



The Birthday Edition



11 SEPTEMBER 1956

11 SEPTEMBER 2026

RPS TURNS 70!

A WORD FROM OUR HEAD



On 11th September 1956, Roundwood Park first opened its doors as a two-form entry, non-selective secondary school, operating out of just three original teaching blocks. Over the last seven decades, and as the local educational landscape changed, including the closure of secondary sites in neighbouring Redbourn and Wheathampstead, Roundwood Park continued to expand to meet the needs of our growing area. Our school has evolved into a vibrant, thriving community of over 1,400 students, including a Sixth Form of more than 400.

As the seventh Headteacher of RPS, I feel an immense sense of pride in leading our school community today. While our site, size, and facilities have transformed dramatically since 1956, our core objective remains the same and our school values continue to anchor everything we do:

Potential & Excellence: We remain committed to an ambitious, high-quality education that challenges every student to achieve their very best and develop a real love of learning

Inspiration: We strive to foster a creative and inspiring environment where students are excited to learn, grow, and express themselves.

Integrity & Kindness: We remain grounded in serving local young people with honesty, moral purpose, and care for the wellbeing of one another.

Community: We proudly celebrate our role as an inclusive school at the heart of our area, working in partnership with generations of local families.

We are delighted to be celebrating the school's outstanding achievements, and the generations of young people who have passed through our gates.

Diary of our first day

Tuesday 11 Sept 1956: The school opened at 08:50 with 189 on roll and an assistant staff of 9. The roll was divided into 6 classes, 3 in first year and 1 each in other years. Normal timetable was in operation at 10:30.

Life in the beginning

Each day had 7 periods - 4 in the morning and 3 after lunch. During break times the girls and boys had their own playgrounds - and did not mix!

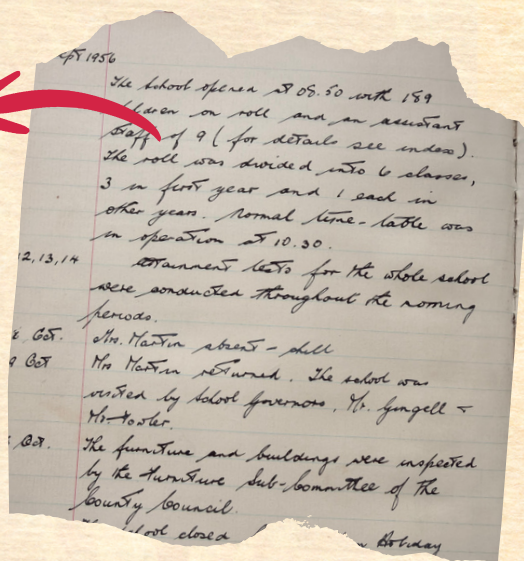


RPS opened with 10 teachers, including the first Headteacher, Mr Arthur Foxwell, who served RPS for 20 years.



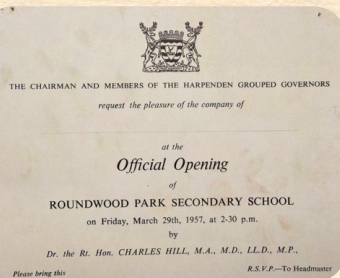
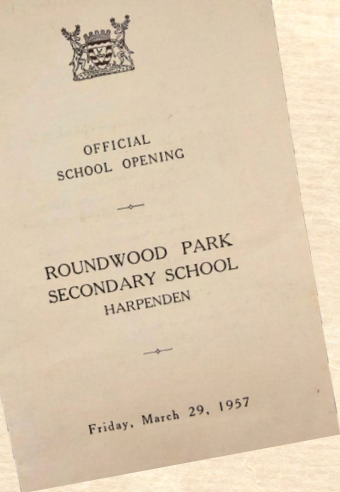
School logos across the ages....

The original 'school badge' was designed by Deputy Head Mr John Lucas



Students enjoyed school trips to France, Italy, Austria and Yugoslavia (as it was)

There were lots of sporting opportunities on offer and the school was organised into 4 Houses - Braille, Campbell, Grenfell & Nightingale - providing a competitive element to the popular Sports Day and, from 1961 when the town's outdoor pool opened, the annual Swimming Gala.



SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS

The school may have opened on 11 September but the official opening ceremony was on 29 March 1957 so we intend to celebrate our birthday throughout the year with various events and activities. Keep an eye on RoundUp and our social media!

We started our celebrations today with a fabulous 70th birthday cake made by our wonderful catering team and enjoyed by staff this morning!

House Music will have a 70th theme this year - our competition for the design of the programme cover closed today and we are excited to share the winning design soon!

Curriculum Week will have a 50s theme as well as a special edition of Register and Read, celebratory assemblies, a whole school afternoon tea in the summer term, as well as lots of fun birthday-themed House events.



MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Presentation of the next generation of school computer from Hewlett Packard in July 1989. This was a real leap forward in technology at the time (from the old BBC Micro!), putting RPS at the forefront of the computer studies offering for students.



OUR SCHOOL FROM ABOVE



Via helicopter 1980s!

Via drone 2020s!

MORE RECENT MILESTONES



Johnny Ball opens the new Maths & Music block in 2008

Our fantastic Sports Hall was opened by Mike Atherton in 2011



The Olympic Torch visited RPS in 2012!

The opening of our incredible 3G pitch in 2018



Our library received a wonderful upgrade in 2021 thanks to our PTA

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER!

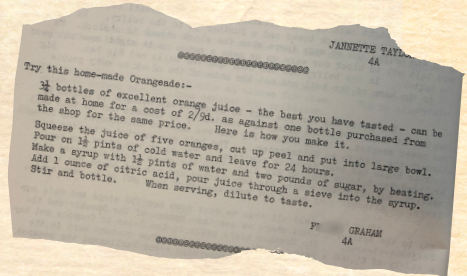
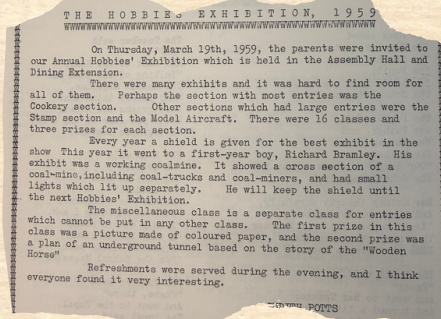


The very first edition of a school magazine. Student-led, and named, it was first issued in November 1959.

*It also features lots of student articles on the topic of tortoises?!

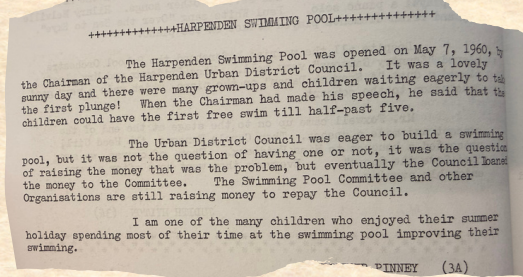


The magazine features lots of poetry, puzzles, stories, reviews of school visits and news of school events - we particularly love the write up about the Hobbies Exhibition....and the recipe for home-made orangeade!

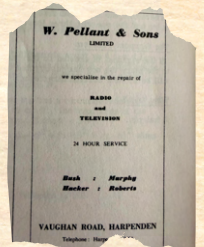


Volume 2 of the Roundwood Express was published in December 1960 and included a 'History of Redbourn' and many more articles, poems, artwork, puzzles and trip reviews. As well as card game tips, a fashion show review and lots of careers advice - our favourite article is about the opening of Harpenden's Swimming Pool....

*This one also features how to tame a hedgehog!



Volume 8 of the annual school magazine moved to being commercially printed so advertisers were required to help with the cost. Do any of our local residents remember the High Street store 'Buttons' or 'Pellant & Sons', the TV and radio repair shop on Vaughan Road? Or 'Rolt's' cycle & pram store?!



The 1970s saw another change to the format of the Roundwood Express but it remains full of student articles, poems and stories. With more tales of school trips, visits and an exchange programme with Alzey.



HARPENDEN - ALZEY STUDENT EXCHANGE 1972

On Monday 17th July we left Harpenden at 6.30 am to arrive at Mainz at 9.12 pm. There we were met by the parents and taken to Alzey by car.

The next day, Tuesday, we had to ourselves and most of us went to the wonderful outdoor swimming pool, where we all loved to go. As the weather was brilliant we were able to go there quite a lot.

On Wednesday we went to the Stadthalle or town hall. Here we met the Bürgermeister of Alzey. One of our party gave a speech in German.

On Friday we went to Wachenburg and Heidelberg where we saw a wonderful castle. It was a lovely place situated on a hill with a marvellous view.

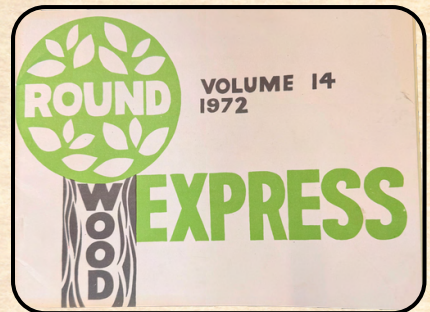
On the 26th July we went on a Rhine excursion where we saw the Lorelei rock. This is a rock with a peculiar legend. The boatmen who sailed on the Rhine saw a beautiful woman on the rocks who sang a beautiful song. They all looked up at her and they crashed into the rocks. There is a lovely song about this.

On Friday we had to leave. Waving goodbye we left by coach for Köln.



Our newsletter was renamed RoundUp and went digital (and maybe a little dull!) in the early 2000s.

RoundUp in its current format will be out next Friday!!



THE RPS HOUSE SYSTEM

We are very proud that there was a House system right from the very beginning here at RPS. When we opened in 1956 there were 4 Houses - Campbell, Braille, Grenfell and Nightingale - students competed in their Houses at Sports Day and, from 1961 following the opening of Harpenden's swimming pool, the Swimming Gala. Competition was expanded over the years from a host of sporting events to include the Work Shield, awarded for academic work and achievement.

Take a look at the House updates in the boxes from 1966!

Our current House system was introduced at the beginning of 2011 and was inspired by the Olympic Games coming to London. The 7 houses were designed specifically around the 7 Olympic/Paralympic values of friendship, excellence, respect, inspiration, determination, courage and equality and were originally given colours until the current naming of our Houses was agreed across the student body and announced in June 2012, just in time for the Games. As we know, the theme of naming our Houses after inspirational people continued...

WILBERFORCE - William Wilberforce

GREY-THOMPSON (GT) - Tanni Grey-Thompson

FRANK - Anne Frank

MANDELA - Nelson Mandela

OWENS - Jesse Owens

SCOTT - Robert Falcon Scott

CADBURY - John Cadbury



WENLOCK VISITS SPORTS DAY! 2013

NIGHTINGALE

This House is, of course, named after the founder of the nursing service, Florence Nightingale, the creator of modern nursing who was born of wealthy parents. She took up nursing in 1853, but it was not until she went out to the Crimean War and set up her hospital at Scutari that her great ability as an organiser became apparent. She turned the chaos and filth of the first aid posts into the order and cleanliness of a hospital, not without opposition from the military. Before 1854 nurses had not been employed in military hospitals; now they are an essential part of the military organisation.

*These House updates are taken from Volume 8 of the 'Roundwood Express' in December 1966.

Whether you belong to Nightingale House or not you can profit by trying to follow her example of self sacrifice and determination to succeed.

During the year we have won both the House football and athletics cups.

GRENFELL

Welcome to all new members of GRENFELL HOUSE!

This House is named after a very famous man - Sir Wilfred Thomason Grenfell - who began his career as a house-surgeon at a London Hospital.

He then became a master-mariner, and interested himself in hospital facilities for seamen. In 1892 he went to Labrador, where he gradually built up the social services for which he is best remembered - hospitals, nursing stations, orphanages, co-operative societies and industrial organisations. For many years, he operated hospital ships between Labrador and Newfoundland. He was knighted in 1927.

This is a great House with a good tradition of fighting against odds - of coming up from behind. Keeness is to be found in all years, for all sports, both boys and girls, and as a result, GRENFELL is never without a trophy to its credit. At the present moment, we hold the Cross Country and the Rounders trophies, which proves the effort by both boys and girls, while in the last two years, we have been runners-up for the Championship trophy.

CAMPBELL

When the school opened there were just under 200 pupils on roll, so the four Houses at the time were fairly small. Each group met to discuss how the Houses were to be named and our group finally decided on Campbell, after Sir Malcolm and his equally well-known son, Donald, who have each held the land and water speed records. Their racing cars and boats have been named "Bluebird".

Campbell have not been very successful in the past with sports trophies, but we have made up for it by a good showing with the Work Shield which we won, and the Tone Shield in which we were placed second.

BRILLE

Braille House was named after Louis Braille, the French inventor of the Braille System of printing for the blind. He himself lost his sight at the age of three, so he poignantly understood the effect of a world of darkness, dependent entirely on the voices of relations and friends.

Blind people, to counter their sightlessness, develop an amazingly sensitive touch, and Braille used this in his system. It consists of embossed dots, in groups of six, impressed on special, thick paper. Each different group of dots corresponds to a letter and, gently touched by the blind person, their arrangement and placing are equivalent to a sighted person reading letters on a page.

Our Braille House prides itself on living up to the tenacity of its 'founder' and we are always proud of the many volunteers always willing to "have a go" when we find our selves short of people really qualified to be in teams. This year we hold the netball, hockey and basketball cups - due probably to these very volunteers.

SPORTS DAY 1959

This year the Sports Day was held on Wednesday, 22nd. July. The total points scored were as follows:- 1st. Nightingale 137½; 2nd. Grenfell 128; 3rd. Braille 127½; and Campbell 110.

There were quite a few spectators, many of whom were parents of the children taking part in the events. Outsiders came as judges for some of the events, and some of the teachers were judges, too. The person who started the races off was Mr. Carter.

When the children were not taking part in the races they could buy drinks which cost 3d. each. A profit was made that afternoon and donated to School Fund. Many of the teachers put in plenty of hard work in preparing for the Sports Day.

NIGHTINGALE

TAKES THE TOP SPOT AT THE 1959 RPS SPORTS DAY!

WE ASKED OUR STAFF FOR SOME OF THEIR THOUGHTS AND THE CHANGES THEY'VE SEEN OVER THEIR TIME HERE AT RPS...

How has the school changed the most since you first walked through the doors?

The biggest change since I started is the use of technology, everything was on paper in 2003, I used an overhead projector, there were no emails just pigeon holes, and handwritten student reports; the digital revolution has changed the way in which we work drastically, and mostly for the better. Despite the shift, the heart and soul of Roundwood Park is exactly as it was and is the reason why I have never left, it's too brilliant here!

Lou Martin - Assistant Headteacher. started at RPS in 2003



Every school has its own unique traditions. What is something uniquely us that has never changed?

As someone who enjoys a chat (and a hug!) I would say the warmth and friendliness of staff at RPS makes us unique. Over the years I have met some amazing people - many of which will be my friends for life. I have enjoyed countless conversations whether printing in reprographics, walking down the corridor or getting a coffee in the staff room. I hope this never changes and that I have many more friendly staff members yet to meet (and hug!).

Emma Ellis - PE Teacher. started at RPS in 2008

What is one tradition from the early days that you miss and one new tradition you absolutely love?

I really miss students covering their geography exercise books in old maps, wrapping paper or brown paper!

I love the new traditions of the Year 11 and 13 proms. They offer a fantastic chance to celebrate the end of GCSEs and A Level exams and make lasting memories with friends after years of hard work. They mark massive milestones in our students' education and I love seeing them wearing glamorous evening gowns, sharp suits, and formal attire!

I have worked at RPS for over 40 years and still love it!
Pauline Moxham - Geography/PE Teacher - currently our longest serving member of staff having joined us in 1985!



A WORD FROM SOME OF OUR STAFF WHO WERE ALSO STUDENTS!

What is a tradition from your student days that you are thrilled is still alive and kicking for the 70th anniversary?

There are so many lovely traditions still alive and kicking! My favourite has to be that leavers' videos are still being made in Years 11 and 13. They are so funny to record and watch, creating some great memories that last a lifetime!

Sophie Darby - Head of Computer Science. Left RPS as a student in 2017 and started as a teacher in 2021



What made you want to come back and build your career at the very place you grew up?

I knew I wanted to be a teacher ever since I was a student at this school, and everything I learned at RPS helped drive me to where I am today. It was a proper full-circle moment seeing some of my prior teachers now as colleagues, but it is such a privilege to be back and able to (hopefully) do the same for others as was done for me!

Matthew Hubbard - Maths Teacher. Left RPS as a student in 2020 and started as a teacher in 2025

FOLLOW US ON
SOCIAL MEDIA!



If you have any memories of RPS in the early days, or you would like assistance with an Alumni event in this birthday year, or you would just like to send us a birthday message, please get in touch!
Contact Amy Warren - a.warren@roundwoodpark.co.uk