

Presentation at Speech Day, July 2008, given by the Headmistress of the Senior School, Mrs Alice Phillips, and the Headmistress of Preparatory School, Mrs Kathleen Jefferies

[With the week's forecast for Speech Day having been consistently gloomy, the day dawned breezy but warm and bright and Mrs Phillips began by declaring 'shirt sleeve order' for the girls in the marquee at King Edward's School, Witley.]

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AMP - Before I begin officially, and particularly on looking at the unexpectedly good weather today, I feel moved to share with you the two adages upon which I have been leaning this morning: "*The sun always shines on the righteous*" and "*Fortune favours the Brave.*" This will probably be the bravest speech I will ever make on Speech Day.

Mr Mayor of Waverley, Mrs Bate, Mr Mayor of Godalming, Mrs Rivers, Anne Milton, MP, honoured guests, governors, parents, former parents, former pupils, colleagues, former colleagues and girls, welcome to St. Catherine's Speech Day 2008.

Welcome to King Edward's School, Witley, where, by kind permission of the Headmaster and governors, we have been able to share their speech day facilities. When Dunsfold declared us homeless this year; King Edward's came to the rescue. At a time when independent schools are being asked to justify our charitable status, it is good to be able to demonstrate a cost-effective camaraderie within the sector!

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Like many of his contemporaries, the great Victorian novelist, Charles Dickens, first published some of his famous narratives in episodic form in the monthly periodicals. He was notorious with publishers for only *just* meeting deadlines. (We finished this yesterday afternoon!) Indeed, some critics claim that he often had no detailed plan of where some of his stories would take him from one month to the next. What mattered was the build up to the exciting cliff-hangers: the final moments of each instalment which left the reader waiting anxiously for the next month's magazine. He ran the full gamut of the emotions, too, and could play upon the heartstrings of his readers like a virtuosic violinist, or lift the spirits with furiously sentimental and happy endings.

Neither Mrs Jefferies nor I would lay claims to the status of an eminent novelist, episodic or otherwise, but standing here together again today, I feel that we are, nonetheless, co-authors at the very least of an ongoing *historical* narrative, now in its third annual instalment. On this occasion, however, hitherto passive listeners, or '*dear readers*', we will ask you to be co-authors of Chapter 4, and share control over the final outcome of the current volume.

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2007-8 could so easily have been labelled with the epithet "*Phew – the year after the inspection*" and we could all have settled into a smug, introspective, self-congratulatory stasis. However, in the spirit of the inspectorate's description of "*a learning school in which a state of satisfaction with anything but the best is not on the agenda*" (ISI Report October 2006) how far from the truth this has been. There is no such thing as a rut anywhere at St. Catherine's – other than possibly on the green field parking space by the senior netball courts (!). And thank goodness for that! (All the activity, that is, not the rut!) Or, more properly, thanks to the *staff* – who are, of course,

goodness personified and who generate the new ideas. We'd like first to focus on these first of all.

In the Senior School an Eco-Committee has been founded, led by Mr Deane, the Estates Bursar, and including Dr Lee as Staff Rep., and a group of committed and enthusiastic girls who had to make formal applications to be part of this project. We now have Bronze Eco School Status in Senior School – having caught up with the Prep. School (Phew!) – and hope for Silver in time for the Girls' Schools' Association National 'Girls Go Green Day' on Monday 6th October. We are working on recycling, mapping energy use, looking at bio-diversity, waste disposal, and adding eco value to the local community.

Last Summer, Mrs Arrick became determined to offer a trip which would provide practical help, on the ground in Kenya, to our sister school, St. Catherine's in Mukuru, Nairobi. Many Sixth Form girls applied to join the trip. Working together superbly, they devised two major fund-raising events, a Sixth Form Christmas Ball on an African theme and the Big Catwalk Fashion Show, featuring clothes from local fashion retailers, and also their own very striking Textiles coursework designs. They worked incredibly hard, raised £4,500 which they are sending to Kenya, but then had to accept that the current political situation in Kenya meant that it was not safe enough for them to deliver this money in person. From this, though, has emerged the concept of a Sixth Form Charity Board which will run again next year. I congratulate them all on their determination to help, and their stoical response to deep disappointment.

Meanwhile, Emma Reynolds and Georgina Disney-May co-edited a book of quotations provided by famous women and raised over £1,000 for Afghan Connection and our partner school in Afghanistan.

Not to be outdone, the Old Girls Committee made a decision to adopt a new charity this year, too, and, through Association Choir events, is now supporting Enki, a charity founded by old girl, Rakhee Dodhia that provides children in Kenya with senior schooling which is not funded by the government at all.

The Autumn Term saw our first major Middle School Drama production for many years, a Sixth Form poetry society was launched, and in January our first Upper 4 Student Exchange with St. Catherine's, Melbourne began with Lucy Olsen, Hannah Pilkington and Abi Vega travelling out there for a term. This term we have welcomed Amelia Hamer, Sharon Lee and Sarah Gillies here. They leave to fly back to Australia tomorrow.

In May, local architect, Elspeth Beard, officially opened our new Computer Aided Design Suite, funded by the large grant from the Wolfson Foundation which I announced last year.

On the last evening before Half Term, the inaugural Rock Concert took place in the Dining Room featuring some 25 rock musicians – girls and staff (Mr Gladwell on Base Guitar).

Finally, in June we introduced an ICT Bulletin to all senior students advising them on the safe use of social networking sites. This edition featured advice on privacy settings on Facebook. More will follow. The aim is to embrace modern technology, harness its many powers but ensure it is used safely and responsibly.

For parents, we have implemented ImageBank on the School website on which professional photographs of school events by our own professional photographer, David Weightman, are now placed for online purchase, and introduced the ClarionCall text, voicemail and email service to all parents. (I am particularly proud of this service as it was invented by a former parent,

Nick Kitson, and until recently, our client manager was one Sam Kitson, old girl, and former Head Girl and A Level student of mine!)

During this summer holiday we will be completely redecorating the Millennium Building and installing a digital message board system in the Senior School. The latter is a major gift from the PTA that will support our eco-strategy by cutting down on paper messages, notices and photocopying. It will also afford instant access to world news or major events. There is the distinct possibility of Wimbledon over lunch in June in the Dining Room...

As you can see. The only “Phews” hereabouts are those of relief and contentment after the successful realisation of yet another interesting idea. All this energy is invigorating.

KMJ – There have been *just* as many new initiatives in the Prep. School this year.

We aim to develop dynamic thinkers:

- Individuals who are able to use a range of strategies and skills when faced with a problem or unknown situation, and respond appropriately and swiftly.
- Individuals who are able to think and who can achieve positive outcomes in challenging conditions through perseverance and creativity.

De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats are introduced in the Prep. School and reinforced in the Senior School, and as of this year we now include our youngest girls in Pre-Prep., aged 4-5 in the process. And to make it more personal to them, we call them Thinking Crowns (anything to do with fairies and crowns will always be a winner, except none of them is pink!)

We have our sights on soon becoming an accredited De Bono Thinking School. Most of the work has been done already, and in September and April colleagues across both schools will take part in further training which will secure this status.

As you may recall that last year we introduced The BiblioCats to the Prep. School, a group of volunteer parents who man the library, Monday-Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., so that it is a fully functioning resource for the girls. We put reading high on our agenda and introduced the BiblioCats’ Reading Scheme. And I have pleasure in reporting that 73% of Year 3 girls have reached the Bronze level certificate, 50% Silver, 28% Gold and 15% Platinum. Form Teachers are delighted and are reaping the rewards.

Our use of ICT has increased dramatically in a very short space of time: Interactive Whiteboards in every classroom, digital videos used throughout the school, particularly in Science, basic programming skills taught using robots to help girls understand how a computer operates, electronic voting systems helping gather data for projects, and touch-typing within the curriculum, to name but a few.

Knowledge is the key in using ICT effectively. Our in-house ICT training course is in its third year with 25 staff having gained their certificates and 14 currently studying. Mrs Thomas even gained the more advanced Certificate in Professional Studies, awarded by Cambridge University, which was presented in Sharing Assembly to great applause.

Thanks to the generosity of the PTA, the outdoor garden project has been completed, including scarecrows, a wooden play house, toadstool table and seats and an outdoor stage frequently used by Lower 3 at lunch break.

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About this time last year we received the Key Stage II results of our Year 6 leavers. I am pleased to say that, once again, 100% Level 4 was achieved by all girls in the three core subjects, and 75%, 88% and 100% Level 5 in English, Maths and Science, respectively.

In the Senior School II+ Entrance Examinations, Hattie Lucas-Clements was awarded an Academic Scholarship and Laila Sticpewich a Music Scholarship. Mei-Yin Gruber has accepted a Music Scholarship to Guildford High School, and four young ladies gained places at Frensham Heights, Prior's Field and Wycombe Abbey.

AMP – Last Summer the class of 2007 gained 94% passes with Grades A & B at A Level, and 11 gained Merit of Distinction Grades in the Advanced Extension Award. All who had applied pre-A Level gained entry to their first choice of university. The 16 who applied post A Level last Autumn, all have good University places, and two have prestigious Art School places at Central St. Martin's. They have all enjoyed a wide variety of Gap year placements, projects and travels.

The current Upper 6 gained 89% A & B grades at AS Level and the Current Lower 6 gained 95% A*-B grades at GCSE with 74% at A* & A. And this summer, Ems Plews was joint winner of the Corpus Christi College Cambridge Classics Essay Competition.

From Key Stage 2 to A2, these are outstanding academic achievements and all the girls are to be congratulated on their hard work and successes.

St. Catherine's enjoys a strong reputation as an academic school, but I believe that what makes us special is our genuine emphasis on the benefits of a truly *rounded* education. Consequently, the extra-curriculum is of vital importance, and this year we felt that some data might be particularly interesting as a means of celebrating the events which are recorded in your programme, or which many of you will have attended this year.

KMJ - Music is an intrinsic part of the lives of the girls in the Prep. School, from the moment they step foot into Pre-Prep I until they leave us in Lower III. Fresh in my mind is last Saturday's Prep. School Open Day where we were treated to a variety of musical pieces performed by members of the String Orchestra, the Wind Band, the Recorder Ensemble, and the String Quartet. Specialist groups such as these were not in existence five years ago, and now there are opportunities for our talented musicians to perform with others in the Senior School. Marsha Ford, Mei-Yin Gruber, Ailsa McGugan, Emily Hart and Laila Sticpewich were proud to be invited to play in the Orchestra at the Middle School Concert.

Out of 160 girls in Key Stage II (ages 7-10) individual music lessons number 150, of which a quarter study multiple instruments. The number of girls sitting The Associated Board Music Examinations has trebled in the last five years, and Music Scholars and Award winners have featured year on year. It is not uncommon for girls to leave us, having reached Grade 6 on an instrument. Quite an achievement!

AMP – In the Senior School, with 33 Visiting Music teachers, and 575 lessons being taught each week on 21 instruments, and 270 external music examinations being taken and passed, it is no surprise that music is as strong as it is. There have been 22 concerts, from the informal termly opportunities to take the first foray into the world of public performance, to the grand Galas with their solo concerto opportunities, chamber ensembles, massed choirs and orchestras.

During the last academic year, 160 girls were members of school choirs, 65 played in an orchestral group, 50 played in sectional ensembles such as the Camerata, the Brass Ensemble, Jazz Band etc., there were eight string or piano quartets, five recorder consorts, one early music consort and nine rock bands of various styles. Individual musicians have won places in the National Youth Choir and other national orchestras and ensembles.

Meanwhile, further musical opportunities for all were provided by the six house informal concerts and the House Music competition when every single girl in Senior School sings in a full house choir in each of her seven years in the Senior School.

KMJ - Drama is part of the Curriculum from Form I –Lower III, and is highly regarded. Mrs Denise Hodgkiss, who teaches the girls, also produces, directs and choreographs the school plays and musicals. Shows are of the highest quality. This Year's superb Lower III Production, *The Magic Tree*, a musical by Peter Skellern, consisted of Trolls, wizards, witches and crows (Harry Potter St. Catherine's style!) conspiring with one another to avoid a future of poverty. The music begins, actors take centre stage and I am dumbfounded by the fact that before me stand 40 ten-year olds who manage to hold an audience spell-bound for nearly two hours.

Such achievements are the result of a much bigger team than most schools are privileged to have. Props (including Sainsbury's 'trolley boats'), make-up (of the most outrageous kind) and costumes (for which there is a long queue, particularly the queen's gown - there are some advantages to being small!) were all down to the wonderful commitment from our 'amazing mums'. I thank them all.

Interest has grown and Speech and Drama Clubs are now on our list of extra-curricular options, with approximately 30 girls taking LAMDA Verse and Prose Speaking from Entry to Grade 2.

Put on a mask, or hold a puppet, and the quiet, shy, reserved young lady soon has the confidence to be a loud, mad goblin, or an old, obnoxious Headmistress (Clearly no role model here.).

The skills level of the girls is forever on the increase; more sophisticated productions call for more complex sound, lighting, and staging; more rehearsal space; more make-up rooms; more costumes; not to mention, more spectators, more seats (and more comfortable seating) are all needed.

AMP – Feeling the pinch from the increasingly high quality of the Lower III Production from 'over the road', last October saw the first full-scale Middle School Production, directed by Miss Sekhon. *The Ratz* involved 38 girls on stage and 12 behind the scenes (not to mention 9 parents and 4 staff out back, too! Those Mums transfer with their girls!) and played to full houses. What a show it was, too.

And in February, a company of 43 gave the Senior School production of *Twelfth Night* with 24 actresses and 19 behind the scenes actually managing the lighting, music, sound and costumes. It was quite the best school Shakespeare I have ever seen, and as an English specialist, believe me, I've seen a few. A stunning evening which moved me, by turn, both to tears and to tears of laughter, such was the quality of the acting.

GCSE, AS and A2 Drama productions involved 28 girls and the marks awarded by all the external moderators were excellent. The Upper Sixth group are on stage again this afternoon and I urge you to watch them.

The Senior House Drama competition involved a team of Sixth Form girls in each house as writers of the 6 individual house plays, an average of 75 approximately per house on the stage and 25 behind the scenes. (A full house complement is typically 95 girls.)

120 girls take LAMDA classes, from Grade 3 up to Grade 8 (the Gold Medal) in either Acting or Speaking or Verse and Prose.

KMJ – If we look at Prep. School Sport, extra-curricular Sporting Clubs and Teams cater for all abilities and involve large numbers of girls, and have increased over the years. Over 50% of the girls aged 7-11 participate in each of Tennis, Rounders and Swimming clubs and squads. If you can simply remember whether your daughter belongs to Sharks, Dolphins, Mermaids, Catfish or Seals..., you are doing quite well and might be in the pool at the right time and on the right day.

Similarly, over half the girls choose to join Athletics Club each week, and through hard work and commitment, four girls qualified for the Prep School National Athletics Competition. Special congratulations go to Rebecca Dingemans for breaking the National U12 800m record and for becoming the National U11 Biathlon champion.

Hockey Club, open to girls in Upper II and Lower III, has also proved to be very popular, with 75% of the 80 girls participating, and this year the team was placed 6th in the Surrey Championship.

Additional achievements this year include: IAPS Swimming Nationals – three individuals qualified as did three relay teams. Athletics – once again, the team won the overall Trophy and Squadron Trophy at the District Athletics. Gymnastics – the U11 and U10 squads won the Improvers Trophy at the Girls' Independent Schools' Gymnastics Association Competition in Belgium. And Tennis – Annabel Strong and Lily Reynolds an unbeaten season, and winners of the U9 Surrey League and Surrey Tennis Festival.

The Silverware collected is wonderful for the School (as long as somebody remembers to polish it!), and has increased exponentially over the last five years. But sport is about more than trophies.

House sports translate to house points, and the girls are very, very keen to earn them (although house points are also awarded for good work, good manners, etc). The competitive side of every child can be seen when representing their House. They know that the winners of House Gymnastics, Swimming, Athletics, Rounders and Netball gain vital points that often determine the winner of the termly House Cup. This makes for a very tense Final Assembly as the final house points totals are announced!

Naturally, as the girls get older, wiser, busier but more focused, and aware of their own particular aptitudes – every single girl is different – choice enters into the sporting arena.

AMP – In the Senior School, 210 girls represented the School in 12 Lacrosse A & B and occasional C teams, 176 played in 21 Netball A & B and occasional C, D, E and even F teams, 55 girls attended swimming squads and four teams represented the school in galas, 18 gymnasts supplied 3 teams, 44 athletes performed in age groups teams, 44 in tennis, again in age groups, and 135 at rounders in 13 A & B teams.

Representative honours are given in your programme, but today we particularly congratulate Sorcha Cotter who, in only Upper Five, has just returned from helping Wales Senior Ladies Lacrosse Team reach the Semi Finals of the Prague Cup, where they came up against the

United States. She was joined in that tournament by recent old girls Kate Newell and Olivia Clinton, both playing for England.

But if the highest level of Sport is not your thing, and you just want to play to have fun, or the occasional match, then House Sport Competitions are for you. In a typical year, in Ashcombe House, for example, 46 girls played in House Netball or Lax, and 58 in House Squash, Tennis, Rounders or Gymnastics. Apply that across 6 houses and the further opportunities that abound for sporting involvement become clear.

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Now at this stage you could be forgiven for thinking that we have abandoned even a historical narrative for a foray into a statistics text book. But there is method in the madness. All this data reveals how a significant increase in investment in the staffing of the key extra-curricular areas over the last eight years has provided a huge expansion in the opportunities – teams/clubs/house events – for many more girls to explore their sporting, musical and dramatic talents.

The standard of what the girls achieve in all these areas gains tremendous plaudits from all who stand on touchlines, pool sides, in viewing galleries, in auditoria and yes, even in the Dining Room after concerts; from external adjudicators and from members of the public; from visiting examiners and moderators; and from many local friends of the School.

KMJ - There is no doubt that it is the *people* who make a successful School: staff and students, parents, governors and alumnae. When the mix is right, people start to sit up and take note. And that is the point. The quality of the work undertaken is now of such a standard that it truly merits a proper set of facilities to complement it, and to allow us to take it even further. We are forever striving to improve on what we do and the new Sports Hall, gymnasium, dance studio and theatre space will help us to add yet another dimension.

With our proposed new buildings we could operate more comfortable wet-weather games lessons and productive wet-weather training opportunities for all our teams. We could expand our gymnastics and dance – already strong in the Prep. School – to greater numbers in the Senior School and give both a proper home.

But we could also explore additional activities which would suit yet more girls. Sports such as basketball, fencing, martial arts of various kinds – who knows? All these could possibly be catered for in a modern sports hall. The Fitness Suite would allow all girls – and staff – to maintain their fitness levels, without necessarily becoming involved in competitive sport which, though very popular here, is not necessarily for everyone.

A proper, dedicated dance studio – with barres and mirrors – will become a home to the Dance School for many of its sessions and more girls will have access to it for after-school ballet, tap and modern dance lessons.

The new Assembly hall has been designed so that it can be adapted for performances of music, drama, dance and for public speaking and debating: another two further growth areas in senior school life latterly. Drama for everyone can find a real home with modern stage facilities and proper, safe opportunities for those who enjoy involvement, but don't like being *on* the stage, to rig and operate lights, sound equipment, manage a large wardrobe space, or specialise in make-up design behind the scenes. The huge growth of Design Technology in all areas of the School tells us that technical theatre must also be an area where we would be able to include girls more in drama as the equipment will be much more girl-friendly and accessible.

AMP - In the new building, there will be four additional music practice rooms and a recording studio for the rock musicians and anyone else needing to record a demo track/audition or exam. piece. In the new hall, musicians of all genres will have an acoustic that flatters their instruments or voices, and an ambience that doesn't smell of the remains of boarders' supper. The new, plush raked seats will even push back to create an orchestra pit (yes really – and wouldn't that wonderful Sixth Form production of *Annie* last week have benefited from that?) or ample space for a mosh pit. My younger SMT colleague, Mrs Wyllie, informs me this is the correct terminology for rock concerts. Further to enhance my 'street cred.' I must remind you that "*Moshing is the practice of slamming unselectively with a participative crowd of individuals engaged in a frenzied celebration of musical energy*". Much as we love the Dining Room and our wonderful caterers, concertos, choral works, crowd frenzy and catering don't quite mix.

And for all Senior School house competitions that take place in the current Speech Hall, for cramped Monday morning assemblies and even more cramped end-of-term Long Parlies, gone would be the squash we endure at the moment. Ask *any* girl in Senior School if this needs addressing, and they will give you a resounding 'Yes!'

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This leads us neatly back to our episodic historical narrative. Let's give it a heading in the Victorian style: *Chapter 3 – In which Good News is received and a Challenge is set down.*

When we left you last year, a planning application had been made for our proposed buildings. Needless to say, delays occurred, and the tension mounted. Our case was finally heard by Waverley Planning Committee on Wednesday 31st October. Imagine the scene. The Chairman of the Estates and Buildings Committee, Mr Kendall, myself, Mr Foord (Development Director), and Mrs Reed, one of our most enthusiastic old girls and a former governor, and our architect, Simon Tupper. The Chairman of Governors, a Waverley Planning Committee Member, had had to declare an interest and was not in the chamber!

In the most unusual Waverley circumstances of there being some thirty *supportive* comments on their website, and only *one* minor nigggle about the management of the access point for construction traffic, the Planning Officer appeared to be out of her comfort zone!

Our architect had three minutes at the microphone. The committee members spoke, one by one – we held our collective breaths – and to our delight, they not only recommended the scheme, but also, most unexpectedly, paid the School some wonderful compliments. Particularly touching and supportive were the comments of Local Councillor, Mr Richard Gates. Planning permission was granted. Project 125 officially had lift off. The Chairman rejoined us, and we cracked a bottle.

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KMJ - The rest of this year has flashed past in a flurry of meetings, detailed drawings, wiring diagrams, final decisions and I think we can now safely say we now know where every single electrical socket will be going, how the heating system will also help generate electricity, and how we will be harvesting rain water to use in the building and on the grounds.

The Quantity Surveyors will form their final judgements in October, and we will go out to tender in November. The start date on site *could* be late January/February, we hope coinciding with Half Term for the major demolitions.

This is a *major* project, and from the outset was planned with a realistic eye to feasibility. There are two distinct phases, the first of which could be built as a free-standing building in its own right. Wide consultation says that the will of the people is to minimise disruption for current students and build the whole project as one; *realism* dictates that we measure up to some major financial challenges if this is to be achieved. Phase 1 is the Sports Hall and Sports Facilities. Phase 2 is the Assembly Hall, Drama and Music Facilities. The phasing is dictated by funding requirements and practicalities alone, not by any kind of order of priority.

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In the School's history, many important developments have taken place. Buildings have gone up to suit the curriculum then on offer, and others have changed use. The aim of the School is to target a surplus of 10% of fee income over expenditure, and feed that back into new developments. In recent years: the Music School extension, the Millennium Building, the new lacrosse pitches, the complete refurbishment of Main School boarding and of all the Prep. School, the building of Upper Court, and finally, of Trinity Court.

However, if you trawl the inspirational pages of the school magazines of the last 123 years, you find that in the face of necessary projects of a different order of magnitude, the School has turned to its supporters for the additional financial help and the need was recognised. Interestingly, these all coincided with key anniversaries in the life of the School; they were designed as gestures of faith in the School itself, what it stood for then, and in the future. They were, quite simply, investments in our future. On the eve of our 125th Birthday, Project 125 presents another such challenge to which I hope we all can rise, and remember, we two speak as parents.

AMP - These are challenging times for the wider economy, no doubt, but so too were 1935 and 1950. The Great Depression and pre-war anxiety in the first instance and post-war austerity in the other. Yet, in 1935 on Speech Day in our fiftieth anniversary year, Miss Symes thanked all present for the new Speech Hall – our Speech Hall, now nearly 75 years old – saying that she “*hoped everyone was not packed in such a herring-like manner as they had been formerly.*” Hmmm. How History repeats itself. ‘*Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.*’

In 1959, celebrating an appeal launched post-war in 1950, and another phase of significant building – the current gym, a classroom block, advanced Physics laboratory, the swimming pool and Symes house – Miss Stoner refers to “*a true annus mirabilis for the School: we are entering upon our 75th year and, as is befitting, a tremendous step forward is being taken.*”

And again, in 1985, the Centenary Appeal funded the Centenary Building, securing the future of the School as we know it today with an immensely strong Sixth Form cohort.

Regardless of the economy, there are times when it would be negligent not to plan ahead. In the recent words of the Vice Chancellor of Oxford University, launching its eye-watering appeal for £1.5 billion: “*in leading academic institutions, simply maintaining the status quo is to move backwards.*” Our targets are not in quite that league, but they are in millions which are significant sums of money for a School. And, like a university, we have no endowment. We need private support and we look for it at any level. Every single gift will be significant.

During our recent preliminary consultations on our fund-raising documents with a number of parents and old girls, we have received a great deal of enthusiastic encouragement and we already have some significant and generous pledges of financial support. All our governors are also leading the way and have given to the Development Fund.

Last week I was given by a parent, with whom we have been in consultation, an observation that is both humorous and apposite: “*The only organisation that exists to make money is the Royal Mint; other organisations and institutions exist to create ideas that then make money*” Without education there will be no creators of clever or inspirational ideas in the future.

In any era, an investment in the education of young people is always in the country’s best interests in the longer term. Take, for example, the terrifying statistic that 65% of the nation’s graduates in science subjects come from the 7% of schools that are independent. In these circumstances, we should not cower abjectly, therefore, under the wagging finger of a hostile government, but hold our heads up high and retaliate that while they may not like us much, the nation can’t actually do without us at the moment. We are extremely strong in the Sciences, and routinely send good numbers of our students to university to study science or related subjects at university departments that would otherwise be under threat. I could give other good examples of ‘endangered’ subjects at which we also excel were time not pressing on.

Nobody likes discussing money. It is the *height* of vulgarity to do so at a dinner party, as we know. But this is *not* a dinner party, and I am shameless in asking now for the assistance that will keep this School’s facilities comparable with those of our competitor girls’ schools, and with those of the well known boys’ schools where the fees, I think it is fair to say, are notoriously higher than ours. The governors do not wish to fund major developments of this kind through excessive fee increases.

Ladies and gentlemen – dear readers – we reach the penultimate page of this year’s instalment in our historical narrative. This is the moment of suspense, and nearly the end of this year’s chapter. *Fortune favours the Brave.*

On Monday we will be mailing to all 5,500 members of the St. Catherine’s Association a document entitled *Funding the Future*. It will provide you with all the facts and figures you need to know. Please read it carefully and consider how you might, in your individual ways, support St. Catherine’s into the future. Your investment in your daughter’s education will be a stake in her – and our – future.

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As the year draws to a close, we prepare to say our farewells but I’d like first to begin with some welcomes and thank yous. First, to Peter Martin, our new Chairman of Governors this year: a former parent, devoted to the School and passionate about its future, his drive as Chairman of the Development Committee has been instrumental in guiding the School wisely into this next phase. And to Tim Kendall, Chairman of Estates and Buildings and Jonathan Tippet, Chairman of Finance, whose work together is geared towards our ultimately commissioning these new buildings. Finally, to Mrs Silver who became the Business Manager of the School this time last year and has become an inspiration in the management of our financial affairs at this important moment in the School’s development. We would like to thank her for her year’s work and loyalty to us both.

KMJ - Another particularly warm welcome goes to our Association Director, Mrs Stocks (OG) who has quickly established a rapport with our alumnae of all ages.

Before our farewells, at the end of another busy and successful year, we must first thank all our colleagues, in our hard-working staff rooms, in all the support departments behind the scenes, and in our energetic management teams; our respective PAs and husbands, supportive and endlessly patient.

Turning to the staff, we congratulate Miss Verdon and Miss Grizzelle on their engagements and wish Dr Kievit, Miss Nevin and Miss Dyball much happiness on their respective wedding days. We also congratulate Mr and Mrs Hughes, Mr and Mrs Alexander, Mr and Mrs Moore and Mr and Mrs Mackness on the births of Eddie, Freddie, Erin and Rory respectively, and we wish Mrs Creer, Mrs Bingham, Mrs Meredith and Mrs Jamieson well for their maternity leaves.

Professional working women who are also happy and successful wives and mothers are wonderful role models for our girls.

At the end of term Mrs Naish leaves us after two successful years as PPIIN Class Teacher. We wish the family well in their move to the Cotswolds. And after a ten-year association with St. Catherine's, latterly as Classroom Assistant, we send best wishes to Mrs Hackett on her retirement.

AMP - Of the Senior School staff leavers, I turn first to thank a group of colleagues who have been filling in for maternity leaves or testing their vocations and who move on after only a year: Miss Bokhurst, Miss Cosgrave (Old Girl) and Mr Edelman. I also thank Mrs Austin who returned once again to help us in the French Department.

Other colleagues moving on this year to new schools for family reasons or promotions after longer stays are Miss Verdon (Old Girl), Miss Sekhon and Miss Pickersgill. After four years, Miss Ritchie leaves us to take on a new challenge working for a church in South London. I would particularly like to thank her for editing the School Magazine this year, for leading the Christian Union, and for steering the Sixth Form Musical for the past four years. All have been undertaken with warmth and an eye for detail which hallmark her approach.

Retirement beckons others. For Mrs Green, it is retirement from the teaching staff, but not from her LAMDA work. In slightly tongue-in-cheek mode, she wrote in her letter of resignation: "*St Catherine's is a little like the legendary 'Hotel California': 'you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave ...!' I look forward to continuing my proud association with what has been, at times, my second home..*" (Look out for the next Non Nobis where I hope you will see a photograph of the School minibus surrounded by all the former staff who routinely come back to help Mrs Arrick with D of E, and you will see more of what Mrs Green means!)

Finally, Mrs Gillian Scahill retires this year after 18 years in the ICT Department and seven as Head of Curriculum ICT, a post she was the first to hold. In it, she has enjoyed the distinction of being the only Head of Department, apart from the Head of PE, to oversee lessons each week for every single member of the senior school, and in a subject where things are out of date as soon as they make it onto our screens. She has also been in charge of the marking of our entrance tests in verbal reasoning, been a member of our Working Group on Virtual Learning Environments (you will hear more of this next year) and has assisted the timetabling team with her expertise in their computer programme. We thank her and wish her a long and happy retirement.

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And now to the major group of leavers this summer, the Class of 2008. They represent the largest Sixth Form year group ever to have attended the School at 79. Lower Five, I hope you will wish to challenge them for that record. Upper Five, you will equal them.

A wonderfully exuberant year group, each one an accomplished young woman, six of whom have been with us since they were four, how stylish and confident they look today – and believe me they will look even more glamorous tonight at their Leavers' Ball. They've survived the ordeal of

A2, a wealth of extra-curricular challenges, and, last week, a number of Greek island beaches! Indeed, in the Ladies just now the recent beach exploits were under discussion between some cubicles and I felt obliged to declare my presence in the queue. Harriet Jordan was quick to reassure me that no one had been hospitalised (!) and that they had had a great time! (Of course they little know what we got up to in similar circumstances when we were their age!)

For them, I have in my usual way selected a few quotations that they can make their own if they wish, and given our underlying theme, they are all from great writers of English Literature:

A serious piece of advice first of all, which is in keeping with our focus at St. Catherine's on learning by taking risks. From Samuel Beckett: *'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.'*

And John Keats: *'Give me books, fruit, French wine and fine weather, and a little music out of doors, played by somebody I do not know'.*

Some life-coaching from Iris Murdoch: *'Writing is like getting married. One should never commit oneself until one is amazed at one's luck.'*

And from Oscar Wilde, his famous comment which stands as the ultimate advice on self-confidence: *"I have nothing to declare except my genius"* spoken as he went through US customs.

And finally, on a non-literary note, and in case they need reminding of their 'feet of clay', one from a list entitled 'Great Truths that Adults have Learned': *'Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground.'*

Hold your ground, ladies. We wish you all every happiness as you set out on life's journey and we hope you will keep in touch and visit us often.

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Given how lucky we are with the weather today, in spite of the forecast, in School, later on, I am sure you will all want to tour the exhibitions in all the subject areas, watch the rounders match – though I suggest you park your car wisely as rumour has it that Mrs Alexander will be wielding a bat! – call in on concerts or watch the Upper Sixth A2 Drama presentation. You will also be able to view again the 3-dimensional model of the proposed new building which will be on display in the Governors' Marquee. From there you can take an outline map and walk round the footprint of the proposed site to get a feel of the scale – and excitement – of the project.

St. Catherine's School is nearly 125 years old. Already a substantial working group of colleagues from across both phases of the school is working under the able leadership of Mrs Marilyn Banks, Senior Housemistress, to plan a celebration of this landmark which we reach on September 25th 2010. Our usual annual events are to be made extra special in 2010-2011, and some additional ones have been planned. There will be a lot of excitement, and many celebrations of a fine achievement in terms of the history of girls' schools.

A decision will be made about the phasing of Project 125 on September 20th this year, by a special meeting of the Governing body, as to how much of the project can go ahead. How wonderful it would be if, on that date in 2010, we could be inviting a very special guest – we hope possibly a royal personage – to open and name the Anniversary Halls.

As a preliminary 'taster' to that, however, a Grand Association Ball promoted by both PTAs is planned for next year, on Saturday 20th June, which will give us cause to celebrate as a School the establishing of our Development Fund. I am particularly tasked by the organisers to ensure that I have given you this date now: Midsummer's Day in 2009!

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Samuel Butler once said, *“When a man is in doubt about this or that in his writing, it will often guide him if he asks himself how it will tell a hundred years hence.”* We humble women hope that our words today will be read a hundred years hence, not as great literary gems, but perhaps they will be quoted as I have quoted my predecessors, as marking a very significant moment in the History of the School.

I end on a poignant note, though, with Miss Symes, once again, in 1935: *“One cannot help wondering in these anxious days what the next 50 years will bring in their train, but if the country is to play its part in the development of world peace and world prosperity it will need citizens with vision, with a power of clear thinking, a right sense of values and unselfish devotion to the service of their fellows. It is such citizens that St Catherine’s must and will seek to train in the future as it has tried to do in the past.”*

How truly her words still ring today. Please help us to maintain this School as a leading provider of education for young women who will continue to be such citizens.

“Let Us Go On ...”