Message from the Head

It is a truism but nonetheless worth saying again; schools are extra-ordinarily busy places and none more so than SWPS. Over the past term we have held, enjoyed and experienced an amazing range of activities and events, whilst the all important pursuit of teaching and learning continues. I thought that I might share with you a few of the highlights:

As you no doubt remember, Drama is a huge part of the lifeblood of the school and with our brand new Theatre we can continue to deliver wonderful and inspiring productions. This year’s school production was the largest in terms of student participation that we have ever done. A promenade production of four Grimm Tales, the audience were led by hostesses through spookily decorated corridors from play to play and in the interval treated to a mocktail or cocktail courtesy of the Queen of Hearts. Direction of these four plays was shared between staff and students and the whole effect was fantastic.

Each year SWPS organises a conference for educational professionals. This year’s was Women in Leadership. An inspirational line-up of speakers included Vivienne Porritt from #WomenEd, Jill Berry: author of ‘Making the leap, Moving from Deputy to Head’ (both former Head teachers), Lorin Lafave from the Breck Foundation, and our very own Tara Hanley, Second Deputy: Academic. Topics as wide-ranging as the power of language, ambition, confidence, applying for leadership roles and stepping into one due to tragic and unforeseen circumstances gave delegates from all over the country food for thought.

In terms of new subjects for SWPS, we have recently launched GCSE Computer Science and last term our Y10 Computer Science girls visited Microsoft in Reading for their personalised ‘Get On’ event. They had guest speakers talking about their pathway to their current careers, including the Xbox EMEA group product marketing manager and a Technical Evangelist, who spoke about the importance of Computer Science and Maths in current and future society, focusing on AI.

Finally I would like to extend a huge thank you to those of our alumnae who have supported our Higher Education and Careers Fairs. Both events have proven to be a great success again with over 50 institutions from the world of Higher Education attending and over 50 careers represented and I look forward to welcoming many of you to some of the great alumnae events which we are planning over the coming months.

Chris Muller

Alumnae Officer’s Post

It’s always great when Perkonians visit the school, be it at our alumnae morning, careers fair or sixth form talks. We look forward to seeing more of you with an invitation to join us at the SWPS Marquees both at Henley Royal Regatta and School Sports Day, and looking ahead we have the visit to the Princess Diana Exhibition at Kensington Palace, London Networking Event, the Annual Reunion in October and Oxbridge Lunches.

At school, tensions are rising as exam stress kicks in. Despite the stress, the students are taking it in their stride and receiving lots of help from their teachers. Our staff do a wonderful job of keeping them on track; their support is invaluable. Do you remember a particular member of staff for their guidance during those difficult months? Do you have any anecdotes that you’d like to share? Is there a teacher who you’d like to publicly thank for their help? If so please write in and share this with us.

We are always keen to hear your memories about SWPS or what you are doing now. Please send these in to alumane@swps.org.uk.

With best wishes, Sam Kassir, Alumnae Officer
In March, our Music Department produced a spectacular Evening of Music, the culmination of many months of dedication on the part of our students, their teachers and some of our alumnae.

The School Orchestra boldly opened the evening with ‘Farandole’ from the ‘L’Arlesienne’, Suite No.2 by Bizet. Music Scholar Violetta Suvini then stepped forward with her violin to give us a spellbinding performance of the gloriously dramatic and extremely challenging ‘Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso’ by Saint-Saëns. The orchestra’s programme moved from France to northern climes with ‘Finlandia’ by Sibelius, Mussorgsky’s ‘Night on a Bare Mountain’, and then to Norway with ‘Morning’ from Grieg’s ‘Peer Gynt’ Suite. Our Senior Sixth Flute Trio then played ‘The Trio’ from Act 1 of ‘La Bohème’ by Puccini and ‘The Gypsies’ Chorus’ from ‘Carmen’ by Bizet. Their poised, beautifully phrased performance impressed the audience.

The first half of the evening concluded with the Chamber Choir, directed by Margaret Hull, performing the truly uplifting ‘Lift thine eyes to the mountains’ from Mendelssohn’s oratorio ‘Elijah’. They then sang in perfect time together a contrasting novelty song ‘Peter Piper’ based on the tongue twister. Following the interval we were treated to the wonderful Mozart ‘Requiem’ performed by the Chamber Choir, augmented by guest singers that included current and former staff, parents, friends, and members from the Guildford and Egham Choral Societies. Lila Radja and Eileen Zoratti shared the soprano solo parts and Francesca Duke and Megan Graham shared the alto. They were joined in the solo quartets by tenor Matthew Spillett from Guildford Cathedral, and by our very own bass Peter Davies, retired now from SWPS and formerly the Head of Design and Technology. The Chamber Orchestra, led by Violetta and Catherine Abela, provided the accompaniment for all the solo and choral movements.

There were so many people involved in putting together a truly wonderful evening, but special mention should undoubtedly go to Mrs Theresa Scrutton, our Director of Music and the architect of the event!

It was also very wonderful to see some of our alumnae involved too. Those who took part were:-

**Former Staff in the Requiem Choir:**
Peter Davies
Lesley Smith (soprano)
Bob Geary (tenor)
Husband of Christine Yarwood—Nigel

**Former students in the Requiem Choir:**
Lizzie Hull (soprano)
Elly Bolton (alto)

**Former student in the School Orchestra**
Nicole Abela (violin)

**Former student in the Requiem Orchestra**
Beverley Hull (violin)
In February our Drama Department’s performance of *Beasts and Beauties*, with its gruelling schedule showcased not only our students’ talent, but also their impressive stamina, commitment and professionalism. The hostesses led their charges from play to play, down the eerily dark corridors, with projections of Hansel and Gretel running frantically through the woods. The two witches from the Gingerbread house looked down threateningly from the television screens whilst blood dripped chillingly down the walls. The atrium was transformed into a woodland scene, by the art department.

The plays ranged from the comic ‘Magic Table, Golden Donkey and the Cudgel in the Sack’, to the more sinister ‘Hansel and Gretel’ and ‘Bluebeard’ then on to the more romantic and heart-warming ‘Beauty and the Beast’. Those students who took on roles of stage management and technical crews carried huge responsibility for ensuring the plays ran smoothly and not forgetting the make-up crews and hairstylists who excelled themselves in their wonderfully gruesome necklines of Bluebeard’s wives and beautiful woodland tree spirits and in the sheer number of French plaits that had to be woven. Finally, the student directors and assistant directors produced wonderfully inventive and memorable productions that will live long in our memories.

Also in March we held our annual *Careers Fair*, which was organised by our Head of Careers Mrs Lucy Haley, herself a Perkonian from Class of 1999. The fair was another SWPS success with many representatives from various industry sectors attending to answer questions from the students.

Many of the exhibitors were Perkonians and we’d like to say a huge thank you to all of you who took part;

Francesca Athies, Kelly Baker, Cassie Edmiston, Victoria Deyoung-Burgess, Joanna Gaudoin, Freya Hogan, Annette Kratz, Anna Leach, Judy Parnall, Anna Lundberg, Chanel Sharp, Anna Thairs and Chandni Trehan.
Our inaugural Perkonian Netball Tournament which took place on a sunny afternoon in March was a resounding success!

Five teams took part from the Classes of 2007, 2012, 2015, 2016, U16s and a Mixed Perkonian Team consisting of Mums, Staff, Alumnae and Current Students! Good natured competition would be an apt description of the day.

Huge congratulations to our winning team the class of 2007, very closely followed by the Mixed Team who were first runners up based on goal difference only! Same time, same place next year netballers!??!

I think our current students were a little surprised to be beaten by the oldies but it only spurred on their sense of competition as they were heard to be talking about returning as alumnae themselves to take the trophy.

Huge thanks go to Mrs Elaine Searle, our Director of Sport, for her invaluable help in putting the tournament together and also for playing in the mixed team.

What a fabulous alumnae event and certainly the first of many we think...........so get practicing!!

We were joined by Perkonians (young and slightly younger!!) at our second Alumnae Morning last term which was another success. The great thing about these mornings which take place during a school day is that our Perkonians get to see the school in action and catch up with some of their former teachers along the way. It was a lovely atmosphere and we look forward to the next one.

For this year’s Christmas Comeback at the Hand and Spear in Weybridge, we were joined by Perkonians who had left school in the last three years. They enjoyed sharing stories about universities, graduate training schemes, travel and of course school. This event is now an annual feature in the alumnae calendar and we will let you know as soon as possible once next year’s has been set.
Iris Belsten, nee Hoey recalls life at SWPS over 70 years ago and we were delighted when she agreed to share her memories with the Perkonian Community:-

"My sisters Kathy, Tessa and I were born in the 1930s into a working class background. The Butler Education Act had been passed in 1944 allowing us to attend SWPS. Due to our family's financial situation we received grants for our uniforms, free milk and school meals, and a bus pass. We sat part of the exam at the elementary school then came to Chertsey for the second part, on the bus with a teacher who shared a bag of barley sugar, an enormous treat in those days of rationing! It was a three form entry with classes of about 30, but the main school was over-crowded, so Pyrcroft was used. We remember Pyrcroft for the gardens; a paradise of trees, shrubs, grass and a pond where we could go pond-dipping, climb trees and play hide and seek. We travelled to school by bus and all remember the winter of 1947 when a quick thaw led to terrible floods; Chertsey Lane was completely flooded and, with no bus in operation the soldiers came to help local residents, giving us a lift on their DUKW vehicles; and so therefore, we once travelled to school by duck.

At Perkins, I loved gym (there was a shortage of tennis balls following the war, so we practised our strokes assiduously without balls). The heightened rigour of all the academic curriculum did not daunt any of us, we liked it though Tessa says she saw no point in trigonometry and algebra. Kathy and I loved books, 'A Tale of Two Cities' for her and 'Wind in the Willows' for me. We were, and still are, avid readers so to study Shakespeare, Dickens and Shaw etc was so interesting as were all the set books right through to School Certificate. We also did Needlework, Art and Music where Kathy excelled, although poor Tessa and I were asked not to sing because we were tone-deaf. I vividly recall French, taught by a stern French Mademoiselle who deplored our Thames Valley accents. Miss Kemp taught Tessa and I Latin, Tessa excelled, but I did not and I'm afraid Miss Kemp got so exasperated she once threw the chalk at me!! We have vivid memories of school lunches at Pyrcroft because the food was horrible and so we had to devised ways not to eat it. I had a leather bag into which uneaten food went and was then disposed of on the way back to school! Tessa used to hide hers behind pipes! Lunch at the main school was in the hall (now the Library), also used for assemblies and music lessons. The food here was fine. These were girls entirely used to the deprivation of a wartime diet, so we weren't fussy. We loved the cook’s apple crumble which was so popular she put the recipe up on the school noticeboard since so many girls had asked for it.

After the War, the older teachers left to be replaced by younger ones who had served in the War. Miss Eastaugh retired and Miss Sames joined as Head in 1947, making changes, to uniforms and by widening the curriculum. There were visits to London and towards the end of our time at Perkins we took part in a school production and we also put on class shows; I was M.P Erichon in a French playlet performed for our parents, Miss Sames was heard to comment that mine was the worst French accent she'd ever heard; Tessa's sixth form class did a play involving guns and sea.....the teacher Mrs. Gunn added to the authenticity by smoking a cigarette whilst lying on the floor puffing up smoke.

We left after School Certificate and trained to be secretaries, contributing to the household expenses. By 1955 we were all married and in 1957 Tessa and her husband emigrated to Canada, where she worked as a secretary and, after her children were born, typed and edited manuscripts and magazines for many years. She set up an Energy Conservation Information Centre and later went to University to read English and Classics earning a BA Hons and an MA. Kathy eventually became a doctors’ receptionist, and at the age of 33 I went to College to train as a primary teacher. I taught for 24 years, 12 as Deputy Head. We have all achieved great things in our long lives and the opportunities for deprivation have never left us; the enthusiasm for learning and new experiences first engendered at Perkins has remained, and even now, in our 80’s we know it all started with Perkins.

We were very lucky to have had the experience!“
On 17th March we wished Happy 100th Birthday to Hazel Green. You may remember that I visited Hazel in her home last year to hear about life at SWPS nearly 100 years ago.

Happy Birthday Hazel, we hope to welcome you back to SWPS again very soon!!

I’m sure that many of you reading this will remember fondly your experiences on Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, be they good memories or bad! Some of our Perkonians were recently presented with their Gold Awards at Buckingham Palace; congratulations to Charlotte Cook, Phoebe Lewis, Sammy Husselbury and Rebecca Ackroyd on this great achievement! Some of them have shared their stories with us:

Charlotte Cook, Class of 2014
D of E definitely falls under type two fun: while you’re doing it you wish it was over, but when you’ve finished, your memories of it are very fond and anecdotal, such as some of these funny moments; Back in the heady days of Bronze, I was trying to get through a kissing gate, but got very stuck due to my huuuuge backpack and had to unclip from it and climb out! I attracted a herd of very curious cows, to the horror of one of my team with a fear of cattle. For my silver project we decided to look at the psychological effects of D of E on our mood. Cue one of the team with a camcorder popping up at very emotional moments of the expedition through the Peak District to film some very unflattering scenes - I hope no one knows where the video is… although she did capture our elation when we’d finished and were tucking into some celebratory ice cream.

In Dartmoor for one of our Gold training exercises, the weather was so wet that we all wrapped our feet in supermarket bags before we put them in our walking boots, and still got soaked from falling in a bog.

For our Gold expedition, in our infinite wisdom we decided that it would be a fitting end to our experience of Duke of Edinburgh to finish on top of Snowdon. This involved waking up at 5am to get ahead of the scorching summer weather we’d experienced so far. We started the walk in to the mountain but when we got to the base of the path, we couldn’t actually find it. As we were feeling thoroughly done with the expedition, we made an executive decision to just head up the mountain cross country - perhaps not the safest move! However when we reached the top of the mountain, it was a really triumphant moment - until we realised that our finish point was at the base of Snowdon on the opposite side! I vividly remember a teammate tripping and hitting her head on a rock and due to our concern that she might have concussion, two of our team dropped their bags and sprinted down the hill to get to our next checkpoint two kilometres away. They then rushed back after meeting our supervisors — a truly heroic effort! Thankfully, she wasn’t concussed.

My presentation several years after completing the Gold expedition was well worth the wait. After meeting Prince Andrew, we were treated to a talk by Bonita Norris, the youngest British women to summit Everest. As a member of my university’s mountaineering society, I was very impressed by her and her inspirational talk, which was very pertinent to all of the Gold finishers (including myself) seeking our next challenge, and facing life in the real world. She talked a lot about how completing DoE Gold had given us experience of true grit and determination, and how that is so useful in this modern world where you do have to dig a little deeper sometimes to get to your goals.
Phoebe Lewis, Class of 2014
I was sitting in St James’s Palace, thinking back four years to my qualifier for the Gold DofE Award. We were told to think of fun, interesting stories to tell the Duke of Edinburgh and it made me smile to remember the off-the-path route to the top of Snowdon; the flies and bugs that swarmed our campsite every morning covering us in bites and the number of times we cried with laughter (and pain and exhaustion) over the course of the trip. DofE brings up memories of delirious times with friends; realising I wasn't that good at map reading after all; trangia dinners with grass in; and getting no sleep in tents. I’d do another expedition again with my group in a heartbeat - as long as it wasn't snowing like one expedition where we were given extra sleeping bags from Mrs O’Hara because of the cold! The ceremony was so fancy, and the reiteration of the success of our achievement to have reached Gold (given that only 10,000 people of the quarter of a million who started DofE a year reach Gold) was really lovely. The Duke of Edinburgh was as witty and funny as rumour had led me to believe.....! And he actually laughed at my joke; he commented that it must be easy walking Snowdon, you can't get lost, and I retorted that my group managed it. He laughed, so probably the highlight of the ceremony for me was making a royal laugh!

Rebecca Ackroyd, 2016 — “Cooking for Gold”
So what makes the Gold DofE award different from the other awards? The Residential section! A five day stay, with strangers on a chosen activity. I opted for a course that would teach me a new skill whilst giving me the opportunity to eat lots of delicious food! Flora’s Kitchen Cookery School, based in Hampshire, was where I set off to in the October half term of S6 year. The ethos of Flora’s courses is to learn useful, new culinary skills in a fun environment. The University Basics Course taught us a multitude of easy-to-make dishes which taste delicious but don’t break the bank. There were six of us all staying in Flora’s lovely farmhouse—home from home. Flora made us part of the family; playing with her children, taking the dogs for countryside walks as well as breaking into song in the heart of her kitchen. Hello by Adele was our favourite. We each received a large folder filled with amazing recipes and donned our chef’s aprons daily, to begin creating tasty food in her masterchef-like kitchen. Roast chicken dinner, triple choc chip cookies, risotto, ham carbonara, harissa salmon, spring rolls, chocolate fondue, lamb curry – just some of the variety of dishes we made, whilst also learning the basics of cooking rice well, stir frying vegetables and making a decent sauce. It makes me hungry just thinking about it. Flora lived in the Far East for a while so some of her food was Asian inspired – one afternoon we learnt to make Sushi. Maybe not a university basic but definitely something to impress your friends with. I made new friends, became part of Flora’s extended family and gained confidence to prepare and cook a range of dishes, with budget in mind. I’ve tested out some of the recipes on my family – always good feedback, and I will set off to university next year, armed with my cookbook. Whilst I thoroughly enjoyed my expedition, this course was the biggest highlight for me - other than receiving my award from Prince Edward at St. James’ Palace of course! Flora stays in touch and sends us ideas of new recipes via email, as well as posting food envy photos on Instagram. If you have not yet completed your residential section for your Gold, and are a food lover as I am, then this is the course for you!
We are delighted to announce that for the first time we will be at the **Henley Royal Regatta** on Thursday 29th June and would like to invite you to join us at the SWPS Hospitality Tent on Butler’s Field for some bubbles and nibbles! If you are not already a member of the Steward’s Enclosure and wish to purchase tickets to the Regatta Enclosure which is open to everyone, you can do so by contacting the Badge Line on 01491571900 or using the following link:-  [https://www.hrr.co.uk/buy-tickets](https://www.hrr.co.uk/buy-tickets). Tickets cost £23 per person and there is no charge for children under 14. Entrance to the public areas are free of charge. We will be there between 11am—3pm. Spaces are limited.

On Wednesday 22 November we will be organising an alumnae visit to Kensington Palace to see the ‘**Diana, Her Fashion Story**’ exhibition, followed by Afternoon Tea in the Orangery. Prices and timings are yet to be confirmed but please do save the date in your diary. We anticipate that it will be a lovely experience!

**School Sports Day** will be taking place on Tuesday 4 July and after the last year’s success where we invited alumnae for a tour and hospitality, we would like to invite you once again to enjoy an afternoon on the Sports Field whilst watching the proceedings. Please email alumnae@swps.org.uk to sign up and let us know if you’d like to have a tour of the school first.

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**Looking Ahead to 2017!!!**

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As ever we are mindful of the environment. Have you received this newsletter by post but would prefer to have it electronically? If so please let us know your address by sending an email to Sam at alumnae@swps.org.uk!!!