The annual review for Old Blues of The Blue Coat School 2018/19

Inside
- Liverpool's answer to Banksy
- Following in the footsteps of Mo Salah
- In search of a cure for Alzheimer's
- Old Blues’ portrait gallery
- Surprise! Surprise! Ian Preston
A MESSAGE FROM
The Headteacher

We often talk about the things that make Blue Coat great and very often we focus on our brilliant students and how they are expertly supported by our dedicated and skilled staff. But that doesn’t tell the full story. Supporting our students and staff is our growing community of Old Blues whose involvement in the school is just as vital as any other part of our community.

This year, students of all ages have really appreciated the inspirational messages of our Old Blues who have given their time to speak at awards afternoons and the time many Old Blues have given to guide and support the students in their career choices. Many of you also offer us great financial support so that we can support our students to have the very best experience at Blue Coat by redeveloping the library and transforming ICT, both of which have been boosted this year by transformational gifts from very generous Old Blues.

We are excited to look ahead to next year when we hope to engage with more Old Blues through existing and new events. Please do look out for these events and don’t hesitate to get in touch with our Development Team if you want to be involved with the exciting work currently going on at Blue Coat.

Mr Mike Pennington
Headteacher, The Blue Coat School

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Keep in touch!

Due to new EU legislation we require your consent to communicate with you. To view our new Privacy Notice and communications consent form head over to our website. Once complete you’ll never miss an event invitation, e-newsletter or Old Blues magazine.

www.bluecoatschoolliverpool.org.uk/old-blues/keep-touch/

You can contact the Development Team directly at development-team@bluecoatschool.org.uk or on 0151 733 1407 ext. 207.

Don’t forget you can also keep in touch with Blue Coat using our social media platforms:

Facebook: /bluecoatschoololdblues
Twitter: @LiverpoolBCS
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/groups/8153535

Calling all female Old Blues!

The Development Team would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed material for this edition of the magazine. We are always on the lookout for new material but we are particularly interested to hear from our female Old Blues, who we feel are underrepresented in this edition. Please get in touch if you’d like to be featured in a future issue!
Congratulations Class of 2018

The Class of 2018 have embarked on their first step towards their chosen careers having celebrated a fantastic set of A Level results in August.

Of all grades awarded:
- 56% were A* - A
- 79% were A* - B

This year’s results illustrate the passion, enthusiasm and hard work shown by our students, who have been led by our inspiring and devoted team of teaching and support staff. The high standards set by our conscientious students and their dedicated approach to their studies has enabled them to secure places at prestigious universities across the UK, including 14 students who have accepted places at Oxford or Cambridge University.

We would like to wish the Class of 2018 the very best of luck as they embark on the next phase of their education, and we look forward to welcoming them back to the School for our A Level prize giving ceremony, on Tuesday 8th January 2019.

Introducing our New Head Boy and Girl

“We are very honoured to be able to represent the school this year. We are looking forward to working with more people from across our school, integrating all the year groups together and building an even better relationship with the teachers. We know how hard everyone works and are grateful for the chance to get involved even more ourselves.

We are also excited for the opportunities our role will bring to represent the school at events throughout the year and can’t wait to meet the many people who help to support our school.

We’re already enjoying giving back to an amazing school which has supported and shaped us over the last six years. Hopefully, we can help to make our school an even better place for future students who join!”

Head Girl and Head Boy, Emma and Jacob

School Chapel transformed into UN General Assembly

Organised by our Politics Department and led by a team of Year 12 Ambassadors, over 50 students from all three Key Stages had an opportunity to represent countries including Russia, the United States of America, Iran and Portugal. The event, which saw delegates undertake independent research prior to the event, involved students debating a range of challenging topical issues.

For Year 8 delegate George, who represented Spain, participating provided a unique opportunity to “look at issues not normally covered by my current curriculum and to undertake independent research. The experience was incredibly interesting because it showed me a different side to politics and debate, as well as history. I loved participating in this event and hope to attend in the future, too.”
East Wing refurbishment centrepiece of redevelopment project

Thanks to the generosity of The Blue Coat School Foundation and the UK Government the School undertook one of its largest refurbishment projects during 2018.

The seven month programme involved the relocation of our Sixth Form centre to the newly refurbished East Wing. Accommodating over 300 students, our Sixth Form students now have access to the Robert Styth Study Library, formerly known as the Board Room, and the Bryan Blundell Bistro, offering fresh bean coffee, hot chocolate and a menu of hot and cold food. The former Headmaster’s Office and adjoining rooms have also been converted into the Sir Alan and Ian Tod common room.

Also included in the project was the redevelopment of our Art department. Each studio is now equipped with new display boards, smart boards, and furniture.

Peg Leg corridor, once infamous as a dark, damp and menacing corner of the School, has been brought into the 21st century with lighting and heating.

If you would like to retrace your steps through Blue Coat and see our new facilities please contact the Development Team, we always love showing our Old Blues around School.

Students shine in spectacular production of Guys and Dolls

One of the great American musicals, Guys & Dolls, was this year’s School Show with a cast and production which delivered a practically professional level of energy and skill for Frank Loesser’s 1950 musical of Broadway low-life clashing with do-gooding missionaries.

The School Band brought alive stalwarts songs like Guys And Dolls, Sit Down You’re Rockin’ the Boat, and Luck Be A Lady. Usually school productions cut the dancing, but student Luke James’ choreography superbly revived this dimension. He will also join other leads, including Jamil Abbasi and Natalia Barton, in our next show, The Addams Family.

Success at the North West Goalden Globe awards

In June Miss Fitchie was crowned North West Netball Teacher of the Year, during a special ceremony in Manchester, which celebrated the hard work and dedication shown by teachers, grassroots coaches and volunteers over the past twelve months.

Under her leadership the number of students playing netball and representing The Blue Coat School has grown rapidly. Sharing her passion and enthusiasm for the sport, our players have demonstrated their talent and motivation which has led to eight City Championship titles as well as victory during our annual netball tour and local matches.

Year 7 football team enjoy a fantastic 2017/18 season

Our Year 7 football team enjoyed a remarkable first season representing The Blue Coat School. Having performed strongly in the Merseyside Cup our talented players progressed through to the final of the Year 7 Liverpool Cup, the first Blue Coat team to do so in over 20 years. Defeating teams including Alsop, St Margaret’s, and SFX along the way to the final. Despite losing 3-1 to Cardinal Heenan in the final, the team put in a strong performance.

Year 7 team triumph at Widnes Rugby School Games

For the past two years a special partnership between The Blue Coat School and Widnes Vikings has provided students in Years 7 to 9 with an opportunity to pursue a Rugby League pathway outside of school.

Competing in the 2018 Widnes Vikings Rugby League School Games 9s tournament for emerging schools, our Year 7 team defeated Grange, Runcorn, Ormiston Chadwick Academy, Rainhill and St Edwards, to be crowned winners of the competition. In spite of their newcomer status this excellent display reflects the team’s confidence, ability and resilience. We wish the team all the best as they continue to perfect their knowledge and understanding of Rugby League and skills with Widnes Vikings.
One year on since creating his celebrated For all Liverpool’s Liver Birds giant wings located in Liverpool’s Baltic Triangle, artist and Old Blue Paul Curtis from the Class of 1997, emerged as one of the city’s most exciting and talented artists.

His work continues to spread across Merseyside, from Everton’s Goodison Park to a striking campaign for The Clatterbridge Cancer Charity. And it doesn’t stop there, Paul was personally asked by film director Danny Boyle to create a mural for his latest film!

However, his artistic career has only occurred through a strange twist of fate after what seemed like a far more lucrative and secure job in the oil and gas industry evaporated. Paul graduated from Liverpool University with a BSc in Geology and Physical Geography and Aberdeen University with a Masters in Petroleum Geoscience, in 2001. Yet all these qualifications, plus his Blue Coat School education was not enough to avoid redundancy caused by the 2014 oil price crash.

“I tried to get a new job in the industry, but there weren’t any,” he says, “looking at recruitment sites all day is depressing. So the art was accidental. I only had one foot in it as I saw it as a stop gap. Only once I decided to fully commit did it start to pay off.”

He believes everything we see is influential, but he’s intrigued by how things work visually together, and says: “Some of my work has Jack Vettriano and Georgia O’Keefe influences. I think that like them, I am a painter as well as an artist. The two don’t always go together.

“I am very much still learning. My first few canvases were very film noir. I like that style’s dark, smokey mystique and classiness. Since doing large murals, I developed working with bold, bright colours. Being a mural artist means you work with the client. I enjoy making their imagination into a real painting, from abstract through cartoon to photorealism.”

The sudden worldwide fame of For all Liverpool’s Liver Birds guarantees it will always be special as it literally changed his life with people taking selfies and sharing them worldwide on social media. He said: “It went ballistic and the national press covered it! I got a little worried as I wasn’t really prepared. It did accelerate me into being fully professional not only in the traditional sense but also the way I approached my work.

“The Liverpool Landmarks painting on Edge Lane is my biggest achievement, purely due to sheer size (100 sq m)! I like the small Gina Lollobrigida painting in Italian Fish Club or the Coffee Plant I did on Coffee & Fandisha. These are my favourites.

“My art is not trying to shock anyone, quite the opposite. I want it to brighten up their day for a few seconds! As much of my work is highly public I think that is important.”
One of the best things about my job is the travel – even if I'm always in the type of economy hotel my mum hoped I'd never stay in. However, my main memories of Egypt involve heat exhaustion, food poisoning and sitting on that camel wearing a Mohamed Salah shirt. It took weeks to get travel permission. The Egyptian authorities were convinced I was up to no good and put someone in the car with me for the four hour drive north from Cairo to Nagrig, Salah's hometown.

Strangely, my minder seemed to get a bit cross whenever I told him my name but in the end, he realised I was just trying to see what good can come from a multi-millionaire footballer who cares about someone other than himself.

Salah's injury meant he wasn't involved much in Egypt's World Cup campaign. The people in his village were dismayed, but didn't have a bad word about him. Quite the contrary, as he's doing things nobody knew about. I accessed his charity's records which detail how he's giving pensions to more than 500 villagers, keeping them out of poverty in a country where it's very easy to fall through the cracks. We met amazing people with staggering stories, but wherever I introduced myself people would turn away and be cold-shouldered and they told me it was my first name. To my horror, it was being cold-shouldered and they told me it was being cold-shouldered and they told me it was being cold-shouldered and they told me it was my first name. To my horror, it apparently sounds like a four-letter obscenity in Arabic!

And that's why I now call myself Mohamed Garnett when I'm travelling in the Middle East these days!

Nick's programme, Mo Salah: Football Is Life or the podcast series Searching for Salah is available on the BBC Sounds app.
The fact that Blue Coat’s magnificent Shirley Hall remains in one piece for daily use is thanks to the School’s fast-acting former art teacher Mr Ian Preston, affectionately known as Jake by many Old Blues.

The name Jake came about after a boarder likened his lightweight appearance at a staff football match to a rake, and Jake the Rake was born.

Mr. Preston said: “When the head first asked me to direct, I overheard one of the staff sneer, ‘He hasn’t even got English O-level’, and I thought, ‘I’ll show ‘em’.

“So I took over the plays and Rod Jamieson, Head of Art, was fine about it and I worked with the new Head of English, Don Hayes,” he said. The students were also very enthusiastic and as time went on productions and special effects became ever more ambitious.

“I wanted shows to be spectacular. Probably a lot of what we did would fail full of Health & Safety regulations today,” he laughed, “but no one got hurt, not even the dancer who fell down the stage trap-door I installed. It was for Jack & The Beanstalk and as the beanstalk came up, she suddenly went down!”

“We set up rigs so students could fly and for Aladdin the actor’s feet would create explosions. Once, due to an error, a big cloud of dry ice which was meant to swirl around the performers’ feet surged up to the ceiling and then gradually descended enveloping the band so they couldn’t see. The audiences loved it!”

“For one production we announced Royalty would attend and dressed up a member of staff, Mrs Lesley Box and some elderly people actually believed she was Queen Victoria! The effect was slightly spoiled when she came onto the stage and her hooped skirt got wedged on the steps, tangled her legs up and she fell off!”

Possibly the biggest surprise of his career was when Scouse chanteuse Cilla Black burst into his pottery lesson for an edition of her hit tv show Surprise! Surprise! in 1993. The producers got the idea from Mr Preston’s late wife who knew Liverpool comic Bob Carolgees, a regular on the show.

“It was indeed a surprise. The show wasn’t rigged and if Cilla thought the surprise was spoilt she’d leave immediately. In fact, she rolled up in her chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce, wearing her fur coat. She was great: what you saw was what you got. We then did two days of filming with Cilla, Blue Coat students and myself at the Neptune Theatre putting on a show.”

For Old Blue Chris Winchester from the Class of 1990, “The Surprise! Surprise! filming was great fun. It was a two day shoot which I thought was incredible for just a 3 minute video. It was the first time I’d been on a film location and I was blown away by the scale of the operation - the size of the crew, the big double decker bus.”

Ian’s impact cannot be underestimated.

"Jake is responsible for me being who I am. I wasn’t much good at maths, I wasn’t much good at English - in fact I wasn’t much good at drama but it led me to a career I’d never thought of and a life that still surprises me every so often. He taught me how to do a backwards roll without showing my knickers when I was a female lead in one play (before co-education!).

"I’ve never known a more influential teacher." Old Blue Nick Garnett, Class of 1983
Our Old Blues' Portrait Gallery presents the stories of our Old Blues in a relevant, modern and aspirational way that our students can connect with. Working with Sane Seven Photographers, we created a series of engaging portraits that portray our Old Blues not only as successful and confident individuals but also as personable and approachable, who are comfortable in stepping out of their comfort zone and bending conventional rules.

Our Old Blues' Portrait Gallery is an ongoing project for Blue Coat. The inaugural portraits currently lining the newly renamed Old Blues’ Corridor, formerly the Shirley Hall corridor, feature just a small selection of our Old Blues and in time we plan to feature many more who have excelled in their respective fields. Indeed, we are excited about welcoming back our current students to the school in years to come to celebrate their achievements and successes and inspire future generations of students.

Commodore Martin Atherton OBE - Class of 1977

**Life isn’t always smooth sailing**

During his naval career Martin served at sea several times as well as with the Royal Marines and was captain of HM Naval Base Clyde prior to moving to Whitehall and working at a senior level in the Ministry of Defence. Promoted to the rank of Commodore in 2011, he headed the Royal Navy’s involvement in high-profile events including the London Olympic Games and the 70th anniversaries of the Battle of the Atlantic and D-Day. Martin was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2014.

In 2016 Martin was appointed as Receiver General at Canterbury Cathedral, the most senior lay role at the Cathedral.

Daniel Brown - Class of 1995

**Life may be full of thorns but there is no success without a few scratches**

Daniel is an artist, designer and programmer - creating apps, websites and digital installations for luxury brands and public and private artworks. Since 1999, Daniel has been chosen by Internet Business Magazine as one of the world’s top 10 internet designers; he was one of Creative Review Magazine’s ‘Stars of the New Millennium’, and more recently featured in The Barbican’s blockbuster Digital Revolutions exhibition and The New York Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial. His work with photographer Nick Knight can be seen on Apple’s ‘Thirty Years of Mac’ documentary and commercials.

Daniel has been acknowledged as a pioneer in the new media field - his artworks are now in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Denver Art Museum and London’s Victoria & Albert Museum. He was chosen as London Design Museum’s Designer of the Year in 2004.

Helen Brown - Class of 1999

**Speak your voice, break the mould**

Helen began her career as a Broadcast Assistant at BBC Radio Merseyside, followed by Broadcast Journalist at BBC North West Tonight, before focusing on sports journalism in 2009 when she became Producer for BBC TV Sports News.

As Associate Producer for Sky Sports Formula 1, Helen produced the critically acclaimed documentary The Last Teammate, on the death of Ayrton Senna. This was broadcast around the world, including on NBC in the United States. Helen subsequently went on to produce the re-launched F1 Show, as well as travelling the world producing features and programmes from Grands Prix.

As Producer for BBC Sport Helen produced Olympic Breakfast for BBC1 and was also the Paralympics producer for BBC News during Rio 2016. After a short spell producing Football Focus and Match of the Day 2 Extra, Helen now works as Assistant Editor for BBC TV Sports News, based in MediaCityUK.

Zia Chaudhry MBE - Class of 1987

**Sometimes you’ve just got to impress the life out of them**

Upon graduating from the University of Manchester with a degree in law, Zia returned to his hometown of Liverpool, establishing his legal career as a barrister specialising in criminal law after he was called to the Bar in 1991.

Outside of his legal practice, Zia has been actively involved in interfaith work for over fifteen years, with a particular emphasis on dispelling misunderstanding about Islam and Muslims.

Zia is the author of ‘Just Your Average Muslim’. This timely story of his personal journey growing up as a Muslim in the United Kingdom was originally intended to serve as a guide for his own children but quickly developed to address wider issues concerning Islam and Muslims.

In 2001 Carl helped to form the private client discretionary fund management department in Liverpool, becoming head of the Liverpool office in 2016 and regional director of the northern offices in 2018.

Carl Cross - Class of 1989

**Life can pass you by if you sit still for too long**

Carl is a regional director of Investec Wealth & Investment. After graduating with a first class degree in History from the University of Liverpool in 1995, Carl joined BWD Rensburg (now Investec) as an equity analyst, where he undertook original research on oil, industrial and utility companies and contributed to overall stock selection.

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Bill Currie - Class of 1988

For every snake, there is a ladder

Bill is the founder of the William Currie Group, which specialises in investments in the retail, e-commerce and tech sectors. Previously Bill was a top-ranked, multi-award-winning retail analyst for Barclays (BZW), Hoare Govett and Charterhouse Securities, where he was Joint Managing Director.

Bill’s working career began in stockbroking in 1982. During his time in London he was ranked No.1 Retail Analyst in all institutional surveys for some years and was involved in numerous flotations and takeovers whilst being an advisor to many of the leading quoted retailers. Upon leaving stockbroking, Bill founded his Family Investment Office, The William Currie Group, and The Fragrance Shop. The Fragrance Shop grew to a chain of over 100 stores until it was sold, whilst the investment business has evolved from mainly investing in quoted companies to now focussing on fast growth E-Commerce and Tech businesses.

The only safe thing in life is to take a chance

Upon leaving school, Stuart studied law at Oxford University followed by four years of practice as an entertainment industry lawyer in London. Following this Stuart moved to New York to become an executive at Miramax Films, eventually becoming the studio’s head of worldwide distribution at the youthful age of 31. In 2006 Stuart moved to Los Angeles and started IM Global, which over the next decade became one of Hollywood’s leading film production, financing and distribution companies. As Founder and CEO of the company Stuart produced or distributed films alongside luminaries such as Martin Scorsese, Julia Roberts, Johnny Depp, Nicole Kidman, Sylvester Stallone and Tom Ford from his offices in Hollywood and New York, and via a network of overseas offices. In 2015, IM Global was given the award of International Film Company of the Year by Variety Magazine.

In early 2018 Stuart launched a major new Hollywood content company in early 2018 to specialise in the emerging market economies including China, India and Brazil. The company, IM Global, is tasked with finding and developing local, independent talent and storytelling. The company has now begun to service the top-line talent in Hollywood via a network of offices around the world, including Los Angeles, Mumbai, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Believe in yourself and you can go far

After a year studying Chemistry at Oxford University, Alice decided to change course to Economics and Management, leaving Oxford with a first class honours degree. Following a successful summer internship at Goldman Sachs in London she joined them full time as an investment banking analyst in UK Mergers and Acquisitions. Due to the worldwide financial crisis Alice decided to take a career break to go travelling, and then went to Cambridge University to study an MBA. After some more travelling, including learning Mandarin in China, Alice returned to London in 2011 to begin working in asset management. Alice now works as a fixed income strategist at asset management firm Schroders, doing economic, political and investment research for her team, as well as publishing research and宏观经济, political and investment research for her team, publishing research and attending conferences. Currently Alice is completing a PhD in Finance and investment at the University of Oxford.

Success is all about calculated risk

Simon is an entrepreneur and business founder, who has taken a number of businesses from start-up to multi-million pound enterprises. Simon graduated with a degree in Law from the University of Liverpool, but decided to pursue his business interests upon graduating rather than pursue a career in law. In 2007 Simon founded the Gourmet Society, a membership club that allows its members access to discounted meals, and by 2014 had over 1 million UK members. Since selling the company Simon has continued to pursue new business interests, investing in FMCG early stage businesses, e-commerce IT platforms, property and selected leisure businesses.

Simon Leonard - Class of 1997

Try to examine the problem from every angle, don’t be afraid to get off your chair

Simon left Liverpool in 1980 to study physics, specialising in theoretical physics, first at Cambridge then Edinburgh. At Edinburgh Simon was supervised by Peter Higgs, who was awarded the Physics Nobel Prize in 2013. After achieving a doctorate Simon exploited the opportunity to travel, holding research posts at the Universities of Oxford, Illinois and Glasgow, then the Theory Division at CERN (the particle physics laboratory near Geneva), before taking a lecturing position at Swansea University in 1993. Simon has been based at Swansea ever since, becoming Professor in 2003, and was elected a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales in 2013. Simon’s research uses lattice gauge theory to study microscopic properties of matter; in particular the quark-gluon plasma thought to exist for temperatures in excess of a trillion degrees and the ultra-dense quark matter possibly to be found in the cores of neutron stars.
The current School library is situated in the heart of the school beneath Shirley Hall (which many Old Blues will remember as the Dining Hall). The library should be the beating heart of the school, a facility and resource that all students are able to access to benefit their studies and help them exceed their potential. As it currently stands the library has limited use and appeal. Functional yet uninspiring, it has limited capacity due to outdated design and lack of furniture with no space for additional teaching or opportunities for private study.

Our students deserve more.

We want to transform the current library into a new state-of-the-art Learning Resource Centre which will significantly improve both the day to day learning opportunities for our students and wider curricular activities. It will help us foster talent and create wider opportunities for creative, inspired learning within the school, as well as provide the space for us to develop our outreach and engagement programme with local primary schools as part of our social mobility agenda.

Bright Minds Bright Futures will enable us to transform the existing library space into a multi-functional LRC that will incorporate:

- Flexible space to incorporate zones for study, group work, project work, research, homework and reading for pleasure
- Suitable space to house an increased stock of fiction and non-fiction books
- Increased access to online resources
- Additional teaching space for 30 students
- Private study areas
- Sound proofed group working pods
- Significantly improved ICT and WIFI infrastructure providing student access to mobile devices
- Soft seating areas to encourage reading for pleasure
- Area to host guest speakers and lectures.

This £1.2 million project is being 100% funded from voluntary donations, and will only go ahead if we are able to raise the money needed to make the project a reality. We’ve already raised almost £200,000 towards our ambitious goal and look forward to speaking to our friends in the School community who would like to help us make our vision a reality.

Get in touch

If you would like to support Bright Minds Bright Futures please contact the Development Team at development-team@bluecoatschool.org.uk or on 0151 733 1407 ext 207.

You can also find further information about the appeal, or donate online, at www.bluecoatschoolliverpool.org.uk/support-us/brightmindsbrightfutures

Thanks go to Davide the marketing maestro

We are grateful to Old Blue Davide de Maestri from the Class of 1983 for lending his branding and marketing expertise to this fundraising appeal to help us create a campaign name and identity. Since leaving Blue Coat in the early 1980s Davide has had an impressive career spanning the marketing, branding and sponsorship sector. Having worked as Board Account Director for Saatchi and Saatchi, Brand Director for Liverpool Football Club and Head of Marketing, Brand and Insight for Kenyons, we are hugely grateful to Davide for supporting the School by sharing his expertise with us.

“Working alongside the School to create an identity for the new LRC fundraising appeal has been a fantastic process.

We come up with ‘Bright Minds Bright Futures’ as we see the new LRC as playing a key role in helping to inspire bright Blue Coat students to have the brightest of futures. As an Old Blue myself, I’m so grateful for the opportunities I had at Blue Coat and hope that by creating this exciting new campaign we can raise the funds needed to make this project happen for current students. Non sibi sed omnibus, not for oneself but for all!”

“We really need more books and better facilities. The number of computers we have is not enough to benefit all students, and comfortable chairs and quiet reading areas should be essential for those who aren’t using the library for study but for reading. A wider range of books would be really useful for our studies too.” Katie, Year 13

“The library looks like one building but really it’s thousands of magical places.” Theo, Year 10
WE ARE BUILT ON PHILANTHROPY

Facts and figures 2017/18

2017/18 WAS OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING YEAR TO DATE, RAISING £222,620

for a variety of projects including our Development Fund, Bright Minds Bright Futures Appeal and Blue Coat For All organ restoration project.

215 INDIVIDUALS AND 10 CHARITABLE TRUSTS AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTED THE SCHOOL

We received an incredibly generous gift of £100,000 from an Old Blue and his wife towards technology and the advancement of learning in technology and coding.

STUDENTS RAISED £1,480 FOR OUR NEW LRC AND DEVELOPMENT FUND.

DEVELOPMENT FUND

Thanks to the generosity of parents, Old Blues, staff and friends of the School we have been able to support an increasing number of Development Fund projects designed to enhance Blue Coat School life. We are pleased to work closely with our Parents’ Association and regularly co-fund projects to achieve maximum impact for our students. Here’s just a snapshot of some of the projects we were able to support in 2017/18:

Outdoor Chess

“Chess club only takes place once a week, but outdoor chess allows my friends and I to play every day! We enjoy encouraging classmates and friends who have not played the game before to get involved.”

Year 8 student

Genetic Technology

Our A Level Biology students can now experience genetic testing procedures, using the same equipment and processes used in laboratories and scientific institutions.

Lego Mindstorms

Our avid computer coders now have access to a new creative and engaging form of computer science. Classroom and extra-curricular activities remain extremely popular.

“Having benefited so much from the first class start in life that Blue Coat gave me, I felt it was only right to ‘pay it forward’ and contribute in the hope that current students will get the same first class opportunities.”

Old Blue, Class of 1997

Make a lasting impact through a gift in your Will

A gift in your Will makes the seemingly impossible, possible. A legacy can help to create new teaching spaces or help provide extra-curricular provisions to help our students flourish, or can contribute to the upkeep of our wonderful and historically important Grade II* listed buildings to ensure we can provide the very best resources and facilities for our students.

If you’d like to make a lasting impact and inspire the bright minds of the future through a gift in your Will, please contact the Development Team for further information.

“Chess club only takes place once a week, but outdoor chess allows my friends and I to play every day! We enjoy encouraging classmates and friends who have not played the game before to get involved.”

Year 8 student

“It was only right to ‘pay it forward’ and contribute in the hope that current students will get the same first class opportunities.”

Old Blue, Class of 1997

If you would like to talk about supporting the School in any way please contact the Development Team at development-team@bluecoatschool.org.uk or on 0151 733 1407 ext. 207. You can also donate online at www.bluecoatschoolliverpool.org.uk/give
Helping to keep our minds healthy
Dr Jon Rohrer, Class of 1993

An ageing society means dementia is increasingly prevalent in the population. Fortunately, there are dedicated medical scientists researching the condition such as Old Blue Dr Jon Rohrer from the Class of 1993. He is Medical Research Council Clinician Scientist and Honorary Consultant Neurologist at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, London, and in effort to better understand the disease he has established an international research partnership to study the early signs of dementia, specifically frontotemporal dementia.

"After completing my initial training as a junior doctor I devoted to the early dementia research. I was pointed in the direction of Professor Martin Rossor who was the head of the Dementia Research Centre at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London – he mentioned a condition called frontotemporal dementia.

Dementia is an umbrella term for a group of different neurological conditions in which people develop progressive problems with their thinking or behaviour - the most common form is Alzheimer's disease which initially affects memory for things that have happened. Frontotemporal dementia, or FTD, is one of the other common forms, particularly in younger people in their 50s and 60s. Instead of affecting memory, it affects your ability to socially interact with others and to recognise their emotions. People's behaviour changes, becoming less inhibited than before, often being ruder, or more socially inappropriate than they would have before, or very apathetic. As it causes subtle changes in personality, the early stages it can be more difficult to diagnose. We commonly see people who have spent years trying to get a diagnosis and were diagnosed with depression or marital problems. Unfortunately the condition has no cure at the moment and progresses inexorably over five to ten years until people end up unable to talk and require help for all of their usual daily activities.

I've spent the last 13 years studying FTD, particularly looking at special methods of brain imaging to understand what is happening to the structure of the brain as the disease progresses. For the last few years I've led a study that has brought together international centres from around the world called the Genetic FTD initiative. FTD runs in families in up to half of people with the condition. Unfortunately this means that the children of people with this form of FTD are at a 50% risk of themselves also developing FTD later in life.

I now spend most of my research time studying these children who kindly come to our centre, and the other centres around the world, for one day each year to have a series of tests including thinking and memory tests, brain scans, blood tests and spinal taps. Our first big paper was published in the Lancet Neurology journal and showed remarkably that the loss of brain cells that eventually leads to the condition is occurring at least 10 years before people develop symptoms. In other words the time to treat the dementia is going to be at least 10 years before people develop symptoms - it may be too late to treat the condition adequately by the time people start to show signs of FTD.

This work has led to us looking at when we should be trialling new drugs in FTD. Previous studies were aimed at people who had symptoms but the GENFI study is now working with six different drug companies to develop trials that will hopefully prevent people ever developing symptoms. We hope these trials will start in the next 12 months. I don't know whether these trials will lead to a cure for FTD but it is the first step along the path towards a cure.

We currently have over 700 people in the study around the world and are aiming to get to 1000 next year. We hope to understand what kind of tests we will use in drug trials to see whether the drugs are working - we think this is likely to be a mix of brain scans, blood tests and spinal fluid studies. It has been amazing working with these families and with other researchers. It is only by bringing people together to collaborate in research that science can move forward."
**School equipment is Morocco bound**

High up in the Atlas Mountains and cut off by snow in winter are some of Morocco's remotest villages. Yet here in these isolated areas, children are now being educated thanks to School2School, an initiative set up in conjunction by The British Moroccan Society and Belvedere Prep School.

Playing a crucial role in the expansion of this project is investment manager Bill Currie from the Class of 1980. With support from the Belvedere Prep School community, 11 learning centres have been established in villages, including Talatass and Agounsane, where little or no education system exits. Since the project was founded five years ago, more than 1,000 children aged 4-18 years have benefited from the initiative.

By recycling school equipment such as uniforms, laptops, desks, books, microscopes and blackboards, which are no longer required in Liverpool, the level of education each centre can provide is greatly enhanced.

Although the initiative has faced challenges from village elders often resistant to taking children away from the fields, barriers are steadily being broken, most notably through the number of girls being educated. In a region which predominately speaks Berber, an opportunity to learn Arabic provides students with a fantastic stepping stone to succeed in securing jobs in the surrounding towns and cities and ultimately giving them financial independence.

It’s not only the children who benefit from the centres. Once the children have completed their education at each centre, they return to the villages and become role models, their experience providing their communities with an opportunity to access education.

Now into its sixth year, Bill hopes the next six years will see the initiative grow, with more remote villages providing their communities with an opportunity to access education.

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**Don Dodkin horses around with Jack Whitehall**

Old Blue Don Dodkin from the Class of 1965 appeared on stage with top comedian Jack Whitehall – but nobody realised as he was the back end of a pantomime horse.

Don, whose son John was tour manager for Jack Whitehall at Large, arrived to see the show in Cambridge and found Jack in a flap. Don said: “His entrance on stage was riding this pantomime horse, but the ‘rear end’ hadn’t turned up. My son John told him I was an amateur thespian running the village Drama Group, I was immediately press-ganged into my now infamous supporting role as Dobbin’s rear end! It was great fun and Jack is a lovely guy. My big disappointment was not getting an Equity Card because of my sterling performance!”

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**Taste of the Middle East**

Nesting alongside some of Lark Lane’s famous bohemian and independent establishments, including Keith’s Wine Bar, the new Arabic cuisine restaurant Hafa Hafa is the brainchild of Old Blue Tim Haggis, from the Class of 2009.

Translated as ‘Party Party’ in Arabic, Hafa Hafa’s early incarnation as a street food stall built a strong reputation at Liverpool’s first ever street food market, Baltic Market, and at food festivals up and down the country.

Opening a restaurant on Lark Lane, where for many years Tim worked as a teenager, naturally felt like the next step and the right home for his new venture. Famous for its Middle Eastern inspired Halloumi fries, Falafel wraps and house hummus, Hafa Hafa in its permanent form adds a new dimension to the culinary delights already found on Lark Lane.

“I’ve always admired how Lark Lane has been a hub of independent businesses and I’m excited to be a part of it.” said Tim.

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**Top Score for Old Blue Neil Sang**

Transforming a football playing career into being one of the most successful agents in the sport is an achievement which Old Blue Neil Sang from the Class of 1988 can savour. Not that he’s one for sitting on his laurels after being part of the biggest transfer deal in Major League Soccer history.

Neil played a crucial role in helping 18-year-old Alphonso Davies sign a new contract to play with one of Europe’s biggest football teams, Bayern Munich, from January 2019.

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As a former professional footballer during the 1980s and 1990s at Everton Reserves and Torquay United, Neil admits as a younger player he did not understand the importance of attitude and character, something he is keen to reinforce amongst his clients.

Despite the regrets associated with an erratic start to his professional career, Neil is keen to give back to the sport he is so passionate about. He realises the value of his experience in teaching young players how to behave. The support he provides for his clients can prevent them from making the same mistakes as he did.

“As a young player at Everton I didn’t get on with authority. Success isn’t just about ability, the key is also to have the attitude and character. I want to give something back by providing a support mechanism for young players to navigate football’s political landscape. My mistakes have a value in this.”

Now representing over 20 clients and dealing with scouting, brand endorsements, contract negotiation and law, Neil is always on the go travelling the world from North America to Africa, with countries such as China, Japan and Australia emerging as strong investors in the game.

He was also the first intermediary to negotiate a profitable Image Rights deal outside the Premier League with a League One player. An experienced radio presenter, he currently co-hosts a football news show on Liverpool’s Radio City.
Claire Croxton, (nee Thomas) Class of 2007
Congratulations go to Old Blue Claire Croxton and her husband Nick who welcomed baby Archie this year! Claire and Nick, who met at Blue Coat, got married last year.

Zach Washington-Young, Class of 2008
Six years after being told he would never walk again, Zach completed his biggest challenge, the London marathon. Zach is the first person in history to complete the arduous 26.2 miles having suffered a total spinal cord break. Congratulations Zach.

Tiffany Wong, Class of 2009
In 2018 Tiffany passed her ‘RIBA Advanced Diploma of Professional Practice in Architecture’ and is now a registered and chartered architect. A Manchester School of Architecture graduate, Tiffany has previously worked in Kuala Lumpur. Now back in the UK, Tiffany is based in Milton Keynes, working for Jacobs UK Ltd, focusing on schools, airport and rail station projects.

“Looking back, I am thankful and blessed for all that has happened to get me to where I am at now, with all the support and encouragement along the way. Art classes at Blue Coat are definitely one of the things that I do miss.”

Liam Loftus, Class of 2011
Liam, a University of Oxford graduate and junior doctor at the Royal Liverpool Hospital, encouraged our Key Stage 4 students to follow their passion as they consider their future career path, and to use their ambition and motivation to overcome challenges, during our Awards Afternoon in July.

Anna Elcock, Class of 2018
Our thanks go to Anna for creating this year’s Christmas card. The design beautifully depicts our annual candlelit carol service held in the Chapel. Anna, who is currently taking a gap year, is looking forward to embarking on her architecture degree. All funds raised from our Christmas card campaign went directly to our Development Fund.

David Badley, Class of 1964
This summer three members of the Class of 1964, Rod McDermott, David Badley and Graham Metcalfe reminisced on their Blue Coat days during a summer reunion held at David’s home in Leicester.

Dr Gordon Bartley, Class of 1981
With over 30 years experience in catalyst-related engine emissions control technologies, Gordon has set up his own consulting company which seeks to reduce harmful pollutants through catalyst-related technologies, in his home state of Texas. Gordon is also the Director in a UK start-up tech company, MEMPRO Ltd. On top of this Gordon is a Texas Realtor “just for fun!”

Class of 1991
2019 will mark 30 years since our first cohort of female students joined Blue Coat Sixth Form. We would love to mark this milestone with a special celebration. Please get in touch with the Development Team for further details.

Eric Masaba, Class of 1992
During a business conference in July, Eric pitched his company Texxi Global to guests including His Royal Highness The Duke of York.

Graham Hughes, Class of 1997
In November we welcomed back Graham as our GCSE prizegiving speaker. Graham has enjoyed great success as a travel writer and presenter. Among many adventures he won a tropical island off Panama in a competition and holds a Guinness World Record for the fastest time to visit all countries by Scheduled Ground Transport.

Liam Loftus, Class of 2011
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Joni Chan, Class of 2015
7 days before jetting off to Canada to embark on his year abroad, Joni attended our Key Stage 3 Awards Afternoon. Reflecting on the many opportunities Blue Coat provided him with, Joni inspired students to seize every opportunity no matter how big or small.

Dr Gordon Bartley, Class of 1981
With over 30 years experience in catalyst-related engine emissions control technologies, Gordon has set up his own consulting company which seeks to reduce harmful pollutants through catalyst-related technologies, in his home state of Texas. Gordon is also the Director in a UK start-up tech company, MEMPRO Ltd. On top of this Gordon is a Texas Realtor “just for fun!”
Former physics teacher Keith Caulkin MBE celebrated his 60 years' association with the Blue Coat School at a special event in his honour attended by more than 60 Old Blues, parents, staff and former staff.

The evening included Mr Caulkin demonstrating some of his favourite experiments; drinks from the Error Bar and physics-themed concoctions such as Mr C’s Quantum Theory Punch and Mr C’s Thermodynamic Tame. There was also a Radioactive Raffle, which raised £355 for our Bright Minds Bright Futures Appeal.

Congratulations went to ‘The Stupid Boys and Girls’ team, for emerging victorious from Mr Caulkin’s fiendishly challenging Blue Coat quiz.

Headteacher Mr Pennington warmly led the tributes and Mr Caulkin’s friend and former Head of Chemistry Mr Nick Cowan highlighted some of Mr Caulkin’s renowned and unique teaching methods, which included leading sing-alongs to Diana Ross’ Chain Reaction to help students memorise equations.

The Caulkin story began in 1958 with the 11-year-old future physicist starting at Blue Coat School, along with his twin brother, Cyril, in Graham House. He left in 1965 to read Physics at Manchester University graduating with a BSc and a Masters. Since returning to Blue Coat in 1975 to teach and share his passion for physics, he has taught 5,125 students over the past four decades.

Mr Caulkin defied the laws of educational physics by continuing his career after retirement in 2016 and daily attends the School as Development Team Volunteer. He also organises the School’s British Physics Olympiad competition and still runs the Badminton Club on a Saturday morning.

Mr Caulkin said: “This evening was a happy and joyous occasion for everybody. I loved every aspect of it and was deeply touched by the big efforts of everyone involved to organise it for me.”

“I came to the Blue Coat in 1985 from Hillfoot Hey comprehensive school which had just been closed down for reasons that were never explained to us pupils. There was nothing about that school that I remembered with any fondness.

By sheer good fortune, I was accepted for the Blue Coat Sixth Form and my life changed. Being at Blue Coat for me was like walking into a sanctuary and I never looked back. I experienced peace at school for the first time since primary school. The teachers were engaging and committed, the students were clever and interested in learning. These were things I had never before experienced and I never looked back.

Two years later I had A Level grades which allowed me to read Law at university. After that I studied at the Inns of Court to read for the Bar, in London, where I now live. I had always wanted to be a barrister because I was interested in the idea of participating in justice. I remember being told by a teacher once that life wasn’t fair. He was right of course, but I knew I wanted to be in a profession where everybody strived to create the conditions for fairness – even if only for the duration only of a single trial.

Once I qualified and completed my pupillage I started my trade in the Crown Courts up and down the country. I love my job which specialises in Legal Aid cases involving violent crimes as well as fraud and sexual offences. There’s no greater thrill than standing up to address a jury and nothing more nerve-wracking than waiting for a jury’s verdict. And no other job could have held (and continues to hold) my attention these last 25 years.

“My life changed when I walked in through The Blue Coat School’s doors on Church Road.

I was lucky enough for You Don’t Know Me to be chosen by BBC Radio 2 as Simon Mayo’s Book Club Choice, plus being long-listed for the Crime Writers’ Association Gold Dagger for Crime Novel of the year and The Telegraph’s Best Crime Novels of the Year.

The defendant in You Don’t Know Me tells a story that’s hard to believe, but does that mean he’s guilty of murder? What I wanted to do was to create the dilemma in a reader. If his credibility is stretched to breaking point, is that nonetheless balanced by everything else he’s told you has happened in his life, which may be plausible? Can the moral question be so strong that it can overwhelm legal guilt?”

I have been interviewed on various radio stations to discuss the book. To me, this book is one of my life’s great achievements, because the numbers of people from working class backgrounds of my heritage publishing crime books is vanishingly small (I was born in 1969 to first generation Pakistani parents). It is smaller even than the equivalent number of barristers. And it still surprises me when I walk into a Waterstones and see my book on a shelf and see Lee Child’s name on the cover recommending it to readers.

For me, as I said, my life changed for the best when I walked in through those doors on Church Road. I shall never forget the start that Blue Coat School gave me.”
Q&A
with Aubrey Reynolds,
Old Blue, Class of 2001 – Film Director/Producer

Winner of the 2018 Digital Impact Award’s award for Digital Campaign of the Year and Best Use of Digital in the Engineering Sector. “Sometimes found making films … perennially late … procrastinating whilst trying to be a writer”

Did a Blue Coat School education give you a particular outlook on life?

I think it did. I never sensed that achievement is embarrassing and I accepted there are people who are very intelligent, very good at sports or arts or sciences. And then there’s the rest of us! The school was all boys until sixth form. So that’s contributed to my ability to focus on tasks, work hard to achieve, plus my state of arrested development and inability to chat women up. A Blue Coat education alongside 120-plus ambitious and highly intelligent razor-witted Scouse schoolboys gave me a relatively quick wit and hardened my skin.

Did you take part in School productions, or make films whilst here?

Up until 12 years old I wanted to be an actor; so when I first started at Blue Coat, I was in the Bugsy Malone chorus. Then a combination of awkward adolescence and a fascination for film-making pushed my interests away from being on stage. My rough book was always filled with storyboards for action sequences, drawings of imagined superheroes and Best Prem or LFC XIs. I really enjoyed my time at Sandhurst, but there were a few challenging moments, especially in the hot summer – digging endless trenches on barely any sleep. Whilst there was lots of hands-on practical training, there was also lots of conceptual work – lectures on war studies, and talks from high ranking Army personnel on leadership.

Are Screen Studies, such as you read at LJMU, of practical use in your career?

Definitely and not at all. University is great if you have a clear career goal and find the right course and university. Coming from Blue Coat’s very academic and focused environment to LJMU and its 50% practical course like Screen Studies really freed me to make increasingly less bad films.

Do you have a staff job with a digital agency, or are you coping with the insecurity of a freelance career?

I am currently staff with an agency. I moved from the North West to London two years ago, leaving the insecurity of a freelance career. I changed from not being money driven (luckily) and reveling in a lack of structure, to wanting more security in my life.

Do you have to compromise your artistic principles in order to make a product for a client and is it their project? It has to meet their needs. It’s not your passion project.

Is travelling the world making videos as good as it sounds?

It really is. I love to travel and I am someone who enjoys experiences over possessions. So this year I have been to Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, Zambia, South Africa and Kazakhstan. What’s best about travelling for work is interacting with people and seeing places you would never normally get to see.

Given your fascination with the mystery of Peg Leg Corridor, will you make a film about it?

Maybe! I’d never thought about it until this question, but who knows what will spill out of my head? My third UK Film Council short film was a horror/thriller and it is a genre I find very interesting.

Top Rank medic

In July Old Blue and future medic Sam Elcock from the Class of 2015 attended internationally renowned military training academy, Sandhurst. How did he get on?

“This Summer, I attended the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and was commissioned as an Officer in the Army Reserves. It was a path I never really considered, but looking back now, I regret not looking into it earlier.

At school, I knew I wanted to study medicine, and secured my place at the University of Leeds in 2015. Before I packed my bags, a friend who is a doctor informed me of the University Officers’ Training Corps or ‘UOTC’. I’d never done anything like it before such as cadets, but signed up at the Freshers’ Fair and haven’t looked back since.

UOTCs are Army Reserve units for University students, and are located on campuses throughout the country. No, you can’t get sent to Afghanistan mid-term – you’re non-deployable, have no commitment to the Army, and are able to leave at any time. But, they’re designed as an insight into the Army, and have a training syllabus that reflects that of officer training at Sandhurst.

The UOTC have training nights once a week, and we go away every other weekend – there’s a bit of Army training, a bit of sport and lots of social events.

It was in my first year that I started my application to become an officer, as I began to realise I quite liked all this ‘Army stuff’. It ended up being a long but enjoyable process of medicals and selection – culminating in a 3.5-day selection week called ‘Army Officer Selection Board’, or AOSB.

AOSB consisted of things like essay writing, group discussions, interviews, written tests, fitness tests and practical tasks; it was unlike anything I’d done before, but luckily, I passed and got the golden ticket to Sandhurst to complete my training as an officer.

I really enjoyed my time at Sandhurst, but there were a few challenging moments, especially in the hot summer – digging endless trenches on barely any sleep. Whilst there was lots of hands-on practical training, there was also lots of conceptual work – lectures on war studies, and talks from high ranking Army personnel on leadership.

My time at Sandhurst culminated in a commissioning parade, and marching up the steps to receive my commission followed by the Adjutant’s horse, in a format that’s stayed the same for over 100 years.”

Kick start campaigner

The very varied cultural interests of Old Blue Nick Wood, of the Class of 1956, stretch from possibly initiating his good friend John Lennon in the mysteries of reading music (aided by his grandmother’s piano) to kick-starting campaigns for imperilled pioneering national heritage like Liverpool’s majestic Royal Albert Dock and Cheshire’s mighty Anderton Boat Lift.

“I was a city and county councillor throughout the 1970s and chairman of a standing committee. It was my 1972 report to fellow city council leaders about the decaying condition of the Royal Albert Dock that probably triggered the movement to save the edifice from demolition at the hands of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company. I had a number of conversations with CEO John Cucksey at the time which eventually led to the restoration of the complex. This then became the catalyst for a resurgence of the city centre and the transformation of countless thousands of people’s lives even today. Later moving to Northwich in Cheshire with my partner, David Reece (we exchanged rings on Christmas Day 1970), I became part of the campaign to restore the long abandoned but celebrated Anderton Lift. Happily both their coasts are today fully functional to lift and lower canal boats and the land around it has been merged with the country park. I also chaired the body that re-established the annual Salt Festival with the collaboration of ICI.”

Sam, pictured far right, following his commissioning parade

Nick Wood at the Scottish Parliament building

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FROM THE HOT BIG BANG TO COLD DARK MATTER:

Professor David Marsh, Class of 2005, delves deep into the Universe’s origins

Inspired by Mrs Derrienne and Mr Cowan, David has attended some of the world’s most prestigious institutions, including the University of Oxford, Canada’s Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics and, in 2013, he received one of two Postdoctoral Fellowships awarded by the Royal Astronomical Society.

Currently based at the Institute for Astrophysics at the University of Gottingen, Germany, David was one of six international researchers to receive the Sofia Kovaleskaja Award in 2017. Considered one of Germany’s most valuable science grants, David was awarded a grant of up to €1.65 million to develop and establish his own research team to explore one of physics’ great puzzles: dark matter.

David’s team is seeking to establish a new alternative model to identify the key components of dark matter. Dark matter cannot be seen or even thought to be made of weakly interacting massive particles; however, this is so far unproven. One theory — being investigated is the possibility that dark matter could be composed of axions, and ultra-light elementary particles, as yet undetected. David’s computer simulations of theoretical calculations, predicting the individual properties of axions, can then be tested by astronomical observations.

Reflecting on his success, David said: “This grant is incredibly significant for my research as it provides me with an opportunity to be the head of a research group for the first time. This is a rare opportunity for someone at the early stages of their career. With a team of world-leading experts, I am able to undertake much broader and more ambitious projects.”

“I also have the opportunity to fund PhD students. The long, five-year timescale of the funding also facilitates this. I can spend a significant amount of time building a large piece of work, outside of the year-to-year pressure to produce results in a shorter funding period.

“My group is studying dark matter and in particular a model for it called axions. We develop theoretical models and simulations of galaxy formation with this type of dark matter, by using observations of stellar motions and galaxy distributions, we try and identify what dark matter is. We also work on proposals to directly detect dark matter in the lab, using a novel type of material called a topological insulator.”

Q&A

with James Kerr, Class of 1997 – Man of the Theatre

James Kerr is an award-winning international theatre director, actor, writer and translator. As an acting tutor he has trained top talents like Benedict Cumberbatch. His acclaimed production of Twelfth Night reopened the defunct Liverpool Playhouse in 1999.

Has being educated at Blue Coat School influenced your attitude to life?

Yes, it has. I still have a very close friend who sat next to me in Latin. He went on to work for the secret service in Iraq and Afghanistan and I went into the theatre and whenever we meet we talk about our Latin lessons together with Mr Watson. Blue Coat instilled into me a love for learning and the importance of following my own path. I remember it being so relaxed as a learning environment and fun.

Did you take part in School productions?

Yes. I jumped at the chance. I was in a few pantos and loved what theatre offered me. It gave me a chance to explore myself and understand why I feel so strongly about storytelling. I loved stories, and and have to admit that in my day the panto was the only chance we got to mix with a girls school, so that added to my general enthusiasm.

What drew you into acting?

I don’t know. I think it was wanting to be seen and heard. But now I’m not sure, something maybe deeper. Acting, like music, takes you on a journey to places that you don’t know about yourself. I think I always felt that the adventure in my life was going to be found inside me. I never really wanted to go sky-diving.

Was reopening Liverpool’s Playhouse Theatre one of your most challenging projects?

Yes. It was really hard. It had been closed for many years and was my home. I had seen shows there as a child and knew how it smelt and looked and felt. It is a building full of feelings and memories. I had to open in three weeks. We had very little to spend. I am still not sure how we got there.

How does it feel to be able to pass on your skills and experiences to young actors like Benedict Cumberbatch who become household names?

I am very proud to be associated with actors who can translate what they learn from me into practice. If they become internationally known that’s great, and of course I feel very proud of their achievements but I am also aware of many actors who have enormous power who we may not know. When I watch an actor I know I am always interested in what they are becoming, and to see what they do with the craft they have learned. Theatre and film has changed so much in a short time. What we think of as acting has changed also, you just have to look at the style of acting in movies from 40 years ago. Fashion in acting is changing very fast. Benedict has manged to hold onto his acting values, and that’s tough in the modern world. I think this says a lot about him. I am most proud of that in his work.

Does coming from Liverpool inform your attitude to acting and directing?

More and more. I think Liverpool is a very poetic place. It gets language and likes words. I think the playwrights that have come from Liverpool have been wonderful wordsmiths. I left Liverpool and tried to re-invent myself as we do when we are young, but now I feel that I am in touch with what I was. When I visit I always feel the sense of its vision and its cold stare. I like to think I have inherited something of that from the city.

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Q&A
with Daniel Brown, Class of 1995 – artist/designer /programmer

Daniel Brown has been named as one of the world’s top internet designers. He creates apps, websites and digital installations for luxury brands, public and private artworks.

Who are your artistic influences or art heroes?

Well as a Scouser and an artist, of course I have to say John Lennon. However, there are lots of less obvious examples, such as Jamie Reid, who designed all the cover art and graphics for the punk band Sex Pistols. I don’t think many people know that he lives in Liverpool.

How did you discover digital art?

As part of my studies, at the age of 16 I did work experience at a small multimedia studio tied to Liverpool John Moores University. They were creating interactive tools to aid education. I initially did two weeks’ work experience, but they were so happy with my performance I carried on working for them on weekends and holidays. By the time I left school at 18, I literally walked straight into a job with them and never looked back.

Around the same time, the web was invented, there was a huge boom in the digital media industry. Over time I found I was enjoying more creative projects in fields such as music and fashion, and naturally moved in that direction.

Does working with very powerful brands and personalities like Apple Computers, Kanye West, Mulberry, Sony PlayStation, and the Royal Society of Arts mean you have to compromise your ideas to their style?

Yes and no. Of course, with any design project there are parameters you have to work with, such as brand guidelines etc. But with the kind of work that I am involved in these firms have specifically sought me out for my style and expertise, so they are usually willing to trust my judgement. It takes a lot of hard work and experience to get to that position though.

What is your advice to creative students wanting to follow a career like yours?

It might seem at first that you’re in the wrong school – certainly for the first couple of years I thought that the Blue Coat was very much about humanities, science and more traditional subjects. But in reality, it prepared me for the fact that even being a successful artist or a designer you need to have discipline, you need to be able to make business decisions and you need to be able to communicate clearly. With hindsight, Blue Coat set me up with all the skills I needed and the ambition to achieve success.

You’ve lectured on using design skills to empower the disabled. How does this work?

At its most basic, design is simply about problem-solving. About how one can use various resources to achieve a task.

What you find with disability is that the problems people face can be very individual and unique, and therefore there aren’t necessarily off-the-shelf tools to help them. If instead we can teach people to be able to design things themselves (and use technology such as 3D printers) people can make a perfect solution tailored to their exact needs.

It sounds too weird to be true, but Old Blue Lewis Hou from the Class of 2008 has successfully combined his own discipline of neuroscience and fiddle-playing hobby with the expertise of educators, traditional musicians and dancers to explain scientific concepts using traditional folk dancing.

The result is Lewis’ award-winning Science Ceilidh, based in Edinburgh, which explores the science of our health, well-being and world around us with traditional music and dance.

Lewis says: “This collaboration aims to bring the highly participatory spirit of our folk traditions, where everyone has a voice and is able to take part, regardless of expertise, to communities everywhere.”

This is achieved by putting an unusual spin on traditions, such as medical researchers adapting ceilidh dances so each move helps explain scientific concepts. These include the Dashing White Blood Cell to explore the immune system, to the Orcadian Strip-the-Helix to explain DNA replication, or learning about light in the Fluorescence Fling.

The Science Ceilidh band performs these dances at festivals and events all over the UK and Europe, playing a high-energy mix of traditional Scottish tunes with influences from across Scandinavia and North America.

Science Ceilidh has worked with some 16,000 members of the public, primary and high school pupils to explore the benefits of music, creativity and learning in the brain and the importance of learning new skills throughout life. Its workshops are inter-curricular, looking at the physics of instruments, how the senses work, along with the cultural contexts of folk music and arrangements.

The events finish with participants developing their own creative performance (often ceilidh dances) to share what they have learnt with peers and parents.

It is hoped that Lewis and the Science Ceilidh will be able to visit Liverpool and take part in a future Blue Coat For All event for our community engagement programme.

Lewis says: “Our community projects work with groups who often don’t have the opportunity to engage with traditional arts and science. We focus on rural communities, youth projects and most recently with a project on how well-being and creativity links with dementia.

“A few years ago, I realised the strong overlap between the folk traditions – the importance of bringing people together, not about those who were the best necessarily, but having a voice and piece to share, and what we were striving to do at these educational festivals with science. We encourage everyone to feel they can engage with science, even if they weren’t experts.

“That, and along with the idea of the Orcadian Strip the Helix, came to me and I started working out how you could actually explore science using traditional dances. With our ceilidh band in 2014, we hosted the first Science Ceilidh in the Edinburgh International Science Festival which sold out.

“Since then, we’ve grown the concept further, broadening our education and community projects to take a holistic approach to exploring arts and sciences and not only focusing on dance, but like the more traditional meaning of a ceilidh, using all forms of traditional arts to bring people together and explore their health, well-being and the science around them”.

www.bluecoatschoolliverpool.org.uk
Joni Chan,
Class of 2016,
Montréal, Canada

“Discussing with my French tutor my year abroad options, I’d already dismissed Paris. As an ethnically-Chinese UK citizen, I wanted a more multi-culturally-integrated city whose ethnic minorities were not peripheral and where I could truly feel at home.

I think I’ve found it. Montréal is the world’s second-largest French-speaking city, after Paris, yet feels as cosmopolitan as New York, as well-integrated as London, and as friendly as Liverpool. In this bilingual Canadian city, baristas and shop assistants will greet you with ‘Bonjour! In Montréal it’s so easy to feel like a Francophone local. Most satisfying was watching the World Cup final between France and Croatia in the fan-park, joining in with French football chants and sharing their joy when France won.

Aspiring to a Foreign Office career, I am studying International Relations at McGill University (often ranked number one in Canada) as a visiting student. This gives an international dimension to my Oxford Modern Languages degree. I’m also enjoying many cultural events and festivals (within an hour of arrival I stumbled into Montréal International Jazz Festival).

I can’t wait to show my friends and family the city. This is the beauty of studying languages, it opens up the gateway to a world of opportunity.”

Sam Rigby,
Class of 2011,
Mumbai, India

After leaving Blue Coat in 2011 and graduating from Nottingham and St Andrews, Sam moved to Mumbai as part of a bilateral UK-India exchange scheme. He quickly became enamoured with the country and the economic transformation taking place around him, so sought to engage meaningfully with the world’s fastest-growing developing economy.

Sam took a job with a leading Indian investment bank where he works as an Equity Sales Trader, acting as a touch point for international investment banks, mutual funds and hedge funds as they seek to invest money in India. Day-to-day Sam speaks with international traders and portfolio managers and helps them to take positions in Indian markets.

Drew Marsh,
Class of 2008,
New York, USA

“The last ten years have truly flown by. I can hardly believe I’m about to write about what I’ve been up to over the last decade and it begins after Blue Coat!

I studied Mathematics at Durham University and decided to stay an extra year and complete my Masters. I actually began on the Economics and Mathematics course, but quickly realised that I was only really studying Economics because I thought I had to “to get a good job”. After a few weeks I switched to a full Mathematics degree and never looked back.

I started to find the idea of working in Finance quite exciting and, with a little good fortune, I landed an internship in Sales and Trading at Credit Suisse in 2011. Trading was exciting, loud, fast-paced, challenging: I loved it. Thankfully, the internship led to a full-time trading role in London.

Four years later, with my ear to the ground, I came across a trading role in our New York office and jumped at the opportunity. I’ve now been here two years and loving it: imagine London, but bigger, louder and faster! When I take stock, it’s quite incredible how much things have changed since I left Blue Coat, and yet I still feel as connected as ever to our little slice of Wavertree.

It doesn’t matter what happens after you leave; ten years, twenty years, fifty years can go by, you’re an Old Blue for life!”

LEE WARD,
BACK FROM BRAZIL

As if flying down to Liverpool from Brazil to take the post of Director of Music at the Anglican Cathedral wasn’t enough, Old Blue Lee Ward from the Class of 1983, was soon looking for another musically mind-bending project.

Luckily he found it in Blue Coat For All, the project to restore the School’s Father Willis pipe organ as this amazing, rare 1874-built instrument inspired him to start organ lessons. He said: “I was so fortunate to get this wonderful grounding at such an impressionable age.”

Lee recalls: “From Year 1, I was enthralled by Shirley Hall’s elegance and its fine Willis organ. Assemblies included organ music played by the Director of Music Mr Pinder, or a pupil, Timothy Harvey (now Director of Music, King’s School Chester), who remains a good friend and colleague.

I was determined to learn the organ and delighted when James Pinder agreed to teach me. Having two organs at the School meant plenty of opportunity to practice and this helped my lessons with Professor Ian Tracey at Liverpool Cathedral and in classes with Director of Music David Houlder.”

After becoming Chester Cathedral assistant organist aged 18, he studied at the Royal College of Music, University of London and St Paul’s Cathedral. After 16 years as The London Oratory School Director of Music and its world famous boys’ choir, in 2012 he moved to Brazil as Director of Music at St Paul’s School, Sao Paulo. He said: “With a population of 21 million, Sao Paulo is an extraordinarily vast place with such vibrancy and it’s also a very musical place.

“One of my students was Mick Jagger’s son Lucas and Mick opened our new Music Department, giving a very inspiring speech about the value of music. I was also organist accompanying the monks at Sao Paulo’s Basilica Of Our Lady.”

He became Liverpool Cathedral Director of Music a year ago and said: “I’d intended staying in Brazil, however when the job came up, I decided to take this last chance, not believing I’d be appointed. It’s a job I dreamt of since I was a boy!”

Revisiting Blue Coat School after returning from Brazil, he said: “The sound of the Shirley Hall’s Willis organ still resonates and I remember its wonderful tone. It is historically important and aesthetically deserving of restoration for such a wonderful school.”
This year the NHS, one of the nation’s most loved institutions, celebrated its 70th anniversary. Here’s just a snap shot of some of our Old Blues working across the country providing care to thousands of NHS patients.

Dr Georgina Hunt, Class of 2012

“After leaving Blue Coat I went to the University of Sheffield to embark on my medical degree. Five years later I am back in Liverpool and working as a Junior Doctor in the Royal Liverpool Hospital. During my first year as a doctor I have worked in different specialties including cardiology, colorectal surgery and urology. My day to day life is busy and challenging but also rewarding knowing that I have had a positive impact on people’s lives in my local community. Within the next 5 years I hope to become a GP and would love to stay based in Liverpool.”

Dr Andrew Drakeley, Class of 1989

Andrew is the Clinical Director of the Hewitt Fertility Centre, part of the Liverpool Women’s NHS Foundation Trust. The IVF unit is one of the largest in the UK, creating around 1000 babies per year. In 2018, the world’s first IVF baby turned 40. To celebrate this the clinic held a party, inviting over 500 former patients and children (ranging from aged 28 to novel born) to a special event. Andrew was appointed as a substantive Consultant Gynaecologist at the Liverpool Women’s in 2005.

Dr Matthew Mak, Class of 2002

“The Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust provides a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service, responding to patients who have suffered trauma or serious medical emergencies. I am one of a number of doctors who have had the opportunity to be seconded from the NHS to work for this fantastic organisation. As a service, we operate 24 hours a day, ensuring we can be there for the most critically ill and injured people in the region covering 3,500 miles. Following critical care interventions, we can airlift patients directly to the hospital. Around half of the patients we treat are taken to regional major trauma centres in London or Brighton.

I feel incredibly honoured to have the opportunity to work for this innovative and forward thinking organisation. If the Air Ambulance did not exist, many more people would die on the roadside and it would be less heart-warming to see patients and their relatives return to our hangar to say hello when they have recovered from their accidents. It truly is a privilege to be a part of a lifesaving charity that is dedicated to patient care.”

Professor Rod Stables, Class of 1978

Rod is a consultant cardiologist and is the Director of the Cardiac Catheterisation Laboratories at the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital.

Rod has established a leading reputation for practice and research in interventional cardiology. His clinical interests include coronary intervention such as emergency Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention. Rod also established the Clinical Trials and Evaluation Unit at the Royal Brompton Hospital.

Dr Chris Fang, Class of 1991

“If you believe the press, you would be forgiven for thinking that the NHS is in a state of crisis. The NHS is certainly not perfect, but no healthcare system is. Reflecting upon my 21 years of service in the NHS, the longer term trend is much less depressing.

In 2018, patients enjoy much shorter waiting times for diagnostic tests, outpatient appointments and routine surgical procedures. The long waiting lists which were commonplace when I started in are now largely historical. Many new therapies have evolved over the last two decades making treatment less invasive and shortening hospital stays.

Working conditions for doctors have improved steadily over the last two decades. In 1999, I recall being on duty for a total of 120 hours one week when I was a junior doctor in General Surgery.

Whilst one never wants to use the service, seeing the NHS through the eyes of a patient have formed my most humbling and positive experiences of the NHS and all the staff who work within it. It is there when you need it and, importantly, free at the point of delivery.”

Chris is a radiologist specialising in musculoskeletal imaging at Derby’s Royal Hospital.

Class of 2018 Prizegiving Drinks: 
Tuesday 8th January - The Blue Coat School

In keeping with tradition there will be an opportunity for the Class of 2018 to relax and catch up with friends in the Robert Sthry Study Library, formerly known as the Board Room, following this year’s ceremony. There will also be a chance to explore our new East Wing facilities which include the Bryan Blundell Bistro and Old Blues’ Portrait Gallery.

Old Blues’ London event: Thursday 28th February - Champagne Charles, 17 The Arches, Villiers Street, Charing Cross, WC2 6NG

With many Old Blues based in London, we are heading back to the capital in early 2019. We look forward to catching up with our growing London network and highlighting some of Blue Coat’s most recent successes.

Old Blues’ football tournament: 
date TBC - The Blue Coat School

Relive your Blue Coat sporting glory with friends and former classmates on the ‘fields of dreams’ (Lance Lane playing fields) during our first alumni sporting event. Further details to be released in early 2019.

Oxbridge event: November, date TBC - Oxford

Are you an Oxford or Cambridge student or graduate? We will be travelling to Oxford at the start of the Michaelmas term to celebrate and reminisce with our Old Blues over their Blue Coat school days. Watch this space for further details.

LBCOBA News

The Blue Coat School’s connection with Beaumaris, which dates back to the Second World War, continues to this day. Each year a representative from the Association lays a wreath at Beaumaris’ cenotaph on Remembrance Day.

This year, President of the Association, Keith Caulkin, attended the town’s service to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

To receive communications from LBCOBA, including their newsletters, please visit their website www.liverpoololdblues.com

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‘non sibi sed omnibus’
‘not for oneself but for all’

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