

Hilary Claire Lister (née Rudd) 1972-2018



Hilary was a pupil at KES for two years, from 1985 – 1987. During that time she began to suffer from the paralysis which would lead to her spending the rest of her life in a wheelchair. Initially it affected her legs only, and although she had always revelled in sports, she could still continue with the rest of her life, playing the clarinet and studying to become a scientist. Over the next few years she spent many months in hospitals as doctors struggled to find a reason for her condition, eventually arriving at a diagnosis of Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy. In spite of this she pressed ahead with her life, obtaining qualifications needed to be a clarinet teacher and a good degree in

Biochemistry at Oxford. She was instrumental in improving access for people with disabilities both in the University and the City of Oxford. From there she went to Canterbury to continue her studies, beginning a PhD at the University of Kent. She also married Clifford Lister, a professional singer.

Then her illness began to develop in ways that had not been quite expected, and she began to lose the use of her hands and arms. This was a crushing blow, as it led to her having to abandon both her PhD and her clarinet playing. Now fully quadriplegic and in constant serious pain the neurosurgical team at Kings College Hospital began a series of spinal operations to try and reduce her pain levels.

But Hilary needed something to **do**. Eventually a friend suggested that she might enjoy going sailing with them. The result of that simple invitation was that she went on to become a world-famous sailor, sailing single-handed into the record books and the hearts of many in the sailing community. Her film, "A Race against Time", followed her sail around the coast of the UK, and she was rated as the fourth best sailor in the world. She travelled widely through both sailing and speaking engagements, and managed a full and active life. Her aim, she said, was to take the 'dis' out of 'disability'. She died as a result of complications arising from her quadriplegia. There will be a service to celebrate her life at Jesus College, Oxford, on May 2nd. 2019.