



# Claire's Court Schools



NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2011

As our Golden Jubilee year comes to an end, it's nice to reflect on the many events enlivened by our celebrations, from the formal occasions such as Speech Days and Concerts, through to the major social events of the school year. Many of the staff and pupils have become very closely attached to their Jubilee Pins too, made possible thanks to the generosity of our two Parent/Teacher bodies.



This term, three major events have helped bring our school community closer together: the *May Ball*, the *Summer Fete* and most recently, the *Golden Jubilee Finale* at our Taplow playing fields last Saturday. The College PTA and the Claire's Court & Ridgeway Society have worked extraordinarily hard on our behalf this term, organising events, clothing sales and fund raising in equal measure. I am delighted to report that their efforts have been rewarded, not just by the enthusiasm with which you have supported their work through ticket sales and attendance at events, but also in raising some £25,000 to provide medals, other prizes and awards, and considerable capital for



the provision of new sailing boats, computer trolleys and floodlights to come while more safeshades, a scull, cricket nets and sewing machines are just a few of the myriad contributions made over the past year. At the end of this academic year, Amanda Howman and Dermot Woolliscroft, the Chair and Treasurer of the College PTA, and Chris Basley, vice-chair of the Ridgeway Committee, are standing down having served with great distinction for a number of years. Vacancies on our PTA committees exist, their Annual General Meetings will take place in September at Ridgeway and all parents interested in assisting this valuable work are invited to put their names forward for election. The AGMs are followed by a short combined social event at which the Society Award is presented to those pupils or parents who have made a significant contribution to our development as a school.



With the reporting of public examination results still to come, I am sure there will be good news for many. Meantime, one of our Year 9 girls at the College, Amber Hill, has performed with such distinction with her shotgun that she has been selected to shoot for the England Ladies Skeet team this autumn. Fellow College Year 9 athlete, Ellie Rayer, has continued in outstanding form after winning the U15 National Indoor Multi-Event Championship at Sheffield; is now ISA U15 champion at 200m, Javelin and Relay, came 2nd in the Southern Multi-Event Championship and will compete in the All England Schools finals in September. Despite the copious rain since half term, the boys have been able to shine at their cricket with the Under 15 side winning the County Vase, defeating Newbury's Park House in the final. Congratulations must also go to our past pupils now graduating from University; to Phil Clapp (Reading) and Guy Swadling (Loughborough) persevering with Rowing and Rugby (championship side Esher) respectively as they seek further sporting honours, and most notably to Josh Cremin (Southampton) and Luke Selzer (Warwick) who have both gained firsts in their Biochemistry and Physics Degrees. Josh is moving on to the University of Cambridge where he has won a salaried research post, studying mitochondrial proteins for his PhD while Luke is staying at Warwick, where he has a Doctorate research post into Solar Flares. Before then, Luke who is also a talented artist, will be stewarding our summer exhibition of Claires Court Art and Photography in the Nicholsons Centre in Maidenhead alongside former pupils, Amanda Frith and Peter Robinson.



It seems that no week goes by without the various weekly bulletins carrying announcements of some extraordinary achievement or other by our pupils. For many, this can only happen because of the work of exceptional teachers and coaches across our sites. I have already written at length of Mrs Lizbeth Green's retirement after 7 years of distinguished service as Head of the College. Already, her successor, Paul Bevis, has become a well known face as he has eased himself in to various gatherings and meetings this term, and we look forward to a new chapter in the College's History from September. Mrs Green departs in particularly good company this summer. Richard Milner-Smith, one of her assistant heads and a figure well known across the secondary year groups and the Sixth Form for his outstanding Geography teaching and sports coaching, departs to take up the deputy headship of another independent school, Moyles Court, in Hampshire. Mrs Margaret Taylor is retiring after 20 years as class teacher of Year 4. Mrs Sally Woodhead is also retiring from her position as ICT teacher. Stepping down from Ridgeway after 28 years as Special Needs Co-ordinator is Eileen Goford, an institution in her own right for leading learning, Eileen also founded and has continued to lead Ridgeway's extraordinary chess provision, bringing on county and national champions with the best playing for England. Ridgeway has won the Berkshire Primary Schools Chess Association's 'A' League for seven of the last nine years, and is the only name on the Under 9 cup! Also retiring from Ridgeway are Marion Bintliffe, another



remarkable teacher, after 13 years' service most recently of Year 5 and founder of our Chembakolli day, and Louise Walker after 8 years leading our Reception class and an ace athletics and cross country specialist. From Claires Court, Chris Hill retires after 7 years teaching English and Fishing, one of the stalwarts of the Claires Court kitchen gardening fraternity and lead chef on the Year 9 outdoor education week. Also moving to develop his career in new directions is Julian Bown after 19 years of instructing our tyro and more experienced drummers and director of our accomplished Samba Band. A full list of those leaving us from each site can be found on the relevant end of term bulletin that accompanies this newsletter.

Given the concern currently being expressed about the ethics and morals of British journalism, I hope those in our own community feel that we do our best to live up to the values that we promote – we certainly try hard! Schools are learning places and that does not happen without failing – win or lose, our teachers and administrators have provided brilliant support throughout the year and for this Hugh and I are extraordinarily grateful. In particular, we appreciated the call of duty to remain at work this last month when the consultation over publicly funded retirement benefits lapsed into confrontation at national level. Please be sympathetic to both sides of the argument when discussion comes to a head later this year – in the meantime, I know we can continue to rely upon the loyalty of our staff to work your sons and daughters to their very best! You can find more about our school life and

matters educational from my blog, *A Principled View*, (see [www.clairescourt.com](http://www.clairescourt.com) for links) in which I have some fun as well as express some cogent views on my educational life.

## A Principled view



This Jubilee year closed with a wonderful celebration at our Taplow playing fields, in which 800 or so families, teachers and support staff enjoyed the atmosphere, the music, the food and all the side shows and activities, blessed by some welcome sunny weather. The event gave many a first sight of our new playing fields, coming on nicely in this warm but wet summer.



Among more immediate projects planned for the summer break include the enclosing of the courtyard at Claires Court to give more internal floor space off the dining room and an expanded Room 8 above, a remodelling of the top floor at Ridgeway to house a revamped library and an ICT provision for a full class, and at College the completion of the Hall refurbishment, replacement of the screen to the Lower School ground floor entrance from the Junior playground, and a remodelling of the lobby, dining room and first floor in the main house of the College.

It is worth pausing here to reflect that the main house of the College celebrates its 120th birthday in the autumn. When opened in September of that year, it provided purpose built accommodation for the then Principal, Andrew Millar-Ingليس, who ran Norfolk Park School from his premises at Inglewood on The Crescent. The College main house, Library and IT classroom are therefore probably the oldest school buildings in Maidenhead still in use. If this is not reason enough for celebration, then consider the advertising in the autumn of 1891 of the “new” Maidenhead College which stated that

it was “established as Norfolk Park School [in] 1861.” We have not yet been able to verify this claim (the Maidenhead Advertiser only began publication in 1869) but if true, then September sees us with a 150th celebration on our hands! The copy also boasts of “Modern Premises. Experienced Teaching. Individual Attention. Moderate Terms.” claims that we believe we continue to deliver today.

So we close this year with 1005 pupils, 116 teachers, 124 support staff and last but not least, two very proud School Principals; as 2 of the first 19 pupils attending Claires Court Preparatory School for Boys in 1960, we have seen how far our enterprise has travelled, from small boarding school to major independent spanning all ages and abilities, over the intervening years. Our aim for the next 50 is to become the finest non-selective independent school in the world; and with the incredible support of you, our parents, our pupils and our staff, I hope we’ll get there rather more quickly than that!

*James Wilding*

