

Clocktower

Keeping alumni in touch with Ripon Grammar School and each other



Winter/Spring 2014
Issue 5

Cancer breakthrough

As a schoolgirl, she fought to save RGS. Now this leading surgeon's pioneering research is saving lives

From RGS stage to cinema screen

The student who overcame shyness to hit the big time

Plus: RGS is 'top school in Yorkshire'
Helping to shape the future since 1555

Designer Bruce Oldfield on his time at RGS:
"My English teacher had the most profound effect on me"

A letter from the Chair of Governors

Dear Alumni

Welcome to another Clocktower, packed with information about RGS. The headline in a Department for Education advert a few years ago promoting teaching as a profession read simply: Everyone remembers a good teacher. In their interviews in this edition Naomi Sharma, Hebe Beardsall and Bruce Oldfield all confirm that truth. It is equally true that everyone remembers a good school - but what makes a good school? That question has probably been the subject of more educational research than any other. In fact most people instinctively know whether a school is good or not: excellent and dedicated teachers - absolutely essential; strong leadership - crucial and fundamental; a clear vision and school ethos - a prerequisite. What is so often overlooked by academic researchers, but certainly not ignored at RGS, is the importance of a strong school community, not just pupils, parents, staff and governors who happen to be at the school at any one time, but also the large numbers of alumni who, over many years (back to 1555 !), have gone on from RGS to achieve



a myriad of amazing things in their lives. Naomi writes that she grew up encouraged by the school (and her parents) "to believe there were no barriers to what she could achieve". She, Hebe and Bruce all bear witness to that, as do so many other RGS alumni. News of your achievements inspires our current students, your continued interest, support and, where possible, involvement helps RGS to be an even better school. So please do let us know your news by emailing us at rgsconnect@ripogrammar.co.uk and if possible, please support any of our special alumni events or visit the school whenever you can. Most of all - do keep in touch; RGS needs you.

With best wishes
Dr Peter Mason

• EDITORIAL TEAM

Contact us on rgsconnect@ripogrammar.co.uk or Paul on paulheap73@gmail.com.
Editor: Ruth Savage • Deputy editor: Nicola Woolfenden • Careers editor: Ian Pringle
• Alumni news editor: Paul Heap • Design: Ruth Savage • Artworker: Suzanne Ryan.

Where

Have you ever wondered what happened to those



Simon Leather, pictured right, left RGS 1973:

After spending 20 years at Imperial College London, I took up an appointment as Professor of Entomology at Harper Adams University, Shropshire in September 2012. I am now heading up a new Centre for Integrated Pest Management and incidentally I am the only Professor of Entomology in the UK. I am third from left in this School House photo, above, the other reprobates are: from left: Colin Rushmere, David Howarth - me - Steve Tombs, Neil Rothwell (foreground), Nick Goss, Bryan Lee and Nick Ford - on top is Jan Spencer (Head Boy)

Then
and now,
Ritchie
Fiddes,
far right,
and as a
schoolboy,
right



Ritchie Fiddes, left RGS 1996:

Having founded my Online Backup & Disaster Recovery business, Backup Technology, in 2005 and expanding it internationally, I have recently sold it to the UK's leading cloud computing company, the iomart Group. In the last year I have maintained links with the school helping out with careers advice and mock interviews and it was great to go back to see everything that had and hadn't changed! When I'm not busy working I spend my time watching my race horses including Moviesta (who I own with Harry Redknapp) who won the King George Group 2 sprint at Glorious Goodwood this year, and Ancient Cross, who won the Ayr Silver Cup. ritchie@backup-technology.co.uk

RGS alumni offer



The Bivouac, on the Swinton estate near Masham, is offering 10 per cent off early bookings for mid-week yurt and woodland shack stays between January and June 2014, when booked before February 28. The Bivouac, which offers camping in luxury yurts (sleeping up to five) and woodland shacks (sleeping up to seven), alongside a café/restaurant and shop, also runs a wide range of events and activities throughout the year, ranging from children's entertainment and craft classes to musical evenings and quiz nights, as well as guided walking, cycling and outdoor/country crafts. Please quote RGS Clocktower when booking, to be eligible for this offer.

Contact details:

www.thebivouac.co.uk Bivouac at Druid's Temple, Masham, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 4JZ
Reservations - Tel : 01765 535020, Email: hello@thebivouac.co.uk

Terms & Conditions:

Exclusive to Ripon Grammar School alumni only . Applies to new bookings for Monday to Thursday nights between 1st January and 30th June 2014, subject to availability. Applies to accommodation charges only. Cannot be combined with any other offer.

are they now?

old friends you lost touch with? **Paul Heap** reveals what he and other former RGS students are up to now

Caroline Bentham (Barker),
pictured right in Ripon's Spa
Gardens and inset aged 14.
She left RGS in 1982:

I left RGS to go to catering college in Leeds. I had my family at a young age and went back to work as a school cook when they went to school themselves. I became head cook back at RGS and went on to run my own little café, the Sun Parlour Café, in the Spa Gardens. I have been there nine years and love it. I am still connected with RGS as I teach an adult cookery class in what was my old domestic science room. One of my old maths teachers comes to the class. It's amazing how long it takes to call one of your teachers by their first names. Both my children went to RGS and we shared some of the teachers!!



Sarah Mackley, pictured left, left RGS 1998:

RGS was a springboard for me to a very happy few years at Durham University during which time I spent a year in the south of France and, apart from a gruelling PGCE and few years teaching French in the UK, have never really left since! I set up my own translation and interpreting business in Lyon in 2010 and fell in love with this beautiful city (and the idea of being my own boss!).

Email: sarahmackleyinfrance@gmail.com,
website: www.clayborncommunications.com



Oliver Stirk, left RGS 2001:

I graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 2006, during which time I was lucky to spend a year working in Paris. I then spent five years working for a private equity firm in London, before returning to Harrogate to establish a specialist elderly care service called Carefound Home Care (www.carefound.co.uk). I am married to Emily, whom I met in Paris, and still enjoy playing plenty of rugby and tennis.

I can be contacted on ostirk@carefound.co.uk.

Paul, pictured above, & Helen Heap (nee Alderson), left RGS 1991 and 1987 respectively:

Paul: I qualified from Harper Adams College with a rural property degree and have followed a property career ever since, which has led to me owning my own commercial property development company. I am an RGS governor.

Sam Frankland Left RGS 1994:

I am a director at CBRE, chartered surveyors specialising in the sale and valuation of pubs, restaurants, care homes and day nurseries.
www.cbre.co.uk

Tommy Gilchrist left RGS 2006:

I graduated from the University of Reading with a BSc in Physical Geography. After two further years as an elected officer for the Students' Union, I moved into recruitment for the Page Group. I've recently transitioned out of that industry and am currently working for a (Tory) member of the House of Lords with sights set on political consulting / political policy advocacy. Any job conversations in that arena firmly welcome.

tommygilchrist@gmail.com

Helen: I qualified as a French teacher from Stirling University and returned to RGS to teach before moving to Harrogate Grammar School. I have recently stopped teaching French in secondary school and have moved to teaching French at a number of primary schools around Ripon. I am a governor of Bishop Monkton Primary School. We have three children, two of whom now attend RGS.

Please contact us at paulheap73@gmail.com.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

For more than 20 years, students at Ripon Grammar School have been taught history, French and RE in temporary classroom huts. At last, that is about to change. RGS has secured £1.8m of funding to ensure ambitious plans for a new languages and humanities block will soon become a reality. The new building, due to open in September 2014, will replace eight pre-fabricated units introduced as a temporary measure in 1990. Further ambitions include plans for a new dining hall and a girls' boarding house extension.



You can follow Ripon Grammar School on Twitter @RiponGrammarSch

From RGS stage to the BIG SCREEN

Rising star Hebe Beardsall tells Ruth Savage how difficult it is to break into the cut-throat world of acting

Many of those lucky enough to see Hebe Beardsall's magnificent performances as Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* and Miss Trunchbull in *Matilda* on the RGS stage will have suspected they may just have been watching a star in the making.

Now the talented actress is about to appear on the big screen, in Full Monty producer Uberto Pasolini's new film *Still Life*, which stars Downtown Abbey actress Joanne Froggatt and recently premiered at the Venice International Film Festival.

Hebe plays teenage mother Lucy in the film, which also stars Sherlock Holmes and *Happy-Go-Lucky* actor Eddie Marsden as a council officer tasked with tracking down relatives of those who die alone, and is due for release in the UK within the next few months.

The 20-year-old Durham University English student, who left RGS in 2011, plans to pursue a career in acting full time after she graduates next year. She knew she wanted to be an actress from the age of ten when she took part in school performances, including playing the poet Homer in one particularly adventurous production, at Kell Bank primary school near Masham.

"I know it sounds a bit clichéd but I was really shy. Acting was the one thing that brought me out of my shell. My shyness just disappeared when I was on stage. It helped me develop in confidence."

She was just 15 when she bagged the part most teenagers could only dream of, that of Ariana Dumbledore in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2*. After contacting casting agents to see if anyone was auditioning for a fair-haired teenager, the budding young actress got a call, out of the blue: "They just happened to be casting *Harry Potter* and invited me to London to audition," she explains.

It may have been a fleeting role, but competition was fierce to win a part, no matter how small, in what was to turn out to be one of the top five worldwide grossing films of all time.

"The sets were mind-blowing - it was so cool to see them first hand." But it wasn't all star-studded glamour: "The waiting around is so boring," she confesses. A number of TV roles followed, including the part of

Pacifist Pam in the CBBC TV science fiction series *The Sparticle Mystery*.



Academically gifted - Hebe gained ten A*/A grade GCSEs and A*AA at A level - her parents never tried to persuade her to follow a more conventional and secure career path.

But as the daughter of writer Jonny and sculptor Janie Beardsall, who also design and make fabulously outlandish reclaimed fur hats which have featured in *Vogue*, Hebe was never going to work in an office.



Jonny and Janie have always encouraged Hebe and her 17-year-old sister Ruby, who wants to be a fashion designer, to follow their dreams: "I come from a very arty, creative family and they are so supportive. I probably wasn't ever going to do a normal job."

It is a cut-throat business, particularly for young actresses starting out, but Hebe takes it all in her stride: "Rejection is something I am quite good at taking at the moment," she says. "It is an extremely difficult industry to break into, especially if you are a young, blonde female. But I am very determined," she adds.

Hebe has been told she has a 'period drama face'. Unique and full of character, the up-and-coming actress certainly has the look many casting directors are after.



"It's important not to be pressurised into looking a certain way or being too skinny. You have to embrace the look you have got and make that work for you. You need to find your niche." Effortlessly stylish, she loves vintage clothes: "I know what I like, I don't follow trends," she says.

While studying for her degree, she has been enjoying taking part in Durham student drama productions, playing a wide range of roles including *Miss Wade* in *State of Fugue* and *Ismene* in *Sophocles's Antigone*, which attracted critical praise. Her next big part is that of *Nora Wingfield* in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*: "Durham Student Theatre is thriving and I really enjoy being a part of it." What she loves most about acting is the varied personalities she explores: "I'm intrigued by psychology so it's amazing to delve into different characters."

Her ambition is to appear in a period drama: "I

Favourite
He was s
English

*“I wasn’t
ever
going
to do a
normal
job”*

■ *Still Life*, a poignant take on life, love and afterlife, centres on a council worker whose job is to find the next of kin of those who have died alone. A new case liberates him from his routines until he finally starts living life – with all its exciting and dangerous unpredictability – to the full.



Joanne Froggatt and Eddie Marsden in *Still Life*

would love to be a Bennet sister in *Pride and Prejudice*,” she says. One of her role models is the British Olivier-award winning actress Ruth Wilson, best known as Alice Morgan in the BBC TV psychological crime drama *Luther* and star of the film *Jane Eyre*: “She has such an incredible face and is so versatile.”

The big-budget film work she has experienced is a world away from where she first started on her primary school stage and Hebe admits that, at times, it feels almost unreal: “Every time I am on these big sets, with famous actors and directors, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the whole thing.”

At the *Harry Potter* premiere in London in July 2011, she rubbed shoulders with actors like Alan Rickman, Jim Broadbent and David Thewlis and she was particularly thrilled to meet *X-Men: First Class* actor Nicholas Hoult.

Although Hebe emphasises her role in *Still Life* is small, she says it was an incredible experience: “Thankfully, the baby actresses I worked with were impeccably behaved and so sweet.”

Hebe would encourage RGS students who want to pursue a career in acting to persevere: “Drama school, post school or university, is the most conventional route in, or you could try sending letters with a headshot and information about you to casting directors. I’d recommend buying *Contacts*, a handbook with advice and contact details for everybody in the industry,” she says.

Signed up to the BWH acting agency in London, whose clients include Barry Sloane and Jennifer Aries, she says she has learned much from many of the well-known actors she has worked alongside. Joanne Froggatt was particularly encouraging: “She gave me a lot of advice.”

It is advice that will no doubt come in useful as Hebe faces the challenges of the year ahead: “Things will start heating up after I graduate. It’s very competitive. But I think the secret of success has to be tenacity.”

For Hebe, it’s an approach that, so far, appears to be paying off: “The most rewarding thing about the job is seeing the finished product and your name on the credits.”

**teacher: ‘Mr Fell
so cool. He made
lessons great.’**

*Treading the boards: Hebe, pictured at the Durham University theatre workshop
Photograph: Dave Wood*

Far left: top, Hebe with actor David Thewlis at the last Harry Potter premiere; middle, on set with Karen Drury and Joanne Froggatt; bottom, as Ariana Dumbledore.

We seek out those companies which have connections with Ripon Grammar School and wish to advertise directly to our alumni:

FOUNDATION GROUP OF COMPANIES

We are a recruitment and business acquisitions and mergers firm with three companies - Foundation Talent Acquisition (financial services recruitment) Retiring IFA (financial services business acquisitions and mergers) and Retiring Accountant (accountancy business acquisitions and mergers). We have been established 15 years and have quadrupled our turnover in the last three years. We also run the Steps to Success programme, which helps tens of thousands of children.

Below are three of our many opportunities in Ripon:

Graduate Researcher

£14,000 - £18,000 Basic + Generous Bonus Structure We are looking for graduates to join our first class training programme with the opportunity to move into senior roles. You will be responsible for sourcing the market for candidates to match clients' requirements. You will be an intelligent and fast learning individual who wants a long-term career. Some sales / telephone experience desirable but not essential

Recruitment Consultant (Financial Services)

£15,000 - £30,000 Basic + Generous Bonus Structure You will be running a recruitment desk, interviewing candidates and sourcing financial services industry positions that match requirements as well as helping clients find suitable candidates for employment. You will enjoy training and development in a company where career progression is phenomenal. You must be naturally persuasive, capable of hard work, have an insatiable desire to learn and have some gravitas about you in order to advise senior professionals. Commercial sales experience essential.

Acquisitions and Mergers Consultant (Financial Services / Accountancy)

£15,000 - £30,000 Basic + Generous Bonus Structure You will be responsible for running an acquisitions and mergers desk, speaking with individuals wishing to sell financial services/accountancy practices as well as sourcing the market for buyers looking to expand. You will enjoy training and development from acquisitions professionals and have the opportunity to deal with people at senior and board level. Commercial sales experience essential.

(Vacancies available at time of going to print. For further information, please check:
www.foundationresourcing.co.uk
www.retiringifa.co.uk
www.retiringaccountant.co.uk

IF you have connections with RGS and have a post you wish to advertise here for FREE please contact us on rgsconnect@ripongrammar.co.uk

Work experience is no longer an optional extra. Former RGS student and parent **Ian Pringle** reflects on the benefits and urges more employers to get involved

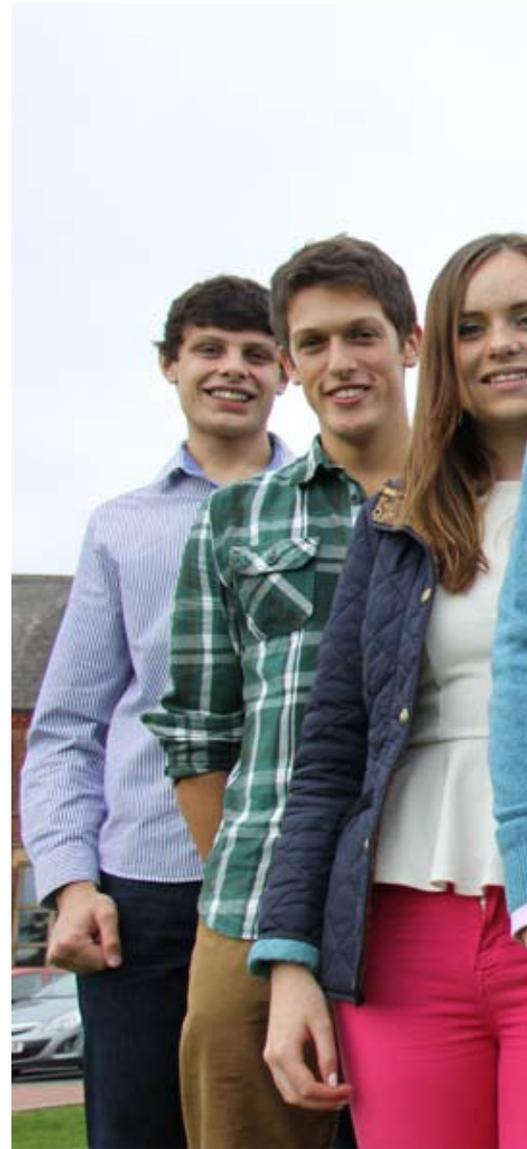
Ripon Grammar School is keen to help all students, past and present, with their careers. The school Careers and Higher Education evening in March is just one strand of activity, but if our students are to succeed at the highest levels we need to attract as much help from alumni as possible.

For those students planning to go to university or entering the job market during these particularly challenging times, an offer of work experience or careers mentoring can prove invaluable.

An example from the recent past might serve to illustrate the point. My children, Rosemary and Alastair, were undecided about their futures while at school.

Rosemary, who left RGS in 2005, enjoyed sciences but couldn't choose a subject. Shrewd advice from the headmaster suggested natural sciences at Cambridge. To support that application and confirm the choice, she sought laboratory experience. She was fortunate enough to find a summer vacation place at Covance Laboratories in Harrogate, which helped confirm her course choice and proved to be a conversation piece at interview.

As time passed on her degree, she decided against a career in science. Law, particularly intellectual property seemed a possibility. To that end she spent time with two legal firms, but was still undecided. The management option she took up in her fourth year provided valuable additional knowledge and, whilst studying, she was successful in gaining a post as an associate consultant at the global management consulting firm Bain & Company. Alastair, who left RGS in 2007, was interested in business and economics but two weeks at the financial services organisation Deloitte in the summer holidays quickly dispelled accountancy as a career. Two half days with stockbroking firms confirmed an interest in



The new alumni: to RGS's latest leavers, pictured above, Johnson, Alex Worrall, Elizabeth Tearle, Hugh McHale-M...

investment. The school supported his course choice of economics and management at Oxford, and again his work experience came up at interview.

Whilst at Oxford he enjoyed work experience at a City money broking firm and subsequently gained a paid internship on graduation at investment bank Nomura, which led to a job as an investment analyst.

In both instances the school offered valuable help with university and course choices but was unable to secure work experience.

Why placements work

RESEARCH shows 36 per cent of students completing a work experience placement had received at least one definite job offer by the Easter of their final year compared with just 11 per cent of other undergraduates. Experts warn work experience is no longer an optional extra and has increasingly become an essential element of preparing for the employment market. Figures show students will apply for 427,000 jobs by the end of this year, compared with just 244,000 in 2008.

ents can open doors



this bridge between classroom and workplace can prove invaluable as they swap school for the big wide world. From left, Will Laughan, Georgina Sanderson, Hannah Hickingbotham, Cameron McCormack and Benjamin Nabarro

Fortunately, through various connections, both gained the necessary opportunities, but not every pupil and family is so lucky.

If you can provide work placements please contact Bob Walker on walkerB@ripongrammar.co.uk. T: 07757393504. If you can help in any other way, including with practice interviews, lunchtime presentations or workplace

visits, please contact Frances Wilson or Jill Locke in the RGS Careers Department: wilsonf@ripongrammar.co.uk T: 01765 602647 ext 229 or through LinkedIn. We would be delighted to hear from you.

• More than 100 organisations will be taking part in the RGS Careers and Higher Education Evening, for current students and parents, in school on Tuesday 6 March.

■ AROUND half a million young people take part in one and two week placements every year in the UK.

■ A GOOD placement makes young people more realistic and able to make informed career choices says the Education and Employers Taskforce.

■ MORE than 60 per cent of graduates end up working for the company they have interned for.

■ FOR every 350 second-year student placements with the financial services firm Deloitte, the company receives 10,000 applications, which need to be sent a year in advance.

A BOOST TO EARNING

WORK experience helps boost students' earning power according to research. Young adults who took part in four or more activities with employers while at school went on to earn an average of £23,100 by their mid-20s, £3,600 a year more than those with no experience, says a study by the Education and Employers Taskforce charity. It also underlined the value of school visits by local companies.

USEFUL LINKS:
cipd.co.uk
hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/ faqs.htm
youngworker.co.uk



Inside Westminster: Eliza, above

'It's easier to get a job'

- As Chairman of Westminster North Conservative Future, Eliza Richardson helped plan and execute Boris Johnson's mayoral election campaign
- The 23-year-old's duties now include writing political speeches and helping to draft Bills
- She has just been approved as a Conservative candidate for next year's local London elections

Eliza, who left RGS in 2008 and now works as parliamentary assistant to MP Peter Bone, says it would have been so much easier to get a job if she had had more work experience. The University of Nottingham politics graduate says: "I really regret not getting a summer internship, in any field, just for the experience, before I left university."

She eventually managed to get a number of short political and charity sector internships and advises students to approach people in the field they wish to work in: "Most people are willing to give some time to talk about how to get started and what your options are."

- Read Eliza's story in the next edition of The Clocktower.

BEST BIG FIRMS FOR GRADUATE INTERNSHIPS

Barclays (banking)
Grant Thornton (accountancy)
PricewaterhouseCoopers (financial services)
Linklaters (law)
Ernst & Young (financial services)
BDO (financial services)
GSK (pharmaceuticals)
KPMG (financial services)
Deloitte (financial services)
Morgan Stanley (investment)

Source: ratemyplacement.co.uk



Ruth Savage talks to fashion designer Bruce Oldfield about his schooldays and growing up in the North-East and North Yorkshire

‘The most important things I learnt at RGS? A lot of common sense, good manners and a decent set of values’

Lace dress and coat, right, by Bruce Oldfield

Q: If you could meet your 18-year-old self now, what advice would you give?

A: Perhaps to work a bit harder at things that didn't immediately grab me, to take a little more disciplined approach.

Q: Who is your role model?

A: My foster mother, Violet, not only for encouraging my career but also for being such a strong and determined woman. She made us aware of our potential, that we could do anything if we set our minds to it.

Q: Who or what inspired you when you were at school?

A: Miss Allison's English class was quite inspirational. She had the most profound effect on me and taught us the works of Gerard Hopkins, a poet I love to this day."

Q: Which do you think matters more to success - ambition or talent?

A: I think having a little of both is essential for success.

Q: What is your proudest achievement?



Bruce Oldfield, above.

Bruce Oldfield, OBE,

was at RGS from 1964 until 1969. A former Barnardo's baby, he was brought up by his foster mother in a small terraced house in County Durham. The family lived close to poverty, with an ash closet in the yard and a tin bath: "It was like Angela's Ashes, except ten years on," says Bruce. By the time he was 13 he was, he confesses, "a bit crazed" and was sent to the Barnardo's children's home in Ripon, where he attended RGS after passing the 11plus. He thrived at school: "It was respite from Barnardo's," he says. He went on to teacher training college before switching to fashion. While still a student, he designed a capsule collection for New York store Henri Bendel and launched his own label in 1975. His popularity soared after actress Charlotte Rampling started to wear his designs. But Diana, Princess



of Wales (above) choosing him as her favourite designer made his name. His most recent creations include stunning gowns for singers Rihanna and Taylor Swift.

A: Receiving my OBE in 2000.

Q: What advice would you give to an RGS student today who wants a career in fashion and design?

A: Learn your craft well and follow your dreams. Don't fall at the first hurdle - it's a tough industry.

Q: You have said you loved the RGS uniform, something that made you stand out from the other Barnardo's boys. What did you used to wear as a teenager outside school?

A: Things that would make your toes curl! Purple striped bell-bottoms with a flowered shirt...

Q: What were the best things about growing up in this part of the country?

A: White Christmases! London is so busy the snow doesn't stick for long. And I was always grounded, that's what the North gives you.

Continued on page 11.

Bridal couture by Oldfield.





Swimming instructor and past pupil Emma Makewell leads an aqua aerobics session in the RGS pool.

Olympic stars support our pool celebrations

Our celebrations to mark the centenary of Ripon Grammar School swimming pool included a photographic exhibition, sporting events and star studded Olympic-themed auction. **Hattie Parker** reports



Simon Walmsley, who left RGS in 2007, looks over old school photographs with head boy Derek van der Westhuizen.



On a gloriously sunny day in July, past pupils and friends gathered at Ripon Grammar School to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the swimming pool, an event that helped raise £6,000 towards improvements.

Sixth formers were on hand to give tours of the school and its new facilities and old boys and girls were able to see the newly renovated pool in action first hand. The Astroturf was in use for a girls' rounders match and a cricket match was also taking place, providing the perfect backdrop for an idyllic summer's afternoon.

On display in the hall were many items of sporting memorabilia - part of a silent auction to raise funds for the school. Olympic-themed items, donated by big names including former RGS student and Olympic diver Jack Laugher, his GB diving team mate Tom Daley, swimmer Rebecca Adlington and the triathlete Brownlee brothers, attracted most of the bidding.

A large photographic exhibition charting the history of the school was also on display in the library and was much appreciated by all those who took the opportunity to visit it.

And what better way to round off the day other than to enjoy a splendid cream tea in the hall, reminiscing about time spent at RGS, whilst being entertained by a string quartet? The fine weather undoubtedly helped but there was a real sense of enjoyment and a relaxed atmosphere throughout the day.

The Old Riponians' Association wishes to thank all those who, through their generosity, have raised £6,000 to improve the pool. To date, the funds have been used to install a poolside shower and for the purchase of teaching equipment.

Above, from left, Tim Wolstencroft (left RGS 1964), Sally Ingram, Natalie Mounsey and Simon Fogden (left RGS 1965)

Pictured left, from left Joan Fawcett, Pamela Spalding (left 1969) deputy head boy Joe Pearman, head girl Sally Pitts and John Roper (left 1948)

Good Value

RGS has gained national recognition for being in the top 20 per cent of schools adding value to students' achievements. Sue Williamson, chief executive of the education body SSAT, described RGS's performance as stunning: "Ripon Grammar School is one of the best schools in the country in outperforming expectations for pupils and improving future prospects. There is plenty other schools could learn from RGS's success." The award is based on analysis of progress made by pupils between Key Stage 2 primary school results at age 11 and GCSE results at 16. This achievement follows RGS being rated in the top twenty of 4,500 schools for teaching excellence and results by the Good Schools Guide earlier in the year.



Engineering accolade

FORMER RGS student Cameron McCormack, above, has won one of just seven prestigious national £12,000 engineering scholarships, putting him in the top echelon of the UK's most able future leaders in the field. Based on his achievements in his sixth form years, this is a significant accolade both for Cameron, who is now studying engineering at Cambridge, and the school.

Winning role

TWO students from RGS have won a top award in an NHS national schools' competition for their innovative video advert and presentation promoting the role of a forensic psychologist. Louisa Chatterton and Annabel Fry, the Yorkshire and Humber regional winners, were among 1,660 students from all over the country who took part.

Continued from page 9.

Q: Where do you like to eat out when you come back to Yorkshire?

A: Betty's in Harrogate, it's elegant, relaxed and generally a lovely place to sit and watch the world go by. The cakes aren't bad either.

Q: What are your favourite places in Ripon?:

A: There is something about the quality of Ripon, the architecture. I love Fountains Abbey, and the symmetry of the view in a straight line to Ripon Cathedral. I used to do cross country running there.

Q: What is your most treasured possession?

A: My baby grand piano. And my dogs - a Rhodesian ridgeback called Babe and a five-year-old border terrier called Baz.

Q: Favourite book/film/TV programme?

A: Now Voyager is a fantastic film, I love Bette Davis

Q: Where do you like to escape on holiday?

A: It's rare that I get time for a break but when I do Tuscany is always top of my list! It's so beautiful and peaceful and the food is fantastic!

Q: What is the most important thing you learnt during your time at RGS?

A: A lot of common sense, good manners and a decent set of values. I know this sounds very twee and middle class but these are the things that have served me well.

Q: As the son of a young, married Irish woman and a Jamaican boxer, growing up in County Durham and Ripon in the Fifties and Sixties, did you ever encounter any prejudice because of your colour?

A: Yes, but mainly from the parents of girls I was friendly with, but, on the whole, it wasn't too bad. I think it was curiosity more than malice, if I'm honest. My foster family and I were particularly lucky, as we never experienced the pressure cooker effect of discrimination that was rife in the larger southern cities.

Q: Do you think grammar schools are a good idea?

A: An excellent idea if you value excellence. Grammar schools set high standards for their children and encourage enterprise and an ethos of hard work to achieve optimum personal results.

Q: Did you ever get an after school detention and, if so, why?

A: Yes, for forgetting to bring in my PE kit...constantly.

My advice to students is to learn your craft and follow your dreams



Silk damask coat, with pleated dress by Bruce Oldfield

Naomi Sharma left RGS 15 years ago to pursue her dream of studying medicine.

The 33-year-old surgeon tells **Ruth Savage** how she is now turning the treatment of prostate cancer on its head

Naomi Sharma's first published work was a letter in the Ripon Gazette, written when she was a 16-year-old schoolgirl and arguing that RGS, which was then under threat, was a great school and should be saved.

Her latest is her ground breaking research into the treatment of prostate cancer which, when it was first published over six months ago, earned her international recognition. The two are not unrelated.

Naomi, 33, is a leading surgeon at Oxford's Churchill Hospital and also lectures at Oxford University. The daughter of a self-employed carpenter, she feels passionately about the benefits of selective education.

"It is about offering an excellent education and boosting opportunities for those who are able from whatever social background," she says. "As a student, I always felt we were all valued and got there on our own merits.

"I wrote the letter of my own volition. I felt so strongly that my Mum had to tone it down a bit before she let me post it," she laughs, adding that it was the education she received at RGS that helped set her off on the path of studying medicine and equipped her well for her future career.

As a female surgeon, she is one of a rare breed. The fact that she is also an academic lecturer in surgery makes her rarer still.

The mother of two, who is married to an orthopaedic surgeon, agrees that when it comes to the number of women working in surgery, the statistics are shocking.

While nearly 60 per cent of medical students, 44 per cent of paediatric consultants and 49 per cent of public health consultants are female, only 8 per cent of consultant surgeons are women. The number of women in academic surgery is even smaller.

Naomi has become used to patients calling her 'Nurse', or assuming one of the males on her team must be in charge. It is something she takes in her stride.

It was undoubtedly thanks to her dual role as clinician and academic that her world-first, comprehensive tissue



At the c

study is shining a whole new light on the biology of the most common male cancer.

Her research has uncovered a new gene network which could unlock the door to more effective treatments, bringing hope that more of the 41,000 men diagnosed in the UK every year could survive the disease.

Previously, tests on prostate cancer, which kills 11,000 each year, were carried out on cancer cells grown in plastic Petri dishes in the lab, but these aren't perfect. They tend to pick up genetic quirks that make them progress less like the disease in an actual patient.

What made Naomi's Cancer Research UK funded study different was that, for the first time, she and her team were examining fresh prostate tumour samples from patients with the disease to find out what happens in real tumours.

But why had no-one ever thought of this before? "Exactly," laughs Naomi, a graduate of Nottingham University who completed her Phd in prostate

cancer at Cambridge University: "It's not rocket science, right?"

It is thanks to her that scientists are examining, for the first time, the way cells behave and talk to each other in the tissue itself, leading to the discovery of new genes driving and growing the disease, which can now be targeted with specific drugs.

Inquisitive by nature, Naomi has always felt it is vital to carry out research at the same time as practising surgery: "It's important to change practice and not just continue to do what has always been done."

It is hard to say what it was that led her to become one of the few women to succeed in the highly competitive and male dominated world of surgery. Naomi, who has two sisters and a brother, first became interested in science as a child when she was given chemistry sets and crystal growing kits as presents.

While her parents never pushed her in any direction, she always knew she wanted to be a doctor and did work experience at her local hospital and

Favourite teachers:
'They were all brilliant, particularly Dr Saunders and Mr Saul'

TOP SCHOOL IN YORKSHIRE

OUTSTANDING A level results have seen RGS take the title of top state school, including all selective schools, in Yorkshire. Just under 80 per cent of A level grades were A*-B, with one student achieving an exceptional six A*s and two gaining five A*s. Nine students won places at Oxbridge and more than 60 per cent have gone on to universities in the elite Russell Group, with two students winning coveted places on highly competitive training schemes. RGS is now 53rd in the Daily Telegraph's national league table of state schools.

easier to deal with. But it is always the most difficult part."

Her advice to RGS students who are thinking of a career in medicine is: "Think carefully about what you want to do. It is a brilliant career but the course is long and hard and doesn't give much of a feel for what the job is actually like, so gain as much experience as you can and see what it involves. It is important for people to find their own path."

She feels that managing a good work life balance is one of the toughest challenges for women in surgery.

Naomi's working day lasts from 7.30am until about 6pm, but she also has to work some weekends and has 24 hour on-call duties: "It's unpredictable. It all depends what happens," she says. Having children turned out to be the biggest challenge of her life. "It's the hardest thing out of everything I've done. It's non-stop," says Naomi, who ensures she keeps up with hockey and piano practice, as well as running and going to the gym.

"Time management is the most important thing. Doing exams and homework, these were skills I picked up in school and I was always taught sport was important."

Due to the demands of their careers, Naomi and her husband have had to spend long periods apart. "We have had to move around for jobs. But for the first time in 10 years, we are working together in Oxford."

She hopes to complete her family and settle in one place, but, currently carrying out research into bladder cancer, she has further career ambitions too: "I would like to be a professor of urology one day and have my own research group and clinical department."

By that time, hopefully, many more than 8 per cent of consultant surgeons will be women. And some of them may even come from the current student population at Ripon Grammar School...



*Grateful for the education she received at RGS: Mother-of-two and leading surgeon Naomi Sharma (formerly Tyreman) pictured at Oxford's Churchill Hospital
Photograph: Oxford Mail*

utting edge

GP practices: "I wanted to work with people, not just do pure science."

RGS gave her a lot of support when it came to choosing the right university and she was particularly inspired by voluntary work she did while at school, visiting elderly people living alone: "One person isn't the same as another, there is so much variety and it was an opportunity to make a difference to people's lives in a positive way."

She certainly grew up encouraged both by school and her parents to

believe there were no barriers to what she could achieve: "I just always did what I wanted to do, I was lucky. Mum taught us to keep going, no matter what. She made us feel there were no

limits to what we could achieve."

The hands-on, practical skills she needs for her work were honed as a schoolgirl, she adds, as she helped her father make furniture in his workshop. Her

determination is a quality she has inherited, she says, from her mother.

But most of all, it is the love of her job that drives her on.

"Surgery is fantastic, a brilliant career. I like the fact it is physically demanding and technically challenging. And you have a

result at the end which is visible and tangible."

Now specialising in urology, she has just operated on a patient with bladder cancer. It was a demanding,

six hour procedure: "There is a degree of endurance. You're standing on your feet the whole time, operating and concentrating. We removed the bladder and made a new one out of a piece of bowel. That was good."

One of the attractions of her field, she says, is that she gets to work with exciting new equipment: "We have a lot of cool technology, we use a robot to take out the prostate. It's great to work with."

The most rewarding part of her work is her relationship with patients: "You get to see the whole thing, from when they have just had their diagnosis through to surgery and recovery. You go on to see them after they have left hospital, for many months and years afterwards. There is continuity," she says.

"But the most difficult bit is we can't cure everybody. That is hard to deal with initially. Despite your best efforts, people will die. Unexpected things happen to people. You get a lot of training in medical school to help you. You get used to it and it becomes

“Mum taught us to keep going and made us feel there were no limits to what we could achieve”

Helping shape the

Ripon Grammar School is educating young adults of the future while drawing on its proud and illustrious past. Local historian and author **Chris Lloyd** delves into our archives, which will soon be available online



Present day: Cricket at Ripon Grammar School, beneath its distinctive clock tower

Former pupils have spent months digitising 15,000 documents from the school archives. Papers dating back to 1540, governors' meeting minutes dating back to 1623 and examinations and school magazines from throughout the ages will soon be available at the click of a button. This means our young historians will have the original documents on their computer screens so they will be able to flesh out the truth of these tall stories and long tales from their school's illustrious past...

THE BEGINNING

No one knows for certain when Ripon Grammar School began. Some sources suggest that it was before the Norman Conquest of 1066. Others say the first documentary proof of a school in the city is dated 1348 when Ricardum le Chamberlayn, described as "former master of the Schoolhouse", was one of 138 people who failed to appear before the Court of the King's Bench. As Ricardum was part of such a large group, it is suggested he was involved in a mass disturbance, perhaps a riot. As punishment, he was outlawed - so the first known schoolmaster of Ripon is not an especially good role model.

BRIBING PRIESTS

The medieval school was given land by benefactors. The land was let out to farmers and the income supported the school. The school was also connected to a collegiate church in Ripon. In the 1540s, when Henry VIII was dissolving the monasteries and seizing the Church's land, it seemed likely that the school fields would be regarded as Church property and seized by

the king. The fear in Ripon was that this would force the school to close through lack of income, so the townspeople hatched a cunning plot. When Henry's commissioners arrived in town to decide which land now belonged to the King, two priests had been bribed to tell them the land had nothing to do with the Church but belonged directly to the school. The commissioners believed the lying priests and let the school keep the land. Ripon rejoiced.

However, in 1550 governors tried to dismiss the schoolmaster, the Reverend Edmund Brown. In retaliation, he told the authorities of the chicanery that had occurred, and the Duchy of Lancaster seized the lands. The school's future was back in doubt

BLOODY MARY

Queen Mary, the only child of Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine of



Royal Charter: Queen Mary, the school's founder

Aragon, is known for the brutal way in which she re-asserted the Roman Catholic faith. In her five year reign, she had more than 280 Protestant dissenters burnt at the stake.

Perhaps because of Ripon's attempt to frustrate her Protestant father's plans, she looked kindly on the fate of the school. On June 27, 1555, she signed a royal charter which established the Free Grammar School of Queen Mary at Ripon. This granted the school's ten governors the disputed fields and so it was saved.

This date is regarded as the foundation of the modern Ripon Grammar School.

SCUM OF THE COUNTRY

School legend has it that in the 1650s two school governors became embroiled in a violent dispute over a young lady. Jonathan Jennings, an alderman of Ripon who had kindly provided the school with some slate to repair the roof, called his fellow governor, George Aislabie, "the scum of the country". This led to the duel in which Aislabie was fatally injured. Jennings rushed to London to obtain the King's pardon for the murder.

SCHOOL FRICTIONS

Two fascinating frictions that future scholars should investigate run through the school's history. The first concerns how a school is funded when the income from the fields is not enough to cover the costs and there is no state help.

To overcome this lack of money, some headmasters encouraged pupils from

wealthy families to board, which is why even today Ripon is one of very few state schools that has boarders. The more boarders a headmaster recruited, the wealthier he became and the better lessons he could offer. But lots of boarders meant there were only a few places left for local day boys.

And fees went against Queen Mary's founding charter that set up a "free school", not a free school as Michael Gove would understand it today which is free from local government involvement, but a school that was free of charge to local pupils. However, a school without enough income is a school without decent facilities, and in the middle of the 19th Century there were growing complaints about the unhealthy nature of the school's building in St Agnesgate, in the shadow of Ripon Cathedral.

The importance of boarders to the school's economy was shown in the 1880s when wealthy families took their boys away from the school because of a rumour concerning the headmaster and a local lady. This plunged the school into financial uncertainty.

In the 70 years before the Second World War, local authorities took an increasing role in financially supporting the school, and the last fees were abolished in 1944.

LESSONS ON LESSONS

The second friction concerned what the school should teach. It was set up to concentrate on Latin and Greek grammar, which was needed for

future since 1555

scripture study and for boys to be accepted for university. For example, when the Reverend William Plues was headmaster at the start of the 18th Century, boys learned 50 to 100 classical lines by heart every day. But as the 19th Century wore on, there was little demand in Ripon for



Generous: The school's benefactor, the Marquess of Ripon

people who could spout vast passages of Pliny, and so there was growing local pressure for the school to teach more commercial and modern subjects. In 1848, local tradesmen signed a petition opposing the tuition of "dead languages" and demanding more maths, book-keeping, Continental languages and science. The difficulty for the school was that if it produced young people who were valuable to local businesses it could not also produce pupils ready for university, and this would deter wealthy families from sending their sons to board and so income would again decrease.

THE MARQUESS OF RIPON

The brilliantly-bearded Marquess is worthy of great study. He was chairman of the school governors from 1860 to 1909, when he died at his home in Studley Royal, near Fountains Abbey (his mansion burned down in 1946).

He was born in Downing Street when his aristocratic father, Lord Goderich, was beginning his 144 difficult days as Conservative Prime Minister. Somehow, the Marquess turned into a radical Christian socialist - views of which his parents disapproved.

His views mellowed a little when he was elected MP for Hull in 1852 and became a member of William Gladstone's Liberal government. He formed an alliance with Florence Nightingale to improve soldiers' conditions, and he was in favour of giving more people the vote. For four years he was the Viceroy of India, where his tasks included extricating British Forces from an ill-advised war in Afghanistan. He worked closely with Edward Forster - a Quaker who had spent some time working in Darlington in a textile mill - on the introduction of the 1870 Education Act, which

created state elementary schools. On a local level, the maverick Marquess's interest in education was shown by his deep involvement with RGS.

In 1872, the Marquess gave the school a new, large property in Bishopton Close which enabled it to move out of its unhealthy premises near the Minster. An architect, George Corson from Leeds, was called in, and in 1889, the school's iconic clock tower was opened by the Marquess himself.

BOYS WILL BE BOYS

In 1894, the school 1st XV rugby team won the Yorkshire Public Schools' Challenge Cup for the second time. The school's official history says: "The event was unfortunately marred by the drunken celebration of the team." In the early 1960s, boys produced wine from gooseberries grown in the caretaker's garden and strained it through dirty socks. They presented a bottle to a new history master who took it home with him. The school's history reveals: "He placed it in his sitting room where it exploded during the night, causing considerable damage. The remainder of the substance was confiscated."

OLD BOYS

Everyone knows of Richard Hammond, the Top Gear TV presenter who somehow cheated death when crashing at 288mph, and Bruce Oldfield, the designer who dressed Diana, Princess of Wales. But Sir William Chambers, another Old Riponian, deserves mention. Although born in Gothenburg, Sweden, he left Ripon in 1746 and designed the Gold State Coach which has been used in the coronation of every British monarch since George IV in 1821.

WAR BOYS

In both world wars, Ripon Grammar School lost at least 48 pupils. John Dean, who attended the school from 1932 to 1939, wrote: "The sad thing for my generation is that the 6th form classes of 1938, 1939 and 1940 were so heavily decimated by the casualties of war. I was one of the few who survived to enjoy the benefits the school gave me over a long career."

POLITICS

The documents currently being digitised will give a fascinating insight into how late 20th Century politics shaped the school. First of all, in the early 1960s, when co-education was the fashion, the school was threatened with "disestablishment" if it did not agree to amalgamate with Ripon Girls' High. The school was already considering the move, but the prospect of loss of money from the state certainly concentrated minds. The school retained its grammar school status, meaning it was one of only three in North Yorkshire that selected its pupils. Labour governments wanted comprehensive



Sports lesson: Playing rugby on the playing fields before the First World War



Howzat: Cricket at RGS in the late 1870s. The Bishopton Close building was given to the school by the Marquess of Richmond



Grand Designs: the new Bishopton Close building pictured in 1897

education to end selection, and RGS was only saved by Conservative general election victories in 1970 and 1979.

In 2000, the battle was re-fought and Ripon became the only catchment area in England to hold a ballot. Parents voted 1,493 to 747 to retain the school's selective nature. Lord Hattersley led the campaign against selection, saying it was

"divisive and consigning children who fail the 11-plus to a lifetime of failure". Its supporters pointed to the school's unique atmosphere and excellent exam results. In 2012, it was rated "outstanding" by Ofsted.

*RGS archives can be accessed on www.ripongrammar.co.uk from January 2014

Don't miss former RGS boarder Mark Read's inspiring story in the next edition of The Clocktower

The world through my lens



After leaving school, Mark Read went travelling in South East Asia and Australia in an attempt to 'find himself'. By chance, he met renowned war correspondent John Pilger who told him 'Journalism is the privilege of witnessing history in the making'. That was when Read realised he wanted to be a documentary photographer. Now he travels the world working for publications like National Geographic and Time magazine. You can read his incredible story and see his powerful and moving images in the next edition of The Clocktower.



Read, above, photographed remote Chuckchi tribes in Eastern Siberia in temperatures of minus 53°c for National Geographic



Picture perfect: Read at the Great Wall of China, top, and working in the middle of the Belizean rainforest of Central America. Capturing the beauty of the Grand Teton mountains in Wyoming, left