

# KEYnotes

2023 EDITION THE ANNUAL MAGAZINE FOR BIRMINGHAM GIRLS' OLD EDWARDIAN CLUB



140<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY EDITION

*Looking at our past... our present... and our future*

# Chairman's Welcome

This edition of KEynotes is indeed very special as we look back over a year of celebrations for the 140th anniversary of KEHS.

The many events which have taken place over the last few months are covered in this edition and I hope will give you a sense of the pride Old Edwardians have in being associated with the school, and indeed the joy the current students have for being part of its ever-evolving history.

It seems to me that the years spent at school – particularly secondary school – have a deep impact on your life. Most people will meet their lifelong friends during that time and even if you do not see each other for months (or years!) you can just catch up immediately!

When I spoke with fellow alumnae at the Town Hall event, the Old Edwardian Reunion Day and the Opening of the new Design Centre, it was quite clear that there is a very special kinship amongst former pupils – whether it is one of your former classmates or indeed someone from a different generation. I have a lovely photo of my daughter Grace (2013 leaver) with Barbara Davis (née Bayliss) who left in 1944, taken at the Reunion in June which shows this beautifully.



Barbara has been a member of the BGOEC committee for nearly 50 years and her enthusiasm is infectious. Over the years she has organised a great many events – theatre trips, skittles evenings, amongst others. For the last 30 years she has been editor of PS! magazine which began as a newsletter for Old Edwardians sharing news and articles beyond KEynotes and its predecessor, The Annual Report. The content varies from fascinating places to visit, articles from overseas members, recipes, quizzes – something for everyone! It is published four times per year and if you would like to subscribe, please see the details at the back of this magazine.

Sadly, this year we lost another long-standing member of our committee. Sylvia Dicker (née Hallam) came to KEHS in 1946 and her five daughters followed her in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. She also served on the Parents Association Committee and really was the fount of all knowledge about KEHS. Please do read the tribute her daughter Alex has written about her extraordinary life.

Whilst the BGOEC committee no longer has to organise events, thanks to the excellent work of the Development Office, it has a place within the school community and we would welcome anyone who wanted to get involved.

The success of this 140th Anniversary year is thanks to the hard work of many people but particularly the Principal, Kirsty von Malaisé. Her vision for the Town Hall event was inspirational and I know she contributed a huge amount of work to it and the other events that took place.

My thanks to her and the Development Office for all they do for the Old Edwardian community.

I hope you enjoy this edition of KEynotes and I look forward to catching up with you at our events next year, particularly the Reunion in April.

**Annette Duffy (née Glennon) (1983)**



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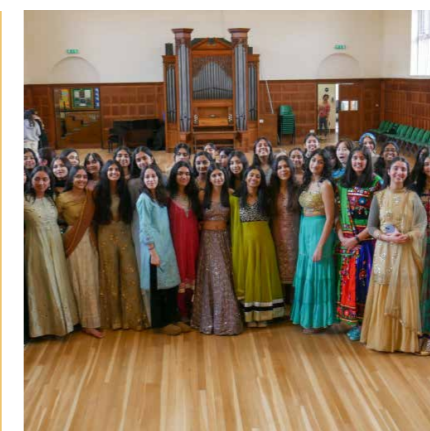
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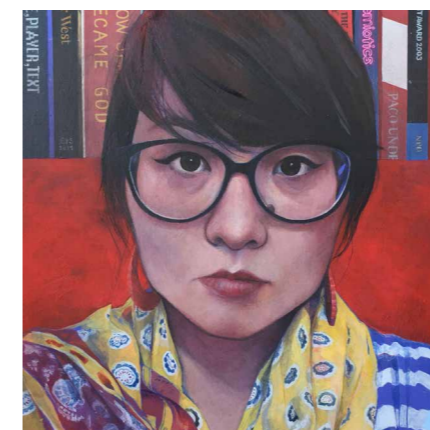
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*Note: the views expressed in these articles are those of the authors themselves and do not necessarily reflect those of the school, the Old Edwardian Club or the KEynotes Committee.*

Front cover photo: Dominic Tranter

# Creating History

There is something wonderful about collectively celebrating a decade birthday with absolutely none of the attendant ambivalence that can accompany our own personal milestone birthdays!



We have been very proud to celebrate our 140th birthday this year, through a wonderful gala event at the Town Hall, attended by so many Old Edwardians; a stimulating lecture given by esteemed writer and historian Rosalind Miles; a drinks event in London which gathered OEs from many different generations, and a day of celebration for our current pupils, including lots of cake (see photo!) and very popular inflatables.



At the Town Hall event in March, I launched our 140th Birthday Appeal, to raise £140,000 for our Assisted Places. I am thrilled to say that we have exceeded the target for this fundraising, and would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who responded to the appeal. It will undoubtedly transform the lives of those who benefit from it. You can read more about this on Page 13.

From 1945 to 1976, up to 90% of our pupils had their fees paid fully by the local authority, on Direct Grant places. My own mother was one such pupil who benefitted from this scheme at Croydon High School, after which she was offered a place at Cambridge (which she then did not take up - another story!). When the government abolished the Direct Grant scheme, the schools' mission was to 'continue to keep KES and KEHS accessible to academically able children, to ensure that no suitable pupil is denied admission to these schools solely on financial grounds.' The new government assisted places scheme that ran until 1997 was less generous than that in the Direct Grant era, and the schools created their own Assisted Places programme, generously funded by the Foundation and by individual benefactors.

In an era of rising costs, and in view of the threat from an incoming Labour government on the addition of VAT to fees, it is crucial for the schools that, as part of our wider financial strategy, our Assisted Places are safeguarded. This will be one of my prime tasks in my forthcoming role as Chief Master & Principal of KEHS and KES.

As I write, I am in the throes of appointing our first Head of School at KEHS, as well as a Head of School at KES, who will support my new role next year. It is an exciting time for the two schools, as we now shape the teams to lead the schools into the next phase of our history.

With all good wishes

**Kirsty von Malaisé**  
Principal



Beatrice Whitehouse - Grandmother



Linda Williams - Mother



Ruth at school

## The First Grandchild of KEHS

I was the first-ever third generation Edwardian to attend KEHS, and I was delighted to be invited to shake hands with Miss Major, in recognition of this feat. Miss Major was a former Head and had started at KEHS in my mother's final year (1912). This particular visit was her final one to the school.

My grandmother, Beatrice Whitehouse (née Raine), started at the new King Edward VI High School for Girls in the second term in 1883. The eldest of ten siblings, Beatrice was the first to attend KEHS, followed by three of her sisters, Edith, Amy, and Constance. Beatrice celebrated her 90th birthday on 28 May 1959, and the school sent flowers to mark the occasion, with the event being reported in that year's Phoenix magazine.

Beatrice's daughter, my mother, Linda Williams (née Whitehouse) attended KEHS from July 1906 to July 1912. Some of her many achievements included being Honorary Secretary of the Musical Society and Netball Captain of Bordeaux House, and being awarded the Class Prize in her final year. In 1912, she went to Leipzig, Germany, to study music, but this was curtailed by the First World War. As an Old Ed, she was part of the KEHS Red Cross Society in 1916. Linda achieved a Grade 1 O Level in German in 1966, at 72 years of age. She and her husband, Dr Clifford Williams, had taken up the study of German as a hobby following his retirement. Keeping up the family tradition, this was reported in the 1967 Phoenix magazine.

And so to me. I was fortunate to be a KEHS pupil from September 1945 to July 1953. Like my mother, I played netball, although my main sport was tennis. I joined the school tennis team in 1948, younger than most, and won the Muriel Davies Singles Championship in 1949, coming first out of 40 entries! I was delighted to spot myself on the front cover of the KEynotes 2022 edition, appearing in the group photo on the bottom right of the page (front left)!



During my final two years at school, I served as a Prefect and the Tennis Captain. After leaving KEHS, I read Geography at Newnham College, Cambridge - I actually turned down a scholarship from Oxford. My subsequent career was in Personnel Management. As I approached retirement, I took up learning the piano, and continued my lessons by phone during lockdown, a development I shared with my fellow Old Eds through the pages of KEynotes 2021.

I truly cannot over-estimate the effect that my years at KEHS have had on my life. And the same would be true for my grandmother and mother too. Thank you KEHS, from a family of Old Edwardians.

**Ruth Williams (1953)**



Ruth in 2023





**Miss Creak And Staff, 1884** Back Row (L-R): Miss A. Earl, Miss Davison • Middle Row (L-R): Miss Slater, Miss L. Earl, Miss Creak, Miss Sullivan, Miss Lindsay • Front Row (L-R): Miss Nevins, Miss Perry, Miss Besemeres.

The KEHS staff as it was in the summer of 1884 is shown in the above photograph. The closely buttoned bodice and skirt were the fashion of the time.

# 140th: Our Past

## The early days of KEHS

King Edward VI High School for Girls was opened on 18 September 1883. The creation of this school for secondary education of young girls had been the culmination of decades of slow, but continual, social and political progress. The Victorian era, despite its notorious reputation for segregation of both gender and class, particularly when it came to matters such as health and education, was slowly giving way to (at the time) more ‘radical’ forms of thinking.

The 1880s were a decade of change. Victoria was still Queen, but her health was declining. Many long-standing institutions such as the London Chamber of Commerce were founded. The Natural History Museum opened its doors for the first time. Bombs were detonated in London by Irish Republicans; the women’s suffrage movement was growing in popularity and Jack the Ripper roamed the streets. In Birmingham, the industrial revolution had created expansion of factories and a huge influx of families from the surrounding countryside to work in them. The back-to-back houses were slowly improving with the building of the city’s gas and water works to provide lighting and sanitary water. Birmingham became known for trade and shopping and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery was opened in 1885.

Perhaps it was the lure of this up-and-coming town (which was finally granted city status in 1889) that persuaded Miss Creak to move from Brighton to Birmingham on a salary of £300 per year, plus an additional £1 per pupil per year. This was a high salary for a woman and well above the usual rate for headmistresses at the time. Miss Creak, in turn, appointed her own teachers (also on good salaries) and at the beginning of term, nine brave souls assembled to tutor 150 girls.

For the first six years of its existence, KEHS was entirely based out of the Boys’ School, designed by Charles Barry in 1835. (Charles Barry incidentally also designed the Houses of Parliament and Highclere Castle, aka Downton Abbey). The establishment of the girls here was very much a temporary measure, as the cost of the additional Grammar Schools had a large financial impact on the Foundation.

One hundred and fifty girls were taught in a large room at the front of the building, the former assembly hall for the boys. This hall was separated from the Boys’ side of the school by a corridor, the doors of which were carefully locked. Within the hall itself ‘classrooms’ were separated by curtain partitions. With the large amount of foot and cart traffic outside on New Street – a road used by many traders, along with several lessons taking place at once, the atmosphere must have been noisy to say the least.

Despite the lack of funds for a new building, Miss Creak applied to the Foundation Governors for additional items such as musical instruments and, very early on, the sum of £40 for a library. This was granted and, by all accounts, was Miss Creak’s pride and joy. She made many additions to it herself as time went on, often giving expensive books. In later years, the Sixth Form used it largely as a private study, reading often what they pleased rather than their own special subjects, and receiving no word of censure for this when Miss Creak came in. Some of the books that Miss Creak gifted to the school from that original £40 are still kept today in the Stuart Southall room near the current library.

In 1889 the Governors, still on the lookout for a central site on which to relocate the Girls’ School, purchased the premises of the Liberal Club at the corner of Congreve Street. This had recently become vacant and while still not appropriate as a permanent site for the school, was certainly more spacious. The building sadly no longer exists as it was demolished to incorporate the inner ring road and part of the Museum and Art Gallery, but was within sight of the Town Hall and Chamberlain Square.



The exterior and interior of the Charles Barry building on New Street – home of KEHS 1883-1889



Looking at the interior of this building, some of you may recognise a familiar statue in this picture on the right (the mourning lady).





# 140th: Our Present *continued*

## Neurodiversity Celebration Week

This March, KEHS marked its inaugural Neurodiversity Celebration Week with a series of lectures from expert speakers.

Author Simon Jarrett explored the history of our understanding of neurodiversity, particularly how the complexities of language and imagery show how our perceptions have changed over the centuries. This is the topic of his book entitled 'Those They Called Idiots: the idea of the disabled mind from 1700 to the present day'. Pupils also heard from two speakers about their lived experiences: Tiffany Grego and KEHS's own Mr Ollis. These insightful, honest, and uplifting talks gave the pupils plenty of food for thought, as well as constructive ideas for the future.



## Diamond and Golden Reunion

This event, which is held jointly for both KEHS and KES each year, saw 40 Old Edwardians return to celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. The highlight was a talk by former KES Head of History, Paul Golightly, who explored the evolving cityscape since the 60s and 70s and our schools' places in it. Updates on the future were given by Kirsty von Malaisé, who also shared an excerpt from a 1983 pupil on what they thought the school may look like in the future (some of which was not that far off!).

## 140th Anniversary Reunion & Exhibition

This special reunion, open to all Old Edwardians, focused on the rich and diverse history of KEHS. In the morning, Foundation Archivist Charlotte Gallant, gave a fascinating talk on the history of KEHS, featuring lots of material from the depths of the archive. In the afternoon, guests were invited to view the Exhibition, created by Annette Duffy and Cas Britton, in the Senior Library.

'Its aesthetic setting and the fact that the library was funded by Margaret Pugh, one of the first generation of pupils, was ideal.

Covering a great variety of aspects of school life, the exhibits showcased our unique collection of archives and artefacts with which many generations of Old Edwardians are familiar – most of these were donated and some were on loan.

Visitors enjoyed and were 'amused' as they viewed the uniform from different eras – ties, gymslips, berets all reflected changes in uniform fashion, since it was first introduced by Miss Major in 1919. Written records, especially through Phoenix, showed what girls thought about some of the items they were compelled to wear!

Other bays in the library displayed important aspects of school life – curriculum, Heads and staff, buildings, extra-curricular activities, music, drama and sport. Academic success was illustrated with a copy of the original entrance exam as well as many examples of prize giving.

Visitors were equally interested in how school life adapted to times of crises – the two world wars through to Covid times.

The exhibition sought to give all Old Edwardians, whatever their generation, something they could relate to – many spotted a photo or their name in an exhibit. Their positive feedback expressed how much they enjoyed the displays.

Here's to the 150<sup>th</sup>!!'

### Cas Britton and Annette Duffy



As you entered, a display of the work of the Birmingham Girls' Old Edwardian Club (BGOEC) showed its activities from our School's earliest days and its role today working with the Development Office.



## The School Birthday

The whole school came together to mark our official birthday on 18 September. The day was filled with delicious cakes, a huge range of special activities, thought-provoking assemblies, and a chance to try some inflatables in the Sports Hall. Our special guest was Dr Joanne Johnson (1995), who delivered three inspirational talks (read all about her on Page 14).

## OE London Drinks

Held at The Lansdowne Club, London, we were delighted to welcome so many at the event and to see such a wide range of year groups.

As we raised a glass to KEHS, the evening was a lovely celebration of the last 140 years, and gave a chance to reflect on both our history and our future.



## Anniversary Lecture: Rosalind Miles

Dr Miles is renowned for her award-winning works, such as 'Who Cooked The Last Supper?', 'The Women's History of the World' and the internationally acclaimed novel 'I, Elizabeth'. Her diverse experiences as a historian, critic, novelist, journalist, broadcaster, lecturer, magistrate, and social activist have taken her to prestigious locations worldwide, including Buckingham Palace and the White House.

As a founder member of the International Women's Forum and the Women's Equality Party in the UK, Dr Miles drew on her rich background to explore the concept of equality in her lecture: 'Equality: What is it? Where is it? Can we have it? And do we want it?'. Scan the QR code to watch the video.

Dr Miles also shared a delightful supper with students from both schools, providing a unique opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussions on topics they are passionate about.



## Día de los Muertos

In October, Lower Sixth Spanish students had their first 'Day of the Dead' celebration. This Mexican festival is held annually in memory of deceased ancestors.

It was an overwhelmingly lively event, with live music and dancing, sweet treats, pin the skull on the skeleton, and a piñata.



## Awards Evening

We celebrated the Class of 2023 at their Awards Evening in November.

Our special guest speaker was Jules Parke-Robinson (1993). Jules spoke of the things she had learnt at KEHS, and how she has used them throughout her career - experiences that she still draws upon now. She talked of confidence, ambition, resilience, and empathy. These qualities that have seen her through her roles in the Army for 20 years, where she became Commanding Officer of the Special Investigation Branch Regiment, leading her team in Iraq, to her now corporate roles, where she leads a team within a workforce of 69,000. She encouraged the audience to take opportunities when they arise – she herself chose to defer her entry to Sandhurst to play rugby for Wales at the World Cup.

The evening concluded in the dining hall where guests could catch up with staff, friends, and family.

Good luck to the Class of 2023! We look forward to welcoming you back to more events in the future!



Scan QR code to read extended content.

# 140th: Our Future

This fantastic piece was written by Old Edwardian and Birmingham Poet Laureate, Jasmine Gardosi (2010) for the Town Hall Evening of Celebration event in March. As we look to the next 140 years of KEHS, Jasmine celebrates the opportunities that can be nurtured at school. With the right tools, our pupils can be whoever they want to be. For many, that tool is an Assisted Place.

## A Poet Laureate

In the classroom, there is a poet laureate.  
Well... she would be, but - not quite yet.  
She stammers through the paragraphs  
of her English textbook.  
Mumbles to the teacher.  
Her friends can't even speak to her  
before she turns red.  
Never picked to read in assembly,  
never cast in the school play,  
destined to "say it clearly please"  
for the rest of her days -

but what if she has just one hour a week  
when she can play?  
A lunchtime club. Creative writing.  
Sowing seeds of poetry.  
Showing her  
her broken verbs  
are open verse.  
They're spoken word.  
A place to practice her nerves away.

And in a different classroom,  
there's another poet laureate.  
Well, she would be, except...  
not quite yet.  
Poetry isn't cool, and nor is she.  
But her brain is a laboratory.  
Walks the science corridors alone as she  
wordplays explosively.  
She makes magic with language.  
But knows stanzas get laughed at.  
What if she had one coach who reads  
a quote or three of her poetry?  
Helps her to see  
the emergencies her verses breathe  
The urgency of her beliefs  
the certainty her words can free.  
The person she'd emerge to be.  
If she could only learn to see  
all that spoken word can be.

And in a different classroom  
there's another poet laureate.  
Well she could be - but not quite yet.  
First, she'll learn her mind's not haywire -  
she's neurodivergent, actually.  
Her brain's wired with insane fire  
that makes her lines hit laterally.

And in a different classroom,  
another poet laureate.  
Like many others, her mother doesn't pay the termly fees.  
No family of hers has ever gone to university.  
Makes no matter. Doesn't factor.  
She learns to be a vital voice for her peers.  
Her on-stage presence grows so sharp  
she can hack into minds with her similes.

This is a place of all types of possibility.  
Potential that reaches to infinity.  
Future thinkers, makers.  
Doers, and innovators.  
Its richness lies in its diversity  
assisted by its bursaries.

All walks of life are watered here.  
The seeds of so many stories.  
Increasing access year on year -  
so let's look forward to the next 140.

Jasmine reflected on her poem 'these stories are based on real life, from those during my time as a pupil at KEHS and now in my role as a workshop leader who runs the KEHS weekly Spoken Word Poetry Club. Our school community is rich in talent and Assisted Places are vital to offer access for pupils from all backgrounds to reach their full potential.'

Photo:  
Lee Allen



Scan here to watch  
Jasmine recite her  
poem in a very  
familiar place!

## The 140th Anniversary Assisted Places Appeal



As we look to the future, we must thank all those who give generously to support it: thank you to all of the Old Edwardians, parents, staff and friends of the school who have made a gift to Assisted Places this year.

For many families with able children, choosing a school like KEHS is simply not an option without the financial support of an Assisted Place. Assisted Places not only enable the brightest pupils to attend our school, they also enrich the school community, allowing the girls to learn from meeting and interacting with people who have different perspectives and backgrounds, helping our school to continue to reflect the community it serves.

Birmingham is among the most deprived Local Authorities in the country and **your gifts help children break the economic barriers standing between them and the education they deserve, ultimately promoting social mobility and, in turn, changing our city for the future.**

Thanks to the phenomenal on-going support of donors, KEHS has double the national average proportion of pupils receiving means-tested assistance. Our challenge now is to maintain and grow these figures over time. Demand for assistance far outweighs the funds we have available. Raising funds for more Assisted Places is, and always will be, vital to our ethos and our strategic plan.

**Our 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Appeal set out to create a new full seven year Assisted Place for a girl sitting the entrance exam this term. I am delighted to say that, through your generosity, not only did we reach our target of £140,000 but we smashed it! You raised an amazing £145,885\* and doing so, it has allowed a girl the opportunity to join our school in September 2024\*\*. We are so thankful for all your donations, and of course, to our match fund donor.**

**By giving together, you are making a huge impact.**

**THANK YOU to everyone who supported this appeal and who continue to support Assisted Places.**

Laura

Laura Salt, Head of Development

Do not worry if you have not yet donated but would still like to - Assisted Places are an ongoing need and we will continually raise funds to help every generation of girls. Your gift will give them the opportunity to attend our school, as we continue to make our school more accessible. You can make your gift by scanning the code here.



**Thank you!**  
*together you raised £145,885*

**104**  
donors

**40**  
*first time*  
donors

**£878**  
average  
single gift

**£20**  
average  
regular gift  
*per month*

**88**  
*years*  
oldest  
donor

**22**  
*years*  
youngest  
donor

If you feel you are unable leave a gift in your lifetime, you may choose to leave a gift in your will. A legacy gift is one of the most significant gifts you will ever make and reflects the things that matter to you.

By leaving a legacy to Assisted Places you can be sure that the future generations of KEHS pupils will have the opportunity to come here, regardless of their means, giving someone the same opportunities that you had. Everyone who chooses to leave a gift in their will is invited to become a member of the Creak Society.

For more information on leaving a gift in your will please contact the Development Office at [Development@kehs.org.uk](mailto:Development@kehs.org.uk) or 0121 415 2245.



\* Correct at the time of print and including Direct Debit pledges of three years. \*\* Remaining funds will go towards additional Assisted Places.

# Out of Office: OEs in unconventional workplaces

## Antarctica

In a world often filled with extroverted adventurers and seemingly fearless trailblazers, Jo's is a refreshing story of how a quietly curious teenager became an award-winning Antarctic explorer - and had a mountain named for her to boot!

Looking back at her time at KEHS, Jo feels she was quite reserved. She was a dedicated student and a talented musician. Jo took Biology, Chemistry and Maths at A Level and, after some deliberation, went on to read Natural Sciences at the University of Durham. This was the first turning point for her. Finding the Chemistry unpleasantly hard, Jo pivoted from Natural Sciences to Geology.

From there, she then moved to Cambridge to do her PhD, writing her thesis on Magmatism of the Vitim Volcanic Field in Siberia. Choosing to stay in Cambridge to maintain the connections she had made there, Jo took her first role with the British Antarctic Survey in 2002, studying glaciers, volcanoes and climate, and has never looked back.

In the last 20 years, Jo has made some fascinating discoveries that tell us about thousands of years of climate change, as well as informing the future. From rocks deposited by the retreating Antarctic ice sheet, Jo has discovered that there were periods of significant change 8,000 and 3,000 years ago - discoveries for which evidence has since been found elsewhere on the continent.

Making discoveries like this requires not only a wealth of specialist knowledge, but the strength and determination to undertake fieldwork in one of the most remote places on planet Earth. Antarctic fieldwork typically lasts 8-12 weeks, exploring the local area and collecting samples for further examination. When speaking to our students recently, Jo was refreshingly matter of fact about the trials and tribulations of these trips: driving over hidden crevasses, using huge power tools with little hope of medical treatment in an accident, going weeks without a shower, to name but a few. Her love for her job keeps her going.

Jo freely acknowledges that she does not meet people's picture of an Antarctic explorer, but she attributes her successes to keeping an open mind and knowing herself. She is an explorer, and an academic, and a mother, and a musician, and many other things besides. With the right support and a little bit of luck, anyone can pursue their passions, no matter how unlikely they seem.



The Polar Medal is a medal awarded by the Sovereign of the United Kingdom to individuals who have outstanding achievements in the field of polar research, and particularly for those who have worked over extended periods in harsh climates. It was instituted in 1857 as the Arctic Medal and renamed the Polar Medal in 1904. Until 1968, the Polar Medal was presented to anyone who participated in a polar expedition endorsed by the governments of any Commonwealth realms. Since 1968 the rules governing its presentation have been revised with greater emphasis placed on personal achievement. Jo is the twenty-first woman to have been awarded the Polar Medal (out of more than 900 recipients!); the first was Sir Ranulph Fiennes' wife, Ginny, in 1986.

**Joanne Johnson (née Garner) (1995)**



## Space

I'm Siân O'Hara and I was part of the leavers' class of 2000. Armed with my A-levels in General Studies, Double Maths and Physics, I set off to study Aerospace Engineering at the University of Southampton. From a young age, I had wanted to be an astronaut and travel into space (even if it wouldn't be on board the NCC Enterprise!). I figured studying rockets would be a good start. It was tricky to find career advice, as it wasn't a common choice. So I spent a lot of time reading through piles of university brochures. I chose Southampton as it had the largest proportion of space-related course content.

I adored my degree for the most part, thankfully the space-related modules were not only inspiring but seemed to suit my intellectual inclinations. I also loved the ones on maths, materials science, and helicopters. My enthusiasm was useful motivation and in 2004, I graduated with my first class MEng (Hons) and a confirmed desire to do something in the space domain.

I applied to the Young Graduate Trainee scheme at the European Space Agency (ESA) to work on mission design, hoping for interplanetary missions, but I didn't get offered a place. I had taken a temporary admin job in the civil service so I stayed on there while I applied for other opportunities. I was still holding out for something space-related and in February 2006 I started working for Telespazio UK (or VEGA Group as it was known then) as a Junior Engineer. And I'm still working there these days, as a Senior Consultant for our Earth Observation and Climate Services group.

Over the course of my career, I've worked on a variety of projects and programmes, including Earth Observation data quality assessments, and the development of quality control good practice guidelines and frameworks, primarily on contracts for ESA. These led to work within the Copernicus Climate Change Service to provide operational service of Sea Surface Temperature products, and then to defining an Evaluation and Quality Control framework for providing quality information to users in various sectors (water, energy, tourism, and health to name just a few).

More recently, we've been working with the UK government to update and improve Defra's environmental data-sharing platform. You might even have used this platform, if you've ever checked water quality information for beaches or local bathing spots. As I write this, there is a red flood warning in place in parts of the UK, and the Environment Agency's flood warnings are delivered via this platform. So there is quite a lot of pressure to get the platform and services it provides right, as well as being an exciting opportunity to evolve this to improve the delivery of current functionality and for expansion to include new or bring together disparate existing services.

My career has followed a somewhat wandering path, often taking me places I wouldn't have predicted, and I'm keen to see what comes next. Watch this space...

**Siân O'Hara (née Procter) (2000)**



## Virtual Reality

I always look back on my time at KEHS with fond memories - it truly is an incredible school and community.

While I was there (2005-2012), my classmates who I'd known for years may not have known that I struggled with social anxiety. Not with people I'd known a long time, but when ordering my food with the lovely dinner ladies in the dining hall each day, speaking in class, and ordering a frappuccino at the University Starbucks (if you know, you know!). While these small things weren't debilitating, there were other areas where my fears held me back from opportunities. I didn't apply for universities where I needed to interview; I had a panic attack before my GCSE French oral exam, and I burst into tears at the request to recreate a scene from Macbeth in English with Miss White.

Little did I know at that point, that it was finding a solution to these fears that would propel me into my career today. After KEHS, I received a First in BA Theology and Religion at University of Birmingham and then went on to achieve a Distinction for my MSc in International Business at the University of Warwick. It was while studying at Warwick, that I had a presentation coming up and I was feeling nervous three months before it! I was talking to one of my friends and we came up with the idea that virtual reality could provide a psychologically safe place to practice a skill like public speaking, so I could become both competent and confident. And this is how my company, VirtualSpeech was born.

Now, we are a team of 14 people working with AI and virtual reality to improve communication skills like public speaking, sales, leadership, and interview practice, through active learning. We've helped 450,000 people across 130 countries and worked with companies like Vodafone, Deutsche Telekom, and PwC. I've travelled the world speaking at conferences and lived in Silicon Valley, I've spoken live on BBC World News and advised the OECD - all opportunities I would never have allowed myself to pursue before.

KEHS was intrinsic in affirming my ambition and Mrs Young and Mrs Cummings were especially transformative in helping me to believe in myself - for which I am eternally grateful.

KEHS taught me that the world is full of opportunity; you just have to have the courage to say yes and seize these opportunities. Regardless of what you choose to study, it is your drive, determination, and willingness to take risks and step out of your comfort zone with which you will discover your true potential and what your legacy will be.

**Sophie Thompson (2012)**





# Arts Focus

Evident in the multitude of exceptionally talented individuals the school has nurtured along the way, alumnae have not only demonstrated a keen artistic prowess but have also showcased an exemplary level of skill and innovation within the realm of art and design. The school's commitment to them is reflected in the investments it has made, along with the legacy of inspiration shown amongst our Old Edwardians. The future of art and design looks bright.

## Design Centre Opening

We were delighted that the KEHS Design Centre was officially opened in September as part of the 140<sup>th</sup> celebrations. It was an opportunity to recognise the introduction of GCSE DT and GCSE Computing into our curriculum and celebrate the spaces that our pupils now have in which to learn.

Nick Bassett, Head of Art and Design and Technology, spoke of the significance of our daily habits and its link to learning; he praised students for their resilience, courage, openness, and curiosity, especially throughout the pandemic.

Special thanks to those who had been involved in the project, including former Principal, Ann Clark, for instigating it, the KEHS staff who led the project, colleagues from KES who provided valuable contributions and advice, Governors for their support and external partners. You can listen to Nick Bassett's full speech by scanning the QR Code on page 17.

'Thank you to Professor Helen Higson OBE DL, for accepting our invitation to unveil the plaque for the official opening on Thursday, 21 September 2023.'



'We also wish to thank Ena Evans, our Head from 1977 - 1996, who spearheaded the initial fundraising appeal for the original Peter Bennett Design Centre at the time of the school's centenary in 1983.'

## Dorothy Zhang (2018)

The art department at KEHS has defined much of my attitude to design. It gave me a basis to understand how we make sense of and give meaning to the world. The art block became a place to absorb endless references through conversations with each other, the books piled around and visits to the neighbouring Barber Institute. In particular, Mr Bassett and Ms Huxley-Edwards encouraged a way of seeing that deeply considered the social context. This support and guidance led me to study architecture, a long path that involves several years in education, interspersed by time working in practice and further exams.

The past two years have involved working in a small architectural practice in London where we take an approach that prioritises community, conservation and craft. Projects include the restoration of a Victorian house for the painter Peter Doig, the renovation of a pub for Lewisham Council and the restoration of a medieval hall for a furniture designer; these projects have all involved exploring how we preserve traces of time. We work in a physical way, through models, material experiments and hand drawing just as much as we rely on digital software, an inclination towards the tactile that has continued on from my time in the art block at KEHS.

Mr Bassett also emphasised materiality: he referenced Arte Povera- the radical 1960s art movement that privileged everyday, humble materials. This is particularly pertinent in the context of architecture where the construction industry accounts for 40% of the UK's carbon emissions. Imaginative ways of reuse and repair are critical to a sustainable society. This September, I started my Masters in architecture at the Royal College of Art where I plan to make full use of the wood and metal workshop. I think it is sad that we have somehow lost a sense of how to make, and perhaps the act of making would shift our relationship to consumerist culture, so that we celebrate the wear and tear of objects and spaces that are well used and cared for.



## Natasha Chetiyawardana (1998) Creative Partner, Founder at Bow & Arrow

In September I was delighted to be asked to be the guest speaker for the Design Centre opening. Unfortunately, I couldn't be there in person because at nearly nine months pregnant at the time, travelling back up to Birmingham wasn't the smartest of ideas! But speaking to 11-18 year old girls about their future when I was expecting my second daughter really made me think...

After my time at KEHS, I went on to Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design to study Product Design. I didn't go to art school on purpose, I went almost by accident. I didn't know what I was doing, and I did it against all advice. I had no clue that it would lead to an actual career and was made to think I was throwing away all the work I had put into my hard-earned grades. But I took the leap anyway. And it started a series of 'risky' career decisions that maybe don't make sense to others, and the journey to having a conviction in my creative instinct.

For me, the opening of the centre wasn't just about a metaphorical ribbon cutting. It wasn't about the bricks and mortar of a building. It's what that building represents:

- At a time when cuts are being made to the arts from education to wider culture, investments are more important than ever. KEHS is not traditionally known for the arts, it's known for academic excellence, so an investment like this speaks volumes.
- Creativity in general is a skill that the talent of the future needs, whether you can pick up a paintbrush or not. Creativity can be the secret weapon of bold leaders and of leaders that choose empathy and teamwork. It's applied in not just creative industries but in many different sectors and careers and is a hugely powerful foundation to have.
- Getting in touch with your creative self will enable you in the future to think differently, to act differently, to ask the harder questions, to come up with better answers, to be a leader that inspires not dictates, to be someone that can help bring creativity out of others and enable them and enable their potential not just your own. I personally benefited hugely from being able to explore my creative side and what potential that could unlock for me. But with university costs increasing, cuts being made to the arts so that access and exposure is rapidly decreasing and growing employment uncertainty, a creative career could be one that less and less people choose or take the 'risk' on. I hope that more secondary schools open their minds and their wallets to invest in creativity for the young people of the future.

**You can watch the full version of Natasha's speech here and listen to Head of Art and Design, Nick Bassett's speech too by scanning the QR code below.**



## Emily Porter-Salmon (2001)

It was the Art Block that sold me on KEHS in the first place. I'm sure for my parents it was all about the excellent results and great science facilities, but for me, the Art Department was a magical place. It had its own dedicated building (with a *kiln*) which was pretty mind-blowing.

Liz Edwards came to KEHS as Head of Art when I was in the U4th year, and I think it's fair to say she transformed my thinking. She didn't push or cajole but was always there with some new paper or pigments and would just say 'see what you think about these'. She introduced me to figurative artists like Stanley Spencer and Frida Kahlo, and encouraged me to look at the changing portraiture of David Hockney (who I eventually wrote a PhD thesis about, and even painted, thanks to another inspirational teacher, Professor Shearer West, at the University of Birmingham).

It wasn't until I became an Art Teacher for a time myself, (years later at KES!), that I appreciated the commitment that comes with these subjects – Art Teachers don't get lunch hours or time to themselves, because there's always someone wanting to come and finish work.

I was one of several of the Class of 2001 who took A-Level Art by stealth, as it were. We were the last academic cohort before the reforms that introduced AS/A2 assessment. As such, our choices in the Lower Sixth were somewhat more limited with the option for a fourth AS subject with only four periods a week. Liz made it possible for us to fulfil the requirements and upgrade our AS to a full A-Level qualification through coursework. Our end of year exhibition was incredible – so much work, with so much passion. I couldn't have produced the work I did, become the person I am today, without Liz's nurture and direction.

I didn't study Fine Art in the end though; instead, I found myself a student of English Language and Literature at St Hilda's College, Oxford. It was while I was an undergraduate that I first began to exhibit and paint professionally; a portrait of my sister, Elly, was selected for the BP Portrait Award in 2003, and I have exhibited several times with the Royal Society of Portrait Painters and other galleries. I even did some TV, painting Dame Kelly Holmes for a BBC show.

I'm now a commercial semiotician, based in London; applying the cultural theory I learned over the course of my English BA and History of Art PhD to brands all over the world. It's a great example of how the arts and humanities equip us with skills that can be widely applicable, though I fear this is often forgotten in today's political landscape that sees the Arts as a nicety rather than a necessity, and higher education as a vocational training ground.

I'm still painting, but my progress has been slowed somewhat by a combination of my day job and being a parent to a small person. She seems to enjoy drawing and painting too, so who knows what lies ahead...?

# Care.Do.Give

Charitable work at KEHS is a heartfelt endeavour that the community has been devoted to for many years, with a lengthy and admirable history.

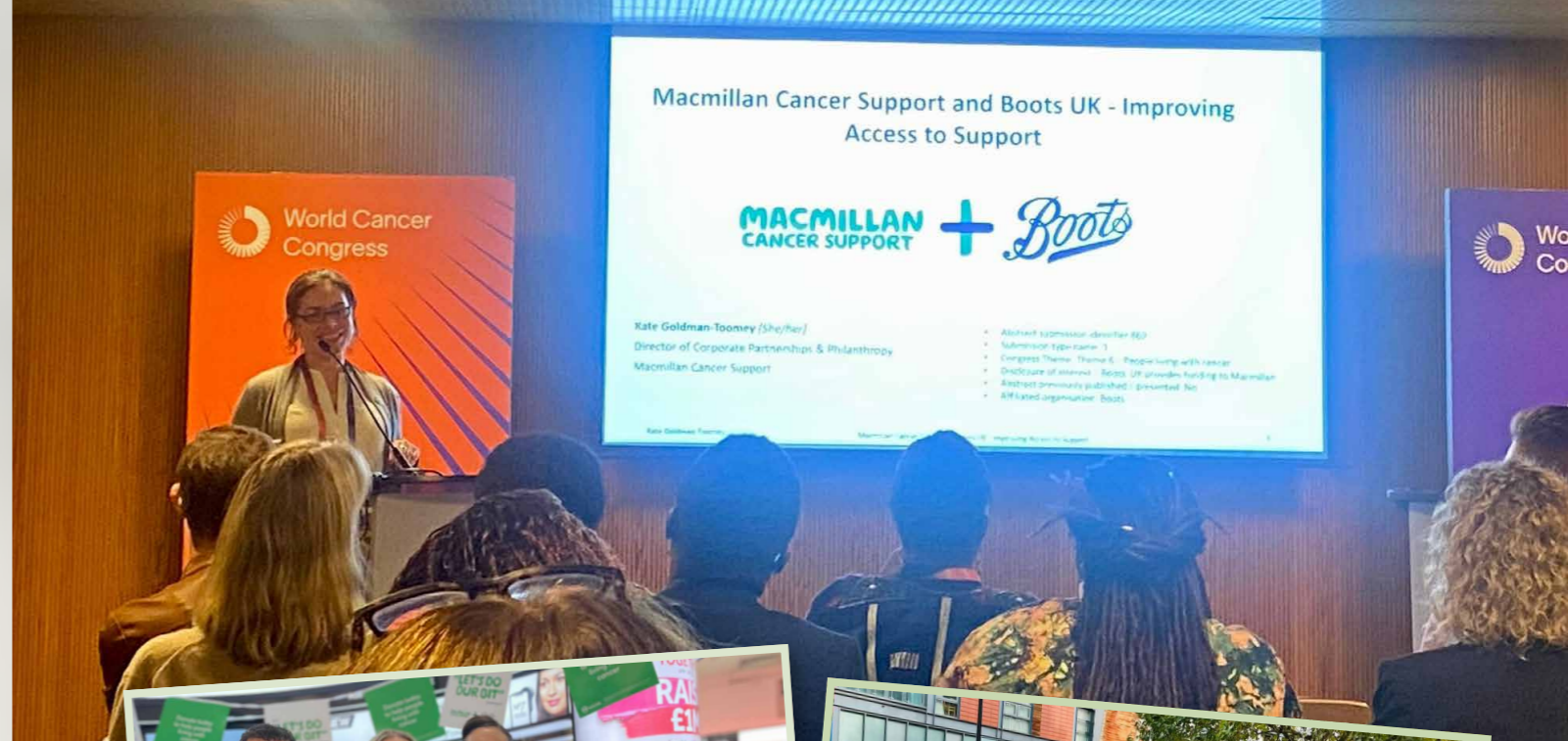
The benefits of this work are far-reaching across our community, enabling students to not only make a sincere contribution to society and an effort to enact positive change, but equally develop essential skills that will serve them well in the future.

Over time, the structure of KEHS community service has developed and grown from the U.G.S (Union of Girls' Schools for Social Service) of 1928 to the later renamed Community Service of 1971, in which the weekly form charity collections that we know so well were first introduced. Now, in 2023, almost 100 years from the birth of U.G.S, Community Service has been relaunched, under the title of C.D.G: Care.Do.Give. As the title suggests, this rebranding puts an emphasis on the 'caring' aspect of charitable work, symbolising the devotion to their service that the team holds. Under the expert guidance of Mrs Hindmarsh and Miss McKemey, 26 pupils take the initiative in organising a wide variety of support for charities and the community. This includes fundraising through events such as form collections, non-uniform days and Sports Day, donations to the King Edward's Home Bank in partnership with KES, and volunteering for Sixth Form Outreach to support and enrich the education of primary school children.

The first major event organised by the C.D.G Team was the Upper Sixth Charity Week from 6-10 November. The Sixth Form chose to fundraise for the Birmingham Crisis Centre: a local charity that has maintained a safe haven for female victims of domestic abuse since 1988. Regardless of their background, Birmingham Crisis Centre champions the providing of aid and accommodation for women and children who have suffered domestic abuse, assisting them to move forward and rebuild their lives. In just a single year, they managed to support 135 families, including 224 children under the age of 10, and received an award from the Lord Mayor for their outstanding services to women. We believe the importance of supporting smaller, local charities such as the Crisis Centre cannot be understated. Over the course of this week, the team organised and ran a selection of entertaining activities: a screening of Mulan; a scavenger hunt for the Lower School; a students vs teachers quiz; and of course, a classic KEHS cake sale. As a result, an astonishing £434.53 was raised in aid of the Crisis Centre.

We can all safely say that our Charity Week was one to remember and greatly look forward to many more like it under the capable and devoted hands of the C.D.G. team.

Maya Hussain, C.D.G. Sixth Form Committee



## Kate Goldman-Toomey (1996)

Kate wanted to work in advertising and marketing, imagining that at the end of a long illustrious career, she would volunteer in the charity sector.

She did a degree in Ancient History at Nottingham University which she absolutely loved, then worked for a venture capital firm in the City. This role didn't really sit particularly well with her, and in the meantime, she discovered that there were jobs in the charity sector i.e. it could be a profession, and she got a job with Great Ormond Street Hospital with their Events Team. Twenty-five years later she is still working in that sector and hasn't looked back!

Besides Great Ormond Street Hospital, she has worked with many other incredible organisations: Save The Children, NSPCC and UNICEF, and is now a Director of Macmillan Cancer Support, responsible for a number of teams who work with companies and philanthropists, who wish to make a difference in the world. They do that by not just giving money, but also their skill sets, their assets, and their brands.

Kate finds this work incredibly fulfilling; it can be quite hard, but she loves it! She meets all kinds of interesting people and works on all sorts of different and fascinating projects. She was even recently invited to Downing Street!

Kate has developed professionally too. She started out as an Events Executive and is now a Director which means she is part of the Senior Leadership Team at Macmillan Cancer Support, so she gets to think about things like strategy, innovation, sustainability, etc. Macmillan have been sponsoring her through the Government Apprenticeship Scheme to do an Executive MBA for which she is very grateful.

Kate often thinks about a Mary Shelley poem with the line 'What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?' and she feels very fortunate that she gets to do a role she loves.

# Old Edwardians' News

## 1940s



**Pamela Norman (née Laughland) (1939)**

Huge congratulations to Pamela who celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in February this year!

Pamela attended KEHS but left at age 16 as she didn't want to be evacuated to Malvern (1941 was her 'cohorts' final year).

After the war Pamela trained as a speech and language therapist at the West End Hospital in London and met her future husband, Denis, there. Although she took an instant dislike to him, he did persuade her to attend a dinner with him and three months later they were engaged and married in 1952. They had three children, though tragically the third child, a little girl, was stillborn.

Pamela and Denis moved to Alcester in 1955 and were very involved in the local community, becoming founder members of the Alcester Civic Society (ACS). They were instrumental in helping to save historic workers' cottages and set up the society to preserve these and other heritage buildings. Both Denis, who died in 1981, and Pamela were Presidents of the ACS and Pamela remains in that role.

Pamela also served as a Magistrate for 20 years – first in Alcester, then Stratford and Leamington attending 100 court sessions a year, and at 68 she did a science foundation course with the Open University before going on to get a second class degree in cognitive psychology.

What an amazing lady! We wish you well in this auspicious year!

## 1950s



**Angela Clayton-Turner (née Rubery) (1957)**

Amazingly Freedom Pass holders can travel from central London to Reading for free! I have now done this twice, firstly to view the amazing copy of the Bayeux tapestry housed in Reading Town Hall and created by members of the Leek Embroidery Society. The second occasion was to meet up with Gillian (née Smith) a friend since first meeting in Form 3B in 1950.

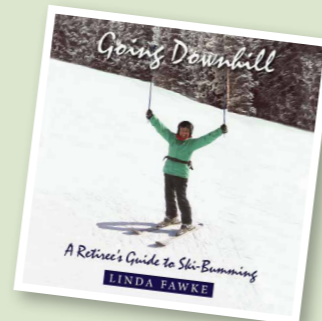
One change forced on us by Covid has been the increase in online communication. Many of us oldies have now learned to zoom and for me it has become a way of keeping in touch with family and friends who are too far away to visit. I have just had a lovely online chat with another friend from KEHS days and hope to continue and increase these contacts.

**Ann Stone (née Booth) (1957)**

For the last five months my son has been putting daily posts of my biographical graphic book, which contains pages about King Edward's and other Birmingham history, on Instagram: ann.and.geoffrey\_their.story It covers the period from birth, 1931, to 1964, when we met and married after two weeks.



## 1960s



**Linda Fawke (née Rowberry) (1964)**

I have recently published my third book, non-fiction this time (the first two were novels): 'Going Downhill - A Retiree's Guide to Ski-Bumming' – it's me on the cover! This is a light-hearted look at life in the French Alps after retirement, both in Winter and Summer (so not just skiing). It covers experiences with family and friends, travels through France, the trials of buying an apartment in the Alps and learning the sort of French you don't get at school (even KE!).

**Melodie Brookes (née Vincent) (1966)**

My husband, Nigel and I, are on a trip to Australia. We stayed in the beautiful city of Perth and spent a day on Rottnest Island. On the ferry back to the city we met a delightful family, originally from Vietnam, having a reunion. We discovered our Birmingham links and the amazing fact that we are both Old Eds! She was the class of 1997 and I was the class of 1966. Such a lovely coincidence. With best wishes to any other Old Eds who know us.



## 1960s



**Carol James (née Statham) (1968)**

This summer (2023), to my joy and astonishment, I was cast as Mam in the Stamford Shakespeare Company's production of 'The Lady in the Van'! It marked the beginning of my recovery from my Covid fears and I am incredibly thankful to the rest of the cast for their help and understanding. No 'big bum' in this costume, but lots of crimplene and a dodgy wig - lovely! I'm the one in mauve with jazz hands! Next summer 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' as a gender changed Egea (Egeus)!

## 1970s

**Catherine Glover (1971)**

In May I was elected to Wokingham Borough Council as the member for Shinfield South. I'm still also doing bits of website work for various historical societies, including the Library of Rural and Agricultural Literature for the British Agricultural History Society.



**Annegret Frings (1974)**

"Hey! My Oma (grandmother) went to your school 1967 - 1974. Nice to meet you."

Remember, the world needs creatives and intelligent, switched on, aware women. Stay a-Lert, the world needs Lerts.

**Jane Winn (née Burrows) (1974) and Carol Ward (née Girling) (1974)**

We met during our first week at KEHS and remain friends to this day. We have been through both sad and happy times together over the years.

**Jane:** I am mother to a son, a daughter and recently a son transitioning into a daughter. I have lived in Scotland since 1984 doing a variety of different jobs, mostly at the universities of St Andrews and Strathclyde. I retired last year to spend more time gardening, doing Pilates and looking after my granddaughter Caitlin.

**Carol:** Since leaving school, I have lived in Worcestershire, mother to four sons and grandmother to Lyra. One of our sons now lives in New Zealand, which has given us the opportunity to make three memorable trips to visit him. Nearer to home, we enjoy holidaying by train in Europe and exploring the islands of the UK. Since retiring in 2020, I now volunteer at the local community cafe.



**Graham Line (Former Staff 1970-1974)**



In 1970 I joined the teaching staff who, like the students, were girls only. I don't know what their expectations were at this change, and I am not aware of having any myself, though considering it was my first job, I was skiing after only a year on one of the school trips!

Key to my teaching role was the Cambridge Latin Course, a new way of teaching Latin, which I introduced. How many of you remember how sad you were when Pompeii was destroyed in the end and when their dog, Cerberus, perished?? Some of the students actually wept - this was real language sinking in.

I left in 1974 to go to a comprehensive school in Durham. I am now in my seventies and fittingly I live in Deva (Chester). The connection with the Romans goes on.

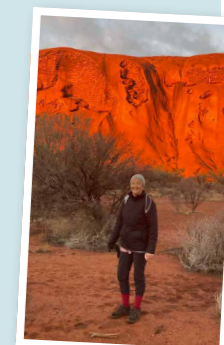
To you all, as I recall, I say on leaving 'ave atque vale' – Hail and farewell.

**Debbie Hayes (née King) (1975)**

I studied dentistry at Birmingham and worked after qualifying in 1981 in Cambridgeshire. Retired early in 2010 in order to travel with my husband. We have one daughter and 2 grandchildren 5 (girl) and 2.5 (boy). In 2014 we moved to Edinburgh and love the city life. Still travelling a lot both abroad and discovering Scotland. I'm hoping to get together as many of our year for our 50<sup>th</sup> reunion in 2025. Happy to hear from anyone not yet on my list.

**Heather Stone (née Brookstein) (1976)**

Excellent tour of the Red Centre with Uluru in the background. Have been living A level Geography for real for 36 years here in Australia but still very much appreciate the trips 'home' - see you next year!



# Old Edwardians' News

## 1970s *continued*

### Maggie Faultless (1979)

Maggie led the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at Glyndebourne in 'Don Giovanni' this summer. She is also the first holder of the Becket Chair of Historical Performance at the Royal Academy of Music in a newly created endowed chair and has been made an Honorary Fellow at her 'other' alma mater, Clare College, Cambridge.



## 1980s



### Sara Tidy (née Eveleigh) (1981)

Over more than thirty five years as a Marketing and Communications professional, I've been fortunate to work with many leading international brands and complex global businesses. I've led internal and external communications, multi-channel strategy and planning, stakeholder and employee engagement, corporate and brand campaign development and implementation, thought leadership and content creation. But my real joy has been in leading teams and developing the young people I've been so lucky to work with. I'm now a Coach and Mentor - helping to develop personal and professional skills and well-being among the next generations of young women. I'd be very happy to listen and talk with any Old Edwardians about anything that's on their mind, or decisions they want to take, to help them on the next stage of their journey.

### Beth Macnab (1986)

After a career spent, as a Psychologist, CBT Therapist and ten years working in Education, I gladly gave up work, in 2021, to become my hugely beloved elderly Mom's full-time carer. We went on one heck of a ride together before she had to leave our world, to partake in her next adventure, in April of this year.

I needed to channel my grief in to something positive, so I found myself writing a second book, (my first, about my hilarious late Dad) to raise funds for Mom's cause, CRUSE - Bereavement Counselling Service. I hope 'Ida Macnab - A Daughter's Love' may help others on their own unique grief journeys.

After losing mom, my days involve dog walking, voluntary work doing therapeutic sessions, joyful play schemes with children through MENCAP, being a Support Worker, a wife, mom, step-nanna, and going to live music gigs. Hubby is in a Blues band.

Those who knew me won't be surprised to hear I still have a lot of hair of varying multi-colours, to go with my tattoo collection! In middle age, mentally I don't feel much different to the spiky-haired, wild-child teenager I was, and have every intention of adhering to the notion of growing old disgracefully!

With love to my fellow 'old girls'. Please email me at [beth.km@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:beth.km@hotmail.co.uk)

### Sarah Paton Briggs (1986)



After a successful first career in BBDO international advertising agency network, I retrained as a psychotherapist. I left corporate life in 2006, turning instead to running a private practice. I specialise in trauma and relationship therapy, having taken additional specialist qualifications in those fields. Advertising was about identifying what makes people tick and selling it to them.

Psychology is similar but less commercial, in that I listen deeply with an unwavering aim to support people in becoming more authentic and fulfilled. Nowadays much of my work is focused on women's empowerment, particularly through menopause and later life. This year I founded Mentrix with my sister, Karen Briggs (who went to Edgbaston High School) offering specialised support through coaching and courses, guiding mature women to navigate through menopause with their health and wellbeing, career and relationships intact.

We thought it was tragic that after striving to accomplish a strong education and career and social connections, many women were imploding with a huge loss of confidence if beset by menopause symptoms. KEHS alumnae are a testament to the value that older women accrue, which can be shared with younger generations who are facing similar transitions.

### Rachel Parsons (née Patrick) (1988)

40 years on from starting at KEHS (1983), Rachel is living quietly in Snowdonia. She enjoys renting out her holiday home which is called 'Minafon' in Penmachno.



## 1990s

### Amy Marston (1990)

I'm currently filming five episodes out of a six part thriller for Left Bank Pictures called "Insomnia" - to be shown on Paramount next year, headed up by Vicky McClure.

I played the regular role of (baddie) Miss Murphy this year for the first series "A Kind Of Spark", which celebrates neurodiversity and had an inclusive cast.

### Angela Buckley (1991) - Current staff - Teacher of Biology and Head of Tudor House

I was a keen hockey player whilst at KEHS and moved into umpiring later on. I have been a national level hockey umpire for some years and have more recently become involved in Master's Hockey - this is hockey played in age group teams from over 35s to over 70s!!! This summer, I went to umpire the European Masters Championships in Valencia, Spain and here I am umpiring a Gold Medal match!



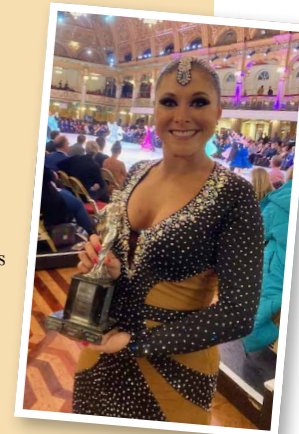
### Emma Abbey (1992)

I read medicine at Cambridge before specialising in psychiatry. My big news is that I was elected to Fellowship of the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 26 October 2023. Fellowship of the College is awarded as a mark of distinction and recognition of contribution to psychiatry. I continue to work as a Consultant on the dementia ward at the Charlton Lane Hospital in Cheltenham, and am Appraisal Lead and Undergrad Tutor for the Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Trust.



### Carrie Soderman (2014)

Carrie and her team became the British National Latin Formation Dancing Champions at the British National Dance Championships in Blackpool in November.



### Jean Downs Former Staff 1980-2006

I have many memories during my 26 years at KEHS working as the technician in the Physics department. Please see just a few of them below!

A visit to CERN with the girls - in the tunnels I stood with one foot in France and the other in Switzerland. Helping the music department to sell tickets for the concerts. The 100 year celebrations of the school and many more happy occasions. Helping the girls and members of staff with problems, school productions and events. Overcoming many different challenges, during the days, in the three Physics Labs!



### Jenny Soderman (2014)

Jenny married Niles in a beautiful ceremony in Cambridge on 9<sup>th</sup> September.

## 2010s

### Jasmine Gardosi (2010)

Congratulations to Birmingham Poet Laureate, Jasmine Gardosi, who has just been awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters by Birmingham Newman University.

The multi-award-winning alum was recognised for her work, which pushes the conventions of poetry and uses the spoken word as a tool for social inclusion.

Jasmine continues to work with KEHS students to help them find their voices and hone their performance skills.



Photo: Sam Carpenter

## 2020s

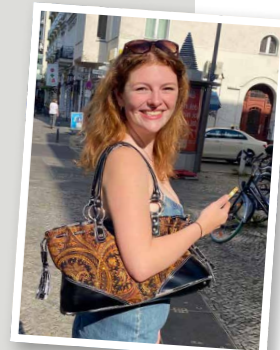
### Erin Duxbury (2022)

I have joined Per Capita as the Deputy Editor for the Magazine and Cultural section. Per Capita is a new publication targeted at year groups 12 and 13 up to university level.

One of the things that excites me the most is the commitment to empowering young writers, and providing them with a platform to experience writing professionally, in the context of a national newspaper. One of our major repeating features is spotlighting these emerging creative talents spanning theatre, fashion, the arts and music!

I am confident that together we will produce compelling content that will engage and inspire readers, and I look forward to contributing to the growth and success of this amazing publication.

We hope to have a separate website for which we are using a graphic design team from my university, Central St Martins, to produce!



# Sadly Missed



## Pamela Eltrude Genton (née Robinson) (1939)

Pamela was born in Birmingham in December 1924 and had a very happy childhood - until the war when she was evacuated at the age of 16, ending her formal schooling at that point. She was the epitome of modesty, but she was very proud of the fact that she'd won a scholarship to King Edward VI High School for Girls when only 10 years old.

Between the ages of ten and fourteen, she took dancing lessons, learning tap, musical comedy and ballroom as well as ballet. She also started elocution lessons and worked her way through exams to become a Member of the Royal Academy of Music and Elocution, and later, during the war, she was a bronze, silver and gold medallist of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts.

After marriage in 1947, and having raised her two daughters (born in 1948 and 1951), Pamela decided that she'd like to do some part-time work and began to do market research interviewing. She specialised in pharmaceutical market research and had a 'little black book' with the names of all the doctors she used to interview who were always more than happy to spend time with her.

Her skills and abilities were numerous - she loved amateur dramatics, performing in many plays with the Manor Players in Sunbury where she lived until 1969; she painted lovely landscapes in oils and watercolours; she was also a skilled dressmaker and knitter. In fact, she excelled at almost anything she turned her hand to.

She had a horrible car accident in Paris in 1981 which necessitated many operations on her hand and arm - undergone with great stoicism.

She worked in the Princess Alice Hospice shop in Cobham, Surrey right up until lockdown, and only stopped driving a month or so before she died.

On her death, her family were able to take comfort from the fact that she had managed to live independently in her own home, with great dignity.

She was outstandingly capable in so many areas but, where she was truly exceptional, was in communicating with people of every age, background, and nationality. In the many, many beautiful messages received after she died, there are words which crop up repeatedly: exceptional, marvellous, one in a million, a lively mind, a 'can do' positive attitude, welcoming, inspirational, sharp, perceptive, so interesting and so interested in other people - truly a role model of how to age gracefully.

**Liz Genton-Eames (daughter)**

## Jean Lowe (née Shakespeare) (1945)

Jean Shakespeare was born in 1927 at the very southern edge of the city of Birmingham, the Maypole. Her parents Thomas and Ida Shakespeare had moved from Derbyshire so that Thomas could take up a teaching post at a school in Birmingham. Before long, the family moved into a new house in King's Heath and Jean, then at primary school welcomed the arrival of a younger sister, Dorothy.

Jean was awarded a place at King Edward VI High School and quickly became interested in English, History, Biology and the Arts including theatre and painting. She was evacuated to Cheltenham during World War II before returning to KEHS to complete her studies, obtaining a School Certificate. On leaving school, she got a job as a laboratory technician at Midland Counties Dairy and was involved in the process of pasteurising milk before it was sold across the UK.

Jean met a young company director called John Lowe who attended the same church as she did and was himself a former pupil of KES. In 1951, they married at Cambridge Road Methodist Church and had four children. Jean and John enjoyed trips to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre where Shakespeare's plays were particular favourites, even though there is no traceable link between this Shakespeare family and Stratford upon Avon's celebrated bard.

In 1978, Jean suffered the sudden loss of her beloved husband John, at the age of just 51. As her children had flown the nest, she became a landlady and offered board and lodgings to students from Birmingham University.

In her early 60s Jean embarked on a new adventure. Having lived in Birmingham all her life, she decided on a change of scenery and moved to Hereford. She bought a bungalow and as a life-long keen gardener, she undertook a complete redesign of her back garden. She also became a volunteer who helped keep the gardens at Hereford Cathedral looking at their best. She was able to pursue her interest in historic buildings by becoming a part-time guide for a National Trust property. She followed her interest in painting particularly in water colours and for many years was a member of the Painting Club in Hereford and sold many paintings at their exhibitions.

At the age of 94, after a short illness and receiving end-of-life care, Jean died peacefully on 8 July 2022 with her youngest daughter at her bedside. She leaves four children, nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

**Graham Lowe (son)**

## Sheila Hobday (née Reed) (1952) - Former Staff: 1959-64

Sheila was born on 3 April 1933 and died on 12 April 2023, just after her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. She was a pupil at KEHS from September 1950 to July 1952.

Sheila also taught at KEHS. She was a Maths Teacher from 1959, got married to Wilfred in August 1960 and left KEHS in 1964, when she had the first of their three children.

**Wilfred Hobday (husband)**



## Audrey Diana Trumper (née Thurman) (1945)

Audrey was born on 21 March 1928. Tragically her mother died only a year and a half later, so she was raised by both sets of grandparents until her father remarried when she was seven years old.

During the war years, Audrey attended King Edward VI High School in Birmingham and cycled into school every day. Post-war, she pursued teacher training at Homerton College, Cambridge. Soon after, Audrey met her future husband, Keith, at St. Germain's Church in Birmingham.

Audrey and Keith married in May 1950 and their early journey together led them to Quinton and later Selly Park, where they raised three boys, Robert, Michael, and David.

Living in close proximity to Birmingham University allowed Audrey to immerse herself in her passions—music and literature. She became an avid member of the University Choir and worked at Hudson's bookshop on the University Campus.

Audrey loved her familial duties and had a passionate zest for life. She embraced her love for travel, once taking her two older boys to Switzerland in the mid-60s to sample the relatively undiscovered sport of skiing. She explored the cuisines and cultures, not just of Switzerland, but also the Soviet Union, the South of France, Canada, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and the Greek Islands.

When all three sons had left home, Audrey and Keith moved to a cottage in Hillside, Martley, Worcestershire. Audrey's lifelong interest in gardening continued here, where she grew fruit and vegetables, made jam, kept bees, and sold jam and honey. She became active in village life, including the Women's Institute, the Horticultural Society and the Beekeeping Society. She was also an enthusiastic member of the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and enjoyed days out with friends visiting gardens as part of The National Garden Scheme.

Audrey engaged in community service throughout her life, supporting causes like the Victorian Society in Birmingham and fundraising for Cancer Research. She championed environmental causes, showcasing a keen awareness of the need to protect our natural world.

Audrey's sister-in-law became terminally ill, and Audrey encouraged her two sons to join her own family, where they all spent many happy times together, but tragedy struck in 1979 when Audrey and Keith lost their middle son, Michael, in a motorcycle accident.

Audrey maintained her active and independent lifestyle even after Keith's passing in 2001 though she moved to a bungalow in the centre of Martley in 2014, residing with her beloved dog Polly. She belatedly developed dementia which necessitated increasing levels of care at home, before she entered a care home in February 2023. It was only a very short time later that she passed away peacefully on 8 March - 13 days before her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Audrey leaves behind her two surviving sons, three grandchildren and one great grandchild. She is very much missed by them and a community of friends spanning Birmingham and Worcestershire.

Audrey's enduring spirit and the richness of her experiences will be fondly remembered by all who were touched by her remarkable life.

**Robert and David Trumper (sons)**

## Sylvia Dicker (née Hallam) (1953)

Mum attended KEHS on a scholarship between 1946 and 1953. She went from there to read English at St Anne's, Oxford where she met her first husband with whom she had three daughters (Ros, Kate and Juliet). They lived in Zambia for several years in the 60s/early 70s.

She then married my dad in 1976, and they travelled to South Africa in 1977 with Juliet, while Ros and Kate stayed with my grandparents in Hall Green and attended KEHS. My dad was working as a locum doctor in the mission hospital at Vufuli in the northern Transvaal. They all moved to Saskatchewan later the same year where my dad was the only doctor in a very, very small town. My sister Lizzie was born there in 1977.

My parents moved back to the UK in 1980 for my dad to take a job at a practice in Derby, then Northfield, and I was born in 1982.

I will remember my mum as someone proud of her 19 descendants: five daughters (all of us are Old Edwardians), two granddaughters (see photo!), 11 grandsons and one great-grandson. She valued intelligence and was compassionate. At a time when it wasn't fashionable, she strongly advocated for the right of women to give birth as they wanted (she was an early member of the NCT), and also their right to choose to terminate a pregnancy. She was also an advocate for the rights of gay and trans people and for education at all levels. She started a playgroup in Eastend, Saskatchewan; taught junior school children in Zambia including putting on a production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'; was Chair of Governors at Ley Hill Primary School; taught children with special educational needs in Hemel Hempstead in the 1970s; taught nurses in London, and students with English as an Additional language at Brooklyn Tech; and then at the Church of England College in Edgbaston where she also took groups to public speaking competitions. Marrying my dad did significantly curtail her instinct to care for animals but in Zambia she had had a menagerie which included nine dogs, four cats and, at different times, a monkey, a baby deer, rabbits, Guinea pigs and white rats.

She was proud of her garden and enjoyed watching the squirrels and the sailing boats on Edgbaston reservoir.

She used to joke, quoting Paul McCartney: 'Far have I travelled and much have I seen, Dark distant mountains with valleys of green'. She visited the Rockies, the Victoria Falls, the Great Wall of China, Sidney, Petra, India, Montserrat before the volcanic eruption, and the Pyramids.

She was pretty eccentric too - she kept a freezer full of cashmere jumpers, and celebrated Christmas by inviting everyone round and then disappearing off to play the piano!

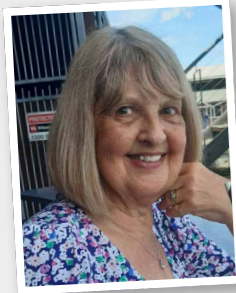
I can only reflect on a tiny fraction of the memories of her. At her funeral, my sister, Liz, sang 'Leaves that are green' by Simon and Garfunkel - a song about nature and writing - both passions of hers - and how fast time passes. Maybe we don't get to do all the things we had hoped, but we all have more of an impact on others than we can ever know.

Mum passed away peacefully in May this year, shortly after her 88<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Alexandra Komar (née Dicker) (2000)**



# Sadly Missed



## Christine Edwin (née Taylor) (1966)

Christine attended KEHS from 1959 until 1966. She lived with her mum and dad in Bromsgrove. Her parents were not 'well off' but made great sacrifices so that she could have an excellent education at a top class school.

She was successful in obtaining excellent examination results and in 1966 she gained a place at Bangor University in North Wales.

Soon after she started there her father, who had suffered from poor health for some time, passed away. She returned home and as she was their only child, she wanted to leave university to look after her mother. Her mother was adamant that Christine should return to university and complete her studies.

Christine was successful in gaining a good degree, which enabled her to be successful in obtaining an English Teacher's post at Swanshurst Grammar School in Birmingham.

During the following years, Christine married and had a son, Simon. Sadly, after a short while, this marriage failed and she was a single parent for a while, during which time she taught at an Adult Education College, in the evenings.

Subsequently we met, married and moved to South London, where she taught at Non-Such Grammar School in Cheam, Surrey.

After three years, we purchased a Residential Care Home for the Elderly in North Wales. During this time, we had a son, Mark.

Both of us were committed Christians and belonged to The Salvation Army Church. In 1986 we both felt called to enter full time ministry in The Salvation Army. After studying for two years at Bible College and after being commissioned and ordained, we led Salvation Army Churches and Social Centres for 21 years, before Christine retired in 2009.

In retirement, we lived in The Cotswolds. Christine was a keen gardener and designed and planted our garden. During this period, she was very active in our small village. She was a Parish Councillor, Chairman for a period, managed the Village Hall for 12 years, and for much of this time she was Chairman there too. For the last few years, she was also the editor of the monthly village newsletter. In addition, for 10 years, she was a volunteer for the National Trust.

During our 45 years of marriage, she often referred to her time at KEHS and was grateful that she had this opportunity. She was so pleased that she attended a reunion at the school a few years ago. At the event she met up with fellow Old Edwardians, one of whom she continued to communicate with afterwards.

Christine passed away peacefully at home after a relatively short illness on 7 September 2023.

Apart from myself, Christine will be sorely missed by her two sons, stepdaughter, their partners, her grandchildren and her first great granddaughter, who was born on Christmas Eve last year.

**Colin Edwin (husband)**

## Helen Wilson (née Beeson) Former Staff: 1977-1982



Helen joined the staff of KEHS in 1977 as Helen Beeson, and we immediately became very good friends. She became the form teacher of L4C and taught Physics with Brian Wood, Jane Underwood and me, until she left in 1982 to have her first son, Andrew. After that, she and husband Dave moved to Oxfordshire.

While she was at KEHS, she also introduced Astronomy as an option within the A Level Physics course, and taught Photography as a Friday afternoon Block. She and I spent some Easter and Summer holidays taking groups of Sixth Form girls to dig the gardens and paint the houses of elderly people in Balsall Heath, via the school's long attachment to the Care of the Elderly group there. We also participated in the summer holiday camps for children from deprived backgrounds, organised in cooperation with the Family Service Unit.

Helen and Dave had three lovely sons in all. We shared family holidays for many years, arriving via ferry to some unsuspecting little French town with six small boys in tow. We'd get together for weekends too, and Helen and I also met up at Science teacher conferences. Helen was roped in to teach some science at her sons' primary school, developed an interest in primary science and went on to be Principal Lecturer in Science Education at Oxford Brookes University. She was still doing some work, on a consultancy basis, until her illness.

Helen was passionate about developing a questioning approach in children and was keen to propagate the idea that science could be a vehicle for higher order thinking. She authored books and papers, and ran a substantial research project 'Thinking, Doing, Talking Science' that involved training teachers to adopt her method of delivering more cognitively challenging science lessons. Her legacy to primary science is enormous.

Helen and Dave were very active in their church, running a youth group even when their own children were very young, and then continuing as Lay Readers and in various other roles.

The boys and their partners now have children of their own, and Helen was immensely proud of her sons and her five grandchildren. Her love, kindness, wisdom, enthusiasm, steadfastness and wit were appreciated by her family and a wide circle of friends. She had a passion for the outdoors – wet and windy weather were better, in her eyes, than hot sun. She owned more weatherproof coats than anyone I know. She loved outdoor photography and was keen to practise techniques for photographing birds in flight.

Helen was diagnosed with bowel cancer in April this year and died on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Hers was such a full life, with a positive influence on so many people. But it was a life that ended prematurely, and she will be missed so much. I count myself very fortunate to have been one of her friends.

**Pam Rutter (friend and former colleague)**

- Pamela Genton (née Robinson) (1939)
- Jean Lowe (née Shakespeare) (1945)
- Audrey Trumper (née Thurman) (1945)
- Eileen Carradine (née Fenn) (1947)
- Jean Eccleston (née Wilkins) (1950)
- Anthea Gent (née Low) (1952)
- Sheila Hobday (née Reed) (1952) - Former Staff: 1959-64

- Sylvia Dicker (née Hallam) (1954)
- Christine McDonald (née Colver) (1955)
- Janice Platt (née Payton) (1960)
- Christine Edwin (née Taylor) (1966)
- Ellen Brown (née Pope) (1978)
- Jane Davey (1982)
- Helen Wilson (née Beeson) - Former Staff: 1977-82

**Editor's note:** It was noted in Doris Trott's obituary in KEynotes 2022 that her years of employment with KEHS were from 1970-1996. Doris was also employed by KEHS from 1955-1960 (she joined as Miss Coulman and became Mrs Trott in 1957) and she did two terms in 1967.

# Message Board

## Dates for your 2024 Diary

**Saturday, 27 January: Senior Production**

**Saturday, 24 February: Diamond & Golden Reunion**  
A special celebration for the Classes of 1964 and 1974.

**Monday, 18 March: Symphony Hall Concert**  
For all alumni and guests, with an additional reception for recent donors.

**Saturday, 27 April: Annual Reunion**  
For all alumnae, with special guest speakers in Education.  
**Followed by The Milestones Celebration - for the Classes of 1984, 1994, 2004 and 2014.**

## Stay in Touch

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 King Edward VI High School for Girls

## London Branch Report 2022-2023

The covid-enforced gap has given us an opportunity to take a fresh look at our London offering. Many people are continuing to work at home at least for part of the week. Meetings which used to be face-to-face have remained online and something called a webinar seems to be increasingly appearing in my diary. This change is an opportunity, and we need your help:

Ideas please for events which you would enjoy supporting! Can we support useful and enjoyable connections? Would it be helpful to have online events? How can we support those less able to travel? Would you support a joint event with KES?

Event venues, especially reasonably priced ones, are difficult to find. Does anyone have access to an event venue, or can you suggest venues?

Please help us with your ideas by contacting **Debbie Macleod** at [oldeds@kehs.org.uk](mailto:oldeds@kehs.org.uk) or 0121 415 2245 who will be in regular contact with me.

**Angela Clayton-Turner (née Rubery) (1957)**

## Endowment Update

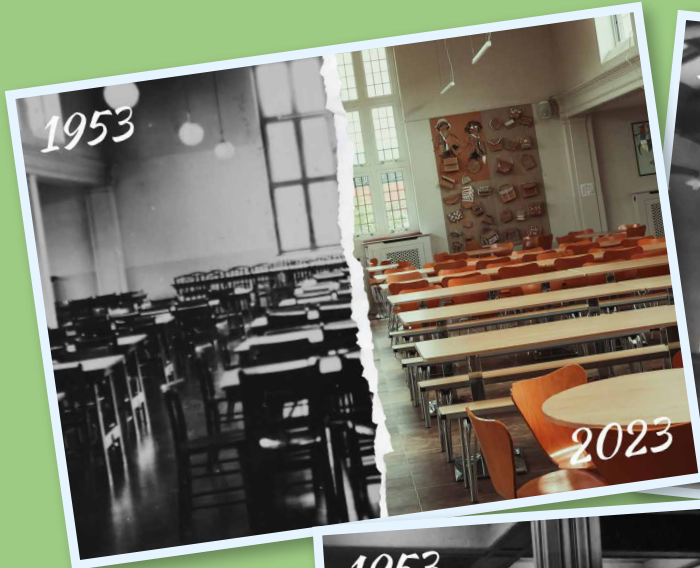
In 2014 when The KEHS Trust was created, the BGOEC transferred the monies under their stewardship to the new charity. These have been endowed, with the capital remaining and the income contributing to the Assisted Places Fund each year. With new gifts from generous donors, and investment growth, it has increased from £585,000 to £1.4 million since 2014.

Income from the BGOEC endowed fund is added to the donations we receive from Old Edwardians and friends of the school each year. Together, they funded 23 Assisted Places in the last calendar year - for girls who could not have been here without that support. Thank you to all of the donors, past and present, who continue to make this possible and to ensure that KEHS remains accessible to all bright girls in our region.

Assisted Places are the cornerstone of KEHS and demand always outstrips supply. If you would like to make a gift to support them, please do not hesitate to get in touch. All gifts received in support of Assisted Places are ring-fenced, and 100% of your donation goes directly to this purpose.

## The BGOEC Committee & KEynotes Committee

**Kirsty von Malaisé** *President, Trustee of BGOEC*  
**Lois Freedman** *Vice-President*  
**Annette Duffy** *Chairman, KEynotes & Volunteer Archivist*  
**Cas Britton** *KEynotes & Volunteer Archivist*  
**Janet Burgess** *KEynotes*  
**Angela Clayton-Turner** *London Branch Secretary*  
**Barbara Davis** *KEynotes, Trustee of BGOEC, PS Magazine!*  
**Anna Emery** *Treasurer*  
**Helen Nixon** *Trustee of BGOEC*  
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