



# School's pride for Nobel Prize winning student

By David Melsome

This year's Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2024, announced in October, was jointly awarded to Sir Demis Hassabis and Dr John Jumper for developing an artificial intelligence model to solve a 50-year-old-problem: predicting the complex structures of proteins.

Sir Demis is a former student of Christ's College Finchley in East End Road, N2, who went on to study at Queen's College, Cambridge, in 1994 before founding the video games company Elixir and the AI company DeepMind.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences made the award in recognition of the

discoveries being recognised this year congratulations to Sir Demis on this phenomenal achievement.

Dr Ruth Hill, headteacher at Christ's College Finchley, told us: "We have sent our heartfelt congratulations to Sir Demis on this phenomenal achievement. He is a true inspiration to us all and our staff and students have benefited greatly from his



Nobel Prize: Demis Hassabis

pair's research and work that has already been life-changing for millions of people across the world.

In 2020, Sir Demis and Dr John presented an AI model called AlphaFold2. With its help, they have been able to predict the structure of virtually all the 200million proteins that researchers have identified. Among scores of scientific applications, researchers can now better understand antibiotic resistance and create images of enzymes that can decompose plastic.

### Vast possibilities

Heiner Linke, chair of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry, said: "One of the

generosity in time and donations when he has visited and shared his knowledge and experience. Some of his teachers are still here and we are all bursting with pride at everything he has achieved for the benefit not only of our community but the world."

Sir Demis co-founded DeepMind in 2010 to develop AI models for popular board games. The company was sold to Google in 2014 and, two years later, DeepMind came to global attention when the company achieved what many then believed to be the holy grail of AI: beating the champion player of one of the world's oldest board games, Go.

# Pasture calendar goes on sale

The volunteers who run Long Lane Pasture have released their new calendar for 2025 featuring views and wildlife seen at the nature reserve.

As reported in our last edition, the pasture team is desperate for funds to buy new equipment to keep the site in good condition for its visitors and inhabitants, so every purchase will be a big help. The calendars will be on sale at the pasture opposite the fire station in Long Lane, N3, on Saturdays from 10am to noon, when the work teams are there.

is £6 and payment can be made using the QR code on the front of the calendar.



World travellers: Jane Ray and Mike Thomson with Michael Palin, who presented their Alan Whicker documentary

# How a brush with disaster shaped our own correspondent

By Ruth Anders

A bonus of attending the showing of Hollywoodgate, the powerful new documentary exposing life under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, at the Phoenix Cinema (The Archer, November 2024) was meeting local resident Jane Ray.

As Artistic Director of The Whickers, a charity for funding first-time documentary filmmakers and podcasters, she was instrumental in raising the money to get Hollywoodgate made. Her husband is the multi-award-winning BBC Foreign Affairs Correspondent and presenter Mike Thomson, and I had the pleasure of talking to them at their home in East Finchley.

The BBC has sent Mike to some of the most troubled parts of the world to cover numerous conflicts, including wars in Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Colombia and Afghanistan. Jane has also won many awards as a documentary maker.

Having worked extensively with the legendary presenter Alan Whicker, she wrote and directed BBC Radio 4's archive programme about Alan: Around the World in 80 Years, presented by Michael Palin.

Mike and Jane travelled much of the globe together before starting a family.

Their life stories could fill several pages of The Archer. Mike told me: "We bonded over shared ideas about the power of broadcasting." He had a slightly rocky time at school and added: "I've always felt that a successful reporter should be trouble."

### Drought report

Of his many achievements, Mike is especially proud of the BBC report he filed in 2002 featuring a conversation with a starving boy in drought-stricken Ethiopia which directly led to Sir Bob Geldof's involvement and the raising of £15million.

Jane and Mike are now working together again on a

Radio 4 programme based on his 1974 experience of being caught up in Cyclone Tracy in Darwin, the state capital of Australia's Northern Territory. Mike was swept up in this massive natural disaster while travelling the world as a teenager, a story in itself. Perhaps it was then that the seed was sown for the adventurous career ahead of him.

The programme, My Night with Tracy, will explore the way the disaster influenced Mike's development as a broadcaster and as a person. It will air on Radio 4 on Sunday 29 December at 8pm. Hollywoodgate can be found now on BBC iPlayer.

# Last-minute gift buying

The last Muswell Hill Indoor Car Boot Sale of the year will take place on Saturday 21 December from 10am to 1pm at Hornsey Parish Church Hall, on the corner of Cranley Gardens and Park Road, N10 3AH.

Buses W7, W3 and 144 stop nearby. Admission is 50p and refreshments are available. For information, contact 020 8368 8180.

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