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to Sierra
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Hills news



A termly round-up
from Hills Road
Sixth Form College.

Spring 2023 www.hillsroad.ac.uk



Dr Hanif Sindi.

International Women's Day celebrations

Hills Road celebrated International Women's Day this year with a four-day film festival and a talk from Dr. Hayat Sindi, a renowned scientist and advocate for women in Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM). The Ramatu Foundation gave a presentation about obstacles faced by young women in developing countries, and students participated in themed activities in their subjects as well as through the College's Future Ready Programme.

The film festival, which ran throughout the week, showcased a diverse range of films that explored issues related to gender equality and women's rights

and probed topics such as the history of feminism, racial equality, and female empowerment. Students also attended panel discussions with visiting speakers and experts to discuss gender equality and equity.

On 7 March, Dr. Hayat Sindi delivered a talk organised by Afrah Peeran (Year 13) to a packed lecture theatre. Dr. Sindi is a pioneering biotechnologist who has dedicated her career to improving healthcare in developing countries and promoting women's participation in science and technology. She was

Continued on page 3



***We're creating a
tranquil space on
the College site.***

TUULI PARKER

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Dance show

A brilliant display of talent with a hugely rich variety of style and content.

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Hills donates microscopes to Sierra Leone

Fenella Dansie, senior Biology technician, organised a donation of microscopes to the Kate McGrath School for Girls in Sierra Leone in February. Fenella, in conjunction with Amy Brookman, Chair of Trustees, at the Friends of Freetown charShity, found a way to repair, clean and ship almost 20 microscopes to Sierra Leone in aid of efforts to provide orphans and young women from impoverished backgrounds access to valuable resources for learning.

The goal of the programme is to improve scientific literacy through practical learning, and these microscopes will enable students at Kate McGrath the chance to take their studies to exciting new places.

Fenella said "We wanted the microscopes to go somewhere they would be used and appreciated, and thanks to the local lab technicians' network we were able to link up with Friends of Freetown and work out the

logistics. Knowing that this equipment will help young women who have limited access to practical science resources is fantastic and as a team we are very happy to have been able to help."

The school has created practical science spaces for their students which they have called 'Friendship Labs' in tribute to their donors, and their work to enable young women to access the sciences continues with help from donors like LabAid.

>> [Read more.](#)

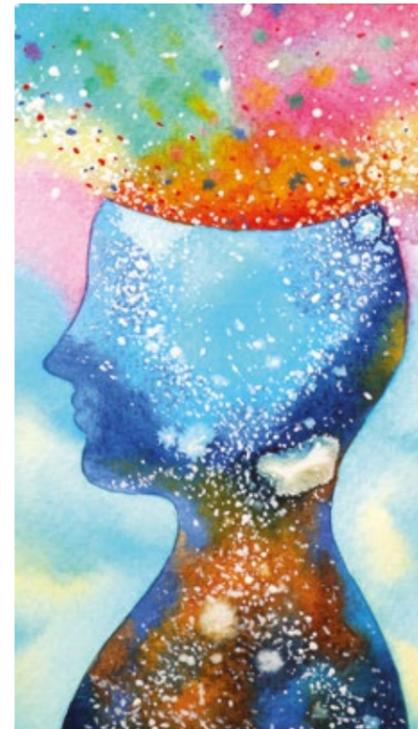


Fenella handing over the microscopes to Amy Brookman.

“

“The provision of the equipment will now provide the opportunity for these girls to realise their full potential in the sciences.”

**SANESI FAWUNDU,
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS AT
FRIENDS OF FREETOWN**



“

“Our focus here is on normalising different ways of thinking and working, accepting neurological diversity as natural, and promoting easy ways to increase inclusion.”

**HANNAH HACKING,
HEAD OF CLASSICAL AND
CONTEMPORARY HUMANITIES**

Neurodiversity Week spreads understanding

Celebrating Neurodiversity Week at Hills this year saw all students and staff invited to participate in sharing words to describe the uniqueness of their brains and ways of thinking. The response from the College community was huge, with over 180 submissions made to the Word Cloud which will be displayed in the new Study Skills centre later this year.

Hannah Hacking said “We invited students and staff to contribute to our word cloud and I’m delighted with the outcome. It demonstrates the many and varied strengths of our different brains. Neurodiversity celebration week is about remembering that each of our brains have unique strengths and there is no one ‘typical’ way of thinking.”

Cover story continued

named one of the BBC’s 100 Women in 2018, is one of the top 10 most influential Arabian women (ranked by Arabian Business magazine) and was the first woman from the Persian Gulf to receive a doctorate.

During her talk, Dr. Sindi shared her own experiences as a woman in STEM and highlighted the challenges that women still face in the field. She emphasized the importance of supporting and empowering girls and women to pursue careers in science and technology and called on students

to be advocates for gender equality in their own communities while using their intelligence and empathy to follow their dreams.

The International Women’s Day celebrations were a powerful reminder of the importance of promoting equity and empowering women in all areas of society. By bringing together students, staff, experts, and activists, International Women’s Day provided a platform for meaningful discussions and inspired action for positive change throughout the College.

in brief

Nine Hills students ventured into the UK Space Design competition finals at Imperial College London. Physics teacher, Tim Lord, said “It was a very intense weekend and although our team didn’t win, they gained an incredible amount of experience and life memories and friendships.”

Hills achieved three top golds in the British Physics Olympiad and are returning to the competition for round two. 2,830 students from 440 UK schools (plus 2500 students in China) competed, and Hills students Jongman-Rios Mali, Ben Woodrow and Lucy Wilson achieved the highest possible honours.

Year 12 students Gwennie Evans, Annabel MacGolpin and George Emms have won the French Régional Debating competition after three and a half gruelling hours of competitive debate. The Year 13 team also won their regional competition, and Emma Gee Olmedilla and Maria Keating went on to compete against the best linguists in the country to win silver in the final in London on 15 March. Congratulations and well done!

In January, 22 Hills students sat the Oxford University Computing Challenge (OUCC) Round 1, having qualified by virtue of scoring in the top 10% nationally in the Bebras computing challenge in Autumn 2022. 31% scored ‘distinction’, which is 11% higher than the national average, and a further 14% achieved ‘good’, ‘merit’ or ‘excellent’. One student, Peter Bailey, got a perfect score and was one of only 24 students nationally to be invited to the OUCC final. Congratulations to Peter who went on to be awarded second place overall in the final, a huge achievement!

Eco-Week promotes sustainability

The annual HR4.5k fun run for students and staff will take place on Monday 24 April this year, with funds raised being donated the World Wildlife Fund and Rainforest Alliance; charities chosen in a college-wide vote.

The winner of this year’s logo design competition is Year 12 student Ylva Connell, who produced a highly attractive and eye-catching piece of branding that students and staff loved.

The 4.5k this year kicks off a week of raising awareness around environmental issues. The College’s first annual ‘eco-week’ celebration will also feature a sustainable fashion show, another first for the College. Students and staff are being encouraged to source an outfit for £5 or less from charity shops to make a stand against fast fashion, which is an issue close to the hearts of many young people at Hills.





Students get ready for Spring

Spring is a time of renewal and growth, and what better way to celebrate this season than by planting flowers? Students enrolled on a Year 12 Gardening Enrichment course have been embracing the spirit of Spring by planting a range of flowers and plants in the Tranquillity Garden, a space at the College designed for mindfulness and biodiversity. This event not only beautified the garden but also brought students closer to nature and fostered a sense of community.

The Tranquillity Garden, located adjacent to the Colin Greenhalgh building, was created to provide a space where students could connect with nature and find a sense of calm amidst the busy college day. The garden features a variety of plants, including trees, shrubs, and flowers, all of which are native to the area. The space is also home to several bird feeders and nesting boxes, which attract a variety of birds and other wildlife.

The spring flower planting event was organised by Tuuli Parker, who also teaches Photography A level. The enrichment group work very



"This term the students chose a wide selection of plants that will provide interest throughout each season, whilst also considering winter structure, being wildlife friendly, and creating a tranquil space for everyone to enjoy."

**TUULI PARKER,
PHOTOGRAPHY TEACHER**

hard to keep up several areas of the college's green space while promoting sustainability and conservation. The event was not only a chance to connect with nature but also to connect with each other. As they worked side by side, students talked and laughed, sharing stories and getting to know one another better. This sense of community is essential



in creating a positive and supportive environment, and the Tranquillity Garden provides an ideal space for fostering these connections.

As the flowers grow and bloom, the garden will become an even more vibrant and beautiful space, offering a peaceful retreat for students and teachers alike. In addition to its aesthetic value, the garden also serves as an important educational tool, providing a hands-on learning experience that can't be replicated in the classroom.

Spring planting in the Tranquillity Garden was a success, bringing together students to celebrate the season and contribute to the beauty and biodiversity of their school's environment. It's a reminder that even small actions, like planting a flower, can have a significant impact on the world around us, and that by working together, we can create a brighter and more sustainable future.

Words of hope on Holocaust Memorial Day

Eva Clarke, a survivor of the Holocaust, visited Hills Road as part of our Holocaust Memorial Day tributes to share her story with students and staff. The visit took place on 26 January, the day before the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp by Soviet troops in 1945.

Ms. Clarke, who was born in a concentration camp in Austria in 1945, spoke to the College community about her experiences during the Holocaust. She talked about how her mother, Anka Bergman, had been deported to Auschwitz and gave birth to her in a cattle car on the way to the camp. Ms. Clarke was one of only three babies born in the camp who survived.

During her talk, Ms. Clarke emphasized the importance of remembering the Holocaust and its lessons, a message echoed by the wider college community in its effort to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day not only in the curriculum but also with informative displays and tributes



curated by departments showcasing Jewish excellence in a variety of fields. Students at the College said they were moved by Ms. Clarke's talk and inspired by her message of hope and solidarity.

Eva's story is a powerful reminder of the horrors of the Holocaust and the importance of standing up against hate and prejudice.

[>> Read more.](#)



World Religion Day visitors

World Religion Day is celebrated annually on the third Sunday of January to promote interfaith understanding and harmony. This year Hills students came together for a panel discussion with representatives from a range of faiths and a special visit from a Cambridge Central Mosque Imam.

Hafiz Imam Zakarya Gangat lead a recitation from the Quran with the Islamic Society and helped students learn more about the Mosque by answering questions in the College's Multi-Faith Prayer Room.

Muhammad, who attended the session, said "Spending time with the Imam as a society was really special. His recitation was very moving, and I'm grateful to have experienced this with my friends. It was nice to hear an expert opinion on problems



Hafiz Imam Zakarya Gangat with students from the Islamic society.

such as how to uphold religion while integrating into Western culture."

Progress and Support Tutor, Angeline Lee, who organised the event, hopes to make the panel an annual tradition and to continue to promote interfaith

dialogue and understanding among students in the years to come. She said "We hope to be able to continue to shine a light on the diversity of faiths represented in our community and look forward to celebrating this together more in the future."

Careers Week inspires students

In February the Careers team ran a fascinating and exciting week of speakers, activities, and opportunities for students to explore their futures. Employers, professionals, academics, and other experts provided interactive sessions designed to help Year 12 students find out all about their choices beyond Hills. From doctors to authors, and universities to apprenticeship providers, the programme covered an incredible spectrum of progression options and provided first-hand insight into the many choices open to A level students. Careers Week runs in tandem with Progress Reviews, so students were able to meet with their teachers for feedback on the year so far while also looking ahead to their futures.



“We are extremely grateful to our speakers who gave up their time to talk to students. Our young people really valued the opportunity to explore so many different opportunities for their futures.”

**BEKKI CLARK,
HEAD OF CAREERS**

Opportunity to explore future options

The Careers department is hosting the annual employer fair on Thursday 30 March. There will be over 30 organisations attending and speaking with students about what they can offer if they decide they'd like to go

and work for them! Local companies include Arm, Cambridge Consultants, Domino Printing Sciences and Hill as well as national and international organisations including Pfizer, Stantec, Astra Zeneca and Encore

Estate Management. Head of Careers, Bekki Clark said “This will be a great opportunity for students to engage with employers to explore future opportunities both in the short and long term.”



Film students join British Film Institute

Two Hills Road students have been accepted by the prestigious British Film Institute's (BFI) National Film Academy, and another has been awarded a place on the BFI's Craft Residential course. The BFI has produced some of the most talented filmmakers in the UK and each of the A level Film Studies students, Lucy Quilter, Paul Evangelista, and James Huggins were chosen from a competitive pool of applicants.

Paul said he was thrilled to have been accepted and is looking forward to the opportunities that the National Film Academy will bring. He said “I felt very excited to apply as I understood the course would lead to me meeting other passionate filmmakers and opportunities in the future. I'd love to work in film in any capacity, whether it's directing, producing

“When I found out I was accepted I felt absolutely elated and incredibly proud of my achievement. I am so grateful to be a part of this course and to learn from some of the best film professionals in the country.”

LUCY QUILTER

(which is the role I'm focusing on in the course), or any of the other countless roles in the industry.”

Head of English, Media and Film at Hills Road, Tanya Jones, said “This is a huge achievement. I'm sure they'll have a wonderful experience and represent Hills Road brilliantly.”

With the support of the National Film Academy, these Hills students are poised to take the film industry by storm. All three students wanted to thank their teacher, Tanya Jones, for her support and guidance throughout their studies.

Articulation competition grand prize finalist

Year 13 student Sambor Puskas has progressed to the grand final of a prestigious public speaking competition to be held at The National Gallery. Sambor chose to speak about The Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw, Poland, which is a building he fell in love with as a child. The Articulation competition is an acclaimed initiative for young people designed to promote the appreciation and discussion of visual culture. Sambor said “I was really shocked when I won the final because some of the other presentations were amazing, but I definitely had a lot of fun and tried not to stress too much!” The grand prize final takes place at the National Gallery on 28 March, and we wish Sambor the best of luck.





Serena goes for gold

Serena Blackwood is having the kind of year most student-athletes can only dream of. We were lucky enough to chat about her recent run of competitions, her life as a Year 13 student, and where she sees life taking her beyond Hills Road.

"This year has been one of my proudest years so far", she says when asked about her incredible run of success in 2023, and it's easy to see why. Serena is currently the sixth fastest female 60m runner under 20 in the country, and she is 33rd in the overall women's UK rankings; a phenomenal achievement for an A level student who has just turned 18. This year alone Serena has won a bronze medal at the London Indoor Games under-20 and senior, gold in the southern under-20 championships, came sixth in the England Athletics championships and was a semi-finalist in the UK Athletics Senior Indoor Championships with a current personal best time of 7.53 seconds.

When talking about her sporting goals Serena is clear that her intention is to reach the highest possible level. She says "My ultimate ambition is to compete in the Olympics. The trip to get there, though, is more significant." The trip in

question currently involves balancing training and competing, with A levels in Biology, Physical Education, and Psychology, a study program Serena chose to prepare her for university and a career as an osteopath. Serena's drive comes from both a genuine passion for running and a drive to succeed. "Because of my love of sports, I always tell myself that I don't have a choice whether to go to training or compete in a competition" she says when asked about her motivation. "My Aunt, Dad, coach and sister are people I care most when it comes to making them proud."

If A levels, competing nationally, training, and maintaining a social



"Because of my love of sports, I always tell myself that I don't have a choice whether to go to training or compete in a competition."

SERENA

and family life wasn't keeping her busy enough, Serena has also set up a business. Switching from athlete to entrepreneur, Serena describes 'Elegant Comb', her hair braiding side-hustle: 'The reason I started the business was not just for my own passion for hair, but also to bring some culture and admiration for black hair and beauty to Cambridge.' She says the business is about 'serving the community by sharing hair care knowledge.' To find out more and to see Serena's work, follow Elegant Comb on Instagram at @elegant.comb.

As Serena continues her journey to the Olympics she likes to credit the people who support her day in and day out, 'I would like to thank my coaches: Ben Davies, Sam Richards, and Jordan Newton, my family especially my aunt, dad and sister, to all my teachers from primary to now, and to all my friend who support me in my life.'

We wish Serena nothing but success and happiness in her studies and her sport, and we cannot wait to see her lighting up the track at the AoC National Championships later this year.

>> Read more.

Volleyball: For the first time in the history of volleyball at Hills Road, two College teams have progressed to the semi-finals of the AoC national cup. Having already won the AoC regional finals and earned a place at the national finals in April, the women's volleyball team secured their spot in the national cup with a 3-0 win over Colvic in January, while the mixed team continued a string of wins to join the women in representing the College on the national stage.

National championships: Hills Road is currently number one in tier three of the Association of Colleges (AoC) National Championship tables with almost sixty students competing later this year. This is an exceptional achievement given that the College is one of the highest-achieving sports colleges despite being much smaller than many of its competitors. Hills is currently the top-ranked college in the East of England and is poised to provide some very stiff competition for the title of most successful sporting college in the AoC.



SPORT ROUND-UP



Women's Rugby: Women's rugby players competed in the world's largest school rugby tournament in March reaching the final but sadly losing to Hereford SFC. Head of Sport, Ayden Duffy said "The Rosslyn Park National Schools Sevens competition is known for being a massive elite sporting event with over 10,000 young athletes competing. Our women's team has represented the College with skill, discipline, and a superb level of sporting conduct and maturity."

Rowing: The Hills Road rowing teams competed in the annual Schools Head of the River. The Hills women's 1st boat finished 10th in their category and the 2nds, 13th, while the men's 1st boat finished four places higher than last year at 12th in the Schools 1st 8+ category. The 2nd boat also finished 18th. The competition featured over 350 boats.

Cross-country: Huge congratulations are due to the Hills Road cross-country runners who represented the Cambridge District at the English Schools Finals in March. Our runners recorded some of the best times we've seen in recent years and placed highly across the board. Most notable was Year 12 Jenny Leggate, who came 19th with a time of 17.08 minutes.

West Road concert wows crowd



Ahead of their spellbinding performances at West Road, A level students, College musicians and staff were photographed rehearsing in the Concert Hall on 22 March.

Highlights of the Spring Concert evening included Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*, Walton's *Spitfire Prelude*, and Ayala Gate performing as lead flautist in Doppler's *Fantaisie Pastorale*. The Wind Orchestra delighted the audience with Cesarini's *A Joyful Fanfare* and Buckley's *Let the Bells Ring*, based on Ukrainian Bell Carol.

The College choir and chamber choir also joined forces with the chamber orchestra to perform Vivaldi's iconic *Gloria* before switching styles completely for a medley of Stevie Wonder numbers. The evening closed with rousing performances from Stu Hanna and the Folk Roots band, and Trevor Barlow's Jazz Orchestra.



"Copious thanks to our wonderful Hills Road musicians for a fabulous evening of live music at the Cambridge University Concert Hall: scintillating solos and superb collective musicianship! Particular thanks to those for whom it was their last concert: we hope you will continue to derive huge pleasure and inspiration from live musicmaking in the future."

KATE MURDOCH,
 DIRECTOR OF MUSIC,



The Collective Dance show

A huge well done to all the Hills Road dancers who put together such a fantastic show in the Robinson theatre on 9 March. There were lots of varied and thoughtful approaches to the choreography with the dancers working well together to produce some top-quality dance ensembles

and solo pieces. With the Y13s practical exams about to start it was a real treat to see their pieces already at such a high standard. Year 12 dancers stepped up and out into the limelight too and they'll be looking forward to following in the Y13 students' dance footsteps next year.



Cymbeline

Students are busy rehearsing for *Cymbeline* which will be performed in the Robinson Theatre on 20 and 21 April. Head of Performing Arts, Richard Fredman said "Cymbeline has to be Shakespeare's most bonkers play! It is about a twisted fairy-tale with a wicked stepmother, a good-hearted princess and two kidnapped babies, as well as a posh idiot in a Hawaiian shirt and the god Jupiter himself in technicolour. This show has it all – including Kylie! The question is, does it have a happy ending?"

To find out get your tickets now!

>> [Get tickets.](#)