



Dear Parents, Old Boys and Friends of Michaelhouse

Please click on the headings below to navigate around the eNews.

Rector's Message.....	1
Departmental News: Dramatic Arts, Ms Asha Royappen.....	3
Departmental News: French, Ms Martine Planteau de Maroussem.....	4
B Block Camp: 11-13 September 2020	4
Congratulations and Individual Achievements.....	5
Start of 4 th Quarter Transport.....	5
Outside Coaching/Tutoring and Police Checks.....	6
An African Footprint at Michaelhouse	6
Conclusion	6

Rector's Message

During the course of last week, I became aware through the Housemaster of West, Jonathan Smith, of the work of **Drew** and **Luke Reynolds** (in B and D Blocks respectively) and of their family in connection with a conservation project. The particular work for which they had volunteered and then enthusiastically engaged was assisting with the dehorning of a white rhino as a way of protecting this species which, as practically everybody will know, is endangered. The boys' father, Lane Reynolds, indicated that the vet who had darted the animal had to use a chainsaw to dehorn it, having put earplugs into the rhino's ears and a protective mask over its face. A close watch had to be kept on the opioid sedative used which, I am told, is so strong that, if a man touches the area around the dart, it is enough to kill him.



The Reynolds Family



The main purpose in dehorning is, quite obviously, to protect rhinos from poaching as the horn is valued to such an extent in a number of Asian countries that it sells for upwards of US \$90 000/kilo. As most people also know, its supposed healing and other properties are imagined and not real as the horn, in essence, consists of keratin, the same protein found in human fingernails. After being dehorned, the animal wakes up in due course and walks off unaffected into the bush and is able, thereafter, to be more likely to survive the vicious onslaught of poachers who seek to hack out the horn without any regard for the wellbeing of the animal itself.

Simultaneously, I heard the news that an eminent South African veterinary surgeon, Dr William Fowlds, is due to speak at the Royal Geographical Society in London on the work he has done in the Eastern Cape in this field. William's family own the Amakhala Lodge about halfway between Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown and he works in association with a friend of mine, Paul Gardiner, whose family previously owned Shamwari, as well as the actress, Virginia McKenna of the Born Free Association, in raising funds for the protection of rhinos in Africa. On probably the last occasion on which William spoke at the Royal Geographical Society in London in 2013, I was immensely proud, as a South African, to be part of the audience. 700 people rose as one to applaud him.

The importance of work with rhinos and other endangered wildlife species cannot be underestimated. The WWF has indicated that wildlife is in freefall and that animal populations have fallen by more than 2/3rds in less than 50 years and this is backed by the Zoological Society of London which has recently also drawn attention to the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of how nature and humans have a fragile inter-relationship.

There is, however, some optimistic news in that the television presenter and naturalist, Sir David Attenborough, has demonstrated that gorillas in Rwanda have staged a remarkable recovery over the past 40 years since he first visited that area as a result of careful conservation. Some of the offspring of older gorillas can even be recognised from their parents or grandparents. The gorilla population is now actually doing rather well and, what Attenborough saw in 1980, has been turned around. Let us hope that the same can be done with rhino and other similarly endangered species such as elephants.

I am writing to bring to the attention of parents and others the **importance of conservation** once again – of protecting lands and forests, of reducing soil degradation, of restoring marine ecosystems, of protecting lake and river habitats and similar projects. In the 17 years during which my family and I lived very happily in the UK, one of the aspects of South Africa which we missed most was the apparently abundant game here. In many cases, this is just on our doorstep currently, but it won't be here for the next generation unless we play a role in protecting it.

Not everybody can be involved with the complex action of dehorning a rhino, but we can all play a role in the conservation of this country by recycling more actively than most of us do and in other simple ways. I was most heartened to see, as I was going up to visit the C Block Journey on Saturday, a number of people out between Balgowan and Nottingham Road with



plastic bags as there was a concerted effort to collect all the litter over that 10km stretch to safeguard and uplift the environment. This was a reminder to me of the fact that each of us can play a role, however small, in conservation. Something to think about.

Departmental News: Dramatic Arts, Ms Asha Royappen

If someone had asked me in 2019 if Dramatic Arts is a subject that can be taught on-line I would have adamantly said no. Lockdown demanded a paradigm shift in the Department and we had to reinvent the subject for online learning - a subject that relies on emotional intelligence, social interaction, critical thinking and an understanding of what it means to be human.

The boys must be complimented on the way they received the tasks and engaged with them. In a time of doom and gloom they were resilient; while the pandemic had dampened our spirits, the boys' creativity and enthusiasm for Dramatic Arts was still intact.

Lockdown Highlights

The E Block studied Charlie Chaplin and silent movies as one of their tasks. This was something that we created specifically for online learning. They had to use the skills learnt to create their own silent movie, record it and send it to us. This task was taken seriously by all the boys who put tremendous effort into their work and we certainly needed the humour. We had a WhatsApp group where videos were posted and this was probably one of our busiest WhatsApp groups ranging from A to E Block.

The D Block had the task of creating a lockdown video. You can watch some of these on the Michaelhouse Dramatic Arts Virtual Cultural Week Showcase which can be accessed via Moodle. A new set of skills was learnt in this process as boys worked remotely with a partner to conceive the ideas, collaborate and create a video that documented their lockdown life. They learnt how to use a camera, edit, add music, backgrounds etc. The videos were recorded separately and had to be edited together. Dramatic Arts is a subject that is constantly changing as it reflects on the socio-political context of the times. The lockdown videos did just that and each video revealed a different set of emotions, difficulties and humour. We laughed, we cried, we applauded and we had hope through the various videos.

The C Block worked on monologues from a play called *Breasts*, with the dominant theme of toxic masculinity. We explored and discussed how men should embrace their masculinity, and how and when it becomes toxic. All masculinity is not toxic but if we can identify the toxicity and begin to understand it then we become better husbands, fathers, sons, colleagues – better humans. It is with this deepened understanding of the characters that the boys then attempted their monologues.

Movement in lockdown? Can it be done? B Block proves that nothing is impossible in lockdown – not even choreography. Movement and choreography are some of the strengths in the Department with the school being identified as a school of excellence in movement at the end of each year's Matric practical examination. The B Block boys grabbed this task with



both hands, feet and any other part of the body that can move to create beautiful and moving pieces. The boys had to select a site and incorporate the use of the site into their movement pieces. These were entitled: *Movement in Isolation*.

The A Block worked on preparing their exam pieces throughout lockdown and performed their trials' practical examination, which has been reduced to two pieces of their choice, this year. These are strange times for them and the challenges that they face are unlike any other year, yet they produced exceptional work in their trial practical examination. The resilience and ability to adapt has been a strength of this group of boys. We were disheartened that they had to perform to an empty theatre, to a camera rather than an examiner, which defeats the sole function and purpose of theatre. Despite this the quality of the pieces were of a high standard as the boys displayed their talent and skills learnt over the past 2½ years. We look forward to the time when our theatres can reopen to audiences and the spirit of live theatre can be revived.

Departmental News: French, Ms Martine Planteau de Maroussem

What's in a language? – four major components in the form of reading, writing, listening and speaking, in addition to discovering a new culture and enhancing one's thought processes. Though the first three skills are acquired at an early stage in one's learning process, speaking remains undoubtedly the most challenging of those components to master and demands continuous engagement and commitment in and out of class. With the arrival of Covid19 on the scene, new ways of implementing those linguistic skills had to be found and Quizlet came to the rescue, especially when it came to verb conjugation.

One of the challenges that I met as a one-person Department during the time of lockdown was to ensure we cater for all types of learners: from beginner level to native speakers.

It was rewarding to see the outcome and our Francophiles must feel pleased with their progress.

B Block Camp: 11-13 September 2020

In order to promote our B Block boys consideration of **leadership**, over the past weekend we designed a programme which was both practical and thought-provoking. The boys had to shop to a budget and prepare a "banquet" and a musical item for entertainment on Friday in their Houses and then, on Saturday, a team led by David Allen, a Police Reservist and ex Presidential escort and guard, gave a presentation about integrity, honesty, personal image, communication, as well as body language and interpreting it, among other leadership skills. That afternoon the boys engaged in some team building activities on the fields and tried to employ some of the skills they had learned in the morning session. On Saturday evening we were treated to a presentation by Sean Disney, a mountaineer and motivational speaker. Sean has been climbing and leading expeditions the world over for more than 20 years, he has summited Everest twice and is a Twice "7 Summits" climber. His presentation



involved real life experiences and related these to decision making in the context of leadership and achieving the end goal. Finally, on Sunday morning the boys spent time with individual Housemasters discussing the expectations of them during their A Block year.

Congratulations and Individual Achievements

Christian Fellowship Committee

Congratulations to **Cameron McClean-Banks** and **Richard Upfold** who have been elected as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Christian Fellowship Committee for 2021. We wish them success and fulfilment as they guide the group which generally comprises up to 150 boys at Michaelhouse.

Music School

Several of our boys have recently achieved at a very high level in music. Our congratulations go to **Mmofa Matjele** for being the focus of an article in the September issue of SA Drummer magazine – to read the article go to <https://sadrummer.co.za/>.

Three other boys achieved Merit in their Trinity College music examinations: well done to **Andrew Woodland** - Grade 6 Saxophone, **Peter Woodland** - Grade 6 Trumpet and **Oliver Cheales** - Grade 8 Clarinet. The achievement of a Grade 8 pass is exceptional inasmuch as it is the highest level to which one can go in music examinations and Oliver is still in C Block. Well done, too, to **Angelo Nkosi** for his Merit Award in the Grade 3 Drum Kit Rockscool Examination.

Start of 4th Quarter Transport

The return to school for the commencement of the 4th quarter will be on **Sunday 4 October** and there will be a bus from Johannesburg departing from Zoo Lake at 12h00, a bus from Bloemfontein departing from North Ridge Mall at 11h00, a bus from Durban departing from the Pavilion at 16h10 and making the usual stops through Kloof and Pietermaritzburg.

Airport collections from Oribi will be at 17h00 and from King Shaka at 12h30, 14h30 and 16h30. All bookings for these trips can be made through the usual transport booking portal for any queries please contact **Mrs Nirvana Naicker**, School Transport Co-ordinator:

Cell: 060 562 3954

Office: (033) 234 1170

E-mail: opsadmin@michaelhouse.org

The staff member accompanying the Johannesburg Bus on 4 October is Mr Linda Shezi.



Outside Coaching/Tutoring and Police Checks

Very occasionally parents make an arrangement to have their son receive special coaching or tutoring, for example in a sport or subject. If parents wish to do so, the matter must please be referred to an appropriate senior teacher at Michaelhouse as we need to ensure that the usual police checks are in place, as is the case with all teachers and coaches who work here. If you are unsure to whom the matter should be referred, kindly contact my Executive Assistant, Angela Jonsson.

An African Footprint at Michaelhouse

A bust of Albert Luthuli was commissioned in 2007 for the foyer of the Rand Club in Johannesburg. Only two other editions of the bust exist, one of which has been purchased for and given to Michaelhouse by an anonymous donor. The sculptor is Bridget Bird who specialises in busts and such figures and has completed commissions in the UK, Dubai, Delhi and South Africa. Bridget is currently working on a bust of the Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu.

Apart from being President of the ANC from 1952 until his death in 1967, Albert Luthuli was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 1960, the first person of African heritage to be awarded such a prize. The bust is currently positioned in the Rector's Reception, welcoming all who enter at the door.

Conclusion

It has been another busy term with the A Block writing trial examinations and the C Block recently experiencing the rigours of their Journey. The other year groups, too, have been hard-pressed with various demanding activities, with the D and E Blocks having some experience of damp and chilly scenes this week on their hikes/camps. Here is a picture I took yesterday in the Oribi Reserve of some of the E Block who were just about to receive food for their group and were warming themselves by the fire.





As the boys return to you for their Michaelmas break, I wish you all a happy time with your sons and trust that they will come back to school in early October refreshed and ready to take up the challenge of the examination term ahead.

With my best wishes

ANTONY CLARK
RECTOR