

**COLCHESTER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**  
**OLD GIRLS'/ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION**  
**NEWSLETTER – Autumn 2020**

**Editor's Notes**

These are strange times! I hope everyone is well and keeping to the ever-changing regulations (as we did at school, of course!) and let's hope that the situation changes soon so we can return to normal. This has meant that we do not have much to report - no AGM, coffee mornings, garden party, lunches, etc, but I have received some interesting articles.

Please let me know how you have been coping with COVID-19 as it should make interesting reading to see how different Old Girls have spent their time! It is not difficult to email me (or call me for my postal address) and, as usual, no great literary work is required!

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Information, news, comments, photos and articles for the next Newsletter by 31st March 2021.

**Events**

I think that perhaps the above heading should have been 'non-Events'. I am so sorry that all our members have been unable to meet up socially this year. You may remember we had a full programme planned but had to cancel every meeting, due to the unprecedented pandemic.

The lockdown has affected the older members of the country a great deal. Although we are advanced in years, normally we are very active and sociable; we miss these aspects of our lives. Many of the Associations I belong to have closed down until at least January 2021 – U3A programmes such as my table tennis group have stopped altogether, although the Spanish class I attend is continuing (with varied success) on Zoom.

When this situation changes, as inevitably it will, we will reinstate our last programme of Events and meet up again. In the meantime, if you can, please consider supporting the local venues that our Group often uses, such as Grey Friars, and the Chinese Restaurant, The Bamboo House, and also continue telephoning, texting, emailing and writing to each other to keep up our friendships. (I don't do Facebook, etc!)

Jean Johnson

**Treasurer's Report – 2019-2020**

**Jean Johnson**

In normal circumstances I would submit the accounts at the AGM but instead this year I will give a brief summary of them. The actual accounts will be circulated, of course, at our next AGM, but if anyone wishes to see them before then please contact me.

I thought that the accounts would be simple this year with so many events cancelled in 2020 but they still managed to throw up a few odd entries. When I started to get replies to my emailed Events programme, Covid was beginning to show its presence. Consequently, although I had already paid a deposit for our second lunch for the year at the Colne Bistro, I kept the cheques members had sent rather than paying them in. Therefore, I was able to shred all these cheques, with the owner's permission, when I contacted them with the cancellation news. So the only entry for income for this event is when the deposit was refunded.

There have been expenses incurred with relation to mailing the newsletter – printing, stationery and postal costs. One of the cheques I paid in for an event in 2019 must have been for £8 instead of £8.50 (whoops) and I was surprised to see that Barclays Bank charged 3p interest on our current account (this has never happened before). Your Committee decided to make a donation to Colchester Night Owls in memory of Marsyl.

I have transferred £470.20 in total from our Deposit Account this year to pay for the annual insurance and also to keep this account solvent. Unfortunately the 2019 Colne Bistro lunch lost money, in view of the fact their original quote was not honoured, and we also lost money on the Grey Friars Coffee Morning.

As of 1st July 2020 our Current Account stood at £120.13 and our Deposit Account at £3,424.52.

**Catherine Bullen Foundation** was named after an ex-pupil of CCHS (*right*) who was a fifth year medical student and died suddenly in 2002, aged 22, from gastroenteritis whilst on a working holiday in Namibia. She had travelled to Africa as part of her studies at Bristol University and was due to work in medical practices in Zambia and Tanzania.



Her parents, Roger and Linda, who visit the area twice a year, were determined to continue their daughter's dream to help others, and set up the Foundation in her memory. Some 15 years later, the charity has raised over £500,000, helping some of the poorest people of the Omaheke region. The first project was to rebuild the borehole providing fresh water for the local school and hostel. The original aim was to build a healthcare centre in Otjimanangombe (*left with Linda*) and since the completion of that, dormitories have been built for school children and flushing toilets for the villages. The next project is to build a multi-purpose hall in the village and fund an ambulance for the area. For her continued work Linda was awarded in 2015 a well-deserved MBE.



To find out more about the charity or donate, visit [namibia-aid.org.uk](http://namibia-aid.org.uk).

### **News from Old Girls**

#### **Winifred Foster (Skeet 1942 - 1951)**

I was born in 1935 and as I only weighed 3lb 13oz, my mother devoted her life to keeping me alive. It was a miracle she succeeded as there were no incubators in those days. My wonderful father who was in the Royal Navy volunteered to transfer to working on the submarines to pay the fees for me to the High School when I was seven years old. As a result, I sailed through the 11plus. Unfortunately, by the time I left school my father was unwell and my mother was very old fashioned. She believed girls should go out to work when they were old enough and contribute to the family purse. My second job was in Cullingford's office in the High Street which was lovely and the girls were very friendly but the pay was abysmal, it was only £3 a week. I then worked at the tax office and later the telephone exchange. Talk about boring, all we had to do was plug into a board and say "Number Please". I got so depressed my mother paid for me to get a plane to Malta to stay with my sister whose husband was in the Army and stationed there. That was a wonderful experience, the Maltese treated me like Royalty as they were so grateful to the British and I sat near the pilot.



When I returned I got a job as a Firewoman and I loved it. My pay was £7 per week which was excellent: Shortly afterwards I planned to marry Ian Foster when I thought he would have to go to Egypt due to the Suez Crisis. In fact, he didn't go and was demobbed in December 1956. We went ahead with our marriage which was great and had 5 children, 12 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren, with another on the way. Shortly after we moved to Romford returning to Colchester in 1971.

Whilst in Romford we met Missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and it answered all the questions that we had been unable to get elsewhere. It was incredible and we knew immediately that we should join that Church. After we retired from our careers as Independent Financial Advisors we were called to go on a Church Mission for 2 years and to our surprise and delight we went to Vladivostok, Russia. It was the most amazing and wonderful experience in our lives. We made so many wonderful friends and we still keep in touch with these incredible people.

Since returning to England I was agreed to stand as a Councillor in Shrub End Ward. It was the year the boundaries changed so double the numbers were elected. To my surprise and, dare I say it, horror, I got more votes than anyone but when I buckled down to being a Councillor I loved it. Four years later I lost my seat but a vacancy came up in the Prettygate Ward and I was elected there for the next 4 years, making a total of 8 years as a Councillor. I decided then that at my then age it was enough and resigned.

It has been an interesting and enjoyable life.

#### **Joan Gurney (Appleton 1938-51)**

Joan had prepared her following article in July when her husband sadly died suddenly so when referring to Gerald, it is written in the present tense which Joan wanted to change but we agreed that the article would remain as it was. We pass our thoughts to Joan at this sad time.

#### **WHAT JOAN DID NEXT - Part 2**

In 1956, five years after I had left school, I met my husband, Gerald. I was in my first teaching post at Ipswich and he was completing a postgraduate Diploma in Education at Cambridge, having had his student days delayed by a year because of the necessary National Service which was mandatory at that time.

Our paths must have crossed many times earlier during our childhood days spent in neighbouring villages. These places might have included the former site of the Tendring Show where I rode my pony each year, and which was immediately behind the original Great Bromley rectory, Gerald's childhood home. Not far away was the old blacksmith's shop where my pony was regularly 'hot shod'. Later, I know that I must have watched him playing tennis for his school team (CRGS) against CCHS and even later I was part of an innovative scheme between the two schools whereby a small group of girls from CCHS, who needed chemistry for their future studies, took part in an exchange with a few boys from CRGS who needed biology for the same reason. At the same time neither school had the laboratory facilities of the necessary level.

Once or twice a week, therefore, I was part of CRGS well before girls were officially taken into the sixth form there some decades later and I might have passed Gerald in the corridors! He did not register on my consciousness however until, as a schoolgirl spectator, I saw him in the annual CRGS all-boys production of 'Richard of Bordeaux' in 1949. I liked what I saw!

Several years later my father's car, which I was driving, broke down and a very helpful young man, who I thought I must have seen somewhere before, stopped to help me and, with a piece of string, tied up something under the bonnet. It worked and the rest, as they say, is history! I have had many used cars ever since (but never a new one) so he always jokes that he has been tying up my cars with string ever since!



We were married in 1960. I never imagined that I would marry one of the 'Purple Blazer Brigade'. I defied tradition and wore a short wedding dress and veil, the skirt of which was held out and enhanced by a very fashionable 'can-can' underslip (*left*). We went to Norway for our honeymoon which included a completely unplanned trip on the small coastal delivery boat which called at every port and fjord as it travelled northward. This was well before it became a popular tourist attraction.

We bought a house on our return and started our new jobs - mine at the Gilbert Technical School on North Hill and Gerald's at Colchester Royal Grammar School - teaching respectively biology with swimming and English with tennis. We were both delighted to be returning as teachers to the buildings where we were educated. It seems strange today, when so many people commute to and from London to work, that we even considered whether we might be too far from Colchester - at 7 miles - to travel easily each day. But then we were out in the country with an ancient Morris 8 Tourer which sometimes had to be pushed up a steep hill! We survived the prolonged winter of 1963 by walking across the fields to catch a local bus when we were completely snowbound.



Our sporting and art interests were not exactly mutual. Gerald can only swim a few strokes and I am not very accurate with a ball, so we took up two new interests - punting (*right*) and brass rubbing. Our usual punting route was from Stratford St Mary upstream to Higham where the bed of the river is hard and acts as an anchor for the punt-pole. The soft muddy river bed downstream from Dedham to Flatford sucks the pole and punter to a wet disaster! Gerald did the skilled pole work whilst I relaxed in the bottom of the punt!



We travelled all over Essex and Suffolk to rub brasses (*left*). Here I did the artistic rubbing whilst Gerald did the mundane preparatory work of dusting, brushing and aligning! We arrived at one church with previous permission to rub, only to find that in earlier years the brass had been plundered. I had the audacity to write to Nikolaus Pevsner, the renowned record of English architectural gems, in whose informative and famous books 'The Buildings of England' I had found the reference, to politely tell him that there was no brass in that church. I had a delightful letter signed by him which I still treasure.

With help from my parents we prepared our newly acquired house for occupation. Built in 1950, it needed a lot of redecoration and the grounds required attention. A table, two chairs and a bed were a starting point, quickly followed by a pair of curtains. I took with me my very modern record player which I had bought with my first pay cheque. It replaced the ancient, but much loved, wind-up gramophone (*right*) which could only play 78rpm records and most of these still bore the crackle and buzz caused by constant childhood playing of classical music with a worn steel needle. It always reminded me of those early days at CCHS when singing lessons included such songs as 'The Raggle Taggle Gypsies' - which today would be considered not very politically correct - to an accompaniment on a very tinny piano. In contrast 'God be in my head', the school



hymn, was sung at the final 'breaking up' ceremony of each term with much more gusto and excited anticipation of the holiday ahead.

We had fun searching antiques and second hand shops for furniture which fulfilled our tastes for early pieces. We sometimes liked, but rejected, post-war designs and G-plan models which were appearing at that time. The pieces we chose, however, mixed unbelievably well with the vivid colours and abstract patterns of the 1960s curtain materials which I have continued to search for in boot fairs ever since.

The whole preparatory process brought back memories of my childhood on the farm in Dedham. Duvets had not come into being and cosy feather beds were underneath you as you slept between starched white cotton sheets. I remember a group of my teenage friends at CCHS going on a week-long French exchange trip in the late 1940s and returning with stories of sleeping with a feather bed on top of them, and this, they said, was called a 'continental quilt'!

More memories came flooding back when the decorating work reached the bathroom. My bath time on the farm as a child was taken in a small tin bath in front of an open fire, where the hot water was ladled from an ancient wood-fired copper and afterwards the soap suds were emptied



in the garden. And as for the toilet .... I will pass over this briefly! A draughty, battered weatherboard privy stood at the bottom of the farm garden and a chamber pot was under the bed at night!

Shortly after we moved in I wanted some sturdy but bold patterned crockery for kitchen and everyday use. I settled on Cornishware (*left*) - the simple blue and white banded items which had first been produced in the late 1920s by TG Green in the Derbyshire Potteries. It reminded me of my rural roots. I bought the more usual pieces - plates, bowls, dishes, cups and saucers which were still being produced - and then discovered that there was a mountain of older pieces out there in secondhand shops and at antiques fairs. I was smitten! What had started as a utilitarian necessity became an unintentional collection - storage jars with unusual and misspelt names, teapots, colanders (and even a clock) filled my kitchen shelves. Several of my items appeared in the book on Cornishware by Paul Atterbury which was published in 1998.

My main collection of Bathing Bygones started slightly earlier and more deliberately. The changing fashions of bath attire had always intrigued me. My father's bathing costume which he had bought when he lived in Australia in 1908 sparked my interest. It was a two-piece made of heavy dark grey flannel. The vest section had long sleeves and extended to the top of the thighs. The pants, similarly, had legs which reached to the knee. My father insisted on wearing this costume right through to the end of his life in the late 1960s. It was viewed with hilarity by my CCHS teenage school friends and those of my university days who, by this time, were clad in the most miniscule bikinis! This fashion had shocked the world in 1946 when it was 'invented' in Paris by Louis Réard because it dared to expose the navel! As my working life evolved and the more swimming teaching I did, the greater my interest in bathing fashions grew until I was writing articles, giving talks and exhibitions and lending items to museums, including the Krefeld Textilmuseum in Germany and the Fashion and Textile Museum in London. Today I have approximately 500 costumes (men's, women's and



children's) dating back to the 1890s (*right*) as well as posters, silver, jewellery, postcards and other ephemera and accessories.

Gerald's collection of racket sports arose in a similar way, after his youthful participation in many of them, and with an equally wide variety of objects assembled. It outshines my collection in every respect, and he has travelled to many parts of the world to give exhibitions. We both look back to our childhood and schooldays and remember the changes in equipment and clothing used in these sports. Wool, cotton, linen and silk gave way to man-made fibres for bath costumes and wood, gut and leather for rackets were replaced by fibreglass, plastic and nylon. Special designs in rackets also appeared. I particularly remember one fifth former at North Hill having an unusual tripe-shaft racket (*ie - a Streamline Green Star Racket - left*) designed by Bunny Austin, a Wimbledon singles winner in the 1930s, which was supposed to be more aerodynamic and therefore gave you an advantage over your opponent. How envious we were that time! Today, any racket of this design is a valuable collector's item! Changes in clothing for sport were also influenced by Wimbledon. What shock would have ensued in my CCHS school days if any of us had dared to show even half an inch of frilly knickers under our length tennis skirts!



Back at our new home I soon set about the garden which was an interesting wilderness. Two orchards and a small meadow were set between several neglected lawns. My busy farming parents had had little time to be devoted gardeners, but were wildlife enthusiasts and had passed this interest on to me. I also remember my biology lessons at North Hill in the rather dreary basement laboratory (which always smelled of formaldehyde) and the emphasis placed on photosynthesis for plant life. So when I heard about a local nursery which forced daffodils under glass (so that the cut flowers were ready for sale in January) and then cut off the leaves and threw out the bulbs, I asked them to throw a few lorry loads in my direction! We had bulb-planting parties for 2 years knowing that we would not see them flowering for another 2 or 3 years because their ability to photosynthesize had been cut short by removing the leaves. But a sea of gold eventually emerged under the fruit trees and grew bigger every year (*right*).



The small meadow already had the beginnings of a wildflower haven and with some additional seed scattering and plug planting it continued to produce a rich carpet of colour in most seasons. But what about the grass? An aged pony came with me to graze the meadow and with the help of a little haymaking it is always under control. What images from the past are conjured up when the tractor arrives to start the cutting in late summer after the wild flowers have gone to seed. But that is another story!

A flock of geese were set free daily on the orchard to feed on the grass and ignore the daffodils when in flower. And what good grazers and vocal watchdogs they became! It is not difficult to imagine that in Classical Civilisation they were given the task of guarding the gates of Rome - a fact subconsciously absorbed from my CCHS Latin lessons!

Our son was born in 1966. One fashion feature from that era is implanted on my mind. Stockings and suspenders were gradually being superseded by nylon tights. Not only were these much more accommodating for long legs but wrapped themselves more comfortably around a pregnancy bulge which, at that time, was modestly concealed (not displayed) by a loose fitting tunic. Long gone were the days of CCHS and thick fawn or black stockings held

up by suspenders and even further in the past were these suspenders attached by buttons to a liberty bodice!

Now the 1970s were fast approaching. Hemlines were getting higher and hair was getting longer. As I record the events of 15 years since I left CCHS and became, in turn, a student, teacher, wife, householder and mother, I can recall the many changes and developments which have taken place during that time and acknowledge that yet many more were still to come.

### Memories of School Hockey

The school used to give team critiques (below) on each member of a school team for everyone to read in the School Magazine. There were positive remarks but these were frequently followed by a negative comment. 1955-56 "Team Criticism" of the 1<sup>st</sup> XI (below) was written by Mavis Jones, a team member, but her critique were written by "APJ". **Jean Johnson (Cuthew)** has written that she and **Diana Rowe (Blake)** and were quite proud of the fact they were the only fifth formers in the first Hockey XI. Diana was exceptionally good and was awarded her colours at the end of the year; they were obviously deserved because she played hockey for another 29 years after leaving School, both with Colchester Ladies and the mixed Colchester Oysters and even had a trial for the County team. Jean also played for Colchester Ladies and the mixed team from Woods of Colchester Ltd. Diana and Jean, who were brought up in the same area of Colchester, have been friends since they started CCHS and their most recent get-together last month was a nostalgic meeting for coffee at Grey Friars!

RB **Diana Blake** - a very steady back who combined well with the rest of the defence. Her stickwork

was very good and she cleared the ball well. She well deserves her colours.

LB **Brenda Tonkin** - she tackled energetically and with enthusiasm, but her play would be improved by

neater stickwork and more speed when chasing her opponent.

RH **Judith Brunning** - she combined well with her wing, but although she cleared the ball well her

stickwork still needs practice.

CH **Malyn Brown** - her play was consistently good, and she combined well with the forward line, but at

times she could have used her strong hit to greater effect. (She was also awarded her colours!)

**Marion Richardson** - she has developed into a far quicker player this season. On the whole she

marks well, and was able to start many attacking movements by her strong hit. (Also awarded her

colours!)

LH **Jill Rose** - her play has improved this season, she now tackles with determination and clears the ball

well.

RW **Elizabeth Mabbitt** - a fast neat wing, who took the rest of the forwards up the field with her, she

should try to play a more attacking game in the circle.

RI **June Heppenstall** - her play shows much improvement. She had a strong hit, and passed well, but

tended to play in an offside position.

CF **Elsbeth James** - she was capable of scoring very hard goals, but too frequently relied on reverse

stickwork. She played more vigorously as RI at the end of the season.

LI **Jean Cuthew** - she achieved a good goal score and improved continually throughout the season.

Although her stickwork was good, her play lacked attack.

LW **Janice Goff** - her stickwork has improved this season. She was a fast wing but tended to put herself

in an offside position.

GK **Mavis Jones** - a strong and determined player. She cleared the ball aggressively and combined well

with her backs. She showed much improvement from the last season. She has been a most helpful

and efficient captain and in particular has given up much time to assisting the Colts XI.

Do we have any news of the other members of the team? and who was AJK? But more importantly, how many of us even reached the heights of a school team?

### Memories of Grey Friars from 100 years ago

In the School Magazine for 1960-61 are some fascinating memories from three mistresses who had been at Grey Friars one hundred years ago. If these stimulate more recent memories, please let me have them for inclusion in the next Newsletter.

#### From Miss M Collier

Straight from College, very young and wearing a pink hat, I came to Colchester in 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War. We had Cookery in the North Hill Kitchen, and there was Needlework to teach in Room 33, a little French and Scripture and, of course, the charge of the School dinners, the latter quite a business with the increasing shortage of meat and fats and the general uncertainty of supplies.

I had fallen in love at first sight with Miss Crosthwaite or "Bindy", as she was later affectionately known to us all, and to work under her as she built up the School was the most wonderful experience that a young mistress could have had. Her own zeal for the work and forgetfulness of self were infectious and produced the happy atmosphere in which we worked.

In 1918 I left to do some war work, but was back a year later. The war was over, the school was overflowing, Miss Thornbery was on the Staff and together we worked to get Grey Friars

(right) ready to house the Junior part of the School in January 1920. What a thrill it all was! Mr and Mrs Alston were caretaker and cook and Miss Stoodley and I had rooms in their house adjoining Grey Friars. And what beautiful dinners Mrs Alston cooked. You all came up for second helpings and sometimes the second helpings exceeded the first! Miss Howson was Senior Mistress at North Hill, followed later by Miss Reynolds, and Miss Crosthwaite and other members of the Staff rushed up and down the High Street between the two buildings. Those were good days and we would not have missed them for the world.



In 1923, with the help of Mrs and Miss Thornbery's furniture brought out of store, we took over Lyndhurst, 149 Maldon Road, as a Staff house, and in the following year the Home Science Course was started.

And now, best wishes to all the Home Science girls, some 90 of you, who during the next 11 years came, eight at a time, for one year, to spend half the week at Lyndhurst doing practical work and the other half at North Hill. We had some good times, didn't we, and you did well in your Final Homecraft Examination and got really worthwhile posts afterwards.

All good things come to an end, and with many regrets I finally said good-bye to Colchester in 1936 after 21 most happy years.

#### From Miss J D Thornbery

Miss Thornbery joined CCHS in September 1919 and was Senior Mistress at Grey Friars when it opened in January 1920, until she went to Muswell Hill in 1934.



Old Girls who were at North Hill (*left*) in the Autumn Term of 1919 will remember the crowded conditions under which we worked. Grey Friars was not ready and the School was overflowing. There were classes in every available corner, even in the gallery where a wooden trellis was erected so that girls, more interested in Gym than Maths, would not fall over into the hall below. Some of us trotted across the road to St Peter's Hall where the Preparatory children had temporary

accommodation in the charge of Miss Harris.

During the term, furniture and equipment were ordered for Grey Friars, but it was not until almost the last day that we were able to have the keys of the building. We worked feverishly all through the Christmas holidays. Curtains had to be made for the ground floor rooms so that passers-by could not wave to Staff and children during Science lessons and while we were having dinner. Miss Collier bought a sewing machine to ease the work and, as well as the many curtains, we made about two hundred and fifty bright blue shoe bags and put large white numbers in chain stitch on every one. At last the great day arrived and Staff and children poured through the front door to be welcomed by Miss Crosthwaite who learnt their names in a very short time.

The years at Grey Friars were some of the happiest in my life. We worked hard, played hard - especially in matches against the School - tennis, rounders, hockey and netball and we laughed heartily at the funny things that happened. We stayed late at School, took home piles of books to mark and went to bed tired, but it was all so worthwhile. We were poor - very poor by present standards - but the work and responsibility gave us great satisfaction and the good effects of Miss Crosthwaite's leadership and influence have remained with us throughout the years. We can never be sufficiently grateful for having had the privilege of working under her.

*(below: a rather blurred picture of the staff at CCHS in 1923, but unfortunately no names)*



From Miss L C Reynolds

I spent 14 years at CCHS joining the Staff the same term at Miss Hurt. What a fine scholar and clever teacher she was, as well as an amusing colleague!

I remember as vividly as if it were yesterday, September 17<sup>th</sup> 1917, my first day at North Hill when my beginner's shyness was at once dispelled by the kindly welcome of the Head Girl, Doris Wells (now Mrs Nicholson) who, protectively towering above me with hair 'up' and skirt long, looked a far more fitting member of the Staff than I felt.

How lucky I was to have the opportunity of teaching Latin in the old Roman capital of Britain! I used to start off the IIIa beginners with lessons on the Roman wall, overlooking Balcerne Lane, on the edge of the School grounds, where double snowdrops grew in profusion in Spring; and often a parent would send me a hurried invitation to run over in the dinner hour to a bit of mosaic pavement he'd unearthed while gardening; and once when a sceptical member of the class, questioning the origin of some earthenware fragments that I proudly showed, took them to Mr Hull, the Curator of the Castle Museum, for verification, I found the next morning written on the blackboard: "Miss Reynolds's remains are genuine"! Who could fail to enjoy teaching and perhaps even learning the classics under such conditions?

I am grateful for all the help and guidance and fun from those far-off days at CCHS enjoying my experience as Senior Mistress, both with Miss Crosthwaite and Miss King. My initial training and progress essentially depended on Miss Crosthwaite's influence and inspiration, and later her friendship.

**Does anyone know when this photograph was taken?**

Do you recognise the girls and what are they doing now?



The photograph (*left*) was taken in 1963.

From left to right:  
 Jenny Long, Felicity (Tizzy) Hooper, Lynda  
 Dorrington, Mary Chatto, Carol Davey,  
 Anne Goodwin and Christine Bentley.  
 Mary is Beth Chatto's younger daughter.

Does anyone know where these girls are and  
 what they are doing?

## **OBITUARIES**

### **Beryl Powys (Lomax 1935-42?)**

Our thanks to Beryl's husband, Ian, for sending this delightful story of their life together. (*right: Ian and Beryl in December 2012*)

Just received the OGA Newsletter. My wife, Beryl, died in March this year. She was born 10 March 1924 and enjoyed reading the OGA Newsletters but used to wonder how many other readers would still remember her.

We had lunch in a riverside pub to celebrate her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday but she fell the next day and passed peacefully a few days later. In her mind she was not old but, like me, our bodies tell us we are old.



She started to teach during the war but for a short time only as her mother had a stroke and Beryl had to return home to look after both parents. We had met before the war (which war? our grandchildren cry!) and worked on the farm attached to Cants Roses. In 1951 my Regiment, The Welch, was posted to Colchester and was then drafted to Korea. I said to Beryl that so long as no Chinaman put a bullet in me, I'd come back and propose to her which I did after I carried the Queen's Colour at the 1953 Coronation. The name of the Major



General and Colonel-in-Chief of The Welch at the time was Lomax and I was 'suspected' of marrying his daughter, to assist my career and promotions!

We were married on 1 January, 1955 (*left*) so Beryl was an "army wife" although spent little time actually with the army but we led a full and long life together. Later I was posted as Adjutant at regimental HQ in Cardiff where we had a married quarter but we were again separated as the Regiment went to Germany, then Cyprus with no married quarter for a young lieutenant's wife and our first son, Richard. Beryl rented accommodation - virtually the whole top floor of Mistley Hall near Manningtree.

She then began another wandering existence as I decided that I would leave the army. I joined Michelin and Beryl and I spent the happiest years of our lives in the two Rhodesias (remember them?), Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. We climbed Kilimanjaro almost as soon as we settled into our house in Mombasa - a port - and ships ran up through the Suez canal - first stop Brindisi. We had our holiday home there. We swam, we barbecued, we led an easy life. Some may label us 'colonials' with a cook, a garden boy and an ayah but in those days this provided those families with a house and food as well as a wage. They never complained.

I was then offered Canada or Italy - Beryl and I immediately said Italy - but we were sent to Montreal. We learned to ski - never as nonchalantly as our two sons - and it was a wonderful couple of years in an unforgettable country. We came back to the UK and later spent our years of retirement in a friendly Cambridgeshire village. We occasionally watched some of our old 8mm movies - they don't rival the many African and underwater ones now on 'the box' but they are 'our' films and we truly believe that we saw Africa at its best.

Beryl was a much loved pillar of the community and we all regret that only two family members could attend her funeral in these difficult times but when life returns to normal she will have a real send off.

I hope some readers will remember Beryl. She left the world just a wee bit better than she found it.

**Sheila Audrey Scott** (Coleman) died peacefully in Stanway Green Lodge Care Home, Colchester, on 6th June 2020 aged 89. Widow of Don, Mother of Alan, Martin and Judy, Granny to Sam, Megan and Mary.

If anyone could let us have memories of Sheila we will share them in the next Newsletter.

**Dr Paul Sharpe**, CCHS Biology Department from 1980 to 2009

**Mary Rickard** (1969 to 1976 and laboratory technician, 1987 to 2000) writes: I was so sorry to learn from a former colleague of the sad death of Dr Paul Sharpe.

Paul joined CCHS as Head of Biology from Clacton County High School in 1980, receiving several promotions over the years, eventually being promoted to Deputy Head in 1995, a post he held until his retirement in 2009. His wife, Sue, remembers his duties as Senior Teacher - Curriculum Manager including constructing the timetable on their hall floor, with the aid of a huge white board and hundreds of coloured stickers. In addition to his excellent teaching and nurturing at CCHS, he will be remembered by many for his liaison with local primary schools, enriching their science curriculum; providing evening classes for parents and for the practical sessions which he ran for students from local comprehensive schools during the holidays. His keen interest in WWI and WWII history led to him becoming an honorary member of the History department and he often accompanied their trips to the battlefields.

I met Paul when I re-joined CCHS as a physics technician in 1987 and personally remember him as being such a caring, knowledgeable, modest and gentle man. Coffee breaks were never long enough, he was such an interesting person to talk to. I remember him telling me about his collection of fossil sharks' teeth and how he knew of a fantastic place to find them (which he, frustratingly, would never divulge to me!). He was always busy doing something - I seem to recall that he was a keen sea canoeist and I am informed that his wife has now published a book that he wrote. Anything entitled 'Much more than calamari' and which Amazon describes as seeking to show how important the mollusc phylum has been in shaping history definitely requires further investigation!

Paul put so much effort into everything he did, including having fun. I was reminded of the Sand Dance which he and Sheila Allen (Chemistry) performed at a CCHS end of term talent show one year. I well remember the two of them practicing (seemingly endlessly) in my Physics laboratory when the girls weren't around, and what a roaring success it was with girls and staff alike on performance day: this is how I intend to remember my former colleague, Paul – with a smile.

I am grateful to Paul's wife, Sue, for providing me with details of just a few of Paul's admirable achievements, and to Shirley Tofts for telling me that she considered that 'He was the fairest and kindest person I had the pleasure to work with', which says it all.

With heartfelt condolences to Paul's family.

### **Of Plagues and Pandemics**

**Tina Powell**

With so much of life as we know it currently affected by coronavirus, and numerous recent programmes and newspaper items on the bubonic plague, and Spanish 'flu, I found myself wondering how previous pandemics had impacted Colchester. (I did meander into other diseases and public health issues – but they can be saved, for another day!)

While bubonic plague had existed for centuries elsewhere, it did not reach England until much later. The Black Death marked the start of the Second Plague Pandemic, which would continue to afflict the country, with differing levels of virulence, until the mid-18th century. (The First Plague Pandemic had ravaged mainly the Mediterranean countries, but also impacted mainland northern Europe, and the Near East, between 541 and 767.) Bubonic plague finally reached the south coast of England in June, 1348 and proceeded to ravage the country until the end of 1350.

In Colchester, by August, 1349, both the abbot and prior of St John's had died. In the decades before and after the pandemic, there was an average of 2-3 wills proved in the town

each year. In the 12 months from September 1348 there were 111 and 25 the following year. There are no definitive figures on death rates, but historians believe it was probably slightly lower in the town than the estimated 45%, in the surrounding rural area.

We are familiar with the Great Plague which afflicted London in 1665 and killed an estimated 100,000 people, roughly 20% of the city's population, subsiding only after much of the city was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. Many will have heard of the bravery of the inhabitants of Eyam in Derbyshire who quarantined themselves for some 14 months so that they did not spread the disease, which had come into their midst via bales of cloth from the capital. In so doing they did, indeed, contain the infection – but it is said that fewer than a quarter of the inhabitants survived.

How many people realise that Colchester was one of the worst-affected towns in the country, though? Between 1665 and 1666, the plague is estimated to have killed 4,500-5,000 Colcestrians – almost half the town's population. Plague pest hospitals were set up in Mile End and St Mary's. While subsequent outbreaks of the plague were not as devastating, the disease continued to be endemic until about 1750.

Given that Spanish 'Flu was much more recent, you might expect that information would be much more readily available – and it probably would be, were it not for DORA! The Defence of the Realm Act was first passed in 1914 at the start of the Great War and initially aimed simply to control communications, British ports, and to subject civilians to the rule of military courts. During the course of the War, though, there were 6 further amendments, which covered a wide range, from introducing British Summer time to extending the powers of the police, to banning bonfires, kite-flying and whistling in the street! DORA also imposed rigid censorship on the press – both to maintain morale at home and to deny the enemy any possible propaganda victory.

By way of example the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, arrived in Manchester on 11th September 1918 to be greeted by cheering crowds lining the streets. He collapsed with a severe fever, hours later, and spent the next 10 days on a respirator, having fallen victim to Spanish 'Flu. The newspapers reported merely “a little chill”, and explained his absence from the public eye as a “precautionary measure”, while the mayor of Manchester stated Lloyd George was “progressing satisfactorily, but was staying in bed”.

Many other countries had similar censorship regimes in place – which is how the pandemic which was to sweep across the world, in 4 main waves, between early 1918, and April, 1920, got its name. Spain was neutral, and took no part in the war. Its newspapers were free to feature daily reports of the dreadful disease which was affecting its people, and, unlike most 'flu viruses, killing mainly the young and fit – and so it became known as Spanish 'Flu.

Experts believe the virus probably originated in China, and that its spread was helped by the enormous migrations which took place, when millions of people began returning home from the war. It has been estimated that at least 500 million people were infected, worldwide (about a third of the global population) and that some 50 million died – more than had been killed during the entire conflict.

Those at greatest risk were adults aged 20-40 and death would often occur within hours of the first symptoms. Sybil Stanford (*right*) had joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment – civilians, who nursed military personnel. She fell ill, on the day she was due to finish work at the American Red Cross Hospital, in Lancaster Gate, London – and died, two days later, aged 20. She is buried in St Paul's churchyard, near her parents' Braiswick home. Corporal Sidney Bowman had survived life on the front line, but, within hours of reaching his Nunns Road home, was taken ill,



and later died, in the Military Hospital, “after escaping all the dangers of battle”. Harry Bright, of Harwich, aged 7 years and 10 months, was sent home from school, feeling unwell, and duly put to bed, by his mother. He died just 75 minutes later.

The Essex County Standard first mentioned the pandemic on 13th July, 1918, reporting that “several deaths” had been caused by the virus, which had also “prostrated many hundreds, possibly thousands”. Several schools in the town were closed, temporarily, between June, and August of that year, but, by mid-October, they were all closed. At that point, the plight of Essex made the national press, with the Times stating that hospitals, workhouses and infirmaries in the county were badly affected. The County Council put out a plea for more coffin-makers, as the death toll continued to rise.

The greatest surge in cases came after the announcement of the Armistice – which saw great crowds in the streets of the town, first, outside the offices of the County Standard, to read the official notice, confirming rumours of the end of the war, and then to celebrate.

Unfortunately, of course, those celebrations were a perfect opportunity for the virus to spread – and were soon helped by the enormous transit of troops.

As a garrison town, Colchester obviously had large numbers of men passing through, arriving and departing by train, with many spreading the ‘flu, as they went. In November, 1918, 10 patients a day were dying in the Military Hospital – and their bodies were then put into coffins and taken to North Station, to be returned to their families!

Colchester Borough Council had leaflets delivered to every home, setting out advice for keeping fit, and avoiding the infection. This included keeping warm, and sleeping with good ventilation. People were advised to avoid crowded areas, getting cold, or tired, and excess alcohol. Theatres and cinemas were disinfected, after every performance. The County Standard opined that the precautions were “somewhat meagre”, and 323 people were said to have died in Colchester, by 1919.

**NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL** - thanks to Kate Stubbs, Marketing and Communications Manager CCHS

**Breanna Blackboro** progressed from CCHSG to study medicine at Birmingham Medical School in 2018. She has completed 2 years of her medical training and during the height of the pandemic she was working in ITU as a health care assistant at Basildon Hospital, looking after COVID-19 patients. Breanna originally undertook work experience at Basildon Hospital while at CCHSG.

When she left CCHSG in 2018, she was awarded the annual Catherine Bullen Foundation Prize which commemorates CCHSG alumna Catherine, who tragically died from illness while on a student medical placement in Namibia. It is presented by Catherine’s parents to a CCHSG student going onto a career within healthcare. Breanna’s account of her first shift in ITU, which she has given us permission to share, proves what a very worthy recipient of the prize she was.



**My First ICU Shift:** “Wow. I’m honestly awestruck at how the regular ITU staff manage 12 hour shifts in full PPE without turning into dehydrated, achy and miserable prunes. The conditions are as tough as the news presents them; for once it’s not all dramatised. Yet in the difficulty of the environment, there is such a sense of camaraderie and everyone working for the good of those patients and their families who are left in the darkness of Covid-19. As an Health Care Assistant, my role was predominantly management of equipment stocks and patient cleaning. Thank goodness for the body suits and gloves. I thought I’d find this challenging to deal with, but it actually ended up being a really rewarding job and the team had good humour throughout.

A highlight was being able to extubate a patient as they made progress and no longer needed their ventilator. My role was to release a syringe to decompress the balloon that held the ventilation tube in the trachea, to pull the tube out and to quickly secure an oxygen mask in place afterwards. As the man gripped my hand with relief I could have cried.

I also spent an hour talking to a sedated patient and stopped her clawing at her tubes; she was Portuguese so didn’t know what I was saying, but seemed soothed by my words. It’s a really odd sensation to be talking to patients that cannot respond to you, but I think it’s so important to treat them as though they can - otherwise you lose a sense of humanity in the situation.

I keep being asked why I’m an HCA if I’m wanting to be a doctor. I for one couldn’t be more grateful to be having this experience. I’ve now got such an admiration for the HCAs, nurses and the shifts and responsibilities they each have. I like to think that even once I’m fully qualified, I’ll remember my HCA days with fondness. Their job is equally if not more valuable than that of a doctor and one that in my opinion, if done properly and with love, can have far more of an impact than any number of prescriptions, diagnoses and therapies.

### **CCHSG Student Voice**

**Emily Chen, Year 12**

Student Voice (*right*) have had to adapt to not having our face-to-face Friday meetings during registration, moving instead to online Microsoft Teams meetings. All the same, we’ve been working to help with the running of the school, even in these very odd times.

Our biggest achievement this year is our rearrangement of the awards system, prompted by general dissatisfaction in upper years about not receiving merits or R awards.

Unsurprisingly, when asked what they considered a suitable reward, the student body decided on food. We also decided to change the basis awards are given on; instead of just rewarding academic achievement, we came up with the acronym AWARD, which stands for Academic achievement, Wider life in the community, Attendance, Respect, and Determination.

We also reassessed the student planner, mainly providing feedback on how often some of the extra pages are really used by students. We also decided on new formatting and cover art for next year.

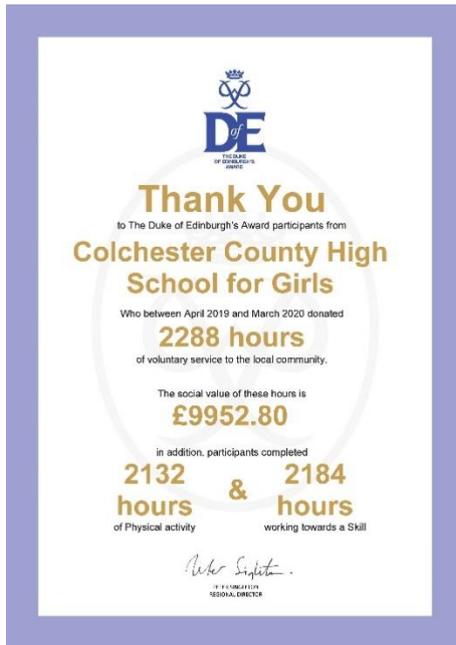
There’s been ups and downs regarding lockdown. Unfortunately, like a lot of things, some of our plans for events and changes had to be put on hold. One of these ideas that we were still discussing was the possibility of a clothes swap for charity that upper years could perhaps



participate in, which is obviously not possible now. However, student voice have been helping coordinate the uncharted territory of home-learning. We were also the first students to see what the reopened school looked like, and how the social distancing guidelines would be implemented. After our initial horror (“what?! No vending machine?!”) we decided how to present this information to the rest of the school, with a pre-recorded presentation and explanation from Mrs Daniels.

Of course, the majority of our meeting time is spent discussing rather ordinary arrangements like hand dryers not working, clocks being late, or pegs in the changing rooms being broken. I can safely say that almost all of the matters raised with Student Voice have been mentioned in meetings and then addressed by the Site Team. Though rather uninteresting to say that we

have put up new clocks and fixed the changing room benches, it does make daily life at CCHSG much easier and is greatly appreciated by my fellow students.



### **Duke of Edinburgh Award in Lockdown**

Although life is different at the moment and we cannot go on expeditions, the DofE participants have been working on their other sections. Some have changed their activity to help other people in this difficult time, others so they can continue the award at home. In recognition of their efforts, participants that complete 3 sections will be awarded a “certificate of achievement” by the award scheme.

### **Volunteering, Physical and Skills Sections**

One student set up a swap table on her driveway for her neighbours, others participated in online research for Zooiverse. When one of our Bronze Award participants

found that she was unable to continue volunteering at her local library, she became an ambassador for the service and promoted the online library services. Other students have been mentoring their siblings and helping with wildlife studies.

As gyms and clubs were closed many students started running, walking, or cycling in their local area, followed online exercise sessions at home or devised their own training programmes. The additional time at home gave many students the opportunity to spend time developing their skills such as playing musical instruments, learning to code and by far the most popular activity - baking. Students have uploaded more than 70 pictures of their cakes, biscuits, and cookies into eDofE.

### **CCHSG Librarians Share the Secret Reading Habits of Teachers....**

As many people were catching up on reading during lockdown, and over the summer, we thought you might like some insight into the reading choices of members of staff. It's always interesting for us as librarians to discover what people are reading and why.

Dr Martin is reading “Breathing Lessons” by Anne Tyler. She chose an Anne Tyler after listening to the author interviewed on a podcast. The book is based on the lives and friendships of one couple. Written with lots of imagery, Dr Martin feels as though she is there with the couple watching them live their lives.

Miss Wiseman has earned herself a merit from the librarians. She has joined a virtual book group! This is a fantastic way to try new books outside your usual comfort zone. Miss Wiseman has just finished “The Beekeeper of Aleppo” by Christy Lefteri. This looks at the

journeys made by refugees to England. She said it put things into perspective by showing how families lives were put at risk as they tried to reach a safer, happier life.

Mr King is reading book 14 in the “Dresden File” series called “Cold Days”. The series follows the story of a wizard who works as a private detective in Chicago... Mr King says “it is pure escapism, an alternate fantasy reality with mystery, magic and action.”

Miss Bowdidge is reading “Crossfire” by Malorie Blackman. It is the fifth book in the ‘Noughts and Crosses’ series. It has reminded her of how much she loved reading the series when she was a child. The story follows the lives of Troy and Liberty, two teenagers caught in the firing line as a result of decisions made by their families and even though the world is a different place for Noughts and Crosses the consequences are just as dangerous....

Mr Paz has also been very busy reading. He started with “Girl, Woman, Other” by Bernardine Evaristo. This is the beautiful and poignant compilation of life stories from the viewpoints of (mostly) women of colour in Britain. He confessed that it made him cry multiple times! Get out your tissues and start reading. He also read “Inglorious Empire” by Shashi which is a ground breaking study examining the dark side of British colonial rule, thanks to overlooked primary sources and newly discovered documents. For his book club Mr Paz has read “Measure of a Man” by Marco Malvaldi. This is an historical novel about Leonardo da Vinci as he attempts to manoeuvre court intrigue, assassinations, financial woes and egos, all the while trying to solve a murder and work on a famous horse statue that was only finished a few decades ago!

### **The CCHSG Librarians**

We are delighted to say that the much anticipated new Library at CCHSG is now nearing completion. It will provide excellent study facilities, computer access and resources. Housed on the first floor of our new teaching block, it will be able to accommodate up to 150 students (post COVID) at any one time.



