

## The School Community

Last Saturday brought my very first Frost Fair – and what an event it was! The School was transformed into a wonderland of teddy bears and tinsel, cakes and craft stands, and both Halls were truly decked not only with boughs of holly but with baubles, tinsel and, above all, gallons of Christmas cheer. The seasonal smells of mulled wine and roasting turkey set the tone for a morning of festive fun and Santa’s grotto would have rivalled the best in the land.

It was, truly, quite the most impressive school Christmas Fair that I have ever attended, not just because of the high quality products on sale there, but because of the tremendous sense of community, which is so evident everywhere at St Mary’s but was especially so that morning. Everywhere I looked were our girls, helping to serve food and man stalls, looking after younger children and even selling their own produce. Well done, Young Enterprise. Staff, also, were out in force, despite the ever pressing deadlines of reports, and I was delighted to meet not only our current parents and governors, but Old Girls, former parents, governors and former members of staff, all of whom still hold such affection for our School that they return year after year to support us. I am hugely indebted to the parents of the SMA and all their helpers and particular thanks to Mrs Applin, Mrs Hurst and Mrs Patching who masterminded the whole event.



Whilst travelling in Costa Rica recently, our tour guide told us that in order to progress from the status of settlement to village there, a community must have a church, a football pitch and a school. The football pitch did leave me a little bemused but how fitting that a school should be at the heart of the community. It is the place where our young people spend so much of their waking life, the place where they acquire the knowledge and skills which will enable them to achieve economic well being and to take their place in society, the place where they learn to interact with a whole range of different people, and where they learn the value of this spirit of community. Sadly, in the busy, pressurized world in which we live, it is gradually disappearing from many sections of our society, through fear, through apathy - dare I say through selfishness? - but I was very conscious on Saturday that it thrives and flourishes here at St Mary’s. How very blessed we are.

Jean Ross

Headmistress