



Madras College Newsletter

December 1990

School Roll

—numbers on the increase

Numbers this session stand at 1540, about 50 more than the original forecast. Although new families moving into the area increased the size of every year group, the most notable feature was the exceptionally large number of pupils who chose to come back for a fifth year. The return rate works out as a phenomenal 82%. There are 845 pupils at Kilrymont Road and 695 at South Street where accommodation is under pressure.

Results

One reason for that exceptionally high return rate is provided by the school's excellent results in SCE examinations. Final figures, adjusted to take account of appeals, have recently arrived from the SEE. There were 840 presentations at Higher Grade: 20.9% were Band A passes and the pass rate for Bands A—C was 77.4%. The results at Ordinary Grade, Standard Grade and SYS showed similar levels of performance. In almost every subject the results are well above regional and national averages; in many cases they are twice as good or more. One individual result is especially notable. Oliver Morris receives the Royal Society of Chemistry's Award for gaining the top marks in Higher Chemistry in Scotland. This is the second time in three years that this award has come to Madras. Clearly, any anxiety about the quality of education which Madras College pupils receive is unfounded.

Staff changes and promotions

The greater number of pupils brought a corresponding increase in the number of staff of whom there are now 115 all told. It is a pleasant change from the downward trend of recent years to welcome so many newcomers. Mrs. E. Abbot (Art), Mr. M. Barclay (Art), Mrs. V. Rough (PE), Mrs. M. Welsh (Tech.) and Mrs. V. Faichney (LSS) join the permanent staff. Also with us, for the time being at least, are Miss J. Braid (Home Economics), Miss C. McDonough (Biology), Mrs. D. Lamb (English), Mrs. H. Page (English), Mrs. M. Harkins (Maths), Miss M. Kyle (Music), Mrs. V. Cundill (Biology) and Mrs. C. McCance (English).

Vacant promoted posts are slowly being filled, but there is still some way to go before the process is complete. The new Depute Rector and a worthy successor to Mr. Hodge is Mrs. Lyn Brown. The increasing importance of drama in the curriculum has been recognised by the creation of an Assistant Principal Teacher post to which Mrs. Elinor Kirk has been appointed. We congratulate them both on very well deserved promotion.

Mr. Ian Kennedy will take up his duties as Principal Teacher of Geography after Christmas. He comes to us

from Glenrothes High School and, more recently, the advisory service and we welcome him to Madras. Next term we also welcome back Mr. Douglas Watson who is returning from secondment to resume his duties as Principal Teacher of Business Studies. We take this opportunity to thank those who have held acting posts in these departments for the excellent service they have given—Mr. Scott and Mrs. Thomson in Geography and Mr. Beck, Mrs. Milne and, for the last few weeks, Mrs. Little in Business Studies.

Four members of staff are to be congratulated on gaining Senior Teacher appointments—Mrs. Harding (Spanish), Mrs. Gourley (LSS), Mr. Mole (Biology) and Mr. Munn (PE).

Mrs. Macfie has returned to the English department and Mrs. Nisbet to Music. We are glad to have them both with us again and thank Mrs. Gellatly for covering English classes over the last few months.

Mr. Buchanan, Mrs. Dunne and Mrs. Milne have all, unfortunately, been absent for some time. We send them our very best wishes for better health and thank Mrs. Morrison and Mrs. Ritchie for filling the gaps in Maths and Business Studies.

There are three foreign assistants this year. Miss Nasri in French; Mr. Mohr in German (his second year at Madras); and in Spanish (a new development) Miss Oulego.

Herr Schussler, a teacher of English and PE from Alsfeld in the German province of Hessen, spent three weeks studying the Scottish educational system as the guest of the Modern Languages department.

Farewell to the 'janny'

Mr. John Gourlay who came from the Burgh School to Kilrymont as its first janitor when it opened in 1967 has retired after 30 years service. We wish him many happy years of retirement in which to pursue his numerous interests.

Mathematical Success

Fifty pupils took part in the recent National Maths Contest. Nationwide it involved 12,816 candidates from 454 schools. Given the size of the entry, our results, which have just come through, are remarkable. Three pupils, Colin Robertson, Andrew Priest and Claire Dumbleton, qualify for the British Maths Olympiad and gain gold certificates. Six pupils will receive silver certificates and another eighteen gain bronze awards. Congratulations to the Maths Department on an outstanding achievement.

East and West

Because of its situation and perhaps also because of its history, Madras has always had more of an international element in its population than most Scottish secondary schools. It is very pleasant indeed to record that this year we have several pupils from Japan, several from Canada and the United States and one from Russia. For those who are not English speakers the help provided by Mrs. Logan of the English as a Foreign Language service is invaluable, but whether there are language difficulties or not, our friends from overseas join fully in the life of the school and make a very worthwhile contribution to it.

Activities: —Debating/ Music and Drama

If results are one of the indicators of a school's performance, another must surely be the range and variety of its activities. Here also Madras has a record that is hard to equal. It is only the highlights that are mentioned here, since much of the detail appears in the Madras College Diary, published fortnightly in the local press. The Diary itself has become an important and valuable school activity. We understand that the Diary's authors have some interesting features in the pipeline and information about Former Pupils would also be welcome.

Our debaters have successfully tested their skills in a number of competitive events. Brian Logan, Timothy Jupp and Kenneth Cobb are now in the 4th round of the BP/English Speaking Union Public Speaking Competition. Brian Logan and Stephanie Wiens won through to the 3rd round of the English Speaking Union/Britannic Assurance debating competition. Loma Malcolm and Kenneth Cobb have reached the second round of the Edinburgh University/Bank of Scotland debating competition. In the Courier/TSB debating competition the school was represented by two teams, Will Poole and Catriona Chisholm, and Lindsay Charles and Alison Smith. The latter pair go through to the next round. There were two important in-school competitions. The annual inter-house debate for the Rotary Club Trophy produced a high overall standard and was won by the Blackfriars team of Kenneth Cobb, Timothy Jupp, Keith Legg, Lewis Brown and Clea Waterston. The new Thomson Trophy for public speaking in Years 1—3 was won by Catriona Chisholm. The trophy is in memory of a leading member of the St. Andrews Speakers Club, Mr. J. Thomson. We are very grateful to Mrs. Thomson for presenting the trophy and for the encouragement she has given our young speakers.

In any list of the term's activities Music, as always, features prominently. A final concert by the girls' choir, which went on exchange to Orleans in June was followed by a social gathering for audience and performers. A new exchange is under way— this time between the Wind Band and a youth band from Kristiansand in Norway who will visit St. Andrews in June. The brass band took part in the service at Holy Trinity to commemorate the granting of the Burgh's Royal Charter. They provided music for Remembrance Day services at Moonzie Kirk by Cupar and at St. Andrews, where they were joined by a section of the senior choir who braved the cold to swell the singing. In the run-up to Christmas the choir took part in a carol service in St. Leonards

Church; members of the brass group played at the dedication of the Christmas tree outside Holy Trinity; soloists gave a concert for the St. Andrews Preservation Trust in the North Street museum while the early music group, now calling itself Forlana, (the origin of the name has not yet emerged), gave a special performance for the friends of the Crawford Centre. In addition to all this, there are our own two Christmas concerts and several opportunities for the choir to go carol singing in the town in aid of local charities.

In the Regional Scots Song Composition Competition, Highly Commended certificates were gained by Mhairi McCrindle, Wendy Tait, Moira Graham, Kirsteen Black and Susanna Wiens.

There has been no lack of dramatic activity. The Junior Drama Club has been working on a traditional Mummings Play for Christmas. Forty-three S1, S2 and S3 pupils are involved, most as performers, but some also with masks and props and general stage management. Several professional groups who work in the educational field have visited the school. One hundred and eighty S2 pupils saw the Theatre in Education group from the Byre Theatre in the play *Bubble Boy* and took part in a drama workshop afterwards. Fifty S3 Modern Studies pupils were involved in a drama workshop on poverty and S6 saw a performance of *Too Much Punch for Judy*, a highly emotive exploration of the issues raised by drinking and driving. Visits have not just been incoming. Seniors have been to Glasgow to see a production of *The Ship*. Their next main outing is to the musical *42nd Street*. One hundred S1 pupils have had the opportunity to see the Royal Lyceum's spectacular production of *Hiawatha*. It has given them an experience of live theatre which will add an extra dimension to their drama work.

"Readathon"

Many S1 pupils were involved in a sponsored reading event to raise money for the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund for Children. Readathon 90 was organised by the English teachers and the S5 Communications Module class. In the space of three weeks 500 books were read and £1,371 raised.

Challenge of Industry

After some initial hesitation S6 pupils thoroughly enjoyed the annual Challenge of Industry Conference. We wish to thank the industrialists who took part for giving us their time and expertise, especially Mr. Tom Ferguson for his able and stimulating chairmanship. The school's Young Enterprise company, who are successfully marketing a Christmas card, are this year being advised by Mr. Nigel Buchanan and his colleagues from Liquid Levers and we thank them for their support.

Sporting Events

The school has maintained its usual wide range of sporting and other activities and both individuals and teams have distinguished themselves.

Gillian Charnock's tennis successes continue. She is currently East of Scotland Senior Champion and Scottish under 16 Champion, to name but two in a growing list of titles.

On the football field the 1st XI has an unbeaten record so far and several individual players have represented Fife Schools; Martin Burkinshaw and Mark Reynolds in the under 16 team and Gavin Aitken at the under 15 level. Bradley McGuire is an under 18 reserve. And the most important game of the season—the annual staff match against Waid Academy—ended in a goalless draw.

Claire Hunter and Sally Mitchell have gained places in Midlands District under 18 hockey squad and Sally has also been selected for the under 21 group. The 1st XI and the 3rd Year XI reached the semi finals of Fife Schools and Midlands District tournaments, but both teams were beaten in both events.

Katharine Hill, Kevin Ross and Dorian Coxon have been chosen for the Fife Schools Senior Badminton Team in the Scottish Inter-Regional Tournament.

Derek Brown, Mark Ballantyne and Allan McAndie took part in the Midlands District Rugby trials.

In the Fife Schools Road Relay Championships both the over 15 and the under 15 boys' teams won their events and the over 15 team became the first winners of the new Flockhart Trophy. Our 'B' and 'C' teams also produced good performances by being placed 4th and 5th at over 15 and 2nd and 4th at under 15.

In the Fife Schools 'A' Swimming Gala Pauline McLean and Ian Whittaker won their respective events. In the Regional gala for pupils with special needs, Stuart Hobbs won the 50 metre front crawl and along with Leann Jordan represented Fife in the national gala at Whitburn.

Success in a less familiar sport was gained by Catherine Christie, Lesley Christie, Fiona Malloch and Wendy MacDonald who came 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th respectively in the Scottish Schools Trampolining Championship.

PTA News

PTA meetings this term have dealt with the courses after Standard Grade, the work of the Art Department and the Aware programme of work experience. All have been informative and interesting but, with the exception of the first, poorly attended. At a time when there is so much concern about educational standards it is disappointing that so few parents take advantage of these opportunities to become better informed about the teaching and learning that is taking place in school. The poor response makes it increasingly difficult to justify the amount of time and effort which staff put into planning and preparation for these meetings. The PTA programme for next term begins with the traditional dessert party in the Byre Theatre on Friday, 18th January following the Quad Theatre company's topical production of *Oh, What a Lovely War*. The second meeting, *Developing the Whole Person*, a panel night on Social Education, takes place in Newport Primary School on Wednesday, 30th January. Please note that is a week later than the previously advertised date. Subsequent meetings deal with *Modern Languages for All* (19th Feb-

ruary) and *Green Theme* (6th March). PTA meetings are pleasant social occasions. They are not "members only" affairs. Every parent is entitled to attend, and we look forward to having your support next term.

School Board

For those who have not seen press reports of School Board business, this term's meetings have been concerned with the problems of school transport and with the preparation of a submission to the Howie committee which is considering the examination structure in fifth and sixth year. The Board recognised the advantages of the present system and came out quite clearly in favour of its retention with appropriate modifications to take account of new developments. The Board was also involved for the first time in making a senior appointment and four members took part in the short leet interviews for the Depute Rector's post. The Board's next meeting is on Thursday, 31st January at 7.30 p.m. in the Kilrymont Road Building when the report on its work during the past year will be presented. Copies of this report will be sent out to all parents prior to the meeting.

Here and there

Staff and pupils from the Department of Special Education travelled to Linlithgow to take part in the national carol service for Children with special needs in St. Michael's Cathedral.

The Business Studies Department took a party of senior pupils from the Higher Economics and Accounting classes to London to see at first hand the financial institutions of the City. To prevent over-concentration on the money markets, the trip also included a visit to London Weekend Television to see the taping of a comedy show.

The usual round of Christmas lectures is in full swing and groups from Physics, Chemistry, Modern Studies and Maths are attending, mainly at St. Andrews, but some also at Dundee. Another group from the Maths department took advantage of St. Andrews Day to visit the University Computing Lab where Dr. Edmund Robertson and his colleagues demonstrated MacTutor software on the AppleMac computers in the Lab. We are grateful to Dr. Robertson for making the visit possible and for giving the school a copy of the software which will be used to enhance S5 and S6 courses.

In the Art department some SI pupils produced designs for Christmas cards and we would like to thank Mr. Gordon Paton and Mrs. Julia Barclay of Redgate Design for their assistance with their production. Some seniors volunteered to build and decorate Santa's Grotto for the Merchants' Association and put in some very hard work on this project.

S3 and S4 pupils have taken part in a great variety of real work situations as part of the Aware programme and all appeared to have enjoyed the experience. Meantime, some S2 pupils have busied themselves with the production of a magazine and, in addition to articles of the usual kind, three different second year classes will feature in each issue.

Buses, Buses, Buses!

Some of you may know a piece of nonsense verse, written in a mixture of Latin and English, of which the last line is: *Lord, preserve us from these buses*. Nonsense it may have been to the Oxford don who wrote it, but it would be much more of a heartfelt prayer to those of us who have had to spend a vast amount of time trying to make sense of the operational and behavioural difficulties which seem to have plagued school buses this term as never before. It is even more infuriating to realise that so much of the time could have been more profitably spent on matters which had some direct bearing on education. Bus arrangements are not really a matter for the school at all, but inevitably becoming involved out of concern for the safety and welfare of our pupils, we end up in the thoroughly unsatisfactory position of being caught in the crossfire of complaints- from all sides. The School Board has discussed the matter and has heard an outline of the Regional position from Mr. McKeown, Assistant Director of Education (Resources) and Mr. Manning of the Department of Engineering. Mr. McKeown, Mr. Manning, the Rector and Mrs. Brown subsequently had a very full and frank exchange of views with Mr. Williamson, the main operator. A survey carried out by the Region shows that the number of seats available exceeds the number of pupils travelling by about 20. This is without taking absentees into account. However, the availability of a seat for everyone depends upon pupils boarding the correct bus. Where there is an apparent choice of buses, pupils tend to wait for a later bus, either to have a few minutes longer at home or because they want to be with friends who travel on it. Also to be with friends, pupils may board buses at a stop which is actually for a different route. A few discrepancies of this kind upset the whole basis of the seating calculation. It is hoped to issue more detailed information about this aspect of the problem in due course.

Some other points which emerged may be of interest to parents. Drivers are not allowed to put pupils off buses for bad behaviour and expect them to walk home. They may take the bus to a police station, but if they do, pupils who have not been allowed to get off at their usual stop have to be taken back to it on the bus. Pupils are required to carry their bus passes and show them to the driver or an inspector if asked to do so. They would not be put off the bus for not having their pass, but would be reported to the school in the first instance. However, the bus company is legally entitled to ask them to pay their fare.

No matter how often the point is made, the children do not seem to appreciate that bad behaviour threatens the safety of all concerned. Time has already been spent, and even more will have to be spent, talking to groups of pupils about the question of behaviour. I am sure parents have tried, as we have tried, to get the message through. May I appeal to you to try once again to do whatever you can to persuade the children that sensible and responsible behaviour on the buses is in everyone's interest. The present state of affairs can not be allowed to continue. *Do we have to wait for a disaster before there is any improvement?*

And in conclusion ...

Buses apart, most other aspects of school life appear to be flourishing. Staff and pupils can look back with satisfaction on what has been achieved so far and enjoy the reward of a well earned holiday. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Some Useful Dates for your Diary

Christmas Holidays

Term ends —Friday, 21st December, 1990
Term begins— Monday, 7th January, 1991

Mid Term Holiday— Monday and Tuesday 11th and 12th February, 1991

In-Service Day— Wednesday, 27th February, 1991

Easter Holidays

Term ends—Thursday, 28th March, 1991
Term begins—Monday, 15th April, 1991

Parents' Nights

S5/6 —Wednesday, 23rd January, 1991
S4 —Tuesday, 5th February, 1991
S2 —Thursday, 21st February (*half year group*)
S2 —Thursday, 28th February (*half year group*)
S1 —Monday, 18th March, 1991

Examinations

S3—Monday, 21st January—Tuesday, 5th February
S2—Monday, 18th March—Friday, 22nd March

PTA Meetings

Friday, 18th January— School Drama Production—
Dessert Party
Venue: Byre Theatre
Wednesday, 30th January—Social Education
Panel Night.
Venue: Newport Primary
Tuesday, 19th February—*Modern Languages for All*
Wednesday, 6th March—*Green Theme*
Thursday 14th March—AGM