



HEADMASTER'S PRIZEGIVING REPORT ON THE SCHOOL YEAR 2004-5

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I am sorry that this letter is long, the French philosopher Pascal once wrote to a friend. Please excuse me, but I did not have the time to make it any shorter.

I recognise the problem. This year's *Pictorial Record* looked at one stage as though it would need to extend to an extra eight pages. Mr Priory, with compassionate brutality, avoided that. As usual this speech is text to accompany those more entertaining images.

2004-5: a special year. The Tricorn Centre came down. The Development Campaign gained momentum. Nor were these initiatives entirely unconnected. The new All Weather Pitch at Hilsea, one of the achievements of the Campaign, needed a solid core of rubble to underpin it. The Tricorn obliged. This was a gesture symbolic as well as concrete. For many parts of our community made a wide range of contributions to the Campaign. Since the Development Office started in 2001, it has revolutionised contacts with former pupils, and undertaken a number of excellent initiatives. The Development Campaign, which raised over £1m, brought not only the All Weather Pitch (opened with a series of demonstration games on 12 June), but also the new Library and Dr Ken Woolas Laboratory. Andrew Motion visited us again to open the first of these. Members of the Woolas family, assisted by Dr Jim Al Khalili, performed various commemorative acts, from readings about science to chemical tricks, in order to declare the second open. These new facilities have already begun to transform school life. Huge thanks are owed to all those who have made these, and the augmented bursary fund, possible.

This year there was also much attention to how independent school candidates fare in university entrance. In part, this was a focus of my sabbatical term: so many parents wished to attend an information evening on the topic that even the largest venue available could not satisfy demand. The national newspapers tossed and petted and gored the issue around all year. They finally concluded that there was really no story to speak of. Certainly PGS, thanks to the endeavours in particular of Mr Pitt,

Dr Galliver and Mrs Spofforth, experienced its best year of university entry ever. All 17 pupils who gained Oxbridge offers attained them; well over 90% of pupils attained their first choice of university, and indeed by 11am on results day there were only five pupils uncertain of their tertiary destination. A Level results, *bien entendu*, played their part. Forty two pupils got three or more A grades. There was a record A grade percentage, and a record point score per candidate (381). It all helped to consolidate, for those who take an interest in such things, our position in *The Daily Telegraph's* First Division of schools. The historians deserve a special mention -- even if making history is the sort of thing one might expect historians to do. The Department gained seven Oxbridge places and achieved an A Level AB % of 100%. In incidental addition, Mr Lemieux, the Head of Department, published an article on 'Britain and Ireland 1798-1821' in *History Review*. Perhaps its subtitle, *Changing the Question or Altering the Answers*, had been inspirational to all.

At GCSE the A*/A percentage rose from last year's 67.9 to 70.1, with a record 45 pupils gaining only A*/A, and a record eight pupils gaining only A*. The outstanding achievement perhaps, was the award of ten prizes from the exam boards for candidates gaining the top five marks in their subject nationally. These included Glynn Jones (taught Drama by Mr Garnett), Jason Graves (Biology with Mrs Thompson), Samuel Wilson (French with Mr Hogg), and Philippa Clay and Frederick Lord (French with Mrs Gozalbez-Guerola). There were no fewer than five awards for English Literature, stellarly matching last year's award of five prizes for French. Congratulations go to Alice Thornton (and Mr Priory), Angela Tang (and Mr Elphick-Smith); and Natalie Crawford, Hannah Hardingham and David Spittle (pupils, all three, of Mrs Mitchell).

Oliver, not inappropriately given the Portsmouth associations, was probably the highlight of an exceptional artistic year. Each night the vast spaces of the King's Theatre were filled; each night the audience left amazed and delighted. Warned by Mr Smith that I must not miss out on something extraordinary, I sat incognito at the back of the stalls, next to two members of the public who had queued for return tickets. Encouraged by their comments, and by the requests for *More* not only on stage but also off, I asked Mr Hampshire if he would make a musical an annual venture and out of his exhaustion and generosity came a whispered assent. Mr Garnett had his play *Break Away* produced in London. This was not quite the same family entertainment, perhaps. But in *The Guardian* Michael Billington, likening the watching experience to being hit over the head with a stick of seaside rock, praised Mr Garnett's bruising energy, whilst *The Stage* welcomed 'exactly the kind of play to turn apathetic teenagers on to the wonders of theatre.' In *Time Out* the play was Critics' Choice, and it brought so much pleasure to charabancs of Pompey supporters that the critique in *Theatre Review* even mentioned our presence.

The school's partnership with the London Mozart Players expanded this year. In addition to the Remembrance Sunday Concert and Festivities Gala Concert (which Alan Titchmarsh kindly agreed to introduce) we at last plucked up the courage to mount a performance of Bach's St John Passion: the last time the school had attempted it, in the 1950's, the Headmaster rose to read the text of those passages which the choir were unable to master. Again, newly, it was perhaps the compliments from members of the public which I shall remember most about this performance,

which got our new Director of Music, Andrew Cleary, off to the most impressive of starts.

Highlights of the Art year included three excellent exhibitions in the Cathedral. The first, of images from the D Day 60 Commemorations, also resulted in a magnificent catalogue. The second, in the Easter term, *Stations of the Cross*, featured work by 46 Year 9 and 10 pupils. Our own gallery in No 10 has hosted a number of splendid exhibitions, none more striking perhaps than the Nelson and Trafalgar exhibition for the International Festival of the Sea. The celebrated cricket artist Jocelyn Galsworthy came to paint the Old England fixture at Hilsea: a limited edition of prints should be available in time to make requests of that lover of white tints, Father Christmas.

Many widened chimneys in the school's ever growing catchment area can be expected to have an interest in such a memento this Christmas, for it has been a year of sport like no other in the school's history. The statement is safe from any accusation of hyperbole; the achievements need careful chronicling. We contested every County Cup Final in Rugby. The 1st XV were disappointed not to complete a hat trick of Final wins: the game drifted from them uncharacteristically. Congratulations to the U15s, however, who seized their chances, and the trophy. The Rugby 1st VII won the County Cup and several other competitions. Their Fly Half, Dan Neville, displayed commendable versatility: having scored a century for the 1st XI against St John's College he left the field early to represent Hampshire U20s in their National semi-final against Cheshire. Opportunely, his parents, great supporters of school sport over many years and many children, were there to see the century, and of course provide the transport.

Some might query the need for an astro when Hockey results are already so impressive: a team largely comprised of Year 7s narrowly failed in a penalty shoot out to reach the last game in the U14 National Finals and retain the trophy won last year. They more than proved their class, however, when beating the Wales national team on their home territory: a triumph of admiration over humiliation meant that the Welsh immediately invited them back. The U14s won the Gold Medal in the Vienna International Junior Indoor Tournament; the U12s won the Silver Medal. In Cricket, there were some impressive wins, not least by the U12s, who easily won the County Cup, and remained almost undefeated throughout an expanded fixture list and extended season, losing only to Millfield off the last ball. On the adjacent pitch, however, the U12Bs gained an easy win and revenge. The final of the U15 County Cup was delayed until this term: our U15s won handsomely, gaining the trophy for an unprecedented fourth year in succession. Team member Chris Morgan played for England Schoolboys and Hampshire 2nd XI.

Above all, PGS Girls came into their own. PGS became fully co-educational in 1991. A new sporting provision was introduced by Mr Blewett and Mrs Spencer, and careful foundations laid. Between May 2004 and June 2005 we have contested National Finals on no fewer than seven occasions. This is in itself easily a record; but the significant fact is that the majority of these Finals have been contested by girls, who have also this year won a host of local and regional competitions. The U13s for the second year reached the National Athletics Final, a magnificent occasion held this year at Abingdon: two teams excelled (Millfield and Southend High School); we missed third place by two points. The same year group, weeks previously, had made

it to the National Netball Finals, held in sweltering heat beside the Central Line in Essex. The Year 6 girls matched this double. They too reached two National Finals: in Netball (where they were Runners Up) and in Rounders.

The Portsmouth Festivities, one of the most active parts of the school's partnership scheme, this year became a limited company and will soon be a charity also. The move constitutionally stressed their growing assimilation in city life and financially enables them to attract greater funding. This year's Festivities elongated into the celebrations of the International Festival of the Sea, and Portsmouth was duly and prolongedly *en fete*. Colin White not only gave a Nelson lecture but also wrote the script for a sort of *mise en scene* in the Cathedral: the *News* thought it should be repeated every year. Sir David Frost gave a witty and thought provoking account of his life; and, lest everything got too naval, Professor Richard Holmes marked the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo by talking about the Napoleonic infantryman. There was a stunning performance in the Comper surroundings of St Philip's Cosham by the Delme String Quartet. Clifford Benson gave the first recital on the school's new Steinway, and Catherine Bott impersonated Emma Hamilton at the Royal Marines Museum prior to conquering Haydn's *Nelson Mass* at the Cathedral. A new musical by Adrian Bawtree and John Jeffery, going under the title *England Expects* in Portsmouth, and *Make Sail* in parts of the world that espouse political correctness above fidelity to the history of semaphore, was premiered by a huge PGS cast in St Mary's Church, and repeated in part at the Drumhead ceremony on Southsea Common. Banqueting House Whitehall next stop.

The summer brought bells and farewells. We bade goodbye to Ms Parkes, Ms Rowan and Mr Drew, all marrying and all relocating, and to Dr Backhouse. Mr Arnold, an unselfish and unstinting contributor to school life, left for Sutton Valence: Dr Kittermaster's farewell speech to him in the Common Room was suitably generous, hilarious and warm. Mr Minns, noted for acuity of observation, sharpness of wit, operatic knowledge and Chemical skill, took early retirement. So too did Mr Dean, Head of Design Technology, and one of our Timetablers; we now wish him many well deserved free periods, on every day of the week. Mr Henderson left for his roots in Sherborne; Mr King went to explore new horizons Down Under. Those two charismatic and energetic Jamies will be badly missed.

The Chairman on this occasion thanks many people. I should like to thank him, and his fellow Governors; the school could not hope for better. The Common Room contains a panoply of personality and talent: the Chairman is giving some long service awards this evening, and the centre of the *Pictorial Record* intentionally provides a glimpse of the depth and range of personalities and talents which our Common Rooms contain. The Non Teaching staff give us wonderful support, and none more so than the secretaries. We are sad to lose from that team Mrs Tetley, now touring the high seas, and Mrs Gazey, who retires to France. Thither also retires Mrs Pugsley, popular and long experienced custodian of the Library. The Second Master, Mr Smith, leaves to become Head of Hereford Cathedral School. In his letter of application to PGS seven years ago Mr Smith stated that he was a great believer in the old adage that two heads are better than one. This proved predictive rather than dissident: he has on one occasion or other done every aspect of my job. His hidden talent for mimicry has always played second fiddle to his considerable energy for innovation, and over seven years he has become almost synonymous with the

institution he has transformed. Indeed, that *almost* is incorrect. For DHL Carriers, mishearing the name given over the phone, sent last January a large parcel to *The Paul Smith Grammar School, High Street, Portsmouth, PO1 2LN*. The framed label now accompanies Mr Smith to Hereford.

In 2003, I spoke proudly at Prizegiving about a whole range of local triumphs. Last year, this Report reflected on a vision for development which would see PGS achievements set in a more national context. This year it is a pleasure to be able to report on several such achievements, and to look forward, with confidence, to yet more.

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