



Robert Clack Alumni Association Newsletter

Issue 22

May 2018

Happy Spring to all our readers! This edition has a distinctly royal flavour with an honour for our Alumni Association patron, alumni and current student 'royalty' achieving and sharing their personal and professional successes, both inside and outside the classroom, and a very special royal invitation for our Development Officer, Ellen Monk.

Update from the Trust

The trustees took up residency in co-chair Ian Pittaway's city office for their May meeting. After the regular business of the trust (including an update on our increasing Alumni Association members - over 1,460 to date!), head teacher Russell Taylor presented details of major building works currently ongoing at the school. Robert Clack is expanding and improving facilities to offer students a cutting edge, creative, and welcoming learning environment. It's incredibly exciting to hear plans come together and we look forward to seeing them finalised over the coming months and years.

Deputy head teacher Richard Spandl also joined the meeting to tell trustees more about how the work of the Alumni Association supports students in their studies and extra curricular activities. We are very proud of the difference we help to make - only possible with your support. Working alongside the 'frontline' of amazing teachers and staff within the school, we hope this will continue to grow.



Keep in Touch

If you have any suggestions for newsletter articles or things that you would like to share with the Robert Clack Alumni community, or would like to know more about how you can get involved in the work of the school, please contact emonk@robertclack.co.uk

A Royal Wedding Invitation for Alumni Association 'Royalty'

Our very own Robert Clack 'royalty', Alumni Development Officer Ellen Monk, was delighted to receive an invitation to the most-talked about event of 2018 - the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle! Development Trust Trustee and Alumni Association Chair, Ian Pittaway, a Deputy Lieutenant for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham nominated Ellen to be one of the lucky 1,200 guests invited to Windsor Castle on 19th May in recognition of her valued work with the Alumni Association. Ellen took 17-year-old daughter Georgia as her guest to this historic event.

The day started with a train journey across the width of London, from Dagenham to Windsor. Battling through the crowds when changing trains at Slough was no problem for Ellen and Georgia who had been issued with special 'spectator' badges entitling them to a fast-pass queue jump. Upon arrival at Windsor they were greeted by an ambassador who escorted them to the Castle via a special route. After clearing security, they were presented with their coveted Harry and Meghan goody bags, including an order of service, shortbread, water and a special commemorative large chocolate coin.



It is wonderful to see the contributions of our committed staff and supporters recognised, and the work of the Alumni Association represented at such a prestigious event.



Once in the grounds of the castle Ellen and Georgia took their places just opposite St George's Chapel where they had an excellent view of the arriving guests including David Beckham and George Clooney (two particular favourites!), followed by members of the Royal Family, and then man-of-the-moment Harry and his best man William, looking splendid in their uniforms. Lastly, of course, was bride Meghan - looking absolutely radiant.

When the ceremony commenced the crowd took a seat in the sunshine to enjoy their picnics whilst listening from the speakers positioned around the walls of the Chapel. After the ceremony they were treated to a glimpse of the newly-wed royals as they rode past in their carriage waving to the crowds. The bride and groom were followed by their guests who stopped to say hello in person to spectators. Ellen and Georgia made friends with other spectators, many of whom - similar to Ellen - were nominated to attend in recognition of contributions in their own communities. The day finished with a drink in a Windsor pub to toast the happy couple.

Ellen said: *'We had a fantastic day from beginning to end. I am so grateful to Ian for nominating me. It was an honour and a privilege to attend'*.

More Dagenham Royalty! Alumni Association Patron Sandie Shaw collects MBE from Buckingham Palace



Dagenham-born singer Sandie Shaw said she was thrilled to be honoured at Buckingham Palace as she collected her MBE.

The star, who was named in the 2017 Queen's Birthday Honours list, said the Prince of Wales seemed "stunned" that the 70-year-old was only now being given an award.

Following her conversation with Prince Charles, she said: "He was a bit stunned it had taken so long. He said 'Why? Why has it taken so long for you to get here?' I told him the truth - the truth is that women in music haven't tended to be honoured in the past, certainly not in the 60s."

Asked if the prince had agreed with her, she replied: "I wouldn't like to say." She added: "He said he was glad I was here now."

And Sandie, who scored Britain's first Eurovision Song Contest win in 1967 with her hit *Puppet On A String*, revealed she does not take much interest in the singing contest - admitting she never watches it.



Story courtesy of the Dagenham Post; Pictures - Dominic Lipinski/PA WireHuge

Huge congratulations Sandie! Robert Clack School is incredibly proud to have you as patron of our Alumni Association.

Calling all Fundraisers!

Can you help to give the next generation of students a 'helping hand' and ensure that potential and not background determines their future?

We are looking for people to help us fundraise for the Alumni Association. This will include helping us to scope fundraising ideas, develop relationships with businesses, identify and pursue potential sources of income, and plan applications to grant awarding bodies. Perhaps you've got experience of fundraising in another voluntary or professional capacity, have key contacts that may be able to help, or just have some time to spare and want to get involved.

Whatever your experience (whether it's lots or none at all), however much time you are able to give (from a regular commitment to one off advice/support sessions) get in touch at emonk@robertclack.co.uk. We'd love to hear from you and we'd love you to join us on our brilliant journey to helping Robert Clack students be the best they can be.

Back to School for Clack Alumni

Paul Spires (Class of 1981)

Class of '81 alumni member Paul Spires was back in the classroom on 26th March for the first time in over 30 years. Paul, now the owner of Sound Financial Planning Group, an independent accredited financial planning firm, came in to speak to Year 11 pupils about his life and career since leaving Robert Clack and shared sound advice on choosing a route to a financial career. Paul visited two PSHE lessons and gave students an opportunity to quiz him about his career, rounding off his day with a tour of his old school and lunch at the Fiddlers Pie and Mash shop - a familiar taste of his youth!

Paul enjoyed being back in school so much he came back to the Sixth Form presentation evening back in April, and has signed up to attend an upcoming KS3 presentation evening. The pupils really benefited from sharing in Paul's experience and we were thrilled to welcome him back after so long!



Katie Nelson (Class of 2013), Michael Soetan (Class of 2015) and Lewis Holmes (Class of 2017)

Robert Clack has a long and successful relationship with Cushman and Wakefield - a leading global real estate services firm - with a number of our students studying and working with them over recent years. Three former pupils who currently work for the company came back to school on 15th March to introduce our Sixth Form students to apprenticeship opportunities at Cushman Wakefield. Katie Nelson (class of 2013), Michael Soetan (class of 2015) and Lewis Holmes (class of 2017) gave an inspirational presentation outlining the benefits of working for a global company whilst studying for a fully funded degree courtesy of Cushman and Wakefield.

Lewis himself was offered an apprenticeship after a similar presentation he attended as a Sixth Former in 2017 - and this year he is 'on the other side' of the classroom, encouraging potential new recruits who are sitting where he was just a short time ago.

After a stimulating session with the Cushman and Wakefield team, a number of students have since attended company insight days and are exploring apprenticeship opportunities further. We wish them every success in their applications.

Back to School for Clack Alumni

Fisayo Nobi, Sharon Akaka and Hassan Habtounne (Class of 2015)

Former Clack pupils, now Russell Group University students, Fisayo (Oxford), Sharon (King's College London) and Hassan (Warwick), were back in the classroom on 18th April sharing advice, support and tried-and-tested techniques for revision with Year 12 and 13 students in the lead up to their summer exams. Fisayo, Sharon and Hassan - who scooped top grades in their own exams - provided inspirational stories of personal successes and challenges, as well as tangible study techniques from time management to memory retention.

Feedback from the session was extremely positive and students were incredibly grateful to benefit from the expertise of previous generations of Clack students who were in their position not so long ago.



A huge thank you to all of our Alumni members for taking the time to come back to Clack. Your support makes a real difference to the lives of current Robert Clack pupils and we love to see you back in your old classrooms!

Another Brilliant Year for the Brilliant Club



On 12th May, a group of Sixth Formers successfully graduated from another successful Brilliant Club programme at Robert Clack. The Brilliant Club is an award winning charity that recruits, trains and places doctoral and postdoctoral researchers in non-selective state schools across the country to support students to develop the knowledge, skills and ambition to strive for highly-selective university places.

Clack students worked with PhD tutors to complete research at undergraduate level. In this year's programme, our students focused on a range of challenging and topical issues including the scientific justification of animal testing and Tudor royal progresses. Their work was assessed and marked to stringent university standards and we were thrilled that many of our students received 2:1 and First Class classifications - an incredibly impressive achievement. Congratulations to all of our brilliant Clack Brilliant Club 'graduates'!

Many thanks to the Robert Clack Alumni Association for supporting this fantastic opportunity - and to our fabulous teachers for organising trips and tutorial sessions

Our Brilliant Club graduates also grabbed the attention of local MP Jon Cruddas...Read on...!



Dagenham & Rainham MP Jon Cruddas Visits Pupils getting Taste of University Life

Dagenham and Rainham MP Jon Cruddas visited pupils at Robert Clack to discuss a scheme preparing children from under-represented backgrounds for top UK universities.

The Labour MP heard about pupils' progress in the Brilliant Club Scholars Programme, which delivers higher education-style tutorials to small groups of pupils.

"I was very impressed at how they engaged with such a complex and challenging academic topic," Mr Cruddas said. "It just goes to show what young people from Dagenham and Rainham can achieve if we give them the opportunity."

The scheme places PhD researchers in state schools to speak about their own research.

Friday's meeting featured a course on what animals can teach about the human brain, and King's College London tutor Robert Ellingford's talk on the Tudors.

Deputy head teacher Richard Spandl said he was "excited" to see how the pupils' participation "inspires their study and university choices."

Story courtesy of the Dagenham Post

Robert Clack Student Elected Young Mayor of Barking & Dagenham

We are very proud to report that Robert Clack student Wesley Oparaugo has recently been elected as the borough's Young Mayor. The *Dagenham Post* gave the scoop on our Clack star...

Wesley Oparaugo, 15, of Robert Clack School, has replaced Vaisaly Gnanapandithan and becomes the borough's fourth young mayor. Wesley, who is the first male to hold the position, was one of five candidates who stood to be elected. Members of the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum voted for their preferred candidate after hearing each give a speech summing up their manifesto pledges at the Vibe Youth Centre on Monday 5th March.

Wesley said: "I am extremely excited and deeply honoured to have been elected as the Young Mayor. I really wanted to be the Young Mayor because I want young people to feel that they can speak up, regardless of whatever they are going through. I have been elected for a reason and I vow to give my all to make sure the young of Barking and Dagenham are heard, and not just seen. I am also very honoured to be the first male Young Mayor, and I hope to pave the way for more to gather confidence and go for roles like this."



Robert Clack Student Elected Young Mayor of Barking & Dagenham

Wesley's term will run from March 2018 until February 2019 and he will work alongside the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum to choose a local charity to fundraise for via a vote. Once a charity has been selected the group will plan fundraising events for the year in an effort to raise as much money as possible.

Cllr Evelyn Carpenter, cabinet member for educational attainment and school improvement, heaped praise on the new appointment and also thanked the outgoing young mayor for her contribution to Barking and Dagenham. She said: *"I am very pleased to welcome Wesley to his new post as young mayor for the borough. I have no doubts that he will be a major success and will do everything to help the youth of Barking and Dagenham. Also, I would like to thank Vaisaly Gnanapandithan who did a great job as young mayor last year and raised a great deal of money for Barking and Dagenham Young Carers."* *Story courtesy of the Dagenham Post*

Huge congratulations and good luck in your new role from everyone at Robert Clack School, Wesley!

Entrepreneurial Former Clack Student Develops Social App.

A new social app aims to bring together ambitious black young professionals in order for them to get ahead in their careers and shatter the so-called 'glass ceiling' preventing many ethnic minorities realising their full potential.

Black Young Professionals Network ([BYP Network](#)) is a platform helping ambitious future leaders to connect with one another, form friendships, collaborate and pursue careers in business. The networking app, which already has more than 2,000 users and has been described by many, as 'LinkedIn for black professionals', is the creation of Kike Oniwinde, a University of Nottingham graduate and former Robert Clack student.

Kike came up with the idea after meeting numerous likeminded black peers both through internships at Deutsche Bank, Citi and Goldman Sachs and during studying for her Masters at the University of Florida.

After returning to the UK, Kike sought to extend her own professional network further. However, she found the existing networking events on offer were too formal, lacked purpose and did not reflect her ethnic background, so she decided to take positive steps to improve the choices available to people in her position.

Kike, who currently works in business development for a financial technology company, said:

"A lot of young black people I met had achieved some success in their corporate careers or businesses, but many had the feeling of 'what now?' They felt like they could do more but there always seemed to be a limit to what they could achieve due to the culture of the workplace and the so-called 'glass ceiling'."

Entrepreneurial Former Clack Student Develops Social App.

Kike's personal observations reflect the reality of black and ethnic minority representation within the business and corporate world. A recent analysis of Britain's 1,000 most powerful people found just 36 were from an ethnic minority background. Another study, by the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex, found British ethnic minority graduates are between 5% and 15% less likely to be employed than their white British peers six months after graduation.

Kike believes the BYP Network can help to affect change within the workplace by encouraging black young professionals to strive for higher goals, and in the process help to alter public perceptions of young black people. The BYP Network app is available for iOS, Android and online and is free of charge to download and use. It uses a hashtag system so each user can input all their profile interests and reasons for joining, enabling a high level of personalisation to ensure they meet peers with compatible interests.

Although the network is aimed at black young professionals aged 18-35, there is no specific entry requirement and likeminded people from all backgrounds are welcome to join. All members are also welcome at any BYP Network events, which are held throughout the year as a chance for members to socialise and listen to keynote speakers from within the UK black community. For more information about the BYP Network please visit www.bypnetwork.co.uk

Story courtesy of Brave New World

Congratulations Kike - fantastic to see another one of our former Clack students succeeding and making a difference in the world



**Former Clack Student
on Radio 4 Today
Programme**

On 25th April, former Clack pupil Betty Harding featured on the prestigious Radio 4 Today programme to speak about the challenges that some students face accessing student finance and 'home' student status. Betty, a physics student at Manchester University, appeared alongside Minister for Children and Families Nadhim Zahawi, and spoke about her work campaigning as part of the Young Gifted and Blocked (Let Us Learn) campaign. You can find out more about this work at <https://www.justforkidslaw.org/what-we-do/our-campaigns/young-gifted-and-blocked-let-us-learn/>



**Join Us for a Summer
Music Evening - 18th
July**

Chair of the Robert Clack Development Trust and Alumni Association Ian Pittaway would like to invite all Alumni Association members and guests to the school's Summer Music Evening on Wednesday 18th July at the Gosfield Road site. Join us for an evening of fantastic entertainment from our talented Clack musicians and a chance to see your old school and catch up with other alumni. Arrival time is 5.15-5.30pm for drinks and nibbles, ready for the concert to start at 6.00pm.

Please contact Ellen Monk if you would like to attend emonk@robertclack.co.uk.

Spotlight On... Toni Agland, Class of 1981

Toni Agland, Global Environment Health and Safety Manager for a facilities company, is under the spotlight in this edition.

Working life

Toni left school in 1981, after completing one year of sixth form, with her mind set on becoming a police officer (too dangerous according to her parents!) or a scientist. Toni had been interested in science at school and was keen to pursue a career in this field. She started her working life in the NHS training as a Pharmacy Technician at the Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel. Once qualified Toni spent the next three years making chemotherapy treatments and IV food bags for premature babies - a role that was rewarding and heart-breaking in equal measure. After leaving the NHS Toni took a more senior role as Senior Pharmacy Technician for Baxter Healthcare Ltd, a US based company. This move opened a number of doors for her and her career expanded to include roles in purchasing, IT project management, sales, customer service, and supervising warehouses, lorries and drivers. Somewhere along the way she was asked to look after the quality management system and that led to taking on responsibility for environment, health and safety - according to Toni, a circuitous and very enjoyable route!

School day memories

Although Toni describes herself as a very nervous, quiet girl she loved school and made lots of friends - some of whom she still sees today. She worked hard and learnt a lot, particularly in her favourite subjects - science and maths. She played sport and has very fond memories of the sixth form music hall. Toni regrets not finishing her A levels and wishes she had paid more attention in French - "Oh how I wished I could speak French now!"



How school has changed

Toni observed that the biggest differences between her school days and those of our current Clack students are diversity and advancements in technology - "Computers, Interactive Whiteboards and iPads were something we only saw in Star Trek!"

Opportunities today are also very different to when Toni was at school - "The world seems a much smaller place and people travel far more so opportunities arise in different regions of the world. Traditional manufacturing industries have all but disappeared since I left school and have been replaced with things like service industries so the landscape is very different."

Toni's advice for students today

"The first thing is to enjoy school and get involved in any activities available to you. It is very important to get a rounded education, so work hard to give yourselves options for the future. Don't be afraid to ask questions - if it needs asking it is not stupid".

And final words from Toni are..... Pay more attention in your language classes!

Thank you so much for your memories Toni and taking the time to be 'Under the Spotlight'!

One from the Archive



Our One from the Archive photo this edition has been provided by our Development Trust Trustee and Class of 1998 alumni Melissa Pepper (who features in the front standing row, third from right). The picture was taken in February 1997 on an A Level history field trip to Trewern. The man holding the large log on the left of the photo is Mr Ramage - still a teacher at the school today!

Do you remember anybody in this photo - or are you one of the stars of it?! Do you have memories of this field trip to Trewern (and the fierce common room Twister competition that took place throughout the week...!?)

Get in touch - we'd love to hear from you!

Support the Robert Clack Alumni Association

Join us Sign up to the Alumni Association at: <https://networks.futurefirst.org.uk/register/types>

Volunteer Come back to school as part of one of the many exciting events we run with current pupils throughout the year. Contact emonk@robertclack.co.uk

Donate Alumni can make a real difference to current pupils' lives. You can donate at www.justgiving.com/rcdt by texting RCDT08 to 70070 or contacting emonk@robertclack.co.uk

Look out for our next newsletter in July 2018