

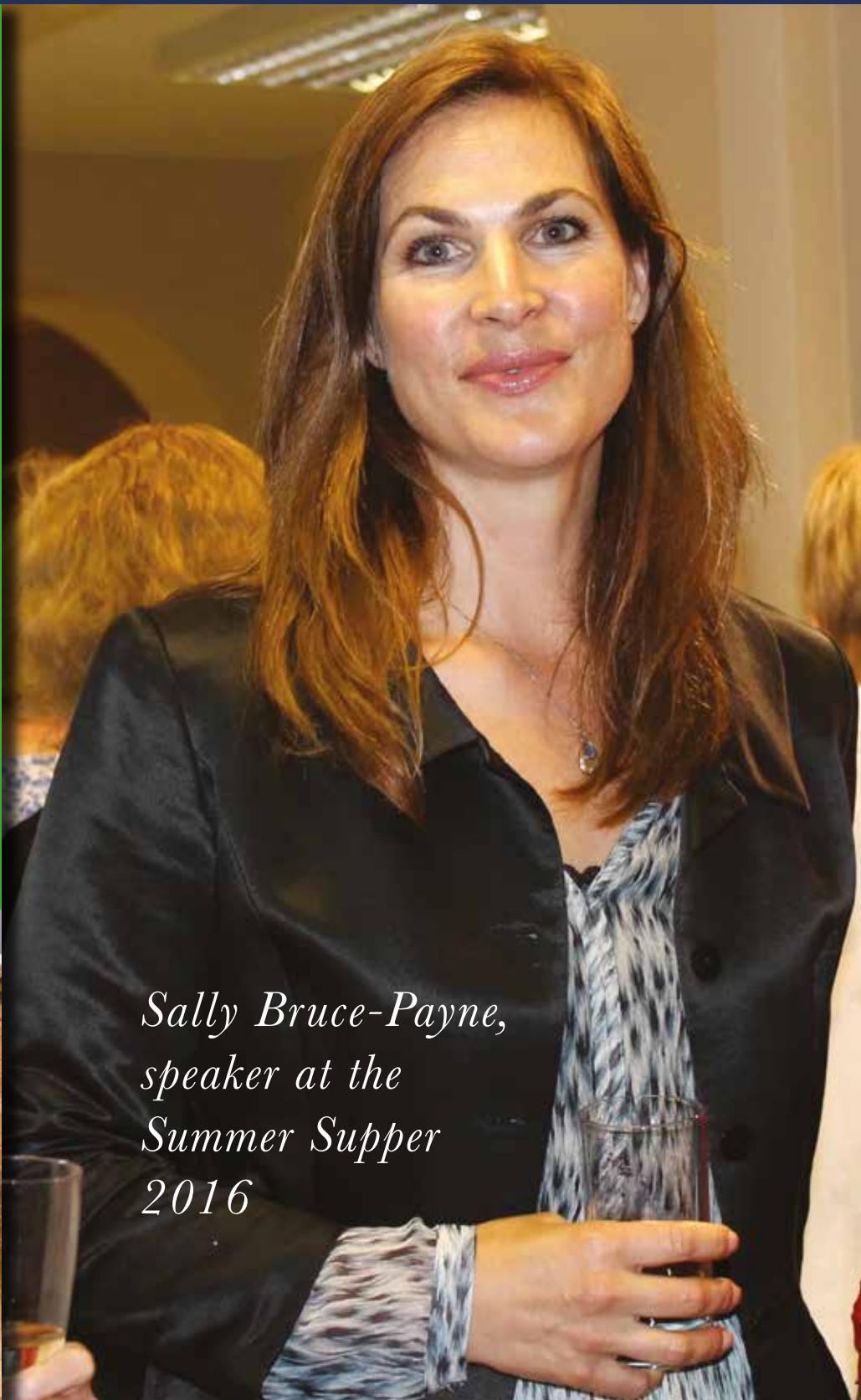


Laurel Leaves

THE EDGBASTON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE

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*Sally Bruce-Payne,
speaker at the
Summer Supper
2016*

Chairman's Message



Welcome to Laurel Leaves.

We are delighted to bring you another packed edition, chronicling the events of 2016. Thanks to everyone who has contributed with articles and photographs, and, as always, to the wonderful team who have put the publication together for us so beautifully.

This year brought opera singer Sally Bruce-Payne back to school as our Guest of Honour at the Summer Supper in June, which is reported in greater detail in a separate article. This was a particular

Message from the Headmistress

Another year has slipped by in the world of EHS. We say a fond farewell to our Year 13 leavers and welcome in our new girls, and the year moves on again. The wonderful thing is that our leavers never really leave. As last year's leavers said fondly: "We love to come back to the EHS bubble" - a lovely phrase.

This year has seen the completion at long last of the Preparatory School's extension. The project has been successful in its

treat for me as Sally and I were at school in the same year but hadn't seen each other since those days. Before the evening events began, we had a really wonderful afternoon catching up and taking a stroll around the school, enjoying both the original parts as well as marvelling at all the fantastic changes that have occurred since 'our day'. If you have yet to join us at one of these suppers, I would urge you to come along - they're always great fun, past pupils and staff sharing anecdotes over a drink and a delicious meal - bubbly and chocolate concrete, how can you refuse?

The EHS Prep Department has seen significant changes over the past year and after great anticipation, the completed extension was opened in November. The new façade, expanded Library, impressive Art room and refurbished Staffroom have all enhanced the teaching and learning environment for pupils, staff and visitors.

We would love to share these exciting developments with you and invite Old Girls and their families to our second 'Open House' event. The school doors will be open on the afternoon of Saturday 4 March, to both the Senior and Prep Departments. Please come and enjoy wandering around the corridors of your youth and join us for refreshments of tea and cake. The first event in 2015 was a huge success; it was fantastic to see mini school reunions chattering away around school, some even clad in the old green uniform.

I hope the 2017 afternoon will bring as much pleasure and happy reminiscing.

The Old Girls' Association Initiative Award is a valuable way in which we can give something back to current pupils. This year, Bethany Lucas, the current Head Girl, was a truly deserving recipient. The committee was delighted to be able to offer her financial support to attend a highly prestigious choral course at Eton College. Following her participation, Bethany attended one of our meetings to talk to us about her experience; we, as a committee, were truly humbled to see what a profound impact the week had had on her and feel honoured that we were able to play a role in helping her to make the most of this opportunity.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition and recognise some familiar faces amongst the pages. Laurel Leaves thrives on your stories, so keep sending in your news and photographs for future issues. It never ceases to amaze me how varied and inspirational the lives of EHS Old Girls seem to be!

Wishing you all a happy and healthy 2017.

**Anna Stanley
(née Lefever)**



with the times but the EHS spirit remains unchanged - and long may that be!

Dr Ruth A Weeks, Headmistress

Forthcoming Events in 2017

Our calendar is already filling up for 2017; we do hope to see you at one of the OGA events taking place in 2017:

OGA Open House

Saturday 4 March 2017

A great opportunity for a walk down memory lane, this is a chance to meet up with fellow Old Girls! Bring family and friends to see your old haunts and feel free to wander the corridors and explore the newest part of School in Prep, the recently opened extension of which includes a brand new Library and spacious Art Room. Doors open at 2.00pm and refreshments will be served in true EHS style - with plenty of cake!

Summer Supper 2017

June/July - date to be confirmed

As ever, the OGA will be celebrating the summertime with a get-together over fine food and drink. Be sure to look out for our e-newsletter, Old Girls Reunited, throughout the year for confirmation of the date, details of this year's Guest Speaker and a booking form to get your tickets. The Summer Supper, which follows the AGM each year, is a favourite for many Old Girls and we do hope you will join us for another enjoyable evening.

Details, updates and reminders of all the OGA's events will be available via our e-newsletter 'Old Girls Reunited' and on the OGA Facebook page. For further information or to register your interest in attending an event please contact us on 0121 454 5831 or by email to oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk

Stay in touch

Contact Details: If you have recently changed your address or wish to update your records, perhaps you have a new 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.

Old Girls Reunited: For news and updates on forthcoming events as well as news of interest from in and around School 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: Like, follow and share our Facebook page 'EHS OGA' for news and updates from the Old Girls' Association. Share your stories and photographs from events or find and keep in touch fellow Old Girls.

To contact the Old Girls' Association send an email to oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk, telephone 0121 454 5831 or write to the School by post marked 'OGA'.



Last year's Open House was a great success

Edgbaston High School Old Girls' Association Committee 2016-17

President

Dr Ruth Weeks

Vice-Presidents

Mrs S. J. Horsman (1987-1997)

Miss E. M. Mullenger (1998-2006)

Chairman

Anna Stanley (1982-1989)

Secretary

Diane Hirst (1947-1961)

Past Staff Representative

Stella Pinkess (1946-1960)

Current Staff Representative

Lesley Bowler (1969-1980)

Sally Hartley

General Committee

Laura Banks (1979-1990)

Anne Howarth (1954-1961)

Lindsay Lucas (1973-1981)

Leyla Ogan (1989-1994)

Priti Bansel (1985-1997)

Legal Advisor

Miss S. Thomas (1961-1972)

Laurel Leaves

Helen Holmes (1980-1985)

Class of '66 Reunion *what fun we had!*

From the moment the first intrepid arrivals entered the ante-hall, the hubbub of conversation and reminiscence began and lasted all day. Who knew that, 50 years on, we would all be so exquisitely pleased to see old friends again – and yes, we did mostly recognise one another.

Extraordinary too that none of us felt the need to boast about past or present lives or to share the ubiquitous photos of the grandchildren. What we enjoyed most was reminding each other of our young selves, the qualities we saw in each other and the experiences we shared and which made us what we have become.

Of course we have - because we're EHS girls!



EHS 6th



Class of 66 Reunion group



Penny, Lynda and Susie

Many of us brought memorabilia to share and the tour of the school and the displays in the library all prompted memories we thought we'd forgotten and others we wished we could forget!

Best of all, we – the Class of '66 – are all back in contact again, friendships have been re-forged, photos have been shared and it turns out that, for all of us who enjoyed the excellent food, good wine and the great company that day, we count ourselves lucky in our education and have lived lives of value in our communities.

Penny Searly, née Williams



Cake cutting, July 1965



Memorabilia on display in the Library



Singing the School Song

Old Girls Reunion of 1989 and 1991

Over the summer, Old Girl Katie Fitt (née Speer), visiting the UK from her home in Australia, was joined by her old school friends for a reunion at EHS. The girls who attended were leavers from 1989 and 1991 and many had been at the School all the way through from Westbourne through to Sixth Form! Imogen McCormick (née Dawes) shares her thoughts from the day:

It was with some trepidation that Nicki (Power, née Rodale) and I pulled into the oh-so-familiar car park on Westbourne Road last July. For those of you who have already had reunions, I am sure the same anxieties and thoughts were whizzing around your minds as well... Why ARE we meeting up with girls who we haven't seen for nearly 25 years? For what reason do we need to spend the afternoon reminiscing of old times, some of which we would rather have forgotten, finding time in our busy lives to hang out in our old school building? Well, all I can say is, it was completely worth it and so much fun.

For me personally, EHS had been my home from the age of 2½ where I started as a fourth generation EHS girl, and the youngest of three older siblings. Even my Uncle Nigel had been a member of EHS at one point during the war, something of which he enjoys reminding us! So it

definitely holds a very dear place in my heart.

So here we all were, on this bright Saturday afternoon, slowly gathering in front of the new front door and rather impressive glass extension of EHS And from the moment we all emerged from our cars, the anxiety and nerves evaporated.

We were taken on a tour of the school by Mr Watson, the Facilities Manager, who had very kindly agreed to open up and show us around. I think he may have had second thoughts though, as the noise of laughter and chattering filled the air in abundance.

It was great to see everyone, and conversation flowed so freely it was like we had never left. The tour of the school was fantastic and we were all so impressed by the new buildings and how the 'old building' had been adapted. We had lots of fun leaving messages for Mr Dukes in the art block and messages for current pupils on the white board of our old classrooms... all which brought back such fond memories. Sadly, Mr T's classroom was locked, so we were unable to leave messages there, however, one member of our group was delighted that a small hole in the lab ceiling, which she had 'accidentally' made, was still there!

After our tour we made our way to the next door Botanical Gardens next door for refreshments and we continued our catch up. It was brilliant to see photos of each other's families and see where our lives had taken us. As the afternoon drew to a close, we all agreed what a fabulous time we had all had.

School reunions are something which I think we all slightly dread as we feel we may not live up to the expectations of others, or indeed, ourselves. However, what our day together showed us is that everyone was genuinely delighted to see each other.

There is something of that green uniform of old that will run through our veins forever, inexplicably linking us together and reminding us of an important connection to our past. See you in another 25 years...

Imogen McCormick née Dawes (1975-1989)



14 OGs attended the reunion: Katie Fitt (née Speer), Imogen McCormick (née Dawes), Jo Floor (née O'Flaherty), Nicki Power (née Rodale), Yasmine Al-Daftary, Annalisa Payton, Caroline Smith, Clare and Deborah Handford, Ginny Allen (née Owen), Michelle Tuckey, Debbie Marshall (née Boak), Tamsin Franks, Becky Hurcomb.

An Interview with *Claire Robinson, Deputy Head of Prep*



It's always lovely to catch up with the lives of past pupils but for some their career paths are easier for us to see: over the years, many have returned to the school to work, including myself, and we currently have seven former pupils currently at EHS, following in the footsteps of their teachers. Here, I have the pleasure of catching up with Claire Robinson, who, alongside Sue Alderson, is Deputy Head of Prep.

What was your earliest memory of coming to the school?

I remember being interviewed by Miss Belton and of being completely in awe of her. Having come from Harborne Junior School, EHS seemed huge, an intimidating and formal building. By the time I started in Upper Thirds, Mrs Horsemen had taken over at the helm. However, I remember settling in happily and very quickly feeling 'at home' in my new surroundings, with Miss Bosc as my Form teacher.



Claire at school

Where did your teaching career start?

After studying Maths at Exeter University at Saint Luke's College, I gained employment back at my old primary school, Harborne Junior. I spent four happy years teaching Year 6 and one year with the Year 3 pupils. At this point I knew I needed a change and I heard of the job at EHS through my mother.

What role did you initially take on at EHS?

During my interview for the job there were many questions related to Maths but I was unaware at the time of the motive behind these. After accepting the position, I was asked to take on the additional role of Maths Coordinator, as well as the agreed Year 6 class. Since starting in 2003 I have also taken on the annual Year 6 production and I now organise the activity/cultural trip to France.

What was the food like back then?

I enjoyed the food, turkey casserole and flapjack spring to mind as favourites. I remember we would all try to eat the doughnuts completely without licking our lips! Milk and biscuits tickets for Morning Break were in circulation then and were treated and traded like gold dust.

What are your memories of the uniform?

We had to wear a pea green box pleat skirt and beige shirts. I had a brown school mac and I remember the blazer being a green colour rather than the blue it is today. I certainly wasn't the rebellious type on the whole, with my mother teaching in Westbourne at the time it certainly wouldn't have gone down too well! However, I did get away with wearing my tie the thin way round, which was the trend at the time.

Which were your favourite subjects at school?

I particularly enjoyed Art with Mr Dukes and Biology with Miss Bosc (both of whom still work at the school). Maths became a firm favourite as I got older and I was definitely inspired by Mrs Palfrey and Mrs Kent, the latter encouraging me to study the subject at university.

When did you know that you wanted to be a teacher?

I knew from early on that teaching was going to be the career for me. I loved being around young children and I also enjoyed watching my mother mark work, make worksheets, mount pictures and use the Banda machine; I appreciate there is more to teaching than this now!

What opportunities were you offered as a pupil at EHS?

I participated in the Young Enterprise scheme, was secretary for the Form Representatives Committee one year, taking the Minutes at meetings, and was the Music Monitor for assemblies whilst in the Sixth Form. I also took on the Community

Sports Leader Award, working with Prep Teacher, Anne Collins. I appreciated the opportunities for work experience available in the Sixth Form, spending Wednesday afternoons helping in three local primary schools. By being given these all-round experiences, EHS enhanced our organisational skills and encouraged us to take on responsibilities, broadening our focus outside of the academic curriculum.

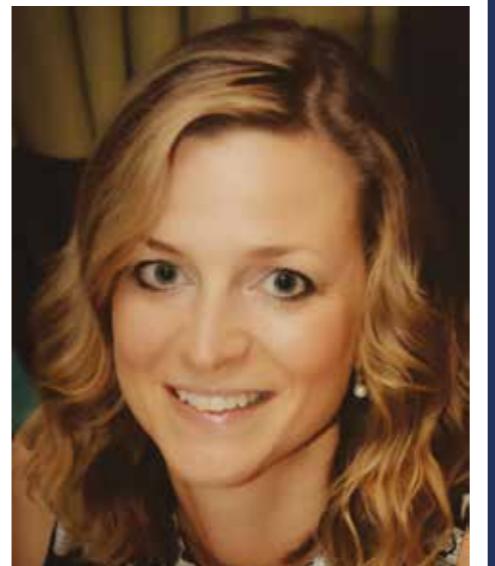
How has being an EHS girl influenced you as a teacher?

My strongest memories of being at school are of particular lessons that I enjoyed. When I think about what it was that made them enjoyable, in many cases it was the teachers themselves and their different styles of teaching. When I first started out in my career I tried to model myself on the inspirational teachers from my school days, remembering how they made me feel as a pupil and hoping that I could make the children that I taught feel the same.

What do you believe EHS's strengths to be?

The school is fantastic at looking at the whole child; it provides a nurturing environment, building confidence. The whole school approach provides a very secure setting and it's lovely to follow the girls as they continue their education, watching them blossom and seeing how they develop as they progress past Prep and on through Senior School.

Anna Stanley, née Lefever



Claire 2016

Supporting EHS

Edgbaston High School is committed to continuing the founders' vision of providing girls with an excellent all-round education. Unlike some schools, EHS has very little endowment funding and is not part of a foundation; the School's aspirations of increased bursaries and realising new development projects cannot be met through fee income alone.



There are numerous ways you can support EHS, whether it's sharing your expertise with current pupils, donating to a general fund to be used for future building developments or bursaries or leaving a Legacy donation.

Donations

A donation can be given to the School at any time, and if you complete a gift aid form the School would also be able to claim back any tax that you have paid on income.

Leave a Legacy, Be a Legacy

The school would like to encourage and invite Old Girls and friends to consider contributing to our future success by making a gift to the School.

One of the easiest ways to support the School is through a legacy donation. A bequest allows you to support the school in a way in which you may not be able during your lifetime. No matter how large or small, you will be endowing the future of Edgbaston High School. Naturally, provision for family and friends is a priority in financial planning but it is then straightforward to include a gift to Edgbaston High School, a charitable trust, either in the text of a Will or as a simple codicil. Legacy donations can be allocated to specific ways of supporting the School's future or left 'unrestricted' for allocation wherever EHS needs it most. The Governors, Trustees and Headmistress will always honour the wishes expressed within any Will.

There are also considerable tax benefits to making such a gift - bequests can be made free from Inheritance and Capital Gains Tax, meaning you could reduce the total tax burden levied on your estate to your family. If you choose to tell us of your intention, it can help us to plan for the future, although there is no obligation to let us know and gifts can even be left anonymously if you wish.

For further information about planned giving, please contact the School via oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk or telephone +44 (0)121 454 5831.

Give your time

As well as having a dedicated Careers Service in School we benefit enormously from willing volunteers who offer girls the opportunity to explore career options, participate in mock interviews and receive invaluable advice about specific careers. If you feel you could help in some way - workshops, work experience, talks to the Sixth Form on your career or area of interest - please do contact the School via oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk in the first instance. We are so grateful to those who have given their time and resources to help enrich the experience of our girls.

Over the coming year, we shall continue to communicate the various opportunities available to Old Girls who may wish to consider supporting EHS in some way, big or small. In the meantime, please do visit the school website for more information.



Destination of 2016 Leavers



Chloe Abuteir	Liverpool Hope University	Geography
Chloe Adams		Pursuing a career in music
Saira Ahmed	Aston University	Sociology
Dominique al-Hindawi	Cardiff University	Medicine
Hanna Alam	King's College, London	Religion, Politics and Society
Almas Ali	University of Leicester	Geography
Maariyah Aqdis	Aston University	Psychology and Business
Tara Baaj	King's College, London	English
Sunayna Bhatia	University of Birmingham	Psychology
Ellenor Blake	University of Derby	Criminology
Joanna Brown	Loughborough University	Art Foundation course
Ella Browning		Applying 2017
Lucy Carr	University of Leeds	English and History
Lucy Clutton-Brock	University of Manchester	History
Holly Cook		Applying 2017
Eleanor Coombes	King's College, London	Comparative Literature
Georgina Draysey	University of York	Economics and Finance
Laura Dunnaker	University of Leeds	Environment and Business
Rebecca Evans	University of Leeds	Sociology
Anna Lucia Fattorini	Durham University	Biological Anthropology
Amna Haroon	University of Birmingham	Biological Sciences (Genetics)
Ruth Head	University of Reading	Biomedical Sciences
Elle Joannou	Birmingham City University	Real Estate
Stavroulla Joannou	University of Chester	Events Management
Gurpreet Johal	University of Liverpool	Geography
Sumandeep Kailey	University of Leeds	Dentistry
Abnasi Kang	University of Leeds	Mathematics
Vinisha Katamaneni		Applying 2017
Georgia Khanna	London School of Economics	Politics and International Relations
Molly Leyland	Harper Adams University	Food Technology and Product Development
Francesca Liddiard	Oxford Brookes	Art Foundation course
Finola Maguire	University of Leeds	Geography
Jodie Morris	Durham University	Philosophy and Theology
Hurkeerit Mudhar	Coventry University	Nutrition and Health
Susannah Murphy	KS Dance	Dancers' Course
Lydia Nash		Applying 2017
Millie Nelson	Oxford Brookes University	Accounting and Finance
Chloe Newton	Cardiff University	Dental Therapy and Dental Hygiene
Ofunre Ohizua	University of Liverpool	Psychology
Leena Osman-Yahia		Applying 2017

Natasha Patel	University of Leeds	Psychology
Gabriella Perera	Oxford Brookes University	Primary Teacher Education (Campus-based)
Hillary Phillip		Applying 2017
Arabella Poxon		Gap Year employment
Esther Prasadam	University of York	Music
Rebecca Presswood	University of Southampton	Civil Engineering and Architecture, 2017
Monica Raju	University of Liverpool	Psychology
Zara Ryan	University of Leeds	Theatre and Performance
Kimi Shah	University of Manchester	History
Katie Shannon	Nottingham Trent University	Graphic Design
Sophia Shipley	University of St Andrews	Psychology
Emma Shortland	University of the Arts, London	Art Foundation Course
Chloe Simkiss	University of Reading	Consumer Behaviour and Marketing with Industrial Training
Eleanor Smith	Falmouth University	Graphic Design
Natasha Smith	University College, Birmingham	Sports Therapy
Hannah Stanton	University of Leicester	Ancient History and Archaeology, 2017
Amani Syed	University of Nottingham	Management
Lucy Visram-Cipoletta	University of Bath	Modern Languages and European Studies (Spanish and ab initio Italian)
Rhianna Voice	University of Cambridge	Classics
Emma Wallace	University of Exeter	English
Bingxuan Wang	University of Cambridge	Medicine, 2017
Beatrice Williams	Durham University	Economics
Eleanor-May Williams	University of Liverpool	Psychology
Jessica Wilson	University of Reading	Geography and Economics (Regional Science)
Mathilda Wylde		Applying 2017



Olympic Dreams come True

Over the summer, staff and pupils alike were captivated by television coverage of the fantastic Olympic Games in Rio and we were delighted to see two EHS Old Girls, Laura Whittle and Susie Rodgers, competing on the international professional sporting scene.

Old Girl Laura Whittle represented Great Britain in the 5,000m at the Rio Olympics.

Thirteen years after leaving Edgbaston High School my Olympic Dream came true!

The final part of my Olympic journey took place in Belo Horizonte where I spent 10 days in the Team GB training camp. Belo Horizonte is the sixth largest city in Brazil and our hotel overlooked Lake Pampulha, so most of my training took place around this large lake or at the athletics track. This camp was organised by the British Olympic Committee and was the base for all the sports representing Team GB. It was relaxing here and we were able to get on with our training away from all the Olympic excitement, while also supporting Team GB via the TV!



Laura, at the Olympic Village, Rio



Laura, front centre

Saturday 13 August arrived and it was my turn to leave the training camp and finally fly to Rio for the Olympic Games. We received our accreditations before we left for the airport, which was exciting as the final leg of the "Road to Rio" was about to begin! Sunday and Monday were spent relaxing and adjusting to the village, which was massive and like a small town. We stayed in high-rise apartments overlooking swimming pools, tennis courts, a cycle path and a McDonald's. Meal times were an experience as the dinner hall was at least the size of two full-size football pitches. Team GB tended to always sit in the same area, so it was always easy to find someone you knew! I was a little star-struck at my first breakfast as I saw the Olympic Decathlon Champion Ashton Eaton and Olympic Bronze medallist Brianne Theisen-Eaton eating their cornflakes!

The gun was fired and we all set off. A Japanese athlete started the quickest and soon built-up quite a lead, while the rest of the field were happy to run in a group. I found myself running wide on the outside of lane 1 for the first few laps, so moved forward to enable myself to run the shortest line, and ended up leading the chasing group as we tried to close down the Japanese athlete. This continued for about three laps and then the African athletes took over. Unfortunately when the pace really picked up with three laps to go I was unable to respond. I rallied all the way to line and finished in 10th place in 15.31, but sadly this position and time were not fast enough to allow me to qualify for the final.

It was my first Olympic Games, so I made sure that I enjoyed every step of the race. I came away from the race knowing that I had given it my all, but also filled with determination and desire to try and qualify for the Tokyo Olympics in four years' time!

Laura Whittle, née Kenny

On Monday 12 September, EHS Old Girl Susie Rodgers won a gold medal in the 50m butterfly swimming in a stunning performance at the Paralympic Games in Rio.

She has since become something of an internet sensation thanks to her incredulous reaction to winning gold! - the video footage has been shared and viewed thousands of times and was widely regarded as the enduring image of the games.

Susie certainly made her mark in Rio, kick-starting her winning streak with a bronze medal in the 50m freestyle swimming a week before winning gold.

Susie first competed on the international stage at the IPC World Championships in 2011. She was then selected to represent Great Britain at the London Paralympics in 2012 where she won bronze medals in the 100m freestyle and the relay, completing a hat trick of bronze medals by finishing third in the 400 metres freestyle.

Susie is well-remembered by EHS staff who recall her not only as a talented swimmer but as a keen musician too.

We send to Susie our warmest congratulations on this truly inspiring achievement.



Old Girls' News

Julia Ironside née Bailey, 1987

Julia (EHS 1975-1987) recently made the decision to return to education and has just graduated with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins. Her work presents a close examination of the quotidian, often bringing objects and materials from the natural world (or their semblances) into the gallery. Examples of Julia's work can be seen on the website: www.juliaironside.com

Julia lives in London with her husband, Hamish, and their daughter Aspen.

Kate Fisher, 1997

Congratulations to Kate Fisher who gave birth to identical twins in February 2016. Kate, a journalist and broadcaster, married Ben Martin last spring. After being stationed in Birmingham for ITV Central News for many years, Kate now lives in Washington DC where she is a journalist with a news bureau. Husband Ben is a camera man for Channel 4. Kate is very well-remembered and has returned to EHS several times in recent years including to speak at the opening of the Senior School's new development in 2011. Kate's mother Carolyn Fisher (née Smith) is also an Old Girl.



Kate Ibbotson, 2005

Kate Ibbotson (EHS 1998-2005) married Giles Prior in a wonderfully festive celebration on 18 December 2015 at Barnsley House in the Cotswolds. Kate was joined by EHS Old Girls Laura Broomhall, Meg Gardiner, Anna Jones, Caroline Langton, George Oakley, Rosanne Verow, Shaila Punn and Sarah Waterhouse (Shaila and Sarah not pictured).

Congratulations to Amie and Guriq

Congratulations to Amie Randhawa (née Shoebotham, 2002) on her recent nuptials. Amie was married to Guriq Randhawa, on 30th April 2016. Friends and family joined the couple for a fantastic wedding day which included a Sikh ceremony, a church wedding and a fantastic reception at Sherbourne Park. Amie's three bridesmaids were all Old Girls - Chloe Dove (née Jackson), Callie Levine (née Pomroy) and Sarah Williams. The wedding was attended by 15 Old Girls. Amie's mum, Veronica Shoebotham (née Vaughan) and her aunt, Diana Welsh (née Vaughan) who now lives in Australia.



From left to right: Annabel Preston (née Wingate), Annabel Fage (née Garland), Rose Parker, Alison Stacey, Joanna Bowles, Chloe Dove (née Jackson), Amie Randhawa (née Shoebotham), Sarah Williams, Callie Levine (née Pomroy), Gemma Westwood (née Shilcock), Lucy Williams, Lydia Fletcher, Stephanie Cartledge (née Allen) & Emily Hall.

Emily Price, 2011

After embarking on a Master's degree Emily achieved a distinction in her Masters of Molecular Neuroscience. Emily was delighted with this achievement and delighted to secure a position as a lab technician in the laboratory in which she conducted her research project. She hopes to continue with her research by studying for a PhD, commencing in September 2017.



Kate Ibbotson and friends

Emma Hall, 2015

Emma left EHS in 2015 to study English at the University of Exeter. Her course includes a year of study abroad and she is now studying at the University of Toronto where she recently had the pleasure of going to see critically-acclaimed author Margaret Atwood about her new book 'Hag Seed', a modern adaptation of The Tempest.

Farewell Clare and Penny

Each year the school bids farewell to departing staff but July 2016 saw fond goodbyes to two staff who had also been pupils at EHS.

Clare Whitney, née Little, attended as a pupil in Senior School, 1975-1980, before attending King Edward's College, Stourbridge to study A Levels in Latin and French. She then went on to obtain a 1st Class Hons degree in Latin from Leicester University.

Clare returned to EHS to teach Classics in September 2011, and had been Head of Department since 2014. She has now taken up a Classics post at Shrewsbury Girls' High School to enable her to work nearer to home.

Clare recalls, 'I have many memories of my time at EHS as a pupil, including the fun of taking part in many musical performances under

the direction of Miss Harper, a school trip to Switzerland and the tremble of fear at being sent to stand outside Miss Belton's office for wearing the wrong colour socks (the closest I got to being naughty!).

'It always amazes me how frequently I come across other Old Girls. It's a very small world. EHS is a unique school and one never truly leaves! I look forward to returning to Old Girls' reunions.'

Penny Searly, née Williams, started the school in Greenoaks in 1953 and continued right through until completing her studies in 1966. She returned to the school numerous



times during her career, teaching English, including Literature, which has been a real joy to her, Media Studies and more recently, she introduced Mindfulness to the curriculum. She also ran the Debating Club for the pupils. Penny's key memories include Miss Robinson checking her skirt length, the pleasure of participating in plays and concerts, being off-side in Hockey and the nerves and anticipation of A Level results day.

We wish both Clare and Penny much happiness in their future lives and hope that we will catch up with them soon at future OGA events.

1976 Leavers' Reunion



Sunday 15 May 2016 saw a wonderful reunion of 37 girls who left EHS in 1976. They met at the Botanical Gardens for a day of shared memories of school, as well as trying to catch up with each other's news from the past forty years.

Pam Tilt (née Senior) and Rachel Selby had worked particularly hard, using the internet and social media to contact as many as possible. Some had travelled especially from as far afield as Switzerland, Singapore and Belgium.

After lunch, some of the Old Girls were taken on a tour of School by Helen Jane Arnold who is currently on the School's Governing Council. It was fascinating to be shown all the developments, particularly as some had never been back to EHS since leaving. Miss Muffet (a past Head of Prep) joined the party for tea and enjoyed meeting up with those girls she had taught over fifty years ago.

All those present agreed what a lovely day it had been and they were looking forward to the next reunion!

Recipient of the Kathleen Elliot Travel Award, Anna Marshall (2015)

It was a great honour to be the recipient of this year's Kathleen Elliott Travel Award. The award enabled me to take my scuba diving course in Fiji in April 2016. I did the course with an organisation called 'Real Gap', the duration of which was two weeks. I had one-on-one lessons with a dive instructor who coached me through all of the necessary skills and theory for the written test and at the end of the two weeks I gained my PADI Open Water scuba diver qualification and then my PADI Advanced Open Water scuba diver qualification.

In order to gain my Open Water certification, we did a few dives in the pool initially so I could get used to the feel of wearing all of the scuba gear and the correct process for ascending and descending safely. I also had to master the gear preparation and assembly before entering the water. Some of the skills I learnt in the pool included regulator clearing (clearing water out of your mask), descending and equalizing, neutral buoyancy, cramp releases, mask removal and replacement and air awareness. At one point I also had to remove my scuba gear underwater and put it back on again all while breathing through the regulator which I found difficult because as soon as your tank is detached from your back you have to maintain your underwater balance whilst getting used to how weightless you suddenly feel. (There were also three crabs scuttling around in the bottom of that pool!)

Once I had completed all the confined water dives I went out on a boat and did a few dives on Fiji's Coral Coast. I only

saw a small section of the Coral Coast during my dives but what I did see was fascinating. Unfortunately, while I was there Fiji had a period of bad weather so my dive instructor said the visibility wasn't as good as it could be due to the runoff of water from the mainland. 12m visibility still seemed pretty impressive to me! After each dive I recorded the pressure of air in the tank, the duration of the dive and the maximum depth reached. On one occasion, I started the dive with 200 bar pressure and end up with 80 bar after a 40 min dive at a depth of 12m.

I did a total of four ocean dives to gain my Open Water certificate and I thoroughly enjoyed each one. On my first dive I saw a green turtle which was fascinating; they are so graceful underwater!

After my Open Water qualification, it was time to move on to the advanced Open Water dives. To gain the advanced qualification I had to complete an additional five dives, each one with a more specific focus. So for my five we chose to do the Advanced Drift dive, Naturalist dive, Deep dive, Boat dive and the Navigation dive. For me, the most interesting dives were the Naturalist dive and the Deep dive.



I found the Naturalist dive very enjoyable because we had the opportunity to observe the reef and jot down specific types of plants, invertebrates and vertebrates that we saw. The various species that we saw made me look forward to learning about them at university when I begin my degree in Marine Biology. We saw a wide variety of plant life including turtle grass and seagrass and saw invertebrates such as anemones, a pyramid cone shell, a harlequin shrimp, a hermit crab, a sea urchin and all of the coral. The pyramid cone shell was particularly interesting because you could see the long trailing sting that it laid out in the sand in order to stun other organisms - we had to avoid it carefully! We saw a blue spotted stingray, a grouper and a snapper (types of fish) and a baby anemone fish which we noted down as vertebrates. To be able to spot these fish I had to learn the characteristics they had that made them stand out. For example, groupers have short spiny dorsal fins that taper down to the tail. They are often dark brown or black with splotchy markings.

Alongside the Naturalist dive, the Deep dive was also fascinating because of how different things appear when you are 30m underwater. There is less coral that far down because of the reduced sunlight and this also means that colours are less vivid. At the surface, a colour chart with the colours of the rainbow on appeared as a chart of browns and dark purple when 30m underwater. When diving that deep we had to be aware of 'nitrogen narcosis', a feeling of overwhelming drowsiness and mental impairment that can be hazardous if not recognised in a timely manner: if either one of us was feeling the effects of nitrogen narcosis we had to ascend



to shallower depths until the symptoms subsided.

I had an amazing time on my scuba diving course and I am looking forward to continuing to dive in the future and develop my skill even further. I am interested in taking the night diver course because the ocean is bound to look spectacularly weird and wonderful at night due to all of the different nocturnal creatures that come out.

The ability to be a competent scuba diver will be an invaluable skill for a (future!) marine biologist to have and I look forward to using the knowledge I have learnt to help discover more about the aquatic world.

I am very grateful that the Kathleen Elliot Travel Award has enabled me to fund the trip.

Anna Marshall



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

Year 11 Leavers

ADAMS, Chloe
BROWNING, Ella
COOK, Holly
DRAYSEY, Georgina
DUNNAKER, Laura
EVANS, Rebecca
OSMAN-YAHIA, Leena
PERERA, Gabriella
PHILLIP, Hillary
POXON, Arabella
PRASADAM, Esther
RYAN, Zara R
SHIPLEY, Sophia
SYED, Amani
AHMED, Saira
BHATIA, Sunayna
CARR, Lucy C
CLUTTON-BROCK, Lucy A
JOHAL, Gurpreet
KATAMANENI, Vinisha
MUDHAR, Hurkeerit
NELSON, Millie
PRESSWOOD, Rebecca
SIMKISS, Chloe
SMITH, Eleanor
WALLACE, Emma
WILLIAMS, Eleanor-May
WYLDE, Mathilda
ALAM, Hanna
ALI, Almas
BAAJ, Tara
BROWN, Joanna
COOMBES, Eleanor
MAGUIRE, Finola
OHIZUA, Ofun
PATEL, Natasha
SHAH, Kimi
SHANNON, Katie
VISRAM-CIOLLETTA, Lucy
WANG, BingXuan
WILLIAMS, Beatrice

Year 12 Leavers

SAHOTA, Parveen
MUGHAL, Noor
LACROIX, Phoebe

Year 13 Leavers

AL-HINDAWI, Dominique
AQDIS, Maariyah
BLAKE, Ellenor A
HAROON, Amna
HEAD, Ruth
JOANNOU, Stavroulla
KANG, Abnasi J
LEYLAND, Molly
LIDDIARD, Francesca
MORRIS, Jodie
MURPHY, Susannah E
NEWTON, Chloe
ORR, Rachel
RAJU, Monica
SHORTLAND, Emma
STANTON, Hannah

Bethany Sounds Out Eton Choral Course

Over the summer, Head Girl Bethany Lucas participated in the prestigious Eton Choral Course, a week-long, residential summer courses for young singers, which provides intensive, fun weeks of training in singing and choral music. Here, Bethany tells us about one of the most challenging, yet rewarding, weeks of her life:

The Eton Choral Course, which I attended over the summer, was without a doubt, one of the most exhausting, challenging, intensive weeks of my life. I can also safely say it was one of the most rewarding. Nowhere else is your voice pushed to its limits in quite the same way as it is on these choral courses. Warm up started at 8.40am and we sang throughout the day till about 8.00pm, bearing in mind we also had to contend with the heat wave and hottest day of the year which coincided with the course.

Each day was a combination of Full Choir rehearsals with the 71 other participants on the course (many of these rehearsals were taken in the stunning Eton College chapel which is one of the most beautiful chapels I've ever seen), rehearsing in sectionals (which I took with the altos) and my consort (a smaller group of 12 singers). With the main choir we rehearsed a range of music, from traditional choral pieces as well as one very interesting modernist composition, which I really enjoyed learning. We had three performances as a main choir: first in Cambridge at Trinity College, then at Compline at Eton College Chapel and then Evensong in Windsor Chapel.

In our consorts we also worked on a close harmony, jazz piece which we workshopped with composer Alexander L'Estrange, as well as one sacred piece, which each consort performed at lunch as grace. As you can imagine, because of the sheer volume, difficulty and variety of repertoire we tackled in such a short space of time my sight reading skills were tested and challenged. However, I can tell it has made a huge difference and it is a

skill which will aid me significantly in my choirs, both now and in the future.

On top of these ensembles we had two individual music lessons and then a masterclass with our singing teachers and three other students. This was a particular highlight for me because the feedback we were all able to give each other was incredibly constructive and receiving personal tutelage from a world-class musician was a true privilege.



which I worked on in my singing lessons and the one I performed in the informal concert - Qui Sedes by Vivaldi - is the piece I performed in my audition for a choral scholarship at Oxford on the 27 September.

Perhaps the most surprising part of the course was the absolutely incredible support I received from the other students. Indeed, I am still in contact with friends I made and in September we held our official reunion where we not only got to catch up with one another but sang Evensong together in St Johns Chapel, Cambridge.

It was an incredible week and at the end of it I was invited to sing with the elite, professional Rudolphus choir - however, sadly my time commitments have meant I've been unable to meet the rehearsal days in London but at some point in the future I will hopefully get a chance!

The course has made such a big difference and as a result of the training I have been offered a choral scholarship at Oxford, which I will be able to undertake if I am academically accepted.

This whole experience has given me so many memories, taught me a huge amount and finally inspired me to wholeheartedly pursue singing as I leave EHS at the end of Year 13.

Bethany Lucas

Alongside Bethany, another EHS pupil, Rosie Howl, has also been offered a choral scholarship at Oxford. Our warmest congratulations to both girls on this fantastic achievement.



On Friday 25 November, guests gathered at a ceremony to mark the official opening of the Preparatory School's new building development.

The extension, completed in August last year, was declared officially open by the Rt Hon Sir Stephen Brown, former president of the School's Governing Council. He was joined by chair of the Governing Council, Jeremy Payne, Dr Ruth Weeks, Headmistress, and Sally Hartley, Head of Preparatory School, for a ribbon-cutting ceremony that took place in the impressive new Reception area.

The day's proceedings were enhanced by a visit from author and children's illustrator Shoo Rayner. Shoo, who was in school to deliver workshops to pupils throughout the course of the day, was on hand to open the newly extended library.

The cutting of the ribbon was met with a chorus of loud cheers from the girls who had gathered on the terrace to watch. Following tours to see the results of the building works, guests that included former staff and former headmistresses of the School were invited to tea in the spacious new Art Studio.

This event comes after more than a year of planning, design and construction. The



Guests gather for official opening of Preparatory School Extension

million-pound project, designed to extend and enhance facilities in the School's Preparatory Department, has resulted in a two storey extension to both the front and rear of the school. On the ground floor, the library has been extended and the façade of the Prep School has been transformed with an extended glass fronted Reception area. The dedicated art, design and exhibition space sits at the heart of the development.

Mrs Sally Hartley, Head of Preparatory School, said: "We are delighted to be able to officially open the new extension and are thrilled with the results. In particular, the provision of the new Art Room, which is housed on the first floor of the extension with glass frontage, has provided a light



Ruth Weeks, Elizabeth Mullenger and Laura Bartlett



Penny Birt and Pat Ritchie

and airy environment to allow the girls to extend their skills.

"The development has also provided more staff work space as well as some much-needed storage space."

The Preparatory School's extension is the latest in the School's ongoing programme of refurbishment and development. In 2011, the School completed building works to enhance the Senior School, resulting in a new Reception area, extended library and a state-of-the-art Sixth Form centre complete with new classrooms.

Official photocall outside the impressive new Prep Reception entrance

Summer Supper 2016



Following the brief formalities of the OGA AGM, the Summer Supper is always a lively event, with plenty of chatter and catching up. In June, ex staff and past pupils came together for a wonderful evening, enjoying the delicious food. Once again the Catering team at the school did us proud - even chocolate concrete made an appearance on the menu!

This year opera singer Sally Bruce-Payne was our guest of honour. Whilst at Edgbaston High School, Sally's talent for singing was already evident, often performing solo during choral works. It is no surprise to her peers that she has gone on to have an amazing career, singing as a member of The Sixteen and Monteverdi Choir. She

has worked with leading conductors, orchestras and choirs around the world, appeared as a soloist in many of the major concert halls and has recorded a wide repertoire along with radio and television broadcasts.

Sally spoke incredibly fondly about her time at EHS and will always be grateful for the tutelage and guidance that she received from her teachers, but she also emphasised that there has been no shortcut to her success - practise, practise and more practise.

The evening ended with farewells to leaving staff, who were presented with a gift and a brooch from the OGA, one of whom, Penny Searley, was an Old Girl herself.



Anne Howarth and Lindsay Lucas



Julia Blake, Priti Bansal and Sue Mobley



Sally Hartley and Lesley Barton

Address by Sally Bruce-Payne, Summer Supper 2016

Thank you so much for inviting me back to school! It's such a nostalgic moment for me, in a place where some of my happiest memories were formed!

I'd love to share some of these memories with you and how they influenced my journey into the wonderful and often rather bizarre professional musical world. I was back in Birmingham last year to celebrate my father's investiture as an Honorary Fellow of the Birmingham Conservatoire. It was suggested that as I was child-free that day we should go and see some old haunts. We went firstly to Hallfield School, where my mother was Head of Music and St George's Church where my father played the organ and I sang in his choir, and, of course, where the School had its annual Carol services, for which he used to play.

I often think of EHS and have been curious to come back and see how things might have changed.

The entrance is not as I remember it. You now enter into what was our locker room! How unexpected it was to come into a very glamorous reception area WITH A LIFT! Girls can come and go through the Ante Hall which was an absolute no-no when I was a pupil here. It was saved for exceptional events!

As I walked back along the corridor towards to main hall it all came flooding back to me. I absolutely loved being at school here. They really formed my happiest days and I didn't want to miss a day of it! The energy and exhilaration I felt here has stayed with me ever since.

It could be that I had come from the little state primary school Harborne Junior School. Or that I had a few nail-biting days on the waiting list anxious to see if I'd be accepted. I just know that I was overwhelmed by the incredible space and facilities and an enormous number of older girls! I knew I was privileged to be studying here.

Interestingly, although I was incredibly well taught here I never felt pressurised or not good enough. Quite the reverse in fact! I was presented with countless opportunities to learn about who I was and where my passions might lie. On reflection, I think that this was an incredibly empowering experience for me. As women and young girls we are only too aware of our own faults and negative demons. We often don't



Sally Bruce-Payne

need these pointing out to us. But rather, being accepted and encouraged really brought out the very best in me.

Times have changed of course for pupils and staff with many more pressures for both in an active and successful school. I have three children of my own. What I observe is how much pressure everyone is put under today and this makes me even more appreciative of what a golden time it was for me here. My children are quite bewildered by this notion that I actually 'enjoyed' my school days.

I also recognise how many opportunities were possible to experience then too. I was so honoured in the Sixth Form to become St. David's House Captain and the School Sports Captain with Swimming Captain for good measure! I believe I was the first music scholar here too, and gather that has been running ever since.

It was possible for me to pursue county hockey, county swimming, school gymnastics, play for a tennis club, do 4 hours cello practice a day and do my homework! There was even time for the City of Birmingham Schools Orchestra and singing in the wonderful Ex Cathedra Choir. What opportunities!

The important thing I learnt from fitting in all these activities was not only good time management skills but also that by spreading your interests, if one interest was disrupted for some reason there was plenty else to keep positive about. That has been a huge lesson for me in my work as a professional opera singer.

It was here under the guidance of the lovely Pam Jelf and Margaret Harper



Sue Mason, Lesley Barton and Pam Nix

that my certainty that I wanted to pursue a music career was realised. Triple music for A level on a Friday afternoon was a joy and an oasis! Every time I hear our set works Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet or Rodrigo's Guitar Concerto I remember the late Miss Jelf with enormous fondness. As a pupil and then busy out in the world forging my career I never took the time to revisit and thank her. It's a huge regret. She'll never know what a profound impact she made on me. I wonder how many former pupils feel this way and have never got round to letting their influential teacher know how much they meant to them? Miss Jelf gave endless hours of her break time to make sure my keyboard skills were up to scratch. I was a cellist and was allowed to practice during break times if I wanted to and was given permission to regularly take the train to London to visit my teacher who was a professor at The Guildhall School of Music.

So here it all began, my first major learning curve: I didn't get a choral scholarship to Claire College Cambridge as I'd so desperately wanted. However my life did not end even though I thought it might!!! I went to Bristol University to read music. And this is where two of the most important



Sheila Palfry and Susan Wakefield (Horsman)



Stella Pinkess and Angela Ferguson

things in my life happened. I was one of only a handful of practical musicians on my course as most others were composers and purely academics. Because of this I was asked to perform very regularly as lead cellist in the orchestra and getting paid concerts singing for local choral societies. I would not have had so much experience and exposure had I been one of a number of very competent musicians at Cambridge. The other and MOST important thing that happened was that I met my future husband - he made sure I singled this out as the IMPORTANT fact! - a non-musician and grounding force for the years of musical globe-trotting that followed!

I gained a place to study as a postgraduate at the Royal College of Music. I chose to do this as it has the reputation as being one of the best, if not the best, musical institutions in the world. My grandmother, mother and father had all studied there and I rather liked it too! I had always sung and been immersed in the world of music. My father was an organist and head of the choir school at Westminster Abbey, where we lived in the cloisters and my mother was an organist. So I'd always sung and had a comprehensive schooling in church music repertoire.

But nothing could have prepared me for what awaited at the Royal College. Within the first few weeks of being there Harry Christopher's (conductor of the professional choir The Sixteen) came in to work with us and left hiring me to work

with the group. This was my ultimate goal with my singing and I'd only just started my course. This was closely followed by a visiting agent taking me on her books. She and her lovely husband would come to support all my concerts and usually drive me home after. She guided me carefully with which repertoire to take on and which to leave.

Everything you do has an impact on your voice and there are some quirky things a singer might do including going on complete voice rest, taking a humidifier on your travels to counteract the air-conditioned hotel rooms and wearing a surgical mask when flying from one gig to another as the aeroplane is so dehydrating for the vocal chords and germs are easily spread.

On one such occasion on a flight to Japan I'd come from a performance at Cardiff Central Hall and driven overnight to get to Gatwick Airport in time for a very early flight. I put on my surgical mask, which happened to be overly large and black, making me look more like Darth Vader! I had to step off the flight and literally go straight to the Concert Venue to perform an opera I'd been rehearsing in London but had never so much as seen my costume or the stage in Japan. I needed to arrive in as good as shape as possible as it was going to be filmed live for the Arts Channel.

I later learnt from John Elliot that this had been my 'test' and from then on offers of solo work with him came thick and fast. The American agent, IMG, then offered to take me on their books. I also won a major singing competition called the Lady Nixon Award and took myself off to America to study for a short time with my winnings. Then followed years of back-to-back travelling in my 20's and early 30's. I'd be

I was ok. To which I replied that I had to 'sing an opera' as soon as I landed. When I arrived and left the plane the same air steward came up to me and said, at a distance, 'Have a good operation'.

So I'd achieved my goal of singing with The Sixteen and had the added bonus of an agent. Work was flooding in and all my study time at the Royal College of Music was taken up by preparing for the next professional engagement. I felt I didn't really know how to sing and what to aim for next. Again, it became a private and very personal path of discovery for me. Almost in answer to this I received a phone call quite out of the blue from the Monteverdi Choir conducted by Sir John Elliot Gardiner. I'd had a rare night off and a few too many glasses of wine. At first I thought it was a prank call from a fellow student. No one gets cold-called by Sir John Gardiner! But the clipped and offended voice on the other end of the line sobered me up instantly. I couldn't possibly go and sing for this world renowned conductor unprepared and slightly hungover....so I declined! This was immediately followed by a phone call from my agent ordering me to phone them back, say I'd be there, drink a gallon of water and go back to bed! Which I did.

The strangest of all places I warmed up was on a beautiful country estate in Norfolk. The owners of the estate didn't realise what was entirely meant by 'warming up' so I was given a stable with a very large horse still in it! I sang a little, very quietly, and the horse eyed me suspiciously, so I carried on until I gauged my luck was about to run out!

I've been incredibly privileged to have worked with many of the finest conductors in the world and they have been a colourful and varied bunch. I think some would be certifiable were they not so utterly brilliant at what they do! There have been so many memorable moments.

I unexpectedly became pregnant with my 1st child. This was not in the plan - my diary was booked five years in advance, as is normal, but we hadn't scheduled in a family! Having become what I felt was sometimes a commodity for the big business of the world of Opera I suddenly knew very strongly that I did not want to travel at this pace. I say commodity as it's all too easy to lose a sense of who one fundamentally is.

For example, I did an interview for a glossy magazine. After they had made me up



Sally and Laura eating pud

out of the country for roughly 10 months of the year. Sometimes performing operas, many concerts, recordings and broadcasts on TV and radio.

The stamina and discipline I needed were immense. I would prepare, prepare and prepare some more. Preparation was absolutely key. I was flying, usually alone, around the world. Sometimes it was all very glamorous and others it was very basic. I had to be prepared for anything! For example, there was many an occasion I'd be travelling to France by Eurostar and need to arrive having warmed up my voice and ready to rehearse. So I'd just have to improvise and use the only warm up facility available...the Eurostar Loo! There was frequently a line of very perplexed fellow travellers waiting when I came out!

I'll never forget looking at the children and seeing the joy in their faces. I hadn't sung a note in a very long time but when I did it was one of the most rewarding performances I'd ever given!

Returning to my performing a few years later I decided not to return to the big, commercial side but rather to use the contacts I'd made and had enjoyed working with. Also I've really enjoyed performing to raise money for various charities and I occasionally get time to do masterclasses for young professionals which I thoroughly enjoy.

My children all have their own pursuits and I constantly juggle all these demands with family life and my performing. Not always terribly well, but we get there somehow muddling through. Sophie is now part of the England Swimming Team I have a lot of 5.30am get ups and very late bed times. How history repeats itself!

To conclude, I think my message to any aspiring young musician would be to prepare, prepare and prepare some more! There is just no short cut to hard work. You have to put in the hours and make the most of the opportunities you're given, good and bad. And most importantly, and particularly as a woman - that you can have it all - but not necessarily at the same time! And to acknowledge each stage that comes along and embrace it.

That's my challenge.



Lesley Bowler, Celia Bell, Anna Stanley

to look the way they wanted I was taken around Notting Hill to a very swanky restaurant and was photographed and interviewed there as we walked around the area. When the magazine came out I hardly recognised myself and the only fact they had reported correctly was my name! The rest was entirely fabricated. I was pictured sitting in the garden used for the film Notting Hill, which they said was my garden. They also said I liked to ride a bike around Notting Hill with onions around my neck! News to me!

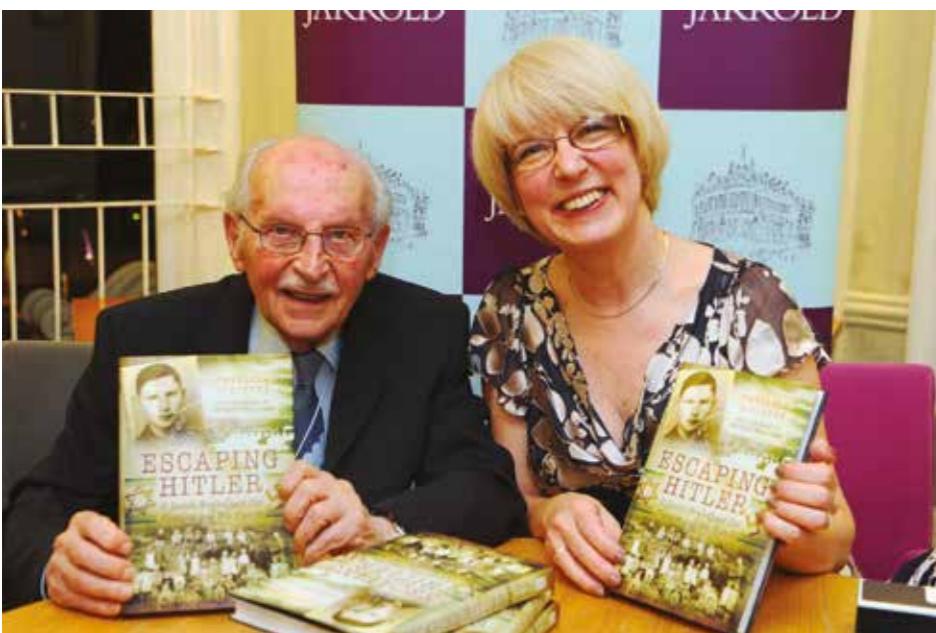
I was due to record Mozart's Requiem in Singapore and race back to do the opening night of The Proms. I knew instinctively that I needed to stop! On reflection I'd had no work/life balance. It had all been work, work, work....which was fine at the time. Things change of course and suddenly it was all life and no work....

Sophie arrived in 2002, Jamie in 2003 and Jemima in 2004! When Sophie was very small she had a virus that put her in Birmingham Children's Hospital. Whilst she was there I stayed with her and I observed the other children, some of whom were extremely poorly and would never leave the hospital, and some who were visited only once a week or month by parents because of the cost of living a great distance away. It struck me how bored they were. The highlight of their day was when the nurse came in to administer their medication. The busy nurses could only ever spare a minute or two. So I offered to sing a few nursery rhymes to them.

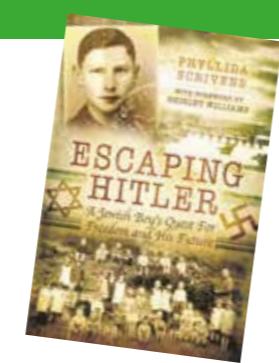
Margaret and her Refugee

Over the period 2013-15, author Phyllida Scrivens was in correspondence with Anne Howarth, the School archivist, about her research into Margaret Free, a former student of Edgbaston High School. Margaret was a student at EHS for just a short time from 1943-47, until she died of an hereditary condition, aged 13. Phyllida shares with us excerpts of the remarkable story of Margaret and the Free family and their significance in her novel 'Escaping Hitler'.

Erich seemed to know where to take me. We took another bus to Moseley and walked down Yardley Wood Road, a street of solid-looking houses with small neat flower gardens next to the road. Erich knocked on a door and a lady opened it. She was obviously expecting me and I clearly remember that she had a smile on her face. I did what all Germans did, the way of greeting someone you don't know. You shook their hand, bowed your head and clicked your heels together. I had learnt a few words in English but I got things mixed up and as I shook hands with her I said, "Goodbye".



Joe and Phyllida at the book launch in Norwich, February 2016



These are the words of ninety-two year old Joe Stirling from Norwich, born Günter Stern in the Rhineland village of Nickenich in 1924. The lady answering the door in July 1939 was Freda Free, daughter of Russian Jews, Oxford graduate and mother to seven-year-old Margaret, who in May 1943 would become a student at Edgbaston High School for Girls.

For the past five years Joe has been sharing with me his memories of over eighty years, resulting in the publication of my debut biography, Escaping Hitler. The only child of Alfred Stern, a Jewish cattle dealer and his wife Ida, Günter's early childhood in a rural idyll was disturbed in 1933 when Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. Over time, loyal customers began boycotting Alfred's business, family meals were reduced to potatoes, friends turned away and following the horrific events of Kristallnacht in November 1938, Günter's future was decided. His parents applied for him to join a Kindertransport to take him to a new life in England. Günter was impatient, setting off on a lone seven-day walk across Europe to reach

safety. His plan did not work out quite as he hoped, but he finally left Nazi Germany in July 1939 on the final refugee train out of Cologne before war broke out. Günter would never see his parents again.

Decades later I was fortunate enough to hear the details of this story from the man himself, during a public event in Norwich. I was transported to another time and instinctively knew that this man's story would become my debut book. During an initial visit to his home, Joe offered me some old documents, treasured for many years. Amongst them was the Last Will and Testament of his foster mother Freda Free, written shortly before her premature death from a genetic disorder in 1952. Amongst a number of bequests Freda instructed: 'One thousand pounds to be paid to the Edgbaston High School for Girls, the said sum to be devoted to the setting up of equipment and maintenance of a Library to be known as "The Margaret Free Library".

During March 1947, while Günter was serving in the British Army, thirteen-year-old Margaret died of the illness inherited from her mother. Günter had lost a second family. Moved and intrigued by these tragic events, I contacted Anne Howarth, Archivist at Edgbaston High School, who immediately sent me information, photos and documents about young Margaret Free. In December 1956 the school magazine Laurel Leaves, carried a report from the recently appointed Headmistress Miss Hopkins. She wrote: 'I want to tell you of a generous gift to the school in a legacy from Mrs Freda Free. She has left £1,000 for the equipment and maintenance of a library as a memorial to her daughter, who was at the school from May 1943 to March 1947. We shall use this for all the new equipment needed in our library, which will then be called the Margaret Free

Memorial Library. I am told that Margaret was a brilliant girl.'

Unlike Margaret, Günter finished his education in Lydney, Gloucestershire with the evacuated Yardley Grammar School, made possible by a bursary awarded to the refugee by the Cadbury family. He went on to join the British Army during WW2, ran the Education Corps in Portsmouth, before marrying his sweetheart and living with her family in Attleborough, Norfolk. In 1949 he moved to Norwich with his young family. The city is his home to this day. Over the next seventy years he would repay the country who gave him life through tireless charitable work, his year as Sheriff of Norwich and as a businessman and employer in his pioneering travel business Stirling Travel, still remembered by many older people in the city. For the past few years Joe has captivated audiences with his stories, now accompanying me on numerous public speaking engagements. His achievements are many but without the kindness and generosity of Oliver and Freda Free, along with Margaret, young Günter's future could have been so very different.

Phyllida Scrivens, Norwich

Escaping Hitler: A Jewish Boy's Quest for Freedom and His Future by Phyllida Scrivens was published by Pen and Sword Books in January 2016. Available from Amazon.co.uk or for more details on how to order signed copies direct from the author see <https://escapinghitler.com> or call Phyllida Scrivens on 01603 300212.



Margaret, as she was when Gunther first arrived in Birmingham

An Interview with Meg Gardiner



This year, we were delighted to welcome Old Girl Meg Gardiner (2005) to speak at Speech Day. Year 13 student Sioned Gill managed to catch up with Meg before the start of the ceremony. Sioned takes up the report:

Final preparations for Speech Day were underway: the choir had completed their final rehearsals and guests were being ushered into their seats. Before the start of the ceremony, I had the pleasure of conducting an interview with Old Girl Meg Gardiner. After leaving EHS in 2005 she went on to complete a Music with Educational Studies degree at Cambridge University before venturing into the legal sector.

Sioned: You did a music degree after you left EHS - how did you find your way into law from music?

Meg: I had played a lot of music whilst I was at school (Meg played the oboe and violin while at EHS as well as singing in various choirs) and obviously enjoyed my degree but felt even though I really loved music, I did need a change upon graduating and really just stumbled upon law as being a career I might enjoy. I then went on to complete a law degree and ended up qualifying as a solicitor. I completed my training contract at an American Law firm in London. I felt that my love of music allowed me to engage in a degree I really enjoyed and acted as a good transition from degree to career.

Sioned: As you said you went on to qualify as a solicitor and now work as a lawyer. What would you say is your favorite part of your job?

Meg: I work as a solicitor in the Enforcement Division of the financial services regulator, the Financial Conduct



Authority (FCA). This means I work to ensure that firms and individuals operating in the UK Financial Services sector, abide by the relevant rules. Where those financial services institutions, someone working at those institutions, or someone trading in UK listed stocks or shares, commits unacceptable or improper behavior (such as insider dealing), they might get referred to my team to investigate them and to come to a resolution. That resolution might be a public notice stating what they've done wrong, and if it's in relation to an individual stating that they can no longer work in the industry, or imposing a financial penalty, or getting a criminal conviction and them being sent to prison. I have played key roles in recent large, high profile investigations into wholesale firms; my favourite part of the job really is feeling that at the end of each investigation, I really have, "made a difference".

Sioned: Equality is still a big issue within today's society; as a woman do you feel that in the legal sector women are fairly represented, in comparison to men?

Meg: If I am being honest, no. I think the statistics are something like 48% of lawyers in the UK are female but there is a huge imbalance as to what level of seniority those female lawyers are at and the attitudes towards those female lawyers in some

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working environments. When I first joined the profession, the statistics were a lot lower than they are now. In recent years, the legal profession has started to acknowledge and tackle the issue of ensuring female lawyers remain in the profession for as long as they are able to and that they have access to the same development opportunities as their male counterparts thus ensuring that there should be equal opportunities for female lawyers in more senior roles. Although I think it is things are improving, there is some way to go.

Sioned: I know you didn't take the most traditional route to becoming a lawyer but what advice would give to any girls considering a career in law?

Meg: I have always taken the approach of doing something you enjoy. I studied Music at university because it was a subject I truly enjoyed, not because I had a focus on what career I was going to follow. The same would go for pursuing a career in law. "Law" covers a huge spectrum of subject matters and there are so many different areas one can specialize in. If you are really interested in becoming a lawyer, I would suggest finding an area that really interests you. The main way this is going to come about is by completing some work experience or starting to read the huge wealth of material that is out there. I remember interviewing someone for a training contract. They had not completed a law degree and hadn't yet begun any of their formal legal training. I knew that they were going to be a good fit when they began to discuss legal principles they had been exposed to in the TV Show "Making a Murderer". OK, so the show is American and the law is different from the law in the UK but that individual had been able to digest the US legal principles, researched the UK equivalent and begun

to form a view on its applicability in certain situations.

Sioned: Outside of your career in law, I have read that you are a keen rugby player (Meg plays for Wimbledon Ladies in the Front Row, she is also the Honorary Secretary of the Club). How exactly did you get into rugby?

Meg: All my brothers and sisters had played rugby and I'd always wanted to play myself. I started playing at University and started by playing 7s for my college. I ended up representing Cambridge in two Varsity matches against Oxford and I also enjoyed a season as President of the Women's rugby club whilst in my final year. I now play at Wimbledon RFC in the Championship of the women's game and I am Honorary Secretary of that Club as well.

Sioned: You are also on the RFU Disciplinary Panel which deals with foul play and misconduct. Do you feel your role as a lawyer has helped you in this role?

Meg: I was very lucky that the opportunity came up to sit on the RFU Disciplinary Panel in 2014 and I jumped at the chance. I have always been interested in the causes of deviance in the sport and the links between misconduct, foul play and the law and so taking on this voluntary role with the RFU was a natural progression for me. I sit on a panel of three people who hear cases of foul play and misconduct in mainly the professional game but, in really serious cases, also the top level of the amateur game. Whilst in this role, I've heard cases where players have caused serious physical injury to other players, cases of drug abuse and cases where players have committed verbal abuse to referees or other players (including cases of racial abuse). My legal analytical skills certainly help me in this role but my years of experience as a player do as well. I mainly deal with minor issues within the top levels of the amateur

league but am sometimes involved in the professional levels too. It can be funny when I sit on a panel with two ex-rugby playing men sat opposite a current professional player; sometimes I think there might be a misconception that I know nothing about rugby, I'm just the lawyer in the room – well, that is until I start talking!

Sioned: One last question, if you could invite four people to a dinner party who would they be? They can be living or dead.

Meg: That's a hard question; in being invited here to speak this evening, I've enjoyed having the time to reminisce on school days and remind myself of this wonderful school's history. I would invite EHS's first Headmistress, Alice Cooper, Jessie Owens (he was a black athlete who won four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Olympic games during Hitler's rule of Germany), Hillary Clinton (at the time she had recently lost the USA presidential election) and Nigel Owens (he is one of three professional referees with the Welsh Rugby Union and one of the few male rugby professionals to be openly gay). I'd be hugely interested to understand from all of these individuals the barriers they faced and how they overcame them to be so successful.

We had to finish the interview at that point; the bell had sounded indicating that the ceremony was about to begin and Meg was needed downstairs to take her place in the procession. On behalf of everyone at EHS I would like to thank Meg again for her interview and for attending Speech Day in the capacity of Guest Speaker.

Sioned Gill, Year 13