



Summer Newsletter

Madras College Newsletter

June 1998

Rector's Note

At the end of the school session it is appropriate to stand back from the hustle and bustle of day - today endeavour to take stock. This has been a year of excellent levels of achievement and activity in every sphere in Madras College, even by our own high standards. It is also one which has seen many National initiatives concerning Quality Assurance in Scottish Schools, about raising and measuring Standards and Attainment by setting Targets. It is necessary, therefore, to pause to consider the fundamental purpose of any school. The Statement of Aims of Madras College, developed with much care and discussion over recent years, may be summarised thus:

- to give absolute priority to good learning and teaching, in order to develop the full potential of each pupil, irrespective of ability or gender;
- to deliver this learning within a caring environment where the individual is valued and supported in a climate of mutual respect;
- to encourage pupils to become aware of the wider community, its importance in their present and future, and its potential for creating good links and practical projects or service.

I am proud to inherit these Aims which I believe embody the best aspirations for any modern school in achieving true quality of service to the community. But how should we measure our progress and our success in achieving them?

If we take the statistical approach favoured by some current educational gurus, we might list a number of Performance Indicators which show good SQA examination results and high uptake of further and higher education places. We could instance low unit costs per pupil. We would note Performance Targets given to us based on the school's characteristic index and socioeconomic audit, known as a Value-Added profile. Or words to that effect.

On the other hand, we might measure our success a different way. We could cite the testimony of the vast majority of parents, higher and further education admissions officers, employers, work experience contacts and members of the community. They speak to us with appreciation and enthusiasm about the skills and successes, the personal qualities and attitudes of Madras College pupils of all ages and abilities. They are impressed by the tone of our school, where the richness of experience comes from so many activities whose success cannot be measured by results alone; where sharing pleasure in the achievements of others appears as important as the fulfilment of individual ambitions.

Need we suggest which impression or judgment is likely to be recalled in years to come? Which, in the long run, is the more valid measure of the service the school is offering to the community which it exists to serve?

We believe our preference for how our school should be judged is well-founded, based on an approach of academic rigour and reflective professionalism. We also believe that our stance is probably closer to parental and community viewpoints than all the benchmarks, statistics and comparisons of the day.

So what should a proudly comprehensive school like ours do, to make the most of its educational inheritance in the face of earnest, persistent but fundamentally misguided attempts to turn us into some kind of results factory?

We could accept the inevitable: pay lip-service to managerial cults, accept fear as the best motivator and grudgingly conform, all the while knowing that there is a better way of planning, delivering and reviewing our service to young people.

Or we could come right out in the open, discuss these weighty matters with all interested parties, then jointly announce

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our proposals for the ways and means of measuring progress and achievement in fulfilment of the School Aims.

Your help is needed. If we go for the second option it has to be based on a genuine partnership with parents. On our own, we shall be exposed to the charge that our dislike of statistical measurement of our success being imposed on us, is the result of a dated and complacent attitude. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is precisely because we care so much for the best of our traditions, our proven ways of achieving real success in human terms, that we fear for the future if the school becomes cast in an alien mould.

These matters will be raised at School Board and Parent Teacher Association. Please assist these bodies by attending meetings or giving members your views.

Lastly, whatever else troubles us, I and the whole staff are most grateful for all the help and encouragement received from the parents throughout another splendid session of hard work and well-won achievement. We wish you and your families a very pleasant and happy summer. Thank you.

STAFF NOTES

The pace of staff change is continuing. Mr Prunty, Head Janitor, retired earlier this term after 19 years of distinguished (and distinctive) service. We wish him well for a long and happy retirement. In May, Mrs Irwin was appointed as Principal Teacher of Drama at Lochgelly High School, while Mr Dewar arrived from there to take charge of Drama here. We thank Mrs Irwin for her service to the school as teacher and then as acting Principal Teacher for the last two years. Her contribution to the school both in curricular and extra-curricular aspects has been very much appreciated and we wish her great success and fulfilment at Lochgelly. At the end of term we shall also lose Mrs Girdwood as APT of Social Subjects, owing to her need to move back north. Even in her brief time at Madras, however, Mrs Girdwood had begun to make her mark and we are most sorry to see her depart. Miss Lindsay, part-time teacher of Modern Languages, also left early in May and we thank her for her enthusiasm and commitment to her work. Just a fortnight ago we welcomed Ms McCormac to Science after her transfer from Melville House. We should also inform parents that Mr Latona (Computing) is exchanging for a year with a Canadian teacher, Mr Moore, who will join us in August.

MRS BRIDGES

A major change this summer comes with the resignation of Mrs Ann Bridges, Principal Teacher of Guidance and teacher of English, after 33 years service to Madras.

In the proud history of the school, many individuals are remembered for the enduring legacy which their teaching skills, contributions to the wider life of the school and often, indeed, their personalities have left us. We suspect that when the more recent annals come to be written, prominent amongst them will be the name of Mrs Bridges. Certainly Mrs Bridges' many years of outstanding drama productions, vividly remembered by so many, including former pupils who were thus launched into their careers, now join the myths of the past.

Generations of pupils have benefited from her acute mind, eclectic love of literature and individual charismatic approach to teaching. As a Guidance teacher, her humorous understanding

showed in her evergreen empathy with the vagaries of teenagers taking blundering steps towards freedom and independence.

Leaving us well before normal retirement age, Mrs Bridges looks as lively and fresh as any of us, a vivid proof of her positive attitudes to school and to life in general. As an active figure on the national education scene of English teaching, she will no doubt continue to serve pupils' interests and represent the best professionalism of her colleagues for many years to come.

Thank you, Mrs Bridges. We shall miss you.



Mrs Bridges

Latin Speaking Competition

In this annual event held at St Andrews University, Hazel Pearson (S4) retained the Intermediate Cup, which she won last year. Joanna Kay (S3) and Dorothy Lawrenson (S5) came third in the Intermediate and Senior Cups respectively, while the S3 and S4 Project Teams both won second prizes.

CSYS BIOLOGY

The Sixth Year Studies group spent two valuable weekends on practical work at the school's bothy in Glen Tilt during October, working with Dr A Rutherford, Mr D Young and Mrs P Robertson from the department.

The CSYS Project produced by Jenny Davie on "Factors affecting the heart rate of Daphnia" was judged to be of such an outstanding standard that it has been entered for the Prince Philip Prize, awarded annually for projects relating to an area of study in animal biology.

School Exchanges

Great Valley High School, Philadelphia

Our participants for Session 1998/9 in this well-established exchange programme have been chosen: Colin Donaldson, Sarah Feldman, Dixie Mirowski and Amy Palmer (S6) have already made contact with their counterparts from Great Valley High School. They are preparing to host their American visitors from August to January 1999, during which time they will be senior pupils at Madras College. The Madras pupils will fly to Philadelphia in January and complete the school year there, gaining a unique experience of American culture and education.

42nd Kiel Exchange

In the two-year cycle of the annual exchange with the Kieler Gelehrtenschule, this is our year for visiting Kiel. Twenty pupils accompanied by Mr D Macgregor, Principal Teacher of German and Miss S Mackay, duly left St Andrews on Saturday 6th June at 6.30 am for another European venture. In doing so, they were perpetuating one of the oldest existing school exchanges in the UK: an unbroken tradition since its inauguration by the then Rector of Madras, the late Dr John Thompson, in the mid-1950's.

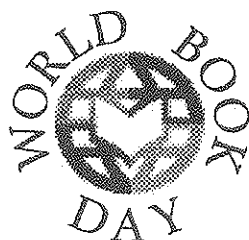
Canadian Exchange

During Session 1997/8, an exchange in the Biology department when Mr R Thompson joined the staff for a year, meant that we made a link with Salmo Secondary School, British Columbia. An exchange between two senior pupils, similar in format to that with Great Valley High but with each leg lasting only 8 weeks, is in the process of being set up for this autumn.

Parent Teacher Association

Drama Showcase

The PTA organised a highly successful Drama Showcase Evening on April 23rd, when over 80 pupils drawn from S1 to S6 presented a wide variety of pieces: dance drama, work created through improvisations based on Beowulf and Darkwood Manor, extracts from Shakespeare and from Liz Lochhead. Many lunch time and after school rehearsals during Drama Club had been required to provide the high level of performance enjoyed by a full house of parents and friends. Our thanks go Mrs E Irwin, Mrs P Esler, Mrs J Aitken and Mr N Stewart of the Drama department for all their effective input. Thanks also to Mr J Love, whose technical expertise set up the sound and lighting effects and to Mrs P Robertson, who managed them on the night.



23rd April 1998

Activities centred around this day to promote reading, advertised in the Easter Newsletter, went ahead as planned. Tremendous support from staff, parents and pupils made it a very worthwhile and enjoyable event.

Around 550 tokens were used in the purchase of books, each one giving the buyer a £1 deduction on the price. Class 1A had an excellent visit to P1/2 classes at Langlands School, to enthuse them about the scheme and "share a story". The book stalls at evening events were well-patronized. Staff donated copies of books which they had enjoyed reading to book boxes for senior pupils: generosity which also promoted interesting staff room discussions about reading tastes!

The whole event, stretching over a period of two weeks, ran very smoothly, thanks to the superb organisation and hard work of Mrs J Scott.

50/50 Club: June Draw Winners

£25:

- 140 Mrs J Young, Blebo Craigs
72 Mrs B McGinley, St Andrews

£50:

- 15 Mrs L Craig, St Andrews
88 Mr & Mrs S Hudson, St Andrews

Scholarship Awards

Kirsty Dawson (S6) has been awarded a Tullis Russell Scholarship of £600 a year to support her studies for a degree in Business Studies at Strathclyde University. Of the four successful applicants, Kirsty was the only girl selected.

Neil Donaldson (S6), has been awarded £1,000 by Edinburgh University in recognition of academic excellence, to support him there in studying Maths and Physics.

Non-Uniform Day



'Top of the Pops' Performers

The impetus for this year's charity Non-Uniform day came initially from a group of second year pupils. The whole school rapidly became involved, with second year selling tickets in Kilrymont Road and the Interact Group organising in South Street. A total of over £800 was raised, which will be distributed to a range of charities including Child Leukemia.

Such days are an illustration of the school working together as a community at its best. The atmosphere was all that could be hoped for, with pupils responding positively to the break in routine, enjoying the comfort of casual clothing while contributing to good causes, but nevertheless working hard as on any other school day.

The highlight at Kilrymont Road came at lunch time, when a huge and appreciative audience of pupils were taken back to the Sixties for an unforgettable Tops of the Pops: many stars, notoriously unreliable in their present day appearances (Elvis Presley and the Rolling Stones to mention but two) managed to appear for this one show. But for a remarkable selection of wigs, the members of staff who were prepared to display such remarkable energy, dancing skills (and courage) could be identified. However Mrs D Lamb, as compere, producer and chief bully, can be named here to take her bow.

MATHEMATICS Competitions

Double Olympiad

Luke Halliwell (S6), whose mathematical prowess and competitive enthusiasm have brought him success at ever higher levels, has achieved his ultimate ambition of being selected for the six-strong British Maths Olympiad team to compete in Taiwan in July. As if this were not enough, Luke has also reached the same superlative heights in Computing. He has secured a place on the equally prestigious team of four who will represent the UK in the 10th International Olympiad of Informatics taking place at Expo in Lisbon during September. Luke is currently gaining work experience with a London-based company while continuing to prepare for the contests by correspondence course. With our congratulations, we extend best wishes to Luke for a successful and stimulating experience competing at international level.

Following their Gold success in the UK Schools Intermediate Maths Challenge reported in the Easter Newsletter, Sue Liu and Jack Edwards-Fox sat the demanding second round paper in April. Only around a hundred competitors succeed in solving two complete questions and their achievement therefore is recognised by an award at Distinction. Greatly to their credit, both pupils reached this level.

Sue Liu, with three and a half completed questions, came 1st in Scotland and was placed 18th in the UK listings. She has been awarded a scholarship to attend the National Mathematics Summer School at Queen's College, Birmingham in early July. Since members of the 1998 UK Mathematical Olympiad team will be serving as team leaders and "mentors" throughout the five day event, Su will find at least one familiar face in Luke Halliwell.

In the 1998 Mathématiques Sans Frontières competition, Madras has again scored highly, with both the Fourth and Fifth year entrants appearing in the final list of twenty teams who received certificates of excellence at the Prizegiving Ceremony at Heriot-Watt University on 18th June. The main prize winners were announced there and both teams have won second place in Scotland in their respective competitions. Two £200 prizes therefore come to the school.

The final round of UK Maths Challenge is that for the junior years, where the rising generation of Madras pupils enter the competitive field in S1 and S2. The outstanding results achieved by this age group of pupils perpetuate an established tradition, but are no less remarkable for that. Indeed, the total of 13 Gold, 19 Silver and 20 Bronze awards has only been equalled once before by Madras pupils at this level. It should be remembered that over 130,000 contestants took part and that only the top 6% achieve Gold awards. The Madras pupils who did so are: Sarah Graves, David Stephens, Duncan Knowles, Donald McCabe, Alistair Bonar, Robert Collins, Toby Gilbertson, Joseph Humfrey, Andrew Farmer, Allan Williamson and Nina Hepburn in S2 and, even more exceptionally, James Milne and David Taylor from S1. Invited to sit the second round of the prestigious Junior Maths Olympiad, are the top four scorers: James Milne, Sarah Graves, David Stephens and Duncan Knowles.

With performances like this, it is not surprising that the Junior Team also won the Fife Junior Maths Challenge Competition.

Our congratulations go again to all pupils, winners or not, who take part in competitive Mathematics: all their hard work and enthusiasm contribute to this fine record of achievement. Much of the credit, of course, should go to the staff of the Maths department and in particular to Mr K Nisbet, whose passion for mathematical problem solving and unflinching competitive drive generates and nurtures all this activity.

TESCO TOKENS: Computers for Schools

The Learning Support department would like to say a big thank you to all the pupils, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends and the teachers who have sent in Tesco tokens. They arrived by hand and by post from the length and breadth of Scotland. We ended up with a total of more than 16,000, which will be put to excellent use supplying equipment to support pupils' learning.

Maths Workshop

Sixteen pupils from S5 accompanied by Mrs L Caldwell, spent a stimulating day at the University of Stirling on June 11th, taking part in workshop activities and a quiz. Their mathematical insights were expanded by taking part in the following: "The Meaning of Life", a computer simulation of cell reproduction and death; "Coke Pepsi Challenge", a practical challenge leading to a statistical analysis; "The Grand Canyon", where the Stella Simulation Programme was used for population modelling; and "Capturing Space", comparing volumes of Platonic space.

EASTER TRIP TO FRANCE

For the third year in succession, Mr C Jessop, Principal Teacher of French, led a party of 41 pupils on another very successful expedition to France. Drawn from S2-S4 with a select group of sixth years assisting with organisation, the accompanying staff members were Mr M Barclay, Miss S Mackay, Miss C Lindsay and Miss P Dunn.

Many experiences were packed into a short space of time. A morning visit to the First World War battlefield of Vimy Ridge, the tour of Paris by coach and metro, the boat trip on the Seine, the Tour Eiffel, the Arc de Triomphe, the Sacré-Coeur and Montmartre, the walk down the Champs-Élysées. Paris retained its magic, even for those who had been before, especially when seen on our "Paris by Night" tour.

Then on the Brittany via Chartres and the magnificent cathedral, before the Mont-Saint-Michel and the oysters at Cancale. Records were broken here when, with the initial apprehension overcome, some six dozen oysters were consumed by the group! Dinan's market possibilities were thoroughly appreciated, as were the shops in Saint-Malo before the long journey home. But even this was relieved by an extensive visit to the Continent hypermarket in Cherbourg before going on board the ferry. The last francs were spent - if there were any left by that time.

And the prize for the best project? £20 to Karen McDermid (S3) for a splendid effort.

School Board News

Professor Peter McKiernan, Chairman of the School Board writes:

The School Board has been very active since its re-formation in March this year. Many parent members have come on to the Board for the first time and the enthusiasm and commitment is remarkably high. Among the Board's Duties and Rights is a Right to represent the parent body on issues relating to the education of our children. So, if there is an issue with which you think we can help, please contact Mrs M Wilson, Clerk to the School Board, in the South Street Office and she will bring it to our attention. Parents are welcome at the Board's meetings - a list of next sessions proposed meeting dates is given below. If you have a specific issue to raise, there is a permanent parents' slot high on the agenda. This will enable you to leave early, just in case you don't want to witness the rest of the proceedings!

So far, we have had to deal with a large backlog of issues that arose in the six month gap between the old Board ceasing to be and the new one coming into existence. Such issues have included the establishment of a Sub-Committee to investigate and report on accommodation, equipment and the general resource needs of the school; foreign languages; homework; the approval of the Rector's budget plans for next session; the road safety problems created by the chip vans; commentary on the school holiday dates for the next two years and responses to an abundance of surveys from Fife Council and the Scottish Office.

Two issues deserve special mention. The Board, in an extra sitting, debated the Scottish office Paper "Parents as Partners". This deals with the enhancement of the role of parents in school education. We compiled a detailed response to the Paper. Hence we were delighted when, in the official response from Fife Council to the Scottish Office, the voices of Madras parents had been recorded loud and clear.

The Board has also moved quickly in response to concerns among teachers that the apparently common delays in filling some vacancies have caused undue stress and threatened the quality of service in the run up to and during the examination period. We are in correspondence with the Council as I write this report.

The Board would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the school on its achievements during the year, to thank the teachers for their high quality of service and to wish all parents and pupils an enjoyable summer.

Proposed dates of meetings, Session 1998/9:

Thursday 10th September 1998

Thursday 29th October 1998

Thursday 26th November 1998

Thursday 28th January 1999

Thursday 11th March 1999

Debating & Public Speaking

Jonathan Dean, Jenny Shanks and Hazel Pearson (S4) represented Scotland in the UK finals of the English Speaking Union Schools' Public Speaking Competition sponsored by The Observer and Prudential. The event took place on May 9th at Godolphin and Latymer School, London. Although not placed, the team performed well and were a credit to both Madras and Scotland.

In the Junior Inter-House Debate, the winners were Castle. Individual winners were: Eric Baijal (S3), Chair; Tom Lawrenson (S3), First Proposition and Thomas Foster (S1), Opposition. All who took part are congratulated on their contributions.

Music

A group of 18 pupils from S3 Standard Grade music worked with Mrs J Nisbet towards a very successful charity concert in Newport on Saturday 6th June. The programme they put together included band music from the Pigeons and solo items, various instrumental groups, recorder group and vocal arrangements.

The annual Bell Baxter Centenary Music Competition, with finalists drawn from Bell Baxter, Waid and Madras, was hosted by Madras this year. Fine performances from Kirsten McNeill (S6) and Jenny Lau (S5) earned them first place and runner up respectively.

Rounding off a school career which has involved him in entering (and winning) Burns Competitions continuously since first year, Glyn McCrickard (S6) won the National Burns Competition at Carlisle on 6th June. We applaud not only this outstanding achievement, but all the pleasure his singing and recitation have given over the last six years and hope he will continue to delight audiences in the years ahead.

Results in the Associated Board examinations sat at the beginning of this term were excellent, involving pupils from S1 to S6, many of whom gained distinction or merit passes.

YOUNG SCOT

In this competition, pupils in S1 were invited to write saying why they would like to train with the Scottish Claymores. As a result of the entry written by Sam Larg, he and the rest of Set 108, accompanied by Mrs M Kyle and Mrs M Nicol, were invited to participate, joining a group of 200 pupils from all over Scotland. The day at Shotts on April 2nd proved windy and wet, but the experience was enjoyed by all. Highlights included the training sessions, cheerleading, a "delicious" packed lunch and a free sweatshirt, and all participants left with a "goody bag".

Hadrian's Wall

On the weekend of 13/14th June, Mr Cleland led his annual trip to Hadrian's Wall, assisted by Miss J Robertson, Mr C Jessop and Mrs A Shields. For the first time, Carlisle Museum was included in the visits and its excellent exhibitions were enjoyed. Despite some of the wettest, chilliest weather encountered in 19 years of June expeditions, the intrinsic interest of the trip and the impeccable behaviour of the pupils made it once again a rewarding experience for all.

Sport Up-date

• Golf

Within the school, Scott Finlay (S2) was the winner of the Junior Boys Golf Championships.

In the Fife Schools' Championships, Scott Finlay (S2) won the Junior Boys Stroke Play; Hannah Norrie (S6) and Sarah Copland (S3) are the Senior Girls' Team Stroke Play champions.

The school team won the Scottish Golf Foundation East of Scotland Championship by 10 shots, but were beaten in the national event by Marr College. Jamie Farmer, Ruairidh McQueen and Graeme Edie, will visit the United States this summer to play in the Buick Open and Mid-West Junior Championship.

• Tennis

The school achieved a double in the Midlands Schools' Junior Tennis Championships (Under 15), when Siri MacDonald (S3) and Alison Bell (S2) won the Girls' event while Ben Anderson (S2) and Johnny Randall (S1) were the Boys' winners.

SPORTS DAY 18th June

After the wet, dismal weather of recent weeks, the bright blue skies of Sports Day were especially welcome. The afternoon ran as smoothly as ever, under the expert direction of Mr T Trewartha, Principal Teacher of PE, and his efficient team. Many events were closely contested and the standard was good. Mr S Smart, former member of the Technical Department, presented the prizes.

The House Cup went to Castle, while the individual winners were as follows:

SENIOR

Boys: David Robertson
Girls: Katie Cathro

THIRD YEAR

Boys: Craig McLaren
Girls: Emma Stewart

SECOND YEAR

Boys: Adrian Dempster
Girls: Ellen Norrie

FIRST YEAR

Boys: David McLean
Girls: Fiona Thomson

HOLIDAY DATES

Summer

Monday 29th June 1998
to
Friday 21st August 1998
(Pupils return Tuesday 25th August 1998)

Autumn

Monday 5th October 1998
Monday 19th October 1998
to
Friday 23rd October 1998

Christmas

Wednesday 23rd December 1998
to
Tuesday 5th January 1999

February

Thursday 11th February 1999
and
Friday 12th February 1999

Easter

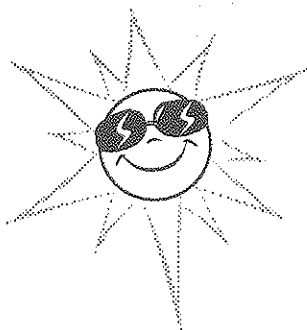
Monday 29th March 1999
to
Friday 9th April 1999

(All dates inclusive)

3 Day Activities

A great deal of staff organisation and time goes into the third year's three days of activities, held when they complete their examinations at the end of May, but it is well worth while in the range of experiences it offers pupils and the benefits in terms of relationships.

This year's Three Days ran exceptionally smoothly. Over 160 pupils went on residential trips to destinations as varied as Mull, Nethy Bridge, Scarborough, London, Alton Towers and Glen Affric. The other half of the year group chose involvement in a wide variety of single day events: diverse activities ranging from Bread Making to Rock Climbing. The feedback from staff and pupils alike has been enthusiastic and positive and our thanks go to all who were involved.



We wish you a relaxing, restful and refreshing holiday from all at Madras College.