OLD COTSWOLDIANS

VOL. 03 | WINTER 2026

COTSWOLD NEWS

Discover the latest school, student and staff news from The Cotswold School.

ALUMNI VOICES

Alumni Voices interview with Richard Whincup

UPCOMING EVENTS

Discover the exciting alumni exclusive events we have lined up for 2026.

Dear **Alumni**,

As we approach the February half term at The Cotswold School, I am delighted to share the latest edition of our alumni newsletter and bring you up to date with some of the recent highlights from across our school community.

This term has already been full of energy, achievement and creativity. We are immensely proud of our Year 13 students who have received offers from Oxford and Cambridge, a wonderful reflection of their dedication and academic ambition and a record in the school's history. Alongside this, our Year 12 and 13 students have achieved strong results in their mock examinations, demonstrating focus and determination as they prepare for the important milestones ahead.

Our community has also celebrated a number of achievements beyond the classroom. The recent production of The Addams Family was a spectacular success, showcasing the talent, commitment and teamwork of our students both on stage and behind the scenes. Across three performances, the cast and crew delivered outstanding entertainment that was enjoyed by all who attended.

Competitive success has also been a highlight this term. Our chess team shone in the second round of the ECF U19 National Schools Chess Championship 2025–2026, securing their place in the national finals in Nottingham.

Looking ahead, we are also pleased to be planning a Summer Alumni vs Students Cricket Match and would love to welcome members of our alumni community back to school to take part. This event will provide a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with fellow former students, revisit familiar grounds and enjoy an afternoon of friendly sporting competition with our current pupils. Alumni of all abilities are welcome to express their interest, and further details will be shared in due course.

We are also excited to see the continued growth of girls' rugby at The Cotswold School and are currently seeking sponsorship to support new team kit for our players. If any members of our alumni community would be interested in supporting this initiative, we would be delighted to hear from you. If you are interested, please email marketing@thecotswoldschool.co.uk.

Thank you for remaining such an important part of The Cotswold School family. We hope this newsletter helps you stay connected with school life and we look forward to sharing more news and welcoming many of you back to future events in the months ahead.

Best wishes,

Will Morgan

Headteacher

Cotswold News

January

Record-Breaking Oxbridge Success

We are delighted to share some exceptional news: seven of our Year 13 students are currently holding offers from Oxford and Cambridge Universities, the highest number in the 38-year history of The Cotswold School.

This outstanding achievement reflects not only the exceptional academic interest, enthusiasm and ability of the students themselves, but also the collective support that surrounds them. Their success is a testament to the dedication and expertise of our teaching staff, the encouragement of families, and the strength of our wider school network. The students and their offers are as follows: Jackson Carter: Biochemistry, University of Oxford; Rafi Lanham: Law, University of Oxford; Emilia Poole: Law, University of Oxford; Elliott Masefield: Ancient & Modern History, University of Oxford; Ruby Aylett: Spanish, University of Oxford; Flo Anthony: English, University of Cambridge; and Jack Puddy: English, University of Cambridge.

In particular, we would like to thank the many alumni and professionals who have generously given their time to support this year's applicants through practice interviews and mentoring. Your guidance has played an instrumental role in helping these students prepare with confidence for one of the most competitive university application processes in the country.

If you would like to support our next cohort of applicants through mentoring or mock interviews, we would love to hear from you.

February

February saw our students bring the school hall to life with a spectacular production of The Addams Family. Across three performances, audiences were treated to an evening of music, mischief and mayhem as the cast and crew delivered a confident, polished and highly entertaining show.

The production showcased not only outstanding performances on stage, but also the creativity, teamwork and dedication of students working behind the scenes on lighting, sound, costume and set design. Months of rehearsals and preparation were rewarded with packed audiences and fantastic feedback from staff, families and friends of the school.

It was a true celebration of talent across the school community and a memorable highlight of the February term.

Alumni Achievements

We're always so proud to hear about the incredible things our former students go on to do after leaving school. From career milestones and academic successes to creative projects and community contributions, our alumni continue to inspire us with their achievements.

In this section, we shine a spotlight on some of the recent accomplishments shared with us - proof that the Cotswold School spirit continues long after leaving!

If you have a story to share, we'd love to hear from you for a future edition.

Katie Rowe

Katie Rowe (Class of 2023) is currently in her third year of a four-year university course, working towards qualifying as a teacher in 2027. Since leaving school, Katie has continued to pursue her passion for rugby, developing her skills and earning the opportunity to train at Twickenham. Alongside her academic studies, she has embraced every opportunity to grow both personally and professionally, and we are delighted to celebrate her achievements beyond the classroom.

Sarah Lippett

Sarah Lippett (Class of 2008) studied at The Cotswold School for both GCSEs and A Levels before taking a gap year and going on to complete a degree in Development and Peace Studies at the University of Bradford. Sarah now works for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a United Nations agency, and has built an international career across the charity and humanitarian sectors. Her experience includes four years with the PDSA, work with an international NGO in Burundi, and roles with the UN since 2022. Having lived and worked across Central and West Africa, Sarah is currently based in Qatar. She has held positions in HR and People Management and now works within the Supply Chain team at IOM. Sarah has kindly offered to share her experiences with the school community should students be interested.

Alumni Achievements

Eliot Binns

Eliot Binns is a business development and partnerships professional currently working at SoGlos, Gloucestershire's leading media brand. He joined SoGlos as Partnerships Manager, where he works with local businesses and organisations to develop media campaigns, grow visibility and build strategic relationships.

Before SoGlos, Eliot held commercial and business development roles with companies including Nike, Gap and Peloton, focusing on partnerships, sales strategy and growth initiatives. His experience spans both global brands and regional businesses, giving him a broad perspective on marketing, audience engagement and commercial growth.

A graduate of the University of Gloucestershire, Eliot is based in Tewkesbury and combines his professional work with an interest in local sport and exploring the Gloucestershire region.

Sam Mitchell

Since leaving The Cotswold School in 2014, Sam has taken an unconventional path that led to owning and running a successful business. After studying Maths, Physics, Economics and Product Design at A level, he chose not to follow the traditional university route, instead gaining experience across a range of companies while travelling and working internationally, from New Zealand to Australia and Southeast Asia. He later returned to take over the family business in antique restoration materials, stepping into leadership just before the COVID lockdown and navigating significant operational challenges.

The business was subsequently rebranded as Restorate, with a renewed focus on becoming a nationwide online destination for high-quality wood finishing and decorating products, while supporting and reviving the antiques industry. The company is now a UK market leader, supplying customers nationwide and exporting globally. Alongside his professional achievements, he continues to race historic cars at venues including Goodwood Motor Circuit, winning the HSCC Formula Ford Championship and being featured in Autosport Magazine as one of the country's leading club drivers.
For more information about Restorate, click on the link.

Alumni Voices: Richard Whincup

From captaining the senior rugby team and serving as Head Boy in the early 1990s to now lecturing in Sport and Business and standing proudly as Town Sergeant and Town Crier of Tewkesbury, Richard Whincup (Class of 1991) has carved out a life defined by resilience, service and community. His time at The Cotswold School not only shaped his values and lifelong friendships, but also led him to meet his future wife, a Year 7 classmate who would later become his partner of nearly 27 years and wife of 22.

Richard's path, however, was far from straightforward. Living with a significant stammer throughout his school years, and later facing A-level results that did not go to plan, he could easily have allowed setbacks to dictate his future. Instead, with the support of compassionate teachers and a determination to confront challenges head-on, he took what he describes as the "scenic route", progressing from college to university and ultimately into a career built around communication and leadership.

In the interview that follows, Richard reflects candidly on overcoming self-doubt, the power of empathy in education, the value of alternative pathways, and why sometimes the bravest thing you can do is simply "front up" to the challenge.

Tell us about your time at The Cotswold School. What stands out most?

I started in September 1991 and have only very positive memories. I made a lot of good friends – many of whom I'm still close to now. I played rugby and captained the senior team for a couple of years.

I also started karate in Year 8 with Mr Loud, our French teacher, and continued all the way through to Sixth Form, earning my black belt.

But perhaps the most important part of my school story is that I met my wife here. We were in the same year from Year 7, in the same classes and learning groups. I eventually plucked up the courage to ask her out between Lower and Upper Sixth, and we've now been together for nearly 27 years, married for 22 this May.

We managed long distance through university, she was in Birmingham while I studied in Solihull and later London, but we made it work. Looking back, that's a pretty special legacy from school.

You were Head Boy, but you've openly spoken about struggling with a stammer. How did that shape your experience?

Growing up with a stammer wasn't easy. It was very chronic at the time. But the school supported me brilliantly. They gave me extra time in oral exams and were compassionate and understanding.

Being Head Boy with a stammer was always going to be a challenge. I gave a couple of fairly dodgy speeches, and on one occasion my deputy had to do the vote of thanks because I just couldn't.

Years later, though, I was invited back to give the Speech Day address. That felt like closing the circle. It meant a lot.

What happened after you left school?

My A-levels didn't go to plan, in fact, I failed them. As far as I know, I might be the only Head Boy in the school's history to have done that!

That's probably important for young people to hear: sometimes things don't go the way you want them to. You have to take the scenic route.

I went to Solihull College to study for an HND in Sport Science and Health. For the first time, I was studying something I was passionate about, I excelled. That led to a place at Brunel University, where I went straight into the second year.

On A-level results day, I never would have believed I'd end up with a degree. But life doesn't always move in straight lines.

If you were leaving school now, do you think you'd make the same choices?

It's a different time. I work within a university now, but I don't think university is the only route anymore.

If someone had offered me an apprenticeship on results day, I probably would have taken it. I might have learned a trade. But those sliding door moments shape you.

Even with my stammer, I eventually joined a speech programme that helped enormously. Who knows what might have happened? I had a brilliant time at university, but it's interesting to reflect on how different it might have been.

Alumni Voices: Richard Whincup

What advice would you give to students who are struggling whether with a stammer or something else?

It can feel incredibly difficult at times, like there's no hope. But there is always hope. There are always people willing to help.

Surround yourself with good people – people who are on your side and who will fight for you a bit. Be brave, there is help out there, but you may need to step outside your comfort zone to find it.

All of the jobs I've had involve speaking. I could have chosen something where I didn't have to talk much, but that's not the route I've taken.

You can't bury your head in the sand. To use a rugby analogy – you've got to front up to it and stare it down.

What are you doing now?

I'm a university lecturer in Sport and Business, which means no two days are ever quite the same. Some days are spent teaching and working with students in seminars, while other days involve planning, research or supporting students one-to-one. I really enjoy being part of that environment and helping young people develop confidence, direction and ambition, particularly knowing that my own journey was not entirely straightforward.

Alongside lecturing, I still coach rugby at Stow-on-the-Wold, which keeps me connected to the sport that has been such a big part of my life. I also do stadium announcing at Hartpury, which is great fun and another opportunity to challenge myself in a very public way.

I sometimes work as Town Crier and Town Sergeant for Tewkesbury, a role steeped in history and tradition and something I am incredibly proud of. For me, stepping into that position felt like the next stage in my speech journey. Years ago, public speaking felt like the biggest obstacle in my life. Now, I stand in front of crowds and project my voice with confidence. That feels quite special.

I am very busy, but it is a good kind of busy. I feel fortunate that the different roles I hold all reflect parts of who I am: sport, education, community and communication.

Looking back, what values from The Cotswold School have stayed with you?

Compassion and empathy are the two things that have stayed with me most strongly.

The teachers at The Cotswold School could easily have treated me exactly the same as everyone else in oral exams and classroom situations. They could have insisted that I stand up and read in the same time frame as everyone else or complete speaking assessments without any adjustment. But they did not. They recognised that fairness is not always about treating everyone identically, and they gave me the support and understanding I needed to flourish. That made an enormous difference to my confidence.

That experience has shaped the way I work as an educator today. I am very aware that every student carries something with them, whether it is visible or not. Because of my own journey, I try to create learning environments where students feel supported, heard and able to reach their potential, regardless of the challenges they may be facing. A small act of understanding from a teacher can have a lifelong impact.

Looking back, I feel incredibly lucky to have attended The Cotswold School. It suited me, it supported me, and it helped me become the person I am today.

Upcoming Alumni Events

Alumni vs Students Cricket Match - Summer 2026

We are pleased to be planning a Summer Alumni vs Students Cricket Match and warmly invite members of our alumni community to take part in this special event.

The match will provide an opportunity to return to The Cotswold School, reconnect with fellow former students and enjoy an afternoon of friendly sporting competition with our current pupils. It promises to be a celebration of school spirit, community and shared memories, both on and off the pitch.

Players of all abilities are welcome to express their interest, whether you previously represented the school or simply enjoy the game.

Further details, including the date and format of the match, will be shared shortly. If you would like to attend, please register via the link below as soon as possible, as we need numbers to ensure the event is viable and enjoyable for all attendees. Feel free to share this invitation with fellow alumni - we would love to see as many familiar faces as possible!

RSVP Here

The Cotswold School is Turning 40!

The Cotswold School will mark a significant milestone in 2028 as it celebrates its 40th anniversary.

As the school approaches this landmark year, plans are beginning to take shape to recognise its history, achievements and the strong sense of community that has defined The Cotswold School over the past four decades.

To support this work, the school is establishing a Fundraising and Celebration Committee. The committee will help shape anniversary events, gather ideas and perspectives from across the school community, and support fundraising initiatives in the lead-up to 2028. The first meeting of the committee will be held on Tuesday 3rd March at 5pm.

The school is keen to involve alumni and members of the wider community with a range of skills and experiences. Those with expertise in fundraising, event planning or community engagement are particularly encouraged to take part, although enthusiasm and a willingness to contribute time and ideas are equally welcome.
Anyone interested in finding out more, or supporting the anniversary celebrations in other ways, is invited to contact the school at admin@thecotswoldschool.co.uk.

Further details about the anniversary programme will be shared as plans develop, and the school looks forward to working with past and present members of its community to make the 40th anniversary a memorable and meaningful celebration for all.

Get In Touch

We love hearing from our alumni! Whether you've started a new job, launched a business, travelled the world, or simply want to share a fond memory from your time at The Cotswold School - we'd love to feature your story in a future newsletter.

Please get in touch with any updates, photos, or milestones you'd like to share. You can email Grace Dembowicz at **marketing@thecotswoldschool.co.uk**

Your stories inspire our current students and help keep our alumni community connected!

Reunion - Register Your Interest

We're excited to be planning an alumni reunion for this summer - a chance to reconnect with old friends, reminisce about your time at The Cotswold School, and see how the school has grown.

If you'd like to be kept in the loop or are interested in attending, please register your interest by completing the form linked below. We'd love to hear from you!

Keep an eye out for more details in the coming months.

Register Here

Become An Alumni Ambassador

We're looking for former students to join us as Alumni Ambassadors - helping us grow and strengthen The Cotswold School alumni network.

Whether you'd like to support with reunion planning, share your career journey to inspire current students, or simply help spread the word about our growing community, we'd love to have you involved. It's a great way to stay connected, give back, and be part of something that continues to make a difference.

If you're interested in becoming an Alumni Ambassador, please get in touch with Grace Dembowicz at **marketing@thecotswoldschool.co.uk** - we'd love to hear from you!