



## Penicuik High School



### Parental Newsletter Christmas 2012

It is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to write to you about some of the achievements and events of the last few months.

#### 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Penicuik High School

Originally built in 1937 as the secondary school for the town of Penicuik, Penicuik High School is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a variety of different events over the next year.

The celebrations began in September, shortly after the start of the new term, with an evening concert. It was an extraordinary performance which brought together young musicians who currently attend the school and former musical pupils from the past forty years onto the same stage.

The staff at Penicuik High, working with Community Learning and Development, are planning an event which aims to bring together different generations in the community. "People of all ages have a common bond with the school and the 75th anniversary provides the perfect opportunity to build on that within the Penicuik community," said Jim Fair, Depute Head Teacher at Penicuik High. Isabel Pattie from Community Learning and Development stated that "there is a real potential here for people from different generations to learn from one-another."

The history of the school has spanned several generations and the school has adapted to dramatic changes over the decades. Staff and pupils are reaching out to the community to gather historical artefacts which document these changes. An open day is planned for March next year where there will be displays of photographs and objects of interest which tell the story of the school. Staff and pupils will re-enact the different educational methods adopted in these periods of our history. Visitors will have the chance to relive their childhood by visiting classrooms from various eras of the school history.

In order to promote the inter-generational theme further, a group of pupils plan to interview former pupils of Penicuik High from each decade since the school opened. These interviews will be filmed and the resulting documentary footage will be shown during the open day. The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations will culminate in a reunion event in June which will bring together pupils from several generations with the opportunity for meeting, eating, dancing and remembering what were hopefully amongst the happiest days of their lives.

Amongst the alumni of the school is a notable figure whose achievements will be commemorated as part of the anniversary celebrations. Sir James Hamilton, the designer of the delta wing for Concord, was the first dux of Penicuik High. Sadly he passed away earlier this



year. The science and technology building will be renamed in honour of his great achievements in aeronautical engineering and education.

A service of thanksgiving and remembrance marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school took place at Penicuik North Kirk on Monday 26 November. The service included several musical performances and multi-media presentations celebrating the school's role in the history of the community. Our thanks go to Rev Ruth Halley, minister of Penicuik North Kirk, for leading us in such a beautiful service.

### **Your school needs you!**

If you attended Penicuik High School, or have been involved with the school in any capacity, and have memories and artefacts you would like to share we would love to hear from you. We would especially appreciate photos, videos, uniforms, yearbooks, jotters, reports, sports memorabilia, etc.

As part of our celebrations Penicuik High School will be opening its doors to the community on 14 March 2013. This will be a unique opportunity for members of the community, old and new, to come together and share experiences and recollections of their time at Penicuik.

We are putting together an exhibition on just how Penicuik High School has developed and changed through the decades from opening in 1937 to the present day.

You can hand all items into the school office Monday to Thursday 8am - 4.30 pm and Friday 8am - 3.00pm. In order to ensure their safe return can you please label your items clearly with contact details.

If you have any queries visit our website <http://penicuik.mgfl.net> or email [penicuik\\_hs@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:penicuik_hs@midlothian.gov.uk) or contact the school by telephone on 01968 674165.



### **Model United Nations**

After months of counting down the days, the hours, and the seconds, Penicuik High School's second annual Model United Nations had finally arrived. The Secretary General, Rose Andrew, and deputies, Scott Glen and Annie Tucker, are just a few of the many who had been waiting a long time for this day. A lot of planning and dedication had gone into picking interesting topics for the debates and organising the entire function in which 15 schools - around 200 pupils - participated from around Scotland.

That morning, the events were kicked off by Rose Andrew, Secretary General. Then after an invigorating speech from guest Professor Wendy Graham, who gave an incredible insight into maternal health problems in the developing world, the delegates made their way to each committee room to start their debates.



Many of the separate committees started their debating with an 'ice-breaker' to reduce the tension in the room and to make everybody feel comfortable with one another. They were asked to say their name, what school they were from and either something interesting or embarrassing about themselves. One boy who was representing USA told everybody that his first karaoke experience resulted in him singing Britney Spears 'word for word... in German'.

Committees included Security Council, Economics and Social, Health, Political, Human Rights, and Environment. Some of the motivating topics discussed were; '*The Question of Migration and Immigration*', '*The question of growing fuel while people starve*' and '*The question of whether spying is still justified and necessary*'.

At lunch there was an 'Emergency Debate', as is so common among MUN conferences in schools. This Debate created the idea of North Korea helping the Iranian Government to manufacture their own nuclear weapons. As would be expected there was much for the delegates to argue over while they were all congregated in the assembly hall. Delegates were handed small newsletters about the day that had fun 'gossip' to read as well as information on what happened in each committee. Awards were given out at the end of the day for Commended, Highly Commended and Best Delegate in each committee. Best Delegates received a gavel which was hand crafted by the Craft and Design department of Penicuik High School.

Model United Nations gives the pupils a chance to develop many skills needed in life. Such as; public speaking and presentation skills, thinking on their feet, and encouraging them to pay attention to issues going on in the world today. The large group of young people that came to this event have certainly benefitted from the high quality of debate. Penicuik High School look forward to hosting our third MUN conference next year.

*Heather Holness and Megan Reid, S5.*



## **'Big Day' 2012**

On Thursday 13 September, Penicuik High School hosted 'The Big Day', its annual health promoting day. With the entire school participating, the day aims to encourage healthy living and healthy lifestyles to students from first year up to staff. As its name may incite, the day is indeed a large event in the school's calendar, with students able to benefit from the aid of professional coaches in outdoor sports such as rugby, football and hockey. Furthermore, there is the opportunity to have a go at perhaps more unconventional sports like archery, karate and breakdancing.



The day was operated in parallel with Lothian and Borders Police, with whom the school hold strong bonds, who were a part of a “Recreation Road show”, which aimed to showcase what the local community has to offer. From the Police informing and quizzing students upon the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, to being instructed and shown the secrets to performing effective first aid, students were gifted a vital insight into the way in which to lead a positive, healthy lifestyle. Galleries and stalls had emerged from Modern Languages and Home Economics classrooms, as many local clubs and organisations were present to showcase the various possibilities which are available in and around Penicuik, such as the Pentland Rangers, the Air and Army Cadets, and the Penicuik Community planning group.

Aside from this, one of the most popular extensions of the day proved to be the House Competitions. A string of significantly competitive events which run throughout the year, students were able to gain points for their house, Clerk Maxwell or Liddell. They undertook Army Drills, attempted to execute accuracy and skill in Rocketeering, and also were put to the test in the well-received ‘It’s a Knockout’ style relays, the latter being organised by the sixth years.

In spite of the seemingly dull and inglorious weather conditions that Penicuik had to offer, the atmosphere remained to be one of enthusiasm and positivity, increasing in correlation with the day’s duration. In the afternoon session, students and staff ventured upon a sponsored walk, which featured Penicuik’s historic Clerk Estate. Moreover, students were able to raise funds for the school in gaining sponsors, as well as those cherished house points. With the rain managing to remain in the clouds for the majority of the day, much encouragement and optimism can be drawn from the ‘Big Day’ of 2012, which can be undoubtedly branded as a complete success for the school as a whole.

*Oliver Lemarchand, Head Boy*





## **Consultation on the structure of the school week and AGM of Parents' Association**

The AGM of the Parents' Association was well attended with a good number of parents staying on for an excellent consultation meeting on the structure of the school week, with a number of interesting views and questions raised from the floor. Following on from the consultation meeting a consultation exercise was carried out on our proposal to move to a 29 period week from next session. The result of the consultation is that staff, parents and pupils all overwhelmingly gave their support for this change. My thanks go to all who participated in this.



## **Staffing**

We welcome on to the staff our new school librarian Ms Katherine Morgan, Mr Michael Hughes teacher in English and Mrs Elizabeth Buchan teacher of Support for Learning. We also have a number of newly qualified teachers with us for the year; Ms Emma Thomson in Computing, Ms Kelly Caddow in English, Ms Rachel Jones in PE, Mr Erik Thomson in RMPS, Ms Sam Gordon in Biology and Mr Kevin Thornley in Chemistry. Mrs Susan McCall and Mrs Priscilla Smail have both taken up positions of Learning Assistant.



## **Emergency Numbers and Severe Weather Closure**

Can I ask that all parents and carers make sure that the school has the most up to date information including emergency contact numbers to enable us to contact you in an emergency. In the case of closure due to severe weather before school starts an announcement will be made on Radio Forth. In the case of closure during the school day pupils would be sent home without parental contact. Pupils travelling by school bus would normally be the first sent home at the instigation of the bus company. Can I ask that you ensure that your child has somewhere safe to go to in the event of severe weather closure and that they know these arrangements. If there is a problem with these arrangements please contact us before severe weather arrives to allow us to discuss the individual needs of your child in this eventuality.





## **Penicuik High School Students Parliament Bound**

The phrase “once in a lifetime” is one which is increasingly banded around today. However, despite its clichéd interpretation, this is perhaps the most accurate description of the experience of 12 students from Penicuik High School. On Friday, 7 December, 11 pupils from S4 to S6 ventured to London’s House of Lords, to take part in “The Big Care Debate”. The event, to which Penicuik High School were cordially invited, focused on the question “Who should care for the vulnerable in our society?” with the other nine UK wide schools given the option to argue for the state, the family, or the charities in the third sector. In addition, members of the University of the Third Age were in attendance, making this a landmark maiden intergenerational debate in the Houses of Parliament.

After the unspeakably early morning rise for students to take the train to Kings Cross, they were given a tour of the Houses of Parliament, before lunch in the splendid surroundings of the House of Lords’ Royal Gallery. Eating alongside the statue of King Edward I proved to be a surreal experience in itself. After a briefing on the etiquette and regulations of debate within the chamber, the debate began with the iconic red benches nearly packed to capacity, as teachers watched on from the viewing gallery above. With each school assigned one prepared speaker, Rose Andrew of fifth year had her name recorded in Hansard, as she argued against the rise of the private sector in UK healthcare. As the debate progressed, the Lord Speaker of the House, Baroness D’Souza opened up the opportunity for more impromptu speakers, and Head Boy Oliver Lemarchand was also granted the chance to contribute to the debate. As the event drew to a close, after excellent speeches for all sides, voting commenced and the conclusion that it should be the state caring for the vulnerable triumphed to an overwhelming victory. The students and staff were in agreement that this was a greatly gratifying and insightful experience, and that the school was represented extremely well in the UK’s upper chamber of parliament.

*Oliver Lemarchand, S6.*



## **The Cells Project**

Artistic installations created by pupils from Penicuik High School have been included in the “Pioneers of Science” exhibition currently on show at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. The project which involved collaboration between the Roslin Institute and specially commissioned artists has had an enormous impact on the children who took part.

Isla Thom recalls in detail her visit to the National Portrait Gallery, “We saw this specific exhibition because the project had an unusual theme of science and art together. The exhibition held many fascinating objects and pieces of artwork including Dolly the Sheep’s death mask.”

The artists at the gallery helped Isla and her classmates to experiment with different ways of observing and drawing. Isla continues, “We were shown how to examine objects carefully and we were encouraged to try out various activities such as drawing the item with your eyes only on the object or drawing without taking your pencil off the paper.”

The pupils were also taken to the Roslin Institute where they learned about the process of cloning: “We went to a lab where we extracted DNA from a kiwi. We also looked at what infections and cancers looked like up close under a microscope.”

These experiences and observations were used as the inspiration for their art works. Isla explains, “At first we made drawings from our memories of Roslin Institute on tracing paper, we then applied some special paint to wool paper, stuck them both in frames and laid them out in the sun. After a few minutes the results were unbelievable!”

The experience of taking part in this project has given the pupils a fascinating insight into the very different ways of making sense of the world through art and science. The results of their artistic endeavours are on show at the National Portrait Gallery until 3 February 2013.



## **Happy Holidays**

Can I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a great New Year. School closes at noon on Friday 21 December for pupils and staff, with school resuming for all on Monday 7 January.



M Edie, Head Teacher