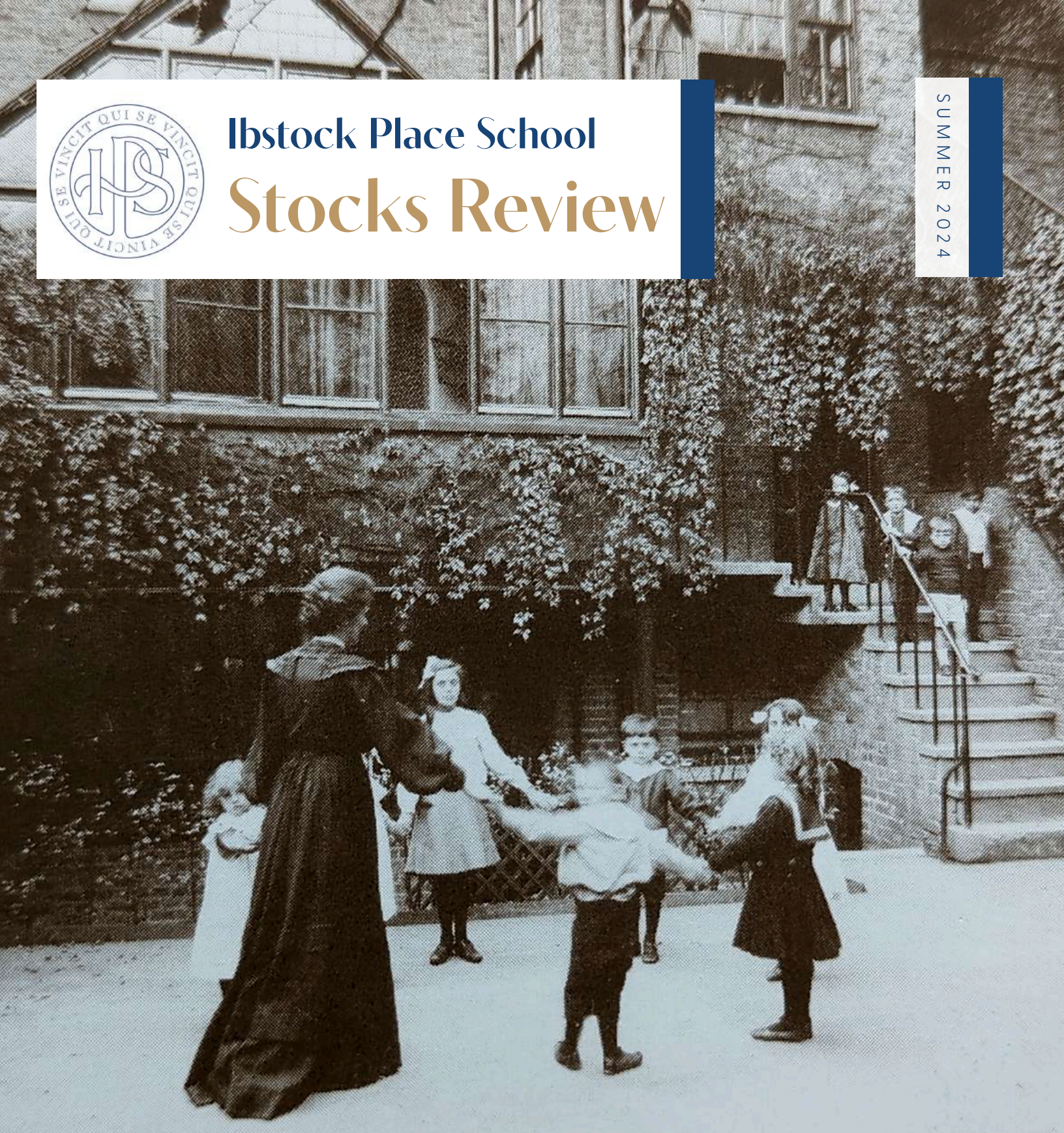




Ibstock Place School

Stocks Review

SUMMER 2024



Update

From Headmaster
Christopher Wolsey

Alumni Highlights

Catching up with
Laurie Mayer, Zain Abbas,
and Roy Ramsay

School History

Ibstock 130
Insight into the Duchess of
Sutherland, The Paget Twins,
and the School's move from
Boarding to Extended Age





Ibstock Place School Stocks Review

SPRING 2024
NO. 03

03
Ibstock 130:
1894 - 2024

04
Laurie Mayer
1954 - 1957

05
Zain Abbas
2003 - 2011

06
Roy Ramsay
2008 - 2013



UPDATE: FROM THE HEAD 02

Recent initiatives and projects from Ibstock Place School

IBSTOCK 130 08

The School celebrates 130 years - a whistle-stop tour through some of the highlights.

FEATURED ALUMNI 04

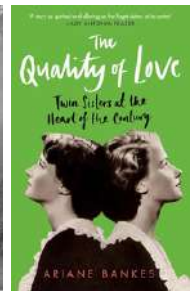
Featured articles from alumni - what are they up to now?

AN HISTORICAL PROFILE 07

The Duchess of Sutherland

A NOTE FROM THE PAST 08

Looking at the Paget Twins - Celia and Mamaine (former residents of Ibstock Place House)



FROM THE ARCHIVES 09

From Boarding School to an Extended Age Range - a discussion of the 1970s debate

UPCOMING EVENTS 12

From the Head

Dear Stocks,

I am delighted to introduce the third edition of Stocks Review.

This year, of course, is particularly special for Ibstock as it marks the one hundred and thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the School. Within these pages, you'll find a good deal more about our history, stretching back to Mrs Bailey's famous meeting in 1894, in which she proposed the creation of a new Kindergarten. How far we have travelled since then!

As ever, several members of our alumni community are featured throughout this edition, offering fond memories of their time at Ibstock as pupils as well as their successes since departing. We are always delighted to hear from our alumni and listen to their stories. Invariably, they remind us of the strong values of community and support which have always animated the School, and which remain critical to our identity today.

This year, we are looking forward to the opening of the second phase of our "Ibstock Museum". It will be located in our Sutherland Room and it will include feature a series of informational posters, photographs and objects relating to the history of Ibstock Place House – or St Serf's House, as it was at its very beginning. I am grateful to Ms Platt, our archivist, who has worked hard on this project for over a year.

As ever, we encourage you to get in touch. Our digital presence is growing apace; you can find us on Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram. If you'd like to be featured in our next issue of 'Stocks Review' or to visit the campus then please do get in touch. We should very much enjoy re-connecting with you.

With my very best wishes

CHRISTOPHER WOLSEY

Headmster



Ibstock Celebrates 130 years...



In 1894, Mrs Alfred Bailey delivered a talk to a room full of her friends and acquaintances, sharing the newest Froebelian venture in England – a ‘demonstration school’ which was now active in Kensington. This Kindergarten provided a space for trainee teachers to hone and share their skills, as instilled through the Froebel Education Institute. When enthusing about this venture, Mrs Bailey said that the Kindergarten would be:

‘the growing ground for the budding time of a child’s life ... where the ear would learn to delight in time and tune, where head and hand would work together to invent and create, where habits of obedience, self-control, patience, and love would be inculcated...’

This Kindergarten was open when Mrs Bailey delivered this talk in 1894. Two years later, in 1896, it was visited by Empress Frederick and noted as having six pupils in attendance.

By the start of the Second World War, the school had grown to fifty pupils, and a decision was made to evacuate the children from the school in Kensington to Little Gaddesden in Hertfordshire, owing to the Blitz. The Headmistress at the time, Barbara Priestman, searched for an appropriate house in Hertfordshire which might be an ideal temporary location for the School during the war. She described what she found in a letter to the committee at Froebel:

‘There is a house at Little Gaddesden, which I find very attractive. It has just been redecorated and entirely renovated by an American who understands the need for warmth and light.’

The location was agreed, and the Demonstration School in Kensington relocated to Little Gaddesden in late 1939 and, by necessity, became a boarding school. Once the war ended, the School returned to London, and the

Froebel Education Institute procured a house across from its Roehampton building – called Ibstock Place House.

This house had been built in the early 1900s by renowned architect, Frank Chesterton and was initially named ‘St Serf’s House’. Its first owner, Lady Millicent, the Duchess of Sutherland, purchased it in 1913. An article in *Country Life* from 1920, described the house as follows:

‘In those days many big houses were built first and a purchase found for them afterwards. It was under such conditions that there came into being two large houses at Roehampton which were designed with such rare skill ... by Frank Chesterton. It is a thoroughly sound piece of work, with no nonsense about it ... a fine Georgian house ... good materials were the essence of its construction.’

The Duchess never officially resided in the house; at the outbreak of the First World War she joined the war effort as an ambulance driver in France and subsequently married a Brigadier General. In 1925 St Serf’s House was purchased by Major John Paget and his family and renamed ‘Ibstock Place House’. Ibstock was the ancestral home of Major John Paget – a village in Leicestershire. In 1939, as did the pupils and staff at the demonstration school in Kensington, the Paget family evacuated London.

During the war, the House was requisitioned by the Ministry of Works to support war efforts; huts were erected for military operations, which were later used as classrooms and a dining hall when the School took it over a few years later.

Thus, Ibstock Place House became the new home for the School from October 1946 (though the Ministry of Works continued to use some of the huts around the campus until July 1947). Upon moving to Roehampton, the Demonstration School of Kensington and, latterly, Little Gaddesden, renamed itself Ibstock Place School



Laurie Mayer

1954 – 1957

From there, Laurie became the first graduate to be recruited by New Scotland Yard's Press Bureau as an information officer; then began his career as a broadcaster. Here he received his first broadcasting experience conducting radio reports from the Metropolitan Police Central Traffic Control and through crime appeals on the BBC Home Service (now Radio Four). In 1970 the BBC launched BBC Radio London and Laurie was recruited as the station's crime correspondent. Within a month he was presenting the breakfast show 'Rush Hour'.

A few years later, the Managing Director of BBC Radio (Ian Trethowan) invited Laurie to present a new show on Radio One called 'Newsbeat' (still extant decades later). In the aftermath of eighteen year olds being granted the right to vote, Newsbeat was designed to involve teenagers in news and current affairs. No news item was longer than three minutes – the length of the average pop record and the perceived attention span of the target audience. A complete history of the Arab/Israeli conflict, for example, was presented in 2.5 minutes. This opportunity gave Laurie the chance to interview significant political figures including Enoch Powell, Harold Wilson,

Margaret Thatcher, Jim Callaghan and Tony Benn. His most memorable interview was with USA boxing legend Muhammad Ali. In the 1980s, Laurie worked for BBC Television's 'Nationwide' as a reporter/presenter, and as an investigate reporter for 'Sixty Minutes' and 'Six O'Clock News'. Among his accolades was winning the RTS award for his coverage of the Tottenham Riots in 1985. In the 1990s he worked as a launch presenter on 'Breakfast News' and was, later, the main evening news anchor on 'Sky News Tonight', including extensive coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial. In 1998 he became the Director of Public Affairs for Harrods and the spokesperson for Chairman Mohamed Al Fayed. He returned to the BBC in 2001-3 working as a presenter of the BBC South East Regional News – the BBC's first digital newsroom.

His proudest moments in his very full career demonstrate his integrity: he campaigned against and exposed bullying at the BBC. He also built positive media coverage for Mohamed Al Fayed despite the hostile press; and, finally, he was able to return to the BBC after representing Al Fayed – arguably the most controversial man in British public life at the time. On a lighter note, Laurie was delighted to win the Novel Edmonds Golden Egg award for the most amusing TV out-take (Google 'Laurie Mayer giggle').

Laurie's very accomplished and successful career, he notes, was something for which his time at Ibstock prepared him. He notes that his time at the School gave him the confidence to develop his own interests and identity: 'Ibstock gave me the space and time to discover myself without feeling pressured to conform. It made me feel it was okay to be different because every one of us is unique and we all have something to contribute'.

Laurie Mayer attended Ibstock Place School from 1954 to 1957. He describes his fondest memories as marked by the social atmosphere of the school. The kindness of strangers amongst classmates and staff throughout his residence at Ibstock has remained with him. Also, he recalls his enjoyment of the meals: fried bread and tomatoes for breakfast, and cod liver oil – which his classmates often shared with him.

Laurie remembers when he sat his 11+ exams and attended subsequent interviews. During one interview, the assessors began to speak French to him, as he had studied the language at Ibstock. Laurie remembers not particularly enjoying secondary school but he decided to apply himself academically, which led to his BA in Comparative Studies (English and American Politics in Literature) at Essex University in 1965-8.

Zain Abbas

2003-2011

Zain Abbas was a pupil at Ibstock Place School from 2003-2011 (from years 6 to 13). He was a Senior Prefect and, also, the House Captain of Brearley. His fondest memories of Ibstock generally focus on the community; he notes that the friends he made at Ibstock are still his closest friends. 'Growing up in an idyllic leafy suburb with a community of teachers and parents who were always looking out for you was a privilege I did not appreciate nearly enough until after I had left'. He specifically recalls a few highlights of his time at Ibstock, not least playing football on the tarmac hard court during lunch (where the Theatre now resides). In 2010 a memorable and thoroughly enjoyable trip to Greece was unexpectedly extended, he recalls, owing to the eruption of the Icelandic volcano. Whilst they had to move hotels, their relocated hotel rendered them 'stuck' in a beach town in Greece for a couple of days. Zain also remembers coming into the School during the Easter holidays for A-level revision and enjoying the facilities of the newly built Library.

After leaving Ibstock, Zain attended Imperial College London to study Mechanical Engineering, including a four-year integrated masters course. Whilst at university he completed an internship at Citigroup Global Markets on the trading floor; he completed his degree in 2015. His first job after university was on the TeachFirst Leadership Development Programme, during which he spent three years as a Maths and Computer Science teacher at Capital City Academy, serving a greatly disadvantaged community in Willesden, now called Harris Lowe Academy. Whilst working at this school, he completed a summer internship at Deloitte UK and was elected as a Liberal Democrat Councillor for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (a position he held from 2018-2022). Subsequently, in late 2018, Zain moved into the Financial Technology (FinTech) industry at IFX Payments, working as an Implementation Manager. He assisted clients to make use of software for their multi-currency banking needs. In 2020 Zain began working at Thought Machine with two other former Stocks – his younger brother Faiz Abbas and a friend from his year group, Stanley Hitchcock. At Thought Machine he worked as a Client Delivery Manager, providing support to build new products using a cloud-native core banking system. In late 2023 Zain took time off work to go travelling, helped a friend open a café in north London, and studied a



course in Artificial Intelligence at the University of Oxford – Said Business School. Recently, in February 2024, he started a new role as Head of Product at another FinTech – DKK Partners – which specialises in foreign exchange for exotic currencies.

Zain's proudest moments include building his varied career by focusing on dynamic start-ups (rather than join a corporate graduate scheme). He notes that the opportunity for impact in a small company is quite rewarding, 'You can have a genuine influence on the strategic direction of a company and its products, taking business from the biggest oldest players in banking through the power of technology'. He also regards his election as a councillor and working with disadvantaged students as a teacher as two moments of which he is particularly proud. His time at Ibstock Place School contributed to his success, particularly by inculcating softer skills: the encouragement to be a positive member of the school community, the emphasis on being polite, helpful and considerate, and the close relationships with peers and teachers have left an indelible impact. 'It struck me how not everyone has the skills, the privilege to experience these things, or the mentality it gives you.'



Roy Ramsay

2008-2013

memory, he said 'the muscle memory we got from playing so many hours on that long and narrow coffee table would take years to unlearn when we tried to play on normally-shaped tables after leaving school!'. Roy's final cherished memory was his trip to Sicily with friends and staff – during which he ascended Mount Etna and viewed the crater at the Vulcano. 'To this day,' he notes, 'that is my favourite experience of travelling abroad'.

After leaving Ibstock Place School, Roy attended Newcastle University to study Computer Science, which included an industry placement at IBM doing technical support for their Cognos Business Intelligence customers. He graduated with a First-Class Honours and took up his first job as a 'Graduate ServiceNow Developer' at a small company in central London called TESM Ltd. After eight months, he decided he wanted to advance his software development skills so he moved to Innovez Ltd, with a small team of twenty specialised software developers. 'Here we were creating several new cutting-edge software products for the energy trading industry, which long needed new players to replace the aging technologies it had been relying on

for decades'. After a few months, Roy found himself leading a small project and he became the lead on one of the company's most significant projects – its Energy Trading Risk Management System.

Roy's proudest moments include this project at Innovez, which was the culmination of a multi-year effort and produced modernising software which was highly valued by traders and operators at energy trading firms. Roy also considers what he identifies as, possibly, his forthcoming proudest moment – a social network which he began in 2022 and his own technology company 'RR Technology Consulting' – for which he gained his first client in February 2024. Roy cites his experience at Ibstock as preparing him for life in countless ways, though he suggests that its most significant influence was building his public-speaking skills and overall confidence. As part of the debating team, he competed in persuasive public-speaking events, and as Head Boy he delivered many speeches throughout the year to a variety of audiences. These experiences enabled Roy to develop the soft-skills and confidence to take on leadership positions and client-facing roles early on in his career.

Roy Ramsay was a pupil at Ibstock Place School from 2008 to 2013 – from year 9 until year 13. During his attendance his name was Shawkat Al-Baghdadi, but he later changed his name to Roy Ramsay whilst attending university. His fondest memories at Ibstock include the numerous activities in which he participated – Think Club, Debating Society, and work he undertook as Head Boy. He particularly enjoyed House Music, during which he remembers watching talented students demonstrate their expertise on various instruments which 'planted a seed', he suggests, which has made an indelible impression on him – his decision to learn to play piano. He also fondly remembers playing table tennis in the Sixth Form Common Room, for which pupils used the coffee table and mugs to create a makeshift ping-pong table and net – dubbed 'Long table tennis'. Of this

The Duchess of Sutherland

First owner of St Serf's House (later Ibstock Place House)



The Duchess of Sutherland was the first owner of 'St Serf's House' the former name of what we now call Main House, which was built in the early 1900s. She purchased it in 1913, as an 'out of town residence'. The Duchess, however, never formally moved into the home. With the advent of the First World War she founded an ambulance unit in Belgium. She wrote about her experiences in 'Six Weeks At War'. She reflected that the ambulance work gave her special insight into the German psyche and, with a view not divorced from her era, suggested a version of nationalist jealousy:

To my nurses and doctor and to me the Germans showed civility. I do not attempt to probe for the motive. Germany has always been jealous of England and during this fearful war she has grown to hate our country, but I am persuaded that her respect for England is unchanged.'

The Duchess was an avid philanthropist, as was clear through her work. Indeed,

her commitment to charitable efforts predated it, as noted by her involvement in the Cripples Guild at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1897, she had erected a holiday home for poor children in the Trentham Estate and subsequently turned her attention to improving the circumstances of 'crippled children' – children who suffered with chronic injuries which might prevent them from sustaining work. The Duchess developed 'The Cripples Guild' which proposed education as rehabilitation for these children and which also prepared them for a variety of trades. In a 1904 issue of *Charity Organisation Review*, the Duchess discussed her extensive work in the *Potteries Cripples' Guild*. She asserted as her aim "not only the relief of the physical pain, but the development of the individuality of a deformed child."

The children in the Cripples Guild were instructed in a variety of trades – most notably their pottery and metal work, which was sold commercially. By 1910 the Duchess had opened a store in Bond Street to sell some of these pieces.

Children in the Guild were also involved in numerous other trades including making artificial flowers, flower-basket weaving and book-binding.

An 1886 edition of *Popular Science Magazine* suggested the crippling of children could be attributed to poor parenting. In families with working mothers, it asserted, the children were locked up in a room on their own or left with an ambivalent neighbour who would not properly care for the child. Children of well-off families were also at risk due to 'bumbling nurse-maids' whose neglect resulted in chronic injuries. The author surmised that often, it was "as much an act of abandonment as that of the heathen mother, who throws her babe into the jaws of the crocodile of the sacred river." Difficult home life was one renowned cause of developmental issues. Perhaps even more widely detrimental, however, were the effects of child labour.

While today it is widely accepted that exposure to lead can cause chronic illness and developmental issues, it was less recognised in the 19th century. The Duchess of Sutherland researched extensively on the subject and became convinced of its harmful effects. She wrote a chapter 'On the dangerous process in the potting industry' which elucidated various concerns. In July 1898 she held a 'lead-poisoning party' to spread awareness of this detrimental issue. Thanks to the Duchess and the work of other activists, in 1903 the government issued new regulations regarding uses of lead, which resulted in a 40% drop in lead poisoning incidents.

After leaving to support the war effort in 1914, the Duchess remained in France throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Through her ambulance work, she met and married Major Percy Desmond Fitzgerald and became Lady Millicent Fitzgerald (though they soon divorced). She became married again to Lt. Col. George Hawes in October 1919 from whom she was divorced in 1925. She never officially took up her residence at St Serf's House, as she had intended, and in 1925 it was sold to the Paget family.

The Paget Twins

A reflection on Celia and Mamaine Paget by their daughter/niece Ariane Bankes



Ibstock Place became the home of my mother and her identical twin sister, Celia and Mamaine Paget, when they were orphaned at the age of twelve in 1927. They had no siblings, and became the wards of their maternal uncle and aunt, Major John Byng Paget and his captivating French wife Germaine, known to all the family, then and now, as Ging-Ging. Their cousins Wynnie and Anne were respectively three years older and younger than the twins, who were welcomed into the family with great warmth, but they could not but find their new life bewildering – a far cry from their simple country childhood in rural Suffolk, with just their beloved father and staunch, elderly nanny for company.

Now they found themselves immersed in luxury, with phalanxes of servants to cater to their every whim, all presided over by their eccentric and unpredictable Uncle Jacko who ruled the household in draconian style. They longed for an education which would

open the doors to university, a notion considered preposterous by Jacko and Ging-Ging, who dispatched them to a finishing school above Lausanne before the inevitable presentation at Court, in 1935. Identical, beautiful, and spirited as they were, the Paget Twins took London by storm, becoming Debs of the Year but failing to secure husbands, so – to their despair – they were put through the whole rigmarole a second time. Naturally unconventional, they longed to escape to a more congenial world, and swiftly achieved this on their maturity through Mamaine's affair with the arch-bohemian painter and writer Dick Wyndham, a man as far removed from Jacko and Ging-Ging's idea of an ideal husband as was possible.

Dick was at the centre of London's intellectual circle, close friends of the Sitwells, Cyril Connolly (editor of *Horizon* magazine), composers Constant Lambert and William Walton, and painter Matthew Smith. Liberated, the twins thrived in this company, and

after wartime nursing, they secured jobs in publishing and intelligence, which further extended their circle. Mamaine was to fall in love with Arthur Koestler, already famous in 1944 as author of *Darkness at Noon*, and Celia was to meet the recently widowed George Orwell soon after the publication of *Animal Farm*, who fell in love with her.

Orwell and Koestler were, in 1945, united in their anxiety about the new world order in the shadow of the Atom Bomb, and eager to alert the West to the dangers of communism, steadily spreading its tentacles under the guise of peace conferences and propaganda. They were the first Cold War warriors, and the twins were caught up in their cause, meanwhile juggling complicated lives in London, Paris, Palestine and America. In Paris, they mixed with Sartre, de Beauvoir and André Malraux on the Left Bank and Mamaine found herself caught up in a passionate affair of the heart with Albert Camus, which was not destined to last (they were both committed to others) but which evolved into a tender and faithful friendship. Celia was involved with the philosopher A.J.



(Freddie) Ayer and the lawyer Jeremy Hutchinson, before marrying my father; meanwhile, her close friendship with Orwell continued until his death. Mamaine died, tragically, at

the age of thirty-seven, mourned by her twin, my mother, even more deeply than by Koestler and Camus; her memory lives on in her wonderfully droll and lively letters to Celia, which form the core of my memoir. The Paget twins were extraordinary women: vivacious, gregarious, unafraid, and fortunate to live among the intellectual giants of their time.

Read more about the Paget twins in Ariane's new book – pictured above.

Photo: Celia and Mamaine, 'The Stretch' magazine, 1938.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

From Boarding School to Day School

The age-extension debate of the 1970s



When the Froebel Demonstration School evacuated to Little Gaddesden it became a boarding school by necessity. In this vein it continued when it moved into Ibstock Place House in Roehampton in 1946; the School incorporated both day school and boarding school pupils. This continued until the late 1970s when accommodation was made, instead, for an extension of the age range.

When former pupil, Matthew described his experience at Ibstock Place School in the 1970s, he was keen to highlight a substantial distinction between life then and now. During his enrolment, the School was a boarding school and a day school – indeed, most pupils who attended at that time were boarding pupils. School space was not unaffected by alternative infrastructure. To the left of the main staircase (upon entering the School), the present-day first floor classrooms were dormitories for boys.

To the right (where offices and the staff room are presently found) were the girls' dormitories.

Beginning in 1968, conversations about the discontinuation of the boarding school were arising. Some parents and staff preferred to extend the age of the school – which then ended at 13 years. The accommodation of a larger pupil population would likely relinquish the boarding facilities – a decision which was not attractive to all IPS stakeholders. One board member, remarking in 1968, was utterly inimical to the prospect. 'I am loathe to get rid of boarding' he asserted. He proceeded to suggest that a removal of the boarding facility would leave the School bereft of a 'home like quality' which he believed many found valuable.

The family domesticity which is the core of our present school would no longer be there. What would come in its place?

The identification of Ibstock as a boarding school is important to this age-extension narrative. Interestingly, this was not part of the School's historic provision. Ibstock Place School, formerly the Froebel Demonstration School, had been a day school from its inception in 1894 until the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. Indeed, it was in this year when the School became a boarding school by necessity, as pupils evacuated to Little Gaddesden in Hertfordshire, to a charming house discovered by their Headmistress, Barbara Priestman. The home-like quality was already in Miss Priestman's mind when she found the property. In a letter to the School committee she notes this house – soon to be home for the School – was, characterised by its 'warmth and light'.

Thus, the School began its boarding school years as a safe haven during the Second World War. Central to its remit was to provide a happy and protected space for children. In 1971, two former boarders at that house in Hertfordshire visited the grounds with the Headmistress; they remarked fondly upon the safe and happy memories they had acquired there. Indeed, such safety and happiness was paramount. In a letter home to a parent in 1939, Barbara Priestman tried to assuage concerns about their child, remarking upon how happy and safe their son was 'like a person at peace with himself and the world; suspecting no evil & so far I hope finding none.'

When the School moved into Ibstock Place House in 1946, this facility continued and the emphasis on a 'separate space' perpetuated. For some children, as was reported by the committee, the boarding facility provided a safe space from difficulties at home: 'it is undoubtedly true that there seems to be a growing number of broken homes & a growing need for schools such as ours where children can get stability & security for at least part of their lives.'

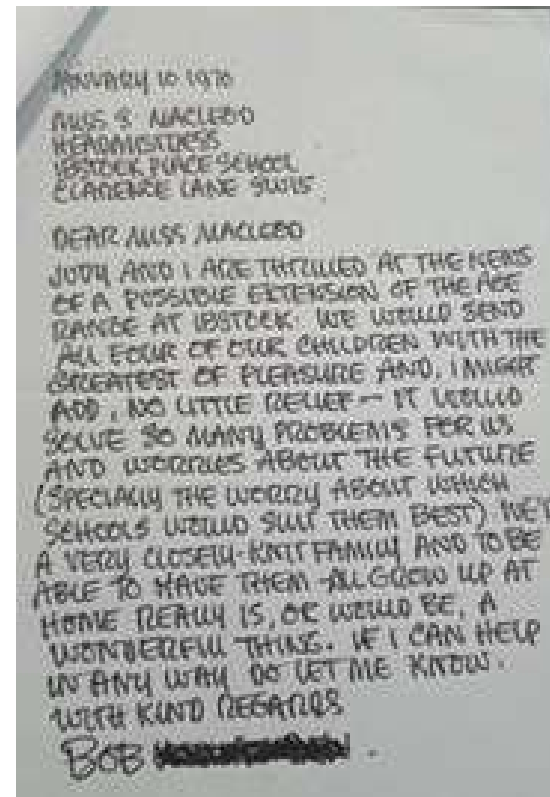
As discussions about extending the age of the School began in 1968, through the 1970s, a key factor in this debate was space, which was in short

FROM THE ARCHIVES

supply. Staff and parents in favour of age-extension were happy to abolish the boarding facility to make space for extra classrooms. This would involve 'dormitories turned into classrooms, ancillary rooms to cloakrooms...' as noted in the plans. Ostensibly, extending the age of pupils from 13 to (minimally) 16, accompanied changes which were unpalatable to some who viewed the loss of the boarding facilities too great a sacrifice.

On the other hand, there were some who vehemently advocated for the age extension as a priority over boarding facilities. One parent, in 1970, wrote enthusiastically in favour of an age extension. 'We would send all four of our children with the greatest of pleasure and, I might add no little relief' he asserted in his letter. His family lived in the area of Roehampton and identified the benefit this would be for their 'very closely-knit family'. This point was echoed by others in the Ibstock community. In February 1970, a working party investigated the mood regarding age-extension. Evidently, parents who lived in the area benefited from no close progressive co-education day schools. Bereft of this option, children over 13 were being sent away from home to comparable boarding schools. If a suitable option existed closer to home, they suggested, they would happily make use of it.

Which was of a greater benefit to children? Close access to their domestic life into their older years, or the preservation of a separate-from-home boarding facility? The debates over this issue were significant enough to close the matter temporarily from 1970 until 1975. Once the project reopened in 1975, the age extension was agreed within a year. The first cohort of year 10 pupils was admitted in 1977 and the boarding facility ceased.







130



Sports Day 1948

Stay Connected

Keeping in touch with Ibstock provides a range of benefits including:

- Opportunities to organise your own events
- Access to networking with other alumni
- The chance to share your news and achievements

To help build our community, get in touch here:

alumni@ibstockplaceschool.co.uk

Join our alumni network here: stocksconnect.com

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Upcoming Events

22 June 2024

Ibstock 130 Celebration
Stocks BBQ

28 June 2024

Prep School Prize Giving

3 July 2024

Senior School Prize Giving

4-6 December 2024

Upper Senior School Production

10-11 December 2024

Carol Services at All Saints Church,
East Sheen



Ibstock Place

CO-EDUCATIONAL DAY SCHOOL