CCHS OLD GIRLS'/ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER – Spring 2026

Editor's Notes

Summer is ahead of us and Jean Johnson has organised lots of events for you to enjoy. Please read the 2025 AGM Minutes in preparation for our next AGM in June, they are such a good read! Thank you yet again to Joan Gurney who has written a couple of articles for us. We have very few articles from Old Girls which is a shame as we all have memories from our days at school and I know you enjoy reading them. Instead of such articles I have once again trawled through old School Magazines to extract interesting bits, but it's not the same as members writing in now! It is not difficult to email me (or call me for my postal address). I hope you can come to the Colchester events that Jean is organising this year which are listed below. The reply slips are at the end of this newsletter. Perhaps some of you could write about attending these as Jo Edwards has done and I am so grateful to her for her other contributions. No great literary effort is needed!

Contact details: Liz White: Tel: 01206 522713 e-mail: alangwhite187444@hotmail.com

Information, news, comments, photos and articles for the next Newsletter by 30th September 2026.

OGA EVENTS for 2026 – reply slips on page 15 and separate sheet Jean Johnson

We have already had two events this year, one at the Officers' Club and the other at Greyfriars. I apologise for the fact they were so close together but hope that the following events will be well attended. It appears that the Chinese Restaurant we have used with much enthusiasm for so many years has closed. Also changes, or perhaps I should specify, expenses for the hospitality industry, have also affected arranging our programme. Most of our members now know the location of the events. I try to arrange them so car parking is available, or a nearby bus route. If it is possible for members to offer lifts to those finding it more difficult, please do so. Also please pass on details of our meetings to any OGs you think may be interested. Guests are welcome for all events with the exception of the AGM.

Saturday 18th April 10am to noon. Breakfast at The Crown Public House in Lexden Road. For this event everyone orders their choice and pays individually. However, I do need to know numbers, so the manager can arrange for the seating accordingly, so please use the reply slip.

Friday 15th May Lunch at the Balkerne Room, Colchester Institute. Please arrive for 12.15pm. We haven't used the Institute for several years and we hope it will prove successful. Two courses will cost £15 or 3 courses £18 – this will include coffee after. The menu is available so either complete the slip anyway with your cheque, or ring/email me to check whether you like the menu, then you can send your cheque. I will probably need menu choices at the beginning of May.

Saturday 27th June The AGM at the School. As usual we will start at 10.30am for coffee before the actual meeting. However, if you wish to join a tour of the School beforehand, Kate Stubbs has kindly offered to show us around at 9.30am. The meeting proper will start at 11am followed by lunch. Please indicate your preferences on the reply slip. £12 for lunch and coffee, coffee only 2.50pp

Friday 24th July Coffee at 10 Landseer Road, Colchester, CO3 4QR. 10am to noon. £7.50pp. If you need information about bus routes please contact me. There is parking in the road nearby but be aware of the restrictions. (As before we hope to have Greggs sausage rolls at this event!)

Monday 24th August The annual Garden Party at Liz's house, 187 Lexden Road, Colchester, CO3 3TE. 2.30pm to 5pm. £8.50pp

Wednesday 9th September Meet at Greyfriars at 10.30am. On this occasion we will gather on the terrace, weather permitting, and everyone will order and pay for coffee, etc, for themselves – therefore no money is required in advance. However, as a courtesy to Greyfriars I would like to give them an approximate number attending, so please contact me during the week before if you intend to come.

Jo Edwards (Mabbitt 1960-67)

Eighteen Old Girls enjoyed conversation, reminiscences, bottomless coffee and delightful little cakes (an orange and chocolate flavoured opera cake and a really unusual but very tasty apple choux bun) at our OGA Coffee Morning at Greyfriars in October last year. We are usually in the Rose Room at the front of the hotel but this time we were in the Cloisters, aka the School Hall, which brought forth a number of 'Do you remember?' conversations.

We feared that nobody would get there as Anglian Water closed both Brook Street and East Hill, sending drivers on a massive detour through streets normally closed to cars. Jean managed to get messages to everyone to explain the diversions only to discover, on arrival, that the roads were still open! If anyone receives a fine, please let us know. We did a screenshot of the online map showing the diversions!! Thanks, Jean, for organising the event.



REUNION NEWS

Class of 1976 – Did you Leave in 1976? *(poster left)*

Were you, one of your friends, sisters, daughters or granddaughters one of the 6th form leavers in the summer of 1976? Unbelievably, it is 50 years since we left CCHS at the start of that long, hot summer! We are proposing a reunion on 27th June 2026 to mark the occasion and to catch up on all of the news. Please contact Lynne Howe (Cheal) by email: cchsreunion2026@outlook.com for further information.

Invitation to Reunion Event – Did You Start in 1976?

We look forward to welcoming the students who started at CCHSG in 1976 back to the school on 12 September 2026. The reunion is organised by Karen Ainley - karen@mosaicpublicity.co.uk. If you have contacts from this Year Group, do please let them know about the event.

Class of 1986 Reunion



On Saturday, 17 January, CCHSG was pleased to host a nostalgic reunion for the Class of 1986. Alumnae gathered to share fond stories of their time at the school, with many bringing personal photographs and examining the School Magazines sourced from the CCHSG archive. Ms Stubbs led the group on a guided tour of the building, which included a walk down the first floor corridor to view their old form rooms. The visit offered a chance to reflect on how much the school has evolved since 1984, when this Year Group was in Year 11. At that time the school had only three, rather than the current six, forms of entry. The event was a great success, and the school looks forward to staying in touch with these former students.

COLCHESTER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -OLD GIRLS'/ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION
MINUTES of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
CCHS DINING ROOM, NORMAN WAY, COLCHESTER
6th SEPTEMBER 2025, 11am

1. APOLOGIES - Joan Gurney

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM AND MATTERS ARISING
Minutes of the last AGM have been provided to members in the newsletters sent out earlier this year. There were no comments or matters arising and the 2024 minutes were agreed by a show of hands of all present and signed as correct by Liz.

3. CHAIR'S REPORT – Liz White
All relevant matters have been covered in Jo's report (see below).

4. SECRETARY'S REPORT – Jo Edwards
Well, we are still here, which, in my case, I find quite remarkable! One might, of course, be forgiven for thinking that the OGA is now reduced to a tiny organisation with a membership consisting wholly of 'women of a certain age' but do not be deceived. This is not the case. These days, few leaving girls stay in Colchester. They go off to University and then pursue their chosen careers which take them far from the city. However, hundreds retain their OGA membership, despite social media helping them to keep in touch with their friends and with the school. This year, we have stuck to our tried and tested programme of local events - coffee mornings at the Officers' Club and at Grey Friars, Chinese lunch at the Bamboo House (the quantity of food was extraordinary, it just kept coming and it was wonderful), breakfast at the Lexden Crown and Liz's legendary garden party which I was so sorry to miss. We also tried a couple of new opportunities to meet. The first was a casual invitation to meet at Grey Friars for coffee on the terrace. That, by coincidence, was on my birthday and it was a delightful way to celebrate. We all decided to stay for lunch, too, as the weather was so lovely. The second was Jean's invitation to her home for coffee - and Greggs's sausage rolls (plus other delights). It was another lovely day and we sat in her garden, much to the annoyance of the local wren! Coffee was served and two colossal boxes filled to the brim with warm sausage rolls appeared, as did plates of absolutely delicious cakes. Mary does make exceedingly good cakes, we have discovered.

Our thanks go particularly to Liz, Jean, Di and Mary for all their efforts on our behalf. It was so kind of Liz (and her husband, Alan) and Jean to host such delightful events.

Liz attended the Leaver's Assembly as usual to present the OGA's School Leaving Award for 2025 to Maisy Brookes. More of Maisy, a worthy recipient, in a moment. Liz has also produced a couple of very interesting Newsletters this year. Incidentally, we lost our Newsletter printer, Kathy, last year. She has retired and moved to Norfolk. We wish her well. I say it every year - yes, I admit to sounding like a broken record - but Liz does need contributions and it would be particularly good if we had some from younger Old Girls. Memories of your schooldays, details of your life since leaving, your path to your current job - we know that many of you are doing the most extraordinary things and we would love to know more!

Speaking of memories, some of us have recorded our memories of our time at the school and we would encourage you to contact Kate Stubbs at the school about doing this yourself. Kate is amazing. Apart from all her other responsibilities, she is really throwing herself into her role as the school's archivist. At our last AGM she produced so many interesting documents for us to look at. I know that the School Inspection Report (now Ofsted) dating from the very early 1960s was a revelation to some of us. Suffice to say, it did not glow! We know that many records were lost during an overzealous clearance some while ago and so we are amazed by what Kate has found. But she is not just finding stuff. She is doing something with it! I am not going to steal her thunder as I am sure she will update us in her report. Thank you, Kate, for all that you are doing for us - yes, she even sorted our printing issue! You really are something else!

Our committee meetings have been challenging to arrange! It should be easy to get such a small group of people together, especially as several of us have retired, but it is a nightmare. What is the saying about

asking a busy person?! We are all incredibly busy but we do, eventually get together and we do get things done! We should thank Liz, our Chair, Newsletter Editor and Caterer in Chief who works so hard for the Association, Jean, our Treasurer and Events Organiser, Tina, who looks after our Membership, Website and Social Media, Mary, who looks after the School Leaving Award and makes those exceedingly good cakes and, of course, Kate, for whom nothing is ever too much trouble!

Finally, we are, again, in awe of the success of those who took their GCSEs and A levels etc this year. We are proud of them! The opportunities the school now provides are extraordinary. I look back on my time here in Norman Way and find it difficult to believe that it is the same school. However, sitting in the School Hall earlier this year, watching my 5 year old granddaughter dancing on the stage in her ballet school annual show, I realised that the only things that had changed were a few more names on the Honours board - and different spotlights. I can remember sitting, rather uncomfortably, above the ceiling, operating the lights for a school play! Great fun! I hope today's girls will have such happy memories. I am sure they will.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT, 2024–2025 Accounts – Jean Johnson

I find that because the accounts are presented in the middle of the year, but our events run from February to possibly November, it is very difficult to see at a glance how our expenditure equates to the income for each event. For instance the only events that show this true equation are the Coffee Morning at the Officers' Club and Chinese Lunch and this is because of their timing in the year. On the other hand an event like the AGM shows money in for the 2024 AGM as well as this event today. If we have a good attendance at events when Liz is doing the catering we can usually show a profit (for which we are very grateful to Liz) and as agreed previously we can then slightly subsidise the cost of the nostalgic Greyfriars Coffee Morning.

The good news is that on 1st July 2024 the Association had a total of £2196.92 in our two bank accounts and on 30th June 2025 the sum was £2197.23.

I'm not quite sure if this final paragraph ought to be minuted. I find on looking at the account books that it is my 30th anniversary as Treasurer. I have a feeling this might not be legal so if anyone would like to take on this post please let me know!

There were no questions raised by members at the meeting.

6. OGA MEMBERSHIP AND WEBSITE – Tina Powell

There are 1612 names on the membership database (although, technically, all new leavers automatically become members of the OGA). 408 records have no email details. We try to keep the database up to date when we are made aware of any changes or when paper copies of the newsletters are returned.

Comments - Monica asked if we could include a form with the posted newsletters, asking recipients to confirm if they still wished to receive the newsletter and that if we did not receive confirmation, we should stop sending by post (given the costs involved). The committee advised that this had been done previously, without success: some of the committee were aware of members who had not responded but did still wish to receive the newsletter.

Actions

- It was agreed that, at the next AGM, members should be asked to advise if they are aware of anyone who could be removed from the postal list.

- Liz was asked if she could remind the student leavers at next year's assembly to update the OGA with their contact details when appropriate, e.g. when leaving university.

7. SCHOOL LEAVING AWARD 2024/25 – Mary Softley (Rickard)

As of 19th May 2025, the award fund stands at £1950.52. Every year, the school is asked to nominate a student who has made extra effort outside of heir studies, or has who supported fellow students, overcome personal difficulties, or displayed some similar qualities of merit – this is not an academic achievement award. The Association currently awards £100 to the chosen student, presented by Liz White at their end-of-year Leavers' Assembly. This year, the school chose Maisy Brookes and the OGA received the following letter of thanks from her:

Dear Old Girl's Association,

I am writing to thank you very much for presenting me with the OGA Leaver's Award. I am so pleased to have the time and effort that I have put into my extracurricular activities acknowledged, and to know that I have made a positive impact. It was wonderful to meet Mrs White when she came to represent the OGA at our Year 13 Leavers' Assembly. I hope that past students will continue to have strong links with the school as this can be such a valuable support the current and future students.

I really appreciated the wide range of musical opportunities at CCHSG and loved leading the orchestra when I was in the Sixth Form. I also enjoyed representing the school at external events, as guitarist in the rock band. This was so much fun and always a great break from academic subjects. While I am taking a gap year after exams, I am hoping to find some more opportunities for volunteering, in addition to the volunteer role that I have at the Essex Wildlife Trust. I am especially interested in animal conservation as that is what I hope to pursue as a career. I am also planning to improve my first aid skills as part of my current part-time job.

Thank you once again for the award.

Best wishes,

Maisy

The OGA members wish Maisy well in her future life and studies.

8. REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL

Presented by Kate Stubbs, Marketing & Communications Manager, CCHSG

I'd like to begin by saying how pleased we are to be able to welcome the Old Girl's Association to the school again this year. On behalf of the staff and students I would also like to thank the OGA for continuing to present the annual Leaver's Award and to thank Liz for speaking at the Leaver's Assembly and making the presentation. You have already heard from Mary how much the award meant to this year's recipient - Maisy Brookes.

This has been another busy and successful year here at CCHSG. The recent GCSE and A level results were very pleasing and over 90% of Year 13 students progressed on to higher education or advanced level apprenticeships. On average 60% of students progress on to Oxbridge or other highly selective Russell Group universities.

Admissions - The school continues to be heavily oversubscribed. There are 6 forms of entry, with 192 students in each Year Group from Year 7 to Year 11 totalling 960 in the lower school. Places in Year 7 continue to be applied for through the Local Education Authority and allocated to students based on performance in the 11+ selection test. Tests continue to be hosted here at CCHSG with this year's test taking place on Saturday 20 September. In 2024 630 candidates were tested over 3 sittings. CCHSG actually had 697 applicants for the 192 places last year, with some candidates having taken the test at other centres. All appeals are heard by the Independent Appeals Panel. There were 8 appeals heard in 2024, none of which were successful.

As mentioned last year, the changes to the admissions policy now give priority in part to students living within 25 miles of the school. This applies to 154 of the 192 places. The remaining 38 places are then allocated in descending score order from the Rank Order of Merit List, highest scoring first, regardless of where the girls live. The school remains committed to fair access and there are favourable access arrangements for students who quality for free school meals, pupil premium payments or who have a parent in the armed forces. The full policy is available on the website.

Building Work - With the school now at over 1,200 students, we had reached capacity in terms of classrooms and last year the Senior Team managed to secure capital funding for a significant building

project. Currently underway is the addition of a second floor over the ground floor extension. This huge undertaking has been underway since Easter, with break during the examination season. When complete, in January, the build will provide 3 additional classrooms, additional toilets and office space. Over the past year the site has also seen, among other things, the renovation of 3 sets of student toilets, the provision of a fitness suite with gym equipment, a new lighting and sound system in the hall, floodlighting for the netball and tennis courts and installation of solar panels on the school roof.

Past Students - Last year I talked about our plans to involve past students in the delivery of our careers programme, to support students with their progression post 18 and potentially as mentors for current students. We have made significant progress with this, with a number of lunchtime talks organised across the year, past students providing Oxbridge advice sessions and a full programme of speakers offered during Careers Week. Some 500 past students are now on our CCHSG Connect alumni database and a quarterly CCHSG Connect newsletter has been established.

A display of progression posters, in which past students outline their pathways since CCHSG, are about to be installed in the main corridor. These are also featured on the website. Examples of the posters are available to view and members of the OGA are very welcome to participate.

CCHSG Archive - We are keen to celebrate and share the history of the school and a large scale piece of wall art using archive materials is currently under design. I would like to thank members of the OGA who have supplied photographs and other historic items for the archive. We are keen that the design reflects the student perspective and the ethos of the school. Drafts of the current wall art design are available to view at the meeting, and feedback is very welcome.

Comments

 Monica complemented Kate on the archiving achieved to date. She asked what will happen to the three recordings recently made by herself and a few other Old Girls. Kate advised that these would be available in their entirety for research purposes (i.e. not redacted), although they would not be placed in the public realm on the website.

 Jean has been in contact with Beryl Whent and has been given some old photographs, including sports day from the roof of the North Hill school! These were made available to look at during the meeting and would be forwarded to Liz for inclusion in the newsletter. Jean suggested that the school archivists might like to contact Beryl to record some of her memories.

9. MOTIONS

None received.

10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

There were no new nominations or expressions of interest. The existing Officers confirmed that they were all willing to stand in their current posts for another year if the members wished.

- CHAIR – LIZ WHITE (BAILEY) (1960-66)
- SECRETARY – JO EDWARDS (MABBITT) (1960-68)
- TREASURER – JEAN JOHNSON (CUTHEW) (1951-56)
- COMMITTEE –
  - TINA POWELL (1968-75)
  - MARY SOFTLEY (RICKARD) (1969-76)

This was unanimously agreed by show of hands from all present.

The members present thanked the committee for all their hard work over the last year.

11. ANY OTHER AGM BUSINESS

Monica – noted that there were only about 15 members attending the AGM, and fewer each year. She suggested that in future years the OGA could combine the AGM with the annual garden party, to reduce the workload for all concerned. A discussion followed and the following points were raised:

 It was easier to hold the AGM at the school.

 Liz has very kindly hosted a garden party every year for many years but may wish to retire at some point!
 To reduce the catering workload at future AGMs, attending members could assist by bringing refreshments.

Action – the committee to discuss options for future AGMs at the next committee meeting and report back to the next AGM.

12. DATE AND VENUE FOR THE 2026 AGM

It was agreed that the committee would discuss suitable options at their next meeting and agree a final date with the school. Members will then be notified.

All present thanked Liz and Di for all their hard work preparing lunch and the school for hosting (via Kate). The meeting concluded at 12 o'clock.

Signed by (Chair): Dated:

Jo Edwards (Mabbitt 1960-67)

Who remembers Miss Overy?

An email received a few days ago from a genealogy site I subscribe to suggested that I should:

Discover if your gran was a 1920s trailblazer with a new directory of teachers.

As it happens, she was, but, by 1927, she had left teaching to look after my mother and my aunt. My mother, born in 1920, was already in the 'Pre' at CCHS. My aunt followed in her footsteps seven years later, so 1927. I knew both were taught by Miss Overy in their early years at school so, killing time whilst waiting for a phone call that I knew would be challenging, I decided to keep calm by checking the directory to see whether she was mentioned.

And there she was. Mildred Mary Overy *(right)*.

OVERY, Mildred Mary, Assistant Mistress, County High School, Colchester. *Educ. and Tr.:* Watford Gr. Sch.; Maria Grey Tr. Coll., London; N.F.U. Hr. Cert., 1921; B. of E. T. Cert. (Elem.), 1921. *Exp.:* Colchester Co. H. Sch. since Sept. 1921.—*Member:* R.G.S.; A.A.M. *Address:* Abbots Langley, Herts.



The Maria Grey Training College opened in 1878 and was the first teacher training college for women in Great Britain. It closed in 1976. But what of her qualifications? Challenging phone call forgotten (I never did get it!) I puzzled briefly over NFU Hr. Cert. Miss Overy taught me Biology but a National Farmers' Union qualification? Hmm, somewhat unlikely. Light dawned as my mind drifted back to my own teacher training. National Froebel Union! According to Chat GPT, a 'Board of Education Teacher's Certificate (Elementary) awarded in 1927 was a, if not the, primary qualification for teachers in public elementary schools in England and Wales during that era.' I backtracked a little and had a look at the 1921 Census, taken in June. I found her recorded as living with her parents and five siblings at Abbots Langley. She was born there in 1901. She is listed as a full time student at a 'Kindergarten College'.

Miss Overy moved to Colchester within weeks of that Census to take up her post of Assistant Teacher at Greyfriars, concentrating on the young children in the Pre. I don't know where she lived in those early days but, by the 1939 Census, she was living in her flat at 1b The Avenue, where she remained until a move to Dedham shortly before her death in 1976.

Initially employed, I believe, to teach in the 'Pre', which took both fee paying girls and boys from age 6 to 11, she stayed at the school following the abandonment of fees and its conversion to a fully selective High School in the late 1940s.

I remember Miss Overy as my Biology teacher but she taught Liz White, OGA Chair, English. Liz remembers her immortal words "All right is not all right unless all right is two words!" Teaching two very different subjects to girls who had all passed their 11+ was not bad for a Kindergarten teacher, was it?

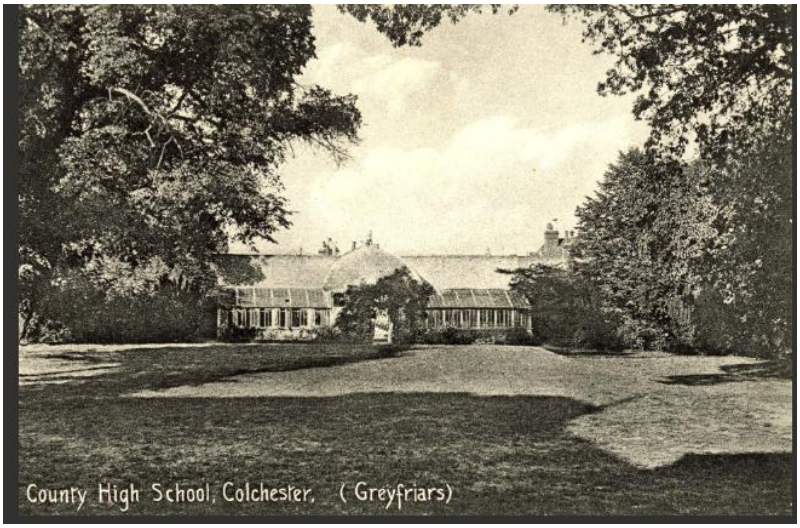


I have many memories of Miss Overy, who I both liked and respected. The one that I think really stands out is of her cycling slowly and rather sedately to and from Norman Way to her flat in the Avenue. The bike was ancient and of the black, 'sit up and beg' variety. It had a huge wicker basket on the handlebars. The basket was ALWAYS full of bundles of exercise books. Nothing distracted her. She was in a world of her own on those journeys!

Incidentally, I noticed something whilst checking both the 1911 and the 1921 Census. Miss Overy's father worked for the Board of Guardians, who administered workhouses. I wonder whether that is where her passion for fundraising for Dr Barnardo's originated? If you remember Miss Overy, you may well remember these *(right)*!

We were all very much encouraged to take one home to fill with loose change, returning it at the end of each term to be emptied and reissued in time for the next. Strangely nostalgic!

Joan Gurney (Appleton 1938-51)



Our remarkable and resourceful contributor, Joan Gurney, has sent two more articles for inclusion in this OGA Newsletter. Although written some 25 years ago, Joan says they are her favourites. The contents echo some of her schoolday experiences at Grey Friars – the tennis lawn and the small wildlife pond near the eastern side of the magnificent and original south facing conservatory *(left)*; and even if no nightingales were ever heard there, Joan remembers that there was always plenty of other birdsong!

Brief Encounter

The May Bank Holiday of 1999 was a perfect day in very way – sunny and hot, with a clear blue sky. I spent the whole day working in, and around, my large pond *(right)*. A solitary blue dragonfly skimmed the water. The water lily leaves had already reached the surface, promising that shortly the waxen-like flowers would emerge from the dark muddy depths, unfolding with an almost ethereal quality to reveal their shades of pure unblemished pink, white and burgundy. A skylark sang above the adjoining wildflower meadow, which in later weeks, would be a-flutter with Meadow Browns amidst the mauve shimmer of delicate flowering grasses, before finally providing the intoxicating scent of new mown hay.



All this countryside beauty, which I appreciate so much, had a special significance for me that year because, the previous Autumn, my sight had been seriously threatened by a sudden retinal detachment. It was, therefore, with a heavy heart, that I knew I had to leave this idyllic setting the next day to keep my sixth post-operative appointment in London.

The grey overcast sky on Tuesday morning matched my mood. Although it was pleasantly mild and breezy, nothing that day, I believed, would compare with the sensuous experience of yesterday. I made my way to Colchester North Station to catch the 12.03pm train to London. I arrived on platform 3 fifteen minutes early. It was bleak and deserted. As I paced the platform, I was suddenly aware of an unusual birdsong. Perhaps all those winter weeks of enforced inactivity during which my vision was affected, had made me more acutely aware of sounds. Music had been my only solace. Other things which are taken for granted – reading, driving, birdwatching – were denied to me whilst I recovered my sight. But this sound I could hardly believe. I had not heard a nightingale since my childhood, and here it was in a very public place in the middle of the day. Once heard, however, the song is never forgotten. The sheer range, richness, and variety of the penetrating song were unmistakable. Bubbling and flute-like phrases, trills and piping notes – they were all there. For me, however, the most distinguishing feature was the slow, plaintive "sobbing" note repeated often, and with increasing volume until it reached its final crescendo. *(right: Nightingale – courtesy Visit Essex)*



The shy and secretive songster (which is rarely seen) was well hidden in a small thicket alongside the lines, and it carried on singing uninterrupted as the platform gradually filled with people – suited gentlemen reading their newspapers, young women talking on their mobile 'phones, teenagers listening to their Walkmans and restless infants playing with their toys. Nobody, through naivety or ignorance, took any notice of the continuing epic solo unfolding around them. I wanted to shout "Stop! Put those things away, and listen to something which you may never hear again." I had fifteen minutes of ecstasy, and then the Intercity train form Norwich throbbed into the station, the passengers were swallowed up, and even as the doors slammed and the train moved off, the nightingale was still singing - magical notes rising above the noise of the busy station.

On the way back in the early evening, I remembered that I had been so enthralled by the bird's performance that I had not noted the species of tree in the thicket from which it was singing (an important detail which would be needed for the National Nightingale Survey). So on arrival again in Colchester, I returned once more to the, now empty London platform. Only then did I realise that as my pupils had been dilated during my eye examination, I was unable to see the trees clearly enough to identify them accurately. From this thicket, the insignificant little bird with the outstanding repertoire may have carried on singing for several hours that afternoon – such is the energy and enthusiasm for stating his territory and attracting a mate during his short vocal season. All was not silent, however. The wind was moving round to the north and the evening was becoming cold. I hurried home.

It may be a complete myth that "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square", but it is an absolutely certainty that a nightingale sang at Colchester North Station on May 4th in the final year of the millennium. It had made by day!

A Summer Shower – Joan Gurney

Many paintings present a moment which is frozen in time. But sometimes there are ways in which the picture indicates what has happened immediately *before* this moment, and there are clues which enable the spectator to predict what will happen *after* this moment. Such pictures are said to have a narrative. "A



Summer Shower" by Edith Hayllar (1860-1948) *(left)* is a good example of this.

In this picture a game of tennis, in a country house garden, has just been "rained off" and the four young players are filling in time in the hallway of the house, overseen by two mature, non-playing lady chaperons. The "frozen moment" shows conversation taking place, and other idle activities to whileaway the time. And can one detect a little dalliance in the foreground?

We know that it is raining because one of the more mature ladies, standing just outside the window has an umbrella. The sky, through the upper glass, is hazy, and the outline of a tree has the blurred effect produced by falling rain. The other young lady player (on the left in the window) has pulled the lower casement door towards her to protect her skirt from the rain.

The signs that they had previously been playing mixed doubles are obvious. The gentleman (left foreground) is resting his racket on the floor. The seated lady beside him is holding hers on her lap, and against the wall (on the right) is another racket – and balls on the floor. The two gentleman players are informally dressed in sporting knickerbockers, stockings and cummerbunds. Shirt sleeves are casually rolled up. The two young lady payers are wearing comparatively short, non-elaborate summer dresses (to allow free movement) and decorative aprons (whose pockets would hold balls). All four players wear flat shoes and no headgear. One of the chaperons (seated right) is making a note of the score. The lady player in the window is holding something in her right and. I like to think that it is a skirt-lifter which she has temporarily removed during the break in play. All the details tell us that a game of tennis has been interrupted by rain. Indeed even the serving of lemonade (by the gentleman background right) may be the premature refreshment intended for a later break.

It is easy to predict what might happen next after this "frozen moment"; the rain may cease, the sun come out and play may be resumed. Rain, however, may continue, "filling in time" may become pointless, and hope of play may be abandoned so that other activities are pursued.

This picture is very important for sports historians, because, on such a day as this, table tennis (variously called ping-pong or gossima at the tine) was born; it is believed that tennis players, frustrated by ceaseless rain and wishing to practise their skills, invented the game. Battledores were borrowed from the nursery, the hall or dining table was used as a playing surface, a row of books across the middle provided an improvised net, and balls were fashioned from the lemonade corks.

This seems a very likely, and attractive, conclusion to the narrative of this picture. And it has an added interest for tennis collectors; Edith Hayllar was surely drawing on her own experience – maybe just a day or two before – when rain stopped play on the family court at Castle Priory, Wallingford, Berkshire. Every detail is just right, and what collector would not yearn for the keenly observed 1880s racket in the foreground?

This oil on board (only 21 x 17½ inches) signed and dated 1883, was sold at Christies, King Street, in the Forbes Collection Auction of 19/20 February 2003. Estimated at £150,000 - £200,000 it made £320,000. "The Young Tennis Player" pencil and watercolour, by Edward Robert Hughes (1851-1914) estimated at £3,000 - £5,000.made £3,000. The 361 works raised nearly £17million.

Christie's notes on the Hayllar painting give the information that Edith was one of 9 children and it is likely that some of them posed for her here, but also state that tennis was invented in 1874 and that the first Wimbledon Championships were held in the same year!

The catalogue - extending to 3 heavy volumes (cased) and 900 pages – is of the highest quality and very reasonably priced at £65. It will surely be an instant collector's item, and if you are keen on art, you should find one now.

SCHOOL MAGAZINE 80 YEARS AGO – 1945/46

This extract is fascinating as it was written 80 years ago and has anything changed?!

Plastics S Hardy (Upper VA)

Plastics is the name given to a large number of new substances invented by chemists to replace more traditional materials, and although the word plastics is relatively modern, substances of plastic nature have been in production for some fifty or sixty years.

An example of this is celluloid, used for toilet articles for many years. Plastics have been gradually introduced as a substitute for industrial and household goods of wood, metal, glass or porcelain. Scarcity of these materials during war years has caused a much wider use of plastics which are strong and tough, light in weight, smooth, attractive and resistant. They can be sawn, cut, turned and polished like any wood or metal, but can also be moulded into any required shape. They have already taken firm hold on the electrical markets as most plastics are very good insulators. Plastics are now widely used for cups and saucers, combs, tooth brushes, lenses, films, fountain pens, bicycle pumps, lamp shades and bathroom fittings.

With such examples as these to guide us, with the experience of the 1001 use of plastics, let us try to imagine a dweller in the Plastic world. The new-born baby will come into a world of colour and bright shining surfaces. The walls of his nursery, all the articles of his toilet, his bath, his toys, his cot, the moulded light perambulator in which he takes the air, the teething ring, the unbreakable bottle he feeds from, later all the equipment for his daily meals, the trays, spoons and mugs, all will be plastic, brightly coloured and patterned with every design likely to please his childish mind. As he grows up, his plastic toothbrush and hairbrush have plastic bristles, his plastic clothes are of synthetic silk and wool with plastic zips, wears plastic shoes, his pen is plastic and his books covered with plastics. His schoolroom has shining walls and the moulded desks are without angles or projections.

The windows of this school curtained, with plastic-faced cloth, are unbreakable, and the frames are of moulded plastic, light and easy to open. The plastic floors are silent and dustless too. The very blackboard is of unscratchable plastic, and if corporal punishment has survived in this plastic age, he may have the privilege of being beaten with a synthetic plastic cane.

Lampshades and stands, screens, bowls and vases of every shape and colour will be available in beautiful transparent glass-like materials in every imaginable form. Outside the home even the tennis racquets, golf clubs and fishing tackle will be entirely made of plastics. The "Plastic Man" will go boating and yachting in small vessels built of moulded plastic sections. In the office, the trays filing cabinets, loose-leaf books, telephone and even the desks will be made of this material. In the electrical industry, except for conductors, and magnets for which metals remain essential, almost everything will be plastic.

But now our "Plastic Man" is getting tired and old. He has a plastic denture, plastic spectacles with plastic lenses and a plastic comb. He still takes photographs on plastic films with a moulded plastic camera and plastic lens, listens to a plastic wireless set, sits in plastic seats in the cinema watching a plastic film, or stays at home playing with plastic playing cards and moulded chessmen on a plastic board. He finally sinks into his grave in a plastic coffin.

SCHOOL MAGAZINE 50 YEARS AGO - 1976

Mr Stachnik *How many of you remember Mr Stachnik? He was my Chemistry master and I could not understand much of what he said, but then I wasn't that interested in Chemistry. I did know that he was Polish and had been a fighter pilot in the Second World War, so I did my best!*



We are sorry this summer to say good-bye to Mr Stachnik who had been teaching at CCHS for 29 years. A great scientist himself, once inside his laboratory he was single-minded in his desire to teach everyone chemistry, from the very young to the old. His enthusiasm for his subject as a pure science and in its widest applications he passed on to many of his pupils. His efforts in devising new experiments were tireless. He developed semi-micro and micro methods of chemistry in school, first as a necessity at Grey Friars where he was allocated a small section of the cloakroom as a laboratory! The small scale method was perfected in the new building (Norman Way). Mr Stachnik had a genuine interest in the well-being of the school. He was always to be found on money-raising occasions with his hydrogen-filled balloons. He was an idealist in education and a great fighter for the preservation of the grammar school where he believed that excellence in education should be pursued for its own sake.

We thank him for all he has done for the school and wish him many happy years of retirement. These are unlikely to be idle years. He is continuing is study in the field of Geology. He hopes to spend part of each year in Spain where he will conduct his practical work. As a student of science he will always set us an example.

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL



The Sound of Music (From Colchester Gazette)

More than 130 talented pupils worked for many months to prepare their version of the classic Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, The Sound of Music. Over three straight performances, the students brought the show to life at their school in Norman Way. Accompanied by the live sound of the school's orchestra, the evening featured songs such as *Do-Re-Mi*, *My Favourite Things*, and *Climb Every Mountain*.

Michaela Cudmore Rice, head of drama, said: "In addition to the acting and music, the production was a wonderful celebration of the creativity, discipline, and collaborative spirit of our students from Sixth Form to Year 7, both on stage and behind the scenes." Hired costumes from Thespis Theatrical Costumiers helped give the show a professional finish.

CCHS a top school in East Anglia.

The Sunday Times publishes an annual guide and ranking of the best schools across the country. In its 33rd edition, it has been recognised as the definitive ranking of the UK's top primary and secondary state and independent schools.

Colchester County High School for Girls, in Norman Way, has been crowned State Secondary School of the Year in East Anglia 2026, while Colchester Royal Grammar School in Lexden Road has been named State Secondary School of the Year in East Anglia for academic excellence. The School celebrated the good news, as executive principal Gillian Marshall praised the schools hard work.

She said: "We are incredibly grateful for the unwavering commitment of our parents, students, and staff. Their collective dedication has been instrumental in our success. At CCHSG, we take immense pride in

nurturing leadership skills and offering a super curriculum that prepares our young people to be adaptable and resourceful. We emphasise creative and critical thinking skills and the development of a strong work ethic. Our school culture is built on high aspiration, inclusivity, and ambition. We believe in providing high-quality teaching that not only inspires curiosity but also fosters a lifelong love of learning. Our staff work collaboratively to maintain outstanding academic standards and uphold a belief in continuous improvement. We prioritise pastoral care, ensuring that our students thrive in a safe and supportive environment where their wellbeing and personal development are valued alongside their academic achievements. Moreover, our enrichment activities and co-curricular programs play a significant role in developing confident individuals who are well-prepared for life beyond school. We are delighted to be named the State Secondary School of the Year for East Anglia and remain committed to our mission of excellence in education."

Memories Recalled – Archive Project



(above – Old Girls L-R - Liz White, Jo Edwards, Jean Johnson, Della Parker, Eileen Warner, Kathleen Wilson, with the History Ambassadors and staff)

On 30 January, the CCHSG History Ambassadors, with Mrs Sanderson and Ms Stubbs, were delighted to welcome a group of alumnae who had attended CCHSG during the 1940s, 50s and 60s. Students spent time chatting with their guests and recording their memories of school life, including uniform, lunches, extracurricular activities, sport and social events. They were also eager to explore how academic learning and examinations have changed over the decades. Several of the alumnae had been students at CCHSG during the war and immediate post-war years, and they offered fascinating insights into everyday life under rationing and other restrictions.

The History Ambassadors are now collating the recordings and preparing a summary of their findings, which will be shared on our website, as a corridor display in school, and in Year Group assemblies during the summer term. We are very grateful to Mrs Sanderson said: "Meeting ex-students from CCHSG was a fascinating experience for our Year 8 and Year 10 History Ambassadors to engage with. They thoroughly enjoyed listening to their stories and learning about their experiences, which gave a real insight into what

life was life at CCHSG from the 1940s onwards. They are very much looking forward to sharing this with the wider school community later in the year."

Mrs Della Parker *(below left)*, Miss Kathleen Wilson *(below right)*,







CCHSG Alumni Newsletter

Our CCHSG Alumni Newsletter now publishes quarterly, via email. Join our mailing list, or submit items for inclusion by contacting Kate Stubbs via kstubbs@cchsg.com or complete the online form at: https://forms.office.com/e/jzfYqJ7dhj

Alumni Progression Posters

Would you like to be part of our "progression wall" *(left* of Alumni Profile Posters?

We have now installed the first phase of our progression posters in the main ground floor corridor *(left)*. We are aiming to capture the stories of our CCHSG alumni, whose diverse pathways will interest and inspire current students.

Past students can provide their details for a poster via the link below. We would love to hear from you!
https://forms.office.com/e/mgpBciiYFv

Digital copies of School Magazines from 1909 to 1999 can be found on the school website:
https://www.cchsg.com/about-cchsg/history-of-cchsg

Sunday Times Parent Power Guide 2026

CCHSG has been named State Secondary School of the Year in East Anglia, 2026 by the Sunday Times Parent Power Guide *(.*

Helen Davies, editor of The Guide, said:
"As well as celebrating the academic excellence of the top schools it is uplifting to see how they are shaping their students to be ready for the 21st century and instilling a lifelong love of learning."

We are delighted that the staff and students at CCHSG have received recognition in this way.



STOP PRESS from Jo Edwards



Hot on the heels of the Officers' Club Coffee Morning on Friday 6th March 2026 came another, this time in the Salon at Grey Friars on Thursday 12th March *(above)*. We decided that we'd had enough cake the week before and chose newly baked warm scones with clotted cream and strawberry jam instead. Very yummy! It was another delightful morning. Thanks, Jean! Several members made the short journey across the corridor to the bar afterwards for lunch in the room that had once been their first classroom, still fully recognisable despite the addition of the bar.

EVENTS REPLY SLIPS

Please reply by 14th April
Telephone/text Jean (01206 579688 07799 525245)
BREAKFAST AT THE CROWN INN, LEXDEN
SATURDAY 18th APRIL – 10am

Pay individually on the day. Don't forget to let me know if you have to make a cancellation on or nearer the day

✂ .....

Please reply by 4th May
LUNCH at COLCHESTER INSTITUTE
FRIDAY 15th May Please arrive promptly at 12.15pm

Name ..... Tel .....
Block capitals please

I enclose a cheque for £..... (Payable to CCHS OGA - £15 for two courses, £18 for three)
Please contact me for menu choice if interested, then please send cheque and menu choice by 4th May.

Please write the name(s) of any guests on the back of this slip

✂ .....



Gleaned from old photos printed by Colchester Gazette. Can anyone date this photo or even name anyone?