

Annual Report given by the Headmistress, Alison Jones, at Senior School Prize-Giving on Friday 23 October 2009

'Happy and ambitious' will be the strapline of our next set of advertisements. This strapline, like 'Taking learning beyond the classroom', was created for us by Megan McGregor to give an insight into life at Rye, and her words give us a context for this reflection upon the year just passed and upon both what we did and how we did it.

A happy and ambitious team of Patricians, led by our Head Girls, Lucy Saunders and Francesca Keith, found their own learning taken well 'beyond the classroom' and showed the way to others, in a lively year of development planning and event organising and hosting. Agnes Kim and Olivia Knops gave dedicated service as Sacristans and Eucharistic Ministers and they trained and led our Altar Servers, and Julia Brouard planned and directed our energy-conservation initiative, Eco-Club, and our representation at several schools eco-conferences. Thanks go to all members of sixth form, Patricians in particular, for a year of enterprising and effective leadership.

From within their Year 13 'classroom' emerged a fine set of AS/A Level results, a third of grades (31.9%) being grade A and a further third (31.9%) being grade B. The average UCAS score was 332.33 points, with the outcome that, in an exceptionally competitive year nationally, places were nevertheless quickly confirmed and plans secured. Raimat Ali and Julia Brouard each achieved grade A in three A Level subjects and their places for Chemical Engineering at Imperial College, London and Medical Science at Birmingham respectively. Ashwini Virgincar achieved grade A in each of her four subjects, together with a distinction in the Advanced Extension Award in English, and Ashwini has just taken up her place to read Medicine at King's College, London, where Swan Lau also has chosen to read Medicine, Swan having achieved grade A in her five A Level subjects and a total UCAS score of 600 points. The Advanced Extension Award was a new venture and brought distinctions not only for Ashwini but for three fellow pupils as well, Olivia Emms, Keziah Gardom and Kate McBride.

The summer brought four Year 12 girls particular success, with an impeccable full marks in several individual modules, for Beth Murfin and Sarah Temple in Geography and Qin Xian Lin and Yue Zhao in Mathematics, and Hermione Stanley achieved grade A in each of the nine modules taken in her three A Level subjects (Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry), Hermione's academic successes once again being accompanied by her sailing successes, this year, 6th in the 420 Ladies World Championships, and Hermione being currently top ranked British girl, Hermione thus 6th on the world stage, 1st on the UK stage.

The Year 11 GCSE grade B or above pass rate was 81.9%, and over half (56.5%) grades were A or A* (24.8% A*). Three quarters (78.3%) of the 46 pupils in the year group achieved grade C or above in ten or more subjects. Thirteen girls achieved grade A or A* in nine or more subjects: for Sarah Kehoe nine of her eleven A grades were starred, for Anna Stellardi ten of her twelve A grades were starred, and for Megan McGregor all her eleven A grades were starred. Four other pupils achieved A or A* in their eleven subjects.

In Year 10 most girls completed GCSE Science and GCSE Religious Studies with grade C or above, well over a third with A or A*, and with similar success also in their first GCSE Mathematics and GCSE ICT modules. Alice Kennett achieved not only A* in GCSE Science and GCSE Religious Studies but almost full marks in two of the Science modules, exactly full marks in the third Science module and a further set of full marks in the Summer 2009 GCSE Mathematics module.

11+ academic scholarships were awarded to Esme Calcutt and Ruby Ellis, both already at Rye. Elspeth Lund from Rupert House was awarded an 11+ drama scholarship, and Rachel Mountford from St Joseph's, Oxford was the recipient of an 11+ combined scholarship in recognition of her academic achievements and her talents in music and sport. 2009 brought the award of Rye's first 13+ scholarship, this honour going to Grace DeBanks of Ashfold in recognition of her achievements and potential in art. 16+ academic scholarships were won by three girls at Rye, Jasmine Allday, Sarah Kehoe and Megan McGregor, and Kathryn Hampshire and Lucinda Kenrick, both of Rye, were awarded 16+ special subject scholarships, Kathryn for her sport and dance and Lucie for her drama.

The King Award, in its sixteenth year, gave recognition to 22 projects, most between the values of £150 and £300, and with two special £500 awards, one to Imogen Stanley and one to Hermione Stanley in support of their exceptional commitment and accomplishment in sailing, Imogen and Hermione having been selected for the GBR 420 Worlds Team and sailing together with distinction in the latest Ladies Worlds Championships held on Lake Garda in August, and now looking towards the 2016 Olympic development squad.

Imogen and Hermione's on-going sailing successes made it especially appropriate that it was Pippa Wilson, the Olympic sailing gold medallist of 2008 in Beijing, who came to open our sports centre. The Morton Hall is named after Tim Morton, for 15 years to date a Governor of Rye and a key figure in the preparations for the sports centre project, and this new hall and its adjacent fitness suite have quickly proved their value, giving scope to a substantial and diverse sports programme, some activities exclusively for our own pupils, others providing opportunities for pupils within the various sports clubs which use the Morton Hall at evenings and weekends. There have been some real successes in sports fixtures, with notable wins for the hockey team, and some strong individual performances, in particular from Samantha Howse at school, county and regional level in tennis, from Rebecca Byren in cross-country, Becky being placed 4th in the annual Oxfordshire Schools Cross-Country event, and from Megan Burton in school and county hockey and county cricket. Iona Williamson set a personal, year group and school record of 10.99 for her 20m front crawl on Sports Day, and Sports Day, ably organised by Amy Clifford and her sixth form team, gave us an impressive high jump competition and a series of new records both in the pool and on the track. Imogen Barnes received the Captain of the Year award and demonstrated commendable leadership skills both on and off the pitch. Imogen has continued also to compete with Isabel Upton, Sienna Barbour and Caroline Viney at a series of schools riding events, Rye's team coming third at the annual inter-school show jumping event in April and Imogen securing the distinction of a 1st place for her individual performance. Elizabeth Dutton was placed 2nd out of 172 competitors in this year's clay pigeon shooting schools challenge at Bredon in May. The year saw the introduction of the Players' Player Award which recognises consistent ability and commitment in matches and is voted by team members: special mention goes to Zoe Amos from Year 7 who received the Under 12 netball and hockey awards. Another initiative this year, the Sports Leadership Award, is providing a valuable framework for senior girls to develop their communication, organisational and leadership skills, and junior pupils are benefiting from the activities which the scheme has opened for them. Francesca Keith as Sports Captain and Chloe Trenaman in her first year as Head of Physical Education have led us through a year of exciting opportunity and development in sport.

The annual Summer Exhibition showcases the year's work in art and design, and this year's introduction of girls describing their work brought a warmly received additional dimension to the exhibition, with animated and engaging presentations by Harriet Bruce, Francesca Dean, Olivia Emms, Emma O'Sullivan, Jessica Townson and Natalie White, Natalie to whom this year's art prize was awarded for her *Still Life with Roses*.

The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art awards gave acknowledgement to some powerful group acting work from girls in Years 7, 8 and 9, in *The Earthquake*, *Tear Drop*, and *Catholic Sisters*. Year 10 invited us into the disturbing emotional landscapes of *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* and an adaptation of John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*. Year 11 gave us a dramatised extract from *Lord of the Flies*, girls responding with intelligence and authority, both stirring and disconcerting, to the challenges of the piece, with imaginative and accomplished support from Hannah Grovenor on lighting, Jasmine Allday on sound and Katharine Hatrick on set design. Diane Samuel's *Kindertransport* and Charlotte Keatley's *My Mother Said* gave Year 12 the opportunity to demonstrate the range of their talents in creating and exploring lives invaded by public and domestic forces. Year 13 in their upper sixth year held us in thrall first by *Find Me* and then by *Is This My Show?*, both pieces investigating experiences of mind control and the dark place created when distinctions between illusion and reality are blurred: here was work of distinction from Lucy Saunders, Katherine Lamont, Natasha Turner, Alexandra Luscombe and Caroline McGovern-McKinnon. The inter-house drama festival generated four highly original, inventive and vibrant plays based on stories from Greek mythology, and the festival gave scope for a glorious outpouring of talent, starting with Holywell's *The Birth of the Olympian Gods*, directed by Lauren Townson, moving on to Binsey's *Demeter and Persephone*, written and directed by Lucy Saunders and Sacha Luscombe, turning then to Hendred's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, written and directed by Katherine Lamont, and the quartet being completed with Stonor's *Odyssey*, directed by Abigail Jones. The actor, Rupert Evans, undertook responsibility for the adjudication, awarding the trophy to Hendred's *Orpheus*, but with everyone agreed that the whole show had been a triumph.

The annual writing competition attracted a record 94 entries, lively and varied in theme and style, with 1st prize for the poem going to Josephine Lindsey-Clark for her limerick, *There was an old ex-pat from Bali*, 1st prize for the mini saga going to Kate Ellis-Sawyer for *Time*, and 1st prize for the short story being awarded jointly to Amy Kirtley for *I Have a Dream* and Octavia Kerr for *The Day My Life Changed Forever*. Our school termly newspaper, *Rye Perspective*, flourished, co-edited by Louisa Emms and Megan McGregor. The Sugg Cup Reading Competition gave us a beautifully choreographed entry from Emma Harpin, Emily Morris-Jones and Georgina Ellison of UA Fanthorpe's *Not My Best Side*, a bittersweet moment from J D Salinger's *The Catcher in The Rye* read by Susie Kumah and Abigail Jones, and a stylishly paced and realised rendition by Iona Williamson of an extract from Melvyn Burgess's *Billy Elliot*, Iona's reading securing overall 1st prize. Shruti Virgincar, Amy Kirtley and Shauni McGregor were awarded 2nd place in the annual Youth Speaks Public Speaking Competition for their entry, *Am I getting through to you?*. Katie Kennett and Rose Kirtley won the Science Fair shield for their presentation, *Screwed Up*. In the annual UK Mathematics Challenge we achieved 16 bronze awards, one silver award and three gold awards, the gold awards being won by Yuka Esashi in Year 9 and Misa Esashi and Megan McGregor in Year 11. Another new venture last year was our participation in the BBC's School Report project, in which a team of girls from Years 7, 8 and 9 learned to prepare and present news for a live day's broadcasting on 24 March, a mildly frightening and unqualifiedly valuable experience for all the team, not least Claudia Chalmers, Amy Johnson, Amy Kirtley and Shauni McGregor whose report was selected for transmission on BBC radio and television that day. The year came to a happy conclusion with the inter-form debating competition: presentations were bright and delivered with verve, not least by the overall winners, Zoe Amos and Katie Kennett who encouraged us to think that it might be better not to replace teachers with computers, and Amelia Krabbé and Francesca Padley who made the case for arming our police.

We excelled ourselves in music this year, the senior choir in particular making distinguished contributions to the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, Mass throughout the year and notably the Conference Mass for the Catholic Independent Schools' Conference in January. Olivia Knops, in her final year before embarking on her university study of music, sang with distinction on these occasions and at the year's various concerts, including the teatime concerts which she inaugurated and which have created a happy forum for singers and instrumentalists of all ages, the teatime concerts providing useful experience in times of preparation for music grade examinations and bigger scale public performance. Alexandra Cotter and Julia McCourt, for example, have thus delighted us prior to their successes in the Oxford Music Festival and the Abingdon Music Festival, and with Alex on piano and Julia on violin, their Handel sonata played at the Confirmation Mass in May lives hauntingly in the memory. Julia has just completed her first season with the National Children's Orchestra and Julia and Alex have each achieved distinction in the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music examinations in June, Julia for grade 7 violin and Alex for grade 7 piano, with grade 7 clarinet already achieved by Alex earlier in the year. Of their fellow pupils from Year 9, Hannah Byren and Rebecca Byren are both working towards grade 7, Hannah on piano and Becky on cornet, Shauni McGregor is becoming increasingly authoritative as a gifted flautist and oboist as she prepares for Grade 7 flute and Grade 5 oboe, and Josephine Lindsey-Clark, whether leading or supporting, is emerging as a musician of wide-ranging talent and much character. Year 11's Composition Concert was the catalyst for the exciting dynamic of girls composing and performing pieces for each other, and here was an occasion for superlatives, from Misa Esashi's *Sports Day*, to Felicity Smith's *Allegretto in C*, to Megan McGregor's *In Memoriam*, to Rebecca Nourse's *Andante in C* and Louise Jamieson's *Blue Shadow*.

Residential visits took us to Nettlecombe Court in Somerset for a one-week biology field course, The Ridgeway, Exmoor and Dartmoor for a series of Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions, Paris for an international business studies conference and Iceland for a memorable visit to the volcanoes, hot springs and waterfalls of a strange and beautiful landscape.

At our termly Charities' Days we raised approximately £3,500 for various charitable organisations, some working locally, some nationally, some internationally. Most links are made by individual pupils and friends of Rye. It was Rachel Massey and her year group who encouraged us regularly to support the Breast Cancer Campaign. Octavia Kerr and her year group have steered our support for Pancreatic Cancer UK, Octavia's father, Howard, having spearheaded the raising of £80,000 before his death a year ago from pancreatic cancer, the Howard Kerr PhD Scholarship Award established now in his honour. Francesca Keith introduced us to the Princess Royal Trust for Carers, and a number of girls have experienced at first-hand Seesaw's work for bereaved children. Nancy Trenaman, a former Principal of St Anne's College, Oxford, and a former Governor of Rye, led us into our regular support of LEPROA and its work to reduce both the incidence and the consequences of leprosy. Lotte and Daisy Duncan introduced us to the Hope Foundation and its work with street children in Calcutta, and we raised approximately £700 for the Hope Foundation, in particular through *Showcase 2009*, a happy and ambitious evening of entertainments, organised for us by Susie Kumah, Mary Newnham and Lauren Townson.

The Parents' Committee produced a happy programme of events, with highlights of the year being the Christmas Bazaar, the Summer Fête and Sports Day. Thanks go as ever to all members of the Committee and particularly to Jo Steele for her fourth and final year as Chairman, Sue Hampshire for her first-rate work as Secretary, Julie Griffiths, as Vice-Chairman, for stirring even the faint-hearted into action, and Chantal Embers for bringing some French style (albeit a little surreally) into the sale of second-hand uniform.

It is a privilege to have within our school community the work of our Chaplains, Father Fred from Sweden, Father Festo from Tanzania and Father Benny from Indonesia, all members of the Society of Jesus and currently here in Oxford as members of Campion Hall. We thank them for the insights of their own spiritual and scholastic studies and for helping maintain Rye's links with the international Catholic community.

In May we welcomed Bishop William Kenney to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation, and we were delighted that Bishop William was able then to return to bless the newly re-ordered Chapel. It was David Willcock and Pam Evans who designed the plan and Keith Henwood and his team, Keith in his fifty-first year of service to Rye, who undertook the construction, the Captain Vaughan legacy having been reserved to fund this project. Timber from the fallen cedar gave us the beams; Margaret Evans gave us the new three lilies window. We already had in place Margaret Edith Rope's St Teresa of Avila window, a window given to us by Mrs Vaughan, Mrs Vaughan being one of the Rope family. The particular significance of the Rope window is that it was after St Teresa of Avila that the Vaughan's only child, Teresa Vaughan, was named. It is of Teresa (Caesar) Vaughan that you see a photograph as you come into my room, and it was Caesar who, as Ivy King puts it, gave us 'the school's first intimate involvement with death', for Caesar, nursed by her mother, teachers and friends, died at school, after a month's illness, on 11 March 1938, one day after her 15th birthday. Out of the sadness and loss of her early death has come, over the years, much good, and our Teresa, Caesar, serves as an example and inspiration to us. Quintessentially happy and ambitious herself, she gives us a model for happiness and ambition in our own lives. And there, in our St Teresa window, Caesar's window, are some more words, words to steer us, words by which we are invited to set our compass:

Spin carefully,
spin prayerfully,
leaving the thread
to God.