



Friends' School
SAFFRON WALDEN

Dear Old Scholar,

A Happy New Year to you and to your family!

Looking back on the end of 2010 sees the school in a better shape at the end of the decade than at the turn of the century. Much has been accomplished and numbers, particularly in the senior part of the school, are healthy. As you know, much of this time has been taken up by the school in planning for significant changes on our beautiful Saffron Walden site and I am delighted (and also a little relieved) at last to be able to pass on to you news that we were granted planning approval for new Junior School buildings last October. These will complement the extensive renovation of the Leicester building that took place over the summer. As you can appreciate, we are looking forward to the fine detail of the relevant contracts being tidied up so that work can begin; a sensible estimate is that we will move into our new accommodation in time for the start of the new school year in September 2012 – a mere five terms from now. Although many will mourn the demolition of the old 'San' where the infant department is presently located, our pupils and teachers will benefit hugely from new, bright, airy classrooms adjacent to the playing fields and will enjoy having their own school hall instead of a 'charming' but cold Scout Hut.

Already we are turning our attention to the Mount Pleasant end of the site and discussions are being held about our 'next steps' which could involve work on our original Victorian '1879' building and boarding accommodation, although the Sixth Form Centre, Learning Support, the art department and the science department are all pressing their cases for being redeveloped.

Although we are optimistic about the future at Friends', we are realistic enough to acknowledge that the coming year (at least) is going to be a tough one, as it is for the majority of the country. Already we find our bursary fund stretched to the limit (and, possibly, a bit further) and so it was extremely heartening that at your Old Scholars' Association AGM members passed a resolution that ties school and OSA even more tightly together. A strong and supportive OSA is vital to the school and the decision to open membership to all those who attended Friends' School, not just those who pay, is a wonderful recognition of this.

Already plans are being made for next summer's OSA reunion on Friends and Families Day and Julie Foster, the new OSA President, is working hard to ensure that attendance at the OSA Dinner in the evening approaches 100, which would be a fabulous achievement. No doubt you will hear from her in due course.

At school, terms fly by ever more quickly and with more and more being packed into them. No sooner have we celebrated last year's excellent results than we turn our attention to preparing our next cohort for university application. Sport, music and drama continue to enrich our lives – we eagerly await our production of 'Romeo and Juliet' later in the year having enjoyed a most original 'Christmas Words and Music' celebration shortly before the end of the Autumn term in St Mary's church. On the sporting front our girls in particular had a terrific season on the hockey field with some notable scalps taken in some exciting fixtures. As ever, much is captured in *The Avenue* and I am pleased to enclose the latest edition with my letter.

For those who like to keep up to date with events at school, please visit our newly designed website (same address: www.friends.org.uk) which went 'live' just before Christmas. I hope you like the images and the info you find there. Remember, use 'links' at the bottom of the front page to get to the OSA pages or pick up the link via the list on the 'Home' page.

The coming year should be a good one for Friends' School; I hope 2011 is equally as successful and enjoyable for you.

Best wishes,

Graham Wigley

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