

## Anne Laing biography

This tribute to a much-loved and inspirational teacher comprises her timeline, classroom and School Treasurer experiences, a splendid tribute from 'Jam Boy' – Fraser Doherty MBE, and a few photo memories.

Anne was born and brought up in Edinburgh, living in the Bellevue area, attending James Gillespie's High School, where she particularly remembers Miss Napier. Miss Napier was my dad's sister (Depute Head and Head of Maths at JGHS) I graduated from Heriot Watt in 1964 and attended Moray House for my secondary teacher's qualification in the following year.

She left in her fifth form, starting her working life at the Inland Revenue, but soon started a Business Studies Course at Heriot Watt, graduating in 1979. She returned to Heriot Watt University in 1977 for a year's study to convert her Diploma to a BA in Business Organisation. She decided teaching was to be her vocation, and undertook the required one-year Moray House college qualification. Her first teaching post was at Leith Academy in 1964, where at the age of 26 she was one of the youngest Heads of Department in Edinburgh.

In 1971, she started her family, marking a hiatus in her teaching career, but she returned in the late 1970's, when she was on the 'lists' at Craigmount and Trinity. In 1980, she started her long connection with the RHS, when on visiting the school for what she assumed to be an interview, she found that the Alan Campbell, then head of Department had already pencilled her in the timetable, so that was that! She retired in 2005, and the Annual Report that year particularly thanks her for work as School Treasurer.

### Anne's classroom experiences.

1. Sixth form 'Wear what you want' day. Anne liked Elvis Presley, and the class knew that. One pupil turned up wearing a hired Elvis impersonators kit, just to please Anne. He later went to work his usual shift at Lauriston Farm, making loads of extra tips for charity from the customers.
2. When son Alan was in the second year, one day Anne was shouting at his noisy classmates to keep the racket down in the corridor. One pupil said "who's that old bat?" to which Alan replied – "that's my Mum". I met the same boy the following week (I was only seeing that class one day per week at the time), and said, with a broad smile, "I'm the old bat!" I wanted to show that I had a sense of humour.
3. One year, after the summer holidays, I was surprised to find that twenty Amstrad computers has surprisingly been delivered. There were large instruction booklets, but no other assistance. Like my other colleagues, I had no idea what I was doing, and informed my third-year class of this situation, but thankfully, between us we got them working. It was the early 1980's, in the infancy of personal computing. We were given one BBC computer, again with insufficient instructions, one IBM golf ball typewriter, and one Olivetti word processor. Thin pickings. I understand that all pupils now have iPads.
4. I was teaching a small third year class, nearly all boys, none of whom were even vaguely interested in Business Studies, and as I went to sit down at the front, I nearly missed the chair and only just retained my composure. With the back of the classroom being all windowed, I laughed and suggested to the class that they would probably have been pleased to see me catapult and disappear out of the window at the back of the class.

### School Treasurer

Having been school treasurer while in post as PT Business Studies at Leith Academy, when asked to take on this voluntary post for the RHS, I agreed! As I was to find out, the accounts at Royal High are different from other schools. This was due to the historical significance of the school and involved the personal management of many accounts. These included

1. Funds raised from various activities each year,
2. Allocation of money for prizes awarded each year,
  1. Royal High School Former Pupil Trust Fund which was invested to benefit the school.
  2. Added to the above were further funds which required the involvement of others. These included
  3. RHS 'Colours' part-payment for badges
  4. The Endowment Fund which was managed according to the Endowment Trust rules. The monies received was then allocated by a committee involving Councilors, RHS Former Pupils and the cheque from the Investment Department at Edinburgh City Council was sent to the school for allocation by the School Treasurer and School Bursar.

Bursaries, awarded to pupils according to historical agreements, were sent out directly by the Council Bursaries Section, but had to be accurately recorded in school records. The school appointed an Auditor who worked with the School Bursar, and monthly meetings of a small committee provided the opportunity to discuss any relevant topics and financial

decisions. These management processes were all in place when I managed the accounts in the late 1990s /early 2000s and many changes will have been made since then. I did have the advantage of teaching in the Business Education department and hence was familiar with accounting theory and practices and, importantly, of committee meetings. One block (hour) per week was allocated for the task of School Treasurer – and those who have ever been involved in this post in any business will realize that much more time had to be spent in the various levels of activity. But how enjoyable it was working with interesting people within and outwith the school.

The school's aim was to achieve the best returns for each of the funds – quite a challenge, but I received valuable investment advice from the best of sources. One of the parents' representatives on the School Board helped in correspondence with HMRC which resulted in valuable refunds! The manager of our nearest branch of the Royal Bank understood our aim to generate as much interest as possible and helped identify and negotiate the best routes and products to achieve the goals of both the school and those of Edinburgh Council.

The spending of our funds was equally challenging. At the beginning of each month, checks had to be carried out to ensure that staff requests for funds were for a valid reason. As you can imagine those meetings provided some hilarity as to what might be accepted as valid!

No school functions in isolation. Those within it always work with each other along with the wider community. The enjoyment of being involved in this work was immense - although the time spent in the pursuit of the needed accuracy demanded more time than an hour each week! I have already mentioned the value and contribution from those outside the school. But the support from fellow teaching colleagues as well as the Business Manager and staff from the school office was also immeasurable. All of those people allowed me to believe, when I retired from my job at the Royal High School, that I had contributed something of value to the school; both as a teacher, and as School Treasurer and Clerk to the School Board.

## How Anne Inspired a Generation of Entrepreneurs

### Fraser Doherty MBE

Since finishing The Royal High, I have been on an exciting journey as an entrepreneur, developing my jam business SuperJam and co-founding a popular craft beer club called Beer52. I've often been asked about the early years of my entrepreneurial journey, which began while I was still at school at the age of fourteen.

One of the people I always thank for inspiring my career is Anne Laing, a passionate teacher at the school who encouraged me and many others during our formative years. As our Business Studies, Accountancy, and Economics teacher, she ignited a passion for business that has endured to this day.

Anne was an incredibly passionate teacher, and she made sure to bring her love for business to the classroom. She often arrived with articles from that day's newspaper, using real-world examples to make the topics we were learning about come alive. With her enthusiasm and dedication, she created an environment where many of her students discovered a deep-rooted love for business and went on to become entrepreneurs themselves.

My classmate, David Stephenson, is one such example. He looks back on his time in Mrs. Laing's class with great fondness and even followed in her footsteps to become a Business Studies teacher in Glasgow. Her influence has rippled through countless students, and her legacy lives on in the numerous entrepreneurs and educators she inspired.

In my own experience, Mrs. Laing was one of the first people I ever confided in about my business idea. At the time, I had recently learned how to make jam in my grandmother's kitchen but wasn't sure where to turn next. Anne's encouragement was a significant catalyst that pushed me to pursue the idea further. She not only nurtured my passion for business but also helped me seek grant funding and advice to get my business off the ground.

What started as a simple idea at school went on to change my life and become a successful company supplying major supermarkets around the world. My progress would not have been possible without Anne's guidance and unwavering support. The understanding of Accountancy and Business that I gained in her classes has gone on to serve me well in running my own company.

Recently, I had the pleasure of inviting Anne to visit our offices and take a tour of our operations. It was a fantastic opportunity for both of us to walk down memory lane and reminisce about the journey that led to SuperJam's creation. As we explored the company that started as a simple idea in a classroom, I couldn't help but feel immensely grateful for the role she played in shaping my dreams and aspirations.

Anne Laing's story is a testament to the incredible impact that passionate educators can have on their students. By fostering curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, she not only shaped the lives of countless individuals, like myself and David Stephenson, but also indirectly influenced the world of business through her dedication and love for teaching.





In a world where education and the role of teachers are continually being challenged and redefined, Anne Laing stands as a shining example of the power of passionate educators who, through their unwavering commitment and belief in their students, can change lives and leave a lasting legacy.

Fraser Doherty, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023

**A selection of photographs from Anne’s life at the Royal High School**

**Business award is sweet win for jam maker**

EDINBURGH'S superjam-maker Fraser Doherty has become the first Briton to win a prestigious international business award. The 18-year-old scooped the Global Student Entrepreneur Award, and a cash prize of £3000, at a ceremony in Chicago. The former Royal High pupil beat off 750 other competitors from 14 countries to snag the prize. Mr Doherty started off his business making the jam in his kitchen, as a way of making extra pocket money when he was 15. But now the Davidson's Mains teenager has established his own company, Doherty's Preserves, and signed deals with several major supermarkets to have them distribute his jam. The secret recipe, handed down to Mr Doherty by his grandmother, uses grape juice as a sweetener instead of sugar, and the teenager has also chosen to make the jam using so-called superfoods such as blueberries and cranberries. Meanwhile, there were claims today that Scots eat the fewest traditional dessert puddings in the UK. A campaign to save old favourites such as jam roly poly and spotted dick has been launched after BBC's Custard's research found people in Scotland only have a hot pudding on average about once a year. According to the research, Britain's favourite traditional pudding is apple crumble.



RECIPE: Fraser Doherty

**Fraser’s diary too jam-packed for him to pick up latest prize**

JAM maker Fraser Doherty has scooped a national award for young entrepreneur of the year. But the 18-year-old businessman was unable to attend the ceremony in London because he was picking up an international award in Chicago. Fraser, a former Royal High school pupil, was recognised at the start-up ceremony, which was set up to celebrate the best small businesses in the UK. He has just collected the Global Student Entrepreneur Award in Chicago, which includes a cash prize of £5300, and signed a deal with Tesco. The teenager started making jam in his kitchen in Davidson's Mains as a way of making extra pocket money. He used a secret recipe handed down by his grandmother, but replaced the sugar with grape juice. The jam has already proved a huge success, with Waitrose selling 150,000 jars in the past nine months. He signed the deal with Tesco last month.



*Anne’s leaving present from Dougie and Davy of the CDT dept; Teak, Mahogany, Beech and Sycamore, all from recovered sources in the school*



*(Upper) Fraser Doherty (at 18) wins the ‘Global Student Entrepreneur award’  
(Lower) Orange advert naming Anne.*

*Fraser Doherty (at 18) wins ‘Young Entrepreneur of the year’, but is too busy to collect the award*



1993 Teachers, Matt Maclver Rector, Anne second from left in third row.



2003 Teachers, George Smuga Rector, Anne seventh from left in the second row. Alan Campbell (Anne’s principal teacher) back row eighth from left



BUSINESS DYNAMICS CONFERENCE 2002-03  
Anne organised an event for a number of pupil teams.



*Anne Laing, Edinburgh Council rep. and Rector George Smuga*



*The girls creating 'models' for a task*



*Problem solved !*



*One of the teams presenting their conclusions of the day's proceedings*