

The
Thomas Hardy
School

Newsletter



SPRING #1
2026



Welcome

I write this as two of our most popular annual trips – the ski trip and the science trip to Florida – set off for their adventures. These and all trips and visits are such an important part of school life, which is about so much more than academic qualifications (important though those are). We all look forward to hearing from students about what they get up to, and I must thank all the staff who are giving their half-term up to run them.

Indeed, the value of activities outside the classroom is something of a theme in this edition of the newsletter, and I must draw attention to the incredible work being done by staff and students across the school under the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) umbrella. From the over 40 students taking part in the prestigious British Biology Olympiad, to our long-running Genesis (genetics) Club,

through to Sophie Cradock in year 13, who has won the Big Bang Senior Technology Award and is now a semi-finalist in the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition, STEM is such a varied and consistently strong part of school life. It is particularly impressive to see how many female students are involved with and doing amazing things in STEM clubs and subjects, as this was one of the disparities that the promotion of STEM was intended to correct. Thanks to Mr Davis who coordinates it all, and to all the staff who run the clubs and organize the competitions. If your child would like to get involved, there is something for everyone: clubs include AI coding, F1 in STEM, Renewable Energy, the Landrover 4x4 Design Challenge, Flying Start club and our brilliant Genesis Club.

I must also pay tribute to Major Kevin Matthews, who steps down as Contingent Commander of our

Combine Cadet Force at the end of this year. Ours is the oldest school CCF in the country, and Major Matthews has ensured it is one of the most popular and best run.

I have had the pleasure of seeing the cadets on parade in school and on exercises around the county, and of reading the comments that parents and students make in annual surveys about the confidence, self-discipline and character that they have developed under his leadership. He leaves, as legacy, a superb group of cadets, strong connections with the MOD and local bases, as well as a fantastic culture of respect, responsibility and resilience. Thank you, Major Matthews.

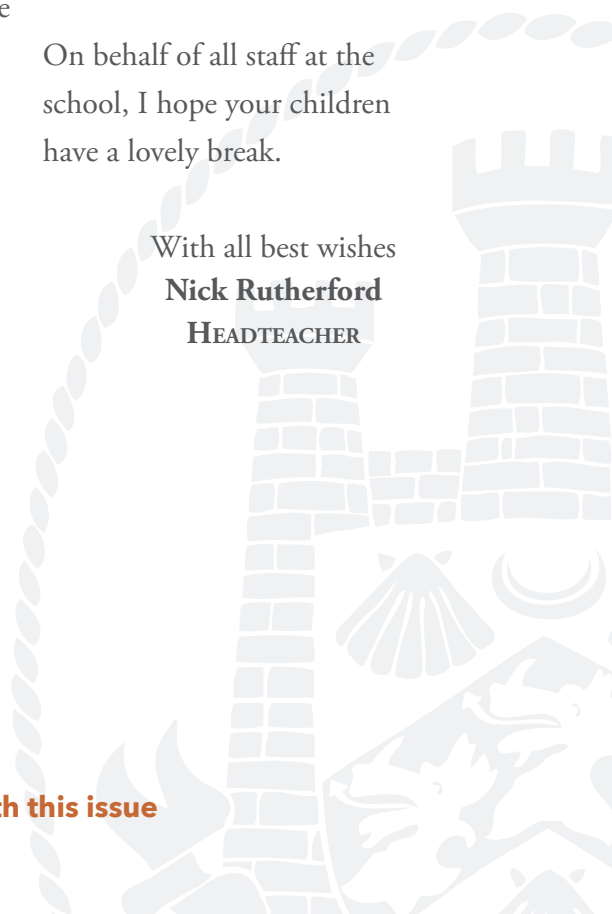
On behalf of all staff at the school, I hope your children have a lovely break.

With all best wishes
Nick Rutherford
HEADTEACHER

Newsletter design,
editing & layout:
Caroline Lester

COVER IMAGE: Detail from a print inspired by Bletchley Park made by **Erica Williams** from Year 12.
More about Bletchley Park on page 15

Thanks to all contributors for their help with this issue



Equestrian



ANOTHER SEASON OF SUCCESS

*The school's equestrian team has had a truly outstanding season, competing at prestigious venues and achieving remarkable results. In October, the team travelled to the Addington Manor Equestrian Centre, returning home after exceptional performances. **Carmen Hillier** placed 8th in the 80cm, 5th in the 90cm and an impressive 3rd in the 95cm showjumping. **Miya Willsher** also delivered a strong performance, finishing 6th in both the 85cm and 90cm showjumping classes.*

More recently, **Izzy Sutherland, Flora Sutherland, Miya Willsher** and **Carmen Hillier** competed at Moreton Showjumping, with the aim of qualifying for Hickstead in May. The team achieved a fantastic 1st place in the 85cm showjumping, along with a commendable 4th place in the 95cm showjumping - a first for the county team.

These results mark a brilliant end to the season as we look ahead to 2026. The school is extremely proud of all the riders for their commitment and sportsmanship. A special thank you must also go to the parents, whose support, and dedication, often over four-day competitions, make these opportunities possible.

Mrs Russell

Geography



OLYMPIC RENEWAL IN NEWHAM

In January, the Geography department took 30 Year 12 and 13 students to see the Olympic Park in Newham, London. Their A-Level looks at the regeneration and rebranding of Newham from a severely deprived area to a bustling thriving area, with a focus on technology. **Miss Bright** and **Dr. Vest** conducted a tour of the park with a focus on how the rebranding has changed the

lived experience for the people of Newham, although some people have not benefitted from the investment.

The trip was rounded off with an important investigation into the retail opportunities in the Westfield Centre (which employs 10,000 people, excellent for improving the socio-economic characteristics of the area) but otherwise known as a quick bit of shopping!

GEOGRAPHY GIRLS IN STEM

In February, thirty-two enthusiastic girls took part in a hands-on workshop exploring Practical Action's "Regreen the Desert" project. Together, they discovered how science, technology, and human ingenuity can transform some of the world's driest landscapes into thriving, productive ecosystems.

During the session, they investigated real-world challenges faced by communities living in arid regions and experimented with irrigation systems to solve the food shortages impacting fifteen million people, in 2026. They learned how simple, sustainable innovations can help support families that depend on the land.

Miss Williams, Miss Bright & Dr Vest

Higher Education



STEP UP TO OXFORD

Earlier this month, a group of Year 11 students visited New College, one of the colleges that make up the University of Oxford. The visit was the second part of the 'Step Up' programme, which has been developed by New College to support state students who might wish to apply to study at Oxford. Students were given a tour of New College and were able to speak to current university students who explained how the tutorial teaching system works and talked about the work life balance at Oxford.

In the afternoon, we heard from a lecturer at the university who gave us an insight into the admission process and teaching style at Oxford.

The 'Step Up' programme will continue in the sixth form; the outreach team from New College will visit us September to explain what students can do in Year 12 to start building a competitive application.

Mr Ayre



Music



CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

On the 17th December we held our Carol Service at St Peter's

Church in Dorchester. The Thomas Hardy Singers and readers performed exceptionally to the packed-out congregation. Highlights of the evening included an original carol composed by Mrs Trevorrow, as well as a stunning performance of Stars by Eriks Ešenvalds, accompanied by six rubbed wine glasses.

For a performance visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4rRF-vfeks>



ALUMNI CAROL SERVICE

On the 22nd December, former

Thomas Hardy Singers conductor Peter Oakes held a special alumni carol concert at St Peter's Church in Dorchester. The event featured music staff and former Thomas Hardy Singers students from as far back as 30 years ago and was a beautiful occasion to not only celebrate Christmas, but the legacy of the choir, as well as providing a wonderful reunion for those involved.

Music



WINTER CEILIDH

In late January, we held our annual ceilidh, masterminded by the school Folk Band.

The students learned a full programme of music and dances under their own direction, which is highly commendable. The dances were called by Mrs Trevorrow and Mr Robertson. Around 100 students and adults attended. The hall was filled with laughter, with all having a fantastic time. Huge thanks to the band!



JOE STILGOE WORKSHOP

In February students from all years took

part in a jazz workshop with UK jazz chart topper Joe Stilgoe, recognised as one of the best singer-pianists in the world. Joe worked with our jazz band and singers to help us understand the process of arranging. He then treated us to a Q&A and closed with an outstanding improvisation based on musical suggestions. Some students went on to watch him in the show 'Hooray For Hollywood', with one citing it as one of their favourite concerts of all time.

For more news and information on the music department, visit:

<https://music.wessex.ac/thomas-hardye-school-music-department.html>

or follow us on Facebook and Instagram @ths_music_dept

Mr Trevorrow

PE



SPORTS TIE PRESENTATION

Each year, students have the opportunity to earn their Thomas Hardy Sports Tie. These are presented to students who have represented the school in their chosen sports for two years.

Prior to Christmas, students in Years 10 and 11 were presented with their sports ties in football (girls and boys), rugby, swimming, cross-country, and netball. Congratulations to all students who were awarded with these



IMAGES, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
SWIMMING; RUGBY; CROSS-COUNTRY;
GIRLS' FOOTBALL; BOYS' FOOTBALL.



SPRING TERM UPDATE

U14 Girls' Football

Congratulations to the U14 girls' football team who played their first game in the County Cup, winning 3-0 with goals from P. Jones, J. Bullimore & E. Burgess, see image top left. This win sees them progress through to the semi-finals, which will be played next half term.

U14 Boys' Football

Congratulations to the U14s who are through to the quarter finals of the County Cup along with the B-Team who are through to the second round of the Area Cup after winning 6-3.

U15 Boys' Football

A great 3-1 win in the Area Cup sees the boys move through to the second round. Well done to all involved.

Badminton

Congratulations to the KS3 & KS4 Boys Badminton Teams who played in the County Tournament, see image top right. The KS3 team came away as winners of the tournament and now progress onto the Regionals which will be held in Bath.

An excellent half-term of sport in the THS PE department!

Miss Leatherland

Chemistry



ALUMNI CHEMISTRY

We were delighted to welcome back Thomas Hardye alumni **Elian Looker**, who returned to speak with our current Y12 Chemistry students. Elian studied A level Chemistry at Thomas Hardye before going on to read Natural Sciences at the University of Oxford, and he shared invaluable insight into his academic journey.

His presentation included practical advice on chemistry

exam technique, effective revision strategies, preparing for university interviews, and what it's really like to study STEM subjects beyond A level. Students found his tips both reassuring and motivating, particularly those considering competitive university applications. It was fantastic to have Elian back with us as a role model for our chemists, and we look forward to following his journey and future successes.

Mr Bruchez



ENGINEERING CHEMICALS

KS5 Chemistry students recently enjoyed an inspiring lecture from **Dr Nuno Bimbo**, Associate Professor at Southampton University. Dr Bimbo introduced students to the world of chemical engineering, highlighting the wide range of careers and opportunities available within the industry. He also spoke about cutting-edge research areas, including hydrogen storage and its importance for a more sustainable future.

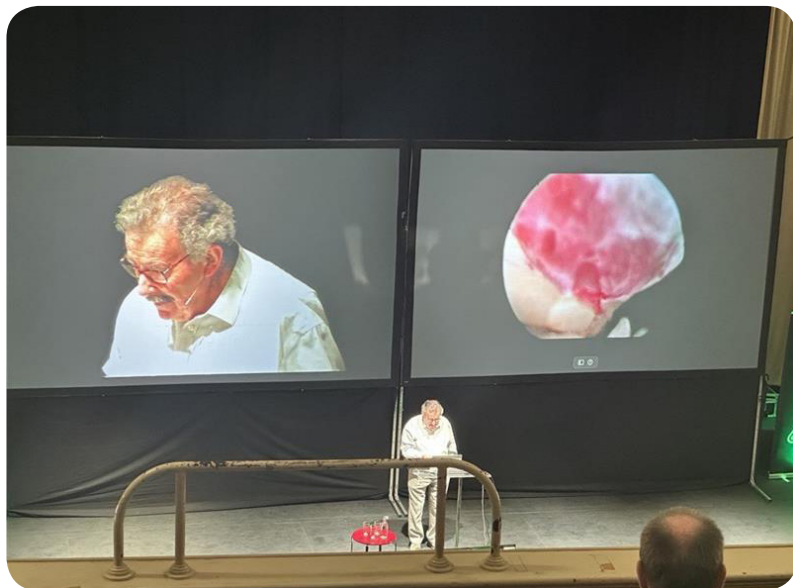
The lecture gave students valuable insight into how chemistry is applied beyond the classroom and into real-world problem solving, making it a fantastic opportunity for those considering science and engineering pathways after school. We would



like to thank Dr Bimbo for giving his time and expertise. We now look forward to visiting Southampton University for their Twilight Lab sessions later this summer.

Ms Brammer

Science



SCIENCE LIVE IN BATH

Around 50 Year 11 students

recently travelled to Bath to attend GCSE Science Live, an inspiring event designed to bring science to life beyond the classroom. During the day, students heard from a range of leading scientists and science communicators, including Professor Sophie Scott, Professor Robert Winston, Dr Anna Ploszajski, Dr Jessica Wade and Dr Tim Gabriel.

The speakers explored key GCSE Science topics while also sharing insights into current research, real-world applications of science and pathways into STEM careers. The talks helped to reinforce subject knowledge, clarify challenging ideas and provide practical revision and exam advice as students prepare for their summer examinations. Students were engaged throughout the day and represented the school superbly.

The visit was both motivating and educational, making it a valuable addition to their GCSE Science studies.



Ms Brammer

STEM



ON THE GRID

Following their success in winning the ECITB Teamwork Award, the Energy and Renewables team were invited to Chickerell Substation to explore Dorset's electrical infrastructure and learn how electricity is generated and transported.

The team donned official National Grid PPE and were given rare access to the normally restricted site.

GOING FOR GOLD!

This year saw an exceptional turnout for the British Biology Olympiad, with 43 THS students entering the prestigious national competition. It challenges students with fast-paced, high-level problem-solving questions, delving into cutting-edge and topical areas of biology, pushing students to think critically and creatively.

A total of 18,800 students from 1,132 schools across the country participated this year. Our results were outstanding: 9 students received Commended Effort awards; 4 were Highly Commended;

10 earned Bronze; 6 achieved Silver and two students **Mia Wright** and **Taher**

Shamseldin were awarded Gold, an honor reserved for the top 5% of participants nationwide.

Congratulations to everyone who took part and showcased their exceptional talent and dedication!



Mr Davis and Miss Orchard

STEM

STEM CLUB GETS CREATIVE

With an energetic start to the year, students from all year groups are tackling global



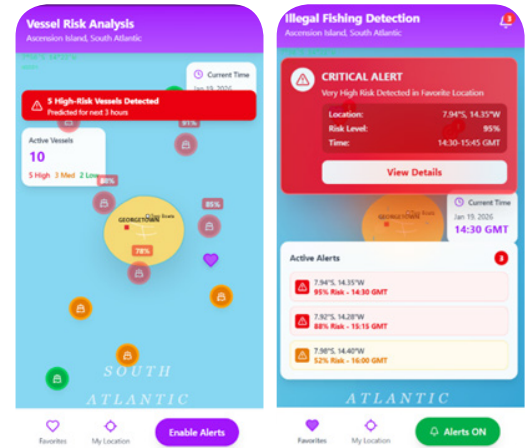
challenges with innovation and creativity. Two teams are leading the charge in the FI STEM Challenge, aiming to create the fastest FI car in the school's Development Class.

A Year 9 team is developing an energy-regeneration concept using a wave-energy capture device, inspired by the success of last year's Big Bang award-winning team. Year 10 teams are exploring new ways to increase biodiversity across the school site through modern tree-planting techniques and

the creation of water habitats.

Other students are designing apps to improve energy efficiency in homes. Meanwhile, Year 12 students have developed a concept to identify and track eutrophication events in Poole Harbour, allowing authorities to be alerted to potential incidents before they occur. A group of sixth form students have also designed an ingenious portable protection device to support mangrove restoration.

All teams will be applying for a range of national and international competitions so watch this space!



SOPHIE MAKING WAVES

After an incredible year marked by winning the Big Bang Senior Technology Award and securing second place at the International AI in STEM Challenge, **Sophie Cradock** is once again making waves this time as a semi-finalist in the prestigious Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition. The competition offers winners not only mentorship but also financial support from Samsung to help bring their innovative ideas to life.

Sophie's project aims to create an app that alerts governments, companies, and fisheries monitors to illegal activities, enabling them to mobilize resources quickly and prevent environmental damage. It's a brilliant initiative that could make a real-world impact and we can't wait to see how her project evolves.

Mr Davis

Drama



FROM THE RED CARPET

The Drama department PA Captains organised a musical revue performance called 'From The Red Carpet'. This performance included 50 students from Years 10 - 13 in a vast array of musical theatre numbers. Assisted by Miss Higgins, the students worked as a large cast to choreograph and develop the work, creating a fantastic show on February 5th & 6th.

Miss Higgins



Library



HARRY POTTER BOOK NIGHT

At the end of January, the Library held its annual HP book night to celebrate all things in the wizarding world and the Library is decorated to full effect. Some lovely students from Year 9 defied the weather, the school was closed the following day, and came along to make house hedgehogs, bookmarks, favour boxes all whilst eating popcorn and watching 'The Philosphers Stone' on the big screen.

The evening ends with our big HP quiz, which tests knowledge from the very easy 'What school does Harry Potter attend?' to the more difficult 'What happens when you eat a tiny black Pepper Imp sweet?'

Expelliarmus!

Mrs Stevens & Mrs Enikova



CCF



ALL CHANGE AT THE TOP

After 20 years of service as a Cadet Forces Adult Volunteer,

16 years with the THS CCF and 9 years as Contingent Commander,

Maj Kevin Matthews is standing down at the end of the academic year. In his recent resignation speech, Maj Matthews, *see image top left*, gave thanks to all cadets, past and present, for being an inspiration in their willingness to learn, to lead and to persevere, and why organisations like the CCF matter so much in the development of good citizens of the future.

He also gave thanks to the senior leadership of the school for their support, commenting that, "A school that invests in character, as well as academic achievement, invests wisely in the future".

Maj Matthews will be succeeded by existing Officer Commanding the Army Section, **Capt. Chris Copson**, *see image top right*. He said, "After being OC Army for so many years, I am deeply honoured to be taking over as Contingent Commander".

Maj Matthews

History



BLETCHLEY PARK INVESTIGATED

In December, Ms. Ayunga organised a trip to Bletchley Park, site of the WW2 codebreaking mission, for sixth form history, maths and computer science students.

We enjoyed guided tours with volunteers to learn about Bletchley Park's role in the war; the people who worked there and the Bombe Machine. Independently, we looked around the mansion house and the code-breaking huts. All the displays and reconstructions were extremely interesting. We took part in a code-breaking workshop too, where we had a go on a real Enigma machine. It underlined how extraordinary the minds were of those who worked at Bletchley.

The National Museum of Computing showcases the history and future of computing, from the first digital computer, Colossus, to advancements in artificial intelligence.

Historical re-enactors roaming about ensured some comical encounters.

We also made the obligatory visit to the rather expensive gift shop! Overall, it was an enjoyable, insightful and inspiring day.

Story: Harry Chilcot, Y12

Illustration: Erica Williams, Y12

Communication & Support

Tips for effective communication

Contact the tutor first.

For most academic and general/social concerns, the child's tutor should be your first point of contact. Email addresses follow the format of last name and then initial, no space, e.g.

jbloggs@ths.wessex.ac

Please be clear, concise and respectful.

Respect staff's working hours:

Parents should be mindful of teachers' workload and should not expect a response to emails immediately. Many staff are part-time, and teachers are not expected to respond to emails outside of the usual working day.

- **Family support and advice line** - 01305 228558
<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/family-help-in-dorset>
- **Samaritans** (116 123) -
Free, 24/7 support line for anyone struggling
- **Shout Crisis Text Line** - Text "SHOUT" to 85258 (24/7)
- **YoungMinds Parents Helpline** (0808 802 5544) -
For advice on supporting your child
- **Connection** - Dorset's 24/7 Mental Health Helpline
- **Call 0800 652 0190** (free, open to all ages) -
This NHS service offers round-the-clock support for anyone in Dorset experiencing a mental health crisis, including parents concerned about their children

Safeguarding & Guidance Leaders

Year 9 Mrs Kelly
ckelly@ths.wessex.ac

Year 10 Miss Gosling
jgosling@ths.wessex.ac

Year 10 Mrs Morgan
cmorgan@ths.wessex.ac

***If your concern is urgent,
please contact the school office:***

**Monday - Friday
8:30am - 4:30pm**

admin@ths.wessex.ac
01305 266064

Report an absence from 8.40am:

<https://www.ths.wessex.ac/for-parents/report-an-absence>

Mrs Noble

Dates

SPRING TERM

half-term:

last day of term:

SUMMER TERM

INSET day:

all students return:

Bank Holiday:

half-term:

all students return:

last day of term:

Monday 16th February - Friday 20th February
Friday 27th March

Monday 13th April
Tuesday 14th April
Monday 4th May
Monday 25th May - Friday 29th May
Monday 1st June
Friday 17th July