

Stonyhurst, St Mary's Hall
Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 9PU

12th November 2008



Dear Parents,

We have now been back for a week, and, after the initial excitement of greeting friends old and new, have settled back into the familiar routines. A few of our returnees have felt a little bit more homesick this week than in the time prior to the half-term break, but this is now starting to ease again. As it has been so good to spend time with our families, it's not surprising that we miss them, but the homesickness is lessening as our busy days take up more of our thoughts and energies.



Those who got back on Tuesday evening, or on Wednesday morning had a great treat on Wednesday night. Our Lower Elements rugby teams were away playing at St Olaves, but as they returned, the rest of us all walked into Hurst Green to attend a Bonfire and fireworks display. It was exciting to walk



up The Avenue in the dark, but we were in our Gap Groups and the big ones helped to look after the little ones and make them feel safe. When we got there, there was an enormous bonfire, and the fireworks display was pretty good as well. We stayed for a while afterwards, to let the crowd disperse and to watch the dancing flames, before returning home to a well-earned rest – and to greet our Spanish Boarders, who arrived, tired but happy to see their friends, at just after 9.00pm.



Our next big day was Saturday, when all our sports teams were once again in action. Netball and Hockey were against Rossall, and the Rugby teams faced Aysgarth in what Mr Crouch described as "The toughest rugby I think I've seen". Quite a number of our Boarders headed off after their matches to weekend sleepovers with day pupils, but for the rest of us, our normal evening routine was adjusted to include a trip across to St Peter's to attend a Vigil Mass, as we would be attending a Remembrance Day service

on Sunday Morning. The fact we could go to this in home clothes met with universal approval!

When we returned, instead of our usual activities, we had our own bonfire to attend, so that those who had been playing Rugby or had been still in transit on Wednesday evening did not miss out altogether. Mr Hughes and I had been keeping an anxious eye on the drizzling rain all day, but Mr Crouch had assured us that the weather would be clear, so we handed out hot-dogs and cups of tomato soup with great



confidence, despite one or two drops of water. By

the time we got to the sparklers and glo bands, the fire was hissing merrily in the gradually increasing downpour, but we were not deterred, or even dispirited. Mrs Miller had thought of everything necessary for a great evening, and as we handed out the (by now rather damp) marshmallows for roasting, broad grins on everyone's faces showed that really, good company and a warm fire are far more important than the weather! We had a great night!



Boarding life has, of course, its trials and tribulations as well as its fun and happy moments. Sometimes there are tensions between young people who live closely together and moments of high excitement, like arriving and departing, can lead to high-spirited behaviour and, now and again, to getting into trouble. Despite these occasional hiccoughs, I do feel very grateful for the quality of care, compassion and friendship that our Boarders show for one another most of the time, and the way that they learn from mistakes and move forward together in this very special community. Moments of togetherness, like Saturday night, show exactly what is best about this special way of life.



Sunday started, as usual, with a lie-in and breakfast in pyjamas, and we had a little more free time than usual as we did not have to leave for Mass at 9.40. Instead, we assembled a little later to make our way once more to Hurst Green. The morning had been clear, but cold, and the children were told that they could wear coats over their blazers and jumpers. With the sunshine out, though, most of us were warm enough during the brisk walk to the village. We marched solemnly behind the CCF band and stood

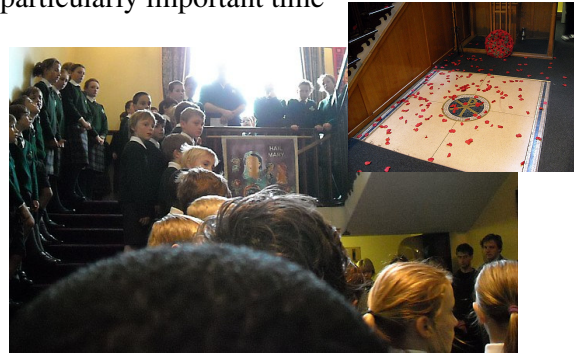
around the war memorial to participate in a very moving Service of Remembrance. It was a poignant reminder of our place within society, together with the residents of the village, equally indebted to those who have lost their lives, and continue to put their lives at risk in the protection of the freedoms we so often take for granted.

Before lunch there was either free time or an optional revision session, and then after lunch the Figures and Elements children all revised hard for their exams, which started on Monday, whilst the bruised and aching Ruds took the opportunity to relax and recover from their strenuous sports events, assuring us that they were fully up to date with all work.



A swim in the afternoon helped everyone to unwind and have some fun, before a return to our gap evaluation groups, free time and supper. We wrote our letters home and did a bit more studying in the hour between tea and cereals, when many of the Ruds remembered that, actually, they might have some work to catch up on after all!

Monday morning assembly gave us great cause to be proud of our boarders. Mark was recognised as the *Optimus Dormitor* or Best Boarder, awarded for his unfailing cheerfulness and helpfulness to others, and Ifeoma achieved the most social credits for the line period achieving the *Optimus Civis* or Best Citizen, Cup. Monday was also, of course, a particularly important time for Figures and Elements, who have been writing examinations this week, but the atmosphere in the boarding house has been very supportive, with children helping one another with revision, and explaining things when others found it difficult to understand, and we trust that your children will have had the chance to perform well and show how much they have learned so far this term.



In addition to the Examinations on Tuesday, we participated, with the rest of the school, in two minutes silence to mark Armistice Day. In the evening, 22 of our Ruds and Figures Boarders went off to Bolton's Octagon Theatre to see *The Venetian Twins*, a hilarious commedia del arte comedy set in the round on a stage surrounded by trampolines. We absolutely loved it and didn't mind the late night at all!



Today was significant, not only because of the sense of relief at the completion of examinations, but by the celebration of a twin birthday, as Uwaomachi and Chidinma had a double party! We tried to make their day special, particularly as they are two of our youngest boarders and they are a long way away from home, even though their older brother and sister are here together with them. We know how important family is, and are currently working hard to

implement a system whereby boarding siblings will find it more straightforward to be visited by their brothers and sisters, using the College Chit system, and we look forward to welcoming as many as possible of them on Sunday at our Blandyke lunch.



We have had a busy first week back, I am sure that you will agree.

With best wishes to you all,

Ruth Hughes
Director of Boarding