

Mike Baker Memorial Fund Spring 2016 Newsletter

Scholars take on *The Media Challenge*

Earlier this year, the Mike Baker Memorial Fund supported a three-day media course for Year 12 Scholars from Swindon and Hastings & Bexhill. Divided into small teams, Scholars were given the challenge of imagining they had just started working for a media company who were pitching an idea to mobile phone provider, O2, for an exciting, new digital platform based around social media.

Each team member was designated a role in preparing the digital platform including editor, content writer, website developer or art designer. By coming up with an original concept and preparing to present it, the Scholars developed a number of skills including teamwork, research and communication which were used when conducting interviews with members of the public in Cambridge about their opinions of social media.

The course was led by journalist and press consultant Marina Gask, who had the difficult decision of judging the pitches and choosing a winner. Pitches varied from a social media site created exclusively for a university campus to an informative website encouraging the older generation to use social media.

The Scholars thoroughly enjoyed the challenge and it significantly impacted their understanding of different types of media and their relevance and application in society.



"The journalism course was a new experience for me. I have never interviewed people before, and if it weren't for Villiers, I probably would never have even considered doing it. Even though I didn't have an interest in journalism beforehand, I found the course surprisingly evocative and engaging".

"I most enjoyed the challenge. I liked being challenged and stepping outside my comfort zone".



The Secretary of State for Education visits 'inspirational' Swindon Scholars



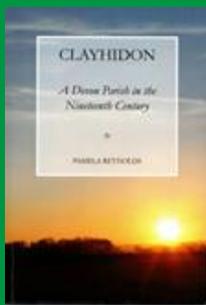
The Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP, and Heidi Allen MP have visited Year 13 Swindon Scholars at Villiers Park to find out what impact the Scholars Programme is having on them.

The visit took place during the Scholars' residential course as they come to the end of their fourth year on the Scholars Programme.

During the visit students had the opportunity to speak informally with the Education Secretary. One Scholar said, "Nicky Morgan was interested to know how the Scholars Programme has helped me. We spoke about what I've got out of it, how it's helped me with the process of applying to university and what the wider effect of the programme is on my school".

The Scholars left a lasting impression on the Education Secretary who tweeted, "Thank you for hosting - very inspirational & lovely to meet all the students". While Heidi Allen reaffirmed her support for Villiers Park, "I am so proud of the work you do, delighted to show you off!"

Nicky Morgan's visit was an opportunity to demonstrate the success of the Scholars Programme and, following the visit, Villiers Park's achievements have been cited in the Education White Paper.



'Clayhidon – a Devon Parish in the Nineteenth Century' tells the history of the people of the Devon village 200 years ago. The book, launched last November, is written by Pamela Reynolds and is dedicated to Mike Baker whose family roots are based near Clayhidon.

The book is a tale of human history and we learn about the parish through the lives and adventures of its past residents including farmers, butchers and shoemakers. We discover that Clayhidon has had a lively past but has seen many tragedies including murders, robberies and poverty. We also hear how issues such as education, transportation and farming were approached in the village.

Mike Baker inspired and encouraged the project, Pamela says, "It was because of Mike that I wrote the book about this parish of Clayhidon. He was the one who suggested it and when I claimed that I could not do it, not having the knowledge, it was he who calmly encouraged me and started me on the way. So he was having an influence not just on youngsters but on someone older than himself".

Thank you to Pamela who has generously decided to donate proceeds from the book to the Mike Baker Memorial Fund.

Would you like to fundraise for the Mike Baker Memorial Fund? If so, we would love to hear from you. You can request a fundraising pack full of ideas by contacting the Development Office development@villierspark.org.uk or 01223 872601.

Aspiring journalist Roisin shares her Villiers Park story

Scholar Alumna **Roisin McCormack** joined the Hastings and Bexhill Scholars Programme in Year 12 in 2012 while studying at Sussex Coast College Hastings. She is now studying English Literature at the University of Sussex and below we hear how Villiers Park is helping her on her journey into journalism.



Roisin on the Active Journalism course

Roisin explains why a career in journalism appeals to her

"I've always wanted to pursue a career in writing and in the last few years I've started seriously thinking about journalism, particularly fashion journalism as this would combine two things that I love. There have been times when I have been put off journalism and thought about pursuing a career in a less competitive and hardened industry, but I always return to this one idea and get excited at the thought of a job in fashion journalism, which makes me think it's worth trying my very best.

"The thing that most appeals to me is the opportunity to meet such a variety of people, to discuss and share my opinions on a wide range of current issues, and to be caught up in a fast-paced and exciting environment".

Roisin tells us what impact Villiers Park has made

"The Active Journalism course that I attended in Year 12 [funded by the Mike Baker Memorial Fund] taught me the basics of journalism which ultimately made me realise that it was something I could be good at and could do. It also informed me of the different routes into journalism that don't necessarily require a lot of money.

"The Scholars Programme as a whole had a hugely positive impact on my education and development as a person. My attendance at the fantastic 'Exploring Shakespeare' five-day residential confirmed that I wanted to do an English Literature degree, as the university style seminars and lectures fascinated me. The sessions with my Learning Mentor made my college experience less stressful and more enjoyable.

"The Trust continues to help and motivate me by offering me a Career Mentor. Speaking to my mentor Ellie (Deputy Editor at Fabulous Magazine) has been incredibly helpful. She has been very honest about the positive and negative sides of entering a career in journalism and inspired me with stories of all the wonderful things she has done during her career. By speaking to someone in the industry, I know now that my career goal is attainable but that it will take a lot of hard work and drive".

Roisin is looking forward to the future

"This summer I have secured a two-week internship on the features desk at 'Fabulous Magazine', which I am really looking forward to. Once I have finished my degree I plan to undertake a Masters in journalism. My ultimate goal is to write for a fashion magazine while my short term goal is to attain as many other internships as possible and do well in my degree!"