COLCHESTER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
OLD GIRLS'/ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER – Spring 2022

Editor's Notes

Life seems to be gradually returning to normal, thank goodness, and I hope you can come to the events that Jean Johnson is organising this year. Thank you to everyone who has sent in articles, poems, etc, and again to Joan Gurney who has written further about her life since leaving CCHS. Old Girls enjoy reading what others recall from their time at CCHS so please keep memories coming! I do trawl through old School Magazines for interesting bits, but it's not the same as members writing in now! It would also be interesting to hear how you all coped with the various Covid lockdowns. It is not difficult to email me (or call me for my postal address) and no great literary work is required! Details of our Colchester events and the relevant reply slips are at the end of this newsletter.

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Information, news, comments, photos and articles for the next Newsletter by 30th September 2022.

PLEASE LOOK AT EVENTS ON PAGE 14 – reply slips on page 15.

From Jo Edwards (Mabbitt 1960-67)

The photograph below is of Old Girls with their children at an "At Home" at Grey Friars in June 1953. Lots of races - egg and spoon, sack, etc. I'm in the front, trying to stop my cousin Christopher from running towards the photographer. This cousin has just sent this to me. I am so pleased as Cooper *(Jo's dog)* ate my copy when he was a puppy!



Miss Vashon Baker (wearing a hat) standing slightly left of centre. Can any others be identified?

NEWS FROM OLD GIRLS

Jenny Lithgow (Denton 1954-59)

The first sonnet was written in May 2020 in the first lockdown and the second in April 2021 as we were coming out. Hopefully this will redeem me from the terrible error I made when at Grey Friars when we were asked to 'write out a poem'. I totally misunderstood that it meant 'compose a poem'. I have never forgotten the shame. Act V, mentioned in the sonnets, is a group of older adults that meets weekly in Colchester for different activities relating to theatre.

Sonnet written by me May 2020

I wake up to another day
Another one of toil and care;
I ask myself why do I stay
But plough on in this nightmare.
The daily routine goes round and round,
How do I escape from this lockdown?
But in my garden birds abound
Cheering me up from the chorus at dawn.
I take five, sit in the garden and close my eyes
Teecher, teecher, teecher goes the great tit
My favourites the skylarks sing from so high
Sparrows chirping stop, stop, stop, for a bit.
Nil desperandum to keep me alive
I enjoy zooming with Act V.

Out of Lockdown 2021

I enjoy zooming with Act V, I do
It's kept me sane throughout this last year.
Without it I think I would have gone cuckoo.
I'm sorry for absent friends we miss so dear.
Staying at home with nothing at all new,
except as exciting as if next door's
bathroom window is open or not, eeuuu.
And are the people following the Laws?
So, we will be able to go out soon.
Do I want to? I think I'll stay at home
with wild birds and the hedgehog. What a goon!
We'll just carry on like Derby and Joan.
Will I be tempted to go into town?
Only Act V will get me to go down.

Daphne Jones (Drabble 1958-65)
Memories of Miss Roper

I remember Miss Roper. She was retired when I started CCHS in September 1958, but retained frequent contact with the school. She was a friend of Miss Overy who was my form mistress in the first year (Lower IV L). It was through Miss Overy that Miss Roper invited us to take a picnic tea to eat in her garden at King Coel's Kitchen. I think I went to this gathering for two summers (1959 and 1960). King Coel's Kitchen was, as I remember quite large, and had a wild area with a deep dip with a disused tennis court at the bottom. We took our packed meals and ate them in the sunshine at the lawn area surrounded by flower beds. Afterwards we were invited to wander round the garden and make a note of all the flowers we could name or describe. Then we met on the lawn again and compared our lists of flowers.

Miss Roper also joined us on some of our school trips. On one occasion we went in a bus which started and finished at the bus park in the town centre not from the school. (I can't remember where it was going.) Going home Miss Roper kindly offered to give a lift to three or four of us, and drop us off on her way back to Lexden. She bumped a couple of cars on backing her car out of the parking space. She didn't seem at all bothered, and didn't stop to check on any damage!

Queen's Platinum Jubilee Year

This is the Queen's 70th year as monarch and it is quite interesting to see what the school was doing the years of her accession and coronation. Nothing. Nothing was mentioned in the 1952-53 School Magazine about the death of King George VI or the accession of Queen Elizabeth II except that there was a three day Coronation Holiday on 1st, 2nd and 3rd June 1953! However, the poem below was written by M Stothard, then in the Middle Fifth.

Coronation

Anticipation
Decoration
Celebration
Jubilation

Admiration
Meditation
Consecration
Knight's oblation.

Acclamation
Adoration
Salutation
Illumination
Vivat Regina Elizabetha.

Miss Ruth King



Although little about the Coronation was in that School Magazine it did include a heartfelt address given by Rev Canon R H Jack at the Memorial Service at St Peter's Church on the death of the recently retired Miss Ruth King *(right)* on 28th October 1953. Below is an abbreviated version and gives an interesting insight into her life outside the school.

"It was only a short while ago that we came together at divers times and in sundry places to make our parting gifts to Ruth King; to express our gratitude for and our appreciation of, her twenty-five year service as Headmistress of the County High School; to take our leave of a personal friend and to wish her many years of happiness in her retirement.

"The things we said so recently are still fresh in the minds of most of us. For a quarter of a century she devoted the high qualities of her mind and her physical energy to the well-being of the generations of girls who passed through the school in her time. With the help of a loyal and co-operative staff she cherished the heritage which was handed to her by her predecessor *(Miss WM Crosthwaite)* and she maintained and enhanced the high reputation in which the School has always been held. She was guided by firm convictions and strong principles so that, at times, she would express very frankly and firmly, her opinion of actions or policies which in her view were not in the best interest either of a girl in particular or of the whole School in general. She spared no effort in helping those who were willing to make an effort to help themselves, and there are very many girls in all parts of this land who have reason to be and who are very grateful to their Headmistress for the help and guidance and encouragement which she gave to them.

"Her services to education were more than local. The knowledge and wisdom which came of long experience were freely at the disposal of all who wished to avail themselves of them and she gave valuable counsel to a number of professional bodies both in our own county and in national organisations.

"Some of us were her colleagues in the work which was, I suppose, the chief occupation of her leisure hours – her work for the King George V Memorial Club in this town *(41 East Stockwell Street)*. For many years, until she left Colchester, she was the Hon Secretary of the Club and she gave up many evenings to work in it – serving behind the counter, helping to run the various activities of the club, helping individual members of the club in their problems and difficulties. There are many young men and women who have passed through the club who will recall with gratitude her generosity and her friendship in time of need.

"Some of her other activities I mention only in passing. She took a very full and active part in the concerns of the community – as a member, for all her years in Colchester of the old United Nations Organisation, and later of the United Nations Association, as a member of the Business and Professional Women's Association *(logo left)* and of various other bodies. Very frequently, at meetings held to promote some good and pious cause, she was present to contribute her interest and support.

"In her public life she had gained our admiration: in her private life she won our affection. She had a gift for friendship: she practised, in good measure, the art of being kind. And in her own home at Number 60 *(High Street)* – when she was at ease in the company of her friends – when she was the kindly and happy hostess – that is a memory which those of us who were privileged to receive her hospitality will cherish.

"Kindness, humility, generosity, her desire for the well-being of her fellows - these are among the gifts by which we will remember her. And by her courage and her integrity."

Other tributes from colleagues about her work for the King George V Memorial Club were included in the CCHS Magazine:

"She helped us to touch a class, some nearly Borstal, that no Church group appealed to. All those Sunday afternoons she toiled listening and chatting to them; many men in the army have come back to say what those Sundays meant to them. She was a great lady.

And from the Business and Professional Women's Club "She was a great inspiration and help to us."
"One has only to walk round the town to hear any tributes paid to her kindness, help and service."

The Essex Headmistresses Association: "I loved her witty remarks and her zest for life. She was a wise and eloquent president and a most unselfish and energetic worker in the branch."

At the OGA Committee meeting held at North Hill on Saturday 12th December 1953 it was recorded that Miss Vashon Baker *(Headmistress 1953-1966)* "paid tribute to our late headmistress on behalf of all members. Miss King's devotion to the good of the school and her generosity and understanding were typified by her last wishes. Those were that instead of flowers, donations could be made to the School Leaving Award fund and she herself had left £25 to the same fund." Members were to be given the opportunity at the next meeting to donate to the fund in Miss King's memory. At the 18th March 1954 OGA Committee meeting it was recorded that "The whole year has been overshadowed for us by the death of Miss King, for we were all profoundly shocked to hear of her illness so soon after saying 'goodbye' to her and wishing her many happy years of retirement. That she was thinking of us, as ever, in her last weeks is amply illustrated and we can only hope that her memories of us may have helped her through her illness. It was also announced that Miss King had left £1,000 to the School Leaving Award.

The 2021 winner of the School Leaving Award was Mia Urwin who sent the following letter:

Dear Colchester County High School for Girls, Old Girl's/Alumni Association

I have loved being a part of this school's community and as a result have thrown myself into it wholeheartedly. It was such a wonderful surprise to see that this was recognised by staff and I was overjoyed to receive this award.

It is unbelievably kind of the association to offer such a generous award every year, and it is an honour to be the recipient. I intend to go on and do both the school community and the OGA proud as an alumni myself.

Thank you for your kindness,

Yours sincerely,

Mia Urwin



Today, of course, Ruth King is remembered by a road named after her *(right)* off Park Road and very close to the school she loved. Many years later her legacy, with interest and additions, is still being used to fund the annual School Leaving Award.

Joan Gurney (Appleton 1938-51)

What Joan did next – Part 5



It was a memorable occasion on March 14th 1998. At a grand reunion, between 40 and 50 old girls of CCHS *(left)*, gathered together to celebrate the year 1948, fifty years earlier, when they had all been involved in taking School Certificate, the school leaving examination which released them from school at the age of 16, into their working life, unless they decided to stay on into the Sixth Form.

Most of those present at this event were still living and working in the Colchester area. Some were now further away in the British Isles, and a few were abroad and sent messages. It was a day when memories for all sorts were shared. The sporty types told of hockey, netball, rounders and tennis matches played against other schools.

All this was against the background of school life before, during and after World War 2 and within the surroundings of two historic buildings - Grey Friars and North Hill. There were stories of staff, idiosyncrasies – the trio of Miss Lynn (Art), Miss RL Phillips (English) and Miss Holmes (Gym), who always addressed us girls as "Ladies", Miss King, the fearsome headmistress, Miss Herriott, the equally fierce Deputy Head and Miss Overy, who was a gentle foundation stone and appeared to have been there for decades but was probably only in her early 30s. None of the all female staff were married – perhaps a legacy from the days when women who married were required to leave the profession.

The musicians told of playing in the school orchestra, and the dramatists of the CRGS annual production at the Royal Grammar School, where the female parts were traditionally taken by the boys until, suddenly and dramatically, the sixth form girls of CCHS were invited to replace them – but almost too late for this 1948 envious group!

The background to school life was re-lived in all these memories, particularly during wartime – running for the air-raid shelters which were created in the beautiful garden at Grey Friars, the issue of a third of a pint of milk at morning breaktime, and the small dose of cod liver oil to keep us healthy – not to mention the visit of the "nit nurse" to inspect our hair for lice!

I added my own stories of that time to the miscellany – the boys and girls from all schools in Colchester who travelled on the notorious Beeston's school bus which picked up those travelling in from Manningtree, East Bergholt, Ardleigh and Dedham, and the many innocent flirtations which took place on the move! But it was my deliberate avoidance of being selected for a school sports team which dominated my stories. I had my own pony, Bronch *(right*), and he was my greatest joy, even during the war when leisure activities were curtailed. I needed all my after-school time and weekends to enjoy riding him, and keeping him trained for competing in shows, gymkhanas and Pony Club events. I did not want this time devoted to playing in a school team, so I was quite unfaithful to CCHS in this respect, and even today I sometimes feel a pang of guilt about it, although I did once act as a reserve in a tennis team!





Bronch, my pony, became a legend at winning events in gymkhanas, and was envied by other competitors. But he did have a mind of his own, and did not like jumping, often pitching me over the fence ahead of him as he stopped short at the take-off point. But similar school sports day events and team races such as potato races, bending and musical sacks became twice as skilful when performed on horseback! My hockey stick 'swing' became rather lethal after playing polo-crosse on horseback (a hybrid of polo and lacrosse) with the stick *(left)* the length of that in polo, and the head the size of a squash racket with droopy net to catch the ball.

I confessed to my friends on that anniversary day that my same avoidance strategy applied to learning to play the piano and violin in my school days. Private music lessons were available from Miss Harman in a small room on the top floor of Grey Friars which overlooked the castle. But it was the required practice time which I often sacrificed in order to ride my pony and that took a toll on my musical skills. I did play the violin for a short time in the school orchestra, but progressed no further, although my appreciation of classical music is still strong.

A major focus of our reminiscences at this reunion was the School Certificate examination itself. Memories of the examination hall converted from the gymnasium at the North Hill *(right)* site were etched on our minds – silent, foreboding with giving regimented spacing of desks each candidate an uneasy feeling of isolation as we at there for the 2 or 3 hours of each examination. Most of those present agreed that School difficult Certificate was much more which than the 'O' levels and GCSEs subjects eventually replaced it. At least 6 gain the had to be passed at one attempt to taking certificate – there was no re-failed subjects, and modules and continuous assessment did not exist. Maths and English Language had to be included in the total number of subjects passed. All the questions in each subject required either calculations (maths) or essays testing recall of facts (English Literature, geography) or translations (French and Latin). Multiple choice questions had not been invented! There may have been a distinction, but I did not get any!



Most of my grades were credits, but three were only passes. These were Latin which I found difficult, but very useful later in life, English Literature, where Shakespeare was a set text which I disliked intensely, and Art. I was very upset about the latter because Art was my best and favourite subject. As I tried to analyse my disappointment, I thought about the subject given for the imaginative composition which was laid down in advance. This was "Harvest" as far as I can remember, and I chose to paint a traditional harvest scene with horse and wagon piled high with sheaves of corn, the top ones formed into a 'human guy' to signify the last load – and there were men with pitchforks accompanying it. It was a farming scene conjured up from my parents' farming background – but it was very static, with the represented movement going across the picture

plane. Perhaps I should have slapped on the paint in Impressionist style, or introduced something more modern, daring and innovative. Picasso's work was just becoming fashionable and dislocated semi-abstract angular forms seemed to be the current trend. But I had wanted to paint something that I like – the Picasso I did not like!

Three years later in 1949, I had the last laugh when my father and I listened to Sir Alfred Munnings' Presidential Address, recorded on the radio, at the Royal Academy. Picasso's creations were severely criticised and mocked and I felt vindicated and ready to defend my views on 'cubism' which I still hold today.

The Reunion of 1998 had brought back so many memories of that School Certificate year 50 years previously. My father had admitted that he had wanted to take me to the Olympic Games which was held in London that year. He did not mention it to me at the time because of the importance of my School Certificate. The Olympic Games were obviously very special to him because he had been an important, and successful, half-miler in his youth and he wanted his interest in sport to continue in me. He asked me to remember to go to the Olympic Games if they ever came to Great Britain again, which, of course, I did in 2012.

And so the memories, promises, legacies and renewed friendships of the 1990 Reunion were solidified, and time moved on. Just over a year later, on May 4th 1999 I was part of an unusual and very exciting encounter which has remained with me every May since then and conjures up similar experiences from all the Mays of my childhood.

My first bedroom at my parents' Dedham farm house was under the eaves with a dormer window which looked out directly on to a narrow deserted country lane overshadowed by woodland beyond. Every year, in early May when migrant birds began to arrive from remote faraway parts of Europe, a nightingale *(left)* took up residence in the trees opposite my bedroom window and at dusk for several hours into the night, it captivated me with its song as it endeavoured to attract a mate with its penetrating trills, piping, bubbling and flute-like notes, and the slow plaintive 'sobbing' note from which I could always identify it. I never objected to being sent to bed early for this short period of the year because I would lean out of my bedroom window – sometimes for hours – enchanted by the magic of it song. I am not sure whether my young CCHS friends were as entertained by my description of my activities the night before, as I had been by the bird's performance, but our nature study lessons on birdsong and bird recognition never matched the real thing!



In 1999 it had been more than 40 years since I had heard a nightingale and on that May morning of the 4th, I was making my way to an appointment at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London and had arrived on Platform 3 at Colchester North Station 15 minutes early to catch the 12.03pm train to Liverpool Street. The platform was empty, but I was stopped in my tracks by a powerful birdsong, so penetrating it could probably have been heard halfway up North Hill where the site of the original Senior Department of CCHS had originally stood. It was unbelievable and unmistakable – a nightingale singing from a small adjoining thicket alongside the platform in a very public place in the middle of the day. As the platform filled with people, this shy insignificant little bird, hidden in the branches, continued to sing, but nobody – ladies, gentlemen, teenagers, children, - through naivety or ignorance, took any notice of the epic event unfolding around them. I, however, had 15 minutes of ecstasy and then boarded the train as the song continued.

When I got home that evening, I sat down immediately and wrote up the event. It happened to be the year of a Nightingale Survey carried out by the British Trust for Ornithology to whom I sent my account. It was one of the most delightful pieces of writing that I have every composed, and excerpts from it appeared in various magazines throughout the year. It may be a complete myth that "A Nightingale sang in Berkeley Square" but it is an absolute certainty that a nightingale sang at Colchester North Station on May 4th in the final year of the Millennium. It had made my day.



At the end of every year, as a tradition, I have always pruned my grapevine on Boxing Day and 1999 was no exception. Growing in a very long narrow greenhouse *(right)* against the weatherboard wall of an outhouse, its gnarled twisted stems entwined the supporting beams of the glass roof and the wooden wall, of the shed, now devoid of its rich summer foliage and prolific bunches of black grapes which it had produced every year of its 70 year life. Grape vines are surrounded by myths beginning from their pruning which should be done on the remains of a dead donkey! Additionally, pruning should not take place after the end of the year for fear that the cut ends may cause the vine to 'bleed to death' as the spring sap rises in an early warm unexpected weather break. The only solution to this dilemma is to push a potato onto each cut end to seal the wound. An unscrubbed potato from the garden is best. I often wonder whether the magnificent conservatory *(left)* which was once in the Grey Friars garden had a grape vine growing inside at some point. The girls of the Preparatory Department played in its ruins in the 1930s when I was there, but there were no explorations of its previous life. Whilst pruning my grape vine, I always looked into the apple store to check that the field mice were not tasting the content and that the quince, an ancient fruit, were not transferring their scent to the apples and affecting their taste. At the same time I collected a few to make a jelly to eat with cheese.



And so the new millennium 2000 began. My first granddaughter arrived and so it was a special year. How had so many eventful years passed so quickly since I had become a mother myself? My working life at the Adult Community College in Grey Friars continued although I was not on duty for so many evenings. I missed my journeys home in the car at dusk and later at night. It was often quite magical. As I entered the narrow back lane of Ardleigh and Great Bromley a fox, dazzled by the lights, sometimes crossed the road in front of me, but more often I was accompanied by the silent and ghostly flight of a barn owl as it searched the grass verges for prey. Earlier in the year, and often in daylight, a hare would lollop along the middle of the road ahead of me, taking its time and seemingly knowing that I also would take my time, even if it were at walking pace!

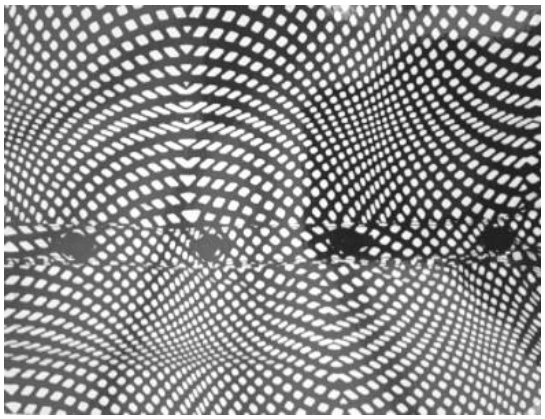
The year 2001 marked exactly 50 years since I was preparing to leave the CCHS sixth form for university and eventually teacher training. It was then I received the advice from CCHS staff that if I was thinking of making teaching my career I should study science not art as "there was no future in art"! I have never regretted my decision, but still hankered after a great knowledge of art. So in 2001 I decided to study for a part-time Master's Degree, but it did not fit with some of my evening swimming teaching which I did not want to give up at that point. Eventually I decided to try my hand at an 'A' level in History of Art. Once again I found myself in a 'role reversal' situation – as a member of the management team at the Adult Community College, and then, one evening a week a student with a regular evening class tutor. What an interesting experience it was! I was able to take another backward glance and compare an 'A' level with what was, until 1950, Higher School Certificate taken from the sixth form as an entry qualification to university. This required three subjects to be taken at an advanced level and passed on the same occasion in order to gain the Certificate. There were no re-takes in single subjects. By 2001 the system had changed and 'A' levels could be taken in modules on different occasions, or even retaken if failed, in separate years.

The main examination for my 'A' level art was in two parts over two years, the second part included a mini-dissertation completed by research and done entirely independently. This was of great interest to me. What should I choose to research? I eventually decided to base my study on the early paintings of Sir Alfred

Munnings which I had always admired because of their depiction of rural life. Sir Alfred had lived in Dedham at the same time as my parents had farmed there, and I often used to meet him on his horse whilst I was out in the country lanes riding my pony. As a child I had a favourite print of his called 'Charlotte's Pony 1905" and during my research for the project I visited his birthplace, Mendham in Norfolk, and discovered that this painting formed the basis for the village sign *(right)*. It had to be the frontispiece for my project!



I took three years to complete my 'A' level in several acceptable stages. It was an enjoyable procedure quite different from the harrowing experience of Higher School Certificate in 1950. It expanded my knowledge of art, reinforced my belief that learning is for life, and introduced me to many artists I had not encountered before. Bridget Riley was one of these whose optical illusions of dazzle and flicker found their way into fabrics of the 1960s which I adored *(left)*. It was, as a result of this course that I continued to visit Paris every year at Easter to repeat a past enjoyment.

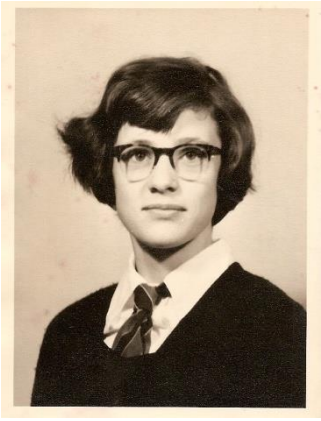


By 2003 I had been working in adult education for nearly 30 years and I received my 'A' level in History of Art in 2004. Grey Friars meanwhile had become a "brand name" for adult education. In 1986 it had faced reorganisation by Essex County Council and was threatened with closure and sale, and now, once again, as we entered 2005 its future was in jeopardy. Grey Friars was listed for disposal, the curriculum was reduced with a withdrawal of the Principal and educational and management teams. The 'For Sale' notices went up on Grey Friars in 2007, and it was inevitable then that the future of the building would change for ever.

Liz White (Bailey 1960-66)

Having tried to persuade Old Girls to send in their memories I thought it was about time I did!

New Arrival at CCHS



For the school year 1959-60 I attended the Blyth School – a Norwich Grammar School – and was automatically transferred to Colchester County High School for Girls in September 1960. *(Left: School photograph, October 1960)* This was a newly built (1957) three-storey building in Norman Way and in 1960 was still surrounded by fields. I remember watching the harvests being gathered whilst bored in a lesson, or the tractors working the fields in the spring. Now, of course, these fields are covered by two other schools. To get to school I had to walk along the Queen's Road folly – the local name for a footpath. This was supposed to be for pedestrians, but inevitably the Royal Grammar School boys would cycle rapidly along there, satchels and coats flying and beware the pedestrian! To be fair, most of the High School girls did the same. There were nettles along the side and plenty of evidence of dogs – it was a little smelly. The folly led to Park Road, an unmade rough road, which led to the end of a hedge through which I passed, across a rough piece of land (now a car park) and into the school grounds.

It all seemed so different from Norwich and the new building seemed intimidating and less friendly than the old worn buildings of the Blyth School. It was a typical late '50s flat-roofed building with lots of glass, wood and concrete and with herring bone parquet floors throughout – the noise created by so many girls had nowhere to go but bounce back and amplify. No wonder the mistresses were always commanding us to be quiet! Girls did not enter by the main doors – they were for important people! We had to go to the south entrance and wait until the doors were opened, but at least in those days there was some covering from inclement weather. Inside, the cloakrooms stretched to left and right and offered sufficient hooks for 600 girls. It was rather noisome as all the shoebags hung in there, as well as coats, and, with few girls taking them home during the term, the plimsolls and sweaty sports clothing produced a smell which is so evocative today as school cloakrooms still emit it!



The proverbial bike sheds were very evident to the north of the school and housed dozens of bikes during the school day. I walked to school most of the time as I didn't want to leave my very new Raleigh Palm Beach bike *(left)* in the sheds. It was pale blue with the obligatory shiny chrome, a *three* gear Sturmey Archer device and a bell attached to the straight handlebars. The effect was completed by a small leather saddle bag containing the necessary repair tools. It also had its own stand.

I remember being very surprised that the girls in my form (Upper IV P –Year 8) found my accent amusing. *I* had no accent, I thought, but I actually had quite a strong Norwich accent which was very different from the Colchester accent, although only some sixty miles away. On meeting a friend many years later (2008!), she says she remembers my accent and how different it was from the local one. Sadly, I gradually lost my Norwich accent, mostly because it seemed to cause great hilarity in the form, but I don't remember any unkindness.

Most form rooms had single desks, pushed together in twos, arranged in rows facing front but rooms such as Y (the Geography Room) with specific uses had large tables with drawers that we used for our books when we were in the Upper Vth (Year 11). All rooms were very light, thanks to the huge windows and it was easy to stray from the lessons as there was so much to look at outside, especially from the upper floors. In the summer the south facing form rooms became very hot and the large heavy Venetian blinds could be let down, but not without difficulty as the strings always got twisted and could cause much welcome disturbance and wasting of time in a boring lesson! My initial form room was north facing on the top floor with Mrs Joanna Bailey as our form mistress. My name, of course, was Bailey and we all found this quite unnecessarily amusing but the joke soon wore thin and was forgotten. Each room had a letter of the alphabet, so they were quite easy to locate and when the bell went after the 35 minute lesson, we all had to traipse around the school to the next class. It was a good time waster and you had plenty of time to chat. There were four lessons in the morning, split by a break and three lessons after lunch with only a short break as far as I can remember after the second lesson. We had to be in school for the register to be taken by 0840 and then make our way to the hall for assembly by 9 o'clock.



The headmistress for the whole of my stay there was Miss Katherine Vashon Baker, *(right)* or VB as she was known. For the whole of the six years I was there she seemed to wear the same green and beige coarse bouclé-type suit with the colours in wide horizontal stripes. Once a term as she entered the hall there would be a gasp for she would be wearing a smarter dark tweed suit – there was a Governors' Meeting that day! Each day the head girl would walk in front of her carrying the open Bible and her notes, climb the few steps to the stage, place the books on the table and join the school prefects arranged in a semi-circle behind VB. We all chanted "Good morning, Miss Vashon-Baker" in response to her greeting and she announced the hymn, which was followed by prayers and a reading from the lectern. Each form would take the reading duty in turn for a week. I don't know whether it was more terrifying to have to read or more embarrassing to have to listen to small girls nervously reading in front of the whole school. Announcements were made, rules reiterated and we were dismissed to our classes, marching out in an orderly manner to the strains of the Radetsky March or something similar performed by one of the music mistresses. Occasionally suitably accomplished pupils would play the splendid grand piano for assembly. My friend Caroline often played and I was constantly directed to do so, but steadfastly refused. The St Trinian's films were popular at this time and on one memorable occasion at the end of term we convinced poor Caroline that it would be a laugh if she played the theme tune to egress the hall. After much persuasion she did so with a straight face, but it created many suppressed giggles from the pupils and, I believe, some of the younger staff, but I remain firmly convinced to this day that VB never realised what was going on! The Roman Catholic girls regretted that they had missed this for they, together with the few Jews at the school, attended their own assemblies – mixing of religions was not encouraged, especially by the Catholic Church!



As the school was in a garrison town there was a constant movement of girls in and out. The girls were used to this and quickly made newcomers feel welcome. I never felt like an outsider, but I think the fact that I was prepared to join in the jokes, naughtiness and other activities within the class, I was accepted fairly quickly. My demeanour was naturally one of "butter wouldn't melt in my mouth" *(left: school photo October 1962)* whereas the opposite was in fact true. I delighted in being able to cause a certain amount of disruption and noise at any time, yet not be suspected. Watching all the results was greatly amusing! Was I really that bad?

During our Lower and Middle Vth years (Years 9 and 10) Mrs Douglas, a lovely, gentle, vicar's wife, took us for Scripture in one of the 'huts' – two additional rooms (V and U) built slightly away from the school to accommodate the 'bulge' years. We had our lesson in U just before our morning break when we could eat the cake and biscuits that we had brought with us. Once she had opened the Bible Mrs Douglas seemed to be in another world and we did pretty well what we wanted in a very quiet way, including homework due in at a later lesson! One trick, when sitting next to Anna, who brought her mother's lovely homemade fruit cake to school, was to crawl on all fours up and down the aisles between the desks and distribute bite size pieces to our friends. Whether Mrs Douglas saw and determined not to take action I do not know, but it caused great amusement! We did, however, get our just deserts. The result of two years of Mrs Douglas's lessons was that in our Upper Vth year we were all dreadfully behind in our studies – not that we were taking it at 'O' level – but our next teacher was VB herself and she demanded to see our books. The form went very quiet and as soon as the lesson had finished we sought out the two girls who had taken notes in the previous two years and copied their books, passing ours and the original on to other girls! VB, as an experienced teacher, was probably well aware of the similarity in our notes!

This can be continued another time - if Old Girls are interested!

Rachel Dudley has kindly sent more names identifying girls in the photographs on page 12 in the Autumn 2021 OGA Newsletter. Any more help with names??

1951 Rounders Team Upper 3rd



3. Susan Beaumont
7. Hilary Swann
5. Judith Eastall
9. Maureen Cox

Upper III 1950-51



From the Colchester Gazette



Laura Gurden, 36, from New Town, in Colchester, starred in four episodes of Countdown between March 25 and March 30. The historic Channel 4 game show, in its 85th series, first broadcast in 1982 and sees guests try to outsmart their rivals by displaying their numerical agility and lexical prowess.

Laura, who attended Colchester High School for Girls, scored 59, 74, 71 and 64 while on the programme, which has become a staple of British television. Much to her delight, she also appeared on the show alongside famous faces such as Stephen Fry, Susie Dent, Rachel Riley, and presenter Anne Robinson.

Speaking about her time on the series, the Culture and Media Studies graduate said: "I applied online and had to complete a telephone audition to win a place on the show. It was an amazing opportunity and I was very fortunate to be on the same show as Stephen Fry and of course I was very proud to have won three rounds. Watching myself on television was a very surreal experience and I was nervous about the broadcast. However, I have been overwhelmed with my family and friends' good wishes and congratulations."

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL - with thanks to Kate Stubbs

Allan Blundell MBE - Our congratulations to Allan Blundell on his investiture as MBE, at County Hall last week. CCHSG is hugely grateful to Allan, who has made a very significant impact on the educational opportunities of students. Having served on the Governing Body since 1997, acting as its Chair between 1998 and 2017, Allan continues to work as a Trustee. We thank him for all that he has contributed both to CCHSG and in many other areas.

Amber Atherton Award - Entrepreneur's New Award

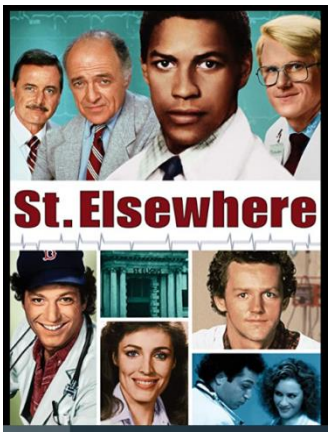


CCHSG students have been invited to take part in a competition to promote enterprise skills. Amber Atherton, 31, *(right)* founded her online jewellery business while still at school. Having relocated to Silicon Valley with her next software venture, Zyper (recently acquired by tech giant Discord), Amber is now hoping to inspire the next generation of female entrepreneurs in the UK. The Atherton Award offers a cash prize of £100 and 1:1 mentoring for a student aged 11 or above who displays entrepreneurial initiative. Miss Atherton said:

'I'm delighted to announce the Atherton Award has launched at CCHSG recognising entrepreneurial spirit in students whether it's completing an online coding course, building an app or starting a business. The winner will be awarded a trophy, cheque and mentoring time. Good luck to all the students entering.'

An assembly for Year Groups 7-9 was held to launch the Amber Atherton Award and PSHCE (Personal Social Health and Citizenship Education) social enterprise lessons gave the students an idea of what a social enterprise is and what would be required to run a social enterprise. There are over 80 students who have entered the competition and have submitted a business plan proposal. Year 12 students who have been involved in Young Enterprise have been mentoring some of the teams that have entered the competition. We have invited judges from local businesses such Colbea and Colchester County Council to sit on the panel in April. There have been enterprise talks from Mrs Abiola Okubanjo on running a social enterprise and Isabel Duah on working as a trader for Schroders. Judging of the award will be on 20 April.

Visiting Speakers at MedSoc



On 7 March, MedSoc was delighted to have Mr Yow, a vascular and endovascular surgeon, come and give us a talk about his pathway to Medicine and his work as a surgeon. His journey to becoming a surgeon was atypical as he first attended law school before deciding that Medicine was the best fit for him. This was incredibly useful information for many members of MedSoc as it showed us that there wasn't 'a one size fits all' approach when it comes to pursuing Medicine as a career. Mr Yow also talked us through his motivations for becoming a vascular surgeon and explained how the excitement of resolving clinical problems, the reliance on technical craft, as well as the hit TV show 'St. Elsewhere' (1982-86) drew him towards the profession. We are grateful to have had such an impactful insight into the world of vascular surgeons and endovascular surgery and are very grateful to Mr Yow for speaking with us.

MedSoc was also lucky enough to have ex-CCHSG student Becky Hoskyns come in and give us a talk about her experiences studying medicine in Bart's and The London Medical School (QMUL). She was a truly charismatic speaker as she talked us through her reasons for going to BART's and why choosing a school that compliments you as an individual is so important. She herself had made it abundantly clear that BART's was the school for her through her impassioned description of the university.

World Book Day - Bliss Falowo 12E

To celebrate 25 years of World Book Day all students at CCHSG took part in 'The Masked Reader', organised by Mrs Croxon. Eleven members of staff disguised themselves and challenged Form Groups to identify them,

the books they were reading and the authors. Members of staff also dressed up as characters and support staff were especially inventive.

European Youth Parliament

We are extremely happy to announce that our Year 12 European Youth Parliament team passed the Regionals round on Friday 4 March and are through to the Nationals at the end of June. On Friday 4 March, they travelled to Churchill College, Cambridge University, for a day of debating vital topics in modern-day life. From talking about the return of African artefacts to their origin places to how to control fast fashion, the pressure was definitely felt by all those participating. The quality of the competition was incredibly high but the preparation and practice of our students paid off. The Team are looking forward to travelling to Liverpool for the National Finals in June.

EVENTS

I'm listing below the events we have planned for the coming months. The list may not be in the usual format because at the time of typing this I have Covid and I am unable to use my usual computer so I am typing it on my iPad.

Please return reply slips to Mrs J Johnson, 10 Landseer Road, Colchester CO3 4QR. Please reply at least one week before the event. Please write name of any guest on back of reply slip.

All cheques payable to CCHS OGA please.

Jean Johnson

Coffee morning at Colchester Officers' Club in the restaurant on Tuesday, 26th April. 10.30 am to 12 noon. £6 per person.

Coffee morning at Grey Friars on the terrace on Monday, 16th May, 10 am to 12 noon.
£10 (includes refills!) per person.

A G M at the School on Saturday, 23rd July. 10.30 am for coffee before AGM at 11, followed by lunch. £2 for coffee only, £8.50 for coffee and lunch.

Afternoon Garden Party at 187 Lexden Road on Monday, 5th September. 2.30 to 5 pm.
£5.50 per person.

Many thanks, again, to Jean for organising these events.

EVENTS and REPLY SLIPS

All cheques payable to CCHS OGA please. Please return reply slips to Mrs J Johnson, 10 Landseer Road, Colchester CO3 4QR. Please reply at least one week before the event. Please write name of any guest on back of reply slip.

Coffee morning at Colchester Officers' Club in the restaurant on Tuesday, 26th April. 10.30 am to 12 noon. £6 per person. Guests welcome. If you are not a Club member, or have a blue badge, please park in far end car park.

Name: ……..... Tel:……..

I enclose a cheque for £…….

Coffee morning at Grey Friars on the terrace on Monday, 16th May, 10 am to 12 noon.

£10 per person. Guests welcome.

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