



# Easter Newsletter

Madras College Newsletter

March 1996

## Viewpoint

### • Adverse Weather

The twelve weeks between Christmas and Easter are always the most difficult and demanding of the whole session. The absolute necessity of completing, before the end of term, the internally assessed elements, which are now required for both Standard Grade and Higher, intensifies the pressure on staff and senior pupils. This year the bad weather and the interruptions resulting from it made the term even more stressful than usual. During the first snowfall, the school was closed when it might have been open. During the second, it struggled to stay open when it should probably have been closed. Quite apart from the unpredictability of the weather, accurate information about its effect on local road conditions was difficult to obtain. Decisions to close are not taken at local level. The reality of the situation on the ground may appear very different when viewed from the windows of Fife House. Even if Regional approval to close is obtained, it may be two hours or more before buses and drivers can be obtained to take children home and even in that time conditions can change dramatically for better or worse. Confused messages aggravate the problem. On one occasion the school was assured all roads were open, although that quickly proved not to be the case. Because essential details were omitted or announcements were delayed, broadcast information was sometimes not as helpful as it was intended to be. The increasing number of pupils who live outside the catchment area present a special problem since they depend on service buses or collection by parents. Having to make individualised travel arrangements for these pupils added greatly to the pressure on school office staff who are to be congratulated on the calm and efficient way they coped with a rapidly changing situation. Snow may be fun for the pupils, but the paramount

importance of getting them home safely in these conditions creates a state of emergency for the school.

### • School Uniform

A side effect of the cold is that pupils very sensibly wrap up warmly and school uniform disappears under an assortment of woolly coverings. Unfortunately, when the weather improves and the wraps come off, uniform never seems to return to its former glory. Quite apart from any seasonal decline, some increasingly prevalent trends, denim jeans and sweatshirts for example, go beyond the minimum standard of what is reasonably acceptable. Compared with many other state schools, Madras takes a view of uniform which many would consider to be fairly relaxed. It is important to remember that uniform is not an end in itself. For the individual, the advantages of good personal presentation ought to be self evident. From the school's point of view it has a direct bearing on matters such as equality and neutrality. It is also an essential element in the process of setting standards, since it is not only by their exam results that schools are judged. The appearance of pupils at concerts and other special occasions is immaculate and demonstrates that support from parents and indeed pupils themselves is still there. However, any encouragement which can be given to the creation of the slightly less casual day to day image would be a welcome improvement.

### • Drugs

Perhaps however, the greatest threat which all schools face, is that drugs are apparently increasingly available to young people, even those living in areas where one might naively suppose there was no problem. Two alarming facts emerged from a recent conference on drugs which I attended. There is evidence

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to suggest that young people are most likely to obtain drugs from friends rather than the traditional shady character at the school gate. It was also disturbing to learn that many young people think of drugs as 'fun' and see nothing wrong in their recreational use. Since shock/horror tactics or simply telling young people to say no have proved to be ineffective as counter measures, education clearly has to look for new ways of presenting and winning the argument. With a view to raising awareness and addressing any concerns which parents may have, plans for next session's PTA programme include a workshop on ways of tackling this problem.

## STAFF NOTES

Mr Edgar's retiral at Christmas after 24 years outstanding service to the school was a closely guarded secret and came as a surprise to many of his colleagues.

He came from Jordanhill College in 1972 as Principal Teacher of English and was appointed Assistant Rector in 1984. He gave the English department strong leadership and gifted teaching. His experience of piloting it through many changes enhanced his contribution as a member of Board of Studies where one of his main areas of interest was the curriculum and the course choice structure. His training college background made him a natural choice as 'Regent' to advise and assist students and probationers. The school library, staff development, in-service training and the support systems for pupils with special needs have all benefited from the skill and vision he brought to their management.

His wide range of interests in literature, art and music illuminated his morning assembly talks which were models of their kind, never failing to make a telling point in a memorable and interesting way. His quiet wit enlivened many a tedious Board of Studies discussion and when members were tempted to advocate superficially attractive solutions to

problems, his sound common sense invariably brought discussion back to fundamental points of educational principle and practice. We shall all miss him as a friend and colleague, but we wish him every happiness in his retirement and thank him for all his unobtrusive hard work for the good of the school.

Until a permanent replacement for Mr Edgar is appointed, Mrs Kyle, Principal Teacher of Home Economics, assumes the responsibilities of Acting Assistant Rector. This gives rise to changes in the Home Economics department with Mrs Steven becoming Acting Principal Teacher and Mrs Copland Acting Assistant Principal Teacher.

We congratulate Miss Kelly of the Biology department on her appointment as Assistant Principal Teacher of Guidance at Balwearie High School.

Inevitably, staff absence is at its worst at this time of year, to an extent that supply teachers have become increasingly hard to find. We are very grateful to all those who have helped us, often at short notice and in difficult circumstances. At the same time, we send our good wishes to Mrs Lamb, Mrs Hannah and Miss Young who have all been absent for some time.

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## Devolved School Management

The school is nearing the end of its second year of devolved financial management. In spite of the work involved, which is considerable, there are clear benefits in having local control and being able to direct funds where they are most needed. By using money carried forward from the previous year's prudent housekeeping, it has proved possible to allocate extra resources to enhance teaching and learning in various ways although the main thrust this session has been directed towards a significant improvement in the provision of new technology.

## Local Government Reorganisation

Fife seems to have been less severely affected than many other authorities by the financial difficulties arising from local government reorganisation. Even so, the education budget has been cut by about 4.5 million. Fortunately, school staffing levels and the main allocation to schools for the purchase of textbooks and basic equipment have survived intact. Changes are being introduced for instrumental instruction. School meals will cost more, there are significant reductions in the allocation for educational excursions and in the budget for the repair and maintenance of school buildings. Nevertheless, Fife's support for education has been maintained. The cuts are substantially less than those faced by other departments of the region and education is the only service to be granted a small increase for future growth.

## DUNBLANE APPEAL

Everyone in the school community has been deeply affected by the tragedy of Dunblane Primary School and our hearts go out to parents, pupils and colleagues. Pupils have been eager to give their sympathy some tangible form and collections at the usual end of term services will give them an appropriate opportunity to contribute.

Dunblane inevitably raises the whole question of the security of schools and their vulnerability to intruders. It is not just a case of pupils and staff being at risk. The vast amount of expensive technology with which schools are now equipped, is possibly even more likely to attract unwelcome attention. As part of the ongoing development of Information Technology the school was already giving some consideration to improved security and it will be further reviewed in the light of recent events.

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## PTA 50/50 Club

The school has benefited greatly from this year's PTA fundraising activities, not least from contributions channelled through the 50/50 Club, which of course, combines effortless giving with the possibility of winning a prize. Funds from this source are being used to purchase a new public address system to be used at school sporting events and in the South Street Assembly Hall. 50/50 Club prize winners to date are:

• **December 1995**

£15 Mr C Mitchell, St Andrews  
£20 Mrs M Aitken, Leuchars  
£100 Mrs C Cameron, Leven

• **January 1996**

£15 Mrs I Miller, Newport  
£20 Mrs E McGregor, St Andrews

• **February 1996**

£15 Caroline Makein, St Andrews  
£20 Mrs M Lohoar, Strathkinness

• **March 1996**

£15 Mrs L Spence, Newport  
£20 Heather McNeill, St Andrews

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## Duke of Edinburgh Awards

On the evening of 30th January parents and participants were invited to an awards ceremony in the library at South Street, when Mr David Somerville, Assistant Director of Education, presented the badges and certificates to the 27 fourth year pupils who have achieved their Bronze awards. These pupils are now working toward their Silver awards. Meanwhile, another batch of current S3 pupils are working for their Bronze awards and attended an expedition training day on Sunday 10th March around school and up on Drumcarrow Hill. Topics covered included map and compass work, First Aid (run by volunteers from the Red Cross), tent erecting and camp cookery. The S4 experts were on hand, assisting with the skills they learned last year.

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## Rotary Club Links

### Interact Club

An Interact Club for senior pupils has been recently formed under the guidance of Mr J A Bennett, with support from Mr Joe Rosiejak, Interact Chairman of District 1010 (Scotland North) and Mr Bruce Alexander, President of St Andrews Rotary Club. The aim of the club, whose name is a contraction of "International Action", is to allow pupils to develop leadership and interpersonal

skills in an international context. The office bearers of the first committee are Niels Calvert, President, Louise Donaldson, Secretary and Jennifer Bennett, Treasurer, with other members of the current sixth year. They will shortly be recruiting from the present fifth year to carry on the work they have started.

### Camp Ryla

There was an exceptionally strong leet of applicants for places on the Rotary Youth Leadership Award Scheme, where pupils are sponsored for a week's training in outdoor and leadership skills. The successful pupils for this summer are Jamie Kilpatrick and Marianne Harkins (S5).

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## Ohtawara Exchange

As usual, the possibility of spending a fortnight in Japan attracted a great deal of interest and there was keen competition from S4 for places on this year's exchange. All 14 applicants acquitted themselves extremely well and the Trustees of the New St Andrews Japan Golf Trust faced an almost impossible task in choosing from the 7 who went forward to the final interview stage. The four who were successful are Garry Beat, Graeme Edie, Kirsten McNeill and Fiona Mitchell. Congratulations to them and to all concerned on the excellent impression they made.

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## Fashion Show

The PTA Fashion Show on March 12th promised to be a great success, with all tickets sold out well in advance and an exciting range of clothes generously supplied by local shops to be shown by confident and well-rehearsed young models. A heavy snowfall on the day was hardly to be expected, but the difficult weather conditions did not depress the enthusiasm either of the participants or of the audience, who turned out in praiseworthy numbers. The event raised money for the Paediatric Unit at Ninewells Hospital and for the school. Thanks go to the PTA committee and to all the members of the Home Economics and PE Departments, who put so much time and effort into this worthwhile and enjoyable occasion.

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## Young Enterprise

Trading under the company name Orka, the Young Enterprise group met for a full programme of activities, under Managing Directors Steven Whyte and Rebecca Mumford (both S6). Their products this year were candles, golf balls, ruffles, notelets and mugs. Thanks to the expert assistance of Mr Campbell, Mr Henning, Mr Beck and sponsors The Bank of Scotland, all the participants had a good experience of running a company and made a tidy profit.

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## Art Bus

Art classes visited the Arts in Fife exhibition on the Art Bus. The artist had created an intriguing installation using glass tanks full of water suspended from a frame. Each tank was lit from inside and streams of bubbles ran up through the water. Inevitably there were a variety of reactions, but most of them were positive and enthusiastic!

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## Debating & Public Speaking

Outstanding success in the earlier rounds of national competitions led to an intensive term of preparation and events for the teams and their coaches, Mrs Fraser and Mrs Baughan. Chris Irwin (S6) and Eleanor Winton (S5) successfully negotiated four rounds of the Edinburgh Speaking Union Debating Competition to reach the Grampian/Tayside Area Final. Andrew Bell (S5) and Eleanor Winton were runners up in to the National Final of the Edinburgh University/Bank of Scotland Debating Competition, out of an original entry of 117 schools. The same team represented the school in the Glasgow University Challenge Debate for "the best twelve debating schools in Scotland" and was one of the four finalists. Eleanor Winton was invited to compete in a pool of 20 speakers to select three members to represent Scotland in the World Championships in August in Australia. She narrowly missed a place and received many encouraging comments from the judges about her performance.

In the Junior TSB/Courier Debating Competition all teams did well, with Graeme Broom (S3) and Luke Taylor (S2) reaching the National Final, where they were the runners up and won the prize of a weekend in London.

In the annual three-cornered contest with Waid Academy and Bell Baxter High School, the school team of Emily Fraser (S5), Jonathan Ervine (S4), Simon Newton (S4), Douglas Aiton (S4), Chris Sinclair (S4) and Ailsa Stewart (S6), retained the Waid Centenary Trophy for the fifth successive year. Jonathan Ervine, Simon Newton and Emily Fraser also won individual prizes for their contributions.

Meanwhile, the Public Speaking team of Helen O'Connor (S6), Chair, Charis Melvin (S6), Main Speaker and Emily Fraser, Vote of Thanks, assisted by Ailsa Stewart in one round, were one of finalist teams in the Edinburgh Speaking Union National Competition on 20th March. They achieved joint third place from an original entry of 115 schools.

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## Contests & Competitions

### • Chemistry

The school team of Adam Reid (S6), Chris Sinclair (S4), Juliet Kenicer (S3) and Helen Scott (S2) took part creditably in the Conoco Top of the Bench Competition, reaching the semi-finals before being knocked out in a very close contest by Glenrothes High School.

### • Mathematics

In the National Maths Contest 1995, 33,000 candidates from 850 UK schools took part. Madras College pupils earned a total of 18 awards, including three at Gold: Adam Reid (S6), Graham Reman (S5) and, an especially fine achievement in view of his age, Neil Donaldson (S4).

In the UK Schools Intermediate Maths Challenge 1996, with more than 100,000 contestants, the school won the remarkable total of 39 awards, including

13 at gold, given to the top 6%. They were: Susan Weatherstone, Neil Donaldson, Jennifer Davie, Alexander Goodwin, Douglas Aiton and Jonathan Ervine (S4) and Gordon Maclachlan, David Gibb, Martha Neilson, Alan Riddell, John Whammond, Alexander Grascuk and Anne Wright (S3). Best in the school, Susan Weatherstone has also been invited to sit the prestigious International Intermediate Invitational Maths Challenge.

### • Dungeons & Dragons

In the 1996 Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Competition, one of the school teams entered won the Scottish final. Scott Stickland and John Whammond (S3), James Whammond and Elliott Brooks (S2), Brett Stickland and Jack Edwards-Fox (S1) will now progress to the British final in Loughborough in September.

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## Burns Supper

The annual Burns Supper, marking the bicentenary of his death, was held on the Bard's birthday, 25th January. After the meal, Steven Whyte compered the proceedings and introduced the main speaker of the evening - Robert Burns himself, reincarnated in a body which, however like himself, reminded many of the audience of Mr A O Lindsay. In the course of a full and moving address, Mr Burns was ably assisted by pupils from S1 to S6, who supported his discourse with song, recitation and humorous toasts to the Laddies (Steven Whyte) and the Lassies (Charis Melvin).

As usual, this was an evening of warm fellowship greatly enjoyed by all. It is always gratifying to attend an occasion

at which so many come together in equality and friendship: qualities which were emphasised in the main address as true to the spirit of the poet being celebrated. Copies of Mr Burns' speech with a few original poetic items, will shortly be available.

The contributions of the Music Department to the evening were as ever excellent: fiddlers, pipers and singers. As a result of their performances that evening, Claire Speed (S4) and Glyn McCrickard (S4) were invited to represent Madras at the Fife Schools' Burns Competition at the end of March. On 19th March, Glyn McCrickard won the coveted Leng Medal for Scottish Singing.

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## The Rover

The term began with the Quad Theatre Company's production of "The Rover" by Aphra Behn at the Byre Theatre. Intensive rehearsals and preparation, involving the sacrifice of a large proportion of their Christmas holidays by Mrs Ann Bridges, the cast and stage crew, resulted in a spirited and enjoyable performance of this neglected Restoration comedy. Leading parts were played by Andrew Bell (S5) and Jan Carruthers, Ruth Mortimer, David Pearson, Lizzie Reid and Steven Whyte (all S6).

# Sports Round-up . . . . .

## • Hockey

The outstanding achievement of the season so far has been by the Senior Girls Indoor Hockey Squad, who won the Scottish Indoor title in February, defeating the High School of Glasgow in the final. The Outdoor Squad has reached the final of the Midlands Cup and represented the Region in the Scottish Cup, achieving some fine results and reaching the Semi-Final before being defeated by the ultimate winners, Hutchesons. The Second Year Girls' Hockey team won the Fife Outdoor Hockey Tournament at Cupar on 4th March. Melanie Christie and Frances Rossi from S2 have been selected for the Fife Under 16 Development Squad for hockey.

## • Football

At football, the Under 15 team has reached the final of the Fife Cup for the third year in succession, while the Under 16 team is in the last 16 of the national competition, the B&Q Cup, having been runners up to St Columba's in the Final of the Fife Cup. Craig Michie (S4) and Craig Wilkie (S4) have played regularly for the Fife Schools team, which has reached the semi-final of the Scottish Cup. The Under 18 team are currently lying second in the Fife Schools League and play Queen Anne High School in the semi-final of the Fife Cup on 20th March. Chris Seeley and Paul Broadfoot have played throughout the season for the Fife Under 18 team.

## • Swimming

In swimming, Rachael Hood (S2) and Alistair Hood (S1) qualified for the Scottish Schools Swimming Championships in Edinburgh. Katy Goldsmith and Katy Cathro (S2) and Louise Paul and Rachael Kay (S1) were third in the Scottish Gymnastics Championships held at the Fife Institute in February.

The S1/2 swimming team won the area final of McVitie's Scotsplash on 20th March. Their prize included £100 for the school and they now go on to the National Final to be held at the Commonwealth Pool, Edinburgh in May. Congratulations to Stuart Bell, Melanie Christie, Rachael Hood, Andrew Lemoncello and Paul Malecki (S2) and Melanie Bairner, Sally Field, Alistair Hood, Stuart Steen and Carolin Taylor (S1).

## • Girls' Football

Girls' Football continues to develop well. The squad raised around £500 through a sponsored activity and were able to purchase strips for both the junior and senior teams. They have benefited from the support of the North East Fife Sports Council, who supplied 20 footballs, a set of bibs and

training markers, which have been of great use in training sessions. In February, the 1st X1 played a fixture against St Andrews High School and won 4:2. Nine girls have been selected with girls from Bell Baxter to participate in a sports academy at the end of March.

## • Rugby

In Rugby, cancellations have restricted the number of fixtures played this term, but with the teams back to full strength after recent injury problems, there have been some excellent performances. First XV Highlights were the 65:10 defeat of Royal High School, Edinburgh and the 41:5 win over Glenrothes RFC Under 18 team. The 2nd XV has also played well, being undefeated and scoring many points. At regional level, Robbie Steven (S6) had played for the Midlands Under 18 team, Geoff Crow at Under 16, with Euan Bennett as replacement.

## • Netball

Caroline Dewey (S6) has been selected for the Fife Under 18 team.

## • Cross Country

Madras College once again had outstanding success at the regional Cross Country Championships at Kirkcaldy on 13th February. All seven teams won medals, and seven individual places were gained, a total of 49 medals, 3 trophies and 3 boys' champions. The First Year Girls team took first place and won the R McDonald Shield. The Under 15 Girls were also first and gained the Livingstone Trophy. The Over 17 Boys team were placed first and won the IDocherty Cup. Tom Greene (S1), Andrew Lemoncello (S2) and Chris Seeley (S6) were Champions in their respective age groups. Congratulations are offered to all participants on this fine performance.

In the TSB Scottish Schools Cross Country Championships at Irvine on March 9th, boys' and girls' teams from Madras competed strongly across the full age range. Most successful were the Senior Boys, who were the Silver Medalists in their event, and Andrew Lemoncello (S2), who came 8th in the Under 15 Boys event. As a result, Andrew has been selected to represent Scotland in the UK Schools Championships later this month.

## • Skiing

Twenty four third year pupils took up the opportunity to learn to ski at the Hillend Dry Ski Slope. All completed the course of lessons successfully and will have the chance to try their skills on snow before too long.

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## Olim Cives

It is sad to record the deaths of three former members of staff. We take this opportunity to offer our sympathy to their families and to pay a final tribute to their work.

### Mr Blakey

Mr Blakey joined the staff in 1964 as a teacher of Maths. Because of his own deep commitment, he chose to retrain as a teacher of Religious Education. In 1981 he was appointed Principal Teacher Administration, a unique post specifically designed to overcome some of the difficulties of managing the split site. His mathematical skill and his meticulous attention to detail made him particularly adept in dealing with such tricky matters as timetabling and class cover arrangements. He was held in high regard by his colleagues, not least for his scrupulous fairness in allocating classes to them. Although he retired in 1989 he remained a familiar figure about the school, particularly during SCE Exams over which he presided as Chief Invigilator with his usual courtesy, efficiency and accuracy.

### Dr Gilchrist

At the age of 92, Dr John Gilchrist was in all probability the oldest former member of staff. He was a St Andrews graduate, a University rugby blue and captain of the Scottish University Golf team. He began teaching in Liverpool, returned to St Andrews in 1944 and taught Classics to several generations of Madras pupils to whom he was affectionately known as 'Gillie'!

In 1957 he moved to Aberfeldy as Principal Teacher of Classics and there began a long connection with local government. This continued after his retirement from teaching and led to his appointment as the last Provost of St Andrews prior to the reforms of 1972 which created North East Fife District. He was a great lover of music and until recently, a regular attender of school concerts.

### Pipe Major Barron

The present strength of the school's Piping Society is due to the solid foundations established by Pipe Major Barron. In the days when staff appointments were very much at the Rector's discretion, he was recruited by Dr Thompson who firmly believed that instrumental instruction in a Scottish school was unthinkable if it did not include piping. He could not have found a better instructor. Pipe Major Barron was an outstanding performer, a notable composer of pipe music and a gifted teacher. Under his influence, Madras became known in the piping world as a centre of excellence and it was for a number of years the venue for national junior piping championships. Anyone who stayed on after school on Thursdays, quickly found the peace of the Quad shattered by the sound of pipes from behind every pillar with the Pipe Major 'flitting from pupil to pupil, coaxing, encouraging, setting high standards and getting the best out of them. His work has stood the test of time and given him a unique and special place in the school's musical tradition.

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## Dates for your Diary

### School Starts

Monday 15th April 1996

### S3 Parents' Night

Thursday 25th April 1996

### SCE Exams

Begin Wednesday 1st May and end on  
Wednesday 5th June 1996

### SCE Study Leave

Begins on Friday 3rd May and ends on  
Friday 31st May 1996

### May Day Holiday

Monday 6th May 1996

### S3 Examinations

Begin Monday 29th April and end on  
Friday 17th May 1996

### PTA - Quality Matters

Wednesday 8th May 1996

### In-Service Day

Tuesday 21st May 1996

### P7 Parents' Night

Monday 27th May

### June Holiday

Monday 3rd June 1996

### New Timetable for S5/6

Tuesday 4th June 1996

### S1 Parents' Night

Wednesday 5th June 1996

### Summer Concert

Wednesday 26th June 1996

### Art Exhibition

Thursday 13th June and Friday 14th  
June 1996

### Awards Ceremony

Tuesday 2nd July 1996

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## And finally

It is our hope that staff, parents and pupils will all have the opportunity to relax over Easter and enjoy the break in suitably spring-like weather, which has so far been conspicuous by its absence.