

Keeping alumni in touch with Ripon Grammar School and each other

Clockwork

Winter/Spring 2016 Issue 9

Ritchie's riches

How RGS helped turn his life around



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GLOWING
REPORT**

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Jamie makes it
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GIRL POWER

Why we need more
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PROUD DAY RGS war hero John Dean meets the Queen
Boarding memories ● School news ● Life after RGS: Where are they now?



Letter from a war veteran

Dear former students and friends of RGS,

I was head boy at Ripon Grammar School in 1939 and in August represented RGS at a Rotary-funded event organised by the League of Nations at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, just days before war broke out. I remember arguing furiously with the German boys and, on the train home, watching as the blackout started in France.

It was a very different world to the one students at RGS are growing up in now. The sixth forms of 1938, 1939 and 1940 were so heavily decimated by war. I was one of the few who survived to enjoy the benefits the school gave me. Perhaps because of this I have always looked forward, not back. We lived next door to RGS, in Ash Grove, and my mother, a huge driving force in my life, was determined her son was going to go to the grammar school and get a good education. I owe everything to RGS. Without it I could never have achieved all the things I have done. It lifted my whole family.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at school, where I played a lot of sport, particularly hockey, and made lasting friendships. I stayed on an extra year to get a scholarship, without which my parents couldn't have afforded for me to go to university. I was lucky enough to go on to study chemistry at Birmingham University, then take an MSc in chemical engineering at Birbeck College after the war. My career was in flavour and fragrance chemicals and I went on to establish a vanilla industry in India.

I wish today's students a bright, happy and prosperous future as they venture out into the wider world in the 21st century.

With very best wishes,

John Dean

PROUD DAY: Read about John's meeting with the Queen on pages 12-13

Where are they now?

Have you ever wondered what happened to those old friends you lost touch with? We find out what some former RGS students are up to now



Leshia Hawkins (left RGS in 1997) I was deputy head girl & girls' games captain and graduated from Durham University (St Aidan's College) in 2001 with a degree in modern languages (thank you Mrs Swainston, Mr Smith and Miss Ward in particular). I represented British Universities at cricket and captained the Durham women's team, with career best bowling of 8-24 - made all the sweeter coming, as it did, against Loughborough. I have been the business development manager at the England and Wales Cricket Board for two-and-a-half years, after several years spent recruiting for the sports and entertainment industries in the UK and Europe. I was originally hired to build a commercial programme for grassroots cricket and source sponsors for our very successful England women's team. In 2014, I was responsible for the first ever stand-alone commercial deal in international women's cricket, securing Kia Motors as partner to the England Women and headline title sponsor of Women's Test Match cricket; the players all receiving a brand new Sportage car, to go with their professional playing contracts, announced a few months before - and just after their back-to-back Women's Ashes wins. I am now also charged with finding sponsors for men's international and domestic cricket, so it's fair to say my life is always full, never dull - and incredibly privileged and fun. I feel very fortunate to do what I do and who I do it for; if you'd asked me at school what I wanted to do when I 'grew up', this would have been pretty close. I can be reached at leshia.hawkins@ecb.co.uk

Having fun: Leshia pictured with England captain Charlotte Edwards and head of women's cricket Clare Connor at the Kia Motors sponsor launch, below



Working Down Under: Andrew pictured, below left, today, and when he was a schoolboy at RGS

Andrew Farrer (left RGS in 2007) My days are spent in a hyper-sterile laboratory, wearing a full body suit, three layers of latex gloves, a surgical mask and visor. My movements are restrained, slow and deliberate. I have to strain to fully open or close my hand, the gloves robbing me of tactile sensation. I do this because I am retrieving ancient DNA, the remaining fragments of genetic information from living organisms that lived hundreds or thousands of years ago. A-levels in biology, chemistry, maths, and classical civilisation underpin the passions and knowledge that allow me to do this work, though it is amazing how every subject has lent me something (wish I'd listened a bit harder in some). After leaving RGS, I studied zoology at the University of Manchester, where I got my first taste of ancient DNA work. Following a job as a labourer for a local Ripon firm, and an MPhil in biological anthropology at the University of Cambridge, I was referred to the Australian Centre for Ancient DNA, University of Adelaide. Now I am a second year PhD candidate at the centre in South Australia, working closely with the Museum of London. My work Down Under uses the DNA of bacteria preserved inside the calcified dental calculus (best known to most of us as plaque) of ancient human remains. This allows us to recreate the bacterial community that lived in the mouths of our ancestors. Bacteria on our body may evoke a negative reaction, but this community is critical, helping us with day-to-day functions and keeping us healthy. I am asking how this bacterial community has altered through time in historical Britain, and what these changes meant for our ancestors and for our health today.

CONTACT US

We would love to hear about what you're up to now

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Happy days: John, main picture, left, and as a schoolboy at RGS, inset. Above, performing his poetry on stage

John Hamilton May (left RGS in 2009)

As part of a four-year MA programme, I studied English literature, theatre studies, French and world religions at the University of Glasgow for two years before undertaking a year abroad at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As well as studying, I interned as an assistant stage manager for three professional productions, including a version of 8, The Play, which featured Olivier award-winner, Gavin Creel. After the most amazing year of my life, I returned to Glasgow to work as the assistant director on a new play's national tour, as well as complete my degree (first class honours, MA Theatre Studies). During that time, a play I'd written won a university competition and was selected for performance at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2013. Called Love in the Past Participle, it tells the story of two couples and four lives that become entwined in one fateful day. It received some lovely reviews, sold out most of its run and got me picked up by a literary agent. It was translated into Spanish before its opening in Madrid in Autumn 2015 and recently won the Eurodram Award for Best Hispanic Translation. I returned home to North Yorkshire for a job with Rural Arts, an arts charity based in Thirsk, programming live performance and heading up their communications. A few months in, I won the BBC Verb New Voices award, which culminated in a piece of mine being broadcast on the Christmas edition of Radio 3's The Verb. It was a poem called The Space Between Teeth, which explores the effect the First World War had on male-to-male communication. I've recently moved to London to serve as the programming coordinator for Theatre Centre, a theatre company dedicated to touring brilliant quality work to schools across the country, and am looking forward to what the future has in store.



Where are they now?

Paul Carolan (left RGS in 1989) I initially did an HND in marketing, before completing my education at the famous Watford College to gain a post-graduate diploma in advertising. This helped me follow a passion for advertising and to go straight into a dream job at Capital Radio in London. Chris Tarrant and Pat Sharp were rocking the airwaves then and it was fantastic training for the rest of my career so far. I followed up with positions at BBC Worldwide, Virgin Radio, Microsoft and a few others, and I'm now a consultant for Clear Channel UK and 65twenty Ltd (The Lad Bible/The Sport Bible), advising them on commercial strategy. In between, I've been lucky enough to travel the world by taking a year out from my career, and even set up a furniture business with my brother Mark (also ex-RGS) and we launched Gallery of Wonderful in Selfridges London five years ago. It ran its course but it was a brilliant experience in setting up a business from scratch in an industry we knew nothing about. Outside work, my wife Jane and I have an adorable daughter Eliza, and I play as much golf and watch Leeds United as I'm allowed.



A passion for advertising: Paul, above, as a schoolboy at RGS and today

James Dean (boarder, left 1949) My home town was the city of Bradford where I was employed at 16 years of age as an 'engineering learner' under the city engineer. I had one day off to attend college and also had to put in three evenings study each week before I was eventually to become graduate of the Institution of Civil Engineers. London beckoned and I was taken on by the borough of Wood Green, to become later the London borough of Haringey, as an engineering assistant. One of my first jobs was to lower the road under a railway bridge so that double decker buses could use the route. Having completed this project imagine my surprise to find on returning from holiday that British Rail had closed the line and taken the bridge away. All my careful work was redundant.



Following various other appointments I began to specialise in transport planning (facilitating the movement of people and goods) and became deputy chief transport planner for London with the Greater London Council, until Margaret Thatcher abolished that organisation in 1986. I was out of a job but was fortunate to be taken on as principal engineer in a transportation consultancy firm. I remained in this field of work, eventually leaving as a director in 1996. Since then I have been happily retired with my better half Elizabeth in the lovely market town of Swaffham in Norfolk where I am much involved in community matters. This year we are celebrating 800 years since the town's market charter was signed so there are major celebrations including re-enactments with jousting. For this and other events, we are looking forward to visits from our two sons' families including our five grandchildren. Perhaps there is one short message I would like to leave with students. Whilst at RGS I never really appreciated the quality of education received and it was only in later years that I realised how important those school days were.

Read James's boarding memories on page 27



Rosemary Pringle (left RGS 2005) I loved sport at RGS and was involved in every club. Whilst at Cambridge, where I studied natural sciences and management, I competed for the athletics and hockey teams. But starting at the big management consultancy, Bain & Co in London, I fell out of love with exercise. I stopped questioning the motivation of people who didn't exercise, and started questioning exercise products available to busy adults. The gym was boring, yoga was embarrassing and I didn't have time to join a sports club. All I needed to do was burn some energy and there were so many ways to do that. Why couldn't it be more fun?

Different games, with different people, no experience required, at times that suited me - games only exercise classes. So I gave up my corporate career and together with Charlotte Roach, a friend from Cambridge and ex-GB athlete, we set about creating just that. Rabble was born and the backlash against boring had begun. That was January 2014. A year later we have secured angel investment, operate from five London locations and have been featured in national newspapers including the Times, Telegraph and the Guardian. As clichéd as it is, running your own start up is a total rollercoaster. The highs are higher and the lows are lower, but like any rollercoaster it's totally exhilarating. Every day we are creating something that hasn't existed before and I love the freedom and autonomy. We have just launched in Manchester and the next step for Rabble is to expand nationally and internationally. The dream would be to come full circle, to be playing games back on Ripon playing fields once again. Hope to see you on the pitch.



Sporty: Rosemary at RGS



Looking back on old school days: James Dean, left and circled in 1946 photograph, above. Fun and games: Rosemary Pringle, centre front row in main picture with a crowd from Rabble and, top right, with business partner Charlotte

RGS IN NUMBERS

£48

Annual boarding fees at RGS in 1916. Tuition fees were £12 a year. By 1950, fees were £90 a year. Today's annual fees are £9,300 to £10,745 and tuition is free

Visit www.joinrabble.com

Where are they now?

Chris McAleese (left RGS in 1999) I am a second assistant cameraman (2nd AC), also called a clapper loader. I work on feature films and TV shows. The most visible part of my job is that I do the clapperboard at the start of each take. This is only a small part of the job though: I am also responsible for organising and looking after the camera equipment; loading film into the camera in a darkroom or in a special lightproof tent (yes, we still do shoot on film sometimes); I also put down marks on the floor so the actors know exactly where to stand to be in shot and in the right light. I've been working in the film industry for ten years - it took a while to break in, and I started out working for free. Before that I'd done a degree in geography but I'd realised it wasn't something I wanted to continue as a career. I'd always been interested in behind-the-scenes documentaries about films, and as a teenager at RGS I'd made short films with my friend Mark Hills, so I decided to pursue working in the industry. I am freelance, so I never have any guaranteed work. When my phone rings with a job it could be anything from a single day to six months of work. The hours are long and we often work nights and/or outside in the cold and wet. I frequently leave home before 5am and might not be home until 10pm. It's a million miles from 'Hollywood glamour' - think muddy fields in the rain rather than red carpets. We're also usually in a different place every day, so you have to be able to find your way around. I get to travel a bit - I've been all over the UK filming, and abroad on some of the bigger jobs. It's a boom time for the UK film industry at the moment, in the last year alone I've worked on Avengers 2, Star Wars, James Bond and Mission Impossible 5 amongst others. The variety is part of the appeal - no two days are the same. The downside is that it's hard to keep up with friends and I often have to cancel plans at the last minute. I got married in 2014 - luckily my wife works in the same industry so she understands the strange hours and long absences.



Mice work: Malcolm, pictured setting off to deliver giant decorative model rodents to a client, says he will never tire of his fascinating job

Malcolm Tempest (left RGS in 1964) When I left school I got a job in Ripon at HW Baines in Fishergreen. It proved to be very good training in that the firm undertook every form of building work from roof repair to building new premises. I did the designs and plans but also spent much time on sites gaining first hand knowledge of the building process. I did an HNC in building at York Technical College and courses at the Art School and at the Advanced Architectural Institute in York. In 1970 I started my own architectural and design practice, mainly serving farming and the rural area. Since there were few architectural practices around then, development and architecture had a dubious reputation, rather like banking has today, but we tried to please our customers by giving them what they wanted, and were comfortable with, not, as the training then went, to tell them what was good for them. We pioneered the rediscovery of traditional crafts and design in housing estates, to make attractive places to live, a local example being North Stainley Village which we started in 1969. We went on to leisure development, such as Lightwater Valley and the Forbidden Corner, near Middleham, where we also restored the estate and principle house. Much of our recent work has been in restoring historical buildings and landscapes and in designing traditional new country houses. It's a fascinating job from which I think I shall never tire or retire.



'A million miles from Hollywood glamour' but at least Chris gets to work with the stars: Chris with actress Carey Mulligan and his clapperboard on the set of *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Below, at school and out on location with the camera. Naomi Fowler, right, as a schoolgirl at RGS and at her graduation



RGS IN NUMBERS

THE total number of students at RGS, of whom 75 are boarders. In 1901 the total number of students was 73, 29 of them boarders. In 1912 there were 100 students, including 41 boarders.

888

Naomi Fowler (left RGS in 2010) Having gained A-levels in biology, chemistry, English literature and drama & theatre studies, I had wanted to go on to study medicine, however didn't secure a place to do so and therefore took a gap year. During this time I undertook a number of voluntary jobs including at Harrogate District Hospital and Jennyruth Workshops. Following my gap year, I gained a place at the University of Bradford, reading clinical sciences, which I recently graduated from with first class honours. During my time at university, as well as succeeding academically, I became the vice-president, then president of the Bradford University Society of Operettas and Musicals (BUSOM), with whom I have been involved in 19 productions.

Whilst at university I reconsidered my aim of studying medicine and, inspired by my time in BUSOM, now hope to work in the media. Last summer, I had a month-long, highly enjoyable work experience placement with the BBC in Salford where I was involved in the production of the CBeebies show *Justin's House*. This experience was unlike anything I had ever done before and cemented my wish to pursue a career in this sector.

I have found university to be a brilliant experience, allowing me to develop my confidence and introducing me to a far wider range of options than those I had previously considered. I am currently applying for jobs and considering undertaking a master's degree.

RGS IN NUMBERS

7,000

THIS is the number of hours of voluntary work 44 students from RGS carried out over the past year. They donated a total of 300 days between them, working in charity shops and as swimming and gymnastic coaches as well as helping disabled riders and acting as peer mentors to fellow students.



There is still a marked gender gap in career choices. **Rebecca Chamberlain** talks to one former RGS student who found her perfect job in the male-dominated world of engineering

ENGINEERING *a better* FUTURE

Engineering consultant Anna Ferguson says that while the field she works in may be dominated by men, that shouldn't discourage young women from entering the profession: "Engineering is a field that embraces women - and actively encourages them into its most senior levels," says Anna, who believes the City and Investment banking are far more aggressive and unwelcoming as working environments.

Anna speaks from experience. She's had a varied career, working in IT, investment banking and management consulting before entering engineering. The part-time university tutor has worked in the City of London, the North-East and Manchester, in everything from small companies to large global concerns.

First-time mother Anna returned to work in February 2015, after six months' maternity leave, as an engineering consultant for the 'small energy and environmental consultancy TNEI Services Ltd, which specialises in electrical networks projects and renewable energy and is owned by a large oil and gas firm.

She is an expert on the revolution in electricity generation, from alternative power systems to changing regulations in the industry: "As well as doing the sort of thing I've always wanted to do, it's a great environment to work in. There's a strong emphasis on flexible working and the hours are much more sensible compared with those in the City. We are lucky in that a third of us are women in my workplace. This is unusual, although

we interview everyone on an equal basis. I'm not sure whether having a higher proportion of women contributes to success but it does seem to provide a more balanced environment compared with some of the places I've worked.

"I find it difficult to understand why there are still so few women engineers in this country. In addition to a high percentage of women, we also have many nationalities represented in our company. Countries such as India, Sri Lanka and Iran seem to

encourage women more than we do in the UK. These countries tend to be looking to develop their GDP, so professions such as engineering are encouraged.

"I think engineering should encourage more women for two main reasons. Firstly, there is a skills shortage, so it would seem silly that the sector is missing out on a large proportion of the population. Secondly, engineering is an interesting and reasonably well paid profession with sensible hours, and so women should be given the opportunity to work in it."

While she was lucky to receive great support and advice at Ripon Grammar School, Anna says poor careers advice and lack of support at school age nationally are contributory factors, with many teachers poorly informed about careers choices.

"School is where it has to start. A friend's daughter was told by an advisor at her school that she shouldn't go into engineering 'because she's a girl', and that she should think about something 'more suitable'. We quickly got her some work experience with us, to show her what it's all about."

"I find it difficult to understand why there are still so few women engineers in this country"

Continued from page 9

Anna, who left Ripon Grammar School in 1996 after taking A-levels in maths, physics, chemistry, further maths and general studies, says: "RGS was fantastic for attracting anyone who wanted to do engineering into the relevant subjects. There was no feeling that a girl shouldn't be doing these subjects - not from the teachers, and not from the boys doing the same classes. In fact, there were quite a few girls doing the same subjects as me. I'm hoping that my daughter Catherine will go to a grammar school and hence have similar choices."

After A-levels, Anna spent a year at Hartlepool Power Station, through the Year in Industry scheme, during which she won a number of prestigious awards including national Young British Engineer runner up and a WISE women in science, technology and engineering prize, before embarking on her engineering degree at the University of Cambridge.

"There were noticeably fewer women here. About 15 per cent were women on the general engineering course, which was the first two years of my degree. But there were significantly fewer when I specialised in electricity and information sciences (EIST) in the third and fourth years. But, as with school, there was no suggestion that I shouldn't be there, or that I was less capable than the boys - in fact, the girls that chose EIST tended to excel."

Anna recommends engineering as a degree, even to those who don't want to be an engineer at the end of it: "It's so varied. Maths and physics are quite specific and there are fewer opportunities to apply them. An engineering degree gives you the chance to do all the technical stuff, and also broader areas such as economics, accounting, presenting and communicating."

While studying for a PhD in microwave photonics at Leeds University, Anna enrolled on a scheme directed at females interested in working in IT in the City of London. She went on to take up an internship with global investment bank Goldman Sachs while completing the second year of her PhD.

However, while the internship was enjoyable, she found working as a permanent employee tough: "The company itself was keen to recruit women, and there were a few in IT, but there were hardly any women at all on the trading floor. It's just not an environment that many women seem to want to be part of. The working hours were extremely long."

After a stint in management consultancy, Anna decided it was time to leave London and head back North. It was while working as a head-hunter in the North-East that she began an MSc in electrical power systems at the University of Bath, via distance learning, earning a Women in Engineering grant as well as the prize for the best student.

That led to a Hebburn-based graduate job with the New and Renewable Energy Centre (Narec): "I was given significant

experience which included project managing a major part of an offshore wind development, and gained chartered engineer status after a year," says Anna.

After six months on maternity leave, Anna and her partner Andy, a teacher, will be sharing their daughter's care: "I'm going back four days a week, rising to five, and Andy will also have one day at home a week."

"My boss is a woman, and works reduced hours to balance work with home commitments, as do a number of my male colleagues. However, as we are a consultancy, it is possible to advance rapidly and earn a good salary at a relatively young age."

As a working mother, who also tutors and guest-lectures for the University of Bath, Anna, 36, has no regrets about any of her choices: "An engineering degree keeps your options open as it is equally valuable for careers such as investment banking and management consulting. Whilst I'm delighted to now be working as an engineer, these experiences also built valuable skills, and the combination of education and experience has helped to get me where I am now and hopefully to continue to progress."

"As a whole, my career in engineering has in some ways been assisted by my being

a woman. At conferences people are eager to hear from you and speak to you because you stand out, and I've been approached for board level opportunities, because bosses are so keen to make their organisations inclusive at every level. It's made networking much easier."



"As a whole, my career has been assisted by being a woman - you stand out and networking is easier"



Among the sixth form Oxbridge entrants at RGS, Anna is circled



Woman at work:
Anna below and left,
with baby Catherine



Favourite teachers

"There were lots of great teachers at RGS. Mr Rouse, who was passionate about physics, and Mr Postlethwaite were my favourites. The most memorable was Mr Green, a great organist. I enjoyed discussing music with him at A-level."

Girls allowed

With Europe's lowest percentage of female engineers, the UK needs to work hard at attracting girls to the profession. Yet, says **Ruth Savage**, a recent survey found only two per cent of parents would encourage their daughters to follow such a career

ANNA Ferguson is one of a very select group. Only eight per cent of British engineers are women, the lowest proportion in Europe. And, with only four per cent of all engineering apprentices being female, it's a figure that could fall even further.

The UK is well behind other countries like Germany (where 15 per cent of engineers are female), Sweden (25 per cent) and Latvia (30 per cent). We desperately need more than one million new professionals qualified in maths, physics and design to work in engineering occupations by 2020.

Yet the profession still hasn't got to grips with recruiting women. And the fact that a recent survey revealed only two per cent of parents want their daughters to become engineers isn't helping.

It's a problem for all UK manufacturers. A report by the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) says both parents and careers advisors are guilty of imposing gender stereotypes, steering girls away from science and engineering, where there is a current shortfall of about 40,000 workers.

Four in five firms are now struggling to fill vacancies, warns Verity O'Keefe, of the manufacturers' organisation EEF, largely because, she says, the talent pool is half what it could be.

Parents are more likely to choose medicine, nursing or teaching for their daughters and science, construction and engineering for their sons, says CaSE. And while just two per cent of parents revealed they want their daughter to be an engineer, as many as 12 per cent want their son to be one.

Sarah Shaw, a director of Women into Science and Engineering, worries the proportion of women in engineering could continue to decline: "The impression we have is that girls just aren't being encouraged to apply and aren't aware that the opportunities exist."

Almost half of mixed state schools in England have, in recent years, failed to enter a single girl for A-level physics. And too many parents still associate engineering with dirty jobs in heavy industry, rather than with well-paid graduates designing ultrasound scanners or smartphones.

Parents who want their children to find secure, well-paid careers should stop pushing them to become doctors and lawyers and encourage them to train as engineers and scientists, where there is a huge shortfall of skills and diversity, urges CaSE: "The number of girls going into apprenticeships is low," warns Sarah Main, director of CaSE.

In the meantime, while other professions such as medicine have managed to close the skills gap by tackling the gender issue, UK manufacturers, suffering from a dearth of engineers, risk losing their competitive edge.

Dave Dalton, chief executive of the British Glass Association, says: "The future is not going to be about physical endeavour; it's going to be about mental endeavour, and 50 per cent of the population are female. Why are we not attracting that potential?"

Anne Dowling, the first female head of the Royal Academy of Engineering, believes that, as well as initiatives to ensure girls know about the variety and creativity of careers in engineering, we need to create clear routes into engineering for those who take different A-levels and degree courses: "We cannot have people ruled out of rewarding careers they would be well suited to by a poor decision they made when they were 15 or 16."

RGS engineering awards: [see page 22](#)

Proud day for RGS war hero

A former RGS head boy received a particularly warm welcome from the Queen as thousands gathered in London to remember those who fought and died in the Far East during the Second World War. Ruth Savage reports

The 70th anniversary of VJ Day was the first wartime commemoration 95-year-old John Dean has attended. In fact, his daughter Margaret says it was the first time he had ever even taken his medals out of their boxes.

So it was fitting that this modest and unassuming war veteran got the hero's welcome he deserved when he arrived in London for the event and met the Queen and Prince Philip, with whom he served in the Pacific with the Royal Navy.

John joined 350 other veterans and former prisoners of war, who were among the 2.5 million British and Commonwealth troops who fought to defeat Japan in the Second World War during the longest campaign of the six-year conflict.

And while the number of survivors may be dwindling, the public, including families with young children, came in their thousands to line the parade route all the way to Westminster Abbey.

A moving service of remembrance at St Martin-in-the-Fields church in Central London, attended by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, was the first of a series of events throughout the day to remember those who fought and the Queen listened attentively as John told her where

he was on VJ Day," says Margaret, who accompanied John, who left RGS, where he was head boy, in 1939.

Almost all of his school friends, most of whom joined the RAF, were killed in the war.

When asked what he talked to the monarch about, John said: "I said I'd met the Duke of Edinburgh when I was on his ship." And he told her that during the war Prince Philip was "just like the rest of us".

John, who was one of the first Royal Navy officers trained in radar, recalls meeting the Prince when he was posted to Ceylon in 1944: "The radar on Prince Philip's ship kept breaking down and he frequently asked me to fix it."

"He told John he worked out the position of enemy aircraft by lying flat on the deck," added Margaret. John had a few words with the Duke at the ceremony too. "He recognised me immediately," said John, who says he still remembers VJ Day vividly.

John also enjoyed a conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron, who said afterwards: "I feel my generation hasn't had to suffer anything like what these incredibly brave people went through. It is truly humbling."

Britain suffered 90,332 casualties in the war against Japan of whom 20,968 died, 12,433 of them prisoners of war. After VE (Victory in Europe) Day on May 8, 1945, the Japanese finally surrendered on August



Wearing his medals: John with the Queen, above. With daughter Margaret, left. In the RGS cricket team, 1936, and in uniform, Christmas 1942, below

14, following the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The following day was celebrated as VJ Day.

John, now based at Haslemere, Surrey, recalls that while his ship was in harbour in Japan he took a train alone to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to see for himself the impact of the atomic bomb. No-one else would go with him. He said: "In among all the devastation people were just carrying on with their lives as normal. They had nowhere to go."

John's father, Ripon plumber Sam Dean, had been against him volunteering to fight straight after leaving school because of his own experiences during WW1, so John went on to study chemistry at Birmingham University. But he decided to join up two years later, after his university was bombed.

At one point during the war, while escorting Indian troops ashore to safety, John discovered their officer was his old RGS schoolmaster Jack Gibson, who said: "Oh it's you Dean" and invited himself to sleep on his floor.

"Jack became headmaster of Mayo College in India and John kept in touch with him all his life," says Margaret.

Another good friend from RGS, Roland Nelson — whose father was a military and civilian tailor in Ripon and made the uniform John is wearing in the photograph, right — survived after three years as a prisoner of war in Singapore.

"Dad, who stayed in the Far East for a year after the war ended, looked for Roland in Singapore but never found him," says Margaret. Roland was so ill he had come back earlier via Canada. The two men met up

again eventually in the UK "Roland died only a year or so ago," says Margaret.

John, who specialised in flavour and fragrance chemicals, met his wife Helen, who died four years ago, at university. They went on to have two daughters and two grandchildren.

An expert in growing vanilla, he eventually founded a vanilla industry in southern India, establishing it as a crop alongside tea and coffee, and set up The Gourmet Vanilla Company.

John only discovered in the Seventies that Helen had been an official wartime codebreaker: "Dad didn't know she worked at Bletchley Park until 30 years later, once the Official Secrets Act was lifted and it

appeared on television. Only then did she say to Dad, 'That's what I did'," says Margaret.

Recounting the rest of their day in London, Margaret says: "It was like a dream." The magnificent Drumhead service on Horse Guards Parade featured a fly-past of historic aircraft and a wreath-laying ceremony where actor Charles Dance read the poem The Road to Mandalay, by Rudyard Kipling.

This was followed by the parade down Whitehall and finally a garden party with Prince Charles and Camilla in the grounds of Westminster Abbey.

John says: "At 95 I never thought I would meet the Queen. I wonder if she knows how much pleasure she gives people."



Picture MoD



Top woman

GUARDIAN editor-in-chief Katharine Viner, who left RGS in 1989, has been named one of the ten most influential women in the world by BBC Radio 4's Women's Hour. Putting Viner at number four in the Power List Top Ten, judging panel chair Emma Barnett called her one of the 'most influential women in the English speaking world.' The list also includes SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon and actress and campaigner Angelina Jolie. "I am honoured to be included among such a distinguished group," said Viner, who described today's society as 'increasingly unequal'.

Poetry prize



DR PAUL Hullah, who left RGS in 1981 and now teaches English literature at the University of Meiji Gakuin in Tokyo, is kindly sponsoring a new RGS poetry prize trophy. The first recipient of the award, judged by Dr Hullah himself, is Rebecca Payling in 5C, who also wins a book token. Her prizewinning poem, Dreamland, can be seen on the school website: www.ripongrammar.co.uk/news/poetry-competition

In the jungle

FORMER RGS student Richard Hammond, 45, who is reportedly earning £600,000 an episode for his new venture with Amazon, has recently filmed a two-part programme in the Amazon rainforest—Richard Hammond's Jungle Quest—for Sky TV.

Home screen

THE critically acclaimed film Still Life, which features former RGS student Hebe Beardsall and stars Downton Abbey actress Joanne Froggatt, has just been released on Netflix. Producer Uberto Pasolini also made The Full Monty.

Alumni news

Bruce takes to the high street

Once, Bruce Oldfield's bespoke creations were the preserve of royalty and Hollywood A-listers, happy to pay up to five figure sums for one-off gorgeous couture gowns and occasion wear pieces. But now the acclaimed designer, who left RGS in 1969, is, at last, making clothes we can all afford. His new ready-to-wear high street range with John Lewis has skirts, tops, coats and dresses from as little as £59. The priciest item is a swish faux-fur cuffed coat at £299.

Bruce by Bruce Oldfield, created exclusively for John Lewis, is his first collection for the UK high street, and the first of many lines planned for the department store.

Having previously dressed everyone from Diana, Princess of Wales, to actresses Joan Collins and Charlotte Rampling and singers Rihanna and Taylor Swift, Oldfield has been sought after by the high street for years. But he has demurred until now.

"Couture is beautiful and is most definitely where my heart is. It was very important I chose the right partner as I wanted to create a collection that embodied my design ethos and attention to detail whilst being accessible to a wider audience," he says. And for those who don't live close to a John Lewis store, the full range will also be available online.

After a childhood spent split between foster care and a Barnardo's home in Ripon, the children's charity, of which he is vice-president, is a cause close to his heart. So for every sale of his £160 little black dress—a panelled sleeveless silk shift that he has christened the 'Little Bruce Dress' - Oldfield will be donating £20 to Barnardo's. The charity paid his fees and provided a grant for him to attend Saint Martin's School of Art after a teacher training course at Sheffield City College of Education: "I try to support them in any way I can, particularly in the area of aftercare," he says.

Bruce, 65, who first launched his eponymous label in 1975, will now be supplying John Lewis with two 60-piece collections a year. Currently finishing work on next year's spring/summer collection for the store, Bruce will also be continuing with his own couture designs and bridal collection. Just in case you happen to have a few thousand pounds to spare...

Ruth Savage



Bruce's Swan dress with metallic print detail: £160

THE expert who put the expression on the face of Richard III and Santa Claus has returned to RGS to present student prizes. Former pupil Professor Caroline Wilkinson, the director of the School of Art and Design at Liverpool John Moores University, is renowned for her work as a forensic anthropologist, recreating the head of Richard III from the skeleton discovered under a Leicester car park. She also reconstructed the face of St Nicholas and figures regularly on the BBC's Meet the Ancestors. She told students, staff and parents at the annual lower school prize-giving ceremony: "The brain needs lots of stimulus from different areas so the more subjects you study the better. Modern research has dispelled the myth that people have a dominant side of the brain, the right looking after the analytical, the left creative. Art and science skills are desirable in a host of careers." Prof Wilkinson left Ripon Grammar School in 1984 and has enjoyed a rich and varied career: "There are incredible opportunities out there so study the things you are interested in and follow your dreams. The future is definitely cross-disciplinary."



Follow your dreams: Professor Wilkinson

Jamie Swarbrick and his friends used to create YouTube films with home-made cardboard sets until their work was spotted by a famous Hollywood director. **Ruth Savage** finds out what happened next

This time last year former RGS student Jamie Swarbrick and a few of his friends from university were creating short, wacky films on YouTube, which cost just a few pounds to make. Then, in a scene that could have come straight from a movie script, a top Hollywood film director flew them out to LA to make a new series of their own, with support from the creators of The Muppets.

Jamie is one of four innovative young film makers behind the fantastical new show, Oscar's Hotel, made on location in Los Angeles and just launched on Vimeo's On Demand service.

Backed by movie mogul Ron Howard, director of A Beautiful Mind and Apollo 13, Oscar's Hotel is based on a surreal short story by P J Liguori, a friend of 24-year-old cinematographer Jamie.

A-list stars, including Alfred Molina, Patrick Stewart and Elliott Gould, are the voices of some of the weird and wonderful characters in the show, with outlandish costumes created by the Jim Henson Company, which is also backing the project.

The series takes place in a whimsical universe where Oliver, a 20-something manager's assistant, finds himself the temporary proprietor of his uncle Oscar's magical hotel. Molina and Stewart play two Repo Fish who come to repossess the hotel. Gould plays a talking sirloin steak.

PJ, James and co-makers Louis Grant and Sophie Newton, who met at university, started out making their short films online, creating their own sets and costumes and using friends as actors. "We had budgets of just a couple of pounds, so it was all done in a makeshift way, with costumes botched together from second hand clothes. And we used a lot of cardboard," says Jamie.

But as their popularity grew, they were commissioned by companies including Krave and Oreo to make online adverts, which picked up hundreds of thousands of viewers.

They soon came to the notice of director Ron Howard, who runs the New Form Digital company, and initially backed the team to make a £10,000 pilot of Oscar's Hotel before flying



Jamie goes to Hollywood

them out to LA to produce their own six-episode web series, described by one critic as 'one of the most exciting new series to emerge from YouTube's creative community'.

What Culture calls it: "A marvellous cross between The Mighty Boosh and Guest House Paradiso, a trippy, highly entertaining new age comedy that demonstrates an amazing imagination doused with just the correct amount of eccentricity." Jamie, who left Ripon Grammar School in 2009



Weird fish: Alfred Molina and Patrick Stewart play the Repo Fish

after taking A Levels in art, product design and biology, never dreamed he would work in Hollywood: "It was intimidating and crazy and different all at the same time," he says.

"We wrote the show and created it in the UK, doing most of the work over Skype, me in Ripon and the others in Brighton, then flew over in

July to shoot it on location and in the studio. We were there for about a month. Everyone on the team has their specialities, but we all did a bit of everything, playing with potential stories, coming up with jokes and generally just working out what we wanted. I had no idea whether what we created was any good or not, so it was wonderful that these people from across the pond liked it so much."

After an art foundation course at Harrogate College, Jamie studied film production at the University for the Creative Arts in Farnham, Surrey: "At school, I wasn't the best student in the world, I was always kind of day dreaming most of the time. I wasn't always as attentive as I should have been."

But he got an A in his A-level art: "That was my biggest influence. Painting made me understand a lot about light and composition and that shows through in my work. I don't have a canvas and paintbrush anymore, now I have a camera and editing software."

At RGS, he had lots of one-to-one tuition from Mrs Henson and Mr Duckworth as the classes were small: "There were only 13 of us doing A-level and the teachers were really good," he says. He fell into filmmaking he says, making short, experimental art films to begin with: "I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I did the degree in film production because I wanted to find out a bit more about it." Jamie, who is living at home

for now, is hoping the team will go on to make a second season of Oscar's Hotel, and would like to work on a full length feature film eventually. But it still all seems a bit surreal, he says.

His father Andrew, who runs A A Swarbrick Butchers in Ripon, recalls his son cutting the lawn for an elderly neighbour the day before he flew out to LA: "Cutting grass today, Hollywood tomorrow - that's what Jamie said at the time," he laughs. He and mum Rae have both enjoyed watching Oscar's Hotel: "It's brilliant,



Daydreamer turned filmmaker: Jamie Swarbrick

very colourful and amusing and a bit Monty Python-ish I think," said Andrew. Jamie and brother Alexander, 27, who also went to RGS and now works as a set designer at Harrogate Theatre, were the first in the family to go to university, he added: "We are enormously proud of both of them."

Alumni news



A lot of bottle

THE Old Riponians' Association has sponsored a new initiative which aims to reduce the amount of waste plastic in school. The Old Rips have funded the cost of 800 water bottles, to be used at various water points around school, as deputy headteacher, Marita Murray, explains: "We want to cut the amount of plastic waste in school. We are part of the Biffa Bin recycling project, started by the School Council over three years ago. But after a lunchtime session it is noticeable how many plastic bottles are left behind, hence the reason for introducing a reusable bottle for all staff and students." The scheme has been given the thumbs up by the pupils, as one student explains: "The bottles are really useful and I like the school logo on the front." The Old Rips have also purchased new sports bibs, to be used for inter-house competitions. The new bibs were used for the first time on Sports Day this year.



RGS IN NUMBERS

73.6%

THE number of A-level grades that were A*-B, August 2015.
Congratulations to students and staff

OLD RIPS RGS ALUMNI REUNION

This year's winter get-together is at school on Saturday, December 19, beginning with the AGM at 12pm, followed by football, hockey and netball matches from 1pm. Spectators welcome. There will be light refreshments in the library, where the RGS electronic archives will be open, from 2.30-4pm. Contact secretary@oldriponians.org.uk for more information. All welcome.

Coming up soon in Clocktower



TIM Casson (left) who left RGS in 2001, is the brainchild behind The Dance We Made, which wowed crowds during the Culture Olympiad (part of London's Olympic Games) and has been performed all over the world. He has danced on New York's Brooklyn Bridge, enjoyed a stint on Broadway and earned himself a place in the Guinness Book of World Records. As a boy, his love of dance made him stand out at school, which wasn't always easy. But it made him all the more determined to succeed. Read about the teacher at RGS who encouraged him to follow his dream.

Top scientist returns to RGS

Ripon railway porter's son Professor Alan Plumb, who rose to international acclaim as a leading authority on the science of the stratosphere and went on to head astro meteorology at the world-renowned MIT, returned to his old school for the first time in 50 years. **Sarah French reports**

Students' learning was taken to new heights when they were treated to a lecture by one of the world's most eminent atmospheric scientists. Professor Alan Plumb, a past pupil of Ripon Grammar School, is recognised as making a seminal contribution to the understanding of the ozone hole, monsoons and many other atmospheric phenomena.

He returned to his old school for the first time in nearly 50 years to meet staff, tour the buildings and grounds and deliver a lecture on the depletion of the ozone layer to geography, maths and physics students.

The professor, who grew up in Ripon and left RGS in 1966, went on to study physics followed by a PhD in astronomy at Manchester University before embarking on a career that has taken him around the world. He spent 13 years in Australia and for the last 27 years has been based in the United States where he led the Center for Meteorology and Physical Oceanography at the world-renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1998, he has worked with NASA on aircraft experiments at altitudes of 20km or more than 65,000ft. He was recently awarded the prestigious Jules Charney Award by the American Meteorological Society for his 'fundamental contributions to the understanding of geophysical fluid dynamics, stratospheric dynamics, chemical transport and the general circulation of the atmosphere and oceans'.

The son of a shopkeeper and railway porter, Prof Plumb



Stellar career: Prof Alan Plumb outside RGS. Above, with students Beattie Knights and Eliza Dwyer on a tour of the school, where he gave a talk to sixth formers, below left. Students were taking part in a non-uniform day to raise money for charity. Below, in the school's observatory and, bottom, as a lower school prize winner, circled, in 1961



recalled how his love of fluid dynamics, later to become his international specialism, began as a schoolboy in Ripon: "I liked fishing and I'd stand and watch the trout in the Ure every day on my way to school. I remember wondering about how the water moved around rocks.

"I was an Air Force cadet at school and once took a course on airflow around mountains.

I remember being intrigued about that in the same way," he recalled. He had already developed an interest in astronomy, reading about it in books from the school library.

He said: "It was dark at Ure Bank Top, where I lived. I think we cheat kids today out of something really important by having all this light pollution. When you have a dark sky, like we had when I was a boy, you can see so much."

science, pointing out the room where he had had his first physics lesson. He said: "I enjoyed mathematics at school but didn't really like physics until I got to sixth form. I remember lessons with Mike Wallace."

He added: "Being educated at Ripon Grammar School worked for me. I'm aware there are arguments on both sides about selective education but from my experience it worked."

Prof Plumb explained that he came from a very ordinary background: "RGS felt like a very academic environment where you were encouraged to achieve. It didn't have to be mathematics or physics, it could be music, but it always set high expectations."

● You can read our in-depth interview with Prof Plumb in a future edition of Clocktower



"RGS worked for me. It was a very academic environment where you were encouraged to achieve"

During his return to Ripon Grammar School, the 67-year-old professor was shown the school observatory and gave his lecture in the red brick building where he learned his

*He has just sold his IT business for £23m but this successful entrepreneur had a challenging upbringing, raised by a single parent on benefits. He tells **Ruth Savage** how going to Ripon Grammar School helped him turn his life around*

The secret of my **SUCCESS**

RITCHIE Fiddes is living the life many of us can only dream of. Having recently moved into a stunning converted farmhouse with stables and paddocks, set in 20 acres of magnificent North Yorkshire countryside, he is happily retired at the age of 35.

Ritchie, who owns 20 racehorses, along with six yearlings, now spends his time indulging his passion for the sport which had been a part-time hobby while he was busy building the IT business he sold two years ago for £23m.

What makes his story all the more remarkable is that he left school at 16, having been brought up by a single parent on benefits, during which life was at times, he says, 'a struggle'.

He has gone on to own Porsches and Ferraris and buy a string of properties in Ripon, where he and his family once lived in a council hostel.

Ritchie once even took over the penthouse suite of York's luxurious Cedar Court Grand, North Yorkshire's only five star hotel, and lived there for eight months while his previous home was being renovated.

He and his business partner started their online backup and disaster recovery business from nothing, in a small, cramped office in a rough part of Leeds, above a pet shop and next to a nail bar.

The company, Backup Technology, quickly grew to be the biggest specialist in Europe, with a turnover in excess of £6m and offices in the States with clients including major sporting clubs, the BBC, the Crown Prosecution Service, Siemens, Suzuki and Pernod Ricard.

His friends joke that he is 'North Yorkshire's most eligible bachelor,' and Ritchie blushes at the thought. But he does admit that if he hadn't been so busy building up his business, he would probably have settled down and had a family by now.

And family, despite what he regards as a challenging upbringing, means a lot to him. He credits his grandparents George and Jean, especially, for giving him support when he was growing up.

After his parents split up, when Ritchie was just three years old, his father, who was in the Army, had moved to Hampshire and Ritchie and the rest of the family lived in a small flat in Ripon: "The windows leaked and



it was always cold. There were times when benefits money ran out. It was a struggle, definitely.

“My grandparents were the one solid thing in my life. They always lived in the same ex-council house, which they had saved up to buy for £600.”

Once he bought his spacious, five-bedroom Georgian farmhouse, he moved George, who has sadly since died, aged 90, and Jean, 77, into one of two charming cottages, with newly installed kitchen and bathroom, in the grounds.

“They had never had anything like it. Having sold the business, out of everything I have done, seeing them moved in meant more to me than anything else. My grandparents had been so important in my life and I wanted to return that.”

He recalls when he passed his 11-plus: “It wasn’t the happiest time. We were constantly moving at that stage, I would lose my books, there was no real structure. But I was the first in the family to get to the grammar school and my grandparents were so proud.”

Because he got free school meals, Ritchie was entitled to a free school uniform: “They said there was no way I was wearing a free uniform. They scrimped and saved and took me to buy the uniform and all the kit, the rugby boots and everything. It stays with you, that.”

Ritchie feels that getting to the grammar school was key to his success, giving him the confidence he needed to believe he was as bright and capable as anyone else: “It was important to me that I got through,” he says.

And Ritchie always had big ambitions. Aged just 15, he wrote his father an eerily prophetic letter outlining his future plans: “I said I was going to have my own business, own a Ferrari and retire by the time I was 30,” says Ritchie. Having bought a silver Ferrari 360 for his 30th birthday and sold his business when he was 33, he was only out by a few years.

By the time he started grammar school, his mother had remarried and had another baby. But his stepfather was medically discharged from the Army and the family was soon on the move again. Home was a cramped, one-bedroom council hostel in Ripon, then a bed and breakfast and eventually a council house.

Ritchie believes school helped keep him on the straight and narrow: “It taught me good values and manners. None of my friends smoked or were into drugs, we were all brought up to be good human beings.” Although coming from such a relatively impoverished background could,

at times, make things difficult: “It can be elitist. A lot of my friends were from wealthy backgrounds. Things like not having the right trainers could make you stand out.”

Ritchie did two paper rounds in order to buy his own Nike trainers and Adidas football boots: “It was tough at the time, but you learn about making money and looking after yourself, about working.”

His first business involved nabbing extra portions of free school dinners, then selling them to friends: “That was the naughtiest thing I ever did. But it was enterprising,” he laughs.



Winner: clockwise from bottom right, Ritchie pictured after one of his racehorses, Moviesta, won the King George at Glorious Goodwood with jockey Paul Mulrennan; Moviesta, winning at York; Ritchie at home and with his grandmother Jean, happily settled in her new cottage



Although he did well enough academically, gaining seven good GCSEs, he knew he was never going to go through sixth form and on to university: “Financially, it wasn’t viable. I always knew I had to make my own money and do something myself,” he says.

His first full-time job was with SCA nutrition, an animal feeds company based at Dalton airfield, but after six months he moved to Hampshire to live with his father.

“A boy always wants to live with his dad,” he says. He worked for the Hospital Savings Association and then Lloyds TSB, while washing up in kitchens and waiting on tables in the evenings to make extra money until, aged 19, he moved back up North to live with his grandparents again.

He worked in IT sales for Express Terminals in Ripon for four years, gaining valuable experience as account manager for a number of large UK clients before deciding to set up a backup technology business with a cricketer friend, Simon Chappell, who worked in the same field. That was in 2005.

The pair designed an automated computer back-up service for large businesses, with data centres in Manchester and London: “We held two copies of companies’ data off site, in secure locations, protecting it against loss from fire, theft or flood,” says Ritchie.

“We knew the software inside out and did it before anyone else. We risked everything, coming out of steady employment with a steady salary. Our credit cards were maxed to the limit.”

His background gave him the drive he needed: “You have to be a bit uncomfortable to take a risk and make a go of it. You have nothing to lose.

“We did have sleepless nights at times, like when the car broke down and you didn’t know if you could afford to fix it. We were working harder and harder but all our travelling, all our expenses were on the credit cards.”

They knew they needed some high-profile clients to make the business grow. So Ritchie, a lifelong Liverpool FC fan, contacted the club and persuaded them he could provide a better service than what they currently had. The club signed up immediately. A week later Everton FC phoned up and asked if they could sign up too.

“Within three months, the Alliance & Leicester, British Red Cross and Cheshire Police had all signed up too,” says Ritchie. “It grew from there.”

Within nine years, they had moved to larger offices and employed 16 others, travelling all over the world,

including Las Vegas, San Francisco, Dubai and Toronto, as the company expanded.

They had built up a high value, covetable business which a number of others wanted to buy: “After nine years we decided to sell. There were a lot of cross selling opportunities, it was the right time.”

It was during negotiations with cloud company iomart, which eventually offered them £23m, that Ritchie’s house in Ripon was flooded: Having grown up never expecting life to run smoothly, Ritchie simply arranged for the renovations to be done and moved into the Cedar Court Grand, where celebrity David Gest lived in the next penthouse.

“I needed something straightforward and easy. I have never let what has been happening at home bother me, I just shut it all out. During the negotiations they would never have known my home had been flooded.”

Suddenly having millions of pounds in the bank hasn’t changed him: “It is not like a lottery win when it drops on your lap. You have worked hard,

you know what the business is worth. Emotionally, I didn’t feel attached to it.

“Having that amount of money in the bank doesn’t make life any different. Life was good before, life is good afterwards,” he says. “Now things are a lot more relaxed. Since I’m travelling a lot less, I have time to do the stuff I enjoy.”

He plans to remain in his new home for the foreseeable future. And, despite all the free time he now enjoys, says he doesn’t plan any holidays, because he gets bored lazing on a beach or lying by a pool: “If I didn’t go on holiday again, it wouldn’t bother me. I love my life here. I

“I was first in the family to get to the grammar school and my grandparents were so proud. They scrimped and saved to buy the uniform. It stays with you, that

had had enough of living in a five star Hotel. After a while, I just wanted somewhere where I could relax, have friends round and make a salad sandwich or have beans on toast if I wanted.”

He is happy to devote most of his time to his horses now and is building eight new stables, complete with an equine treadmill, at his property: “I’m up early with the animals, not sitting around every day watching telly,” he laughs.

He and Simon bought their first horse, Ancient Cross, five years ago because they were working hard and needed something to do outside work in order to relax. When it won its first major race at York, they were hooked. One of Ritchie’s horses Moviesta, which he part owns with football manager Harry Redknapp, went on to win the King George Group 2 sprint at Glorious Goodwood and was third by two heads in the Group 1 Prix De L’Abbaye in Paris.

He now sponsors one of the country’s top jockeys, Paul Mulrennan: “I have had fantastic success working with

Key to his success: Ritchie in his RGS school uniform



Paul. A lot of hard work goes in behind the scenes which means we enjoy the winners even more,” says Ritchie, who is planning to start breeding race horses in the near future: “It is hard to make money out of it. You have got to do it because you enjoy it.”

Ritchie is also trustee of a local charity, Jennyruth Workshops, which offers adults with learning difficulties work experience and life skills, and gives career talks at his old school.

But he doesn’t plan to work again: “I have never been so sure or so comfortable about anything. I don’t have any big ambitions, I have achieved everything I wanted to. I want to spend more time seeing friends and being with my grandmother. They are much more important to me than material things.”

He does hope to have a family of his own one day: “You want to give your own kids some of the things you didn’t have when you were growing up. But I wouldn’t want them to be ruined by money.”

School news

RGS gets a glowing report

Ripon Grammar School passed an inspection by a prestigious national schools' guide with flying colours. **Ruth Savage** reports

Ripon Grammar School is a 'can do, will do' school with friendly, courteous, articulate and insightful students who are confident, without being arrogant, and have a real pride in their school.

That's the verdict of a Good Schools Guide inspector who visited RGS at the end of the last academic year and gave it a glowing report. She observed that there were 'lots of heads up, eye contact and smiles' as she walked around the school.

The Good Schools Guide (GSG) is one of Britain's most respected independent guides, publishing detailed reviews of 1,200 schools every year.

The latest report follows the school winning a number of top GSG awards for GCSE performance, being named the highest performing grammar school for boys in art, boys in astronomy and girls in French.

At RGS, the guide reports: "Pupils talk of friendly rivalry, pushing each other to achieve," adding that there were strong protestations from both girls and boys on the question of true equality: 'It is not an issue here'.

There are genuinely good relations between staff and students throughout the school, says the report: "Pupils and parents cannot speak highly enough of staff, their commitment and willingness to go 'above and beyond'."

And RGS is described as doing 'a very fine job' of encouraging and enabling pupils to make good progress: "Near the top of the tree nationally. This is all the more remarkable,

given that RGS is not as highly selective as some grammar schools in, for instance, Kent and Essex, being unable to draw pupils in great numbers from outside its defined catchment area."

The guide describes Headmaster Martin Pearman as: "A very approachable, unpretentious man, who brings a wide experience of schools and a clear vision of his school's purpose, which is 'to serve the local community with a high quality education, increasing the life chances of ordinary boys and girls'."

He believes passionately that 'pieces of paper are only part of what makes you' and that time at school is for learning to deal with failure as well as success.

Sports facilities, particularly the new Astroturf and sports hall, are described as 'excellent'.

Music and art also come in for high praise: "There are lots of enthusiastic musicians and superb art on display. Visiting artists augment a strong teaching team." says the guide. New buildings, including the sixth form centre, mathematics and engineering block, state-of-the-art music facilities, observatory and girls' boarding house are credited with adding gravitas to the school's original Victorian facade.

"There is an air of purposefulness in the school; a quiet hum from classrooms and sensible movement between lessons. There is a very good pastoral system in operation; in addition pupils look after each other," says the report.

www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk



Aspiring students: some of last year's GCSE pupils, who achieved exceptional progress scores from the age of 11 to 16

Top of the tree for added value

By Sarah French

encouragement, support and high quality teaching students received to ensure they could achieve beyond expectations. He added: "This new data for GCSE results in 2014 confirms the excellent progress made by students at Ripon Grammar School from KS2 to KS4. It is always gratifying to see how well students improve during their time with us.

"The middle 18 attainers, who are defined as students with at least one level 4 at KS2,

made exceptional progress. They have clearly benefited from the high aspirations of all the students in the year group, including our boarders who perform very well academically and make excellent progress."

A year ago, Ripon Grammar School was recognised for the progress sixth form students made during the two years following their GCSEs. Their success at A level put the school at the top of the 2013 Yorkshire league table, while the value added score put it ahead of the rest of the country.

RGS IN NUMBERS

£3,070

THE amount raised by Headmaster Martin Pearman's London Marathon run for the Calvert Trust, to enable those with disabilities take part in adventurous outdoor activities

The levels of attainment were especially critical among the middle 18 students in the year group whose level of progress was one of the highest of any school in the country. Headmaster Martin Pearman said the figures reflected the

Can you help inspire our students?

RGS's next careers and higher education evening will be held on 9 March, 2016 as we look for opportunities to develop further links with employers.

This now annual event will focus on different career areas each time, with 2016 concentrating on scientific, technical, health-related areas and sport and the following year affording an insight into the arts, business, public sector, media and more.

We would love to hear from anyone who could contribute to helping raise our students' awareness of a wide range of career and educational opportunities and to provide inspiration and ideas about ways which enable them to stand out from the crowd in future university or employment applications.

There are also a number of opportunities for business representatives to work with specific year groups.

This term lower sixth students will be given the chance of practice interviews in order to increase their confidence and to develop the skills needed in relation to gaining work experience. We would very much welcome offers of help from those with interviewing experience for future years, in addition to support with other employability skills.

We also invite informal presentations from guest speakers at our careers club, which meets monthly on Wednesday lunchtimes. If you feel that you or your organisation would be able to contribute to any of these events, or to other areas of our careers programme, please e-mail Jill Locke on lockej@ripongrammar.co.uk.

RGS in the news

RGS has been praised once again in The Sunday Times. Reporter Julie Henry, describing the school as the highest ranked state school in the North, observes that local state primaries provide the vast majority of the intake, helping the school maintain a strong sense of community.

Her report, published at the end of the last academic year, also states that our sixth form is particularly strong at challenging pupils and getting the most out of them. With value added measures the highest of any school in the country in 2013, she points out that students make better than expected progress, to the tune of two thirds of an A-level grade.

The newspaper quotes Headmaster Martin Pearman as putting strong relationships at the heart of the school's success: "The students are known as individuals. They feel valued and supported," he says.



Goodbye, Mrs Swainston

MANY former students will remember Mrs Swainston, who has retired after 35 years teaching at RGS. "Her contribution to the school over this time has been immense," said Mr Pearman. "Those of you who had the privilege to be taught by her will know her to be always enthusiastic and cheerful. Most importantly, she always cared passionately for all of the students in her care. Things will not be the same without her. She will be much missed not only by students but also by staff. We wish her well in her retirement and hope very much that she will keep in touch.

Songbird Billie set for stardom

Watch out for RGS student Billie Marten who is taking the music world by storm with a song she wrote while studying for her GCSEs this summer. Billie, who is signed to Sony Music's Chess Club label, released her four-track EP *As Long As*, featuring her single *Bird*, in November. Just before it came out, Radio One DJ Huw Stephens named it the 'Hottest Record in the World' and the station's Annie Mac made it her record of the week. Then singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran tweeted to his 15.5m followers that 16-year-old Billie's song *Bird* was 'stunning'.

Better known at school as Billie Tweddle, although she wrote many of the songs for this EP in between studying for her exams, she still managed to do extremely well in her GCSEs: "My teachers have been really supportive and my school work comes first, but it's nice to be able to keep writing songs," says Billie, who started sixth form in September and is taking A-levels in English literature, art and French.

Born into a musical family, Billie started playing guitar and singing when she was eight: "We had David Bowie playing in the car instead of nursery rhymes when I was little," she explains.

She first came to national attention after her mother, Sally, recorded a video of her singing to put on YouTube for her grandparents in France: "We thought nothing of it but then it just went crazy," says Billie.

After her YouTube debut got hundreds of thousands of hits, Billie was asked to appear on two of the big mainstream TV talent shows, but turned them both down: "I started writing more songs and did small, local gigs. I don't want to be famous or anything. I just love music. The attention has been accidental," she explains.

Having performed at Leeds Fest as well as on Radio One, she recently embarked on her first tour with one of her music idols, Lucy Rose. And her acoustic folk-inspired songs have certainly struck a chord. The Independent on Sunday's music critic described Billie's voice as 'unbelievably beautiful', announcing: 'Occasionally you come across something so



Teenage prodigy: Billie Marten

startling you have to tell the world about it." Clash magazine praised: 'striking song-writing from a teenage prodigy'. And the online music magazine Consequence of Sound says she has: 'a vocal delicacy that far outstrips artists twice her age'.

The daily internet music publication Stereogum enthused: "It seems impossible that a teenager can summon towering, windswept emotions of a Wuthering Heights scale, but here we are."

More recently, The Sunday Times Culture section, which named *Bird* the 'Hottest Track' of the week just before its release, described the song, which Billie says is about how words can affect people, and not always for the right reasons, as 'worldly wise and profoundly beautiful'.

Ruth Savage

The smiles on their faces said it all as boarders proudly revealed the completed £1.1m extension to Johnson House at the official opening of this important development for girls' boarding at Ripon Grammar School. The investment has created an additional 15 boarding places for girls, offering stylish single rooms for sixth formers from across the county and beyond. The extension includes a garden decking area, social space, a kitchen and bathrooms with easy access to the boarding house prep room, dining hall and lounge. Security has been upgraded too, with access via fingerprint technology.

At the official opening, Headmaster Martin Pearman said it meant the school could now meet its target of 100 boarders, both boys and girls.

"Ripon Grammar School is another post-16 option for families across Yorkshire, combining first class education with boarding in excellent, modern facilities.

"Boarding really does bring its own sense of community, and it enhances the wider school community; it's a real strength of RGS," he added.

Beattie Knights, 17, of Pickering, who joined RGS in the sixth form, said: "I love the close relationship I have with my friends but it's nice to have your own space, especially new space like this.

"Boarding is fantastic preparation for university and gives you a taste of independence without the full responsibility of having to look after yourself."

Yaz Ebert, 17, from Leeds, has boarded since Year 7 and, now that she is in Year 13, has been allocated one of the new rooms.

"When I started I was in an eight-bed room, then in a



room for four girls and then, until this year, shared with one other person, so I've tried all the different ways of boarding.

"The best thing about it is the social aspect, I've made lifelong friends here. The new rooms are clean and modern and I like the automatic taps in the bathroom. I make my lunch in the kitchen and we sit together to watch TV in the new social area," said Yaz.

Senior housemistress Ruth Smith was joined by Chris Charlton, a former senior housemistress, at the opening.

Ruth, who feels this gentle introduction to having a home away from home helps students settle and adjust to university life more quickly, says: "It's very exciting. The sixth form girls really like it because they have their own kitchen, social area and individual rooms which gives them an even better idea of what to expect at university."

The extension was supported by North Yorkshire County Council and designed by architect Mike Kettlewell, with furniture supplied by Ellis, of Huddersfield, and the orchard garden by donations from Valeria Sykes and Colin Little.

Pete Dwyer, corporate director of children and young people's services at the county council, said: "As an authority we wanted to be part of this exciting development.

"My passion is about the education community of North Yorkshire and we should be judged on our ability to

create great education for all.

"My thanks go to this school and this headmaster for the contribution they make to that education community, for their professional generosity and willingness to spend time on the improvement of others."



Home from home: (L-R) Yaz Ebert, Toni Babayemi and Funlola Rhodes enjoy the social area in the new £1.1m extension, below left. Laura Laycock at her desk, above left, and Beattie Knights checking out one of the new cupboards, above

Success for budding engineers



On track: from left, engineers of the future David Owens, Ben Pease, Ben Maddison and Ellie Lamb

BUDDING engineers at RGS have won coveted awards for helping Network Rail on a particularly challenging project. It involved work on the planned electrification of Selby's swing bridge, in preparation for the line being transformed from diesel to electric. "This is easier said than done when the bridge has to swing through 90 degrees without leaving cables stretched over the river," says head of lower school Mike Barker. The students, who won Gold Crest awards for their outstanding performance, worked on a solution with NR engineers which will hopefully be implemented in the next three years.

There was further success for Patrick Moon and John Ashton, in lower sixth form, who have been presented with prestigious Arkwright Scholarships, awarded nationally by the charitable trust to those high-calibre students identified, through a rigorous selection process, as future leaders in engineering and technical design. The scholarship will help support them through A-levels.

RGS IN NUMBERS

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THE number of new students from throughout Yorkshire, including Richmond, Northallerton, Helmsley and York, who have joined RGS's sixth form this year

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BOARDING AT RGS ON www.ripongrammar.co.uk/boarding OR CONTACT MARITA MURRAY ON murraym@ripongrammar.co.uk T: 01765 602647

Little do today's boarders realise just how lucky they are. Three boarders from the Forties and Fifties recall a life of rationing and few home comforts

Cold swims, mashed parsnip with custard and pillow fights in the dorms



I arrived as a boarder at RGS just a couple of weeks after the end of World War II. Air raid precautions were still in place with brown sticky tape criss-crossing the windows and evacuation instructions still in evidence. Needless to say, rationing was at its height. Clothing had to be made to last and Miss Wilson, the school housekeeper was kept constantly busy repairing and darning all manner of items until they finally expired. But for an eleven-year-old, the war paled into insignificance alongside the excitement and apprehension of this new way of life away from home, living in a dormitory alongside a dozen other young charges.

My situation was a bit different because my mother was the resident school cook. She had to try and work wonders with food rations: two ounces of butter, one ounce of cheese and one egg per person to last a week, and one jar of jam to last a month. There was a hectic spell of cross-table bidding before the eating commenced. Fresh bananas were unknown. Instead, there were dried bananas which had to be soaked in water for several hours. One of the many ingenious, fake dishes was to mash cooked parsnip; add banana essence and some yellow colouring; add custard and call it banana pudding.

From the academic point of view the war meant that teaching staff were mainly men who were not young or fit enough for employment in the forces. A few of them had come out of retirement and found keeping discipline difficult. But every one of them showed deep consideration and kindness in somewhat trying circumstances, with limited resources.



Grateful: George Topple above, who went on to study law at Cambridge, above. Main photo: George, circled left and Alan, right, pictured in 1952 Top: dining room and dorm, 1940s

Despite the privations there was a fine spirit in the school and the boarding house, which was small enough to feel like a large family. These were still the days of corporal punishment but that is not to say that we were not well treated. The headmaster was not averse to handing out multiple canings where the offence warranted it (eg a pillow fight in the dormitory). The prefects too, at least in the boarding house, occasionally 'used the slipper' to reinforce their authority.

The three dormitories marked very distinct phases in our development. We were still innocents in the junior dorm looking upon Matron and Miss Wilson as mother figures. By the time we reached the middle dorm we were more self-confident, more boisterous, more of a handful to manage. Then, in the senior dorm we began to understand responsibilities - towards others, towards ourselves

and towards the school. Work increasingly mattered, though for many sport was a close second.

RGS was a comparatively small school when measured against our sporting rivals, so it was rare for us to win the majority of our fixtures. Nevertheless, we probably punched above our weight and provided our fair share of players who went on to win honours.

The daily routine for the boarders was probably much the same as it is now. There was pre-breakfast PE, lessons, single meal sittings summoned by bell, after-tea 'prep' and staggered lights out for the three dormitories. At certain times in the summer evenings and at weekends the (unheated) swimming pool was opened for the boarders. On Friday evenings we had the 'pay parade', ie the line-up to receive our sixpence weekly pocket money. Saturday morning saw the much-prized freedom to walk into town (to spend our six pence on tea and a bun!). In the afternoon there was usually a match.

On Sunday mornings we always marched in single file to the cathedral for matins. In the afternoon it was compulsory to go for a walk and be off the premises for at least a couple of hours. Town was out of bounds so it was usually an amble across the fields towards Studley Royal.

The more adventurous might set up camp and light a fire to bake dough on sticks and brew up tea which, in very cold weather was useful to pour into one's wellingtons. It was even known for one or two to break into the nearby Royal Engineers camp to play in the mock urban training ground known as the 'French Village'. The weekend ended with the normal prep period given over to hobbies or reading.

Hats off to the cook

I was a boarder at Ripon from 1945 to 1952. Hats off to Mrs Topple, who managed to feed around 60 hungry boys on a daily basis during a time of rationing. I recall we had a currency system operating, two strips of bacon for a piece of fried bread, two pieces of fried bread for an egg. We got one pot of jam once a month. Strawberry was red with congealed lumps, raspberry was thinner and red with seeds, apricot was sort of orange with lumps. However in reality they all tasted the same.

The headmaster was Bill (W.J.) Strachan, whose footsteps coming down the corridor to the big school (now the library) for morning prayers silenced the whole school. In spite of being on the receiving end of his cane on several occasions, in later life I came to realise what an excellent school he ran, he really cared.

As a boarder we were awakened by the bell at 7am every morning, up and outside at 7.15am for twenty minutes physical exercise, generally ending in a half mile run down to what was then the sanatorium. We had to sit quietly and listen to a piece of classical music from approximately 7.45am to 7.55am, when the sound of Mr Strachan's footsteps would silence any conversation. Breakfast was 8.00 to 8.30am, then into big school for morning prayers at 8.45am.

The curriculum had quite an emphasis on the classics. For instance we did Greek, Latin, French and German in our first year. At the same time we were learning about Greek mythology and Ur of the Chaldees. Looking back it amazes me how much we were able to learn. Of course, discipline was pretty strict. You stood up when a master came into a room and did not sit down until he told you to. You addressed the masters as Sir and the mistresses as Miss Taylor, or Miss Clarke.

Physical punishment did happen, but it was relatively rare. Masters used to wear gowns in those days. The most fearsome, actually one of the kindest when I got to know him, was "Masher" Brown, the deputy head and chemistry master. It was Masher Brown who

taught me to think logically - in his own unique way.

There was considerable emphasis on physical exercise. In addition to daily exercise for the boarders, and PE classes twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons we played rugby in winter and cricket and athletics in summer. We played against several schools in the area, the favourites were Bootham, the Quaker school, and Ampleforth the Roman Catholic School, (the Abbott at the time was Basil Hume, who went on to become the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster).

We boarders had to attend morning service at the cathedral every Sunday. The seniors used to slip into a paper shop for a copy of the News of the World without being noticed. This provided reading material while we were on our knees for the prayers that went on forever,

All this was before the days of computers but also before the days of ballpoint pens. There were long wooden benches in the school with cast iron frames and ink wells that had to be filled on a daily basis by the class monitor. The benches had initials carved in them, some of which dated from the 1700s.



Boys had to wear short trousers and a cap until their 14th birthday when pocket money also increased from six pence a week to a shilling. It was an early lesson in inflation, as the shilling bought exactly the same as the sixpence had when you first got it - two small bars of chocolate.

School days were not without their challenges, but I am extremely grateful for the wide range of knowledge I gained.

After leaving school I worked as an apprentice, taking evening classes, won a Technical State Scholarship, and went on to study physics at the University of Durham.

It is only in later life you realise how much you owe to those teachers who had the patience to encourage your interests, discipline you when necessary, and the wisdom to know when to do which. They truly made a difference.

Alan Fergusson

Officially, the boarders only came into contact with girls twice in the year - at the school dance with the girls' High School, and the joint debates. In addition a fortunate few shared biology lessons, presumably owing to the lack of resources. Trysts with girls were strictly forbidden. Once, the headmaster had to warn the assembled boarders that some boys had been observed "Wenching under Bishopton Bridge."

After a few years the effects of the war eased. We had an influx of fresh, young teachers (at least half from Oxbridge) who brought a new vitality to the teaching and helped us widen our ambitions. New subjects and extra-curricular activities sprang up. Under encouragement from the government we started an army, and RAF, cadet force. Since then the school seems to have gone from strength to strength. We former pupils are immensely proud of its achievements and forever grateful for the life-enhancing opportunities which it has afforded us.

George Topple

I was a boarder until 1949 and returned for a visit to the school in April. Quite a lot has changed as you can imagine but that lovely view across the playing fields of the clock tower and main building is still the same. The main hall where I played the piano for morning assembly has been converted to a library and along the road where the tuck shop used to be are now classrooms. The dorms where we used to have twenty or so beds are now divided up into rooms for two and four. The dining room looked just the same though. Incidentally, I was at my hungriest immediately after lunch and used to rush out to the shop for an iced bun.

Of course immediately after the war was not the best time to expect superb

Twenty beds in one room

catering but I bet the meals today are of a distinctly higher quality. I remember sneaking into the dining room and swapping my jam ration with someone else's, if I was given plum and wanted strawberry. I also recall having marmalade and sausage as a sandwich, the argument being that sausages then were mostly bread anyway. Just after the war, teachers who had been called up still hadn't returned but in my opinion the 'retired' teachers we had were excellent. I always remember Mr Welsh who was Scottish and taught English. When I wrote, simply, that "I went for a bicycle ride in the country" he crossed it out and replaced it with the much more colourful and creative "I went for an expedition a-wheel" - a bit over the top, you might think, but I felt my good English education was very valuable to me in my chosen career as a civil engineer.

James Dean



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Established in 2003, and owned and run by Becky and Dave Naylor (Becky is a former RGS pupil), Bronco works with clients both locally and nationally to deliver innovative, market-leading digital marketing solutions.

With a team of 18, Bronco's success is based on our own guiding thought that **'There's always a solution'** which we challenge ourselves and our clients with each and every day.

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