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Beech Hall School

for pupils aged 6 months to 18 years

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The Griffin Extra

Issue 10/1 - November 2024



In Macclesfield, pupils sign messages for Pink Day; across the Atlantic Rory's dad succumbs to pink nails



No more so than in that final week of the half term has Beech Hall pupils' success been more apparent or more evident in the everyday - and the not so everyday - life of the school. Whilst this edition of The Griffin Extra will recognise the efforts and success of our NYC swimmers, it will also

with Prefects last week to finalise out pilot programme, I returned home to 131 WhatsApp messages as they continued to debate the advantages and disadvantages of certain systems. We have now agreed a pilot programme for the next five weeks, after which we

50 merits: Selection Box
125 merits: Lower tier trip
175 merits: Higher tier trip

These will be reviewed at the end of term with consideration given to fairness and consistency.

Process

pay tribute to the phenomenal efforts of our Upper V pupils for Prevent Breast Cancer, the remarkable success of our U11 footballers, ISA Arts and of course, the decision of the year, the unveiling of Beech Hall's official Christmas card design.

As anyone who knows anything about Beech Hall will understand, our pupils are at the heart of everything that we do. Now this may sound really obvious, wouldn't every school place its pupils at the centre of its goals? At Beech Hall, I believe we go several steps further in this endeavour. This is why our staff have been working very closely with our Senior Prefects to overhaul our merits system which we recognise could be fairer, more motivating and more effective. During the last six weeks, Prefects have met and discussed the current system, its flaws and ways in which it could be improved. They have understood that any whole-school system is difficult to implement consistently, and this has been their goal. Head Girl, Dulcie Pearson and Head Boy, Amaan Mohammed, joined the staff at the start of September to discuss their initial thoughts and Dulcie then joined a staff meeting to further their thoughts. When I finally met

will evaluate, tweak if necessary and hopefully confirm the way forward from January. In coming to decisions, the Prefects have discussed the various intrinsic and extrinsic motivators as well as the innate purpose of a merits system. Is it to reward excellence, or to improve behaviour? Should academic attainment be the ultimate goal or should attitude and effort be more important? I have been very impressed with the manner in which pupils have taken part in this project and am looking forward to this upcoming five-week pilot. In order to ensure fairness and consistency for all pupils, all senior pupils (i.e. from Form III upwards) will restart their merits total from zero, but please don't worry, Mrs Yandell has a track of what you have already earned so all is not lost. In order to establish a level playing field and therefore a fair test, we have agreed this starting point. Junior pupils will continue with their merits total as before. For all pupils there will be four rewards on the tariff available with merits awarded (a maximum of 1 for each occasion) for our school values of kindness, respect, integrity and ambition, as well as for effort and attitude.

Rewards will be:
25 merits: Brunch voucher

In the pupils' survey of pupils, we were all surprised to understand that, on the question of public or private acknowledgement, pupils were split pretty much fifty-fifty and so we will award these privately in forms from now on, rather than publicly in assemblies.



The Wear It Pink! Day initiative came from the pupils, borne out of a careers visit to the Nightingale Centre at Wythenshawe Hospital, and you can read about its immense success, both in Macclesfield and in New York later in this issue.

Whether you were part of Pink Day to raise so much money in support of an incredible cause, have found success in this year's ISA Arts Competition, enjoyed achievement on the football field or in the water, many, many congratulations to you and thank you for your participation and your engagement, your energy and your enthusiasm, your effort and your attitude.

Look out for the QR code videos in this edition.

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads 'James Allen'.

James Allen [Headmaster]

LET'S BE AWARE

You have a good chance to cure breast cancer if you find and treat it early.

If you think something's wrong, don't wait.

Seek care immediately.





Upper V Pupils Ticked Pink

A determined and hardworking group of Upper V pupils were tickled pink when they raised more than £1,000 for Prevent Breast Cancer.

Having visited the Nightingale Centre at Wythenshawe Hospital in September, plans were made to run a host of different fund raising activities across the day for junior and senior pupils, and staff.

Football and netball matches, a treasure hunt, guess the sweets in the jar, cake sale, dance class on the lawn, tug o' war and throwing paint at the teacher were organised and facilitated by the pupils.

Reece Chopping, Dulcie Pearson, Farrah Cooper-Blair, Ruby Calnun-Pratt, Sophie Podd, Indi Platt Wells, Liv Thorndyke, Amaan Mohammed, Kate Vasylevskya, Poppy Chrimes and Taha Harcup all contributed at various stages and worked together to create what was a memorable day. Mr Coulbeck, Mrs Rhodes, Mrs Struthers and Mr Campbell all volunteered to be soaked with cold, pink paint water and many other staff members supported the events.

The aim of raising at least £1,000 was a challenge set by the staff at the aforementioned Nightingale Centre. The Manchester base for Prevent Breast Cancer is building a Screening Academy - the first of its kind in the UK - and any school which raises £1,000 can have its name imprinted on a digital brick which will be part of the new building and installation.

Careers Lead Mr Coulbeck said, "We are so proud of the pupils. Organising such a full day for different groups of people took a lot of effort and so many meetings. They had their moments and will certainly learn from the experience but they pulled it off and what a magnificent achievement. It was also superb to see so many staff and pupils wearing pink for the day too!"

Not only was Beech Hall dressed in pink for the day but members of the Channel Swim squad also had their nails painted pink and wore some questionable outfits whilst recovering from their successful completion of the Twenty Bridges Swim around New York City.

Deputy Headmistress Mrs Yandell commented, "It was one those classic Beech Hall days! Everyone came together to have fun and raise money for a deserving charity. The pupils did marvellously well and we thank them for their hard work and commitment."

Prevent Breast Cancer is the only UK charity dedicated to the prediction and prevention of breast cancer. They are committed to freeing the world from the disease altogether. The team in Manchester is focused on preventing rather than curing; promoting early diagnosis, screening and lifestyle changes. For more information, visit www.preventbreastcancer.org.uk.

Ben Coulbeck [Careers Lead]







From Macclesfield to Manhattan



Do you know the...

Signs & Symptoms

prevent
breast
cancer

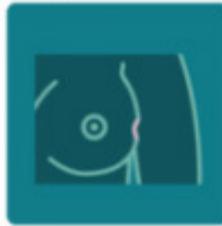
A lump in the breast



Swelling of all or part of breast



Dimpled or depressed skin



Nipple changes inversion



Bloody discharge



Skin irritation or texture change



Redness & heat



Visible lump on armpit



The earlier breast cancer is found, the better the chance of beating it.

Speak to your GP if you notice anything unusual.



More info & how to check yourself video



www.preventbreastcancer.org.uk

U11 Football Champions

Date: Friday 18th October

The U11 football team from Beech Hall School put on a spectacular performance at this annual tournament held at Kings School Macclesfield, demonstrating both skill and determination throughout the day.

Group Stage Matches:

In our opening fixture against Gawsworth School, the team swiftly dispelled any pre-tournament nerves, securing a convincing victory that set the tone for the day. Next, we faced St Albans, who dominated possession. However, Beech Hall's resolute defense held firm, resulting in a hard-fought 0-0 draw. Our final group match was against the hosts, Kings School. Despite showcasing impressive skills on the pitch, Beech Hall fell short, losing 2-0. Nonetheless, the team's efforts earned them a place in the Quarterfinals of the Shield Competition.

Quarterfinal:

In a thrilling quarterfinal match against Rainow, Beech Hall displayed their attacking prowess. Bentley Williams stole the spotlight with a brilliant hat-trick, while other players also contributed to a commanding scoreline, sending the team into the semifinals brimming with confidence.

Semifinal:

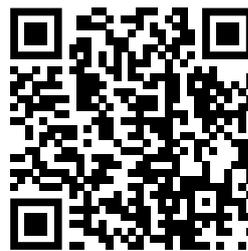
The semifinal saw Beech Hall dominate possession and create numerous goal-scoring opportunities. Stellar defensive performances from Ethan Oliver, Danny Lawson and William Robinson, allowed goalkeeper Archie Davies to keep a clean sheet. Goals from Theo Forster, Harry Nichols, and Freddie Johnson propelled the team into the final, now hungry for victory.

Final:

With the trophy in sight, the pressure mounted as Beech Hall faced Whirley. Unfortunately, within 40 seconds, Beech Hall conceded a penalty, which Whirley converted. Despite battling hard and creating chances, Beech Hall struggled to find the net. Just as it seemed all hope was lost, Freddie Johnson scored a stunning goal in the dying moments of the game, bringing the score to 1-1 and sending the match into penalties. With the score level at 3-3 in the shootout, Bentley Williams stepped up confidently, and scored to make it 4-3. A pivotal save from Archie Davies sealed the victory for Beech Hall, securing the trophy amid jubilant celebrations from pupils and parents alike.

This tournament was more than just a game of football; it was a competition that developed both character and resilience amongst our young players. Congratulations to the U11 football team for their incredible achievement. This is just the beginning, and we look forward to seeing what this talented group of players can accomplish in the future!

Ryan Walker
[Head of Sport]



*Don't miss
Archie's legendary
penalty save!*





From left: Lawson, Johnson, Oliver, Robinson, Davies, Forster, Nichols, Williams





Congratulations to Felicity's "Autumn Trees" (left) and Poppy's "Meow" (above) both of which earned 2nd place medals in this year's ISA regional Art Competition in the categories of Key Stage 2 2D & 3D respectively

Eleanor's magnificent robin has been selected as this year's official Beech Hall Christmas card, congratulations Eleanor. Miss Fitzgerald said: "I was really pleased with so many entries and it was a difficult decision for Mr Allen who judges all of the entries blind of the artists' name in order to ensure a completely fair process."

Mr Allen was confident with his design choice because, as he explained to the crowd who had gathered outside the Art room awaiting the decision: "What I love about this design is that it is slightly quirky. I love the gold eye lashes, making the robin look like it is heading for a night out on the branches. It also appeals to the swimmer in me as it could also be swimming through the beautiful blue ocean."





Outstanding Success

Our application for this year's national Education Today awards, which has resulted in Beech Hall being shortlisted for the second consecutive year, focused on our outstanding GCSE results this summer which included a 100% pass rate in Maths and 95% in English. In addition, 100% pass rate in Chemistry, Design & Technology, Dual Science, English Literature, Film Studies, Media Studies, Physical Education and Physics. "Going to Beech Hall School has transformed our son's future options." (Year 10 parent)

It also focused on our Channel swimmers who crossed the water in a record time of 11 hours and 48 minutes. Upper V leaving parent wrote: "I have no words to express our gratitude for what you have done for James. When he joined Beech Hall, we had hopes he would do 'okay'. How wrong we have been! He

has surpassed every dream we had for him. This has only been possible with your dedication, determination and downright perseverance! We now see a boy who can achieve anything. I don't say this lightly, you have the most phenomenal team – quite honestly changing the chances of students like James." James himself said, in church on his final day at Beech Hall: "Without Beech Hall, I would not be able to stand here in front of a packed church, in my shorts, and speak to you. Because of you, I have skills and memories I will never forget. I have swum the Channel with my friends, played football in Dubai and worked with the tortoises in Galapagos. I never thought I would enjoy school but I have now finished my exams and am sitting at home wishing I was back at Beech Hall."

Beech Hall changes the lives

of its pupils. The skills and attitudes learned through swimming and other co-curricular activities enhances and enriches success in the classroom. As one Year 7 parent wrote in her questionnaire: "Society takes children not predisposed to fragility and makes them fragile; Beech Hall takes children whose learning challenges means they are predisposed to fragility, and makes them resilient."

It is also this success which resulted in Beech Hall being highly commended in this year's annual ISA Awards as ISA's Senior School of the Year.



"Society takes children not predisposed to fragility and makes them fragile; Beech Hall takes children whose learning challenges means they are predisposed to fragility, and makes them resilient."

If you have never seen Katie Ann landing on the steps in Wissant, France to complete Beech Hall's first ever Channel relay swim in 2021, you shouldn't miss this 53 seconds of inspiration





went

It's 7.20am on the 15th October. It's a clear bright day in New York but there is a nip in the air. We are on the edge of the changing seasons and there is exciting uncertainty in the autumnal breeze. Some of the trees are beginning their Fall colours, green turning to gold, red here and there. We assemble in North Cove Marina, Downtown Manhattan for one of the last swims of the season around 20 Bridges Manhattan. Today we are Lads v Dads - 3 members of our Channel squad who have each completed 2 English Channel relays, with their Dads and

James Allen.

Each team sets off in a small boat with a kayaker onboard. We motor past the World Trade Centre, The Statue of Liberty, The Empire State Building and reach our starting point Mill Rock.

Ed Heyworth's fear of starting is trumped by his fear of losing to his Dad, Alf. Ed jumps in and he's off! The bridges are clustered together in the Harlem River - Ed knocks 4 off! The race is close at times but each time Ed stops and looks

back he is ahead of his Dad. Aleks Rangayah is next in ...never have I seen such steely determination: We know honorary Dad James Allen does not like losing so unsurprisingly he powers the Dads ahead. Mr Allen looks happy and relaxed, his swimming is smooth, but does he know Aleks is on his toes? Aleks swims harder. Aleks digs deeper. He doesn't give in ...and he edges the Lads into the lead again.

Crash, splash! Rory Kaye is in the water. Through the Henry Hudson Bridge now and into the Mighty Hudson River. Rory storms ahead. The tidal assist gets stronger. Ed next. We are way ahead of the Dads and Ed is flying at over 6 knots an hour. This is one of the strongest tides of the year and whilst useful if the tide is in your favour - as the Hudson races to the sea its magnitude can be menacing at times. Not an easy swim this - but at least we are still ahead of the Dads! Aleks next in - we can't even see the Dads! This is looking really good. Then Rory again. We nearly reach the end of the Hudson River and turn towards East River. We are in front of Battery Park - but what's this? Rory seems to be going nowhere. We encourage him

to go faster.

Nathaniel our kayaker wears a white peak cap and years of experience so it is startling when he yells "I can barely move, the wind is on my back and the water is weird" Both of them seem almost stuck in the water. Horror of horrors Phil Kaye has gone at double speed assisted by kayaker Alex who has expertise in finding fast water.

Ed & Aleks are in unison. They shout above the sounds of boat traffic and helicopters "Rory your Dad is catching you" and somehow Rory manages to break free from the tidal rip separating the Hudson and East River. He rounds the corner and whoosh he is off again. Back up the East river and heading towards Harlem.

Rory begins to take us under the BMW series of bridges - B is for Brooklyn, M is for Manhattan. Ed takes us under W for Williamsburg. And finally it's Aleks who takes us under the last Bridge alongside Roosevelt Island and storms home to Mill Rock in a stupendous time of 7 hours 22 minutes and 24 seconds!

By Bridges

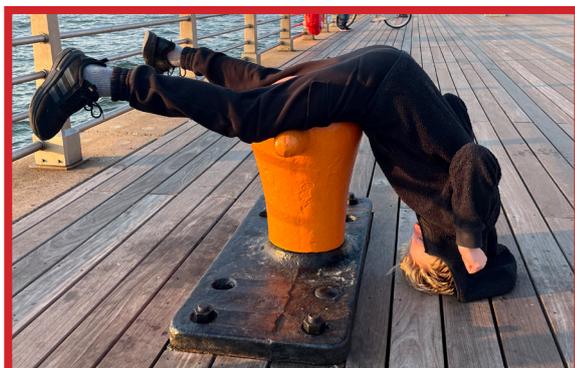
Awesome achievement lads! And TBH considering the combined age of all the Dads' knees including Mr Rangayah as Observer, Mr Heyworth, Mr Kaye and not forgetting Mr Allen - is over 400 years old-their time of 7 hours 35 minutes is a remarkable achievement too. Well done all!

Together we have reconstructed impossible - to make it I'M POSSIBLE! . The Beech Hall



See the Swim Squad jump out of Manchester Airport and onto Brighton Beach

Ed takes a break from the stresses and strains of swim preparation at Pier 40



Mencap Marvels triumphed even though NWOY doesn't generally do relays & doesn't generally allow kids. It seems that when you approach on the platform of being a double English Channel Relay swimmer you get higher rights of audience! It just shows success leaves clues. Give it everything you've got and you never quite know how far you can go!

Nikki Pope [Swim Coach]





Two Teams Take on New York

BEFORE THE SWIM

Phil:

Late 2023, post swim at Hathersage pool, we sat down with Nikki, Cate and Mr Allen who delivered some exciting news. There was an opportunity for Rory, Aleks and Ed to swim another of the Triple Crown swimming events, the 20 Bridges in New York.... The school would be entering both a junior team and a senior team. Rory immediately volunteered "my dad will do it" ...

Whether it's mental, physical or both, there is no escaping that I struggle in "less warm" * water. Once I'd signed up, the promised 18 degrees water quickly changed to, "it could be significantly less than that, prepare for the worst and hope for the best". As a parent, we've watched the swim squad acclimatise to "less warm water" to prepare for the Channel. The kids are tough, but I don't think I appreciated just how tough they are until I had to do it myself. After many months I think I've got a bit better and now have a love / hate relationship with the less warm water. It's invigorating but I still dread it! Other than the temperature, the other challenge is speed. A rivalry emerged about which team would be quickest, senior or junior. Gone are the days when I was quicker than Rory in the pool, gone are the days I can "hold his feet", gone are the days it's close and gone are the days it's close to being close! Although I trained hard, going into the swim my aspirations were to keep the time losses to a minimum...

Once in New York, we scheduled a couple of training swims at Coney Island and were given an incredible welcome by the locals. The sun was shining, and the water was comparatively warm at 17-18 degrees (we'd been in 12.7 the week before). I was the only one with the shivers afterwards, I tried to disguise

it, but Rory was merciless drawing attention to it. I sensed the coaches were worried!

Rory:

We did lots of training with the swim squad at school. It was really fun because the dads came in the pool with us. Everyone was faster than my dad, but he didn't give up but kept on going and I really liked that. We joked a lot about who would win and it got very competitive.

We also trained in Liverpool Docks. This was mostly with the whole swim squad but we also did a few extra sessions. It was good to practise in open water and even better when we got a KFC afterwards.... My dad and I trained a lot together before school as well and ate bacon sandwiches afterwards. The best bit of training though, was in New York on Coney Island. We trained with the local Brighton Beach swim club, and they gave us encouragement and doughnuts!! We ate hotdogs there as well.

*NB The term "cold" is prohibited in swim squad.



THE SWIM

Phil:

Swim day was incredible. We arrived at Battery Park and watched the sunrise over the Statue of Liberty. After a few last jibes from the juniors about how easily they would beat us, we raced in the support boat to the start line. It could have ended there, the boat launched airborne off the waves almost throwing us overboard.

Finally, after all the training we were off. The water temperature was around 18 degrees, the conditions were good, and we made fast progress, down the East River and into the Harlem River. Willis Avenue Bridge – Tick, Madison Avenue Bridge – Tick... Some great performances were on show, not only in the water but also from the support team racing from bridge to bridge to cheer us on (before finally relenting and retreating to the bar). After a bit of back and forth with solid first swims from Alf, Mr Allen, Ed and Aleks the teams were neck and neck. Time for me to face Rory. I didn't see much in the Harlem River; the sun was blinding so I kept my head down sighting from the blurred colour of the canoe. Entering the Hudson was a bit of battle against the currents, once I'd rounded the corner, I set my sights on Washington Bridge in the distance.

After my first swim the priority was to get warm before assessing the damage. Eugene Rangayah supported the senior boat, and it was reassuring to have him with us, dry robe at the ready. Layering up was reminiscent of the Friends episode where Joey puts on all of Chandler's clothes, I had come prepared! Inevitably, the juniors had built a substantial lead.

Alf and Mr Allen then battled the big swells in the Hudson with the Manhattan skyline passing us by, before I was back in the water to tackle what has subsequently been named "Phil's corner". Phil's corner is where the Hudson meets the Atlantic and the currents can be quite unpredictable. I didn't know at the time, but both Rory and I made slow progress in difficult water. I do remember enjoying the view of the World Trade Centre for quite a long time! Then I was held up by the Staten Island Ferry before Alf took over once more. The game was up, there was no catching the juniors, and we soon got happy word that Aleks had completed the swim for the Junior team. Strong swims from Alf and Mr Allen brought us home 12 minutes later, no disgrace. It was time to celebrate and back at Battery Park

we enjoyed food and drinks with friends and family, a medal presentation from Cate before returning home satisfied with a great day all round. We still had time to enjoy New York in the subsequent days and met frequently to see the sites. Thanks to everyone for their good company, I had a great time and laughed all week.

There was one last victory for the juniors; Rory and Mr Allen had somehow entered a competition to see who would eat the most burgers during the week. It ended up quite one-sided...

Rory:

I really enjoyed the swim. The water temperature was perfect. We had trained in much colder water, so it felt easy and relaxed. The hardest bit was the sun in my eyes which stopped me seeing the canoe and my dad. I think it made me work harder because I couldn't see my dad and so I didn't know if I was beating him. I did beat him though! Sometimes when I lifted my head up I saw brilliant things in New York, like the One World Trade Building and the awesome skyline. Ed stood up on the boat and sang California Girls which made us all laugh. Aleks also played loads of New York songs out of my speaker and it felt very special.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Phil:

Being an (extended) part of the Channel swim squad has been a privilege. To be successful the children must be committed, determined and fearless. Watching them rise to the challenge has been inspiring. More than that, they achieve their goals with a positive, infectious attitude; often daft, always fun, with mutual support, kindness and friendly banter. I quickly gained a (fair) reputation for not being able to swim in a straight line and I'll always remember the remark when I used a wetsuit for a longer less warm swim. "I'm not angry, just disappointed" (Danny).... It worked; I have not used it for a squad session since!

I'm a firm believer in the mental and physical benefits of regular exercise and would encourage anyone considering joining the swim squad to do it! You don't need to be an expert swimmer; you just need a positive attitude.

Rory:

I learned that my dad is a very, very tough person who never gives up and that is what swimming is about. It's all in your attitude...

IN A POOL CAFÉ NOT SO FAR AWAY...

3 boys (Aleks, Ed and Rory) were called into an inner circle to be informed that the 20 Bridges of Manhattan swim in New York is calling! Excitement was everywhere!

That is how the adventure began! Well, for the boys, anyway. For us, parents, were sworn to secrecy until all legalities had been formalised and approved by the powers that be at Chatsworth!

Flights were booked!
Accommodation arranged...and re-arranged!

Channel swim completed, photo opportunities done, summer holidays done, new school year begins and then the training and anticipation for New York began!

Aleks was particularly excited as he saw this trip as him doing justice to a New York visit, since the last time he jetted in and out like a rock star along with the Beech Hall conservation trip to the Galapagos! Initially it was all about what we were going to eat and visit (from a film location perspective)! The focus was always the swim but, if anyone knows Aleks, food, film and music are his passions, other than swimming (of-course!)

The music...Aleks had compiled a playlist for the New York trip and each day, we would be singing a tune or two or just listening to Sinatra, Keyes, and other artists. A week before the trip Aleks serenaded us at the Soirée with a rendition of Frank Sinatra's New York! He changed the lyrics to highlight (and remind us...again) that the trip was the next week!

Some of us gathered at school on the morning of departure, and took an exciting minibus taxi journey to the airport. That was also part of the fun, and was the start of another trip as the Beech Hall Mencap Marvels swim family!

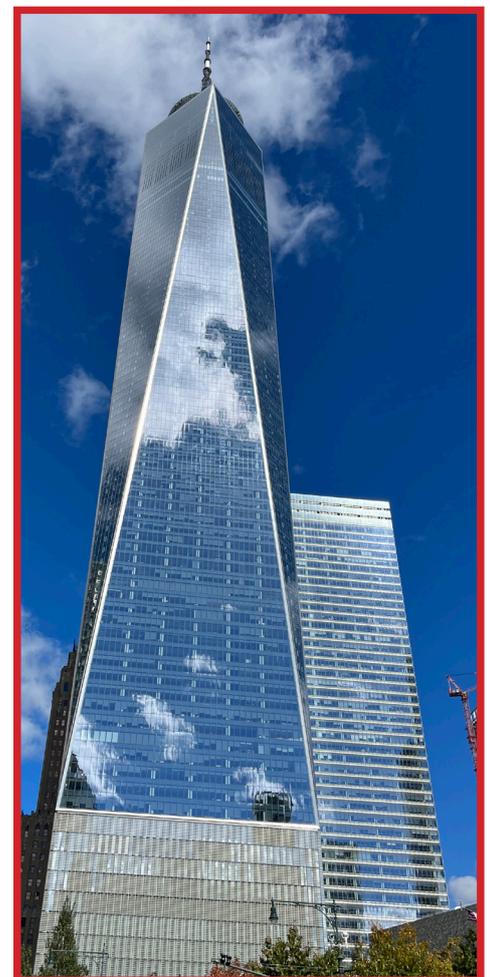
We indulged in pre-flight snacks and beverages, the flight was called and we boarded. Mid-way through the flight we took over the aisle and had a jolly chat about what lay ahead, and everything else all at once! It made the time fly!

After a day of rest and recuperation and a bit of Little Italy and Hudson Piers, the swimmers embarked on conditioning swims, where we met some of the most amazing people in Brighton Beach (Brooklyn). Whilst the swimmers were away for their swim, I thought, that I would indulge in a splash in the warm Atlantic, but was nicely prevented from doing so, by the curiosity of the New York Open Water / Local Swim club members. They were in absolute awe of our boys, and could not get over the fact that they were teenagers, embarking on the 20 Bridges of Manhattan swim! Later that day the swim teams were lead into the water (amidst some doubt) to swim around the pier at Coney Island in honour of Trudy Ederle! Aleks was adamant that he wanted to replicate her experience and convinced me to bring a rope along, so that he could swim around the pier whilst tied to the rope! However, my response when I saw the pier..."We are gonna need a longer rope!" The "rope" I took along was our travel clothes line!

The day before the swim we

had a lovely ferry cruise around Manhattan Island for familiarity of the route and for an entertaining tour guide! The swimmers gathered at the bow, taking in the rivers and contemplating the gargantuan task that lay ahead! Excitement and nerves filled the air!

Swim Day! I had the honour of being support for the Dad's boat, with Aleks swimming with the Lads! Prior to setting off, we exchanged taunting war cries, reminiscent of the Kiwi's against the Springboks before a rugby match! All in good fun though. The boat ride to the start point at Mill Rock was thrill-seeking to say the least! As per the boys on the other boat...we were at times airborne! This highlighted how choppy the waters were at the confluence of the Hudson and East Rivers!



The horn was sounded and the swim was off! Alf and Ed started it off, followed by Mr Allen and Aleks, and closing off with Phil and Rory. That was the order of the swim and the rules stipulated that the order could not change, with each swimmer doing an hour at a time. The lads really showed that they were aquamen in disguise and set-off to a roaring start! However, this was not a race...each team had to swim their swim! Whilst the Dad boat trawled along the East River, we encountered wonderful shouts of encouragement from the bridges above, by the marathon bridge finders/trekkers/jay walkers, namely : Victoria, Angelica and Sally. It was wonderful to see and hear them! We had no idea, what they had to go through to achieve the bridge meets! They deserve medals for this feat!

Whilst on the East and Harlem rivers, I enjoyed wonderful conversations with the pilot of the boat(Sean) as well as the kayaker escorting the swimmers (Alex). It was lovely to encounter people from different backgrounds in this situation that we were in (4 guys in a boat...That could be a title for a travel show!). The conversations stretched from technical elements of boating to fishing to water quality to watches! Over and above that I had lovely history lessons about previous swims and elements of the rivers and bridges and fish! As we meandered the Harlem, we reached the confluence of the Harlem and the Hudson, the water went from placid to slightly rapid in seconds! This highlighted the task ahead for the swimmers. The air in the boat went from chatty to almost stone cold silence as we observed the swimmers ahead and the impact of the choppy water and

the currents ahead!

We reach the confluence of Hudson and East Rivers again... this time with a swimmer facing the strong adverse currents! It was a challenge, not helped by the Staten Island Ferry getting in our way! 7 minutes felt like an eternity! Once on the East River, the current was in the swimmers' favour! Mill Rock was ahead....

The boys had finished in 7 hours and 22 minutes with Aleks (proud parent moment) taking the team across the finish! They waited to greet us, as Mr Allen crossed the finish with a time of 7 hours and 35 minutes. The greeting was a mix of jubilation and show-boating, which we all agreed was well deserved on both teams but particularly for the boys!

We made our way back to the marina from where we started. The Dads respectfully waited for the Lads to disembark, in honour of the swift completion time, before being assisted onto the pier. We were greeted by family and friends ready to offer helping hands with everything! Celebrations started by us taking over the outside seating area of a food hall! Medals presented, thirst quenchers consumed and "photoshoots" done...we all headed to off to hit the bed and get some well deserved rest! That was the swim done...

Over and above the swim related activities, the entire squad of swimmers and family and friends, bonded on so many levels! It brought the Beech Hall family that we are, even closer! We shared conversations, catchy quotes, wonderful meals/ not so wonderful meals, ferry cruises, aimless walks, purposed

walks, lovely sites and sounds, sometimes not so nice smells, terrible pizzas, amazing pizzas (Joe's Pizza – as featured in Spiderman), forced tips, expensive taxi rides and cheap train/bus rides AND a fabulously celebrated PINK DAY in NEW YORK!

The 7/10/11 days spent in New York, will be cherished! It is almost unbelievable that we accomplished so much as a well bonded group of people in such a short space of time! This trip was mostly about the swim, but as a consequence of our shared purpose, this has made an indelible impact on our lives, with memories that will last a lifetime! I, as well as the rest of us, feel privileged and humbled to have been a part of this experience!

Thank you Cate Bauer, Nikki Pope (The Mencia Marvels), Mr Allen, Beech Hall, Chatsworth and New York Open Water for making this a reality for all of us! Special Thanks to all the swimmers who agreed to take on this challenge! And divine thanks to the weather gods for a fabulous summery autumn in October!

Where to next, Sir?

Mr Eugene Rangayah [Father & Dads' Observer]



Settling the nerves - or not - on the circular ferry around Manhattan the day before our swim

right to Island



I had enjoyed two prior experiences in New York City and both were tainted for very different reasons. My first trip, four days in 2009, was simply the wrong time for me to visit and I enjoyed little of the experience before returning to London disappointed and disillusioned with a city about which I had so much hope, not even the barricaded area of Ground Zero resonating to any great extent. My second and only other experience was thirteen years later, and was for approximately five hours, as we killed some layover time on our return from the Galápagos Islands, again my experience tainted by the weight of responsibility for twenty-five pupils in Times Square after almost three weeks and eight flights away from home. However, my experiences notwithstanding, I wanted to love New York, and we were heading to the Big Apple

for a very specific purpose, and so I boarded Aer Lingus Flight EI045 with hope and optimism.

Perhaps a very specific purpose for a visit helps to galvanise the senses and focus the mind but whatever the reason, I felt like I settled into Lower Manhattan District readily, easily falling into a routine that included Liberty Bagels in between morning meetings and a nightcap in Bill's just around the corner from my hotel. As a group we were spread far and wide from Battery Park on the south side of Manhattan to the north of Central Park, across the water to Brooklyn and across the Hudson on the other side to New Jersey. Rory became the mastermind of the Subway, leading not only his family around the city, but also sharing guided instructions to the rest of us for our easiest and safest way home each evening.

Without such a specific purpose, I doubt I would ever have had cause to venture to Brighton Beach but training swims on Saturday and Sunday with local New Yorkers was the draw, such an important component of our risk assessment to be able to swim with locals who know the water, the currents and the challenges. However, welcome we were by a group of people, some of whom are 20 Bridges swimmers, some are training for the challenge and many simply there to swim for pleasure, some of them every day of the year. They were friendly, welcoming and super impressed with our swimmers' commitment not only to the challenge itself but with the ease with which they were happy to get into water slightly less warm than we would like. On both days, they spoke with confidence and ease with other swimmers, waxing lyrical about

on Beach, Coney and sea-sickness

how much they were looking forward to their swim on Tuesday. Saturday, we headed along the beach to Coney Island and to Trudy Ederle's pier. As the first woman to cross the English Channel, she learned to swim with a rope around her waist, and was encouraged by the promise of a free hotdog for anyone who could swim around the pier. And so she did. And so we did. Enjoying this most iconic of training swims that earned us all a free hotdog from Nathan's, the home of the New York 'dog'. During this privileged weekend, we met Kieran who was due to attempt his solo alongside our friend Wen on Sunday, Vicki who completed her swim around the Island in 8 hours 25 minutes, and Sonia who was inspired to swim at the weekend, entirely on the basis of our swimmers. "This is the end of the season for me," she confided, "I'm not really sure whether I'm going to swim today." One conversation with Aleks, Ed and Rory and she was in the water, so thrilled to have been encouraged by three nutty English kids. I was genuinely delighted to see her again on Sunday, keen as she was to swim "I think for at least another couple of weeks, thanks to your amazing kids".

With Monday came the circular ferry around Manhattan, a two-and-a-half-hour sojourn following the counter-clockwise route we would take less than twenty-four hours later. Unfortunately the summer temperatures of the

weekend had dropped and the wind had picked up with worrying confidence. As we rounded the bend opposite Lady Liberty, we were literally smacked in the face by the heady attitude of the Hudson River, moody, arrogant and a reminder of the challenge ahead. Whilst the conditions and temperatures were concerning, it was a critical trip to understand the water, the course, the landmarks and to be able to orientate when we were in the water. As we walked back along Hudson Park, I think we all thought without verbalising it, a quiet concern for what was to come.

Some swimmers worry about the unknown, others worry about the water temperature, and the older amongst us worry about injury. Personally, these pale against the ever-present concern for the most unwanted and debilitating kinetosis. The trajectory impact of the rolling sea on my guts is no secret and I have, over the years, experimented with a variety of remedies, all of which have not touched the sides; at least if they have touched the sides, they have been quickly eliminated by way of projectile hurling. A few years ago, I was fortunate to make the acquaintance of a most friendly medical practitioner who recommended a certain cancer-related drug designed to counter the nauseous effects of chemo and radiotherapy. "I'll try it," I said with a little too much enthusiasm, and try it I did. I have

discovered, with some degree of trial and experimentation, that this drug works beautifully and most importantly effectively in combination with a full Scopoderm patch secreted securely behind my right ear. The result? Almost nine hours on the water, at times on the Hudson, with some fairly effusive swell, with zero impact on my intestines. There was nothing being vigorously eliminated from me on Tuesday, unlike one of my compatriots, but that's an entirely different story.



The 20 Bridges Manhattan Swim is one of 'the big swims in the world'. Prior to last week, a group of children have never been permitted to swim it. It took an awful lot of convincing on the part of New York Open Water, the organisation in control of this swim. A few hours into the swim, one of the NYOW Board members commented, "wow, they're fast" to which Cate Bauer responded "I told you - they're swimmers, not kids". The swim takes in three separate rivers as we circumnavigate the island of Manhattan, a total of 48.5km which takes advantage of currents that have us swimming, at times, at more than twice our usual pace. Heading out from North Cove Marina, it was a thirty minute RIB ride to the start point at Mill Rock, just north of Roosevelt Island. This is the start of the wide, calm and serene Harlem River, the perfect way to

start our swim and hosting fifteen of the twenty bridges. Alf and I had two beautiful introductory swims before Phil took over for a third leg that rounded the island just ahead of the George Washington Bridge and the confluence of the Harlem and Hudson Rivers. Lumpy, bumpy, choppy, windy, it wasn't the easiest of swims before Alf took us under the remarkable big three - Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges - and then I took over swims along the Hudson and the iconic images we were swimming past. The vast expanse of Central Park, the ever-present image of King Kong atop the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building and so many more. Whilst choppy, the current ensured we covered about eleven miles between us before Phil took over alongside the One World Trade Centre and, yes, the bend in the river. Now

another set of challenges as the current worked against him and he had to wait in the river for two Staten Island ferries to both come and go. With the go-ahead to continue swimming, Phil battled the current and got us into the East River and the start of the final challenge. Alf took us under the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge, our penultimate bridge and I took over as we headed for Roosevelt Island. Just one bridge to go and we were flying with a potent combination of adrenaline and current. With the red triangle of Mill Rock looming, the senior team completed their swim in 7 hours and 35 minutes, just over 12 minutes after the juniors became the first junior relay team in the world to complete the 20 Bridges swim around Manhattan.

James Allen
[Senior team, 2nd place]

