

FROM THE PORCH

The end-of-term newsletter from the Director of Boarding at Maritzburg College



Sunday, 24 June 2018

Dear good people of the College BE

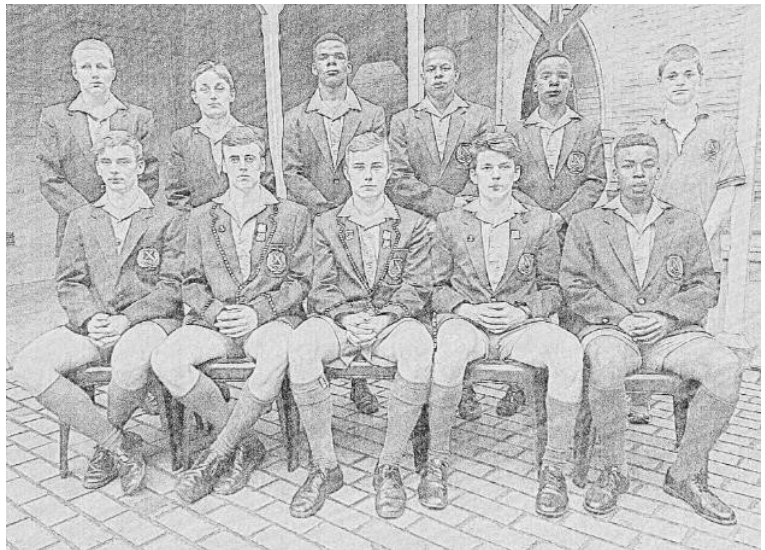
I send you warm wishes for the holidays from within the bowels of the admin block here at College. It has been an industrious and full second term for the College boys and staff, and I'm sure that you all are looking forward to spending some quality time with your boys. With all the winter sports matches on the go, together with sports practices and exam marking, it has been a busy time to be a teacher/coach, and I must say that I have been counting down the days until break-up day myself. Not that it has been a bad term at all. The College Boarding Establishment marches on as always, and although there have been a few hiccups along the way this term, it has generally been a very pleasant and settled term for the College boarders and staff.

What follows is my newsletter for term 2, which also gives me an opportunity to provide all the boarder parents with some news about the goings-on in the College BE.



The view from my porch last week: My two delightfully mad *skebengas* manage the Weber braai wearing snorkels!

- **Boarders' Representative Council of Learners (RCL):** I've continued to have productive meetings with the boarders' RCL (*photo right*), which is under the chairmanship of R Stainbank, the Senior Boarder Prefect and Head of Nathan's. At the request of the boarders' RCL, a meeting took place only a week ago of the school's Traditions Committee, chaired by the much-admired headmaster of Cordwalles, Mr Lance Veenstra (who is also a boarder parent). I'll provide a quick summary of those discussions below, but at least the avenues for communication between myself (representing the BE staff and the school) and the boarders themselves have remained healthy, and I'd like to thank Stainbank and his committee, made up of boarders in Forms 3 to 6, for their productive and worthwhile discussions with me.



- **Governing Body report-back:** At the recent meeting of the Mr Guy McGladdery's Boarder Parents' Committee (BPC), Mr Lionel Zunckel, who is our representative on the governing body, was able to report back that a number of BE-related issues had been discussed at the May meeting. Real concerns had been expressed about the Reunion Friday and the hosting of the King Edward VII School (KES) boys, and it was agreed by all that the dayboy parents be engaged as soon as possible on the issue. I can also report that I regularly meet with both Mr McGladdery (as chairman of the BPC) and Mr Zunckel (as the GB representative for boarding).
- **Signing out for half-optionals:** We have made some amendments during their winter season, in an effort to cut out at least some of the pesky bureaucracy that parents face on Saturday afternoons. Sadly, the physical signing of paperwork remains a prerequisite, and I ask you to be supportive, as we continue to retain a minimum amount of officialdom in place, in order to protect your sons and ourselves.

- **Boarders and dayboys:** Two recent First XV rugby matches were compulsory attendances for dayboys in Forms 2 and 3, in an effort to have dayboys to a greater degree match the commitment shown every Saturday by the boarders. This disparity has been a source of some grievance for years, but at least the general view was that the experiment worked rather well.
- **BE staffing:** It's been an emotional few days for the BE staff, as we bade farewell to that much-loved and much-admired housemaster of Nathan's, *Mr Dorian Larter*. The best wishes and warm thanks of everyone in the BE community go to Dorian for his 5½ years in the hot-seat in Nathan's and his 9½ years in the BE generally. In the *photos at right*, Dorian is shown (i) walking through a guard of honour last Saturday, at the start of his final sports match at College – a 5-0 rout by the U14B hockey team against the 'Hoppers; (ii) at the "changing of the guard" on break-up day, as he handed over the keys to Nathan House to the incoming housemaster, *Mr Drikus Hoffman*.
- We also bade farewell at the end of this term to *Mr Doug Watson*, who will shortly be departing for the Land of the Long White Cloud, after he had laid some foundations in that country late last year. He will be re-joining the Auckland Aces cricket franchise – *above left* is a photo of Dougie and his children, Grace and Luke, in their Auckland supporters' kit.
- Our warm thanks also go to *Sr Lauren Richmond* (*above right, in characteristically loving pose!*) for her 18 months' devoted and highly-professional service in the sanatorium, and we wish her everything of the best in her new post at Hilton. I thank all these fine people for their contributions to the College BE, and for their duty, warmth, friendship and collegiality.
- As far as staff changes go, and as mentioned above, Mr Hoffman has been appointed as the housemaster of Nathan's, and he will work alongside and closely with *Mr Linda Shezi*, who not only lives in the house that adjoins the house itself but has been appointed as the deputy housemaster. They will divide a number of the Nathan House-related duties between the two of them. *Mr Nollie Duvenage* has been appointed to College and will be joining the BE. He is as we speak in the Czech Republic and will be coming to College after extensive experience at Merchiston, the Middle East and of course Europe. We are also very pleased to be able to welcome *Mr Dylan Coombes* and his family to the BE staff, and he will be living across the road at 44 College Road. He will be doing duty in Nathan's and, as a former international sportsman and a sports coach of renown, he will no doubt add a lot of value to the BE. We'd also like to welcome *Nurse Shantal Rajah*, who will be taking



over from Sr Lauren in the sanatorium. In that regard, the staffing of the sanatorium has been further bolstered by the decision to employ an additional nurse to assist the two sisters-on-duty, and that appointment process is currently underway.

- **Litter:** This has been a source of some concern to me, as I have made my way around parts of the school campus of late. I will be instructing the BE staff to pay closer attention to the alarming tendency of some College boys to leave litter and expect others to pick it up for them. *The photo right is a not uncommon scene: a bag and clothes left casually atop a locker in the school block over the weekend.*
- **Breakages:** In a similar vein, there was some vandalism in Clark's in the final weekend of the term, and I received understandably irate emails from Mr Hackland, the school's estates manager. Once again, this is part of a scourge throughout the world but it is something that we at College will simply not tolerate. Please continue to support us in this regard.
- **Shepstone House:** Shepstone House has come along extremely nicely and I'm sure you have all been following its progress, as there have been regular photographs posted on social media over the last few months. At this stage, the floors are being polished and the internal décor is beginning to take shape. Mr Ryan Kyle, the housemaster, is certainly delighted with the progress and he was on the last night of term able to reveal the coat-of-arms of the House. We certainly have come a long way since the early and long-awaited foundations emerged in November last year (*photos right*)!



- **Boarder medical insurance:** Please be aware that all boarders are required to have a minimum amount of medical cover. The sanatorium ladies tell me that there are over 60 boarder parents whose sons currently do not have a medical policy. This means that, if they are injured, they may have to be admitted to a state hospital – in which case the onus of looking after the boy concerned will rest upon his parents. We simply cannot have our hard-pressed sanatorium sisters sitting idle all day in the reception of Grey's or Northdale hospital. I urge those parents: sign your son up on a hospital policy at least!
- **Multipurpose white t-shirt:** The deputy headmaster: co-curricular, Mr Brandon Swart, has put forward a white t-shirt emblazoned with the school badge for general sports' use, as a saving for parents and a brand-awareness exercise. I am sure that you will hear more in this regard from the sports department.
- **Security/fire exits in the Houses:** The setting up of decent security exits (*photos right*) in all the boarding houses has been a matter of priority this year, and I am happy to report that security gates and security exits have been placed in all the houses, to ensure that the fire safety of the boys is not compromised, as well as limiting access to the houses at crucial times (e.g. Saturday mornings, when there is at times a lot of foot-traffic through the school).
- **Theft:** This dreadful scourge was emphasised at the recent meeting of the BPC, and has been a source of real concern to those of us on the BE staff. The fight against theft received real impetus a few weeks ago, when an individual in Form 3 who had at one stage in his College career been a boarder but was at the time languishing as a dayboy was found *in flagrante delicto* by other boys. The upshot of the affair is that the boy was expelled from Maritzburg College and happily is no longer amongst us. It has been interesting to notice that the incidence of especially cellphone theft has fallen away rather dramatically since his unlamented departure! The BE staff have been very aware of these problems, and a number of spot checks were carried out during morning roll calls. We will certainly do our very best to continue to ensure that your sons' possessions are safe. However, at the same time, we do need to emphasise the fact that on so many occasions a boy cries "Theft!" when the missing item has been lost due to his own negligence. The number of items that are left around the school and the BE remains a concern, and the lost property room remains choc a bloc with clothing left in the corridors of the school, in unattended lockers etc.
- **BE mattresses:** There have been some complaints over the last while about the condition of some of the mattresses. I did carry out a spot check of about 30 mattresses a few weeks ago and I must say I found them to be at the least satisfactory. Also, the boys seemed quite satisfied. I will keep an eye on this going forward.



- **Lost property:** In the last few days of the term, I paid a visit to the school's lost property room and was fairly alarmed at the quantity of clothes, shoes, bashers, sports equipment, books, stationery etc. stored there. If your son has lost stuff, do please make sure he has paid a visit to the storeroom.



- **Out-of-province boarders:** It remains the priority of Maritzburg College to provide boarding facilities for boys from within KwaZulu-Natal. However, the expansion of the BE to accommodate nearly 500 boys does mean that we have the opportunity to enlist quality boys from outside of KZN too. Over the next few months, the marketing department at the school, with my own input, will be looking at ways to ensure that the school is best served and that we have the best possible intake of boarders every year. It has been interesting over the last few years to keep an eye on international trends relating to boarding. The reality is that more and more parents are opting to keep their children nearby, and although College has successfully managed to buck this trend over the last 30 years, heightened competition from private day schools – and the growing number of such schools in, for example, the North Coast area around Ballito is a case in point – is something that we at College need to keep an eye on.
- **House inspections:** I carried out inspections of all the houses during the course of the second term and was generally satisfied with the state of the dormitories in the morning. I am aware that the inspections can create a false impression, in that sometimes the dormitories are rendered rather messy by boisterous young men only moments afterwards! I will be keeping a close eye on the state of the dormitories though....

NB Drugs: I urge parents to really take responsibility for the conduct of their sons when they are at home – especially when school pressure taps off (e.g. in term 3), over long weekends, and during the holidays. We simply cannot have boys subjected to a plethora of school rules, regulations, checks and tests while at school during the week, only to be allowed plenty of rope when at home over the weekend from well-intended, loving, but tolerant parents, who might struggle to “Simply Say NO!” or might turn the odd blind eye with a “boys will boys” shrug. Please meet us halfway: we will do our best to continue to provide a safe, supportive and inspiring environment for your boys here at College – but we need all our parents to be proactive and supportive too. A boarder who uses drugs is not welcome here, and on legal advice we will be stepping up disciplinary action against boys who use drugs – whether that use is at College or at home. If you feel that your son is at risk, please take the initiative of regularly testing him yourself, carrying out counselling etc. and if necessary providing us with those details on a confidential, need-to-know basis. Where your son engages in a rather carefree lifestyle that is more suited to a university student, please do not be surprised when you have to receive the dreaded telephone call from myself suggesting that he take a few days’ unscheduled leave of absence – with further rather undesirable consequences to follow!

- **Traditions Committee:** The school's Traditions Committee met 10 days ago, and the main reason for the meeting was for the boarders' RCL to be able to discuss with the members of the committee certain amendments that they wished to make to the contents of the "Traditions Booklet". This booklet is a confidential booklet at the moment, although the long-term view is to be able to disseminate it openly, especially amongst the boys. There was some healthy give-and-take between the boys and the members of the committee, and a number of other tradition-related issues were discussed once that rather thorny issue had been dealt with. Other discussions related to the conduct of boys at sports matches, war cries etc.
- **BE survey regarding KES hosting:** About six weeks ago, I carried out a survey via SurveyMonkey of the BE parents relating to the hosting of KES boys – specifically, the hosting of boys without your sons being present on the Reunion Friday night. I must say that only about 58 parents (out of the 350 email addresses used), which was disappointing. There was some appetite amongst the boarder parents to assist us in this manner, but I remain very mindful of the inconvenience and uncomfortableness caused by having to host boys from outside the province from other schools, while your boys are back at school.
- **Sunday outings for termly boarders:** These were tentatively resumed this term, with a Sunday morning outing for about a dozen boarders to the Liberty Mall. This practice will continue in the third term, and termly boys are encouraged to sign up for the occasional jaunt to the beach, Midmar Dam, Mall etc.
- **Out 'n' About:**

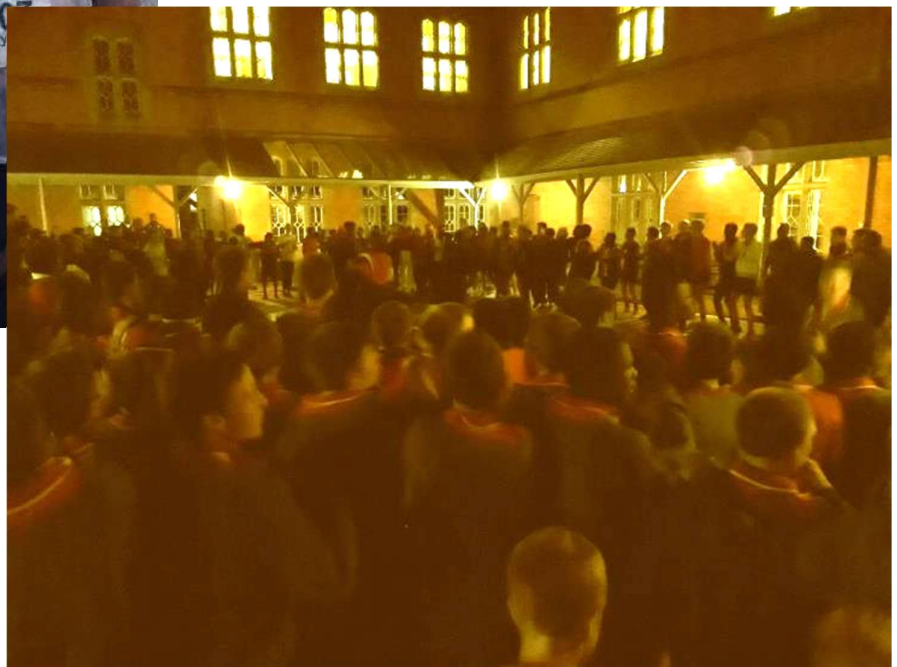


Clockwise from top left: C Slater and S Silver pose in front of some of the stirring College memorabilia now on display in the Elliott House common room; Slater, J Chikowore and R Smith pose on the comfy new furniture in the revamped common room; an action photo of Head of Shepstone's N Radebe on the charge against Michaelhouse earned a photographer 1st prize at the recent Royal Show; a bunch of likeable rogues from 2015 supporting their old school against Glenwood; famously brave former 1st XV skipper, K Thunder, addresses the boarders before the Glenwood match; no rest for the wicked (viz. Mr D Pryke)!





Clockwise from top left: A thought-provoking headline and lead article from last weekend's Saturday Star about the much-publicised goings-on at Joburg's Parktown Boys' High School; a blast-from-the-past photo of much-loved Nathan's boarder-master Mr Graeme "Totti" Waters, when he was a teacher at Merchiston (the best of luck to Totti, who will be undergoing an operation over the holidays); a recent Friday Night Shout in the old Clark's Quad; Fifth Former K Smith and Mr G Dorling (former housemaster of Clark's) do some one-on-one wrestling at a recent 7th-10th teams rugby practice; two ironmen of the College staffroom, after completing the recent Comrades Marathon in a very respectable time of 8 hrs 47ms: Messrs Brandon van der Walt (deputy housemaster of Hudson's) and long-standing College teacher Mr Darryl Trodd.



- **Academic successes:** We await the result of the June exams for all the Forms, but I do think I need to report that at the top-end of achievement, a number of boarders have done extremely well thus far this year. These include C Hollaway and M van Heerden, who were respectively placed first and second in Form 6 – well done, young men. I think I should add that Holloway (*pictured right*) is not only the Head of Clark's, but a First XI cricketer of renown and an SA age-group hockey player. Huzzah!
- I've also carried out a brief summary of all the **school awards** that were made to College boys from January to 1 June this year. In my view, the number and scope of the awards made to boarders reaffirm the general belief held within the bowels of the BE that the boarders (who make up only 34% of the school) are indeed the backbone of the school! Here are some stats from the start of the year until 1 June (i.e. NOT including the awards handed out on the last day of the second term):
 - Of the 304 awards made across the board to College boys, 135 were made to boarders (44%)
 - Of the 101 leadership-related awards, 56 were to boarders (55%);
 - Of the 29 prefect awards, 18 were to boarders (62%);
 - Of the 48 house leader awards, 25 were to boarders (52%);
 - Of the 105 sport-related awards, 53 were to boarders (50%);
 - Of the 39 awards for College's arguably premier sports of cricket, rugby and hockey, 25 were to boarders (64%);

However -

- Of the 46 academics-related awards, only 15 were to boarders (32%);
- Of the 34 culture-related awards, only 9 were to boarders (26%);
- Of the 19 service-related awards, only 2 were to boarders (11%)!
- **Leave at the end of each term:** Over the last few years I've made comments about the number of parents who ask for special leave in the last few days of each term, and this past week was no exception. We have literally received scores of requests for special leave. Please appreciate that it places the school in an impossible position: there are a number of school-related issues that need to be attended to in the final week of each term, and this term these included examination mark checks, script checks, the all-important inter-house cross country run on the Thursday, and considerable inter-house competition across-the-board on the Friday. The housemasters and I are compelled to follow the instructions of the headmaster that no leave may be granted.
- **Boarders' commitment in term 3:** The commitment of College boys far surpasses that of many of the all-boys schools around, at which the number of sports teams have shown an alarming decline in the last couple of years. But, even so, we will be looking carefully at the commitment of all the boarders on the College sports-fields, especially as the winter season begins to wind down after the frenetic first three weeks of the third term. The school really does need a big commitment from all its boys, as it takes to the field against Affies (home), PBHS (away) and KES (Reunion Weekend). We will certainly be expecting the boarders to participate, as is their want, and not to shirk their commitment, and I especially call upon the parents of the senior boys to ensure that their sons remain fully committed to the College sports programme.



Above: Pure commitment: The head prefect on the charge vs Michaelhouse.

- **“Boarders of the Month” for June:** The “Boarders of the Month” for June are the two Shaw brothers from Clark’s, Jake and Callum (*photos right*). The members of a well-known equestrian family, both boys have brought further glory to their family’s illustrious name through their selection of late for two SA polocrosse teams – Jake (*left, in SA colours*) for the SA U14 team and Callum (*right*) for the SA U19 team. Well done, boys! For these achievements, the Shaw brothers are worthy winners of a “free optional”.



Important dates for the third term of 2018:

- 16 July, from 14h00: *Boarders return*
from 19h00: *Roll call*
- 19 July, from 17h30: *Form 3 Subject Choice Information Evening – parents and boys*
- 20 July: *Hosting of Affies boys, with compulsory attendance on the following day*
- 24 July: *Form 6 parents’ evening – parents and boys*
- 27 July: *Teams leave for Pretoria – inter-school exchange with PBHS*
- 31 July: *Form 5 parents’ evening – parents and boys*
- 3 Aug: *Reunion Friday, with the arrival of KES from about 15h00*
- 4 Aug: *Reunion Day vs KES*
- 7 Aug: *Acting prefects’ identification camp starts (‘til 9 Aug)*
- 8 Aug, from 13h00: *Boarder Parents’ Committee meeting, followed by free weekend*
- 17 Aug: *No school for the boys, with Leavers’ Dinner & Dance commencing at 18h00*
- 24 Aug: *Vogue Ball braai (Form 5) with Epworth girls*
- 27 Aug: *Acting prefects’ announcement*
- 1 Sept: *College rugby 7s festival at Woodburn Stadium*
- 3 Sept: *Form 6 trials examinations start*
- 4 Sept, from 05h30: *BE Spring Run*
- 7 Sept, from 17h30: *Vogue Ball at Epworth (Form 5)*
- 15 Sept: *“Normal” summer sport – vs Northwood – resumes*
- 19 Sept: *Sport & Culture Awards Evening (compulsory attendance)*
- 23 Sept: *Various camps and tours commence*
- 24 Sept: *Public holiday*
- 26 Sept: *Trials end*
- 28 Sept: *Term 3 ends*

Please access the term calendar on the D6 Communicator for further details.

Closure

As I in vain attempt a heroic “Reunion Day Pose” (*right*), I wish you all a superb July holiday with your boys, and all the best for the third term.

Matthew

