



# P EACOCK

by the pupils, for the pupils

Interest • Interviews • Current Affairs • Debates • Reviews • Music

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With thanks to Mr Kidd, Mr Hunt and Mrs Kendall

# Editors' Notes



Welcome back to another edition of the Peacock! You find us at the busiest time of the year, as exam season descends on us. As we enter this testing time, why not take a break out of revision to catch up on all the news in and out of school?

Mary Osborne

“To be better equipped for the tests that the year will bring — read a textbook.

To prepare for the tests that life will bring — read a book.”

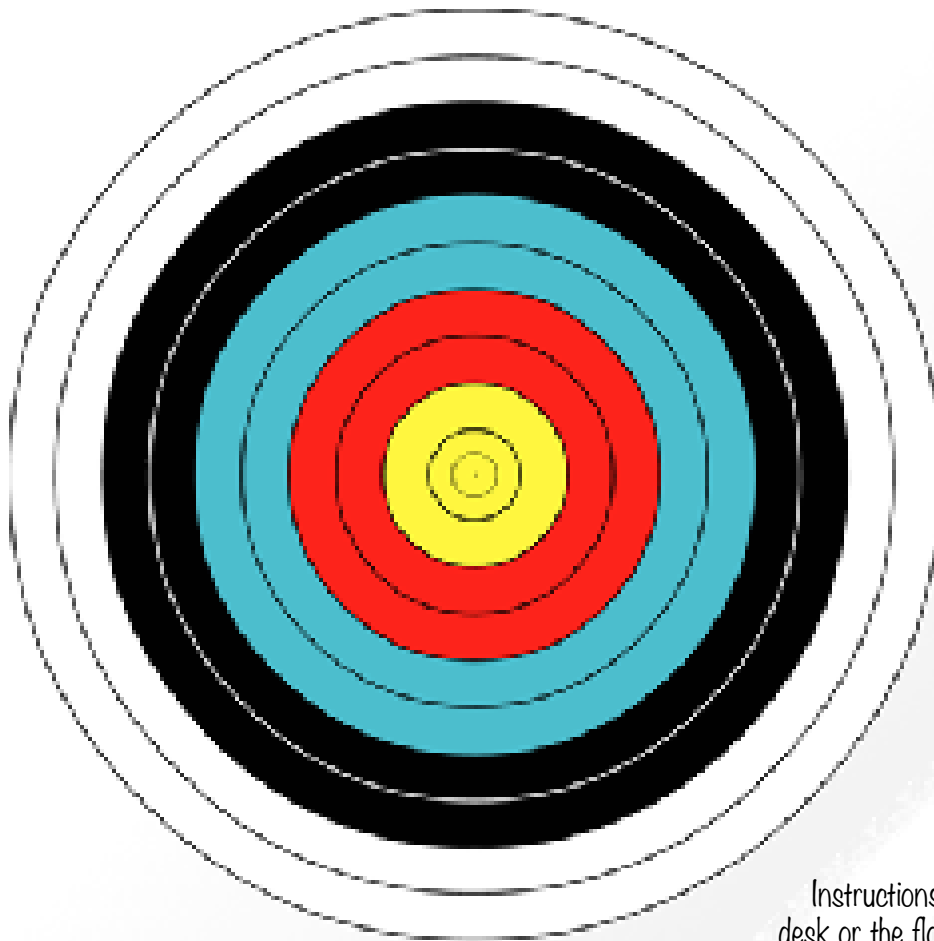
Mokokoma Mokhonoana

**Bored? Can't be bothered to read or revise?**

**WHY NOT TRY YOUR HAND AT THIS**

**TARGET GAME?**

**AIM FOR THE CENTRE!**



Instructions: Put the page on your desk or the floor (if you really want a challenge) and aim your pencil above it. When you're ready - let go!

Try out this riddle!

I am your powerful weapon; I come before  
your eyes.  
I help you seek the truth, yet I often give you  
lies.  
What am I?



## The Election: An Unexpected Result

I can honestly say, no one was expecting these results. As I sat at 3am, cup of tea in hand, watching the results for each constituency pour in, I could scarcely believe it. Throughout the lead-up to the election, Labour and Tory wrestled for the top spot in the polls, and there was hardly a day where there was more than three points between them (in terms of percentage of support in the country). The one thing that was clear throughout the race was that we would not have a majority government; to achieve a majority, a party has to get at least 326 seats. In theory, a party can form a government without having a majority, but it means that it is hard for them to pass acts through parliament.

On Wednesday night, my guess for the result would have been a Labour/Lib Dem coalition government, headed by Ed Miliband. However, the polls were so close that that would have been a loose guess: the only thing I was certain of was that we would not have a majority. Yet, as I sit here writing this, there is a Conservative majority government in Westminster. The first hint of what was to come came at 9:51- George Galloway, the infamous Tory politician. He released an illegal exit poll on Twitter before voting had stopped (it is illegal to release an exit poll, which is based off asking voters who they voted for, before ballots close because it might influence people) which said that the Tories would get 316 seats - a far cry from what was predicted. People scoffed at this, and one politician commenting that he'd eat his hat if it was correct... But as the results poured in, the predictions came true.

Conservative, Conservative, Conservative. As each seat was announced, this was a pattern we kept hearing. Even the safest Labour and Lib Dem seats were lost to the Tories; famous figures such as Ed Balls, John Hayes and Vince Cable lost their seats to the Tories. Again and again, we saw Labour politicians

and Lib-Dems stand red-eyed and grey-faced as they lost their supposedly safe seats.

In Scotland, it was a similar story but with a different victor: the SNP exceeded all expectations and won all but one seat. Labour felt this loss especially hard, as Scotland are usually where they pick up a lot of their seats.

The end results were:

Conservative - 331

Labour - 232

SNP - 56

Liberal Democrat - 8

Green - 1

UKIP - 1

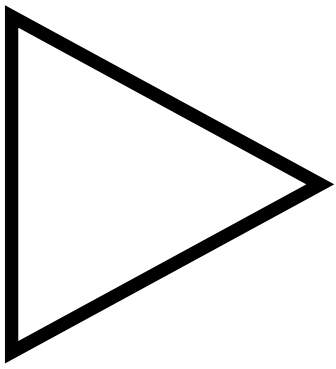
Other - 21

It was a crushing blow to the Liberal Democrats, who lost 49 of their previously held seats. Lib Dem leader, Nick Clegg, had no choice but to resign, and did so on Friday morning. Later on that morning, Ed Miliband, leader of the Labour party, who had "crashed and burned" as one man put it, also resigned, taking full responsibility for the party's disastrous result. That afternoon, the "people's favourite" Nigel Farage, leader of UKIP, resigned after having lost his seat.

It was a bloody night, and no doubt the party leaders were left with little choice but to leave. In many ways the country was left in shock, with delighted surprise on one side and horrified tears on the other. The question in many people's minds is: how on earth did the pollsters get it so wrong? I fear this is a result caused by that classic phenomenon: the shy Tory. People who are either too embarrassed or peer-pressured to admit to supporting the Tories, and so the only time they express their political affiliation is in the privacy of the voting booth.

By Mary Osborne





# Year Ten GCSE Drama Performances

On 30th April, Year Ten did their GCSE Drama performances and exams. Throughout the day, the 30 students performed their pieces and were filmed and marked by Mrs Griffin and Miss Adams. In the evening, they performed their pieces to family and friends. The themes for the physical theatre pieces were either “shadows” or the painting “Persistence of Memory” by Salvador Dalí. The students interpreted these in many different ways, with all but one group choosing the “shadows”

theme. Some showed the theme through the idea of having a shadow or demon following them. Another group used the theme to express the feeling of losing a family member. Another was about domestic abuse and the scars it leaves. The group that did the “Persistence of Memory” theme showed the pain of losing an officer during war. All the pieces were very well-acted, with many bringing the audience to tears. Well done to everyone involved!

By Mary Osborne



Students after the performances

# Senior Debating Final: has technology proved harmful to modern society?

On the 27th of March, the last Friday of term, many of us gathered in Saint Nicholas' to bear witness to the annual senior debating finals. This year, the motion discussed was whether the effects of technology had proved harmful to society, with Izzy Jackson and Sammy Haynes arguing for the motion and Dominic Clerkin and Holly Johal arguing against. Both teams argued fiercely, making a range of points and actively addressing and engaging with one another's arguments.

The arguments for consisted of the obvious problems of social media and the effects it has had on our lives. They argued that the internet as a whole had encouraged de-sensitised comments and attacks, as well as created huge dissatisfaction with our own lives and selves when being constantly confronted with unrealistic portrayals of other people's lives and unreal, air-brushed beauty. They also argued for the definition of technology in the motion to only encompass television and media; this point in particular didn't seem extremely relevant, as technology is clearly a much broader concept.

The arguments against highlighted the huge advances in medicine and science thanks to technology. They pointed out how much better we are at dealing with illnesses; it was only 200 years ago that having a cold could have been fatal. The speakers went on to credit the convenience of life we all enjoy as a result of technological advancement. This includes all of the things that we take for granted which help with jobs that would otherwise most likely consume our existence: dishwashers, washing machines, ovens and such.

Both teams also brought up a point about the

blame not being on the technology itself, but the people that use it. To me, this seemed a bit irrelevant because, for good or bad, the motion was talking about the effects of the technology in question, regardless of how those effects came about.

Then it was opened up to the floor for what Mr Allen described as "the best floor discussion we've ever had". A question was asked about whether all of the convenience that technology has given has ever raised human happiness as a result; certainly some would complain that the human race is, on the whole, a lot sadder than it used to be, with higher rates of depression and generally poorer mental health. If so, are all our scientific and technological advancements really worth it? To this, one member of the audience said: "It's just obvious we're happy, isn't it?" Personally, I'm not so sure.

Another good point produced from floor discussion was whether, without technology, we could have invented all of the harmful killing machines that plague our existence. Can we blame atomic weapons, guns and missiles on technology, if without it they would never have come into being?

Then the teams concluded, giving them their final opportunity to demolish the opposition's argument and to get in some debate-related trash talk. The votes turned out to be overwhelmingly in favour of the opposition, which was perhaps not a fair reflection of how close the debate was. Nevertheless, congratulations to Holly Johal and Dominic Clerkin; the 2015 senior debate champions.

By Ruth Whiteside

# A REVIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

After studying “A View from the Bridge” in our English class, I was curious as to how Young Vic would pull it off – after all, how can you successfully recreate various stabbings and sex scenes on stage without it being highly inappropriate or having the action off stage?

It turns out you can, and to great effect.

Rodolfo was played by Luke Norris; Catherine by Phoebe Fox; Beatrice by Nicola Walker; and Eddie by Mark Strong. Marco was played by Emun Elliott, and Michael Gould played Alfieri. All of the actors are well-renowned and have won various awards; their calibre ensured exciting and dramatic performances on the night.

Right from the opening moments, we see Eddie showering after a long shift in the docks which introduces the non-naturalistic aspect of the play. The stage also is a non-naturalistic, plain white cube which contrasts to the realistic acting and scenes, adding another dimension to the play.

The stabbing scene mentioned earlier was definitely my favourite scene: before, in the play, Beatrice had said, “Whatever happened we all done it, and don’t you ever forget it, Catherine”, foreshadowing Eddie’s death. In the performance, all of the characters were grouped around each other, holding one another tightly. Then, the lights dimmed and “blood” fell from the ceiling to represent Eddie’s death. This, I thought, was a very effective representation as it showed all of the characters, quite literally, playing a part in it.

By Leanne Potter







# DESERT ISLAND DISCS

*This feature is inspired by BBC Radio Four's "Desert Island Discs". In this issue, we interviewed Mr Shelley.*

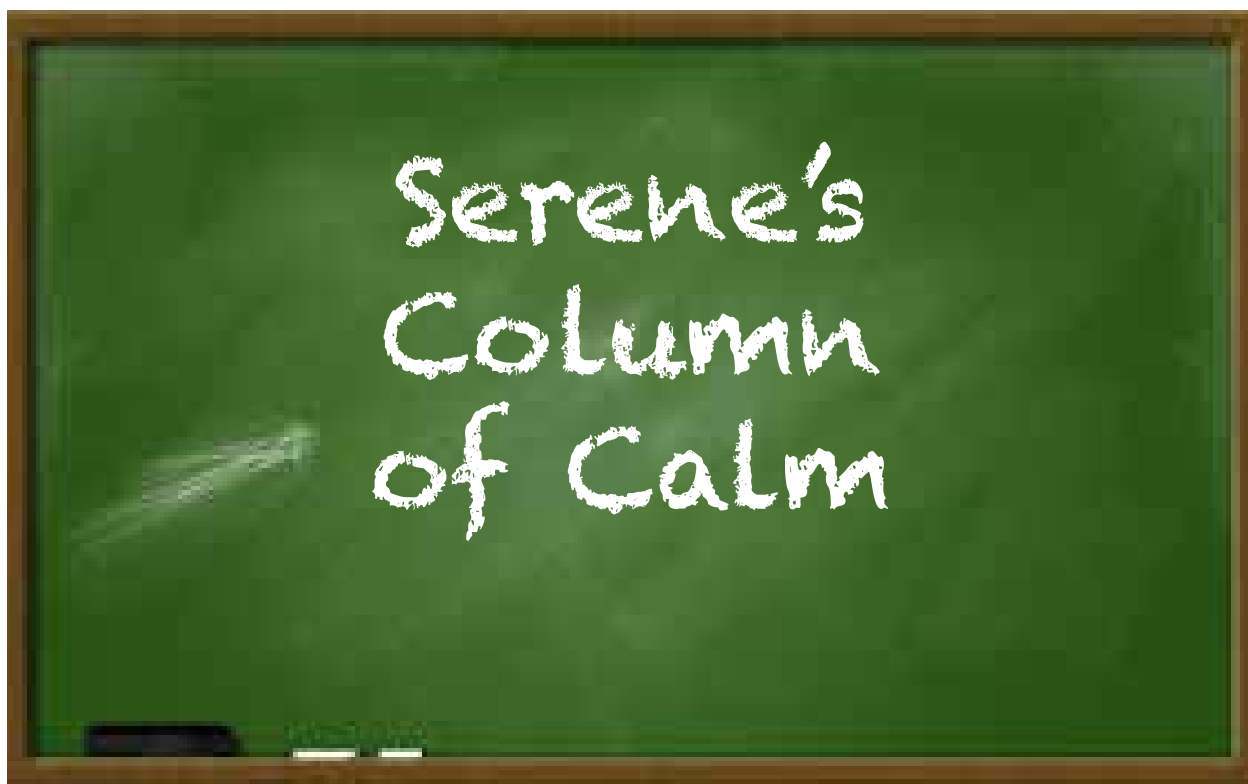
Sunshine on my shoulders: John Denver, The best of John Denver. Always good to sing along to and it is such a beautiful thought-provoking song.

Halleluiah Chorus: Handel, from The Messiah; just a favourite of mine. I have enjoyed singing this in choirs and love belting out the tune!

Zadock the Priest: another one by Handel and another favourite. A super, powerful, rousing piece of music, it commands attention and it just might get me rescued!

Leanne Potter





Exam season is upon us yet again and instead of concentrating on the strains and stresses inside the exam hall, or indeed at the revision desk, I'd like to talk about the compromises we have to make at this time of year with regard to our busy cyber selves.

Talking to the Year 11s it is clear that quite a few have had to do a lot of soul-searching about their use of social media and game-playing during the run-up to exams. It seems obvious to say that, as boys and girls tend to use the internet very differently, the impact of revision and exams will be different for each gender. Whereas girls tend to emphasise the "social" in the term social media, boys tend to engage in the game-playing aspects with more gusto. I have heard a number of Yr11 boys talking about the deals they have done with their parents for the duration of the exam period: either volunteering to give up their X-Boxes completely until the end of June or agreeing to impose a strict series of time-constraints on their usage. Some of the newer versions of the games have been dangled as an incentive, with parents agreeing to buy the new versions after GCSEs, provided the consoles are handed over for the vital weeks of the summer term. Many students have made the decision of their own accord, seeing

the sense of success in exams trumping a top level score in a game!

Girls, on the other hand, seem to interact very differently and perhaps their social media habits allow for a more collaborative and supportive academic use of social media at this time of year. On the other hand, the reverse might be true and confidence and good practice might be undermined by negative comments online.

Whichever of the above is true or half true, it is stating the obvious to say that technology is only a tool and it can be used to communicate, motivate and de-stress just as easily as it can be used to distract, troll and spread panic. In the interests of all, but chiefly, in the long-term interests of yourself, make the computer an instrument of use rather than abuse.

"Console" yourselves with the thought that exams are a passing phase...

Soyez Sage!

By Serene Dholakia

# The Year Seven Space Mission: A Brush With Death



During the weeks after the Easter holidays, the Year Seven classes went on a trip to the space station where we took part in a simulated space mission to find comet Enke. Everybody had their own jobs; for example, the navigation team and the data team. We were either in the space station or mission control. During the mission, there were lots of different problems that occurred, including no power in the probe room (where we built the object that would fly into the comet) and, at another point, also no oxygen (a big problem!).

Once we had been sorted into groups, the first half went into mission control where they were given their work stations and told what to do. They had to tell the navigation team where to go, via headset, and the other team how to find the data and also how to find out the information on the course of stars ahead. The room that it took place in was very realistic, with clocks telling us all the main time zones in the world and a camera that showed us what was happening in the space station. After a few close shaves, where all the members of the team in the rocket 'died', we

finally swapped over our roles due to a 'radiation' outbreak in the space ship which meant that everyone got to swap over. Apparently the 'radiation' was caused by 'a leaky computer'...

In the spacecraft, we were challenged to build a probe and launch it to land on the new comet, which we got to name ourselves. The names varied from form to form, including "Comet 7F" to "Comet Gymnads2k15" (7E). Everyone assumed the same jobs as when we were in mission control but they changed slightly when we were in the space station compared to when we were doing the experiments, which included weighing out chemicals (isolation), checking everybody's health (medical) and building a probe (probe). We were faced by many problems when we were in the space station, at one point the humidity was too high and we had 10 seconds left until we died. But thanks to Life Support's quick actions we survived the mission!

Overall, the trip was great fun – we learnt a lot of team-building skills as well as science skills.

By Ella Davies

# The Teenage Socialist



## *The (Unfortunately) Necessary Evil of Tactical Voting*

I could easily write a ten page list on stupid things about Britain. Right at the top of that list would be our voting system: we have a system called First Past The Post. Basically, it's where the country is split up into constituencies and, at the election, each constituency votes in one MP.

Now, First Past The Post has its strengths. It's simple, cheap, and means the votes can be counted very quickly, so the result can be announced just hours after the election.

However, it takes the value out of each vote: it produces "safe seats" where a party can be certain to win. For example, constituencies where most of the population are middle class means that that seat is likely to be a Tory seat. However, any Labour or Lib Dem voters in that area will effectively be drowned out; there is no chance ever of anyone but the Tories winning there, meaning that people feel that their vote has next to no value.

If large areas of a country are electoral deserts for a certain party, then the party might not focus much attention there. For example, Sussex is a very Tory area so Labour are very unlikely to get many seats there. Therefore, while they are in government, it doesn't make sense for them to try and win Sussex over, but rather to focus their money and energy into their "safe seats".

Another problem with FPTP is that it restricts how many candidates a party can put forward so they go with the "safe option". This stops women and minorities getting in as MPs; for

example, a party might choose to not put forward a gay candidate because it could put homophobic voters off. This is why most MPs are white men.

This election is a perfect example of how FPTP fails: no party is going to get a majority of seats, but they might get a majority in actual votes. Many people are turning to tactical voting - where you use your vote to stop your least favourite candidate getting in as opposed to voting for your favourite. A lot of my friends support Labour and Green, but they aren't planning on voting for them. This is because I live in one of the safest Tory seats in the country, and a vote for any other party is basically useless. The only party who could possibly challenge the Tories in my constituency is Lib Dem, so many Clegg-haters will be voting for his party. This highlights just how ridiculous our voting system is.

People should be voting for the party with the best policies, not voting to avoid the worst. If we had a voting system such as proportional representation, we would get a government in that actually represented the feelings of the people. But we don't. So again, this election, people will lose the opportunity to properly express their democratic rights. Hopefully the next government will make a change for the better.

By Mary Osborne



# Berlin Trip Photo Competition



1st



# A little something to fill your summer...

The long break is not that far away and it will offer long days, long flights and the opportunity to pick up a book or a Blu-ray that you might not have had the chance to read or watch.

**14+ For those who like their fiction a little more grown-up:** In the past few months Kate Atkinson has published a companion piece to her time-slip novel, "Life After Life". The new novel is called "Love among the Ruins". Both novels are well worth a read... Indeed, have a look at Atkinson's Jackson Brodie detective fiction (recently televised). Her Behind the Scenes at the Museum is also very good. Another time-slip novel worth reading is "The Time Traveller's Wife". And if you like your fiction truly weird, then check out The Book Of Leaves by Mark Z Danielewski (many of these books are in the school library). Adventure-lovers who are growing out of the Horowitz series of books might like to try Alaister Maclean (very popular in the sixties and 70s) – "Where Eagles Dare" is a good place to start and it is also a cracking war film... The "Colditz Story" by Pat Reid is another good (true) story about WW2 prisoners of war – and their escapes... The latter half of this paragraph might appeal to blokes but all of the above were thoroughly enjoyed by this (male) reviewer.

**Non-Fiction Fiends:** Those of you with who don't fancy fiction might like to look at Bill Bryson's latest: "At Home" – any text by Bryson is worth dipping into and I also heartily recommend his "Short history of Nearly Everything" and his travel books, for example his "Notes from A Small Island" about living in Britain. He has also written a biography of Shakespeare, simply called: "Shakespeare" and a book about the problems with English as a language: "Troublesome Words". They inform and entertain at the same time.

**Perennial Classics:** For readers who like classics, try RL Stevenson's "Treasure Island" and Andrew Motion's sequel, "Silver" – both good yarns in the traditional sense. "Goth Girl" by Chris Riddell is a delight for young and old – anyone who has read Romantic and Gothic literature will enjoy all the puns and in-jokes, anyone who hasn't will enjoy a story that can be read in the time it takes to mow the average lawn...What parent is going to interrupt a teenager actively engaging with a book?

It's the 150th anniversary of the publication of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" – why not read this classic – and its sequel, "Alice Through the Looking Glass"? Both are still mind-bogglingly brilliant and so many images are still used in our everyday world – in adverts and films and all sorts of other media.

**On the film front:** The "Age of Ultron" is out – but why not check out earlier superhero films – perhaps ask Mr Cox and Mr Willis for recommendations.

One of the very best Sci-Fi films ever made was "Bladerunner" – a true classic! Have a look at "Twelve Monkeys", too – and "Brazil". And don't dismiss great films in Black and White! You can some of the very best movies ever made but before that colour gimmick ruined everything: Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton – they all made films before stuntmen and CGI were invented – the shots you see are for real. So many books and films – I'll add to the list next issue but maybe there are some "must reads" that you would recommend?

**Why not email The Peacock with your suggestion (and a reason why you like it)?**

By Percy Peacock





## Budapest: A Hidden Treasure

Budapest: a city renowned for its beautiful architecture, glorious thermal baths and more recently made famous by the hit song from George Ezra.

It is split into two distinct areas by the mighty Danube River: Buda and Pest. We visited both parts of the city during our trip in February half term. Pest is more cosmopolitan, and home to the main shopping street, Váci Utca, a thriving hub of cafes and stylish shops. The impressive Heroes Square is also found in Pest; built to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the arrival of the Hungarians in Eastern Europe. Whilst in Pest, we also went ice skating in the floodlit grounds of the Castle Vadayadi Vár and sampled the truly unique and gorgeous *kürtőskalács*, a warm, deliciously sweet dough wrapped in sugar. Possibly one of the tastiest things I have ever sampled, it is a must-eat if you are ever to visit Budapest or Hungary. Hungary, much like Estonia, (see last issue) also has one of the hardest languages in the world; however, not to be deterred, I tried to learn a few key words and phrases such as: 'Köszönöm' (Kus-uh-num') meaning 'thank you', 'Jó napot' (joh- na-put) meaning 'good day' and our most widely used phrase: 'Beszélek angolul?' (besh-e-lek an-goh-lul') meaning 'Do you speak English?' (Hungarians under the age of 25 are much more likely to!).

Across the Széchenyi Bridge, you really get a clear view of the magnificently ornate Parliament building and it isn't hard to see why it has graced the front page of many a tourist brochure. Unfortunately, we were not able to see inside this fantastic landmark, as it was that weekend that President Putin had decided to visit Budapest. It is clear just how much Hungarians do not want any Russian influence in their strongly independent country, as over

2000 patriotic Hungarians staged a very noisy protest through the streets of the capital during his stay.

Hopping on one of the many trams that crisscross the city and river, we got off in the centre of Buda and explored its quieter and more historic streets. Buda is home to some of the oldest buildings in the city, such as the National Art Gallery and the President of Hungary's private residence. Whilst there, we visited one of Budapest's many thermal baths, the Gellért Baths. For most Hungarians, two or three visits to the baths per week are the norm, and many do not think anything of spending the whole day there. Sitting outside in the tranquil baths, with steam whirling gently around, we felt a long way from the hustle and bustle of Pest just across the river. We also went to the Széchenyi Spa Bath complex, one of the biggest in Europe with 18 indoor pools and 3 grand outdoor pools. It was pure heaven unwinding in the 40 degree thermal waters, while the sun set over the Baroque architecture and famous yellow walls of these Baths.

It was so interesting to experience a culture completely different from the UK's, so I urge you to visit this strikingly beautiful and buzzing city, packed with things to see and do. After one taste of warm *kürtőskalács*, you are sure to fall in love with Budapest, just as I have.

