OLD GIRLS'/ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER – Autumn 2023

Editor's Notes

We had a very mixed summer with the weather but I hope you have enjoyed yourselves at the various OGA events. Jo Edwards, as usual, has taken photographs – some better than others! I must say thank you to those who have sent in such interesting articles of their time at CCHS. Please keep them coming - everyone enjoys them so much and I hope they will trigger further memories! Joan Gurney, despite her protestations, has sent another article for us to relish.

Please let us have your contribution as every article is very gratefully received! They don't have to be long, even just comments on what others have written.

Jean, as usual, has organised some good events for us to enjoy and these are much appreciated by all. Photographs below.

Information, news, comments, photos and articles for the next Newsletter by 31st March 2024.

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

RECENT EVENTS

Chinese Meal 10th May 2023



Coffee Morning September 2023



Garden Party Friday 8th September 2023



Coffee Morning at Grey Friars 17th October







It was sad that several Old Girls were, at the last moment, unable to attend the Grey Friars Coffee Morning in October, as it was, as usual, a very pleasant occasion *(near left)*. The sun streamed into the Rose Room overlooking East Hill as we ate our rather moreish little cakes and drank gallons of coffee and tea! Conversation flowed. We can get rather noisy! Near the end of the morning, two figures appeared in the doorway *(left)*. 'Are you Old Girls?' We laughed and said that we were, some of us in all senses of the words. They introduced themselves. Lynn Muir (Linda Todd 1955 - 1960) now lives near Bude but was in Colchester for a few days. She and Carol Hakins (Sleebush 1956 - 1963) had met for coffee in the hotel and had, I understand, mentioned to one of the staff members that they had been at school in the building in the 1950s. They were promptly told that we were elsewhere in the hotel so came to find us. How lucky was that? Several of us remembered them. Lynn left school to go to the Art School the year I started but I recognised her from the Garrison Stables in Goojerat Road where we both rode. Carol stayed on at school and I remembered her very clearly. They stayed and chatted and, of course, we signed them up as members of the OGA! Thank you so much, Jean, for arranging another lovely event.
(above left) Jean Johnson and Joan Gurney

EVENTS

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed several events. Members visited the School for the AGM and were delighted and somewhat amazed with the presentation video of the School (a drone was involved) given by Kate Stubbs, our School Liaison friend. The Garden Party at Liz White's home was, as usual, very well attended and the weather co-operated. I am counting the open invitation to meet up for coffee at First Site as a success. This is because last time I suggested this option, three of us attended at a local hotel. In September six of us met at First Site. Percentage-wise I consider I am now winning with an event of this type!

At the time of writing this, Grey Friars Coffee Morning (17th October) still has to take place and that will be the final meeting for the year.

Jean Johnson

OGA School Leaving Award



Every year in May I am invited to CCHS to present the OGA School Leaving Award to the girl chosen by the school, not for her academic abilities although those are usually considerable, but for her consideration of others and supporting various groups and events at the school. The cheque for £100 is not huge but it does, at least, enable the winner to buy such items as books or equipment for her next step in life. We generally receive a delightful letter from the winner. *(left: the usual dreadful photograph of me with this year's much more attractive winner, Kaavya!)*

Letter from Kaavya below:

Dear Mrs White and the OGA Committee,

Thank you so much for presenting me with the Alumnae Association Leaver's Award. We are very grateful for the work the OGA put into maintaining links with the school.

Just a little bit about me, I like to undertake charity work not just within England but internationally as well. Some of the work my family and I have done in India has been raising money to provide 70 beds among the poorer rural communities. Just recently with my 18th birthday money, we sponsored 3 girls who have sporting aspirations and donated money for sports equipment as well as providing dinner for an elderly care





home with Vasantham Trust India. (I've attached some pictures above).

I am also a St John Ambulance first aid volunteer, in 2022 I was chosen to be the Lord Lieutenant's cadet. In recognition of my high number of volunteering hours with St John Ambulance, my performance as a corporal, and raising £853.60 over the Covid lockdown for the organisation, I was invited to Buckingham Palace last January by HRH Princess Anne as a 'young achiever' (right).



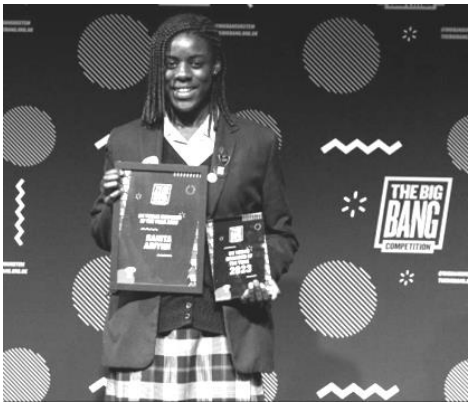
I am aspiring to be a doctor and am planning to study medicine at the University of St Andrews.

Once again, I am very grateful for this award and the recognition of my work.

Yours sincerely,
Kaavya Chandrasekar

Colchester schoolgirl wins national engineering award with groundbreaking device.

From the Colchester Gazette *(Image: Newsquest)*



A STUDENT from Colchester has won the Young Engineer of the Year award. Ranita Ariyibi, 15, who goes to Colchester County High School for Girls, scooped the top prize for her invention of a device which enables deaf people to communicate more easily.

InterSign acts as an electronic interpreter between British Sign Language and English, meaning it can see a sign and then give the meaning in both spoken and written English. Similar to smart speakers, like Alexa, the groundbreaking device has the additional advantage of being able to take action. For example, signing 'help' could trigger the device to call emergency services or a family member.

Accepting her award *(right)*, Ranita said: "It's absolutely crazy, I never imagined that I'd be here today.



"It's been such a long process and I'm so grateful for this opportunity and to have won this award. I think having the showcase of all the competitors at The Big Bang Fair is really inspiring, seeing how young people can do amazing things."

(Right: Ranita Ariyibi showcasing her InterSign project.

The Big Bang UK Young Scientists and Engineers Competition allows young people aged 11 to 19 across the UK to showcase their skills and creativity. Participants have the opportunity to build confidence, teamwork skills, and problem-solving abilities, whilst also receiving expert feedback on their projects. The competition is open to students in state-funded education, as well as home-educated individuals and those participating in community groups.

Dr Hilary Leevers, chief executive of EngineeringUK, which runs The Big Bang UK Young Scientists and Engineers Competition, said: "Huge congratulations to Ranita on her UK Young Engineer of the Year award. "She has worked incredibly hard on her InterSign project, trying different approaches and coding solutions to create a device that does what she set out to achieve. "The judges were really impressed with her creative ideas, problem-solving and determination, all important elements in engineering. I look forward to seeing how InterSign develops and what Ranita does in the future."

CATHERINE BULLEN FOUNDATION

The Catherine Bullen Foundation was set up 21 years ago by the parents of a medical student at Bristol University who died in August 2002 in Namibia from gastroenteritis. Linda and Roger Bullen were determined not to forget Catherine, an old girl of CCHS, and set up the foundation in her memory to improve the quality of life of the children in Namibia.

Over the years they have helped the community by building medical and educational facilities and continue their good work. Latterly they have provided desks and chairs at large school to replace bricks and shared desks and have also funded school uniforms for 150 children at another school.

They have now enlisted the help of girls at St Mary's Senior School in Colchester who also funded school uniforms at Good Hope Primary School and are now funding socks and shoes for the children. The two schools have become quite close with the help of social media.

To learn more about the foundation visit www.namibia-aid.org.uk

NEWS FROM OLD GIRLS



Jo Edwards (Mabbitt 1960-67) writes:

The photo of North Hill *(left)* prompted several comments on *facebook* - some of which are in a random order. Pauline Taylor's comment is one my mother would have appreciated. She often made this exact point. Della's response to 'Shirley' confused me until it dawned on me that Doreen must have been called Shirley in her youth!!

From Pauline Taylor: CCHS, the Tech and the Art School. I was at CCHS and there were doors between the Tech and

our part with glass in the top which was obscured so that boys from the Tech could not see us especially when we had to do gym in the hall in our knickers!!

Then I spent 4 years in the art school. The three centre windows at the top (of the photo) were our studios for Life Drawing, &c, and the top left hand window was the Print Room where I spent my final 2 years.

The top bay window to the left of the centre door was the room of our CCHS head mistress, Ruth King, and to the right was the sixth form. We were not allowed to go in the front door but had to go to an entrance at the side on the right. Boys from the Grammar School used to come to play tennis on the tennis courts and that caused great excitement!!

From Doreen Ellis: In the late 40s and 50s it was also mostly the senior half of Colchester County High School for Girls before the new school was built in Norman Way.

From Della Parker: answers to Doreen Ellis. Yes you are right. High School at the bottom, Technical College at the top and boys Technical also at the bottom. 1944-47 my years.
Hello Shirley. Hoping to get to some OGA functions! Maybe will see you!

CROSS COUNTRY RUNNING - Jo Edwards in response to Daphne Jones (Drabble 1958-65)

Daphne Jones' article in the last newsletter triggered a memory. Daphne was a couple of years older than me and I remember her well. It was her description of cross country running that took me back to my schooldays. I wonder whether today's students are allowed to run along quiet country footpaths in navy school knickers and white aertex shirts?

Our route was similar to Daphne's but, I think, in the opposite direction. My friend Mo and I were both very good cross country runners. On cross country run days, we left the school as soon as we could, ran down Norman Way and turned right along Park Road before turning right again into Shady Lane which ran between the CCHS and CRGS playing fields. On reaching the 'crossroads' where one could cross the allotments to the Shrub End section of Norman Way, turn right to Bluebottle Grove or left to Irvine Road, we were supposed to turn right but Mo and I had a very good reason to turn left, and we invariably did. Why? Because my grandmother lived in Irvine Road, just by the entrance to the path. She knew when we were likely to arrive and had drinks and biscuits or cakes waiting for us. She had been Mo's first teacher and always enjoyed her visits. We would sit and chat to Grandma for 20 minutes or so before carrying on with our run back to school via Bluebottle Grove. Incredibly, we would pass a number of classmates, arriving back at school in reasonable time. We were never caught!

I have clear memories of going for runs with Mo during free periods when we were 6th formers. The school was extremely strict about girls going off the premises during school hours but, for some inexplicable reason, nobody ever worried about the two of us leaving for a run. Again, dressed in nothing more than bra, aertex shirt, navy knickers, short white socks and plimsolls, we would run into town and sometimes pop into a shop or two . As we had our names embroidered in large, brightly coloured, chain stitch letters on our shirts, we were taking an enormous risk but, again, we got away with it. Mrs Pipe would greet us as we returned to the changing rooms. 'Been for a run, girls? Well done!' If she had but known ….!



WHO ARE THEY AND WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

I found this photograph recently of six girls from CCHS dressed up for their Prom in 2010.

Who are they?
What did they do after leaving CCHS?
Where are they now?

Can anyone answer these questions?

We would love to know!
Joan Gurney (Appleton 1938-1951)

What Joan did Next – Epilogue 2

I related in epilogue 1how certain events and objects in your earlier life can form links in a chain which continues to run throughout your later life, and described several which had the most pleasurable influences in my own life. But the events of World War 2, both at school and at home, had a less pleasant but memorable effect on my life for many years afterwards.



The outbreak of WW2 occurred only a short while after I had joined the Preparatory Department of CCHS at Grey Friars. My experience of war at school included hearing the air raid siren, running for the long narrow underground air raid shelters which always smelled musty and had been made in the beautiful Grey Friars garden *(right).* I also remember diving under our desks as a temporary safety measure and hearing the bombing which took place in nearby Chapel Street.



The school air raid shelters always contained a bowl of much-desired sweets just in case any of us felt afraid and sick. In retrospect, it seems that quite a number of pupils felt distressed in order to obtain a rare treat in the time of food rationing. At the end of the shelter's interior was a portable Elsan closet. I was used to these more primitive forms of closet because the farm had a draughty weather-beaten privy at the bottom of the garden, but many of the temporary occupants of the Grey Friars shelters always hoped for a short air raid and waited for the "All Clear" to sound so that they could enjoy the sanctuary of the artistically decorated Victorian lavatory pan *(left)* on the mezzanine floor of Grey Friars.

We had to wear our gas masks on our body all the time. It followed the pre-war rule about money. If you brought a few pennies or a sixpence to school, it had to be 'in a purse, on your person'. In the photo *(right)* I am on the extreme right of the front row (kneeling) with my cross-body purse. This was class Upper 2 with Miss Cooke (centre back), just before the beginning of war. Our gas masks were in a cube shaped box with a canvas covering and a long strap and were worn like the purse in the photograph.



One experience at school near the end of the war gave me some amusement, but my mother thought otherwise. Some of the Preparatory classes were told they were going to be given an entertainment as a reward for their good behaviour. It was to be shown from the back of a lorry in Castle Road (almost level with Foresters). We filed out of the Pedestrian gate (in the wall of Grey Friars garden) in a very orderly fashion and were told to sit down in the road facing the 'make-shift' stage on the back of the lorry. It was also emphasised that we were to sit still and not move, shuffle, whisper or talk. We, of course, obeyed! Life at School was very disciplined. It was a very hot summer's day – we were wearing our panama hats – but I was not aware of any part of the entertainment only of the fact that I was sticking to the road. When it was time to go, I could not get up, the tar on the road had melted with the heat and my red, white and blue summer dress, together with the lower part of my legs were stuck to the road! What happened next to me, my dress, my change of clothing and mother's calm acceptance and the anger, I cannot recall!

My experiences of WW2 at home included a nightly cold walk to our own air raid shelter which my father had constructed in the farm gravel pit (which was smaller and cosier than the school version), watching 'dog fights' of enemy versus allied planes in the day time, and the excitement of having a pair of silk pyjamas made from a parachute abandoned by a pilot as he ejected from his damaged plane.

Food rationing affected us very little on the farm because we had food sources from animals and vegetables all around us. My mother, however, did cook stinging nettles as a green vegetable and also made that into soup. I disliked the latter! Rose hips were also gathered in autumn to make a conserve rich in Vitamin C. I remember there was a competition at school over one autumn weekend to see who could gather the most rosehips which were going to be sent to a firm who made rosehip syrup. I was a country girl and therefore had a considerable advantage. I spent all weekend picking and won!

The stories of my father's duties in the Home Guard will stay with me forever and account for my addiction to 'Dad's Army' whenever it is shown on television. All the characters are so well cast. It is often thought that many of the incidents in this series were very 'far-fetched' and in the region of fantasy, but many of them were related to real life in the Home Guard.

Here is my father's favourite story. He was given the recipe for a Mototov Cocktail – a small hand thrown bomb in a bottle which could be deployed in close combat. He was told by his Captain to take it to the local chemist and ask for it to be prepared, which he did. As he gave the recipe to the pharmacist he warned him to be careful because the mixture could be very volatile. The pharmacist, offended by this advice from a farmer, said that he knew what he was doing, he was a qualified chemist! He then retired into a back room to prepare the mixture. My father heard a bang and the chemist reappeared minus his eyebrows and forelock! My father never told me the language that followed.

One group of friends who I met in the early years of the war came to live in the adjoining farm. The five of us used to play all over the farmlands of our parents. On one occasion, when we were digging and scraping in one of the gravel pits and watching the sand martins weave in and out of their burrows whilst we were searching for fossils, we came across a curious object which we could not identify. It appeared to have 'wings', and we proceeded to pull it to pieces. My father arrived unexpectedly to see what we were doing and immediately told us to put it down and move away. It was an unexploded incendiary bomb!

News of the events of war were extremely limited at the time. Secrecy was paramount. "Careless talk costs lives" was the common slogan. "Your country needs you" encouraged conscription and "Dig for Victory" helped to ease the shortage of food. My father was exempt from conscription, as were all farmers, because of their importance in the provision of food for the nation.

Entertainment, particularly via the radio attempted to keep citizens in a positive mood. Everybody remembers Gracie Fields with her optimistic "There'll be blue birds over the White Cliffs of Dover" and "We'll meet again". There were also indications of hope and success in other wartime songs – "We'll hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line. Have you any dirty washing, mother, dear?"

In the later part of the war a new more fearful sound made its appearance – that of the 'doodle bug'. I remember listening for its recognisable drone and then for its engine to 'cut out' whist covering my ears and waiting for the subsequent explosion as it hit the ground. At least this delay gave a warning whereas the V2 guided rockets did not, and they were the most feared.

At last, peace arrived in 1945, and this brought me an experience which would keep coming back to me for years. Secretly, and without my parents' knowledge, I managed to listen to Richard Dimbleby's iconic and harrowing radio broadcast when he was one of the first reporters to accompany Allied troops as they liberated the concentration camp of Belsen. The images it conjured up for me, at 14 years old, I need not repeat.

I left CCHS in 1951 after 3 years in the sixth form to study biological sciences. Partial food rationing was still in place, and journeys were difficult. A school friend, Ann Gough, and I were very keen on cycling and youth hostelling holidays. I was still limited in my mode of travel using only bicycle, horse, bus or train. We had several trips around Great Britain and in the long vacation decided to venture abroad with our bicycles. We caught the ferry from Harwich to the Hook of Holland and set out to explore Belgium, Holland and Denmark. This is where some of the events of the recent war were suddenly magnified. We

visited Anne Frank's hideaway house in Amsterdam where her family was betrayed by those they had trusted and then her subsequent death in a concentration camp.

The enormity of the D-day landings and the colossal loss of life did not register in my thoughts until I visited Normandy at the end of the 1950s. I had just met Gerald, and with two more friends we had a car and camping holiday (I could now drive) in Northern France. After nearly15 years since the end of the war miles of the Normandy beaches were still littered with wrecked and abandoned landing craft. Beyond the beaches acres of crosses marked the numbers of the fallen. There were other trips abroad with friends either camping or youth hostelling where I saw the devastation of the beautiful city of Dresden in retaliation for the destruction of Coventry in a ferocious air attack.

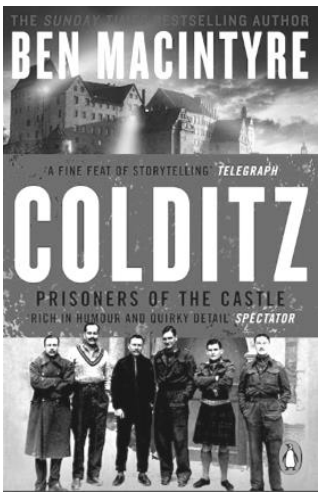


All these links in the chain of events relating to wartime seemed to go on and on throughout my post war life. The Berlin Wall *(right)* came down in 1989. It had divided the city into east (governed by the Russians) and the west (governed by Britain, France and America). I visited it in 1991 and although it seemed peaceful and calm at the Berlin gateway, it was impossible to remove indelible images from my mind of attempted escapes over the wall.



In those last years of the 1980s I also visited Poland and toured the death camp at Auschwitz *(left)*. Needless to say, the horrors of this concentration camp were spelled out to me in great detail. It reinforced all those facts which I had heard from Richard Dimbleby in his radio broadcast about Belsen all those years ago when I was 14. Every time I hear the theme music from the film 'Schindler's List' I am brought to tears.

And so, all the links in my wartime memories are complete. Or are they? Every so often I remember something which sets me off on another line of thought. Here is one of them. When my son was a young boy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he had a favourite board game called 'Colditz'. He used to throw the dice with a special friend on many occasions to see whether the prisoners or the captors would win the game. It was a battle of intrigue, innovation and subterfuge, exactly matching the events of that time. The player representing the prisoners always seemed to win, and I was pleased to see that a recently published book 'Colditz. Prisoners of the Castle' *(right)* retells, with great humour, one of the greatest stories of the last war, and equals my love for 'Dad's Army'.



Miss King, who was Headmistress at CCHS during WW2 wrote so eloquently about the affects of war on school life in the School Magazine of 1938-44, and also in the forward to this magazine of 1944-45. All this was brought together by Joan Watson in the Old Girls' Newsletter of Spring 2019. My war memories are just a little drop in the ocean of those times.

After a period of austerity, deprivation and conformity, a more relaxed flamboyant and non-conformist extravagance usually follows. And so, in the aftermath of war the 'siren suit' was banished and along came Dior with the New Look of mid-calf hemlines and pinched waist fashions of the 1950s. In the 1960s Mary Quant came on to the scene with her ever-ascending mini-skirt hemline, boyish hair bob, bright colours, sparkly tights and PVC coats and rainwear *(left)*. For women, clothes were no longer intended to keep you warm but for effect and agility (running, skipping, jumping). Women now had the option to stop dressing like their mothers – and perhaps like their schooldays! War was behind them and fashions would never be the same again, and this is the last link in the chain of my wartime memories.



Kathleen Wilson (1946-51)

The Kindness of Strangers, Schoolmates and Teachers

It was with great anticipation and a mixture of excitement and nervousness that I approached my first day at CCHS.

The reasons for this were numerous, but mainly due to the fact that my primary school education had been very poor. Most of my early schooling was during the war years (WWII). As a family we had moved to the village of Ardleigh in the summer of 1939. We were away on a quickly arranged family holiday when my father was 'called up' early and our holiday was cut short. Just over a year later I started school, but it was only for two weeks. I well remember it took just a short while for the infants' teacher to realise I could read, add up and do what I called 'joined up writing'. As a family, my parents had decided to move around the UK to spend time near my father, but within one term and three different schools, my father was posted abroad – destination unknown. We then came back to Essex but could not go back home - our house was let on a year-long lease – so we went to live with my Grandmother in mid-Essex. It was about 13 months later that we returned to Ardleigh and I went back to my initial village school. I had very few friends in the village and could empathise with my mother's saying that you had to live in a village for 20 years before you could be considered a native.

I believe the most educational time came when from the age of five my mother insisted that, along with the rest of the family I was to write letters to my father, wherever he was serving in the Army. I say educational, because my father wrote extremely interesting letters from all over Africa and the Middle East, describing what he had seen, experienced, the people he had met and the drawings he included (all as far as censorship allowed). At the beginning of my last year at primary school, seven of us were told we would be sitting the 11 plus examination. Although still away from home, but back in the UK, my father insisted I be given extra work to do in preparation. I cheerfully accepted the good natured teasing from my brother and mother over the mistakes I made – but I did learn.

In all my primary schooling I only met one teacher that I really liked and respected –Mrs Green – and she only taught me for one term before she retired.

No one else from my small village school passed the 11 plus, so on that first day I was alone in my new school uniform (including that 'hat') for my introduction to a school with some 600 or so pupils – none of whom I knew. According to instructions I caught the double decker bus from Dedham and found myself a seat towards the front of the lower deck. Two stops further on I noticed an older girl in CCHS uniform enter the bus. I had seen her about the village but I had never had occasion to speak to her. Her name was Gwen Garnham. The next thing I knew – she was beside me – inviting me to go to the upper deck with her - she told me she was 'bus prefect'. On the top deck she introduced me to Libby, one of the more senior girls at Grey Friars, Gwen herself was at North Hill. Libby was to take me into school and show me where to go. So I experienced my first two kindnesses of the day.

At the mid morning break on that first day, as I strolled around by myself I saw a wide group of nine girls, arms linked, coming towards me. An auburn haired girls in the middle called out to me "What are you looking so miserable about? Come and join us" – and they made room for me in the middle of their row, making me very welcome. Angela Stuart was the initial caller and Joan Crane, Jennifer Banham, Janet Bond, Cynthia Brown and Brenda Botham were (I believe) among the others. They were all friends from the same primary school, North Street in Colchester – and they were to become my friends for a good while thereafter – more kindnesses not forgotten.

Over the next couple of years we met – often out of school. As I lived in an unmodernised house without a telephone, they went out of their way to include me in outings, holiday time outdoor gatherings and, of course, Birthday parties. Someone would write a letter, or a couple of them would cycle over to my home (11 miles return) in order to include me. Knowing my interest in soccer Joan Cane and her elder sister, Doreen (also a CCHS pupil) introduced me to Layer Road matches and the "Green 'Un" newspaper. There was also a kind 'sleep over' with Joan.

It was two out of school activities (piano playing and the Girl Guides) which introduced me to three other CCHS pupils, all new to the area, namely Anne Bayley and her sister Judith and Elizabeth Barton (B). In my Upper IV year I met them all, though Anne an Elizabeth were already at North Hill. My out of school early evening music lessons often meant I travelled home on the same bus as our Guide Captain and Lieutenant and would walk the ¼ mile home with them from the bus stop. It was they who persuaded me to go for the proficiency badge of Musician. The tester was to be that ex-teacher from my primary school that I referred o earlier. Having finalised the badge testing well enough – Mrs Green was more interested in my school

progress and asked to see my school reports – even though I had only seen her occasionally over the past 2 – 3 years. A very kind interest. It was shortly after this that a stranger arrived at one of our Guide meetings – this was my first encounter with Anne Bayley who immediately joined our Company. Already far more advanced than any of us - she was a First Class Guide on her way to becoming a Queen's Guide – just wanting one more proficiency badge. Anne helped us finalise our entry into a Divisional model making competition and joined us at Annual Camp. Judith also joined our Guide Company. One morning Anne strolled into our tent with a wake-up call, greeting me in French – to which I was able to reply likewise. At the fascinated request of the village girls for more of the same, Anne made it easy for me by asking me other simple questions. Our two patrols shared the cooking details that day. Anne invited two of us – Guides – to a party at her home in the village where she ably demonstrated her ability to organise an event and included a novel way of introducing four of us from the village to her own classmates from CCHS without any awkwardness on our parts.

I think it was because of my Musician's badge that Anne asked me if I would help her with her final proficiency badge. She wanted to go for the Hostess badge by putting on a party. Much preferring outdoor activities I reluctantly agreed and was allocated the writing of invitations, helping to prepare the hired room and the refreshments while Anne concentrated on the programme of events. During the party I played the piano where music was needed and did my share of introducing one of the games. The Divisional Commissioner granted us both our proficiency badges and a little while later Anne gained her Queen's Guide Award.

Elizabeth B was also a Girl Guide and spent her time between the Lawford Company and ours in Ardleigh. I remember one occasion when Anne, Elizabeth and I formed part of a First Aid Competition team together. Elizabeth was our Standard Bearer when we needed one. Anne's kindnessesses to me and our Guide Company helped to develop me, so my return kindness was that help with the Hostess badge. It was good to have two older friends as well.

I mentioned staff, and those I particularly remember at Grey Friars were Miss King who taught us mathematics with (for me) new subjects of algebra and geometry. (I have reported earlier on Miss King's kindnesses to me – Newsletter Autumn 2016). Miss Flatman was our first year form mistress and Miss Blunt and Miss Killick both taught us English, one year each. I remember a kind incident with Miss Blunt early in my Lower IV year. She had given us a dictation and on my paper a word was missing. She had a quiet word with me – "had I not heard what she had said?" I replied that yes I had heard perfectly well. That was the first time I experienced a problem that was to recur after every long summer holiday. Towards the end of six weeks spelling would often desert me! What I should have said was that I knew the word wasn't 'shore' but I couldn't remember how to spell what she had said. The missing word was 'sure'. Miss Blunt did not reprimand me and was pleased that I recognised the spelling when she told me. Miss Killick was also our form mistress. She wrote the script and got our form to put on a couple of presentations of 'The Pied Piper'.



Shirley Frost was the Pied Piper as she could play the recorder. There was also great glee when we found out Miss Killick was engaged to be married – the girls guessing 'his' name until someone settled on 'Bill'. At the end of the year Miss Killick left the school and we had organised a wedding gift for her from the form. It was my privilege as Form Captain that term (more kindnesses of my classmates) to present her with it. What she said she would cherish was the card on which all of our form pupils had written and signed. We had a snapshot taken with five of us before she left. *(left: Members of U IV D with Form Mistress Miss Killick and L to R: Jennifer Banham, Vice Form Captain; Dorothy Robinson, Vice Games Captain; Miss Killick: Shirley Frost, Games Captain; Kathleen Wilson, Form Captain; sitting – Joan Crane; Best Scholar!)*

Perhaps her many kindnessess to us were exchanged with one from us in return.

Our move on to North Hill, streaming and later divisions for subjects, together with new classmates and a lot more hard work were to be our future experiences – but the kindnesses continued.

Heritage Open Day At Grey Friars, Sunday 10th September 2023

Joan Gurney reports

Once again Grey Friars took part in the Heritage Open Day on September 10th when interesting and historic buildings which are not normally open to the public welcome those who want to see inside.

An exhibition was set up in the room with a bay window on the eastern side of the former CCHS entrance hall, detailing the history of the site from Roman times to the building of the present house in 1755 and onward, showing its various occupants until the present day. The exhibition attracted a number of viewers and books on Grey Friars were available.



Alan Skinner, helped by his wife Sylvia, conducted two guided tours around Roman Road and Castle Road *(left)* which were formerly the grounds and garden of Grey Friars before the road and housing developments. Alan's walks are always popular and were fully booked in advance with 15 people on each. Alan provided everybody with a sturdy returnable booklet to help with his guidance around the route.

There was no fear of rain on this day, but the sun was extremely hot particularly on the afternoon walk. However, two stalwart determined groups set out with sun cream, sun hats and sun glasses. There are always CCHS Old Girls on these walks and together with the very interested and co-operative residents of the two roads, many intriguing stories are added to Alan's commentary. In the photograph, the occupier of the former Roman Urn public house in Roman Road tells the groups stories of erstwhile publicans.

On returning to the Reception area of Grey Friars hotel and at the end of each circular tour, a member of the hotel staff took each group on a tour of the interior of the hotel, to show how the rooms had been tastefully and sensitively converted from CCHS classrooms to hotel use. There were, of course, more stories and memories from CCHS alumnae of their activities and misbehaviour within the school classrooms. Then there was a last look at the exhibition.

The day ended in late afternoon. Drinks and cups of tea were necessary but plentiful and everybody went home hot but happy.

Liz White: Colchester Heritage Weekend

I put on a large display of Victorian items, ably assisted by CCHS Old Girls Di Childs (née Pennick) and Leona Bryan (née Gillespie) at St John's Green School. Children took visitors around the school describing different rooms – it was very interesting. The school is approaching 125 years of education and researchers Laura Davison and Claire Driver would be VERY interested if anyone who attended the school could give them an account of what they remember.



The contact is: onesquaremilelaura@stjohnsgreen.org.uk

OBITUARIES

In Memory of Christa Paxton (née Chatband) Brenda Green 1958-65



Christa Chatband joined CCHS, as I did, in 1958 and travelled in daily from Layer de la Haye. I don't think we ever were members of the same class, we being the 'bulge' year, but with other girls in our year, mainly Janey Hollingworth, who joined our ranks in the 4th year, my friendship with Christa has survived to the present day.

(left: photo of Christa taken from the Guardian obituary by brother William)

Christa preferred the English History element of education whilst I bent towards the Arts. I have an amusing recollection of Christa, possibly in the 5th or Lower VIth. Whilst working in the hallowed library she spilt a bottle of ink over her newly written essay! Her sharp expletive of 'Oh! Bloody hell!' brought an equally sharp retort from Miss Mann. 'Christa Chatband, OUT! I will not tolerate such language in the library!' 'Oh, but ....'. 'OUT NOW!' Miss Mann screeched, so Christa dutifully gathered up her ruined essay and dripped the pool of ink, now gathered in its folds, across the library floor, bringing further coals heaped upon her head by a now incandescent Miss Mann, leaving we remaining friends in stifled mirth! .... How dare we!

However, a more poignant memory, a very sad one, was that of being told that Christa's mother had been killed in a cycling accident in the village where they lived. This happened in the First Year Sixth and the shock affected us all as Christa was a very popular member of our sixth form group.

From that day Christa's life and hopes changed as she took on the role of looking after her father and two younger brothers, whilst eventually returning to finish her year at school before leaving. I think she did a secretarial course at Colchester Institute and then went to work in the library of the newly established Essex University. As she adjusted to her situation, Christa decided she wanted to travel and at her earliest opportunity applied to British Airways and became an Air Hostess, looking very attractive in her red, white and blue uniform. In this role she was able to gently retreat from Layer de la Haye and find her feet. She made friends among the crews she worked with and some of them have been constant. It was whilst in the service of BA that she met her husband to be, a peripatetic Airport Manager. As his wife Christa, now Paxton, found herself transported to amazing destinations around the world, certainly ticking her desire to travel. They latterly ended up in Bermuda where our mutual friend, Janey, holidayed on a couple of occasions at their invitation and thought she had found heaven! However, Janey soon realised that Christa's marriage was not a happy one and indeed it eventually failed, Christa returning home alone, was divorced and had once again to consider her lot!

Her experience both of life and travelling at a relatively young age had given her an insight to areas of need and Christa's former skills came to the fore. She saw a job advertised for the newly established oil-rigs off the coast of Aberdeen requiring secretarial skills. She applied and got the job! She was to monitor and be in charge of the supplies and equipment required by the men working on the rigs, both nutritional and technical. I have recently seen a photo of Christa dressed in suitable Aberdeen waterproof clothing plus hard-hat, standing on the platform of an oil-rig! (Strange for one who HATED cold weather!) She quickly saw the need to implement a strict timetable for goods and equipment to be delivered or reported to make the oil-rigs efficient workplaces and duly established her own Company called 'Seaplace'. Another photograph showed Christa behind her desk all neatly arranged, owl-like glasses perched on her nose, her determined look stating 'Don't mess with me!' We are told that her meticulously organised operation ran like clockwork and the reputation of her Company grew in its effect on the oil-rigs and gained great respect from all the numerous businesses she dealt with. They trusted Christa implicitly and she was very much accepted in a dominantly male world, which was an amazing achievement.

Eventually Christa decided to sell her expanded Company as she had now established herself as a competent business woman and other seeds were being sown. She returned to London where she purchased her house in King's Road, Fulham. Here she established a new career as an independent Fund Raiser and consultant for other charities. It seems Christa could persuade people to part with cash for worthy cases and this, as always, she did with great resolve, determination and success.

Her interest and concern in life-threatening situations had been fuelled by her travels, some of which she had witnessed at first hand. Now her attentions turned to becoming a member of the adult core of VSO and helping with their fundraising needs. Her then employer and now great friend, Dick Bird, gave a wonderfully succinct

picture of Christa in this role; he knew her so well! During this stage Christa happened to meet Peter Evans by chance and they seemed to click! It also happened that Peter was a computer whizz which fitted so well with her VSO work, computerisation certainly providing a speedier communication tool! So they became a unit which proved a happy and eventful existence together.

They both travelled via VSO to various destinations, often war-torn and quite dangerous. I know that eventually there were in Cambodia and Christa set up charity funding for a series of clinics for women and children badly scarred, both mentally and physically, by the Khmer Rouge. She and Peter returned on several occasions after their initial visit ended, having made friends there and were greatly appreciated for the work they had done, but Christa was also keeping a weather-eye on the accounts, knowing full well how corrupt life can become where people have had to fight for their very existence.

Christa and Peter established a wide circle of friends both in their own neighbourhood and across the world. They loved to share time with others and were very hospitable, as I well know. However, Christa would always need to know the exact time of one's arrival and departure and by what means of transport, so that she could plan the time spent together to best effect. Very much a Christa trait!

I was somewhat alarmed on my last visit in August 2022 to be told Christa had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and had already had keyhole surgery which her surgeon hoped had removed the early stage of the tumour. Sadly this proved not to be the case and after being given as much treatment as was possible, Christa knew she was living on borrowed time. I received a call from Peter in May this year, not long before I departed for Canada in June, to say that Christa was in hospital, but very soon moving to the local hospice. I was so pleased that I managed to have a few words with her on the phone at that point as Christa died peacefully on 26th June surrounded by all her family. Such a sad loss of a lovely friend.

Wyn Foster (Skeet 1942-1951?) from her husband, Ian



It is with sadness that I must report that my wife, Wyn, had a massive second stroke on the 2nd January, 9 years after her first one. She did not regain consciousness and died on the 8th January 2023. We had been married for 65 years and 5 months all but one day. She is survived by myself, 2 sons, 3 daughters, 12 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren and as you can appreciate leaves a big hole in a big family.

She first attended the Prep School from the age of 7 and went on to the senior School after passing the eleven plus.

She had a successful early career, and then qualified as a teacher as a mature student, later appointed as Head of History at Landermere school in Thorpe Le Soken. She later became a Financial Adviser. After retirement we both served on a humanitarian mission for our Church in Vladivostok, Russia for 2 years. When we returned home Wyn was elected as a Councillor on Colchester Borough Council and served for 8 years.

Although I say it myself as her husband she was a very remarkable and capable individual as well as a very loving wife and mother. The family miss her lovely spirit.

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL with thanks to Kate Stubbs, Marketing and Communications Manager

CCHSG proudly engaged with Environmental Issues and Sustainability

Woodland Trust Gold Award

In the summer term, CCHSG gained the Woodland Trust Gold Award. The Woodland Trust is the largest woodland conservation charity in the United Kingdom and is concerned with the creation, protection, and restoration of native woodland heritage. It has planted over 50 million trees since 1972. As part of our work on developing the wider school environment we have undertaken additional planting and habitat management to encourage and improve biodiversity around the school grounds. This includes additional hedgerows, maintenance of our great oak trees and establishing wildlife sanctuary zones. Thanks to all the students and staff that have contributed to this important award. https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/

Eco-Schools Green Flag Award

We are also delighted to have received the Eco-Schools Green Flag award with Distinction. Comments from the awarding body included that we are "leading by example" and they were particularly pleased by our "whole school approach to the Eco-Schools programme".

They noted that our "Action Plan is strong, substantial, and ambitious. It contains innovative and impactful activities. Planting trees will give your Eco-Committee a legacy ….. On top of installing solar panels and heat pumps, you also decided to promote positive energy behaviours, which is important even when using renewable energy sources which can feed back into the grid."

"Reimagine" - Ceres Clean Energy Competition

Congratulations to the seven CCHSG students *(right)* who, at the end of the summer term, were announced as winners of the 2023 Reimagine Clean Energy Competition at the Science Museum, London.



The competition was sponsored and organised by Ceres, a global leader in fuel cell and electrochemical technology, in collaboration with STEM Learning UK. Secondary school students from schools across the southeast of England were asked to submit up to three minutes of animation explaining an exciting and original scientific concept relevant to the net-zero mission. The competition aims to inspire the next generation of innovators to tackle the global climate crisis.

The Reimagine expert judging panel assessed entries on their level of creativity, depth of research and how far the ideas presented could have an impact on climate change. CCHSG competitors, several of whom run the school's Eco Society, hugely impressed the judges. One judge commented that they had approached the competition with a level of commitment and organisation that would be impressive at work, let alone while at school! The students won a trophy which doubles as a real, working, hydrogen fuel cell, as well as £200 each.

Mrs Marshall said: "We are really proud of the outstanding performance from our students against some tough competition. As a school we work to engage students with global environmental issues and bring together elements from across the curriculum, such as Geography, Art, English, Biology and Physics. We are also focused on moving towards the use of sustainable energy sources across our site and on protecting and enhancing the environment for nature within our immediate surroundings. It is very pleasing to see our students demonstrating so much commitment and creativity in facing these global challenges."

For more information about the students' animation as well as the company itself see: https://www.ceres.tech/reimagine/winners-2023/

School Examination Results (from Colchester Gazette)

Colchester County High School for Girls, ranked as outstanding by Ofsted at its most recent inspection, did not publish exam results. Explaining the CCHSG decision not to release information about students' exam results, executive principal Gillian Marshall said: "It would not be appropriate to publish individual performance figures for schools to make comparisons which might undermine the effort and ongoing commitment of students and colleagues. The students can be very proud of the hard work and commitment which has led to the superb examination results they have achieved."

The Gazette explains: The return of results day comes after exams were disrupted for two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with some pupils sitting public exams for the very first time despite being in their final year of school. Throughout 2020 and 2021, pupils received final marks based on coursework and teacher assessment – it meant a jump in grade inflation, with top grades this year for A levels falling from 44 per cent last year down to 36 per cent this year. Despite this, the percentage of A and A* grades across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland was still higher than in 2019.

Summer Concert - "Simply the Best"



Presented on two sell out evenings this year's Summer Concert "Simply the Best", featured dance, drama and music with the theme of "Divas". Around 200 students took part and the CCHSG orchestra accompanied many of the items. Well done to all those involved and to Mrs Jefferies for the musical direction and Mrs Cudmore-Rice who produced and directed the performances.

Look out for our Winter Concert at the end of this term and our spring production of "Oliver". Tickets will be available online via Trybooking or contact the school office.

A FINAL NOTE FROM JO EDWARDS!!



It was absolutely by chance that I discovered that the school has a British Chess Champion in its midst! Ruqayyah Rida *(left)*, a Year 7 student, has won the title of British Chess Champion for Girls under 10 not once, but twice!

How did I find out? A Colchester Civic Society member, David York, spoke to me about his wish to open a chess park beside the Mercury Theatre in Colchester; public tables where anyone could play. He wanted the park to be a memorial to Jonathan Penrose, who was born in Colchester. Grandmaster Dr Jonathan Penrose OBE was 10 times British Chess Champion. I remember Jonathan's parents, who were joint Secretaries of the first Colchester Civic Society, so I offered to give David a bit of help, although I have never played chess in my life!

It was in the course of our discussions about the Jonathan Penrose Memorial Chess Challenge at the Town Hall, which would immediately precede the opening of the Chess Park, that I found out about Ruqayyah. David announced that she was going to take part in the simultaneous exhibition by Grandmaster Michael Adams, who is 8 times British Champion. I was intrigued. David had ascertained that CRGS had a chess club but had not heard from CCHS. Realising that there were fair chances that Ruqayyah was a student there, I put him in touch with our wonderful contact at the school, Kate Stubbs, and the rest, as they say, is history!

I do hope that Ruqayyah's success will be the catalyst required to create a CCHS Chess Club! Ruqayyah met with some extraordinary people on that day. Jonathan's sister, Professor Shirley Hodgson BSc BM BC DM D(Obst)RCOG FRCP DCH FRSB, made the ceremonial celebrity first move *(right)*. His brother, Oliver, a Theoretical Physicist (Google him!) is pictured with Ruqayyah *(on left of picture)*.



Incidentally, the fourth sibling is Sir Roger Penrose, who was awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics. What an incredible experience for Ruqayyah.

Note from the Editor

I do hope that you have enjoyed reading the latest issue of our Newsletter. It should have triggered many memories for you. PLEASE let me have your comments – we love to hear from you! Handwritten comments are welcome as I can type them up! Photographs can be scanned and returned.

You can email me on alangwhite187444@hotmail.com or call me on 01206 522713 for my address.

Thank you!