

Cothill House Magazine 2012

Headmaster's Opening Remarks

It is a privilege to write, for the first time, a few words of introduction to another edition of the Cothill magazine.

Cothill has had a very exciting year; one that I have enjoyed watching from another country! The year began with the *Tatler* Award for Britain's Best Prep School, and it is largely upon this theme that I want to dwell in these opening remarks. Although *Tatler* is not directly connected to a boy at Cothill, it had clearly been made aware of something special here, in fact, of many special things here. We have the X factor! Having been based in the south of France for the last eight years, without any English television, I have largely escaped the furore of the reality TV shows, but I now understand why my family, and indeed some of the Cothill boys, would rather watch that televised competition more than the Saturday night film. It is compelling viewing, watching characters pitting their wits and skills against their rivals with the sole aim of finally being selected as 'the one'.

It is to some extent the same formula for parents when they are faced with the choice of schools that might best educate their children. One difference, thank goodness, is that parents do not have the likes of Simon Cowell or Gary Barlow influencing their decision with derogatory remarks. Perhaps the main difference however, is that unlike the *X Factor*, where the winner is kept in by the number of votes received, the selection of a school needs just the votes of the parents and the child in question. In that respect, perhaps the choice of schooling is more comparable to *Dragons' Den*, with the parents as the Dragons! Schools like Cothill will try to impress the Dragons, and the Dragons will only commit themselves when they have seen that a particular school possesses the 'X Factor' needed to successfully educate and inspire their child. As I return from my post as Directeur in the Gers, I am delighted to see and feel that Cothill has this, and that the engine of the School is tuned to provide all that is necessary to energise and enlighten preparatory school boys.

While I inevitably miss the château - as do all Cothillians - I am excited about the post-Sauveterre years at Cothill. As the pages in this magazine will describe, and the almost daily updates on the website will show, Cothill is a very busy place. As a product of the system almost 25 years ago, it is still abundantly obvious to me that the traditional values at the heart of the School remain unchanged. Boys should be well-mannered, they should strive for excellence (as widespread as possible) and they should be encouraged to enjoy their prep. school experience to the full. To complement these traditional values, it is still clear that plenty of opportunities are afforded to Cothillians, and that their passions and skills can be nurtured, be it in the classroom, or in the phenomenal library, the impressive computer room, the frenetically energetic art, design and woodwork departments, the ever-expanding music department, or even on the sports fields. Sport at Cothill is strong, not only with regard to results, but also, and perhaps more importantly at this level, with regard to participation. Thanks to the hard work of all the Staff, led by Richard Sutton, all boys will have the opportunity to represent the School in each of the three major sports. While the stars are allowed (indeed encouraged) to be stars, the 8th XI or 9th XI, or the Colts D or the Under 9 C team all feel the same excitement at representing Cothill. This all enhances the general feeling of happiness and inclusion in our small community.

Of course, Cothillians appreciate the facilities and grounds here, which are meticulously looked after by the groundsmen and maintenance team, but they also value the skills and commitment of all the Staff who teach them, who cook and clean for them, who supervise and look after them. I am hugely grateful to all these people for their dedication and commitment to our cause. A mention of gratitude at this

stage should be reserved for Neil and Tracy Brooks for the unrelenting energy and enthusiasm that marked their eight years in charge at Cothill, and the School is in great shape thanks to their leadership.

So, as Cothill starts a new era, I am confident that we possess the courage and motivation - just like the eventual winner of the *X Factor*, or a successful entrepreneur on the *Dragons' Den* - to withstand the pressures and challenges that lie ahead, and be selected as the school of choice. *Tatler* would support this, and share my view of Cothill. It is a wonderful place, and Maria and I are delighted to be back here to take a real interest in the boys and adults who make up this family boarding school. At Sauveterre, we would see the children's French progress over the duration of their term with us. At Cothill, we will have an important role in the progress and development of the boy over a longer period of time, and this is very exciting.

D.M.Bailey
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