THE SQUIRREL

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100 Years Bacup & Rawtenstall Grammar School
The sagging ice-crystal laden clouds have never looked so beautiful.

After countless exams, endless hours of home- and coursework, and a few too many challenges, the summit of the slippery, icy mountain we have been scaling since October is finally in sight. It’s been a challenging term for all, making the relief promised by this coming break seem all the more rewarding.

The main hall is dazzling: threads of electric blue and glittering gold are spun across the balcony, intercepted by thick plumes of halcyon-gold tinsel; arguably the most important figure of them all, our proud Christmas pine perches at the corner of the Headmaster’s Table.

We have had a few whispers of snow these past few weeks, but not enough to hasten the holidays. Perhaps without the scowls and threats of parents and teachers, aware of the need of clear roads, it will fall thick and fast and bring us a White Christmas.

The majority of articles in this, the third edition of The Squirrel, have turned their attention to Winter’s defining event: Christmas! There are instructions for a number of creative inventions, some texts intended to inform, and others to remind, you of some interesting topics, and a sprinkle of sport as well.

We hope that you enjoy reading this edition – ideally from a snug armchair, a mug of hot chocolate in hand.

On behalf of the Team, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Habete fiduciam in laborem nostrum

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Another new instalment to The Squirrel courtesy of John Chavasse in 11G, our Word Correspondent, is this, the Word of the Edition. Look out for it each time, and pay attention. You may be quizzed on it in the future...

- Acrimonious -

Adjective
1. Bitter or resentful, or with an intent to be hurtful

e.g. "He retorted acrimoniously", "The acrimonious ghost of Christmas Yet-to-Come"

This word comes from the Medieval Latin ācrimōnia (1535-45).

Ācri- (the stem of ācer) means sharp and sour.
IT’S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN WHEN frost covers the fields and windshields, bright lights decorate our towns and trees and bring hope and joy to dark dull evenings. It’s Christmas! What is there not to love about shops crowded with bargain hunters and the festive minus degree temperatures?

Nowadays, however, we aren’t confined to one month of this joyous behaviour but instead reminded in late August when supermarkets start filling their selves with Christmas goods. Although, you only truly know it is Christmas when your T.V is filled with seasonal advertisements.

Christmas is the season when retailers go full-scale to get into shoppers pockets through expensive TV adverts. John Lewis is known by all to be the annual Christmas advert that everyone prepares for, you can’t say it’s Christmas unless you have shed your body weight in tears after experiencing a John Lewis advert. This year the advert centres on Sam, a young boy, and his adorable penguin, Monty. They are best friends and do everything together, but Monty is sad and wants a sweetheart. The story is told with no dialogue, just Tom Odell’s emotional cover of John Lennon’s “Real Love”, which already swells your tear-ducts without even watching the advert.

According to David Ogilvy, “a good advertisement is one which sells the product without drawing attention to itself” - in many ways the John Lewis advert does exactly that. As the climax of the advert finishes, where Monty meets his new friend Mabel, the audience breaks into waterfalls of tears running to their nearest John Lewis to buy penguin covered merchandise and other overpriced nonsense.

John Lewis claims to not only sell wardrobes and women’s wear, but actual love! Let’s just say John Lewis really went full out this year, with their Monty Goggles, “virtual reality goggles you can use to explore ‘Monty’s Christmas’ in an amazing 360º panoramic world” and their audiobook narrated by Dermot O’Leary. Despite all this blatant commercial propaganda, it’s hard not to say that John Lewis has done it again with an excellent heart-string pulling advert. Well you would hope so after spending £8 million on it!
the true meaning of christmas? the clue is in the title

AMONGST THE SHOPPING, NATIVITY PLAYS and endless ice scraping and defrosting, we all, quite understandably, have quite a lot on at this time of the year. Society is swamped with the stress of trying to fit every form of festive or mildly commercial activity into 4 week slots, forever in a constant bid to fulfil the media fuelled need for “the best Christmas yet”.

However, this leaves us with not much left but empty bottles and bubble wrap come January 5th. Society must then wake up, push aside the hangover, like an unwanted memory, and move on until the next consumer holiday arrives, fortuitously enough, only 40 days away when heart shaped chocolates and endless bouquets arrive to remind us what love really is—a £3 Clintons card and a couple of grubby roses if you’re lucky. And that’s it for another year, a lot of money, a lot of fuss and what gained? A couple of bath sets you aren’t going to use, a house plant you’ll kill within the week and yet more crockery from the deranged aunt that just keeps on giving.

What if we go back to a simpler, more innocent time, a time where we, I don’t know, maybe looked at why we do this for each other, why we spend our evenings running around trying to find the ‘perfect gift’, our way of demonstrating how good a human we are? Well done self, human frailty and egotism satisfied, your presence on earth is justified. It’s those 6 letters before ‘mas’ on the card you’re writing for the neighbour you nod at approximately 4 times a year that really matter. Or at least what He stood for, love, unconditional, undeniable, uncontrollable love and compassion for others.

Let’s face it, that prospect is terrifying, the fact that we do all of this, the presents, the food, the tree because of that one little boy 2000 years ago that changed the world. But by taking a moment to think about it, we are in ourselves welcoming, inviting compassionate thoughts. By nature as humans, we are drawn to the mystical and magical, the tooth fairy, and Easter bunny. All of our wishes for something inexplicable to exist amongst the blatant predictability of our existence. Yet, at the time of the year where magic is at its height, we frequently miss out the most truly magical thing of all, love.

And the marketing industries know this. Like the sooth sayers of old, they know that people want to be swept away in another ‘Christmas world, away from the day to day humdrum nature of normal life. And it is important that they do, to enable them to create thirty seconds of pure idealised bliss where forest animals can celebrate Christmas like me and you, with a cleverly placed carriage clock at the end that we must buy if we don’t want the rabbits to be sad. Sweeping us through the perfect Christmas and then, just like that, as soon as it came, it goes, floats away for another day, it leaves you there unsated. Alone. In the abyss, waiting for the next fix of Christmas commercialism or delusion, employed to stop you thinking about the report you really must file at work or the debt your building up with every present bought. Like drug riddled junkies, now
we yearn for fantasy to get through the reality, advertisement gold.

However, we don’t want our fix of fantasy with an added moral; we don’t want the tedious Christian teachings pushing down our throats, inviting back memories of grandparent’s rants from years gone by. We accept the magic but without difficult conditions. We can believe in Father Christmas but not the Father of Christ.

And so alas we have no Jesus and no nativity, unless a child happens to be adorned in a tea-towel playing the 2nd Shepherd at school. We don’t have the angel Gabriel and his heavenly pals, unless he is magically transformed into a fluttering flawless female deity who happens to be clutching the latest Channel perfume in her grasp. And the only new born baby now to be seen is the latest plastic doll that cries endlessly into the night that your child so desperately wants for all of 10 minutes before the next thing. And the next

Even still, however, we can, as a society of agnostics or atheists, still accept the simple message the story we’ve heard a thousand times is telling us, and spend one day of the year happily focused on the love we have for others.

At the time of the year where it gets colder, and darker and scarier, don’t turn away from love and compassion, for without it none of this lucrative business we call Christmas works. Christmas cannot function without the reason Christ was sent to us. And, as scary as it is, the adverts can’t fulfil that need for us. We can’t buy some love in the sale or just turn up to a carol service on Christmas Eve and fake it. You must yourself, selflessly and whole heartedly, accept it. Even if that love is of your family or community, not a divine being, it is still in its purest form love, and something that is the only thing that really matters when all else is lost.
food for yuletide thought

CHRISTMAS USUALLY BRINGS TO MIND glorious feasts, the distant family visits that last for at least a week, and the white-bearded, red donned man himself – Father Christmas. Although receiving numerous gifts makes that list too, it also means that for every present I get, it is only common courtesy to give one in return. It may sound selfish, but admittedly everyone feels that nagging dread telling us it’s time to go out to pick and buy presents; the mere thought of the cost is enough to make anyone put it off. However for cheaper presents all you need is a few ingredients to create homemade chutneys, biscuits and other recipes, which are guaranteed to satisfy all your friends and family, without straining your wallet too much!

Caramelised Onion Chutney

This recipe is extremely easy and uses up any spare vegetables that you have in the cupboard, just put the finished product into small jars and decorate with ribbons for a perfect addition to a Christmas hamper. Best of all this recipe can be made in advance to take the stress away from the run-up to Christmas Day.

Ingredients:

- 3 medium red onions
- 1 medium shallots
- 1/2 medium white onion
- 1/2 sweet red pepper (grilled until black, peeled, seeded and diced)
- 1/2 red chilli (deseeded and diced)
- 135ml balsamic vinegar
- 25ml red wine vinegar
- 110g dark brown sugar
- 3cm stick of cinnamon
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- 1 small sprig of rosemary (leaves picked and chopped)
- olive oil

Method:

1. Peel and chop the onions and shallots into chutney size pieces, place into an oiled pan and add the bay leaf, cinnamon and rosemary.
2. Cook for about 20 minutes on a low heat until the onions are golden, soft and sticky. Add the chilli and pepper cook for a further couple of minutes.
3. Add the vinegar and sugar, simmer on a low heat until thick and chutney like.
4. Spoon into sterilised jars. Can be left for 4-6 weeks to develop flavour.

Christmas Sugar Biscuits

This recipe makes lots of small and sweet biscuits which you can shape and decorate to your liking, or even make into tree
decorations by adding a hole to the top of biscuit and threading ribbon through it.

Ingredients:

- 100g unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
- 100g caster sugar
- 1 free-range egg, lightly beaten
- 275g plain flour
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 400g icing sugar
- 3-4 tbsp water
- 2-3 drops food colourings
- Edible glitter

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas 5. Line a baking tray with greaseproof paper.
2. Cream the butter and sugar together in a bowl until pale, light and fluffy.
3. Beat in the egg and vanilla extract, a little at a time, until well combined.
4. Stir in the flour until the mixture comes together as a dough.
5. Roll the dough out on a lightly floured work surface to a thickness of 1cm/½in. Using biscuit cutters or a glass, cut biscuits out of the dough and carefully place onto the baking tray.
6. To make into Christmas tree decorations, carefully make a hole in the top of the biscuit using a straw.
7. Bake the biscuits for 8-10 minutes, or until pale golden-brown. Set aside to harden for 5 minutes, then cool on a wire rack.
8. For the icing, sift the icing sugar into a large mixing bowl and stir in enough water to create a smooth mixture. Stir in the food colouring.
9. Carefully spread the icing onto the biscuits using a knife and sprinkle over the glitter. Set aside until the icing hardens.

Chocolate Truffles

Of course chocolate is a winner with everybody, so a recipe including this renowned flavour had to appear in the article. These truffles make the perfect gift with quite a professional look when wrapped up in boxes and cushioned with tissue paper, considering the quick and easy method.

Ingredients:

- 250ml whipping cream
- 225g dark chocolate
- 55g unsalted butter, cut into cubes and left to soften
- unsweetened cocoa powder, to dust

Method:

1. Chop the chocolate roughly. Then pulse in the food processor until it's the consistency of breadcrumbs.
2. Boil the cream. Turn on the food processor again and pour the cream very slowly onto the chocolate. It is a bit like
making mayonnaise and you should soon have a perfectly smooth emulsion. If the mixture does split, process for a couple more minutes and it usually does the trick. Add the butter, bit by bit and beat until it has been incorporated. Pour the mixture into a bowl or tray and leave to cool for about 15 minutes in the fridge. When it has set to the consistency of butter icing, it is ready to be piped or spooned into truffle sized bits.

3. If piping, put mixture into a piping bag, and pipe blobs of mixture about the size of a cherry onto a tray covered with greaseproof paper, or cling film. Cool for at least two hours, then finish by rolling in cocoa powder, coconut or chopped toasted nuts.

Recipes from:
http://allrecipes.co.uk/recipe/6595/caramelised-onion-chutney.aspx?o_is=Hub_TopRecipe_1
http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/christmasbiscuits_93733
http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/rococotruffles_68078

star biscuits and cupcakes

Freya Bowden

Ingredients
100g/3½oz unsalted butter, softened at room
100g/3½oz caster sugar
1 free-range egg, lightly beaten
275g/10oz plain flour
1 tsp vanilla extract

To decorate
400g/14oz icing sugar
3-4 tbsp. water
2-3 drops food colourings
Edible glitter

Method
1. Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Line a baking tray with greaseproof paper.
2. Cream the butter and sugar together in a bowl until pale, light and fluffy.
3. Beat in the egg and vanilla extract, a little at a time, until well combined.
4. Stir in the flour until the mixture comes together as dough.
5. Roll the dough out on a lightly floured work surface to a thickness of 1cm/½in.
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9. Carefully spread the icing onto the biscuits using a knife and sprinkle over the glitter. Set aside until the icing hardens.

**For the cakes**

280g self-rising flour
175g golden caster sugar
175g unsalted butter, very soft
150g pot fat-free natural yogurt
1 tsp vanilla extract
3 eggs

**For the frosting**

85g unsalted butter, softened
1 tsp vanilla extract
200g icing sugar, sifted

**To decorate**

Natural green food colouring (for Christmas trees), sweets, sprinkles and white chocolate stars milk and white chocolate buttons and natural colouring icing pens.

Heat oven to 190C/170 fan/gas 5 and line a 12-hole muffin tin with cake cases. Put all the cake ingredients into a bowl and mix with a whisk until completely smooth. Spoon the mix into the cases; bake for 25 minutes or until golden and risen. Cool before eating.

For the frosting, beat the butter, vanilla extract and icing sugar until pale and creamy and completely combined.

To make snowmen, reindeer and Christmas puddings, first spread the icing over the top of each cake. Then lay the chocolate buttons on top, slicing some buttons into quarters to make ears and hats. Finally, use icing pens for the details. For the Christmas tree, colour the icing with green food colouring and pipe onto the cakes using a star-shaped nozzle, decorate with sweets, sprinkles and white chocolate stars. Or you could make your own design.

Now eat them!
oh christmas tree, oh christmas tree; how green are your branches?

Tara Williams

For every turkey, there are approximately eleven humans on this planet. For every pig, there are approximately seven humans. And for every robin, there are about twenty-three humans.

Yet there are sixty-one trees – comprising 230,000 different species – per human on this planet. That is 400 billion in total.

Trees are our world, so abundant as to dwarf the human race, so durable as to outlive generations. So humbled, so commonplace, as to be taken for granted, or to be all together ignored, on a daily basis.

We share 70% of our DNA with trees. They may not be our closest relatives, but they are certainly one of the most fundamental to our existence; for millennia, humans have been unable to exist without the food, shelter and material offered by these silent pillars of life. And yet, collectively as a race, we strive to destroy them. Forests cover 30 percent of our planet’s surface, one and a half acres of which is razed every second. Ironically, it is only after such hideous exhibitions of human capacity that we crave the beauty which we no longer have; that we mourn the loss of the spirit that trees embody.

Deforestation – and in fact all forms of human-implemented Earth-destruction – is a topic that I feel very strongly about. But this is not a lecture, nor is it an extended Geography or Chemistry lesson. I know that we are all very aware of the fingerprint we humans are leaving on this incredible planet. And at this festive time of year – where timber feeds our hearths, and paper hugs our presents – I cannot envisage a long line of volunteers willing to sacrifice such comforts for a greener planet. Writing this in front of a flourishing fire, Christmas cards hanging on the walls around me, I can understand why. And it is questionable, would such small sacrifices make any difference?

Perhaps not on the individual scale.

This article does, however, exist to expose the treatment of trees during this merry time, so that on the 6th January 2015, when Christmas slips into your collection of fairly-light lit memories, you appreciate how to relinquish your rubbish responsibly and respectfully, to ensure that trees can remain at the heart of our Christmas culture for years to come.

Trees have been an emblem of Christmas for thousands of years. Pagans would hang branches around their homes during the Winter Solstice, turning thoughts towards and beckoning the Spring. Many early, discernible Christmas Trees were hung upside down from the ceiling using chains. It is possible that the pyramidal shape of Christmas Trees was inspired by Paradise Trees, used in medieval German Mystery Plays that were acted out in front of Churches on Heiligabend.

In 1841, Victorians created the Christmas Tree tradition that we know in Britain today – familiar to many cultures – when Prince Albert brought an evergreen over from Germany and mounted it in Windsor Castle. At this time, candles adorned the branches to symbolise the stars in the sky over Jesus’ birth. A
drawing of the Royal Couple standing with their tree was printed in a newspaper; and so the humble poplar became popular.

In past Winters, people decorated their outside trees to entice spirits. It was believed that these spirits would live in the leafy limbs and grow foliage and fruit every year. To the delight of the decorators, each Spring the trees would burst into leaf.

When the new custom of bringing small fir trees indoors began (most probably in Germany), so too did the custom of adding decorations. The very early ornamentations were edible, such as gingerbread men and gilded apples. Glass makers soon bought in on the tradition, fashioning small baubles similar to those used today. At first, a figure of the Baby Jesus was placed at the trees’ pinnacles; overtime it changed to be an angel or fairy, representative of Angel Gabriel, or a star, like the guide to Bethlehem.

The beginning of the 20th Century marked the birth of the artificial Christmas Tree’s esteem, commencing with those made from coloured ostrich feathers (deemed ‘fashionable’ at Edwardian parties). Soon, wholly white trees, as well as those made from papier mâché, metal, plastic and glass, were available for purchase.

But ever since said obscured origins of Winter Solstice practices, there has been one question haunting its participants: which is more environmentally friendly; a real or fake Christmas Tree? Both forms have their caveats and shortcomings, and both have their advantages, which generally balance out.

The average Christmas Tree takes 7 years to grow, requiring care and nurture early on to ensure Christmas-criteria is met. Approximately 98% of real Christmas Trees are grown on dedicated farms, which employ over 100,000 people in the USA alone. This is an income for many people, during a time where there is not much other business. The other 2% are cut down from the wild, which of course does have a negative effect. One of the most severe is that on the consumer’s guilt levels; nowadays, many of us choose to buy fake, believing that after a few years any adverse effects will be neutralised. In the annual carbon and energy footprint of an average American family (and increasingly, the average British family), the purchasing of a Christmas Tree of either variety would be pretty much inconsequential. But of course, the impacts stretch far beyond just those on the environment.

As mentioned, buying a real tree from a local seller or farm provides business for area growers. It could potentially slow urban sprawl, as forested land is obviously vital if demand is to be met. They are also a sustained cultural tradition—many others, such as eating at the dinner table, are lost as modern technology renders them obsolete.

Considerably less artificial Christmas Trees than natural trees are used worldwide, although their popularity is increasing. Most are made of 100% recycled plastics from used PVC packaging materials in China, and supporters also note that they offer less of a fire risk than natural trees (some apartment buildings have even banned natural trees because of the risk).

Although most artificial trees are made in China, the transportation efficiencies are actually quite high. Conducted studies don’t seem to differentiate fossil fuels from biological fuels, a distinction which is crucial for accurate conclusions.

The replacement of fossil by biological fuels has atmospheric advantages, on top of which is the reduced number of natural trees deforested when artificial trees are used. This
must go some way to reducing atmospheric CO₂.

The verdict is unclear, as both types of trees offer solutions to problems imposed by the other. Artificial trees can be reused, year after year. But so too could a potted Christmas Tree. Unfortunately, the space for such a shrub is something that most families are lacking.

Nowadays, there are Fairtrade Tree options, as well as Rent-a-Trees, which allow you to borrow a Christmas Tree for the holidays. But ultimately, no matter the pros (and even regardless of other cons), artificial trees are another manufactured piece of plastic, whereas real Christmas trees are entirely renewable. For every one cut down, 2.5 more are planted.

If you have chosen to go natural this Christmas, remember that there are plenty of ways to dispose of your naked tree come Spring. There are many organisations (see http://www.christmastreesny.org/Recycling.php for more information) which offer to take trees off your hands and then use them for a number of things, including bird feeders and hiking paths.

Although choosing the green option is important, so are traditions, which in the end is what Christmas is. There is no clear conclusion as to which tree is better, so ultimately, the decision lies in your hands. This is not a choice that will decide the future of mankind; whether to leave port or shandy out for Father Christmas on Christmas Eve, though well, that’s a different story altogether.
what does the word ‘reed-bed’ conjure up for you?

Kate Brown

REED-BEDS PROBABLY AREN’T WHAT YOU spend your time enthusing over or your Saturday nights visiting, but believe it or not they’re actually pretty interesting. I volunteer at a nature reserve (RSPB Leighton Moss) that is North West England’s biggest reed-bed, which takes a great deal of management to keep it ideal for wildlife. For those of you studying Geography, reed-beds are a great ecosystem to examine!

Management 1- Reed cutting and Clearing

There are many reasons that Leighton Moss ‘cut and clear’ the reed bed. Although it appears somewhat unusual and destructive, this method of reed bed management is vital for the maintenance of the numerous species that have made Leighton Moss their home.

Firstly, clearing areas of reed bed creates a patchy environment, providing open areas for water birds to feed. Birds such as Moorhen and Coot need open space to guide their chicks and show them how to feed. Clearing areas of reed also allows new reed to grow - this mixture of old and new reed has proved very helpful for many reed bed birds.

Over time, reed beds dry out due to the build-up of ‘reed litter’ - this is the broken and dead parts of reed that have fallen to the base of the reeds. This reed litter is known to have very damaging effects if not managed, as well as intrusive scrub that can dominate the reed bed and eventually lead to woodland. Reed litter also releases phytotoxins during decomposition, which damages living reeds. Clearing reed litter slows the natural succession of these scrubs (for example hawthorn and blackthorn).

Water level (or water regime, which is the yearly management of water level) is perhaps the most important factor when it comes to managing reed bed. Different birds require different water levels to nest - the Water Rail and the Bittern both require completely different water levels when nesting. By clearing the reed litter, which has a drying affect, certain areas of land can be adapted to have more suitable characteristics that certain species of bird will benefit from.

One of the simpler reasons Leighton Moss clear areas of reed bed is to meet the needs of the visitors. Leighton Moss is, after all, greatly influenced by visitors and their needs, so it is important that they can enjoy the wildlife and have a clear view in order to bird watch. Birds such as the Reed Warbler or the Sedge Warbler are particularly well hidden within the reeds; hence they are especially sought after. It has also been shown that these birds favour the edge of the reed bed for feeding and breeding!

Due to intensive agriculture deprioritising reed beds and water drainage, reed beds have
become a very much threatened habitat in Britain. It is important that they are managed carefully and any alteration to the reed bed is done with great care and all species are taken into thorough consideration. With many specialist species depending on the reed beds of Britain, it is vital that they are sustained.

Still not enthused about reed-beds? Fair enough, but take a visit to Leighton Moss and your mind will be changed!
WHY IS IT THAT SOME OF OUR AGEING population seem to be convinced that young people are the enemy?

Comments such as “it was different in our day” or “they have no manners these days” can actually be seen as hurtful, highly condescending and, quite frankly, portray a rather narrow minded attitude. Why do I say this? As we all know, travelling by bus can be a rather soul destroying or tedious experience but occasionally it can actually provide some real stark insights into our humanity.

Recently, I was on the 483 bus home (a very small bus for such a large group of students but there hangs another tale!) and I was chatting to someone, engrossed in a conversation about work and A-Levels (what else?). Then, out of the blue, a group of old ladies approached us as they were leaving and said “you should have given up your seat for that man there. I think you are highly rude and have no manners.”

OK, I thought to myself. Perhaps she had a point. We need to make sure we show respect to others and I am a firm believer of that. To be honest, I hadn’t even noticed an older man was standing up as he wasn’t on the bus for long. However, when I now looked at the man she was talking about, he was certainly older than me (many people are) but he appeared to be fit as a flea and I actually would have felt embarrassed to ask him if he wished a seat for fear he may find it insulting. No question though, I would have given my seat up without hesitation if it was required.

Upon reflection, and after witnessing several torrents of abuse concerning young people from those more advanced in years, I found myself asking the question should age automatically give you automatic rights above those younger than you without question? Does it give you the right to make remarks such as this about others you don’t even know, just by qualification of advanced years? Indeed, on the other hand, if I had said similar things about their generation surely they would automatically think I was disrespectful and perhaps discriminatory, yet they are perfectly entitled to question OUR actions when they are convinced they are right?

Don’t mistake me; I try to take each person as an individual. I actually spend a lot of time with elderly people. I visit my grandparents at least three times a week and help my granddad who, unlike this gentleman, is immobile. I also work in a library where I assist elderly people every working day. Without doubt, I value the conversations we have, the advice provided and the insights into times past. Yet, even they, on occasion, still make assumptions based upon such
arbitrary discriminators such as age. Ironically, the day after ‘the infamous bus incident’, a
disabled elderly lady got on the bus and I
instantly offered her my seat and she said she
didn’t want it. This made me wonder whether
that man was actually bothered about the
seat or whether the three old ladies just
wanted to castigate young people. Indeed,
even after I explained to the ladies at the time
that if the man would’ve asked I would have
gladly given up my seat, they continued with
their highly derogatory and discourteous
comments about how “I was not brought up
right” and that “it’s different these days.”
Well, actually, I don’t think it is.

Why am I writing this article then I hear you
ask? It’s actually not the fact that I was clearly
unfairly patronised in public by three old
ladies on the bus about my supposed lack of
respect for my elders but rather because I
wanted to point out (what should be obvious)
that we should not judge each other’s
characteristics on first appearances and on
single actions, and certainly not based on
stereotypes. It would definitely not be ok for
them to judge me on my race, my gender, my
religion so how come it was ok to judge me on
my age? Often in our society, we see ageism
in the reverse as an issue but I feel that I
actually experienced this and cannot do
anything to combat it.

These older ladies didn’t have a clue who I
was, where I come from or what my daily life
is like, yet they still labelled me as a insolent
“youth.” If I was 10 or 15 years older would
these ladies have made these assumptions?
Indeed, they chose to catch a school bus that
they knew would be busy and overcrowded
and witnessed what they thought was typical
selfish behaviour in the youth of today. Well,
people often say you see what you expect to
see, especially if you do not challenge your
views.

Hopefully, you as a reader, like I do, recognise
not all elderly people adopt this myopic
attitude and, like young people, there are
some open minded and less open minded
individuals in our society whatever their age.
All of us need to ensure we do not just blindly
accept stereotypes whether we have been on
this Earth for a decade or two or for many
decades. Personally, after being so
traumatised by this experience, if I see a small
bus approaching with 483 emblazoned on the
front, I may just get a taxi instead.
creative corner

After the unprecedented success and popularity of last edition’s Creative Corner, we have decided to make it a regular feature. Not only will you find below a sample of the literary skill of BRGS students’, but also some festive tutorials brilliant for any upcoming parties.

christmas beauty

Alicejane Evans

Hi, I’m Alicejane Evans and I am a new member! This page is about how to incorporate Christmas themes into your everyday beauty! Below are some tutorials on how to do Christmas nails and hair like Elsa from the Christmas film of all time... ‘Frozen’! Christmas is that time of year where we all partake in the Christmas festivities and a perfect way to do this is to do your nails!!! It is a part of a female’s life that doesn’t take a lot of skill meaning that anybody can do it!!

1. Santa Hat Nails

STEP 1: Start with a clear coat of nail varnish as the base.
STEP 2: Next take a red polish and neatly paint the tips of your nails, this is the beginnings of Santa’s hat.
STEP 3: Taking a black nail art pen, create a downwards facing crescent and then...
STEP 4: Fill this shape with the red nail polish.
STEP 5: With a white nail art pen, draw the fluff around the base of the hat and draw the outline of the bauble on the end of the hat.
STEP 6: Then with the same white pen, colour in the bauble at the end of the hat!

Then, if you choose to, you can apply a top coat to stop it chipping.

2. Reindeer Nails

STEP 1: Start with a clear coat of nail varnish as the base.
STEP 2: Next take a brown polish and neatly paint the tips of your nails and at the sides as this will be the reindeer’s ears.
STEP 3: Taking a dark brown nail art pen, draw antlers in the centre of the head as shown in the picture.
STEP 4: With a white polish, paint two circles on the face for the eyes and add a smaller black polish in the centre of the white circle for the pupil.
Step 5: With a white nail art pen, draw the fluff around the base of the hat and draw the outline of the bauble on the end of the hat.
Step 6: Then with a red polish, paint the nose on at the tip of your nail.
Then, if you choose to, you can apply a top coat to stop it chipping.

3. Elsa Hair

STEP 1: Brush your hair to get rid of any knots.
STEP 2: Curl your hair.
STEP 3: Create a small quiff to create volume.
STEP 4: Start to do a French plait all the way down your hair pulling in pieces from the sides to make sure you don’t miss any bits.
Step 5: As you get to the middle of your plait, bring it to one side (whichever is comfortable) and begin to carry on plaiting as this will help it stay to one side.
Step 6: Make sure you don’t do the plait too tight as you won’t be able to give it that ‘rough’ look.
Step 7: After putting in a bobble for security, try gently pull out bits of the hair to make the plait bigger and wider.
It may seem that Halloween has only just come to an end, but as the temperature drops and decorations appear in frosty windows, the thought of Christmas approaches. I have written a short poem in order to maintain the excitement!

CALLING ON CHRISTMAS

Hearing squeaking up and down the stairs,  
Dreaming of wanted toys,  
Elation and excitement  
In the hearts of all girls and boys.

Trees and lights are twinkling,  
Stockings are being hung,  
The Christmas joy is around  
As carols are being sung.

Chestnuts roasting on the stove,  
Mistletoe strung over every door,  
Staring out through the window,  
The blanket of snow is difficult to ignore.

Children wearing mittens  
And throwing snowballs,  
A smile on every face,  
While the snow continues to fall.
And honey-blonde hair that glows like light
and a smile that makes me feel alright
and powers that drive back the dark of night
Is it any wonder that I love you?

My shades of wrath are out in force
my fears, my sins, are their source
she says all will be fine, of course
Is it any wonder that I need you?

Despite the times when I’m alone
despite the things I cannot atone
she will not let me face them on my own
Is it any wonder that I want you?

By my side making me strong
for the shelter of her wings I long
protecting me is her swan song
Is it any wonder that I have you?

Whatever happens, however fatal
she will stay forever faithful
my forever-watching guardian angel
Is it any wonder that I love you?
"Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?" asked Scrooge.

"I am."
The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

"Who, and what are you?" Scrooge demanded.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

"Long Past?" inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

"No. Your past."

Perhaps, Scrooge could not have told anybody why, if anybody could have asked him; but he had a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered.

"What!" exclaimed the Ghost, "Would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!"

Scrooge reverently disclaimed all intention to offend or any knowledge of having willfully bonneted the Spirit at any period of his life. He then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

"Your welfare," said the Ghost.

Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately: "Your reclamation, then. Take heed."

It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm. "Rise. And walk with me." It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped his robe in supplication.

"I am mortal," Scrooge remonstrated, "and liable to fall."

"Bear but a touch of my hand there," said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this."

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground.
Raheem Sterling and Saido Berahino are two of the Premier League’s young stars with both having great starts to the new season. Despite the fact that both of them weren’t actually born in England, the pair have been called up by Roy Hodgson to represent the national team. This is an enormous feat - made even more special if you take into account their inspirational journey to make it this far.

“If you carry on the way you’re going, by the time you’re 17 you’ll either be in prison or playing for England.”

Thankfully for Sterling though, it was the latter. These were the words of Chris Beschi who taught Sterling during his time in primary school and this quote is a strong reflection on his childhood. Born in Jamaica in the gang-plagued area of Maverley in Kingston, for the first 5 years of his life, Sterling was raised by is grandmother. At the age of 5, he and his mother migrated to London leaving Raheem’s father behind as he was in a poor financial state.

When Sterling was 9 years old, his father was murdered in Jamaica which affected him hugely as he got excluded from his primary school due to poor behaviour and a bad attitude. Sterling was brought up near the old Wembley and from his bedroom window witnessed the demolition of the stadium.

From this, he was inspired to take on the sport of football and it was realised very soon that he was hugely talented as he was signed by Queens Park Rangers at the age of 11 when one of their scouts saw him playing in a park. Within 3 years, Sterling made the huge leap of playing for QPR under 18s and was starring or them. Crowds for these games swelled from 50 to over 500 as many wanted to see 14 year old Sterling at work. Later that year, Sterling represented England for the first time playing for the under 16s. At this point teams like Arsenal, Fulham, Manchester City and Manchester United were scouting Sterling but Liverpool leapfrogged them all by inviting Sterling for a trial, a month before his 15th birthday.

Here he was introduced to Liverpool’s manager at the time Rafael Benitez and in an interview admitted that this experience had a huge effect on him as he met Steven Gerrard and Fernando Torres who convinced him to sign for Liverpool. He earned a call-up for the England under 18s and 19s before making his first team debut for Liverpool at the age of 17 becoming the second youngest player to ever...
play for them. He then represented the England under 21s scoring 3 times in 8 appearances. He only managed 3 appearances in his first season at Liverpool however he broke into the starting 11 in the following season scoring twice in 24 games earning him a call up for England becoming the 5th youngest player to appear for England when he played against Sweden. The next season however was his most successful to date as his 9 goals in the league helped Liverpool finish second falling only two points short of eventual winners Manchester City. After that season, Sterling earned a lot of praise from the likes of Xavi and Gareth Bale and has the potential to become one of the best in the world.

“On October 21, 1993, Burundi’s first democratically elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, was assassinated by Tutsi extremists.”

This resulted into the beginning of the Burundian Civil War. However only 2 months prior to this event, Saido Berahino was born in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi. He grew up in poverty with his mother and three sisters while his father was out fighting in the war. When Saido was just 4, his family received the heart-breaking news that his father had been shot dead, obviously a major loss to Berahino. As his family were too poor to afford a football, Saido had to play with plastic bags which had been scrunched together to form a ball. When Berahino was just 9 years old, he agreed with his mother that he should go alone and escape the war-ridden country and somehow manage to relocate to England.

Firstly to escape the country, Berahino needed a family friend with him so they could both escape the border without harm. They firstly arrived in Tanzania. However they collectively decided to advance further into Kenya. From here, Saido’s family friend tried getting plane tickets so both of them could get into Europe. However they could only purchase one ticket and wisely, the older family-friend of Berahino allowed him to travel to Europe leaving himself behind. Berahino safely arrived in Europe and with some help from a family; they paid for Berahino to be flown to England. Ultimately he reached England and arrived in Birmingham. Here, to his surprise, Saido was greeted by his mother who hadn’t seen each other in nearly two years! They spoke for an hour until they were separated again as DNA tests were needed to confirm that they were related. After it was confirmed that both of them were related, Saido moved in with his mother in Birmingham and played football again, this time with an actual football!

Despite not being able to communicate with his friends, teammates and coaches, Berahino excelled in his local club Phoenix United and was scouted by local club West Bromwich Albion and was signed by them at the age of 11. Berahino starred for the Midlands club at youth level earning him the honour of playing for England under 16s and representing England under 17s at the Under 17s European
Championships scoring a goal in the process helping England win the tournament. After a loan spell at Northampton, Berahino was given his debut for West Brom in 2012 against Yeovil. After an injury-plagued season he returned in the 2013-14 season with goals against Arsenal and Manchester United scoring 9 goals. After a great start to the 2014-15 season consisting of 7 goals in just 9 appearances he was rewarded with an England call-up. Despite not featuring in the two matches he was called up for, his international debut isn’t too far away!
some dates for your diary...

Here are the dates of a few important upcoming events. Better not forget that one on the 25th December...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014/2015 Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday 19th December</td>
<td>Last day of term!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 24th December</td>
<td>Christmas Eve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 25th December</td>
<td>The Big Day!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday 26th December</td>
<td>Boxing Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 31st December</td>
<td>New Year’s Eve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 1st January</td>
<td>New Year’s Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday 5th January</td>
<td>Inset Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 6th January</td>
<td>Back to school/Lionheart Challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 8th January</td>
<td>Year 7 Panto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday 12th – Friday 16th January</td>
<td>Year 10 Work Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 22nd January</td>
<td>Year 9 Parents Evening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 29th January</td>
<td>Year 11 Parents Evening</td>
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thank yous

So here we are, not only at the end of another edition, but at the end of another glorious year. This is my first Christmas as editor, and I have to say what a fantastic experience assembling the festive edition of *The Squirrel* has been.

I hope that you have equally enjoyed reading our stories and accounts, and that maybe we have given you a few projects for the holidays.

We say goodbye to Mr Fleming from History and thank him for all the brilliant stories and for being the ‘coolest’ History teacher. We also say goodbye to PSHE, Sociology and Critical Thinking teacher Miss Martin this term. This has left many students heartbroken, and eager to wish her *bonne voyage* as she sets off on her amazing around-the-world-trip. Thank you, Miss, for all your work with us.

Christmas and New Year serve to remind us all of how lucky we are. The many presents and cards exchanged over the past few weeks in themselves are ‘thank yous’: to our friends, for laughing with us during the good times and supporting us through the bad; to our teachers, for your endless patience, perseverance and dedication; and to our parents, for everything that you never cease to do.

Please let this edition be our Christmas card to you. Thank you, once again, for reading.

Have a magical Christmas!

*Tara*