Thomas Foley's Charity (founded 1667) for the boarding and education of boys



Old Swinford Hospital

Stoke Edith Estate Office,
Stoke Edith,
Herefordshire HR1 4HG.

ATF/6221

8th May 1980.

R.L.Harris Esq.,
Wychbury
23 Farlands Road,
Old Swinford,
Stourbridge,
West Midlands.

Dear

For some little time I have been concerned at the public relations and above all the leadership given by the Feoffees, and Feoffee Governors, has not, in my opinion, been of the highest order.

For us to carry the staff and boys along with us during a period of falling levels of funding in some areas by the Local Education Authority, combined with our programme of change, it is, and unquestionably will be necessary for us to explain in broad but clear outline the duties of the L.E.A., the Governors, and the Feoffees.

You will now appreciate how pleased I was when you started to grasp this nettle at the last Visiting Committee Meeting. I cannot believe that our efforts are likely to be anything but frustrated if we lay down a series of quite unnecessary smoke screens. The rules of the scheme were all laid down many years ago.

I suggest to you that a measure of our failure to exert that level of leadership which is undoubtedly necessary was the outcome of the meeting with the previous Chairman, the Chairman of the Governors, yourself and some others had with the staff when, as I understand it, a veritable barrage of petty and ill-informed complaints rained down upon your heads. It is a typical example of a workforce not in tune with the leadership, because the leadership is fundamentally lacking.

The leadership that is necessary at Old Swinford Hospital is for us to plainly state the positions of the Feoffees and the Governors before all the assembled staff and possibly the senior boys, and for this to be done on a regular basis. In my view, tea and buns, and sherry are no substitute. I suggest you pause and consider just how many of the staff even know what the vast majority of the Feoffees, Feoffee Governors, look like or their names; would you run your business upon such a strange basis !

During the past few months I have been looking closely into the matter of the standards and competence of the Masters. Much of what I have found is less than satisfactory. I suggest to you that the Feoffee Governors owe it to the Founder, the Parents, and above all the boys to see to it that Old Swinford Hospital does not become a happy hunting ground for the least successful and competent members of the schoolmastering profession.

This again is a matter, in my view, of firm leadership by the Governors/ Feoffees putting pressure on the L.E.A. who are the employers of these masters to see to it that the proper standards are maintained. The present policy of hoping that some of the less satisfactory members of the staff will quietly fade away ducks the issue and does nothing for the Foundation or the School quite apart from inviting the Headmaster to make bricks without straw.

I would be very glad to get your views ?

Yours,

Andrews.

BANNISTER, KING & RIGBEYS

Resident Partners:
N. J. WASE-ROGERS
P. W. KING, B.Sc.

Consultants:
J. W. KING, M.A. (OXON)
Notary Public
J. W. BANNISTER, T.D.

10 FOSTER STREET
STOURBRIDGE
WEST MIDLANDS
DY8 1EN
SOLICITORS

TELEPHONE:
70911 (2 lines)
5005 & 5040
(STD 038 43)
MDX 10675

YOUR REF. | OUR REF. | DATE

PK/AW/3113 | 16th January, 1984

C.R.F. Potter, M.A.
Headmaster,
Old Swinford Hospital,
Stourbridge,
West Midlands.
DY8 1QX

Dear Mr Potter,

You expressed an interest in seeing a selection of documents relating to mines which belonged to the Feoffees. If you would like to call and collect these with a view to their being sent on to Worcester Record Office in due course you are welcome to do so.

It may not be many months before I ask Worcester Record Office to come and collect these and various other documents we have for them here.

Yours sincerely,

Other Partners: D. M. BILLINGS and C. J. POPPLE, M.A., LL.B. (Cantab) at Associated Firm:
RIGBEY, LOOSE & MILLS, 18 BENNETTS HILL, BIRMINGHAM B2 5QN Tel.: 021-643-1831

Thomas Foley's Charity (founded 1667) for the boarding and education of boys



C. F. R. POTTER, M.A.
HEADMASTER

Old Swinford Hospital

Stourbridge
West Midlands
DY8 1QX
Telephone Stourbridge 370025

December 1989

Dear Parent

The end of term and Christmas are rapidly approaching, but I am trying to do this letter in good time because there is so much that needs to be said at the end of this first term of Grant Maintained status. I hope you will read everything carefully because there is some very exciting news to report after the Feoffees' and Governors' Meetings earlier in December.

The last few weeks have been particularly hectic because the 'flu bug hit the school, both boys and staff in a major way. 154 boarders so far have been affected. I am enormously grateful to the Sanatorium Staff for the way they have coped, and they in their turn say that they could not have managed without the generous and unstinting help not only of House Staff but also of boys who fetched and carried for their sick friends in a most willing way. The whole scenario has shown cooperation and teamwork at its very best. The San Staff and I are also most thankful to those parents who were able to take sons home to care for them. The pressure was relieved at crucial times!

The most noticeable change this term has been the way in which Baxter House has progressed over the months. Most memorable was the day when the first roof timbers went up, and promptly fell down with a resounding crash, which was clearly audible in the Oak Room (my study, to the uninitiated!) where the Housemasters were gathered for their meeting. Anyway, all is well and the completion date is set for the end of February. It seems generally agreed that it is to be a most handsome building.

Earlier this term, I was able to write to you to tell you of some of the important decisions which had been taken as a result of Grant Maintained status. The advantages continue to be more and more apparent. Two new appointments have recently been made: Mr.A.Bradshaw has joined the school as Computer Maintenance Manager; he will also be helping with the Electronics Department. This is an entirely new appointment, and a very important one, considering the increasing amount of new Technology equipment in the school. Mr D.Davidson has joined the school as Workshop Technician on a full-time all-year basis. Previously the school had LEA support on three days a week only in term time.

A budget was set aside to pay for Supply Teachers to cover Staff absences. In spite of the fact that it has been a bad term for illness, I am delighted to say that because of the generosity and willingness of the Staff in covering for absent colleagues, we have not had to spend a single pound. Therefore I have put the money saved straight back into the classrooms by ordering extra equipment requested by Departments. I know that

parents (and boys) will recognise that this kind of attitude by our Staff shows exceptional loyalty to the school and will be duly grateful.

The Department of Education and Science invited the Governors to make a bid for capital expenditure on the educational side of the school. We have been able to make our case direct; previously we should have relied on the LEA to make it on our behalf. Every year since the early 1980s the Governors have made on the teaching side, extra Science Laboratories their top priority. Their bids, via the LEA, have not been successful. The project to build three extra laboratories on top of Lyttelton, over the main Physics and Chemistry Labs, has been submitted direct to the DES by us this year as a Grant Maintained School. We believe we have a good case. Whatever happens, we have plans to improve Science teaching areas by taking over the old Electronics area as well as the old Audio-Visual Room. These areas will be particularly suitable for Sixth Form science teaching.

Enclosed with this letter you will find the updated exam result sheet. The trends since 1980 still point upwards, but I do have to say that the results achieved by last year's Fifth Form are unlikely to be bettered. 92% of the boys gaining 5 or more GCSEs at C and above first go compares with a national average of something in the low 20%, and the A levels show the markedly increased number of A and B grades that we always hope for. With four boys into Oxbridge, and a record number of boys getting onto degree courses, no-one can say that we are not a force to be reckoned with academically. You may also like to know that of this year's Upper Sixth of 73, 56 have applied to University, 14 for other degrees (mainly Polytechnic), and 3 boys expect to go straight into employment. 14 of the Upper Sixth have made application to Oxford or Cambridge. In this connection, I should like to give advance notice that Miss Crosland is organising a Higher Education Conference on the day the boarders arrive back at the beginning of the summer term, April 25th. Many Universities and Polytechnics will be represented, and parents and boys from the Fifth and Sixth Forms are encouraged to come.

The usual Careers Convention, organised by Dr. Phillips, will take place on the last evening of next term, Friday 30th March 1990, and will be open to parents and boys from the Third Year and upwards.

For me, the most exciting moment of the term was when both the Feoffees and the Governors gave the go-ahead in principle to a scheme which I believe will bring huge advantages and benefits to every boy and member of Staff at Old Swinford.

The plan is to build, to the west of Dudley House, a school Shop and range of new Common Rooms for the Staff, the whole building being known as the Old Swinford Centre. The Shop will be far more extensive than the tuck shop originally planned for Baxter House. It will take up the whole ground floor and will not only sell Tuck but will also include the School Uniform Shop and Second-Hand Clothing Shop. Further, agreement has been reached with Midland Bank to have a school branch in the Shop for the use of Staff and Boys; they have promised to provide much of the fittings for the Bank. In addition, Sports Equipment will be sold. In short, the Shop will provide as many as possible of the items which a boy needs for his day-to-day existence here.

Potentially the most exciting part of the project will be the fact that the whole Shop scheme is designed to provide business training opportunities for Lower Sixth boys. Each operation will be a kind of mini-enterprise, and, on the lines of Young Enterprise, boys will have the opportunity to be on the Board of Management for each Shop Enterprise. Midland Bank have agreed to provide basic training for boys involved in helping to run the Bank, though school employees will continue to be used for the Tuck and Clothing operations. All the Enterprises will be under the direction and supervision of Mr. R.L.Naylor as Warden of the Centre. The

Secretary of State has in the last few weeks underlined the importance of vocational training for Sixth Formers in addition to their academic studies. Next year's Lower Sixth will have this opportunity.

It is planned to start building as soon as possible after April next. The scheme will have important offshoots. Surplus profits from the operation will go straight into the fund for building the swimming pool, and the present Staff Common Rooms can be used for teaching areas for Divinity and Classics. This means that all the mobiles east of Sheppard House and west of Baxter House can be moved or removed in the Summer Holidays. The 1928 temporary Black Hut will finally disappear! So too will Colonel Ison's old workshop.

The Feoffees are anxious that this whole area should then be properly landscaped, and the focal point, they have decided, should be a Fountain with a statue (bronze, if possible) of the Founder, Thomas Foley, on a plinth in the centre. After all, the buildings put up in the last decade could not have been built without the resources provided by the Founder. The Fountain should be visible both from the Prospect and Upper Close direction and Baxter House. It seems appropriate to call the whole area Tom Court. We already have a Quad, and there is, of course, the famous Tom Quad at Christ Church, Oxford. The abbreviation 'Tom' for Thomas Foley is, I hope, forgiveable; so too the plagiarism from Oxford. I have told boys in the school that a Prize (perhaps £40) is offered for a winning design for the Court incorporating the Fountain, provided the ideas in the design are acceptable to the Feoffees. A good project, perhaps, for after Christmas?

In any event, the whole appearance and aspect of the southern part of the school site will be transformed over the next twelve months, thank goodness! At the same time, considerable thought has been given to the location of the different academic departments, and some fundamental restructuring is in hand for next September in order to bring Departmental teaching into individual and cohesive areas.

Now for the shorter notices:

WORK EXPERIENCE

This is done by all Fifth Formers after GCSE exams, and is an option for Lower Sixth boys in Adventure Week. Is there any parent whose firm can offer a potential placement? If so, please would you write to Mr. D. E. Christley.

YOUNGER BROTHERS

If parents are intending to enter younger sons into the school, whether as Boarders or Day Boys (Day Boarders), it is helpful to have the Registration form completed well in advance. Please contact the Admissions' Secretary, Mrs. Sandy Thomas. We have bookings already up to 1999! Incidentally, about 75% of prospective parental visits to the school come as a result of your recommendations. Thank you very much for keeping our application lists bulging full; if you would like some copies of the School Prospectus to give to friends, please call in at my office. We are planning a new Prospectus to be ready at the end of 1990.

DAY BOARDERS

The new Day Boarder scheme is proving immensely attractive to the people of Stourbridge. We have guaranteed a minimum of 12 places to First Year boys next September, but we have already had 49 applications. The closing date is December 31st. Parents of present day boys who wish to convert to day boarding have also been sending in applications at a great rate. Decisions about these boys will be made, I

hope at the end of next term. However, I think we shall need to interview each boy and his parents before making a decision. In the meantime, please let me have any further applications by Half Term in February.

MUSICAL MATTERS

Those who have heard the musical events this term cannot fail to have been impressed by the musicianship of the boys. The Opera production in May, 'Orpheus in the Underworld' should be a real treat. I should like to congratulate the following for passing Associated Board Music Exams: David Hingley: Piano Grade 1 Duncan Parker: Piano Grade 1 Jonathan Coyle: Piano Grade 3 Laxman Ariaraj: Euphonium Grade 3 Alastair Tomson: Eb Cornet Grade 3 Robert Ellis: Cornet Grade 3 Andrew Wlson: Piano Grade 3 & 'Cello Grade 4 Simon Gibson: 'Cello Grade 4 Simon Picken: Eb Horn Grade 5 Adrian Plevin: Violin Grade 6 & Theory Grade 6 James Hale: Theory Grade 7

DESIGN & ART MATERIALS

All boys here at some stage use basic materials in these subjects, and often wish to take their 'product' home. I have been aware for some time that it is the usual practice in other schools for a payment to be made for the materials used, if a boy wishes to retain the finished article. The provision of wood, plastics, and high quality art paper is increasingly expensive, and, in future, the school proposes to work on the assumption that all boys will wish to own the finished products from their creative endeavours. There is therefore a proforma for you to complete if you are willing to pay for the necessary materials. If you are financially not able to do so, or, indeed unhappy with the prospect, your son's finished products will remain the property of the school. If you are receiving Family Credit or Income Support, please let me know this personally. The information will be totally confidential.

CONSENT FORMS

Some time ago, consent forms were sent to you complete so that your son could take part in extra-curricular activities. Some of these have not been returned and lest your son be disadvantaged, may I urge you to complete it. Extra forms can be obtained from the school Office.

DENTAL CHECK-UPS

The San. has requested that I ask parents of boarders who are registered with the school dentist, Mr Moore, to let sister know if your son has not had a dental check-up within the last six months. Also parents who have requested to be registered with Mr. Moore and subsequently changed their mind, should notify the San. without delay. Some boarders are registered at West Hill Clinic and it would appear that a number have slipped through the net. Dudley Health Authority, it seems, are not doing any routine school checks and some of the boys at West Hill Clinic have not been seen for some time.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY IN BOARDING HOUSES

There have been one or two incidents in other boarding schools recently where electrical safety procedures were suspect. This has caused us to look at our own situation and rules have been published in all boarding houses. If a boy brings back electrical equipment it is a parent's responsibility to ensure that it is safe and properly wired and fused according to British Standards. Fuse ratings are 13 amp for a kettle, 5 amp for a toaster or hair dryer, and 3 amp for all other equipment. With some reluctance we allow hair dryers, although

the potential hazard is considerable. Electric kettles or toasters are not allowed in the dormitories. The only kind of adaptor permissible is the fused 'multi-socket block' connected by a single lead to one plug.

TELEVISION SETS

Some boys have permission from Housemasters to have TV sets. It has been made clear to us that each of these personal sets must have a licence, unless it is battery run. Housemasters will be asked to check this next term.

PARENTS' EVENINGS

Parents' evenings next term are as follows: Monday February 12th 7pm Fifth Year

Monday March 5th 7pm Lower Sixth

FUTURE TERM DATES

There is an alteration to Outweekend in the Summer Term. Unfortunately, public exam dates have clashed with the previous arrangement. Therefore, the first Outweekend will be from Saturday May 5th at 11.45am to Monday May 8th at 8.30pm and NOT the weekend of May 12th-14th.

MOCK EXAMS

These begin on Wednesday January 10th for Fifth formers and Upper Sixth. Upper Sixth exams finish on Monday Jan 22nd and Fifth on Friday Jan 19th.

Parents of day boys may apply for study leave for their sons during the exam. period since their study facilities in school are limited compared with the boarders. So Revision may be done at home by day boys but ONLY if there is a specific request by a parent. The Library will be available for Revision for those day boys whose parents do not request study leave.

SCHOOL MAGAZINE

A splendid edition, extremely full and readable, has been produced by Mrs.Hartley and her editorial team. I hope all boarder parents have received a copy via their son. Day boys whose parents have contributed to the school fund have all been given a copy. Further copies may be purchased from the Office.

DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER DAY

I am delighted to say that the Governors have passed the following resolution: 'The Governors wish to express their appreciation to the Headmaster, Staff and Boys for all their efforts in making Duchess of Gloucester Day such a successful occasion.'

THE LIBRARY

Many thanks to all the parents who come to help in the Library. It makes an enormous difference. At the end

of term a stock check has been done, again with the valuable assistance of yourselves. It seems that the rate of loss of books per year is in excess of 5%. This is not good! Please can you all make sure that there are no books lurking at home which should be with us.

The Feoffees have made two grants of £4000 this year to buy books. That is tremendously generous of them, but they will only go on doing this if I can assure them that the Library facilities are properly used and the books well treated and returned after use.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Mr. S. Orpen who is a member of the Black Country and Birmingham Post Card Club (and runs our own Collectors Club) and has won First Prize in the North West Federation of Post Card Clubs Annual Display Competition. His display of post cards by the Cartoonist Lawson Wood (1929/30) won in the subject display section and now qualifies him for the national finals next year.

THE CALENDAR & DATES

In this letter you will find a copy of the Calendar for next term. Further copies may be bought from the Office.

Here are some further dates made since the copy went to press:

Tuesday Jan 23 8 pm Debating Society in the Library

Thursday Feb 1 Observer Schools Debating Assocation at Bromsgrove School:

OSH v Hereford Cathedral School.

Thursday Mar 1 8pm Debating Society in the Library.

Monday Mar 12 8pm Debating Society in the Library.

Tuesday Mar 20 7.45pm Music School 'Thoughts of Love' Miscellany of Verse and Music.

Thursday Mar 22 4.30pm 'Thoughts of Love'.

Tuesday Mar 27 Prospect House Outing 'The Railway Children' Grand Theatre Wolverhampton.

CANCER NEWS

We have been asked to contribute copies of Cancer News and you will find issue 1 enclosed.

BEGINNING OF THE SPRING TERM

Boarders return on Tuesday January 9th at the latest by 5pm IN SCHOOL UNIFORM. Day boys return on Wednesday January 10th by 8.45 am for Registration. First Assembly of the term is at 9 am on Wednesday January 10th.

GAMES EQUIPMENT

An important sheet of information is enclosed from the PE and Games Department. It has been discussed by the Governors who wish the the requirements to be clearly known by parents. Boys who are not properly equipped and protected cannot expect to take part in the the sports concerned. We all have to take care that we minimise the possibility of injury.

SHAPE OF THE DAY

As a staff we have spent a good deal of time over the last six months discussing the shape of the Old Swinford day and the best use of the available time in the context of a boarding school. This term we had a two day visit from Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, and I was able to discuss things with the chief Boarding School HMI (who happens by a lucky chance to have had a boy in the school who became Head of Witley House and went on to take a degree in Geography).

It is likely in any case that the Secretary of State for Education will soon confirm the instruction to schools that a minimum of 25 hours academic teaching should take place each week, Monday to Friday. We have to take this into account, and some adjustments will need to be made for next September. It is generally agreed that the length of the lunch break is unnecessarily long. However, valuable Sports coaching and Music rehearsals take place at this time and these must be preserved; sports practices may take place before a boy has his lunch, for instance, and lunch will be served over a longer period than the present half-hour scramble.

After formal teaching, it is vital to make best use of the time. A large number of Societies meet or Activities take place after 4pm and they last for at least an hour. What the boys call 'tea' begins at 5.30pm and this is their last main meal until breakfast at about 8am the next morning. The timing of tea is too early and 6.30 may be a better time. We should then call it 'Supper' and it would be a cooked meal. Tea would then be available at 4pm after lessons to include a cup of tea and a bun or something similar.

On Mondays next term we shall try this arrangement for the time after school. Tea will be at 4pm, activities until 5.30pm, first prep at 5.30 or thereabouts until Supper, staggered by Year or House, at about 6.30pm. Second Prep will begin at 7.30pm. Sixth Formers, who at present finish Prep at 9.30pm, will finish at 9, and other boys will complete their Prep correspondingly earlier. The early evening devotees of 'Neighbours' will suffer, but the division of Prep into two shorter portions works very well in some schools I know. Boys who receive evening coaching in sports or take part in other evening activities, such as Scouts or Duke of Edinburgh Award Training, will have their Prep times far less affected. For the time being, the experiment will only take place on Mondays.

If the scheme works, it will therefore be possible for junior Day Boarders to have completed at least an hour's supervised Prep before they return home. For junior boys, at least, there will probably be an increased emphasis on the structured use of the post-afternoon school activity and Society time.

CHAMPION TEAMS

The Under 15 and the Under 16 teams are both County Champions of Worcestershire. There are two knockout competitions and the school has never won both before. The Under 16s beat Worcester RGS in the final .. 32 points to Nil, having beaten King's School, Worcester in the semifinal. The Under 15s beat King's, Worcester ..28 points to 4, having beaten Worcester RGS in the semi-final. The Under 15s now go on to the

National Daily Mail Cup (the under 15s reached the last 8 in 1988).

This represents a magnificent performance by both teams and underlines the strength of the Rugby Football in the school.

SPORTS & GAMES

It has been a memorable term for success in many spheres, both on an individual and team basis.

Congratulations to Sam Bradberry of Maybury for gaining places in both the England and Great Britain team (Under 16) for Ice Hockey.

Congratulations to the Archery Club who finished fifth in the English Schools Championships. Richard Blunt won the Gale Trophy for equal score at each distance.

Congratulations to the following Soccer players on being selected for the Dudley area teams: Anthony Brand and David Kneebone (Under 13); Jonathan Brand and Martin Gordon (Under 14); Richard Wain and Robin Cruise (Under 15).

Congratulations to the 1st XV Rugby team on being runners up to one of the best Welsh Rugby schools, Llandovery College , in the final of the Walsall Invitation Schools Tournament.

Congratulations to the 1st XI Soccer team on reaching the quarter finals of the West Midlands Cup.

About three-quarters of all Rugby matches in the school have been won, a splendid record.

The following won places in the Worcestershire County teams; Under 18: Simon Hird, William Coles, Mark Artherton, Mark Bush, Peter Rawlings. Under 16: Ian Grayson, Daniel Jamieson, Aidan Blanco, Richard Hansford, Richard MacKenzie, Nigel Chapple and Stephen Mullins. Ian Grayson and Daniel Jamieson have gone on to be selected for the North Midlands XV, and Ian as County and North Midlands Captain for this season.

SWIMMING POOL

Many thanks to those of you who have offered to serve on the fund-raising Committee. The Committee will have its first meeting early next term.

SPONSORSHIP

We are actively seeking sponsorship for the school, large or small, and I hope to be able to announce some success soon. In the meantime, if any Firm or Company you are associated with is interested in making a one-off or regular commitment to the school, please get in touch with me. The new Technology Centre could be given the name of a supporting company. I am looking for Scholarships for boys whose parents could not otherwise afford the boarding fees. The Swimming Pool project needs some industrial or commercial support. Any ideas?

In this connection, I should like to thank Mr Hopley's (father of Paul in Witley) firm for sponsoring the school

Soccer team with their sportswear including shirts, shorts and socks. The firm is Flameproof Electrical Enclosures Ltd. We are grateful to this firm.

CRICKET COACH

Mr. David Banks, the Warwickshire, and former Worcestershire cricketer has been appointed to help coach Cricket in the school next summer term. We also expect, as in previous years, to have another Australian cricketer with us for the Summer Term.

I know I have left much out of this letter, but I am sure parents will recognise that the achievements this term have far outweighed any individual difficulties or problems. There has been a marvellous atmosphere of cooperation and support in the school in this first term as a Grant Maintained school. The future looks bright.

May I wish everyone, Staff, non-teaching Staff and Boys a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Yours sincerely,

