

Clocktower

Keeping alumni in touch with Ripon Grammar School and each other

Winter/Spring 2015
Issue 7

A king reborn

Bringing faces from the past to life



Most desirable schools

RGS in the North's top five

Golden boy

Diving star Jack triumphs at the Games

Back from the brink

How losing it all made Sean a winner

PLUS We report on boarding life today as RGS offers more places and CBI leader opens new classroom block

A letter from the head girl and boy

Dear former students,

WE hope you enjoy reading the latest edition of Clocktower, which is full of stories and news about our school, not just from the past and present but also looking to the future.

As head boy and girl, we are constantly finding out more about RGS and the diversity of opportunities offered to students here.

Discovering what pupils from previous years go on to do after leaving RGS can often be particularly inspirational. An engineer who is now technical director of the Lotus F1 team, the forensic anthropologist who recreated the face of Richard III and a former entrepreneur who is building his own eco-friendly home are among the many remarkable past pupils featured in this issue.

Staff at RGS work hard to prepare us for life after school but we also find the help we get from former students, who return to school to talk



to us about careers and give us advice, invaluable. We are extremely grateful to those who help with interview practice and offer work experience too.

We hope you enjoyed your time at RGS as much as we do now and would love you to come back to talk to us about what you have done since you left school. I am sure we would benefit from your experience. Please keep in touch.

With best wishes,

Lauren Langham and Nick Edwards

Where are they now?

Have you ever wondered what happened to those old friends you lost touch with? **Paul Heap** finds out what some former RGS students are up to now

Dr Paul Hullah, pictured right and in newspaper clipping, below left (left RGS in 1981)

Insatiable cravings for books and betterment instilled and installed deep in my vernal nomadic heart by unsurpassable RGS mentor- teachers, I entered Edinburgh University in 1981 to achieve an MA (first class with honours) in English language and literature and, subsequently, a PhD ('The Poetry of Christina Rossetti'), partly funding/interrupting my studies with work as a musician and journalist. Active, notorious, and impecunious awhile on the UK underground music and arts scene (labelled a 'silver-tongued devil' by Sounds, and my band, Teenage Dog Orgy, hailed as 'legendary' by the NME), I fled to Japan in 1992 and have taught English literature at universities there for the last 22 years. I am currently tenured Associate Professor of British Poetry and Culture at Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo, and co-founder of Liberlit, an organization for 'discussion and defence of the role of literary texts in the English curriculum' worldwide.

I have published, presented, and performed internationally in literary studies, EFL, and multimedia poetics, and have published 14 textbooks for English learners in Japan, most featuring 'literary' texts at their core: recent textbooks include Britain Today: Old Certainties, New Contradictions (Cengage, 2011) and Rock UK: A Sociocultural History of British Popular Music (Cengage, 2013). My first award-winning collection of poetry, And Here's What You Could Have Won, was published in Britain in 1997 by Dionysia Press; my sixth collection Scenes (a book-and-vinyl album collaboration with Edinburgh musician/artist Martin Metcalfe) was published in August 2014 by Word Power.

In 2013 I received the Asia Pacific Brand Laureate International Personality Award, an honour endorsed by the 4th Prime Minister of Malaysia as well as the country's 13th King. The award citation stated that I was selected for 'paramount contribution to the cultivation of literature [that has] exceptionally restored the appreciation of poetry... [and] contribution to the literary education of students in Asia.' I am currently working on a critical study of the poetry of Christina Rossetti to be published in Britain in 2015.

I am blessed and very content. So many good things in my life, and in me, I owe to RGS. paulhullah@hotmail.com is where my cage can be rattled. (If I don't owe you money, please do so.)



Tim Casson, pictured left and above (left RGS in 2001)

I trained at The BRIT School and Bird College before completing an MA in contemporary dance at London Contemporary Dance School. Since then I've had a wide-ranging career, performing with dance companies such as Jasmin Vardimon Company, featuring in various music videos, commercials, the movie 'World War Z', and covering the role of Puck in Opera North's production of Benjamin Britten's A Midsummer Night's Dream.

As well as performing, I work extensively in dance education, leading projects across the country. I am currently the course leader for The National Youth Dance Company and 'JV2', the Jasmin Vardimon professional development certificate course.

I also choreograph for the stage, television and opera, and am currently an Associate Artist at Pavilion Dance South West. In 2013, I founded my company Casson & Friends, with a view to creating contemporary dance performance with a focus on collaboration. One of my projects, 'The Dance WE Made' has also set a new world record!

You can find out more at www.cassonandfriends.com, and on my own website www.timcasson.co.uk

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Dr Paul Hullah (second right, above) helped win RGS's first computer in 1980. He was a member of the team from the sixth form economics group that triumphed in an inter-schools competition, The Yorkshire Post ICL Business Game, in 1980 "It was RGS's very first computer, although we all left the school before it arrived," says Dr Hullah. The winning team, above, from left: John Shinn, Trevor Hall, Richard Brown, Paul Green, Paul Hullah and Stephen Clegg.

COVER STORY

Professor Caroline Wilkinson, who left RGS in 1984, went on to become an internationally renowned expert in craniofacial identification. Currently Director of Liverpool School of Art and Design, she used to enjoy playing for the school hockey team and is pictured second left in the back row of this picture. Read her story on pages 10-12.



Judith Allen, pictured left (left RGS in 1996) I set up Farming For All – which provides activities for people at risk of social or educational exclusion so that they can regain confidence and self-esteem – in 2009 after working in a range of outdoor, farm and countryside based jobs and realising how much the outdoors really helps people therapeutically.

After school, I initially took on a range of jobs and travelled for two years around the world, then returned and worked for Battersea Dogs Home as a re-homer, becoming a park ranger and rare breeds farmer before taking a teaching qualification and going on to set up FFA in order to create a place of safety, calm, learning and development where the environment and animals are used to benefit individuals' needs. It has gone from a bedroom business to its new format and we have just launched Sweet Tree Farming For All which is a joint venture in which we will be starting to work in London as well as Hertfordshire and are also building our own Care Farm in Mill Hill. www.farmingforall.org.uk

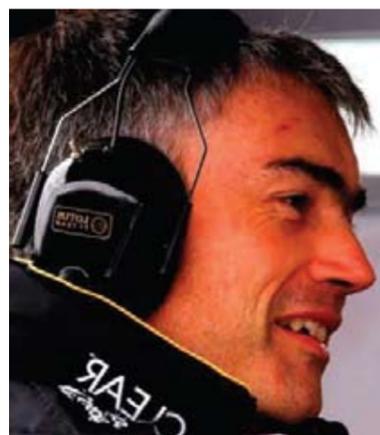
Nick Chester, pictured left and top left in the De Grey line up photo, right, (left RGS in 1987)

I graduated from Cambridge in 1991 and joined Simtek Research to work on vehicle simulation projects. When Simtek launched its own F1 team in 1994 I was fortunate to travel with the team, working for Simtek Grand Prix analysing data at the track in addition to vehicle simulation.

I joined Arrows in 1995 to move into suspension design and in 1997 I took on the position of performance engineer for Damon Hill and Pedro Diniz before becoming race engineer for Mika Salo and Pedro de la Rosa in 1998 and 1999 respectively. The start of the 2000 season heralded the beginning of my Enstone career, joining Benetton as test engineer to Alexander Wurz, Giancarlo Fisichella and Mark Webber.

The following year I graduated to the role of performance engineer for Fisichella before adopting the same position alongside Jarno Trulli between 2002 - 2004; helping the Italian to his first and only Grand Prix win at the 2004 Monaco Grand Prix.

In 2005 I took on a new posting as head of vehicle performance group; encompassing suspension, brakes and simulation.



It was a great period at Enstone as the team secured both the Constructors' and Drivers' World Championships in the 2005 & 2006 seasons under the Renault F1 banner.

By 2010 I became head of performance systems, overseeing the team's vehicle performance group, control systems and dyno operations. In 2011 I took on the new role of engineering director before becoming technical director of the Lotus F1 team at Enstone in May 2013.

*Read Nick's career story in the next edition of Clocktower



Winner:
Jack
Laugher

Golden boy

Jack Laugher, who left RGS last year, won two gold and one silver medal at the Commonwealth Games. Leading North-East sports journalist Scott Wilson was there

Ask most people to name a British diver, and if they don't say Ashley Young, it's a safe bet the vast majority of respondents will plump for Tom Daley. Young, photogenic and an Olympic bronze medallist at the age of just 18, Daley has transcended his sport to become a bona fide British celebrity, with all the various opportunities and pitfalls that entails.

He has spearheaded his own TV shows, *Splash* and *Tom Daley Goes Global*, advertised a range of products and companies from British Gas to Nestle, and found his private life thrust into the public arena. Increasingly, it has become impossible to tell where Tom Daley the diver ends and Tom Daley the showbusiness star begins.

All of which acts as both incentive and warning to Jack Laugher as he increasingly finds himself outperforming Daley on the diving board and challenging his team-mate's monopolisation of



the growing spotlight afforded to a sport that increasingly sees British competitors challenging the traditional powerhouse of China. Laugher's recent hat-trick of medals – two golds and a silver – at the Commonwealth Games makes him not only the most successful diver at this particular Games, but also one of the biggest British winners in the event's history. First,

he claimed the 1m springboard crown, then added the synchronised 3m springboard title. In between, he claimed silver in the 3m individual competition.

With his boyish looks and carefully gelled hair that would not look out of place in One Direction, Laugher is attracting a growing audience that stretches way beyond those who would normally be interested in diving.

His Twitter account has more than 71,000 followers, he increasingly finds himself stopped when he walks the streets of Leeds after a training session at the city's John Charles Pool, and there has even been an internet campaign in which more than 1,000 respondents demanded to know what music he listens to when he clamps his state-of-the-art headphones to his ears after every dive. For the record, it's "chilled out house".

If not quite yet a household name, these Commonwealth Games will surely come to be recognised as the point at which Laugher stopped being just another diver and evolved into a

genuine British sports star. That will inevitably present challenges, but with his happy-go-lucky persona and laidback attitude, the teenager appears more than capable of handling them.

"I love having a higher profile and being in the limelight a bit," said Laugher, who has successfully banished the memories of a disappointing London Olympics thanks to the strength of his performances at the Glasgow Games.

"It's a great thing, and it's fantastic when people show an appreciation for what you're doing.

"I take a lot from that. It's great when people are appreciative of the work you're putting in and the performances you're producing. It's great having the support that we do, and diving in this country is just growing and growing and growing.

"You can tell by the crowds that we're attracting to events now, people know about diving and are taking an interest in it. Having all that behind you, it just should spur you on to do really well."

Laugher certainly seems to have drawn inspiration from the level of crowd support at Edinburgh's Royal Commonwealth Pool at the Games, and after missing out on another potential gold medal when he made a crucial error in his penultimate dive in the individual programme, it says much about the strength of his character that he went on to perform so strongly alongside his close friend and house mate Chris Mears.

The pair finished fifth in the World Series this season, a level of performance that entitled them to start as strong favourites against the best of the Commonwealth. They still had to complete the job though, and eventually finished almost 30 points clear of Australians Matthew Mitcham

and Grant Nel thanks to a wonderfully consistent series of dives.

"I went to bed the night before and all I could think about was nailing those dives," said Laugher. "We laid them down pretty well. Everything that happened in the 3m just gave me a really good feeling that I could go out there and do everything I could to get another gold. That was all I wanted really."

The joy when their final score was confirmed was clear to see, and the pair's close friendship is clearly a key part of their professional relationship in the pool. It says much that they had to fight not to break into giggles as they received their medals.

"We say a lot to each other whenever we're competing," said Laugher. "We just try to get each other laughing because that calms us down. It can range from everything from corny

jokes to movie references - it's basically just two mates messing about."

That is as maybe, but that 'messing about' means Laugher has returned to North Yorkshire with three Commonwealth medals in his possession.

"The Commonwealth Games have been an absolute dream for me," he said. "I was hoping to do well, and I thought if I could come away with three medals, it would be a dream come true.

"For two of them to be gold and the other one silver is absolutely fantastic. And to get the last one alongside my best mate is just the best thing ever."

**Scott Wilson is chief sports writer on The Northern Echo*



Banishing the Olympic nightmare

If you missed the diving on TV, read **Scott Wilson's** report from the Games on the magnificent performance that won Jack his first gold medal, and showed the world he's one to watch

30 July 2014

FOR the vast majority of British competitors, the London Olympics were the stuff of dreams. For Ripon diver Jack Laugher, however, the 2012 Games were an unmitigated nightmare. Competing in the London Aquatic Centre as an inexperienced 17-year-old, Laugher freely admits he froze on the biggest of stages. One of his dives in the 3m springboard qualifying round went so spectacularly wrong it earned a score of zero, and he was left slapping the water in frustration as his hopes of glory collapsed around him. All of which makes tonight's triumph at the Commonwealth Games all the more rewarding and uplifting. In the two years since London, Laugher has developed into one of the leading divers in the world, with this month's third place in the Shanghai World Cup confirming his ability to take on the best Chinese performers at their own game. But the questions about his ability to handle the pressure of a major Games remained. Not anymore. Laugher didn't just beat the best the Commonwealth has to offer in the 1m springboard competition at Edinburgh's Royal Commonwealth Pool tonight - he demolished them, claiming victory by a mammoth 45 points, a margin that is just about unheard of in elite-level diving. Laugher's performance in the preliminary round had marked him out as a strong favourite in the final, but he trailed his team-mate, Chris Mears, after the opening two dives. His third effort, which earned a string of high marks, changed that, and with Mears dropping away in the second half of the final, Laugher had opened

Continued on page 21

Old Rips to the rescue

WHEN RGS's talented under 18s rugby team reached the final of the prestigious Yorkshire Cup, there was just one problem. Their team strip was faded, worn and frayed at the edges. Staff and students alike were full of pride as the boys prepared to battle for the sought-after trophy, the first time in living memory that the school has got through to the final, which RGS famously won in 1894. And, following an appeal by Mike Garvey, head of boys' PE, the Old Rips alumni association stepped in at short notice to buy a brand new £828 team strip, ensuring our players looked their best when they ran out to meet the challenge.



In action: the RGS 1st XV

The kit arrived just in time for the game in Wakefield and, although the team didn't manage to come home with the cup, the boys did put in a high quality performance against old adversaries Ermysted's Grammar School, of Skipton, and there were some impressive individual displays of skill and strength. Coached by Alex Margerison and Keith Miller, the talented team included James McDaniel, an England U17 scrum half, centres Tom Newby and Harry Lamb, who have played for Yorkshire and skipper James Woolfenden, who has played for North Yorkshire.

Nicola Woolfenden, president of the Old Rips, said: "We were very pleased to be able to offer our support to the team and we congratulate the boys on reaching the final of such an impressive competition." Headmaster Martin Pearman said the school was very grateful to the Old Rips for stepping in at such short notice.

There's always next year...



Can you help our students?

Please contact Bob Walker on 07757 393504 or walker@ripongrammar.co.uk if you can provide work placements.

Contact the RGS careers department on wilsonf@ripongrammar.co.uk or 01765 602647 if you can help in any other way, including with practice interviews, lunchtime presentations or workplace visits.

A fond farewell

THOUSANDS of past pupils will remember being taught by three of our longest serving members of staff who, between them, gave almost 70 years of their working lives to RGS before retiring in 2014. Deputy head Mr McGrann joined the school in 1994. Mrs Wise, former head of sixth form, spent 22 years at the school. Head of geography and upper school, Mr Illingworth, joined RGS in 1989. "They will all be missed very much," said headmaster Martin Pearman.

Report by Sarah French

played by the boys and masters who served and lost their lives in the First World War. We will never forget them," she said.

A total of 49 wooden crosses were planted next to the memorial stone, in memory of those killed. Student Shannon Millar, whose father is in the forces, recited Wilfred Owen's poem *The Send Off*. Martha Barber, 18, of Thirsk, played *The Last Post* and Patrick Lindley carried the standard on behalf of HMS Heroes, a national peer support initiative for children of service families. To coincide with the ceremony, the school library hosted an exhibition based on research Old Rips secretary Derek Crookes and retired teacher Greta Hills carried out into all those former pupils and masters who died in the First World War.

* **Battle for survival: read our latest letter from the Front on P22-23.**

The Good Schools Guide has named Ripon Grammar School one of the most desired schools in the country. Ruth Savage reports

Ripon Grammar School is one of the 35 most desired state schools in the country and one of the top five most popular in the North, according to the Good Schools Guide.

Experts from GSG, one of Britain's most respected independent guides, which publishes detailed reviews of 1,200 schools every year, have highlighted those schools with strong academic performance which receive the highest number of hits on the guide's website.

Ripon Grammar School is one of the most high-achieving schools, which a large number of parents are clearly keen to get their children into, said spokeswoman Janette Wallis.

In the guide, RGS is described as: "An unashamedly academic school, exemplifying much of the traditional English grammar school tradition, although certainly not an exam factory."

"It is a school that gives the impression of being happy with itself and its aims, sitting comfortably in its community - clearly wanted by the people of Ripon."

The guide emphasises that RGS's exam results are 'consistently very good', with many pupils going on to top universities.

The school is also 'near the top of the tree nationally' for adding value, it says. The GSG, which also offers individual consultancy advice to parents, adds that the school is Yorkshire's only state boarding school and 'much cheaper than independent alternatives.'



RGS is a 'highly desirable school'

Only five schools from the Midlands and the North made it onto the GSG list. The others are: Adams Grammar, Shropshire, Altrincham Girls' Grammar, Cheshire, Fulford, York and Tudor Grange, West Midlands.

Elizabeth Coatman, who heads up the GSG's state school advice service said: "I am delighted to extend awareness of the many excellent state schools beyond London and the South-East, such as Ripon Grammar School. "And it's in a beautiful part of the country too."

Headmaster Martin Pearman, who

says the school strives to serve the local community with a high quality education, in order to increase the life chances of ordinary boys and girls, added: "I am delighted to receive due recognition from such a respected guide which understands parental perception of schools. It is also testament to the excellent work undertaken by staff and students at RGS."

*See website for further details: www.ripongrammar.co.uk

RGS students excel in the arts and sciences, below and left

Best in Yorkshire

OUR students' latest examination results place them top in Yorkshire. RGS is the top performing school at A level in North Yorkshire for the second year running, and the top state school in the whole of Yorkshire. More than 75 per cent of our 2014 A Level grades were A*/B. This placed RGS 72nd in the Daily Telegraph national league tables. At GCSE, 67.8 per cent of grades were A*/A, with a third of all results graded A*. Ranked on A/A* per-centage, RGS was the highest performing school in North Yorkshire at GCSE. RGS is the top school in the country for progress between GCSE and A Level and in the top 20% of schools for progress up to GCSE.



Sunday Times lists RGS as top state school in the North

SCHOOLS in Yorkshire dominate The Sunday Times guide to the north of England's best secondary schools, but it is Ripon Grammar School that takes the top state school spot. The only state school presence in the paper's Parent Power North Top 20 comes from three North Yorkshire grammar schools, with RGS in the top spot, Skipton Girls' High School two places behind and Ermysted's Grammar School a further four places after that, in 20th position. Reporter Julie Henry describes Ripon Grammar School as having first class facilities: "And every child is expected to pursue at least one extra-curricular interest. Most students gain places at top universities, including Oxford and Cambridge," she adds. In the school's latest 'outstanding' Ofsted report, she says, students are described as 'well-rounded and confident' and 'outstanding ambassadors for the school.'

£80,000 prize



Talented: Stephen Laws

FORMER student Stephen Laws, who left RGS in 2013 and is now reading engineering at Imperial College, London, has been awarded the prestigious Kingsbury scholarship, worth £20,000 a year for four years, recognising his outstanding potential and talent for engineering.

Stephen, who worked for the agrochemical company Syngenta through the Year in Industry scheme, says: "I would like to thank RGS staff, particularly those who taught me through sixth form. I would not be in the position I am now without the help of the school."

Tatler praise

RGS gets a mention in the glossy society magazine's round-up of the best state schools in the UK: "We hear terrific things about Ripon Grammar, an outstanding state grammar," says author Alice Rose.

JOB MARKET

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



The Centre for Process Innovation (CPI) is a UK-based technology innovation centre. It uses applied knowledge in science and engineering, combined with state of the art facilities, to enable its clients to develop, prove, prototype and scale up the next generation of products and processes.

It works closely with industry, from multi-nationals to high-tech start-ups, investors, government agencies and leading researchers to stimulate and manage market-led innovation.

CPI is constantly looking to appoint bright, talented individuals to join its team and all positions offer competitive salaries plus attractive benefits packages. Recent posts include Principal Technologist, Business Development Assistant and In House Lawyer.

Please check the CPI website for information on current positions.

The company is based at Wilton in Redcar and has sites in Darlington and NETPark - the North East Technology Park in Sedgfield, County Durham - where world class science and technology companies and individuals come together.

In 2011, CPI was named as one of the government's elite network of Catapult Centres. The High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC) is the catalyst for the future growth and success of manufacturing in the UK and CPI is one of only seven centres in the country to have been awarded such status.

Dr Tom Taylor is one of the directors at CPI and he also sits on the Board of Governors here at Ripon Grammar School.

Please visit www.uk-cpi.com for further information.

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If you have any connections with Ripon Grammar School and have a post or any job opportunities you wish to advertise here for FREE, please contact us on rgsconnect@ripongrammar.co.uk

Technology has changed so much in the 20 years since I left RGS. Back then, we didn't have any access to computers, they were just starting to be introduced. At university we had to go to the library and grab a copy of the book we needed for an assignment before they all went, and now kids just go to the internet on their smart phones to find all they need.

My husband Dave and I started Bronco, a digital marketing company, in 2003. He was into computers and very techy and it was his desire to learn new technologies that led us down this path. This was the beginning of our route in SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) and the demand for the service grew. As Dave was one of the first into the industry, his reputation grew and that's how we got to where we are today. From the early years of growing the business we have travelled the world, attended huge conferences, have friends across the globe and have met the founders of Google.

We started the company when the time was right to go it alone. It's a massive challenge when you give up paid employment, especially when you have two young kids. The main aim for the company in the first year was to have enough in the bank to pay the big quarterly bills. As we are an internet service provider we have always hosted websites from our offices in Ripon. In the early days our biggest overhead was paying the electricity and the cost of the internet pipe, to keep the company switched on.

Now we work with global clients and local companies, including many brands that don't have a high street presence but are more well-known online, the likes of CitiBank, WeBuyAnyCar, MeccaBingo, Coast Fashion, 888.com, Schuh, Virgin, Sixt and MyVoucherCodes. We work across many competitive industry sectors and have clients based in the UK, USA, South Africa, Dubai and Tel Aviv.

But one thing we struggle with is finding staff. We don't have a problem keeping staff as many have been with us for up to ten years, which is brilliant. But because of our location we don't have a large pool of talented people to choose from. We wanted to build a company that we would want to work for and staff benefits include everything from having great offices, including a well-stocked kitchen with drinks, biscuits and fruit, to providing private health care, fuel subsidies, free eye tests, home broadband, car valeting, parties and meals out. There are lots of people who want to work for us because of our reputation in the industry but location is often an issue.

'Where have all the bright RGS students gone?'

Past pupil and digital marketing company boss **Becky Naylor** tells **Rebecca Chamberlain** that Ripon is suffering from a 'massive talent drain' and urges former RGS students to come back home

Our main competitors are based in Leeds, Manchester and London so we are often out of reach to many skilled individuals.

Ripon does have a massive talent drain, and it can be seen in the workforce. We have a great pool of talent that RGS attracts and then students head to university. Sadly there isn't a great appeal to return to Ripon to live and work as graduates. We are big supporters and sponsors of Ripon Rugby Club and see the same issues there with RGS students who play junior rugby leaving at 18, which affects the senior rugby teams. Many students end up staying in their university town, finding work and settling down, and it's only later in life people end up coming back.

We do not have any barriers when it comes to qualifications. To us, it's more about having an understanding of the industry and passion for the internet, since what

is being taught at university about web design or SEO is often out of date before the course has finished. Out of our 16 full time staff, half are local, and I'm the only one who went to RGS. One member of the team relocated from Devon five years ago and our newest recruit has relocated from Newcastle. Another commutes from Bradford every day. Ideally Ripon needs to work on keeping hold of talent and encouraging students to return, but it's hard when there isn't a massive job market and house prices are out of reach.

So what is the future for Bronco? The main core of our business comes from making clients' websites rank in Google, and attracting more website traffic. Google is constantly changing so we are always evolving. The focus is on making everything responsive so that new websites work on all devices, from desktop computer, to tablet, to mobile phone.

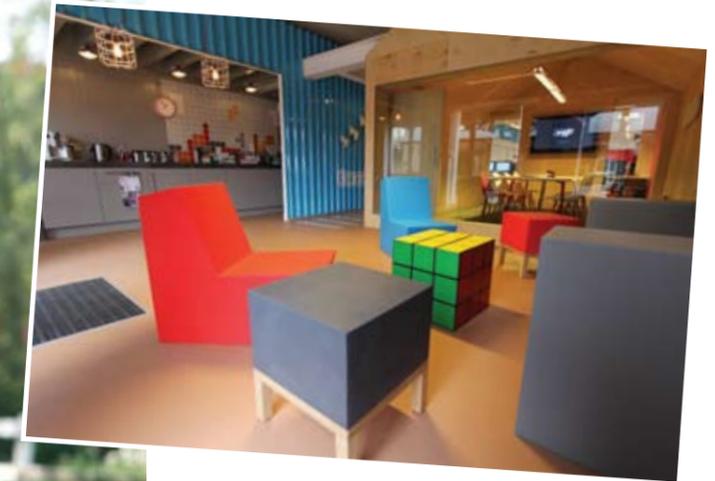
We made a side step a few years ago and added PR into our remit of services as Google started to become much more about brands. This has evolved into our own digital media marketing team.

We have always had strong links with Ripon, and started Ripon Internet, which is a free business directory and tourist information website, in 2006. Before Discover Ripon, which is one of our clients and Ripon's official website, we designed and built Visit Ripon and the site's main purpose is to promote Ripon to visitors. We are always trying to put more back into the city and provide the skills to help other people out.

We never set out to be the biggest, and many of our competitors who started out at the same time are five or ten times our size. But we have always kept a tight hold of our growth to maintain the environment that we have created for our staff and to stay close to the day to day running of things. We always strive to be the best.

In the future, you never know, we could have the kids at the helm.

■ **Bronco, Phoenix Business Centre, Ripon, HG4 1NS**
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Favourite teacher: Dr Petchey

Becky Naylor, left. The Bronco offices in Ripon, above

Bronco

My RGS memories

I WAS Becky Cooper back then and, having grown up in Wakefield, joined RGS in September 1988, starting in the third year. When I go back to the school for parents' evenings or school events with my own children I always think it's strange that it really hasn't changed, it even smells the same.

My future career hadn't even been invented when I was at school and I was heading down the path of being a teacher. History was always a passion of mine. I always remember history lessons with Dr Petchey as being strangely entertaining with his enthusiastic style of teaching. He certainly knew how to get into character. My history career ended, though, when, due to issues at home, I did really badly in my A levels, pretty much failed history, and lost my place at Sheffield University to study it. I can't even remember what my A level results were now, but I strongly believe that everything happens for a reason. Through clearing, I got onto a university course— administrative management at the University of Humberside— that set me up to run a company and manage a team, which is how I got here today. I'm sure my results when I left the school didn't do the league tables much good that year, but success can always come out of failure.

I got a 2:1 and returned to Ripon in 1996 to join the purchasing department at Express Terminals in Ripon (now Express Group), moving up the ladder to become purchasing manager. In 2003, Dave and I started Bronco and I left my job to help run the company in 2005. Along the way I have had two boys while carrying on with a full time career. Miles was born in 2000, and Ethan in 2002. Both are now at RGS. One of our driving factors for the business and our future was Ethan becoming critically ill with meningitis and recovering back in 2005, which made us realise that you only get one chance at this, so make the most of it while you can.

The woman behind the famous image of Richard III, created from remains found under a car park, has been bringing faces of the dead to life for 20 years. She tells Ruth Savage how she does it

When the reconstructed face of Richard III was first unveiled, after being painstakingly built by adding precisely calculated layers of muscle and skin to a scan of his skull, gasps could be heard from the carefully selected audience.

Few expected to see such an eerily lifelike image gaze back at them. Forensic anthropologist Professor Caroline Wilkinson, who headed the four-strong team of scientists and artists who worked on the 15th century king, was probably the least surprised of anyone in the room.

The mother-of-one, who left Ripon Grammar School back in 1984, has been meticulously recreating remarkably accurate faces of the dead for more than 20 years.

She was working on Richard III's remains, which were found under a Leicester car park, before DNA analysis results could confirm identity. No reference was made to contemporary portraits, descriptions or family resemblance.

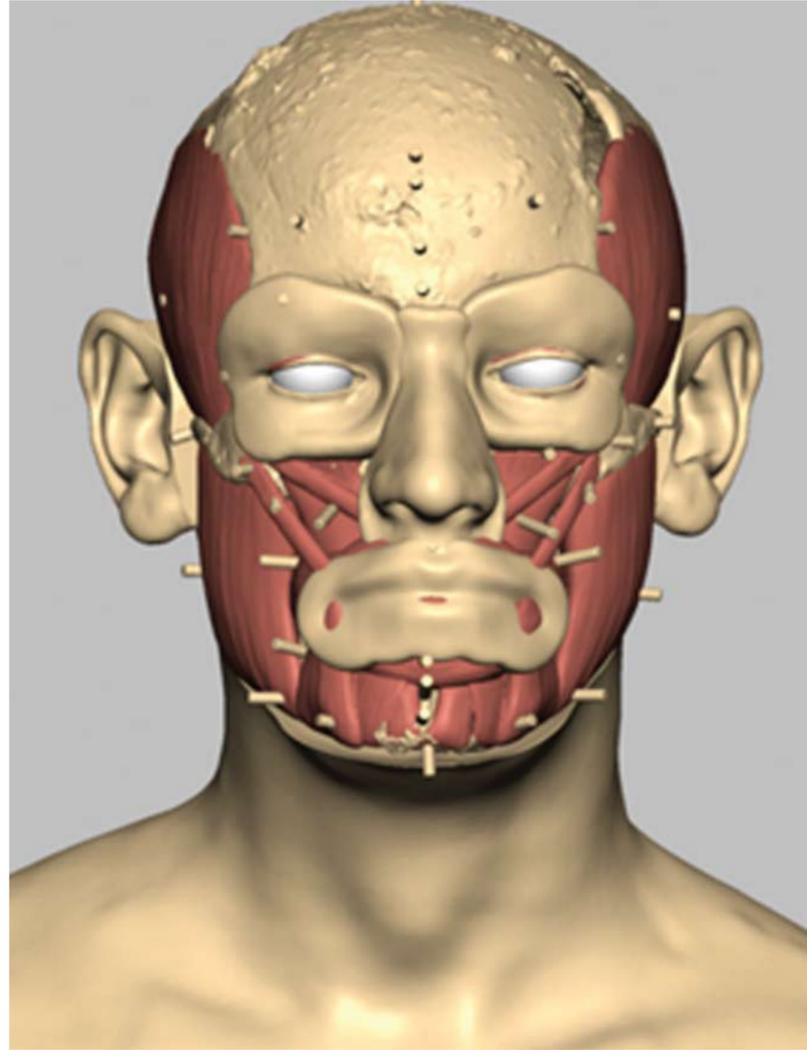
And yet, when Richard's 17th generation nephew, Michael Ibsen, stood beside the three dimensional plastic model, the resemblance was uncanny. The slightly arched nose and prominent chin were just like those featured in paintings of the king.

Thanks to the fast advancing, cutting edge computer system developed by Prof Wilkinson, facial reconstruction is becoming an increasingly exact science.

Historian and author John Ashdown-Hill said seeing Richard's image was "almost like being face to face with a real person." And the originator of the search, Richard III Society member Philippa Langley, added: "It's like you could just talk to him, have a conversation with him right now."

Prof Wilkinson, who has reconstructed the faces of everyone from Johan Sebastian Bach to Mary, Queen of Scots and Saint Nicolas, feels people respond particularly enthusiastically to the realism of computer generated images.

The faces she has recreated from the human remains of bog bodies and Ancient Egyptians have



A king reborn

There is never a dull day. I didn't take much of an interest in history and archaeology at school but it fascinates me now'

been exhibited in museums around the world as well as featuring on television programmes such as BBC2's Meet the Ancestors and Channel 4's Secrets of the Dead.

"People are seeing a 21st century version of a face of someone who lived two or three thousand years ago, and that can be quite moving. It makes people respond to it in a more human way - they see it as an individual rather than human remains."

The daughter of two primary school teachers from Masham, Prof Wilkinson never dreamt that her passion for both art and science at school would eventually lead to such a rewarding career.

Now 48, she was a student at Ripon Grammar School at a time before science and computing, combined with art, began to offer a whole range of such exciting new career opportunities.

"In the Seventies and early Eighties, we weren't encouraged to combine art and sciences. Art was considered to be for people who weren't academic

and there weren't thought to be any great career opportunities. Of course all that has changed."

She is grateful to the two art teachers, Mr LV and Mr SA Smith, who let her attend art classes even though the timetable didn't allow her to take the subject at A level. "Both of them taught me to draw and observe things, they inspired me. My biology teacher, Dr Smyth, was the first person to spark my interest in the human body. Between them all they held my interest in art and science."

She studied biology, chemistry and maths but always kept up her interest in drawing and painting, taking A level art after her Manchester University anatomy and physiology degree. She went on to study scientific illustration at Blackpool Art College.

After taking her PhD in the relatively new subject of facial anthropology, or the science of human faces, she moved to the University of Dundee, where, as professor of craniofacial identification, she headed up the human identification side of the Centre for Anatomy & Human Identification.

Now about to take up a new post in Liverpool, as director of the city's School of Art and Design, she will also have a Faces Lab in the Science Park there. "My work has always crossed over between art and science," she says.

Her workshop may be covered in model heads, traditionally created by layering clay on top of a plaster-cast skull, but there is also a large computer system, enabling her to use 3D modelling or 'virtual sculpture' to create the same muscles she creates in clay, using information from CT scans of the skull.

It's thanks to this scientific precision that her reconstructed faces have also featured on TV's Crimewatch and are increasingly used in police investigations. Her expertise in facial image analysis has also been called upon in the criminal courts.

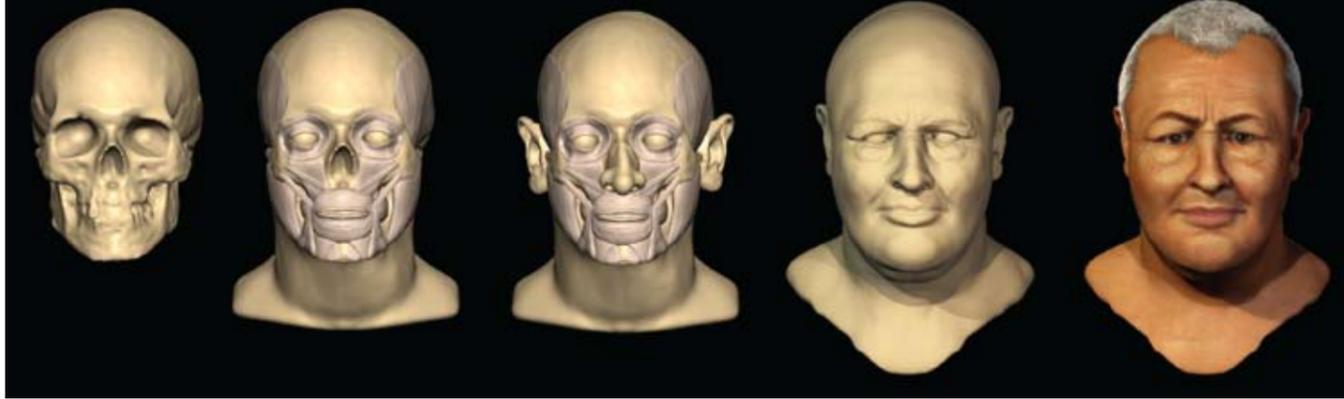
"There is never a dull day. I didn't take much of an interest in history and archaeology at school, but it fascinates me now," she says.



Prof Wilkinson and the three faces of Richard III, above.



Favourite teachers: 'Dr Smyth (biology) and Mr LV and Mr SA Smith (art)'



Recomposed: Prof Wilkinson reconstructed the face of Johann Sebastian Bach, above. King in the making: Richard III model, below

Regularly employed by police forces in the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, Taiwan and Abu Dhabi, it is this part of her work that she finds most rewarding: "It can be thrilling when our work leads to the identification of a body," she says.

One recent high profile case, known as the Corstorphine Hill murder, involved the discovery of the body of a 66-year-old woman in Edinburgh. Prof Wilkinson's facial reconstruction was recognised by a relative of the victim in Ireland, who alerted police. Her son was eventually charged with the murder.

She is constantly striving to increase accuracy, blind testing her facial reconstruction methods on living people.

Her system has one crucial piece of hardware, a mechanical arm with a pen-like attachment, used like a computer mouse, which actually allows the user to 'feel' the surface of the model as it is created.

"It's not quite the same as using your hands, it's more like sculpting with a tool - you can feel it in exactly the same way," she says.

This is how Richard III's bust was originally created. The 3D digital image was then replicated in plastic using a rapid prototyping system, before being painted, with eyes, wig, hat and clothing added.

One of the greatest advantages of the new technology is it means delicate human remains can be analysed without handling. "We can be non-invasive. If we have a 3,800-year-old ancient Egyptian mummy, we don't need to remove the soft tissue to see the bone."

In this case, a CT scan allows her to see and remove layers from the original, swooping through the sarcophagus, wrappings and preserved soft tissues to the bones underneath.

Scan data can also be transferred quickly by email, rather than having to transport skulls or bone casts.

Simpler and easier to reassess than modelling by hand, where wooden pegs are placed using a ruler and a scalpel to indicate tissue depth, the virtual approach is still a painstaking process at this stage. "We have to follow the same rules and go through the same analysis, so it takes the same

amount of time," explains Prof Wilkinson. She uses a database of pre-modelled muscles, which give the face its shape, while using the virtual tool to shape and mould the face.

"We all have the same muscles, but because every skull is a slightly different shape, each muscle is slightly different on each individual" says Prof Wilkinson. Next the eyeballs, ears and nose, deformed to fit the individual, are attached and, finally, the skin and hair.

Another advantage of the virtual approach is that Prof Wilkinson can zoom in on skin, muscles or bone at any time: "We can refer back constantly, something you can't do with traditional methods because as soon as you put clay onto a skull you're covering it up".

At times, her work takes a more creative turn. Her team was recently asked to create a virtual sculpture of Mary, Queen of Scots, as she would have looked at the end of her brief but turbulent reign in Scotland, to coincide with the biggest

But it is not always the most famous characters from history which make the most fascinating cases: "Working with ordinary people can often be much more interesting."

She worked on a foot soldier killed at the Battle of Towton, in the Wars of the Roses, who had a large, healed face wound. "He lived with it approximately ten years before he died. It shows ordinary people in the 15th century had that sort of medical treatment available."

Prof Wilkinson also enjoyed recreating a 'bog body', preserved in peat, from the Iron Age period in Denmark: "He was a contemporary of Julius Caesar. The peat preserves the soft tissues as opposed to the skeleton, so the body was squashed flat. We could see details on the face, like the wrinkles."

Constantly analysing the relationships between soft and hard facial tissues, she is hoping she can increase the accuracy of her work further: "There is still a lot we don't know. While the shape of the nose is reliable, ears and lips are difficult to predict because they are variable and dependent on things like orthodontic work."

She has other, slightly more creative, ambitions too: "I would like to work on an animated version of Robbie Burns reading his own poetry," she confesses.

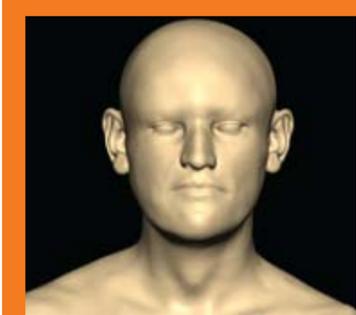
While at school, she didn't know what she wanted to do: "I was interested in anatomy and physiology but didn't want

to be a doctor. I vaguely thought of pathology," she says.

Her advice to students today is: "Follow your own path and keep your options open rather than being too focussed too early. Everybody has something in them, even if they are not academic. If you don't know what you want to do, do subjects you enjoy."

"One of the good things about RGS was that we did a lot of subjects. I am glad I learnt languages, it wouldn't have been something I would have chosen but it's a wonderful skill and good for the brain."

She is still in touch with friends from RGS and misses the landscape: "You forget how beautiful it is. I have a massive fondness for York and the Dales and Moors. I can imagine coming back to live in Yorkshire one day."



It can be thrilling when our work leads to the identification of a body

ever exhibition on the life of the iconic historical figure at the National Museum of Scotland.

"This project was different because, unusually, I didn't have a skull to work with. There was a bit more artistic licence."

Portraits and contemporary descriptions were used as a starting point. The result captured Mary at the age of 25, twice widowed, accused of murder and about to be forced from the Scottish throne, into exile and imprisonment: "I wanted to show the stress on her face, how much she had aged, the shadows round the eyes and the loss of weight due to illness."

"Mary had a big nose and strong chin so doesn't sound attractive, but the paleness of her skin, red hair, and strong features meant she had a very striking appearance."

At last, the cold and leaking prefab huts are no more. Sarah French reports on the opening of the new classroom block that we have all been waiting for



Building for the future

Ripon Grammar School has celebrated the achievements of students past and present with the opening of a new £1.5m classroom development. John Cridland CBE, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, officially opened the new humanities and languages building ahead of the upper school speech day, at which he was guest speaker.

The new two-storey building, which replaces the school's temporary classroom blocks and was completed on time and on budget, has eight classrooms, equipped with the latest touch screen technology, and a staff room. Mr Cridland, who was educated at a grammar school and Cambridge University, praised the



ambience of the classrooms as a learning environment: "The building only liberates the mind, it's only the place where great teachers teach, but it's a step along the journey to world class education. At the CBI we are on an export crusade trying

to sell our goods and services around the world, so to see a fantastic new languages building warms the cockles of my heart," he said. The speech day recognised the GCSE and A level success of students earlier in the summer and welcomed



Forward thinking: CBI leader John Cridland talks with Headmaster Martin Pearman and guests, left, at the opening of the new building. With Mr Pearman and chair of governors, Dr Peter Mason, at the official opening, below.

back many of those who left Ripon Grammar School for university after their exams. Representing 190,000 businesses, Mr Cridland told the students they needed ambition, self-belief and a heavy dose of hard work: "What I have seen in this fantastic school is rounded education. But even in one of the best grammar schools in the country it's not all about success. There are setbacks and failures and it's what you do with those failures that matters."

He added: "I say one thing to my teenage children and that is: chase your dreams. Whatever you want to do, go for it with all your guts, hard work and ambition." Headmaster Martin Pearman said the A level students had been an outstanding group with 76 per cent of their grades being A*-B, making Ripon Grammar the top performing school in North Yorkshire for the second year running. Five students went directly into employment with the rest gaining places at top universities. Mr Pearman added: "Students at RGS are increasingly ambitious, which I think is a tremendous legacy from the year groups that have gone before."



Sounds familiar?

CURRENT sixth form geography students left from Luton Airport for a fascinating field trip to Iceland in April. The flight took three hours. But does anyone remember an adventurous school trip to Iceland in the summer of 1962, when it took three weeks to get there by boat? The school magazine reported on the three-week expedition to the Langjokull glacier area of Iceland at the time: "Although the school has organised many trips abroad, it was the first time in its history that such a large and well-equipped party had adventured so far afield. The party assembled in Edinburgh on August 6, and

departed from Leith docks on the S.S. Gullfoss (3875 tons), travelling third class, which involved sleeping behind canvas screens in the front hold, although food was taken in the second class dining-room. The sea journey of over 800 miles took three days, and at Reykjavik (main port and capital city) the journey was continued aboard a strange Icelandic bus.'

Were you one of the intrepid students who embarked on this trip, or do you know anyone who went? Do you have any photographs you could share with us?

Contact us on rgsconnect@ripongrammar.co.uk

RGS is expanding to provide more places for boarders. **Sarah French** takes a peek behind the scenes to find out what everyday life is like inside one of the country's few state boarding schools today

House & home

As Hannah Crowther and Bridie Smith head to their next lesson at Ripon Grammar School, a notice prompts them to switch off the lights - and their music and their hair straighteners. It's the kind of parental reminder dished out every morning, but in this case it's a sign on the wall of Johnson House, Hannah and Bridie's home from home Monday to Friday. The 16-year-olds are among 67 boarders, including nine who are full time, at RGS. But this is no conventional independent boarding school with fees of £25,000 plus per year.

about giving them the experience of being away from home before they go to university.

"We have military families whose children remain with us when parents are posted overseas, families with demanding jobs that require a lot of foreign travel, and we're getting more enquiries from families moving across from the independent sector, perhaps because of financial pressures. We have many children whose homes are in the county but are too far away to travel back and forth every day."

Students also come from nearby schools which don't have sixth forms, including Ryedale School, near Helmsley and St Francis Xavier in Richmond, as well as Cundall Manor, York, and Queen Mary's School, Thirsk, in the independent sector.

With its Victorian brick clock tower and 23 acres of grounds with tennis courts and pristine pitches, it looks to all intents and purposes like a fee-paying school. But Ripon Grammar is the only state maintained boarding school in Yorkshire and one of only 36 in England, a disparate group of city and rural, co-ed and single sex, academies and comprehensives, at the top of and lower down the league tables that combine state education with paid-for boarding.

At Ripon, pupils get to experience boarding in a beautiful cathedral city and benefit from education at Yorkshire's highest performing state secondary school - but all at a fraction of the price of the independent sector, typically around £9,000 a year. Marita Murray, deputy headteacher and head of boarding at RGS, says: "Pupils board for a variety of reasons according to their family circumstances. For parents of girls it's often



Girls in Johnson House and boys in School House all enjoy their leisure time with friends at Ripon Grammar School, one of the top state boarding school in the country



Due to the increasing diversity of families that benefit from boarding, Ray McGovern, chairman of the Boarding Schools Association, called for more state boarding schools recently, claiming it could improve learning and opportunities for many children, particularly those pupils who miss out on sport and other extra-curricular activities because of time consuming journeys by bus or train.

The number of boarders at RGS may currently only account for less than ten per cent of the whole school, but it is receiving around 20 enquiries from prospective students and their families every week.

Due to this surge in demand, the school is now investing £1.2m in extending the girls' boarding house, Johnson House, which will result in 16 more places from September 2015. Five more places will also be freed up for boys. "In the last few years we've had to turn girls away so the extension will not only meet current demand but allow us to grow our boarding provision for the future," says headmaster Martin Pearman.

Geography, and specifically the scale of North Yorkshire, is why RGS began offering boarding in the first place, more than 450 years ago. For children living in outlying villages and on farms, boarding meant they had equal opportunity to access high quality education.

Hannah and Bridie are both from Kirby Moorside. Bridie explains: "It was easier for our friends to stay where they are and a bit harder for us leaving to come here on our own. But we've ended up being more pleased with our choice and our old friends are a bit bored now. They miss us, but we're so busy we've hardly got time to think about it."

Jess Butterell, 17, is from Skipton and in the sixth form studying A levels in religious studies, history and English literature having started at Ripon aged 11. "It would take me an hour to get here from home," she explains. "It was quite daunting when I first came because I didn't really know anyone but I settled in quickly. I've made a lot close friends in boarding that I wouldn't have made as a day pupil, and the prospect of going to university isn't nearly so daunting now."

For Rachael Pond it was about finding a good school but also one that offered boarding as she is from Bridlington. Annie Fry, 13, who also comes from Skipton, adds: "My mum travels a lot with work, plus it's easier for me to board. Everyone is really close and friendly here."

RGS is selective, with children in year 6, many from local primaries, sitting the 11-plus entrance exam in September. Whereas opting to board may once have been a way to secure a place, that's no longer the case.

It's a far cry from once-a-week bathing, matron doing her rounds in a white coat and the coin-slot telephone rooms of yesteryear'

"We get very genuine boarders," explains Miss Murray. "Parents commit for five years, which is important because it creates stability in the boarding houses."

That's particularly reassuring for those parents who are out of the country and need to know their child is safe and well cared for.

"To us, boarding is at the heart of Ripon Grammar, not an add-on," she adds. "At some schools it can be like a Travel Lodge tacked on the side, but for us it is fully integrated into school."

For the boys, integration is literal, since their boarding house, grade II listed School House, forms part of the main school building; they even have direct access to the library on an evening which is ideal for homework, and for contacting parents via the internet. Not only that, but the team of dedicated boarding staff includes a chemist, a historian and a biologist, so there's plenty of help at hand.

Elliot Mountain's home is only ten miles away in Harrogate, but his mum travels the world with work. Having lived in Chile and Canada, the 11-year-old is used to different environments. "I thought boarding would be fun and it means I get all my homework done," he says.

Certainly boarding seems to have a positive impact on academic results; far from performance dwindling due to being away from home, boarders

typically excel. "There is strong evidence of positive outcomes for boarders," says Mr Pearman. "Whether it's dedicated prep time, greater access to school resources, having teachers on hand or controlled levels of time away from school books, boarding seems to create an environment that supports hard work."

"I add to that my own theory that students can learn as much from their peers as they do teachers. In our boarders' study rooms you're likely to see students doing prep together, sharing knowledge and asking for help from their peers."

"I'm always delighted to see an A level chemistry student, for example, helping a younger pupil who needs a bit of guidance. It's education at its best for both students, and not always possible at home where parents, no matter how dedicated, may fall short, unable to assist in subjects with which they are not familiar."

Another huge advantage of sixth form boarding, he adds, is the chance to become well prepared for university: "Boarders learn to be independent and tend to be confident, self-assured individuals who are socially able, value their family and the lasting friendships they build through boarding. They make the transition to higher education very easily."

A typical day starts with breakfast at 8am. Other than sixth formers, students aren't allowed back into the boarding house during the day, ensuring that school and 'home' are separate in the same way as they are for day pupils.

When lessons finish at 3.55pm they register, choose from the snack counter, then have free time to watch TV or play computer games in the boarders' lounges, go running or join one of the school's many sporting clubs until 6pm when tea is served by the boarders' dedicated catering team, with a student rota for cleaning up afterwards. Then it's prep until 8pm.

Activities organised by the house parents include ice skating, bowling, theatre, cinema and other trips out. The boarders also have exclusive use of the school swimming pool one night a week and can use the gym and other sports facilities. Twm Stone, 17, from Oswaldkirk, near Helmsley, says: "You can join pretty much any club you want to so there are even more opportunities for boarders. We looked at independent schools but decided this was better."

Tong-Yi Chan, 16, from Harrogate, adds: "I didn't really need to board but it is convenient and this way I'm constantly with my friends and am more independent. "When I go home at weekends I leave school behind, then when I'm back at school somehow I value my parents and home more."

Dominic Edwards, 15, who went to primary school



A far cry from once-a-week bathing and matron doing her rounds: Boarding today at RGS, above and left

single rooms. Bathrooms are close by and laundry is done for them.

There is a continual programme of improvement, with £162,000 invested in the last three years in new furniture and soft furnishings. It's a far cry from once-a-week bathing, matron doing her rounds in a white coat and the coin-slot telephone rooms of yesteryear. All in all there is no appreciable difference between state boarding at Ripon and the independent sector, a feeling confirmed by Tabitha Milton, 11, from Helperby, who joined from Cundall Manor Independent School, near York. "It's a change for me, and this is a really good school. I like sport and now I've got new friends here, it's good."

"Whatever their reasons for opting for state boarding, parents are overwhelmingly happy with their choice," says Mr Pearman.

A new survey for the State Boarding Schools Association, completed by more than 1,500 parents of boarders in 29 state boarding schools, shows high academic quality and the chance to fulfil potential are key drivers. Parents also believe state boarding schools offer value for money.

"Of those who responded, 93 per cent said their children were happy boarding, while 95 per cent said they would recommend boarding to others," adds Mr Pearman.

"Increasingly, having flexibility in their child's education is not a luxury for many families, it's a necessity. The comfort of knowing their children are safe, well cared for and well educated is not just a choice, it's a route to happiness for everyone."

The friendships made by boarders, adds Marita, appear to be strong and long-lasting, with a high proportion of former boarders returning to school events.

"We want pupils to enjoy the boarding experience, and so many being keen to return is an indication that they leave here with good memories. As staff, that's what we want for all the children."

Ripon Grammar School is holding a sixth form open evening on January 26, 2015 at 6.30pm



Happy readers: students in the library

Today's students enjoy an Old Rip-roaring read

avid readers in Ripon Grammar School's sixth form have former pupils to thank for helping to widen their reading by adding to the number of novels they are able to enjoy and discuss together in school. The Old Rips RGS alumni association was delighted to fund multiple sets of books for the sixth form reading group. School librarian Sally Dring says it means the sixth formers are now able to have a say in selecting which titles to use: "The donation from he Old Rips will

Stay in touch

Join the RGS alumni group on [LinkedIn](#)

cover eight copies of about four titles, so providing material for a year," she adds. The Old Rips were also pleased to provide the careers department with some much-needed magazine racks to go with their newly re-vamped careers room. Jill Locke, head of careers education at the school, explains "We are currently in

the process of having the room redecorated and generally trying to upgrade the image of the room to make it more vibrant and appealing, hopefully attracting more students to come in on a regular drop in basis, to make use of the resources. We are very grateful to the Old Rips for their support" Nicola Woolfenden, president of the Old Rips, adds: "We are very pleased to be able to make a contribution towards improving the learning environment for today's students in this way."



Pictures by Nicola Woolfenden



Who are they?

DO you know the lady in the centre of the top photograph, or the boys staring back at the camera? Did one of them become your granddad? All these faces have come to light in a unique film of Ripon, taken in April 1916 when soldiers from the army camp joined the townsfolk of Ripon at the racecourse for a Highland Sports Day. The Yorkshire Film Archive thinks this 1916 film, discovered in the basement of the Town Hall, might feature former RGS pupils and is appealing for our help to identify some of the faces now peering back at us, through the screen, 100 years later. Who were they, what are their stories, and what happened to them over the coming years?

If you know any of the people shown in the photographs here, or have any information, then please contact Martin Watts on 01904 876550, m.watts@yorks.ac.uk or visit the YFA Facebook page, www.facebook.com/FilmedandNotForgotten, where there are more photographs and people to identify.



Boarding in the Forties and Fifties



In the next edition of *Clocktower*, former boarders including George Topple, right, reminisce about 'Masher' Brown, pillow fights in the dorm, cold swims in the unheated pool and school dinners which included a 'banana pudding' concocted from boiled parsnips.



THE GOOD LIFE

Entrepreneur Sean Wheatley enjoyed lucrative contracts with the White House, Formula One and the US Masters. He tells **Ruth Savage** how, after losing it all in the financial crash of 2008, he found true wealth



“I was filling voids with buying things. But we never had enough”

Inspired: Sean and son Scott spend much of their time outdoors

Only a few years ago, Sean Wheatley lived the sort of life others might envy. The owner of two successful businesses, he and his family lived in a large house in a leafy suburb of Minneapolis.

He owned five luxury cars, including a Porsche 911, a Lotus racing car and a Jaguar convertible, as well as a boat. His family enjoyed several luxurious holidays in Europe and America every year, wore the best designer label clothes and ate out in restaurants every night.

“We didn’t think twice about what we were spending. When we went to Florida, we’d stay at the Hard Rock Hotel and take over the top floor suites. My wife had a big collection of designer handbags,” recalls Sean.

But the Newcastle University graduate, who left Ripon Grammar School in 1989 and qualified as a civil engineer in 1993 before leaving the UK to make a new life for himself in the States, always felt something was missing.

Working 12 hour days, he and his wife Molly took their children out to restaurants because they arrived home so late they never had time to cook. And, although they enjoyed luxury vacations, they were always working, constantly on their phones and laptops.

The six bedroom house and six figure income wasn’t making Sean happy: “We moved to a bigger, even nicer house. But it was all getting out of control. I was filling voids with buying things. When you buy things to be happy, you just want more. We never had enough.”

While his two children, Scott and Halle, had everything they wished for materially, Sean, 44, was aware he wasn’t giving them the time and attention they needed.

“Looking back, I used to wake up with a feeling of dread. Fear ruled my life. I was living in fear of not having enough, fear of losing it. I was having to work to pay the bills, always chasing the dollar.”

When the global financial crisis hit in 2008 the car dealership Sean owned went bust as customers could no longer rely on credit. His other business, producing promotional items for prestigious clients, including large international companies and even the White House, survived a while longer, but was under pressure.

The crash was the catalyst he needed, he says, to change his life “I always wanted something different. But that is when I really started thinking about what I wanted from life.”

Today, having returned to North Yorkshire, where he grew up and his parents still live, Sean manages the 22 acre estate attached to a small holiday park near Bedale.

He and his 18-year-old son Scott, who wants to be a countryside ranger, manage the woodland, grow all their own organic vegetables and fruit and keep chickens.

Although they haven’t gardened before, they are now self-sufficient in vegetables, growing everything from kale and carrots to parsnips, onions, potatoes, garlic and tomatoes in raised beds and greenhouses.

They have even learnt to hunt, skin and prepare rabbits to eat: “We have ten rabbits in the freezer as well as pheasants and pigeons, and trade favours with local farmers,” says Sean, who forages for berries, mushrooms and nettles, which he and Scott enjoy cooking and eating.

The pair have also planted hundreds of trees: “I am earning less money but have so much more.



Sean used to love fast cars but now he prefers growing veg, below



“Everything we are doing is about heading towards a more self-sufficient, sustainable lifestyle, but it takes a lot of time and effort,” says Sean.

He accepts this life isn’t for everyone. His now ex-wife Molly and 15-year-old daughter Halle struggled to cope without the modern conveniences they were used to when they joined Sean and Scott in North Yorkshire. After a few months, they returned to the States.

Sean acknowledges that his working life today is a far cry from his earlier career as a successful entrepreneur, with a knack for spotting gaps in the market, when he and Molly first got together.

Shortly after he first moved to the States, having married American-born Molly, aged 24, he started his first business: “I wasn’t really interested in being an engineer,” he says.

He and Molly initially set up a small English tea room in Minneapolis but expanded to distribute Yorkshire tea to large supermarket chains throughout the whole of Minnesota and the mid-West.

Soon, they were also selling accessories, such as tea pots and framed pictures of English countryside scenes. This led Sean to spot a gap in the market for similar pictures of American landmarks, which quickly grew into another successful business, producing promotional products for business conferences and awards ceremonies for large corporations

“We worked for all the big Fortune 500 companies, Formula One the Masters Golf Tournament, all the major events.” Before long, they were taking \$1m a year.

Their Global Miniatures business even won the contract to produce outgoing President George W Bush’s farewell gifts - a framed piece of parquet floor from the Oval office - to 400 members of staff, including Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld: “Everyone got a framed, signed letter from him. I still have a sample of the parquet somewhere in a box.”

But Sean, who started the business from his basement, soon became disillusioned: “In the early days, I was in the back helping make the products and getting my hands dirty. I enjoyed that. But after ten years, the business was big enough, I didn’t need to be there every day.”

He needed something new to get his teeth into: “Motorsport was a passion, so I started a car dealership,” he says.

Initially, he started exporting American cars like Mustangs and Hummers to England. In order to get his dealer licence, he started selling Volkswagens, a car he had always loved, on the side. That

“I am earning less money but have so much more. Our life is so much more fulfilling now”

Our life is so much more fulfilling now,” says Sean.

Working towards a totally self-sufficient life, they have learned to bake bread and have even made cider from the apples that grow in a small orchard on the estate. They are also learning about keeping bees.

Sean, who will be offering guided walks in the area, also hopes to run specialist self-sufficiency and countryside skills courses on the site: “We want to inspire and involve other people in the community.”

Having trained in woodworking, he is helping to build four additional wooden holiday chalets on the park, and Sean and Scott also have plans to build their own eco-friendly, off-grid home on the site, which will be heated by wood burners and make use of wind energy, ‘grey’ reusable rainwater and composting toilets.



business grew too: "I realised I could buy cars coming off lease at auction for the same price as the big dealers. This was a level playing field with no overheads. I have always been a decent salesman. I got ten cars to start with and took \$1.4m in the first year. It grew from there."

It suited his lifestyle: "I loved racing and it helped advertise my business. I had a Porsche 911 which I turned into a track car, and a Lotus racing car. It was great."

From this business alone, he was bringing in a \$220,000 salary: "But we were spending it as fast as we were making it."

Sean had been running his car dealership for three years when the market collapsed in 2008: "The housing bubble burst overnight. It was carnage. Customers weren't able to buy on credit. My business just tanked."

With more than \$100,000 of personal debt, he closed the business: "All of a sudden, I didn't have anything, it was all gone. I was renting a house, I was bankrupt, it was a real catalyst."

For a year, he didn't do anything. Then an old friend from Ripon asked him to come up with an idea for a new business to help him and his family relocate to the States: "He needed a visa. So I spotted a gap in the market for a dog mess cleaning business and put together a real professional brand called Pet Waste Professionals."

With a fleet of trucks, the company soon became the number one pet waste business in the county. Once again, Sean had struck gold. But by now, material success had lost its allure.

"Business was something I used to measure my success by. But as soon as I got rid of all the material stuff in my life, I started to feel a lot lighter. It wasn't all about money any more. I knew what was important. A weight had been lifted off my shoulders."

"I realised I had more than I ever had because it was not all going out faster than it was coming in. I wanted something simpler. It was a kind of awakening."

He returned to England at the end of 2011 and began working at the holiday park, helping to improve and expand the tea rooms as well as getting involved in plans to build four new log cabin style holiday homes.

He found he enjoyed ground management, planting trees and coppicing: "I was spending a lot more time outdoors, in nature. It was more fulfilling than anything I'd done since I was a kid," he says.

And his son turned out to be just as passionate about this simpler way of life: "Looking back, I was lazy and spoiled, before," says Scott. "I expected money, I didn't do any chores. I planned to study business or marketing and get a high paying job, maybe live in the suburbs."

"But Dad has inspired me on the path we're taking now. It really excites me. I have a real sense of pride in what we're doing."

Sean has no regrets about leaving his old life behind: "That was like another person. I am not stressed out now, I have time for people. We live a frugal life with no expenses and have cash left at the end of every month."

"We are better off now than ever. We have enough and know what enough is. We're content. I wake up every morning now just loving it."

*High Parks Estate, High Parks, Newton-le-Willows, Bedale DL8 1TP 01677 450555



Happy now: Sean works with wood while Scott collects eggs, below. Some of their cider haul, right



We have enough now and we know what enough is'



A packed and colourful life

OBITUARY

Maureen Blackburn

RGS computer systems manager until 2009



Maureen attended Harrogate Grammar School and then worked for ICI, initially in Harrogate and then in Manchester and Huddersfield where she specialised in fibres and textiles. She took her City and Guilds Chemical Technicians qualifications, studying at night whilst working. On marrying David she moved to Kirkby Malzeard and they worked together tackling the challenges of farming, running a business and bringing up their daughter, Sharon.

In 1983, she took employment at Ripon Grammar School as the physics/AV technician. As IT systems were developing in schools, Maureen constantly improved her knowledge and understanding of computers and this enabled her to become the first IT technician at RGS. Indeed, she was also able to help the school by stepping in to teach IT when the head of department took maternity leave just before an Ofsted Inspection. Her insatiable appetite for learning about how computers worked proved invaluable as she moved on to become computer systems manager for the school and she would often be up late at night solving problems to support staff and pupils. Maureen was a competent swimmer and had helped as an instructor at Ripon Swimming Club while Sharon was a club member. She had taken both ASA and RLSS teaching qualifications and, when asked if she would be interested in teaching life-saving classes in school, she was eager to help. Initially this was in sixth form games lessons, then she also took the extracurricular swimming club and later organised swimming tuition for children with special needs.

She thoroughly enjoyed learning new sports and attended coaching courses for hockey, netball, volleyball, athletics, tennis, orienteering, canoeing, windsurfing, power boating and sailing. Whilst working in the physics department we appreciated that she managed to find time to teach in second, fifth and sixth year games lessons. In addition, she gave specific training to hockey goalkeepers during lunchtime practices and was prepared to turn out to umpire school fixtures on Saturday mornings throughout both summer and winter. In winter this was followed by

umpiring for Ripon Ladies' Hockey club matches in the afternoons. On agreeing to accompany the school outdoor pursuits holiday in Quiberon, she decided to take lessons in canoeing prior to departure. She became interested in windsurfing when the Gybe Scheme opened at the racecourse and, being the person she was, took charge of maintaining all the equipment for many years. This also enabled windsurfing classes in our sixth form games lessons and an evening club that many of our boarders enjoyed. Maureen was thoroughly

involved in our third year Bewerley Park trips right from the start, until her work as computer systems manager made it impossible to be out of school for a whole week.

At heart she was an educator and she could win young people's trust by trusting them. She gave each one a chance, neither quick to judge nor suffering fools gladly. She encouraged all her IT apprentices and always loved to see students blossom and reach their full potential. As if Maureen didn't already give a great deal of time to Ripon Grammar School, when Mr Jones asked if she would join the school's governors, she took herself off on a course to enable her to do the job to the best of her ability. She had a packed and colourful life, enjoying climbing in her early years, being a Sunday school teacher when Sharon was young, taking up skiing and running (completing the 1999 Great North Run for St. Michael's Hospice) and, in retirement, enjoyed bowling (outdoors at Ripon and indoors at Harrogate). She sailed, canoed, camped and caravanned and was particularly skilled at mending clocks. Her pride and joy was her MX5 and she loved her motorbikes, having good mechanical knowledge and skills.

She was an all-rounder who loved nothing better than a project she could research and get to grips with. If she did a job, she did it well, with no half measures. She was organised, energetic and practical, with a zest for life and interest in people.

She loved her home in Kirkby Malzeard and she and David were very happy there throughout their 43 years of marriage. Her retirement in 2009 was sadly cut short by illness. She is survived by husband David and daughter Sharon.

Maureen Blackburn, born February 21, 1944, died April 28, 2014

If you would like to submit an obituary for a former RGS teacher or student who has passed away in the last year, please contact : rgsconnect@riponggrammar.co.uk

Continued from page 5

up a sizeable advantage by the time he took to the low board for the final time. His final dive - a backward two-and-a-half somersault - was right on the money, and he eventually finished with a score of 449.90, comfortably clear of his closest challenger, Australian Matthew Mitcham, who ended with 404.85.

The speed of Laugher's execution was impressive throughout, with his control and consistency all the more creditable given the memories of two years previous. "Going last is always hard, and the first two dives were a little bit shaky," said Laugher. "But as soon as I got into my rhythm it started picking up and things started to go well."

The 1m event, which is not part of the Olympic programme, is not even supposed to be Laugher's main discipline. No matter what else is to come, tonight's medal



will always be special though, banishing the memories of London and conclusively drawing a line under an experience that has helped to make Laugher rather than break him.

"This definitely puts the Olympics right," said the 19-year-old. "I believe you learn from your mistakes and never let it happen again. It feels

Favourite teachers

'Dr Grime — he showed a genuine interest in my diving and helped me with my chemistry as well as he could. He'd always be checking my results online and was always a great teacher.

Then Miss Gilfillan, she was a brilliant PE teacher and our PE group had a great time in her classes. As well as being fun, she was a great mentor to me in school.'

Champion: Jack Laugher, left

absolutely amazing to be Commonwealth champion - I'm nearly lost for words. I'm training really hard, and I've moved out from home, which is giving me my independence. I'm training with my best mate, Chris Mears, as well. I'm trying really hard constantly, and it's going really well. I'm just so happy."

Former RGS student Alan Newton describes the siege mentality and reality of trench warfare in remarkable detail in this letter from the Front to his old school, sent one hundred years ago

I have been asked to describe some of my experiences, at the Front. To do so fully would probably fill all the pages of the (RGS school) magazine, but I will endeavour as briefly as possible to give you some idea of the sort of life I have led. My experience extends over a period of about four months, beginning from the middle of March. I joined my battalion just after the now historic battle of Neuve Chapelle, in which the battalion had played a not inconspicuous part. I thus reached France in time only for the tail end of the winter months and the bad weather, in which respect I was lucky, for even as it was I was able to realise what the hardships of the winter campaign must have been. I was also lucky in another respect, namely that we have been situated near the centre of the British line all the time and we have not had to bear the brunt of the hard fighting that has taken place near the extremities of the line.

Most of my experience therefore has been of:

Trench warfare:

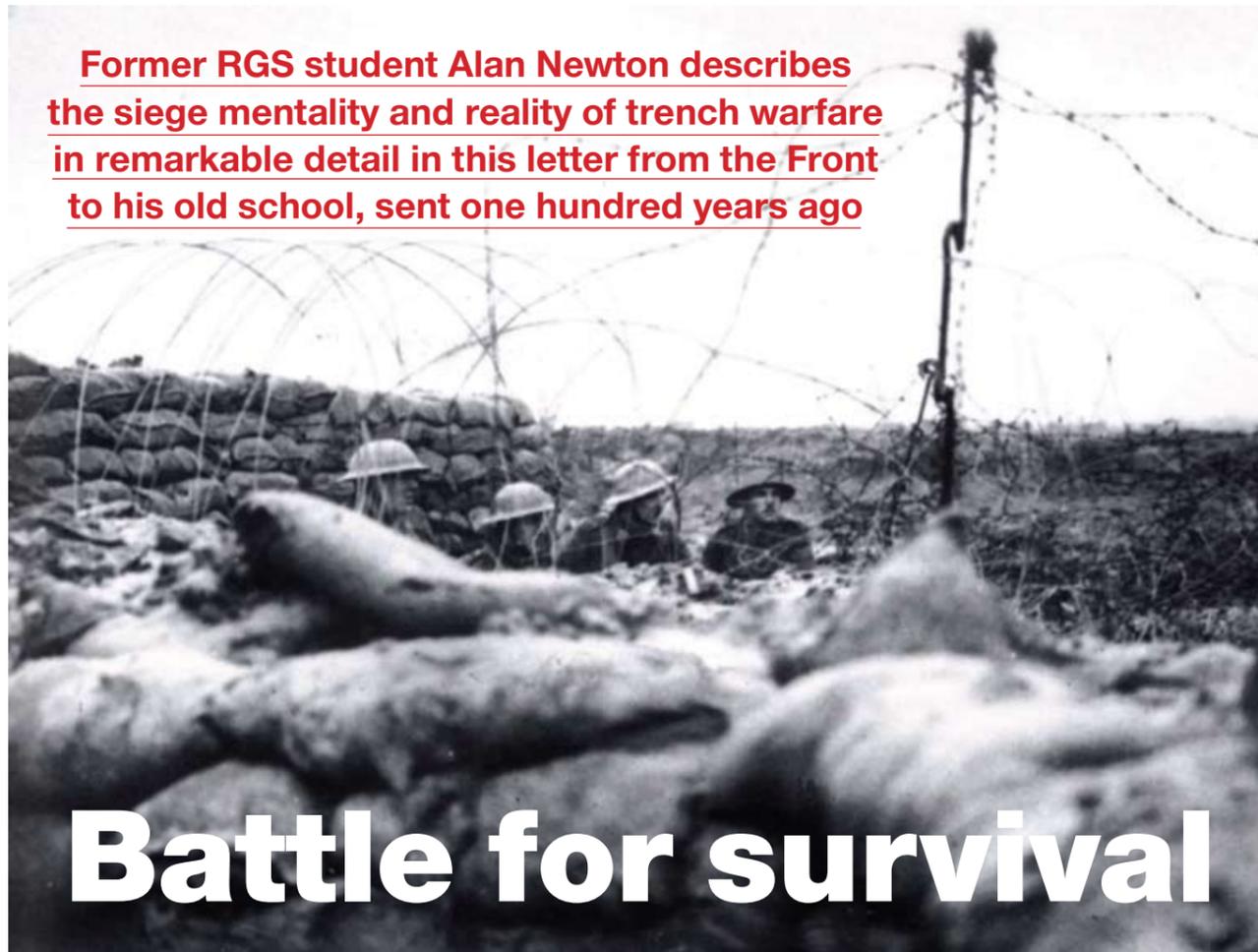
This is a somewhat monotonous work, and is more akin to a siege than anything else. Both armies hold long lines strongly entrenched, and here they have remained for many months past with but little variation. A little push here or a little push there occasionally gains a few hundred yards of ground, but to all intents and purposes the British line is the same now as it was last November. Such is the power and accuracy of modern weapons of war that fighting in the open entails very heavy casualties, and even an advance of a few hundred yards can only be obtained at the cost of enormous losses. Consequently the War has developed into what is practically a siege – a process of “wearing down the enemy.

Life in the trenches:

The word ‘trench’ always appears to me somewhat of a misnomer as applied to the firing-lines of the armies engaged in the present conflict; for it implies a sort of ditch dug into the ground. The modern trench is nothing of the kind. It is dug down very little, if at all, but a parapet or breastwork of earth is thrown up in front, and built up with sandbags to a height of six feet or more. One can thus walk about behind the parapet, in perfect comfort and with nothing to fear from the enemy's bullets, and at the foot of the parapet a firing-step is made to enable the men to fire over the top with ease. Also, loopholes are made in places for use by snipers during the daytime, but it is essential that these loopholes should be well concealed and be closed up with an iron plate or other means when not in use.



‘It is a piteous sight to see ruined and deserted houses all over the countryside, walls shattered by shell fire’



Battle for survival

Siege mentality: above, top right and middle: trenches in Ypres, Bottom right: Durham Light Infantry soldiers in trenches. Newton, below left and right. Panel inset: trench on the Western Front

The parapet is made anything from six to ten feet in thickness, so as to be absolutely bulletproof. Occasionally the trenches are shelled by the heavy artillery. Nothing, of course, is proof against the modern high-explosive shell, and on these occasions the parapet is often knocked all to pieces and has to be re-built, under cover of darkness. Such a bombardment, while having a certain ‘morale’ effect, does not usually cause much loss of life, if proper precautions are taken, but it entails a good deal of inconvenience and extra labour.

Behind the trench another breastwork or parapet is usually erected to protect against the back-burst of a shell. It is in or behind the parapet that the ‘dug-outs’, or living quarters, are made. They are built usually with a framework of wood and lined all round with sandbags, and roofed over with corrugated iron with a sprinkling of earth on top. Some dug-outs are quite commodious, and the walls are sometimes decorated with pictures cut from the illustrated papers. Usually one has just room to lie or sit in them with comfort, but not to stand

up. Each officer generally has a small dug-out to himself, or sometimes two officers share a dug-out. There is usually one larger one, where the officers of a company mess together. The men's dug-outs are somewhat bigger as a rule, and nine or ten have to share a dug-out, but when the weather is fine and warm many prefer to remain in the open. About forty or fifty yards behind the fire-trenches there is usually a second line of trenches, with communicating trenches up to the firing-line. These, of course, are quite distinct from the second line of defence, which is prepared some distance behind the actual firing-line for use in case of emergency.

The duties in the trenches are not particularly arduous, though causing a certain amount of strain. During the night double-sentries are posted at frequent intervals along the trench, and the officers constantly go round to ensure that the sentries are alert and attending to their duties.

At night, too, any work that requires to be done is performed, such as putting up or strengthening the barbed-wire entanglements in front of the trenches. Such work is rendered somewhat eerie and a spice of danger added to it by reason of the flares-sort of rockets or light-balls, not unlike Roman candles -which are constantly sent up. The German flares, by the way, are much superior to ours, though we have improved in this respect.

The daytime is usually comparatively quiet, except when the trenches are shelled. Single sentries only are necessary, and at wider intervals. A look-out is kept by means of periscopes, as it is unsafe to show one's head much over the parapet during daylight, or a sniper will very soon get busy. It is in the daytime chiefly that one is able to rest, and under ordinary conditions one can get quite

a large amount of sleep-two or three hours at a time. Every day - just before dawn and again at dusk everybody is required to “stand-to” - usually for about an hour. During the night all have to keep their equipment on, but in the day a certain proportion of the men are allowed to take it off. In fine weather the conditions are on the whole quite pleasant, but in wet weather quite the reverse, for the soil being mostly of a clayey nature is soon converted into a quagmire.

Life in billets:

During the winter months we usually spent a spell of three days in the trenches, and were then relieved by another regiment, reliefs of course being always carried out at night. Since the coming of summer, however, we have done spells of six days at a time. The intervals between the spells are spent in billets.

Some billets are much better than others, but as a rule we manage to make ourselves pretty comfortable. More often than not, we are billeted at some farm-house, and a company is always kept together as much as possible. The men are generally accommodated in the barns or stables, and given straw to lie upon, while the officers are allotted one or more rooms in the house itself. Sometimes one even gets the luxury of a bed, but in any case we can make ourselves quite comfortable by laying our sleeping-valises upon the floor or on a mattress.

If the billet happens to be anywhere near the firing-line, there is always the possibility of being shelled, an experience I have had more than once. On these occasions we have to turn out of our billets and run to dug-outs or any cover that can be obtained. Also, if hostile aeroplanes come over,



it is advisable to lie low, for if one is observed, information is given to the artillery, and they train their guns on the spot. On the other hand, at times we get into billets well back from the firing-line,



and one almost forgets that there is a war on at all. While in billets, we generally do some physical drill in the mornings, or go for a route-march, in

Roll of Honour

Lieutenant Alan Francis Newton (West Yorks Regt), elder son of Mrs Newton, of Crescent Parade, Ripon, and of the late Minor Canon Newton, of Ripon Cathedral, is in hospital in London suffering from a wound in the forehead and other bruises, received through the bursting of a shell over his billet on the evening of June 18th. This is the second time Lieutenant Newton has been wounded. It is only three weeks since he returned to the Front after recuperating from wounds received last July. He is an Old Riponian having been educated at Bradford and Ripon Grammar Schools. From Ripon School he gained an exhibition at St Catherine's College, Cambridge, and took his degree in the Classical Tripos in 1907. He obtained a commission in the West Yorks on the outbreak of war.

From the Harrogate Herald, June 27, 1917



Research by Old Rips, RGS alumni society

order to keep the men fit. It is a piteous sight to see the ruined and deserted farms and houses that are scattered all over the countryside many of them with nothing but the bare walls standing, and these all shattered by shell-fire. People at home cannot possibly realise what it means to have war brought to one's very doors. Churches, too, always afford targets for the artillery, and I have seen many a noble edifice in ruins. At the same time it is surprising how close to the firing line the French civilians continue to live, and carry on with their ordinary peaceful occupations-cultivating their lands within sound and range of the guns. I could fill pages with descriptions in this strain, but space forbids. I would have liked, too, to say something about our aeroplanes, our artillery, and many other modern weapons of warfare, but perhaps I may be able to devote a future letter to some of these subjects. In conclusion, I should like to give you a brief description of the one battle in which I have been engaged, namely: The Battle of the Aubers Ridge (May 9th).

*Before I close there is one other subject to which I must refer, namely, the proposed formation of an Officers' Training Corps at Ripon. As one who has had some experiences of O. T. C. work I hope the project will soon bear fruit and the Corps become an accomplished fact. Good luck to it!

LIEUT. A. F. NEWTON (O.R.), 2nd West Yorks. Regt

Somewhere in France

6th July, 1915.

***Tales from the heat of battle: read Alan's report on the Battle of Aubers Ridge in the next edition of Clocktower**

Coming soon

In the next edition of *Clocktower*

'I was just a lad in a small North Yorkshire village who had big dreams'

Favourite teacher: Mr Postlethwaite



■ **Around the World in 80 ways:** BBC TV natural history documentary maker Mark Flowers, pictured left and above, describes how his love of plants and wildlife led to a fascinating career that has taken him all over the world. He tells how he got to work with his hero Richard Attenborough, make award-winning programmes such as *The Human Planet*, swim with river dolphins in the Amazonian jungle and play with lemurs in Madagascar.

School reports then and now



■ Former RGS English teacher Stefan Lewicki takes an amusing look at how school reports have changed over the years. Do you have any humorous excerpts from your old reports that you would like to share with us?

Contact us on rgsconnect@ripogrammar.co.uk



Favourite teacher: Mr Miller

■ **Suits you, Miss:** Chemistry graduate Alexandra Robinson, left, reveals how she is cutting it in the world of bespoke men's tailoring. A tailor and account manager for Mullen & Mullen, Alexandra meets clients in prestigious locations all over the City, including the Gherkin and the Shard. She says her chemistry degree has helped her master the complex mirror images involved in patterning: "It's molecular chemistry in a different form."



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