

Editor's Letter

Isn't it a funny thing when we meet our childhood heroes? I was reunited with one of mine a few months ago. Vivienne Durham was my A-Level English

teacher when I was but a wee slip of a thing at Godolphin & Latymer in the Eighties. I had the pleasure of meeting her again, after a gap of nearly 30 years, when I interviewed her for AE's feature on Turbo-Charged Headmistresses. During those years, Durham has gone on to become one of our most stellar heads, educating literally thousands of girls - most recently at Francis Holland Regent's Park - but she was mine first.

With Durham I discovered Shakespeare, a love that shows no signs of abating. Isn't it funny how the seeds sown in those years germinate so deep? The three of us - Durham, Shakespeare and I - spent two years together. In those olden days, there was no pressure of AS-Levels at the end of Year 12. We had time, acres of it. My copy of Hamlet from that time is still one of my most treasured possessions; each and every page covered with minute annotations. For more than a year we studied

“DURHAM, SHAKESPEARE AND I SPENT TWO YEARS TOGETHER”

this one play, luxuriating in every cadence and meaning. I count myself hugely privileged to know it so intimately.

My rose-tinted memories are of sunshine and Shakespeare and NO exams. But the wheels did come off. When I spun out of orbit at A-Levels with anxiety and overwork, Durham calmly scraped me off the floor and gently helped me through the crisis. As many parents have discovered at Francis Holland, where the pastoral care is considered second to none, Durham has a warmth and rare gift for people.

The strength of feeling we have for our school mentors is somehow out of all proportion to the way we feel about people we meet in our later years, when life is more diluted. It's why a good teacher is so fundamental to every child's education.

And a good education is what this issue is all about. We have a wealth of features, from how

to negotiate the SEN maze, to our guide to the best country preps and why boarding might be the answer. And because good teaching isn't always academic, Jay Piggot, Headmaster of Epsom College, has written a fascinating piece on the challenges faced by school rugby in a more modern, professional age and Peter Green, Head Master of Rugby School has written a passionate defence of why an arts education matters.

I hope you enjoy this issue. 



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