

Mrs Rosemary Stewart

It was with deep sadness that we learnt of the death of our former colleague and friend Mrs Rosemary Stewart on 8 August 2022.

Rosemary is fondly remembered by generations of High School pupils both in her capacity as a brilliant Biology Teacher and also as someone who was passionate about the welfare of her pupils. Rosemary had an innate understanding of the complex and often difficult issues that underpinned both academic performance and more importantly affected children and young people's ability to thrive. These combined skills, alongside Rosemary's fierce belief that gender should be no limitation to opportunity, made her an obvious choice to lead the newly formed Biology Department from its inception. Rosemary was appointed 'Headmaster' of Biology a mere three years after embarking on her teaching career, having come later to teaching following time in industry.

A little-known fact about Rosemary Stewart was that she pursued her career, balancing family life with study and earning an income. While her children were young, Rosemary attended college to gain Higher qualifications which today would have secured entry to all the most competitive courses.

In the late 1960s, Rosemary encountered much resistance as a result of her gender and only as a result of her tenacity and determination, did she secure a place to study Biochemistry at the University of St Andrews. It is a testament to Rosemary's intellect, focus and organisation that she graduated with an Honours degree in 1975, whilst raising her two young children with her husband, Bob. Within a year Rosemary had completed her teacher training at Dundee College of Education and the High School was lucky to appoint her to her first teaching post.

Taking on the leadership of the Biology department in 1979, she was instrumental in putting the discrete study of Biology 'on the map'. Rosemary was more than a match for her male counterparts, advocating for the underdog, devoting herself to encouraging girls to pursue science and giving of her time to engage with her pupils on a human level. Although we regard this as part and parcel of the role of a teacher in 2022, Rosemary was radical in the emphasis that she placed on this vital element. She believed that success comes from nurturing, supporting and challenging young people to believe in themselves.

Little wonder then, that in 1987, Rosemary was appointed Assistant Rector with responsibility for 'Personal and Careers Guidance'. In this role, Rosemary set down and built the framework which was to become the blueprint for pastoral support in the school. She was uniquely qualified to do this basing her approach on a view that values should be lived and that there was an onus on all teachers to demonstrate the values which they wished to nurture in their pupils. This is a philosophy with which, many of us, as young teachers at DHS in the early 1990s, were imbued. We grew to understand by listening to Rosemary speak and lead and by reading her superb UCAS references in support of all High School girls applying to university (GC Stewart, Deputy Rector, wrote all the boys' references!) that understanding the environment around a child was critical to unlocking their potential, both at school and in the world beyond.

Rosemary also managed to find time to contribute to the wider life of the school in several areas. Passionate about a number of charitable causes she gave her time and energies to championing many of these personally and professionally. Rosemary was also very much 'up for' adventure and challenge. She participated in several foreign school trips, most notably being part of the High School's incredible and historic trip on the SS Uganda twice!

Personally, and professionally so many of the High School Family owe Rosemary Stewart a huge debt of gratitude for being such a passionate and, at times, fierce proponent of the importance of down to earth advice and guidance, the application of kindness over everything and the power of simply being interested in others and their development and success.

Inherent in everything that Rosemary did, was the constant that her family (and her daughters in particular) came first. This was central in encouraging a generation of girls and women to believe that they had a right to 'have it all.' A direct and positive result of Rosemary's influence was that this very phrase was used about me as I applied and was successful in securing a PT Guidance position in the new Guidance Team which was formed immediately following Rosemary's retirement in 1999.

These features are now fundamental to the High School in 2022 and this is in large part Rosemary's great legacy. I hope she would be very proud that in 2022, the High School has a female Rector, Deputy Rectors, Bursar, Director of ICT, Head of External Relations and that 10 of our 25 Heads of Department and Principal and Assistant Principal Teachers of Guidance are women! Alongside the countless young lives that she influenced positively, this radical change in the representation of women in leadership roles at the High School is Rosemary's lasting legacy to the school. More importantly, our Integrated Curriculum recognises the central importance of exceptional Pastoral Care to success.

Rosemary retired from teaching and the High School in April 1999. At the time the Rector, Mike Duncan, wrote the following tribute to Rosemary in the School Review. I include it here in full.

"Countless pupils have reason to be grateful for her down to earth advice and sympathetic understanding. She has been unstinting in giving of her time to pupils and their families, particularly at moments of difficulty for the pupil. Professionalism, attention to detail and expecting the highest standards in herself and others have marked her many years' service to the school. "

Our deepest condolences go to Rosemary's daughters, Fiona and Moira, and to all those who were former colleagues and friends. Rosemary will be sadly missed but remembered with great affection, respect and warmth.

Lise Hudson, Rector