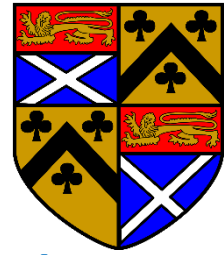


# The Rochester Grammar School 2023 Alumni Newsletter



## Welcome to the 2023 RGS Alumni Association Newsletter!

Thank you to all of you who have sent email addresses for us to use instead of receiving the newsletter expensively by post. We still need more email addresses please. It may also be possible to access the newsletter via Facebook.

I have received some very interesting and exciting snippets of “Lives Since RGS” and some of these features in this newsletter.

Thank you to those of you who have kept in touch this year; we are always delighted to hear from you and enjoy reading news from alumni and your associates. It is always wonderful to see old friends and classmates reconnect and to hear about and see our school as it is today. By popular request we have continued with different and cheaper format of our 2023 alumni lunch. Part of the request was to be able to spend more time chatting during lunch. As a result, we are continuing with a buffet (instead of a sit-down, catered lunch), which is cheaper and should allow people to mingle and chat.

A booking form for the lunch can be found at the end of this newsletter or attached to this email. You may print or copy as many as you like, so why not pass one to a friend? A membership form, is also included so that you can encourage friends from school days to join us and stay in touch all year round. We of course take the security of your personal data seriously. We securely retain only name, time at RGS and contact details of members for our own purposes. If you wish to update your details or be removed from our mailing list at any point, please contact us on [ruth.rivers@rochestergrammar.tsat.uk](mailto:ruth.rivers@rochestergrammar.tsat.uk), at which point we shall delete your details permanently.

This year’s newsletter features lots of news and information from 2022–2023 so far, but we are always open to contributions. If you feel inspired while you read this edition, please do not hesitate to contact us with ideas for next year’s content. If you have news or photographs which you would like to share, or any other questions, you can contact the committee through all the usual channels and Ann’s (Chairman) and Carolyn (Treasurer and Membership Secretary) details are at the end of the newsletter. In addition, you can email us [RGSKentAlumni@gmail.com](mailto:RGSKentAlumni@gmail.com) or on twitter [@RGSKentAlumni](https://twitter.com/RGSKentAlumni).

Happy reading!

With our warm regards,

The Alumni Association Committee

## AGM and Annual Lunch 2023

The Rochester Grammar School Alumni Association invites you and your school friends to join us for our AGM, a tour of the school and then lunch on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

Our annual lunch reunites old girls (and boys!) and offers an opportunity to catch up and hear about the school day. No menu is included on these pages, but we would ask that you clearly note any dietary requirements on your booking form to ensure that we cater for all.

Note that we also hold our 2022/23 AGM before the lunch, and we warmly invite all to attend to hear about our activities and plans for the future. Members are reminded that they are entitled to vote on any matters raised at this meeting. Following this, as in previous years, we shall enjoy lunch together, an update on school life and the annual raffle. Donations of prizes on the day are appreciated.

**Why not contact friends from your year and organise a reunion? If you cannot join us for the whole day, please feel free to just come to the lunch. To attend, please complete the form at the end of the newsletter.**

Don't forget your camera or your purse! We should love to see and share your pictures of the lunch with suggested captions; we shall include as many as we can in next year's newsletter. We ask all of those who attend the lunch to contribute £1 to the fund for the Alumni Award as explained later in the newsletter.

Timetable for the day:

**10:30am** Registration

**11:00am** Tour of the school, conversation time for those who wish to catch up with friends

**12:00pm** AGM

**1:00pm** Lunch

**2:30pm** School update from the executive officers, more time for conversation, school songs

**4:00pm** Depart

## Minutes of the AGM

### The Rochester Grammar Alumni

#### Minutes of the AGM

Held at the school on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2022

		Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome</b>	
	Ann West welcomed everyone to the AGM after the enforced cancellations of the previous three years.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>	
	Avril Noble, Sheena Florance, Wendy Williams, Sylvia Hyland and Heather Gilbert.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes of the Previous AGM</b>	
	The minutes of September 2019 had been published in the newsletter.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
	There had been discussion at the last AGM about May as a better date for the AGM, but as proved by the low numbers who wished to attend the originally scheduled date in May 2022, this has not proved to be the case.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Chairman's Report</b>	
	<p>AW reported that two committee members, Pat Stevens and Yvonne Atkinsons, had died, and Avril Noble was standing down from the committee. She appealed for new members to join as the current low number of committee members is unsustainable. She emphasised that there are as few meetings per year as possible, and being on the committee is not too onerous.</p> <p>There is currently no staff representative on the committee as Ms McDonagh has left the school. Two student representatives were in place and they provided invaluable support. Mrs Rivers, the Head's PA and Mrs Cottee also were a strong support for the Alumni.</p> <p>AW expressed thanks to Anna Golding for all her work in raising the profile of the Alumni on facebook. There are in excess of 1000 members.</p> <p>With the death of Pat Stevens, who had worked tirelessly to maintain a data base of members' skills and expertise which could be accessed by RGS for help with interviews or placements, it had been decided that a new approach was needed. In January, a list of work experience placements being sought by the students that year would be given to the Alumni, giving time for members to approach</p>	

	<p>appropriate people who may be able to offer help well before the work experience was undertaken in July.</p> <p>AW had been in contact with Medway Archives to see if they would be interested in holding RGS memorabilia much of which is currently in storage within the school. After a lengthy delay, they have now confirmed that they would be interested, and already hold some RGS items through the Math school.</p> <p>AW welcomed Andy Millest, a former head of music at RGS to the lunch, and thanked him for attending as Alumni had expressed a wish for teachers to attend.</p> <p>The catering this year was being provided by Dee who had formerly worked at RGS, and AW thanked her for the great effort she had put into the event,</p> <p>AW thanked all students and staff who had helped with the newsletter and the school for continuing to fund the postage at a considerable cost. Whilst numbers of the Alumni receiving the newsletter by email had increased, there were a significant number preferring a hard copy. She also thanked committee members for their support.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Finance Report</b>	
	<p>In the absence of Avril Noble, AW reported that the current balance on the Alumni account was £4420.59. This remains stable as the only significant expenditure is for the annual lunch and the £30 for the Alumni Prize. As in previous years, attendees at the lunch would be asked to give £1 towards this annual award.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Update on School Business</b>	
	<p>In the absence of Mrs Brinklow, AW read out her report on school events and activities. She highlighted excellent IB and GCSE results in 2022, including 4 students who achieved 12+ grade 9s at GCSE, a feat achieved by only 13 students nationally. There had been considerable outstanding sporting achievements, a large cohort of students undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh award at all levels and many charitable fund raising initiatives. Her full report would be published in the next newsletter.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
	<p>A member enquired whether the link to the schools in Trinidad had been maintained after Pat Stevens' death. AW was unsure, but would check.</p> <p>Marina Kesby said how much she had enjoyed a production at the school and asked who to approach to get tickets for future events. AW said it was best to contact Ruth Rivers by email, and reminded</p>	

<p>members that Alumni could buy tickets at a discount. Details of events were on the school's website.</p> <p>AW read out an email from Sheena Florance who was unable to attend the AGM and lunch due to ill health.</p> <p>AW informed the meeting that Betty Trollope was now in a nursing home. She and some former teachers had visited her, and Ann had taken her to a service at Rochester Cathedral, but Miss Trollope's declining health made such outings difficult.</p> <p>AW reiterated her plea that additional members came forward to help on the committee in order to ensure that the Alumni could continue.</p> <p>Alumni thanked Ann West and the other committee members for organising the AGM and lunch.</p>	
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The meeting closed at 1.00pm

### The Alumni Award



The award is a beautiful trophy which is given annually, for service before self, as the trophy remains in school, it is accompanied by a gift voucher. This is funded by voluntary donations of £1 from those who attended the annual alumni lunch.



### The Butterfield Cup

This cup is awarded for commitment to school.

## New Alumni Student Links

We welcome the new Executive Officer Team and our current Alumni Student Links. Subomi, Naa, Mabel, Rita and Sanjana are the pathway which keeps RGS students from former and current years connected. The students have already been pivotal in the redesign of RGS' Student Voice and are keen to keep working to enhance the community feel of the school. The students have a particular interest in environmental issues and the school has already seen changes applied such as bamboo cutlery in the canteen and a reduction of single use plastic around the school. The students contribute to assemblies, act as role models for the younger years and support at all school events.



*(left to right – Mabel, Rita, Subomi, Sanjana, Naa)*

## SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

The Alumni Facebook Group now has over 1,100 members and continues to grow steadily. With posts frequently reaching over 800 members, it offers a fantastic opportunity to keep up with what is happening at the school, catch up with old friends and reminisce over school days. Popular topics being the memory that many of us share of the walk (frequently in the rain) between the old school and the new school, our favourite teachers and how sad many of us still are that the old school was pulled down.

The Facebook Group is also a source of information for members. Copies of the Annual Newsletter can be found on the page, together with details of forthcoming events, such as the Alumni Lunch, which this year is being held at the school on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

We continue to seek copies of photographs that members may have of their time at RGS. These are being saved to the Facebook Group in albums for everyone to enjoy. We currently have photographs from all the way back in the 1920s, which is truly remarkable, particularly when considering that we have yet to receive any photographs at all from the 1970's!

So, if you have yet to join the "RGS Kent Alumni Association", please look for us on Facebook, submit a membership request and come and join us.

## ALEGRA CULLUM RGS 1952-1956

As a foreign immigrant I was accepted at RGS on condition that I would become naturalised at the first opportunity. At the time I could not have taken “O” Levels from the school as a foreign student.

I gained so much from my time at RGS, particularly from the cultural trips to art galleries, museums and theatres in London. These were invaluable for my future studies and for developing hobbies. From school, I gained entry to Teacher Training College in Bradford and qualified as a Primary School s teacher.

Soon afterwards, I married my school boyfriend. We went to live first in Canada and then to the USA for two years, after which we returned to the UK where we continued to move around the country.

I was a “stay-at-home” mum until I eventually returned to further study: first at the University of Nottingham where I gained a diploma Special Needs and Counselling. I then taught for a while in a school for children with special needs until moving once more, this time to London. Unfortunately my husband and I divorced.

I then worked for year for the Richmond Fellowship Charity, again with children who had special educational and emotional needs. From there I moved on to work in a school for maladjusted adolescents (a term no longer used). While working there, I pursued my interest in psychology and attended many different training courses before working for the National Marriage Guidance Council (now “Relate”)

By then, I had decided on a career change for which I needed a Master’s degree which I earned at Sussex University. This was my entry qualification for training in the Society of Analytical Psychology in London to practise as a Jungian Analyst- work I truly loved.

I then remarried and went to live in Israel where I taught for a year at Haifa University while also taking on patients for Jungian analysis. I pursued my hobby in textiles, particularly batiks and held an exhibition in the Arab-Jewish centre in Haifa

Upon our return to the UK, I continued working in private practice until retirement loomed. Since I knew I still had ambition for further study, I undertook a course at Brighton University in Foundation studies in Art and Design.

So now, as I’ve retired I am free to enjoy my hobbies, my garden and about to publish my autobiography. I have had a rich and fulfilling life.

## HOW THE WORLD HAS SHRUNK

Back in the late 1950's one would never have imagined that this event could ever happen but it just shows how the world has shrunk as a result of worldwide travel. So there is this small tourist boat sailing up the Brahmaputra River in Assam when out of 40 passengers, two were surprised to discover that they were both ex pupils of Rochester Grammar School! Me and Ann's sister Pat Grubb from the year above me. What an amazing coincidence?! It really is a small world.

A most surprising and very enjoyable addition to a fantastic cruise. So, no matter what you think, life still holds pleasant surprises for us all.

Angela White nee Watson  
RGS 1954 to 1961



## MARY COX RGS 1963 - 1970

I've always wanted to dance. From the moment I saw a dancing school perform at a children's party, I knew that I **had** to do that - much to the surprise of my slightly old-fashioned family! While compiling this article I realised that there have been catalysts that have directed my dancing life.

I joined RGS in 1963 as a very shy, unselfconfident girl. In the autumn terms, the highlight of my week was dance lessons taught by Miss Joan W. White. I danced as James in Miss White's *The Man God*: a dance drama narrating the life of Christ which was performed in a local church on a specially erected stage. As it pre-dated other now famous musicals telling Christ's story, this must have been quite revolutionary. We also danced several times in the Cathedral.

I longed to be chosen to join her small dance performance group, but alas I never made it. However, Miss White had obviously seen something in me, because, at a parents' evening, she told my parents that I could have a career in dance. She was catalyst one. In the School library I found a prospectus and I duly applied to the Art of Movement Studio (now Trinity Laban) in Addlestone, auditioned and was accepted, with my parents' blessing, on the 'two plus one' teaching course. For two years, Monday to Thursday, we studied dance and other arts subjects. Then, every Friday, we were taken by coach to Trent Park College for education study. The third year was spent at Trent Park where the balance was tipped in favour of education with some dance. I took my RGS prize book with me – the collected poems of Dylan Thomas, which I still have – awarded for 'My services to the School in modern dance'.

In 1973 I emerged as a qualified teacher of Art of Movement with a Certificate in Education (merit). I taught for two years in Kent Secondary Schools, but the posts were temporary and I needed to work, so

I retrained in publishing and became assistant editor of Dance & Dancers magazine and sub editor of Dance Theatre Journal, eventually joining the publications department of The Royal Ballet. During this time, I went to a dance workshop led by Wayne Sleep. Chatting to him, he commented, 'I'll do anything to promote dance'. This was catalyst two, as it made me realise that I wanted to return to dance teaching. With the support of my son's primary teachers, I set myself up as a self-employed dance teacher. At one stage I was going into nine Croydon schools per week teaching dance clubs and curriculum lessons. I took groups to dance at the Fairfield Halls and was Vice Chair of Croydon Schools' Dance Association for many years. I was honoured to receive an award from Croydon Schools' Sports Partnership for my services to the Borough in dance.

When I heard that the Olympics were coming to London in 2012, I wanted to get involved. I knew it would have been something that my parents could have dined out on! I was accepted into the Closing Ceremony. I was in a street party on top of a truck. It was a very exciting day performing in front of 85 million people in the stadium and on TV. Before the Ceremony we saw Madness, One Direction and Russell Brand, who, like us, were waiting for their entrances. We glimpsed Prince Harry on the screens as our truck drove in, and audience members high-fived us as we exited through the seats. We were told to go home in our costumes and were treated as celebrities by the general public who photographed us many times as we went through the Westfield Centre. This is catalyst three as it opened up many more opportunities. Due to that I met Rhiannon Brace and performed in four of her works, and more thrillingly, was a volunteer performer for nine nights in the O2 with Take That; and proudly was an usher at Stephen Hawkins' interment at Westminster Abbey. As a lasting legacy, I still accompany the Pandemonium Drummers in all the big London Parades: The Lord Mayor's Show, the New Year's Day Parade, the St Patrick's Day Parade and Pride.

In 2014 I volunteered to participate in the Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony in Glasgow. I was in the 'People make Glasgow' section, dancing to Amy

MacDonald and Rod Stewart. This is catalyst four, for, many years later, it gave me the chance to be part of the Queen's Jubilee Pageant as it was directed by the same team that produced the Glasgow ceremonies. That was a very tiring day – I walked nearly 15 miles according to my fitness tracker, but I was so honoured and moved to be there, and to be able to see Her Majesty's last ever appearance on the balcony – a tiny figure dressed in green.

In 2018 I founded my own dance group, Grand Gesture, to prove that old bodies could still dance! There's four of us, all over 60, and we've performed twice at The Place Theatre in London, in Richmond, Bournemouth and Croydon. Most excitingly we were head hunted to take part in BBC1's The Greatest Dancer and spent a busy day filming in Birmingham. However, our contribution didn't make the final transmission sadly. We're currently creating a new work to be performed in the Royal Academy of Dancing's new theatre as part of Wandsworth Arts Fringe on 15 June. We have a website and FaceBook page if you'd like to check out the quirky dance theatre pieces by geri-anarchists!

### **MOIRA DYSON nee WALTERS RGS 1966 - 1973**

And now for the past 50 years.....!

When I left RGS in 1973, I started training as an Occupational Therapist at St Loyes School of OT in Exeter- in those days 200 miles from home seemed like going to the ends of the earth! I qualified in 1976 and went to work at Redhill General Hospital, later changing jobs and specialising in the emergency care of older people. In 1978 I met and married my husband and moved to Leatherhead. Like so many people disillusioned with the statutory services, after 30 years I left the health service in 2006 and joined my husband in a start-up business making pressure testing equipment for the oil industry. As you can imagine, it was a steep learning curve, but I went on lots of one-day business training sessions and did what OTs do best- jumped in at the deep end!!

All went well- assembling the machines in the garage (OK in the summer, but in the winter.....) and we realised that we needed to up-scale our ventures and in 2007 bought Falcon Forge which specialised in historic ironwork. Due to a variety of reasons, this became 'my baby' to run the operations and the workshop. This was OT on a grand scale! I knew all those woodworking and basketry classes would come in handy one day (not having used them as an OT!) Herding kittens sprang to mind, when organising a workshop of recalcitrant (but highly skilled) welders all of whom were 'special' in their own ways.

However, we completed many projects, both restoring historic items as well as creating new pieces. We were particularly proud of creating the ironwork at Arundel Castle for the new gardens (look out for our dancing golden crown on youtube) and were introduced to Prince Charles. On-going projects in the castle

were mainly replica chandeliers and lanterns- as you can imagine they need to be larger than usual.

We continued to carry out work such as making altar gates for The London Oratory and huge brass chandeliers for Norwich Cathedral. However, OT habits die hard, and we supported a young blacksmith to return to work after a long period of incapacity. I also became a Freeman of the City of London and became a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Lightmongers

Our two sons live locally so we are able to see them and their families- with lots of time for our delightful grandchildren.

We decided to retire and enjoy retirement and travel whilst we still could. In the three years prior to the pandemic, we travelled extensively- which was fortunate as our travels were curtailed- we are now setting off again!

Barely a day goes by when I don't recall the exceptional teachers we had and their enthusiasm to impart knowledge and skills. Mrs Large our Home Ec teacher- who gave me the knowledge to cater for 80 at our summer parties and a sound nutritional base- even my daughters in law use her Victoria sponge recipe. Miss Tope with her science and physics (useful in a forge), Mr Chapman who tried so hard to impart knowledge of maths, (my husband despairs sometimes), Mrs Sandford who taught us French- so useful on our travels. Geography field trips were particular highlights- recalled on our recent trip to North Wales with its glaciated landscape. Who could forget the enthusiasm of Miss Narciss Mair coaching the whole school to perform a concert in the cathedral?

We were so lucky to have had such an exceptional education- and coming from a working-class background it opened up such opportunities that would not have been available otherwise. If there is anyone out there who can still remember me, I would love to hear from you [moiradyson@gmail.com](mailto:moiradyson@gmail.com)

Moira (aka The Forgemistress!!)

## CANON LINDA WAINSCOT RGS 1968 – 1975



Recalling the elation as I opened my 11+ result, my journey to becoming a pupil at RGS had begun! Purchasing the uniform, I loved the idea of wearing a hat to school....until it became a reality! The grey 'flannel gym knickers' were something else altogether!!! In September 1968 I travelled alone on 2 buses, arriving at the former school building on Rochester Maidstone Road fearful and excited in equal measure.

Significant memories include:

being taught by fabulous teachers (more of that later...) walking up and down Rochester Maidstone Road for outdoor P.E. and, later on, for Biology and Art too assemblies with the Sixth Form girls on the balcony running down the slope outside the Headmistress' office

when the rule was only ever to walk 'sensibly'! .....

making great friends with none more so than Sue Wainscot (nee Gallagher) who is now my sister-in-law as we married two Wainscot brothers!

Now for some of the teachers

Miss Janet Trotter (R.E.) brought the subject to life, particularly at A Level.

Remarkably, I was able to meet up with her in about 2005 when she was the Principal of The University of Gloucestershire and I was privileged to be invited to be an Honorary Fellow.

Miss Carole Blyton (P.E.) who sadly died a year or so ago. Her enthusiasm for team sports was legendary!

Miss Tope (Chemistry) was the best Form Tutor for our Lower Sixth year. Sadly, I wasn't a star pupil in Chemistry!

Miss White (R.E.) taught us a prayer in Year 7 which we had to write out and illustrate for homework.... 'Anytime, anywhere, I can shoot an arrow prayer'.....if only I could remember everything else I was required to!

Dr Andrew Ashbee taught me O and A Level Music. With a musical brain the size of a planet, he never seemed to have the need to refer to books or music to explain or demonstrate anything at all!

Leaving school in 1975, I went on to study Music and Drama at Bretton Hall College in Yorkshire. A long career in education followed with posts that enabled me to teach to A level as well as BTEC Performing Arts and be involved in Teacher Training. I held leadership roles in Maintained Schools, the Independent Sector and Further Education in Cambridgeshire, East Sussex and Warwickshire.

For 20 years up to August 2020, I was the Diocesan Director of Education for the Diocese of Coventry with 75 Church of England Schools educating over 18,000 children and young people. A huge honour was to be invited to be an Honorary Canon of Coventry Cathedral. During that period, the Academies Act came into being so that created more than a little 'activity'.

Since 'retirement' it has been my privilege to undertake project work as a consultant for the Dioceses of Derby and Gloucester.

Married to Simon, we live on the Leicestershire/Warwickshire border and are members of Christ Church in Rugby. I am involved in lay leadership as a Church Warden, preaching, prayer ministry and music.

I look back on my time at RGGGS with fondness and gratitude and hope that anyone reading this is able to recall happy and interesting times too!

### **SYLVIA ROWLES nee STONEHAM**

The Telford Methodist Minister was desperate to find someone to host a doctor over from Myanmar on a church educational visit for two weeks in 1997. Someone suggested that my husband, Ken (Margaret Rowles' brother), and I would be suitable to ask as Ken was responsible for overseas students at Wolverhampton University Art and Design School and they knew we were very used to having frequent visitors from all over the world.

Than Bil Luai duly arrived and settled in with us. He told us how he had built a small wooden hospital on his own land that proved so beneficial to the community that he went on to build a brick hospital in Kalaymyo, a town near the Indian border. This was soon outgrown so he was planning an extension with better facilities.

He asked us if we would like to see the hospital when it was finished. He would have to get permission from the government when he got home for us to enter the country before he could send the official invitation. Of course, we jumped at the idea. Eighteen months later we were on our way after a very difficult time getting visas. We couldn't stay with the family as no foreigners were allowed to stay with a Burmese family. Luai booked us in to one of the best hotels in town which would barely rate a star by our standards!

His wife Shela and their three daughters, Lily 17, Miriam 15 and Sarah 12 were introduced to us. The girls were extremely shy. They had learned English in school but never spoke a word to us. The younger two were still at school but Lily's education had been curtailed at 16 by the closure of all further and higher education due to the governments fear of another student uprising. She had nothing to do except help with childcare in the extended family.

We decided we would invite her over for a year to improve her English along with Miriam, who in six months' time would also have to leave school. They arrived in June 2000 during a very cold spell and had to wear coats, hats and gloves for the first time in their lives. They were very easy to get on with and fitted in well. We aimed to give them as many experiences as we could including swimming. Getting them into swimsuits was tricky. They had never revealed their legs since they were young children. I persuaded them to come downstairs with the swimsuits on, covered with a wrap, on the pretence of seeing if they fitted but really it was to give them confidence to appear "undressed".

We enrolled Lily at the nearby technical school because her English needed more practice, but Miriam went straight into the sixth form at Newport Girls' High School to take physics, chemistry, maths and further maths using her third language! She was every teacher's dream pupil. I had to insist she stopped studying at 10:30 pm every night so keen was she to do well.

At the end of the school year, they went home for a month's holiday, armed with money to bribe the officials at Yangon (Rangoon) airport to give them their passports back as they could be forfeited to restrict foreign travel. We had asked them back to continue their education as we thought they had great potential.

Lily wanted to nurse and it so happened that our government offered a diploma in nursing with a bursary to anyone who had the appropriate GCEs. Lily applied for a place at Stoke on Trent hospital. Ken took her to the hospital for the interview and he ended up advising the interviewers how to offer her a place subject to passing the Oxford English Language test. They had never had a Burmese student before! Fortunately, our daughter Rebecca was a TEFL Teacher and after only two weeks intensive study Lily passed the exam at grade 7 which was very acceptable and started nursing that year with a room in the nurses' home, free training and money from a bursary. She is now a senior nurse working in the High Dependency Unit of Stoke Hospital.

Miriam in the meantime excelled at school, and we were at pains to think how we could afford to carry on funding her as she wanted to train as a doctor. Ken had many sleepless nights wondering how to raise the money. The fees for overseas students were £10,000 for years one and two, £15,000 for year three and £20,000 for years four and five. Add onto that £5000 a year living expenses and you can guess we were unable to manage that!

In the end Ken devised a plan: if we found 200 people willing to pay £100 a year for five years we could do it. Ken and I travelled the country to ask for funds for 'our girl'. People were very generous. The Methodist recorder advertised the situation with a photo of the girls and money just came in. In total it was just under a quarter of a million with donations from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. It was marvellous. One elderly man in Devon who had a Burmese wife gave us £500 pounds straight away in case he wasn't alive in the next five years!

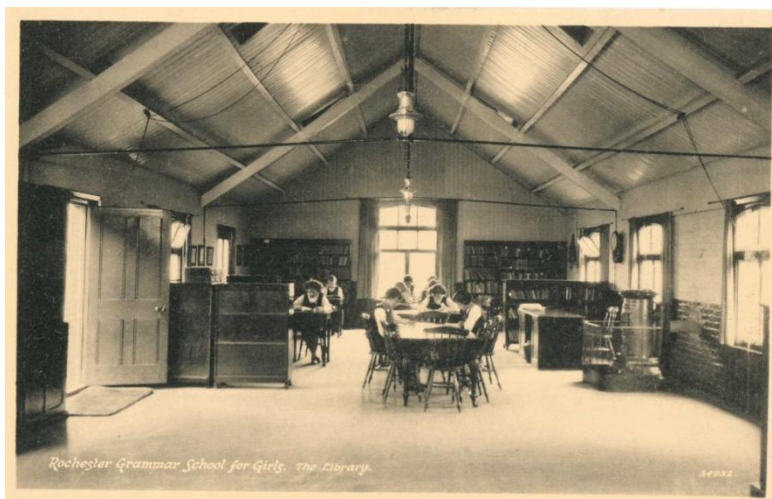
The University of Leicester were happy to have her with her excellent A level results (she scored 100% on one of the maths papers) wowing them at interview in her emerald silk national dress. Thus began her five years study for her degree and subsequent in-hospital training where she never had to repeat an exam. She is now colorectal consultant surgeon.

Sarah was three years younger than Miriam and I didn't want her to feel overlooked so we invited her over for her tertiary education in 2003. She went to sixth form college where she sat 3 A levels (as we could only afford 3) and applied to Keele University to read pharmacy. She is now a band 8 b pharmacist in Dudley specialising in electronic prescribing.

Lily married an English man from Stoke and I am now grandma to two lively boys. Miriam met a talented young Burmese lawyer in London and nearly all my family went to their glorious wedding in Tahan, a suburb of Kalaymyo, in 2012. Amicus is their fascinating little daughter who could ask for a drink of milk when she was just two in two more languages if she couldn't get it in her first! Luai and Shela, who have happily shared their daughters with us, had a trophy Inscribed for Ken and I, in appreciation of our love and care for their daughters which they gave us on our wedding anniversary in 2017 just a year before Ken died.

## RGS Over the Years

**Then:**



The library

A traditional classroom



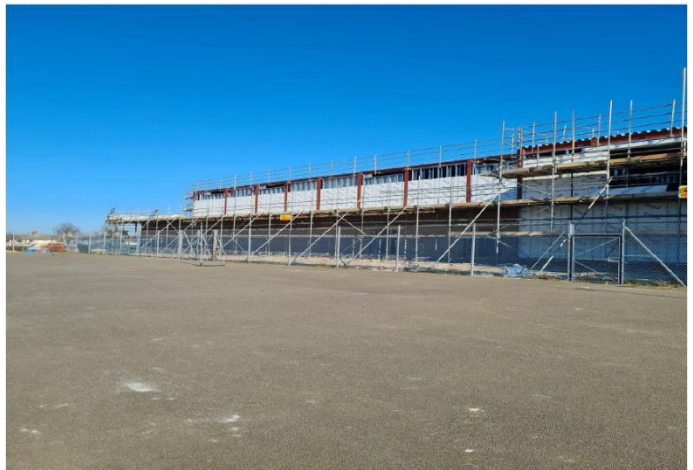


The field

**During recent construction:**



Creation of the new Sports Hall in progress





The new Art and DT block

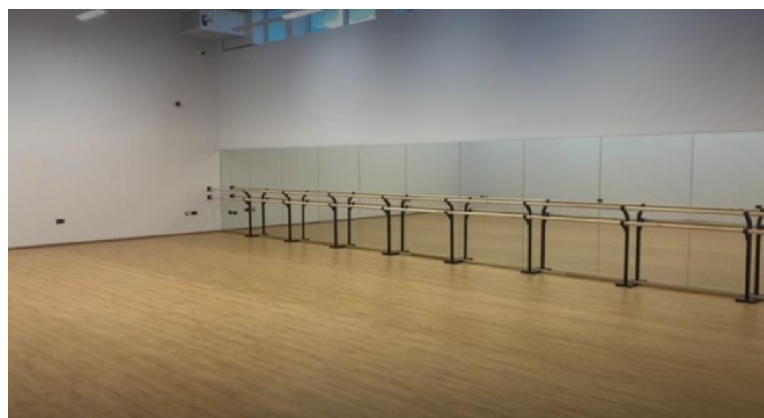
**Now:**



A fully equipped gym that is used by students daily and then open to the public in the evening. The money that is raised through gym memberships is reinvested into education.



An updated Dance Studio with mirrored walls and sprung flooring.





It can only be described as an enormous Sports Hall! With floor markings laid out for basketball, netball, badminton, football and anything else you can think of, the Sports Hall is a welcome new addition.

## What have we been up to at RGS 2022-2023?

### Thinking Reaccreditation

Staff and students are overjoyed to have been reaccredited as an Advanced Thinking School by the University of Exeter.



We applied for reaccreditation to maintain our Level 2 Thinking School status. To achieve Level 2 Thinking accreditation, we were assessed on; Dissemination of Practice, Evaluative Research, Professional Development, Differentiation and Whole School Assessment. These areas identify the school's continued work to support lifelong learning and holistic growth for all students, no matter their starting points.

We have fully embedded Thinking Skills into the school's teaching, assessment, evaluation and staff development which was recognised throughout the school's review as the University of Exeter documented

**“The school’s cognitive education development journey has moved forward unswervingly since its previous accreditation [...] Rochester Grammar School has embedded thinking and meta-cognitive approaches in all aspects of school life in order to ensure that its aims and ethos are a reality.”**

The report also praised the school for its high aspiration and achievement for students and we could not be prouder to be reaccredited as an Advanced Thinking School. Thinking is at the heart of everything we do and it enables us to provide

unique and rich experiences to our young people. We aim to deliver excellence for all and this accolade is a part of that journey. Thank you and well done to all of our incredible staff who continue to deliver passionate teaching for our students. This would not be possible without you.

**"Rochester Grammar School is an exceptional school and stands as a model of meta-cognitive excellence for others to emulate."**

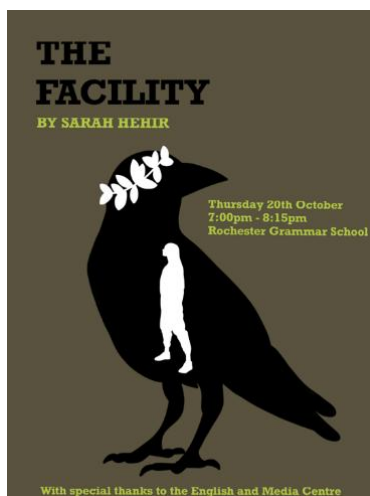
## RGS Students return to volunteer at the London Marathon

After an enforced break due to Covid, RGS students were excited to continue the tradition of volunteering at The London Marathon bag drop in October. Despite it being a long day for all involved (leaving school at 7am and returning at 8pm), our students were exemplary from beginning to end and a real credit to RGS. Plenty of tired and beleaguered runners came and found Simon Inkpen, who led the trip, to pass on how amazing the students were, how kind they were to them and how enthusiastic they were to congratulate each and every runner regardless of how long they had been on the Mall.



## The Facility

In October, the school held the world premiere of 'The Facility', a modern day reworking of Sophocles' ancient Greek play, 'Antigone', which was performed by our year 11 drama students. Having the opportunity to meet with the playwright, with her also attending a rehearsal and seeing the final performance was a fantastic experience for those involved. Every student really excelled in the performance and it was so lovely seeing them all pull together to support each other. The use of the chorus and the miscreants really added to the atmosphere and enabled us to have some interesting dynamics on stage, such as in 'Ode to Man', a moment of poetry within the script. They also enabled us to have some quite physical moments, including a lift of the character of Polynice, a character who was speaking from beyond the grave. We chose to include some British Sign Language within the performance, which was mainly shown through Polynice's character who would sign many of her lines so her character and message could be conveyed on more one level.



## OBITUARIES

### Tribute to Sylvia – 1938-2023



Sylvia died in February after a short illness.

We will remember Sylvia as a valued member of the Rochester Grammar School Alumni Committee in the recent past. She attended RGFS from 1949 to 1954, and in her retirement, she enjoyed social activities with friends from her year group.

In her private life, Sylvia was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother. Throughout her adult life, she was also actively involved in her local community, as Leader of a Brownie Pack and organiser of a Luncheon Club for Seniors. Her stalwart support of the W.I. led to her appointment as President of her local group.

Kathy Springate, Di Chamberlain and Ann West represented RGS at Sylvia's funeral. The numbers present only served to confirm that she was a much loved and respected member of her community. Sylvia was a quiet, unassuming person, for who actions spoke louder than words. She will be much missed by all who knew her.



## Member Details and Profile

Please fill in this little profile for us - we know that there are people out there trying to contact their old school friends and they are really interested to hear how you are faring. If you are willing for the information to be published and shared with other members of the Alumni Association, please complete the Form below and return it to:

Mrs Ann West  
c/o office@rochestergrammar.tsat.uk

Surname:

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First name(s):

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Current Address:

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School years:

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Telephone Number:

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Email Address:

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What did you do when you left school?

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What have you done since then e.g., work, family, interests, travels?

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What are your thoughts about school, what "events" have stayed in your memory?

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Don't stop here if you have more to tell, just carry on overleaf