



# Laurel Leaves

THE EDGBASTON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  
OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE

## Contents

Chairman's Message	P2
Sounds of Summer	P4
An Interview with Emma	P6
Destination of Leavers	P8
Morocco Scholarship Report	P10
Old Girls' News	P12
Another Tour of Duty	P14
Welcome New Members	P15
A Festive Evening	P16
Sun Shines on OGA Supper	P18
Obituaries	P20



# Chairman's Message



## *A warm welcome to the 2015 addition of Laurel Leaves.*

For those of you who I haven't had the opportunity to meet, I would like to introduce myself as your new Chair of the Old Girls' Association.

I attended the school as a pupil in the Senior School from 1982 until 1989, became a parent in 2006 when my daughter joined Year 6, and in 2008

I was delighted to start working as a teacher in the Prep department. Just when I thought I'd explored all avenues, along came the opportunity to join the OGA committee; how could I refuse?

This summer saw our wonderful Celia Bell step down as the previous incumbent of the role of Chair, however we are delighted to say that she is remaining on the committee. It is a great honour for me to take over from her; she will be a hard act to follow.

It was a real treat for me that my first "engagement" in this position was to welcome the very latest 'Old Girls', the leaving Year 13s, to our family, presenting each with a beautifully designed brooch. This was especially significant for me as I had known many of the girls since they were young (one of them since birth!).

They are a fine cohort of young women and we wish them all the best

as they leave Edgbaston High School and enter this next exciting chapter of their lives. We hope they look back on their years here with fondness and look forward to hearing all about their future achievements and life stories.

If you haven't returned to school for a while and are intrigued by all the changes that have taken place within the building over recent years, or have ever wondered if you could still find the radiator that you used to huddle up against each lunchtime, please join us in February when we will have an Open House with tours around the school. As with all Edgbaston High School events there will be cake, although sadly I cannot promise chocolate concrete.

Please remember to keep in touch with us; we are always delighted to hear everyone's news.

Wishing you all a very happy and successful 2015.

*Anna Stanley (née Lefever)*

# Message *from the* Headmistress

Writing this on my way home from the Girls' Schools Association conference encourages me to reflect on the many positive aspects of our School. At EHS we are blessed with well qualified and committed staff, wonderful pupils and old girls, supportive parents and council members. We have excellent facilities and continuously strive to maintain and improve them.

Looking over the list above you can see clearly where our strengths lie: they are in the people in our community. The 'buzz' about the school is created by our present pupils and staff but it is reinforced by a long and rich history established by those who have gone before. It is this linking of past and present that is so important. The sponsorship of

the Initiative Award by the OGA and EHSPA generates tangible links between the past and the present and also allows our girls to experience travel that might not have otherwise been possible.

We were delighted to welcome Old Girl Emma Heathcote-James as our Guest Speaker at this year's Speech Day. Emma shared with the audience her experiences of growing her business from fledging kitchen table start up to nationally recognised brand, and some of the valuable lessons she has learnt along the way.

In her speech, Emma placed great emphasis on the importance of perseverance and determination in relation to personal goals, encouraging the girls to strive to fulfil



their ambitions. The talk given by Emma was immensely inspiring to our girls and her message illustrating how enthusiasm and hard work can lead to success was not lost on the entrepreneurs of the future.

Edgbaston High School continues to be a School to be proud of. A School renowned for its excellent academic results, its strong pastoral care and its sense of community. Thank you for your continued support.

*Dr Ruth Weeks*

# Class of '81 *meet up again*

*Following the success of the 2011 Reunion to mark the 30th anniversary of leaving EHS, a group from the 'Class of 1981' met up for Sunday lunch.*

It was really lovely to see some of those who were unable to make the reunion in 2011, so there was even more news to catch up on! The group met at The Lyttleton Arms in Hagley and had lunch in a private dining room, so we were able to make as much noise as we liked! We hope to do this again and may well try to meet up every year.

*Sally England Kerr (née Oakley)*



*L-R Elena Slee (née Dowell -Lee), Sally England Kerr (née Oakley), Nicky Harrison (née White)*



*L-R Nicky Harrison (née White), Hilary Silverwood, Maria Dengler-Harles, Lesley Holmes (née Morrison)*

## Stay in touch

**Contact Details:** If you have recently changed your address or wish to update your records, perhaps to include your email address or contact telephone number, then please do get in contact to let us know. In addition, we are always delighted to hear about your news - career development, engagements, marriages and births. If you have any news of special interest that you would like featured in a future issue of Laurel Leaves or if you would like to simply update us on what you have been doing, then please do contact us.

**Send an email** to [oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk), **telephone** 0121 454 5831 or write to the School by post marked 'OGA'.

**Old Girls Reunited:** Don't forget 'Old Girls Reunited' the termly e-newsletter for EHS Old Girls. Visit the Old Girls' Association section of the school website to sign up for this free email service.



**Follow us on Facebook:** Did you know? Edgbaston High School OGA is now on Facebook! Follow us on our page 'EHS OGA' for news and updates about forthcoming events. Please do share this with your fellow Old Girls.

## Edgbaston High School Old Girls' Association *Committee 2014-15*

### **President**

Dr Ruth Weeks

### **Vice-Presidents**

Mrs S. J. Horsman (1987-1997)

Miss E. M. Mullenger (1998-2006)

### **Chairman**

Anna Stanley (1982-1989)

### **Past Chairman**

Celia Bell (1964-1971)

### **Secretary**

Diane Hirst (1947-1961)

### **Past Staff Representative**

Stella Pinkess (1946-1960)

### **Current Staff Representative**

Lesley Bowler (1969 - 1978)

### **General Committee**

Laura Banks (1979-1990)

Lindsay Lucas (1973-1981)

Leyla Ogan (1989-1994)

Ronnie Shoebottom (1954-1968)

Anne Howarth (1954-1961)

### **Laurel Leaves**

Helen Holmes (1980-1985)

### **Legal Advisor**

Miss S. Thomas (1961-1972)

# Sounds of Summer

## OGA Choral Concert

*Margaret Harper, former Director of Music at EHS, returned to school on Sunday 20 July to revive her passions and skills, organising and directing her Old Girls choir. The members, ranging from girls who have left in recent years to those who had been pupils at the former Hagley Road site, came together again, following on from a previous performance at Christmas, for this special concert.*

Many of the ladies had been taught by Margaret over the years and it was a lovely opportunity for everyone to reminisce about school days and share a love of singing, often inspired by their education here.

Margaret put together an incredibly ambitious number of songs, many of which were well-known favourites, adding a touch of nostalgia as thoughts returned to when the songs had been

first learned whilst at school. With the programme already printed, everyone set to work to realise her plan. Rehearsals began at 10:30 on Sunday morning and amazingly, by 5pm, the choir were pitch perfect and ready to perform to their audience. However, anyone who has had the pleasure of being guided by Margaret, and remembers her levels of enthusiasm and drive, may be forgiven for not being overly surprised by this feat. The melodies were a delight, accompanied by a beautiful selection of poems, perfectly chosen for the occasion by Elizabeth Mullenger.

Thanks should also go to Emma Cockbill, who expertly accompanied the singing on the piano, Suzie Purkis and Christina Tavener for helping to conduct some of the pieces and to Ruth Spencer Jolly for designing the programme cover.

*Anna Stanley*



# The Millennials

## afternoon tea



*In March we were lucky enough to hold a Mothers and Daughters Afternoon tea in London at The Army and Navy Club on Pall Mall (affectionately known as 'The Rag') as part of the OGA Millennials London Chapter group events.*

The club kindly hosted us for the afternoon, during Mother's Day weekend, in the beautiful Ladies Drawing Room and put on a wonderful afternoon tea with many tantalizing treats! It was delightful to see girls from a wide range of years with their mothers and so good to be joined by both past and present staff; Elizabeth Mullenger, Denise Snabel, Sheila Palfrey, Margaret Harper and Anne Stocks. We were all also treated to a tour of the club and its many incredible historical artefacts and paintings, many of which have links to some of our great historical events and figures including Winston Churchill and the Queen Mother.

Following much positive feedback we very much hope to organise a similar event in the near future so please do keep an eye out for more details nearer the time.

Anyone interested in joining us should contact Nicola James at:  
[nicola.james88@googlemail.com](mailto:nicola.james88@googlemail.com)

# My Costa Rica

*by Abigail England Kerr*

***Each year, the OGA contributes towards the provision of the Initiative Award. This award is open to Sixth Form students who wish to participate in a charitable endeavour, either in the UK or overseas. Here, Abigail England Kerr reminisces about her trip to the wilds of Costa Rica....***

This summer I embarked on a solo two-week volunteering project to Costa Rica. The journey alone required three separate flights, the most exciting of which was my connection from San Jose on a plane of only six seats. Needless to say, I am sure it had seen some action in the Second World War! My destination was Puerto Jimenez, a former mining town on the Osa Peninsula, inhabited by about 2,000 people. My home for the duration of my stay was in the centre of the town and, though basic, was not devoid of a somewhat ramshackle charm. I had to adjust to living without many of the amenities many of us are privileged to enjoy in Britain, waving goodbye to an oven, microwave, kettle and perhaps most painfully, air conditioning. The choice of food was quite limited on my allocated budget, and I lived mainly on a diet of rice and beans for my time there. Yet, an unexpected surprise awaited me: Puerto Jimenez had super-speed wi-fi in every cafe. A mere two minute walk from my accommodation was the local school, which though small - the entire

cohort the equivalent of perhaps a single class at Edgbaston High School - possessed a distinctly friendly and charming atmosphere. My days were spent assisting staff to teach the children to speak, write and read English, undoubtedly the focus of the curriculum in a country where the contribution of tourism to the economy is vital.

With me speaking very little Spanish, and what I did attempt being of dubious quality, I had to resort to more innovative teaching methods, namely lots of hand gestures! What struck me as particularly interesting was the vastly different system of discipline in Costa Rican schools. Indeed, it is virtually unheard of to raise one's voice at a child in their culture. This, along with the calling of staff by their first names, created a relaxed learning and teaching environment, which I felt most privileged to be a part of.

In the evenings, I would assist in English classes for adults, which are provided free of charge by a charity organisation. More often than not those who attended would be parents of children at the school, and it was greatly rewarding to feel like I was making a real difference, however small it may be, to an entire family. On the weekends I took the opportunity to explore the region, undertaking various excursions and activities. Of particular excitement

was zip-lining through the rainforest canopy, which, with hindsight, does make the Lickey Hills appear rather mediocre! Whilst in the jungle I was confused as to the origin of an incessant buzzing noise. I was soon informed that the jungle Mosquitos require a 'debt' for your entering the jungle, namely your blood. Mosquitos aside, the view was spectacular and certainly worth the annoyance of the accompanying midges.

Coming in at a close second as to my most memorable experience was a day I spent watching and swimming with dolphins. With the aid of a tour guide's self-constructed wooden board I was dragged behind a boat, propelling myself under the waves, occasionally hearing the sounds of circling dolphins communicating to each other. Additionally, we visited a spot frequented by expectant mothers, mainly from America, who wished to give birth surrounded by dolphins, which I hear is a most memorable experience!

Living and working in an area not frequented by tourists made for a truly insightful cultural experience and one I am not likely to forget. Moreover, being a solo traveller necessitated a level of independence and self-reliance which previously I was little accustomed to. I greatly appreciate the assistance provided to me by the Old Girls' Association in making this extraordinary trip possible.

*Abbie England Kerr, Year 13*

# An Interview with *Emma*



*On Friday 7 November, the magnificent back drop of the University of Birmingham's Great Hall set the scene for an evening of celebration as pupils, parents, staff and members of Council gathered for Edgbaston High School's 139th Speech Day ceremony.*

Guests enjoyed an address from Old Girl Emma Heathcote-James (1995), who shared a witty and truthful account of her roller coaster journey to making her business, the Little Soap Company, a success.

From hand-making soap on the Aga and selling in subzero temperatures at farmers markets, the Little Soap Company has greatly evolved over the years, with production runs now in the tens of thousands. It has the accolade of being the first organic soap bar to hit supermarket shelves nationally and Emma was thrilled when she launched her organic range in Waitrose in 2013.

Year 13 students Kimren Hullait, Manreet Johal and Harsharan Kainth were lucky enough to interview Emma before the Speech Day ceremony began:

**Kimren:** Of your many qualities, which would you say you had gained from being an EHS girl?

**Emma:** I think tenacity, confidence and motivation!

**Manreet:** Where did you go to university and what did you study?

**Emma:** I studied here, at Birmingham

University and studied Theology. At EHS I took A Levels in English, Religious Studies and Art.

**Kimren:** Tell us more about your career and your business, the Little Soap Company.

**Emma:** The Little Soap Company was founded in 2008 and specialises in organic and hand-made soap products. I started the business because I am passionate about reducing the amount of chemicals and synthetics people unwittingly rub into their skin and could not find what I wanted out there in the market place. Before that I worked in PR and the media and also had several books published.

**Harsharan:** What do you enjoy most about having your own business?

**Emma:** Definitely the flexibility! I can wake up at 5am and finish at 12pm if I want to. I'm also a bit of a control freak; I like being in charge so that I know what's going on!

**Kimren:** What tips would you give to someone who wants to start their own business?

**Emma:** Many people told me that I couldn't do it. An important life lesson is to be true to yourself. All of us have dreams, passions and visions but these are fragile and can be crushed by people who don't believe in you. Don't take no for an answer, luck has nothing to do with it, decide what you want and just be yourself.

**Kimren:** Finally, how does it feel to be coming back to an EHS event?

**Emma:** It's very odd as I remember taking my finals in the university's Great Hall all those years ago! We had a 20 year school reunion in January and I came back to see EHS. I was so impressed and your new Sixth Form centre is amazing! I felt so envious!

It was a pleasure for all of us to hear Emma speak and she was sure to give advice and share important life lessons that apply not only to those who dream of starting a business, but to everyone, no matter what career path they wish to take. We would all like to thank Emma sincerely for taking out the time to address us and for congratulating us on our achievements.

*Kimren Hullait and  
Simran Dhaliwal  
Sixth Form Marketing Prefects  
[www.littlesoapcompany.co.uk](http://www.littlesoapcompany.co.uk)*



# Lights, Camera, Action!

## *Television Historian Visits EHS*

*Kate Williams, author, television historian and EHS Old Girl visited EHS to record footage for a Dutch television documentary on Britain's fascination with history.*

Following a brief stop to record footage of a typical history lesson, Year 11 pupils Bethany Lucas and Huma Hasan took part in a wider discussion for the film on Britain's relationship with history, the girls' favourite historical periods and whether our fascination with the past is a particularly national trait.

It was fantastic to have Kate back in school after so many years and we were pleased to be presented with a signed copy of her new book 'The Storms of War' for the senior school library!



*In February 2014, Stella Clarke, Head of the Internal Communication Sector of the Directorate General for Interpretation for the European Commission and EHS Old Girl, gave a talk to Years 10-13 about the prospects of working for the European Union as part of the 'EU Back to School' Project.*

## Old Girl Gives Insight *into EU Careers*

Stella Clarke, née Wilson, was a pupil at Edgbaston High School between 1973 and 1979, during which time she took on the role of Deputy Head Girl. The talk began with an entertaining quiz to ascertain the extent of the students' knowledge of the European Union and its workings, and offered the girls advice on a similar career, highlighting the importance of learning languages as a necessary requirement for any EU role.

It was a fascinating introduction into working with the EU and we are sure it encouraged many pupils to consider continuing the study of modern foreign languages to a higher level.

We are always looking for Old Girls who would be happy to return to EHS to give careers advice. If you are interested in giving a talk please send an email to [oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk)



# Destination of 2014 Leavers



Anah Ahee	University of Warwick	Chemistry
Molly Allen	University of the Arts, London	Fashion Management
Divya Balasubramanian	Newcastle University	Medicine
Alice Barrett	University of Leeds	Spanish
Aisha Blakemore-Razaq		Applying 2014
Polly Bowden	University of Exeter	Classical Studies
Sarah Bracey	Cardiff Metropolitan University	Sport and Physical Education
Danielle Carrington		Applying 2014
Surina Chahal		Employment
Aishwarya Chandran	Birmingham City University	Business and Management
Katharine Cheswick	University of Bath	Sport and Exercise Science
Anna Cooper	University of Manchester	Philosophy
Susie Derry		Applying 2014
Amrita Dhani	Southampton Solent University	Law
Alice Dillon	University of Edinburgh	Classics
Laura Dobson	University of Surrey	Nutrition/Dietetics
Alexandra Ferry	Royal Holloway, University of London	History
Francesca Freeman	University of Liverpool	Business Management
Natasha Freshwater	University of Sheffield	Business Management
Daisy Guttridge	Kingston University	Graphic Design
Evie Haywood	University of Bristol	Philosophy
Kate Hetherington	Royal Holloway, University of London	Zoology
Sophie Hill	Royal Holloway, University of London	Music



Ruby Hinchliffe	University of Bristol	Classical Studies
Tess Hulton	University of Edinburgh	History and Classics
Alice Jennison	University of Sheffield	Urban Studies
Jessica Jones	Oxford Brookes University	International Hospitality Management
Nathalie Kaye	Warwickshire College	Art and Design Foundation Course
Rebecca Khan	King's College, University of London	History
Stephanie Kleanthous	Birkbeck, University of London	English
Thaisa Laroiya-McCarron	University of Birmingham	Pharmacy
Florence Lawton	University of Nottingham	Pharmacy
Jessica Lloyd	University of Liverpool	Biological Sciences
Alice Luesley	University of Sheffield	Medicine
Jennifer Luisada	University of Manchester	Psychology
Sophie Lynn		Applying 2014
Clementine Macliver		Employment
Evie McGrail	University of Liverpool	History
Anne Marie Michael	University of Leicester	Medicine
Henrietta Mooney	Manchester Metropolitan University	Fashion Buying and Merchandising
Emily Nash		Gap Year
Eman Niaz	Coventry University	Psychology
Sukhpreet Pangli	University of Sheffield	Computer Science and Mathematics
Bethany Pedley-Smith	Leeds Metropolitan University	Events Management
Charlotte Rothnie	University of Warwick	French and History
Monique Sall	University of York	Sociology
Emily Sandilands	University of Liverpool	Sociology
Hannah-Katherine Smith		Applying 2014
Holly Southern	Middlesex University	Theatre Arts
Kate Stanley	Sheffield Hallam University	Marketing
Hannah Stevens	University of Reading	Nutrition and Food Science
Ruqqayyah Tabbasum	University of Birmingham	History
Jourdan Truman	Sheffield Hallam University	Physical Education and School Sport
Helena Venables	Manchester Metropolitan University	English and American Literature
Eleni Vousden		Applying 2014
Poppy Wilkes	Cardiff Metropolitan University	English and Contemporary Media (2015)
Gemma Wilkie	University of Salford	Sociology
Hayley Williamson		Applying 2014
Shona Williamson	University of Kent	Classical and Archaeological Studies
Kitty Wood	Nottingham Trent University	Business Management and Marketing
Sophie Wright	Nottingham Trent University	Marketing

# Morocco

## Scholarship Report

*This summer we were each gifted support from either the Initiative Award or the Kathleen Elliot Travel Scholarship, in order to help fund our volunteer work in Morocco. We arrived in Marrakech, very nervous, on the 29 July and spent the next two weeks helping with a varied and exciting range of projects organised by Riad 9 Volunteering (R9V).*

We were introduced to R9V through an assembly led by Nikila Patel two years ago, who was part of the first wave of students to volunteer with the organisation. The Geography field trip to Marrakech in January gave us a taste of the vibrant Moroccan culture but it also revealed the extreme poverty hidden behind the beautiful city walls. This inspired us to research R9V and eventually led to our enrolment on their summer



placement. R9V has gained an esteemed reputation due to their provision of sustainable contributions to the community, rather than simply short term financial aid. It is a unique and truly special organisation that is completely run by students and aimed at 16 - 25 year old volunteers.

Our accommodation was in a traditional Moroccan riad within two minutes walk from the main square, the Jamaa el-Fna. Sunday evenings in the riad were dedicated to decisions about projects for the following five days, with a choice of up to four volunteering opportunities each day. We individually chose exactly what projects we wanted to contribute to, dependent on our interests, be it teaching English or French lessons, painting classrooms, craft activities with cancer patients, caring for orphaned children or playing outdoor games and sports. Surprisingly, the chance to teach in French was not a particularly popular option.

We felt that the most moving and emotional project was 'Bird's Dreams' which involved visiting a children's cancer ward at the Marrakech Hospital. The craft table often started off bustling and lively but finished quiet, as each child was returned to their hospital bed, too exhausted or sick to finish the activity. Although there were harrowing sights, many of the projects were unexpectedly joyful. Al Karam Orphanage for Boys showed us the care and love that can form even in hardship and our visit concluded with the most competitive



and spirited game of 'Duck, Duck, Goose' (or in Morocco - 'Camel, Camel, Chicken') imaginable.

Our hard work during the week was rewarded by free time at the weekends and we took the opportunity to venture out of the bustle of Marrakech. Our first weekend was spent at the Ouzoud Waterfalls in the Atlas Mountains, the highest waterfall in North Africa, which was stunningly beautiful. The local water park meant an escape from the 50°C



heat, as did a trip to the breezy (we had forgotten the joy) seaside town of Essouria. Our final weekend was spent on a breathtaking overnight outdoors camp in the Sahara Desert. The sunrise and night sky were worth the 10 hour coach journey, with no air conditioning, and the even more uncomfortable camel ride.

Our time volunteering allowed us an opportunity to see the hardships that many face daily and offer a very small contribution in trying to alleviate them. R9V has made us more aware and sensitive towards the isolation and poverty that is present in society, not just in Marrakech but in England too. It was a fantastic experience that perfectly balanced hard work with memorable opportunities.

In the spirit of independence we refused our parents' offers to fund



us and instead applied for the aid of the scholarships available. Without the generosity of the awards it would have been difficult to raise the money necessary in time and therefore we would like to give our thanks to those that made our volunteering possible.

Thank you.

*Emma Hall, Nyilla Ahmed,  
Hannah O'Connor and Ellen Jones*



# Old Girls' News

## **Naomi Johnson** left 1991

In September 2014 Naomi came back to the UK following a gruelling 31,000km cycle ride across the globe!

Having left her old job as CEO of Scottish charity, Firstport, Naomi set off with a complete stranger for this trip of a lifetime. During that time she rode through 30 countries including, at an altitude of 5416 metres, the Throng-la pass on the Annapurna circuit in Nepal, cycling from Cairo to Capetown and riding to Alpe d'huez to watch the Tour de France.

Naomi raised money for The Homeless World Cup and kept a blog [www.bikemind.co.uk](http://www.bikemind.co.uk). Now she is back in the UK she plans to inspire others to live their dreams, continue blogging, to establish a consultancy business and to return to Scotland. She hopes to have more opportunities to cycle the globe and would like the next trip to cover Chile and Argentina.

[www.naomirjohnson.com](http://www.naomirjohnson.com)



## **Sian Dawson** (née Spriggs) left 1998

After leaving EHS in 1998 Sian Dawson (née Spriggs) went on to study at the University of St Andrews. Following one year in Vancouver, Canada she trained as a primary teacher and lived in Edinburgh for some years.

Sian got married in 2009 and now has a lovely little four year old girl, Pepper, whom they are planning on home educating for the first few years of school age so that she can play and climb trees!

Sian currently works part time as a nurture room teacher, working with children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. She has stayed in Scotland and is enjoying living near the sea in Fife.

## **Alex Gage** (née McKenzie) left 1978 and **Lady Carla Stanley** of Alderley (née McKenzie) left 1976

We were delighted to hear from two sisters. Alex Gage (née McKenzie, 1963-1978) has recently returned to teaching in primary schools in Hertfordshire and Lady Carla Stanley of Alderley (née McKenzie 1961-1976) who lives in Oxford and works in International Junior sailing.

## **Zara Withers Braddon** (née Withers) left 2001 and **Simone Withers** left 2002

On 17 April 2014, I married Nicholas Braddon at Iscoyd Park in the borders of Cheshire, Shropshire and North Wales (Nick is from Cheshire). It was a fine Spring day and the daffodils were all in bloom! We had a wonderful day, filled with so many special memories.

A number of Old Girls were able to



join in the celebrations including my sister Simone Withers (2002) who was a bridesmaid, Lara Fatah (2001) and Rebecca Whitener (née Owen, 2001).

I am a Preparatory School teacher at Highclare School and I enjoy accompanying the choir on the flute whenever I can. My husband, Nick is a Patent Attorney.

My sister, Simone, has also asked me to share her news. Simone trained as a Tax Advisor at KPMG in Birmingham after studying History at the University of Cambridge. She relocated to KPMG in Leeds two years ago and has recently bought a house in Ilkley, Yorkshire where she is now enjoying the country life!

Photographs above, from our wedding day (Simone is wearing green, left).

## **Amy Davies (née O'Neill) left 2002**

Dr Amy Davies attended Edgbaston High School from Year 7 through to the sixth form.

She married Mr Huw Davies on New Year's Eve 2013 at St Paul's Convent in Birmingham.

Amy's three bridesmaids were also EHS Old Girls. Pictured from left to right: Annabel Fage (née Garland), Amy Davies, Lauren Gautier-Ollerenshaw and Rebecca Loyo Mayo. The photo also includes Amy's adorable house rabbit, Flapjacks!



## **Alexia Monroe (née Dowell Lee) left 1982**

Alexia Monroe is now the manager of the Gordon Russell Design Museum in Broadway, Worcestershire and in her free time, Clerk to Bourton on the Hill Parish Council and a trustee of the North Cotswold Food Bank. Happily married with three children and a whippet! - and still committed to her local church in Moreton-in-Marsh.

## **Anne Howard-Smith (née Brazier) left 1978**

After leaving EHS, Anne attended the Cambridge College of Arts and Technology. Having completed a three year course in Business Administration, she joined cosmetics giant Estée Lauder and had a sixteen year career with the group, which owns brands such as Clinique, MAC, Bobby Brown and Origins.

Anne was National Accounts Manager for the Estée Lauder brand with responsibility for marketing sales and profit within John Lewis, House of Fraser and Debenhams; in addition she had responsibility for

launching the Estée Lauder brand into Boots.

Anne married and after the birth of her daughter, Victoria, returned to work to run the Prescriptives brand part time and also worked within the international division to launch both Clinique and Estée Lauder in Poland and Russia.

She left the company after the birth of her son James and has loved being at home to see the children grow up. Anne and her husband live in Surrey where her two children are at school.

## **Jenifer Simpson (née Ashford)**

Water has been a prominent theme throughout most of Jenifer Simpson's adult life, from sailing the world as a young woman to educating the community about water efficiency in her later years.

Jenifer was recently awarded with an Order of Australian Medal (OAM) on the Queen's Birthday Honours list "for service to conservation and the environment" in recognition of her 20-plus years of promoting water recycling.

Jenifer, who lives in Australia, said: "It hasn't really sunk in yet and I don't really know what will happen. As far as I can make out, it means that when I sign my name I can put 'OAM' after it."

Her interest in the more efficient use of water began when found out that a dam was planned in her local valley.

"I woke up one day to this news and I decided that was not a good thing. I thought, if we recycled water like they do in the rest of the world, we wouldn't need to build a dam at all. So I got involved with being an anti-dam activist. We won eventually; it took a lot of doing though."

Ms Simpson said she soon realised how little she knew about water and so began visiting as many sewage treatment plants as she could until she got a consensus of opinion about best water practice. "I had a great deal of difficulty doing research because it's not in the library and there wasn't, in those days, an internet,"



she said. "I thought to myself, I have a degree in chemistry and if I, as a chemist don't understand anything about the chemistry of water then probably nobody else does! Ever since then, I've been trying to persuade somebody to educate the community."

Mrs Simpson and her husband retired to the Coast in 1977 and bred donkeys for 16 years.

Jenifer said she hoped her award would give the cause of recycling water greater credibility.

By kind permission of [Sunshine Coast Daily News](#)

## **Katherine Holmes (née Fraser) left 2004**

Many congratulations to Katherine who married this year on 22 July 2014.

## **Sybil Thomas left 1972**

The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, the Right Honourable The Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, has appointed Her Honour Judge and EHS Old Girl Sybil Milwyn Thomas to be a Senior Circuit Judge, Designated Family Judge, based at Birmingham Civil and Family Justice Centre. Sybil was called to the Bar in 1976. She was appointed as an Assistant Recorder in 1993, a Recorder in 1997 and a Circuit Judge in 2005.



# Afganistan - *Another tour of duty!*

*Old Girl Caroline Whittaker RRC, who was at EHS between 1962-1974, is an Academic Manager at the University of South Wales and Lecturer teaching Nurses. Caroline is also a Senior Nursing Officer in the Army Medical Services Reserve having being commissioned in 1982. She has served in Bosnia, Iraq and undertaken two tours to Afghanistan. In her role as Senior Nursing Officer for 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital the unit deployed to Afghanistan in October 2013 and returned January 2014. This is a short resume of her account of her last tour of duty:*

Landing at Camp Bastion Afghanistan for a three month tour and experiencing a temp of 35°C and an atmosphere of grey coloured dust everywhere, I did suddenly wonder at the age of 55 what on earth had possessed me to volunteer once again. However, you take the Queen's shilling and offering nursing skills and experience for deployment is just what personnel from the Reserves do. The Reserves Training and Mobilization Centre at Chilwell had provided me with some excellent military training and I gained new confidence in handling my rifle, very important for where I was going.

It all seemed quite surreal; one minute I was in the UK and the next here I was standing in one of the largest military camps in the world. In fact in its heyday Camp Bastion was larger

than the town of Reading and the fifth busiest airport in the UK.

The role I had been deployed to do was Senior Nursing Officer (Matron) of my current unit 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital and I was very proud to be appointed to this position as I would be part of the leading edge medical care provided in the hospital, at one time the busiest trauma hospital in the world. The overarching principal of my position was to ensure patient safety and quality improvement.

One of the challenges I faced was to bring together a disparate group of clinical personnel as the Field Hospital was made up of not only core unit staff, but individual augmentees (Regular and Reserve), Danish and US colleagues. However, everyone soon gelled together and we had a fantastic team. The health care given to our soldiers is of a high calibre. This is so important in that our soldiers and their families can be confident of receiving the best possible medical care available, recognising the tactical and geographical constraints of operations. Our other unit role was to mentor medical personnel from the Afghan National Security Forces and excellent working relationships were forged. In addition we began the planning for the drawdown of the hospital in preparation for leaving Afghanistan later in the year.

As with all operational deployments, you have to quickly establish a routine which, in the beginning, consisted of



working and eating. However I soon took advantage of a wonderful gym to ensure I kept fit whilst away and occasionally met up with friends in the coffee shop. My accommodation in Camp Bastion was in a two person room and I was very fortunate that I was able to shower every day with access to flushing lavatories. This was in contrast to the majority of facilities outside of Bastion which were very primitive in comparison. During my tour the temperature plummeted and we did have about three weeks of rain so I was glad that we had heating in our accommodation as the majority of personnel in the forward locations had limited to no heating at all in their tents. There were a number of social activities and as a unit we celebrated Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year. We also set up a hospital Choir to entertain patients and staff and by goodness the Welsh know how to sing.

The unit returned at the end of January and we were welcomed with a homecoming parade from the people of Caerphilly County Borough Council and bestowed the Freedom of the City of Cardiff which



was a wonderful accolade. All in all, another chapter closes and will see what next year brings.

***Lt Col Caroline Whittaker  
RRC OSfJ TD***

Caroline Whittaker was nominated in the Education Category for the prestigious award RCN Welsh Nurse of the Year Awards 2014. Caroline was one of only two finalists and was subsequently the runner up.

*Caroline Whittaker in Mess Dress to the right receiving her award from Tina Donnelly Director of the RCN, Wales.*



# The Old Girls' Association *welcomes its new members*

***Year 11 Leavers***

Humaa Asif  
Annabel Brown  
Simran Chahal  
Mariam Chohan  
Rowena De Silva  
Hannah Gibbons  
Katherine Hicks  
Abir Iqbal  
Sabrina Jagpal  
Anisha Kular  
Mariel Orford-Hall  
Saffron Purewal  
Lucy Simcox  
Lowri Thomas

***Year 12 Leavers***

Laura Henery  
Catherine Wainwright

***Year 13 Leavers***

Anah Ahee  
Molly Allen  
Alice Barrett  
Aisha Blakemore-Razaq  
Polly Bowden  
Sarah Bracey  
Danielle Carrington  
Surina Chahal  
Aishwarya Chandran  
Katharine Cheswick  
Anna Cooper  
Susannah Derry  
Amrita Dhani  
Alice Dillon  
Alexandra Ferry  
Francesca Freeman

Natasha Freshwater  
Daisy Guttridge  
Evie Haywood  
Kate Hetherington  
Sophie Hill  
Ruby Hinchcliffe  
Tess Hulton  
Jessica Jones  
Nathalie Kaye  
Rebecca Khan  
Stephanie Kleanthous  
Thaisa Laroia-McCarron  
Florence Klawton  
Jennifer Luisada  
Sophie Lynn  
Evie McGrail  
Anne Marie Michael  
Henrietta Mooney  
Emily Nash  
Eman Niaz  
Sukhpreet Pangli  
Bethany Pedley-Smith  
Charlotte Rothnie  
Monique Sall  
Emily Sandilands  
Asmaeossadat Shirazi  
Hannah-Katherine Smith  
Alexandra Southern  
Kate Stanley  
Hannah Stevens  
Ruqqayah Tabbasum  
Jourdan Truman  
Helena Venables  
Eleni Vousden  
Poppy Wilkes  
Gemma Wilkie  
Hayley Williamson  
Sophie Wright

# A Festive Evening of Carols and Canapés



*What better way to kick off the festive season than with an EHS Old Girls carol concert. Margaret Harper, former Director of Music at school, brought together her choir for the occasion; the thirty participants spanned the generations, from recent leavers to those who had been pupils at the Hagley Road site. The rehearsals for these concerts always take place on the day of the performance, requiring a lot of hard work and concentration from the ensemble. Fortunately, the morning began with the obligatory cup of tea and slice of cake to lubricate the vocal chords and boost energy levels.*



The songs chosen for the occasion included ones that took members back to their time at school, evocative of past carol services at St. George's Church. Others were new to many, requiring a great deal of effort and concentration in order to master the harmonies and complicated phrasing. However, under Margaret's ever enthusiastic guidance, the singers rose to the challenge.



The evening event took on a new format this year. Before taking to their seats, the choir and guests spent a relaxing hour chatting away, sipping wine and sampling delicious canapés to the gentle background sounds of Michael Bublé, surrounded by brightly lit Christmas trees and flickering candles.

The programme was a wonderful combination of choral performances, audience participation in the carols and a beautiful selection of readings, kindly chosen for the event by Elizabeth Mullenger. The soloists were fantastic, silencing the room with emotion. Emma Cockbill expertly accompanied the

harmonies on the piano and thanks also go to Suzie Purkiss and Amy Ward (née Slevin) for the support they provided with the conducting.

Research suggests that singing in company cheers us up faster than performing solo or playing sport. The concert certainly bore this out and also provided everyone involved with a wonderful opportunity to meet old acquaintances and to make new friends.



The OGA are committed to providing funds to support our future Old Girls in their development. The retiring collection raised £128.25, which will go towards next year's Initiative Awards.



# Sun Shines on OGA Supper



*The sun shone on guests at the annual Old Girls' Association Summer Supper on the evening of Thursday 5 June 2014.*

Former pupils, old and young, and members of staff past and present, gathered in the early evening sunshine for photographs and drinks before taking their seats for supper.

As is the tradition, at this event retiring members of Staff are presented with a token of appreciation on behalf of the Old Girls' Association. Dr Heather Gay, Academic Deputy Head and Mrs Glenys Hennessey, teacher of Home Economics and Textiles, both of whom retired this summer, were in attendance and accepted gifts

presented by Celia Bell, Chair of the OGA. Anna Stanley, Prep teacher, also left the School this summer but we are fortunate in that she will continue her close association with EHS as she returns to take up the position of OGA Chair, taking over from Celia Bell who is stepping down after three years at the helm.

At this year's event we were delighted to welcome Old Girl and Guest Speaker Emma Heathcote-James (1995) who entertained us with tales of how she has grown her business, the Little Soap Company.

After presentations, the group enjoyed a delicious two course supper and the opportunity to reminisce and catch up with one another. Guests



*Anna Stanley presenting flowers to Celia Ball*



*Anna Stanley and Celia Ball*

were delighted to see a variety of soap products on display from the Little Soap Company and took the opportunity to make some purchases at the end of the evening!

It was lovely to have so many former pupils and staff together to share their special memories of past times at EHS. Huge thanks must go to our outgoing Chair Celia Bell who has worked tirelessly on behalf of the OGA over the last three years. Of course, we must also thank Emma Heathcote-James for a truly inspirational after-dinner talk; we are grateful to her for her time and shall continue to follow her career and the Little Soap Company with interest. [www.littlesoapcompany.co.uk](http://www.littlesoapcompany.co.uk)



*Anna Stanley and Lesley Bowler*



*Anna Stanley and Anne Howarth*



*Emma Heathcote-James*



# Obituaries



## **Kate Wallbank**

*English teacher and Deputy Head*

When I joined EHS in September 1984 I was fortunate to work with Kate as we shared an A Level set. Kate wore her considerable scholarship easily, encouraging both wider background reading and a rigorous analysis of the text.

The following year, Kate became Deputy Head, but still enjoyed 'hiding' in the classroom where she passed on her enthusiasm for literature to both young and older girls. As Deputy Head she trod the difficult line between the staff room and the Head's office with quiet diplomacy and grace.

She was also very supportive of staff with problems, offering practical, sensible advice. I remember her defending the necessity for strict uniform by asserting that it gave teenage girls something unimportant to rebel against, thus distracting them from more harmful protests.

Kate was a warm, lovely person whom I consider it a privilege to have known.

**Jenny Goodall, Head of English**  
1984-2001

Kate was a much admired and loved teacher, evidenced in comments made in reaction to the sad news of her passing:

"An amazing woman in so many ways; she had a huge influence on the type of teacher I wanted to become."

"She was old school awesome and the absolute reason I am an English teacher now. I still try and slip the word 'dendrochronologist' into everyday parlance."

"She inspired me to teach ... I know how that sounds but it's true"

"I am sure she will be very missed by her family and friends. Long may she carry on in all our written words and abbreviation marks in the margin."



# Obituaries



**Geraldine Wynn**  
(née Goodman)  
at school 1922-1931

On 12 March 2014, the OGA was notified of the death of Mrs Geraldine Wynn by daughter Jennifer Grazier.

**Angela McKenzie**  
(née Bradsworth)  
at school 1944-1952

Angela McKenzie died suddenly on 4th November 2013 having recently celebrated her 80th birthday at a family party on the summer at her home in Solihull. She was still very active, and up until four years ago she was still skiing.

Daughters Alex and Carla are both EHS Old Girls.

**Eugenie Eleanor Jones**  
(née Hall)  
at school 1933-1937

Barbara Davies wrote to inform the OGA that her mother, Eugenie, passed away on 5th December 2013 at the age of 94 years.

**Florence Eileen Valentine**  
at school 1925-1933

The niece of Florence Eileen Valentine wrote to inform the OGA of the death of her Aunt. She passed away on 26th October 2013 at the age of 97 years and led a full and interesting life until the end.

**Dorothy Noreen Chesney**  
at school 1930-1934

Dorothy Painting (née Schneider) has informed the OGA of the passing of

Dorothy Noreen Chesney. Her twin sister Muriel died some time ago.

Both sisters were Old Girls of EHS, probably late 1930s or early 1940s. Muriel Chesney was the Tutor in charge of the United Birmingham Hospitals Radiography Training School and as a student Dorothy Painting attended many of her lectures. Noreen was a Superintendent Radiographer at the Coventry and Warwick Hospital.

Both sisters were active members of the Society of Radiographers, in particular the Midland Branch where Dorothy Painting too was a member.

**Angela Rollason**  
(née Gaydon)  
at school 1937-1945

In February 2014, Diane Hirst informed the OGA of the passing of Angela Rollason. Angela attended EHS in the 19302/40s and sometime afterwards was a former chairman of the OGA.

**Jill Ferguson**  
(née Walters)  
at school 1935-1939



Jill left EHS in 1939 and trained in the Middlesex Hospital to be SRN. She died on the 8th June 2013 (one day short of her ninety-first birthday). She married Derrig in 1955 and had three daughters

none of whom went to EHS but all had university education. She was good at games - but never very good! She was a weekly boarder and her parents ran a boarding school but managed to take her and her brother on camping holidays in Europe.

She managed to keep up her nursing training, was a good mother and popular friend. She rarely met school friends but while at school spent some holidays in Four Oaks. (We used to pass their house on our weekly shop at Sainsburys!)

**Gwendoline Joan Foster-Smith**  
(née Steeds)  
at school 1920-1928

Sarah Ludlam, granddaughter of Gwendoline, informed the OGA of her passing. She died in May 2012 at the age of 101.

Gwendoline was from Edgbaston and attended EHS in the 1920s and made many friends; Edith Riley, Winnie Tyler, Joyce Cadbury and Dorothy Chamberlain (daughter of Neville) were just a few of the girls she mentioned. She remembered the Headmistress Miss Tarton Young and three teachers all called Miss Brown, although Miss Joyce Brown was her favourite.

Photo of Gwendoline aged 13 taken in Llanellian, Anglesey.

