



ROUNDWOOD PARK ALUMNI Newsletter 31: September 2020

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Regular request

PLEASE forward this newsletter to ex-Roundwood friends and encourage them to make contact to be added to our mailing list.

PLEASE inform us with your correct/preferred contact details.

Changing jobs often means a change in email address. Please email us or use the link to update details. <http://www.roundwoodpark.co.uk/alumni-registration-form/>

Editorial comment

We all find ourselves in very troubled times and, understandably, increasingly anxious about livelihoods and personal health of loved ones and friends.

We hope that all our alumni and families will be able to come through this difficult time as we search for 'light' at the end of this 'dark tunnel'..

Following the spread of the Covid-19 and resultant 'lockdown /restrictions' there has been far less to report other than the school has endeavoured and been efficient, cautious and run a reduced service for students of key workers and some of Y10 and 12. The 'virus' continues to impact greatly on all of us. Other countries have reacted differently and similarly to the UK and I am delighted to report back from those alumni that wrote in with their experiences from across the globe.



1. In **British Columbia** we are very lucky to have Dr Bonnie Henry as our chief medical officer, she has done a fantastic job. Locking us down earlier and providing daily briefings on the situation. On Vancouver Island the statistics for the first wave are incredible with 190 infections and 5 deaths in a population of approximately 1 million. We are now seeing higher infections in the 2nd wave, mostly driven by the 20-40 age group, but with a lower death rate. As a retired couple living on our own we have not been affected by the tight lock down restrictions, especially as grocery stores responded with new home delivery. The hardest restriction was not being able to see family and grandchildren, Zoom just does not cut it. We just had our first visit in 5 months which was glorious.

John P.

2. Living and working in **Thailand** kept my family and I relatively safe from the risk of contagion during the height of the COVID epidemic. The government here was relatively quick in implementing measures that effectively minimised the spread of the virus. Schools were closed, inter-provincial travel was restricted and international flights were cancelled. I personally spent 3 1/2 months working from home, during which time my daughter and wife remained at home with me. Face masks became mandatory and beaches, parks, restaurants and other high-risk venues closed. For part of this period, a nationwide curfew was implemented between the hours of 2200hrs and 0500hrs to deter the populace from holding social gatherings and even alcohol sales were completely banned for a short, but painful period. We only socialised with close friends that we knew were not attending large social gatherings with other people in our area. We created a kind of mini-bubble and took it in turns to host barbecues and meals until that too became illegal. It wasn't a particularly tough time for us, as living in the rural part of Chonburi gave us the benefit of open spaces, the use of our swimming pools and a warm climate to enjoy whilst working at the garden table, and importantly, we came through it unscathed and armed with an extensive array of new recipes.

Jeremy S

3. Here in **Sweden** the major corvid outbreaks have really been confined to the larger towns and cities which, given the population density in those locations, is logical. Compared to the UK, Sweden is otherwise sparsely populated which is an advantage in situations such as this. Families here tend to live separately unlike e.g. Italy where several generations can live together and this also has been an advantage. My wife and I live by ourselves on a fairly isolated farm, our nearest neighbour is about 300yards away. We are only ten minutes from the nearest town by car but I can walk our dogs for hours round various forest trails here on our doorstep and never meet a soul. Living in such a location thus makes it easy to maintain social distancing and we tend to make our weekly shopping run at a time when the supermarket is devoid of patrons. When we shop we wear surgical gloves. Our family gatherings (we have three children and four grandchildren) have been corvid adapted by us always being out of doors and also remaining the required distance from one another. As you may imagine the sacrifices we have had to make in deference to the corvid virus are, for us, almost negligible compared to city dwellers in high rise apartment buildings. I have been active at the local canine club and this, as well as singing in a local choir, are the only hobbies I have curtailed for the duration. Our greatest concern has been for my 92 year old mother in law who lives by herself in a town apartment. We have done her shopping and delivered it to her door. However, to ensure that her medicines are in order my wife dons mask and gloves to go into her apartment. So far, none in our family seem to have contracted the virus: This I must qualify by saying - as far as we know - because there are reports of those who have had it without noticeable symptoms. On other necessary visits to town to run errands, we are careful and we always have hand gel with us. Our lock down has not been as rigorous as in the UK and this also I see as logical because of the difference in population densities.

All in all, the corvid crisis has for Sweden had significant consequences for townsfolk and much less so for those who, like ourselves, live out in the countryside.

Harry C. B.

4. My wife and I decided this year was going to be the year we quit our jobs to travel the World together and after years/months of planning we took the plunge and left our house and said goodbye to friends and family to set off on March 1st 2020.

We had a one way flight to Russia (our trip had already been altered several times to avoid China) so Plan B saw us making our way through the Baltic countries happily until March 17th when Europe went into Lockdown.

We happened to cross the border from Latvia to Estonia on the day the borders closed and continued to Tallinn as planned. We decided to stay put for what we thought would be a few weeks (no point travelling back to the UK as no home/jobs/vulnerable parents).

Five months later we are still living in Estonia and have started our own Youtube channel and decided to document there everything that has happened to us during this crazy time and to show the world some positivity during this pandemic.

A National Estonian newspaper (Õhtuleht) heard about us and reached out asking if they could interview us about our experiences during Covid-19 living in Tallinn, Estonia.

Long story short, we ended up on the front cover of the newspaper and our channel went crazy with Estonians really appreciating our positivity and videos about Tallinn. We're so pleased we stayed and have seen things from another countries perspective whilst hearing so much from friends and family in both the UK and USA.

Life handed us lemons, we made lemonade! Hopefully the whole world can recover soon and we can all learn a few things to carry forward when it does.

Craig S.

5. We are presently away in Navarra, lovely countryside, north of **Spain**. Basically we went to Javea, 14th March. I have been using a small room at the back of the house during months of strict Lockdown. Classes with two companies kept me busy till end of July. Working from my "bunker" using zoom, slack and WhatsApp platforms to communicate. I even completed a 4 week training class on "how to deliver online classes" in one week - listening to the videos at 2x speed - an online course of course. Lockdown was much stricter in Spain than UK. Not even allowed out for an hour of exercise during lockdown. People were going to the supermarket, round trip as an excuse to get out of the house (needed receipt from the supermarket, so bought a bar of chocolate etc...) Dog walkers were allowed out so some were renting their dogs out to friends and family...apparently.

David and Rosa

6. Here in the **US**, life is still very restricted due to COVID-19. I am thankful to live in Illinois where our mayor & governor have taken the situation seriously and we reopened slowly so are now being able to enjoy the summer to some extent with bars, restaurants and parks open with limited capacities but our beaches remain closed. Masks have been mandatory here in shops since lockdown started and this continues to be the case.

Working in the hospitality industry during this time has not been fun but I have been lucky to still have my job and have worked throughout albeit on reduced salary / hours. This situation is in place until the end of the year at least and while no permanent cuts have been made yet, we have been advised to expect it. In the meantime, I have submitted my green card application. This has been done with much more documentation required than usual as the embassies remain closed so the process is more stringent currently. I got married here in Chicago last year to an American so this will hopefully help my case! Note, I didn't marry him for the green card, we've been together for 5 years now.

I will have been in Chicago for 6 years in October of this year and it is definitely home now. I'm hoping I'll be able to get back to the UK see my Mum before the year is out!

Jane H.

7. **New Zealand** has been quite fortunate from a Covid related perspective – lucky to be isolated at the bottom of the world, having a small population over a large land mass and relatively quick to “shut the country down” for 5 weeks of level 4 isolation has resulted in a disease free environment to date (aside from quarantined infected expats returning home – lax quarantine security procedures of said individuals now addressed apparently after several selfish morons “escaped” from their mandatory 2 week hotel lockdown to go shopping etc Only luck that these infected individuals didn't infect the general population. A few other incidents of numbskullery included allowing untested expats to travel to funerals before being tested for Covid only to find they had the disease – again only luck that nobody in the general population was infected – no more of that following the outpour of outrage once the media reported it). Economically, the price to pay will come after the September election when the Government Covid related unemployment subsidies cease. Unemployment figures will jump. Tourism is a large percentage of NZ's GDP and businesses reliant on offshore visitors have been affected greatly with the borders closed and likely to remain closed for the foreseeable future until a viable vaccine is produced. Mortgage repayment holidays from banks are now ceasing and non-tourism NZ businesses are using Covid as an excuse to restructure (down sizing). I found the 5 week initial Lockdown itself in NZ quite pleasant! Very fortunate to be in “an essential service”, we logged into works systems remotely from home and continued to operate as normal using Zoom for online meetings etc Weather was great too which was a bonus given that travel restrictions were imposed.

Tom B.

Many thanks to all those that wrote in and apologies for any that we received after publication.

Staff changes

Mr. Dean Inns (2012 -20). Network Manager – Moved to Katherine Warrington School (joining ex-RPS Deputy Head Tony Smith, who is now the Head Master) as Network Manager and Business Manager.

Mrs Jackie Hammond (2019-20), Employment Events coordinator is moving back home to Liverpool.

Mr Mark Jones (2016-20). Computer Science teacher.

Dr Giovanna Belghitar (2015-20). Maths teacher.

Mr Bob James (2016-20). Economics teacher – retired.

Mr Martin Pavet (2019?-20). Art & Technology teacher.

Mr Alex Gomm (2017-20). **Alumnus and member of the Premises team -new position at Anglia Water.**

Miss Lucy Moxham (2019-20). Helped in Learning Support now taking up training as Geography teacher (Mrs P Moxham's daughter).

Mrs Mel Lennon (2017-20). Inclusion Dept. deputy – now taking up position in the Police.

STOP PRESS

Alumni **Brian Love** and **Liam Jeffries** both seen regularly(!) at Harpenden Cycles during the recent upsurge in cycling!

Alumnus **Bilal Skoien** (2010) is alive and retains his upbeat and positive self whilst working in the financial market.

Alumnus **Dean Smith** remains busy and active in his local long standing window cleaning business.

Alumna **Kath (Tyers) Barker** (1985). Cheerful as ever and en route to Italy for a break.

Mrs Zena Tyers, taught Cookery in the 80s.



CONTACT – Your news and views are greatly appreciated. Please email us with a synopsis of what you would like to appear along with a photo (linkedin?) Please email b.smith@roundwoodpark.co.

Ed. *BMLS*