



QUOD

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RUGBY SCHOOL



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Hats off to girls at Rugby School!



RUGBY SCHOOL

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PONIES, CHUKKAS AND GLORY: OUR PROUD POLO HISTORY

GRACE STEWART-LINHE

Polo: full-blooded athletes ridden by dashing players in crisp white jeans; a wonderful mixture of hockey and croquet on horseback at full tilt; spectators in glamorous summer dresses sipping champagne in the sun.

That's the stereotype, but what is polo like actually?

Polo has a rich history dating back over 2000 years and is played in over 70 countries worldwide. It is one of the few sports where men and women can compete on equal terms.



Grace playing polo (not at Onley but in Scotland)

It is played on a large grass field during summer, and an enclosed arena during the winter. Two teams (three players in arena polo, four in grass polo) compete to hit a small ball through the opponent's goalposts using a long-handled mallet. The game is divided into periods called 'chukkas' each lasting seven minutes, with between four and six chukkas in a match. Players are mounted on polo ponies (full-sized horses despite the misleading moniker), which are periodically switched out during a match to prevent the horses getting tired due to the fast pace of the game.

Polo here at Rugby School is played on Tuesday and Thursday evenings (these are lessons) and Fridays (the instructional chukkas). The school also puts out several teams of varying levels to play in SUPA tournaments against other schools and universities.

How long has polo been offered here?

Well, according to my *very* in-depth preliminary research (i.e. visiting the website, but hey, at least it's not chatgpt) Rugby Polo Club is one of the oldest clubs in the country, first established in the year 1893.

Originally, the polo grounds were on Spring Hill Farm and Rugby was once the home of polo for the Prince of Wales, The King of Spain, the Duke of York, the Aga Khan and even Sir Winston Churchill. Despite the club's immense success of 200 playing members in 1900, it didn't survive the First and Second World Wars.

In fact, it wasn't until 2000 that the club was re-started, by brothers Phillip and David Baker.

Whilst researching the origins of polo here at the School, I came across an article on the Rugbeian Community website written by Jane Phelps, a legendary Rugby School figure. Jane Phelps was Hm of School House in 1992, the Hm who opened Stanley, and the staff member in charge of equestrian sport who eventually ran extra-curricular polo for the school: *"I wanted to get the pitches back in action, but the bursar at the time said it would cost £17,000 to restore them, which was not in the budget. I hired*



Audrey Wang with polo kitten

a sit-on mower and prepared a small pitch that we could at least play on – which proved it was possible. The Baker family agreed to restore the pitches if they could play rent free and this was agreed. So, in 2000, things were going sufficiently well for Phil and David to open their Onley farm to re-start the Rugby Polo Club.”

Today, the club is flourishing, with four qualified HPA coaches (that’s the Hurlingham Polo Association, the governing body of polo in the UK), around 25 tournament weekends yearly, and representation internationally. On a more important note, there are delightful stable cats! Often my polo lessons featured at least one proud kitten, strutting around the polo ponies and inspecting the riders.

So clearly the Rugby Polo Club is very successful, but what is it like to actually play? Although I *could* talk about my experience playing here, I thought I would ask someone a little more qualified: Bruno Bradshaw.

I hit Bruno with some searching journalistic questions.

How did you start playing polo?

“I’ve always been around horses, and, about 10 years ago, my brother, Benjie, started playing polo while he was at Rugby. From there, the whole family got into it.”

Where did you learn how to play?

“At Kirtlington Park Polo Club, which is a short drive from where I live, and I still play there.”

Is it dangerous? Have you had any injuries?

“Like any sport, polo can be dangerous. There are a lot of risks, especially when you’re on horseback at speed. For example, last year I fell off twice during matches - both times because I turned too sharply at high speed: the horse slipped and I was thrown off. Luckily, I haven’t broken any bones or had any serious injuries so far.”

I wish I could say the same. In the F Block – only my second year of polo lessons – my family and I were playing up in Scotland when the horse I was riding fell (or, as my older brother likes to describe it, “Grace tried to teach a horse to front flip”) and I snapped my clavicle in half. After 6 months with my arm in a sling and terribly repetitive physio sessions, the first thing I did was return to polo lessons at school. Yes, it is that fun.



Grace in the A&E after the polo injury

The interrogation continued apace.

Which teams do you play for?

"I don't play for one permanent team. Instead, I'm hired by different patrons (who are the team owners and financiers) to play for their teams during the season. In January, I was very fortunate to represent Great Britain U21s against the USA, which was an incredible experience."

What is your most memorable/dramatic experience playing polo?

"I was at Kirtlington Park Polo Club in a 6-goal tournament. We were losing 6-3 going into the final chukka, but we managed to come back and win 8-7, which took us through to the finals."

What are your plans regarding polo once you've left Rugby?

"I'll definitely continue playing at university. As polo is mainly a summer sport, it fits well around studies. As I get older and gain more experience, I'm hoping more opportunities will come my way."

How would you compare Onley with the other places you've played?

"It's an incredible place to learn. The coaching is fantastic, and they really understand how to teach the fundamentals effectively. I've been very fortunate to also play at clubs like Al Habtoor in Dubai."

Any advice for younger years thinking about trying polo?

"Give it your best shot. It's the most adrenaline-filled sport I've ever played, and I couldn't recommend it more. Just go for it!"

I couldn't agree more.



Cat in a helmet

MY XX SUMMER FAREWELL

BEE ASKIN

When I was in E block, I spontaneously decided to attend the Rugby June sixth form day. I had a childhood friend here and had always been inspired by her confidence and love for her school. I had enjoyed school up to that point (I was at King's High in Warwick), but, after viewing Stanley, I felt an itch for a change. Scratching this itch was the best decision I ever made.

My time at Rugby has disappeared, like sand quickly running through my fingers. I distinctly remember when my fabulous tutor, Ms. Barnett, and I had my first tutor meeting. Of her many wise words which she gave me as a nervous LXX, the most memorable were 'You will blink and your time here will be over'. Thinking of this now, these words are so accurate. It has all gone so quickly, and, as the summer term gathers pace and exams suddenly loom very vividly, I find myself, like many fellow XX students, clinging onto every moment of being here.

Boarding, without a doubt, has been my most treasured element of this school. Living with 47 girls from all over the world has been so special and to encapsulate the joys of living with your friends is immensely difficult to do in a matter of sentences. It's loud, chaotic, comforting and never, ever boring.



Lara and Sloss on their way to Baked!

In this environment I have made the most multi-faceted and bright friendships, ones that I truly value. Here are some friendship memories from the last two years:

The initial three weeks at Rugby. When India, Sloss, Maddie, Esmé, Sophie and I all were on the sharing floor of Stanley, (which we call 'Top Tops'). Arriving at a new school and living away from home for the first time, those first few weeks were formative for all of us. After the chaos of Induction Day, India and I collapsed onto our beds for some much needed 'TikTok Time'. Half an hour later, we both admitted we felt completely overwhelmed, united in our panic at just how big a step we had taken. We had a

countdown in our room on a whiteboard of how many days until we would be going home. After five days, the whiteboard was gone.

'The Thirsty Thirds'. In the LXX Lent term, the 3's netball team was an ideal example of friendship in action. We were coached by the ever-encouraging Miss Griffiths, who led us to an unbeaten season. Our captain, Rachel Crane (S) who left last year, united us and led the team to ensure we were always having fun. A particular memory is our game against RGS Worcester on the 8th of March (where we won 41-14). Celeste and Bella tied purple ribbon into all our ponytails for International Women's Day. Honor and Bexie drove an efficient warm-up, as a speaker blasted some summer songs (even though half of us were wearing skins).



'The Snug'. Located on the first floor of Stanley, a small common room space that Stanley XX occupy each lunchtime, 'The Snug' is a space where we all sit and laugh for an hour before we return to lessons or go to sport. This memory stands out. It was a Saturday morning and a group of us were sat in *The Snug* awaiting our various sporting activities, the room full of energy, all relieved that we had finished morning lessons and were looking forward to a relaxed afternoon of sport and a fun social. With one (not all that funny) joke made, the room was sent into hysterics. The kind of laughter where the room went silent for a moment as we were all catching our breaths. It's moments like these – simple, unplanned happiness – that I shall miss the most.

'The Band'. In the LXX, I was welcomed into a band with Yasmin, Tom, Nathan, Anthony and Debroah. I had never played in a student-led band, so, as a fairly inexperienced bassist, I was quite nervous, but this quickly dissipated as we began playing 'Superstitious' by Stevie Wonder. Fame came calling as we played at CV22, Blue Note, and came joint first in this year's Rock and Pop competition. The prospect of a rehearsal after supper in the music department brightened a 7 period Monday. Johnnie (pianist) and Nathan (drummer/saxophonist) often improvised with all of us spontaneously joining in.

Growing up, I always yearned to have sister: apologies to my brother, the delightful Henry, in LXX Cotton, who also joined Rugby in the sixth form, and who is, bizarrely, but brilliantly, trying to join the British bobsleigh team at the next Winter Olympics: good luck with that one, Henry.

Coming to Rugby has filled that sister feeling I always wanted. On New Girls Day, held in the Stanley garden in late June 2024, India Nickols (who I ended up sharing a room with) said '*I want to experience what it is like to have sisters*', which immediately chimed with me. I liked her confident, emotional directness. India grew up with four brothers, so maybe felt this stronger than me. Although it sounds cringey, boarding does create a sense of 'sisterhood' or 'brotherhood'. I guess this sense of closeness and community is encapsulated in the American terms 'sorority' and 'fraternity'.



Honor and Maddie enjoying the cricket on the Close.

It's everywhere at the School, this feeling, isn't it? You can see it all around... House singing and dancing on the TSR stage whilst XX members of the House lift an F blocker. Friday Night Lights, with each house chanting the names of their fellow house mates, whilst waving hand painted banners. The cups of tea had in common rooms after lunch during stressful times.

Whilst the Advent Term contains exciting events such as the Pushcart Race, Big House Singing and joyous Christmas hymns in Chapel, a real favourite term for many XX is this Trinity Term. Tulips. The Mr Whippy van rolling into Horton Crescent, the bells jingling, taking you viscerally straight back to the childhood excitement of sensing ice-cream. Cricket matches on the Close. Blazers quietly abandoned on the journey to and from lessons. Prep complete on a balmy evening, a questionable game of tennis with friends. Sitting outside and attempting to complete work in the garden. Trips to see Caroline at Stodge, amid the hours of hard work in the library. The rush to sit outside after

lunch, in UV 5. The hot coffees from Baked that move to a classic lemonade the hotter it gets. The blossom in the Stanley alley that elegiacally begins to blow away as the first exeat begins.

As the summer term already feels like it is slipping away, I hover unstably somewhere between excitement, nostalgia, and mild panic about how I'll survive without constant access to toast and Lara (Wells) next door to me. I realise Rugby has shaped me in many ways since joining two years ago. The way I now call chaos "character-building", the way silence now feels slightly suspicious, and how 47 girls can somehow feel like home. I'll miss *the noise* most: the overlapping conversations; the laughter echoing down corridors; Poppy's singing coming from the room above mine; our wonderful matron, Fi, with her great stories.

I'll miss the unspoken understanding that someone is always there, even if just to procrastinate with. I once thought independence meant being alone, but Rugby has taught me it actually means knowing you never really are.



TOP GUN ENGINEERING STYLE: MRS CARTER AND THE R.A.F.

MATTHEW SUM

If you walk into a Physics classroom, you might not immediately realise that the person at the front once helped run military aircraft operations across the world.

For Mrs Carter, the journey from the runway to the classroom began long before she ever set foot in the Royal Air Force.

As one of her students, I have always been struck by how her lessons feel grounded in real experience rather than just theory. Learning physics in her classroom isn't just equations on a board, but something practical, applied, and at times unpredictable. It's the contrast between the discipline of the classroom and the scale of her previous career that made me want to find out more about the person behind the lessons.

Growing up in Shropshire and attending a local state school, she had an unusually clear sense of direction as a child. *"I knew I wanted to join the Air Force from a very young age,"* she explains. *"I knew which subjects I had to be really good at. I knew which ones I had to take for A-level in order to get onto the aeronautical engineering degree course I aspired to. I was quite lucky that way."* While many students are unsure about their future, Mrs Carter already had hers mapped out. Mrs Carter's first step into the world of work was not quite *Top Gun* glamour. *"My first job was working in a garden-centre café on a Sunday when I was doing my A-Levels: clearing away tables, putting things in the dishwasher, taking things out of the dishwasher. I made 500 scones every morning! I've never eaten a scone since."*



101 Sqn VC-10

When I asked her what made her decide to join the RAF at a young age, she revealed the moment that sparked it all. *"So, rather cheesily, we were going on holiday. I was five years old, and there's a bridge called the Severn Bridge, which goes between Wales and England. We were driving over the Severn Bridge and the red arrows went overhead in their diamond nine formation. I said, 'That's what I want to do!'"* However, opportunities for women in the RAF were limited at the time. *"Girls were most definitely not pilots,"* she recalls, and engineering was hardly encouraged. Despite this, she remained determined: *"If I'm going to be the first female pilot, then I'm going to be the first female*

pilot.” Unfortunately, not having 20:20 vision scuppered that dream and so a career in engineering seemed the next best thing. After being sponsored through university by the RAF, she went straight into a 20-year career as an engineering officer. Her work took her all over the world, from maintaining and operating aircraft to working on advanced weapons systems to writing future strategy and driving organisational change.



II(AC) Sqn Tornado

“I started off on air-to-air refuelling aircraft and went all the way around the world with them. We'd take 5 or 6 guys away on one or two aircraft and we'd be away for up to four weeks at a time.

I went from there into second-line maintenance, which is a bit like when you put your car in for a really big service ... but for fast jet Tornados.

Then I got promoted, which took some of the fun out of it because you become officially responsible. My role involved integrating weapon systems and electronic warfare material onto aircraft; I brought in a brand-new weapon that went on the Tornado and managed how we were going to look after it.

After that, I went to The Ministry of Defence in London, looking at future strategy for the RAF, which led to work in the whole of Defence: the army and navy as well as the Air Force.”

Among her most memorable experiences was spending time in the Pentagon, where she contributed to strategic planning for the US Air Force. *“That was really eye-opening. I also took an aircraft and some guys all the way over to Australia for one night, and then we came back again.”*

Other moments were defined less by location and more by intensity. She describes operations, including time connected to Iraq, as some of the most focused periods of her career. *“You’re doing what you joined to do. All the extra meetings disappear and you just focus on the aircraft.”* One particularly striking memory involved flying to Australia for just one night before returning, a reflection of the fast-paced and demanding nature of the job.

Mrs Carter’s career evolved significantly over time, from hands-on engineering roles to senior positions involving strategy within the Ministry of Defence in London. With increasing responsibility came a shift in priorities. Eventually, she faced a decision: continue a demanding career that required constant travel or choose a different path. *“The Air Force meant being away from home basically all week, getting home late on a Friday night, then going back to work again Sunday afternoon. If I stayed in the Air Force, I’d be living to work... or I could work to live.”* She chose the latter.

After leaving the RAF, she worked as a chief engineer in a company specialising in airships and other “*lighter than air*” technology before deciding on a complete change. She trained as a teacher in Wales and began working in schools, eventually joining Rugby in January 2023.



The Pentagon

Her background in engineering continues to shape her teaching today and she highlights the importance of organisation and problem-solving: *“My previous career helped me be very good at project managing, thinking about what problems I might encounter and how to overcome them.”* At the same time, she acknowledges that moving from a direct, decision-focused environment into the classroom required adjustment. *“I guess, on the downside, I’m probably not as obviously approachable, smiley, as some teachers, because of how my whole career has developed, that form of immediate and visible emotional communication, is something I’m still working on.”*

Away from school, her life remains just as varied. She spends time horse-riding, hill-walking, and camping. She is also involved in charity work through the Sporting Bears, giving sportscar-rides to raise money for children’s charities. She even maintains a 15th-century house, a project that keeps her very busy.

Looking back, her advice to students is simple but powerful: *“Believe in yourself. Don’t be afraid of failure.”*

From a childhood moment on a bridge to a global career in engineering and now the classroom, Mrs Carter’s story is one of determination, adaptability, and curiosity. Whilst her setting has changed, the same drive that once sent her in an aircraft around the world now shapes the way she teaches Physics at Rugby.

FORMULA 1 (NOT JUST 22 GUYS DRIVING IN CIRCLES)

ABIGAIL CHAN

Sometimes I think back to when I started liking Formula One, and I'm never quite sure. I just know I used to sit down with my dad when he played the race live on television, cheering Lewis Hamilton on, learning about strategy. If I were to pinpoint a specific year where I started paying attention and understanding the complex strategy, it would be 2018. Looking back, I remember familiar names from the left side of the screen where the driver positions were displayed, like Lewis Hamilton, of course, Sebastian Vettel, the emerging talent Max Verstappen, and I remember seeing Kevin Magnussen and Romain Grosjean in Haas.

The things I remember most, though, are just sitting down and discussing strategy with my dad while watching the race on television. I loved talking about DRS, the drag reduction system, and sometimes my dad would explain the mechanics of it and why it was important, and over time I grew to understand the different components of the cars.



A close-up on the Halo (taken by Abi's dad)

History

The first ever declared Grand Prix was the 1906 French Grand Prix, but the first ever Formula 1 Grand Prix was the 1950 British Grand Prix in Silverstone, won by Giuseppe Farina. The name 'Formula' came from the set of rules and regulations the drivers had to follow, mostly brought in for fairness and safety.

Speaking of safety, it's a huge part of what makes the sport so strict. The halo, introduced in 2018, is a three-pronged bar above and in front of the driver's head which is physically designed to deflect debris and absorb impact, and has saved countless lives in brutal crashes where drivers may not have survived. Being only 7kg, it can withstand the weight of a double decker bus on top of it.

Formula 1 used not to be a sport with such tight regulations, and many of the drivers were nowhere as rich as the drivers on the grid today. The sport was not open to outside sponsorship until 1968, and Team Lotus was the first team to feature a notable sponsor, partnering with Imperial Tobacco's Gold Leaf.

Sir Lewis Hamilton

Many will have heard of Sir Lewis Hamilton, arguably the greatest Formula 1 driver of all time. He holds countless records in the sport, the best-known being the most career wins, pole positions and podium finishes, and holds the most Formula One World Drivers' Championship titles, having won seven, tied with Michael Schumacher. He is certainly the most decorated driver in the sport.

Ever since I was little, Lewis Hamilton is a name that has stuck out for me. As my dad was the one who introduced me to the sport as a child, I, of course, supported his favourite driver as well, and over time, Hamilton, and, in turn, the team he drove for, Mercedes, became my favourites. I've supported him throughout some of his championship dominating career and the years where Max Verstappen was just ahead, and even his debut season with Ferrari in 2025.



Lewis Hamilton and his tribute to Chadwick Boseman, 2020

He was born in Stevenage in 1985, and his father, Anthony Hamilton, worked multiple jobs just to be able to fund his early karting. However, by that point, it was clear that he was an emerging talent. In 1995, after winning a karting championship, he told the McLaren Formula 1 boss, Ron Dennis, that he would be driving for McLaren one day. True to his word, he was signed to their Young Driver Programme 3 years later.

He debuted in Formula 1 in 2007, driving for McLaren, and finished as a runner-up one point behind Kimi Räikkönen in the championship standings. In his second year, he won the championship, securing the win in the final lap of the last race just one point ahead of Felipe Massa. He went on to win 7 World Drivers' Championships, though

many fans will jokingly say 8, after a last-minute safety car in the final race of 2021 allowed Verstappen to overtake Hamilton on newer tyres, narrowly winning the championship.

The Japanese Grand Prix

This Easter, on the 29th of March, I had the privilege to attend the Japanese Grand Prix in Suzuka. It was an hour drive from where we were staying so we needed to book a taxi ahead of time so we could arrive at a comfortable time so we could browse the different merchandise stores.

Upon arriving, all I could see were the endless streams of people clad in blue, red, orange, green and black marching towards the entrance of the circuit. As we only arrived on the final day of the Grand Prix, almost every piece of team merch was sold out, save for the replicas. Thankfully, we got into Suzuka Circuit's official store and picked up a lot of memorabilia. Suzuka is known for its creative costumes and this year was no exception. There was no lack of creativity, with miniature drivers and handmade cultural costumes with some Formula 1 flair.

After wandering near the shops for a little while, we stated to walk over to our seats for the driver's parade, usually at 12:00. The walk itself was about 15 minutes long, but we made it just in time to see the drivers being driven past us and waving, which I was ecstatic about.

Soon after, about 30 minutes before the race, the reconnaissance laps started, where each driver usually does a lap around the track just to make some final checks to the car. What made them so special was that they were the first time I actually saw the cars driving, which was amazing. The atmosphere and the sound of the engine is what makes being at a Grand Prix in person so special.

We stood for the Japanese anthem about 15 minutes before the start of the race. This year, they brought in YOSHIKI, a Japanese artist, to perform a rock version of the national anthem, which caught us off-guard, but sounded beautiful.

As the clock struck two, the drivers embarked on their formation lap to warm up their tyres, and for the first few laps, I let myself just sit and listen to the sounds of the engines roar by. I brought my camera to the race, and with my dad, took many pictures of the cars.



Abi at Suzuka with the Lewis Hamilton flag

The final winner after the 53 laps was Kimi Antonelli, one of my favourite drivers, and this win allowed him to become the youngest championship leader in Formula 1.

Tyla Harris

I was lucky to be able to interview Tyla Harris, a XX in Whitelaw, who races professionally in Rotax DD2 in Europe and KZ karting in the UK. He started karting in 2019, as his dad used to do rallying, and they've always been interested in motorsports.

I asked whether he had any role-models in motorsport. Besides his dad, he said, "I look up to Lewis Hamilton." He also admires Colin McRae, the 1991 and 1992 British Rally Champion and the 1995 World Rally Champion, as he found that era of WRC really interesting. When I asked whether he had any intention of moving up the ranks to become a Formula 4 racing driver in the hopes of making it to Formula 1, he said he would love to do Formula 4, but it was just too expensive.

As Lewis Hamilton famously said at the Australian Grand Prix in 2020, "Cash is King". Although at the time he made reference to the saying, implying the International Automobile Federation (FIA) were

prioritising financial gain over safety concerns of the emerging COVID-19, it can be used to symbolise how money is a huge deciding factor in motorsports, sometimes making young karting talents unable to rise to Formula 4 because of the lack of funding. Tyla mentioned how Formula 4 was prestigious, and was internationally recognised, but as he said, *“At the end of the day, money is the main thing that stops 99% of people in karting from rising to Formula 4.”*

Women in Formula 1

Many people think motorsport is just people driving around in circles for an hour and a half. But their impressions neglect the fact that drivers risk their lives driving in high speeds around the track. In Formula 1, drivers are placed into a cockpit that can be up to 40-50 degrees celsius and spend most of their career training their endurance and strength to withstand the G-forces of the high-speed turns. That’s why even though Formula 1 is technically a mixed gender sport, the fact that it is physically demanding ultimately steers the bias towards men. However, more and more women are taking up important roles in motorsport. For example, Laura Müller is the first full-time female race engineer in Formula 1, working in the Haas Formula 1 team as Esteban Ocon’s race engineer. Just recently, Doriane Pin, development driver for Mercedes and the 2025 F1 academy champion, tested the 2021 Mercedes W12 in Silverstone, becoming the first woman to drive a Mercedes Formula 1 car since 2012.

While motorsport is primarily a male-dominated sport and community, many more women are finding their way to motorsport, whether it be through mechanics and engineering, race strategy or even being drivers themselves.

With motorsports becoming more popular than ever, I want to be able to harness my interest in engineering and work in the field of motorsports in the future. But that’s a long way away. So, I’ll just sit back on my sofa, open a snack, and watch races in the comfort of my home.



SO, YOU THINK LEARNING TO DRIVE IS A PIECE OF CAKE?

FREDDIE BENNETT

Every kid at some point of their childhood has had that dream or image of driving their sportscar on an open road at sunset. Everyone has always wanted to drive when they were younger, no matter if they were into cars or not, with that end goal of driving their dream car, as an inspiration or milestone for where they want to end up later in life. Of course, this image of having an amazing car is a great thing to have to serve as motivation, but at the age I and fellow LXX and XX are at now, all we are worried about is passing our test and getting on the road in the first place. This, however, has become increasingly difficult, as we wait sometimes months for a test.

In this article I'll be reviewing a few experiences of people across different generations, seeing how different it has been over the years and highlighting some funny experiences as well.



First, I'd like to start with my dad: what better place to start? He started driving consequent from a family dispute that he wouldn't be able to do a circle around his driveway in his father's car. My dad backed his corner, of course, but had no prior driving experience. The house he lived in at the time had a horseshoe driveway, with a meticulously kept lawn at its core. His father protected this lawn and had a go at his wife if she even touched a blade of that grass. In a fit of rage from this argument, my dad stole the car keys, turned on the car, put his foot on the accelerator and drove straight across the lawn in the driveway before nearly crashing his front bumper into the gate to his house. Not the most successful first driving experience.

My mum, however, never felt the need or desire to drive. Growing up in a town on the Jubilee Line, she usually took the train wherever she needed to go. This changed in her second year at Bath when she was sent to do a 6 months' placement, working at Gatwick Airport, which is incredibly inconvenient to get to by train every day from Bath. At this point, recognising a 2-hour commute wasn't the best move on the board, my mum decided to give driving a go, which was a lot easier process then. There was no theory test to go through so you would turn up on the day in whatever car was provided and try your best, and the examiner next to you would gauge if you were dangerous enough to fail or not. A bit less complicated and regulated a system than it is nowadays. Unluckily for my mum, she was, in fact, deemed, a bit too dangerous. She was doing very well for her first test until there was a very loud wingmirror collision on the examiner's side of the car. This was deemed a crash, so my mum failed her



Freddie in Mr. Foulds' car

driving-test. Feeling the hit of a 2-hour train commute, my mum re-sat two weeks later and emerged victorious with two much healthier wingmirrors and a much happier examiner.

These weren't the final driving test experiences my parents would face. They went, about 20 years ago, to do a work-stint in California. If anyone was thinking the driving-test the UK had at this time was easy, then this may be a hard read. There were a couple of complications, of course, as Americans, strange as they are, have put the steering-wheel on the wrong side of the car and drive on the wrong side of the road ... so there was a bit of adjusting to do. In America, there are no separate tests for manual or automatic, there is simply one driving-test. Everyone is put in an automatic car and told to do a lap of the block they start on. The roads in America are very smooth and straight, so, in comparison to our driving

on what is left of the road, they drive on the left-hand side. This made for the easiest driving experiences of my parents' lives despite how different it was.

Passing your test in Britain is now much more rigorous, which is definitely better for preventing accidents; the flip-side is that it makes for a very tedious task of getting your driving licence. I have just turned 17 and have started my driving journey, but, as a car enthusiast, I've decided to learn in a manual, which is proving a little difficult. The journey towards your license begins with your provisional license, which you can apply for at 16, which allows you to wake up and get behind the wheel on your 17th birthday if there is an adult present. After this, you have to do your driving theory test: this I haven't done yet, but, from what I understand, it is difficult to pass as the threshold is very high. There is high demand for driving-tests so it might be a long time after you book one and happen in the most obscure and distant place in the country. Now, if you fail this test, due possibly to the insanely long wait for your driving test, you will not have the same liberty my mum had to re-do it in two weeks. Oh, no: it will now take an average of 4-6 months. This has been a lengthy and annoying process for a couple of friends of mine who have passed, with one even saying it took him months to find a driving-test slot in a place three-and-a-half-hours away from his home.

Closer to home, I have interviewed a couple of teachers about their driving-test experiences.

Dr Chesterton, Head of Classics and beloved tutor in Kilbracken, hasn't ever taken his driving-test, and has never even tried. He never had an interest in cars, and, due to his growing up living in a town, going to university in Durham, and now working five minutes from his home, he has always got around by train, or on foot, not feeling the need to drive anywhere. This feels unusual, but think about it. If you

don't have a true need or desire to drive, why bother? None of the faff you have to go through to get a licence. No very high insurance premiums as a new driver. I feel Dr Chesterton's confident approach should be culturally normalised.

Dr Sutcliffe, much like Dr Chesterton, didn't ever have the need to drive. However, while at university, he thought he should do *"the adult thing"* and learn to drive, though this was only because his mother offered to pay for the lessons. As a naturally "very risk averse person", he began to over-think every micro-movement and action needed to make this manual car go. He admits he used to struggle with the physical co-ordination part – *"You've got your hands on the wheel, pressing those pedals beneath your feet, looking in the wing-mirror, looking in the rear-view mirror, reaching down for no obvious-seeming reason to change the clutch ..."* - and there was also the permanent and inexplicable anxiety that, somehow the car in the opposite lane would suddenly veer across into his lane and into the side of the car, even though both cars were moving in a straight line in different lanes. Dr Sutcliffe had three driving lessons, where no progress was made. He said that the driving instructor often reached

over to steer for him. At the end of this third lesson, Dr Sutcliffe and his instructor were sat parked outside his parents' house. Asking for reassurance, Dr Sutcliffe asked the instructor how he thought he was getting on, and the reply was, *"Well, Joe, I'd say you were poor."* He then didn't turn up for the fourth booked lesson. Dr Sutcliffe still chooses not to drive today.



A 20-year-old Dr. Sutcliffe learning from the master

Meet Tina, our resident matron in Kilbracken. Tina had quite the story for me when, cosily seated in her office, I asked about her learning to drive experience. She chuckled before telling me the story of her second driving lesson. Her first lesson went fairly well, so she was confident going into her second. But within ten minutes of the lesson starting, her instructor had fallen asleep in the passenger-seat beside her. She didn't notice immediately, only realising that he had when she asked how she was doing or what she should do next, and there wasn't a response. She tried to wake him up politely, trying not to feel stressed. He was very sorry, of course, but she was scared, angry, and very unimpressed with him for the rest of the lesson. Unsurprisingly, she didn't have another lesson with this instructor again, and, all's well that ends well, she passed her test in one go after a few more lessons.

Hearing stories from different generations makes it clear that learning to drive has never really been easy. The cars have changed, the rules have tightened, and the roads are busier, but the nerves, excitement and sense of freedom remain the same. Learning to drive is one moment that quietly marks growing up, a rites-of-passage experience that signals independence. It must feel brilliant when you pass the test, and then sit, solo, behind the wheel of a car, revving up, ready to go.

GETTING LUDIC WITH LANGUAGE

LILY-ROSE PITCHER

As I look back upon my time in Rugby, one of the most valuable things I believe that I have got from the School is the opportunities of creative writing. My first encounter with it came in the form of my first ever prep assignment in F Block: the task of writing dramatic monologue. Quite pretentiously, I wrote mine on the Ancient Greek myth of Arachne and toiled over it for a couple hours. Through this, I became aware of Ms. Scott Martin and the creative writing club that she ran every Tuesday. The opportunities that I subsequently accessed through this society have thoroughly enriched my life in the past five years at Rugby. So, about to bid *adieu*, I thought it only fitting that I should commemorate the Creative Writing Club through investigating its purpose, history, and value.



Lily-Rose gets creative

In addition to the Tuesday 7.15 pm weekly club, there are many other facets to creative writing at the School. Once a year, a group of around 15 students from across all year groups attend a creative writing course ran by the Arvon Foundation. I have been lucky enough to attend twice – once in F Block, and once in LXX. Over the week, students (and teachers!) get the chance to work with poets and authors on their writing, as well as explore the idyllic surrounding countryside. On such trips, we formed close bonds, cooking meals together and spending the evening chatting and playing games. One particular stand-out moment was when one of the writers-in-residence, poet Jacob Sam-La Rose read his poem *A Life in Dreams* to us with such energy and poise. This is now one of my favourite poems and I often return to it.

When I was a student in the E Block, the position of Poet Laureate was introduced, as a way to elevate a student voice in poetry within the school, and you can see the list of those in the position on a board adjacent to the English Office in the New Quad. The first two students that held this position were Lika Gorskaia and Nihal Kumar, two immensely talented and inspiring writers. I was lucky enough to be asked to be the third, and within my time in the position, I was asked to write a poem about the TRR, aided in assisting Poet in Residence Arji Manuelpillai on World Book Day at Bilton Grange, and ran a creative writing workshop of my own!

The creative writing community at Rugby clearly remains a flourishing branch of the school's extra-curricular life, so who better to interview about it than Ms. Scott-Martin, the driving-force behind it all.



Alfie Turner channels his inner poet

Ms. Scott-Martin explained that she “set the society up on my first year here, and Miss Norton was one of my first students. She used to come every week when she was in E Block. There wasn’t a creative writing group that I’m aware of before I came. At first, it was very small and it was just literally two Southfield girls, sometimes three. Moving into Stanley, when I became Hm, meant we could use Stanley private side, which ... well, we could have cookies, and my cat came in and that made a really nice space so it didn’t feel like a classroom. This made everything really work. Now we use Bradley library, which is perfect and it feels that the society has significantly grown again as this year we’ve had more interest than any other year.”

I am always in awe of others’ writing – especially Ms. Scott-Martin’s! I was aching to ask her about her own love of writing:

Can you remember when you first became interested in the field of creative writing or poetry?

“Yes, probably from when I was four. I’ve always, always written and I’ve always read poetry. Instead of getting pocket money when I was little, I had to learn a poem; then, if I learned it properly, I would be able to choose a book. So I think I was always destined just to be an English teacher!”

Who are some of your own favourite writers, and would you say you are specifically influenced by any of them?

“I think it changes. When I was at school, I studied Sylvia Plath, which blew my mind. I just thought it was extraordinary. Then I studied French and Spanish at university and just fell in love with Lorca, Spanish poetry, and South American writing.

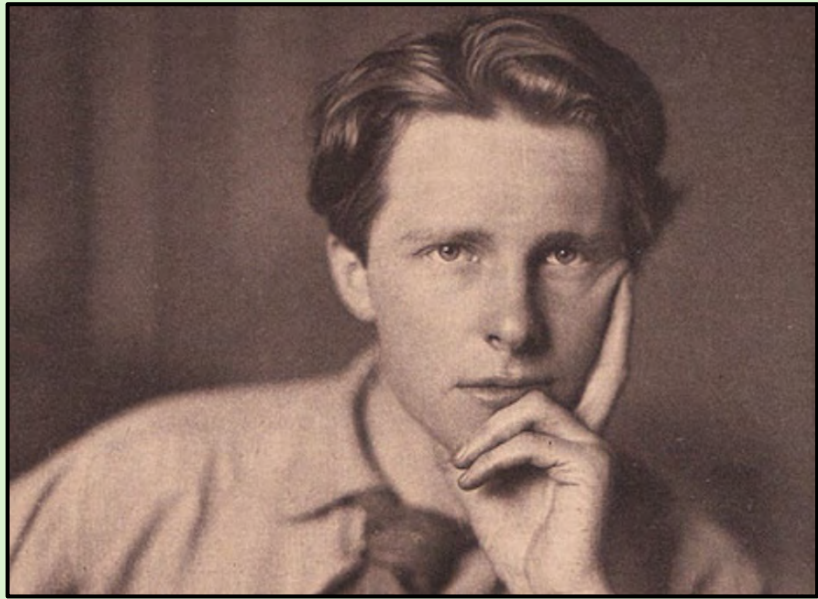
Now I’m really drawn to contemporary poetry. I love canonical poets, teaching Blake or Shakespearean sonnets or whatever, but, in my own time, I reach for contemporary poets, such as Fiona Benson, who a few of our writers met on the Arvon course. I’m reading a lot of poetry by Jack Underwood, who is extraordinary. I like poetry outside my comfort-zone, performance poets such as Danez Smith. The syllabuses that we teach don’t have enough really relevant modern poetry which has been written in the last five years. I think we’re missing a trick; there should be more of that on any curriculum.”

I was also curious about Ms. Scott-Martin’s own relationship with the Creative Writing club. Has she ever been influenced by, or really moved by, a piece of writing by a student?

"Always. Always. I'm often in awe. I think that working with young writers I find genuinely inspiring. I'm always inspired by students' writing. A couple of my present F Blockers are really good, as they just make crazy creative leaps that I can learn from."

What has been a highlight of the trips to Arvon Creative Writing?

"The power cut in October 2025 at the Arvon centre in Sheepwash in Devon, when Fiona Benson read from 'Midden Witch' by firelight, was one of the most atmospheric experiences of my life. It was almost as if it had been staged. It was so perfect."



Rupert Brooke

Caroline Bird is amazing. She told me to steer towards the dark, giving me advice and feedback on poems I'd written. After that, I had a poem called 'Unmothering' published in Magma, which is a contemporary poetry magazine edited by Benedict Newbury and Pauline Sewards. This led to more and more poems being published, which was all essentially thanks to that moment with Caroline, I think."

In recent years, Ms. Scott-Martin has introduced the position of a Poet in Residence, in which a leading contemporary British poet collaborates with the school. I asked Ms. Scott-Martin what the Poet-in-Residence brings to the School's creative writing community?

"In the world of contemporary poetry, they're big names. Having a one-to-one with a prize-winning, published, renowned contemporary poet, I think there's no better way of getting feedback. It makes our writers here at Rugby feel like they really are poets. I guess they're just experts, and they are taking student work seriously, which, for a student, must feel empowering. It means it's not just me offering advice and encouragement, as there are different voices involved."

Ms. Scott-Martin evidently cares deeply about the enrichment of young people's writing, and is an enormously talented poet herself. In addition to having her work published in magazines like *Magma*, she was also selected for the Writing West Midlands Room 204 Writer Development Programme, and is currently studying towards a PhD in creative writing.

I will be forever grateful for all of the hours spent writing outside on Arvon trips, the conversations about writing and literature that this community has produced. I often think about how some of my favourite writing I have produced arose from being surrounded by other writers, sat wondering in the garden of the Arvon Centre in Devon, a notebook on my lap and a pen in my hand.

‘CACTUS’

MS. SOPHIE NORTON

I wrote *Cactus* after I had been frequenting Ms Scott-Martin’s creative writing group for a couple of years.

One of the sessions she led was on the sestina as a poetic form, introducing us to Elizabeth Bishop’s *Sestina* as a well-known example. I loved the challenge of creating expression through these structural limitations, and I remember selecting the words for my poem with purpose: bruise, scissors, chocolate, plastic, cactus and love. It was early 2018 and cacti were somewhat trendy – something to do with an Instagram aesthetic, I think. There was also a widespread media call to reduce single-use pollutants and discourse about plastic straws being banned from fast-food chains was increasingly relevant. The Guylian seashell-shaped chocolates were in my mind at the time, I had been given a small box a week prior. I deliberately tried to offset these images with words that connote violence: bruise and scissors. Whilst I wrote, the combination of words played out into this narrative that felt like a short story.

With some refinement and advice from Ms Scott-Martin, I entered the poem into that year’s Foyle Young Poet’s competition. A few months later, I received communication that, out of 11,000 entries, *Cactus* had been selected as one of the 85 commended poems. I was invited to attend an award ceremony in London where we listened to poems from selected winners and the judges – which was an amazing experience.



Ms. Norton back row, centre

I'm hastily changing before my mirror when I find the bruise.
It's purple and ugly and if I could I'd cut it out my skin with scissors.
Instead I turn to my drawer, where I reach for a chocolate
from one of those little transparent containers made of plastic
that my mother gave me in return for looking after her cactus
while she partied with her new husband, a man that I can't say I love.

In fact, I hate him. Towards him, I feel the furthest emotion possible from love.
Unlike a flower, you cannot grow your own bruise.
My mother's husband gave it to me. I didn't want a reward for the cactus.
My mind wanders to the aforementioned scissors
and then drifts towards the idea of plastic
while I question why I continue to eat so much chocolate.

It's probably because I wish I was the colour of chocolate.
Silky brown, a smooth rush of velvet love
Instead of the artificial gunk my mother smothers on her pale skin, bottled in plastic.
She buys it in bulk from Selfridges. When she spends too much she earns another bruise
from her husband, who hits her after the tag's been snipped off with scissors.
When her screams fill the house my brother cries and I tend to her cactus.

Her husband often makes her cry so I spend a lot of time with the goddamn cactus.
I've decided to name it: Praline, after my favourite flavour of chocolate.
He lives in a pot covered in little flowers, carefully cut from magazines with nail scissors.
My mother woke up late today. She had a neck covered in bites of love
At least, that's what she called them. It's actually just an ugly purple bruise.
Her husband's tried to claim his property; sucking on her as if she were made of plastic.

It worries me that the oceans have too much floating plastic.

It kills birds and ducks and turtles and fish and plants like my precious cactus.
I don't think love is supposed to kill. It shouldn't take the form of a purple bruise.
But mother's pathetic. She cries and cries then forgives with gifts of flowers and chocolate.
She thinks her husband shows her love
but living with him is like an everyday gamble of rock, paper, scissors.

I want to poke out his eyes with sharp scissors,
want to see him still and cold in a morgue under a sheet of sterilised plastic
because my mother deserves an actual, real love.
Not her husband, who acts like such a prick that one wonders if he's actually a cactus.
I'll get him. Perhaps I'll poison him with spiked chocolate.
Or smack him as he lulls in unsuspecting sleep, give him one hell of a bruise.

His love is a balloon which I'm determined to puncture with scissors,
His presence was a fresh bruise, with a personality as superficial as plastic.
Now his cactus spikes are broken, like his promises of sickly sugar. But we've given up chocolate.



HOW DOES MARKETING WORK HERE AT RUGBY?

SOPHIE GEDYE

The next time you scroll past another Rugby School Instagram reel or post, take a second to look at it. That perfectly captured match action shot that ends up becoming your profile picture, the “day in the life” video, or a candid photograph of yourself that you didn’t even realise was being taken, it all seems pretty natural. But in reality, there is far more going on behind the scenes than you might think. Behind every post is a team, a plan, and a carefully considered marketing strategy.

The team itself is small but wide-ranging. Tash Grove, Head of Marketing and Brand, leads the overall marketing strategy for Rugby School, Morgan Thomas leads on content, overseeing everything from social media to day-to-day news, while Dan Cobble focuses on the School’s website, and external advertising. Kelly Keen, lead designer, creates publications such as the *Arnold Foundation*

Review and works across lay-out, visuals, and print materials. Together, the team works towards a shared goal: driving the recruitment of new pupils and ensuring Rugby School remains a leading, fully subscribed and high-achieving school.

It is easy to assume that School marketing is occasional, a few scattered posts and the occasional billboard. The reality is very different. The team has photographers on site multiple times a week, with events being covered. As Morgan explains, “over one weekend alone, we had seven different events being photographed”. Morgan mentioned her first week working at the school involved her being



Sophie sees how marketing gets done

thrown in the deep end with marketing for Festival on the Close, which is arguably the busiest school can get.

The level of output feeds into something much bigger than social media. The team is currently working on projects that will shape Rugby's brand for years to come. This includes a full rebrand, a completely redesigned website, a series of around 25 professionally produced videos and a documentary-style insight into boarding life. Together, these changes represent a deliberate shift in how the school communicates so it is more immersive and more focused on experience.

Parents, thinking about the choices available for their child's education, naturally compare schools. In terms of marketing, it can feel difficult to find ways to stand out. One of the most interesting approaches of the team is how they themselves, irrespective of their job, as it were, think about Rugby itself. As Tash explains, the aim has been to avoid generic messaging and to focus instead on communicating what genuinely sets Rugby School apart. Most schools rightly point to strong academic results, rich co-curricular provision and robust pastoral care. We seek to differentiate by giving students a more prominent voice in communications, allowing the lived experience of school life to speak for itself. This is the best way for us to demonstrate that it's character-formation and the creation of 'the whole person' that sets us apart here at Rugby. In doing so, we also present an authentic picture of the School.



Tash Grove, Head of Marketing

Rugby has been successful in creating marketing trends. For example, Head Girl, Bexie Monteith's and Head Boy, John Hawkins' 'Day-in-the-life' videos were quickly adopted by other schools. As Morgan puts it, *"It's nice to see that they might be influenced by us"*. It serves as a reminder that marketing from students' perspectives, which involves a more authentic, 'this-is-actually-happening', candid view of the School is often more engaging than something with a staged feeling.

What does a typical day look like in the Marketing office? The answer is simple: there isn't one. Some days are spent interviewing students, staff or alumni, others involve co-ordinating photoshoots, designing publications, or planning campaigns aimed at audiences far beyond the school. There is also *"a lot of ad hoc stuff... it is all very fast-moving."*

At its core, the team's aim is simple: to capture what Rugby is really like. However, this is not always straightforward as a polished video or carefully selected image can show what happens, but not always how it *feels*, which, humans being primarily emotional before anything else, is what matters. This is where students come in. As Morgan explains, *"Students can come and talk to us. We're open to collaborating or being sent stuff if there are good stories or ideas"*. This includes filming, editing,



The Marketing team at Rugby School

suggesting ideas or simply sharing experiences as students often see the School from a slightly different angle. “You probably find, if a peer was filming you, you might be a bit more relaxed”, which usually results in more natural and genuine content. It doesn’t have to be complicated: *“If you’ve been somewhere and had an amazing time, just tell it”*.

You might wonder why I am, personally, interested in all this. I am currently sitting on an offer of AAB to study marketing at the University of Leeds, which has recently been ranked first for their marketing course. I have

always found myself to be a creative person and knew I would get bored with a degree surrounding numbers or simply learning. What drew me to marketing in the first place was how ever changing the profession is – not one day looks the same and that’s what I love about it. What is also appealing about the degree is how broad it is. I could apply the skills learnt in marketing to many different career paths, which makes it a very good option for someone so indecisive. I especially love the aspect of my course that allows me to tailor the modules I want to my own interests, allowing me to follow more of a psychological route into marketing.

I asked Tash about her own experience as regards now having a marketing job, and one at Rugby School. Originally, Tash never intended to go into marketing, having loved history of art in school she gained a job at Christie’s. Here she matched buyers to the style of art that they had previously been interested in, or already had in their collections, working in the Old Master Paintings department in client development. This job “crossed over with marketing and events”, helping Tash gain an insight to the industry. Moving out of London, there weren’t many jobs that were similar, so applying the skills from her job at Christie’s, moved to work at a marketing agency in Cheltenham, before moving to work in alumni marketing for Rugby School. Interestingly, Tash spent some time running her own calligraphy business, running workshops and designing pieces like Christmas cards, which “taught me a lot about business and branding, and marketing through social media”. As an Old Rugbeian herself with experience in luxury brand marketing, it was perfect. After a year of doing the marketing for alumni, Tash moved into main school marketing, which is the area she is currently working in. I wondered next whether coming back to work in the school you once went to yourself was a weird experience. Tash, in contrast, found it to be an advantage as “you don’t have to learn where everything is, and have seen the school from both perspectives”. The rest of the team interestingly don’t have any past relation to the school, giving their approach many different perspectives and a new viewpoint.

So, next time you see a Rugby School post, it’s worth remembering what sits behind it – planning, coordination, strategy, and a team building something new. It reflects a shift in how the School tells its story: away from simply describing what happens, and towards showing what it feels like to be here. Increasingly, that story isn’t just being told *about* students, it’s being told *by* them. After all, no one understands life at Rugby better than the people living it.

THE ILLUSION OF FREE TIME

FLOSSIE WHITTLE

There's a moment every boarder recognises instantly. You finally collapse onto your bed, the exact same bed that doubles as your sofa, your desk, your friends' snacking table and your emotional support structure ... and you think, At last. Free time! A rare, but perfect pocket of nothingness.

And then, within seconds, your brain reminds you of the sports kit quietly waiting for a wash, the emails you've been 'meaning to reply to', the House meeting you forgot was moved to tonight, the 'quick' Nintendo game that someone is

already yelling about from the corridor, and, of course, the inevitable knock on your door just as you open a new assignment. Sometimes it's a friend. Sometimes it's a tutor. Sometimes it's someone asking if you've seen their missing

moisturiser, water bottle, or dignity after last night's House "I love London". It's chaos, the kind that would be funny if it weren't your actual life.

It does make you wonder: do we genuinely have free time, or just unscheduled productivity disguised as free time?

Because 'free time' at school does not mean freedom. It just means no official lessons. And 'no lessons' is different from 'no expectations'. There are optional assemblies (which somehow feel less optional the more people talk about them), friends to see, house bonding activities, and the quiet-but-constant pressure to revise. Even relaxing becomes a performance. You are not just resting, you are resting in a way that looks wholesome and ready for a teacher come in to check in on you.

In a 24/7 environment, even downtime feels like something you're supposed to be good at.



Flossie and friend high jinks

Then there's the strange psychology of being busy. Saying "I'm sooo busy" has basically become a greeting. Comparing workloads is a competitive sport. Productivity becomes a personality trait. And the guilt – the guilt - the special kind that appears the moment you dare to relax, is unmatched. You sit down for five minutes and suddenly your brain decides it's the perfect time for a 9pm motivation prep. Rest starts to stop feeling like recovery and instead starts feeling like procrastination.

Of course, there are, as well, all the ridiculous things we all do to delude ourselves. Opening your laptop the moment someone walks down the corridor just in case they do decide to come into your room so you happen look productive. Sitting in the library or Collingwood Hall purely for the psychological aesthetic of feeling you are academically intense. Pretending to annotate something deeply meaningful when actually you're just underlining random words because someone you vaguely want to impress walked in. Or the classic boarding-school survival tactic, the 'I'm just going to have a 5-minute break' ... which ends up being a pilgrimage across House, somehow counting both as procrastination and socialising.

Zoom out and all this madness is not surprising.



The joy of Instagram distraction

We're in a high-achieving environment where academic success, sport, and social life all run at full-speed. When you live where you study, there's no mental separation. Your workplace is also your bedroom, your dining hall, your common room, your everything. You're constantly surrounded by energetic teenage peers, the House atmosphere is always on. Even brushing your teeth can turn into a full social debrief. When your school is also your home is there ever a real switch-off?

And then there's the boarding aspect. Even week-ends end up scheduled. There is: the big match, the social Saturday, the scheduled Sunday night academic panic that hits every week at around 9 when you realise there's another week. 'Free time' often translates as 'catching up slowly', which is, absurdly, more exhausting than just working normally. Free time becomes the space in which you

prepare for everything else. Free time is less a break and more a buffer.

HOT SUMMER NIGHTS: A GUIDE TO MUSIC FESTIVALS

CLEMMIE WILSON



Dean girls warm up for the summer

Hot summer nights. Dried mud. Feet aching from walking up and down the same fields countless times. Vibrating speakers pulsating vibrations through the ground. It can only be a music festival, deep in the middle of nowhere, and, somehow, already, your phone is at 3%. Somewhere between the car park and the gates, that noise hits you: a distant hum of music which feels familiar, the waving of brightly coloured banners in the afternoon breeze, the sun scorching the grass, drying anything up but the mud as you step out of the car to collect your wristband.

If you haven't felt that feeling, or aren't planning to, you're missing out. Expectations - imagining the perfect pinterest worthy outfit, endless music acts of your favourite artists, and getting the perfect picture with nothing other than a digital camera - are almost completely different to the reality. But why are music festivals so culturally significant? And how have people's expectations and attitudes

changed from generation to generation, from festival to festival? And, of course, how did music festivals even come to exist in the first place?

History

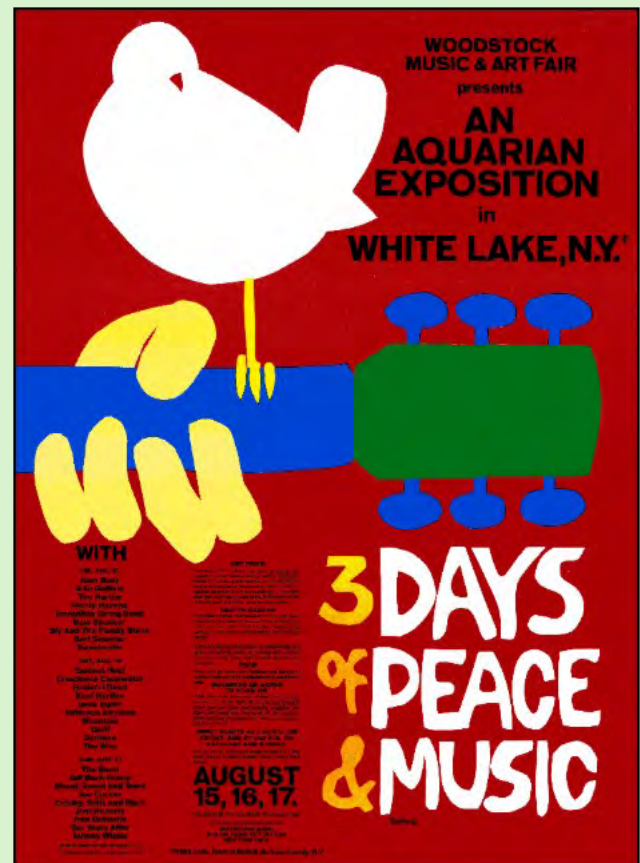
While music festivals date back to the ancient times of the Greeks and the Romans, it was in the period of the 1950s-60s that we moved away from religious traditions and local get-togethers to the modern format which we all recognise and love today. From the Newport Jazz Festival in 1954 to The Festival of Britain in 1951, the most celebrated and credited festival was the late 1960s wonder, the Monterey Pop Festival, often cited as the dawn of rock and pop festivals. It is worth mentioning that festivals during this period were not as we view them today, as, instead of focusing on music, camping, and multi-day events, they were much more about community and tradition, with some focusing on political messages such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

This period was followed by the Golden Age of the late 60s and early 70s, where counter-culture, 'free love', and anti-establishment themes took a massive rise globally. This era featured the iconic Woodstock festival of 1969 and the Isle of Wight festival (1968-70), and the first Glastonbury occurred in 1970, with tickets worth a whopping £1. These were defined by a 'hippie' ethos, featuring cheap entry and minimal security, which laid the foundation for the multi-day camping format which has become hugely popularised.

This evolved into the more mainstream with organized planning festivals of the 1980s to the 1990s. Festivals were recognized as commercialized multi-genre events, defined by a 'free and easy' atmosphere, rave-culture, with heavy drum-and-bass influenced music, with diverse line-ups and a culture of fashion. The modern era is where you can find the common 3–7-day lineup, transitioning from commercialisation to corporation, spanning from pop, hip-hop and electronic music with global events such as Coachella, Reading and Leeds and Glastonbury. So, as you can see from this mini history lesson, festivals have grown hugely from small local events suffering from overcrowding to communal gatherings with hundreds of thousands of people, harbouring heavily sponsored high ticket price events.

Woodstock and Glastonbury

Talking about the history of festivals, it's impossible to waffle on without talking a bit about the deified events: Glastonbury and Woodstock. The Woodstock Festival, though short-lived (only lasting for three days in the August of 1969), was branded as 'An Aquarian Exposition: 3 Days of Peace & Music'. Created by four principle organisers, Michael Lang, Artie Kornfeld, Joel Rosenman, and John P. Roberts, it became a powerful protest against the war in Vietnam and was regarded as a celebration of counter-culture values. Defining 1960s counter-culture, and drawing almost 400,000 people to a New York dairy farm, it attracted ground-breaking performers such as Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and The Who. Although the sheer size of the crowd suggested chaos, a harmonious atmosphere served as a peaceful escape from the 1960s political turmoil and social unrest, epitomizing the desire for unity.



Founded in 1970 by dairy farmer Michael Eavis at Worthy Farm, Somerset, the Glastonbury Festival began as the £1 "Pilton Pop, Folk & Blues Festival", inspired by hippie ideals and the Bath Festival. It evolved from a small 1970s gathering into a colossal culture phenomenon, with the Pyramid stage featuring from 1971 and supporting causes such as CND. By 1981, the festival became a regular event supporting the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and introduced a permanent stage. In the 2000s, despite challenges of overcrowding, it became one of the world's most famous festivals, featuring diverse headliners like Stormzy in 2019 and Sir Paul McCartney in 2022.

My mum!

Recently, I interviewed my mum to learn about her experiences with music festivals and how they've changed over the years. She told me that, although she's only been to one proper festival - Big Feastival last year - she's been to many concerts, including Robbie Williams' huge 2003 show,

which had one of the biggest crowds in UK history. When she was younger, Glastonbury was the only major festival people talked about, and she said, *“No-one my age really went to festivals back then.”* She prefers smaller events, but only if they still feature strong headline acts, and she enjoyed Big Feastival because *“it was close to home, and I could just go for the day,”* especially since she brought her children along. Most of her festival and concert moments have been enjoyable, although she once got caught in tear gas at a show abroad. For her, the best part of festivals is the shared atmosphere, *“everyone coming together to enjoy the music.”* She thinks festivals are about both the music and spending time with people you care about, and if she went again, she’d want a mix of dancing, people-watching, and relaxing.



Leeds Festival

This summer, I’m hitting Leeds Festival, and I’ve been planning how both to survive and actually enjoy it. The real hacks are knowing which stages to hit first, having a way to stash your stuff safely, and keeping friends close so you don’t waste half the day hunting each other down. Layers are essential, and snacks are underrated — nothing kills a set like being hungry or cold. Mostly, it’s about moving fast, catching the best acts, and just soaking in the chaos and energy that makes festivals unforgettable.



Looking back at the origins of festivals - from ancient gatherings to the counterculture icons of the 1960s and the global giants of today - it’s clear that music festivals have always been about more than just performances. They are snapshots of culture, emotion and community, shaped by each new generation that attends them. Whether you’re standing in a field covered in dried mud, queuing for overpriced chips, dancing with your friends, or simply listening to the distant thump of a bassline, festivals create memories that feel almost timeless. Even with rising ticket prices, corporate sponsors and ever-growing crowds, the heart of festivals remains the same: people coming together to experience music, freedom and moments they can’t quite find anywhere else.



CCF BACK-IN-THE-DAY

MR DAY

Thursday afternoon was the key temporal window each week as regards service, back in the day.

"New Men's Games" occupied me in the F Block on Thursdays in 1983-84. (Girls were only in the Upper School at Rugby back then, and their pioneering approach to being bolted onto a boys' school is to be admired.) A diet of such pastimes as fives (Rugby, not Eton or Winchester), rackets, and hockey on an antiquated cinder 'all-weather' (debateable) pitch on Hillbrow Small kept me hungry enough to devour my daily Town House Tea in Stodge, typically a drink, an apple and a stale cheese or ham roll, and sometimes ham and cheese, or cheese and ham.

The E Block brought the novelty of 2AA aka 2nd year Alternative Activities as, in uniform, we learned the basics of map-reading, navigation, teamwork etc, under the tutelage of a trusted senior cadet. I was to revisit this leadership opportunity myself in the XX, and I enjoyed it. 'Granny-bashing', as far as I believed at the time, was the only other option to CCF, although I did find myself volunteering to



officiate at the local special Olympics each year, which was rewarding, and illustrated some unusual yet surprisingly effective techniques for launching missiles in the form of *discoi*, shots and javelins from wheelchairs. I don't recall the detail of the health and safety regimen in operation at the time.

So, CCF it was from the D Block onwards, and I served as a member of the Infantry Section, affiliated with the Royal Warwickshire Fusiliers. I was proud to wear the hackle, said by my comrades-at-arms to have been dipped in the blood of the old enemy, France. Was this literally true? I wondered. How did the modern French person feel about that? Shooting ranges and obstacle courses at Gamecock Barracks near Nuneaton were a regular staple, and we spent one memorable weekend *en masse* wandering around the North Yorkshire moors, abandoning the warmth of the barracks at Catterick garrison to search for the new enemy, which I think was probably Russia, but I was never quite sure whether they were out there, or not. The Regimental Sergeant Major, ex Coldstream Guards, had medals, probably for services rendered to non-PC 'banter', but everybody liked him, and it was fun guessing which button might pop off his uniform, as he puffed out his proud and ample chest. "Stand proud, boys, stand proud!"

When I returned to Rugby in 2006 as a member of staff, I was once again faced with a choice. Granny-bashing or CCF. No choice at all, and I have three cadet service medals to prove it.

ATTEN...TION!

MS. NORTON

There is a hurried scraping of combat boots against the damp asphalt as about 30 teenagers bring their arms to their sides, hands in fists, spines straightened and chins lifted. Our eyes follow Mr Welch as he paces back and forth before the group, identifying untucked shirts, creased trousers and loose shoelaces. The Marines have a reputation for excellence. We make up the *harder* CCF option; the one where they make you camouflage with face paint, do push-ups and run with wooden logs around The Close.



Ms Norton centre

The importance of physical presentation was stressed from the very start. We were equipped with a full uniform (berets, trouser twists and all) and were expected to polish our combat boots in-between the weekly Wednesday afternoon sessions. During these, we congregated in the Collingwood centre car park where New House has since been built. As a result, there was no jumping out of the way every few minutes for cars or DPD drivers delivering equipment to IT, and we sometimes spent up to (what felt like) 40 minutes perfecting our marching. Back and forth, back and forth.

The perks of being part of Marines were the fun activities we got to do. I fondly remember going on a trip to Yardley Chase where we were given a ration pack and supplies to build our own shelters in the forest, sharing mess kits to cook our own lunch. Another great trip involved a residential experience at the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, where we stayed overnight on an actual boat and were privileged to spend time learning about the rich history of the Royal Navy - whilst still finding time to go on morning runs and do some push-ups, of course.

With these thrilling experiences under my belt, I was excited to learn that I would be supporting the delivery of the current Marines programme as a member of staff at Rugby School, exactly a decade later. There is such a variety of activities on offer now; this term alone the Marines sections have been building shelters in the forest (with tarpaulin and without), building fires, navigating their



surroundings, operating laser shotguns, practicing knots, and even abseiling down the centre of the Chapel.

These activities feel very meaningful, and great opportunities to practice not only survival but also teamwork and communication skills, outside of the classroom. A particularly great session a few weeks ago was finished with a group afternoon snack of bread and syrup, freshly cooked on fires

that the section had foraged for and lit by sparking flint onto kindling. For those students that didn't make the hardcore Pringle Trophy earlier this term, there have been plenty of physically demanding army crawls and camouflaging activities in nearby woodland.

My reflections on returning to the CCF stomping ground after so long are that Mr Welch is as passionate about the Marines as ever. Now with a bigger group of student participants than during my time, they have the excitement of being able to rotate activities each week, perhaps sacrificing some marching practice, but gaining an impressive array of survival skills. I joined the Marines as a nervous E-block student wanting to challenge myself, and it's heartwarming to know that there are currently students there for the same reason. From my experience and observations, the Rugby School's CCF Marines really do reflect the official motto: "The Few. The Proud. The Marines."



SULTAN OF SWING ASPIRATIONS

GABRIEL NIESLOUCHOWSKI

Playing a musical instrument is good for your brain, right? But does that idea actually encourage anybody to start playing? As someone who plays guitar, I can assure you that it's much more than that, and here is the exact reason why (it might be a pretty long one, though).

How I started

I started playing guitar when I was 14, and it wasn't part of some big plan. I was at a friend's house, just hanging out, when I noticed a guitar sitting in the corner. I picked it up, played a few random strings, and that was it — I was interested. I wouldn't say I was instantly good (far from it), but something about it stuck with me.

What really pushed me further was my grandfather. He was a huge fan of rock music and his house was full of guitars. Even though

he mainly played the piano, music was a big part of his life, and being around that definitely had an effect on me. Seeing all those instruments and hearing all that music made learning guitar feel natural, almost like it was something I was meant to try.

Of course, wanting to play and actually learning are two different things. That's where my first teacher comes in.

Ever wondered how to teach guitar? Ask someone who has 27 of them!

Mr Lis was very strict. Lessons were serious, and he didn't let mistakes slide. At the time, it could be frustrating because progress felt slow, and he didn't give out compliments easily. In fact, it took six months before I got my first one. After playing something I'd been working on, he looked at me and said, *"Not bad."* That was it. But honestly, it meant a lot. After months of practice, hearing even that small bit of approval felt like a big achievement.

Despite being strict, he was also really funny. He was always making jokes, especially by quoting lines from old films he liked. Sometimes I didn't even understand the references, but it still made the lessons



Gabriel in action



Jimi Hendrix, guitar hero

more relaxed and enjoyable. At first, I didn't know whether he was saying something mean or just quoting another film, but I learned to differentiate and found that this was exactly the type of lessons I liked. It was a good balance — tough teaching, but with a sense of humour.

As I got more into playing, I started learning about famous guitarists, and some of their stories made the whole idea of playing guitar even more interesting. One of my main

sources was my teacher, and here are a few fun facts about famous guitarists you probably didn't know.

Eddie Van Halen was known not just for his skill but also for being a bit secretive about it. There's a story about him playing his famous solo 'Eruption' live while facing away from the audience so people couldn't see how he was doing it. His technique was so unique at the time that he didn't want others copying it straightaway, and it indeed took others a few years to realize the technique behind it.

Jimi Hendrix had a very different start. He taught himself a lot by listening to vinyl records and trying to copy what he heard. There's also an unusual detail about his family: his dad had six fingers, but, because of stigma around this condition, (called polydactyly) at the time, they were tied off with silk cords, which stopped the blood from flowing and the fingers eventually fell off. If Jimi was so good with only 5 fingers, I wonder what he could do with 6 of them! Moreover, his technique was completely over the top — sometimes, he played guitar with his teeth!

Then there's Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin), who played in a completely different style. One of the most interesting things he did was use a violin bow on his guitar in order to create a 'so different' sound-effect just for 'Dazed and Confused'.

I was curious how my guitar teacher started his own journey with playing guitar. *'I just wanted to impress girls'*, he said. *'But now I've got 27 guitars and no wife, so I assume my goal changed somewhere along the way'*.

How IT ALL started: a history of guitars

I assume not many of you were ever struck by a thought: 'Wait, but how did someone invent guitar?' — and before I started playing — neither was I. However, the story of the guitar, especially the electric guitar, is really fascinating and shows how something small can turn into something that defines a whole era in music.

Early versions of the guitar go back to instruments in Spain, which developed from even older stringed instruments brought over by the Moors. These early guitars were acoustic, meaning they relied entirely on the body of the instrument to amplify the sound.

By the 1800s, the 'classical guitar' had more or less taken shape: six strings, a wooden body, and a design that's still recognizable today. It worked well for small rooms, but, as music got louder and bands got bigger, especially in the early 20th century, the guitar started to struggle. It just couldn't compete with drums, brass sections, or even a piano in terms of volume.

That problem led directly to the invention of the electric guitar.

In the 1920s and 1930s, musicians and engineers started experimenting with ways to amplify the guitar. The breakthrough was the pickup, a device that converts string vibrations into an electrical signal, which can then be sent to an amplifier. One of the earliest successful electric guitars was the 'Frying Pan' developed by George Beauchamp and produced by Rickenbacker. It looked unusual (more like a lap steel than a modern guitar), but it proved the idea worked.

Things really took off in the 1940s and 1950s. This is when solid-body electric guitars were introduced, guitars made from a solid piece of wood rather than a hollow body. This reduced feedback (that loud, unwanted screeching sound) and made the instrument much more practical at high volumes. After Leo Fender and Les Paul introduced their models of guitars that were finally fit for their purpose, the electric guitar became central to modern music. In the 1950s and 60s, it shaped rock and roll, as artists like Chuck Berry used it to create riffs that are still instantly recognizable.

There is another funny story about the development of the guitar, and it's about the amplifiers used.

At first, amplifiers were designed to be as clear as possible, but musicians quickly discovered that when you pushed them too hard — turning the volume up beyond what they were meant for — the sound would "break up." Instead of clean notes, you'd get a rough, gritty tone. That sound became what we now call distortion.

At the beginning, this wasn't something engineers planned — it was almost an accident. One of the most famous early examples comes from Link Wray, who wanted a tougher, more aggressive sound. So, what did he do? He poked holes in the speaker of his amplifier — shouldn't it be obvious? That physical damage made the sound fuzzier and more distorted, especially on his track *Rumble*. It was a simple idea, but it changed how people thought about guitar tone, and now there is an effect for every sound possible. I mean it. Guitars can sound like ducks. Or frogs.

How other people start – an interview with Mrs Sanders

Mrs Sanders has been here since 2010 and is known to everyone in the music department, especially the people who play in bands, as she's Head of Rock, Pop and Percussion Music.



Blue Note

How old were you when you started playing a musical instrument?

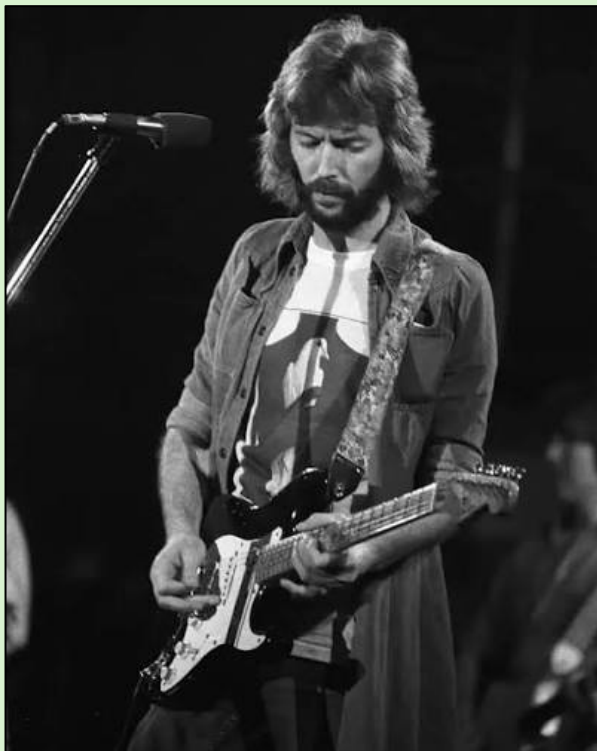
'Five. The first instrument I played was the piano. My four sisters were already playing an instrument, and my dad – even though he didn't pursue a career in music – is still one of the best musicians I've known. When he heard a song he liked in a movie, he was able to play it just after the first hearing – just like that! It was something I really admired.'

You play not only the piano, but also violin, guitar, and percussion, together with drums, but drums is your favourite one. How did you start playing?

'It was really simple, actually. When I was 13, a band at a local lively church needed someone to play the drums. They showed me how to play one simple bit, and then it clicked. From that day, all I could ever think of was drums. Even though I was really academic and planned to become a doctor, I told my parents that I want to pursue a career in music, which must have been weird for them at first, but it definitely wasn't a shock. At the end of the day, it was they who raised me this way.'

Looking back at your teachers and your own process of learning, how do you try to be the best at what you do?

'It's the teacher who makes the learning either the best experience of your life or your worst nightmare.



Eric Clapton, guitar legend

That's why I always want to teach my students from the level at which they are and only expect from them if they expect something from themselves. I think the worst words a teacher can say is: 'How do you not know this yet?' It's my job to teach them what they don't know, and comments like this only discourage. Playing an instrument is not always about getting a grade 9: music is always about people and it creates for me emotions and memories that could never be achieved without its presence.'

What were your favourite song when you were 17-18?

'Rosanna by TOTO. A true banger.'

Thank you, Mrs Sanders.

Guitar-playing: what it's really all about?

What matters most is not how fast you can shred along the fretboard, making your fingers bleed while trying to impress girls and eventually ending up with 27 guitars. For me, like Mrs Sanders, guitar is always about people. For example, I joined my former school's band after my first interaction with the guitar at a friend's house and the memories I have of all my old bandmates go way beyond just music. I'm now in another band, happily playing so loud that I cannot hear the singer, coming up to a rehearsal with a song I 'only need to polish a bit', arguing about who takes the solo ... It can't have been so different when the Moors and Spaniards first introduced guitars to the world.

ARE SUPERHERO COMICS THE NEW MYTHS?

ALICE TROTTER

When I was nine, I was introduced to the rather strange world of myths, by a rather strange Classics teacher who was somewhat too interested in certain aspects of the course. Despite this, I gradually became mesmerized by these stories. I found it bizarre that these tales were mostly a mystery: who created them? When did they gain so much traction? When I was first being taught about these heroes, they felt very emotionally tangible. But there being no mention of an author confused me. So, by nine-year-old logic, I concluded that Rome was founded by a man raised by a wolf.



In regard to comics, I, like most people, knew of these superheroes long before I had ever consumed



Freize of Heracles

any of their media. “Gosh, long distance is my kryptonite” – what’s Kryptonite?” Getting into comics, however, was much harder than getting into mythology. Between a middle-aged man yelling at me from the Internet that on not account could I start at Issue One of anything, and being told that there were some comic-runs so taboo that I should avoid them like the plague, it’s safe to assume that, for a while, I meekly skirted around the scary dragon that was the world of comics. Over time, I eventually decided to tackle the Mount Everest which comprised picking up a singular issue. *Wonder Women Rebirth* by Greg Rucka. I highly recommend *Wonder Women Rebirth* if you want to avoid feeling like you’ve fallen into very weird cheese dream. Now, fast-forward a

couple years, and, midway through a particular dull classical civilisation essay, I began to wonder if the two had much in common. Both feature fantastical elements, with some comics even taking characters from myth into their stories. I believe that out of all the mediums of storytelling today, that comics may be our modern version of myth.

Firstly, how are comics are the closest thing to myth in contemporary society? Unlike books or films which (aside from adaptations) involve a set group of people working on one story, comics, over the span of decades, have many different writers who often re-tell and edit plotlines, which results in changes. An example of this is Wonder Woman having two different origin stories, one where she is created from clay, and a second where she is daughter of Zeus (not an unlikely event). Variations in myth are common due to oral tradition allowing for changes as there was no set written text.

Secondly, myths themselves have been told through visual aids, with varying degrees of success, such as the frieze at Olympia which shows the Labours of Hercules. Of course, there other contenders for the title, as fairytales and fables have been prevalent throughout history and similar myths have altered, yet I think that it is probably safe to say that few today spend their evening huddled round a table re-telling stories of princesses and knights.

Now, who features in comics? For the sake of simplicity, let's focus only on Greek myths and DC (detective comics). Most Greek heroes and superheroes have a purpose behind their creation, so, with Theseus, the Athenians wanted a hero to represent them who was on par with those such as Heracles, so Thesus is praised for the creation of democracy and unifying Athens: he was created with the intent to send this message to the rest of the Greek world. Similarly, many of the well-known superheroes today played a role in World War II. In 1938, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuste, two Jewish immigrants, created Superman. Matthew K. Manning, a writer for Superman said, *"These were two Jewish men reaching adulthood just before the start of World War Two. There was plenty to be angry about. And suddenly they had this character who could give a voice to their concerns and hold the corrupt accountable."* In the early years of Superman's creation, those working on him had the ability to be far more outspoken compared to the direction which DC would later take with their characters.

Myths and comics both display what society respects. In myths, most of the heroes are physically strong, such as Thesus, who was able to take down the Minotaur, as well as wise, which can be seen in characters such as 'wily' Odysseus who cleverly invented the



Variant cover for Justice League #75



ruse of the Trojan Horse. In comics, heroes are also significantly strong (with most having enhanced abilities) as well as being smart, for example, there are parallels between Batman and Odysseus, both of whom do not have genetic advantages beside from help from those who do (gods or other heroes respectively) and they largely rely on their wits.

Another similarity between myths and comic characters is that, physically, it is specified that they fit standards of beauty. In both *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, the central characters are described as “god like”. Superheroes’ silhouettes tend to mimic men’s (the target demographic) ideals for both themselves and women in terms of

physical attractiveness. Nowadays, a sense of stereotypical body-shape is often used to subvert audience’s expectations, such as Hans from *Frozen*.

Comparing myths and comics helps us understand how society has changed in terms of ideology. I think that this can be seen most in the difference in justice and morality. In the times of heroes and oracles, brutal justice was expected: if someone killed a person, then they should pay the price. This justice is mostly considered harsher than what we think necessary today, such as Odysseus killing all of the suitors upon his return from Troy to his palace in Ithaca, with no consideration for the difference in their behaviour. In contrast, superheroes are often very morally aware, with heroes such as Batman famously having a no-killing role. Due to comics representing a whole community as opposed to an individual’s ambition, the hero’s morality is often a sanitised one designed to cause the least amount of controversy - obviously this can change in alternate universes or if a particularly edgy writer takes on the job – but, for the most part, they are a paradigm of perfection. The evolution of the hero, from Hercules to Superman, displays humanity’s aim to be flawless. Where mythic heroes failed due to hubris or rage, comic heroes fail because of loyalty or stubbornness, with such traits re-framed into a positive attribute. In comics, this can easily happen, but, in reality, it is as impossible for us to shake of these flaws as it is for pigs to fly.

Modern society is unrecognisable from the age of myths, but - in the tales of Batman, Superman, Spiderman, you name it - humanity still possesses a desire for intriguing adventures of betrayal and extreme drama.

MY RUGBY SCHOOL JAPAN ADVENTURE

JOSHUA FELLOWS



A visit to a Shinto shrine

Last June, at the end of my F Block year, I was lucky enough to take part in the Japan Exchange with Rugby School Japan, and it was honestly one of the best experiences of my life. From exploring Tokyo and hiking volcanoes to making new friends and learning about Japanese culture, every day was full of surprises and memories I will never forget. Before I went to Japan, my perspective of Japan was mainly influenced by social media and stories I had heard: I knew facts like Japan was one of the cleanest

countries in the world, as well as the most respectful, but I never really knew how Japanese people went about their everyday lives.

Day 1 - Arriving in Tokyo, we were greeted by students and staff at RSJ and had a talk with the principal, Mr Tony Darby, who has now left, before having dinner with our Japanese buddies. Unlike at Rugby School UK, RSJ has one large dining hall where the whole school eats together. In the evening, we learnt about Japanese school life and common etiquette, such as no eating or drinking whilst walking, or being completely silent on trains or any form of public transport.

Day 2 - We made *shisa*, which are cultural lion-dog statues which are believed to protect people from evil spirits, designing our own unique combinations (I made mine a mix between a panda and a penguin) and trying to draw some koi fish. A visit to *teamLab Planets*, a sensory art museum, was fascinating: we walked through water, mirror rooms, and giant glowing spheres. That night, I discovered that Japanese students' meals are way more unique and diverse than what we usually have, as there are always different Japanese dishes to try, from rice to grilled fish to things I had no idea existed but still enjoyed.

Day 3 - A flight to Hokkaido, Japan's northern island which is much quieter than Tokyo. Teto - no relation to our esteemed Politics teacher - our friendly tour guide, took us on a hike through moss caves, which were full of green plants, rocks, and tiny waterfalls. Some parts of the trail were really steep and slippery, so we had to climb carefully over rocks and tree roots. The hotel we stayed in had authentic traditional Japanese-style rooms: two of us slept on beds laid directly on the floor, and the room had a low table with little seats that made us feel like we were basically sitting on the floor. That night, we wore traditional Japanese *kimono* at the dinner at the hotel.

*Day 4 – Volcanos! We explored 地獄谷 (Jigokudani or “Hell’s Valley”), a place with steaming hot springs, volcanic rocks, and bubbling pools. It smelled a bit unpleasantly like eggs due to the amount of sulphur in the air but it was so cool to see. A visit to a museum taught us about the *Ainu people*, the indigenous people of Hokkaido. What I found interesting was that the Ainu language had no correlation with any other modern language, making it extremely endangered; also, that Ainu history dates back more than 10,000 years is astonishing.*



Day 5 – More volcanos! We hiked Mt. Tarumae, an active volcano. The trek up was steep, and the wind was so strong that we had to hold onto our hats (and each other) at some points: it was definitely the hardest thing we did on the trip. At the top, the view was stunning. At the summit of Mt. Tarumae, the ground was bleached and cracked like skin and the wind roared past us so fiercely it felt like the mountain was trying to throw us off. Beyond its smoking crater, there was a glassy blue lake which stood eerily still, towered over by the endless landscape of hills.

*Day 6 - We went to RSJ for the morning, joining our buddies in their first three lessons. An obvious difference we noticed is that RSJ students have 5 periods in the morning – 3 before break and 2 before lunch, with 1 or 2 in the afternoon – compared to our only having 4. Students also had an assigned slot after lessons for extra-curricular activities (which I believe is compulsory). We took part in an earthquake drill, which is taken very seriously in Japan. When the alarm went off, we had to quickly get under our tables and stay completely still until we were told to evacuate; then we made our way to the *Webb Ellis*, which is RSJ’s only astro pitch. That night, a social with the full-time boarders of School House and Rupert Brooke was fun, as we played Mario Kart, Werewolf, and made pancakes together.*

*Day 7 – This day saw an exciting trip to the Tokyo Dome to watch a baseball match: it was a house outing and the girls went to a trampoline park. Unfortunately, the team we were cheering for lost 5–0. Personally, I had no idea that baseball was such a big part of Japan, but the experience of going to a popular match in *the Tokyo Dome* is unforgettable. Sports like rugby and cricket, which are widely recognised in the UK, are barely talked about in Japanese schools.*

Day 8 – Here was an interesting trip, a visit to a pedestrian-crossing! Shibuya Crossing is the busiest pedestrian-crossing in the world. It was hectic: hundreds of people crossing at the same time from every direction. At the crossing, I expected something much bigger, as the photos I had seen online suggested, so, at first, I felt slightly underwhelmed (I forgot to take photos and videos the first time because I did not realise we were walking across it). Even so, stepping into the surge of people moving in every direction was still an exciting experience. I liked visiting, by extreme contrast, a serene temple, where we tried Japanese 御み籤 (omikuji or “fortune telling”) which are fortune slips commonly found at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. I got a “small blessing,” which I think is better than a curse.



At Tokyo Sky Tree

For many of us, the exchange was a genuinely eye-opening experience. Cheryl Chimwanda described how the trip connected with an interest in Japanese language and culture, saying, *“When the opportunity arose for me to learn and socialise with other who spoke Japanese, it felt refreshing.”* She also highlighted how welcoming the boarding houses were, explaining that *“the boarding houses were really homely, with activities ranging from origami and bracelet making to board games.”* For her, one of the most memorable moments came outside school, as *“the smiles we got from locals when we spoke Japanese made me feel like I belonged, rather than feeling like a visitor.”* Isabel Strain praised the RSJ students, saying that they were *“so kind and welcoming, and really let us slot into their normal life,”* whether that was sitting together at meals, attending lessons, or *“playing Mario Kart in the evenings.”*

One thing I really admired about Rugby School Japan was how practical everything is. Outside every building, there are communal umbrellas that anyone could borrow when it rained and then you later put them back for others to use. Considering how often we end up completely soaked after sudden downpours in the UK, this felt like a genuinely useful idea rather than just a nice extra.

I also liked how modern and well-designed the school spaces were. While I know Rugby School UK rightly prioritises and preserves its history and historic buildings, it was interesting to see how RSJ combines modern design with practical learning spaces. Everything felt calm, organised, and purposeful, which made it an effective environment to work in. Another thing that stood out was how respectful students were during lessons and around school. This felt quite different from the UK, where classrooms are often more traditional and less flexible in lay-out. For example, students in RSJ consistently waited their turn to speak instead of speaking over each other, and moved quietly between lessons, which created a noticeably more attractively serene and focused atmosphere.

If we could bring back even a few of these Rugby School Japan ideas, feelings, and moods – shared responsibility, thoughtful design, and a calm approach to school life – I think they would make a positive difference at Rugby School UK.

SKY BLUE DREAMING

CIARA HAGGARTY, MS. SCANLON, MYSTERY SUPPORTER

All over the West Midlands champagne corks are popping as Coventry celebrate their long-in-the-waiting return to the Premier League. But how does it feel to be an actual Coventry fan right now? *Quod* opens its pages to the excited revelations of three Rugby School Coventry fans: Ciara Haggarty, Head Tennis Coach; Mrs Jo Scanlon, English teacher; and a Mystery Guest.

Ciara Haggarty

I became a Coventry fan the moment I was born!

We are a huge Sky Blue family who have supported the club through every high and every low over many years. My parents, grandparents and cousins were at the legendary FA Cup Final 3-2 win against Tottenham in 1987. Some of the family were sat with the Spurs fans as they only got tickets the night before the game. Their ticket was just £25, which included a padded seat and provided a great view of all the Coventry fans. My family even got away with celebrating all three of Coventry's goals without being kicked out the stadium!



Ciara at the 1987 Cup Final with her family

My family have always been season ticket holders throughout the years. I had my first season ticket back in Highfield Road at the age of 7. I saw many a famous player in Sky Blue at this stadium when we were in the Premier League, the likes of Darren Huckerby, Dion Dublin and Mo Konjic being the favourites. My best memory at Highfield Road comes from the last ever home game, a huge 6-2 win against Derby, and, at the final whistle, every single fan inside the stadium were on the pitch with the

players. We even – get this – tasted some of the grass so we could always have a piece of Highfield Road! It was very emotional after 125 years there.

We've had many ups and downs since moving to the newly named Coventry Building Society Arena, recently making the FA cup semi-final in 2024 where we narrowly lost to Manchester United. The year before, we lost on penalties in the play-off final against Luton Town: it mattered so much I flew back from Dubai to ensure I was there!

Now, finally, after 25 years, we have made it back into the Premier League after one of the most incredible seasons you could witness as a Coventry fan. One of the best moments this season was the 7-1 home win against QPR on the same day it was announced that we finally owned the ground. Another one was, after a nervous Christmas period and losing a 10-point lead at the top of the league, we won 4-2 at home to Middlesbrough, who had taken the top spot from us ... which we never then lost.



A young Ciara

Of course, confirmation of Premier League football, through the 1-1 draw away at Blackburn, was unmissable: over 7,000 Coventry fans were there to see an 85th minute equaliser to secure Premier League status. The scenes were wild, the noise was incredible, and the tears were flowing.

It gets better. After 25 years of being at the Coventry Building Society Arena, this year we were finally able to call it our own stadium, which tops off a sensational season. The stadium is at full capacity nearly every game, so we've gone from League One football, with only 9000 fans, to champions of the Championship with the 32,000-seater stadium full in a sea of sky blue.

When Frank Lampard was appointed, there were very mixed reviews. Losing a Coventry legend in Mark Robbins, who brought us back from the brink so many times, was a shock to many fans. But Super Frank has proved exactly why he was appointed and thoroughly has the backing of all the fans. The

football we play under Frank Lampard is something we have never seen before, pure class: calmness on the ball, attacking, and always in control. We were top of the league from game one, lost the position for one game in December, and then remained in pole position for the remainder of the season. To secure Premier League status after 25 years away with 4 games left of the season to play just shows that Frank Lampard is the guy and was the right appointment 18 months ago.

Roll on next season!

WE ARE PREMIER LEAGUE!

SKY BLUE ARMY!

SUPER FRANKIE LAMPARD!

Ms. Jo Scanlon

Growing up in Coventry, there was not a great deal to celebrate.

But that all changed in 1987, the year Coventry City won the FA Cup. Part of the fun was the build-up. I can still remember all of the lyrics to 'Go For It, City', the dubious song the team released to commemorate reaching the final, and which, at All Souls Primary School, we screamed daily in the playground.

I watched the match at my friend Katie's house. I remember being hoarse the next day – so vociferous were we. Goal celebrations were so intense that, when my favourite player, Cyrille Regis, scored, it was a full ten minutes before we realised his goal had actually been disallowed. After the final whistle, faces adorned with woad, or possibly just blue eye-shadow, we paraded round the neighbourhood in our choicest sky-blue clothes. It was euphoric on the streets: car horns honking, kids whooping, strangers hugging.



A happy Coventry canine

And then, a few days later, we headed into the town centre to watch the victory bus parade through the streets. The highlight for me was that Cyrille Regis' nice wife, Beverley, waved at me.

It was downhill all the way after that. Every year we were stuck in the relegation-zone, and there was often a last-gasp reprieve on the final day of the season. Until 2001, when there wasn't. As if that wasn't enough, the club went bankrupt, lost its home ground, and, at one point, sank to the lowly depths of League Two. The home-made 'We'll be back sign' held up by a disconsolate fan at Villa Park in 2001 seemed laughably hopeful.

Yet, phoenix-like once again, Coventry showed resilience, belief and optimism. That sign has been re-worked, and now it reads 'We are back'. Thousands upon thousands of fans held the new sign aloft at the last home game of the season when Coventry were presented with the championship trophy. And that same sign adorned the front of the victory bus as it paraded through Coventry on 4th May.

And I was there once again, to wave at a bus full of players and support staff who had united my city and restored some pride to it, reminding me that, despite the lapse of almost 39 years, I'm still a proud Cov Kid at heart. PUSB.



The celebratory parade

Mystery Supporter

Dr Morse, School House Housemaster (2003-13), Chemistry teacher (1986-2024), and Cotton tutor (2013 - present), is a die-hard Coventry City fan.



A delighted Dr. Morse

Or is he?

The confusion centres around secret documents stored in the vaults of School House, which are known by the *cognoscenti* in School House as 'The Fasti'. Started in the mid C16th when Lawrence Sheriff founded the School, they document notable termly goings-on inside the House, such as winning a sports competition, or a XX student winning a place at Oxford, or an E Blocker going two weeks without collecting a minor.

The Fasti had lapsed into a certain desuetude until a certain Will Manners (2011-17), School House Rugby School loyalist and School House ultra, resurrected them with zealous care and rigour, and, retrospectively, updated recent events. He was fascinated to discover a hitherto

unknown connection between Dr Morse and Coventry City. Shaking the dust off forgotten manuscripts, his careful detective work revealed the following.

- It seems that Dr Morse, a keen chorister, was partly drawn towards supporting the club because of Coventry F.C.'s initial name when founded in 1883, 'The Singers'.
- Boyhood enthusiasm had been sparked by Coventry's 1960 victory in The Southern Professional Floodlit Cup.
- A musty, faded receipt for a several crates of *Chateau Meaume*, dated Saturday 16th May 1987, the day of Coventry's epic underdog 3-2 F A Cup



Super Frank joy

Final victory against a much-fancied Spurs side, including 50 goals in the season Clive Allen, courtesy of a brilliant diving header by the impossibly elongated Keith Houchen.

- Several flour-specked recipes for cakes from 2001 onwards, a seismic date in the annals of Coventry City history as this marked the end of 34 years of continuous presence in the top - flight. It seems that, over the last 25 years, baking tasty lemon drizzle cakes and delicious Victoria Sponge cakes has provided emotional comfort and distraction after disappointing 0-0 away draws at Doncaster Rovers and desolate 3-0 home defeats at the hands of Hartlepool.

Doubters might point to the unlikelihood of someone born in Gloucestershire and brought up in Somerset supporting a team in the West Midlands, but when – ask a Manchester Utd fan – has geography ever related to committed support? Some might assert that badminton was Dr Morse's avowed sport (master-in-charge of badminton 2009-19), but, of course, passion for one sport does not preclude passion for another.

Approached for comment, Will Manners, loyal to the last, refused to divulge the contents of secret School House Records. The present keeper-of-the-flame of The School House Fasti, the famously discreet E Blocker, Johnny Lu, remains tight-lipped. The School Archivist, Ms. Jenny Hunt, is unable to help because of the tight control the present School House housemaster, Mr Louis Callan, exercises over access to the underground vaults. Dr Morse, the figure at the centre of this secret drama, is unable to elucidate, being presently away from School on a tour of vineyards in Bordeaux.

The mystery remains.

REQUIEM

CECI FLINN

Grief is a dead mackerel
& the sea is colder than you expected.

The lilac air of dawn is a fragile egg
& the rocks are kelped & slick
& scratch the arch of your foot

and you cannot swim past it.

The sand speaks of rot
felt on the edge of your gut
quite like the salt air,
quite like the rockweed & foam,
something strange & heavy on the breeze

and you cannot swim past it.

Part the water with the tips of your fingers,
baptise your forearms elbows & chest
up to your neck in the sunless deep,
breathe that darker stench strongest now.

Grief is a bloated mackerel
rotting just below the surface
eyes clouded & grey gold,
armoured scales flaking to the sea floor
mouth puckered & dumb
& you try-
but you can't swim past it
You cannot swim past it.

This poem is purposefully weird and a little uncomfortable to read.

It captures the feeling of lingering grief, walking along the shore at dawn. It is beautiful because the sea is always beautiful, but at the same time there is this disillusionment, the sea is cold and the rocks hurt your feet; decay hangs in the air. Something just feels off. You still go for a swim, still embrace the cold, breaststroke with your face a little out of the water, and...



Aquatic theme – a shark Ceci made earlier this year

come nose to nose with a rotten fish. Gross! I wanted to create a sense of revulsion, a realisation that this is the cause - this fish is the reason for the smell, the feeling of dread, the rocks.

Throughout the poem, you are trapped by this fish, and you can't get past it - you can't get past your grief.

I wanted to create a poem that acknowledges the difficulty of life when grieving.

I wrote 'Requiem' for the Mozart's Requiem event (inventive naming on my behalf) in a creative writing session led by Ms. Scott-Martin. The requiem itself is about grief and was Mozart's last composition. My poem was inspired by the poem "Grief" by Matthew Dickman, which moves away from traditional depictions of grief and instead personifies the emotion into a purple gorilla, something surreal but familiar in the speaker's life. The absurd depiction of grief as an object feels more relatable because it is more open to interpretation, instead of a single emotion. I wanted to find an unconventional animal to be my metaphor, so I thought of the foulest thing I would not want to encounter: a rotten fish.

I really enjoyed performing the poem live during the Mozart's Requiem event, and, as I read it, a group of Rugby's dancers performed a dance routine inspired by the poem, which was amazing! Writing this poem was challenging because it is such a personal topic and I wanted to do it justice and convey grief in an accessible way, whilst also being aware that everyone's experience of grief will be different.

Creativity has always been central in my life. Since joining Rugby in LXX, I have had the privilege to attend Ms. Scott-Martin's creative writing sessions weekly, run Rugby 360 creative writing workshops with primary school students, go on the Arvon trip, submit my writing to various competitions, as well as receive workshops from last year's Poet-in-Residence, Arji Manuelpillai, and have this year's Poet-in-Residence, the fantastic Laurie Bolger, give me valuable guidance. Next academic year, I will have the honour of being Rugby's Poet Laureate: I am really looking forward to getting more involved within the community and encouraging more people to get into creative writing. I love the freedom of writing and how you can convey any emotion, idea, or experience.



ALICE IN WONDERLAND F BLOCK CREATIVE WRITING 1st PRIZE

THOMAS GREANY

One Tuesday, period 4, Mr. Robinson had developed a bad case of flu, which incidentally rather pleased the class as they had recently been bored stiff while learning about the subgroup of viruses that the disease belonged to, and so B1 was full of good cheer while waiting for the cover teacher to arrive, particularly from one member of the class called Thomas, who had recently received no less than four consecutive telling-offs, two of which had resulted in impositions, at the hands of the teacher in question.



However, fifteen minutes later there was still no sign of a teacher. Then, suddenly, a neglected teapot left on the desk uttered a very muffled and still more indignant, “I wasn’t sleeping!”.

“That’s strange”, thought Thomas, “I’ve seen a mouse without a shout but never heard of a shout without a mouse. Or doesn’t that make sense?” Of course, to you or me it certainly doesn’t, but it seemed like a perfectly logical question at the time. Just when he had concluded that it made total sense, and then rapidly changed his mind and decided he had gone absolutely mad, when the lid of the teapot flew up with a sharp ‘pop’ and the head of an *extremely large* mouse came up over the rim. “A dormouse, in fact,” he thought. “But how do I know that, and what on earth made me think of a mouse in the first place?”

“Why didn’t anyone wake... I mean, why didn’t anyone... Well never mind all that now. Why haven’t you started yet? Hurry up! Get out your books this instant and be ready to take notes.” No-one but Thomas seemed the least bit surprised at this strange cover teacher. “First,” said the dormouse “First, we shall discuss Physics.”

“But sir,” said Thomas, “This is Biology, isn’t it?”

“That is neither here nor there, nor anywhere for that matter, though somewhere it may be here for there and there you may find it anywhere. So, now that we have dealt with *that* little interruption, we shall proceed. Let us begin with... yes, I think perhaps density. You, boy” (This was directed at Thomas; the dormouse made this clear by hopping over to his desk and staring at him with a finger levelled in his direction.) “If the treacle is drawn up in a bucket, and rises through the air in the well, then which is the denser? Well, come on then, answer me!”

“The treacle, Sir?” he said.

“No, no, no, you stupid boy! Why would the treacle be *rising* if it’s *denser*? You can’t have been listening to me! Some-one else had better explain to this silly boy. You, over there!”

“The bucket, Sir,” said Nancy Stevens, “because the treacle is floating on the top of the bottom of the bucket. Otherwise, the bottom of the bucket would float on the top of the treacle, of course.”



"Yes yes, very well done," said the dormouse.

"But that doesn't make sense!" exclaimed Thomas, "And anyway, this really is Biology."

"Of course it makes sense. But very well, we shall proceed to Chemistry."

"But.."

"Silence!" shouted the dormouse. "Since you think you are so clever, then, answer me this: If three little sisters lived in the well in the above question, then what chemical broke down the treacle?"

"Broke it down Sir?" queried Thomas. "What did they do that for?"

"Stupid boy! Can someone else answer me? Yes, you, Miss Stevens."

"Tea, Sir."

"Yes, precisely, well done, well done! Let's see now, yes, I think a dodecahedral RLP point to you."

"But that can't be right!" protested Thomas, "And even if it is, then why are they breaking it down?"

"They're eating it of course," replied the Mouse. "What else?"

"They live off *treacle*?" asked Thomas. "They must get terribly ill."

"Yes, indeed," said the dormouse, "Very, very ill. In many ways. Diseases, disorders, ailments, afflictions, maladies, manias, bugs, bacteriomes, conditions, complications, complexes, contractions, viruses..."

"...Viruses?!"

"Sorry?" said Thomas.

"I *said*," said Mr. Robinson, with infinite menace in his voice "What is the characteristic component of those cells, such as Influenza's A and B, that belong to the subgroup Orthomyxoviridae, which enables them to be such effective and deadly viruses?"

"Treacle, Sir?" Thomas replied, tentatively.

"*Treacle? Treacle?!*" roared Mr. Robinson "That has just earned you your third imposition this week, Mr. Greany, for sheer impertinence and failure to grasp even the simplest ideas, and as such I will expect you in detention this Saturday!"

QUOD 10 QUESTIONS

MISS GREATWOOD

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

I went to Moreton Hall in Shropshire and I LOVED it! I was a keen lacrosse player so winning the National Championships was a great day, but also I just loved all the silly fun and games that you get up to with your friends at a boarding school.

- (2) Looking back, can you identify when and how you felt a passion for Biology/Religious Studies?

My favourite teacher at school was Mr Hartley who taught me Chemistry. It was my favourite subject at school as I found it easy, but much of that was because he explained all the concepts really well. Also, who does not love doing crazy experiments? Also, I did really enjoy Biology, which was more interesting, in fact, but it was harder as there is a lot to learn. I went to Durham to do Natural Sciences and did 3 modules of chemistry and 2 of Biology but switched in my second year to Molecular Biology and Biochemistry as I enjoyed the Biochemistry modules more. There was a lot of Maths in the Chemistry, and, although I did Maths A level, it did not come easily.

I was not really interested in religious things until I was at university and my best friend was a Christian. The way she lived her life shaped by Jesus was really intriguing and it was there that I first started to investigate Christianity. I became a Christian in my 3rd year and have not looked back.

- (3) When you were a child, what job did you see yourself doing?

I remember drawing lots of princess dresses, but that is not really an occupation. I really did not know.

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

At the start of LXX, I wanted to be a doctor, but, when I did my work-experience, I fainted watching a blood test and hit the floor. I ended up in hospital for three days with severe concussion. I decided Medicine might not be the best path. My parents gave me excellent advice which was to pick something that I enjoyed and to study that, hence the Chemistry and then Molecular Biology and Biochemistry



(5) What is your favourite t.v. programme?

Got to be 'Traitors'. I have watched all series including the US, Australia, NZ and Ireland.

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

I went to see Michael Jackson with my sister at Cardiff Arms Park in the Black and White tour. It was incredible. A more recent blast from the past was the Pet Shop Boys in Aberdeen - I was a huge fan as a teenager.

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

A previous Assistant Chaplain, Susu Cook, was a friend of mine and she emailed me on the Monday to say that I should apply for the Assistant Chaplain job. She also asked Mr Horner to email me as well. I was in the middle of putting an application in for Headington School, but the Rugby job came up first so I wrote the application on Tuesday and sent it in on Wednesday. On the Thursday, Rugby emailed to ask me to interview, so I came up on the Sunday, had my interview on the Monday, and was offered the job that day. Quite a whirlwind week!



(8) What is your favourite country in the world, and why?

At Easter, I went to visit New Zealand again and it really is stunning. Also, the people have such a can-do attitude. I would definitely live there if it were not so far away.

(9) What was your favourite childhood holiday?

Ever since I was born, I have been going down to Cornwall. Even when it rains - and it does a lot - we sail, windsurf, go on long walks along the beach and surf. In fact, some of the Girls' Hms went down for a short break all together at Easter. I love Rick Stein's St Petroc in Padstow.

(10) Do you have a hidden talent?

I have been making quilted bedspreads for my godchildren. I am now on number 7.

After working at Rugby School for 21 years, and being Housemistress of Griffin for four years, Miss Greatwood is leaving to work for a Christian Charity where she will be roving Chaplain visiting different schools.



What's Hot?

"fellas that are in the mood", 'Vogue', Madonna

Frank Lampard

Ruin

zipping along

Henry Askin, LXX Cottonian, applying to join the UK Winter Olympics bobsleigh team with no previous experience and dubious correlation to entry criteria.



What's Not?

D Block Friday period 7

too frank with prep excuse

Restore

desultory drift

rationality





Hope you enjoyed that!

Editor: Dr Sutcliffe

Lay-out: Freddie Bennett; Abigail Chan; and thanks to Ava Mousley, Harnek Sahota, Issy Balfour, Alice Trotter

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