



From the Headmaster

A world dominated by rule, regulation and policy inevitably leads to a greater degree of conformity and the pandemic has obviously been responsible for a succession of guidelines by which we have all had to live our lives since the first outbreak. In contrast to this, however, and especially during grey, wet January days I firmly believe that the eccentric and idiosyncratic are all the more important in bringing colour into our lives and in reminding us all that individuality is a key factor in enriching any community. After all, if you walk in the footprints of others, you will never make any of your own.

This week marks the anniversary of the death of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, known more commonly as Lewis Carroll, who died in 1898 aged 66. Lewis Carroll and the whimsical, wonderful world of *Alice in Wonderland* would not, on face value, have an obvious connection with the RGS. Flamingo croquet, mad tea parties, jam tarts, the appearance of Humpty Dumpty do not, regrettably, feature highly in daily school life. And yet the links are compelling. Lewis Carroll's funeral was held at St Mary's Church in Guildford and his resting place is The Mount Cemetery in Guildford. Guildford is veritably dotted with allusions: *The March Hare* pub; the traditional hat shop *Mad Hatter*; the statues of Alice with her sister watching the rabbit go down the hole near the former *Debenhams* store; the permanent exhibition in the Guildford Museum; to name but a few. Indeed, the RGS collaborated with the Rikkyo School on a bilingual (English/Japanese) drama production of this literary masterpiece just before the pandemic struck.

With charismatic characters, a compelling storyline, and memorable quotations, *Alice in Wonderland* continues to fuel the imagination with creativity and possibility. The RGS has certainly not been exempt from equally colourful individuals and the School History is testament to this. In 1947, Ronald Smoothey joined the staff and "he was instantly liked by the boys, this flamboyant newcomer clad in sports jackets, slacks, and broad, square-knotted ties." His legacy remains in the Smoothey Art Competition which to this day champions the eccentric and the unusual. The late Terry Jones epitomised the RGS spirit whereby he took what he did seriously, but he certainly didn't take himself too seriously. In his Foreword to the RGS Oral History he speaks of "a treasure trove of colourful and often hilarious details and anecdotes" from those interviewed about their memories of the School which, as he goes on to say, "cannot hide the affection which most of us have for the old place!" And in more recent times Old Guildfordian Simon Bird certainly has continued this rich tradition of originality and individuality.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a belated Happy New Year and I hope 2022 is a rewarding, healthy and enjoyable year for us all. As we look forward to the next 12 months, we should never forget the quirky and the kooky, and perhaps we can also learn something from Lewis Carroll at the same time:

As the Mad Hatter said: "Have I gone mad?"

"I'm afraid so. You're entirely bonkers." said Alice. "But I'll tell you a secret. All the best people are."

Latest News

CHARITY: **Alex Jackson** (4N) completed a marathon for charity just one year after having open heart surgery. He ran ten laps of a 4km circuit and raised more than £12,000 for the charity *Cardiac Risk In The Young* (CRY).

MATHEMATICS: In the national Sixth Form Mathematics competition, *Ritangle*, the RGS team comprising **Janek Czarnek**, **Efe Görgüner**, team captain **Thomas Thevenon**, and **Michael Wu** successfully navigated the 32 questions and made it to the fiendishly-difficult final challenge. The RGS team narrowly missed out on victory, coming second out of 714 schools: all the more impressive as they were a Lower Sixth Form team. In addition, all boys in the Third Form took part in the *Bebras Computational Thinking* competition. The questions are designed to test computational and logical thinking, including working with algorithms. Impressively, 68 of our boys qualified for the next round, approximately 50% of our entrants. Of particular note was the achievement of **Yuvan Raja** (3P), achieving full marks. To put this in context, 155,815 competed in this competition nationally, and only 30 of these entrants achieved a perfect score.

STAFF: At the beginning of the Lent Term, we are delighted to welcome the following new staff to the RGS: Ms Li (Mandarin); Ms Parchow-Hosmer (MFL); Ms Pei (Mandarin); Mr Rossiter (Biology) and our new Headmaster's PA, Miss McAllister. We wish them all the very best as they join the RGS community.

Sports News

FENCING: **Felix Johnson** (4B) secured the Silver medal in the Surrey Men's Intermediate Épée. In addition, **Xavier Wallin** (5P) has been selected for the Under 17 national foil squad and will represent Great Britain in the European Fencing Confederation event at in Bratislava, Slovakia. Xavier is the fourth RGS fencer to be selected for the Great Britain squad in recent years.

FOOTBALL: After a two-year hiatus since the last inter-school matches, it was a pleasure to see football returning to Bradstone Brook. The 1st XI secured a 3 – 1 victory against the Old Guildfordians with a brace from **Harvey Laing** (L6). This was followed by two superb performances against Hampton School which, despite the narrow 1 – 2 defeats, showcased the progress made recently by RGS football.

HOCKEY: Likewise, competitive hockey made a welcome return last weekend across all year groups. On Friday night, 120 First and Second Form boys played against Guildford Hockey Club: every one of them was representing RGS in hockey for the very first time. The block against Tonbridge School then followed with the 1st XI setting the tone in a seven-goal thriller as they narrowly lost 3 – 4. The Under 14s took centre-stage with an 8 – 0 victory for the A team and hard-fought 1 – 0 wins for the B and D teams. **Navin Sivayoganathan** (4B) ensured he finished the weekend topping the goal-scoring chart with a hat-trick for the Under 15C team. The 1st XI then followed this up midweek as they battled freezing conditions to record a confident 2 – 0 victory against Cranleigh School to progress to the next round of the England Tier 1 Championship.

SAILING: **Ben Mueller** (U6) has been selected for the RYA 29er Youth Performance Squad, recognising his potential to progress within British Youth Sailing to the British Sailing Team and into the Olympic Development programme.