



6th July 2024

Dear all,

As the preparations for Gaudy are finalised, as the main College prizes get allocated, as the last reports get written, there is, as ever, a sense of rhythm about the final stages of term. One of the things about schools is that much is repetitive; a cycle comes to an end . . . and then another begins. But, of course, for all those who are leaving, it is a significant moment; for boys it is the end of five (for most) formative years. For parents, if it is their youngest son, it might be many more years than that. For leaving staff, they are departing a community into which they have thrown themselves; it is much more than a job that they move on from.

For Ben Holden, it has been 37 years. It is difficult to sum up his contribution to the College: as a don, Head of Department, Tutor and Sub-Warden. But I want to try. Partly because the publicity will annoy him. Partly because such service deserves recognition. And partly because he represents the very best of Radley. The very nature of the role of DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) is such that most people have no clue as to what it entails and how much is going on; Ben has, with calm thoughtfulness, dealt with all that has been thrown at him. He is full of humour, kindness and decency. He was a wonderful tutor in D and a brilliant colleague throughout his time. His wise advice has been invaluable to me and I know that Council would say the same. He has been a remarkable Radley servant. And, as I was writing these words, I looked out of the window. There was Ben, on his penultimate afternoon at the College, playing croquet on the mansion lawn with some Shells. Enjoying their company; more importantly, they were enjoying his. The consummate schoolmaster. He will be missed.

We wish all the very best to him, his family and all who move on from Radley at the end of the year. That includes the 6.2s of course; they have been a lovely year to work with . . . they have an energy, togetherness and sense of fun that has been great to see, and they have been of immense support to each other in difficult times. The Leavers' Dinner, as it always is, was a particularly lovely occasion; I looked round the Dining Hall at a scene where dons and boys interleaved round the tables, talking to each other more as friends than anything else. It reminded me of what makes a boarding school special. They worked hard for their exams and we wish them all the best for August; we will, of course, be on hand to help them with any questions on results day and beyond. As I think about universities, I would like to congratulate the 18 boys who received US offers at some of the best universities in the world; we are delighted by that, as we were by the eleven Oxbridge places (and two organ and one choral scholarships) early in the year.

The main College Prizes for the year have been awarded as follows:

Senior Prefect Prize	Zach Wickens
Outstanding Contribution	Orlo Clark
Richards Gold Medal for Academics	Bernardo Mercado
Wade Prize for Leadership	Henry Daubeney
HAC Prize for Courage	Max Newell
Simon Molyneux Prize for Commitment	Yiyang Xu
Hector Scott Russell Chalice for Performing Arts	William Lowrie

Congratulations to them and to the many prize-winners from all year-groups.

I want to thank the outgoing pups and prefects. I say to them as they start their year that they do not realise how much they set the tone and how much their advice is to us as useful. This year's group has been no different and I pay a particular tribute to the Senior Four: Zach Wickens (Senior Prefect); Sepehr Saadat (Second Prefect); Hyunjo Kim (Senior Academic) and William Lowrie (Senior Co-Curricular) and, in turn, welcome their successors: respectively William Pillar, Nicholas Squire, Luke Chalmers and Angus Lowrie.

It has been a vintage year in so many ways. Not content with the rugby triumph from last term, we have seen the debating team win the prestigious ESU Mace Debating national title. The robotics team that finished second in the nationals in March went on to be the best UK team at the world championships in Dallas. The golf team finished fifth nationally. So did the tennis team. And the J16 oarsmen (A & B) won gold medals at National Schools'. The croquet team are unbeaten. It has been a year of real success: a tribute to the hard work put in by staff and boys alike as well as the talent we have to work with.

I often say that one of the problems of being Warden at Radley is that there is so much going on that it is impossible to attend everything I want to. More than that, it is impossible even to keep up with it all. 'Bulletin' each week gives a good summary and Max Horsey's video unit does an incredible job at keeping a record of everything; the digital library is extensive. Let me give a sample of the term's events: a wonderful taster concert of the music for the upcoming College Musical *Les Misérables* (book your tickets for November!); visits from Adam Sheingate (politics professor from Johns Hopkins), Dominic West, Frank Luntz and Yemi Osinbajo (former VP of Nigeria); one of our hounds – Bagel – winning the main prize at the South of England Show; the chamber choir singing evensong at St Paul's Cathedral; 33 boys and dons running the Blenheim 7k; a new collaboration between the orchestra and the bands scene with the 'Symphonic Pops' concert; boys and dons doing the biennial Peter Cook dramatic monologue competition; a series of organ recitals; the CCF inspection day, complete with Apache helicopter; exhibitions of boys' work in Design and Art; a 'futures week' for the returning Vths (including almost all of the new entrants to 6.1); the Ferguson singing prize; the mock election; all 18 6.1s who took the LAMDA Gold Medal public speaking exam achieving a distinction the Shell play *'Kick-off'*; Warden's music. In addition to all that goes on routinely, of course: lessons, exams, matches, inter-social competitions I am very proud of all that we manage to fit in . . . you can see why the boys are exhausted at the end of term! It is a remarkable place.

In the midst of all that, we continue to develop our partnership work. Do take a little time to look at the report on what we do, delivered in the form of [Voices](#), where those involved tell something of their stories. I hosted a dinner recently for a number of local connections that are involved: politicians, local business people, charity leads, primary school heads – to discuss what we are trying to do and how it might be refined and improved. It was heartwarming to hear how much what we do is appreciated and how it has begun to have real traction and, crucially, not be seen as a rich school handing out treats but rather real partnership. In turn, I was able to share the value of the work in terms of the impact it has on our boys. We need to forget the hostile political context for a moment - difficult, I know – and see this for what it is: a crucial part of what we do and who we are.

But then the political context rears its head again. I write this section slightly bleary-eyed: the political junkie that I am did not allow the foregone conclusion of the exit poll to prevent me staying up all night. We know that we are now in a world where the government will seek to introduce tax policies that are detrimental to our sector; we will continue to be in touch with you as that develops and we appreciate the concerns that it raises; I am confident, however, that Radley will remain robust and continue to offer the wonderful education that we do. The seismic political shift was felt at Radley too . . . not to the extent of a Labour majority but a clear rejection of the Conservatives among the boys in favour of Reform. That might generate some conversations over the Summer at home . . .

As you know, we have spent some time this year on a 'digital conversation' and I am grateful to those parents who took part in the focus groups that we had earlier in this term; many volunteered to do that and we were pleased to have two very useful discussions. Inevitably, views varied. I reiterate what I always say: there are no easy answers, we will continue to pursue the approach that seeks to move from the 'restrictive' to the 'controlled permissive' and, crucially, we will carry on the conversation.

We intend to communicate more regularly on these issues and offer more assistance to you as parents. To that end, we will be launching our new approach in September; we will communicate that with all parents through ‘Bulletin’ and in the form of a Parent webinar. Boys have been told that there will be tighter restrictions on phone access next year for juniors; we are not at this stage changing our approach for the Sixth Form but will encourage more discussion and ‘nudge’-style behaviour management for and with them. As an example of that, it might be worth parents thinking about investing in a lock-box such that boys then only need one moment of will-power to lock their phone away for a defined period: an example can be found [here](#). It is just one of many options available. We are likely to conduct a pilot experiment in some Socials with these next term.

The new times for phone access for boys will be:

	Phone Access		
	Monday – Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Shell	1800-1900	1700-2115 *	1700-1930 *
Remove	1730-2145 †	After lessons-2200	Post-Chapel-2145
Vth	Post-period 5-2145 †	After lessons-2215	Post-Chapel-2145
Sixth Form	All the time		

† Phones will be handed in during Prep.

* Coinciding with the afternoon roll call in Social.

More information to come in September; we will also be reviewing iPad use through a new committee involving dons and boys and that will be a focus of ‘the conversation’ over next year. Thank you for your support on these matters; as ever, we also want to be clear in promoting positive behaviours as a means of achieving the right results.

The challenges of the digital world and the new political landscape are important matters but are not what I want to end the year with. Let me close with some reflections on the Leavers’ Recitals that have been a highlight of the term for me. Boys who are about to leave voluntarily organise their own concerts and play to an audience of family, friends, and dons. What I love is the variety: the styles of music, the level of organisation and preparation (very varied!), the length, the range of presentation (from hesitant thank-yous to well-crafted compering and speeches), the slightly random nature of the audiences. It makes them authentic. But I love the consistency too: there is always a real warmth: in the generosity of the support, in the willingness of staff to give up time to accompany and their obvious pride in their students and in the genuine gratitude from the boys as they thank their teachers.

Authenticity and warmth. I hope, in the midst of all we do and achieve, these are never lost. They are inherently good things. They make Radley what it is.

I thank all the staff, academic and operational and you as parents for all that we have achieved together this year and the boys for making it, as ever, all such fun. Have a great Summer.



John Moule
Warden