



## Principal's Newsletter

18<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Dear Parents,

I want to give you some advance notice of several Parents' Association events. Tomorrow is the occasion of the 70's Night where parents relive their early youth by dancing and dressing in at the manner of a bygone era. This will be held in the Dining Hall at 19.00. I look forward to being your bartender.

A final reminder about the **Ladies Christmas Dinner on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November** at The Patio restaurant. The last date for orders is 25<sup>th</sup> November. For more information please [click here](#).

On **Saturday, November 26<sup>th</sup>**, the Parents' Association will once again sponsor the **Christmas Fayre** in our Sports Hall from 12.30 until 16.00. This family occasion brings together all parts of the College, visitors from the public, and bundles many charitable purposes into one afternoon. I hope you will make plans to be there. To support the event there will be a non-uniform day in the Upper School on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November with pupils asked to bring in items for the Christmas Fayre. Items that have been requested include: games and toys, CDs and DVDs, computer games, books and toiletries.

Next Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> our music staff will put on a concert at Beechlands. Last year's concert was a very special occasion because it revealed that our teachers are not only pedagogues but also artists. This will begin at 19.30.

Advance notice that **Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November** is a **Staff INSET morning** from 8.15 until 9.00 in the Upper School. School will start at 9am for pupils. School buses will run at the usual time.

From Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> to Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December we are having a Family theme in Chapel. On behalf of the Chaplains I would like to extend a warm invitation to parents to attend the service on the day of your child's House chapel or on any day convenient to you. Rev Jeremy Duff, our school Chaplain, will be leading the services which begin at 8.40am.

I keep running into pupils with a badge on saying silence, who are simultaneously placing their finger over their lips in a commitment to silence. 29 pupils are doing a charitable sponsored silence today for Children in Need and between them £1816.61 has been pledged. They have all been given dry wipe boards and pens to communicate and should be able to take a full part in the lessons. As an excessively loquacious person inclined to idle banter, I admire them for this sacrifice and wish them all the best. Also well done to Laura Davidson for her hard work in making 70 bags of popcorn last night and selling them today to raise £70 for Children in Need.

There were many positive comments about our Speech Night. Lord Hunt proved an excellent speaker and his exhortation to pupils was well received. The musical performances by Laura Erskine and the College "glee"

Choir wowed the assembled throng. In another instance of learning something new every day, I was particularly impressed with Peter Mann's guitar playing which I had never heard before, Abby Middleton's choreography, and Hope Lapin and Thomas Gornall's brave performances. There really is so much to celebrate in our school, and we made a pretty good fist of appropriate celebration on Wednesday night.

Next week will be the Year 12 progress tests. This result will be an important barometer in our pupils' progress towards excellent AS results. We intend, after Christmas, to monitor Year 12 progress in the same manner as we monitor our Year 13s. Bi-weekly feedback and Principal's tutorials will become the norm for our pupils

The 1<sup>st</sup> XV's great season continues. They set aside Arnold 32-14 on Saturday before defeating an enormous Sixth Form college called Audenshaw in Manchester 14-7. Now a quarter final in the Lancashire Cup against heavy favourites Merchant Taylors beckons. The 2<sup>nd</sup> XV have not won many matches but their spirit and discipline is greatly to be admired. The U12s had a close game but lost while the U13 strolled to a comfortable victory. The match of the day was away in Blackpool where the U15's battled to a draw. This wonderful season is blighted by only one thing. I am disappointed when a boy says he can play, but then does not turn up. This happens rarely but with enough regularity to effect the morale of certain teams and the reputation of our school. The school's response is to impose disciplinary consequences on non-attenders.

This weekend will see our annual clash with St Edwards at every age level. This is always a great fixture and I hope some of you will support the College, home (U13, 14, 15) or away, (U12, 2ndXV, 1<sup>st</sup> XV) with a 10.00 kick off.

A parent suggested recently that I should explain a little bit more about the Houses and their history. Today, Friday, is House activity day at the school. We are having competitions in Chess (the Chess club has been growing dramatically since the introduction of our "professional" coaches Mr Peter Purland and Mr Ian Campbell) and Badminton.

I should start these brief histories somewhere so I will begin with Howson's. Like all our Houses, Howson's is named after one of the former Principals of the College. The Reverend Howson was a close university friend of the first Principal of the College, Reverend Conybeare. The two had taken their degrees together in 1837. Conybeare had won a fellowship to remain at Cambridge, Howson had not. In 1842 Conybeare married, which meant forfeiting his fellowship, and took on the enormous challenge of beginning the College including recruiting staff, equipping the building, and establishing a curriculum and routine. He did all this at a time when teachers were not trained or licensed and there was no national or even local curriculum. Conybeare immediately involved his good friend Howson in the project. In 1844, the first year of actual instruction, Howson was on the staff of the Upper School. In their spare time the men collaborated on a book, *The Life and Epistles of St Paul*, which was to become a Victorian bestseller. Pupils later claimed they had helped write the book, as Howson continuously set essays on the Life of St Paul and the boys became convinced their best ideas had been stolen by Howson. Conybeare came to rely on Howson who was an energetic man, a great administrator, and a person seemingly of some flair and ambition. Indeed Conybeare often wrote to others saying that if Howson left, he should not be able to carry on.

In 1847, Howson did leave and Conybeare announced his ill health would force him to retire. He immediately campaigned for Howson to be brought back to the young and struggling school. In this campaign he succeeded, and Howson was Principal of the College for sixteen years from 1849-1865. After his retirement he became the Dean of Chester. It is this title which is prominently displayed on the frame of his portrait in my office.

Howson smiles gently from this picture and seems to have a cherubic expression. In reality, he was forceful, ambitious and criticized for being a sort of Vicar of Bray figure. He was described by a colleague as "energetic, ubiquitous, always keeping the institution (and of course himself!) in the public eye." Howson introduced natural sciences, geography and geology to the curriculum. It is he who forbade the wearing of moustaches, even by staff! He greatly increased his own power over every aspect of the institution, including its lecture programmes and evening classes. This was the man who lends his name to Mr Griffith's house and its teams and activities.

May I wish you a happy weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Hans van Mourik Broekman  
Principal

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