

Founders' Day 2010

Mr McGrigor, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome Ian Wilmshurst, the Headmaster of the King's School, Bruton as our guest of honour this morning. Following Founders' Day last year I received a letter which began, 'Dear Mr Phillips, as a Headmaster you have no equal', somewhat ruining the effect by continuing, 'but several superior.' Mr Wilmshurst is completing his first year as a Head after a distinguished career as a deputy and assistant master and I have no doubt that he will soon be listed amongst those 'several superior'. I am delighted that he has agreed to be with us this morning as Kings is a school to whom we send too few pupils and I know only too well how busy this time of year can be.

Every summer I receive helpful advice along the lines of what I should, or shouldn't, include in this speech. To be fair most of it consists of, 'Are you really sure that you need to speak again this year?' Each Founders' Day it becomes harder to sift through the pages of the Mercury, Termtalk and all the other publications we produce, to decide what, or who, should, or should not, receive a public pat on the back on an occasion as important and as public as this. Forgive me therefore if you've heard it all before

I still, I'm afraid, get riled when other schools are described to me as academic, the implication clearly being that Hordle Walhampton is not. This year a local competitor trumpeted its impressive 10 passes to King Edward's: no mean feat, but sadly the local paper wouldn't print the headlines that we would have liked to see on our next advertisement, the one trumpeting our eleven passes. It is too easy to believe that all you will hear this morning in terms of activities, sport and the many extra curricular events that make up an HW education, is to the detriment of the work we do in the classroom.... but it just isn't true.

So I would like to begin by congratulating again all those who passed into King Ed's and those who sat entrance exams at 13 or 11: success to schools such as Bryanston, Canford, Clayesmore, Hampshire Collegiate, the Harrodian, King's Taunton, St Swithun's, Sherborne, South Wilts Grammar, Stonar, Talbot Heath and Wycombe Abbey does not come easy: they are schools at which hard work is prized and entry hard fought. In addition to these results, entry success was also achieved at Bournemouth Boys and Girls, Seaford and Rendcombe although places at these schools will not be taken.

The icing on the cake each year is the tally of academic scholarships and, whilst Felix Ambrose, William Entwisle, Joseph Holland and Isabel Mitchell at Canford, Oliver Joy at Downside and Keir Amyes-Headley at Marlborough were unsuccessful, they were all excused further exams as the result of impressive papers. Going one better were Annie Horton at Ballard, Jared Wason-Cooper at Bedford, Arabella Watkiss at Canford and Valentina Sassow at Downe House who were all awarded academic scholarships.

Neither teaching, nor learning, need be dull so it is good to note the various additions to the curriculum that have been employed to make subjects stand out for pupils. Various Year groups have enjoyed visitors presenting Egyptian, Saxon, Roman and Victorian days and trips went to HMS Victory, Butser, Hampton Court, Fawley Oil Refinery and the Dorset Coast. Forms have been to productions of Skellig and Horrible Histories but Year Seven went one better by re-enacting the Battle of Hastings on the Front Lawn.

There is far too much testing demanded of us these days and it is all too easy to imagine that children don't care. Fred was saying his prayers as his father passed by his bedroom door. 'God bless Mummy and God bless Daddy and please make Calais the capital of France.' 'Fred' said his father. 'Why do you want Calais to be the capital of France?' 'Because that's what I put in my Geography test.'

A recent debate resulted in the firm view that HW pupils do not want national service re-introduced, a clear message to the new government, which incidentally our own election clearly endorsed. The recent writers' workshop introduced all ages to books on riding, football, Egyptians and to journalism. Extension work ensured that Year Six pupils contributed to our haul of 7 gold, 15 silver and 7 bronze awards in the Junior Maths Challenge: a competition aimed at children in Years Seven and Eight. The introduction of Gateway, for those more curious, allowed for sessions on the Anglo Saxons, textiles, maths problems, pond dipping, Kenya, astronomy and began with forensic science: all arranged in-house and mostly presented by our own staff.

Looking back to the start of the year, we joined many others in celebrating the European Day of Languages. Giving us the opportunity to dress appropriately was memorable (although perhaps 'unforgettable' in the case of Mr Whately-Smith in his lederhosen). It was also an opportunity to try different menus, have taster lessons in unfamiliar languages and play games such as boules and cache-cache. Those who finished their exams in the spring also had the opportunity to delve into other languages and it was good to award the school's first send up for Russian: well done to Marsha Allan-Burns.

A Swiss man visiting Sydney, Australia, stops at a bus stop where two locals are waiting. 'Entschuldigung, koennen sie deutsch sprechen?' he asks. The two Aussies just stare at him. 'Excusez-moi, parlez-vous francais?' he tries. The two continue to stare. 'Parlare Italiano?' No response. 'Hablan ustedes espanol? Still nothing. The Swiss drives off disgusted, and the first Australian turns to the second says, 'Y'know, maybe we should learn a foreign language'. 'Why?' says the other. 'That bloke knew four languages and it didn't do him any good.'

In addition to the excellent academic results, I am delighted to see that the honours boards this year truly reflect the breadth of all we do and how well we do it. Imogen Segrave was awarded a drama scholarship at King's Taunton, Valentina Sassow at Downe House and Arabella Watkiss at Canford won music scholarships, Emily Sykes's art was recognised at Clayesmore, Laura

Maughan was awarded an all-rounder scholarship for her riding at Stonar and Felix Ambrose and Joseph Holland won sports scholarships to Canford.

The Arts have certainly not been ignored this year. The introduction of Composer of the Month has, we hope, raised the profile of classical music. Great performances at the New Milton Music Festival, a day spent with the BSO arranged by the British Horn Society, exam successes, concerts ranging from the low-key lunchtime series to the Spring Serenade and Senior Soloists via an excellent performance by the Year Two violinists have been highlights. Of the latter, Abi Hutchinson who took over the mantle of Pre-Prep music this year next takes the next twelve months off on maternity leave: I am sure that we all wish her well.

On stage we have enjoyed two great Nativities, Dickens, Daniel and The Blue Crystal and we await the Year Eight production with eagerness and a little trepidation. Children in both Prep and Pre-Prep have taken, and passed very successfully, a series of LAMDA examinations, giving us much pleasure at their workshops, in the process.

Artists have been to Marwell Zoo and St Ives, children have benefited from the Cre8 course and parents have attended workshops on drawing and watercolours. The arrival of Atilio Zani in the woodwork room has certainly raised the profile of, and interest in, three dimensional work to rival the already excellent pottery. Today's exhibition demonstrates the wide range of opportunities available as well as the high level of talent we have at HW.

Sportsmen have proved themselves over the course of the year with several unbeaten teams: young and old, girls and boys. The Under 11 boys have not been beaten at any sport over the course of this year...although the Twyford cricket match was a close run affair. The footballers won the Moyles Court tournament and the Colts won at both Moyles and Castle Court. The 1st rugby VII, in their only tournament, were runners up to Portsmouth Grammar School. Cricket matches have been, mostly, won and there have been superb performances by Felix Ambrose, scoring an unbeaten 150, Joseph Holland weighing in with a 70, Oliver Joy taking 3 for 2 and Tom Leon bagging a 5 wicket haul...but not all in the same match. Freddie Marshall, for the Colts, had a knock of 52. It has been good to report in The Mercury of the increasing number of New Forest and County representation achieved by our sportsmen. For the girls, this term's rounders has gone well with Emily Sykes and Honey Lander picking up balls for a 5 rounders match...and Valentina Sassow, following last year's successes, doing it 3 times this season. The new kit has obviously worked wonders.

The new athletics kit has helped too. The Junior Wessex saw gold medal performances from Thomas Sykes and Andrew Crawford. Andrew also bagged a second and two thirds, Jasper Toor a second and third and congratulations to the U10 boys 4 x 100m relay on their third place. For the seniors, four qualified for the National Finals: George Grisley, Valentina Sassow, Alexander McGrigor and Isobel Mitchell with other good performances recorded by Edward Phillips, Jamie Morgan and Mattea Pauc.

Runners also impressed in the short cross country season. The Under 13 girls and the U11 boys won their respective races at the Moyles Court meeting with, in addition to those mentioned before, Sophie Shakespeare and Eliza Dubois, impressing. At the Perry-Dalziel meeting of 13 schools, HW came 2nd. Of the less celebrated sports, William Entwisle, Joseph Holland and Oliver Joy represented the school at the IAPS Golf Tournament: our first time competing saw us finish mid-way down the field. Thanks to parent Graham Holland for encouraging our entry and then organising the day spent in the frozen north at Lytham St Annes. Our sailors have had success on the water as have those playing locally for various rugby, football, cricket, cycling and orienteering clubs. Marksmen took part at Bisley and surprised no-one by coming second as a team, with Alexander McGrigor snatching the individual runners-up spot for himself. Fencers, Eliza Dubois, Lois Fry-Samuels, Grace Marrs and Hugo Walters have taken part to good effect in regional competitions despite the sad death, at the start of this term, of coach, Chris Holroyd who had been associated with HW for so many years and was a Parsons' Trophy fixture.

The importance of a good teacher is well known and nowhere this year has this been more true than in the equestrian centre as Eve Blachford and Cassie Glennie have boosted the number of riders, particularly boys, and added all sorts of courses and competitions, at home and away. Their latest venture, the introduction of polo, had to be seen to be believed: sadly you will have parked on the polo pitch so we cannot demonstrate this year....and anyway they'll need to buy a second mallet.

The teaching has always been impressive in the Pre-Prep and we shall be sorry to lose Claire Holly as she moves on to take over the reins at Durlston Court's Pre-Prep. The younger children have enjoyed a dance week, a multitude of visitors ranging from four-legged to an Exploradome. The influence of the Forest School is growing as more year groups use it: it has been particularly pleasing to see the beavers using the grounds to increasingly good effect, the Kick Asthma Mini-Marathon being a prime example of this. The After School Club has flourished through inspirational planning and a willingness of staff to contribute.

And, of course, it is the willingness of all those who work at HW to go the extra mile that makes the school so special. I am certainly pleased that I am not in a position similar to another local headmaster. Completely fed up with the lack of energy and apathy amongst his staff he decided to jolly them up by taking them for a slap up meal. Sadly, even before they had ordered he realised that this was a waste of time. When the waiter asked him what he would like, he replied, 'Steak' to which the waiter responded, 'and the vegetables?' 'Oh they will have steak too.'

This year those in the common room arranged lectures for pupils and parents on such topics as swimming the Channel, the joys of scouting and Ernest Shackleton, they have taken trips to Wind in the Willows and the local pantomime and they have organised visits by a dance group from Ballard school and a lecture on learning difficulties by Robin Pauc. As part of the Burrard series, we have enjoyed talks on India, the history of the grounds, photography and a lecture on the perils of Facebook, to coincide with SID, Safer Internet Day. Pupils in Year Eight have

followed a specially designed Leavers' Programme with a mix of internal and external speakers and they also enjoyed a dinner on St Valentine's Day, organised by the home team.

This year in addition to the junior Wessex event which attracts almost 1000 athletes and supporters, Tim Norris and Nigel Reed have also organised the senior equivalent in Bournemouth. We have also hosted various football tournaments, the Perry Dalziel cross-country meeting and, for this year and next, we are the hosts of the SATIPS national art exhibition. This latter runs for a week and it was great to see, on the Friday when the rest of the school was on an exeat, so many staff offering to help Kevin Nicholls and Jane Pickance arrange the display and lay the tables for the gala opening, which they would not be attending: all this and, at the end of a busy year, Expeditions' Week still to come.

Of the common room, members of the senior management team deserve special mention: Tim Norris, academics, Mike Stanley, pastoral and Nigel Reed, practically everything else ensure the day to day running of the school is smooth and that we all know what is happening when.

One of the recent initiatives has been the creation of FLAG, Forward Looking Action Groups in which all members of staff put forward ideas, and see them through, for the advancement of the school. This year has seen greater cooperation between the Prep and Pre-Prep departments, the redecoration of the dining room and the production of a revised Parents' Handbook that we hope will be available towards beginning of the next academic year. Next year we shall be extending the scope of the award of colours to include the arts and activities in order that it is not sportsmen who receive an unfair proportion of accolades. Sport has not been forgotten and that particular group is tasked with raising the profile, and results, of girls' games. The appointment of Sarah McGowan as a specific coach has gone some way to achieving this. Sadly though, at the end of this term it looks as though we will be saying goodbye to Nick Wright who has been a tower of strength on the games field, turning his hand to all that has been asked of him. I am certain that he will run a fine department one day.

Other members of staff who have left us over the course of the year include Peter Lewis, whose tenure at both Hordle House and Hordle Walhampton stretches into the far distant past. Peter has been a head of English, producer of plays, Director of Studies and most recently has been our lettings manager, liaising so successfully with all those who have wished to hire the school. Rita Cordery was the school secretary and my PA and registrar for many years and was the first port of call for prospective parents. She worked tirelessly on our behalf and the fact that we maintained our numbers in difficult times is testament to her skill and tenacity. At the end of this term, Margaret Newbery retires from the learning support unit. Margaret's career stretches back to Walhampton days and there are many past and present pupils who owe their success to her skill and dedication. As the special needs coordinator, Margaret put into place many of the policies and procedures that are now commonplace in schools but then were newfangled and revolutionary. She will be much missed by her colleagues. It is also sad to report here that Walhampton's first science teacher, Denis Dunlop, died recently.

Newcomers have included Clive Smith-Langridge as our deputy head. Clive has proved himself invaluable as a link between me and the common room and has taken on a whole raft of responsibilities, not least being master of ceremonies this morning. Suzanne Wright has taken to the role of PA and registrar like a duck to water. Encouraging and sympathetic to parents who contact the school, she can be a terrier with a headmaster who doesn't complete tasks on time.. In fact, her arrival has galvanised Linda and Sarah in the school office and, amongst other innovations, I hope that you have appreciated the introduction of clarion call.

Another newcomer, mentioned by the chairman this morning has been Danny Boswell our bursar. He has spent much of his first few weeks tidying up procedures and sorting out an office whose requirements become more and more complicated as each day passes. To aid him, Paul Morris has become our Facilities Manager and, with the arrival of Neil Crosby, has overseen the completion of the maths classrooms, the arrival of the new fleet of minibuses and a myriad of regulatory and other maintenance issues. It is to his credit that we were able to stay open during the heavy snowfall in January when others not far from here were closing their doors. One of Paul's first tasks was to ensure that the new boarding accommodation was ready to use in September: it was.

Boarding has taken on a new lease of life with the flexible option being taken up by more parents than ever before. You will be pleased to know that from September the price of a second consecutive night will be less expensive than at present. The boarding house staff, Beth and Paul Morris as well as Adrian and Rosie Taylor and the matrons Sue Strong and Isabel Amado work tirelessly to ensure a balance between informality and ensuring that work is completed. Keenan Hurrell left us half way through the year and I'd like to thank her for all the work she did on behalf of the boarders and those children feeling not so well. Next week our boarding will be inspected by Ofsted. This appears to be mostly a tick box exercise but I hope that the subsequent report reflects the hard work of those who look after the welfare, whether it be by cleaning, maintenance, catering or driving, of all our pupils. To entice all children to try boarding, we have held a barbecue for parents of children in Years Seven and Eight and sleepovers for those in Years Six, where members of staff became characters from Cluedo, and for junior pupils, who enjoyed being cowboys and indians making use of the stables and the kayaks in the swimming pool. We believe passionately in the benefits of boarding and I have spent quite a bit of this year advising former parents on schools for their children who have left us but have not been able to settle: I really do advise at least a term of serious boarding before heading off to a senior school which may not be quite so accommodating.

Promoting the boarding and the school in general, is a full-time job and we are fortunate to have Jane Kerr as our development director. It is she who produces Termtalk and the regular advertisements in the Lymington Times, etc. In addition, we have held receptions for parents locally, most recently at St Leonard's Grange thanks to the McGrigor family, and on the Isle of Wight, thanks to the Sheldons. Jane has spent a long time in smoothing the transition between

the Pre-Prep and the Prep and we have introduced a tea party for the children and, for the considerably more nervous parents, a drop-in morning and a breakfast at which to meet the staff.

Of course we rely on your support to ensure that these events and others like them are successful. The Parents' Liaison Committee is a very good conduit for views to be exchanged and explained and I would like to thank all those who sit on it, especially Alina Jenkins, Susan Mitchell and Emily Walters who step down at the end of this term. The HWPAs have been a tower of strength this year under the chairmanship of Marie Creed-Helliwell, ably supported by Charlotte Paearson-Chisman and Nicole Duncan: last night's ball, the quiz night, fireworks and Christmas Fair are show piece occasions but I am grateful to them for the work they do behind the scenes at events such as Carols in the Courtyard and the Junior Wessex. This year, their fundraising has been for the replacement of the Adventure Centre: an expensive project but one which we all hope will be achieved and soon. A new low ropes course will soon, we hope, be installed in the grounds to be used by all pupils. This has been made possible by the hard work of the HWPAs committee and a generous donation from the Duncan family. Of course we know that parents of HW children must be wonderful but it is good to have it officially recognised, as it was with Gerard Basset's crowning recently as the World's Best Sommelier.

Not just adults but children too have caught the eye doing good works: running, swimming and wind surfing for Sports Relief, suggesting Charities to support: including the wearing of eye patches for the Jubilee Sailing Trust, we have helped 10 this year and that doesn't include hosting a debate on global warming organised by the Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy. Three children, Ellie Brooke-Smith, Oliver Payne and Rufus Wright were confirmed by the Bishop of Winchester and few will forget the 80+ year old Bishop Timothy Dudley-Smith consecrating the newly designated Lawford pew.

The Chapel is still an important part of life at HW but there are times when the message has not quite got through. When asked to draw a picture of her favourite Bible story, a young girl presented the teacher with a drawing of four people on a plane. 'Which story is this?' asked the teacher. 'The flight from Egypt' was the reply. 'This is Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus.' 'And the fourth person?' asked the teacher. 'Oh, that's Pontius...the pilot.'

Finally, and I am well aware that that is the one word will perk most of you up, I must thank the ladies and gentlemen on the stage. I was disappointed, both personally and professionally, when Patrick Seely stepped down as a Governor last summer. He had done much for the school over the years, not least as Chairman of the Board and Finance Committee, and was going to leave a large gap. However, up stepped Neil McGrigor and we have never looked back. Little did Neil know that in a matter of weeks he was going to be our emergency Bursar, a role he took to with tact, tenacity and one he learnt swiftly, allowing the handover in January to Danny Boswell to be considerably easier than it might otherwise have been. Governors, these days, do not have it easy and one of my tasks this summer is to allocate responsibilities for them whether it be sitting on

one of the three sub-committees (Education, Finance and General Purposes) or taking responsibility for compliance, early years, risk assessment, etc

I have already mentioned Danny and Clive but must not forget Beth Morris, the Head of the Pre-Prep and housemistress responsible for the boarders. Beth has already been subjected to an Early Years inspection and an appraisal this year and emerged from both with flying colours and I know we all wish her well next week as Ofsted descend yet again.

Jackie has as always, been the rock behind which I've hidden. I was particularly reminded of this earlier this term when a decision she made went spectacularly wrong and the concerns and complaints came flooding in to me, not her. When I moaned to a handy Governor I was told simply, 'Oh everyone loves Jackie and they don't want to upset her'. I suspect she has only stayed with me because I understand a universal truth: at whatever stage you apologise to your wife, the response is always the same: 'It's too late now'

So, Jackie, I'm sorry for having gone on so long.

If you have been, thank you for listening.