OLD GIRLS'/ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER – Spring 2024

Editor's Notes

Are we all ready for the many events that Jean Johnson has again organised for this year? We have such fun at these and it is a shame that some are not too well attended. Look at Page 14 of this Newsletter for the next events and reply slips, including our AGM on Saturday 27th July at the School. The minutes of our last AGM are printed below. Joan Gurney, despite her continuing protestations, has sent yet another article for us to relish. My thanks also to Jo Edwards for her careful scrutiny of local newspapers to find interesting stories relating to the School!

THERE IS A SMALL YEARLY CHARGE OF £2.50 to send members a printed copy of the biannual Newsletters. However, if you are over 80 years of age, you will get them free as long as we have your current address! If you would like to take advantage of either method, please let me know. The link to the Newsletter is, of course, sent to all those who have given us their email addresses.

The current school uniform can be seen on the school's website and there may be other photographs of past uniform held by the school. If you have any photos or memories of your school uniform please let me know or contact Kate Stubbs at the school. Do you remember having to kneel down so Mrs Pipe, the scary PE mistress, could check that your skirt was no more than three inches from the floor! When we knew this was going to happen we unrolled our skirts at the waist and afterwards rolled them up again!

Please send your own memories and comments on the articles in this newsletter - any contribution is gratefully received! Old Girls enjoy reading your memories as they trigger their own but please give them to us!

Information, news, comments, photos and articles for the next Newsletter by 30th September 2024.

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

AGM MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 2023

COLCHESTER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
OLD GIRLS/ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
CCHS DINING ROOM, NORMAN WAY, COLCHESTER

22 JULY 2023, 11AM

Meeting preceded by tea/coffee and biscuits.

In attendance – 16 members + Kate Stubbs, CCHSG

1. APOLOGIES

Tina Powell, Eileen Warner, Margaret Howard (Sparkes), Jenny Crewdson (Lewis), Jenny Dennis (Walling)

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM AND MATTERS ARISING

Unfortunately, minutes of the last AGM had, in error, been omitted from the newsletters sent out this year. However, copies were made available to read on the day and were agreed by a show of hands by all present. A copy of last year's AGM minutes has been appended to these minutes, with the committee's apologies.

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 back at the School, thanks to Kate Stubbs who sorted this out for us. We really are enormously grateful. Incorporating our AGM into the Garden Party, which we have done over the last couple of years, was lovely, although we were very reliant on good weather. However, it distanced us from the School, which was wrong. We obviously want to maintain a good, strong, link with our Alma Mater and our annual visits certainly help us to achieve that. As does Kate! I would like to formally record our thanks to her. She

is amazing! She really is our link with the School, keeping us up to date with news, writing articles for the Newsletter, attending as many of our events as she can, distributing surplus Newsletters, you name it, she does it. Nothing is too much trouble. Always charming and eminently approachable, she is an absolute gem! Thank you, Kate!

Liz has, again, attended the Leaving Girls' Assembly to give a short talk about the OGA and to present the School Leaving Award. I will leave Mary to elaborate on that. However, shortly afterwards, I happened to meet a girl who was at that assembly who told me how much she and her friends had enjoyed and appreciated what Liz had said. Apparently they were also highly amused.

We have had several events since the last AGM, making up for lost time! For those who still think of Grey Friars as their school (North Hill is rarely mentioned!) we have had a coffee morning there and another, surprisingly well attended one, at the Officers' Club. A select few enjoyed a splendid Chinese lunch and we also returned to the Colchester Institute for lunch as well, sadly to the Balkerne Restaurant rather than the Colne Restaurant which has closed. Such a pity as we liked it very much - and it was cheaper! And, of course, we had our annual garden party at the home of Liz and her husband, Alan, in Lexden Road. It was so good to see Kate and a group of leaving girls there too. We must thank Liz and Di for preparing and serving such gorgeous food, both at the garden party and here today. And we must thank Alan (Liz's husband) for his hospitality and support. Jean, of course, apart from being Treasurer, organises our programme and deserves a medal! Thanks to all of them.

Mary will report on the School Leaving Award which she administers and the banking nightmare she has had this year, rather reminiscent of the one we had with our main OGA account a few years ago. Running bank accounts for small organisations is fraught with all sorts of unexpected and often totally farcical complications, all supposedly set up to prevent money laundering. In all honesty, do we really look like money launderers? And who in their right mind would use our small, insignificant accounts for such a purpose? Never mind. It's immensely irritating at the time but, in retrospect, the conversations and correspondence we have had concerning our accounts have been so surreal that all we can do is laugh - and boy, have we laughed! Thank you Mary, for your quiet determination!

Mary also writes amazing Minutes - and she doesn't lose them either. I will confess that I still haven't found the ones for the AGM before last. I know I still have them and they will reappear. With the amount of paper I have in my house, as I am heavily involved in other societies as well, it is hardly surprising that I occasionally lose stuff but I admit that I am surprised that the Minutes haven't turned up yet. I am sorry! Thanks, Mary, you are incredibly efficient and put me to shame.

Liz has produced two Newsletters this year. I will remind you that, despite Liz's sterling efforts, a Newsletter is only as good as its contributors and I know she would really appreciate more copy! We particularly need news about younger Old Girls. What are you all doing? Where are you working? What amazing experiences have you had? Have you met up with your contemporaries, either just in small groups or a full scale reunion event? Have you recently married or had children? We would also love your memories of your time at school, particularly if you were at Norman Way. Were you involved in a school play with CRGS? As OGA Secretary, I have recently had enquiries about a couple of those. One was about the Knight of the Burning Pestle in the late 1960s which, by incredible coincidence, was the only school play I was in so I could answer that but the other was La Belle Helene which was after my time and I could find nothing about it. Did you take part? If so, please tell us!

We did have an interesting time distributing the e mailed versions of the first Newsletter this year. Normally Tina does this in her role as Membership Secretary but she was in India with very little internet access. Mary and I struggled. We tried to use the very good and detailed instructions left by Tina, who thought she'd covered every eventuality, but we failed dismally. Neither of us could get the password to work. We managed to contact Tina to confess. And so it was that the Newsletter was distributed to members via a very iffy internet connection from the Muna River in Pune. A definite first for the OGA!

Very sadly, we have lost some Old Girls during the year. We were so sorry to hear of the incredibly sudden death of OGA stalwart Pauline Millatt who, only a short while before, had been really enjoying herself at the Grey Friars coffee morning. Pauline had four daughters who were all at the School. Mary will report that Pauline left money to the School Leaving Award Fund.

Again, we must be immensely proud of our association with the School. I was contacted by a Sixth Former a few months ago. She wanted some information about the Dutch Quarter that she thought I might have as she was writing about it as part of her 'A' level Geography coursework. I did have the information she wanted and arranged to meet her - at Grey Friars, of course. We had a long chat and I was able to introduce her to a friend of mine who was able to give her far more detail than I could. I made some suggestions about further sources and left her to it but not before asking whether I could read the essay when she had finished it. She duly contacted me. I read what she had written and was absolutely stunned! It was an extraordinary piece of work. It was at that point that I realised why the School has the results it does. She said that her teachers were wonderful and extremely supportive, which was really good to hear. With a few notable exceptions, I can't say that I had the same experience, I'm afraid, but, as I have said before, I can happily bask in reflected glory and say 'I went there!' when the girls again excel and achieve superb exam results as well as succeeding in all sorts of other challenges. Well done to them all!

Post-meeting update from Jean Johnson – We were sad to read in the Standard (21/7/23) that Ann Heathfield had died. She had moved from Mersea to live with her daughter at St Osyth a few years ago. Our thoughts are with Ann's family.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT, 2022–2023 Accounts – Jean Johnson

The AGM was postponed last year but I had actually completed the accounts as usual for the end of June, so I have continued that timing, although we are still a few days away from the end of the month. Some members have already paid, and either refunds were given or donations given to the OGA. Although I was not at the AGM I had suggested that we give the School Leaving Trust Fund a donation and this was duly passed by members. This year I realised we had been rather generous and am rather horrified to see that we have had to transfer quite a lot of money from our savings account to our current account. £400 was, of course, for the School Leaving Fund, and just over £200 was to pay for money owing from the previous year (the latter was mentioned in last year's accounts). The annual insurance bill is an additional cost.

You will see that by subsidising the Grey Friars Coffee Morning we lost over £30. The Colchester Institute lunch, Bamboo House Lunch and the Colchester Officers' Club Coffee Morning more or less broke even, and we are grateful to Liz for making us an approx. £20 profit on the Garden Party.

This year, we have offered Grey Friars Coffee Morning at the price they have quoted - £10 – albeit with only 2 cakes instead of 3, but still unlimited coffee or tea, and we will assess whether the increase price makes a difference to the numbers attending.

There is a notable absence of income from printed newsletters, probably because the over 80's are sent one free. We still have printing, stationery and postage costs to cover the events and newsletter mailings.

In view of this sad look at our finances this year, I am proposing that if we have a collection today the amount raised is donated to the OGA funds rather than to the School Leaving Fund, I will leave Mary to tell you about my reasoning for that when she talks to you.

There are some copies of the accounts circulating (also appended), and if there are any questions please feel free to ask.

QUESTIONS ON THE DAY:

1. Monica asked if Grey Friars is the best location for a coffee morning if it is so expensive. Those present thought that as there are so many OGA members who have fond memories of Grey Friars, and as there is always such a good turn-out at this venue, we should continue for the time being.

2. There were no objections to donations collected at the AGM going to OGA funds this year. Jo stressed that anyone who wanted to donate to the School Leaving Fund were, of course, still welcome to do so!

6. SCHOOL LEAVING AWARD 2022/23 – Mary Softley (Rickard)

Every year, the School is asked to nominate a student who has made extra effort outside of their 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 Kaavya Chandrasekar. She was nominated for her activities as Charities Co-ordinator for the Head Student Team and for her extensive work outside school as a volunteer for St. John's Ambulance. She has also co-ordinated the involvement of St. John's Ambulance volunteers in training CCHSG students in first aid.

The School Leaving Fund was becoming severely depleted and last year at the AGM, it was agreed that £400 of the Old Girls' Association income should be transferred to the School Leaving Award Fund. In addition, a collection held at the last AGM raised a further and very generous £120: thank you everyone.

More significantly, following the sad passing of the much-missed Pauline Millatt, her family passed on a very generous bequest to the School Leaving Fund. Pauline's kindness will enable us to continue to issue the award for many more years than we had anticipated. We are humbled and most grateful to Pauline and send our thanks and best wishes to her family.

This all means that as of 8th June 2023, the School Leaving Fund total sits at £2,142.52. This does take into account this year's award to Kaavya.

When updating the bank with details of my married surname, it transpired that NatWest were also holding incorrect details concerning the principal contacts for the account, despite having been informed in writing several years ago. It has proved very difficult and time-consuming to provide the evidence that they require, but (hopefully) this has now been done.

Post-meeting update – text of the letter of thanks from Kaavya. (Kaavya'sletter and photographs in Autumn 2023 Newsletter)

7. REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL – Kate Stubbs, Marketing & Communications Manager, CCHSG
Kate thanked the OGA for the presentation of the School Leaving Award by Liz to Kaavya. She told us that the students especially enjoyed Liz's talk at their leaving assembly and were appreciative that the OGA were also encouraging non-academic aspirations and achievements amongst students.

Kaavya Chandrasekar was most grateful to have been nominated for this year's School Leaving Award and has written a letter of thanks to the OGA. She hopes to attend this year's Garden Party on 8th September.

We were reminded that the School publishes a regular newsletter on their website: https://www.cchsg.com/

Old Girls are encouraged to take a look, to find out what goes on at the School today, including their many non-academic activities. The School's prospectuses can also be found here.

Excitingly, the website includes access to a drone tour of the School (both outside and indoors!). Kate played this video to us at the end of the meeting, but it can also be found on the website here: https://www.cchsg.com/admissions/prospectus/.

There is also a video presentation of the School Sixth Form virtual open evening, again played to members at the end of the meeting, but available to view here: https://www.cchsg.com/sixth-form/sixth-form-admissions/sixth-form-virtual-open-evening/

Future School productions will be advertised on the website and Kate advised that Old Girls would be welcome to attend.

The School has expanded considerably in recent years – from 750 students when Kate first started working at the School, to 1200 students today. There is now six-form entry at year 7 (192 students), with 650 hopeful students sitting the entrance examination this year. In an effort to widen participation from feeder schools, and to encourage students who might not otherwise apply, CCHSG run an outreach programme to give confidence to those considering sitting the entrance exam.

There are also currently 260 students in the 6th form.

At present, CCHSG students travel from as far away as Hackney. This means that they are subjected to a very long day. It is also considered that parents are less likely to attend events and the students themselves unlikely to participate in extra-curricular activities. The School's admissions policy will therefore be changing in 2025: there will be a preference for applicants living within 12 miles of the School (i.e. a lower entrance exam score will be accepted from these students), although anyone from outside this zone will still able to apply. They hope that this change in policy will help to re-introduce more local families to the

School. Full details of the admissions policies are available to read on the School's website: https://www.cchsg.com/.

8. WEB SITE – Tina Powell
Tina was unable to attend the AGM but had no matters to report. A reminder that the OGA's website is available at - Home | mysite-1 (cchsoga5.wixsite.com)

Newsletters are added to the site when published. Members are encouraged to send in anything relevant to the Committee for inclusion on the website, or for the Newsletters.

The members are also reminded that the OGA/Alumnae Association host a Facebook page – search @CchsAlumnae in your preferred search engine. Current and past newsletters can also be found here.

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)
Proposed – Diana Rowe; Seconded – Christine Pettitt and Di Childs
The members present thanked the committee for all their hard work over the last year.

11. ANY OTHER AGM BUSINESS
1. Monica had some information about the daughter of a CCHS Old Girl, Vivien Baldry. Vivien's daughter, Rue Baldry, has recently been given the Commonwealth Short Story prize: Monica hopes to write a piece about this for inclusion in the next newsletter.

2. Monica has been working on a memories project for Wakes Colne, including voice recordings. Three of the group are CCHS Old Girls and they are planning on talking about their memories of the School at their next meeting. They have borrowed professional recording equipment from Colchester Recalled. Everyone involved has had to agree to their voices being recorded and their stories are going to be archived at the Essex Records Office/Essex University (considered more appropriate repositories than the Society itself, as the valuable resource should persist, even if the group is disbanded in the future).

Monica rightly considers that residual knowledge and priceless memories are being lost. She had the exciting idea of recording the vocal history and memories of CCHS Old Girls in a similar manner. It would be a lot of work but might be something that the current School management could facilitate. It would also be an interesting project for any 'budding journalist' students at the School, as well as an incredibly valuable, historic and social resource. Those present asked Kate if she thought it might be something that the School would be interested in facilitating as a joint and collaborative project between CCHSG and the OGA. This would be a good way to build on the links between the two organisations. The School may also have access to the high quality recording equipment and suitable data storage requirements.

Those present were enthused about Monica's idea, which immediately invoked many memories of school, including the terror that Miss King might have discovered girls eating doughnuts in the street whilst walking in their uniforms between sites!

Action – Kate Stubbs will investigate further and report back to the OGA.

12. DATE AND VENUE FOR THE 2024 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 catering so deliciously, much appreciated by all!

Signed by (Chair): Dated

The meeting concluded with videos from Kate Stubbs (drone tour of the School and sixth form virtual open evening), followed by a delicious lunch from Liz and Di.

NEWS OF OLD GIRLS

Charlotte Anderson (2002-9)

In August 2022, I took the decision to step away from the corporate world to start my own maths tuition business in East Grinstead, West Sussex. I now have 20 students, to whom I mostly teach maths, and give the occasional helping hand with physics/science. I have a much more relaxed way of life, and have widened my local social network 10 fold, at least.

Every day, I am grateful for my outstanding secondary education. The rigorous teaching I received has meant that even topics I thought I'd forgotten come back to me quickly and easily. My thanks to Dr Parrot, Dr Cox, Mr Metcalfe, Mr Bowles, Dr Griffiths, Mr Harvey, Mrs Norman, and Mrs Cura for a fantastic education, and to the late Elizabeth Ward for leading such an optimal learning environment and always believing in me.

Laura Stephens (2010-17)

Laura has done remarkably well in her 200 metre butterfly swimming career in the last few years. In the 2019 World Aquatic Championships she reached the final and in 2022 represented England at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, winning two medals. That year she won the gold medal at the British Swimming Championships, and again this year. She has also just won the gold at the World Aquatic Championships in Doha – Britain's first global title in a women's individual event for 13 years – the last winner being Rebecca Addlington. She has also been part of the British Women's relay teams.

SCHOOL MAGAZINE 70 YEARS AGO

In the School Magazine of 1953-4 the Old Girls' Section reported that:

"We held three meetings as usual this year, and in addition, a Mothers' and Babies' meeting was held on June 19th and was very well attended. At the Christmas meeting an appeal was made for funds to enable the Association to buy its own crockery. There was an immediate response, and at the Easter meeting we were all delighted to be able to use our own crockery. The Summer meeting was held at North Hill on July 17th. Unfortunately rain prevented the tennis tournament that had been arranged between the Staff, present girls and the OGA."

Also in that Magazine

Report from Melbourne by Grace Hantot (née Duddy) about several flights with the Flying Doctor, Dr LW Alderman. Grace Eleanor Duddy was born in Lexden, Colchester in December 1914. It is not known whether she attended the Preparatory School but she would have been in the secondary school at CCHS from 1926. She trained as a teacher and emigrated to Australia in September 1946, where she married Henry Hautot. Henry died in 1965 and she later returned to England and died in Ipswich in 1993.
(Ed: Unfortunately I have had to edit this very long report.)

At 7am on Easter Sunday (1950) w started off on our first flight from Broken Hill NSW to the opal fields at Andamooka. This is an isolated spot to the north west of Lake Torrens, about five hundred miles by air.



The opal miners all live in dugouts underground like modern pit dwellers. They scoop out a room in the side of a small hillock and usually sleep on a broad platform of earth on which they place their bedding. Any building materials would have to be brought over dangerous desert route from Adelaide. So the only semblance to an ordinary home is wooden doors in the hillsides. The earthen homes are also much cooler in a place where the temperature can reach 130F in the shade.

(left: Flying Doctor aircraft – de Havilland DHA-3 Drover)

There was a tiny hospital made in a similar way. One room held a bed, a small table and a medicine chest. Besides these there was just room for the doctor. The

hospital is usually kept locked and in charge of the medical man appointed by the small community. The doctor calls once a month, unless for an emergency. I saw some very nice opals here. Sometimes people dig for years and find nothing. Then they may suddenly become rich in an afternoon.

On a later flight we went to Maree, one of the hottest places in Australia. It is in the South Australian desert, on the railway line which runs from Adelaide to Alice Springs. As soon as darkness came the air was full of flying beetles. This hit me in the back, went down my neck and into my hair. They are a very pretty iridescent green, but if you step on one the smell is abominable. This quiet desert town is on the old camel route to Birdsville. The famous Birdsville track has seen many an Arab drover with his string of ungracious beasts. I met and talked with one old Arab drover who told me that they are now being replaced by motor trucks. He also showed me over the Mosque which they had built there.

From here we received an emergency call which meant flying over some hundreds of miles of flooded country. We saw water flowing into Lake Eye, this happening for the first time in living memory. When we arrived at Birdsville the place was completely surrounded by water and had been so for three months. No one had been able to get in or out so we were greeted most enthusiastically. Here we dined on goat meat, tinned tomatoes and tinned beetroot. That afternoon we had flown over floods large enough to have engulfed the whole of England and Wales.

It was a most exciting experience. I would like to be able to go again and meet all the very hospitable people whom I met then.

20 YEARS LATER - SCHOOL MAGAZINE 1973-4

News of Former Staff - Miss Roper

It is sad to report that Miss Roper, who taught at the School from 1919 until 1957, died in October 1974. Many Old Girls will remember Miss Roper with respect for her integrity and high standards. We shall remember the gentle, quiet manner in which she conveyed her enthusiasm for her subject to us, especially when she took us to study the flora of her own woodland garden, or for botanical rambles along the river bank to Oliver's. She contributed much to the School and maintained a personal interest in her former pupils whenever she came to OGA meetings after her retirement. We are most grateful for some mementoes of her time at the school and some books given to the school by her brother, Mr William Roper, on her behalf. *(I wonder what happened to the mementoes?)*

Also in this 1973-4 School Magazine:

Coincidences! by Pat Pearson Upper VI





Both Kennedy and Lincoln were concerned with Civil Rights; Lincoln was elected in 1860 and Kennedy in 1960. Both their wives lost children while in the White House. Both Kennedy and Lincoln were killed on a Friday in the presence of their wives. Both were shot in the head from behind. John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin, was born in 1839; Lee Harvey Oswald, Kennedy's assassin, was born in 1939. Both assassins were Southerners favouring unpopular ideas and both were shot before being brought to trial. Lincoln and Kennedy were both succeeded by a Vice President Johnson; Andrew Johnson was born in 1808; Lyndon Johnson was born in 1908. Both were Southern Democrats of humble origin. Lincoln's secretary, whose name was Kennedy, advised him not to go to the theatre that day; Kennedy's secretary, whose name was Lincoln, advised him against going to Dallas. Booth shot Lincoln and ran from a theatre into a warehouse; Oswald shot Kennedy and ran from a warehouse into a theatre.

Joan Gurney (Appleton) 1938-51

And now for something completely different!

I have almost come to the end of stories from my life based on a country childhood and many backward glances to the influences of my schooldays at CCHS.

Psychologists tell us that our intellect is a combination of nature and nurture, and sociologists add that our final personality is dependent on all the people that we have met and all the events, major or minor, which we have lived through in our early lives. Both of these hypotheses may explain why I have so often felt compelled to write purely for pleasure, about such things as wildlife, the countryside, friendships, travel and swimming. But looking through my early school exercise books recently (hoarding is another of my inherited traits, or some say obsessions) how did I become so interested in the supernatural , ghosts, and the occult to write essays and compositions about them in my later schooldays? No doubt, we pupils were given composition titles on which to complete our thoughts and demonstrate our knowledge of English, sentence analysis and punctuation. I remember that I was no good at writing about abstract subjects – Happiness, Colour, Sounds – and even Clouds ended up as a meteorological report with nothing remotely creative or imaginative about it.

I can only surmise that the story of the ghost which apparently haunted the top floor of Grey Friars and which was relayed to me on my arrival in the Preparatory Department in 1938, had a subliminal effect on my imagination. The long narrow dark and gloomy top corridor *(right)* of the building, particularly the middle section, marked P, on the plan *(below)* was not one of the building's most attractive features. This is the point where the original 1755 house and the later 1904 west wing are united with the 1780's garden room below.

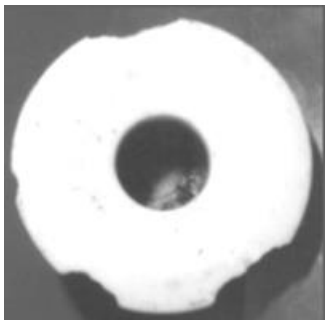




Here, the original furniture hoist *(left)* conjured up in my imagination an association with the hanging of witches in times gone by. I need not have blamed my exaggerated senses because this ghost story has been added to and enhanced over the years. After CCHS had vacated the building in 1957, and other schools used it as temporary accommodation, it is recorded that a ventilation door into a wall cavity in this area often mysteriously blew open (or was manipulated by an unseen hand) in times of storms, and even later, when the Adult Education Centre was established, the caretaker's dog would never accompany him on his top floor nightly security round because of an "unseen presence!"

These ghost stories and tales of the supernatural kept me entertained during the 1940s

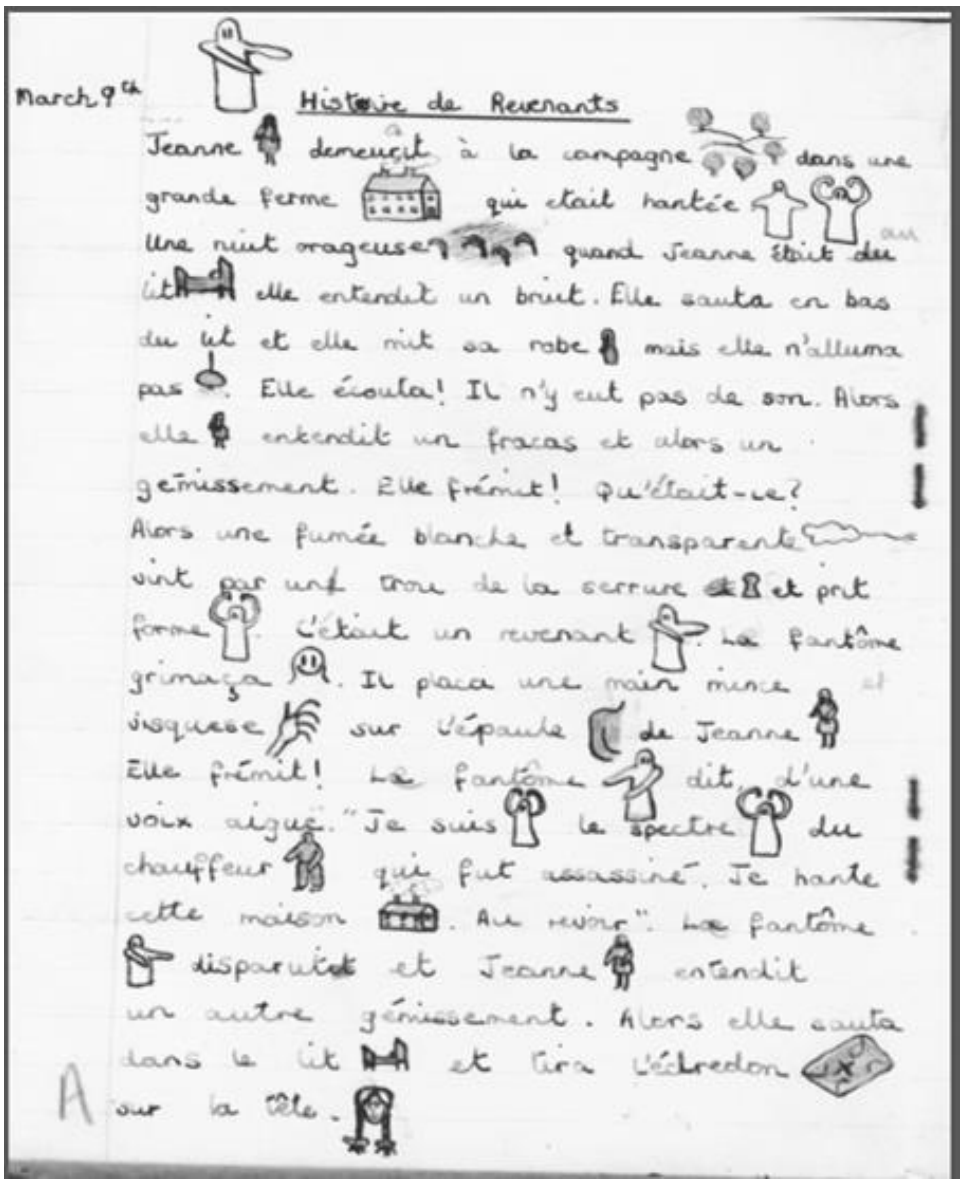
and the war years. It was within these years that I wrote a piece called "An interview with the devil" where, during a dream which I had after attending a pantomime, I descended into hell and met the devil. It is of great interest to me today because, in the dream, several events of that decade were replicated, and it became an important record of social history in the real world. There was a National Health Service in the underworld, and in order to enter Hell and the Fiery Furnace, I had to acquire my own set of horns and a spiky tail! These were rationed (as was food in the war years) and coupons had to be torn out of my ration book as they were handed over. There were queues for everything, and priority was given to those who had completed the most evil deeds, and so went to the front of the queue. There must have been some controversy in the real world at the time over opticians' failure to deliver horn rimmed spectacles because they got straight in, as did anybody who came from Colchester! What had they done, I wondered?



At this point in the story of my dream, the writing was beginning to fade because I was obviously recording it with a 'dip in the ink' pen and it needed replenishing from the ceramic inkwell *(left)* slotted into my desk top I never knew the answer and my dream suddenly ended. It had been a comedy with gruesome details!

My English teacher (either Miss Blunt or Miss RL Phillips , to distinguish her from Miss ME Phillips who taught Maths) did not like the story very much and although she gave me a B+ did write 'Quite Good' at the end. I gave her more satisfaction when I wrote (still with tongue in cheek) "On learning to ride a pony" for which she said "I enjoyed this".

Not content with creating our own fantasy world on paper, with four CCHS friends I decided to explore the supernatural world a little further. We arranged a bicycle trip to Borley Rectory which was not far from Colchester, and which had been in the news as one of the most haunted houses in the country. Anticipation was high, but we were so disappointed that nothing spectacular happened except for a farm worker, believing that we were looking for something unusual to occur, lobbed a potato at us over the hedge!


March 9th

Histoire de Revenants

Jeanne demeurait à la campagne dans une grande ferme qui était hantée. Une nuit orageuse, quand Jeanne était dans le lit elle entendit un bruit. Elle sauta en bas du lit et elle mit sa robe mais elle n'alluma pas. Elle écouta! Il n'y eut pas de son. Alors elle entendit un fracas et alors un gémissement. Elle frémit! Qu'était-ce? Alors une fumée blanche et transparente vint par un trou de la serrure et prit forme. C'était un revenant. Le fantôme grimaça. Il plaça une main mince et squelettique sur l'épaule de Jeanne. Elle frémit! Le fantôme dit, d'une voix aigue. "Je suis le spectre du chauffeur qui fut assassiné. Je hante cette maison. Au revoir". Le fantôme disparut et Jeanne entendit un autre gémissement. Alors elle sauta dans le lit et tira l'édredon sur la tête.

The ultimate challenge in ghost story writing came in the late 1940s when my French teacher at the time (who I believe was Miss Nichols) asked us not only to write a ghost story in French, but to construct it in the style of a Mediaeval Puzzle Book. This meant including, as the story unfolded, miniature illustrations *(right)* within the text. This pleased me no end, because art was my favourite subject. Here

I reproduce it knowing that all those learned alumnae, helped by the small drawings will be able to translate it with ease!

I left school at CCHS in 1951 to become a student at university and teacher training college thinking that tales, ghosts and the underworld were well behind me. Towards the end of this four year period I became involved with a small drama group and suddenly found myself in a production where I was understudy to Mephistophilis, and although I never had to stand-in for the main character, I was once more back in the world of horns, tails and spikey fingernails, and enjoyed assisting with the facial make-up *(left)*.



Fifty five years passed, and all thoughts of ghosts and the supernatural vanished and then a ghost of a very different kind entered my life.

I have always loved owls. Screeching Barn owls, snoring Little owls and hooting Tawny owls, all inhabit or visit my meadow and orchard, and I hear their calls. But my favourite is the Barn Owl. Often as I drove home in the dark after my evenings work in Colchester, as soon as I entered the narrow lanes of Gt Bromley my headlights would pick out a barn owl overhead, silently searching the grass verges for small rodents.

On another occasion driving home at dusk from London with my late husband, Gerald, at the wheel, as we entered Mary Lane North from the A120, I glimpsed a young barn own sitting on a post beside the road. "Look out," I shouted. Confused and dazzled by the combination of noise, movement and car lights, it took off suddenly, hitting the windscreen hard. We stopped and I got out expecting to see a stunned bird lying in the road. But it had, apparently, flown away unharmed, leaving a tiny fragment of creamy-white feather stuck to the glass as evidence of its collision.

My next exciting owl encounter was yet to come in February 2010, but this time the bird left no clue to its identity – barn and tawny owls are similar in size. Read on for the finale!

Small birds, such as chaffinches and blackbirds, sometimes fly into windows where the glass appears to be an open space. The only indication of the collision is the sound of thud and, sadly, often a corpse on the ground below. Pigeons usually survive, but leave an intricate and eerie 'ghost' mark caused by the fine resinous and insulating powder in their feathers sticking to the glass. Nocturnal strikes by owls, as they fly silently searching for prey, are the most interesting. They are, perhaps mistakenly lured by reflections.

This very unusual 'ghost' *(right)* on the rear window of my husband's car, greeted me one morning in early February after a cold clear night which had given a light dusting of snow. The impact must have occurred at the exact moment when the temperature dropped to freeing point, because the outline is remarkably sharp, and there is no disturbance of snow beyond the periphery of the image.



Although I would hope to see a daytime small bird 'ghost' on a window sometime soon, the misty faint image is not easy to photograph, but a nocturnal owl 'ghost' as clear as this one on frosted snowy glass is very rare, and I cannot hope to see it eve again. It is my most memorable 'ghost' experience.

1949-56 Reunion – Della Parker (Nixon 1943-56)

On Saturday 9th September 2023 we had a reunion of our year at CCHS. This year we are all 85 years old and Elspeth Griffin (James, our head girl, felt people were no longer afraid of Covid so it was worth having a go!

She drew up a list of 17 people with their phone numbers and email addresses for e to use. I decided on phone calls and had a really lovely time chatting to old (very old!) friends. Brenda Baker (Tomkin) added two more with whom she was in touch – Jennifer Burnett (Marsh) and Mavis – now Anne? (Jones).

The numbers accepting reached 15, which was marvellous, but I panicked! I had booked 'The Cricketers' at Eight Ash Green because the food is good, the car parking easy and it's near the A12. I panicked because once numbers reach 12 their menu choices have to be given in advance! I don't know how to send attachments to a group! There was a huge choice of both main and lunch meals! My son saved me! (How grateful we are for the younger generations!) People's choices came flowing in and with a few phone calls all was ready. Fourteen of us met together that Saturday! How is it that we feel so happy and relaxed with people we really only knew as children?

Our first reunion was at Greyfriars when we were all 60 years old and the building was an adult education college. Since then we've met a few times at 'Beth Chattos' and 'The Harvester'!

Many old friends have died, some haven't the mobility to travel, or the ability to drive – but we will try again next year!

Interestingly, four of us had been in the Pre, which was then fee-paying. However, when the 1944 Eduction Act came in, it became free, but no chiodren entered which made the year younger than us the last of the Pre. We did have to 'pass' the 11-plus to cpntinue at CCHS.

Some of us re-visit Greyfriars for a meal or a coffee. Structurally, inside and out, it has hardly changed. From rooms are now bedrooms and our Pre from room is now the Bar!

So here's to **Saturday 14th September 2024**! Hopefully we "Will Meet Again".

NEWS ABOUT THE SCHOOL (as reported in Colchester Gazette!)

Jack Petchey Foundation Event - March 2024

Nearly 100 Colchester youngsters were recognised for their "amazing achievements" at an awards ceremony in the city. The Jack Petchey Foundation Awards took place at Charter Hall, in Cowdray Avenue, celebrating the greatest 11-25 year olds in the area. The event highlighted individuals for their significant contributions to their respective schools, colleges, or youth organisations.

Amazingly, 96 young people from Colchester were honoured during the evening for a variety of different reasons. The foundation granted each of these winners' medallions and framed certificates, along with a £300 grant for the betterment of their respective institutions.



16-year-old Edie Duffy *(right)*, who studies at Colchester County High School for Girls, was celebrated for her role as a kind and dependable model pupil. Ms Duffy will allocate her grant towards a physics trip for her class to either the Royal Observatory at Greenwich or the particle accelerator in Oxfordshire.



Another winner, 14-year-old Michaela Cherian *(left)* from Colchester County High School for Girls, was lauded for her notable contributions to charity. She plans to spend her Jack Petchey Achievement Award grant on a meal for her form group.

Mayor of Colchester, John Jowers said: "It is always so uplifting to see our future - (there's) so much running down of our youngsters - come and see this ceremony, it is so uplifting. Congratulations to the Jack Petchey Foundation." The Jack Petchey Foundation has, thus far, disbursed more than £624,000 to Colchester since it first started awarding funding.

New Teaching Block - January 2024

The School has submitted the proposals to Colchester Council outlining the construction of a single three-storey classroom block and canopy. Plans detail the new block would be constructed of "brickwork and cedar panelling, aluminium windows and with a flat roof". A proposed floor plan shows the site would hold

three classrooms, a store and plant room, with space also set out for an office, lobby, toilets and cleaners' cupboard.

Highest admission rates to Oxbridge - December 2023.
National data collected by the Daily Telegraph reveals that both Colchester Royal Grammar School and Colchester County High School for Girls had two of the highest proportions of pupils continuing their studies at Oxford or Cambridge. Interestingly, CCHS and CRGS leavers in 2020 had the same percentages, ie, 16 per cent going to Oxbridge, with 66 per cent enrolling at other Russell Group universities, eg, Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool, York, several London colleges, etc. Nationally only 1% of students enrol at Oxbridge and 18% at the Russell Group Universities. The data also revealed that 94% of CCHS students started their university careers within two years of leaving school and CRGS had 96%.

CCHS over the years – February 2024
Wisdom Giveth Life – a motto still woven into everything CCHS does.

This year, the school, in Norman Way, marks 115 years since it was founded. Now boasting hundreds of students, the school has grown and evolved, but its success has been a constant.

Off the back of its latest maintained outstanding rating *(see page 13)* and to celebrate another major milestone in 2024, *Colchester Gazette* dug into the archives to find pictures from 1913 to the 2000s, documenting school plays, exam successes and memorable teachers past and present.



The school first opened in Colchester High Street in 1909 with just 67 pupils. It moved to the top of North Hill (now the Sixth Form College) *(right)*, then to Grey Friars (now Grey Friars Hotel) and finally settled in its distinctive Norman Way home in 1957. The school badge was unveiled in 1927 and under headteacher Miss Katherine Vashon Baker in the 1950s, a house system introduced and a parent-teacher association formed. The first major expansion was under the leadership of Dr Aline Black, who in 1996 was responsible for the "technology block" extension of the main building. By 2005 the school role had expanded to 767.



(left: Former Head Elizabeth Ward outside with ex-students

The school has been under the leadership of Gillian Marshall from 2009 to now. It became the lead school in the Alpha Multi Academy Trust in March 2018. Recent development highlights include a major extension of the Sixth Form centre, a new sports hall, the rebuilding of the swimming pool and a new teaching block.

A statement on the website sums it up perfectly: "Throughout the school's long history one thing remains consistent, its leadership by generations of talented and dedicated women and committed teaching staff who aspired, and continue to aspire, to provide the very best in education and opportunity for the students in their care."

(Ed: I am sure that we could tell Colchester Gazette many more facts about the school over the years but, perhaps, some might not be printable!)

Obituary

Mary Francis – Laboratory Technician CCHS



Mary Francis died peacefully at her home in Stanway in February at the age of 80. She was involved with the Scouts for more than 60 years becoming a Cub Scout leader at 18 and moving to Colchester in 1969 she was Akela with the 9th Colchester Cub Pack, then with the 17th Colchester St John's Pack for 27 years until 2007. She served for four years as the District Commissioner of Colchester East District Scouts and was a county adult leader trainer. In 2006 May was presented with the Silver Wolf award *(left)* by the Chief Scout, Peter Duncan, the highest award for an adult Scout leader given "for services of the most exceptional character". She was just the sixth recipient and the first female to receive this award in Colchester. In 2007 she became Chairman of the Management Committee at Thorrington Scout Camp for ten years.

In her working life Mary help teachers and students as a laboratory technician at CCHS and outside Scouting she was a magistrate for more than 30 years, serving as Chairman of the Youth Bench. She was a trustee at the charity Open Road for 20 years and a keen member of Inner Wheel, an international organisation linked to Rotary. She also enjoyed volunteering at King's Ford School, helping young people with reading.

The *Colchester Gazette* awarded Mary with its Community Hero award in 2015.

Despite being diagnosed with Vascular Dementia with Alzheimers in 2017 she would not be deterred from enjoying watching Colchester United home games and attending U3As ukulele group where she sang and played percussion. She also sang in the St John the Baptist's church choir in Layer de la Haye.

Her family said "A loving mother of three and grandmother of six, Mary leaves behind Michael, her devoted husband of 61 years. Known as Supergran, Akela, Glary Mary, Madam, Nee or Granny Mary, she had a positive influence on the lives of so many people through her lifetime of volunteering.

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

CCHSG Ofsted Inspection January 2024 - "CCHSG is an Exceptional school"
When inspectors visited CCHSG recently the school was found to be outstanding in all areas. There were no areas requiring improvement and is was noted that leaders at all levels have maintained an exceptional level of education for the pupils

The following all received "outstanding" judgements: Overall effectiveness, Quality of education, Behaviour and attitudes, Personal development, Leadership and management, Sixth Form provision, : Outstanding.

Among many very positive judgements inspectors identified that: pupils are part of a respectful, kind and hardworking community; the views of pupils are considered carefully and acted upon effectively by the school, there is a remarkable range of leadership opportunities for pupils, there is a culture of determination to succeed not only academically but also to be good people who will make a difference both in school and in the wider world, the quality of education provided by the school is outstanding.

As a result the outcomes for pupils are some of the highest in the country for pupils are exceptionally knowledgeable about their subjects, the skills they demonstrate are remarkable. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is ambitious and pupils with SEND make excellent progress. It was also noted that the behaviour of pupils was exceptional.

Pupils have access to a rich and diverse range of activities both within and outside the curriculum to enable them to develop their character.

Mrs Gillian Marshall, Executive Principal and CEO of Alpha Trust commented: "Enormous thanks are owed to our students, many of whom spoke with the inspectors and who, as always, were our best possible ambassadors, embodying the aims and ethos of the school. I would also like to thank our staff, parents/carers and our governors for their belief in the value of the broad, ambitious and innovative curriculum that CCHSG provides and for their unrelenting support, which has always been key to the success of the school. As part of our school mission we refer to our aim in educating our students to become the "leaders of tomorrow". When we look for leaders we seek not only those with academic capability, resilience, drive and ambition, but wider ethical judgement, compassion, teamworking and communication skills. Inspectors described the school as exquisite and exceptional. While the report did not identify any areas of the school's provision as being in need of improvement, we will never be complacent. Our ongoing processes of reflection and self-evaluation will continue to support us in securing the best possible educational opportunities for our students."

The full report is available on the CCHSG: https://www.cchsg.com/about-cchsg/ofsted-inspection-report-january-2024/ofsted-report-2024/

CCHSG Connect

CCHSG has started working with the education charity Future First to help us reconnect with past students and enable them to benefit from professional links to our wider alumnae.

Former students have wide ranging experience and expertise which we also hope could be hugely beneficial in supporting those in the earlier stages of their careers and in informing and inspiring our current students. Over the next year we will be organising a range of activities, via CCHSG Connect, with our alumnae. Perhaps you would like to contribute to a careers event for current students, give advice about an aspect of higher education, provide work experience or become a mentor to a current student.

It does not matter when you left, whether you are in higher education, employment or involved in other interesting things, please do join CCHSG Connect.

Please sign up at: https://www.futurefirsthub.org.uk/register/cchsgconnect

CCHSG would be very grateful if you could please spread the word! CCHSG is working to develop this platform and would appreciate it if you could share the sign up link with any fellow alumnae via your own networks.

Teacher Training

Are you, or is anyone you know, interested in training to be a teacher? CCHSG is lead school for Colchester Teacher Training Consortium (CTTC), one of the best training providers in the area. The school centred programme, recognised by Ofsted as outstanding, allows trainees to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) through a combination of taught sessions and practical training alongside colleagues in schools. CTTC is currently recruiting applicants for September 2024 and graduates can qualify as a teacher in Primary or Secondary education with just a year of training. Tax-free bursaries of up to £28,000 are available for eligible trainee teachers in certain subjects. Pastoral support and mentoring is a strength of the programme and local schools are keen to employ trainees from the partnership. The starting salary for teachers is currently £30,000 and many former trainees have moved quickly into leadership and management roles. Do contact us at CCHSG if you would like help with organising a school taster experience or need any advice from subject staff.

For further information see www.colchesterttc.org.uk