

Marco Mills, Gibbs' 2005-2010: Naval Officer



Marco Mills, Gibbs', 2005 – 2010 writes: Life after Lancing was heavily influenced by the experiences that I had in Malawi, having visited with the school during the 2010 expedition.

This expedition shaped my interest in Africa, and during my gap year, amongst other things, I travelled to Northern Africa with a motorcycle to explore the continent further. After a few hairy moments, including one accident and a bout of illness, I began studying a joint honours degree in Geography and History at the University of Leeds, and was able to specialise in African History. What began as a broad interest soon morphed into an academic interest, and I decided to pursue a Master's Degree at the University of Oxford in African Studies. Here, I wrote my thesis on the disease *trypanosomiasis*, concentrating on an epidemic of the disease that ravaged the shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda during the beginning of the 1900s. For this, I was awarded the Kirk-Greene Prize for the best overall student performance.

Having written about Uganda, and spent a month researching there, I decided to go back and was offered a four-month internship with the charity *Universities Together Empowering Development*. Acting as a spokesperson for the charity and a co-ordinator for various social action projects around the country, I travelled widely, and even met the President in person. After I completed my internship, I purchased a 125cc motorcycle and travelled the length of the country.

Back in the UK, I moved to Tottenham in London where I worked for a charity that seeks to strengthen the local community sector. Nevertheless, despite enjoying this job, I sought something that would offer more of a challenge.

Having been in the RAF CCF section at Lancing, I had had the privilege to fly and had always fancied being a pilot. I therefore chose to seek a slightly more adventurous career. Keen on sailing and

wanting to keep my beard, I decided to join the Royal Navy (rather than the RAF) as a pilot. In April 2017, I completed my training at Britannia Royal Naval College (where the Captain of the College also happens to be an OL) and graduated as an Officer (Midshipman). In the next few months, I will progress onto my flying training. In the future, I hope to be flying either helicopters or the new F-35s from HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier.

Despite my busy life in the Navy, I have been able to maintain the connections I made in Uganda, and continue to act as a trustee for two charities established in the country: *Universities Together Empowering Development* and *Teachers Empowerment Platform*.

My memories of Lancing are fond ones, and reflecting on the previous six years since leaving, it is apparent just how much my experiences at Lancing shaped the direction that I took.