

High Storrs Alumni News

A Brief Encounter with Jessica Ransom

There really was a time, unbelievable as it may now seem, when a walk in the City Centre of Sheffield meant 'bumping into' someone you knew. It could be a relative, for many of us in the 1940s and 50s were born into large families and so had many cousins, aunts and uncles. Or it could be someone from a school you attended. But inevitably it means stopping and having a chat, no matter how brief.

When I see old photographs of the crowds on a Saturday in Dixon Lane or nearby Haymarket I am reminded of a world without smartphones and very few private cars and the word supermarket we might have heard in an American film in the cinema.

I am saddened that a walk on The Moor or Fargate these days brings no such happy meetings. The City has twice the population, about 50 times the number of University students who also happen to come from many other countries, and shopping is no longer the main reason to be in the city centre, especially after four o'clock in the afternoon.

So, I was especially delighted to see a familiar face as I turned the corner into Ecclesall Road at Moorfoot on a recent Saturday morning. The 'face' beamed back at me but although I instantly knew its owner, she had never before seen me...or at least I wouldn't have thought so.

Before I could stop myself, and with difficulty in getting the words out in the right order, I stuttered 'Why, it's High Storrs most famous old girl'. The eyes of **Jessica Ransom** are captivating in every way. On television, as Doc Martin's last receptionist, the widening of the pupils in exasperation became the hallmark of an actress who was clearly destined to go far up the ladder of success and celebrity.

Those eyes now widened into an incredulous look and so I stepped up the conversation, explaining how I was proud to be associated with The Highstorrians and their alumni register. Jessica responded warmly to the mention of her old school. I asked her what she was doing in the City. "Visiting family?" I asked. "Well actually I am on my way to rehearsals at The Crucible," she responded. "They're doing The Hypochondriac, you know? The Moliere play?" "And of course I'm staying with my parents."

The conversation turned back to High Storrs and Jessica explained how the former head of Drama at High Storrs, Claire Pender, had first got her interested in an acting career.

I would have liked that brief encounter to go on for much longer but we both had a timetable to keep to. But as soon as I returned home, I booked tickets for The Hypochondriac in which Jessica will be playing three characters. I'm not a natural Moliere person but I wouldn't miss this production for the world.

<https://www.sheffieldtheatres.co.uk/events/the-hypochondriac>

David France
Alumni 1953-58

September 2023

