

# PIN OAK



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**FEATURE**  
Goodbye 2020

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**HEAD OF COLLEGE**

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**INSPIRATION**  
Netflix Dramas

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## EVERY CHRISTMAS MOVIE EVER



So many Christmas movies, so little time; Or so I thought. It was a haunting realisation that almost every Christmas movie is basically the same. Therefore, why not just summarise them all into one and utilise the extra time to make additional paper chains!

So um, spoiler alert. I guess.

A young female journalist living in New York City has to go to a semi-ambiguous town somewhere in the Midwest for an equally ambiguous reason; perhaps to write an article, to help with a Bakesale or for her hometown's annual Christmas nativity play. The town's name? Christmas. Begrudgingly, the protagonist (Let's call her "Holly" as the perfect festive double entendre) laments to her friend (Whom we do not see for the rest of the movie) that this trip conflicts with her workaholic lifestyle, her friend laughs and says "Holly, you need man".

Following a travel montage, Holly has arrived in the little town named Christmas. Holly ventures into the town's square (It should look like a little European market place) for hot chocolate or better wifi (Gotta make those work calls!), when she accidentally bumps into the equally non-specific love interest (Let's call him "GenEric") "Hey, why are you in such a hurry" GenEric chuckles, "I'm just trying to get some work done before Christmas." Holly rolls her eyes, "Someone is in need of some Christmas cheer!" GenEric laughs again; "Listen" Holly says "I haven't celebrated Christmas since..." (My mom died/ the accident/ I got hired). "Well" says GenEric, "Why don't you celebrate it with me and my family! As they say; there is no Christmas like a Christmas spent in a small ambiguous town coincidentally named Christmas!"

Holly agrees and another haphazard montage ensues, as Holly and GenEric decorate the house to a royalty free Christmas carol called "You Jingle my bells". "Wow, I guess I have really changed since moving to the big city." Holly says; the montage coming to an abrupt halt as Holly and GenEric are caught under the mistletoe together. In the heat of the moment- they kiss. But then Holly (and the screenwriters) collectively realise "Oh my gosh; what about my Fiancé who hasn't been mentioned in the movie yet!". Holly begins to retreat back to her accommodation.

At the lowest point of her Character arc, Holly cries and laments the Holiday season when she passes a toy shop; inside a mother struggling to pay for her daughter's only Christmas gift says "I'm sorry sweetie; but this year-when Holly interrupts "Don't worry, I've got it" handing the storekeeper her Mastercard. The mother and child thank Holly profusely and an old man who looks notably like Santa (Trust me, this happens in every movie) winks at her

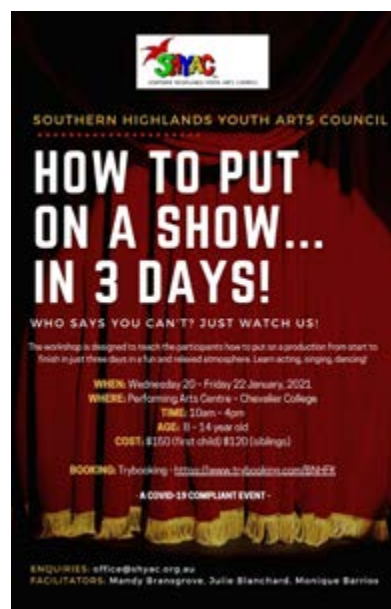
Once back at her accommodation; Holly thinks about the true magic of Christmas, before answering another work call when she begins to hear the sound of royalty free Christmas carols softly in the distance. Rushing to the door, Holly sees GenEric and his family carolling at her door. "You didn't think we could spend Christmas without you?" he says. Holly leaps into his outstretched arms, throwing her phone into the snow.

"I love you Holly" he says

"I love you too GenEric."

And they all live happily ever after.

By Pearl Bendle (Year 12)



## HEAD OF COLLEGE'S REPORT



Dr Stephen Barnett, Chairman Oxley College Board of Governors, fellow Governors, Parents, Friends and Students both here and watching this Speech Day Assembly on Zoom. I offer a special welcome to our Year 12s for your final Speech Day and the

full stop in your secondary schooling.

Who could have imagined 12 months ago that we would be doing separate speech days for the Junior School and Senior school and sitting out on Elvo lawn broadcasting live, rather than gathering as a whole school community like we have traditionally done in the past. Before I start, I would like to make special acknowledgement of our musicians and music staff who are performing today despite having very little time to prepare given all the restrictions placed on them this year. I think you have done a remarkable job! Thank you.

I am thrilled to have some people in front of me and to be able to celebrate what has been an 'interesting' and memorable year. I encourage everyone to cherish the special memories we have been able to create despite the challenges faced and to celebrate the resilience, strength and growth of our young people and staff members. They have all been truly outstanding, and I am so very proud of each and every one of them.

Altogether, they have helped create the magic which is palpable at Oxley College. Why do I say magic! Just last Thursday night at the Year 10 Film Festival I was reminded of the 'magic' of Oxley- not only by the energy and creative and brilliant films that our Year 10s had created in just seven days but rather by a former student who, for various reasons had moved to a big Sydney School and when talking about her new school and how she quite liked it said 'Mrs Ethell in coming back to Oxley tonight I am reminded about just how special Oxley is. She went on! 'You need to understand Oxley is a diamond and you have magic happening here! Don't let people forget that'!

There are many people who make the magic happen at Oxley and I would like to thank the Board of Governors for all their support this year, especially our current chairman Dr Stephen Barnett and Mr Frank Conroy our immediate past Chairman. Oxley is very fortunate to have your generous and wise leadership. I would

also like to extend my most sincere thanks to our staff especially this year as I know each and every one of you - Executive, Teachers, Administration, Support Staff, IT, Grounds and Maintenance, Canteen, cleaners; you have all gone above and beyond. You have been outstanding, and I could not think of a better team of people with whom to face this year. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Today in particular, I want to acknowledge a most significant departure from the team of talented and dedicated teachers who guide our students. Vanessa Forbes, Visual Arts teacher, retires this year after more than four decades in education. Vanessa has been

*"Who could have imagined 12 months ago that we would be doing separate speech days for the Junior School and Senior school and sitting out on Elvo lawn broadcasting live, rather than gathering as a whole school community like we have traditionally done in the past"*

instrumental in shaping Visual Arts at many schools, including at Oxley, and she goes out at the top of her game. Three of her Year 12 students were nominated for Art Express, the annual showcase of HSC Visual Arts excellence with Matthew Hardy's work selected for inclusion in the Maitland Regional Gallery. I am reliably informed that this brings Vanessa's total Art Express nominations to 23, with 11 works selected for inclusion in the Art Express Showcase. And that's just during her time at Oxley! Vanessa, we thank you for your dedication and the generosity with which you have fostered the creative vision of our students. You leave with our best wishes.

I don't want to use this time we have together to talk about 2020 in terms of COVID-19. I think we've all heard enough but it's hard to separate the virus from any meaningful reflection on the year that was. As many

international commentators have observed, the impact of this pandemic on us globally is likely to be on a par with the impact of the World Wars or the Great Depression. In fact, some argue that the repercussions will be greater, because COVID-19 has affected so many of us at once, challenging every aspect of our lives from the most significant- our health, as well as the ways in which we work and learn, to the more mundane restrictions imposed on travel and availability of goods.

History has taught us that any disruption on this scale creates the opportunity for new ways of thinking. For many years at Oxley College we have strived to cultivate a growth mindset in all that we do, but this year we were challenged to put that attitude into practice. The word 'emergency' comes from the Latin 'to rise up'. This community's response to the pandemic has led to



our teachers' creative fires in ways I don't think we could have anticipated, as well as fostering resilience and independence in our young people. It is on this positive legacy of COVID-19 that I wish to focus today.

But 2020 has been a year in which you've heard a lot from me this year- at some stages on a daily basis, so I thought I would share the reflections of some of our students on how they have been affected positively by COVID as learners and as people. As ever, I have been humbled by their courage and wisdom.

Academically, so many of our students told me that they valued the skills they developed as a direct result of the greater independence demanded of them during learning@home.

Key themes were the leap in computer literacy in the Junior School – a Year One student triumphantly declared: "I know how to get onto Canvas by myself and I can remember all my passwords!"

In the Senior School, an insight into individual learning styles and the development of more sophisticated organisational skills were common themes:

"Before learning@home, my desk was a mess, covered in piles of papers. Now I have an organised system with everything in its place. I am calmer and it saves me time," said one Year 11 student.

"Whilst I missed seeing my friends, I really think the skills I developed during learning@home helped me to hit the ground running for Year 12," said another.

The flexibility that learning@home offered our students, coupled with the agility it demanded of our teachers and learners alike, will inform our goals as a school for 2021 and beyond. While our senior students bemoaned the strain on family wifi caused by working alongside siblings and parents working@home, many of our younger students enjoyed the presence of their families as they learnt. However, it did prompt a distinct recognition of how multi-talented their teachers are.

"Mum cleaned the dishes while we were doing Maths. My teacher never does that," a Year 1 student reported. "Even the Kindies are better at French than my Dad," confided another.

"My parents weren't good teachers because they didn't ask the right questions" said one Year 1 student, while another disapproved of his father's approach to sports training: "he didn't even get the basketball hoop out, just told me to run four laps around the house."

While parents might not always make the best teachers, particularly not while simultaneously juggling their own workload at home, I do want to acknowledge just how much of the heavy lifting our parents did, not just in the Junior School but across the College as whole. It was a true partnership and the success of our rapid transition to learning@home owes much to the support and

positivity of our parents, and for that we are grateful.

While the perspective of some of our youngest students might make us chuckle, I do not want in any way to gloss over the strength of character our students have displayed this year. It is our young people who have led this community in terms of their optimism and agility, not just during the fires and learning@home but in the aftermath as well.

2020 saw the introduction of both Personal Interest Projects and Personal Ethical Projects, or PIPs and PEPs as we call them. Of course, these projects assumed an unforeseen urgency and importance as this year unfolded for our students.

We saw this so clearly through the energy with which our students occupied and honoured the creative space offered to them. Initially attracted by the glitter of superficial knowledge about a topic, it was an honour to witness our learners move past surface understandings of their chosen area of inquiry in pursuit of deep knowledge which, like gold, is usually buried. The PIPs and PEPs gifted our students with agency and voice as never before in their learning, and they exercised that agency and raised those voices with great passion and insight. For example, our Year 10 students seized the opportunity to explore topics as diverse as sustainable fabric production and the impact of social media on adolescent mental health and autonomous machines to name a few. If ever a year taught us that we are limited in education only by the conventional thinking of adults, and traditional notions of schooling 2020 has been it!

More than anything else, 2020 has been a year of expanding our sense of what is possible.

In a year when we have been forced to slow down, consume and discard less, we have also witnessed the immediate impact on our environment. The Himalayas have emerged from clouds of pollution and there are patches of blue sky above Beijing for the first time in many years. We have even had kaleidoscopic swarms of butterflies on the coast. Will we return to the debate on climate change with a renewed sense of what might be possible?

Just as the fires, floods and pandemic of 2020 triggered a long overdue devaluation of the cult of celebrity and a much needed re-evaluation of what people like the Kardashians have to offer us in a crisis, the year that was has resulted in a greater respect not just for education and a welcome rise in the esteem in which teachers are held, but greater respect for learning more generally and for knowledge. We have all, individually and collectively, had to learn new skills this year, and so perhaps this more intense focus on learning, and its value, is a natural consequence. How many of our students knew what an Epidemiologist was before 2020? I am not sure that even I knew precisely. The

movement of experts to the forefront of public debate has been both surprising and delightful for someone who values learning in the way that I do. In particular, the increased value that we as a society seem to be placing on science and innovation, listening to the experts rather than popular media, is exhilarating. Oxley will maintain this momentum into 2021 as we strengthen our College focus on STEM at all stages of the learning journey, through a specialist STEM programme in the Junior School and introduction of new subjects in the Senior School including a new elective in Year 9 called Cultivate and an additional HSC science subject in Environmental and Earth Science.

For me, in the end, 2020 has been about finding clarity of what stays true. These are our values? – kindness, courage and wisdom. These are the things we remain true too, when change seems to abound all around us! How do we give those values expression in our community and in our world? And how can we harness that clarity to fight for something better, more meaningful and effective, than the status quo?

These questions will resonate into 2021, informing our growth as a community. 2021 marks the beginning of a new era at Oxley College with a new strategic plan to be developed and as mentioned by Dr Barnett the commencement of the longer-term process of implementing our Master Plan. Over time, you will all notice the refurbishment of existing facilities, creation of new and versatile learning spaces, as well as a renewed emphasis on student safety on and around our campus, with a particular focus on traffic management and parking. But you should also expect to see continued innovation and change in more than just the bricks and mortar of Oxley College.

We are going to work hard to ensure that we acknowledge and continue to foster the independence our students have demonstrated this year. The fortnightly Learning Cycles, introduced in response to the disruption of COVID-19, will remain a central pillar of learning at Oxley. Both parents and teachers alike sang the praises of Parent Teacher meetings via Zoom rather than in person, so we'll be keeping those. We'll also be exploring the production of webinars to share with our community, inspired by the possibilities for more fully exploiting technology in our learning and communications which 2020 has alerted us to.

Oxley has met the challenges of 2020 and, as a school and as a community, we have not been found wanting. Our challenge is to integrate the lessons of 2020 into a true growth mindset as we enter 2021 and the years that will follow. Our challenge is to maintain the agility and creativity we have been forced to develop as a school and as a community of learners.

Our challenge is to remember what J.R.R. Tolkien so poetically wrote in *The Fellowship of the Ring*:

*"All that is gold does not glitter, not all those who wander are lost;*

*the old that is strong does not wither, deep roots are not reached by the frost.*

*From the ashes a fire shall be woken, a light from the shadows shall spring;*

*renewed shall be blade that was broken, the crownless again shall be king."*

We wish you all a safe and happy holiday and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Head of College, Jenny Ethell's speech. Senior School Speech Day Assembly, Wednesday 9 December 2020.

## ***FROM TUTOR TO MENTOR***

### **2021 – From 'Tutor' to 'Mentor' & Meet the Mentor on Day 1, Term 1 2021**

In Pin Oak Issue 113 (Friday 30 October 2020), I wrote about the changes in 2021 to our wellbeing structure in the Senior School, involving the change from five 'Tutor Groups' per House, to six 'Mentor Groups'. You can read about the nature of and reasons behind these changes here.

We have now completed the process of creating a sixth group in each of the six Houses. Unless due to staff departures in Term 4 2020 or because your child has indicated a willingness to move groups, your child's Tutor (Mentor) will remain unchanged.

Given the importance of the role of the Mentor, we are setting aside the afternoon of the first day of term – Wednesday 27 January 2021 – for parents and students in Years 7-11 to meet with the Mentor. This is an opportunity to reflect on the end of year report and to discuss some goals for the year ahead.

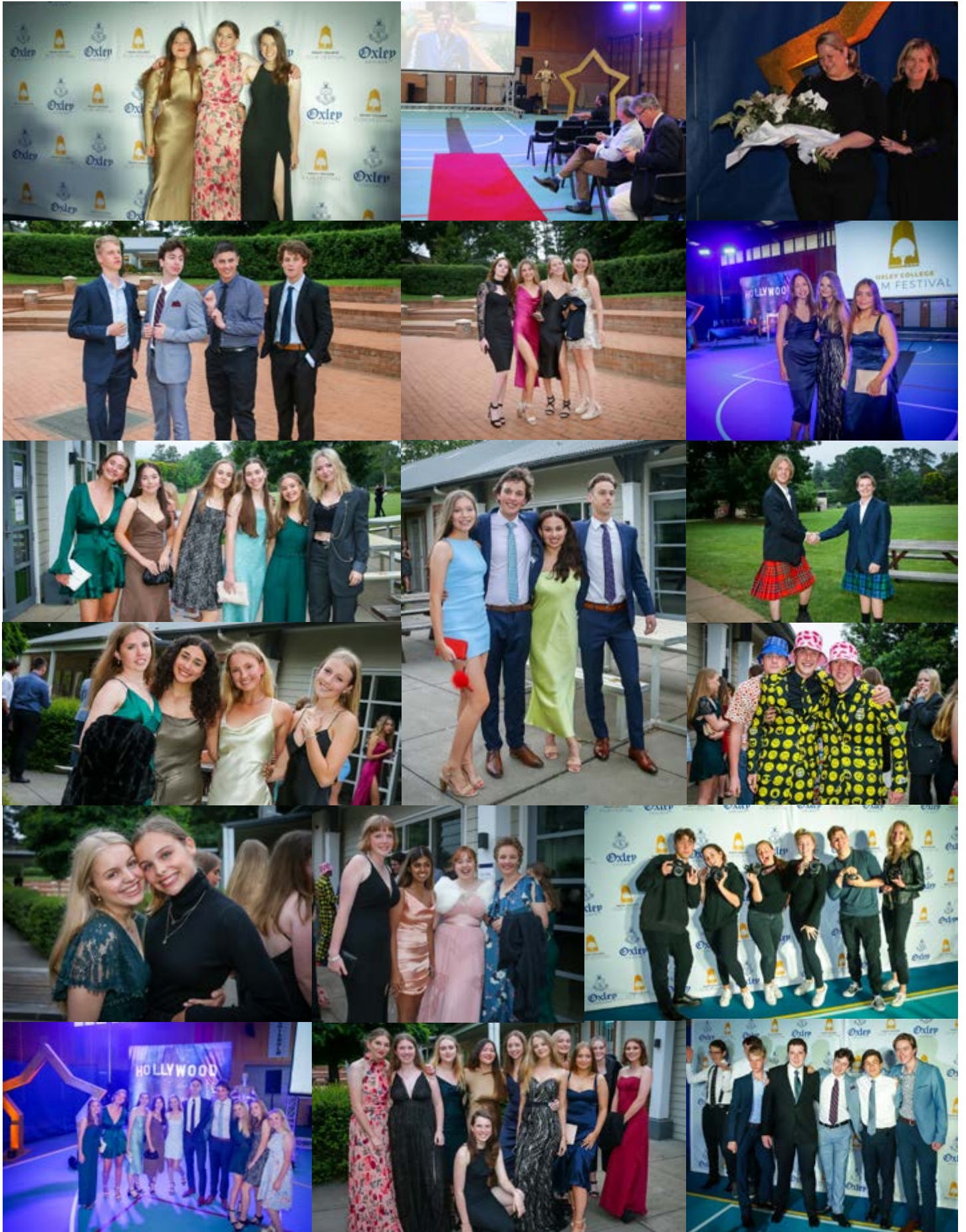
Year 7-11 parents will receive further information via email in January 2021, inviting you to select a time slot on the afternoon of Wednesday 27 January. These meetings will take place at school and parents will be able to attend either in person or via Zoom. Students will attend in person and all students will remain in school until the end of the school day.

We look forward to seeing you in 2021.

By Mark Case, Deputy Head Pastoral



# FILM FESTIVAL





# *PIPS AND FOI*





# GOODBYE 2020

Summer has just begun and the sweet smell of gingerbread, mince pies and leg ham lingers in the air as the countdown to Christmas commences. All of this blissfulness is most definitely a figment of my imagination...off course. Realistically I have consumed an 'unprecedented' amount of zooper doopers in this heat and the only smell in the air is that of recycled air-conditioned oxygen. Yet this being said, the magic of December has certainly arrived.

With the subtle hum of Bubl  ringing in our ears, it becomes apparent that soon we are to enter into a new year, crossing our fingers that it will beat the last. Though, we tend to distract ourselves from this looming unknown by preparing for the festivities of the Chrissie season. Excuse my satirical tone, yet this distraction from the new year is most commonly seen through succumbing to the cleverly crafted pressures of capitalism. It's brilliant. Instant gratification is at the core of humanity, and I like to think I'm not overly dependent on materialistic possessions, though Christmas challenges me and I fall into its trap every year. A part of me is ashamed to place so much value on the contents of my Santa stocking, especially when every children's Christmas movie tells me otherwise. Nevertheless, it is only human to want things, yet this desire for material possessions only turns sour when it is driven through the longing for validation and exterior acceptance. Do you really want the iPhone 12 or are you just trying to keep up with 'the Joneses'? It would be ignorant to simply assume such ulterior motives from our wish lists yet it is crucial we have these discussions with ourselves as to discover what you truly do and don't desire.

Throughout the holiday season it is customary that we reflect upon the year we just endured.

Though my description of Christmas might seem glum I have decided to take more of a positive slant on briefly recounting 2020. Hence, I have formed a slightly odd list of events that brought us a smile, giggle or sigh of relief these past 12 months:

- Trump got voted out!
- Taylor swift blessed our ears with a brilliant 8th album
- Drive in cinemas have made a comeback
- Season 4 of The Crown graced our screens
- We attended music concerts online
- The world went to their kitchens to bake banana bread
- We now know how to wash our hands effectively

Though these recounts are slightly comical within themselves, it is important we acknowledge the genuine immense challenge we have all faced this year and still continue to battle. 2020 has most definitely been like none other. It is evident that the 'unprecedented nature of the covid19 crisis' has contributed to the mass decline in mental health and overall wellbeing. Though this hardship and pain birthed the collective growth for the gratitude we have for one another, and ourselves. Human company and support has never been more cherished. In Australia, we are

lucky to be at a stage where we are comfortable and not locked up in our own houses anymore, free... in a sense.

My critique upon the oh so common media phrase of the 'unprecedented Corona crisis', aims to highlight the power of word choice in feeding into the fears of society. The word 'unprecedented', defined as "never having happened or existed in the past", was in itself a promotion of denial. This is seen through the known patterns of spreadable disease in history and the prediction of similar future pandemics. Hence, the sheer scale of Covid19 is a result of the lack of unified global initiatives, precautions and efforts to prepare for such a 'crisis'.

Following on from my exploration of the shared global hardships of 2020, it is clear that a new fresh year is to be welcomed with open arms. Consequently, follows the influx of new year 'resolutions'. In efforts to unpack the term I found this description, "A New Year's resolution is a promise a person makes for the new year. Regardless of what resolution you commit to, the goal is to improve life in the coming year." Resolutions appear innocent and self-helping yet they are commonly disguised as instruments of self-loathing. For example, when researching I came across an article which suggested possible resolutions to the reader which would supposedly make them happier in the new year. The 'cutting down of calorie intake' was amongst these suggestions. Weight loss is a personal experience and people choose that journey rightfully on their own accord, yet the claims in this article are problematic for they perpetuate the wrongful narrative where a number on a scale determines your happiness and worth. Though this example is not to scare you from making new year resolutions because setting out a plan for future habits and goals is incredible healthy and exciting when done correctly without self-loathing undertones.

**"Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself"**

Henceforth, I think it is only fitting to leave you with cheesy quotes to motivate you for the new year: "Be happy in the moment, that's enough. Each moment is all we need, not more." (Mother Teresa) "Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself." (George Bernard Shaw) Though I am just words on a page in this instance, I hope you enjoy the joys of Christmas and I wish you a safe new year... hopefully there will be an alien invasion in 2021 as to one-up the 'unprecedented nature' of 2020.

Peggy Holmwood (Year 10)



# INSPIRATION



## FILM FESTIVAL

Year 10

Film night 2020 was a night to remember. I recall arriving and being in awe of how grown up and glamorous everyone looked but also amazed at how the PCC (sports centre) had been transformed into a stage set from the Oscars, complete with the amazing Yearw 11s who volunteered to be the 'paparazzi'. Once we walked in on the red carpet and took our seats, we prepared ourselves to watch a series of mediocre quality films. However, to our surprise the films were all so much better than expected and I found myself bewildered by each of them. Once we had watched all of the films we waited with anticipation as the awards were announced. Baxter Gregory received the Best Script award, Mack Kane received the Best Editing award, Isabel Feetham received the Best Cinematography award, Hamilton Saek received the Best Director award, Olivia Bow received the Best Actress award and, Rex Sparke received the Best Actor award. After these awards the moment had arrived where the winner of best film was declared, the winner was 'Eshay in a Box' directed by Dominic Uliana. This film was deserving of the award as the whole audience engaged with the great cinematography as well as engaging with the well written and humorous script. Overall film night 2020 was an amazing experience and I would encourage next years' Year 10s to engage with the great opportunity Film night, as well as Film Festival programme, produces. It was a wonderful night full of glitz and glamour.

By Jillian O'Connell (Year 10)



## NETFLIX

Queen's Gambit

Competitive chess has never been so appealing. Enter Beth Harmon (Anya Taylor-Joy), orphaned from childhood due to her mother's suicide and a neglectful father. At a dreary and regimented orphanage, she becomes addicted to horse tranquilliser medicine. She begins playing chess with the resident groundskeeper, Mr Shaibel (Bill Camp), and the rest is (fictional) history. Based on Walter Tevis' 1983 novel of the same name, the on-screen adaptation follows Beth as she experiences the trials and tribulations of American high school while simultaneously perusing a serious career in competitive chess. The series, later on, employs feminist rhetoric to examine the social and political landscape of the 1960s, with great emphasis on the pre-conceived role and talent of women at the time, making it relevant in feminist discourse to this day due to its alluding to how Beth is perceived and received due to her gender, evident especially in the beginning of her career. Throughout the series Beth battles addiction, developing social dynamics, a co-dependant relationship with her adoptive mother during her rise to being the greatest player of her time. Both personally, and professionally, Beth dedicates her life to chess, due to this throughout the series, the viewer develops a greater understanding of the emotional pressures of the young star, contradictory to her glamorous fashion and generally immaculate appearance. We see her isolate herself from those who love her, give up chess completely, and then overcome these issues and 'get back on the field' so to speak, issuing important lessons on the power of human-will and tenacity.

Beth travels cross country through the United States, to Mexico, and then finally, in what is the most important match of her career, to Russia. Through this, we see Beth develop meaningful relationships with fellow chess players and come to terms with her traumatising past; both growing as a player and as a human. The Queen's Gambit, while aesthetically and dramatically pleasing, teaches a valuable lesson on perseverance and following passions despite adversity.

By Ella Jackson (Year 12)



## NETFLIX

Ratched

Not a hero nor a villain, how can we justify Mildred Ratched's bizarre yet valid morals? Sarah Paulson is brilliantly scintillating as Nurse Ratched in Ryan Murphy's (American Horror Story) latest Netflix series. Ratched, the prequel of One Flew Over Cuckoo's Nest, encapsulates the backstory to a psychiatric nurse and a mistress of manipulation. Mildred Ratched, inveigles her way into Dr Hanover's (Jon Jon Briones) hospital, Lucia Mental Hospital. Nurse Ratched secures her position by means of a little blackmail, importuning suicide, poisoning, trauma, and her daring lipstick. What her intent is, we do not know, but it is surely connected with the multiple murderer, Edmund Tolleson (Finn Wittrock). Tolleson is delivered to Lucia's to remain incarcerated after the horrible crime hate against priests - but it's all a bit suspicious when it turns out Nurse Ratched and Tolleson somehow know each other, isn't it? Events unfold one after another, but Nurse Bucket (Judy Davis), a magnificently awful woman in an abstract way, has her suspicions of 'Nurse' Ratched. Is she even a qualified nurse? Where does she come from? What are her intents? Why has everything crumbled as soon as Nurse Ratched arrived? Underlying the unfortunate events, Ratched engages with questions about where evil originates - are monsters born or made? - about how we treat halt and lame from within, the unseen trust we place in authority, and people's capacity for exploitation and complicity, even if they fall short of the extremes. TV series Ratched explores, comments, and questions us as humans, our morals, and the world we live in. Ryan Murphy has created an unexpected frantic run, all in eight episodes, but is a must see for all.

By Claudia Thompson (Year 12)



## Chairman of the Board of Governors

*Dr Barnett, a former student of Oxley College during its formative years, has been an Oxley College Governor since 2012. He was educated at The University of Newcastle where he completed his medical degree. He has post graduate studies from the UK in Child Health and as a general practitioner. He joined the Bowral Street Medical Practice in 2002 where he is a Director.*

*In 2014, he completed his doctorate at the University of Wollongong, researching the use of e-learning for medical education in rural and regional areas. His PhD has developed into Medcast, a healthcare professional education company of which Dr Barnett is a founder and Director. He is also a Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Wollongong, Graduate School of Medicine and continues to research and publish in Medical Education. He also serves on the NSW Council of The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.*

*Dr Barnett is also a parent of three children attending Oxley College.*

*In May 2020, Dr Barnett became the Oxley College Chairman of the Board of Governors following the retirement of the former Chairman, Mr Frank Conroy AM.*

In the late 1960s, John Lennon sang 'There is nothing you can do that can't be done.....it's easy.....All you need is Love'

In the late 1980s, I came to a young school whose school song encouraged students to 'Fill the World with Love your whole life through'.

And in 2020, you will sing the same school song, in a school that still bases its teaching on Christian principles, and principles found in many faiths and philosophies, of love, and of kindness. And from these principles come courage and wisdom. At Oxley, students are encouraged to Be Kind. To Show Courage. To Seek Wisdom.

As one of the early Oxley students, and now as a parent at Oxley and Chair of the Oxley Board of Governors, I am encouraged and excited that, in an everchanging world,

these foundation principles, this heart of Oxley, remains brave and strong, and true. Oxley is a very special place and as we embrace change and growth and the future, knowing that we continue to take this special soul of Oxley with us, is so important.

Over the past few years, I have come to realise that this is one of the key functions of the Board of Governors- to remember and reinforce the importance of these values and make sure they are reflected in all the strategic directions of the school.

The Board of Governors contribute a large amount of voluntary time to the school, as a service to our community. Key changes over the last year include Mr Frank Conroy AM, our long-serving Chair, leaving. We continue to miss his generosity and company and be grateful for his enormous contribution. My Tony Norris, the Deputy Chair, will also complete his 12 years as a Governor in May and will step down. He will be replaced as Deputy by Mr Roderick McAllery, who has so ably served on the Board for the last four years. Thank you to Tony for all that you have done for the school. Your corporate experience, financial ability and 'steady hand' have been integral in the College's success.

In my day job as a GP, I spend a lot of time focussing on 'the whole person' – a healthy body and mind and healthy social context...In a way, our role as the Board is similar- to be responsible for the overall 'health' of the school, and to be able to report to you, the students and families, on that wellbeing.

So overall, I am very pleased to be able to tell you that in its end of year health check, the Board of Governors can report that Oxley is very fit and healthy for a 37 year old.

Going through each aspect of the healthcheck, if Oxley's body is its infrastructure and finances, then it is in good shape.



We have been undergoing a prolonged period of Masterplanning over the past couple of years. Despite living in the country and being on a lovely big piece of land, traffic flow and carparking were ongoing issues which were hard to solve whilst also providing the numbers of classrooms and facilities for a thriving school. Fortunately, this has been solved by some creative thinking from our architects as well as the purchase of an adjacent property this year, 1 Hudson Street.

The details of this planning process will be clearer over the next 12 months, but after a recent presentation by the school architects, I am very encouraged to hear that there are well thought out solutions for classrooms, for specialist teaching spaces, traffic and parking over the next few years. I'd like to thank Mr John Rapp and Mr Roderick McAllery on the Board Building Committee, as well as the Mrs Ethell and her Executive for all their work on this project.

Financially, Oxley has some similarities and differences from other independent schools. In line with other independent schools, Oxley was able to cut some costs and distribute these costs back to families in the midst of COVID, whilst also absorbing extra costs of cleaning and online infrastructure.

Our own micro-climate in the Southern Highlands however, is a bit different, as families flock from the city for a tree change. This has led to a faster filling of the school than first anticipated. Growth is, however, in line with our ultimate goal of capped places and maintaining the balance of a small, personal school, with enough scale to offer a variety of subjects and keep fees mid-range.

To meet this need, the College will continue to invest in infrastructure including high quality teaching spaces and play areas, to cater across the school. As a young school with little in the way of endowments (we don't have a large number of Old Oxleyan billionaires yet.....but speak up if you know of any!), these funds continue to come, primarily, from school fees.

Another Oxley difference is that, with the new government funding formula that comes into place from 2021 onwards, which is based on actual parent incomes, our government funding will reduce from current levels.

Over the past couple of years, Oxley has kept fee increases below state average, but in view of the above factors, this year we have agreed to a mid-range fee increase of 3%. We believe that at this level, we can maintain a strong school, whilst aiming to minimise more significant increases in the future as government funding falls.

So Oxley's body is strong. It's mind – its teaching and learning, continues to excel. Each year the data we see from academic performance shows a significant uplift across all learning abilities - from students receiving learning support, to students being extended in their learning. The Board of Governors would like to thank Mrs Ethell, the Executive, the Teaching Staff and Support Staff for all their efforts this year.....in fact this year in particular, as we have all coped with COVID and the associated challenges.

And so finally, to the heart and soul of the school. This is all of you. The staff, the students, parents and the Board. Thank you for your courage this year in a time of apprehension and global fear. Thank you for your wisdom in a time of international confusion: embracing (and surviving!) learning from home, social distancing and staying away from school when unwell. And thank you for your love and kindness to each other during a time of pressure and uncertainty - the Oxley community is in good health and ready (after a good holiday!) to embrace 2021. And with my medical hat on, and seeing the vaccine trial results and recently published government vaccine rollout plans, there is much to be hopeful for as we look towards next year.

So please have a happy and safe Christmas and New Year, see you in 2021!

Chairman of the Board of Governors, Dr Stephen Barnett's speech. Junior and Senior School Speech Days - Tuesday 8 December and Wednesday 9 December.

# NEW SKILLS

# SCOUTS



## Duke of Edinburgh International Award's Skill Development

Leah Halstead has been developing Photography as her skill for DOE. She has worked on a range of photos focusing on different aspects of the natural world.

**31 October 2020**

**About the photos** - After an odd year the spring flowers in my garden lightened the mood, literally. The azaleas, white roses, begonias, melastomes, "four o'clocks" and cherry blossoms, bud in late September and open in early October. My inspiration to take these photos was due to their overall beauty, in particular the azaleas because the bushes are located just beyond my bedroom window and I get to see them every day. Whilst taking these photos, I was curious about the bee's movements and concluded that they are graceful and musical creatures.

**What was I taught** - Using a tripod: When using a macro setting and large lenses, a tripod is necessary for stability.

Macro setting: Also known as 'Flower setting' is used to capture the small details on an object.

Lens distance: When in macro setting the camera has a set distance which you can

be from the object this can be adjusted by the zoom of the lens.

Changing Lenses: The lenses must be changed quickly so that the glass lens is not exposed to dirt or dust.

**24 October 2020**

**About the photos** - Throughout a hike on the Dead Horse Gap Cascades Track on the NSW/VIC border, I was surrounded by the beauty of the harsh alpine environment we have in Australia. The native Australian alpine gums have fresh offsprings after the cold winter. The earthy colours of the plants are a direct representation of the dry Australian environment, even in the alpine area. Overall, I enjoyed taking these photos as I took in the landscapes.

**What was I taught** - The rule of thirds: When taking photos (landscape in particular) it is good to have a imaginary grid (nine squares). Then you can use the different parts of the shot in a more effective way.

Wind and timing: When taking photos in the bush it is hard to get focus with a low f/stop and more light or a bigger field depth and a high f/stop. It is best with my camera to wait for the wind to die down using a medium f/stop.



## The Scout ASM Award

2020 started with Alex Jurgs (Year 9) working towards achieving the pinnacle award in Scouts called the Australian Scout Medallion. Less than 1% of scouts achieve this award. Alex worked hard and consistently on this goal. He did several hikes culminating in leading a practice hike for six scouts with two adult leaders assessing his navigation and leadership skills to authorise him to lead an adventurous journey. Alex led a group of five Scouts, without any adults, on a three day and two night journey spanning 30kms from Hornsby to Cowan railway stations in mid-October.

Over the past two months Alex has completed his last remaining outdoor skills badges (bushwalking, bushcraft and camping) and been awarded his Australian Scout Medallion. This is the first awarded in the Southern Highlands ever since its inception 14 years ago.

Thus far in his Scouting journey he has - hiked over 300kms, camped out over 75 nights, learnt and taught critical survival skills to others and led a small group of his peers on a three day hike over 30kms without any adult supervision. He's also made many life-long friends. But these are only the outward markings of his incredible inner journey to increased confidence, maturity, resilience, through developing leadership, organisational, planning and interpersonal skills. It's these skills and abilities that Scouting promotes and that will help set Alex up for the rest of his life.

By Jenni Rees



# ***JUNIOR SCHOOL NEWS***



I wanted to share with you some encouraging words to end the year. Mrs Muriel Stuart, a 95-year old member of the local community, who was the recipient of a Year 5 OLE Week service gift initiative run by Mr Jonathan Hunt, spoke with us about her amazing life and shared her wisdom. Her words have stayed with me this week, and I think might encourage us all. A student asked what her number one piece of advice for us was.

Muriel who has lived through world wars, polio pandemics and the Great Depression offered this:

‘Always keep a sense of optimism. There is so much that I feel excited by. So many things I find fascinating, and more to learn. Scientific discoveries are being made every day. Life will bring many ups and downs. The pendulum swings back and forth, and what I have learned is that there will always be difficult and challenging periods. They are inevitable, but with those comes many many good things. Everything passes, and even the dark times. It is a wonderful time to be alive and there is so much to grateful for.’

As we come out of a sometimes challenging year, life can be difficult, but the storms pass, and day always follows after the night. Take care and see you in 2021. By Katherine Halcrow, Head of Junior School









# JUNIOR GALLERY





# NEWSFLASH

## HAMPERS

### Christmas Hampers: Thank You!

Thank you to Senior School families for their generosity in contributing to our two Christmas hamper drives.

We are contributing 19 boxes of bon-bons and 12 gingerbread house kits to the Salvation Army's 'Southern Highlands Community Christmas Dinner', in support of local families in need.

We have also donated 21 Christmas hampers to the Wingecarribee Family Services to help families experiencing hardship to celebrate Christmas. The hampers contain a range of goods including mince pies, shortbread, chocolates, Christmas puddings and Christmas decorations, as well as food staples such as breakfast cereals, pasta and soft drinks. Thank you too to Student Leaders Grace Ayling, Abbey Henderson and Luca Ritchie for putting the hampers together.



## NEW BAGPIPES DIRECTOR

Interview with our new Pipes and Drums Director- Barry Gray

### How long have you playing the bagpipes?

I started playing the bagpipes in 1971 – 49 Years.

### Can you tell us about your experience with Pipe Bands?

– I hold the Australian Pipe Bands Association Advanced College Certificate (1985). I was Pipe Major/Musical Director of NSW's premier band City of Blacktown (Grade 1) from 1985-2006. I have been on the Australian adjudication panel since 1986 and adjudicated contests throughout Australia, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong.

### What are some of the highlights of your career?

– NSW State Solo Championship in every grade working my way up from the Novice in 1972 through to reaching Open Grade in 1978. I have been the Open State Champion on many occasions, I have also competed in Solo competitions in Scotland in 1986, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2006 and in France 1999 as an Australian selected representative at the World Invitational McCallum Trophy in Lorient.

### Who have you performed with?

– I have performed onstage with Sir Paul McCartney on nine occasions, John Farnham for near 30 years, Bryan Adams, Olivia Newton John, Tom Jones, and Andre Rieu and am often seen on tour with the Australia Girls Choir. I have also performed at the Military Tattoo in Sydney 1999 and 2006.

### What is your normal form of employment?

– I left a sales related corporate world job about 20 years ago and took the plunge to become only a hand full of pipers in the world who derive their income wholly and solely from piping and related ventures. I play bagpipes at funerals, weddings and events all over the state. Pipers of Distinction perform at in excess of 300 performances each year. I am often employed to perform, judge or teach in countries such as Cambodia, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and the UK. As well as piping, my wife Elizabeth and I run a Kilt Hire and related attire business (A Highland Wedding Kilt Hire) as well stocking bagpipes and associated products (Berlsa Trading Celtic Sales).

## ANNELIESE WANSEY

Congratulations.

Anneliese Wansley (Year 12) had a triumphant three days at Waratah Showjumping from 20-22 November consistently placing in the Young Rider 130 classes with 4th, 2nd, and 3rd places on her horse Patrick. She also took out first place in the Junior 125 on a super horse belonging to her coach. This time she stepped up a class into the 140-150 Open Grand Prix with Patrick. To her enormous credit and two amazing rounds, she placed 4th! Anneliese was also featured in this month's Highlife magazine.



## WEEKEND SPORT

The start of the cricket season has begun, and Australia has made a cracking start. Australia played their first ODI match against India on 27 November coming away with a victory, winning by 66 runs. Steve Smith and Aaron Finch both scored centuries, and Adam Zampa and Josh Hazlewood were key wicket takers. The second match was played on 29 November, with Australia coming away with another victory, winning by 51 runs. Steve Smith once again scored a century, while also leaping across the field and making a brilliant catch. Glenn Maxwell's made a lot of runs, very quickly, bringing up Australia's runs. Moises Henriques also made a brilliant catch, getting Kohli out! However, unfortunately, early in the second innings, David Warner suffered a groin injury, which sent him to hospital to receive scans, this injury lead to Warner being out for the third and final ODI match against India.

The third match was played on 2 December, and unfortunately Australia suffered several injuries, leading to them having to bring in new players. David Warner remained injuries from the second match, and Patrick Cummins and Mitchell Starc took a break for the final match. Australia got many wickets early one, with Sean Abbott getting the first, followed by Ashton Agar getting the second not long after. But India finished their innings with many quick boundaries, giving Australia a total of 303 runs to get in order to win the match.

Despite losing the final match by 13 runs, Australia still won the series, which was a great way to begin the cricket season. By Liv Bow (Year 10)



## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Congratulations to Nic Milner Year 12 2020 who has been nominated for the HSC Showcase at Museum of Applied Arts Sydney for his Design and Technology Major Design Project. Nic designed and produced a sustainable running jacket with an innovative waterproof system to carry gear and stay dry when competing in races. Well done Nic!

By Beattie Lanser