

SIR THOMAS RICH'S NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2002



Education has been much in the news this term because of problems with awarding A-level grades. It is unfortunate that much of the coverage has been negative, politicians and the media have not always considered the effect of their views on the students involved. The introduction of AS exams has brought many benefits e.g. a broader course in the Lower Sixth which leads to grades from which appropriate choices can be made for U6 study. It is now agreed that the system was brought in too hurriedly and, albeit belatedly, adjustments need to be made to the grading system. It should not perhaps have caused such consternation that when a significant change was made to a long-standing system that improvements were possible. And it certainly does not detract from our students' outstanding results this year.

DATA COLLECTION SHEETS

All pupils were given a Data Collection Sheet to take home. This shows the information we hold on each pupil and also asked for an entry on ethnic background. I would urge any parent who has not received this form to ask for a copy, and any forms which have not been sent back we would appreciate their return as soon as possible. Parents will understand that we need accurate information, for example should there ever be a need to contact home in an emergency. The ethnic background information is required by the Government and schools have to make a choice about a pupil's ethnic origin in every case where they have not received a reply.

GLOBAL ACTION

This is a reminder that the school is trying to recycle as many things as possible. The waste paper is now being collected on a regular basis. We can take in and recycle printer toner cartridges, mobile phones, postage stamps and, after Christmas, we will also be collecting used Christmas cards.

If any parent knows of somewhere that may be able to recycle old computers, please let us know. We would also like to recycle cardboard but we need someone to collect it. Other ideas are always welcome. I would also like some help to establish a compost heap in the grounds and to form a working party to tidy up the conservation area. All offers of help to Mrs. Arnold. JMA

PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

We hope many of you have seen the smart new minibus parked outside the School. Again many thanks for the donations sent in. We have also agreed to purchase some new computers for the school as some of the ones the pupils have been using are rather slow and in much need of updating.

Having been on such a big shopping spree the funds need a boost again and so we come to the Christmas Fayre to be held on Saturday 7th December 1 pm to 4 pm in the school hall. Raffle tickets should arrive on your doormat over the Half Term. This raises a lot of funds and we hope you will feel able to support this as well as coming along on the day; more information to follow.

The 2002 Parents' Association "Silent Auction" will take place at the annual Christmas Fayre. This year our 'lots' will include meals out, Christmas gifts, free family activities, exceptional discount opportunities and many more desirable offers. We plan to circulate the Auction Catalogue to all families ahead of the Fayre so bid tactics can be prepared in advance. Be sure to visit the Silent Auction at the Fayre and use your skill to outwit the other bidders and buy some extraordinary bargains.

It was good to see some new faces at our AGM and we look forward to having some 'fresh blood' on the committee, having recently lost a few loyal members as their sons/daughters move on to the next stage of life. L. Dalton

OPEN DAYS

We had, as usual, two very busy Open Days earlier this month and a packed Open Evening. We are grateful to the many students who gave of their time during the days and evening to help out, some in Departments, a large number as Guides to show prospective pupils and their parents around. Our visitors are always complimentary about their Guides, praising their knowledge of the school and their obvious pride in it. I am also grateful to our Parents' Association, to parents who helped during the Days and Evening and to those who provided the refreshments during the Evening.

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Congratulations to:

Samuel Johnson (11R) who won the Gloucestershire Under 16 boys' archery championship; **Richard Young** (8T) who competed in the National Indoor Climbing Finals at Leeds, achieving 599 points out of a possible 600 which earned him 4th place.

LANGUAGES

We welcomed our Upper Sixth German exchange partners from Trier to Gloucester this week. As well as experiencing life at Sir Thomas Rich's, they enjoyed a Civic Reception by the Mayor of Gloucester, toured the Cathedral and visited Cheltenham and Oxford. They also came together in the evenings for a visit to the cinema and to play ten-pin bowling.

We hosted the New Life Band from Tanzania for a morning. They performed Tanzanian song, dance and music to the whole school in assembly and then led workshops in various lessons during which they also explained something of their way of life.

Work Experience in France

On Saturday 19th October six members of the Upper Sixth (Emma Fitzgerald, Ross Herrick, Sarah Hollinshead, Joshua Jones, Joedi Rose and Gregory Williams) set off for a week of work experience in Brittany. The students and their accompanying teacher, former colleague David Slinger, were based in a residential centre near Pontivy. The centre arranged placements for our students in local cafes, restaurants, shops and a riding school. We hope that the students will benefit greatly from what is a linguistically and socially challenging experience. AJG

SCHOOL PRODUCTION

4th, 5th and 6th December

"Alison's having a party on Friday night and I've said I'm going – that's all right, isn't it?"
"Which Alison is this Estelle?"
"Will her parents be there?"
"What time will it finish?"

If the above conversation rings any bells with you, you'll love this year's school production "The Book of the Banshee", which perhaps ought to be subtitled "The battleground of adolescence". George and Bridget Flowers find their house transformed into a war zone as their daughter Estelle hits adolescence – and it's not only Estelle, there's also Will, "Blaring that frightful music out of his room all night. Sticking posters over his nice honeysuckle wallpaper, avoiding the housework..." But Will has his mind on another war zone, the trenches of the First World War, where his namesake, Will Scot Saffery, discovered the world doesn't divide neatly into friends and enemies.....

(If you can't wait for the school production to find out what happens, you can read the novel, "The Book of the Banshee" by Anne Fine.) ERS

APPEALS/REQUESTS FROM DRAMA

Our GCSE students are appealing for old white sheets – preferably double sheets.

Costumes for the School Production: most of these are easy but we might need some shirts and trousers made. Are there any parents willing to help with some sewing? We also need white shirts in larger sizes. All offers of help gratefully received by Mrs. Stanley. ERS

RAILWAY SOCIETY

On 21st September we celebrated the re-nationalisation of the railway network with a trip to one of its most remote outposts. Armed with fleeces, electronic organisers and a bright nylon kite we enjoyed the delights of the Welsh narrow gauge railways tempered with the challenges of Aberystwyth Burger King and Borth Youth Hostel. Highlights of the trip included superb scenery in uncharacteristic sun, hydraulic experiments on Aberystwyth pier and kite flying from coach 3. An honorary Darwin award was made for an incident involving a kite, Birmingham New Street Station and Benjamin Franklin; better luck next time! AP

RUGBY

1st XV: P4, W2, D1, L1, F69, A28

Despite disruptions due to injuries and games lost due to hard ground the 1st XV have made progress throughout their matches. Their determination and competitive nature have enabled them to compete well against some strong opposition. Continued hard work will be needed for the remainder of the season if they are to be successful. IJG

2nd XV: P5, L5, F60, A95

After two scrappy games against Chosen Hill and Beaufort, Rich's produced two excellent performances against Churchdown and Bournside followed by a good match against Dean Close where they were beaten only by the pace of the wingers. Although all matches are defeats four were by a single score and with a little luck could have gone the other way. MRS

Colts XV: P8, W3, L5, F134, A153

The U15s endured a difficult start to the season with a number of tough fixtures. To their credit the team continued to train hard and look to have turned the corner in terms of performance. There is a good combination of power from the forwards and flair from the backs but it is in terms of decision-making from all players where real improvement has been made. There have been recent impressive victories over Chosen Hill (27-14) and Bournside (36-14). We look forward to the rest of the season. RS

U14 XV: P6, W2, L3, D1, F109, A166

A mixed set of results from the Under 14s. This has reflected their commitment and attitude towards training. The team has the potential to do well but in the second half of the season they all need to show greater focus and dedication. PDL

U13 XV: 'A' P5, W5, F135, A36 'B' P2, W2, F77, A5

The 'A' XV have made a very promising start to the season, having won all their five matches this half term, including excellent away wins against Monmouth, Chosen Hill and Bournside. They have scored 135 points and conceded just 36. The 'B' XV have also made an impressive start beating Monmouth 45-0 and Bournside 'B' 32-5. In the Bournside 7-a-side competition the 'A' squad won their group beating Crypt and St. Edwards but lost to Bournside in a closely fought semi-final by 12-7. CDAC

CROSS COUNTRY

An encouraging start to the season with both the Junior Teams (Years 7 & 8) and the Inters (Years 9 & 10) qualifying for the Midland Counties round of the English Schools Cross Country Championships. In the initial round Richard Farrow (7B) and Kevin Ellis (10R) led our teams home, finishing fourth and sixth respectively in their races over a tough Prince Henry's, Evesham course.

In the first round of the Senior West Mercia League our team finished fifth out of six teams with Tim Dalton (11B) finishing fifth in an excellent run out of the 49 runners.

At the City Cross Country District trials Rich's were well represented with the bulk of our runners qualifying for the County Championships to be held at St. Edwards, Cheltenham in November. Rich's won all three races with Richard Farrow (7B) winning the minor's race, Luke Barns (9S) the junior race and Phil Hanson (11R) winning the inter race. The runners displayed Rich's strength in depth and the potential many of our pupils have if they committed themselves to Cross Country. PDL

VENTURE SCOUTS

The 44th has been on active service quite a bit so far this term! The regular Friday night meetings have variously and at different times involved members wandering around Chosen Hill with balloons tied to their heads, night navigation exercises to Wainlodes, scavenger hunts around Longlevens, fire lighting and backwoods skills.

Twelve of the unit took part in the 5 Valleys Walk, raising money via sponsorship for the National Meningitis Trust, another group of twelve made up the main element of the Gloucester District Dragon Boat Team, which came second in the Junior section and fourth overall at the recent South Cerney Dragon Boat Races and two of the unit have taken on organisation of the Quiz Night next month.

Many of the unit are continuing their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver awards, some helping out with various service projects at school, others working for charitable concerns of their own choosing. A First Aid course is planned for early next year. PB

WORK EXPERIENCE FOR YEAR 11

All parents should have received details regarding next year's work experience: 7th – 11th July, 2003 (inclusive). Students and parents are urged to secure a suitable placement as early as possible. Written confirmation from the secured placement should be sought and full details supplied to Mr. Lloyd. If you have any questions regarding work experience, see Mr. Lloyd.

Three students from 11R, Gareth Mohamed, Philip Hanson and Sam Coe, experienced an excellent two days with the Army in Warminster. The students received an active and eventful two days, with opportunities to use weapons, display their leadership skills and undertake physically demanding challenges. All three students reported back to school with positive views. PDL

SPEECH DAY

Our annual Speech Day and Prize Giving was held in the School Hall on Friday 27th September. We were pleased to welcome Guy Vassall-Adams as our Guest of Honour and the City of Gloucester's Mayor and the County's Executive Director of Education amongst our guests. It was an excellent evening of celebration of many of the school's and our pupils' successes over the past year.

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

9T have been writing to a school in Poland about English life in general, English schools, this school and our county. This task had several objectives: it was a meaningful piece of informational writing for 9T, it will help the Polish pupils with their English, and their teacher will get them to write back (in English!) and tell us a bit about life in Poland, a country we have to admit we know very little about. This link arose out of a visit made to our school last term as a result of our Language College status. Three teachers from Poland and one from Germany visited us and sat in on some of our lessons. Their contribution to my Lower Sixth lesson on Captain Corelli's Mandolin was extremely valuable.

Members of Esperanto Club have also been engaged in foreign correspondence: we composed a letter about ourselves, our hobbies and our pets. We now have pen friends in Germany, Bulgaria, Sweden and Finland. ERS

LETTERS SENT HOME

- 4/9 Year 7/new L6 Home-School Agreement
- 6/9 Year 7 – Stratford trips
- 19/9 Language Classes for adults
- 19/9 Year 7 – Stratford trips
- 7/10 Year 7 – Parents' Association AGM
- 14/10 Year 7 – Informal P.A. Evening
- 15/10 Lower Sixth – Exam Study Leave
- 21/10 Year 11 Preview Careers Programme
- 25/10 Quiz Night

CAREERS

Upper Sixth

Parents should be aware that all pupils in the Upper Sixth have been given the opportunity to have a careers interview with our Personal Adviser, Mrs. Pauline Quinn, from Connexions.

Year 11

All Year 11 have received information regarding "The Preview Careers Programme" which will take place on 19th November, 2002. This package will help our Year 11 students to make informed choices about their AS/A2 choices. Any queries please contact Mr. Lloyd.

Parents of Year 11 should also note that Mrs. Quinn, our Personal Adviser from Connexions, is gradually interviewing all the students. If parents need any urgent help or advice regarding their son's careers options, they should contact Mr. Lloyd. PDL

FILM CLUB

A group of Upper Sixth students has been running a Film Club, each film running over two lunchtimes on Monday and Tuesday. The more popular films such as *Monsters Inc* have been shown on the big screen in the Hall. Our thanks to Michael Smith, Mark Dwight, Patrick Butler and David Edwards, they have shown admirable initiative and organisation.