

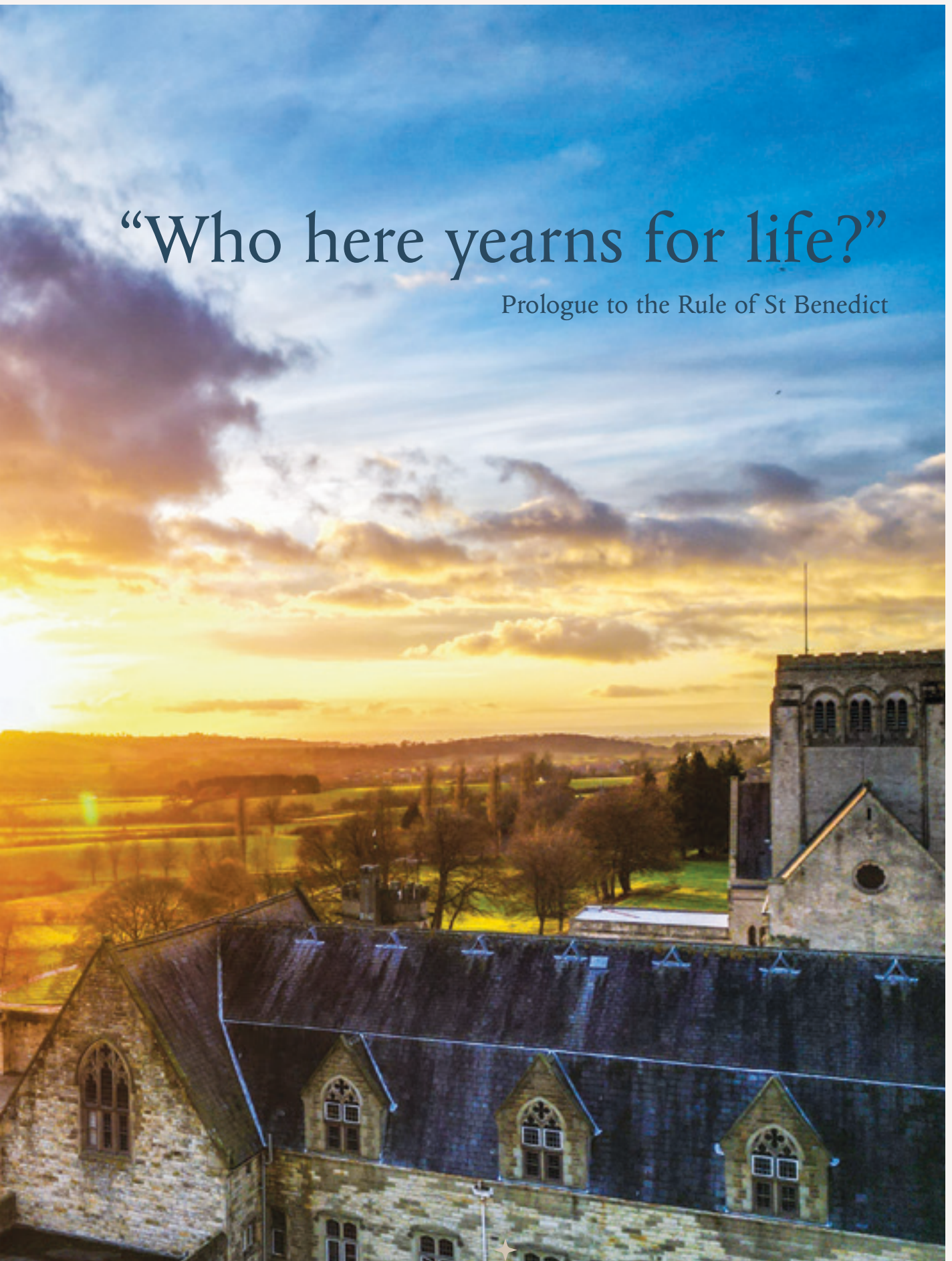






“Who here yearns for life?”

Prologue to the Rule of St Benedict





There are some qualities of a school that can be measured easily: examination results, university destinations, co-curricular opportunities, sporting achievement, or professional success beyond school. These things matter, and they form an important part of the Ampleforth story.

Yet those who know the College best often speak first of something less tangible.

They talk about friendships formed here and sustained across decades. They speak about the strong sense of community, of being known and valued as individuals. They recall the teachers and staff who inspired them and challenged them to think deeply, act with integrity and look beyond themselves. They speak, too, of the valley itself, whose beauty and tranquillity leave a lasting impression long after they have left.

Above all, many describe their Ampleforth education as a source of guidance which stays with them for life. This stems from our Catholic ethos, with Christ at the centre, and the Benedictine tradition that has shaped the

College for more than two centuries. At its heart is a conviction that education is about the formation of the whole person: character as much as knowledge, wisdom as much as achievement, faith as much as intellect, and service as much as success. It is an approach that seeks not simply to prepare young people for examinations or careers, but to help them live meaningful and purposeful lives.

These principles are not merely taught but lived daily at Ampleforth. Respect for the dignity of every individual, humility, compassion, integrity, courage, self-discipline, and service are qualities cultivated through life in community and a shared sense of responsibility. They encourage young people to look beyond themselves, actively contribute to the common good, and commit to what is right. In doing so, they help create an environment in which students grow not only in capability, but also in character.

Every student arrives at Ampleforth with their own talents, ambitions and questions. Our role





is not to chart a course for them but to help them discover it for themselves. Central to this is a community that seeks to know each student deeply. Through encouragement, challenge and support, young people are inspired to develop their strengths, fulfil their potential and grow in confidence and self-knowledge.

Through academic study, life in House, friendship, chaplaincy, service, sport, music, creativity and daily community life, students begin to form a deeper understanding of who they are and who they could become.

In this sense, an Ampleforth education offers something akin to a compass. Not a map prescribing a single route, nor a fixed destination, but a means of finding direction amid the opportunities, uncertainties, and challenges that life inevitably brings. Grounded in enduring values, it provides a constant orientation, a true North against which life's decisions are measured.

Amplefordians go on to lead remarkably varied lives, following different callings and making their contributions to the world in different ways. What they share, however, is a sense of meaning, purpose and confidence shaped by their years in the valley. In a world that often feels fast-moving and uncertain, this may be one of the greatest gifts an education can offer: not simply the knowledge to succeed, but the wisdom to discern what matters and the confidence to remain true to one's principles.

The pages that follow bring together the voices of current students, former students and parents, each reflecting on the part Ampleforth has played in their lives. Their experiences are diverse and every story is unique. Together, they offer a glimpse of that enduring compass: the values, discernment and integrity that continue to guide them and remain among the most distinctive hallmarks of an Ampleforth education.



EMMA & ADAM BRETT

Current Parents

We joined the Ampleforth community as parents in 2016 when our son entered the school in Year 9. Three daughters followed. Over the years, while the school has changed in many aspects, the ethos and values that drew us to the valley have remained a steady, reassuring constant.

Living in the south of England, and seeking a full-boarding experience, the strong pastoral care that Ampleforth offers was a key persuading factor for us. From day one, we witnessed a support structure that wraps around each child. Through daily interactions with the house pastoral team and your child's personal tutor (who is embedded in the house and works

closely with your child's teachers), we observed the school develop a deep understanding of each of our children, enabling staff to encourage their strengths but also, crucially, support any setbacks. This approach, exemplifying a key tenet of the Rule of St Benedict (that the strong have something to strive for, and the weak have nothing to fear), has given our children a strong sense of self, security and belonging.

Another important reason for us selecting Ampleforth was its nurturing learning environment. As parents we wanted to avoid the pressures of a hothouse education, feeling strongly that if our children were happy and



felt encouraged and supported by inspirational teachers, they would thrive academically. This has wholeheartedly proven to be the case; our children have discovered their interests and thrown themselves into their studies, exceeding all expectations in their public exams.

The full-boarding experience has gifted our children so many extra hours, enabling them to build deep and lasting friendships, dive into the many activities on offer across the campus, and achieve a work-life balance that has been so important for their mental health and wellbeing.

Our children have also experienced a profound sense of community and faith that derives from the Benedictine principles and rhythms that run across school life. From morning prayers and throughout the day, in the classroom, the concert hall, the art studio or on the playing field, these principles inform and underpin everything they do so that it is second nature for an Amplefordian to be welcoming and inclusive. The ultimate expression of this Benedictine sense of community, and a highlight for us whenever

we visit the school, is whole school Mass in the Abbey every Sunday. To witness the engagement of the students never fails to be uplifting.

But these principles extend beyond the school community. Our children have been given opportunities for voluntary work with young children, the elderly, disabled and the marginalised. So that by the time they leave Ampleforth (as three of our children now have), they have a respect and appreciation of each other's differences and an understanding that a fulfilling life is not just focused on the self but lived in the service of others.

With such a sense of community and belonging, it is perhaps unsurprising that Old Amplefordians often return to the valley, as our children and so many others do. In a changing world, the Abbey is a powerful and reassuring reminder to our children of the immutable Benedictine values that have shaped them and which will continue to provide a compass for life long after they have left.



GABRIELLE AKANBI

Year 13, St Aidan's House

Ampleforth has given me so much and there isn't enough room to write it all. Nevertheless, here is my story.

I joined the boarding community in Year 7, drawn to the beautiful, sweeping countryside, alongside the rich variety of the curriculum and the extra-curriculars on offer. I was not disappointed.

The key elements of an Ampleforth education are Academics, Sports, Music, Service and Faith. These are a given for all students should they wish to participate. I immersed myself in all of it and I am amazed at my achievements and development.

Alongside my daily academic progress, I was a member of the Hockey, Netball and Cricket teams, often sporting our signature red and black (or whites) on Saturday and Wednesday afternoons in fixtures with other schools. This was not only a form of recreation and release but also helped me build friendships outside my house and year group.

My love for music led me to the Schola Cantorum, where serving at the weekly Mass developed my choral skills slowly but surely. I went on all sorts of Schola trips in the UK, France and Italy. My highlight was singing at the Vatican and attending Mass led by Pope Francis! I always looked forward to the annual performance of the Messiah which I will miss tremendously. I also played in the Orchestra and Pro-Musica, relishing performances at every Exhibition and concert.

Boarding showed me a true sense of community. Navigating school life among a diverse range of people from across the globe gave me the opportunity to learn about their cultures as we grew up together. Where else can this happen? One of the things I'll miss most is being able to walk only a few metres to see my closest friends.

A simple daily joy that surprised me in my first year was communal prayer. Praying together strengthened our relationships and feeling of unity. I joined St Aidan's House in Year 9 and had my first taste of House Competitions. It was exhilarating. The camaraderie and collective spirit of housemates inspired a higher level of performance and competitive edge.

I have received individual, all-round support from the staff throughout my time at Ampleforth, especially when I have struggled. I'm particularly grateful to my tutor and housemistress.

As I move on to the next chapter of my life, thanks to Ampleforth I carry with me a quiet confidence, infused with a balanced perspective, nurtured talent, and the knowledge of the support of a global network of Old Amplefordians. It has prepared me not just to succeed, but to navigate the wider world with purpose, integrity, and service.



FINBAR FLANNERY

St Dunstan's & St Oswald's, 2025

I left Ampleforth last year and am now reading Theology and Religion at Durham University, where I was delighted to be awarded a Choral Scholarship following five wonderful years singing in the Schola at school.

People often say that Ampleforth has intangible qualities, but I think the qualities instilled at the College are the most tangible part of every Amplefordian and Old Amplefordian you meet. The sense of respect, acknowledging the dignity and worth of each person, is present in every interaction with students and staff.

The values found in Amplefordians stem from Benedictine monastic life, which has so much to teach us. In a world that is increasingly polarised and fast-changing, you need to know in your heart what is right and true. This is exactly what Ampleforth gives you. It isn't explicitly spelt out; rather, it is lived and shaped throughout your time in the Valley, grounded in the Catholic faith and compassionate values. While I have been at university, I have come to appreciate this more and more whenever I am faced with moral decisions.

A vital aspect of this shared life is the people around you. I cannot fully express the affection I feel for the friends I made in the Valley. They are, without doubt, some of the closest people in my life. They allowed me to become confident in who I am - not to seek their approval, but because in this community, everyone is valued and everyone contributes. My memories of our experiences together in the Valley will last forever.

It is difficult to capture what Ampleforth truly is in such a short space; the best way to understand it is to spend time in the Valley yourself. Here, these 'intangible' qualities that people speak of quickly become tangible in every interaction.

For new students in particular, allow yourself to be inspired by the people around you, have fun, and say yes to every opportunity that comes your way. Ampleforth really is for everyone, whether you are Catholic or not, and whatever your interests may be. Every talent and skill is valued. This is how you will contribute to the shared life in the Valley.



KEZA PITTELOUD

St Margaret's, 2023

I am a third-year Law and International Relations student at IE University in Madrid. I attended Ampleforth from 2019 to 2023 and want to touch on a few things that I think matter most.

Academically, Ampleforth gave me something I didn't expect: the freedom to discover what I actually loved. I arrived thinking I might lean towards sciences, and left with A Levels in History, Art, French and Politics – subjects that taught me how to think critically, write clearly, and argue with conviction. The teachers were genuinely exceptional, and the environment encouraged curiosity rather than just performance.

But what shaped me just as deeply was the faith life at Ampleforth. I had grown up in a Catholic household, but faith at school became something far more personal and alive. Mass in the Abbey, morning prayers, confession with the monks, the singing that I still find myself missing – it was all woven into daily life in a way that never felt forced. What I treasure most is that the monks taught us not to follow faith blindly, but to ask questions, to understand why we believe what we believe. That kind of grounded, intellectual faith is something I carry with me every day and I think it's quite rare to find in a school environment.

In my first year, I met the group of girls who would become the closest thing to sisters I've ever had. We came from all over the world – English, French, Austrian, German, Chilean, Spanish, Australian and yet, despite our cultural differences, we built a home together and became women together. Living so closely with them taught me patience, empathy and how to celebrate what makes each person unique.

The Ampleforth motto is 'A compass for life'. I believe every facet of my life has been changed by the school. More than anything, Ampleforth gave me the space to grow into myself. I arrived a little lost, an only child who had moved countries more times than I could count. I left with a community that felt like family, a sense of direction, and the confidence to choose a path that was entirely my own – which led me here to Madrid.

I can't promise that a child at Ampleforth will never miss home, but I can promise that they will be helped to become thoughtful, grounded and compassionate people, wherever life takes them.



LUDWIG HENCKEL VON DONNERSMARCK

St Thomas', 2018

I chose to go to Ampleforth at age 15. What began as a one-year exchange turned into three. What started as a simple broadening of horizons became a defining chapter of my life, one I'll carry with me always, emotionally, intellectually, and above all personally.

Boarding school, any boarding school, is a challenge. It is an adjustment, a new environment. However, with the right mindset and a willingness to grow, it has been one of the most rewarding decisions for me.

Ampleforth is one of the last true full-boarding schools in England. That creates a deep sense of community, unlike many other schools where most of the students head off at the weekend. But there is a deeper reason, too. It's the humanity of this school. In my three years at Ampleforth, I had a constant sense of being safe, supported and truly seen. I was heard, I was helped, and I was always guided, especially when things were difficult. I didn't just feel safe, I felt welcomed.

The Rule of St Benedict says, 'Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for He will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me'.

That spirit of hospitality, of welcoming each person with dignity, patience and kindness defines the culture of this school. And it teaches something incredibly powerful: you do not have to be perfect to belong. You don't have to perform to be accepted. You are welcomed as you are and supported as you grow.

If I had to sum up the culture of Ampleforth in one phrase, it would be 'Pursue growth, not perfection'.

Today we are surrounded by pressure to be perfect and yet perfection is usually unreachable. Growth, on the other hand, is real. It's meaningful. It's what shapes character and character is what shapes life.

And that is what Ampleforth gave me: the freedom and the opportunity to grow in a safe, yet guided environment. To grow in courage, in humility, in friendship and in faith.



MAGNUS WALKER

St Thomas', 2014

When embarking on a journey, a traveller would be wise to begin by taking a compass bearing. This gives him reassurance that his first and arguably most important steps are aiming in the right direction despite the obstacles around which he may have to navigate. To me, this analogy encapsulates what it means to be an Amplefordian – a far-sighted education that not only provides exemplary opportunities for students to pursue traditional academic pursuits, but also a sense of purpose, belief and morality that is deep-rooted but may seem intangible to an outside observer.

As an alumnus of over ten years now, I have had a chance to reflect on this at length and how I still feel the compass guiding my way. The school and the monastery are inextricably linked, and with this comes the foundation of community and hard work that is set out in the Rule of St Benedict – ora et labora – to pray and work in equal measure. The school embraces this sense of balance at its core, ensuring that every student

feels a sense of belonging within all communities and societies it has to offer. Each of these pastoral, academic, sporting and creative spheres encourages students to step beyond their comfort zones and experience something new. When I was a student, I took this as an open invitation to try (and fail!) across all these pursuits; preparing me socially, emotionally and academically for the next stage of life.

This becomes even more pertinent once you have left the Valley and realise that you are always welcome back with open arms. I couldn't encourage this more! This friendship and inclusivity that is achieved through the Old Amplefordians' network and numerous societies allows this common sense of direction and community to be shared by all leavers, parents, and teachers alike. The compass sets the bearing and continues to accompany us as we navigate life with a sense of purpose and integrity that will always hold true.



ELLIE GARGAN

St Margaret's, 2012

Ampleforth has always been more than an education for me and my family. It has been a lasting influence on who I am and how I approach life. As a second generation Amplefordian, I arrived with a sense of connection to the school, but it was my own experience there that deepened that attachment and made it truly personal.

Ampleforth taught me the value of thinking and working independently, while also giving me the confidence to ask for support when I needed it. It encouraged me to recognise areas for improvement without seeing them as failures, and to see asking for help as a strength rather than a weakness. That balance of independence, humility, and resilience has stayed with me ever since.

The school provided an environment where I could learn, develop, and push beyond my comfort zone, always with the reassurance that

I was supported. That sense of encouragement shaped my approach to new challenges, and it carried directly into my university studies and then into my career. Whether working in the UK or the US, I have drawn on the habits and mindset I developed at Ampleforth, including self-discipline, curiosity, and a willingness to adapt.

Just as importantly, Ampleforth gave me friendships that have become a constant in my life. The relationships I built there have supported me through every stage, from school and university to adult life, and, most meaningfully, some of my closest friends from Ampleforth stood beside me most recently as my bridesmaids. In that way, Ampleforth's impact is not something I only look back on with gratitude. It is something I still carry with me today.



JOHANNA & LAMBERT LENSING-WOLFF

Former Parents

All four of our children spent between two and five years at Ampleforth. While our two eldest looked at other schools before choosing Ampleforth, our younger children were already so deeply influenced by the Ampleforth spirit that they didn't even consider looking elsewhere.

All of them thrived during their time in the Valley - personally, socially, spiritually, and academically.

They met wonderful people among both the College staff and monastic community. These were people who truly inspired them because our children felt 'seen' for who they were, their individual interests and needs. They always spoke of the warmth and great sense of humour

among the teaching and house staff, which is enormously important for creating a warm and welcoming environment.

They all found lifelong friends among their peers and joined the vast network and community of Old Amplefordians once they left the Valley. Wearing a SHAC hoodie or cap almost always sparks a connection with a fellow Amplefordian from a different generation.

Ampleforth's celebrated "compass for life" is not merely a marketing slogan, it is a way of living that our children have deeply absorbed during their time in the Valley and which guides and helps them find the right way through an increasingly complex and challenging world.



CONCLUSION:

The stories in these pages reflect different generations, different paths through life and different experiences of the College. Yet a common thread runs through them: a sense of meaning, purpose and confidence shaped by enduring values.

This points to the value of an education that helps young people develop not only their abilities and the knowledge to succeed, but also their character, discernment, and understanding of what matters most. Ampleforth educates young people not simply for personal success, but for lives of purpose in the service of the wider world.

If you feel drawn to what you have read, we warmly invite you to come and experience Ampleforth for yourself.

Ampleforth: A compass for life.







A COMPASS *for Life*



for Life

If you would like to learn more
please get in touch.

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