

SIR THOMAS RICH'S NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2002



1666

We start our new School Year in good spirits, returning to a new Language Centre, improved Art and ICT facilities, and outstanding examination results. So morale and expectations are high, but this is as it should be for we are blessed with excellent staff and able pupils. Therefore we all look forward with confidence to another year of high achievement.

BUILDING WORK

Over the summer holidays there have been important improvements to our facilities. A large and airy Art Room has been created from our old Graphics and Computer Rooms. The computers have been moved to a new room, made by knocking together two classrooms opposite the library, next door to our other computer room. A new Technology Room is being built, this is a larger project which is planned for completion in December.

In addition, our thanks go to our caretaking and cleaning staff who worked hard through the holidays to ensure we have a clean and tidy learning environment. Many of the classrooms were redecorated and a number were re-carpetted.

NEW STAFF

We welcomed six new teachers to our staff this term: Mrs. M. P. E. Lewis, teaching Psychology A-level; Miss M. Lucas, Geography; Mr. N. D. Pitel, History; Mr. D. Riley, Business Studies and Economics; Mrs. B. Testoni-Ranken, Head of German; Mrs. R. C. Zurick, Head of Biology. We also welcomed Mr. S. Conlon as our new resident caretaker. We wish them happy and successful careers at Rich's.

NEW PUPILS

We have 112 boys in Year 7 who join us from 57 primary schools. The new Lower Sixth has 109 students of whom 28 join us from other secondary schools. 26 of the Lower Sixth are girls, giving a total of 41 girls in the Sixth Form of 206 students. Total pupil numbers are 757 (compared with 756 in September 2001).

MINIBUS

We were delighted to take ownership of a new minibus at the start of this term. It is a Mercedes Sprinter, the same model as our other minibus which has proved ideal for our purposes. It will be invaluable in supporting the tremendous variety of curricular and extra-curricular trips organised and led by staff, thereby enriching the educational experience of our pupils. We are indebted to our Parents' Association and their determined and hugely energetic efforts in fund-raising which enabled us to purchase the minibus.

The P.A. directed that we should not try to sell the old minibus but instead donate it to a local community scheme, we handed it over to the Coney Hill Neighbourhood Project who were very pleased with the gift and envisage it being of great help in the many events they organise.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Gloucestershire County Council is one of the lowest-funded education authorities. The authorities at the bottom of the funding scale have banded together, under the title of the "f40" group, with the aim of trying to achieve a fairer funding system. Enclosed is a letter they have asked schools to circulate to parents.

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Another fine set of results was achieved by our students in this summer's examinations. It is good to see the hard work of teachers and pupils so well rewarded.

GCSE

97% of GCSE examinations were passed at grade C and above, with 49% of all entries being at grades A and A*. 81% of all grades were B or better. The average points gained by each Year 11 boy (based on A*=8, A=7, B=6, etc.) was 64.2, which is equivalent to over eight grade A*s, or over nine grade As, per pupil. Fifty boys each gained five or more passes at grades A and A*, twenty five boys each gained nine or more passes at these top grades.

The twenty nine boys who took their Mathematics GCSE a year early, at the end of Year 10, all passed at grades A and A*.

AS

This is the second year of AS examinations, they were introduced by the Government last year. Our results were excellent then (and led to outstanding A-level results, as described below), they were almost identical this year.

99% of all papers were passed with 63% at grades A and B. Sixty nine students each gained at least one grade A, twenty nine students each gained three or more grade A passes. The average points score per student (A=5, B=4, C=3, etc.) was 18.7 which equates to just under five grade B passes. These are impressive results and they ensure a solid foundation for progress towards full A-levels.

A-LEVEL

Our previous best A-level results were achieved in 1997 when the Upper Sixth was an exceptionally talented and conscientious year. However their results pale in comparison to a truly outstanding set of results this summer.

99.3% of all papers were passed, 63% at grades A and B. (Before these results our highest proportion of top grades had been achieved last year at 54%.) The average points gained per candidate (A=10, B=8, C=6, etc.) was 33.75 - compared with the 1997 score of 28.2. Thirty six students, a third of the Upper Sixth, each gained two or more grade As; the average number of A-level passes per student was 4.1.

These excellent results ensured that Sir Thomas Rich's was well placed in newspaper league tables. In *The Guardian* we were ranked 14th in the country and in *The Independent* we were 11th. Indeed *The Independent* placed us the top boys' school in England and Wales.

Congratulations to our teachers and pupils, these excellent results are the outcome of their hard work through the year.

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Congratulations to:

Ashley Burgum (U6H) on his selection as a Lord Lieutenant's Cadet, Ashley will assist the Lord Lieutenant on his royal duties and other formal occasions;

Niall Drury (7S) who has been signed to Birmingham City F.C.'s football academy;

Ben George (L6H) who received an invitation to audition, in Birmingham playing the French horn, for the National Youth Orchestra.

Well done to all three, we wish them well.

VENTURE SCOUT SUMMER EXPEDITION TO NORWAY

The 44th this year returned to the land of fjords, peaks and pines. Armed with a rudimentary grasp of Norsk (enough to ask "Snakke Du Engelsk?" and "En Øl takk") and a minibus crammed with enough equipment to meet most eventualities, the unit initially took up residence in the forests of Nord Odal at a place called Gjeddevasskoia – 'the settlement of the pike'.

There we were set to work on and around some old foresters' huts – repairing things, making wooden bridges, painting floors and stoves, clearing water courses, deepening a water collecting pool, shifting boulders, installing our own Norwegian variant of a shadoof, planning and marking out a nature trail, felling trees, clearing undergrowth, cutting and stacking winter wood, the list goes on!

Interspersed with all this purposeful activity we found time to swim in the local lakes, threaten the resident fish with a fishing pole, take on the local football team in an exciting contest, eat large quantities of Geitost, Sunda and tomato mackerel as well as visit Oslo, the capital city, for Fram and the Thong of Norway, and Elverum, for its famous Jagt – og Fiskedager and knife festival.

A week of our hard labours left Ernst Davies, our 82 year old "works convenor" much impressed – he even loaned out the leaders to a neighbouring farmer to put up a "... few (hundred) metres .." of fencing!

Thus shattered but feeling proud of our collective efforts we journeyed to the mountains and some spectacular scenery for the remaining week or so of our visit. Impressive blue glaciers, high mountain views, icy morning plunges, the Pilgrim's Way through Vinstradalen, the Gaupne squeeze-box festival and a girl called Tonje – all made up a kaleidoscope of experiences and memories for each individual in the party. And finally it was all over – too quickly as such trips always are!

PB

RAILWAY SOCIETY

For a lucky few members from Year 9 the term's activities began early. Our friends at Railtrack once again invited a small group to Greater Manchester in August. We spent a fascinating morning at Stockport learning all about traditional signalling methods. Even better was the afternoon, spent at Manchester Piccadilly's modern power signalling centre. Suffice it to say that our members' understanding of railway operations is now considerably greater. Many thanks to Railtrack for organising such a superb visit.

The next trip is a weekend visit to mid Wales by rail, where we plan to travel on two of the steam-worked narrow gauge lines, the Vale of Rheidol at Aberystwyth and the Talylyn at Tywyn. There will be a day trip later in the term when new members from Year 7 will be able to join. Meetings and trips are announced in Assembly.

SWP

DRAMA

This term's production is "The Book of the Banshee", a novel by Anne Fine, adapted for the stage by Tina Williams. We have further adapted it, adding music and some new scenes, to make it suitable for a large cast, and we are very grateful to Anne Fine and Tina Williams for giving us permission to do so.

The storyline may seem familiar territory to many of you as it focuses on the tensions which arise in family life when children hit adolescence. The story is told by fourteen-year-old Will Flowers. Ever since his sister Estelle turned thirteen life in the Flowers household has become a battle field; or maybe it just seems that way to Will because of his own obsession with the battlefields of the First World War. He's been reading a book about a boy his own age who fought in the trenches ... does Will Scott Saffery, writing in 1914, have anything to teach Will Flowers in the 21st century?

ERS

NESTLÉ TOKENS

We are again collecting the Nestlé "Box Tops for Education" tokens. These are found on their breakfast cereal boxes such as Shredded Wheat, the scheme operates until March next year. We have a collection box in the foyer, all contributions will be gratefully received. The school receives 10p for each token collected.

DATES FOR AUTUMN TERM 2002

Monday 16th September
Friday 27th September
Tuesday 8th October
Tuesday 8th October
Wednesday 9th October
Wednesday 23rd October
28th October – 1st November
4th – 7th November
Monday 11th November
Wednesday 13th November
Tuesday 19th November
4th, 5th, 6th December
Saturday 7th December
Tuesday 10th December
Monday 16th December
Wednesday 18th December
Thursday 19th December
Friday 20th December
23rd December – 3rd January

Nearly New Uniform 6.00 – 7.30 p.m.
Speech Day 7.30 p.m.
Governors' AGM 6.00 p.m.
Open Day
Open Day & Open Evening
Informal Y7 Parents' Evening
HALF TERM
Lower Sixth examinations
Nearly New Uniform 6.00 – 7.30 p.m.
Year 10 Parents' Consultation Evening 6.00 p.m.
Careers Assessment (optional – Y11 and L6)
The Book of the Banshee, Hall, 7.30 p.m.
Parents' Association Christmas Fayre 1.00-4.00 p.m.
Christmas by Candlelight, Hall, 7.30 p.m.
Upper Sixth Parents' Consultation Evening 6.00 p.m.
Carol Service, St. John's Northgate 7.30 p.m.
Carol Service, Holy Trinity Longlevens 7.30 p.m.
END OF TERM 12.45 p.m.
Christmas Holidays

DATES FOR 2003

Monday 6th January
6th – 17th January
Monday 13th January
Monday 20th January
Wednesday 29th January

Term begins 8.40 a.m.
Year 11 Trial GCSE examinations
Nearly New Uniform 6.00 – 7.30 p.m.
STAFF TRAINING DAY (non-attendance for pupils)
Careers Convention (Years 11-13)

Thursday 30th January
Wednesday 5th February
24th – 28th February
3rd – 14th March
Thursday 6th March
Monday 10th March
Monday 31st March
Wednesday 9th April
Friday 11th April
14th – 25th April

Monday 28th April
Tuesday 29th April
Monday 5th May
6th – 9th May
Monday 12th May
12th May – 6th June
19th May onwards
26th – 30th May
Monday 9th June
9th – 27th June
Wednesday 11th June
19th – 25th June
Thursday 26th June
30th June – 4th July
Friday 4th July
7th – 11th July
Friday 18th July

Year 11 Parents' Consultation Evening 6.00 p.m.
Sixth Form Open Evening
HALF TERM
Upper Sixth Trial A2 examinations
Year 9 Parents' Consultation Evening 6.00 p.m.
Nearly New Uniform 6.00 – 7.30 p.m.
Lower Sixth Parents' Consultation Evening 6.00 p.m.
Year 7 Parents' Consultation Evening 6.00 p.m.
END OF TERM 12.45 p.m.
Easter holidays

Term begins 8.40 a.m.
Year 8 Parents' Consultation Evening 6.00 p.m.
BANK HOLIDAY
Year 9 National Curriculum tests (SATs)
Nearly New Uniform 6.00 – 7.30 p.m.
AS examinations (Lower Sixth)
GCSE examinations
HALF TERM
Nearly New Uniform 6.00 – 7.30 p.m.
A2 examinations (Upper Sixth)
Sports Evening 6.30 p.m.
School Examinations
STAFF TRAINING DAY (non-attendance for pupils)
Sixth Form Induction Week
New Year 7 Induction Day
Year 11 Work Experience
END OF TERM 12.45 p.m.

GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT

In July the Geography Department and 23 boys from Years 10 and 11 went on their long-awaited trip to Kenya. After a long journey we arrived at our accommodation, instantly branded as "amazing" by many of the pupils. Kigio is a thatched lodge with three dormitory rooms on the upper floor and a lounge and dining area on the ground floor, all set in the grounds of a conservation ranch.

During our stay we went on bush walks, visited Elsemere (home of Else the lion), Menengai volcanic water and went on safari at Lake Nakuru and Hells Gate National Parks.

Following our stay at Kigio we journeyed south into the Masai Mara. Here we camped in safari tents. During our time there we had the opportunity to make several game drives on to the Mara and visit a Masai village.

An extremely good time was had by all involved. The pupils seeing what life is like for Kenyans of different backgrounds along with the experience of saw a wealth of African wildlife including rhino, lion, cheetah, giraffe, elephant and zebra.

DAG

CHARITIES

The School nominates three charities for our fundraising efforts through the year. This year the selected charities are:

AUTUMN: - ACES, a local charity which raises Aid for Children in El Salvador.

SPRING: - St. Rose's Special School, Stroud, a school for physically disabled students, aged 2-19.

SUMMER: - the School's link with P.M.M. School in Jinja, Uganda.

FOUNDATION STATUS

Last year the Local Education Authority changed the procedure for children transferring from primary to secondary schools. Parents were required to place the LEA secondary schools they were interested in their children attending in strict order of priority. This inevitably meant that parents who wished their child to be considered for a Grammar School had to make a difficult decision, whether to put the Grammar School as first choice. The Governors looked into the possibility of seeking to change the school's status from 'community' (as it is now, with admissions controlled by the LEA) to 'foundation' (when the school could organise its own admissions, hence parents could apply to Sir Thomas Rich's separately from any LEA application). However we decided to delay seeking the change because we knew that the Government was looking at primary/secondary transfer procedures and it promised new legislation this summer.

That legislation has now been passed and it requires all LEAs to put their proposals for primary/secondary transfer to the Government for approval. The proposals must meet certain criteria, one of which is that it must not be possible for a child to receive more than one offer from maintained schools. The LEA has not had time to formulate its proposals yet but it seems very unlikely that there could remain any advantage in gaining foundation status.

The procedures for children currently in Year 6 i.e. for entry into secondary schools in September 2003 will remain as they were last year. However the new procedures will be implemented to take effect the following year.

To summarise, we shall look very carefully at developments but it now appears unlikely that we shall pursue the original intention of changing to foundation status.

LAST TERM

Some events took place in the last couple of days before the summer holidays which were too late to be recorded in July's Newsletter. These included a Sixth Form performance of *Le Malade Imaginaire* in the quadrangle at lunchtime, directed by Mrs. Earl. And we welcomed Gloucestershire County cricketer Alastair Bressington to our final assembly, he presented the many cups, colours and certificates.

CAREERS

Year 11

Parents please note that in the next few weeks all students will be receiving a copy of the Connexions Careers Service booklet "Your Way Forward – Options 16+", a comprehensive guide to help our students make informed choices for next year.

Bristol Careers Fair

The Sixth Form and Year 11 have been notified and obtained access to "flyers" about the Careers and Job Opportunities Fair to be held at the Brunel Centre, Bristol on Sunday, 22nd September between 10.30 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Entry is free and the event is open to parents and students.

UCAS Application

Upper Sixth parents should be aware that students should access not only the recommended UCAS Web sites to gain help in deciding on their university course choices but also the School's software packages, such as "Higher Ideas" and the "Potter's guide to university". Any student needing additional help on their choices should see Mr. Lloyd. PDL

SPEECH DAY

Our annual Speech Day and Prize Giving will be held in the School Hall on Friday 27th September, starting at 7.30 p.m.

We shall be delighted to welcome back Guy Vassall-Adams as our Guest of Honour. Guy left Rich's in 1989 for Oxford University, since when he has worked for London Weekend Television, Oxfam and the United Nations; he then took a Masters degree in Law and is now a barrister specialising in human rights. Attendance for all Year 7 boys is obligatory.

All parents are warmly invited to attend, it is one of the School's most important occasions, an excellent way to celebrate the achievements of the School and our pupils over the last year.

In order to help with seating arrangements, please complete and return the slip enclosed with this Newsletter. I hope you will be able to attend and enjoy the evening.

SENIOR PREFECTS

We have two School Captains this year, Tom Moseling and Katie Winter. We therefore do not have a Vice Captain. Our Observators are Tim Grant, Ross Herrick, Tom Hindley, Akshay Nair, Nicholas Smith and Michael Smith. These senior pupils received their gowns of office during our first assembly on the opening day of term.

The School relies upon the help of our Prefects and Senior Prefects to ensure our smooth running and good order. They also provide advice and help for younger pupils as well as acting as excellent rôle models and we are very grateful for the additional time and effort they put into their duties.

