

Junior Prize Giving 2015

Councilor Jeffels, Chairman of NYCC, governors, guests, staff, parents and members of the Lower School. Welcome to Ripon Grammar School's Junior Prizegiving 2015. Thank you for giving up your time to share in what has been another year of exceptional achievement and success. I find it increasingly difficult to summarise the many outstanding successes that students have managed to achieve given the range of activity both in and out of the classroom. But what always endures and I hope will be the hallmark of students at RGS in perpetuity is the unfailing modesty and dignity whether it be in success or failure. The mark of anyone is not how they conduct themselves in victory but in defeat. I am pleased to say that students at RGS allow their actions to do the talking.

Unfortunately my actions did the talking when I did the London Marathon but I would like thank all of you who sponsored or encouraged me; after 20 miles I certainly needed it. It is always dispiriting to be overtaken by a gorilla, rhino or a banana but when the Wolverhampton Bobsleigh team pulled up alongside and threatened to overtake me, I began to wonder whether training had any effect on my ability to run. But the occasion was incredible and it restored my faith in humanity. Everyone was wonderfully encouraging and kind on the day. The crowd held up signs like 'well done random stranger' and 'you are now my favourite runner' which I knew I wasn't. In the less salubrious parts of London, I saw a sign saying 'run like you have stolen something'. People who had collapsed were being helped back on their feet by other runners who sacrificed their finishing time. I even ran alongside Jesus who was carrying his cross. 'Come on Jesus, you need to speed up a bit' was one of the more surreal cries of encouragement of the day. He was running barefoot and it would have indeed been a miracle had he finished judging by the exhaustion etched on his face. I would say that the positive atmosphere which was the hallmark of the marathon is the same I experience I have at RGS. People are kind to each other. People encourage each other. People strive to succeed and are willing to challenge themselves. I would encourage all of you to do the London Marathon one day if you can. The oldest person to complete the marathon course was Fauja Singh who made it around the course in just over 6 hours. She was 93. Please don't tell me you are too old. And I raised over £3000 for the Calvert Trust which is the most important outcome of all. I am very grateful to everyone who sponsored me; every minute I ran I thought that's another sum of money raised for the charity. It made my effort feel valued. Feeling valued reminded me of a true story I heard about the late, great Tom Finney, footballer formerly of Preston North End and England. At the end of the season he was renegotiating his contract for the forthcoming season. He went in to see the manager. The manager was delighted with him. 'I will pay you £25 per week during the season and in the summer, when we stop playing I will still pay you £25 per week'. Finney was delighted and he left the office. Tommy Docherty also played for Preston at the time and went on to manage Manchester United and Scotland. He went in to see the manager. 'I am very pleased with your efforts. I will pay you £25 per week during the football season, and in the summer when we stop playing, I will pay you £17.50' said the manager. Docherty was happy. However, Docherty was chatting to Finney and realized that his pay was less so he went to see the manager for an explanation for this perceived gross injustice. The manager said that Finney was a better player and therefore he was going to pay him more. Docherty replied 'he is not a better player than me in the summer.....'

So where do I start? Last summer's exam results were superb with record results at GCSE with over two thirds of the grades being at A*/A. The value added progress measure of 1042 placed RGS firmly as one of the top performing schools in the North of England once again. At A level, over 76% of the

grades were A*/B. Value added measures suggest that students at RGS achieve a third of a grade higher at A2 than expected. The school finished 70th in the country in both the Daily Telegraph and the Sunday Times Parent Power Supplement. The success on the sports field has been exceptional this year, particularly in the lower school. Moreover there was success in music, business and enterprise and in virtually every possible sphere of school activity you can imagine. No wonder the record numbers applying for places in the sixth form and very high levels of interest for entry in first and third form. We were visited by the Good Schools Guide to update their entry; I quote 'Pupils friendly, courteous, articulate and insightful; confident not arrogant, with a real pride in their school. Lots of heads up, eye contact and smiles as you walk around. This is a can do, will do school – pupils talk of friendly rivalry pushing each to achieve. Strong protestations from both girls and boys on question of true equality 'not an issue here'. On election of school officers 'it's the best person for the job every time'.'

I was delighted to announce that former head girl at Ripon Grammar School, Katharine Viner, has been appointed as the first female editor-in-chief of the Guardian Newspaper in the 194 year history of the newspaper. She is the only female editor of a major UK national daily and is a tremendous inspiration for all the students at Ripon Grammar School; her appointment was thoroughly well-deserved. Katharine's speech at Speech Day back in 2005 was wonderful and she epitomized all that is good about the school; she was modest, talented and engaging. I am just as delighted to introduce Professor Caroline Wilkinson who is also a conspicuously successful Old Riponian. Professor Wilkinson is a British anthropologist based at Liverpool John Moores University, formerly of Dundee University. She is best known for her work in forensic facial reconstruction and has been a contributor to many television programmes on the subject as well as the creator of a reconstructed head of King Richard III of England. The king's skeleton was found under a car park in Leicester during an archaeological dig. The reconstructed face has a slightly arched nose and prominent chin, similar to features shown in portraits of Richard III painted after his death. Historian and author John Ashdown-Hill said seeing it was "almost like being face to face with a real person". This is an area of design I was unaware of so I am looking forward to what Professor Wilkinson has to say.

Professor Wilkinson holds a PhD in facial anthropology from the University of Manchester and first became known to television audiences as a result of her regular appearances on the BBC series Meet the Ancestors. She is an author of several works on the subject of facial reconstruction.

In December 2014, Professor Wilkinson created a facial reconstruction of St Nicholas, working from anatomical knowledge, tissue depth data, and the latest reconstruction technology. From his skeletal remains, it was known that his broken nose had "healed asymmetrically, giving him a characteristic nose and rugged facial appearance". Not the sort of person you would like to find in your lounge covered in soot and stealing your sherry on Christmas Eve.

The **extension to Johnson House** has progressed very well and the project has been delivered on time. It will increase capacity in Johnson House and will provide state of the art accommodation; I am pleased to say it is virtually full for September. I am also delighted that the refurbishment of the **wash rooms in School House** will be done over the summer holiday. Simpson's the contractors for the extension to Johnson House have agreed to oversee the project and increase the shower capacity

for junior boy boarders. This is an essential development following the Ofsted inspection last summer.

The **consequential improvements** to the existing Johnson House building will include window replacement on the north, south and west elevations. This will improve insulation and will also improve the appearance of the building and reduce energy consumption as well.

The **access improvements** are scheduled to take place now that funding has been secured. Ramps will be installed at the end of the admin corridor, the clock tower entrance and the end of the North Corridor. The admin corridor ramp will necessitate structural changes to the medical room whilst the other ramps will require automatic doors to be installed. I have written to Julian Smith MP to attempt to speed up the planning process for the external ramps since, instead of the summer, the installation of these may need to be delayed until October half term when planning approval is finally gained.

There are a number of staffing changes: Mrs Gallagher, who is currently teaching at Heworth Grange Comprehensive School in Gateshead, is joining the **biology** department and Mrs Garmory, who is re-locating with her husband from the South of England, is joining the **art** department. Mrs Gallagher will replace Mr Weir and Miss Garmory will replace Mr Duckworth who will be teaching just one day next year. Miss Ireland has been appointed to the English department; she is a former student of RGS who left in 2007. Miss Ireland is a talented athlete and keen on drama. Mrs Solden has been appointed to teach food/nutrition. Mrs Swainston retires after 35 years at RGS and her contribution to the school over this time has been immense. Those of you who have had the privilege to be taught by her will know her to be always enthusiastic and cheerful. Most importantly, she always cared passionately for all of the students in her care. The languages department will not be the same without her. She will be much missed not only by students but also by staff. We wish her well in her retirement and hope very much that she will keep in touch. Mrs Lewis is moving to Oswestry to take up new challenges and will be replaced by Mr Highton, formerly of Prince Henry's School, Otley. Mr Weir has secured a post at North Durham Academy and will be replaced by Mrs Caldwell who will return from maternity leave. Mrs Ball is seeking new challenges abroad and will be moving to Italy to live. Our best wishes go to her for her new life there.

Mrs Pybus has already started in the role of **bursar** and she will work alongside Mrs Forder until she retires at the end of this term after 27 years of dedicated and outstanding service to the school. Mrs Bennington's post of **cover supervisor** has been made established and she will commence her role in earnest in September. Mrs Schofield, in the design technology department, has gone on maternity leave and Mr Nicholson is covering her maternity leave.

We will miss all of the leaving staff and our best wishes go to them. **Applause.**

At the end of the academic year I would like you to thank the staff once again for their unstinting commitment and dedication to the students' welfare and academic progress. The strength of the relationships between staff and students is excellent and is one of the enduring and most recognizable strengths of the school. This was in evidence no better than on the Upper Sixth Leavers' evening in May. This is an evening which has been going for almost 10 years and it provides an opportunity to say farewell to parents as well as students. And what a tearful farewell it

was. The students in the upper sixth were an incredibly close year and the friendships forged in their school days will endure, I am sure. I hope they will keep in touch with each other as well as the school in the years to come. The excellent relationships between staff and students are forged through the opportunities outside the classroom as much as inside. The opportunities provided by the staff in music, drama, sport and trips as well as clubs, societies, competitions, work experience, Young Enterprise, Prince's Trust enrich the students' education and facilitates the development of attributes such as resilience, optimism, enthusiasm, creativity, humility, emotional intelligence, sensitivity and determination.

Trips such as the French Trip for the Second Form, Mr. Clarke's annual RE trip to London, Mr. Margerison's junior ski trip, the First form trip to the Deep, Bewerley Park, the netball trip to Somerset, the Berlin trip, trips to the Holderness Coast, Second Year French trip to Normandy to name only but a handful.

This is just a tiny snapshot of all the activities which go on and I am grateful to all the staff for providing students with such a wide range of opportunity to learn and develop skills outside the classroom. Please put your hands together to thank the staff for their work this year **both** in and out of the classroom. **Applause.**

Congratulations to Ted Wainwright's RGS U/14 rugby team who won the Grand Final play offs of the White Rose Rugby Series at the Shay Stadium, Halifax.

The White Rose Rugby Series currently includes seventy schools from all corners of Yorkshire and matches have been played throughout the season to select champions from the four quarters of Yorkshire. Man of the Tournament was Evan Rees. RGS beat Rodillian Academy, St. Mary's Menston and Guiseley School. Ted Wainwright, Bertie Black, Oliver Williams, Evan Rees, Cole Potts and Harvey Toomes are with the Yorkshire Rugby Academy. The Under 14 team were also runners-up in the St Peter's invitational tournament.

The KS3 boys and girls were crowned **North Yorkshire badminton champions**. This is an excellent reflection on the badminton talent in school and my thanks go to Mr Willis for his support of the sport which has gone from strength to strength. **Both the U14 boys' and girls' teams are area champions:** Connor Eddleston, Harry Edwards, Alex Edwards, Christian Cavell-Taylor and Henry Exley for the boys and for the girls Libby Rickard, Jemima Strachan, Georgina Turner and Sophie Richardson. Connor Eddleston and Simeon Mitchell have represented Yorkshire.

The U14 netball team acquitted themselves tremendously well in the national finals, reaching the semi-finals where they lost to Hulme School, the eventual winners of the national competition. The team comprises Molly Reed, Katie Reed, Emily Reed, Amy Mackenzie, Lucy Williams, Sophie Richardson, Amelia Borchard, captain Jessica Merrin and is now the highest ranked state school in the country in this age group; an exceptional performance. Jessica Merrin, Emily Reed, Katie Reed and Amy Mackenzie have gained county representative honours. Pheobe Ingram, Harriet Strachan, Olivia Borchard and Isabella Binks are all competing in the Regional Netball Championships with the Rockets Netball team.

The **U14 hockey team** were unbeaten in the area tournament and are again the Harrogate & Craven champions and the **Harrogate & Craven U13 A hockey team** played in the 7-a-side Inter Area tournament and finished 1st, winning all their games. Six of the girls in the team were from RGS: Bethan Ratcliff, Katie Reed, Jessica Hasson, Penny Baker, Harriet Strachan and Olivia Borchard. Lucy Williams has represented North of England at hockey whilst Amelia Borchard, Kathryn Barrett and Millie Simenacz have been selected to train with the Yorkshire hockey squad. Rosie Barker, Maisie Heap, Harry Williams and Henry Hanson have represented North Yorkshire at hockey.

In athletics, Sola Sowole is the 100m Yorkshire champion whilst also representing the area in 200m and long jump. Kathryn Barrett (discus), Rose Pallikkara (shot putt), Harvey Toomes (discus), Ted Wainwright (shot putt) and Oliver Willams (long jump) also represented the area. The inter girls team has qualified for the NE finals of the Track and Field Cup whilst Isabella Binks (hurdles), Sola Sowole (100 meters), Libby Rickard (1500 meters), Elliot Hutchinson (long jump) and Ted Wainwright (shot) have all been crowned area champions.

Lewis O'Donnell, who captains North Yorkshire, and Finlay Bean have both represented Yorkshire at cricket whilst Sophie Richardson has been selected to play **cricket** for Yorkshire U15's women's team. She played against Cheshire and her team won. Harriet Sowray, Millie Simenacz and Lucy Verity have been selected to play cricket for North Yorkshire. Sam Maddison has been selected for the Lord's Taverners' Under 13 team.

The second year team of Katie Reed, Amy Edmondson, Tilly Wills, Tom Senior and Toby Saynor won the North Yorkshire mixed **volleyball** competition at the Mount School in York.

In swimming both the junior and senior teams qualified for the finals of the **Leeds and District Swimming Championships** and finished as runners up. Bethan Ratcliffe has represented North Yorkshire at football and Joshua Halliday is a member of the Chesterfield Junior Football Academy and Marijka Booth reached the National Rock Climbing Finals where she finished 16th. Catherine Garnett finished 8th in the national Under 13 diving finals.

Elliott Hutchinson has won four awards and 2 gold medals in Yorkshire under 16 **dance** festivals even though Elliott is in the second year.

The junior **Schools Challenge team defeated** Barnard Castle and Argyle House School in a 'University Challenge' style quiz. Congratulations to the team of Jasper Wood, Molly Cushing, James Dobbs and Marcus Tomlinson on defeating Hymers College in the regional stage too. They then faced Nottingham High School in the intra-regional finals but finally succumbed.

The **AMPS awards business team** of Gus and Oscar Smith, Jasper Wood, Euan Macarthur, Angus Williams, George Vivian, Joe Willis and Oliver Parry were commended how well they organized the reception for the event at the Royal Hall in Harrogate.

The RGS entry in the countywide North Yorkshire **anti-bullying competition** 'Don't be a bystander' won first prize for their thought provoking rap whilst the second years' entered the national '**Step into NHS Careers**' competition and Joseph Foster's entry won a commendation.

First year boy choristers, Alexander Abrahams, William Hutchinson, James Kitchingman and Barnaby Sladden, along with second year students Macy Raine and Susie Morgan, displayed nerves of steel when they performed live to the nation in January as BBC Radio 3 broadcast a service of choral evensong from Ripon Cathedral. It is estimated that a million people world-wide heard the broadcast. We are proud of these pupils' professional singing skills and their dedication to the continuation of the Cathedral's centuries-long tradition of sung worship. **Musician** Susie Morgan won her prepared class at the Ripon Young Musician competition recently. Susie won first place as a violinist and singer and also won the class for solo piano. In recognition for her outstanding performance as a pianist, Susie was presented the European Piano Teachers' Association Cup. Many other RGS students were highly commended for their performances. Harry Edwards won the R and B factor at Boroughbridge. Congratulations should also go to the String Orchestra, directed by Miss Stables, who were invited to perform during the Young Musician winners' concert. They performed superbly and showed great dedication; Musicality, the Lower School Choir, received a highly commended place in this year's Harrogate Competitive Festival. Zander Abrahams won first place in the Under 13s piano class.

Congratulations to 1A, 2D and 3D for winning their **form competitions** and they enjoyed a day out at a local theme park.

I am also extremely grateful to Mrs Alison Reed and her excellent team of parents who run an extraordinarily successful Parents' Association, described by the GSG as 'supportive'; a bit of an understatement. The funding of the school minibus, the projection unit in the hall, new hall curtains, sports equipment galore, new computer screen in the new classroom block help so much. The summer raffle draw is tomorrow and there are some fantastic prizes. Please feel free to purchase some tickets today to aid their fundraising.

The evident success of the school is as a result of the partnership between staff and students based on excellent working relationships. With so many talented staff and students working together, the school goes from strength to strength; places at the school continue to be highly sought after. The significant funding being invested in the school through the classroom block and the boarding extension is testament to the confidence that others have in Ripon Grammar School. The students have been eager to 'learn and seek after righteousness' 'being true to the founding fathers of the school over 1000 years ago. I believe that the future of the school has never been brighter.

After such a superb year in all respects, it is with great pleasure that I will pass back to Dr. Mason who will then ask Professor Wilkinson to present the prizes after a musical interlude.