



ROUNDWOOD PARK ALUMNI Newsletter 44: December 2023

www.roundwoodpark.co.uk/alumni



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

Editorial comment – Under new management from January 2024.

A new management team will now take over the running of the Alumni Association

. Dr Brian Smith, teacher of science and chemistry (1981-2011) and Alumni Association founder (2008), manager and newsletter editor will no longer be involved.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

1988

Matthew (Williams) Adar (1988) writes...



From earlier years we reported in the Alumni newsletter that I have been living in Israel and working as senior

management in the Hospitality Industry in the city of Eilat.

Well that was true until COVID hit the Industry with paralyzing results, I thus by complete chance changed Industries and have been working for the last 2 years as Project manager at a civil engineering company.

Very different from Hotels, but a challenge and a learning experience.

YOUR NEWS from around the world?

*In the past the Newsletter has featured an 'alumni of the month' to showcase the range of career **direction and locations that our alumni have pursued since leaving us.***

We would be delighted to hear from any of alumni that would like to feature in the next or future editions of these alumni newsletters.

Previous 'alumni of the month can be viewed on past Newsletters on the alumni site.

Do you have a story to tell? - The class of '78!

On a typically cold and wet Autumn evening in Harpenden, 7 intrepid members of the "Leavers of 78" met in the Harpenden Arms for a reunion, no less than 45 years after leaving our beloved Roundwood Park School. The weather did nothing to tempt John Tasho, who now lives in Sydney, Mike Huggan, who spends his days sailing around Greece, or Mike Graham, now living on the west coast of USA, to consider coming back to Blighty permanently. Not a chance. The group was joined by Gavin Wright, who lives in Surrey, Paul Watkinson, down from Oxfordshire, Tony Doyle who made the trip down from the other end of Station Road in Harpenden, and me, Nick Bishop living in Oxshott Surrey,

We were also joined on WhatsApp video by Chris Smith who was sunning himself in Javea, Spain, and an apology from Ian Lynch, living in Hitchin but stranded at the time in Birmingham. There was much affectionate discussion around our teachers at the time, most notably Jack Passmore, Roy Patterson, Mike Hoppe, Mrs Clubley, Mr Field, Mr Evans and Mr Foxwell.

We then went for our customary curry at the New Taj Mahal in Station Road where Kimberley (Mike Graham's wife) and Alison (Gavin's wife) joined us to make sure the banter remained clean and gentlemanly-like, although it didn't work. Never does. Here's to the next 45 years!



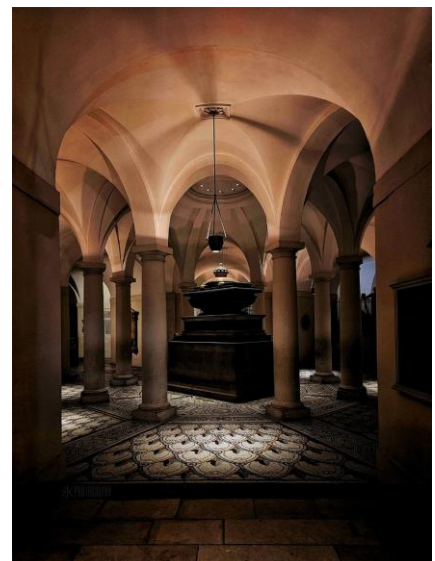
Anyone who still recognises us, and would like to either communicate, or join us at a future event, please get in touch with Dr Brian Smith b.smith@roundwoodpark.co.uk
Photo left to right, Tony Doyle, Gavin Wright, Mike Huggan, John Tasho, Paul Watkinson, Nick Bishop, Mike Graham.

Thanks to Nick Bishop (class of 1978) for text and photo.

CONGRATULATIONS – Lucy Barrett (2009)

Just wanted to let you know I had some good news this weekend - my photograph 'Burial Bash' has been shortlisted for the British Photography Awards 2023 (Architecture category). If you would like to check it out and maybe vote for the People's Choice Award, this is the link:

The crypt in St Paul's Cathedral. The Nelson Chamber - surrounding the tomb of Admiral Lord



Nelson - is often used as a space for entertaining, events or functions, and is able to hold over 200 guests.

<https://www.britishphotographyawards.org/2023-shortlist/architecture/burial-bash/c69b5691-206e-404d-808c-84cf0326c851>

Natasha 'hangs up her boots'!



Natasha Dowie (2006). After a life as a successful professional footballer, this former England international and Liverpool FC Women's all-time top goal scorer and 'journeyman' playing for clubs across the globe has decided to call time on her stellar career in the professional game, which spanned nearly two decades.

While she may be hanging up her boots, Dowie will now become an ambassador for the Liverpool Women's team - a role newly created to work with the girls' ProGame Academy, boys' Academy and the LFC Foundation girls' programs among other roles.

The STAFF INTERVIEW

Jenny Durdey

(September 2001 - July 2023)

Head of Art



1. **Did you study Art at College/University and why that subject in particular?**

The BA degree I followed was a combined studies course covering Textiles, Wood, Ceramics and Metal. I had always loved art and making things and was interested in a career in theatre costume or set design.

2. **Do you have any fond memories of your time in H.E.?**

It was expected in those days to do a one-year Art Foundation course before an art degree. This course gave me a very good grounding in drawing as well as a strict work ethic. We were expected to always have our sketchbooks with us and constantly record what we saw around us. Criticism was dished out very readily in a Craig Revel-Horwood fashion; the course leader thought nothing of ripping work up if he didn't like it. Thankfully things have changed.

One of the best things about going to art college was being surrounded by creative people, not just those on my course but all the other arts and performing arts students. It was a time to grow up and make lifelong friendships. The course was very much about experimenting with the media and developing a creative thought process.

3. **What made you go into teaching?**

I avoided the teaching profession for 3 years, rejecting parental pressure to follow in their footsteps. During this time, I continued with my own art practice, worked in a museum and had a community arts job. The museum job was really interesting; as well as being a museum guide, we were creating an exhibition of cottage interiors in 4 different period styles. This involved going to derelict houses in and around Liverpool to find items such as old fireplaces, furniture, light fittings and so on. I recently revisited this museum and the cottages are still on show. The community arts job involved teaching art and movement to people of all ages and abilities including a 3-year-old girl who was allergic to sunlight and residents of an old people's home. At this time, I was also coaching trampolining and it was probably all these experiences that led me to do a PGCE art teachers' qualification in Cardiff.

Learning about the artistic development of children was fascinating and being amongst lots of trainee art teachers gave plenty of opportunity for shared practice.

4. **Have you ever considered or undertaken another career path?**

In the 6th form, I did briefly consider doing Geography at university and made my applications but really my passion was always for art.

5. **Why did you choose Roundwood Park School and have you ever worked in another school?**

My first job after qualifying, took me to Stevenage. The job sounded great; the arts, including dance, were considered a really important part of the curriculum. As well as teaching art, I was given some CDT (technology) and textiles teaching and there was a strong gymnastics club, so I could continue trampolining coaching. However, it was a challenging start to my career; certainly, a baptism of fire.

After working in a few other Hertfordshire schools, I wanted to lead my own department so when the Head of Art job at Roundwood Park came up, I had to apply. I already knew some of the staff, the lovely Connor Geraghty being one, so I had some insight into what the school was like. As a result, I was more than happy when I was offered the post.

6. **What aspects of your job at RPS do you especially enjoy and if you have to pick one thing that you most enjoyed what would it have been?**

Obviously, the teaching is the best bit of the job. Of all the art processes I have taught, I particularly love teaching Lino-printing. It is so magical to see the results as they come off the printing press. I also love teaching oil painting; it is such a versatile medium. Being creative with all the different media and processes is such a joy. Other highlights are the whole day workshops I organised with visiting artists and the house art competitions. Students achieve so much more with extended time in the studio.

7. **Do you have (m)any moments that stand out that you are willing to share about your experiences at RPS?**

After 22 years, there really are so many memories and experiences I wouldn't want to pick one out.

8. **What form/type of art work pleases you most and do you paint/draw or undertake any of these in your leisure time?**

I enjoy a wide variety of art, there is so much to appreciate and learn from different styles and art forms. One of my favourite paintings is a self portrait by Stanley Spencer. In contrast I also enjoy more abstract, expressive artwork. I love seeking out art galleries and museums when on holiday and thinking how I could incorporate what I see into my teaching.

Over the years, teaching left little time to do my own artwork, so now is the time to get back to it. For me, it was always the process of drawing, painting and making that I enjoyed rather than the end result.

9. **The school hall and foyer contain so many wonderful paintings – do you have any favourites?**

There is one piece of work that will always stand out for me and that is Alex Makhoul's painting of his grandmother. Whilst we are all impressed by the photographic quality of this painting, to me it has more than this. There is a beauty in the expression and emotion conveyed which I don't tire of looking at.

10. **You have regularly organised students' art exhibitions in school. Have you also organised trips out to galleries etc?**

School trips are a highlight for students and teachers, creating many memories. The residential art trips I organised went to Paris, New York, Amsterdam and Berlin. I also organised a lot of day trips to museums and galleries. I love giving students the opportunity to broaden their experience this way and enjoy it as I do. Arriving in New York the year they had a record snowfall in February was wonderful. The streets and tourist sites were so quiet, no queues for the Empire State building, we saw the plans and beginnings of Ground Zero and Central Park was magical in the snow; one of the students described it as looking like Narnia.

I was also lucky enough to go on lots of trips organised by others; ski trips, the French Chateau, South Wales to name a few and I loved these times.

11. **Would you consider doing art as a form of therapy?**

Art is definitely a form of therapy as many students will, I'm sure testify. I recently did an on-line life drawing class and it reminded me of the benefits of really focused observational drawing. It is almost like meditation. The practical, repetitive nature of some craft techniques can be really calming. I can't promote it enough.

12. **How do you feel you made an impact at RPS in any of your roles at RPS?**

I like to think that the school environment has been improved by displaying students' work wherever we could claim display space. A great deal of superb work was produced during my time there. I hope I made people, students and staff, recognise the value of art for everyone and its importance in society.

13. **What are your passions/hobbies or pursuits in your spare time?**

Dancing is my main pursuit these days. My partner Steve and I started ballroom dancing several years ago. Lots of lessons, exams and social dances in ballroom, Latin and more recently jiveswing dance has opened up a new life for us, making so many new friends. I also do two adult ballet classes a week; having done ballet during my teenage years and into my 20's it is great to be able to still do this later in life.

14. **After two decades of teaching Art at RPS what will you miss most and least once you have left?**

Of course, it is the students who I will miss; seeing their artistic development whether they are superb artists or those who really struggle. I miss the interaction with a

younger generation. I miss learning through the students and learning through the research I did to support the schemes of work. I miss being creative through others. I miss the chance to experiment with media and techniques using equipment and materials that were readily available in the department.

I miss the interaction with so many different people every day.

15. **When students look back on their time at RPS how would you like to be remembered?**

I hope I will be remembered for being a really good art teacher who was strict but fair and encouraged students to get the best out of themselves artistically. I hope I will be remembered for the extra time and kindness I gave to those students who needed it.

CONGRATULATIONS



Tim Chisnall (2011) and Diana Garzon were married in 2022 in Edinburgh.

Tim worked at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh where he gained an MRes in Food Science. He is now a Healthcare data analyst at the NEC.

ALUMNUS in the news!



The publicans of Harpenden's The Engineer have been recognised with an award due to their contribution to the site.

Harpenden-born Alumnus Pete Mann and St Albans' Mike Fisher were given the award by Star Pubs & Bars - who own the premises - having run the location since 2002.

Having drunk his first pint at the pub, Pete was 23-years-old and a regular at The Engineer when he and Mike took it on.



Pete receiving the award from Dan Hayward of Star Pubs & Bars. (Image: Star Pubs & Bars)

The pub is believed to have been built in 1865, and is said to have been called 'The Bird in Hand' but become known as The Engineer after the nearby railway from London to

Bedford Pete commented: "I've known the Engineer all my life – it's a lovely pub and was where I had my first pint with my friends as young man, so it's very special to me.

"I've worked in pubs since my early teens and, when The Engineer became available, I jumped at the chance to take it on with Mike and give it the new lease of life it needed to keep it thriving for the long-term."

Pete also spoke of the pub's continued success, and the reasons that the pair remain in charge. He added: "We never thought we'd be here this long and now can't envisage leaving.

r

Courtesy of the Herts Advertiser 15th November By Pearce Bates Live Reporter

Future star?

It looks like RPS has another sporting talent in its midst.

Future alumnus, Rhys Lawlor (Y9) has competed in the Junior boys at this year's Wimbledon and won a number of matches. You may have watched some of his matches on tv?

CAREERS NEWS

We are indebted you our alumni that make contact to offer their services with career guidance. Hester Moore (2015) is the latest to offer help in the Energy Sector.



For our last virtual careers insight evening of the academic year for 2022-2023, we were looking at STEM careers and had two alumni kindly volunteer their time to talk to us about their career paths. Angel Ashcroft talked about her experience, for the past 24 years, in the construction industry, both as a civil and structural engineer and also in the roles of design management and project management with key skills in the rail industry.

We also had Alessandro Algar, 2018 alumnus, talk to us about his degree in Aerospace Engineering with Space Technology at the University of Hertfordshire and how he has

joined TUI's Level 7 Apprenticeship, Technology Development Graduate Programme. Alessandro's role is currently focused on software and Cloud while concurrently pursuing a part-time MSc in "Digital and Technology Solution Specialist – Software Engineering". This opportunity has revealed his true ambition to apply evolving digital technology in the aerospace industry by supporting aviation's journey towards a more efficient and sustainable future.

We would like to thank Angel and Alessandro for all their time, support and advice, it is greatly appreciated. If anyone would like to take part in our virtual career's insight evenings, please contact us at careers@roundwoodpark.co.uk

Other events that we have coming up this term are:

15th November - Y12 Future Options Day 1 - This day is looking at writing CV's and covering letters, ready for the mock interviews in January. We are looking for alumni from various different industries that can give advice to students on CV's/portfolios, etc. Please do contact us if you are able to volunteer to help with this event - careers@roundwoodpark.co.uk

Natalie Patel
Employer Liaison & Event Coordinator
e: n.patel@roundwoodpark.co.uk

Trampolining success continues

Mrs Pauline Moxham's guidance and encouragement with her trampolining sessions has reaped rewards again.

"The RPS trampolining squad competed at the Regional schools trampolining competition yesterday (19/11) with amazing success. 4 teams were Regional Champions
3 teams were in 2nd place
5 individuals were Regional champions
18 individuals and all 7 teams are through to represent the East region at the Zonal competition in Birmingham in January



"We took our biggest squad ever".



Letters to the Editor

1. **As ever, I love reading the Alumni Newsletter. My little ones always ask where I went to school, and why I didn't go to School in Birmingham or Solihull, so I thought it would be interesting to show them around my old stomping ground if possible. SM. Always a pleasure to renew acquaintances' and share memories.**
2. **I am out with my uncle David who went to Roundwood. He would like to receive alumni letter LJ. No problem! We are always keen to enlist and add to our growing number of alumni.**
3. **I'm moving back to the UK from Sydney. Was keen to come by the school at some point. Back next Monday, if you can accommodate a quick visit next week would be great to drop by and say hello. MG. Wonderful to hear but alas too slow to respond but responded to say we can try again!**
4. **Woohoo 🙌. I got my first mention in the Alumni newsletter! AB. First time for everything. Hopefully catch up sometime!**
5. "It was lovely to see you last week. Thank you for taking the time to show us around the school and for lunch. My only regret is that I did not visit sooner". SM. Always a pleasure to meet up after so many years.
6. **Thanks for getting back to me. I remember you, although you were never my teacher! I hope you're well. I'd love to be added to the mailing list for the newsletter and thank you for passing on my details in case there's any way I can help.HM. Always keen to contact alumni and thanks for your offer of help.**
7. Letter to the editor from Israel.MA. *Many thanks for this enlightened piece.*

Staff Leavers

Richard Frederick (July 2021 – Nov 2023) was a member of the Premises Team. He will be taking up a similar position at Icknield Primary school.

Jennie Hall (Mar 2004 - Dec 2023); Student support officer in the 6th form.

Sarah Hilliard (January 2017 – December 2023) was Careers advisor.

RPS VISITORS

Saad Mohammed (class of 2005)

Saad and Saba plus their three children visited the school on Wednesday 18th October.



Saad enjoyed his trip to the school and reliving old memories. Since reconnecting he has managed to track down a few of his chemistry class of 2005. The last social trip as a group in Harpenden and the famous benzene ring cake was made by Jenni Peterson (I think).

Saad and his family are soon to be moving to a far-off island where Saad will take up a new position and a new challenge.



ROUNDUP

For general school news about events and opportunities and achievements of pupils/students please go to the school website.

<https://roundwoodpark.co.uk/roundup-newsletters/>



STOP PRESS

Ed Sloley (2007) was seen filming/photographing his well known and eminent food writer / chef / mother at the St. Alban's Food Festival in September.

Rupa Shah (2007-14), former Biology teacher at RPS was also at the Food Festival with her little boy and husband. She moved to St. Albans High School for girls where she is now a House Mistress.

On a recent walk, we met Mrs Bills who reminded me of her three children that all attended Roundwood Park: **Michael Bills** (1995 or 97), Suzanne and Tiffany.

Similarly, **Kirst Briggs**, former teacher of English (2007-19) is alive and well and proud to report that her son **Joshua Briggs** (2022) is now in his second year at Oxford Studying Physics.

During a political newsletter drop, it was a pleasure to bump into **Rebecca Cash** (2009) and her husband and two small children.

And whilst waiting for flu/covid jabs I was delighted to meet up with **Veronique Czibarro** (1987-99) who informed me that she regular kept in contact with **Barbra Arnold** (1993-2001), **Eva Childerstone** (1989-99) and **Anne Pettit** (1990-95)



It is with great regret to report the tragic death of Victoria Greenwood (class of 2000) as reported in the local press in mid November.

Christmas Delivery



The usual Christmas Post

Office Letter Box covers (made by the editor's neighbour) will be on display in Harpenden and St Albans.

The Alumni newsletter format and mode of delivery will change next year in 2024

Data and contact details will remain within the RPS Admin team. Please contact admin@roundwoodpark.co.uk if you wish to be removed from the alumna database.



Thanks and best wishes to all our contributors and readers over the years. It has been an enormous privilege to have been involved in my many roles in this school and with all the wonderful students that I have had contact with.

B.M.L.S

(editor; 2008 – December 2023)