



Summer fete on the Headmaster's Lawn, 1937

### From the Headmaster

As so much policy across the country continues to be re-written and re-invented, so this week saw us reflect that our definition of community is seemingly too narrow! When #RGSTogether was coined we envisaged it referring to students, staff, governors, parents, Old Guildfordians and their families, but Sunday's phenomenal charity initiative saw the need for us additionally to incorporate cats, dogs and even horses into the definition, as for one day only the animal kingdom united with us – voluntarily or not (!) – for #WearItWithPride by sporting RGS ties, scarves and branded sports kit. The photographs of this charity event capture so much of the spirit of warmth, togetherness, solidarity and also the gentle humour of our community as we came together to show how much we care, irrespective of our distance, and to support our local nominated charity, *Shooting Star Children's Hospices*.

This seems all the more poignant as we look to celebrate VE Day tomorrow which marks the 75th anniversary of one of the most important dates in history. When peace finally returned after the Second World War in May 1945, celebrations began with two extra days' holiday. On VE day, reported *The Guildfordian*, "shouts, laughter and music drifted over the cobbles up the High Street. Scattered midnight revellers marched by, oblivious of the past." Victory in Europe Day signalled an end to an extended period of conflict which had cost the lives of millions; had destroyed homes, families, and cities; and had brought huge suffering and

hardships to the populations of entire countries. The parallels with our current global situation are all too clear and as, so we hope, we pass the peak of the Coronavirus in the UK so equally we hope that we too will soon share in the sense of hope for the future, while never for a second forgetting the terrible cost to lives and livelihoods which has accompanied this. Our hearts and deepest thoughts continue to go out to all those who have so tragically and prematurely lost their lives in recent months.

The older generation has been particularly affected by the current crisis and our Alumni Office has been doing sterling work in contacting our older Old Guildfordians to offer company, words of kindness and solidarity. They, like many of you, will have found that it is the older generations who have shown astonishing resilience, bravery and patience. We should, of course, not be surprised. This is a generation who inherited a world which had been turned upside down by events, a world recovering and adjusting to a new life after war and a world which underwent significant change in the 20th century. Their strength and stoicism impressed then and continues to do so today.

In the same way, it is the young people, our students, who will be tasked with reacting to and preparing for the future as we start to look forward. As I have said on numerous occasions, this generation are going to have to adapt while being calm and creating a new sense of normality wherever possible: acknowledging the problem and dealing with it in an efficient and selfless manner. Both the present and the future demand young people to be flexible and to find solutions, to be independent and motivated, to think outside the box and to respond positively to challenges. These qualities have never been more important. And yet it is this very same generation who have suffered so much in recent weeks. The lack of social interaction and the lack of connectivity have had a profound impact on the young's mental health and wellbeing. They also will need to show their strength and stoicism, while aided by every possible level of support and encouragement from ourselves. I have, however, no doubt that our young people will rise to this challenge.

This makes initiatives such as last Sunday's event all the more important. On one level it reinforced our tight bonds as a community but it also allowed us to focus our attention on supporting our nominated local charity, *Shooting Star*, which is currently fighting to stay open. As a children's hospice, caring for babies, children and young people with life-limiting conditions, the Guildford Hospice provides a vital service. It speaks volumes that our whole community came together and as is so often the case, I was humbled by the response, young and old alike, and, indeed, human and animal alike. #RGSTogether has never felt so poignant, never felt so true.

I wish you all the very best for a restful and relaxing long weekend.