



2019-20

*The Magazine of The Alice Otteleians  
and  
Old Elizabethans' Association*

*Number 11*



**Michael Ridout 1954–2019**

## Editorial

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting has been postponed, due to the Coronavirus pandemic emergency. The Committee had already taken the decision before the Prime Minister's announcement on 23rd March in order to help maintain appropriate social distancing.

The closure of all schools from 20th March and the Government regulations requiring us all in the UK to remain at home unless obtaining vital supplies reinforces our earlier decision.

The Committee will write to you to inform you of the rescheduled date when there is the realistic prospect of holding the meeting safely and in line with all regulations and recommendations.

We live in sobering times.

I never imagined I would need to begin my editorial with such an opening and yet here I am. I re-read my editorial from last year, when Brexit seemed agonisingly interminable. I write this the morning after the Government's announcement on 23rd March. It seems almost unbelievable that in the past 12 months we have had another general election, exited the EU and now face something, a threat far more existential than anything most of us will have known. All those debates, arguments and divisions seem so trivial now, so very insignificant.

Today our priorities are markedly different. We need to focus on protecting one another and ourselves, taking care of one another. And taking care of one another is not always going to be easy. Last Sunday was Mothering Sunday, a day when families get together to enjoy one another's company and celebrate their Mums. I did not visit my mother. She is 87 and has multiple complex health conditions which made such a visit the wrong thing to do. When you know you are doing the right thing, how can it feel so wrong? And therein lies the challenge for us in the coming weeks and months, that of head over heart. Which brings me back to the AGM. Had there been any way in which we could have held the meeting, we would have done but to have done so, even before the Government's announcement yesterday, would have

been irresponsible and placed an additional burden on the school, our hosts on these occasions.

And speaking of the school, I am sure the selection of comments received from parents during the current emergency will give rise to a strong sense of pride as you read the praise and appreciation contained in their words (see pages 16–19). It is that sense of continuity, looking back and yet looking forward, which ensures the pupils and parents have the confidence to place their trust in the advice and measures that were taken.

Before this rapidly becomes known as the “Coronavirus Edition”, I must draw your attention to the other many and varied items intended to pique your interest and, perhaps more than ever, provide a brief respite from the day to day. We are fortunate to have the magazine supported by a new member of the team. Alison Candlin has kindly stepped up to take over Ian Cranston’s work of liaising with the printers and getting the magazine into its final format. I am indebted to Ian for all his hard work over the years and would like to pass on my personal thanks to him via these pages. Thanks, as always, are due in no small measure to Barry Rees, proof-reader extraordinaire, who labours quietly in the background, eagle-eyed for the mis-placed comma, incorrectly placed adverb or, woe betide anyone, an abused apostrophe. Any errors sit entirely at my door.

Speaking of errors, I must offer a formal apology to Ross Beech. News had reached us of his death last year and despite best endeavours, there seemed no reason to doubt the accuracy of the sad tidings. Imagine the mingling of embarrassment and delight to be advised that Ross is very much alive and well, and it is to be hoped he remains so for many years to come! It goes to show that no matter how thorough and careful one is, sometimes we get things wrong. I hope any upset caused to Ross and his friends was short-lived and he has come through the doubtless friendly leg-pulling that was occasioned by this.

I cannot allow this editorial to pass without mention of Mike Ridout and Wendy Edwards. Mike, as many readers will already be aware, was cruelly taken from us far too soon in a road traffic accident in South Africa last August. He was one of those individuals who quietly made things happen and was a trusted, respected and admired teacher and colleague. He had joined RGS back in 1978, and retired some 36 years later in 2014. Those at the service of celebration and commemoration in Perrins Hall in October heard John Pitt read an email he had received from Mike, recently retired, the night before John’s first term as Headmaster began. Its generosity of spirit and offer of help if needed, seemed the perfect epitaph. We miss him greatly.

Wendy Edwards was Head of Music at the Alice Ottley School between 1969 and 1984. Though small in stature, she was a formidable personality and presence; there was no grey in her classroom. Her clarity of thought combined with her trademark forthright delivery made for an often

exhilarating (terrifying?) lesson. An exacting upholder of standards (who could forget her use of a wooden twelve inch ruler to beat the time on the head of a future AO Head Girl to make sure she "got it"?), she was feared by many. In reality, the woman behind the baton was kind, funny, and hugely interested in the progress and development of her pupils and their lives after they had left. She did not sugar coat any message, whether praise or criticism. Off sick in the run-up to the annual Carol Service, she had deputed one Upper VI girl to rehearse the Senior Choir. On her return, just days before the Service, she put the Choir through its paces. At the end, she was silent for a few moments. Slowly her face broke into the broadest and most radiant of smiles. "Choir," she said, "I do hope you haven't shot your bolt!".

And having provided a small glimpse of what lies beyond, I took a moment to look up towards the window of my living room. Truly it is a gloriously sunny Spring afternoon, so normal in these abnormal times. My beloved amelanchier is just in bloom – its star-like tiny blossom will be in its immaculate glory in two to three days' time – and the flowering currant will be its perfect foil. More than ever, I hope the contents of this latest magazine manage to divert, distract and entertain you even if only for a few short moments.

I will close by wishing each and every reader good health, good cheer and fare forward.

Kay Meredith

# **The Alice Ottleians and Old Elizabethans' Association**

## **Officers and Committee 2019/2020**

### **President**

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### **Joint Archives Secretaries**

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### **Headmaster of RGS Worcester**

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## Data Protection Statement

The Association maintains records of members for the sole purpose of facilitating communication with its members. In order to comply with Data Protection legislation members must be given the opportunity to object to some or all of the data relating to them being so held and used. The information which may be held, relating to each member is as follows:-

Data that will be available to The Association, the School and all members:

- Name, including maiden name where applicable
- Gender
- Email address – Public, only available to other members if you have entered this in the online database or if you have requested an Association Official to enter it on your behalf
- School, RGS or AOS
- Years at school

Data that will only be available to The Association and may be passed on to the School with your permission:

- Postal address
- Email address – Private, only available to The Association
- Telephone number, landline and mobile
- Date of Birth
- Destination after school
- Notes re interests, occupation and qualifications
- Links to family members who were also at the School

All of the above data will be available to each individual member upon logging in to the Association's website and selecting "My Profile". Upon ceasing to be a member any data held will be deleted after six months.

Changes in Data Protection legislation came into effect in late May 2018 with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This requires greater transparency on what data organisations hold, how long it is held for and how they manage it. In order to comply with these regulations a Data Protection Statement is published on the AOOE website.

If any member has any objections to some or all of this information being held on the membership database, or if they object to this information being made available to other members of the Association, or to the School or if they wish to know exactly what data the Association holds in their record they should email the Membership Secretary ([membership@aooe.org.uk](mailto:membership@aooe.org.uk)) or write to her at Flat 30, Brookside Terrace, 32 The Lane, Barbourne, Worcester WR1 1AF.

The membership database is controlled, monitored, updated and used by the Membership Secretary and the Webmaster, who is a member of the Membership Sub-Committee. Your data will never be shared with any other individuals or organisations other than the School or fellow members with your consent.

## The Association Website and Database

The Association's website can be found at [www.aooe.org.uk](http://www.aooe.org.uk)

There is a members' area on the website where you can login and update or amend your details, enter any news you have for the annual magazine and access the members' online directory, subject to certain data disclosure restrictions. You can also view past Association and School magazines and download order forms for certain Association publications. News of various School and Association events are also listed there. We hope that you will add the website to your favourites so that you can keep in touch with us easily.

If the Association has your email address this will be your username. You can request a password by clicking on the relevant part of the login page and a link will be emailed to you to setup your password or reset it if you have forgotten a previous password.

If the Association does not have your email address you will have to email the Membership Secretary (**[membership@aooe.org.uk](mailto:membership@aooe.org.uk)**) asking for it to be added to the database before you will be able to login. If you are happy for your email address to be visible to other members you should state this in your email. This email address is also the one to use if you wish to update or amend any of your details and cannot access the online directory via the members' area of the website.

The Association would like to keep in touch with members via email where possible, as this is both faster and cheaper than the post. However, we only have email addresses for about 27% of our members. If you are happy to receive email communications from the Association please email the Membership Secretary (as above). Furthermore, if you wish to receive the RGS weekly electronic newsletter, The RGS Times, please state this in your email so we can pass this information onto the School.

The Association has almost 550 members for whom we have no address details. Each time we send out a circular or a magazine we get many returned as "gone away" or "not known at this address". This means that we waste money sending out an item of post that is going to come straight back to us and also members have paid for something that they are not going to receive.

Many members clearly forget to notify the Association when they move home, so if you know of any member who has moved within the last year or so please remind them to let us know their new address. A full list of these "lost" members is available as a PDF on the Association's website.

## Subscriptions

The membership of those who were in the RGS 20 year membership scheme and left before 2000 and those who were in the AO 15 year membership scheme and left before 2005 has now expired. We hope that you will wish to continue your membership of the Association – please contact the Membership Secretary to arrange payment so that you can continue your membership either as an Annual Member or as a Life Member.

Any members who continue to enjoy membership under the somewhat underfunded old life schemes, which were closed for new admissions in 1986 for OEs and in 1996 for AOs, may wish to “top-up” their membership with an annual standing order, or a Life Membership, details of which can be obtained from the Membership Secretary, by email at [membership@aooe.org.uk](mailto:membership@aooe.org.uk)

## Mailings

The next mailing you will receive is planned to go out towards the end of October 2020 and amongst other things will give details of the Annual Dinner. If you have not received this mailing by early November please either check The Association’s web site or contact the Membership Secretary.

The next magazine will be published during the first two weeks of April 2021, but subject to a change of format, as explained below. If you do elect to continue to receive a paper copy and have not received it by the end of April, please follow the same action as above.

## The Hole in the Wall Goes Green

In an effort to minimise our environmental impact – and also to save on the considerable cost of printing and postage involved with mailing out 3,500 copies of the Hole in the Wall each year – the committee has decided that this will be the last paper edition of the magazine to be routinely sent to every member of the association.

Going forward, the Hole in the Wall will be available to everyone electronically on the AOOE website: [www.aooe.org.uk](http://www.aooe.org.uk) This edition is already there, so you can see how it will work.

If you would prefer to continue to receive a printed magazine, please fill in and return the slip included in the envelope with this edition or send an email to [membership@aooe.org.uk](mailto:membership@aooe.org.uk)

We hope you’ll all enjoy staying up to date and in touch with the association, whilst also helping us to do our bit for the environment.

## The President's Year

Well, the Presidential Year has flown by, as I knew it would. It seems just a matter of weeks since I was inveigled into serving another term by the Breakwell/Meredith conspiracy. The May AGM soon followed and I received the AOOE medallion from Kay Meredith, outgoing President and another "second-timer".

The AGM was followed by the President's lunch, not as well-attended as we had hoped, but notable for some culinary creations most unfamiliar to non-Alice Otteleians.



***[Ed: no apologies for cheese and jam, although eagle-eyed Alice Otteleians will spot the mistake ...]***

Towards the end of term the School hosted the RGS Cricket festival. I was much involved as the six RGS schools used Ombersley Cricket Club as an outground, where I am groundsman. The weather held and all went well. The games on Monday and Tuesday finished early, prompting Sean Lloyd, RGS Worcester groundsman to send a message asking: "When are you going to prepare a pitch that lasts all day?" I answered: "The Worcester boys say Wednesday's pitch was the best they've played on all season, apart from a couple of away games." There was no reply. On the Tuesday afternoon there was tea for former pupils. I met many old friends, a most enjoyable occasion. And Flagg Meadow looked magnificent!

Late October brought another occasion, where I met many old friends and former colleagues. Sadly, this was altogether a different affair: a Memorial Service for Mike Ridout, a much respected former colleague, who had died in a traffic accident in South Africa. It was a large gathering, a tribute to a popular senior teacher at RGS.



A month later at the end of November I was delighted to receive an invitation to the Grand Opening of the Performing Arts Centre, where the students put on the musical *Les Misérables*. This superb facility hosted an equally superb performance by the students. They were magnificent – quite the best school performance I've seen anywhere. Some of the voices stood out. I would not be surprised if one day some of these young people took to the stage professionally.

Suddenly, it was December and the annual AOOE dinner was upon us. This is a traditional event taking place on the first Saturday of December in Perrins Hall. This event requires considerable organisation – tickets, bar, caterers, guests and I must thank most sincerely Jem Porteous, our social secretary, for his considerable efforts. The dinner was well attended; numbers

were boosted by the attendance of the Whiteladies contingent, former boarders, led by Fasha Mahjoor. Apparently bar taking records were broken. This was almost certainly thanks to one table in particular. My thanks go to the Headmaster and to Peter Breakwell for elevating the evening with their speeches.

Still December, and the Carol Service loomed. As President, I was due to read at the cathedral. It was my third time and I had the same passage to read each time. A rehearsal had been arranged for the readers. An unexpected but eagerly accepted lift saw me arrive at the cathedral with 20 minutes to spare. I walked all around, once again deeply impressed by this dignified, numinous, inspiring place. "One cathedral is worth a hundred theologians capable of proving the existence of God by logic" – Julian Barnes, British novelist. The service was a triumph, beautifully organised; the various choirs exceptional.

So one more Committee Meeting in March, then the AGM in May and my year will be over. It has indeed flown by. In May I shall hand over to Shelley Evers the presidential medallion. I wish her every success in her year. I have enjoyed the meetings and am very grateful to the Committee for their help.

Barrie Rees

## Message from the President-Elect

I'm enormously proud to have been invited to take over the AOOE presidency in May 2020, the thirtieth summer since I walked away from the school for the last time as a pupil.

The summer of 1990 remains vivid in my memory... glorious sunshine, a major football tournament, a disproportionate amount of my time spent with "grammar boys", more holidays than were necessary and a feeling of such excitement, combined naturally with some trepidation, about what lay ahead of me. Those who know me well might quip - upon reading the sentence before this one - that it looks like 2020 is shaping up to be practically the same and, on reflection, they'd be correct, though I would have to remind them that I have no influence whatsoever over the weather..

What is it the French say? "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"? My French these days is embarrassingly rusty, but it was to read French at the University of Oxford that I was heading as I walked out of Britannia House for the last time. For this amazing opportunity, which became the springboard to a varied, fulfilling and interesting career (which I should point out isn't over yet by any stretch!), I shall forever be indebted to the inspirational teaching and mentoring of Mary Somers, the Alice Ottley's Head of French from 1990 until 2000, and a member of the school's brilliant French department for some 30 years in total.

It saddens me that I never thanked Mary properly. She passed away, as many of you reading this will be aware, in 2018; so instead, I intend to pay that gratitude forward now through my presidency of the Alice Ottleians and Old Elizabethans' by galvanising the old boys and old girls network, strengthening

the Association's ties to the school and supporting the creation of opportunities for "all those who go forth from this school" (perhaps the Alice Ottleian community will accept my apologies for the slight bastardisation of a well-known phrase from the AO's legendary "Tuesday Prayer").

Ironically, while I left the Alice Ottley School in 1990, I've never actually properly left Worcester. It is still where I live,



although it is only much more recently that I have genuinely begun to think of it as home. We had moved to “the Faithful City” in 1980, just before I first joined the AO in September 1983 and, while I moved away for my four years at University, I ended up returning to live here for sheer convenience when my first “proper job” meant I was travelling the world in export sales and marketing, to the extent that Birmingham Airport became like my second home. Over the years, my career evolved away from sales into marketing and then into what I soon discovered was my real passion - brand and communications. Until 2018 I led what could politely be described as a fast-paced and challenging corporate existence, leading on brand and marketing for a major UK-based international organisation – I loved everything about it... the late nights, the high blood pressure... really I did. Then the organisation I’d devoted my life to for more than a decade went into liquidation, just like that.

Time away from the stresses of the corporate treadmill allowed me to realise that there was more to life, that this was in fact an amazing opportunity to re-evaluate things and to regain control over how I was spending my time; I realised I had hardly any connection with Worcester despite having lived here for almost all my life and, at the risk of sounding like a 1980s Miss World contestant, I realised I wanted to “give something back”. Almost as if fate itself had read my mind, one Friday morning I received a phone call from one of my oldest and dearest friends, Peter Breakwell, asking if I’d be interested to get involved with the AOOE Committee and, more specifically, to take on the role of President-Elect from May 2019. I told Pete I needed time to think about it but deep down I knew that this was something I wanted to do.

How right I was! It felt like “coming home” the first time I stepped back inside Britannia House and now, having had the opportunity to spend time back in the school environment, reconnecting with all that they do today and hearing about all they aspire to do in the future, I am quite simply in awe of the first-class facilities and second-to-none education that RGS Worcester (for even I – an Alice Otteleian so passionate that you could slice me like a stick of rock and see Candida Rectaque printed in white and blue along my length – am getting used to calling “my old school” by this name now!) offers to pupils from Worcester and the surrounding areas.

Simply put, I shall be so proud to be the President of our Association from May 2020 and I would love to think that if you share the same fond nostalgia as I do for either “the AO” or “the Grammar”, I can encourage you to make this the year you reconnect with the Association. Why not attend one of our events or simply get in touch with me to say hello? Whether we knew each other back in the day or not, whichever of the schools you attended, we are all AOOEs now - so I really hope you will.

Shelley Eyers  
President Elect  
president@aooe.org

## **A View from the Head's Study**

For those alumni, parents and friends who joined us for the formal opening of the new Performing Arts Centre in November, we were given a real treat with a performance of 'Les Misérables' that would not have been out of place on a West End stage. Guests asked whether the actors were professionals as our pupils demonstrated the breadth of their acting and singing talents. We enjoyed a wonderful evening and a superb celebration of the Arts at RGS Worcester. It was wonderful to be able to welcome so many of our seat sponsors to experience the facility they helped make possible.

I am writing this article having just got back from the National Indoor Hockey Finals where RGS Worcester had both Under 16 and Under 18 teams represented. This is the first time in our sporting history that both teams have reached the National Finals and follows on from two teams qualifying for the Netball National Finals last year. This puts us amongst the very best schools in the country in Girls' Sport which is a triumph and down to hard work and commitment from the pupils and their coaches.

The Debaters can also hold their heads high having started the year with a win at another national competition, this time in Bath, and they are looking forward to the rest of the season, confident that RGS Worcester now competes with the best of the best.

The successes outside the classroom sit comfortably alongside our best A Level and GCSE results for several years which put RGS top of the schools in Worcester in The Sunday Times 'Parent Power' Survey 2020. Most importantly, their performance gave our pupils the chance to accept offers from leading Universities, including five pupils who held offers from Oxford and Cambridge. The academic development of the School is seeing a real emphasis on Teaching and Learning as staff embrace the opportunity to reflect on their practice and share ideas. As ever, their commitment to RGS Worcester is superb. Special mention should be made of Religious Studies Teacher Jo Marsh, who passed 30 years of service to AOS and RGS last term.

With a real emphasis on pastoral care, an awareness of the importance of skills development, including in digital technology, and a co-curricular programme that is quite simply breath-taking, the pupils are well set for their futures and the friendly family atmosphere remains a really important feature of the, now, four RGSW Schools (RGS Worcester, RGS Springfield, RGS The Grange and RGS Dodderhill).

We await the outcome of our planning application, working with Worcester Hockey Club and Worcester City Council, to build a state-of-the-art Hockey facility in Perdiswell. This facility will be of huge community, as well as school, benefit and will supplement our Outreach and Partnership programme which has seen over 1,000 local school pupils visit RGS in the last year, participating in over 40 different events.



***Artist's impressions (above) and map (opposite) of the proposed new school hockey facility.***



This important part of our commitment to our community also stretches further afield through local, national and international charity work including recently developing a link with a school in Ghana.

Thank you to the AOOE Committee and current President Barrie Rees for all the support they give to the School and to alumni who assist the School in so many ways including Bursary support, assistance for our Careers department and seat sponsorship in the Godfrey Brown Theatre.

With record numbers of pupil applicants for September 2020, our schools offering breadth of choice as we educate nearly 1400 pupils across Worcestershire, and with our students achieving local, regional and national success, the four RGSW Schools are in good shape as we enter the 2020s. If you want to find out more then please do visit our website: [www.rgsw.org.uk](http://www.rgsw.org.uk).

We are all excited about the bright future ahead.

John Pitt  
Headmaster

## Committee News

We were very sorry to learn that Jo Marsh (below), a Common Room representative, had suffered a stroke in January 2019. This year, the very good news is that Jo has recovered well. She was even back teaching part-time in the Autumn Term and attended the Carol Service in the Cathedral, although she told me she was still sleeping very well from very early in the evening! Her joy at being able to be back at work and attend such events was obvious to see.

We are delighted her recovery has continued to go from strength to strength and although saddened to lose such a valuable member of the committee (Jo had decided to pare back many of the additional activities she undertook in order to help her recovery), we completely understood and supported her decision. We were also delighted to see her achieve the significant milestone of 30 years at the school and add our congratulations to those of her colleagues and pupils.

We send Jo our thanks and continuing best wishes for her good health and recovery.

Kay Meredith



## The Hole in The Wall Blog

Thank you for the latest edition of The Hole in The Wall magazine.

What a magnum opus!

Thank you again for another excellent magazine. I feel sure Willy-J would disapprove of me saying so but I do so like the look and feel of it – and it fits into a handbag perfectly for an indulgent read on a long train journey. You will know lit.crit, was never a particular strength!

I appreciate the hard work to produce such a professional magazine.

First, my belated congratulations for this year's edition. Remarkably diverse and interesting.

Well done on once again putting together the "Hole in the Wall". A huge effort I know. Ann would be very proud of you!

Congratulations on the latest edition which arrived yesterday!

Another amazing magazine!!

What fun those giraffes looked and for a very good cause. Well done everyone involved.

There are so many interesting articles, and of course all the tributes to Ann are so lovely.

Another success, I enjoy the variety of the fare you produce. Truly something for everyone.

Just got back from Canada and have been reading HITW. MAGNIFICENT! While away on holiday and not imbibing vino or seeing relatives or tracking moose/beaver etc, I re-read Northanger Abbey – not JA's finest but it was

good to see my younger Canadian cousin had several of Austen's novels. I enjoyed it and thought of you all celebrating Ann and Mary's lives at the AGM. I hope it went well.

Well done – I really don't know how you do it!!!

You have an enormous task collating "The Hole in The Wall" magazine.

As someone educated "over the wall", reading the tributes to Ann Garrod left me with a sense of regret that I had not had the benefit of her teaching.  
A special lady.

The magazine is splendid and thank you for all your efforts for us to enjoy.

I have commented before just how much time and effort are required to produce the articles and to get the "flow" right with a magazine. Well done and thank you.

Phew! This magazine positively rattles with verve and pace. And that it is so easily distinguished by its size makes the task of finding it again on a crowded shelf seem less daunting somehow, so thank you.

It was good to receive the latest Hole in the Wall with so much lovely stuff about Ann.

It is difficult to complain about the number of items from the ladies when we men have not submitted any. I will put my thinking cap on for next year and hope others feel the same. Still a very enjoyable read.

I enjoyed the picture of Ann as a fresh faced girl and graduate.

It's good to see the magazine going from strength to strength. Thank you, it can't be easy.

Farewell Mrs Ricketts. Your beehive hairdo lives long in the memory, as does your calm and clear teaching.

## Forthcoming Events

As we go to press with this edition of The Hole in the Wall, the country is in a state of uncertainty as we watch and wait to see how the effects of the coronavirus pandemic ripple through everyday life.

Normally we would be publishing now the dates for the AGM and the Annual Dinner, but the committee has taken the decision to delay setting a date for either event until advice against travel and socialising has been lifted.

As soon as we are in a position to plan ahead, all members will be contacted with the requisite notice of AGM, and we sincerely hope to be able to gather as usual for the dinner in the approach to Christmas.

## Correspondence

Sir, (sic!!!)

Thank you for the recent copy of "The Hole in The Wall", but I think it must have been sent in error as there was little or no mention of Old BOYS!

Perhaps I missed the de-merger of the Schools and was sent the wrong Magazine?

I hope that this can be rectified before the next Magazine is due.

Yours,

Disgruntled OE

P.S. Come on lads, the mag is showing more bias than the BBC! They can only include news of Old Boys if they are sent the info in the first place!

**Editor's Note:** rumour has reached me, despite the literacy demonstrated in this correspondence, that the author is, in fact, one Christopher Pate, recently retired from Andrew Grant Estate Agents. We wish him all joy in this new phase of his life and hope that he, too, can find the time to pen a contribution worthy of gracing these pages!



***Bumble with a very absorbing chew***

## A Key Team Member?

One of the great things about the family of schools (now four, following the arrival of RGS Dodderhill last year) is how each school, whilst completely immersed in the same ethos, can follow its own path and so it is with one of the newer recruits at Springfield. He has been on the staff now for about 18 months and whilst he is immensely popular with children, parents and staff alike, he has not been universally welcomed [Ed: the Director of Finance & Operations was fairly sparing in his positivity about the appointment].

This addition to the team gives so generously of his time to the children, spending break time and lunch time with them. He is particularly good with children who are experiencing any form of unhappiness, maybe finding things difficult, overwhelming or confusing. He has boundless energy, is unfailingly pleased to see the children and spend time listening to a child's woes as they walk together outside.



He is on excellent terms with the Head-mistress, Laura Brown and spends a lot of time with her in her office. He is often keen to meet prospective pupils and their parents too and always makes a fabulous impression. This paragon's name? Why, it's Bumble! He is a two and a half year old black spaniel and, as you can see from the pictures, is completely at home in Springfield.

There is considerable research that shows contact with animals is hugely positive in mental health terms for children and adults, and especially for children who may be experiencing personal troubles. All too often, a troubled child may find it too difficult to talk to an adult but it is nothing short of remarkable how they open up

to an animal. Bumble has therefore been a really positive addition to the Springfield team. He will walk with an unhappy child, listen as they unburden themselves and not break their confidence. The fact that they are accompanied by a teacher means an unhappy little person gets the right care and support to help restore them to their usual cheerful and happy self.

Good job Bumble!

## **Coronavirus**

### **Its Impact on the RGS Family of Schools**

With the fluid and fast-changing situation in the UK and across the world, RGS has been working extremely hard to maintain business as usual, support pupils, parents and staff and adjust and update its contingency plans. No small undertaking as we can all appreciate! The Prime Minister's announcement of school closures on 18th March was widely anticipated and our schools' plans were already in place for such a move. In line with all schools across the UK, the four RGS schools closed their doors on 20th March. What was completely unexpected was the announcement that there would be no public exams this year, which must leave the A' Level students in particular feeling that they have missed an opportunity to be tested, to discover if they would, literally in this instance, make the grade.

In the midst of this, the school has sought to keep parents as well-informed as possible about the current status. I thought readers may be interested to browse some of the comments received by John Pitt from parents in response to his update letters sent during March. They really do speak for themselves.

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My son shared with us the lesson plan and timetable for tomorrow... We just wanted to say how fantastic we think it is and how impressed we are with the level of organisation. These are incredibly difficult times for you all and the speed with which you have sorted this out is phenomenal. Can we just say a big thank you to you and all the staff for working so hard and doing your utmost to keep lessons going and a teaching structure. It is very much appreciated. In the coming weeks we are all going to learn to appreciate you all the more. Interesting days ahead!

May we also take this opportunity to wish you and all your loved ones "good luck" for the days ahead. We hope you all remain healthy and unscathed. We look forward to seeing you again "on the other side".

May I commend the school's leadership team on the consistently clear, measured and timely updates throughout the current crisis. In the Civil Service we have been told to work from home if we can – so I am, and if my son joins me in doing so, I am confident that we will both be able to crack on with what we need to be doing!

I sincerely hope that amongst the question and concern emails you will have been flooded with this evening there are a few that express their deep gratitude for the calm, caring and efficient way in which you are steering through this difficult time period. Hope you and yours are all well and will speak to you soon.

Thank you very much for keeping us so well informed during this time of uncertainty. We always felt assured our kids were well looked after and safe.

As we don't know for how long the schools will be closed, we'd like to offer our help in case the school needs volunteers to make sure the kids of parents that need to work in core services during this pandemic are safe while learning remotely at school. We are happy to help in any task or area of the school that is required, in any of the four RGS schools. We hope you and your team can get some rest at least during the 2 weeks of the Easter Holidays.

My children are working hard at home. The school should be commended on its approach to digital modernisation over the last few years. It will enable the continued education of pupils over and above peer schools. Well done!!

Hi there, I just wanted to drop a quick line and let the school know how impressive I think your response has been to the pandemic. As a parent, I have felt reassured throughout and it is great to know early on how the school will be responding. These are exceptional times but I have felt that RGS has risen to that challenge. Thank you.

A note to thank you, and the team you lead, for your reaction to the current COVID-19 outbreak. Each letter has been informative and reassuring and yesterday's update, regarding remote learning, seems to have left no stone unturned. This cannot be an easy time with so many pupils under your responsibility. From us though, thank you again another example of our children's education being in safe hands.

I hope this email finds you well...in these troubling times! Firstly, may I say I think your communication regarding COVID 19 has been excellent, and as a family we totally support all your decisions.

Best wishes, and thanks again for all the hard work the school are putting into this, it's a really very impressive response.

This is just a quick note to thank the School for the excellent communication in these unprecedented times. I do not under-estimate how challenging this is for all Schools and for you personally as the Head of RGS to do the right thing for the children, parents and staff and at the right time. From what I have been told the teachers have been calm and reassuring whilst I am sure they have many personal worries.

I am worried about many things at the moment but one thing I am not worried about is how well RGS is prepared and organised for inevitable closure and I don't doubt that when the time comes it will be operationally slick and business as usual (or as close to that as it can ever be).

I do believe we are entering a time of a new normal and it will be those who are most able to adapt and innovate, and do so quickly, that will prosper. There is little to fear here for RGS. Once we get there the uncertainty will be lifted and the new normal will be quickly established. Please pass on my thanks to all the staff and see you on the other side!

Dear Mr Pitt and the school team, I am writing to thank you and the team for all your efforts to keep everyone informed and to keep the school functioning without too much disruption. We fully support all the measures that you have taken so far and for what happens in the future. Therefore I would be grateful if you could pass on this message of support to all the team who we know will be working extremely hard.

Thanks - the school is doing a good job under difficult circumstances. I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to Mr Pitt and all teaching staff at this incredibly difficult time. Your communication has been 1st class and for that we are very grateful. Thank you so much for this excellent plan - new routines will be established and our son will be in touch with his teachers in as close to a school environment as possible - I am so relieved.

Thank you RGS. For what it's worth, I think the school and the various Heads are doing a magnificent job looking after the kids and keeping parents informed.

What a fabulous school. Thank you for making so much effort to keep everybody informed. It's clearly been a challenging time, but you have kept the normal business running. Well done and thank you.

I just wanted to say what a fantastic job we feel the school is doing managing the Covid-19 situation. I work for an organisation with several hundred thousand employees globally and a team of people dedicated to sending communications on this type of topic and I can honestly say that RGS has kept me at least as well if not better informed over the last couple of weeks. Communications have been clear, informative, balanced and fair despite the fact that you are in an almost impossible situation. As they say you can't please all of the people all of the time!!

I should add that despite the aftermath our daughter absolutely loved the ski trip - thanks to all involved. We just wanted to say a big thank you for the way you are updating us regularly and for the way you're handling this whole situation - not easy, but your reassurance, decisiveness and active communication are all very reassuring.

Thank you. Good letter. Difficult circumstances.

All the best, I think the RGS response and handling of this matter has been fabulous. Thank you to all involved. Much appreciated.

I wanted to reply to thank you for your updates and the way you are approaching the situation with a prudent but balanced approach. We are impressed with the way it has been dealt with by the leadership. Warmly I know you and your team are damned if you do and damned if you don't but we do appreciate your endeavours with this challenge. Thanks to all.

Many thanks for the regular updates regarding the coronavirus.

My daughter hasn't been impacted at all as she wasn't on the ski trip, but we just wanted to say that we very much appreciate everything you, the leadership team and the medical staff are doing in light of, presumably constantly changing, PHE advice. We fully understand that you are very much at the mercy of that advice and are on the receiving end of fairly robust opinions as to the appropriateness of your actions, but that the wellbeing of the pupils and staff is at the beginning, middle and end of every decision you make, however difficult.

We just wanted to let you know that you have our full support for any decisions you make in the coming days and weeks. We can only assume that this, combined with the ever-rising water levels have meant that this working week hasn't been one of the better ones...! Hopefully you're all managing to stay dry and that both situations resolve themselves swiftly for you. Many thanks to you all.

Many thanks, we think RGS are doing a great job both in the action taken & keeping us informed. My family wish to applaud all schools and staff in the group for their response to a very difficult and fluid situation. Well done and keep it up. You have our support.

I just wanted to thank you very much for your efforts. While I happen to think the response to the outbreak generally has been slightly bonkers, with many mixed messages adding to anxiety, I am also very aware that you will be following medical guidance and acting totally in the best interests of the children, as always. Thank you.

Thank you for the update and the wise precautions you are taking. I am writing to express that, given the fast changing situation we all find ourselves in, I feel that you are taking a proportionate response. You have our support.

Thank you for keeping us updated. The situation you are in is not one I envy. All I can say from our point of view is keep up what you are doing. You can't please everyone all of the time!

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On behalf of the Association, I would like to add our thanks and congratulations. It is reassuring to know that the significant investment in the Digital Learning Programme a number of years ago (which still puts RGS in an elite group of leading schools) means that lessons can carry on remotely and the education of our children is going to be far less disrupted than would otherwise have been the case. Well done RGS and staff!

Kay Meredith

## Governor News

As we were going to press last year, the emerging news was of Dodderhill School in Droitwich joining the RGS family. A number of changes have taken place during the twelve months, most notably the appointment of Sarah Atkinson as the new Head from last September following the retirement of the former Headmistress Cate Mawston. Younger readers will remember Mrs Atkinson's calm, kind and able presence at The Grange, where she was Deputy Head Academic and a member of the Senior Leadership team and will doubtless be delighted to hear of her promotion.

The welcoming of Dodderhill to the RGS fold has brought to the RGS Board the additional benefit of new board members Katie Wormington and Jane Cross, two former Dodderhill governors. Katie and Jane bring totally different backgrounds and experiences and complement the already considerable strength and depth of the RGS Board.



***Katie Wormington***

After leaving Godolphin School in Salisbury and formal training in agriculture, Katie has pursued a career in that industry ever since. She is an integral member of the family business that now manages over 1,500 acres in Worcestershire and Wiltshire, with arable, livestock and forestry enterprises, let properties and conservation projects.

Due to needing both transferable skills and the confidence to work in a male-dominated industry, Katie is passionate about the importance of giving all pupils the skills to tackle and succeed in whatever career direction they wish to take.

Her three children are all former pupils of both Dodderhill and The Grange and after over six years on the Board of Governors for Dodderhill, she brings to the board a deep knowledge of the school's strengths and development opportunities. She is a strong advocate of Dodderhill making the most of the opportunities available as part of the RGS family and has been a very visible and reassuring presence in the school, providing continuity to parents and staff during a time of change. Katie sits on the Education Committee as the Liaison Governor for RGS Dodderhill.

Jane Cross (BSc ALCM, FCA) is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and since October 2019, has been Managing Director of e.surv Chartered Surveyors. Her career began with EY where she completed her Chartered Accountancy training. Thereafter, she followed a career in financial services. Before her appointment with e.surv, Jane was the Chief Risk Officer for the Financial Services Division of a plc and specialised in risk management, governance and regulatory compliance. This role was preceded by her time as CEO of Personal Touch Financial Services group which in turn followed on from several Finance Director appointments. Jane's son is a former RGS The Grange and RGS Worcester pupil and her daughter a former RGS Dodderhill pupil. Jane has a keen interest in classical music and regularly plays her flute with a small music group. She is also Treasurer for Girl Guiding in Droitwich, as well as a member of RGS's Finance and General Purposes Committee. Her husband doesn't see as much of her as he would like!



***Jane Cross***

## Digital Learning – What No Paint Pots?

The Digital Learning Programme is well-established in the four schools and it is all too easy to think that it applies only to the more traditional academic subjects such as Maths, English or Science. Springfield pupils were able to get creative with a digital art programme recently. Using the app “Art Set” together with some new iPad crayons, they were set the challenge of creating pictures of members of the Royal Family. And you can see from the results below, they certainly got to grips with the task, to very colourful effect!





## Back for Lunch

In May 1990 I was preparing to sit my A-levels. We thought we were so grown up: readying ourselves to scatter to the furthest corners of the country (and beyond, for some), because we were "so ready" – with a teenaged eye roll – to move on from the comforting cocoon / stifling strictness (\*delete as appropriate) of school. May 2019, and I find myself back, not for the first time since leaving school, but certainly for the first time in a fair while. Here this time to support my dear friend Shelley in her election at the AOOE AGM to the position of President Elect for the year, with the enjoyable bonus of the President's lunch afterwards.

We had some time before the meeting to explore. School staff were on hand to lead tours of the buildings on both sides of the wall, but I headed up the staff staircase (still feels slightly daring!) and the steep and winding stairs up to Room 14 – Art domain of the wonderful Mrs Perks and home to the state-of-the-art computer suite installed during my time at school. I saw one of those BBC Micros in a museum not so long ago.

That attic area is now home to the AOOE archives, and the committee had set out an array of artefacts and images on the tables. What a treasure trove of memories. To my astonishment, one of the first things I spotted on the table was a photograph of me on the lawn outside the vestibule doing archery with Miss Richards. I may have squealed a bit with the surprise, prompting Kay to murmur quietly, 'Well, we did know who was coming today, you know.' Ah yes, of course.



***Left to right: Miss Tyler, Sarah Holmes (Martin), Alison Candlin, Shelley Eyers (Cooper), Peter Breakwell, Mrs Cowton, Mrs Coombe***

It's perhaps unsurprising how at home one feels back at school even after so many years. My children tease me about having been to 'Hogwarts'; about lacrosse being just one net away from a broomstick (we still use my stick, though mostly for rescuing the dog's balls from under the sofa); ask me on a side-splittingly regular basis, 'What options did you choose, Mum? Defence against the dark arts?' Ho, ho, ho. But it's because I still feel so fondly about school and talk about it so often that they even have that much of an idea about my youth.

It's a delight to step back in time and reconnect with such happy memories and I would urge anyone to make that special trip and take the opportunity to attend one of the AOOE or School Foundation events held each year. I'll certainly be back again.

Alison Candlin



***Lunch was lovely, but I think we all agreed that the cardboard, glue and glitter was the best bit.***



**LACROSSE FIRST TEAM**

*(Back left to right) Sarah Bailey, Catherine Cowton, Sara Armstrong, Amanda Lemon, Sarah Stephens, Alison Candlin, Joanna Wagstaff. (Front left to right) Lindsey South, Sarah Wilson, Emma Brown, Katherine Davies.*

*(Photo: Tom Bader)*

## Next Stop? Why, Tanzania!

This summer I wanted to do something different. I explained to my work colleague in the Christmas break that I was looking for options about how I could spend my (long) university summer holiday. He suggested ICS. I had heard of NCS (National Citizenship Service), it was often advertised at school as a social development opportunity. ICS intrigued me; this is the International Citizenship Service. It is a global volunteering programme where UK volunteers work with volunteers of the host country on projects that aim to help remote communities.

I applied and had my assessment day within a week! A week after that I found out I would go to Tanzania on project WASH. I was clueless about what I would experience and even after my training weekend in Doncaster, I still didn't have any idea where I would go in Tanzania, or what project WASH involved. I raised the required £800 funding with the help of the AOOE's generous donation and pushed the thought of Tanzania out of my head while exam season took a temporary hold of my life. Even the day before I was

to leave the UK my mind hadn't fully grasped that I would be living in a remote village in rural Africa for 10 weeks without my phone and home comforts. I said good bye to my parents at the airport just as summer began – I would next see them as autumn started.



I had never been to a developing country before and I cannot fully remember what I saw on arrival, only the feeling of amazement at the raw beauty of the country. From Dar Es Salaam we drove six hours to Morogoro Town. We passed through farmland and small settlements. Fields were covered in rice plants and bordered by banana and mango trees. Shacks selling fruit and vegetables lined the bumpy road and people waved from the cafés and bars.



We met our counterparts for a training week. We learnt that we would be teaching the local school the seven stages of WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene), from the eight stages of handwashing to MHM (menstrual hygiene). We were also briefed on the culture of Tanzania and the possible dangers of being in the village. This week was so great as we all got to build friendships with each other. However at the end we were split into two groups, each group having seven Tanzanians and seven British volunteers.

I never expected it to be easy living in the village, but I didn't think I would grow to have such appreciation for things we take for granted in the UK. From having a corner shop that sells everything you may need, to a washing machine, to running water, they all seemed like a distant memory to me. I helped my host family fetch water from the pump, but they also got their water from a stagnant well. My meals were mostly rice and beans, and I collected my own water every night to have a shower outside over the bucket. However, my host family were so welcoming I soon didn't feel like I was out of my comfort zone, instead I felt like I was home. My counterpart would translate for me when she could and soon, we were used to each other.

We were the second and last cycle to the village (Sululu). The first group had built the septic pit and the foundation for the student toilets. We were to finish the seven boys' toilets and eight girls' toilets, as well as building the septic tank for two teacher toilets, the toilets themselves and the handwashing



station. Before we came there were two toilets for over one thousand students and only a few “tippy” taps (a bottle tied to string that meant it could tip water once the string was pulled). Construction was physically demanding and often dirty. The volunteers would mix cement for the builders to do the skilled work such as brick laying. Brick tossing and attempts of plastering were also common tasks. During the last two weeks we painted the murals and I painted the MHM room. The group would divide in two and while one half did construction, the other would teach the students. We made lessons interactive and the students responded well. We hoped they would tell their family what we taught them!

My favourite day was the first action day we held. An action day saw us throw a ‘party’ for the villagers to engage with the work we were doing. Almost the whole village came! We were focusing on hand washing, so we created games for the children where this was key but also fun. One game challenged the children to throw slippery soap with wet hands and the last group standing would win. Music was also blaring so loudly from speakers that it was heard not just in the market but the whole village! We often danced with the children and adults alike.



I learnt so much from my experience in Tanzania. Thank you, Alice Otteleians and Old Elizabethans, I hope with your support we made a positive long-lasting impact for this community.

Jane Thurgood

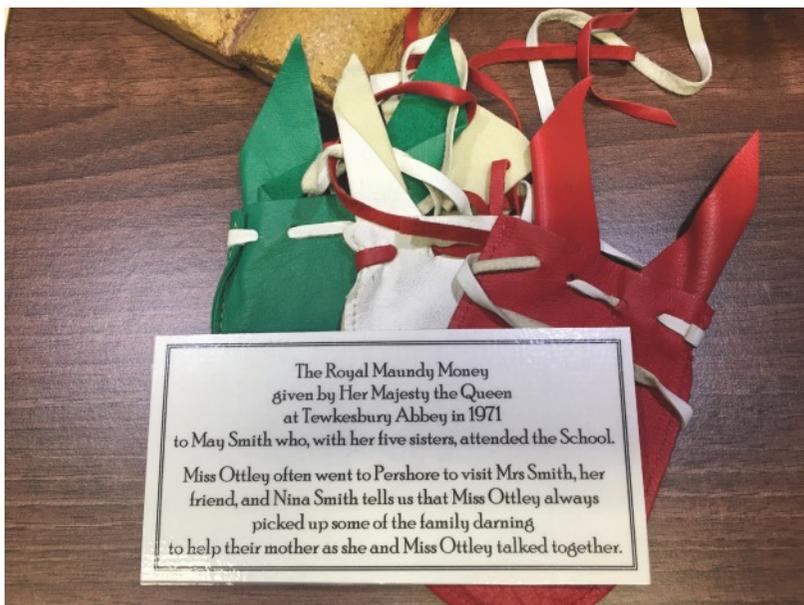
## Archive Gallery

The AOOE archives are an ever-evolving treasure trove of objects and photographs documenting the history of the school in its separate entities and bringing together those histories in one place. Donations of photographs or physical objects are always welcome – together with as much information as you can provide, of course. When you attend AOOE events where you will have the opportunity to view a selection of the archive material, the archive secretaries will be delighted to talk to you and hear any detail you can add to what they already know about the articles on display.

The following pages are a gallery of images taken at the AGM in 2019, showing the display in the former Room 14 at the top of the Alice Ottley main building. Do come and explore when you are next in school.















SELECTION OF MATERIAL  
FROM  
THE ROYAL GRAMMAR  
SCHOOL

  
RGS  
WORCESTER

ALICE OTTLEY SCHOOL  
ARCHIVES



 WORCESTER CATHEDRAL

Alice Ottley - her life and legacy:  
A commemoration



Book of the Exhibition  
held in Worcester Cathedral  
18 - 22 September 2012



Alice Ottley  
Her life and legacy:  
A commemoration

Book of the Exhibition  
held in Worcester Cathedral  
18 - 22 September 2012

The Dean's Chapel  
 WORCESTER CATHEDRAL

Edited by Anne Pugh, Thomas Storey,  
Margaret Goodall and Helen Taylor

THE MUSEUM IS PAID FOR BY RICHARD'S





## East African Playgrounds Fundraising 2019

After 5 years at RGS Worcester, I left Year 13 in 2016 and began a gap year before commencing Marine Biology at the University of Southampton in September 2017. Through my studies, I got involved with the universities RAG (Raise and Give) Society and I was invited to apply to be one of two adventure team leaders for a charity called 'East African Playgrounds'. This involved recruiting a team of students, supporting, tracking and leading their fundraising before flying out to Uganda for 3 weeks with them in June/July 2019 to volunteer for the charity to build and maintain playgrounds. Part of the expedition also involved a five-day trek to see some of the last remaining silver back mountain gorillas and help to support their conservation. I was greatly enthused by this challenge and managed to recruit a team of 11 students who shared similar enthusiasm for the charity and the trip.



My team and I had successfully met our targets and by the 23rd of May 2019, we had raised almost £16,000 in a 6-month period. This was achieved through organising pub quizzes, sponsored runs, bake sales, club nights, bucket raids and asking for support from family and friends. This was helped greatly by the generous donation by the Alice Ottleians and Old Elizabethans' Association who awarded me £150 to help me reach my personal total.

Play is a very important part of growing up and many studies have linked enrichment via play to increased intellectual development and especially important is increased school attendance in less developed countries. At RGS and before my education there, I was surrounded by enriching activities as well as practical learning. Through the schooling and nurture afforded to me during my time at RGS, I was able to achieve a greater confidence and academic success that enabled my path to University, so when the opportunity arose to go to Uganda and try to help shape a better future for less fortunate children, I leapt at the chance to help.



Whilst staying at Nakanyonyi Primary School in Jinja, Uganda, we experienced the teaching methods at a government run primary school with 2,448 children enrolled (and lots of mosquitos!). Alongside local experts employed and trained by the charity, we built a large playground, taught children in interactive play sessions and supported the charity in training the existing teachers in other ways to teach and how to include play in teaching.



I was humbled by the experience and I am very proud of what we were able to achieve in a short space of time.

I would like to express my gratitude to Alice Otteleians and Old Elizabethans' Association who supported this project and helped to make a positive difference to the lives of the children in Jinja.

In 2020, I will be attempting a similar challenge in the UK where I will be recruiting a team of around 20 students from the University of Southampton to raise money for the charity 'Unseen' by doing the three peaks challenge. 'Unseen' is a charity fighting modern slavery which hopes to make a difference to survivors of slavery.

Joseph Young (2011 – 2016)



## Latin Poetry – The Roman Legacy

Did you “do” Latin at school? Did you love its poetry? If you did, you will excuse what follows as pure fantasy, but, according to a recent newspaper report, schoolgirls in the war-torn Middle East have discovered the joy of learning Latin. They love its poetry, and the great Roman poet Cicero is one of their favourites. [Ed: Really? Unbelievable ...] Now, believe it or not (and if you did “do” Latin at school, you will probably not), there is evidence that Worcester had its own Roman poet whose Latin was remarkable. Could schoolgirls in Worcester have been aware of this anonymous poet, and do they now share the same joy in learning Latin as their counterparts in Asia Minor?

From its foundation in the 13th century, and down the following centuries, boys at RGS will have learned Latin. Perhaps one of them became this poet. Many will have found the language difficult to understand, but, in later years, the most easily understood words of the late great Latin master, R.D. Wormald (aka “Grubs”) were not Cicero’s poetry, but “STOP RUNNING DOWN THE LONG WALK”!

Translating this into Latin did not produce a rhyming couplet, but it always had the desired effect. It was during his time at RGS, however, that two fragments of Latin poetry were found which were attributed to a Roman poet. The first is quite short. Shakespeare wrote a whole play about its two characters:

Caesar et sum iam forte  
Brutus et erat  
Caesar sic in omnibus  
Brutus sic in at.

The second must have been written in a later period, perhaps by one of his followers:

Esse billi, heres ago  
Fortibus es in aro  
Nos illi billi, Themis trux  
Si vatis in em. Pes an dux.

So, those who have “done” Latin will, doubtless think this is all fantasy but others may think that Worcester did have a Latin poet whose work, though never aspiring to the classical heights of the great Cicero, might nevertheless be remembered still.

Clive Owen

## The Mervs

On the day that Ben Stokes played the innings of a lifetime, I was with eleven of my best mates, their progeny and partners, at the idyllic Brockhampton Cricket Club, wearing a large floppy moustache and enjoying life to its fullest. It is hard to imagine a better way to spend a day.

The twelve of us met at RGS in the 1980's and have been playing cricket together, in homage to the great Merv Hughes, since 1998. Naturally, the emphasis has always been on social rather than sporting excellence and, as most of us approach our fifties, this is even more so.

Our generous hosts for the weekend were Matt Taylor (1990), his wife Kate and family. Suitably billeted around the house, local pub and tented fields, we met each evening on the Taylors' rear terrace for food, liquid refreshment and conversation. Without doubt one of the best things about having close friends you have known over four decades is that you are never short of conversation! Our children range from 18 months to almost 18 years and it is brilliant to see the instant bond when we get together – also their eagerness to participate in the cricket when tired old limbs succumb to the fierce heat of an August bank holiday weekend.

The match was played in blistering sunshine, a rare treat for the late summer holiday. Brockhampton batted first and regular drinks breaks were order-of-the-day for your Mervs in the field. Fortunately, with 12 senior players and



***The Mervs 2019***

***Back row L to R – Thomas Halkon, Ian Gormley, Mike Freely, Dan Walker, Graham Taylor, Adam Gaca, Adrian Baker, Daniel Halkon, Andy Thorp  
Front row L to R – Andy Halkon, Jon Powell, Pete Breakwell, Iain Burton, Matt Taylor***

kids to boot, there was plenty of scope for ten minutes outside the boundary for a pint of lager shandy, or two. In the game itself, prolific paceman Adrian Baker took two early wickets in his opening spell, reducing Brock' to 41-2. After this though, the Mervs found wickets hard to take. Perhaps it was the short boundaries, perhaps it was the heat (perhaps it was the proximity of the bar and the frequent breaks) but the scoring rate was high through the middle order. Although there was excellent bowling later on from Adam Gaca 2-12 and Charlie Walker (son of Dan) who took 2 wickets for 5 runs, the damage was done and Brockhampton finished with an imposing total of 263-8 off 30 overs.

During the extended tea interval we listened in awe to the incredible climax to the Headingley Ashes test match. All of us, players and spectators alike, were gripped by the tension of the moment. When England's ninth wicket fell they had needed 73 to win and it seemed impossible that Stokes and Leach would survive and score enough runs to pass the Aussies' total. What happened next has gone down in history as one the most remarkable victories. As we celebrated on the side of the Brockhampton pitch, beer in hand, I would be lying to say it didn't cross my mind to forfeit and roll-on the festivities. But being Skipper comes with responsibilities so we padded-up and, suitably inspired by England's heroics, headed out to bat.

Jon Powell fell for a duck in the second over.

Fortunately, Powell's opening partner Andy Thorp fared better and together with Andy Halkon they put on 50 for the second wicket. Thorp finished on 28, Halkon 26 and there were notable contributions from Mike Freely (32), Matt Taylor (27) and Dan Walker (24). Despite this, the Mervs found the asking rate too steep throughout and by the time the innings closed, they had posted a respectable 195-5.

Brock won by 68 runs but naturally, on such a day, the result of our match was inconsequential. The beautiful setting, time spent with close friends and families, the hospitality of the home team and the events at Headingley will be the stand-out memories of 25 August, 2019.

Post-match I delivered my traditional address and awarded the Mervs' honours. Merv of the Match, on a day of celebration for ginger-haired cricketers everywhere, went to Mike Freely. Due to a disappointing lack of calamitous on-field incidents or errors, the Thanks-for-Coming medal had to be decided in a boat-race. We were delighted and unsurprised that Ian Gormley carried-off this ignoble award.

If anyone wants to turn-out for the Mervs in 2020 please let me know, we will be doing it all again sometime, somewhere.

Pete Breakwell  
Mervs' Skipper, February 2020

## CLASSIFIED AD

WANTED: Class of 1990  
(aka & including 1988 GCSE guinea pigs)

For a ground-breaking girls AND boys reunion party,  
to celebrate us all, some 30 years later\*  
And (hopefully) the end to social distancing – please  
act with discretion

Date: Saturday, 10th October 2020  
Venue: School

11:00 School tour (optional)  
12:00 Drinks (mandatory)  
13:00 Lunch (L-O-N-G)

It would be wonderful to be as many as possible  
Please share far & wide – and contact us for further  
detail & to let us know you'll be there!

 FaceBook: Once Upon a Wall Class of 1990

 Instagram: @onceuponawall1990

 onceuponawall1990@gmail.com

Self-appointed committee:

Amanda Hyett (née Lemon), Emma Kennedy (née Ward),  
Bridget Errington

Adrian Baker, Jon Powell, Mike Freely

With special thanks to The RGSW and AOS Foundation Office

\*ticketed, simply to cover costs

## 1950s Reunion for 2020

A small group of Old Girls from the 1950s were delighted to rediscover one another at the school merger celebration in 2007. They have met up several times since then and are now looking for more of their contemporaries who were at school in the '50s to join them at the next AOS Summer Gathering, on Saturday 27 June, 2020.

If you'd like to join Brigid Gardner (Brennan), Caroline McArthur (Finlay), Christine Dowling (Brent), Jill Taylor (Ottley), Jill Clay (Sanders), Margaret Ryley (Gittins) and Sadie Chalkley (Banfield) and reconnect in person with others from your time at school, please look out for details of the gathering on the Foundation Office alumni website [www.rgswwandaos.foundation.org](http://www.rgswwandaos.foundation.org) or contact Jo Weaver in the Foundation Office on 01905 613391 or by email to [foundation@rgsw.org.uk](mailto:foundation@rgsw.org.uk)



## Recollections of "Phys.Ed." at AOS

After reading a description by Jerry Seinfeld (an American comedian) about the gym lessons in his schooldays - "hanging upside-down on ropes with almost no clothes on" - I began to think about our AOS gym lessons in the late 1940s/early 1950s.

We had no special sports outfits apart from footwear: brown gym shoes for gym, black gym shoes for netball and black lacrosse boots. Gymnastics were performed in the navy-blue knickers, which were compulsory uniform wear over a pair of white ones. We would enter the Gymnasium and go up on to the end platform, there to shed our overalls, gymslips (tunics - nothing to do with gym!) and ties. Clad in knickers and blouses, socks and gym shoes, we were all set for the 45 minutes of what is now called "Phys.Ed."

After a few warm-up calisthenics we were ready to tackle the various pieces of equipment set up in a circular route. We walked, balanced on the bar of an inverted wooden bench, did scissor jumps over parallel bars, vaulted over the wooden horse, and leapt up and over the two leather-topped wooden boxes. I can still hear the bounce of feet on the springboard prior to take-off. We climbed to the top of long ropes and hung upside-down by our feet or right-way-up by our arms on the bars which lined the walls, and did somersaults on the hairy mats. It was all great fun and most (but not all) of us enjoyed it.



***Gymnastics class in action – these girls fortunately wearing more than just their navy-blue knickers!***

I was quite agile, but never good enough to be included in the prestigious "star gym class", which met one evening a week after school hours. I was very envious of that élite group of athletes.

I am not sure how we managed in summer. Did we tuck the skirts of our blue and white striped cotton summer dresses into our elasticated knicker legs, as we did when practising handstands and cartwheels in break? Or did we shed the dresses and do gym in vest and pants? Maybe others remember? In our adolescent years, the question of who or who did not yet have a bra was of great interest – those who already wore one being looked up to by those with still boyish figures, of whom I was one.

Miss Veale, Miss Annand, Miss Thomas and Miss Crowe were the perpetually mini-skirted mentors who caught us on landing from leaps and vaults and they obviously did a good job because I do not remember anyone ever having an accident.

In the summer term, weekly swimming lessons were compulsory, only to be avoided on production of a note from home claiming a valid excuse. We walked in a "crocodile", two by two, to nearby "Parks's Puddle" – a pool of excruciatingly cold water, surrounded by chilly wooden changing cubicles, two girls allotted to each.

The sports teachers sensibly never entered the water but stood on the edge in their sweaters and mini-skirts, shouting instructions to us from above and miming the action of various strokes. Some girls were good swimmers, probably from tuition elsewhere. I finally learnt to swim in the sea on holidays, but never got past mere competence.

After 30 – 40 minutes of swimming or shivering, we were happy to get out of the water, take off our plain navy-blue swimsuits and get dressed, with cardigans and thick woollen school blazers over our cotton dresses. Of course, there were hot summer days now and then, when the experience was almost pleasant but however inclement the weather, the school timetable was set in stone and swimming lessons were not to be cancelled any more than history or geography!

I will leave to others the description of winter sports: "lax" (lacrosse) over in "Brit. Scue" (Britannia Square playing field) on frosty mornings in regular indoor uniform tunics, blouses and ties and knee-length socks; netball much the same on the court outside the gym. Those were the days and, all in all, they were happy ones!

Valerie Jackson (now Rosendorff)  
1942 - 1954



***From one gym back to another (via a library) – but what a transformation!***



## Rowers Reunited

It was a bright sunny day in June 1999, as we lined up, a schoolboy crew about to race another crew from "Bachelors Barge Club", USA, on the start-line of Marlow Regatta. These boys had travelled over to try and pre-qualify for the upcoming Henley Royal Regatta, as had a crew from Sydney, Australia, whom we had narrowly beaten earlier on in the first round. The race started cleanly, and after a tight tussle in the middle thousand metres we managed to take a length lead which eventually led to a win, setting us up for a final against Winchester College later that afternoon.



There are some things we all remember from our schooldays and those few halcyon weeks of 1999 are a happy part of my school memories. We won the final and became the first RGS Worcester crew ever to win the prestigious Marlow Regatta; later that afternoon, Dave and Matt, our stern pair, went one further to win the final of Elite Coxless pairs at the same regatta, an incredible achievement for a schoolboy pair. In doing so they cemented their position to represent Great Britain later that summer. To this day, I don't believe RGS has won another event at Marlow. The trophy was enormous, and took two of us to carry it!

The win there pre-qualified us for the Fawley Cup at Henley several weeks later, and we waited with anticipation for the draw. For school rowers, the Henley Royal Regatta is a very big deal, often more so than any National Championships or School events. Our entire year had been leading up to this regatta. The rowing press had described our crew as one of the likely finalists, and 'the fastest single club quad in the country at the moment'. We



were expecting to be seeded, and kept away from the favourites, a composite from Leander Club and Tiffin School which included the now-legendary Matt Langridge, already by then the current World Junior single sculls champion. Matt went on to win Gold, Silver and Bronze Olympic medals as part of Team GB over the next three Olympiads.

Inevitably, for reasons unknown, the seeding didn't happen and we sadly drew the Leander/Tiffin boys in the first round, a grey and overcast Thursday morning. Knowing we were unlikely to beat them barring a disaster, we planned to row hard from the start and see if we could pressure them into a mistake. Row hard we did, putting half a length lead into them at the end of Temple Island, but no mistake came forthwith and they slowly and steadily pulled clear to an impressive 2 length lead by the finish. Thus came to the end our dreams of being the first RGS crew to make a Henley Final. Times later showed we would have won most of the other heats with ease.

There was an unexpected outcome to this however, as Matt invited us all back to the Leander Clubhouse following the race for refreshments. There we spent a good hour reviewing the videos of our race on their big screen with none other than Sir Matthew Pinsent, by then into the third year of his Sydney Olympic Campaign with the GB coxless four, tucking into what seemed like an entire loaf of bread and jam. For schoolboys into their rowing, this was the equivalent of a football-mad teenager being invited to the England dressing room to have breakfast with David Beckham. A great way to take the sting out of an inevitable but painful defeat.

The rowing press, including the Telegraph and Regatta magazine, were to follow this up by criticizing the 'Henley Gremlins' for allowing such a draw to happen without proper seeding, and starving the Regatta of a deserved final clash. No matter, the result would have been the same, and we schoolboys were made up even to be written about outside our own school newsletter.

Certain things about those days stand out. I remember arguing with Dave the day before (nothing new). I remember us all being decked out in bright yellow 'Janousek Racing' T-shirts by our boat manufacturer, Bob Janousek, for the warmup days, who had popped by to wish us luck. I remember our coach, Mike Vetch, running us through some apparent 'relaxing techniques' that he had learnt from ante-natal classes (hard to keep a straight face). I remember the joy on my parents' faces as they came to the Regatta, picnic basket in hand, and my late Father followed the race down in the umpire's launch, something he spoke about for years afterwards. I remember having a long chat with James the day before, and then washing the boat together, to help calm our collective nerves. And I also remember us being disappointed that we wouldn't get to race in that crew again, with Dave and Matt having to spend the rest of their summer preparing for their GB Junior duties.

I was lucky enough to race at Henley 4 subsequent times in different School, University and Club crews, but none of these had the same impact on me as my first time. The very first time you race in Henley, the sheer scale and spectacle are unlike anything else, and you can only prepare for it by experiencing it first-hand. It's a magical place for a rower. I wouldn't have missed that grey and overcast morning for the World.



So, we four went our separate ways following Henley, with Dave and Matt finishing their school career, and James and I starting our last year of sixth-form. I ended up going to Loughborough University with Dave, the two of us representing our 1st VIII at Henley in 2001. Matt went off to study in Cardiff, rowing for a season or two but then choosing to focus on his medical studies. James went to study at Oxford Brookes, took up triathlon, and ended up representing Great Britain on three separate occasions. In fact, every member of this Quad has, at some point, represented their Home Country or Great Britain, with Dave Gilbert perhaps going the furthest by representing GB U23 and World Universities towards the end of his University years.

One of the other rewarding outcomes of school-age rowing has been to follow the careers of our peers as they went on to greater things. Watching athletes such as Matt Langridge, and another Worcester boy Zac Purchase, win Olympic Gold medals for Great Britain some years later has been a real privilege, knowing that we once raced and knew them. Another RGS boy a year or two after us, Tom Dyson, is now head of Paralympic rowing for GB. And Matthew Pinsent, clearly inspired by our breakfast chat in Leander Club in 1999, went on to greater things as well.



A logistical feat then to get the four of us back together 20 years later, one living in Worcester, one in Cardiff, one in Inverness and one in Poole. All several kilos heavier in the body and somewhat lighter in the hair but together with parents, families and our coaches from the late 1990s, rowing together again was both a genuine pleasure and an enjoyable trip down memory lane. It's something that I would urge any old school or club

crew to try and do at some point, as the rewards are well worth the effort of making arrangements. Friendships and respects forged in rowing boats seem to be some of the strongest going. I'd probably say that the sustained friendship and camaraderie is more rewarding than the rowing or winning all-told, and these particular ones have stood up for 20-odd years.

Thanks go to our friends at Worcester Rowing Club, some of whom remembered us as pimply Schoolboys, for hosting the day, and special thanks to Keith Hiley for the photographs. An 'old boys' race at a local regatta has been suggested for next year; let's see if the enthusiasm is still there after the winter!

Rob Inett

**The RGS Worcester crew of 1999 was:**

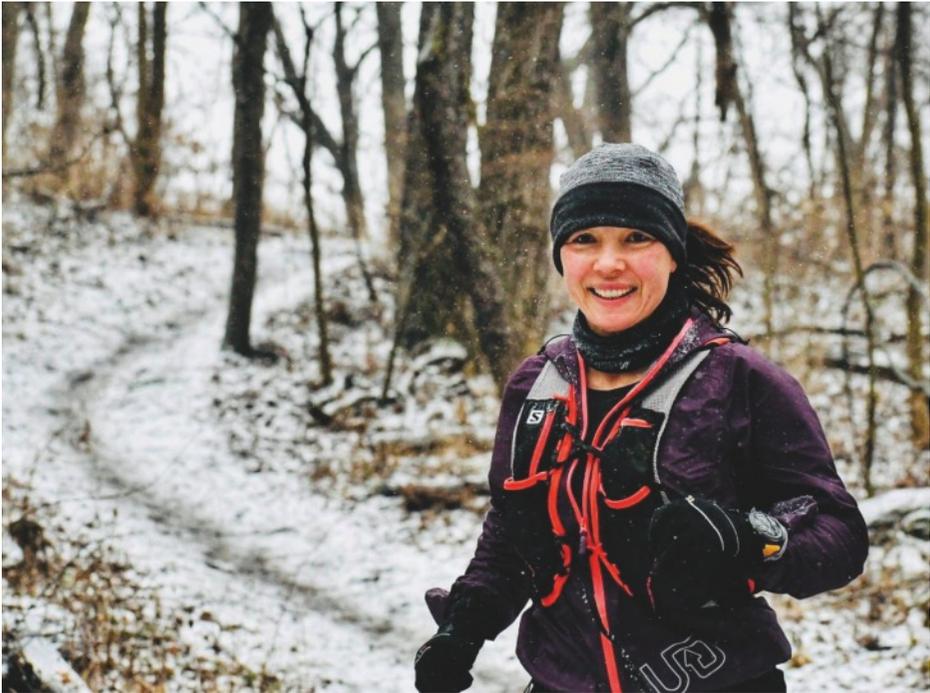
**(Bow) James Fletcher** studied at Oxford Brookes  
Now living in Inverness, working in Forestry and Land management.  
Represented Great Britain in Triathlon in 2004, 2007 and 2013.

**(2) Rob Inett** studied at Loughborough  
Now living in Poole, Dorset, managing a small Building Company.  
Represented Wales in rowing.

**(3) David Gilbert** studied at Loughborough  
Living back in Worcester and a Construction Consultant.  
Represented England, Great Britain and Great Britain U23 in rowing.

**(Stroke) Matthew Williams** studied at Cardiff  
Now living in Cardiff and is a Consultant Anaesthesiologist.  
Represented England and Great Britain in rowing.

**Coach: Mike Vetch** RGS Worcester



## Going for a Run?

Many of us like to run for fresh air and fitness, but few take it quite as far as Alice Ottleian Sarah Bailey. Sarah was a stalwart of every school sports team going in the '80s, representing not only the school but also playing at county and district level and even national level in lacrosse. 30 years on, she's clearly got no intention of slowing down.

Sarah lives in the States, where her mammoth runs regularly take her along snow-covered trails, through desert landscapes and across the most challenging of terrains. She has run many Ultra-marathons (for FUN!!), including the Action Asia Mongolia 100km twice and the Grand Canyon Rim-to-Rim-to-Rim.

This August – travel restrictions and global emergencies permitting – Sarah is coming back to the UK to take part in the Ultra Great Britain Race Across Scotland: Sarah's first 200-miler. She will be raising money at the same time for the not-for-profit charity 'Bigger Than The Trail', of which she is an ambassador, as she aims to complete the (very hilly) 215 mile course in under 100 hours. We wish her luck!



***A formidable tennis doubles pairing with Sara Armstrong (now Acworth).***

***A happy heap of lacrosse players.***

***Back row left to right: Camilla Goddard, Alison Candlin, Vicky Reynolds, Sara Armstrong, Hélène Aberdein, Katie Cowton.***

***Front row, left to right: Emma Roe, Hannah Dalgleish, Sophia Randle, Sarah Bailey, Stephanie Heasman.***



## Calling all Cricket Fans!!

I chanced to be in the Cricket Pavilion overlooking Flagge Meadow on a gloriously sunny June day last year. It was hot and, in the post-lunch haze, my eye alighted on the honours boards. I was drawn to the bowlers and noticed a significant number had taken 9 wickets, surely a remarkable feat? I quickly decided that these had to represent the pinnacle of our bowling achievements.

But not so fast, I hear you shout, there are others who shouldn't be ignored! And I have to hand it to you, because of course, you're absolutely right. So, I list below (the "niners" first) my nominations for the "RGS Best Bowling Performance".

Please send your vote, together with any recollections, rationale or special pleading, to [magazine@aooe.org](mailto:magazine@aooe.org), which I will happily include next year. Sadly, no prize for the winner, just the recognition and acclamation of your peers!

Year	Name	Figures	Opposition
1946	P. D. Mills	9 - 36	Crypt
1953	A. F. Hill	9 - 40	King Edward's School, Southampton
1956	P. J. Payne	9 - 39	King's School, Worcester
1963	I. D. Follett	9 - 26	Sebright
1967	E. A. Baynham	9 - 20	King Edward's School, Stourbridge
1985	J. S. Waters	9 - 61	King's School, Worcester
1986	J. S. Waters	9 - 20	Repton
1945	R. A. Johnson	7 - 7	Wolverhampton Grammar School
1971	D. R. Wilton	7 - 4	Oxford School
2013	E. A. Bartlett	6 - 4	Wolverhampton Grammar School
2013	W. J. Bury	6 - 8	King's School, Worcester
2014	A. S. Jawanda	5 - 1	Hereford Cathedral School

Kay Meredith

## Mary Somers Remembered

*We were unable to include these tributes to a much-loved teacher and colleague last year and are putting that right in this edition. Many are written to Emily, Mary's daughter.*

I met her on my first day at AO and we were immediately friends. That never changed. We shared the same attitudes and values concerning the school, the girls, and French, especially French Literature, which we both loved. We had to take it in turns year on year to teach literature, to make it fair! When things got tough for one of us the other always had her back, and we always pulled together when things in general were difficult.

As Head of Modern Languages she was my Head of Department, and I was delighted when she was appointed, and always admiring of how she ran the department. As one of my Sixth Form Tutors, she was kind, patient and approachable for the girls, and totally dependable for me.

And the Provence Exchange: she set it up, from a connection at the École Chevreul in Marseille of Elizabeth Oakley's, and she organised it, top to bottom, every year for ten years. It was so valuable for the girls. But for me, I shared your Mum's love of Provence. We had the most lovely time each Easter in the Provençal sunshine with our French friends, visiting exquisite towns and villages and fascinating Roman sites, loving the mountains, the sea and the countryside, the lavender, vines and cypress trees. None of that would have happened were it not for your Mum.

As neighbour to a single Mum, she couldn't be bettered. She encouraged me to buy the house in the first place. She was always there for me (with a little practical help from your Dad in the matter of birds in the house!), always time for a cup of tea and a chat in that welcoming kitchen. Since we retired, it's been mainly coffee or lunch at Worcester Garden Centre, catching up with the kids – she was so proud of you all – and now grandchildren to talk about, too. And friends, and books, and music – we never ran out of conversation.

When she was diagnosed with that awful condition, she took it so bravely. As her mobility declined and her physical horizons narrowed, she continued to go out, to accept invitations, to be part of the world. I had so much respect for her. I was so proud of her.

Jan Cowton

Just three weeks ago, as I re-subscribed to French *Elle*, I remembered how my love of magazines began – and indeed with French *Elle*. As most people know, magazines are my indulgence. They have allowed me to dream, escape, explore, understand myself, read of people, places, arts, foods... They have been fuel to my pursuing a life far greater than I had ever imagined.

What a wonderful teacher to suggest not a text book, not extra homework, but a fashion & culture magazine created in the arts jewel of Paris, to inspire a simple teenage girl living a small town life in the late 80's to engage with the French language and culture. That wonderful teacher was Mrs Somers and I received the most wonderful privilege of being her pupil for 7 years, as I evolved from a meek 11 year old child to a young woman full of curiosity for the tangible world that lay ahead and also the intangible that lay beyond.

I still remember the Sunday afternoon as I pored over an A level French literature essay, when I suddenly wanted to know the answers to those questions that Camus was posing of this life and beyond. It was exciting and thrilling – and has never left me. I still spend many an hour musing. Double French lit. during sixth form was a joy. I can't remember now if it was every Tuesday or every Wednesday. Mrs Somers would appear – nearly always dashing, late – filling each day with so much.



***Mary (right) shown here with Ann Garrood (centre) and Polly Brook (left) at the retirement celebration for Ann and Polly in the Summer term of 1989***

She was tall and elegant. Always a stroke of lipstick and wonderful jewellery. Fantastic woollen skirts – and boots to her knees. She was chic, she expressed herself in her aesthetic style. And sometimes she would appear with newly coiffed hair – so glamorous. And yet she was also so real, so down to earth, so understanding.

Despite her wonder, there was never anything to fear. She was kind. It would always be OK. She had the brightest, broadest smile. And the literature was absorbing as we got under the skin of characters, stepped into their shoes and explored existence, guided by Mrs Somers to flex our sensitivities and reflections.

Oh, and she had studied in London. I guess the bottom line was that I was pretty awestruck by my French teacher! And I don't think it was a coincidence that I ended up living in Paris and almost believing that I was French!

And then at the end of those seven years, she hosted a summer supper party at her home in Tibberton. It felt like my passage to the greater world. I was a young woman, a guest of the most wonderful female role model. It really did feel like the world was my oyster. I was so excited.

Without doubt, through her being, her example, her sharing and her encouragement, Mrs Somers germinated the seed of me. And next week, as Katie, Sara and I watch a stage adaptation of Sartre's *L'Étranger* in London, we will celebrate the extraordinary teacher who provoked our curiosity in this gift that is life.

Bridget Errington

For me I have warm, happy memories of her lessons. I don't ever remember feeling uncomfortable or stressed. She was motherly, kind and understanding and had a wonderful, cheeky glint in her eye.

I'm currently with Mum and Dad and Mum has probably summed it up the best... "as a mum of four, I have talked to a lot of teachers at parents' evenings over the years and I remember very few names but Mrs Somers was one that stood out because she was kind and always looked for the best in people".

Sara Armstrong (now Acworth)

I still remember my conversation with Mrs Somers when Bridget was made Head Girl and also the letter she sent after I gave tapes to her department; with thanks for her wonderful teaching. Please send my condolences to the family.

Bridget Errington's Mother

She was one of life's great ones. So passionate about teaching, so inspiring. I think it was she who made what seemed like incomprehensible French texts seem so easy and enjoyable. I truly credit her with helping get me to Oxford and to will me to study literature.

She was also such a gentle soul, never looking for credit at her students' successes, just quietly getting on with the job. The respect we had for her was innate, we knew she was a brilliant teacher but there was never any need for her to be strict and was always so much laughter in her classes.

Mrs Somers was just one of those teachers who made you feel totally at ease no matter how big the challenge. I remember looking at Camus' *La Peste* and feeling that it was totally beyond my capabilities and yet she rendered it one of my favourite books ever.

She was one of life's golden people... she never drew attention to herself but is one of those stand-out people in all our memories. I remember her kindness, I remember her patience and most of all, I remember laughing with her... rare for a teacher-pupil relationship.

Rest In Peace Mary and thank you.

Vikki O'Connor

Your Mum was such a special lady with the biggest of hearts. I always remember that when I went through some tough times at AO, missing home and not feeling that I was fitting in, she was the only one who picked me up and pulled me aside to talk to me a number of times.

Sarah Bailey

Mary was so instrumental in shaping my early life through my education; I could never have thanked her enough, and I will now never get the chance.

Before you joined Emily, your mum had been our form teacher. Of course, she had taught many of us – including me – since we were 12 anyway, but she was gentle, caring and watchful – just what we needed – as our form teacher in our GCSE year when we thought we knew it all, but in fact knew nothing. I guess we had you to thank for the beautiful, serene way she was with us all on a daily basis in that year... she had one just like us back at home and she knew 15 year old girls like the back of her hand... and we were fortunate enough to meet you and get to know you, when you joined us for VI Form.

I have wonderful memories of a calm, gentle and determined mentor, who I respected more than I've respected anyone since, and who inspired me like no one else subsequently could when it came to literature.

Mary was our form teacher in Upper V. One day she came into the form room earlier than she normally did for registration and called us all into her confidence..... she had received a call that morning from one girl's mother explaining that her daughter had dyed her hair the previous night and that it had gone horribly wrong, such that her normally mid-brown hair was jet black and very "obvious". The poor girl was devastated at what she had done and had initially been refusing to come to school for fear of being laughed at. So Mary calmly explained that our classmate would be slightly late into registration that day and that she (Mary) hoped we'd be able to treat her in the way that we'd hope we'd be treated in the same circumstances – no drawing attention to it etc, and acting as normally as we could. So she arrived and we did just that.

I was – and still am – full of admiration for how Mary handled that situation, how deeply she commanded our complete and utter respect such that she ensured that we – a bunch of 25 pubescent and fairly vocal teenagers – never let on. Mary treated us like adults in taking us into her confidence and in return I hope we didn't let her down.

Shelley Evers

I arrived aged 10, small, naive, from a small prep school and found AO enormous and pretty scary. I was so proud of my uniform and getting a scholarship to this amazing school, so I pulled my socks up and did up my overall belt and listened in class and worked hard. For most of my peers this was ok, but a small minority picked me out and made my young life so confusing, sad and difficult. Name calling, whispering, giggling at my naivety and innocence and that I did ballet(!) turned more nasty and I soon started to hide in the toilets rather than go to the playground. I was really, really

unhappy, hated the school and thought it was me – and finally told my parents.

When they spoke to Mrs Somers she was instantly sympathetic, kind, understanding and caring. I'm not sure exactly what she did but it got better and so I didn't leave AO. What she did do was help and look out for me and sometimes even gave me a hug (probably not allowed to do that now!). She also taught me French which was useful (!) but what she did for a small, shy, desperately sad 10 year old has stuck with me forever. I am so, so grateful to her and have often talked about her when the subject of bullying arises. If only more children had a teacher like her to stand up for them and help.

Suzi Gurney (now Freely)

School French trips – staying at VVF camps. The night the French hosts brought us all (age 12) quails with the heads on, laid out on silver platters. Much noisy “yuk, yuk, we can't eat those” from the 12 year old girls. Your Mum and Mrs Parkinson and my Mum plucking off the heads, encouraging us to be slightly more polite... and telling us it was just like chicken, and so delicious, honestly!

Your Mum and mine on the same French trip, checking we were all asleep in our beds in our little chalets, but finding midnight feasts all around, sweets all over the floor, much laughing – and they restrained themselves from shouting at us for breaking the rules...and laughed too.

Another school French trip to the South of France, with Bridget, Vikki, Bailey and many others. We were a year or so older and able to be let loose in Marseille, until a group of dodgy men started following some of the older girls around the port... your Mum, mine and, I think, Mrs Greenow soon stepped in! In a beautiful Provençal village – I can't now remember which – as we were allowed a couple of hours to “buy postcards”, but that was a ruse to let all the French teachers (your Mum, mine, Mrs Coombe, Mrs Greenow) find the perfect table outside a seafood restaurant and order the MOST ENORMOUS platter of shellfish to share... I have the photographic evidence somewhere!

She was our French teacher from Upper 3 all the way through to Upper 6 – me, Bridget, Sara, Shelley, Vikki, Sarah Bailey. We feared “losing” her each year but were always delighted when there were no changes. So passionate about French, a wonderful French accent, a love of every nuance of the language, the culture, the people, her passion and enthusiasm shone through every lesson.

It was no coincidence that we all took French for A level, and most of us for S level too. Then she really came into her own: her excitement at sharing with

us Albert Camus (*La Peste, L'Étranger*), Jean-Paul Sartre (*Les Mains Sales, Huis Clos*). Her teaching took us to another level – to philosophical discussion, and existentialism. The meaning of life and death, the meaning of a good life and what really matters in living. She was so wise, so knowledgeable, so kind and so nurturing. We all headed off to fantastic universities, all (except me!) to study languages. She was a huge part in that.

And just before our A levels hosting a dinner for us all at *Veranos*. Treating us as friends, not pupils, bridging to adulthood and our journeys beyond school.

Katie Cowton (now Baker)

## **An Account of Mary's Funeral**

It was the most radiant day. As an AO contingent comprising some of my gang (The Alice Band), our teachers (Mrs Cowton, Mrs Chatwin, Miss Pearson, Mrs Coombes, Miss Tyler, Miss Holwill...) AND a headmistress (Miss Sibbit) consumed several pews, the most beautiful sun shone from a bright blue sky, through autumnal leaves and stained glass windows onto a blanket of white lilies resting with Mrs Somers.

We sang (of course, *Praise My Soul* inc!) and listened to Mrs Somers' life, shared so bravely and beautifully by Emily, and her brother and sister. Emily's brother, Robin, shared some AO reflections including yours. Robin talked of Mrs Somers' modesty and how she kept so much of her amazingness under wraps. Her gift of kindness to you captured so much. It really was a very special sharing.

After the service, there was the most amazing energy in the church garden as everyone delighted in being together and talking of Mrs Somers. Emily, Robin and Sam (Emily's sister) then treated us all to white sparklingness by the glass and a pig roast in their home garden!

Mrs Somers was an amazing role model. We must all remember to embrace this life as she did – with kindness, style and so much more.

Bridget Errington

## High Crimes and Misdemeanours?

Can school ever really be appreciated when you are a pupil? It is only when you have a wider perspective, as an adult, that you look back objectively. I now realise that everything at our wonderful Alice Ottley School was in place for the greater good of each and every one of us. I feel privileged to have been a pupil.

However, as a boarder from the age of seven, both in Oaklands and Chester House, the discipline of those times was extreme; camaraderie our source of strength. This taught two non-academic life lessons – survival in adversity and the importance and value of friendship.

My foremost misdemeanour was talking “after lights out”, with considerable punishments! Four in a dormitory inevitably led to mischief and I never learned the lesson of silence.

Then there was the forbidden talking to Grammar School boys over The Wall, and the exchange of oh! so innocent love notes. Also there was the Sunday march to Worcester Cathedral from Britannia Square in a “crocodile”, in school uniform, come rain or shine. AOS and Grammar sat opposite each other in the cloisters. This gave the opportunity for “eye contact” but Heaven forbid if we were noticed to be smiling inappropriately at a chosen one! Authority seemed to have supernatural vision and reprimand was inevitable. No wonder we boarders made hay once the sun shone and we were free!

And now the two schools are metaphorically “married”. Happy days!

Jean Goodwin  
1954 - 1963



## Leavers' Destinations, 2019

<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Aitchison	Robert	Bath Spa	Environmental Science
Allison	James	Nottingham	Geography
Allsopp	Eleanor	Greenwich	Criminology and Criminal Psychology
Anderson	Guy	Bath	Accounting and Finance
Andrews	Ella	Nottingham Trent	Business Management and Marketing
Beardmore	George	Loughborough	Aeronautical Engineering
Beardsley	Lauren	Reading	Ancient History and Archaeology
Bell	James	Exeter	Classics
Bell	Katie	Bristol UWE	Criminology
Berry	Alec	Oxford (Balliol College)	Engineering
Berry	Thomas	Bath	Criminology
Betteridge	Jake	Cardiff	Business Management
Bishop	Chloe	Gap year	
Broster	James	Manchester	Genetics
Burman	Jonathan	Nottingham	Mechanical Engineering
Chaplin	Harry	Cardiff	Accounting and Finance
Churchill	Samuel	York	Computer Science with Cyber Security
Clarke	Ella	University Centre Hartpury	Sport and Exercise Nutrition
Collins	Gemma	Swansea	Classics
Cooper	Dublin	Unknown	
Cooper	Holly	Nottingham	Medicine
Corbett	Joseph	Cardiff	Medicine (2020)
Cox	Charles	Liverpool	History and Ancient History
Davies	Gabrielle	Leeds	Fashion Marketing
Dennis	John	Nottingham	Psychology
Devereux	Charles	Loughborough	Economics
Dipple	James	Loughborough	Mathematics with Economics
Dixon	Drew	Gap year	

<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Dugdale	Lily	Swansea	Materials Science and Engineering
Eberlin	Isabelle	Gap year	Art Foundation
Fellows	Daniel	Birmingham	Engineering (Bachelor degree level)
Fish	Amelia	De Montfort	Forensic Science
Fish	Katie	Nottingham	Geography
Forrester	Martyn	Keele	Accounting and Finance with Business Foundation Year
Frain	Rory	Loughborough	Politics with International Relations
Gill	Abigail	Gap year	
Griffiths	Ella	Nottingham Trent	Fashion Management
Groves	Theodore	King's College London	Classical Studies
Guest	Oliver	Birmingham	Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences
Hackett	Katie	Liverpool	International Business
Hallam	Robert	Birmingham	Computer Science
Halpin-Barnett	Eilisa	Nottingham	Classical Civilisation
Hammond	Thomas	Cardiff	Business Management
Haque	Mohammed	Nottingham Trent	Economics with International Finance and Banking
Haynes	Felix	Cambridge (St John's College)	Human, Social, and Political Sciences
Healey	Jessica	Nottingham Trent	Psychology
Healey	Samuel	Liverpool	Biological Sciences
Hill	Bethany	Harper Adams	Real Estate
Howard-Louvaine	Joshua	Harper Adams	Animal Behaviour and Welfare (Clinical)
Hughes	Ben	Nottingham Trent	Broadcast Journalism
Hughes	Quinlan	Southampton	Ancient History and History
Iqbal	Mohammed	Loughborough	Aeronautical Engineering
Kimberley	Archie	Cardiff	Human Geography

<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Kirby	Edward	East 15 Drama School	
Lawton	Patrick	Nottingham	Economics
Ledger	Reuben	Nottingham Trent	Civil Engineering
Lee	Benjamin	Gap year	
Lewis	Seth	Loughborough	Business Economics and Finance
Lloyd Jones	George	Oxford Brookes	Business and Management
Lowe	Benedict	Swansea	Economics and Finance with a Year in Industry
Marsh	Abigail	Swansea	Sport and Exercise Science
Martin	Jenna	Cardiff	Music
Matthews	Thomas	Cardiff	Business Management (HRM)with Prof Place Year
Meeson	Thomas	Gap year	Paramedic
Meredith	William	Cardiff	Business Management
Milton	Guy	Aberystwyth	Environmental Earth Science
Mitchell	Alice	Liverpool	Geography (Science)
Morgan	Helena	Cardiff	Mathematics/Music
Morrell	Elizabeth	Exeter	Philosophy and History with Study Abroad
Mortimer	Elle	Writtle University College	Veterinary Physiotherapy
Moseley	Grace	Cardiff	History
Munro	Harvey	Liverpool	Architecture
Murphy	Amy	Nottingham	Civil Engineering including an Industrial Year
Murray	Jacob	Gap year	
Murray	Joseph	Liverpool	Biological Sciences
Nash	Ella	Bristol UWE	Fine Art (2020)
Neale	Joseph	Birmingham	Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences
Niel	Eleanor	Royal Agricultural University	Bloodstock and Performance Horse Management

<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Subject</b>
O'Neill	Tristan	Oxford Brookes	Business and Management
Oldnall	Jessica	Nottingham Trent	Fashion Marketing and Branding
Osborne	Flynn	Worcester	Computer Games Design and Development
Padbury	Georgia	Nottingham Trent	Marketing
Parker	Blake	UCL	Chemistry
Pathania	Suvikrant Singh	Birmingham	Engineering (Master degree level)
Phillips	James	Manchester	Chemical Engineering with Industrial Experience
Price	Beatrice	Sheffield	Biology with Placement
Pryke	Robert	Cardiff	Neuroscience
Pyle	Alice	Nunnery Wood High School	Business and Finance Apprenticeship
Rabjohn	Beth	St Andrews	Art History (2020)
Rimell	Harriet	Gap year	
Rogers	Amy	Birmingham	Mathematics
Rushforth	Charlotte	Nottingham	Classical Civilisation
Sankey	Oliver	Reading	Classical Studies
Saunders	Will	Oxford Brookes	Business & Management
Sinclair	Imogen	Cardiff	Psychology with Professional Placement
Sonksen	Arun	Cardiff	Politics and Economics
Sparks	Fraser	Oxford (Queens College)	Mathematics
Still	Imogen	Cardiff	Psychology (2020)
Sutton	Daniel	Manchester	Biosciences with a Foundation Year
Thomson	Joseph	Bristol	Applied Anatomy
Tranter	Isabelle	Oxford Brookes	Architecture
Warner	Joshua	Warwick	Politics and International Studies
Warner-Warr	Amber	Oxford (Regents Park College)	English Language and Literature
Wheeler	Padraig	Birmingham	International Business with Language (4 years)
Wilson	Jude	Liverpool	Business Management with a Year in Industry

## Obituaries

### Wendy Edwards 1935 – 2019

Wendy Elizabeth Edwards was born in India on 29th April, 1935. She was the youngest of three, Gillian and Shirley being her older sisters. She spent the first eleven years of her life in India, leaving for England (or rather, Wales!) in 1946. She was enrolled as a boarder in Dr Williams' School in Dolgellau. There was no family connection to the school, but an aunt lived in nearby Llwngrwil. She and her two sisters, also at the school, were able to spend time with her aunt, not least the school holidays as their parents remained in India; her aunt had a formative influence on the young Wendy.

Wendy's school days were happy; that she excelled in music will not be a surprise. She was an exceptionally talented pianist and during the latter stages of her school career, she hoped to become a concert pianist. Sadly, she suffered from a bout of serious ill-health which saw her diagnosed with lupus, a condition with which she lived for the remainder of her life. Her recovery was a long, slow and painful process and apart from the disruption to her education, the lupus diagnosis put paid to any hopes of her following the career of a concert pianist. She decided instead to take the academic music route and took a degree in Music at the University of Cardiff.

She returned to teach at Dr Williams' School and led the Music Department there with the enthusiasm and high standards for which she later became known at The Alice Ottley School. She was remembered as an inspiring and enthusiastic music teacher and a kind and lovely housemistress. In 1969, aged 34, she was appointed by Miss Millest as the Head of Music at the Alice Ottley School. She joined the school at a time of great change and she set to her task with the energy and verve that were her trademarks. One rite of passage for the Upper Third was the weekly "Singing" with Miss Edwards. The entire year group would be seated on the Apse, with "W.E.E." at the piano. The main purpose was hymn practice but there were lighter moments and although she seemed pretty fierce to an eleven year old, for the timid or uncertain, she could also be extremely kind. She did not suffer gladly those who did not try. If you had genuinely tried to the best of your ability, no matter how limited, that was good enough.

She was strict and set clear boundaries; if she told you to do something, you did it – or not at your peril. In the 1970s, during the bombing campaign run by the IRA, the entire senior school was in Main Hall practising for some major school event. The other staff had left and it was just Miss Edwards and some 700 girls. During the pause between verses, a hand bell could just be heard ringing and Miss Millest announced there had been a coded warning about a bomb at a school in Worcester. Miss Edwards closed the lid of the piano and gave calm, clear instructions to evacuate. No one panicked, the entire body of girls stood and quickly made their ways to the exits to assemble at a safe distance.



Miss Edwards inspired the very highest standards of musical attainment and under her guidance, girls developed their talents for composition, performance (vocal or instrumental); the reputation of the school for its music soared – not insignificant as it had hardly been poor before her arrival. The musical highlight of the year was the Carol Service in the Cathedral. The choir was well-rehearsed and despite having their folders, all singing was “off the book”. Anyone who took part in a W.E.E. event will not have forgotten

the exhortations (encouragement is too mild a word!) to smile, to look up, to exaggerate the “k” at the end of a word so that it carried to the back of the building, to take a large breath silently and to enjoy the occasion. Such was the musical reputation of the school that when the French Ambassador spent time in Worcester in the late 1970s, it was the choir of the Alice Ottley School that was invited to sing for him in the Chapter House in the Cathedral.

And yet there was more to her, even, than that. Not only could she show kindness to the timid, bestow praise on the girl who had eaten all of the “small” portion of a loathed school lunch, she was one of an exceptional group of staff at the school at the time who showed their pupils how to make connections long before the trend for inter-disciplinary teaching. Her generosity, keen intelligence and genuine interest in her pupils ensured she was among the very best of that august staff body. Small but mighty summed her up perfectly.

She inspired the greatest affection and devotion in her pupils which was reciprocated, to the extent that she discretely absented herself for a day to attend the wedding of a former pupil. It seemed her dynamism and energy had her destined for greater things and in 1984, she was appointed the Headmistress of Huyton College, an independent girls’ school in Liverpool.

A convinced supporter of single-sex education, she took on the significant challenge of enhancing the school’s reputation in a city where there were already some formidable competitors. Perhaps her challenge was the greater owing to the prejudice and academic snobbery prevalent at the time about Music as an appropriate degree qualification for a Head. It is to her immense credit that she overcame that. She focused on raising academic standards and also on religious education, pastoral care and the school’s spiritual life. Her professional career was sadly cut short by illness (she was often in considerable pain) when in 1991, she was forced to take early retirement and shortly afterwards, underwent major spinal surgery.

She retired to Great Malvern and enjoyed a wide and varied range of interests and friends during her long retirement, all overseen by her ever present feline companions. Wendy was a regular visitor to Yeo Cottage in Moreton in Marsh, where Eileene Millest lived in retirement up until her death from cancer. Wendy was a devoted and loyal friend, staunch and unwavering in her support.

When Wendy received her own diagnosis of inoperable cancer, she faced it with her typical courage, discretion and resilience. She died in the Community Hospital in Malvern on 20th July, 2019 aged 84. Her funeral was held at Worcester Crematorium on 9th August. There was a single hymn, “Dear Lord and Father of Mankind”, a recording rather than the congregation singing. Nevertheless, the two Alice Ottleians present, both former members of the senior choir, could not help themselves and softly, very softly, sang her out.

## Margaret Franklin

Margaret Franklin was the daughter and only child of Frederick and Peggy Franklin. Her father was Church Warden of St. John's Church in Bromsgrove, and Margaret spent her early childhood there with her parents. She joined The Alice Ottley School in 1943 and her family moved to Worcester to minimise their risk of being bombed, Worcester being considerably further away from Birmingham than Bromsgrove.



Margaret enjoyed her time at school, despite having a stammer in her youth and having to overcome the prejudices she encountered and her own frustrations. Whilst at AO, aged 16 she had to come to terms with the unexpected death of her father, who had collapsed in his car and died with tragic suddenness in Birmingham. Her friends really came into their own at this point, especially her closest friend Mary Alexander (later Twigg).

Margaret left school in 1954 and pursued a career in speech therapy, her own

stammer having been resolved. There were trips abroad, such as the one to Berlin with her best friend Mary and in 1960, she took up a temporary, one year role in Northern Ireland. This was quite a move for a Worcestershire girl, with neither connections nor ties to the area. It was prompted by her mother, who had advised Margaret that she thought the young man Margaret had been seeing was "too much of a drinker" and therefore not a good marriage prospect, so the ostensibly temporary move to Northern Ireland was by way of a fresh start. In fact, it was the start of a thoroughly rewarding and fulfilling life in Northern Ireland. Margaret's career flourished. She somehow managed to find time to study for and be awarded a B.A. Hons from the Open University whilst working full time, and her professional success culminated in her being in charge of the provision of speech therapy for the Northern Ireland Health Board.

When Margaret retired, any thought that this capable, active lady would take a back seat and drift was totally misplaced. A keen gardener, she used to open her garden in aid of the Parkinsons Society. And her enthusiasm for gardening had not gone unnoticed by an "almost" neighbour, David Nesbitt. Widowed in 1998, David had bought the plot of land next to Margaret's bungalow in Carrickfergus, in order to build a bungalow for his daughter should she ever need it.

David and Margaret exchanged the usual neighbourly pleasantries and a friendship developed. Knowing her interest in gardening, David asked Margaret to accompany him on a garden tour of Scotland and from then onwards, they were "an item" and so began the next chapter of their lives.

They never married, nor did they live under the same roof but enjoyed fully their retirement together. They took a number of holidays, including cruises on the *Queen Elizabeth II* and the *Queen Mary II*. They shared many interests but not, it seemed, Bridge. Margaret was a keen and very good player of the game but David had never learned to play.

Browsing the local newspaper one day, Margaret spotted a notice setting out the hope that a branch of U3A (University of the Third Age) would be set up in their area and it included as activities the possibility of joining a walking group, a gardening club and learning to play Bridge. So, decision made, they responded and this led to David being proposed as the Chairman, with the task of forming a committee – not what either of them had anticipated! But U3A in Carrickfergus was off to a flying start and became a vibrant social hub with dedicated and capable volunteers. Margaret excelled with all matters horticultural, regularly holding events at her home or opening her garden. Originally, meetings used to take place in the local library, where they were allowed to meet for free but the library changed its policy and decided to charge for meetings.

The option of buying somewhere to hold meetings, using a loan, was suggested. The local former Salvation Army hall had recently been up for sale at a local property auction but had failed to make its reserve price. David phoned the agent to understand the lie of the land and updated Margaret. It was at this point that Margaret questioned the need for a loan and decided to purchase the building herself and gift it to U3A, so that there could be a permanent base for all their meetings, administration and other activities.

David recounted that Margaret often spoke very warmly of her times at school, remembering a number of staff, and especially Miss Roden, in the fondest terms – a little of the Alice Ottley light burned brightly in Northern Ireland!

Margaret was diagnosed with cancer two years before she died. Initially she had decided that she did not want any treatment but David persuaded her



to reconsider. This change of heart meant they had another two years together before she finally passed away on 4th November, 2019. She had lived a very full life in her adopted home and touched the lives of so many. She was described as "one in five million", but perhaps the final tribute should come from David: "In the eventide of my life, unexpectedly, I met the best woman who made it the best part of my life. She was much loved by many and much missed."

Kay Meredith and David Nesbitt

## **Brigadier Duncan Green, C.B.E., MC**

Born on 7th June, 1925 to Arthur and Dolina Green, Duncan Ross Green was the ninth of their ten children. He grew up on the family farm in Ombersley and was educated at RGS between 1937 and 1942 (where he excelled at games) and subsequently at the Indian Military Academy at Dehradun, from where he was commissioned into the Indian Army in 1947. 1947 was the year of independence for India and Pakistan from Great Britain and a time of blood and violence in the sub-continent and as a subaltern, Duncan was assigned to keep the peace between Muslims and Sikhs at Jalandhar in east Punjab. Sadly, he witnessed much blood, violence and murder.

His army service later saw him in action in Malaysia. In Kalabakan, his battalion of the Gurkha Rifles had routed an invading Indonesian "Komando",



***Duncan Green in Penang in 1968, taking part in a tug-of-war with 10th Gurkha Rifles comrades. He sports a sling having broken his left arm playing squash.***

part of President Sukarno's ultimately unsuccessful confrontation and in 1964, he found himself engaging with Indonesian paratroopers, who had invaded Peninsular Malaysia. In one encounter, he had shot two invaders and taken another prisoner. As the battalion's second-in-command he hastened back into the jungle in this new area of conflict, from where he directed a series of patrols to intercept the parachutists.

Despite the fact that British and Malaysian intelligence had warned of an air attack on military supply depots in Singapore, unhelpfully for those on the ground, the arrival of Indonesian paratroopers had not been anticipated. Intelligence gained from the first parachutists to be captured revealed that of the four Hercules transport planes intended for the incursion, only two had been made it to the drop zone. One had failed to start at Jakarta and the fourth had crashed into the Strait of Malacca with all aboard. The Indonesians had incorrectly identified Labis, 100 miles north of Singapore, as a fervently rebellious area, committed and ready to take on the authorities in the new Federation of Malaysia.

Any sense that this was a poorly motivated, equipped and led group of soldiers was quickly dispelled. The threat was real. Two groups of parachutes decorating the jungle canopy gave away the drop zone and one of the Gurkha commanders, Major Richard Haddow, was shot dead. Ultimately, the operation to defend Labis against attack was successful and of the 98 parachutists who had landed, 90 were either captured or killed in an eleven day period. Malaysia did lodge a complaint against Indonesia to the UN security council, at this time chaired on rotation by the Soviet lawyer and international diplomat Platon Morozov, but the unprovoked seaborne landing was merely "regretted" and the parachute drop only "deployed".

On his return to the UK, Duncan received a regular commission and transferred to the 10th Gurkha Rifles, who had opted to join the British Army on the partition of India back in 1947. Before returning for further service in the East, Duncan married Vera — known as Vee — Jolliffe, a serving army subaltern. They had five children, two sons and three daughters, who all survive him.

Continuing service in east Malaysia saw Duncan awarded the Military Cross for outstanding leadership and personal courage. In 1968, he took over command of 1/10th Gurkha Regiment in Hong Kong, where the battalion routinely manned the border of the New Territories with communist China, and then took the battalion to Penang, Malaysia, for amalgamation with the 2nd Battalion.

The result of his appointment to a training post at Sandhurst, normally a safe situation, led to a brush with death. Duncan had been sent, together with several other officers, to assess the feasibility of setting up an army staff college in Sudan. The group was travelling in a Russian-built helicopter, which crashed in a desert sandstorm, the tail rotor having broken off. Very

fortunately, all survived and the staff college duly established, although only for a short time.

Duncan was promoted to the rank of Colonel and assigned the command of the British garrison in Belize. Guatemala had claimed a substantial slice of the modest 8,765 square miles of the territory from as long ago as 1821 and this caused little or only mild concern amid the British government, who considered that the presence of a British resident battalion would be an effective deterrent against any territorial adventures by the Guatemalan neighbours. In 1970, however, a sudden build-up of Guatemalan troops in the densely forested border region tested this theory and the resolve of the British garrison.

It was Duncan's rapid assessment of the situation and corresponding call for reinforcements that led to the miraculous easing of tension, doubtless helped in no small measure by the arrival of half a squadron of Harrier jump-jet fighter-bombers and a small naval task force. Duncan was appointed CBE for his resolution and skilled deployment of his small deterrent force.

He retired from the Army in 1980, having been promoted to the brigadier commanding the Gurkha recruiting structure and British military medical facilities in Nepal. His retirement was a rich and fulfilling time, combining his constant interests of his family, the Brigade of Gurkhas and the welfare of the hillmen who had retired to Nepal and golf. He became director of the Council of Voluntary Welfare Work in London and for several years, he worked for the Gurkha Welfare Trust. He was also captain of the Liphook golf club.

Duncan passed away on 21st April, 2019 aged 93.

Anyone interested in hearing Duncan's own account of his life and military service can hear him in a recording on the Imperial War Museum site at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80015897>

## **Valerie Holland**

Valerie first arrived in 1991 to cover a colleague's maternity leave; we soon realised the strength of her English teaching and whenever a part-time position became vacant she was the first person to be thought of. Valerie read English at Oxford and taught at a variety of schools before arriving in Worcester and taking up the post at the Alice Ottley School. Her formidable knowledge of literature and enthusiasm for her subject made her a valued member of the Sixth Form team; one of her gifts was to communicate her particular love of Shakespeare and poetry. Her pupils responded to her high expectations – there were no half measures for Valerie! Her colleagues, too, knew that they could always rely on a direct and honest response from her. Her vigour and passion for her subject will not be forgotten.

Rosemary Ham

## **Rosemary James 1924 – 2019**

My mother was employed at The Alice Ottley School as Sister in the Sick Bay in the late 1950s and early 1960s. When she first started as Sister James, the sick bay was located at 13, St George's Square and it later moved to 17, Shrubbery Avenue. The sick bay was where the boarders went when they were ill. The children were removed from the boarding houses to the sick bay until they were fully recovered and able to return to their boarding houses.

From what I can remember and the information that I have gathered from White and Blue magazines (they do come in useful to jog your memories!), Sister James worked part time at the Sick Bay in 13, St George's Square while my brother went to a Nursery School in Shrubbery Avenue and I attended Sunnyside School (just over the road from St George's Square). In Autumn 1958 I moved to Springfield at the A.O. and Colin (my brother) started at Sunnyside. During the summer of 1959 my mother must have been offered the post of full time sister, as Sister Weatham was leaving. I can remember my parents asking me whether I wanted to become a boarder or stay as a day girl. I jumped at the chance to become a boarder.

My mother and father moved into 13, St. George's Square during the term time and then we all went back to our home in Little Witley for the holidays. Miss Lane also lived at the sick bay and helped my mother and Mrs Ballard came in to clean and cook. I cannot tell much about my mother's time at the sick bay because I only went once in my five years as a boarder. However, I can write about one incident in the school. There was an outbreak of nits in the school and my mother had to deal with it and inspect the pupils' hair. Miss Roden wanted to keep the news of the outbreak very quiet – a disgrace

in those days - and was very anxious it did not get into the papers. It may seem incredible now but obviously I only really learnt about this later in life.

My mother stayed for five years as Sister and then decided that the time had come for my brother (now 11) should not be living at an all girls' school. As Colin said in his address at Mum's funeral, 'My younger years were traumatised by the fact that Mother worked as Matron at The Alice Ottley School - no male child should be subjected to living in a girls' boarding school for any length of time.' I also think she felt that the time had come for me to have more freedom than you had as a boarder, so I became a day girl again in Autumn 1964.

Although in the White and Blue magazine it wished Mum a very happy retirement, this was not actually true. Mum had trained as a nurse at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham during the 1939 - 1945 war, so in 1964 she decided to return to work again as a nurse in hospital, firstly in the plaster room and then in the chest clinic at the Worcester Royal Infirmary, until she retired in 1985.

My mother returned to the School when we both attended the 100 years' Celebration of the School in 1983, and she kept up with news of the school through me and "The Leaflet". At one of the AO reunions, many of the boarders spoke to me about my mother and her care and kindness.

Penny Smith (daughter of Rosemary James)

## **Michael Ridout 1954 – 2019**

Michael Joseph Ridout was born on 20th December, 1954 and grew up in the family home together with his two sisters, Louise and Jane. Doing well at school, he progressed to read Geography at the University of Birmingham and he duly graduated from there with his degree in Geography. However, Mike's efforts had not been wholly academic. Firstly, it was a time when deep and long-lasting friendships were made, as attested to by Paul Sanderson at the memorial service for Mike last October, and it was a time when Mike also pursued his other passion, athletics. He was a member of the University's Athletics Club, which he captained in the 1975 – 76 year, and he ran for the famous Tipton Harriers.

He joined the Geography department of the all-boys, state Grammar School in 1978 and he retired from the co-educational independent school that still retains the name "RGS" in 2014. As the school underwent its numerous transformations, Mike was a constant. His contribution to the life of the school and the generations of pupils is hard to measure in a few short sentences. He brought a particular energy to everything he did. His efficiency, dedication and professionalism were aided, rather than undermined, by his infectious enthusiasm (which never waned in the 36 years he was at RGS), good humour and genuine warmth for those in his charge, whether they were in the Geography classroom or on a field trip, on the athletics track, or cross country running, on a rugby pitch (another lifelong passion of Mike's) or on a school skiing trip.

His eye for and attention to detail made him ideally placed to reassure the Education Committee of the Board on the thorny subject of predicted grades at GCSE and A' Level during the May Education Committee meeting. His tour de force, however, came annually at the October meeting, when the Committee reviewed his carefully analysed and presented report on public exam performance. This compared and contrasted predicted and actual grades, as well as the school's performance in relation to local competitors, and Mike's mastery of his brief was always lightly, self-deprecatingly worn.

Outside the classroom, Mike remained a keen runner, as his London Marathon personal best of 2 hours and 36 minutes evidences. He was very much a family man and although having no children himself, embraced the role of favourite uncle to his nieces and nephews.

After he retired in 2014, Mike joined the AOS and RGS Foundation in 2016 as one of its earliest trustees. He also became a volunteer at Croome Court and was able to dedicate himself further to pursuing his lifelong love of athletics. When the World Athletics Championships came to London in 2017, Mike attended every session as a supporter, a feat he repeated at the World Indoors in Birmingham the following year.



In 2019, Mike undertook a project supporting VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) in Southern Africa. He was due to be there a year, another adventure and typical of his generous spirit that he should give his time and considerable abilities for the benefit of others. It was there, on 13th August that he met his untimely death while out cycling, aged just 64, in a road traffic accident.

His family returned him to Britain and held a private family funeral. A service of remembrance and celebration took place in Perrins Hall on 26th October, 2019 in Perrins Hall. The service combined hymns, tributes from his sisters, nieces, close university friend and brother in law, a photo montage, and concluded with John Wilderspin, former colleague, playing Edward Elgar's "Nimrod" on the school organ. Mike's RGS colleague Howard Groves also spoke, as did former pupils Richard Swindells (1988-93) and Laurence Greenway (2001-10).

Richard spoke of how Mike had influenced his education so significantly as his mentor when a new boy in Year Nine, helping him develop a love of distance running whilst he achieved his academic potential. Laurence illustrated how Mike's natural enthusiasm for Athletics, detail focus and dedication to the team ethic combined with his mischievous sense of fun to make participating in athletics so rewarding. Mike encouraged pupils to try out disciplines and discover new events and never more so when the RGS team needed points at an Athletics competition. There would be a tap on the shoulder from "MJR", followed by an invitation to "have a go" at throwing a javelin or jumping hurdles. Whilst this may have occasioned an outburst of good humour and disbelief, the points collected often meant the team triumphed, including the memorable occasion when RGS beat Eton College!

The abiding thought of this life so well lived, as one filed out from Perrins Hall that day was summed up by some words of the poet William Wordsworth, read by Mike's sister Louise:

What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now forever taken from my sight,  
Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind.

## Deaths 2019 – 2020

It is with deep sadness that we record the deaths of the following members of the Association. We extend our deepest and sincere condolences to their families and friends.

**Belgrove**, Mrs Sally Elizabeth Hall died on 26th June, 2017. She was a pupil at The Alice Ottley School between the 1940s and the early 1950s, and much enjoyed her time at the school. She had good friends at school and with whom she was in contact from time to time over the years since leaving. She went on to success in nursing and finished her nursing career as a Casualty Sister. She also did further a qualification at Moorfields Eye Hospital London, subsequently working at hospitals in Worcestershire. She married Martin Ernest Hall in 1966 and had three children (Jeannette, William and Hilary) and was thereafter actively involved in the family drinks tourism business for many years until unable to continue due to Parkinson's disease, which she battled with for the last 20 years of her life.

**Blyth**, Mrs Anne Vaughan, resident of Redwood City, USA, has died. A pupil of AOS between 1925 and 1933, sadly no further details are known at this time.

**Edwards**, Miss Wendy Elizabeth, departed this life aged 84 in the care of Malvern Hospital on 20th July, 2019. Head of Music at the Alice Ottley School between 1969 and 1984 and thereafter Headmistress of Huyton College in Liverpool until 1991. Her funeral service, led by her beloved nephews Guy and William, took place at Worcester Crematorium on 10th August, 2019.

**Fletcher**, Mrs Anne died peacefully at home on 29th November, 2018, leaving nieces Allison, Penelope and Jane. Her funeral took place at the Mid-Warwickshire Crematorium on 19th December, 2018. Staff at AOS between 1975 and 1988, initially as Head of History until 1984, and as Deputy Head between 1984 and 1988.

**Franklin**, Miss Margaret, passed away on 4th November, 2019 at Belfast City Hospital. Her funeral on 8th November was held at the Roselawn Crematorium. Margaret was an Alice Ottley pupil between 1943 and 1951. "A wonderful lady and a force of nature – only ever for good".

**Freeman**, Miss Freda Elizabeth (known as Elizabeth) died on 4th July, 2019. A resident of Shipton-under-Wychwood, Elizabeth attended AOS between 1935 and 1943.

**Gardner**, Miss Rosemary, M.B.E. Attended AOS between 1931 and 1939, Rosemary passed away in Stroud in either 2018 or 2019. Sadly no further details are available to us at this time.

**Green**, Brigadier Duncan, C.B.E, M.C., formerly of the 10th Gurkha Rifles, died on 21st April, 2019 aged 93. A pupil of RGS from 1937 to 1942.

**Griffin**, Mrs Hilary Kelland (AOS 1946 – 1948), formerly of Quorn and Rothley, passed peacefully away at South Lodge, London Road on 13th September, 2018 aged 87 years. Wife of the late Peter (1994 -2011) and of the late Brian (1953-1992).

**Haswell**, Mrs Rosalie Malik (AOS 1947 – 56) died on 28th May, 2019 just before her 80th birthday. She had been living in India with her husband on a farm for the past 25 years.

**Lane**, Peter (RGS 1975 – 1980) passed away on 14th August, 2018 aged 56, having been diagnosed with a grade 4 glioblastoma brain tumour in April 2017. He is mourned by his wife Helen and their two daughters.

**Jaray**, Ms Tina passed away in June 2019. There was no funeral, rather a small gathering of family and close friends, as Tina had wished to donate her body to medical science. Tina had asked that if anyone who knew her wanted to commemorate her life, that this be through a donation to St. Richard's Hospice.

**Munro**, Dr. Alistair (RGS 1962 – 1969) passed away on 31st May, 2019 at St. Richard's Hospice after a long illness. After working at a number of different hospitals, he finally retired several years ago as a Consultant Chemical Pathologist at Worcestershire Royal Hospital.

**O'Brien**, Brian (RGS 1941-1946) died on 28th December, 2019 aged 89. He served on the Old Elizabethans' Committee from 1976 to 2005 as an Elected Member and latterly as Magazine Secretary. Brian was a member of the Old Elizabethans' Rifle club for over 30 years and a keen photographer, which he took up professionally as the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Official Photographer in the last 15 years of his working life.

**Pearce**, Mrs Janet Yvonne Fagence died in hospital on 6th September, 2018 aged 85, leaving her husband Cyril and son Leslie. Attended The Alice Ottley School between 1943 and 1950.

**Rayer**, Mrs Connie Hartwright passed away peacefully at Perry Manor Care Home on September 9th, 2019 aged 97. Wife of the late "Ted" and mother to Ann and Graham. After a private cremation, a service of celebration for her life took place at Whittington Church on 2nd October, 2019.

**Ridout**, Michael (Mike), RGS Master between 1978 and 2014, died suddenly aged 64 on 13th August, 2019 after he was hit by a car when out cycling in South Africa, where he had been volunteering.

**Scott-Wilson**, Alex (RGS 2001 to 2006) died recently. Sadly no further details are known at this time.

**Tomsett**, Keith William died suddenly on 13th March, 2019 aged 52. At school between 1978 and 1986, his funeral took place on 1st May, 2019 at Birmingham Crematorium, Perry Barr.



Should you wish to notify the Association of the death of a member, please email [membership@aooe.org.uk](mailto:membership@aooe.org.uk) or call Kay Meredith on 07478 726716 and a notice will be included in the next edition of this magazine.

## Treasurer's Report on the Accounts for the Year ended 31 December 2019

In the year to 31 December 2019 the Association produced a deficit of £2,170 compared with a surplus of £1,845 last year. The main features of the Income and Expenditure account for the year are as follows:

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Income</b>	£	£
Subscriptions	11,488	13,261
Interest on Deposits (Gross)	985	920
Grant recovered	-	3,000
Income from Social events and the sale of ties etc	4,184	2,794
	-----	-----
	£16,657	£19,975
	=====	=====
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Printing, postage and stationery	8,970	10,702
Awards	4,350	3,280
Sundry Expenses including web site	262	341
School Prizes	650	650
Taxation	151	185
Cost of Social events and ties etc	4,444	2,972
	-----	-----
	£18,827	£18,130
	=====	=====
(Deficit) / Surplus for the year	(£ 2,170)	£ 1,845
	=====	=====

The summarised Balance Sheet of the Association as at 31 December 2019 is as follows:

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Assets</b>	£	£
Fixed assets	953	953
Life Members' Investments	260,665	255,591
Net current assets	101,043	103,213
	-----	-----
	£362,661	£359,757
	=====	=====
<b>Financed by:</b>		
Life Members' reserve fund	260,665	255,591
Accumulated fund	101,996	104,166
	-----	-----
	£362,661	£359,757
	=====	=====

It should be noted that the Life Members' reserve fund is not available to the Association for general use. The fund is held in reserve in order to provide an annual income each year over the 'life' of the members of the fund. We have not carried out an actuarial valuation to ensure we have sufficient funds to cover future costs.

The funds that are currently available to the Association are those shown as 'Accumulated fund' above amounting to £101,996 (2019; £104,165).

We have recently been receiving applications for fewer grants from individual students than has been normal recently and the majority of the funds are paid to the School for specific projects.

The cost of postage, printing and postage is less than that in the previous year because we did not have to convene another general meeting, as the normal annual meeting was quorate in 2019.

The full accounts will be available at the AGM, on the Association's website or can be requested from me via e-mail.

Richard Hemmings  
March 2020

## **Ties, Badges and Pullovers**

Ties as regular neckties or as bow ties, priced at £6 and £7.50 respectively, and the new Association lapel badges, priced at £5.00, are available from the Foundation Office at the School (foundation@rgsw.org.uk).

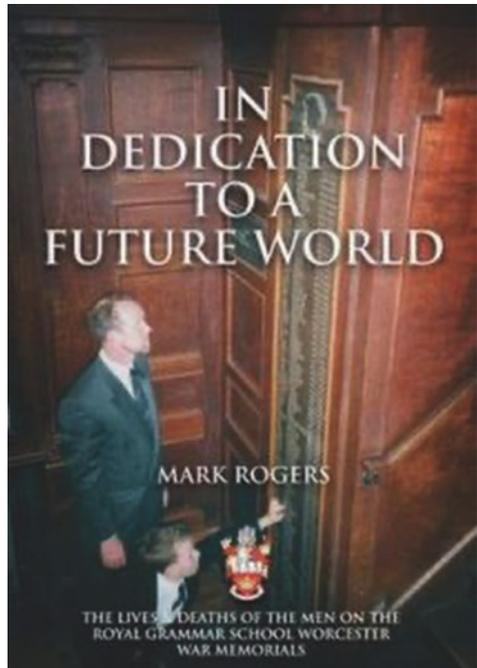
A limited supply of the Old Elizabethans' 100th Anniversary Dinner silk ties are available at £12.50 and the Old Elizabethans' Pullovers at £27.00 each, again from the School.

Please add £5.00 to cover UK postage and packing for each of the above items except for the pullovers. For overseas postage, and for pullovers please ask. Payment instructions are shown in the members' area of the Association's website.

## **In Dedication To A Future World**

Copies of this book are available by application to The RGSW and AOS Foundation Office at the School for £6 each plus £2.50 for P&P in the UK, overseas postage rates by request. Payment instructions are shown in the members' area of the Association's website.

Contact: foundation@rgsw.org.uk  
or phone 01905 613391



## Alice Ottley

### Her Life and Legacy: A Commemoration

This book came about by demand following the success of the exhibition in Worcester Cathedral in September 2012. It was launched on 22nd June to coincide with the installation of the Blue Plaque to honour Alice Ottley, and the 130th anniversary of the opening of the school.



The book charts the life and times of Miss Ottley prior to, and after, becoming Headmistress of Worcester High School for Girls, which would later be re-named in recognition of her achievements. Building expansion and academic successes bore witness to Alice Ottley's foresight and capability, and such was the respect in which she was held that shops and businesses closed on the day of her funeral in Worcester Cathedral. This book encompasses topics previously uncovered in histories of the Alice Ottley School, and some of the pictures used can be seen in print for the first time.

Copies can be obtained from RGS Reception price £6 each (cash or cheque payable to the AOOE Association) if collected in person, or ordered and posted to UK addresses for £8.50 (For overseas mailing please ask).

## Join The Association's Rifle Club

The Rifle Club is always on the lookout for new members. Whether you are experienced or not, if you would like to join us, come along to the range under Perrins Hall on a Thursday evening.

We meet from 19:30 to 21:30 from September through to May and also once a month during the summer for non-shooting activities!

The club caters for a wide range of ages and shooting abilities and after shooting on Thursday evenings we generally retire to a local hostelry for a few well-earned beverages!

If anyone is interested in joining, contact the Rifle Club Secretary, Nick Glover on 01905 757287 or [nick.glover@talk21.com](mailto:nick.glover@talk21.com)



YOUR RIFLE CLUB NEEDS  
**YOU**



**Wendy Edwards 1935–2019**