

Rachael Pearson



Certainly no 'Bird Brain':

One of Occold School's alumni is proving to be a medical scientist of distinction with a long term objective no less than making the blind see.

Approx. twenty years ago a group of girls at Occold Primary (**Karen Fisher, Emma Gibbs, Michelle Hull, Clare Mann, Helen Wasp & Rachael**) conducted 'Bird Brain'; one of the best primary school science projects I have seen.

The girls cordoned off part of the school yard, put up bird food, bird table & nest boxes, and undertook a long methodical logging of bird behaviour.

At the Occold School Christmas Show 'Ring the Changes' a presentation, using puppets, was made of Bird Brain Throughout the Year. The very impressive presenter was Rachel Pearson.

Turn on the TV in November 2002 to watch Horizon. The subject is magician James Randi's offer of \$1 million to anyone who can provide convincing evidence of the homeopathic effect in Homeopathic Medicines.

The person entrusted with the crucial operation of preparing the Homeopathic solutions is none other than a UCL scientist called **Rachael Pearson**.

Now jump to November 2006 and the cover article of the important science journal "NATURE": Retinal repair by transplantation of photoreceptor precursors. And prominent in that research is Dr Rachael Pearson of the UCL Institute of Child Health.

As Rachael herself explained in an interview with Nature "So what we've done is to show that the adult retina can actually incorporate new photoreceptors, but only if the transplanted cells are taken from a particular point in development..."

The purpose of this research on mice is eventually to replicate the retina growth in hospital patients suffering from retinal degeneration such as in age-related macular degeneration or diabetes. Approaching a third of childhood blindness involves disease of the retina. The positive results obtained even holds out the prospect of some of the born blind being eventually restored to sight.

This may still be a long way down the line but with the thoroughness and professional skill of the likes of Rachael Cobbold (nee Pearson) applied to it we must have a good chance of eventual success. – any 'Bird Brain' can see that!

Andy Andrews