

Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge **17-18 March 2016 Visit**

Thirteen of our Year 11 students – Thomas Curtis, Brandon Grimbaldston, Hamaas Hassan, Jake Horsfall, Callum Marsh, Sachin Mistry, Bhavik Patel, Cian Patel, Luis Smith, Matthew Smith, Daniel Tilbrook, Parin Vyas and Karol Wijacinski took the opportunity of visiting the University of Cambridge, accompanied by two members of staff, at the end of Lent term and staying at Sidney Sussex College for a couple of days.

Before arriving at Sidney Sussex College the students went on a tour by minibus to see a few of the sights of Cambridge, such as some of the other colleges from the outside, Jesus Lock after which the River Cam widens and deepens and where the different college boathouses are situated as well as Parker's Piece, now regarded as the birthplace of the rules of Association Football.

After checking into the en suite accommodation at Sidney Sussex there was time, guided by a first year undergraduate, to explore the grounds, gardens, library, College Chapel (where the head of Oliver Cromwell, a Sidney Sussex alumnus, is buried in a biscuit tin under one of the flag stones in the Antechapel) and other numerous facilities situated within the College. Sidney Sussex is one of the oldest colleges in Cambridge, being founded in 1596 by Lady Frances Sidney, Countess of Sussex.

Dr Kirsten Dickers, the College's Admissions Director, provided a welcoming introduction to Cambridge with some useful advice for future applicants. No visit to Cambridge would be complete without enjoying a tranquil punt along the famous college 'Backs' on the River Cam. Later in the afternoon there was also time to explore other parts of Cambridge, including the unique Corpus Clock (dubbed by some as the "Grasshopper Clock" and officially inaugurated by the Cambridge physicist Stephen Hawking) and the Senate House, where the graduation ceremony takes place, as well as to hear about various student pranks in the middle of the night, such as hoisting a car undetected on to the roof of the Senate House or placing Santa hats on the four spires of King's College Chapel.

The following day after breakfast in the College's Dining Hall, the students were able to sample lectures at the College and one of the University's faculties as well as to visit the fascinating Whipple Museum of the History of Science.

After an eventful two days spent in glorious sunshine, the students departed for home, accompanied by Joe Gregory, a second year student at Sidney Sussex, who is a former West Hill boy. The myths and misconceptions about the typical type of student admitted to Cambridge being from anachronistic bastions of class privilege had been dispelled. The reality is that the University assesses applicants individually and welcomes all students based on academic performance and the ability to think, irrespective of background. Colleges provide on-site accommodation, which is much cheaper than renting privately, whilst offering generous financial support packages for students from the lowest-income households.

The last glimpse of Cambridge from the minibus was the sight of the University Library tower dominating the skyline over the fenland and meadows and that of the spires of King's College Chapel shimmering in the dying glare of the setting sun.