



# Queens' Alumni News

Issue 4 July 2022

Welcome to the fourth edition of the exciting **Queens' Alumni newsletter** where you can learn all about how our past students have got involved with helping our current students.



## 'Retiring after 42 years'

Mr Swift is retiring after an incredible 42 years teaching at Queens', Mick's journey and association with Queens' started as a student at the Bushey Grammar School (North Side) as it was then in 1968, 54 years ago. 7 years as a student and 42, as a teacher, many children, their parents and even some grandparents have passed through Mr Swift's very capable hands. He is of course now our last connection with a former era and to the original Bushey Grammar School.

In 1968, Mick was placed in the Green House, Monmouth. The other Houses were Essex (Auden), Clarendon (Sutherland) and Cassio (Newton), before the big vote on House names with the merger of Queen Alexandra School. Four new names were selected:

Auden (Poet), Drake (Explorer), Newton (Scientist) and Sutherland (Artist). Mick's journey with Drake had begun. Mick left Queens' in 1975 to go to university and then to teacher training at Worcester PE College where he specialised in PE. His original second subject was History but a little bird told him Maths may prove more helpful as a shortage subject – even back in the 1970's.

Following a year off in 1979, he started at Queens' in 1980 – a PE Teacher first and Maths second. Interestingly, he was placed in Newton, albeit for only a few weeks and then Auden for 2 years.

He has always been an active member of staff. A legendary member of the Queens' Cricket Club, a demon bowler who regularly hit sixes into the tennis courts, organising annual cricket trips to Worcester College.

He also played hockey, teaming up with Sam Moore at one stage. Similarly, he was a keen footballer, centre forward for the staff team, although I believe the goals did not always flow. Mick also subbed for the South Staff Bridge team.

In 1983 he gained promotion to become Deputy Head of Drake House - the start of the love of all things green grew stronger.

Career ambitious, he completed a Masters between 1984-7 in Classroom Observation – there is not much Mick could not explain about the 3 styles of lesson observation.

A promotion in 1992 to Head of PSE and many opportunities for external promotion. The pull of Queens' however, was as strong as ever.

A further promotion in 1997 – this time to the Head of Drake cemented his love of Queens' and all things Green. He took over from Mrs Luxford – The Luxford Trophy still exists for the best Choir in House Music.

As Head of House, Mick was responsible for the development of students, pastorally and academically, covering safeguarding and progress and also discipline – who would want to get on the wrong side of Mick – There would always be a Swift consequence.

In 42 years, Mick has attended 34 Ingleton trips and 7 to Whitby Bay, taking over 1000 students away, only losing one attendee and that was a member of staff, leaving her at a service station.

In his time at Queens' Drake have won 35 sports days and in terms of the Robert Brown Trophy, 2 wins and 10 second places, the best record of any House. Since its origins in 1973, Drake has won House Music 20 times. Mick has always taken the role of House Charities seriously, raising almost £40,000 over 20 years.

Mick has made an outstanding contribution to Queens' School and we wish him the very best for the future in his much-deserved retirement. He will still be visiting Queens' in the years ahead but should you miss him, you will no doubt catch him supporting Watford Football Club, as a season ticket holder.

Year 7 football team, 1984



Year 10 cross country, 1985



## 'Where are they now'

My name is Matthew Rendle, I was in Drake House from 1983 to 1989. It's fair to say I was not a grade A student and I found school life hard. I was extremely lucky to have Mr. Swift as my form tutor and in my final year he supported me in getting some animal related work experience; I have kept pet reptiles since I was 10 years old and so I have always been passionate about all animals.

I did work experience at a large veterinary practice in Watford and was able to observe the clinical team working and its true to say I was blown away by how amazing the veterinary nurses were; they provided a lot of the hands-on care for the animal patients, caring for a huge variety of species from pet mice to racehorses. It was so inspiring to see, and it was at this point I knew I had to try and become a veterinary nurse. When I started, I was honestly not sure I could be successful in the studying side of things and passing all the exams to reach my goal, as this part of education had previously never come naturally to me! I stayed on to 6th form to get the essential Maths and English GCSE grade C's I needed to add to my other two GCSE's I had already passed, and in late 1992 I had passed these exams and subsequently was offered a student veterinary nurse (SVN) position at the vets I had been doing work experience at. I jumped at the chance and started my training. I found the training hard at times, but as well as attending college once a week a lot of the training was hands-on and carried out in practice which I loved. Looking back, I really enjoyed being an SVN; the qualified registered veterinary nurses (RVN's) I learned from were so supportive and kind to me and they really shaped me as a nurse.

In 1992 I passed my final exam and entered the register for veterinary nurses. At the time I was only the 23rd male nurse ever to go on the register (thankfully there are many more male registered veterinary nurses today).

I stayed at my first training practice for a total of 13 years, moving up the team until I became Senior Theatre Nurse, looking after all the surgical patients. It was a role I really enjoyed, and it allowed me to expand my knowledge in the veterinary nursing care for a huge variety of species. I loved the challenge of nursing a new animal species I had not previously worked with, having to research that species to try and provide it with the highest standard of veterinary care possible.

In 2003 I was asked to apply for a veterinary nursing position at ZSL London Zoo. I remember at the time being 100% sure I was not knowledgeable enough to get this role; I have 'imposter syndrome' even to this day, but I went for the interview anyway! I remember being shown round the veterinary department at London Zoo and thinking how it felt so much like the clinical environment I had worked in before. The interview was hard, but as I was sure I would not get the job I was very relaxed and answered all the questions to the best of my ability. Much to my disbelief, the next day I got offered the job!



I worked at ZSL London Zoo nursing a huge variety of animals from ants to elephants and pretty much everything in between. Being able to nurse gorillas, lions, tigers, venomous snakes, giant tortoises and Komodo dragons to name but a few, was such a privilege. In time I became Head Nurse at London Zoo and this role allowed me to continue to expand my knowledge. I started teaching student veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons for various universities and colleges, I wrote articles, textbook chapters and I also got the opportunity to travel the world to support in-situ conservation projects. This field work ignited a new passion in me, as being able to help a sick or injured wild animal so that it could be re-released back into the wild is the best thing I have ever done, it feels amazing!

During my time at ZSL London zoo I started to get involved in veterinary politics, to try and improve the profession I love so much. I got elected on to the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA). I stayed on the BVNA council for 3 years and then stood for election to be on the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) veterinary nursing council; this could be very intense and stressful at times due to the levels of responsibility involved, but an amazing opportunity and hugely rewarding. In 2017 I took the tough decision to leave ZSL London Zoo. I had progressed as far as I could at the zoo and I started to question the wider role of zoos in general and knew I wanted to try and do more in-situ conservation nursing. It was a hard time for me leaving such a high-profile role and my mental health did suffer at this time, but with the support of friends and family I found a new role nursing exotic animal species in a huge referral centre in Leeds, where this role taught me more about managing people and I was recognised as a good leader at this point by the RCVS.

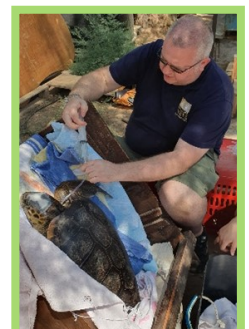
In 2020 I became the chair of the RCVS VN Council and was the first male nurse to have ever held this position. My 'imposter syndrome' was in overdrive at the time I joined, and I am currently in my final year of the chair role. I have been very fortunate to have had this opportunity and do my bit and leave a legacy for the veterinary nurses of the future!

In 2020 I won the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Bruce Vivash Jones award for outstanding contribution to the advancement of small animal veterinary nursing which was incredibly humbling and a huge honour that only gets awarded annually.

Since leaving the zoo I have also been supporting a wildlife charity called Wildlife Vets International (WVI) on several of their field projects, traveling the world to nurse some of the most amazing animal species. I currently look after WVI projects in Europe for sea turtles, India for vultures and Ghana for primates (mangabays). This work is the best veterinary nursing I have ever done, and I feel so lucky that I get to do this as part of my career. None of this would have been possible without Mr. Swift seeing the potential in me all those years ago and supporting me so well during my time at Queens', and for that I will always be grateful.

For further information on veterinary nurse please see-

[www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk) [www.bvna.org.uk](http://www.bvna.org.uk)



## Past students inspiring the current students



Goran Newsum (Auden) left Queens' in 2017 to study Maths at Queen Mary's University. Now a graduate he works for the Royal Institution, the home of scientific research and education. Goran is as passionate about Maths as ever, and has recently published an article about the Mathematics of pop songs in the mathematical magazine "Chalkdust". Goran kindly came to speak to our Year 12 A Level Maths students about his current work, and studying Maths at university.

Ex-student Adam Payne (Newton) came in to speak to Year 7 students about his time at Queens' and his current role at Watford Football Club. After obtaining a first class degree in Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Portsmouth, Adam is now working at the Academy Athletic Development Coach at Watford FC. Adam has been talking to Mr Hopwood about returning to Queens' to do some coaching with our students next season, so watch this space!



## Year 7 Careers Panel? Career enrichment lectures that are designed to inspire



We were very lucky to have two past students come and speak to our Year 7 on Monday 18th July about their careers.

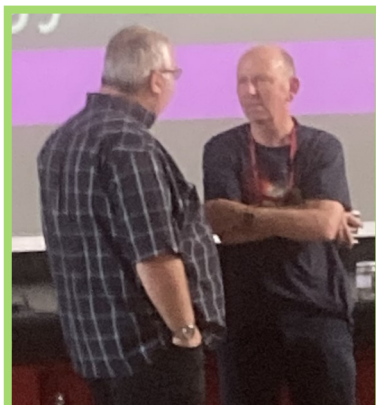
Rebecca Kidd NI from 2012– 2019 who has just gained a first at Surrey University in Criminology and Forensics . Rebecca is going to start her career with the Police force soon as a detective. You could see her experience on the debating team coming through as she had the students in the palm of her hand.

Matthew Rendle who you have just read about fascinated the students with his talk about the animals he has helped in his career. So many questions were asked by the students



they nearly missed their next lesson. We will certainly be doing this again next year.

Matthew also enjoyed meeting up with Mr Swift who got Matthew his work experience placement in a Vets that lead to his great career.





## Ms de Groot caught up with ex-student Jake Hurst



1. **What has changed most about the school?** The biggest change is the way the school is run. The hierarchy was completely different when I was a pupil; you had the Headteacher, two Deputy Heads and your four Heads of Houses. Back then, your Heads of Houses were your Heads of Year, Directors of Learning and Student Support Managers all in one person with the help of the Deputy Head of House, who would normally be delegated with half (or sometimes more...) of the duties. The biggest day-to-day change is we no longer finish early on a Tuesday or a Friday - we used to finish at 2:30! However, on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday we finished at 3:30, so I think finishing at 3pm is a positive and consistent change.
2. **What has changed least about the school?** The attitudes and ethos of the school. Queens' has maintained its ability to encourage its pupils to strive to achieve the best of their ability and to support pupils as much as they can. Some of the faces haven't changed either (a few grey hairs beginning to show here and there!), which was lovely to see and be welcomed back by familiar faces.
3. **What was your favourite school lunch?** My go-to was a pepperoni pizza melt panini but sometimes I would get the roast or fish and chips. I will never forget the jam donuts they used to make on a Friday: they need to make a reappearance in the canteen.
4. **Who was your favourite teacher (apart from the Maths department of course!)?** I didn't have a favourite however, I had favourites. My form tutor Mrs Billinge (most of my time she was Miss Rosen, it still feels strange calling her Mrs Billinge!) because she was always so supportive as a form tutor from Year 7 – 11, always had a smile on her face and had the ability to get the class pumped up to face the day at 8:30. The music department because they helped encourage, support and develop my love of music into a skill which I still practise today. Mrs. Underhill, who is sadly not with us now. She was my GCSE English teacher and she was simply incredible. She truly unlocked the subject for me by making the texts interesting and despite only being about 5ft tall, had the ability to inspire the fear of God in you. Finally, Mr Foxall. A name we all know, Mr Foxall taught me for A-Level English Literature and he continued the legacy of Mrs Underhill in his ability to engage the class and make challenging texts accessible. I will never forget the Year 13 trip to Haworth, Yorkshire with him, Miss Callow and our trusted minibus driver: Mr Taylor.
5. **Who were your form tutors?** As I said, Mrs Billinge – best form tutor ever (until I become a form tutor next year) and in Sixth Form Mrs Wynne, who was lovely and very supportive in helping write my personal statement for university.
6. **What was the best thing about the Year 7 trip to Ingleton?** We went to Ingleton in the summer of 2009. We went on lots of walks and stayed in a cosy hostel. My best memory was exploring White Scar Cave, where inside there is a part called The Devil's Tongue. The tour guide told a story of how if the drip from The Devil's Tongue lands on you, for every drop that lands on you is 7 years of bad luck. Accordingly, we all judged the when the drip was going to drop and passed under The Devil's Tongue avoiding the drip. But not Max. Max stood under the tongue, stretched out his arms and started to count 7, 14, 21, 28... Everyone on the trip, apart from the tour guide and teachers, found this hilarious.
7. **What was the worst thing about the Year 7 trip to Ingleton?** The end of trip party in the local village hall was appalling.
8. **Words of wisdom to current sixth formers:** Create a habit of reading when you're young.  
Failure just means you get to try again but with more experience.  
You'll get there. If someone is being unpleasant towards you, it's saying more about them than you.  
Stop comparing yourself to others and only compare yourself to yourself yesterday.  
You are responsible for more than you think – take responsibility for your decisions, actions and happiness.  
Limit phone time: too much social media will make you dull – get a hobby.  
Take an interest in the world around you: whether or not you truly find it interesting, it is important to know what is happening around you.  
Be sceptical – people lie.  
Learn to love your imperfections –everyone is unique, no one is perfect.  
Be resilient: embrace change and uncertainty. It will make you stronger, smarter and better than you ever thought you could be.



9. **What was the best thing about University?** Increasing my knowledge, understanding and appreciation of my degree subjects (English and Philosophy), my year abroad to Barcelona and the freedom.
10. **What is your favourite new house name?** Franklin. Her work in the medical field has helped influence and save millions of lives. Originally when I returned, I thought Green was renamed after Aretha Franklin. I was in Drake House as a pupil and now as a teacher I am in Attenborough. I feel the reasons behind the changing of the house names is an important reflection on how change is a necessary part of life and how the education system should progress as we do as a society.
11. **What extra-curricular activities did you do when you were at school?** I played football, rugby and badminton. I participated in the swimming galas, sports days, guitar lessons, the band in the school play, talent shows. I remember an external business competition at Moor Park which was a great day out. I went on three Ski Trips. In Year 13, I went on a World Challenge expedition to Nicaragua and Costa Rica for a month, which to this day is still one of the best things I have ever done.
12. **Did you ever get a detention and if so what for?** I'll be honest: I had a few. I had quite a few after schools but only ever for not completing homework but I was never rude towards teachers, admittedly a little bit cheeky – I knew what I could get away with! I did get two or three Friday detentions and I was put in IE for half a day once, but this was for missing a Friday detention due to illness – completely unfair!

## Current staff in school

Lauren Hall NE 2010-2017

Tracy Jenner nee Clark SV 1974-1979

Sam Harris NI 2010-2017

Julie Kenny nee Perrotton DF 1975-1980

Jake Hurst DP 2008-2015

Mitesh Mistry SG 2009-2016

Becky Holder DP 2007-15

Carole Phillips nee Meehan SG 1977-1982

Ruth Humphry-Ingram AH 1998-2004

Jayne Porter SA 2009-2014

Ryan Hunter DF 2010-2017

Sarah Thorn SP 2006-2013

Polly Jenner NI 2006-2014

Mick Swift Drake through and through

If there any news items or information you would like included please email Mrs Davies

[daviesch@queens.herts.sch.uk](mailto:daviesch@queens.herts.sch.uk).

We decided this May to make the Alumni more personal by creating our own contact list, where only the information you have requested is passed on. If you have any friends who came to this school and would like to re-establish contact please ask them to join our Alumni by registering using the [Alumni](#) area on the school website. We look forward to hearing from you.