



DOLLAR
ACADEMY

RECTOR'S PRIZE DAY REPORT

1 July 2010

Chairman, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I very much appreciate your generous introduction, although your comment about my one day of absence was a bit below the belt. I never realised you kept such close tabs on me, but I know you've always had genuine interest in the tagging of sheep. I should have known.

Chairman, I really am grateful to you for your continuing wonderful support of Dollar Academy. Yesterday, you were lunching with the Princess Royal; the day before you were being appointed to the Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Richard Lochhead's new body set up to examine Animal Health and Welfare – I like the thought of a new quango called AHAW. As a very busy man, you find an enormous amount of time for Dollar Academy, and your work, so ably supported by your wife Margaret, is genuinely appreciated. The Cameron Trust sends more and more of our young leavers worldwide. And congratulations too to Mrs Cameron on her three firsts and a third at the Royal Highland Show.

Some ten years ago, the Headmaster of Bryanston, who was then Treasurer of HMC, Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference, presented his final set of accounts at HMC's AGM in Harrogate. In front of a grey suited body of approximately 300, he lifted a set of accounts, waved it in the air, said two words "and last" and sat down to tumultuous applause.

No matter how great the temptation might be to pick up the speech, wave it and slump in my seat, I shall soldier on. There is an extraordinary amount of good news to report. Over my time in Dollar, I have delivered a fair number of Prizegiving Reports, and every one seems longer than the previous. The only one anyone remembers is the one about my dog done quite a few years ago when she was a frisky young puppy. As I read that speech again, I felt as if I were entering a different world. How things have changed since the year 2004. Today, if you forgive me, I'm going to walk my dog once again round the campus. Remember, she is older, still fascinated, but slightly twitchy about her landscape being altered.

For those who are not interested in Dollar or dogs, I offer a piece of simple arithmetic. On Monday, I completed my last newsletter. I produce seven a year, on average eight

pages long, and a print run of 2,200. Calculate the number of pages of A4 which have been used to print the newsletter over the course of the past sixteen years; divide the final number by the number of human beings in the world killed by sharks in 2001, and I'll give the correct answer at the end. It helps if you're studying Economics, and have followed Mr McFarlane's advice to read *Super Freakonomics*. I'll repeat the question.

Back to my dog walk. 6 30 am I leave the house and turn left along Academy Place. Left again and I pass the Junior School, the home of so much that's good in Dollar Academy. Charitable fundraising, musicals such as *Rats*, and orchestral concerts form the icing on the cake; the rich mix of academic rigour and devoted teaching makes the cake itself. It would be fitting at this point to pay tribute to Miss Fiona Goudie who retires after sixteen years as Assistant Head of the Junior School. She has many children and parents who are devoted admirers of her industry, organisation and care.

My little black spaniel looks through the bars of the playground gates as if aware that next year will see a very different Junior School playground when the vast expanse of dull Tarmac goes.

We turn quickly on the route back up to the main Playfair Building itself. Dollar Academy above all represents outstanding academic achievement, and there are figures to prove my remarks. In 1994 there were 804 presentations at Higher, which produced 195 A passes (24.3%); last year, in 2009, there were 806 presentations, two more than in 1994, with 463 A grades (57.4%). The Scottish Qualifications Authority, unlike the English A Level Boards, does not indulge in grade inflation. In fact, percentage pass rates nationally in some subjects are dropping. The achievement of so many of our young people here is admirable and remarkable in the current climate. 94% of our Form VI leavers have gained five or more passes at Higher. The Scottish average is 22%. All the figures on our examinations are readily accessible, and I am not quoting selectively. While last year's results were the best ever in the history of Dollar Academy, it was the breadth of achievement right across the board which caught the attention. I cannot praise highly enough the work of so many members of staff here. Only two colleagues based in the Playfair Building say farewell, Miss Sally Gardner in the

English Department, leaves us at the end of this session to take up an appointment in Germany and Mrs Virginie Turner leaves for Indonesia from Modern Languages.

My dog has been a frequent visitor to the Academy this year, but is far less distinguished than some of the others: we welcomed HRH Prince Edward to see our dual exhibition of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award along with The Cameron Trust represented by Katie Trim who had been supported by the Trust in her work in South Africa. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Michael Russell MSP, and Keith Brown MSP, Minister for Skills and Lifelong Learning, spent a fruitful hour discussing Dollar's initiatives in Science and in the Scottish Baccalaureate, Alex Kitz, FP, and one time Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* here, had been part of Barrack Obama's campaign team; and only a couple of weeks ago, the former Chairman of Selectors of the Pakistan test cricket team, Mr Salahuddin Ahmed, spent a couple of hours in Dollar which included a spell of batting in the Form II cricket nets as the young bowlers charged in. No prizes for guessing which visit I found the most memorable, illuminating, and downright enjoyable.

I think it vital that our young people have the opportunity to experience those at the very top of their professions, and those who are leaving today should not underestimate their power to influence children positively in the future.

My dog has become pretty bored with the academic musings, and drags me off to the east of the Academy. There's no large chimney now as the boilers have been upgraded, and the back of the Academy no longer has the appearance of a crematorium. Into the woods, the path leads to the renovated Classics empire where Mr David Hall's personal influence has ensured that the numbers opting for the subject here in Dollar grow year by year – and many of our young people go off to study related subjects like Ancient History and Archaeology. There seems to be more employment in these areas than in Law at present. We say farewell today to Mrs Irene Mason who has been Joint Head of Classics here and whose contribution to the teaching of generations of young Latinists has been most significant.

A quick check of our newly resurfaced tennis courts, but already, my little black spaniel favours the brand new Tiger surface in front of the pavilion.

We pass the Home Economics Department on the left as we cross the area to the Prep School. I must thank Mrs Anne Kean for the outstanding service she has given to Dollar in Home Economics. Her stylish contribution to events which link the Prep, Junior and Senior School has been a reminder to everyone of the power that an all-through curriculum from 5 to 18 brings. The Teddy Bears' Picnic this year where Prep 1 and Form VI mingle and discuss their cuddly toys was again a photographer's dream.

The Gibson Building, with its still stunningly flexible auditorium, has seen a range of lunchtime concerts, evening orchestral music, jazz orchestra events and general vigour in Dollar's music. All members of the department under John McGonigle's baton contribute to the popularity and energy found in this area, and the whole school is affected. The Christmas Concert in Perth Concert Hall ran for two nights to packed houses; Christmas 2010 has thus necessitated a change of venue, and Dollar will take over Edinburgh in December for a grand night in the Usher Hall; *Evita* in the macrobert was the result of intense hard work as well as creative vision throughout only one term of preparation. The full standing ovation on the final night said it all. We had never seen a musical of that quality performed by Dollar's young people. Thank you to Mr John McGonigle, Mrs Gill Robb and the team.

Onwards past the Prep School. Is there a livelier, more imaginative environment for children anywhere in the country? There is a real sense of order, and yet effective, productive teaching and learning are visible everywhere. The artwork on the walls, the written work in the jotters and the sounds of laughter mix in a most convincing way. Central to the Prep School strength have been three long-serving members of staff who have opted to retire at the end of this session – Mrs Margaret Nesbitt, Mrs Eilidh Dow and Mrs Nancy Briggs. All three have represented the most firmly loving form of Dollar teaching which sets so many children on the right road. All three will be sorely missed.

The dog checks out the Dewar Science Building and the Younger Building for Mathematics and Business Education. In September, the team from last session who

had raised over £86,000 for The Prince's Trust, had the privilege of visiting Downing Street and speaking with the then Chancellor, Mr Alastair Darling and his wife, and even Lord Mandelson who was skulking in the background. If only the Chancellor had been able, like the Dollar team, to turn £3,000 into £86,000 last year, he might never have been deeply mired in the difficulties of the past government. The Dewar Building also houses Dr Sharon Fulton, the staff figure-head of the Charities Committee. This year, a Sponsored Walk year, the Committee has been fortunate in its Head – Lizzy Walker – a human dynamo. I now call on Lizzy to say a few words on the extraordinary sums raised again this year.

Ladies and gentlemen. On a day where we recognise the academic, sporting and cultural achievements of Dollar and its pupils, it is also important, I think, to note the significant impact and the integral role of charitable giving within Dollar.

If I may perhaps sum up in numbers, the successful endeavours of the Charities Committee within the school: £54, 000 was donated to 6 charities as a result of the sponsored walk this September: to the Muir Maxwell trust for epilepsy, to the Transplant Trust, to the St Francis small home in Malindi, to post tsunami projects run by John Purves in Sri Lanka, to Home Start in Alloa and to Crossroads a charity for young carers. Throughout the year, £1,300 was raised for the Bobby Moore cancer fund and £1,200 to the Red Cross in response to both the Haiti and Chile earthquakes. £800 was donated for children in need and after this year's charities week, £700 each to Mercy Ships UK, The teenage Cancer Trust and to CLEFT, a charity for children with cleft lip and palate.

It is somewhat difficult to express personally the effort involved, the occasional stress experienced, but essentially, the crucial support available from the entire school community to secure such generous charitable donations. Dollar is unique in that though its charities committee may involve just sixth years, fundraising and events are widespread throughout the community involving every member of the prep junior and senior school, pupils and teachers alike. The generosity, the support and the kindness of this school and its pupils can be reflected in the Charities Committee's final total of £65, 333. A challenge thus for next session too.

The dog skips on past the CCF Red Hut, and lies down beside the Argyll Building. She knows that I spend a great deal of time in that area of the school where the new Contingent Commander, Major Craig Stewart, along with the pipe band supremo, Mr

Matt Wilson, hatch ever more complex plans to keep Dollar in pole position in the Scottish Schools Pipes and Drums.

This year, as the whole world should know, the Dollar A band won the Scottish Schools' CCF Competition for the eleventh year in a row. The band had previously won the Glasgow Highland Club Competition although they were surprised to find that an Edinburgh school was so confident of victory that it had already had its name inscribed on the trophy. Dollar's Pipe Band last weekend became British champions for the first time in Annan, Dumfries, in competition with 38 other bands. That competition was sandwiched between the Friday night party after the final night of *Evita* and the first event in the School Sports at 2 pm on the Saturday. You need to be fit to undertake co-curricular activity in Dollar.

The dog drags me on past the Technology Building, one area for which the Governors are seriously making plans. The Head of Technology, Mr Ralf Farthing, leaves at the end of this session in order to direct a design company. He has brought much to the Academy and his contribution particularly in sport has been appreciated. Next session, Dr Deborah Keys, moves into a new post of Head of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology. Acronym observers have quickly spotted the fact that she will become an ASET. As a Physicist, involved through the ScotBac with universities and other generators of development, she will be ideally positioned to advise on our next steps in this major unifying project at the north-east end of the campus.

The dog takes me down the new walkway which provides perfect hardstanding for the spectators watching hockey and tennis in the summer. The nine tennis courts in front of the newly-refurbished pavilion have seen 36 young people regularly developing their skills. The new surface keeps the ball low in hockey, and allows for a consistent, gentle bounce in tennis. Both tennis and hockey should make major advances in the coming years.

We move onwards to the Maguire Building. The Studio Theatre has housed a variety of plays this year involving Form VI, Form II and Form I at different times. Most recently, the time capsule project has been viewed by hundreds prior to the closure of the capsule.

This session's Art Exhibition was the culmination of a year of intensely hard work by the department under the leadership of Mr Gus Maclean whose innovative approach never fails to astonish. This year, the ceramic work, the photography, the design projects, the fashion and indeed the drawing and painting again reflected teaching of the highest quality and extraordinary commitment from pupils. This year, the Art Department took a large party to London where new ideas sprang up in new contexts.

The dog trails me along the back path behind the Maguire Building, past the Groundsmen's environment where an early morning chat with Mr Rab Meldrum and Mr Neil Linton, early birds both, allows the school to be put to rights for the day. We are immensely fortunate in Dollar to have a team of groundsmen of such dedication, and I wish them every success in sorting out some of the areas which still require further work since last autumn's monsoon season and the long dry spell since spring. The grounds are looking extraordinarily good, and it's little wonder that our rugby, cricket and athletics provide so much success. While the 1st XV was hit by injury at a crucial point in the season in the Cup, the team is to be congratulated on its success in the inaugural ventures two matches sponsored by Dollar Accies against Stewart's Melville and Fettes College. On both occasions, Dollar won the trophy, and the Man of the Match awards went to Scott Cubitt in his first 1st XV match and Michael Hill. Nevertheless, the Player of the Season was the remarkable Tom Hogarth who wins the Dollar Accies Adam Robson Trophy today.

Our cricketers operated effectively throughout the school, with the 1st XI defeating most opposition – Glenalmond, Fettes and the like in a season without a cancellation for weather. Nevertheless, the result against one Edinburgh school requires further gloss. The Edinburgh school scored 159-8 to which Dollar replied with 163-0, with Peter Ross, the Captain, scoring 103*.

The dog is let off the lead and she dashes madly around the outfield, John Foster's fiefdom. I sit back on one of the benches and meditate on some of the highlights of a season which has involved three young Dollar former pupils representing the Scottish Rugby XV as first choices in the remarkable two test wins in Argentina. John Barclay had been nominated number 7 of choice by journalists in the Six Nations Tournament;

Rory Lawson, Head Boy in 1998-1999 would have done his late grandfather Bill McLaren proud; and Graeme Morrison, who had spoken with humour and integrity at the Sixth Form Dinner here in Dollar this year, added to his impressive number of caps. Again, those young men know just how much their deeds encourage the boys playing rugby here in Dollar – and indeed in Graeme’s case, any girls who wish to become involved in public speaking. I meditate on Karolina Brzozowska’s success along with Emma Hammond in the Doodle4Google competition; I think of our quiz team, British champions; I think of our debating successes; I think of Blair McWhirter’s outstanding success in football, and his part in the first Scottish Independent Schools victory over England; I think of Ruth Clarke’s continuing success in fencing; of recent FP Jennifer McIntosh’s world ranking in shooting, and onwards in my mind past a further win in the National Country Life Green Howard competition which our shooting team simply keeps winning. I wish Major Craig Stewart, Mrs Julia Adamson and the shooting team every success at Bisley this year. They came second in the Ashburton, the most prestigious schools’ competition last year, and the Chairman and I very much wish to see Dollar back on top in 2010.

The dog comes back to the lead, and I wander past Argyll House which, as the Chairman has noted, will be going through significant renovation this summer. Heyworth House as I turn to come up West Approach, is already preparing for a major rebuild which will provide the girls with the most elegant and yet homely boarding environment in Scotland.

Onwards up the West Approach, I take in the view which comprises the wide and wittily fantastical front cover of *Fortunas*, and again I commend Miss Elspeth Scott and Mr Peter Nelson on their three major productions this year. No other school attempts three magazines per annum. It is some achievement. Credit should also be paid to the editorial team of *The Galley*, the unofficial school magazine which keeps attracting attention in the most positive of ways. And likewise, Dollar Academy’s Yearbook this session which is so bright, so colourful and so positive represents an extraordinary amount of hard work by the editorial team, Carol Roberts and Catriona Jardine.

We approach the front of the Playfair Building, and the dog looks mournfully at the steps. At long last, they're going to change and beneath them will be placed a time capsule the creation of which has provided a typically creative reassessment of the curriculum and the Dollar diaspora this year. Mrs Alison Morrison, the new Head of the Prep and Junior School, chaired a committee which suddenly found a routine project coming spectacularly to life. Every one of our senses was considered; all departments and areas of the school were covered; bright new curricular ideas became the basis of experiment; and immense good fun was had in summer term. Little children wrote letters to the future – some naïve, some poignant, some witty. One child wrote, "we have included recordings of birdsong and cars – you will probably have neither of these in a hundred years time".

Nevertheless, ladies and gentlemen, we aim to have a very powerful Dollar Academy still in a hundred years time, and the rock solid foundations being provided throughout the school, mixed with the sheer joy most of our young people experience by being taught here, will guarantee that future. The time capsule contains many artefacts – photos of 2010, dining hall menus, and so on. I am just very pleased that this outstanding Form VI which leaves today has been so much part of that time capsule. In recent weeks, the Head Boy and Head Girl have really played a part in keeping the community together and in focus. David and Talia, you deserve the thanks of everyone here.

I'm pulled on past the steps, as the dog senses that breakfast is round the corner. Firstly, however, she checks out the monkey puzzle tree which is continuing to grow straight and strong in the midst of the Rectors' trees. Future generations might well meditate on the choice.

Back into my house, and breakfast. Mary and I have counted it a privilege to have been part of this wonderful community for twenty-three years, and we wish the new Rector as much enjoyment as we have had. I must pay tribute to and thank all the support staff, the teaching staff, the key players on the staff (the "barons" as I term them), the Senior Staff Group (Geoff Daniel, Lesley Hutchison, Martin Hendry, Simon Johnson and Alison Morrison) which goes to extraordinary lengths for the young people

and staff of the Academy, the office staff, under the guidance of Elaine Gallagher, the Bursariat, and keeping everything in order, my PA, Wendy Pearson. Dollar has a hugely professional staff, delightful young people and a governing team without compare. Those features will not change.

Nor will the close harmonic relationship with the town of Dollar. Health and Safety obsessives frequently suggest that we put fences up around the grounds: sorry, but our community in reality and in symbol has no barriers with the town. Thank you, most sincerely, to so many people who have made our twenty-three years in Dollar so enjoyable: we so much value your generosity of spirit.

I leave you with a thought. One child in the Prep School on learning of my retirement asked if I would be put in the time capsule. We haven't brought cryogenics onto the curriculum yet. And, by the way, there were four shark deaths worldwide in 2001. There are four pages on any sheet of A4, so the answer to the problem, if my arithmetic is right, is 123,200. If you got the correct answer, you might become Chancellor.

Thank you again Chairman, and your Board for your outstanding support throughout my time here. I look forward with much keenness to Dollar's future development.

JSR
30.06.10