



28 March 2025

Dear Parents

It is the last Monday of term. In the Theatre, three hundred boys are gathered to hear the annual Rathbone lecture: a tour de force on the subject *'Winning in the age of AI - How technology is shaping the new world order'* by Robert Bassett Cross MC. Questions range from the ethics of AI to its environmental impact, from its existential threat to its impact in the field of war. It was possible to leave the evening reassured by the emphasis on the fact that the human values and skills needed in the new digital world will be those that boarding teaches: character, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and compassion. It was possible as well to be excited at the opportunities of such a world or to be concerned at the pace of change. It was even possible to be a trifle scared by the potential implications. What was impossible is that anyone left the theatre without broader understanding and things to think about. It was exactly what a lecture should be.

At almost the same time, in Oxford Town Hall, The Mighty Orchestra were playing. A collaboration between Radley, two state secondary schools, and the Thames Valley Youth Orchestra (representing 23 schools) working with 162 pupils from 9 primary schools to produce an outstanding concert as the culmination of their Music Flood year, the centrepiece of our music partnership work. Few things make me prouder than seeing our boys contributing to such a patently good thing and for it to be embedded in what we do. It is of course thrilling to see the impact it has in music making across the county; it is equally exciting to see our boys learn so much through the process; for music, of course, read sport, Countryside Centre, robotics, phonics, reading or countless other activities . . . all part of what we do. I heard a story this week about a boy in his final session (of fifteen) with a primary school who got the group together at the end. Some final words of inspiration? Apparently not: he just said thank you to the boys and girls for having him. I like that.

So, on Monday evening, we had intellectual stimulation and provocative debate. We also had community partnership. All in a Radley day. And, of course, the day before there was a stunning concert in Chapel. And the day after we had hordes of boys go off to compete at Rosslyn Park, Queen's or the Schools' Head of the River. Not to be outdone, and not to be forgotten, all this happens as coursework gets completed, language orals kick off the exam season and the routines of the end of term need to be completed. All needing don support, time, expertise and inspiration. It is always an exhausting time of year. But it is always rewarding too.

There is much to celebrate. I want to congratulate the fourteen boys who received Oxbridge offers in the recent round; we know all too well how difficult those places are to get and that they still - although not the only destinations of merit, far from it - represent the highest of academic

accolades. Well done too to those boys who have achieved high marks, medals or both in various subject Olympiads and competitions: Maths, Chemistry, Biology, Linguistics. I am delighted that over 70 boys entered the Serpentes essay prize, organised by our academic prefects and a highlight of our academic year. Well done to a junior maths group who were 4th in the UK in an international maths competition with over 500 teams.

While it is always nice to have individual moments or one-off successes in the College, it is all the more satisfying when such successes are repeated. Last year we had one ensemble reach the national final of the ProCorda competition; this year there were two: a guitar and a saxophone quartet. Last year we had one team do well enough at the national Vex Robotics Championships to qualify for the world championships in Dallas; this year we have two. We were delighted that our debating team won the ESU Mace competition last year; this year's team has just reached the final again. Well done to all involved.

As ever in the Spring Term, we have had two main plays on stage in the Theatre: the Removes' *'Treasure Island'* gave a number of boys the chance to live out their inner pirate and the 6.1 production - *'The Hearing of J. Robert Oppenheimer'* - was a tour de force of line learning, sustained character acting and excellent staging of what was a challenging text. With pretty impressive accents too! In addition, we saw two successful ventures in association with other OX14 schools: a 'Shakespeare Shorts' evening and a script-writing competition, both rewarding and both won by Radleians. Not to be outdone, the musicians took 73 boys to Salamanca for a very successful tour; other highlights included a wonderful Battle of the Bands and a stunning Choral / Orchestral concert in Chapel where they reprised some of the tour repertoire. They continue, of course, peripatetically as the new Music School begins to take shape; more on that in the next edition of The Radleian next term.

I am a great fan of the annual Declamations competition and this year had some real highlights; although it may be invidious to say so, I think that the Vths were perhaps the best group final in my time at the College. A joy to listen to . . . and the reprise evening means I get to see the best of them all twice! Do look at the video if you get the chance. It was lovely to have one of the great retired stalwarts of the Common Room, John Beasley, himself an accomplished stage performer and great supporter of the tradition, back to judge. Not surprisingly, he did a wonderful job.

Even John's legendary status fades a little into the background when compared to that of Jon Buzzard, who retires from his job as IT Systems Manager at the end of term after 44 years at the College. He is a legend in more ways than one; as the controller of all things digital at Radley for many years and as a man who very much does not seek the limelight, there are those among the boys who have questioned at times whether, in fact, he exists. It was a joy to have him come up at the end of this morning's Warden's Assembly to loud applause so that I could shake his hand: not only to dispel the myth but to say thank you for a remarkable career of service to us all. He will be missed.

Well done to the 3rd VIII and J14A Octo that won at Schools' Head and the National Scullery respectively. Congratulations too to the 3rd XI football who won their league (with a nod to their

coach Mr Jewell in his 26th and last season as a football coach) and the unbeaten 5th XI. To the two pairs, who as I write, are looking forward to their National Rackets pairs semi-finals later on today. To the JC2 and M3 hockey teams who narrowly missed out on unbeaten seasons. To the Midgets and Colts 7s teams who made it through to day 2 at Rosslyn Park. To the Junior Colts rugby side that won the U15 National Plate competition. To the J15 Real Tennis duo who had to play each other in the national final. To the two boys who qualified to run in the English Schools' Cross-Country Championships.

Thank you for your support for all we do. When I talk to prospective parents and when I address the parents of the new Shells each September, I always stress the importance of partnering with them in ensuring that each boy makes the most of a Radley education. I am incredibly fortunate to lead a team of academic and operational staff that are dedicated to that being the case . . . but it only works with your support as well. So for all that support – visible and invisible – we are very grateful.

Back to the lecture, though. It is all too easy to get carried away by the busy-ness and success of the term; to live just in the bubble of Radley College. I hope that the boys engage with the world beyond, understand the issues, think about them, develop ideas on them and care about what is happening. It is a cliché to say that we live in remarkable times, but clichés are by their definition often right. It is why I am pleased that Politics is a popular subject; it is why I am delighted that Debating is strong in the school; it is why I am pleased that there were so many good questions as the lecture came to an end; it is why it is so important that through our partnership work, boys are exposed to a world beyond our gates.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Moule', with a horizontal line underneath.

John Moule
Warden