



Autumn 2019

# HABOGC Newsletter

Haberdashers' Aske's Old Girls' Club

[www.habsgirls.org.uk](http://www.habsgirls.org.uk)

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter



AGM 2019 with the 2019 leavers



Rose Hardy, Headmistress

## Useful web links

### Facebook:

<https://facebook.com/habsoldgirls>

### Twitter:

@habsgirlsSchool

### Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/habsgirlsSchool](http://www.facebook.com/habsgirlsSchool)

### SoundCloud:

<http://www.soundcloud.com/habsgirlsSchool>

### Instagram:

@habsgirlsSchool

### Portal

[alumnae.habsgirls.org.uk](http://alumnae.habsgirls.org.uk)

## Dates for the Diary

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December  
2019 - Carol Service**

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020 -  
Careers Evening**

## LETTER FROM THE HEADMISTRESS

Dear Old Girls

*It's hard to believe that my first half term as the new Headmistress at Habs has gone so quickly, and that I am already writing to wish you all a most happy St Catherine's Day (which we will celebrate at school on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November). I hope that wherever you are in the country, or indeed in the world, that you will reflect for a moment on that day on the very happy memories you have of your time at the School, and especially the traditions and fun of the St Catherine's Day's celebrations you enjoyed over the years with your contemporaries.*

*Every day I meet more members of the Habs family who add to my growing understanding of how to build upon the school's proud traditions of excellence, diversity and warmth for the next generations of Habs' students. I feel very proud and privileged to lead such an impressive school and to work with such talented staff and students.*

*It has been lovely to meet, and hear from, so many of you over recent weeks. The Reunion on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September was a lively event. It was a great pleasure to welcome those of you who were taught at Elstree alongside the Acton alumnae, some of whom had never visited the School on its 'new site' at Elstree. We are very grateful to you for attending: I know that our current pupils, acting as your guides, felt*

*Continues over page...*



# HAOGC Newsletter

Haberdashers' Aske's Old Girls' Club

## HAOGC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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### OFFICERS

PRESIDENT:

MIRANDA BARNETT (Napper) 1989

TREASURER:

ANITA TWIDDY (Harrison) 1985

SECRETARY:

ANTONIA CLAYDEN (Woodiwiss) 1986

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:

SYLVIA NOTLEY (Day) 1961

HEADMISTRESS (ex-officio):

ROSE HARDY

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:

JULIA MANDICH 2005

MEMBERS:

SONIA FIELD (Porges) 1981

ANJALI KOTHARI (Malhotra) 1990

SARAH KATZ (Wolfe) 1986

SARA RENSHAW 2005

VICE PRESIDENTS:

JUDITH CURATI (Payne) 1979

PAULA HAMMOND (Preedy) 1959

SUE HARRIS (Eaton) 1971

PAT HOWELLS (Rixon) 1953

PAMELA PYE (Wiseman) 1948

NICOLA WALTERS (Ivinson) 1971

STAFF REPRESENTATIVES:

TIM SCOTT

ROBERT JAMES-ROBBINS

LAURA MEE (Stedman) 2000



there were many links between the generations, and your school experiences and theirs. They especially enjoyed showing off the school's new STEM centre which is a fantastic addition to the campus.

July 2019 saw our second Habs visit to Bangalore to visit the Parikrma Foundation. The Foundation educates around 1,200 students from deprived backgrounds who are based in 4 schools around the city. 16 students and 3 members of staff spent a week devising and performing a dance piece with students from their Pre-U College in the town of Sahakanagar which is to the North of the city. The second week was spent travelling to the amazing city of Mysore, to a coffee plantation homestay in the Western Ghats rainforest and to a Buddhist settlement up in the mountains. The July 2020 trip is already in the planning stage and we are building on our links with Parikrma through art projects, joint book groups (via Skype) and are now looking at further curriculum links.

Over the Summer, all our Senior School students and staff again took part in the "Big Summer Read". This year's book was

Geraldine McCaughan's *Where the World Ends*. Students of all ages participated in an 'off timetable' day in September, in House discussions about the book, subject specific workshops whose themes were inspired by it, and a special question and answer Assembly with the author herself. Geraldine wrote to me afterwards and I must just quote a part of her letter: "It was extraordinary to meet with so many gracious, cheerful, willing students, each with a distinct personality, impeccable manners and distinct charm."

The Houses continue to develop their own identity and team spirit. The Harvest Festival organised through the House system just before the half term break, was yet again a demonstration of the generosity of all our students and their parents. Two mini buses delivered a host of goods to the Islington Refugee and Migrant Centre for use both at the Centre and as gifts to those who attend.



The Autumn Concert this year featured the large ensembles in the School. The Symphony Orchestra accompanied Risha Alimchandani (U6, trombone) in a performance of David's Trombone Concertino, while the Chamber Orchestra accompanied Simran Vyas (U6, mezzo-soprano) in a performance of the Villanelle by Berlioz. Choral items included a medley from Les Misérables performed by the Senior Choir and Catch a falling star by Chilcott performed by Cantabile, our Middle School Chamber Choir. The Concert ended with the Jazz Band performing Mission Impossible. Over 200 students will be involved in the Concert from Lower Four to Upper Sixth years.

For the second year we are running a national Christmas Carol Competition and, in addition to entries from our own students, we have had entries from Tunbridge Wells Grammar School, St Albans's High School for Girls, Badminton School and Eton College. The St Catherine Singers will perform as will The Leading Ladies, a vocal trio set up by Old Girl Rosie Clifford. As well as performing the shortlisted Carols, The Leading Ladies will sing some of their own repertoire. The competition will be judged by Philip Berg, former Director of Music at St Paul's Juniors and Master of the Music at The Queen's Chapel of the Savoy.

This year's annual Carol Service at St Martin-in-the-Fields marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Miss Gillett's inspired decision to relocate the event to the famous Trafalgar Square church in 1969. The anniversary will be commemorated in the Order of Service.

With all good wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. K. R. Hardy".

Rose Hardy  
Headmistress



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## HAOGC Update

Dear Old Girls

I'm writing to inform you of proposed developments in how the Old Girls will be catered for in the future. I wrote to you last spring to let you know about School's new alumnae provision. This reflects how the majority of other similar schools interact with their alumni especially in the digital age. As a committee run by volunteers we cannot and do not want to compete with this and it makes sense for us all to work together rather than run two separate overlapping organisations. With School providing paid members of staff to run the alumnae it should be a professional and consistent set-up which doesn't solely rely on the good will of the few volunteers who currently do all the work. I would encourage you to visit the online alumnae portal [alumnae.habsgirls.org.uk](http://alumnae.habsgirls.org.uk) to see what it can offer you and to check that your contact details and consents are up to date. Alternatively please fill in the form (enclosed with hard copy newsletters) and send it back to school or telephone **Rachell Fox** on 020 8266 2437.

For those of you who don't wish to go online, School will continue to provide information and newsletters in hard copy. It will be essential for School to have your consent to contact you.

Alumnae engagement is a high priority of the Governors' new strategy and I know that School will always welcome engagement with the Old Girls in any form whether it be attending the Carol Service and the reunions (which will continue), visits, offers to help with careers, your own news, or contributions of artefacts and your Habs memories for the School Archive.

I will write to you formally in the upcoming months setting out our proposals for winding up the Club in its current form and letting you know how you can continue your relationship with School. We will also hold an Extraordinary General Meeting to formalise the proposals which I anticipate will be in the summer term. In the meantime, if you wish to contact me you can email me at [president@haogc.org](mailto:president@haogc.org) or write to me addressing the letter to me personally c/o School.

I wish you all a happy St Catherine's Day.

Best wishes

Miranda (Current President)

## Carol Service - 50 years at St Martin-in-the-Fields

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Habs Carol Service held at St Martin's. Carol service sheets held in the archive go back to 1909 – Miss Gilliland's headship but 1969 marked a change in this tradition. Previously Carols had been held in the school hall at Acton but by 1968 this had become an unwieldy affair requiring two afternoons to accommodate the girls, their families, friends and Old Girls of the school, and the general great and good.

Guests sat in the balcony and the school was drummed into regimentary entry into the hall whilst singing and executing a precise right angle turn into their respective rows. White markings were placed on the hall floor, first by Miss Parker and then, after her retirement, by Mrs Davies (nee Elton). Apparently it was quite something to behold.

Miss Gillett, who became Headmistress in January 1969, decided to move the venue to St Martin's and change the format to a more traditional 9 lessons and carols that is still used today. The 1969 Carol Service was held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1969. The Old Girls' representative would have been the President who was Jean Dawson (nee Macrae). Jean had taken over that role just a few days earlier on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1969 according to Club minutes. Jean was at school from 1953 until 1960.

Carols included Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending; It Came Upon The Midnight Clear; Shepherd's Pipe Carol; O Little Town of Bethlehem; I Sing of a Maiden; See Amid the Winter's Snow and Silent Night, most of which will be familiar to regular attendees even in recent years. The service ended with Wake, O Wake which has been sung at every Carol Service since 1926.

Old Girl Judith Curati recollects that whilst still at Acton she went to school as usual in the morning, then walked in crocodile to Ealing Common Station to catch the 'Special' train up to London. This was a train specially commissioned for the girls! They had strict instructions to stand at the back of the platform at Ealing Common so that they did not interfere with other travellers and only to get on the train marked Special.

If you have any other recollections of Carol Services gone by, Judith would love to hear from you – [archive@habsgirls.org.uk](mailto:archive@habsgirls.org.uk).



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Class of 1999 in the Hicks memorial Garden in front of the Sime Music School

## Stephanie Wooler – Class of 1999

“Ladies and gentlemen of the Class of 1999... wear sunscreen.” It is hard to believe that twenty years have passed since Baz Lurhmann was all over the airwaves and in the pages of our Leavers’ yearbook. Certainly, if you had told my seventeen-year-old self that I would be writing this update from across the pond, I would have laughed in your face. I was only at Habs for sixth form, but those two years had a huge impact on my life, in terms of both the friendships I made and my intellectual development.

Like so many others at the school, I was inspired to study French by the one and only M. Bardou, whose passion for the subject was infectious. When I entered Hertford College, Oxford to read Modern History and French in 1999, though, I primarily considered myself a historian who wanted to speak good French. Over the next four years, however, I fell in love with the literature of the nineteenth century and remained at Hertford for a further year to complete my M.St., during which I delved further into my secondary interest in feminist theory. A combination of personal circumstances and the prospect of financial support led me next to Harvard, where I pursued my Ph.D in Romance Languages and Literatures, completing a dissertation on the cult of the actress and the culture of hysteria in late nineteenth-century France.

My time at Harvard was challenging, to say the least, but rewarding. By the time I finally emerged onto the job market, however, it was 2012, American Ph.D programs being



**Class of 1999 Leavers' Ball**

and, after some time spent in curriculum design, I wound up in academic advising. Students today have to face financial and mental health challenges far beyond what we imagined back in the last millennium, all whilst navigating a university education. I often joke that my job involves “saving undergraduates from themselves”: in reality, it is far more complicated and rewarding than that. I help students to navigate the transition from adolescence to adulthood and reach their academic and personal potential (sometimes in spite of themselves!).

Wentworth Institute of Technology, the small private university in Boston, MA, where I work, is a STEM-focused institution very different from the ones where I was educated, but the young people with whom I work are creative, inspiring, and a lot of fun to work with, most of the time. I still miss academia “proper,” but my job affords me some teaching opportunities, and I do my best to remain active in the scholarly community by presenting at conferences. One day, I hope that my thesis will become a book, though that would require more time for writing than I currently seem to have.

So, home, for the time being, is the United States, where I now hold dual citizenship. Brexit and Trump mean that my husband and I talk a lot about the future (and Canada), but Boston suits both our careers, as both a tech hub and a hotspot for higher education. Maybe the dreaming spires will beckon again, one day, but the life I never imagined has been pretty good too.

significantly longer than British ones. It had always been my intention to return to a book-lined study amongst dreaming spires in the U.K.: by the time I graduated, however, I had met my American husband, and the academic job market had changed beyond all recognition. The traditional path to the professoriat has all but disappeared: in both the U.S. and the U.K., higher education is undergoing profound change, with adjunctification and spiraling costs fueling the shift.



**Stephanie Wooler, Upeka Ranasinghe and Anya (Anna Navidski)**



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## Photograph Identification – Prefects Dinner in Summer 2003



Thank you to everyone who helped identify the girls in the photograph which was taken at the Prefects Dinner in summer 2003 especially Shailla Khan (nee Haque).

- |                         |   |                     |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1 Sarah Fotheringham    | 12 Dilini Nanayakkara   | 21 Prini Shah       |
| 2 Tessa Loebenberg      | 13 Devora Kirk  | 22 Dilys Uwagboe    |
| 3 Megan Russell         | 14 Nel Anandagoda   | 23 Alexa Gostyn     |
| 4 Victoria Robertson    | 15 Shanthi Wilkinson  | 24 Natalie Tidey    |
| 5 Victoria Sara Kennedy | 16 Zoe Little   | 25 Rachel Goodyer   |
| 6 Shailla Haque         | 17 Maria Yanni  | 26 Caroline Boulton |
| 7 Amy Wolfe             | 18 Simone Goligorsky<br>(behind number 10 and in<br>front of number 19) | 27 Katy Barrett     |
| 8 Si Wing Man           | 19 Natalie Dewar  | 28 Corinne Harrison |
| 9 Camilla Rockley       | 20 Meera Shah   | 29 Gaby Judah       |
| 10 Jacqueline Chan      |   | 30 Clare Tiernan    |
| 11 Caroline Thompson    |   |                     |

## A Group of Sixth Formers off on a School Trip in 1994

In this newsletter, I would like help with identifying this group of sixth formers and their teacher who are off on a school trip in a rather interesting looking vehicle. If you can put any names to the faces then please email me at [archive@habsgirls.org.uk](mailto:archive@habsgirls.org.uk).

Judith Curati (nee Payne) – School Archivist



## Careers Evening

Next year's careers evening run by the Old Girls for current sixth formers will be held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and will be on the theme of careers in finance. If you have a career in banking, accountancy or another financial sector and are able to contribute either as a speaker and/or as a host for the evening could you please contact Julia Mandich on [careers@haogc.org](mailto:careers@haogc.org).



## Elstree Headmistresses profiles

### Sheila Wiltshire 1974-1991

In all respects Sheila Wiltshire was a first. The first Headmistress at Elstree, the first married woman (with young children) and the first Headmistress of this school who did not come from a traditional teaching career.

Sheila Campbell was born in 1925 in London and was educated at South Hampstead High School. She graduated from the London School of Economics with a first class degree in Economics.

After a period as a research scholar at Newnham College, Cambridge, and as an Assistant Lecturer at London University, she joined the Administrative Civil Service. Upon return from a year's sabbatical with a Nuffield Travelling Fellowship, she was attached to the British Embassy in Rome while working for the United Nations. She was promoted to Assistant Secretary in 1964 (the same year as her marriage to Geoffrey Wiltshire) and served for several years as full-time Chairman of a Regional Planning Board. Her experience of working on educational issues in the Civil Service meant that she was approached by the governors of a boarding school and asked if she would be interested in their headship. After spending a week at the school she declined the offer for family reasons but the experience had whetted her appetite, and so, when the headship of her old school became vacant in 1969 she accepted the position. However, the challenge presented by this school's move to a new site in Elstree was too great to miss and she became Headmistress in September 1974.

After the first year when she reportedly faced the "teething troubles" of the new buildings, including completion of the swimming pool, and a large number of new staff with "calm

efficiency," the next challenge was the demise of the direct grant system of funding school places. Under the scheme the school had a minimum of 25% non-fee paying pupils whose fees were paid by their local authority. It chose to become independent in September 1976 and introduced a bursary scheme to give pupils from less privileged homes the opportunity to attend.

It may have been this change to the school's funding that prompted her to found the St Catherine's Parents' Guild which met for the first time in December 1979 led by its inaugural chairman, Keith Payne. It had two



Mrs Sheila Wiltshire in 1990.



Newly completed Michael Hall House which became home to the Wiltshire family in 1983



**Mrs Sheila Wiltshire and HRH Princess Margaret at the official opening of the Bostock Centre in 1988.**

objectives – to foster and further develop a family atmosphere within the school whilst also raising money to provide extra facilities at school. Just 7 months later the school's annual Open Day incorporated a fete run by the Guild with the money raised going towards musical instruments and, in particular, a concert grand piano for the new Sime Music School.

Indeed the Music department flourished during Mrs Wiltshire's headship led by Mr Peter Hewitt who was Director of Music from 1978 to 1989. The first addition to the Elstree site was the Sime Music School which was officially opened by Colonel Sime, Chairman of the Governors, in November 1979. This provided a concert space, classrooms and additional practice rooms which allowed the department to expand from its original location above the Prevett Hall entrance. In November 1986 the first Haberdashers' Schools' Music Festival was organised and held at Elstree at the request of Christopher Bostock who during the course of his Mastership of the Company was much impressed with the variety and quality of the musical talent displayed by the schools of the Haberdashers' "family."

Changes to the curriculum included the introduction of Economics for the sixth form with the appointment in 1975 of Mrs Kriteman. In September 1985 a Craft, Design and Technology department was created spearheaded by Miss Stephanie Hadleigh, and in 1989, Politics at AS level was begun.



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**The first 3 Elstree Headmistresses at St Catherine's Day 2007. (L to R Mrs Sheila Wiltshire, Mrs Elizabeth Radice and Mrs Penelope Penney)**

In 1981, a second Deputy Head position was created when Mrs Maxine West was promoted from the post of Second Mistress. This was a position she held until 1988 when she left and was succeeded by Mr Malcolm Gough. For many years, Mrs Wiltshire continued the tradition of the Headmistress leading the daily morning assembly until she was asked by the pupils if some could be pupil-led. At Christmas 1990, the Junior School held its own Carol Service at Christ Church, Radlett and did not join the main school at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

Development and additions to the school site continued. In 1983, Mrs Wiltshire and her family were able to move on site and into the newly finished Michael Hall House, named after a School Governor. The following year, the Bostock Centre was opened which added a third floor to the main teaching block and took advantage of the initial design of the buildings at Elstree with flat roofs to permit future expansion. The increase in pupil numbers meant that extra space had to be created in the Prevett Hall to accommodate the whole school, and so, in 1985 the depth of the stage was reduced from 23' to 13' 9". The Sports Hall was added in 1988 and was officially opened by HRH Princess Margaret. This marked her third visit to Elstree during Mrs Wiltshire's time as Headmistress, following the official opening of the school on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1974.

During the final years of her headship, Mrs Wiltshire chaired the organising committee of the four Aske schools for the celebrations to mark the Tercentenary Year of the foundation of the Robert Aske Trust. In 1990 there were many events including a concert at the Royal Festival Hall, a Newfoundland Scientific Expedition, an art exhibition in Covent Garden, and Sports Day culminating in a Service of Thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral.

When she retired in 1991 she had overseen an increase in pupil numbers from 700 to over 1,100 with the sixth form having doubled in size. There had been an enormous development in Maths and Science, particularly in the sixth form – from only 13 girls studying Physics in 1974, to about 60 in 1991 and that summer, a record number of 26 pupils were holding Oxbridge offers. She was awarded an OBE in the Queen's birthday honours list and in the same month building work commenced on the Wiltshire Building which would provide a permanent home for the Craft, Design and Technology department plus specialist science rooms for the Lower School.

### Penelope Penney 1991-2005

Penelope Chamberlain was born in Newbury, Berkshire in 1942. She was related to the former Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain who was her grandfather John Chamberlain's first cousin through both his mother and father. Brought up in Switzerland, she had ambitions to become an ambassador which would have utilised her language skills. She was fluent in French and German. However, a brilliant teacher in the sixth form at Chatelard School, Montreux inspired her to study English at Bristol University but, when she married her husband (William Penney) whilst at university followed by the birth of their first child just after her finals, life as an ambassador was superseded by life as a teacher and wife of a vicar with an enjoyment of driving fast cars.



From 1974, she was Head of Languages and Communication at Astor of Hever School, a co-educational comprehensive in Maidstone, Kent which she recalled in 1994 as “a rough, difficult school” with “an air of oppressive masculinity about the place.” After 5 years she moved to become Head of Prendergast School in Catford, a girls' comprehensive school. It was a post she held for 6 years before moving into the independent sector and becoming Headmistress of Putney High School.

When Mrs Penney was appointed as Headmistress at Haberdashers in 1991, she described being a head as “tremendous fun.”

She found the girls friendly and committed and, having been used to more urban spaces, the space and freedom of the grounds impressive. The school was already strong academically and she was mindful that reputation may be difficult to live up to and so it was vital to spend time telling girls that what they can do is of importance and is valued. “Everyone needs and



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**Mrs Penney with HRH Princess Margaret at the official opening of the Wiltshire Building 15<sup>th</sup> October 1992.**

thrives on encouragement, and on the understanding that each has a gift which should be recognised.”

She saw her role as “leading the school” and engaging everyone involved to work towards the same vision. “Where there is no vision, people perish.” School assembly played a huge part in this engagement process and she spent a lot of energy on ensuring that her morning address to the school was appropriate and meaningful. Indeed, following her retirement from Elstree, two books were published of her assembly addresses: “Hearing the Squirrel’s Heartbeat” published in 2006 by Gresham Books Ltd., a collection of 47 assemblies all given in schools during her 25 years of headship, followed in 2008 by “Go and Open the Door.”

She believed that the people in an organisation were most important and liked to spend her daytime interacting with them as she could always take the paperwork home with her. She was renowned for knowing everyone’s name and utilised some very effective techniques, as well as a good memory for faces, to ensure this reputation was maintained.

During her time at Haberdashers, she was President of the Girls’ Schools Association, which represents independent girls’ schools in the UK, for the year from November 1994 and used as her theme “Independent girls, independent women.” Each week of her presidency she wrote an article or letter for one of the newspapers and whilst it was not always published

she did get a great deal of coverage for the Association and girls' education. In 1993, the Association had introduced a course for newly appointed heads of independent girls' schools in which Mrs Penney was heavily involved for 12 years.

After 14 years as Headmistress at Haberdashers, she stepped down in summer 2005. However, as she told the school magazine she did not propose to retire properly and took on the role of part-time Educational Adviser to the London Diocesan Board of Schools. She still retained her enthusiasm and described being a Headmistress as "the most fabulous job" which despite being very demanding she still enjoyed.

She had utilised the space of the school grounds, which she had so admired upon appointment, with the addition of new buildings for Design & Technology (1992), the Junior School extension (1992) and rebuild (2006), the Art/Music building (1995), the double gymnasium and examinations hall (2001) plus the Modern Foreign Languages department on the site of the old gymnasium (2002). In 1994, a 4+ entry into the newly created Rainbows class was added and, by 2005, some 11+ entries were 5 rather than 4 form entries together with greater numbers of sixth formers, this meant that the school roll increased to between 1120 and 1140 pupils. When she joined in 1991 a record breaking 26 girls had held Oxbridge offers. In the summer of her retirement 43 girls gained Oxbridge places and all other girls gained a place in their first choice university. This must have been very satisfying for someone who admitted to failing to win a place at Cambridge herself.

Significant anniversaries of the school were celebrated. In 1995 a ball was held to celebrate 21 years at Elstree and she commissioned the writing of the school history. Entitled "The Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls – The First 125 Years" it was published by Gresham Books in 2000. The author Helen Dulley was a Cambridge history graduate who taught in the Junior School from 1990-2000.



Mrs Penney liked fast cars and enjoyed driving her Lexus.



Mrs Penney with the first Head Girl at Elstree (Clare Craig (nee Hardy)) and former Headmistress Mrs Wiltshire at St Catherine's Day 2004.

In 2012, Mrs Penney became Head of Surval Montreux which had recently been acquired by Bellvue Education who wished to develop the finishing school into a girls' boarding school offering the British curriculum to international students. In making this move she returned to her beloved mountains which she missed terribly when she had returned to the UK. In her retirement interview with



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the school magazine she said "I missed waking up in the morning and looking out over Lake Geneva and the mountains. That was just unbelievable. I love mountains." At Surval she was back in Montreux where she had gone to school but even closer to the lake and the view of the French Alps across the water. After 4 very successful years in Switzerland she returned to Oxfordshire nearer her children and grandchildren where she enjoyed an all too short period of time before her death on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018 following a short illness.



**Mrs Radice in 2006**

## Elizabeth Radice 2005-2011

Elizabeth Radice comes from a family of teachers. Indeed two of her relatives taught at the school at Acton. Her mother, Miss JV Berry taught English, and her aunt, Miss HM Stephenson taught History, and both joined the school in 1946. They both left after 3 years to get married. Her mother remained in contact with the school and the births of her three children, including daughter Elizabeth, are recorded in the Old Girls' Club news section of the school magazine.

Her father's work took the family abroad and Elizabeth's young life was spent in South America before she came back to the UK to board at Wycombe Abbey School in Buckinghamshire. During the holidays she returned home which was, by then, in the USA just outside New

York. Her mind was made up to become a teacher during her gap year when she filled in for a few days, due to an outbreak of flu amongst the staff, at the preparatory school where her mother was teaching.

She read English at Somerville College, Oxford followed by a PGCE at Hughes Hall, Cambridge. Her teaching career was based mainly, but not solely, in the independent sector in a variety of day and boarding schools, both co-educational and single sex. She was Director of Studies at the (then) all boys' RGS Newcastle before becoming Headmistress of Channing School, Highgate.

In 2005, she became Headmistress here at Elstree just as the redevelopment of the Junior School building was completed. On her first Deputation Day in March 2006, she hosted HRH Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex and Haberdasher, as he paid his first visit to the school to officially open the new building. Other building work included the new swimming pool (the 3rd in the school's history) and fitness suite, and the infill between blocks A and B which were both opened in 2009. As well as providing more office and teaching rooms, the infill has a specially designed area for the careers and UCAS department allowing the girls more space for researching their options.

The Cornflower Award which "may be awarded to a girl who has impressed a member of staff by her work or her effort (e.g. showing originality, humour, imagination, courage); her



**HRH Prince Edward in conversation with Mrs Jennie Kirk (Junior School Music teacher) and Mrs Radice following the Junior School Concert to mark the opening of the redeveloped Junior School – 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2006.**

involvement or contribution to a charity, community service or other activity; or for her generosity, kindness and general help and support etc. to others” was an early introduction in January 2006. It was named after the school flower whose origins is shrouded in mystery but its first recorded use was at the first triennial weekend reunion of the Old Girls’ Club in summer 1927.

The St Catherine’s Prize for Sixth Form Scholarship was created in 2010 and provides the Lower Sixth with an opportunity to stretch their intellectual wings something that Mrs Radice was keen to encourage. It requires them to undertake research in the summer holiday between the Lower and Upper Sixth submitting a paper upon their return to school which is then judged. There may be more than one winner who each receive a financial prize. Also in 2010, the Prefect system was altered allowing girls to nominate themselves or be nominated by friends for the role. Instead of the complete year group being voted on some girls now choose not to be in the running. The Sixth form benefitted from a refurbished Common Room providing a more pleasant environment for girls to relax in between lessons.

After six years as Headmistress, Mrs Radice decided to retire. The Haberdashers’ Company made her a Freeman and one year later she became a Liveryman. She is now a Governor at St Helen’s School in Northwood.



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## Biddie O'Connor 2011-2019

Biddie O'Connor graduated from St Hugh's College, Oxford with a degree in Classics. She took her PGCE at Sydney Sussex College, Cambridge and began her teaching career at Francis Holland School. By 1984, she was Head of Department at Old Palace School in Croydon. It was whilst on a career break having moved to St Albans that she was encouraged to apply for the post of Head of Classics at this school.

She joined the school in January 1992 one term after Mrs Penney had taken up the post of Headmistress. The Classics department flourished under her leadership with the number of girls choosing Latin, Greek and Classical Civilisation rising steadily. In September 1994 she was made Head of Sixth Form. This was an exciting time as entry into the sixth form was being actively advertised with special Open Days and a

more rigorous selection process. She worked tirelessly to raise the profile of the Prefects and so in the academic year 1993-94 Prefects' Charity Week was born. As the Head Girl, Emma Vardy, wrote in the school magazine "It was felt that the Prefects might be seen as somewhat isolated and unapproachable by younger girls, and that it would be barrier-breaking if the Prefects could raise money for a particular charity." The first year included a jumble sale, a karaoke evening, a Staff vs Prefects netball match and, the inevitable, cake sale. Their aim was to raise £500 for the new childrens' ward at Northwick Park Hospital. They exceeded that figure by £150. In March 1995 the first leadership training day for Prefects was run to help develop their skills. In 1998, Biddie became Deputy Headmistress with responsibility for the curriculum and timetabling. It was thanks to her ingenuity that so many girls were able to do the combination of subjects of their choice. She left in December 2001 to become Headmistress of Loughborough High School.

After 10 years in Loughborough, she returned to take up the role of Headmistress at Haberdashers. A headship is always defined by the changes that take place under



Miss O'Connor with School prefects in June 1994.

the new leadership of a school. The major one during Miss O'Connor's has been the introduction of houses which began at Easter 2015 when everyone, including staff, were allocated to one of 6 houses named after the first Headmistresses of the school – Powell, Millar, Gilliland, Sprules, Harold and Gillett. This has led to many new inter-house competitions and has transformed the annual Sports Day. Each competition placing adds points to the house scores which, in addition to house points earned by individual girls, leads to a grand total at the end of the academic year and the awarding of the House Cup. This was a totally new concept at Haberdashers where inter-form competitions had always been the way. The House Cup was presented to the school by the Old Girls' Club who also created the new Acton Head Girl boards (2018) to record the names of the early head Girls from 1919 and compliment the Elstree Head Girl boards with their more recent names.



Miss O'Connor with pupils in 2011.

The use of technology around the school increased with the introduction of electronic registration in September 2012 and electronic tablets for all staff in September 2015. The following year, all Junior School pupils were issued with one and then the Lower IVth intake the academic year after. Tailored black trousers were added to the permitted uniform at Easter 2018.

Changes to the buildings continued with the Junior School playground being moved to the front of the school during the summer holidays of 2013 so that the demolition of the dining room, Junior School Hall and original swimming pool could commence on 1st April 2014. The new building which comprises a dining room, mezzanine café, conference room, performance space and Learning Resources Centre (LRC) was officially opened by Audley Twiston-Davies on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2015. The space once occupied by the library was then converted into teaching space for the History and Politics department. A new infant library was inaugurated in March 2016 in a converted double decker London bus which is parked alongside the the Junior School. In October 2017 the cloakroom block was demolished and in its place has grown the new STEM building which will be officially opened in March 2020.

Celebrations in the last 8 years have included a street party for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and a '1974 Day' to celebrate 40 years at Elstree at which everyone embraced the joys of 1970s fashion, music and food including Angel Delight. Having seen the first Action Week, Miss O'Connor also saw the last in 2014 which raised a phenomenal £11,661 for charity but unfortunately was too large to be accommodated whilst everyone was dining in the Prettett Hall during the building works. A joint Haberdashers' Schools at Elstree concert was performed at the Barbican followed a few months later by the 110th Anniversary of the Old



# HAOGC Newsletter

Haberdashers' Aske's Old Girls' Club



Miss O'Connor with gifts from pupils presented at the final whole school assembly on 27th June 2018.

Girls' Club celebrated at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

A group of pupils and staff led by Mrs Hender (Economics) worked hard to research and mount a World War I exhibition in school which included displays about how the school had contributed to and been affected by the war. It remained in place from November 2014 until Easter 2015. As a result of research in the School Archive, a memorial plaque commemorating 3 former boy pupils of the school who lost their lives was created and still hangs in the school.

In September 2016, a second Rainbow form was added to the Junior School. The two forms are called Buttons and Bobbins in keeping with the Haberdasher theme. A Forest School was inaugurated the previous September and continues to delight the younger pupils of the school come rain or shine.

As we look forward to next academic year the LIVth intake will be 146 pupils in 6 forms which will include Ansuz first used for the 2009 intake.

We wish Miss O'Connor a long and happy retirement after her 18 years' association with the school.



## Reunion September 2019

With a mixture of trepidation, excitement and intrigue, I proceeded along the familiar route from the car park towards my past. It had been 30 years since I had left Habs. What I was struck by on arrival was a real sense of nostalgia, a sense of being somewhere familiar, yet a sense that things had really moved on since we were last there as pupils.

A warm welcome awaited us as we headed into the new dining hall where former teaching staff and alumnae from 1947 all the way up to 2018, mingled. We were informed of the day's events, including a brief AGM and address by the new headmistress, Rose Hardy, before sampling a wonderful lunch. Over lunch, we had the chance to speak to former staff, pore over the beautifully curated exhibition of Habs memorabilia and of course the opportunity to reconnect with our peers from the past. It was unbelievable that 30 years had elapsed, but we found much common ground, reminiscing on fond memories of our school days. On leaving in 1989, I was the only pupil who had decided to move straight into teaching, but I was delighted to find that currently a great number of us are working in the field of education.

A superbly conducted tour of the buildings by our prefect, notably a daughter of one of our group of alumnae, was a real eye opener into the extensive works carried out since we had left: a roof garden with resident model sheep; a range of art rooms and a superb library to count but a few changes. However, there were still many things which remained in place under the ever watchful eye of Sir Robert Aske, who continues to observe from his rightful position in the Prevett Hall.

My only regret was not to have attended a reunion sooner. It was a memorable day from start to finish and I look forward to the next with much anticipation.

The information booklet on Headmistresses at Habs was incredibly informative and I learnt much about our then headmistress, Mrs Sheila Wiltshire, and her experiences leading up to her appointment, as well as her predecessors and successors.

Penny Lee (1989)



## Obituaries - Staff

**Mrs Angela (Angie) Williams** John Williams wrote to inform us that his wife Angie passed away on 11th December 2018 after a long battle with breast cancer. Mrs Williams taught biology from 1978 to 1982.

**Mrs Linda Devine** Mrs Devine passed away on 30th August 2019 at her home in Spain after a long, brave and tenacious battle with illness. She and her husband, John, retired to Spain in 2013 after she left Haberdashers following 27 years of service. She started in the fees office and then took up the admissions post after four years where she managed the assessments of the Junior girls, 11+ and Sixth Form entrance exams, enjoying working with the full spectrum of age groups across the school. She made a tremendous contribution to the school and said when she left that she would miss the people. Together, she and her husband made a wonderful new life in Spain, throwing themselves into every aspect of their local community. John was with her when she died.



Mrs Linda Devine



**Mrs Brenda Cathcart (nee Croft)** Brenda Croft (later Brenda Cathcart) taught mathematics at Haberdashers from 1948 to December 1955. She was ready to accept new responsibilities and was also appointed by Miss Harold, the then Headmistress, as a second mistress. She believed in the value of mental arithmetic and would sometimes issue a stream of quick-fire aggregating arithmetical commands: divide by two, subtract six, multiply by ten, and so on. She really enjoyed the chance of seeing her former pupils at Haberdashers Old Girls events and was shocked to find that some of these pupils had become grandmothers. She was a good friend of Margaret Watts, a music teacher at Haberdashers, a friendship that continued into old age.

Brenda was born in 1919 in Birkenhead, where she went to school. She studied mathematics at Royal Holloway College London and trained as a teacher at St Hughes Hall, Cambridge. She taught at Godolphin School near Salisbury before joining the staff at Haberdashers'. She married David Cathcart in 1955, leaving the school at the end of that year, living for the next thirty years in Dewsbury, Yorkshire, where David was a GP. After becoming a mother, she continued to teach part time. As a mother, if praise was called for, she would often say "Ten out of ten, go top!" She was active in Church of England matters, sitting on regional synods and acting as a selector for the Northern Ordination Course. She and David settled in Somerset from 1987, David dying in 2003. Brenda died on 6th December 2017 aged ninety-eight, survived by four children and five grandchildren. Three of her family members have gone on to study mathematics at university.



## Obituaries - Old Girls

**Barbara Donkin (nee Bootman)** who was a school from 1940 until 1948 passed away in June 2019. In recent years she was living in a residential home in Harold Hill, Essex. Her daughter Ann attended the school in the 1970s.

**Joyce Griffen (nee Avery)** – Robert Griffen wrote to inform us that his wife Joyce passed away on 20th March 2019. She had been suffering from Parkinson's disease for 12 years. For much of that time she managed to continue to live her life comfortably and enjoy being part of the lives of her 5 grandchildren. However, in the last 18 months as dementia became part of her illness, it became necessary to move her into a nursing home where she subsequently died quite peacefully. Joyce attended school from 1948 until 1957 when she left after one year in the sixth form to train as an occupational therapist. She was a member of the Old Girls' Club Committee from 1988 and in October 1991 suggested that the work and career experience of professional Old Girls could benefit current pupils and thus the OG network was inaugurated. Her daughter Liz belongs to the Class of 1991.

### **Barbara Beaton (nee Biggs) – by Andrew Beaton(son)**

My mother attended the school from September 1936 until summer 1939 when her education was somewhat interrupted by the outbreak of war. She would have only been approaching the age of 16 when she left school and I know that she worked as a laboratory assistant for some time after. She married my father, a dentist, in 1945 and had three children, and from then on (as she would



**Barbara Beaton (nee Biggs) in 2017**

proudly pronounce when asked) became a full time housewife and mother. I can say from personal experience she did this exceptionally well! She took great pride in her role and there was little she could not do.

My mother had a long and happy life (1923-2018), was married for over 60 years, was a grandmother to six and great-grandmother to seven. Family was central to her life. She lived in Twickenham for over forty years, before that in Kingston. As a child, my mother lived in Chiswick and then in Acton.

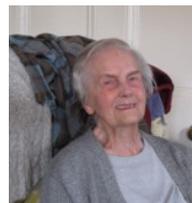
**Jean Horne (nee Rivers)** - who belonged to the Class of 1941 died on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2019 aged 96.

Jean won a scholarship to Haberdashers' Aske's in 1934, and all her life was immensely proud of having been a pupil there. She loved to tell stories about her school days, and kept in touch with one or two school friends until she was in her late eighties.

She was evacuated to Dorchester with the school, and was fortunate to find it mainly a positive experience. Languages, art and music were her favourite subjects, and if the war had not intervened and there had been money for fees she would have loved to go to university.



**Barbara Beaton (nee Biggs) in the whole school photograph of 1937**





# HAOGC Newsletter

Haberdashers' Aske's Old Girls' Club

As her contribution to the war effort she trained as a nurse at Leicester Royal Infirmary, but did not complete the course owing to ill health. After recovering she worked at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine until she married Bill Horne in 1947.

Before she went to infant school Jean began to play the piano, and in her forties she took up the cello, later gaining her teaching diploma at the Guildhall School of Music. Jean taught piano and cello until she was 90, and loved every moment. She produced imaginative music books for early learners, and thought of accessible ways to teach the basics of music theory. She was particularly proud of having taught cello to a young Chukka Ummuna, and was thrilled to see him on TV from time to time. Jean had a sweet soprano voice, and was a long term member of Dulwich College Chapel choir.

For many years Jean kept a daily diary, and she wrote reams of stories and verse, though sadly none of her three novels found favour with a publisher.

Her mobility decreased as her arthritis worsened, and Alzheimer's took its toll, but she was able to remain in her own home with assistance until October 2018 when she moved to a care home in Edinburgh near her daughter. She died peacefully in her sleep.

Anne Lithgow (daughter)

## Ruth Richardson (nee Joy)

My mother Ruth Richardson (nee Joy) passed away from cancer on the 11th October 2018. Born in 1938 in Middlesex, she attended Haberdashers' from 1947 to 1956 starting in the Lower School.



After leaving school Ruth went to Queen Mary College (QMC) London where she studied Botanical Science - meeting several fellow Haberdashers' there.

She married my father, David, while teaching science in British Guiana (South America), and I was born in Africa while they were living in Tanzania. My brother Iain (now married to Pat) and sister Ailsa (husband: Charles) were born in the UK and we lived mainly in Forfar and Selkirk in Scotland, where Ruth was a primary school teacher.

Mum moved to Aberdeenshire (the town of Oldmeldrum) in 2000 and she lived happily until she began to become ill in the autumn of 2017. She was heavily involved with her local church, Christian Aid, Fairtrade and her Community Cafe.

She was very proud of her seven grandchildren (youngest to oldest): Ted, Rosa, Matthew, Lucia, Daniel, Hugh and Freya.

Duncan Richardson (Son)

Ruth's school friend Ann Bird (nee Thursfield) writes: "I had always kept in touch with Ruth - mainly at Christmas and birthdays - so I heard the sad news from Duncan when he saw my Christmas card. Her older sister Alison was also at Haberdashers' and is now living in Cambridge.

Ruth went on the Geography Field Trip to Malham Tarn in the exceptionally cold Winter of 1956 (Margaret, Veronica, Wendy, Audrey Stokes and Audrey Backhouse) and on the Botany

Field Trip to Flatford Mill (Steph, Sally, Sarah, Jan). She and I used to go on bike rides in the countryside ‘communing with nature’. We also went to one of Billy Graham’s crusades at Wembley.

She was a lovely spiritual soul.”



**Jean Hobby (nee Elliott)** - 7<sup>th</sup> May 1938 - 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Jean won a scholarship to Haberdashers’ in Acton in 1949. She was frequently elected as a Form Captain. Her willingness to take on responsibility and her wonderful ability to connect with people led her to be chosen as Head Girl (1955-56) by Miss Harold, with whom she remained in contact for many years.

**Jean Hobby** Her interest in others led her to study the brand new Social Science course at Birmingham University. This led to a Master’s Degree at the London School of Economics and then qualifications as a Child Protection Officer.

Whilst working in London, Jean was introduced to David Hobby, a banker on leave from the Far East. They married quickly in 1963, sailing to his posting in India two days later. Here she threw herself into her new role – being the wife of a senior officer in a challenging environment. Her daughters Deborah and Gillian were born in Calcutta.

Postings to Malaysia, Japan and Lebanon followed. The years in Beirut proved difficult as the Civil War kept David in the war zone and Jean and the girls could only visit during intermittent ceasefires.

Eventually, in 1981, David took up a new role in London which allowed the family to reunite in Surrey and Jean returned to social work.

On retirement, Jean and David moved to Suffolk and spent many happy years in Framsdon, finally putting down roots and enjoying the village community. Here they looked forward to family visits having acquired two sons-in-law. They had five grandsons whose developments and achievements they actively followed. Jean also continued to correspond with several of her old Haberdasher friends. Sadly, Jean’s mobility deteriorated after an accident although she bore her pain with dignity and grace.

After the death of her beloved David in 2012 she decided to move to Welwyn Garden City to be near family. Here she continued to take a keen interest in those around her, offering kindness and emotional support to friends and family.

Despite her ill health which led to her eventually being wheelchair bound, she lived independently and happily. Those who knew Jean remember her for her warmth, generosity and consideration of others.

Deborah Daniel (Daughter)



This photograph of the Prefects in summer 1956 shows Jean, as Head Girl seated in the middle of the front row and Ruth standing behind her and slightly to the right.



## Out-of-Date Addresses

The following people are no longer at these addresses. Please would you be kind enough to let me know if you have a current address for any of them.

Left	Name	Last Address
1993	Karen Homer	Warren Road, Ickenham
1993	Bettina Phillis (Stanton)	Church Lane, Ruscombe
1994	Nicola Enbergs	Troutstream Way, Rickmansworth
1996	Nikki Laurence (Balbes)	Downlands Court, Luton
1997	Alice Fung	Hendon Wood Lane, Mill Hill
1998	Jennifer Coles	Townsend Lane, Harpenden
1999	Claire Martin	Northiam, Woodside Park
1999	Samantha Wight	Elm Park, Stanmore
2001	Erica Plaut	Limes Avenue, NW11 9TJ
2004	Denise McGregor (Rochford)	Avondale Road, Harrow
2006	Alice Elwes	Southwood Lawn Road, Highgate
2007	Rosie Thomson	Charmouth Road, St Albans
2009	Emma Carey	Davenham Avenue, Northwood
2009	Emily Stewart	Dalkeith Road, Harpenden
2010	Chloe Pearce	Hawfield Gardens, St Albans
2011	Rebecca Johns	Robins Close, London Colney
2011	Laura Ramasamy	Craigwell Avenue, Radlett

Please continue to send me any changes using the form at the back of this newsletter.

Also if you receive your newsletter electronically, please remember to let me know if you change your e-mail address. If you would like to change from a hard copy of the newsletter to an electronic copy, please let me know. I would be very pleased to receive any news for the next newsletter.

Mrs Sylvia Ntley, Membership Secretary, 42, Chester Drive, North Harrow, Middx. HA2 7PU  
Tel: 020 8863 2659, Fax: 020 8863 7959, E-mail: haogesn@hotmail.com

**Disclaimer** - If you do submit an article, please note that we may be required to edit it without prior approval. However, we do promise to upload a full version on the alumnae portal.

Please note that we do not accept any responsibility for the information or links associated with non-Habs websites and blogs mentioned in this publication.

## MEMBERSHIP RECORDS FORM

Please use this form to update your contact details. Post to:

Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls,  
Aldenham Road,  
Elstree, Herts,  
WD6 3BT

### PERSONAL DETAILS (PLEASE PRINT)

Full Name (incl. Title):.....

Preferred Name .....Maiden Name (if applicable).....

Address.....

.....

Telephone Number.....Mobile Number.....

Year you left school.....Final School Year eg Upper 6/Upper 5.....

E-mail address.....

### EDUCATION

Did you go to University/College? YES NO

If yes, University/College name?..... Job Title.....

Subject.....

Graduation year.....

I give / do not give permission for my newsletter to be sent to me by email (*Please delete as applicable*)

N.B. Please include any news about yourself.

### PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

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# CAREERS FORM

PLEASE PRINT

I/my firm would be prepared to: *(please tick those applicable)*

- Give a Careers talk on the subject of .....
- Come to a Careers Convention
- Give a mock interview for university entrance
- Give a mock interview for company internship
- Other ways you may be able to help (please indicate) .....

Title (Dr/Mrs etc.): 

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Forename/Initial: 

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Surname: 

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Position: 

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Company: 

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E-mail address: 

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Signed: ..... Date: .....

Send To: Mrs Laura Mee, Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls, Aldenham Road, Elstree, Herts, WD6 3BT or email [lmee@habsgirls.org.uk](mailto:lmee@habsgirls.org.uk)