

PRIZE DAY 2006

Friday, 27th October was Prize Day and as usual the entire school journeyed to the Silversprings Moran Hotel for the event. Dr. T.T. West chaired the proceedings and this year's guest speaker was the Honourable Mr. Justice Kevin Feeney, Judge of the High Court.

Following the academic procession Dr. West swiftly introduced the programme of events. He began by paying tribute to The O'Donovan for his many years of service on the Board of Governors and wished him well in his retirement. He then warmly welcomed two newly appointed members of the Board, Mrs. Olive Simonin and Mr. Ivan Wolfe. Dr. West also welcomed Mr. Justice Feeney and assured us that we could expect an excellent speech, (in this he was certainly correct). Finally, he called upon Mr. Thompson to deliver his Headmaster's Report.

The Headmaster began by echoing the sentiments of Dr. West regarding The O'Donovan's years of service and by welcoming Mrs. Simonin and Mr. Wolfe and thanking them for their willingness to take on the demanding role of Governors of Midleton College. He also shared the good news of Mr. Brian Cairns continued improved health and the recent birth of his daughter Tracey's son, Jacob.

Early in the speech Mr. Thompson dealt with the issue of change, specifically how Ireland, East Cork and Midleton have all changed in light of the strong economy, building expansion, influx of foreign nationals, etc. The challenge facing the school is to provide continuity for our pupils in this time of change while also providing them with the necessary skills to thrive in this new Ireland.

Next came a review of academic achievements. Prior to commenting on our Leaving Cert. results he made the astute observation the "the Points Race is not over". Although there are now sufficient College places available for all applicants it must be remembered that the most sought after college courses will still have very limited entry conditions. It was an excellent set of Leaving Cert results (the highest since 2001) and particular mention was made of the 11 A grades attained in Biology. Hal Hodson was the highest achiever in the exams with a total of 575 points. Hal was awarded the Moore Memorial Prize. In Junior Cert Barry Cunningham had the highest grades and was awarded the Intermediate Shield. Overall the Junior Cert results were all that could be expected and bode well for future success.

Extra-Curricular Activities were many and varied. Field Work studies such as the seniors' trip to the Netherlands, science students researching at Fota Wildlife Park and the E.S.B. station at Aghada and various day trips to Waterford and Kerry. Students were also involved in a wide variety of charitable fund-raising, most notably on behalf of the Hope Foundation. During the year members of Transition Year raised an incredible €31,000 for Hope. 5 members of Form IV accompanied by Mr. Cashman travelled to Calcutta to see the work of the Hope Foundation first hand.

In sporting endeavours the school teams were highly successful. Senior girls' hockey was played at the highest A level for the first time. This was as a result of years of hard work and achievement at B level. The Minor girls also did very well to reach the A final having defeated a strong Mount Mercy side in the semi-final. Caroline Murphy was selected for the Munster U21's hockey team.

The senior rugby team had an exceptional season, the highlight of which was winning the Mungret Cup (for only the third time in the history of the competition). Peter Brougham, Joe Deane and Cathal McSweeney were selected for the Munster A squad. The senior boys' hockey team retained the Cup and League they had won the previous year. At the start of this year they qualified for the Irish schools Hockey championships in Belfast. Craig Moore, Darren Farrell, Emmet Long and Joe Deane were selected at Munster U18 level and Simon Casey at U16 level.

Caroline Levis and Shane O'Brien were the two pupils sponsored by the M.C.A. for a week aboard the Asgard Sail Training vessel.

In other areas the College Orchestra is now in full swing, the Christmas concert production of Oklahoma was a resounding success, the Transition Year art module produced tapestries that went on exhibition in the USA and Mrs. Monaghan has founded a French Club within the school.

New staff this year include Mr. Twomey, Ms. Castro, Ms. O'Shea, Mr. McGuickian and Ms. Hurley. Our new GAP year students are Mr. Symon (Australia) and Ms. Parmar (Canada).

At this point in the speech this year's senior prefects were introduced and came forward to accept their insignia of office. They are Polo Crosbie (Headboy), Aisling Kelly (Headgirl), Nicholas Murphy (Head Dayboy), Charlotte Spink (Head Daygirl).

The College has been invited to take part in the ELOS programme. This will involve a network of schools throughout Europe working on projects, exchanges etc. to promote the concept of European citizenship.

The Headmaster also spoke of the challenges of managing a school and particularly a boarding school and thanked all members of staff for their continued support. It was also explained that in line with recent legislation the Governors have committed themselves to establishing a Board of Management for the College by September 2007.

Reference was made to our first and second Open Days (Sept 2005 and Sept 2006). Both were very positive and generated excellent feedback. Tribute was paid to the ongoing work of both the P.T.A. and the M.C.A.

Finally in the physical development area we were told of significant refurbishment within the main building. The drive was resurfaced and a number of C.C.T.V. units were installed. The College has also received a DES grant to fund an all new crèche on campus. Plans for the role of the rugby pitches and a redevelopment of the main school campus are continuing and should be beneficial to the future of the school. The Headmaster concluded by exhorting his audience to live up to the best traditions of Midleton College.

At this juncture Mr. Justice Feeney was invited to give his speech. He was one of the most impressive speakers ever to appear at Prize Day. He was witty, articulate and spoke at length without any written notes to hand! Justice Feeney began by relating how he had visited the school in August and had been given homework to do! In fact he had been given a copy of the History of the College and a copy of last year's magazine to help him in researching for his speech. As a Dubliner he claimed to be intimidated by the intelligence of Corkonians but since his mother was a Cork woman he hoped this would qualify him as a half wit!

He proceeded to entertain us by expressing fascination with the fact that Midleton College came into existence due to the sex life of King William II. If he hadn't granted extensive lands in Ireland to his mistress our school might never have been founded. He continued by looking at the chequered history of the school as it opened, closed, re-opened on several occasions. In speaking of the current school he believed that it was healthier than ever before, which is partially a reflection of Ireland's prosperity as a whole.

Mr. Feeney then came to the "meat" of his speech. He stressed to the students the importance of accountability and responsibility for one's actions (obviously important in his legal career). In speaking of this he mentioned the influence of teachers in shaping this aspect of character. It was through studying 'To Kill a Mocking Bird' with his English teacher that he first came to favour a career as a lawyer (Form III – take note.) This in turn led him into a brief but eloquent attack on the evils of racial intolerance. He concluded by thanking everyone and received generous applause. The students responded well to his blend of wit and wisdom.

Mr. Ian Sexton and the College Choir then performed a hymn of praise for the audience. This was followed by the presentation of prizes and proceedings concluded with a farewell blessing from Bishop Colton.