

# The CLOCK TOWER

Ripon Grammar School alumni magazine

Spring/Summer 2018  
Issue 14

## Top of the league

RGS retains  
leading North  
school title

## An inspiration

The transplant  
survivor who is now  
helping others

## Game girl

The past pupil  
who wants us to  
play more

Being paid to have  
fun travelling the world

# Living the DREAM

### WARNING

Contains content  
likely to induce  
pangs of envy

Plus: Prize-winning entrepreneurs Reunion news Novel success



# A letter from your alumni society



Dear former students and friends of RGS,

Welcome to this edition of Clocktower, which is full of fascinating stories about the achievements of our students, past and present. From the double transplant survivor, whose vital scientific research is now helping others, to the best friends making a living out of travelling and having fun, we hope there is much to inspire you.

The fact that RGS has, once again, been named top performing state secondary school in the North is testament to the hard work and determination of our talented staff and current students. There are, no doubt, many more fascinating stories about their future achievements yet to come.

We are indebted to editor Ruth Savage, who is bowing out after six years of producing Clocktower, which must be one of the best alumni magazines in the country. We are grateful for her effort and commitment.

Our key aims remain unchanged, to keep you connected with RGS and each other and to facilitate reunions (see below). The Old Riponians' Association continues to grow and membership is free. Simply email us if you haven't yet joined, we'd love to hear from you.

Please keep in touch.  
Very best wishes,

**Derek Crookes**  
President  
Email: oldriponians@aol.com

**WERE YOU AT RGS IN THE FIFTIES?** We are hosting a reunion for RGS and Ripon High School students of the Fifties at RGS on Saturday, July 7, from 2pm, as well as a get-together for the Class of 1978. Contact oldriponians@aol.com for more information.

# Where are they now?

We catch up with former RGS students to discover what they are up to now

**EDD RILEY**  
Left RGS 2011

After RGS, I studied chemistry at the University of York. Science had always been a real interest of mine at school, and I was fortunate enough to have some excellent teachers who really brought the subject to life.

Dr Grime in particular was very supportive, and managed to put up with me as his student for five out of my seven years at the school. Although I thoroughly enjoyed chemistry, I very quickly found myself spending an inordinate amount of time with the university's drama society. A particularly busy student society, they put on in excess of 25 individual shows a year.

Thanks must go to Mr Fell for his infectious passion for all things theatre at school. I also somehow found myself the inaugural president of the university's Swing Dancing Society, which has since gone from strength to strength (most notably in my absence!).

Towards the end of my time in York, I realised I wanted to do something completely different and a bit more adventurous with my life, and so I decided to join the Royal Navy. After a long application process, I was finally given the go-ahead and so started my initial officer training down in Dartmouth.

Eight (mostly) enjoyable months later, I passed out, and I am now in the early stages of flying training. Many more years of training are to come, but I'm thoroughly enjoying myself. It may have become a bit of a cliché on a piece of writing such as this to mention the many fond memories one has of school days, but I can honestly say that is exactly how I feel.



Flying high: Edd when he was at school, above, and in his Royal Navy uniform, left

I loved my time at RGS, and am so very grateful to all the staff and for their hard work that gave me such a good start in life.

**KATHRYN SEDERATI**  
(nee Spooner)  
Left RGS 1976

I was a boarder at Ripon Grammar School and left at 16 to go to secretarial college in Abingdon before working as a personal assistant. After having a family I had a complete career change and moved to working in schools.

I trained to be a sensory specialist for the education team in Wigan near Manchester and am still there 20 years on. I work with visually-impaired and hearing-impaired children and young people, teaching braille which, although challenging, I thoroughly enjoy.

I revisited Ripon in the summer of 2017 and it brought back so many memories for me. I visited the cathedral, which we attended every Sunday morning as boarders, walking into town in crocodile fashion past the bike sheds and through the old allotments in our oversized grey cloaks and Sunday hats. We would then walk back and have Sunday lunch under the watchful eye of a prefect.

While visiting, we bought a special Ripon ale. We were lucky enough to be in the market square when the Morris dancers were competing, it was lots of fun watching the Steampunks, and the costumes were amazing. Walking through the cobbled streets was very nostalgic; there were many more tea rooms than I remember. Ripon is a very pretty historic city. I would have liked to have a look around Johnson House but unfortunately it was closed. Our house mistress then, Miss Holland, and our matron looked after us in the sick bay. Top of the Pops on a Thursday evening brought everyone down to the common room, it looked exactly as I remembered it, as did the sanatorium where I did piano practice.

**TONY ELLENDER**  
Left RGS 1961

After leaving school, I took up my RAF scholarship at Cranwell in September 1961 and graduated in July 1964. Operationally, I flew Lightning, Jaguar and ultimately Tornado aircraft in the UK, Singapore and West Germany.

Other tours included trials flying at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, and a staff tour at ZATAF JHQ Rheindalen (West Germany).

I met and married my late wife Ann in Scotland. Our daughter Clair was born there in 1968, and son David was born in Singapore in 1970. I retired from the RAF in 1986, joined British Aerospace (now BAe Systems) at Dunsfold, near Guildford, and transferred, two years later, to the Al Yamamah programme administered from Warton.

I spent 14 years as a Tornado flying instructor at KAAB Dhahran in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, before finally retiring in 2001.

The family home during the BAe years was in Farnham, Surrey but we decided to settle in North Yorkshire. We found The Mount in West Burton in 1999, which was restored for us, and became our home in July 2001. Ann died there six years later and I still live there.



The swimming pool was unchanged too. We wandered over the sports fields where many an early morning was spent jogging round the track. Memories of high jump and relay came back.

Although new buildings have been added, the main buildings remain untouched. We took lots of photographs, especially in the hall where I sat through many an assembly facing gowned figures. We even had a drink in the old Spa Hotel.

It was a very enjoyable day looking at the archives and meeting up with old Riponians, most of whom I had never met before but we shared a common interest. Thanks to all who made that possible.



Dancing queen: Kathryn Sederati with Morris dancer Peter Hills in Ripon and at school, pictured back row, second from left



RAF scholarship: Tony today, left, and in the cockpit on the ground at RAF Leuchars, above. As he was at school, below





# Have we got news for you

A couple who met at RGS have won an award for an innovative business they set up to help teach young children about what is going on in the world. **Ruth Savage** reports

**T**wo former RGS students have won a major business award for a venture they launched less than two years ago, aimed at encouraging the teaching of current affairs in primary schools.

Rob and Katie Harrison, who went on to marry and have three children together after leaving RGS, have already signed 600 schools up for their Picture News service and plan to sign up a further 1,000, to include secondary schools, in the near future.

Former primary school teacher Katie (nee Marsden) got the idea after noticing there were few resources available to help teach children about news and current affairs.

Together with Rob, a former agricultural salesman, she created Picture News, which offers a weekly resource schools can sign up for, giving teachers everything they need to teach pupils about what is happening in the world that week.

Each week schools signed up to Picture News receive a pack containing a poster featuring a current news story, open-ended questions, assembly plan and further learning ideas.

"Our resources are used for weekly news assemblies, debating clubs, social discussions and literacy work. Our emphasis is on learning from, not just about, the news," explains Katie, who left RGS in 2004.

She said: "For me, it became more and more important that our children became aware of what is going on in the world. A lot of what we are about is learning from current affairs and what is going on. We are very passionate about that."

The judges of the York Press Awards - open to businesses in York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull - praised Picture News for innovating in an existing market: "Their service helps educate and inspire the next generation, engaging children with the wider world around them."

"Katie and Rob have already inspired a huge number of young people to look at the world differently. In an age of fake news, their timing couldn't be better."

"I always knew I wanted to develop my own product," explains Katie, who did teacher training at Carlisle and went on to work in sales and training for an education company after teaching at Sessay Primary School.

"When teaching, I placed great emphasis on children learning from real-life situations. This was where the concept began. I felt if I could create a resource that could help with this I

could not only help save teachers' time but also help a vast number of children learn about our world."

She initially ran the company in her spare time in June 2016, going on to

officially launch it in the September, leaving her job to run the company full time a few months later, with Rob - who studied wildlife biology at Newcastle University after leaving RGS in 2003 - joining her full-time in the New Year.



Their skill sets complement each other, says Katie: "I'm responsible for our weekly content, social media and marketing and Rob is responsible for the accounts, logistics and packing side of the business."

Having recently launched a Picture News Advanced version for secondary schools, they both feel positive about the future: "We've got rapid expansion plans and are on track to sign up another 1,000 schools," says Rob.

But underlying everything is their desire to teach children to think about what is going on around them: "Not only are children incredibly interested in what's happening in the world but by using it as a medium for teaching, they are able to become empowered citizens - realising they can make a difference and contribute to what's happening."

www.picture-news.co.uk  
email: help@picture-news.co.uk  
T: 01765 530908



Picture perfect: Rob and Katie celebrate their award, main photograph, and, above, with their children, Oliver, 5, William, 3, and Emily, 2.

**A** footballer who honed her striking skills at Ripon Grammar School is now a rising star in the national women's game.

Nicki Gears and her Durham Women FC team, The Wildcats, reached their first ever Women's Cup Quarter Final in March, when they lost to Everton, one of the biggest names in football.

Nicki, described by pundits as a particularly speedy striker and a name to watch out for, has also played against Liverpool, Leicester City, Sunderland and Tottenham Hotspur this season.

Wildcats spokesman Mark Donnelly describes her as a quick and skilful forward who, as well as scoring goals, provides plenty of chances for her teammates: "She has been excelling as part of the team, which has enjoyed a successful start to the season. Nicki is a big part of this."

After leaving RGS in 2011, Nicki won a coveted place on a sports scholarship degree programme in the States and joined Durham's Wildcats in 2015, following four record-breaking years spent playing as a forward for the University of West Alabama Tigers.

She finished her career in the States as her club's all-time leading scorer with 47 goals and a 335 shot total. She was also one of the top goal scorers in her field nationally.

Durham, which competes in the FA Women's Super League 2, the second tier of Women's football in England, approached Nicki when she was home for Christmas, just before her final exams.

*'She is, without doubt, the most talented footballer RGS has ever had'*

RE teacher Julian Clarke, who coached Nicki's team at school, says she is, without doubt, the most talented footballer RGS has ever had: "From the moment Nicki arrived at RGS, it was clear she had an extraordinary gift for playing the beautiful game."

"Even as an eleven year old, she used to run rings round some of the older players at our Friday night training sessions. Nicki was a superb all-round footballer, chosen to represent her county at under-16 level."

**Ruth Savage** reports on the star striker who shone at RGS

As part of her contract, she was offered a full scholarship to study for her masters in physical education at Durham University, which supports the popular club.



Pitch perfect: Nicki Gears is making her mark in the world of women's football

"She could pass, shoot, tackle, head, cross, run at speed with the ball, score and even go into goal. As with all great athletes, Nicki had a strength of character and personality that was remarkable - she was a reservoir of strength to her team mates and never gave up until that final whistle blew."

"Her greatest moment of triumph came in the under-16 girls' County Cup Final in December 2007 when she scored the one and only goal which defeated Wensleydale 1 - 0 (after extra time) to lift the trophy for her school."

## Brothers launch hangover-free beer

**T**wo brothers who attended RGS have launched their own low alcohol, low calorie beer.

Infinite Session, a company dedicated to producing low alcohol beers, launched its first product, a pale ale on draught and in bottles, in February.

Chris Hannaway, 28, says he and brother Tom, 30, co-founded the company because they love beer, but don't always love the hangovers.

They wanted to make a beer, he explains, which you can knock back if you are out playing football next day, without worrying about the consequences.

The brothers found the non-alcoholic beers they tried weren't too bad but felt flavour could be improved and branding could be less apologetic and more confident. Infinite Session is all about the flavour, craftsmanship and experience of drinking it, they stress.

The launch coincides with latest research showing

more than 20 percent of adults say they do not drink alcohol, while sales of low and no-alcohol drinks are up 50 per cent from five years ago.

Infinite Session was brewed at London's Sambrook's Brewery with six different grains and new world hops such as Galena, Ekuanot and Mosaic, and is also low in calories, with just 35kcal in each 330ml bottle.

Chris told the Morning Advertiser pub trade newspaper: "Alcohol-free shouldn't be a lesser experience. Beer is bigger than booze. We won't apologise for it being alcohol-free."

No stranger to creating new products, he launched the frozen yoghurt brand Arctic Farm in 2009 with a fellow student while he was still at the University of Bath studying business administration. Their first retail customer was Harrods, followed by 110 Sainsbury's stores around the country. He went on to launch the sports drink Overly in 2014.

\*For more information visit [infinite-session.com](http://infinite-session.com)



From Infinite Session to beyond: Chris and Tom with their first beer product



## FAVOURITE TEACHER

“Mr Lewicki. I loved his English classes as he was so passionate about the subject and was constantly sparking interesting debates and discussions. He inspired me to study English at university”



Hazel with her game, left and below

Photos below by Craig Hibbert

# Game for a laugh



## Ruth Savage talks to a former student who is making a career out of encouraging people to be silly and have fun

**H**azel Reynolds's idea for a card game so hilarious it would lure her 12-year-old sister Rose away from her iPad over Christmas proved to be a real winner.

And that wasn't just because RGS student Rose, along with other family and friends in Ripon, enjoyed playing Randomise so much over the holidays.

When Hazel's husband Chris encouraged her to do more with the game, which involves acting, drawing and describing silly and random identities, she took it to market and now, three years on, has sold more than 35,000 copies.

Last year, it was one of the best-selling card games on Amazon UK in the run up to Christmas and Hazel now heads up a team of three employees working for her game company, which turned over £180,000 last year.

“Rose, who is now 16, was playing all the time on her tablet and would only come to life when we were playing family games. So I came up with a game, a cross between Pictionary, Articulate and Charades, creating silly drawings and actions that would capture her attention,” explains former journalist Hazel.

“Seeing my mum trying to draw an evil badger proposing and watching my friend Rach truly becoming a clumsy goose skydiving was so funny and created hilarious memories that stayed with us long after the game ended. Lots of people suggested we should produce it commercially,” she says.

It was partly Hazel's desire to start a family which inspired her to reinvent her career and become a full-time game designer. Aged 28, fed up with her daily commute from Brighton to London and increasingly frustrated by the demands of working in the media industry, she gave up her job to set up her Gamely company nearly three years ago, a day before she found out she was pregnant with her son Charlie.

Hazel, who left RGS in 2005 to study English literature at King's College, London, had worked in business innovation for Which? magazine and enjoyed that side of her job more than the writing: “I enjoy problem-solving and coming up with ideas, but things move quite slowly in a big company. I liked the thought of being my own boss and taking

*‘If you had said to me three years ago my job would be coming up with games and helping people have fun, I would have said that sounds mad’*

responsibility for things, but quitting my job was scary.”

She gave herself four months to see if it would work, playing the game as many times and with as many people as possible, and worked on refining the rules to make it even more fun, while an artist friend agreed to illustrate it.

When she launched a campaign on the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter to test the market, it generated almost £4,500 in pre-orders from 288 supporters in just three weeks. Investing an additional £5,000 of savings and with the help of Cartamundi, the company which manufactures cards for Monopoly and Uno, Hazel managed to produce and ship the product to her first buyers in time for Christmas.

By the following summer, she was averaging 30 sales a day, enough to provide a small income to live on, going on to average more than 100 a day and soaring to 13,400 copies in the three-month run-up to Christmas.

When Amazon - which featured Randomise on its Launchpad site dedicated to exciting new products and has made a short video about the company - included the game in a special deal offer, it sold a staggering 1,000 copies in a single day.

And earlier this year, Hazel, whose game sells in France, Spain, Germany and the US, was asked to share her success story at an Amazon conference in Luxembourg, speaking in front of 800 staff.

Her game has been so popular that husband Chris gave up his job as research manager with Channel 4 to become creative director of Gamely in March: “He has a good understanding of what people like, a good eye for branding,” says Hazel, who also took on a business operations manager in June.

A finalist in the Lloyds Bank National Business Awards last year, she is enjoying being an entrepreneur: “It is great fun. I have had to deal with finance, employment contracts, shipping stock and marketing. Luckily, in the world of Google, it's easier to find answers. It's a challenge but I am learning so much and every day is different.”

The game was even featured on ITV's This Morning programme in December, which helped boost sales: “Holly and Phil had to guess a shocked rabbit playing the saxophone,” says Hazel.

Both she and Chris, who now have a second child - daughter Cora, born in January—manage to work part-time and share childcare: “I can make time for my family while focusing on what I'm good at, which is coming up with fresh ideas for new games,” says Hazel.

Having taken out a £20,000 loan to invest in manufacturing, the company has been busy testing and developing new products for 2018 and plans to expand distribution both in the UK and abroad.

“We tested out new prototypes with friends, family, and random testers to find out which games go down best. The packaging for two new games is currently being designed and both will be due out in time for summer. I can't wait to share them with the world.”

Hazel can barely believe how successful Randomise has been: “My husband had a lot more faith in it than I did. I produced the game with the idea of bringing friends and families together.

“It is crazy to think people I don't know all over the UK are now playing it. It doesn't feel real, I can't believe we have managed to turn it into an actual business. If you said to me three years ago my job would be coming up with games and helping people have fun I would have said that sounds mad.”

She says her mother was her biggest inspiration while she was at school: “She always gave me lots of freedom in my personal life, on the condition that my school work never suffered. Thanks to my mum, studying hard (as well as partying hard) was important to me.”

Hazel's advice to current students is: “Try as many different things as you can in your life, in order to find something you really love doing - whether this is playing games, climbing mountains or scuba diving. Then, work out how you can turn your passion into a business. Setting up your own business is a lot of fun and there are lots of resources out there to help you. We initially funded our business on Kickstarter and I think crowd funding sites like this have really levelled the playing field for budding entrepreneurs - if you've got a good idea, it's easier than ever to turn it into reality. We've also had a lot of support from the Natwest Entrepreneurial Spark scheme, so definitely do your research and find out what support is available in your area.”

W: [randomisegame.com](http://randomisegame.com)

### FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Clocktower review

★★★★★

ALL you need to get started is four or more players, a watch, pen and paper, and the rules are very simple. You can choose to mime, describe or draw the clues which will help your team guess your madcap identity, testing everyone's creativity and ability to think on their feet. We had a 'talented scientist flipping pancakes' and a 'smelly crab playing football'.

With different levels and options to choose from, it suits all ages and abilities, so everyone from granny to your eight-year-old niece can easily join in, and you can play in large numbers too.



It's fast-paced and fun and can be played for a few rounds or longer.

An added bonus is that it's small and light, so easy to carry around when travelling. A good game to bring on holiday.

R.S.



Diving star wins triple gold at Games following a visit to his old school

# Jack returns to inspire future Olympians

Ripon Grammar School's very own Olympic diving champion returned to his former school for the first time since his gold medal win to inspire our next generation of athletes.

Jack Laugher, MBE, who was about to fly out to Australia's Gold Coast for the Commonwealth Games - where he won a hat-trick of gold medals in the 1m and 3m springboard and in the men's synchronised 3m springboard competitions - urged pupils to get behind Team England.

He said he appreciated the chance to meet up with the teachers and students who have supported him: "It's been amazing to catch up with so many familiar faces who have provided a huge source of support throughout my diving career," he said.

"When you compete, you are very much representing everyone who has helped you get there," he said.

Jack, who won Britain's first gold diving medal

## Visionary behind global growth

Tim Wray, former chairman of Yorkshire construction consultancy firm Turner & Townsend, has sadly died at the age of 69 following a short illness.

Tim attended RGS from 1960 to 1967 and went on to study at the University of North London. Having spent his entire 45-year career with Turner & Townsend, Tim oversaw the growth of the firm to a global enterprise which won three Queen's Awards for Export.

He initially joined the company as assistant quantity surveyor, based in Darlington, but went on to head up heavy engineering and mining projects in South Africa, and spent 18 years in Johannesburg.

Known as a visionary and a strong leader, major projects he worked on included the iconic Shard building in London and he also helped expand key markets worldwide.



Strong leader:  
Tim Wray

As well as establishing many toy libraries in South Africa, he created the Chairman's Group, a global initiative challenging staff to provide bold, insightful and practical solutions to problems. At the time of his retirement in late 2016, the company boasted a £400m turnover and employed 4,300 consultants throughout its 104 offices in 44 countries.

He leaves behind wife Christine and three daughters.



An inspiration: Jack with students at Ripon Grammar School and showing his medals to teachers Kevin Auger and Richard Grime



And he praised RGS student, 12-year-old Oscar Groundwater, who has enjoyed success in regional and national diving competitions: "Oscar has a lot of talent. Hopefully he'll have the same kind of support I have been lucky enough to enjoy, in order to follow his dreams."

I have been lucky enough to enjoy, in order to follow his dreams."

Jack enjoyed meeting up with RGS PE teacher Helen Mackenzie, who flew out to Rio to support him in 2016, and her mother Sylvia Grice MBE, who taught him to swim as a three-year-old.

"Jack has inspired pupils to believe in themselves, encouraging kids not to give up and to try again," commented Mrs Mackenzie.

He also had the chance to reunite with deputy head Kevin Auger and head of science Richard Grime, who Jack named as one of his favourite teachers in a previous edition of Clocktower.

\*Ripon residents have launched a campaign to name the new swimming pool after the athlete and calls have been made for a commemorative plaque or bench. The number 36 bus, which runs from Ripon to Leeds, has already been named after Jack.

## Snowboard champion

Congratulations to Aidan Scannell, who won the men's elite category in snowboard racing at the British Universities and Colleges Sport Dryslope Championships in Edinburgh in November. More than 900 competitors from 62 universities took to the slopes for the two-day event. Aidan, who left RGS in 2012, is studying for a PhD in robotics and autonomous systems at the University of Bristol.

# Touched by the kindness of strangers

Round-the-world cyclist Iain Johnston has travelled through 22 countries and clocked up 13,000km since setting off last July. Iain, who featured in our last edition, contacted Clocktower from Taiwan to update us on his adventure

Cycling in Kazakhstan was a surreal experience, passing camels strolling across the road, horses running in the distance and incredible camping spots along the way.

The cargo ship I took across the Caspian Sea to get there from Azerbaijan took three days instead of one because of bad weather and, due to the strained relationship between the Russians and Ukrainians, I saw a number of fights kick off over the smallest of things. On a previous trip, a Russian was thrown overboard after a disagreement!

Uzbekistan was challenging due to the remoteness of the route. I couldn't find a single cash machine for 600km but luckily a few cafes fed and watered me free of charge when I stopped to ask for water and explained my situation.

Eventually, I found a bank which, after a few hours of waiting, gave me stacks of Uzbekistani So'm, making me an instant multi-millionaire thanks to their high inflation rate.

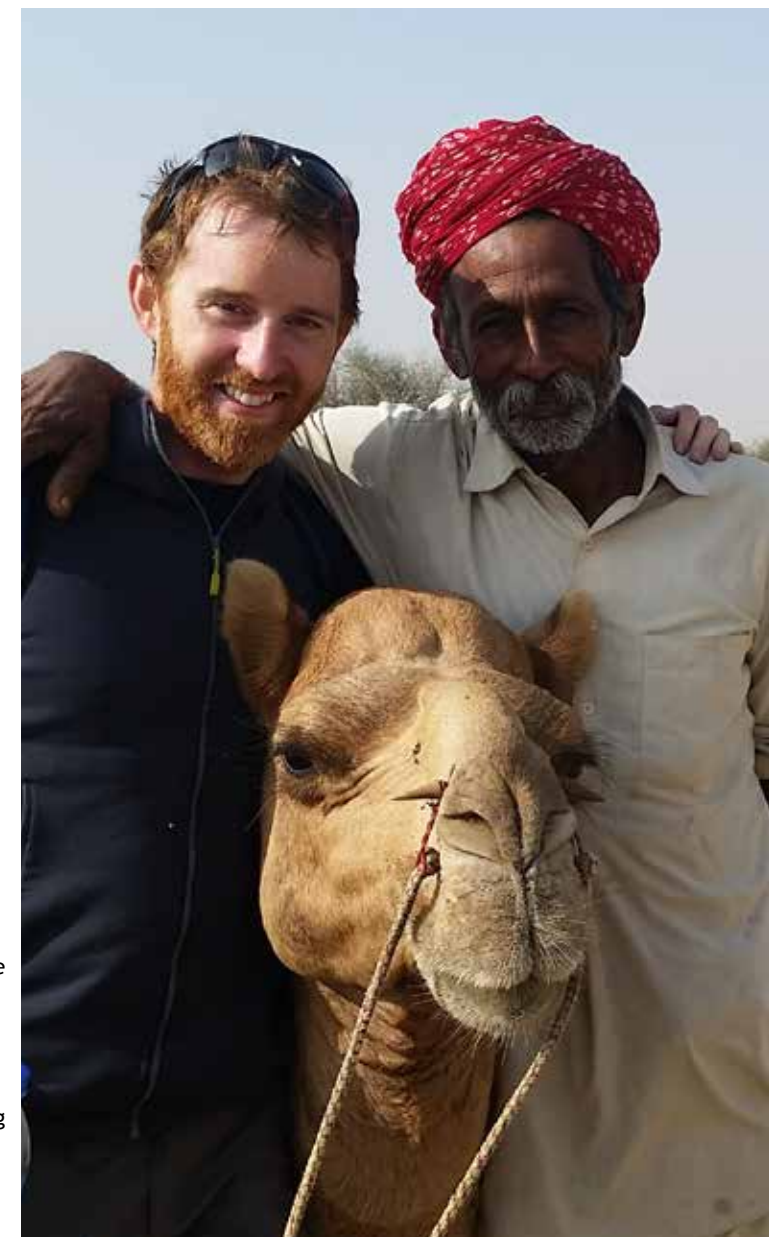
India has been without doubt the hardest country to cycle through.

The roads were in an awful state of repair, with huge trucks flying past dangerously close.

The amount of pollution gave me a persistent cough and sore throat for the six weeks I was in the country.

India is so densely populated, I was frequently stuck in traffic jams. Stopping in villages was out of the question as I'd be surrounded by a crowd and food breaks usually consisted of people staring at me or taking pictures on their phones.

On the other hand, I really enjoyed the roadside cafes serving delicious food, the ability to interact with more people in



Making friends all over the globe: Iain Johnston with a camel shepherd in Jaisalmer, western India, during his round-the-world trip

English compared with other countries, their friendliness and the kindness they showed me, from building fires to keep me warm and feeding me for no charge, to taking a genuine interest in my trip.

I've been in south-east Asia for the past couple of months enjoying the cheap, easily accessible food stalls and having kids running alongside me smiling and waving. Camping in Vietnam has been a real struggle, due to the flat terrain and rice fields saturated in water as far as the eye can see.

Last week in Vietnam, I woke in the middle of the night to find the river level had risen and I was surrounded by six inches of water. Taking the tent down in the pitch black, wading through water was the last thing I wanted to do while half asleep.

I'm not sure of my final route yet, but expect I'll fly from New York to Portugal and cycle back to England finishing, probably in October, in either Ripon or Leeds.





# 'I want to give something back'

Double transplant survivor **Dr Claire Corps**, whose vital research is now helping other patients, tells us how she achieved her dream

**F**ormer RGS student Dr Claire Corps suffered renal failure, two brain haemorrhages and underwent a kidney transplant and neurosurgery, all before she reached sixth form. After leaving RGS in 1987 to study microbiology and transplant immunology, she also suffered liver failure.

Despite having a liver transplant in her twenties, she went on to qualify as a research scientist in order to help transform the lives of other transplant patients. She tells us her story:

“I have just started my dream job. Granted, it has taken a while for me to get here but life is seldom a straight path.

‘You will notice we have some rather small first years this year,’ said headmaster Mr Stanley, speaking in assembly on my first day at Ripon Grammar School. I wanted the ground to open up and swallow me, as, at less than four feet tall and weighing under 20kg, I knew who he was speaking about. My introduction to RGS had begun.

I had suffered kidney failure aged eight years and, following two years of conservative treatment, was now on haemodialysis. This meant that three times a week after school I would go home, do my homework, then get attached to a kidney machine for three hours.

This kept me alive but left me tired and frail, unable to take part in any physical activity and at times finding it difficult to just get through the day. Thankfully, at the end of my first year in 1980, I got the phone call I had been waiting for. They had a kidney for me and, that evening, I underwent a kidney transplant, with a kidney which is still working today, making me one of the longest surviving transplant patients in the country.

The transplant meant I could start doing sport at school and I decided to compete in the British Transplant Games. Despite the fact I couldn't swim, I entered two swimming events, so had to learn fast.

Thankfully Mr Mayo, a woodwork teacher, did special lessons for people who wanted to learn and soon I was off, swimming in the RGS pool. I still compete in the Transplant Games most years and, despite usually coming last in any event, I try. I have so many friends there who understand what it means to be the recipient of a life-giving organ. It is like one big family.

Having health problems at such an early age made me want to study medicine and go into a life of research and my O-level results were such that this seemed a real possibility, but life was to be turned on its head again.



Claire pictured on dialysis, aged 12

*‘A kidney machine kept me alive but left me tired and frail, at times finding it difficult to just get through the day’*

During the summer of 1984, while on a beach in Cornwall, my brain exploded - or at least that is what it felt like. The pain in my head was something I never want to experience again and I was rushed to hospital with what turned out to be the first of two brain haemorrhages.

Strangely, two RGS teachers, Alan and Di Young, happened to be there at the same time and helped my parents, sister Janet and brother Anthony during the following weeks while I

was gradually moved up the country to the Neurosurgical Unit at Leeds General Infirmary. I had a second haemorrhage a month later and ended up having neurosurgery, with sixth form put on hold.

At a low place in my life, everything seemed impossible, but several teachers sent me letters and cards wishing me well and saying how they looked forward to seeing me back at RGS. One letter in particular made me sit up and stop feeling sorry for myself. It was from Dr Saunders, informing me he was holding a place for me in his chemistry A-level set. I thought if the teachers still had faith in me, I had to get on and do it.

Initially paralysed down one side, I had to teach myself to write again, but never got the speed of writing required for exams and so never quite achieved the grades required to study medicine.

On returning to school I had to drop a year, and left in 1987 to study microbiology at Leeds University. I soon realised this wasn't a career for someone who was immunosuppressed and decided to train as a medical laboratory scientific officer with the Blood Transfusion Service instead. One of the reasons I chose this was because one of the laboratories carried out tissue typing, a procedure in which the tissues of a prospective donor and recipient are tested for compatibility prior to transplantation.

When my health started to decline and full-time work was no longer an option, I went to Manchester to study transplant immunology in the hope of eventually getting a full-time position in tissue typing. Not settling in Manchester, I contacted Leeds surgeon Professor Peter Lodge and he agreed I could do my MSc research there.

This was a move that probably saved my life. While I was working for him, he realised I was going into liver failure and persuaded me to have a liver transplant. If you are going to go into liver failure, it's extremely lucky if you happen to be working for a top class liver surgeon at the time!

After my transplant, he offered me a job,



*‘A new chapter in my life’: Dr Claire Corps, one of the longest surviving kidney transplant patients in the country.*

initially doing audits, then working back in the laboratory. I worked on a novel solution for organ preservation, which keeps the organ in a good condition once taken out of the donor and before being put in the recipient, and managed to get my PhD. Then, unfortunately, funds ran out. I took a sideways move and ran clinical trials, initially in hepatobiliary and transplant surgery before moving to immunology.

Recently, having received more funding, Prof Lodge asked me to go back to work for him and open a new laboratory in St James's University Teaching Hospital, studying transplantation. How could I say “No”? Initially I am working on our solution for liver and kidney preservation and once that this is perfected will move on to adjust the solution so it can be used for heart and lung transplants.

Some would say it was a subject close to my heart, but really it is nearer my kidney and liver. If I can put back some of what I have got out of it, I will be happy.

Looking back I have had a good life, if slightly

scary at times. A good grounding from RGS in working hard and never accepting second best in my own work has got me to where I want to be, even if by a rather different route than expected. I still live in Ripon and since I and my siblings left RGS, all three of my sister's children have gone there, making it quite a family school as both my dad and his brother also attended RGS.

This is a new chapter in my life and I am very excited and looking forward to all the

challenges my new job will bring.

I hope by reading this some may be inspired to follow their dreams, no matter how unlikely they are to be accomplished, but mostly I hope people are willing to think about organ donation.

Please consider joining the Donor Register but if you do nothing else, talk to your next of kin and let them know your wishes. Relatives will make the final decision if anything happens to you and even if you want to donate, if they don't know this, they can, and often do, say ‘No’. Please give others the opportunity to fulfil their dreams.”



*Proud day: receiving her PhD*

[www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk)



A former RGS student and his best friend are enjoying the coolest job in the world. They tell **Ruth Savage** how they are making a living out of travelling and having fun

**L**ife is a beach for Josh Stockdale and Alex Boulton. Literally. The pair are being paid to travel the world, visiting amazing places while surfing, scuba diving and leaping into clear blue seas, along with partying, meeting new people and simply having a good time.

Well, somebody has to do it, joke laid-back former RGS student Josh, 21, and Alex, 22, who are forging a lucrative career by posting quirky, fun films, blogs and breath-taking photos of their exploits, from Bali to Mexico, the Philippines, Iceland and Australia, on their travel website and social media.

As well as being brand ambassadors for a range of travel and designer clothing companies, their regular action-packed shoots in far-flung locations are backed by an electronics giant and they are working on a major travel project with the MTV UK entertainment channel.

The likeable lads, who have been in a boy band together since they were at school and have 70,000 followers on Instagram, landed their dream job by chance after making a short film of their first trip away together to Bali over a year ago, which was viewed by 10,000 people.

“We were just completely having a good time, jumping off cliffs and swimming with turtles and dolphins, to the sound of DJ Don Diablo’s electronic dance music,” says Josh.

When Visit Indonesia discovered the film online, they asked if they could use it on their website, which got the pair noticed around the world, encouraging them to set up their digital visuals company, Dream Beach Life, early last year.

“Now we have the coolest job in the world, creating fresh, fun visuals and digital content and social media for companies with a target audience of young girls and guys like us. It’s not for suits. We tend to live life like we’re in a music video.”

It was making videos for their current band :PM, which has enjoyed considerable success, that honed keen photographer Alex’s filmmaking skills. And since their recently released single, Grown Ups, has gone viral on Spotify and Amazon, it’s attracted even more followers for their Dream Beach Life brand.

Guitarist Josh and drummer Alex met at their village primary school and created their first band when they were just 11 years old.

Committed to their music, they got part-time sports jobs on leaving school and set up a video production company as a side project: “We were inspired by YouTube stars like videographer Rory Kramer, who travels the world with musicians, having a good time. I loved the idea of travelling for free, but it seemed pie in the sky,” says Alex.

*Continued over...*



# The beach boys



**SOMEBODY HAS TO DO IT**, clockwise from top left: Josh, left, and Alex exploring Boracay in the Philippines; freediving in El Nido, the famous surfboard photo; the best way to travel, by private charter plane; in the rainforests of El Nino; island-hopping in the Philippines by private charter plane; free-diving with manta rays in Nusa Penida, Bali; Josh with coconuts on Malcapuya Island





Josh, who left RGS in 2016, recalls daydreaming in class about travelling the world: “I never really knew what I wanted to do. Teachers like Mr Demir, Mr Pepper and Mr Fell were influential figures when I was unsure. They all understood my worry about being pushed down the university route and being tied to a career path I might not have enjoyed.”

The lads’ first proper job was an all-expenses-paid trip to Cancun, Mexico, to create a video for the Go Blue Tours website: “We partied for up to 19 hours a day for a week, capturing all their activities on film. It really was living the dream,” says Josh.

Then, when the multinational electronics company Panasonic spotted a stunning ‘human surfboard’ photograph of the boys on Instagram, which was taken using a Panasonic camera, they asked Josh and Alex to become brand ambassadors.

“That was the photo that really started it all for us,” says Josh, explaining how they had set up their camera on the beach while they larked about in the sea. Alex, who has been taking photos since he was 15, adds: “It only took a few takes to get the picture, with a decent amount of air underneath us, before we hit the ground.”

After a high-level meeting with Panasonic’s top management team in London, to which tousle-haired Josh and Alex turned up in their trademark ripped jeans and T-shirts, they were offered the sort of deal that would make many of us green with envy. “We get that,” laughs Josh.

Their first trip for Panasonic was to the Philippines, where they spent four weeks in luxury villas on five different islands, using local guides to take them to lesser-known places: “We went on quad bikes and hired boats to go scuba diving and catch fish to cook lunch on the beach,” says Alex.

Other companies, including Swedish lifestyle brand Zerpico, Hunter Boots, Jessops photographic company and the US company Extreme Sports, quickly signed the boys up too.

In addition to working in the Philippines and Indonesia, they spent most of last summer covering music and surfing festivals in the UK for Dream Beach Life before setting off on a 900-mile campervan road trip in Iceland: “We stopped off at all the waterfalls and beauty spots and raced snowmobiles over glaciers, hiked to natural hot springs and stargazed most evenings, forming amazing friendships along the way,” says Josh.

From there, they spent a month working in Bali for luxury villa and clothing companies before being snapped up by MTV UK, along with the STA student travel company, to film a major project with Tourism Western Australia.

Having recently arrived in Perth, Josh explains: “We’ve only been here a week now and have already been skydiving over Rottnest Island, swimming with dolphins, taking helicopter flights, scuba diving, sand boarding and dune bugging.”

Their exploits will be featured on MTV’s social channels and website, as well as being played on billboards all over the continent: “This will be the proudest moment of our career so far,” says Josh.

With upcoming projects also taking them to the Dominican Republic, the Maldives, Ibiza, France, Morocco and Mexico, the pair are hoping to

collaborate with famous models, musicians and Instagram stars: “This is going to be a very busy year for us, we are going to be clocking up those air miles but can’t wait.”

They are proud of being self-funding: “While our families have been supportive, we haven’t had any money from them,” says Josh, who explains that they do extensive research, producing detailed travel plans and costings before they set off.

Believe it or not, it can be hard work too: “We have tasks every day, it can be tiring.” And saying goodbye to new-found friends is particularly difficult: “You get close to other travellers. Leaving them is hard.”

But they’ll put up with it: ‘We love the non-stop lifestyle, every day is different. You can’t beat the excitement of waking up in the morning, after arriving in a new country at night, and looking out of the window at an amazing view.’

**FAVOURITE TEACHERS**  
*‘Mr Demir, Mr Pepper and Mr Fell were influential figures who understood me’*

Josh has some advice for current RGS students who may be interested in a similar career: “The social media and travel industry is constantly growing due to Instagram and Snapchat. It’s now so easy for people to see beautiful places and be inspired to go there. But you need to jump onto a platform early to have a chance of being successful in it.

“Passion, determination and confidence have been the key to my success. You’ve got to want to work longer days than your competitors. You need to be confident with self-marketing and have great people skills to secure jobs. When you’re self-employed you have to do everything yourself.”

He urges students to think carefully before committing to going to university if they are unsure: “If you have second thoughts, don’t go. Don’t be persuaded if you are not completely driven.”

Later this year, the pair plan to expand their company and hire more editors to help with their growing workload but, for now, they’re simply enjoying the ride: “We love getting back from a trip and going for a screening at Panasonic, sitting round a huge 120-inch screen, with popcorn and a beer, to watch what we’ve just done.

“Then it’s a case of ‘Where are we going to go next?’

W: [dreambeachlife.com](http://dreambeachlife.com)

**BREAKING NEWS:** Following this interview, Josh and Alex’s band, which also includes RGS past pupils Dan Reynard and Harry Yates, was chosen to support chart-topping band The Vamps on the 2018 Night and Day Arena Tour. Well done lads.

**NICE ICE BABY, clockwise from top left: checking out the crazy ice sculptures of Iceland’s Blue Lagoon Beach; Skodafoss waterfall, southern Iceland, exploring Iceland and the Northern Lights; on the black sand beaches of Bali; enjoying the villa pool in Canggu, Bali; Iceland trek; at Klingking Beach in Nusa Penida, Bali; by the famous Coron sign on the remote Coron Island in the Philippines**





Ripon Grammar School is leading school in the North, for fifth year in a row

# TOP of the league

Ripon Grammar School has once again been named the leading state secondary school in the North, topping the regional rankings for the fifth year in a row.

The Sunday Times's 2018 Parent Power guide, which identifies the 2,000 highest-achieving schools in the UK, ranks RGS the 54th best

performing school in the country, up from 73rd and 87th in the previous two years.

This steady improvement is reflected in the latest examination results, with students scoring 79.1 per cent of their A-levels at A\* to B grades, compared to 76.2 per cent last year, and 63.9 per cent achieving A\* or A grades at GCSE, up 3.3 percentage points on last year.

Students are excelling at Ripon Grammar School, one of the top performing secondary schools in the UK

Headteacher Jonathan Webb says: "At Ripon Grammar School we are immensely proud of our sixth form students.

"To be ranked number one maintained school in the North for the fifth year in a row, and 54th in the country, is a real testament to their hard work and determination.

"I am delighted also by the progress made by our students at GCSE, which places us in the top 100 schools nationally. Value-added, the measure by which students make academic progress, is exceptionally strong and is engendered at Ripon Grammar School by a strong student work ethic and an experienced and dedicated teaching staff."

## Fun and games raise £11,439

From rapping teachers to dancing boarders, this year's Charity Week had it all, although the worthy cause behind the fun and games was never forgotten.

Students raised an impressive £11,439.45 for Candlelighters, which supports families dealing with children's cancer in Yorkshire.

The event opened with a bang when the upper sixth form performed a dance battle on the main stage. Throughout the week there were a huge range of activities and performances held at lunch and break times, from a non-uniform day to raffles, stalls and competitions.



Putting the fun into fundraising: RGS students enjoying one of the charity events which raised more than £11,000 to help children suffering from cancer

Other highlights included teachers in fairy costumes being sponged by students, the unforgettable staff pantomime, Frozen, and the 'colour run' paint race, which was attended by 170 students.

Money raised will go towards providing financial support, therapies and support services for families as well as helping fund holidays and run other events such as Halloween and Christmas parties for children with cancer.

## David's on a roll

A Ripon Grammar School student has been selected to play for England in the increasingly popular international sport of pétanque, which is similar to boules and in France dates back to the early 1900s.

David Blyton, 15, started playing with his father, a former British Champion team member, as a child and over the last two years has been selected as a member of an eight-player national youth squad.

He has played competitively in Slovakia in 2016 and France in 2017 and was a member of the England Team 2 last July. Selected to play for England in February, in a large event at a boulodrome near the Alps, David now has his sights firmly set on the 2018 European Championships.



Ready to roll: David Blyton is setting his sights on the European Championships

## Turner's prize



Wordsmith: James Turner at the Southbank Centre

Congratulations to upper sixth form student James Turner, who was awarded runner up in the prestigious Foyle Young Poets competition. His poem was chosen from several thousand entries and will be published as part of an anthology online and in print.

James attended an awards ceremony at the Southbank Centre, London, where he was presented with several poetry books, and also attended a seminar run by poets. "I gained a lot from it that will hopefully help my writing process in the future," he said.

The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award is the biggest award for writers aged 11-17 and has kick-started the career of some of today's most exciting new voices, including Sarah Howe, Helen Mort and Caroline Bird.

## England success

Four RGS students, Chloe Stringwell, Jude Grimmer, Beth Pritchard and Rebecca Purll, will be training with the national VX squads following impressive performances during their trials for the England teams.

Ripon Grammar School, as the National Centre of Excellence for VX, is not only home to the Ripon VX Club but also to the England national squad. Established squad members include Joe Willis, who has already represented England Youth, Oliver Stocks, who has enjoyed great success in the singles version of the sport, and Jhapi Shahi, who is looking forward to competing in the singles at the World Cup in India next year.

OUR talented First XV rugby team took to the national stage when they made it through to the England Schools National Vase semi-finals at Allianz Park, home of reigning European champions, the Saracens.

At the same time, our Under-18s and Under-16s got through to the finals of the Yorkshire Cup, making it third year in a row for the Under-18s, which is a major achievement.

Well done, too, to our Under-16s football team on reaching the final of the County Cup and our Under-18s, who entered the North Yorkshire

## Sporting triumphs

League for the first time and proved to be serious contenders in the Area Cup. And congratulations to the First XI girls' hockey team who were runners up in the Austin Friars 7s Hockey Tournament and reached the Northern Finals of the National Indoor Championships. The Under-16 hockey team reached the North-East round of their national competition while the Under-14 team won their Spring Area Tournament this year.



# Students triumph over adversity

**A** Ripon Grammar School rugby player who has shown exceptional resolve, resilience and staying power in the face of tough challenges over the past year has been selected to train with the Under-17s England squad. Ted Wainwright received an Adversity Award in Harrogate in December, alongside fellow RGS student Bethan Ratcliff,



who plays football. The awards, which started in 2013, mark the achievements of young people who use sport to overcome whatever difficulties life has thrown at them. Ted, pictured left, has been playing for Yorkshire Carnegie for the last three years and was chosen in late September for the England squad. Judges praised both Ted and Beth for keeping going when it

would have been easier to give up.

*\*James Willis has joined Ted in the Yorkshire Carnegie Under-18 academy side, taking on teams including Newcastle Falcons and Sale Sharks. Oliver Williams has been chosen to play for Yorkshire Under-17s, while Oscar Lees, Toby Boyce and Will Barrett have been selected for the Yorkshire Carnegie Under-15 Academy.*

Fantastic prizes in RGS summer raffle

## Winner's dinners

**O**ne lucky RGS Grand Summer Prize Draw winner will enjoy a delicious dinner with friends, cooked in their own home by an acclaimed French chef.

Classically trained under Michelin-starred chef Alain Ducasse, Yves Quemerais has worked for everyone from professional footballers to peers of the realm and his is just one of many coveted prizes, including themed hampers and days out, which friends of Ripon Grammar School can enjoy this year.

Fashion lovers will also have the chance to win a beautiful pure silk scarf, created by Yorkshire Dales artist William Watson-West and based on his original paintings of local flora and fauna.



Past pupils who feature in this edition of Clocktower are also kindly donating prizes. Artist Lesley Seeger is offering a copy of her book, *Coming Home*, while games company owner Hazel Reynolds is contributing a selection of family games, including two newly-

designed products to be launched in July.

Many parents may find North Yorkshire author and parenting expert Janey Downshire's offering of copies of her book, *Teenagers Translated*, particularly useful while budding florists will enjoy taking part in the Christmas wreath workshop offered by the Yorkshire Dales Flowers company.

Award-winning North Yorkshire photographer Tessa Bunney, exhibiting at the Joe Cornish Gallery in Northallerton and the Ryedale Folk Museum this summer, is also offering a stunning print.

If you would like to buy tickets, which cost £1 each, please contact Tracy Butterfield on friends@ripongrammar.com. The Draw will be held on July 2.

*\*Friends of Ripon Grammar School fundraising is making a real difference to*



**Chef at work: Yves Quemerais**

For more details about prizes, visit: [frenchchefathome.com](http://frenchchefathome.com), [lesleyseeger.com](http://lesleyseeger.com), [randomisegame.com](http://randomisegame.com), [tessabunney.co.uk](http://tessabunney.co.uk), [teenagerstranslated.co.uk](http://teenagerstranslated.co.uk), [yorkshiredalesflowers.co.uk](http://yorkshiredalesflowers.co.uk), [watsonwest.com](http://watsonwest.com)

*student life at RGS. This year, money raised from a wide range of events has helped provide school with a second defibrillator, a new projector and screen for the hall, costumes and props for the Billy Elliot production, fencing and screening around the science block, swimming pool lane ropes, a new 3D printer and kit for various sports teams.*

## Girl powered

ELEVEN RGS students have qualified to run cross-country for North Yorkshire, including Mena Scatchard, who was crowned North Yorkshire Champion at the county championships.

This follows our inter girls' cross-country team coming in 20th best school in the country at the national cross-country cup finals in Kent. The course included an undulating route over rough terrain through woods, then a tough hill just before a 400m flat run to the finish. Perfect weather conditions saw some fantastic performances, with all girls pushing themselves to the finish.



**True grit: from left to right, Isabella Binks, Helena Da Costa, Mena Scatchard, Molly Acton, Christa Wilson, Ella Foster**

# Auf wiedersehen, Peter

**Peter Whone** left Ripon Grammar School, aged 17, in 1963 to work for a chemicals company in Birmingham, while taking a four-year sandwich degree course in chemical engineering at Loughborough University. He left Britain for Germany in 1971

### Why did you decide to work abroad?

It was a stroke of luck that I spent one year working in industry. It made it very clear to me that working as a chemical engineer was not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. My strongest subject was process control theory, using digital computers.

I applied to every computer company in Britain and was offered a job as computer programmer with Honeywell Information Systems in Hemel Hempstead and became a general computer software expert.

We used to build computer systems for our German branch and people from the German office in Eschborn, near Frankfurt, used to come over to commission those systems.

They asked me if I'd like a job over there. I was single, with no particular ties in Britain, so I said "Why not?".

I drove to Austria for a camping holiday and stopped off in Eschborn on the way for an interview. They offered me a job as a project programmer. The salary seemed tremendous compared to what I was earning in Britain and I signed on the dotted line there and then.

On November 1, 1971, I arrived at Frankfurt Airport with a huge trunk containing my worldly goods. I've never looked back.



**Peter pictured in 1963, the year he left RGS, fifth from right in back row, and how he looks today, aged 71 and enjoying retirement, below left**

### What are the advantages/disadvantages?

The salary was much higher, but the cost of living was also higher. Most people in Germany back then lived in rented accommodation and it was very expensive.

The company was German/French, and a little strait-laced and rigid in the way it did business. But after I joined the German subsidiary of Tandem Computers, a Silicon Valley start-up, in 1977, life took off. They were the greatest company on earth and I remained with them until I retired in 2011.

European travel was so much easier. Frankfurt is very central, so I could visit France, Switzerland, Italy and Austria with ease.

Early on, language was a problem. I'd done one year of German at RGS, but found that, once in Germany, I hadn't learned very much. My biggest problem was being in the computer industry where everyone spoke English, and in Frankfurt, which back then was full of American GIs, all the locals spoke English too. If I went shopping and tried to speak German, they immediately recognised I was a foreigner and answered me in English. But a year working on a project in a small village in north-west Germany, where no-one spoke English, was my salvation.

I later married a German and we had two children, who were brought up bi-lingual.

### What do you miss most about home?

Not much. I still had family in Britain, but visiting them wasn't too difficult. It was a long trip when the channel crossing was via the ferry or the hovercraft. But then the Channel Tunnel opened and life was changed forever. I once drove from Frankfurt to Markington in exactly 12 hours - a record! Later on, with Tandem Computers, I managed a specialist group that was split between Frankfurt and High Wycombe, so I was over at least once every month. English TV was sorely missed. My mother used to record programmes and send me VHS tapes. Once I'd found a store in Frankfurt that sold Branstons Pickle and Wensleydale cheese, cravings for unique British fare were slaked.

*'German beer is so much nicer'*

### And least?

English beer. German beer is so much nicer.

### What advice would you give others?

If you get the chance to work in Europe, take it. Learn the language as quickly as you can. Then you can enjoy the different culture, food, drink and scenery.

### Do you plan to return to the UK eventually?

After Brexit? You are joking. I was terribly disappointed that the Leavers won, so much so that I applied for German citizenship the day after the Brexit result was announced. I believe Britain will be in for a hard time once Brexit happens.





Photograph by  
LUCY SAGGERS

**Charles Hutchinson**  
talks to a talented artist  
and former RGS student  
who has brought out  
a stunning new book  
featuring her work

**W**hen the world is rushing by, Lesley Seeger stands alone in a field, her paints in a bag, watching. It is that moment during a painting trip, that creative new dawn, which still excites the York artist after two decades, a landmark she is marking with a mid-career retrospective book, *Coming Home*.

Lesley, who left RGS in 1975, explains: "The main reason for doing the book is that I've been painting for 20 years and it seemed a good time to pause and take stock of all my work so far and see where I want to go next."

"My style has developed a lot over this period and I wanted to collect as much as possible together to see what is most important to me. It takes a long time for an artist to find their own true voice, way or practice. After more than twenty years, I am finding mine."

The title of her book, *Coming Home*, reflects the fact that its publication coincided with Lesley's first exhibition at The Biscuit Factory in Newcastle, the city of her birth and a place steeped in family history.

Lesley lived in Northumberland before moving to Ripon at the age of nine and, in the course of writing the book, mused on her early influences: "I realised what a debt I owed to Mr Smith (whose nickname was SAS), the art teacher at Ripon Grammar School when I was there. He was such an inspiring teacher. And although the grammar school was rigorous academically, we still had time for double art every week."

# True colours



"Mr Smith's kindness sustained me."

Fortunately for me, the grammar school at this time placed an emphasis on the fostering of imagination and freestyle creativity in both art and English. SAS also taught us about perspective, colour and composition. He was very keen on telling us to learn to recognise when a painting is finished and not to 'over paint'. I still have one of his paintings at home given to me as a wedding present. It is true that good teachers stay with you for life and can really influence the direction you take."

The book has been an interesting exercise, she says: "There's a clear pattern that emerges that shows how each year or each couple of years the work jumps in its development."

"Principally, my skill set has developed. It is inevitably more considered, but I hope it also contains the freedom and spontaneity of early work. For years I worked totally out of my imagination, making original landscapes and floral still life with colour and texture as their main focus."

When Lesley moved from the centre of York to the countryside seven years ago, her work took a different turn: "Living in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has enabled me to work with real as opposed to imagined landscape. Now I am also interested in form, content and tonal values. The work is based much more on observation as I spend a lot of time sketching outside in the landscape."

*Continued over...*

**SUFFUSED WITH COLOUR:**  
Right, top: *The Bird's Nest*, Harlow Carr, middle, *Burton Agnes Hall*, bottom, *Bamburgh Beach*, all acrylic on board

Top: *Rosedale*, left, *Land Song*, below, *Derwent Meadow*, all plein air paintings, acrylic on board







Lesley at work, above, and as a schoolgirl at Ripon Grammar School, left, pictured front row, fifth from right.

Photographs above and right by LUCY SAGGERS

As a result, the abstract florals which I have always done have become more considered and the landscapes, more free. Both types of work inform each other.

“Colour is central to my work,” she explains. “I can’t imagine being an artist who just works in black and white. However, my palette has become more subdued, a more northern European palette.

“I used to do a lot of travelling in Sri Lanka, India and Egypt, the bright colours of which informed my earlier work, but in recent years I’ve spent more time in England and Scotland.

“Now I hope the mixture of these experiences, the gentle palette of the British Isles and the vibrant and exciting hot tones of more southern climes, have come together to complement each other and form an integrated and expanded palette.”

Coming Home’s subtitle - ‘A contemporary colourist’s approach to English landscape’ - highlights Lesley’s modernist approach: “I am always looking for a new way to describe what I see. Now we have cameras and film, a painter no longer needs to record life in a literal way. A painter friend of mine said to me:

‘You are moving towards form from formlessness.’ This really does sum up the direction of my artistic practice. I am moving away from total abstraction towards describing form in a new way.

“The years spent exploring colour, texture and paint manipulation have now been integrated into my current practice of increased observational work, which also focuses on composition, tonal qualities and content.

“What I’m trying to get across is how it ‘feels’ to stand in a particular landscape, rather than just how it looks. I’m interested in atmosphere and capturing the sense of place. That is why working outdoors, en plein air, and then completing work later in the studio suits me perfectly.”

She has some words of advice for current RGS students considering a similar career: “I would say do a good art foundation course and then go to the best art college for your specialism. Study other artists and, most of all, just work very hard and find your own voice. You must be hardened to rejection, have faith in your own style and be prepared for financial insecurity. The rewards, however, are great.

“When a painting is going well, there is no replacement for the excitement and joy. In my case it is when I have found a new way of making a mark or describing something that is both unique and pertinent.”

*“Lesley is currently working outdoors on plein air landscapes, including commissions of the Wolds and Rosedale. She will be exhibiting at Cambridge Contemporary Art gallery from June, Art For Youth North, Topcliffe, in October and Number Four Gallery, St Abbs, in November. Her work can also be found at the Saltbox Gallery, Helmsley and she has two exhibitions booked for 2019, at Helmsley Arts Centre and The Yorkshire Arboretum, near Castle Howard.*

*\*Lesley will be signing copies of her book at The Little Ripon Bookshop on Saturday, May 26, between 10am and 12pm. It can also be purchased from [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) and Quacks printers of York T: 01904 635967*

For more information, visit [lesleyseeager.com](http://lesleyseeager.com)

A version of this article first appeared in the York Press



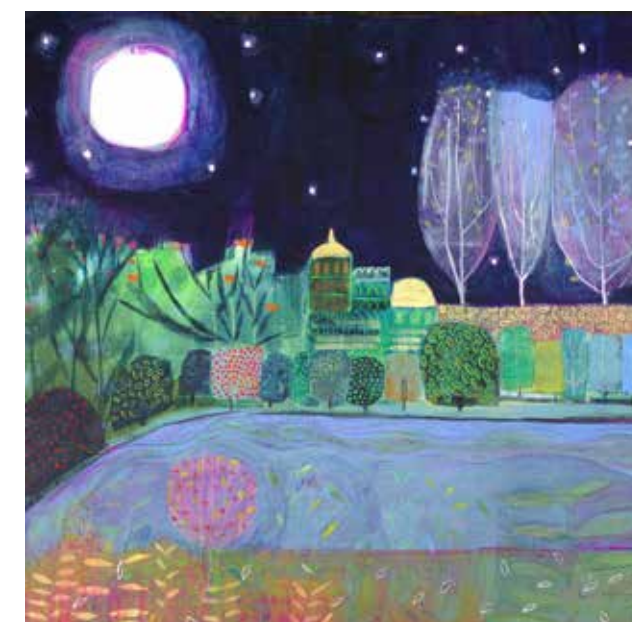
Running a still life workshop at York Art Gallery top, and aged sixteen, above

## FAVOURITE TEACHER

*‘Mr Smith was an inspiring teacher. It is true, good teachers stay with you for life and can really influence the direction you take’*



Carmire Gate—Castle Howard, acrylic on board



Castle Howard, acrylic on board



The Beach House, acrylic on canvas, as featured on the book cover of Coming Home



# A novel approach

Historical fiction author **Simon Turney**, who left RGS in 1990, has written more than 20 books. His novel, *Caligula*, was published by Orion Books in March. He tells us how he did it while **Matthew Weston** reviews his latest work

**F**ew careers can just be 'fallen into'. Some take many years of education, focusing on the specific needs of that profession. Others rely upon determination and persistence, though few of those would be what they are without a good educational grounding.

I have always had a fascination with history. It began with my grandfather Douglas Atkinson (another past pupil of RGS), who introduced me to the world of Rome in the north of England, but was built upon strongly by my history teacher Dr Petchey. Those two men, who also happened to be acquaintances, are largely responsible for how my career has turned out.

RGS, and Ripon in general, have remained central in my life. Born and bred in the city, I only left for a few years for university and one job, returning to Ripon and moving out to a local village to be near family.

I focused largely on arts subjects at school, yet decided that in order to secure a good job in the market at the time, computing would be a more sensible option to study at university. It took me a year to discover computing was not for me, and I left, took a year out, and then returned to university to study classical history. Notably, though, during that year of computer science, I wrote a number of short stories, and I think it was then that the bug for writing actually took hold.

Upon leaving university, I was somewhat stumped as to what to do with my classical education. Jobs were few and far between and, ironically, computer-based jobs that I was now not qualified for were plentiful and lucrative.

Consequently, I simply looked for the first job I could find. I still had my love of history and telling stories, and I contemplated going into teaching for a while. Financial needs won out and I began a long chain of very varied jobs.

Simply by, whenever a job ended or a contract ran out, taking whatever job I could find that was preferably better than the last, I moved through industries in a whirl. Car sales, decorating supplies, Civil Service, utilities admin, all came



Simon with wife Tracey, also a former RGS student, who left in 2001, and their children. Above, the cover of his new novel, *Caligula*

and went. But in the meantime, I continued to create stories and build entire imaginary worlds. I also continued to explore the history around me and to read books on the subject voraciously.

In the end, through yet another odd irony, I ended up working in computers, running a network for an insurance company, and the very nature of the job meant that short periods of fraught activity and extreme overtime were punctuated by long periods with very little to do other than watch for problems. At the time I was reading (for fun!) Julius Caesar's war diaries, and wondered whether that fascinating account could be made more gripping by turning it into a novel. So, with a history of story writing already behind me, I decided to try and do just that in the free time I had.

I finished *Marius' Mules* in late 2003, then went about the traditional route of all would-be authors: printing off huge reams of manuscript and sending it to agents around the country to receive in return firm rejection letters. Time passed and I continued to run networks.

Then, in around 2008, I was part of an online

community of would-be writers who critiqued each other's work, and the UK Arts Council funded an initiative to produce a number of books from the community. Two of mine (I had written another by then) were accepted and released as paperbacks. They sold in small numbers, but each sale was something of a thrill. Then someone I'd met through that community urged me to plumb the digital books market. I released both books on Kindle and they sold like hot cakes. I was amazed.

Over the next few years, partially thanks to a couple of people who gave me great support, I wrote and released more novels, with a growing reputation and ever-increasing sales. A nod is due there to the rising importance of social media and online networks, which definitely helped progress my career and bring me more easily to a wider readership. Still, traditional publishing seemed to be somewhat out of reach, and there was a gulf between those books released by the great publishing houses and those independently published, though admittedly that gap has been closing more and more over time. But I was happy as I was. I was still working in computing, now writing databases for a living, but I had a good supplementary income with writing. Then, in 2012 I was made redundant, and by happy coincidence, my writing career had just reached the point where it could sustain the family.

Then the unexpected happened. My success had reached the attention of a literary agent.

In fact, I had tentative enquiries from three

## THOUGHT-PROVOKING AND INSIGHTFUL

Clocktower review

★★★★★

A COMPELLING story that is thoroughly grounded in the historical sources, *Caligula* by Simon Turney is a highly recommended read for any student of classics, history or anyone with an interest in the ancient world. There is an excellent discussion of historical sources and the author's interpretive decisions at the end for those such as myself who enjoy this aspect. The novel gives the reader an insight into the motivations of one of the most fascinating figures in Roman history. The choice of Livilla, the sister of Caligula, as first-person narrator means that the reader really gets a deeper sense of what is going on in the minds of the central characters. Simon Turney's *Caligula* is not the legendarily depraved and insane despot of tradition, but an intelligent, decent man pushed to extremes by those around him and one who, like many of the emperors, struggles to sustain an effective working relationship with the senate. Many will have been used to the view of Caligula seen in Robert Graves's *I Claudius*. This will be a thought-provoking contrast. Simon Turney's *Caligula* is a welcome addition to the growing ranks of great historical fiction on the Roman Empire. I look forward to seeing what he makes of the emperor Commodus in his next novel.

Matthew Weston  
(Head of classics at RGS)

agents in a short time, less than ten years after I'd been sending manuscripts out desperately in the hope of attracting the notice of just one. I signed with an agency, which has turned out to be one of the best small agencies in the business, and things have just expanded from there. Overseas foreign-language releases, audio books, and finally, with the guidance of my agent, one of the biggest publishing houses, Orion, bought my manuscript for *Caligula*.

Here I am now, 14 years after beginning on *Marius' Mules*, with more than twenty books released, consistently peaking in the Amazon charts and winning rave reviews. I still have a few independently released books, others with small digital publishers, and finally a gleaming hardback that hit bookstore shelves in March.

Fourteen years of persistence, not taking no for an answer, finding new ways to do things and unlocked doors when I found others barred, and I've made it to where I aspired at the beginning. Better still, I am doing something I love, which brings pleasure to other people, and which uses my education, my passion and my skills.

So if anyone has a burning urge to write, don't be discouraged by the seemingly impenetrable world of publishing. There are always ways to achieve with sufficient determination and will. Of course, adequate hard work and the support of good editing is important, especially in the world of self-publishing. For me it was a long way round, but it only goes to show it can be done.

# The snow must go on

Ripon may have been blanketed in snow but, thanks to the sports hall, that didn't stop Old Rips enjoying their annual winter reunion games. **Helen Mackenzie, Hannah Hale and Toby Kinread** report on the netball, hockey and football matches between students old and new



In a snowy week that saw both the fields and the Astroturf flooded, it was fabulous to know that all games could still go ahead in the sports hall.

Suzanne Clarke, Joanna Wallace and Sammy Wilson all play for Ripon City Netball Club and have played Old Rips netball for the last three years, but an ankle injury meant Sammy could no longer play. Sarah Reed provided youth, fitness, speed and agility while a Christmas meal out with two old mates the night before enabled me to persuade Jane Swiers and Nicola Scott to play - as long as Nicola didn't have to cut her nails!

From current RGS staff Suzanne Rickard (an old girl), myself (an even older girl) and Carrie Prideaux from the Special Educational Needs department joined the squad along with Jackie Laughner, mum to



past pupils Jack and Katie, so not quite an Old Riponian but good enough. The match was umpired by Debbie Reed and Wendy Sharp from Ripon Rockets, both mums to RGS girls.

The youth, fitness and brilliance of the girls shone from the first whistle and the Old Rips were always on the back foot. Superb shooting from Amy Crompton meant there was no way we could match the girls' score.

Laura Crompton and Annabel Sharp (the youngest member of the girls' squad) were amazing in the centre court while Jessica Pawley and Katie Reed defended their hearts out.

Verity Langdale played really well in the centre court as well as scoring a couple herself while Bethany Grimmer - who should have been playing for the Old Rips, by rights - helped Amy rack up the score against us.

In the end, it was a definite win for the girls, I have no idea what the eventual score was but I don't think we made even 50 per cent of their total. No matter, the real winner was netball.

As a physical education teacher, and indeed a student, who remembers the good old days of life without a sports hall, I am still blown away, some nine years on, that we have such a remarkable facility at RGS.

HM

Continued over...





A match being snowed-off is a rare occurrence in Ripon. However, the weather this year meant the Old Rips hockey match had to be contested in the sports hall. The players were in good spirits and enjoyed a more fast-paced game, as is the nature of indoor hockey. Despite several players having been out of the game for numerous years, all gave commendable

performances. Particular credit must be given to the powerful shots of Fi Mingay and the committed play of Victoria Garbutt. Many thanks to the umpire, Andy McCann, for adapting so well under such trying circumstances. It was great to see such a wide age range of players; we hope to see you all again next year.

HH



Carrie and Tom Prideaux with Poppy, Iris and Primrose



George Oram, Euan Raffel, Adam Taylor, Valeria Taylor and baby Lily



Hilary Webb (Burton) and John Chambers



Simon Walmsley and Euan Raffel



Naomi Smith, Tom Stringer, Ben Blakey, Julia Stanyard, Hannah Hale, Hattie Stringer



Andrew McCann, Melody Swiers, Zach Mudge, Tom Stringer, Nick Edwards



Patrick Savage, Nathan Atkinson, James Woolfenden



John Rawson, Greta Hills and Marita Murray



A great show of friendly football: RGS players old and new, with Toby Kinread pictured third from right, back row

It does not happen very often in Ripon, but the day before the traditional Old Rips football match saw our town covered in snow. The pitch was blanketed and so this year we would resort to football in the sports hall. Three teams of six players rotated to play each other in short, intense games. The head-height rule proved difficult to stick to at first, but we soon

started to zip the ball along the ground quite competently and avoid knocking any mince pies out of spectators' hands. Nick Edwards tucked away some penalties and Fergus Scholes took out aggression on the ball with a powerful long range goal. Ben Blakey also scored a notable goal to get the fans going, while birthday boy Scott Thompson relinquished being goalkeeper

to score a penalty himself. Grateful thanks go to John Mackenzie for refereeing the games.

Overall the snow was no reason to forego a great display of amateur and friendly Old Rips football.

TK



Netball players, with Helen Mackenzie pictured fourth from left, back row



Hockey players, with Hannah Hale pictured front row, centre



Chris Bucktrout, Sam Crompton, Ben Blakey



Nicola Scott and Jane Swiers



# FEEDBACK

Your news and views

Write to Old Rips at [oldriponians@aol.com](mailto:oldriponians@aol.com)

WELL done to you and the rest of the team who produce Clocktower. I have been to a few academic institutions and most school magazines go straight in the bin, but not the RGS one. It is a very good read and well designed. I left RGS in 2006 and, following a stint as a broadcast journalist in Ghana, I am now teaching at an international school just south of Kuala Lumpur, somehow finding myself specialising in geography rather than history. After four great years in Malaysia and travelling throughout the region, I will be moving to Kazakhstan in August to take up a new teaching position at Haileybury Almaty independent school.

I still try to keep up with as many of my RGS friends as I can, but am always amazed to read about what others are up to in Clocktower, Johnno on his around the world cycling trip for example.

**Henry Wilkinson**

AS the parent of three Old Riponians, I just want to thank you and the team

for the Clocktower. It is great to find out about what is going on in the school and to hear what former students are doing now, both those who are high achievers and also those with more unusual and quirky careers. You produce such a professional and interesting magazine.

**Alison Bradley**

CALLING all former RGS students - please don't lose touch with us. Work that we are doing with current students, particularly in the sixth form, has benefited hugely from the kindness of a large number of former students who have come back into school to share their experiences and to talk about their career choices beyond school. The advice, support and ideas that they have given have been, at times, life-changing for students. In some cases former students have even offered to mentor current students whose aspirations follow their own career paths. This support is just wonderful, and is something that we would love to continue to develop; we also love the fact that it gives us



The Clocktower is read far and wide: Henry Wilkinson, standing at back, with colleagues at his international school in Malaysia

the opportunity to catch up with old friends, and to hear your news and the amazing stories about where life has taken you.

However we are also conscious that, as a school, we have simply lost touch with very many of you in the years since you were here, and with new data protection laws requiring us to delete and destroy contact details for all former students unless they have given their express permission for us to keep those details, we will shortly lose any ability to make contact from our end. We are hoping, therefore, to re-establish contact with anyone who would like to remain

in touch with RGS, and particularly to encourage them to become members of the Old Riponians' Society (which explicitly gives us permission to keep contact details.)

Before 2013 there are comparatively very few students who are actually signed up members of the Old Riponians' Society, and with membership free, it would be great to have more former students re-establish links with us and with one another.

If any former students or staff of Ripon Grammar School would be happy to remain in contact with us, share news, come back and visit (whether to

share wisdom with current students or just to stroll down memory lane), or to join the Old Riponians' Society, please do get in touch via Facebook ([www.facebook.com/rgsoldrips](http://www.facebook.com/rgsoldrips)) or Twitter (@OldRips) or contact head of sixth form Terry Fell on [fellt@ripongrammar.co.uk](mailto:fellt@ripongrammar.co.uk) or Derek Crookes on [oldriponians@aol.com](mailto:oldriponians@aol.com).

We would love to hear from you once again.

**Terry Fell**

*\*Our three letter writers each win a copy of Randomise, a popular game created by former RGS student Hazel Reynolds (see pages 8-9).*



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\*see page 16