

## Remembering Mr Riches – Hon Alumna and Teacher of Chemistry (1990-2003)



*'A totally charming man, with a wicked sense of humour and a keen eye for the ridiculous'*

Mr Riches taught me chemistry GCSE from 1990-1992. I was not a fan of science by any means and Mr Riches took my disinterest with good humour, choosing to focus instead on my chatty personality and engaging with me that way. He was good fun - open, honest and able to talk to us on a human level. I'll always remember that at the end of our GCSE year, I said to him: "Mr Riches, if somebody put a gun to my head and made me choose a science A-level, I'd choose chemistry."

He replied, in his typical deadpan manner: "Thanks very much, Louise. That means a lot."

Rest in peace, Mr Riches, you'll be missed.

Louise Bloomfield (nee Scodie)

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To The Family of Mr. Riches

I was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of dearest Mr. Riches. He was an inspiration to me in so many ways and taught me so much about myself, life in general as well as Chemistry. His passion for his subject rubbed off on me and inspired me to take Chemistry A-Level. He encouraged me repeatedly & made me believe in myself when I was ready to give up & helped me to achieve an A\*. He will be sorely missed as a human being on this earth. He was truly one of a kind...

Pls accept my sincerest condolences & may his soul RIP.

Warm regards

Anoushka Hirdaramani (nee Kapur, SHHS 1994)

For the family of Mr Riches:

I am very sorry to read of Mr Riches' death. He was my form tutor for sixth form and also my GCSE chemistry teacher in the mid 90s. He managed to reign over a gaggle of over enthusiastic students with an impressive calm and we genuinely respected and appreciated him. He was funny and insightful, human and professional, and I still fondly remember our lessons with him in the chemistry lab. My condolences for your loss.

Sincerely,  
Kim Laidlaw.

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Dear Family of Mr Riches,

My condolences for your loss.

I remember Mr Riches so fondly. His twinkle - rye sense of humour, irony and a slight sense of chaos permeating his lessons made them fun and alive. I felt he had respect for us as individuals - he noted our passions (whether they were chemistry or not) and recognised who we were.

I'm really grateful for his teaching. I'm thinking of you during this difficult time.

Best wishes,  
Louise Simpson (class of 2005)

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To the family of Lystra Riches,

My deepest condolences. I was at Shhs from 1993-2000 and was taught for many years by "Mr Riches", including for A-level. He was absolutely wonderful - inspiring, kind, hilarious and wise. His love of teaching was clear to see and he encouraged us to think big, think outside the box and not to be so neurotic! He treated us with the utmost respect (with just the right amount of heckling!) and had great faith in us and we felt it. I am so grateful for his teaching and have never forgotten him.

With all best wishes,

Samantha Shulman (nee West)

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To the family of Mr Riches,

I was so sorry to hear of his passing. I remember him fondly, despite leaving SHHS almost 30 years ago - he was just one of those teachers whose memory stays with you. I remember him as being funny and engaging.

I hope that the knowledge that he was fondly remembered brings you comfort at this time.

All best wishes,

Leyla Montakhab

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I am so very sorry to hear of the passing of Mr Riches. I remember him tremendously fondly, even though I was hopeless at Chemistry. He had the most amazing ties, smelt deliciously of Gauloises cigarettes and was kind and funny and made what was to me a very tricky subject slightly less scary.

Imogen Slaughter

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I am so so sad to hear about Mr Riches. He was my chemistry teacher and my form tutor in the 6th form - a long time ago now - I left in 1994 but Mr Riches was a teacher who really made an impact on us all. He was a really excellent teacher, I thoroughly enjoyed his lessons and the subject because of his lessons. I remember that shortly after he'd started at school, he had parents' evening and he told us that he'd written our names next to photos of us so that he could remember who he was talking about when our parents came in - we found that quite funny.

He was incredibly kind, supportive, calming, laid-back, modest and he had a great sense of humour, he'd take the mickey out of us sometimes and didn't take himself too seriously. I remember him very fondly and how helpful he was as a form tutor when we were sitting our A levels.

He will be remembered by so many students as a special teacher and individual.

I send my deepest condolences to his family. He will be very much missed.

All the best,  
Lisa Bayfield

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In the 90s Mr Riches was the coolest teacher! So funny and bright, and treated us all like individuals, with respect and good humour. I've thought of him often since leaving school.

Melissa Katsoulis

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To the family of Lystra Riches,

I am sending my condolences to you. Mr Riches taught me in the 90s, and strangely, he came into my mind just five days ago. I mentioned him to my children (11 and 7) as something he used to say all the time came to mind and made me smile. He asked (begged?) us to always be 'SHORT, SHARP and TO THE POINT'. How fabulous...I remember it still and it was such good advice.

With warmest wishes,

Annabel Fraser

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Very sorry to hear of Lystra's passing. I was on the staff at South Hampstead from 1988 to 1991, so Lystra and I only 'overlapped' for a year, but I remember him well as a popular teacher and a very pleasant staff-room colleague. My condolences to his family.

Margaret Skinner

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Dear family of Lystra,

I left SHHS in 2006, and have such fond memories of Mr Riches. He was endlessly kind, caring and full of fun. His lessons were also a scream, and somehow amidst the hooting laughter, we learnt a lot from him too. How did he do it?! One of the funniest memories was the day he was tasked with year 7 sex education.... I'll say no more!

Mr Riches was unanimously popular, and I'll always remember him smiling away in his corduroy blazer. I wish you all well, and hope the funeral goes well - I'm so sorry I'm unable to make it but will be thinking of him that day.

With warmest wishes,

Louisa (Shovel)

(I'm now an anaesthetic doctor, such was the love of science that Mr Riches instilled in me!)

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I knew Lystra really well and taught with him for many years, in the adjacent department of Biology: we both worked under Dorothy Walgate as Head of Science.

He was a totally charming man, with a wicked sense of humour and a keen eye for the ridiculous. He was scathing about notions of education that didn't put the student at the centre of concern or that were too theoretical. He had an amazing rapport with the students who enjoyed his lessons and laughed heartedly at his jokes and irony which illuminated his lessons. He was a brilliant chemist with the patience to explain things in detail to this biologist! My husband Mike sold him a black Mercedes and they enjoyed chatting about its performance! (It was an old car!). We met up out of school occasionally and enjoyed his company very much.

He used to tease me about having lived in a commune but it was in fact a Housing Cooperative. He also used to claim that climate change wasn't happening or that smoking was good for you just to wind me up. It always worked! But I knew he was a loving and kind man: a complex and interesting man and a great teacher. Mike and I will both miss him so much.

Best wishes

Jenny Spurgeon (Hon Alumnae)

Comments from former pupils on Facebook:

*Oh this is sad news indeed. I imagine he and MC (Margaret Cullen) are right now sharing a drink and a dry joke at the great North Star in the sky. Thank you for letting us know.*

*I just taught my son what he taught me about air molecules being stacked up on top of each other. I'm very sorry to hear this, he was quite a character, and teacher. Xx*

*Oh how sad. I remember him taking us on a tennis trip. Had such a brilliant time! All love xxx*

*What sad news - thank you for letting us know. He was a brilliant 6th form tutor too. I'm not sure that we ever did what we were meant to be doing in form time - but I learnt so much from him as a result of lively and irreverent debates.*

*Such sad news. I loved him so much I even considered, for a fleeting moment, doing a level chemistry! And I have a vivid memory in younger years when I got into a funny habit of slapping my friends (gently) as a joke. We were so relaxed and friendly with him that during a chemistry experiment I*

slapped his face 🤔. We looked at each other for a long moment, a little shocked, and he said "ooh I could have you expelled for that". Glad he didn't! Can so imagine him and MC up there by a heavenly version of the corner of Maresfield garden having a smoke xx

So very sad. I loved his maverick spirit - wonderful memories of him chasing me round the lab with a board rubber, in mock fury at my insolence. I don't believe he ever taught me anything about chemistry, but I learned a lot from him about politics, and the importance of independent thought, integrity, irreverence and curiosity.

He was one of my favourite people at SHHS. Really supportive and made me realise that you could science, chill and funny at the same time. I made the very ill- advised decision to take Chemistry A level just because I liked being around him and loved his classes.

I went through a phase of biroring vines around people's ankles and I remember during one class he spotted my apparent sudden disappearance, ambled to the back and bent down to find me cross legged beneath the bench doodling on, I think it was, X's leg. We stared at each other, his eyes slipped down to my blotchily blue attempt at body art, he then unfurled upwards and discreetly left us to it. He was the coolest and I'm really lucky to have had him feature in my back in the day cast of 'adults making the world ok'. ❤️🔪🖋️💡❤️ Bye Mr. Riches.

He was the reason I did Chemistry A-Level. I remember him noticing that I'd made up every single one of my results rather than doing the experiments, and merely pointed out that some variance would be more "realistic" than a totally perfect set of results. Never told me to do the actual work. Also that he accepted page and paragraph numbers as answers to tests if you were feeling like a smart arse. Such a kind, funny and compassionate human. I'm sorry he has gone.

I still hear his voice in my head every time I spell separate (him disgustedly saying "sep- e-rate"). Literally every time 😞

So sad to hear this. Mr Riches was an institution and the sole reason I passed GCSE Chemistry. My everlasting memories will be his black velvet jacket sleeves, encrusted with board chalk in the almost (according to Sara's post) constant absence of a board rubber and mock-clouting over the head with a box file when we 'pretended' to misunderstand something. When I joked that I was going to choose Chemistry at A level choices evening he took me seriously and 'pretended' not to understand why I was laughing. A fabulous teacher X

Sad news made sweeter by being shared and seeing so many nice messages.

I was never actually taught by Mr Riches, but somehow just thinking about him makes me feel calm. May he rest in peace

Vivid memory of cigarette stained hand also shaped for playing Spanish guitar music- what a frank and nice man, I have a sketch of him made in class somewhere