

# LAUREL LEAVES



## The Edgbaston High School Laurels Association Magazine

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Winter 2024/25

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# NOTE FROM THE CO-CHAIR



We have an amazing Committee who have devoted their time and energy to make this Association what it is today  
*Caroline*



Hello everyone and a warm welcome to our Winter edition of Laurel Leaves. On behalf of myself and my co-chair Sally Hartley, we would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year for 2025 and we hope you have enjoyed all the Winter festivities.

The Laurels Association have had some really enjoyable events over the last few months where a nice mixture of previous pupils, retired staff, current pupils and current staff have joined together to reminisce and celebrate all things EHS. I hope you enjoy reading about these events in the following pages.

Do join us for the events this year if you can, our next event is on Saturday 8th March, it is the 'Open House' event where you are invited to come to see how EHS looks now, wander around at your leisure, meet the Laurels' Committee and Sixth Form Representatives, have a chat with some of the retired staff, and enjoy some delicious coffee and cakes.

We will also be meeting for Drinks in London in the Spring and having our Summer Lunch with Chris Evans' Netball Event and the Laurels' AGM!

One thing I have learnt since becoming Co-Chair is the depth of passion the EHS Laurels' Association have. I've been reading through the minutes from previous Committee meetings and the pamphlets from previous events and I'm really impressed, we have an amazing Committee who have devoted their time and energy to make this Association what it is today. What wonderful Alumnae. I would like to thank them for their years of hard work and their support since becoming Co-Chair.

Well, that's enough from me, enjoy the magazine...  
Best wishes

*Caroline Sprackman*  
Co-Chair with Sally Hartley.

# MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMISTRESS



Nostalgia is powerful, it is a feeling of wistful affection for a time in the past

*Clare Macro*

I have been contemplating nostalgia recently, not least because for many the Christmas period can be especially nostalgic. In our house, every time the Christmas boxes come down from the loft they are met with cries of 'do you remember when we made this?', and if I dare to suggest that the cuddly Christmas toys don't need to be out this year, I am met with mutinous looks.

Nostalgia is powerful, it is a feeling of wistful affection for a time in the past, often triggered by sensory experiences like a smell, sound, or taste. It is a bittersweet feeling, a mixture of joy, sadness and longing for another time. Agnes Arnold-Forster, a writer and historian of medicine and healthcare, describes in her book, 'Nostalgia: A history of a dangerous emotion', how Nostalgia has had a poor reputation; it was first coined and used as a diagnosis in 1688 about soldiers on the front line. It is derived from the Greek word, nostos (homecoming) and algos (pain or longing). This 'mysterious' disease caused lethargy, depression, disturbed sleep, sores and other physical manifestations of not looking after oneself. For some, the illness proved fatal and was recorded on their death certificate.

As the 20th century dawned, nostalgia morphed fully into a psychological disorder akin to melancholy, which could lead to anxiety, depression and sleep disorders. Then it became the relatively benign emotion we know today, although it still wasn't given much credibility as nostalgics were accused of being 'stuck in the past' and unable to adjust to new realities or even face reality.

However, today, psychologists believe nostalgia is a fundamentally positive emotion – a powerful psychological resource that provides people with a variety of benefits. During moments of nostalgic reflection, the mind is 'peopled'. The emotion affirms ties with friends and family. People with nostalgic tendencies feel more loved and protected, have reduced anxiety and are more likely to have secure attachments. Experiencing nostalgia can make us happier and more resilient during times of stress.

As Agnes highlights, it can be used nefariously, particularly by political groups who specifically target nostalgic feelings to perpetuate a view that 'things were always better in the past' and that they can bring back those times. Targeting people through the use of nostalgia has been shown to make them more likely to believe political claims regardless of their truth. But, if used as a tool, amongst other things, it is argued that nostalgia is a winning strategy for feeling better about ourselves. Studies led by Clay Routledge, the head of research at the 'Human Flourishing Laboratory', in DC suggest that yearning for the past has an upside; "it helps us feel more connected to other people, while lowering prejudice towards 'out-groups' (people who might be a different ethnicity or age to us) and increasing our ability to offer emotional support". Nostalgia can help us find meaning in life. This involves knowing that your existence matters and that your life has purpose. It is something that we all strive for in one way or another. Nostalgia has been shown to be an important resource for understanding that we have meaning, and it can help us in times of crisis when we think that as one person among 8 billion on the planet, we can make no difference. Nostalgia can help us move through this and

pursue important life goals.

Nostalgia has also been shown to build self-esteem and allow us to focus more on being true to ourselves, rather than getting caught up in extrinsic standards. When thinking nostalgically we are the prime protagonists in our stories; because of this it helps us see our lives as continuous and coherent, providing us with a sense of authenticity. In one study people who felt nostalgic saw their past self as an authentic representation of themselves. This in turn reduced their focus on meeting the expectations of others, and they were able to concentrate on their intrinsic expectations of themselves, in other words they were able to access the 'real them' and not the version we think others want to/need to see.

Routledge originally thought about nostalgia as a defense mechanism – when life is uncertain and unstable, we look to the certainty and comfort of the past, and that makes us feel better. And this is true about nostalgia, but as just mentioned there are many associated benefits to nostalgia and Routledge says that the most beneficial aspect of nostalgia is that it's as much about building a better future as it is the past. At least one study has shown that nostalgic people are more open to experiencing new things, expanding their horizons and being curious. And when sharing our memories with the people that we created them with it is a way to keep that bond alive and strengthen it. Even if it is not possible to do that, nostalgia is a form of self-disclosure, so sharing your memories with new friends who you didn't experience them with can help build these relationships.

In other words, there's nothing wrong with passing hours talking about the 'good old days', which is, of course, what we love to do through Laurels.

Clay Routledge's book, 'Past Forward, How Nostalgia can help you live a more meaningful life', was published in 2023.

*Clare Macro*

# LAURELS COMMITTEE

## President

Mrs Clare Macro, Headmistress

## Vice Presidents

Dr R A Weeks (former Headmistress, 2006-2019)

Miss E M Mullenger (former Headmistress, 1998-2006)

Mrs S J Wakefield née Horsman (former Headmistress, 1987-1997)

## Co-Chairs

Mrs Caroline Sprackman (nee Wall, 1988-2003)

Mrs Sally Hartley (former Head of Prep School, 2009-2024)

## Secretary

Miss Sarah Learmonth (1993-2009)

## Treasurers

Mrs Anne Lacey (staff, 1992-2018)

Lindsay Lucas (née Farnath, 1973-1981)

## Past Staff Representative

Chris Evans (staff, 1998-2017)

## General Committee

Sophie Glover (1999-2010)

Anne Howarth (nee Stirling, 1954-1961)

Elizabeth Hughes (nee Case, 2003-2010)

Louise Della Pesca (nee Venables) (1994-2004)

Amy Ward (nee Slevin) (1990-2004)

Elizabeth Hartley-Lever (1998-2009)

Lesley Bowler (1969-1980)

## Legal Advisor

Miss S Thomas (1961-1972)

## Production of 'Laurel Leaves' publication

Helen Holmes (née Maros, 1980-1985)

## Committee Meetings

Wednesday 5 March 2025, 6.00pm - 7.30pm (Online)

Wednesday 4 June 2025, 6.00pm - 7.30pm (In person and online)

Saturday 5 July 2025 - AGM (In person)

## Events

Saturday 8 March 2025 - Open House

Saturday 5 July 2025 - Netball Event and Summer Lunch (AGM)

Summer term, date TBC - London Drinks

# A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS AT EHS

On 7 December 2024, Edgbaston High School hosted its annual Christmas carol afternoon, A Merry Little Christmas, in the cozy setting of the Hexagon. Despite the disruptive weather outside, the warmth and joy inside were undeniable as a small gathering of attendees, including some of our treasured Laurels, came together to embrace the festive spirit.

The event was a delightful mix of music, laughter, and connection. With bells and tambourines in hand and accompanied by beautiful piano music from current EHS student, Lily, we sang along to beloved classics such as Jingle Bells and White Christmas.

Adding to the charm of the afternoon were heartfelt readings by Mrs. Macro, our Headmistress, and her son, Thomas Macro, whose words brought smiles to all present. The festive cheer was further fueled by steaming cups of hot chocolate and mulled wine, which kept everyone cozy and content.

The carol afternoon provided a wonderful opportunity to catch up, celebrate the season, and create cherished memories. We look forward to gathering again next year to continue this much-loved tradition.



# FROM THE ARCHIVES

A Glimpse into Westbourne's Past:

Take a trip down memory lane with these wonderful snapshots of Westbourne from 1979 and 1982! These images capture the early years of EHS's youngest pupils in Nursery, Kindergarten, and Reception. Recognise yourself? Get in touch [ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk)





# DRINKS IN BIRMINGHAM

**Saturday 12 October 24:**  
On a blustery Autumnal Saturday afternoon we hosted our first Birmingham based 'Drinks in the City' event at 'The Slug and Lettuce' in the trendy Brindley Place.

This event was inspired by the success of our 'Drinks in London' event in the Spring. The event was a success, everyone really enjoyed it, the venue was lively and vibrant with good food, excellent cocktails and fab company!

We really enjoy meeting Alumnae at these events, we had some familiar faces who regularly attend, and also some people who have not been to a Laurels' event before. It was great fun hearing stories from their school days, it takes us back to our happy times at EHS. Though the names of our teachers are different depending on the era we attended EHS, it was clear that we share the same confidence, values and passion that an EHS education provides.

Do join us for our next London Drinks event in Spring 2025 (date TBC).



# LAUREL LEAVES AWARD WINNER 2024

Each year, the Laurels present the Laurel Leaves Award to two exceptional students– to either recent leavers or Sixth Formers. The award, designed to support and inspire ambitious young women, provides a prize fund to help recipients pursue their passions, develop their skills, or embark on new opportunities.

One of our most recent winners, Mollie, put her award to great use in an exciting and meaningful way. Here's how she made the most of her prize and how the Laurel Leaves Award continues to open doors for EHS students.

"Thanks to the Laurel Leaves award, I've been able to take steps toward achieving my Level 2 Women's Artistic Coaching Qualification. This qualification is a key step in my journey and progression to becoming a skilled gymnastics coach, and the support from the award has been key in making this possible.

Currently, I am in the process of finalising the venue for my Level 2 course while balancing my studies at university in Leeds. The award's financial support will cover most of the cost of this course. Alongside university, I have been gaining hands-on experience at my local gymnastics club in Birmingham and working with these gymnasts has been an incredibly rewarding opportunity to improve my technical knowledge and supporting skills, which will be directly assessed during my qualification. In the new year I hope to begin coaching in Leeds at local centers and also well-known gymnastics clubs which will allow me to work alongside top coaches and gain further experience.

Once my level 2 qualification is completed it's a step that brings me closer to my long-term goal of contributing to the world of gymnastics coaching and encouraging young athletes to achieve their best. I am truly grateful for the award as the qualification will offer me greater opportunities in the gymnastics world and help inspire the next generation of gymnasts."

*Mollie Hewerson*



# AWARDS

As part of the Laurel's Association, we are proud to offer a variety of awards that celebrate the unique talents, hard work, and dedication of our pupils. Whether you're seeking financial support for your next academic project or looking for recognition of your creativity, there is an award for you. Below are the awards currently open for applications:

## Opportunities Award

Open to pupils of EHS, this is a one-off, needs-based funding opportunity to help students meet unexpected financial needs. If you find yourself in need of additional support, this could be the perfect opportunity for you.

## Laurels Award

Open to Sixth Formers and recent leavers (from the last three years), the Laurels Award provides up to £500 funding for students seeking opportunities that will enhance their further education or career aspirations, whether through training, development programs, or other initiatives.

## Pam Jelf Award

This music-based award, established in memory of former EHS teacher Pam Jelf, is open to all pupils of Edgbaston High School. Successful applicants will receive a £250 prize.

## Initiative Award

In collaboration with the Parents Association, this award helps fund student-led projects in the summer term and is open to pupils of EHS.

## Pat Muffet Award

This award, focused on craft and creativity, is decided by the Prep school and is open to pupils of the Prep School. Awarded in memory of Pat Muffet, this is a great way to celebrate artistic talent.

We encourage all eligible students to apply for these opportunities, as they provide valuable financial support and recognition.

Keep an eye out on our website, social media channels and newsletters for more information. If you would like to apply, or know someone who would be interested in applying, please contact [ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk) for more information.

*Best of luck to all applicants!*

# LUCY MAY ATKINS

11th May 2004 - 24th June 2024

Lucy was at Edgbaston High School for Girls from September 2015 until July 2022. Prior to that she was at Blue Coat in Harborne, and she had just completed her first year at Cardiff University, having made as fine an impression on her tutors and friends there as she did with us and at Blue Coat. She died on June 24th, 2024, when she was hit by a car whilst crossing the road on West Boulevard in Quinton.



Lucy's kindness, caring nature, clear-headed vision, legendary organisation and wonderful fizzing energy were always clear to see. This was plainly evident at the memorial service held for Lucy at EHS on Saturday 21st September 2024. Lucy's parents, Richard and Nicky and her brother, Harry, brought together so many people, and we were able to spend the afternoon hearing about how much she packed into her life and how much she was loved by all who knew her. Simba was also mentioned a few times, tragically killed with Lucy; as the Atkins would say themselves, not the easiest dog to love, but with Lucy he was always loving; it is true to say that very few people (and animals) could resist Lucy's winning smile and charm.

Lucy loved EHS and all things EHS. I know that during the two lockdowns she missed the EHS events that are part of our long tradition and one of her driving factors when she was elected Deputy Head Girl in 2021 was to ensure that we could get as many back up and running as possible. She would involve herself in all of school life, guiding at Open Days, where her positivity would convince even the most reluctant prospective parents, such that they would leave saying that they wanted their daughter to be just like Lucy when she was older. She loved baking a cake for House Bake Off, creating eclairs fit for the Titanic for a history project, donning a tutu for Sports Day, dancing in House Gala, dressing up on our themed charity days and helping backstage with our musicals in the make-up department. She knew what it meant to be an EHS student and certainly went for it.

Lucy didn't let the small matter of Covid get in the way of how she could fulfil her role as Prep Prefect either; when it was not possible to meet face to face with the Year 3 girls to hear them read, Lucy organised different sixth formers to do voice recordings of themselves reading 'George's Marvelous Medicine'. The year 3 girls loved it. I dropped her a postcard to say well done for doing this, and in true Lucy fashion she wrote to thank me for this postcard, saying how kind she thought it was.

Lucy's kindness and sensitivity and ability to think of others was a core part of who she was, and she epitomised what it is to be a servant leader; always thinking of others and always the first to say thank you. She was also very witty, in an assembly the year group wrote at the end of the year to remember their time at EHS, Lucy delivered her lines with perfect comic timing, which I won't be able to do justice to; *"Year 10 flew by, and we hit year 11 with a very messy kitchen, hence the kitchen being boarded up with hazard tape and we still can't load a dishwasher even now. Year 11 ended on a very strange note due to COVID which meant no prom, but I think we can all agree after the*

*stress of trying to organise one in Year 13, it was probably better we never had one after all."*

Lucy was able to use a small quip to bring laughter to any situation and it was lovely to be able to see more of this side of Lucy when I met with the student leadership team, Fareedat, Lucy and Natalia weekly. They were a great team and despite coming from different close friendship groups, worked seamlessly together. And I know that one of the things they were most proud of during the year was the introduction of a new tradition at EHS - our celebration of collective cultures day. Lucy loved celebrating the wonderful diversity of this community and was a driving force behind this day and creating a legacy; we have now had one each year since Lucy's year group left school. Lucy also spent much of the year as Deputy Head Girl organising me, ensuring I was ok and that the events went off smoothly, pulling things together behind the scenes, and offering her help, always with that broad and beaming smile on her face. And, on top of all that, she worked exceptionally hard; something her teachers in every report remarked on and commended her for. She flourished academically, loved learning and her determination was always evident. She was also excelling at Cardiff where she was reading a business degree and had just secured the highest mark of her cohort in her end of year examinations.



I do not keep every card I have been given, but Lucy's card to me when she left EHS has sat on my shelf ever since she gave it to me in July 2022, and it captures the essence of Lucy as an EHS girl.

*Dear Mrs Macro*

*I can't believe we are at the end of our final year. It really has been an incredible one and having the opportunity to be a Deputy Head Girl has been one of the highlights. One thing I won't miss is having to plan socials, we are a hard bunch to please!*

*I really just wanted to say a big thank you to you for guiding us through the role. I have loved the times we have laughed and danced before assembly and almost into assembly. It has been lovely*



*getting to know you better and I will certainly miss our Wednesday meetings and of course the Freddos. Sadly, I don't think they give them away for free at university, which is shocking.*

*Once again, I want to say a massive thank you for all the chances and opportunities EHS has given me. I enjoyed every one of them.*

*Hopefully school won't be too boring without us Year 13.*

*Lucy*

On Lucy's last school report, I wrote that with her departure 'I shall feel like my right arm is missing next year'. I also wrote that there was not enough space for me to write what I wanted to say, and

even here, with more time and space, I have not said it all.

Lucy gave so much to EHS, loved her time here, and had, as she did wherever she went, such a positive impact on those around her. For all members of the community, it is a joy and privilege to have been part of her life. We will try not to mourn the life she will now not lead, but to remember the life she had and the happiness that she brought to all of us. Lucy's star will always shine brightly, and even though I only knew her for a few years, I do not think she would want people to be sad that she has gone but use our memories of her to do good things, be kind and to never waste a minute of life.

*Clare Macro*



We are very grateful to be given this opportunity to write about our beloved daughter Lucy and to be able to thank all at EHS who helped to make her Memorial Service held in the Octagon last September so special. This is an abridged version of the eulogy delivered at that service:

### LUCY EULOGY

On Monday the 24th of June, Lucy took our dog Simba for a walk - that walk continues. Lucy left the house happy, she was much loved by all who knew her, and given the many hundreds of messages we have received it is clear that Lucy left an indelible mark on all who had the privilege and good fortune of knowing her. Lucy was in a happy place, her life was very good, and she had much to be happy about. That Lucy and Simba's lives have been cut so tragically short is something we are all struggling to come to terms with, but Lucy would not have wanted us to be sad.

At funerals, the poem The Dash is often read, the dash being that between the date of birth and the date of death and about what matters is what people have packed into that dash, and how they have lived and loved in those years. Lucy in her 20 years had packed in more than many who lead a long life.

Lucy certainly watched more television, including Dad's Army and period dramas than we could believe was possible in only 20 years. When Lucy and her brother Harry were small, we purchased some television screens for the car so that they could watch DVDs on long journeys. The aim being to stop Harry from being car sick and perhaps to stop Lucy from talking so much. They achieved 50% of their aim - Harry stopped being car sick - but we then had a running commentary on whatever Lucy was watching, in amongst howls of laughter, particularly at Dad's Army!

Lucy had a capacity for enjoyment and an appetite for life from a very young age. We have described her as a force of nature. She was a ray of sunshine, shining into everything she did and everywhere she went.

Lucy, was not necessarily the easiest of little ones, and she knew her own mind from a very early age. Whether it was wanting to feed herself as a baby, or knowing what she wanted to wear, which rarely coincided with what her Mum

thought she should wear. Lucy was stubborn: learning to ride a bike was a classic example. How her bike did not end up in the lake at Canon Hill Park as her Dad shouted in exasperation at her, you will be the only 18-year-old still on stabilisers, as she dropped the bike and stormed off refusing to pedal, we do not know. But Lucy did it when she was ready, in her own time. As was the case with walking. She didn't walk until just before her second birthday, but why waste the effort on that when she could simply beam at people and lift up her arms to be picked up and moved, saving her energy for the more important matter: of talking.

And boy could she talk. Whether it was almost interviewing people when they came to visit when she was younger, to the interested questioning of her latter years, Lucy always spoke, and had many strong opinions on many things. And when she wasn't talking, she was planning something, or walking to stay fit, or cleaning!!! Who knows if she was taken from us so early because a mistake was made by the angels who thought she must be far older because of the number of words she had got through. We are sure there are octogenarians who have spoken less in their 80 years than Lucy did in her 20.

Lucy could, when small, tell the most bare faced lies and would have easily passed any lie detector test. The most famous being at St Peters Primary School, when during a lesson about what their parents did, she said her mum worked for Lush making bath bombs. She would have got away with it had she not over-egged the story and finished with "and my dad works there as well". We had thought of sending Lucy to EHS when she turned 7, however, she decided she wanted to follow in her big brother's footsteps and go to the Bluecoat School, rising to be the House Captain of St Monica's House.

Lucy then came to EHS where she rose to become Deputy Head Girl ending up with two A's and a B. She loved her time here.

Lucy then took a year out after EHS and worked as a junior clerk at St Philips Barristers' Chambers for 6 months before she went travelling to Cambodia and Vietnam and then went to teach at a school in Zambia where she adored the babies in her care.

Lucy then went to Cardiff University, where she was achieving firsts throughout her first year. Lucy loved the course, attending all of her lectures, even thanking the lecturers for their lectures! We are particularly delighted to have been told that Cardiff University is going to award Lucy a posthumous degree.

In the last 10 days of her life, Lucy had as usual packed in so many things: dinner with us and friends in London; a fabulous day at her cousin's wedding where she saw a lot of her family; Lucy saw her Grandma, and all of her aunts and uncles; Lucy went to her Godfather's party on the last Saturday where she saw many friends and had a fabulous time; and she had a trip to the Gower with her University friends.

It was almost as though Lucy was ticking off a list to ensure that she saw and spoke to as many of those who were nearest and dearest to her as possible. We could not really have asked for a much better last 10 days if we had had the chance of planning it.

To lose a child is not the natural order of things. But we must not lose sight of how lucky we all are to have had 20 fabulous years of Lucy being in our lives.

We have had many kind messages of love and support and there are a number of similar themes that have emerged from them: Lucy's big and kind heart; Lucy's ability to light up a room; Lucy's sense of humour; Lucy's organisational skills (one former teacher at EHS commented on the fact that she was so impressed by Lucy when she was Deputy Head Girl that she fully expected to see Lucy back as headmistress one day); Lucy has been referred to as "the mum" of the group on many occasions; and a school friend said that there is a little piece of Lucy in all of us.

As we have said to many people in these last few weeks, we don't mind sadness, it is to be expected, but we do not want misery. Remember Lucy for the wonderful, fun, kind young woman she was.

As a friend said:

*"Beautiful souls leave a permanent mark in this world and continue to shine so bright that they illuminate the darkest places and times."*

It could have been written for Lucy.

In Lucy's memory we would ask you to do the following: don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today; don't forget to tell those who are near and dear to you that you love them and give them an extra cuddle; do please look before you cross any road, even if the lights suggest you can go; take your foot off the pedal when approaching any pedestrian crossing; and perhaps, instead of rushing to judgement, although Lucy could judge like the best of us, pause, hold that bad thought and replace it with a nice thought: think, what would Lucy have done.

And if we all do that, it is possible that we might make this world a slightly better place, which is what Lucy would have wanted and will be a fitting lasting legacy for her.

Lucy, Moose as we called her, was truly special. To her very core Lucy was kind, generous and thoughtful. She was the most wonderful daughter, sister, granddaughter, God daughter, cousin, friend. Lucy added joy to all of our lives. Remember that and we are sure it will help us get through these tricky times.

### *Lucy's Father*



# STAFF LEAVERS

## Vincent Johnson

Vince Johnson retired at Christmas after 36 years of loyal service. Vince started his career as a member of the groundskeeping team before moving over to become Caretaker and then Head Caretaker. His primary responsibility was to help to ensure the school site ran well at all times, as well as overseeing site security. During his time at EHS Vince saw many changes including three different headmistresses as well as numerous building projects. Vince's dedication, helpfulness and positive attitude has been evident and much appreciated by all staff and students over the years. His knowledge of the building will be missed; ask him where anything is and he surely knows the answer. I wish Vince a thoroughly well deserved retirement.

*Wayne Hayes*



formal duties. She was always willing to go the extra mile, whether it was offering a listening ear to students and staff, ensuring every detail was perfect for school events, selecting the right gifts or flowers for special occasions, or even managing the school buses efficiently. Her keen sense of responsibility and thoughtful approach made a lasting impact on the school community. Over the years, Yvonne had become much more than just a school secretary; she has been the backbone of our school community. Her hard work, commitment, and cheerful demeanour have left an indelible mark on our school, and we are deeply grateful for all that she has done. Thank you, Yvonne, for your incredible service and for being such a vital part of our school's journey. We wish Yvonne well in her new endeavours.

*Kam Purewal*

## Yvonne Crawford

In July 2012, our school was fortunate to welcome Yvonne as our school secretary. From the very beginning, it was clear that she was not only good at her job but truly indispensable. Over the years, Yvonne had become an integral part of the school community, offering unwavering support to the Senior Leadership Team and ensuring the smooth running of day-to-day operations. One of Yvonne's many talents have been her exceptional ability to handle the school's correspondence. From sending important school letters to managing communication with parents, staff, and stakeholders, her attention to detail and professionalism have always been second to none. Her efficiency and dedication ensured that no task was too small or too complex for her to handle with grace and precision, this was most evident in the countless award ceremonies she administered for. Beyond her administrative prowess, Yvonne was also the face and voice of the school. Whether she was warmly greeting parents and visitors at the reception or answering phone calls with her friendly and reassuring tone, she provided a welcoming presence that reflected the school's values of care and excellence. Her ability to connect with people and make everyone feel valued contributed greatly to the positive atmosphere within the school. Yvonne's dedication extended beyond her



## Sue Blankson

Sue joined the Bursary in September 2017 on a temporary contract. She enjoyed contracting because it gave her the opportunity to meet new people, work with different software and develop a variety of skills.

When she joined, I remembered that I had worked with her about 13 years earlier and recalled her as a hardworking and pleasant person to work with. I was thrilled to welcome someone on board who already knew me well. As time passed, Sue settled in seamlessly and by January 2018, it felt like the right moment to ask her to join our team permanently. I'll admit, I was a bit apprehensive since she hadn't planned to stay long, but to my delight, she agreed! My only concern came later when talks of retirement started to become more frequent. This is not a great topic of conversation, is it?! The day she told me she was leaving was truly difficult—it felt like I was losing someone who took immense pride in her work, ensuring that every document that passed through her hands was coded accurately and authorised. If anything wasn't up to standard, she made sure it was known! This level of attention to detail is what made her such a great Purchase Ledger Assistant. Sue left to embark on a new chapter in her life. While we miss her dearly, I can only express my gratitude for everything she contributed to our Bursary Team over the years. We are all better for having worked alongside her. Sue, I wish you all the best for the future.

*Beatrice Kail*



# ATHENA NETWORK

**We are excited to announce the revival of the Athena Network, a unique initiative that connects Edgbaston High School alumnae, Laurels, with current students to provide guidance, advice, and inspiration as they plan their futures.**

For those unfamiliar with the Athena Network, it is a platform designed to match our former students with current pupils who share similar career aspirations. Whether you are a doctor, an architect, an entrepreneur, or work in any other field, your insight and experience can make a world of difference to the next generation of EHS Laurels.

By joining the Athena Network, you will be paired with students whose ambitions align with your profession. As a mentor, you will commit to connecting with your match at least once a term.

These connections may take place in person at school or through other methods, which we will define during the matchmaking process to suit everyone's needs.

To rebuild this valuable resource, we will review our alumnae database and reach out to those within our Laurels network to extend the invitation to join the Athena Network. We are incredibly grateful to all who choose to participate. Your involvement strengthens the bond between past and present students, showcasing the power of our alumnae community to inspire, lead, and support.

If you are interested in being part of this initiative or have any questions, please contact Anne Lacey or Louise Dele Pasca, who will oversee the revival of the Athena Network.

Thank you for helping us create something truly special. Together, we can ensure that the next generation of Laurels has the tools, connections, and confidence to achieve their aspirations.

**Is there someone from Edgbaston High School you'd like to reconnect with? Perhaps a classmate who shared unforgettable memories, a teacher who inspired you, or a colleague who left a lasting impression?**

We would love to help bring the EHS community closer together, so let us know who you're looking for, and we'll do our best to locate them within the EHS network.

Email [ehslaurels@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:ehslaurels@edgbastonhigh.co.uk)

with your name, the name of the Laurel you'd like to find along with any details you have and tell us why you'd like to reconnect. Let's celebrate the connections that shaped our journeys!

# DARK REMEMBERED DAYS - A REVIEW

Edgbaston High School hosted *Dark Remembered Days*, a moving performance exploring the impact of World War II through poetry, literature, and music. The production was a reimagined version of a show first staged at The Market Theatre, Ledbury, last November but reshaped to reflect ongoing global conflicts, making it both poignant and timely.

Directed by Elizabeth Mullenger, a former Head of Edgbaston High School, the production was staged in the Octagon. Two performances took place: a matinee for Years 10 and 11 and an evening show open to the wider school community. The cast, self-described as "mature," included individuals whose parents or grandparents lived through or fought in the Second World War, adding a personal layer to the production.

Elizabeth Mullenger opened the performance by expressing her hope that it would be "thought-provoking." True to her words, the stripped-back, poetic production offered a deeply reflective experience. Accompanied by images, video, and interpretive artwork, the performance conveyed the harrowing realities of war. A particularly powerful moment came as Elizabeth Mullenger delivered a monologue about a mother's devastating loss of her own mother and child during the London bombings.

The show also included a montage of telegrams sent to soldiers' widows, illustrating the heartbreak endured on the home front. The performance concluded with a bittersweet

depiction of VE Day, juxtaposed with a modern lens on war, highlighting humanity's ongoing struggle with conflict and destruction.

Following the matinee, pupils engaged in a Q&A session with the cast. When asked why she created the performance, Elizabeth Mullenger explained her wish to deepen understanding of World War II, often overshadowed by the focus on World War I.

*Dark Remembered Days* was a considered and poignant exploration of history's lessons and their resonance today.



# FUTURES FAIR - NEWS FROM LAURELS

Back in September, the EHS Careers Team hosted an inspiring Futures Fair, giving students from Years 9 to 13 the chance to explore opportunities with over 40 exhibitors, including universities, employers, charities, and our very own Laurels. The event featured a Laurel's Lounge, where we welcomed several of our Laurels back to engage in informal conversations with current pupils, offering valuable advice for their time at EHS and beyond. It was a fantastic opportunity to catch up with some of our former students and hear about the exciting paths they've taken since their time at EHS. Here's what they've been up to:

## Ros Gammie 2001-2008

Ros is a Lecturer in Medieval Philosophy, Theology, and History at Bishop Grosseteste Uni, a small CofE University up in Lincoln. She is keen to emphasise there are different iterations of, and pathways to, success and is proud to represent the humanities and their importance!



## Kate Buxton 2012-2019

After leaving EHS, Kate studied Stage Management at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Shortly after graduating, she worked with Kenny Wax, contributing to productions like Hey Duggee: The Live Theatre Show (Olivier Award winner) and Fantastically Great Women Who Changed The World. In March 2024, she joined the UK and Ireland tour of Grease as a Technical Assistant Stage Manager, a role that involves working closely with the cast and crew to ensure smooth performances in a fast-paced, dynamic environment.



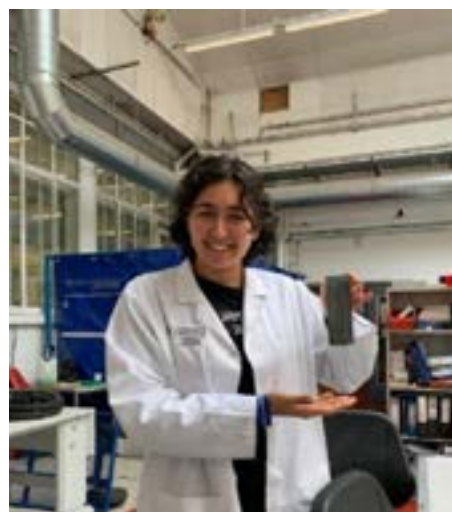
## Beth Lowe 2009-2015

Beth joined the Birmingham office's graduate scheme in September 2019 after completing a successful internship that summer. Graduating with an Upper Second Class Degree in Real Estate Management from Oxford Brookes University in July 2019, she also spent a year abroad studying at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In November 2021, she passed her APC, achieving MRICS status and becoming a registered valuer. She now works in the Licensed and Leisure Agency team in Birmingham, following rotations in Valuation and Advisory Services and Rating.



## Natalia Barrios-Majja 2015-2022

Natalia's passion for physics and maths, sparked at EHS, led her to pursue a master's in aerospace engineering at the University of Birmingham, where she is now in her third year. She is the Team Principal for the university's Eco Racing Team, building an electric car to compete in the Shell Eco Marathon in Poland. Alongside her studies, she has played basketball in Spain for the university team, flown a glider, and learned to weld. Her work in material science earned her a bursary from the Worshipful Company of Founders and artisan membership, inspiring her to start a home sand casting project. Now applying for internships, she is excited about the future of planes and her career.



## Nadia Ismail 2010-2017

Nadia is a First Officer at easyJet, based at London Gatwick, the airline's largest base. As a First Officer, she sits in the right-hand seat, supporting the Captain, who occupies the left-hand seat and represents the next step in her career progression. Nadia loves her job for its ever-changing challenges, from new routes and airports to navigating bad weather, making every day exciting. She feels fortunate to enjoy incredible views and travel to a variety of destinations.



# FUTURES FAIR - NEWS FROM LAURELS

## Dominique Al-Hindawi 2009-2016

Dominique is an FY4 doctor currently taking a career break to work as a locum and travel before beginning paediatric training. After studying undergraduate medicine at Cardiff University, she completed her foundation years in Yorkshire. Most recently, she worked as a Trust Fellow in paediatric surgery at Great Ormond Street Hospital during her FY3 year. Her ultimate goal is to become a consultant general paediatrician with a special interest in paediatric and adolescent gynaecology.



## Anisha Prasad 2012-2019

Anisha recently graduated from Aston University with a BSc in Business and Management, which included a valuable year in industry where she gained fantastic experience and connections. She is currently working on her master's in Human Resources at the University of Birmingham.



## Lowri Bevan 2016-2023

While studying for her A-Levels, Lowri completed work experience at Colliers International in August 2022, sparking her interest in a career in the property industry. After Year 13, she secured an apprenticeship with the company's Valuation and Advisory Department, allowing her to work towards an RICS-accredited Real Estate Management degree at the University College of Estate Management while gaining hands-on experience. Since August 2023, Lowri has been assisting the team and building key industry relationships. Her five-year apprenticeship will prepare her to achieve MRICS accreditation as a Chartered Surveyor.



# STAY IN TOUCH

Our email address has changed from [oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk) to [ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk).

Have we got your correct details recorded? Please ensure you update us with your latest contact details by completing the contact form ('Alumnae' or 'Former Staff') via the 'Stay in Touch' page on the Laurels Association section of our website. Alternatively, do send an email to [ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk) with your name (including maiden name if applicable), address, contact number, email address and years attended).

## Laurels News Bulletin

Don't forget to check your inbox for our e-newsletter and 'Laurels News Bulletin.' The newsletter is usually sent out to subscribers at least once every half term and brings you all the latest EHSLA news and events.

Not a subscriber? Sign up by completing the relevant form on our website. Alternatively, do send us an email along with your full name (and maiden name if applicable) and your years at EHS to [ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk).

**Let's get social**



Follow us on Instagram  
[@ehs\\_laurels](https://www.instagram.com/ehs_laurels)



We are also on Facebook  
[EHSLaurelsAssoc](https://www.facebook.com/EHSLaurelsAssoc)

## Share Your EHS Memories and Win!

Calling all EHS alumnae! We want to hear your stories and see your memories. Whether it's a never-before-seen photo from your school days, a standout moment, or a tale of how your time at EHS shaped you, we'd love for you to share it with us.

Send us your photos, stories, or even recreated moments from your time at EHS and you could be in with the chance of winning a hamper. Post your photo or story on Instagram, tagging us in [@ehs\\_laurels](https://www.instagram.com/ehs_laurels).

*The most engaging submission will win a special hamper.*

Plus, your memories might even be featured in the next alumnae magazine!

Entries to [ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk)  
Closing date is Sunday 27 April 2025

Start digging through your photo albums and memories—we can't wait to see what you share!

# FALLEN LEAVES

## Sue Wright 1946 - 2024

Sue Wright was born in January 1946, a short distance from EHS at her family home in Augustus Road, daughter of a family of non-conformist Birmingham lawyers and a New Zealander. After a brief time living elsewhere, the family returned to Birmingham in 1954 and Sue started attending EHS in May 1954. She got her O-levels, represented EHS on the Top of the Form radio quiz and took A-levels which saw her secure a place at Southampton University to read modern history.

After university, Sue returned to Birmingham first working as a management trainee at Cadbury's before joining the administration of the University of Birmingham. It was here that she met John Armitage and in 1972 they were married. Sons Thomas and William followed in 1977 and 1978 and Sue settled into a role as wife and mother in Selly Park with various side interests: continued work at the University including cataloguing their art collection, becoming a Magistrate, being a trustee of Lench's Trust almshouses and a school governor.

In 1994, John passed away - an unexpected and early death. Sue soon found companionship in Alex Wright, an old family friend who had recently been widowed too. In 2000, they married and Sue moved to Harborne. She continued to be a magistrate and took on new roles including on the National Trust's Kinver Edge committee - land her family had donated in 1917. Her and Alex travelled widely across the UK taking a particular interest in cathedrals, church architecture and royal burial sites.

Unfortunately, however, Sue's life after her marriage to Alex was also defined by breast cancer. First diagnosed in 2001, she beat it after chemo and radiotherapy only for it to return in 2018. Treatment continued for the rest of her life and while she was strong-minded and vivacious as ever she weakened during the course of 2022 and 2023 before passing away, surrounded by family, just before her 78th birthday.



*This brief biography has been written by Sue's son, William.*

