

HEADMASTER'S LETTER 13 December 2021



Dear Parent

You will have received a substantial 'Covid' letter from the Deputy Headmaster on Thursday, so I will not use this letter to deal with restrictions and testing arrangements. Please do look out for comms over the holiday - whilst we hope it will not be necessary, situations can and do change in a trice and the School needs to respond accordingly.

Although it took a day or two for the boys to get back into the 'masks habit' they have now done so and I am pleased with the response. We simply need to be very careful for the remaining days of term as we await further guidance.

CAROLS TONIGHT?

I am writing this on Sunday morning – I had to step in at the last minute yesterday to play for a choral society Christmas Concert as the organist they'd booked had contracted Covid. I am sitting here now hoping that our own Carol Service can go ahead - by the time you read this, we will know. As we have had to restrict tickets, the service will be livestreamed on [the Church's Facebook page](#).

Please note that this event is considered by All Saints as an 'Act of Worship'; the Church requires that masks are worn by the congregation throughout the service, including for the singing of the carols. It will be a little like clapping in woollen mittens!

OBITUARIES

We were sorry to hear of the deaths of two former members of staff. I have sent condolences to the families, on behalf of the School. [Neil Cooper](#) and [Colin Tattersall](#) are both very well-remembered by staff and old boys.

ROWING AT HAMPTON HEAD

Hampton Head was the last competition this term for RGS Rowing. It is a top junior event, with crews travelling from as far afield as Devon and Norfolk, with a large entry from clubs and rowing schools in the Thames Valley. RGS took seven boats for the 3km time trial. The event gave the boys an opportunity to see how the term's training had paid off. The J16 Quad of Rowan, Fraser, Archie and Jenson came 5/27 in a very competitive field beating our local rivals.

ROWING CLUB AUCTION

Please do take a look at the [RGS Christmas Auction](#) with some great lots available to help the Rowing Club fundraise for new boats.

RUGBY

We have had a pleasing couple of weeks with important, significant wins in various age groups against Bromsgrove and Dean Close Schools. The U15s beat Harrow School in the Nat West trophy London and South East regional semi-final. If they win the next match they're through to the National Quarter Final. Try, try and try again.

HISTORY TALK FROM THE 'WAR DETECTIVE'

Nicola Cross, one of the MoD's so called 'War Detectives', featured in ITV's 'Long Lost Families', came and gave a fascinating and insightful talk to Sixth Form historians on Wednesday, 8th December. Nicky Campbell and Davina McCall presented a Long Lost Families Special entitled 'The Unknown Soldiers' back in October 2019 which showed how Nicola Cross and the MoD's Joint Compassionate and Casualty Centre all female team of six, use archaeology, historical research and science to identify bodily remains of British service personnel discovered overseas. Working in France, Belgium, Albania, Poland and North Korea to name but a few locations, Nicola and the team have used forensic techniques and research to give names to the missing and bring closure to families who have waited for over 100 years, in some cases, to see their loved ones buried in a marked grave. Her talk included a recent case study where seven out of nine bodies of British soldiers from the First World War found in Belgium two years ago were identified through a combination of artefacts found on their person and DNA testing. Nicola also brought artefacts from this dig for the boys to view, and they had an opportunity to ask questions about her work. A new series of Long Lost Families has just finished filming, so you can anticipate seeing Nicola and her team on ITV in the New Year.

STAFF

It was unfortunate that our staff party had to be postponed on Friday - the hog had been roasting all day so the venue provided a take-away service for those who wished. There was no waste. It served as a reminder of the precarious nature of the hospitality industry; the venue will have lost significant takings on the night. Last week, I flagged up the work that our teachers have been doing to ensure that your son continues to receive the best possible education. This week, I should like to pay tribute to our non-teaching staff - a diverse body encompassing those who support me in running a large operation in terms of finance, estates, IT and to those who crunch the data and support teaching staff and students. Many thanks to you all for the work that you do.

MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Congratulations to the Music Department who are through to the last four in Outstanding Music Department of the Year. Look out for further information in the new year.

FINALLY

Many thanks for your support during the last term. Teaching boys, wearing coats, with the windows open is not ideal for anyone; what we have done is to keep going, resurrect as much of the co-curricular programme as possible and do our best to make sure that no student is left behind.

We've been working behind the scenes to refresh our vision, mission and values and to put plans in place to ensure RGS continues to progress over the next five years and beyond. Staff and governors will be working through this as soon as we return in January.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you all a very happy Christmas.

Philip Wayne