

ENGLISH INTERNATIONALLY...

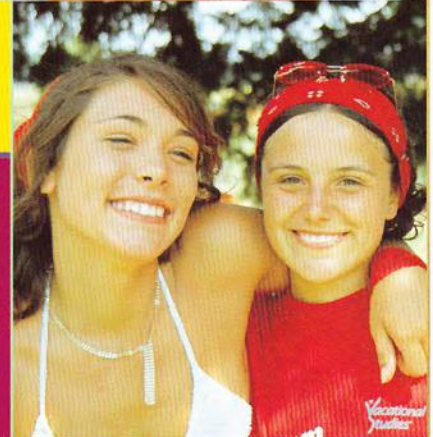


*“the investment
that can never
be taken away.”*

Summer 2002

*Vacational
Studies®*

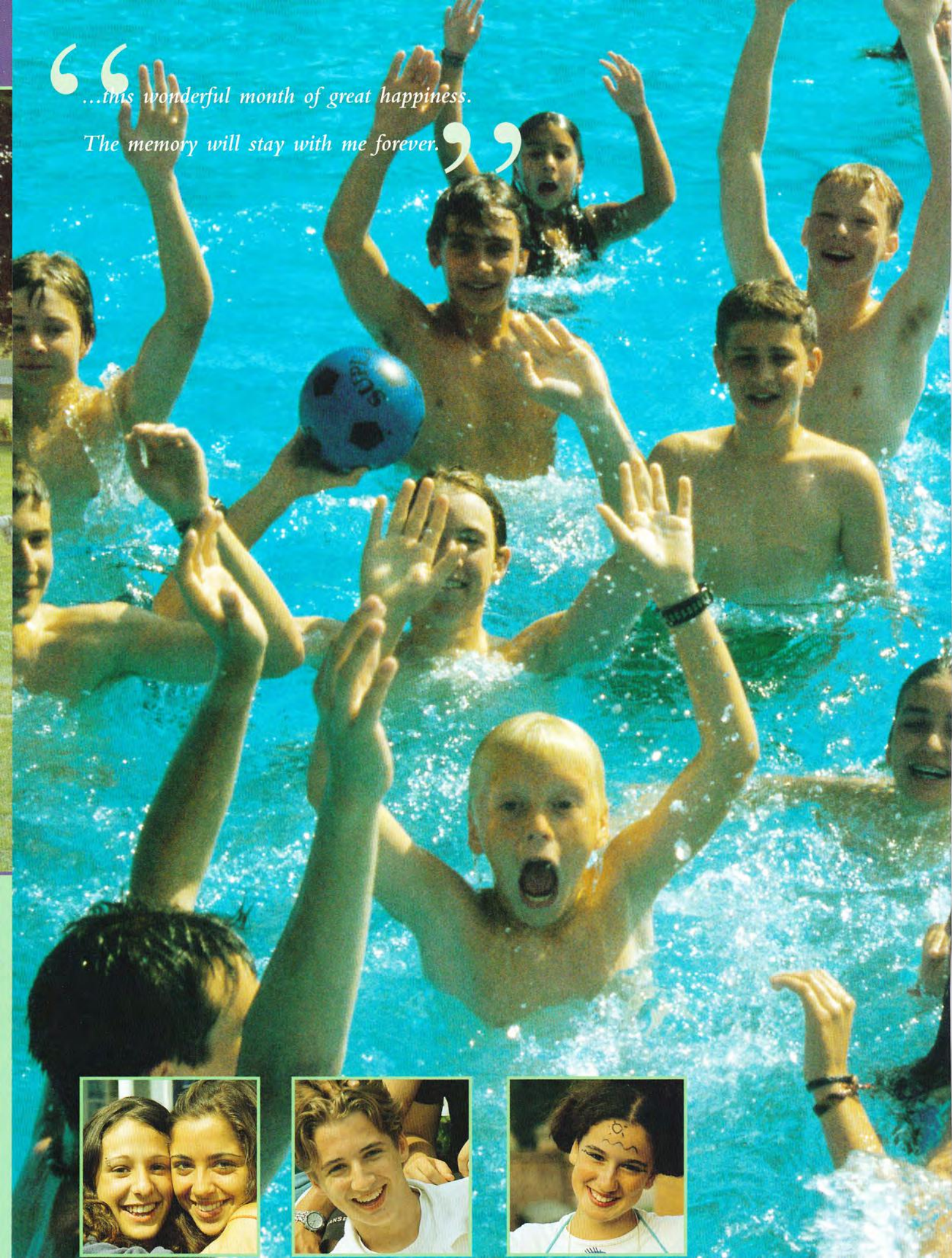
www.vacstuds.com



RESIDENTIAL
ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
COURSES

11-17 YEARS

“...this wonderful month of great happiness.
The memory will stay with me forever.”

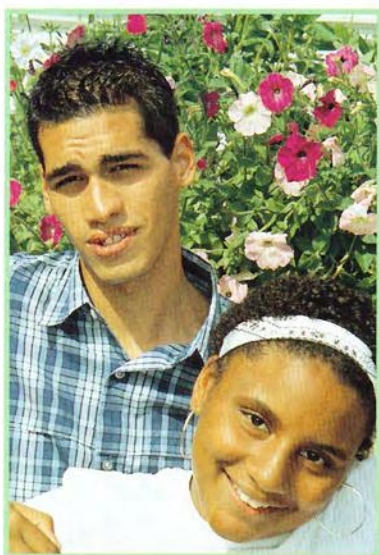


THE COURSES



RESIDENTIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES

Vacational Studies Courses have been running for 29 years. We have tried in this time to develop an enjoyable balance between 'vacation' and 'study'. Here is our programme for Summer 2002.



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.

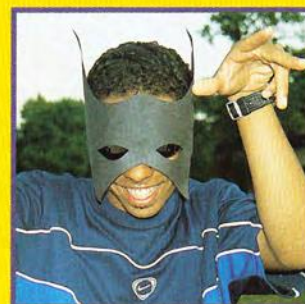
This emphasis on the practical use of English is combined with a full sports, entertainments and excursion programme helping young people to learn 'English internationally....' But it is more than this....

ACCREDITED BY THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Vacational Studies is 'Accredited 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 1999.



*“I can truly say
that it was the
best summer
holiday of
my life.”*





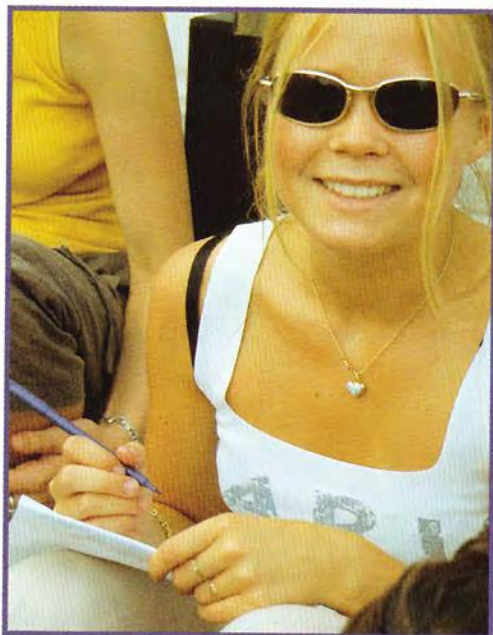
ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

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 2001-2002') is written in a different style so you have an idea of my personality which necessarily influences the atmosphere on the Courses. It gives a more detailed rationale of the 2002 Courses and what has shaped them, so

fully informed and can prepare for the experience. If your application is accepted, both sections are essential reading. In particular, 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the second section deals with fundamental issues and must be read.



THE COURSES



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, 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 quite small so that the staff can get to know everybody and treat each child as an individual.

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.

CHOICE OF COURSE

The Courses all have the same format. The only differences are location and dates. 2002 dates are:-

ELSTREE

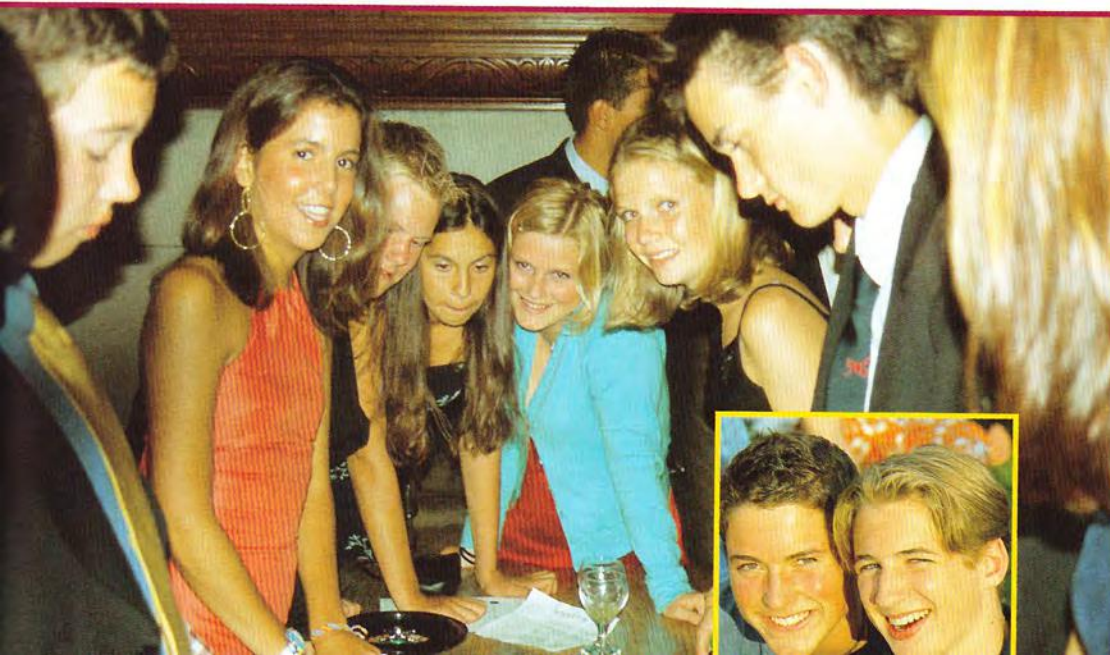
9 July – 6 August 2002
(4 weeks)

MARY HARE

11 July – 8 August 2002
(4 weeks)

CHEAM

13 July – 10 August 2002
(4 weeks)



THE SCHOOLS

THE SCHOOLS AND SURROUNDINGS

For 2002 we have Courses at Schools near Newbury – 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.

THE MARY HARE SCHOOL

The Mary Hare School is a campus comprising several buildings. Since 1982, we have used The Manor House. Recently we have also used Howard House. Various architectural styles are represented. 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.



CHEAM SCHOOL

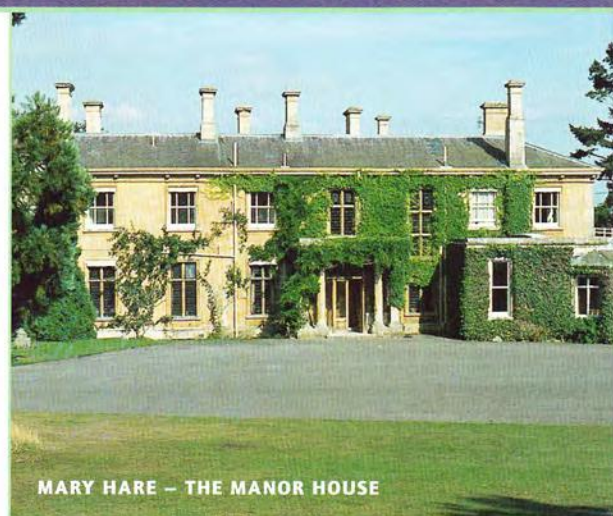
Cheam School is a late nineteenth century mansion. A particular feature is the sunken formal garden. The School's large grounds with playing fields, lawns and woods, back onto Watership Down. There is a recently built sports hall/gymnasium and a range of tennis courts. It has an open-air swimming pool.



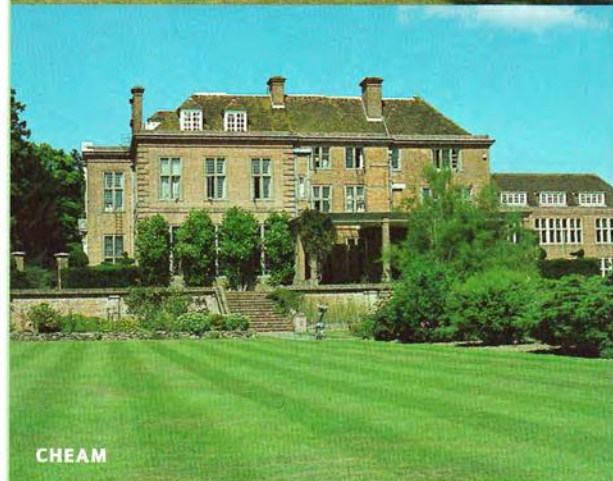
ELSTREE SCHOOL

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 gymnasium built in 2000. The dining room, kitchens and some dormitories were rebuilt in 1991. There is an open-air swimming pool and a range of tennis courts.

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



MARY HARE – THE MANOR HOUSE



CHEAM



THE PROGRAMME



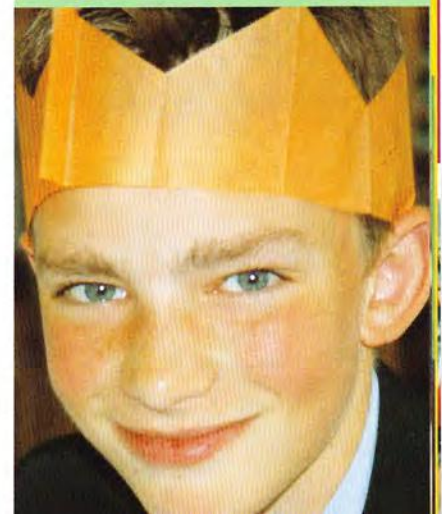
*Vacational Studies
has given me an
incredible opportunity:
I have many friends
from around the
world, improved my
English and,
especially I have
experienced emotions
each one richer than
the other.*

THE TEACHING

A staff of qualified, professional teachers, experienced in the teaching of English, 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 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 'Over to You', 'Reward Intermediate', 'Cutting Edge', 'Matters' and 'Panorama 2'. 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.

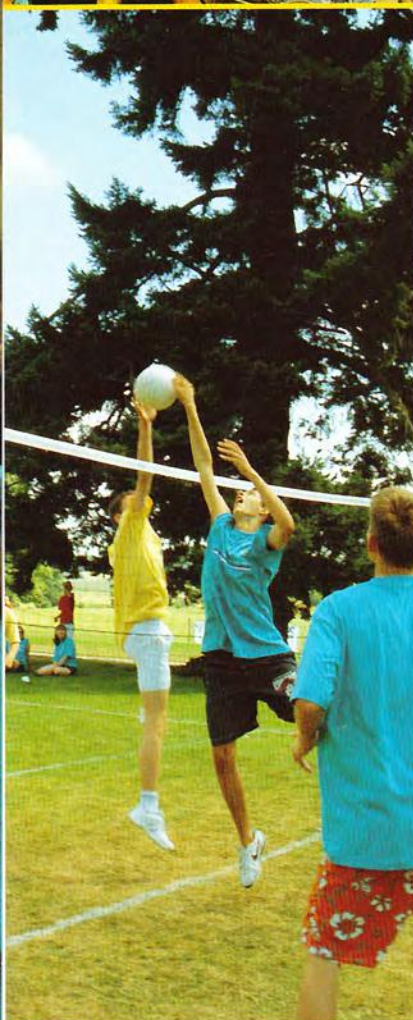
The emphasis in lessons is to help develop the students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through a topic and task-based approach. This involves working with students on a variety of activities centred on a particular topic and helping them with the language needed to complete the activities. They will be expected to complete certain tasks. 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.

A Certificate of Attendance is sent at the end of the Course. This Certificate is accepted in some countries as justification for a state bursary. In Italy, the Ministry of Education has decreed that a Certificate issued by a British Council Accredited School counts towards the Italian School Leaving Certificate.





THE PROGRAMME



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 'Sports Day' when all 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 non-sporting activities on the programme – games, singing contests, folies bergères, discotheques, barbecues, concerts, 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 visit to London for sightseeing; another is a visit to a designer outlet or similar for shopping; the destination for the third excursion will be Oxford, Southampton, Winchester 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 one or 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 about £5.

THEATRE VISITS (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

Tickets for 'The Lion King' and 'Mamma Mia!' – smash-hit West End musicals that are booked out months in advance – have been requested and we will be allocated a limited number. Students who apply early enough will be able to see one of these shows. The cost of each (show + travel to the theatre) will be in the range £40–50. The cost should be added to pocket money. If it is not possible to provide a ticket, the money will be returned with the student at the end of the Course.

CERTIFICATION IN SPOKEN ENGLISH BY THE INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

The Institute of Linguists has been recognised by the British Government as examiners since 1910. Specially for us, they have devised a Certification in Spoken English which will be externally marked by their examiners. Certification will be on 4 levels, according to the ability of the student. Level 1 is 'Near Beginner'; Level 4 is 'Advanced'.

student is giving information and (2) a structured task in which the student is requesting information. Including preparation time, the examination will last about 20 minutes. It will be held in each school at the end of the Course. The Certificate in English as a Spoken Language for Short Courses is an officially validated qualification awarded in each level at one of three grades – Pass, Merit, Distinction. The cost is £36.00.

(NEW FOR 2002) CERTIFICATION AT LEVEL 4+ IN WRITTEN ENGLISH BY THE INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

As a number of returning and new students achieve such proficiency in English, The Institute of Linguists has piloted in 2001 and will offer in 2002 Certification at Level 4+ in written English and optionally in written and oral English combined. The cost is £36.00. For combined written and oral certification at this level, the cost is £53.00.

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 racquet 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 (£33.00) should be added to pocket money.

FOOD SAFETY

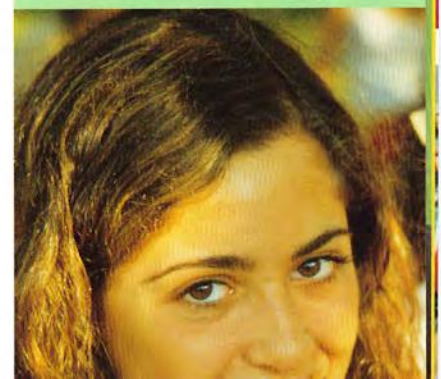
Vacational Studies policy is not to serve any food about which there is any concern for any reason. We serve only what we believe parents would feel safe to serve their own children in their own homes.

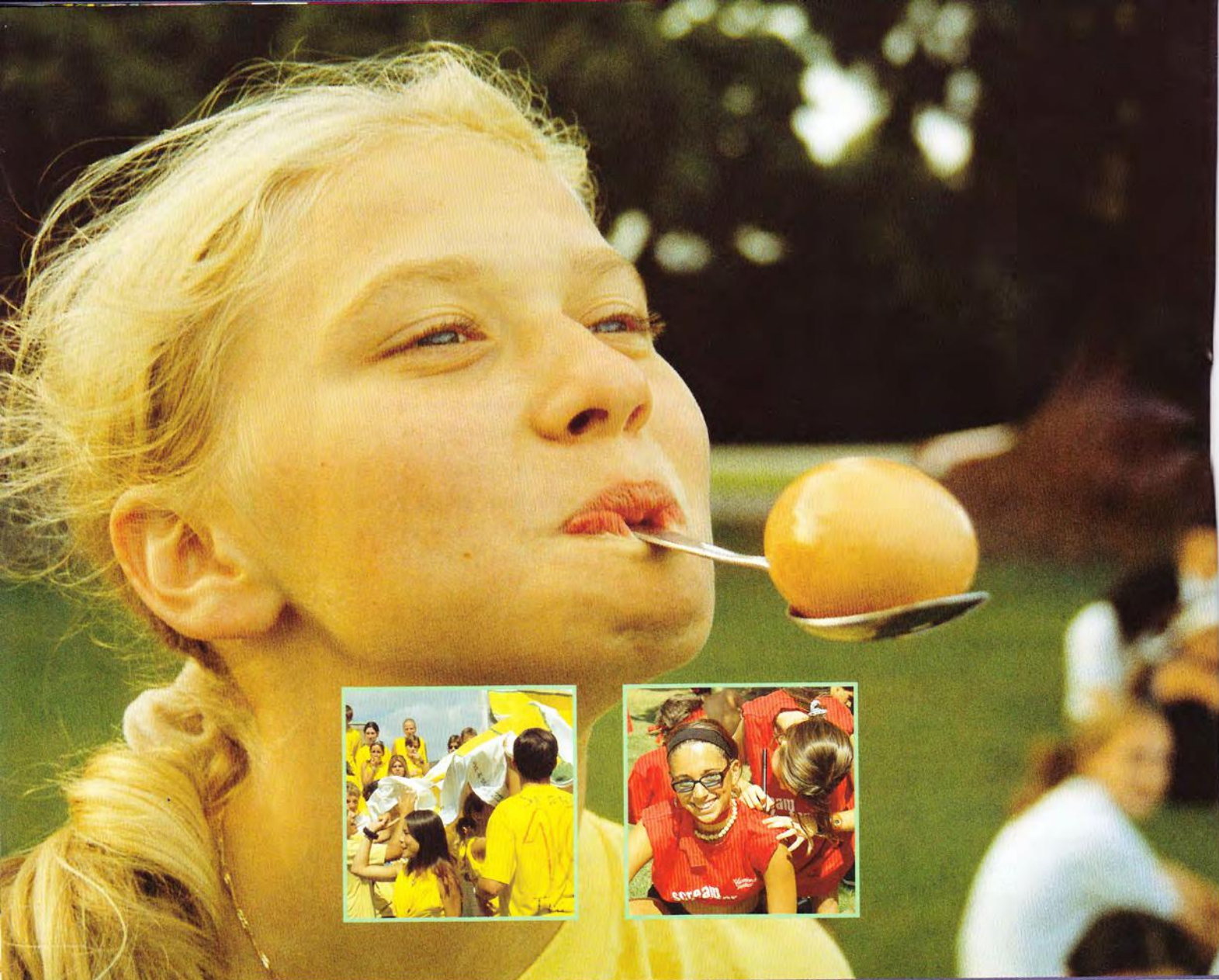


A TYPICAL DAY

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.





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:

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.

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 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.

Any student can join the Food Committee which meets the Caterer regularly to discuss all aspects of the catering.

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. Our British students do so, too.

Another 'encouragement' to speak English is the 'English Only Prize' with a Vacation Studies watch for the winner. Points are awarded each week to students who have spoken English much more than their own language. Throughout the Course, there are also 'English Only' bonus days.

THE PROGRAMME



caught more than once using any language other than English on that day, an extra point is awarded – a 'bonus'. At the end of the Course the points are totalled and a name is recommended to the Director for consideration for the 'English Only Prize'. The more points, 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 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'. Children of European nationality should bring an E128 form available from their health service, entitling them as temporary residents to the same free treatment under the British National Health Service as British citizens for all, including pre-existing, conditions.

RELIGION

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

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

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

INSURANCE

Every student is 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 to the student or parent during the month before the Course prevents attendance on the Course; private emergency 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.

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. There is also at least one native English-speaking student.

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 obey the law, 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. We also reserve the right to send the writer of the original 'letter of recommendation' a photocopy of any correspondence we enter into.

Last year I had a dream: it was to come back to this special place and now I have the same dream.



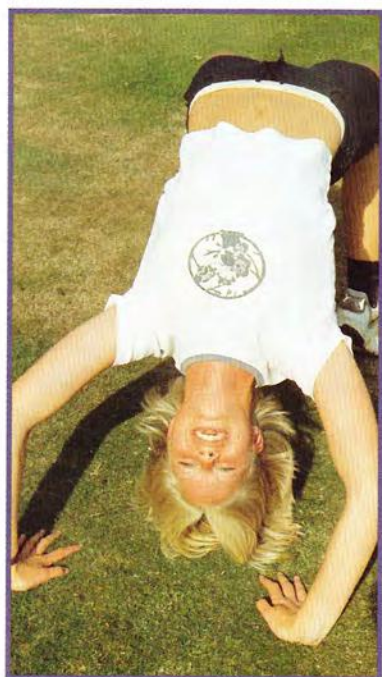
“

...an overwhelming experience which envelops
one's life during those four hectic summer weeks.

”



HOW 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, exceptionally, 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 2002' slip.

POCKET MONEY

Pocket money can either be brought by students (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. Students will tend to bring about £300. 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.

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

¹At specified times and terminals – see 'Travel'

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

³Travel and supervision, not entrance fees

⁴As described in the 'Insurance' slip

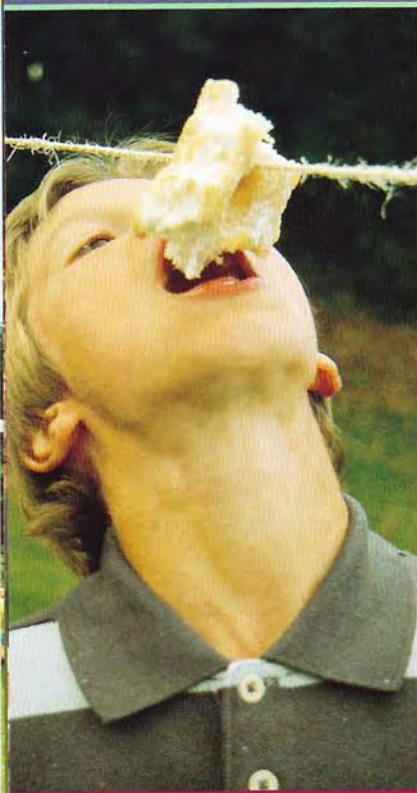
⁵If washable at 40°+, not sensitive to bulk washing/drying and at your own risk

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

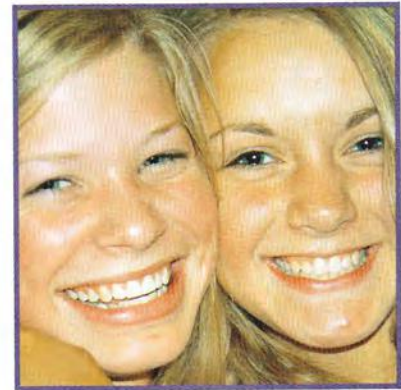




TRAVEL

It is quite usual for our students to fly alone. 90% of our students arrive and depart in this way. There are many cut-price air ticket offers – for early booking, for young people, or for travel on particular flights. We operate a collection and return transport service between Heathrow Airport and the Schools on arrival and departure at no charge, subject to the conditions on our 'Travel Details' form. Our staff can meet students arriving at Heathrow Terminals 1 and 2 (only) and check-in students on outgoing flights from Heathrow Terminals 1 and 2 (only) on the stated dates. Our staff are at Heathrow from 12.00-16.00 on arrival days and from 09.30-13.00 on departure days. If flights arrive earlier than 12.00, students wait for our staff near the Information Desk. If flights leave after 13.00, we explain the procedure and take students to wait in the correct area.

For young children (under 12), airlines operate an 'Unaccompanied Young Persons (UYP)' or 'Unaccompanied Minors (UM)' service on request and look after them. As airlines insist on a named person meeting and returning a child and that the person remains until the flight has departed, parents should note that if they request UYP or UM service, all UYP or UM arrivals and departures must be by taxi at cost. The driver is known to us and has been working with us for many years. He will meet students and check them in personally. It is normally unnecessary for students to be booked to fly UYP or UM. Airlines (especially British Airways) are very helpful with young passengers at any age.



Our free standard service cannot be used when arrival is later or departure is earlier than our stated dates or times, or if the flight is via Gatwick Airport, or if a student is booked UYP or UM, or is on a flight which arrives at or departs from Terminal 3 or 4, or is outside our requested times. We can make special taxi or minibus arrangements on your behalf. We do not charge for making these arrangements, but the cost of the taxi or minibus is payable by the student. (As a guide, a one-way taxi for one person to Heathrow is about £70 and to Gatwick about £90. For two people, the cost is shared). Special requirements should be indicated on the Application Form and details sent separately.

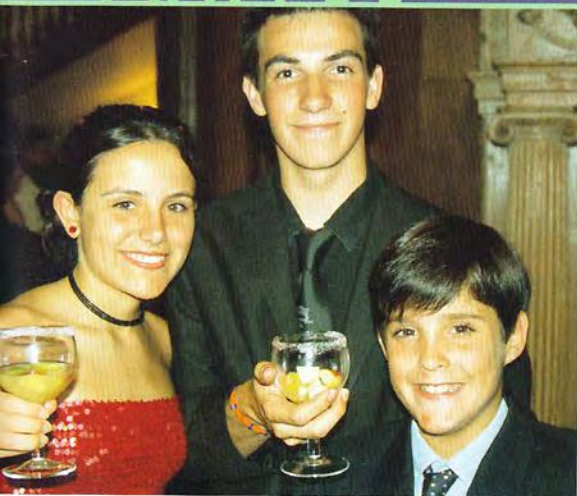
AT THE AIRPORT

Before travelling, we send an identity badge and luggage tags to ensure quick recognition. Our representatives will carry blue 'Vacational Studies' folders and will meet students at the entrance to the Arrivals Hall after leaving the Customs Hall.

If you do not take our standard collection/return service, but we make other arrangements for you, the same procedure applies.

VISITS TO THE SCHOOLS

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



IF YOU COME BY CAR

Road directions are given before the Schools' addresses. Parents bringing students are asked to arrive at between 12.30 and 14.30. Parents collecting students on the last day are asked to arrive before 11.00.

ON ARRIVAL AT THE SCHOOL

All money is handed in at the Office for safe keeping. Students can withdraw money every day. We keep passports and tickets safely. We cannot accept responsibility for pocket money or valuables not handed to us.

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

ELSTREE 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.

Address for students' letters:

Elstree School

Woolhampton, Reading RG7 5TD.

Telephone (to contact Course Manager):

National: (0118) 971 0614 (new for 2002)

International: +44 118 971 0614 (new for 2002)

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 RG14 3BQ.

Telephone (to contact Course Manager):

National: (01635) 244221 (new for 2002)

International: +44 1635 244221 (new for 2002)

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

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

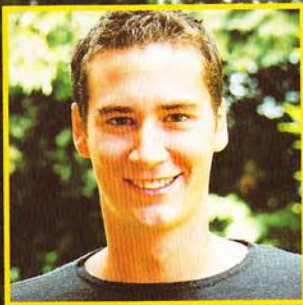
By train from London, leave from Paddington Station. For Mary Hare and Cheam, arrive at Newbury Station. For Elstree arrive at Reading Station or Midgham Station. There are normally taxis at Newbury Station. If not, there are taxi numbers in the phone box near the Station. There are always taxis at Reading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

FINALLY...

We have tried to describe the Courses fully and frankly. Please also see the section 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the News Section. The News Section (enclosed) contains more detailed information on various aspects of the Course. It is essential reading for the parents of 2002 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.





VACSTUDS.COM – THE E-MAGAZINE

I have been appointed IGM's assistant with the view to develop vacstuds.com into an internet site worthy of the organisation that it represents. It was whilst studying for my degree in English Literature at Bristol University that I came across Vocational Studies and I joined the sports crew at Mary Hare first as an assistant in July 2000 and then as SSO in July 2001. My aim is to develop the internet site so that former students can benefit from their time at Vocational Studies all year round. The site will develop into an e-zine, with interesting articles from around the world, as well as work experience offers and a way for former students to keep in contact with the international community. If any former student or parent would like to contribute any articles or ideas, please contact me on wil@vacstuds.com.

Wil

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 Vocational Studies and has three young sons of his own.

Pepys' Oak
Tydehams
Newbury
Berkshire RG14 6JT
England

TELEPHONE

National
01635 523333
International
+44 1635 523333

FAX

National
01635 523999
International
+44 1635 523999

E-MAIL

vacstuds@vacstuds.com

WEB SITE

<http://www.vacstuds.com>

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Printed in England on non-bleached paper from farmed sources

School Group photographs by David Hatfull

All other photographs by IGM

Designed by Lillington Green

Written by IGM

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NEWS

2001 – 2002



'So enjoyable and fruitful' (the parents of a Russian student); 'He had a great time with you' (the father of an Italian student); 'Homesickness came only when they were back, missing their new friends from Vacation Studies' (the father of Dutch students); 'Thank you for the excellent organisation, the good tuition and pleasant atmosphere' (the mother of a Belgian student); 'Elle est revenue, comme chaque année, enchantée de son séjour. Hier soir elle était très triste de se retrouver sans ses amis' (the mother of a Monegasque student); 'An excellent combination of fun, action and learning. Certainly we will be happy to be on your list for future reference' (the mother of a Dutch student); 'Grazie per il mese stupendo' (the mother of an Italian student); 'It was my best TEFL (teaching English as a Foreign Language) experience to date and I would love to come back next year' (one of the teaching staff); 'I've just spent a marvellous time as a staff-helper in my childhood paradise' (a staff helper); 'She returned with a big smile on her face and with lots of stories and funnies for us' (the mother of an Israeli student). Now that we have the 'Messages Forum' on vacstuds.com, the cries of woe - all in English, of course - from students missing their friends are plaintive: 'Today I was standing in our garden and thought about how boring it is in Germany. I hope I will see you again' (a German student); 'It has been great, fantastic even and I loved every minute of it' (another staff helper); 'It was for me my best holiday in all my life, so it was so difficult to leave you' (a French student); 'I'm so sad to be at home. It seems that time has stopped and I just can't take it out of my mind' (a Portuguese student).

Once again the nerve endings are not far from the surface. Our young people have a real emotional experience and suffer, for many of them, the closest experience to a bereavement when they have to leave those to whom they have become so close. It is a shared experience, not accessible to other friends who must wonder what all the fuss is about. All the more reason for our students to keep in contact with each other. Only someone who has also been to VacStuds can really understand the feelings. An increasing number of parents can understand. Several are now sending their children to us. All are opting to let them come at an earlier age than they were when they came. They all know that everything about the Course - the socialising, the fun, the learning, the integration - is easier the younger you are. For some, it takes a couple of weeks for the self-consciousness of adolescence not

So here is my view of Summer 2001. As always, some of the lines are for reading between.

The weather began by thinking it was autumn. Cool breezes, grey skies and rain characterised the first week or so. Suddenly it was summer for two weeks, but not an ordinary British one. We were hotter than Hawaii. Even for those from the warmest climes, it was too hot to run around. For those with an 'English rose' complexion, it was time to turn lobster red. Just as quickly as it came, the heatwave vanished and it was autumn again. This time no one minded. Sports Day was over, the students had bonded, there was a Folies to prepare for and outdoor games in the rain were not a problem.

At Elstree, Diana Haltermann (Staff Helper, Spain/Germany), now in her second SH year, writes 'the students were fantastic. It was a pleasure to meet each of them.' How can I disagree? It was the students' co-operation and willingness to join in that distinguished 2001 from 2000. They also had a far better sports and social programme to join in with. The crew was a strong team, all of whom had previous experience with us. They knew what worked and what did not. Diana writes that Jonathan Hooper (Sports/Social Organiser) 'gave us the opportunity to use our imagination, to express ourselves and come up with new ideas and activities. He was funny and serious when needed - and very professional.' Quite right. She is as generous in her praise with the other members of the crew. Both Ed Jones and David Miller have been students with us twice. I was aware of their excellent qualities and was not disappointed. Both joined in with everything and were tireless in all

activities. The other Staff Helper was Christelle Boisson (Monaco) a student of several summers at Elstree during which she and I came to know each other and I became aware what a special place VacStuds has in her heart. Under the aegis of Course Tutor, Anna Eames, now in her fourth year, a team of mainly strong teachers met mainly motivated students. Peter Blood was in his sixth year, James McCrory and Gemma Hindson in their second. There were three newcomers: Jake and Shelly Whitehead, who was particularly keen to take advice and established a good rapport with her class, and Paul Ilott, who was popular in the classroom, learned quickly what was expected of staff and joined in with the Course activities. Susan Thorneycroft-Taylor was our debutante and thoroughly efficient Matron. To quote Diana again, she 'was concerned and caring at every moment, like a second mum'. She was also Assistant Course Manager, aided by her splendid friend, Bracken, who became a firm favourite with all the students and did not let the lack of a fourth leg stop her chasing imaginary rabbits over the grounds. With excellent students and staff, what could go wrong? The new Course Manager was Anne Cardew. She worked very hard to ensure that everything ran smoothly. I wish it had been fun for her. There were some wonderful events. Some of the students proved to be natural entertainers. Among many memorable moments for me in an action-packed Course will be the parody of a Eurovision entry in Elstree's Folies Bergères. Quite the funniest act I have seen in thirty years of VacStuds - captured for posterity in its entirety in the video.

'Thank you for giving me the opportunity of being part of Cheam 2001. The students' positive outlook and constant self-motivation were a joy. Their spirits remained buoyant. Although the sports and social programme was littered with new ideas that worked perfectly, it is the student driven events that stand out - their Talent Show, the effort and subsequent joy of success at Sports Day and a week of rehearsals for the Folies.' Thus Will Cole, Assistant crew in his second year with us and a former student. He is absolutely right on all counts. Michael Taylor, ex-Assistant and student, now guitar-playing Sports and Social Organiser headed a talented team. Camilla Woolsey-Brown in her second year provided strong support especially in singing and also in dancing with Bianca Visser and Tim Albers (Netherlands), excellent Staff Helpers both. In many ways it was Cheam's



year. The Eurovision was spirited and the Talent Show was simply superb - singing, dancing, juggling gymnastics, comedy sketches - with talent after talent on display. Other Courses would do well to follow Cheam's lead. I believe that parents who invest in their child's future by sending them to us also invest in developing their other skills. Cheam students had ample opportunity to show these for everyone's entertainment. The new Cheam song, 'Cheam Dreamer', created by the crew, was so catchy I heard it even in Elstree corridors. The Cheam tribal rhythm 'Spectacular' was more than line-dancing and enabled many individuals to shine. On the teaching side, Pierre Gerrard was Course Tutor again for his fifth year with us. The talented Chris Spencer and Sophie Alder were back for their second bite at the cherry. Craig Foxall, fresh from a year teaching in Japan, was a welcome newcomer and 'team-player'. Anita Aghera and Melissa Fordham were teachers new to us. Sabine Burdeyron-Dyster was back as Matron and ACM for her fourth year with us. Utterly reliable and sensible, her approach remains no nonsense. As does Francis McIvor's. He is the self-styled 'caring Course Manager', so I gave him the youngest students this year. The idea worked so, unless his exchange year in the US cuts across our plans for 2002, I shall give him them again. As he correctly observed at the final dinner, this being his sixteenth summer with us, most of our current students were not born when he started with VacStuds. One is never too old to have a wonderful summer with us - as many have discovered.

That there is no letter from which to quote the glories of the sports crew at Mary Hare 2001 is no reflection on the excellence of the Course or the hard work put in - more their inability to put pen to paper or finger to keyboard. The letter from which I can quote is by Liz Morris, our new Course Manager in this her eighth year with us. ACM last year, Liz clearly observed well what is required of the ideal Course Manager. I can sum it up as the ability to see the succession of things to

do as simply that - just 'things to do', not 'problems to solve'. In a year when it seemed no one had anything to wear after Mary Hare's laundry system had shrunk its workload, problems could have abounded. That they did not is a tribute to Liz's calm handling of the Course. 'I want to tell you how much I enjoyed this summer and how satisfying it was to take on a different role at Vacational Studies. I try to explain the attractions: the international mix, the range of personalities, the community spirit, the varied activities and sports outside the classroom and, above all, the enjoyment experienced by all. The ethos of Vacational Studies is something special and should be experienced to be appreciated.' Vince Purdue returned as Course Tutor. As did Steve Sugden for his sixth summer and Lewis Warburton for his second. There were four newcomers - Fiona Morgan - a hit in the classroom and on the dancefloor with her 'Gay Gordons' tuition preserved on video, Paul Franks whose Geordie humour came as a surprise in the far south, Carys Church and Maria Hale. Julia Tingle did sterling work as Matron and ACM, although she felt her main role was ministering to victims of the laundry. Fortunately, this year's students were a healthy lot. The dutiful Buster was Julia's ADC. After his debut last year as the Assistant everyone loved, Wil Davies took on the role of SSO. That the social side ran so well was largely as a result of his hard work. He took last year's programme and enhanced it, cutting out what did not work and being open to new ideas that might. Commando was a new game in which teams co-operated rather than competed. Christmas Dinner became Christmas Lunch with games. It was while talking to Wil that the idea of the new song competition for Sports Day came up. I liked the spirit of innovation that abounded. The students relied on staff input. For instance, although it was invented there, I do not think Mary Hare students are aware of the difference between a Folies Bergères and a revue. Sarah Jocelyn and Nick Johnson returned as Assistants and did splendidly. Alex



Kam (Netherlands) was a mature and reliable first-time Staff Helper. Also a first-timer, Barbara Hernandez-Mora Segura (Spain) was close to the students. While for some of the students it may have been one year too many, for most it was a great year.

Also travelling from school to school, often at speed, was Katie Scott in her second summer as Director of Studies. Having revised the Programme of Work, it is she who prepares and organises the induction of teaching staff before the Course begins. It is she who advises on what books and materials should be ordered. She provides support for and briefs the Course Tutors and the Support Teacher, organises the assessment groups and student placement, observes lessons, advises on peer observations and team teaching, arranges the Examination and, of great importance to me, ensures that the progress reports and the text of the final teachers' reports on students are correctly and informatively written and presented on time. It is a hugely important post. With so much to do, that Katie can end her report to me with the words, 'I have had a thoroughly enjoyable year', is as gratifying as it is remarkable.

The Support Teacher this year was Sarah Cota who gained valuable experience going from class to class at the three schools while being based at The Mary Hare.

Another traveller was Jonathan Riggall, now in his fifth summer as my PA. Last year's joke Lada became this year's ugly duckling Scorpio estate; the rear became somewhat uglier than the front after he backed it into an Elstree signpost. Jonathan fetched and carried and generally remembered what needed to be done. He is back to his environmental work in Jamaica for a few months before entering the world of real work. I shall have to find his successor.

And there was me. During the rest of the year commuting is simply a matter of walking into another room. During the summer, it is shooting from school to school as 'Deus ex Audi' dealing with a variety of challenges from the aftermath of a pillow fight to the ramifications of a nervous collapse and all the time seeing video opportunities to preserve for our students. I try, too, to talk to staff who can give me an insight into how the students are responding to the Course and how we can make improvements.

NEW SCHOOL SONGS

The idea of an inter-school competition at Sports Day to see which school could create the best new song was the result of such a conversation. Sports Day has now become an institution. Schools work towards it. Some years ago, I included the 'Spectacular' as a way of encouraging every student, no matter how unsporty, to perform at Sports Day. Preparations for the Spectacular galvanise all the students right from the first day and give each Course an identity. I was looking for something additional to include in the Sports Day programme that would enable every student to join in and make a contribution. The school songs have passed into folklore. Tribal memories mean that they need not be written. They are passed down from generation to generation. 'I've got an Elstree dream, if you know what I mean' (to the tune of 'Mildred') sums up beautifully what students 20 years ago felt about their school and the feelings are as fresh today as they were. Nothing can rival the lyrics of 'Now when Mary Hare is over you'll remember that the best time of your life you had it here. Now we're waiting all together for the end and remember only one thing - friends will be friends.' The old songs are the best ones, of course, but I thought we should encourage creativity among the new generation of students and staff. I promised a new music system for the Club of the school that presented and sang what I judged to be the best new school song at Sports Day. Elstree delivered an intricate three-part round, Mary Hare did clever things to 'Wonderwall', but Cheam's rendition of 'Cheam Dreamer' based on the Monkees 'I'm a Believer' won the day. For once, I made a popular decision. The strains of it were heard the next day in Elstree's corridor. It is an upbeat song, telling how great it is to be on the Course with a catchy 'ooooh' in the middle. In comparison, Elstree's was too complex; Mary Hare's too self-congratulatory, denigrating the other

schools. All the new songs performed at Sports Day are preserved on the video. We shall see which, if any, survive.

SPORTS DAY

Coming as it did in the middle of our heatwave, there was no need for a 'plan B'. Everyone knew 30 July would be hot and sunny. Yet again, new teachers were stunned by the fervour occasioned by the coming-together of young people who, just a few weeks before, had been strangers. The ululation of red, blue and yellow-clad youngsters revealed how thin is the veneer of sophistication that separates us from our tribal forebears. My video camera swung from Mary Hare to Elstree to Cheam as the buses disgorged their chanting, banner-waving passengers, ears ringing with the sounds of 'Mary Hare! Mary Hare!', 'We're gonna score one more than you - Elstree!' 'Go Cheeam! Go Cheeam!', distorted voices and contorted faces captured on tape. And how they love a good shout! Passions are heightened and, woe betide a referee who makes an incautious decision. Boys and girls football, volleyball, basketball, softball are all competed for with more enthusiasm than skill. Spectators follow their school from game to game with raucous support. Because of its geography, Mary Hare has been Sports Day's venue since its inception in the early '80s. The majority of the organisation fell on Mary Hare staff, especially Wil Davies and his crew, and Mary Hare's caterer, Jean Monger. As always, games happened with near clockwork precision. The dining room was a haven of tranquility in which Mrs Monger's superb buffet lunch could be enjoyed. The song competition and the Spectaculars occupied most of the afternoon. I think everyone realised how much work had gone into the performances and most of the onlookers were prepared to sit quietly and applaud at the end. Elstree's show had a Harry Potter theme; Mary Hare's was loosely based on Batman. To my mind,





Cheam's African tribal drumming and dancing stole the day. The buses arrived; those from opposing schools embraced; the buses were cheered off. Peace returned once again to The Mary Hare.

CATERING

Everyone sampled the delights of Mrs Jean Monger's catering at Mary Hare on Sports Day. At Cheam and Elstree, meals were provided by Sodexo with Roger Hammett in charge. As ever, I organised food questionnaires which give choices ranging from 1 (bad) to 10 (good) and I indicate that a '1' by 'choice' = there was no choice at all; that a '1' by 'quality' = the food was inedible and that a '1' by 'quantity' indicates there was no food at all. Needless to say there were those who found that there was no food at all. Their responses were discounted even though some found that the variety of the non-existent food was quite good. I am really not sure of the value of quantifying students' reactions. With the exception of the meal at which the range was chile con carne or vegetarian chile con carne or curry, most meals were very good and there was always a choice. Some meals, especially at Mary Hare, were exceptional. My own feeling is that our catering is, by and large, as good as we can reasonably be expected to get it. If we found a particularly picky eater, I introduced the student to the caterer. Once again I asked the students to complete a 'Food Questionnaire' and have tabulated the results. The overall average satisfaction rates (combining 19 different questions on quality, quantity and variety of the various meals) are as follows:- Mary Hare 61%; Cheam 63%; Elstree 61%. Results are similar to last year's with Cheam up and Mary Hare and Elstree down. This is a year when everyone who went from school to school commented on the excellence of the Mary Hare catering. From my point-of-view, the tabulated results are of little value - with one exception. It shows that barbecues (with an approval rating of 75% (Mary Hare), 84% (Elstree) and an astonishing 90% at Cheam) are even more popular than the tuck

shop. Students' comments are more revealing. The caterers have been given the forms and a breakdown of the results applying to the various aspects of the catering. They have been asked to take note of the comments. I can add that I ate only at the schools the entire summer and enjoyed almost every meal. As one (non-British!) student stated in the questionnaire:- 'I loved it!'

WORKING FOR THE CATERERS

Former students and their friends who would like to earn money by working for Sodexo at Cheam or Elstree should contact me. I shall send them Roger Hammett's address. Several have already done so. The work is hard, but they had a great time.

THE FUN OF VACSTUDS

Over the years, the social programme has become far more sophisticated with a special event every day. So valuable are the accumulated ideas that we have a 'Notes for Sports/Social Staff' in which activities and events that work and those that do not are tabulated. With former British students coming on to the staff after two years as well as so many students returning for two, three and more summers, continuity is assured. Popular events can be honed; those that did not work first time can be rejigged with lessons learned. The events and activities give everyone the chance to join in - even me. This time I compered 'The Weakest Link' (a popular BBC programme in the UK) in which competitors are given general knowledge questions and those found lacking are dismissed with a curt farewell. For many years, I have called out the names in assessment groups on the first day and sent them off with their teacher with a 'bye bye'. The same 'bye bye' was used to dispatch losing contestants. This and events like Scottish Dancing revealed to me one of the hardest tasks faced by the crew - that of motivating some students. This fear of trying something new means that, left to themselves, some young people would do very little. Generally when they are pushed into

activities, they enjoy them. We try to provide gentle encouragement rather than compulsion. Occasionally, however, we oblige students to be active for their own good. As those who are reluctant tend to be those whose parents have taken the initiative to send them rather than the majority who have asked their parents to let them come, we assume parents agree with our approach.

THE 'STUDIES' PART OF VACSTUDS

With the plethora of resources, teaching materials, ideas contained in the Programme of Work, a trained Director of Studies and experienced Course Tutors provided, teachers tend to create focussed and stimulating lessons. That they are task-based makes them different from lessons at students' own schools. Some make tremendous progress. Our British students were a useful resource, moving from class to class to assist non-native speakers. They were also able to give individual help to those with specific difficulties.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Teachers presented the Director of Studies and me with the folders of students they considered impressive. We chose the winner from this selection. Prizes for Academic Excellence were awarded to Juan Pinero (Elstree); Ane Holte (Cheam); Marika Francia (Mary Hare).

'ENGLISH-SPEAKING PRIZE'

As a result of 'English Only' days and general observation, the staff put forward to me the names of those who had impressed them with the linguistic use they made of the international environment. I chose the winner(s) accordingly. Prizes for the speaking of English on a day-to-day basis were awarded to Alex von Kursell and Marianne Andvord (Elstree); Mehmet Donmez (Cheam); Maarten Schneider and Marius Kristiansen (Mary Hare).

IOL CERTIFICATION

The Institute of Linguists Certificate in Spoken English for Short Courses with three grades of attainment (pass; merit; distinction) at four levels was offered. It is an entirely oral examination and is based largely around the experiences the students have on the Course. As before, the examiners commented on the very high standard of English generally and the enthusiasm with which the candidates talked about the Course. This examination is a real qualification from Government-approved examiners. This year we piloted

successfully a new, written examination at Level 4+ with two candidates who had already achieved a pass with distinction in the oral Level 4 examination. With brilliant written papers, both achieved passes with distinction.

For 2002, we are downplaying the word 'examination' as this word tends to frighten some students and parents. We are using the word 'Certification' as a certificate is what the students receive. Certification will be offered at levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and also at level 4+ as a written paper and at Level 4+ combining oral certification with a written paper, all with three grades of attainment. We hope the parents of every student, except those with less than one year's English, will opt for certification.

VACSTUDS CERTIFICATES

The examination certificate is not the only valuable piece of paper our students have at the end of our Course. The final report and leaving certificate from a British Council Accredited School is now accepted by the Italian Education Ministry as counting towards the student's matriculation. Maybe where Italy has started, other countries will follow. In Monaco, a certificate issued by us will count towards a state bursary. There may be other grants that I am not aware of in other countries.

THE VALUE OF THE COURSE

I think the work we do and the experiences our young people have are of tremendous value. It is something I have been happy to devote my life to. It is now more than a generation since the Courses began. We are starting to have as students the children of those who were with us in the '70s. There have been some changes in attitude, in society and in technology which I should comment on in the following paragraphs:-

PARENTAL CONTROL CONDITION (INTRODUCED IN 2001)

Most students keep (more or less) to the rules that they have signed their agreement to in the 'Agreement and Travel Details' form. We must assume that they will keep their word, otherwise we will become law enforcement officers rather than educators. Nevertheless, there are some students who will try to do what they want to do regardless of the consequences and without considering the effect it will have on the community. A few young people are self-centred, have 'attitude', think they know their 'rights', have no idea

what they are missing by insisting on freedom and do not have the responsibility or social awareness to use it wisely. They also have no idea that we are required, under English law, to protect them under our 'duty of care'. Parents have decided to invest in our Course and we are keen that everyone who comes to us gets the full benefit. I believe it is a partnership. For this reason, I have written a 'Parental Control Condition' into the contract we have with parents. In brief, I say 'we will do our best to fulfil our 'duty of care' under English law based on goodwill and the trust established by your and your child's agreement to the 'rules' as evidenced by the signed 'Agreement and Travel Details' form. If your child's attitude or behaviour is such that we find that we cannot exercise the control required to fulfil our 'duty of care', we shall pass responsibility for control to the parent either by requesting the parent's presence or by telephone contact with the child. If this fails and we decide the child is beyond control, we shall expel.'

In effect, this means that if we sense that a student has problems that are likely to result in trouble, we contact the parent before real trouble results. We contacted parents on three occasions this year. In every case we had 100% support. The parents talked to their children in a rational way in their own language and helped the child see the way forward. Exceptionally, I did not have to expel any students this year. I am sure the 'Parental Control Condition' helped achieve this.

UNREALISABLE EXPECTATIONS

It is important that all parents read this paragraph. 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 final report we write will be our frank assessment. As the teaching/learning situations are different, it may not be similar to the school report you are accustomed to. 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. If your child is interested in drinking, smoking, going out at night and leading an independent life, please choose another organisation less restrictive than ours.

Ours is a new, exciting and active environment. Parental control appears absent. Our students are a long way from home, without the constraints and responsibilities that tend to check behavioural excess. No doubt there is also the desire to impress one's





peers. They may call it 'being carried away'. Whatever the causes, some of our students indulge in behaviour that is simply anti-social. If they get caught, they may feel they have little to lose. Protected by this feeling that no one of importance will ever know, I am aware that some students have broken our rules and even the law. All students come to us after a 'letter of recommendation' has been written about them by their school. To remove this feeling of anonymity and to encourage students to take responsibility for their own actions, we reserve the right to send the writer of the original 'letter of recommendation' a photocopy of any correspondence we have with parents about children in our care.

ENGLISH LAW

I state on the Application Form that this applies. There is nothing sinister about the inclusion of these words. We are de facto in loco parentis in the summer. We accept responsibility for looking after 250 or so other people's children. Parents trust us to make wise decisions. Sometimes, however, we receive requests which we consider unwise. For example, we are asked to let children be unaccompanied by staff when we consider they are not responsible enough to be unaccompanied. Children feel that, if they ask their parents to request something from us, we must comply with a parental request. We are the ones closest to what is happening. We know what a prudent parent would do and would not do in certain circumstances. Legally, we are expected to fulfil the role of a prudent parent – no more, no less. Sometimes we do not agree with what a parent is asking us to do. We shall use our discretion in all matters. Under English Law a parent may not sign away a child's rights. This includes the child's right to be protected by adults. We shall do what we think is right for the child. This is why I state that English Law applies.

MOBILE PHONES

About 30% of students came with a mobile phone, even though we requested that they should not be brought as our experience is that they are a nuisance. For all young people, the Course is a social as well as linguistic experience in which they do some growing up. I know this is a reason parents choose to send their children to us. In the case of homesickness, relationships with new friends or awkwardness in adjusting, a mobile phone gives a young person the ability to achieve the instant gratification of externalising emotions without thinking them through and dealing with them by letting time pass for consideration and reflection. Children are happy to let other children use their mobile phones as this is a friendly act that they think may confer a social advantage. In fact, in not one case this year was any mobile phone call of any constructive use whatsoever. Quite the opposite. The cost of these international calls must be huge. Parents may be surprised at the bill their well-intentioned child has run up for them by letting others make calls. The UK Education Department has now directed that the use of mobile phones in schools be discouraged for health reasons. We ask parents not to send one. We do not accept liability for any loss or damage to any mobile phone whether in our care or in the care of the student or for any charges incurred in its use. Any mobile phone that is brought will be kept in the Office and can be used only with the Course Manager's permission outside the school and outside class, sports and social events periods. Mobile phone battery chargers may not be connected to the electricity supply in dormitories and can only be charged by the Course Manager in the Office.

TRIPS

From feedback, it seems that the trip most students enjoyed was to the Designer Outlet in Swindon, followed by swimming at the Oasis, although we learned that Monday is the worst day for such a visit as some shops were closed. A sightseeing tour of London followed by the Maritime Museum was too ambitious. Most successful of all are the trips students take to events in which they have a particular interest. Bowling, 'paintballing', the cinema and the open-air theatre in Oxford were all popular. For 2002, there will, of course, be a trip to London for sightseeing. A trip specifically for shopping to a designer outlet will be repeated. The third trip will be to a venue of the students' choice. The fourth trip will be Sports Day. There will be one or 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 about what is possible at each of the venues and they can decide what they would like to do. What we shall include is transport and supervision. We shall obtain group booking rates where possible, but entrances will be payable from pocket money. If a large enough group wishes to go somewhere, we shall make the arrangements and send accompanying staff.

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 more relaxed than ours. Our view must, of course, prevail as we have to take the responsibility, as mentioned above.

THEATRE VISITS

These proved as popular as ever, especially 'The Lion King'. The choice system introduced in 1996 was used again. Students are asked to choose which show they wish to see in the order of preference on a form which shows the Invoice number. The earlier the application, the lower the Invoice number. Tickets are allocated by Invoice number. The lower the Invoice number, the greater the chance of getting one's choice of theatre visit. This year, no student had more than one theatre ticket. Those students with high invoice numbers – those who applied late (after March) – did not get a ticket. All

the more reason to apply early! So that there is minimum disruption to the organised programme at the school when there is a trip to the theatre, the number of tickets will again be limited so that students will have only one. 2002 Invoice numbers start at 11717. A 'Theatre Visits' choice list will be sent out in March.

PROPERTY

Once again, we ask that items with a used resale value over £40 in value be listed on the 'Valuable Possessions' form. At the end of the Courses we send back every item of property left behind that was named. Un-named items are also returned if we have a good idea to whom they belong. Property not given to us for safe-keeping and lost other than when in the student's possession on a trip is not covered by the Insurance policy we include as part of the Course Fee.

HEALTH

Students are entitled to free emergency treatment under the Medical Insurance policy included in the Course Fee for illnesses or accidents that happen in Britain. Pre-existing conditions are not covered by our insurance. No one is entitled to free treatment for a pre-existing condition unless they have an E128 form for temporary residents. In some countries, those who have private medical insurance are not allowed an E128, so treatment for pre-existing conditions must, therefore, be paid for and claimed from the insurers later. All other students in the EEA (EC, and most other European countries) must come with an E128 form. This is available from health departments overseas and will entitle the bearer to free treatment under the British National Health Service for any health-related condition, pre-existing or otherwise, exactly like a British resident. An E111 form is not an alternative to an E128. An E111 is not required in the UK.

VACSTUDS VIDEO

This has been edited and sent to those requesting it. Each school has its own E-180 'VacStuds 2001 All Over Again'. For those students wishing to relive the summer and for those parents trying to find what made it 'the best summer of my life', here is instant nostalgia, tangible atmosphere, the magic weaving its spell. Parents of 2002 students who would like a preview can request a copy. It is absolutely not a promotional video. It is a collection of the events I saw as I went from school to school over the summer. If there is a 'VacStuds 2002 All Over Again'

video, it is likely to be on DVD rather than the cumbersome videocassette. Most families in the UK have DVD attached to their TVs or in their computers. A box on the 2002 Application Form asks if parents have this facility. If most parents have DVD, we shall discontinue providing the video on cassette.

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 almost always be reached - sometimes in surprising places. If there is a problem, I can take immediate action - as long as I know about it. Mobile phone reception in Woolhampton is awful, so if there is no response, please assume I am at Elstree and try later. 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.

STAFF HELPERS

Traditionally, we have two former students on each Course as unpaid helpers, providing a link between staff and students. They tend to be 18-21 and to have left a gap of one summer after being a student. SHs are chosen at the end of the year. Potential SHs should contact me in November. If we use the expression 'leadership potential', or similar, in the report, this is the clue that an application may be fruitful. Occasionally SHs may graduate to Assistant status and more, but this is not generally the case as we look for native English-speaking staff.

AFTER THE COURSE

Please feel you can 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!

There are three other extensions to my work - The Jörg Weise Association, Giotto and the Vacation Studies Foundation:-

THE JÖRG WEISE ASSOCIATION

(www.vacstuds.com/jwa)

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 tragic 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 Foundation, 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 Manfred Gottschalk (Fontanestraße 21, D-51373 Leverkusen, Germany. Tels: +49 214-45702 and 56481; Fax +49 214-503606; E-mail: info@buchhandlung-gottschalk.de.) The next JWA Meeting will be in Madrid at Easter 2002.

The Jörg Weise Trophy is occasionally awarded for 'an outstanding contribution to the international ideals of the Course'. It was awarded this summer to Jose-Manuel Serrano (Elstree); Stefan Muthspiel and Anna Sala (Cheam); Andreas Tellefsen (Mary Hare). All made outstanding contributions to the aims of the Courses.



THE JÖRG WEISE SCHOLARSHIP **(www.vacstuds.com/jwa/scholar)**

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 2002 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.

INTERNATIONAL CONTACT – THE HISTORY OF GIOTTO **(www.vacstuds.com/giotto)**

The 2002 'Giotto Site' is in its 16th year and contains over 2500 names. Listing is provided at no charge. Name, birthdate, e-mail address and brief profile only are included. It is totally financed by Vacational Studies as an adjunct to our work in helping make the world a smaller place. 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 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. From 1986 to 1997, there was an increasingly heavy

'Giotto Book', posted worldwide. In 1998, there was a 'Giotto CD', light to post, but complicated to install and use. From 1999, Giotto has existed only in cyberspace. WWW.VACSTUDS.COM/GIOTTO is an ideal medium for it.

INTERNATIONAL CONTACT VIA GIOTTO

(A message to parents and alumni)

www.vacstuds.com/giotto/workexperience

Almost all the students we have accepted since 1972 have been exceptionally talented. We may well have the crème de la crème of European youth. On Giotto's new web site, we are creating an international work experience section. Are you studying at a university or similar? Do you wish to enhance your CV with work experience abroad? Do you run a business or are you part of an organisation that has a position to offer? Would you like to fill this post with an intelligent young person who would gain from the opportunity and from whom you, too, might benefit? Please go to www.vacstuds.com/giotto/workexperience. Contacts are so important. We wish to facilitate these worldwide. We are happy to provide links from this section of our web site to your own business.

THE VACATIONAL STUDIES FOUNDATION

(www.vacstuds.com/foundation)

The Vacational Studies Foundation was registered as a Charity under English Law in January 2000 to assist talented children from less-privileged backgrounds and offer them opportunities to develop their potential in environments they might otherwise never have experienced. The Foundation would ensure that the children proposed were placed in environments where they would feel comfortable and able to realise their potential fully. There are no specific criteria to receive support as young people proposed could have a variety of talents ranging from academic to music and the arts. There are already close links with The Jörg Weise Association as Professor Dr Weise is one of the Trustees of The Vacational Studies Foundation. Please go to www.vacstuds.com/foundation.

THE NEW VACSTUDS.COM – AN ON-LINE MAGAZINE AND MORE

Wil Davies (also an English graduate and of proven ability in getting VacStuds students active) is now my full-time assistant. His special brief is to run vacstuds.com as a web site with its own magazine and more. Vacstuds.com is our 'shop window' and the main source of information about us. The entire brochure (in five languages) and also this 'news section' are on our web site. Application for places on our Courses can be made electronically. The 'Messages Forum' that has proved popular with a number of regular correspondents continues. There is now far more than this. Vacational Studies has its own web of contacts world wide. These are accessible to those who have completed a Course as a student of ours.

So – the Vacational Studies web site is in a state of change with radical developments to it before the start of 2002. Come and visit!



THE 'CHEWING-GUM' CHEQUE GOES TO CHILLINE

AND FINALLY...

This has also been a year of change in my personal life. As this year's students will have seen, I am now the proud father of three sons, Piers, Ian and Lars, born on 8 February 2001. Of their nine Godparents, five are either students or parents of former students. It is wonderful to have such international connections. I am proud of Vacational Studies' achievements to date. I hope to continue to provide opportunities for my own children and for yours for many years to come.

IGM – Autumn 2001