

OLD RENDCOMBIAN SOCIETY

.....

NEWSLETTER  
2024

*50th Edition*

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### **Change of Address & Contact Preferences**

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### **Digital Edition 2024**

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## OLD RENDCOMBIAN NEWSLETTER

### Society Officers

At the Annual General Meeting on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023 the following officers were elected:

President:	Chris Wood (1965-71; Staff: 1976-2009)
Chairman:	Alex Brealy (1980-87; Staff 1994-2023)
Vice-Chairman:	Jessica Weston (1998-2005)
Secretary:	Jane Gunner (1975-77) <b>Whiteway Farmhouse, The Whiteway Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 7BA</b> Tel: 01285 658627 e-mail: <i>jane@r2g2.co.uk</i>
Treasurer:	Claire Germaine (1990-93)
School representative:	Edward Thomason (2005-10, Staff: 2011-)
Committee Members:	Nigel Powell (1967-74) Delia Rich (2001-2011) Iain Whittaker (1980-87) Hamish Wilson (1971-78) Richard Tudor (1973-80) Bob Edy (1959-67, Staff: 2015-23)
Hon Auditor:	David Williams (1966-71)
Newsletter Editor:	Richard Tudor (1973-80) e-mail: <i>rictudor706@yahoo.co.uk</i>

**The Minutes of the 90<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Old  
Rendcombian Society held on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in Room E1,  
Rendcomb College**

Present: **Richard Tudor** (1973-1980), **Chris Wood** (1965-1971; Staff 1976-2009), **David Williams** (1966-1971), **Brian Smith** (1965-1972), **Bob Edy** (1959-1967; Staff 2015-2023), **Mark Naylor** (Staff 1998-2017), **Jane Gunner** (1975-1977), **Nigel Powell** (1967-1974), **Alex Brealy** (1980-87; Staff 1994-2023), **Claire Germaine** (1990-1993), **Tim Nicholas** (1989-76), **Des Knox** (1970-75), **Robert Sherratt** (1989-76), **Tim Etherington** (1974-1980), **Phil Smith** (1968-74)

1. Apologies: **Iain Whittaker** (1980-87), **Neil Lumby** (1968-1973), **Delia Rich** (2001-2011), **Jess Weston** (1998-2005), **Hamish Wilson** (1971-78), **Rob Jones** (Head of College 2015-)
2. The minutes of the 89<sup>th</sup> AGM held virtually on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022 were accepted as a correct record.
3. Matters arising out of the Minutes:  
The meeting wished to pay tribute to the late **Bill White** (Staff: 1961-97) who is greatly missed and who had contributed so enormously to the life of the OR Society.  
**Chris Wood** thanked everybody who had attended the funeral and memorial service for Bill and in return, he was thanked for the excellent eulogy that he had given.
4. To receive the Honorary Treasurer's Report:  
The Treasurer, **Claire Germaine** gave her report. Current balances gave a total of £19,108.13 of which £260 remains of the late **Colin Hitchcock** fund. The cost of the newsletter was significantly up on last year because of its size as there was the wish to include many tributes to **Bill White**. This meant it had to be sent as large letter, doubling the cost. Some of this had been mitigated by not sending hard copies overseas, which on average, would have cost £6 each in postage. Should overseas ORs wish to receive a printed copy, they would need to contact Jane. They could of course download it from the link provided on the OR website.

For the first time the number of ORs choosing to receive notification that the newsletter was available to download rather than having the booklet had crept over the 100 mark. There had also been a Facebook notification resulting in the newsletter being downloaded 260 times in the first 24 hours which was very pleasing. Next year would be the newsletter's 50<sup>th</sup> year and Jane Gunner suggested that she would like to retire from doing it once this had been achieved. She hoped that people would come forward to shadow her this year so that it could continue for the next 50 years. The meeting thanked Jane for all she had done.

Rob Sherratt volunteered to coordinate a feature on ORs' anecdotes and memories in celebration of those 50 years. It was agreed that an appeal would be put out on Facebook and Jane would direct people to Rob. The Chairman thanked Rob for an excellent suggestion.

There continued to be a trickle of shop sales made up of books and socks.

Jane Gunner reported that while the OR Society does not charge for the refreshments, the College now employs outside caterers and no longer subsidises the meal and this year the charge would be £18/head for the elevenses, lunch and tea. The OR Society does ask for donations but this normally only covers a tiny percentage of the cost. David Williams was looking into having a mobile card reader to make it easier for people to donate. Rob Sherratt suggested the use of a QR code on the website or the back of the newsletter so that people could pay in advance. The committee agreed to explore it further.

The Hon. Treasurer thanked David Williams, the Hon. Auditor for his help and support and the Chairman thanked both the Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Auditor.

It was proposed by Tim Nicholas and seconded by Nigel Powell and agreed unanimously that the accounts be adopted.

5. To elect a new Chairman for the OR Society

After 8 years as Chairman, Richard Tudor had decided to step down. The committee nomination was Alex Brealy and the Hon. Secretary had received no other nominations.

Alex Brealy introduced himself, explaining that he had been at the College between 1980 and 1987. He has 3 older brothers who also attended the College. He had studied geography and joined the staff in 1994 and is now Head of Geography. He was voted in unanimously.

Jane Gunner expressed her huge gratitude to Richard Tudor who had been such a tremendous support to her over the years of his chairmanship.

6. OR Bursary:

The Committee recommended that the bursary level remained at £1,500 and this was agreed, proposed by Brian Smith and seconded by Rob Sherratt. The Committee also wanted to broaden the scope of the bursary so that it encouraged closer to home educational trips. It was agreed to drop the 'Travel' and just call it the OR Bursary. Chris Wood and Nigel Powell are working on guidelines for the future.

7. Any other business:

Mark Naylor updated the meeting on the Friends of Rendcomb. The trust has been supporting two students over the last year and has made a commitment to contribute to the fees of another pupil for the forthcoming year.

In the absence of the Head, Alex Brealy reported that College numbers are strong with 420 pupils aged 3 to 18 years old, 150 of which are in the Junior School. The number of pupils from Asia has dropped so Park House is now no longer in use, although there is a new surface for the Junior School playing field beyond it. The College has instigated a ground-breaking Equality, Inclusion and Diversity programme, which is being very well received.

The meeting closed at 12.55 pm with a vote of thanks to the College.

## **SPORTS CONTACTS**

Please contact well in advance if you wish to play, referee or umpire in any of the fixtures. Also, on the OR website and Facebook.

**Gentlemen's Sport and College:** Edward Thomason,  
*thomasonE@rendcombcollege.org.uk*

**Ladies' sports:** Jess Weston, *jess\_weston@hotmail.com*  
Delia Rich via *OR Facebook page*

## A G E N D A

**You are invited to the 91st AGM of the Old Rendcombian Society Sunday 23rd June 2024 in E1 at Rendcomb College at 12.15pm**

1. To receive apologies for absence
2. To receive the minutes of the 90th A.G.M. held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023
3. To deal with matters arising from the minutes
4. To receive Hon. Treasurer's report
5. OR Bursary
6. Any other business
7. Vote of thanks to the host

### **OR DAY – SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024**

**All ORs welcome along with their families**

10:30 a.m.	Coffee in Clock Hall
11:15 a.m.	<b>Cricket match</b> (TBC)
12:00	Pay Bar
12:15 p.m.	<b>AGM</b> in Room E1
1:00 p.m.	<b>Hot Lunch</b> including vegetarian option for cricketers and all visitors. Main course to be collected from Servery. <b>Suggested donation £10/head</b>
2:30 p.m.	Tours of the buildings Cricket Match resumes on Top
4:30 p.m.	Tea in Reading Room or Pavilion if there is a cricket match.

**OR DAY – SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023**



**1983 leavers: Back row (L to R): Rob Akers, Jim Teague, Charlie Ekin, Russ Copley, Ted Wilcox, Rich Smith, Matt Archer, Ben Freeman, Richard Deacon, Si Beales, Cal Dewar, Phil Needham (pt hidden), Sian Smith (née Alexander), Charlie Hutton-Potts, Eric Blencowe, Rich Perrett. Front row (L to R): Nicki Scott (née Agius), Ben Holmes (née Syrett), Emma Thomas, Jo Sinclair (née Soutter)**



**(L-R) Tim Nicholas (1969-76), Phil Everatt (1969-76), Rob Barnard-Weston (1968-75), Martyn Pitt (1969-73), Tessa Hicks (née Wolferstan) (1974-76), Charlie Hussey (1974-76), Jane Gunner (née Watson) (1975-77), Martyn Griffiths (1969-76), Rob Sherratt (1972-77), Jonathon Fletcher (1968-76), Jade Sinclair (1973-78), Phil Smith (1968-74), Des Knox (1968-75)**



On a lovely sunny day in June 2023, more than 80 people returned to the College for the Old Rendcombian Society Summer Reunion. A presentation was made at lunch to Bob (1969-67, Staff: 2015-23) and Ruth Edy who were retiring from the College. (See page 43)



**Front Row: Delia Rich (2001-11), Olivia Round (2006-11), Victoria Clark (2004-13). Back Row: Edwin Price, Alana Carpenter (2002-11), Will Scott (2005-13), Jack Pethick (2006-13), Harry Ellis, Tristan Stevens (2006-13), Josh Thomas (2001-13), Oliver Bayliss (2011-13)**

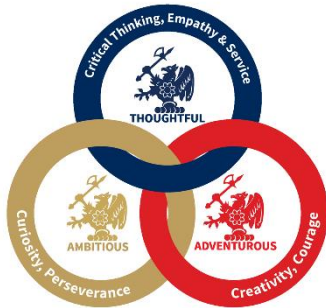
**Will Scott, Oliver Bayliss,  
Tristan Stevens, Harry Ellis  
Delia Rich, Olivia Round,  
Paul Bevans (Staff: 2007- ),  
Josh Thomas,  
Lance Baynham (2003-13),  
Jack Pethick  
Johnny Peake (2010-20)  
Alana Carpenter**



## REDCOMB COLLEGE

### Update from the Head of College

ORs will be pleased to know that Noel Wills' vision continues to be central to the College approach. This year we have formalised character development by agreeing to a set of virtues for development in every pupil. These virtues are grouped under our College values of being *thoughtful*, *adventurous* and *ambitious* and now weave through all of College life



including a Rendcomb Award (think pre-Duke of Edinburgh Award) for those in Years 7 and 8, our reward system, our reporting system and in the approach that we use every day. To further reinforce this point, all Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils are on a carousel of lessons where they have to learn an instrument, which they then perform and develop basic culinary skills in preparation for a parents' dinner. Our 6<sup>th</sup> Formers take tutor group lessons and run activities and we continue to put huge

numbers through the Duke of Edinburgh programme. Like Simpson before me, I firmly believe that by developing character we can help Rendcombians in their academic pursuits; proven by our outstanding results, success in National Competitions and increasing numbers gaining a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Degree.

The College has always had a reputation for the Performing Arts and this year has been no exception. Most recently we put on *Oliver!* to three sold-out audiences, while last year saw the Seniors tackle the Caucasian Chalk Circle, the Middle School impressed in *The Canterbury Tales* while the Juniors enjoyed the *Amazing Adventures of Superstan*. The Music Department organised over 60 concerts, with the pinnacle being the wonderful Carmina Burana last summer.

The other event that I wanted to draw to your attention was Beyond COP21, a program that links up schools and sustainable businesses, in an attempt to educate and reduce carbon footprints. The College has taken significant steps in this area with improved insulation in the Stable yard (over a kilometre of insulation) a shift to buying renewable energy, a reduction in food waste and many smaller initiatives that add up to a more sustainable approach.

There is no doubt that our initiatives and individual approach have proven attractive to current parents and we have seen the College grow to over 415 in the last year. It was very special to win Gloucestershire Independent School of the Year at the SoGlos awards, especially given the impressive local competition. While we will remain a 'small school' this growth has been an important part of our strategy and provides some protection against the Labour Party's policy to impose VAT on school fees.

We have also seen the departure of two OR staff, **Bob Edy** and **Alex Brealy**. Both have given enormously to the College and are highlighted elsewhere as is **Amanda Brealy** and her contribution.

I could continue writing and include the pioneering work we are doing in Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity, the growing range of activities (now 115) the work in pupil mental health or the successes on the sports fields but instead I will conclude by reassuring you that Rendcombians continue to be a special breed, young people who are confident but not arrogant, value service alongside leadership and show curiosity and a willingness to follow their own path.

**Rob Jones** Head of College

#### **Addendum**

My thanks to the OR Society for making ORs aware of the situation regarding Paul Dodd. Please go to the OR website and see my safeguarding statement for further details.

### **THE NEWSLETTER**

**Jane Gunner** writes: As you will have seen from the cover, the newsletter is now 50 years old. **Bill White** was always so thrilled that it had taken on a life of its own and was very keen for it to continue. I have been associated with its compilation for roughly 40 years, early on my secretary Mary FitzGerald would type up all the articles which had been written in Bill's immaculate handwriting and as technology moved on, we began to incorporate photos and then colour. **Richard Tudor** kindly took on the editorship and **Neil Lumby** added his creative flair to the layout and covers. Over the years **Amanda Brealy** has provided a huge amount of support with photos and tracking down articles, so I am delighted that she has agreed to take on the compilation of the newsletter from next year. She has the benefit of knowing a huge section of the alumni as she and Alex have been associated with the College for nearly 30 years. Please continue to send in all your news, wedding pictures etc. to Richard or Amanda so that the newsletter can carry on for another 50 years. Thank you.

## CONGRATULATIONS

**Lauren Shipperbottom** (2010-14) University of Birmingham Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, MBChB Hons. July 2022.

**Josh Carr** (2013-20) Royal Agricultural University BSc in Real Estate and Land Management and Winner of the Pilkington Prize

**Stefan Hossle** (2011-21) BSc First Class Hons. Geography, Swansea University

**Madeleine Morgan** (2009-18) First Class Hons. MA History, University of Edinburgh.

## BIRTHS

To **Justin Rosa** (1980-87) and Olga Savchuk, a daughter, Elizabeth Gabriella born May 2023.

To Annalisa Deufemia and **Nick Evans** (2000-04) a daughter, Isabella born August 2023.

To Holly and **Harley Phelps** (2000-07), a daughter Poppy Jayne born November 2023, a sister for Oscar.



To **Hermione** (née Llewelyn-Bowen) (2009-14) and Drew Marriott a daughter, Eleanora Jaqueline December 2023.



On 22nd January 2024, old Rendcombians **Richard** (1976-83) and **Sara Deacon** (1987-89) were proud to receive a visit from HM Queen Camilla at their jewellery premises at 11-15 Wood Street, Swindon. During her visit, Queen Camilla officially opened Deacon's new Rolex workshop and also joined in celebrating the company's 175 years of business in Swindon.



## MARRIAGES

**Rachael Jennings** (2002-11) and Chris Smith were married at St Andrews Church, Eastleach in May 2022 with a reception at Oxleaze Barn. **Lucy Payne** (née Barnett) (2007-11) was one of the maids of honour and **Evi Berryman-Bevans** (née Bevans) (2007-11), **Hannah Wood** (2001-06) and **Sarah Jones** (2004-09) all attended. **Rachael's** father, **Paul Jennings** (Staff: 2002-13) gave her away.





**Nigel Taylor** (1971-78) married Lorraine in October 2022 day at The Old Barn near Petersfield, Hampshire, with the celebrations attended by many old friends. **Treve Evans** (1971-78) was best man.

Also there: **Anthony Flambard** (1971-78) and **Penny Jones** (1976-78), **Hamish Wilson** (1971-78), **Andy Mackonochie** (1971-78), **Tim Parfit** (1971-78) and **Chris Troughton** (1973-78) (not in the picture).

Nige reports that there were a few bleary eyes the next day after the thinly disguised opportunity for a class of '78 reunion!







**Emma Lavendar** (2007-12) and Luke Berwick were married at Hyde House, Stow-on-the-Wold, October 2023.

Bridesmaids: (left to right) **Olivia Round** (2006-11), **Victoria Clark** (2004-13), **Alana Carpenter** (2002-11), **Delia Rich** (2001-11)



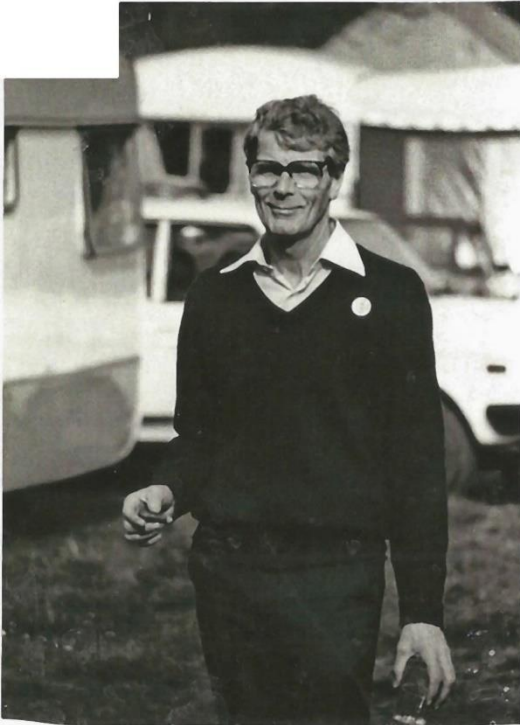


## OBITUARIES

It is with great sadness that the Society has learnt of the deaths of the following people. Our deepest sympathy goes to their families and friends.

**Major Tom Wills**, long-serving governor and Trustee, died aged 83 years old in March 2024. A full tribute will be published in next year's edition.

**Roger Medill** (Headmaster: 1971-87)



Roger Medill died on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023 and a funeral service to celebrate his life was held at St. Peter's Church Rendcomb on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023. Among those who attended were Helen and **Julian Comrie** (1946-54), representing **Claire Foster** (née Comrie) (1978-80), and **Fiona Welford** (née Comrie) (1980-82).

**Rev. Bob Edy** (1959-67; Staff 2015-23), **Dorothy Burden**, **Major Tom Wills**, **Chris Wood** (1965-71; Staff 1976-2009)

**Charlotte Holdaway** (Staff: 1971-93) representing **Anne Holt**

(Staff 1968-97), **Pat Poole** (Staff 1971-2010), **Phil Smith** (1968-74), **Rob Barnard-Weston** (1968-75), **Des Knox** (1970-75), **Charlie Hussey** (1974-76) representing **Dick** (1967-72) and **Toby** (1971-76) **Roberts** and **Phil Everett** (1969-76). **David Marshall** (1972-79), **Keith Winnill** (1972-79) representing **Matthew Cragoe** (1972-77). **Simon Howell** (1972-79), **Roy Edwards** (1972-79), **Annabel Molyneaux** née Goodenough (1973-75), **Bella Burke** née Bartlett (1973-75), **Henrietta Bud** née Hooper (1973-75) **Jane Gunner** (1975-77), **Nick Miles** (1975-80), **Simon Knapp** (1975-82)

**Ben Freeman** (1976-83), **Eric Blencowe** (1976-83), **Richard Deacon** (1976-83), **Charlie Hutton-Potts** (1977-84), **Iain Whittaker** (1980-87) **Lindal Squire** (1982-84), **Martin Graham** (Staff 1985-2017), **Claire Germaine** (1990-93) **Rob Jones** (Head of College 2015-) **The Old Rendcombian Society** represented:  
**Nigel Powell** (1967-74), **Neil Lumby** (1968-73), **Chris Dendy** (1969-76), **Denis Price** (Staff: 1969-90), **Hamish Wilson** (1971-78), **Joe Watson** (1971-78), **Tessa Hicks** (née Wolferstan) (1974-76), **Jenny Phelps** (née Watson) (1977-80), **Katrina Brown** (née Walsh) (1984-86)

**Nick Miles** (1975-80) gave the following eulogy:

**Introduction:** Good morning to all of you. My name is Nick Miles, and I had the good fortune to be a boarder at Rendcomb from 1975-1980, following my father Michael who was at the college from 1943-50. **Oliver** and **Rachel** have kindly asked me to say a few words about **Roger**. This is a real privilege, and also a closing of the circle of life. When I was 13, recuperating from a serious illness, I was blessed to live with the Medills in their family house for two terms. As my parents were living in Japan, the Medills provided a home from home and took fantastic care of me. Thank you, dear Roger, Mary, Rachel and Oliver.

Roger was an inspiring person in those formative years of my life. He led the school with such style, dignity, and boundless energy. His English lessons were so much fun. I remember sitting in his study when asked if I wanted to become a prefect, to which I replied no thanks, and he smiled that beautiful smile saying “I thought you would say that”. So he continued with “Would you like to be Head Librarian?”, at which I was delighted. A much better offer as far as I was concerned!

**Today we have the opportunity to pay tribute to Roger’s achievements.** He led the college as Headmaster from 1971-1987, when pupil numbers grew from 170 to 237. He taught English to O and A level. Roger implemented with great gusto the plan to go coeducational in the 6<sup>th</sup> form, ably assisted by Mary who established the horse riding for the girls.

Roger was one of the world’s natural gentlemen, providing the right image of the school in all circles. This enabled him to raise new resources whether it be equipment, finance, publicity or goodwill. What kept Roger so young was his unrelenting enthusiasm for all aspects of school life, from the formality of Founder’s Day to the politics of the General Meeting. Rendcomb has always been a ‘practical’ school with an emphasis on non-

academic pursuits alongside exams. Roger personified this with his enthusiastic sponsorship of rugby, cricket, music and woodwork alongside the lesser-known thespian readings, bridge, golf and computers.

**I will now share some tributes from fellow ORs.**

**Starting with my contemporary Richard Tudor (1973-1980, Head Boy, Chairman of OR Society) who remembers Roger's sporting prowess.**

“Roger was a tidy squash player. When I thought I was getting good and on the verge of the junior county side he asked me for a hit. I knew he didn't play much, so fancied my chances. He gave me a hiding with his fabulous backhand volley! Roger's favourite word was ‘marvellous’, which entertained us all!

He could debunk silly ideas in a very gentle fashion, smiled easily, laughed often and seemed to enjoy most aspects of school life. I reminded him of that backhand volley when I last saw him at Mary's funeral - and he laughed. I said that we had enjoyed his time as headmaster. He said that he had been enormously lucky. What a lovely reaction from a man near the end of his life. Class.”

**Moving on from Head Boy to Head Girl, Claire Comrie (1978-80) recalls Roger's pastoral role.**

“He was a peaceful and calming figure. He knew what was going on but might not always interfere. Roger was a ‘presence’ – looking like Edward Fox meant he was quite noticeable, yet he was never overbearing – a thoroughly human and decent man. He will be missed by all who came under his watchful care.”

**Christopher Dendy (1969-76) benefited from Roger's appreciation of music.**

“I remember one afternoon when I was practising some Rachmaninov on the piano. There was a knock on the door, and in he walked. After a brief conversation came the dreaded command – “play something for me”. I managed to get through some party piece and from that day on he always took a keen interest, realizing that the piano, not chemistry, was the love of my life! Roger's faith in me and what I could achieve is something I carry with me to this day, and, I hope, pass on to my own pupils.”

**Many of you will know Chris Wood who shares his experiences as a member of staff (1965-1971, staff 1976-2009)**

“Roger was a very charismatic headmaster and parents were always impressed when shown around the school and interviewed by him, which resulted in many sending their children to Rendcomb. In 1982 their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess Michael of Kent visited and he was so at ease with them at the official opening of the Dulverton Hall. As something of a sportsman himself, he always supported sports and was immensely proud of the achievements of a small school. He was very approachable and easy to talk to, quickly understanding any problems and acting accordingly.”

### **So, to conclude**

These different memories collectively portray Roger as a natural leader and a gifted all-rounder. My lasting picture is that of his greyhound-like frame striding the touchline ‘Up Top’ totally immersed in the 1st XV rugby, oblivious to the entanglement of his dog’s lead around his legs, yelling encouragement and showing delight when the team scored a try.

**Thank you, Oliver and Rachel, for this opportunity to share such fond memories of your dear father.....**



**Isobel Nicholas** (1980-82) (Head Girl), **Jeremy Trigger** (1977-82) (Head Boy), **Bill White** (Staff 1961-97), **Roger Medill** and HRH Princess Michael of Kent at the opening of the Dulverton Hall 10<sup>th</sup> May 1982. Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess were then taken for a tour of the school.

**Dr Graham Smith** (Staff: 1974-99) died on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and a service of Thanksgiving was held for him at St Lawrence's Church, Bourton-on-the Water. Among those attending were:

**Martin Graham** (Staff 1985-17) representing **Lindsey North** (Staff: 1996-2012), Mrs Webb representing **Charlie Webb** (1990-97), **Chris Wood** (1965-71; Staff 1976-2009), **Jane Gunner** (1975-77), **Claire Germaine** (1990-93), **Martin Stitt** (1979-86), **Stuart Taylor** (1990-97).

**The Old Rendcombian Society** representing:

**David Beanland** (1974-79), **Tessa Hicks** (1974-76), **Keith Winmill** (1972-70), **Hamish Wilson** (1971-78), **Nick Miles** (1975-80), **Denis Price** (Staff: 1973-80), **Chris Morshead** (1974-77)



**James Smith**

(1990-97) writes:  
My father was a very private person who rarely spoke about himself, even with those close to him. We know the facts of his early life, but not his memories and

stories. Born in Cleethorpes in 1946 with a brother ten years older than him and schooled near Lincoln he always had a love of physics. In contrast, his bêtes noires were History (too boring) and Chemistry (too smelly). This led to a physics degree at Salford and a DPhil at Keble College, Oxford. During his doctoral research, he spent much of his time at Culham Laboratory and his thesis was on the interaction of plasma waves. He continued with postdoctoral research, but when a position in the USA fell through, he spent a short time at Sussex University before looking for something more permanent.

He answered an advert in the Telegraph for a Physics teacher at a small independent school in Gloucestershire. In 1974 he began at Rendcomb and, together with David Hawkswell, also a recent arrival, he set about modernising the department and bringing it into the 1970s. He only intended to stay for a short while before finding something more long-term, but events conspired to keep him at the school for 25 years. It is fair to say that teaching was never his natural calling, but he was always highly prepared and very meticulous in his classes.



Housed in the main college staff flat next to sickbay he befriended the new matron. He had a kettle and she had a colour television and one thing led to another. In December 1977 they married at St Peter's Church. My mother **Hilary**, who by now had stopped being matron, loved the village and the church and it was she who kept them in Rendcomb. They moved to Number 18, had two children, moved again to Orchard House and Dad continued teaching. His contributions to the school included assistant housemaster in Junior House and examinations coordinator, but my main memories of him being a teacher while I was young



are us going on school trips with the Junior House and spending my summer holidays learning to build electronic circuits.

Dad had a great love of stamp collecting, which started when he was young, and of postal history. Holidays invariably involved hunting down historical post boxes and photographing them (often to the bemusement of passing locals). One such trip in rural Kent resulted in the AA relay service being called out when our cambelt snapped. It was great fun for an eight-year-old boy to sit in the cabin of the AA relay all the way home along the M25 and M4, but less fun for the owner of the car. This was not the last time he had automobile trouble. A trip to picturesque Port Isaac, where we parked on the beach, and a misunderstanding of the tidal times (not helped by the car park attendant who told us when high tide was but not when the beach would be underwater) nearly saw our car washed away. After a lovely dinner, I ran ahead to view the beach from the overlook and ran back with a huge smile to tell my parents that the water had reached the car. I never again saw my dad sprint as fast as he did that day as he flew down the streets of Port Isaac and managed to start his car just in time. Another car parked nearby was not so lucky.

Sadly in 1994, our happy world was shattered by the death of my mother. This hit Dad incredibly hard and it is no exaggeration to say that this eventually led to him taking early retirement and leaving Rendcomb five years later. He suffered from depression for much of the rest of his life and

it was particularly acute in the immediate time after. Despite some time off, which may have seemed generous for the time, he was back teaching only a few months later and from this distance in time it is clear to me that it could have been handled better, especially with the modern greater awareness of mental health.

After leaving Rendcomb he made a home and life in Bourton-on-the-Water. He was a regular member of the congregation of St Lawrence's Church, reprising his role as chalice bearer at communion on occasion. He began a course in Cirencester learning computer skills and very soon was teaching the course himself. He also taught adult education classes on basic skills in mathematics and English; as always, he was very dedicated and meticulous. After retiring in 2011 he worked part-time at Shalom Bookshop in Bourton and was well respected for his easy-going and kind manner. He worked there, apart from a breakthrough Covid restrictions, until a few months before he died. As well as that he returned to his hobby of gardening; his garden became filled with flowering planters and ornaments from Dobbies and was often a riot of colour, although sometimes it became rather overgrown depending on his motivation to mow the grass or do the weeding. He continued to read widely, do the crossword most days and attend church. I was often surprised by his favourite shows on television which included at various times Casualty, Strictly Come Dancing and Emmerdale, but he never became a big pop culture fan! In 2012 he became a grandpa and eventually had four grandchildren altogether.

When he was diagnosed with cancer early in 2023, he vowed to fight it. Unfortunately, though, it had already spread too far for any treatment to be possible and it quickly caught up with him. He spent the last few weeks in North Cotswold Hospital where the nursing staff were fantastic and he was kept comfortable. Several old friends were able to visit or talk to him, including a phone call with his old friend **David Hawkswell** and a visit from **Chris Wood**, both of which meant a huge amount to him. Happily, all his grandchildren were also able to visit before he passed away peacefully on June 5th. Many thanks from the family to those who visited or were able to attend his funeral.

Finally, he returned to Rendcomb: his ashes were buried there in July 2023 alongside those of my mother in the shadow of St Peter's Church. The place he thought would be a temporary home ended up being the place where he was happiest and has become his permanent resting place.

The following support staff also sadly passed during the last year:

**James Hardy (Jim)** (Staff: 1989-2013). Jim was a long-standing member of the Catering Team and well-liked by the students being always ready to help in any way he could, both he and his wife Pearl retired together in 2013 between them they had contributed 46 years of service to the College.

**Maureen Allen** (Staff: 1990-2012). Maureen was a member of the Housekeeping Team and worked throughout the College with her final years supporting the younger students in the Old Rectory. Her links to Rendcomb included bringing her young son Richard to work to help wash up in the kitchen then he went on to become a member of the Catering Team.

**Geraint Owen (Taff)** (Staff: 1997-2000). Taff was the Head Chef and sadly in his mid-fifties has passed away. After a short spell at Rendcomb, he went on to manage catering within the RAF and subsequently ran the Catering department at a large Oxford College.

**Sheila Lee** (née Greenfield) (1976 -78) died on 17 March 2024 in Dublin, just three days short of her 63rd birthday. She leaves her husband, Robert, and her two children, Nicole and Aran. Full obituary to feature in the 2025 newsletter.

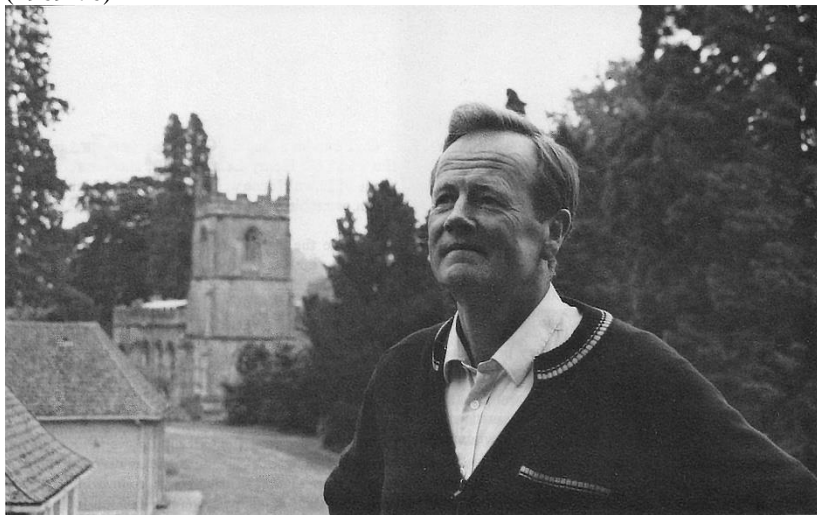
Friends from the Class of '78 were delighted that Sheila could join our reunion last year. Her superhuman effort to make the journey from Ireland was an inspiration to us all.



**Pen Jones, Treve Evans, Deborah Harrison, Joe Watson, Ian Pengelly, Gray Moore, Hamish Wilson, Kerry-Jane Chandler** (née Crowhurst), **Chris Troughton, Charlotte Bonardi, Nigel Taylor, Sheila Lee** (née Greenfield) **Andy Mackonochie, Sarah Robins** (née Morris), **Anthony Flambard, Tim Parfit, Pete Haynes.**

**John Willson** (Staff 1967-88) died September 2023. His funeral was held at Sedgemoor crematorium on 26th October with a wake afterwards at Admirals Landing Bridgwater. Among those attending were:

**John Shaw** (1981-88), **David Williams** (1966-71), **Richard Tudor** (1973-80), **Dr Mike Bews** (1983-88), **Ian McMurthie** (1983-90), **Bob Barrett** (1969-76)



**John Willson** 7<sup>th</sup> June 1937 – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2023

**John Shaw** (1981-88) writes:

John was a music and Latin teacher at Rendcomb College and this is where I first met him in '81 as a fresh-faced 11-year-old in my first ever Latin lesson. Rendcomb was a boarding school that was all boys but accepted girls in the 6th form. John was the senior housemaster in the main building. I did not excel in either music or Latin so soon gave them up. However; I got to know John at the age of 14 when I decided to give up cricket and take up climbing.

John had a love for Wintour's Leap and drove down every Saturday with a minibus of 14–18-year-olds for climbing days. That summer John was finishing off the Wintour's Leap guide and we spent every Wednesday afternoon checking routes on Fly Wall. In the summer holidays, we went to Bosigran for a week where he taught me to lead, as a result of his skill at teaching by the end of the week we stopped off and I led Moonraker at Berry Head. With the talk of a new guidebook, a resurgence in new routes started, mainly led by Gary Gibson but John knowing Wintour's so well

spotted new routes, cleaned them and pointed me in the right direction to claim several first ascents with him following.

Before I started climbing John had led an expedition intending to climb the Eiger. Unfortunately, they failed and had to head back home. Sat in his apartment at Rendcomb with one more week of summer holidays to go he decided to catch a train and promptly soloed the Eiger on his own. He led expeditions to the Alps most summer holidays and we went twice while I was at school. John was also the coordinator for the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, leading expeditions all over the UK, and doing our practice walks ready for our final assessment.

In 1988, John retired from teaching at the age of 50 and bought a house at the top of Wintour's so he could climb more. At the age of 50, he was climbing at his best and led the first ascent of Yesterday's Dreams E2 5c. He soon got bored and started to foster children. This was a rude awakening from well-mannered public-school boys to kids from the streets of South Wales.

Although John always said he couldn't understand people owning dogs. One day one of the foster kids came home with a dog and was soon followed by two more. John became a true dog lover and spent many days camping and walking with them mainly in the Brecons but travelled far and wide with them. His new love of animals led him to become a vegetarian. He also became a very keen gardener and was almost totally self-sufficient with fruit and veg from his garden.

I kept in touch with John and we used to climb as much as possible. John was always available for anyone looking for a climbing partner at Wintour's on the UKC website. Our final week of climbing was in 2013 with a week at Bosigran with my wife, son and John who was 76 and he still managed to be dragged up Anvil Chorus. John was a lover of music and played the organ at St Mary's church Chepstow. He was a quiet gent who kept himself to himself and was never one for large social gatherings.

In 2017, John was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and soon had to give up climbing. He struggled on and with the support of climbers in Woodcroft got through COVID-19 but his mental capabilities associated with his Parkinson's was taking over. At the end of last year, John was moved to a nursing home in Bridgwater, a two-minute walk from my house. I visited John nearly every day and although conversations were confusing, he was still happy and contented and he could still remember our previous climbing experiences until his death on 17 September 2023. He will be sadly missed.

**David Bell** (1967-74) writes:

I was so lucky to have **John Willson** as a teacher from 1969 to 1975, he introduced me to a lifelong love of mountains, as he did with many others.

My first trips were to Wintours, where we climbed with big boots and hemp cord around our waists (before we made our own harnesses out of the newly developed tape), and we climbed Severe on a good day.

John had found the mountains only recently, trained himself on courses and then transmitted that knowledge to us. John taught us well – navigation, hypothermia, bivvying, first aid, understanding the weather, map reading – and then put it into practice. He entrusted two of us, we were 14 at the time, to climb up to the ledge of Bottle Buttress *Bottle Buttress (VD 4a)* and bivvy. John simply abseiled down at dusk to check we were secure for the night. He taught us that when you get in a fix, think, don't panic and work your way out of the problem. A couple of years later we were benighted on Lliwedd and we took it all in our stride. He would take us onto the Black Mountains, sometimes at night, then give us our maps and tell us, "Find out where you are and take me to this point on the map". Another weekend he visited a friend in Lincolnshire, he took two of us with him, gave us a map and the friend's address, dropped us 20 miles short and said, "See me at the house at noon tomorrow". We found our own route and dosed in a field corner in our orange plastic bags, soaked through.

John went on a Hamish MacInnes course in Glencoe and then introduced us to winter climbing, teaching us everything he had learnt. We achieved a lot in winter, which is not easy when you are based in Gloucestershire. John bought one of the first Terrordactyls and paired it with a Chouinard axe; he lent us his tools and some of us made copies in the school workshop and were all proud when he led us up a North face in the Otztal Alps and our homemade tools, my 'terror' had a wooden shaft, enabled us to do it.

I still hear John's instructions to this day when setting up an abseil, "Make every link in the chain carefully, as your life depends on it, then, before you go over the edge check everything a second time". In all the time I climbed with John, I don't remember any accidents amongst the many boys he took out.

I lived in Scotland when I left the school and would climb with John on some of his winter trips to Glencoe. I became aware of his increase in rock climbing grade and his new routes at Wintour's at this time.

Thank you, John, for being an inspiration.

**Robert Barnard-Weston** (1968-76) died in December 2023.

A tribute from Rob's school friends **Ian Taylor, Mike Denley, Norm Crowe** and **Pete Sayers**.

We can't believe he's gone... we were all so shocked and upset when we heard he was dying. We loved him more than we realised if we're honest. Here are a few things we remember. Rob was always the best of our lot for remembering details of our school life. Now he's no longer here to ask.

We all met in September 1968 when we arrived at Rendcomb for what turned out to be probably the most fun you can have during the seven years it takes to complete a secondary education. There was a group of five of us, all from Gloucestershire, who became lifelong friends: Ian, Mike, Norm, Pete and Rob. The school then was firmly Gloucestershire-centric, having been founded by Noel Wills, a member of the Wills tobacco family, and we benefitted from the scholarships then available for bright Gloucestershire boys whose families would otherwise not have thought of an independent boarding school education for their son, let alone been able to afford it. It's likely that for each of us a family was wondering how on earth their child had essentially left home at the age of 11.

Rob at Rendcomb was the Rob we really knew. We've kept in touch ever since and had regular get-togethers, but it was our shared Rendcomb experiences that gave us the gift of enduring friendship. We were at Rendcomb from 11 to 18 - formative and challenging years at the best of times. At an (initially) all-boys boarding school where home-sickness and bullying featured it was especially challenging and you needed your friends. Our friendship didn't start immediately but instead formed over those early years: we remember Rob being very bright, very quick, always looking for opportunities. A favourite school punishment was to be ordered to copy the complex, fiddly text from your surname's initial letter in the dictionary onto one or more sides of Oxford Pad paper – the worse the transgression the greater number of "sides" had to be written. Rob, knowing that sooner or later he would receive such a punishment, used some of his spare time to write out several sides from the "W" dictionary entry. Rob was right – his late arrival for an English lesson resulted in the teacher, Mr Holt, telling Rob to write out several sides. Rob, looking very pleased with himself, reached into his smart briefcase, pulled out the pre-written sides with a flourish and handed them to Mr Holt. We watched the sides being ripped up there and then; predictably Rob was ordered to write some more.

Academically Rob could have been brilliant at anything. Sitting next to him in class it was tempting to look over his shoulder. Words were his forte but despite this, he did Maths, Physics and Chemistry at A level – possibly

because the rest of our group were doing the science subjects too. He went on to get a degree in Philosophy at Southampton University!

In those days we were lucky enough to have the use of the manual workshop (“the manole”) where we could engage in dangerous and creative activities with wood, metal and razor-sharp edge tools. Rob was a brilliant woodworker: he would come in and rattle off a few table lamps and salad bowls on the lathe and then go off and do something more interesting while we laboured away tediously doing mortise and tenons and dovetail joints. Being good at woodwork put you in a prime position to become a Stageman, and all five of us achieved this. We were allowed to wear scruffy home clothes (see the photo below of Rob and Pete), had access to the backstage area and generally felt pretty cool. It also had the advantage that you didn’t get picked for the school plays, although in our case that probably wasn’t a great risk. But we were involved in the buzz of the performances, and we got to share beers afterwards.



In one non-comedy production Rob had to lower a parchment scroll down to the stage from the high-up catwalk at a precise moment so that an Important Character would pluck it from the air to read. Rob, headphones on, probably listening to Black Sabbath or Led Zeppelin, didn’t notice that the scroll had dropped into the middle of the stage way before the intended moment. The actors had to dodge around it, while frantic gesticulations to Rob had no effect. A similar error happened to Pete, incidentally, who failed to close the stage curtains after a dramatic arm-wrestling sequence at the very end of an act.

One of the actors had to give up the extended contest and close the curtain himself. Rob thought all this hilarious - we loved being stagemen.

Rob was a talented all-rounder in school sports – in the Firsts for rugby, hockey and cricket, and his best sport might have been hockey. We used to get thrashed in rugby mostly but had some very useful cricketers - Simon Wormleighton should get a mention. In the 6<sup>th</sup> form, we gave up summer



term cricket and played volleyball instead, in the estate gardens – so much more fun.

We were in dorms up to the 5th Form. At bedtime, a master would come round, turn the lights out and after that we had to be quiet. If you carried on talking, you were put “on silence” for the next day or two, with no talking allowed in the morning or in the evening before lights out. Rob found this impossible, so we were regularly “on silence” for extended periods. It wasn’t just Rob’s fault of course but his big laugh can’t have helped. At the beginning of one term when we had a lot to say to one another, the masters came round to shut us up multiple times, and we ended up “on silence” for about a month! We were moved into separate dorms after that.

If you were brave enough you could climb out of a top-floor dorm window at night, walk around the outside of the building on a narrow ledge then re-enter the building through a different window. Pete showed no fear at all and was a regular ledge walker, aiming to circle the entire college building; Rob was pretty fearless too and did it quite a lot – luckily, they were rather good at it. The rest of us went from one window to the neighbouring one just once and that was enough.

One summer Rob, Mike and Norm, aged fifteen, went on a cycling holiday to the Isle of Man. Their aim was to get served beer in pubs and to meet girls - they had some success with the former and absolutely none with the latter. They cheated: a regular at Mike’s Dad’s pub was a lorry driver and he gave them a lift up to Liverpool. All through the holiday there were crashes, flat tyres, chains that kept coming off and gears that wouldn’t work. On the return journey they couldn’t cheat and had to cycle all the way back to Gloucestershire which was much tougher than they’d imagined. At least they’d been served some beer.

As a group, we spent many Sundays setting off from school with a packed lunch, aiming to get as far away from school as possible. No need to be back until teatime; no need to say where we were going. One time we cycled to Mike’s parents’ old farm near Cheltenham. There was no one around so we explored the barns and found there to be cider in one of the enormous barrels – so much better than the Woodpecker and Strongbow that we usually bought from the village shop at Woodmancote. The cycle ride back to school along the A435 was hilarious.

When we were in the 5<sup>th</sup> form, girls were admitted to the lower 6<sup>th</sup> form. This was just the right time, giving us the benefit of a co-ed Rendcomb for our final three years there. Some of us have never recovered (Pete & Jacqui and Norm & Teta – each of these couples still together). We were all very keen to make friendships with the new girls, and this changed the group

dynamic. For a while, we weren't so close, until things settled into a new pattern that included the girls, and we were together once again. Rob did his Oxbridge term at Rendcomb after A levels and then went to Southampton University, where in 1980 he graduated with a BA in



Philosophy. He then spent ten years working as a copywriter for marketing

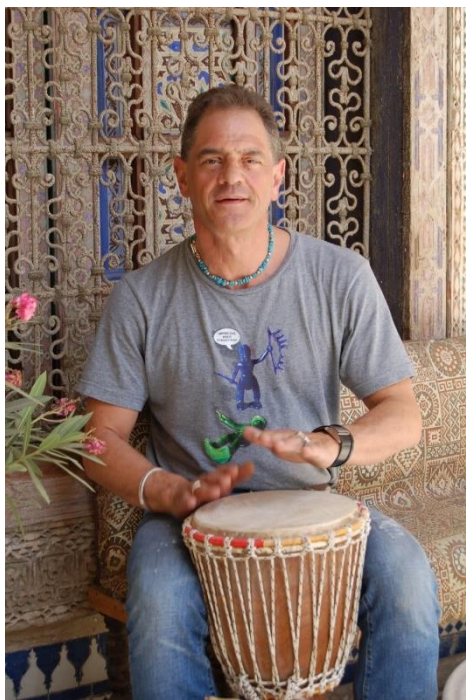
companies and advertising agents. This exposure to consumerism convinced Rob that he should instead use his talents to persuade companies to improve our environment, and he started his own freelance work to achieve this: as he put it, “poacher turned gamekeeper”. As a committed environmentalist, he worked with many different companies and organisations, always promoting ESG – Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance. Rob said, with typical verbal dexterity: “When all is said and done there’s a lot more said than done”. He knew that the task was huge, and he was tireless in his determination to effect positive change. It was while at Southampton University that Rob met and became a close friend of Pete Barnard, and through him met Kari Barnard, whose family lived near Bath. Rob and Kari married and have five wonderful children, all now wonderful adults who will be such a support to Kari. There are four young grandchildren, and Rob would certainly have continued to be the most amazing grandfather for them.

Rob and Kari lived in New King Street in Bath, in a terraced Georgian house: the walls weren’t thick enough to protect the neighbours from the volume of Rob’s massive stereo system or the volume of his drumming. There were many extended Djembe drumming sessions into the early hours. It was during these years that Mike became in need of a place to stay, and he was invited to live with Rob and Kari, unconditionally. This was a typically generous and understanding offer, and Mike will always remember his time there, as he became the “Uncle in the Attic”! He recalls witnessing the extraordinary nature of the Weston household: in amongst the deafening chaos there was fun and laughter, music, games and questions. Children fell asleep when and where they chose and fed themselves whenever and with whatever they could find. Mike was doubtful they would all survive! Looking back now we can see how all this fitted perfectly with Rob’s anarchism, with unwavering support and understanding from Kari. Rob and Kari then moved to Bloomfield House Hotel in Bath, which they ran as an eco-hotel until only a few years ago. An ever-changing variety of interesting and slightly alternative guests would return time and again, and Rob would delight in the deep conversations, sharing plans and ideas. Rob was very interested in shamanism, and he spent time with shamans from indigenous people, absorbing their wisdom and using it to guide his own work.

Rob was certain that a sustainable, cooperative approach is key to a happy life and a successful business. He was convinced that localism is the way to go, and he used this enthusiasm and passion to start Bath Farmers’ Market

in 1997. It was the UK's first farmers' market and he was justifiably proud of this achievement.

In 1999, Rob completed his MSc in Responsibility and Business Practice at Bath University. This matched his thinking on ESG, and his conviction that the capitalist model we've adopted is not sustainable. The photo of Rob with his family was taken at this time, on the steps of Bloomfield House Hotel. At Rob's viva for the MSc, he told the examiners that rather than use words he felt he needed to use his African Djembe to drum his presentation. Rob delightedly told the story, with bellows of laughter, of how one of the examiners muttered "Either this guy's mad or he's a complete genius – I can't decide which".



The last time Norm saw Rob was in August last year when he was passing Norm and Teta's home. The voice message he'd left to announce his visit started: "This is your crazy, anarchic friend Rob here...". Typical Rob - his life did indeed seem to us to be at times crazy and anarchic. He was driven by a deep love for others and a passionate desire to make the world a kinder, fairer, better place to live. If this meant doing the opposite, exploring the radical options, being anarchic then that was just great. Have a look at the Wikipedia entry for anarchy Rob was brilliant with words, and he would use them loudly and enthusiastically, with

impressive force and clarity, to bring his ideas to life.

We will not forget Rob – his family, friends and old schoolmates will miss him hugely.

**Peter Gregory** (2009-16) died tragically in a ballooning accident in June 2023. The funeral was held at St. Andrew's Church, Chedworth and afterwards a celebration of his life was held at Far Peak where over 500 people attended to celebrate his life. Among the ORs who attended the funeral were: **Delia Rich** (2001-11), **Anthea Birden** (1982-84), **Honor Birden** (2009-16), **Ollie Birden** (2009-14), **Henry Mills** (2008-15), **Arthur Mills** (2012-16), **Charlie Roffe** (2009-14) representing **George Roffe**, **Alex Brealy** (1980-87; Staff: 1994-2023), **Brodie Ash** (2008-15), **Clem Ash** (2010-17), Rob and



Caroline Baker representing the family, Fiona Hutton-Potts representing **Charles Hutton Potts** (1976-83), **Josh Hutton Potts** (1977-84), **Daniel Hansel** (2009-16), **Louis Crozat** (2011-16), **Mitch Kendall-Smith** (2012-14), **Emma Fuchs** (2009-14), **James Taylor** (2008-14). **George Dimopoulos** (2011-16), **Yannis Dimopoulos** (2012-14), **Louis Mernagh** (2009-14), **Alex Tatara-Mills** (2009-14), **Robert Sharman** (2010-18), **Sam Tushingam** (2009-16), **Howard Auster** (2009-14), **Victoria Clark** (2004-13) representing **Ben Margesson** (2003-13), **James Sinfield** (2009-16), **Josh Cropper** (2007-14), **Pascale Summers** (2009-16), **Hermione Marriott**, (née Llewelyn-Bowen) (2009-14), **Toby Beckett** (current pupil), **Jane Gunner** (1975-77) representing the Old Rendcombian Society, **Mark Naylor** (Staff: 1998-2017) representing the Friends of Rendcomb Trust, **Richard Wills**, Governor and Trustee representing Rendcomb College. Past and present staff who attended included: **Anne-Sophie Prian**, **Ben Ford**, **George Timuri**, **Paul and Mandy Bevans**, **Fiona Auster**, **Amanda Brealy**, **Cheryl Hossle**, **Mel Holness**, **Eleanor Sharman**, **Sara Bell**, **Rachel Fielding**, **Sue Corkett** representing **Stephen Clark** and **Chris McGuire**, **Ian Corkett**, **Annabelle Salt-Forster**, **James and Jane Stutchbury**, **Sarah White**, **Jacqui Noel**, **Alice Wyndow**, **Amy Smith**, **Martin Graham**.

## **FRIENDS OF RENDCOMB TRUST**

Registered Charity No. 290373

Chairman: **Richard Wills**, Governor and Rendcomb College Trustee  
appointed 2004

Executive Trustee: **Mark Naylor** (Staff: 1998-2017) appointed 2017  
**Jane Gunner** – (née Watson) OR (1975-77), Hon. Sec. OR Society,  
former parent

**Rob Jones** - Headmaster (2015-), Ex Officio 2015

**Keith Winmill** – OR (1972-79)

**Richard Law** – OR (1964-70) 2009

**Dr Tessa Hicks** (née Wolferstan) – OR (1974-76), former parent

**Jessica Weston** – OR (1998-2005), OR Society Vice-Chairman

**David Marshall** – OR (1972-79)

**Robert Sharman** - OR (2010- 2018)

The Friends of Rendcomb have continued to support both the College and students of the College throughout 2023-2024 with donations helping two students whose family circumstances would have prevented them from continuing an education at Rendcomb. The Head of College reported that the students have done well and are grateful for the support they have received. The Friends continue to support where requested with both learning aids and support for sport within the College. It is only with the kind and generous donations that the Friends receive that they can achieve their aims and objectives in supporting Rendcomb College and students in a time of need. The charity has, over the last four years, made support available to the College of over sixty-four thousand pounds. It has only been able to do this thanks to very kind and generous donations.

If you would like to donate on either a regular or just a one-off donation to assist the work of the Friends of Rendcomb, please contact **Mark Naylor** either by letter at 7 Hampton Grove, Meysey Hampton, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 5JN or mail: [naylorm20@hotmail.com](mailto:naylorm20@hotmail.com) or should anyone wish to join the Friends of Rendcomb Charity as a Trustee please feel free to do so, we can only survive with the generosity of supporters.

In November, four ORs kindly returned to the Griffin to perform in aid of the Friends of Rendcomb and Cirencester Housing for Young People.

They were **Holly Phelps** (2001-12). Holly performs as **IORA**, whose music blend of alternative electro-pop, last summer enthralled audiences with electrifying live shows at events like Glastonbury, The Great Escape and radio play on BBC 6 music.



IORA's recent EP and lead track 'Devil in Me' in collaboration with David O'Dowda, released through Extreme Music (production arm of

Sony/ATV Music Publishing), was placed 16th on Romania's Shazam charts and has 41K views on YouTube™.

As an esteemed alumna of the Roundhouse Resident Artist program, IORA has passionately crafted and shared her sonic creations. Notably, IORA's collaboration, 'Waiting,' has received significant acclaim, earning support from Radio 1's BBC Introducing with Gemma Bradley and the Childest Show with Sian Eleri. IORA's catalogue has found favour with BBC Introducing North West and earned a coveted spot on Sigrid's personal BBC playlist. She also delivered a mesmerizing performance at the Roundhouse, where she supported the legendary Badly Drawn Boy.

Beyond the music realm, IORA showcased her vocal prowess as the singing voice of the lead character in the multi-award-winning short film 'Time Bascule' by Di Maidstone. This extraordinary collaboration has earned accolades in Athens, Montreal, Los Angeles, and the Indie X film festival. IORA's remarkable journey has been made possible by the support of various grants, including the PRS Emerging Artist Fund, the Women Make Music Fund, the PRS Open Fund and Arts Council England.

**Nathan Seatter-Messer** (2010-22) is currently training in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre at The Urdang Academy, after completing a foundation year at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

Nathan left Rendcomb College in 2022 after completing his A Levels, since then he has been working in the industry alongside his current training.

Recent (TV) Credits include: Featured Student Role in *Sex Education (Series 4)*, Page Boy in *The Crown (Series 6)*, Targaryen Squire in *House of the Dragon (Series 2)*, Teenager in *Silent Witness (Series 27)* and Young Micah in *Family Feuds: True Crime (Series 1)*.



**Arthur Cook** (2018- 23) writes: "I've been studying music for nearly 8 years now, and ever since I laid my hands on the guitar, I knew I had found my calling. I've been writing songs for as long as I have been playing the guitar - and I'm looking forward to studying and furthering my music journey at Bath Spa University next year.

I've spent some time in a studio recording some of my own compositions and covers of songs I adore, which I have since released on my website and SoundCloud. If you like what you hear today - a listen and a look at my songs and website would be very much appreciated". [arthurcook.co.uk](http://arthurcook.co.uk)



**Mark Gunner** (2001-08) is a uniquely creative solo artist, he manages to be a reliably varied figure of endearing contrasts. Accompanying himself with nothing but a solo acoustic bass, Mark Gunner plays everything from atmospheric folk to pumping dance tracks. After tinkering away for years at his technique, he's crafted a fun and light-hearted set for everyone to enjoy which few bassists (if any) could even hope to replicate.



Now Mark is a growing force in a bewildering number of different places - from a unique and beautiful solo bass act to a pioneering livestream designer, to session musician, songwriter and visual effects artist. His insatiable curiosity and energy are constantly spilling over into new things, so much so that Mark's Weekly Nonsense - a series where Mark literally did whatever seemed interesting to him at the time - made waves on Instagram™, YouTube™ and TikTok™.

## ST PETER'S CHURCH UPDATE



**Marie Hobbs**, the College's new Chaplain at her commissioning by Bishop Robert, with Chapel Prefects **Fred Walmsley** and **Christian Viehmann**, and **Rob Jones**, Head of College.

It has been a fairly quiet year for St Peter's Church!

As we spent much time and money in the COVID-19 years on securing a new roof in terne-coated stainless steel, we have been consolidating in terms of effort and finances. Having said that, the leaking roof resulted in some serious stone masonry work to both the exterior north nave and north chancel parapets. Internally we have also had to remove and refill areas of damp plaster. This work was completed in the early part of 2023.

It was only a short time later that we were required to undertake our Quinquennial Report and I am pleased to report that the architect found no major problems – small housekeeping jobs, like cleaning the windows. Phew!

Like Rendcomb College, we were extremely sorry to say goodbye to **Rev. Bob** and **Ruth Edy** but of course, we realise that they need to move to the next chapter of their lives. During their 8 years in Rendcomb, they have given so much to the church and the village – it's almost as if the village has lost its backbone. Whilst, of course, being so much part of the church, they encouraged and comforted us, celebrated and commiserated and generally supported the community. We hope that they are enjoying retirement in Witney in their newly refurbished house.

While we miss Bob and Ruth, we are excited to welcome Marie Hobbs and her husband, Dan, and daughter, Chloe, to our church community. Marie has recently been Commissioned into the Church by Bishop Robert. She is full of enthusiasm and new ideas. With her encouragement, we are moving forward to installing Wi-Fi in the church. Bringing us into the modern era will allow her the opportunity to do interactive presentations to the pupils and allow us to install a Sum-up or similar payment scheme for collections and donations.

We are also sad to say goodbye to **Alex Brealy** who has been Church Warden and our Safe Guarding Officer for many years. We are forever grateful to our stalwart committee and especially Carol Bailey who gives so much time for the benefit of St Peter's Church.

If you feel that the church has benefited you during your life and you would like to give a donation or become a regular giver please contact our Treasurer, Annabel Purcell. Her email is [annabelpurcell@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:annabelpurcell@hotmail.co.uk)

## OLD RENDCOMBIAN NEWS

Recently, the New York Times held a competition, "Variations", looking for parodies based on well-known work and reflecting a current event. **Geoff Bye** (1940-48) submitted something based on Shakespeare's sonnet xviii. Subject Twitter. It was one of a handful published. Geoff believes it shows that his English classes with **Katherine James** (Staff: 1946-68) were not wasted.

Shall I compare thee to a Facebook post?  
Thou art more chatty and more volatile.  
Rough winds do shake thee coast to coast  
and Musk as owner doth impress his style.  
Sometime too hot, the eye of commerce shines,  
and oft your gold complexion dimmed  
And share price tumbles and declines  
by chance or Elon's wobbly course undimmed.  
But thy true existence shall not fade  
nor shall the image of your name at birth.  
Nor shall that name by him mislaid  
be lost to all who live on Earth  
So long as men do breathe and Musk doth vex  
So life goes on, tho' Twitter morph to X.

**Geoff Taylor** (1953-1961) and **Mike Naish** (1952-1960) and meeting up in Toronto in October 2023. First get-together in 63 years. Geoff paid for the beer!



**Alex Green** (2013-18) writes: I have achieved my MEng (Hons) in Chemical Engineering with Oil and Gas Technology at Heriot-Watt University. A bit of an odd qualification as it is an integrated Masters and so I have spent five years working towards an advanced degree and do not hold a Bachelor of Science (BSc) or Engineering (BEng). Unfortunately, I couldn't attend my own graduation as I am attending an overseas training course as a prerequisite for my new position in Aberdeen when I return.

**Emily Apps** (2004-08) played the maid, Clarise, in the musical adaption of Rebecca by Daphne Du Maurier at the Charing Cross Theatre in Autumn 2023. She also covered other parts and took the role of the second Mrs. de Winter on 9<sup>th</sup> September.



Earlier in the summer she had sung jazz with the 17-piece Apollo Big



Band at the Kings Head Hotel in Cirencester to a sell-out crowd.



Emily with fellow pupils, **Tessa Langman** (née Couch) (2001-08), **James Hill** (2001-08), **Alex Holden** (2000-07), Harriet Lockett (2005-08), **Harry Frost** (2000-07) in the 2007 senior school play Amadeus by Peter Shaffer.

## STAFF RETIREMENTS

### **Rev. Bob and Ruth Edy** (OR 1959-67, Staff: 2015-23)

When I started at Rendcomb one of the first things I received was a picture of Bob. While we all know Bob has many talents, modelling is not the first thing that comes to mind but there he was on the College Termly Calendar – something I never achieved! When we think of Bob, we think of someone who embodies the Rendcomb values and what we stand for as a College. He is thoughtful, adventurous and ambitious and goes where the light leads! He has enormous credibility not just because he is a wise and caring man but also because he was a pupil here and he even



met the Founder's wife. In the past Bob has regaled us with stories of extra holiday and ice cream at Founders' Day, delays to the term because there was no water, hockey in the quad and even balustrading although I don't think that Bob ever had that pleasure!

It was appropriate that his last service focused on character and the importance of being grateful and showing empathy. Bob always showed great empathy for others and this shone through in the many comments from the community.

Together with Ruth, Bob has also done so much to bring the College and village closer together. Under his guidance and that of the PCC, the funds were raised to reroof much of St Peter's and the days of seeing your breath in Chapel ended when he managed to get additional heating installed. Then of course there was running Bob. He has been responsible for getting many staff and pupils into running, swelling the Cirencester Park Run and adding numbers to the Rendcomb Half Marathon and 10K races. He could be regularly seen jogging up behind Park House on his way 'up top' and his knowledge of the local walks and trails was legendary.

Thank you, Bob, for all that you have done for Rendcomb from that first day when you were, in your words, the youngest, smallest member of the community to 64 years later where you are one of the wisest and kindest members of the College.

Enjoy your sabbatical as we all know that you will never retire and thanks from all at Rendcomb.

**Rob Jones** (Head of College 2015- )

**Alex and Amanda Brealy** (1980-87; Staff 1994-2023)

**Rachel Fielding** (Staff: 1994 -) writes: Many people know that Alex was a



pupil here as well as being a member of staff, and apart from a brief spell at university, he's been a pillar of the Rendcomb community for a very long time. But I think the person who said that he remembers Alex helping to build the church, might have been exaggerating a little ...

Alex and I both started here in September 1994, a few weeks after he and Amanda had got married. Both their children, Edward (my godson) and Eleanor joined the Junior School when it opened and the whole family moved into the Old Rectory in

2004, the same year that the Fieldings moved into Godman.

The things that make Alex a good friend and a valued colleague are the things that have made him such an asset to a school like Rendcomb - his loyalty, complete lack of selfishness and overwhelming kindness. He is a gentleman in the truest sense of the word.

Alex is very giving of his time and attention as we discovered when we were running the boarding houses at the same time. Always instrumental to the smooth running of the many GodRec events such as treasure hunts, charity Balls, parent dinner parties and Friday night Challenges, Alex was the only person who could make a rainy evening walk into an experience of huge excitement and mystery for a group of 90+ children on a Friday night.

Alex is an inspirational teacher and has excelled as a geographer, bringing his love of the outside world to countless pupils. He is a teacher who is not only skilled at explaining the workings of an oxbow lake, he is also extremely competent at cycling back to his classroom from the staff room with a cup of coffee balanced on his handlebars! Alex has taught maths, coached hockey, cricket and Rugby to an excellent level, and taken countless D of E trips not to mention Geography and Languages trips too.

It's impossible not to gather a few nicknames as you proceed through your teaching career and Alex soon earned the name Spaceman amongst some pupils who failed to recognise the clarity of mind of the meditating zen master! It was typical of Alex to have a full NASA-rigged spacesuit on our next themed Mufti day, and I distinctly remember the standing ovation when he walked into the dining room for lunch.

Alex and Amanda are moving to Kent to be nearer to family and to manage family estates. For the movie fans amongst you, he is perhaps going from a starring role in Goodbye Mr Chips to The Darling Buds of May... Having visited the area and the gorgeous house that Alex and Amanda will be moving into, I can see why.

As they say, behind every great man is a great woman, and with Amanda's creativity and energy and Alex's kind-heartedness, generosity and unflappability, they have been a formidable team. Sorry you won't quite be completing your 30th year with me, Alex. I will miss you both enormously.

**Jess Weston** (1988-2005) writes:

Having studied at Rendcomb, Alex joined the teaching staff in 1994 as a fresh-faced Geography teacher. Alex (or "Mr B" / "Breals") was a great teacher – full of enthusiasm and genuinely interested in the subject. I remember an early lesson where he gave us all Ferrero Rocher chocolates to teach us about the geology of the earth's core and crust (very tactical to enthuse a load of 12-year-olds with chocolate; I expect you couldn't do this

now through fear of nut allergies!). I also remember lots of field trips; surveying pedestrians in Cheltenham, wading in rivers, measuring pebbles on beaches and trips to Cardiff Bay. Trips further afield to places like Iceland restarted after I left. Alex was always known to have a very relaxed nature. I recall one day he hadn't locked his little Renault 5 car in Stable Block and so some of the boys got in, took the handbrake off and managed to push it around the corner behind one of the arches, hiding it in a bush! Alex was most confused when he came out of the lesson but didn't seem too concerned after he eventually found it! To me, Alex made Geography lessons fun and interesting and I have no doubt he played a pivotal role in me and others going on to study it at University.



I first recall Amanda when she used to help with the hair and makeup at school plays. I remember her coming in with a very little Edward and Eleanor Brealy tottering around, trying to herd lots of young, nervous and excitable dramatists to sit still for 5 minutes whilst copious amounts of eye shadow and glitter were applied. Amanda then got fully embedded into Rendcomb life with the start of the Junior School in the early 2000s. Amanda was always

smiley, helpful and enthusiastic and I know she dedicated enormous amounts of her time, energy and passion to helping make the Junior School the success it is today.

There were no better candidates when houseparents were needed to run the Old Rec Boarding House in 2004. I cannot imagine a more kind, caring or compassionate couple to have undertaken this role. I am sure parents felt their children were in such safe hands and you provided so many happy and fun memories for the boys that you looked after in the "Brealy Bunch" era.

It is hard to imagine a Rendcomb without the Brealys; they represent every value and quality that makes Rendcomb so special. You will be sorely missed and I hope you realise how much of an impact you had on many of the Rendcomb family over your 29 years. Your continued involvement in the OR Society is most welcome and will reassure many that you can never quite leave...



## Extracts from the poem written by Junior School Head, Gavin Roberts about Amanda Brealy.

And so it's time for you to leave us now  
Your time at Rendcomb's spent  
You're off to the 'Garden of England'  
And to a more peaceful life in Kent

But with you will it ever be peaceful?  
You're bound to find so much in which to take part  
There will be walking and amateur dramatics  
And there's sure to be plenty of craft and some art

To list all that you've done here at Rendcomb  
Would take me far too many days and nights  
So in these short few minutes  
We shall have to settle for the edited highlights

And when they write the full history of this school on  
a hill  
Of this place that holds a place in your heart  
Your name will feature on page after page  
As you've undoubtedly played a key part

From Nursery – Yr6 and Senior School too  
There cannot be much you've not taught  
But whatever the topic or subject  
To it, nothing but enthusiasm you've brought

You've shared your love of creativity  
And taught art with a passion and joy  
With lessons filled with excitement  
And loved by each girl and boy

There were hours spent trying to pick out the errors  
With all that Rendcombian proof-reading  
But it can't have been all work and no play  
As Edward and Eleanor prove, there must've been  
time for some breeding

It's a thankless task to be proof-reading  
And the pressure really does tighten  
But it was seldom you ever made a mistake  
With the exception of one Post-It marked 'lighten'

You've been outside in all sorts of weather  
In rain, sleet, hail, snow and occasionally sun  
But if ever we needed a Forest School champion  
Then Mrs Brealy – you'd be the one

It hasn't always been easy  
Challenges? There's certainly been some  
Just think of those years you spent in Old Rec  
Being everyone's surrogate mum

Now this is about you and not Alex  
But as you are clearly good mates  
Please could you check once more before he leaves us  
That Old Rec contains no more of his dinner plates

Such dedication to so many shows  
You've spent hour after hour after hour  
Creating costumes, painting sets and rehearsing  
And climbing the steps up that tower

Every JS production was a labour of love  
And often we'd all thought you'd go crazy  
As you strived to get the best out of your cast  
What a director – our very own Scoresese!

I asked Mr Brealy – 'What's the best of the shows?'  
He replied it was too hard a choice  
Like all of the audiences, he said he'd loved every one  
But especially those where you lost all of your voice

A colleague and friend to all who have known you  
You are someone we can truly rely on  
Someone who's been there with advice or a joke  
And when needed, a shoulder to cry on

In the midst of all your adventures  
Of all the successes, challenges and strife  
Perhaps what we've all valued the most  
Is that you've always been larger than life

You bring joy to each room that you enter  
And any sagging spirits or morale you could hoist  
But then you'll be certain to lower the tone  
By telling us that something is moist

My work here now is almost done  
And I hope you've enjoyed this short time  
That we've spent paying tribute to you  
Albeit with some rather dodgy rhyme

So good luck with your new Kent adventure  
With the crafting, long walks and am dram  
Enjoy the countryside and beauty around you  
But try not to set up another badger sex-cam

You've been a rock we all could rely on  
To help find a means to an end  
And above all else I've tried to list here today  
You've just simply been a very good friend

We know you've plenty more to do  
And you're nowhere near your date of expiry  
There's plenty of spirit for adventures anew  
It's not just your hair that is fiery

And it's fitting that I'm reading this tribute  
In a room where JS martial arts has produced many a ninja  
Well, no... to be honest there's no reason at all for that  
previous line  
Other than it rhymes with... goodbye to our favourite  
ginger!

## OR SPORTS

On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March, Dean Close School held its annual alumni ladies' hockey competition. Whether it was the proximity to Easter it is hard to say but, in the end, only 5 teams took part. The Rendcomb ladies have always enjoyed this fixture and so were keen to participate but this year found it hard to muster a team. Thanks must go to the guest ladies from Cirencester Hockey Club who allowed us to take part. Despite some excellent tackling and fine shots, Rendcomb came fifth but not before being the best losers against the eventual runaway winning team from Dean Close. Thanks to all those who played and made it such an enjoyable outing.



ORs: **Charlotte Ellis** (1999-2004), **Jess Weston** (1998-2005), **Ellie Jones** (2010-17) and **Megan Hardie** (2004-18) (goalkeeper) with guests Rhona, Millie and Ellie.



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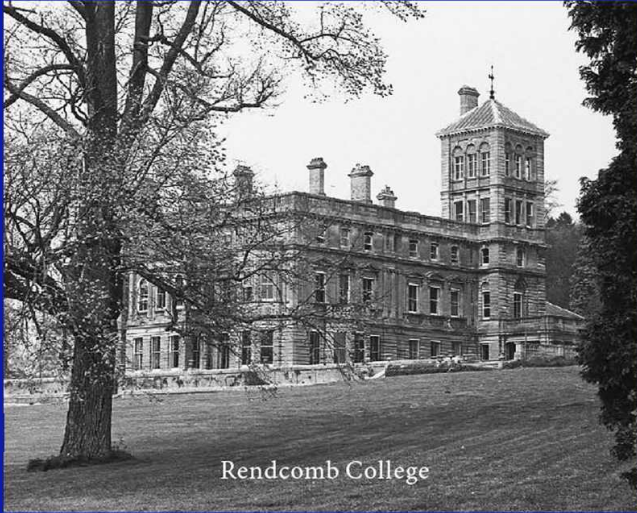
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Years at Rendcomb: Junior School ..... Senior School ... ..

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