



## **PARENTS' CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2006**

If, having read all those somewhat impersonal 'Family Christmas letters' which arrive with in ones Christmas cards, you are strong enough for another, then do read on .....

### ***The Superlative Challenge***

For those of you who like a challenge, a prize will be awarded at the first Monday Assembly of the Spring Term to the children who have correctly counted every superlative in this, somewhat lengthy, newsletter. Answers should be given to Form Teachers on the first day of term.

### ***Lions take the Cup***

After a thrilling term's competition, which saw over 10,500 personal credits being awarded throughout the school and a further 300 for rugby, hockey and swimming Housematches, Lions inched ahead in the last weeks to beat Gryphons into second place by just 69 points.

### ***New Pre Prep Opened in Style***

Perhaps the highlight of the term was England cricketer and Old Ashfoldian Jamie Dalrymple officially opening our brand new £1 million Pre Prep in front of hundreds of pupils, parents, staff and Governors. Jamie, who left Ashfold in 1994 while his father was still head, called the new building "wonderfully impressive". "I never imagined I would be back one day to open such a magnificent building," he added.

Wearing his national training kit, he recalled spending much of his seven years there on the games fields and ball park. "I never imagined then I would get to play cricket for England," he said. "Sport is now my life and I am delighted to see the current crop of Ashfold children have these opportunities still."

Afterwards, Jamie gave a cricketing demonstration with some devilishly inscrutable spin bowling before donning his pads and being clean bowled by Mark Strong with his first ball.

### ***Second ICT Room Handed Over***

Members of the Ashfold May Ball Committee, whose Ball this Spring raised enough money to fund almost entirely our a brand new second ICT suit, last week formally handed it over to Mrs Angela Sanderson (School Governor), thrilled staff and children.

Our thanks again to all the members of the Committee for their hard work and to all of us who supported the ball so enthusiastically! Unquestionably, this additional ICT suite has significantly enhanced children's and teacher's access to ICT and greater access has meant that more children than ever are able to learn to use ICT as a tool for developing their understanding of other subjects. Indeed, Mr Andrew Bentley reports that it is being used almost 70% of the time.

### ***2006/07 School Magazine***

In those soporific moments after Christmas Lunch when the weather outside looks less inviting than the log fire crackling quietly in the fireplace, stretch down for your copy of this year's School Magazine and marvel again at just what an impressive record of the year it is. Having done so, I am sure that you will agree with me that the editorial team of Mr Terry Wintle and Mrs Fiona Russ have done a magnificent job. Indeed, I believe it to be one of our best magazines ever.

### ***Concert Spectacular***

The Senior Informal Concert for Form V & VI children was as spectacular as ever with over half of the children in these forms (some 25 children) performing with varying degrees of expertise on everything from drums to recorders and from violins to trumpets. The quality of their performances was breathtaking as was the pace of the concert - 33 separate performances in just 50 minutes! My congratulations to all of our musicians, but in particular to the nine children who performed twice and to all of their music teachers.

### ***Grade Examinations Bonanza***

At the start of term we learned that every one of the 27 children who took music exams last term passed; the majority with merits and distinction. Last weekend a further 16 took exams, so not only is instrumental music alive and well, but we are keeping our fingers crossed for the results.

### ***Bursting at the Seams***

Many years ago we struggled to persuade children to join and stay in the choir. Today, with Senior and Intermediate Choirs filled to capacity and long waiting lists for both, the problem Mr Alan Williams now faces is how to squeeze even more choristers into the choir stalls in church - my space looks in jeopardy!

### ***Packed to the Rafters***

As Mr Venn gamely tried to squeeze us all into Dorton Church for the term's Evensong, and despite the loft being called into service, I fear a few parents were turned away. This was a pity, not only because the Senior Choir sung superbly and our readers, Stuart King, Oliver Penfold and Peter Leslie, read confidently, but also because The Revd Anthony Bewes spoke powerfully in his address. Next term, with Forms III now going home at 5.00 p.m., I promise there will be room for us all.

### ***Radley Wind Day***

A group of our best woodwind and brass players enjoyed a fabulously inspirational and challenging day at Radley College earlier this term. There, they were joined by hundreds of other prep school musicians and were able to play with them in large groups of children with similar abilities. After an intensive day parents and friends joined their children and enjoyed a spectacular concert of the music they had learned that day. A great day out was had by all.

### ***Choir Brings Christmas Cheer***

Last week Chilton Residential Home residents and staff were treated to an evening of Christmas carols and popular musical numbers from the past. Indeed, as soloist Jordan Towells, Abigail Hughes, Sasha O'Donnell, Chrystia Reynolds and Kristian Wood sung, residents joined in enthusiastically, particularly with Abigail's rendition of 'A nightingale sung in Berkeley Square' and Kristian's 'On the street where I live'. Memories were kindled and the choir left a warm glow as they bade farewell and Merry Christmas to all at Chilton House.

### ***Carols at St Mary's***

The highlight of the term for many was the magnificence of the singing at our Carol Service. Senior, Intermediate, Junior and Parents' Choirs all combined to provide as powerful a lead as ever to the congregational singing and their Carols were delightful. I thank you all for your generous comments about the service - it was indeed a moving and uplifting event - and for the £627 collection which was shared between the school's chosen charity and the Thame Barns Centre.

### ***Every Child's Christmas Art Displayed***

Mr Phil Cave achieved the near impossible feat this year of hanging the Christmas art work of every Trans-Form VI child in the Mansion in the run-up to Christmas. Everywhere one looked walls were packed with sparkling crackers, glistening snowflakes and colourful presents - even the Transition scenery was commissioned as a canvas for Transition art. The 'buzz' of children talking excitedly about each others work was heart-warming.

### ***Four Extra spaces on Summer Activity Holiday***

Mr Pincott is now able to release four additional places on his Summer Action Adventure Holiday to Narbonne in France during the summer holidays - Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July to Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2007. The cost is £480, with a £200 deposit payable immediately and the balance to be paid by end of February. Further details are available from Mr Pincott, whom you should contact should you wish to take up this opportunity - I am afraid this is for Ashfold children only, so parents need not apply!

### ***Match Analysis***

**Winning Seasons for all our Girls Teams.** Every one of our teams had a 'Winning Season' this term - a tremendous achievement and a testament to the talents of our girls and the skills of their coaches. Although the U13/12s did fabulously well to win 5 of their 8 fixtures, our most successful team were the U10s who are turning out to be a rather talented group of girls.

	<b>P</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>L</b>
U10	7	5	1	1
U11	7	3	2	2
U12/13	8	5	1	2
<b>Overall</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

### ***Rugby Teams Struggle.***

Despite struggling somewhat in the younger games, Mr Johnson as Head of Boys Games is nevertheless impressed by the determination and commitment of the boys, especially when up against much tougher opposition. He is proud of Game 1s 'Winning Season' and of the high quality of our rugby coaching staff. He is also optimistic about the future as Game 1 promises to be stronger still next season.

	<b>P</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>
U9	6		2	4	15	125
Colts B	3	1	1	1	69	52
Colts A	3	1		2	57	49
Game 1	8	4	1	3	216	95
<b>Overall</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>		

### ***Tired legs all round.***

Was it really a year ago since the last parents and staff hockey morning? Surely not! Despite

being a year older and a little crankier, the quality of hockey was better than ever. Highlights included Alan Johnson's rather unorthodox but very effective defending with his right knee (just keep them out of the D at all costs Alan), Michael Wright's sunglasses which he insisted on wearing every match (mysterious guy), Barton Macfarlane's cricket spikes (I'm glad he didn't step on my hand), and the sheer determination of the ladies who delivered some of the fiercest tackles I have ever seen – yes I talking about you, Elaine Giliomee, Vicky Wheeldon, and Diana Bird.

At the end of a hugely enjoyable and exhausting morning the winners were the Hair Bear Bunch (I told you it was crazy) consisting of Paul Dowthwaite, Rod Alexander, Karen Fisher, Paul Currie, Mike Fulwood and Elaine Giliomee. The player of the tournament was also the top goal scorer Karen Fisher (is there no sport that this lady cannot play...football, cricket, netball, hockey!). Afterwards we were all hosted royally by the perfect tea ladies Debbie Swift, Debbie Dale and Lisa Wright. See you all next year gang writes our tirelessly enthusiastic organiser Fiona Dowthwaite.

### ***Bigger and Better than Ever?***

It may be my rose-tinted spectacles, or even the fact that for the first year ever I managed to track down a glass of mulled wine, but this year's Bonfire and Fireworks seemed to me to have been spectacularly successful. The Parents Committee excelled themselves - the fireworks were breathtaking; the bonfire as large as any Mark Strong has ever built and the mulled wine flowed.

### ***Record Numbers Boarding***

No less than 75 children (26 girls and 49 boys) have boarded regularly each week this term - an all time record. It is fabulous that so many children have jumped at the opportunity to board and that boarding is again so popular. Next term promises to be equally so and the challenge for boarders remains to knock Mr Bentley off the top spot on the pool League.

### ***Majority of Girls Staying to 13+***

Each year the dreaded 11+ decision faces parents of girls, but this year I am thrilled to report that at least 60% of our girls are committed to staying on and benefiting from all we have to offer in the fifth and sixth forms.

### ***Leadership Challengers tested by the rain***

After our entire fourth form had enjoyed two afternoon's leadership training a team of eight were selected to represent the school at Cheltenham College's Leadership Challenge Competition. Defending our title against more prep schools than ever and in the rain, proved too much of a challenge, but despite the rain, spirits remained high and we ended up coming fourth. My congratulations to the entire team and thanks to Mrs Gill Crampton Smith and Mr Alistair Ferguson for their help with the Leadership training.

### ***Scholars Club Busy Again***

I am delighted to congratulate the four new members of our Academic Scholar's Club, Dominic Curran, William Fulwood and Rachel Williams. The Club have had another exciting term; after a spot of improvisation and film making with Mr Adrian Downie, a select group from Forms V and VI travelled to Oxford to take part in the Prep Schools' Challenge quiz at Magdalen College School, where they acquitted themselves very well. Mr Terry Wintle then explored poetry writing on the theme of darkness and the Club completed their activities with a presentation on mazes from Mr Bill Inge. As always, huge thanks are due to all those who help to enrich our Scholars' wider education. We look forward eagerly to next

term, when our programme is to include a talk on Bletchley Park by Mrs Jan Fulwood. Perhaps you too might have something you would like to share one evening? If so, please get in touch with Mr Inge.

### ***All welcome at the Ashfold Stand - even sheep!***

It was great to see so much Ashfold writing and artwork on display again at this year's Thame Show and I was delighted that so many of our children received Show Certificates for their work. My thanks to all parents and children who dropped by the Ashfold stand to talk to us. We had a great day, spoke to seven sets of prospective parents and a sheep - although Charlie Parker politely declined to register his prize-winning sheep for entry into PP1 next term.

### ***"A guide, a guide, my kingdom for a guide"***

Within minutes of starting this term's Open Morning, our supply of guides was exhausted as we struggled to cope with the tidal wave of prospective parents and their children who had arrived to look around. Without question this was our most successful Open Morning to date with 36 families and 58 children represented - ten more families and children than ever before. My thanks to all our children who rose so spectacularly to the challenge and were the finest of ambassadors.

### ***"I counted them out .....***

#### ***.... and I counted them back in".***

Over sixty of us gathered on a glorious Sunday afternoon and set off for Brill in a game attempt to walk off our hastily eaten Sunday Lunches. With the incentive of a delicious cream tea awaiting us upon our return, the Adrian Downie family power-walked their way along the 4 mile circuit and finished first. A great afternoon in the countryside was had by all and my thanks to the Parents Committee for rallying us all, for providing marshals to keep us on track and for those memorable cream teas.

### ***Tantrix and Tangrams puzzled us all***

Earlier this term the Saloon was taken over for two puzzling days by The Happy Puzzle Company who ran the most enjoyable and challenging workshops in practical problem solving, lateral thinking and teamwork for every form from Pre Prep III - Form VI. Parents too were invited and twenty of them turned up for their session though the company was far too polite to report to me how they did.

### ***All Work, no Play at Lyme Regis***

This year's sixth form Geography Field Trip went to Lyme Regis where they spent three busy days at a field studies centre learning more about coastal and river processes. Their Common Entrance coursework projects should be all the better for this trip, particularly as Mr David Venn and Mr Alan Johnson kept them hard at work each evening writing up their day's study.

### ***Forms III invade Warwick Castle***

In October Forms III made their annual trip up the M40 to Warwick and its splendid castle. Mrs Kathy Chantler and Mr Alistair Ferguson led the large party of historians up and around the battlements before descending into the dungeons. Highlights included an archery display, the firing of a trebuchet (you'll have to ask them) and 530 steps (as counted by George Kent)

### ***Forms II visit the British Museum***

Mrs Jane Johnson and Miss Victoria de Trensse braved the London traffic and a very busy museum when earlier this term they took their Forms to visit the Egyptians at the British Museum. A great day out was had by all, but the highlight was the mummified bodies.

### ***Forms I went to the Corinium Museum***

Form I children enjoyed a fabulous day in Cirencester visiting exhibits on Roman life. The highlight – apart from lunch – was the ‘hands on’ session which allowed them to dress as Romans, handle real Roman artefacts and play Roman games.

### ***Poet Gavin Stewart returns***

As part of the Junior Department's celebration of National Poetry Day, Gavin Stewart joined us again this year and entertained children with a selection of interactive self-penned poems which for some reason involved them all having to make noises like giraffes and nodding like fish! He then spent the rest of the day working with each of the forms to help them create some super poems of their own.

### ***Grandmothers give Transition a taste of War***

History was brought to life when Emmeline Downie and Edward Elgin invited their grandmothers to speak to their forms about their lives during WWII. Having learned about enduring the Blitz and chocolate rationing children were distinctly less enthusiastic about living in the 1940s, but all the better prepared for their day as ....

### ***Evacuees visit Swindon Steam Museum***

Dressed as evacuees and carrying their gas mask boxes Transition children were met at the Station by The Billeting Officer who helped recreate the experience of travelling away from home as evacuees, and of packing an evacuee's suitcase, satchel and lunchbox. A little alarm was felt when, upon their arrival in the countryside, they were picked, or not, by host families. This, together the chance to handle WW2 objects relating to Gas and the Blackout meant that by the end of the day, all had had a wonderfully interesting and eventful day.

### ***Open Wide***

Dazzling smiles all round were the order of the day in Transition after dental hygienist Mrs Wright (Lauren's mother) came to show children how best to clean their teeth and to alert them to the consequences of failing to clean their teeth properly.

### ***An Englishwoman's home ..... is a Castle***

Pre Prep III children refused to let their spirits be dampened when they arrived in the rain at Windsor Castle only to find The Queen was not 'At Home'. Nevertheless, during the day they learned about why the castle was first built on the site, how it had developed over the years, about the castle as a home and just how many people worked there. Strangely the highlight was not the State apartments, enormous dolls house, suits of armour, or walls full of weaponry, but having their photographs taken next to a real live soldier.

### ***La Manoir aux Quat' Saisons hosts PPI***

There was no shortage of volunteers to accompany PPI's visit until staff and parents learned that their children were to visit the gardens to learn both how plants grow and how they are used in cooking. Nevertheless, what an adventure PPI had travelling in the School Minibus and being guided around the gardens by a very kind young man who showed them a vast array of plants and vegetables.

### ***The Ashfold Book Circle's Term***

In their two meetings of the term the Circle read and discussed ‘The Number 1 Ladies Detective Agency’, ‘Three Men in a Boat’ and ‘My Sister's Keeper’. As always, the quality of the discussion was improved somewhat by the high quality of the fine wines and nibbles. Their first book next term will be ‘Lady Chatterley's Lover’ by DH Lawrence, so if you

would like to join them, hunt out a copy, immerse yourself over the holidays in it and join them in the Library at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

### ***Over £3250 raised for Charity***

Mr David Chetham has lead the children's fundraising efforts this term for our chosen charity Macmillan Cancer Support (MCS) with breathtaking results:

### **The World's Biggest Ever Coffee Morning raises £418**

As part of the nation-wide campaign by MCS, Mr Chetham and Form III (F) hosted this event on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September, in the Saloon. Having dug deeply in their pockets, donated generously and cleared the cake stall, parents were rewarded with coffee and biscuits.

### **Jeans for Genes raises £350**

The entire school entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of the day chipping in a pound each for the privilege of wearing jeans for the day - its rumoured that even the Headmaster was seen wearing a pair!

### **Sponsored Music Marathon Raises £1,835**

I take my hat off to all of our musicians, and to their parents, for entering so enthusiastically into this event. In less than two weeks they raised a massive £1,835.

### **Christmas Fayre Raises almost £600**

The focus for this year's Christmas Fayre was squarely on the children; the Sports Hall being packed with traditional fayre games and other stands run by our sixth formers. As always the 'Secrets Corner' did a magnificent trade in Christmas presents for parents (I hope you liked yours!) and the numerous cake stalls and Café did brisk trade. My thanks to the Parents Committee for organising such a wonderful event and in particular to Mrs Lisa Wright for masterminding the whole operation.

### **Sixth Form Stalls raise £115**

Prefects galvanised the sixth form into baking cakes and making DT items for sale at the Christmas Fayre and at the end of the afternoon had sold out raising an impressive £115 which they split between their own chosen charity 'Children in Need' and MCS.

### ***Harvest Gift gratefully received***

At the end of September the Revd Tina Sterling joined us in church to lead the Main School's Harvest Festival celebrations. As children brought their gifts to church that morning it was evident that they and their parents had really risen to the occasion. Indeed, so generously had they given that Tina had to fight her way through a veritable wall of cans, dried pasta and fruit in order to get into the church. A grateful letter from the recipients of our gifts, The Long Crendon Day Centre, is posted in the main corridor outside Reception.

### ***Record number of shoeboxes collected for Romanian families***

This year thanks to your great generosity we sent a record-breaking 200 shoeboxes full of Christmas presents to Romanian families as part of the nation wide appeal 'Shoeboxes for Romania' run by the Christian Charity Link Romania. At the start of our appeal Mr and Mrs Johnson, who last year travelled to the city of Iasi in Romania to help distribute shoeboxes, spoke movingly to us all about just what a difference these shoeboxes of gifts make to the lives of these poor Romanians. Before sending our shoeboxes on their way the Revd Tina Stirling received and blessed them at a school assembly.

### ***Pre Prep Christmas Spectaculars***

**Not a dry eye in the House?** The Transition Production had it all - catchy Christmas numbers, form read poems and, as always, the 'My Christmas Wish' had us all reaching for our handkerchiefs.

**Counting by numbers.** Thanks to some masterful script-writing by Mrs Gill Venn, first-rate musical direction by Mrs Fiona Russ, and West End quality costumes and make-up by teams of parents led by Mrs Hatton and Ms Rossi, Pre Prep II & III's Christmas production 'The Census' proved itself to be a hugely entertaining and spectacularly impressive way of teaching children to count. The staff medal for the term goes to Mrs Russ for managing to keep up with her soloists ..... just!

**Pre-School & PPI's Nativity.** For many of us Christmas does not start until one has witnessed one's first traditional Nativity Play, so the joint Pre-School and Pre Prep I production was a timely reminder that Christmas was upon us. All of us there enjoyed the experience; it was a real joy it was to watch such young children delivering their lines and singing so confidently in their first Nativity Play.

### ***Father Christmas visits Pre Prep***

Despite all his reindeer having flu and having to read in the Thame Gazette where to find the new Pre Prep building, Father Christmas arrived in a flurry of bells and visited all the classes, bringing gifts for everyone, including the teachers. We are so grateful to him for taking time out of his busy schedule to visit us at Ashfold. Thank you Father Christmas!

### ***England's Top Netball Umpire***

It is wonderful to have Mrs Jo Kelly back to full fitness again both coaching at school and umpiring in the Netball Super League. If you have missed her umpiring live on Sky Sport her next match is in March and we'll give the girls details. In the meantime, it is a great honour to have England's Top National Umpire coaching at Ashfold.

### ***New GAP Students***

Patti and Yasmin left us last week after a year in which they proved themselves to be magnificent GAP assistants. They are both off to university and they take with them all of our very best wishes.

In January we are joined by two new assistants:

**Zara Downie** continues the long line of students from Geelong Grammar in Australia. She was a School Prefect, an experienced boarder, is a passionate artist, has represented her State in Hockey and captained her school XI, so we are in for a treat.

**Alexander Handley** continues the long line of students from Wanganui Collegiate in New Zealand. He was Deputy Head of School, a 1st XI Cricket and Soccer player, and comes highly recommended by his Headmaster who visited Ashfold earlier this term.

### ***Salting of the roads around School***

I fear that despite our protestations the council has refused to salt the roads around school this winter, due to 'severe budget cuts from Central Government'. We are particularly concerned about this and would welcome your support in challenging this decision. If you have not already written, could I urge you to write or email your MP and in particular to .....

Ms Valerie Letheren, Cabinet Member - Transportation, County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP29 1UA. (vletheren@buckscc.gov.uk)

She claims that the County Council has carried out a risk assessment. You might wish to comment on the risks to you and your children given the steepness of the roads to Ashendon and Chilton, the tightness of the bends on those hills, the narrowness of the roads (which in many places are not wide enough for cars and buses to pass), the lack of public transport to the school (i.e. you have no choice but to drive), the number of parental cars driving children to school twice each day (approx 200), the accidents you have witnessed on these roads etc

In the meantime, I do encourage you to take extra care whilst driving in icy conditions.

### *Headmasterly Pleas*

#### **Gravediggers Required**

The Gravediggers is a parent and staff side which plays cricket on occasional Sundays during the summer term against a number of local teams - always at Ashfold. Mr John Miller, our Gravedigger Secretary and Team Manager, is always on the look-out for new talent, so if you are an enthusiast, or 'used to play a bit', do please contact him on 'john@johncmiller.freereserve.co.uk' or 01844 218500.

#### **Parents Committee**

We are blessed with a Parents Committee full of parents willing to help organise events for us all to enjoy. I know that whilst they are delighted to do all this, there are times when they really could do with a little more support, particularly immediately after events, when the offer of a hand putting tables and chairs away etc would be much appreciated.

#### **Elync**

Most of our urgent and general school communications are emailed to you via an Elync website. Sadly, over sixty sets of parents have yet to subscribe to this service, which means that we still have to rely substantially upon Blazer Post. Not only is this ecologically unfriendly, but it remains relatively inefficient as it relies upon the uncertainties of children delivering the letters to you!

Please could I encourage all of you who have yet to subscribe to this service, to do so if you can. Please contact the School Reception Office if you would like us to send you further details. Alternatively, you could register directly by logging onto [www.elync.org/register/registerparent.asp](http://www.elync.org/register/registerparent.asp) and follow the instructions you will find there.

#### **Uniform**

We hope you like the new style of Uniform List which you will find on the school's website.

Please name **ALL items of clothing** including shoes, football boots, gloves, watches and the fleece of new school coats. If things are not named, you will appreciate that it is almost impossible to re-unit children with their possessions.

A second set of trainers is needed for all children in Forms III - VI. These are for indoor use only and are in place of the plimsolls which children up to Form II are required to have.

Please note that from September 2007 Barbour Coats will no longer be acceptable as an alternative to the new School Coat and Fleece.

#### **Medication**

All medication coming into school must be handed into Surgery by parents or guardians with the child's name on it. No medication is to be put into school book bags or boarding bags.

**Changes of address/Contact details**

Please notify the School Reception Office immediately of any changes in Address, home telephone numbers, mobile numbers and work numbers. Without these being up to date it difficult for us to contact you in an emergency.

**Temporary Arrangement Details for Parents Away on Holiday/Business**

In the event you go away on holiday/business during term time and your children are left in the care of others, it is vital that you complete and return a form held by Matron before you go away.

**Pencil Cases**

Whilst some children do their best to fit a WH Smith aisle-full of stationary into their book bags, others seem barely to possess a pencil. Please would parents ensure that at the start of next term all children in Forms I - VI have pencils, colouring pencils, a ruler, sharpener and eraser. All but Form I children also need a fountain pen.

May I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.



M.O.M Chitty  
Headmaster