



**Alumna Subject Graduated** Suzie Halewood  
Mathematics  
1986  
**Place of Work Position** Self Employed  
Writer/Film Director/Supporter of philanthropy to education!



Suzie became a portrait painter and opened a restaurant in Primrose Hill. She then started writing scripts and her first screenplay was turned into a feature film. She directed her first feature which made The Times Top 100 Films 2008, starring Ben Barnes. Suzie is now setting up a social networking hub for students.

# Great minds *go on to* great places

## What were your reasons for choosing Royal Holloway?

I applied to all London colleges as I just wanted to be in London. I was thrilled to be accepted at RHC until I realised the Maths Department was in Egham not Regents Park. But you can't beat Founders Building for beauty. It was a great place to study and a privilege to be in such surroundings.

## What were your favourite aspects of the course?

I always loved the art of solving problems. While studying for A-levels, an exercise was set, the outcome of which was the 'discovery' of cosine theory. It felt magical following in the steps of Pythagoras, with the same excitement of discovery. There is a huge comfort in the purity of mathematics. That it was there before us. It can be perfect and doesn't lie (well, apart from the odd singularity). It just waits patiently for us to find it.

## What was life like at Royal Holloway?

Protected, green and leafy. I didn't much like school, but Royal Holloway was a happy time. In some ways college is a good safety net before real life hits you. It was a safe haven away from home where mistakes could be made.

## Were you involved in any societies?

A fellow maths student started a club with a couple of drama students called The Sex Machine. I designed the posters. You had to pay to attend and it was cheaper before 9pm (only the coolest students came after 9). I also did posters for students standing for Sabbatical Officers. I was also at college the same time as the actor Mark Strong. He drove a yellow VW Beetle and everybody fancied him.

## Do you have an outstanding memory of your time at College?

The most memorable time was sharing a house in Pooley Green with a fellow mathematician (Charlotte), a drama student (Jeremy) and a musician (John). They all had spiky hair. Every Sunday we'd get all the papers and fight for the News of the World (well you have to have a day off). Then we'd take it in turns to cook a big Sunday roast. Someone once left the chicken in the oven over Christmas, so by the time we came back the house looked a bit Damien Hirst.

## How has Royal Holloway changed since your time here? What's stayed the same?

Coming back to visit the college was so strange in that the minute I set foot in Founders I felt I'd

never left. Although it's better to regret the things you do than you don't do, I wish I'd made more of the potential to study there. There are some phenomenal brains in the Maths Department. I suppose I did take it (and them) for granted a bit.

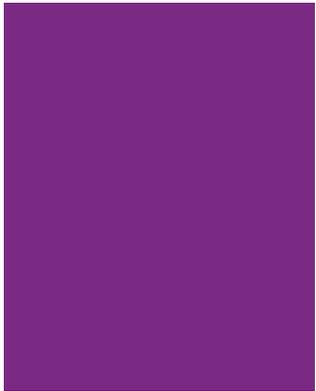
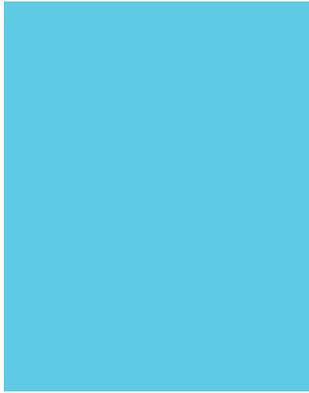
## What has been your career path since graduating?

After Maths and Egham I finally made it to London and shared a flat in Battersea with some wild nurses. I opened a restaurant in Primrose Hill (Big Night Out) with a couple of chefs before attending a summer school at the Slade and a foundation course at Wimbledon. It was my sister who suggested film – not only did I love it; it also combined the problem solving of maths with the visuals of art. Whilst working as a film runner, I pitched an idea to the producer who bought it and it (One More Kiss) was made into a film with Gerard Butler. I made my first short film Rocket Man from the short ends (bits of film left over), which starred the comedian Sean Hughes and was showcased at The Venice Film Festival. An interactive web series made with (among others) Simon Beaufoy (Slumdog Millionaire) was BAFTA nominated, which led me into commercials. I then moved to Los Angeles for three years working as



# people with passion

“There are some phenomenal brains in the Maths Department”



a journalist for a local newspaper and making a 7-up style documentary about the Latino gangs of LA. I also met LA Times correspondent Rich Marosi with whom I now co-write on US projects.

#### **Please tell us about your current role.**

I'm currently trying to close financing on a science fiction thriller with Dougray Scott, Neve Campbell and Jamie Draven attached to star. I'm also setting up sponsormestudent.com where students can find alternative funding to loans. I passionately believe education should be free. All those imposing the £9,000 per year fees had a free education.

#### **Do you use your Mathematics Skills in your current role?**

I normally do an initial budget to see what finance will be needed. But hope springs eternal and I usually under-budget. Luckily I have a good line producer (Andy) who comes in shows me how it really is. Certainly the thought processes involved in maths help with story structure and the latest script features the Riemann Hypothesis, without which there'd be no encryption of online credit card transactions. Budgeting for Sponsor Me Student has been harder because this is the first networking site I've set up. It just takes more research but I'm nearly there. It'll cost about as much as the film to

get up and running, but I think – especially with colleges who have taken the initiative having their charity status threatened – it's essential.

#### **Why do you choose to support the College's students through Sponsor Me Student?**

The Sponsor Me Student site is a huge undertaking and will probably take several years to build and a lot of back up from people who have previously worked in the charity sector. In the first instance, it needs to be glitch free so the obvious place to carry out a trial run would be Royal Holloway College. When I first came up with the idea of the site, my concern was that I didn't want to tread on anyone's toes – so I was much inspired by meeting Kathryn Griggs who, with others in the Development Department, successfully secures sponsorship for the College every year.

#### **What inspired you to start your website?**

I think two or the cornerstones of a civilized society should be free education and healthcare. According to The Tax Payer's Alliance, the previous Government wasted 80 billion GBP a year on needless initiatives and quangos and failed to collect a further 100 billion GBP in unpaid taxes. Yet to give every college student a free education

costs just a few billion GBP. It doesn't make sense. I set up Sponsor Me Student because I passionately believe education should be free and I think there's a potential win-win partnership between sponsors and brands keen to attract the youth market and individuals who themselves had a free education. I also think that in the long term, if students who benefit from the site can go on to sponsor another student, this is good both psychologically as you've turned a debt into a gift.

#### **Would you encourage other alumni to get involved in the site or donate to their College in general?**

I would. I'm hoping to generate a considerable amount of publicity for the site and encourage the donating and sponsorship initiative as a whole. As the site is an enabling platform only, sponsors who have pledged to sponsor a student will then deal directly with the colleges who have charitable status and can benefit from gift aid.

#### **Do you think it's important to support your alma mater?**

Yes. After all, they supported me. Royal Holloway gave me a great education (although some of my mum's friends assumed I was in jail) even if it's taken me years to appreciate it all.

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