

# AIGLON

THE MAGAZINE



ISSUE 8 SUMMER/AUTUMN 2017

**School:** Service with a smile as students help out at Villars' refugee centres

**Mountain:** Why the Torchlight Descent is still such a treasured moment

**Ideas:** The year after: making the most of the moment you leave the mountain

**People:** Three Aiglonians share their experience of the 2008 financial crash



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AIGLON is published twice a year, in the winter and summer, and is sent free to Aiglonians. It is available to other readers on subscription. The opinions expressed in AIGLON are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of Aiglon College.

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Cover: *Why I love... camp food*  
Photograph: Joe McGorty



## Features



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WELCOME TO  
ISSUE EIGHT

BEING PART OF AIGLON'S BUSY admissions team can sometimes mean spending as much time off the mountain as on it – but after two years in post, it is clear that while our community originates on the mountain, its spirit extends around the globe. I'd like to thank all of you who have given up your time and resources to support Aiglon, whether that is spreading the word about our ethos, hosting events, introducing new families, supporting our new Arts and Assembly building or taking part in our reader survey.

Indeed, you can see the strength of our community in these pages, from the volunteers who help to run the fire service (on page 48) to those who are supporting refugees in Villars (on page 16). On page 22 we discover what Aiglonians do after school and on page 32 our community remembers the annual torchlight descent of the graduating class – a moment which marks the beginning of life after Aiglon.

In all these stories I find a common thread: we are where we are today because of our community, our shared values and our shared friendships. As the development of the campus gets under way, I look forward to sharing progress with you, our community.

**Valerie Scullion**  
Director of Admissions  
and Advancement  
Send your comments to  
advancement@aiglon.ch.



SCHOOL



MOUNTAIN



PEOPLE



MIND



BODY



SPIRIT

PRAISE

I thought the Winter 2016 issue of the *Aiglon Magazine* served up a marvellous blend of engaging coverage and articles by alumni and current students and staff linking the school's past with present and future.

In just a few short years, the magazine has managed to strike an appealing balance of alumni and school news with personal stories about life in and around Aiglon.

Thanks again, Mr Corlette, for the Aiglon experience and bravo, Karen Sandri and creative team, for keeping the magazine vibrant and relevant, and reflective of that Aiglon experience.

**Erik Friedl**  
(Alpina, 1969)

MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

I always enjoy receiving Aiglon's news, beautifully presented and informative. Wonderful to see that our dear school is still thriving and instilling the same principles we received all those years back.

Yes, the world is changing but the matters of the heart and spirit remain eternal – human nature remains mostly the same, in both its good and bad forms, regardless of technology, or science.

Wishing the school and staff the very best for 2017 – I hope to drop by one day soon.

**Jeremy McWilliam**  
(Alpina, 1976)



LEADERS

Just a quick note to say how much I enjoyed the article in the last issue about leadership! And, I have gotten several nice messages from Aiglonians about it, from friends both old and new. This is fun; thanks again for thinking of me for the article!

**Pamela Bates**  
(Clairmont, 1985)

MONTE ROSA?

In reference to Bill Lockwood's query about girls' schools near Châtelard (Issue 7), Monte Rosa seems to ring a bell. I asked an ex of mine who went to Châtelard during the early 1960s, but unfortunately she couldn't think of [another] one either.

**Simon Tow**  
(Alpina, 1965)

INSPIRED

Accolades are due to *Aiglon Magazine*, especially for the fine photos in last summer's article about mountain huts.

My daughter had been nagging to go hiking all spring and my husband recommended Maine or New Hampshire – which were unanimously declined.

I suggested something more dramatic, pointing to the magazine's images of La Cabane des Dix, one of our long ago Aiglon ski expedition destinations.

Plans were made that same afternoon – destination Villars! How beautiful it was to take the tram to Bretaye with my husband and two daughters and hike to the top of Roc D'Orsay. Villars was wonderful, with summer street markets and music festivals, and comforting with the familiar Heiz Patisserie and Le Sporting, not to mention chance encounters with Rosemary Hopkins buying her pain de jour and legendary Duncan Maxwell (who told my girls tales of their mother as a student biologist!).

We decided to forego the tram and hiked our way back down to town from the top of the Chamossaire. We passed Alpina where we met Houseparent Mr Krueger who was handcarving a boat from a special African wood he had received from a parent of one of his students.

We then went inside Alpina – by this point my daughters were distraught they had not had the opportunity to be Aiglonites themselves – and personally I had moments of feeling that 35 years had not passed at all.

We left Villars and went over the St Bernard Pass into Italy, only to decide a few days later to return to Villars and finish our holiday as we had originally planned: hiking and hiking.

So thank you, *Aiglon Magazine*, for our wonderful adventure!

**Johanna Barsdorf Schmitt**  
(Clairmont, 1980)

Join the conversation!

**www.aiglonlife.ch**  
**email:** advancement@aiglon.ch  
**write to:** Aiglon Magazine, Aiglon College, 1885 Chesières, Switzerland.  
**Facebook:** www.facebook.com/aiglon  
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NEWS



Parsons Building

As renovations to the former Exeter House continue, the Aiglon College Association Board of Governors and Trustees has approved renaming the building in honour of the late Head Master, Mr Philip Parsons, and his wife, Bibi. With immediate effect, the former Exeter building will be known as the 'Parsons Building'. Tony Jashanmal (Alpina, 1965) and chairman of the Board said: "The Parsons made an amazing contribution to Aiglon for more than 32 years. We are so proud to honour them in this way."

Architect for Assembly and Arts

Last June, Aiglon launched a competition to find an architecture firm to design and deliver a campus centrepiece: the new Assembly and Arts Building. After a gruelling selection process, Durisch + Nolli Architetti has been announced as the winning firm. To find out more about the building and our campus masterplan, please visit: [www.aiglon.ch/campusmasterplan](http://www.aiglon.ch/campusmasterplan)

Unique opportunities for students

Targeted for their maturity, global awareness, tolerance and multilingual skills, Aiglon students are being actively sought for undergraduate programmes requiring a semester abroad. New York and Northeastern Universities offered these opportunities to just a handful of their applicants – including five Aiglonians, a tribute to Aiglon's commitment to educating global citizens.

Results of readership survey are in

Thank you to all the readers of the *Aiglon Magazine* who took the time to complete the readership survey emailed to Aiglonians back in February. We were delighted that 74 per cent of you said that they read all or most of the magazine and 86 per cent of you said that the magazine strengthened your connection to Aiglon – and we are listening when you say you would like more classnotes (we will be sticking with the extended section introduced last issue). To read the survey results in full, please visit [www.aiglon.ch/survey](http://www.aiglon.ch/survey).

If you missed the survey and would like to give us some feedback, please do call, write or email – our contact details are at the left of this column.



Illustration by Ruby Taylor



# The secrets of the White Rabbit



Richard McDonald  
HEAD MASTER



ONCE UPON A TIME, I would attend a conference hoping to come away with an abundance of new knowledge and insights – ideas that could transform my professional practices or illuminate my personal life. Now I’m content to come away with one or two small stones in my shoe: diamonds of discomfort, both precious and perturbing. Is this idleness, indifference or a cynical, hubris-laden “I’ve heard it all before”? Or, like a lifelong lepidopterist, have I stopped trying to build a collection of everything and started looking for rarities, misprints and anomalies? It may be a little of all of

these – and that I tire more quickly of certainties than I do of questions. Let me give you an example from a recent conference. A keynote speaker cited a frivolous word-play variously attributed to former US president Dwight Eisenhower, Clint Eastwood and the White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*: “Don’t just do something – stand there.” I liked the subversion of a well-worn cliché through a neat reversal and pondered it. Ten minutes later, I realised I hadn’t retained a single word of the presenter’s talk because my attention had been totally sidetracked and led down a rabbit hole. What had happened? Reversal had created paradox, paradox had created puzzlement and puzzlement had required a whole mental investigation to see if a new sense of order could be built from the inversion. And of course it could – quite an interesting one too. The whole paradigm of the action-oriented world had been replaced by a static one; a different, looking-glass universe. I was completely detached from the presenter’s topic, yet I felt my attention levels had been curiously sharpened and intensified. It occurred to me how quick we are in a conventional learning environment – a school classroom, a lecture hall or even an outdoor setting – to reel in the straying attention of our audience, or our students, and prevent them from disappearing down rabbit holes. When we do this, we may unwittingly pull them back from the brink of genuine interest and dynamic enquiry. The sparking of an original reflection is extinguished and replaced by the dull duty of attentiveness. It also occurred to me how quick we are to exhort people to act rather than reflect, to do rather than to be. We see reflection as if it were an optional glimpse into the rear-view mirror, a kind of indulgent spectatorship. We prefer the dictatorship of action: our deeds, not our thoughts, will make the universe better. And does this particular rabbit hole have an end? It does; and as I emerge, shaking the uncomfortable precious stones from my shoe, I hear the White Rabbit telling me to leap before I look. 🐇

# Bringing Aiglon to the world



From left —Stephanie Heathfield; Valerie Scullion; Luke Steward; Helen Sanders.

Aiglon website and as a result of Mrs Scullion and her team’s recruitment work. That work involves training recruitment agents, developing new markets, such as in Africa and Iran, and hosting recruitment and alumni events across the world. And it involves communicating what is wonderful – and, most importantly, unique – about Aiglon. “For our parents, a strong academic performance is a given,” she explains. “So often it is our values that particularly resonate. Moral fibre, a healthy body and mind, and service are principles many parents would like their children to develop. People also like to know that we are a not-for-profit school and that their child is not simply a number on a balance sheet.” Along with the Head Master, Mrs Scullion is tasked with making the difficult choice of which students to accept. “It’s all about the fit,” she says. “As well as academic capacity we’re looking for young people who will embrace life on the mountain and have a positive impact on student life.” It’s also important to get a mix of nationalities, of which there are currently 55 at Aiglon. “We try and have no more than 15 per cent of any one nationality,” says Mrs Scullion, “and we’re always working to add new ones. Applications reflect what is going on in the world, so we have to keep on our toes.” Recently the admissions and advancement teams merged – a move which makes sense in part because the two teams share the same ultimate goal. “We are the first point of contact – and we hope that is the start of a relationship that lasts a lifetime,” Mrs Scullion says. “It is all part of building our community.” 🐇

Writer: MEGAN WELFORD  
Photography: JOE MCGORTY



“OUR ROLE IS TO tell the Aiglon story,” says Mrs Valerie Scullion, Director of Admissions and Advancement. “The story of the community, the shared experiences, the dedication of our staff and the achievements of our students.” Mrs Scullion and her team look after admissions, recruitment, marketing, communications, alumni relations and fundraising – only possible, she says, with the support of Aiglon’s school community. Every year is different but the goal is always the same: to find the best students for Aiglon – and that can mean travelling many miles to find them. “It’s not as glamorous as it sounds!” she laughs. “In 16 days I can take 14 flights and change time zone, culture and language every 36 hours. But I love it. I’m a people person and I grew up internationally so connecting with different countries is natural for me.” New students come to the school through referrals from Aiglonians, through the



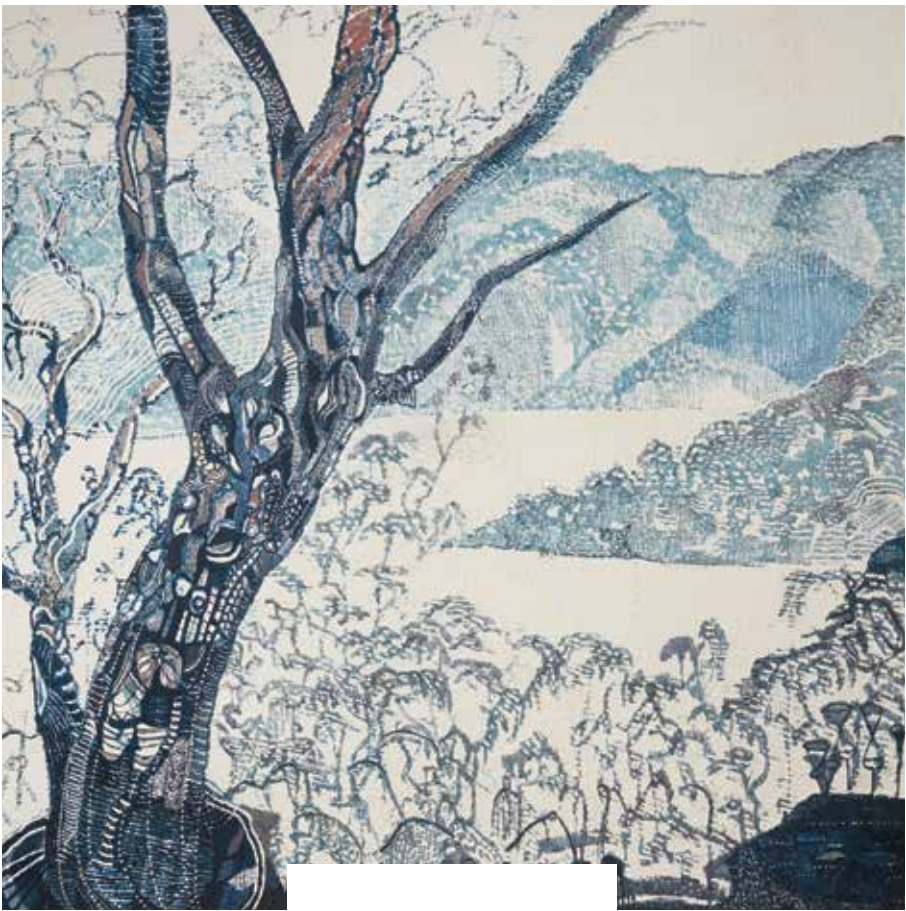
Here's looking at you

# Joshua Yeldham

(Belvedere, 1989)



Writer:  
MEGAN WELFORD



WHEN HE FIRST went on an Aiglon expedition, the Australian-born **Joshua Yeldham** (Belvedere, 1988) fell into the snow underneath his heavy backpack and sobbed.

Fourteen years old, and completely unused to the cold and the rigours of the mountain, Josh says he was convinced to go on by his guide, who said if he didn't make it to the refuge he'd freeze – and by his friends, who carried his backpack and encouraged him onwards.

Afterwards, he says, he was so proud of making it that he put his hand up again and again for expeditions. “I would not be who I am today without the mountains,” he says, simply.

Today he is a celebrated artist and filmmaker, living between Australian river and sea in a eucalyptus forest with his two children and his photographer wife, Jo. He produces beautiful art, which has been described as a spiritual journey through nature.

“I left Aiglon with a spiritual connectedness to nature,” he says. “Before Aiglon, if I couldn't do something I'd have

“  
I WOULD NOT  
BE THE PERSON  
I AM TODAY  
WITHOUT THE  
MOUNTAINS

a tantrum and give up. But there I expanded as a human, I learned how to go past my breaking point. I learned how to move my body into the wilderness, go beyond where I am, where it's comfortable and safe.”

His work often takes him on a physical journey, “up the river in isolation”, and a spiritual one, “entering new domains of knowledge.”

Bullied as a boy at a single-sex school in Sydney, he loved the friends he made at Aiglon. “My roommates were from Nigeria and Pakistan and it was fascinating, having mates like that. I also loved being friends with girls, and I fell in love for the first time at Aiglon. I'm very grateful for that.”

Yeldham also fell in love with art, thanks to the inspirational art teacher, John Sutch (who died, in 1988, aged just 30). “Mr Sutch took me to Giacometti exhibitions and introduced me to jazz. He taught me I could be amazing,” Josh says.

And today, he continues with another Aiglonian tradition: meditation. “Sitting quietly listening to a student talk taught me about storytelling – it taught me how to captivate an audience.” **A**



Clockwise from top — Joshua Yeldham, photographed by Jo Yeldham; *Morning Bay*, shellac ink on hand carved linen paper; *Silver Owl of Morning Bay*, studio cast aluminium with cane.



## LES AMBASSADEURS

THE LEADING HOUSE OF LEADING NAMES

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ZÜRICH  
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+41 44 227 17 17

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LUGANO  
VIA NASSA 5  
+41 91 923 51 56

ST. MORITZ  
PALACE GALERIE  
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# CHATEAU D'AIGLE

1,000 years of history and heritage

Writer:  
SANDRA  
HAURANT  
Photography:  
JOE MCGORTY



**Medieval majesty —**  
The castle dates back to the 12th century, and today houses a museum where visitors can learn about its history and that of the 1,000 year-old winemaking traditions.

**T**HERE IS SOMETHING MAGICAL about a medieval castle set among the vines. Add to that scene a spectacular alpine backdrop and the image is unforgettable. Which is perhaps why the Château d'Aigle, and its large vineyard, attracts around 20,000 visitors a year, as people come from far and wide to learn about the region's winemaking history.

The Château d'Aigle and the vines that surround it date back to the 12th century, when the building was home to the knights of Aigle. After a long and colourful history, in 1804 the castle was bought by the town of Aigle and for 200 years it had a number of roles, including courthouse, prison and housing for the poor of the town.

Today, the impressive building houses a museum, as Nicolas Isoz, its curator,



Nicolas Isoz —  
curator of the Château  
d'Aigle museum.

explains: “We renovated and reworked the museum in a fun and interactive way with films, touchscreens and other elements which show the world of vines and wine,” he says. “But we try to show visitors the historic side, too. We show the castle with its medieval towers. Certain areas are decorated in the original style. And then the museum explains the landscape around us, the vines and the world that they belong to.”

The Château is part of a 1,000-year old wine-making tradition. The vines produce Chasselas, a grape variety which makes a dry white wine (and is also grown in the Rhone Valley and in the Lake Geneva Region). Visitors can see the nuts and bolts of winemaking, from planting the vines through to the presses, barrels and bottles, to the moment when one pours a glass. Part of the exhibition is dedicated to explaining the information contained in the labels on a bottle of wine which is, says Nicolas, a veritable calling card for winemakers.

An interactive explanation of how to taste wine – which doesn't involve drinking a drop – explains the different stages of wine tasting, from its look, its bouquet and its taste. However, visitors who want to taste the real thing are invited to join a guided tour which includes a visit to one of the local vineyards which have links to the museum. **A**

*To find out more about the Château and Vine and Wine Museum please visit:  
www.museedevin.ch or call +41 24 466 2130.*



AUGUST – DECEMBER 2017



Sports Day 1959, with  
Mr Neil McColville (1959–68).

## Diary



**26 August 2017**  
**New Parents**  
The New Parents' reception will be from 18.00 to 20.00. We look forward to welcoming you to the mountain.

**29, 30 September 2017**  
**San Francisco**  
Join us for cocktails on Friday and a hike on a Saturday ending at the Pelican Inn for drinks. Friends and family are welcome – please do join us for any or all events!

**1 October 2017**  
**Los Angeles**  
We are delighted to invite Aiglonians to join us at the home of **Cecilia Peck-Voll** (Clairmont, 1975) and Daniel Voll for a meeting of friends and alumni.

**3, 5 October 2017**  
**Boston and Miami**  
Aiglonians will gather in Boston at the Barcelona Wine Bar (South End) at 18.00 on 3 October and then in Miami on 5 October, details to follow. Save the date!

**15 November 2017**  
**Hélène de Beir Lecture**  
Hélène (Clairmont, 1992) was killed in Afghanistan working with Médecins Sans Frontières. This annual lecture, held in her memory, will focus on humanitarian awareness and service.

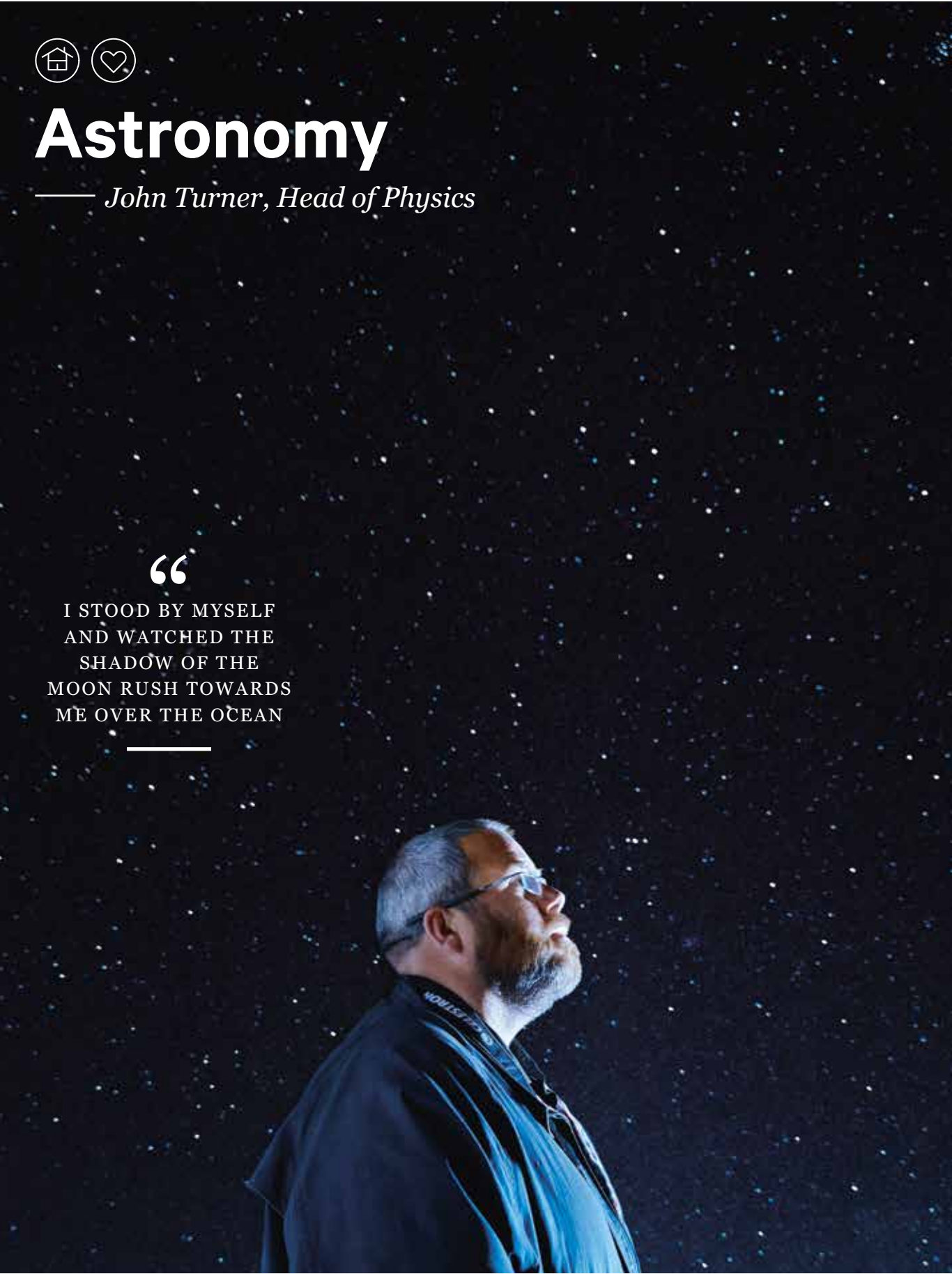
**14 December 2017**  
**Guys and Dolls**  
We eagerly anticipate this year's school production. Join us before the show for tea and scones from 15.00. The performance starts at 16.00 in the Hall.

**14 December 2017**  
**Parents Dinner**  
Sixth Form Parents are cordially invited to dinner, location to be confirmed.

**15 December 2017**  
**College and Careers**  
The College and Careers Office presentation begins at 13.15 in the Sports Centre Classroom.

**15 December 2017**  
**Parent-Teacher**  
Meetings begin at 13.30.





# Astronomy

— John Turner, Head of Physics

“

I STOOD BY MYSELF  
AND WATCHED THE  
SHADOW OF THE  
MOON RUSH TOWARDS  
ME OVER THE OCEAN

Writer:  
LUCY JOLIN  
Photography:  
JOE MCGORTY

“ I TRY TO TAKE OFF MY scientist hat when I look into space,” says Head of Physics Mr John Turner. “You want to look with a certain wonder. People sometimes assume that you have to be thinking about it from a science perspective – I am a physicist, after all. But I have a different perspective. It’s just quite beautiful.”

Mr Turner first found his passion for astronomy on a clifftop in Australia. “In 2002, long before I came to Aiglon, I travelled around Australia for six months,” he remembers. “I had the opportunity to witness the total solar eclipse in December that year. I was staying just outside Ceduna, a small town in southern Australia, and I walked out along the cliffs which overlook the southern ocean. I stood by myself and watched the shadow of the moon rush towards me, over the ocean. It was quite something.”

Since then, his love of the night sky has prompted him to travel to see the very best skies that the world has to offer: from



**On planets —**  
Neptune is the eighth planet from the Sun, making it the most distant in the solar system. This gas giant planet may have formed much closer to the Sun in early solar system history before migrating to its present position.



**On satellites —**  
The moon is Earth’s only natural satellite but there are more than 10,000 man-made ones in orbit.



**On comets —**  
Comets can strike our planet – and have. New research suggests that a comet smashed into the Sahara desert some 28 million years ago. In 2013, scientists reported that a tiny pebble found in the Sahara – dubbed “Hypatia” – came from the comet’s icy core (nucleus).



**Above —**  
North America Nebula, situated in the Cygnus Constellation – a composite of red, green, and blue 300-second captures, taken and processed by Iñigo Valenzuela (Alpina, Upper Sixth) using an ASA 12” Astrograph telescope and Photoshop.

lying under the stars in the Namib Desert, staring at the Milky Way, to walking around at Everest Base Camp after the sun went down. “I went out late at night and suddenly I was surrounded by Everest on one side, the world’s highest mountains on the other, and just this perfect sky, completely clear, and millions of stars.”

But despite these star-filled travels, Mr Turner says one of his best experiences took place at Aiglon’s Kalouti Observatory: “We witnessed the final flight of the Space Shuttle Endeavour during a star party. You could see two little dots of light – one was the shuttle, one was the space station, just cruising across the sky.”

Like most interests, astronomy can have a competitive element. One of the most popular activities for astronomers is a ‘Messier Marathon’ – an attempt to spot all 110 astronomical objects catalogued by French astronomer Charles Messier in one night. Mr Turner has taken part in a few but, he says, he’s not desperate to cross things off a list. He enjoys just looking, rather than looking for something.

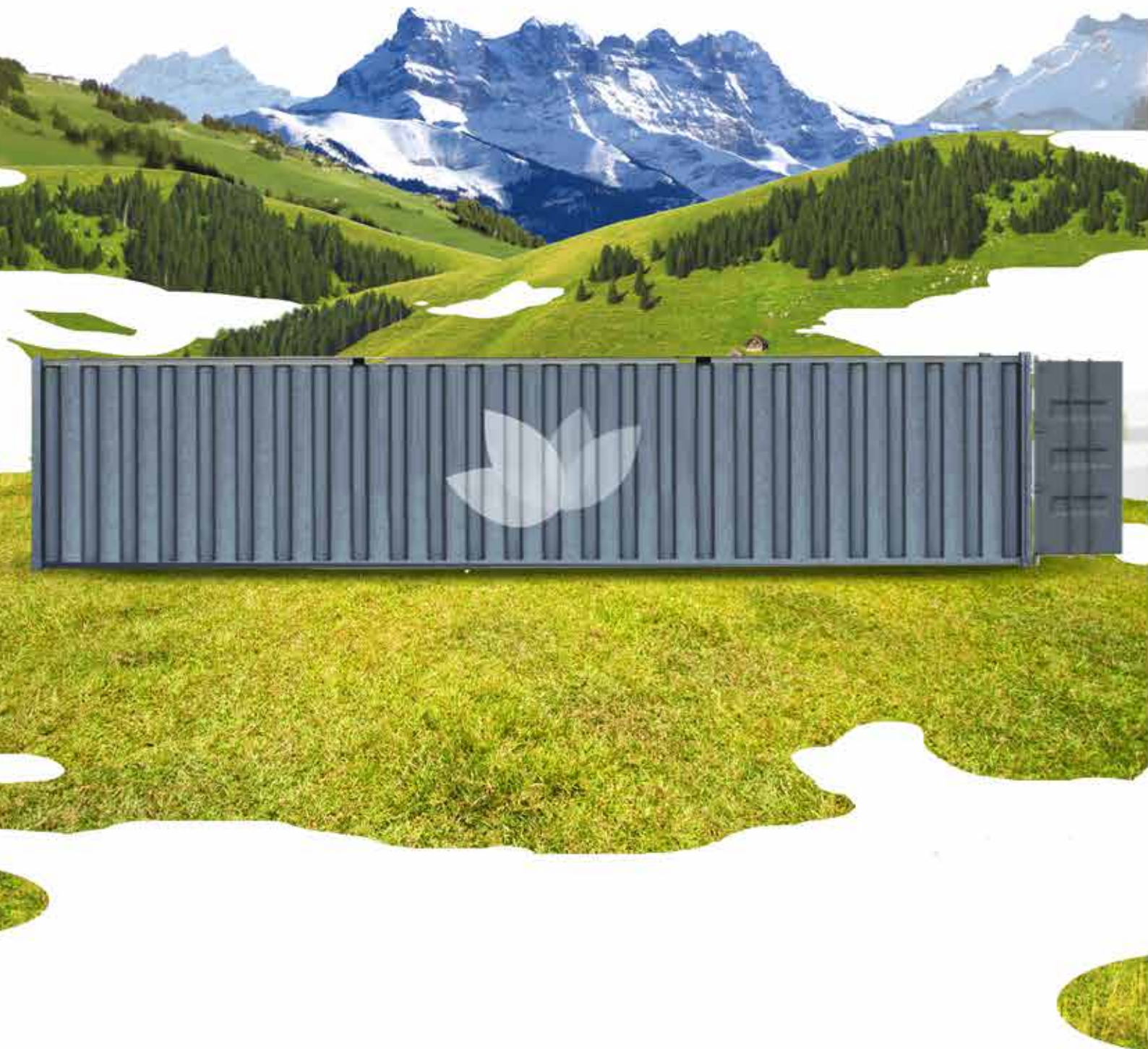
“We have an amazing telescope and binoculars here at Aiglon, but there is something special about looking with the naked eye,” he says. “The light from the stars comes down into your eyes and isn’t filtered by any equipment. If you’ve got troubles down here on Earth, looking into space puts them into perspective. The everyday doesn’t seem that important when you contemplate the enormous size and beauty of space.” **A**



Marcus Gims



A global challenge is...



...to make food available  
for more people in more places.



*Patent granted 2010*

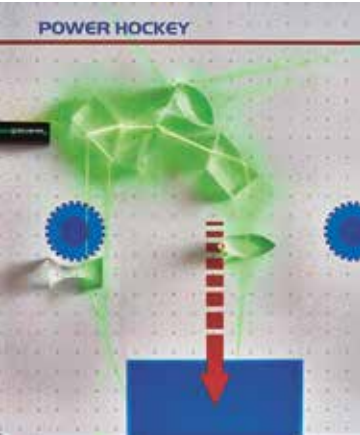
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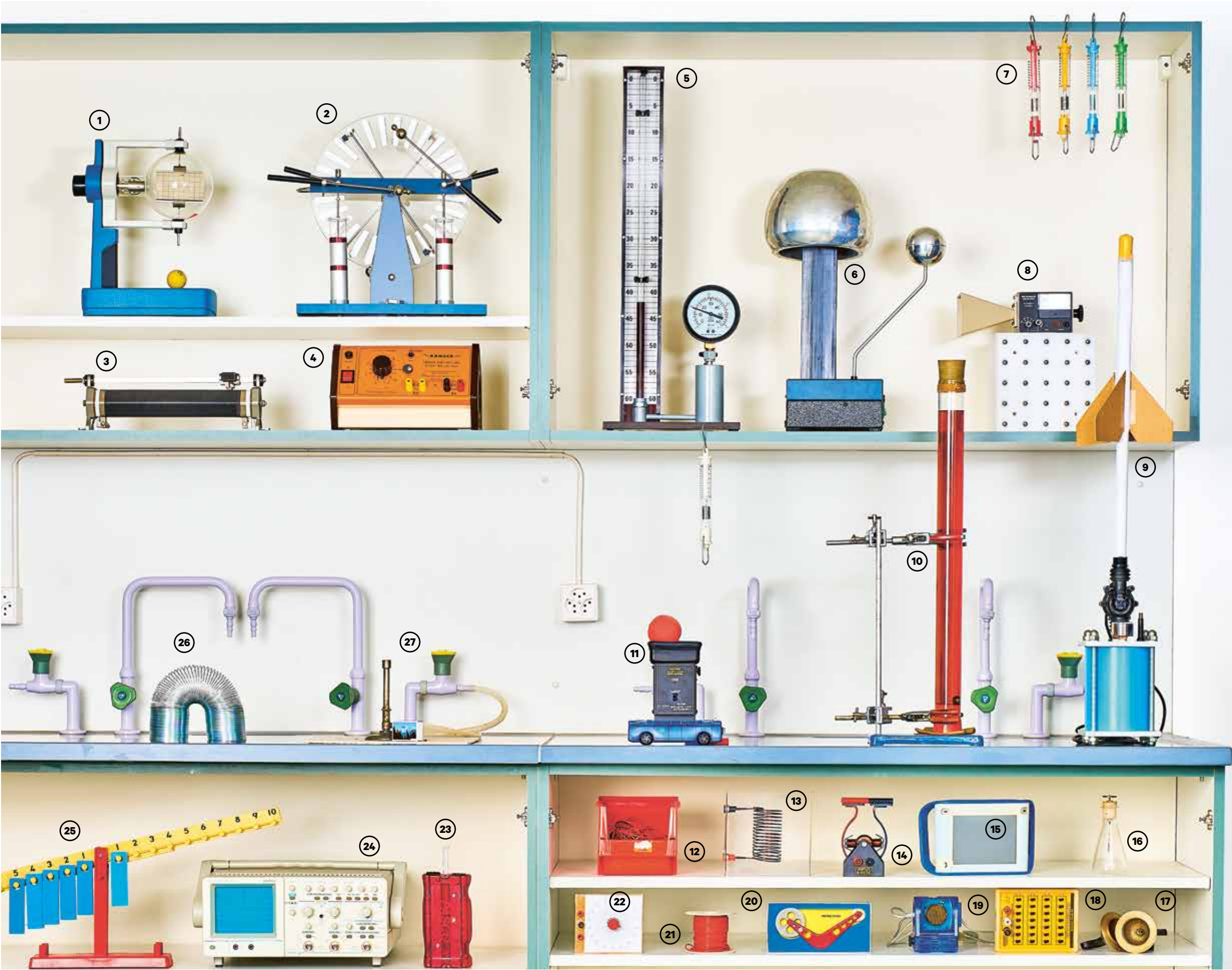




Photography:  
JOE MCGORTY

# Physics

- 1 Electron deflection tube
- 2 Wimshurst machine
- 3 Rheostat
- 4 Lab power supply
- 5 Boyle's Law apparatus
- 6 Van de Graaf generator
- 7 Newton meters
- 8 Microwave receiver; Microwave Bragg Diffraction Cubic Lattice
- 9 Rocket launcher
- 10 Viscosity tube
- 11 Ballistics cart
- 12 Connectors
- 13 Solenoid
- 14 Demonstration motor
- 15 PASCO Data logger
- 16 Homemade electroscope
- 17 Magdeburg hemispheres
- 18 Resistance box
- 19 Motion sensor
- 20 Thermobile
- 21 Spool of wire
- 22 Potentiometer
- 23 Dynamics trolley
- 24 Oscilloscope
- 25 Balance beam
- 26 Slinky
- 27 Bunsen burner







# From Villars, with love

Service has always been at the heart of Aiglon life. So when refugees began to arrive in Villars, Aiglonians knew they could make an impact.



Writer:  
BECKY ALLEN  
Photography:  
JOE MCGORTY



At the refugee centre —  
Daisy Crawley (Exeter,  
Upper Sixth)





**Louise Crawley**  
*Aiglon parent*



**Mrs Naomi Haynes**  
*Houseparent (Delaware)  
and Biology teacher*



**Valerie Barnes**  
*Aiglon parent*



**Manon Barnes**  
*Clairmont, Lower Sixth*

THE PICTURE SHOWS AN ARCHETYPAL Swiss winter scene. Blue-skied – not clear, but lightly veiled with cirrus cloud and a trio of contrails. The horizon is ringed with alpine peaks, and in the middle distance chalets cluster between conifers on the tree line. In the foreground, the snow is scored by toboggan tracks and halfway down the slope you can just make out a couple and their two young children sledge into the distance.

But it isn't an ordinary image, and when she describes the photograph she took this winter, Villars resident and Aiglon parent **Louise Crawley** has to hold back tears. "It's a Syrian family from Aleppo," she says. "When they arrived here last summer they were in shock, so being up there on the toboggan run with them was amazing – this couple and their kids just having fun on sledges felt lovely after all they had been through."

They are one family among millions, because the world is on the move. According to the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, global displacement reached record levels in 2015. Some 65.3 million people have been forced from their homes, among them almost 21.3 million refugees, more than half of whom are under the age of 18.

Between January and September 2015, 23,150 people applied for asylum in Switzerland, and migrant assistance organisations across the country swung into action. In the canton of Vaud, EVAM (Etablissement Vaudoise d'Accueil des Migrants) set up two refugee centres in Villars. The first, a former children's holiday camp called La Clairière, opened in October 2015, followed three months later by a pair of chalets in Gryon. Suddenly, a ski resort more accustomed to welcoming visitors in search of winter sport became home to 150 Syrians, Eritreans and Afghans in search of safety.

"When we heard the refugees were coming, I put out a message in school asking if anyone was interested in helping out," Aiglon Chaplain **Mr James Torrance** remembers. "The school has an extensive service programme, so this was an unmissable opportunity to get our students involved in real service to a real community."

The reaction was overwhelming. Thirty staff and 75 students – a quarter of the school – responded, among them **Manon Barnes** (Clairmont, Lower Sixth) and **Denis Becsenescu** (St Louis, Upper Sixth). "I was seeing stories about refugees on the news every day, but none of us had ever talked to anyone who'd been through this awful experience," Denis explains. "I volunteered because it was a chance to understand more about the problem – an opportunity I probably won't get again."

Manon also wanted to get behind the headlines and beyond the numbers. "You hear the political arguments, the statistics and people worried about refugees taking our jobs," she says. "But it's more personal than that. These are human beings who would have loved to stay in their own countries, this is not something they're doing for fun. When I hear that kind of reporting on the news it enrages me."

For the past 18 months, volunteers from Aiglon and Eclair, a community group in Villars, have worked with the asylum seekers. Like Louise, **Valerie Barnes** is an Aiglon parent and Eclair volunteer. "We started in October 2015 with an appeal for winter clothes and shoes, because refugees often arrived with only flip-flops," says Valerie. "When the children started going to school, we rallied round to arrange school bags for them. So many people in Villars played a role. We are part of a privileged community and when we asked, people gave."

Since then, volunteers have helped their new neighbours learn French, teachers gave maths lessons while the children were waiting for places in local schools, and Aiglon opened up its sports facilities to help teenagers let off steam. They have played cricket and football together, painted and danced, walked and skied, cooked and eaten, talked and listened – the many ordinary things most of us take for granted.

With clothes sorted and French lessons organised, the volunteers made ready for Christmas. "Together with the refugees we made a mural with scenes of Swiss mountain life and decorated the windows with paper snowflakes," says Louise. "For the Christmas party, we asked the Head Master, **Mr Richard McDonald**, to bring his saxophone. He brought Aiglon guitar teacher **Mr Jack Sakic** and all of a sudden the centre was full of Afghan and Syrian men dancing to jazz."

Later that winter Mr Torrance, together with seven Aiglon students and a mountain guide, organised a snow-shoeing expedition for a dozen refugees. "Expeditioning is a big part of our educational ethos, so taking them snow-shoeing was wonderful," he says. "Halfway up the mountain we stopped on a snowbank, and within seconds an intercontinental snowball fight broke out, Afghanistan versus the rest – we had so much fun. And later that term the refugee team won Villars' official snowball fight."

Every Wednesday afternoon, Aiglon students visit one of the refugee centres to lead an activity they have spent the previous week preparing and, says biology teacher and Delaware Houseparent **Mrs Naomi Haynes**, they have witnessed huge changes in the refugee children they work with. →



**Clockwise from top left** — Avnika Gupta (Exeter, Lower Sixth); Delphine Lafond-Puyo (Houseparent

Clairmont and French teacher); Manon Barnes (Clairmont, Lower Sixth); and Valerie Barnes (current parent).





Above, left —  
James Okaro Juma  
(St Louis, Lower Sixth)

“

There's a former Afghan army captain who walked from Tehran to Switzerland with his wife and five children. These are epic journeys – and epic people

“The kids have always been very loving. From the second week, they'd come out to meet us and greet us with hugs. But we'd come back to Aiglon every Wednesday absolutely exhausted because the kids were a million miles an hour. They had bags of energy and nothing to dissipate it,” she says. “Now they sit quietly and concentrate – the secure and stable environment has had a huge impact. And they speak brilliant French – they put us to shame.”

Seeing such a change in the children has also had a huge impact on the volunteers. “Some of the kids were really quiet,” Manon says. “I remember one eight-year-old boy. He was always really sad, he wouldn't play, so hearing him laugh for the first time after six weeks was the best thing ever. It was my biggest achievement.”

For many older teenagers and adults, however, boredom is the major challenge – until they receive a B- or N- permit, they are not allowed to work. Instead, the commune has come up with creative ways for the refugees to contribute to community life. Some volunteered as marshals at a local car rally, while others used their cooking skills to cater for social events – including Valerie's birthday party. “Three Syrian ladies very kindly made stuffed vine leaves, fattoush tomato and parsley salad, burek pastries with feta and spinach, falafel with winter slaw, plus yoghurt and rose baklava for dessert – it was wonderful,” she says.

Now that the children are settled in local schools, and many families are being rehoused down in the valley while the authorities process their asylum applications, staff and students at Aiglon are reflecting on what they – as well as the refugees – have learned.

What most surprised Mrs Haynes were the lives people had left behind: “I assumed they'd come from nothing, but many had been to good schools and spoke good English. Their parents had good jobs with good prospects. That they had to give all that up to come and live somewhere with metal bunk beds and communal facilities – that's quite sobering.”

For Mr Torrance, it is their journeys that stand out. “There's a former Afghan army captain with a face off the pages of the National Geographic. He fought against the Taliban in the Hindu Kush, and then walked from Tehran to Switzerland with his wife and five children. These are epic journeys and epic people,” he says.

He thinks that Switzerland in general, and Villars in particular, have a positive story to tell. It shows that in relatively affluent communities, concerted action and a



can-do attitude can make refugees welcome. “Switzerland is under the radar – we hear a lot about Germany – but per head of population, the Swiss are quietly taking a lot of refugees and looking after people really well,” he says.

For Aiglon, it's been an overwhelmingly positive experience. Over the past 18 months, its staff and student volunteers have worked closely with local residents at the refugee centres, putting the school's principles into practice and strengthening ties with the local community. “It's easy for a boarding school to exist in a bubble, so this has enabled us to get out and be recognised,” Mr Torrance adds. “Getting students to use what they have for the benefit of the world is a big part of Aiglon's ethos. This is a fantastic vehicle for that and it's on our doorstep.”

Perhaps most importantly for Aiglon, volunteering at the refugee centre has taught students some major life lessons. Thanks to the refugees, they see the world differently and – crucially – truly believe that they have the ability to change it. According to Mrs Haynes: “Some of the students have been involved from the beginning and say it's the part of their week that matters most to them, having a relationship with the kids and doing things for them. They feel they're making a difference, however small.”

Denis and Manon agree. Both are now involved with other charities – Manon with a Russian group that cares for children with Down's syndrome, and Denis with an NGO in Romania enabling children in Râmnicu Vâlcea, his home town, to go to school.

“We should give back to our communities because we're lucky to be in a school like Aiglon,” says Denis. “We need to think about those who don't even have the basics. Working with refugees makes you understand the world better – and try to do something to make it better.” <sup>2</sup>

*If you would like to support Aiglon's work with refugees and asylum seekers please contact Chaplain Mr James Torrance at [chaplain@aiglon.ch](mailto:chaplain@aiglon.ch).*





Viewing figures —  
“I learned that even work that looks really exciting is made up of 99 per cent tedious tasks. I spent eight hours a day staring through binoculars trying to identify swans by their bills.”



# *The* **YEAR AFTER**

What do Aiglonians do when they come down the mountain?

Writer: MEGAN WELFORD





# REAL LIFE STARTS *here*

The year you leave Aiglon is life-changing: school is out, and not just for summer. But before – it seems – you even have time to draw breath, the questions begin: will you go to university? Which continent will you chose as your base? Will you go into the family business or strike out on your own? Of course, most Aiglonians already have the answers – and for many, that includes choosing to do something different. To travel. To explore. To serve. And in the process, they sometimes find a completely new – and unique – direction.

**Donatus von und zu Schaumburg-Lippe** (Delaware, 2012) had vaguely considered taking a gap year, but says he was forced to ‘take a reality check’ when he didn’t get into his first-choice university. The subsequent year out turned into four, and led him, a German national, into the British Army.

“It didn’t hit me until I didn’t get my place,” he says. “I’d always had good grades but I was lazy. I wanted to go into some kind of entrepreneurial career, be a manager and a leader. When I got rejected, I realised I didn’t have those skills.”

Rather than giving up, Donatus decided to dust himself off and acquire the skills he needed; the army, he says, seemed like “a good place to learn how to get things done”. In preferring the British army he was partly inspired by his chemistry teacher, **Mr Peter Chapman**, who could occasionally be persuaded to recount tales of his time at Sandhurst – the military academy of the British Army. “It took a lot of pain – and 36 letters to the German Ministry of Defence – but eventually, after a year of officer training, the German Army agreed to let me go.”

Before bootcamp began, Donatus took inspiration from another Aiglonian: English teacher **Mr Darren Coxon**. “We talked about the book *Yes Man* by Danny Wallace, where he spent a year saying ‘yes’ to everything. I decided to do the same for four months. I went to New Zealand, because my mum suggested it. I rented a car and slept in it, and worked in youth hostels. I have a fear of heights but I ended up parachuting and bungee jumping and I loved it.

“Up until then I’d been surrounded by kids my own age but now I had to learn how to make friends with people of all ages. I also learned to relax and trust in fate and in my own capacity to do things. I said yes to visiting a friend from Aiglon who then became my girlfriend – before, I wouldn’t have had the courage to go.”

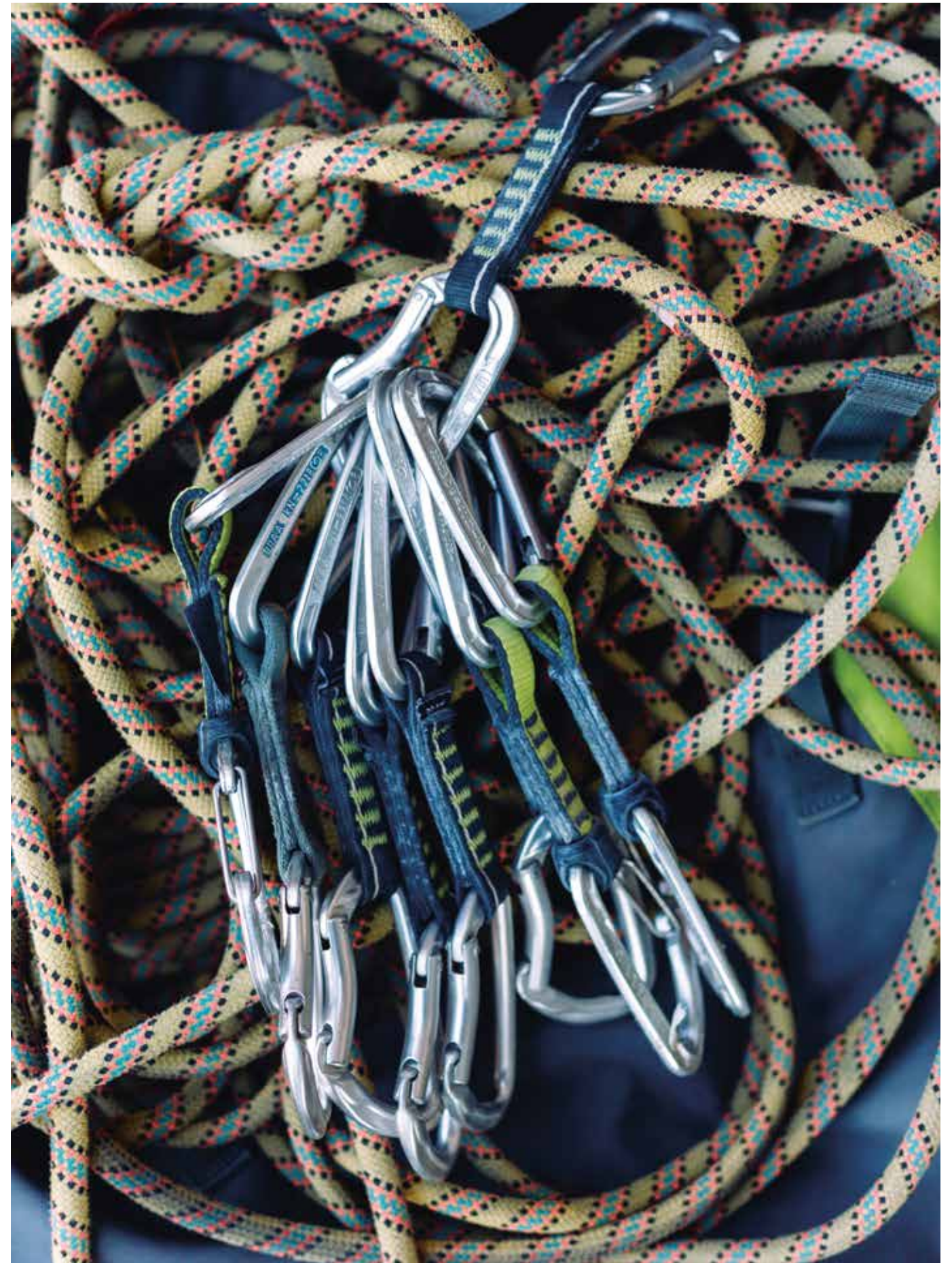
Next, came Sandhurst and rapid instruction in both discipline (“I once failed inspection because my toothbrush wasn’t facing North!” he says) – and also how to use humour and friendship to survive. He then joined the Household Cavalry as an officer, and developed leadership skills. “People rely on you to make decisions. It’s tough. You have to be confident.”

**Mark Logie** (Alpina, 2003) also found responsibility – and confidence – in his year after Aiglon. Taking advantage of Aiglon’s Round Square connections, Mark worked as a resident assistant in an Adelaide school, responsible for the very lives of the young people in his charge. “I was setting up ropes for a climb,” he remembers, “and I was so worried that instead of the normal three pieces [of metal, for securing ropes], I put in seven!”

It was, he says, a steep learning curve. “After all, I was barely older than they were. But I did some tutoring and learned I was capable of explaining concepts. I missed home, but I had experiences like sleeping on a rock shelf in the Flinders Ranges and waking up to an amazing sunrise. It gave me a taste for travel.”

**Jennifer Vandeventer** (Exeter, 1979), from New York, volunteered for Sir Peter Scott (founder of the World Wildlife Fund) at the Wildfowl Trust in Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, UK. “I wanted to spend more time in the countryside and try something different,” she says. “I lodged with a couple who were restoring a 17th century cider mill. There was no heating and a glass of water by your bed would form ice overnight. The floor was dirt and we found ancient coins and silver spoons in it. There was no ceiling, so you had to walk across the beams to go to the toilet in the night.” →

**Metal man [right]** — “I was setting up ropes for a climb and I was so worried that instead of the normal three pieces [of metal], I put in seven!”





“

I learned that work, even making coffee, is harder than it looks

A little daunted, Jennifer nonetheless looked on the bright side. “It was fun, and sometimes hilarious. We ate delicious food and played games by candlelight. I learned that you choose whether something will be fun or miserable. I could have been lonely, but I learned to spend time by myself.”

She also stockpiled a set of excellent stories. “I had some baby geese imprinted on to me for a film about Nobel prize-winning zoologist Konrad Lorenz. They follow the first thing they see. I wore wellies with a bell so they would eventually follow another woman in the film when she wore the same. For weeks these six goslings followed me everywhere – they tried to get in the bath with me, they slept in a basket by my bed. They were very cute. And messy.”

Jennifer was inspired by the people around her, whom, she says, she might not otherwise have had access to. “Peter Scott was a Renaissance man,” she says, “an Olympic sailing champion, a painter, a scientist, a conservationist. His world was so big. Normally, to work somewhere and with someone like that, you would need at least a Masters and several years’ work experience.” Prince Philip was a Wildfowl Trust patron and she visited Buckingham Palace twice – “in and out the back door” – to survey Mute swans.

And she made an important discovery. “I learned that even work that looks really exciting is made up of 99 per cent tedious tasks. I spent eight hours a day staring through binoculars trying to identify swans by their bills.”

**Shuja Jashanmal** (Belvedere, 1983) also learned about work the hard way. “I worked in my family’s butcher’s shop where I learned to differentiate beef and lamb cuts. My mom would insist I bathe before dinner as I always smelled of meat! I then became quite good at selecting fruit and vegetables for our supermarket customers. My employers (my family) took full advantage of my situation and paid me a mere \$90 a month! The cheapskates!”

**Domingo Morgan Luco** (Alpina, 2016) found himself working more hours than anyone should – full time in a café with 5am starts and every evening in a restaurant until midnight. “It was horrible,” he says, “but also brilliant. I met people I’d never have otherwise – people who’d left school at 16 with no qualifications, a woman who



was selling her house to go and work with animals in Sri Lanka. I learned that work, even making coffee, is harder than it looks.”

Like Donatus, Domingo was rejected by his chosen university and as a consequence, his year after Aiglon was one of true self-discovery. “I was arrogant and vain,” he says. “I assumed I would get in to Oxford. When I got rejected I felt it was the end of the world, my prospects were ruined. I decided to take a gap year and apply again.”

Domingo went to live with his father in England and says the best thing about his year was spending time with his baby sister Gabriella, two. “We’d do singing and dancing and swimming and I’d take her to the park. A lot. The bond we have now will last.”

Domingo’s second application to Oxford was successful and he will start there, studying Geography, in the autumn. His advice for current sixth formers? “Don’t be

stuck in a bubble. You don’t need to go to university straight away, explore the world, be open. And don’t be too hard on yourself. Think about where you’ll be happy.”

Jennifer says her year out cured her yen for the countryside, and she went back to New York, where she went on to work in publishing, have three daughters – and now works with undocumented immigrants. “You’ll never get that time again to just try something different,” she advises. “There are all kinds of ways to have an adventure.”

And Donatus is applying his newly-acquired skills at Hult’s International Business School in London, where he leads a large number of social clubs and student organisations. “Going to the right university can be a placebo for confidence,” he muses. “I didn’t learn anything theoretical or business-related during my time out but I am a hundred times more competent now than I was before.” <sup>A</sup>



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# AFTER THE CRASH

Writer: LUCY JOLIN  
Illustration: LUKE WILSON

**Egon Vorfeld** (Delaware, 1985) is no stranger to crashes, bubbles, crises and panics. As founder of wealth management company The Forum Finance Group (FFG) and a former City banker, he has lived through plenty of them and come out the other side. But in September 2008, as banks all over the world from the US to Iceland crashed and burned, something felt different. Clients were calling up in a panic: was their money safe? Was this bank safe, or that bank? Should they move their money? What was happening?



“

t really felt, for a moment, that the financial industry as we knew it was almost on the verge of collapse,” says Egon, a former member of the Aiglon Board of Governors and now an Aiglon Trustee. “The financial industry is largely based on confidence and trust. Even a dollar bill is effectively an IOU. When the trust in the system disappears, it is scary.”

Over in Los Angeles, **Ruggero Borletti** (Alpina, 1984), now senior vice-president of wealth management and private wealth advisor at UBS, was in the eye of the storm at Morgan Stanley. “I was very concerned, because Morgan Stanley’s stock was plummeting,” he remembers. “Our clients’ portfolios were plummeting. I was a little disbelieving as to what was happening. I thought that things would recover just as quickly as they had fallen: if you look at the 1987 crash, for example, it was really a one-day deal and the market recovered quickly. I kept thinking that fear was gripping the market and that fear was going to go away. I didn’t realise that the ramifications would eventually lead the country and pretty much the world into a global recession.”

Ten years on, the ramifications of the 2007-08 financial crisis are still being felt. The exact causes are complex, numerous – and still hotly debated. The global financial services sector is still very much alive – but a lot has changed. Increased regulation has been one of the most important impacts. In the US, banks have been forced to recapitalise and bring down their leverage, as well as submitting to vastly increased regulation. More than \$400bn in fines were levied. The result, says Ruggero, has been far less appetite for risk. “Many of the banks in the US which have recovered from the crisis from an equity capital standpoint have not been lending as much as they can because of all the regulations and fines. That probably has been something that has stunned these banks quite heavily so their willingness to take risks again has clearly diminished for many years to come.”

**Natalya Akentyeva**, parent of Andrey Makiyevskiy (Guardian, Delaware, Upper Sixth), and Anastassiya Makiyevskaya (La Casa, Prep Form Two) agrees. Now deputy chief executive officer and deputy chairman of the management board at JSC Altyn Bank, based in Kazakhstan, Natalya was Head of Corporate at global bank ABN AMRO in Kazakhstan during the crisis. It didn’t affect Kazakhstan much, she says: a drop in oil prices, for example, is far more impactful to a country whose wealth lies mainly in its natural resources. But she’s seen changes nonetheless. “When you are working in a bank, you should make your decisions carefully. But if a bank is not taking any risk, then it is not making any remuneration. Yet now it’s a more complicated process to satisfy a bank when you are working towards a complex solution which satisfies the vision of all sides.”

Egon points out that after any significant event where people have lost money, there tends to be a strong reaction by politicians or



“

A bank that is not taking any risk is not making any remuneration

**Natalya Akentyeva**  
Parent of  
Andrey Makiyevskiy, Guardian  
(Delaware, Upper Sixth)  
and Anastassiya  
Makiyevskaya  
(La Casa, Prep Form Two)



“

Finance is not a science. You are going to be wrong sometimes, but how wrong?

**Egon Vorfeld**  
(Delaware, 1985)  
Parent of Johannes  
(Delaware, Lower Sixth)

regulators. “There is a lot of finger pointing,” he says. “They should have known, they should have done this, they should have had the rules in place, monitored better. There’s a general trend of increased regulation after any event where people have lost a lot of money.”

Banks, he says, are now expected to have much higher capital requirements and carry out far more compliance. “I would say that most financial institutions employ ten times the number of legal advisors and compliance officers than they did before and probably half the number of investment managers and relationship managers in relation to the number of clients that they serve.” And while Egon says he entirely appreciates the need for regulation, he is concerned that it might not always be the right solution.

“The irony is that that a tick-box culture makes it easier to commit fraud, in a way,” he says. “The fraudster knows exactly what they need to do, and there is less room for intuition. When I worked at Cazenove’s in London – the most blue-blooded broker in the City, the Queen’s broker – I remember talk about the ‘sniff test’: does it smell right? Your intuition was at least as important as going through the motion and checking off a list. I have always been a believer in transparency and high quality service. Any form of standardisation has its challenges. One understands that we need more supervision and checking, perhaps, but it doesn’t always serve the end customer best and it’s quite often political: an easy win for politicians.”

But the decade following the crash has also represented an opportunity, on both a global and a personal level. The crash was frightening, says Ruggero, but at the same time, he says, it was also exciting. “There was so much going on that was new. I was concerned. But I wasn’t worrying all day – I was excited about the changes that I felt were coming.”

Natalya observes that as US and European banks become more risk-averse, others countries started to step in to fill the gap, putting measures in place to develop both their corporate reach and their centres of financial excellence and research. “In southeast Asian countries such as China, Malaysia and Indonesia, they have been using this period where banks have not been taking so many risks in order to grow,” she says. “You are starting to see more top-ranking universities based in Hong Kong or Singapore – and Asian banks acquiring European banks.”

Different products and services have sprung up. Ruggero pinpoints two major changes in the investment market: bonds, which used to be seen as a safe place, are now viewed with much more caution, particularly those issued by government or by states and municipalities. “One of the things that happened in the crisis is that government assumed a lot of debt from the banks and the corporations to save them from going bankrupt,” he points out. “So a lot of the debt has shifted to government.” Stock-picking, he says, happens far less and is being replaced by indexing, which spreads the risk: it’s far safer and cheaper to buy an index of 500 companies than have someone managing a portfolio of 25 companies.

And both Ruggero and Egon made fruitful career decisions sparked by the crisis: Ruggero sold his book of business to UBS in



“

I wasn’t worrying all day – I was excited about the changes I felt were coming

**Ruggero Borletti**  
(Alpina, 1984)

November 2008, following clients’ concerns about the validity of Morgan Stanley, and he has been there ever since (Morgan Stanley, of course, survived). Egon merged the company he founded in early 2009, immediately following the crash. “We felt strengthened by the experience yet again of this crash – as we have all experienced many before,” he says. “Sitting through such a crisis on your own is tougher than going through a crisis with a couple of solid partners.”

Go back through that list of crises that have come before and the question of whether or not another crash is possible seems moot: it’s not a question of ‘if’ but ‘when’. Lessons have certainly been learned with regard to this particular scenario, but what else might be happening right now to sow the seeds of another ‘black swan’ event? Ruggero points to the derivatives market as a potential danger zone: several banks have a very high level of exposure to these complex products. But he doesn’t see the particular set of circumstances that led to the first crash happening again. “People learn from experience,” he says. “Lending here in the States now is much more regulated: you cannot get a loan without putting some real money down any more. And that’s a good thing.”

To Egon, the lessons are all about recognising the value of transparency and high quality service. “Finance is not a science,” he says. “Everyone, me included, is trying to make sense of it, trying to model it, trying to predict. But it’s not a science. You are going to be wrong sometimes, but how wrong? The key thing is to manage the extent to which you are going to be wrong. If you limit your losses, you are actually going to do a lot better than if you just focus on making money, as that is when you get very badly caught up in one of those bubbles.”

And despite finance’s new worlds of rapidly changing technology and digitisation, with more and more money changing hands by computer, the old maxim still stands, he says. “If a thing seems too good to be true, it probably is.” **A**





Writer: WILLIAM HAM BEVAN  
Photography: IAN GC WHITE

The last time Aiglonians ski down the mountain together, they do it by torchlight. We explore the traditions and the memories.

T O R C H L I G H T                      D E S C E N T





4pm —

Students head up the mountain and meet in Bretaye to ski with their friends one last time as Aiglon students.



6pm —

The calm before the storm. Students, Sixth Form tutors, teachers and ski instructors meet on the terrace for drinks before heading inside for a fondue dinner.

**W**HEN THE CLASS OF 2017 gathered this March at Col de Bretaye for their final descent, even the weather seemed to recognise the sense of occasion. “While we were inside the restaurant, it started snowing – for the first time in three weeks,” says **Akram Safa** (Belvedere, Upper Sixth). “By the time we started on the journey down, it was coming down a lot. It was funny, since this was the last-ever time we were going to ski as a class. It was as though it was all planned.”

**Maria Minkova** (Exeter, Upper Sixth) says: “It was snowing heavily, but soon people were hardly noticing because they were so excited. It was such a great way to end the season. Being able to share this time with my friends was the best present Aiglon could have given me.”

The descente aux flambeaux has long been a highlight of the final year, and the fondue at Col de Bretaye is widely described as the most convivial of all Aiglon dinners. Before ski boots are clipped up and torches lit, there are speeches from the Head Master and the Guardians. Then it’s time to launch off down the sweeping blue run back to the foot of the Roc d’Orsay télécabine.

For spectators, the ribbons of flame dancing down the mountainside make an enchanting spectacle. And for those taking part, it’s a moment of reflection as well as celebration. It marks the end of the ski season, and one last chance to come down the mountain together as Aiglonians.

The format of the evening has scarcely changed in 30 years. “I remember that we took the train up from Villars to Bretaye on a Wednesday night,” says **Marina Andina** (Clairmont, 1996). “It was all of the Upper Sixth as well as a lot of staff. Some of our ski instructors were there as well. We had a lovely fondue with white wine before we skied down. And then the next morning, we had to get up and go to classes as usual!”

Even when visibility isn’t affected by a sudden snow flurry – or the tendency of the torches to burn out halfway down – the novel experience of skiing at night can be disorienting. Marina says: “It’s a piste you know so well, which you’ve done every day. But suddenly you’re going along in the dark with this flaming stick,” she says. “It feels very different, and it seems like you’re skiing much faster than you are. But everyone made it down in one piece.”

Some years bring a further peril. Snow coverage can be less than optimal in late March, and patches of mud are difficult to see until the last moment; but serious falls are rare. Akram says: “There were a few tumbles this year, but that’s part of what Aiglon represents – taking the challenge, falling down and getting back up again with a smile. That’s the attitude everyone has.”

A ‘buddy’ system, whereby classmates look out for each other, also helps to ensure safety. “I had help from friends who were better skiers than me,” says Maria. “If

anyone went down, someone else would pick them up and ski with them until the end.”

The torchlight descent was one the most eagerly anticipated rites of passage at Aiglon for **Jonathan Fackelmayer** (Belvedere, 1995). He says: “It’s one of the big ones that I think we all related to. In my day, when you turned 17 you were allowed to drink beer and wine on certain days. That gave you a certain sense of growing up. The next big event was the descente aux flambeaux – and I suppose the one after that was graduation.

“In that final year, there’s a big build up to graduation. But instead of just having a party at the end, Aiglon gives you these occasions that mark the passage of time as you get closer to your ultimate goal. The torchlight descent is one that we still remember fondly and talk about, even 22 years on.”

“For me, the torchlight descent was special because it’s only ever done by the graduating class,” says Marina. “I don’t think it has ever been organised for anyone else. For me, it definitely was emotional. It was the end of our final winter there, our last term of ski racing was over, and we now had only one term left. After a bunch of exams, we would be out of there.”

For Akram, the event’s significance was in acknowledging and cementing ties between the year group. “I think one of the main things that Aiglon offers is a strong spirit of togetherness,” he says. “Without these →



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Being able to share this time with my friends was the best present Aiglon could have given me

**Maria Minkova**  
(Exeter, Upper Sixth)





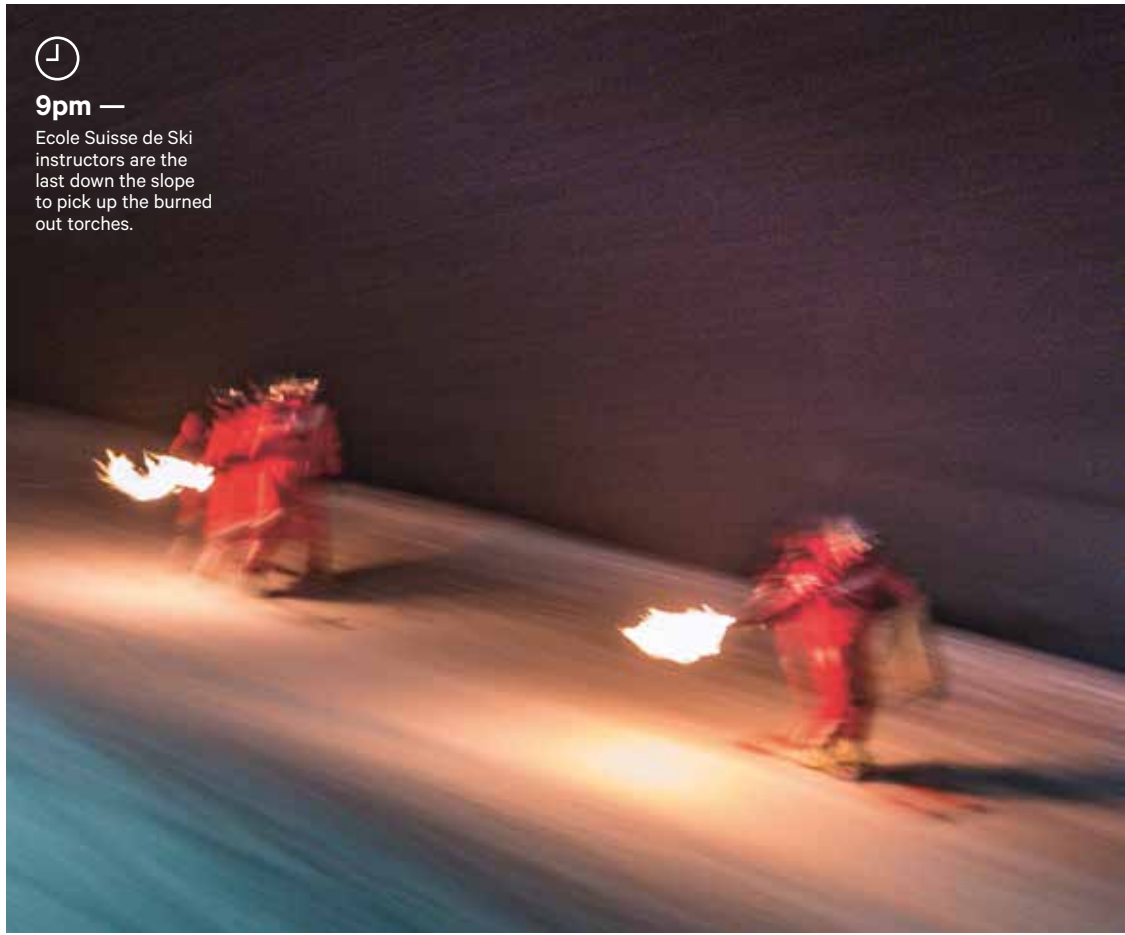
8pm —

It's on! The ski down to the village gets under way and the night sky starts to light up.



9pm —

Ecole Suisse de Ski instructors are the last down the slope to pick up the burned out torches.



events, we wouldn't feel how close our community is. I even think our friendships – those genuine friendships created at the school – are often formed in these situations when we're a little outside our comfort zone.

"The comfort zone is a nice place, but nothing can grow there. Take the long expedition, when we have hardly any food and we have to survive. That's when you really bond with people. You get to know them on a natural, genuine basis. I think that's what distinguishes Aiglon from many other schools in the world."

A select few alumni have returned to Villars and taken up a torch for a second time. As president of the Friends of Aiglon College UK and vice-president of the Aiglon Alumni Association, Jonathan attended the event in 2014. Little had changed from the first time around – save for his ski attire.

"I had to come straight from work in Geneva, so I was skiing in a full suit," he says. "But the event was very similar to ours. It was wonderful to be among the seniors again, and to see that same sense of pride, camaraderie and fun on the faces of the students. That was a special moment for me: I got to do two descentes aux flambeaux, whereas most people only have the memory of one."

While at school, **Éric Amyot** (Delaware, 1977) never had the opportunity to descend from Bretaye after dark, but made up for it as an alumnus. "It was at the

reunion of Delaware alumni, when the old Delaware House was closed up," he says. "We had a fondue at the restaurant and a lot of fendant. What I remember most of the descent is when one of my friends, **Alessandro Twombly** (Delaware, 1978) was skiing next to me, quite fast. He skied on to a patch of mud and his skis stayed there, but he flew about 100 metres in the dark."

This leads on to an as-yet unanswered question: when did the tradition begin? "I don't remember it happening at all during my two years," says Éric. "But at the speed I was skiing in those days, no torch would have stayed lit!"

It can be said with certainty that the ritual had become part of the school calendar by the late 80s. "Skiing has been part of Aiglon's DNA since day one, of course," says Jonathan. "But as to the actual date it first started, I have no idea. I remember that it was well established at the time I did it."

Marina agrees. "I was at Aiglon for seven years and I remember it from when I started in the fall of 1989," she says. "I was in Exeter House that year, and I remember being in my room, looking out of my window and seeing this line of fire coming down the mountain. So I think it was already a tradition by then."

For many who have taken part, the origin of Aiglon traditions is less important than their endurance, and the knowledge that future generations will be able to



“  
Taking the challenge,  
falling down and getting  
back up again – that's the  
attitude everyone has

**Akram Safa**  
(Belvedere, Upper Sixth)

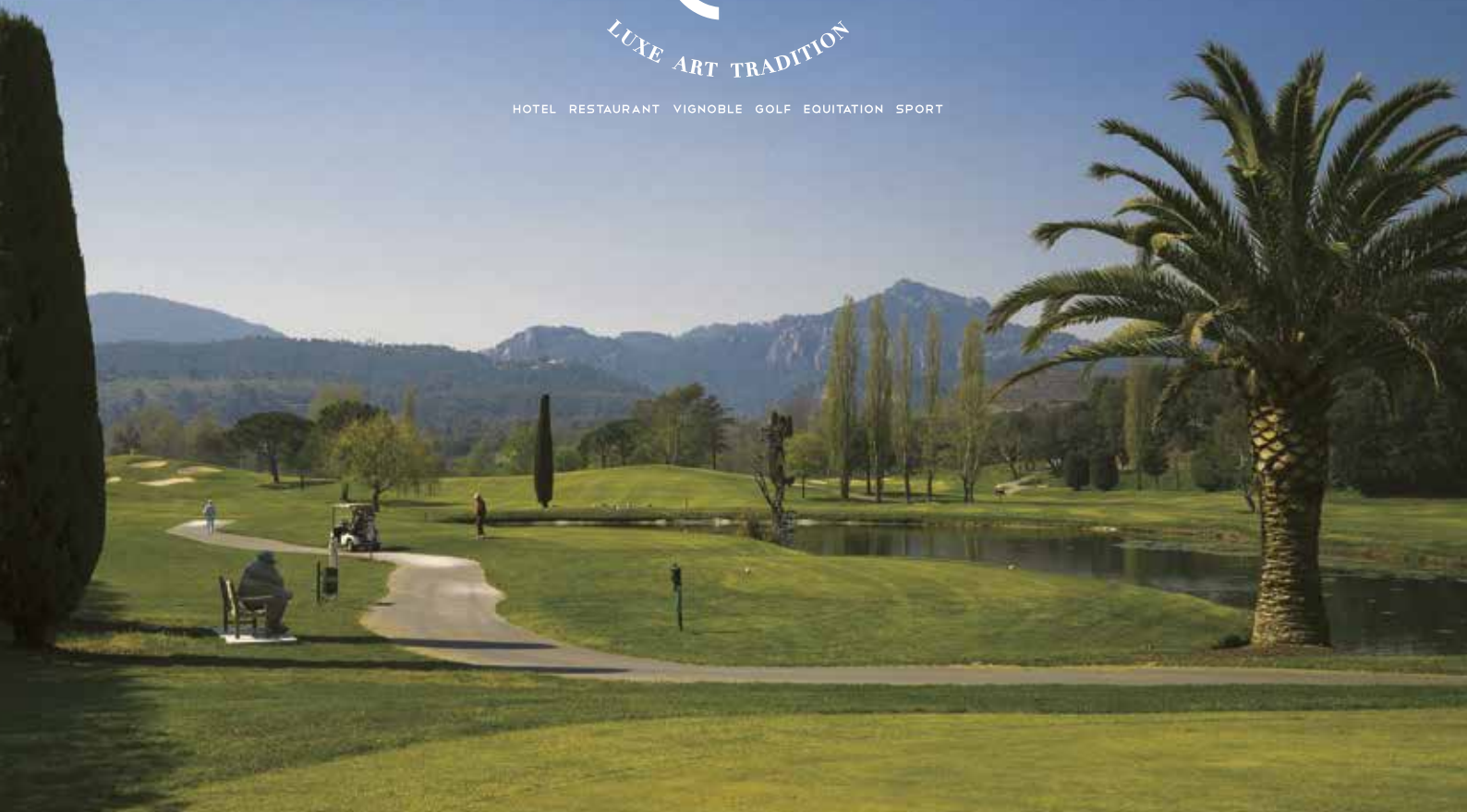
take part. Marina says: "My brother's wife's niece is at Aiglon this year, and I was talking to her over the half-term break about some of the things they still do – like the torchlight descent, and having to go skinning, doing winter expeditions and so on. It's nice to know there's a certain level of continuity. You can speak to people who were there in different eras and they'll have a lot of similar experiences, which I think is great."

And for those who fired up their torches at Bretaye this year, preparing for the final straight to graduation, the torchlight descent was not just a moment to look back and exchange nostalgia, but one to look forward to life beyond the school. Maria says: "In his speech, the Head Master told us that from now on we'd have more and more moments when we would think, 'This is the last time I'll do this at Aiglon'. But we knew it wasn't an ending. At Aiglon, your friendships last a lifetime."

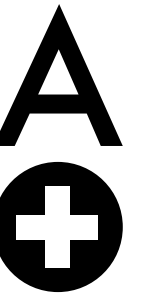
Jonathan agrees. "When I came back, I reminded the students that as they come to the end of their Aiglon career, it's not really the end but the start of something new. There's a whole alumni network out in the world today that's very much looking forward to embracing the senior class as they move out of Aiglon and into the big world." 🗨️

*Do you remember your descent? We would love to hear your stories. Email us at [advancement@aiglon.ch](mailto:advancement@aiglon.ch).*





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# CLASS NOTES

Share your news and get in touch with the Aiglon community at [alumni@aiglon.ch](mailto:alumni@aiglon.ch)



Thank you for sending us so many updates – in fact too many to print! But if you want to know what **Stephen du Plessis** (Belvedere, 2005), **Nicole Musimwa** (Exeter, 2015), **Charlotte Asprey** (Chantecler, 1993), **Mimi Yamani** (Exeter, 2003), **Alexandra Hinckfuss** (Exeter, 2003), **Shekhar Kanabar** (Belvedere, 1998), **Charl Heynike** (Delaware, 2003) and others are up to now, please visit the NEW Aiglon Life site at: [www.aiglonlife.ch/classnotes](http://www.aiglonlife.ch/classnotes).

## NEW YORK LIFE

After five years in Singapore, we have moved back to New York. Despite our Vitamin D deficiency, we are enjoying the craziness of New York life and enjoy seeing even more Aiglonians than we saw in Asia (**Giacomo** and **Misha** – come visit, Bali is not that great). **Juan Zavalía** (Alpina, 1990) comes through regularly, and **Angela Lester** (Chantecler, 1989) and **Dominic Longcroft** (Delaware, 1984) are neighbours, as was **Javier Macaya** (Alpina, 1987) until we moved. **Gherardo Guarducci** (1984) keeps us all caffeinated and fed (St Ambroseus), and **Kanna Kitamura** (Clairmont, 1990) keeps us all connected – she organised a dinner with **Patrick Pearson** (Alpina, 1992), **Luc Bassompierre** (1995), **Zeina Dakak** (Clairmont, 1994), **Roberta Seiler** (Clairmont, 1994), **Vinit Mehta** (Alpina, 1991), **Dilip Madhani** (Belvedere, 1992), and **Steve Reeves** (Alpina, 1992) who flew in from Minneapolis! And then another recent dinner with **Dilip** and **Bahjat Talhouni** (Delaware, 1992). Looking forward to reconnecting with other old friends – [obareau@gmail.com](mailto:obareau@gmail.com)

**Oliver Bareau** (Alpina, 1989)



## A NEW VENTURE

I have managed to find my way back to Switzerland and I am currently based in Geneva! Since graduating, I've completed two degrees at Bentley University and I am currently finishing my PhD in finance in Geneva! I try to come up to Aiglon as much as possible, even if just to breathe the almost unpolluted air and check out the incredible developments on campus. At the moment, I'm leading a family run 'haute maroquinerie' - luxury fashion brand, Sophia Sangani. We produce exotic skin pieces for both men and women, our online store will be live before this summer! [www.sophiasangani.com](http://www.sophiasangani.com)

**Hassaan Joosub** (Delaware, 2008)



## THE SEBA CZ SCHOLAR

In February this year, **Charlotte Asprey** (Chantecler, 1993), **Carlotta Newbury née Calleri-Zavanelli** (Exeter, 1994), **Mrs Fiorina Zavanelli**, Head Master Mr Richard McDonald and Director of Admissions and Advancement Mrs Valerie Scullion travelled to Kenya to choose the third SEBA CZ scholar – the scholarship set up in memory of **Sebastiano Calleri-Zavanelli**. **Carlotta** writes: "We were all inspired and humbled in equal measure by the impressive calibre of candidates. I think Seba would wholeheartedly approve of the next scholar, who will join Aiglon this autumn." **Charlotte** adds, "It never fails to go unnoticed how Aiglon creates a bond in those who have studied there that is unique. There is a noticeable yet invisible thread that binds us. I was in New York last week for only one week and saw no fewer than six Aiglonians! I wish and hope the next scholar will leave Aiglon with that same invisible thread."





URBAN CHANGE

My daughter **Talitha** and I have recently moved to Barcelona. After six years in the jungles of Sri Lanka, and six years of Aloha Maui organic eco life it's a BIG urban change. But a good one. Come and visit!

**Catherine de Rham** (Clairmont, 1989)



A NEW BABY

**Lucian Wynn Anderson Pugliese**, son of **Claressinka Anderson Pugliese** (Exeter, 1997) was born at home on Jan 31 2017. This photo was taken by Claressinka's husband **Joe Pugliese** (joepug.com).

EMPTY NEST

After raising three children (including twins who are off to University in Boston and LA) for 25 years I am finally an empty nester and am happy to be able to meet up with some great friends from Aiglon. **Andrea von Buchholtz** (1978) and I recently met in Madrid then **Rosemarie Bata** (Clairmont, 1978) and I met in Lucca, Italy where I recently bought a place. I am organising a mini Clairmont reunion with **Kristina Muller-Eberhard** (Clairmont, 1977), **Nina Ritter** (Clairmont, 1978) and **Sue Meshkoff** (Clairmont, 1978) hopefully in April or May in Italy and Warsaw. Times are good!

**Marinda Liu Lobo** (Clairmont, 1978)

HELLO BALI!

**Misha Baumann** (Delaware, 1989) has been living in Bali, just down the road from **Giacomo Galtarossa** (Delaware 1989) and **Belinda Sircombe-Jellett** (Exeter 1987), for six years. "I have three daughters who help keep it real! This year I celebrate 20 years of joyful partnership with my wife. I am also launching a transformational retreat business. Feeling healthier and stronger now than ever before. Gonna keep on this trajectory and will be curious to return to Switzerland to climb different peaks that I felt challenging at 17!" [www.lightventures.life](http://www.lightventures.life)

THE WRITE STUFF

For the past months I have been writing for the Brown Political Review (BPR) at Brown University, where I started studying after graduating from Aiglon in 2015. BPR is an entirely student-run online and print magazine that publishes political content on a range of issues. My articles mainly focus on European politics; recent topics have been Emmanuel Macron's rise in France and the Labour Party's role in the context of Brexit. For anyone who is interested visit [www.brownpoliticalreview.org](http://www.brownpoliticalreview.org).

I appreciate any sort of feedback at [ale\\_borghese@brown.edu](mailto:ale_borghese@brown.edu).

**Alessandro Giovanni Borghese** (Delaware, 2015)



MORIA CAMP

**Jeremy McWilliam** (Alpina, 1976) is working to support refugees in Moria camp, on the Greek island of Lesbos. "We run the food, tea and clothing tents from 9am to 11pm and provide security for the family compounds so that there is some separation between women and children and single men." To support Jeremy's work please visit [www.eurorelief.net](http://www.eurorelief.net).



AN ENGLISH REUNION

In April, **Richard Bloor** (Belvedere, 1964) and **John Gardner** (Clairmont, 1965) reunited with fellow Aiglonians in England. Richard writes: "There was incessant chatter and laughter, and the venue was excellent." The group raised their glasses to members who has passed away, including **Andrew Clive** (1965) and **Nick Rowcliffe** (1966), who organised the first reunion (with just eight alumni) three years ago. Save the date for next year: 25 April 2018.



GREAT HOSTS

In early January, 2013 SEBA CZ Scholar **David Kimondiu** (Belvedere, 2013) drove from Rome to Villars to visit Mrs Patience Fanella-Koch (Director of College & Careers Counselling) and former Belvedere Houseparents, Mr and Mrs Saunders. "I loved being back at Aiglon and on the Bretaye pistes! I had the chance to see the new SEBA CZ plaque in The Hall with my photo. I spent Christmas in Genova, Italy, with Seba's family which brought back many happy memories of holidays there when I was at Aiglon. Thank you to both Seba's family and to Patience Fanella-Koch for hosting me."

**David Kimondiu** (Belvedere, 2013)



THE SPIRIT OF GSTAAD

**Tara Sahni** (Exeter, 2012) and **Sara Al Tamimi** (Le Cerf, 2012) at the book launch of *The Spirit of Gstaad* by **Homera Sahni** (P'12) and **Mandolyna Theodoracopulos** (Clairmont, 1994). A number of Aiglonians attended the launches in London and Gstaad including **Mir Akbar** (Delaware, 2017), **Virginia Achenza** (Clairmont, 2011), **Peter Mardaleichvili** (Belvedere, 2012) **Max Pfyffer von Altishofen** (Belvedere, 2011) **Zeina Dakak** (Clairmont, 1994) and **Mehreen Akbar** (P'17).

Tributes



Mr Charles Walker, 1969-72

**Wes Green** (Belvedere, 1972) writes:

Mr Walker taught Mathematics, Chemistry and integrated studies; his wife Heather was Delaware housemother (Robert Boas was housemaster).

Though I never knew him well, he was always supportive and quick with witty remarks. In fact, it was some horseplay with Charles that landed me in the most serious trouble I had to navigate during my days at Aiglon.

fooling around in the Exeter gym, I unadvisedly called him 'Chuck'. He drew himself up and turned bright red. It looked as though he was going to explode. If I hadn't been a house captain, I'd still be running up and down the mountain! Thankfully, we had the opportunity to touch base and chat about those Aiglon days a couple of years ago on Facebook. A dear man. RIP.

Nick Rowcliffe, 1966

**Nigel Thorp** (Belvedere, 1972) writes:

Nick Rowcliffe, who organised the first two Aiglon UK 1960s reunions, came from the Standard Fireworks family. On leaving Aiglon, he went to work for Henry Spencer and Sons, agricultural land agents in Worksop eventually establishing Rowcliffes, a leading firm of estate agents in Buxton, which continues to bear his name. Nick became a publican with a loyal following of patrons to his restaurant outside Macclesfield before selling his lease and concentrating on outside catering.

Sadly, Nick was not able to attend the second Aiglon 1960s reunion as he had been in hospital. Typically hard-working and reliable he insisted of getting out of his hospital bed for a day at Christmas a year ago for a hog roasting event and died a few days later. Nick is survived by his wife Sue and two daughters of whom I know he was very proud.

Andrew Clive, 1965

**Martin Freston** (Clairmont, 1965) writes:

Andrew attended Aiglon from 1960-1963. He worked for Mason's Pottery for 10 years, going on to set up his own sailing school in North Wales. He was an excellent skier and did some instructing in Scotland. Later, he and his family moved to Wiltshire, where he and his wife Helen built up a catering business.

He was a very accomplished sailor and in 2000 crossed the Atlantic in the ARC rally in a small yacht. He organised several sailing trips for his local community, and he loved gardening and the outdoors.

Andrew attended last year's Aiglon reunion in the UK and was hoping to attend again this year. He leaves a wife Helen, two sons, William and James, and two much loved grandsons.

Mr RJ Knight, 1956-1958

**Jonathan Knight** (Belvedere, 1985) writes:

My father, RJ Knight, who was a member of staff at the school in the late 1950s along with my mother who died in 1995, passed away in October last year at the age of 93 after a short illness.

He was living in Lymington, Hampshire, UK at the time. My father had in recent years bumped into Kit Rogers (Alpina, 1985) who is also based in Lymington and had also kept in regular contact with Joyce Lowe who was living close by in Bournemouth before her death.

I know that he and my mother took so much pleasure from being part of the school at its early stages in the 1950s and had many fond memories of those

times. It is only as I sort out my parents' house that I realise just how much that time meant to them. I, of course, was lucky enough to spend two years at the school (Belvedere – 1983 to 1985) and so also understand Aiglon's 'magic'.







D. & G.  
Charlet-Ançay

De nos  
**passions,**  
nous en avons fait  
**notre métier.**



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## Class of 2003

The Class of 2003 is still in full swing and sharing stories, pics and updates on Facebook.  
Jessica Rossi (Exeter, 2003) writes: "We're planning our 15-year reunion in Villars for January 2018.  
If you are not on Facebook but would like to know more, please contact me on [jessica@mavericksdigital.com](mailto:jessica@mavericksdigital.com)."

**Jack Henderson** (Delaware, 2003) is working in London for an investment management firm. Sadly, he didn't make the 2013 reunion but is looking forward to 2018 and says it's been great catching up with old classmates at Aiglon weddings over the last few years.

**Bryan Lawson** (Alpina, 2003) is based in Victoria, Canada. He's married and a father of two: Oaklyn (aged two) and newborn Raewyn. He's loving life as an "all around hippie/bush forager" and works as an organic produce specialist/natural grocery store manager. He says having two children has changed his life but, aside from that, living in a tent in central America working on farms for six months in 2013 before Oaklyn's birth is the most memorable experience he's had in the last five years. He dreams of creating a permaculture food forest/wellness centre, a place to live naturally and grow with his family.

**Melissa Klein** (Exeter, 2003) moved to Portland, Maine for work after producing photoshoots for the past 10 years in New York. She has been working hard with her father on their non-profit Assisting Children in Need, spent time in Tanzania to open a vocational training centre and has recently been to Thailand for meetings with local non-profits to build a library and start a nursery school.

**Rebecca Greenway** (Clairmont, 2003) is in Lille, France, teaching IB English at an international school. Following in the footsteps, who would have thought! Rebecca managed to survive the 2015 earthquake in Nepal with 20 of her students whilst she was organising a service learning project. She returned to Nepal this April to set up health workshops for teenage girls and is still hopeful of changing the world through education! She also hopes to make it to the next reunion during the school holidays if it can fit during the school vacation as Mr and Mrs Greenway are still in Villars!

**Sacha Pictet** (Delaware, 2003) is in London working in private equity at an asset management company. When he's not working in finance, Sacha spends his time changing the world one revolution at a time.

**Marie Watanabe** (Hind) (Clairmont, 2003) married in 2014 and was living in Denmark completing an observership at a department of vascular surgery, while trying to learn Danish! She's now relocating to Singapore hoping she will stay for longer than 1 year as she has been moving around a lot in the last few years. She's planning on withdrawing from medical practice and hoping to doing a masters in healthcare administration, which is the area she's trying to get into, but she'll want to try and make it down for the 15th year reunion in Villars and see how things have (or have not) changed!

**Jessica Rossi** (Exeter, 2003) splits her time between the Cape Winelands (SA) and Crans Montana (CH). She's busy running a dance entertainment company in London, producing and consulting in digital marketing but mainly is focused on running and growing Cheerobics: a fitness and coach training hub for the cheerleading industry and just recently published a book. She's been working and travelling with her other half for almost 5 years and now looking to settle down and enjoy a good work/life balance.

**Leticia Van Riel** (Clairmont, 2003) is in Barcelona loving life as a booking agent and manager for DJs. She moved to Barcelona just over a year ago after 12 years in the UK. She plans on setting up her own company focusing mainly on the management of DJs and singers.

**Ekaterina Preis** (Clairmont, 2003) is in Moscow and as much into art as ever! She is painting and set up an art foundation to help other artists which involves running exhibitions a number of different artists as well as herself. Last summer she started a healthy (but tasty) ice cream business inspired by her 10 year old daughter. She would love to study some more in Paris so she could also do more exhibitions. Being unable to attend the last reunion she is very much looking forward to the next one.

**Stephanie Tan** (Chantecler, 2003) is based in Jakarta, Indonesia, fully immersed in the family business, which manufactures and distributes fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). This year will be the second time we are a main sponsor for Jakarta Fashion Week. Stephanie also organised a weekend retreat for 100 people focused on self-empowerment and healing from emotional trauma which resulted in seeing a lot of broken families unified and a lot of broken relationships healed. For her next phase, Stephanie plans on combining business and social responsibility by teaching villagers around the country how to take care of cleanliness and hygiene. Eventually she would like their products to also tie in with campaigns that remind women of their true value and inspire confidence in them.







# Fail well, fail better

Fildzah Zulkifli  
*(Exeter, Lower Sixth)*

Fildzah Zulkifli says learning to ski involved a lot of falling over, but it was worth it to be able to ski down from Bretaye to Aiglon – by herself.

“You’d have been hard pushed to find a more reluctant skier than me when I arrived at Aiglon,” laughs Fildzah Zulkifli (Exeter, Lower Sixth). She is not joking. Having moved from her home country of Malaysia, where she’d never so much as put on a pair of skis, Fildzah admits her reluctance was mainly about fear. “I knew the school was famous for ski racing and doing well in high level competitions, but I wasn’t remotely sporty, let alone a skier. In fact, I’d only ever been good in one sport and that was squash. The thought of ski injuries only heightened my fear.”

Today – just six months after taking to the slopes at the beginning of the year – Fildzah adores skiing, relishing Aiglon’s competitions and enjoying setting herself ever more challenging goals. “It’s just the best feeling ever when I’m skiing fast in sunny weather, with the wind blowing and a fresh smell in the air,” she says.

“It’s therapeutic too. A few weeks ago, I was having a rough day but out on the slopes it was like a weight had been lifted. I literally smiled my way through the afternoon. It turned my day upside down in such a great way that words can’t quite describe it. Even my friends noticed!”

It is quite a contrast to Fildzah’s first time on the slopes. “I couldn’t even put on my skiing boots and they felt so heavy and clumsy,” she recalls.

To make matters worse, the session didn’t go well. “I think I’d set myself high hopes without realising and I felt such an outsider seeing others skiing so gracefully, while I constantly fell over. The instructor was fabulous, but that just made me feel



I’d let him down too. I couldn’t remember the last time I felt such a complete beginner at anything.”

On a phone call to her parents that evening, Fildzah was “quite down. I told them how embarrassed and disappointed I felt and they encouraged me to keep persevering. They suggested setting myself small, achievable goals – starting with simple turns and then just getting from one point to another.”

These mini-goals helped enormously in her tri-weekly ski lessons, says Fildzah. “My first aim was learning how to put my ski boots on and off. Next up, I decided how to turn in various directions and so on.” She hasn’t looked back.

Skiing also has other, hidden, benefits, such as bonding with Aiglon students she might not otherwise have made friends with and growing in confidence in other areas of life.

“The help I’ve been given at Aiglon to learn to ski has made me feel that I might be able to take on other sports, such as tennis. In the past, I’d have given up and got demotivated almost immediately, but I know now what can be achieved if you really try,” she says. “That attitude carries over into my schoolwork too. Whereas before, I’d get really upset if I got a bad result in a test, I no longer drown in self-pity and just remember that practice and working harder can get much better results next time.”

And her personal best? The first time she skied all the way down from Bretaye back to Aiglon itself. “It took me about 15 to 20 minutes and I felt like a proper skier for the first time because it’s the piste that all the skiers use to get to the town of Villars.”

Writer:  
KATE HILPERN  
Photography:  
IAN GC WHITE



“MY PERSONAL BEST? WHEN I SKIED ALL THE WAY DOWN FROM BRETAYE TO AIGLON. I FELT LIKE A PROPER SKIER FOR THE FIRST TIME





# Camping food

Nattie Krittanont  
*(Clairmont, Lower Sixth)*

Writer: BECKY ALLEN  
Photography: JOE MCGORTY



It's the countryside and camaraderie that make camping food better than any other meal. Arriving at a beautiful camp site at the end of a 10km walk is really special. And first, we have a drink – cool water tastes really good.

We share the jobs that need to be done. Some people put up the tents, others cook and the rest of us do the dishes. We all eat together, and it's a relief to finally sit down and rest. After supper's finished we talk over the day. I guess it's like having a beer after work – only without the beer!

Walking makes you really hungry, which makes the food you eat when camping taste much better. It's easy to take food for granted at home or at school, but you appreciate camping food more because there's no-one else around except you and your group. And eating outside makes food taste different: even if rain sometimes makes your bread soggy, it's a fresh experience.

Pasta is a popular camping food. That, or something like Spanish tacos or chicken with

spicy sauce and noodles. The key to good camping food are dishes that are easy to make and which don't take too long to cook. We don't cook sweets, because you can't carry too much weight in an expedition bag, so we might just have a cookie or a waffle.

In the evenings after supper, we have time to relax and reflect on what we've achieved during the day – but mornings are more business-like. We don't have a big breakfast, something easy like waffles and Nutella and a quick drink. Or we might just make a sandwich so that we can get off and finish the ex. The thing that's special about breakfast is people's funny 'wake-up' faces and not having to bother brushing your hair.

I go on expedition quite a lot, but my favourite trip was a cooking competition in second form. We had to design our own menu and make it fabulous. Other people's food was amazing, it's surprising what you can do with just a few ingredients. One student made sushi – wow. That was such impressive camping food. **A**



## This is how Aiglon changed my life

Andrea Giordano  
*(St Louis, Upper Sixth)*

Last year, I travelled to Kibungu, in Rwanda, to teach at a school and help at a local orphanage. On the second day of the trip, a large truck drove into the orphanage compound and all the children ran towards it to unload huge buckets of water. But instead of drinking anything, they formed groups so they could bring the water first to the elderly house, then to the kitchen, then to the bathroom. Their sense of unity was truly inspiring.

When I look back at my time at Aiglon, it's this project and another – teaching French every week to Syrian and Afghani

refugees back here in Switzerland – which I feel have changed me. I wanted to try and give to people directly, to go to people and help them. We have five Guiding Principles, and the two I hadn't explored much were service and diversity. These two projects helped me explore those principles.

In Rwanda, I realised how lucky I was compared to those people, with everything I possessed. Yet I felt that some people, even with the little they had, were really happy. We want to have more and more, but it is possible to be happy with so little.

Likewise, when teaching refugees, I heard stories about how their brothers and sisters had died in bombings in Afghanistan or in Syria, and how they had been forced to leave their homes. They had to leave everything behind and yet they remained so strong on the inside. I learned that it's important not to judge someone when you don't know their full story, where they came from and what they have experienced. And I made unexpected friends, too: in particular, a little boy in the orphanage. Meeting him made me understand that this project wasn't just one where I'd make other people happy, but where I would find happiness, too. **A**





# Mountain firefighters

Writer: LUCY JOLIN  
Photography: JOE MCGORTY



Below —  
Mr Peter Willett,  
Mr Chris Chalcraft,  
Mr Laurent Calise and  
Mr John Gerhardt.

## Villars and Aiglon rely on volunteer firefighters drawn from the local community and school staff.



“

MY FIRST FIRE WAS  
JUST A SMALL JOB  
BUT I WAS FULL OF  
ADRENALINE!

**Mr John Gerhardt**  
(Alpina, 2003)  
Senior computer services technician

A firefighter always remembers their first fire, and **Mr John Gerhardt** (Alpina, 2003) is no exception. He'd only been training for a few weeks before the first call came in – a fire right behind La Casa. “I was controlling the traffic,” he says. “I remember finding it amazing that when the hosepipes are full of water and going at full tilt, they're like solid steel, so you can't drive over them. It was just a small job but I was full of adrenaline!”

There's a lot more to the work of the Chesières-Villars fire service than you might expect. Of course, they fight fires. But they also do everything from hauling a fallen tractor upright to helping train passengers who have become stranded after an avalanche.

It's an essential service, and it's entirely run by volunteers, several of whom are Aiglon staff: Senior Computer Services Technician **Mr Gerhardt**, équipe members **Mr Laurent Calise** and **Mr David Moss**, Deputy Head (Student Life) **Mr Chris Chalcraft**, Head of History **Mr Nick Teal**, and Head of Art **Mr Peter Willett**. Indeed, the school's involvement with the fire service goes back a long way. Mr Gerhardt credits his involvement

to **Mr Russell Lewis**, Aiglon's former head of IT, who sadly passed away in 2008. “He came to my door and said: ‘I really want to do this, but not by myself – why don't you join me?’ That was in 2006 and I'm still here.”

Two teams of volunteers operate at Chesières-Villars. The first, most experienced team have beepers which can go off at any time and tell them what the situation is, where it is, and which vehicle they should use. Everyone then heads to the fire station in the village as quickly as possible. If the incident requires more power, the B team are contacted via their mobile phones. Each volunteer must also be officially on call for five weekends a year – during that time they are not allowed to drink, or leave the immediate area.

Gaining new skills is a big part of the job and every year volunteers identify areas where they'd like to train. For Mr Gerhardt, the practical skills gained as a fire service volunteer are a fantastic contrast to his working life – “which is usually spent in front of a screen,” he says. But he also loves the connection it creates between the school and the village. “It would be easy to sit up here in our little enclave,” he says. “But I've met so many local people who also volunteer for the fire service. We're from many different walks of life, but we all wear the same uniform and do the same vital job.” <sup>A</sup>

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