

Dear Parents

We had our Remembrance Service today. It was moving and dignified. A year ago I wrote the following to School House parents.....

We remembered the dead today – those killed in war. The Last Post and Reveille floated over the College (played expertly by James Burchell) and we thought about those enthusiastic young men who went off to war all excited - so alive and then, suddenly, so dead. It was solemn and sad - as it should be. Sometimes, though, I think the dead soldiers are the ones to be envied. Their pain was over relatively quickly. We remember their sacrifice and honour it but they are a memory – they do not have memories. It is the people who were left behind who suffered as a result of memories; the mothers, wives and children who for years missed their son, husband or father and wondered about the violence of his passing. It is the soldiers who survived who gathered body parts of friends and who lived with the memory of the lives they had taken in moments of unbelievable terror and horror. They too should be remembered for they have given their lives and they could never be the same again. Have you watched the series “Band of Brothers”? It is a series about a company in the 101st Airborne division in Europe (and it is brilliant – the most expensive series ever produced). Each program begins with some veterans remembering the part of their story you are going to watch. This is 60 year later but their emotions are still raw and the voices catch and grown men cry. They have lived with it all for 60 years. That is a great sacrifice which as young men they could not begin to comprehend in their excitement of going off to war. So, for me, James’ trumpet plays for them all - calling back down the decades that we remember their sacrifice; their deaths, their loss of comrades, their loss of innocence, their hurt minds and wounded souls. *We will remember them.*

Everyone has started exams now and I think most boys enjoy the change in tempo, even if they do not like the exams as such. These exams tend to be tougher than in May in some subjects simply because the volume of work to learn and understand has increased. I hope your son has decided that it is worth making a big effort for them. If your son is in grade 9 you may need to convince him to take pride in all his results. I am afraid we do find some boys stop trying in the subjects they are dropping – which is always a pity as it does not reflect well on them and brings down their average mark and class position.

I trust all grade 10 parents have steeled their hearts for the 3 week absence of their sons. I expect for all this is the longest you will have ever been separated so completely from them. It will be interesting to see who copes best – parent or son! I think they are going to have a unique experience – one they will cherish for years to come. No doubt there will be many stories told in the weeks to come which will become part of Epic folklore in time – just as the Adventure Course staff could bore you for hours with stories from the last 38 years of walking around the Cedarberg with boys. I am looking forward to my week out there with them.

I trust your homes will be peaceful through exams, that all will be safe during the various activities and that (as always) we will arrive exhausted, but happy, on Friday 30th to celebrate the closing of another chapter at Bishops.

Yours sincerely

Peter Westwood
(Deputy Headmaster Pastoral)