

To promote Sixth Form travel and adventure, the Old Millhillians Club has launched a Travel Award. It has similar aims to those of the Van Moppes Award that was so popular with Upper Sixth formers in the Sixties and Seventies. The new Travel Award will support Upper Sixth form school leavers who want to embark on any worthwhile travel adventure or challenge for their general interest and personal development or even to raise money for charity. The Club will offer up to £1,000 towards travel costs (not a donation to a charity if one is involved) and there will be two awards each year.

The Old Millhillians Club presented the 2022 Travel Award to Sienna Turner (Weymouth 2017-2022), Harriet Shrimpton (School 2017-2022) and Jack Curtis (Weymouth 2017-2022) by the Old Millhillians Club. It followed an application process which involved an interview and a presentation of entrants' travel plans and how they intended to spend the money. Discovering they had won the award produced squeals of delight – the grant allowed the trio a more enriching trip as they were now able to explore a wider variety of museums and sites, which all have hefty entry fees.

On 27 June, Sienna, Harriet and Jack embarked on an Interrailing trip around Italy which, as three keen Classics students, was something they had talked about for years. After months of researching the best places to visit, backpacks, youth-hostels and where to buy the best gelato... they were ready to go. To finally be able to immerse themselves in the Roman sites they had studied for not only A-levels but also GCSEs was going to be 'something very special'. They felt fortunate to have been in classes with Miss Griffiths and Mr Plummer whose teaching afforded them a nuanced perspective when visiting galleries and sites. They anticipated the trip would also broaden their knowledge of Roman life and discover its legacy on modern Italian culture.



Hattie trying on backpack...it was too big



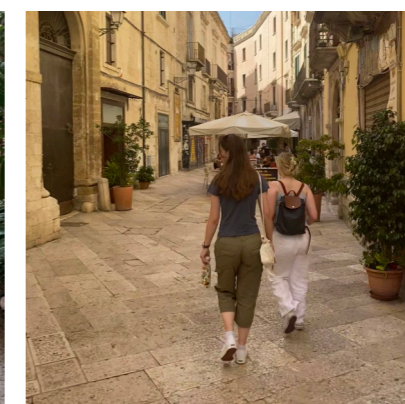
Jack all set for adventure



Sienna packed and ready to go



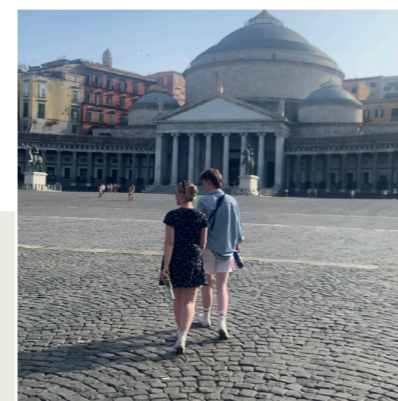
Sheltering from the heat in the shade of Bari's narrow street



Exploring the streets of Bari on the first leg of the tour



Our first gelatos in Bari melted very quickly in the 39 degree heat"



Heading towards the Basilica Reale Pontificia San Francesco da Paola, Naples



Leftover Napoli pizza kept the wolf from the door on a day trip to Pompeii



Letting the train take the strain en route from Naples to Rome

Jack shares his account of their trip

We landed full of enthusiasm in Bari where our journey began and quickly learnt to appreciate unexpected places and experiences. We revelled in the city's many basilicas especially if they weren't popular or grand, our favourite being the Basilica De San Nicola. Evening gelato purchases were a 'must'. In retrospect, we could have spent longer here, but at least we had enough time to get into the beauty of basilicas. Next stop was Naples which gave us a whole new perspective on everyday Italian metropolitan life. For many different reasons this city is vastly different from London; what we noticed particularly was its apparent total lack of road safety. On the other hand, there appeared to be great nightlife coupled with excellent street food. Of course, being the birthplace of pizza, sampling it was a must: the pizzas were delicious but what we hadn't anticipated was their size, they were bigger than our plates! Averaging 22,000 steps a day helped us burn off the additional calories in no time.

From here we took the train for a day-trip to Pompeii which was one of the highlights of our whole tour. We were blown away by how well preserved everything is and even got to enjoy our leftover pizza in the famous forum, once the heart of the Roman city and its thriving market centre.

Our next destination was Rome, somewhere we planned to stay for a more substantial time as there is so much to see and do, both classical and modern. To pack it all in

we started our first day at 6am with a trip to the Trevi Fountain; perfect timing to beat the crowds, grab some good photos and toss a cent into the water. Afterwards, we visited the Pantheon which was filled, surprisingly to us, with Roman Catholic iconography as opposed to the ancient statues and mosaics we were expecting.

We were then first to enter the Vittoriano, or the 'typewriter' as it is commonly known, a national monument in the centre of Rome where we learnt about Italian military history. We paid a bit extra to go up on to the roof where we enjoyed a spectacular panoramic view and spotted our next destinations: the ruins of ancient Rome, the Roman Forum and the Palatine Hill, all of which we had read about in the works of Virgil and Ovid.

The following day we saw other famous landmarks including the Colosseum and the Spanish Steps. We also visited the Keats-Shelley museum where we learnt about 18th-century Romanticism, and popped out onto a little balcony which proved a great spot to admire the Spanish Steps away from the crowds. On our last day, we threw caution to the wind and let Sienna drive us round the Villa Borghese gardens in a pedal-powered buggy. Despite the lack of spatial awareness Sienna displayed on the busy paths and the breakneck speed we travelled, we all survived another day.

From Rome we travelled to Florence, the art capital of Italy, where we felt obliged to make the most of everything and take in as many of the beautiful statues, mosaics, frescos, and paintings as we could in the Palazzo Medici Riccardi, the



Travel Award Winners 2022 Sienna Turner (Weymouth 2017-2022), Harriet Shrimpton (School 2017-2022) and Jack Curtis (Weymouth 2017-2022) on their last day at school

Travel Award 2022



A delicious pasta supper on our first night in Rome



Harriet, Jack and Sienna beat the crowds with a 6.30 am visit to the Trevi Fountain



Reconnecting with OM Reggie Heward who joined them for dinner in Rome



School friend Sonia Corsini joined the gang in Venice to celebrate Sienna's 18th birthday



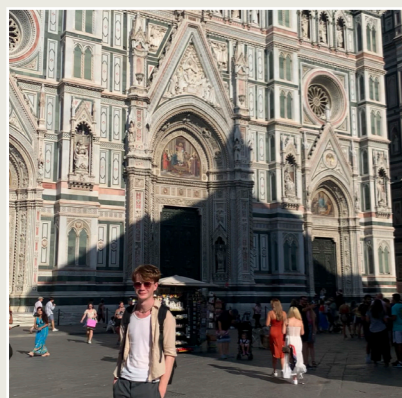
Prepping to explore the Roman Forum and the House of Augustus in 41 degree heat



Rowing on the lake at the Villa Borghese Gardens in Rome



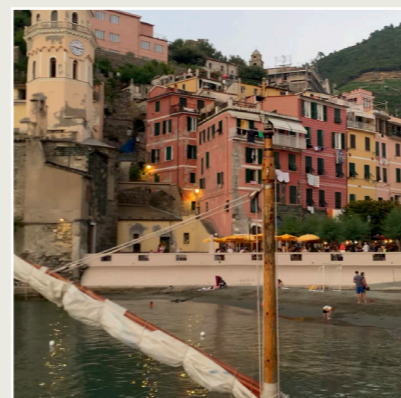
The trio visited the Keats-Shelley House overlooking the Spanish Steps in Rome



The decorative facade of Florence's Cathedral of Santa Maria Fiore



Taking in Botticelli's The Birth of Venus at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence



To escape the heat the trio headed to Vernazza in the Cinque Terre

Palazzo Vecchio, and the Uffizi Gallery. Although Florence is extraordinarily pretty, the heat was truly unbearable especially at our hostel which was in an old convent without air-conditioning. Notwithstanding, it was still one of our favourite places visited and, given the opportunity, we would all definitely return.

To escape the heat, we headed to Vernazza one of a series of pretty towns strung along Italy's west coast in an area known as the Cinque-Terre. It is an immensely beautiful place lined with colourfully painted houses perched on a rocky cliff overlooking the sea and surrounded by vineyards. This proved the perfect antidote to the hot and sticky city as we were able to relax and swim in the sea. We also took

advantage of the local seafood on offer which we highly recommend: Sienna and Hattie even managed to convert me into a seafood enthusiast.

It was at this point where our trip got a bit more stressful. Our six train, eight-hour journey to Bergamo wasn't as straightforward as we'd hoped: in future we'd make sure to check train times and book seats. Despite the tumultuous journey we instantly felt at home in Bergamo with its cooler weather and alpine landscapes. As we took the funicular up to the medieval Citta Alta, dominated by the Rocca di Bergamo fortress, we were surprised at how much we enjoyed the quieter parts of Italy that aren't oversaturated with tourists. It was here we saw some of the most beautiful basilicas too.

Our next train ride was a leisurely one to Crema where we easily hopped onto our connection to Lake Garda. This is the town where Call Me by Your Name, an adaptation of Andre Aciman's book and one of our favourite movies, was filmed. Here, we made a beeline to the tourist office where props from the movie were on display including the actor's bikes which we were actually allowed to ride! We had fun re-enacting some of the best scenes from the movie using the original props.

From Lake Garda we took a day trip to Sirmione to see the ruins of Grotto de Catullus, the home of the Roman elegiac poet whose work we had briefly studied in our classical civilisations 'love and relationships' module. However, the visit wasn't solely educational as we allowed ourselves to have fun and relax at Gardaland, a local theme-park, and stopped later to eat lunch on a canal boat in Peschiera del Garda.

Sadly, we were now heading to our final destination the remarkable city of Venice. Here we spent our time exploring the small streets and canals on foot as well as taking an 'essential' gondola ride. We celebrated Sienna's 18th birthday with a delicious dinner alongside the Grand Canal. Our friend, Sonia Corsini (Burton Bank 2020-2022) made the trip to Venice to celebrate with us. It was lovely catching up and we had a great evening together with lots of laughter.

We all agree that one of our standout memories from this trip was our book swap where we dipped into each other's favourite genres. Among our top books were Enchanted April by Elizabeth von Arnim, Giovanni's Room by James Baldwin, and The Gold Rimmed Spectacles by Giorgio Bassani. Another memory we all cherish was our final evening in Florence eating dinner alfresco by the Basilica de San Lorenzo: we had the best meatballs, the best view, and the very best company.

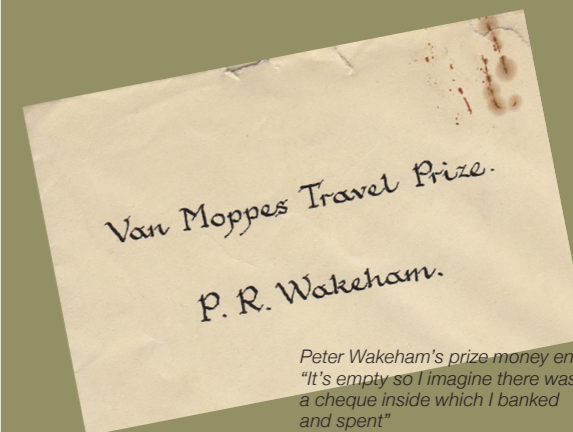
Without doubt we had an absolutely unforgettable trip with memories we will treasure for a lifetime. It's hard to put into words how lucky we felt to be traveling together, having spent five years side by side at Mill Hill, all having just finished our A-Levels, especially in the knowledge this was our final trip before heading off to different Universities. Our heartfelt thanks go to the Old Millhillians Club for helping us to finance this journey for which we will be forever grateful.

Van Moppes Travel Award 1964 winner Peter Wakeham (Burton Bank 1960-1964) recalls his travels

My co-winner Guy Gill (MHS 1960-1964) and I toured Italy and, what is today, northern Croatia via a small part of Slovenia. We budgeted for a four-week trip at a total cost for the two of us of £120. I still have the prize-winning submission – five pages penned in green ink – and the envelope which contained the prize. There was no presentation but Lewis van Moppes (1917-1922) always met the winner(s) and I vividly remember the occasion when Guy and I were invited to lunch. Van Moppes was a charming man and we were entertained royally to a slap-up meal in a private dining room at his offices in Basingstoke. I recall to this day how well dressed he was. He gave me my long-lasting taste for custom-made shirts and suits!

Our trip was culturally very rewarding. In addition to time in Bologna, a wonderful city with strong communist representation at the time, Guy and I spent lots of time in art galleries in Florence and Venice and saw the amazing mosaics in Ravenna. I bought dozens of postcard photographs of the paintings and sculptures which I kept for decades until I recently scanned them in for posterity. Florence remains my favourite Italian city to this day.

We each planned to write a dissertation on 'The practical differences between Italian and Yugoslavian communism'. I did actually put pen to paper and submitted the dissertation for a Trevelyan Scholarship to Cambridge University. I didn't win that award. I had an argument with one of the judges, who said my submission was inaccurate because there was no threat of communism in Italy. I referred him, indignantly, to the photo of a communist party poster included in my dissertation. He was not persuaded, despite me also informing him that the Italian Communist Party had over 30% of the vote. In hindsight I now see this as my first encounter with confirmation bias or possibly fake news.



Peter Wakeham's prize money envelope: "It's empty so I imagine there was a cheque inside which I banked and spent"