



From the Headmaster

It is a sign of the value and importance of education that schools in the UK have, for the most part, resisted external pressures and managed to keep their doors open over the last century or so. In recent years, only the weather – in true British fashion! – has resulted in disruption to students' learning. In my reflection in *The Bulletin* of January 2015, I reported on a brief hailstorm followed by a light dusting of snow which resulted in absolute gridlock on the roads of Guildford. I commented that the travel disruption and dealing with the unexpected provided a pertinent reminder that we have to learn to be far more versatile and adaptable. We must continue to nurture students who, rather than being fazed by a light dusting of snow, relish the opportunity to adapt and cope with the unexpected. As I concluded, "Let it snow!"

Other than that quintessentially British challenge of the weather, the only other reasons for school closures have been instigated for national reasons: celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee; royal weddings and so forth. Fortunately, extended periods of time when the school gates have been closed are few and far between in our history but certainly not unheard of. In the summer of 1939, the RGS along with the rest of the country, was operating under the shadow of war and having to plan for the challenges ahead. This period of history provides many echoes of the modern day. The Michaelmas Term was due to start on 19 September but, with war having been declared two weeks before, Surrey County Council issued instructions that the School should not open until air raid shelters had been completed. The RGS partially opened a few days later but only for certain students; public examination year groups were prioritised with the Fifth and Upper Sixth Form allowed to attend for just three days a week. Other students attended for an hour and a half two days a week. It was over a month before the whole student body could attend in person once again.

On the return of all the students, Headmaster AJB Green was committed to keeping the school and activities running as normally as possible, believing that this was vital training for "a citizen of a free country". This insistence was despite a terrible winter which brought with it a desperate coal shortage and epidemics of flu and German measles which, as Nigel Watson notes in the School History, "scythed through the school population". Travel restrictions put an end to most sporting fixtures; nevertheless, the Headmaster continued to exhort the boys to try to carry on normally, although they were living in an abnormal world.

RGS students were relatively fortunate. During World War 2 it has been estimated that over one million children were not attending school in the UK and yet against the backdrop of so much tragedy, hardship and challenge, this period saw the RGS fervently adopting the Blitz spirit. The School History notes that there was a strong sense of stoicism and determination which saw the boys making the very best of the situation, innovating with new clubs and societies, and maintaining morale, even if it meant pushing the

boundaries. Treats and perks, just as now, kept spirits high and Nigel Watson comments that although one local bakery, probably *Grimmonds*, was officially out of bounds, boys popped out at break time to buy fresh bread rolls whenever available.

The parallels are notable and what continues to impress me, as lockdown continues and the school gates remain closed, is the spirit shown by our whole community: that stoic desire to make the very best of the remote period, while not for a second underestimating the context of the tragic loss of life and the very real difficulties faced by so many. This stoicism, flexibility, resilience and good humour will undoubtedly stand our boys in good stead in the future, and if a few treats are required to get us through it, then so be it, just as long as we don't suffer a light dusting of snow!

Latest News

Chemistry: **Alex Thow** (U6) has received the silver medal he won in the 52nd International Chemistry Olympiad. Alex was one of the four students representing the UK and he scored a superb 83% in the grueling five-hour paper.

Chess: RGS 1st VI chess captain **Omeet Atara** (U6) has been competing in the British Online Chess Championship over the past few weeks and recently won the Under 18 British Blitz Championship against some much higher FIDE-ranked players. His success continues a long RGS tradition of British Chess Champions.

Physics: In the British Physics Olympiad Round 1, Upper Sixth Form students received an outstanding four Top Golds (**Salvatore Nigrelli, Nathan Page, Alex Thow** and **Ben Watkins**), placing them within the top 104 students out of the 1,606 that took part nationally. They now progress to Round 2. In addition, **Jackie Zhang** also secured Gold and **Harry Cameron** received a Distinction in the Astro Challenge, out of only 3 nationally; they will join the other four in sitting the British Astronomy and Astrophysics Olympiad.

Forthcoming Events

Parents and Boys Sporting Fixture: This weekend provides the opportunity for the parent body to join forces with their sons to represent the RGS in a sporting run/walk fixture! We are competing against 10 other schools (Caterham, Colfe's, Eltham College, Emanuel, Hampton, KCS Wimbledon, Portsmouth Grammar School, Reigate Grammar School, St George's Weybridge and Trinity School Croydon). The format, rules and regulations for Saturday are as follows:

- A team must be made up of a parent / guardian and a pupil.
- Both members of the team must complete 3km on foot, with each other. The route should start and finish at more or less the same point and should be recorded on a smart watch or tracking app, if possible.
- The time to be submitted is the time of the slowest member of the team to complete 3km (though you really should be running together!).
- Government guidelines regarding outdoor activity must be strictly adhered to.
- Each team should only enter one score. Please only enter your fastest score if you complete more than 1 x 3km on the day.
- Times should be inputted by clicking [here](#) by 8.00pm at the latest on Saturday 23 January.

It would be fantastic if we could get a great turn-out from families throughout Surrey and beyond and from the First Form all the way through to the Upper Sixth Form. Why not also, once again, wear proudly RGS colours and sports kit: boys, family members, and pets alike?! Please send photographs to Mr Cover via email: gdgc@rgsg.co.uk.