

# THE OLD BRADFORDIAN

The Old Bradfordians Association Magazine



## The Yorkshire boy who speaks Chinese

Chris Murphy (1986)

News  
Features  
Obituaries

2025 Edition



# WELCOME



## ... from the Chairman of The Board of Governors

Well, that went quickly. It is hard to believe that, writing this in 2025, we are already a quarter way through the 21st century.

**Lynne Morrison**

Chairman  
of The Board  
of Governors

And, if time passes quickly, the pace of change accelerates even more so. There are few aspects of our daily lives that have not changed, often quite fundamentally, during the last twenty-five years.

Fortunately, most change has been welcome – whether through improved medical diagnosis and treatments, cleaner energies, easier access to knowledge and information, and more rapid communications.

During the pandemic lockdowns, for example, the School was able to call on technologies that would not have been available two decades earlier to continue to deliver teaching to our pupils.

Whilst it could never replace the richness of life in School, it meant we could continue to support our pupils' learning and welfare during this challenging period.

Early January, we had to use it once more when snow and freezing temperatures forced the closure of BGS and most other local schools for a few days.

Unfortunately, change brings challenge too, not least in how society manages the unintended and less desirable consequences of progress. What was a simple and clunky mobile device for making calls a few years ago is now an ubiquitous super-computer in your pocket, capable of being both a lifeline and mechanism for malign intent.

Another consequence of change is that more people will have multiple occupations during their careers with some entering jobs that did not even exist whilst they were studying. It's why schools and universities stress the need for lifelong learning.

This brings me to the main point that I wanted to make - despite all of these changes and amidst the uncertainties and challenges that we may face, BGS education is as important as ever, and probably even more so.



This is not to imply that the School has been impervious to change in recent years – quite the opposite as is testified through the remarkable developments in our estate and facilities, how we teach and how we monitor progress, the pastoral support we offer, our extracurricular provision, the incorporation this academic year of reception and Year 1 children in the Junior School, greater professional development opportunities for staff and recognition of the considerable contribution BGS makes to the economic and cultural wellbeing of the city in addition to the wider region.

At its heart, however, there has been constancy in the School's core values – Excellence, Opportunity and Happiness. These have allowed us to maintain a sense of being a close and supportive community whilst equipping our pupils to navigate and thrive (as well as continue to learn) in an ever-changing world.

We are committed to being valued partners in the local community – we are members of, and host, the monthly meetings of Bradford Breakthrough (the association of the major employers in the Bradford District) and are active supporters of Bradford's year as the City of Culture – whilst recognising that the majority of our former pupils will most likely make their mark in national and international arenas. The School is also judged by similar benchmarks.

This is why keeping in touch with our former pupils, both recent and not so recent, is so important to us.

I have long since learned that, wherever you go in the world, it will not be too long before you bump into a proud former BGS pupil. So, I suppose that my central message is the blend of continuity and change. As we start the next quarter of the 21st century, I am sure that continuity of the School's values will help provide our current and future pupils with the capacity and skills to enable them to succeed in whatever changes the next twenty-five years will bring.

Lynne Morrison

## ... from the Acting President

I write this message with a mixture of both regret and optimism. You will recall that last year I wrote of the challenges facing the Association and its Committee and the progress that we had made in our discussions with the Headmaster concerning the future of the Association.

These discussions continued throughout 2024 and as a result the initial proposals have been refined and were subsequently approved by the Membership at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 6th March 2025.

The rationale behind the decision was explained in a note to all members circulated with the notice of the EGM.



**Gordon Green**  
(1961)

Past President  
(2011-2013)





I say regret because we have in effect agreed to wind up the original Old Bradfordians Association which dates back to 1898 and we will no longer have an OBA Committee or President. My involvement with the OBA goes back to the day I left School and being encouraged by the then President to join the OBA.

Thereafter, as an Articled Pupil to Cyril Luxton (a Past President, Auditor and Secretary) I did the Audit and I have subsequently served on the Committee for many years having myself been Auditor in my own right, Treasurer and the President and now Acting President.

I haven't missed an OBA Ball (with Victor Sylvester and his 'strict tempo' Dance Orchestra) or the Annual Dinner, both of which are held on successive nights in January. The former was the premier event in the Bradford social calendar and attracted over 1000 guests sometimes with a waiting list for tickets.

The Annual Dinner was always a most convivial event where in my earlier years I met many former teachers and realised that they (or at least some of them) were actually human!

**I now turn to optimism.**

The School has established in the Development Department a team comprising of Head of Development Anya Friis ably supported by Ali Brook and Lorna Leite.

They have already taken over, with some success, the organisation of OBA events both in Yorkshire and further afield and I am certain that this will continue in the future.

Another benefit of the changes is that the funds of the Old Bradfordians Association amounting to around £120,000 will now be put to good use in supporting both the Assisted Places Scheme and a new fund to assist needy former pupils at University.

In this way we are supporting both future and current OBs which we believe to be a worthy use of those funds. It should be emphasised that The Old Bradfordians Association will continue, but under the management of the School, which I believe will be the most obvious and efficient modus operandi for the future of the Association.

The primary contact for OBA matters is Anya: **oldbradfordians@bradfordgrammar.com** I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their support and work in the past and for their help in developing the plans for these changes. I wish the Development team well in their future endeavours and I assure them of our support should the need arise.

Finally, I am sad to report the deaths during the past year of two long serving committee members, Graham Reid and Stephen Goodwin. We send our condolences to their respective families.

**Hoc Age!**





**Mark Lawrence**  
(1975)

President,  
The Old Bradfordians'  
Club (London)

## ... from the Old Bradfordians' Club (London) President

The Old Bradfordians' Club (London), or The London Club to use its abbreviated form, was established in 1896 as a social club to encourage OBs living or working in London and the south-east of England to come together in fellowship, and to support the school.



It was incorporated in 1913 and is currently listed at Companies House (the UK business registry) as a not-for-profit private company without shares limited by guarantee.

Out of the approximate 8,500 OBs alive today, The Development and Old Bradfordians' Office at the school calculate that about a third of that number live in London and the south-east of England. The London Club currently has a membership of 550, some of whom have moved on from our catchment area to elsewhere in the UK or overseas.

Our aim is still to encourage OBs from all generations, who have a connection with London and the south-east of England, to come together to meet in person their fellow former BGS pupils from the same or maybe a different generation and engage in conversation about their careers, the entertainment, social, cultural and sporting opportunities they enjoy in London and surrounding counties, their hobbies, their travels abroad or interests. By whatever conversational topic, I hope OBs can establish a connection with each other by attending our functions.

In 2024, we held a variety of formal and informal events to encourage OBs, and in some cases their families, to meet up: two semi-formal dinners at The Union Jack Club, near Waterloo Station, four social drinks events at three different bars in the City of London (one as a joint event with the School to celebrate 40-years of co-education at the school, and another to celebrate Yorkshire Day on 1st August), and three meet-ups (the first at Henley Royal Regatta; the second at The Worshipful Company of Woolmens' Sheep Drive across Southwark Bridge and The Livery Fair; and the third at The Hampstead Theatre in Swiss Cottage to see OB actor John Hollingworth play the lead role in "Reykjavik" - a play about the perils faced by the fishing industry in Hull during the late 1960s).

Some events have been better attended than others. We are still trying to achieve the same levels of attendance as before the Covid pandemic. Prior to the first lockdown in 2020, 34 OBs attended the first one and a total of 80 different OBs attended the first five informal social drinks events, with many attending on multiple occasions. I was pleased that some of these attracted a good attendance of female OBs.

Looking back through the London Club records, 15-years ago it was very common for over 40 OBs to attend the informal monthly dinners at The Devereux Arms (off The Strand), but now post-Covid we do well to attract numbers in the late teens at social drinks events and our informal dinners at The Union Jack Club (near Waterloo station), despite the food and service being infinitely better quality, and the cost of the meal being very heavily subsidised.

I suspect that post-Covid "Working From Home" has reduced the numbers of OBs coming into London during the day, who would otherwise come to an evening function direct from work. Now it means a special journey into London, which OBs are sadly reluctant to make. Also, the wide use of social media enables OBs to keep in touch with school friends and contemporaries so very easily.

However, to reinforce the point above, I believe the unique selling point of the London Club is that it enables OBs to meet in person others from a different generation whom they do not yet know, but with whom they share a common background by virtue of their attendance at BGS. Each OB might learn something of interest or benefit from others, irrespective of any age difference.





We would very much welcome members' suggestions regarding the types of events and venues that would encourage them to attend.

Please email ideas to  
**oldbradfordianslondonclub@gmail.com.**

Fortunately, the Annual Dinner at The Carlton Club still has a great pull. The 2024 version on 22nd November witnessed 93 OBs, partners and guests, ranging across several generations, fill The Churchill Room to capacity.

I sincerely do hope that London Club members will engage more in person at forthcoming functions, and I look forward to meeting you at one or more of our events in 2025.

**Hoc Age!**



**Dr Simon Hinchliffe**  
BA, MEd, PhD, FRSA  
Headmaster

## ... from the Headmaster

It continues to be a busy year. I recently enjoyed beers, Balti and lively chatter with OBs in Leeds. I now write these words on a jam-packed Azuma, throttling home after black tie dining and passing port to the left with the Old Bradfordians Club, London.

From Balti to black tie in rapid succession, clearly the BGS engine of social mobility is still purring nicely! And, needless to say, it was wonderful to be able to spend time in the company of OBs and their guests this week, although I'm less spry than I used to be and after two late nights on the trot I am finding it somewhat heavy going in my carriage today.

As mentioned in my address at London, and occasions before, our School is in good shape and people notice. This doesn't happen by magic. We have had to change and raise our game in some respects. But in many ways, this has been a continuation of those historical qualities that first made BGS great, rather than a replacement of them – a 'Back to the Future' strategy if you will for uncompromising high standards.

What we are seeking to achieve is inherently difficult, at our school, in the North, at this time. Moreover, recently, things got a lot harder. VAT on fees, the imminent removal of business rates relief, changes to the national minimum wage and National Insurance, when 70% of our costs are staff related, will work against some of our ambitions, inevitably bringing a degree of uncertainty and discomfort.

I continue to lead BGS at a time when our practice and culture have needed to evolve, sometimes against an established gain, a time when we have weathered the challenges of a global pandemic and continue to wrestle with teacher recruitment shortages and regional economic headwinds, for example.





A time when ideology threatens to overwhelm many peer group schools in our sector. This is not a moment for feint hearted leadership from Governors and the senior team as we balance our individuality and independence with a changed external context.

Gatherings in the company of Old Bradfordians make all the difference when human batteries need to be recharged. Your interest in what we are doing, how we are doing, is precious and we don't take it for granted.

Your words and gestures of support when we meet, recently in Bradford, Leeds, Edinburgh and London are invaluable. Many OBs are also benefactors, supporters of means tested Assisted Places for bright children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children from hardworking families of traditional BGS stock.

Without our benefactors, these children would soon disappear from our roll. The cost of a BGS education is about to increase – this is not of our making and reflects external factors. Only through the protection of Assisted Places will the inclusive demographic spectrum of our school be maintained. Only through the commitment of benefactors to our young people, and to social justice and mobility, will BGS remain accessible, grounded and faithful to its ethos and historic purpose.

Whilst on this theme, I hope that many reading these words might return to BGS for our Made in Bradford Gala Dinner in the Price Hall on 21 June 2025. Funds raised will count towards Assisted Places.

It promises to be a fabulous evening of conversation and connection, food, drink and live music. Do join us. Moreover, the Gala Dinner will coincide with a weekend of sports events (the Hoc Age Weekender) for our OBs. On courts, grass and river, it's going to be a lot of fun for a good cause.

Many talk about levelling up, about unlocking the potential of our children, unleashing the power of the North. People talk a lot. BGS is actually doing something, it has for generations, and continues today to make a difference in a locality where the need is great. There's a lot going on at BGS and in OB circles. I wonder how the current, somewhat weighty episode of our school's story might ultimately read?

With that said, perhaps it's time for a little levity? And a lesson or two from the BGS archives regarding the judgment that ultimately visits all BGS head teachers.

There's a copy of a BGS artefact lately discovered in our archive that hangs on my study wall. The original document, remarkably, dates back to 1641. It is older than our Royal Charter and is a serious piece of BGS and civic history. So, what can it be? The answer...

...a petition for the removal of the Headmaster!

I note some of the signatures of the Old Boys who signed it, familiar sounding BGS names like Dawson, Crabtree, Midgely, Crookes, Hodgson, Bowers, Taylor and Holdsworth. Youthful members of these West Yorkshire dynasties continue to walk the corridors of BGS today. Need I be cautious? I'm always cautious!

But why were they so upset in 1641? Firstly, because travel to and from BGS was "bad" (don't we still know it at times); secondly, education at nearby grammars had to be paid for and it was likely that 'Bradford lads' would soon have to do likewise; and, thirdly, this is a fascinating one, because boys who lived outside of the Parish were classified as "foreigners" – this is verbatim. So, if, in the mid-1600s, you were born and raised in Cullingworth, Keighley or Undercliffe, you were a foreigner – an insight into the West Yorkshire psyche of yesteryear.

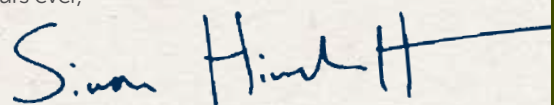
And so, to finish...

With two children at BGS, one in Clock House and our eldest starting GCSEs, and Mrs Hinchliffe now employed permanently in our PE Department, it's fair to say that Bradford Grammar School has become much more than just a choice of profession, more than a vocation even. It's our family way of life. We count ourselves fortunate indeed to have been embraced by BGS in this way, and to be able to play a small part in an illustrious history that spans generations, past, present and future.

A piece of that long history is recorded in the pages that follow.

**Read on and enjoy. Hoc Age!**

Yours ever,





Anya Friis

Head of Development

As a small team of three, 2024 was our first full year at BGS and what a year it was. We realised some wonderful donations, began our 1662 Ambassadors project and increased our events programme.

In this review I'll share some of the highlights and take a look forward at our goals for 2025.

Our ultimate goal is to enable children from across our region to benefit from a BGS education and all the life opportunities this provides. It's our mission to ensure that we can offer means tested Assisted Places to bright children, regardless of background or circumstance, ensuring they get the chance to thrive and realise their full potential.

Our aim is to raise £5 million for our 1662 Future Fund (endowment) in the next 5 years, alongside receiving regular donations to the 1662 Campaign. A Future Fund of this magnitude would go a significant way towards safeguarding our current level of Assisted Place provision.

The longer-term ambition is to raise £20 million towards the Future Fund which would guarantee our current AP programme and provide the foundation for growth – more Assisted Places and greater positive impact – at a time of growing need.

## A year in Development

With requests for Assisted Places increasing every year, and the addition of VAT on school fees, now more than ever we need the support of our BGS community to raise vital funds to ensure our School remains accessible to all.

To enable our department goals, one of our projects we supported this year has been the creation of a community of Ambassadors who will assist the Development Department and 1662 Fundraising Committee in supporting the mission and advocating the need for Assisted Places.





We have worked hard in the recruitment process; all our ambassadors are members of our Old Bradfordian community, with several being direct recipients of a bursary/Assisted Place. They truly believe in the culture and community of Bradford Grammar School, and, with their support, we hope to build upon our 1662 Campaign and enable more children to benefit from a transformative education.

We have ambitious plans to grow our Future (endowment) Fund which will yield income for Assisted Places in perpetuity. We have been touched by the generosity of Old Bradfordians and friends and aim to develop this remarkable support with our Ambassador community over the coming months and years.

Perhaps seek them out at any of our up-and-coming events and ask how you might be able to get involved.

Our events programme was very much a departmental highlight in 2024; it's fair to say, we've enjoyed meeting each and everyone of you throughout the year. From the Swimming and Water Polo Gala back in March, to the Colfe's Rugby match in December and every event up and down the country in between.

We look forward to hearing your stories and watching you enjoy moments with your peers. 2025 promises to bring you more chances to get together with fellow alumni.



As far as our financial health and wealth is concerned, this year we brought in £753,000 to the 1662 Campaign for Assisted Places – 1st September 2023 to 31st August 2024. We've had donations of all sizes from 114 donors who contributed donors aged 21 to 91.

Regardless of the size of donation, it all counts. Every penny and every pound. You can read our Impact Report (available on the BGS website via School News, Publications) to find out more about the donations and our donors.

It is our aim to not only maintain, but also increase, the current level of Assisted Place Awards. We are in a strong position, but with uncertain times ahead, we must secure the future of our programme.

In 2025, every Old Bradfordian is being given the opportunity to get together and also support the goals.

On 27th and 28th March 2025 we held our BGS Giving Day, where all donations received counted towards our Future Fund. Our Giving Day motto was 'Be the One', as we hope, one by one, everybody will support in some way and help us work our way towards that £5 million goal.

Whether you sign up to a monthly direct debit, give a large one-off gift or a legacy pledge, every donation will transform a child's life. The Giving Day was a great opportunity for the entire BGS community to get involved and ensure our events, activities and fundraising efforts are a success.

Furthermore, on the 20th and 21st June 2025 we will be playing host to a wealth of OB sporting events during the 'Hoc Age Weekender' and putting on our Made in Bradford Gala Dinner, where we will celebrate the achievements of our alumni and benefactors whilst raising funds for our Future Fund.

We hope you can join us for a superb weekend of friendship and a special evening filled with fine food, entertainment and company, all whilst raising vital funds to secure a child's place at our School.

Tickets are £80 and open to OBs, friends and families of BGS. Packages for tables of 10 are also available to purchase from £800. Be quick though as there are only a few left!

Finally, it just remains for me to say a heartfelt thank you to each and every Old Bradfordian, for coming along to our events, for engaging with us, for your generous support and commitment to our goals. On behalf of Ali, Lorna and myself, we look forward to seeing you in 2025.

Together we can make our mark, so BGS children can, in turn, make theirs.

**Best wishes**



Angela King



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# NEWS IN BRIEF

“

**I'M TRULY PASSIONATE ABOUT DOING ALL I CAN TO IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF CANCER PATIENTS, PARTICULARLY IN YOUNG PEOPLE**

”

## OB Natasha joins NHS board

An Old Bradfordian who set up a charity with her family in memory of her sister has been appointed to an NHS board in Yorkshire.

Natasha (Tasha) Dawson (2013), who attended Bradford Grammar School with her sister Ella, has joined the NHS West Yorkshire and Harrogate Cancer Alliance Board as a Public and Patient Representative (Lay Member).

Tasha is a founder and trustee of the Ella Dawson Foundation, which was established in memory of Ella, a young artist who was just 24 when she died in July 2021 following two years of treatment for an aggressive form of blood cancer.

The Huddersfield-based charity offers young people with cancer access to physical, psychological, emotional and wellbeing support, which Ella was passionate about.

After leaving BGS, Tash gained a first-class honours degree in Sports and Exercise Science from The University of Leeds and has used her knowledge and skills to make a difference by delivering exercise rehabilitation and supportive care to many young cancer patients.

Following graduation, Tasha worked as a Health and Wellbeing Coach at Active Leeds, helping people with long term conditions lead active and healthy lives beyond their diagnosis. She is now the Health and Wellbeing Coach for the foundation and has been involved in setting up the 5K Your Way Move Against Cancer in West Yorkshire – an initiative that inspires and empowers people affected by cancer to live an active and fulfilling life.

As part of her new role, Tasha will be working with the Patient Experience Strategy and Improvement group. “I’m delighted with the appointment. I’m truly passionate about doing all I can to improve the experience of cancer patients, particularly in young people,” she said.





**Above:** Natasha (Tasha) Dawson (2013)

**Below:** Eva Lockett (2021) and Victoria Eyre (2021) collect their awards

## DofE Awards

OBs Eva Lockett (2021) and Victoria Eyre (2021) attended Buckingham Palace to receive their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

The girls worked towards their award during Covid, overcoming challenges such as completing their community-based tasks. Their patience, hard work and endurance paid off earning them a sunny day at the Palace



# Yorkshire and BGS coach at rugby final

OB and BGS Head of Rugby, Dan Scarbrough (1996), coached the Yorkshire County Senior Men's team in their 2024 campaign.

The team won their pool most notably beating Lancashire at Hull Ionians to reach the Bill Beaumont Div 1 County Championship final played at the Allianz Stadium (Previously known as Twickenham Stadium).

The team played Southern group winners Kent in the final. Yorkshire went ahead and were in control of the match until they lost a player to a red card after 35 minutes. They had a kick to win in the last minute which was pushed wide so sadly it was Kent who were victorious 30-31!

This was the first time in 16 years the white roses have reached a final. Dan, who has been coaching the Yorkshire team for the last 3 years, was ready for a tough match.

He said: "We knew Kent were a very good and solid side who won the County Championship last year, therefore performing the basics well and following our processes was essential.

We had some diamonds in the squad and our team did themselves proud, despite the final scoreline."



**Left:** Yorkshire County Senior Men's Rugby team

**Below:** Nick Hooper's war memorial video

**Right:** An OB audience with the King

## War memorial video produced



Many Old Bradfordians will remember Head of History, Nick Hooper (2015).

Mr Hooper, who has had a lifelong interest in the First World War, and led school battlefield trips for 25 years, has been back at School to help produce a video in collaboration with Bradford Through The Lens videographers, Riaz Ahmed and Graham Swain.

A project that began in 2014, Nick has always enjoyed researching and uncovering new stories about our wartime Old Bradfordians and has written over 200 biographies of those who died during, or as a result of, their war service.

Watch for yourself this fascinating look back at our fallen soldiers and teachers; a journey which starts at the War Memorial:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aQ1IJttE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aQ1IJttE)







## Awards from the Palace

Two Old Bradfordians received awards in July from His Majesty at a ceremony at Windsor Castle, London. Chris Murphy (1986) and Dr Asif Qasim (1990) earned themselves the prestigious King's Awards for Enterprise, which recognises exceptional performance by British companies.

Chris Murphy, the founder and CEO of The Albion Knitting Company, was recognised with an Award for International Trade. The company manufactures luxury knitwear for some of the most famous fashion brands in the world. Upon meeting King Charles, Chris said: "The King was fascinated to learn that Albion sweaters were manufactured in the UK at the London factory and he congratulated Albion on being a flag bearer for British textile production and traditions."

Dr Asif Qasim, a cardiologist and founder of MedShr was recognised with an Innovation Award. The company has produced a medical knowledge platform that connects over 2.5 million doctors globally.

Commenting on the accolade, he said: "It is a real honour to receive a King's Award and we are proud to fly the flag for British Enterprise and Innovation. The King and I discussed the impact climate change will have on healthcare, as well as our company's mission to democratise medical education, improve patient care and ultimately, to save lives."

**Congratulations to both OBs on their awards.**

“

**BOB, WITH CHARACTERISTIC RIGOUR AND HUMANITY, URGES US TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE CAN ACHIEVE MEANING IN OUR WORKING LIVES, DO SOME GOOD IN THIS WORLD AND ALSO MAKE A FEW QUID.**

”

## Book launch at Salts Mill

Former Head of Physics, Dr Bob Gomersall, who taught at BGS from 1980-1997 launched his first book at Salts Mill.

The book “Worthwhile Wealth – An entrepreneur’s guide to success that satisfies” is a book for the entrepreneur that wants to not only create a profitable business but also a worthwhile life.

Bob says his book has inspiration and insights from a wide range of business builders. A book that sets out a vision for a new kind of return on investment and shows you how to create success for yourself, your way.

“It is ultimately about motivation – what motivates individuals to set up businesses and organisations and hence to create wealth in its widest sense.”

Dr Simon Hinchliffe, Headmaster commented: “Bob, with characteristic rigour and humanity, urges us to understand that we can achieve meaning in our working lives, do some good in this world and also make a few quid. A very reasonable and grounded philosophy, entertaining too.”

Anyone interested in purchasing the book, can buy here:

[mybook.to/Worthwhile-Wealth](https://mybook.to/Worthwhile-Wealth)



**Right:** Former Head of Physics, Dr Bob Gomersall signs his book  
**Far right:** James Leavor (2012), with the Great Western Air Ambulance helicopter





## Four OBs celebrate Drummond Awards

Four Old Bradfordians have been given awards of up to £1,750 each this year from the Drummond Studentship.

The trust, which is operated by the Old Bradfordians (London Club Ltd), was established in 1911 by James Drummond of Ilkley, the then President of the club in memory of his late wife, Eliza. Awards are made to Old Bradfordians so they can pursue any special studies necessary for their careers.

This year, medical student Alex Doulah (2019) received £1,750 towards an eight-week work placement shadowing top paediatricians, specifically in nephrology (kidney medicine), at the Starship Children's Hospital, the largest children's hospital in New Zealand and also the South Pacific Islands.

Civil Engineering Masters student Sacha Macy (2020) was given £750 towards his trip to Peru in March 2025, which is part of his Global Engineering Module. Sacha will spend four weeks working on a practical civil engineering project with a local community, which has previously included work such as installing working toilet blocks and running water services for a town in Peru.

Astrid Knox (2020) received £750 towards her costs studying for her Masters in Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi in America. Astrid recently graduated from University College London with a First Class Honours in History and Politics of the Americas.

Finally, James Leavor (2012), who is studying for a Masters in Paramedic Medicine, was awarded £750 to pay for a Diploma in Immediate Medical Care. James recently gained a promotion to his dream role with the Great Western Air Ambulance as a Trainee Specialist Critical Care Paramedic on the Helicopter Emergency Medical Team.





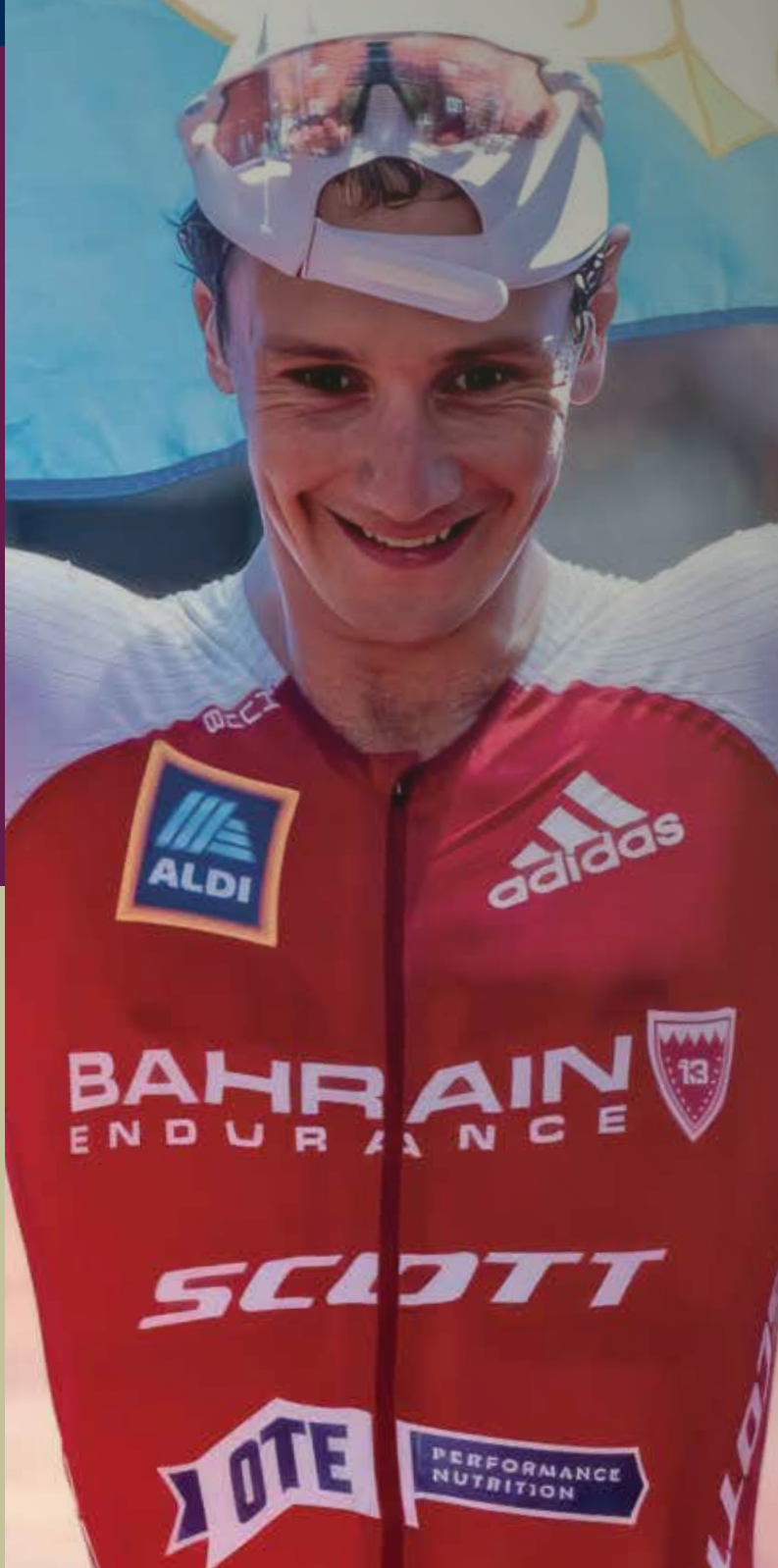
## Alastair Brownlee retires

A double Olympic triathlon champion has been described as an “inspirational Old Bradfordian” whose character and achievements have become the “stuff of legend at his former school” following his retirement.

Alastair Brownlee (2006), OB and former Bingley Harriers runner became the first triathlete to successfully defend his Olympic title when he won gold in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, four years after triumphing on home soil in London.

Dr Simon Hinchliffe, Headmaster, said: “Alastair Brownlee is an inspirational Old Bradfordian whose character and achievements are the stuff of legend at his former school, Bradford Grammar.

“A great many of us have cheered him on throughout his career from youth competitions to world and Olympic triumph. It is a privilege to be part of Alastair’s life story, and we’re incredibly proud of him and his brother, Jonny. We wish Alastair every success and happiness for all that comes next - as our school motto, ‘Hoc Age’ encourages – do it!”

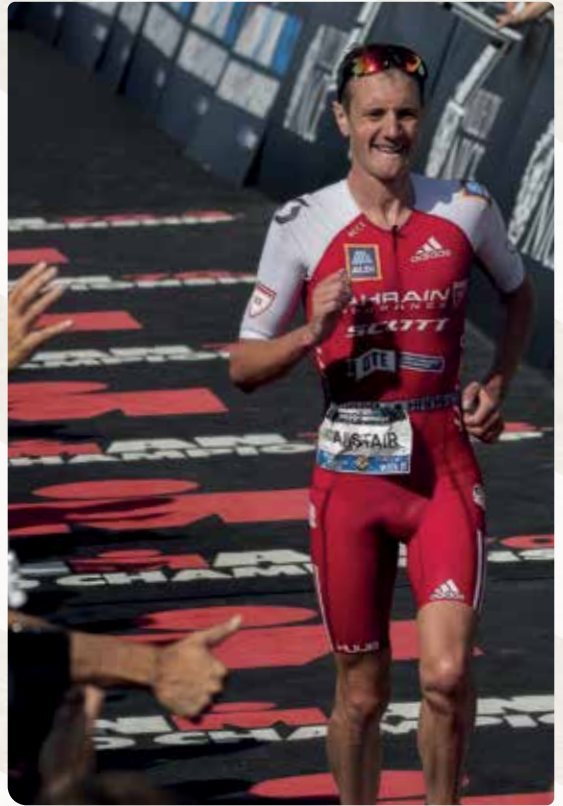




“

**I LOOK  
FORWARD  
TO EMBRACING  
A SLIGHTLY  
SLOWER PACE  
OF LIFE ...**

”



A post from Brownlee, 36, on Instagram read: “It’s time to close this chapter... This marks my transition from professional triathlon, a moment approached with both dread and excitement in equal measure.”

36-year-old Brownlee, whose first significant title came in winning the 2006 Junior European Duathlon, wrote on social media:

“Triathlon has profoundly shaped my life; I have dedicated nearly half of it to being a professional athlete, fulfilling my childhood dream and achieving far more than I ever dared to imagine. Why now? It feels right. I am happy and content, eager for what lies ahead. I find myself smiling because it happened, rather than crying because it’s over (to paraphrase Dr. Seuss).”

Brownlee was also individual World Triathlon champion twice, won the European title four times and competed alongside his brother and OB Jonny, two years his junior, at elite level. He is now considering what his next steps are away from the sport.

“I look forward to embracing a slightly slower pace of life, yet not too slow,” the Yorkshireman added.

“There’s an exciting array of events, challenges, and adventures awaiting me — things I’ve always wanted to have a crack at but haven’t had the chance to pursue. For me, sport has always been a personal journey of exploration, and I’m excited to try some new challenges.

First, I have many wonderful people to thank and some well-deserved relaxation to embrace. In the coming months, I’ll share more about my career and the incredible individuals who have been part of my journey, along with the new and exciting challenges and projects I’m eager to tackle. I am deeply grateful to each and every one of you for your contributions, no matter how small you may believe they are. Your support means the world to me. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

**Contributor: Rowman Newman**  
Senior Reporter, Telegraph and Argos.



The Old Bradfordian  
2025 Edition

# 40 YEARS OF WOMEN AT BGS



Four decades ago, BGS became a co-educational school. Since 1985, many girls have walked the corridors and have gone on to become accomplished women. We speak to three of them about their recollections and careers.

### Rachel Bentley

Looking back on her time at BGS in the 1980s, Rachel Bentley reflects: "landing in a school where, for hundreds of years it had been all boys, I can only imagine was a little bit of a shock to our male peers as they adjusted to hearing girls giggle (a lot), whilst the teachers had to find new ways of teaching. Ultimately, the boys didn't ask for us to come, though we were very much welcomed, respected and nurtured in the BGS way."

David (DAGS) Smith was the headmaster at the time and interviewed many of the girls coming through. In Rachel's eyes, he was looking for 'bright, brave and driven' young women, girls proud of who they were. It was in the Sixth Form that Rachel met her future husband and lifelong best friend and they bonded on their first day at the school.

Fast forward to 2024 and Rachel can be found in Wetherby, still with close connections to the school and the teaching staff. Personally, and professionally, she is now turning to her creative instincts, focussing on supporting businesses within the arts as well as creating art herself. It is a move, perhaps, that speaks to the 'bright, brave and driven' young women of BGS.

When asked to sum up her feelings about our School, the message was clear: "it's hard to think of life without Bradford Grammar as it has given me the drive professionally, as well as a husband and, with that, our two sons. I simply wouldn't have had my life, had it not been for BGS."



Rachel has gone on to have a long career working across financial and marketing sectors. As a leader, coach and mentor she has sought to support other people on their own professional journeys, which she firmly believes is a quality instilled during those formative BGS Sixth Form days.



**BGS GAVE ME TWO THINGS -  
LIFELONG FRIENDSHIPS AND  
RESILIENCE. IT'S WHEN THE  
CHIPS ARE DOWN AND THE  
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HAVING BOTH ARE.**



**Natalia  
Dannenberg-Sprier**

Natalia left BGS armed with her A-levels and a drive to succeed. A Leeds girl, Natalia continued to study languages (namely German) at university, with a plan to become an international lawyer. However, whilst at the University of Nottingham, Natalia directed a play in German and realised that her creative side was calling.

Subsequently, she changed career direction and wrote to 23 TV production companies for a job. She received one acceptance as a runner, which was duly accepted, and her TV career began, one Natalia looks back on with fondness: "I started as a runner on an astronomy show called 'Stardate' and moved onto history and science programmes such as 'Time Team' and 'How Do They Do It?'. It was a wonderful time, full of adventures and amazing people. I found myself down South African mines, flying onto an icebreaker ship by helicopter in Canada and crawling around under Egyptian pyramids."

Around this time, Natalia also met her German (soon to be) husband and a relocation to Bonn followed, where she worked in broadcast journalism, which furthered her love of the media, news and the German language.

Despite living and working abroad, Natalia remained in close contact with her BGS peers: "School gave me two things - lifelong friendships and resilience. It's when the chips are down and the bumps in life come you realise just how important having both are. BGS was certainly a character forming school and I would say that the experience gained there absolutely helped me see light and positivity when the setbacks in life happened."

For the last 13 years, Natalia has been working at the International Paralympic Committee, firstly leading the social media and editorial team, then as the Head of Brand & Engagement.







**Jane Chapman**  
Assistant Head  
(Pastoral),  
Jane Chapman,  
has worked at  
Bradford Grammar

Alongside having three children, Natalia's career progressed, and her team were instrumental in creating a public shift in perception, transforming attitudes towards Para-athletes through the Paralympic Games.

The highlight was most certainly the London Games: "London 2012 was a game changer in terms of how we shifted the dial; we really didn't foresee the groundswell of warmth and enthusiasm for the Paralympic Games. We worked tirelessly; 20-hour days living off adrenalin, with coverage on every national paper, across all social media platforms and strategic partnerships boosting everything we did. It was the year the Paralympics and Paralympians truly became cool."

In 2024, the year of the Paris Olympics, aside from developing the brand for the Games, Natalia was additionally tasked with a new role of Head of Paralympic Heritage. In this capacity, she aims to explore and communicate the history of the International Paralympic Committee, the Paralympic Games themselves and the attendant athletes to a global audience.

**School for 35 years. Upon taking retirement in July, she talked about how the school's pastoral provision has grown and adapted to the changing needs of today's young people – and the challenges and highlights throughout her teaching career.**

It is the end of a long school day and one of Jane Chapman's colleagues pops her head around her office door to check on a pupil.

"I've done everything I can at my end," she says. "Is there anything else you can think of before I go?" "No," replies Jane. "And thank you, you've done more than enough."

It is moments like these that emphasise how much Jane will miss her colleagues when she leaves at the end of the Summer Term. Jane has taught at BGS for 35 years and is looking forward to spending more time with her family, but will miss the busy, independent school she has loved working at.

"I've been blessed with great colleagues here, not just in the Classics department and the pastoral team, but also within the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)," she says. "We've got a hard-working SLT, and I feel privileged to be part of it. I have always felt supported by talented colleagues who put the School first."

Jane joined BGS in 1989 as a teacher of Latin and Greek and, after going part-time for a few years when her children were young, went on to become Head of Department in 2006.

"Teaching Classics at BGS has been a richly rewarding experience, and I've loved it," she says. "I've had the privilege of teaching some wonderful students and the satisfaction of growing the department as its Head."

We managed to keep Greek on the curriculum when it was under threat, and in 2009 we introduced Classical Civilisation A level. I'm grateful that the School allowed us to grow at a time when Classics departments in other schools were shrinking. I particularly enjoyed taking Classics outside the classroom with some memorable trips to Italy and Greece, as well as minibus excursions to Classics events up and down the country and to London plays and exhibitions."

Jane became Assistant Head (Pastoral) in 2013 and throughout her time at the school, has seen many changes in the pastoral provision.

"When I arrived at BGS in 1989 it was a very different school," she says. "The pastoral provision for the boys here consisted of a school nurse and form tutors who registered pupils in the morning and took them to assembly, but spent little time with them otherwise. We had some girls in the Sixth Form and a few female teachers on the staff, but it was very much a traditional boys' grammar school, and we felt our job was to educate and develop upstanding young men. The teaching staff largely saw pastoral provision as the parents' responsibility rather than the School's.

There was no PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) education within a very traditional curriculum. A very different place from BGS today."

Gradually, the School changed. Girls joined the Sixth Form in 1984 and the School went fully co-educational in 1999.

Head of Year roles were created with a Senior Tutor to oversee pastoral provision. Schools everywhere were required to play an increased role in the development of their students beyond academic subjects.

PSHE at BGS gradually evolved, with Debbie Chalashika's appointment as Head of PSHE in 2014 a major step forward.

Says Jane: "Debbie developed a rich, contemporary programme with excellent resources for her teaching colleagues to deliver. We all gradually became confident in delivering lessons on mental health, finance, social topics, careers, relationships, and citizenship and more, whatever our original subject area. Society now expects schools to be offering this wider education as part of its pastoral provision, but it has been a journey to get where we are."

One of the biggest challenges Jane has seen has been the effects of social media on young people.

"The dreadful thing about it is you can't escape it," she says. "When I started teaching, if you were having a difficult time at school, struggling with friendships, or being bullied, you could go home at 4 o'clock and leave it behind until you came back in the next morning. You were not on your phone through the night to check what was being said about you and to you. Today, the posts, likes and messages go on all day and all night, and you don't get any reprieve at weekends or in the holidays from the noise. It's relentless.

We try to protect our children from the distraction in school by banning mobile phones during the school day and we educate and support them about the damage to mental health and the risks online. I think schools have a responsibility, as does society in general, to try and put the monster we've created back in its box. But this is no easy task as it's so addictive. It needs adults to set better examples of healthy social media use too."

Another major challenge the School has faced pastorally has been supporting children through the COVID pandemic, particularly when the students weren't allowed into school.

"The pandemic was a time of frightening uncertainty and confusion for our children," she says. "It was a challenge trying to support them remotely and the BGS staff did a superb job of sustaining remote education.

Post pandemic, it was harder for some children who hadn't socialised for a while. We had children who struggled to return to normal school life and since the periods of lockdown we have had more cases of EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance). But we were also impressed by the resilience of most of our students (and staff), who weathered the disruption with growing resourcefulness.

In pastoral terms, perhaps the most valuable legacy from the traumatic disruption was a confirmed awareness of the need to equip our young people with an understanding of how to look after their mental health and wellbeing."

Asked what some of her highlights have been during her long career and she ponders for a while.

"I don't really see my time here in terms of highlights," she says. "But I have felt a quiet satisfaction and sense of achievement as the pastoral provision at the School has taken shape. Getting PHSE properly established within the School and getting a full-time School Counsellor to work alongside our established pastoral team were important steps.



"Being a teenager has never been easy. Trying to work out who you are and who you want to become can be challenging. That's why it's important to educate our children on good mental health and what bad mental health looks like, and when to ask for help and how to find it. And also, how important it is to be yourself and be happy in your own skin."

Other important developments have included a restructured Heads of Year system, an increase in nursing provision, creating the roles of Pastoral Prefects (a team of 20 supports the younger year groups), and Pastoral Teaching and Learning Champions. Jane is also excited about the new Learning Support team and their plans for the future of SEND at the School, and says she is sorry not to be staying on to see this grow.

Reflecting on her time at BGS she says: "The joy of teaching is playing a part in the development of young people and knowing you have made a difference.

You can do that in the classroom, but also, and importantly, around the edges. In the ethos of school activities and co-curricular life, in the way form tutors build relationships with their tutor groups, in the support offered to students when they need it. There is nothing better than seeing them thrive and feel proud of themselves and happy with who they are."

"I feel lucky to have had my career at a school like BGS. If you look around the school, you will see that the students carry their talents very lightly here. They're modest and grounded, clever and funny, and they continually surprise you and make you proud to be a part of their journey."

It's hard to imagine BGS without its beloved pastoral lead, but colleagues will, perhaps, find comfort in knowing Jane is looking forward to some quieter days ahead, spending time with her husband Malcolm, and her children, all of them Old Bradfordians. Harry is now a management consultant living in London, Mary, a doctor in Hampshire, and Alfie, a management consultant in Australia. She's also looking forward to spending time with grandson, Dylan.

"He'll be coming up to one when I retire," she says. "It will be fun to spend more time with them all. And time for gardening, walking, reading and some overseas travel, I think. I'm looking forward to it.

"There will always be the question of who exactly am I when I'm not Mrs Chapman at BGS? But I guess I'll have to work that one out!"

**I FEEL LUCKY TO HAVE HAD MY CAREER AT A SCHOOL LIKE BGS. IF YOU LOOK AROUND THE SCHOOL, YOU WILL SEE THAT THE STUDENTS CARRY THEIR TALENTS VERY LIGHTLY HERE. THEY'RE MODEST AND GROUNDED, CLEVER AND FUNNY, AND THEY CONTINUALLY SURPRISE YOU AND MAKE YOU PROUD TO BE A PART OF THEIR JOURNEY.**

# FEATURES

A police detective and former social worker found his gritty day jobs fuelled his imagination enough to write his first novel  
**'Care and Control'.**



**OB Roshan Pitteea (2001) spent several years as a social worker before joining West Yorkshire Police, where he runs the force's Stalking Unit, based in Wakefield.**

The son of two nurses who was born in Mauritius, the 41-year-old always had an active imagination and would often make up stories when he was younger, and even during his early years at Bradford Grammar School.

"I can recall when I first started at BGS I'd come from a small primary school, and I felt a bit overwhelmed. I would write my observations down in stories, one of which was called The Demon Physics Teacher – and I hadn't changed any of the names," he laughed.

"Obviously I've learnt a lot since then, such as how to disguise my characters!"

Roshan set up the Leeds branch of The Blast Project, which supports boys and young men who are at risk of being sexually exploited.

After gaining valuable safeguarding experience there, he qualified as a social worker and moved into statutory child protection. Roshan later joined the police where today he is a Detective Sergeant, soon to be an Inspector having just passed his exam.

While he wrote short stories and penned a novel in his teens (mostly about spies and secret agencies) it wasn't until he reached his 40s that he found the time to write again.



# FROM POLICING TO POWERFUL PROSE

“  
**THE RESPONSE TO THE BOOK  
HAS BEEN PHENOMENAL.**  
”

When a former partner's dad asked him to co-author a book with him, his passion for the written word was reignited and he began work on his own novel, *Care and Control*.

The book delves into the darker side of life and follows a police investigation into why a teenager keeps going missing from care. Roshan published it in June and is now working on its sequel, in-between policing shifts.

"I couldn't get it down on the page fast enough," recalled Roshan, who lives in Keighley with husband, Chris.

"By writing it, I wanted to celebrate social work and policing because I felt quite strongly that it had taken quite a battering over the years. I'm not saying they do things right all the time, but over the course of my career since my 20s, I've worked with some remarkable people."



Roshan said that, as a gay man who felt repressed growing up, writing had given him an opportunity to explore the world through his characters.

"Having spent a lot of my youth and early adulthood in the closet, I've learnt to be more open and to celebrate my identity," he said. "Being able to write intersectional characters is really freeing. The response to the book has been phenomenal. I did get permission from work before I wrote it and they've been really supportive about it. It's a creative outlet for me, but if it also shines a light on some of the good things which happen in my profession then so be it."

While he's drawn heavily on his career experiences for his first book ("I've developed some really twisted villains as a result"), the second will need more research as he'll be weaving in voodoo and the self defence system, Krav Maga.

"I can often be found on a Saturday morning learning Krav Maga then heading off to my writing class," he laughed.

Roshan has also started a blog via his website, where he keeps his readers up to date with his journey as an author and explores the themes of his work in more detail.

He looks back on his time at BGS fondly, despite 'dressing as a Goth in Dr. Martens boots!' for most of it.

"What I liked about BGS is that there was a freedom to excel there," he said.

"They had quirky, memorable teachers who really helped. I felt like I came away with a lot of transferrable skills and a way of thinking outside of the box. That certainly carried me through to university and beyond."

**Visit Roshan's website:**

[roshanpitteeaauthor.com](http://roshanpitteeaauthor.com)

**To buy Roshan's book:**

<https://bit.ly/4iJJVLr>

**Portrait photography:**

[hedderickphotography.co.uk](http://hedderickphotography.co.uk)



An anonymous benefactor has given a significant donation, allowing several children from a range of backgrounds to take up Assisted Places.

# Generation DONATION

Seven new Year 12 students have been awarded Assisted Places thanks to the donation, where they will receive an outstanding education and be inspired to dream big and reach their full potential.

It brings the number of students who have been awarded APs at BGS this year to 14, with much of the money generously gifted by the school's Old Bradfordian alumni via its 1662 Campaign. Two of them, a Year 12 and a Year 13 student, have also received scholarships from the Rank Foundation's 'School Leadership Award' which has supported 1,500 pupils since 1978. The students attend a leadership event in each of their Sixth Form years, take part in regular online meetings and spend two weeks in the summer holiday working for a non-profit organisation. The students also receive financial support.

One existing AP recipient, Zinedine M, in Year 12, said: "The opportunities I have at BGS go way beyond the curriculum. I'm a member of the Politics, Bio Med and Debating Societies, all of which are setting me up for my future. I'm grateful to those who support the 1662 Campaign and thank them for enriching my life immeasurably."

The recent benefactor, who wishes to remain anonymous, said: "BGS provides a transformative education; it offers an environment for students to thrive and achieve their full potential. Bright, talented children deserve an outstanding education which is why I support the Assisted Places programme. We know that by helping aspirational children we can also achieve a more positive future for them and their families."

According to the English Indices of Deprivation, Bradford is the fifth most deprived area in the UK with 22 per cent of children living below the poverty line.

The school has recently launched the 1662 Campaign Ambassadors programme, where benefactors discuss ways to sustain and increase the number of Assisted Places at BGS.

Anya Friis, Head of Development at BGS, said: "BGS has a long history of social responsibility, offering talented and hard-working children from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to reach their full potential.

We couldn't offer these places without the generosity of our benefactors, and we are hugely grateful to them and the transformational impact they continue to have on children's lives in Bradford."





## In October, actor John Hollingworth (1999) took on his latest role as Hull trawler owner Donald Claxton in the world premiere of Richard Bean's new play Reykjavik.

John Hollingworth feels fortunate to be working regularly. The 43-year-old has just finished starring as Antony in Blanche McIntyre's bilingual English and British Sign Language staging of *Anthony and Cleopatra* at Shakespeare's Globe, and is now in rehearsals for Richard Bean's new play, *Reykjavik* at Hampstead Theatre.

It is good, he says, to get stuck into two long theatre projects back-to-back, compared with the stop-start nature of screen work. "We did our last show at the Globe and I went straight into doing this play," John says. "Theatre is the most fun you can have as an actor. I'm lucky to have done so much on screen, but it is often much more broken up. You do two days here, four days there, then time off. With theatre you get a shared sense of endeavour. You get a group of people forming a company and working hard to tell a story."

Born in 1981, John was brought up by his mother on the outskirts of Bradford. When a neck injury put a stop to his passion for rugby, he discovered acting instead. He landed a spot with the National Youth Theatre, studied at Trinity College Dublin and eventually graduated from RADA in 2008.

He has worked extensively on stage – The Deep Blue Sea at West Yorkshire Playhouse (now Leeds Playhouse), *The Norman Conquests* at Chichester Festival Theatre, *Trouble in Mind* at the National Theatre – but is best known as a character actor in TV series such as *Poldark*, *The Crown*, *The Queen's Gambit* and *Mr Bates vs the Post Office*. Ironically, he says he often finds himself playing posh people.

"I grew up on benefits in Yorkshire and got an assisted place at Bradford Grammar School, which had a fairly metropolitan accent," John reminisces.

"Now, I make money playing posh guys. I think a lot of casting directors don't even know I am from Yorkshire"

"*Reykjavik*, is set in 1975 and is about a fishing trawler that is lost near the city. Some men survive. I play Donald Claxton, the hull owner who heads to Iceland to sort it all out. The play is written by Richard Bean, who is a master craftsman. It has a lot of funny stuff, but within a serious and moving structure. And it's directed by Emily Burns, who is a generational directing talent at 33 years old. It also has a fantastic, incredible bunch of actors in it"

**In conversation with The Stage's Fergus Morgan.**



**JOHN  
HOLLINGWORTH  
- REYKJAVIK**

# THE OB WHO BECAME A HOLLYWOOD PRODUCER





## While ‘fortunate timing’ may have opened doors in Hollywood for Umar Hussain, he says it’s the politeness and empathy developed at BGS which led to excelling in his work on Hollywood blockbusters.

People can have many serendipitous moments throughout their lives.

For Old Bradfordian Umar Hussain (2010), he created his own luck by strategically positioning himself at the German VFX (visual effects) and animation conference, FMX, not long after finishing university.

Recognising that the VFX and animation industry thrives on connections, the young graduate researched extensively and identified the conference as a crucial networking opportunity.

Despite having limited resources, he saved up, secured his spot, and flew out with his sister Safia, a fellow Old Bradfordian, who wanted to help her brother get there safely and achieve his goals.

“While everyone else was running towards the artists and famous film directors, I knew I wanted to talk to an Animation Production Management professional, a much more niche job role,” he recalls.

“I waited in line at the Disney Animation Studios booth and asked to speak to someone in Production Management. The production person there was genuinely delighted to be of assistance and applauded my willingness to fly out and put myself out there.

“I ended up chatting to him for one and a half hours. He said, ‘if you want to break into films, you really need to get an internship’ and explained the landscape of the UK VFX and animation industry.

He gave me a list of names and companies to research, and I went straight back and began crafting a plan.”

Eventually, an opportunity arose at one of the companies the production person had mentioned via Creative Access, a company which helps pair aspiring interns from under-represented demographics with media companies.

And, after extensive interview prep with the help of the Internet and family, he secured an HR internship at a London VFX production company. While he didn’t want to work in HR, had got his foot in the door.

Umar went on to learn the industry from within and networked internally to secure a move from HR to the Feature Film VFX Production department. He quickly moved up the ranks to become a Visual Effects Producer, working on blockbusters such as Star Wars Episodes VII, VIII and IX, Fast & Furious 9, Doctor Strange, and, one of his childhood favourites, The Lion King. His position today, is a long way from his early days at BGS where he says he didn’t consider himself to be anything special academically.

While he’d been a member of the Film Society at BGS, he wasn’t sure what to study when he left the Sixth Form. Knowing he wanted a career in film but not knowing how to get there, he opted for a degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Manchester University for its broad post-graduate options.

Serendipity struck when he bought a textbook from someone in the year above on his PPE course who was an aspiring film director. The two became friends and Umar began helping him on music videos and short films. On one of the sets, he met someone who helped secure him a stint as an intern on the reality television show Made in Chelsea before then taking the leap with the HR internship opportunity.



"I got in the door but there was a long way to go to where I wanted to be," he says. "And as soon as I got that role, I started taking people at the company for coffee and asking for their advice on how to transition across into production. Eventually an opportunity came up to cover some absence in the Feature VFX Production team on the remake of Robocop and I was on my way."

From there, aged 21, Umar was offered the role of Production Coordinator on the hit film, Guardians of the Galaxy, and he leapt at it – even if it meant missing important life events.

"I missed one of my graduation ceremony events to keep working," he laughs. "My parents weren't too happy to miss the photo opportunity, but it was a great project. I really loved that one. I was very lucky to meet the team that I did and learn from the best straight away. I had been back and forth between Manchester and London while finishing my degree and doing internships, but once I secured the full-time role on Guardians of the Galaxy, I moved down to London to live with my grandma in Eastcote."

He then worked at Framestore, an Academy Award-winning British animation and visual effects studio, and from there, he joined Industrial Light & Magic, the American visual effects company founded by film legend and Star Wars creator George Lucas in 1975. The company, which is now owned by The Walt Disney Company, had just opened a London studio. "Around 2014 the buzz around the VFX world was about Industrial Light & Magic opening a London VFX Studio," he says. "They famously had US headquarters and were the only place that would work on the new Star Wars films. I applied for a Production Coordinator role on Star Wars – Episode VII, which was hugely competitive with around 80 applicants."

"The system of promotions once you are in, is a bit like getting a Karate belt. I went from working as a Visual Effects Coordinator to a Line Producer to an Associate Producer and then Producer."

You work with every department as you move through the ranks. It's a very technical industry. I always went for coffees with all the artists and creative supervisors and asked them what they were doing and what they needed. I don't think academically I was anything special at school, but if you showed me how to do something I could do it. They showed me, and it helped me take advantage of the technology."

Umar went on to become Production Manager on The Lion King ('I loved the Lion King growing up!') and then, in 2019, undertook the same role on Star Wars Episode XI. One of his biggest projects was working on ABBA Voyage for three years, from inception and creation to show time.

It was a 'challenging time' he admits, due to the sheer scale of the production which involved so many different people. "I can't listen to Abba now without flashbacks," he laughs.

After Abba, Umar was Associate Producer on Fast and Furious 9. Eighteen months ago, through his hard work and reputation as a leading production expert in his field, he secured the highly coveted O1-B Visa to work in the USA, a visa for those in film and television who demonstrate outstanding/special ability.

Realising one of his dreams of living and working in America, he moved from London to Miami where he began working with the senior American team at the same company across huge films such as The Marvels, Twisters & Wicked.

Over the years, he says, he's really enjoyed being lucky enough to attend premieres of the films he's worked on where he's had plenty of 'wow' moments, seeing celebrities and people he just worked with walking the red carpet.

While he's incredibly discreet about his work and celebrity interactions, he recalls a special moment when JJ Abrams saw the ILM team across the room at a Star Wars premiere after party and came over to personally thank them for their incredible VFX work on the project.

"That was a really lovely moment for the team to have together, a really memorable night," he says.





Umar, now engaged to his partner, Eleni, who he met between his US and UK travels, plans to move back to the UK to get married and see where life and his work will take him - possibly further into the world of augmented reality, virtual reality and immersive experiences.

In June, he came back to his old school to be guest speaker at the Junior School Prizegiving, taking some rare time off.

He reassures his eager young audience that they don't need to have their futures all mapped out at such a young age to achieve in life.

"It's not a big deal if you don't know exactly what you want to do," he says. "I had a strong feeling that I wanted to work in films, but I didn't know the right way in."

He credits his success to taking the advice from the Production Management professional he met in Germany, and being driven. He may say he never excelled academically, but there's no denying his ability to knock on doors, to listen and learn, and take advantage of every opportunity.

"As well as the impressive new technology on offer today, personality counts. BGS is such a lovely place to learn and being polite and empathic has got me far," he says.

"My father, Zulfi, always said, 'if you don't ask, you don't get'. I took him at his word, and you'd be amazed how many times people will offer to help if you ask nicely."



## OBI ENE SCORES FOUR IN FORTY FOR SALE SHARKS

**OB Obi Ene (2021)  
kicked off his career  
and permanent  
contract with Sale  
Sharks by scoring four  
tries in 40 minutes  
against Caldy during  
the Premiership  
Rugby Cup.**

The final score was Sale Sharks 40 - Caldy 7. "It was certainly the biggest highlight of 2024 and I felt I had put myself on the map," commented Obi. "Before the match, the coach was joking with me and inferring that I should attempt to get a hat-trick, but he had to be happy with the fact I got four tries!"

It was his proudest moment this year, having joined the club on a permanent 3-year contract in September 2023 and the Rugby Union professional is currently juggling a full-time degree and a full-time rugby role. The new position has meant Obi has moved from Newcastle University to Manchester recently so he is close to his club, allowing him to be around his team and to train.

Obi credits School and his teachers for teaching him how to deal with life when it gets tough, on and off the pitch. From the History teacher who prepared him for life after School to the rugby coaches who were the motivation behind being better in the game.

Whilst his teammates have their rest days and down time at the cinema and coffee shops taking it easy, Obi can mainly be found in the library remote studying to ensure he has a career beyond rugby. His degree is in Business, Accounting and Finance; a world away from sport.

"Finishing my degree is so very important to me. I enjoy the business side of my studies and eventually I will want to use my academic side and all that I learnt at BGS and at University. For now, I'll be making the most of my time playing rugby and hopefully doing some coaching eventually too."




A portrait of Chris Murphy, a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair and a light beard, wearing a light-colored blazer over a sweater. He is standing in what appears to be a library or a room with bookshelves in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white geometric shape on the right side.


# THE YORKSHIRE BOY WHO SPEAKS *Chinese*

Having grown up on a council estate, Old Bradfordian Chris Murphy (1986), knows only too well the transformative power of a good education. He talks to us about his entrepreneurial luxury knitwear journey and also giving back via the School's Assisted Places programme.





## I LOVED BRADFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL FROM THE MOMENT I GOT THERE



"I never met my father," he says. "My mother and I lived with Nana, Grandad and Uncle Leo, who had Down's syndrome, and it was a very loving family. I started school at the local comp and I was just...bored. Swain House told my mother I was thick, but she knew the problem was the school and she was determined to get me into BGS."

Chris's academic record began to improve when he joined Bradford Grammar's Junior School, after his mother managed to scrape together the money to pay the fees. He faced leaving BGS at the end of Year 6, as she could no longer afford for him to continue, but fortunately he was given a coveted Assisted Place (which he's fairly sure came after a Governor watched his fantastic flute playing at an end of year BGS concert!)

"I loved Bradford Grammar School from the moment I got there," he recalls. "I loved the diversity of the school. There were a lot of wealthy kids, and kids from pretty normal families, but there were also kids like me, from humble backgrounds. No one gave me any stick about where I'd come from. It really gave me a sense of aspiration, that I could do and be better. I was knocking around and making friends with lads from wealthier backgrounds, it was a real eye opener and gave me a lot of motivation to try and do better for myself."

Although Chris admits he didn't do too well at BGS academically until his final year ("I was enjoying doing too many things – sport, music, friends!") he found early on that he wanted to study Chinese, inspired by a teacher at BGS.

"There was an economics teacher called Sid Greenwood and I really admired him," he says.

One of Chris Murphy's mottos is being a 'big fish in a small pond'. Certainly, when he left BGS in 1986, the saying served him well when he became one of the few (if any) students heading off to study Chinese and Korean at university.

"I loved English, but everyone was studying it," he says. "I wanted to find an area of specialisation where I could stand out from the crowd. When it came to the graduate jobs fair at the end of fourth year there was only one other graduate who could speak Chinese and Korean, which meant we were in a very select pool."

The graduate fair led to a year in South Korea in management consultancy as a precursor to a fantastic career in textiles, which has seen Chris set up two companies and establish them as some of the leading providers of luxury knitted goods in the world. His clients range from Chanel and Hermes to Chloe and Givenchy with knitwear worn by models walking runways in Paris, New York and Milan – a long way from the Swain House Estate in Bradford where he grew up.

"He was the first person who gave me a sense of social justice and a deep interest in politics. That led to an interest in communism and China and I became fascinated with Chinese history."

After a brief stint as a management consultant, he heard about a graduate trainee opportunity at Dawson International PLC, which at the time was the world's largest processor of cashmere and owned much of the UK's textile infrastructure across Yorkshire and Scotland.

"Not many people are aware the best cashmere in the world comes from China, and once China began moving from a planned economy towards privatisation, Dawson needed someone on the ground who could speak Chinese – that's when the Chinese speaking Yorkshire boy stepped forward," he laughs.



"They sent me to Hong Kong to map the supply chain of cashmere in China in 1994, to see how it was evolving and establish the emerging key players controlling the raw material. I went on to play a key role in establishing the troubled JV with King Deer in Inner Mongolia."

Chris later moved to Swiss-based company, Alpha Tops SA, one of the biggest traders in alpaca, mohair and cashmere.

He was sent to China to open a Beijing office where he introduced alpaca to the Chinese market. "From zero in less than two years, China was consuming more than half of the production of alpaca in South America," he says. "We were doing great, but I could see the future was for value added rather than just selling raw materials. I'd seen how not to build a factory in China from the Dawson experience, and I knew many UK and Italian knitters were struggling trying to offshore manufacturing to Asia.

I chatted with Alpha Tops and, with investment from them, I set up Alphetex which became the first WFOE (wholly foreign-owned enterprise) producing textiles in Beijing.

Chris then had to find new clients. He sourced the best samples he could find in China and flew to New York.

"I begged and borrowed every contact I could, and I managed to get an appointment with Ralph Lauren Purple Label. They took one look at me and pretty much said 'who the hell do you think you are,'" he laughs.

"But I also managed to get an appointment with Ralph Lauren Childrenswear, and I came away with an order for them and another for Jonnie Walker, the whisky brand!"

Today Alphetex employs 350 staff in Beijing and turns over £30m per year. From that success, he set up The Albion Knitting Company in 2014, the only industrial-scale knitwear factory established in London since the Second World War.

"Brands such as Chanel and Hermes want production that's exclusively in Europe," he says. "Even back in 2010 I could see luxury brands would move towards localisation and of course Covid also showed us there are a lot of issues with over extended supply chains, logistics and politics. So, even though most people said I was bonkers setting up a knitting factory in London in 2014, but it has proved a good decision."

Albion employs 50 people, turns over £6m per year, and this year won a King's Award for Enterprise. "It's been a journey, I love what we do," he says. "I love working in a creative industrial space where we make beautiful things and I'm part of the connection with Bradford's industrial heritage and, in some small way, being able to tap back into that.

"The main challenges I think are political. I share OB Mark Learmonth's deep distrust of Government. Most problems in my career have been created by politicians or politics."







So much so, Chris is now relocating Albion to the Isle of Man. "Manufacturing costs in London have tripled since I set up Albion and the UK Government has lost all control of the economic levers and is utterly helpless," he says.

"But we're really looking forward to our move to the Isle of Man. The Government has been extremely welcoming, including a substantial grant to move the business over there. Half of our staff are coming with us in search of a better quality of life and the other half we'll recruit locally." While Chris has a London pad, he'll also be looking for somewhere to live in the Isle of Man with partner Cheri. Daughter Hannah is working in PA Consulting in London and her sister Julia is studying Chinese and English at Newcastle University.

Thanks to a strong senior leadership team, Chris doesn't have to travel to China as much as he used to.

He also has plans to give back. He's opening a knitting school in London to teach practical skills to graduates leaving institutions such as Central St Martin's, the world-renowned arts and design college.

"There's a real need for the practical skills. It will be like a finishing school for them, and we are working with UKFT (UK Fashion and Trade Council) to design the course," he says.

Chris has also recently become one of BGS's Ambassadors for Assisted Places and is fully funding an Assisted Place.

"I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunities BGS gave me," he says.

"The teachers that taught me and friends I met there opened my eyes to another world and gave me an approach that transcended my local environment. I wouldn't have dreamt or done half of what I've achieved were it not for the springboard BGS gave me.

"I do think Bradford was an excellent place to grow up. Despite a bit of urban decay and some of the deprivation around, Yorkshire and Bradford values are very strong. You might not have all the advantages, but you learn how to get far with very little. The world doesn't owe you a living, it's out there to be made, and BGS gives you the confidence to believe, to dream and seize those opportunities. That's what Hoc Age means.

"Now I'm in my 50s, I'm at a time in my life where you start to think about giving back. There are many things you can do with your money, but I think it's important to give back. When I look back at when I went to university, I had a full grant and my tuition fees were paid. You don't have that now; kids are coming out with £50k of debt. That is a disaster for social mobility. But giving back is something I can do; I can make a difference and if just one kid is able to follow their dreams and be successful through an Assisted Place, the sense of social justice I learnt at BGS will have come full circle."

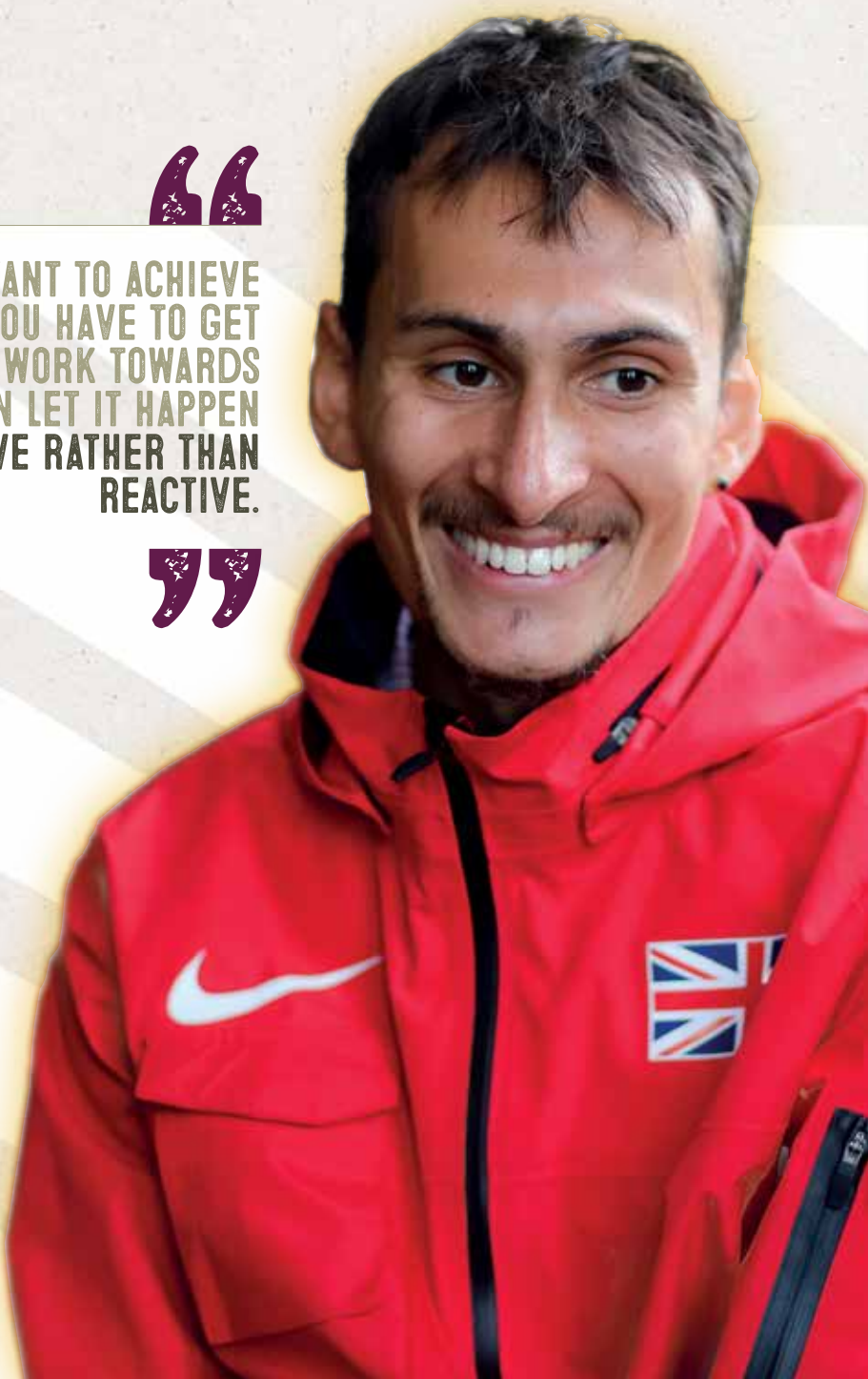


# *Interview with* **EMILE CAIRESS**

“

IF YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE  
SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO GET  
ON WITH IT AND WORK TOWARDS  
IT RATHER THAN LET IT HAPPEN  
– BE PROACTIVE RATHER THAN  
REACTIVE.

”





The Team GB long distance runner, Emile Cairess (2016) is the current European record holder for the road 10 miles. In 2024 Emile came third earning a podium place and bronze medal in the London Marathon and achieved a fourth place in the marathon at the Olympic in Paris. A career that continues to go up and up, Emile spoke to us about his time at School.

**Describe BGS in three words?**

I would say fun, energetic and supportive. The school invested in me and I was privileged to be able to come to BGS on a bursary. It was a really positive, supportive environment for me to grow up in.

**Who was your best friend?**

I had a few 'best mates' - Sachin Ahir, Usama Alli, Alife Blackhall and Joe Holden - and we all really looked out for each other. Alfie left the school in Year 11 but I'm still friends with the others. They come and support me at my races and they're very understanding when I can't come out much because of my training. We take the mick out of each other all the time. We can all laugh at ourselves which is important as running and training can be pretty intense - it's certainly kept me grounded!

**What did you want to be when you grew up?**

Initially, I wanted to be a footballer (I'm a big Arsenal fan) and then I knew I wanted to be involved in sport. As I got better at running, my focus shifted towards that.

**Most embarrassing moment at school?**

I remember one time falling over in front of everyone at school while I was doing some kick ups with the football. All the kids were watching. My friends found it hilarious.

**What was the food like?**

I thought it was fantastic. I used to have breakfast there every day from Year 2, a bacon sandwich and a hash brown. At lunch you could get pizza or fishfingers but there would also be home cooked food, such as cottage pie, and there was a big salad bar. I enjoyed eating there.

**Where was your favourite place at school to hang out with friends?**

The field. We used to play football there every lunchtime.

**Teacher's pet or the detention room?**

I did get a few detentions and it was usually for being disorganised and not doing my homework.

**Prefer to go it alone or be part of a team?**

Long distance running is a solo sport and I love it. I'm very competitive and I'm always trying to be the best, so I'd say 'go it alone'.

**All-star sports captain or outside field lingerer?**

BGS gave me a fantastic opportunity to try different sports but I was running outside of school and that took up all of my spare time. So I was neither a sports captain nor a field lingerer!

**Win any prizes at school?**

In Junior School I won the maths prize in Year 2 and the English prize in Year 6. I also won Sports Person of the Year in Year 6.

**Who was your favourite teacher?**

That's a difficult question and it's hard singling one out. There were so many teachers who had a big impact and I felt they all really cared about me as a person. They supported me in my racing, making sure I caught up with school work and not minding if I needed to leave lessons to compete.

**Advice for your school-age self?**

Be more organised and keep on top of things, and be more disciplined with homework. I struggle with being organised to this day. But I wouldn't want to give my self any life altering advice. I'm happy with who I am and the choices I've made.

**How would your teachers describe you?**

Maybe someone who is happy and fun to be around. I'm quite easy going. It's a bit of a juxtaposition since I'm also really committed and competitive but it works well!

**The school's motto is Hoc Age, roughly translated as 'get on and do it'. What does that mean to you?**

If you want to achieve something you have to get on with it and work towards it rather than just let it all happen - be proactive rather than reactive. At BGS they always encouraged you to try things you might not think of. I enjoyed maths and I remember taking part in a maths challenge. I didn't do very well, but it was good to have a go. It made me take that extra step. That was enough for me, but for someone else it could have been a turning point for them. The school definitely encouraged you to get on and have a go.



Barrie Scott (1980) is an Old Bradfordian who has spent his career as a teacher, Headteacher and Priest. He was ordained 29 years ago and has spent over 35 years in the education system. As an education specialist, Barrie's day job entails leading and training teachers and school leaders, in delivering good governance across the Diocese of Birmingham, as an advisor for 52 Church of England schools.

## WHY I GIVE BACK TO BGS

— **BARRIE SCOTT**

The desire to provide support for the education system, Barrie attributes directly to the BGS education he always felt so fortunate to have, and to his parents for creating the opportunity.

"My mum said categorically that my brother and I were going to have the very best education and go to the best school in the country. Like many of my BGS friends, we weren't a wealthy family and lived a very modest life, sacrificing holidays and any other luxuries so that the school fees could be met. Fees came before anything else."





Barrie grew up in Bradford and started at Thornville in 1971 aged 8. Lifelong school friends were formed here and moving up to the main school, Barrie embraced all of the opportunities that became available to him as a teenage boy. He played the organ in assembly, went on exchange trips to France and Germany, took part in swimming and badminton, sang in the choir and performed in the school plays.

"Attending Bradford Grammar School was more than just achieving good grades and academic success. It instilled in me the 'can do' attitude that I have taken through life. I wouldn't dream of not trying something and my approach is just to have a go and make the very best of it. I take this attitude into every school I work with."

Colleagues refer to Barrie as having a Nike 'Just Do It' attitude. Or in BGS terms – Hoc Age! Nothing is off limits and goals are there to be achieved. "I've always tried to take the education and ethos of Bradford Grammar through the state system in my career. In my second headship, in 2009, in an 11-18 comprehensive of 1400 pupils in Staffordshire, only 2% of its 6th Form students obtained places at Russell Group Universities. Within 4 years we had grown this figure to 25%."

It's clear that Barrie cherishes and is grateful for the years he had at BGS. The only occasional drawbacks to school life being compulsory cross country and the school uniform. "I was never really a runner and sadly it was the days of the brown uniform; it's fair to say I've never worn brown since!"

Barrie credits his upbringing and childhood for all he has achieved in life creating a desire to give back to BGS and the Assisted Places programme. Recently, he has joined the Keeling Society and pledged to leave a gift in his will, which will enable children going forward to benefit from a BGS education. A gift that he believes will transform the lives of others.

"I owe everything that I am and everything that I have achieved in life to my parents and to Bradford Grammar School. My parents put my education first and I took a Hoc Age approach through life. I have pledged to give back and join the Keeling Society so that future generations can benefit from the same."



Remembering BGS in your will is one of the most personal and significant ways you can help to safeguard the future of talented young people in and around Bradford, and that of BGS itself.

All legacy gifts, regardless of size, help us to pass on the transformative gift of a BGS education. Legacy gifts will be directed towards the school's permanent endowment for Assisted Places, providing assurance that your gift will be preserved in perpetuity, just as you intend.

**For more information, or to request a legacy brochure, please email:**

**[development@bradfordgrammar.com](mailto:development@bradfordgrammar.com)**

As your support echoes through the years, you can be confident that countless future Old Bradfordians will make their mark in the world.





Headmaster Dr Simon Hinchliffe joins OB Sir David Wootton to discuss his time at BGS, and his love of classics, rowing and music.

# *Interview with* **SIR DAVID WOOTTON**

**Simon Hinchliffe (SH):** *Sir David, let me start by asking about your time at BGS as a pupil.*

**David Wootton (DW):** Before I came, I was aware that my uncle had been to BGS, although the significance of that was lost on me because I was so young, and I didn't have any contact with him in relation to the school. Both my parents were teachers in other schools. They were keen for me to attend BGS. Having passed the entrance test I arrived aged 10 in September 1960 from a state primary school. For me, it was a wholly new world.

I remember the immensely civilised, cultured and learned classics teachers who were all highly committed to their subject. I did a number of other subjects, of course, but with one exception, I don't have much memory of teachers beyond classics because there wasn't the same level of engagement from me.

**SH:** *Who was the exception?*

**DW:** That would be David Crowther. He arrived when I was 15. He'd had one prior teaching appointment, so was probably in his mid-20s then. But of course, all teachers are the same age in the estimation of young schoolboys! David was a physics teacher but also the master in charge of rowing and I'd joined the BGS Boat Club the year before, when it was looked after by Courtney Lloyd. I was fairly flat-footed, useless at chasing balls, but I was strong and energetic. The Boat Club - yeah, I thought 'I could do that'. David Crowther was ambitious for the Boat Club and again, it was something I could do. I became very committed.

At the same time, the Hallé Orchestra was at St George's Hall in Bradford and BGS had an arrangement under which, through Mr Walsh, we would supply boys to be the programme sellers. You could sit anywhere in the hall free. My love of music was kindled. So that again was another opportunity provided to me. I sat behind the orchestra and could watch and listen to Sir John Barbirolli and other well-known names.

**SH:** *So, classics gave you an initial beachhead at BGS, a way in? Rowing and music followed.*

**DW:** Yes, and fundamentally when you're at school you feel an obligation to do what the teacher says, but it's bigger than that. Looking back on it, it was a huge opportunity. Through studying I developed a sense of detail, and a steely will to deliver quality. I wanted to do well, and the teachers responded. They'd all done classics to a high level themselves and were committed to the subject, and they were very encouraging.

**SH:** *You have alluded to some characteristics, nurtured in you at BGS, that extend beyond your love of classics, rowing and music. Are there any traits that BGS might have fostered in you, which were subsequently taken into life beyond the school gates?*

**DW:** I used the word, 'quality' earlier. I try to make sure that each thing I do, whether it's a meeting or a speech, or when I have to produce something, it is of a high quality, and not dashed off. People who get an e-mail or a letter or something, feel the compulsion to respond immediately, and that response can often be shallow. I don't like doing that: I prefer to wait until I can get it right.

**SH:** *Is that a wider reflection on modern living and working, and the cult of immediacy?*

**DW:** Yes, sadly.

**SH:** *Where did your BGS education take you, and what avenues opened up beyond BD9?*

**DW:** My life beyond BGS began with two books, one about Oxford, one about Cambridge. I decided I'd apply to Cambridge. And I spotted that in rowing Jesus College, whilst not always top of the Cambridge pecking order, was there or thereabouts almost every year. At the time, the then Headmaster of BGS was a former Oxford man. So, when I told him that I wanted to go to Cambridge I did so with mild trepidation. But he said, 'jolly good ... off you go ... but you're on your own'. I think he respected my decision.





**SH:** You are still involved with rowing. Would you care to say something about that?

**DW:** The best-known event I am involved in is an international one, Henley Royal Regatta which was established in 1839. I am one of 65 stewards, and together we run the regatta. There's a private enclosure at Henley called the Stewards' Enclosure. You have to be a member of it to get in. It is a special place, and being there during the regatta is a privilege. The cream of rowers from this country and many parts of the world compete there.

**SH:** This is an opportunity to communicate my gratitude to you, for the invitation you extended to myself, and some OB benefactors and BGS rowing parents, to join you in the Stewards' Enclosure during one such regatta.

Being a dutiful headmaster, I recall my innocent efforts to reorganise the 'garden furniture' in said enclosure to make the setting even more accommodating for our number. I clearly transgressed the hallowed and military trim turf in doing so. I recall a firm hand grip on my shoulder, followed by a polite but impatient voice asking me to kindly put his chairs back where I'd found them. I turned and dutifully apologised to Sir Steven Redgrave, then shuffled off, Pimm's in hand, chastised.

Moving on, I wonder if I might now ask about your ongoing involvement with Bradford Grammar School. You remain a loyal advocate and supporter of all that our school does. Perhaps you'd like to tell us about your connection now?

**DW:** There's a time gap in my life in the sense that, after I left for university, I hardly ever visited the school. A career in London and family life took me away, and for many years I had to concentrate on that. Well into my legal career, I found myself an elected councillor in the City of London and thereafter progressed to being Lord Mayor of London in 2011/12.

Around that time, I felt I needed to build around me some indications that I wasn't just a middle-aged, best suited lawyer. I thought that reconnecting with the school would be a good thing to do and I was very pleased with the school's response, which was immediate. And I was delighted that following a visit I made during my time as Lord Mayor, I was asked to present the prizes at Speech Day. Which I did. The following day I was invited down to the BGS boat house on the River Aire. So, I went with my father, stepmother and wife. None of them told me that I would be unveiling a new boat with my name on it! It was on that occasion, by the Aire, that the then Headmaster suggested I become a Governor.

**SH:** I'm glad he did.

**DW:** So am I.

Ultimately, I was delighted to be asked to help the school with its external profile. There are obvious challenges to the school's position. Over the years Bradford has not done as well as some other places economically. More recent threats map onto

that. But it's also clear to me from other involvements I now have in Bradford, that we are one of the youngest and most entrepreneurial communities in the UK: Bradford is on the up. And the entrepreneurs, especially those in the Asian community, are staying here and doing well. They want Bradford to succeed, and they want to live here with their families. Tapping into that zeal, that enthusiasm, and into that loyalty to place, will drive growth and improvement.

BGS is already part of that dynamic. Independent schools are a bit out of fashion at the moment, and that means it is difficult for us to achieve the recognition and engagement that we merit. However, what we offer Bradford and the district beyond is potentially transformative to it, whether we are in fashion or otherwise.

**SH:** Finally... if Sir David Wootton could give a piece of advice to his schoolboy self, what would it be?

**DW:** I'd say, work out what you want to do and be. And then just go for it, do it, and do it properly.

**SH:** David, thank you so much for your time and candour this afternoon.

**DW:** You are most welcome, Headmaster.



OLD  
BRADFORDIAN

## Obituaries

With thanks to John Bennett (1973),  
Obituaries Editor

We record with sadness the deaths  
of the following Old Bradfordians and offer  
our deepest sympathy to their families  
and friends.

James  
("Jim") Bentley  
(1944)

1926-2023

Jim was born in Bingley,  
leaving BGS, as Head  
Boy, in 1944. After  
National Service and  
Cambridge University  
(First in Classics, Sidney  
Sussex), he spent twenty  
years in the Inland  
Revenue (HMRC) as  
a Tax Inspector, before  
joining a firm of London  
solicitors as Head of Tax  
in the late 1960s. A keen  
sportsman, he won the  
Yorkshire Shield with  
Bingley Rugby Club in  
1951. He was particularly  
proud of kicking a  
penalty goal on his 50th  
birthday in a parents/  
sons school match.  
He played squash into  
his 60s and golf into his  
mid-80s. He was also  
active in his community  
with the local church,  
scouts and after  
retirement with Probus  
and University of the  
Third Age U3A. Jim died  
peacefully in his sleep  
at the age of 96. He was  
married to Ethel from  
1953 until her death in  
2021 and they leave  
a son and daughter.

Canon John  
Bearpark  
(1954)

From T & A Obit

1936- 2024

Born in Odsal, John  
moved with his family  
to Guiseley, where  
he attended Oxford  
Road School and St  
Oswald's before BGS.  
He then attended  
Oxford University and  
Lincoln Theological  
College. He was made  
Deacon in September  
1961-taking the role of  
Assistant Curate at Holy  
Trinity Church, Bingley.  
Following this he served  
as Priest in Charge at St  
Hughes, Baildon, before  
becoming the Vicar at  
St Saviours Fairweather  
Green in 1967. In 1977,  
John, his wife Dorothy  
and their children,  
Andrew, Rachel and  
Catherine, moved to  
Steeton where he was  
Vicar at St Stephen's  
and Chaplin at Airedale  
General Hospital.

In 1994, he became  
Parish Priest at St  
Margaret's High  
Bentham as well as  
Rural Dean and, in 1999,  
St John the Baptist Low  
Bentham became part  
of John's remit. He  
was involved in local  
schools, care homes,  
amateur dramatics  
and chaired election  
hustings.

David Moore  
(1963)

1943-2024

After three Thornville  
years David chose the  
Classics stream, leaving  
after a year as Head  
Boy with a scholarship  
for St John's College  
Cambridge. He was  
a talented all-rounder  
who excelled especially  
as an opening batter  
in the First XI. He also  
attended the nets  
at Yorkshire County  
Cricket Club, the team  
he supported over  
many decades.



Following graduation he became a teacher, with one of his pupils at Macclesfield School, Peter Moores, becoming the future England cricket coach. His final post was Head of St Dunstan's College in south London. The Old Bradfordians' Association, of which he became President was an important part of his retirement. He made a point of attending functions of the London branch and wrote a book about the School in the era of his own attendance\*. He also made an enormous contribution to the cultural and intellectual life of the city of Bradford, as University Librarian and a stalwart of the Bradford (Civic) Playhouse.

\*Haec Egimus: All This We Did Standish Media Services Limited; 2011 ISBN-10:0957108303



**David Crowther**  
(1999)

1939-2024

In 2024 former Master and Second Master, David Crowther, sadly passed away aged 85. David Crowther joined the staff at BGS in 1965 and gave 34 years of service firstly as an Assistant Master of Physics, then as Head of Physics, and finally as Second Master, a post he held for 20 Years until his retirement in 1999. David, or Big Frank, as he was fondly known to the pupils had a no nonsense reputation, with pupils, quaking at the thought of being interviewed by him if they had erred in their ways.

For David was quick to latch on to any inconsistencies in their stories always being forensic in his discovery of the true detail. He was never afraid to take the hard decisions, administering justice with fairness and integrity. However, this approach and reputation masked his true character. He cared very much for the pupils, and staff, and was always a very willing and sympathetic listener in times of need. As Second Master, David was the School's Examinations officer, he was responsible for coordinating teachers' cover, he compiled the Red Book organised Founders' Day and also Speech Day. All of this required daily and unrelenting vigilance and attention to fine detail which established BGS's reputation for thorough and well directed administration. Whilst making the School run smoothly, David continued to teach a half timetable, during which his pupils would witness his patience, care and dedication in helping them understand the finer points of the Physics syllabus. In times of trouble, David was a rock of support for pupils and staff, always being there when needed, and this alleviated (by their own admission) the loneliness of command for at least two Headmasters!

When David arrived at BGS he brought with him a love of Rowing which he used to rescue the sport at the school by launching an appeal to raise funds for a new Boathouse and coaching. David led BGS rowing very successfully for fifteen years. David was also a great supporter of Music and Drama attending many plays and concerts throughout his BGS career. Finally, no obituary of David would be complete without mentioning some of the comments received by the School from Old Bradfordians following the sad news of his passing, such as:

"David Crowther a great man, alongside DAG Smith and Douzy, three of the most inspirational role models in my early life. He was kind and helpful, and introduced and inspired me to rowing, a sport which I still enjoy." Simon Wood (1980)

"A great teacher, a fearsome Deputy Head, a devoted father, and an honour to have known." Dave Kassapian (1985)

"We always used to hum the Imperial Vader March as he walked by in assembly. A great man – will be remembered by so many." Daniel Wellings (2002)

"I joined 3Bu at BGS in 1965 and David Crowther was our teacher for Physics. In one of our first classes he recruited myself and two other classmates to be coxes, and I have been involved with rowing at school, university, in public rowing clubs in Hong Kong ever since that day. David's dedication and enthusiasm for the sport was inspiring, and when setting up rowing in three schools that I worked in. David's down to earth (!) way of working and qualities of leadership have always been examples to follow."

Paul Tattum (1972)

**Simon Darnbrough,**  
**Specialist Rowing**  
**Coach.**

**John Horton**  
(1956)

1940-2023

Despite a family move from his native Nottingham, he always maintained a loyalty to Nottingham Forest. At School he went through the Classics stream, excelling in Greek verse under the inspirational guidance of Mr Shaw Smith. His main extracurricular activity was the school play, for instance as Iago in Othello. Whilst at Oxford he changed from Classics to English and thence on to a librarianship course in Sheffield.

Returning to Bradford he took up a position at the University Library, eventually attaining the position of University Librarian. This gave him a representative role and the opportunity of introducing guest speakers, for example chairing a lecture by politician turned prolific author Roy Hattersley, appropriately enough about J B Priestley, after whom the library is named. Retaining his interest in the theatre, he became a stalwart of the Bradford (Civic) Playhouse and was widely considered to have made an exemplary contribution to the cultural and intellectual life of the city.

**Arthur Kennedy  
(1976)**

1957-2024

An Ilkley boy, Arthur's 10 years at BGS saw him progress from the Thornville 'Prep' to Deputy Head Boy. He also excelled at languages, played rugby and sang in the school choir. His French teacher Tony Kingham remembers him as "a very cheerful and polite young man". After studying Theology at St Peter's College, Oxford he worked in London and Lancashire before training for the Church of England ministry at St John's College, Nottingham. Ordained in 1985, he served curacies in Norfolk and Hampshire before being appointed as Rector to three parishes in rural Somerset.

Ill health forced an early retirement which allowed him time to pursue his interests in family history, walking and cycling. He leaves Pauline, his wife of 45 years, children Philip and Sarah, and granddaughter Annabel.

**N. R. Tiley (Nick)  
(1964)**

1946-2024

Nicholas (Nick) Roger Tiley was born on 15th February 1946, a younger brother to Pam. Their father, Arthur, was an insurance broker, and Conservative MP for Bradford West from 1956 to 1966. Nick attended BGS from 1954 to 1964; at Thornville, where he met his future brother-in-law. Gavin Craig. Nick did not excel academically, but enjoyed water polo and squash, playing the latter into adulthood until his knees could no longer take the strain. After leaving BGS without A-Levels, he spent 4-months in the South of France learning French, prior to attending the Sorbonne for 6 months. He moved to London and trained to be an insurance broker, where he joined the London Club in 1966. He met his future wife, Karin, at a party in London. Upon their engagement six months later, they moved back to Cottingley, and married in June 1970. Nick worked for his father's insurance business. Following the birth of their first three daughters, Michèle, Rachel, and Ailsa, the family moved to Manchester, where their fourth daughter, Philippa (Pippa), was born.

Nick enjoyed family life: he taught his four daughters to be enthusiastic and passionate in all that they did, and to support each other. He loved enjoyed entertaining family, friends and neighbours with his generous hospitality at his home in Berkhamstead (Herts.), where the family eventually settled. He enjoyed a wide ranging variety of music (Country & Western, Edith Piaf, Tina Turner, and Musicals) and took delight in driving his family on holidays to Wales and to France (visiting many chateaux and war memorials, swimming, barbecuing family meals and drinking claret). After taking early retirement in 1996, aged 50, he got a degree in Economics, Philosophy and Psychiatry as a mature student from the University of Hertfordshire. Politics was a big part of Nick's life: he believed in the power of the individual and traditional Conservative values.

In retirement, he was a councillor for 12 years, and enjoyed helping people from all backgrounds and political affiliations sorting everyday problems which were causing them difficulty, be it thwarted planning applications or damp in their home. He was President of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of NW Hertfordshire Health Authority, and President of The Old Bradfordians' Club (London) from 2001 to 2003. His membership of The Carlton Club in central London permitted the London Club to hold its annual dinner there every November, until ill-health forced him to relinquish it in 2019. He died in hospital on 21st September 2024 at the age of 78, surrounded by his family. He is survived by his wife, Karin, four daughters and 12 grandchildren.

(Compiled by Mark Lawrence, President of The Old Bradfordians' Club (London) from the eulogy streamed at his funeral service)



**Graham Tait Reid  
(1952)**

1935-2024

We are sad to report the death of former OBA President Graham Reid who died aged 88 years in November 2024 after a short illness following a fall. Graham, who was President in 1995, had served on the OBA Committee for many years and was a regular supporter of many OBA and School events.





**Christopher Storr  
(1959)**

**1940-2024**

Graham was a retired Yorkshire Bank manager. Away from work he had many sporting interests. As a keen cricketer, he served within the committee of the Bradford Cricket League for many years and was Chairman of the Executive committee from 1997 to 2012. He was made a life member on his retirement from this role. Graham was a proud Scotsman and had represented his country as a Sprinter at the British Empire Games. He was a lover of Rugby Union and was a regular visitor to Murrayfield to support Scotland. He was also the Aire Wharfe representative on the Yorkshire Rugby Union committee and also a longtime member of Baildon RUFC where he had served on the committee and held a number of posts including President. Graham was a member of Shipley Rotary Club having served as Treasurer and President. We offer our sincere sympathy to Graham's daughters and extended family.

**Written by Gordon  
Greene, OBA President**

Something of the flavour of the school may be gained from the following broadside delivered by the Headmaster in the lower sixth: "Storr, what is all this nonsense I hear about your being interested in choral scholarships? Isn't it about time you stopped fooling about and settled down to some proper work?" Decades later, he discovered to his delight that David Hockney, two years his senior, had been given the same level of encouragement, and told he would never earn a living as an artist. He won a choral exhibition to Exeter College, Oxford, often eschewing 'voluntary' lectures for singing. Following Oxford he became a teacher of Greek and Latin. However he did not find it fulfilling, and quickly got a job as a trainee education officer with Essex County Council. He maintained his singing, meeting his future wife, Jo, through a musical weekend in 1966. His career then took him to the Inner London Education Authority to be in charge of the Authority's enormous building programme of schools and colleges. He was asked to become the first lay Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Southwark, overseeing the work of some 200 primary and secondary schools in Kent and South London.

It was the job of his dreams, and he held it until his retirement twenty years later. He was organist and choirmaster at St Augustine's for over forty years and oversaw the installation of two organs. On retirement, he immediately enrolled as a PhD student at London University, with the chairman of his examiners encouraging him to turn his thesis into a book, which he did. Retirement also allowed him to learn how to make Eccles Cakes from scratch.



**Chris Wontner-  
Smith  
1948-2024**

Bradford Grammar School paid it respects in November 2024 upon news that a much-respected and esteemed member of our Board of Governors and OB passed away unexpectedly on Friday 22 November. Chris demonstrated loyalty, expertise and commitment to BGS over his 30 years as a governor, which is something BGS will remain ever grateful for.

He was warm, supportive and always provided constructive challenge. Moreover, Chris was a regular attendee at School events such as Open Day, Founders Day and various concerts. He genuinely cared about BGS, its staff and pupils. Fellow Governor Christine Hamilton-Stewart said: "Chris was a colleague greatly valued by the entire Board of BGS for his integrity, financial guidance and reliable support. His calm demeanour along with a very quirky sense of humour will be missed by us all, we have lost a great friend of the Board and also a tremendous asset to the school." Colin Mellors, another Governor commented: "Chris was a stalwart supporter of the School throughout his life, initially as a pupil and, for the last three decades, as a wise, respected and much-loved Governor. Whilst modest in his demeanour, he had a forensic intellect and his softly-spoken words of advice were always listened to attentively. Always acting with utmost integrity, and ever generous with his time, he cared about the School and the wellbeing of all of its community. He will be greatly missed by all those fortunate enough to have known him. Sincere condolences were sent to Chris's family and friends.















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