

COLCHESTER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

OLD GIRLS'/ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER – Autumn 2021

Editor's Notes

It's good to be getting back to some normality after several lockdowns and with booster vaccinations we should be able to do even more! Thank you to everyone who has sent in articles, especially (again) Joan Gurney who has written another delightful episode of her life since leaving CCHS. Please keep the articles coming! Sadly there are several obituaries but these help us remember those who were fellow pupils at school many years ago and learn more about them. It is not difficult to email me (or call me for my postal address) and no great literary work is required!

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Information, news, comments, photos and articles for the next Newsletter by 31st March 2022.

STOP PRESS - Photos from our Coffee Morning at Grey Friars earlier this month.



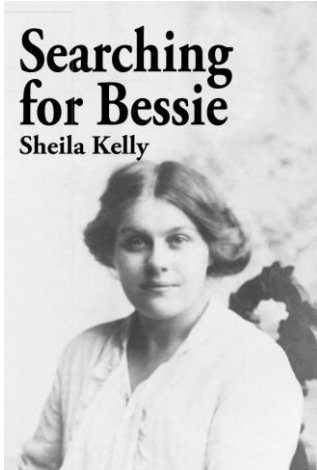
Events - Jean Johnson, Events Organiser

I feel that we have been fortunate to have had two social events recently. The afternoon Garden Tea, held at Liz White's house on 17th August, was very successful. More than 30 members attended and we were very lucky that the weather was kind to us. Liz's garden is a really lovely, convenient meeting place and we are very grateful to Liz for not only letting us use garden but also for the tremendous work she and Di did to provide us with such an excellent tea.

Similarly we were very grateful to be able to enjoy another outside event on 16th September. At the Coffee Morning at Grey Friars, held outside on the terrace, once more we had about 30 members attending and it was very rewarding to see so many friends together again.

I have optimistically taken out insurance to cover our events for the next year, so we definitely have more social gatherings planned. In the meantime I hope all members have a safe next few months and I will be in touch again as soon as we can all meet up again.

News from Old Girls



Sheila Kelly (Watson 1959-66) (right)

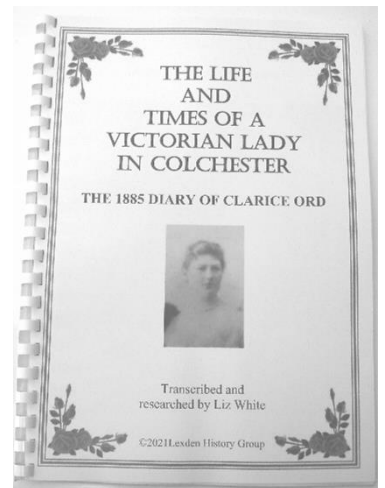
Sheila has written “Searching for Bessie” - a book about her family's journey through very different events and emotions. She also includes some recipes and prose and poetry. This is a good read for anyone! It tells the story of Sheila's grandmother, Bessie Emma Reason, one of five daughters, and who brings shame on the family by having an illegitimate child just after the First World War. Sadly a few months later Bessie dies in a cycling accident leaving her small daughter to be brought up by the family. Sheila recalls family history with a continuing description of life by the River Stour many years ago. A fascinating book!



It is available at Red Lion Books, High Street, Colchester, priced at £12.

Liz White (Bailey 1959-66)

Liz has written another book - this time about an 1885 Diary she was given. There were no personal details in the diary and much detective work took place until she was able to identify the writer. Clarice Ord was the second wife of a Major General and lived for over 40 years in Beverley Lodge, 10 Lexden Road, Colchester. This house is now part of CRGS and known as Gurney Benham House. Clarice Ord recorded very briefly her daily visits, her friends, accounts, the events she performed in and entertainments she attended in the town. Liz has researched her life, family and activities and over 220 people mentioned in the diary. A remarkable insight into a lady in Colchester in the middle of Victoria's long reign.



Copies are available from Lexden History Group at lexdenhistory.org.uk/ or from Liz (see Editor) and cost £7.50.

Joan Gurney (Appleton 1938-51)

(right - Joan at the recent OGA Grey Friars Coffee morning)

What Joan did next - Part 4

By the end of the 1980s my wildflower meadow, grazed by two ponies, was well established. The hay crop scented the air in late summer and the orchards were carpeted with snowdrops, daffodils and bluebells in spring, as the geese wandered amongst them. The fruit got picked in early autumn, the dovecot got painted and in winter out came the homemade toboggan of my childhood.

The year 1987 had been a year of heavy rainfall, but it had been very mild. By the early autumn many broadleaf trees were still in full foliage, and there had been little sign of premature leaf drop or early autumnal colour change. With hindsight it would have seemed that with these events the roots of large trees were less securely anchored and the persisting canopies provided enormous resistance to winds, like the sails of a yacht.



On the evening of October 15th, the usual weather forecast by Michael Fish was nothing out of the ordinary. He jokingly said that a television viewer had suggested a hurricane was on the way, but he dismissed this as nonsense - and so I went to bed that night at 10.30pm.

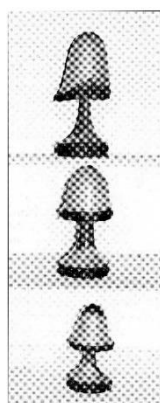
During the night I was aware that it was rather windy and every so often, in the early hours of October 16th, there was a splattering against the window as if bursts of raindrops had bit the glass. It was not until next day that I realised this was not lashing rain, but showers of leaves torn from trees as they came crashing to the ground. And so I dozed on regardless, as many other people did, on that devastating night of the Great



Hurricane. In the morning when I looked out of the window I could not believe what I saw. Mature trees were totally uprooted (*left*). Fruit which had not been picked was covering the ground like abandoned tennis balls, sheds, roofs and stables were wrecked and bales of hay and straw, from the partially destroyed barn, were strewn across the meadow like discarded matchboxes. One hedgerow suffered 'leaf burn' from the salt-laden wind which it had picked up from its passage over the sea.

The clear-up and replacing of our twenty lost trees took months and then years. One success story was a mature walnut tree which was winched upright from its 45° fallen position using a tractor and chain - and it survives in the Grey Friars garden during my schooldays. down in my memory as another extraordinary happened (according to our physical geography places, rather than the gentle and unlikely climate devastation, I had my garden officially recognised

Grey Friars garden escaped severe damage sides, but the roots of some trees were, no doubt, have existed since the time of a monastery on the from its timber (which is valued for furniture tutors, who was a woodturner, made me a set of memento of my life-long love of the site.



The events of October 16th/17th went meteorological event which only ever textbook of the 1940s) in outlandish other of East Anglia. But despite all the as a wildlife haven in 1988.

because of its protective walls on all weakened. An ancient yew, which may site, came down a few years later, and making) one of the Grey Friars College decorative toadstools (*right*) as a

All the household labour-saving devices which I had seen change and develop over the earlier years, were continuing to evolve. Carpet beaters had given way to the vacuum cleaner, kitchen ranges to electric cookers, washing lines to tumble driers, and putting food down the well to keep cool now only required a refrigerator. But the most innovative appliance of the late 1980s and early 1990s was the microwave. It must have been developed almost exclusively for the busy housewife. This was the decade where women worked and had jobs outside the home. What a bonus this was for the quick preparation of an evening meal as I discovered when I was working evenings in adult education!



There was still time to watch television however, but even here, the style of humour was changing. Gradually, leading up to the beginning of the 1990s, no longer was it a stand-up comedian who told a series of funny jokes, but a very subtle form of situational humour took over, within a conversation between two people, or a small group of people. Each one bombarded the other with relentless sharp-edged wit often set against a background of everyday life. The most memorable were four neighbours, Tom, Barbara, Margot and Jerry in "The Good Life", the family in "Butterflies" and the sophisticated conversations between Peter Cook and Dudley Moore. My favourite of all time, however, will always be "The Two Ronnies". The exceptional acting ability of Ronnie Barker, his double 'entendres' and his clever play on words have never been surpassed. How I wish I had been with my husband, Gerald, when he visited Ronnie in his antiques shop in

the Cotswolds (*left*), after his retirement from acting, and was treated to a spontaneous piece of dialogue with him which could have come straight out of “Open All Hours”!

My work in swimming at the Adult Community College in Grey Friars still continued into the 1990s but the programme was gradually being curtailed by financial cuts from Essex County Council and temporary closure of some school pools, which decreased the availability for hire. This, however, allowed me to increase other aspects of my swimming teaching in schools and other organisations, but venturing into the less publicised aspects of the sport. I had been involved in lifesaving for many years, but synchronised swimming had always attracted me. This ‘novelty’ was described as a mixture of ballet, gymnastics and swimming performed to music and the recent Tokyo Olympics brought to the forefront the extreme difficulty involved in the breath control required, particularly in team events, where much of the physical support work is under the water surface. It rightly deserves its new title - Artistic Swimming. My favourite piece of choreography will always be the sequence which I put together for the theme music to Inspector Morse, borrowed from television! Many of my ex-students will remember it!

Trees are one of my greatest passions. They had been there in abundance during my childhood on a farm in Dedham, and during my early schooldays at Grey Friars. I knew every tree, its name and position around the playground - the yew trees, the walnut, the pear tree and the stories of the black mulberry which fed the silkworms which we kept - and of course the butterflies, moths and songbirds which they attracted. Not only did the Hurricane stir up all these memories but it was a time when the climate change controversy and the importance of protecting wildlife and trees for the continuing survival of all humanity, was given great importance. I began to plan how I might compensate for my loss of trees, and at the same time, contribute to the overall survival strategy.

In 1995 I started my tree restoration project. I fenced off a small part of the meadow which ran alongside a very wet ditch, and a native tree spinney started to take shape. Amongst the endangered and rare ones, I wanted to include fruit and nut bearers to encourage wildlife. Native saplings of hazel, ash, and others were easy to obtain, but the rarer ones were more difficult, so again I sought the advice of an expert, the eminent but amateur environmentalist, Miriam Rothschild, an authority on native species, who had already helped me with my wild flower meadow. The wild service tree which originally gave its name to pubs known as “The Chequers” (from its speckled fruit and the drink made from it), and the wild pear were two of the more unusual which I wanted, but I had long had a love affair with the black poplar, an endangered variety which I had first discovered growing beside a stream at my parents’ farm in Dedham when I was 14 years old. Its massive height, trembling leaves, fat red catkins and scented leaf buds in spring captivated me, and when I discovered that it was perhaps even heading for extinction after the water meadows and river habitats were being drained, I knew I had to have one. Not only that, it appears in several of John Constable’s paintings, its wood is almost fireproof and was used for clogs, cruck-framed buildings and floors of wagons - maybe even “The Haywain”. The spinney took two winters to plant and since then it had flourished.

The decade of the 1990s was my travel decade. I am not sure how it started, but my husband, Gerald, had never been inspired by the thought of holidays preferring to spend the long school summer break sitting in the garden, tending the plants, cutting the grass and looking after the animals. But he also cherished this time alone to work on his extensive racket collection, writing articles, finishing a few books and some contributions to radio and television programmes. So he sent me off to explore! Although we had both enjoyed more primitive holidays when our son was younger, camping, cycling and youth hostelling now gave way to my desire for something more sophisticated and leisurely.

Have always regretted dropping history as a subject when I was at CCHS, but I had too many others to fit into the timetable as I was approaching School Certificate in 1948, and I could not take on any more. My historical knowledge is still very limited, but pre-history fascinated me. In my early working life I searched for arrowheads at Walton-on-the-Naze, shark’s teeth at Wrabness and helped on a ‘dig’ at a Bronze Age burial site in Dedham. But a whole new world opened up for me in the 1990s. I travelled by train, coach, boat, but never by



plane. I explored the art and architecture of Florence, Venice, Paris, St Petersburg, the archaeology of the Orkneys and Outer Hebrides, then the atrocities of World War 2 and their affects on Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic, the physical features, vegetation and climate of the Scilly Isles, and Scandinavia, including the spectacular geysers of Iceland (*above*). All, of course, were influenced by what I had learned at CCHS.

I still managed to devote some time to my Bathing Bygones Collection, and in my mind, the ultimate possession for a collection such as this would be a bathing machine! These originated in the 1700s, and were specially aimed at the ladies. They were pulled buy horse, or winch (or even by a strong man) to the water's edge, so that the lady could enter the water in her all-enveloping bathing costume without being exposed to view. Together Gerald and I often used to search along beach-hut-lined coastal areas to see if we could spot any huts which were the remains of a bathing machine with its wheels removed. There are one or two around and, after all, Queen Victoria's bathing machine at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight is reputed to have been found in a dilapidated state being used as a chicken shed.

I almost abandoned my search, except that I kept thinking the only difference in appearance between a bathing machine and a shepherd's hut was the fact that the former had wooden wheels for more durable sand and water travel, and the latter had metal wheels for hard surfaces and meadow travel. A shepherd's hut was towed by horse, steam engine or tractor to the lambing fields in spring, and lived in by the shepherd day and night to help with the lambing and to nurse the sickly lambs beside the tortoise stove, returning them to the slatted pen under his raised bunk bed after recovery. And then one came up for sale at a farm auction in



1997! Of course I bought it! In the mid 1990s a shepherd's hut had not yet become a fashionable garden hideaway, nor was it widely reproduced as it is today. Its advantage over other garden offices and playrooms was that it had wheels, and therefore could be moved, and did not need planning permission.

My work-worn Victorian shepherd's hut was delivered on a low loader, was swung over a hedge and ditch by crane (*left*) and arrived in our meadow where it was towed by tractor to its final position in a corner of the field. It needed several repairs - the

curved corrugated iron roof was replaced, the solid weather-board walls treated with wood preservative, the floor strengthened, window glass and stable door replaced and wooden steps from an old boat added.

The corner of the meadow where the shepherd's hut found its final place had been earmarked by both Gerald and me for a pond, which we had wanted for years, and so in 1998 the digger arrived to make a 40ft by 20ft tear-drop shaped cavity (*right*) with the point of the tear just near the base of the steps into the shepherd's hut. Once the liner was fitted and the pond filled, I had to have a swim! The water was colder than the River Stour at Dedham where I learned to swim as a child! But afterwards, I curled up in the warm shepherd's hut.



I had hardly finished planting the marginal plants, the submerged ones and the floaters, before the wildlife began to arrive as if by magic - newts, frogs, dragon flies and their larvae, and over time nesting moorhens and mallards and a temporary wolverine visitor. Honey bees took up residence amongst the original sheeps' wool insulation of the cavity walls. Memories of the Grey Friars pond came flooding back once more and the beautiful garden of the 1930s (*left*) aflutter with bees and butterflies which has now sadly disappeared under the tarmac of a car park.



My work at Grey Friars continued throughout the 1990s and the 'Learn to Swim' programme retained its success and was

still giving confidence to more and more adults who had learned to swim in their later years. Keeping the team of tutors together, co-ordinated and motivated when they were separated in different pools, at different times, on different days, was a difficult, but necessary duty to during that decade I started to produce a Departmental Newsletter, once or twice a year to which any swimming tutor could contribute any article or letter, on any topic. As I was short of articles in 1997, I decided to write something myself and so a three part article about Grey Friars, when it was part of CCHS between 1920 and 1957 when I was at school there, was planned. The content was a mixture of anecdotes, personal experiences and historical facts, all based on a set of photographic postcards of the building and its grounds in the 1920s. It was intended to be spread over three issues of the Departmental Newsletter.

Two parts of the work had appeared in two separate Newsletters and the third part was unfinished when some alumnae of CCHS who were planning a 50th anniversary reunion of the 1948 School Certificate Year heard about it and wanted it completed in book form and ready for the event in late 1998. Writing, printing and photography all had to be accelerated and there was much burning of the midnight oil! And so 'Pictures from the Past' was born in A4 format (later to be revised and reprinted in A5 size). I 'signed off' the book on the final page with a photograph of myself performing long jump (*right*) in my final year at CCHS where a newly created long jump pit had been excavated at the North Hill site. I had given up my successful skills at high jump after trying to transform my scissor style to that of the 'Western Roll' which I had seen in pictures of the Olympic Games. My attempts to copy it were disastrous after landing heavily in a wet, muddy bed of farmyard straw, which I had hoped would give me a soft landing!



'Pictures from the Past' was completed for the 1998 Reunion and what a day of story-telling that turned out to be! But more of that another time.

More Memories of School Hockey **Kathleen Wilson (1946-51)**

I think it was in February 1950 that a majority of the senior members raised that there would not be many more matches together and a camera was brought along for a couple of keepsake snaps. The one taken of that 1st XI is below. I was pleasantly surprised when Leanne May sought me out afterwards with several copies for my autograph for the leaving VI forms as mementos.



1st XI Hockey 1949-50

Back row from left: Margaret Edwards RB, Rosemary Palmer LH, Doreen Jay LB, Leanne May RI, Kathleen Wilson GK, Pat Moon CF, Ruth Payne LI.
Front row from left: Elizabeth Barton CH, Thelma Smith RW, Mary Long RH Capt, Rosemay Gollifar LW.

In those days a CCHS hockey season was not complete without the annual Oxford v Cambridge match which included staff players. I remember Mary Long seeking me out one breaktime to

enquire if I had yet been asked to play in that match. She was to Captain the Oxford side and wanted a goal keeper. I said Yes! - this would round off my first season splendidly even if I was apprehensive.

After about 10 minutes play in that match the Cambridge team were awarded a corner and all the Oxford team (at that time) had to retire behind the goal line. I remember Miss Van der Spey (PE Netball) sprinted back to take up a position next to me as she asked "How long do they keep this pace up?" I smilingly told

her “Today - probably the whole match!” At another instance I came quickly alert when Bunty Payne, playing for Cambridge broke through our defence, although quite a way from our circle. Now I would find out if all those extra practices had born fruit. That quandary was never resolved as I heard a shrill whistle. Miss Holmes, umpiring at our end of the pitch had her arm up in Oxford’s favour and the word rang out “offside”. What a relief and the match finished 0-0.

The Team Criticism - 1st XI (1949-50)

*Colours were awarded (!) Colours already held

RB Margaret Edwards - she is a hard hitting back who has improved during this season. She is reliable but needs to gain full control over the use of her stick.

LB Doreen Jay - During this season she has learned to combine well with her half and other back but is still rather slow at clearing the ball.

RH (!) Mary Long - A very capable player - she controls and clears the ball well and quickly combining well with both forwards and defences. A captain who will be sadly missed for her team spirit and keenness; her thoughts were always for the team and the welfare of its members. I should personally like to thank Mary for the help she gave me in my first term here (SMO)

CH Elizabeth Barton - she is a keen and enthusiastic player who has settled down well. She is fast and has good control of the ball which she distributes well, but needs to keep her own position more carefully.

LH (!) Rosemary Palmer - She is a capable and reliable half who works well with both forwards and backs.

RW* Thelma Smith - She is a fast wing with good control of the ball who combines well with the other forwards and has learnt to distribute the ball more freely.

RI Leanne May - Although she has settled down well in her new position she is still inclined to be slow. She rushes well in the circle, thus helping to score several goals.

CF (!) Pat Moon - Her ball control still needs improvement but she is fast and a good shooter, so that it was unfortunate that she was unable to play in many of the matches.

LI* Ruth Payne - She is fast and combines well with her wing. Her ball control has greatly improved.

LW* Rosemary Gollifer - She is very fast but needs more control over the ball which she is apt to leave behind. She combines well with her half and inner.

GK Kathleen Wilson - Although she has come straight into the 1st XI with little experience, she has been quite reliable. She has improved through continual practice but needs more confidence.

I believe Clare Dolph RB, another VI Form prefect, played in the practices and at least one of the first matches, so I give her a mention. She was also the Team’s Captain. However, she was due to leave early with plans to go to Australia.

In my last year at CCHS (1950/51) I managed to keep my place in the team, which then had six more newcomers, three from my own class. That season we added knee length red socks to our kit, although they did not always inspire our performances. Our playing record was: played 12, won 9, drew 1 and lost 2. Rosemary Gollifer became Captain with Bunty Payne as Vice and Rosemary Palmer became Head Girl. Also Rosemary Palmer was absent from the team and school for a while as she recovered from a time in hospital. The Captain’s Critique at the end of the season, as far as I was concerned, was a different one from that of my first rookie year, and along with Maggie Edwards and Elizabeth Barton (call me ‘Barton’) I too was awarded my colours. At the end of the season the Oxford v Cambridge match was cancelled due to poor weather, but there was another treat in store for us. A bus load of hockey enthusiasts, myself and other team members included, left North Hill on Saturday 3rd March for Wembley Stadium. We were due to see a Women’s International Match - England versus Ireland. I believe it was the first time the AEWAA (All England Women’s Hockey Association) held a match there. As Barton said in her report “We saw some superb hockey played, especially by the English forwards; Ireland put up a game fight and the match was not as one-sided as the score of 6 goals to 1 in England’s favour seems to show”. My diary states “Play was super, magnificent, ever so good. Wish we could play like them”. One further point - if you have never had the experience of attending Wembley Stadium for a Women’s International with an audience in excess of 50,000 - mostly schoolgirls - with the noise, shouting, screaming, stamping and applauding - you have really missed a treat!!

At the end of the previous hockey article in the Autumn 2020 CCHS OGA Newsletter, the question was raised about further new of team members. What little information I have of those 1st XI members of

1949/50 after leaving school I include below: Those leaving in 1950 all completed the Cambridge Higher Certificate.

Mary Long was awarded Entrance to Edinburgh University and later on an MA Honours Class II in Modern History from that university.

Pat Moon, Head Girl. In her last term at school Pat was Captain of Tennis, playing 1st couple with her hockey team mate Leanne May, with Elizabeth Barton, Mary Long and Thelma Smith also in the 1st VI. Pat gained a County Major Exhibition to the Royal Holloway College London University (Mathematics). In 1953 she married Michael Clay and on 7 July 1954 had a daughter, Caroline Jane, and then Pat was in Montreal enjoying Canadian life.

Leanne May went to the London College of Secretaries.

Doreen Jay went to Bath Training College for Teachers, was Vice Chairman of the Students' Council and Deputy Senior Student at that College and gained Distinction in her teaching certificate. She went on to teach Art and English at Stansted Secondary Modern School.

Thelma Smith, Senior Deputy Head Girl, won a County Major Scholarship and later s BA Hons Class II in Modern History from Oxford University and later was taking a Secretarial Course.

Clare Dolph who left and was due to go to Australia. Married Ronald Thompson in Hong Kong Cathedral on 25 October 1952. (Did she ever reach Australia?) Her daughter, Angela, was born on 14 November 1953. (Clare travelled as a receptionist to Sydney in October 1949. The question is did she return to England before marrying Ronald?)

Among the team members leaving in the summer of 1951 was **Barton** who went to Leeds Training College; **Bunt Payne** nursed at University College Hospital.

I (**Kathleen Wilson**) went to continue my education part-time via BX Plastics Research Station where my laboratory was a hot, noisy, steamy environment - an 'alien' world.

The remaining three members of that 1st XI team of 1949/50 all left after one more year in the team.

Rosemary Palmer returned to the team and her Head Girl duties, gained Entrance to Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford (French).

Rosemary Gollifer became Deputy Head Girl leaving the Hockey Captaincy to Maggie Edwards. Rosemary gained State Scholarship and Entrance to Bedford College London (German).

Maggie Edwards went to the FEI Training College at Roehampton.

One is left to wonder why four members of that team of 1949/50 were honoured with Head Girl or Deputy duties. Was it due to hockey or were they all exceptional young women?

Old School Magazines

Flicking through old School Magazines is fascinating. Do you remember the prunes frequently served with custard for pudding? In the 1960-61 magazine Lyn Halls of the Middle V actually wrote a "pome" about it!

ODE TO A SCHOOL PRUNE

(With apologies to Banquo)

What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire,
That look not like any food on earth,
And yet are on't?
Smell you? Or are you aught that girls may eat?
You seem to be quite harmless,
Reposing in your dish of cornflour sauce.
You should be good for us,
And yet your looks forbid me to interpret
That you are so.

Another item from the same magazine was by **Joan Turville-Petre, MA, BLitt**, née **Blomfield**. She was at CCHS from 1920-30 and studied at Somerville College, Oxford, where later she was a Tutor and Fellow from 1941 to 1946, a lecturer in English from 1946 to 1965 and an Honorary College Research Fellow from

1965. She published articles and reviews in various periodicals. In 1943 she married Gabriel Turville-Petre, a professor in Icelandic at Oxford University and although there were no guests at their wedding, their friends, JRR Tolkien and his wife, Edith, were witnesses! She had three sons and her life and achievements are recorded in her own Wikipedia page. She died in 2006 aged 94. (left: Joan in 1943)



She wrote the following in the School Magazine in 1961:

"Home was good, but school was better. CCHS was the right place for an ambitious, impatient child who wanted to enjoy an independent life in the outside world without sacrificing the secret pleasures of home. Through ten years it was the place where I was happiest. I met my first friend at the tram-stop in 1920. I hope my friends value this past life half as much as I do.

I can go through most of Grey Friars in memory, from the attic room where we bought our school books to Miss Crosthwaite's study on the ground floor, with its gallery where the library was kept. The elegant front stairs and landing and the Preparatory rooms facing the garden had the dignity of a private house. This household character pervaded the building, for the classrooms varied widely in size and shape. So, too, in the garden, with its big shaded lawn and curving shrubberies. The asphalt playground seemed enormous, but along the whole length ran a raised walk well enclosed with fruit trees and herbaceous plants; in the border falling to the playground were big red peonies.

North Hill was bare and graceless by comparison, but it was the scene of a fuller and more complex life. In the dark dank lab I learnt enough botany to systematize a long-established interest in wild flowers. There were Sixth-Form coaching sessions with Miss Phillips or Miss Reynolds behind a screen at the end of the corridor. There were discussions round the gas fire in the Upper Sixth room, which was both ugly and awkwardly furnished, but had a fine view. Hockey had its own associations, for the field at North Hill was too rough for any game but rounders. Games lessons or Saturday practices were held on the swampy field behind East Hill. There was a familiar charm about this rough pasture at the end of a stony lane. We got good training, all the same (here or on the military ground) for Miss Holmes insisted on high standards.

For many years there was a special source of fun and interest in Hark - the Historical and Archaeological Society - driven by the furious enthusiasm of Miss Winters and fed by the varied talents of other members of the Staff. We met in Grey Friars hall to sing folk songs and sea shanties and to learn intricate country dances. The Saturday expeditions were equally delightful to the grave students of architecture and to those who liked picnicking and climbing church towers. Hark had something for most ages and was a truly liberating experience. (I learnt more about music here than from any formal instruction). These activities remain a fair sample of the quality of life at North Hill. Of course, there was good teaching - one took that for granted at the time without much understanding of the skill and wisdom of the various practitioners. School societies, plays and concerts gave the fledglings space to flap their wings and try their strength. The absorbing interest of these extras is proof that the school was run by people who had the art of teaching you to teach yourself. Both Miss Crosthwaite and Miss King evidently understood this aspect of education. Although they were very different in character both the headmistresses I knew were broad-minded as well as high-minded."

From the 1956-7 School Magazine

Many of you will have memories of Miss Roper, whether from school, Guiding, or visiting her at King Cole's Kitchen in King Cole Road, Colchester. Miss Maude Elizabeth Roper was born in South Africa in November 1893. Her father was a serving soldier and her siblings were born all over the world but the family settled in Colchester in 1918 and almost immediately she started teaching at CCHS. In the 1939 Register she was recorded as a High School Teacher living with her widowed mother, also Maude, at King Cole's Kitchen. She was an Air Raid Warden and manned the ARP First Aid Post during the Second World War. Her sister, Muriel, was 16 years younger and attended CCHS at Grey Friars and North Hill. Apparently people started calling Miss Roper, Margaret, after the famous daughter of Sir Thomas Cromwell and, as she had always

hated the name Maude, she became known as Margaret. When she retired the following article was included in the School Magazine. (Right: Miss Roper in 1913)

"We have learned, by hard experience, that the battle cry of the Magazine Committee to its contributors has, perforce, for reasons of economy, to be "Condense! Condense! Condense!" - but how can we condense all that should be said in gratitude for and appreciation of Miss Roper's thirty-eight years' service to the School? In the Lab, in the form room, as Head of a House (York) she has worked for and with us with power to encourage the enthusiastic, and understanding to help the duffers out of their difficulties. And, outside the school time-table there was much more - the nature expeditions in the holidays, rambles on Saturdays, the exhibitions and lectures she arranged for us - particularly the lectures on bird-watching with their lovely illustrations - and. Most especially, her First Aid whenever anyone felt sick, or fainted, if anyone cut her finger, twisted her ankle, or fell and broke a bone the cry was always the same "Can you find Miss Roper?" and when she came, quiet and unhurried, skill, comfort, and reassurance came with her - and, very often, her car too! - in which she would drive the sufferer for treatment to the hospital, or safely to her own home. But perhaps the nicest memory of all will be - of flowers. Flowers for any kind of School function, flowers in the Hall, in the Staff rooms, and in the Head's room, more often than not brought, and always arranged so beautifully by Miss Roper - in fact we may say with truth that she expressed much of her affection for the School in flowers. Her interest in those she taught went on with them as Old Girls; indeed, no OGA meeting would feel really complete if Miss Roper were not there. And, though the present School has had regretfully to say goodbye to her, the Old Girls, who so many of them through the years have kept in touch with her, will welcome her, as a member of the Old Staff, with delight, and the OGA will find in her as a member of their Committee and their Magazine Representative a magnificent link with the School.



We do thank her very truly for all she has done for us - and send her our love and best wishes for many happy years of retirement." She died in 1974.

Do you have any memories of Miss Roper? Please send them in so we can share them!

Obituaries

Ruth Kathleen Greenwold (Motum 1941-48) from Anne Glover, her daughter.



Ruth sadly died on 24th June this year aged 89. She was born at a nursing home on the corner of Beverley Road and Lexden Road in Colchester. The family lived at 238 Ipswich Road. She was an only child but made friends with the children of neighbours (including local shop owners the Hatfields) and her many relatives living nearby. She wandered about, playing in the woods and paddling in the nearby stream, cycling or tobogganing down the slopes in the winter. Behind the house, the good-sized garden which looked over fields sown with corn, had a patch for her Dad's vegetables, a hutch for a pet rabbit and somewhere to keep chickens during the war. Down the road was Mason's shop where wartime sweet coupons could be exchanged for Sherbet Dabs and from there a boy on a bike made deliveries. A baker came to the house with fresh bread in a huge basket and the greengrocer, with his horse and cart, sometimes gave Ruth a ride up the road. At 4 or 5 years old, she recalled going to the front gate and watching fascinated, as the man on the bicycle-cum-ice-cream-maker made her a wafer with his special tool.

Aged only 5 she caught the bus on her own to Maldon Road to attend the New Church School and remembered that in 1938 she went with the school to the Park to see a tall, grand lady coming along the path opposite Colchester castle. It was Queen Mary! She attended 'Miss Betty Brookes Dancing Academy' and took part in a display on stage, probably at the Albert Hall Repertory Theatre, in Colchester High Street. She must have enjoyed the experience, because much later she joined Colchester Operatic Society and in 1953, danced in a production of Show Boat, at the Playhouse Theatre in St John's Street!

When war started in 1939 Mr Hatfield constructed an Anderson shelter at the bottom of his garden with help from her father. She had to carry a gas mask and identification card and there was the constant threat of the air raid siren going off. Ruth did not like getting up at night to go down into the horrible, cold shelter and added to this she was in Mile End isolation hospital for weeks with Scarletina, often having to get under the bed and the mattress for protection just in case a bomb brought down the ceiling. Her father, Kesel, had a 'reserved' occupation at the Waterworks on Balkeine Hill and was in the Home Guard, Ruth and her mother were evacuated to Rushden near Northampton, but only stayed for about six weeks.



Ruth, aged 9, entered the Lower 3rd form at Grey Friars where her class teacher was Miss Overy (*left*) and she got on well, making many friends. When she passed her scholarship (11+) she moved to North Hill where she met her life-long friend Bridget Bareham (Nelson). The High School made a lasting impression on Ruth and later she became an active member of the Old Girls Association, keeping in touch with classmates and sometimes organising events. An annual highlight was the OGA garden party, held at Weavers in Lexden Road.

During her school years Ruth joined the Girl Guides, becoming Rose Patrol leader and camped one summer in the grounds of Danbury Palace near Chelmsford. She joined the Red Cross Nursing Cadets and much later, in 1953, was to help through the night at Harwich, after devastating floods swept the East of England.

After an interview with Headmistress, Miss King, Ruth left the High School aged 16 and got a job as a tracer in the drawing office at the Post Office in West Stockwell Street. Later she took Civil Service exams to become a Clerical Officer but there were no jobs available, and she was told to go to the War Department, working in the Garrison and using her car as part of her job.

She enjoyed playing tennis, swimming, the theatre or cinema, the church Young People's Holidays. For her 21st birthday her father, who had won some money on the Football Pools, threw his daughter a lovely birthday party at Joscelyn's Café in the High Street, with about forty guests!

1955 was a year of great adventure for Ruth and accompanied by her friend, Jane Gill (Elphick), she sailed to Canada, then travelled to Bryn Athyn in Pennsylvania, USA to begin a year at the church college, on a Fine Arts course. She sailed back on the Queen Mary and after the early death of her father Ruth and her mother moved to a bungalow in Bramley Close. They both had to work but kept a little grey A30 car (*right*) which Ruth drove to the car maintenance class at Colchester Institute. Here she met her future husband, Geoffrey Greenwold, and on a sunny September 12th 1964 they were married with a reception at the Fleece Hotel in Head Street and a honeymoon in Sussex followed. Ruth Waters (Davies) and the two daughters of High School friend, Diana Richardson, were bridesmaids, all in peach satin. Ruth and Geoff soon bought 75 Magazine Farm Way and stayed there for the rest of their lives, making it a warm and welcoming home for their two children, Anne and Hugh.



Ruth enjoyed reading and poetry; music and singing; her garden, flowers and the natural world and delighted in exploring new and beautiful places, in Britain and abroad. As far back as 1967, Ruth joined the Home Farm Women's Institute making many friends and trying new crafts and even winning prizes. When the children were older Ruth worked at the Oaks Hospital and the Examinations Board. She helped at charities such as Homestart and delivered library books to the housebound. She took French classes and in later life, together with Geoff, enjoyed art classes and lectures from the University of the Third Age and became involved in the Colchester Recalled local history group. Ruth liked puzzles and between them, the daily crossword in the Express Newspaper was never left undone!

Mary Sparkes (Newman 1944-58) from her sister Anne Witton

Mary Newman was born in the City of London on 11th April 1940 and she was always very proud to be a cockney. Her parents moved to Colchester when she was a small baby and her father, an optician, became manager of Clement Clarke in Crouch Street. The family lived in a flat above the shop and although it was a good central place to live, it was not good for a child who longed for a pet dog. Her sister, Anne, was born in 1944, the year Mary started at CCHS - one of the last to start before she was 11.



Left: July 1956 L-R Barbara Hunt, ?, Mary Newman.

Below left: July 1957 Upper VI North Hill,

Below right: Upper III 1950-51

Lower left: 1951 Rounders Team Upper 3rd

Can anyone help with names?



Mary was studious and stayed at the High School until she had taken her 'A' levels in science subjects. Her father's parents could not afford for him to train in medicine but he persuaded Mary to become a doctor and she was accepted at the London Hospital. By now she was friendly with Keith, her future husband, and after a year's study she decided she didn't want another five years of training and found a job in the laboratory at Courage and Barclays brewery on the Embankment.

Keith's father's hobby was making puppets and putting on shows. Mary and Keith decided to earn a living putting on puppet shows at Butlins so they travelled to different

Holiday Camps spending about 3 days in each. Keith then decided to build animation puppet shows and with Mary's help started a business. They married in 1966 and moved to Colchester so at last Mary could have pet dogs. Their business grew and they designed and made many shop window Christmas displays including Selfridges in Oxford Street. They then moved to designing and making fairground rides, one of the first being the Ghost Train on Clacton Pier, followed by work at Alton Towers, Blackpool and other theme parks.

By now they had moved to East Mersea and Keith could indulge his love of horses and Mary her pet dogs. However by 1990 their marriage was failing and they divorced in 1993. Mary then bought a house in West Mersea and earned a living book keeping until she was 65. She made many friends at Church, Mersea Island Museum and Mersea Island Trust, later becoming Chairman.

Despite ill health Mary seemed happy until the first lockdown in March 2020. Then she missed getting out

to meet friends and in April that year when she turned 80 she had to retire as Chairman of the Trust. Although family and friends phoned regularly she began to neglect her health and in November she fell ill. She went to stay with her sister, Anne, but was taken into hospital suffering from serious diabetes. She went to a Care Home nearby but her friends and Anne, with all the Lockdown regulations, could only phone, not visit. Mary went into hospital again where she died from pancreatic cancer on 19th June 2021.

Ethel Munson (Carter 1937-42) An appreciation by Joan Gurney (Appleton 1938-51)

I first met Ethel at CCHS in the late 1930s when the school was based at Grey Friars and we were both pupils there, but I was a few years younger and do not remember her very well. However, we would have crossed paths at the morning Assembly, met up in the playground and gone through the same school experiences in the highly disciplined atmosphere of that period. I caught up with Ethel again in the early 1970s when we both returned to work in Grey Friars after it became the Adult Education centre and later the Adult Community College.

Ethel, the youngest of seven children, was born on 25th July 1926 at Bays Mill Cottages and died this year 2021 shortly after her 95th birthday. Her father worked at Stanway Hall farm and the farm workers cottages were just off the Maldon Road in a very isolated position down a long narrow track, not far from the present-day Colchester Zoo. The other half of the cottages was occupied by a family with eight children - Ethel's only neighbours and companions. Children in those times could spend a whole day playing in the fields safely and unaccompanied before returning home at tea time.

There was no electricity or gas at the cottages and drinking water was from a spring or a well with bucket or hand pump. Washing water came from the water butt or nearby Roman River; candles and oil lamps provided light, and cooking and heat came from an open fire or log and coal-fired kitchen range. Most local travel was on foot.

Ethel had loving parents and very supportive older brothers and sisters. The family kept a pig and some chickens and tended the large garden which produced much of the food which fed them. They had a strong relationship with the church and often attended All Saints (Shrub End) three times on Sundays. Ethel always recalled the pleasures, as well as the hardships, of her childhood with great affection and I always sensed that her early experiences were very dear to her, but she never thrust these memories upon you. Small details emerged gently and unobtrusively, but a whole storehouse of social history lay behind each tiny episode.

Ethel's first school was in Straight Road, Shrub End - a walk of at least 3 miles along deserted tracks, muddy Butcher's Wood and open fields. This was a trusting era and so dirty boots could be left behind the bushes and exchanged for smarter cleaner school shoes towards the end of the walk, knowing that they would be safe and unharmed when collected for the return journey. Ethel remained at this school until the age of 11 when she took the equivalent of the 11+ or an alternative test for entry to secondary school. She was awarded a place at Colchester County High School for Girls in 1937 which was based at Grey Friars. No doubt her entry would have been preceded by an interview with the formidable head mistress, Miss Ruth King, who instilled fear in any pupil - but Ethel's strong character would have taken all this in her stride.

In the early stages of this new school, practical work was at the forefront. Drawing, painting, nature study, needlework and gardening, as well as the obligatory English and maths, with some regimented gymnastics, filled the timetable as we gradually moved on to the more formal subjects of History, Geography, French, Science and Latin. We remembered making our first garment - a pair of knickers in the school summer dress material - the school dinners, the team games, the glorious garden and the stunning architecture, all within the constraints of World War 2. We were high disciplined, taught politeness, good manners, respect for our elders and, of course, support for each other as we ran for the air raid shelters or dived under our desks for safety. Bullying was unknown.

Ethel left school at 16 in 1942 to begin her working life. The war was still on and she joined the Civil Defence to become a telephonist doing a weekly overnight shift. Her first job was an Accounts Clerk at

Bland Fielden and Co. She worked there for 10½ years and this developed her prodigious numeracy skills. She made many friends, enjoyed her independence and holidays in Great Britain.

Ethel married Eric Munson in 1953 and gave up work, as was the custom at the time, to set up home in Berechurch Hall Road, and after her two children, Susan and Stephen, were born continued to manage the household, its finances and demands. Once the children were of school age Ethel went back to work again - a dinner lady, receptionist and clerical assistant at a number of small businesses in Colchester. But she always ensured that all these jobs fitted in with school times and her husband's work, so that she was back when they returned home.

Ethel's final job gave her the utmost pleasure. She became a part-time clerical assistant at the Adult Education Centre in 1972. She was at Grey Friars once more and stayed for nearly 20 years! Her corner of the office - known as 'Ethel's Patch' was a happy place, and she was adept at dealing with anxious adults who were coming back to education in later life and fearful of learning a new subject, skill or activity. At the same time, Ethel remembered her school days there with enormous gratitude and how much she still enjoyed gardening, sewing and knitting - but her most enduring love was for her bicycle, which she rode daily until the age of 85 and then gave it away to charity for use overseas.

After her retirement in 1992, Ethel remained active in Church activities and Social Clubs and featured in a number of Amateur Dramatic productions, including pantomime with her husband, Eric. She confronted her life with courage after his death in 2011. Her grandchildren had always been a great joy and comfort to her, and trivial things, such as letters or cards were seen as treasures. Long forgotten, discarded or ancient ones from family and friends, were often retrieved and read aloud to an appreciative audience who accompanied this act with uncontrollable laughter.



Grey Friars became a hotel in 2014 after a careful and tasteful restoration. In 2017 a group of friends and colleagues from the former Grey Friars College took Ethel to tea there for her 90th birthday (left). To Ethel, Grey Friars always remained a very important symbol.

It has given me great pleasure to write about Ethel's life. There is no doubt that the experiences of her childhood and early life shaped the qualities of her character - adaptability, determination, self assurance, reliability, consideration for others, and above all, appreciation of the simple things in life. She will be remembered by many with love and gratitude.

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL Kate Stubbs, Marketing and Communications Manager CCHSG **History of the Headteachers of CCHS - Part 2**

In 1957, Colchester County High School for Girls became united on one site when the new premises were opened at Norman Way, where the school is today. In 1956 Miss King retired after 25 years at CCHS. She was presented with a travelling clock and a patchwork bedspread which every girl in school had helped to embroider. It was the new Headteacher, Miss Katherine Vashon Baker, who, as she wrote in the 1953 School Magazine, "after many years of disappointment and hopes deferred", was in charge of supervising the school's move to Norman Way in 1957. The plan, originally mooted before WW2, had taken some 30 years to come to fruition.

The new, rather more functional 1950s school building took some getting used to after the elegant surroundings of Georgian Grey Friars. Miss Vashon Baker summed up the mixed feelings in her opening speech: *"We cannot but feel great regret at leaving Grey Friars where the girls and staff have found peace and serenity, but we must all feel a sense of thankfulness that plans for transferring the school to new buildings and uniting it under the same roof are at last fulfilled. ... How much having a school in one building will mean to us, you all will know. And to this must be added many other things we have longed for; good laboratories, proper provision for Domestic Science, a full-sized and fully equipped gymnasium, and a hall where we can all meet.... The school will still be the same school in all the ways that matter. We*

shall carry with us all the rich endowment of tradition, and friendship and ideals of the past years and former generations. The greatest single advantage in the new building is that each room has been designed for its special purpose. To our school, housed in separate buildings for so many years, the Hall in which the whole school can meet for daily assembly is one of our greatest pleasures."

Under Miss Vashon Baker's leadership, a House system was introduced, and a Parent-Teacher Association was formed. The students and parents added to the school facilities by raising funds to build a swimming pool – something that some of the students involved were later to come to regret, as covering the pool was not something that could be afforded and heating was not introduced until 1966, when an average of 240 girls were using the pool every day.

Even at this initial stage there was a shortage of classrooms on the site, and a number of temporary "demountable" buildings, which were much disliked as poorly insulated and noisy, were installed. They were not finally demolished until 2018 – and in 2021 one, used as a store, still remains.

Miss Joan Hasler, a graduate of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, became CCHS's next Headmistress in 1967. This was a period during which the national education system was changing, with comprehensive co-educational schools being widely introduced. CCHS continued to pursue a selective education policy, with the school growing in popularity. There were three forms of entry, with just 96 students in each year group.

Mrs Jean Goodfellow succeeded Miss Hasler in 1976 and held the post for the next 11 years overseeing the school's move, as part of a national change, from centrally managed Local Education Authority funding, to devolved budgets as a "grant maintained" school. *"When I arrived the budget was £30,000" she recalled. "When I left it was more than £1.8 million. We were able to do so much more as a grant maintained school. We substantially improved our premises and we established a budget for in-service education for staff. We were able to choose what to spend our money on and when it was appropriate to spend it."*



Over time extensions have been made to the original building and new buildings added to the site. The first was under the leadership of Dr Aline Black, who in 1996 was responsible for the "technology block" extension of the main building.

Mrs Elizabeth Ward (1998- 2009) (*left*) modernised and developed various aspects of the school: Science building (S block), facilities for the Sixth Form and the "mSchool" - Music, Mathematics and the Mind (Creative & Critical Thinking) built largely with funds raised by the school. By 2005 students numbered 767 and the school also became involved with the management of the Colchester SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training Consortium), later Colchester Teacher Training Consortium (CTTC).

From 2009 Mrs Gillian Marshall led the school development focusing on substantially improving the facilities and equipment for students and developing educational networks to work with other schools. In April 2013, North East Essex Teaching School Alliance (NEETSA) was set up, with CCHS the lead school. This collaborative partnership provided professional development for teachers in local schools. In 2017, with CCHS as lead school, CTTC moved into adapted rooms in the S block for its Colchester base. CTTC, in partnership with Colchester, Tendring and Ipswich primary and secondary schools annually trains around 100 new teachers. In 2021 CCHS was successful in applying to become part of a new national network of 87 Teaching School Hubs. The Alpha Teaching School Hub will provide a centre of excellence for teacher training and professional development, working in collaboration with other schools in the Babergh, Colchester, Ipswich and Tendring areas.

CCHS became lead school in the Alpha Multi Academy Trust in March 2018, initially working with the Gilbert School and later joined by Manningtree High School and Home Farm Primary School. The new Trinity School, which opened in September 2021, is also part of the Alpha Trust.

Under the grammar school expansion scheme in December 2018 CCHS, by committing to fair access and partnership working, was granted funding to increase the school intake in September 2020 to 197 students, in 6 forms.

Alongside the development of the school's leadership role and the wider partnership working, the improvement of the facilities and resources for students on the school site during this decade has been very extensive. While much of the funding for these projects has been gained through careful preparation of bids to central government by Mrs Marshall and the Senior Team, school fundraising through the PTFA and parental contributions have also been significant. Funding all these projects has at times also required creative thinking. For example, the lovely patio dining area for Sixth Formers, with its heaters and rattan furniture, was funded by Mrs Marshall, Mrs Moss and Mrs Jackson and provided summer holiday training for Irish teachers, preparing them to return from abroad to teach in the UK.



Site development highlights from this period include the major extension of the Sixth Form centre to provide a separate entrance atrium, lecture theatre, IT suite, and additional classrooms. A new and much needed sports hall opened in 2019 providing excellent indoor facilities. Part of this project was the rebuilding of the swimming pool, with adjoining changing rooms, which ends 60 years of students walking across the car park wrapped in towels. In 2020 an entire teaching block was created to provide a new and much expanded

Library and three art studios, including a dedicated Sixth Form studio space.

Throughout CCHS'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.

GCSE & A level results 2021 - Statement from Mrs Gillian Marshall:

This year, following the cancellation of exams, GCSE and A level qualifications were awarded through a process of teacher assessed grades, against a national standard and approved and awarded by the exam boards. The government is not publishing performance data for any schools or colleges this year due to the varying impact of the pandemic. We congratulate all our students on their exceptional results and join with their families in celebrating their outstanding achievements, which represent the culmination of many years spent studying. All the students have demonstrated their strength of character and good humour throughout the past 18 months, in the most challenging of circumstances. We would also like to recognise the way in which these students contributed to life at CCHSG and inspired younger students. We are hugely grateful for the committed and positive way that everyone at CCHSG has supported each other throughout the past academic year, and worked in the best interests of the school community.

We are also very grateful to the teaching staff, who have worked tirelessly and thank the whole school community for their unfailing support, and determination. These superb examination grades have truly been earned and the students have an amazing journey ahead of them. We are pleased to have welcomed the majority of Year 11 back in to our Sixth Form this September.

Save the date – CCHSG PTFA would like to invite students and staff, past and present, and our local community to join us at our popular annual Christmas Market at CCHSG on Saturday 27 November. Why not join us for lunch, or coffee and cake?

