

# Rockport School Magazine 2021/2022





# Welcome

A warm welcome to our Rockport School magazine.

We've tried to capture and put together the many memories from the roller coaster academic year that was 2021/2022!

It's been another busy year with trips, conferences, achievements and much more, so sit back with a cuppa, relax and enjoy leafing the pages and spotting familiar faces along the way.





# Positions of Responsibility

*Positions of Responsibility are awarded to pupils who show great leadership skills as role models to the rest of the school.*

## HEADS OF SCHOOL

For the academic year 2021/2022 we were delighted to appoint Ugonna Ojiako and Oli Whiting as Heads of School.

## DEPUTY HEADS OF SCHOOL

Supporting Ugonna and Oli is a team of Senior Prefects comprising Ben Lally, Laura-Kate Lattimer, Jack McNulty and Ciara West and Prefects Abdul Alhowaish, Jack Calvert, Ranky Chawich and Jacob Martin.

## HEADS OF JUNIOR SCHOOL

The important jobs of Heads of Junior School were appointed to Alexander Moody and Eva Pringle.







Jazz on the Lawn was a wonderful opportunity to bring our Rockport community together again and welcome the many new families who joined us this term.

Even though it was a fairly last-minute decision to coincide with fair weather, everybody enjoyed themselves and had a lovely afternoon.



*Jazz on*







# The Lawn



12th September, 2021





# Sixth Form Enrichment

On 1st October we hosted our first post-pandemic event for our senior students, Governors and friends of the school. It was great to have the chance to get back to hosting a wider event for our senior students outside the classroom.

Held at the Culloden Hotel and generously sponsored by Wilson Nesbitt Solicitors, Connor Smyth, Lord of the Dance professional and winner of Channel 4 SAS: Who Dares Wins, gave an entertaining and informative presentation to our Sixth Form students, as part of our wider enrichment programme.

Connor gave a presentation which was both entertaining and informative and which certainly held the attention of all present; a fact borne out by the stimulating Q&A session at the end. As well as that, a lot of what he said about resilience, self-belief and tenacity chimed not just with our students, but with our Round Square IDEALS of Leadership and Adventure.









# Ganaway Activity Adventures

*Words kindly provided by Miss C Rice*

Many of our year groups went to Ganaway Activity Centre in County Down during the year, in the spirit of the Round Square Ideal of Adventure. Here we were pushed to our limits and forced out of our comfort zones to prove that we really do have more in us than we think!

We participated in a variety of activities, including archery, zip-lining, wall climbing, and assault courses. This was a fantastic experience for our students, and it was a terrific chance for us to work together as a team after spending so much time alone at home due to lockdowns! Our pupils (and the staff who were pushed off the zip lines!) will never forget this experience as it was one that truly brought us together.





# Feeling on Top of the World

The Upper Juniors had an absolutely amazing day for their trip to the Mourne Mountains in October. Expertly-led by Mr Vance, alongside school outdoor leader Mr Clark and their teachers Mrs McCartney, Mrs Johnston and Mr Reid, they travelled en-masse to the begin their adventure.

It began at Bryansford Gate at the back of Tollymore Forest Park and the large gaggle of intrepid mountaineers eventually made their way east across to Donard Wood, before descending via the Glen Valley below Slieve Donard into Newcastle. Their final destination was Maud's Café for a well-deserved ice cream.

The children did brilliantly!





# CANADIAN BUTTER TARTS



## Ingredients:

Refrigerated  
 2 large eggs  
 Baking/spices/liquids  
 3 cups of all-purpose flour  
 1/2 tsp of baking powder  
 3/4 cups of brown sugar packed  
 1/2 cup of lard  
 1/2 tsp of salt  
 1 tsp of vanilla extract  
 1 tsp of white vinegar  
 1/2 cups of pecans  
 3/4 cup of unsalted butter  
 1 tbsp table or whipping cream  
 1 cup of water

## Pastry

• 3 cups (375g) all-purpose flour and more for dusting  
 • 1/2 tsp (2.5 ml) baking powder  
 • 1/2 tsp (2.5 ml) salt  
 • 1/2 cup (114g) lard  
 • 1/2 cup (114g) unsalted butter  
 • 1 large egg  
 • 1 tsp (5 ml) white vinegar  
 • 1 cup (250 ml) cold water

## Filling

• 3/4 cup (165g) packed brown sugar  
 • 1/3 cup (73g) unsalted butter  
 • 1 tbsp (15 ml) table or whipping cream  
 • 1 tsp (5 ml) vanilla extract  
 • 1 large egg  
 • 1/2 cup chopped pecans, walnuts, raisins etc. (optional)

- 1) In a bowl add together flour, baking powder and salt.
- 2) Cut in lard and butter with a pastry blender or using two knives until the mixture resembles oatmeal.
- 3) In a measuring cup combine egg with vinegar. Then add enough water to make one cup.
- 4) Stir in the liquid, adding enough to make the dough, stick together.
- 5) Set the dough on to a lightly powdered surface, then gather it into a ball and separate into two equal parts. Saran wrap both parts. Place one in the freezer for later. Set the other in the fridge to chill for an hour.
- 6) Roll the dough on a floured surface till it's about 1/8" thick. Cut as many 4" circles as you can. Re-roll the scraps then cut out more circles to make 12.
- 7) Fit the pastry circles into a muffin pan then place into the fridge ready to fill.
- 8) Preheat the oven to 375F and put in the lower rack of the oven.
- 9) In a saucepan, melt butter with brown sugar. Remove from heat and mix in cream, and vanilla. Let cool (for about five minutes) before whisking in the egg.
- 10) Divide the pecans (or chocolate chips, raisins etc.) among the pastry shells and pour in, filling until half-full.
- 11) Bake for 13-15 minutes or until crust is a light golden brown around the edges and filling is bubbling.
- 12) Let cool in pan. Place metal cooling rack upside down on top of the pan and flip over the pan, then flip over each butter tart right side up.



# European Day of Languages 26 September

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR  
MODERN LANGUAGES  
E C M L  
C E L V  
CENTRE EUROPEEN POUR  
LES LANGUES VIVANTES

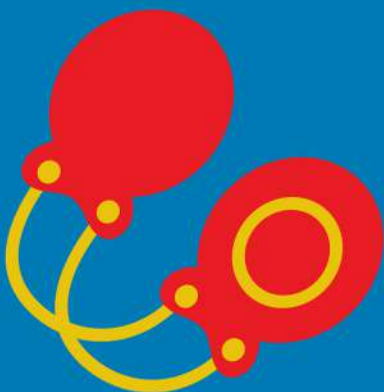
COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Celebrating the European Day of Languages gave us an excuse to add a little 'je ne sais quoi' to our day and embrace the cultures of Europe and beyond!

Early Years added extra touches to their uniforms with stripes and berets, Upper Juniors spent time crafting to make special accessories, while senior students enjoyed a European Café and a delicious continental menu was served in the Dining Hall.

Tres bien!





Happy Halloweeeee...  
The text is written in a black, cursive font at the top of the page, set against a background of orange pumpkins and spiders.









# Boarding fun at Rockport



Boarding is an integral part of the Rockport experience for many of our students and is truly a home away from home. Our dedicated and caring staff look after the boarders as if they were their own. It's important that boarding is not simply an extension of school, but rather a different type of learning experience.

Our boarders hail from local areas, UK and Ireland and internationally, and range in age from 8 to 18 years old. The Rockport Boarding Department tailors its approach to individual boarders' needs and personalities. The 24/7 care that Rockport offers has been commended by boarders, parents and external agencies from around the world.

The stand-out memories for most of our boarders, in addition to the life-long friends and connections they make, are the activities and experiences we organise. These photos give you a glimpse of just some of the amazing memories our boarders made last year, including 'Fright Night, a UV glow stick party, baking activities, Grand Prix go-karting and Belfast Giants ice hockey games - to name only a few!













I've been in boarding for five years now and in the time I've been here I've taken part in lots of fun activities. Whether it be roller blading, paddle boarding or going to the cinema, the activities arranged have not only helped me to make friendships, but pushed me out of my comfort zone too.

I quickly made a really solid friendship group within boarding, and I don't think that would've been possible if we hadn't been given so many fun things to do.

Last year my favourite boarding activities were the UV disco and celebrating Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee.

I can't wait to see what's in store this coming year!

**Hollie Harlen R11**





# Upper Juniors' Day of Adventure!

Crawfordsburn Scout Centre was the location for Upper Juniors' action-packed day of adventure in October.

All 40 Upper Junior children walked from Rockport AND back to throw themselves into each of the activities, many of them sampling archery, wall-climbing, grass-sledging and crate-climbing for the first time.

There were lots of tired souls and soles that evening, but we think it's fair to say they all had a blast.





# Rockport Remembers, 11th November 2021

23 Old Rockportians gave their lives in WW1 & WW2



We will remember them.



Our annual Remembrance service, held at Glencraig Parish Church, began with Heads of Junior School, Eva Pringle and Alexander Moody, delivering a lovely reading followed by soloist and duettists Eva Pringle, Erin Dawson and Emma O'Brien, who gave beautiful vocal performances.

The wreath was laid by Heads of School, Oli Whiting and Ugonna Ojiako, who then followed with a tribute to Old Rockportian RJM Harrison, who lost his life serving his country towards the end of WW2. The final piece of music was a delightful recorded performance by the Junior Choir of 'You raise me up' which brought the service, recognising the immeasurable service offered by those who gave their lives, to a fitting close.





# Sixth Form Round Square Leadership



In November, Sixth Formers Jack Calvert and Jack McNulty organised a charity initiative in conjunction with parents, staff and pupils. Donations were requested for North Down Storehouse and the Barn Animal Rescue and we were overwhelmed by the generosity of our school community. We received this letter of thanks from Storehouse North Down.

*Dear Headmaster,*

*On behalf of Storehouse North Down I would like to say a great big thank you yet again to all your pupils and staff who contributed to the collection of groceries. Also well done to Jack Calvert and Jack McNulty who organised it. These boys were a great advertisement for your school. They were so well mannered and helpful when they delivered the groceries. We were quite overwhelmed with the amount collected. It is so good that young people are thinking of others at this difficult time.*

*This year has been a difficult year for many and we have seen the requests for hampers increase. We are giving out approximately 50 hampers per week to the value of £2500. In the next two weeks we will be giving out 400 hampers in the North Down area. It is only by the generosity of people that we are able to help meet this need.*

*Again many thanks, God Bless,  
Margaret Bailie, Chairperson  
Storehouse North Down*



# Heroes Stamp Design Competition

Pupils from Yr4 - Yr10 designed a stamp to recognise those heroes who stepped up for others during the pandemic.

Each pupil received a certificate for their personal effort and pictured is the the school certificate thanking us for our contribution toward helping achieve the Guinness World Title!





# BEAVERTAILS

Preparation time : 10 minutes (plus rising time)

Cooking time : 15 minutes

## Ingredients

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup lukewarm water	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup plain flour
$2\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dry yeast	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup wholemeal flour
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup warm milk	Oil (for frying)
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup granulated sugar	Coating :
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt	1 cup granulated sugar
1 egg	2tbsp ground cinnamon
2tbsp melted butter	Your choice of toppings

## STEPS

- 1 In a large mixing bowl, combine the yeast and warm water. Let it activate for 3mins. Then add sugar, milk, egg, salt and melted butter to the bowl, stir to combine.
- 2 Mix both flours together and add it into the wet ingredients to make a soft dough. Knead for 5mins, if using a stand mixer or 8mins, if kneading by hand. The dough should be smooth and elastic like. Cover dough and allow it to rest in a greased bowl for 45mins. to an hour.
- 3 Knead the dough briefly then divide into 10 portions, of equal size. Allow them to rest, covered by tea towels. While the dough balls rest, combine sugar with the cinnamon in a small shallow, broad dish.
- 4 Working with one ball at a time, roll it out into an oval about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick, place it on the side on a floured surface. Repeat until all ten beaver tails are rolled out. Next heat 4 inches of oil in a deep saucepan. When the oil reaches  $385^{\circ}\text{F}$  it is ready.
- 5 Give the tails one final stretch then place them in the hot oil. Cook for 2-3 mins. per side or until gold on both sides. Then remove from the heat and toss them in the sugar coating.
- 6 Finally coat with your chosen toppings (such as nutella, peanut butter, m&m's, banana etc.) Best served warm and fresh!



BY: Keri





# Rockport Ladies' Lunch

We welcomed the return of the Ladies' Lunch on Friday 10th December, an event that never disappoints!

We were joined by almost 150 ladies who enjoyed a delicious lunch, a talk given from our charity this year, Invisible Traffick, and a chance to catch up with old friends - not to mention the much-anticipated prize draw, organised by a super-efficient team of Rockport Mums!

There was dancing, singing and maybe the odd bottle of champagne! We're already looking forward to next year's event!









# Carols by Candlelight

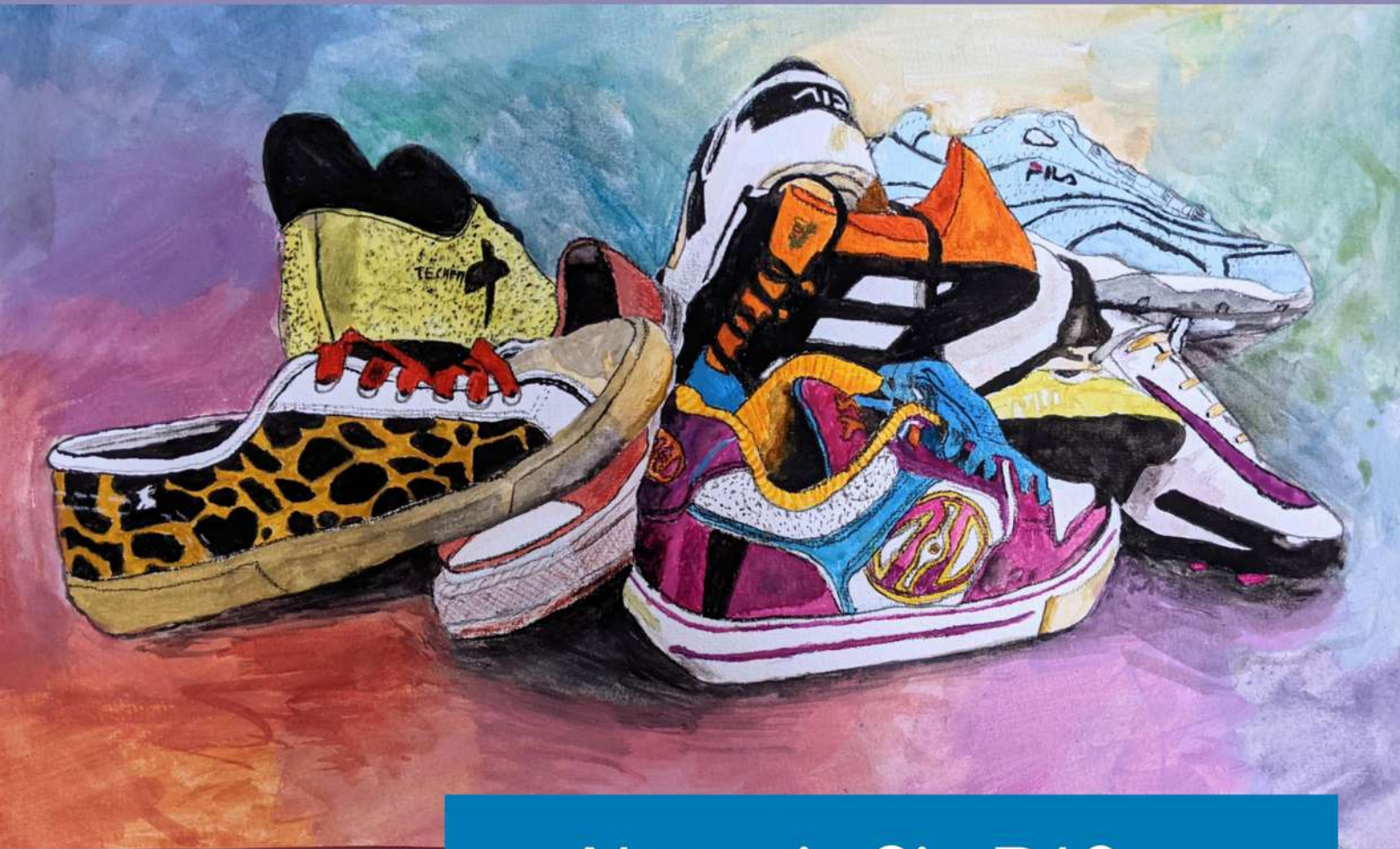
Not to be disheartened by restrictions that forced us to re-think our traditional Carol Service at St Philip & St James' Parish Church, it was replaced with 'Carols by Candlelight' on the front lawn.

On 16th December pupils, teachers, parents and friends of the school gathered to listen to the Junior and Senior Choirs and Vocal Groups, followed by some community carol singing.

We were lucky to have a dry and mild evening, complemented by traditional mulled wine and mince pies to add to the occasion!







Natanis Sin R12







wonderful time of the year





# A trip down memory lane...

If you asked a non-Old Rockportian how they felt about their school years, you'd almost always hear tales of dislike and a desire to leave school as soon as possible to experience the world. The story is quite the opposite when you ask an Old Rockportian about their memories of school! You can almost pin-point the exact moment they're transported back in time and delight in sharing their their personal journeys, always with a genuine affection and an intimate sharing of a time that was obviously very special to them.

A great number of them cheekily seem to be about getting up to mischief somewhere, mainly in the GT may we add! (just read Russell's account!)

We love to hear the stories of yester-year so we asked some Old Rockportians if they would write a few lines to share their special times with us all - one thing seems clear, and perhaps we all already know it, but we're all incredibly lucky to share Rockport, so let's keep making those memories!

We have shared Mr Reynolds' contribution from the 2006 Centenary Magazine and the below was kindly gifted to us by current Rockport Mum, Deirdre, who along with her friend, Natalie, (who is now Baroness Evans!). They had the great role of editors-in-chief of the Rockport Reporter, so forget Lady Whistledown of Bridgerton - if you weren't seen with a copy of the Rockport Reporter then you were missing out... on the very important room-moving info and of course, keeping up to date with Computer Corner!

Our thanks to the following for their contributions. To Deidre for the snippets and to Georgia, Russell and Henry for sharing - we hope you enjoy!

## **R**OCKPORT **R**EPORTER... The Gazette of Rockport School

Monthly During Term Time 13p

Mr. Broad is changing a lot of things in Rockport, knocking down countless walls, and blocking off lots of doors.

Mr. Armstrong's getting a lovely new stationery stores room, which is going to be in Mrs. Sinclair's office. No, Mrs. Sinclair isn't going without an office, she is moving into the library. We're not going without a library, it's moving into the first form room. The Upper 1st classroom is going to be moved into the French room

changing room. The changing room is moving down into the boiler room. There really are a lot of changes being made, even Mr. Broad's study is being moved to the Boarders' Common Room. He will teach from there as well. Most of these changes are to be made by next term.

The Editors would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Deirdre Gilpin.  
Natalie Evans.



# Computer Corner

Last time the program didn't do very much. In fact, all it did was make a few sounds. This program does a bit more than that. It is also a bit longer, so try to persevere at the computer longer.

For any more advanced programmers I've included a section about how to save a program onto tape or disc/disk. If you have spent a long time typing a program in there is nothing more annoying than losing it due to a power out or having to turn the computer off to go out or have a meal!

J.J.L. Douglas.

```
10 CLS
20 PRINT "NAME ANY PLURAL OBJECT , FOR
EXAMPLE 'RADIOS' OR 'ELEPHANTS', BUT NOT
'RADIO'"
30 INPUT A$
40 PRINT "NOW TYPE IN ANY WORD THAT RHYMES
WITH 'ME'"
50 SOUND 1, -13, RND(255), 40
60 INPUT B$
70 PRINT "THANK YOU"
80 PRINT A$; " ALWAYS FRIGHTENED ME"
90 PRINT "BUT NOW I'M AS HAPPY AS A "; B$
100 END
```

Not many new words, only RND. RND tells the computer to pick a number between 1 and the number in brackets after RND. For example RND(300) would pick a number from 1 to 300.

If you have a disk drive, the way to save a program is SAVE"????????". The name mustn't have more than 7 letters in it. Do the same thing for tape, though you must be a little more careful.

When you have typed SAVE press RECORD and RETURN at the same time. Don't overlap programs or you'll lose both of them if they're on tape. The names can be up to 10 letters long if you are using a tape.

To load a game back, if you are using tape, first wind the tape to the beginning of the program and press PLAY. Then type LOAD"????????". Disc will be much quicker than tape.

Discs are better but much more expensive than tapes. If you use discs, always remember to look after them or they will be ruined.

We're glad to say that the standard of creative design for our Rockport event programmes has improved just slightly since 1978!

And the eagle-eyed amongst you will have worked out that not only were Sports and Speech Day combined, but the term also ran much later than it does currently.

ROCKPORT

SPORTS

AND

SPEECH

DAY

1 JULY 1978



# ing Rockport in the Sixties

By Josh Reynolds

I was a pupil at Rockport from 1964 – 1969 but I think I can safely say that the secluded backwater that was Rockport in those days was more or less untouched by the 'Swinging Sixties.' Having said that, however, I'm reminded of the time, aged about eleven, that I smuggled in a pair of strictly non-regulation Chelsea boots that were all the rage at the time. Boarders in those days had to polish their shoes every evening before tea and present them to the duty master for inspection. I decided to present the Chelsea boots of which I was so proud – ankle length, chisel-toed, with a wide band of elastic on both sides – to the duty master, on that occasion Mr. Williams, just to see what his reaction would be. Those readers who remember Mr. Williams know he was not in the habit of suffering fools gladly, and they may now either be doubting the truth of my story or my sanity aged eleven. I assure you the story is true and freely admit I must have been mad to have tried to pull such a stunt. In the event, Mr. Williams' reaction was mild compared to what it might have been – he took one look at the offending footwear and promptly confiscated them. I didn't see my Chelsea boots till the end of term. Still, I

suppose I was lucky not to have been soundly beaten.

As a teacher at Rockport today, I can attest to the fact that punishments were far more severe, albeit swifter, than they are now. Not that we were any less naughty, of course. The fact that bad behaviour would almost invariably be rewarded with corporal punishment probably added to the thrill of being naughty: we were playing for higher stakes, which increased the sense of relief when we got away with our misdemeanours.

One of my fondest memories of my childhood days at Rockport is of cricket matches on a Saturday afternoon against a variety of opponents. There were the matches against adult teams such as The Fathers, The Old Rockportians and the Masonic Lodge, and of course there were the matches against the other Irish prep schools, most of which are long gone: Mourne Grange, Garth House, Brackenber, Gloucester House, Cabin Hill, Castle Park, Brook House, Headfort and Aravon.

I also have a vivid picture in my mind of hot summer days spent swimming in the lough, either at the Cove when the tide was in or at Glenraig beach when

the tide was out. Afterwards, we would walk back in our swimming trunks, barefooted over the grass and would spread our towels out to dry in the sun. There were two diving boards at the Cove – high board and low board, and Mr. Tucker, alone in his rowing boat, would patrol up and down and keep an eye open for swimmers and divers in difficulties. David Marshall mentioned to me recently that his brother Tim had won the High Board Diving Cup, without actually being able to swim – Mr. Tucker was waiting in the boat and offered him the end of an oar when he surfaced. That was the extent of Health and Safety at Rockport in those days.

As a pupil at Rockport during the sixties and as a teacher here since 1981, I've witnessed many changes, but there are two things that haven't changed – the school's idyllic setting and its caring, family ethos.

R. T. Reynolds.





# Old Rockportians Remember...

## **Georgia Cunningham 2000-2012**

*Rockport is a very special place.*

*Although I joined R1 over 20 years ago and loved every happy minute in the Jackson Building, it was my later years that I remember most fondly. Even at the time, I knew the experience was special, and was sad to move on (because Sixth Form wasn't available "in my day"). The academic hoops all got jumped through, I survived the R7 Summer Concert Dance Routine, I can vividly remember the nerves at Declamations, and being particularly delighted to give up the clarinet...but what will stay with me forever is all the fun we had.*

*Miss Holland's sports tours are still the stuff of legend amongst us, including a trip to Barbados and a golf tour to Blackpool. We experienced victory and defeat...well, defeat mostly ( Virtus repulsae nescia sordidae!), and learned to be gracious in both! Although classes were small in number, we were all encouraged to participate in every activity and value every member of the team. We put a lot of effort into netball and were proud to reach the NI Schools Netball Final.*

*We learned a lot on DofE expeditions - zip your tent carefully or a fox will eat all your rations, and 20 miles is a long way on an empty tummy!*

*Most importantly I met some of my very best friends, with whom I still spend a lot of time today.*

*For now, I am living and working in London, but I love an excuse to visit and will always feel "at home" at Rockport.*



## **Russell Simpson 1988 - 1994**

*I still have a scar from when I threw myself off a cliff at the far end of the GT and sliced the back of my hand on a rock. It was one of these forever days, a timeless evening designed, surely, for kids to play on and on. The cliff was called 'The Point' - it's gone now - and we risked limbs to launch ourselves over nettles, then celebrate distance and survival. I remember laughing as we wrapped my actually-quite-serious cut in long grass so we could carry on jumping. On a similar night, I remember a friend so committed to uninterrupted play that, as he relieved himself behind a tree, we foraged leaves thick and wide enough for him to do a good wipe. Unrelatedly, he habitually picked chewing gum off the underside of tables in the dining hall and ate them. He got worms. He's an architect now.*

*These days, my kids are at Rockport; sometimes I catch a glimpse of my scar and remember why. Post-Rockport, life gets insistent and serious and less gentle. Our pernicious fetishisation of 'grind' ensures us ever less time to laugh and throw ourselves off cliffs and scavenge pre-loved gum. I know Rockport permitted me a longer breath of freedom than many others; I count myself beyond lucky to be able to afford my own kids the same gift of space and quiet. We all deserve happy scars.*





## **Henry Crosslé - 1970 – 1978**

*As a pupil from 1970 – 1978, it is only in more recent years that I think how fortunate I was to be taught by men who had fought in the war thirty years previously... what conversations you could have with them now as an adult, when you wouldn't be terrified of them as before! Now, when I spend time walking through the corridors and grounds of Rockport, I can still hear the booming voices of teachers Michael Williams, Sam Russell and Peter Armstrong shouting at young boys who were doubtless pushing the boundaries of their patience!*

*I remember Mr Russell's Shell class when he would drum our times' tables into us - he would instruct "always fold the page down the middle, mark it out before copying those tables down". Then we would start the tables' chant. However, I would have been watching out the classroom window, yearning to get out to play in the GT and onto the Point. Sometimes during the summer term, Mr Russell would take his form class out to the Point and that's where we would sit in the long grass, enjoying the sun and reciting our times' tables and our spellings.*

*Can you imagine eating lunch in Mr Vance's study? The dining room in my day has since been divided into two and turned into the Headmaster's study and the Old Library in the main school building. Lunchtime started with Mr Tucker's Latin prayers - "Benedictus, benedicat, Per Jesum Christum, Dominum Nostrum;" End of meal "Benedicto benedicatur, Per Jesum Christum, Dominum Nostrum." Lunchtime concluded with lost property announcements, "who has lost a yellow and black jacket pencil?" as the headmaster waved it above his shoulders. How innocent that all seems now!*

*Games would see Mr Williams in a trench coat and gum boots, and Mr Russell, cigarette in hand, wearing his sports jacket (complete with folded handkerchief in top pocket) and short wellie boots – both referees would be panting around the pitch after the players and the ball. Not your modern-day PE teachers!*

*Afternoon detentions set by Mr Williams meant pulling a huge roller up and down the cricket square... meanwhile grounds' man Eddie Smiton drove around the pitch on the trusty Massey Ferguson tractor, towing unguarded gang mowers – health and safety risk assessment was unheard of in those happy days!*

*1974 saw the opening of the Tucker Hall, soon to become the new home of Mr Russell's fantastic annual plays. His productions were professional in every aspect, from the acting, to the sets, to the costumes. Miss Rosie Webb tirelessly sewed costumes as we rehearsed for what seemed to be the whole of the Autumn term, to be ready for the first weekend in December. Mr Russell's make-up team made grey wigs and beards which turned ten, eleven and twelve year olds into school masters and mistresses ('The Happiest Days of your Life' 1976) and into elderly station masters ('Ghost Train' 1977). From back stage duties to front of house management, Mr Russell made every pupil seem important during the Wednesday afternoon dress rehearsal and then three consecutive nights performing to the full-to-capacity Tucker Hall. These three-act performances over three nights were one of the highlights of the Rockport year in the 1970s... fond memories!*



Henry pictured with his classmates - far right



Ghost Train production 1977



# Hollywood Festival, January 2022

Expertly prepared by Mrs Catherine Hunter, Rockport pupils took part in the annual Hollywood Music Festival, in Classical, Folk and Musical Theatre categories.

Each of our students prepared and performed to an excellent standard, and for many performers it was their first time in front of an audience. Congratulations!





# Creative Writing by Year 8

In English, Year 8 worked on developing their creative writing, by adding lots of description.

They were shown an image of a spooky forest and asked to write a story, using sensory descriptions and figurative language.

He arrived, his place of peace. He goes here every time he feels downhearted or despondent. He has friends amongst the trees and branches and even the river. They're hidden in the strangest places such as in the old crusty tree with slowly withering bark that falls in a pile of decomposing dirt.

He sees the slimy, slithering snake slowly climb up the decaying branch, which stood proudly viewing the beautiful surroundings. He sees the little, sneaky spider monkeys swing from branch to branch still being their brazen selves.

A putrid stench began to fill his nostrils as he tries not to inhale through his nose. His eyes are watering. He searched for what was creating the terrible smell. He found it; a rabbit corpse surrounded by starving flies slowly eating away at its diminishing body.

He also found fungi growing on the trees then gulped some down because he hadn't eaten for hours. "Uh," he cried spitting it out on the ground. Immediately a cluster of hungry ants fought for the food as he watched with interest.

He crept closer with his eyes focused on the ants as he walked through the thick blanket of leaves. He couldn't see the root that lay beneath. He felt the ground punch him in the face. He rolled into the river. The taste of mud, dirt and filthy water filled his mouth. He saw black, nothing but black.

By Luca Johnston

I was balancing on the roots trying not to fall off into the spooky darkness below. I am greeted by green and yellow fog filling the air around me. The overhanging branches are thick and bent. The roots are covered in moss and twigs peeking out of the trees. The leaves are falling from the large trees. The bats are flapping their wings like leaves on a windy night.

As I fight my way through the thick vines and bushes, I'm shocked to find a snake approaching me as if I'm his next meal. The air is consumed with the smell of dampness and grass. I was surprised to see the friendly face of a frog as green as the treetops.

I felt a drop of water on my face when I looked up. Suddenly, it was like a waterfall coming from the sky. Next thing I knew, I was soaked as if I had been swimming with all my clothes on.

By Rachel Ballard



# When it Shows!

It looks like... lots of white dirt.

It smells like... dry water and cream.

It feels like... wet dry sand.

I think of... making snow angels.

I want to... make snow men.

It makes me feel... excited and happy.

victor



Victor Simpson R4



# North Down Rotary Club

This year North Down Rotary Club generously donated sixty trees to the school, which were planted in March by the R3 & R4 children, along with Mike and John from the Rotary Club.

The Rockport Conservation Club also assisted with planting the trees around the campus. We were delighted to receive the trees as part of our Round Square environmental initiative and look forward to watching them grow over the years to come.



## Student Council

During the spring term the school's Student Council was formed with a range of dynamic, mature and enthusiastic pupils from R8-R11. Pupils were voted onto the Student Council by their peers, with the aim of making some positive changes within the school.

Chairperson Hollie Harlen (R11) shared the council's mission: *'Our mission is to make the student body's opinions not just heard but listened to and acted upon. We plan to represent each student equally and be a collection of approachable faces which anyone can confide in.'*





# Antiques Roadshow

You may have spotted some familiar faces in a February episode of the BBC's Antiques Roadshow!

Head Boy Oli Whiting and Head Girl Ugonna Ojiako, accompanied by Mr Vance, made a cameo performance on the iconic show, originally filmed in September but screened in February.

It was a lovely day of filming where we had the opportunity to share our school's unique and historic link to the development of penicillin during WW2. It was also great to be able to give recognition to someone who was clearly an unsung hero of the penicillin story, Professor Norman Heatley.

An interesting addendum to our participation with our Heatley penicillin vessel was the sudden appearance of Barry the AR security guy, whose job it is to accompany anyone with a valuable artefact back to their vehicle in case they are mugged by an Antiques Roadshow spectator!

Suffice to say, following the Antiques Roadshow valuation, our penicillin vessel is now well insured and is securely on display under lock and key!





# Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh



Well... Mrs McClure did warn us...! She told us after our practice expedition in April, that we had benefitted from perfect weather conditions and that we would never get it so good again! "You will either get roasted or drenched" she had remarked, when preparing us for our qualifying expedition in June. After our practice expedition had gone so well, I think we all took what she said with a pinch of salt – big mistake!

Our weekly training sessions, however, had us all well prepared for both expeditions in the Mourne Mountains. Mrs McClure and Miss Bridges developed our skills in map reading, route card planning, packing our rucksack, planning meals, and looking after our kit (as well as each other!).

The first day of our qualifying expedition went by without too many dramas, other than Rhiannon falling off a wall and me falling into a river! The day was mostly dry (unlike me...) and the three groups - totalling 17 of us - enjoyed meeting up at the campsite at the end of the day, cooking together and swapping stories about the expedition so far.

The next morning our group was the last to set out. The final words from our assessor David were "the weather shouldn't be too bad today". Unfortunately David was wrong! We hadn't been walking for long when the weather started to close in. Normally each group walks independently of the others, but luckily for groups one and two, they 'bumped into each other' and stuck together, which was just as well as one of the groups had lost their walkie-talkie! One or two of us were succumbing to the horrendous cold and wet weather, but fortunately Zak's quick actions of putting the tent up (single-handedly) gave some much needed shelter.

Everyone showed great determination and eventually we all made it to the second campsite. We had been due to 'wild camp' that night, but the weather wouldn't allow it. At the last minute, the leaders were able to organize for us to stay at a campsite which had great facilities, there was even a little house on-site with a fire for us to get dried out, warmed up and enjoy some hot chocolate – it was a brilliant night, reminiscing about the day and enjoying each other's company.

I'm glad to say our last day was much less eventful! It was a really long route but the weather was kind, it only started to hail in the last few minutes of our walk to meet the coach in Kilbroney Park near Rostrevor. It was an incredible few days which undoubtedly strengthened the bond between us all and reminded us "there is more in you than you think" (as Mr Vance would say).

Thank you to Mrs McClure, Miss Bridges, Mrs Megarry and Mr Clark for their Duke of Edinburgh work all year, and also to assessors David and Sammy for their help during the expeditions.

## Sam Crosslé (R11)



Bronze Duke of Edinburgh group



Silver Duke of Edinburgh group



At the end of April both our Bronze and Silver DoE groups completed their practice expedition in the beautiful Mourne. Pupils had the opportunity to develop their teamwork, navigation skills, resilience and sense of adventure, as they walked, cooked and camped together. The sun shone the entire time – unlike the qualifying expedition! In June the students had to deal with some very challenging weather in the Mourne, particularly on day two. Everyone worked well in their teams and used their training to get through – each and every student chose to persevere and complete their qualifying expedition. We were able to organise some last-minute indoor respite on the Thursday evening which gave the students a chance to have a hot chocolate and dry their wet clothes by the fire!

Duke of Edinburgh expeditions are all about pushing yourself and discovering the tenacity that you did not necessarily know you had! The external assessors were hugely impressed with our students, so much so, they took the time to write to Mr Vance (below). We really cannot commend them enough. Well done everybody!

### **Mrs S McClure**

*Dear Mr Vance*

*I am writing to you in a personal capacity as a Duke of Edinburgh's Award assessor of nearly 40 years' experience of working with young people in that field, and as someone who has assessed young people from Rockport School several times over the years. Over the period of the 8th to 10th June past I was assessing three groups of young people from Rockport School.*

*As I am sure your staff involved have already reported, the weather on the second day was particularly unpleasant. It was one of the worst that I have experienced in recent times at this time of the year.*

*My reason for writing is to convey to you how well your young people managed those conditions and express my admiration for their tenacity, perseverance and attitude that they all exhibited over their respective two- and three-day adventures. It would be rare that groups faced with such conditions manage to complete their task without some retiring for a number of reasons. On my arrival at their finish point on the last day of the expeditions, I was pleasantly surprised that all the young people who started were at the finish point. These young people would be amongst the best that I have assessed from Rockport and I hope that from these young people, you have your first successes with Gold.*

*I am aware that this does not happen without considerable training and time investment from your teachers that are involved, and they too should be credited with providing the young people with the tools to manage and complete the tasks that they set out to fulfil. But the final credit is still to the young people who dealt with the conditions that they faced in such a professional and measured way.*

*Yours sincerely*

**David Morrow**

**Duke of Edinburgh's Award Assessor**





# Rory McIlroy meets our golfers!

In February, some of our golfers had the lucky chance to practice alongside Rory McIlroy at his home club of Hollywood Golf Club, while he was preparing for his next competition.

This was a great opportunity for our young golfers to meet an icon of the game and someone who is a global ambassador not just for golf, but for Northern Ireland. We're incredibly proud of the achievements of all our golfers, so were delighted to hear that he even asked a few of them for some tips!

Our golfers loved being able to watch Rory in action and they were thrilled with the photo opportunities!

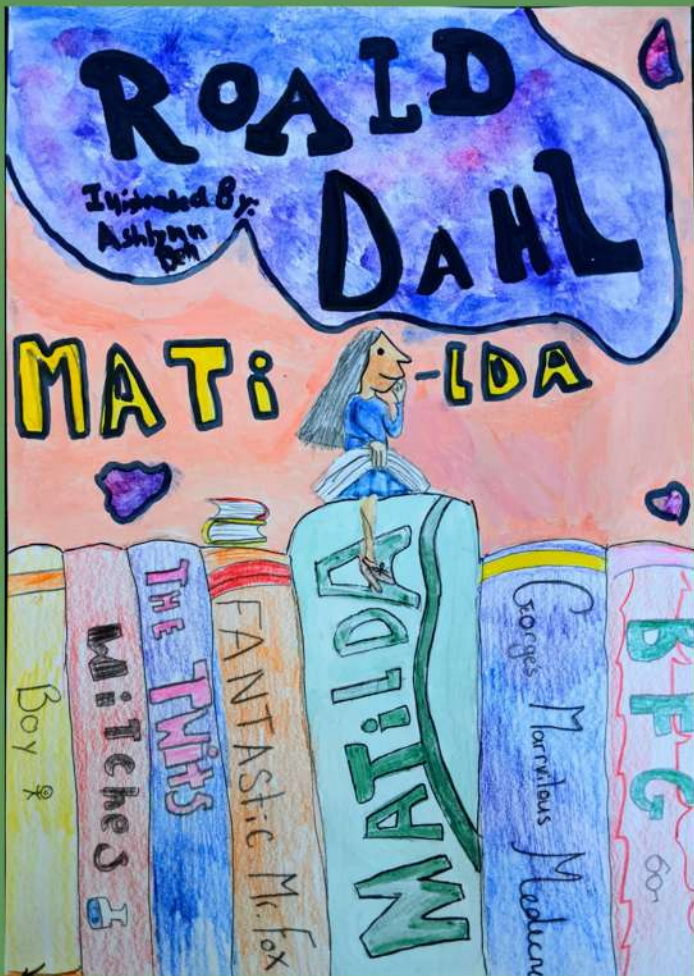
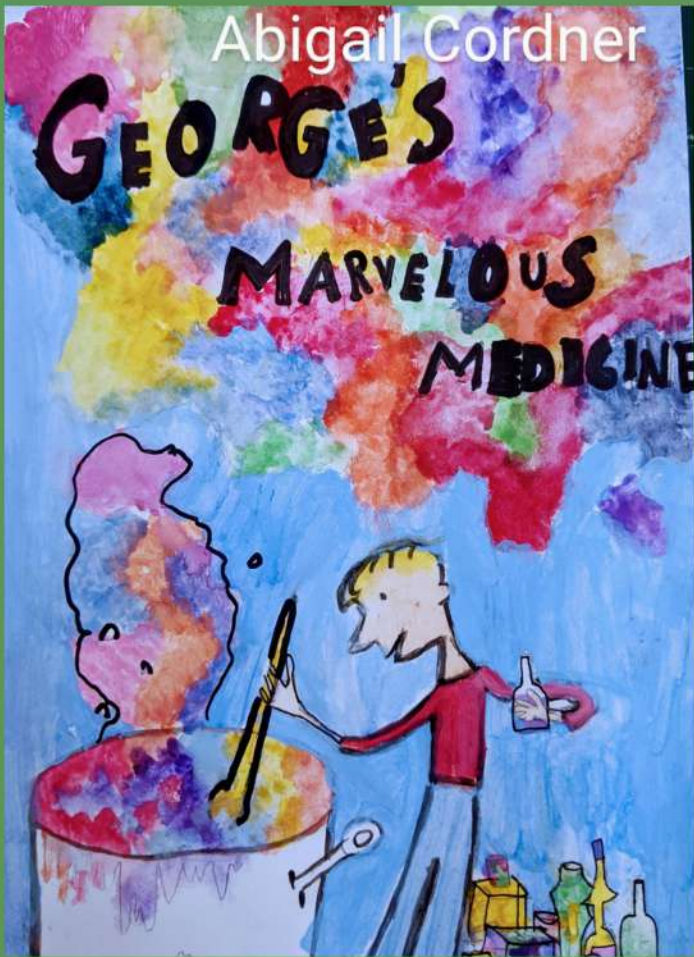


## UCAS

Another year, another trip for our Year 13 group who attended the UCAS Exhibition in March. It was a very valuable experience for our pupils to speak to lecturers and students about courses and student life. They also attended some of the key note speaker presentations which gave them useful guidance into university application too.







R7 illustrations inspired by World Book Day



# Kevin Bell Fundraising

When the Rockport community comes together to support the work of a great cause, it really is a force to be reckoned with!

The Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust was set up in 2013 and has stepped in to help more than 1000 families in Ireland who have been affected by a sudden bereavement of a relative overseas.

At the end of 2021, the trust was invaluable in supporting a family who are a part of our Rockport community. In recognition of this help, the staff and a team of senior pupils began running a series of fundraising events as part of a Round Square service week, to raise funds in support of the work of the trust.

There was a bake sale, a 'Guess the Number of Sweets in the Jar' competition, a whole-school Non-Uniform Day, a 'Nearest the Pin' competition and a 5-aside Football Tournament. PHEW!

We received a letter from KBRT founder Colin Bell, an excerpt of which follows, expressing his thanks to everyone in the school community.

*Dear Mr Vance*

*Thank you, the staff, pupils and parents of Rockport School for your so generous £1,100 donation to our Trust, in memory of the late Daniel Ferguson. We are glad we were able to assist in bringing Daniel home to Donaghadee. Also thank you for your very kind words, they are much appreciated.*

***Yours sincerely  
Colin Bell  
Founder, KBRT***



The Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust aims to alleviate the financial hardship of bereaved families repatriating the body (bodies) of loved one(s) who have died abroad in sudden or tragic circumstances back to Ireland.









# A lesson with Moyra Donaldson

*Words kindly provided by Mrs L Hobson*

In February, sixth form literature students had the privilege of spending the day with Northern Irish poet Moyra Donaldson, winner of Art's Council Northern Ireland 'Major Individual Artist' award.

Moyra is a local to our parts, hailing from Co.Down; she is celebrated for her unique voice in the Northern Irish canon and we count ourselves lucky to have had her share her time with us.

The sixth formers began their day with a private poetry reading from Moyra's latest poetry collection, this was followed by a creative writing workshop where pupils engaged in the process of producing their own creative pieces. In the pupils' final session, Moyra shared her knowledge and experience on editing before giving students the opportunity to share their own work and receive feedback.

This was a unique opportunity for our literature students to meet with and learn from a celebrated Northern Irish poet in an intimate setting. It is an experience to remember, and an enjoyable one to have had before the real work of revision and examinations began!





# European Young Parliament

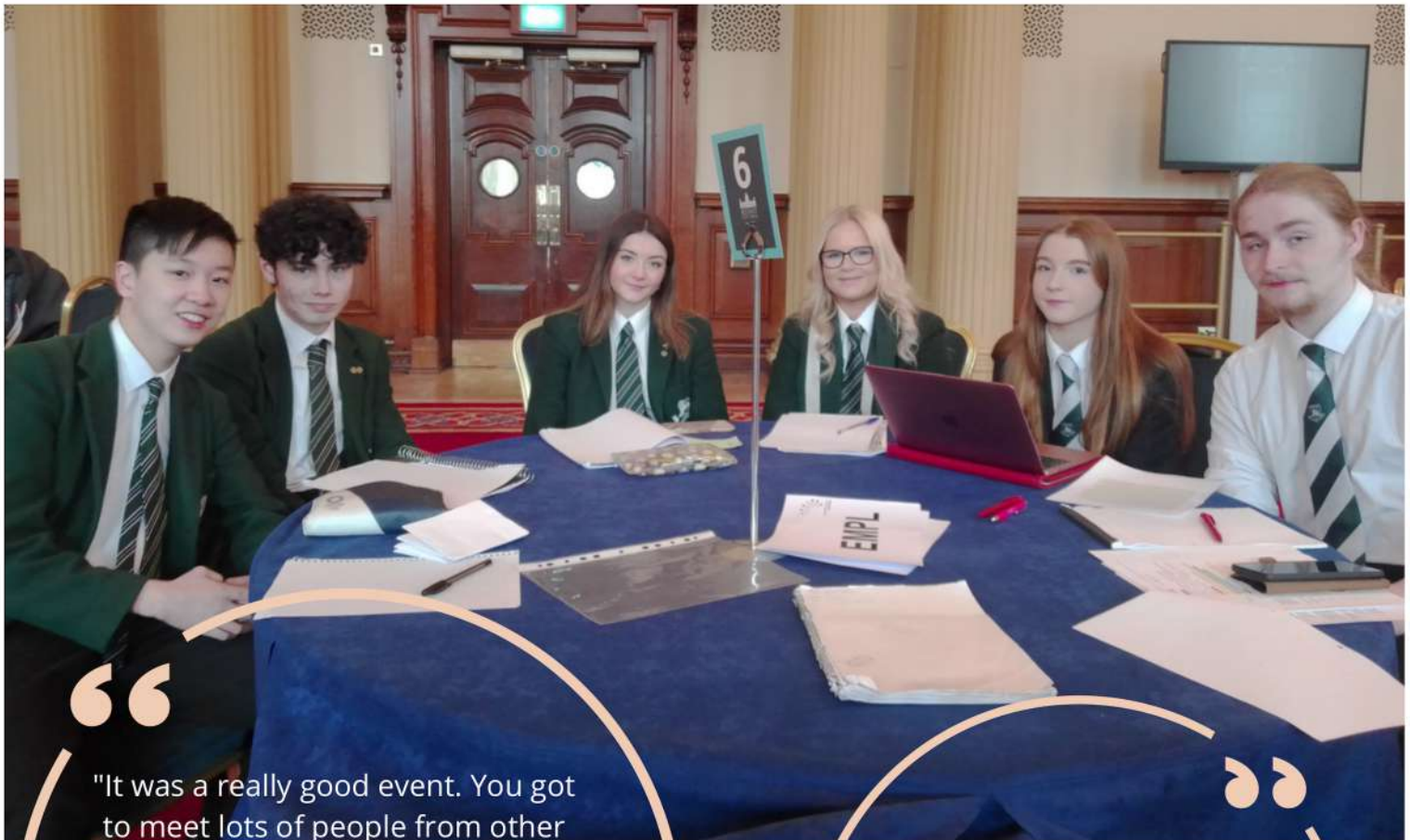
*Words kindly provided by Mr J Corcos*

In March, a team of six Rockport students participated in the European Young Parliament regional session in Belfast City Hall. The European Young Parliament is a forum for young people to develop and express their opinions on a wide range of topics and debate possible legislation around them.

Among the issues debated were the gig economy, Covid-19 vaccines, euthanasia, migration, and the return of stolen cultural artefacts to African nations. The standard of debate was incredibly high and many of the most established grammar schools in Northern Ireland took part.

Our team pictured below, comprising Adrian Chan, Naoise McDevitt, Grace Coyle, Katie Calvert, Emma Yeaman and Max Todd, acquitted themselves excellently and at the end of a gruelling day of debate, our Rockport team, alongside Portadown College, were chosen to progress to the national round in Liverpool in September.

An amazing achievement!



“

"It was a really good event. You got to meet lots of people from other schools and find research and debate issues that are really current. It made me think about things that I had not considered before and I changed my mind on a few things too."

**Max Todd**

”

”

"I really liked challenging the views of other people and the cut and thrust of the debate, even though it was kept really formal and professional and ultimately quite light-hearted."

**Emma Yeaman**

”



# Ukrainian appeal

March 2021

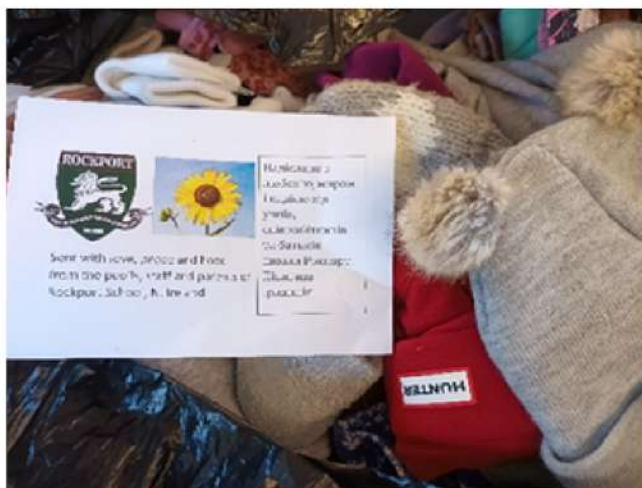
We were overwhelmed by the sheer generosity and good will evidenced in the support for the people of Ukraine. Just 36 hours after our PTFA first asked for help did we need a truck at school to collect the mountain of supplies donated; supplies that began a 3-day road journey to people in need on the Polish-Ukrainian border. And no sooner had that load departed than Miss Holland's room was once again put out of commission by the arrival of many more donations.

The impact of the situation was felt by all and was evident in the enormity of donations. Stories of some of our teenagers taking their pocket money and going to supermarkets to buy nappies or toothpaste for young children in Ukraine reminded us that we ought to be proud of our young people and their empathy and spirit of service.

We were very grateful to 'Hope for Youth' who assisted us greatly in helping get the aid to the Ukrainian refugees so quickly and efficiently. We put the below messages into all of our boxes;

Надіслано з любов'ю, миром і надією від учнів, співробітників та батьків школи Рокпорт, Північна Ірландія

The translation is, ***Sent with love, peace and hope from the pupils, staff and parents of Rockport School, Northern Ireland.***





# Founder's Day Cross Country

17th March, 2021

The traditional Annual Inter-House competition on Founder's Day was a great success. It was wonderful to be able to allow parents, friends, and family back to spectate at this event.

Even though it went ahead last year without spectators, there is nothing quite like the atmosphere of a crowd willing the pupils on at every stage of the run – especially the infamous 'Death Hill'!

Although we have winners of medals and trophies, all runners are winners in our eyes, and especially those children who naturally struggle with distance running. Their effort and tenacity are celebrated just as much as the talent of the winners.

Overall winners were Christian Simms (R12), Claudia Simms (R11), Luca Johnston (R8), Paige Girvan (R8), Bobby Doyle (R7), Annabella Cole (R6), Victor Simpson (R4), and Jessica Johnston (R4).

This year the victorious House was Greens!





# Break the Rules – A Week of Madness in March!

The boys and girls in Early Years spend most of their time being angels... they are well-mannered, polite, courteous and understand the importance of rules in school in order to create a happy, safe and productive learning environment.

So it was decided, that for ONE WEEK ONLY, they would be allowed to 'Break the Rules!' What a week!

We had crazy hair, nail varnish, tattoos, non-uniform, fancy dress, crazy socks, odd shoes, packed lunch, classroom swaps...and MORE! We loved it!

Sometimes when you give in a little...you get so much MORE in return! We knew that our children would continue to work hard to follow our school rules...when everything went back to 'normal'!

It was so lovely to see how much the children (and parents!) embraced this crazy week and the smiles on their faces reinforced that it was definitely worth it!





# Hat's Off!

Welcome to our farm!

For their Spring production the boys and girls in Early Years wowed the audience with a musical tour through the seasons, as Apple the pony tried to find the perfect weather for her hat!

There was singing, dancing and entertainment throughout the entire performance. We forget sometimes how nerve-wrecking it can be to stand in front of a sell-out Tucker Hall crowd, but they were absolutely amazing - we were so proud of the hard work and enthusiasm our children showed over a number of weeks and it paid off. Brilliant!







## Sixth Form Formal

The Old Inn, Crawfordsburn, was the venue for our Sixth Form Formal in April this year. A lovely meal was enjoyed, and staff and students got the chance to mix in quite different surroundings! The style was 10/10 and the Formal Committee did an excellent job pulling it all together.

A special thank you to the Old Inn for their super hospitality and donating a raffle prize, also to the Golf Hub who sponsored the goodie bags, and to Wilson Nesbitt Solicitors for the sweetie favours and pens – all very much appreciated!



Adam  
Tate  
Photography









Only at Rockport, would you visit for your tour as a prospective family with Mr Vance and somehow, out of nowhere, the Easter Bunny would appear to see the boys and girls!

Some dancing, singing and of course the highlight, a hunt around the front lawn for what appeared to be the most generous egg hunt ever!

We think the smiles said it all! Our wonderful PTFA pulled out the stops to organise another magical day for our children.





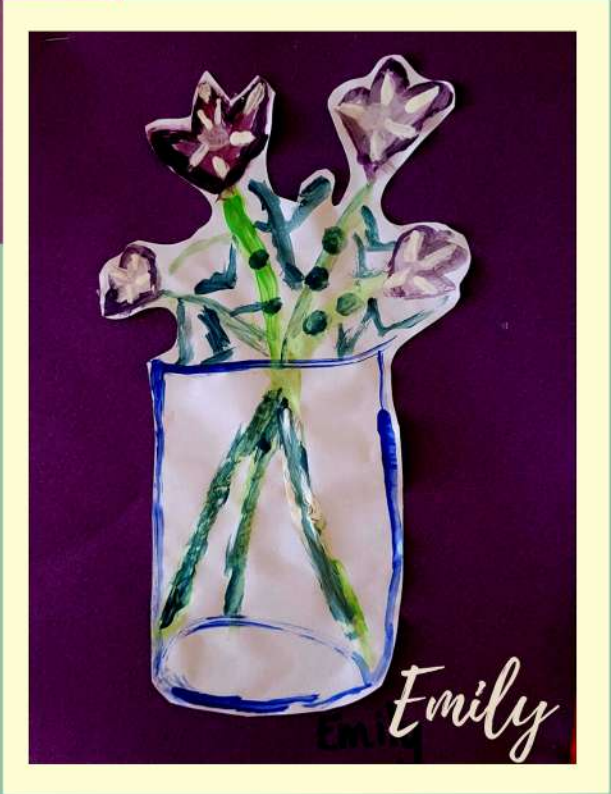




Charlotte



S p r i n g  
F l o w e r s  
b y R 2



Emily



James



Harland



# Balmoral Show

The sun shone for our group of students attending the Balmoral Show in May. R3, R4 the GCSE Food & Nutrition group and representatives from the Conservation Club went to experience Northern Ireland's biggest agri-food event. They were able to taste food and drink products from local food companies such as Tayto, Mash Direct, Whites Oats, Glastry Farm ice cream, Thompson's Tea, to name a few!

The pupils also got a chance to speak with employees from the various trade stands as well as getting close to farm livestock and finding out where our food comes from.

There were lots of different food demonstrations in the Food Pavilion from the Livestock and Meat Commission, as well as local chefs like Paula McIntyre.

It was also lovely to see former Rockport Head Girl and GCSE Food and Nutrition pupil, Phoebe McFeeters (nee Wright), who was exhibiting her 'Hotties Chocolate' product and we thoroughly recommend it!

There was also a great display of one of our Round Square IDEALS in action, pupils came back with some tree saplings that are now planted in the GT! All in all a great day out and the group can't wait to return to Balmoral Show 2023.





# Rockport Show Jumpers

This year Rockport's two show jumping teams - comprising Arielle Allen, Jay Doherty, Niamh Devlin, Alice Salters, Samara Doherty and Tabitha Allen – had an extremely busy and successful year, with several podium finishes during the TRI Inter Schools Show jumping League.

Congratulations to our riders who represented Rockport amazingly well, and thank you to all the parents for their support during these events.





# MASH DIRECT



# BELFAST

# city

# MARATHON 2022



We said a huge well done to staff members Mr Corcos, Miss Rice, Mrs Thompson, Mrs Brennan, Mrs McBride, Mr Vance (Jnr), Miss Jameson, Mrs Megarry, Miss Scott (and Mr Megarry) who bravely pounded the pavements and completed the Belfast City Marathon relay event in May.

Monies raised were donated to Flourish NI, a charity dedicated to the support of people whose lives have been impacted by human trafficking.

What a fabulous achievement!



## Golfing Success

Alanna Ross (Yr 10), Ellie Russell (Yr 10) and Caitlin Ross (Yr 8) were presented with the Junior Schools Championship (Ulster Region) Pennant.

The girls represented Rockport and won the Ulster section, qualifying them for the All Ireland Finals in Dublin - a great achievement for our girls.





# Sports' Day, 27th May

















# Declamations, May

Words kindly provided by Mrs L Hobson

What a fantastic day we had for our annual Declamations' competition - it was a roaring success! All our students, from Early Years to the Senior school, gave outstanding performances.

We started the day hearing from our youngest members of Rockport, led by Mrs Athanasiou, who are to be congratulated for taking part. We were very proud! Special congratulations to our prize winners.

## Reception

1st Place - Eimile Smith  
2nd Place - Penny Boyd

## R2

1st Place - Emily Mulholland  
2nd Place - Sonny Girvan

## R4

1st Place - Victor Simpson  
2nd Place - Branson Buller

## R1

1st Place - Lara Mirkovic  
2nd Place - Grace Mulholland

## R3

1st Place - Hugo Athanasiou  
2nd Place - Amelie Athanasiou

## Overall Winner: Hugo Athanasiou





By mid-morning the Upper Juniors' Declamations were well underway and what an impressive bunch they were!

17 Upper Junior finalists each performed their chosen poems brilliantly and particular mention to Catherine Pringle, who was awarded 1st prize for reciting Seamus Heaney's 'Digging' - a task I'm not sure I would attempt myself!



After lunch, the Senior school presented their own curated speeches on a topic that was important to them. I was very impressed with the skill and maturity that all of these young people exhibited. A special thanks to their class teachers, Miss Bridges, Miss Rice and Mrs Walker.

We were fortunate to have had Dr Jennifer Roberts with us this year. Her manner with our children and young people was warm and encouraging and she really celebrated them in her feedback. Dr Roberts joined us from Queen's University Belfast, where she is Head of English and Deputy Director of the PGCE. She had the very difficult task of deciding on a winner for this year's competition!

All our contestants delivered their speeches with excellence, but there was one student who stood out from the talented crowd. She praised him for his confidence and technique, awarding Harry O'Hara (R9C) this year's champion of champions! Well done on a much-deserved victory Harry!





# Strawberry Shortcake



the list:

2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups all purpose flour

2  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp baking powder

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup of butter

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup of oil

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of sugar

1 tbs of vanilla extract

4 large eggs

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of milk

1 pound of strawberries

3 tbs of sugar

2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of heavy whip cream

1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup powdered sugar

2 tsp vanilla extract.



ADN.

ADN.

1. mix the flour, baking powder and salt, set as

2. mix together the butter, oil, sugar and vanilla extract and beat until fluffy

3. Add the eggs one at a time, mix well mostly combined.

4. Add half the dry ingredients, mix

5. slowly, add the milk + mix well

6. Add the rest of the dry ingredients, mix

well, but not too much.

7. Divide the mix between two tins and cook for 18-20 minutes.

8. Add the sliced strawberries and sugar, toss and mash, leave in the fridge for 1-2 hours.

9. When the cakes are cooked, start making the whipped cream. Add all the cream ingredients and whip until the peak is stiff.

10. When the cakes are cold, put strawberries and cream on the first layer and the second with cream. :)

by: Rin





It was great to welcome Declan Cadell, Head of Academy at Crusaders Football Club, who came along to hold a training session with some of our young footballers in June.

Declan also brought along their very impressive Irish Cup for a few photos and was happy to answer the many questions the pupils had for him!

It was brilliant to hear that Declan was impressed by our students, so much so he posted it on his own Facebook!



Declan Caddell

8 June · 🌐

What can I say about Rockport school. Amazing place , staff and students. Hope the students enjoyed it as much as I did, pleasure is all mines 🙏



Rockport School

8 June · 🌐

A huge thank you to Declan and the team at Crusaders Football Club who came along today to hold a training session with our young footballers.

They also broug... See more





# *The Queen's Platinum Jubilee 2022*

2022 marked the year that Her Majesty the Queen became the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee after 70 years of service.

Rockport celebrated in style to mark the momentous occasion - there were lots of exciting, fun activities with a street-like party for all!

It was a brilliant day, everyone made a special effort to dress in 1950s' clothing & accessories 'Royal Attire' for Early Years' children and there was fantastic live '50s' music by Miss Carr.

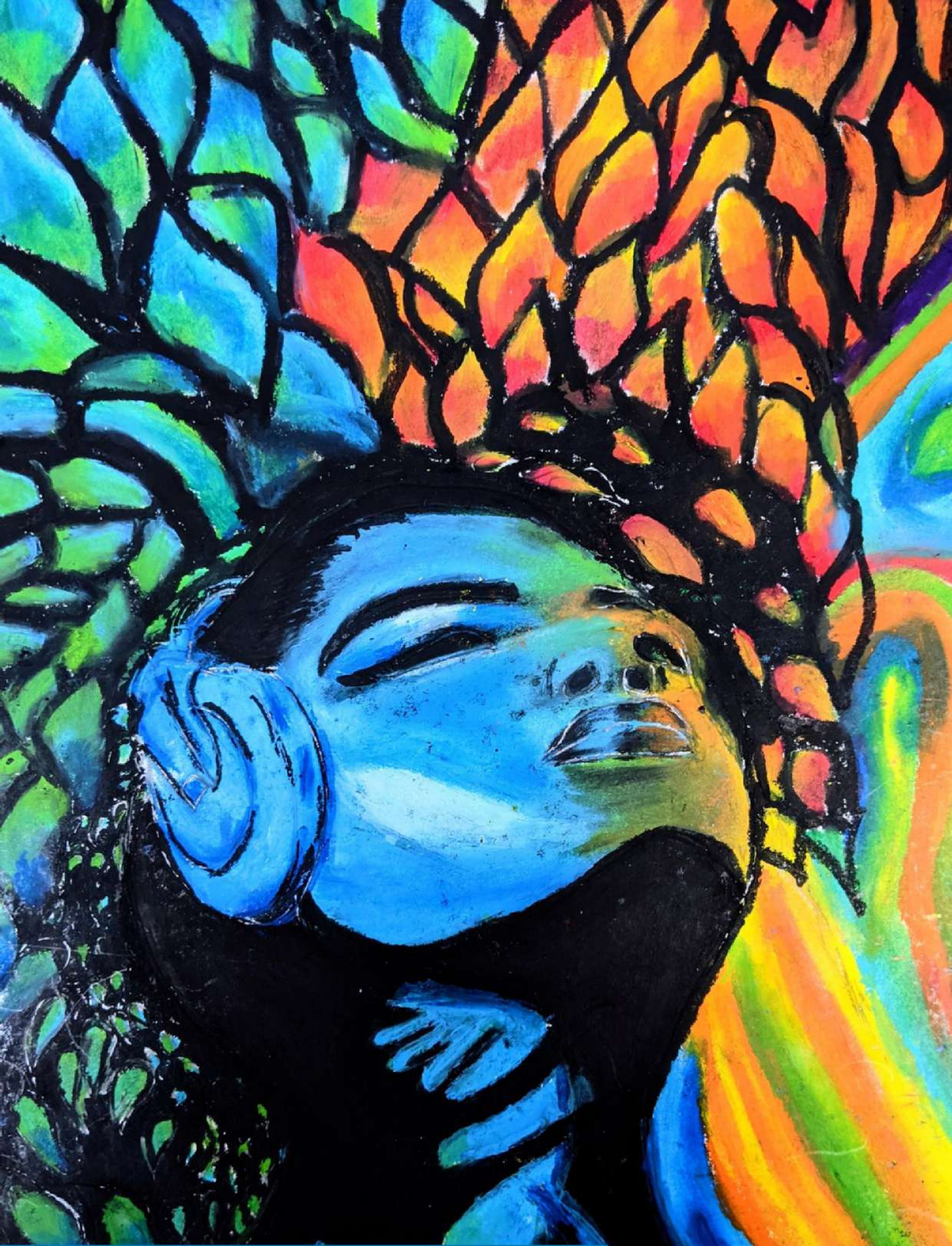
A great day of celebrations!











Emily Chawich R12



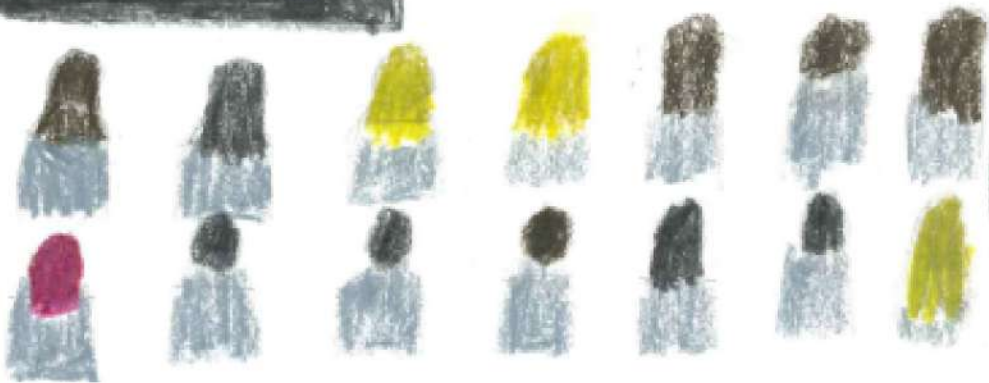
Time for...

# 2022

## SUMMER CONCERT



Tillie  
Cunningham R6





# Summer Concert, 20th June 2022











Early Years' fun day out to Funtastic!  
21st June







*Camp Night 2022*  
*R7 making memories...*  
*June 2022*





# Fun Day Out, Portrush 24th June





# A fond farewell to Mr Reynolds

*Words kindly provided by Mr Vance*

You will know that Mr Reynolds retires this summer. Josh has clocked up an impressive 41 years teaching at the school, many of those living on site with a secondary, but no less important, role as boarding master. But I want to mention not just his incredible service, but his time at the school as a boy and as a boarder himself. There can be no one alive today who has had such a long association with the school, literally man and boy. Throughout those 41 years, Josh has taught History, English and French, he has coached athletics, rugby and cricket, he has run the school shooting club, been head of boys' games, senior boarding master as well as deputy designated teacher for child protection and he has attended dozens of school trips and tours overseas.

Josh, we will all miss your calm demeanour and your mischievous sense of humour. I want to thank you for your friendship, and on behalf of everyone at the school to wish you a long, fulfilling and happy retirement. I do so safe in the knowledge that you will never be a stranger to Rockport and that you will return to visit us on many occasions in the future.







## Headmaster's report on Speech Day

Good afternoon, everyone and welcome.

And may I first extend a special Rockport welcome to our guest of honour Oliver Jeffers.

You will know already that Oliver is a critically acclaimed world-famous visual artist and author. You may know that his picture books have been translated into over fifty languages and that they have sold something like 15 million copies worldwide. As well as that, Oliver's original artwork has been exhibited in galleries and museums worldwide and he has been the recipient of numerous awards, including a New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books Award, the Bologna Rigazzi Award, An Irish Book Award, and a United Kingdom Literary Association Award. You may know that Oliver is also a Rockport parent and that he is a tireless campaigner for bringing children together through integrated education. And, if you are a parent of a child in the Early Years you will also know that, during both lockdowns he found time out of his busy schedule to read from his books, live, online to our children. For that, we at the school are not just still in awe but will be eternally grateful.

Oliver, you are most welcome, and we very much look forward to hearing your address later.

This afternoon in my speech I want to talk about the School Development Plan.

At the back of my study there are two portable notice boards, and on three sides of the two boards there are copies of school development plans going back ten years. As we approach a new phase in school development, it was interesting to look at these boards and see some things, which once were just ideas, but have now come to fruition, perhaps even now taken for granted...

Here are some examples:

- Boarding: to look at introducing (or reintroducing) full-time boarding
- Character Education: to explore joining the Round Square global group of schools
- Staff Recruitment and Retention: the opportunity to join the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme
- Post-16 Provision: a feasibility study into introducing a Sixth Form and A Levels
- Golf Academy: towards creating a school-based centre for young golfers



But it is gratifying for us as a school to see all of these initiatives that were once no more than ideas, now achieved. It also gives us some confidence now, as we look to establish the next phase in our strategic vision for the school.

One other thing that has changed in school is the size of the pupil population. Again, ten years ago in September 2012, I reported a starting enrolment of 179, whilst as we gather here today, we have 283 on the roll, a record for the school. So it is in that context that we embark on the next phase of school development: how can we best ensure that we continue to provide the same service and to maintain the same school ethos as we continue to grow and expand?

Let's think about this. I think our school video is ten years old this summer and although it might be time for a new one, although it does, I think, capture and communicate something of the feel and buzz of everyday life at the school. When we commissioned the video, it was felt that there should be very little in the way of dialogue, just images of happy, busy children; and that the only voices that should be heard should be those of Rockport children and their parents (one thing that was agreed was that I shouldn't speak in the video at all). There was also a debate as to what the first, key, impact message should be. A number of parents and young people had been recorded explaining what Rockport meant to them, and these interviews were then sifted through for that one soundbite that would be heard first: the one which best summed up the school.

And so, it was decided. If you watch the video, there is no dialogue for almost 90 seconds, just music and in that minute and a half we see children 'progress' from 3 to 16, before a parent's voice breaks through:

'It's a great place. It's more about the person.'  
More about the person. What does that mean?

Personalised education (or personalised learning) is that magic that happens when your teacher 'gets' you, understands you, sees you, knows you. And when you 'get' them too. 'Super Head' and TED speaker Sir John Jones talks about how the 'flow' of learning occurs when learning is personalised. Personalised education happens when teacher see every child as a unique individual, each one with their own strengths and areas for development, each with their different hopes and dreams.

It is the power of the one over the collective and what's more is we know that it works because we've all experienced it.

This is not tracking and benchmarking individuals by testing. It is much more than that. Personalised Learning is not driven by data, it is about relationships, so not to be confused with personalisation in IT, like cookies on a website.

Like the Amazon App on my phone. We know it is clever and it regularly suggests all kinds of things for me to buy: but Amazon only thinks it knows me, it doesn't really. Just like friends on Facebook aren't always friends, Amazon's suggestions can often be wide of the mark.

For example, I didn't read the first Harry Potter book when it was published, and there's a good reason for that: because I was 37, not 13. But I have bought some of the books for my children and other Harry Potter stuff since for gifts, so Amazon has me down as a Potterhead. I don't like Leeds United at all, but I once bought a Leeds mug and socks for a friend so it has me down as a Leeds fan. Also, when we had no PPE last year, I ordered those blue plastic gloves from a supplier which I later noticed was called [incontinence.com](http://incontinence.com).

So, it's hardly surprising that Amazon often suggests to me that my life will not be complete unless I buy a Gryffindor Onesie, a signed photograph of Billy Bremner and a pack of 24 incontinence pants. None of which, I can assure you, do I either want or need - or at least not yet.

The truth is, that there is no App for personalised learning, there's no substitute for the personal touch and nothing works like the praise of a teacher. That special relationship solely relies on personal interaction, and only personal interaction with a teacher can make it happen. And if we can't do it here, with a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:8, and average class size of 12, then no one can.

That teacher-pupil relationship is unique and, I suspect, each of us here remember with fondness that teacher who was special to us, who had that gift of reaching us. I remember the teachers who got me, who really saw me and who knew what made me tick. Maybe even believing in me. For those teachers I would do anything.



So as teachers we have great power to shape lives. But that personal special relationship between tutor and student also brings great responsibility.

Haim Ginott says:

"I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized."

And personalisation also makes children and young people more personally responsible: language matters and how we talk to those we have influence over matters most. In fact, the simple act of calling a child by their name can have a positive effect. And if all your teachers really know you and you're in a small school, there really is nowhere to hide.

So the overarching theme in this cycle of school development is and will be, personalised education, and the staff, governors (and indeed the student council) have already asked some pertinent questions, all through the prism of the person.

For example, on our staff training day we focused on two areas, one teaching and learning and one pastoral: first, how do we review and develop our Numeracy and Literacy provision for the individual from 3-18? And second, in an expanding school, how do we continue to ensure personal Pastoral Care for every child. This second area is especially relevant considering the national and international explosion in teenage mental health and wellbeing issues.

Some possible outcomes have been suggested already. As a result of these questions, the Board of Governors has directed us to explore how we might best develop the Cottage as a Student Support Centre to cater for every child and to prioritise this in the coming months and year(s). They have also agreed to fund two new pastoral leadership roles next year as we appoint Heads of both Key Stages 3 and 4.

And there are other areas identified for potential development too: we are to explore the feasibility of an international Summer School, look at the further development of the Rockport Golf Academy as well as enhancing our Scholarship and Bursary programme. And next term, parents will have their chance to feed into the school development plan.

So, all in all we look forward with great hope and great optimism. But maybe that's enough on that for now, as I have one or two people to mention.

Not one day of school would be possible without the efforts of all our staff, and I include everyone in that, all 69 of you. Your professionalism and commitment were obvious to all throughout the pandemic, and it is testament to you that we as a school came through it and emerged stronger than ever. I still see examples of your professionalism every single day, and it is my privilege to lead you.

Finally, thanks to you the parents for your continued support and to the PTFA for their efforts today in providing some refreshments and music immediately following this event. Your and their contribution to strengthening this school community is never taken for granted.

Thank you all for coming once again and have a great summer break.

**George Vance**  
**Headmaster**









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