



# DITCHAM PARK SCHOOL

## Past Staff Association Newsletter

Email: [paststaff@ditchampark.com](mailto:paststaff@ditchampark.com)

**June 2018**

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to be writing to you for the first time as the new Co-ordinator of the Ditcham Park School, Past Staff Association. Some of you will already know me, but for those who don't my name is Alison Chapman and I was the Head's PA/Office Manager/Secretary at the school from September 1997 until March 2017. During that time I was privileged to work for Paddy Holmes, Kathryn Morton, Andrew Rowley and Rob Connolly and can say in all honesty that working at Ditcham was the best job I had in my entire 40 year career. There is something truly special about the school on the hill and the fact that the Past Staff Association now boasts almost 70 members, is testament to the strength of feeling that we all have for it. I am looking forward to getting to know you all and to keeping everyone in touch, not just with each other, but also with what is going on at the school.



I would like to start however, by thanking Pam Richards for all her hard work over the past 18 years. From small beginnings in Paddy's front room, the Association has grown and grown and she has done sterling work arranging the annual lunch, distributing the newsletters and keeping everyone in touch. At the recent lunch at The Brookfield Hotel in Emsworth, attended by around 25 members, Paddy paid tribute to Pam and presented her with a gift of thanks. Pam has given me this message below which I am delighted to share with you all.

*Dear Friends. The Association has come of age! From a small group of former staff hoping to keep in touch., membership has grown to sixty-three. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to co-ordinate the group and I thank you all for your friendship and support through 18 years. The Spring Lunch this year was, as usual, a happy occasion and having passed a significant birthday, I felt the time was right for someone else to take the Association forward. I am so grateful to*

*Alison Chapman for offering her undoubted skills and experience. I am greatly encouraged by her enthusiasm, ideas and plans for the future. Please give her every support. Thank you so much for your beautiful gifts and kind thoughts expressed by Paddy at the lunch. I shall hope to do as we set out to do and "Keep in Touch." With my love Pam"*

**Annual Lunch:** The lunch in April was my first time as a member of the Association and it was lovely to catch up with former colleagues and also some more recent retirees.



Gordon Brookfield & Nicky Street



L-R: Clive Megeney, Linda Griffith, Des Houghton-Connell and Deanna Jacobs



L-R: Rodney Preece, Graham Spawforth, Tony Munday and Linda Munday

L-R: Gill Preston, Janet Frankham, and Liz Steggall



L-R: Annette Hitch, Shirley Varnish, Moya Wippell and Monica Drage



We extend a warm welcome to: Tony and Linda Munday; Tony was Head of Science and a Biology specialist and his wife Linda a Science Teacher; another stalwart of the Science Department joining us was Gordon Brookfield, a Chemistry specialist – Gordon tried to retire on several occasions but the school just couldn't manage without him and he was drafted back to help out and cover many times, however he has now finally escaped and it was great to see

hm there. Also there was Nicky Street, my comrade in arms from the school office. Nicky was Admissions Secretary/Bursar's Assistant and Exams Secretary and played a crucial role in the recruitment of so many pupils to the school over some 13 years being the first point of contact for prospective parents. Des Houghton-Connell was the school's Estate Manager from 1998 until 2016. Des lived on site with his wife and 4 children and played a key role in all of the major building projects which took place during that time including the David Holmes' Building and the Sports Hall, he is also responsible for the development and landscaping of the beautiful grounds that are enjoyed by everyone on a daily basis.



L-R: Will Stretch, Gill Jones and Rodney Preston

Last but by no means least, we welcomed Will Stretch. Will had already retired when he was persuaded by Paddy to come and help out with some teaching at the school in 1998. Some 20 years later he is still there and although no longer in the classroom, his contribution to school life and the development of pupils cannot be under-estimated. Will established the now hugely successful, Ditcham Cycling Club, inspiring so many young people to take up the sport. For many years he organised the school's participation in the Hayling-Paris cycle ride where Ditcham pupils achieved recognition and praise in what is a highly physical and demanding challenge, as well as raising many thousands of pounds for local and national charities. He was also responsible for bringing the British Schools' Cycling Association, National Hill Climb Time Trial to the school, where young people from all over the United Kingdom came to test their skills over the testing climb on the north drive of the school. As if that wasn't enough Will still runs a very popular and successful cookery club and a fitness club.

I was delighted to be able to work alongside Will in the cookery club kitchen and it was always a joy. I am happy to share with you some photos he has sent me from the latest cookery club Masterchef Challenge which was judged by fellow Past Staff member Clive Megeney whose son Toby who was a keen member of the group when a pupil at the school.



We were also very pleased that Ditcham's newest Headmaster, Graham Spawforth, joined us for lunch. Graham has been in post for one year now and spoke with enthusiasm about the exciting developments taking place at the school. He has kindly provided me with a resumé which I am able to share with you below. Graham is keen to work with me to raise the profile of the school's staff alumni and some ideas that we will be working towards are:

- Ensuring that staff who leave the school are made aware that they are automatically a member of the Past Staff Association, regardless of when they leave the school ie not only those who retire at the end of their careers.
- Introducing a page on the school website devoted to the Association.
- Sending Association members the Headmaster's weekly newsletter should they wish to receive it.
- Arranging a function at the school in the summer term for Association members where there will be an opportunity for a look around the school and to see new developments (probably a bi-annual event).
- Invitations to school events such as: Arts Evening, Music Concerts, Drama productions, Sports Days, Special Assemblies, visiting speaker talks etc, on a limited number basis as appropriate.
- Involving Association members in supporting the school's fund-raising activities.



L-R: Pam Richards, Alison Chapman, Graham Spawforth and Paddy Holmes

**Headmaster's Report:** *The School is thriving. Our numbers are currently at an all-time high and Governors are being very supportive with an ambitious building development plan which has seen the opening of four new junior classrooms in September. We have just received planning permission to build a Nursery. It will be a visually attractive, environmentally friendly and sustainable building provided by a company called Ecopod. Situated at the front of the School in the Cottage garden it will have a capacity of 16 children aged 2½ to 4. Our aim is to open in September. Furthermore, plans are now being drawn up for a Performing Arts Centre which will consist of a Music School, a Drama School*

*and an Auditorium which will be situated near the Art and Design Departments to provide a creative hub to the school.*

*We have rolled out an ambitious School development Plan this year which has involved the creation of a Fourth House called Nyewood and the development of new House activities which have included tug of war, quizzes, singing competition and charitable fund raising. We have undertaken a review of the curriculum and timetable and will be introducing significant changes to both in September. Lesson length in Seniors will be extended from 35 minutes to one hour and slightly reduced in Juniors from 35 minutes to 30 minutes. This will allow us to align the timetable for Juniors and Seniors thereby allowing colleagues to be able to teach in both areas of the School. The School day will start five minutes earlier at 08.40am. We have extended GCSE courses from two years to three years to provide teachers more time to deliver the more content heavy GCSEs. We hope this will reduce the pressure pupils feel during their GCSEs. We have also introduced Computer Science and full course Physical Education as options for GCSE so that we can now offer 19 GCSE subjects.*

*It has been a very successful year in all aspects of school life. Last year's Form 5 achieved a strong set of GCSE grades. 13 pupils qualified for the English Speaking Union (ESU) regional finals of the Shakespeare by Heart competition and it was a Ditcham pupil who was awarded a place in the National Finals. We won several national and even more regional art awards for the Independent School Association (ISA) art competition. Music, Drama and Art continue to be particular areas of strength for the School. Two weeks ago, every pupil in our Junior School took part in the Junior Concert either as part of their class or in a group or as a soloist. Our musicians perform in a variety of events and venues including the Petersfield Music Festival. This year former pupil Thomas Baynes won the Young Composer Award and our Yr11 pupil Maddie Walker-Moffitt was runner up. More pupils take the London Academy for Music and the Dramatic Arts (LAMDA) course here than any other school I have worked at. 94 pupils have just achieved a Distinction or Merit in their LAMDA exams. Freya Solly, our Head Girl recently received the Daniel Day Lewis Award by Petersfield Drama Association and she has also successfully auditioned for a place in the National Youth Theatre.*

*It has also been a successful year for Sport. One of our girls in Yr11 is Hampshire U17 cross country and 800m champion and won a bronze medal at English Schools track and field championships last summer. Two of our girls have been selected for the Hampshire U16 hockey team and two boys sail for Great Britain one of whom became European U16 sailing champion for the laser class this Easter. We have an incredibly active cycling club with over 50 pupils who enjoy mountain biking or road cycling or both. Our road cyclists do their own Tour de France each summer and raise money for local charities.*

*Pupils in Juniors enjoy playing outside and bushcraft is the most popular juniors activity. Our Seniors sign up for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme in large numbers and undertake challenging expeditions across the country. I like to think that our pupils are imbued with a love of the outdoors and a spirit for adventure. Evidence for this are the exploits of some of our former pupils. This time last year former pupil Holly Budge became one of relatively few British women to have climbed Mount Everest. Prior to this adventure she set a world record for completing a 9 day horse race across Mongolia. As I speak another former pupil, Rupert Jones Warner is attempting to climb Everest twice. Not many schools can boast of having one former pupil climb Everest. Hopefully we shall soon have two.*

*As I am a relatively new Head you may be asking yourselves what my plans are for the school moving forward. I plan to retain the essential aims and ethos of the school and at the same time provide a curriculum which 'Prepares our pupils for the Future'. Conscious that Technology is changing the way we work and the way we live, we have introduced a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths or*

*STEM Programme for the whole school which is intended to provide our pupils with the technological skills and awareness to make the most of the opportunities the Digital Revolution is providing. Our pupils are learning how to code using Lego Mindstorm Robots, and they are building a Greenpower Challenge Car sponsored by the Engineering Firm Siemens which is powered by a battery. Our STEM speaker programme this year has included a Futureologist who talked about careers for the future, the Operations Director for Google UK who talked about Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality and most recently a computer scientist who explained and demonstrated how he uses coding skills to compose music. We are organising a STEM Fair in July to which some of the biggest Tech Companies in the UK will be coming such as Google, Tesla and Siemens. As a result of our STEM programme two of our Yr10 pupils have secured work experience at racing car company McLaren over the summer. This is an exciting programme which we will develop further with the appointment of a new Head of Computer Science and Digital Learning who starts in September. **Graham Spawforth, Headmaster.***

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### **Forthcoming plans**

It is my intention to keep in touch with you all via email as this is the quickest and most economical method of communicating. If you had already given Pam your email address then you need do nothing more, but for those who I can see haven't got one recorded, I have included a note for you to let me either have your email, or to confirm that you don't have one. Details of forthcoming events will also be posted on the school's website where there will shortly be a page for the Past Staff Association. For those who are unable to embrace the technology I will continue to post a copy of the newsletter to you but other events to which past staff may be invited throughout the year will be communicated only via email and the website.

**Enclosed with this Newsletter is a copy of the Headmaster's Summer Newsletter, an invitation to Founder's Day and Prize Giving on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July and an invitation to the STEM Fair on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July. If you would like to attend any of these events, please email Mrs Lisa Tosdevine who is managing the arrangements. Her email address is: [lisa.tosdevine@ditchampark.com](mailto:lisa.tosdevine@ditchampark.com). I hope to see some of you there.**

I hope that you enjoy the new format of this Newsletter and would welcome any ideas you may have for the development of the Association and of course, please do share your news – I am sure that many of you are involved in interesting, exciting and worthwhile ventures, be they sporting, travelling, volunteering or charitable – don't be modest and if you have photos even better! The email address is at the top of this letter. Thank you.

With very best wishes.

Alison Chapman