

THE COLUMNS

by pupils; for pupils

HSD's Newsletter: Issue 119



As Form 5 and Form 6 are on study leave, the responsibility of editing the columns edition for this week has fallen on the younger members of the columns team! We hope this edition proves interesting despite our best writers not being able to contribute. Good luck to Form 5 and 6 in your prelims and, as always, happy reading!

Honorary Editors Ayanah and Maisey

Holocaust Memorial Day

Mrs Hudson, Rector

Monday was Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 and the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

In session 2022-23, I was privileged to participate in the Holocaust Education Trust- Lessons from Auschwitz (<https://www.het.org.uk/lessons-from-auschwitz-online>) Programme, as a teacher. A key element of that programme was a day visit to Poland and Auschwitz – Birkenau. After 33 years of teaching History and the Holocaust, I realised that until this visit, I did not have a profound enough understanding of what really happened. It was a very challenging day but also a life altering experience and deeply profound and moving.

As you may remember the visit prompted me to share, my father in law's story. An Austrian Jew, who left Vienna just before the Anschluss when he was 17, became a British Citizen, joined the Commando X unit of so called 'Enemy Aliens' and fought covertly behind enemy lines. Part of the requirement was to adopt a new identity and hence Stefan Hirsch became Steven Hudson. The family never talked of all those they lost, it is a chapter of our personal history that we still need to explore more fully.

The theme of Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 is 'For a Better Future' Today, we remember the lives lost, the courage shown, and the lessons learned from one of humanity's darkest chapters. The Holocaust was a tragedy not just for one people, but for all people—a reminder of what happens when hatred, prejudice, and indifference go unchallenged. Let today be a call to action: to challenge hate in all its forms, to stand against injustice, and to teach future generations the power of kindness, empathy, and remembrance.

THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

Charlie Grewar F5

Monday the 27th of January marked Holocaust Memorial Day and last week marked the eightieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The Holocaust, the organised slaughter of over 6 million mainly Jewish people, remains one of the darkest chapters in human history.

Anti-Jewish sentiment had existed in Europe for centuries and was capitalised on by the Nazi party when they came to power in Germany in 1933. Used as a scapegoat for Germany's sufferings post WW1, Hitler's government began their targeting of Jewish people.

First, they identified and forced them to register and wear the Star of David in public. Then they took their freedoms and segregated them from the rest of the population. In 1939 they herded them into ghettos to live behind barbed wire. As Europe fell to the Nazi war machine, Jews in occupied countries, particularly Poland, were rounded up and sent to work camps to work them to death. But it wasn't fast enough for the Nazis.

In 1941, "The Final Solution" was implemented. All Jews within reach were to be murdered. Work camps became death camps. But they found that many soldiers were unwilling to simply shoot them, and so the horror that was the gas chambers emerged. Identification, segregation, and then extermination. That's not to say that Jews were the only people targeted by Hitler's regime. Romani, homosexuals, people of colour, and political opponents such as trade unionists and communists were all sent to the camps to die.

The Nazis had a clear vision of the world they wanted, a vision that necessitated the slaughter of anyone who did not fit in with their 'Aryan' master race. How were these disgusting ideas allowed to take shape, and the first steps be made? How were the German people able to stand by as their neighbours were sent off to the camps? One reason is the effectiveness of the Nazi's attempts to instil a genuine hatred for Jews in society. Anything and everything was blamed on the 'Jewish Menace.' In addition, Jews made up less than 1% of the German population and often kept to their own communities, even before the Nazis implemented their policies of segregation. As mentioned, they were already hated and feared.

As terrible as it sounds, some were glad to see Jews disappear from society. Another part of this is ignorance. The treatment these people suffered in the camps was barbaric, but many Germans either didn't care, didn't know, or didn't want to know about it. For some, it was better to accept that the Jews were sent off to 'holiday camps' or to work abroad. People saw what they wanted to see, and it takes no effort to be wilfully ignorant. Even those who lived near the camps could have dismissed the smoke from the incineration of bodies as a sign of factory work. Many even within Germany had little idea of the brutally efficient extermination that was happening.

It's paraphrased a lot, but Edmund Burke said 'evil triumphs when good men do nothing.'

The holocaust is one of the few events in history with little ambiguity: it was evil, plain and simple. And it happened because good people did nothing. Or some did but it wasn't enough. For every Oskar Schindler, there were ten people willing to look the other way. That was all it took. Most people in Nazi Germany were just that: people. There wasn't anything special about them that made them more hateful or feel more superior. Nothing that made them more ignorant. They

were just human. What happened in Europe from 1941-45, could happen anywhere there is humanity.

The holocaust happened. Remember it. People of all ages were rounded up and sent to die in camps like Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Bergen-Belsen. Remember it. They were slaughtered with ruthless efficiency. Remember it. Their clothes were piled high to be used by those who were only deemed worthy of life due to an accident of birth. Their names and humanity were stripped away and replaced with numbers etched into their skin. Remember it. Ordinary people stood by and let it happen. Remember and learn from it.

Tackling Extremism

Jack Mitchell F3

When we think about the horrific events of the Holocaust, we can easily forget that liberation took place only 80 years ago, and the beginning only a little over 90. My grandparents, although very young, were around when it took place. On the days they were born, thousands of Jews and other ostracised people were brutally murdered less than a thousand miles away in Poland and Germany. It is also easy to forget that it was ordinary people who facilitated the atrocities, by allowing the public rhetoric used against these groups to slowly get worse and worse, and by actually helping the Nazis during the war as soldiers. It took only twelve years to go from the Nazis' first election victory in 1933 to a death toll of 11 million people in 1945. That number did not include those killed in Second World War but just those killed domestically by the Nazis, their own government - although many also came from territories taken by Germany – for being different.

That shocking statistic shows us what can happen when ordinary people don't stand up for others. Most Germans didn't want the atrocities of the Holocaust to happen. Yet they did. We constantly hear far-right politicians talking about immigrants in a similar atrocious, dehumanising way. Because of this, we must understand how dangerous it is to just let it happen. People who want to limit immigration are not extremists, far from it. But when we allow the public conversation about it to become toxic and divisive in the way it was 90 years ago, we open the door to those who are extremists, allowing them to become credible and gain electoral potential. Hitler and the Nazis gained power because people were desperate for change. They slowly but surely manipulated the minds of millions of ordinary Germans to make them blame Jewish people and other different groups for their problems. We must never allow the most vulnerable people in our society such as asylum seekers and immigrants become scapegoats for bigger problems and have to face the horrific consequences that could bring.

The recent successes of far-right parties in Europe have also been cause for concern. Who would have thought only decades ago that less than a century on from this stain on human history, the far-right is again heading towards an election with electoral potential – not victory, but perhaps opposition – after economic woes, using vulnerable people to push the blame onto? Across Europe and the world, the far right has made worrying gains, but we must not forget that the traditional political parties who have seen incumbency as a disadvantage in recent elections are starting to take action against them and become true opposing forces.

To forget that normal people are capable of standing up to evil could be catastrophic. We must always remember the lessons that history has taught us and act on them when we need to.

Name That Musical

Q1 Schyuller Sisters

Q2 Don't Lose Your Head

Q3 Cell Block Tango

Q4 No Matter What

Q5 Popular

Q6 Look At Me I'm Sandra Dee

Q7 I Dreamed a Dream

Q8 World Burn

Q9 I Want it That Way

Q10 Candy Store

Q11 Money Money Money

Q12 The Girl Gets Around

Q13 And You Don't Even Know It

Q14 You Can't Stop the Beat

Q15 She Used to be Mine

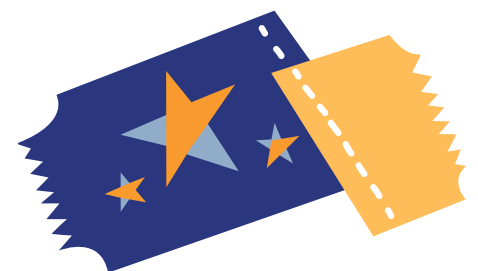
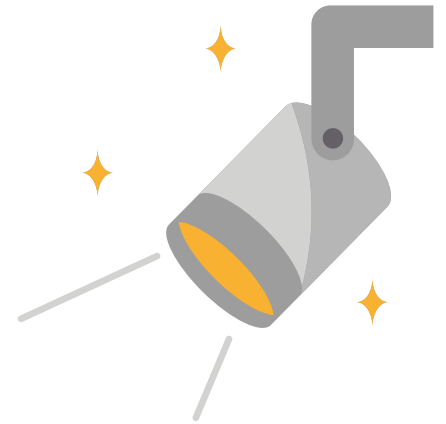
Q16 Revolting Children

Q17 Hushabye Mountain

Q18 Sunrise Sunset

Q19 Think of Me

Q20 You Will be Found



Dear Evan Hansen

Answers 1) Hamilton 2) Six 3) Chicago 4) Whistle Down the Wind 5) Wicked 6) Grease 7) Les Misérables 8) Mean Girls 9) & Juliet 10) Heathers 11) Mamma Mia 12) Footloose 13) Everybody's Talking About Jamie 14) Hairspray 15) Waitress 16) Matilda 17) Chitty Chitty Bang Bang 18) Fiddler on the Roof 19) Phantom of the Opera 20)

Monday the 20th of January, 2025, Donald J Trump was inaugurated as the forty-seventh President of the United States of America. This is Trump's second term as President, his first term being from 2017-2021, with President Joe Biden sandwiched in the middle years. In the 250 years of American political history this has only been done once before by Grover Cleveland who served from 1885-1889, and 1893-1897, with Benjamin Harrison in between his terms.

Usually, the swearing in ceremony is held outside the Capitol Building with over 200,000 spectators lining The Mall, but this year it was held inside, in the magnificent Rotunda. Officials claim this is because of the freezing temperatures in Washington DC, but many speculate it was due to fear of another assassination attempt. The Rotunda was filled with Supreme Court members, dignitaries from the House, Trump family, billionaires such as Elon Musk Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg, majority of Republican senators and supporters as well as former Presidents and First Ladies— Bidens, Kamala Harris, Obama, Bushes and Clintons. The former Presidents are there as a symbol of a smooth transition of power and respect for the Presidency and the country. Two notable absences were Michelle Obama and Nancy Pelosi (Speaker of the House) with no statement given as to the reason for their absence.

The prestigious ceremony saw JD Vance (Vice President) sworn in first followed by Donald Trump. Some celebratory songs were sung by the Military Choir, Christopher Macchio who sang the National Anthem and former American Idol winner, Carrie Underwood, who sang America the Beautiful. There were technical difficulties for Underwood's performance and after a few minutes wait she took it upon herself to sing acapella— can you imagine how nervous she was?

President Trump, took to the podium to list some of his Executive Orders and plans. Some of the more outspoken ideas were; renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, reinstating a two gender society (only recognising male and female pronouns) he also wants America to have the first astronaut on Mars, he declared the Southern border a national emergency so he could send troops to guard it, keeping immigrants out of America while waiting for asylum, as well as pardoning the January sixth rioters.

After leaving the Rotunda, ironically the building he is accused of inciting rioters to attack only four years ago. Later that day he attended the Capitol One Arena to address some of his supporters, he was seen to be dancing to the YMCA and signed his first Executive Orders, where historically the pens he used would be preserved, however he threw them to the crowd of supporters as a memento.

As Trump stated the "Golden Age of America starts now." He believes that during his assassination attempt this summer he was "Saved by God to make America Great Again." Only the history books will tell if he accomplished this. The inauguration was held on Martin Luther King Jr Day, where one of his famous quotes was "I have a Dream."... as an American citizen I too have a dream, that America will move forward with inclusivity, equality, peace and prosperity for all.

2024: THE BIG ELECTION YEAR IN REVIEW

Jack Mitchell F3

Billions of votes cast; thousands of victors. 2024 was the biggest election year in history, with polling stations popping up in over 70 countries across the world, from Uruguay to Finland; Sri Lanka to the Solomon Islands. Nearly half the world's population was eligible to vote, making the year very important for democracy. A large factor in the large number of voters was the fact that eight out of the ten most populous countries in the world held elections. We'll take a look at some of the most important elections to take place last year.

Here in the United Kingdom, it can seem like our last election was years ago, but it's only been six months since our general election in which the Labour Party, led by Sir Keir Starmer won a landslide victory, defeating the incumbent Conservative Party and its leader Rishi Sunak. Labour won 411 seats (some outlets say 412 due to Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle's victory, but during his tenure he must remain impartial, making both technically correct) an increase of 211 from the last election in 2019 when it was led by Jeremy Corbyn. The Conservatives saw a dramatic loss of seats, down 251 from the last election when Boris Johnson led the party to a landslide victory only 5 years prior to 121 today. Sir Ed Davey and the Liberal Democrats also saw a dramatic increase in parliamentary support, up 64 to 72 seats today. The local elections in May this year may see many county councils changing hands as they were not elected during the general election of 2024. It will be interesting to see how the electorate is now feeling about the different parties and may give an indication of future nationwide election results.

Less forgettable was the much more recent American Presidential election, which was won by former President Donald Trump. Following current (until Monday) President Joe Biden's late withdrawal from the race, his Vice President Kamala Harris stepped up to take on Trump but lost with 226 electoral votes to his 312. She also lost the popular vote by 1.5%, or about 2 million votes. The House of Representatives and Senate elections saw the Republicans retain control of the House and gain control of the Senate, but by fine margins in both. There has been much speculation about the potential policies of Trump and the potentially dangerous consequences. Recent comments about not ruling out the annexing of Greenland and the Panama Canal by force haven't exactly quashed fears.

Other elections held in 2024 include the general election in India, where incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi saw his lead eaten into but still very much present, the European Parliament election in which all 720 seats were contested and incumbent President Ursula von der Leyen kept her post, and the elections in Indonesia, in which retired General Prabowo Subianto was elected as President with the highest proportion of the popular vote in the country's history.

Big elections being held next year include the Canadian general election which current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will not contest, the German federal election in which incumbent Chancellor Olaf Sholz is expected to be defeated and the Australian federal election in which incumbent Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will have to fight to retain his premiership. It will also be interesting to see how new governments elected last year will fare this year, and whether the elections this year will be nearly as dramatic as in 2024.

THE SECRET MISSION

Charlotte Stuart Fotheringham F4

This is where I've got myself to. Watching, waiting. Counting down the seconds on my watch. No one is around. Everyone is asleep. How long is it now? Three minutes. Two minutes. Thirty seconds. Twenty seconds. Ten seconds, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one...

Now.

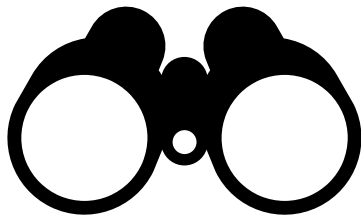
Creeping out of my hiding place, I check no one is around. The yards are deserted, so I continue to creep forwards.

The crates are standing a little way back from the rest of the goods. Sitting there dull and unassuming in the moonlight, as if they're keeping a straight face over their silent joke. No hint of what they're carrying.

The lighthouse beam suddenly illuminates the yard around me, and I fall back into the shadows. It is gone again. The crates are right in front of me. I know what I must do.

Strike a match.

The light illuminates me for a millisecond, before I shield it with my other hand. I hold the match gently to the wood of one of the crates. A faint orange glow comes from the spot. I take the match away, and it stays.



Please, please, please...

The flame roars into life.

I run.

Behind me, the military dockyards explode with light. A small van is here to pick me up. It pulls up on the road, and the door opens and the man steps out.

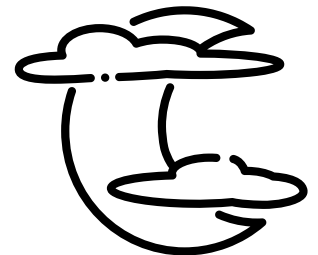
"We saw the explosion. How did it go?"

I am suddenly grinning.

"Can I do something like that again?"

He laughs.

"Of course."



We get into the van and drive away silently, while the rest of world heads towards the dockyards. Laughing with relief. Giddy for what might happen next.

How could we have known there was a man with binoculars?

Gaza Ceasefire

Ayanah Adam F4

On 19 January 2025, a long-awaited ceasefire between Israel and Hamas came into effect, bringing a glimmer of hope to the traumatised residents of Gaza and the citizens of Israel. This truce concludes a harrowing 15-month conflict that began on 7 October, 2023 with the Hamas raid on Israel and the taking of hostages.

The ceasefire, which commenced at 09:15 GMT, after a nearly three-hour delay, includes several critical components aimed at de-escalating the violence and addressing humanitarian concerns. Key provisions of the agreement are firstly, a hostage and prisoner exchange. Hamas agreed to release 33 Israeli hostages in exchange for approximately 737 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. Secondly, the truce facilitates the long awaited entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza.. This includes over 600 truckloads of essential supplies permitted daily, aiming to alleviate the dire conditions faced by the 2.3 million residents.

The Gaza Health Ministry reported that at least 47,035 Palestinians lost their lives (most likely tens of thousands more lost under the rubble), a staggering toll that emphasises the severity of this conflict. This is not just a number, this reminds us of the 47,035 stories that were ended for no reason due to maiming and bombing. Additionally, there were nearly 2000 Israeli lives lost, not to mention the 166 journalists and members of the media who were killed.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza reached catastrophic levels during the conflict. The blockade prevented the flow of essential goods, leading to shortages of food, medical supplies, and fuel. Hospitals, if not reduced to rubble, were overwhelmed, struggling to provide care amid dwindling resources and constant threats of attack. The psychological toll on the population, especially children, is immeasurable, with many experiencing trauma from the incessant violence.

The initiation of the ceasefire has sparked cautious optimism among Palestinians. Thousands have taken to the streets in celebration, expressing relief at the prospect of peace and the opportunity to begin rebuilding their lives. Now, more than ever, we need to help Gazans rebuild and restart their lives. Its impossible to get rid of the psychological trauma but we can do our part to ensure adequate shelter and food.

However, the road to recovery is long, and the international community's support will be vital in reconstructing infrastructure, providing medical and psychological assistance, and ensuring that basic human rights are protected.

The ceasefire marks the end of yet another dark chapter in the region's history, offering a chance for healing and renewal. Yet, the scars of the past 15 months will not fade. A ceasefire does not mean we can forget. We should remember the lives lost, and do all we can to protect the ones we still have. The resilience of the Palestinian and Israeli people, in the face of 15 months of d hardship, stands as a testament to their enduring spirit and hope for a brighter future.

Burns Supper

Meagan Dailly F6



On Saturday the Pipe Band held a Burns' Supper and Ceilidh bringing together parents, kids, teachers and so many more to raise funds for the band. Members of the band from across the school opened the event before Mr Blair Oliphant performed an exciting rendition of "Address to a Haggis". We dined in style on "the great chieftain o' the puddin'-race" and were treated to a series of traditional Scottish Highland dancing (including a 6-year-old doing the sweetest sword dance you've ever seen.) Both the raffle and the auction - conducted by Dr Steuart Fotheringham - had some amazing prizes and helped to raise funds for the 2025 Pipe Band Season. Throughout the evening, Ceilidh dancing was provided by our Tenor Drum teacher Mr Sinclair's band, Fiobha. Overall, it was an amazing night and I can't wait for next year.

Trump's Cabinet

Jack Mitchell F3

As we all know, a certain Mr Donald J Trump returned to the Oval Office on Monday following his inauguration as the 47th President of the United States. Before that, he has spent a large amount of time in between his election victory in November, particularly in the last few weeks, announcing far fetched policies and unsettling many in doing so. His inauguration wasn't as eventful as many had expected, but still caused a stir as Trump doubled down on some of his more interesting ideas such as wanting the Panama Canal and the Gulf of America instead of the Gulf of Mexico. Perhaps the most talked about moment didn't actually take place at the inauguration, but at a separate event, when billionaire and ally Elon Musk appeared to give two successive Nazi-styles salutes. Whether or not it was such a salute has been debated, but it still went viral. He, along with other billionaires such as Mark Zuckerberg and Jeff Bezos, was sitting in the row in front of Trump's cabinet picks, a very important indication of how the new President will approach his premiership.

There were many important people in the row behind Musk, many of whom were not Trump's first choice. They include:

Marco Rubio as Secretary of State. As perhaps the most important figure in the cabinet, Trump's choice of a former opponent shows a change to his usual style. The Florida Senator ran against Trump in the 2016 Republican primary, and has since served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and was confirmed unanimously hours after his boss took office.

Pete Hegseth as Defence Secretary. In stark contrast to the measured and qualified cabinet pick of Rubio, the military veteran and most recently Fox News Host with no government experience whatsoever raised eyebrows. Following the announcement as his defence pick, it emerged that Hegseth was investigated for an alleged sexual assault in 2017, though he was never arrested or charged and has denied the allegation. He has made a name for himself ranting about diversity efforts in the department and has said that women should not see active combat service because 'men in those positions are more capable'.

Robert F Kennedy Jr as Health Secretary. This cabinet is probably even more controversial than that of Hegseth. RFK Jr garnered huge media attention following his vaccine scepticism, chiefly for his false claim from a 2023 Fox News interview that 'autism comes from vaccines'. This claim had been debunked and taken apart by a huge number of doctors and scientists from many different countries. He was a presidential candidate but dropped out, in part due to his admission that he killed a bear cub and dumped in Central Park in New York. The health secretary pick also brushed off previous sexual assault allegations by saying: 'I am who I am'.

These picks are just some of those who will sit with Trump and drive through the policies of the United States for years to come. Perhaps they will become a more cohesive and able group than they currently seem. We will have to wait and see.

The Reappearance of Rachel Price Book Review

Rosie O'Ready F3

The mystery novel, 'The Reappearance of Rachel Price' was released on 2nd of April, 2024, by the bestselling author Holly Jackson, but only now am I reviewing it. This book is about Bel Price, Rachel Price's daughter. Whilst being filmed for a documentary about her missing mother, said missing mother reappears. The story follows Bel struggling with this immense shock, discovering family secrets some would rather be kept hidden.

This book was highly anticipated before its release, as Holly Jackson's previous books have been wildly popular. But was it worth the hype? My conclusive answer is yes. And here's why.

The plot of this book was excellent. In a mystery book, you would obviously expect the plot to twist and turn, but this book took it to a whole new level. Holly Jackson kept us guessing constantly, right to the very end. Who can you trust? What really happened? Are they telling the truth? Holly Jackson ensures that none of these questions can have certain answers until the very end. We're kept with just enough information to keep us happy and guessing, but never enough to know anything. Holly Jackson made the characters feel so real. Even the side characters clearly had so much thought put into them, and it showed. In this book, it would be impossible to have a favourite character, because they are all equally well-written, complex, and generally awesome.

The Reappearance of Rachel Price in summary is, a complex, well-written story. The characters are relatable, the plot keeps us hooked, and the ending had me in tears. From beginning to end, this book was incredible. Jackson really took us on a ride with this one, and I for one, loved every second.

How Mass Transit Can Affect A City

Neil Alam F4

During the winter holidays, I went to Bangladesh. The capital of the country, Dhaka is known for immense traffic. The city had lacked any proper mass transit aside from Buses. However, the Dhaka Metro soon opened at the end of 2022, which was aimed to help reduce congestion across the city.

Currently, one line is open, and it goes from the Dhaka City Centre to a suburb called 'Uttara North.' I went onboard the metro to get first impressions of it.

Once you enter any of the stations, you see a very modern exterior and interior, and it is completely clean as well. The platforms are really clean and simple as well, and the high roof height makes it seem grander. The trains are overall very clean and modern, with onboard announcements in Bengali and English.

Overall, the metro was really needed in Dhaka, as with the population steadily increasing and with how dense the city is, mass transit is really needed. The construction of more lines to other places will hopefully also reduce the need for using cars. There is still a lot to improve on, including more frequent services. However, Dhaka is going on the right path and hopefully it will continue to improve. Projects include the new Terminal 3 at Bangladesh's Biggest Airport and Dhaka Suburban Rail.

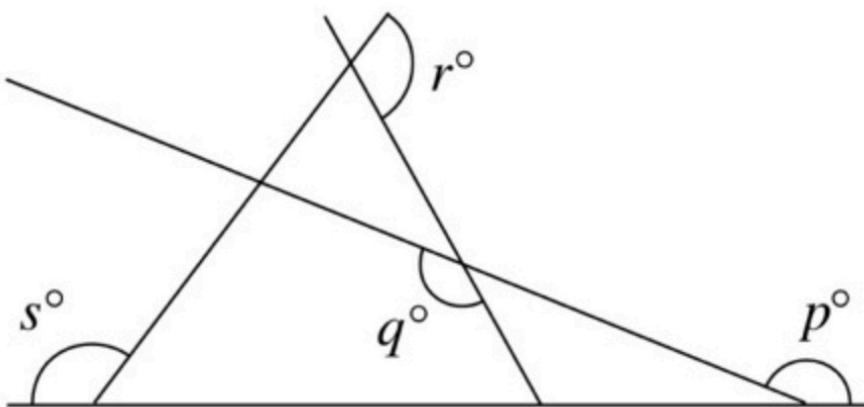
PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

Haoqi Liu, F3

The problem of the week has now moved to its own Firefly page, which can be found at <https://hsd.fireflycloud.net/senior-years/potw> or by scanning the QR code. The firefly page could have more information depending on the problem!

As always, email solutions to me at liuH@highschoolofdundee.org.uk

Four straight lines intersect as shown.
What is the value of $p + q + r + s$?



Have
a good
weekend

The Columns
Team

