

6th July

Since Michael Fish's notorious failure to anticipate the Great Storms which wreaked havoc across the UK in 1987 we have become cynical about weather-forecasting and recent days have confirmed that sometimes we are right to feel this way; perhaps we are simply fortunate in having the Great Umpire in the Sky on our side! On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday we defied the odds and revelled in the sunshine.

The Pre-Prep sports afternoon was a great pleasure but Saturday's Open Day with its outdoor sports and social functions was arguably even more enjoyable because of the immense sense of relief at beating the rain. The School community was at its best in the morning with Senior School Sports Day and Open mornings in the Pre-Prep and Prep, with typically impressive Chartwells' lunch and drinks receptions and then Public Speaking (deservedly won by Olivia Galliano's moving speech), live music from the Blues Band, Prep School Sports Day, and OW cricket and Hog Roast later.

Congratulations are due to Cripps and Weymouth Houses for their overall success in the House Athletics cups alongside our thanks to the PE department who marshalled both Senior and Prep sports events. Allen Ramsden and James Knight were commentators who added greatly to the occasion.

A number of parents will no doubt have been in their gardens offering advice to sons and daughters practising their tent construction skills as we head into 4 days of Adventure Training for S10 then S9 near Ashbourne in the Peak District. It is always a source of sadness when some pupils choose to miss the opportunity for a touch of adventure and two nights without home comforts when we live such predictable lives and thanks to Miss Gavin for stepping in at the last minute! The more seasoned Duke of Edinburgh Silver and Gold Expeditions will require no such support for their time in the Peak District and Lake District respectively. We wish them all minimal thunder and lightening.

Our prospective S9s for September arrived today for their second taste of Senior School with an Induction day in School and our new S12 pupils have all now had a chance to meet new friends and teachers and most have begun to make their mark.

I heard great things last week from and about the Prep School pupils who spent time at Rowengate School as part of our on-going relationship with the pupils there and for some it was truly a life-changing experience. We would be interested in other ventures as part of our service to the Wellingborough community as a whole.

The last week of term is one of mixed emotions : many pupils cannot wait to break away from overbearing teachers, parents often feel that the holidays come around too quickly and are too long, some bizarrely, regardless of our finishing date, seek to take away their offspring before term is finished! We will be saying adieu to a number of teaching colleagues in the Senior School this week : Mr and Mrs Hunt, Mr McGuirk, Mrs Shuttlewood, Mr Papworth, Mr Connelly and Mr Hawksworth as well as others in Prep and Pre-Prep Schools including the ever-youthful Mrs Julia Jones. The latter deserves particular mention for her 14 years of committed leadership of the Pre-Prep during which it has developed into a School which receives universal accolades. The donation by WPPPA of funding for a Pre-Prep Pavilion is a wonderful tribute in honour of Mrs Jones' selfless leadership. As I said at Prizegiving we wish them all, wherever they may be going, the very best of good fortune and health.

30th June

Last Thursday's Prizegiving ceremony was regarded by everyone to whom I have spoken as a considerable success and the speech by Ben Ando (OW and BBC Crime Correspondent) for many struck exactly the right chord; Ben spoke about the life skills which the School had inculcated during his time here and how these had stood him in good stead for his professional career. This coming Saturday's Open Day is another major School occasion when the expectation is that pupils and parents will attend for both the sports day and a chance to socialise across all three parts of our School.

There was also general praise for the visit to Oxford undertaken by the Prizewinners when they were given the opportunity to choose their books at Waterstone's and then visit three colleges.

Last Saturday's Summer Ball has long been regarded as a highlight of the social calendar for all of the community as well as being a fitting way to bid a final farewell to our Sixth Form Leavers and their parents. Praise is due to Caroline Anstee and her Friends' organising committee, Chartwells for their high quality meal and the Estates team for their invaluable efforts.

Last Thursday also marked the arrival of 15 new pupils into the 6th form. One hopes that the efforts of their mentors have been worthwhile in making our newcomers welcome and at ease with their unfamiliar surroundings.

One of the great pleasures at Wellingborough is the opportunity to see at first hand pupils of younger ages. The Year 2 Play "The Queen's Magic Cloaks" was one such occasion enjoyed by all who attended over two days.

For our S12 pupils the immediacy of UCAS decision-making is becoming all-too apparent and the visit to the Birmingham University Fair for many will be their first insight into life on a university campus but they will have the chance to see and hear details of Higher Education in general. We must also find time for planning for both Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions starting next weekend as well as S9 and S10 Adventure Training in the Peak District.

23rd June

We are now in the midst of a time of year when everyone wishes things to be completed yesterday; examinations are coming to an end, papers are being marked, reports written and controversial prize decisions have to be made and tempers become short, relationships fraught with angst and mistakes made which often have wider implications.

On Friday two WPCs came into school to interview a number of pupils who have lost items of value recently such as I-Pods and mobile phones. They themselves, as professionals, found it difficult to draw any firm conclusions. In conversation with a colleague from another independent school he informed me that he had experienced a similar situation of late "it always happens at this time of year" he said and 80% of the items had been returned though the parents had not informed the school. If misplaced items are found please let us know. As pupils were reminded this week we will not accept any lack of respect for others' belongings. At the same time we continue to pick up items from outside of the Dining Hall, this weekend 18 separate sets of books were liberated though not before they had become very wet.

A sun-soaked Friday evening playing staff cricket against Kimbolton followed by a quiet beer in a country pub helped to relieve some of the stresses of the moment; the fact that our side with its mix of youthfulness and experience won by a 5 run margin will not be mentioned!

The "proper" cricketers, the School 1st XI, enjoyed wonderful success in the national 20:20 competition where they defeated Felsted School convincingly and now face the renowned Dulwich College in London next Friday. Meanwhile the female S9 and S10 athletes under Mrs Hunt's guidance have continued to excel and this week, despite absentees due to GCSE Chemistry examinations finished a creditable 5th in the Regional finals after finishing second in the County.

Our second Business Lunch was an enormous success. The event combined short presentations from this year's Young Enterprise teams, a "thankyou" to the business advisers who had worked selflessly with the young entrepreneurs as well as taking the opportunity to network with members of the local business community. The organization by Claire Mitchell and Jo Matthews and the help of Jayne Wilson, Debbie Barrett and Whittemore was also much-appreciated.

Wednesday evening's meeting between the representatives from the parents' associations of all three parts of the School and the Governors was an interesting success. Comments such as "I didn't know who the Governors were" and "I had no idea that they had those committees" and "we appreciated the opportunity to hear about what the Governors are planning" were all telling. The channels of communication are now open more widely and this, one hopes, will be built upon in the next 12 months.

The Blues Band has left an impression whenever it has played in recent years. On Sunday it played at Great Harrowden as part of one of the many Macmillan Cancer Fund events which the School supports. The repertoire was wider than normal and probably was the best that many of us have heard from the Band.

16th June

The New Parents' Morning last Saturday proved to be a considerable success for parents and pupils alike. The occasion allows personal contacts to be made between families and the House pastoral staff. There is always a degree of trepidation felt in moving to the Senior School either from the Prep School or from outside our own community so we hope that after this social occasion and the Induction morning in the final week of term in July, most of the fears will have been allayed.

The following students deserve our congratulations for making the County Athletics team having competed for East Northants this weekend: Michael Palladino – Junior Boys 200m, Chris Palfreeman – Intermediate Boys' 1500m, Jessica Dimmock – Junior Girls' 1500m, Emma Walder – Junior Girls' High Jump and Kirsty Stewart – Intermediate Girls' Long Jump. Jack Chopping also is deserving of praise for his whirlwind 46-ball century to help the 1st XI qualify for the last 8 of the national 20:20 Cup which is played this Thursday at home to Felsted.

Two events which are worthy of note this week : on Wednesday the Governors are hosting a communication evening with the three parents' associations in the School in order to update them on School developments and on Friday lunchtime we host our annual Business Lunch; this latter occasion enables us to laud our successful Young Enterprise teams, make a public gesture of thanks to their business advisors and also to welcome members of the business community into School in order to cement our relationship with them.

9th June

There is something quite British about open-air Shakespeare. The production of *Winter's Tale* by the "Rain and Shine Theatre Company" was blessed despite the heavy rains throughout much of the week, with a beautiful evening and a thoroughly memorable performance which took place on the grass in front of the Pre-Prep. The Company has already agreed to return in 2009 and we look forward to an even larger audience than the 120 who enjoyed last Wednesday evening.

This time of year is one where thought is given to planning for next academic year especially with the prospect of next March's Inspection. Much time is being devoted to the curriculum changes, reviewing what has gone well and less well during the last 12 months inside and out of the classroom. Our plans for the middle of the revised school day from September are developing with much work being carried out by one of the new Assistant Head Teachers, Allen Ramsden, whose responsibility it is for leading the planning and implementation of the programme. Our aim is to broaden the opportunity for, and participation in, enrichment activities.

Amongst other things much enjoyment was gained from the Staff Golf Match against the Embankment Club, some satisfaction derived from the planning for changes in the layout of the car park due to be implemented during the summer break. I was also pleased that S9 and S10 School Council representatives met with the interior designers working on the Dining Hall project and we look forward to our sixth formers working even more closely with them over the coming weeks.

Our new School Prefect body, headed by Jamie Wright and Stephanie Graham, will be participating in a training day on Friday. This week also sees a Foundation Meeting to consider the success of the Bursary programme and the progress made in planning for the new Sports Centre amongst other projects. It is always useful to compare notes with colleagues from other schools about our respective experiences and this week I will be doing so with HMC Headmasters from the east of England. Finally on Saturday we host the New S9 Parents' and Pupils' Information Morning where we and Housemasters and mistresses help to ease the natural anxieties and concerns of those joining us in S9 in September.

2nd June

Whilst many of us enjoyed our Half Term break there were countless young people for whom the week meant arduous revision in preparation for the continuation of GCSE, AS and A2 modules. The vagaries of the examination system dictate that some candidates have almost completed their quota of papers whilst others have barely started. It is worth commenting that we are maintaining a careful watching brief over the whole examination system; we are periodically asked about alternatives to A level such as the IB or Pre-U. Colleagues are currently understandably feeling somewhat daunted by planning for new, externally-imposed, A level specifications for September so talk of alternative changes is a little insensitive. We will be watching closely to see how the new specifications develop.

The House Drama Competition, judged by professional actor Rob Jarvis of "Waking the Dead" fame was a night to remember for the huge audience and the 85 participants. One marvelled at the pupil-inspired direction and production of "Miss Saigon", "A Fight for Love" and "St. Trinians". Maintaining the much-improved efforts of recent years, each was worthy of the highest praise. Not to be outdone by their elders, the faces of the Year 2 and 3 pupils in their Pre-Prep Summer Concert revealed the enjoyment of music especially those involved in the Year 2 Strings project. The thrilling run by our girls in the independent schools' national soccer cup ended at the final hurdle last Friday when they succumbed to a stronger, older XI from the International School, Cobham. The travelling band of supporters (including 16 members of staff) was filled with pride as the girls competed every inch of the way and were thwarted by some first class goalkeeping.

A glimpse at the calendar for the first week of the second half of term reveals an incessant round of activity. The experiment of holding an In-service training day on the Monday after what has previously been a week's break, is one where much emphasis will be placed on the subject of Professional Performance Development ("appraisal"); this is followed by welcoming the Senior Deputy Head-elect, David Williams, as he visits us to begin to learn more of what he is letting himself in for when he takes up his post in September, Chartwells' designers are meeting members of the School Council on Tuesday to explain some of their thoughts for the Dining Hall Project and we host a production of "Winter's Tale" on Wednesday.

19th May

We have seen the official departure of our Leavers with a House Prefects' Barbeque, a School Prefects' Dinner, a lunchtime reception on Thursday for those departing for pastures new after their GCSE examinations and the finale of Friday's emotional S13 Leavers' Service. Grown men cried, indeed there was not an eye left dry as our very own Bob Marley, Hamza Yassin, sang Redemption Song, the inimitable Hannah Edwards cried and sang and amongst others Allen Ramsden captured the moment perfectly. We wish all our Leavers well over the coming weeks' examinations and of course beyond that wherever that may be. We also wish our female footballers well in their Independent Schools Cup Final on Friday evening in North London and our Equestrian team deserve our support in the event which we are hosting in Milton Keynes next Wednesday. Last week we offered our best wishes to the U11 girls' Hockey squad playing in the National Finals in Nottingham and we should be proud of their magnificent third place finish on Sunday. Our two S10 Young Enterprise teams, although they did not progress to the Midlands Finals, also deserve the accolades which they received at the County Finals.

With Study Leave starting today the focus switches to the two remaining years in School (S9 and 10) in terms of appearance, punctuality and civilised behaviour. They have one of their high points of the School calendar on Thursday evening with the Junior House Drama Festival. The fact that the event, with its three productions, is completely pupil-directed, means that it possesses a certain charm and idiosyncrasy. Most importantly it allows pupils to appear on stage in front of an audience.

Grandparents' day last week was the sort of success of which we could only have dreamt; the informative presentation by Neil Lyon on the History of the School since its inception in 1595 was excellent, the pupils' musical offerings were well-received and the meal produced by Elaine O'Sullivan and her team was first class. Debbie Whittemore and her organising group deserve the plaudits which have come their way and we will repeat the occasion next year. 12th May

The Waendal Weekend provided a wonderful opportunity to walk, run and cycle in the sun alongside many international visitors. The bonus of raising funds for the Claire Rowland Charity simply added to the pleasure in swapping pleasantries with groups of, amongst others Norwegian scouts, Bavarian and Belgian hikers young and old on a beautiful Sunday morning. It reminded one of the importances of something as simple as a hearty "good morning" and smile which costs nothing at all to any of us but means so much.

Grandparents' Day on Tuesday is eagerly anticipated and the boundary edge and car park gossip is that parents are rather envious of this preferential social treatment afforded to our more mature brethren; I am sure that New Parents Morning on June 14th and Open Day on July 5th will help to redress the social balance!

Leavers' Day this coming Friday is another social occasion which, for some, becomes hugely emotional. The Joint Heads of School, Georgina Wright and James Francis fresh from their excellent organisation of the Sixth Form Ball, have put together a programme of receptions, lunch and a chapel service. This week also, of course, sees the announcement of the new Heads of School, School Prefects, Heads of House and House Prefect appointments; it may sound crass to comment but this is a hugely difficult series of decisions to make and yet another example of simply not being able to please everybody. There will be inevitable disappointment for some because there are many worthy young people in our current S12 and though we have limitations on numbers of School Prefects, all of those who wish for responsibility will have opportunities of one sort or another in the next 12 months. Today we have announced that Georgina and James' successors will be Jamie Wright and Steph Graham.

Traditionally tempers become frayed in the heat of summer so it is always heartening to speak of positives and on Friday I was impressed with a presentation made to me by a number of S10 pupils who, as part of their PSHCE programme with Mrs Burgess, have been investigating what we, as a School, could contribute to the campaign for Fair Trade products. At times we hear of pupils who lack motivation and independence preferring the easy option of "spoon-feeding" so it is uplifting to be reminded of pupil initiative.

There are two other examples of pupil maturity worthy of note : this last weekend's Duke of Edinburgh Award Gold expedition and on Tuesday the County Finals of Young Enterprise; both sets of pupils deserve our support and praise as do the U11 girls' hockey squad as they prepare for next Sunday's National finals in Nottingham. I am delighted to say that we have received comment from the length and breadth of the UK this week about this Blog and the School Website as a whole - so there are at least 3 people reading about us - spread the word and this week why not read some of the new material which has appeared on the site especially under news items?

5th May

With the official Study Leave period only two weeks away and this Bank Holiday weekend heading into an abbreviated penultimate week, our external examination candidates are fast approaching judgement day and we will soon establish if they are equipped for the task ahead. I was heartened to receive correspondence in support of the philosophy that there is no need whatsoever to pull out of sports fixtures

supposedly to revise. As ever a policy does not carry unanimous support and it was disappointing to see our 3rd XI depleted this week; one's thoughts are with those sportsmen and women who enjoyed a hearty social occasion at the 6th Form Ball on Friday night, enjoyed their sport on Saturday and managed productive weekend revision. On the field spirits were raised by the winning draw achieved by the 1st XI against Repton, one of the leading cricketing schools in the country : (205 all out,135-9)

Last week saw our Young Enterprise teams maintaining the School's proud tradition by gaining two of the three places allocated to the Area for the County round of the national competition. Each of the teams has gained much from their experience and, as Mrs Matthews and the advisors agree, the manner in which they have overcome the inevitable problems and fall-outs, is the most satisfying aspect of all - a great lesson for life!

As part of their on-going commitment to improving the traffic arrangements on the School site, the Governors are holding a special meeting to consider the views from myself, Julia Jones and Richard Mitchell as well as a number of parental suggestions which have been forwarded to us over recent weeks.

28th April

One of the great pleasures in one's teaching career is meeting up with former pupils in a social context as well as reminiscing and hearing of the way in which they are succeeding in life beyond school. The rarified atmosphere of Lincoln College, Oxford afforded one that opportunity on Friday evening for the OW Oxbridge Dinner. The presence of young OWs Naomi Gibbs (02-07 Marsh, Lincoln), Nithya Natarajan (01-07, Weymouth, St Edmund Hall), Tom Harris (98-05, Garne's, St Edmund Hall) and Richard Saynor (97-04, Cripps, Mansfield) amongst others, made for a memorable evening.

The week was also indelibly etched upon the year's sporting memory because of last Thursday's victory by the girls' football side in the semi-final of the ISGFA Cup. The visitors, Repton, proved formidable opponents and it was only in the last few minutes of extra time, with the dreaded prospect of penalties that the girls secured a deserved 4-2 win. We look forward to the final. The U11 Girls' Hockey squad have also achieved national recognition with their victory at Cannock in the Midlands Finals during which they were unbeaten and conceded only one goal. They too await their final on May 18th. The 1st XI Cricket side continued its promising start to the season with a resounding victory at MCS Oxford. A final point worth making, respectfully but firmly, to those cricketers who have GCSEs and A levels in the coming weeks and to their parents: our policy is quite clear on cricket fixtures and that is that we are firmly of the opinion, as are all of our fellow local independent schools, that to continue to play matches aside from the height of the exam programme, is good for both mind and body. If time management is good and social life is sacrificed, for what is only a short while, cricket and other activities can act as an invaluable relaxation.

Much work is being conducted by my colleagues as part of the planning for the re-structured School Day/Week for September and research is concentrating upon the practicalities of developing our opportunities for cerebral activities during the lunch period.

Unfortunately the external speaker, who today (Monday 28th) was due to speak to the 6th form on the subject of Chlamydia, was forced to cancel at short notice. We apologise for this and the talk will be rescheduled and details publicised. Tuesday evening sees the second of two social evenings which we are hosting for Pre-Prep parents to meet the Headmistress-elect, Jocelyn Everatt. Last week's event for Reception and Nursery parents was a real success.

Finally, this week we announced the imminent departure at the close of the Trinity Term of Richard McGuirk, Housemaster of Cripps since 2003, who is to take up an appointment as teacher of Chemistry at Rugby School. We have begun the process of finding a suitable replacement for him and will acknowledge formally his considerable contributions to house and school life at the end of term.

21st April

The annual Old Weymouthian Lunch must be a quite unique event - its intriguing background is explained on the Weymouth House web page - each year despite a dwindling band of these delightful octogenarians, the appreciation which they show for the company and musical offering of the Weymouth S12 girls is genuinely heartfelt. This year we were also graced with the presence of Alison Caton, the OW President, Stephen and Christine Ostler former Director of Music and Housemaster of Weymouth House and Neil Lyon the School Archivist. The other bright point of a thoroughly bitter Saturday, when many literally froze whilst playing or watching tennis and cricket, was a superb unbeaten century from Jason Dunkley in the 1st XI's entertaining draw at Uppingham.

We would like to give advance warning that the annual Waendal Walk is fast approaching and we will be raising funds for the School Charities on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

This first half of term is always particularly stressful with attention drawn to driving especially amongst 6th form and it is sometimes forgotten that we are constantly trying to introduce measures which enhance safety for our pedestrians. We are periodically urged by PP and PS parents to banish 6th form drivers from the School site. This would undoubtedly ease pressure on the car park. It would, however, not please 6th formers who are constantly seeking greater privileges rather than having them removed. It would also not address the selfish driving of those who are more experienced and perhaps, as was suggested this week, they should be "named and shamed". It appears not to be widely known to parents of younger pupils but last term we banned three pupils for periods following complaints from parents or teachers who had witnessed unacceptable driving. We would urge witnesses to pass any further evidence of such incidents directly to the Headmaster's Office where each report will be investigated by the Deputy Headmaster. This coming week sees the first of two social evenings where we will introduce Jocelyn Everett, the Headmistress-elect of the Pre-Prep School.

I am asked at times about our policy towards bullying and anti-social behaviour; no school is immune from instances of unacceptable behaviour. It is not, in any way, endemic and we will continue to be proactive across the whole School. The simple fact of the matter is that we respond methodically when these matters are uncovered.

14th April

We returned last week at a time when maintained schools were just beginning their Easter break, the snow fell and the sun shone; it is simply indicative of the way in which so much of what we do at this time of year is betwixt and between : we encourage those in Years 3,8 and 13 to focus on the present and not the new adventures which lie around the corner. GCSE and A level examinations occupy the minds of many families and teachers' focus is on ensuring that their charges who have left preparation to the last minute, are guided back onto the right path.

It was a pleasure to hear The Chapel Choir sing on its visit to Lichfield Cathedral and receive the plaudits of the clergy and congregation. The Senior School Sports Awards Evening was also a huge success as we, through a very professional presentation, honoured and recognised teams and individuals who have excelled in the Michaelmas and Lent Terms.

The Marsh House Charity Dinner on Friday evening was excellently organised and supported and raised over £600 for charity. Any reference to local or national media will in little time see a reference to the question of Alcohol and its mis-use amongst teenagers and sometimes with even younger children. In a community such as ours there appears to be a broad range of views as to approach and level of tolerance. Regularly I have conversations and correspondence with parents who express dismay over the apparent unwillingness of others to police alcohol use. We attempt to educate pupils, support the law of the land, extoll the virtues of healthy, non-alcoholic drinks and controlled moderate drinking of alcohol; we are, though, in the hands of parents. This week we are holding an Alcohol Awareness presentation for S13 but would like to develop this further in the future by involving parents.

The weekend saw a successful start to the Cricket season despite the cold, biting wind and the counter attraction of a Twickenham cup-final for Saints supporters. It is a pleasure to welcome back Noel Knight once again in his capacity as School Cricket Professional and 1st XI coach and he will have been pleased with the convincing victory over Bedford Modern.

On Saturday 19th we host the annual Old Weymouthian Lunch for those wonderfully youthful octogenarians who were evacuated to Wellingborough School in 1940 from Weymouth College on the south coast. The girls of Weymouth House entertain them over lunch and our visitors regale us with tales of School here in the 1940s; It is a quite uplifting, unique experience for us all!

We have spoken for some time about the idea of recognising the active role played by many grandparents in the lives of pupils here at Wellingborough by having a dedicated Grandparents' Day. Details of the event on Tuesday 13th May were mailed this week. Readers might also be interested in the Ladies' Macmillan Charity Golf Day on Friday 23rd May, details of which can be found in The Schools/Community/Macmillan Golf Day or via a link on the Website Calendar page.