I have been amazed by the response of our Vesey community in light of the COVID19 international crisis. Parents have offered to volunteer. We have a team of 63 Sixth Formers who volunteered to support us during school closure and staff have been going above and beyond to support their students and the wider community. See a continuation of my Welcome on Page 1 and the article on Page 14 for more on this.

No Year Group have been more affected than our U6, who were due to take their ‘A’ Level exams, the ticket for their future study, this Summer. They had only 48 hours to prepare to leave BVGS. Read on page 4 the thoughts of one U6th student.

We all look forward to a time where our lives can continue as normal. Until then, stay apart, stay inside, stay safe.

Dominic Robson
Headteacher.
Living through this Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 has posed challenges for us all. Throughout, I have been so impressed by the calm, hopeful and positive way the Vesey community has responded.

The national cancellation of A level and GCSE examinations was a huge matter for our year 11 and year 13 students to process. The student response was excellent. Joshua Russell (School Captain), Matthew Hurley and Harry Sleighmaker calmly put together a highly professional and thoughtful Year 13 assembly (complete with photo montage) at short notice, which celebrated everyone in their year group and the support staff and teachers, who had looked after them throughout their time at BVGS. We look forward both to properly celebrating the end of GCSEs and A levels with the students in due course.

It has also been challenging for all other year groups at BVGS, with school closed from March 20th to all but the children of key workers. I have been really pleased overall by the way we have adapted to becoming an ‘online school.’ A big thank you to the leadership of Messrs Baglee, Bowen, Buxton and Swindells, who have done so much to facilitate the smooth introduction of Microsoft Teams across the School, so we were ‘ahead of the curve.’ And a big thank you to all the teachers, students (and parents!), who have supported this.

Above all, I am pleased that we are maintaining our hopeful and positive outlook. Our generous annual Easter egg collection to donate Easter Eggs to NHS workers at Birmingham Hospitals, masterminded by Miss Field, Head of Year 11, and delivered this week, has had more poignancy than ever this year.

Meanwhile, during the first week of this Easter holiday period, Mrs Bowen (Head of Design Technology) and Mrs Gregory (DT Technician), assisted by our own Year 7 children of key workers, have been making Personal Protective Equipment for Heartlands Hospital and Birmingham Children’s Hospital.

And I am so proud that through the power of music, BVGS is playing its part, in celebrating our national heroes, the NHS workers, by playing and singing ‘Somewhere over the Rainbow’ this Thursday evening at 8pm.

With grateful thanks to you all, the parents, students, staff, Old Veseyans, Friends and Governors of the Vesey community, for your support this Lent Term and a special thank you to staff who volunteered their time to support Easter onsite learning,

Dominic Robson
Headteacher.
We have been communicating frequently with parents about our action planning and lesson contingency in the case of school closure, which as we now know did happen on Friday 20th March.

Since closure, we have ensured the Teams lesson system is robust and have been looking at ways of continuing our commitment to caring for our students and nurturing their talents.

As part of our way of doing so, we have published weekly newsletters, in a revised format with new features including ‘Skill of the Week’ and ‘Brainteaser of the Week’. Here in our half-termy magazine we wanted to communicate some further ideas of things to do in social isolation. We hope you find this article a good signpost to a range of different activities to keep all the family occupied during social isolation.

Staying Active

- Sport England have released a wealth of resources and ideas on how to ‘Stay in, work out’ and also some ideas for new workouts which we can all do outside the house as part of the allowed 30 minutes exercise a day. Find their suggestions here.

Family Fun

- Lots of organisations, as well as individuals, are going above and beyond to help keep us all entertained in this difficult time. Jay Flynn, a Quizmaster at a pub in Darwen, set up an online pub quiz and hoped to attract a few friends to join in. Instead, 330,000 people worldwide took part. He now has pre-recorded quizzes for children on his channel too. Find out more here.

Days ‘out’ While Staying In

- Longleat have released a guided tour of their Safari Park, which follows the drive-through route normally taken by guests. The tour also allows the viewer to ‘get up close’ (!) to lions, tigers, cheetahs and wolves. Find the link here.

- Searching for an escape from the confines of the house? Travel to museums from London to Seoul by taking a virtual tour of the exhibitions they have on display. A wonderful opportunity to look at artefacts which you might otherwise never have the chance to. There are 12 museums offering this facility. Find out more by following this link.

The Show DOES Go On!

- Andrew Lloyd Webber is streaming a production of one of his musicals on YouTube each week. Each show is available for 48 hours every Friday from 7pm. Find the link to his YouTube channel here.

- Shakespeare’s Globe is set to release 40 productions on its Globe Player platform over the coming month for free. Take this excellent opportunity to explore Shakespeare’s works in performance, from the comfort of your sofa, by clicking on this link.

- There’s so much more out there. The best article we found detailing virtual performances was here. Click to discover even more.
We hear from our students: How is school closure affecting them?

School was ordered to close its gates for the ‘vast majority of pupils’ from 3.20pm on Friday 20\textsuperscript{th} March. For many students, attending Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School provides a sense of safety and comfort, as well as the chance to socialise with friends, enrich themselves academically and discover their passions through engaging with extra-curricular activities. Since school closure, the ways in which students engage with schooling has changed dramatically. Hear from our students about their experiences since school closure.

My Experience of School Closure: Two weeks in. Beth Winterbottom

My name is Beth and I am in the Lower Sixth. Breaking up on March 20\textsuperscript{th} was pretty surreal to be honest. I had prepared myself to finish in July, with my UCAS exams and work experience behind me and a whole summer ahead, but I don’t think this lockdown period has necessarily been a bad thing.

I have managed to keep up with my schoolwork. We are using Microsoft Teams to be able to submit work and receive feedback from teachers and I have found this has worked almost as well as if I was in a normal lesson. I go out for a walk everyday around the fields by my house, and whilst this isn’t very exciting it does make me feel better to be able to leave the house once in a while. This period has also allowed me to get closer with my family because we are all in the house at the same time and not at work or various clubs. We can now sit down and eat together, and watch films, and last weekend we all painted our new extension together, so I do have a newfound appreciation for them. It is also my little brother’s birthday in a few weeks. He is in Year 7 at Vesey and whilst this is going to be a weird experience for us all, hopefully we will have a great day celebrating together with lots of cake and balloons.

For me, the only negative of social isolation so far, has been not seeing my friends every day. I do really miss them and it’s strange not being with them, but we have not let this stop us! Most days we use skype and talk to each other for hours on end; we’ve done workout sessions, played games and even tried out face masks together. Even though I am not seeing them in person, I do feel that in some ways it has brought us closer together because we appreciate each other so much more.

Overall, this whole experience has been odd and completely unprecedented, but I’ve taken the view that we have to make the best of it, because we are all in the same boat. So, let’s stay safe, stay home and keep smiling!
Leaving the School I love with 48 hours notice
Benedict Newman

It feels strange writing in March about leaving school after 7 years of BVGS. It hadn’t really crossed my mind that we would be leaving this year let alone finding out on the Wednesday we would not be coming back the following Monday.

During these last 7 years, we’ve seen plenty of change at school, with new students, new teachers, new buildings yet there were some constants that were taken as guaranteed. We all expected to be leaving school on May 5th, with a big celebration of our whole year in fancy dress, ready to go on study leave. We all expected to be sitting down to do our first exam in mid-May after months of preparation and revision. We all expected to relax and enjoy our summer where we went on holidays together and composed ourselves before the next stage of our lives. However, we had a short assembly which was, in the situation, fantastically well put together and presented by members of the officer team overnight to a diminished year. We had 20 minutes to say our goodbyes to students and staff who have all enriched our lives insurmountably. I know there are people, both staff and students, who we would have loved to say thank you to in person but didn’t get chance to. We may get chance to thank our teachers in isolation, but the cleaners, the canteen and office staff, the music teachers, the sports coaches, the career advisers, pastoral care team and I’m sure many many more have made our 7 years memorable to say the least.

I, personally, have tried to take the cancellation of our exams as calmly as possible. It’s still not confirmed how they will grade us, and what will happen to our university places. Ultimately, we’re only going to be able to prepare for the next stage after we get our results in July. I can’t help but feel sorry for us as we can’t show off the work we have done over the past 18 months, but when we joined Vesey I remember them saying about a “Vesey Experience”. It has taken me until now to actually realise what that means. Whilst at the moment, we don’t know what grades we will come out with, during our time at BVGS, we’ve all played new sports, learnt new instruments, seen different countries, raised money for charity and much more. Somehow, I feel like I’ve already received above and beyond what I expected from my time at Vesey even before getting my A Levels so whilst I’m disappointed that my time was cut short, I can’t say I wasn’t given every opportunity. Until you leave all those things and people behind, you don’t realise Vesey is so much more than a place to get qualifications, but a place to learn lessons both in academia and in life.
This isn’t how I was planning on spending my Easter holidays. With my holiday in Spain cancelled, writing a review of my “Corona Home-Schooling Experience” wasn’t top of my list.

My days have started off in the same way as before lockdown; up at 6:45, leaving the house at 7:30. But not to catch the bus to BVGS, to take Cooper (my golden retriever) to Sutton Park for a walk with my mom and sister. Dad has already started work by the time we leave. Cooper has learnt to swim in the 2 weeks since school closed, I’d say he’s got his 5m badge now! It’s been great to be in the park every morning, doing my 10,000 steps before school would have started. Blue skies, mirror lakes, pine forests, ponies… we could be anywhere in the world, a far step away from the Corona hit NHS. It’s easy to forget about what’s happening in the world whilst walking into nature, until we come across other people out exercising and have to keep to the social distancing rules. After forcing our soggy dog back into the car, we get home at around 9:00 and go our different ways in the house.

My workstation is at the dining table, shared with my dad. So far, I’ve been sticking to my timetable, only difference being I listen to my Spotify playlists through headphones to block out my dad’s continuous and annoying video conference calls with his colleagues around the world. It’s given me a real insight into how dull his world of work is!

Distance learning brings up several benefits; most days I finish my day’s work by lunchtime. Discipline in my home classroom is pretty tight, but I still manage to sneak off to raid the snack cupboard several times. Although, my sister is working in the kitchen so is calling me out every time!

Obviously, lessons can sometimes be complicated as there is no teacher present to explain new work immediately. I’m having to rely on my parents; one who grew up in Belgium and learnt very differently, the other who has seemingly forgotten her entire schooling. Although she did pull out some maths knowledge last week and surprised herself and me!
Last week I took part in an online music lesson trial playing my saxophone with the amazing Mrs Buxton who was on a tablet propped up by an iron on the ironing board! It worked well and lessons will be rolled out after the Easter holidays. All in all, Microsoft Teams seems to be holding up brilliantly and making this whole home-schooling work.

The main thing I’m missing is sport. Mainly tennis but also school hockey and rowing. We are lucky to have a small field opposite our house so go out at lunchtime and do some frisby or help my sister practise her netball (such silly rules!). In the evenings I’ve been playing cards, board games, table tennis and pool. These are things we usually do on holiday, so it’s been nice spending this time with my family whilst at home. I’ve also been doing some cooking. We’ve also been out clapping the NHS on Thursday evenings, bringing everyone out on our street but keeping to our own driveways and having conversations across the road. Strange times!

Having so much time at home has also meant I’ve been able to do a “Cross The Pond” transatlantic flight on my flight simulator taking off from London to flying to New York on a Boeing 737. 7 hours, amongst the clouds talking to air traffic control en route. I’m hoping to do a few other long-haul flights as well as my next online air traffic control qualification as time is something we have plenty of at the moment.

All in all, lock down has brought us the benefit of more “free” time. My parents have had me doing odd jobs to continue earning money for World Challenge – jet washing the patio was a “highlight”! Also catching up with family & friends via skype, zoom & WhatsApp has been different but good. At least we can stay in touch and see everyone, even if via a screen. Stay safe everyone and #stayathome
ENRICHING THE CURRICULUM

The preparation for World Book Day is invariably exciting. We are always promoting reading for pleasure at school and WBD lets us explore different ways of sharing the love of reading. It's a non-uniform day to support the charity Book Aid International, an organisation which sends around the world. In 2019 they sent 1,211,423 books to people in 25 different countries.

We have an author visit school and we want them to speak to as many students as possible during the day. This year it was Mark Walden. He is the writer of the massively popular H.I.V.E. series. He spoke to Year 7-9 and Year 11. Before the day KS3 were asked to contribute so display work to use in the library and Big School – see a selection of brilliant responses below.

On the day Mark began by meeting Year 11 and giving a short inspirational speech, which was well received. Straight after he went into a talk with Year 7 & 9 about superheroes and how to write for them, asking students for their favourite superheroes to discuss. He linked this of course to H.I.V.E. During the talk he read from book one of the series, which was fabulous. There is nothing better than listening to an author reading from his own book and bring the characters to life. After audience questions Mark met students and signed books. This was repeated with Year 7 & 8.

Our annual ‘best dressed book character’ competition was well supported once more. Some excellent costumes on view! The winner was chosen by Mark Walden before he left for the day. The winner was Elliot Mattey from 10G a senior librarian, here he is pictured on the right.

The day was a fitting celebration of reading for pleasure and we raised £950 for Book Aid. Many thanks to everyone involved and everyone who helped and supported the library on the day.
BVGS was proud to host an intensive saxophone workshop, which gave students from Birmingham the chance to perform and improve their skills with Jess Gillam, a BRIT Award Winner and a world-renowned saxophonist.

Throughout the day students from BVGS, Sutton Coldfield Grammar School and Plantsbrook School performed to their peers alongside Jess and shared in each others progress. Jess is truly a star in the saxophone world, her album ‘Rise’ shot to number one in the Official UK Classical Charts and last year performed at the BAFTAs to millions of viewers.

Mrs Charlotte Buxton, Deputy Head of Music Service and Head of Ensembles at Services For Education and a Peripatetic Teacher at BVGS was thrilled to have been able to co-ordinate the event for the children who participated. She said:

“Jess is an unbelievable, vibrant musician who excites and enthrals audiences wherever she performs. We are so delighted that she has agreed to give up her valuable time to meet and perform with Birmingham’s young saxophonists. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for them to learn from such a young and inspiring musician. We are thrilled that she is supporting Birmingham children. It is a rare privilege.”

For the students, the day was invaluable in helping them hone their musical skills and share their passion for saxophone playing with Jess and their peers. A day to remember for a long time to come.
The Show Must Go on: Virtual Music Lessons

Mr. Buxton, Director of Music, worked in collaboration with Services for Education Music to seek to provide virtual music lessons to those who would usually have a lesson onsite.

We are thrilled that BVGS can now deliver music lessons via video call. Please see the very first BVGS virtual music lesson between Alex in Year 9 and Mrs. Buxton.

Year 10 School Trip to the Globe

Before the COVID 19 situation in the UK began to escalate, 40 Year 10 students had the chance down to London to see Macbeth at The Globe on Wednesday 4th March. The performance was an engaging interpretation of the play, and it was great for the boys to be able to see it in the style that the viewers of 400 years ago would have: in an authentically rebuilt Globe theatre.

Now that all theatres have been ordered to close, the globe is still working to bring its productions to people all over the world. They offer a virtual tour of the theatre, selected performances online as well as podcasts. If you would like to make the most of these amazing resources, please visit their website: https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/
A Piece of BVGS History: School Closure
Kerry Osbourne (Clerk to the Governors 1977-2016)

Following the closure of the School because of the coronavirus pandemic, Martha Davis asked me to write an article on ‘the last time BVGS had to shut its gates’, suggesting that this was in 1940 because of the blitz during the Second World War. War against Germany was declared on 3rd September 1939, two days after Hitler’s troops invaded Poland. The first enemy air-raid took place on 6th September, and a massive evacuation scheme was put in train to remove children from inner city areas, and most schools in these areas closed. Despite its proximity to Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield was not a place from where children were evacuated; on the contrary, some children from Birmingham and Coventry were evacuated to Sutton Coldfield. The Governors at BVGS held an emergency meeting on 18th September 1939 to decide whether or not to reopen the School after the summer holiday. A letter was sent to parents to inform them that the School would remain open “for pupils whose parents wish to send them”, but with the caveat that “the responsibility for sending such children must exclusively rest with the parents”. The only protective security in the case of daylight air-raids was a system of open trenches around the cricket field into which all pupils could be transferred in five minutes, but plans were in hand “for an immediate beginning of a complete lay-out of dug-outs in the school Middle Field”. Around 435 boys turned up at the beginning of term, which was similar to the previous number, although some parents had evacuated their children when war broke out. The school-day started earlier so that boys could get home before the blackout operated.

2,241 people were killed and 6,692 injured in 77 air-raids on Birmingham. Sutton Coldfield fared much better, with the odd bomb falling in Walmley, Wylde Green, Maney, the Parade and the Park, but there was no fatality. On 1st November 1940 the School suffered slight damage from an enemy air-raid, when 42 window panes were broken and some roof-tiles were blown off the gymnasium. Lessons were frequently interrupted by air-raid warnings when the boys had to make their way to the underground shelters or dug-outs. Schoolwork was also affected by time taken off lessons for training in the School Cadet Corps, and by masters being called up for military service. The cricket coach was called up and not replaced and most sporting events and other out of school-hours activities were cancelled. In 1941 thirteen boys out of twenty-nine in Form 5MI failed their school certificate, but the Headmaster, Mr Sylvanus-Jones, explained that they “were giving a good deal of time to Home Guard duties”. Despite all the distractions the Headmaster reported to the Governors after twelve months of wartime conditions that “the School has been fortunate in being able to pursue almost a normal year’s work”.

The wartime motto “Keep Calm and Carry On” prevailed and the School did not close at any time during the Second World War; the coronavirus has achieved what the Nazi bombs signally failed to.

To answer the original question, I believe that the last time the School had to shut its gates was on 11th and 12th December 2017, when an exceptionally heavy fall of snow forced the closure of all schools in Birmingham.

The School was very near to closing down for good in 1840, when there was only one pupil in attendance -- but that is another story.
Hockey

The notable successes this term for hockey have been the school 1st team who were due to play Sandbach away in the National Cup in the last 16 schools in the country (two victories away from finals day). A fantastic achievement and a huge frustration for all concerned that this game could not be played. The 1st team have had a fantastic season and a huge thanks to Terry Lavery for his hard work this season with the team and well done to all concerned and I wish all the leavers the very best and thank them for their commitment over the last 7 years. They have been one of the most successful age groups the school has ever had, with the pinnacle of team success coming in year 8 when they reached the National finals. Well done to Ben Ellis (captain), Aiden Hill, Dan Porter, Luke O’Brien, Max Geldard, George Hounslow, Matthew Freer, Joe Hughes. Also to Eric Brown, Aiden Croghan who have been committed throughout in the second team.

The U’13’s narrowly missed out on the National finals at the Regional tournament earlier in March losing on penalty flicks to Bromsgrove in the semi-final. The boys won their group and were undefeated in 6 games and were very unlucky to go out. Lots of hard work needed to try and get their next year! Well done to the following boys: David Machila, Keilan Mistry, Iuean Plunkett, Oliver Ho, Harry Moors, Luke Smith, Liel Javed, Roan Kang, Oliver Brewin, Josh Robinson, Arjun Chatha.

An excellent season of hockey and thanks to all those involved and their commitment, numbers have been outstanding at training all season. Many thanks to the staff for all the team they give up and special thanks to Mr Sheffield who has done an excellent job.
Rugby

The Spring Term saw 15-a-side rugby played until half-term with 7’s the focus after half-term.

The 1st XV had two defeats to strong opposition in Old Swinford Hospital (7-19) and Northampton School for Boys (20-39) who boasted three England U18 internationals. They also had three victories against KE Camp Hill (34-0), KES Birmingham (50-7) and Shrewsbury School (59-12).

The 2nd XV continued their excellent season with a 41-0 victory over KE Camp Hill and a 52-0 victory over KES Birmingham. They also suffered their first defeat of the season, albeit in a close fought loss of 20-29 against Welbeck DSFC 1st XV. The U15s finished the season with improved performances in beating KE Five Ways 32-19 (their first victory against this opposition in four years!) and a close loss of 5-15 to a very strong Old Swinford side. Whilst the U15B’s beat Old Swinford 52-0 as well as the A-teams from Bishop Walsh (24-10) and KES Birmingham (10-7).

The U14s beat Old Swinford (17-12), Five Ways (59-0) and KE Camp Hill (34-19) before losing to KES Birmingham (19-24) and Northampton School for Boys (12-28).

The previously unbeaten U13s were challenged more this half-term, drawing 40-40 with Old Swinford and losing their first game of the season to Northampton School for Boys as well as comfortable victories over Five Ways, KE Camp Hill and KES Birmingham. They were also crowned the Greater Birmingham Champions at the start of March, conceding only one try throughout the entire competition!

The U12s showed the continued progress that they have been making throughout the year with good performances in close losses to Five Ways and Old Swinford before comfortable victories over KE Camp Hill and Charlton School. They also had their Greater Birmingham Tournament, finishing 3rd after losing a tightly fought game to Five Ways.

The Vesey Vultures were also in action several times this term. Before half-term they competed in a triangular tournament at Coventry RFC which saw them lose 5-10 to Oundle School and draw 35-35 to King Henry VIII Coventry. After half-term they beat KE Stratford before losing to Welbeck DSFC. Unfortunately their trip to the Rosslyn Park Sevens Tournament was cancelled amid the outbreak of the coronavirus.

This seasons sevens season was hugely affected by waterlogged pitches at the start of the term and the Coronavirus outbreak at the end. This meant that despite a lot of hard work in preparing for multiple tournaments at each age group, only the 1st VII actually got to take the field in a competitive manner. They performed well at the KE Stratford 7s, losing in the semi-final to Kings Worcester having won their group unbeaten.

Thank you to everyone that has contributed to school rugby this season. The total season figures show that 189 fixtures have been played across fifteen team. We won 110 of these fixtures, drew ten and lost 69 which results in a winning percentage of 58.2 for the season.
BVGS Careers Provision goes Virtual  Mrs. Ashby

Students now have access to Unifrog, which is a complete careers / higher education destinations platform – a one-stop-shop for students across KS3, KS4 and KS5.

Students can compare every university course, apprenticeship and FE course in the UK as well as universities in 30 other countries across the world.

Students can research career pathway options arising from all academic subjects, starting from GCSE through to tertiary education, as well as being able to access up-to-date labour market information.

Students can record and evidence their key activities & competencies and prepare their CVs and personal statements alongside the teacher reference.

Years 7 and 8 were due to register on Unifrog during the 2 weeks commencing 23rd March. As it was not possible to do this as planned at school, we have arranged for Unifrog to send registration emails to each student. If you have not received an email from Unifrog, please let Mrs Ashby know asap (n.ashby@bishopveseyes.bham.sch.uk). Please ensure that you have registered on Unifrog and completed the Personality Profile by Friday 3rd April.

VLE AND TWITTER

Whether or not you have a specific career goal, now is a great opportunity to be investing time in researching options for higher education and pathways into professions. There is a bank of information stored on the VLE (Careers, Documents) including resources about various professions, UCAS, Apprenticeships, Oxbridge and Super-Curricular activities.

Please follow BVGS Careers on Twitter (@BVGScareers) where events, seminars and a whole host of other online resources are publicised.

There is a wealth of information and resources available. For example:

Why not take a virtual tour of a university?
https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/2118851

Immerse yourself in some super-curricular activities
https://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/study-here/outreach/challenge
https://www.oxfordsparks.ox.ac.uk/

Participate in an online event hosted by a university or employer
https://www2.aston.ac.uk/study/academic-live-chats?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=SocialSignIn
http://www.careerschools.pwc.co.uk/Events/All/
https://www.ucas.com/events/exploring-university/learn-about-uni-taster-course (webinars, subject to availability)

Watch university lectures
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4d5ZtfQonW0A4VHeiY0gSkX1QErbaacE

Practice for an assessment day
https://elearn.pwc.co.uk/assessment-day/

Research a particular career, for example
https://www.bornetoengineer.com/engineering-resources
https://www.youtube.com/thisisengineering
Miss Field co-ordinated the annual BVGS Easter Egg Appeal. On April 1st a member of the Charity Team from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham collected the eggs, which are being distributed to staff across the following hospitals: Solihull, Heartlands, Good Hope and the QE. Mike, the member of the Charity Team said: ‘We will be making a lot of people cry, in a good way. All the hospital staff are so grateful for the donations and the acknowledgement of the difficult situation they are all in.’ Thank you to all staff and students who donated to the appeal.

Following the PPE crisis that many of our frontline NHS staff are battling with everyday, BVGS responded by donating all of the PPE equipment we had in our labs to Good Hope Hospital. We hope that it can help protect staff who put their health on the line to support those who are ill.

Mr. Davies, Development Director, has helped support the OV community by reaching out to them to see if they needed help with shopping. He is currently working out a system whereby willing volunteers can help the most vulnerable in the Vesey community.

Mrs. Bowen and Mrs. Gregory came into school over the Easter holidays and alongside two Year 7 students, used our DT printing facilities to print clips, to be used to secure facemasks for NHS workers. The clips are being sent to Heartlands hospital and we will be producing a further 100 for staff at Birmingham Children’s Hospital.
Forward from Paul Wallis, Chair of the OVA

Dear OVs- extraordinary times, how "normal" life has changed in only a few weeks. Desperately sad for anyone who has lost a family member or friend to this terrible virus. Very disruptive for all students. Like everyone else, we are at a stall. We were due to have an OVA AGM on 30th March 2020 but obviously that was cancelled and it seems unwise to set a new date. Upcoming events could be affected - the June OVA Sports Day, Alumni Music Concert and the Tea Party in July. We will keep you posted.

Stephen Roberts, Martha Davis and Dom Robson have continued to collate news from all Veseyans which is now published here. Well done to them. This edition can only be distributed electronically - pass that information on if you can so we can reach as many people as possible. As and when things return to normal, we may be able to repeat some articles in a postal copy. Frequently articles are posted on the Alumni Platform, please encourage any Old Veseyan you know to enrol on that, it is an excellent place to keep in touch. Thanks to Nick Hammond for posting reports about the passing of some very proud Old Veseyans recently - unconnected to Covid19.

I hope you all stay safe and well. We will keep you posted as best we can.

Contributions to Stephen Roberts (1970-77):
roberts384@btinternet.com

News

The Grand Old Lady of Sutton Coldfield will be marking her 500th birthday in 2027. So expect a few dips into our story in future issues. For example:

It was the habit of the Victorian headmaster Revd. Albert Smith to open the batting for the school in cricket matches. Against Oscott College in June 1870, he made no runs. This may be the reason why attempts to persuade Dominic Robson to revive this forgotten tradition have so far proved unsuccessful!

It was reported in March 1942 that ‘for the first time in the history of the school there was a lady governor (Lady Bennett) … and a woman master.’

An advertisement for a cook at the school in September 1956 offered an annual salary of £320 rising by annual increments to £360, with additional increments for improved qualifications.

John Harvey (Headmaster 1975-88) tells us that he has been living in Monmouth for twenty years. After he left BVGS John did some occasional supply work in mathematics and physics for schools in Staffordshire. This continued until the early 1990s, though he continued to work as an inspector for various exam boards for about another ten years. Those who remember John’s famous caravan will be glad to know that he kept it on the road during these years! John and his wife Shirley worked as volunteers for ten years at the Roundhouse, an eighteenth century building situated on a hill overlooking Monmouth called the Kymin and owned by the National Trust. John currently sings in the Monmouth Male Voice Choir, which has appeared twice at the Royal Albert Hall and raises funds for local charitable causes. John has travelled a lot over the last thirty years, including a visit to the USA where he gave a series of lectures on British education. He and Shirley also visited Australia in 1995 and managed to attend the AGM of the Australian branch of the OVA in Melbourne. Both John and Shirley have fond memories of living in the Head’s house.

The Head’s house is currently empty. Your editor was recently given a guided tour by Dominic Robson. Built in the early eighteenth century, it is a beautiful building from the outside and inside truly fascinating.
Ken Porter (1941-9) tells us that he has written his autobiography. He became an academic chemical engineer & was invited to many countries. There is a lot of interesting information in the autobiography about what it was like to be a pupil at BVGS during the Second World War. Ken did not care for Latin and was once caught by a master drawing a Spitfire; another informed him that he had ‘a butterfly brain’ because in class he kept thinking about other matters. ‘Boss’ Jones & Archy Hollis both loom large in Ken’s story. If you’d like to know more about Ken’s autobiography, you are welcome to contact him: keporter@talktalk.net

Stephen Roberts has taken on the role of local history correspondent for the Sutton Coldfield Observer. His contributions will be appearing fortnightly. Stephen’s most recent book tells the story of the connection between Sutton Coldfield and the laying of the Atlantic cables of 1865 & 1866. *Webster & Horsfall & the Atlantic Cable* (Birmingham Biographies, 2020) is available from Amazon, priced £4.50.

**Remembering a Fine Schoolmaster**

Bill Evershed (1970-77) recalls David Cooper, a well-liked head of sixth form …

I’ve been asked to write about a memorable teacher and thought immediately of David Cooper, who started as head of sixth form in September 1976 – a job which I recollect he shared with Don Hardy during an extended handover period. At my age even my hindsight is no longer 20:20 & so my memories are eked out with the help of my diaries of the time. David Cooper was head of sixth form during my second A-level year. He won the respect of all by his air of quiet authority. I never heard him shout – or need to. We all liked him and wanted to win his approval. He brought changes to the sixth form assembly, introducing a slot where, as he put it, we would entertain each other – in poetry, drama, song and readings. Rarely smiling, he had an occasional spasm about his lips which persuaded you that he found a certain situation amusing. I think part of his secret was that he liked us – which at the time would have seemed to us nothing but good judgement. With the passing years, I can see that liking us as we were was rather more of a heroic act than we could know.

I clearly recall his role in the events of our last day before A-levels. The Head Mr Harvey had given dire but vague warnings about “acts of vandalism” which would – we gathered – be stamped on. The school officers, however – with some precedent – did not believe this extended to ducking each other in the swimming pool, and it came to pass. Having considered everything, Mr Cooper decided to let the officers off. At a final speech, he said that in spite of this “regrettable misunderstanding”, he still felt we were one of the best sixth forms he’d met. Dealing with events in this balanced, principled way won him enormous respect, and this was of a piece with his actions generally.

Referring to my diaries from 1976 and 1977, I was quite shocked to discover that I hadn’t been very impressed at first and felt that Don Hardy was a better head of sixth form. In fact for most of the year my only contact was in connection with form-filling for university applications. The diaries bring back the assemblies: David Cooper himself and Martin Cambray-Deakin giving a dramatized recital of ‘Naming of Parts’; Paul Kerriage’s angsty poems; ‘The Pied Piper’ with Jim Noone’s hilarious turn as the surviving rate to Martin Moore’s piper. All this showed the invisible hand of Cooper. Really, it was the slightly surreal, and never adequately explained fourteen days in which I and a few others came back to school between A-levels and the end of term that I got to know David (as I would never have called him) better, and which laid down the lasting impression I had of him – reasonable, sensible, calm. With little for me to do once I’d re-arranged every stockroom going, I was glad to go to Sutton to collect a prescription for him and chase up leavers’ forms on his behalf. It felt good to be trusted and treated like an adult.

So reality is not as I remember it, that I took to him instantly. More accurately, he grew on me, so that by the end of the year, I couldn’t imagine school without him.

As a coda to this, after I left BVGS, I was awarded a prize (because I was the only qualifying candidate). I bought George Herbert’s *Works* and this was presented at the December 1977 Speech Day. Afterwards David Cooper sought me out and congratulated me on my choice of book – that felt like winning it ‘with bar’.
A Chat with Jeremy Finwick

Jerry Fenwick taught Chemistry at BVGS from 1975 until 1978. He also found himself teaching a course on the environment for A Level General Studies. Your editor owes everything he knows about the Clean Air Act 1955 to Mr Fenwick …

1. In what ways was BVGS the same and in what ways was it different to your own education at Leeds Boys’ Grammar School and your own lengthy teaching career at Haybridge High School in Hagley?

LBGS was very similar to BVGS in terms of structure, discipline and subjects offered e.g. we did Latin, we played rugby and cricket and had a competitive house system. Some teachers were strict, but others we ragged mercilessly (much to my shame). There were detentions and physical punishments. Haybridge had the benefit of having girls, which tended to moderate the behaviour of the boys. It was not a typical comp and, in some ways, had aspirations of being a grammar school.

2. Describe the Chemistry Department you joined.

Head of Chemistry was Colin Topliss, who was an excellent teacher and a mentor to me. Other included Mike Dann, who was eccentric but a really nice and helpful man. Amongst the younger teachers was Gerald Imeson and Mike Downwood.

3. What do you remember of the work rate and humour of the boys?

The boys generally worked hard, although I remember that homework was not a priority for some. Having fun at the teacher’s expense was a popular sport for many, but, once I got to know the rules and how not to take myself too seriously, I really enjoyed the teaching.

4. Which members of staff did you call for a night out?

The ones of my age … Mike Sadler (unfortunately now in a care home), Tim Maw (whom I still see regularly), Ian Bates, Crispin Keith and quite a few others.

5. What years was your son David at BVGS? What is he doing now?

David entered BVGS in 1999 and stayed to do A Levels. He is now a Loss Prevention Manager at Sainsbury's and is married with three children.

Vesey House and Gold House Fell Walking Trips

Oliver Pearson (1991-97) tells us how he learned to love fell-walking at BVGS …

My first experience of a school minibus trip up the A5 was in October 1991. Although I was a member of White House, a friend of mine, Jamie Park, mentioned in a queue outside a classroom one day that Gold House were organising a fell-walking trip to Vesey House. I had no idea, as a fresh Year 8 pupil who had only been at the school a very short time, about either fell-walking or indeed Vesey House. I immediately took an application form home and told my parents of my plans for the October half-term. Amazingly, my parents gave me permission, sending me back to school with the form completed and a cheque for payment. From that first trip, I was hooked.

There was the taste of adventure and being away from home with a bunch of boys in the same year. I made some great friends on these trips and managed to participate in every Gold House fell-walking trip from Year 8 up to the LVI. Many teachers escorted the trips over the years, but it was NTM & Mr Jones who always led the groups. The walking in the Welsh mountains was fantastic, with amazing views and an abundance of fresh air and the occasional snow-covered walk.
Following a good long day of walking, we always had a good appetite for warm food in the evenings back at Vesey House. Betws-y-Coed then provided a suitable venue for us to spend our pocket money in the evenings: in the lower years at school Judges was a good source of sweets and small gifts and in the upper years the Wellington Hotel provided us with a location for a sneaky pint. I will always remember the trips to Vesey House with great affection. I gained a life-long love of hill-walking, and have returned to Betws-y-Coed on a number of occasions since leaving school with friends and family, using the village as a base for spending time in Snowdonia. Whilst I understand that Vesey House was sold some years ago, I am pleased to hear that BVGS pupils still return to the area for outdoor pursuits and to support subjects such as History and Geography. I can’t imagine the total number of boys who would have participated in trips to Vesey House over the years, but I am sure that each of them will have lifelong memories of those trips.

Remembering
Charles Henry ‘Harry’ Leigh-Dugmore (1930-7)

We are sorry to record the death of Charles Henry ‘Harry’ Leigh-Dugmore (1930-7) on 8 March 2020. His daughter Felicity Brimblecombe writes:

Born on 9 April 1920, Harry Leigh nearly reached 100 and was probably one the oldest survivors of the Dunkirk evacuation – about which he wrote in the Old Veseyan News in 2011. At BVGS he took part in several Gilbert and Sullivan productions, such as playing Katisha in the Mikado in 1933.

Harry, and his younger brother David, are both in the rugby first team photograph for 1936-7 (back row sixth and third from the left respectively). A problem at home almost resulted in him leaving school early, but his headmaster refused to let him leave the sixth form until he had matriculated. That headmaster ‘Boss’ Jones did even more and lined up an interview for Harry at Dunlop.

Harry’s career at Dunlop was initially in rubber testing, where he met his future wife. After army service, he spent many years completing a degree in mathematics via a correspondence course in his spare time. Meanwhile pioneering work investigating rubber was undertaken using electron microscopy. Harry wrote one of the earliest books on the use of this new research instrument and published numerous papers in scientific journals. Still at Dunlop his employment changed direction when he became the Personnel Manager for the Research Centre. When retirement arrived he had more time to spend on his many hobbies, which included golf – he embraced any new IT, using an early computer to write the history of Walmley Golf Club and started using an iPad in his nineties. Having moved to Sutton Coldfield when he was nine months old, Harry lived there until he was 95, apart from his army service. BVGS played a continuous part in his life – he gained an OV as a son-in-law, wrote articles for the Old Veseyan News and attended the Shaggy Dogs’ Tea Parties. He is survived by two children, five granddaughters and seven great grandchildren – plus a great niece who is about to marry yet another OV!
The BVGS community really has sprung into action to support its members, and the wider community, during these unprecedented times. While many of these testimonies are taken of a life before COVID19, I wanted to draw them all together in this article to remind us all that wherever we are in the world, whatever is going on, we are sure to find an OV! All of these stories can be found in full on the Alumni Network.

MICHAEL BOYLAND (2001-2009)
I have been living in Bangkok, Thailand, since 2014. I work as a researcher for an international environmental research institute. My work is primarily on understanding the causes of climate change and disasters - not just the hazards but the social and political factors that cause people to be vulnerable, such as poverty, unsustainable natural resource use, and unplanned urbanisation. I am incredibly lucky that my work takes me around Asia to meet with governments, disaster-affected people and local organisations working to reduce risks and build resilience to climate change and disasters. My journey to get here started in geography classrooms at BVGS, which led to Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees before my life in Asia began. Living in Bangkok is not for everyone but after five years here I proudly call it home.

ARRAN VERMA (2009-2017)
I am currently living in Barcelona, as part of my year abroad which is part of my course back home. I have been in Barcelona since September 2019, studying Spanish Language and Economics modules at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. I felt fortunate in the fact that this would be one the last year that the Erasmus+ programme would be running for British students, so it was something worth making the most of. Since being here, I have embraced the Spanish/Catalan culture, made new friends from all over the world and learnt skills that will help me for the future. Most importantly, my ability to speak the language has improved vastly, something I believe important in the globalised world we live in today. Besides that, being in Barcelona via the Erasmus+ programme has allowed me to create amazing memories in one of the best cities in the world.

ROB HILL (1971-1978)
Having worked on construction mega-projects in Canada, Europe, the Middle East, South East Asia and China, I decided to start a consultancy business. My mission, my passion, is to reduce conflict and disputes within the construction industry. To that end, rhConsult Limited offers a niche service which identifies off-market and unfair terms and conditions in construction contracts and works to remove or reduce these potentially business-destroying risks.

Why Hong Kong? Despite recent protests, life carries on. There’s a palpable buzz in the city, day and night. It has a beautiful, incomparable skyline. East meets West, not least in HK’s cuisine where dim sum, hot pot and fast food coexist with haute cuisine. Parts of Kowloon could be mistaken for China; parts of Hong Kong island present the cleanest, most modern city in the world. I can walk from my house to three beautiful beaches. Or follow tree-lined hiking trails in the other direction. 80% of Hong Kong is green; not many people know that!

It’s a unique blend of dreams and opportunity, skyscrapers and technology, beautiful nature, diversity and culture. It draws you in and seduces you, until you want nowhere else.

BOB LOWNDES (1951-1959)
After completing my PhD doctoral research at Queen Mary College, University of London, and at the Cavendish Laboratory, University of Cambridge, I accepted an offer in 1967 of a 2-year postdoctoral fellowship at M.I.T. The opportunity to work at M.I.T., generally ranked as one of the top universities in the world, and to live in Boston was an opportunity not to be missed.

In my early days at NU I was focused on teaching and research. At some point I was lured into academic administration and held positions as Head of the Physics Department, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Interim Provost, and Vice Provost for Global Relations.

Bishop Vesey Grammar School was an amazing and excellent preparer for my life both in providing a superb and broad academic foundation, and also in providing an environment to encourage initiative, competitiveness, and entrepreneurial skills.
Wishing you a Happy and Healthy Easter from all at BVGS

Dominic Robson, Headteacher.