



*Madras College*

# *Christmas Newsletter*

**December 1993**

Although there has been an abundance of purposeful and successful activity, the prevailing impression among staff would be that the term has been unusually difficult and demanding. However, it is all too easy to see only the black side, which inevitably attracts attention, and to overlook the many positive and encouraging aspects of school life which indicate that Madras College is in good heart. Of course one reason for gloom has been the high absence rate of pupils and staff who have been decimated by the ravages of flu. In a normal week pupil absences might average 5% or 6% of the year group. When the epidemic was at its height, the S2 absence rate reached 22% and this trend was reflected throughout the school. Pupils tended to recover quickly. Staff were less fortunate and their absences were usually longer. On one occasion there were 34 staff absent and it was touch and go whether the school could continue to function. Supply staff have never been so precious or so much in demand and it was their willingness to help, often at the shortest of notice, which averted the possibility of pupils having to be sent home.

The school roll has increased again. There are 50 more pupils than last session. With a total roll of 1670 pupils, Madras is now the third largest school in the Region. One consequence has been an unusually large number of new staff and we take this opportunity to welcome them to the school.

Although there are more staff on the ground, there are never enough to achieve all that we would like to do. Conditions for them are not improved by the spiralling work-load, now shown by independent research to be an issue of national concern, or by the constant battle against indiscipline, which erodes staff time and energy, even in this area where education is still valued by the great majority. Most of it may be minor, but it is wearing for the teachers who face it. Examples are easily found: bus incidents and the bullying sometimes associated with them; confrontation created by the unnecessary questioning of reasonable instructions or by the failure to hand in work on time; the unwillingness of many senior pupils to produce absence notes in spite of frequent reminders. However, the disciplinary issue, which has given special cause for concern this term, is that in more than one case alcohol has been a factor. What is new and especially disturbing is that in two of these incidents, the participants were almost all junior pupils. The occasional difficulty in the past has not usually involved pupils of this age. Hopefully, these are isolated incidents and the publicity they have received is a matter for regret. Nevertheless, they reflect a pattern of behaviour which seems to be increasingly prevalent outside school. Everyone must feel concern that in the evening and at weekends children of 12-14 apparently manage to obtain alcohol quite freely and regularly drink it in damaging quantities. Recent efforts by various community organisations to address the problem are timely and welcome. From the school's point of view the rules on this issue have always been clear and unequivocal - no alcohol in school, at school social functions or on school trips and excursions. Pupils very often do not appreciate the extent to which the actions of a few can damage the interests of all. It would be no exaggeration to say that if problems of this kind were to continue, many worthwhile activities would be threatened by the understandable reluctance of staff to participate.

Buses are another area for concern. The ease with which an accident can happen is highlighted by recent tragic events in the south. The need for responsible behaviour on the buses has never been greater. Unfortunately, a small but significant minority not only fail to appreciate the potential danger, but they apparently regard the code of conduct, to which they and their parents put their signatures, as a meaningless irrelevance, to be flouted whenever an opportunity presents itself. Overcrowding is a related issue and in most cases the problem is created by the pupils themselves. Regional surveys show that there are more seats available than there are pupils travelling. The figures are based on the assumption of full attendance and without applying a 3 to a seat policy for younger pupils. With rare exceptions, overcrowding is the result of pupils boarding incorrectly. For instance, Newport and Wormit buses are often overcrowded, although there is usually space on the Gauldry bus which follows the same route. On homeward runs overcrowding ought to be an impossibility because every afternoon a substantial number of pupils stay on for extra-curricular activities. However, the Region are proposing to address the problem by introducing colour coding, a scheme which the school has advocated for some time. Pupils will be issued with new bus passes. These will be marked with different colours. Buses will also have a coloured label./

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Pupils with *green* passes will only be allowed to travel on a *green* bus and so on. Passes will be distributed in a way which should ensure that no bus has more than its proper load. It is hoped that these new measures, to be introduced early next term, will make overcrowding a thing of the past. Behaviour however remains an intractable problem. Its solution is not assisted by the wall of silence which prevents the identification of trouble makers or by the lack of effective sanctions to use against them.

### **Dr. John Thompson**

The sudden death on 20th November of Dr. John Thompson, Rector of the school from 1955—1975, saddened the many former colleagues, former pupils and friends to whom he was a well-kent and well-loved figure. To those of us who were taught History by him, albeit long ago and in another place, his influence extended beyond the classroom and lasted long after school days were over. With him, it was not just a case of imparting knowledge of his subject. His teaching had that extra dimension from which pupils imperceptibly acquire attitudes, values, independence of thought and breadth of view. As Rector of Madras, he saw the school change from a small, selective senior secondary into a large, modern comprehensive, a process made all the more difficult by the split site and the amalgamation with the Burgh School. The smoothness with which that long and complicated transition took place is a lasting tribute to his managerial and inter-personal skills, although he would undoubtedly have dismissed such jargon with one of his pithy comments. Although he had an almost legendary reputation as an expert arranger, he was no mere administrator. He had a healthy disregard for bureaucracy in any form and nothing pleased him better than following his own highly individual line, although it was always for the good of the school and out of concern for the best interests of staff and pupils. As with his own teaching, his vision and wisdom were evident in the direction he gave the school. In practical terms there is much we owe to him: he gave school music its present strength by making instrumental tuition widely available; he set up the Kiel Exchange, which almost 40 years ago was a remarkable innovation; he acquired the cottage in Glen Tilt for school use; he began the push, which is still ongoing, for improved library facilities; he put a Guidance system in place several years before it was national policy; and in the enlightened treatment of senior pupils, of which the S6 Committee structure is a prime example, he was also far ahead of his time. It was even his idea to replace the previous unsightly gravel with the now much admired front lawn. His exceptionally clear perception of the school's future was balanced by his deep and detailed knowledge of its history. These elements came together in the new Madras which grew up on the split site. It did not slavishly follow the latest trends. It did not always march to the beat of the Regional drum. In some ways it was refreshingly unconventional; in others it was almost stubbornly traditional. Its confidence in its own destiny provided it with the strength and resilience to face an even more challenging future. The distinctive ethos remains. The school, as we know it today, is still very much John Thompson's creation. In remembering his educational achievement, let us not forget the kind of man he was.

### **The Endowment Appeal**

Madras College is unique among Fife schools in retaining control over funds originally left by the founder, since similar funds elsewhere were incorporated into a Regional scheme. The Madras Endowment is administered by a board of Trustees. By the deed of gift they are legally obliged to set aside some money to provide university bursaries. However, by far the largest part of their income is used to give the school an annual grant for extra curricular activities. The wide range of such activities, which Madras pupils have the good fortune to enjoy, could not be maintained without this support, especially as the limited amount of money which the Region is able to provide for this purpose is quickly exhausted. Unfortunately, costs are rising. To take only one example, transport costs for Saturday morning school games from October to Easter amount to £3,000. Any charges to pupils are deliberately kept to a minimum to encourage participation, although an increase in the near future is inevitable. Unfortunately, also the effects of the recession are making it increasingly difficult for the Trustees to maintain the same level of support. To overcome the problem, the Trustees have launched an appeal. Some very successful fund raising events have already taken place. Others will follow. While the appeal is mainly directed towards former pupils, it is hoped that it will attract support from the large number of parents who recognise the value of their children's participation in the school's rich and varied programme of extra curricular activities. Any donations, however small, will be gratefully received and should/

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be sent to Mr. R.R. Hamilton, The Treasurer of the Endowment Appeal, c/o Madras College, South Street.

#### **Good Works**

When former pupil Oliver Morris brought news back to Madras of a project he is working on to bring clean water supplies to remote mountain villages in Thailand, he enthused senior pupils with a desire to help. As a result, a non-uniform day to raise money was held on Wednesday, 24th November, which raised £657.14. Meanwhile, a group of pupils in SI-S3 have been responding to former pupil Emma Robinson's request that they would write to Burmese refugee children in the school she is teaching in in Thailand to help them with learning English. This is much appreciated, since they lack so many of the teaching materials we take for granted: books, paper and pencils.

A junior branch of Amnesty has been active in Kilrymont Road since the summer. Under the guidance of Mrs. Broom and Mrs. Boag, pupils in S1-S3 have written letters to send to prisoners of conscience and the families of people who have *disappeared*. They are currently engaged in writing messages of hope in Christmas cards designed in the An department. It is hoped to extend this very worthwhile activity to the South Street building in due course.

Pupils in SI, 2 and 3 took part again this year in a sponsored reading event to raise money for the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund for Children. The level of participation was splendid, pupils reading between one and fifteen books during a three week period and raising a record total of £1,500, which included £86 raised by one girl alone.

Some pupils in S6 assisted at the National Arthritis and Rheumatism Council's stand at the Dunhill Golf Tournament and met the Council's patron, the Duchess of Kent.

Harold Raitt, S2 attended the Association for Science Education and won a data logger which he has presented to the Physics department.

#### **Visits and Exchanges**

As usual, a full programme of visits and exchanges is underway this session, including plans for the History Battlefields Tour, a Skiing Trip and another visit to Norway by the choir, which hopefully, will be followed in 1995 by a repeat of the highly successful Wind Band exchange.

A proposal for a trip to the Mosel Region in Germany at Easter 1994 for pupils in SI/2 met with a gratifying but overwhelming response. A party of 40 will be formed from the 120 applicants. The S4/5 Kiel Exchange, which has taken place annually in June since 1955, also found ample new volunteers to join the scheme this year. It is disappointing therefore to have to record that a proposed exchange which a French Lycee near Paris was keen to set up with Madras College has had to be abandoned through lack of response from our S4/5 pupils.

On the annual exchange with Great Valley High School, Philadelphia, we have welcomed Jos Brown and Carrie Scanga this session. Mike Fuller (S6) and Claire Pan (S6), with whom the American students are staying, will return with them for the second leg of the exchange in January. Eva Jacobus from New Jersey is also currently a visiting pupil at Madras.

The German department, participating for the fifth time in a hospitality programme for German teachers of English visiting Scottish schools and colleges, welcomed Frau Gerlinde Meyer from Weissenfels in Saxony on a three week visit this term.

Meanwhile the Senior Rugby and Hockey teams are looking forward to hosting a weekend visit including match fixtures, for touring teams from The Belgrano Day School, Buenos Aires, who will be in Scotland in January.

#### **Debating and Public Speaking**

This promises to be another successful season for Madras. The public speaking team of/

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Lucy Robertson (S6), Anna Scott (S6) and Charis Melvin (S4) have won their way through to the quarter finals of the English Speaking Union/BP Competition.

At the time of writing, we have two senior teams through to the quarter finals of the English Speaking Union/Britannic Assurance Debating Competition and one through to the second round of the Edinburgh University/Bank of Scotland Debate. At junior level, both teams have also reached the second round of the TSB/Courier Debating Competition.

### Art

In the St. Andrews Horticultural Society's *Paint a Flower Competition*, Catriona Hine, S3 won first prize and the Babington-Smith Trophy. A BBC film team subsequently recorded pupils in the Art department working on flower paintings. The film will be shown in January or February 1994 on *The Great British Garden Show*.

Art Department pupils are currently busy making designs for a *Madras Mug*. One will be chosen for production and sale as part of the school's contribution to the Endowment Appeal.

### Scriptwriting Winners

Television appearances have not just been confined to the Art Department. Following their national success in producing a winning playscript, Margaret Graves and Rachel Wilson (S3) will be assisting at the filming of their script by Channel 4. Four S4 pupils, Charis Melvin, Steven Whyte, Lindsey Boitz and Lizzie Reid have also been working with a BBC camera crew in school and in Glasgow to produce a programme for *Jaw Box*, a series on *Discussion Skills for S Grade*. Two groups from the junior drama club have been invited by the BBC to present scenarios for their *Megamag* programme. Filming will take place in February.

### Young Enterprise

This year's group of S5/6 pupils are trading under the name *Genesis*, producing and marketing calendars whose theme is scenes of St. Andrews. They are grateful for the expert advice received from Mr. I. Campbell, Mr. D. Bradbury and Mr. P. Crome, and for sponsorship from the Old Course Hotel.

### Mathematics

Munay Scott (S6) was the first winner of the R.M. Adam Award, a new prize for the best performance in Higher Mathematics in Fife. The award, which was given by the family of R.M. Adam in memory of their father, a former Rector of Kirkcaldy High School, was presented at an informal ceremony in school by Councillor Tom Dair, Chairman of the Education Committee.

Over 23,000 pupils from 800 secondary schools took part in the National Maths Contest 1993. Among the 5% gaining Gold awards were Josh Hale (S6) and Sam Mungall (S6). The school earned a total of 13 Silver and 14 Bronze awards. Amongst the Silver awards, Richard Campbell (S5), Derek Winton (S5) and Adam Reid (S4), only narrowly missed Gold awards, while Richard Alexander (S3) earning Silver was particularly praiseworthy, since he was our youngest competitor ever. All contestants are to be congratulated on their good results, their enthusiasm and effort.

Meanwhile, in the 1993 Scottish Enterprising Maths Competition the Madras team achieved their best result ever, reaching the finals and earning second place, only a few points behind the winners. The team of Jamie Corner and Adam Reid (S4), Graham Redman and Richard Alexander/ (S3) won runners-up shields and book tokens, as well as £100 for the Madras Mathematics department. Congratulations go to them for their magnificent effort.

### Music

The school's musicians have been much in demand. At the end of September they gave a major concert in Holy Trinity where the excellence of the music was enhanced by the superb setting. /

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The concert, at which John Walker from Norway was guest organist, was in aid of the Holy Trinity Restoration Appeal and raised £560. The Pipe Band impressed and delighted guests at the University Overseas Society Ball in the Younger Hall. The Brass Group played their traditional pan in the Remembrance Day services at St. Andrews and at the Old Kirk of Moonzie, on the hill behind Cupar. More recently, they undertook another annual engagement when they provided the music for the dedication of the Christmas Tree outside Holy Trinity. The Senior Choir, who successfully and bravely fought off the flu in order to attend rehearsals, travelled to Edinburgh to record a programme for the BBC. Sadly, the Senior Orchestra has had to be put into abeyance. This is due to the departure of Mrs. Holligan, whose services we regret to lose, and is the first direct effect of the recent rationalisation of the instrumental service. The standard of the annual school Carol Competition was high this year. The three prize winning entries will be performed at the school Christmas Concert. Two are being sent to the BBC *A Song for Christmas* competition and one will also be heard at Falkland Palace and the Lochgelly Centre during the Christmas season.

### **Sport**

At the mid-way point in the winter season, Soccer, Rugby and Hockey teams are all playing strongly, from S1 to S6. In Soccer, the under 13, under 15 and under 16 teams have all reached the quarter-finals in their respective Fife Cups, and the under 13 team has progressed to the fourth round of the Scottish Cup. The Senior, Third Year and Second Year Hockey teams achieved creditable performances in the Fife Schools Tournaments: all reached the finals, and all were unfortunate enough to end as runners-up. The 1st XV Rugby team drew with Perth Academy in their third round tie in the Scottish Cup, but were defeated in the away-fixture replay.

At an individual level, the following boys have represented Fife Schools at Soccer: Gavin Aitken, S6 (under 18), Neil Lumsden, S5 (under 16), Graham Anderson, S4 and Chris Seeley, S4 (under 15). Places have been won in the Midlands Hockey teams by Katherine Farrally, S6 (under 18) and Lindsay McArthur, S5 (under 16), while Robbie Steven, S4, has played for the Midlands under 15 Rugby team.

The Fife Schools Road Relays at Kirkcaldy produced fine team and individual results for Madras. The over 15 team who won their competition and retained the Lockhart Trophy, were: Russell McFarlane, S6 (fastest individual lap), Ian Wallace, S5 (2nd fastest lap) and Sean Berry, S3. The B team of Donal Henretty, Ian Rough and John Anderson (all S3) finished third. At under 15 level, Craig Michie, S2, achieved the second fastest lap and went on to complete the third equal fastest lap at the Scottish Schools Road Relays at Grangemouth.

### **School Board**

Parents will be pleased to know that the Madras College School Board is no longer in danger of dissolution. Seven nominations for the two vacant places have been received and arrangements for the issue of ballot papers are in hand. Many thanks to parents who were willing to come forward at the eleventh hour.

### **And finally.**

A word of thanks to Mrs. Orr (Maths) and Mrs. Watt (Home Economics) who have left during the term. We give them our good wishes for the future.

And to everyone associated with the school, we send the traditional greetings for a *Happy Christmas and a Good New Year.*

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# *Dates for your Diary*

## **SCHOOL HOLIDAY DATES**

<b>Christmas Holiday:</b>	Thursday 23rd December, 1993 to Wednesday 5th January, 1994
<b>February (two days):</b>	Thursday 17th and Friday 18th February, 1994
<b>Easter Holiday:</b>	Monday 28th March, 1994 to Friday 8th April, 1994
<b>May Day:</b>	Monday 2nd May, 1994
<b>June (single day):</b>	Monday 6th June, 1994
<b>Summer Holiday:</b>	Monday 4th July, 1994 to Monday 22nd August, 1994

*All dates inclusive*

## **PRELIM EXAMS**

<b>S3 Exams:</b>	Tuesday 3rd May, 1994 to Friday 20th May, 1994
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## **IN-SERVICE DAYS FOR TEACHERS**

Tuesday 15th March, 1994  
Wednesday 27th April, 1994

## **PARENTS' EVENINGS**

<b>S4</b>	Wednesday 26th January, 1994
<b>S2 (1)</b>	Tuesday 15th February, 1994
<b>S2 (2)</b>	Monday 21st February, 1994
<b>S3</b>	Thursday 28th April, 1994
<b>S1</b>	Monday 23rd May, 1994

## **PTA MEETINGS**

Tuesday 8th March, 1994:	Open all Hours ( <i>Venue:</i> Leuchars Primary School)
Wednesday 16th March, 1994:	Annual General Meeting
Friday 20th May, 1994:	A Social Evening