QEGS
BLACKBURN

THE GARSTANG

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About the Garstang

This newspaper is named after John Garstang, an archaeologist and former student of QEGS, who thereafter attended Oxford, and made major contributions to the study of the ancient history of Asia Minor and Palestine. He published A History of the Blackburn Grammar School in 1897.

The paper is issued out every half term, and we encourage any student to submit pieces for us to include in our next issues. If you would like to join the editorial, design, or photography team, please contact Mr Hewitt, Head of English, or Angelina Jones in Y13.

All submissions can be emailed to mhewitt@*qegsblackburn.com* or *abrown-jones@qegsonline.com*

These can be articles, a piece of creative writing, feedback, or even an idea of something we should cover.

What can the Berlin Wall teach us about AI?

Imagine your city was split in half by a stone wall that was guarded by guns and wild dogs. For many living today, this was FAR from a nightmare - it was bleak reality. I spend November 9th celebrating my birthday, yet many others across the world remember November 9th as a day where history was literally made. The Berlin wall, the tyrannical barrier that divided the great city of Germany between the democratic West and communist East, had collapsed. The marker of brutality and tyranny that was the Berlin wall was now in pieces.

Not even a day before, the Chancellor of West-Germany, Helmut Kohl, was speaking to the Polish president, Lech Walesa, about the wall. Walesa confessed that he imagined the wall would not be standing 'in the next few weeks'. Kohl was amused by Walesa's seeming naivety and took no seriousness in his suggestion - who would take such a radical statement seriously? It was clear to most in that period of time that the wall was staying for a good while. It fell the next day. Not even Soviet leader Gorbachev knew the news. This symbol of oppression was now being used as a place to celebrate liberty. The world had completely changed in 24 hours.

History is filled with incredibly unlikely scenario's that actually happen. In 1982, Britain was at war with Argentina in the Falklands islands. Once again, this invasion from the Argentine Junta was not expected. David Omand, former director of GCHQ recounts:

'Seeing the nation suddenly pitched into the Falklands crisis is still deeply etched in my memory. This demonstrated to me the impact that errors in thinking can have. This is true for all lide as it is for national statecraft... I want to empower people to make better decisions by teaching how intelligence analysts think.'

Though these events happened decades ago, their nature is one that permeates the present world, to an almost terrifying amount. We are in the digital age and, as Omand says, **'there is no going back'**. It is difficult to explain in mere words the scale of the digital realm. Each day there are 5 quintillion bytes of data uploaded to the internet. This shear load of data has given rise to a rather interesting duality.

On one hand, we can communicate and educate ourselves in a way unimaginable to the likes of Plato and Aristotle. On the other hand, the internet (and technology as a whole) has been weaponised. This has taken many forms. One is the classic malware viruses that we commonly associate with cyber threats. For example, in 2017, the NHS was effectively taken hostage (not literally of course) by the Wannacry virus that has been attributed to the North Korean organisation known as Lazarus. The data was taken for ransom, not to mention the countless other corporate and public victims of the attack

Another concern is the use of social media increasing the threat of disinformation. Disinformation is a war-like tactic that has been around for decades. Its usage was seen potently in the aforementioned Cold War, whereby the CIA and the KGB engaged in thousands of disinformation missions in a rather insidious-sounding process known as 'Active Measures'. These missions were meticulously planned and executed by those of elite skill, The aims differed per mission, but all had the idea of taking advantage of the human ability to be unreasonable. Today, we are in a new age of active measures, according to author Thomas Rid - the digital age. This is not to say that Russia is going to try to recruit us through Facebook - those sorts of fears in themselves fall victim to 'meta-disinformation'; whereby the threat of disinformation is either highly inflated to cause panic, or undermined to create a sense of complacency. We are currently living in a strange time due to Artificial Intelligence being all the rage. AI seems to be the new 'buzzword' and has been seen to be highly capable at times.

Reasonably, there have been concerns about its potential weaponization, particularly in regards to the sorts of attacks previously stated. This is where I want to relate the story to the Berlin Wall, as well as the Falklands War. It is tempting to presume that things will always get worse, and it's understandable to believe this. This world can certainly appear to be on a downward spiral, and the development of AI is here to replace us. With this article for The Garstang, I set out to challenge such a Nihilistic view. Not because I necessarily disagree with it - I have no certainty for the future - but because it is, if anything, simply unreasonable. As we have seen in the lessons of the Berlin Wall, the Falklands War, and other major atrocities, it is the abandonment of reason which is the genesis of tyranny,

Therefore, I challenge such a nihilistic view as not not only illogical, but also extremely dangerous.. If we abandon our sense of reason, then we also abandon our sense of wrong. We are, as the ever terrifying Friedrich Nietzsche once said 'beyond good and evil'. Once we are beyond good and evil, as he continues, 'all that is left is the will to power' . Thus it is no surprise that in history, when we see the powerful rise, it can be traced to the seminal destruction of reason and hope.

I thoroughly believe it is a moral obligation that we should face the current uprising of AI with reason, hope and fortitude, if we wish to avoid the mistakes of the past. Only then, can we truly reap the benefits of technology whilst ensuring we prevent it's weaponisation. Because, as Dostoevsky once said, 'When reason fails, the devil helps'.

By Mohammed Awan
Y13, Head Boy

A MASSIVE CHANGE

Exploring the cultural differences between Pakistan and England

By Khadija Zeb, Y11

Life's journey often takes us to unexpected places, and sometimes, those places bring about massive changes. For me, that change came when I left Pakistan and found myself in England. This sparked cultural differences between these two countries that were like stepping into a whole new world

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

One of the most evident cultural differences was language. In Pakistan, my native language was Urdu, and English was taught as my second language. However, upon arriving in England, English became the primary mode of communication. The differences in phrases, accents and even pace of speech were vastly different. At first, I felt like navigating through a linguistic maze, but with time, I learned to adapt and embrace the English Language.

EDUCATION

The education systems in Pakistan and England were another significant contrast. In Pakistan, memorisation was the norm, and critical thinking took a back seat. In contrast, England's education system emphasised critical thinking, creativity, and independent learning. The shift was challenging but immensely rewarding, as it encouraged me to think beyond textbooks, and explore ideas more deeply.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Pakistan is a diverse country with various ethnicities, languages and traditions. In England, I encountered an even greater diversity. People from all corners of the globe had made England their home. This cultural revolution was evident in the food, festivals and traditions that I encountered. It was a beautiful and eye opening experience to be part of such a multi-cultural society.

FOOD AND CUISINE

The culinary experiences in England were a massive change from what I was used to in Pakistan. Traditional Pakistani cuisine is rich in spices, flavours, and aromatic dishes. In England, I discovered a wide range of cuisines from around the world, varying from hearty British classics like fish and chips, to international fare like Thai, Italian, and Indian. It was a culinary experience that expanded my plate.

WEATHER AND SEASONS

Another significant difference was the weather. Pakistan experiences four distinct seasons, with hot summers and cold winters. In England, the weather was often unpredictable, with frequent rain and milder temperatures. Adapting to this climate required a new wardrobe and a different approach to daily life.

CULTURAL ETIQUETTE

Navigating cultural etiquette was also crucial. England has its own set of social norms and standards, from queuing patiently, to engaging in polite small talk. Learning this was essential to feeling integrated and comfortable in social settings.

To conclude...

My journey from Pakistan to England was indeed a massive change in my life. The cultural differences I encountered were both challenging and enriching. They broadened my horizons, fostered adaptability, and allowed me to appreciate the beauty of diversity. While I cherish the rich culture and traditions of Pakistan, I have also come to love the vibrant tapestry of England's multi-cultural society. This experience has taught me that embracing change and cultural differences can lead to personal growth and a deep understanding of the world around us. It's a journey I wouldn't trade for anything, and it has made me who I am today, a global citizen with an appreciation for the richness of cultural diversity.

The Wide Array of Subjects on offer at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School

by Vicky Zhou, Y11

In today's rapidly evolving world, education is not about just memorising facts and figures; it's about preparing students for a future that demands adaptability, critical thinking, and a broad knowledge base.

At QEGS, we take this commitment seriously by offering a diverse range of subjects that cater to the interests and aspirations of every student. QEGS is not just a place of learning, it is a place of growth.

Education should be a holistic experience that allows students to explore their passions and unlock their potential. Our commitment to offering a diverse range of subjects ensures that every student can find and pursue their own interests, and chart their own path to success.

MATHS, ENGLISH AND SCIENCE

These subjects, which you may consider as 'traditional' are actually a fundamental part of educational curricula for centuries and continue to play a central role in modern education around the world.

HUMANITIES

Humanities is a traditional subject that encompasses the study of human culture, history, philosophy, art and ethics. It explores the complex and multi-faceted aspects of human existence, helping students gain a deeper understanding of the human experience across different times and cultures, Humanities foster critical thinking, empathy, and a broader perspective on the world.

LANGUAGES

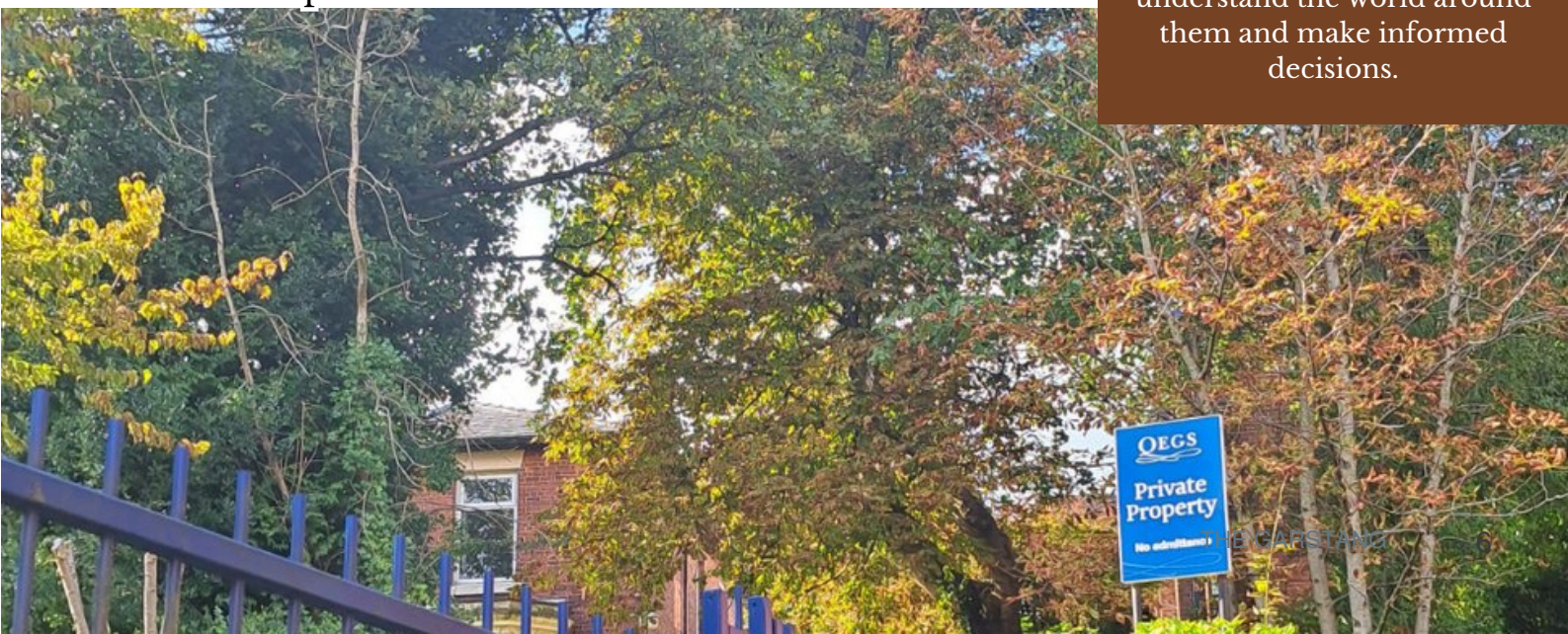
In an increasingly interconnected world, language proficiency is invaluable. We offer a wide range of courses, including Spanish, French, German and Latin, which help students to grow and reach their fullest potential, so in future, they may use it to their advantage.

PE AND SPORT

Our school recognises the importance of fitness, offering a range of PE classes and competitive sports for students to stay active and healthy, We even have our own swimming pool, to which other schools don't have that privilege, and so we use it to our advantage.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

These subjects help students dive deeper into the complexities of society and human behaviour, with subjects such as psychology, sociology, business and economics. These help students understand the world around them and make informed decisions.



Is it you, or is it your mind?

By Angelina Jones, Y13

I find it somewhat comedic that I am the one who is editing *'The Garstang'*, when I am a massive perfectionist and am never truly happy with my work, despite many people telling me I should be. I know this is a similar case for many of you who might be reading this. It can feel that if you don't make things completely perfect, you might let people down, whether it be your teachers, parents, friends, etc. Slowly, as I have progressed through my high school years and into my last year of sixth-form, I have realised that this is not the case at all, but rather due to a rather annoying notion called anxiety.

Anxiety can come in many forms and ways. You may be extremely confident in front of a crowd. You might find it very easy to talk to and meet new people. But this doesn't mean you can't ever have anxiety - it happens to everyone! For me personally, I can talk for hours (and very loudly according to my teachers - sorry!), to anyone, whether it be someone I've known for years, or someone I've met 5 minutes ago, but yet I find myself spending the same equivalent hours after the conversation, experiencing anxiety about whether I've said anything wrong, cringing at myself, and overthinking every tiny little thing.

I think this is why it is really important to surround yourself with good, friendly people who you can talk easily too, and will hype you up over achievements great and small. Because then you will come to realise that you haven't done anything wrong at all, but rather your brain is making you believe otherwise, maybe because of past experiences, or any other factors. And slowly, you'll feel more relaxed in yourself, and your self confidence will begin to rise. It takes time, but trust me, if you are willing for change, change will happen.

Now to all those who are currently undergoing revision for major examinations (Year 11 and 13, I'm looking at you), I know that anxiety and panic is probably incorporated into the daily routine at the moment. 'What if I don't pass my GCSE's', 'What if I don't get the grades for university/college', 'What if...', 'I won't...'. Trust, I know the feeling. But these are all a hypothesis. Unless you have a crystal ball and super powers, the future is unknown to every living person in this world. So why dwell on it? All you can do is try your best, and dedicate beyond sufficient time to your studies. And if it all goes wrong at the end of the year, there are plenty of options and ways to achieve your goals and aspirations, they just won't be obvious as of yet. Your teachers are the best help you can source, they've been in your shoes, so if you are struggling with anxiety at all regarding education, talk to them! Don't let your mind tell you things that haven't actually happened.

Distracting yourself with activities that make you happy is crucial for helping you manage with anxiety and your brain. The amount of hours I've spent talking to my favourite people, watching my favourite Netflix shows, sleeping (a personal favourite pastime), I could have possibly walked halfway across the globe, maybe even to Australia and back if we're being optimistic. But it helps! Even if you are someone who constantly works themselves up to make everyone else happy, if you can find the time to make yourself happy alongside that, you'll manage everything A LOT easier.

My Experience in the Teatime Concerts

By Emily Nickson, Y8

Once per term, you'll find me spending my evening in big school either performing, practicing, or watching a friend practice music.

During the tea-time concerts, the pupils who perform get to pick their own music (with approval from the music staff), and if you choose to watch a performance, you'll see the vast difference in music taste. Some pupils and students might play the piano, others might sing, even a few teacher's get involved with the performances!

After school, the performers head to Big School and practice. With the number of aspiring musicians, it gets chaotic fast! As the parents enter the lunch hall, the performers will get a program of the order of performances.

During the practice time, most of the students are either talking, practicing, watching a friend practice, or playing on their phones, and so it can get loud rather fast, until people start practicing for the last time, in which people start to revise their lyrics/sheet music.

The teatime concerts happen once per term in Big school, and performers stay after school to practice, but the actual concert happens at 5pm and end at 6pm, however depending on the number of performers, it commonly runs past this time frame!

The concerts have a vast amount of variety in the pupils and students attending. Some are in Year 7, while others are in Sixth-Form. It's safe to say there's at least one person per year group, but they are all incredible musicians, no matterwhat the age

CREATIVE WRITING SHOWCASE

DEER IN THE HEADLIGHTS

The beast has been silent. That's why I haven't noticed it, until now. I stand caught in it's hypnotic gaze, ensnared by some dark, forbidden magic unknown to any other creature but itself. It also slows down time, stretching taut each terrifying second, toying with its prey. Even as it twists my body in ways I had not even thought possible, it slows down everything. My agony is prolonged as it toys with me, its prey. My entire existence now fulfils solely one purpose: to satiate whatever sadistic desires it may have. Even as it finishes with me, leaving me on the path, the time passes slowly. I bet it knows that I am lying here in helpless agony. Even as it goes away further along the path, I am nothing but a toy for its game

by Muhammed Alli, Y11

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