



TAIN ROYAL ACADEMY

ACADAMAIDH RÌOGHAIL BHAILE DHUBHTHAICH

Parents' Newsletter

Cuairtlitir

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An Gearran 2007

RECTORS' COMMENT

Supporting Parents

Parents, carers and family members are by far the most important influences on children's lives. Research shows that when parents are involved in their children's learning, children do better at school (Scottish Executive). Because parents have such a vital role to play in their children's education, the Scottish Executive has passed a new law called the Parental Involvement Act, to encourage more parents to become involved. I would like to work very hard with parents over the next few years to improve the way we work together to help our young people reach their potential by:

- Helping parents become more involved with their child's education and learning
- Welcoming every parent and carer as an active participant in the life of the school
- Providing easier ways for you to express your views and wishes.

School boards will cease to exist at the end of July and all parents will be members of the Parent Forum. It will be up to parents if they wish to elect a smaller group called the Parent Council which would

- Support the school in its work and represent the views of parents
- Encourage links between the school, parents, pupils and the wider community and
- Keep the full parent body informed.

Every Parent Council will be different. It will be parents who decide such things as how the parent Council will be set up

- What it should be called
- Who should be members
- What will be discussed at meetings.
- It's size
- When to hold meetings

In order to let you have information about the new arrangements, a meeting has been arranged, 7pm for 7.30pm on 22nd February in Tain Royal Academy Hall. Moira McCarrell of the Education Department will be present to give you information, to answer your questions and to help parents plan the way forward. The School Board members are arranging refreshments and will be on hand to help lead discussions.

It is vital that we have a strong home-school link and I would encourage you all to come along to the meeting. The School Board will be sending you a letter confirming arrangements. I look forward to seeing you on the 22nd February. If you wish to discuss this beforehand, please don't hesitate to contact either myself, 01862 892121, or Paul Hoggarth, School Board Chair 01862 821214.

More information is available at the following website: www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

Donnie Macleod, Rector



HOLIDAY WEEKEND

INSET - Thursday 08 February

HOLIDAY - Friday 9 February and Monday 12 February

SCHOOL BOARD

By July this year the current format of Tain Royal Academy School Board will be subject to change, as will all Scottish School Boards both primary and secondary.

As a result, the January meeting of TRA School Board spent some time discussing the implications the changes will bring and how to manage the process through to July.

The involvement of parents and carers in their children's educational process is to be further encouraged by the recent legislation from the Scottish Executive. To explain the forthcoming changes to parents and carers a meeting has been arranged at Tain Royal Academy on 22nd February, 7pm for 7.30 pm.

Full details of this meeting will be communicated to all parents and carers who have children at TRA.

A guest speaker attended the Board Meeting from Careers Scotland and his presentation led to an interesting discussion on the role of careers advisors in secondary education.

The Board was very pleased to hear that additional financial resources had been made available to from the Scottish Executive direct to TRA and that progress was being made on various building projects with work due to commence on site this month.

Sporting success, staff training and changes, and the success of the Christmas Concert and dances were also on the agenda plus the possibility of linking with a school in Malawi.

A transport problem on the Inver route was the final item addressed by the meeting. Hopefully this issue has now been resolved.

Paul Hoggarth
Chair

Tain Royal Academy School Board

Tain Royal Academy's traditional music group, Gizzen Briggs, held their 2007 Fiddlers' Rally on Saturday 3 February. Tickets for the event had sold out within twenty-four hours and the quality of the entertainment demonstrated why. Guest artistes for the evening were Christine Hanson and Bruce Macgregor and the conductor was former Gizzen Briggs member, Katie Rush, now a post-graduate student at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.

Julie Wilson's pipe tunes began the programme. Later she was to take centre stage again as she demonstrated her talents playing the Northumbrian Pipes in *The Panda, The Duck and Tripping Up The Stairs*. Following Julie's confident opening, the comperes for the evening, Jessica Smith and Fiona McKeachan took control. Their relaxed introductions, with a collection of anecdotes about many of the songs, were a big feature of the evening.

An early highlight was *Torbuie*, written by Rachel Reid for her grandfather. This featured Rachel playing a very fine solo introduction. Set followed set, with the players demonstrating the range of musical textures which they can create. Three tutors have been assisting with particular instruments, Dagger Gordon, Davie Cowan and Hugh Marwick. Their influence was evident in the first part of the programme, for example in the appearance of mandolins amongst the many other instruments.

Christine Hanson and Bruce Macgregor appeared once in each half of the evening's programme. Christine's cello provided an unusual accompaniment to Bruce's fiddle, adding depth to the sound and providing a very different mood at times. Bruce's sense of humour quickly became evident, not least in his tales about his father which introduced *The Highlander's Revenge* in which he treated the audience to a virtuoso performance.

The final tunes before the interval included *My Wee Pet Haggis*, a tune originally composed by four fourth year members of Gizzen Briggs, Lara Vickery, Imogen Rodgers, Lindsay Hallford and Rosemary Lockhart and subsequently arranged by Debbie Ross.

FIDDLERS RALLY 2007

The interval, when the talk was mainly about the stunning quality of playing in the first half of the programme, was an opportunity to indulge in tea, coffee and a fine spread of sweet things. Before the second half of the programme began the raffle was held and it was clear that many very generous donations had been made. (It was something of a coincidence that the Anta handbag, donated by Annie Stewart was won by husband Lachie). After a redraw there was another lucky winner!

The second item in the second half of the programme was the Senior Fiddle group playing two tunes. The group comprised Jessica Smith, Fiona McKeachan, Rachel Reid, Katie Patience, Laura Wilkie, Kari Macleod, along with Debbie Ross. Their exuberant, but tightly controlled playing showed wonderful musical maturity and brought a very warm response from the audience.

There followed *Anton's Cajun Cousin* which had feet tapping even more loudly. This was in part because of the lively syncopated rhythm in which Roddy McLean's infectious keyboard style was evident.

The next group of tunes, a Phil Cunningham set, showed the versatility of the players, beginning with a beautifully controlled, gentle rendition of *The Youngest Ancient Mariner* and gathering pace through to *Wing Commander Donald Mackenzies' Reel*. The following tune, *The Warren Waltz*, was another one written by one of the performers, this time Katie Patience. This offered a further development in the musical colouring of the programme, with Katrine Black on accordion and Rachel Agnew and Skye Evelyn on clarsachs.

The final item before the guest artistes' reappearance was *Leaving Stoer*, featuring conductor, Katie Rush herself in a solo. This earned a terrific ovation and Bruce Macgregor said, as he took the stage again, "How do you

follow that?"

In fact, Bruce and Christine provided perhaps the best illustration of the interplay of cello and fiddle in their tune about the "nameless clan", the Macgregors, a haunting, moving performance. A contrast with their lively piece *Donald Morrison's* about the ironmonger's in Beaulieu. Their two sessions were received extremely enthusiastically by the audience and complemented the Gizzen Briggs programme perfectly.

In the last tunes from the whole group the influence of the different instruments became even more evident, such as in the guitar playing of Donald Gordon, Matthew Kitchen and Sanders Black. And once again the audience was treated to tunes written by Gizzen Briggs members. *What A Joke* was another tune written by Katie



Patience; *The Vamping Trampling* was written by Amber Godsman about the irrepressible Roddy McLean's keyboard work; and Mark Bruce's *Jimmy The Janny* remembers an occasions when

Jimmy McLean was mistaken for a janitor. There is no doubt that a key feature of the evening was the number of fine tunes written by Gizzen Briggers to be performed so superbly by everyone.

Fiona and Jessica, the comperes, brought the evening to a close, giving special thanks to the teachers whose work over many weeks and months had made the evening possible - Debbie Ross, Jimmy McLean, Roddy McLean, and Iain Carlton. A special thank you also went to Katie Rush whose work throughout the day had contributed so excellently to the evening's performance. Her calm authority was evident throughout.

One last treat was in store as an encore in response to the rapturous applause of the audience - a Gizzen Briggs perennial favourite, *The Gael*. Brian Mackie's final coup with the lighting effects brought the evening to a dramatic close.

A Gray

HEALTH FAIR

As part of Healthy Highland Week a health fair took place in TRA on Tuesday 16 January. The aim was to raise awareness of healthy lifestyles.



The health professionals from our local medical practice

were on hand to advise on blood pressure, peak flow and carbon monoxide levels.

The Dental Health Education Unit put on an excellent display on oral hygiene and encouraged pupils by giving them a toothbrush.

The HE Dept set out a very interesting and thought provoking visual display on fat and sugar



fitness tests. The Active Schools Co-ordinator also put the pupils through their paces with a skipping routine. There were also drug education displays and label the body parts.

Everybody enjoyed their afternoon and had the opportunity to explore issues to do with healthy lifestyles.

content of everyday foods.

The PE Department assisted by prefects put the pupils through



J Morrison, Guidance



SNOWSPORTS

Snow has arrived and then disappeared at the Scottish ski resorts. The first coach trip was postponed when high winds caused all centres to close. With more snow forecast Mr Bryce is ever hopeful with a trip planned for after the

long weekend.

Pupils can still join the club to ski or snowboard.

For information see Mr Bryce, Room 3.



HEALTHY HIGHLAND WEEK AT TRACC

Bursting with enthusiasm for 2007, the TRACC After

School Club had a carefully planned programme for Healthy Highland Week (15-21 January 2007) which enabled the children to try out an extensive range of fruit, vegetables, pasta and rice as well as some different activities.

They enjoyed Dance - Hip Hop with Amy (who holds similar classes at TRACC on Tuesdays from 4.00 - 5.00), golf - with the help of Cath Giles (Active Schools Co-ordinator based in Tain, and newly appointed Active Schools Co-ordinator for Alness, Wilma Kelt). Next exciting activity was skipping, carefully orchestrated by Cath, in conjunction with a British Heart Foundation promotion. Cath held a Jump Off on the following Saturday for families and friends and

anyone who missed out on skipping.

Feedback from the After School Club children has been extremely positive - and Head Carer, Lauren Vass, has ensured an imaginative approach to health promotion.

Other activities at TRACC during the week have been well supported - including Body Balance, Circuits, Pilates, Third Age Fitness - and the fitness suite (coming up for its first birthday at the end of the month) has been going like a fair - everyone keen to work off those extra pounds gained over the festive season!

The new programme of activities available for the period 8th January to 31st March is now available. For further information about any of the activities at TRACC, please phone Tain 893767 - where the staff will be pleased to help.