

# The Gryphon



A magazine made by the students, for the students...



## Beechen Cliff



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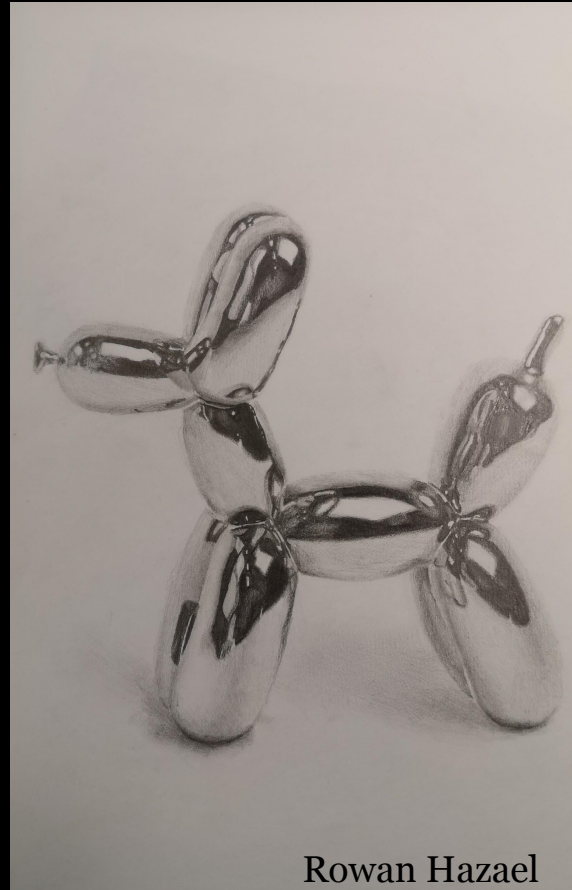
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# An Interview With Mr Markall

Toby Hawkins



**As most of** you will by now know, Mr Davies is retiring from his role as Headmaster of Beechen Cliff after 16 years at the end of this academic year.

We at the Gryphon would like to take this opportunity to thank him for everything he has done for the school during our time here and we wish him all the best for the future. We'd also like to thank him for agreeing to do an interview with us for next term's edition of the Gryphon, which we hope will make for a very enjoyable read!

Following the announcement of Mr Davies' retirement, the process began to choose his successor, a process which I am grateful to have been a part of. This process culminated in the appointment of Mr Markall as the next Headteacher of Beechen Cliff School.

Mr Markall, who has been a member of staff and a member of the Senior Leadership Team

for a number of years, decided to apply for the role 'to have a bigger significant impact on the education and opportunities for students across the school and the city'. He also cited his 'passion for the school and the students' of Beechen Cliff as a motivating factor in his application.

One of Mr Markall's main focuses for the direction in which he plans to take the school is 'pushing the culture of equalities very strongly', which he suggested would be building on the progress the school has made over the past few years. An example of this is that, from September, there will be a transition from the title of Headmaster to Headteacher, part of his plan to modernise the school. He was also very clear that there are 'significant strengths' within Beechen Cliff, such as our teaching and learning results and our pastoral support for students, yet was keen to emphasise his firm

# An Interview With Mr Markall

belief that a school should 'never rest on its laurels'.

Post Covid, Mr Markall also made clear his determination to ensure there will be a strong programme of extra-curricular opportunities, citing his own experiences of how much of a difference they can make for students in later life. He said his vision was for students to feel that they can 'succeed in whatever they want to' and 'achieve their aspirations'.

Mr Markall also spoke candidly about how he had no illusions about the challenges he may encounter in enacting his vision but that 'it was a challenge I'm really looking forward to!'. I asked Mr Markall about his plans for student engagement and representation during the interview process and he was keen to build on his response by announcing his intentions to run a series of forums for a group of students from every year in order for him to personally understand their views on what are the strengths of the school and what they would like to see change or improve. Personally, I thought this was a great idea and opportunity for students, and Mr Markall doubled down on this commitment by saying 'I'm really open to student ideas, I'm keen to learn what they feel could improve their experience and it's a great opportunity for me to get to know as many students as I possibly can'. He also said that the feedback from students would 'feed directly into our school improvement plan'.

When asked about the direction of Beechen Cliff's relationship with the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership, Mr Markall said it was a 'great opportunity to improve education and to

give additional opportunities beyond the classroom'. He suggested that this could involve shared events, and increasing collaborations between individual schools.

The final thing I asked Mr Markall was 'what is your favourite thing about Beechen Cliff?' to which he immediately replied 'the people'. He went on to say that 'this is a really really special community, we have a fantastic team of staff, a wonderful group of students and really supportive parents as well'. He finished the interview by saying 'I am really determined to drive this school forward for everybody's benefit'.

We wish Mr Markall the very best of luck.

# A Love Letter to a Belarusian DarkWave Band

George Nunn

About a year ago, I discovered a band called Молчат Дома (*Molchat Doma*). Their second studio album *Этажы* (*Floors*) was recommended to me by a friend, just before the start of the first lockdown. I was gripped and consoled by it during the sorrow filled period following the tragic cancellation of my GCSEs. While at first I was simply entertained by the novelty of what seemed to me as a sort of Soviet *New Order*, I soon realised that it was much more than just that, and I fell in love with it. However I couldn't quite define what *it* was. The prominent use of synthesisers, drum machines and electric riffs bring to mind the sounds of the New Wave and Post Punk scenes of the 70s and 80s, hence my likening it to *New Order*. This was different though, it had a deeply melancholy vibe that starkly contrasted the almost synth-pop sounds in a weird and beautiful manner. I couldn't put a name to this genre, until about a month ago when my dad came to me with this amazing new band he'd discovered through my brother. He described *Molchat Doma* as *Dark Wave*. Molchat Doma was formed in Minsk, Belarus in 2017. Belarusian is a dying language, Belarus being an ex-Soviet state, so the vocalist, Egor Shkutko, sings in Russian. The band consists of two other members: Roman Komogortsev (guitar, drum machine & synthesiser) and Pavel Kozlov (bass guitar & synthesiser). The name Молчат Дома roughly translates to *Houses Are Silent* in English, a name which very well captures the bands essence. Molchat Doma have a captivating energy to them, while at the same time always having deeply sorrowful undertones. The band has no drummer and



instead uses a drum machine to create 80s-style beats. They've described their sound as "new wave, post-punk and the darker end of synth-pop". Their sound has also been likened by many to Joy Division and The Cure, and Shkutko's vocal style and on-stage presence is similar to that of Joy Division singer Ian Curtis. His voice is eerie and spectral, often clouded in reverb.

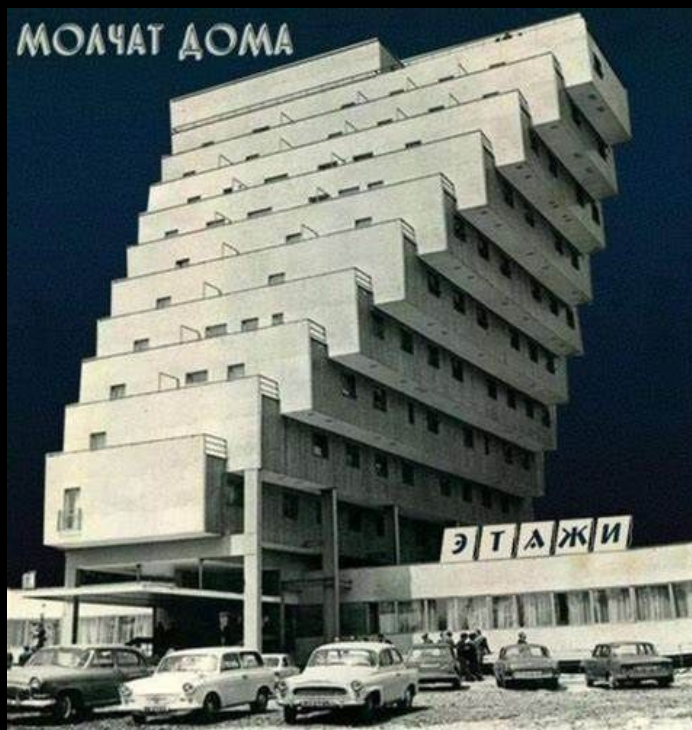
For their non-Russian speaking listeners, I believe the fact that we can't understand the lyrics adds to the immersion and the mood of their music, it creates that sort of post-Soviet era dystopian atmosphere. However, it can also take away from the actual tone of the song. In a similar manner again to *Joy Division*, *Molchat Doma* blends danceable melodies and beats with sad and introspective lyrics. Their lyrics generally focus on loneliness,

# A Love Letter to a Belarusian DarkWave Band

and even themes of depression and suicide. One track on their 2018 album, *Sudno (Vessel)*, follows a poet contemplating ending his life. This is the band's most popular song, partly thanks to its period of mass popularity on TikTok. In 2020, within a few months, the tune had been used in over 150,000 videos, the majority of TikTok users being unaware of the song's despondent subject matter. *Molchat Doma* now has over 2 million monthly listeners on Spotify, many of them in the US. However, at home in Belarus, the band is revered for different reasons. Mass protests and brutal police crackdowns have plagued the streets of Minsk since August 2020, when President Aleksandr Lukashenko, who has been called Europe's last dictator, claimed an implausible election victory. Even though the band has gone

on record saying that they make no conscious effort to address current affairs in their lyrics, due to the very real danger of censorship and loss of freedom, the band has resonated deeply with the young Belarusian population. Their 2020 album *Monument* was released before the disputed election result and its songs mostly focus on failed relationships, but naturally their music reflects the situations in which they live. They are idolised by young people, living in a country still trying to break free from the shackles of its communist past, whose hope that things in their country will eventually get better is reflected in the music of *Molchat Doma*. Fans have exclaimed "If Belarus were music, it would sound like *Molchat Doma*" and "These guys what we live in right now".

*Molchat Doma* has inadvertently inspired a generation of people, living under hard conditions and an unjust regime, and gone viral on TikTok. An unlikely and unexpected outcome, but not one the band is unhappy about. With the pandemic stopping all live music, Shkutko has stated that "This thing [TikTok] has kept us afloat when we were worried that we would wither away". My view of the band has evolved so much and I have learned a lot since I first came across them. They are more than just "The Soviet's answer to Joy Division". While they are probably the most prevalent Eastern European band in the genre at the moment, there are countless others. So, I implore any fans of new wave music to look into the Darkwave scene. They are euphoric, heartbreaking, and maybe of protest.



# Track Records - Mr Tobin

George Nunn

**As a member** of the Gryphon team, it's my duty to ask the important questions and give the people what they want to know. So, in a piece of stand-out journalism, I've plagiarised the BBC's Desert Island Discs and applied it to our very own teachers here at Beechen Cliff. This issue, I interviewed our Head of English, Mrs O'Higgins, and our Head of History, Mr Tobin, and delved into their Track Records. Tracks range from Irish folk songs to Pink Floyd and Bowie.

**George** - An artist or song you're obsessed with at the moment.

**Mr Tobin - Eric Satie**

"I'm listening to him over and over again, I can't leave him alone, in particular his Gnossiennes and his Gymnopédies. I just love the piano."

**G** - One artist or song you discovered as a child or student that is still just as good today.

**T - Johannes Brahms / Gustav Mahler**

"I really enjoy *big* orchestral sound, so these are the two artists I keep on revisiting. Especially Mahler's 5th Symphony, the drama and the power is just spectacular."

**G** - The first song that you learnt all the words to.

**T - "Money" - Pink Floyd**

"I was thinking about the first music that I really took seriously, we're not talking humpty dumpty here are we. The first one that I really knew absolutely every little thing about was Money by Pink Floyd."

**G** - If you could only dance to one song for the rest of time, what song would it be?

**T - "Stayin' Alive" - Bee Gees**

"Do your generation listen to that sort of thing?"

**G** - One song that makes you cry.

**T - Henryk Górecki's 3rd Symphony**

"He's a Polish composer, the symphony is subtitled "A Symphony of Sorrowful Songs". It's just one female voice and it's sort of a plaintive story of what the Second World War did to Poland, and to me it's always been a Holocaust story."



**G-** The best band/artist you've ever seen live.

**T - Blondie / U2 / Spottiswoode & His Enemies**

"The first is Blondie in 1978, so I was about 15, at Dingwalls in London. It was a room not much bigger than the common room, it was absolutely fantastic. Another just extraordinary experience was U2 at Wembley in the early 90s. I remember parking the car about a mile away and as the warm up band was doing their stuff and you could feel it in the pavement, so that was unbelievable. The last one is me being sappy about my old friend John. We went to school together and I went to see him and his band Spottiswoode and His Enemies in New York in the Rainbow Rooms. It was quite something."



# Track Records - Mrs O'Higgins

George - An artist or song you're obsessed with at the moment.

**Mrs O'Higgins - "Would That I" - Hozier / "The Happy Song" - Imogen Heap**

"This is the more adult one, I just like the beat of it, it has a nice feel and atmosphere. If we're talking about what I'm listening to the most, it would be "The Happy Song" by Imogen Heap because my baby is obsessed with it."

G - One artist or song you discovered as a child or student that is still just as good today.

**O - "3rd Planet" - Modest Mouse**

"I've liked Modest Mouse since I was about 14, so quite a long time, and I've seen them live too. I remember he once threw a hissy fit on stage and left after like 3 songs, it was at a festival in Florida. Now he has an album about how much he hates Florida, I'm not sure if it's related or not, but yeah, 3rd planet is very clever, the sound of it is still very cool.

G - One (or the first song) that you learnt all the words to.

**O - "MMMBop" - Hanson / "The Skye Boat Song"**

"Very 90s, three long haired boys, the middle one looked very girly. I think my husband and I both had a crush on him. Anyway, very catchy, not particularly musical. I think I was probably about 7 or 8 when that came out. More recently though, "The Skye Boat Song" which is a Scottish classic song about Bonnie Prince Charlie being rescued which I sing to my little boy."

G - If you could only dance to one song for the rest of time, what song would it be?

**O - "(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher" - Jackie Wilson**

"Classic"

G - One song that makes you cry.

**O - "Couldn't Love You More" - John Martyn**

"This one was quite hard. It's not actually as emotional as it sounds which I think is why I like it. It could almost be about a friend or a lover really, and it's just this concept that you love this person so much that they could go to any extremity and you couldn't love them any more. I remember sitting with my (now) husband up on Richmond Hill in London and mentioning that I'd like to have that song at our wedding, and it turns out it had been a favourite of his when he was young as well. We did end up playing it at our wedding."

G - The best band/artist you've ever seen live.

**O - Animal Collective / The National / Sigur Rós**

"[Animal Collective] Just makes you excited to feel alive, just an amazing atmosphere. The National is sort of the opposite, you just feel profoundly emotional. And then Sigur Rós because it was really cool. They're Icelandic and they sing in Icelandic, it's very 'hippy-dippy' weird."

G - If you were to get a lyric from a song tattooed on your body, what lyric and why?

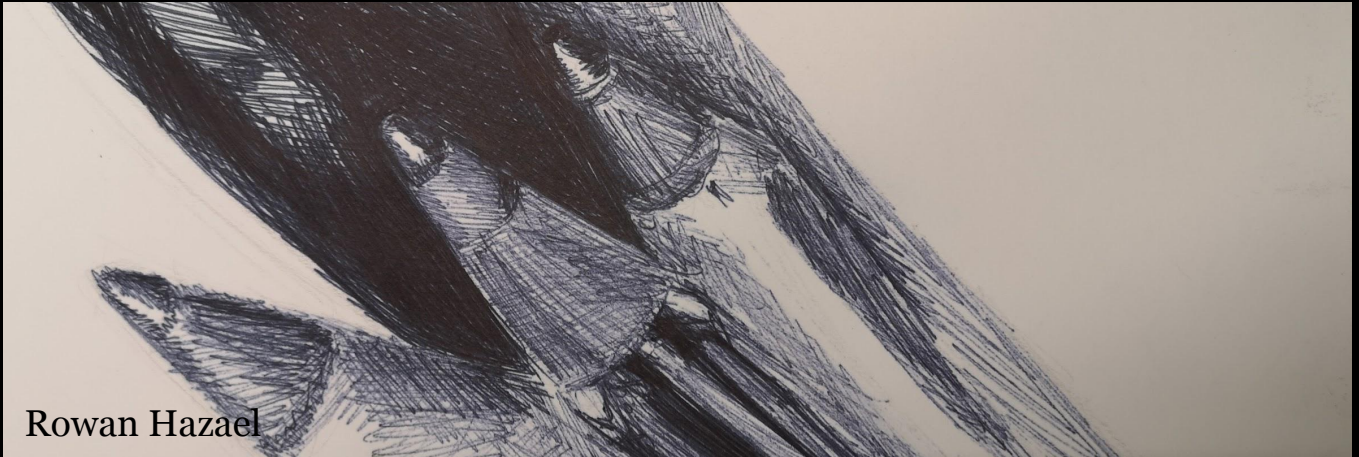
**O - "Mo Ghille Mear"**

"I've done a lot of thinking about it. One that would actually mean something. I don't think I'd actually want it on my arm, but there's an Irish song called Mo Ghille Mear that my dad used to sing to me and I now sing to my son.

Actually, again it's about Bonnie Prince Charlie and my son is called Charlie so it has that link as well. I don't think they're partially attractive Irish words though, it means My Gallant Hero. I also thought of the Joanna Newsom lyric 'I wasn't born of a whistle or milked from a thistle at twilight, No I was all horns and thorns sprung out fully formed, knock-kneed and upright', but it seems a bit overly-intellectual."

# Why we should be Buzzing about this

Theo McGill



Rowan Hazael

**Although many of us** are used to swatting bees, or in some cases running away from them, it is difficult to imagine a life without them, as it is to envisage one without trees. These hard-working, winged invertebrates have been around for millions of years, pollinating our plants, producing honey and supporting life on this planet as we know it. However, a world without bees is sadly becoming more of a possibility, as these important insects are in severe decline. If bees were to become extinct, the planet could be in serious trouble, as these creatures are such an integral part of most ecosystems. Why are bees so important? Well, whilst for many they are no more than a nuisance, bees are actually so much more than this and have an important part to play in maintaining our planet. Just as trees and woods are essential to filter our air, bees are vital to both pollinate the food we need to survive and many of the trees and flowers that provide habitats for wildlife. Furthermore, according to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, approximately 80% of all flowering plants are specialised for pollination by animals, mostly insects (which includes bees). Pollination is crucial because many of our vegetables, fruits and the crops that feed our livestock, rely on it to be fertilised, so, without it, we could go hungry. Vegetables such as broccoli, asparagus and cucumber rely on the pollination of bees, as do apricots, strawberries, apples, tomatoes and almonds. Whilst there are other methods of

pollination, including by the wind, birds, bats and other insects, wild bees are among the most important pollinators because they are capable of pollinating on a much bigger scale. It has been estimated that it would cost farmers in the UK an incredible £1.8 billion per year to manually pollinate their crops, which just further emphasises the importance of bees. In order to be able to feed the world's growing population, we need ever more food, which must be diverse, balanced and of good quality to ensure the progress and well-being of humankind. Bees are renowned for their role in providing high-quality food and other products, but the greatest contribution of bees and other pollinators is the pollination of nearly three quarters of the plants, which produce 90% of the world's food. According to the estimates of the international study conducted in 2016 by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the annual global production of food that depends directly on pollination was worth between \$235 and \$577 billion. Furthermore, agricultural plants that require pollination are an important source of jobs and income for farmers, especially small farmers and family-owned farms in developing countries.

So why are Bees disappearing? Bees are in decline on a global scale as they face many threats from habitat loss to the use of toxic pesticides. Many of the threats to bees share parallels with the threats to trees and woodland, so saving bees goes hand-in-hand with saving trees. If these threats are not brought under control, we could be looking at a future

# Why we should be Buzzing about this

without bees. An increase in urban developments and invasive farming methods has meant that many of the areas bees once called home no longer exist. These developments are as much as a threat to bees as they are to trees and woodland. In the wild, several species of bees nest in hollow trees, so as more trees are destroyed so are the homes these bees live in. Wildflower meadows and other areas abundant in flowering plants are also in serious decline, meaning that bees lose an important food resource.

Moreover, one of the main threats to our bees is the use of toxic pesticides. Whilst pesticides are designed to kill pests, due to their intense toxicity, they are having an adverse effect on other insects too, including bees. Neonicotinoids in particular cause bees a great deal of harm, as when they are sprayed onto plants they are absorbed. So, when a bee comes to pollinate said plant, it will ingest this pesticide which can seriously damage the bee's central nervous system.

Climate change and the extreme weather are also often a contributing factor in the decline of bees. It disrupts bee nesting behaviour and alters the normal seasonal timings, meaning flowers may bloom earlier or later than expected. Whilst the planting of more trees is helping to mitigate some of the effects of climate change, it is still a serious issue that could prove deadly for many of our bees.

Furthermore, due to this, parasites and diseases are becoming another big threat to bees. The varroa mite is a parasitic mite which clings to the back of the honeybee, passing diseases and viruses to it and gradually draining its strength.

Moreover, non-native species can pose another threat to bees. Some species in particular can cause havoc for native species, for instance the Asian hornet eats honeybees and so poses a huge threat. Finally, bees are vital for the preservation of ecological balance and biodiversity in nature. They provide one of the most recognisable ecosystem services, pollination, which is what makes food production possible. By doing so, they protect and maintain ecosystems, as well as animal and plant species and contribute to genetic and biotic

diversity. Bees also act as indicators of the state of the environment. Their presence, absence or quantity tells us when something is happening with the environment

and that appropriate action is needed. By observing the development and health of bees, it is possible to ascertain changes in the environment and implement the necessary precautionary measures in time.

**What can we do to help?** Luckily, it is not too late to help save the bees from extinction. There are lots of things you can do to help protect these important creatures, most of which can be done from your own garden. Like most invertebrates, bees need shelter to nest and hibernate in. You can create your own shelter or buy a ready-made bee hotel. Pesticides are one of the key threats to bees, and so one way to help bees is to stop using them in your own garden. Some pests provide food for crucial pollinators, so leaving them to be controlled naturally is the best choice if you want to help save bees. When a tree blooms, it provides hundreds, if not thousands, of blossoms to feed from. Trees are not only a great food source for bees, but also an essential habitat. Tree leaves and resin provide nesting material for bees, while natural wood cavities make excellent shelters. With deforestation and development on the rise, you can help bolster bee habitats by caring for trees and joining tree-planting parties in your area. One of the largest threats to bees is a lack of safe habitats where they can build homes and find a variety of nutritious food sources. By planting a bee garden, you can create a habitat corridor with plants that are rich in pollen and nectar. You don't need a lot of space to grow bee-friendly plants, as bee gardens can be established in window boxes, flowerpots, and planters. You can also get involved with local organizations and governments to find opportunities to enrich public and shared spaces.

So whether it is getting more involved in your local community or simply making a bee shelter in your own garden, we can all get involved in helping to save the bees. So ... **let's get buzzing!**

# Review of Wes Anderson's Fantastic Mr Fox

Madeline Bennett

**Wes Anderson is a genius.**

Fantastic Mr Fox is a piece of art. We all know the cinematography of Anderson, as well as the humour and creativity in his narrative style; Fantastic Mr Fox is the perfect example of what he is capable of creating. Each shot is aesthetically pleasing, as well as an imbecile work of animation. Throughout it, you may forget it is animated due to the pure beauty and connection to the storyline.

Ever since I was young, I loved Roald Dahl's story, and since I was slightly older I watched the film on repeat. There was one scene that stuck out to me and still does to this day. This is the scene of the wolf sat upon a mountain, Mr Fox and his accomplices drive by and stop before it. The music 'Canis Lupus' by Alexandre Desplat, as well as the shot itself, is truly magnificent and a delight to watch. I have read a couple reviews that state this scene is 'pointless' and 'has no addition to the plot', however I argue it is the opposite. It is a moment of the film that pauses the action and intensity of the previous and upcoming scenes and looks at the characters for what they are: animals. After



watching this film and scene time after time, I have fallen in love with what I think it means and represents. The wolf is not wearing any clothes or standing upright, unlike any other animals in the film, even a sewer rat. Wearing clothes feels almost like a modern discovery for the animals of the film, because Mr Fox isn't surprised that the wolf is 'naked'. Instead, his presence makes them initially uncomfortable. His fear of wolves suggests

that wolves are not like the rest of the animal world, as they do not interact with other animals in the way the other characters of the film do. I believe that this whole idea, as well as this interaction, is truly significant, as it reminds Mr Fox, as well as the audience, that they are *still animals*; an idea that is repeated by Mr Fox but only ever in times of aggression - it's used as an excuse whenever he messes up. This moment represents a moment of peace and truce between the two worlds of wild and modern. Mr Fox was so scared of the metaphorical 'wild' and only ever used the word in a negative way. After seeing the wolf, he fails to communicate with it, yelling at him in Latin, English and Spanish until

# Review of Wes Anderson's Fantastic Mr Fox



he comes to the conclusion that he does not understand. Upon this realisation, he sees that he himself is not as wild as he thought and he feels almost upset upon this realisation.

The arm raised in the air is the only interaction they communicate effectively, which highlights how they are still connected. I feel like this may be a moment we can empathise with as we are reminded of the connection we still have with animals and nature. This is an important theme throughout the film, as the audience make their own judgement on whether Boggis, Bunce and Bean are right. Even the set shows the difference between the wild and the modern animal

kingdom, where the wolf is snowy and the colour palette is plainly white, black and blue. This heavily contrasts the yellow, orange, warm colours shown in the bottom half of the screen, as well as in the entire film as a whole. The group Mr Fox is with are completely mesmerised by this creature and the scene, as they too are reminded of the beauty and mystique of the wild. In two minutes, Anderson has created a beautiful interaction and shown the audience exactly what the film represents and means.

Overall I believe that Anderson's adaptation was beautiful and an incredible adaptation of Mr Dahl's story, achieving the humour and drama the book has to offer in a way that can be enjoyed by people of any age.

# Horoscopes!

Mystic Bebe Waddell and Mystic Katie Osmond

## **Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)**

Emphasis is on your private emotional life this week, with this month entering a lunar eclipse in your solar twelfth house. The lunation encourages you to lie low, rest and recharge. Avoid burning yourself out and use this time as a reflection period.

## **Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)**

Focus on your family and domestic affairs. With the new moon arriving on the eleventh, an opening to improve this area will occur for you. Consider how to take steps now to bring more abundance your way.

## **Pisces (February 19 – March 20)**

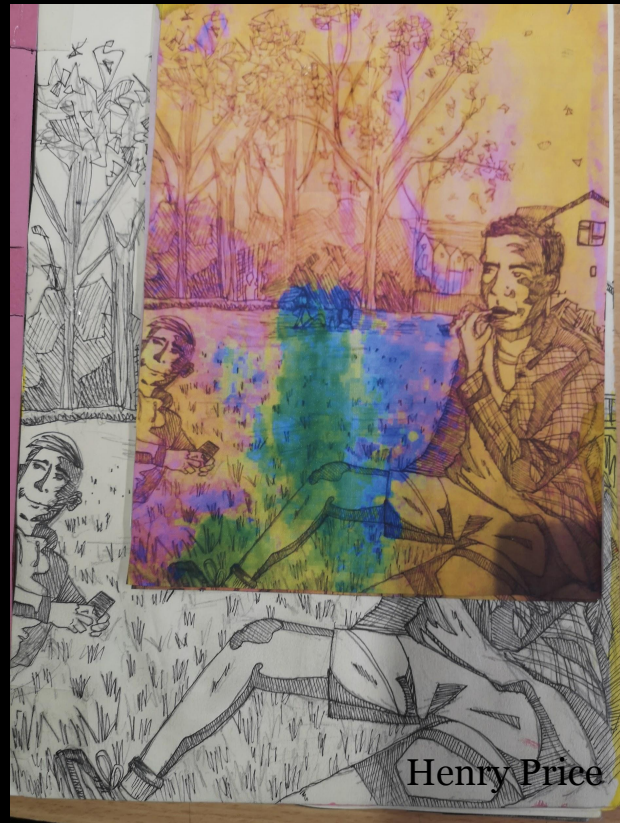
Appreciation in the home, family and self-nurture is in store for you. Manifestations are important for you this week in conjunction with self-love. Your instincts are heightened this week enabling you to have optimism and for the truth to be unveiled.

## **Aries (March 21 – April 19)**

Communication is a key focus this week you should control this flow of information, including changing your thinking to reach your goals; this will bring about changes for your future. This week has power in Venus with focus on love and abundance for your future.

## **Taurus (April 20 – May 20)**

Taurus has a focus on security and comfort this week; certainty will come if you are open to it. Responsibility and commitments are strong with the sun moving into Gemini from Taurus, with Saturn in retrograde you should also look into your past and reputation.



# Horoscopes!

## **Gemini (May 21 – June 20)**

This week is about transformation and destiny, there will be growth opportunities for you in ways that you have been held back. You need to commit to your happiness and destiny through travel and expansion of your learning. Your energy is recharged for your future challenges.

## **Cancer (June 21 – July 22)**

Expect secrets to be revealed in order to live fully, belief in intuition is key this week. Romantic connections are heightened this week, reclaiming yourself as well as your nurturing power giving birth to possibility and learning. Trust your primal feelings this week, trust yourself.

## **Leo (July 23 – August 22)**

Evolution of self is possible this week, putting yourself out there this week will be beneficial in order to evolve. Collaboration is being drawn towards you. The law of attraction will be helpful for you this week put out into the universe what **you need to receive.**

## **Virgo (August 23 – September 22)**

Reputation and career are important this week as Venus enters your career house. Saturn is in your health and wellbeing house, which indicates that you are able to grow and improve your mental wellbeing where it is needed.

## **Libra (September 23 – October 22)**

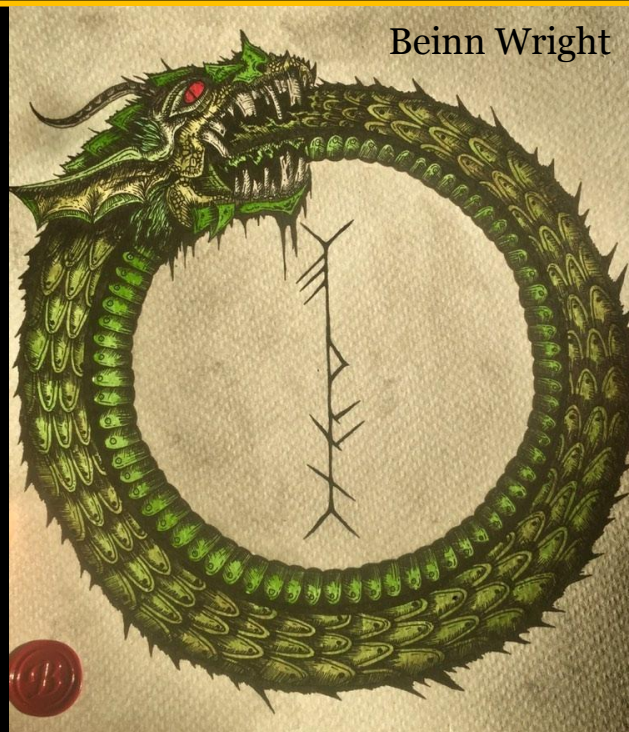
This week is about finding your perfect work and life balance. Prepare to be more productive than ever. Rapid shifts are set to come this month and this could be largely based around communications due to mercury entering retrograde, it would be wise to try and go with the flow rather than make any set agreements.

## **Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)**

Awareness is important for you this week; you are an endless source of wisdom and integrity while Venus is joined with the North Node you should experience new opportunities for primal power. You are able to thrive in influencing other people and most importantly in home dynamics.

## **Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)**

With the lunar eclipse soon approaching major choices, achievements and endings may be drawn towards you. You should remember to move toward what you want, no matter what. Mercury retrograde will begin on the twenty-ninth bringing with it confusion, delays and miscommunication



Beinn Wright

# Sexism

Grace Allen

**The most prevalent** daily acts of sexism are not big actions, but small. The ones that permeate conversations are that in the context of sports, parties and just general everyday chat. It's not overt but naturally creeps into conversation. For most people, it's hard to identify and even harder to call out.

Following the recent events surrounding sexism and "rape culture" in London schools, hundreds of anonymous testimonies have been shared. Using the platform called Everyone's Invited, these accounts were shared and display harrowing statements of sexual violence, sexism and misogyny during their time as students, offering raw and unfiltered discussions of their personal trauma. This comes to light amid the "broader reckoning" of the Sarah Everard killing, whose death became the symbol of all women who had experienced sexual assault and had it gone ignored. Her death caused thousands of women to join together and protest against sexual violence and wider institutionalised misogyny.

However, this issue extends further than individual accounts. According to the Criminal Justice System website, out of every 1000 sexual assaults, 310 will get reported - That means more than 2 out of 3 go unreported. 50

reports will lead to an arrest, 28 will lead to a felony conviction and only 25 perpetrators will be incarcerated. Of the sexual violence crimes not reported to police from 2005-2010, almost a quarter of the reasons were due to believing the police would not or could not do anything to help, with 8% of that believing it was not important enough to report.

Events like these may seem anomalous, but they are part of a long overdue conversation about attitudes and behavior around gender and sexuality at institutions that have the effect of normalizing and trivializing sexual violence, or rape culture.

This article is in no way accusing Beechen Cliff of these behaviours, but is instead addressing a wider, institutionalised issue that has shaped our country for thousands of years. This is not a problem that will go away overnight or with articles like these; this is just trying to educate and share information surrounding gender and sexism.

Considering how this issue has affected 97% of women, it is imperative to keep the conversation going, to the point where it becomes more than conversation. Schools play a huge role and need urgent modification, both in teaching consent and what toxic masculinity is and how to not fall prey to it. The environment in which children grow up, especially boys, can determine the way they treat and react to women's stories and accounts.



# Tribute to our Endeavours

Joseph Brazington

**We can all** appreciate the importance of each other's company following the hardships of the last year, which should be in no way understated. From a personal standpoint, the last two months have been a lot more enjoyable; I can now make new friends, visit family members or spend money at my favourite café thanks to the liberty and safety at this present moment. Yet this has left me unexpectedly burdened by it all. I am sure to most working adults this doesn't come as a surprise, but as a

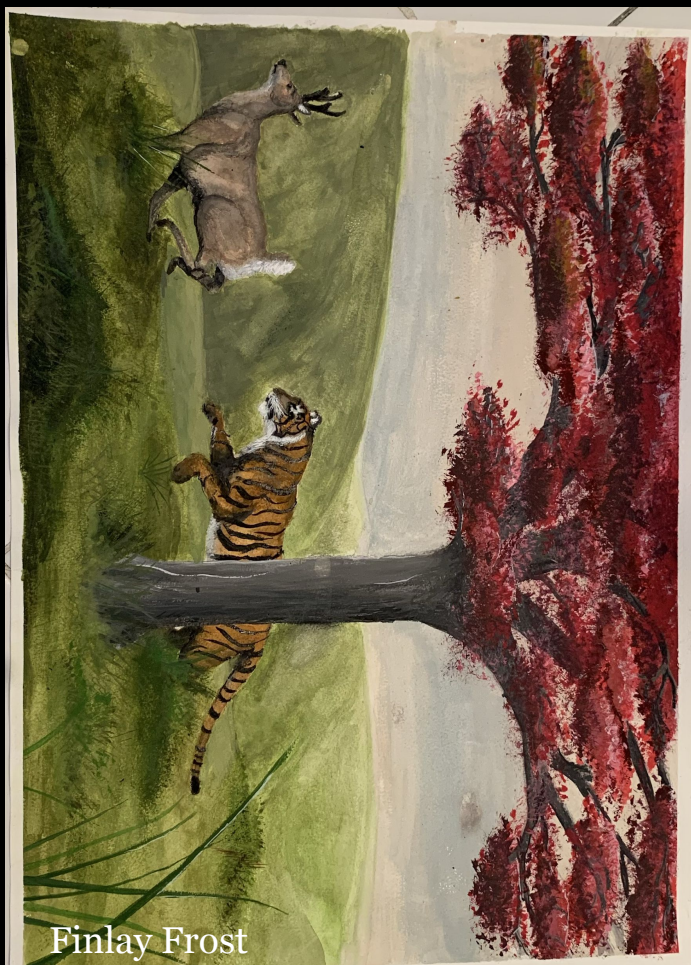
growing student who wasn't too long ago a "young boy", there is a lot to digest as we return to normality. Impending university applications. Mock exams. The question of finance. That barely scratches the list I could write out right now.

It's safe to say that life is nearly back at its full pace again, and I am not one to stir hysteria but it has made me think twice about it all.

It's excellent that the school is providing us with many opportunities to explore new possibilities and extracurricular activities, but I have to emphasise how everyone needs to moderate what you can take in. It's always important to find joy in our free time when we are not engaged in the wear and tear of daily life, as I'm sure you now know from our time in lockdown. Maybe it is more vital now than ever before to use what we have learnt to ensure that we can achieve everything we want to and enjoy a good year.

I suppose I can look to our teachers as role models for how to handle a perpetual strife *similar to above*. Since joining the Sixth Form, I have got to know them on more of an interpersonal level and understand the gist of their duties towards us. Suffice to say it has been gruelling.

In fact I will emphasise that, above all,



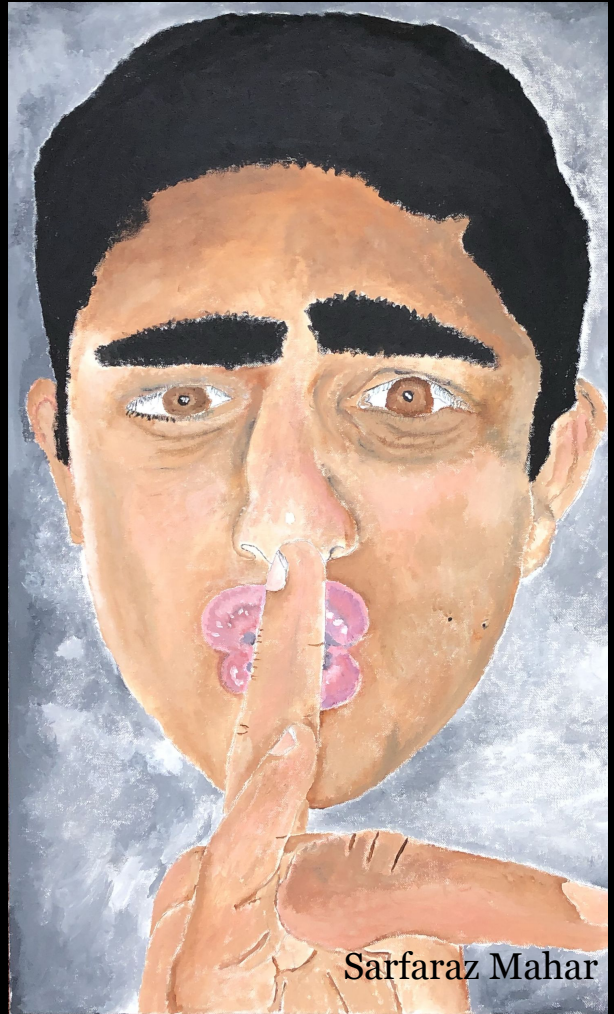
Finlay Frost

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they need *our* help. I must stress that our teachers have been broken down to near capitulation recently, and it is always good to show support but I believe we need to go further and make mutual efforts to assist their efforts. The government has provided little to no assistance during the pandemic and public opinion has seemed to disfavour against teachers, holding the belief that education screeches to a halt when schools are not open. As we know this is not the case.

Additionally, as we see the light at the end of the tunnel, they are receiving the short straw from examination boards and other powers hampering them with excessive papers and homework to mark. Little empathy has been expressed for their drudgery.

Therefore, we should try to acknowledge their endeavours and remember their humanity in spite of any quarrels that may exist. As Beechen Cliff takes pride in placing mental wellbeing as a priority, I ask if we can show understanding and care towards anyone who may be distressed with this sudden pace of life. I have highlighted our teachers particularly because it appalls me how their hard work has been shunned to the side, but everyone deserves fair treatment. It all goes a long way.



Sarfaraz Mahar

# Sixth Form Food Bank

The Gryphon Team



**Last month**, a foodbank collection was done in Sixth Form to support vulnerable people across the UK. Over 30 bags were donated with a combined weight of more than 100 kilograms. These went towards The Trussell Trust, and contributed to the 23 million meals the charity handed out in the last 12 months.

Your overwhelming support has made a true impact in the community. Thank you to everybody who contributed for making this such a success.

The Trussell Trust supports a nationwide network of food banks and together we provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty, and campaign for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

From the Trussell Trust:

In the UK, more than 14 million people are living in poverty, including 4.5 million children. We support more than 1,200 food bank centres in the UK to provide a minimum of three days' nutritionally-balanced emergency food to people who have been referred in crisis, as well as support to help people resolve the crises they face. Between April 2019 and March 2020, food banks in our network provided a record 1.9 million food supplies to people in crisis, an 18% increase on the previous year and during the coronavirus pandemic food banks have seen need rise even further.

# Is Free Will an Illusion?

Jack Dunn



Ollie Hall

**Free will** is the fundamentally important idea that humans have the ability to control our own lives - how we think, how we speak and how we act. For example, the US Constitution is built on the belief that you are free to live your life as you wish. If we start to question if free will is a thing, what consequences does that have for human society as a whole?

One of the most worrying things is that much of the reason free will is being brought into question is based on scientific fact. Yuval Noah Harari, an Israeli philosopher, has said that free will is a dated idea designed to motivate people into rebelling against oppression, but that modern data doesn't

support it. For instance, an experiment conducted by Benjamin Libet showed that there's activity showing a decision being made almost a second before the subject consciously makes it. This experiment has links to the thought that we, as everything else, are made of atoms and nothing more. Atoms interact with each other and react to form products and so on. So, surely that means our thought process is just the result of reactions and nothing else, not some higher conscience? If so, atoms have a set way of reacting that cannot be interfered with - where does this leave room for our idea of choice?

Besides science, there is a more religious argument for the lack of free will - the Christian philosophy of predeterminism. It states that God is an all-knowing, all-powerful being that can see every choice that has ever been made, and every choice that will ever be made. If he is aware of this, that suggests only one possible outcome for every choice that will be made. There is no margin in this for freedom of choice. On the other hand, if God is as all-powerful as predeterminism suggests, why is there the ability for people to commit sins, for example murder? This in itself suggests either apathy from God, which goes against almost every Christian belief, or that there is in fact a choice. More than that, if every choice and action is decided for you, why is

# Is Free Will an Illusion?

why is there a limbo where it is decided whether you go to heaven or hell? In the scenario where God is all-knowing and every decision is predetermined, is there a need for it when whether you are a good or bad person is already known?

Perhaps the answer to the question of free will is one that shouldn't be answered, however. The implications if free will is assumed not to be a thing could be huge. In the case of law, how can you convict a criminal if it is assumed that the choice to commit wasn't their own? Then, with the knowledge in tow that you wouldn't be convicted, our illusion of choice may mean that more people 'choose' to murder, or any other sort of crime, and the overall damage caused physically could be massive.

As well as this, the psychological and mental effects would be awful. First of all, stripping away the fundamental right of people to choose the destiny of their lives could destroy them; so many people could choose nihilism because, ultimately, there could be the thought that whatever is going to happen will happen to you anyway. Furthermore, if you cannot convict people of a crime, by the same token you couldn't then praise people for their achievements. Celebrating achievements, be it a sporting victory or a graduation ceremony, is the source of some of the biggest joy in life. Take away that, and the mental health crisis could become a whole lot worse.

In conclusion, the question of free will should probably remain a philosophical debate, purely to avoid the potentially devastating consequences. At the moment, almost everyone maintains that they have control over their lives, and of course there is still a good chance that that is still the case. Either way, best or worst case scenario, there is no need to think anything else.



George Conway

# Interview with Marina Beare

Toby Hawkins

In February 2021, the PTA of Beechen Cliff launched a fundraising campaign with the aim of raising money for three things; £10,000 for finishing the clubhouse in order to create more space for the school at lunchtimes due to social distancing, £5000 to dedicate to mental health support during lockdown and then a further £5000 designated for laptop support. The initial fundraising target was £20,000, which Marina said was 'a kind of figure in the air' and they were initially unsure as to whether they'd achieve that goal or not. The campaign began on the 1st of February and Marina was 'stunned at how quickly it grew!'. During the February half term, Marina and the PTA contacted a parent of a Sixth Form student who very kindly printed 5000 leaflets, which was then distributed by Marina's son and a group of his friends, along with some sixth formers. They 'blasted' the leaflets across our local community and Marina herself said 'I did 10km walks everyday distributing leaflets'. By the end of the week, the campaign had been increased by £2000!

Marina also shared a story of a local retired lady, who lives close to the school, who said 'I miss those boys, they are my life, I love seeing them walking up and down the avenues' and very kindly donated £650, which was 'extraordinary'. Two anonymous past pupils also donated £3125 each which meant that after just four weeks into the campaign, the PTA had raised over £15,000. Marina said this felt 'just truly amazing' and that there was a 'huge desire to support mental health'. Out of the overall amount raised, Marina told me that £10,000 was given from outside of the school community, comprising of either past pupils or local neighbours.

The campaign, which is still running, is at a stage of returning £237 every month with regular donors and all funds which are raised between now and the end of July will go to the Mental Health team. Marina also outlined how the aims for the funding allocations

evolved, as the Learning Support team approached them saying they would like some money to redevelop a teaching unit where vulnerable students could have a quiet space.

In terms of the amount of people involved in running this campaign, there were three members of the PTA, including Marina, as well as a further six parents who helped run the second hand uniform sales. Marina also spoke about how the PTA had recently negotiated to sell second hand uniforms inside the Mercy in Action charity shop, whereby the PTA have already made £500 through sales with the charity saying they just want the footfall that comes with it. Marina described this to me as a 'complete win-win situation'. She was also clear to emphasise that the PTA are always looking for new people to join them!

Marina also outlined the future plans of the PTA which involve a Quiz and Curry Night, a Christmas Market, following on from last year's success with the Year 7 and 8 Christmas Market, and also look into selling Christmas trees. Marina further described her plan to run a wreath making course, involving local sourced produce and engagement with the local community.

Finally, I asked Marina what her message was to our Gryphon readers, especially parents, as we look ahead to September. Her response was 'my pitch to parents is that the PTA is there to make the school and our community a better place for our boys and girls that are here so it would be great if we could get more parents involved!'

In total the PTA has raised £21,300 since the campaign launched in February! We thank Marina, the PTA and our local community for making this happen. If you would like to contribute to the campaign, which is still ongoing, the link is:

<https://app.investmycommunity.com/ptabeechen246>

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Thank you!

# Sixth Form Food Bank

# TEDx

## BeechenCliffSchool

**x = independently organized TED event**

Dear parents, carers, staff and students,

My name is Toby Hawkins, a Lower Sixth form student and one of the many organisers involved in the latest in a line of TEDx events that have been run at Beechen Cliff in recent years.

Our TEDx event is based around the theme of 'Let's Look Forward', focusing on what we, as students, have to look forward to in our futures. After nearly 18 months of uncertainty, stress and anxiety caused to young people as a result of the pandemic, we are incredibly proud and excited to be planning and running this event.

As I said, I am just one of the organisers involved, participating in a team of eleven other students dedicated to creating what will hopefully be a thoroughly inspiring and enjoyable event for later this year.

We are at the stage now where we have reached out to a wide variety of speakers and have had confirmations of interest from many of them. We have also reached out to local businesses and the wider school community regarding sponsorship opportunities and

additional things we can run on the day to make the event as successful and welcoming as possible. We've also secured a date for the event of the **Thursday 8th of July, 7pm-9pm**, which should allow us to run the event as Covid-19 restriction-free as we can, although the event will still of course be subject to government guidelines. We've also launched TEDxBeechenCliffSchool 2021 on social media this week on both Twitter and Instagram. Our Instagram account is **@tedxbeechencliffschool** and our Twitter account is **@TEDxBeechen**. If you would like to see what we are up to and keep updated with our event, please do give us a follow!

Over the coming days and weeks, we will be continuing to roll out our promotional materials, which have been designed entirely by members of the TEDx Beechen Cliff team, releasing further details about the event, including our list of speakers, and looking towards releasing tickets in the very near future.

Our TEDx email is [tedx@beechencliff.org.uk](mailto:tedx@beechencliff.org.uk) and we, as a team, would love to hear from you if you have any questions or suggestions.

Thank you.



## Beechen Cliff



We would like to give  
huge thanks to everybody  
who contributed to this  
issue of the Gryphon.

If you would like to contribute to our  
next issue then please get in touch  
with Barty Roberts at  
[5Roberts.Bart@beechencliff.org.uk](mailto:5Roberts.Bart@beechencliff.org.uk)