

Chelmsford County High School for Girls

Alumnae Newsletter



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We hope you enjoy this Newsletter!

Winter 2021

Issue 6



Headteacher's Welcome

I begin this introduction and welcome to the latest edition of our Alumnae Newsletter with the remarks I delivered at our end of term assembly, just before we broke for the Christmas holiday. These words, I hope, provide a flavour of where we were as a school, as we, and you, continue to navigate life though the pandemic.

There is much uncertainty right now. A new variant of the virus. Concerns about national restrictions. Political disquiet. And worries about: 'what next?'

But I wonder if now is the time for taking both comfort and strength from those things we sometimes take for granted: our friends, who are always by our sides; our families who are always in our corner; this school community, where we support each other, and cheer each other on.

In a hi-tech age, fuelled by smart devices, endless data and ever-present social media, there is one thing, I think, that the past 20 months has shown: there is nothing more powerful than human contact and human interaction. A cheering smile, a warm 'hello', a heartfelt 'goodbye', a caring question - just taking the time to notice another person.

Take care of yourselves. Look out for and look after each other. And enjoy your time with your families and your friends.

Earlier in the Autumn Term, in greeting parents at our Year 13 Parents' Evening, very many parents spoke about the fact that this was their final formal event at the school, before their daughters move on next year. My initial reaction to this was one of sadness. School staff experience these moments of transition sensitively. We are always so happy for the brilliant young women, who grace this school, as they prepare for the next steps in their lives: whether it be university, an apprenticeship, a gap year, work experience, or another adventure. The reality is, though, that we really miss them when they leave their school. We work hard to build and maintain strong relationships with our students. When they join us in Year 7, Year 12, or in another year group, the students become part of a community which cares for and about them, advocates for them, celebrates them, and cheers them on.

My deeper reflection on these exchanges at the Parents' Evening is one of optimism for these students - indeed for all our students. How fortunate are the people who will, in the future, come to meet and know, and call friend, CCHS graduates. The universities, companies and organisations will benefit greatly as they welcome them. They will bring with them, as they have done for generations now, their ambition, integrity, compassion, and boundless energy to envision a world bettered through hard work, imagination and sorority.

For now, we are blessed that they are here with us, as we work with them - in the classrooms, on the sports field, during House events, the school production, the dance show, and the countless clubs and societies - to maintain and develop a school dedicated to, and a community committed to, excellence in girls' education and empowerment.

Headteacher's Welcome

In so many ways our dear friend and colleague Mr Moore exemplifies what this school stands for. Moreover, the outpouring of heartfelt support and fond recollections from so many members of the CCHS Alumnae is both a testament to Mr Moore's qualities, and the integrity of former students. I visited Mr Moore over the Christmas period, taking with me the dozens of cards, emails, messages and gifts from so many of you. Mr Moore was so moved by this attention and support- he asked me to pass on his sincere and grateful thanks to you all.

I hope you continue to follow our developing change@cchs work, through the updates hosted on the school website. And as things begin to settle down with the virus, it would be wonderful to start welcoming former students back to visit your school. We hope you will be pleased to see the new Sports Centre, teaching block and Library.

In the meantime, I add my best wishes to the CCHS Alumnae and thank you for your continued contact with us and encouragement of our work.

Year 7 students during the first week of the Autumn term 2021, enjoying getting to know their new school environment and their new friends.



Mr Moore (above) in full teaching flow with his Economics students before his move from the demountable on the field, which many former students will remember, into his new classroom in the main school building.

New Year, New Buildings and Some New Names!

Apart from the welcome absence of some of the most trying of the Covid regulations under which we worked in 2020-21, one of the great joys of the first days of term was the sight of even the most senior staff and students trying to find their way to their classrooms. This was because of a decision taken in summer 2021 to try and bring a little more logic to the system of room numbering in the school and at the same time to record and use the names of many of the school's former headteachers.

Therefore:

The original school building and its various extensions are now known as the Vernon-Harcourt building, with rooms V1 to V24. Miss Mabel Vernon Harcourt was the first head mistress of CCHS, serving from 1907 to 1910. She left CCHS in 1910 just before her marriage; in those days marriage was not (for a woman) seen as compatible with school leadership or indeed employment in the teaching profession.



The Science building which was opened in 1994 was at that time named after Miss Geraldine Cadbury, headteacher from 1935 to 1961. This name had fallen into disuse in the intervening years but we hope to remember Miss Cadbury's commitment to the school more often by reverting to using the name for this building and its rooms C1 to C8.

The Music building which opened in 2007 has been named after Miss Pattison who was headteacher from 1961 to 1979. This contains rooms P1 to P7.



A wonderful picture from our archives (left) showing three of our former Headmistresses together. They must have had many interesting stories to share of their years at CCHS.

New Year, New Buildings and Some New Names!



The Languages Building which was built in 2013 was in 2017 named after Dame Margaret Anstee, who studied at the school from 1937 to 1944 and was the first female Under-Secretary General of the United Nations. Its rooms are now A1 to A12.



The new teaching block which opened in September has been named after Miss Bancroft, headteacher from 1911 to 1935. This replaces the old Bancroft building which was opened in 1949 and demolished in 2018.

The new Sports Hall complex has been named after Mrs Nicole Chapman, headteacher from 2007 to 2019 whose vision and efforts contributed so much to making the development possible.



Mrs Chapman right, and left at her farewell reception in July 2019.

Below, another photo from our archives showing three former Headmistresses together in school. This was marking the occasion of the school's 80th birthday.



Pictures of the new (and old) buildings are included later in this publication.



Music, Drama and Dance

Readers will be aware of the very serious impact which the pandemic has had on all aspects of education and of the extraordinary measures which schools and teachers have taken to ensure that lessons and learning have continued. It has, however, been a great sadness that extra-curricular activities have been severely affected by the rules and regulations under which schools have been operating. At various times regulations and guidance have prohibited group singing, the playing of wind and brass instruments in ensembles, physical exercise inside and above all the mixing of year groups.

With the almost total closure of the school site from January to March 2021 and the obvious impossibility of bringing audiences together in close proximity, it is not surprising that we were not able to run our normal events such as the school concerts, the annual school production and the Dance Show.

The 2020 and 2021 Christmas Concerts were presented as pre-recorded online events and at the time of writing we are rehearsing for both a school play and the Dance Show; confidence remains high that we will be able to run these events as normal, albeit with some restrictions in place. For all students and staff who participate in and oversee these events they are valuable parts of the school year which do much to help our students develop their skills and confidence and we look forward to reporting on their return in the next edition of the Alumnae Newsletter.

As we do not have photographs from events in 2021 we offer below and overleaf a selection of archive pictures of school productions and events over the years.



A Midsummer Night's Dream – 2006



Music, Drama and Dance



Pygmalion – 2012



*Dance Show
Rehearsal
2013 –
'Spectrum'*



*House Karaoke –
Year 13 2016
(left)*



*Macbeth – 2017
(right)*



*Oliver – 2019
(above and right)*





The whole school community has continued to engage with our Change project, thinking hard about ways in which the school can contribute to the building of a respectful society which values diversity.

Over the last term we have been thinking about three key issues:

Ways in which we as a school community can celebrate and value diversity in terms of race, religion and ethnicity. As in past years we marked Black History Month in October, this year focusing explicitly on the theme of 'Proud to Be'. An excellent assembly was delivered by senior students and our Change and Diversity Prefects have been reflecting on ways in which the school can broaden its work so as to ensure that we continue to think about the significant themes raised in Black History Month throughout the entire year.

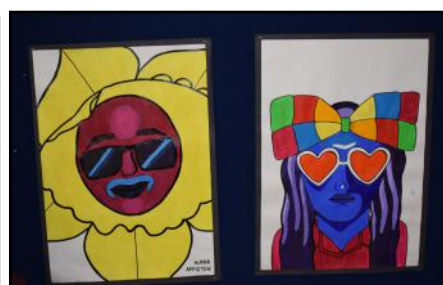
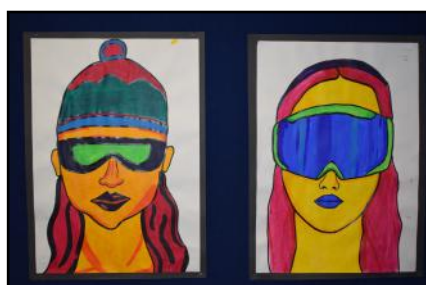
Mr Harvey, Subject Leader for Art and one of our School Development Leaders, launched his school development research project on Inclusivity (which includes LGBTQ+) to teaching staff. Attendees were invited to share their current understanding of inclusivity. Information was collated and analysed and gave a real insight into the areas where we can make the biggest impact. The next step for this project is to work with our students on the areas they would like to develop; this will help to inform the direction of the research project. An 'Art is for Everyone' display has been erected in V23 and V24 to celebrate inclusivity.





We have also been researching further into current thinking about Neurodiversity. Neurodiversity is the diversity of ways in which humans think, learn, and relate to others and it is estimated that around 20% of the population may be categorised as neurodiverse, with differences in brain function such as those exhibited by people diagnosed with dyslexia, ADHD or autism. We are happy to accept that different plants need different environments to thrive yet are often too quick to assume all young people will benefit from the same environment and inputs. Recognising that there are different but equally valid ways of doing things and promoting acceptance of individuality and difference are key to increasing self-esteem, confidence, and achievement in individuals. This continues to be a focus of Mrs Adams, our SEN coordinator and of all members of staff.

'Born This Way' - Senior Prefects led this fundraising event in Summer 2021



Artwork Display – 2017

News from Former Students

We do enjoy hearing from former students about what they are up to post-CCHS. Feel free to contact us by emailing oldgirls@cchs.essex.sch.uk or by posting your news on our Alumnae Facebook group (CCHS Alumnae).

Back in February 2021 we heard from a former student, Wendy. Here is what she had to say:

'I attended CHS as Wendy Hall from 1974-81. I wasn't one of the high flyers, got bored easily and was useless at sport. My father thought post-18 education was wasted on girls. Fortunately he managed to be persuaded that occupational therapy would definitely result in a job, which was a key consideration in the early 1980s, with recession and record unemployment. I went to Dorset House School of Occupational Therapy in Headington, Oxford in Autumn 1981 and worked from qualifying in 1984 until I had to retire early through ill health in 2018. I got my MSc in 2002 and PhD in 2008'.

Wendy has gone on to great things and been awarded the prestigious honour of a Fellowship by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists. She is also the Honorary Professor of Occupational Therapy at the University of Essex, having led the MSc programme and then the academic occupational therapy team until her retirement.

Below is an extract from the letter Wendy received from the Royal College of Occupational Therapists:

'I am delighted to inform you of Council's decision, made at its recent meeting, to award you a Fellowship of the Royal College of Occupational Therapists. This is in recognition of the exceptional contribution you have made to the profession and to the Association and Royal College over many years. You have influenced practice, education and research nationally and internationally and your impact in mental health and occupational science - notably occupational justice - has been significant.

This award is the highest honour that the Royal College can bestow on one of its professional members'.

We are sure you will join us in offering Wendy many congratulations! We are always keen to hear from our former students so do please keep in touch. Ways to do this are shown later in this Newsletter. Wendy has also kindly offered to share more details with any student who is interested in occupational therapy and we are grateful for this offer of support to our students.

Biro drawing of the school by former student, Jessica.



CCHS Alumnae



@CCHSAalumnae

More News from Former Students

We heard via our Alumnae Facebook page about the award of an OBE to Lt. Col. Emma Hutley. Cath Possamai, former student, posted this on 31st December (after the publication of last year's Alumnae Newsletter), and we have obviously been keen to share this news more widely via the 2021 Alumnae Newsletter! You will see from the screenshot of Cath's facebook post below, that Emma and Cath attended CCHS from 1987 to 1993. Emma is a doctor in the Army and has led some critical work in the military response to Covid.



From the archives.... 1950s CCHS....

Severe Overcrowding

In the 1958 Speech Day report it was noted that the school was struggling from a lack of space for the number of pupils. There was now an urgent need for the extra buildings promised twenty years earlier.

In the late 1950s nearly £137,000 was allocated for a long overdue and much needed school building enlargement programme.

More space would arrive in 1961.



Higher Education

In 1959 Miss Cadbury reported that, generally, only 50% of High School pupils continued with full-time study.

School Dinners

"Every pupil ate school dinners in those days (late 1950s), everyone sitting at designated tables with no choice! Each pupil was given her meat on a plate and the vegetables would be served from dishes collected by the 6th Form pupil in charge of that table."

(Mrs Sach).



Please remember to update us on your recent news. Ways to do this are included on the final page of this newsletter.

Tribute to Dr Helena Graham

Dr Helena Graham retired from CCHS in December 2020 after two decades of distinguished service. Her primary role was as Head of History but in her later years at CCHS she also had formal responsibilities as Head of the Humanities Faculty and as teacher in charge of Charity and Internationalism.

Dr Graham trained as a historian in the universities of Southampton and Birmingham, completing her PhD studies at the latter. Her PhD examined aspects of the lives of the peasantry in late medieval Staffordshire and her training in the tradition of Marxist historical analysis only served to heighten her concern for the dispossessed and disadvantaged. As a student she became heavily involved in the women's movement and her students and colleagues will long remember her tireless and fearless commitment to empowering young women and to helping them understand the world around them.

Dr Graham joined CCHS in January 1999 after a period of teaching at Palmer's College in Thurrock. It is safe to say that her style made an immediate impression on the staff room at CCHS but that her colleagues were as swift to appreciate her abilities and commitment as a teacher as her students were to appreciate the incredibly high standards she demanded of them. Under her leadership the CCHS History Department enjoyed a period of great development, with increasing numbers of students opting to study the subject and consistently excellent results. One of her most notable innovations was the weekly Philosophy of History seminar. This gave senior students the opportunity to think hard about historical issues beyond the curriculum and to experiment with ideas and reading at a high academic level. These seminars had a valuable development in the school History Society Lectures which for a number of years saw leading academics addressing audiences at CCHS on topics from *Later Medieval London – A Golden Age for Women* to *Marriage and Divorce in Medieval Islam: or, the difficulties of keeping a harem* via *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Architecture in Essex*. Dr Graham also developed a strong relationship with Peterhouse, Cambridge and a very significant number of CCHS historians moved on to read History at various colleges in both Oxford and Cambridge as well as in other leading universities.



Staff photo – 2002. Dr Graham 3rd row from the front, 7th from the left.

Tribute to Dr Helena Graham

As a teacher Dr Graham was committed to offering her students the widest possible perspective both in the classroom and beyond it. At different periods in her time at CCHS she convened current affairs discussion groups, trained and led CCHS teams which took part in the Felsted Model United Nations competition, led the school's own Year 12 Model United Nations event and lead and participated in trips to Belgium, Berlin, Ecuador, Japan and other sites of historical interest near and far. Always able to see the funny side of some of the challenges of these trips (at least after her safe return home) she could have her colleagues in stitches with her accounts of interpreting medical details in an Ecuadorian hospital or helping students become accustomed to **all** aspects of 'wilderness living' (toilets or lack thereof included) whilst on expeditions. However beneath the hilarity there was a serious intention to help students understand the world and appreciate the lives and perspectives of others. This same intention underlay her commitment to Charity and Internationalism in the school and she was committed to supporting students in all their charitable activities even if she was sceptical about the concerted attempt made by one form over many weeks to focus the school's attention on the plight of one particular disabled donkey. She was particularly successful in developing the school's relationship with CHESS, the Chelmsford homelessness charity and with other causes such as education in Nepal and the plight of refugees in northern France.

Dr Graham is a voracious reader and a deep thinker and her students (both historians and those in her form groups) always benefitted from her intellectual depth and resourcefulness. She did much to build up the collections in the school library as well as to model academic engagement to her students. Her tolerance of educational jargon and of the hordes of charlatans and snake oil salespeople with whom the education profession is bedevilled was refreshingly low, and she had a clear-eyed scepticism about gimmickry and educational fads. Whilst her relationship with computers was not consistently as strong as her relationship with the printed word her classes were always prepared to overlook the occasional IT related glitch and to value instead the real passion and knowledge with which she taught. Indeed, such was her success as a teacher that she was for a number of years an 'Advanced Skills Teacher' sharing her knowledge with departments in a range of challenging schools across the county. She much enjoyed this work and the variety of experiences it brought with it and was saddened when funding for the role was eventually withdrawn by the Department for Education.

Already in her active retirement Dr Graham has cycled from Land's End to John O' Groats and we are sure that she will find much else to occupy herself in this next exciting phase of her life. We thank her for her consistent commitment to everything that is excellent in education over 20 years at CCHS and wish her every happiness in the future.



The Jungle Caravan – with Monsieur Simonnot, a charity representative and students who also volunteered their time for this important initiative – 2016



Dr Palmer, M.Simonnot and Dr Graham

Photo Tribute to Dr Helena Graham



Berlin – 2008



Election Day 2009



Staff Panto – 2012



Model United Nations – 2012



*Felsted MUN –
2013 (left)
and MUN assem-
bly in the School
Hall – 2014 (right)*

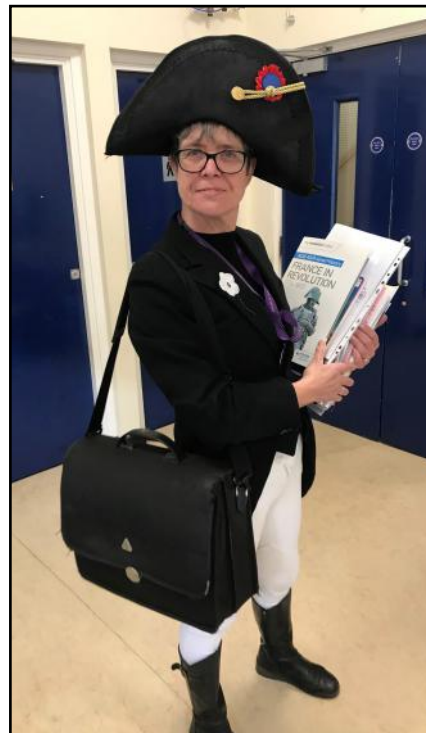


Photo Tribute to Dr Helena Graham



Sixth Form Revue – 'Dr Graham' represented by one of her Year 13 students - 2017 (left)

Superhero Dr Graham, in aid of Bipolar UK – 2015 (right), and celebrating World Book Day – March 2020, just before lockdown (far right)



CHESS Christmas wrapping – 2016 (below)



CHIPS visit for Zimbabwe schools – 2018 (below)



Centre stage – Cinderella & the Seven Dwarfs – staff panto – 2015

With Senior Charity Officials – March 2020

The photos above and on the previous pages are just a few examples of the many areas in which Dr Graham was involved during her time at CCHS. We will miss her enthusiasm, her passion and her sense of fun but wish her well for life beyond CCHS!

Interview with Dr Graham

Last Summer, our Alumnae Development prefects interviewed Dr Graham to find out more about their former teacher, to learn about her life before and during the years she worked at CCHS, and to hear about what she has in store for her retirement. We hope you enjoy the interview:



When did you start working at CCHS, and what is the one thing that you would say has changed the most?

I started in January 1999. One thing that has really changed is the diversity amongst the student population, which is a wonderful thing. I have loved having a Mini United Nations in my lessons. The Year 9 Family Tree project has fully reflected what an amazing range of backgrounds the school's community comes from now. Discipline has probably changed the most – it is so much stricter now. The pub across the road from school – The Compasses - used to be an almost unofficial sixth form common room. I went over there a few times to get students out and into my lessons! Uniform was also lax – those skirts were too short and those necklines too plunging for human decency. And I am totally aware of my own transgressions in some of these areas, before anyone points it out.

How would you say that your job role at CCHS changed throughout your time working here?

Well, I started out as just Head of History, then I added helping out with the sixth form to that but switched to Charity and Internationalism. In the last few years, I became Head of the Humanities Faculty which involved more managing of staff than historical 'stuff'. The charity and internationalism work really expanded – so many cake sales and lower school discos with Magic Mike. I really enjoyed all of it.

If you were able to tell yourself one thing when you started working at CCHS, what would that be?

'This is going to be a fun ride – with a few dips and bumps along the way, like any good ride!'

What would you say your most memorable experience of working at CCHS was?

This is a hard one to answer – there are so many. Some good, some bad. The amount of marking is in the 'bad' column. If there is anything that can be said in 1000 words, rather than ten you can guarantee that a CCHS student can say it. In the 'good' – the trips, though some of those slip into the 'bad'. One memorable Ypres jaunt ended up with most of Year 9 going down with the winter vomiting bug, after one young person started vomiting at Calais and it spread rapidly on the packed bus. On the same trip a couple slipped in the mud and ended up covered, whilst another couple decided to dance in the fountains outside the old Guildhall. The bus drivers were not impressed. It was November – dark, cold and by the end of the day decidedly 'vomity.' In the 'good' column is the work I started doing with a group of Year 9s on Black History Month – Eileen, Haja, Mahdiah and Danni were some of the ones in this group who then went on to do some fantastic work with Chelmsford Museum on the History of the Black Presence in Essex. It was, and is, inspiring. Also in the 'good' column are the laughs we had in class and in the staffroom – plus all the dressing up we did. I will never forget my first experience of what was then called 'The House Pancake Tossing Competition'. Two Year 9s dressed up as Bill Clinton and Monika Lewinsky and I was shocked. I never thought that CCHS students could be such good tossers - marvellous! The name was changed after this event.

Interview with Dr Graham

What was your favourite event during the school year?

Another hard one to answer - the pancake 'event' is up there, but the birthday cakes for the school is another favourite. You cannot, though, beat the staff panto – not an annual event but a definite Event. Oh my goodness the rehearsals, the patience of Mrs Gulliver, the laughs but most of all the sheer excitement and support that we got from pupils. The costumes were pretty good too. It was such a brilliant way to get to know staff from all parts of the school community and to let off pressure from the job. A real bonding experience!

What encouraged you to want to study and teach history?

To study – feminism and politics.

When I started finding out in my early twenties how limited my historical education was it drove me to want to try and understand more, in the first instance, about how and why women had been excluded from the historical record. I was heavily involved in Feminism – going to the local Women's Centre meetings, picketing porn shops, demonstrating at Greenham Common and being involved in groups such as WHAM (Women, Heritage and Museums) and WAVAW (Women Against Violence Against Women). It was through contacts made in these activities that I started learning more about women in History. I also began to appreciate just how important History is for understanding our place in the present and empowering us to fashion the future in a way that does not just benefit male power – patriarchy. Once I had started on this journey of challenging the 'received male narrative' about the past it just seemed a very logical step to consider the ways in which 'others', have been excluded from the historical record and how this has benefited white people. The context of my younger years certainly facilitated this – i.e. Punk, Margaret Thatcher, the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the Anti-Nazi League.

To teach – All of the above plus:

Unemployment when I graduated was very high under Thatcher – over 3 million. We are talking Billy Elliot and Miners' Strike times here. I had thought about teacher-training but Thatcher banned social-science graduates from the profession because she thought they were too left-wing. I decided to do a PhD instead and managed to get funding. Towards the end of my postgraduate funding, I did consider becoming a university lecturer but the terms and conditions of employment were pretty appalling and my supervisor was none too encouraging. I had to earn a living. I was unemployed and had to go on one of Thatcher's schemes for unemployed young people – 'Community Programme'. It was really good. I worked three days a week for benefit-level payment at a local history project in Notting Hill, at The Tabernacle and on All Saints Road. We interviewed local people from all different sections of the community – Afro-Caribbean, Portuguese, Spanish, Iranians and I got the old white working-class group. We put on exhibitions and as the education officer I had to go into schools and do lessons about local history. It was this experience which made me realise that teaching could actually be great fun and was really important. I was an angry young woman who had been brought up by a Christian fundamentalist and who had to really fight to stay on and do her A levels, let alone go to university. The support of my teachers and school – I went to one very similar to CCHS – in this fight meant that education changed my life and horizons.

I wanted to give back and support other young people to be the mistresses, masters and non-binary controllers of their own destinies!



Interview with Dr Graham

What message would you give to the students that are studying here now and any students that are aspiring to study History?

A general message: Be brave and kind. It takes a lot of courage to speak out against injustice but it is absolutely crucial if we want a fairer and better world for all. In fact, if we want a world at all that we can inhabit. These are very tough times that we live in, but one of the almost consoling things I have got from a study of History is that the human spirit is strong. We have done appalling things to the planet and each other, but we have also done some truly marvellous things. There is always hope and we have to keep that alive. In all of this there must be kindness.

Aspiring to study History – just read, reflect and follow those lines of enquiry that ‘tickle your fancy’. Be curious and always check the evidence for claims that are made about the past.

If you could have studied and taught one other subject, what would it have been?

Spanish – having another language is so important and Hispanic studies are absolutely fascinating. Or perhaps PE – I do love being outside and have been a keen runner.

What would you say that you have missed most about CCHS?

The banter – in the classroom and in the staffroom. Mr Warner and Mrs Onuegbu will get this reference.

Generally, what are you up to now?

I got quite ill last year and so have been gradually recovering from ‘burn out’. This has involved getting a Personal Trainer and getting fit. My PT woman is great fun, a bit scary and brilliant. I am doing a cycle ride with my best friend from Lands End to John O’Groats at the end of June 2021. We both cared for her aunt, Angie, who died of cancer last September, as the hospices were not taking people in because of Covid. We are cycling in her memory and to raise money for Farleigh Hospice. I will also be remembering Mr Minnican who was actually cared for in Farleigh. I have been helping another friend with research on the British in India and I am reading, relaxing and just generally having as good a time as Covid allows with my partner. We are going off in a campervan and I am going to learn to sail.

Have you got any new hobbies that you have developed during lockdown?

Learning how to chill out. Another new hobby is seeing a Personal Trainer, which I am hoping will improve my sense of balance and co-ordination to the point when I will actually be able to learn to dance. The CCHS version of ‘Strictly’, where Mr Warner and I butchered a tango, has scarred me and I want to prove to myself that I can be more than a sack of potatoes on the dancefloor.

Readers will have seen in the earlier tribute to Dr Graham in this Newsletter, that she did indeed complete her cycle ride from Land’s End to John O’Groats. We look forward to keeping in touch with Dr Graham and hearing about the many interesting things in which she will no doubt become involved!

Interview with Dr Graham

Some of Dr Graham's favourite events were House Pancakes, House Cakes celebrating the birthday of CCHS, and the staff Panto. Here are a few pictures of these events through the years.



House Pancakes – 2007



House Cakes – 2017 and 2018



Staff Panto – 2004



Interviews with Former Students

One of our Senior Prefects with responsibility for Alumnae Development interviewed former student Sian Clever. We hope you will enjoy reading this fascinating interview:

When did you leave CCHS?

2008

What did you do after leaving CCHS?

Straight after leaving CCHS I went to study Physics and Astronomy (a four-year undergraduate Masters course) at Durham University. After graduating, I started on the graduate scheme at Airbus and I've been with the company ever since. I'm now a spacecraft engineer helping to build a spacecraft module that will be used to take astronauts back to the Moon as part of NASA's Artemis programme. I've lived in Durham, Madrid, Portsmouth, Hitchin and now Bremen since leaving school.

How did the school help in preparing you for your career?

I remember our careers advisor in year 9 or 10 being really helpful. I told her "I want to be an astronaut" and rather than not taking me seriously and dismissing the idea she went away and researched various career paths that might put me in a good position to later apply to be an astronaut. She even suggested a few things I could do there and then, such as attending a Space Summer School run by Leicester University, which I went on to do. I often look back at that and think how lucky we were to have supportive staff like that even if we didn't appreciate it at the time. I've since learnt that not everyone has such a good experience with careers advisors, especially when it comes to young women wanting to pursue STEM careers.

There were some really supportive teachers too. My physics teacher realised a few of us were interested in space and set up an astronomy club for us. We were going to do an extra GCSE in Astronomy at the end of it. Unfortunately, it didn't transpire as the teacher left, but I think it's a great example of how the teachers were willing to go out of their way to support us pupils in the things we were interested in.

How did your journey differ after leaving CCHS to what you thought you would do?

I always knew I wanted to work in the space industry, but I didn't really know exactly what I needed to do to get me there. My maths teacher, Mrs Cousins, advised me to do a Physics degree as it would keep my options open after university, and she was definitely right in that! I always thought that after my undergraduate degree I would then somehow make it to the US and start working for NASA. I did actually apply to do a PhD in the States (and got a place) but I didn't get any funding so had to say goodbye to that idea. In the end I slowly became aware of the space industry in Europe and in the UK and once I found a way into that, my career path started to become a little clearer.

If you had to describe your time at CCHS in three words, what would they be and why?

Friendship (and) happy memories! When I look back on my time at school, it was essentially seven years of being surrounded by my friends all day and every day. Don't get me wrong, I love the people I work with, but the silliness we got up to at school and the fun that we had just isn't possible in serious, working, adult life!

Interviews with Former Students

I'm not sure we realised at the time that you don't really get the chance to hang out with your friends as much at any other time in your life. So don't waste that opportunity.

What subjects did you particularly enjoy during your time at CCHS?

I liked art, especially at GCSE, because we would just sit and create our artwork in the art room with the radio on and chatting about anything and everything. GCSE art exams were definitely the most relaxing of exams – we just sat there painting in near silence for 10 hours or so.

I also liked woodwork because we'd just get up to mischief making random objects by 'sculpting' them from the sanding machine. We didn't take it very seriously at the time, but I definitely think I learnt some valuable DIY skills from those lessons, even if we did mostly sand things into shape!

I hated PE though. The six-minute run at the start of every term filled me with dread. It got a bit better in years 10 and 11 when we were allowed to do a Jane Fonda aerobics video from the 80s instead of a proper PE lesson. That was always entertaining!

Funnily enough, given what I ended up studying, I didn't particularly enjoy physics lessons at school. Physics isn't always the most inspiring subject at school level and that's such a shame. But once you get past the boring foundation stuff, it definitely gets a lot more interesting at university level.

What subjects were offered at GCSE and A Levels when you were at school and what did end up taking?

For GCSE I took: English Language, English Literature, Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, History, Art, Design & Technology (Woodwork), German.

For A Levels I took: Geography (AS Level only – I wanted to go on the trip to Iceland), Physics, Chemistry, Maths, General Studies.

We were also offered the chance to do either Russian or Spanish as an additional lesson in Sixth Form, and so I got another GCSE in Russian in year 13.

Further Maths was on offer at A Level and I probably should have taken it given my intention to study physics. It would have made my first year of university a bit easier, although at the time I was worried about missing the grades needed for my chosen university if I threw Further Maths into the mix. I think it was a good decision in the end as maths was never my strongest subject and it also freed up time for me to study Russian as well.



House Decorated Classroom – 2008 and 2007

Sian explains in her interview how much she enjoyed this event.

Interviews with Former Students

Interview with Sian Clever continued....

What extra-curriculars did you take part in?

I didn't really do any school-based extra-curricular clubs apart from Astronomy Club for the few months that it ran and Orchestra for a year or two. I was a member of an external astronomy club (that I attended with my dad) and the Air Training Corps but both of those were outside of school.

I also used to enjoy going to the Royal Aeronautical Society lectures in London after school. There were (and still are) some really interesting space talks there.

Also, a friend and I were really curious about the criminal justice system and we used to go to the Old Bailey to watch sentencings on non-pupil days when we were in Sixth Form. We saw some really interesting and famous cases. The school also gave us permission to take a day off and attend some sort of Criminal Justice day at a local court which is funny now I think back on it. We actually took a day off school to go and sit in a prison van and in a cell!



House Cakes – 2008 (above and right)

What was your favourite school tradition?

I loved all the House competitions. House decorated classroom was definitely the best. I can't believe we were allowed to spend weeks sticking bin bags on every surface of our classroom and then have a day off for the judging every year. Someone in the year above even brought in a real, live horse one year. That was definitely the most fun House event.

The sixth form revue and the pantomime put on by the teachers were also really fun events that we always looked forward to.

I really hope these things are still going – it was these things that really made my time at school memorable.

How has the school changed since you left?

It's much bigger now, with so many more pupils per year. That must be strange, because when I was at school the year groups were small enough (120 pupils) that you got to know pretty much everyone really quickly.

I also learnt that technology is no longer taught. That's a shame because, as I said, we really enjoyed those woodwork 'lessons'!



Interviews with Former Students

If you could go back and do anything differently, what would you do?

I'm not sure I'm going to be in the teachers' good books for saying this, but I would spend a little less time studying. Particularly when it came to revising for exams etc. At the time, my success was defined by my grades and I don't think that's the healthiest way to live life. The same sort of validation (by exams) doesn't exist very often in adulthood, so you need to recognise other ways of defining success in yourself. Study just enough to get you the grades that you need to get to wherever you want to go, but don't overdo it.

What is your favourite memory from CCHS?

Definitely the residential trips. I have so many funny memories from either the long coach trips there and back, or the silliness we got up to when we were finally left to our own devices in the hostels. I remember a huge drama unfolding when the teachers (rightly!) denied us the chance to go on a night time excursion to the Dracula Experience in Whitby to celebrate my 17th birthday. I can't believe we actually thought they might let us go....we threw a party in our rooms in protest instead which also didn't go down well.



What were you most proud of from your experience at CCHS?

My exam results. I worked hard (perhaps too hard at times) but was rewarded with really good grades that opened up a lot of opportunities for me afterwards.

Have you encountered a particular challenge during your years at CCHS? If so, what was it and how did you handle it?

I remember the transition from GCSEs to A Levels being tough, especially for subjects like Physics and Maths. I thought I'd never get the grades I needed. But, at some point something clicked and I started to get it. The ability to re-sit AS-Levels helped too, of course. I'm not sure it's so easy to do that sort of thing now.

What do you know now that you wish you knew during your time at CCHS?

How important and useful my language lessons would be. I was really set on studying physics and going into the space industry, so I thought languages didn't need to be a priority for me. As it happens, I now live and work in Germany for a huge European company (Airbus) so those German lessons really did prove to be quite useful. Also, language lessons and any other sort of adult education classes are SO expensive. Make the most of those free lessons whilst you can!



Some of Sian's Sixth Form contemporaries taking part in the Young Enterprise initiative – 2008 (above and left)

Interviews with Former Students

Interview with Sian Clever continued....

Is there any advice you would give to the younger years based on your experience?

As above – don't underestimate the importance of language lessons. Even if you don't pursue it to a high level, just having a solid foundation in a language may give you the confidence you need to go for that job abroad one day. It opens up so many opportunities for you.

Also, don't work too hard. Make sure you're doing other things that make you a well-rounded, interesting and fulfilled person. Don't judge your success purely on the grades you get.

What does CCHS still mean to you?

I'm grateful to CCHS for giving me the foundation I needed to go on to do the job that I currently do. Not just in the academic sense, but also in the way that CCHS brought us up to be strong-minded, independent and confident people. I think these attributes are really important in today's society, especially for young women.



Jeans for Genes Day – October 2007

From the archives...

The following is noted:

School's 75th Birthday

The School celebrated its 75th Anniversary in 1982. There were many reminiscences from Old Girls in the magazine and the changes over the years were noted. Recent improvements included:

- ♦ *Two computers had been installed in the school*
- ♦ *A new music room built with the help of parents*
- ♦ *Lower 6th had their own common room in the old caretaker's lodge made habitable by the Parents' Association, and the Upper 6th had re-decorated their house at No. 120 during weekends and holidays.*
- ♦ *Pupils (the Brasso Brigade) had polished all the school's doorknobs*
- ♦ *The Gardening Club had made improvements in the grounds*



LGBTQ+ cake sale – June 2021

Senior Prefects — March 2021



A sign of current times: our Senior Prefects 2021 were photographed as usual, so that their portrait could be hung in the School reception area during their year of office.

In 2021 however, they were also photographed with their masks as a reminder that these were being worn in communal areas in school due to Covid-19 restrictions that were in place at the time.



Campus Development

One of the counterpoises to the challenges of the pandemic has been the great excitement of seeing the biggest ever building project at CCHS come to fruition. Funded by a £6.5 million government grant under the Selective Schools Expansion Fund this project has seen the building of a new Sports Hall, a new teaching block and the conversion of the former gym to be a new library for the school.

Some of our older readers may recall the building of the Bancroft building in 1949, its extension in 1957 and the opening of the swimming pool in 1964. Similarly those at school in 1961 will recall the opening of the new school hall, library and associated classrooms in 1961. The generation of the 1990s will remember the opening of the Cadbury Science building in 1994 and the Drama Studio/Sixth Form Common Room in 1998. Since then the school has seen the Dining Room extensions and of course the new Dame Margaret Anstee Languages Centre which opened in 2013.

However apart from the opening of the AstroTurf pitch in the early 2000s there had been no substantial change to the PE facilities in school since the opening of the Gymnasium in 1916. Few schools in the country were still, in 2021, teaching PE in a building virtually unchanged for the past 100 years and therefore staff had been working hard for some years to secure the funding for a sports facility fit for modern use. We are delighted that eventually we were able to secure this funding and are incredibly pleased with the resulting building. The new Sports Hall, named after Nicole Chapman who did so much to make the building possible, contains not only a vast and impressive hall but also a dance studio, a gym and a fitness suite as well as changing rooms and offices. New floodlit tennis/netball courts have then been provided both between the Cadbury building and the Chapman building and beyond the Chapman building alongside the AstroTurf pitch. This whole development has already proved to be a hugely valuable addition to the school campus.



The new Sports Hall, Dance Studio and Gym as well as the floodlit tennis courts are impressive additions to our ever-growing school campus.



Campus Development

The move of the PE Department to the Chapman building has also enabled the long-planned move of the school library to the old Gym. After a thorough refurbishment we now have a bigger, more spacious library with space for our collections to expand. We have also gained two smaller study rooms. We were delighted that Mr Nichols, our STEM technician, was able to reuse some of the wall bars from the old Gym to build a set of display shelves for the new library so as an element of the old will live on in the new.



The wall bars from the old Gym living on in the new library as display shelves for books (right). We are delighted to have been able to keep this wood safe. Having been a part of the old Gym for so many years, students will continue to enjoy them (in a different guise) for many years to come! Photos above show the wall bars in their previous life. See overleaf for pictures of the new Library.

The third element to the building project has been the replacement of the former Bancroft building (built as a temporary post-war fix in years of some austerity) by a new Bancroft building to house our growing Mathematics department and a number of science labs. These are now mostly allocated to the teaching of Physics. Many readers will recall that prior to 1994 many science lessons took place in the old Bancroft so it is fitting that science and maths have found a home in the new Bancroft.



The new Mathematics and Physics teaching spaces are very popular with our students.



Students enjoying the new outside space which gives shade from the sun and some shelter from wind and rain.



Readers who were at CCHS between 1994 and 2013 will remember the challenges of learning languages in the old Bancroft building with its thin walls and alleged four-legged cheese eating residents. The new building has none of these problems and has already made a substantial difference to the work of both staff and students. We are also very pleased with the landscaping between the new buildings which has done much to increase the amount of outside space which students can use in all weathers.

Campus Development

At the time of writing we are planning for a formal opening of our new buildings in the summer of 2022 and this event will be featured in the next edition of the Alumnae Newsletter. However it is fitting at the moment to record the gratitude of the whole school community to Mrs Susan Hoefling (former Business Manager), Mrs Melissa Mulgrew (current Business Manager), Mr Richard Free (Site Manager) as well as to Mrs Chapman and Mr Lawlor for all they have done to make this substantial development of the CCHS campus possible and successful.

We have included below a further selection of photos to show the new library and teaching spaces the school currently enjoys following the latest campus improvement. For any of you who are planning a school reunion in future months, you will no doubt enjoy having a look at these buildings as part of that visit. Please see the final page of this Newsletter for information on who to contact regarding a school visit.



Online Learning – lockdown insight

Anushka and Katie, our Alumnae Development Prefects have set out below their thoughts on school life when CCHS responded again to the need for online learning in early 2021. This was due to the second school closure during the Covid-19 pandemic:

Online Learning was an entirely new experience for many teachers and students. Therefore, when schools were closed for the first three months of 2021, this appeared to be a great challenge. Nevertheless, at CCHS, the school community continued to thrive with the same quality, persisting to provide the same support for every student. Although certain parts of the curriculum like science practicals were difficult to replicate online, these obstacles were overcome with intuitive solutions. Furthermore, from Online House Cakes to best virtual background, it is clear that the sense of community was not lost. Virtual meetings of CCHS societies and clubs also continued, allowing many students to maintain their interests in hobbies.

Therefore, although Online Learning was a difficult time, this made the return to school in March 2021 an even more exciting experience. With the support from staff, students returned to the campus in order to reunite with their friends and fellow classmates.

With the experience certainly being a first for education and a first for the CCHS community, it is one for the history books!



Although school was closed to most students, there were a small number of students who were still allowed to come into school for various reasons. They remained in relevant 'bubbles' at all times and some staff were also on site to oversee things and provide pastoral support. These students still took part in online learning and, by the looks of these photos, made good use of break-time outside to build a magnificent snow person during the period of snow in February 2021.

Mrs Cross is accompanying the snow person to the left!



The Hall was used for Lateral Flow Testing of students when they were allowed to return to CCHS. (Photo above). This was a mammoth feat of organisation and was extremely successful in ensuring Government guidelines were followed in school.

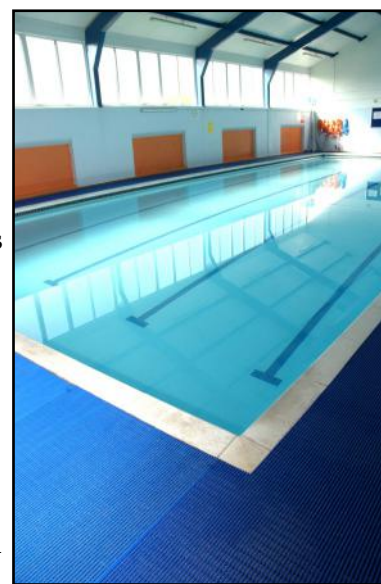


Campus Development – Future Plans

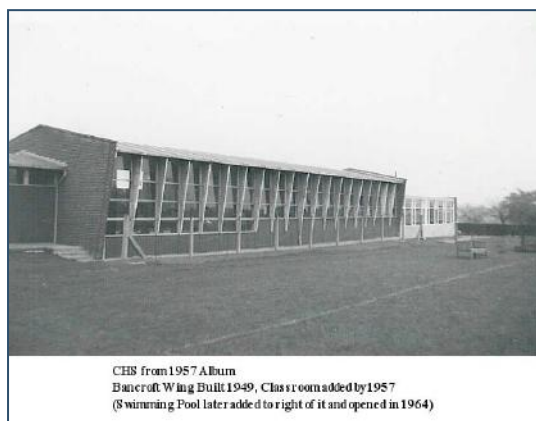
Building a Future for our Girls – the next phase of campus development at CCHS

Readers will have seen elsewhere in this newsletter the feature on the recent campus developments at CCHS. However these developments by no means end our ambitions for the further development of our facilities. Whilst realistically it will be some years before the school is again able to access significant building grants from the government we nonetheless have two significant projects on which we are continuing to work.

The first of these is to refurbish and update the school's swimming pool. Survey work related to the new buildings highlighted some issues with the swimming pool which merit early attention and we are very keen to preserve and develop this important resource. The pool was built in 1964 and re-roofed in 2002 and there have been regular upgrades to the plant and machinery. However whilst the building is currently stable, further attention to significant aspects of its structure is now overdue. Few schools in the area are lucky enough to have access to their own swimming pool and there are clearly many reasons why the pool is an important benefit to the school. These range from the way in which it enables us to ensure that all students leave school with basic swimming and water-safety skills to the way in which it helps us field prize-winning swimming teams in local and national competitions.



Importantly the pool is also an important part of the way in which CCHS supports the local community in Chelmsford. Indeed such is the use of our pool by local swimming schools and clubs, ours is the second most used pool facility in Chelmsford and its loss would be a blow both to the school and to those businesses and swimmers who rely on it. We are very hopeful that this significant community use will help us to unlock funding from Sport England and to ensure that the CCHS pool is properly upgraded and secured for the next 50 years.

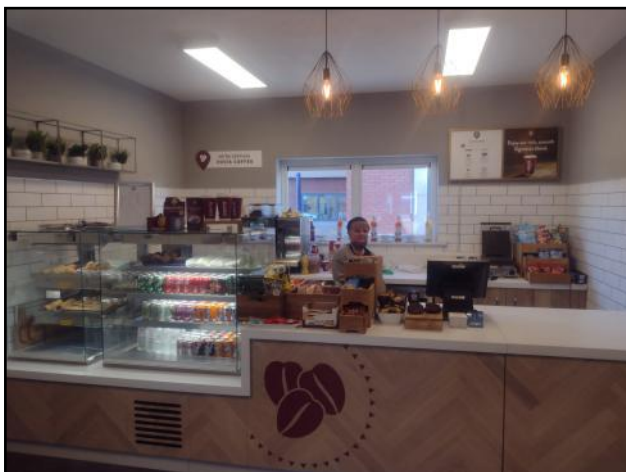
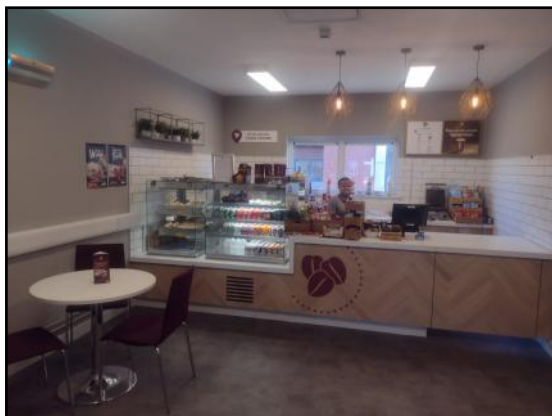


Campus Development – Future Plans

Our second (and much longer term) project is the building of a bespoke Sixth Form Centre. At the moment our sixth formers have access to two dedicated common rooms, a sixth form canteen, a Costa outlet and also dedicated study spaces around the campus. However we would much like to consolidate many of these facilities into a dedicated space for our senior students. There are a number of challenges to overcome before we can pin down detailed plans for this project; the questions of where and how we can develop our increasingly full campus without losing more green space are significant ones. Nonetheless we are confident that in time and with suitable expert advice we will be able to make significant strides forward.



CHS 1998, New Drama Studio and Sixth Form Common Room being built.



Our lucky Sixth Form students now have a well-stocked Costa outlet which is situated next to the newer of the two Sixth Form common rooms.

It is a very popular addition to the facilities available to Year 12 and 13 and they make good use of it during both break and lunchtime.

In Memoriam



Alison Humphrey, née Leak 1952 - 25th September 2020

In September 2021 we heard from Chris Dennison, sister of Alison Humphrey, née Leak regarding the sad passing of Alison. Both Chris and Alison were students at CCHS. Here is what Chris had to say:

Exactly one year has gone by since my sister, Alison, died suddenly from an aortic aneurysm. She was a pupil at CCHS from 1963-1970, studying sciences and maths because she always knew that she wanted to be a doctor. She was also a good pianist and accompanied the school orchestra.

Alison was a medical student at St Thomas' Hospital, London. After qualifying in 1976 she worked at the Red Cross Memorial Hospital, Taplow, where she developed her interest in paediatric rheumatology. After a spell at Frimley Park Hospital, she returned to Taplow and was later appointed as rheumatology senior registrar at Northwick Park Hospital. Appointed to a consultant post in Canterbury and Margate Hospitals she set up a respected Paediatric service and was committed to continuity of care for children through to adulthood. She was an active founder member of, and contributor to, the British Paediatric Rheumatology Group. In her later career, she became East Kent's Director of Medical Education and was instrumental in helping the Trust to gain University status.

She married Peter Humphrey in 1978 and they had 3 sons and 4 adored grandchildren. Her life was lived to the full. She and Peter travelled to many places in the world, especially to spot the wide variety of birds and butterflies. But home was very important too and she loved cooking and entertaining and family gatherings were a frequent enjoyable occurrence. She designed and managed an extensive garden, loved playing golf, tennis and bridge and going on long bicycle rides. Caring for her grandchildren and introducing them to the world of ballet was one of her greatest delights. In 2008, she was diagnosed with cancer, the first of three different types that she had to adapt to throughout the rest of her life. She certainly knew where to access the best treatments and was exceptionally courageous, rarely complaining with all that she had to put up with physically. It was cancer that determined an earlier date for retirement than she would have chosen but she continued to enjoy her life with great enthusiasm.

It is still hard to believe that she is no longer around, especially as I didn't see her as often as I would have liked because we lived in different parts of the country. But I always admired her energy and commitment towards all her many friends and things that she was interested in and we often messaged and chatted. Faced with more cancer surgery a few days before she died she sent her last message to me, with an accompanying photo of her at a bird reserve which said "What can possibly go wrong now?" I miss her and so does our brother Peter in USA.

From Chris Dennison née Leak, CCHS 1961-1968

Chris sent us this beautiful photo of her sister, Alison, looking radiant whilst enjoying the great outdoors.

**Alison Humphrey née Leak
1952 - 25th September 2020**



In Memoriam



Mary (Mollie) Golding, née Byatt June 1922 – 13th June 2020

Back in March 2021 we heard some very sad news from the daughter of former CCHS student Mary (Mollie). Her message is below:

I wanted to inform you of the death of my Mother, Mrs Mary (Mollie) Golding (née Byatt) a former CCHS pupil and an active member of the 'Old Girls' Association from the mid-1960s-1980s. She attended the school as a 'scholarship girl' between 1932 and 1938 and had many fond memories of her days there. Indeed, when I was young she still had some of her old geography scrap books, which I liked to look at and occasionally she would quote a line or two of poetry, Shakespeare or even Latin which she remembered having to learn by heart! I myself was a pupil at the High School between 1964 and 1971 and this rekindled her interest in the school, leading her to get involved in the Old Girls' Association, participating in the weekly Old Girls' Swimming Club and serving on the committee which organised the annual dinners. She re-established several friendships from her own schooldays in this way, not least that of Mary Kenyon, and was thrilled to discover that several ladies that she had known as fellow pupils had daughters at the school during the time I was there. My Mother left Chelmsford, where she had lived all her life, in 1986, after my Father died and she spent the last 34 years of her life on the Isle of Wight, to be near my sister who was settled there. She never forgot the school though. She continued to receive and enjoy the school magazines until they went online, after which I kept her informed, and she maintained her correspondence with Mary Kenyon until the latter's death. She also maintained her love of singing, kindled at the school, and sang in a local choir until about 5 years ago when she was no longer able to go out in the evenings. She remained in her own bungalow and in relatively good health until her last 6 months when her organs began to fail, passing away on 13 June 2020, just 3 days after her 98th birthday.

I am not sure that there will be many people who will remember my Mother now, but I thought you might appreciate knowing that my Mother remained proud of her old school to the end. Incidentally, I was interested to see my own photo in the last edition of the alumnae newsletter. I am one of the young ladies in white in the CLC madrigal group for 1971. We chose the white outfits (all, I think, made by ourselves or our Mothers) as we went 'on tour' to Lisbon that summer. Since we anticipated hot weather we thought a white dress might be the most appropriate attire. I am not sure whether you need any further information for your records but you may like to know that the trip to Lisbon took place through the auspices of the then newly-appointed Head of Music, Mrs Gaitondé who was herself Portuguese. We stayed in her parents' flat – sleeping on mattresses spread around the floors of the rooms and catered for ourselves on a rota, which involved interesting expeditions to buy and cook food. We gave various concerts and performed on the local radio. Mrs Gaitondé was also responsible for setting up the first (as I understood at the time) CHS orchestra. This involved bringing in peripatetic teachers to augment the girls who already learnt instruments privately and buying up (or perhaps loaning from the County) some rather worse-for-wear instruments to get girls started. I began learning the 'cello this way and that too went on to give me much pleasure. For the madrigal group tour in 1971, I even learnt the double bass sufficiently to be able to provide a bass accompaniment to our folk singing with guitars, which was on the lighter side of our programme. Should you ever require further information from the years I attended CHS, please get in touch. Like my Mother, I very much appreciate all the school did for me. I took away some lasting friendships as well as a sound academic start which has served me all my life.

Best wishes to you all; I am sure the school has managed to retain its usual sense of purpose through the difficult last 12 months.

From Sally Waller née Golding, CCHS 1964-1971

We are extremely grateful to Sally for informing us of her mother's very sad death, and also for providing the detail about her own time at CCHS. We have included here a copy of the photo included in last year's Alumnae Newsletter, to which Sally refers.



In Memoriam

We were hugely saddened to receive the message below in September 2021, from Clive Hardy, father of Daniella, a former student of CCHS:

Daniella Purcell (née Hardy)

11.11.1978- 19.07.2021

We are terribly sad to have to tell you that our dear daughter Daniella, after a seven-year brave and stoic fight with bowel cancer, has died. She leaves behind her husband Billy, and their beautiful daughters Aoife and Úna (11 and 8).

All those who knew Daniella, either as a daughter, a sister, a wife, a Mum or just a friend, will greatly miss her.

Born in Milan, Italy, Daniella moved to Chelmsford as a toddler, in 1980. She went to Lawford Mead Junior School before Chelmsford Girls High School. She then studied French and German at Aberystwyth University. Daniella was the first of 'The Hardy Girls' to attend CCHS, followed by Jenny, Alison and Marianne.

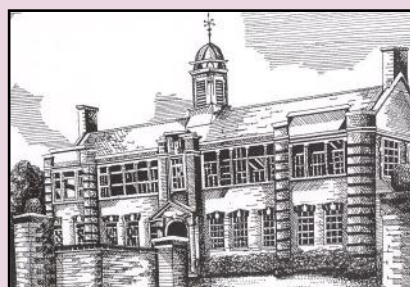


Daniella Purcell (née Hardy)
11.11.1978- 19.07.2021

Anne Gordon has contacted us very recently to advise us of the sad passing of her mother who was a former member of staff at CCHS. Her message is below and no doubt there will be many who have passed through the doors of CCHS who will remember her.

My mother, Jean Gordon, worked for many years in the school office, both during Miss Cadbury's time as headmistress, and subsequently for the vast majority of Miss Pattison's tenure as headmistress, until her retirement. Sadly she died in December 2021 having just had her 99th birthday in October. I suspect that most of the staff who knew her may no longer be with us, but there will be a few.

She gave stalwart service to the school for many years and was well liked and respected by staff and pupils alike. One former member of staff who I happen to know personally made the comment on learning of her death: 'I still remember her in the CCHS school office when I was a newly qualified teacher - she was always so kind and friendly to us all'. Combine that with efficient and hardworking, and that sums up Jean Gordon's demeanour to a tee.



From the Archives

It is interesting to read in the Spring 1910 magazine that reference was made to a Swimming Club. This was a time, of course, when there was no swimming pool on the school site. In our archives, we have found the following note regarding this:

The Swimming Club was reported as due to resume activities in the Summer term, when Miss Willey was to take the girls along to the swimming baths most Wednesday afternoons. Plans were to continue swimming in the early weeks of autumn term. (I presume this was the open air baths in the town.) In the next (Summer 1910) magazine it was reported that Miss Willey's instructions on swimming were expected to progress to lessons in diving. There was regret that more girls did not get to the baths which were open after school on Mondays and also on Saturday mornings.

Miss Willey, Science Mistress, also performed the role of Swimming Instructor.



In the Summer 1910 magazine we hear that the Swimming Club was to be postponed until the following year though students had been visiting the town 'swimming baths' most Wednesday afternoons. Current Sixth Form students still have PE lessons on a Wednesday afternoon (alternating between Week A and Week B/Year 12 and Year 13). The new tennis courts were now in use and we wonder what these students in 1910 would have thought of the new floodlit courts our current students enjoy!

Summer 1910 magazine: The Hall had been improved by the addition of 3 large new pictures. Library: As a number of girls could now read French by themselves, a selection of French books had been added to the Library. Exam Successes were reported on. Games: The new tennis courts came into use and a Tennis Club had been formed and thanks went to Canon Hulton for his donation of 2 tennis nets. It was hoped to start a Swimming Club next year, parties of girls having gone to the town swimming Baths most Wednesday afternoons accompanied by Miss Willey. An article in the magazine Dairy Work at the Technical Institute described the courses offered at the Essex County Dairy School. The Magazine Competition was for the making of the best articles of clothing to be sent to the Passmore Edwards Settlement.

A further note from the 1910 Summer magazine....

General note: There were no Speech Days in the school's early years, but the School held an 'At Home' to which parents were invited. This was probably the Parents' Party, when the Headmistress would make a report to the parents in attendance. Edith Spinner, a pupil of the time, later recalls: "On these occasions Miss Harcourt wore a dress of blue taffeta, with a long train trimmed with ruching of the same material. I remember that as I was carrying a tray of teacups, I had to stand still while Miss Harcourt greeted several visitors. I found to my horror that her train had wound itself round my feet and I was unable to move until disentangled."



Staff who Left in 2021

Mr John Moore retired from his position as Head of Economics in December 2021, having joined the school in September 1989. Many readers will already be aware of the great sadness with which we learned in December that Mr Moore is terminally ill. Everyone at CCHS continues to send him every good wish and a full tribute to Mr Moore will appear in the next edition of the Alumnae Newsletter. This will properly record his extraordinary 32 years of service to the school and celebrate his commitment to the education of so many in the way he fully deserves.



Dr Helena Graham retired from her position as Head of History and Head of Humanities in December 2020. An article about Dr Graham and an interview with her are published elsewhere in this newsletter.



Mrs Michelle Nicoll resigned her post as a teacher of Physics in March 2021. Mrs Nicoll taught at CCHS after qualifying as a teacher in 2006 and some readers may remember her as Miss Hirlam. A graduate in Engineering, she made a strong impression on her students as a gifted and knowledgeable teacher of Physics and she was instrumental in the leadership and development of the school's work with the Engineering Education Scheme and the Arkwright Scholarship scheme, giving many students their first taste of the challenges and rewards of 'real engineering'. She contributed much to the school in her time with us but a significant change in her family situation meant that she needed to commit more time to supporting her children; we wish her every happiness in the future.



Mrs Ying Adams taught Mandarin at CCHS between 2011 and 2021. At the beginning and end of her time on the staff, Mandarin was taught only as an extra-curricular option after school. However during the time the school was able to offer the IB Diploma, Mrs Adams also taught Mandarin in the IB and for the Cambridge Pre-U qualification. Her commitment to supporting her students as they grappled with the notable complexities of Mandarin was exemplary. Whilst for a number of reasons CCHS was not able to continue to offer Mandarin beyond July 2021 we are hugely grateful to Mrs Adams for all that she gave to her students - a number of whom have pursued their studies of Mandarin at university - and we thank her for her service to the school.



Mrs Jacqui Hicks taught Biology and Physics between 2019 and March 2021. She also covered as Year Leader for Year 12 in the autumn term of 2020 during the first part of Mrs Hiett's maternity leave. A highly experienced and successful teacher Mrs Hicks was committed to every aspect of her role and it was unfortunate both for her and for the school that health reasons led to her resignation in early 2021.



Staff who Left in 2021

Miss Jacqueline Silverio taught French at CCHS in the academic year 2020 to 2021. She left us to move to Birmingham.

Mrs Hazel Bates was a hugely effective and much valued Senior Assistant to the Headteacher from 2013 to 2021. Having worked as an Executive Assistant at Board level in a leading merchant bank, Mrs Bates had a range of skills which made her a huge asset to the smooth running of CCHS. Always calm under pressure, relentlessly professional and hugely efficient she coped admirably with a bulging in tray and also gave much time to supporting the Association of State Girls' Schools. Many visitors to the school (and some deservedly nervous visitors to the Head's office) have reason to be grateful to Mrs Bates for her courtesy, efficiency and charm. She left CCHS so as she could better support the family business interests in renewable packaging and other environmental developments and we were delighted to welcome her and her husband back to CCHS to address our inaugural 'Eco Conference' in October 2021.

Mrs Rowan Carroll worked at CCHS between March 2016 and March 2021. Joining the Sixth Form team at a time of some significant changes, she contributed a huge amount to every aspect of the CCHS Sixth Form and her wisdom, efficiency and rapid mastery of every situation presented to her soon made her an absolutely invaluable member of the team. All who passed through the CCHS Sixth Form during Mrs Carroll's tenure will remember her efficient management of attendance, events, student pastoral needs and so much else. The wider alumnae community benefited hugely from her management of the alumnae Facebook group; her regular posts and interactions with former students did a huge amount to rebuild links between the school and its alumnae. In the same way it must be recorded that without Mrs Carroll's efficiency and enthusiasm the past editions of the Alumnae Newsletter would simply not have appeared. It is no mean feat, on top of one's 'proper day job' to make a coherent 50 page publication out of a series of articles emanating from the office of the Head of Sixth Form at irregular intervals over a period of weeks. We are pleased to record that Mrs Carroll has again done a great deal to bring this edition of the Alumnae Newsletter to you and we thank her for her continued commitment to supporting CCHS even after her full-time work at the school has come to an end.

Mrs Jane Lewis worked as our Admissions and Appeals Officer from 17th August 2018 until 31st May 2021. Her calm efficiency in the midst of the all the pressures of the Entrance Test was much appreciated by her colleagues, as was her persistence and attention to detail. We wish her well in her retirement.

Mrs Alexia Treadway was Assistant Librarian between 9th January 2014 and 20th September 2021. She contributed much to the school library and to encouraging students to make use of its expanding collections. We are very pleased that she has decided to train as a teacher of English and we wish her every success in her new career.



Staff Joining CCHS in 2021

In 2021 CCHS was joined by the following members of teaching staff. We welcome them to the school. These appointments are in part a reflection of the fact that CCHS is a growing school; the quality of our students means that staff turnover remains low compared to many schools and our committed staff are a huge part of the school's continued success.

January 2021

Mrs Nicole Dawson - History



Mrs Amy Cutmore - English



September 2021:

Mr Yinka Badmus - Chemistry



Mrs Nicola Howard - Mathematics



Mrs Melissa White - Mathematics



Staff Joining CCHS in 2021

Mrs Emma Miller – French



Miss Sidnie Sales – Physical Education



From the archives...

First Polish Exchange

In 2004, shortly before Poland joined the European Union on 1st May, the school held its first Polish exchange, when a group of Year 12 students were hosts to 15 students from Wroclaw.

The visitors made trips to London, Cambridge, Colchester, Clacton and Audley End.

The return trip by CHS students took place in June that year.

Do any of our readers remember this exchange trip?



CHS 24th September 1930
Miss Bancroft laying 2 Foundation Stones
for the new Science Laboratories



CHS 24th September 1930 - School Captain
Janet Bull laying 2 Foundation Stones
for the new Science Laboratories

*The laying of the foundation
stones for the 'new' science
laboratories – 1930*

In Memoriam

Abbiramy Kathatharan

Those readers of the Alumnae Newsletter who left CCHS in 2020 will be very aware of the tremendously sad news we received in April 2020 about Abbiramy Kathatharan. Abbiramy studied at CCHS from September 2013 until her illness prevented her from continuing with her studies and she sadly died in April 2020.

In January 2020 staff and former students, together with Abbiramy's family met together in the new school library to remember Abbiramy's life and talents and to name one of the new study rooms after her. Mr Lawlor paid tribute to Abbiramy in the following words:

Abbiramy (Abbi) was a bright, brilliant, and caring young woman. She always showed real grit and optimism. She was supremely conscientious about her schoolwork, even under the most challenging of circumstances. Academic work was her focus and her joy. She was determined to sit her GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, even though she was dealing with such a serious illness. She triumphed, with the unwavering support of her family, friends, and staff. Abbiramy had an ambition to study medicine at university and what a wonderful doctor she would have been.

Abbiramy played the piano beautifully and participated with passion in many clubs and societies in School, including French Film Club and Drama Club. Perhaps most importantly, she loved and cherished her friends, inviting them over to dinner when she could, revelling in their company. Indeed, Abbiramy enjoyed great friendships and will live on in their stories and recollections.

Surely, we best serve the memory of this exceptional young woman, her love for her family and her dedication to CCHS, by remembering and appreciating her fine and abundant qualities.

We will remember Abbiramy, with love and affection, as a much valued and highly respected member of CCHS.

Her love for life and of learning was an inspiration to us all.

It is the hope of everyone at CCHS that the dedication of the study room to Abbiramy's memory will serve to remind future students of her qualities and of the example she set to staff and students throughout her time in this school. Her memory is cherished by all who knew her.



The Abbiramy Kathatharan Study Room

Named in honour of
Abbiramy Kathatharan 2002-2020
who studied here from 2013 to 2020
and was an inspiration to all who knew her

This plaque was unveiled by her family in January 2022
so as her memory would continue to inspire others

Meet our Senior Prefects for Alumnae Relations

Anushka and Katie (pictured right) have enjoyed their year as Senior Prefects, with a specific remit within their SP post of Alumnae Relations. They have interviewed former student Sian Clever and also Dr Graham for this edition of the Newsletter. We hope you also enjoyed reading their piece about online learning. Students have had to be particularly resilient over the last couple of years, and have learnt ways to adapt their learning. We thank Anushka, Katie and their Senior Prefect peers for all their hard work this year and through such difficult times.

Eniola and Mariella (pictured below, right) have taken up their Senior Prefect responsibilities during January 2022 (along with the rest of the team).

Eniola and Mariella have specific responsibility for Alumnae Development and we look forward to working alongside them during the year and finding out in what ways they intend to try and develop the role.



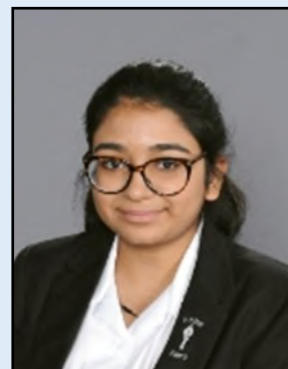
Students working in the new Library which now resides in the space that was the old Gym.

The ceiling and arched windows are a reminder of the space as it used to be.

Remember to contact Mrs Carroll (details on the final page of this newsletter) if you would like to organise a reunion in school.

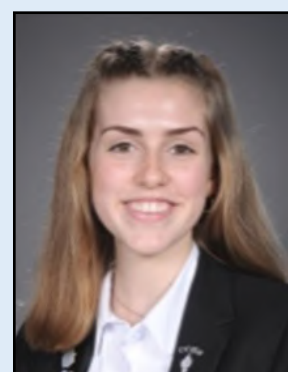
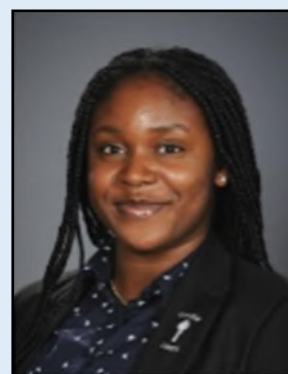
2021

Anushka and Katie



2022

Eniola and Mariella



Training the Next Generation of Teachers at CCHS

If you are interested in pursuing teaching as a career, your former School can support and employ you. We have trained a number of strong graduates in the past, working with the TES Institute to secure their QTS (Qualified Teacher Status). We would pay your training course fees, pay you a salary, provide you with a subject mentor and a professional studies programme.

Alternatively, you might want to pursue a more traditional route into teaching. We work closely with the Billericay Education Consortium to train graduates on a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate of Education) course.

If you would like to discuss routes into teaching and the opportunities that CCHS can provide you with, please do contact me via: hmcgrath@cchs.essex.sch.uk

Thank you.

Stephen Lawlor
Headteacher



Class of 2021 – final week

Although some Covid-related restrictions were still in place during Summer 2021, Year 13 were able to celebrate their final week in true CCHS style. We were pleased that they could enjoy the traditional 'dress-up' week activities and final assembly. As always, we were impressed with the performances during the assembly and all the efforts they made with their costumes through the week to represent their House letter, fictional character, 'what I wanted to be when I grow up' and of course their old school uniform!



How can former students help CCHS?

Careers information:

Could you come back to School to inspire our Year 9 and Year 12 students with details of your career? Every year the School organises a Careers Evening where we invite volunteers to explain their careers to our students and help inform them for their future choices. More details of this event will be published in due course. If you are able to help in any way, please contact Dr Hiner (email ahiner@cchs.essex.sch.uk) or Mrs Carroll (email rcarroll@cchs.essex.sch.uk) for more details.

Mock interviews:

Can you help provide interview practice for our Sixth Form students? This could be for University entrance or work opportunities. We are particularly interested in hearing from those with experience as dentists or in pure science. Please contact Mrs Rowan Carroll (email rcarroll@cchs.essex.sch.uk) if you are able to assist with this.

Lunch-time talks:

We are keen to expand the number and range of these highly successful sessions which have run for many years. Their aim is to promote interests and debate that extend beyond the curriculum and to give students a sense of the different areas in which their successes at school can take them.

If you have a particular area of expertise and would like to engage in discussion with our students, please contact Mrs Rowan Carroll (email rcarroll@cchs.essex.sch.uk).

Alumnae Development at CCHS

Mrs Carroll, who left her full time role at CCHS in March 2021 will be re-joining CCHS, part time, after February half term (2022). Part of her new role will be dedicated to working with you, our former students, and we encourage you to get in touch with her -

rcarroll@cchs.essex.sch.uk

with updates and news, with any questions you may have or if you would like to organise a reunion in school.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Freshers' Fair – 2019



Keeping in touch....

CCHS Alumnae on Social Media



Our 'CCHS Alumnae' Facebook and Twitter groups continue to grow in members. We regularly post news from the school, items from the archives as well as pictures from reunions and occasional news about former students. We also enjoy seeing the posts on Facebook from our group members which include anecdotes and pictures from their time here. Through the facebook (private) group our former students are re-connected with each other and with CCHS. Through the Twitter alumnae page (which is an open group) we are hoping to involve the wider CCHS family – our current parents and students as well as our alumnae. We will be delighted to welcome you to our growing list of members of both these groups.



Chelmsford County High
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Our Facebook Alumnae
private group can be
found at: [CCHS Alumnae](#)

You may also wish to
follow the Alumnae
Twitter page:
[@CCHSAlumnae](#)



Alumnae Reunions

The School is always keen to receive visits from former students but unfortunately because of recent Covid-19 restrictions we have not been able to host these. However, once things settle further we look forward to welcoming our alumnae back into school and to hosting reunions again. After such difficult times, what better way to catch up with people you may have lost touch with over the years than to visit your school, reminisce about your times together at school and of course to take a look at the wonderful new buildings and site changes that have taken place over the years.

If you are organising a reunion for your year group and would like to include a visit to the School later in the year, please contact Mrs Carroll (rcarroll@cchs.essex.sch.uk) who will be happy to help you plan this. Please also email any photographs/details of reunions to Mrs Carroll at the email address above so that we can include these in future newsletters and in the Alumnae section of the School's website.

If you are trying to get in touch with former friends, you may be able to link up with them through our private CCHS Alumnae Facebook group (details above and left). However, it is also worth checking for contact details with the School via rcarroll@cchs.essex.sch.uk. We cannot give out contact details to others, but we can contact them on your behalf to facilitate the link. Our electronic database of members means we can quickly find former students by their leaving year, or by name.

If you are in touch with other former students, please encourage them to sign up to the database via our [website](#).