



The Haberdashers' Adams' Federation
Adams' Grammar School

A Member of the Family of Haberdashers' Schools
Newport, Shropshire

Headmaster's News

Autumn Term Issue 1

11 September 2009

Dear Parents

Welcome to the first Headmaster's newsletter of this new academic year, and a particular welcome to all parents of students who are new to the school this year. We very much hope you enjoy being part of our school community. My regular newsletter is one way in which we try to keep parents informed and involved in the many activities which take place in (and often out of) school, not to mention an excellent opportunity to celebrate the numerous successes and achievements.



Towards the end of the holiday I stood on the ha-ha at Longford and, as the autumnal sun shone strongly (as it always does at the end of some fairly disappointing summer weather), Longford's lush meadows were magnificent in their silence. Yet school grounds must be populated by school pupils and they looked even better during the final few days of the holidays as staff returned to coach boys for the year 7 rugby and languages residential camp, which over fifty boys enjoyed. Equally, the teams from all year groups began their practices at this time and a large number of the school community shared this time together during their holidays. It always re-affirms the strength of our community spirit when I see this.

Our pupils returned on Tuesday morning of this week and I was delighted to see how many of them looked ready for the term ahead. In particular, they looked smart, smiled at me and greeted me with an enthusiastic "good morning sir." We value this very highly, especially when visitors come to the school. This year I will be extending the opportunities for showing around visitors to younger pupils (led by the sixth form) and this aspect of meeting and greeting is something our pupils do very well, and quite naturally.

Our public examination results were the best we have ever achieved, with over three quarters of our pupils reaching A/B grade at A level and a similar percentage at A*/A grade at GCSE. Thirty-five pupils scored straight A grades at A level, and 5 pupils achieved 11 A*s at GCSE. League tables tell different stories according to the method in which they are measured; our main target for public examinations is to enable our pupils to aim for, and reach, the best universities for their chosen courses. This means we will always aim for the top grades, rather than a high number of GCSEs relative to some other schools. It also means that, by restricting the number of examinations the pupils take, we can also concentrate on educating the whole person.

These grades arise, not just through intellectual ability, but also through hard work, tenacity and determination. It is frequently assumed that, as the school results improve, all a pupil needs to do is turn up and have the results "done to them." Yet nothing could be further from the reality of exam preparation. The reason I state this is that the picture at AS level is mixed, with some excellent performances from many, and a sizeable number (as is always the case) who know they need to get down to some hard work – immediately - and sustain this throughout the year if they are to achieve grades that justify their ability. I talked to the upper sixth about this, as well as the urgency of UCAS, following on from the briefings we have given them on this matter, and we will repeat this message regularly for those who intend to submit a form. I was recently discussing the admissions process with one university tutor who stated how much they valued early submissions. The university destinations of our former Upper Sixth form students are currently being finalised. I will be publishing them in a future newsletter.

One or two matters of administration:-

- a) If your e-mail address changes, or if you are new to the school and have not sent us your e-mail address, please do so.
- b) Last term, for years 7-10, we sent out our Record of Achievement document. Part of the process of communicating to parents should include an opportunity for parents to respond to anything in the RoA, whether it is agreement or disagreement. Could I please ask you to consider whether you would like to respond to the comments and contact the relevant individuals?
- c) In addition to the hard copy of the calendar (a copy of which all pupils have received), we will send out calendar details by email for the week immediately ahead. Sometimes, for very good and unavoidable reasons, dates and details will change. Wherever possible we will announce them as far in advance as possible.

Forthcoming dates for your diary:

Saturday 12 September	New junior boarders' team building weekend
Tuesday 15 September	Clubs & Societies Fair
Thursday 17 September	House Indoor Hockey (Year 10 All Houses)
Thursday 17 September	Lower Sixth Parents' Induction Evening
Tuesday 20 September	New Year 7 Parents Welcome Evening (Clive)
Monday 21 September	House Hockey (Year 10 A&B 6s)
Thursday 24 September	House Indoor Hockey (Year 10 All Houses)
Wednesday 30 September	House Cross Country Competition
Thursday 1 October	House Indoor Hockey 5-a-side (Year 9)
Thursday 1 October	New Year 7 Parents Welcome Evening (Darwin)
Monday 5 October	House Chess (Clive v Darwin) (Yrs 7 – 9)
Tuesday 6 October	House Chess (Clive v Darwin) (Yrs 10 – U6)
Tuesday 6 October	House Rugby (Clive v Darwin)
Tuesday 6 October	House Badminton (Talbot v Webb)
Tuesday 6 October	New Year 7 Parents' Welcome Evening (Talbot)
Wednesday 7 October	House Chess (Talbot v Webb) (Yrs 7-9)
Wednesday 7 October	Lunchtime Concert
Wednesday 7 October	Adams' Grammar School Society (AGSS) AGM
Thursday 8 October	House Chess (Talbot v Webb) (Yrs 10 – U6)
Thursday 8 October	House Badminton (Clive v Darwin)
Thursday 8 October	House Hockey (Year 9 Indoor 5-a-side)
Thursday 8 October	House Rugby (Talbot v Webb)
Thursday 8 October	New Year 7 Parents' Welcome Evening (Webb)
Thursday 15 October	New Pupils' Concert

Staff Appointments

I am pleased to extend a warm welcome to all new staff joining us this Autumn:

Miss Laura Jones joins the Geography Department
 Mr Daniel Kaye will teach Design and Technology
 Mr Ben Bransfield will teach English
 Mrs Bette Halcro joins the Languages Department, teaching French and Spanish.

In addition we welcome four teaching trainees:

Mr William Frost (teaching French), Mr Keith Fowles (teaching PE)
 Mr George Heeks and Mr Tom Hurst (both teaching Design & Technology)

I am also very pleased to advise you of some internal appointments:

Mr Gary Hickey has been appointed Deputy Head - Learning and Teaching
 Dr Peter Pack becomes Assistant Head – Curriculum and Data
 Mr Duncan Bowdler becomes Assistant Head i/c Training School (across the Federation)
 Mr Daniel Biggins has been appointed Head of Economics and Business Studies
 Mrs Belinda Hayes becomes Head of Upper Sixth Form
 Miss Abigail Stewart-Brown becomes Head of Lower Sixth Form



Individual Achievement

Robert Lambton (L6D) took part in the National Track Championships in August with excellent results:

2000m pursuit – Silver (2m 18.74s)
 Scratch – Gold Points – 7th
 Match Sprinting – Bronze
 500m time trial – Silver (35.8s)

He next takes part in some more track racing in the UK School Games.

And finally ... onwards and upwards ...

Whilst on the cycling theme ... many thanks for all the enquiries about my cycle ride in France over the summer. By way of description, I have plagiarised unashamedly from an article written in The Sunday Times by a journalist who also did the event and whose article depicted the emotion and atmosphere of the day. For those of you who might be interested, I am happy to regale you with a real time account – it did take me 9 hours and 12 minutes, so an abridged version is necessary



Etape du Ventoux

On the start line there were 9200 cyclists in front of me and 300 behind me. The starting gun sounded, although it was not until 40 minutes later when the chorus of clicks as shoes connected with pedals signalled that we were away.

The scenery was stunning - verdant meadows, blue skies, tree-lined roads, hillsides covered in forests, virtually no wind, very hot.

Five times the road pointed skywards, five times our little peloton climbed steadily. The descents were hair-raising and then eventually, after 96 miles, we arrived at the final feed station, where the peloton broke into a fight for water, food and fruit. Thousands of riders clambered to get water and food. The floor was at least three deep in Vittel plastic bottles. The state of the litter was dreadful – I wonder who might have been on environment duty?

With only 12 miles to go, Mont Ventoux towered over us, a vertical mile to the summit from where we began. The first 2 miles were gentle, but then the road kicked upwards viciously into the forest.

The forest wound on with no respite from either heat or gradient. Some riders passed me, but I also passed many others, not because I was cycling faster, but because I was still on my bike...many riders were walking, broken by the brutality of the seemingly endless ascent.

Finally, after 6 miles of a gradient of between 1:12 and 1:9, I arrived at the last water point – this had been my target through 90 minutes of real struggle. And then I was met with an utter tragedy: The water had run out! My friend and I found a industrial-sized bin, full of discarded water bottles – unashamedly, we searched desperately to find the dregs. We ended up discovering a tiny fountain, but so had 35 other cyclists and, reminiscent of scenes of the third world disasters when rations arrive, these cyclists jostled, struggled and pushed to replenish. Eventually I found the owner of a camper van who gave me some water; there were over 1000 vans parked on the roadside to cheer us on.

I staggered back to my bike, and, for the first and only time in my life of cycling, I desperately hoped that it had been stolen. But there it was, waiting for me like a loyal companion. The final four miles were a barren, limestone outcrop, with no shelter. The wind abated, but the toil seemed eternal. I passed many cyclists lying by the road exhausted, ambulances doing a constant relay up and down the mountain; some were some walking, some were sitting with glazed looks on their faces, others were asleep.

With just over 1 mile to go, I crawled past the memorial of Tom Simpson. An opportunistic American cyclist asked me to take a photograph of him – bearing in mind I could not see straight, let alone take my hands off the bars and focus a camera. I pointed his i-phone vaguely in his direction, pressed what I thought was the equivalent of a shutter and muttered something about getting back on my bike. I hope it came out OK.

When I finished, I looked around me. No one showed elation at that point, just exhaustion. Elation came later. Yet it was worth doing and I would do it again if I were given the chance, if only to re-visit a stunning part of the world and take part in a very special sporting occasion.

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With my very best wishes
M J Barratt
Headmaster