

December 2025 - Winter Term Edition

# The Student Standard

**DENE MAGNA 6TH FORM  
MAGAZINE!**

Created by students, for students!

Winter Warmers: film, music and  
Sixth Form achievements for 2025

Unwrap this Term's Biggest  
Stories

Your term at a glance: the wins, the  
wows and what's next!

*travel / lifestyle / aesthetics / debate / music / games / films / art / photography*

# CONTENTS

<b>CELEBRATING SUMMER SUCCESS</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>BOOK REVIEW - BRIEF ANSWERS TO THE BIG QUESTIONS - BY TIM G</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>FUNDRAISING</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>HALOWEEN - ARTWORK BY SUMMER W</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>EQUALITY IN MODERN SOCIETY BY OLLIE M</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>ALBUM REVIEW BY AARON P</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>RAISING THE BAR BY ORLA B</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>YOUNG VOICES BIG CHOICES BY REY S</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>FILM REVIEW - ZOOTROPLOIS - BY ALEX G</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>UNRAVELING THE FOREST OF DEAN'S PAST BY JOSIE B</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>BOOK REVIEW - THE MONK - BY FRAISER W</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>HAVE A GANDER AT THIS!</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>THANKSGIVING - BY LUNA AND GEORGE</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>GAME REVIEW -UNDERTALE - BY REY S</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>TROUBLE IN THE WYE - BY BOBBY D</b>	<b>28</b>



## The Student Standard

# CELEBRATING SUMMER SUCCESS

We at Dene Magna were extremely proud of our 2024/25 cohort, who yet again achieved fantastic results in their exams this summer, unlocking the door for the next stage of their journey with a 100% pass rate for all students, and 67% of the grades achieved at C or above. Congratulations to the 20% of students who achieved at least one A/A\* grade! Many Dene Magna leavers have headed off to study their first choice courses at University, or have begun apprenticeships.

Congratulations to **Will K** (A\* A A), **Macy P** (A A B), **Charles M-A** (A\* A A), **Connor H** (A\* A B), and **Elektra T** (A\* A A) who all worked so hard to secure the high grades they needed. Also to those who overcame significant adversity during their time with us, as well as the many individuals who exceeded their minimum expected grades.

Well done in particular to **Connor H**, who secured a place to study Medicine at Plymouth; to **Tom M** who is off to study Economics and Politics at Exeter; to **Eliza D** who will be studying History and Philosophy at York; to **Jacob W-J** who will be studying Music at Falmouth, to **Lily A** who will be training to become a physiotherapist at Worcester and to **Katarina R** who is heading to Bristol UWE to study Law. Many also achieved coveted places on higher level apprenticeship schemes this summer - among them we congratulated **Poppy D**, **Sam P**, **Macy R** and **Elliot K** - all of whom successfully completed arduous selection processes whilst also preparing to sit their exams.



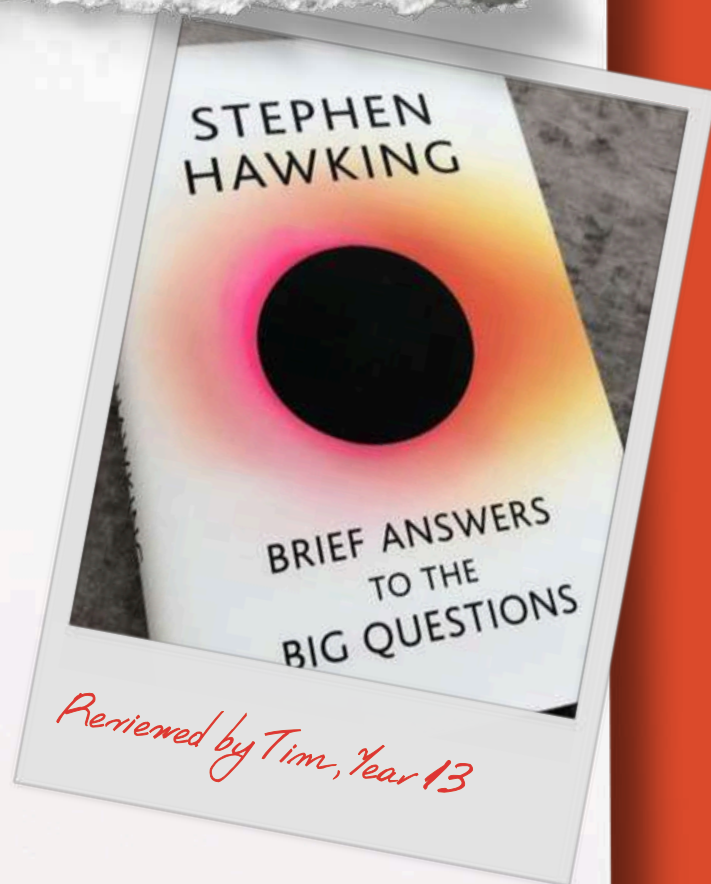
This really is just a small selection of our wonderful cohort of students who achieved success at the end of last academic year. We wish every one of them the best of luck as they head forward into their futures!

# BOOK REVIEW

*Brief Answers to the Big Questions* is a relatively short but challenging read authored primarily by Stephen Hawking. Through a series of questions, he talks about issues from our past, present, and future alongside debates about the future of different scientific fields. This book spans a wide range of topics, including M Theory, AI, black holes and how theology relates to and interacts with science. Some of the most interesting sections include the application of non-Euclidean geometry in time travel, the origins of life on our planet and in the universe (and whether we're alone), and the future of humanity as AI develops at such a rapid rate.

## IS IT WORTH A READ?

This is a difficult book to read, as Hawking's intellect is certainly reflected in his words, but if you have the time I'd certainly recommend the book to anyone interested in science, humanity or the future. His unique way of thinking and ability to convey such advanced ideas in a concise manner makes this book more than worth the time.



# 6TH FORM FUNDRAISING

This term our Sixth Form students have been working hard to raise money for their end of year celebrations and they've done an amazing job so far.

**W**e kicked things off in October with a bake sale held on Sponsored Walk Day, raising an impressive £236.67.

A huge shout out goes to Keira, who has organised two bake sales this term. A special mention also goes to Summer B, Mae, Anja, Shumi, Alex G, Alyx R and Chloe T who worked tirelessly to support their 6<sup>th</sup> form with these fundraisers. Together, their brownies, cupcakes and cookies were a massive hit with students and staff alike!

In November, the Sixth Form brought another round of tasty fun to the school. Our Christmas bake sale was a sell-out success and raised £110.70. Thank you to everyone for the continued hard work and the generosity of those who made these fundraisers happen - and to everyone who came to support them. Well done everyone, we're so proud of you all!

The Christmas Raffle is now underway with some brilliant prizes up for grabs in the form of two enormous hampers, packed to the brim with goodies for all the family. Tickets are on sale until the end of term, when the winners will be drawn in the last day of term assembly (for 6th Form).

Whether you've baked, bought, donated or simply helped spread the word, thank you for supporting the 6th Form. Keep an eye out for more events coming soon!



# HALLOWEEN AT 6TH FORM



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# EQUALITY

IN MODERN

SOCIETY

*By Ollie M, Year 12*

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Equality. Something that society has struggled with throughout the last few centuries. However, not all is negative, because scientists have found that the “Man-the-Hunter” and “Woman Gatherer” stereotypes, that have been around since the middle Paleolithic era, are in fact not true. Scientists realised this because they found remains of women from the Stone Age buried with hunting tools.

## *-The History of Equality-*

Gender roles date back around 12,000 years, from the shift of agriculture in the Neolithic revolution, when more distinctly gendered labour roles were created and humankind began to split. This happened because early humans shifted from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle as they realised they could produce their own food through farming and animal domestication. Since they no longer needed to worry about food, early settlements were established as they could put more focus into tasks like building, crafting and managing resources. This surplus of food and settling-in led to more complex social structures, similar to modern societies, and also leadership roles within communities.

## *-Equality Today-*

Equality today is somewhat comparable to that of the early societies which, in my opinion, is outrageous and should be changed because the ideologies of society have barely changed in 12,000 years!

Although gender equality has definitely become better, it has not improved enough. If you compare gender equality today to gender equality 100-300 years ago, you will notice a drastic change. Women used to go through so much torture and hardship just for being female. One example is the witchcraft problem in the medieval period when women were burned at the stake for going against the social norm. Women have been objectified and put down by society for thousands of years until recently, when women have gone against the stereotypes and achieved things men could only dream of...

- **Malala Yousafzai**, Pakistani activist for girls' education
- **Rosa Parks**, refused to give her seat up on a bus in 1955 - sparked the U.S. civil rights movement
- **Emmeline Pankhurst**, British suffragette who fought for women's right to vote in the early 1900's
- **Marie Curie**, first woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize - pioneered research on radioactivity
- **Oprah Winfrey**, media mogul who overcame poverty and discrimination

I could sit here all day and name women who changed the world. But feel free to do your own research into the matter.

## *-Present Day Struggles-*

Although society is a lot better than it used to be, there are still many problems within society that cause women to be looked at in a negative light. Firstly, the gender pay gap, which is one of the most prominent problems because it is an obvious difference that should not exist, this problem is much bigger in larger industries such as businesses and athletic sports. In the UK the gender pay gap is about 7% (every £1 made by men, is only 93p made by women in the same job) which is quite large. Now, some jobs have relatively understandable pay gaps, such as sports like football because men's football has a lot more viewers which means more money. But other occupations such as office jobs should not have pay gaps because there is no “skill gap” or “viewer gap”. Although equality is getting better and better, you can't help but feel sympathetic for everyone who experiences this prejudice.

I hope that the people reading this will realise that this is still a big problem and everyone out there can help even a little bit to make the world a better place. Make your goal today to show appreciation to any important women in your life, you never know how far a compliment can go.

# ALBUM REVIEW



## GNX

### KENDRICK LAMAR

'GNX' takes a shift in tone from Kendrick's previous and more introspective album 'Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers' where he explores his personal struggles with things like therapy and adapting to fatherhood. In this album, we see him boasting about his success as a rapper, proving to the world he's still 'got it' and is on top of his game. Released in November 2024, 'GNX' marks the 'Not Like Us' rapper's return to West Coast hip-hop. With over 100 million downloads online, 'GNX' is a combination of hip-hop/rap and R&B which means it reaches a wide audience and is able to bring together many different listeners.

The opening track, 'Wacced Out Murals', sets the tone, aggressively symbolising Kendrick's dominance in the rap community. His lyrics talk about how he isn't easily influenced and expresses that the audience should have the same mentality. Track 6, 'Reincarnated', carries on the serious tone, where Lamar sees himself as continuing the spiritual mission of great black artists who couldn't continue theirs due to corruption from fame and addiction, such as John Lee Hooker and Billie Holiday. One of my standout tracks on the album is track 3, 'Luther', which is a change from the first two songs in the album and features Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter SZA (pronounced "Siz-ah", real name Solána Imani Rowe), this being her first appearance in the album. The song also samples the R&B icon Luther Vandross' song 'If This World Were Mine' and we hear Kendrick modernising romantic themes of protection and devotion. The 12 track album is a real collaboration of artistry, and features contributions from many other singer/songwriters including Deyra Berrera, Ink, AzChike, Sam Drew, Hitta J and Dodyó to name a few.

Although I don't think it's his best work, I think this is one of Kendrick's most memorable albums. It's a nice change from his previous work and I like the way it pulls inspiration from different sounds and eras. I recommend this album if you're looking for an introduction to Lamar's music or just hip-hop in general.



# RAISING THE BAR

Spotlight on Ellie Rugman

**Balancing Pro-Rugby, keeping horses and working full time at Dene Magna, Ellie Rugman talks to Orla about how she juggles it all!**

**Orla:** So my sporting background is actually in football. I used to play for the Bristol City Development Academy for a time which gave me a real insight into the intensity of elite sport. Truth be told my passion for music did take over, and I chose to run my contract up. But that experience made me really appreciate the dedication athletes like you bring to the craft so I would love to ask firstly, what first drew you to rugby, and did you ever imagine that it would take you to a professional level?

**Ellie:** Funnily enough, I played football initially and I think I've always wanted to do the best that I could do at anything, for example I was a runner, I did all the clubs, gymnastics, stuff like that. Then I took to rugby because Drybrook were setting up a women's team and I got to know some of the girls and they said "give it a go" so I did, and then I got better and better at what I did. I wanted to just go and try at Hartpury because they were starting up a team, so I started up there and then it became a bigger thing. More people came and started to watch and then before you know it, you're semi professional and you're trying to find a job while also trying to play rugby as well! I think rugby, more than anything, appealed because it was something different that I had not tried before and I thought "great, I will just give it a go" and just see how far it would get me.

# The Student Standard



**Orla:** My idols were Steven Gerrard, Xabi Alonso, and Pele. These players combined intelligence with artistry. Who were your inspirations growing up? Were they rugby players or people from different sports?

**Ellie:** To be fair I probably didn't really have rugby players as idols. I also ride horses and compete so I probably looked at people like Zara Phillips and Pippa Funnell for riding probably due to their dedication to the sport more than just the actual riding. Obviously, now it would be different, looking at different players within rugby that are really good - there are so many sportsmen and women that young people can look to for inspiration these days.

**Orla:** How do you shape the way you look at competing?

**Ellie:** The way I see it, your life has to work around your sport, especially when you are semi professional, I think you have to go in with the mindset that you have to give it everything that you've got, even if you're tired after a day of work or tired after doing the horses in the morning and evening etc. Even if I am feeling pretty drained, I still try to give 110%. I find that because I'm up against people who are professional, it can be really tough as you're still expected to perform as well, if not better to stand out and get the chance to get in the starting team on the weekend.

**Orla:** You're in quite a rare position in sport, where you're balancing a full time job alongside being a semi professional player, so what does a typical working week look like for you? And how do you manage to stay composed in both areas?

**Ellie:** Well I've got horses so my day starts at 05:30am. I get up and muck out before 08:00, I eat breakfast and I am in work for 08:00, then I work here until 14:00, so I can fit in doing my horses. One of my horses has had two operations, so she needs riding every day. Then I go up to Hartpury and train until 20:30-21:00 So that is my everyday, apart from Wednesdays and sometimes Fridays, which I have off rugby, unless we're playing on a Friday night or if we were playing Saturday or Sunday.

**Orla:** when you look back at your career thus far, is there a particular moment that stands out as your proudest achievement?

**Ellie:** I always said I wanted to be in the premiership and I was lucky enough to do it with Gloucester Hartpury the first time round and I remember, we played Exeter and at the end of the game I literally just fell o the floor so

# The Student Standard

dramatically. I couldn't believe we had done it. It had been 6-7 years of just slogging it out, losing my narrow margins, not making the top four etc. Winning the final at Kingsholm with 10,000 people watching was honestly the most unbelievable time of my life. I just cried and cried and then I got the chance to lift the cup which was absolutely amazing, and to carry on and keep doing it is pretty good as well!

**Orla:** Conversely what has been the most demanding or defining challenge you've faced, whether that be physically, mentally, or institutionally, given the nature of rugby?

**Ellie:** I think just trying to balance everything in day to day life is challenging! All those girls going into semi professional is tough and just turning up day to day and performing day in day out are so dedicated. It takes over your life. Your rugby career is short as your body gets older and at the moment my injury has been very tough - its been two, nearly three years of on/off, trying to return, trying to get back, not being quite right - that mentally drains you. And then you're getting questions like "when are you coming back? Are you retiring?" Physically and mentally it can be really hard to cope with it all but you just have to stay focused and keep going.

**Orla:** it has been remarkable to see how much women's rugby has grown in recent years, from attendance to media exposure. What does it personally mean for you to represent Gloucester Hartpury at this pivotal time?

**Ellie:** It means everything to me. I've been there nearly from the start, I probably missed 2-3 games when I was transitioning from Drybrook to Hartpury. I feel like it's my club, I'm part of that club, it's part of me, I don't want to go anywhere else. If you cut me in half I bleed cherry and white. I've seen it through, from the first days where it was tough and we weren't getting those results and now seeing that we can half play a game of rugby, go out and win, and win titles - it's just unbelievable and I'm so grateful to have been able to experience all those things.

**Orla:** There is still a clear disparity between men's and women's rugby, particularly regarding pay and professional infrastructure. What is your perspective on that issue, what steps do you think need to be achieved for the game to achieve greater parity?

**Ellie:** I think it comes down to, obviously, people watching the game. I think the world cup this year has been the most incredible thing to build the women's sport in general, and the more the numbers come in, the more people come into the grounds and the more we will get to play. Unless you play for your country, you are not professional. I don't know how far we are away from that. Could my club pay me enough so that I could play professionally and not play for my country? No. There is a massive divide in it but it's grown so much in the last 3-4 years, since we won the premiership for the first time around and hopefully it continues. I think it will continue quickly now because we have a world cup and that was massive. On average, we have 2,000 people coming to watch us now. We used to have ten people watching us at Harpury, so to go from 10, 50, 100, to 2,000, for a standard game on the weekend is pretty good!

**Orla:** Do you feel like the media has done enough to celebrate the women's game or do you feel there is a tendency for it to exist in the shadow of the male competitions?

**Ellie:** I think they've done a fair bit and I think you've seen a lot about it because they've done it in a year when there hasn't been a men's world cup, which is great. They could still do better, they've shown a fair bit of it on the BBC and obviously you can watch it through there. But they need to show premiership games because then you're watching those players, getting interested and watching that level of sport before it gets international, because those international players, they're already paid, and they're already full time, so you need to build that so people keep coming to watch the games week in week out.

# The Student Standard

**Orla:** touching on a more controversial point, figures like Joey Barton have made dismissive comments about women's sport. What kind of rhetoric do you think that has on public perception and morale on female athletes?

**Ellie:** Obviously it doesn't help, but then I always think if people are making comments then they need to come and watch it. Women can't play sports? Well yes they can! Women play sports differently to men, and yes it won't be the exact same but I think if you watch women's rugby, there is a lot more thinking involved but that is just part of being a different gender. I think it's easy to say women's sport is rubbish, and women can't play sports. If people come and watch it, come and see and feel the atmosphere at a game, they'd enjoy it just the same, if not more!

**Orla:** At school level, I imagine there are a lot of great athletes in all the years. How important do you think sport can be at shaping people? And how important do you think schools and clubs are at nurturing the next generation of athletes

**Ellie:** I think it's huge. All the local clubs around here are trying their best just to feed students - from schools, after school clubs, I think you get into these with friends and often you do it because you love doing that with your friends. I know Drybrook really rely on people coming through and when you look at their team sheet, you see people from their mini section and you think great, they've come all the way through from 6-7 years old and that needs to keep going. It's important to keep them interested, to keep developing these new players.

**Orla:** do you think that these girls now have stronger pathways into sport with more visible role models than when you were coming through?

**Ellie:** All my female friends played rugby at school with the boys and that now is getting to a lower age. The pathway is now a lot better but it needs to improve from 16-18 because from 18 to 20s, the jumps are too big. You're going from a local level and players aren't geared up for it, they haven't had the experience. That middle section needs to build up to get these girls ready for adult level rugby because it's so different. The strength is really different

**Orla:** In the most idealistic view, where do you envisage women's rugby to be in 5-10 years time?

**Ellie:** Everyone to be a professional but I don't know if that can happen. There has been a lot of talk on Welsh rugby and how they've had money troubles and the RFU aren't going to make women professional because, unless the money and support is there it isn't going to happen. So yes, ideally professional, but whether or not that happens, who knows? There definitely needs to be something more attractive for semi professional players because at the moment it is really, really hard and it just absolutely drains you doing the amount we do and juggling a job as well.

**Orla:** Finally if a student here was to tell you they wanted to follow in your footsteps, combining sport with another passion or maybe not needing to do that, what is the singular piece of advice you would offer?

**Ellie:** Back yourself. Back yourself and what you do and you'll get there. And someone would spot you, just keep going and don't give up.





# Young Voices, Big Choices Mock Election Highlights

This term our Sixth Form was buzzing with political energy as students took part in a lively mock election. Three student-led parties were formed, each crafting their own manifestos and policies on the issues they felt mattered most to young people... and Rey tells us more...



Our Politics students took the lead in bringing democracy to life, forming three parties that offered very different visions for the future. The '**Forward Conservative Party**' (FCP) focused more on economics and was the most right-wing party; '**For The Population**' (FTP) championed social equality and support for young people, placing them more firmly on the left and the '**WOKE (Workers of the Kingdom of England) Party**', arguably, was a humorous take on progressive policies, blending satire and genuine social commentary.

The Touchdown was packed with students eager to hear what each party had to say and the buzz was incredible. After brief introductions, they laid out their policies.

After the proposals, the floor was opened up to questions from the audience. The majority of the questions were directed toward the *Forward Conservative Party* and the *WOKE Party* who faced a lively grilling from the audience. Interestingly, *For the Population* received none at all - something their leader, Fraiser, jokingly described as "dodging all the bullets". I think this might have been a sign that the audience was confident in their ideas!





## The Results

*For The Population* Party took a clear lead, winning with 44% votes, outnumbering *WOKE* Party by 8% and the *Forward Conservative* Party by 24%. Since they didn't reach an outright majority, *FTP* would have theoretically formed a minority government - likely resulting in a hung parliament - perfect material for more debates in politics later on!

## Reflections

I think that *For the Population* received the most votes for several reasons:

1. Young people are typically progressive and committed to social equality and justice (this applies to the *WOKE* Party as well - they came second)- and these were central themes to their manifestos.
2. Their policies seemed more realistic, relatable and focused on improving student life.
3. They didn't receive any challenging questions - suggesting their ideas were clearly portrayed in the proposal stage of the event.

Overall, the mock election was really fun and a very interesting event. It was democracy in action and the party leaders were fantastic at staying in character and staying true to their parties policies and ideas.

When I spoke to other students after the election, they mentioned that they left feeling inspired, informed and maybe even ready for a real election one day and I, for one, can't wait to see what happens in the election next year!





# FILM REVIEW - ZOOTOPLIS



*Zootropolis* is a Disney Film following a fox and a rabbit who must team up to solve a case. The film has an all-star cast featuring Jason Bateman, Idris Elba, and Shakira. The movie was released back in 2016, but with a sequel coming out this month (November) I thought I'd share my thoughts on the original...

This is technically a kids' film but actually entertained me more than many films aimed at more mature audiences. Then again, it did come out in 2016, and the quality of films has somewhat... decreased. *War of the Worlds 2025*, I'm looking at you. The film definitely has kids in mind as it's very fast paced and colourful. But references to films such as *The Godfather* make it an offer you can't refuse, even if you are a little older than the target audience. There are also plenty of mature jokes in the movie, making the comedy accessible to everyone. The animation is gorgeous and really made the city of Zootropolis look like a fun and joyous place.

The film's protagonist is a rabbit named Judy Hopps, whoever came up with that name, I hope you're proud of yourself! Judy's dream is to be a proper police officer (or 'cop' according to the Americans). However, everybody she meets believes that she can never do this due to the fact that she is a rabbit. Wow, discrimination in a Disney movie. Anyway, Judy refuses to stop until she achieves her dream and doesn't let this negativity stop her throughout the whole movie.

The different attitudes that Nick (the fox) and Judy have in the movie definitely provide plenty of comedic moments. Think of films and shows like *The Hitman's Bodyguard*; *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*; and



*Planes, Trains and Automobiles*. The comedic moments in these work well as the characters have very different views on life and their attitudes towards problems are nearly opposite to one another. It certainly works here as Nick is not very interested in solving the case whereas Judy believes it is her life purpose, leading to several humorous moments.



I can't say too much about the plot as seeing as it is a detective story, you'll find out what exactly the issue is as you watch the movie. The main focus however is on a divide between predators and prey. Again, a focus on discrimination. I found it great that Nick and Judy were working together despite being prey and predator. The movie explores this theme throughout. This movie is very original in its plot as it focuses on how society perceives differences and minorities (not something I've ever experienced, obviously!)



### **Verdict:**

All in all, this film is beautifully animated, very humorous (even if not all the jokes land), and has strong messages throughout. The detective story line is also very entertaining and keeps you interested. Therefore, while it isn't perfect, it's a greatly funny movie with a beautiful setting, as well as fun characters and strong messages.

**Alex's Score: 7/10**



# *The Forest of Dean*

## Unravelling the Forest of Dean's Dark and Dazzling Past

By Josie B



### What's in a name?

Have you ever wondered where the forest's name originates from? The word "Dean" likely comes from an Anglo-Saxon word for Valley specifically, Mitcheldean - which is located in a valley. Our school, Dene Magna, is named after this, with Magna meaning large, and Dene Parva meaning small!

The Forest of Dean dates all the way back to the Norman Conquest. It developed into a popular royal hunting ground and was used for its rich natural resources. Over centuries it became a major centre for coal and iron mining with the introduction of free miners, with some descendants still alive today!



There are estimated to be over 100 free miners still alive today still actively working on small quarries or collieries.

### Do you have any specific requirements to become a free miner?

- Need to have been born in the forest (within the Hundred of St Briavels)
- Be over the age of 21
- Originally you had to be a male, but this changed in 2010 following an application by Elaine Morman
- You need to have worked a year and a day in a coal or iron mine



# Myths and Legends of the Forest

## “Moose Pig” (The BEAST of Dean)

There have been many, historical and more recent reports of mysterious creatures living in the woods especially around Parkend. One notable example is the ‘The Beast of Dean’ which was also given the name ‘Moose-Pig’. Long before reintroduction of wild boar in the area, an animal said to resemble a boar but large enough to crush hedges, fences and make trees fall, lurked in the depths of the woods.

It's first sightings date all the way back to 1802 by reports of locals having seen an "extraordinarily large wild boar" and that the boar screamed an "unearthly roar". After a while of complaints, local hunters from the nearby village of Parkend captured and killed the boar. The hunting party agreed that it was unlike any boar they had ever seen before. However... in 1998 a report was made by two men after a scare in the woods. James Nash and Marshall Davies claimed they heard a loud gurgling sound followed by rustling. Before they knew it, a large shadow was moving towards them and they ran frantically back to the safety of the village.

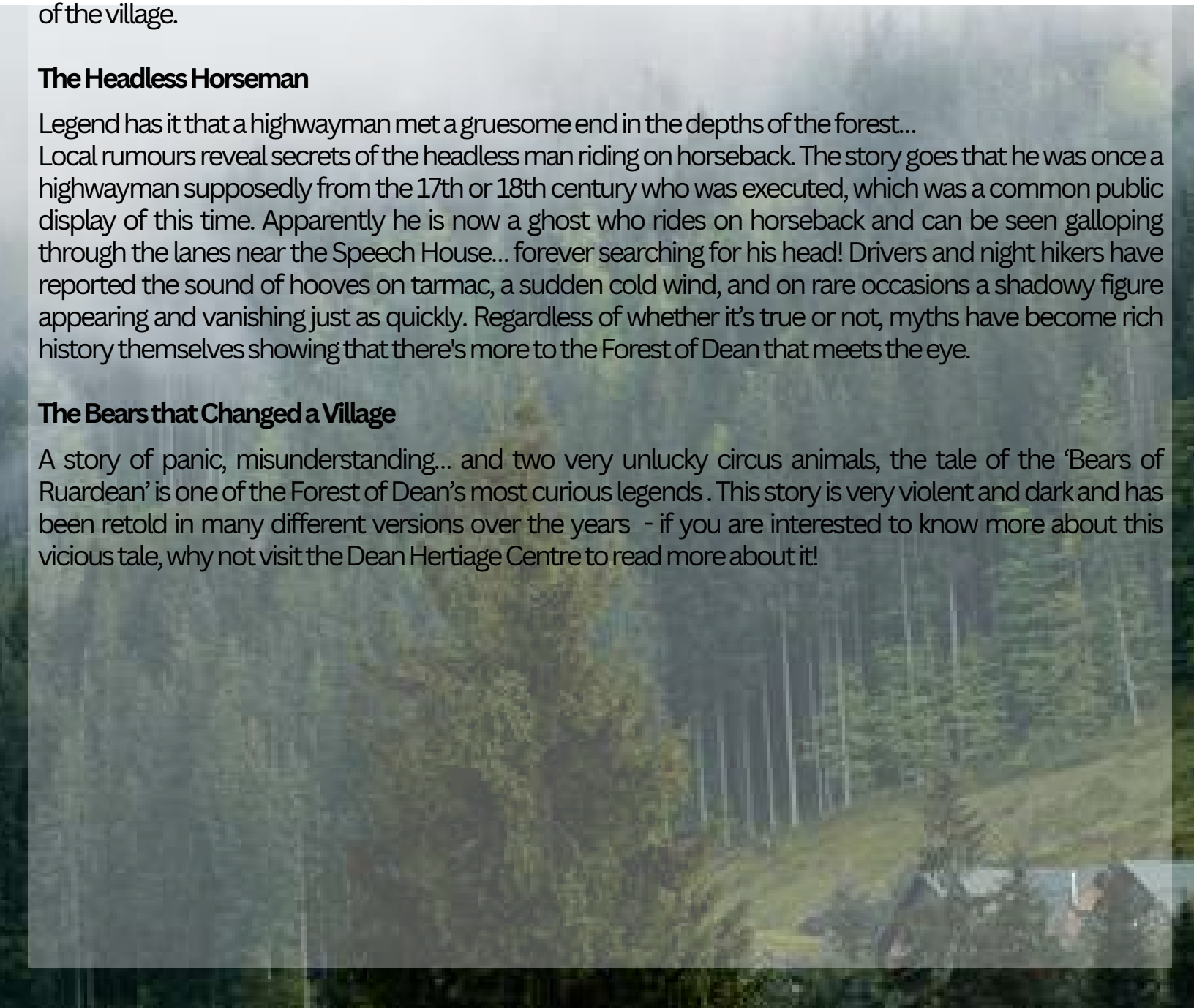
## The Headless Horseman

Legend has it that a highwayman met a gruesome end in the depths of the forest...

Local rumours reveal secrets of the headless man riding on horseback. The story goes that he was once a highwayman supposedly from the 17th or 18th century who was executed, which was a common public display of this time. Apparently he is now a ghost who rides on horseback and can be seen galloping through the lanes near the Speech House... forever searching for his head! Drivers and night hikers have reported the sound of hooves on tarmac, a sudden cold wind, and on rare occasions a shadowy figure appearing and vanishing just as quickly. Regardless of whether it's true or not, myths have become rich history themselves showing that there's more to the Forest of Dean that meets the eye.

## The Bears that Changed a Village

A story of panic, misunderstanding... and two very unlucky circus animals, the tale of the ‘Bears of Ruardean’ is one of the Forest of Dean’s most curious legends. This story is very violent and dark and has been retold in many different versions over the years - if you are interested to know more about this vicious tale, why not visit the Dean Heritage Centre to read more about it!



# The Dean Heritage Centre

If you're interested in local legends like the Ruardean Bears or just want to find out more about life in the Forest long ago (you might even find out some of your own history) then the Dean Heritage Centre in Soudley is the perfect place to visit. Located in an old mill by the river, this friendly museum is full of real local stories, hands-on exhibits, and even a recreated Forester's Cottage that shows how people used to live in the woods.

When I did my work experience there, I got to see behind the scenes and help out. It's a fun place to learn, and they're always looking for volunteers to join the team, especially young people who want to get involved.

### **What makes it unique?**

Unlike big city museums, the Dean Heritage Centre is run by a local charity and doesn't get big government funding; it's now completely self-funded, so they rely on visitors, donations, and volunteers to keep going. That makes every visit, school trip, or helping hand really important.

## Thinking of Visiting?

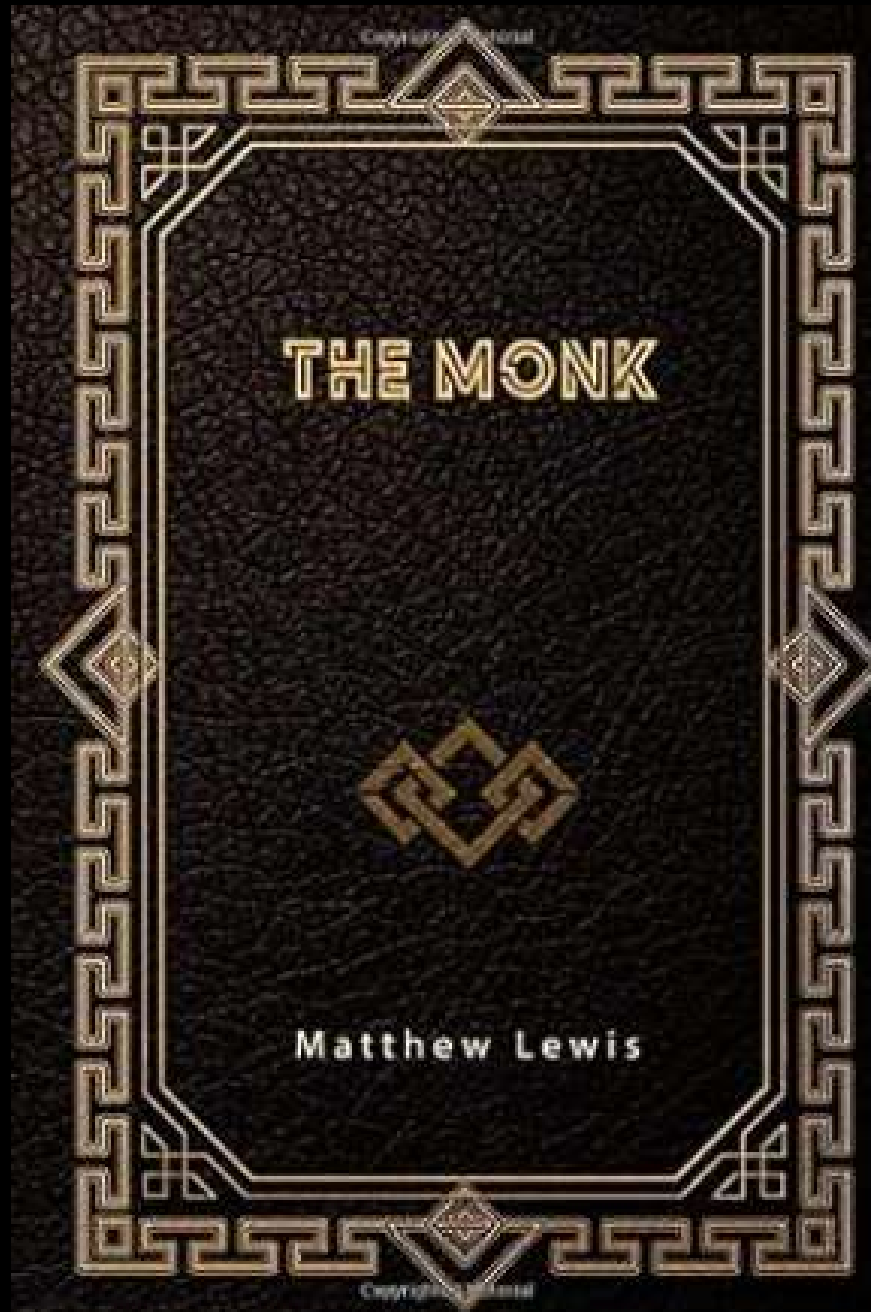
Check out their workshops, craft days, or join in the fancy dress as a miner or Victorian child!

## Want to Help Out?

Asking about becoming a young volunteer - it's a great way to learn new skills, meet people, and be part of something special in your community.



# BOOK REVIEW



BY FRAISER W



“The Monk” was written by Matthew Lewis (born 9th July 1775), in the year 1796 . He had magnificently only written the book in ten weeks, whilst bored and working at the British embassy in Hague, Netherlands at the time of the French Invasion of Holland (Flanders Campaign 1792–1795) . Surprisingly , he had also studied in Weimar , Germany ; learning languages for a diplomatic/ political career his dad had intended him to have, subsequently landing him a seat in parliament!

Matthew Lewis was very interesting to learn about. He had a very fractured upbringing – his mother ran away to secretly marry another man whilst already being married to Lewis’ father, and his mother’s bigamy would, I imagine, have given Lewis a great sense of shame . Divorces were rare in the 1700's, so his parents were unable to obtain one and as women in these times were often unable to earn an independent income, Lewis’ father remained responsible for providing financial support for her – creating an interesting (and often unpleasant) family dynamic. Lewis himself would also use some of his earnings from writing to support his mother. I think Lewis felt quite stuck between his parent’s bitter separation and maybe some of these complex feelings of affection, duty, sorrow and frustration towards his parents, was partly the inspiration in his controversial writing. Another interesting thing I learned about Lewis is that later on in his life , he is noted to have met Byron and the Shelley’s (two of the most famous Gothic novelists there have ever been) and rumor has it that through their conversations he may have influenced works such as Frankenstein as Lewis was well versed in gothic conventions himself.

The Monk is a masterpiece of gothic literature, albeit being written in 1796, it has upheld its authenticity up through into the 21st Century. It combines ideas of crime and punishment and Lewis’ obsession with the supernatural to create a controversial book, often cited as reactionary (through scenes of violence , blasphemy and sexual deviance) . It dives into religious hypocrisy ,human nature and ideas of sin and though there are many narratives followed within the book, the most notable centers around the main character “Ambrosio” , an Abbott (Head of an Abbey).

Set in 1700’s Madrid , The book exudes a feeling of warm sunlit gardens amongst haunting cold, abbeys and convents. Masterfully creating a contrast within two intoxicating settings, it’s hard to not be immersed in this novel. Amongst the city of Madrid itself, is the Capuchin Monastery, the homestead for Ambrosio and many other members of the clergy. The Spanish setting is unconventional for gothic literature –



(normally being in English speaking countries or set in England itself) but I think its a refreshing setting, being in beautiful gardens amongst the atmosphere of the church. It elicits a certain feeling when you read it and you can imagine it all- it's quite indescribable

Ambrosio is the holiest-of-holy Monk . Absolutely adored across Madrid , he is heralded like a saint and treated like a child of God. But as the book progresses , you slowly see him become quite the opposite. His character is representative of temptation and impulse and how embedded it is into the human condition, challenging the religious idea of “sin” . We also meet Rosario , a reclusive but eloquent novice within the monastery, who’s intelligent and possesses more depth than expected. His identity however, remains completely concealed from the beginning but we soon find out who he really is - the challenger to Ambrosio's character and ultimately, responsible for his downfall. Antonia and Elvira also feature as key characters - a mother-daughter duo who are representative of love and purity. Antonia, being the daughter, carries an almost childlike sense of innocence and gratitude that is lacking from some other characters. She is cited for her beauty and eloquence within the book and is beheld by any man who crosses her. Meanwhile , Antonia is a base for responsibility, motherly love and morality within the book . In a storyline which is interwoven with Ambrosio's, you meet Raymond and Agnes . Raymond is a nobleman who is a valiant , brave “loverboy” who is romantically encapsulated by Agnes ; a nun in a convent attached to the cathedral . Their relationship is representative of strict religious values and challenges in conventional relationships - creating conflict between them.

If anybody reading this has an interest in reading or writing, I would advise you to give this book a read. Although being from nearly 250 years ago , it is written in such an ingenious way that it feels and reads completely modern . Once you get your teeth into it ,The book is entirely encaptivating and hard to put down. Overall, this is a gripping and atmospheric read and I think this timeless masterpiece absolutely deserves a place on your reading list.



# HAVE A GANDER AT THIS...



At first glance, you might think the most surprising pet a student could own would be a snake, a lizard, or maybe a tarantula. But one of our Alumni students has gone a step further — she has a pet goose named Daphne! And yes, Daphne goes for daily walks on a lead just like a dog.

Daphne is no ordinary goose. She has a calm, curious personality and a particular love for apples, which she happily munches on during breaks between strolls. According to her owner, Carly, Daphne enjoys exploring new places, meeting new people, and proudly showing off her impressive wings.

But what many people don't realise is that geese actually make surprisingly good pets. They're intelligent, loyal, and are known to recognise human faces — which means Daphne genuinely knows who her favourite humans are.

Having a goose might not be typical but Daphne proves that sometimes the most unexpected animals make the most charming of pets. If you ever see her around, feel free to say hello. Daphne is always happy to make new friends!



# A TASTE OF THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate family, friends and those you love. It's characterised by food, games, pumpkin pie, and most importantly the annual thanks around the dinner table. The annual celebration is a national holiday in The United States, that has roots in harvest celebrations- sharing food and giving thanks for those we love.

Some of my family are American, so this is a custom we've come to know and celebrate even though we don't live in the States. This year was no exception and we welcomed a variety of of my family, friends and siblings to my house, to celebrate Thanksgiving.

We started the night with board games and drinks in the living room. Shortly after, we all gathered to fight over who got the gravy and stuffing. - a Thanksgiving meal is very similar to that of a Sunday roast, with the only failure being the lack of Yorkshire puddings, in return for a strange sweet potato, marshmallow dish. Other than that, it feels very at home in England. This was only the fourth Thanksgiving we have had, but is now clearly a staple in our household.

After eating the main meal, we go around the room and say our thanks from the year; it can be something little or something big - like thanks to a family for taking you in, really anything goes. Then its pudding, however, this is where it begins to stray from English tradition. The best part of Thanksgiving is easily the pumpkin pie - we wait all year just to have another slice of Mum's pumpkin pie, and it's always worth it!

Finally, we capped off the evening with the mandatory game of poker. Even with seasoned poker pro's on the table (my sister and her boyfriend), anyone is able to win it. In fact, my brother Charlie won big this year with a £15 profit! (we only put £5 in).

Anyone is welcome during Thanksgiving. It's a time of forgiveness and appreciation, even if you don't know the history behind it. As this was Luna's first Thanksgiving, she enjoyed the customs and the food and said "the feeling of happiness spread through the room". After a evening jam packed with fun and food, everyone left with full stomachs and happy memories - and that's exactly what Thanksgiving is all about.

By Luna and George



# Game review...

# UNDERTALE

Written by Rey S.

Undertale is an RPG pixel game created in 2015 by Toby Fox.

The game tells a story where monsters and humans lived together on earth. However, after a conflict broke out between them, the monsters were imprisoned underground under Mount Ebott by humans using a magical barrier.



The player controls a child who falls through a hole into the mountain where the monsters live.

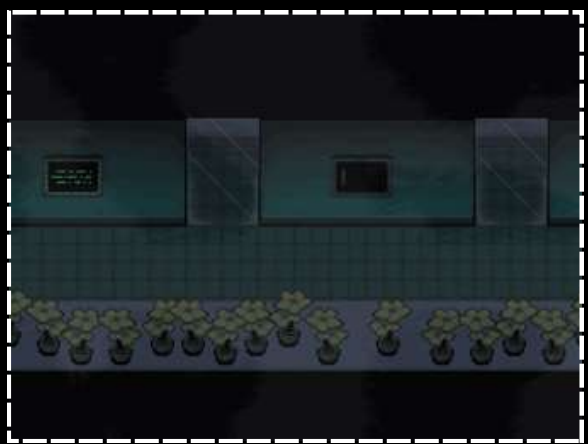
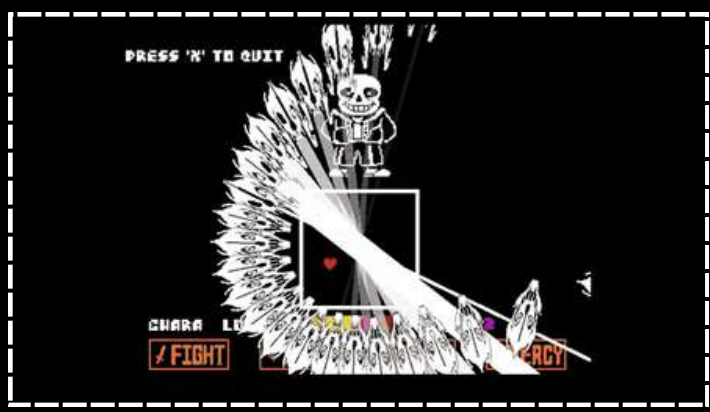
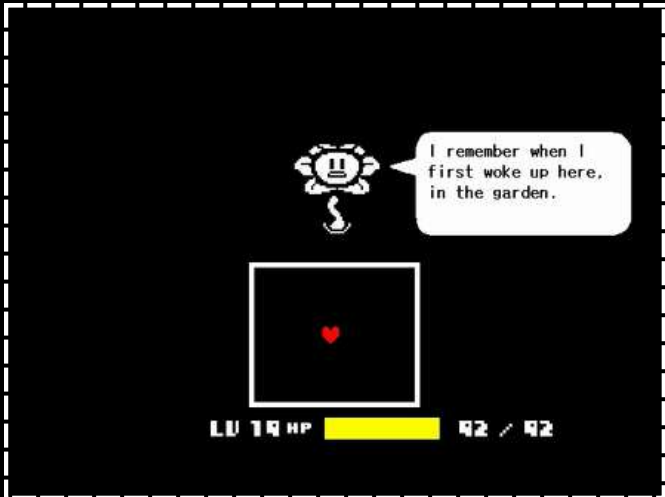
You'll encounter various monsters along the way: some who initially want to kill you but then become attached, others who try to be your friend, and others who only attack you on a specific route (be it pacifist or genocide). The game's essence lies in choices. Every enemy you encounter can be either spared or killed. You can complete the entire game without killing anyone, or you can commit genocide not only of the underground but of the entire game world – the choice is yours. The game also features a save and reset system, which serves not only as a standard gameplay feature but also as part of the story.

The game is full of secrets and Easter eggs, and not all of them have been solved yet.

The game has all sorts of mood: be it hope, horror or mystery.

It's up to you how you want to lay it out.  
Well worth a play!

# The Student Standard



# TROUBLE IN THE WYE – UNCOVERING A LOCAL CRISIS

BY BOBBY D



The River Wye, which flows through the local town of Ross-on-Wye – right on our door step, has become a worrying symbol of ecological decline. Once renowned for its clear waters and rich biodiversity, the river now faces serious pollution challenges that threaten both wildlife and the people who live in the surrounding area.

A major culprit in the river's deterioration is nutrient pollution – especially phosphates – primarily from intensive agriculture. According to government estimates, over 70% of the phosphate entering the Wye comes from farmland. Poultry farms in the catchment produce vast amounts of manure rich in phosphorus, which can leach into the river, particularly during heavy rainfall. Pollution is not just from farms – sewage leaking into the river contribute to the problem, and during hot weather, high river temperatures create conditions that favour algal growth.

## **What does this means for you and why does it affect you?**

Well, swimming and paddling may be unsafe because of bacteria and algal toxins, especially after rain or in warm weather. This isn't just about aesthetics; high nutrient and bacterial levels can pose direct health risks.

Our wildlife is also suffering. Fishing catches are also lower than decades ago as fish stocks have collapsed – so local anglers and businesses that rely on angling tourism will also suffer as a result of this pollution. The Wye Valley is also usually a popular destination for walkers, kayakers, birdwatchers, and holidaymakers but declining water quality hurts these attractions by affecting local jobs and small businesses and or landowners and farmers in the catchment, stricter nutrient management measures can also affect costs and farming practices too but its an essential part of protecting the future of the river.

The Wye is a vital part of our local area and its future depends on choices we make today – by making sure we are all aware of the issues the river is facing and by supporting efforts to restore the river's quality, we can all help to ensure that the Wye remains a place worth celebrating and protecting.

# JOIN OUR TEAM!

## Why join our Editorial Team?

One reason you should join The Student Standard Press Club is the benefit it could have to your personal statement. Sixth Form is the time to start thinking about what you want to do in the future, so anything to add value to your personal statement is important. It will also help with building skills like meeting deadlines, writing and working as a team - and its a lot of fun!

It's not only writing, there are lots of opportunities. From photography and illustration to feature writing, opportunities to do interviews and research, there is so much you can do- get in touch!

### JOIN NOW

If you would like to contribute something to this magazine email

Mrs Davis: [s.davis@denemagna.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:s.davis@denemagna.gloucs.sch.uk)

If you are interested in joining the Student Standard Press Club , we hold sessions during enrichment, every Wednesday, P4&5

**“ IT’S BOOSTED MY CONFIDENCE WITH WRITING “**

**“ I’VE REALLY ENJOYED WRITING FOR THE STUDENT STANDARD AS I’D LIKE TO GO INTO JOURNALISM - ITS A GOOD WAY TO PERSUE MY INTEREST IN THIS AREA “**

**“ITS NICE TO BE ABLE TO BOUNCE IDEAS OFF OTHER PEOPLE IN THE TEAM AND TALK ABOUT CURRENT AFFAIRS AND TOPICS THAT ARE REALLY INTERSTING”**

**“I LOVE THE FREEDOM TO WRITE CREATIVELY ABOUT ANYTHING! ”**

**“ITS FUN AND BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER”**