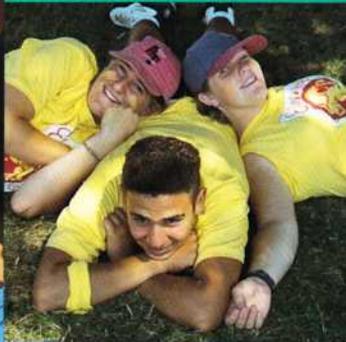


Summer 1997



Vacational Studies®



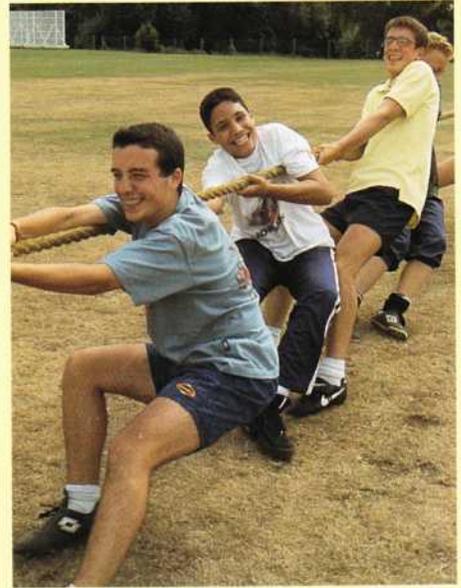
11-17 YEARS



*English
internationally...*



Giulio at Douai's Christmas Dinner



Tug o' War



Abdul & Frederik at Mary Hare



Elstree's Revue

The Courses

RESIDENTIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES

Vacational Studies Courses have been running for 24 years. We have tried in this time to develop an enjoyable balance between vacation and study. Here is our programme for Summer 1997.

WHAT WE TRY TO DO

Vacational Studies tries to create a totally international Course with students from as many different countries as possible. We avoid accepting a large number of students from any particular country. In this way we try to ensure that English is the main medium of communication among the students. By using English not just as a school subject, but as a living language, we hope our students will realise better its importance and value. When young people want to use English to make friends, this element of self-motivation greatly increases their fluency.

This emphasis on the practical use of English is combined with a full sports, entertainments and excursion programme helping young people to learn 'English internationally...'

RECOGNISED BY THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Vacational Studies is Recognised for the teaching of English by the British Council and is a member of ARELS (The Association of Recognised English Language Services) - a professional body, membership of which is granted only after thorough inspection and re-inspections every three years. We were last inspected in 1996.

ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

This is an Information Book. The first section gives you a factual overview of the work we do, so you can decide if we are right for your child. The second part (News 1996) is written in



a different style. It gives a more detailed rationale of the 1997 Courses and what has shaped them, so you and your son or daughter will be fully informed and can prepare for the experience. If your application is accepted, both parts are essential reading.

RESIDENCE

The Courses are all fully residential. Students eat, sleep and receive classes in the Schools.

THE STUDENTS

We accept boys and girls - near-beginners, intermediate and more advanced students - aged 11 to 17. As they cannot participate in an international community, complete beginners are not accepted.

The Courses are sports-orientated and encourage good social development in a community situation.

STUDENTS WHO WILL BENEFIT

Please make sure that our Course is suitable for your child and that he/she wants to come. Those who will benefit and we enjoy having with us will be internationally-minded,



Stringing along at Douai

interested in English, outgoing, gregarious and able to function independently. They will also be willing to accept the constraints of community living. We consider it so important that our standards and expectations are understood and accepted that we ask parents to confirm that they and their children have read the rules and that they agree to abide by them. A slip sent with the rules is provided for this purpose.

HOW THEY WILL BENEFIT

We hope that our students will learn a great deal of English, make good friendships and develop a positive international feeling. As well as formal study, we concentrate on the holiday aspect of the Course. While we try to involve students in all activities, we naturally respect the wishes of those who like to read quietly or be with friends. Over the years, we have built up an excellent reputation with parents and young people all over the world. Many boys and girls spend several summers with us renewing old friendships and making new ones. Most students come to us on personal

recommendation. The numbers on the Courses are deliberately kept small so that the staff can get to know everybody and treat each child as an individual.



The Lions of Elstree

The Schools



Part of Douai



Mary Hare - The Manor House

THE SCHOOLS AND SURROUNDINGS

For 1997 we have four Courses at Schools near Newbury - Douai School, The Mary Hare School, Cheam School and Elstree School. Newbury is a small country town in a pleasant part of southern England in the hills of the Berkshire Downs. It is 70km west of London and 45km south of Oxford. The Schools we use are among the best in the area.

DOUAI SCHOOL

Douai School dates from the mid-nineteenth century with many later additions. It is set next to Douai Abbey in 80 acres of its own grounds and woodlands. It has extensive playing fields which adjoin Elstree School and a range of tennis courts. It has a large indoor swimming pool, a gymnasium and a multi-gym. Some dormitories were rebuilt in 1996. A planned maximum of 95 students will be accepted.

THE MARY HARE SCHOOL

The Mary Hare School is a large mid-nineteenth century manor house with many later additions. There are formal gardens and woodland and extensive grounds which include several playing fields, a range of tennis courts, a gymnasium and a large indoor swimming pool. A planned maximum of 100 students will be accepted.

CHEAM SCHOOL

Cheam School is a late nineteenth century mansion. A particular feature is the sunken formal garden. The School's large grounds with playing fields, lawns and woods, back onto Watership Down. There is a recently built sports hall/gymnasium and a range of tennis courts. It has an open-air swimming pool. A planned maximum of 85 students will be accepted.

ELSTREE SCHOOL

Elstree School is a large eighteenth century country house set in 40 acres of grounds with playing fields, gardens and woods which adjoin Douai Abbey. It has a modern gymnasium and the dining room, kitchens and some dormitories were rebuilt in 1991. There is an open-air swimming pool and a range of tennis courts. A planned maximum of 90 students will be accepted.

All the Schools have swimming pools, tennis, basketball and volleyball courts, football fields, sports hall, recreation rooms, colour TV and bathrooms.

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

At all Schools, students sleep in dormitories. Girls are in one part of the house, boys are in another.

Choice of Course

The Courses all have the same format. The only differences are location and dates. 1997 dates are:-

Douai

2 July - 30 July 1997 (4 weeks)

Mary Hare

10 July - 7 August 1997 (4 weeks)

Cheam

13 July - 10 August 1997 (4 weeks)

Elstree

16 July - 13 August 1997 (4 weeks)



Cheam



Elstree

The Programme



THE TEACHING

A staff of qualified, professional teachers, experienced in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language give 4 lessons, each of 45 minutes, every day except Sunday and excursion days. In addition, there is a 30 minute supervised study period each afternoon. Classes are graded according to age and ability in English. Students are placed first in an assessment group and complete a range of oral and written tasks, including a formal multiple-choice placement test. The combined results of these tasks together with the teacher's opinion eventually determine placement in a class. Class

'Intermediate Matters' and 'Vista'. Our teachers are encouraged to work with a wide range of lesson materials and to utilise newspaper and magazine articles, selected TV and radio excerpts, short stories, poems, songs and advertisements.

The emphasis in lessons is to help develop the students speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through a topic-based approach. This involves working with students on a variety of activities centred on a particular topic and helping them with the language needed to complete the activities. In this way, we aim to develop our students confidence in using English to communicate what is important to them and to stimulate their interest in English as the world's common language. We try to give students materials and activities that are different from those in their own countries. Oral and written English are taught and there is an emphasis on conversation practice. A prize is awarded on each Course for academic excellence.

SPORTS

Sport is an important part of the Course. Our Sports/Social Organiser arranges a regular programme including football, basketball, volleyball, baseball, tennis, table-tennis, swimming, etc. Competitions run throughout the Course. There is also a 4-School Sports Day when the

Schools meet for friendly competitions in the major sports.

We take all practicable safety precautions - for example, students using the swimming pool are always supervised by a teacher.



SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

We try to create a relaxed and friendly family atmosphere in which young people will feel at home quickly and make good social contacts. There is a variety of activities on the programme - discotheques, films, barbecues, folk-singing, concerts, games, optional theatre visits, etc. The programme is a full one. There is always something to do and students are encouraged to participate.

EXCURSIONS

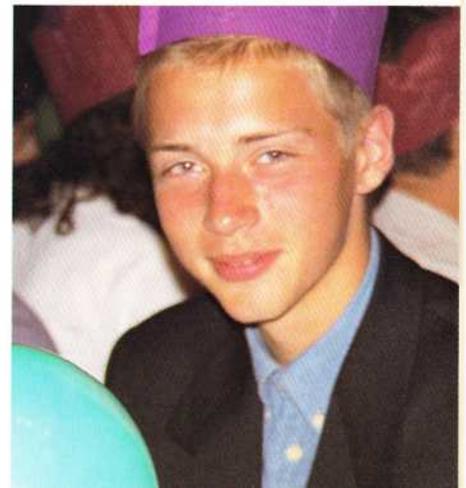
There are four days out. One is a sightseeing tour of London, followed by shopping; the second is a visit to Southampton with its harbour and, optionally, to the National Motor Museum; the destination for the third excursion will be Oxford, Bath, Winchester or another visit to London or a similar city of historical importance; the fourth excursion is to Sports Day. Travel and staff supervision on these excursions are included in the Course Fee.

SHOPPING AFTERNOONS (Optional Extra)

In addition to the organised excursions above (which are included in the Course Fee), there are two optional shopping afternoons which are not included in the Course Fee. These are in Newbury or another town near the School. We think it safe for young people to shop in these towns unaccompanied by staff, if parents have indicated their agreement to this on the Application Form. This helps them achieve a measure of independence. Younger students can be accompanied by staff if parents or we so wish. There will be several staff in the town while our students are shopping. Travel is by private coach from the School with accompanying staff. The cost of transport (payable by students if they wish to go) is in the range from £1.50 to £3.00.



placements are constantly reviewed and students may be moved to more or less advanced classes, according to their performance. The teacher:student ratio is approximately 1:13. Maximum class size is 16. We provide all books and teaching materials. Coursebooks include 'OK', 'Compact', 'Upper Intermediate' and



The Programme



Derek at Douai

THEATRE VISITS (Optional Extra)

'Cats', 'Phantom of the Opera', 'Tommy' and 'Les Miserables' - all these smash-hit West End musicals are booked out months in advance. Tickets for these and other shows have been requested and we will be allocated a limited number. We shall allocate tickets to students so that they can see at least one show of their choice, up to a maximum of three shows. How many shows will be possible depends on the availability of tickets. The cost of each (show + travel to the theatre) will be in the range £30-40. Parents are asked to indicate the number of shows requested and inform the child of this. £35 or so for each show requested should be added to pocket money. If it is not possible to provide the number of shows requested, the money will be returned with the student at the end of the Course.

INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS SHORT COURSES EXAMINATION (NEW FOR 1997) (Optional Extra)

We have arranged with the Institute of Linguists for our students to take an externally marked and certified Short Courses examination, if they wish. This is a meaningful qualification for those of our students above 'Lower Intermediate' level. We are the first school to offer this

examination. We charge at cost and add nothing for administration. As it is a pilot scheme, the cost is only \pm £25.00. Those wishing to sit the IoL 'Short Courses Examination' can request this on the Application Form and add the cost to pocket money. Parents are asked to inform their child that entry to the examination has been requested. We decide on suitability for entry. As the examination is being developed at the time of going to press, more precise information will be sent during June 1997 to those taking this option.

TENNIS LESSONS (Optional Extra)

Tennis may be played at any time, but we can arrange professional lessons, if required. These are available for beginners or near-beginners only. Six one-hour lessons are given in groups of no more than four students. These must be requested in advance on the Application Form. If tennis lessons are taken, a tennis racket must be brought.

As these lessons are prearranged, it is not possible to refund the cost of lessons booked, but not taken. Parents are asked to make sure that lessons are really wanted before booking them. If tennis lessons are requested, the cost (£30) should be added to pocket money.

FOOD SAFETY

Vacational Studies policy is not to serve any food that is banned in any country or about which there is any concern for any reason. We serve only what we believe parents would themselves serve their own children in their own homes. (See 'Beef & Food Safety' in the News Section.)

MEALS

Food is an important part of the Course. Meals are prepared by professional caterers to a high standard. Our specification for lunch and dinner is a choice of hot dishes (including one vegetarian) or a cold dish, a salad bar comprising about ten different items, a choice of desserts and fresh fruit. Students can have the first choice they want and can return for another choice as seconds. If they cannot find anything they like, they can ask us to ask the caterer to prepare something special.

Here is a typical menu for guidance:-

Breakfast:

- Choice of cereal
- Choice of various breads, meats, cheese
- Jam, marmalade, other spreads
- Tea, coffee, milk, fresh orange juice

Lunch:

- Choice of one cold or three hot dishes
- Buffet-style salad bar
- Choice of desserts
- Fresh fruit

Dinner:

- Choice of one cold or three hot dishes
- Buffet-style salad bar
- Choice of desserts
- Fresh fruit

Before bedtime:

- Hot chocolate and biscuits

There is always a vegetarian option. Other special diets can be catered for. Cold orange juice or other drinks are available at no charge. There is a small 'sweet shop'.

At times throughout the Course, the menu will be varied to include, for example, barbecues (spare rib, sausage roll, jacket potatoes, coleslaw dip, crisps, ice-cream, etc.) There will be also be a traditional British Christmas Dinner (roast turkey with stuffing, roast potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cranberry jelly). There may also be national meals. If they wish, students from various countries can advise the kitchen staff on how to prepare and serve a meal consisting of dishes from their own country.

There is a students Food Committee which meets the Caterer regularly to discuss all aspects of the catering.

A TYPICAL DAY

08.15	Breakfast
09.00	First class
09.45	Break
09.55	Second class
10.40	Break
11.10	Third class
11.55	Break
12.05	Fourth class
12.50	Break
13.00	Lunch
13.45	Supervised Study
14.15	Break
14.45	Organised sports and games
18.00	Evening meal
19.00	Games, films, etc.
21.00	Hot chocolate and biscuits
21.30	'Club'
22.30	Bedtime (or 22.45)

'Pocket money' and stamps are obtainable from the Office every day from 13.20 - 13.45 and 14.15 - 14.45.





Olga & Jaap at Mary Hare

HOW WE ENCOURAGE THE USE OF ENGLISH

On each Course there are students from many different countries. We try to ensure a mixture of nationalities in classes and dormitories. We aim to stimulate the speaking of English socially in various ways. Members of staff constantly encourage English-speaking around the School.

Another encouragement to speak English is the English Only Raffle with a valuable prize for the winner. Students who have spoken English much more than their own language are, at the end of each week, entitled to one raffle ticket. Throughout the Course, there are also English Only bonus days. If a student is noticeably using English and is not caught more than once using any language other than English on that day, an extra ticket is awarded - a bonus. At the end of the Course there is a draw for the lucky ticket. The more tickets, the greater the chance of winning the prize. We hope that the prize will be a positive inducement for students to use English.

HEALTH

Minor illnesses are treated by our own staff. There is a Matron with a special surgery/sickroom in each School. We also use the services of doctors in the locality. The St John's Ambulance Service provides training for all our staff at the start of each Course in the latest methods of basic first aid and resuscitation. We ask parents to give us full health information on the Application Form. We request that children with food allergies come with a 1ml. Adrenalin (Epinephrine) 1:1000 injection pen - an 'EpiPen'.

RELIGION

The Courses are interdenominational. If parents so wish, we shall arrange for students to attend an appropriate service. Please indicate this on the Application Form. Transportation to and from the church is payable by students.

INSURANCE

All students are covered by a special Insurance Policy while they are with us. Details are on the enclosed information sheet. Briefly, the Insurance includes refund of full Course Fees if certified serious illness or accident during the month before the Course prevents attendance on the Course; private medical treatment to the value of £10,000; personal possessions and luggage cover to the value of £500; personal money cover to the value of £200; return air fare or repatriation to the value of £10,000 if an APEX reservation is lost because of delayed or advanced departure through illness or accident while the student is with us. Personal accident insurance is included.

There is no extra charge for this Insurance. Every student is automatically covered (subject to the stated conditions) when the application is accepted.

HOW WE LOOK AFTER STUDENTS

We understand the concern felt by parents when their sons and daughters are away from home. They are under constant supervision, as far

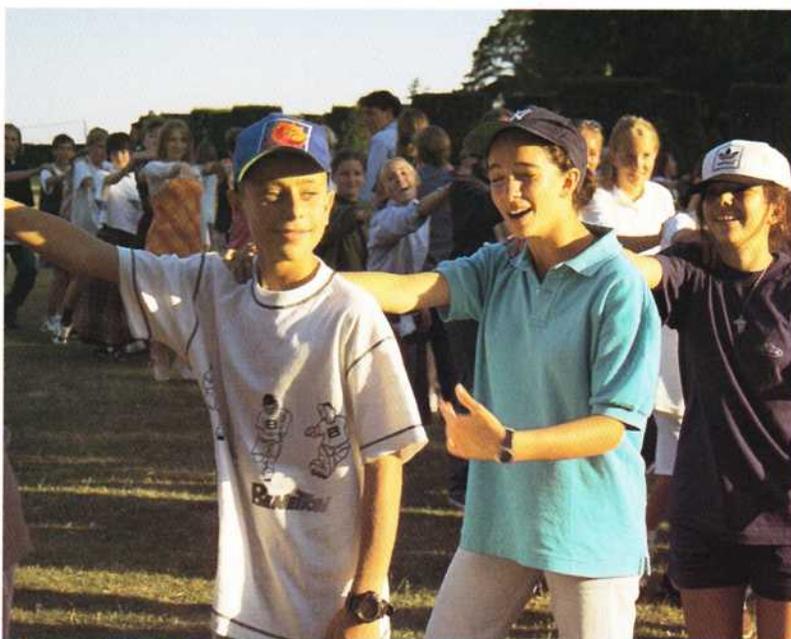
as is practicable, both in the School and on excursions. Our total staff:student ratio of about 1:8 ensures that our students are well looked-after.

In addition to the staff, on each Course there are two older ex-students, 'Staff Helpers', to assist with the sports and entertainments programme.

During the Course, progress reports are sent to all parents describing performance in class and also social behaviour. At the end of the Course, all parents are sent a final report and leaving certificate together with a report from the Director on the student's general progress and behaviour.

IF THERE IS A PROBLEM

We shall contact you. Parents must ensure that we have a telephone number through which they can always be reached. If it is an emergency and we cannot reach you, we shall contact the person named in section 8 (our 'emergency contact') on the Application Form. If we cannot contact either of you, we shall assume your authority to act in loco parentis and in a medical emergency, for example, give consent to appropriate medical treatment. We send students a list of rules and standards of behaviour expected before the Course begins. These are straightforward. Basically, we expect students to respect the buildings, equipment and the feelings of other people and to show



good manners. Students must read and know the rules before they come.

If a student is correctly motivated (see section on 'Students who will benefit') there should be no discipline problems. If any should arise, we reserve the right to contact parents and, if we consider it necessary, require that the child be taken home at the parents expense without refund of Fees.

To Apply

HOW TO APPLY

Answer all the questions on the Application Form and return it to us with (if this is a first application) a letter of recommendation from the school on behaviour and attitude to study. Retain your copy for reference. We shall tell you immediately if the application is acceptable and for which Course. A waiting list operates when the Courses are full.



LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

To ensure that all our students are well-motivated and keen to participate, we ask that a brief letter of recommendation from the school accompanies all applications from new students. This should mention behaviour and attitude to study. No such letter is needed for students we already know or when this might cause conflict with educational authorities.

WHEN THE APPLICATION IS ACCEPTED

We shall write to inform you of this and include our Invoice for the Course Fees. The Invoice can be

settled in full immediately, or 50% can be paid immediately and the balance by the date shown on the Invoice. The place is confirmed when the full Course Fees have been received by us. We shall also request travel details.

HOW TO PAY

Please see the Course Fees 1997 slip.

THE COURSE FEE INCLUDES:-

- residence at the School
- travel Heathrow-School/ School-Heathrow¹
- all meals²
- tuition
- the sports programme
- the use of facilities
- excursions³
- insurance⁴
- the laundering of clothes⁵

¹ At specified times and terminals - see "Travel"

² Except lunch on excursions, but including lunch on Sports Day

³ Travel and supervision, not entrance fees

⁴ As described in the Insurance slip

⁵ If not sensitive to bulk washing/drying and at your own risk

There are NO EXTRA CHARGES except for optional church, theatre or shopping visits and professional tennis lessons. A small (£3) deduction is made from pocket money to provide indoor board games and records, tapes and CDs for the Club. £20 caution money will be retained in the student's pocket money account until the last day when it will be returned less deductions for damages (if any).

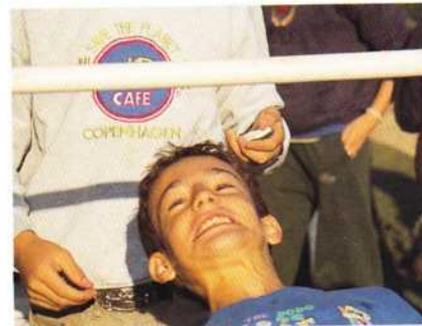
THE COURSE FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE

- pocket money
- optional church/theatre/shopping visits
- travel to and from England

POCKET MONEY

Pocket money can either be brought by students (as a £ Eurocheque under £700 in value, or as a £ cheque drawn on a British bank, payable to 'Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C') or sent in advance to the National Westminster Bank, 30 Market Place, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5AJ for Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 65400100. We also have a Girobank account for personal money. The number is 255 7444.

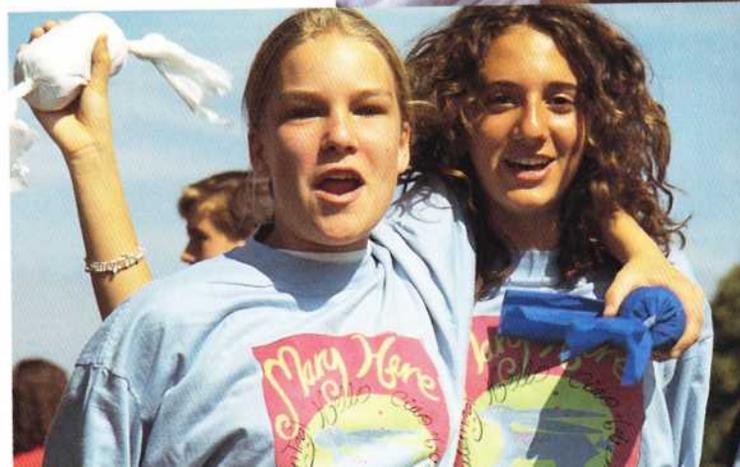
Limbo at Cheam



Students will tend to bring about £250. Optional tennis coaching fees and the cost of theatre visit(s) should be added (if applicable). Do not send more money during the Course.

CLOTHES AND POSSESSIONS

Notes and advice on what to bring and other information will be sent to parents and students in advance.





ON THE FIRST DAY

On request, students will be allocated to a returning student who will act as a guide, explaining the layout of the building, the way the Course runs and answering any questions.

SCHOOLS ADDRESSES AND DIRECTIONS

DOUAI SCHOOL

From London, follow M4 to Exit 12 (Theale). Leave M4 and follow signs 'A4 Newbury' for 9km to Woolhampton. In Woolhampton, turn right after Falmouth Arms at the Upper Woolhampton/Douai School signpost. (Elstree School is 1km along this road on the right). Continue for 1/2 km. Turn right at Main Entrance sign and then immediately left.

Address for students letters:

Douai School
Woolhampton Reading RG7 5TH.
Telephone (to contact Course Manager):
National: (0118) 971 5262
International: +44 118 971 5262

THE MARY HARE SCHOOL

From London, follow M4 to Exit 13 (Newbury). Leave M4 and follow signs 'A34 Newbury'. After 1km take slip-road on left signposted 'Curridge/Winterbourne/Donnington' then left signposted Mary Hare. The Mary Hare School is first on the right.

Address for students letters:

The Mary Hare School
Newbury Berkshire RG16 9BQ.
Telephone (to contact Course Manager):
National: (01635) 244274
International: +44 1635 244274

CHEAM SCHOOL

From Newbury, take the A339 road (signposted Basingstoke) for 10km. Cheam School (Front Entrance) is signposted on the right.

Address for students letters:

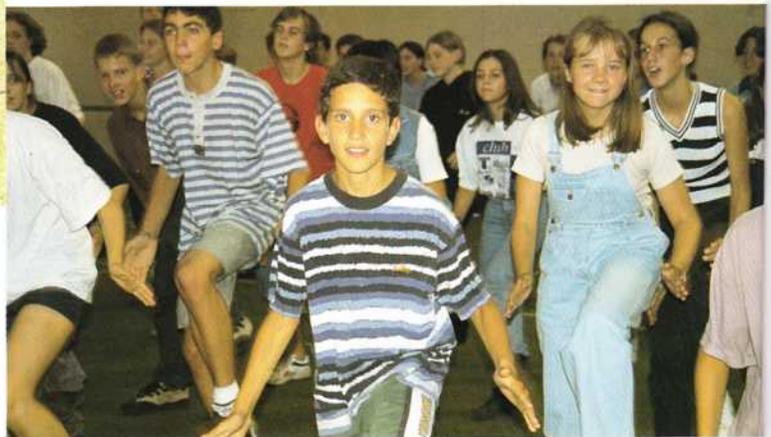
Cheam School
Headley Newbury Berkshire
RG19 8LD.
Telephone (to contact Course Manager):
National: (01635) 268803
International: +44 1635 268803

VISITS TO THE SCHOOLS

Visits to the Schools outside the Course dates may be made only by appointment through our Newbury Office.

FINALLY....

We have tried to describe the Courses fully and frankly. Please also see the section 'Unrealisable Expectations' in



ELSTREE SCHOOL

See directions to Douai.

Address for students letters:

Elstree School
Woolhampton Reading RG7 5TD.
Telephone (to contact Course Manager):
National: (0118) 971 2725
International: +44 118 971 2725

The telephone numbers and addresses given above are only for use during the Courses and only the Course Manager can be obtained on them. During the rest of the year, please use our Newbury Office address and telephone numbers below.

DIRECTIONS BY RAIL

By train from London, leave from Paddington Station. For Mary Hare and Cheam, arrive at Newbury Station. For Douai and Elstree arrive at Reading Station or Midgham Station. There are normally taxis at Newbury Station. If not, there are taxi numbers in the phone box near the Station. There are always taxis at Reading Station. There are no taxis at Midgham Station. Walk to A4 road, then follow road directions.

the News Section. The News Section following contains more detailed information on various aspects of the Course. It is essential reading for the parents of 1997 Course participants and is not only a résumé of the previous summer. We hope this brochure contains all the information you need to make your choice. Any further details you may require can be obtained from the parents of our past students and past students themselves (the addresses of some of these are on the enclosed list) and the Director. We suggest you contact our parental references as they may offer useful advice.

Our Courses are designed with the benefit of years of experience and we are confident that we can combine the learning of good written and spoken English with an unforgettable and enjoyable holiday.



The tears and wailing that accompany the departure of the Bennett's bus in the grey dawn of the last day from four schools have been recorded on videotape; the last of the named lost property has been wrapped and despatched; 401 reports have been written; the first autumn mists have started to shroud the trees; VacStuds Summer '96 is over. But not for many young people all over Europe and beyond.

The memories live on. A British student writes:- 'After having experienced the pain of leaving many good friends last year, I thought I might cope a bit better this year. I was very wrong, I am now just as upset as I was this time last year, if not more so'. From one of the sports staff:- 'I feel very lucky to have been part of such a great team and to have taken part in what is truly a unique event.' A visiting former Course Manager faxed:- 'It was lovely to be welcomed back into the VacStuds family so enthusiastically. I had not realised how much I missed it.' A parent whose son attended some years ago and whose daughter came in 1996 writes:- 'The only thing I can repeatedly say to you and your staff is thank you! The whole programme is just excellent and we as parents feel privileged because our children were your students. Her English improved a great deal, she adored her teacher and everything was just perfect - even the food!' From an Italian student:- 'What can I say? I think words cannot express my happiness after this gorgeous experience. I was really looking forward to coming back and I immediately felt the happy atmosphere. Now I have friends all over the world from Israel to Argentina.' From a Staff Helper:-



Tennis lesson

'Thanks to your great organisation, the friends I made will always have a huge part in my life. We all are a big family.' From a Dutch student:- 'I have had the most wonderful experience ever.' A teacher writes:- 'The abundance of tears on the last day indicated how much they enjoyed each other's company and how they all made many lasting friendships.' And from another parent an account of what happened before and after:- 'We sat at the kitchen table with a cup of tea. I started a monologue. When I finished, he put down his cup on the table. His face turned from red into white, then he started trembling and finally said, 'I am not going for four weeks to that camp. Two weeks will do, but four weeks, no way!' ... As you promised in the brochure, he had the time of his life this summer. He keeps telling me about his new friends. His ardent wish is to come back with them next year.'

How can I contemplate retirement after such an ardent wish? It is clear that I have now become an institution (and all this time I thought I was a person.) The above comments are a selection from the many letters I receive after the Courses and, as I am also a modest person, I have quoted from just a few. Suffice it to say that, although I make no claims in any of our literature, participation in the Course is a real investment in a child's future. But enough generalising. What was going on in the west of Berkshire in the summer of 1996? Bearing in mind that some of the



Scream for Cheam

following lines can be interpreted on a number of levels, read on....

After last year's scorching drought, the weather was bound to compare unfavourably. The sun shone, the grass turned brown, the clouds gathered, the grass turned green again and so it went. The number of days lost to rain was minimal, though, and winter clothing did not make an appearance. We had a pleasantly typical British summer, conducive to indoor and outdoor fun and good classroom learning.

Back from her experiences of the Mary Hare Courses of the 80s into the rather changed environment of our seventh summer at Douai was Course Manager, Heather Starkey. Douai now has its own identity and the students have their own expectations. The staff were largely new, or new to this particular Course, so they had to adapt quickly to some established traditions. We were fortunate in having a particularly strong

sports/social team. Steve Bratt was a tireless Organiser, keen to learn and quick to innovate. His Assistant, Seth Bolderow (my PA from 1994), threw himself - and the disco man's apparatus - into events. His other Assistant, the redoubtable Emma Riggall, back from 1995 and now a smoke-free zone, was just as energetic, although less expensive at discos. It was good to see returning Matron, Pam Walker, on her feet



Crazy games at Douai

'I've got an Elstree dream...'



again after spending most of last year with her leg in plaster. Her services were invaluable in a year when allergies were rampant and an ambulance with blue lights flashing was a not unfamiliar sight. Staff Helpers were (from Spain and from last year) the excellent Victor Lopez - he of the rubber face and Pied Piper-like ability to enchant children - and (from Germany) newcomer Imke Müller, using her recent experience as a student to seek to improve activities. Dominic Higgins returned from last year as Heather's reliable second-in command. It was good to have his considerable presence - as well as his familiarity with the Course which helped him try to give the support and guidance the largely new staff needed to coalesce into a team. Liza

the older returning students set an example of participation; others fell conspicuously in love, undeterred by the monastic environment. Our Course Manager for the past six Douai summers, Chris FitzGerald, visited us and made me realise how the distance from the Office to the Staff Room had increased. There will be changes here.

Richard Rawlins was a splendid and reliable new Course Manager at Mary Hare, well schooled by his predecessor, Francis McIvor. His three years' experience as a teacher with us provided him with an understanding of this side of the Course and of the hothouse atmosphere staff have to work within. They found him supportive and dependable. His experience as a Housemaster has given him insight into young people. His reports on the students have been remarkably perceptive. There has been building work at Mary Hare, too. The new conservatory and coffee bar were put to use. This time we branched out from the Manor House and occupied Howard House, as well. Tireless Sports/Social Organiser, Maarten Koch, provided the usual mixture of activities learned from his days as a student of ours and as a Staff Helper and Assistant. There is something to be said for the continuity that is provided by rising through the ranks. There is also something to be said for innovation. He was ably and energetically assisted by Assistants David Wijeratne and Ana Cuenca and by Staff Helpers Andrea Paoletti (Italy) and Amparo Puig (Spain), all experienced in the ways of Mary Hare. It was great to have back with us an unflappable Matron. Barbara Sykes was a welcome returnee after a year's absence. She became an honorary 'Crew' member. Vince Purdue was ACM and Course Tutor par excellence. Utterly reliable, we relied on his sound judgement. On the teaching side, we had the ever-popular Paul Abrahams back for a third year and the effervescent Helen

Shapter back for her seconds. Newcomers were Alexandra Carn, Charlotte Thomas, Stephen Suddick and Simon Hughes. Steve Rumberg visited from America. Last year, the Course went with a splash rather than a bang. This time, it went with a splodge as evidenced by the traces of exploded hot chocolate on freshly-painted external walls. Whatever will our students think of next? That our Mary Hare students were resourceful is without doubt. That their talents needed direction is also clear.

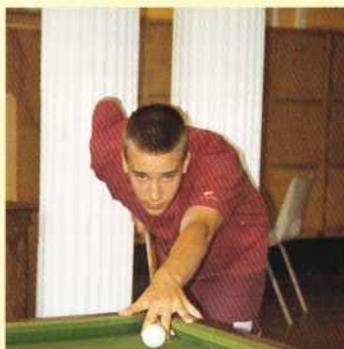
In the Staff Room as well as among the students, Cheam developed into a close and caring 'community' - to quote a letter from one of the staff. It was good to have Richard Wijeratne back again as Course Manager - eventually. He headed a superb team of staff members. Back for a third year was Ruth Pettingale, combining with admirable efficiency the dual roles of ACM and Course Tutor. Teaching were Stephen Sugden, back for a second year, Graham (Forest) Rumbelow back for a third, Jonathan Timms, a returnee from 1993, and husky Sara Evans back for a lovely time. Simon Crane and Louise Murray were newcomers who quickly adapted to the very special Cheam atmosphere. The no-nonsense 'General', James Olsen, returned as

Sports Organiser after two years as Assistant. Pirate Captain, Neil Johnson, became one of his Assistants after two years as a student. Catherine Tucker was indefatigable in her first year as Assistant. Together with the much loved Pieter Wijffels (Netherlands) in his second year as a Staff Helper and perky Natalie Fainstein (Israel) in her first, they formed a superb crew, providing the students with a thoroughly positive lead. Leaders were not lacking among the students either. The Folies was a tour de force and several students showed potential as Staff Helpers of the future. We also had our breakages. Two of the students broke. It is greatly to the credit of Rui and Fahed that they were as accepting of their temporarily disabled status as they were. Matron, Enid Beckett, had a baptism of fire in her first year with us. Hospital visitor extraordinaire, she never stopped. Her companion, Muffin, provided mute support. A good-natured Course, it was always a pleasure to visit Cheam.

With his ten years experience of the Courses in one capacity or another, David Johnson managed Elstree with his customary skill, drawing together into a community the most disparate group of nationalities we have ever seen - from Argentina through Europe to Siberia and beyond. Brilliant first-time Sports and Social, Jessica Hurles, put on a wide-ranging programme that brought out the best in the students and led, indeed, to some student-generated gems such as a Folies Bergères of near-professional standard. Ably assisted by Caroline Wijffels (back for her second year as Assistant) and Gordon Wright (previously twice a student) with Staff



Brown was the Course Tutor (in charge of academic administration within the School) from whose professional expertise all could have benefited. Back from last year were the still vivacious Melanie Miller and Carla Loak, promoted from her previous support role. Among the newcomers to Douai's teaching staff were David McGill and Michelle Maguire, stalwarts both. Last year's building work resulted in a better standard of student accommodation in one or two parts of the School. Yet again, the quality of the students was shown in the high standard of student-generated events such as the Folies Bergères and by their willingness to join in those events on the organised programme. Some of



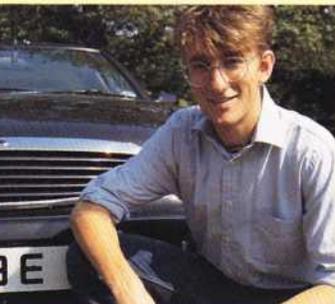
Helpers (from Germany) Kathrin Hoppe (returning for a second helping) and bright, shiny newcomer Manel Vericat (Spain), they formed an excellent team. In charge of the teaching side was first-time Course Tutor, Ambika Pindoria. The other teachers were an undiminished David Klappholz returning from 1993, Diane Farrar from 1994, Julie Pugh from Elstree last year, Ian Lain now a veteran of several years and, new this year, Ellen Simpson, Peter Blood and Duncan Dally. Beany Beanlands (once again combining Matron with ACM roles) did not have to use her soothing hand very often this summer as the students remained remarkably healthy. Her canine companion,

in a multinational environment in which much material can be obtained from the other nationalities and in which the obvious and natural language of communication is English. We had two 'Support Teachers' who took over classes when the teacher was indisposed or otherwise occupied. The very lively Chloe Hutchins shot around the schools at warp factor two and, while her blue T-shirt revealed her loyalty to her base camp, she gave all of them the benefit of her pedagogy, adjusting easily to the various staff rooms. Stephen Littler was the other Support.

My PA, Elliot Robertson, was in evidence at all the schools. He fetched and carried with great efficiency, unruffled by Newbury's horrendous traffic congestion soon to benefit from a long-awaited by-pass.

In spite of our staff's efforts at sabotaging his equipment, Mark Thatcher remained in business as king of the discos. Ever youthful and in tune with the times, he knew how to get the young people bopping. This year's favourite was 'The Macarena'. Ghostly shadows performing it can just be discerned amid the flashing lights in the closing moments of this year's video. Christine O'Callaghan and her colleague from St John's Ambulance Service provided basic First Aid instruction for all the staff before each Course began. Having now filmed them in action resuscitating plastic models, I think I would prefer to take my chances on a spontaneous recovery if I keel over. Liz Fidler was i/c tennis coaching at all the schools. Once again, she had record numbers. Clement weather helped her provide every lesson.

And there was me. I write to all the students before the Courses suggesting they see me if they think something is wrong. Several did. There are still a few, however, who have a pleasant chat to me in passing and wait for their parents to tell me they think they are in the wrong class, would



Elliot (PA) & my trusty Scorpio

Petra, was content to munch a tennis ball all day. The group feeling was evident in every aspect of the Course. Within a day or so it felt as if the students were in their third week. It was 'an Elstree dream - if you know what I mean.'

In addition to the staff based at each school, there were several peripatetic people who had the advantage of seeing everything in action. Fred Gooch was back again as overall Director of Studies, checking teaching standards everywhere, providing a half-day induction for teachers at the start and liaising with Course Tutors. His new topic-based 'Programme of Work' has proved successful and was widely incorporated. This helps ensure that our students receive teaching of the kind they will not get in their own countries. In this way we also aim to capitalise on their being



like to be in another dorm or are seriously ill. This year, I carried my GSM phone everywhere so that parents could always reach me. This was occasionally useful, but most of the few calls I received were of the 'my daughter is seriously ill, please take her to the doctor immediately' variety when the child concerned had coughed once during a telephone call. If a child tells me there is a problem, I am able to intervene and help immediately. While I have a disciplinary function (as a few students discover every year), this is not my main function. All the students are my responsibility. I want them to have a great time. If there is anything coming between them and their having this great time, I need to know about it. As I visit every school practically every day, they all have the chance to talk to me.

BRITISH COUNCIL INSPECTION

In order to be 'Recognised by the British Council', we must be inspected every three years. This 12 hour marathon took place at Douai on 24 July. Two Inspectors looked at every aspect of our work. As their findings are confidential, I am unable to say how often the word 'excellent' was used....

SPORTS DAY

As usual, the main organisational burden for this mammoth event fell on the SSO at Mary Hare where it

takes place. Maarten Koch told me he had assumed I would push it forward 24 hours from the published day. He had been caught out this way two years before. The teletext weather forecasts change subtly over the days so that the predicted mixture of sun and rain becomes either sun or rain at the moment when it is either dry or wet. So cautious are the meteorologists nowadays that it is almost impossible to pin them down to an opinion on the evening before, let alone a few days before. I have to act on intuition. This year, my hunch was right. The day before the scheduled Sports Day was likely to be bright, sunny and dry. At 16.00 on the previous day, I decided to grab the fine weather while it lasted. The ever-resourceful Mrs Monger and her catering staff fast-forwarded their



feeding plans for 450 people; the bus company hastily rescheduled; staff days-off were rearranged; final rehearsals for Spectaculars' acquired a sudden urgency. Up went the posters, out came the banners and on went the show.

The air filled with patriotic songs. 'Douai is the best of all the four schools. We will impress you because we're better than fools'; 'Cheam is gonna win, tra-la-la-la-la, Cheam is gonna win tra-la-la-la-la'; 'Everywhere we go, people wanna know, who we are, where we come from...'; 'Give us an E, give us an L...'; 'Oh, Mare-ary Hare, tararara. We win the games so easily, we are the best in Newbury...'. - songs some of whose origins have been lost in the mists of history, or at least since Vacational Studies started in 1972. A few tempers flared briefly. The refrain 'Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up' put paid to these tantrums as soon as they began. The onlookers are unable to share in the passion of the protesters. During the sports, we had the excellent buffet lunch in Mary Hare's Blount Hall - a cool and tranquil haven from the heat and the hurly-burly of chanting, laughing, running, dancing youngsters shouting in all their languages at once. After came the staff volleyball, then the tug-o-war, then the Spectaculars.

Spectacular they were. Mary Hare's and Elstree's were best viewed from above as their lines of students marched and twirled in intricate shapes until they merged to form the letters of the schools. The tribal

origins of Cheam's chant seemed entirely appropriate on a day when people formed into packs. Douai's triple bill included a chant with the other schools' names muttered darkly to a rhythm between Maori and Red Indian, followed by an innovation on 'Singing in the Rain' and the inevitable 'Douai Warriors'. After the final event, 'litter-picking' in true boarding school style, the evening indoor barbecue signalled the end. The long-waiting bus drivers joined us at the feast. Engines revved and, in a cloud of blue smoke, the other schools drove off. It was a farewell à la last day. Emotions rose to the surface, tears welled and trickled down cheeks, out came the guitar and the traditional songs. Peace returned to The Mary Hare, all of it captured on video. The next day, the grey clouds rolled in. Summer took a temporary rest. No matter. After Sports Day, with all the Courses in full swing, the weather can do what it will. The students are rock-solid in loyalty to their school. Rain or shine, they will have fun.

I shall adopt a similar plan for 1997 as for 1996. Sports Day 1997 is scheduled for Saturday 26 July. The Optional Trip is scheduled for Friday 25 July. If the weather is forecast to be bad on the Saturday, Sports Day will be brought forward to the Friday and the Optional Trip will be put back to the Saturday. If the weather is bad on both days, Sports Day will be postponed until the Sunday (in which case a message will inform parents that 'Telephone Sunday' will become Telephone Monday') and if it rains on

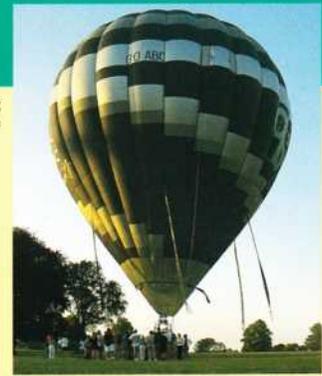
the Sunday, Sports Day will happen on the Monday. Have I covered all eventualities?

CATERING

Once again we had Graham Smith in charge at Douai, Jean Monger at Mary Hare and contract caterers Gardner Merchant in at Cheam and Elstree. While accepting that it is impossible to please all the people all the time, that young people are notoriously conservative about food and that we can never 'win', the applause that all the caterers received at the final dinners indicates that their efforts were appreciated. I do not think I am easily pleased, but I always found something I liked and felt that I ate well at all the schools. I have eaten at several other boarding schools and know how awful institutional catering can be. The food questionnaires were, once again, revealing. One or two included comments showing the writer's strong feelings which should have been reported to a member of staff or to me. I can only continue to offer myself as a non-judgemental listener who has the interests of the students at heart and will not hesitate to act when the need arises. I do not think I have disappointed anyone who has confided in me. As regular readers will know, catering is a particular concern of ours and is, I think, the single most important aspect of the Course. Unless the students look forward to mealtimes and feel well-fed, they will not enjoy the Course.

Two years ago, I introduced the 'Catering Questionnaire' and promised to include the results in the 'Catering' paragraph of the News Section'. The questionnaire lists each meal and requests (i) overall impression, (ii) whether there was enough to eat and (iii) whether there was sufficient variety. Respondents can choose a number from 1 (= bad) to 10 (= good) for each section. The questionnaire goes on to ask similar questions about the cold table, the

Forced landing at Mary Hare



barbecues, orange juice and hot chocolate. The questionnaire can be answered anonymously and there is a section for suggestions. It is clear to me that some of the responses are not well thought out (giving a '1' for 'variety' tells me there was no choice at all, for example, and this is just not correct) or are illogical (giving a score markedly different for the general overall impression of the food from the impression for the separate meals), so all it tells me is what the general perception was. Perception is often different from reality, so the results are of limited use. The scores range from 80% satisfaction with Cheam's barbecue to 44% satisfaction with Mary Hare's cold table. For what they are worth, the overall average satisfaction rates combining 19 different questions are as follows:- Cheam 64%; Douai 63%; Elstree 62%; Mary Hare 59%. The minimal difference can be ignored in the margin for error, so the catering can, once again, be seen to be perceived the same in all our schools. Bearing in mind how difficult to please young people are - especially for food that is completely foreign - I think the scores are commendably high. Nevertheless, the caterers will be given the forms appropriate to their school and asked to take note of the comments.

Food Committees were formed at each School. Again I was struck by how sensible and practical the recommendations were. In 1997, there will be at least one representative from each class and teachers will be asked to canvas opinions so that every student's view can be voiced.

BEEF AND FOOD SAFETY

We did not serve beef - from any country. We served no beef-related products. This meant that not just the meat was excluded, but any stock



cubes, sauces, soups, bouillons or products containing gelatines were removed. For example, some sweets and yoghurts contain beef-related gelatine. We ascertained that none of the products we served in the dining room or sold in the sweet shop had any beef or beef-related contents. It was not an easy exercise (and much small print had to be read) but we ensured that our Schools were 'beef-free'. I doubt if any parent has been quite as assiduous as we have been in excluding beef. Our policy is (and will continue to be) that we shall only serve food that we believe parents would be confident to serve their children at their own dining tables. If there is a doubt over any food item, it will not be served. Let me be clearer. If we have any reason to believe that any parent would be worried about the safety of any food item, our policy will be not to serve that food. We would seek an alternative. We shall not analyse whether such a concern is rational or just media-inspired panic. We shall act on concern - immediately.

I do not plan that beef or any beef-related product from any country will be served in 1997. A number of students requested beef in their food questionnaires. I shall resist their pleas and err on the side of extreme caution in this as in every other regard.

FOOD ALLERGIES

1996 was, for me, the year of the allergies. I had not seen a nut allergy before. It was fast and frightening. I immediately instructed caterers to



Elstree Casino

label all food containing nuts. I had assumed that students would not eat what they knew they were allergic to. I was wrong. One of the reasons may be that they are not on their guard as they do not normally come across these foods which would not be on the menu at home. Some reactions can hardly be avoided. For example, a violent allergy to kiwi fruit was triggered by eating an apple that had been in the same bowl as a kiwi.

Clearly, we cannot prevent all these reactions no matter how hard we try. We can, however, act to delay the effects while we summon emergency medical help. We now insist that all children with allergies to nuts and certain fruits must carry a special injection pen - a 1ml. Adrenalin (Epinephrine) 1:1000 injection pen - an EpiPen - (obtainable via their home doctor) and we must be advised of this.

PRIZES

The prize for Academic Excellence was a VacStuds watch. Winners were Christelle Harkema (Douai); Victoria Byhring Eregdy (Mary Hare); Elisabeth Faugstad (Cheam); Pedro Silva (Elstree.) Watches also went to the winners of the 'English-Only' draw. Winners were Stanislav Zalesov (Douai); Maret Mets (Mary Hare); Ricardo Costa (Cheam) - who is the first student chosen to draw the ticket who succeeded in drawing his own; Arthur van Hout (Elstree.) At Douai we also awarded a special prize for Literary Excellence to Inger-Merete Hobbestad.

ARELS/UCLES TEST

The University of Cambridge devised with the Association of Recognised English Language Services a special test for short summer courses. This was its fourth year. About half of our students were entered. It gave them an idea what their English is like and what is the next Cambridge examination they might take should be. The 'Record of Attainment' which was issued had value only as an



indication of the next University of Cambridge examination which could be taken. It is marked by us, is not a qualification and is really an assessment test.

A REPLACEMENT EXAMINATION - INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS SHORT COURSES EXAMINATION

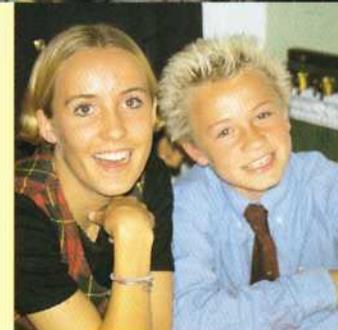
We prefer to offer an externally marked and certificated examination that is a useful qualification for our students. With the Institute of Linguists (a noted British examining board), we intend to pilot a new examination for summer course students. We are offering it in place of the ARELS/UCLES test. Again, we shall charge only the examination fee charged to us per candidate and add nothing for administration. We are advised by the Institute of Linguists that the cost will be \pm £25.00. The examination is being devised between October 1996 and June 1997. In June 1997, I shall send information about this examination, or (if we decide not to offer the IoL's pilot scheme) any replacement examination, to those parents who have requested this option.

1997 DATES

Our dates are always chosen to coincide with most European school summer holidays. This means we must finish by the middle of August. We have tried to offer as wide a choice of dates as possible within these confines. We are also restricted by the date on which each school becomes available each year.

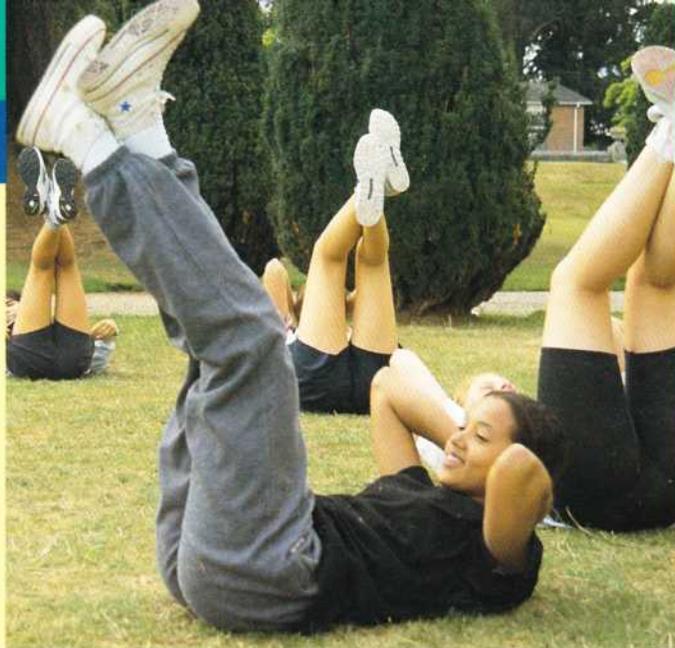
TRIPS

The sightseeing tour of the whole of London was generally successful. Legoland was considered too young for our age-range, although Windsor was generally liked. For 1997, we



shall repeat the London trip. The second trip will be to Southampton with an optional detour to The National Motor Museum. The third trip will be optional. The fourth trip will be Sports Day. There will be two additional shopping afternoons locally. We shall try to accommodate individual preferences rather than expect our young people to conform to our (or their parents') expectation of what they will like. There is no point in expecting every student to be interested in the same things. We shall arrange for students to be informed what is possible at each of the venues and they can decide what they would like to do. On the Southampton trip, for example, some may wish to use it for shopping, others may like to see the harbour and maybe take a boat-trip. Some may like to combine shopping and the Motor Museum. What we shall include is transport and supervision. We shall obtain group booking rates where possible, but all entrances will be payable from pocket money. If students wish to go somewhere else, or do something special, we shall try to make the arrangements. The trip to Chessington World of Adventure, for example, has become an Elstree tradition. If a large enough group wishes to go somewhere, we shall make the arrangements and send accompanying staff.

Elstree aerobics



Whether or not we allow children on excursions to be unaccompanied is subject to our discretion as well as the parents'. A student (and sometimes a parent) may have a view on supervision which is different from ours. Our view must, of course, prevail as we have to take the responsibility.

THEATRE VISITS

I continued the system whereby those who had made early application benefited. Students expressed their choice of show in order of preference on a special 'Theatre Visits' form. The form was handed in on the first day and tickets were allocated in Invoice number order (lowest first) on the basis of preferences expressed. The cost of theatre visits was debited from pocket money accounts right at the start in accordance with information supplied on the 'Theatre Visits' form. Some students thought that, by requesting a number of visits, they would automatically get that number. Because of the demand for tickets, this was usually not the case, but everyone who wanted to have a West End experience was able to go to at least one show. As in 1996, I shall arrange for these visits to be on no more than three days on each Course. There will be a mixture of matinees and evening performances. Matinees tend to disrupt classes and evening shows keep the duty teachers up late, so I cannot please everyone. Some shows will be on the same day so this will limit the choice. I shall try to include at least one new show. Most shows will not be booking for July/August until early 1997, so the 'Theatre Visits' form specifying which

shows will be available when and at what price will not be sent out until March.

EXPULSIONS

There were very few in 1996. One student was surprised to be expelled for a breach of the rules after he had already been on a 3-day suspended expulsion. I am concerned that suspended expulsion may not be taken seriously enough. We shall, therefore, give all those who are on suspended expulsion a special 'agreement' form. This will state what 'suspended expulsion' is and what will happen if subsequently they break any other rule. They will have to sign their 'agreement' to certain conditions of their suspended expulsion status. On the rare occasions when we are unable to contact parents after an expulsion, we shall also employ a signed agreement system. Those on suspended expulsion will, for the 3-days, be fed and accommodated, but no more than this. There will be no lessons, no sports and no trips. This period may be spent at one of the other schools.

Our students must know the rules by heart. We ask parents to go through them with their children. There is no time to acquire a knowledge of the rules by experience. They have to be fully absorbed from the start. They are all based on common sense and our long experience of young people. They are utterly logical and are essential for the functioning of our multinational community.

UNCONTACTABILITY

Amazingly, we discovered that some parents could not be reached even via the emergency contact in section 8. As it was necessary on these occasions for me to take full responsibility in my 'in loco parentis' role, I am formalising my status with a section in the Application form. This section consents to my allowing medical treatment in an emergency when we are unable to reach a parent or a parent's nominated representative in

POSSESSIONS (AND SAFEGUARDING THEM)

All named property left behind, regardless of value, has been sent back. We ask that valuables are not brought. In a dormitory environment, such articles are bound to be mislaid, if not taken. We can understand the need for a camera. The office is almost always manned. Cameras and similar items can be handed in there for safe-keeping and taken out when they are needed. If they disappear while we are in charge of them or are stolen while on a trip, they are covered by our Insurance Policy. If they are left in a dormitory or classroom, they are not. The reason we have a safe, a pocket money book and a Course Manager on hand to dispense pocket money is to prevent money being kept in the dormitory. The sight of a sum of money unsecured in a dormitory may be a temptation too great to resist. In a sense, someone leaving money lying around makes someone else a thief. The ill-feeling that stealing arouses is damaging to the spirit of a community. We do all we can to prevent this. The same applies to valuables and consumer goods. Some high-value items are sitting in my office unclaimed, among them an Olympus Superzoom camera. Items that 'disappear' must be somewhere. If a child arrives home with an expensive article that he or she did not possess at the beginning of the Course and could not have afforded to buy, we would expect parents to ask questions. We hope that an Olympus Trip will be returned to its owner via us. If a possession like an Olympus Superzoom camera is not brought

home, we would expect parents to ask us about it. Few do.

In 1996, each student was issued with a 'Valuable Possessions' form. On it, the student listed the model names and serial numbers of all the possessions they brought which were



of more than £50 in value. This has cut down the amount of lost property and will be repeated in 1997. (We have a single ear-ring for a pierced ear found at Cheam and would love to return it. Owner, please contact me!)

T-SHIRTS

I decided to provide each child and most members of staff with a T-shirt in each School's colour - mainly for use at Sports Day, but also as a memento. They were designed by Dawn Lillington and Stephen Green. Each contained a multilingual greeting and the School's name around a central motif. Douai was an alligator ('his name is Charlie, but we call him Chuck'); Mary Hare was a hare (macho, not cuddly); Cheam was a dog (only because I liked Dawn's drawing, but it became topical as Matron's dog proved to be a



'Oh! Mary Hare'

character); Elstree was a lion (as a yellow animal seemed more appropriate than a banana.) Apart from the colour of Mary Hare's T-shirts (which were not the Velazquez sky-blue I had imagined, but more a pale-blue British winter sky), the students seemed to like them and the staff fought tooth and nail to get one. I named each personally with an indelible marker. Not one was left as lost property.

MONEY FOR CHARITY

The gum-chewers and slave auctioneers have contributed about £400 for 'Childline'. I shall be handing over the customary cheque to 'Childline's' founder, Esther Rantzen, at the BBC shortly.

GUESTS

It is a compliment that former students should wish to visit the Courses if they are holidaying in Britain. A day visit is not a problem. In general, for reasons of space we do not offer overnight stays, but can provide information about accommodation locally.

STAFF HELPERS

It is hard to imagine a young person having a better advantage than to have a period of work experience involving responsibility for 100 or so young people, to have the opportunity to practise a foreign language by working in the country - and to have all the delights of a VacStuds Course for nothing! These posts are sought-after and I am always spoiled for choice. Rarely does a Staff Helper disappoint. Nevertheless, there is sometimes the need for change to give someone else the chance. Posts will arise for 1997 and aspiring SHs should contact me during the November before the summer for which they wish to apply. Contacting me is part of the selection procedure. If someone has the wit to contact me, it suggests at least a modicum of initiative. I wait for SHs to contact me. I do not make the first approach. For those who have not yet caught on

to the subtleties of the English language, the mention of 'leadership potential' in the final letter is an indication that a SH request might be favourably considered. It is generally better for SHs to have a 'year off' after being a student. The increased age gap between them and the students is likely to make the transition from student to staff easier.

TALENT AND THE FOLIES BERGÈRES

I am sure that we have the 'crème de la crème' of young people with us and that the Course is the richer if we use their skills and talents. Each school has a 'Revue' at the end of which the class, under the direction of its teacher, arranges a sketch or two. Some can be too iconoclastic for my taste, so I have tended not to attend. The quality is improving, though. It was in the late '80s at Mary Hare that, under Maurien Cosijn's leadership as SSO, the Folies Bergères began. It was the first time there had been a student-generated entertainment. It was great as a spectacle and also enabled the students to work in a multinational committee using English as the lingua franca. By the early '90s, it had become so special that I devoted a section of the 1992 'VacStuds All Over Again' video to the Mary Hare Folies and asked the SSO at each school to arrange a Folies or similar. It happened - with some remarkable results.

Although I am reliably informed that I came in at just the wrong moment at Mary Hare's Folies (and if they will choose to coincide their Folies with the last night dinner at Douai they cannot expect to have a full filming), all I saw was slapstick indistinguishable from the Revue. Very little is preserved on video. The reason I have suggested a Talent Show at each school is because there is talent among the students. Plenty of it. A Talent Show early on in the programme is likely to bring this out and it can be capitalised on and



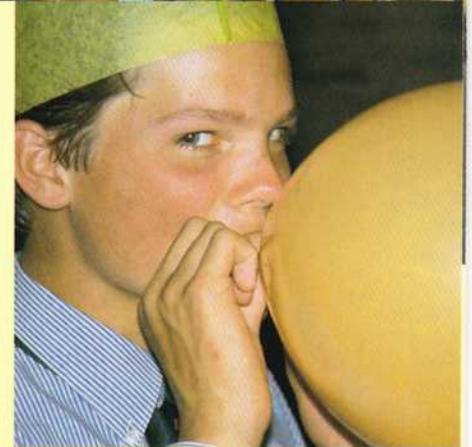
developed for the Folies. The students at Douai and Cheam are handicapped by the lack of a proper stage, but still managed to produce a show that contained individual gems and overall cohesion. The Elstree Folies was a masterpiece. I had time only for fragments in the video, but it is well worth fast-forwarding almost to the end of the tape to see what can be achieved. There were gymnasts, jugglers, a comic double-act, magicians, superb singers, dancers and piano-players. We have the same sort of students at every school. This talent is everywhere and should be brought out. All SSOs will be instructed accordingly.

SPORTS/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The programme is full and packed with events. Old favourites like the Casino have become very sophisticated and can hardly be developed further. Students look forward to them and they must be retained. We have many traditions that will not be touched. Nevertheless, we must not become complacent. For students who come year after year, there have to be changes and developments to retain their interest. I shall make a point of asking SSOs to try to make innovations to existing activities and broaden the range of what is offered.

THE VIDEO

VacStuds '96 All Over Again' is now available. It has been offered to all those who were with us in 1996. Parents of 1997 students who wish to see what the Course is all about can request a copy. It is not a promotional



Pop!

video. It is a compilation of various events that I filmed on my travels around the schools during the summer. It conveys, more than words ever could, the all-important 'atmosphere'. For those who will see each other again only through this medium, it will be of special significance.

UNREALISABLE EXPECTATIONS

Those who know our work will understand why we include this paragraph - and why it is relevant to those sending children to us for the first time. We do what we can to encourage students to learn and use the Course to advantage. We do our best to look after them. We make no other claims. We cannot force a child to integrate. While we provide encouragement, they must help themselves. They will find others who speak their language and they may be tempted to take the easy way. They may come with friends from home. We cannot keep friends apart when they are at the same School. They must decide to broaden their

international horizons, mix and use English. Parents may make requests, but we reserve the right to place students in what we consider to be appropriate classes and dormitories. The Course is a communal experience. Individual freedom is restricted. Our school buildings are boarding schools - not hotels. Accommodation, washrooms, etc. are shared. Bedrooms are boarding school dormitories and these may be sparsely furnished. Our schools become co-educational only in the summer, so bathrooms may be away from dormitories and boy/girl rotas for their use are sometimes needed. Clothes storage space may be limited. All sorts of compromises have to be made, but for most young people this is part of the fun. We also ask parents to accept that telephone contact with their children, especially in the first few days, is not a good idea. We are not being difficult, just putting into practice what we know from experience works. In effect, what we are requesting is a partnership between us based on our expertise and parents' trust in us. What we provide and the parameters of what we permit are in our literature. We act on the assumption that parents and students read it all.

BEFORE AND DURING THE COURSE

Parents are welcome to contact me on any matter. In July and August I tend to be at my desk from 08.00 (English time) until 10.00 and then I travel around the schools. For practical reasons, therefore, it is best to make contact with me during the Courses via the Course Manager. Just before the Course, I send each parent 'last minute' information with my GSM phone number. This mobile phone never leaves me, so I can always be reached - sometimes in surprising places. If there is a problem, I can take immediate action. During the period before the Courses, letters are replied to immediately. I shall probably not be able to reply to letters received during July and August until after the Courses, however. If parents could telephone children only on the two specific Telephone Days mentioned in the 'Notes for Parents', this would be appreciated.

AFTER THE COURSE

Feel free to contact me about anything connected with Britain. For example, parents ask for my advice on continuing their children's education in Britain. I am happy to help. No charge! I see this as a natural extension of my work with young people. Students ask for information, sometimes ten or twenty years later. No problem! In the four weeks between the end of the Courses and writing these lines one of this year's students is already at boarding school in England as a direct result of

coming on the Course and another is in the process of choosing a school for the academic year '97/8 after she will have attended the 1997 Course with us. It has been said before and it is not an overstatement - coming on a VacStuds Course can change your life.... There are two other extensions to my work - The Jörg Weise Association and Giotto.

The JÖRG WEISE ASSOCIATION

Briefly, the history of the JWA is that in 1979 one of our first students, Jörg Weise, who was with us in 1971, died at the age of 21 in a motorcycle accident. It was particularly sad as he had shown promise as an actor and was already involved in international work. His father was on the Board of Directors of Bayer AG in Leverkusen, Germany. In the name of his son, I invited Prof. Dr. Weise to nominate a young person for a place on one of our Courses. He agreed, but went further. He asked that he be permitted to nominate and pay for a place in his son's name in perpetuity. He also agreed to the sculpting of a trophy that would be awarded annually in his son's name to a student or students making an outstanding contribution to the international aims of our Courses. The recipients of the Trophy were invited to a gathering each year and, in time, the group grew to a sizeable number. Such a collection of talented young people from many different countries needed more of a reason for being than just an annual get-together, I felt, and in 1985 I put to them the idea that they could form themselves into an Association that would work towards giving other, less privileged young people the opportunity to cross frontiers. The Jörg Weise Association (JWA) was born. It is a now a charitable institution, registered in Germany, for the advancement of international understanding. It meets annually and has a well-organised social programme. For those who would like to know more, the Chairman is Ed Bergsma (Brinkstraat

27, 7591 DM Denekamp, Netherlands. Tel: +31 541 355780.)

The Jörg Weise Trophy is no longer awarded annually as it tended to promote too competitive a spirit, but has been awarded occasionally for 'an



In class at Elstree

outstanding contribution to the international ideals of the Course'.

THE JÖRG WEISE SCHOLARSHIP

We continue to be associated with the Jörg Weise Memorial Scholarship. The Scholarship is a place on any of our Courses, return air ticket from anywhere in the world, pocket money, theatre tickets and tennis lessons. The recipient of the Scholarship will be the sort of student outlined above who will benefit from attending the Course, but who is unable to apply for a place in the normal way for financial reasons. The Scholarship Committee will take steps to verify the financial situation of candidates. We welcome nominations for the Scholarship in 1997 which should be sent in confidence, and without informing the projected recipient, to Vacational Studies. I shall forward nominations to the Scholarship Committee of the JWA.

GIOTTO

Giotto was started in 1986, the year of Halley's Comet. It seemed to me a pity that the strong international contacts made by our students in their teens should disappear with the passage of time. It is not that they did not wish to keep up the contacts, it is just not easy to continue correspondence after the shared experience of the Course has faded from the memory. Nevertheless, I

'Douai's better...'



felt that these contacts, good in one's teens, could be even more beneficial later on. I decided to contact all our past students to see how they felt. It was my biggest-ever mailshot and the response was huge. I named this organisation Giotto after the collaborative European space-probe, Giotto, which was sent up in February 1986 to observe Halley's Comet. No one knew at that time if it would succeed or fail. In fact, it succeeded. The probe Giotto was so named because Halley's Comet features in a work by the Florentine painter, Giotto. When I decided in 1986 to collate the names of our students from 1972 to date and create this international organisation, I did not know if it would succeed or fail. That the 1997 Giotto Book (to be published in January 1997) will be its 11th Edition and will contain nearly 2000 names, suggests to me it is succeeding. The Book is provided at no charge. It is totally financed by Vacation Studies as an adjunct to our work in helping make the world a smaller place. Some now in the Book are rather young, but time will put this right.

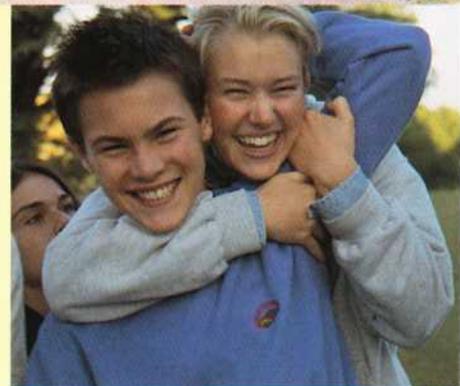
In a few years, the Giotto Book will include many more interesting and useful people in various fields who are willing to be contacted. Dr Michael Nowak in Germany, who was with us in the early 70s and is now a 38 year-old vet in charge of an equine

hospital, suggested an international scheme whereby those 'oldies' (as he put it) who are in particular fields offer the chance of work-experience. I included an 'International Work Experience' page in the 1996 Giotto Book. Already one of our Spanish students has taken up Stephen Finley's offer of work experience in a solicitor's office in Hong Kong. I have received other letters telling me that contacts have been made via Giotto. I would ask any 'oldies' (or let's say those in responsible positions) who are reading this and are willing to offer the cream of European youth the chance of work experience in their firm, to please let me know before the 1997 Book goes to press in December 1996.

There is a downside to Giotto's success, however. I discovered that a commercial organisation has used the 1994 Book as the source for names and addresses for a mailshot to publicise a Spanish Language Course. My permission was not sought, nor would it have been granted. All of us have enough 'junk mail' to contend with. I would have permitted a free advertisement, though, if I had been asked. To prevent this sort of exploitation, the first line of each address has been omitted from the 1995 and 1996 Books and are likely to be omitted from the 1997 Book. I can provide specific addresses on request. The telephone number given is a point of contact.

For those who are visiting or need help in another country, here are contacts. For those who wish for a more personal social contact, Giotto Tours was created by a group of students in 1992 to arrange holidays and get-togethers for its members.

I think this has fallen into desuetude. It can, of course, be revived if anyone is interested in taking the responsibility. Let me know before 15 December and I shall give a page in the 1997 Book to Giotto Tours.



With the 1997 Giotto Book, I shall send information about my suggestion of the creation of a charitable Trust with philanthropic aims to offer assistance of various kinds to people wishing to do what our students have themselves done - to cross frontiers. I know that life has been kind to many in the Book and that some would like to do something along international lines to make life kinder to others.

To give impetus to the idea, I shall offer in the name of my organisation to The Giotto Trust (if it is formed) two places on our Courses in the summer of 1997.

The places will be in addition to the places offered to the JWA. I would not exclude the possibility of the Trust being combined in some way with the JWA, but that must be up to its members.

PHOTOS IN THIS BROCHURE

If parents or students would like to have the original slides used in this brochure, please ask. 'First come, first served.'

OUR COURSE AS A REWARD

A few parents use us as a reward for doing well at school. The problem comes when the child does badly in an end-of-year examination and the parent wishes to cancel. Sympathetic as we are to parents who see an anomaly in giving their child a great time after failing an examination, our normal conditions must apply. The concept of reward involves punishment, too. The punishment should not involve us. Refunds for cancellation less than a month before the Course begins are paid by Insurers only for medical reasons. It is better that parents explain participation in

the Course as an investment for the future rather than a reward.

MY THANKS

To all the parents who have invested in their children's education and development and have entrusted their children to our care; to the young people who trusted us to give them a great time; to those staff to whom I delegated this trust. I am well aware that my entire organisation is based on a bond of trust and that I am privileged to be involved in the development of young people. I think everyone knows it is a position I greatly enjoy.

Ian G. Mucklejohn - Autumn 1996





*So now you know
Vacational Studies
back-to-front.*

Vacational Studies[®]

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ian Mucklejohn - who, as the Director, co-ordinates the Schools - was born in London. He is a graduate of the University of London with an Honours Degree in English Language and Literature, is an Associate of the College of Preceptors and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He has had many years experience in teaching. He is the founder of Vacational Studies.

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