

OLD SULIANS' ASSOCIATION

September Newsletter.

Headmaster's Letter

Dear Old Sulian,

Another year ends and with it the promise of long, hot summer days The reality, of course, will be different but hopefully the positive work undertaken over the year can act as the means to brighten our collective days in weeks to come.

A particular highlight for me was the wonderful performance of 'Children of Empire' during the Spring. To see drama and music departments coming together to entertain an appreciative audience was magnificent. Next year Ms Baker has promised another production to give the pupils and students another opportunity to 'shine' under the guidance of her team of staff.

Mr Cruickshank, in addition to being a great advocate and supporter of the Model United Nations (in which Beechen Cliff again participated with distinction), put his exceptional mind to bear on the task of creating the first 'year book' since the "Sulian", a publication which ran from 1932 to 1968. The production of the 'Gryphon' was a monumental undertaking, requiring significant editorial and general organisational skills. The finished result is, I am sure you will agree, a wonderful record of the School over 2008/9 and a splendid 'vehicle' for allowing many of our pupils' and students' achievements to be recognised in 'published' form. I am hoping that all Old Sulians will have purchased a copy!

Outdoor activities have taken another 'leap forward' over the year. In addition to increased numbers taking up Mr Young's challenge to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh programme, his work has seen greater involvement of Tir-y-Cwm and the encouragement of more staff to become trained and involved in providing exceptional activities for the boys and students. Aided by Mr Ferry, Mr Bell, Mr Diederich, Mr Stewart, Mr Darvill, Mr Holmyard, Miss Coath and an array of other staff participants, the pupils of Beechen Cliff have been offered the chance to take part in Year 8 Pre-Cadet CCF camps, Bog Snorkelling in Wales (an event in which Beechen Cliff achieved the enviable status of providing the World Champion and next two places...), Ten Tors (three teams), Paris Cycle rides and a return visit of our South African link group to Cape Town. This probably only covers a few of the many activities on offer over the course of any given year and parents will be only too aware of the richness of the outdoor education programme – or indeed, the heavy duty loads required for washing machines across Bath as a result of participation in them.

The recent Centurion Challenge saw a large number of boys participate in the rigours of the 100 mile, 48 hour walk from Beechen Cliff to Hungerford and back. A record number made it home by the appointed hour and won the coveted Centurion tie, given to successful participants since 1970. Between 1989 and 2007 this challenge 'disappeared' from the "provision map" of the School but is now an integral part of the Beechen Cliff attempt to impart maximum physical suffering to as many boys as possible – in the exceptional cause of allowing them to find out as much as possible about their own characters. Mr Randall took on the challenge of leading the teacher and parent team over the weekend and we thank him for his considerable efforts.

Music remains as strong as ever, the Piano Concert, Carol Concert and Spring Concerts again allowing the talent which exists within the School to be taken to a wider audience. The new Senior Musician, Jamie Simmonds, has stated his interest in taking music into the new Houses, challenging all of our boys to take an active interest. We thank Mr Calvert and Mrs Nourse for their passionate advocacy of the area within the School and the inspiration they have provided for so many of our youngsters.

Sport dominates much of this summer newsletter, unsurprisingly given the massive level of participation. A wonderful feature, from my perspective, is the fact that so many boys have wanted to represent their school, at all age levels and abilities. Each of the 'team' sports have seen huge levels of participation and success, supplemented this year by the growing popularity of tennis, basketball and even petanque! We

thank the staff who have developed these areas, particularly Mr Markall and Mr Roper, together with the Bath Petanque Club. As so many sporting reports have been written, under the leadership of Mr Hawkins and Mr Wilmot, I will say no more.

Something about academic success and the curriculum would probably be of value at this point. Mr Sayers and his team enthusiastically supported the 'Dambusters' project for Year 7, an activity which was clearly enjoyed and which has brought many interesting contributions to the study of World War Two! In addition Technology has seen enthusiastic take up for the F1 challenge (Beechen Cliff winning through to the finals in Birmingham) and the Robotics and Greenpower Car projects, work which has been undertaken in conjunction with the Science department. Mr Gwilliam and Mr Johnson have taken a lead in these areas, using their enthusiasm to good effect in inspiring a new generation of engineers and designers.

The Maths Challenge, at UK and European level, has seen many of our boys excel, under the watchful and enthusiastic eyes of Mr Henly in Mathematics. Mr Markall has seen two years of outstanding results at Year 9, 26% of our boys reaching the 'exceptional performance' level only achieved by around 3% of boys nationally. For this, again, we congratulate him and his dedicated team.

Foreign visits have been varied in nature over the year. Ms Pavone's visit to San Remo was enthusiastically received by many pupils, whilst Normandy, Paris and Berlin revived 'staple' favourites – led by Mrs Merrett, Mr Hall and Mr Mann. The Barcelona trip was particularly impressive, giving the boys a chance to visit the home ground of the team which, only the previous week, had vanquished Manchester United in Rome.

I realise that the two hundred words to which I was limited might well now have been exceeded and that it would be good to sign off. Before doing so I must pay special tribute to Chef Tim Fletcher and his team. Their achievement in reaching the final of the TES Best School Food Award goes some way to demonstrate the impact that the canteen staff now have on the School. Tim has worked tirelessly for the good of the School and for its pupils. I am sure that no-one would ever take his work for granted, but I would always urge the boys to remember to thank the chef and his team – and never to be afraid to give feedback on the latest offerings! We are truly fortunate to have someone with such talent and energy – his contribution to the School as a whole is quite exceptional.

In this part of the end of year newsletter I have only mentioned a few of the staff who have done so much to make experience at Beechen Cliff varied, challenging and exciting. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those amongst the Old Sulians and friends of the school for their continuing support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A Davies', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

A Davies
Headmaster