

A WADHAM SCHOOL STUDENT PUBLICATION

THE QUILL



BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: REAL STORIES, REAL LIVES



**RESILIENCE, RECOVERY AND
MOVING FORWARD**
JJ CHALMERS - MARINE,
PRESENTER & INVICTUS CHAMPION



POLAND 2027
World Scout
26th Jamboree
Scout Mondial



**WORKING THE
PATH TO
POLAND**
RAISING FUNDS
FOR 2027

**RETHINKING THE PAST:
WHAT HISTORY REALLY
TELLS US**
Dr Kate Lister - Historian
and Podcaster



HISTORY MAKERS
Y8S WIN DISTRICT CUP!



**FROM FIRST CARTWHEEL
TO NATIONAL CHAMPION**
DICKER TAKES THE TITLE!



NEWS, REVIEWS & OPINIONS



DANCE ON THE SPOT!
LOCAL MP ADAM
DANCE VISITS WADHAM

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As we move further into the summer term, this edition of The Quill celebrates a period of achievement, opportunity and growth across our school community.

In this issue, we are proud to showcase the many ways in which our students continue to challenge themselves and succeed — whether through academic competitions, creative projects or sporting performances. From national titles and district victories to impressive results in the UKMT Mathematics Challenge, this edition reflects the determination and ambition that define life at our school.

We are also delighted to feature interviews with JJ Chalmers and Kate Lister. Although their fields are very different, both offer powerful insights into resilience, perspective and the importance of understanding ourselves and the world around us. Their experiences encourage us to think more deeply, challenge assumptions and recognise the many different paths to success.

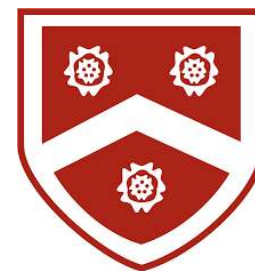
Beyond these features, students have engaged with a wide range of enriching opportunities outside the classroom, including a visit from local MP Adam Dance, inspiring guest speakers, outdoor learning, STEM projects and performance workshops. These experiences continue to broaden horizons and encourage students to think critically about their futures.

This edition also reflects the strength of our wider community through partnerships with local primary schools, alongside the usual range of reviews, opinion pieces and creative writing from across Wadham.

At its heart, The Quill is a platform to celebrate the diverse talents and ideas of our students. Whether you enjoy writing, photography, art, sport, or simply have something to say, we encourage you to contribute to future editions.

Thank you to everyone who helped make Issue 24 possible. We hope you enjoy reading it and feel inspired to be part of the next edition.

Peter Hopwood ~ Editor



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SPRINGING INTO ACTION: WADHAM SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS THIS TERM!

FROM TAKE-OFF TO THE GRAND FINALE: PPOJ SOAR IN NATIONAL STEM CHALLENGE

By Gemma Burton

Some of our Year 8 students recently took part in the exciting Flying Start Challenge, organised by Leonardo at RNAS Yeovilton on Thursday 19th March. The event brought together 39 teams from schools across the local area, creating a vibrant and highly competitive atmosphere filled with innovation, teamwork and hands-on STEM exploration.

In the weeks and months leading up to the event, students dedicated significant time and effort to the challenge. Each team was tasked with designing and building a hand glider, with the goal of achieving the longest and straightest possible flight. This required careful consideration of aerodynamics, materials, stability and design, as well as creative thinking to refine and improve their models through testing and evaluation.

On the day itself, students were immersed in a packed programme of activities. Teams presented their work through detailed posters and presentations, explaining their design choices and the engineering principles behind their gliders. They then took part in a

range of STEM-based challenges designed to test problem-solving, communication and collaboration skills. The event built towards the exciting final stage—launching their gliders inside a large aircraft hangar, where precision, preparation and teamwork were put to the test.

Our team—Poppy Spurway, Phoebe Swain, Olivia Turton and Jack Wood, competing under the team name PPOJ—performed exceptionally well throughout the competition. They demonstrated outstanding creativity in their design process,



strong communication when presenting their ideas, and impressive resilience when refining and testing their glider. Their efforts were rewarded with an outstanding 4th place finish overall, narrowly missing out on a podium position in a highly competitive field.

This achievement secured them an exciting place in the Grand Final held at Aerospace Bristol on Friday 15th May. Building on their earlier success, the PPOJ Pilots rose to the occasion once again, representing the school with confidence and enthusiasm. During the finale, they flew their glider alongside other finalist teams and proudly showcased their poster, explaining their journey and design development to judges and visitors.

They took part in a variety of additional STEM challenges throughout the day, further developing their teamwork, creativity and problem-solving skills in a new and inspiring environment.

Overall, the experience provided an incredible opportunity for the students to apply their learning in a real-world context, while developing key skills such as collaboration, resilience and innovation. We are extremely proud of all the students involved for their enthusiasm, dedication and excellent representation of the school throughout both stages of the competition.



GIVING PEOPLE BACK THEIR HEARING: WADHAM STUDENT SUPPORTS LIFE-CHANGING RESEARCH

By William McKelvey

On ITV News on 6th May 2026, an opera singer, Janine Roebuck, was featured after revealing she had hidden her hearing loss for 30 years. During that time, she relied heavily on lip reading and memory to continue performing. In 2019, Janine underwent “life changing” surgery and received bilateral cochlear implants. At present, adults on the NHS are typically only offered a single cochlear implant.

I have supported research and studies with the University of Southampton Auditory Implant Service and Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospital in London as part of the BEARS (Both Ears) Project. Because of this work, along with the help of other young people involved, 250 adults in the UK will receive bilateral cochlear implants this year. I have helped people like Janine to change their lives. I am still helping with research when needed.

My family and friends are very proud of me.



BIG IDEAS AND BIG CONVERSATIONS **AS MP VISITS WADHAM**

On April 24th, members of the student council welcomed Adam Dance MP to Wadham School.

Following a brief tour of the school with Mr Burgas (with much lobbying for a 3G pitch, a dedicated drop-off zone for parents and funds to improve site accessibility), Adam was delivered to the newly opened B05 multi-use classroom for a working lunch.



Plates loaded and drinks poured, Adam and student council members spent 40 minutes discussing a range of topics regarding education in the local area and the values and reasons behind Adam's decision to become an MP.

Both Adam and our students spoke humbly and with passion, showing a shared appreciation for the moral purpose of education. Although Adam was clear to point out that no promises could be made, he did explain how students and the school could seek his support in areas that will benefit our local community – we're already on it!

We are grateful to Adam for making time in his busy schedule to visit Wadham School and look forward to welcoming him back in the future – this was the beginning of what we believe will be a positive working relationship.

WHAT DID ADAM DANCE HAVE TO SAY?

As part of Adam's visit to Wadham School on April 24th, members of the student council were given the opportunity to engage directly with him during a question-and-answer session. Students had prepared a thoughtful range of questions in advance, focusing on key issues affecting young people, education, and the local community.

The discussion provided valuable insight into the role of an MP, as well as Adam's personal motivations and perspectives. Below is a selection of the questions posed by students, along with his responses.

1. Every other school secondary school in the area has a 3G pitch. We have not got one. How can you support us to change this? - Ciaran Emmerson

I think that one of the things that you see across the world is politics is offering things and then not changing things. Your 3G pitch bid has been going for a long time.

I am putting pressure on them to try to get the Pitch at Wadham. However, it is unlikely due to the current funding model with the FA. I can't promise but I will try.

2. The pavements are very narrow as you leave Wadham and the roads are very fast. How could you support us in making walking home safer? This is especially important as there is lots of new houses going into the area, making more cars on the roads. - Craig Z

I would be happy to engage with the local councillors. I would be happy to walk the route at drop

off and pick to understand the issues around the pavements.

I would be happy to work with highways to look at the possibility of having 20 miles hour limit around the school. I worked on this around South Petherton. Unfortunately, most of the people doing the speeding is the parents in these areas.

3. The school really struggles to make our site accessible to all our students. Currently our lifts are old and are often broken. Some of my friends find it difficult to move around school. how can you help this? - Max Welch

This is unacceptable that some of your friends find it hard to get around site. I would be happy to work with Mr Burgas to see what the Local Authority can do to support this and find the funding to improve the lifts.

4. Why did you want to be an MP? - Hedley Egre

I wanted to make a difference. I got involved in politics at 15. I got bullied at school but the youth club supported me. The conservates cut the youth provision, I ran a campaign to get the youth club re-opened. Paddy Ashdown knocked on my door during the campaign and He help get the youth club open again.

I then got elected to town council and planning. I like helping people with issues.

As an MP, I have secured the dentist in Crewkerne, the contract for Leonardo in Yeovil. This contract is worth 320 million to GDP and 1.4million to Yeovil college. I say I work for you, to serve my community. From pot hole to environmental health. I am also championing neurodiversity, I would like every child to have a screening test for neurodiversity in primary school to support all children with early diagnosis.

5. What is your proudest achievement? - Alice Henly

The Leonardo Contract is my proudest achievement so far. If this contract has not been renewed it would have damage the area for many years to come. On the Monday the secretary of state awarded the contract, we have the celebration planned, the Italians were on their way and all off Leonardo's were ready.

Then Rachel reeves pulled the contract. The Italians got back on their planes and the whole of Leonardo's had to wait again. This was on the Thursday, If this contract did not go through it would have meant 16,000 redundancies of which the average wage is £58.000. It would have meant losing the 1.4 million to Yeovil College and the opportunity for Yeovil to be a defence college.

There was a lot of work to do to ensure the contract went through, this meant a lot of lobbying to all the parties involved. Now the contract has been awarded and Yeovil College has their funding and Leonardo's are now building a solar farm to ensure that the rest of Yeovil can expand and have enough power.

6. What was school like for you? Corey Wadkins.

I did not like school I have ADHD and Dyslexia and I was bullied at school. I found it really hard until I got support. When I got the right support with Teaching Assistant's in my school I felt I could manage school. I was lucky to have the support.

It was difficult in the beginning, However, School is there to set you up for the future. You need to work hard, so you don't have to re-set your qualifications at college. After school I set up my own landscape Gardening business and it was school that teaches you to deliver things on time, to have



good behaviour, to connect with each other and finally to set you up for your future.

7. What is the hardest thing about being an MP? - Harry Willmott.

Hardest things about – Not knowing and starting off the day with having a list. Half way through the day changing and then getting a call and having to run back to Parliament. With ADHD and Dyslexia I find this hard to manage as I cant plan. Very tiring not knowing what you are actually doing.

8. Has being an MP lived up to your expectations? - Asha England

Yes in some parts. However, other parts I have found much harder. I did not know when taking on the job that I would need security. I am still just Adam, but it shocked me to have security. I also did not realise that people would recognise me, I went into Tesco with a baseball cap and 9 people stopped me. I felt I could not do my normal shopping and went elsewhere to get other items. I felt I could not buy gin or chocolate and I felt I was being judged. I also really enjoy it and love it. I am passionate about making a difference. The last Conservative Government failed us.

9. What is your main goal as an MP? – Alfie Charlesworth

My main goal is to make sure that I deliver for the local community and push change for neurodiverse people. It is also important that the community get to speak to me.

10. What are you doing to support young people with their learning difficulties? – Harriet Keane.

Teachers are fantastic but they are not getting enough training to support them with learning difficulties. They are only receiving 2 hours of SEND training. The Government has Pledged to give 2 million for teaching training and also investing in SEND hub's. However, in my view we need more teaching assistants in every school. . School not funded enough for teaching assistances. We also need to support young people with their mental health.

When I was a young Adult there was an organisation called Connections, However, they are not there anymore. This is also true for school nurses. Schools need to get back to basics with support in England and invest early on. I also need to work hard to support my learning needs. I have all my speeches on Yellow paper, and have gaps between each line. When I have a difficult work I draw it in bold and then draw a picture to help me with the words.

11. What do you think about the new legislations about banning mobile phones in school by law? - Ella Priddle

I find this question a hard one. I have two ways to look at it. My mobile phone in school was an old one, you could only play snake on it. However, now I need my technology to support my learning needs. I need my ipad and iphone to read my emails, and help me organise my day. Banning mobile phones will be difficult to police and I think that young people need access to their mobile phones on the way to and from school.

12. What do you think about the changes of having no fried food or sugary food sold within the canteen? – Alfie Charlesworth

When I was at school enjoyed sugary food but it was not good for me. We need to change eating habits in school. Some students don't have the life skills to cook and for some students the meal at school is their only good meal of the day. I have been working with Jamie Oliver to support more wholesome foods to be in school.



13. People speeding in the local area. This caused an accident in Merriott and my Mum wrote to you for support. How can you support? - Poppy Best

Poppy this is very personal question as you and your Mum have written to me to support this in Merriott. I would suggest that you come to my offices and you can book an appointment to talk about your concerns.

14. What did it feel like when you were in parliament and the other MP got ejected? – Harry Wilmott

It was Leigh Anderson that got ejected from Parliament, He broke the rules and needed to go. I knew something was going to go wrong, He said he was going to go for Keir Starmer and then he was rude and abrupt. He then got ejected. For someone of his age, he needs to grow up.

15. How much more housing is going into the area – are you going to try to save greenspace in the area. Over housing could take away green space and walking. – Alfie. Charlesworth

One of the main problems is that there is not enough housing in the area of Somerset. I would prefer if they built on brown fill sites. Like the Cattle Market in Yeovil. However, this is more costly for developers so they don't want to build on these sites. The main issue is that the Government and previous Governments have made it much harder to stop development with their new laws.

It is also a problem that there is not enough social housing in the area. For example there was a 1 bedroom bungalow in Merriott that went on house finders and 821 people bided on the house. This shows how important affordable housing is going to be. I am making sure that any new development has access to parks and also has green walk ways for people to use.

16. What are you trying to do to support the local environment? - Bella Veres

I owned my own landscape company and this is an important issue for me. We have had a lot of flooding lately and this is due to climate change. Climate change is real, some MP don't believe in climate change but I do really believe we need to make actions to make a change.

I have supported the following, each new house is build with solar panels and heat exchange heat pumps. Litter is also important to stop, it is important to support our animals and small creates and environment. I am also pushing policies on Sewage in our rivers.

17. Why is the octagon theatre not open at present? I really like the theatre – Chloe Masterman

The theatre is currently closed. What happened was South Somerset district council applied for funding, then the council changed. We have now put planning permission in and Yeovil Town Council are taking it over and it should re-open at the end of 2028.

18. What are you doing to support anti social behaviour in the area?

This is very difficult as it happens everywhere. I have worked in Yeovil and in Glovers way. I have worked to get the abandoned building knocked down and make for larger green spaces. This is because anti social behaviour happens less in open spaces.

The police in Yeovil area also doing a scheme where vulnerable people can be walked to their cars or home after work if they are concerned.



FINDING THEIR VOICES: OPERA WORKSHOPS INSPIRE STUDENTS

By Bella Taylor

Throughout March, Wadham School hosted a series of engaging opera workshops involving students from across the school, as well as pupils from three local primary schools.

The sessions gave us a brilliant opportunity to develop our performance skills, build confidence, and explore the world of opera in a fun and supportive environment.

We worked with experienced workshop leaders who helped us learn more about vocal technique, expression, and how to tell a story through singing. It was really interesting to see how performers use their voices and emotions to bring characters to life on stage, and we had lots of chances to try this out for ourselves.

The opera workshop was really fun and made me feel much more confident about performing in front of other people.

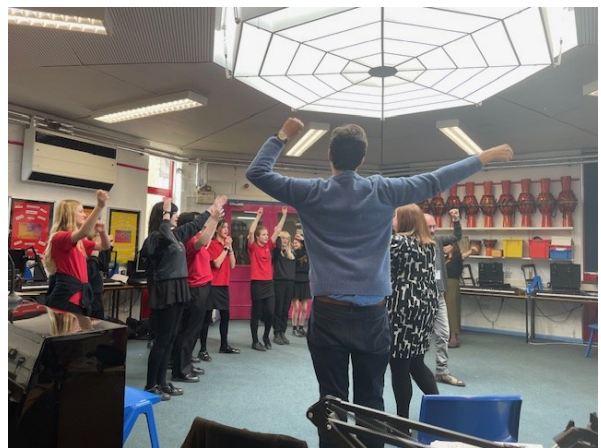
It was especially nice that three primary schools joined in, including my little brother's school. Being able to sing opera with him made me really happy and made the experience even more special.

I've been trying to teach myself a bit about opera in my own time, so taking part in this workshop really helped me learn more about it. It helped me understand how important expression and emotion are when singing, and how much they can change a performance.

Working with younger pupils from the primary schools also made the experience really enjoyable.

It was great to see everyone joining in, supporting each other, and having fun while learning something new together.

If you are thinking about trying opera or performing in the future, I would definitely recommend taking part in a workshop like this. It's a great experience, you learn a lot, and it's really enjoyable at the same time.



FROM THE HOUSE OF LORDS TO QUIDDITCH DREAMS: INSPIRING TALKS SPARK BIG AMBITIONS AT WADHAM

By Beth Church

This term, Wadham students have been fortunate to hear from a range of inspiring speakers, offering insight into both future opportunities and remarkable life experiences.

A highlight of the term was a visit from Dido Harding, Member of the House of Lords, Senior Steward of The Jockey Club, and former Non-Executive Chair of NHS Improvement. Speaking to an audience of 150 students, she shared her personal journey, achievements, and the profound influence of key figures in her life—especially her grandfather.

Baroness Harding spoke candidly about her experiences in the House of Lords and the challenges she faced during her time as CEO of TalkTalk, including the difficult decision to be open and transparent during a major cyberattack. Her honesty and resilience left a strong impression on students. She also engaged enthusiastically in a Q&A session, inviting students to share their views on the proposed social media ban for under-16s.

It was a privilege to hear such an honest and inspiring account of her life, and we were delighted to welcome her to Wadham.

In addition, representatives from Yeovil College University Centre delivered an informative session to Year 7 and 8 students about pathways into higher education. The talk explored different modes of study, debunked common myths about university, and introduced students to the wide range of courses available.

Students were particularly intrigued to learn about unique degrees such as a Master's in Magic and Occult Science and a BSc in Tournament Golf. The session also highlighted how university can be affordable and even mentioned opportunities like joining a Quidditch team—sparking excitement and curiosity among the audience.

What Students Said:

"I thought it might be a bit boring, but I was pleasantly surprised—it was really interesting. I loved her story about her grandad and admired how honest she was about the TalkTalk hack." — Stevie Watts

"The Yeovil College talk was very interesting. I was surprised by how many jobs and levels you can achieve." — Sebastian Glaubitz

"Both talks were very engaging and informative. They gave me ideas about what I might like to do in the future." — Ted Hartley-Smith

"We learned about lots of opportunities and even did activities about celebrities and their degrees." — Oliver Thompson

"The talks helped us understand how to apply for further education and learn more about different careers." — Yasmin Hill

Overall, the talks have been both inspiring and informative, helping students to think more deeply about their futures. We look forward to welcoming more guest speakers to Wadham in the future.





UK Maths Trust

MATHS MINDS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE: UKMT SUCCESS FOR YEARS 7 & 8

By Katherine Higgins

On 29th April, students across the school took part in the Junior UKMT Mathematics Challenge, a nationally recognised competition designed to stretch and inspire young mathematicians.

Over the course of 60 minutes, participants tackled 25 carefully crafted multiple-choice questions, each requiring not just knowledge, but logical thinking, creativity, and resilience. With around 270,000 students entering the challenge each year and only the top 50% receiving a Bronze, Silver, or Gold certificate, it is a significant achievement to be recognised.

Students from 7RE1 and 8RE1 approached the challenge with enthusiasm and determination, and their efforts were rewarded with an impressive 27 certificates across the two year groups. This is a fantastic reflection of both their individual commitment and the strong mathematical culture within the school.

A special mention must go to Teddy Pithers, who achieved an outstanding score of 75 points. Not only did this earn him the only Gold certificate in the school, but also the titles of "Best in School" and one of the highest scores across all participants. Equally impressive was Harrison Ford, who scored 73 points, securing a Silver certificate and the accolade of "Best in Year 7."

Beyond the top achievers, many students demonstrated excellent problem-solving skills and perseverance throughout the challenge. Competitions like the UKMT not only celebrate achievement but also encourage students to think more deeply about mathematics, building confidence and curiosity that extends beyond the classroom. All those who took part should be extremely proud of their efforts.

Year 7 Results

Silver: Oliver Brocklehurst, Harrison Ford, Chloe Masterman

Bronze: William Charles, Maddison Cole, Sebastian Glaubitz, Harriet Grand, Fen Hopkirk, Elsie Jones, Stanley Mosley, Leon Priddle, Mabel Salzer

Year 8 Results

Gold: Teddy Pithers

Silver: Max Collins, Bertie Haldane, Paige Hicks, Edward Parcell, Finley Swinnerton

Bronze: Cody Adams, Lucy Ellis, Susanna Hunt, Joshua Isaac, Oscar Knief, Anna Langford, Mya Langford, Oscar Waugh-Bacchus, Jack Wood

A fantastic achievement for all involved—well done to everyone who took part!



ON THE MOVE AND IN THE WILD: YEAR 10 OUTDOOR LEARNING IN ACTION

By **Jessie Vowles**

The Year 10 Outdoor Learning group, led by Mrs Vowles, have had a very busy and enriching term, taking part in a range of activities designed to develop independence, confidence, and practical life skills.

As part of their ongoing Travel Training Certificate work, students have also completed an additional BTEC unit, Navigating from One Place to Another. This has included travelling independently on public transport, with trips to Yeovil, Boswell's Café, local shops, and Hollywood Bowl. Students have been actively involved in planning journeys, including deciding which buses to catch and calculating departure times from school and arrival times at bus stops. As a result, they are becoming increasingly confident in reading bus timetables and using public transport safely and independently. These experiences are helping to build important skills for future life.

In addition to travel training, the group also visited the Somerset Rural Life Museum in Glastonbury. During the visit, students took part in a Protecting our Pollinators workshop, where they learned about the essential role bees and other pollinators play in food production. Students discovered that one third of the food we eat depends on pollination, highlighting just how important bees are to the environment.

The workshop included hands-on activities such as making seed bombs using wildflower seeds, clay, and soil, as well as creating bee-inspired art prints. Students also enjoyed interactive learning activities including a bee "wiggle dance" game and a running activity in the barn. In the afternoon, they explored the museum on a self-guided tour, learning about Somerset's rural heritage. Highlights included the historic farmhouse setting, a stone barn dating back to the 1300s, Victorian farming tools, and even a taxidermy horse once used on the farm.

Student feedback reflected how much they enjoyed the experience:

"I liked making the seed bomb"

"I enjoyed the bee running activity in the barn"

"I liked walking around the museum and wearing the farmer's hat"

"I liked the bee wiggle game"

Overall, it has been a busy and highly successful term, with students gaining valuable life skills, new knowledge, and increased confidence. Well done to all involved for their positive attitudes and engagement throughout the term.



DARTMOOR CONQUERED: WADHAM STUDENTS COMPLETE TEN TORS

By Laura Andrews

Between 8th and 10th May, four Wadham School students successfully took on and completed the demanding Ten Tors Challenge on Dartmoor—an event renowned for testing endurance, navigation skills, and teamwork across some of the UK’s most rugged terrain.

Harry Willmott, Evan Pearce, and Charlie Gibson tackled the gruelling 35-mile route as part of Blackdown Scouts, demonstrating outstanding resilience, teamwork, and determination throughout the weekend. Setting out on Saturday morning, the team covered an impressive 46km, navigating challenging moorland terrain and reaching as far as they were permitted—eight tors into their route—before camping overnight at Standon Farm.

After an early wake-up at 4:30am on Sunday, they prepared for the final push and set off as soon as checkpoints opened at 6:00am. Despite tired legs and demanding conditions, they showed great perseverance, completing the final 16km and successfully reaching their last two tors. The team arrived at Okehampton Camp at 10:30am, earning a well-deserved second breakfast after their efforts.

In an extraordinary achievement, the group were the first team to finish on their route card, highlighting the strength of their preparation, navigation, and teamwork under pressure.

Also deserving huge congratulations is Henry Maclean, who completed the same 35-mile route with the Yeovil Air Cadets—another fantastic accomplishment that reflects great determination and resilience.

The Ten Tors Challenge is organised annually by the British Army and challenges young people to navigate independently across open moorland, visiting a series of checkpoints (tors) over two days without external assistance. Completing the event is a significant achievement, requiring months of training, physical fitness, and strong teamwork.

All four students have represented Wadham with pride—an outstanding accomplishment.

Well done to Harry, Evan, Charlie, and Henry!



**TEN TORS
2026**

8th-10th May

FROM THE FIELD TO THE FINISH LINE: WADHAM SPORTS ROUNDUP!

ENDURANCE, EFFORT, AND HOUSE SPIRIT SHINE AT WADHAM CROSS COUNTRY 2026

By Laura Manning

In March 2026, Wadham School hosted its annual House Cross Country event, bringing together students from all year groups to represent Powell, Berry, Gibson, and Cooper Houses. The event showcased outstanding determination, resilience, and house spirit, with strong participation across the school community.

Team Competition Results

Each house competed to achieve the lowest average points score (where 1st place = 1 point), meaning the lowest score indicated the strongest overall performance.

Powell – 71 participants, average points score: 73

Berry – 71 participants, average points score: 84

Gibson – 100 participants, average points score: 56

Cooper – 68 participants, average points score: 57

Gibson House delivered an exceptional performance, fielding the highest number of competitors while also achieving the lowest average points score, securing the top overall position. Cooper House also performed strongly, closely following Gibson in the standings.

Berry House recorded a solid team effort, while Powell House demonstrated consistent participation and commitment throughout the event.

Individual Winners

Year 7/8 Boys: Finn Swinnerton

Year 7/8 Girls: Evie Webster

Year 9/10 Boys: Fletcher Aslett

Year 9/10 Girls: Bethany Lee

Summary

Overall, the event was a great success. Students showed excellent effort and perseverance throughout, with closely contested races across all year groups. The atmosphere reflected strong house pride, teamwork, and enthusiasm from start to finish.



WILLMOTT WINS TITLE**By Laura Manning**

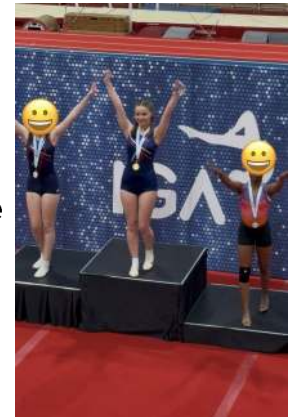
On March 15th Harry Willmott competed at the Wells Junior Badminton Singles Tournament held today at Wells Cathedral School. He impressed throughout the competition, progressing confidently through the qualifiers and semi-finals to secure his place in the U14 final. In the final, Harry delivered a strong and composed performance, winning two straight games to claim 1st place overall. A fantastic achievement—well played, Harry!

**FROM FIRST CARTWHEELS TO NATIONAL CHAMPION: MY GYMNASTICS JOURNEY****By Isabella Dicker**

I am Isabella Dicker (9WLD), and I have recently been crowned the 2026 IGA National Tumbling Champion in Women's Level 6 (13–14 years). In this reflection, I want to share my gymnastics journey so far and the experiences that have helped me reach this level, from starting out as a young child to becoming a national champion. My gymnastics journey started when I was three years old. I began with general gymnastics and loved it straight away. As I got older, I focused more on tumbling, which quickly became my favourite discipline. I really enjoy learning new skills and constantly pushing myself to improve.



Things improved even more when a high-performance tumbling coach joined Orchard Gymnastics. He is strict and pushes us very hard, but I know it's because he wants us to succeed and believes in us. He has helped me improve so much and become a stronger gymnast. One of my favourite parts of gymnastics is the friendships I've made at Orchard. We work hard together, support each other when things don't go as planned, and celebrate each other's successes. Having that team around me makes training even more enjoyable.



I was incredibly proud to become the IGA National Champion for Women's Level 6 Tumbling (13–14 years) and win the gold medal. On the day of the competition, I felt nervous when I first arrived, but mostly I was excited to compete. When they announced my name as the gold medallist, I honestly couldn't believe it at first—I was just so happy!

I would like to say a huge thank you to my family. They support me all the time, even though I know it's not always easy with my training schedule. My mum especially spends hours waiting for me every week so I can do the sport I love, and that means so much to me. Having my family there cheering me on helps me feel calm and confident.

One of my favourite things about competitions is travelling and staying away. Going to Milton Keynes was really exciting. I love packing my bag and getting ready for competition days. Staying in a hotel with my family the night before is really special because we get to relax, have fun, and spend time together, which helps me feel less nervous. I am really proud to represent my club, and even prouder to have become National Champion. I have worked very hard to reach this level, and I'm excited to see where tumbling takes me next.

FROM RIVALS TO CHAMPIONS: YEAR 8 BOYS MAKE SCHOOL HISTORY

By Craig Owen

Big congratulations to the Year 8 Boys football team who won the South Somerset District Cup at the end of April! In doing so, they have made history for the school by becoming the first ever Wadham Year 8 team to lift the title. Well done, boys – we could not be prouder!



The journey to the trophy included a hard-fought semi-final against current holders and local rivals Holyrood. After a slightly slow and disjointed start, the team grew into the game and produced the strong, dominant football they have shown all season. The breakthrough came from a superb 25-yard strike by Max H, securing a 1-0 victory and a place in the final.

In the final, Wadham faced another local rival, Stanchester. Both sides showed clear quality, but Wadham were able to largely neutralise the Stanchester attack. Goalkeeper Joe W produced a series of outstanding saves to keep Stanchester at bay whenever they broke through.

In the second half, Wadham's attacking quality shone through. A perfectly delivered pass from Harvey B found Finn S, who calmly finished to open the scoring. Harvey B then capped off an excellent performance with an impressive long-range effort of his own to secure a 2-0 victory and the cup title.



Players of the Match: Joe W – for his outstanding shot-stopping, and Harvey B – for his pinpoint passing and overall influence.

Goalscorers: Max H (1), Finn S (1), Harvey B (1)

YEAR 10 BOYS ARE DISTRICT RUNNERS-UP!

Also at the end of April, the Year 10 boys' team took on a strong Sexeys side in the Semi-final.

Playing with the wind in the first half, Wadham started strongly and scored an early goal thanks to Rusty. Sexeys equalised just before half time. Wadham then dominated the second half, racking up multiple chances before two fantastic finishes from Jasper and Harvey put the game to bed and gave Wadham a 3-1 win.

In the final that followed, the boys took on local rivals and current champions Stanchester. Despite starting well, and scoring early thanks to Otto, Stanchester took control and their quality shone through.

The boys battled the whole game and stayed in the fight, only for late goals from Stanchester moving victory beyond them. Wadham boys finished runners up and can be extremely proud of their efforts and attitudes to school football this year.

LEAGUE CHAMPIONS! JASPER STEWART AND TAUNTON TOWN WHITES EYE NATIONAL STAGE

Jasper Stewart (Year 10), along with teammate Noah Hodge, plays for Taunton Town Whites U15 in the Junior Premier League (JPL) Championship South West. The league is split into Red and White divisions to manage the large number of teams across the region.

The team has had an excellent season, recently securing the White League title. They are now preparing for an exciting end-of-season play-off campaign, where they will face Cirencester (winners of the Red League) in a semi-final on 16th May. If successful, they will progress to the final on 23rd May, with the opportunity to qualify for the national stage.

Individually, Jasper has made a strong impact throughout the season. Out of 15 matches, he has been named Player of the Match four times and also received a Player of the Month award, highlighting his consistency and contribution to the team's success.

A fantastic season so far for Jasper and his teammates — with even more still to come in the play-offs.



YEAR 8 SHOWS DETERMINATION AND BRAVERY AT CALVERT WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL WEEKEND

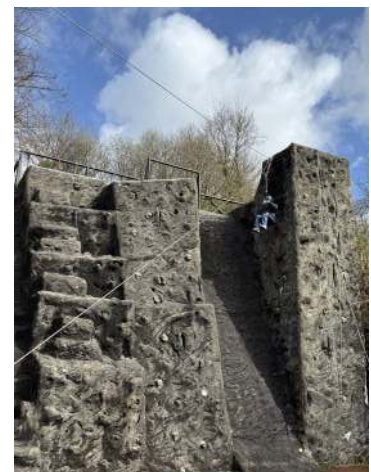
Over the weekend of 28–29 March, Archie Blunn took part in a wheelchair basketball residential with his club at the Calvert Trust Exmoor.

The experience was both challenging and rewarding, giving him the opportunity to develop his skills while also facing and overcoming personal fears.

Archie showed real bravery throughout the weekend, fully engaging in the activities on offer and pushing himself outside of his comfort zone. His efforts were a credit to both himself and his team.

Photos from the weekend highlight Archie's determination and positive attitude throughout the experience, as well as the supportive environment provided by the residential.

It was an inspiring weekend that demonstrated Archie's resilience, commitment, and enthusiasm for his sport.



SPEED, STRENGTH AND SUCCESS AT AREA ATHLETICS**By Laura Manning**

On 6th May, 15 students from Wadham School proudly represented the school at the Area Athletics Competition held at Yeovil Athletics Track. The event brought together talented young athletes from across the region, creating a competitive and exciting atmosphere throughout the day.

Students were selected based on the athletic ability, commitment, and progress they have demonstrated over the past year, and there were high hopes that many would achieve strong results and potentially qualify for the next round of competition.



Particularly impressive were our Year 7 students, who were competing in their very first athletics event. Despite facing competitors up to two years older in the Junior Boys' and Girls' categories, they rose to the challenge brilliantly. Their confidence, determination, and composure were clear to see, marking them out as a very promising group for the future. Special congratulations go to Ben Hutchings (1500m), Reuben Caines (800m), and Chloe Pattenden, who performed superbly to reach the 100m final, finishing 8th overall.



The standout performance of the day came from Fletcher Aslett, who delivered an excellent run to win the 1500m in a time of 4:56. This achievement places him in a strong position as he now awaits selection for the next stage, the Somerset Schools competition. Fin Swinnerton also impressed in the same event, securing 3rd place with a well-paced run and a time of 5:16.

Raffy Pilton demonstrated both speed and resilience by competing in multiple events, ultimately finishing 3rd in the 100m final with an impressive time of 12.87 seconds. Anna Smeeton also claimed 3rd place in the 1500m, showing great endurance and race awareness.

There were several other notable performances across the team. Evie Webster achieved a personal best in the 800m, reflecting her hard work and improvement in training, while Jacob Wood ran strongly to finish 4th in the same event with a time of 2:34. Tessa Hayes produced a determined performance in the 200m, progressing from 8th place in the heats to finish 5th in the final, recording a time of 31.03 seconds.

Every student who attended contributed to the team's success with their effort, attitude, and sportsmanship. Well done to Sam Swatridge, Harry Wilmott, Olive Caines, and Cosima Brown for representing Wadham School with such commitment and pride throughout the day.

Overall, it was a highly successful and enjoyable event, with many encouraging performances and clear progress shown across all age groups. The experience gained will be invaluable as students continue to develop their skills and confidence in athletics.

The next athletics event will take place on 24th June, where the school hopes to take a full coach of enthusiastic competitors. Any students who have enjoyed their athletics lessons and would like to get involved are encouraged to attend the athletics club, held after school on Wednesdays, and to inform the PE department of their interest.

YEAR 11 STAR LIGHTS UP ST JAMES PARK ON DREAM DEBUT

By Harriet Kelly

Year 11 student Dolly Parker made an exciting milestone appearance on Saturday 9th May, stepping onto the pitch for Exeter City Women at St James Park in front of a crowd of around 600 spectators. It marked her first appearance for the team at the historic home ground, a proud moment in what is hoped to be the beginning of a promising football career.

Playing in such an atmosphere is a significant achievement for any young player, and Dolly's debut reflects both her talent and dedication to the sport.

Everyone at school will be looking forward to following her progress closely in the coming season and beyond, as she continues her journey in football with Exeter City Women.

We wish her every success for what promises to be an exciting future in the game.



WADHAM SCHOOL PE CLUBS



PE LUNCH CLUBS SUMMER TERM 1.20-1.55pm

★ WEAR TRAINERS ★ REMOVE ALL JEWELLERY ★ TIE UP HAIR ★

MONDAY	Year 10 GCSE PE PRACTICAL SUPPORT (invite only)		HXK/CKO
TUESDAY	Years 7 & 8 Table Tennis (CKO)	Years 9/10/11 Badminton (CKO)	
WEDNESDAY	Years 7 & 8 Badminton (JJC)	Year 9/10/11 Table Tennis (JJC)	
THURSDAY	7/8/9 Indoor Cricket (HXK)	10/11 Indoor Cricket (HXK)	9/10 Table Tennis (CKO)
FRIDAY	ALL YEARS Basketball (LJM)	Year 9/10/11 Table Tennis (LJM)	Year 11 GCSE PE Theory Support (JJC)



★ WEAR TRAINERS ★ REMOVE ALL JEWELLERY ★ TIE UP HAIR ★

AFTERSCHOOL SPORTS CLUBS SUMMER TERM 3.00-4.00pm

★ WEAR FULL PE KIT ★ REMOVE ALL JEWELLERY ★ TIE UP HAIR ★

MONDAY	All Years Badminton (N. Bailey) <small>*£1.50/session pay via lpay*</small>	Year 10 AEP Support CKO/JJC/HXK	
TUESDAY	7 & 8 Rounders (LJM/HXK)	9/10/11 Rounders (JJC)	
WEDNESDAY	All Years Athletics (LJM)	All Years Trampoline (JJC)	Advanced Badminton (invite only)
THURSDAY	7 & 8 Cricket (DTQ)	9 & 10 Cricket (CKO)	
FRIDAY	All Years Badminton (N. Bailey) <small>*£1.50/session pay via lpay*</small>		



★ WEAR FULL PE KIT ★ REMOVE ALL JEWELLERY ★ TIE UP HAIR ★

★ GET INVOLVED • HAVE FUN • IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS • BE PART OF THE TEAM! ★



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INTERVIEW

CHALLENGING WHAT
WE THINK WE KNOW
ABOUT THE PAST:
A CONVERSATION
WITH HISTORIAN,
AUTHOR AND
PODCASTER DR
KATE LISTER

**Foreword by Peter Hopwood and
interview by Annie Best and Lily
Obern**

We are pleased to introduce this interview with Dr Kate Lister, a historian and writer whose work explores the history of sexuality, gender, and social attitudes across time. Dr Lister is known for making academic research accessible to a wider audience through her teaching, writing, public engagement, and her podcast *Betwixt the Sheets: The History of Sex, Scandal & Society*.

Her work challenges common assumptions about the past by uncovering the often surprising and complex ways people have thought about bodies, relationships, and morality throughout history. In doing so, she brings a fresh and thoughtful perspective to subjects that are frequently misunderstood or oversimplified.

In this interview, Dr Lister shares insights from her research, discusses why history matters in understanding the present, and reflects on the importance of questioning the stories we think we know about the past.

1. What first interested you in studying how human relationships have changed over time?

I have always found the history of relationships quite fascinating. It's something that we all have in common and a subject we can relate to, even with people thousands of years in the past. We all know what it's like to fancy someone and know they don't fancy you back. (Hello Henry VIII), We all crave a connection of some kind.

It's very easy to be flippant about relationship history and think it's not important, compared to the history of wars or Kings, but love and being in love have been a fundamental driving factors in our history since we first crawled out of the sludge.

2. What inspired you to focus your work on the history of human relationships?

I just find it endlessly fascinating. It also allows you to move



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throughout time, across different cultures and people. You're not restricted to, say the Victorians – though, I do love the Victorians. It's clearly a subject other people want to hear about as well. The more I researched and wrote about it, the more people want to read about it.

My PhD was actually about women who wrote about King Arthur! But no one wants to hear about that! Everyone wants to know about relationships in the past and all the mad things that happened, which is fine because I am very happy to tell them.

3. What have been the favourite parts of your career so far?

Last year, I won the Listener's Choice Award at the British Podcast Awards for my podcast, *Betwixt the Sheets*. That was a pretty amazing moment, especially as it was the listeners who voted for it.

Doing a podcast about mistresses with Jameela Jamil was also pretty special, but I think my most favourite moment was interviewing Miriam Margolyes about Charles Dickens. She has been a hero of mine for a long time, and I was so excited to talk to her.



4. What steps did you have to take to become a published author and what advice would you give to someone who wants to be an author?

Start writing now. Build up a portfolio of your work. Even if you think what you are writing is rubbish, get used to process of writing. If you want to be a writer, you can't wait for inspiration to strike, you need to be able to write when you really don't feel like it! The other thing I would say is to start building your social media presence.

Sometimes I hate how much we have come to rely on social media, but its here to stay so you may as well make it work for you. Use it to get your work out there, start a SubStack and start blogging your work- you never know who might end up reading it. I was asked to start writing a column for inews because they had read a history blog I had.

5. What do people most often get wrong about relationships in the past?

I think the thing that bugs me most is the idea that people in the past weren't clean, or didn't care about being clean! If you watch any movie about the medieval period and everyone is walking about covered in mud! Being clean was as important to people of the past as it is today, they just didn't have all the luxuries we have today to do it with. People wouldn't have been as clean as us, but its not true that the people you fancied would have been covered in weeds and stinking like a kipper.

6. How different were ideas about love, marriage, and family in earlier historical periods compared to today?

Oh vastly different. In some ways, a lot of things have stayed the same – being in love and getting married to have babies, for example. That is still with us today in lots of cultures and was certainly very important in the past, but things are also hugely different. Today, we have reliable birth control, but for most of our history, that was a long way away, so it was very common to have huge families.

I've seen records of women who birthed over 30 babies in their lifetimes. It was very dangerous and almost half of children died before their fifth birthday before we had antibiotics and vaccines.

7. Have attitudes toward relationships changed more quickly in recent history than in earlier periods?

Things changed hugely in the mid twentieth century when the contraceptive pill arrived. For the first time ever, that meant women could control how many babies they had. This meant they could stay in education longer and establish themselves in their careers. It meant they didn't have to have thirty odd children. This was a huge shift that things changed very quickly after that, suddenly young people didn't need to get married as soon as they left school. The invention of antibiotics also meant that for the first time, we could cure STIs.



8. What is something surprising you've discovered in your research?

I am constantly surprised by what I find! I was recently reading about how important the invention of the bicycle was in women's liberation. It was a huge moment because it meant they could travel more widely, and on their own.



The golden age of the bicycle was in the 1890s, so long before cars were commonplace. If you wanted to travel, that took quite a lot of arranging and it was expensive. Trains were notoriously unsafe for women on the own, but the bicycle gave women the freedom to meet up, travel long distances, and basically get out of the home. It was a total gamechanger.

9. What is the biggest myth about history that you wish people would stop believing?

That everyone died before they were thirty! It's not true and it drives me nuts. Child mortality was terrible until very recently in our history, but if you made it past your tenth birthday, you stood a reasonable chance of making it to old age. The problem is whenever anyone tries to work out the 'average' age of death, the number of baby deaths pulls the figure right down. But it's not true that it was normal to die in your twenties.

10. Are historical films and TV shows usually accurate when it comes to relationships and everyday life?

No, because all the actors have perfect teeth and skin, and none of the women have body hair. I recently watched *The Other Bennet Sister* and she had armpit hair, which was good to see, but most the time, everyone is way too pretty and smooth. Illnesses like smallpox and syphilis was commonplace and nutrition was pretty poor! Skincare was basic to say the least and no one had sunscreen. No one was walking around with six packs and 'glass skin.'

11. What does studying the history of human relationships teach us about modern society?

Lots! It's very important to learn where all of our present attitudes come from and why we think the way we do. I think the most important thing it can teach us is that nothing is fixed. Everything can change and be made better.

12. In recent years, there's been more public discussion around relationships, identity, and consent — does history help us understand these debates?

Yes, definitely. These aren't new conversations, though they can feel very new. People have been talking about consent and identity for as long as there have been people – often in quite terrible ways. We have moved the conversation on a lot, but we aren't the first to try and understand what gender identity is, for example. There is evidence of same sex relationships and gender diversity dating back to the earliest civilisations

13. Social media has changed how people talk about relationships and dating — are there any historical parallels to this?

Yes! The Roman city of Pompeii that was buried by Mount Vesuvius in 79AD and was perfectly preserved. One of the really unique things about Pompeii is the graffiti that was preserved on the walls. It seems the Romans used walls like we use social media. They write about all kinds of things they have been up to, who they fancy, who they don't, which gladiator is the sexiest. Its very much like social media today.



14. There is growing interest in “hidden histories” and untold stories — why do you think that is?

I think a lot of history has been covered to death! Everyone wants new and exciting things to read about and uncover. I love finding juicy little tidbits from the past because it helps us understand the bigger picture. A lot of being a historian is about trying to find new and original material. You can't just retell the same content all the time, you have to find new things or new ways of telling old things.

15. What skills do you think are most important for a historian?

You have to be critical, and you have to be original, see above point! “Historian” isn't a protected term, so anyone can call themselves one. In some ways, that's great because its so accessible, in other ways it means that a lot of people call themselves historians when they aren't. For me, a historian is someone who produces new research, someone who works with primary sources and translates the past. A lot of people read the work of historians and then think they are one. There is a big difference between someone who writes a book on Ancient Greece by working with ancient scripts, translating fragments of text, and digging up lost artefacts, and someone who reads their book and now thinks they know about ancient Greece as well.

16. What advice would you give to students who are interested in studying history?

Get noseey. You can't be a historian unless you love a good gossip. You don't need academic training to be a historian, but it really helps, so start looking into university courses and thinking about what your specialism will be. Join local history groups, go to local lectures, read as much as you can, and basically nerd out.

17. How can young people learn to think critically about historical information they see online?

Always check your sources. Accept nothing you see online without fact checking it yourself. There is so much junk out there! Even respected historians sometimes fall for it! I know I have.



You need to learn about what are solid sources and what are not. Google is a good starting place, but you have to go way beyond that. For example, a popular claim online is that Elizabeth I didn't wash. Don't accept that as fact! You need to go to various biographies of Elizabeth, written by good historians, and read about her. Follow up on the sources they used as well! Once you start doing that, a very different picture emerges.

18. Which four people, both past and present, would you invite to a dinner party and why?

The romantic poet Lord Byron, who was described as 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know' by his girlfriend – just to see what all the fuss was about.

Nell Gwynn, the girl friend of Charles II because she was very funny and a good laugh.

Janis Joplin, a blues singer from the 60s because she's my hero.

And possibly Jesus Christ, to ask him what he thinks of the MAGA movement.



19. What's next for 'Kate Lister'?

I have a new book launching in May that I am excited about and I am doing some live shows of my podcast in Edinburgh and London.

20. How would you sum yourself up in five words?

Funny, northern, intelligent, whimsical, daft



Getting into Journalism

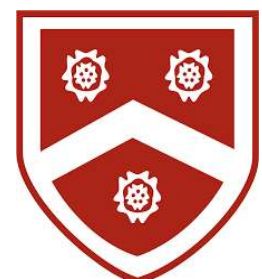
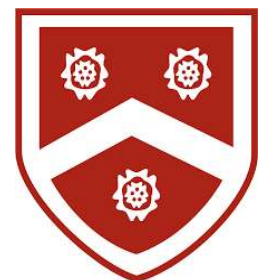
Have you thought about writing for a living, being a reporter, working on a newspaper or magazine?

Would you like to be the next host of 'Match of the Day', 'Newsnight' or 'The One Show'?

Journalism is the key to all of these.

If you want to get involved in the next edition of the Quill:

- Message Mr Hopwood on Teams
- Come and see Mr Hopwood in B23
- Email Mr Hopwood – Phopwood@wadhamschool.co.uk



The Books That Made Us: Teachers' Top Reads

WORLD
BOOK
DAY

5 MARCH 2026

Every reader has that one book — the story they return to, the characters who feel like old friends, or the pages that first sparked a love of reading. At Wadham School, students and staff alike have been sharing the books that mean the most to them, revealing a wonderfully varied collection of favourites.

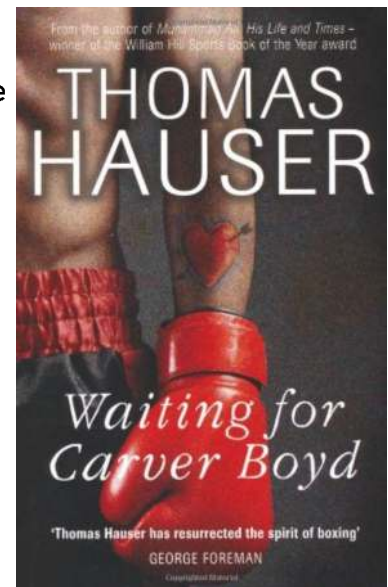
This article is the second in a series celebrating the favourite books of the Wadham community. As with the first instalment, members of staff will share the stories that have stayed with them and explain why these books continue to inspire, comfort and captivate them. As you read their recommendations, why not set yourself a challenge? Pick a title you've never tried before and give it a go — you might just discover your next favourite book.

Waiting for Carver Boyd by Thomas Hauser - chosen by Mr Hopwood

I really enjoyed this book because I've always been drawn to two of the themes in this story—boxing and underdog tales. The novel follows an unnamed fighter who rises from complete obscurity to challenge Carver Boyd, the feared reigning heavyweight champion of the world. That idea of someone unknown working their way up to face the very best is what makes the story so compelling for me.

One of the things I liked most about the book was its writing style. It's fast-paced and engaging, and it constantly makes you think "just one more chapter," which is why I ended up reading it in a single day. The story pulls you in and makes it very easy to keep turning the pages.

Overall, I would highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys inspiring underdog stories and gripping, easy-to-read stories that keep you hooked from start to finish.

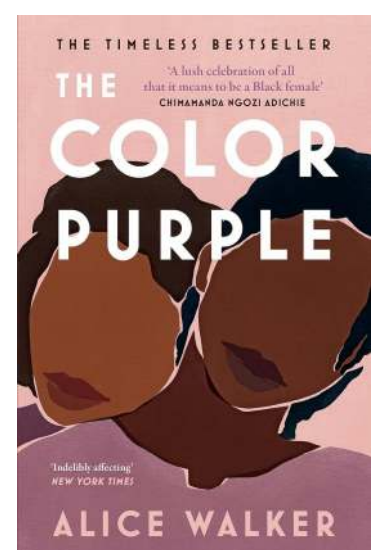


The Colour Purple by Alice Walker - by Mrs Hutter

I really love how the author uses language to give a strong and authentic voice to the characters in *The Color Purple*. Through the dialogue and narrative style, each character feels distinct, real, and deeply human, which helps bring their experiences to life in a powerful way.

The way the story is written makes the emotions and struggles of the characters feel very immediate and personal. It allows the reader to fully connect with their journeys, understand their pain, and also appreciate their growth over time.

Overall, the use of language is one of the most striking aspects of the novel, as it not only tells the story but also shapes how we experience the characters themselves.

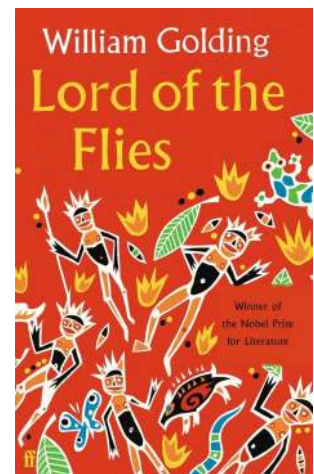


***Lord of the Flies* by William Golding - chosen by Mrs Manning**

A classic novel that explores human interaction and the importance of rules. The story examines how a group of boys, stranded on a deserted island without adult supervision, attempt to create their own society. At first, they try to maintain order by establishing rules and leadership.

However, as time goes on, those structures begin to break down, revealing how fragile civilisation can be when rules are not followed. What makes the novel so powerful is the way it explores human behaviour under pressure.

It shows how quickly cooperation can turn into conflict, and how important rules and shared responsibility are in maintaining order within a group. Overall, *Lord of the Flies* is a thought-provoking novel that uses its setting to explore deeper ideas about human nature, society, and the balance between order and chaos.



***Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir - chosen by Mr Cassidy**

Although *Project Hail Mary* is quite different from my usual preference for historical fiction, this science fiction novel by Andy Weir surprised me by completely gripping my attention. It kept me engaged through its curiosity, tension, and emotional depth, blending big ideas about life and the future with a compelling human story that made me really want the protagonist to succeed. What stood out most was how the book balances scientific problem-solving with a strong emotional journey. Even though it deals with complex ideas, it is written in a way that is accessible and exciting, constantly encouraging you to keep reading and find out what happens next. I also enjoyed how the story builds empathy for the main character and creates a real sense of urgency and hope throughout. It was so engaging that it's easy to see why it has been adapted into a film starring Ryan Gosling. Overall, *Project Hail Mary* was a surprising and thoroughly enjoyable read, and I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys science fiction with heart, tension,



Why Reading Rocks: Benefits for Students

Brain Power

- Improves Concentration & Focus
- Boosts Memory & Critical Thinking
- Expands Vocabulary & Language Skills

Creativity & Imagination

- Sparks Creativity & Problem-Solving
- Introduces New Worlds & Ideas
- Inspires Writing, Drawing & Projects

Emotional & Social Benefits

- Increases Empathy & Understanding
- Reduces Stress & Improves Mood
- Encourages Discussion & Friendships

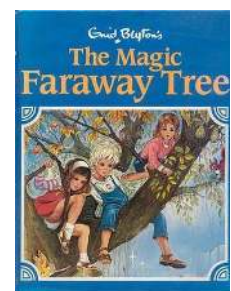
— Pick up a book today! —

Discover new worlds, meet unforgettable characters, and find your next favourite story!

***The Magic Faraway Tree* by Enid Blyton - chosen by Miss Brennan**

I have read this book since I was a child.

It's silly and funny and shows friendship.



Primary Voices — Big Impact!

As part of an exciting new initiative for *The Quill*, we have been reaching out to our local primary and feeder schools to invite them to contribute to our student magazine. This project aims to strengthen links within our wider community by celebrating the creativity, learning and achievements of younger students alongside our own.

Through articles, artwork, stories and classroom projects, we hope to create a shared space where different schools can connect, collaborate and inspire one another. I am delighted to showcase and celebrate the incredible work students have produced as part of this partnership. We hope you enjoy exploring what they have created and sharing in their success.

MERRIOTT PRIMARY SCHOOL - CREATIVITY FIT TO BURST!



**MERRIOTT
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

A Little Girl's Dream Come True

Along the coast was a girl called Zoe, she believed her dreams would one day come true and that one big dream was galloping along the shore towards her right now with her own pony and other wild ones following.

It wasn't long before Zoe got her very own pony called Flo. She absolutely adored her. It was a gift from her family who were kindly saving up money for this moment. Zoe knew a lot about horses, ponies, Shetlands and other horses, so she knew what to do. As the stars danced upon the moon, she peered out of her sparkly window and saw wild horses galloping along the coast. As soon as the sun rose with a sweet smile she peeped out of one eye then the other and she soon realised it was a dream of magical wonders.



Later, she peeked out the shiny window and saw wild horses waiting for her to be released. Zoe scurried outside and tacked up her precious pony [Flo] making sure she was spotless. And as the mountain block was calling her name she leaped on the pony and galloped with the herd along the tide line.

Sometime later, Zoe galloped home untacked and fed the horses. Then she stepped in her room and wrote in her diary of her amazing magical days.

Karate Club Looking for Members

I started karate when I was about 7 years old around Christmas time. Ever since, every Tuesday at 6 o'clock I've walked to Merriott social club and practiced karate until half past 7.

A few weeks after I joined, one of my friends joined. Now I am nine and in 2-3 years I will be black belt. I've met people on black belt at my club in their 70s! Our youngest student is a 4year old!

If you're interested come to Merriott Social Club





Jokes to make you chuckle!

- 1) My horse is called Mayo...Because mayo neighs .
- 2) What is orange and sounds like a parrot...A carrot.
- 3) What do you call a fish with no eyes...Fshhh .
- 4) There's music coming out the printer...I think the paper is jamming again .
- 5) What does a DJ call his son? [e-ric]
- 6) Where can you learn to make ice cream? [At sundae school]
- 7) What do you call a donkey with only three legs? [a wonkey]
- 8) What did the ocean say to the beach? [Nothing it just waved]
- 9) What do you get when you mix a cow with an earthquake? [a milkshake]
- 10) What makes a skeleton laugh? [when something tickles it's funny bone]
- 11) What do you call Postman Pat without a job? [Pat!!!!!!]



JOLLY JOKES!!

<p>What do you call a cow with no legs?</p>  <p>GROUND BEEF!</p>	<p>What do you get when you cross a skunk with Christmas carols?</p>  <p>JINGLE SMELLS!</p>	<p>Why wasn't the pizza party very good?</p>  <p>BECAUSE THERE WASN'T MUSHROOM!</p>	<p>What do you call an elephant in a telephone booth?</p>  <p>STUCK!</p>
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<p>How did the barber win the race?</p>  <p>HE KNEW A SHORT-CUT!</p>	<p>Why was the maths book so sad?</p>  <p>IT HAD TOO MANY PROBLEMS!</p>
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My Primary School Adventure

Primary school has been one amazing school adventure. I have had some amazing experiences there and I am so grateful for all my wonderful teachers and friends who have helped me along the way.

I am taking my year 6 SATs in two weeks and I am nervous, but I know everyone will be proud of me no matter what score I get!

A couple of weeks ago, we got our leavers hoodies. It made the whole end of primary school feel real all of a sudden. I can not believe that my name is on the back of my jumper!

Secondary school is a few months away but when the time finally comes to say goodbye, I know I will be ready.

BEADY BEE

WORD SEARCH

Bees are fascinating winged insects known for their critical role in pollination and in some species the production of honey and beeswax.

BEE, POLLEN, BLOOM, WIGGLE
FLOWER, SPRING, BUZZ, SPROUT

H	G	N	I	R	P	S	A	H	W
B	S	P	R	O	U	T	Z	B	I
H	X	B	L	Z	B	V	N	M	G
D	Q	L	X	Q	Z	U	C	P	G
G	E	C	A	S	B	X	Z	B	L
N	B	R	F	G	L	W	V	Z	E
K	U	H	W	N	O	P	L	B	N
P	H	C	K	J	O	K	D	U	N
D	S	U	L	D	M	A	P	Z	J
F	L	O	W	E	R	F	H	Z	P
U	Y	L	K	J	O	X	E	E	B

SUPER SUMMER

WORDSEARCH

ICECREAM, SUMMER, BEE, POOL, FUN
SUNSHINE

I	C	E	C	R	E	A	M	U	O
O	H	S	J	W	G	D	S	I	P
B	E	F	D	K	P	U	D	Z	O
F	E	G	D	U	N	F	N	K	O
M	B	K	L	H	G	U	Q	L	L
W	V	U	S	F	U	N	A	V	D
C	S	I	D	N	K	L	B	X	I
F	N	C	A	A	H	L	C	Z	V
E	F	J	O	R	E	M	M	U	S
B	Z	B	X	N	M	C	N	K	L

Primary School Recount

The moment I stepped into the school grounds I knew I would fit into my class perfectly. All the teachers were really welcoming and I loved all the fun activities we did. I made lots of new friends, and we talked and laughed together and had a wonderful time in our new class around people I trust and like.

At breaktimes, I would have fun and come back red faced and exhausted. As the years passed by, I got more familiar with the teachers and other students, and enjoyed lessons much more. The move into secondary school is scary, but I am still quite excited to make new friends and have people around me who will always have my best interests at heart. I am looking forward to secondary school and the opportunities it will offer to me.

Poetry

Spring

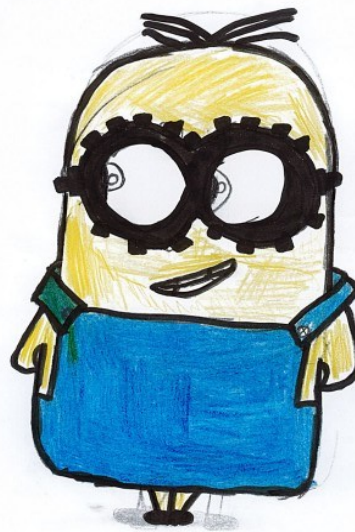
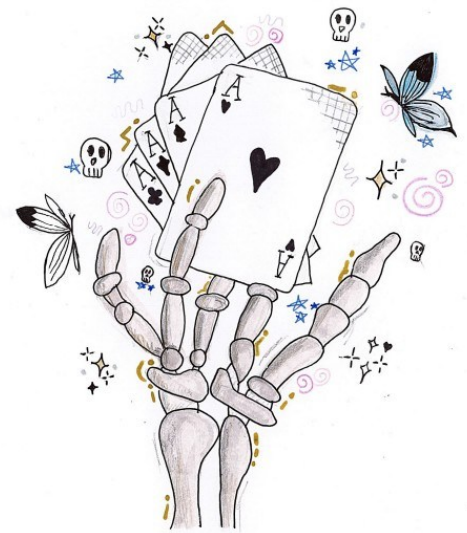
Spring is a wonderful time of year
 when trees blossom, flowers bloom and things are born.
 It's a chance to see the world at it's best.
 Spring is my favourite season as it shows more life than any
 other.
 It is the most beautiful as well.
 I love spring because of all the wild green.
 The nature is wonderful.
 I HOPE YOU LIKE SPRING TOO.

Bears

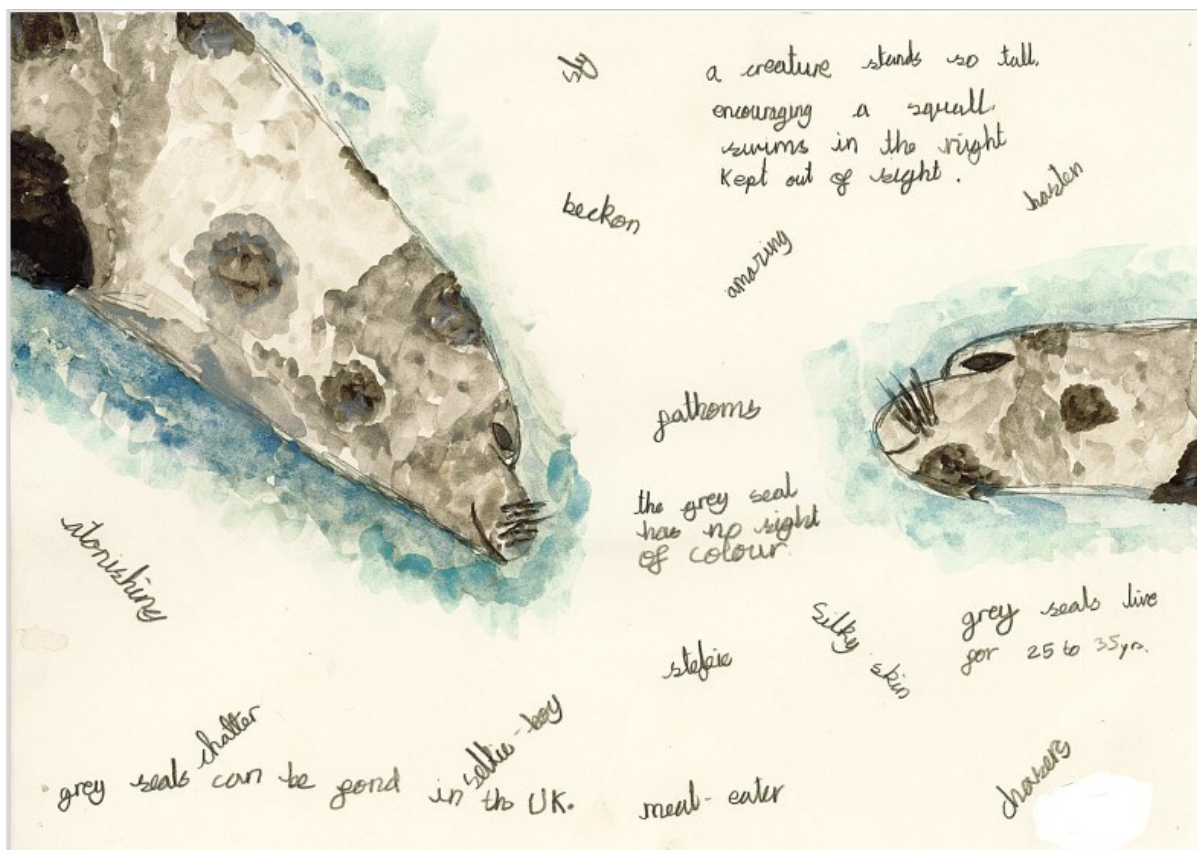
Beautiful black bears
 Lapping up each day
 And enjoying their life
 Countless times they're seen
 Kicking aside forest plants,
 Braving beehives and climbing
 Even though they are hunted
 All bears persevere
 Rights for black bears!

The cat

the cat lies stretching,
 on a throne of soft cushions
 waiting to be stroked.



<p>Poetry</p> <p><i>Spring</i></p> <p>Spring blooms Crocus whispering, To my hungry ears today, Spring will be here soon.</p> <p><i>Rainbows</i></p> <p>Rainbows in the sky, A beautiful bird wafts by, Flowers start to bloom.</p>	<p><i>Flowers</i></p> <p>Pink blossoms swaying, Bye spring hope to see you soon, Spring is in the air.</p> <p><i>Presents of Spring</i></p> <p>single butterfly, Flowers, songbirds and green grass, A heavenly sound</p>
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Trampolining

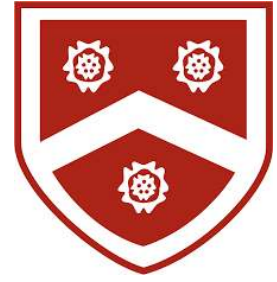
Trampolining, a legendary sport included in the Olympics. But what people don't know, is that there are different types of it. One of which I do. Double mini trampoline (DMT) Now, this type of trampolining isn't in the Olympics, yet. They say 2032 will be the year it is added, I will be 17 then, and my current coach thinks I will be able to compete!



So, let's get on to my training and my club. I train 6 hours a week at Collumpton, that's almost an hour in the car just to go training three times a week! A couple of weeks ago I went to the regional finals at Bath university and I got gold and qualified to inter regionals in July. In between that time, I get to go to Poole trampoline academy for a day to train with everybody who qualified (that's at least a hundred people or more.)

So, as we get to the end of what I've done this year, lets do all of the years I've trained and competed. In 2023 I decided to go to my first ever competition, not knowing that doing that was going to change my life. I was competing on trampoline as I didn't do DMT back then. I competed and sadly didn't get first but I was proud of myself for even doing that in front of hundreds of people. My best friend, did get gold and I was super proud of him. I only competed 2 or 3 times on trampoline before I decided I wanted to move to DMT, which is what I do now. I trained for months before I did my first ever competition on. Believe it or not I got gold, yes you read that right, I got gold! It was my first ever time competing in DMT and I came first. Now I go to massive competitions and I hope to go to bigger ones in the future.

A Peek in to the Magic of Wadham



By Tanya Preston, Governor, Wadham School

The excitement among governors to witness life at Wadham first-hand and for a second time during the 'Governor Visit Day' in March was palpable! What a privilege to be in a position to support and advocate for Wadham as a governor – especially after seeing it in action during a working day. Thank you to all who prepared and took the time for us. We started with a warm welcome (and tasty morning pastry of course!) in the IT suite – the wonderful new large, spacious classroom for pupils to learn all things tech.

STEPPING INTO THE SCHOOL DAY

Diving into lessons, watching transitions between lessons (one or two governors accompanied by a member of the SLT) and talking with pupils was the order of the day. Our mission was to gain a sense of the culture of the school. Was there an ethos of care yet challenge, excitement and consistency of expectations? In just a few minutes, the vibes one can pick up from a classroom can speak loudly. Focus on learning, calm and purpose was the common thread between classes we observed. Our presence didn't deter the pace of learning during the few minutes we spent absorbing interactions between teachers and pupils. In fact, it was a welcome opportunity to speak to individuals and listen to the musings of their day.

Teachers were wholly focused on the learning in their lessons. From unpicking technical language and concepts to giving pupils time to think and articulate responses to deep questions, many techniques were displayed to enable pupils to develop their learning. Subtle praise to individuals was given by staff, building confidence while also signalling to peers that it's okay to speak up and try.

LEARNING, BEHAVIOUR, AND BELONGING

Next, our task was to get a feel for the behaviour of pupils as they navigated their way from one lesson to the next. The squeals of enthusiasm from three girls clocking the new IT suite for the first time as they hovered in the doorway admiring it, certainly conveyed motivation and internal discipline when their friend who dragged them away exclaimed "C'mon, we've got to get to class!"

We then heard a thorough and informative update about SEND from Alexandra Davidson, Assistant Headteacher and SENDCo, before having a brief chance to reflect and chat about what we'd seen over a delicious lunch – thank you kitchen staff!

THE SPIRIT OF WADHAM

With our mission nearly complete, observing the transition of pupils from lunch into the final lesson of the day, and enjoying pupil presentations, continued to confirm many positive interactions we had witnessed. Thank you to the Year 7 pupils: Neeson and Esme, Ethan, Abel, Chloe and Millie for their honest reflections on life at Wadham! Warmth and encouragement, alongside firm but supportive words when needed, summed up the special character of Wadham. There is an unspoken respect between all parties that creates an atmosphere of safety and trust – allowing pupils to be themselves. Plenty of friendly greetings and interactions captured the living Christian values of kindness and respect that permeate Wadham. Magic!



INTERVIEW

**FROM CHALLENGE TO
CHANGE: RESILIENCE
AND ACHIEVEMENT
WITH JJ CHALMERS
FORMER ROYAL MARINE
TURNED TELEVISION
PRESENTER AND
INVICTUS GAMES
MEDALLIST**

**Foreword by Peter Hopwood and
interview by Alex Guise**

We are delighted to present this interview with JJ Chalmers, a former Royal Marine, Invictus Games medallist, and television presenter. After being seriously injured while serving in Afghanistan, JJ went on to rebuild his life through rehabilitation and sport, becoming an inspiring advocate for resilience and positive mental health.

Since then, he has become a familiar face on television, presenting major sporting events and sharing his experiences to encourage others facing adversity. His story is one of determination, adaptability, and finding purpose after life-changing challenges.

In this interview, JJ reflects on his journey, the lessons he has learned along the way, and the importance of perseverance in the face of setbacks.

1. What does my daily routine look like?

It really depends on whether I've got my kids or not. If they're with me, I'm straight into dad mode. If they're at their mum's, I get a bit more time to focus on my own routine. That said, life as a TV presenter is pretty unpredictable—you never quite know where you'll be from one day to the next. I could be anywhere in the country, or even the world.

2. What was I like at school?

I was a class clown, but I was also someone who tried pretty hard, whether that was in classes, but more importantly in sort of all the activities that sat around school. If there was a play to be in or there was a team sport to be played or a competition to be had, I loved trying. I wasn't particularly good at anything, but I loved getting stuck into things and being part of something bigger than myself, being part of, like a big school project or whatever it was.

3. What was my most and least favourite subjects and why?

I think my least favourite was probably English. I'm dyslexic, so I struggled with English, but I did



have a fantastic teacher who really helped me and sort of brought it to life. But it was always a bit of a chore. You know, reading to this day is always hard work for me, but my favourite subject was design and technology. I absolutely love making stuff, working with my hands. Problem solving. Yeah, it's so satisfying and it's just how my brain works. I absolutely love that subject.

4. Did you have any inspirational figures in your life? If so, who were they and how did they inspire you?

Yes, I had some amazing teachers. My English teacher, who was also my housemaster, was a real father figure to me. Another teacher, Ms McFarlane, helped me with my dyslexia and gave me the confidence to express myself. That's something that's definitely influenced my career as a presenter.

5. What drew you to join the Royal Marines?

Whilst I was at school I was a Royal Marine cadet at that time, so I was sort of exposed to, you know, the Royal Marines and particularly, you know, you saw them in the news. But I got to spend time with them through the cadets and they really sort of inspired me. You know, people that had Green Berets on their head seemed like an impossible thing to achieve. That challenge drew me to it. But also, you know, that sense of service, being part of something bigger than yourself that I kind of talked about was really, really important to me.

6. How did your time in the Royal Marines influence your approach to life and work today?

It has altered my approach to absolutely everything I do in my life. You know, my resilience, my attention to detail, my planning, all of the stuff that the Marines teaches you through experience. You're doing these really complex, difficult, arduous tasks all the time.

And if you can do, you know, if you can live, survive and fight in somewhere like Norway or Afghanistan or the Falkland Islands in these really tough conditions, then when it comes to getting up in the morning and making your bed, you find the sort of discipline, resilience and everything that's required to do it. So it absolutely changes everything you do.



7. What motivated you to get involved with the Invictus Games and its incredible athletes?



I was at the first Invictus Games in 2014. So when I first heard about the Invictus Games from Prince Harry, I don't even think they had a name yet. It was just this idea that we were going to have a sports competition for wounded, injured and sick service personnel. And the truth is, I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.



I was in the gym at my rehabilitation centre at Headley Court when the sort of announcement went out that this thing was coming. And, you know, it was pretty much a piece of paper went up in the wall saying *'who wants to be be*

involved? I just happened to be there and said, yeah, I'll do this thing. None of us knew that it would be the Invictus Games. None of us knew that it would be as big as it was. But I just wanted to turn up because it sounded like something that I wanted to be part of, but it was much, much bigger than any of us could have thought.

8. What was your experience like on Strictly Come Dancing and what did you learn from it?

Strictly Come Dancing was really hard. Like, it's physically, really, really tough. It is also, like, mentally tough because you have to learn all those steps and I'm not a dancer, it doesn't come easily to me. So I had to work really, really hard at it. But actually, the thing I learned the most about it is the whole show is about judgement. You're being judged by the judges. Yeah, you're constantly being judged to try and improve and make yourself better. You're being judged by the people at home because they're the ones that phone in and decide whether you're stay here or whether you're going to go.

And while some of that feedback is really important, so the stuff that my dance partner Amy, would give me or what the judges would say to work on or get better, but some of it was judgement that was coming from people who just didn't like my dancing that week and they could sometimes say pretty mean things about me. And it was learning to not just have a thick skin, but actually to learn that their opinion didn't really matter.

Just listen to the ones that did. So listen to my loved ones, you know, my friends and my family who had my best interests at my heart but also listen to the experts that were around me and sort of block out the other noise and forget the silliness that was going on. So I learned a lot of that.

9. What has been the most rewarding moment of your career as a broadcaster so far?



Oh, so many rewarding moments. You know, I pinch myself at the things I get to do. I think some of the big things that I've certainly been part of that felt really special in the moment are those moments that you're part of history, like the Queen's funeral or Duke of Edinburgh's funeral, the Coronation.

I think, though, when I became the first presenter with a disability to have ever presented the Olympics, that was pretty special. Not because I was the first person to do it, but because I want to try and make sure that I'm not the last person that does it.

I'd like to hope that I've been able to change the industry a little bit just by doing it, knowing that it's possible. But, I mean, I love the Olympics, I love the Paralympics and to get to present, you know, all of them so, you know, say the Tokyo Games or the Paris Games, that's really, really special.



10. Which projects would you like to be involved with?

Oh, there's so many things that I would love to do. I think I would love to present the marathon. I love being part of these big mass participation events, when really amazing people, just ordinary people, amazing people come together to challenge themselves to do something really, really tough and, you know, usually it's to support different charities and I just think it's just an amazing, amazing thing to witness.

11. How do you deal with moments of time for yourself, especially after your injury?

Oh, that's a really good question. There's lots of different ways I cope with it, but I think the most important thing I do is just keep going. Now you have to keep going and you have to keep pushing through the pain like when I was in hospital, or pushing through, you know, the toughness of life.



You know, sometimes when you get tired or sometimes when you feel like you can't go any further, you have to do that in order to develop the skills and the mindset to be able to take you that little bit further. Now, you can't always live like that because that's absolutely exhausting. It's okay to take a rest and take a stop, and you've absolutely got to look after yourself.

But sometimes when you think you can't go any further, you can find it. And there's always a reason to keep going. There's always a reason to sort of get up in the morning, look for that positive thing, you know, even if it's just one reason to get up. And if you can just take that first little step, you'll be surprised by how many steps you can take after it.

12. What advice would you give to someone who's struggling to find their purpose or career path after a major life change?

Oh, I think, you know, again, there's lots of different complex answers to that, but the simple one is just to try things, to find opportunities to try different things, things that you think you know in your head, particularly if you're adjusting to disability or change in life. There's going to be lots of things that you think and particularly lots of things that other people think you can't do. Now, at the end of the day, the number one thing you've got to do is try them. Because it might be a case that you can't do it, or it might be a case that you can't do it, you know, quite the way that you did before or the same way that other people do. But you'll only find that out if you try. So you need to try it, make the adjustment, and, you know, that's it. You just got to try as many things as you possibly can and find out what makes you tick and what's worth. What's worth, you know, pushing that a little bit harder and harder for

13. How do you stay physically and mentally fit, balance in your demanding career and personal life?

Oh, that's Such a good question. I don't always get that right is a simple truth. You know, you have to. When it comes to staying physically fit, you have to find the opportunities. And sometimes after a long day's work, particularly if I'm out on the road, sometimes I don't feel like it, but I tend to throw a pair of shorts and my trainers in my bag whenever I travel. And then I just like to try and get out the door and do a wee bit of exploring. So that's a big bit.



As for balancing against my personal life, oh, it can be really tricky sometimes. I mean, I've got kids, so they tend to make sure that I. That I. That I have to be there for them, but it's trying to be present for them. It's the most important thing. Sometimes you're distracted by bits of work or things that seem important, but actually, yeah, nothing's more important than my kids, I suppose, at the end of the day.

But that's also true of your personal life sometimes. I've sacrificed, you know, lots of important things. People's weddings, birthday parties, all these different things, because I wanted to chase the dream, my work. But actually, at the end of life, I'll be a bit disappointed that I missed those things. And so it's about trying to find that balance and make sure that you do do some things for yourself as well.

14. Can you share a memorable experience from working with other veterans or service members?

Oh, that's a really good question. I mean, I think the Invictus Games is the clearest one. And it's all the different layers of the Invictus Games. You know, when I first signed up, it was very much about being with my friends and part of something bigger than myself that attracted me to it. I then went on to win a gold medal at the Invictus Games, and I did it alongside two of my closest friends in the team, and we worked together to win those medals. But even beyond that, I'm still involved in Invictus Games. I present the TV coverage. I worked as a trustee, so I helped run the foundation for a number of years.

And it was about being with those guys and girls who ultimately have lived experience of what it's like to be a veteran, what it's like to have a disability, what it's like to have the Invictus Games change their life. And it's that amazing experience that comes together. You know, they're really, really capable people, but it's the life experience that they've had. It's the things they've seen and done that really separate them apart. And when you bring those people together and you form this amazing team, it's capable of so much more than any one person that's in it.

15. What are some misconceptions people might have about challenges faced by injured veterans?

Oh, that's a really good question. I think, a part of it. We sometimes say that everybody, quite often society thinks that everybody in the military is mad, bad and sad. And so that's sort of our time in our trauma, our time in places like Afghanistan or Iraq have, Have changed us so that we're. That we're, you know, we're. We're angry or that we're sad or whatever it might be. And to be fair, you know, there are instances and I've experienced those feelings, but it's not how I feel all the time, and it's most certainly not how the majority of veterans feel.

Most people who serve in the military go have a career, even a career that might involve going to a war zone, it might involve seeing something traumatic. But actually, the majority of people come out only positively affected by their experiences, so their life is improved by the skills that they've learned about. And I've already talked about that.

But a minority of veterans, including myself, you know, who had a physical injury and a mental



wound. As long as we're given the correct level of support, we're able to go on to live really fulfilled lives. And actually, you know, again, we're not all mad, bad and sad. And even those of us like me that might have sometimes been a bit sad, maybe a little mad, never really that bad.

But as long as I got the help that I needed, which I did, in the support, then I'm able to live a really wonderful life. And I'm also able to do stuff which. Which contributes to society. I'm still able to give something of value. So don't write us off. In fact, we're able to give something really, really special and important. Look ahead.



16. What are your aspirations or goals for the next few years in both your professional and personal life?

I don't know to keep doing what I do. I absolutely love my job and I want to keep working on the big events, whether they're things like the Olympics or the Paralympics, things like the London Marathon, you know, these big ceremonies and moments of history. You know, I like to be creative.

I like to tell amazing stories like I have about warship life in the Royal Navy, you know, to spend time where I get to shine a light on the, the, you know, people that serve in the armed forces. So I'd love to keep doing that, but equally, my kids are growing up and they're the most important part of my life. So just spending as much time as I possibly can with them, making sure that they have the best childhood they possibly have. That's the most satisfying thing and the most important thing in my life.

17. What's next for J.J. Chalmers?

I think I've said it. Just more of the same, but a little bit more time for himself as well.

18. What five words describe J.J. Chalmers?

Oh, there's lots of them.

And it's really hard to, you know, choose words to describe yourself.

That's for somebody else to. To say, I think. But I suppose I would take the, you know, our commando spirit or values that we come from the Royal Marines, which I sort of live by.

So I think there would be things like resilience, discipline, sort of integrity or friendship.

You know, it's looking after the others around me, cheerfulness, always try and find a reason to smile.

And believe it or not, sometimes you don't get to see it on tv. But silly. I love being silly. Yeah, I don't, believe it or not, take life all that seriously all the time.

Wadham School on the move!



A NIGHT OF SHOCKS AND SURPRISES: WHY "2:22" WAS AN UNFORGETTABLE THEATRE EXPERIENCE

By April Abbey

My experience of seeing 2:22 in Plymouth was incredibly exciting and memorable, and I would highly recommend it to anyone who enjoys theatre, especially if you like suspense and a few scares. From the very beginning, the atmosphere felt tense and mysterious, and it immediately drew the audience in. If I had the chance, I would happily watch it again many times, as it was one of those performances that keeps you thinking even after it has finished.

The show was packed with jump scares that made the audience react throughout, but it wasn't just about being frightening—it was also cleverly written and built up suspense in a really effective way. There was a huge plot twist at the end that completely changed how you think about the story, and it made the whole experience even more powerful and interesting.

As part of our GCSE Drama studies, Miss Middleton asked us to think about the staging and how different technical elements helped to make the performance more believable. The production made excellent use of lighting, which was often used to create tension or signal a change in mood. For example, sudden changes in lighting helped emphasise key moments and made the jump scares more effective. The sound design was also very important, with effects such as thunder, lightning, and sudden noises adding to the atmosphere. These elements worked together to move the story forward and keep the audience fully engaged.

The set itself also helped to make the performance feel realistic, as it created a believable environment for the actors to perform in. This made it easier to become immersed in the story. The actors were fantastic throughout, delivering strong and convincing performances. They showed a wide range of emotions, from fear and confusion to tension and urgency, which made their characters feel real and relatable.

Overall, I can say that it was an amazing experience and one that I will remember for a long time. My favourite moment was definitely the final plot twist—everything suddenly went silent as the play reached 2:22, which created a powerful and dramatic ending that stayed with the audience. It felt like the perfect conclusion to such a suspenseful story.



I think it was one of the best shows we have seen on a school trip in a while, and it has definitely inspired me in my own GCSE Drama work. I hope we get more opportunities like this in the future, especially when the performances are as high quality and engaging as this one.



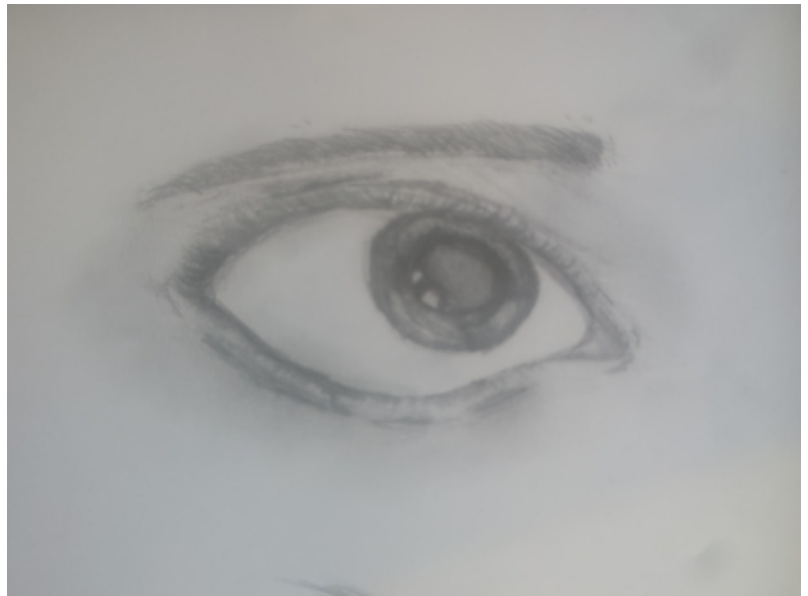
Let's Get Creative!



Artwork by Poppy Best



Artwork by Izzy Foster



FROM CARTHAGE TO THE COSMOS: A FAMILY ADVENTURE ACROSS TUNISIA'S DESERTS, CITIES, AND STAR WARS SETS

By Jonathan Margetts

With a little one in tow, we don't often get the time (or the money) for a big holiday, so when the opportunity arose, it felt important to choose a proper family adventure. My wife picked Tunisia—a North African country with a rich history and a fascinating blend of cultures—and it turned out to be an excellent choice.

I am not a fan of early mornings (who is?), nor do I enjoy flying, so getting up at 2am to make our 6am flight from Bristol Airport was a slightly nerve-racking and exhausting experience. I spent most of the flight asleep, waking just in time to hear the pilot announce we were thirty minutes from landing—pretty good going for a three-hour flight.

We stayed at the Bel Azur Hotel, an all-inclusive resort with two outdoor pools, an indoor pool, its own private beach, two bars (one showing Sky Sports football, which meant I even caught

Everton vs Brentford as well as Aston Villa beating Bologna), a mini golf course, and tennis courts. Frankly, I could have happily stayed there for a week enjoying the food, drinks, and three square meals a day. But eventually, it was time for adventure.

We visited the ancient city of Carthage, which was stunning. Looking out over the city below, hearing the distant, melodic call to prayer drifting from a local mosque, was one of the first moments that really made me reflect on how different life is in

this country. We also visited Sidi Bou Said, a striking town of blue-and-white buildings that looked almost unreal in its beauty.

But the real adventure came during our two-day excursion.

On day one, we were up early again—boarding the bus at 5:45am—and headed to an ancient Roman amphitheatre famously used in the filming of *Gladiator*. It is still largely intact and makes for incredible photo opportunities, though the facilities certainly added to the “authentic historical experience.” It was a powerful reminder of Tunisia's deep and varied history, and the pride its people take in it.

We then travelled into the Sahara, stopping at a Star

Wars filming location—the Lars Homestead (Aunt Beru's house), now part of a hotel and restaurant. Eating traditional Tunisian food inside such an iconic piece of cinema history was genuinely awe-inspiring.

We also visited a Berber home, which was one of the most



fascinating parts of the trip. The Berber people live in underground cave dwellings, naturally insulated and cool even in the desert heat. These homes were only formally acknowledged by the Tunisian government after flooding forced their existence into wider awareness. While above-ground housing was later built for them, many preferred their traditional cave homes and returned once conditions allowed. Driving through the region, we could see doors in the desert leading down into these hidden homes—each one a reminder of a unique and enduring way of life.

That evening, we rode out into the Sahara on camelback, guided by a group of Bedouins. It was a memorable experience—much more enjoyable than the quad biking the day before, which had me clinging on at a rather uncomfortable angle across rough desert tracks. We spent the night in a hotel on the edge of the desert before setting off again at 4:45am the next morning.



Day two began at Chott el Djerid, a vast salt lake where the ground is layered with shimmering salt that you can actually walk on. From there, we headed back into the desert in 4x4 vehicles, speeding over dunes and bouncing across the sand en route to another Star Wars set: Mos Espa, featured in *The Phantom Menace*. The set is still remarkably intact and filled with traders—one of whom was

particularly persistent about charging for the toilet, and another who was very keen on me posing with his Fennec fox (despite my repeated refusals).



We then visited a traditional mosque before making our way back to our hotel.

Tunisia is a beautiful country. The people are polite, and the hospitality—even in small cafes and local restaurants—is exceptional. Since 1956, women have had the vote, and the country feels surprisingly liberal in many respects, despite its strong Islamic traditions and Arab architectural heritage.

Our two-year-old daughter had a wonderful time, making friends with Karim, our waiter at the hotel, and charming just about everyone she met—including our bus driver (whose name we sadly never learned). She even enjoyed the desert journey itself. How many parents can say they've changed a nappy in the middle of the Sahara?

I would highly recommend a visit to Tunisia, not just for the sights, but to experience the culture. Ultimately, though, it doesn't matter where you travel—wherever there are people, there is love, compassion, joy, and hardship. The people of Tunisia were warm and welcoming, and we would happily return. Perhaps the Western world could learn a thing or two about slowing down, taking pride in place, and appreciating the moment.

Take a look at the holiday photos—camel rides, Star Wars sets, sweeping desert landscapes, Berber homes, and the many unforgettable sights from our journey.

WORKING THE PATH TO POLAND 2027



FROM BREAKFASTS TO THE WORLD JAMBOREE: CREWKERNE SCOUTS POWER AHEAD IN POLAND 2027 FUNDRAISING

By Toren Radford-Hyland

Hi, as you may have already seen from Poppy and Evan's previous updates in The Quill, I'm Toren. Alongside five other Crewkerne Scouts, I've been selected to attend the World Scout Jamboree in Poland in 2027.

Since Poppy's last update in March, we've continued to stay very busy with our fundraising efforts.

In March, we held a breakfast event at the Speedwell Centre, which was a great success. With the help of our parents, we served around 70 breakfasts. We were also delighted to welcome the Mayor, Mrs Samuels, which made the morning feel extra special. A huge thank you goes to Barrett's Butchers, who generously donated 15kg of sausages and bacon to help feed our hungry customers. Alongside breakfasts, cakes were also enjoyed by everyone who attended. It



was fantastic to see so many people come together to support me and my friends.



Another exciting opportunity came on Easter Monday, when we were given the chance to run a Scout takeover at Market Street Bakery. Chris, the owner, kindly trained us and gave up both his time and products so we could sell drinks, pastries, and cakes to the public. I really enjoyed the experience, although it was definitely hard work! In total, we raised an amazing £1,639, which will be shared between the five of us.



We are incredibly grateful for all the support we've received from our local community so far. Local businesses have generously donated items, and so many residents have attended our events, making a real difference to our fundraising journey.

In between fundraising, we've also had time to enjoy some activities with the other selected members of Unit 58. We spent a weekend camping at Mendip Activity Centre, where we learned basic first aid and developed teamwork skills. We also received our very smart World Jamboree neckerchiefs, cooked tacos on gas stoves, and—of course—ate plenty of cake!

I'm now really looking forward to our next meeting, where we'll be canoeing on the River Tone in Taunton. If you would like to support us in reaching our fundraising target, please visit our JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/charity/firstcrewkernescout>



History Matters

WEIRD HISTORY: 4 TANKS THAT MAKE YOU SAY “WHAT ON EARTH WERE THEY THINKING?”

By Jonathan Margetts

The tank, as we know it, revolutionised modern warfare. When the first Mark I tanks rolled across the trenches during the Battle of Flers–Courcellette in 1916, the face of battle changed forever. No longer could armies rely solely on waves of infantry; mechanised warfare had arrived, and with it, the promise of unstoppable battlefield engineering.

But as history repeatedly proves, even the most solid and sensible ideas can be pushed into absolute absurdity.

1. The Bison Lorry – Britain’s Rolling Concrete Nightmare

In 1940, Britain faced the very real threat of invasion. With much of its army deployed abroad, the Home Guard needed defensive positions fast. Steel was in short supply, so British manufacturers, including British Leyland, were tasked with improvising. What they produced was the infamous Bison Lorry.



The idea sounded simple enough: if pillboxes and concrete bunkers could withstand artillery fire, why not mount one on the back of a lorry? In practice, it was a disaster.

Production began with little testing, resulting in vehicles so heavy that many couldn't move at all. Engines failed under the immense weight of concrete, chassis cracked under strain, and even the wheels struggled to cope. Those that did manage to move were painfully inefficient, guzzling fuel as they crawled along like reluctant mobile bunkers.

In the end, many Bison Lorries never saw combat. Instead, they were parked at airfields and strategic sites as little more than static deterrents—essentially concrete boxes on wheels, intended to intimidate any potential invader into believing Britain was simply too eccentric to conquer.

2. The DD Sherman – A Tank That Tried to Swim

The American M4 Sherman tank was one of the most successful armoured vehicles of the Second World War—reliable, adaptable, and widely produced. But its amphibious cousin, the DD (Duplex Drive) Sherman, was a very different story. Designed to support the D-Day landings, the DD Sherman was fitted with a collapsible canvas flotation screen that allowed it to “swim” ashore.



In theory, it was a brilliant idea. In practice, it depended heavily on calm seas. On 6 June 1944, the

English Channel was anything but calm. Many DD Shermans were launched too far from shore or overwhelmed by rough waves, causing them to sink before ever reaching land. Others drifted off course, landing far from their intended targets, where they became easy targets for enemy fire. A handful did reach the beaches and support the infantry, leading commanders to describe the operation as a “relative success.” History, however, is less generous.

3. The L3 Flamethrower Tankette – Italy’s Pocket-Sized Inferno

Italy’s contribution to armoured warfare includes one of the strangest designs of the era: the L3 Flamethrower Tankette.

Small, lightly armoured, and operated by just two crew members, the L3 was already underwhelming before it was even modified. The driver had to lie prone to steer it, making comfort and visibility secondary considerations at best. Then someone added a flamethrower.

To keep the weapon supplied with fuel, the tank pulled a separate fuel trailer behind it via a hose. This meant that a single well-placed bullet could ignite the entire system, turning the vehicle into a rolling fire hazard. Worse still, enemies quickly realised that disabling the tank could be as simple as detaching its fuel supply. The design saw limited use in Ethiopia and North Africa before even its operators had to admit the obvious: it was not exactly a masterstroke of military engineering.



4. The Jagdtiger – Germany’s Overengineered Monster

By the final stages of the Second World War, Nazi Germany was increasingly fixated on producing so-called “super weapons.” One of the most extreme examples was the Jagdtiger, a 75-ton tank destroyer designed to dominate the battlefield through sheer firepower and armour. In theory, it was terrifying. In reality, it was unwieldy, impractical, and deeply flawed.

It used the same engine as the far lighter Tiger II, leaving it underpowered for its enormous weight. Its fuel consumption was extreme, and anything more than flat terrain could slow it to a crawl. Its massive gun fired unique ammunition that was difficult to supply, creating constant logistical headaches. Even when it worked as intended, the Jagdtiger often struggled with mobility, fuel shortages, and ammunition resupply—three rather important qualities for a fighting vehicle.



Ultimately, it became less a battlefield advantage and more a mobile burden on Germany’s already stretched resources.

Final Thoughts

From concrete lorries to swimming tanks and flamethrower-equipped mini armour, military history is full of ideas that sound brilliant on paper and questionable in reality. The tank changed warfare forever—but as these examples show, innovation doesn’t always mean success. Sometimes, it just means someone in a planning office said, “Yes, that definitely works,” without quite thinking it through.

Been There. Done That: Trips, Tickets & Takes

WHERE HISTORY MEETS HORSEPOWER: INSIDE HAYNES MOTOR MUSEUM

By Oliver Taylor

On 14th April, I visited the Haynes Motor Museum and honestly had one of the best days out I've ever experienced. I'd rate it a solid 10/10, and this is a walkthrough of what makes it so special.



As soon as you enter, there is an impressive car display on the left, featuring a famous 1973 Porsche 911 Carrera in the lobby alongside other iconic vehicles. On the right is a large gift shop filled with car memorabilia, from keyrings featuring car logos to high-end model cars, including a Ferrari 499P WEC Hypercar priced at £110, sitting alongside Ferrari Formula 1 models such as the SF-24 and SF-25.



After entering the museum proper, the first gallery showcases early 1900s vehicles. These include early Renault models, the Austin-Healey Sprite Mk1, and the Star Scorpio 12-25, along with the Talbot 14/45 engine. These cars are fascinating to see up close, especially when you consider how different they are from modern vehicles—large wheels, simple designs, and much less focus on safety compared to today's standards.



Next is the famous "Red Room." The first thing you notice is a large wall display explaining the significance of red in automotive design. It describes how different manufacturers refer to shades of red differently—for example, Ferrari's "Rosso Corsa," Mazda's "Soul Red," and Mercedes' various interpretations. A quote from John Haynes himself explains how viewing cars in a single colour allows you to appreciate their shape, design, and engineering more clearly rather than being distracted by colour. This really stood out once I saw the cars on display.



The first car that caught my attention was the Maserati Merak SS, featuring its distinctive trident badge and striking design details such as pop-up headlights and unique air intakes. Another highlight was the Eunos Roadster MX-5 (1990), a Japanese sports car known for its reliability, lightweight design,

and popularity in club racing. It also stands out for its right-hand drive layout and refined build compared to similar models.

Other standout vehicles in the Red Room included the Lamborghini Countach LP400S, with its iconic angular shape and huge rear spoiler, as well as Pontiac Firebirds, Porsche models such as the 356C Coupe and Boxster Roadster, and classics like the Ford Capri, Riley Elf, and Vauxhall Victor FA.

From there, you move into one of the highlights of the museum: the Ferrari Room.

This section includes five stunning Ferrari models:

- ◆ Ferrari 250GT Cabriolet
- ◆ Ferrari 308 GTSi Targa
- ◆ Ferrari 360 Spider
- ◆ Ferrari 400i
- ◆ Ferrari 456 GTA



It also features a model of Niki Lauda's 1976 championship-winning Ferrari 312T and the very first Ferrari Formula 1 car. Seeing these machines up close feels surreal—each one is beautifully designed, and although most are red (as expected), there is also a blue model, which stands out.

Next is the Motorsport Hall, which was one of my personal favourites. It includes a range of historic racing cars. Highlights include a Formula Renault car similar to the one Lewis Hamilton drove during his early career, Michael Schumacher's first Ferrari F1 car from 1996, and classic machines such as the Matra MS11 (1968) and Lotus Ford 49 (1967).

There are also notable cars like the Reynard 893 Alfa Romeo driven in Formula 3 by Jacques Villeneuve, the Ferrari F360 GT Modena Challenge Stradale, the Lola T370 from the Embassy Hill team, and even a display of Pirelli tyres from the 2021 Formula 1 season.

The next section is the "American Dream," featuring a mix of iconic vehicles such as a Ghostbusters-style ambulance, a DeLorean (non-time-travel version), a Cadillac DeVille, Lotus Esprits, Jaguars, classic Mini Coopers, and the Aston Martin Lagonda.

Another area includes some of the most unusual vehicles in the museum, including a wooden car design, a three-wheeled microcar, BMW motorcycles, and a classic BMW 2002.

Finally, the Williams F1 section was an incredible highlight. It includes some of the most significant cars in Formula 1 history:

- ◆ Williams FW14 (1991/92), driven by Nigel Mansell during his championship-winning season



- ◆ Williams FW17 (1994), a car from a tragic era of the sport involving Ayrton Senna's fatal accident at Imola
- ◆ Williams FW23 (2001)
- ◆ Williams FW28 (2006)
- ◆ Williams FW38 (2016).



As well as later chassis and parts from more recent Williams cars, including damaged components from modern seasons.

HAYNES

MOTOR MUSEUM

S O M E R S E T

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300
VEHICLES
ON DISPLAY

<p>LOCATION Sparkford, Somerset Just off the A303 – easy to reach and perfect for a day out.</p>	<p>FOUNDED Established in 1985 by John Haynes OBE, creator of the famous Haynes car manuals.</p>	<p>PERFECT FOR Families, car enthusiasts, history lovers and anyone curious about the world of motoring.</p>	<p>GREAT VALUE Standard admission gives you unlimited entry for a whole year!</p>
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WHAT YOU'LL SEE

<p style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">THE DAWN OF MOTORING</p> <p style="font-size: small;">Step back in time with cars from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Simple engineering, huge wheels and the very start of motoring.</p>	<p style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">THE FAMOUS "RED ROOM"</p> <p style="font-size: small;">A stunning collection of red cars from around the world. Ferrari, Maserati, Porsche and more – all about the curves, the design and the passion.</p>	<p style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">FERRARI EXHIBITION</p> <p style="font-size: small;">Multiple classic Ferraris on display alongside Formula 1 history, including early championship-winning cars. A must-see for any enthusiast.</p>
<p style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">MOTORSPORT HALL</p> <p style="font-size: small;">Formula 1 cars from different eras, including Lewis Hamilton's feeder series car and Michael Schumacher's first Ferrari. Historic racers and tyres from the world of F1.</p>	<p style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">AMERICAN DREAM</p> <p style="font-size: small;">Classic American icons including Cadillacs, muscle cars and film stars like the Ghostbusters ambulance-style vehicle and the DeLorean.</p>	<p style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">WEIRD & WONDERFUL</p> <p style="font-size: small;">Explore unusual microcars, quirky prototypes and rare machines you won't see anywhere else. Motoring has always been full of surprises!</p>

WILLIAMS F1 COLLECTION

One of the most in-depth F1 displays in the UK, featuring championship-winning cars, historic chassis and even crashed vehicles from real race weekends.

“

When you experience a mass of cars in one colour, you saw beyond the distraction of colour and took in the design curves, lines, shapes and angles of the car instead and appreciated the car in a different way.”

– John Haynes OBE

PLAN YOUR VISIT

Haynes Motor Museum
Sparkford, Somerset, BA22 7LH
01963 440804
haynesmuseum.org

WHY VISIT?

- ✓ Over 15 themed exhibitions
- ✓ Over 300 cars, bikes and engines on display
- ✓ Interactive and educational for all ages
- ✓ Get up close to iconic vehicles
- ✓ Friendly staff and a passion for cars

★ FUN FACT

Your standard ticket includes unlimited entry for 12 months – so you can visit again and again!

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(Closing time varies seasonally)
Check website for details.

FACILITIES

Free Parking

Museum Shop

Café

Accessible Access

Family Friendly

Event Venue

★ HISTORY. ENGINEERING. PASSION. ALL UNDER ONE ROOF. ★

Every part of this section highlights both the achievements and the challenges of Formula 1 history. I also regret missing the motorcycle section, but overall, the experience was incredible.

In conclusion, the Haynes Motor Museum is absolutely outstanding. Every staff member was friendly, the exhibits were well presented, and the atmosphere was calm and enjoyable throughout. I genuinely can't think of how it could be improved.

For car enthusiasts or motorsport fans, this museum is a must-visit. I would happily go back again and again.

Thank you to Haynes for an unforgettable experience—it was one of the best days out I've ever had.

What's worth a read?

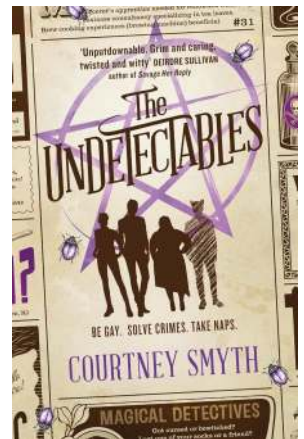
The Undetectables by Courtney Smyth (Titan Books)

By Abigail MacKay

What would you do if you were reunited with your friends after years apart only to be thrust straight into solving a magical murder mystery? *The Undetectables* is a fantasy and crime novel about a group of friends who investigate and try to solve magical, 'undetectable' murders that happen in their town.

Mallory and her friends (Cornelia and Diana) set up a detective agency when they were 14 years old. They tried to solve the murder of a man in Cornelia's Basement at a Samhain Party but failed. Now 20, Mallory reunites with her friends (after an intervention from the ghost of the man whose murder they have yet to solve, Theodore) and is asked by the Night Mayor of their town (Wrackton) to solve the murder of a man. The only catch is that they must solve the murder without anyone else finding out (especially the police). The seemingly impossible to solve case takes a turn when a second victim is killed in the same way as the first, where the killer states that they only have until Samhain that year to solve their serial killings. Can they solve the murders in time and bring the killer to justice before anyone else dies?

I really enjoyed how the author gave us an insight into the feelings of the characters and the struggles of someone living with a chronic illness. Furthermore, I really enjoyed how there were lots of twist that meant that it was hard to work out the culprit until near the end. However, I felt that we didn't get enough background information from their previous murder as to where they got today. I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys mystery and the Occult. I would give it 4 out of 5 stars.



Big Time by Jordan Prosser (Viz Comics)

By Astra Webb

Have you ever read *Big Time* before? Maybe not—but once you hear about it, you might want to give it a try. The story follows Julian Ferryman, the “brains” of his trio and the mastermind behind their risky and often criminal schemes. He's also the bass player in a band called The Acceptables, and his journey quickly becomes intense and unpredictable.

Set in a future version of Australia that has turned into an autocratic state, the novel explores a world that feels both exciting and unsettling. During the band's tour, Julian becomes addicted to a powerful drug called “F,” which allows users to see their own future—possibly even to the end of time. As reality begins to distort, the story dives into big ideas like freedom, control, and what happens when people ignore politics for too long. Some readers have compared the book to *Black Mirror* because of its dark, thought-provoking themes and strange, futuristic concepts. I actually thought this book was great. Even though I don't usually enjoy reading, this is one I would definitely pick up again. If you're someone who doesn't normally like books, I'd still recommend giving it a go—you might be surprised. And if it's not for you, that's okay too; it shouldn't stop you from trying something else.

It's a really good book to read on a not-so-great day, as it pulls you into a completely different world. If you're into dystopian or speculative fiction, *Big Time* is definitely worth checking out. It's fast-paced, imaginative, and makes you think at the same time.



***Blood, Brawn, Brains and Broken Noses* by Chris Sykes (Pitch Publishing Ltd)**

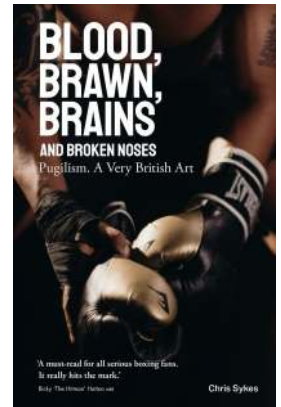
By Peter Hopwood

Blood, Brawn, Brains and Broken Noses is a book about the history of boxing and how it has changed over time. Instead of just focusing on fights or famous athletes, Chris Sykes looks at how the sport developed alongside society, starting from ancient civilisations and moving into more modern times.

What I found interesting about the book is that it doesn't just describe what happened—it explains why boxing became popular and how people's attitudes influenced it. For example, the book explores how ideas about strength, masculinity, and competition shaped the sport, especially as it moved from bare-knuckle fighting to a more organised and regulated activity. This made it feel more like a mix of history and social commentary rather than just a sports book.

The book also includes references to well-known fighters and key moments, which helps make the information more engaging. However, some parts can be quite detailed and harder to follow, particularly when the author focuses on more complex ideas. Because of this, it might not appeal as much to someone looking for a quick or purely entertaining read.

Overall, I think this book is informative and gives a deeper understanding of boxing beyond just the physical side of the sport. It helped me see how boxing reflects the time periods it existed in and why it became such an important part of culture. I would recommend it to readers who are interested in history as well as sport.



***The Games of a Lifetime* by Julian "Jaz" Rignall (Bitmap Books)**

By Sian Grey

I've never really understood video games. I don't play them, and I've always found it hard to see why people enjoy them so much. This has been especially challenging because my son works as a technical artist in the games industry, and I've never fully understood the world he's so passionate about. He often tells me that games can create whole worlds and stories that change depending on the choices players make — something I wanted to learn more about.



That's why I picked up *The Game of a Lifetime* by Julian "Jaz" Rignall. Even though gaming isn't my thing, I hoped this book would help me understand the industry and connect more with my son.

The book is a personal journey through the games Jaz has played throughout his life, starting with Pong in 1976 and ending with Horizon Forbidden West in 2022. Alongside the games, he shares stories from his own life — growing up in Wales, competing in arcade championships, writing for the magazine Zzap!, and even getting paid to test video games straight out of school in the 1980s. Some of the games he mentions were familiar to me from my own childhood, and others were ones my children played years later.

My husband enjoyed looking through the timeline of games and seeing how much they've changed over the decades. The pictures brought back memories of the games he used to play. My



son also liked flipping through the book and explaining the technical side of how modern games are made.

However, I did find the writing style a bit too chatty and wordy at times — perhaps a result of Jaz's magazine writing background. I also would have liked more images of the games themselves. The book focuses heavily on his personal experiences, showing how gaming grew from something only "geeks" and "nerds" did in the 1980s to a huge global industry where millions of people watch others play online.

Would I recommend this book? Yes and no. If you want a quick look back at old games and the memories attached to them, it's great. Visitors to my home often picked it up, looked at the timeline, and immediately started talking about the games they remembered. But if you're looking for something more focused and less personal, the writing might feel a bit long-winded.

Am I now a gamer? No. But I do understand much better why so many people — including my own son — find video games exciting, creative, and rewarding.

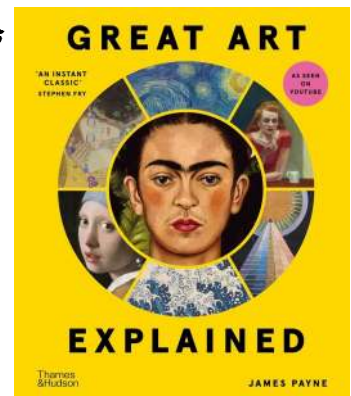
***Great Art Explained: The Stories Behind the World's Greatest Masterpieces* by James Payne (Thames & Hudson)**

By Bryonee Carling

Great Art Explained offers an accessible and engaging introduction to some of the world's most iconic artworks. True to its title, the book excels at breaking down complex ideas, artistic techniques, and historical contexts into clear, digestible insights that are easy to understand.

What makes this book stand out is how approachable it feels. Whether you're new to art or already interested, it helps deepen your appreciation without ever becoming overwhelming. The inclusion of a quote from Stephen Fry and its connection to the popular YouTube series of the same name highlight its modern, wide-reaching appeal.

If you're curious about famous paintings and the stories behind them, *Great Art Explained* is a strong choice. It's informative, easy to follow, and perfect for anyone looking to explore art in a fresh and engaging way.



***GIRLS®: Gen Z and the Commodification of Everything* by Freya India (Swift Press)**

By Suzi Waker

Girls by Freya India is a book about what it's like growing up as a girl today, especially with things like social media and online pressure. The author talks a lot about her own experiences, which makes the book feel quite real and easy to follow. I liked how honest it was—it didn't feel too formal or confusing. She talks about things like fitting in, friendships, and how girls can feel pressured to look or act a certain way. It makes you think about how much social media affects people without really realising it. At times it feels a bit opinion-based, but that also makes it more personal. It's not trying to give all the answers, just share ideas and get people thinking. Overall, it's a good, quick read, especially for teenagers and young women. It's relatable and makes you think about what it's like being a girl today.



Fast Times and Excellent Adventures: The Surprising History of the '80s Teen Movie by James King (Constable)

By Jonathan Broome

Like many cinema books (recently I read the excellent *Cinema Speculation* from Quentin Tarantino) I am a little bored with the long descriptions of studio politics, script wranglings and casting struggles. While obviously well researched, these narratives just don't grab me, I often skip them.

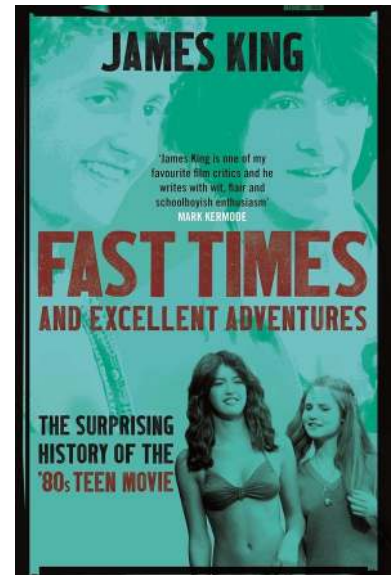
This book though, is excellent when exploring the themes, agendas and stories of the actors and the pictures. King reminds us that there is more to this variety of film than toilet humour and lude set pieces (although, yes, there are plenty of those!) The genre often presents complex characters and social comment we may assume void from 80s cinema.

Take Daniel in the *Karate Kid* – On one level the 'hit only as a last resort' brand of karate taught Mr. Miyagi represents a liberal challenge to the Cobra Kai's Nazi-esq uniformity and strike first mentality. Yet "Daniel's Cocky American swagger reminiscent of umpteen teen Hollywood Idols" represents a celebration Regan's American Idealism.

This truth is even found in the sardonic end to the *Breakfast Club*. These young people do not conveniently fall into one of five-character archetypes imposed on them. They are multifaceted individuals with their own true identities unseen amongst the mundane social strata of daily life.

Even *Bill and Ted*. The entire movie is one satirical swipe at itself. Simultaneously celebrating and bemoaning that the cultural high point of 80s California is not found in its philosophers, scientists or politicians, but two heavy metal surfer dudes, who find themselves sharing a stage with Socrates, Sigmund Freud and Abraham Lincoln.

These stories then have more to offer than we assume and this book does an excellent job of encouraging us to judge the frolics of the teen movie with a bit more credit.



Beyblade X, Vol. 1 (Viz Media)

By Jake Wetherall

I thought this book was adventurous and exciting, with lots of action that kept me interested. It was easy to follow because it's laid out like a comic, and the panels help guide you through the story clearly. Even though it doesn't have colour, the illustrations are very detailed and expressive, which makes the battles and characters feel more alive.

I also liked how the story introduces the characters and their skills, making you want to see what happens next. I think this book is best suited for children aged 10–11, as older readers might not find the story as interesting. However, it's very easy to understand, so anyone could pick it up—even if they haven't read any Beyblade books before.

My only negative is that it reads back to front, which I sometimes found confusing. I would forget and turn it the wrong way and lose my place. Rating 4/5

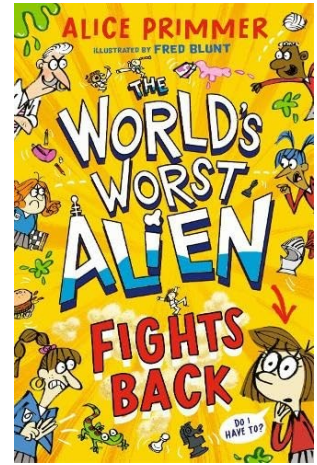


The World's Worst Alien Fights Back* by Alice Primmer (Walker Books)*By Jessie Vowles**

Is it possible that the person sat next to you, right at this very moment, is an Alien?

In *The World's Worst Alien, Fights Back*, Sky (an alien from outer space) must return to Earth to solve one of humanities biggest problems.

Sky has made a planet and named it Earth. Earth is a disaster. Sky fails her planet-making project. The only way she can ever pass this assignment, is to return to earth and stop the humans fighting each other. How hard could that be?



I read 'The World's Worst Alien Fights Back' with my two sons aged 8 and 10. We hadn't read the prequel, but it is easy to catch up with the storyline, and you can enjoy this as a stand-alone book.

The main plot is that 'Sky' our protagonist, is a loveable Alien disguised as a middle school girl. She fumbles her way through the challenges of school life, homework, school sports, making friends, while simultaneously trying to stop humans from fighting each other!

We had laugh out loud moments, along-side the occasional eye-roll, while reading this novel. My favourite characters were Sky and her friend Arnold. Sky stays at Arnolds house during her visit to Earth, and in order not to be recognised by his parents, she wears a different disguise to dinner each night. My favourite was the sombrero and stick-on moustache! Luckily for Sky, dinner time at Arnold's house with his 4 older brothers, is pandemonium, so she goes unnoticed.

I think this book is good for families and younger readers aged 8-12. It is easy to read, with plenty of slapstick, but also includes some important themes around what it means to be human.

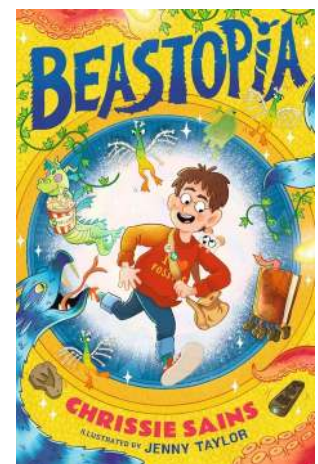
Overall, I would recommend this book and give it 4 out of 5 stars.

Beastopia* by Chrissie Sains (Walker Books)*By Yasmin Hill**

Beastopia is a captivating story that whispers secrets of a hidden realm, where magical creatures live and adventure is never far away. This enchanting tale follows Digby, Mog, and Tai as they set out on a perilous journey to become Apprentice Guardians of Beastopia, facing a series of exciting and challenging obstacles along the way.

With its richly imagined world, memorable characters, and strong themes of friendship, resilience, and acceptance, *Beastopia* is a truly engaging read that transports readers into a world of wonder. The exquisite illustrations by Jenny Taylor add an extra touch of whimsy, bringing the story to life and making it especially appealing for younger readers.

Critics praise the book for celebrating individuality and teamwork, making it an excellent choice for readers aged 7-9. As one reviewer put it, "*Beastopia* is utterly brilliant—a wonderful, magical adventure that's sure to be a huge hit with kids everywhere."



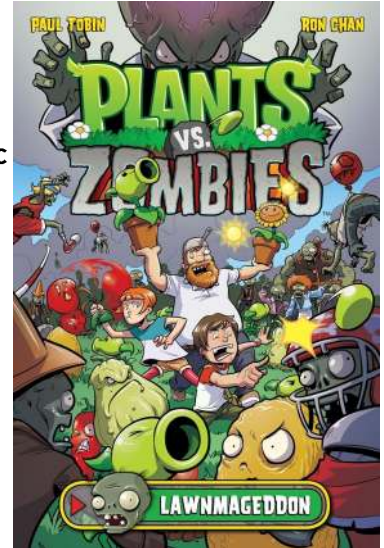
Plants vs Zombies: Volume 1 (Dark Horse Comics)**By Jake Wetherall**

I really enjoyed this book—it was funny and easy to follow, and the comic-style layout made it quick and fun to read. The story has lots of silly moments and jokes, which made it entertaining all the way through.

The drawings are bold, colourful, and full of character, which makes the action scenes and zombies more exciting. I especially liked how the characters interact, as it made the story feel lively and fun.

I think this book is best for ages 10–13, especially if you've played the Plants vs. Zombies game, because it helps you understand what's going on and makes it even more enjoyable.

I didn't really have any negatives for this book—I thought it was great and would definitely read more in the series. Rating 5/5

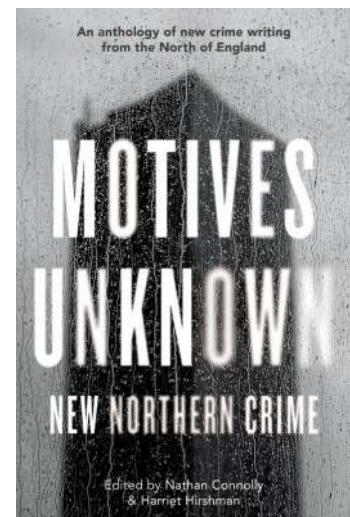
***Motives Unknown: An anthology of new crime writing from the North of England*** - Edited by Nathan Connolly and Harriet Hirshman (Dead Ink)**By Jodie Brown**

Motives Unknown is an anthology of new crime writing from the North of England, made up of eleven short stories by different authors. Each story looks at crime from a slightly different angle, often focusing on memory, guilt and why people behave the way they do. I usually read full-length novels — particularly crime, romance, and historical fiction — so this was quite a different reading experience for me and took some getting used to.

The book begins with a long and very literary introduction. It is clearly written by someone with a deep knowledge of crime writing, but I found it heavy going and difficult to connect with. Even as a keen reader, it felt more academic than accessible, and not something I imagine many people would read for enjoyment. This made me a little unsure about what the rest of the book would be like. Thankfully, the stories themselves were much more varied, and several were far more engaging than the introduction suggested.

The opening story, *What Has Sunk May Rise* by Inés G Labarta, was a slow burner and didn't immediately draw me in. However, it stayed with me long after I had finished reading it. The idea that people might deliberately undermine colleagues because they feel more entitled to success felt uncomfortable, but believable within the fictional world of the story. By the time the story ended, I was fully invested and slightly disappointed that it was over, as it felt like something that could easily have been developed into a full novel.

One of the strongest stories in the collection was *In Young Memory* by Ewan A Dougall. This was a very sad and thought-provoking piece about a former police officer struggling with memory loss while trying to understand a murder he believes he committed. The realisation that such a situation could realistically happen was quite shocking, and it gave the story real emotional weight. I found this one gripping throughout and would definitely read more by this author.



Several other stories stood out for different reasons. *Of Book* by Dan Howarth was unsettling and powerful, dealing with past trauma and delayed justice in a way that felt purposeful rather than sensational. *The Ends* by Andrew Hudson was particularly moving, focusing on the disappearance of an eleven-year-old boy in 1976 whose remains are only discovered many years later. The descriptions of the moors were very vivid, and I could clearly picture the setting. *A Quiet Retribution* by Dawn Nicholson also worked well, keeping me in suspense and holding my attention right up to the end.

Not every story worked for me. *What Gets Forgotten* by Joey McGarvey was difficult to follow, and I struggled to work out what it was trying to be about. *Saving Kenny* by Stan Fenton was written entirely in text-style language and phonetic spelling, with little punctuation or standard grammar. I found this style distracting and hard to read, and it quickly put me off. Other stories, such as *That Crucible Summer* by Pete Hardy and *Skeletons* by Beth Barker, were interesting but ended abruptly, leaving unanswered questions that felt more frustrating than satisfying.

Overall, *Motives Unknown* is a mixed but interesting collection. At its best, it offers thoughtful and emotionally powerful crime stories that focus more on motive and consequence than on action. At its weakest, it can feel inaccessible or frustrating, particularly for readers who prefer clear endings and fully developed characters. Readers who enjoy literary or experimental crime fiction, or who prefer short stories to novels, are likely to get the most from this book. For readers like me, it is a collection with several standout stories, even if it often leaves you wishing they were longer.

***Big Deal! One Hundred Managers, their Greatest Signing and the One Who Got Away!* by Richard Sydenham & John Wragg (Pitch Publishing)**

By Rhiley Clarke

Big Deal: 100 Managers is a football book that explores some of the most important transfers and managerial decisions in modern football history.

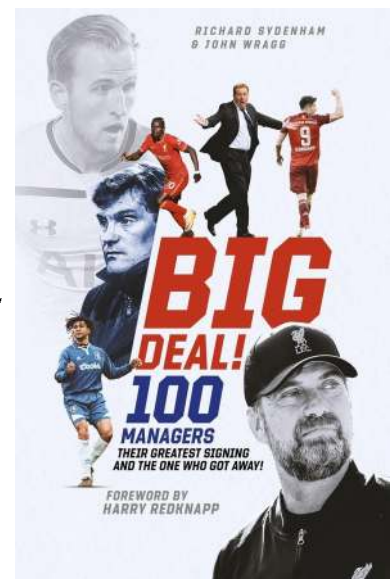
It looks at how managers and clubs have shaped the game through key signings—highlighting both the successes that defined eras and the mistakes or missed opportunities that changed what could have happened.

My favourite transfer featured in the book is Bryan Robson's move from West Bromwich Albion to Manchester United for £1.5 million in 1981. He went on to achieve great success with United, winning several league titles and becoming a key figure at the club.

I would recommend this book to football fans of any team or league. It covers a wide range of clubs and managers, mainly from the 1980s and 1990s, and includes some of the biggest names in football management history, such as Jürgen Klopp.

The book is particularly interesting because it doesn't just focus on the good signings—it also explains the bad decisions and the players who got away, showing how unpredictable football transfers can be.

I would rate this book 9 out of 10. It takes around 4–5 weeks to read, but it is packed with detailed stories and fascinating insight into football history.



***The Immortals of British Motor Racing* by David Addison (Gelding Street Press)**

By Oliver Taylor

The Immortals of British Motor Racing is a tribute-style book that celebrates some of the greatest drivers in motorsport history. It explores the achievements, personalities, and careers of legendary British racing drivers, highlighting their impact on Formula 1 and motorsport as a whole.

Britain is widely regarded as one of the most successful nations in racing, producing iconic drivers such as Nigel Mansell, Damon Hill, James Hunt, Lewis Hamilton, and more recently Lando Norris and Jenson Button, who is also from Somerset. The UK is also home to world-class teams including Williams Racing, Aston Martin, McLaren, Red Bull Racing, Lotus, and others. Famous circuits such as Brands Hatch, Silverstone, Donington Park, and Oulton Park further show the country's deep connection to motorsport. This book captures and celebrates that legacy by focusing on its greatest drivers.

The book features 12 drivers in total: Graham Hill, Stirling Moss, John Surtees, Jim Clark, Jackie Stewart, Derek Bell, Gerry Marshall, James Hunt, Nigel Mansell, Martin Brundle, Dario Franchitti, and seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton. Below are three drivers who stood out to me the most:

James Hunt

James Hunt was born in Belmont, Surrey, on 29 August 1947 and sadly passed away in 1993 at the age of 45. He entered Formula 1 in 1973 after gaining attention in Formula Three, eventually joining Hesketh Racing in 1974. He later moved to McLaren, where he achieved his greatest success. The book explains his journey in great detail, including his dramatic 1976 championship win, which became one of the most famous seasons in F1 history.

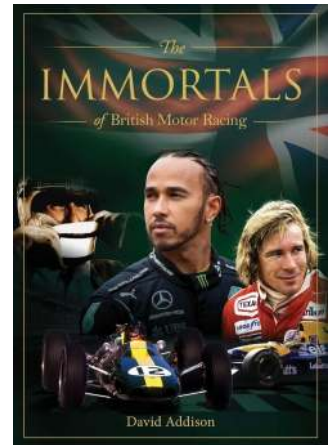
Nigel Mansell

Nigel Mansell was born on 8 August 1953 in Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire. He entered Formula 1 in 1980 with Team Lotus and quickly made an impression with his determination and skill. He later raced for Williams Racing, then Scuderia Ferrari, before returning to Williams, where he won the 1992 World Championship. Over his career, Mansell achieved 31 race wins, 32 pole positions, and 59 podium finishes. The book does an excellent job of showing both his racing achievements and his personality, giving a full picture of his career.

Sir Lewis Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton was born on 7 January 1985 in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. He grew up in challenging circumstances but developed a passion for racing early on, beginning with remote-controlled cars before progressing through junior motorsport categories. He made his Formula 1 debut in 2007 with McLaren and immediately impressed, finishing second in the championship in his rookie season before winning his first world title in 2008. He has since gone on to win seven world championships (2008, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020), matching the record held by Michael Schumacher. One of the most dramatic moments of his career came in 2021, when he narrowly missed out on the title in a highly controversial final race in Abu Dhabi against Max Verstappen. In the same year, Hamilton was knighted for his services to British motorsport. The book also highlights Hamilton's wider impact beyond racing, including his role as the first Black driver in Formula 1 and his advocacy for equality and social causes, showing how influential he has become both on and off the track.

Overall, *The Immortals of British Motor Racing* is a fantastic read. It highlights not only the success of each driver but also their early struggles and lesser-known moments in lower racing categories. It is clearly aimed at motorsport fans, and as someone who enjoys racing, I found it extremely engaging from start to finish. I would honestly give it a **10/10**. I was more interested in this book than almost any others I have read—it is brilliant and highly recommended.



***Together: A Manifesto Against the Heartless World* by Ece Temelkuran
(Canongate Canons)**

By Molly Caswell

Together: A Manifesto Against the Heartless World is a powerful and thought-provoking book in which Ece Temelkuran draws on her personal experiences and deep knowledge of politics, humanity, and the darker aspects of the modern world. Through this, she expresses a strong desire for peace and highlights her concerns about what she sees as a corrupt political system.

Throughout the book, Temelkuran explores themes such as suffering, resilience, power, and resistance, offering a wide range of perspectives on how individuals and societies respond to political and social change. She writes with honesty and confidence, unafraid to express challenging or uncomfortable ideas—one of the reasons she is such a respected political writer.

In the chapter “*On Befriending Fear*,” she discusses the importance of acknowledging and accepting fear rather than allowing it to paralyse us. She argues that avoiding fear can lead to what she describes as the “cold comfort of ignorance.” This idea encourages readers to confront difficult realities rather than ignore them.

Temelkuran also reflects on the concept of the “new normal” and the idea of “surviving it beautifully,” encouraging readers to question what this new normal actually is. Is it the current state of the world, or the change we hope to create? This question sits at the heart of the book and encourages ongoing reflection.

Overall, *Together: A Manifesto Against the Heartless World* is a challenging but important read. It encourages readers to think critically about politics, society, and their own role in the world. It is both reflective and urgent, making it a compelling book for anyone interested in contemporary political thought.



***The Definitions* by Matt Greene (Dead Ink)**

By Olivia Turton

The Definitions is a book set in a rehabilitation facility known as “The Centre.” The residents, referred to as “students,” have survived a mysterious illness that has completely erased their memories—especially anything about who they are or where they come from.

At the Centre, students take part in re-education. They attend daily classes where they relearn basic life skills, etiquette, and the “correct” ways to speak and behave. Without their own identities, they are given new names taken from old video tapes that they all watch together.

As the story develops, the protagonist begins to struggle with the strict rules of the Centre. Gradually, fragments of forgotten memories—such as music, errands, and past relationships—begin to return. These “shards” of memory cause her to question the official “definitions” she has been given and what the Centre is trying to make her believe.

The Definitions is best suited to readers who enjoy literary science fiction. It is a quiet but unsettling exploration of what remains of a person when their identity and history are taken away.



Girls Allowed* by Nick Brown (Halcyon Publishing)*By Danielle Charles**

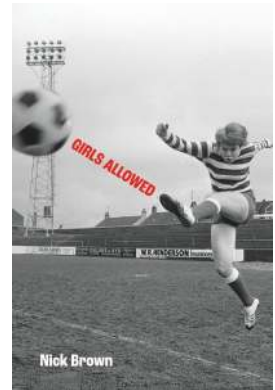
Have you ever felt that sometimes the rules or common expectations around gender in sports just don't make any sense? Well, if that is the case "Girls Allowed" is a book that may interest you.

Girls Allowed by Nick Brown is a non-fiction take on the sports, social and cultural history of British women's football. The book focuses on the struggles and development of women in the British footballing world with a focus on the development of women in football during hardship such as World War One and how they as a community overcame challenges around their acceptance.

The book itself tells a real-life story of how women in football developed in England, how they were banned and how they fought their way back into the system. It follows the journey of their development from start to finish, through hardships and successes. The main "conflict" of the book was "women vs the discrimination". This being discrimination in sport especially from organisations such as the Football Association and wider social bodies / standards.

What makes this book interesting in my opinion was how it is based on real history, the real facts, the fact that it happened. I also appreciate that the book goes into all the details such as their overlooked ban that lasted for many decades and that it can connect these past struggles with today's success to see how far women in football have come.

I think that this book will be interesting for those that are looking to gather information about the development of women's football in British history and would recommend it! If I must give it a rating out of 5 I would give it a 4 out of 5.

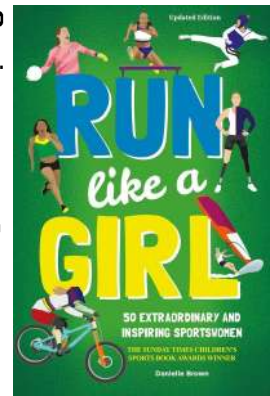
***Run Like A Girl: 50 Extraordinary and Inspiring Sportswomen* by Danielle Brown and *Great Lives in Graphics: Greta Thunberg* (Button Books)****By Laura Manning**

2026 is the National Year of Reading and 'The Quill' library is bursting at the seams with books for students to read and enjoy. I was lucky enough to pick up two books for my daughter, aged 9 who is a keen reader. Having already read, *Good night Stories for Rebel girls* by Elena Favilli I thought she may enjoy reading *Run like a Girl* and *Greta Thunberg* as she is part of her schools Better Planet Club, which focuses on environmental change.

Felicity enjoyed flicking through the *Greta Thunberg* book as it has bright and bold illustrations and snap shot facts about different events in Greta life. The information presented was suitable for a child of her age (and perhaps a few years older) and it told the interesting journey that Greta has experienced in her quest to prevent climate change. Felicity particularly liked the fact that Greta started a global green movement at school, something she reported back to her classmates. Whilst reading this with Felicity, it made me realise we perhaps can do more at Wadhams school to reduce our carbon footprint. Possibly area of consideration for the School Council!



The second book (not finished yet) is another book which you can quickly grab and have a look at, which is ideal for a bit of light reading after a day at school. Following along with a similar theme of short stories about amazing women, Felicity enjoyed this book too. The 'Did you know?' section was fascinating and Felicity particularly enjoyed reading about Sophie Christiansen. Felicity was born prematurely and was intrigued to find out that Sophie was also born two months early but suffered with Cerebral Palsy. She was inspired to read that despite her difficulties she was able to become a para-lympic equestrian rider. The book has 50 different stories about extraordinary and inspiring sportswomen in a range of sporting events, and it is not a surprise it was The Sunday Times Children's Sports Book Awards' winner.



It is easy to read with great images. It is also inspiring to know that 'running like a girl' is no longer a bad thing and this title created a good discussion about equality. Felicity said would recommend this book more so to other children as it has more variety but equally enjoyed the Greta book too! She said you don't have to be interested in sports to find it inspiring.

Finally, if you haven't been to 'the Quill' Library, you should! There is something there for everyone and these two books prove it doesn't have to be a novel, to experience the joy of reading.

Three Lions on a Shirt: The Official History of the England Football Jersey by Simon Shakeshaft (Vision Sports Publishing) and From the Jaws of Victory by Adam Bushby & Rob Macdonald (Halcyon Publishing)

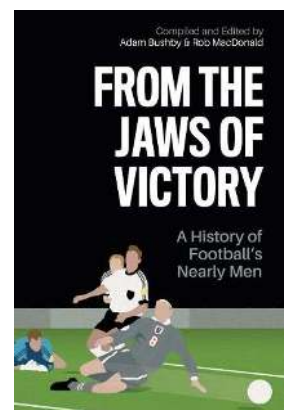
By Lewis Larcombe

Three Lions on a Shirt is a sports history book that acts as a visual and historical guide to the evolution of the England football shirt. Rather than following a traditional storyline, the book uses the shirt itself as the central "character," telling the story of England's football identity over the past 150 years. A key theme is the struggle between tradition, culture, and commercial change in football. It shows how something as simple as a football shirt can reflect major shifts in national identity and the development of the game. What makes this book particularly interesting is the way it uses clothing to tell the wider story of England's football history and national obsession. It takes readers through different eras, from the Victorian gentleman to the modern game, highlighting how style and identity have evolved over time. The writing is informative and engaging, and the themes focus on England's past, football culture, and identity. It creates a strong sense of nostalgia, especially for football fans.



From the Jaws of Victory is a sports non-fiction book that explores iconic national teams and the heartbreak of coming close to glory but ultimately falling short. A key figure featured is Johan Cruyff, alongside other legendary players such as Ferenc Puskás. These players help tell powerful stories of teams that were filled with talent but narrowly missed out on victory.

The main theme of the book is the contrast between style and substance in football, as well as the emotional impact of finishing second. This sense of near success and disappointment creates a strong feeling of drama and pathos throughout. The writing style is described as lyrical and evocative, making the stories of national teams feel vivid and emotional. It is a book that captures both the beauty and the heartbreak of international football.



Both books would strongly appeal to football fans, especially those interested in history, national teams, and the evolution of the game. They offer different but complementary perspectives—one focusing on identity and culture through the football shirt, and the other on the emotional highs and lows of international competition.

Make a Home of Me by Vanessa Santos (Dead Ink)**By Ewelina Hartnell**

Make a Home of Me by Vanessa Santos is a captivating fiction and crime collection that pulls the reader into eight separate stories filled with shocking twists and dark endings. Although the book is easy to read some stories are brutal and disturbing, often ending negatively or in a way the reader cannot predict. Even so, the suspense keeps you interested and wanting to continue reading.

Each story introduces different characters and situations, which makes the book feel fresh and unpredictable. The characters may only appear briefly, but many of them leave a strong impression because of the difficult or frightening situations they face.

The writing style is simple and direct, which makes the book accessible and quick to read. Vanessa Santos creates suspense well, and every story contains its own twist. Some of these twists are shocking, disturbing, or even disgusting, which adds to the horror and crime elements of the book. Certain scenes make the reader question how people could behave in such terrible ways, while also showing the author's imagination and creativity in creating dark storylines.

Although this would not normally be my first choice of book, I still found it interesting because it was easy to follow and constantly made me curious about what would happen next. The stories encourage the reader to think deeply about human behaviour and why people make cruel or dangerous decisions.

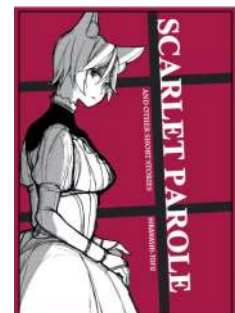
In conclusion, *Make a Home of Me* is an engaging crime and fiction book that succeeds in creating suspense and disturbing twists, even if some endings are unpredictable or upsetting. I would recommend this book to adult readers who enjoy dark crime stories, psychological twists, and fictional narratives that leave a lasting impression

**Scarlet Parole (Marginal Publishing)****By Olivia Moncur**

This short debut manga by Hirahashi-Tofu consists of two short stories. The first part of the manga called 'scarlet parole'. runaway criminal called Euniere Delacroix escapes his execution. After Delacroix hides in a town called Alwick, but soon comes across a witch called Marldant Beironal. Who is also the daughter of Queen Odriana, who Delacroix needs to pass an important letter to.

After Delacroix's Hasty meeting with Beironal his executioners appear. After discovering that Beironal had killed and turned a man into her familiar they decide to execute them both. After killing and escaping their executioners Delacroix and Beironal run away together disguising themselves as townsfolk.

The second part of the manga is called 'les Nuages de Thanatos'. Renetance Corneille after planning her brother's funeral after he died in the war is met by a Thanatos called Neflguria who is interested in why Corneille is so fixated in her brother's death. Neflguria decides to erase Corneille's memories of her brother allowing her to have a peaceful life as musician. I absolutely loved this book the artwork was beautiful, and the characters were well designed. Overall, I give this book a 10/10.



STICK THIS IN YOUR EARHOLES

Margo Guryan – Triple Vinyl Compilation (Numero Group)

By Ron Phelan

This triple vinyl compilation from Numero Group offers a fascinating look at the artistic development of the often-overlooked pianist and singer Margo Guryan. The box set is beautifully presented, with a pull-out booklet and a wealth of photographs showing Guryan alongside jazz luminaries such as J.J. Johnson and Max Roach. The coloured vinyl itself is an attractive muted grey, adding to the overall aesthetic appeal.



The first disc highlights her strengths as both a pianist and composer, featuring work with her quartet as well as solo performances. The sound is firmly rooted in 1960s New York jazz—swing-driven, occasionally touched with Latin influences, and consistently tasteful, if not especially virtuosic. As the record progresses, particularly in the latter half of disc one, the sound shifts toward more pop-oriented material. The second disc opens with the funky “Sunday Morning” and moves through a range of psychedelic-influenced compositions. There are even tentative steps toward 1970s-style disco on tracks like “Hold Me Dancing.”

While the musicianship and writing remain solid throughout, the collection ultimately feels more like a well-curated historical document than a fully essential artistic statement—more engaging as background listening than as a centrepiece. Rating: 3/5

Eccentric Soul – The Way Out Label (Numero Group)

By Ron Phelan

This triple vinyl compilation from the Cleveland-based Way Out label is upbeat and infectious from the start, showcasing a series of criminally overlooked soul recordings from the 1960s. The arrangements are consistently strong, with excellent musicianship and a distinctive label identity that gives the compilation real cohesion. There's an immediate warmth and energy to the recordings that makes them highly engaging throughout.



The packaging matches the music in quality: a double gatefold packed with archival photos and three separate inserts that deepen the sense of period immersion. It's a fully realised vinyl experience that feels carefully curated from start to finish. Rating: 4.5/5

Eccentric Soul – The Saru Label (Numero Group)

By Ron Phelan

The second entry in the Eccentric Soul series is the weakest of the three, though that speaks more to the overall strength of the collection than any major shortcomings here. As always with Numero Group releases, the packaging is exceptional—heavy vinyl, a gatefold sleeve, and a rich selection of promotional photographs that capture the era well.



Musically, this set has a more raw and unpolished feel compared to the others, which gives it a certain charm and historical interest. However, it lacks the consistency and standout moments found in the strongest entries, making it more of a collector's document than an essential listen. Rating: 3.5/5

Eccentric Soul – The Shiptown Label (Numero Group)**By Ron Phelan**

Saving the best for last, this final entry in the Eccentric Soul series is a standout compilation. The pink-coloured vinyl immediately signals something special, and the presentation—another beautifully assembled gatefold with extensive liner notes and archival imagery—continues the high standard set by the series.

The set features 25 tracks drawn from the Virginia-based Shiptown label, with artists such as Ida Sands, The Soul Duo, The Anglos, and Dream Team. The sound spans the mid-60s through the 70s, characterised by rich horn arrangements, layered vocal harmonies, and occasional touches of fuzzed-out guitar.

What makes this release so compelling is its balance of energy and authenticity. The recordings are unapologetically unpolished—no studio correction, no smoothing of imperfections—but that rawness gives them real character and vitality. In an era often defined by overproduction, this feels like a reminder of how immediate and expressive soul music can be.

A superb collection of deeply soulful recordings, presented with care and confidence. Rating: 5/5

**Carsick – Tough Luck EP (Alcopop Records)****By Hope Wood**

The EP *Tough Luck* by Carsick, released on 5th September 2025, is loud, high-energy, and immediately attention-grabbing. It captures a chaotic, slightly abrasive take on UK youth culture that feels both dramatic and strangely relatable. From the opening moments, fast-paced instrumentation and rough-edged vocals set a raw, unpolished tone that sits between punk and indie.

Standout tracks like “Violence” and “Pub Watch” highlight the EP’s intensity, pairing catchy hooks with lyrics about frustration, going out, and everyday confusion. There’s an honesty to it that makes even the more chaotic moments feel grounded and real.

While some tracks can feel similar and slightly repetitive, the EP still delivers plenty of energy and attitude. *Tough Luck* won’t be for everyone, but for listeners who enjoy loud, fast, unrefined music, it’s an engaging listen. Rating: 4/5

**PABST – This Is Normal Now (Alcopop Records)****By Lily Obern**

Pabst’s *This Is Normal Now* hits like a shot of ice-cold water to the face—in the best way possible. The Berlin-based trio deliver a raw, high-energy mix of punk, noise rock, and indie that feels immediate and unrelenting from the opening track. Distorted guitars, driving rhythms, and vocals that feel like they’re being shouted from the edge of collapse pull you straight into a whirlwind of chaos and intensity. It wasn’t quite what I expected at first, but it quickly became a fun, gripping listen that’s easy to return to.

At times, there are hints of influence similar to bands like Fontaines D.C., which adds to its appeal for fans of that wider post-punk sound. It feels like you’re right there in the room with the band as they tear through each track with full force. Overall, *This Is Normal Now* is a visceral, cathartic record—rough around the edges but consistently exciting. It’s not polished, and it doesn’t try to be, but if you’re after something loud, challenging, and genuinely exhilarating, PABST are definitely worth a listen.



FROM CART TO CRITIQUE: WADHAM SCHOOL CONSUMER REVIEWS



SOMETHING FOR THE ...BRICK BUILDERS

Tank set BA0171, Panther Ausf. D (Build Army)

Reviewed by Casper Crouch

Realistic interpretations of military vehicles are hard to come by in the LEGO world, but one brand that really stands out is Build Army. The company, founded in 2020 by Dr Ruibin Zhang, Build Army focuses on creating accurate and well-designed models of military vehicles, particularly German and American tanks from the Second World War.

This is a review of the Build Army set BA0171, Panther Ausf. D. Listed at £49.99 on the official Build Army website, this set features 940 pieces, and its difficulty score is rated at 7/10.

Immediately, when receiving the set, you notice its premium-like box, made of printed card, which turns out to be very sturdy. The graphic of the model on the front of the box is very nice, and it clearly lists the set's information, such as its piece count and scale.

Despite featuring numbered, individual bags, there is no mention of this in the instruction manual. As a result, you are forced to empty out all 940 pieces onto a single space, which can lead to some issues during the build and extends the time required to finish this set, since you are constantly scanning around for a specific part.

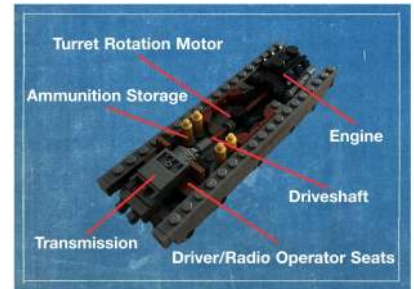
As I begin the build, I start with the two minifigures that were an addition to the set, the Wehrmacht (the armed forces of Germany during WW2) infantry figure and the Panzer crew figure. These figures are both very accurate, featuring detailed printing and moulding for parts such as the rifle, helmet, canteen, etc. They look great, and they would look even more spectacular in large numbers as part of a diorama of some sort.

Get ready to dive into our honest take on some of the coolest products around! From LEGO-style sets and board games to handheld video games, clothes, toys and toiletries, we've tried them all. We'll tell you what's worth your cash, what's fun, and what might not live up to the hype—straight from our perspective, no filters.



Next, I move on to the main attraction – the tank itself. You begin by building the base of the hull, working your way upwards as you build the suspension support, engine bay, and crew compartments. The engineering of this set is incredible, featuring a full interior of the tank’s hull, including seats for the radio operator and driver, ammunition storage, the Maybach HL 230 V12 engine, and the frontal transmission, which was the Panther’s Achilles heel in real life. I have included a photo of the open hull, where the interior is exposed, and I have labelled the components.

For me, the most interesting feature is the turret rotation motor, which uses the power provided from the drive shaft running through the centre of the hull to spin the turret around. From this point onwards, the rest of the build is simply building the rest of the tank. Building the tracks, adding the wheels and building the bodywork. In the end, it was a rewarding but extensive experience, resulting in a fabulous-looking model that looks just like the real thing.



Time to sum everything up. This set was a very interesting experience, using techniques I have never seen before to recreate that striking angular design that the panther is famous for. Its 75mm main gun looks great, and the external features of the tank, including the driver’s viewport, exhausts and commander’s cupola, are designed well and look very accurate and in scale to the tank, which is hard to recreate with simple LEGO bricks. The instructions, while featuring no guidance on what order each bag should be opened, are surprisingly very clear and informative, almost on par with real LEGO instruction manuals in my opinion.



But, like almost every product, this set has its shortcomings. The stickers provided with the set, while realistic, are not very sticky and have a tendency to peel off by themselves after a certain period of time. The tracks are put together by 118 individual track pieces, which, as you can imagine, gets very repetitive very quickly. Additionally, when mounting the tracks, the wheels are very easy to knock off,

making the suspension system quite fragile. But for me, the worst part about this model is that the amazing interior detail that is inside the tank is inaccessible once the build is complete. Overall, I think that the Build Army Panther Ausf. D was a great set, and I would absolutely recommend it to anybody who is interested in LEGO-type sets and military vehicles.



Meet Buildarmy: Where History Meets the Brick

Buildarmy was founded by Dr. Ruibin Zhang, a scientist at the University of Sheffield who spent his nights designing virtual tanks while waiting for his lab experiments to finish. What started as a hobby to relax has grown into a world-class brand with over 60,000 followers on Instagram.

We specialise in creating highly detailed, historically accurate military vehicle models using LEGO-compatible bricks. Our mission is to combine "scientific" precision with the fun of building.

We take quality so seriously that our models are even trusted and sold by The Tank Museum in the UK as part of their official collection. Whether you are a history buff or a master builder, Buildarmy is all about bringing the past to life, one brick at a time.



Wildflower bouquet with vase Review (Nifeliz)**Reviewed by Ewelina Hartnell**

I chose this set because I have always loved LEGO, especially the Botanical Collection. The Wildflower Bouquet stood out to me as it brings colourful flowers into the home, creating a beautiful decorative display. It feels like a bouquet that belongs indoors, adding colour and style without any maintenance. The set comes with numbered bags containing all the pieces, two sorting boxes, and a clear instruction booklet. This made the building process feel organised and easy to manage from the start.

Building Experience

The build was very enjoyable and relaxing throughout. It took me just two evenings to complete, making it a perfect short project. The instructions were clear and easy to follow, and the booklet itself was well designed and helpful at every stage.

One small downside was that one incorrect piece was included. Fortunately, I was able to replace it with a similar piece, although it was a different colour. This didn't significantly affect the final model, but it was slightly frustrating.

Design & Techniques

The build uses clever techniques to create a variety of flower shapes and textures. Each flower feels unique, and the range of colours makes the bouquet look vibrant and realistic. The adjustable stems are a great feature, allowing you to arrange the flowers however you like and giving the set a more personal, interactive feel.

Final Model

The finished model looks excellent. The bouquet has a bright, elegant appearance and works perfectly as a display piece for a bedroom, desk, or living room. It is eye-catching from every angle and feels both creative and polished. As expected for the Botanical Collection, the set does not include any minifigures.

Pros

- Well-organised packaging with numbered bags and sorting boxes
- Clear, easy-to-follow instructions
- Beautiful final design with vibrant colours
- Relaxing and enjoyable build experience

Cons

- One incorrect piece included
- Replacement piece was a different colour

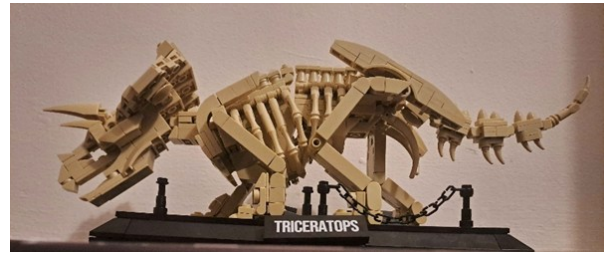
Overall

I would definitely recommend this set to LEGO fans, especially those who enjoy decorative builds from the Botanical Collection. It's an excellent choice for anyone who enjoys creative, nature-inspired models and wants a stylish display piece for their home. **Rating: 10/10**



Triceratops Fossil Review (Nifeliz)**Reviewed by Edward Oleen****Overview**

The Triceratops Fossil by Nifeliz is a LEGO-style building kit that recreates a miniature triceratops skeleton. The set contains 798 pieces and typically takes around 2–4 hours to complete. It retails for £38, although I received my copy for free for review purposes.

**Building Experience**

Building the Triceratops fossil is a mix of challenge and satisfaction. Unlike many LEGO-style sets, this one doesn't fall apart at the slightest touch, allowing you to apply proper pressure when assembling pieces without worrying about the structure collapsing. The main difficulty lies in following the instructions. Because the entire fossil is a single colour, it can be hard to distinguish between similar pieces in the manual. To its credit, the instructions do attempt to compensate by being as clear and detailed as possible, but some steps still require extra attention.

**Pros**

- The finished model looks fantastic. A combination of unusual building techniques and clever part usage results in a surprisingly impressive display piece.
- The sturdiness is excellent—far better than most similar sets I've built. It's worth emphasising just how solid the final model feels.
- Each bag is clearly labelled with both the group number and the exact steps the pieces are used for, making organisation much easier.
- The inclusion of two small storage boxes is a thoughtful touch, helping prevent pieces from getting lost during the build.

Cons

- Some sections can feel repetitive or tedious, particularly assembling the spine spikes. The most time-consuming part is the chain for the fencing, which feels unnecessarily fiddly.

Overall

This is a highly enjoyable set to build and an even better one to display. With a lower price point than official LEGO sets and surprisingly high quality, the Triceratops Fossil stands out as one of the best LEGO-inspired kits I've put together.

Rating: 8/10

Nifeliz is a building block company that produces creative, LEGO-compatible construction sets designed for both display and hands-on building enjoyment. For our school magazine, Nifeliz kindly supplied sets for review, giving students the opportunity to explore and evaluate their products firsthand.

Their range includes detailed models such as vehicles, animals, and botanical displays, all focused on interesting building techniques and visually impressive final designs. More information about the company and their products can be found on their official website: <https://www.nifeliz.com/>.

Overall, Nifeliz offers thoughtfully designed sets that provide an engaging and rewarding building experience, making them a great option for hobby builders looking for something a little different.



Together by the waters edge Review (Brickwith)**Reviewed by Laura Manning**

My son has been enjoying LEGO for the past few years so when 'The Quill' offered the chance to build and review a set for FREE, I took the opportunity. Mr Hopwood handed me a bag of bricks and my son was excited to start the build during the easter holidays.



The set was called 'Together by the waters edge' and was designed by Nick Lever for a company called Brickwith.

In comparison to other LEGO sets my son found it a "challenging" build. The instructions were on PDF so not as easy to read compared to using a manual, for a child of 7 years but nevertheless the challenge may it exciting and did not detract from the enjoyment as the build progressed. An interesting part of the build was the water; my son liked the fact that the water's surface was see through, with 'things in the water'. This added depth to the build. The fishing rod was also "fun" as it was moveable and could touch the waters edge. The company of the dog beside the fisherman was easy to make and looked life-like. "It was like a separate build."



A difficult part of the build were the small pieces and their instability. My son needed an adult to help at times. A very gentle touch was needed to assemble certain parts and at times it was frustrating as it kept falling apart. Despite this, we managed to assemble the set and were pleased with the finished look. It sits proudly on our lego shelf with all the other builds.

A strength of the set is final look of the set, whereas a drawback was the difficulty of assembling the attachments to the fisherman whilst he was already seated at the waters edge. My son said he would recommend it to other Lego enthusiasts but perhaps children who are slightly older than 7, if they want to do it alone! Overall my son gave this a score of 10/10 for the final look but 7/10 for process.

Together by the waters edge Review (Brickwith)**Reviewed by Jodie Blackmore**

I recently built a decorative brick model of a bottle, and it turned out to be a genuinely enjoyable and unique experience. Unlike typical brick builds, this one transforms into a framed display piece once completed, complete with a stand and even the option to hang it on the wall, which I think really adds to the uniqueness.

The instructions were intuitive and easy to follow, making the build process smooth and relaxing rather than frustrating. It strikes a great balance between being fun to assemble and not overly complex, so you can actually enjoy the process. What I love most is the final result. Compared to similar products, it feels far more artistic and distinctive. It doesn't just sit on a shelf like a model — it looks like a piece of modern artwork. It adds a really nice touch to a room or table and I've had a few people ask where it is from and compliment it!

Designed by Liang Yao at brickwith+, the idea that "bricks are a poetic language for expression" really comes through. The finished piece captures that philosophy beautifully — it's both playful and expressive. Overall, I'd definitely recommend this product. It's fun to build, thoughtfully designed, and doubles as a stylish piece of décor once completed.



Brick with a Workshop Spirit: My Garage Review (Brickwith)

Reviewed by Matthew and Oliver Hodder

The Car

The car is a fairly easy LEGO-style build, although some parts are quite fiddly. For example, the steering wheel doesn't always stay firmly in place, which can be a little frustrating during play or display. It was also sometimes difficult to find the correct information in the instructions for this section of the build.

The finished model is dark blue with grey and black detailing, and overall it is good quality. It would be especially appealing to car enthusiasts as a display piece. However, no minifigure was included, and even if you use your own, it does not fit comfortably inside the vehicle. Despite these small issues, it is a solid build that works well alongside the garage set.

The Garage

Building the garage was an enjoyable group experience, and we would recommend it to anyone who has already completed a number of LEGO-style sets. It sits at a medium level of difficulty. The set itself is high quality and includes several interesting details, such as a medal display and a working ramp designed to lift the car. These features add a lot to the overall experience and make the build feel more dynamic.

However, the ramp mechanism did not work as intended. It was difficult to get it to function properly, and despite carefully checking the instructions multiple times, everything appeared to be assembled correctly. This suggests that the mechanism may be slightly flawed or misaligned in design. In the end, the ramp only worked when manually assisted. Aside from this issue, the build was very enjoyable, and the finished model looks impressive. We would recommend this set to anyone who enjoys LEGO-style construction projects.

Rating

- Car: 4/5
- Garage: 4.5/5
- Overall: 4.5/5

brickwith

Brickwith is a building-block parts and set platform that provides LEGO-compatible elements and creative construction kits for hobby builders and designers. The company, which developed from the We-brick platform, focuses on offering a wide range of individual parts as well as designer-led sets, allowing users to build custom models or complete detailed projects.

For our school magazine, Brickwith kindly supplied items for review, giving students the opportunity to explore their products first-hand. Their focus on organisation, design detail, and build quality makes their sets particularly appealing to experienced builders who enjoy more complex projects.

More information can be found on their official website: <https://www.brickwith.com/en>



Triumph Legend 1:24 (CADA)**Reviewed by Eoghan Neville**

I got this CaDA race car set and honestly, at first, I did not expect much out of this set. I have seen a lot of off brand building sets and sometimes they can be hit and miss, so I was not too sure about this one. That being said, it was much better than I expected it to be. I was not expecting the quality to be this good. The quality of the components is above what I initially assumed, snapping together perfectly without feeling overly confined or loose. When putting it together, it feels quite sturdy, which was not what I thought before using it;

The design also looks cool. I like the red and black colour scheme a lot, it makes it look like a proper race car, something you would see in Formula races. There are a lot of nice little details as well, like the shape of the front, the spoiler and the wheels. It looks great standing on display when it is all built up, and definitely stands out. It doesn't just look like a toy but rather a proper model.

One of the best parts for me was how easy it was to build. The instructions are very clear and easy to follow. Everything is step by step, and there is no confusion at any point. I didn't have to go back or redo anything, which is often the case with many sets. Even if you are not very experienced with assembling such things, you can still do it without any problems. It's never a stressful build but always exciting.

Another thing I liked is how much the parts stick together for the majority of the build. The first thing is that most of the build sticks together nicely – when sections are finished, they don't just fall apart when you shake them a little. It shows that work has been put into keeping the parts together which enhances the sense of achievement.

That being said, it's not flawless. The main problem is the front section of the car. For the rest of the build, it is definitely the weakest section. It doesn't feel as strong, and if you touch it too much or pick the car up from the front side, it can come loose quite easily. Sometimes bits would shift around or come apart a little, which was annoying. It is not like it falls apart completely, but it is something that needs to be considered. Because of that, it's probably better as a display piece. If you just keep it on a shelf or move it carefully, it's perfectly alright. However, handling it, the front becomes a bit annoying.

Overall though, I still think it's a really good set. The quality is far superior to what I had anticipated, building it is simple and fun and the end result looks very awesome. The price tag is definitely worth it if you like race cars and sitting down to build sets like this one. Just don't go into the front being too sturdy in your mind and you'll be fine. However, I would still recommend it.

**Mini Orange Circuit Racing Car (CADA)****Reviewed by Ryder Keats**

The CaDA Orange Mini Circuit Racing Car (C55103W) is a compact 70-piece building block set aimed at builders who enjoy quick, satisfying projects. With its bright orange colour scheme, sporty detailing, and included driver helmet piece, it offers an impressive finish for such a small and affordable set, typically priced around £7.99. It also looks great as a display piece once completed.

Overview

This set allows you to build a miniature Formula-style racing car. Despite its small size, it captures



the essence of a real circuit racer with details such as a front wing, rear spoiler, and slick racing tyres. The bold orange design stands out well, while the stickered number graphics add a touch of realism and authenticity.

Building Experience

The build process is straightforward and enjoyable, making it ideal for beginners or younger builders. With only 70 pieces, it can be completed quickly, but it still offers enough small steps to remain engaging. The instructions are clear and easy to follow, and once assembled, the model feels surprisingly solid for its size.

Key Features

- Eye-catching bright orange racing design
- Front wing and rear spoiler for a sporty look
- Driver helmet cockpit detail adds character
- Rolling wheels for simple playability
- These small but effective features help elevate the model beyond a basic mini build.



CaDA

Playability vs Display Value

This set strikes a nice balance between play and display. The rolling wheels make it suitable for light play or racing across surfaces, while the clean, compact design means it also works well as a desk or shelf display model. Its small footprint is an added advantage for those with limited space.

Pros

Quick and enjoyable build, excellent value for money, bright, attractive design and ideal for beginners or casual builders

Cons

Very small and simple overall design, maybe too basic for experienced builders and limited functional features compared to larger sets

Final Recommendation

Overall, the CaDA Orange Mini Circuit Racing Car is a fun, affordable, and visually appealing set. It is best suited for younger builders, beginners, or anyone looking for a quick and satisfying build with a racing theme. While it lacks complexity, it delivers strong value for its price and looks impressive once completed.

Rating: 8/10

Halloween Barn (LEGO)

Reviewed by Phoebe Swain

The Halloween Barn set (40721) is a 205-piece set designed for ages 8 and up. I recently built it, and it was honestly more fun than I expected. At first, I thought it would be quite basic, but it actually has a lot of small, clever details that make it really enjoyable to put together.

Some of my favourite parts were the hidden cauldron and the skeleton, which add a fun spooky touch to the build. The creepy eyes peeking



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through the barn doors are also a really cool feature, and the teeth on the back of the model make it feel even more Halloween-themed and a bit eerie in a fun way.

I also like that some of the doors can actually be opened and accessed, which makes it feel more interactive rather than just a display model.

The build itself isn't too difficult, so it's definitely suitable for beginners or anyone who just wants a fun, relaxed build. It's the kind of set you can build without getting stuck, but still enjoy because of all the little details included throughout. I also think it's really good value for money.



You can usually find it for around £5.45, and even at its highest price of about £8.99, it's still pretty affordable. That makes it a great option as a small gift for a friend or family member, especially around Halloween time, although it would still be fun to build at any point in the year.

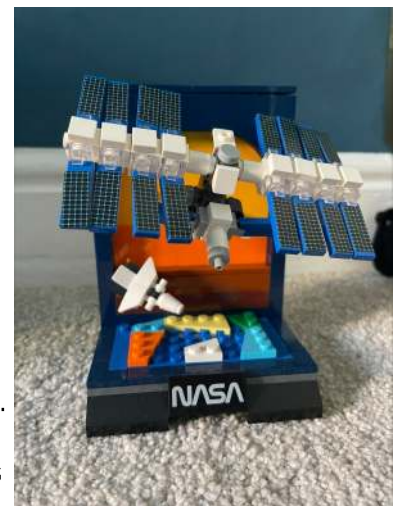
Overall, I really enjoyed building it and I'm glad I got the set. It's a simple but creative build that looks great once finished, especially if you like seasonal or themed LEGO-style sets.

International Space Station ISS (CADA)

Reviewed by Luke Hodnett

While building the International Space Station set, there were a few complex parts, and at times it felt a bit tricky to keep everything in place. A cardboard-like thin piece is used to help hold up the structure, which was interesting considering there are only 118 pieces in total. It also uses clear claw-like pieces to hold the solar panels, which stand out as one of the more unique details in the build.

The set includes 118 pieces in total, including 18 main structural parts. The sun is quite large compared to the rest of the model, while the planets are very small. The colours give it a futuristic look, almost as if it is actually in orbit around Earth.



The International Space Station itself is mostly white, which is accurate to the real design. In real life, if it were black, it would absorb more heat from the sun, which could potentially damage the metal. In the set, you can also see planets like Venus and Mercury or Mars, depending on how you look at it. There is also a small rocket going down towards Earth, which adds extra detail to the scene.

Although the set doesn't come with any minifigures or moving parts, the detail is still very impressive. The solar panels and rocket stand out the most, along with the Earth design. When I first started building, I noticed a lot of pieces I hadn't seen in other sets before, which made it more interesting.

The instructions were easy to follow if you take your time and pay attention. It took me about 30 minutes from start to finish. The trickiest part was definitely the solar panels, but once I lined everything up properly, it all fitted together fine. If you enjoy space, NASA, or galaxy-themed builds, you would probably like this set. You could even pair it with other space sets like Mars rovers or similar builds. The best parts for me were the sun and the rocket.

Overall, I would rate it 4.7 stars because of the detail and the size of the finished model.

Dinosaur Fossils: Velociraptor Brick Model (CADA)**Reviewed by Jack Barclay**

The CaDA Dinosaur Fossils Velociraptor (C59014W) is a 256-piece building set that lets you construct a detailed skeleton model of a velociraptor. It's aimed at ages 8+, and it strikes a nice balance between being simple enough to follow but still interesting enough to keep you engaged throughout the build.

Overall, the build experience was fairly straightforward, but there were a few moments that added a bit of challenge. At one point I couldn't find a piece, which slowed things down slightly, and some sections—especially around the main body—were a bit trickier to line up than others. On the other hand, parts like the tail were much easier and quite satisfying to put together. In total, it took me around an hour and a half to finish.

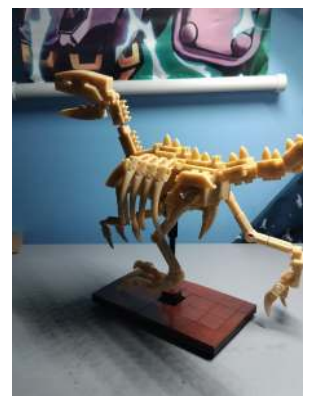
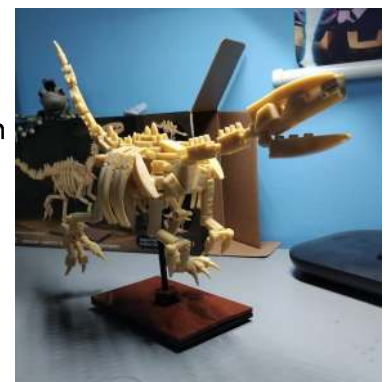
The instructions were clear and easy to understand, which made a big difference. It was usually obvious what piece you needed and where it was supposed to go, so I rarely felt stuck for long. There was also just the right amount of repetition—enough to reinforce the build but not so much that it became boring. The rib sections in particular were repeated, but it didn't feel overly tedious.

Once completed, the model looks really clean and well designed. The proportions stand out quite nicely, with a large body, a long curved tail, and a smaller head and arms, which gives it a realistic skeletal look. Even though there are no minifigures included, the model does feature a few moving or adjustable parts, which helps bring it to life a little more and makes it feel less static.

In terms of playability, this set is definitely more focused on display. It's the kind of model you'd want to put on a shelf or desk rather than play with regularly, but it does look very striking once finished. It would especially appeal to anyone interested in dinosaurs, fossils, or display-style builds.

There were a couple of minor drawbacks. The missing piece I encountered was a bit annoying at the time, and a few sections required a bit of patience to line up correctly. However, none of these issues really took away from the overall enjoyment of the build. It also doesn't have much in the way of play features, but that's understandable given the type of set it is.

Overall, I found it to be an enjoyable and satisfying build that results in a really nice display model. It's not too complex, but it still feels rewarding to complete, especially because of how good it looks once finished. I'd recommend it to dinosaur fans or anyone who enjoys detailed display sets, and I'd give it a solid 8/10.



JADLAM
TOYS AND MODELS

A big thank you to Jadlam Racing Models for supplying us with the brick model sets featured in our reviews, including both CaDA and LEGO products. Jadlam offers a wide range of model kits, RC vehicles, die-cast models, and brick-building sets, making them a great place for hobby fans and collectors.

You can visit them online at www.jadlamracingmodels.com, and we also appreciate them providing a QR code so readers can quickly access their website and explore their products for themselves.



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COBI Challenger 2 Tank Set (COBI)**By Henry Hopwood**

The COBI Challenger 2 is a really strong and detailed representation of a modern British tank. From the moment it's finished, it looks impressive and feels like a proper display piece rather than just a model kit. It captures the design of the real Challenger 2 very well, especially for a brick-built set.

The build itself is fairly complex and took around 5 hours to complete, but it was worth the time and effort. There are quite a few steps and smaller sections to put together, so it can feel a bit challenging in places, but nothing felt impossible or frustrating enough to ruin the experience. Once everything comes together, the structure feels very solid and well-designed.

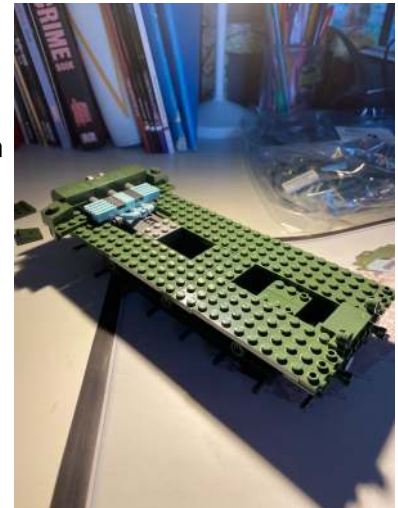
One of the best parts of the build is how sturdy it feels when finished. It doesn't fall apart easily, and it holds its shape really well, which makes it great for display or even moving around the room without worrying too much. Now that it's built, it works really well as a room decoration and definitely stands out on a shelf.

The brick quality is also very good and feels comparable to LEGO in terms of durability and fit. The pieces connect tightly, and the overall build experience feels smooth and satisfying.

The colour scheme and design are also very accurate, giving it a realistic military look that matches the real-life Challenger 2 tank closely.

Another nice detail is the included minifigure, which fits well into the tank and adds extra character to the model. It's a small touch, but it helps bring the whole build together and makes it feel more complete.

Overall, this is a great build for anyone interested in armoured vehicles or modern military history, especially British tanks. It's detailed, sturdy, and rewarding to complete, even if it takes a bit of time and patience. I would definitely recommend it to builders who enjoy more complex and realistic models.



BrickTanks is a UK-based retailer specialising in military-themed brick model kits, accessories, and display sets. They focus on high-quality construction kits that appeal to both collectors and hobby builders who are interested in armoured vehicles and historical or modern military models.



Their range includes detailed tank models and related builds designed to offer a rewarding and engaging building experience. The kits are aimed at builders who enjoy more complex projects, with finished models that work well as display pieces due to their level of detail and accuracy.

A big thank you to BrickTanks for providing us with the Challenger 2 model tank used in our review. Their support made it possible for us to build and evaluate this impressive set, and we really appreciate the opportunity to feature it.

Be sure to check out their website at www.bricktanks.co.uk to explore their full range of models and support the companies that help make these reviews possible.

SOMETHING FOR THE...FASHION FANS

My favourite game
by LegendaryPhoenix T-Shirt
(Qwertee)

Reviewed by **Milo McGhee**

Qwertee



"If comfort and style had a baby, it would probably look a lot like this T-shirt."

This casual cotton T-shirt from a mid-range high-street brand is designed for everyday wear and is aimed mainly at teens and young adults who want something simple, stylish, and affordable. At first glance, the T-shirt looks clean, modern, and easy to style. The minimal design means it can be paired with almost anything, making it really practical for everyday outfits. When I first tried it on, it immediately felt soft and comfortable, giving off a relaxed and effortless vibe. Overall, it definitely met expectations in terms of appearance.

The fit is quite true to size, although it leans slightly towards a more relaxed fit rather than being tight or fitted. It's comfortable enough to wear all day without feeling restrictive, and the fabric feels smooth against the skin while still allowing easy movement. Whether you're out with friends, travelling, or just relaxing at home, it works well for different situations. The T-shirt also comes in neutral colours, making it versatile and easy to match with a range of outfits. The design is simple but still trendy, so it doesn't feel plain or boring, and it looks very similar to the online photos, which is always reassuring when buying clothes.

In terms of quality, the fabric feels like good-quality cotton — soft but not too thin — and it's breathable enough for warmer weather or layering under jackets and hoodies. The stitching also looks neat and secure, with no loose threads, suggesting it should hold up well after multiple washes. One of the best things about this T-shirt is how comfortable and easy it is to style, especially considering the reasonable price. It works well with lots of different outfits and has a timeless look that probably won't go out of fashion quickly.

However, there are still a few small downsides. The slightly loose fit may not suit everyone, especially people who prefer a more fitted style, and the colour options can sometimes be limited depending on the store. Also, while the fabric feels comfortable, it could be slightly thicker for extra durability. Overall, though, it's a stylish, comfortable, and good-value T-shirt that works really well as an everyday wardrobe staple. **Rating: (4/5)**

Empire Wave by RetroDivision T-Shirt (Qwertee)

Reviewed by **Poppy Spurway**

If you're looking for an amazing t-shirt go to [Qwertee.co.uk](https://www.qwertee.co.uk) for fun and comfy t-shirts. I recently received a Qwertee t-shirt to review and honestly, it's one of the best t-shirts I've ever owned. The first thing I noticed was that they are soft and that they have great graphic designs. I chose a Japanese surfing Stormtrooper, called Empire wave. It's a nice loose fit t-shirt that works great for a causal outfit.

The t-shirt is made from 100% cotton, and it feels really soft. This t-shirt is also breathable, and the stitching is good quality making it great for everyday wear. I got the t-shirt in a medium and it is a good length for me, I'm 13, and it isn't too tight or too loose. It washed and dried well and held its shape



with only a bit of creasing. I liked that after a week of wearing and washing I haven't noticed the print peeling or fading on any of the colours.

Another thing I like is that the t-shirt could appeal to both male and female and that the fabric is soft and stretchy. I would also like to mention that the brand Qwertee has a wide range of different prints and t-shirt designs on their very well-designed website

"Qwertee.com." It's also fun to just look through all the other design themes they have, there's something for everyone! They are all reasonably priced between £5 and £15. I haven't found any negative bits about this t-shirt so far and I think its excellent quality for the price.

Overall, I would recommend this Qwertee t-shirt, it is amazing and definitely a good purchase for people looking for good quality, affordable t-shirts. I give this t-shirt 5 stars just for how brilliant the bold design and vivid colours are and 10/10 for comfort and price.



Tokyo Destruction Club by popnotic T-Shirt (Qwertee)

Reviewed by Oscar Dart

I recently got this T-shirt, and overall I've been really happy with it. The material feels super soft and comfortable, especially for everyday wear or just relaxing at home. It has a nice oversized fit without feeling too heavy, and the simple black design with the small logo gives it a clean look that matches with almost anything. After wearing it for a few hours, it still felt breathable and cozy, which I liked a lot.

One thing I also noticed is that the shirt feels pretty durable. The stitching seems solid, and the print on the front looks good without feeling cheap. I've washed it a couple of times already, and it hasn't shrunk much or lost its softness. It's definitely the kind of shirt you can throw on quickly and still feel comfortable and confident wearing out.

There are a few downsides though. The shirt wrinkles pretty easily, so it doesn't always look fresh unless you smooth it out first. The fit may also feel a little too baggy for some people, especially if you prefer a more fitted style. Another small issue is that the logo design is pretty minimal, so if you like bold graphics or eye-catching prints, this shirt might seem a little plain.

Overall though, it's still a really comfy and solid T-shirt for casual wear.

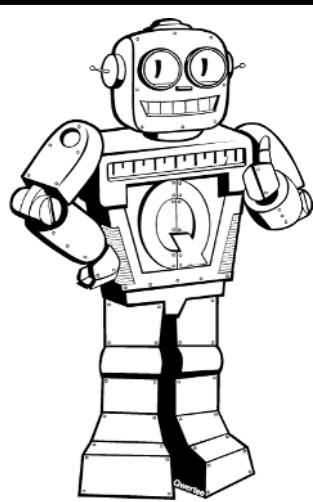


Xavier's School by drsimonbutler T-Shirt (Qwertee)**Reviewed by Luke Pearce**

This t-shirt is great for die hard fans of the X-Men movies or comics with a cool unique design based of Xaviers school for gifted youngsters. It's great to wear for long periods of time as it's comfortable and great for flexibility with a great fit.

The design stands out as it looks like a college deigned t-shirt so it doesn't make the X-men theme to obvious, but fans will instantly notice where it's from.

It's great for casual wear and just relaxing after a long day. Overall, this T-shirt is a great purchase for anyone who is a fan of X-Men or someone who would just like a comfortable T-shirt to relax in.



Founded in Ireland, Qwertee is a popular online clothing brand known for its creative, limited-edition graphic T-shirts inspired by gaming, movies, TV shows, and pop culture.

The company works with independent artists from around the world to create unique and affordable designs, with new collections released regularly. Qwertee has built a strong reputation for its fun designs, comfortable clothing, and supportive online community.

We would also like to say a huge thank you to Qwertee for kindly supplying the items featured in this review. Their support is greatly appreciated.

If you enjoy discovering creative clothing brands and want to support companies that support *The Quill*, make sure to check out www.qwertee.com and explore their latest collections.

Video Games 'Street Fighter' T-Shirt (OceanDust)**Reviewed by Lee Baker**Retro Flair vs. High Maintenance: The Street Fighter Statement Tee

When it comes to fashion, there's a distinct division between a basic staple and a statement piece. The item I've been testing for this article is a garment that sits firmly in the latter category: a heavy-duty, 100% cotton tribute to the golden age of arcade games. Featuring the iconic "Street Fighter" logo, this isn't just a t-shirt; it's a high-fidelity piece of wearable nostalgia.

First Impressions & Build Quality

The moment you pick this shirt up, the quality is undeniable. In a world of paper-thin "fast fashion," this tee feels substantial. The 100% cotton fabric is thick and premium to the touch, providing a structured silhouette that feels like it's built to last. The centrepiece, of course, is the print. The detail is sharp, featuring a full-colour trio of the franchise's most legendary fighters: Chun-Li, Ken, and Ryu. Unlike cheaper heat-transfers that feel like plastic, this print is soft and comfy, the colours are vibrant and the print alignment is flawless with no overlapping or blurry



edges, capturing the classic arcade aesthetic brilliantly.

The Fit: Size Up for Success?

Sizing can be a minefield, but there's a surprise here. While I typically wear a medium, the test garment was a large and it defied expectations. Rather than feeling like a tent, the shirt draped exceptionally well. It avoids that "baggy" look often associated with larger sizes, suggesting a modern, slightly tailored cut that remains flattering even if you size up for extra comfort.

The Catch: A Practicality Punch

However, every fighter has a weakness. While the shirt looks 10/10 on a hanger, the "care" section of the label reads like a high-stakes mission briefing. The instructions are remarkably strict:

- ◆ **Hand Wash Only:** No quick cycles in the washing machine here.
- ◆ **Separation Anxiety:** Multiple warnings about washing it entirely on its own.
- ◆ **Handle with Care:** A strict "do not scrub" policy for the print.
- ◆ **Vampire Rules:** An unusual warning to **avoid sunlight exposure** (presumably while drying), likely to protect those vivid pigments from fading.

The Verdict

This shirt is a bit of a paradox. On one hand, the style is knockout; the fabric feels elite and the graphic is a masterpiece for any gaming fan. On the other hand, the maintenance requirements are a genuine chore for anyone with a busy schedule.

If you're looking for a low-effort daily driver, this isn't it. But if you want a premium, head-turning piece for a special event and don't mind a bit of "labour of love" at the sink (or the cost of dry cleaning), it's a winner.

Style Rating: 5/5

Practicality Rating: 2/5

Final Word: A heavyweight champion of style, but be prepared for a fight on laundry day.

Video Games 'Metal Gear Solid' T-Shirt(OceanDust)

Reviewed by Hedley Egre

One of the standout features of this T-shirt is the artwork itself. It uses the iconic brush-stroke style created by Yoji Shinkawa, the lead character and mecha designer behind the Metal Gear Solid series. His distinctive "sumi-e" inspired art style is famous for capturing movement, intensity, and grit, making the design feel more like a piece of high-end concept art than a standard gaming T-shirt.

The use of bold red and white tones against the black background closely mirrors the original North American and European Metal Gear Solid box art, instantly giving it a strong late-1990s industrial



and military-tech aesthetic that fans of the series will recognise straight away. Small details, such as the inclusion of the Konami and PlayStation logos, also add to the authentic “official merchandise” feel, which collectors and long-time fans will definitely appreciate.

Overall, the design manages to feel both nostalgic and stylish, making it stand out even outside of gaming culture.

Inspired by the worlds of classic video games, comics, and anime, OceanDust is a brand built around nostalgia, creativity, and adventure.

Their mission is to bring the magic of vintage pop culture back to life through stylish, wearable designs that celebrate the joy of discovery and imagination. OceanDust aims to create a community where fans can connect through shared memories while also celebrating creativity and self-expression in the present.



The brand describes itself as “a celebration of the past, a tribute to the timeless, and a call to adventure,” encouraging people to rediscover the excitement of classic gaming and comics while embracing new experiences along the way. We would also like to say a huge thank you to OceanDust for kindly supplying the items featured in this review.

Their support is greatly appreciated and helps support projects like The Quill. If you'd like to support the companies that support student journalism and creativity, make sure to visit www.oceandust.co and explore their latest collections.

Avocado Cat Avocado Pun Geek T-Shirt (Geeksoutfit)

Reviewed by Poppy Spurway

I recently got this dark blue cotton Avocado T-shirt from Geeksoutfit, and it's quickly become one of the nicest T-shirts I own. It's a really unique graphic tee and definitely stands out in the best way.

To start with, the “Avocado” design is incredibly clever and cute. It shows a cat face inside an avocado, complete with little ears at the top, which makes the whole idea feel fun and playful. The bright green of the avocado really pops against the dark navy background, making the print look sharp and vibrant rather than flat or faded.



The material is 100% cotton, which is great if you prefer T-shirts that feel soft rather than scratchy or stiff. It has a lightweight, breathable feel that makes it comfortable enough to wear all day. Even after washing, the print has held up really well with no cracking, fading, or peeling, which is always a good sign compared to cheaper alternatives.

I went for a size up because I prefer a slightly more relaxed, casual fit, and it drapes really nicely without looking overly baggy. The neckline also sits comfortably and isn't too tight, which makes it easy to wear for long periods. It's the kind of T-shirt that works well with pretty much anything, whether you're dressing it down or just keeping things casual.

Overall, it's a really fun piece to wear, especially if you like animals or pun-based designs. It feels

comfortable, looks great, and still manages to feel stylish despite the playful print. At £17.99, it's also really good value for money, especially considering the quality after washing. Geeksoutfit also has loads of other designs, including clever Star Wars prints and funny science-themed graphics, plus the same designs are available on hoodies and sweatshirts too if you want something warmer. Overall, I'd give this T-shirt a solid 5/5. It's easy to wear, holds up really well after washing, and has such a fun, eye-catching design that makes it stand out from more basic graphic tees.

Mos Eisley Cantina Vintage Geek Hoodie (Geeks Outfit)

Reviewed by Olivia Turton

This Star Wars hoodie combines comfort, practicality, and subtle style, making it a great choice for both fans of the franchise and anyone looking for an easy everyday hoodie. It features a modern, slightly relaxed fit that feels comfortable without being overly baggy, giving it a clean and casual look. The fit also makes it practical to carry around when not being worn, as it doesn't feel too bulky or heavy.

The structured cuffs and hem help the hoodie keep its shape over time, which is especially useful after regular wear and washing. The front design has also held up really well, with no noticeable peeling or fading even after multiple washes, which gives the hoodie a more durable and high-quality feel.

One of the standout features is the comfort of the fabric. The soft interior provides instant warmth, making it perfect for colder days or relaxing at home, while the exterior material remains smooth and resistant to pilling. The reinforced stitching around the seams also suggests that the hoodie is built to last and won't wear out quickly. Another practical feature is the large front pocket, which is ideal for carrying essentials like a phone, keys, or other small items. Its minimal and neutral colour design also makes it surprisingly versatile, as it pairs easily with jeans, joggers, or casual everyday outfits without feeling too bold or over-the-top.

Overall, this hoodie offers a strong mix of comfort, durability, and understated Star Wars style, making it a solid addition to any fan's wardrobe.



Geeks Outfit is an online clothing brand that celebrates geek culture through creative, wearable fashion. It was created for people who enjoy video games, sci-fi, movies, coding, memes, and all kinds of nerdy interests, with the aim of helping fans express their passions in a fun and stylish way. Rather than focusing on plain or generic clothing, Geeks Outfit turns humour, fandom references, and internet culture into everyday fashion pieces.



The brand offers a wide range of products beyond just T-shirts, including hoodies, sweatshirts, jackets, shirts, loungewear, and accessories like hats, socks, pins, and phone cases, along with home and office items. Everything is designed to reflect geek interests and make everyday fashion more unique and expressive.

We would also like to say a big thank you to Geeks Outfit for kindly supplying *The Quill* and its student reviewers with materials to review. Their support is greatly appreciated and helps make student-led projects like this possible. To explore more of their collections, you can visit <https://www.geeksoutfit.com>.

Kokoro Scoops Selection Pack**Reviewed by Evie Hopwood**

I was really excited to receive a selection pack from Kokoro Scoops because it felt like opening a box full of surprises. Everything inside was really cute and colourful, and it had a strong kawaii and anime style, which made it feel very fun to open.

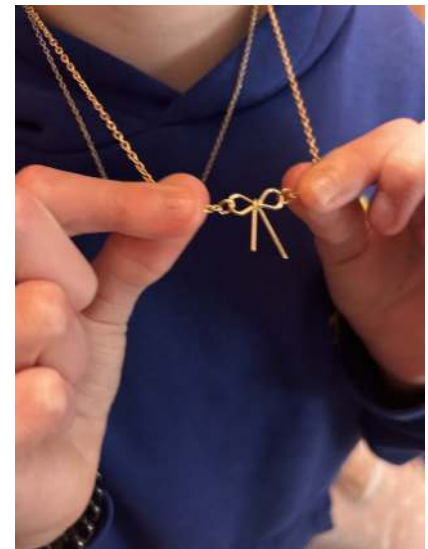
Inside the pack, there was a mix of adorable items including a keyring with a dog on it, Gudetama stickers, and some really cute Hello Kitty hair bands and hair clips.

There was also a soft furry sleep mask, a large rose-shaped hair grip, and a beautiful bow necklace. All of the items felt very pretty and playful, and they all matched the cute Asian kawaii style theme.

I liked how everything was different, so it felt like unwrapping lots of little gifts in one box. My favourite items were the Hello Kitty hair accessories and the sleep mask because they were both really soft and cute. The keyring was also really nice because it's something I could use every day.

This kind of pack would be perfect for someone who loves cute or anime-style things, especially if they enjoy collecting accessories or decorating their room and outfits with kawaii items.

Overall, I really enjoyed the selection pack. It was fun to open, full of surprises, and everything felt carefully chosen. I would definitely recommend it to anyone who loves cute anime-inspired things.



Kokoro Scoops is a thoughtful gifting brand built around the idea that small surprises can bring real joy.

The name "Kokoro," meaning heart or love, reflects the spirit behind the company and its focus on meaningful, feel-good gifting experiences. Inspired by founder Kate's time living in South Korea and China, the brand brings together a love of cute, carefully chosen items and the joy of giving in a way that feels personal rather than mass-produced.

Each Kokoro Scoop is carefully curated, hand-packed, and wrapped with intention, making every order feel like a special moment rather than just a purchase. The brand focuses on creating a sense of excitement and warmth, whether the scoop is a treat for yourself or a gift for someone else. The emphasis is always on thoughtfulness, detail, and making people smile through simple but meaningful surprises.

We would also like to say a huge thank you to Kokoro Scoops for kindly supporting *The Quill* and for providing items for our students to review. Their generosity is greatly appreciated and helps make our work possible. To learn more or explore their gift scoops, visit <https://kokoroscoops.com/>.



SOMETHING FOR THE...MODEL MAKERS

EUGY 3D Model Craft Kit – Bronto & Parrot

By Elijah Brown

I tried out two Eugy 3D cardboard model kits: the Parrot (No. 023) and the Brontosaurus (No. 008). Both are recommended for ages 6+, but they're still



genuinely enjoyable for older students too—and there are lots of different kits available, so there's something to suit everyone.

One of the first things that stands out is the colourful design. Both models are bright, well-printed, and look really good once finished. The pieces are easy to pop out from the sheets, with no awkward or “hitchy” bits, which makes the building process smooth and satisfying.



The instructions are simple to follow, so you can complete both models fairly quickly. They're easy to build independently, but they'd also work well as a shared activity with an adult for younger children.

The Parrot is probably the quicker of the two, making it a good starter model. It's eye-catching and detailed enough to display once finished. The Brontosaurus, on the other hand, is slightly larger and feels a bit more rewarding to complete, especially if you enjoy dinosaurs or want something that takes a bit longer to build.

Overall, both kits are quick, fun makes that don't require loads of time or effort but still give you a sense of achievement. They're a good option if you want a break from screens or just something creative to do.

Final Verdict


Simple, colourful, and enjoyable — with plenty of other designs to choose from — these Eugy kits are well worth trying, whether you're younger or just looking for a quick craft.

EUGY 3D Model Craft Kit – Manatee

By Hattie Waker

I recently built a Eugy cardboard animal model, and I found it really fun and easy to put together. The instructions were simple to follow because all of the pieces are clearly numbered, and you just stack and glue them together using the glue provided in the set. The different parts of the animal were also clearly labelled and easy to pop out from the cardboard sheets, which made the whole build feel smooth and enjoyable from start to finish.





One thing I really liked about the set is how relaxing and satisfying it is to build. Even though it's simple, it's still exciting to see the animal slowly take shape as you add each layer. The finished model also looks really cute and makes a nice display piece once completed.

I would definitely recommend these sets to my friends because there are so many different animals available that everyone could find their favourite. It's also a really good activity to do with a parent or guardian, especially if you enjoy arts, crafts, or model building together.

Overall, I enjoyed building it so much that I'm already asking for more EUGY sets for my birthday!

EUGY 3D Model Craft Kit – Frilled Lizard

By Paige Hicks

Looking for a quick, creative activity that's both fun and a little educational? The EUGY Frilled Lizard 3D cardboard model kit is definitely worth a try. This compact kit lets you build a colourful, layered model of a frilled lizard using pre-cut cardboard pieces. The finished design is bright, eye-catching, and has an impressive 3D effect that makes it a great decoration for a desk or shelf.



Assembly is fairly straightforward. The pieces are numbered and glue is included, making the model easy to complete without too much difficulty. Younger builders may need a little help lining up some of the smaller parts, but overall the process is simple and enjoyable. It also doesn't take very long to finish, making it a perfect rainy-day activity or short creative project.

One of the best things about this kit is how it combines creativity with learning. As you build, you can also discover more about the frilled lizard itself, giving the activity an educational element as well as a crafty one. The model is made from cardboard too, which makes it a more environmentally friendly alternative to many plastic toys.

That said, the cardboard pieces can be a little delicate. Using too much glue or bending the parts too much may affect the final appearance of the model. Overall, the Frilled Lizard model kit is a fun and satisfying activity that's ideal for younger children or anyone who enjoys arts and crafts. It may not be the most challenging project, but it's an enjoyable one that leaves you with a colourful display piece once completed.

A big thank you to EUGY and Brainstorm Ltd for supplying us with these fun and creative model kits to review. Since 1995, Brainstorm Ltd has been inspiring young minds with educational and innovative toys that encourage creativity, learning, and discovery. As the UK distributor for the eco-friendly EUGY range, they support hands-on craft activities that combine imaginative play with sustainability.

Made from biodegradable cardboard and printed using non-toxic inks, EUGY models are both environmentally friendly and enjoyable to build. They are a fantastic way for children to develop concentration, creativity, and fine motor skills while creating their favourite animals and characters.

You can find out more about the EUGY range at www.eugy.com and visit Brainstorm Ltd at www.brainstormltd.co.uk. We really appreciate their support.





Entry Grade 1/144 vGundam (RX-93)



By Joshua Isaac

If you're looking to get into model building but feel a bit intimidated by complicated manuals, tiny parts, and difficult assembly, the Entry Grade 1/144 v Gundam (RX-93) is a perfect place to start.

The kit arrives with only two bags of parts, so it doesn't feel overwhelming when you first open the box. Compared to more advanced Gunpla kits, the build process is very beginner-friendly and easy to understand.

Assembly is surprisingly smooth from start to finish. The parts are clearly numbered, and the instructions are simple to follow, making the whole experience stress-free and enjoyable. In terms of building style, it feels very similar to Blokees models because of the "snap-fit" design, meaning most parts click together without needing glue. This makes it much more approachable for younger builders, students, or anyone completely new to model kits.

Even though this is an Entry Grade kit, the amount of detail is still impressive. The standout section is definitely the head. The face and helmet have a lot more detail than you would expect from such a simple build, and it really helps bring the model to life once completed. Small details across the body also give the v Gundam a clean and modern look that stands out nicely on display.

Once finished, the model is very poseable. The joints move smoothly, so it's easy to create dynamic action poses for a desk or shelf display. The articulation is surprisingly good for a beginner kit, and the model feels sturdy overall while posing it.

However, the kit is not completely perfect. One of the arms has a tendency to fall off occasionally while changing poses, which can get a little frustrating after a while. Thankfully, this is only a small issue and doesn't ruin the overall experience.

Overall, the Entry Grade v Gundam is a fantastic model kit and one of the best starting points for beginners. It's simple to build, looks great once finished, and provides a fun introduction to Gunpla without feeling too complicated. I would highly recommend it to beginners, students, or anyone interested in starting a model kit collection.



HG 1/144 Gundam Barbatos

By Mason Wilson

Overall, this kit is really good and looks awesome once it's finished. The detail is surprisingly good for a High Grade, and Barbatos has a cool mechanical design that stands out a lot on display.

Pros

The torso, arms, and weapons were fun and easy to build. Most of the kit went together smoothly, and the articulation is really good once it's completed. You can pose it in a lot of different ways, and it looks great on a shelf. The proportions also look accurate for an HG kit.

Cons

The legs were probably the most annoying part of the build. Some of the joints were way too tight, and a few of the armour pieces were difficult to line up properly. Building the legs took much longer than the rest of the kit.

Stickers

The stickers were also pretty tricky to put on. The eye stickers and red details are really small, so it's easy to place them slightly wrong. Tweezers definitely help a lot.

Verdict

I'd still give this kit a 5/5 overall. Even though the legs and stickers were frustrating at times, the rest of the build was enjoyable and the final model looks amazing. If you take your time with the difficult parts, it's definitely worth building.



ライバルコーナー RIVALSCORNER

A huge thank you to Rivals Corner for providing the model kits featured in these reviews and supporting our content. Their support has allowed us to try out and share some amazing builds with our readers. If you're interested in Gunpla, model kits, trading cards, or hobby products, we definitely recommend checking out their store. They stock a wide range of kits for both beginners and experienced builders, making them a great place to start or expand your collection.

To support both us and Rivals Corner, each review includes a special discount code that readers can use at checkout. For example, using the code **RCQUILL10** will give you 10% off your order while also helping track how many readers visit the shop through our reviews.

Be sure to check them out at www.rivalscorner.co.uk and support the businesses that help make these reviews possible!



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SOMETHING FOR THE...GAMERS

Anbernic RG35XXSP Review
(LITNXT)

By Jacob Prouse

The Anbernic RG35XXSP is a retro handheld gaming device with a design similar to the classic Game Boy Advance SP. It has a folding screen, which helps protect it while travelling and also makes it compact and easy to carry around.

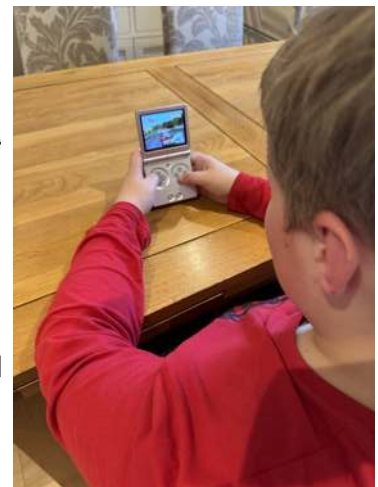
Like many other retro handheld consoles, this device can play games from lots of older systems, including the PS1, Game Boy Colour, and the original Game Boy, along with many others. This gives players access to a huge variety of classic games all in one device.

The console itself is lightweight and compact, making it comfortable to hold for long periods of time. The sturdy plastic build and glossy silver finish give it a clean and simple look while still feeling modern. Because of its slim design, it can even fit into most pockets, making it great for travelling or playing on the go.

Even though many people enjoy the realistic graphics and huge open worlds of modern games, it's still fun to go back and experience older games that were considered amazing for their time. One game I enjoyed playing was Crash Bandicoot. Even though I'm more used to modern games, I still liked its simple but fun gameplay style and challenging levels.

Overall, this device is really enjoyable to use, especially during road trips, long flights, or just when you want to relax and play some nostalgic retro games that you or even your parents may have grown up with. However, not every game works perfectly because the console supports so many different systems, which can sometimes cause compatibility issues.

Overall, I would give the Anbernic RG35XXSP a 7.5/10. It provides a lot of fun and nostalgia in a small portable device, even if a few games don't run perfectly.



A huge thank you to Console Revive for supporting our reviews and helping us explore the world of retro gaming. Their support has allowed us to test and feature some amazing gaming products while also learning more about classic consoles and gaming history.

Console Revive is a UK-based retro gaming brand focused on bringing classic consoles back to life with a modern upgrade. They specialise in high quality custom shells, accessories, and upgrades for consoles such as the Game Boy, Nintendo GameCube, and PlayStation. From restored handhelds with bright IPS screens to rare accessories ready to plug in and use, their products are designed for both collectors and everyday gamers. What makes Console Revive stand out is how they combine nostalgia with modern quality and performance. Their goal is to preserve the golden era of gaming while making classic consoles feel fresh and enjoyable again for modern players.

Be sure to scan the QR code included alongside our review or visit the official Console Revive website at www.consolerevive.com to explore their products.



SOMETHING FOR THE...THINKERS

OSU Duel Card Game
(Fried Potatoes
Games)

By Vicky Richardson

The *OSU Duel Card*

Game is designed for 2 players and it recommended for ages 7+. You can play for 2 minutes or 20 minutes. Most rounds go very quickly so we played best of 3 or 5.

OSU is an Uno-style strategic, but quick and simple card game. Players play attack or defence cards and battle to win 3 attack hands in a row. As with all card games there is an element of chance that can swing the battle in your favour, but strategy is key to defeating your foe.

This game was easy to understand from the start; however, your combat tactics will take longer to develop. OSU is a good pick-up and put-down game. Good to fill 10 minutes before bedtime or waiting for an appointment. Even as a winner-stays-on battle to include more than just 2 players.

Players take it in turns to attack using the 'boxing glove' card/cards and their opponent must defend using shield card/cards. The highest scoring cards win, but the max score allowed is 8 and equal scores result in a win for the attacker. Both players pick up 1 card after each round. If you play more than 1 card, you will have fewer cards for the rest of the game and therefore be at a disadvantage. So, you must be careful about making that aggressive attack so as not to weaken your hand for further rounds.

This is an interesting game, I don't think I have fully gotten to grips with all the strategy of yet. When playing, there are often very quick rounds which can be over in under a minute, but every now and then there is a twist of fate, and a gruelling battle plays out... lasting for 5 minutes or more!

The graphic design is bold and simplistic however I struggle to see the 'boxing gloves' as anything other than oven mitts. This game is a fast and fun, but is no Monopoly, so not suited for a big game-night in. It is a fun game for adults and children but is never going to win victory over Uno. 3/5



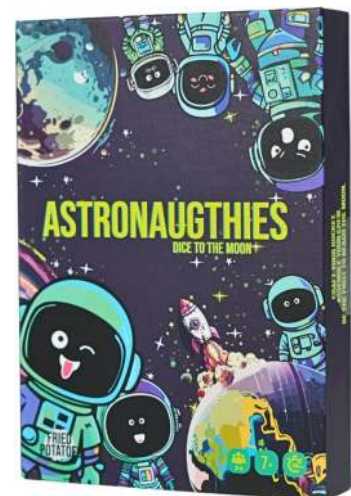
Astronaughties: Dice Till The Moon (Fried Potatoes Games)

By Charlie Straker-Nesbit

First to roll a total of 26 wins. Sounds easy? You try it. The game involves building a spacecraft and recruiting *Astronaughties*, while collecting other cards along the way. Your aim is to collect three different types of cards, with four of each. Once everyone has completed their spaceship, you can begin attempting to roll a total of 26.

Each time you collect an Astronaughty, you gain an extra die, so by the end of the game you'll be rolling with five dice. The other cards include upgrade and action cards, which become part of your spaceship, as well as mini-games, penalty cards, and space event cards that add even more chaos.

This game is brilliant, funny, and chaotic all at the same time. However, we felt there was one



downside: it can take quite a long time to play. After a while, you start to notice that some players' spaceships aren't filling up very quickly, which means it can take even longer to complete your spacecraft and finally roll 26 — especially with the mini-games thrown in.

That said, it really is a fun game to play, and the length is the only real drawback. This review was written by my daughter, Emily (10 years old). I also have a picture of us playing it on holiday that I will get to you.

Mighty Meerkats Memories Roulette (Fried Potatoes Games)

By Jonathan Broome & family

The *Mighty Meerkats* card game is full of fun, colourful characters that immediately appeal to younger players. The children especially enjoyed looking at the different illustrations and choosing their favourite meerkat families before the game even began.

The gameplay is based on the classic pairs matching game, where players need to remember where cards are placed face down in order to find matching pairs. Because of this, the game feels familiar and is very easy for younger children to learn and play without needing lots of explanation.



What makes the game more interesting is the addition of special action cards that mix things up during gameplay. Our favourite was the “Mystic Meerkat” card, which lets you look ahead and plan around your opponent’s next move, often ruining their strategy. The “Earthquake” card was probably the most chaotic, as it forces players to reset the entire board, making all your careful memorisation completely useless.

Overall, the game is fun, light-hearted, and easy for anyone to win, which makes it great for family play. However, because the main gameplay still focuses heavily on simple pair matching, it can start to feel repetitive after a while and may not keep players coming back for repeated games.

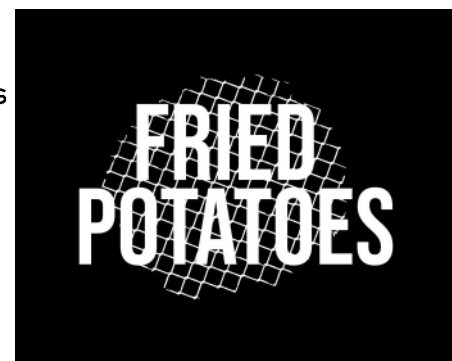
Even so, it’s an enjoyable card game with some creative ideas and entertaining moments, even if it doesn’t completely reinvent the genre. Overall rating: 3/5.

A big thank you to Fried Potato Games for supporting our reviews and helping us explore a variety of fun and creative tabletop and card games. Their support makes it possible for us to try out new games and share honest feedback with our readers.

Fried Potato Games is a company that focuses on creating colourful, easy-to-learn, and family-friendly games that are enjoyable for all ages. Their designs are creative and playful, with a strong focus on fun gameplay, humour, and bringing people together.

Their games are perfect for game nights, classrooms, or casual play with friends and family, and they do a great job of making simple mechanics feel engaging and entertaining.

Be sure to check them out at www.friedpotatoes.games and support the companies that help make these reviews possible! We really appreciate it.



Escape from Pompeii (Exekias Games)**By Hannah Osborne**

Escape from Pompeii is a strategy board game designed for 2–4 players and is recommended for ages 10 and above. A typical game lasts around 45 minutes to an hour, making it a good choice for family game nights or casual sessions with friends.

The aim of the game is simple: get as many of your people safely out of Pompeii before the volcano erupts. Players compete to rescue the most citizens while lava slowly spreads across the board, destroying escape routes and creating chaos as the game progresses.

One of the most enjoyable things about the game is how the atmosphere changes while playing. At the beginning, everything feels calm as players place their pieces and plan ahead, but once the volcano erupts the game becomes much more intense and unpredictable. The spreading lava adds excitement and pressure, and because the situation changes so quickly, it keeps everyone engaged throughout the game.

The lava mechanic is probably the standout feature. Building the lava flow across the board looks really effective and makes the game feel dramatic and fun. It's also entertaining playing with friends because players can interfere with each other's plans, including pushing opponents into the lava. It can feel a bit mean at times, but it usually ends up being funny and adds to the chaotic nature of the game. Since every game develops differently, it also has good replay value and doesn't become repetitive too quickly.

However, there are a few downsides. Sometimes the game can feel slightly unfair because the lava can suddenly block your plans with very little warning, leaving you unable to recover. The instructions were also a bit difficult to understand at first, so we ended up watching YouTube videos to properly learn how to play. Once the rules make sense, though, the gameplay becomes much easier to follow.

Overall, *Escape from Pompeii* is a really fun and entertaining board game, especially for people who enjoy games that are chaotic, unpredictable, and competitive in a light-hearted way. It's probably best suited for families or groups of friends looking for something more casual and funny rather than overly serious strategy gameplay.



Founded with a passion for strategy games and historical storytelling, Exekias Games creates tabletop experiences inspired by mythology, ancient history, and classic competitive gameplay. The company focuses on producing games that are engaging, interactive, and easy to enjoy with friends or family, while still offering plenty of strategic depth and replay value.

Their titles are designed to bring history to life in a way that feels exciting rather than educational, encouraging players to immerse themselves in dramatic settings, clever tactics, and unpredictable moments. Whether it's escaping volcanic destruction in *Escape from Pompeii* or exploring other historical themes, Exekias Games aims to create memorable experiences that keep players coming back for more.

The team at The Quill would also like to thank Exekias Games for generously supplying this game for our students to review. Opportunities like this allow young writers and reviewers to explore new experiences, develop their critical writing skills, and share their opinions with readers. If you would like to discover more about their range of games, visit www.exekiasgames.com.



Phantom Epoch (Doteira Games)**By Jodie Blackmore**

As someone whose only real experience with fantasy games came from watching kids play *Dungeons & Dragons* in Stranger Things, starting *Phantom Epoch* honestly felt like being dropped into another dimension without a map, a torch, or any idea what was happening.

At first, the game can feel a little overwhelming. You're suddenly learning about abilities, character upgrades, exploration, and battles that require much more strategy than I expected. In the beginning, I spent most of my time rolling attack dice and hoping things somehow worked out in my favour. Thankfully, there are plenty of helpful YouTube tutorials online, and once I watched a few guides and started understanding the rules, everything gradually began to click into place.

Once that happened, I genuinely started to appreciate how impressive the game is. The quality of *Phantom Epoch* really stands out, especially in the way the world and characters are designed. The different environments feel detailed and exciting to explore, and the battles become much more engaging once you understand the mechanics behind them. The characters are also surprisingly memorable. At first I was just staring at the Slinks wondering who everyone was, but before long I found myself genuinely invested in the characters and the story unfolding around them.

The gameplay itself is immersive and rewarding. Battles feel important rather than repetitive, and unlocking new abilities makes progression feel satisfying. One of the best things about the game is how it slowly builds your confidence as a player. You start off confused and uncertain, but after a while you realise you're actually making proper strategies and thinking ahead instead of just randomly rolling dice. That progression makes the experience feel really rewarding.

Overall, even as a complete beginner to fantasy-style tabletop games, I had a really enjoyable time with *Phantom Epoch*. It definitely takes patience at the start, especially when you're trying to understand how everything works, but it's worth sticking with. If I can go from "What is happening?" to "I totally planned that" after learning fantasy gaming mostly from television, then anyone can give it a go and have fun with it.



Doteira Games is an independent tabletop gaming company that creates fantasy-based games focused on adventure, strategy, and storytelling. Their games are designed to pull players into detailed worlds filled with unique characters, exciting battles, and plenty of opportunities to explore and build strategies.

Phantom Epoch is a great example of this, combining immersive gameplay with a fantasy setting that feels both challenging and rewarding once you get into it.

We'd also like to say a huge thank you to Doteira Games for kindly providing review materials for *The Quill*. Their support gives students the chance to experience and review games they might not normally discover, while also helping us continue student-led writing and reviews. If fantasy tabletop gaming sounds interesting to you, make sure to check out www.doteiragames.com to learn more about their games.





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***The Quill* is a magazine for Wadham students and is open to anyone. We want writers, artists, reporters, photographers, reviewers, critics, etc from all across the school.**

If you'd like to get involved in our next edition please speak to Mr Hopwood via teams, in B23 at break & lunchtime or via email at Phopwood@wadhamschool.co.uk