



QUOD



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RUGBY SCHOOL

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A star is born



RUGBY SCHOOL

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JACOB BETHELL HITS THEM FOR SIX!

RORY GRANT

It's the big Rugby School story of the year: Jacob Bethell's dramatic emergence as a Test cricket star.

Mr Powell reveals that, *"The first time I saw Jacob bat, in the flesh, was in July 2016 when he visited Rugby for the first time. I had, though, seen videos of him playing in Barbados, in particular, one pull shot off a Jayden Seales' delivery, which is now famous. Jacob was 11 years old. Brian Lara shared this on Instagram."*

Some background. Jacob's love for cricket blossomed in Barbados at a very young age. After 11-year-old Jacob caught the eye of Mr Powell while playing for the Franklyn Stephenson Academy, *"cutting and pulling the Loretto Senior School bowlers to shreds,"* his parents made the bold decision to move him to Rugby. This move to England gave Jacob the opportunity to pursue his cricketing dreams while receiving a first-class education at Rugby School.

Jacob was recommended by a mutual friend of Jacob's father and Mr Powell, John Paterson, whose two sons had been looked after by Mr Powell when he was a housemaster at Loreto School, Scotland. Jacob came to look at Rugby in the summer of 2016 on a family holiday. Mr Powell met Jacob and his family and took them straight to Edgbaston to meet the Warwickshire Academy Director, Paul Greetham, where Jacob was offered the chance to pursue his cricketing dream with Warwickshire, alongside gaining an education at Rugby with Mr Powell and Mrs Powell looking after Jacob. Jacob's father believes this was the moment which changed everything as *"he just went at it full on and loved it"*.

A letter of recommendation from Sir Garfield Sobers, a legendary West Indian cricketer and one of the greatest cricketers of all time, arrived on October 7th, 2016.

In a matter of months, Bethell was swiftly fast-tracked through the Warwickshire County pathway, his talent evident to those around him. From F block to LXX, Jacob remained a key player for the 1st XI, before receiving the captaincy in his final year at Rugby. In the LXX, he made his List A and First Class debuts for Warwickshire CCC, testament to his hard work and dedication. In the XX, he represented England at the U19 World Cup in the Caribbean, where he contributed with both the bat and ball, helping his team reach the final against India, which they unfortunately lost. His performances led to regular selection in the Vitality Blast, Hundred and County Championship fixtures.

The 2024 Hundred competition was a pivotal month in Jacob's career. Consistent and match winning performances soon caught the eye of England selectors, and, within a matter of weeks, he was selected for England's white ball squad to face Australia. Further impressive performances earned him a maiden



Jacob Playing for Birmingham Pheonix in the Hundred Competition



Shirt presentation prior to the Lords National T20 Finals Day

test call up for England's tour to New Zealand in 2024. He was named in the starting XI for all three test matches, scoring a half century on debut and missing out on his maiden first class ton by four runs in the second test. His fearless approach to batting at the age of 21 against an experienced bowling attack was a joy to watch and sent a powerful message to those who might have doubted his ability in the test arena. Jacob was also drafted into the IPL by Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), which presented him with the opportunity to play with the likes of Virat Kohli,

one of the greatest batters of all time. In only his second appearance for RCB, he scored a blistering 55 runs off 33 balls against the Chennai Super Kings. Just when you thought his year couldn't get much better, he became the youngest ever English captain in a T20 series in Ireland, as well as scoring his first international century against South Africa at the Utilita Bowl in a white ball series later that summer. In a word, breathless.

The real drama, however, began in November when Jacob was selected for England's Ashes squad to travel to Australia. This in itself is a fantastic achievement, but what followed was even more astonishing.

After Pope's poor run of form, England were in need of a new top order batter. Rob Key and Brendon McCullum looked no further than Jacob, and he was on the verge of making his Ashes debut at the MCG in the Boxing Day test match in front of 95,000 people. For any cricket fan or player, this is regarded as the pinnacle of anyone's career, and Jacob was about to make it become a reality. Although he didn't get the runs or wickets he hoped for, the experience was invaluable. Despite England's disappointing performance across the series, they had one last opportunity to leave Australia on a positive by making it 3-2.

Without a first class hundred to his name, and less than a handful of test matches, Jacob was again required to prove that he belonged at the international level. Leading up to the SCG test, there were question marks surrounding his selection, but, once again, he managed to justify exactly why he deserves to be playing for England.

In England's second innings, Zac Crawley fell victim to Mitchell Starc in the first over and Bethell arrived at the crease whilst England trailed by 179 runs.

Session by session, he edged closer to the 100 milestone. Following a nervous period in the 90s, lasting 23 balls, Jacob finally reached his maiden Test match century with a lofted shot over the leg side which skipped away to the boundary.

Watching from the stands, his mother described feeling “*extremely proud*” and “*really grateful*” to witness it in person, while his father reflected on a journey driven by ambition: “*Jacob’s ambition was red ball, Test cricket – playing against the best bowlers, over five days, under pressure, across the world.*” For Bethell himself, the milestone felt inevitable rather than surprising. “*It was always coming. It’s nice to get over the milestone and it gave me a lot of confidence to keep doing it,*” he said, later admitting that sharing the moment with his family made it even more special: “*To get over the line and see their reaction was pretty cool. My dad was a cricketer so he knows how it feels to be out there.*”

Jacob concluded day four on 142* and continued from where he left off the following morning, ending up on 154 before being dismissed by Mitchell Starc.

Asked about Jacob’s performance, England legend, Micheal Vaughan replied, “A star is born”. England had found their next superstar.

I had the privilege to play with Jacob in the F Block during the Clifton two-day fixture. This was an experience I will certainly never forget, not because of his performance or because I somehow managed to bat out for the draw, but because of how he welcomed me and carried himself off the pitch. He is a true role- model and someone whose values and behaviour I aim to carry forward as I captain the 1st XI this season.

Another memory I have of Jacob is when he presented shirts to the boys and girls XI’s before the U18 National T20 final at Lords last summer. This was certainly a highlight for every boy and girl involved, alongside the historic day that followed with both teams becoming national champions.

As a cricketer myself, Jacob acts as an inspiration and motivational character in my journey. To a degree, I share a similar story to him in the sense that I came to Rugby from Scotland, taking myself out of my comfort-zone, being surrounded by people I didn’t know and boarding away from home. I understood that this decision would place me in the best position if making cricket a profession was what I truly wanted. Ever since F Block, I haven’t looked back once, and I am proud of what I have achieved thus far. In the early months of F Block I was picked up by Warwickshire and proceeded to progress through their pathway system. This included joining their EPP in 2023 and their Academy in 2025, alongside Levi Gekis and Jack Pidgeon. In 2024 I was fortunate enough to be selected for Scotland U19s squad for the World Cup held in South Africa, an unbelievable experience which allowed me to challenge myself against some of the best players in the world. Last month I managed to re-live this experience after being selected for the 2026 U19 World Cup in Zimbabwe. Looking ahead, I am aiming to continue playing cricket in the hope of getting a county contract and the chance to represent Scotland men’s team.



Rory playing in the U18 National Schools T20 Final at Lords vs Clifton College

Where else but in an interview with Mr Powell could I discover more about Jacob's meteoric rise?

I arrived in Cotton private side and, entering Mr Powell's office, was swept into what seemed like a Bethell and Maia Bouchier half of fame. The walls were scattered with memorabilia and memories from Mr Powell's career (he captained Warwickshire) as well as other legends of the sport, such as Brian Lara, who Mr Powell played alongside.



A young Jacob playing cricket on the beach in Barbados

He began by touching on his recent recruitment trip to the Caribbean, where he was presented with one of Jacob's Ashes shirts by his parents, Graham and Giselle, with a kind message on the back reading: *"Thanks for everything, I wouldn't be where I am without you"*. This highlighted the pivotal role Mr Powell played in Jacob's journey and progression to where he is now. When asked about his first time working with Jacob, Mr Powell recalled taking him for a session in the Collingwood during the 2016 summer before he joined Rugby. *"This kid's pretty special,"* Mr Powell remembers thinking to himself after the session when Jacob was only 10 or 11 years old. In his first year at Rugby, Jacob was awarded three academic prizes. *"He was a bright boy ... sharp,"* Mr Powell noted, explaining that his parents emphasised the importance of his education so he worked equally as hard on his academic as his cricket.

I followed by asking Mr Powell about any memories he has of Jacob at Rugby and he touched upon one of the first times he met him, on a walk around the close in the summer of 2016: *"I walked round the Close whilst chatting to Jacob and hearing him speak: it was like cricket was his DNA and cricket was his life"*. Jacob joined a first XI training session on NBS in the summer before joining and strode out to the centre wicket to face a member of the XX, Johnnie Fagan, who was told to *"go for him"*. Johnnie ran in and bounced Jacob first ball, which he was duly met by a commanding pull shot, sending



the ball flying towards School Field. This sent a statement to the boys in the first XI, as they all paused and were like *"Wow! This kid can play."*

Despite being technically supremely gifted, Jacob was also *"fearless"* and *"his work ethic was second to none. He was the first to practice; he hit so many balls; he raised the bar with his fielding. It was clear he didn't want to let his mum and dad down. That drive and that commitment, I have genuinely never seen something like it."* As someone

who aims to become a cricketer myself, I was interested in the characteristics or attributes Jacob had which enabled him to become so successful. Mr Powell responded with two important ideas. One, *“He has real conviction of who he is as a person and a cricketer”*. Two, *“He doesn’t leave anything to chance, leaving no stones unturned”*.

What has it been like for Mr Powell to see Jacob go on to do such great things?

On Jacob’s international debut for England, he remembers being sat in the crowd with Jacob’s parents, being *“desperate for him to do well. I knew in my heart of hearts that he could perform, but cricket, international cricket, is a funny game and anything can happen”*. A particular moment which stands out for Mr Powell was Jacob’s ODI innings at his home ground, Edgbaston, against the West Indies. *“We were sat on the balcony, and, when he got to his fifty, he turned and pointed his bat at the balcony – that was lovely”*.

And that 154 innings against Australia?

In England’s last attempt with the bat in Sydney, Mr Powell was watching the game on his sofa downstairs in Cotton. After a wicket fell in the first over, and Jacob came to the crease, Mr Powell said to himself, *“This is it. The last test. I’ll just watch it until he gets out.* It proved a happily long watch. When, the next morning, he went into the Cotton dining hall for breakfast, the boys were looking at me saying, *“Are you alright, Sir? You look like you haven’t slept”*.

‘Yes, I’m very alright,’ Mr Powell replied.



Mr Powell and Jacob Bethell at the Warwickshire end-of-season dinner

MURDER IN THE SCR

LILY ROSE-PITCHER

The school was possessed by a long quiet. Outside, the February sky was grey and suspicious, threatening rain. A queue snaked out of Stodge, at the front of which was Daisy Donne, eager for her cheese and bacon flatbread. When she received her treat, she was quick to observe that she had also been handed a slip of paper alongside it. Scrawled upon it was the following:

Dear Miss Donne,

I'd like to ask for your help with investigating the terrible murder of Mr. Eyre-Maunsell that recently occurred in the SCR. Found on his person was his staff lanyard, his wallet, several ballpoint pens, three cough sweets, and a pocket dictionary. Your reputation as a detective precedes you. Being more of an insider than any policeman, I trust that you will get to know intimately the intricacies of this case and are able to make judgements perhaps more reliable than that of the authorities.



How odd, Daisy thought. Whilst the subject of the message provoked a strange, uncomfortable feeling within her, thoughts of excitement simultaneously arose. This project would certainly be a welcome distraction from the monotonous toil of A-Level revision. The image of her, victorious beside the culprit in handcuffs elicited a slight grin.

The message wasn't signed, she noticed. Yet another mystery.

To ensure that Daisy felt as equipped for this mission as possible, she borrowed a magnifying glass from the biology department, a deerstalker from the costume store, and an overcoat from the Cotton XX. Now she fitted the part.

The weapon had been a poisoned cup of tea – *this* was a fact that now everybody knew, any year group gossip having been viciously overshadowed by talk of the murder. The cup was found with dregs of thallium poison, visually unsuspecting amongst the others in the washing up.

Daisy conducted countless interviews of all the teachers who had been present at this staff meeting via Outlook, asking teachers about their time of arrival, their actions within the meeting, whether they had a beverage themselves, and whether they noticed anything at all out of the ordinary. She was thus able to roughly establish those who had been present at the time when Mr. Eyre-Maunsell received his deadly cuppa. Indeed, it was very lucky that the victim had been one of the first to arrive, greatly reducing the list of primary suspects who had been there at the time of the murder:

- *Miss Cunningham*



- Ms. Barnett
- Dr. Coker
- Mrs. Skene
- Dr. Shaw

A slight giggle escaped Detective Donne. This was undoubtedly the friendliest bunch of murder suspects that she had ever encountered. It seemed ludicrous that any of them could be the culprit. And yet here she was, anonymously employed by someone she was certain must be a teacher themselves, to investigate this crime.

She surveyed her list, scrambling for possible motives, for anything that could determine them guilty. Miss Cunningham stuck out to her: the poison could well have been obtained from a

chemistry lab, and she would know well the subtleties with which she could execute the murder. When considering this latter point, however, the whole crime seemed a crude impersonation of a truly sophisticated poisoning. Surely Miss Cunningham would have been wiser than to leave traces of poison in the mug? Stuck in this agonising frustration, Daisy momentarily regretted not choosing Chemistry for an A-Level. This she took to be a sign to move on, for now at least, to the next name on her list.

Ms. Barnett. This name stumped Daisy – what possibly could Ms. Barnett have against Mr. Eyre-Maunsell? Daisy faintly recalled an incident from last term, a discussion in an A-Level English lesson sandwiched between scenes of *Hamlet*. His students, in an intellectual bid to determine whether coffee or tea was better, had asked him about his own preference. Within his reply, he had *strongly* condemned the flavour profile of Yorkshire Tea. Was it possible that Stanley student Sophie Averill had reported this blasphemous comment to her Dhm, and now Ms. Barnett was avenging her home county? It seemed ridiculous, but Daisy knew that Ms. Barnett didn't don her 'Yorkshire born and bred' beanie for nothing.

Now onto Dr. Coker. According to several of the interviewees, he had arrived with Mr. Eyre-Maunsell. The two were apparently chatting jovially, perhaps about their shared pupil of Daisy herself. This fact, however, did not elicit any sort of 'eureka' moment. *What was Dr. Coker passionate about*, Daisy wondered to herself. What could push him to murder? In her head, she listed his interests which she could remember. The school musical. West Bromwich Albion. Opera. Birmingham. All these passions popped into her mind, all creating no immediate association with the murder.

Mrs. Skene? The lovely, bubbly, Mrs Skene? She seemed an unlikely candidate. This seemed the most puzzling motive to establish: what had the Sports dept. got against the English dept.? Hmm...

A breeze of familiarity washed over Daisy upon rereading the final name on her list. Where had she seen Dr. Shaw recently? Then it struck her! In several of her email interviews, his name had been raised in suspicion. When invited to sit beside Mrs. Skene, he had deliberately sat instead beside Mr. Eyre-Maunsell, proximity which would easily allow Dr. Shaw to have slipped poison into his fellow English

teacher's drink. The motive? Unclear – perhaps some disagreement over textual analysis of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, over whether Keats or Byron was the better poet, or if Shakespeare really is the greatest English writer ever (that Christopher Marlowe poster on Dr Shaw's wall?). Daisy scrawled an asterisk beside Dr. Shaw's name.

A day passed. No developments had arisen in the case, and no brilliant moments of clarity appeared. There was something missing. It all seemed too obvious, and yet all too vague at the same time. She possessed no solid evidence against her prime suspect and was practically no closer to discovering the identity of Mr. Eyre-Maunsell's murderer than she was when she first received that slip of paper in Stodge. She surveyed the list of suspects once more. *Miss Cunningham, Ms. Barnett, Dr. Coker, Mrs. Skene, Dr. Shaw. Miss Cunningham, Ms. Barnett, Dr. Coker, Mrs. Skene, Dr. Shaw. Miss Cunningham, Ms. Barnett, Dr. Coker, Mrs. Skene, Dr. Shaw.* Daisy felt as though she was going ever slightly insane.

The list played over and over in her head until supper, sometimes with emphasis placed upon different names as her suspicion of each teacher grew and waned. She surveyed possible motives, possible alibis. Nothing. Practically nothing.

Then, reaching for a glass of squash and muffin, she realised what she had been failing to focus upon this whole day: *the murder weapon*. She knew who she had to talk to.

The following morning, Miss Cunningham seemed slightly surprised when asked by Daisy Donne for help with chemistry, considering that she did three essay subjects, none of which remotely involved thermochemistry or esters. Daisy was straight to the point. She saw no use in creating an elaborate story about being stuck on some chemistry prep.

"Miss, what do you know about thallium poisoning?"

Daisy observed Miss Cunningham's reaction closely, looking for signs of guilt. But Miss Cunningham did not sweat or go red or stutter. In fact, she grinned.

"Are you planning a murder, Daisy?" she asked jokingly.

Daisy laughed. "Of course not," she said, "I just stumbled across it in a book I was reading and was curious."

"Well, if you want to know, it doesn't have a taste or a smell, and it's a slow-acting poison."

Daisy, of course, could have found out this information from the Internet with little trouble, but was eager to get this information from one of the suspects herself. Miss Cunningham's description of the poison sparked Daisy's interest, and she was subsequently quick to establish that the volume of poison found in the cup would not have killed Mr. Eyre-Maunsell that quickly.

This huge inconsistency formed a gaping hole in the centre of this mystery.

Miss Cunningham, Ms. Barnett, Dr. Coker, Mrs. Skene, Dr. Shaw. The list of suspects still rung through her head, becoming almost musical. At lunch-time, she found herself whispering it aloud between bites of chicken tikka masala. This reached the point where her Deputy Head of House, Celia Duffy, asked her firstly of the list's significance, and secondly whether Daisy was going mad. Daisy, full of despair, spent the rest of her lunchtime confiding in Celia. She told her all the details and intricacies of

the situation, wondering whether Celia could offer her a fresh perspective. It turned out that she could offer more than just a different insight, but also an invaluable piece of information. Which was ...

Celia and Yasmin Woo had walked past Dr. Coker along Hillmorton Road as they walked from the music department and he walked back from the infamous staff meeting. They noted how he had retrieved from his bag a portable coffee cup and a biography of German theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht. To Daisy, this did not immediately seem out of the ordinary. Drinking two coffees consecutively was certainly an interesting decision, however. And as for the book, this was very characteristic of Dr. Coker, who was a known Brecht fanatic. 'Breaking the Fourth Wall': what had that got to do with anything? But ... wait a minute ... how had she forgotten Brecht?



The name sounded familiar in another way, however. She had heard it mentioned somewhere outside of the Macready Theatre recently: her English classroom, the week before the murder. Yet another discussion had gripped the class. The pupils were curious to know Mr. Eyre-Maunsell's opinions on the recent school production of *Evita*. His remarks were almost wholly in praise of the show, though he did note that he wasn't the biggest fan of the slight Brechtian influences upon it. Daisy also remembered how terribly ill her teacher had seemed that day with a cough. That would explain the cough sweets found on his person, then. In her mind, Daisy now saw these cough sweets littered across his desk, purple, glistening, ovoid.

A theory began to develop ... But, to prove it, Daisy had to speak to the man himself, Dr. Coker. Plagued by the biblical February rain, she ran over to his office.

"Sir," she said, breathlessly, her deerstalker faintly awry. "I know that it was you who killed Mr. Eyre-Maunsell!" This wasn't strictly true, but she thought that it sounded like something a proper detective would say. He did not reply; he simply sat there, agape. But there, on Dr. Coker's desk, was a jar of the same cough sweets that she had observed the victim taking.

"You have been poisoning Mr. Eyre-Maunsell with cough sweets, laced with thallium poison over the past week. You have been driven into a hidden frenzy ever since you found out what he said about *Evita*. How could he so disrespect Brecht? You then framed the murder as if it occurred during the weekly staff meeting, where the number of suspects would greatly increase, allowing you to slip under the radar. You collected a cup of coffee, secretly slipped in another dose of poison and poured it almost all away, leaving in the cup dregs of the poison. You placed the cup amongst the others in the washing up, so that the poison would seem to relate to Mr. Eyre-Maunsell's death."

There was a long, uncomfortable pause. Dr. Coker reached for his copy of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

Looking up, he fixed Detective Donne with a steely glare.



QUESTS, CRUSADES AND PUBLICATION: AN
INTERVIEW WITH DR SMITH

ABI CHAN

I'm sure you've all seen the 6 and the 7 plastered onto the History Department's window at some point in the Advent term. But what does it mean? I feel extremely privileged to be able to find out, and, of course, more about Dr. Smith's books when I scheduled an interview with him, funnily enough, after my History class on Monday.

I think one of the more important parts of getting to know somebody and their main interest is to get to know more about their childhood and where that interest stems from. So, naturally, I wanted to know more about when and how Dr. Smith first started becoming so interested in history. *"I've always loved history,"* he said, *"My parents encouraged it a lot, and they bought me medieval Lego sets, and took me to Bodium Castle in East Sussex."* When I asked further about why he's so interested in medieval history, he told me he was always drawn to the Middle Ages, because it seemed really exciting as a piece of history, and it had the castles and the knights and the crusades ... *"and Robin Hood, obviously."* And yes, I agree, Robin Hood is amazing. I can see why Robin Hood can get anyone interested in medieval history.



Dr Smith as a child

But, one might ask, why specifically medieval history, and not modern history? I came to realise Robin Hood was not the only deciding factor in Dr. Smith pursuing medieval history. He thinks *'people say that modern history is more relevant, but, if you want to change the world, (and I think we live in a world that desperately needs change),'* he comments, *'people should study the Middle Ages because it's very different, it gives us the tools to critique present certainties about what must happen.'* Even though he is interested in many aspects of medieval history, Dr. Smith is especially interested in the Crusades, having authored academic books on the subject. When I asked why so specifically the Crusades, he said that, when he was about 16, he read a BBC History magazine article about the Crusades. The author, Thomas Asbridge, happened to have a book coming out called *The First Crusade: A New History*, and, because he loved the article, he bought the book and thought, *'Oh, the Crusades are really interesting.'* He also mentioned the film *Kingdom of Heaven* coming out at the time, which he also saw in sixth form.

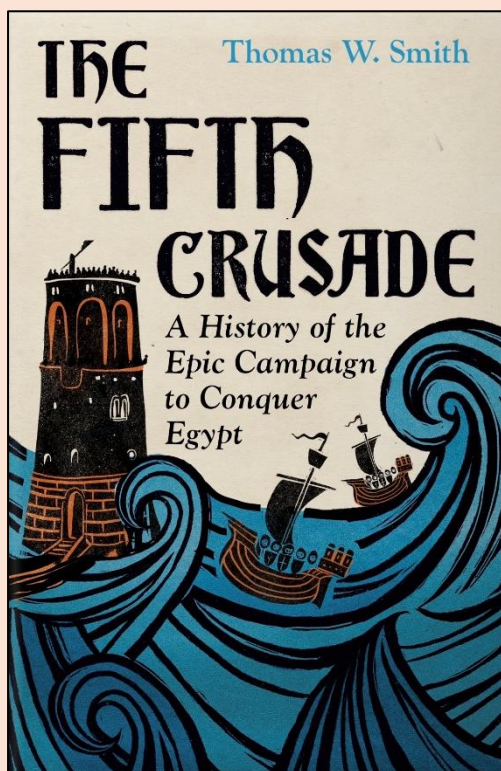
All the talk about medieval history led me to ask Dr. Smith if he had a role-model close to him who inspired him to pursue history. He answered by saying that he had had several role-models, including his granddad, who was in the Navy in World War II. He always loved hearing his stories about his time in the war. But another role-model, one who really had an impact, was his English teacher. He described her fondly, *"She really changed the trajectory of my life because I was quite lazy at school and I coasted through a lot of my lessons and didn't really try hard. My English teacher was amazing, and I really liked her a lot. At this parents meeting, she absolutely blasted me about how I needed to*

work harder and how I was wasting my potential. Then my parents blasted me in the car all the way home. I decided, overnight, to change."

Dr. Smith didn't start his teaching career at Rugby. Before the interview, I found out that he had worked at a few universities prior to teaching at Rugby. When I asked when and where, he said, *"I taught at Kent and Royal Holloway when I was doing my Ph.D, so I did lectures and seminars."* A research grant at Munich University *"changed the course of my life. I met my wife there, and I made great friends that I'm still friends with today. There were also manuscript discoveries that I made which changed the trajectory of my studies."* He then worked as a lecturer in medieval history at Trinity College, Dublin for two years, going on to teach at Leeds for 3 years. *"I gave up early to come here to Rugby."*

So, naturally, I follow up by asking what made him decide to come to Rugby? Wouldn't he prefer to work at a university? *"Can I be honest with you?"* he laughed. *"I really wanted to be a lecturer at university, and it was my life-goal which I worked really hard for. But medieval history isn't as popular, and the university sector was in crisis."* Moving around every few years was not ideal as he wanted a job with more stability. *"My wife's a vet, and she finished her training at so was ready to move to the UK: I wanted a job where we could live together and build a life."* That, he tells me, is why he started to look for a job at an independent school. *"The two things I wanted were to be able to teach history and do my research."*

Here, *Quod* readers, is an exciting journalistic scoop. Dr Smith had heard of Dr. Guard, Head of History, before even coming to Rugby! *"It's a weird story, actually. I've never told Dr. Guard,"* he confessed. *"I was at a conference in London, and I was in my hotel room. This is about the time when I was looking at independent schools. I had a copy of Dr. Guard's book because he's written about the Crusades as*

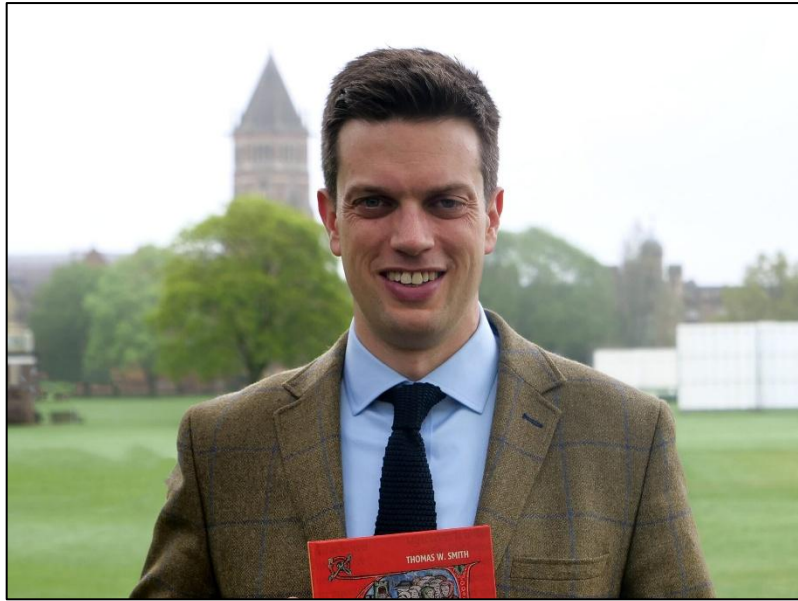


The Fifth Crusade

well. On the back of the book, it said, 'Dr. Guard is Head of History at Rugby School', and I was, like, wow, this guy's made it. That's an amazing job." He laughs at the memory. *"Then a post at Rugby came up and I thought, 'I'll never get this one', but I applied for it and then I got the job."*

Now for the main course of our conversation: how does one actually go about publishing a book? *"There are a lot of different ways to get a work published. Book publishing is one aspect, but there are magazines, articles, loads of different avenues for budding historians and writers out there,"* Dr. Smith explains. *"I've got three academic books, two that are out and one that's coming out in April: 'Curia and Crusade' (Brepols, 2017), 'Rewriting the First Crusade' (Boydell & Brewer, 2024), and 'The Deeds of the Franks who Conquered Jerusalem' (Oxford University Press, 2026)."* I remember his book, *Rewriting the First Crusade*, coming out in 2024 when I was in F Block. So, curious, I ask how he even got started. *"You make a proposal and send in some sample material, for example, a chapter, and they send it to peer reviews, who then see if it's*

good or not. They give you feedback and then the publisher decides whether to accept or not." His new books are aimed at a wider popular history audience. "Some publishers will accept a pitch without an agent, but for many big publishers you need a literary agent. I've got an agent, and he's the one who submits my proposal and sample to publishers. If publishers make an offer, the agent negotiates a deal and announces the deal when you sign the contract."



This sounds, as well as glamorous, seeing your name in lights, also stressful. "Are you under a lot of pressure to write under a deadline?" I ask. Dr. Smith nods. "Yeah," he agreed. "The sample chapter is probably 5000 words, and then the whole book is maybe 80,000 words. The academic publishing works very slowly and they're very amenable to you having an extension. But trade publishing moves much more quickly, and they look at maybe maximum 18 months. One of my most recent books took me 8 years to write, but I just signed a deal with my next book. I was a bit stupid. I set the deadline for the end of March 2027, and now I'm panicking a bit. I need to get it written by then." He looks at the clock. For an academic book, one has to finish it and it comes out; then it might be announced on social media, you give some talks and wait for reviews to come in: "that's it." But for trade books, it's quite different. "You need a publicity programme, so you write magazine articles, do podcasts, maybe attend literary festivals: you need to organise quite a lot."

"Which one was your favourite book to research?"

"'Rewriting the First Crusade' because I made a lot of discoveries of new manuscripts."

It started out as an accidental book, he went on to recount. "I was in an archive in the library in Munich and I found this new manuscript. I was teaching a course and published it as an article, which I was really excited about as no-one had found a new manuscript related to the First Crusade in 100 years. But that's where I thought it would finish." He was happily proven wrong when he discovered more manuscripts of the First Crusade letters. "There were tons of things out there no-one had looked for in a hundred years, and there were new online databases available. I ended up making quite a few new discoveries which changed the way we understand how those letters on the First Crusade were written, how they were edited and changed in manuscripts when they reached Europe."

Dr Smith's excitement felt tangible.

In a change of direction, I asked what was interesting about his new book? "The Fifth Crusade, coming out in July with Yale, is a history of the epic campaign to conquer Egypt. It was enormous fun writing that book because it's a topic I've been working on and off for about 20 years." It's a different story

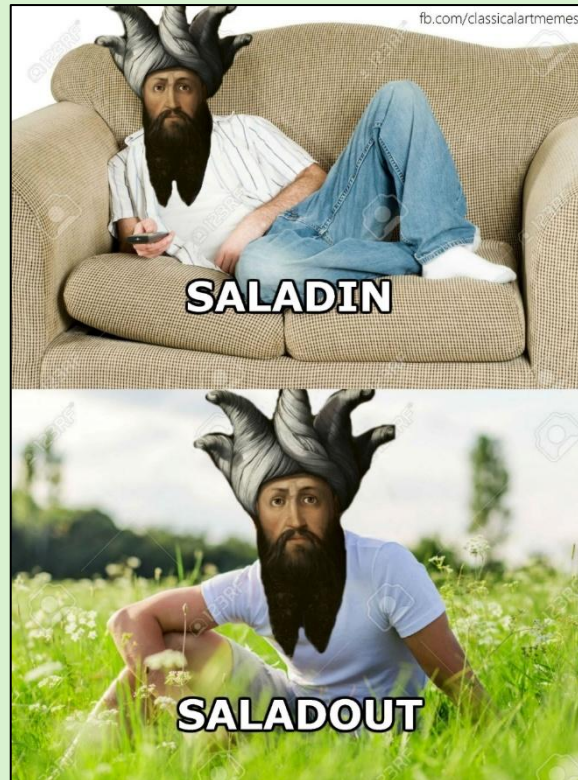
because it is the first crusade that invades Egypt. *“You’ve got this amazingly incongruous set of circumstances where you have Crusaders and Knights Templar in the land of the pyramids, and they’re fighting a crusade on the River Nile. It’s really cool. There are epic sieges, they capture this City on the Nile, and it’s one of the longest sieges in the history of the Crusades. It was really exciting to turn from writing for a purely academic audience to writing a very pacy, exciting narrative that appeals to a wider audience.”* I started wondering, as a reader and writer of fiction who only dabbles in academic books myself, would Dr. Smith’s new book, *The Fifth Crusade*, be a good book for people like me to read? *“Yes, Abi! The other books are more technical, but this one you can read with no prior knowledge of the Crusades.”*

The cover of any book is crucial for grabbing people’s attention: did Dr Smith himself design it? *“This is the fun bit.”* Dr. Smith nodded. *“For academic books, some have a series design and you have an image that slots into it. For ‘The Fifth Crusade’, the cover design is signalling to the audience that it’s a different type of book: my designer based the cover design on a Dutch Golden Age painting.”*

So obviously prolific is Dr Smith, I had to ask if he was in the process of writing *another* book about the Crusades. *“It’s due in March 2027.”* For you readers of this article who have valiantly kept up to this end-point, Dr. Smith has kindly agreed to give you a *“world exclusive review, a sneak peek.”* It’s called *The Last King of Jerusalem, Baldwin IV and the Fall of the Crusader States*. It is a *“history of King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, who has leprosy and fights to save the kingdom of Jerusalem as it crumbles around him with Saladin rising up and trying to annihilate the Crusader States.”* As many who have been taught by Dr. Smith may know, yes, it is the Saladin from Dr. Smith’s famous ‘meme wall’: ‘Saladin, Saladout’.

Ok: enough about Crusades, let’s get to the moment most of you intrepid readers have been waiting for ever since you read the first paragraph. What is the motive behind the 6 7 on the wall? *“Well,”* Dr. Smith sighed, *“I was on a one-man mission to kill off the ‘6 7’ thing. And the fastest way to kill something off is to make it uncool. So I thought if teachers used ‘6 7’ all the time, then it would kill it off quickly.”* Goal achieved, that’s why we don’t see it outside the History Dept. any more.

Walking out of Dr Smith’s classroom, I felt like I had learnt a lot. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Dr. Smith talk about his interest in history, and I feel as if I’ve learnt so much more about him as a person. Ultimately, one of the main things I’ve learnt and acted on was that Dr. Smith loves when people wave at him when they walk past his classroom. *“Shout out to all the people who walk past my classroom and give me a wave,”* he chuckled. *“Totally do it when I have a class. It makes me look cool.”*



The famous Saladin meme on Dr. Smith’s wall

MORE THAN JUST A SHOP: MEET ANNIE AND JULIE, QUEENS OF THE CLOSE

AIMÉE DUNNION

Arriving at the School Shop, most students are more focused on what they need rather than the people serving them. You are on a quick errand during an out, or a special to visit to pick up your first School scarf or pair of pyjamas. It's easy, then, to overlook the work that goes into keeping the shop running smoothly. Step forward Annie and Julie, two unsung heroes of Rugby School. Without them, your errand would be futile and you would have no special scarf or pyjamas. Also, Rugby School touring would cease to exist.

Two weeks ago, Annie received a letter from HR congratulating her on 15 years of work at Rugby School, so she started when the E block were born. I think it is time we get to know the two lovely women who keep the school shop functioning in the way we know and love.



Annie and Julie

Annie began work here as a tour guide. She explained how she had given up her previous job to stay at home and raise her children, yet she wanted 'a little something for my brain to tick over'. Not long after being appointed, Annie was left on her own. She can vividly describe how she felt leading up to her first, solo, guided tour, and confesses that she was '*very, very nervous*'. Though secret hopes that nobody would show up were running through her mind, in the end, about 6 people arrived, a manageable number. The tour began, and Annie began chatting with a lady who was one her *fourth* visit to the school. Internally panicking, Annie thought, 'Oh my gosh. This lady is going to know more than me'. This lady had wanted to visit Rugby School since the 1970s, even sending a letter to the Head Master at the time asking for a visit to the School before guided tours were even an option. It was only six years ago that this memory was rekindled when the same lady from the tour walked in through the School Shop door.

Julie.

As soon as Annie saw her, she cried (internally), '*That's the crazy woman from my first tour!*'. The partnership of Annie and Julie was clearly meant to be.

I was interested to know how Julie's fascination with the school led to her working at Rugby. Julie detailed how she studied *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, feeling that, as soon as she had finished reading, she simply had to visit. She recalls how, aged 15, she got the train, on her own, looked through the gates and thought to herself 'One day'. This was proving to be some story.

Julie's 'Rugby weekends' were what her children would call the times where she went Rugby on the tours. Later in life, Julie relocated and was in the market for another job and it just so happened that Rugby School were looking for another tour guide. When she came for the interview, they asked about her knowledge of the school, and Julie recalls how she 'started to recite things from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and facts about Thomas Arnold. Julie's passion for the job was clear from the get-go. In the phone call letting her know she had been given the job, the person said, 'We will give you the job for your passion, the rest you will learn'. This happened 7 years ago and I guess you could say the rest is history.

It is very rare that you go to the School Shop and you leave empty-handed. Annie describes Rugby School students are quite a 'distinct customer group'. Staff, of course, also use the School Shop, ordering the textbooks that magically appear on your desk. The School shop is not exclusive to the School and they often have a handful of regular local customers, one being a man who buys Shakespeare plays. 'We do get some lovely people,' Julie remarks.

The most popular item at the School Shop? Julie's quick response was 'Vaseline', however, Annie rejoins, 'As daft as it sounds, black pens', as each customer will buy two or three, especially during exam season. Pyjamas and scarves come next. The old Southfield scarf sat on the shelves for years and years, yet the new design has begun to sell out! New students, Julie explains, intuitively know that



A building everyone at Rugby School recognises

pyjamas are the top of a long shopping-list. A typical day in the shop? Conscious of the School's footprint, after a talk with the sustainability Levee a few years ago, items such as bamboo toothbrushes and pen refills were introduced. If you were not aware, the School Shop also do special orders, meaning if you require something specific, the school shop will do their up best to order it to school for you.

When asked what the most rewarding part of working in the school shop is, Annie described how she is a 'little bit devastated every June when the students leave'. They both agree that it is rewarding seeing students come in at 13, getting to know their personalities and watch their character grow in a 'mothering way'. Annie also explained that she is her own worst enemy when it



comes to perfection, they very much pride themselves on the presentation. Having local people visit the shop regularly is one thing, but having people travel from all over the world to visit the School (from Texas, for example) means

that they want the highest standards.

Tours of Rugby School take place continually throughout the school year, much more often than you would realise, due to their discreet nature with minimal interruption to students, all due to Annie and Julie's Secret Service level security measures. The wide demographic of the tours keeps Annie and Julie on their toes: one day, they could have a local primary school, the next it could be super fans of Rugby School Alumni Lewis Carroll. Sometimes, as Annie put it, they

need to 'brush up' on some extra knowledge when they have particularly niche visitors, an example being a guest who is writing a book on Rupert Brooke. French travel agents sometimes arrange group visits for people wanting to experience England. This creates a complex mix on a tour: French teenagers who have been told they are coming in the morning of the trip and who '*clearly didn't want to get out of bed*' (*Rugby? C'est quoi? ... Vraiment?*), and a group of senior citizens who have decided they are having a charming, information-filled afternoon out at a famous public school.

Which have been the most memorable tours? This turned out to be a hot topic. Julie told a story about a group from Japan who came with a translator, but the translator struggled with what Julie was trying to say. A comical photo opportunity in Old Quad, suggested by Julie, broke the ice. After this, Julie was answering all sorts of questions, mostly about her purple hair (the topic of a future in-depth, investigative *Quod* article). Then there was the visit of a group from South Africa. Julie described how they all stepped off the coach, kissed the pavement, took a bit of grass from the Close, and then promptly got straight back on the coach!

'A lot of it is a juggle.' One challenge is that sometimes members of the public do not understand that Rugby is still a working school so they cannot be permitted unrestricted access and be allowed to roam freely. Security have to be called when people choose to openly disobey their instructions!

Did you know that nearly all items in the School Shop are ethically sourced from within the UK?

One of the reasons for this, Annie explained, is her passion for British produce and she is driven to find local supply. Students sometimes find items on the expensive side, for example, a school scarf priced at £37.50. Annie agrees that they could have the scarf made cheaper, but the consequence would be not knowing where it is sourced from or its environmental standards: instead, scarves are tailored specifically for Rugby School and dyed a particular colour from British manufactured in a small mill in Yorkshire. 'You want quality,' Annie states. The list of locally sourced products is endless: School

Hoodies embroidered in Coventry and hand-designed mugs by Susan Rose who owns a pottery studio in Stoke-on-Trent. The support of local businesses feels an important principle.

Annie's proudest achievement is the girls' caps. When Annie began 15 years ago, girls did not get caps for sports. Annie explained how 'In some ways it felt like a boys' school that girls attended'. Annie believed there needed to be a shift and Mrs Hampton was instrumental here as the first female director of sport at Rugby School.

As a parting thought, Annie and Julie said, '*Don't let the eco lights put you off!*' If it is dark, it probably means Annie and Julie are in the stockroom. '*Out of all the jobs I've had,*' Julie concluded, '*I am really disappointed to have found this job only at the end of my working-life, as it is the loveliest place I have ever worked*'.



Annie and Julie openly care about all students and are more than happy to go the extra mile. If you call in first thing, you might interrupt them picking the day's playlist: maybe it's *Disco Friday*, or sometimes, on a Monday, it's 'The Blues', with a hint of tiredness from the weekend. The School Shop is a very fun place to be so remember to check it out and see if it has any interesting surprises for you.



Aimée and Julie with the new in store birthday range

D BLOCK DETERMINING THE NEXT GOVERNMENT? WHY 16-17 YEAR-OLD VOTING IS CONTROVERSIAL?

BEE ASKIN

In November, Jerome Mayhew, MP for Broadland and Fakenham, came to speak to all Politics students in the Macready. Following some very interesting discussion of Labour's fresh release of the budget, the topic of young people's engagement in politics was raised. This included Labour's manifesto promises of giving 16–17 year-olds the vote. When the whole room of 16–18 year-old students were asked if they believe that they should have the vote, nobody raised their hand. None of us felt that we should have the vote any earlier than is currently legal.



My discussion with the Cotton LXX: Henry, Liam, Tris and Tom

This fascinated me: why was it that no-one felt this was a positive for thing for democracy? Was it because we know the people in our age group better than Starmer seems to?

I left the Macready keen to explore why so many politics students were reluctant to see the voting age lowered.

When thinking of this new initiative, I looked at which countries currently have this already in practice, such as Austria, Malta, Brazil and Cuba, and one slightly closer to Rugby, and home for some: Scotland.

On the 18th of June 2015, *The Scottish Elections (reduction of Voting Age) Act* was passed by the Scottish Parliament, receiving Royal Assent on 24 July and it lowered the voting age from 18 to 16 for Scottish Parliament (Holyrood) elections and local government elections. This was seen to be highly effective when it came into practical effect in the 2016 Scottish Parliament election, as, according to ICM's survey, 75% of 16- and 17-year-olds voted, compared with 54% of 18–24-year-olds and 72% of 25–34-year-olds. Is this a sign that 16–17-year-olds joining the electorate is a positive thing for democracy?

Many people I have spoken to about this article have either (a) laughed at the combination of numbers in the title or (b) said 'No, we are too immature'. Some have said both. It is a valid argument for the oppositional view of younger voters, since levels of maturity fluctuate on a vast scale amongst the sixth form, and even into D block. Whilst many feel confident to make decisions such as casting a vote, others (such as Cotton LXX who I interviewed) feel they are just '*your average Joes*' and haven't experienced enough of the world to make such an impactful choice. It raises a question of whether the government want the 'average Joes' to vote as a part of this policy. They seem to want ordinary,

typical citizens to be able to have their say, two years younger than the standard voting age of 18. However, this does scare me slightly, as I don't think that it can be guaranteed young voters will have adequate knowledge when making decisions so votes may be cast for reasons that aren't exactly well thought through or backed up by true and factual evidence.

When I spoke to the Cotton LXX, their thoughts were insightful. Only 1 out of the 6 boys I spoke to, took Politics for A-Level. The mix of viewpoints and interest in politics made for a cacophony of quotes. Their consensus was that they don't believe that lowering the voting age will have positive repercussions. Whilst it may improve the current voting participation



Aimée and Vick (XX) politics students who attended the talk back in November

crisis, they felt this would not be a long-term resolution. Some of the boys (in this context, young men?) were unsure where parties stood on the ideological spectrum and, being frank, found it *'all quite confusing'*. One honestly answered he didn't think he would vote if it was an option right now as he *'doesn't know enough'*. This is completely valid; I think that for it to work effectively there would need to be a nationwide PSHE scheme added to the curriculum which would encourage new young voters to make educated choices and not be exploited by figures aware of possible naivety.

I spoke to Miss Cave, the Psychology teacher, who was leaving university when the vote came into place in Scotland. She is from Edinburgh and offered an interesting perspective, particularly on the susceptibility of young minds and the dangers of social media. We discussed the huge surge of Reform UK, who have gained three Conservative MPs in 11 days during January 2026 and their rise on social media worries Miss Cave. Social media is extremely influential in ways that are sometimes hard to spot in ourselves, as the teenage brain is distinctly sensitive to being unhealthily shaped and warped. This could be dangerous with younger voters suddenly being appealed to in a whole new way, one that is not necessarily adequately checked yet. With Nigel Farage having 1 million followers on Instagram, political figures are aware of their online presence and the extent of the support they can gain rapidly.

This perception was consolidated by my conversation with the Cotton boys who told me that they mainly get their political information from *'TikTok and Instagram'*, though a few said *'sometimes GB News or The Economist'*. One said, he *'wouldn't check the news'* and *'doesn't get it'*. A BBC TikTok on a story we may find interesting, or something to add to our *'Daily Diary'* for Mr Teeton, is harmless. However, the worry is when unofficial accounts proclaim statements which have little foundation but are then taken by careless consumers of such information and used to ground the decision to vote for a party. It's tricky: the rapid and unchecked nature of social media can be seen as a positive for political participation, but it could also prove dangerous because of its superficiality.

Miss Cave spoke about the reaction from young people in Scotland when the Act was passed. Aged 23 at the time, she recalls the news being flooded with campaigning and the pros and cons of the new initiative. *'Many 16/17 year olds were being interviewed and had strong reasons backing up their vote'*, and those who were interviewed appeared to have done detailed research and had policies they liked. Miss Cave said young people *'seemed invested'*. It felt that the vote being available two years earlier for young people might create more serious interest in the future of the UK. Miss Cave said this: *'If we are questioning 16/17 year-olds having the vote, then the same should be done for 26/27 year-olds'*, as it is only around this age is when the brain is properly developed.

When I reflect on the moment in the Macready when not a single person raised their hand (except for one teacher), I think the silence said more than just a simple 'no'. It reflected uncertainty, a lack of confidence, and perhaps an awareness of the responsibility that voting carries. The space was filled with the exact demographic to be given this new democratic responsibility, yet nobody wanted it. The knowledge of what we are like perhaps influenced this stillness when we were asked to raise our hand.

However, the Scottish example seems to show that young people can engage meaningfully when given the opportunity.

Lowering the voting age alone is not a solution to political disengagement, which Labour want to address. My conclusion? Without proper education and support, lowering the voting age risks creating voters who feel overwhelmed rather than empowered.

Perhaps the real question is this: is the government willing properly to prepare 16-17 year-olds to use the vote should it be given to them?



The charity Citizens UK, holding a protest outside of the Houses of Parliament, advocating the lowered voting age.

RITA AND BLAISE, SPECIAL PETS

SOPHIE GEDYE

Pets play a quietly powerful role within our School community, offering companionship, comfort, and moments of joy amid busy academic life. The common saying goes that “you are either a dog or a cat person”, but what about our teachers? This is an aspect of their lives we rarely get to see. To explore this further, I reached out to two members of staff known not only for their dedication to the Politics department but also for their beloved pets: Mr Teeton, owner of a gorgeous working spaniel named Blaise, and Miss Barnett, who has an eighteen-month-old cat called Rita.

My first interviewee was Miss Barnett, with Rita sitting next to her. Rita, and brother, Gerald, were both adopted by separate owners after their mother was rescued. Dr Guard connected Miss Barnett with the rescuer, and Rita found her forever home alongside her brother Gerald, who went to another family. Miss Barnett is no stranger to rescuing cats, previously owning Barbara and Dave. She emphasized the emotional aspect of losing a pet: *“You feel a genuine loss when they’re not there anymore.”*



Miss Barnett and her cat, Rita

As I entered Stanley House, hoping for a glimpse of the famous Rita, a black and white tail poked out of Miss B.’s office, which was my sign to head in. The office sits conveniently in-between the end of Stanley House and private side, allowing Rita to roam freely. Though she sticks to the ‘territories’ that are familiar to her, she occasionally ventures out to sit with the Stanley girls when they are in the courtyard, true to her role as Resident Therapy Cat. As a kitten, Rita used to sit on Miss B.’s bookshelf as she worked, *“like a bookend”*, a very cute image.

Students are often found lying on the floor next to Rita, as if worshipping her, and, as Miss Barnett puts it, *“She has become the unofficial mascot of the house.”* She even has her own cat-flap leading to the garden, often deigning to join the girls there.

I learnt about how impactful Rita’s presence is for the Stanley girls. In the full-on environment of a boarding house, pets offer *“something quite analogue”*. The opportunity to just come into the office and stroke a cat is *“not something you have to intellectualise”*; it is a very therapeutic experience and can act as a good ice-breaker in tutor meetings – *“So, this C in Physics?”* ... *“Oh, look, there’s Rita!”* - or if someone just wants someone to sit with her for gentle times. *“A teacher’s pet can make students feel that school is a cosy space, especially for those who miss their own pets at home. And for students who have never had a pet, it is a chance to experience that connection.”*



Rita as a kitten

What, I asked, does Miss Barnett especially love about Rita? *"I've always loved cats for their grace, beauty and individuality. Rita possesses all these traits and seems to bring a lot of joy, not just to me but to the Stanley community. From sitting on guard to welcome the XX girls back to West Wing to disrupting tutorials in search of yet another scratch behind the ears, she is a much sought-after presence. Indeed, many of the Stanley girls appear to speak fluent 'Meow', making Rita feel very much at home."*

Next up in my *Quod* pet quest was Mr Teeton and Blaise, a working cocker spaniel named after the patron saint of throats – a fitting choice

given his impressively loud bark. Three years old and *"very handsome"* (the only golden pup in his litter), Blaise has become an integral part of the Teeton household.

The family had never owned a dog before, though Mr Teeton grew up in South Africa with practically a menagerie: *"cats, hamsters, chickens, geese, ducks and budgies"*. They knew they had always wanted a dog, *"mostly through experience of looking after Mr Fowle's dog for a couple of days and meeting the dog's mother, Margot, who we loved"*. Blaise arrived just as Mr Teeton's son went to university, jokingly being called *"the replacement"*.

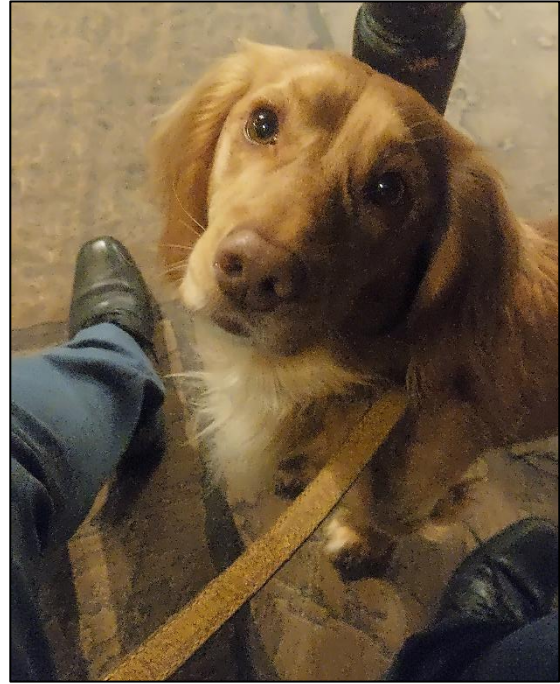
Dogs are well known for changing family dynamics, and, as a working cocker, Blaise naturally engages people and is described as a *"wellness dog"*, potentially taking after his mother, who was owned by a superintendent in the police-force. Mr Teeton reminisces about the 'good old days' where housemasters' dogs would just come in and out of classrooms, which was *"just fantastic"* (Mr Teeton used to be a housemaster at King's Canterbury), but due to *"the different age we are living in, we need to be more careful"*. He agrees with Miss Barnett's view that dogs *"help break the ice, build rapport, and support students feeling homesick or stressed"*.

And what does Mr Teeton especially love about Blaise? *"When the world seems to be against me, when the greyness of the British weather threatens to sap hope of any brightness from one's life, there is a beaming ray of unbounded and unconditional love embodied in Blaise, my adorable working cocker spaniel."*

He is right – one of the wonderful things about having a dog is the routine you get into: getting up in the morning, taking them on walks, feeding them: they just become another family member and are *"devoted to the person who feeds them"*. We all like a bit of devotion.

Of course, the difficulties of owning a pet cannot go unrecognised. Miss Barnett admits that gaining a cat's affection in the first place can be a challenge, especially rescue animals, as they often come with complicated pasts that make training difficult. Rita often seemingly likes to taunt those who give the impression that they are scared, as she *"goes and sits by them, watching the student slightly uncomfortably shift in their seat."*

With Blaise, his difficulties lie in his habit of eating anything he has access to. This included a 12-pack of mince pies last Christmas. Though festive-spirited, this resulted in an “*expensive trip to the vets*”. There is also a difficulty that follows trying to take your pet abroad. The Teetons regularly go camping in Europe and Brexit has made it expensive to take your dog abroad, so you now need certificates, jabs, and worming tablets administered within 120 hours of returning to the UK, often costing over £100. When they took Blaise to Switzerland last Christmas, the vet bills and paperwork added up quickly. And, of course, there's ongoing pet insurance to consider.



Mr Teeton's dog, Blaise

I have had to deal with some of these difficulties myself, having owned a Cocker Spaniel for the last 7 years so can understand the trouble they seem to find themselves in. My dog's name is Maisie, and she has picked up a bad habit of sprinting out of my garden to where the chickens are kept, hoping to find their coup magically unlocked, or any food left out for her to take for herself. Maisie defies the norms of a crazy Cocker Spaniel, however, as she would rather lie on the sofa than step foot outside the house for a walk if a single drop of rain has fallen. This, admittedly, does make our lives a lot easier when trying to juggle the busy school days and long dog walks. There was also the traumatising moment when Maisie decided it would be helpful to eat my passport the week before a flight, resulting in an impromptu trip up to Edinburgh for a last-minute replacement. Despite all these mishaps, I don't regret owning a dog for a second, as they are the best company and seem to make any day a little lighter.

Curious, I researched some of the benefits that having animals in schools brings. Therapy dogs especially are “increasingly used in K-12 (Kindergarten to year 13) schools as part of animal-assisted interventions to support students' wellbeing and learning”, including therapy (AAT), activities (AAA), and education (AAE). Research shows that therapy dog programmes are associated with “improvements in students' mood, anxiety, stress and engagement.”

Pets are a great equaliser. They do not consider grades or popularity, only how much attention you are willing to give them and whether you would sneak any food under the table (much to the dismay of the owner who has spent hours trying to train them). For children, they teach responsibility, routine and resilience. As Mr Teeton puts it, “*A dog is not just for Christmas.*”

Rita and Blaze may not be official therapy animals, but they fulfil similar roles. Rita provides a calming presence during the exam season, and Blaze will greet you with enthusiasm whenever you enter Mr Teeton's classroom. As Mr Teeton reflects, “*With people concentrating so much on mental health, and with students being homesick, animals can really be an important relaxing presence.*” Rita and Blaise exemplify how, through a quiet moment in house or a joyful greeting walking into the classroom, well-being often comes from the simplest sources. Bravo, Rita and Blaise!



THE LADY BEHIND ADMISSIONS
FLOSSIE WHITTLE

If Rugby School had a soundtrack, Mrs Bursey Faulkner would almost certainly feature on it.

Many students first recognise her not through Admissions emails or open-day speeches, but through song. Sit anywhere near her in Chapel and it quickly becomes clear that music is not simply an interest, it is a huge part of who she is. Singing shaped her life long before she worked in schools, and even now it threads quietly through her days at Rugby.

Before a career change as Housemistress at Cheltenham Ladies' College, Benenden, and now Deputy Head: Admissions and Marketing, Mrs Bursey Faulkner was a professional singer. Classically trained, she performed opera, concerts and oratorio,

but her career took her somewhere rather extraordinary: Abbey Road Studios. As a session singer, she contributed to major film soundtracks, including *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Kung Fu Panda*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Stardust* and *Sweeney Todd*, as well as recordings with Susan Boyle. It is one of those facts that feels almost unreal, yet once you know it, the confident Chapel singing makes perfect sense.

In a *Quod* exclusive, I can reveal that Mrs Bursey Faulkner has not only met Gary Barlow, lead singer and lyricist of 1990s wonder band Take That, but has *actually been inside his house*. A session recording tracks for the Take That Tour, *Progressed*, involved visiting Gary Barlow's house and singing in his studio. Mrs Bursey Faulkner smiled at this fun and glamorous memory. *"It was quite an extraordinary experience and hard to maintain professional decorum by not asking for photos!"*

Music remains central to her life at Rugby. She sings with the Temple Consort whenever she can and describes the Rugby School Carol Service at All Saints, Margaret Street, as one of the highlights of her year. For her, Chapel is not an obligation but a joy, a rare moment of stillness in an otherwise busy day, and one she seeks out whenever possible.

Her path into admissions began elsewhere. Before arriving at Rugby four years ago, Mrs Bursey Faulkner was a Senior Housemistress at Benenden School, where she discovered how much she enjoyed working with families, prospective pupils and prep schools. Hosting interviews, giving tours and building relationships felt natural. As she puts it, she loved the "energy" of it — something she believes stems from years of performing and teaching music. Admissions offered the same human connection, simply on a different stage.



Mrs Bursey Faulkner



Now overseeing both admissions and marketing, she finds herself at the centre of a changing educational landscape. Yet she is quick to challenge the idea that admissions is cold or transactional. For her, it is about creating “good news stories” and opening doors wherever possible. Giving a student the opportunity to come to Rugby, she says, is a genuine privilege.

When reading applications, authenticity matters most. Pupils who understand Rugby’s history, its house system and its distinctive character stand out immediately, particularly when that awareness is paired with genuine ambition from the student and not just their family. Applications which convey real passion, especially in music or the performing arts, stay with her. Those who accidentally name the

wrong school also tend to linger in the memory, though for rather different reasons.

Despite her musical background, there is one competition she firmly refuses to judge: House singing. The reason? Bias. With her son Archie in Cotton EB, she insists there would be no way to remain impartial. Archie’s presence at Rugby is something she speaks about with warmth and humour. She enjoys seeing him around school — even if he did not always feel the same. Early mornings in F Block and an enthusiastic, professionally trained mother singing in Chapel were, she admits, “excruciating” at first. These days, she believes he has learned to accept it.

Outside the Admissions office, her enthusiasm for school life is unmistakable. Inter-house competitions such as pushcart racing and House singing are among her favourite moments of the year. She speaks with equal energy about chapel services, conversations with students and the sheer vitality of the school day, saying there is “never a time of day” when she does not look forward to interacting with pupils.

Away from music, she has another unexpected claim to fame: *MasterChef!* Note the second *Quod* exclusive in the same interview. Although she describes her appearance as “very unsuccessful”, her love of cooking is genuine, and she still enjoys time in the kitchen when her schedule allows. What, then, is cooking like *chez Mrs Bursey Faulkner*? “*A love of all things natural and seasonal punctuate our culinary calendar. Simple is often underestimated: my desert island ingredients/equipment would certainly include fresh herbs, 100% virgin olive oil, sea salt, and good knives, sharpened daily.*”

Between travelling for Admissions, hosting events and visiting schools, quiet evenings are rare, but, when they do happen, they are treasured. Radio 3 plays constantly at home, in the car, in her office, through headphones while walking Sybil or when travelling abroad: Favourite music to listen to? “*The Eagles, Sade, Carole King, Ella Fitzgerald, Eva Cassidy. Cold Play is a must having been at Sherborne*

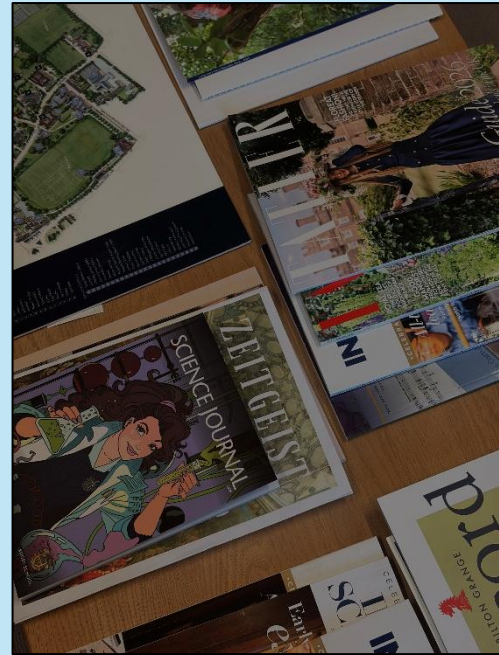
Girls at the same time as Chris Martin.” That’s Quod exclusive revelation no.3. “A new discovery is a band called the Rikas: look them up! I’m not a fan of country or folk music.”

Raised in Sherborne, Dorset, Mrs Bursey Faulkner attended Sherborne Girls as a music scholar, where singing in the abbey first sparked her love of music. As a pupil, she was conscientious and focused, with a clear ambition from a young age to become a professional singer. Ironically, she once declared she would never become a teacher, only – such is life! - to train formally later in life and spend years teaching music. It is one of the more unexpected turns in her career, and one she now values deeply.

Her advice to her younger self is simple: back yourself sooner, stop trying to please everyone, and learn that it is okay to say no.

Perhaps what defines Mrs Bursey Faulkner most is her ease with students. As the parent of a teenage boy, she understands teenagers instinctively and believes they respond best when treated as equals, “normal human beings”, as she puts it. Whether the conversation is about music, life, matches, or even handbags finding common ground is key, as I see it as my responsibility to find it, even pizza toppings, there is always a topic that gets the conversation following. and make-up, she relishes it all.

From Abbey Road to Admissions, *MasterChef* to the Temple Consort, and motherhood to marketing, Mrs Bursey Faulkner brings warmth, humour and humanity to Rugby School. And if you ever hear particularly confident singing in Chapel, you can be fairly sure exactly where it is coming from. Take a bow, Mrs Bursey Faulkner.



DOMESDAY, CASTLES RAILWAYS...THE INTERESTING HISTORY OF RUGBY TOWN

GABRIEL NIESLUCHOWSKI

When we think of Rugby town, there are three things that instantly come to our mind: the sport, the school, and the trains speeding through the Midlands every day. Its history, however, shows that there is much more than that to Rugby town, and not all we think about it is exactly true. Even as students who spend most of our time in the school and its surrounding, we may still be surprised by what Rugby's history hides. So, what is it that makes Rugby stand out beyond the things we already know?

The Beginnings

For many of us, the history of Rugby starts with the founding of Rugby School – 1567. The first mention of the town, however, appears in the Domesday Book from 1086 as 'Rocheberie', with 19 inhabitants listed. At this time, Rugby was a small agricultural village.

During the Middle Ages, in the 13th century, Rugby received a market charter, a crucial aspect for the city's prosperity which enabled Rugby to serve as a market centre, attracting merchants and encouraging trade amongst the local people. It also significantly improved Rugby's social life, creating a space for discussions and meetings. This enabled Rugby to grow and, even though it never became a major city, it has always been flexible as regards adapting to change.



Me reading the Rugby Magazine, vol.1, which speaks about the history of Rugby town, at the local library



Rugby Radio Station in 1955, photo located in Rugby Art Gallery and Museum

A Castle That Disappeared

One of the lesser-known chapters of Rugby's medieval past is the existence of a *castle*. In the 12th century, a small fortification or castle was built in the town, probably without royal permission. These unauthorised structures were known as 'adulterine castles' and were common during periods of political instability. It has been speculated that it was constructed early in the reign of King Stephen (1135–1154) during the period of civil war known as



Me in front of Rugby Museum and Art Gallery

The Anarchy, and then, as a so-called adulterine castle, built without Royal approval, demolished in around 1157 on the orders of King Henry II.

The foundation of Rugby School and some things you might not know...

As everyone knows, Rugby School was founded in 1567 by Lawrence Sheriff. We also know that our school has produced many significant figures such as the famous writers Lewis Carroll and Salman Rushdie; poets Rupert Brooke and Matthew Arnold; and a Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. Many, however, don't know, that the school also educated William Henry Waddington, who

later became Prime Minister of France in the late 19th century. This

international connection is often overlooked and highlights how Rugby's influence has extended well beyond Britain.

That is not the end, however. The reforms of headmaster Thomas Arnold in the 19th century — particularly his emphasis on character education and the prefect system — became models for schools across Europe and even parts of the British Empire. Many modern boarding school structures around the world trace elements of their organisation back to Rugby, even when their students have never heard of the town.

Webb Ellis: A Legend You Know — and What You Might Not

The story of William Webb Ellis picking up the ball is probably one of the first stories every Rugby School student hears, at least that is how it was in my case. When we look at the historical evidence, however, we notice something strange: there is no direct proof for it. The famous incident was recorded decades after it supposedly occurred, meaning historians generally treat it as more legend than verified fact.

Another lesser-known detail concerns the statue outside the School. Since no reliable image of Webb Ellis as a young boy survives, the sculptor used a local model rather than an accurate portrait. Even though it makes sense that there is no surviving image of him (as he was just a boy at the time), this is still something that many are unaware of.

What Made It All Run

If we had to name one thing that made the improvement of Rugby faster than ever, it is the introduction of railway in 1838, which is close to the end of Thomas Arnold's time as Head Master (he died in 1842). At first glance that would be it – more people travelling through, from, and to Rugby. However, I contacted Ms. Jenny Hunt, our school archivist, and she provided me with some interesting details in this area. Unexpectedly, between 1833 and 1838 numbers at the School were declining and started increasing again from 1838. This suggests that the railway helped Thomas Arnold to increase the School numbers again and strongly develop Rugby's reputation.

Radio Station and Clocks All Around the UK

Now, let's move beyond the School gates. As a town, Rugby played a major role in C20th communication through the Rugby Radio Station which opened in 1926. While the name now rings no bells, the station was actually once the largest transmitting station in the world at the time, sending signals across continents and oceans.

During the World Wars, the station was vital for long-distance communication. Even more surprisingly, it transmitted the MSF time signal, which synchronised clocks across the United Kingdom all the way from 1927 up to 2007. For decades, the precise time used by businesses, railways and households was linked to signals coming from Rugby, which made everything run on time. (Maybe if it stayed that way, the trains wouldn't be so delayed...)

The Story of What's Beneath

Although we may think that the fact that Rugby dates to the 11th century already makes it a town with a long history, when we see some recent findings, we can see that this is definitely not the case. Just outside Rugby lies the ancient Roman settlement of Tripontium, once a busy stopping-point along a Roman road. The Rugby Archaeological Society has spent years uncovering baths, buildings and artefacts from this ancient community, achieving magnificent success.

Their work earned the prestigious Pitt Rivers Award, highlighting the importance of local archaeology. And, if you are interested with what they found throughout their work, there is a display of the artefacts in the local museum, open to everyone who wants to learn about the fascinating history of Rugby Town



*A Nobel Prize from an Industrial Town:
The Significance of Holography*

*The Pitt Rivers Award awarded to Rugby Archaeological
society, located in Rugby Art Gallery and Museum*

In 1947, physicist Dennis Gabor developed the theory of holography while working at the British Thomson-Houston laboratories in Rugby, decades before lasers made practical holograms possible. His idea was revolutionary because, unlike ordinary photography, holography records the full structure of light waves, allowing images to appear three-dimensional and realistic.

While one may think this is not a significant invention, it has proved to have many applications in science and engineering. In fact, those shiny images on banknotes, passports and credit cards are holograms designed to stop counterfeiting. This is why Gabor's work earned him the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1971 and showed that Rugby was not only a place of historic traditions but also a centre of cutting-edge scientific thinking. For students used to seeing Rugby as traditional, holography is a reminder that one of the modern world's most futuristic technologies began just down the road.



Me in front of one of Rugby's most iconic places - the Clock Tower



To See Rugby for What It Is

For us, Rugby School students, it is easy to assume that the school defines the town — after all, its buildings dominate the skyline, and its traditions shape daily life. Yet Rugby's history stretches far beyond the Close: from medieval castles to Roman settlements, and from Nobel Prize-winning science to radio signals that once set the nation's clocks.



MR LANDSDALE: FROM ENTREPRENEUR TO
TEACHING BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS

FREDDIE BENNETT

I'm sure Business students reading will agree with me when I say what a great teacher Mr Landsdale is, but, until not long ago, that's all I understood him as, a very good teacher, being oblivious to his intriguing background in South Africa. I learnt about his entrepreneurial background as an example of a topic in one of my Business lessons and his story intrigued me to



find out more, hence this interview. I wanted to delve into the deep end of his businesses and discover why he became an entrepreneur in the first place and what was the catalyst to convert from being an entrepreneur to a teacher.

As soon as I knew I could do an interview as my next *Quod* piece I knew Mr Landsdale was the teacher I wanted to talk to. He met me with such enthusiasm and has given me some really useful insights. It felt extra impressive that, while he was answering my questions, he was also managing his Business booster class.

What was Mr Landsdale's educational journey before starting his first business? I was met with an answer I wasn't expecting: *'I was a lazy academic student'*; he achieved what he needed to but there was not the push to academically succeed. He was, however, a great sportsman: as some of you may know, he was a decorated cricketer back in South Africa, which allowed him to attend K.E.S, a renowned sports secondary school, initially putting all of his 'eggs in one basket'. From there, he progressed to the University of Johannesburg to study entrepreneurial management.

How was this? Coming from a Business teacher and former-entrepreneur, I was again met with an answer I wasn't expecting, as Mr Landsdale replied that the course as *'not very interesting'*, with him only enjoying his final year there on a franchising topic. It did, however, give him the foundations and network to establish his first business.

Mr Landsdale started SuperSport United Soccer Schools in Cape Town, a football academy for children of the ages 4-15 of any ability. His objective in starting this business was to create social change in the area, a place where the kids could go to have fun whilst developing their skills on a recreational level; teams across year groups would play in regional competitions. He stated his pride in feeling a factor in social change in the area. Cape Town is a place with stark economic differences with a fairly high crime rate due to poverty. *'Running a place where the kids could come three times a week and just play'* felt a powerful opportunity to provide.

I asked Mr Landsdale to give me three vivid moments which captured how it felt running his business.

After a brief pause, he dived in.

1. The First Child Who Truly 'Clicked'

I remember one afternoon watching a boy from the “Cape Flats”, a township (or informal settlement in Cape Town), who was quiet, painfully shy, and barely making eye-contact, finally crack a smile after completing a juggling skill with the football. A week before this, he had lost one of his friends during a drive-by shooting involving multiple gangs in the area. It wasn’t the outcome of the skill that mattered. It was the moment his shoulders lifted, his body language changed, and he realised he belonged somewhere. That tiny spark felt like proof that what we were building wasn’t just a business, it was a place.

2. The Day the Bank Account Looked Terrifying

There was a point early on where I opened the business account and my stomach dropped. We were nowhere near break-even: the numbers were honest enough to tell me something had to change. I remember sitting in my car, hands on the steering wheel, breathing slowly and wondering if the whole dream was collapsing. But that moment also pushed me to become more disciplined - refining costs, restructuring timetables, improving communication with parents. That low became a turning-point.

3. The Final Session Before Closing That Chapter

In one of my last sessions before stepping away from the football venture, a group of kids presented me with a handwritten card. Nothing fancy - just scraps of paper stapled together, full of misspellings and doodles. But they kept saying, “Thank you for giving us a place to play.”

That moment hit harder than any revenue milestone.

It made the entire journey - every stress, every long night, every doubt - feel worth it as a coach and fellow lover of sport. It built resilience in me, and it gave me a purposefulness which I have transferred across to my teaching.

Mr Landsdale described his journey in this business as a true adventure, which I think is fitting as, when you run a business, as there is no clear destination you’re trying to reach, you are just ‘running a race with no finish line’, a scary if thrilling concept. Mr Landsdale recalls it as an exciting experience, because ‘even though there were some profit worries, it was a lifestyle business so it was enjoyable’. Cape Town is a place with an extensive social scene, great exercise culture and a lot of recreational activities to take part in as a local, which allowed him to maintain a healthy work-life balance, which was key to





him not feeling stressed. The stress stemmed from the worry that they needed to attract as many customers as possible to break even as a business, while maintaining the goal of being an instrument of social change.

He attests his success in entrepreneurship to his organizational skills: *'staff rotas, parent communication, setting fixtures and training times, meetings with staff'* were all key things he

needed to set up every week. The things most important to succeed in business were, he felt, *'trust and honesty, reliability and empathy'*. This is because if the people you work with understand and share your passion for the business, it creates an emotional attachment, making them want to help, so creating a community around the business that helps it succeed long-term. This was the fundamental base that built SuperSport United Soccer Schools as it created a micro-community of coaches, kids and parents within a struggling society.

Throughout his business experiences his family has remained his number one priority. His partner was a teacher at the time, and his working hours usually clashed with his partner's holidays, and it was this which sparked his decision to become a teacher. How has Mr Landsdale's experience as a business owner affected the way he teaches the subject? First and foremost, he now understands the importance of brand which creates important context for a lot of the things taught. Students can understand a topic easier if he links a case study to the decisions he made in a similar situation.

If Mr Landsdale were to start a new business today? An online cricket coaching business would be his next move, sticking with his knowledge of a sports related businesses with adaptation to the technological age: consultation, video review, advice and development plans. Given his experience as a professional cricketer, he has connections in that world which would help him be successful.

My final dramatic question. I paused and looked my ace cricketer and Business teacher in the eye. 'If the rest of this interview were deleted, and you could give one piece of real-world advice to the students reading, what would that be?'

'Chase your passion, not the money.' Without that, there is no motivation to set up any business venture. *'Delegation is also key.'* In a business you have set up, there will be some things that you maybe aren't good enough to do competently so you need to recognise that. Mr Landsdale learnt that he was better at the interpersonal aspects and actual coaching aspects of the business, and he passed on the things he wasn't as good at or didn't enjoy as much.

Mr Landsdale, this interview was an absolute pleasure. You had some really great advice and have definitely inspired me both in Business as a subject and as a possible career. Thank you for opening up on your experiences with me.

RUGBY SCHOOL – THE NEW TATE MODERN

CLEMMIE WILSON

Walking into the Art department, you are hit with the giant Lego-man cardboard cut-out, the smell of drying paint, and the overwhelming masterpieces which hang on the walls, reminding us art students of the hard work which lies ahead. From overflowing sketchbook pages to 6ft final pieces, the Art department is a space where creative ideas are constantly being tested, whether that be in graphics, textiles, photography or fine art. But art at Rugby is so much more than F block colour wheels and 3D shape drawings. But what about the teachers themselves? I caught up with Mr Ryan, Mr Wright, and Mrs Lambie-Jones to find out about their art journeys.



Mr Ryan's painting of The Close and Chapel

Mr Ryan

Mr Ryan, a fine art teacher, explained how challenge, independence and ambition are central to the way students are taught and encouraged to work.

In response to what inspired him to pursue art, Mr Ryan responded, *'I came from a very arty family, and I was always drawing when I was child, so I never stopped'*. Did he always want to become an art teacher? Because Mr Ryan already came from an artistic family, and his grandfather was an artist and



a 'teacher in his own right, and something of an intellectual oracle', he knew that pursuing art, talking about art and travelling the world to do art was the ultimate dream-job. After Mr Ryan's epiphany of artistic desires, he knew that he wanted to attend art school. *'I became a TA [teachers' assistant] at the New York studio school and paying for some of my tuitions by working for the tutors'*. Through this opportunity, he explained how he met a lot of interesting people through organising dinners for lecturers and hosting them and this experience laid the foundation for a career that balanced practice and education.

When discussing artistic influence, he resists narrowing it down. Like Paula Rego, who once claimed she was influenced by "all artists except Constable", he



maintains a broad interest in painting across history. However, the Euston Road School was particularly influential in his early development, with artists such as William Coldstream leaving a mark. From there, his influences trace back through a long lineage, from late Renaissance painters such as Titian and Veronese to earlier figures like Piero della Francesca and Giotto, reinforcing the idea that art is an ongoing conversation across centuries.

Before joining Rugby full-time, Mr Ryan worked extensively as an artist-in-

residence and taught at university level, including roles at the New York Studio School and Western Connecticut State University. Initially uncertain about teaching in a secondary school environment, he soon discovered that students possessed a genuine love for art that extended beyond grades. Residencies at King's School, Canterbury, and later at the Oratory, near Reading, gradually evolved into more permanent teaching roles, making the transition to Rugby a natural progression.

My final question was this: 'What is the most dangerous thing an art student can say right before beginning an art project?' Having taught at several schools, he laughed, saying that, as an art teacher, you get so used to the same recurring expressions of anxiety, such as eyes or contorted facial expressions, that they might as well be part of the syllabus.

Art and me

Art has always been a prevalent part of my life, particularly through my family, my grandparents especially, ranging from ceramicists and sculptors to gouache painters and watercolour artists. Some of my earliest memories of art being important are from Year 6, when my younger sister and I would visit our grandparents during the summer holidays. During long, lazy days when we had grown sick of watching *The Talented Mr Ripley* or *A Good Year* and played the piano (or at least attempted to) until our ears rang, my grandpa would ask us if we wanted to paint. While my sister was often reluctant, I never turned down the opportunity. Watercolour was, and still is, his favourite medium - and it became mine too - which meant I rarely painted with anything else until I came to Rugby. I also remember the first time I experienced my first exhibition, which was when I was 13 years-old in 2023. Compton Verney is the home of many art exhibitions, a Georgian mansion which hosts a range of art styles, combining creativity and nature. I was in awe of the magnificence which haunted every piece, the lighting almost eerie as you walked from one Dutch flower painting the next.

Before arriving at Rugby, although I enjoyed painting and drawing, I often became frustrated when something didn't go my way or when a mistake meant I failed to meet my unrealistic Picasso-level expectations. However, learning to paint in watercolour taught me that art does not need to be perfected to match a photograph (even if I still want it to) and that working instinctively and trusting the process is a discipline in itself.

When I applied for the Rugby art scholarship, I was aware of just how high the standards were, and the experience reinforced my understanding of the expectations within the department even before I joined. Teacher encouragement is constant (even if, in Mr Ryan's case, it comes in the form of criticism that may seem a little *too* direct). In a word, Rugby has increased my ambition.

Mr Wright

"What," I asked Mr Wright, "is the biggest misconception about studying art at school level?" He was quick to challenge the idea that art is an 'easy' subject, explaining that it is often viewed as a lighter option because people fail to recognise the level of commitment involved: the hours of sustained studio work, independent research, and technical development are frequently overlooked simply because the outcomes are visual rather than written. It can be frustrating sensing misinterpretation of Art in school as a recreational activity.



A piece by Mr Wright

I delved into Mr Wright's artistic background. He grew up on the Isle of Portland famous for its limestone and had the opportunity to study stone masonry while he was still at school, though he never studied art. He had some "*fab*" tutors at college, and one in particular stood out, Peter Doig, who is now one of Britain's most pre-eminent painters. "*He never actually proffered much advice but had a presence and total commitment to his craft that made a huge impact. He used to invite me to gigs of his favourite bands at next door's Royal Albert Hall (so I liked him for that too!)*".

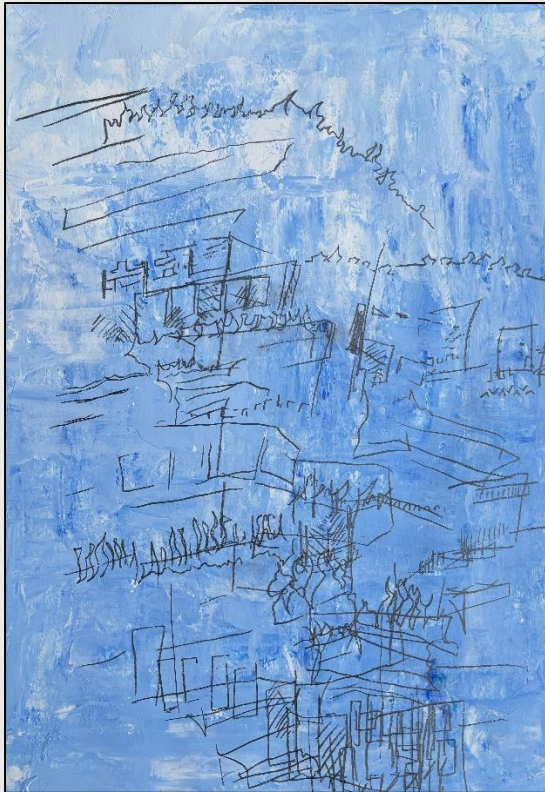
How did you become an Art teacher? "*I started off lecturing, just part-time, to try to supplement my income as an artist. I had a whole different career before studying art and tried many different things, including a brief spell as a Royal Marine. I ran a business for a number of years before deciding to study art.*"



Mr Wright works in oil painting mostly, with resin, too, suspending collage and mixed-media within layers. "*My favourite artist when I was a student was a painter called Cy Twombly, who is mostly closely linked to the Abstract Expressionists, although he wasn't really! His deeply spiritual work, which references mythology, calligraphy and gestural mark-making, still inspires me.*"

Mrs Lambie-Jones

I then caught up with Mrs Lambie-Jones and asked her the same questions. "*Dr Thomas*



A piece by Mrs Lambie Jones

Frangenberg was my favourite teacher. He taught me art history at university and he was a true Renaissance man. We were all terrified of him (he was strict and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of art history) and then we figured out in our final year that he had a wicked sense of humour and cared deeply about how much and how well we learned. He also collected contemporary art - he was inspiration personified."

Do you have any childhood memories of feeling especially drawn to art? "I've always loved drawing and making images - it's something every child enjoys but I never grew out of it. I remember the pride of having my work singled out but also having to manage the attention that came with it - I didn't like that so much. I just wanted to get on with making art and lose myself in the process."

I wondered about her journey of becoming an Art teacher. Mrs Lambie-Jones explained that her parents are both teachers so in some ways it felt an obvious choice.

"After university, I spent a year as an intern in Thailand, working for family friends who ran a business finding jobs for teachers in international schools. That opened my eyes to the wider possibilities in teaching so everything came from there, really. Art teachers spend so much time helping students with their work, but does she have the time to pursue her own artistic interests and create her own art? She replied, "If I'm honest, nowhere near enough - I find my time gets eaten up with school and work so there's not much left for anything else. I always carry a small sketchbook with me and fill that up over time with drawings from wherever I happen to be - they become a visual diary of the things I've noticed over time. I keep finding I use collage, often as a surface to work onto afterwards with a drawing. It's not always a conscious choice, it just sort of happens."

Finally, I asked, which artists Mrs Lambie-Jones finds most interesting. "I discovered Kurt Jackson last summer - I visited his gallery in Cornwall and loved his work - it's all about place and the natural world, with a mixture of paint, drawing and collage. I liked the enthusiasm of it all: he works outside in all weathers, capturing what he feels is important - the artwork as a document, campaigning for us to notice the world around us and value it. I like that he celebrates his immediate surroundings and elevates what we might otherwise take for granted."





“G'DAY!” ... “HOW MARVELLOUS TO MEET YOU!”
AUSTRALIA AND ENGLAND COMPARED
CINDY DENG

What's new?

W hat's new? Stepping off the plane into my first European winter felt like walking into someone else's story. Here I was, eleven weeks away from home, navigating a brand-new lifestyle and school culture at Rugby School. Travelling from Fairholme College, Australia, coming to the UK was both nerve-racking and exhilarating. Before this, I'd lived in two countries, born and raised in China before moving to Australia at the age of eight. When the email arrived confirming my exchange spot, I knew I was about to add a third chapter to the places I call home.

One of the most striking differences I noticed was the way people socialize. If Australia greets you with a loud, 'G'day!', Britain welcomes you with a polite 'You alright?', which I learned is a question that doesn't require a detailed answer. Australians tend to be casual and open, with laid-back, direct humour. In Britain, interactions often feel more understated at first, shaped by polite greetings and a quieter tone. Over time, I've come to appreciate that subtlety, as it reveals a dry, and sometimes engagingly sarcastic wit and a thoughtfulness that make friendships feel steady and genuine.

Small details of daily routine, like the Rugby uniform, was a significant transition. A new uniform meant leaving behind Fairholme's 'sun-smart' culture. There, the Panama hat was non-negotiable: forget it at lunch, and you risked a sunburn. Hair, shoes, and other elements of the uniform followed strict rules. At Rugby, uniform rules feel more relaxed: jewellery is allowed, and the blue blazer and long skirt are the focus. Around the school campus, you find Rugby students carrying only a laptop, instead of the heavier notebooks you carry in Australia.

Adjusting to a new uniform was just the start, next came the rhythm of life at Rugby. Saturday school, along with seven-period days on Mondays and Fridays, took a few groggy mornings to get used to! By the end of the day, my brain was buzzing and my feet were sore, but I loved the sense that each lesson had mattered. Another aspect that stood out was the house system, which is central to life here. The concept of having fifteen houses still sounds jarring to me. In-house communal eating during breaks creates a strong sense of community. Back in Australia, all students are divided into four houses and lunches are eaten outdoors with friends. Our boarding house isn't considered a 'house' for students to 'compete in' with other houses, as it were,

but simply a place to stay. Rugby's house-based lifestyle makes boarding more immersive and connected, something I quickly came to enjoy.



The Australian tartan school dress



G'day, Mr Fisher!

As I settled into life at Rugby, I've met other who share similar experiences with mine. People who, like me, had crossed oceans and rewritten what 'home' meant. Mr Fisher, a teacher from Australia, offered his own illuminating take on moving to the UK. Laptop in hand, I walked over to Sheriff on his duty night, wondering what it would be like to hear another Australian's perspective on life in the UK.

We began with a trip down the memory lane: what it was like to grow up in Australia? Mr Fisher was raised in Sydney, North Shore suburbs and he grew up with a city-based but outdoors-focused lifestyle, with a heavy involvement in sport, such as cricket, soccer, golf, and tennis. As a kid, he loved to ride his bike freely and enjoyed beach holidays. Favourite Aussie snacks? It would be lamingtons, or milo. An *'Australian staple,'* Mr Fisher exclaims. When asked about a vivid memory, being in cadets was the formative teenage experience, especially managing the year nine boys in cadet camp, taking the leadership role during his final year.

Mr Fisher moved to the UK at the end of 2018 in what was initially seen as temporary move. Without a fixed plan, he worked in a pub called The Bell and Crown in Chiswick, West London and later in cadet recruitment for 18 months until COVID disrupted and he considered ideas about the future. *"I came to the UK having paused a teaching degree at the University of Sydney, because I wanted to see the world before becoming a teacher. Three years later, with a renewed vigour for education, I re-started my teaching degree at the University of Bristol (PGCE in History). I secured a job at Brentwood, in Essex, where I worked for three years before coming here to Rugby."*

What does he miss about Australia? The first thing that came to his mind was the widespread land and lower population density; connected to that, easier parking and less crowded public areas made life easier, allowing a slower pace of life. *'Carparks are really challenging here, but Australia doesn't have that problem!'* The sunshine, as well, of course. *'In England, in winter, people very much hibernate. In summer, everyone is out and about, a completely different experience.'*

Agreed. I find Australia's seasons to have less variation in terms of lifestyle and often see Australians out for a run at six in the morning during not only summer, but also in winter. Being outside so much,

regardless of the season, has made me notice things I never did back home. Oddly enough, I miss the feeling of being woken up by the laughing kookaburra calls in an early Australia morning, or tuning in to the late-night anthems of cicadas' cries. Although Australia is infamous for its dangerous wildlife, I find myself missing the sense of vitality of nature that comes from living among such formidable creatures. Over time, the spiders and snakes don't seem so frightening, they begin to feel like companions.

Which country of the two offers a better quality of life? It was intriguing to hear the economic side of the question. Australia has higher wages and stronger workers' rights, a less intense work culture, and a better work-life balance. There is slightly more pressure and competitiveness for jobs in the UK. However, on a global scale, England's proximity to other European countries is an advantage as it allows for more opportunities for school trips or holidays. *'Australia is like a detached paradise,'* Mr Fisher amusingly remarked. *'It's wonderful to live and grow up there: Australians should appreciate what they have, but also get out there and experience the bigger world.'* It seems incredible to think that the UK is so close to France, a dream destination of mine. I would give anything to spend a day in Paris: to walk along the trails of Arago Medallions, visit famous landmarks such as the Arc de Triomphe, the Louvre, or the Eiffel Tower, and grab a fresh pastry from the local bakeries while sipping a delectable cup of hot chocolate.

Back to my instinctive perceptions of differences. The Rugby classroom itself felt like a different world. My conversation with Mr. Fisher confirmed what I had begun to sense: British education is an academic marathon compared to the Australian sprint. Here is Mr Fisher's take on this: *"I certainly believe UK students are much better equipped to handle the academic rigours of university and graduate-level jobs. I didn't become a confident and concise writer until the final years of my undergraduate degree (in English and History). I would have enjoyed being pushed more by my teachers and was probably allowed to 'coast' along too much in the years before our final year. A lot more onus was placed on the student to figure things out for themselves. In this sense, another comparison is that there is much more oversight of students in British private schools, with consistent reports, on engagement and attainment, which I definitely don't remember having."*

Who was his favourite teacher? I asked. *"That would be my English teacher, Mrs Helleman, who is retired and recently shared a poem I wrote in Year 8 English that was read out at my*



Badminton with friends

wedding (without my prior awareness). She pushed us and worked extremely hard. I had her for three years. She also gave each student an award at the end of our final year (Year 12). I got 'The Joker' – apparently, I was a bit of a class clown, although I can't remember why..."

From my experience as regards education, in Australia, the middle years feel more expansive, as there is time to explore, go on exchanges, and try various interests without the looming shadow of high-stakes testing. While my friends back at Fairholme are enjoying that freedom, students at Rugby are already gearing up for the academic intensity of GCSEs. The weight of tradition and a drilled-in routine here make the environment feel more formal, yet it's this very intensity that prepares Rugby students so thoroughly for the academic world beyond the school gates. The academic demand isn't limited to core subjects, as it's also evident in the arts. Drama, one of my favourite subjects, here at Rugby includes coursework in costume design, script analysis, sound and lighting suggestions, areas that I haven't explored before. Writing coursework isn't common in an Australian Drama classroom, where we spend more time doing practical activities onstage. Mrs. Farmer, my drama teacher here at Rugby, is extremely helpful and has taught me several drama terminology and techniques, giving me a fresh perspective.



Dame Edna Everage



It's mid-February, and, with four weeks to go, I don't think about the big milestones or the formal goodbyes. Instead, it's the ordinary moments of being here at Rugby which will return to me in the future: afternoons spent honing my badminton skills with friends; music classes where I was, of course, entirely focused and absolutely not chatting...; interviewing Mr. Fisher and putting together this very article; lunchtimes spent with my Rupert Brooke D-Block girls, huddled over a napkin, brainstorming lists of British

snacks to try. These small, vivid moments will comprise the memories I'll carry across the oceans, back to the other side of the world. 'You alright?' Thankyou, Rugby, I was.

MUSIC GTAs: WHO ARE THEY?

GRACE STEWART-LINNHE

I am not a musician, but living in Tudor for five years means that I have enjoyed the company of a Mr Conway, Ms Milner, and the newly arrived Mr Mitchell. Tudor has always been a house of proud musicians, such as the incredible Celia Duffy, 2022 BBC chorister of the year Niaomi Simons, and 2017 winner Ischia Gooda, and too many musical savants to count. Whilst Tudor has a strong tradition of house singing, I have my failed attempts at choir and piano, as well as a deep-rooted desire to learn the drums during my gap year. Of course, in chapel I proudly sing as loud and as out of tune as physically possible.

Ms Milner essentially became a permanent resident in Tudor last year, joining us for breakfast, lunch, and dinner whilst working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the music department. However, after some self-reflection I came to the startling discovery that I didn't actually know what the job entailed. What does a music GTA actually do?

In my pursuit to understand this role, I first turned to Ms Milner, now ex-GTA and tutor of her "kaleidoscopically exceptional" Tudor E-block. Her words, not mine.

Apparently, when she first arrived as music GTA last year, every time she would eat lunch at a different house she would get asked the same questions: "What do you teach? What do you do: It's a very good question!"

When I repeated these questions, the answer was: "*Lots of things, a multitude of things, almost everything...*" After this mysterious introduction, Ms Milner went on to explain that a music GTA's duties comprise singing in Evensong, Temple Consort, Arnold Singers; setting up BlueNote, competitions and concerts; and supervising extra music, including the "*dreaded P7 on a Friday*". Many of these tasks require her to stay late into the evening.

"*During the day I would be setting up for orchestra which, let me tell you, was a WORK-OUT*". This task was made more difficult by the fact she had to conquer the timpani and bass drums alone. Ms Milner also notes that she spent a lot more time lifting chairs than she expected, commenting, "I'm very strong now".

It didn't all go smoothly. Ms Milner recounts an "incident" last year where someone got stuck in the NMR lift for quite some time...



A terrifying Ms Milner brandishing her famous hockey stick



Mr Mitchell, current GTA (attached to Tudor)

On mentioning my plans to interview the current GTAs, Ms Milner remarked that she thought “*They had a very different experience to lots of other pairs. Whereas Mr Abel, may he rest in peace, (he’s not dead, he just left to become a pilot) and I didn’t know each other at all – and sort of met for the first time at the staff barbeque Mr Robson and Mr Mitchell had been friends since university.*”

Mr Mitchell and Mr Robson – the iconic duo. After learning they studied music at York together, I was curious to know whether they had applied for the job in the hope that they would join Rugby as a pair?

It turns out that they had both applied unknowing that the other had. Funnily enough, they only found out when they both got emails during an orchestra rehearsal together. I was treated to a lovely re-enactment of the fateful scene in the Tudor matron’s office

Oh, I've got an interview

Oh, I've got an interview as well.

It's Rugby.

Yeah, I've got Rugby as well.

At the time they weren’t aware that two jobs were being offered. Awkward?

In fact, Mr Mitchell’s interview was first and his interviewer asked if he thought he would work well with Mr Robson: this was the moment he discovered they wanted to hire two people. So, they were signed up, the first all-male pair of music GTAs in a long time.

One of the first challenges they faced was the register at big choir. Sat with list of names, facing a TSR stage packed full of 140 students, new GTAs are given the seemingly impossible task of taking the register in 20 minutes (whilst also handing out copies of music). Apparently what Mr Mitchell and Mr Robson did was sit facing the students on their laptops, trying to match the ISAMS pictures with hundreds of faces in front of them. They said it was “*pretty intimidating because you were also*



Mr Robson, current GTA (attached to Schoolfield)

facing the students trying to work out who's who and they can see that you're clearly going, like, 'I've got no idea who any of these people are.'"

I'm told that it takes every new GTA a few weeks until they figure out that simply passing around a piece of paper to take down names is the most efficient way of doing the register. Clearly this convoluted game of 'Where's Wally?' is a rite-of-passage for a music GTA...

A little differently from Ms Milner, Mr Mitchell and Mr Robson have become designated 'IKEA builders' in the music department. On the day I interviewed him, Mr Robson's task was to build a hat stand for the music office. Mr Mitchell decides quite cheerfully: *"I think that's one of the positives of the GTA role, that you're not doing the same thing every day - although there is a lot of photocopying"*. During the occasional moment



they *aren't* photocopying, singing or building, the pair enjoy staff cricket on Friday evening. Currently attended by a lot of BG parents and a few teachers, Mr Mitchell said they plan on convincing Miss Milner and Miss Taylor to join.

Was working in music predestined?

Mr Mitchell and Mr Robson were both choristers when they were young and always knew they wanted to do *something* relating to music. They shared that they had both done some freelance work whilst at university, but, interestingly, they found their experiences very different from each other. They both agreed that freelance work is an "extreme risk reward", and largely dependent on your location, but that it is very rewarding to be able to have full autonomy of your own schedule.

When Ms Milner was younger, she wanted to be a maths teacher. Seeing my look of utter disbelief, she announced happily, *"I love maths"*. All her grandparents were teachers. However, in Ms Milner's final year of university, her teacher from sixth form passed away. *"He was so inspirational to me, and this really spurred me on and encouraged me to want to work in a school"*. While she was a GTA there were no teaching jobs available, but she was really interested the variety of experience being a teacher offered. *"I sort of imagined a lot last year [wishful tone] what if I was doing netball? what if I had some tutees?"*.

Seeing her interest, Mr Williams and Mr Sandy encouraged her to do a little teaching whilst a GTA, then, when Mr Conway left the music department, the perfect opportunity presented itself. Netball and tutees suddenly loomed large.

What is Ms Milner up to now?

Magic, for one thing.

“A lot of people don’t know this, but there is a piano that lives below the TSR stage and we’ve got a lift whereby, if you press a button, it comes down; then you push the piano onto it and it comes back up. Once, someone was showing a prospective student around in the TSR, and I appeared like MAGIC from under the stage. I think there’s even one of the livestream concerts where it’s just me popping up with a piano”.

Then there is hockey. *“For some unknown reason I have a hockey stick. But I have never played hockey, except maybe just once in a PE session in year six. When I brought in this hockey stick (in a pink case, it’s a stripey yellow and red), I was talking to one of the other teachers and I asked, “Do you know the last time I used this hockey stick?”. Well, the last time my hockey stick was used was in a musical. We put on the 25th annual Putnum County Spelling Bee in Queen’s College gardens in Oxford (I ran a musical society). We put on this musical and there’s a reference to hockey (American hockey, actually) ... and they used my hockey stick!”* In brief, Ms Milner’s hockey stick has acted in front of a live audience.

As a hockey coach, Ms Milner divulges, *“I’m not a hockey expert but I do bring enthusiasm. I was paired with Dr Moyle, who is just an absolute icon. We were just THE dream-team: our hockey team was undefeated the whole season”.* Armed with her very own stripey hockey stick, totem of professional, adult, rites-of-passage arrival, Ms Milner feels rightly proud: *“I’ve got my own hockey stick. I’m a proper teacher now!”*



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CHINESE NEW YEAR?

MATTHEW SUM

Before I get into the details of the Lunar New Year, I should give some brief context about myself. I was born and raised in Hong Kong, and I attended an international school there before moving to the UK to join Rugby. For me, "home" has always meant the crowded streets, the constant energy, and the vertical skyline of a city that never really seems to sleep.

My memories of the New Year are usually a mix of specific sights and sounds. I remember the flower markets being so packed you could barely move,

and the way the entire city would transform almost overnight. Even as a child, you could feel the shift in the atmosphere—the sudden appearance of red lanterns on every building and the rare moment of quiet that finally arrived when the shops closed for the holiday. It was the one time of year when my family and the rest of the city actually slowed down to focus on being together.

Moving to the quiet routine of Rugby has been quite an adjustment. Even though my daily schedule is now full of lessons, sports, and boarding house life, the traditions I grew up with are still a big part of who I am. I wanted to write this article simply to show what the festival normally looks like for those of us celebrating it here at school instead of at home.

Traditions on Chinese New Year's Day

One of the biggest parts of the New Year is Bai Nin, which usually involves visiting the homes of all your relatives. In the city, the first few days of the festival are very busy. Families spend most of their time traveling from one district to another to see grandparents, aunts, and uncles. At every house, you exchange traditional blessings and receive Lai See. It is a very social experience, and the streets are always full of people moving around to make sure they see their extended family.

Being at Rugby changes this experience completely. Because I cannot physically visit my relatives, the tradition has to move online. On the morning of the New Year, my phone is usually full of notifications from family group chats. It feels quite strange to use video calls to see everyone gathered at home while I am standing in a quiet school corridor or sitting in my study. Even though I am thousands of miles away, I still have to say the traditional greetings over the camera to show respect, but it is a lonely way to experience such a big family tradition. The physical side of Bai Nin, the traveling, the noise, and the hand-to-hand exchange of red packets, is something that simply has to wait until the next time I am home.



Matthew Sum, Jay Yau, Leo Li, Terry Tai



Cuisine of Chinese New Year

While Chinese New Year is a single holiday, the food we eat usually depends on which part of China our families come from. Because Rugby has such a diverse international community, you can often hear students comparing the different dishes they would normally be eating at home.

In Hong Kong and Southern China, the focus is often on the symbolic meaning of the food. We usually have a large family meal

with dishes like steamed fish. This is because the word for 'fish' sounds like the word for 'surplus', representing the hope that we will have more than enough in the coming year. Another common dish is Poon Choi, a large 'basin feast' where many different ingredients like prawns, dried oysters, and mushrooms are layered together. It represents unity because the whole family eats from the same large bowl.

However, for students from Northern China, the traditions are different. Instead of a multi-course seafood feast, the New Year is usually defined by dumplings. Families often spend the entire New Year's Eve together folding dough around meat or vegetable fillings. The dumplings are shaped like ancient gold ingots, so eating them is a way of wishing for wealth and prosperity. Even though the ingredients are different from the south, the goal is the same: to start the year with a full and rich table.

At school, these different traditions become a topic of conversation amongst Chinese students. Even though we are eating in a dining hall rather than a restaurant back home, comparing these recipes is a way to stay connected to our culture. It is interesting to see how everyone has their own version of a 'traditional' meal, depending on where they grew up.

Mrs Zhang

To understand the deeper meaning behind these traditions, I interviewed our Chinese teacher, Mrs Zhang, who Quod readers might recall was, as well as presently being a great teacher, once an ace goalkeeper. She explained that many of the things we do 'usually' have very old stories behind them.

First, though, let Mrs Zhang tell you a little bit about her own Chinese upbringing. "I was born in Xinjiang, which has beautiful and vast grasslands. Then I grew up in Xi'an. Xi'an not only has a history of over 5,000 years, but it is also one of the oldest cities in China. Xi'an is most famous for the Terracotta Warriors, the Bell Tower, and the ancient city wall. Xi'an's cuisine, in particular, is exceptional. The city has unique local foods that leave people reluctant to leave."

So, what are the red envelopes, or Lai See? "The red colour is mostly for good luck," she explained. "But it also has a practical use in legends, as it is meant to scare off a monster that comes out during the New Year. The "Nian" is a mythical beast that comes out every Chinese New Year's Eve to eat people. To drive the Nian away, people put up couplets, hang lanterns, and set off firecrackers. The Nian is afraid of the colour red and the sound of firecrackers, so it won't come out to harm people."



She told me that, a long time ago, New Year was the only time children would get money from their elders. However, it was not just a gift, it was about respect. "On the morning of New Year's Day, children have to go to the older people in the family and wish them a Happy New Year and good health. Only then will the elders give the money, which the children can use to buy things they want." Mrs Zhang recalled a childhood

memory of this tradition. "When I was seven years old, I used the money from my red envelope to buy my first collection of novels, 'Dream of the Red Chamber'. I was very happy because 'Dream of the Red Chamber' is one of China's Four Great Classical Novels, and I was the only one in my grade who had that book. I would read it together with many friends. This is the memory I remember most vividly."

Mrs Zhang also warned me about some common superstitions that can bring bad luck if you aren't careful. "You should be very careful not to break any bowls or cups. If you break something, it is a sign of bad luck for the year." It isn't just about objects, though, it's about how you treat people. She explained that you should never swear at anyone during the festival because it brings bad luck to both people.

So, don't break anything and be polite. What else do you need to do get it right at Chinese New Year? Clothing. While red and gold are the best choices, she advised two colours to stay away from. "You must avoid wearing pure black or pure white outfits. In Chinese culture, these are funeral colours, so wearing them during a celebration is not good."

As 2026 is the Year of the Horse, I asked her what we should expect from the 'personality' of the year. "Horses are very smart and quick so the Year of the Horse usually symbolises energy, passion, and boldness." Chinese or not Chinese, spring is here so find some equine dash as you gallop purposefully towards your exams.

It can feel tough for Chinese students to be so far from home during such a big holiday: how can you help manage such longing homesickness? The Chinese New Year dinner at Rugby is, Mrs Zhang feels, like a family reunion. "When the students eat dumplings and traditional cuisine, it gives them a taste of home. Dumplings are special because their shape symbolises wrapping up good fortune. By eating them together, we are bringing good luck to the whole school family."

Reflections

Speaking with Ms. Zhang changed how I view these traditions. I now understand that customs like the colour red or the shape of a dumpling aren't just for show; they are rooted in thousands of years of history and stories like the legend of the Nian monster. Her childhood memory of using her Lai See to buy a classic novel reminded me that these traditions are about more than just the money, they are about respect and personal growth.

As we enter the Year of the Horse, her description of the animal as 'smart and quick' feels especially relevant for us at Rugby. Whether we are Chinese or not, we can all use that energy and 'equine dash' to stay bold and focused on our goals this term. It turns out that even in the middle of a British winter, these ancient rules and the spirit of the festival still make a lot of sense.

FORESHAWING

JESSICA LO

As seatbelts click,

My fingers itch.

The spluttering

Of exhausted adventures.

Wheels turning my head yearning,

The autumn leaf spreads across the mantelpiece.

The sky dims, the car awakens.

Music, sound, waves,

A chime.

The frequency

Always

Changes.

Eyes open with a buzz of joy,

Left there with nothing but to dismay

Will this be another day without any pay?

Acid in my gut churns,

It blends,

And bends.

Wheels turn, the pavements hot.

Junctions, motorways and the occasional block.

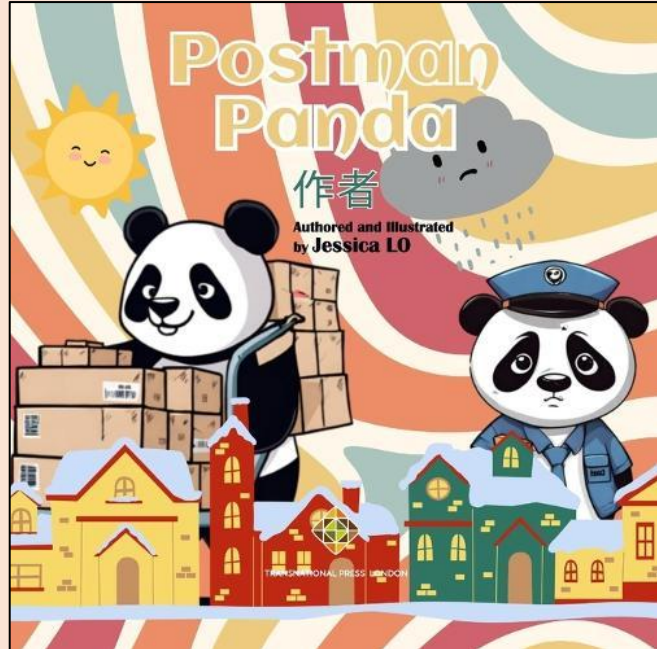


Reflections on writing poetry

'Foreshadowing' captures the journey back to school after a long holiday, travelling home from Nottingham in my dad's car. The clicking seatbelts, the changing light, the movement of the wheels and roads all reflect the emotional shift from a holiday back into routine.

I like writing and poetry because it allows me to slow moments down and examine them closely, turning ordinary experiences into something meaningful. I enjoy how a poem does not have to explain everything directly; instead, it invites the reader to feel and interpret the emotions behind the words.

Writing has always been important to me. I attend creative writing sessions weekly, the Arvon writing trip, and recently I was fortunate to have my bilingual children's book 'Postman Panda' published by TP London. This experience has allowed me to visit primary schools, libraires, book shops, nurseries, book signings, and present assemblies, where I talk about storytelling and teach the versatility between Mandarin and English. Last year, I was lucky enough to attend and host a book signing in London alongside many talented writers and artists, where all proceeds went to charity. These



experiences have taught me how powerful language, arts and more importantly writing can be, when shared with others. I love writing because it connects people, sparks imagination, and allows ideas to flow freely beyond the page.

QUOD 10 QUESTIONS

MR HIGGINSON

(1) Where were you at school, and what is your happiest memory of school?

I attended Lancaster Royal Grammar School from 2012 until 2019. My happiest school memory was our rugby tour to Argentina when I was in year 11.

(2) Who was your favourite teacher at school?

Mr Ledward, my year 7 and A-Level Geography teacher. He always kept us entertained and engaged in physical Geography.

(3) Aged 16-18, what were you doing and where did you think life would take you?

I was studying A-Level Maths, Economics and Geography and playing rugby for Sale Sharks Academy. My aim was to study at a university that combined good academics with a good rugby programme.



(4) What is your favourite restaurant?

Quarterhouse, Lancaster. An excellent chef owned restaurant that sources local produce to create their small plates and sharers.

(5) Friends are coming over for dinner. What is your *piece de resistance* meal to dazzle them with?

Salmon, rice, avocado, tomatoes and mozzarella. I don't own an oven, so I'm limited to an air fryer and a rice cooker.



Zach Bryan 2025

(6) What is your favourite film?

'Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire'. I found it fascinating when they introduced more than one magical school!

(7) What is your most memorable experience of a music concert?

Zach Bryan concert, 2025, with my brother. Listening to 'Revival' at the end of the concert was a memory for life.

(8) How did you come to work at Rugby School?

After university, I worked as a graduate sports coach for a year at a school. This was my first introduction to school sports coaching and boarding. I really enjoyed it and that knew I wanted to go into teaching.

(9) What was your favourite childhood holiday?

USA, 2017. Family holiday to Florida, going to Disneyworld and Universal studios, alongside a drive to South Carolina to watch a total solar eclipse.



(10) What is your favourite thing about Britain?

The British countryside, specifically the grass in this country. When well-maintained, it's the best grass in the world.



What's hot?

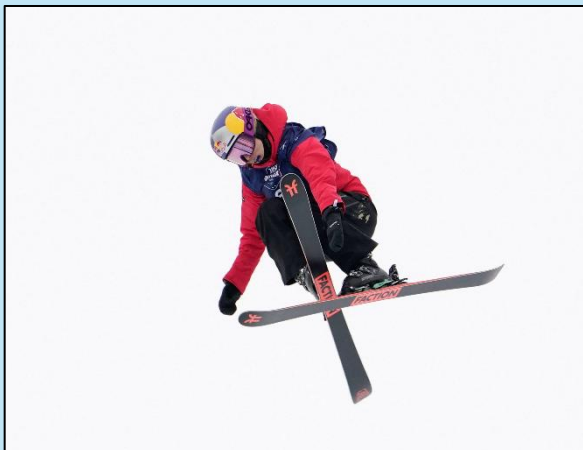
Viktor Gyokeres

'I could walk 500 hundred miles ...'

Freestyle skiing

Muffins, crumpets, letting yourself
pad out a bit mid-winter

The sun



What's Not?

Sir Keir Starmer

Gated

Downhill fast in mocks

Skeleton

'For the rain it raineth every day'
Twelfth Night





Hope you enjoyed that!

Editor: Dr Sutcliffe

Lay-out Editor: Aimée Dunnion

Checking thanks: Mr. Shepherd