

WBGS

The History Boys

A cast of senior school students performed Alan Bennett's play 'The History Boys' on Saturday 12th and Monday 14th December in the James Theatre at Watford Boys. This production played to packed houses on both nights and was produced and directed by members of the Sixth Form



View from the stage

This year's school play was directed, performed and produced in it's entirety by students of Watford Grammar School for Boys and Girls. Alan Bennett's 'The History Boys' had always seemed like the only viable option to us: not only was the film version shot in both schools, but the play deals with the issues and challenges many of us face as students. Despite the controversial themes raised by Bennett, we were proud to see such a fantastic

turnout across both nights and we would like to thank everyone who came to watch. It made the countless after school rehearsals, line learning and backstage preparation feel more than worth it. There is incredible talent amongst the students of both schools, and as long as there is an outlet for such talent, we will no doubt continue to see exciting performances for years to come.





FRIENDS OF WRGS

Review from the audience

I was unfamiliar with the play, the film and the plot in general of the 'History Boys' when I went to see this production at the James Theatre. It was interesting to see a play like that, without any pre-set notions, and it turned out to be a very rewarding experience.

For a production performed, directed and produced entirely by the school's students, it was remarkably polished and professional. It's a very wordy play, and without enough creativity injected into its display, it could have become stale but each new scene was presented with renewed energy and inventiveness.

As I said, 'The History Boys' is a play concerned with ideas and heavy on dialogue, but it manages to prevent itself from becoming boring or repetitive, and that may well be due to the characters that are presenting these ideas to us. They're unique and memorable, and they require actors who can really tap into their inner nature and understand them fully. I

can say with full confidence that there was not a weak performance here. The bulk of dialogue memorised to perfection is impressive in itself, but what really stands out is the way it's delivered: with conviction, total empathy and often a bit of well-placed humour.

I've seen several of the Watford Boys plays over the last few years, and what strikes me every time is how soon I forget that I'm watching an amateur production. Each one has been executed with extreme skill and professional quality. I'm happy to say that 'The History Boys' is absolutely no exception. It takes an excellent script and creates an equally interesting and poignant incarnation that doesn't give in to mediocrity and instead challenges its audience to think deeply and laugh earnestly with characters who are fully realised and will remain with us after the curtains close.

Orla Smith

The Cast List

THE BOYS Akthar - Hashim Jamal Crowther - Arthur Garvey Dakin - Jonathan Williams Lockwood - Joe Patrick Posner - Jack MacLean Rudge - Gabriel Fagan Scripps - Jack Butler

THE STAFF

Headmaster - Robert Russo

Mr Irwin - Ben Lester

Hector - Tim Bush

Ms Lintott - Rachel Benjamin

Creative Team

Zendell Crichlow Milo Caskey Jonathan Davies Sean Warmington AJ Oyekamini JJ King



The Friends of the School supported the event by providing refreshments at the interval.

WBGS

The School Quiz Night

A fun evening was had by all at this year's fundraising Supper Quiz organised by the Friends of School on the 14th November 2015, which was hosted by the school's new headmaster, Mr Cooksey.

Not having a teachers' table this year to compete with gave us all a better chance of winning! Parents' general knowledge and memories were put to the test with ten rounds of challenging questions. Themes ranged from colours, animals, Bond movies, Disney theme tunes and TV detective programmes to history, the USA and geography so there was something for everyone. Film and books enthusiasts were entertained throughout the evening, racking their brains to answer the picture marathon round on 'Best Actress Academy Awards' and deciphering anagrams for the titles of well known classic novels.

Deciding what round to play your joker on is always a bit of a gamble so we gladly welcomed the new option of being able to buy back your joker for a fiver before the answers were marked.

The popular head or tails game of pure chance provided a bit of light relief as well as the opportunity to win £20 for the last person







standing. There were other lucky winners of prizes on the raffle draw, and some participants were fortunate to catch the odd handful of chocolates thrown at them intermittently by Mr Cooksey as a surprise treat.

A big thank you to Danielle Wright for organising this very successful fundraising event yet again. By the end of the evening, a total of £1,800 was raised which will go towards the purchase of a laptops and a laptop charging trolley for the school.

Many thanks also to Mr Cooksey for preparing and presenting all the questions, to members of the Friends of WGSB for their help with the pizza orders and drinks at the bar, and to all the parents who participated in the event.







WBGS

Winter concerts

The school Winter music concerts took place in the Muse on the 25th and 26th of November 2015





The Friends served seasonal refreshments at these events and all profits were donated to the school.

Thank you

Thanks to everyone who helped at the School events and parents evenings during the winter term:



Aleema Brister
Amanda Hardy
Andrea Mullings
Ansu Shah
Archana Singh
Barrie Tynemouth
Deepa Solanki
Elaine Hudson
Hayley Jacobs
Jeanette McLeod
Karen Johnson
Kathryn Bourke
Krisha Pathepan
Lan La
Luzia Lei

Malcolm Bush
Natalija Strelchka
Nayan Das
Paul Marmor
Phanisree Marthy
Rachael Speirs
Ravi Juss
Rita Field
Sharon Jackson
Sylvia Tuite
Victoria Conquest
and everyone who
helped at the school
quiz



Committee News

The Friends of school AGM was held in November last term. Archana Singh remains as Chair and Amanda Hardy as Treasurer of the Friends committee. Rachael Speirs was voted in as the new Secretary.. The AGM report is available online at www.watfordboys.org



I am a mum of a Year 8 boy currently at WBGS and have worked in the financial services industry as a lawyer for the last 15 years. I also have a daughter and a son currently at university. I am interested In developing a stronger connection between the school and the parents for the benefit of the pupils as well as fundraising.

Rachael Speirs

Germaine Mathews, the outgoing secretary, who has experience of event management, night, Summer Ball and Fun-Day. Germaine, school.

was thanked for her work during the past year, will remain on the committee to support the including her contribution to the Friends film Friends fundraising activities on behalf of the



Rita Gosrani stepped down from the two very successful golf days at the committee in June after three active Grove and Moor park golf courses. years. Rita played a significant role in organising major fundraising events for the School such as the Summer Balls at the Hilton and the Grove, as well as

Rita also arranged refreshments for hundreds of people attending school concerts in the Clarendon Muse.

I get enjoyment from organising an event, meeting new people, seeking sponsorships but most of all in seeing guests enjoying the event.

Rita Gosrani

The Friends of school are always looking for new members to join the executive committee. The next meeting is on Wednesday 13th January at 7pm in room L111 of the main school building.

Family draw

Click here to to join the Family Draw or print off the form at the end of the Newsletter. The winner of the Family Draw last term was Mr Balakumaran (ticket number 12) who won £114.92. The Family Draw costs £25 per year to enter and is drawn once a term by the headmaster, Mr Cooksey. The Draw has raised £344 for the school so far this academic year.



FRIENDS OF WBGS

Forthcoming events

Wednesday 20th January

Monday 25th January

Tuesday 2nd February

Wednesday 10th February

Monday 15th February - Friday 19th February

Wednesday 24th February

Monday 29th February

Wednesday 16th March

Thursday 17th March

New Date: Tuesday 22nd March

Thursday 24th March

Year 9 Parents Evening

Year 12 Parents Evening

Year 8 Parents Evening

Year 11 Options Evening

Half Term Holiday

Year 10 Parents Evening

Year 7 Parents Evening

First Spring Concert

Second Spring Concert

Friends Committee Meeting (7.15pm, Room 111)

End of Spring Term

Friends of school are organising a Golf Day on the 12th of May and a Bollywood Barn Dance on the 25th June, in the Summer term. All proceeds from these events will go to the school.



The Newsletter was put together by Kathryn Bourke, Nicholas Bush, Deborah Bush, Victoria Conquest and Luzia Lei. Please send submissions to bush.deborah@btinternet.com



Recipe: Ginger Cake

This cake is lovely - and even lovelier if you leave it in an airtight container for a few days before eating as it goes all sticky. Try it with custard on a cold day as a ready made dessert.

Ingredients

250g each of dark brown sugar, black treacle, margarine (stork or similar.)

375g of plain flour

2 tsp cinnamon

5 tsp ground ginger

3 pieces of ginger in syrup, cut up small

2 eggs, beaten

2 tsp bicarbonate of soda

300ml milk

You will need

A large saucepan

A small saucepan

A tin or lasagne dish - roughly 23cm x 30 cm

Method

- 1. Grease tin/lasagne dish with marg and line bottom with greaseproof paper. Preheat oven to 160°C. Put sugar, treacle and marg in large pan and heat until melted, stirring together as they melt.
- 2. Cool slightly then sift in flour and spices
- 3. Stir in chopped ginger and beaten eggs
- 4. Heat milk gently in small pan until just over luke warm. Add bicarbonate of soda and stir to dissolve.
- 5. Stir milk mixture into other stuff NOTE: you may think it has gone very wrong at this point as it looks very liquid but do not fear. Keep stirring until the colour is the same the whole way through.
- 6. Pour into tin or dish and bake in preheated oven for an hour, until it bounces back when you press it
- 7. Cool in tin for 5 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

Colin and Susie Huxham





FRIENDS OF WBG ART AND LIFESTYLE

Undercover Parent 4 - Lost Property

I did label all the stuff – honestly! But I gave up sewing on labels after it nearly caused a divorce (sewing makes me VERY grumpy!) Then I reverted to iron-on labels (which fall off in the wash) and then to the laundry pen. This seems to wear off on the washable items. And then there are the shoe labels....you wouldn't think that a sticky label with a sticky plastic

bit on top would be too difficult to use but somehow the sticky bit falls off, then the sticky label loses its stick and then the shoe

loses its label.

So, week 1 of term, the shoes are missing....this is a bit of a disaster, since he's now into adult size shoes, which are shockingly expensive! I give him the "you must be more responsible about your school things" talk and tell him to go and check lost property.

Needless to say the shoes were lost in the New Field. Apparently there's a lost property box there but periodically items move up to lost property in the main school, which is open at limited times....so a week goes by. And still no shoes. I have a vision of pairs of shoes and trainers, endless rulers, glue sticks, sports kit, library books, PE bags, boot bags, no doubt phones and other illicit items too, all piling up in a cupboard somewhere.

It got me thinking. The Lost Property Office on the London Underground opened in 1933. In 2011 over 220,000 items were handed

in. Amidst the umbrellas, false teeth and

mobile phones they have found some very interesting items — a puffer fish, a jar of bull sperm, a stuffed eagle, a grandfather clock and two human skulls! But they're now

charging up to £25 to get your

stuff back.

Mind you, we haven't professionalized lost property the way the Americans have, apparently there's a huge store selling lost property in Scottsboro Alabama. Founded in 1970 it employs 140 staff and sees close to 1

million visitors annually. So it occurred to me, since the school has been open for over 100 years, surely there's something decent hidden in there – time to put on my disguise and see if I can find it (or maybe even his shoes!).



WBGS ART AND LIFESTYLE

Poem

My Teacher

My teacher once wore nappies My teacher used to crawl My teacher used to cry at night My teacher used to bawl.

My teacher jibber jabbered My teacher ran up stairs My teacher wrote in squiggles My teacher stood on chairs.

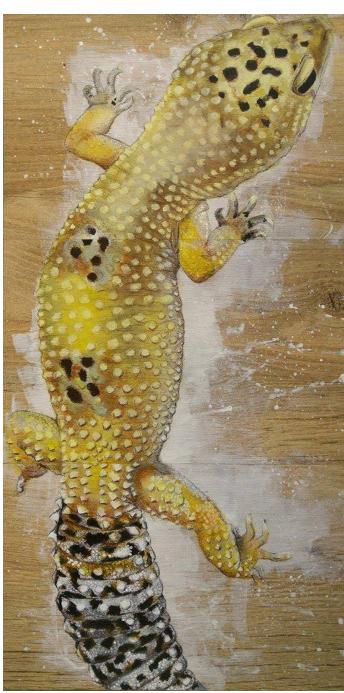
My teacher once was naughty My teacher was so rude My teacher used a bad word My teacher spilled his food.

My teacher lost his homework My teacher took too long My teacher got detention My teacher did things wrong.

My teacher's all grown up now My teacher can't recall My teacher thinks he's different My teacher's not at all!

Anonymous





Keeva Garvey

FRIENDS OF WBGS ART AND LIFESTYLE

Predestination Reviewed

As I've said in the past, there's no point using this review space to give you my opinion on a popular movie, like Spectre for example. Everybody's going to see that film anyway and if you want somebody's opinion on it there's a million reviews online you can look up. What's more worthwhile is recommending a film that practically nobody's seen, a film you probably would never see without an article like this to bring it to your attention.

'Predestination' was released at the very beginning of 2015 but not in cinemas. It went straight to On Demand, which is often the fate of independent or international movies these days that aren't seen to have marketability. In fact, I think that if it had been given the chance, this is a film that would have played quite well to mainstream audiences. Admittedly it's very different, probably unlike anything you've seen before, but it's made with all the thrills and intrigue of a classic sci-fi.

I can't tell you much about the films plot. You're just going to have to trust me and go in blind, because this is a film that is best experienced when you know nothing about it. The general set-up at the film's start is simply a man walking into a bar and telling the bartender his life story. It doesn't sound all that interesting I know, but this is a science-fiction film. It involves time travel, secret organisations and all sorts of other things in ways you've never seen them before.

All that comes into play in the last third of the film however. That's when the plot kicks into gear and everything goes a bit crazy. There's all sorts of mind-blowing plot twists and turns and the ending left my jaw dropped. The film isn't confusing in the sense that you'll struggle to understand what's going on, as that's perfectly clear, however it does make you think. Trust me, this isn't a film that you'll forget about soon



after.

It is a testament to the skill of the filmmakers and scriptwriters that even though its only in the last act that all the action happens, the first two thirds, which simply consists of our main character telling their story, are consistently compelling. There's no sci-fi, no action, but you're still so intrigued, and it's probably true that a lot of that is down to the performers.

The name you may know in the film is Ethan Hawke, who is obviously a well respected actor, and one of my main draws to the film initially. He does a very good job with his character, but the standout is newcomer Australian actress Sarah Snook, who is phenomenal in her role and is clearly destined for greatness in the future. It's hard to explain now but - and I keep saying this - just watch the movie and you'll see.

They seem to be pushing the DVD sales of 'Predestination', so you may be able to easily find it in any nearby shop that sells films. If you do see it, I urge you to buy it because this is a film that is going criminally underseen. It's intelligent and challenging cinema and on top of that it's really entertaining. To me at least, it's clearly one of the year's best films, and if you trust my recommendation and watch it, I promise you won't be disappointed.

Orla Smith



The Long Read

Sean Warmington was recently awarded first place in Cambridge University's Robinson College's essay prize. He is a student in Year 13 at Watford Boys Grammar School.

Science has made us gods before we are even worthy of being men, and I believe there are at least two ways that this statement can be relevant to us.

I personally feel that technological advances today in the 21st century are putting more power in the hands of the few than they are capable of handling, and that the trailing regulation of these advances are allowing injustices to occur. The monopoly of just a few GM companies over 85% of crops grown in the U.S is one example. The total lack of regulation on extra-terrestrial bodies is surely a subject for vehement discourse in a century. However, the lag between the use of new scientific discoveries for exploitation of the masses and the regulation which curbs it has forever been a problem. Any technological advance gives that person advantage over another – and in some cases, a god-like one - an obvious example being the advent of the nuclear age. This is not a new problem, or a new idea - and the idea that we are pushing science 'too far' has forever been a worry, and the exploitation that comes from it is often a case of evil and corruption. But we cannot blame scientific advancement – we must work on the regulation, the anticipation of discovery and the exploitation that could come from it. A great example of regulation curbing exploitation might be the attempt by certain scientific corporations to patent genomes, in competition with the Human Genome Project, being denied by the US Supreme Court. The human genome is now fully accessible to all - not just a small number who can profit from such an important scientific discovery.

This is the debate Rostand wanted to ignite with this quote, but in thinking about his statement, I also began to see how it could highlight a different point: How do certain individuals manage to hold an almost god-like power of the rest of humanity, and why have the people who held these positions of power acted with so little humanity throughout history? I will show that it is the science of Homo sapiens' evolutionary biology that has managed to give such power to Kings, Emperors, Popes, Priests, Shamans, Chiefs etc. I will also show that it is a side effect of this evolution that these 'Gods' seem to act with less 'humanity' (less worthy of being men) than the rest.

The work of Donald Brown in 1991 can point us to 67 cultural universals, a major work in the study of the universal human condition. He identified a few groups (Language and Cognition, Myth and Ritual, Society, and Technology), containing specific observations that can tell us a lot about the way we have developed. Some of the observations are surprisingly specific to be universal, and I will select a few: all cultures have some form of divination i.e. some form of higher god or power whether it be fire worship, monotheism or cargo cults; all have dream interpretation; all have rites of passage; all have control of fire; all have status and roles, leaders and oligarchies, along with more specific religious leaders. All have law and rules, a moral sense of right and wrong, prestige inequalities, and inheritance by family or religious lineage.

FRIENDS OF WBG ART AND LIFESTYLE

Why do we show all of these complex social characteristics, unique to humans? These characteristics are symptoms of a more fundamental part of what it means to be human, put forward by the great social biologist E. O. Wilson: that Homo sapiens are a eusocial species. Eusociality was typically used only to describe the city states of the ants and termites, and a few other mammals. To use Wilson's definition:

"To qualify as eusocial, animals must live in multigenerational communities, practice division of labor and behave altruistically, ready to sacrifice "at least some of their personal interests to that of the group.""

Clearly, humans fit this definition (albeit to a lesser extent to the eusocial insects such as ants, termites and bees) - and as normal as all the conditions in this definition sound to us, it is extremely hard to find species that actually follow it. Of the one and a half million species of animal currently known to us, the trait of eusociality has independently evolved just nineteen times (twenty if you count us). But what influence these twenty species have - the ants and termites have conquered and shaped every continent on earth, the humans have been immensely successful, from a tiny species of ape-like hunter-gatherers less than 100,000 strong half a million years ago to seven billion now. E. O. Wilson calculates that of all the million estimated insect species, the 20 000 showing the eusocial trait account for half of all the insects' biomass.

It's hard to underestimate the influence of eusociality on us as a species. To be truly eusocial, the animals must be to an extent altruistic (selfless or willing to decrease their own fitness in order to improve the fitness of another). Humans categorically are an altruistic species - clear in both the behaviour of ourselves and others which are obviously designed to help others (and I'm not talking about the concept of altruism purely altruisms sake, with no expectation of any kind of reward as I'm not convinced it exists. I'm talking about any kind of action that helps anyone else); and by looking at how ingrained into human culture altruism is. Humans in all cultures take altruism as synonymous with good, and selfish ones as evil - the idea of good and evil is one of the cultural universals. This is clearest in religion - walking into almost any place of prayer the world over you are likely to be assaulted by the same few virtues: charity, honesty, selflessness, generosity – even though religious institutions have rarely followed these same codes. Giving something away or helping somebody else is universally described as a good thing - and this isn't a pure societal construct, when we do altruistically, we feel good – and when we do something selfish, we are seen as bad, and often feel that way especially if our selfishness is to the detriment of another.

Why? Surely giving away half of your mammoth meat to one of your peers is going to have a negative effect on your ability to pass on genes? It comes back to the idea of eusociality. Humans always sort themselves into groups of people, in the past these were nomadic tribes or clans, nowadays it can be seen in social groups or football teams. It is an inherent part of human nature to try and sort ourselves into 'us' and 'them'. For the majority of human history, the difference between 'us' and 'them' has been a matter of life and death. The neighbouring nomadic tribe had a very real chance of ransacking and murdering you and your family

FRIENDS OF WBG ART AND LIFESTYLE

- and the best way to protect yourself against 'them' is to make 'us' more unified. A strong group who think and help each other in acts of generosity or altruism (bravery or selflessness in battle) are more likely to survive a raid by a neighbouring group, or succeed in their own. Being part of a unified team greatly increases your chances of survival. In terms of survival and passing on genes, a cheat will always beat a group of people working altruistically, but groups of cheats will always lose to groups of altruists. If we apply the laws of natural selection here, we will find that a million years down the line, this trait of generosity and altruism has spread through the population, in the form of dopamine release as a reward for generous or altruistic behaviour, rewarding generosity and assuring continued altruistic behaviour. This is so uniform across cultures, and the idea of charitable or altruistic sociality such a staple part of all cultures, I think I am able to use the idea of altruism as a synonym for acting with "humanity".

Moving back to the present day, the power of certain individuals over groups is apparent in a number of different ways. But how, using the rules of eusociality, have such great powers been passed to hereditary rulers and positions, or to institutions such as the church or indeed any other religious group? Despite the fact that groups of altruists will always defeat groups of cheats in battle, there will always be room for cheats to pass on their genes, so long as they do not spread to great a portion of the population. The spread of the cheats can be very quick through an isolated nomadic society, but will be kept in check when the group clashes with other groups, where cooperation is required to conquer them.

The rise of a chief in Palaeolithic society would have been a selfish move, not an altruistic one, and would almost certainly have been achieved through the use of religion. Religion and mythology, making up a number of the cultural universals, would have been the easiest way to gain a mandate from the rest of the group – and in many tribal societies around the world today, the chief is also the high priest of the society. To be able to gain power, an individual must convince the rest of the group that they have a mandate to lead, to take power and give orders to the rest - or that he has a right to greater supplies of food, space, or crucially, women. To convince the rest that he is a spiritual leader, helped by the gods, could come through a number of methods – perhaps through surviving an attack or killing the most people, or by making a correct prediction of a major future event. It is easy to think that the obvious way to gain control over people is by being the strongest, through brute force, but this could not result in continued inherited control like we see in larger societies. The growing old of the chief would result in a challenge by a new alpha male, as we see in prides of lions, or the weakness of heir could also be challenged. The mandate of heaven to a chief and his family does not assure the inheritance of power but it does make it far more likely.

As a religious leader and chief of a clan or tribe, a good way to stay in power is to start to influence religious dogma to prevent attack from other tribes - an even better way to stay in power and spread your genes is to attack other tribes, rape the women, and convert them to the religion and culture of your tribe. There are clues of this ancient method of gaining power in all religions: the chosen people are given a mandate by god, and neighbouring tribes are



dehumanised. Again and again cultures, their religions claim that they are the chosen people under god, and that the neighbouring clans are barbaric infidels. From these ideas come hugely violent religious wars (almost always ordered for an economic or political cause, but disguised as a religious one by the leaders), which sanction mass murder. The massacre of a group of people is a lot easier when you are told you are doing the righteous work of god. The language that has come from these leaders, who could only have got where they are now by cheating their social group, is definitely not the language of humanity. Even though most modern religion today has nowhere near the kind of xenophobia seen in for example the old testament, no priest encourages their congregation to go and check out the mosque over the road, and see if that religion is better for them - religion is inherited, and has been used as a tool for domination of other peoples for almost as long as humans have existed. It is due to a few cheats that religion, and inherited

power of kings and plutocrats was invented – violent and powerful ideas that manage to turn a generally altruistic species into a violent one.

Of modern times, it is my opinion that inherited economic and political power is more of a threat that religious power – but the principles remain the same. If the less altruistic leaders of our society are not kept in check, they will use the technological advances that Rostand was fearful of, and evade regulation. The leaders, the ones in possession of power must act altruistically, and ensure that science does not simply add power to the leaders, but to all humanity. Evolution blessed us with eusociality, and the vast majority of us have altruism bred into our genes and for that we are lucky; yet eusociality of our species has also left us susceptible to the raising up of individuals to god-like heights. Science has made some of us gods before they are worthy of being men.

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The Friends of WBGS Family Draw



For as little as £25 per year you could be in with a chance of winning a cash prize whilst at the same time helping to support the boys weekly clubs and societies.



Please help us to fill in the missing pieces by signing up for our family draw. To enter simply complete your details overleaf and the winners will be drawn once every school term and listed on the WBGS website

Thank you for your support and good luck!!

Family Draw Application Form - The Friends of Watford Grammar School for Boys

STANDING ORDER I would like to join and apply fornumber(s) completed mandate. I understand that I may cancel at any time (subject to the minimum 12 month period) by 25% of the income raised is given as prizes and the remaining 75% goes di-Winners are drawn once every school term and will be notified by email or instructing my bank/building society to cease further * I would like to pay by standing order and attach a payments against the standing order authority. at £25.00 each and agree to the rules below: telephone and listed at www.watfordboys.org Date rectly to benefit our children at WBGS Postcode Mobile For admin use only: Share Numbers Telephone Signed Address Name Email

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