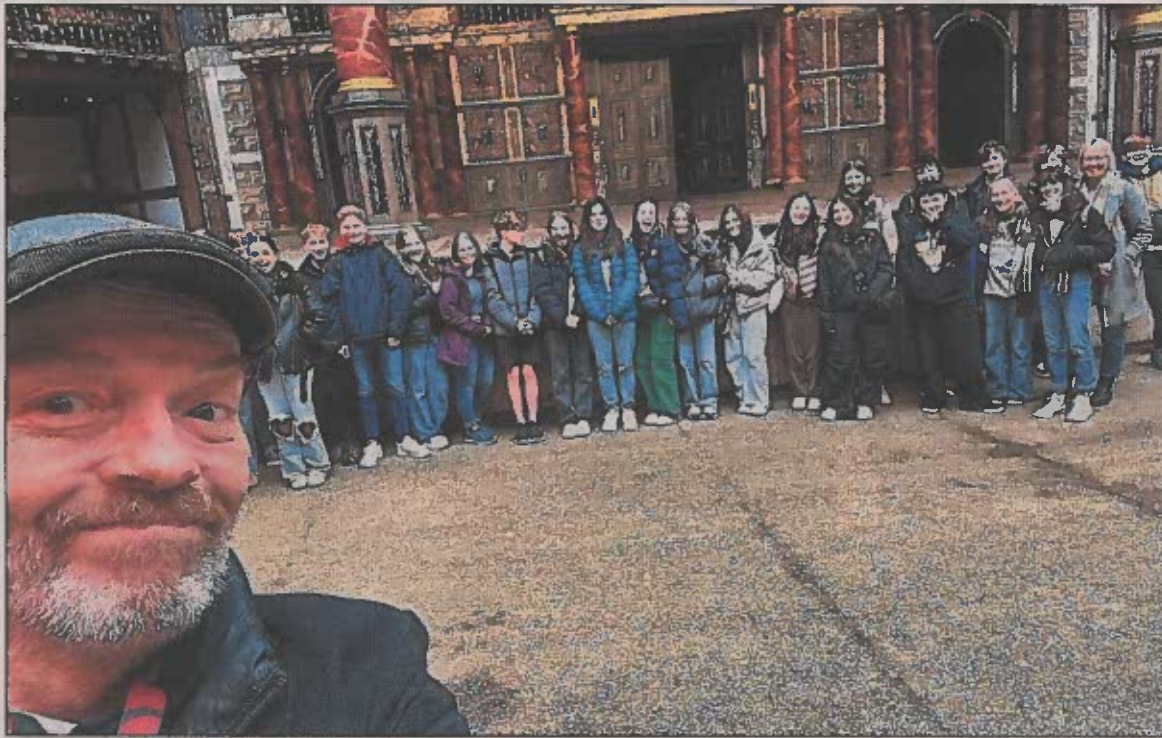


SCHOOL NOTICEBOARD: SELKIRK HIGH SCHOOL

THE latest from behind the scenes at Selkirk High School...



London Trip

"There's nowhere else like London. Nothing at all anywhere", said Vivienne Westwood. Some would say this is right; London is a vast, concrete metropolis that has a way of assaulting every one of your senses and making fresh air seem like a rarity in the twisted tunnels of the underground. A city where there is no colour, no sunshine, no cleanliness, but the never ending sensation that you are puny and small compared to the rest of the world. This is true, but only to a certain degree. London is much bigger than anything in the Scottish Borders. But it's also fair to say that it's a lot more exciting and vibrant, and we have Mrs McKeown's and Miss Swan's genius idea to take us to 'The Big Smoke' to thank for that. Tuesday, January 24. The time was 9am in the morning and we were gathered outside Tweedbank station - all 49 of us. The intricate maze of suitcases and duffle bags made us an incredibly colourful congregation and if we'd attempted it, a rather nice mosaic could have been made on the many station platforms we travelled through. However, the palaver that followed trying to cram all our luggage onto the overhead racks of the train swiftly dissolved the beauty of the moment. The journey to Kings Cross lasted around four-and-a-half hours, time well spent playing multiple card games and endless rounds of I spy, where more than our dignity was lost. Once we arrived in London, all heavy luggage was left at a storage area close to the Harry Potter gift shop and we eventually made our way to the underground, where we caught a train to Westminster, emerging directly beneath Big Ben itself. Just seeing this iconic building removed all misgivings and allowed us to all quietly think, "I'm officially in London!" After this, we walked to Leicester Square for some free time and a chance to explore the area. This was the perfect time to take some very aesthetic pictures of China Town and try some authentic cuisine, including the rare and

exotic McDonald's, filling us with energy for the journey to our Youth Hostel in Cheshunt. The London Lee Valley Youth Hostel was split into five log cabins, two and a half of which we occupied. They had a particularly cosy feel and also provided us with a filling cooked breakfast each morning, sausage, bacon and eggs setting us up well for the vast amount of walking ahead. Wednesday, January 25 began with the Central underground line, crossing London from Liverpool Street Station to St Paul's Cathedral, where some picturesque group photos were taken. We then walked over the Millennium Bridge to the Globe Theatre, where our first educational and cultural activity began. The strikingly accurate resemblance the current Globe Theatre has to the original was breathtaking for us all. The straw roof, elaborate paintings overlooking the stage and even the wooden pillars painted to imitate marble were like nothing any of us had seen before. One of the tour guides, Gerard, whose name will live on forever more in our memory, was probably a major reason the Globe was such an unforgettable experience for us all, with his jokes ranging from

Shakespeare to the reputation of a Ferrero Rocher! Lunch was spent in the busy and bustling Borough Market, filled with a banquet of international food stalls, followed by a quick loo stop in the extraordinary and bizarre Tate Modern Art Gallery, where we narrowly avoided being snared by an oversized dream catcher, complete with wailing banshees. We then commenced our walk to the infamous London Dungeons; a fantastic museum, mixing terrifying history and brilliant theatrical performances, though it's fair to say that not a drop of masculinity remained in the group as we ran for the exits (screaming like girls) (Mr Cove). On to The British Museum, where we spent a happy hour looking at all the things the British stole from other countries. In all seriousness, there were some extraordinary exhibits, including Roman, Egyptian and Chinese, which have all informed our understanding of the world. Miss Swan and Mrs McKeown had cunningly chosen three vibrant areas of the city for us to consume our third meal of each day, and Wednesday saw us nicely situated in the heart of Covent Garden, where we ventured a little further than McDonald's to various snooty - but tasty - London restaurants.

We now come to our last full day in London, Thursday, January 26, where our day began auspiciously with a personal train announcement, sending best wishes to "our friends from over the border!" However, the airport-style security of Westminster Palace was a stark contrast to the friendship shown to us by our MP, John Lamont. Firstly, group tours took place around both the House of Commons and House of Lords, giving us an insight into the running of the UK. Then Mr Lamont took the time to talk to us at length about his role and answer our many, many, many questions. He showed us some areas of the palace not on the public tour, before taking us out to the balcony and posing for photos. A quick lunch in a café looking across at Big Ben before heading to the Imperial War Museum. This was a time for quiet reflection, as many of us took the opportunity to visit the Holocaust Memorial Galleries, a sobering reminder of man's ability to lose all reason. Displays of retired fighter jets and weaponry gave a sense of the terrifying power of war and we left our second museum feeling humbled and grateful for those who have fought and continue to fight for us.

After a long walk to Piccadilly Circus, we dispersed to various restaurants for our final supper and I was slightly disappointed to be served by more than five guys in Five Guys. They were lovely guys, though... We then made our way to the Lyric Theatre to see Cheryl Cole star in *2:22 A Ghost Story*, which had us all on the edge of our seats - jump scares aplenty (Mr Cove was actually on the edge of his seat because he'd forgotten to bring his glasses). The play was outstanding, with its breathtaking sound effects, moving tables and sublime acting from Cheryl Cole. Despite the late finish, we all somehow made it to the early train that left Cheshunt the next morning, beginning our lengthy journey north. It was a subdued group of Selkirk students who arrived back at Tweedbank, as we realised that our long-awaited trip was over. We have so many wonderful memories of our time in London and are incredibly grateful to Mrs McKeown and Miss Swan for organising everything and to Mr Cove and Kara Teague who also came on the trip. Their unending patience and diligence ensured nobody was lost and that we had the most amazing time in London. A truly unforgettable trip.
Written by a senior student

