

# Northampton High School Alumnae News 2019

## Welcome

We are delighted to bring the 2019 edition of Northampton High Alumnae News to you.

After many years of tireless work in penning the Old Girls' Newsletter, we have picked up the mantle from Carolyn White, Chair of the OGA Committee, to allow her to take editorial retirement after so many years of distinguished service. Our sincere thanks go to Carolyn for her energy and enthusiasm, and invaluable guidance in preparing this edition, and for her editorial contribution to the alumnae network over quite a number of years. Carolyn has written an article for us in the Alumnae Matters section, giving a flavour of the newsletter's development from inception. Carolyn thankfully continues her excellent work as Chair of the OGA Committee, and, with the dedicated committee members, is instrumental in organising the ever-successful annual Reunion Lunch, more of which later.

This 2019 edition has been designed, fulfilled, mailed and funded by the school; it is, however, the alumnae's newsletter, so if you have ideas for editorial input for future editions, or would like to comment on the content, please do get in touch with me at [alum@nhs.gdst.net](mailto:alum@nhs.gdst.net). We are also keen to deliver the newsletter in the format most suited to your preference; therefore please do let me know if you prefer to receive a hard copy through the post or a digital copy via email.

As always, it is a pleasure to hear about your careers in various fields and different pathways. It has been a privilege to welcome a number of High School alumnae to our Hardingstone site this past year, including, most recently, Professor Sasha Roseneil, who very kindly gave her time and expertise so generously at our student Minerva talk and Annual Awards Evening in early November. Professor Roseneil was an alumna of 1984 and is currently Executive Dean of the Faculty of Social



and Historical Sciences and Professor of Interdisciplinary Social Science in the Institute of Advanced Studies at UCL. Students and parents were fascinated to hear about her work as sociologist and gender studies researcher, as well as a group analyst and psychoanalytic psychotherapist.

Caroline Petryszak, Acting Head during Dr Helen Stringer's secondment to Oxford High School GDST, gives a flavour of the accomplishments celebrated at the Awards Evening in her report for 2018/19, and food-for-thought for personal growth and celebrating the individual.

As ever, if you would like to visit us or offer your career insights to our pupils, please do let us know, and if your contact details have changed, please do update these via our form in the Alumnae section of the website at <https://www.northamptonhigh.co.uk/alumnae/contact-details/>.

Wishing you a wonderful Christmas, and a healthy start to the New Year. We hope to see you at the Reunion Lunch on Saturday 25 January 2020.

With best wishes,

**Amanda Wilmot**

**Director of Marketing & Admissions**

# Headlines 2018/19

At the beginning of November, we had the pleasure of coming together to celebrate the academic year 2018-2019, to recognise and applaud the achievements of our students and to thank all those who had contributed to making the three terms so successful.

The theme of the Awards Evening was 'Fearless Individuality' and, although we rightly mentioned the excellent headline examination figures of 59% A\*-A grades at GCSE and 70% A\*-B at A-Level, the focus was very much on the stories of the individuals – on the risks that they had taken, the hurdles that they had overcome and of the opportunities that they had been given along the way.



Mrs Petryszak speaks at Awards Evening

Our guest speaker was Sasha Rose Neil, Professor of Interdisciplinary Social Science and Dean of the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences at UCL. As a High School alumna, she was able to take us on a journey from Derngate to London via Yorkshire and Essex as she spoke about her 'Places of Learning'. In an entertaining and informative speech that touched students and visitors alike, Sasha outlined her academic and professional journey, discussed memories of school, and – picking up on the theme of the evening – spoke of her own relative strengths and weaknesses, her interests and passions and of the unexpected events that have made her the person that she is today.

Being an individual – especially in one's teenage years – can take real courage, but at Northampton High we pride ourselves in knowing and valuing each of our girls and they are encouraged to take

risks, to trust in and develop their own skills and character and to avail themselves of the myriad opportunities on offer. These include extracurricular offerings, with sessions as diverse as Debating Club, Ukelele Group, Language Leaders, Femsoc, Cafe Sci, Yoga and the Sewing Bee, and volunteering opportunities, including the Big Bear Little Bear and Big Sister Little Sister mentoring schemes. Girls have the opportunity, too, to provide academic support as Language Leaders or Number Partners and to be involved in outreach work as Young Philanthropy Ambassadors or Community Sports Leaders.

Opportunities for personal and intellectual growth in the classroom are a given at the High School, and the Awards Evening is a perfect opportunity to appreciate this as girls receive recognition for their public examination results, scholarship, and academic excellence and achievement. This year, we also celebrated the individual successes of a student who won a gold medal and a trip to a prestigious award ceremony in the Biology Olympiad and another who won a much-coveted place at the Newnham College Summer School for Mathematics in Cambridge. We considered, too, the two students who were selected for the English Schools Athletics Competition at Alexandra Stadium, the girl who won gold at the World Para Swimming European Championships and the former pupil who was nominated by the British Film Industry as one of 2019's 'faces to watch'.



Class of 2019 Reunion



# Headlines 2018/19

Personal growth is not simply about solo recognition, though, and all of our students – including those mentioned above – understand the importance of bringing their peculiar skills and character to a group or team setting. The ability to think creatively and to work collaboratively are deemed as essential skills for future employment and lifelong learning and girls are encouraged in these, and in appreciating the value that they can add to a group.



'Fearless' girls on STEM trip in San Francisco

Not surprisingly, therefore, there have been numerous opportunities to work as a group over the past year and we remembered in particular the trips to the University of Leicester for a Brain Awareness Day, Warwick University to track exotic particles using real data from CERN and the Victoria & Albert Museum for the 'Dior Designer of Dreams' exhibition. Longer excursions, too, including Outward Bound courses, Duke of Edinburgh hikes, the World Challenge expedition to Cambodia and other overseas tours, including language exchanges. A particular highlight here was the Erasmus+ project, which involved four other European Schools and had a focus on creativity and digital competency. We are delighted and honoured to be holding the grand finale of this here in Northampton in the spring.

Group achievements include the Young Enterprise company who won the award for the best customer service and best teamwork at the county final and there was a plethora of team successes, especially in sport.



Prof Sasha Roseneil addresses guests

Considering the team that was the staff, student and parent body of 2018-2019, it was impossible not to mention the whole-school celebrations and achievements, including sports days, the Gym and Dance Extravaganza, the production of CATS the Musical and the hosting of BBC's Question Time. For many, however, the 140th Birthday Gala Concert at All Saints' Church was unforgettable.

This event marked the culmination of a year of celebration and brought the whole High School community – both past and present – together. Professor Roseneil spoke of her memories of the centenary celebrations when she was a High School pupil, yet she delighted in her ex-form tutor and language teacher being present for her Awards Evening speech. She will be back at least once a year, to give her time and share her expertise, and to remember and absorb the very special atmosphere that is Northampton High School.

Others will return, too, as they always do, and we will continue to celebrate the individuals who constitute our unique community.

## Caroline

**Caroline Petryszak**  
**Acting Head**

# Academic Success

Northampton High School students achieved outstanding **GCSE** results again this year with the total number of 8/9/A\* grades reaching 39% - a substantial increase on last year's impressive total. We are also delighted that 46% of girls gained 8 or more grade 7-9s (A\*/A's).

Dr Stringer, Headmistress, commented, 'The excellence of our students' results is a constant but I never take it for granted because it means so much for each individual, in terms of what went into achieving it and what opportunities it opens.

The fearless energy with which our girls approach their ambitious academic programmes alongside a dazzling range of creative, performing, sporting and philanthropic pursuits never fails to impress me. I congratulate all the girls on their successes and extend heartfelt thanks to all colleagues who have inspired, encouraged and guided the girls along the way.'

Once again, we were delighted to with students' excellent **A Level** results in the 2019 season. At a time when the media focus is on the human cost of the school league table system, we are proud that our 6.2 students, with the support and nurturing guidance of staff, coped superbly with the pressures of the examination system, with 50% of students achieving all A\*-B grades and 24% earning three or more A\*/A's.



Students collect their A Level results



Students collect their GCSE results

Dr Helen Stringer paid tribute to the girls and staff, commenting, 'I congratulate the girls on their impressive achievements and send out a wholehearted vote of thanks to all my colleagues who have contributed to these successes. The splendid grades speak for themselves, of course, but what I am most proud of is the fact that every individual has compiled a compelling portfolio of qualifications plus skills and experiences with which to launch onto an ambitious path which is all her own.

It is a particular pleasure to see the girls enjoying success in a dizzying range of fields, both traditional and innovative. To illustrate this with just one example, two-thirds of our students studying Maths, Further Maths and Physics achieved A\*/A grades and our success in preparing our aspiring medics was tremendous and, at the same time, almost a fifth of girls are going on to pursue courses in creative and performing arts, including music conservatoires and courses in emerging areas such as fashion imaging.

We know how important it is for our students not only to get a place on the course of their dreams but also to be able to flourish and excel when they get there. I have enormous confidence in every member of the Class of 2019 to do exactly that, because they have already pushed their own boundaries with us, whether that be via an EPQ (with 83% of submissions at A\*/A this year), in Electives and MOOCS or through social action and work experience.'



# Nursery & Junior School News

## A new Head for the Junior School

Chris Bailey has joined the Senior Leadership Team as Head of Northampton High's Junior School, bringing international experience back to his roots in Northamptonshire. Taking up the reins to lead the Nursery and Junior School, Chris said, "I am incredibly excited to be home to my Northamptonshire roots. The school has a reputation for delivering the highest academic outcomes, within a nurturing environment, and I am very proud to help move the school even further forwards in our pursuit of educational excellence".

Chris has a real passion for teaching and learning, which is infectious. His vision is "to empower others, to develop independence and to generate a culture of mutual trust, respect and responsibility". Graduating from Leeds University with an honours degree in Music, and then completing postgraduate training at the University of Northampton, Chris commenced his teaching career in Japan where he taught English at primary level. He then taught at Hall Meadow Primary in Kettering, leaving as Deputy Head. From 2013, he worked at the British School in The Hague in the Netherlands, latterly as Co-Head, and



returned to England in summer 2019. Of his first few weeks at the school, he expounded, "I have thoroughly loved every minute". He continued, "It has been a fantastic term so far; what a warm and tightly knit community I've joined".

Chris is passionate about music in the curriculum and believes that a "singing school is a happy school". He is an ardent advocate of staff development, as he believes this has the greatest impact on delivering the best educational provision for all pupils.

## Nursery strides ahead

We are entering a new & very exciting phase in the development of our Nursery provision. The entire space has been reconfigured and is now bright and modern with an emphasis on natural materials. The updated space now includes a bespoke dining room and serving area just for our youngest pupils. A particularly popular area of the setting is our 'exploration area', a sometimes very messy area where aprons are required!

We now have a Pre-School room led by our Nursery and Forest School teacher, Sarah Waters. This is proving very popular with parents and girls alike, giving them a fantastic preparation for the beginning of their school journey the following September.

We are pleased to have appointed a new Nursery Manager, Clare Bing, who brings a depth of experience along with new ideas to our already strong staff team.



# Collaborative community relations

The Queens' Cross partnerships and outreach programme has gone from strength to strength this year, creating new opportunities for engaging with the local community and high quality volunteering opportunities for our students.

The WHEW! (Women Helping and Empowering Women) project, generously funded by the Community Foundation, continued with a series of STEAM, (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) Masterclasses. Girls from our Junior School were joined by 50 Year 6 girls from local primary schools and took part in interactive workshops including Forensic Science, Coding and the Chemistry of Bath Bombs, which were delivered by our Sixth Form students.

In November, girls from a local academy joined us for our Sixth Form conference, #NowIsTheTime, designed to empower young women to start their working lives with the tools to advance their careers, gain equal pay and to progress without a ceiling. It featured an impressive panel of professionals from local businesses and universities. Noisy Classrooms, who had worked with our Junior School on a previous project, delivered a workshop on effective oracy and debating.



Fun at Science Extravaganza

We have many links with the wider community and encourage student volunteering through our bespoke Sixth Form programme, which trains our students in Young Philanthropy in partnership with the Northamptonshire Community Foundation. Every girl at Northampton High School is encouraged and expected to be involved in a social action programme through our outreach work, which offers a wide range of local opportunities to volunteer. For example, in December, our Drama Prefects visited the Age UK Venton Centre in Northampton town centre, delivering Christmas entertainment. The highlight of the trip was spending time talking to the members of the care home and learning about their fascinating lives. In June, we welcomed 90 Year 5 girls from local state primaries for our highly-reputed WHEW! Science Extravaganza event, delivered by staff and students.

Our popular Sports Enrichment and Disability Awareness Day took place in July with six sporting activities (rugby, netball, hockey, tennis, athletics and swimming) with a swimming masterclass taught by our national standard swimmers. 13 local primary schools and 400 girls joined us, and the girls experienced a number of different sports with expert teaching and guidance, learning that sport is accessible to all.



Students enjoy our Sports Enrichment and Disability Awareness Day



# International STEM appeal

Confident, fearless strides continue by Northampton High pupils in the STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Maths) field. A first for the school, an eco-awareness trip to Zanzibar closed the academic year, giving the girls new insights and understanding and memories to last a lifetime.

The now annual 'Chemistree' Christmas lecture brought Christmas to life with experiments, bangs and flashes, entertaining the whole school and demonstrating the broad appeal of the Science subjects.

The Science faculty worked closely with the Junior School during Science Week and throughout the year to encourage the younger students to embrace the fun side of the subject. This year's theme was 'journeys', and Mrs Hodgetts-Tate went on a journey as she taught every class from Reception to Sixth Form, providing a memorable assembly dressed as Dmitri Mendeleev and cycling around the Senior hall!



Biology students have continued the popular VetMedSoc this year, helping them to prepare for careers in the medical and veterinary fields. Students continue to participate in numerous Science-related endeavours such as Spectroscopy in a Suitcase and the Biology Olympiad run by the Royal Society of Biology and Chemistry Live, visits Scott Bader laboratories in Wollaston and Warwick University (to use real CERN data to track exotic particles) bring the subject to life.

The pupils have entered the #700 competition and also the GDST STEM writing challenge, and have showed great initiative and teamwork through organising events for younger students. Highlights feature visits from Dr Suzie Imber, a trained astronaut, and Nicky Smith, the first female helicopter pilot in the RAF, demonstrating how to fearlessly break the glass ceiling.



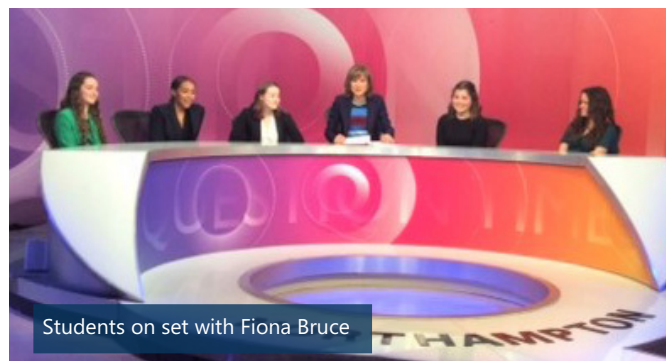
# High School hosts BBC Question Time

BBC One's flagship political debate programme, Question Time, is no stranger to lively political debate, and the programme hosted at Northampton High School in Hardingstone in May 2019 was no exception.

Panellists included Change UK MP, Anna Soubry, MEP and Brexit Party leader, Nigel Farage, Labour's shadow economic secretary to the treasury, Jonathan Reynolds, Amber Rudd, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and businessman and founder of Labour Leave, John Mills.

Members of the local community made up the 150-strong audience, while, during the day, Senior School pupils participated in workshops run by the technical production team, giving a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the highly skilled world of broadcasting.

Students from the School's Model UN and Politics Elective groups went on to meet with Fiona Bruce in her rehearsal, and got behind the TV cameras, seeing for themselves the rigorous demands of broadcast media.



# Staff raise over £1,000 for charity

Members of staff at Northampton High School raised just over £1,125 for The Air Ambulance Service, by holding an array of exciting fundraising activities. These events included an Easter Egg raffle, a 'Pop Up' clothes shop, book sales, and a 12 days of Christmas themed Scavenger Hunt.

The team supports a local cause each academic year, with previous charities including Children are Butterflies and The Cynthia Spencer Hospice. This year's charity is Medical Detection Dogs and a number of exciting fundraising activities are in the planning, including our Santa Fun Run just before Christmas.



# England Cricketer coaches girls to success

Following last year's success of having Ireland international cricketer Ciara Metcalfe on the coaching team for Cricket for Girls, we were delighted to welcome another coach of international pedigree this past summer, Beth Langston. Beth, a current England international, was part of the England squad that successfully

won the cricket World Cup on home soil in 2017.

Beth shared her passion for the game with students and staff alike during the summer term, giving students invaluable insight into the game and encouraging huge personal progress during the season.



## Acclaimed authors inspire

Respected authors Clare Mulley, Pippa Goodhart and Ross Welford, visited Northampton High School as part of the annual Arts Festival in June this year.

The writers delighted in sharing their knowledge with enthusiastic audiences. Thought-provoking questions followed as students' imaginations were piqued by the wonderful world of creative writing and inventive story telling.



Pippa Goodhart meets pupils

## Audiences wowed by CATS the Musical



CATS wowed audiences

This year's theatre production, 'CATS', with a cast from both the Junior and Senior Schools, amazed audiences with their take on the Andrew Lloyd Webber spectacular, featuring the school orchestra (providing all musical accompaniment), dance, gymnastics, first-class singing and acting and even the Community Ladies' Choir.

## NewWay scoops County Awards

Northampton High's company took home prizes for Best Customer Young Enterprise Service and Best Teamwork at the Young Enterprise County Finals this spring.

The team was in elite company, as one of just five finalists qualifying for this stage of the competition. The final was gruelling, with the girls having to submit a company report, give a presentation about their business, set up their trade stand displaying their product and attend an intense group interview as part of the competitive final stage.

With their innovative and eco-friendly bottle lamps, NewWay broke boundaries and achieved new heights.



NewWay scoops County Awards

# Juggling passion for writing with the love of teaching

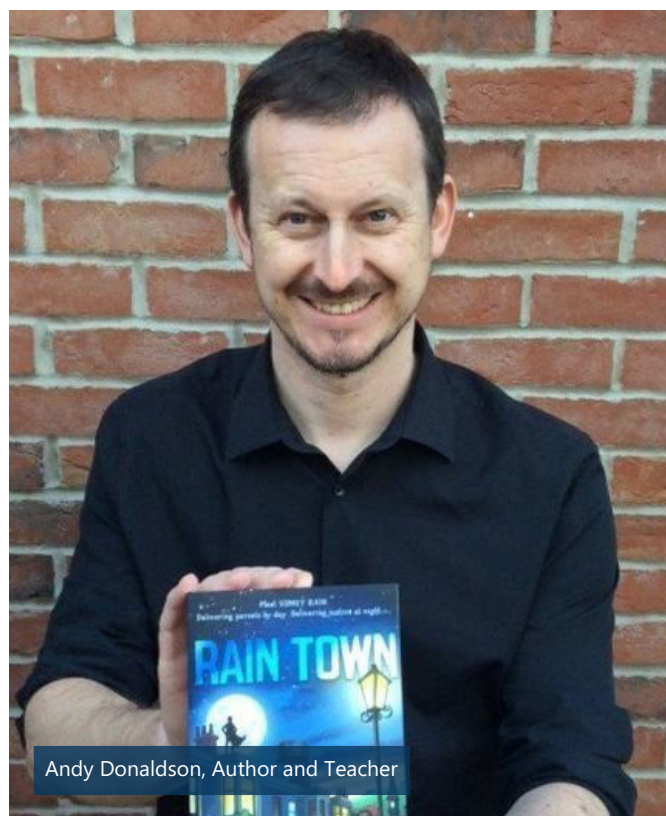
Mr Donaldson, Head of History, has made his exciting debut as an author with the hilarious 'Rain Town'. After years of aspiring to become an author, Andy finally decided to put pen to paper for his first book after being inspired reading his young children bedtime stories.

In an interview with BBC Radio Coventry & Warwickshire's John Fox, Andy explained that the books he would read to his children didn't make him or his children laugh, and failed to make them think about feelings and emotions. "It's a magical time reading stories at night with your kids, and you want to enjoy the story too", Andy explained to Fox, and this was the final inspiration he needed to pursue his dream and enter the world of writing. Thus, Rain Town was born, and launched in early 2019 by Troubador Publishers.

"Reading is massively important", comments Mr Donaldson. "At our School we have several libraries, and the kids are encouraged to read all of the time. You can instantly tell (when teaching) by the style of a student's writing whether they are a reader or not, it shows through so clearly. Reading is absolutely essential".

Rain Town follows the lives of Sidney Rain, an ordinary man in an ordinary town, and his son Stanley, an ordinary boy with ordinary friends. When a mysterious theft takes place at his school, Stanley and his friends turn detective to help solve the mystery, whilst Sidney seeks the help of his friends to try and save his soul.

With a prequel, 'Here come the Rains again' already in progress, the future looks bright for this exciting new author.





# Unique UK debut of YULI: The Carlos Acosta Story with Director Icíar Bollain

A special preview screening, hosted at the University of Northampton, was held in April this year, ahead of the film's UK premier at the Royal Opera House in London, which was simultaneously streamed live in cinemas across the country.

The event was made all the more memorable by Director, Icíar Bollain, travelling to Northampton to attend, bringing to life the creative process for the Northampton High girls. Senior School students from U3 to 6.2 were treated to the film screening following a tour of the University. Whilst pupils were spell-bound by the film, Sixth Form girls had the unique opportunity of interviewing Icíar in Spanish, discussing the role of women in the film industry and learning about the film making process.

The film is based on Carlos Acosta's autobiography, *No Way Home: a Cuban Dancer's Story*. The Cuban dancer broke boundaries and became the first black Principal dancer of The Royal Ballet. He was the Company's Principal Guest Artist for 17 years, and retired from classical ballet in 2016. Acosta takes up the appointment of Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet in January 2020.

Written by Paul Laverty (I, Daniel Blake), the film won best screenplay at the San Sebastian International Film Festival and received five nominations for the Spanish 'Goya' awards including Best New Actor for Carlos Acosta, Best Cinematography and Best Adapted Screenplay.



The film's promotional poster

Inspired by the life of  
legendary ballet stars Carlos Acosta



NHS staff and students before the premiere



Ms Diez with Director Icíar Bollain



# Northampton High celebrates excellence with Sports Presentation Evening

We were delighted to celebrate the sporting achievements of our students at our premier sporting event, our Sports Presentation Evening, in April. In an event that celebrates sporting excellence, students from both the Junior and the Senior Schools were honoured for their contributions to school sport, as well as their achievements in their sports in their leisure time.



Since the start of the academic year, the school's sports teams reached three National Finals, five Regional Finals and became County Champions in two age groups across a range of sports. This is in addition to the exceptional achievements of students boasting titles in a wide variety of sports such as Equestrian, Karate and Skiing.



We were excited to be joined by three stars from the sporting world to help celebrate. Northampton Saints stars, Jamie Gibson and Luther Burrell, were joined by Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist Netballer, Eboni Usoro-Brown, to speak passionately to an enthralled audience about their careers, their influences and what makes them strive to achieve greatness.

Congratulations were in order for all of the deserving young athletes who picked up awards during the evening, including Georgie Forde-Wells, who was named as the school's Sports Personality of the Year, the U16 Netballers who were named as Team of the Year, and Paralympic and Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist, Ellie Robinson, who was awarded the school's Exceptional Achievement Award.





# Junior Digital Leaders

Pupils from our Junior School are now Digital Leaders after joining an innovative new internet safety programme from UK charity, Childnet International.

Launched in September 2015, the Childnet Digital Leaders Programme aimed to empower young people to champion digital citizenship and digital creativity within their schools and to educate their peers, parents and teachers about staying safe online. The programme was initially aimed at secondary schools and, after seeing incredible success, the programme was launched for primary schools in October 2016.

Training now complete, our girls are 'Digital Leaders', delivering impactful eSafety messages in school by providing training, resources and activities to other pupils and their teachers.

Supported by Facebook and the European Union, the programme also gives young people opportunities to engage with leading technology companies and have a say in creating a better internet for the future.



Our Junior Digital Leaders give a presentation

# International soprano delivers Voice Masterclass

The world-renowned soprano, Alison Roddy, visited Northampton High in January and June this year to provide a Voice Masterclass for High School girls.

Alison, who has recently performed as soprano soloist in Richard Strauss' Four Last Songs, Canteloube's Songs of the Auvergne and Mahler's 2nd, 4th and 8th Symphonies, as well as in Handel's Messiah at Symphony Hall in Birmingham. Alison is an expert singer and teacher of the Italian bel canto method, and she demonstrated how one excellent vocal technique enables singers to move seamlessly between opera and musical theatre.

Opening her Masterclass singing the beautiful aria, 'O mio babbino caro' from the opera Gianni Schicchi by Puccini, Alison continued with a work well known to High School girls, Climb Every Mountain from the well-loved musical The Sound of Music by Rodgers and Hammerstein.

The Senior School soloists were given a thorough insight into the world of singing professionally, each student being given bespoke advice for their individual voice and technique.



Alison Roddy delivers her masterclass to students

# Gala Concert closes a year of 140th Birthday celebrations



Rebecca von Lipinski joined by Sixth Form student Théa

Over the course of the last year, staff, students and friends of the school helped celebrate what was a milestone birthday in the history of Northampton High School.

The 140th Birthday was celebrated with an array of exciting events, including Arts Festival week, an 1878 Reception at 78 Derngate and 44 Derngate, and the Old Girls' Association Reunion Lunch amongst many others. The 140th Birthday Gala Concert was hosted at the beautiful All Saints' Church in the heart of Northampton, where current students and staff collaborated with Orchestra of the Swan, an English professional chamber orchestra of international renown, to produce a spectacular evening of music.



Mr Nathan conducts the orchestra

All Saints' Church, historically the spiritual home of the High School, saw students play alongside acclaimed professionals such as David Le Page, violinist and Concert Master, Rebecca von Lipinski, Soprano, and James Dutton, Flautist, to produce some truly breathtaking performances that will certainly live long in the audience's memories.

A truly memorable evening to help celebrate a historic year in the life of Northampton High School.

Thanks also went to friend of the school and our former governor, John Griff, who did a superb job of being compere for the evening, Father Oliver and his team at All Saints' Church, and, students and staff and Orchestra of the Swan for a stunning evening of musical entertainment.



Dr Stringer, Headmistress



# Feature: A global outlook on education

In the globally connected world, we would like our children to emerge from education as a confident, independent young adult, with a full and life-long appreciation and understanding of other cultures.

As schools, with our wider communities, it is our joint responsibility to deliver these attributes, as well as many more, to prepare our students for the changing world. Learning to appreciate and absorb cultural differences is a key component of the rich curriculum and guiding ethos at the High School. The uptake of GCSE languages has dropped across the country since it was made optional in the 2000's. Against this national backdrop, the School celebrates the European Day of Languages each year (this year with a baking challenge as part of



the activities). There are also language exchanges, a L4 residential to Normandy, cultural visits and an exciting Erasmus+ project involving schools from Germany, Hungary, Latvia and Portugal. The High School hosts international university fairs and there are numerous cultural visits, providing a myriad of opportunities for students to develop a global perspective. All students choose a language to study to at least GCSE level, and many choose more than one, continuing on to A Level studies.

The debate is not about which languages we should teach. Language learning is more than mastering a language, it is about mastering the skills for language acquisition, transferrable to other languages in the future. Crucially, it is about developing the cultural awareness - a vital transferable skill, indispensable in international business negotiations. It is part of the armoury of our ambitious young people.

This is why, when we heard the news we would be receiving the highly-regarded British Council National eTwinning Award at the beginning of October, there was much reason for celebration in School.



The award was in recognition of a project which involved working in partnership with pupils in five other countries - Spain, France, Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia using digital collaborative tools. The project was entitled 'Don't Judge a Person by a Face #eTwinclusion!' and the judging panels commented about the award-winning project: 'this eTwinning project emanates commitment, collaboration and community engagement. The students engaged enthusiastically in the universal theme of inclusion as it impacts at all ages. Through the diverse and extensive use of technology, face-to-face encounters with their communities, artists and parents, they have related high impact outcomes and legacy...in this excellent project'.

To secure the eTwinning National Award is a real honour for the students and teachers who participated in this project and many others. The eTwinning project has brought a broad range of benefits to pupils, and is an outstanding example of the international flavour enjoyed in school, as a commitment to developing pupils' global outlook in these times of change.

# Alumnae Matters: Friends old and new enjoy Reunion Lunch

Over 120 guests travelled from near and far to share 2019's Reunion Lunch at the High School.

Former pupils and staff of the Derngate and Hardingstone sites delighted in catching up, creating an atmosphere filled with palpable excitement, felt from the minute guests walked through the door. Guests recognised and located friends from their year groups, and caught up after what was, for some, over 30 years since they had seen each other. The lively conversations continued until the very last moments of the event, with former pupils and staff reminiscing over their own special memories at school.

Headmistress, Dr Helen Stringer, referred in her welcome to the precious friendships made during school years, emphasising their importance, and encouraging former and current pupils to value and nurture them. Friendships made at the High School endure, and can be enjoyed for a lifetime. Our thanks go to Carolyn White, former Maths teacher and Chair of the OGA, and the dedicated OGA Committee, for making the lunch a successful highlight of the Alumnae calendar.

The 2020 Reunion Lunch will take place on [Saturday 25 January](#). Please see information on page 24 for more information on how to book tickets.





# Alumnae Matters: Calling Northampton High Alumnae...

The Northampton High alumnae network is growing each year and it has immense value to the alumnae members, as well as the girls currently at the school.

This unique community is not only a way to keep in touch with old friends and classmates, but to make new personal and professional connections across the career sectors and age groups, locally, nationally and internationally.

We have been delighted to welcome a range of alumnae into school over the past year – to our Medical Sciences Conference, to Enterprise Week workshop days, to career speed-networking events, to Arts Festival events, Awards Evenings, sports clinics, the list goes on.

If you would be keen to visit the school, and share your experiences and expertise with our current pupils – from Nursery to Sixth Form – we would love to hear from you. Please see page 24 for details on how you can stay in touch with us.



# Alumnae Matters: Join Rungway

To enable every Sixth Form student to connect with the wider Northampton High and GDST alumnae family, Trust has teamed up with [rungway.com](https://www.rungway.com), the mentoring app – so now, at the touch of a button, students have a way of asking some of the burning questions they have about study and life after school, anywhere at any time. More than 1,000 GDST alumnae are now connecting with each other on a specialised mentoring app.

One year after launch, Rungway app has more than 1,800 users and some 12,000 interactions. And now, the app is offering a new search function, which allows users to search for topics, and see all the great advice on that subject that has already been shared.

During the past year many questions have been answered, from requests for relevant work experience to queries on the efficacy of attending

university open days in Year 12. There has been advice on volunteering programmes in South America and a discussion on the merits of systems engineering as a career.

Rungway is one of a range of future-focused initiatives for Sixth Formers at GDST schools. To join the community please go to <https://app.rungway.com/gdst/request-invite>.



# Newsletter Beginnings



Carolyn White

I came back to the High School as a Maths teacher in 1980, having left as a pupil in 1965, and got to know some of the members of staff who had taught me on a completely different level. This included, amongst others: Mrs Paulina Nichol, who taught Speech and Drama, and was a fount of much very interesting gossip; Mrs Gill Allen, who was Miss Williams when I was a pupil, and who is still a great supporter of the OGA; Miss Joan Morgan, who became a regular correspondent when she retired; and Mrs Wanda Davies, who seemed to be able to teach anything – perhaps apart from Maths and Science!

Wanda had also been a pupil at the School and had some very entertaining stories of the School during the war when the facilities were very different from how they are today. At the time that I returned, Wanda was the member of staff who was on the Old Girls' Association Committee as the person liaising between the School and the Old Girls.

At that time there was some sort of a bulletin that was sent out to members of the Old Girls' Association and I can still remember her standing on the stage reciting the names of all the villages in Northamptonshire where these former pupils lived. She had a lovely speaking voice and this recitation was an entertainment in itself – we all listened spellbound! The letters were displayed in alphabetical order at the front of the stage and the idea was that, in order to save postage, present pupils would line up to collect the envelopes and deliver them. How many of these actually reached

their destination is a matter for conjecture. I suspect that some of these languished at the bottom of satchels for some time. When Wanda retired in 1989 she persuaded me as a former pupil and present member of staff to take on, what she assured me, were the very limited duties of the Staff liaison person. Much as I wanted to, I found it impossible to say no and so began my tenure on the Old Girls' Committee.

At the time, at the reasonable cost of £5 for Life Membership, girls joined the Old Girls' Association if they wanted to keep in touch and, as I never got round to doing this, I was completely in the dark as to the activities of the Association. I was given a typed list of around five or six hundred names and addresses, and these were copied onto labels to stick on envelopes containing information about events at the School, such as concerts and the Annual School Play. The only event that the OGA ran was a sherry reception before the Play and the first time I attended there were more committee members than there were former pupils at the play!

The first year I took up the reins I put together something about what was going on at the School and updates of former members of staff and ex-pupils. I printed it off at school, labelled and stuffed the envelopes. I baulked at copying Wanda's rendition of the villages, so I stuck stamps on those that were out of the town and drove round posting the ones in the town. That was the first and only year that I did that – I think I probably spent more on petrol than it would have cost to post them! The School bore the cost of the paper and printing and the Annual Membership fee covered the cost of the posting.

When we moved to the new site at Hardingstone in 1992, I continued to write the Newsletter copy, print it, print the labels, stuff, affix stamps and post the envelopes to the members of the OGA, with help from the rest of the committee. We had a 'stuffing envelopes' session in A4 which helped to ease the burden. In time, we had a database and I was charged with keeping that up to date, but it did help that the computer department now ran off the labels for me.



# Newsletter Beginnings

The School becoming a member of the GDST saw the arrival of the next big change. Instead of choosing to join the Association, every leaver automatically became a member. This meant that the GDST assumed the members' data, and there would be no further £5 membership fees payable. To cover the costs of the Newsletter, the GDST agreed to cover the cost of the printing and the postage and, so far, we have managed to keep to this agreement, despite the change of personnel at Trust headquarters.

Mrs Jo Fitzroy-Ezzy, who joined the staff as Marketing Director and also had a liaison role between the School and the GDST, was a big help in setting up the version of the Newsletter that you get today. The glossy paper, coloured photos and impressive layout are things that I could never have achieved so I owe her many thanks for her help in this area.



2018 was my final year as writer and editor of the Old Girls' Association Newsletter. It was a considerable relief to me when the School agreed to take over all aspects of this publication and it is with great thanks that I have handed over to Mrs Amanda Wilmot, the Director of Marketing and Admissions. Amanda has special responsibility for the Alumnae Relations and has been of great help to me, and the rest of the committee.

In future, the cost of this publication will probably have to be borne by the School, and I know that Amanda will be asking if people would be happy to receive it by email. We now have quite a good collection of email addresses, particularly of those members who come to the Annual Lunch, and the latest edition of the Newsletter is always on the School's website under Alumnae. However, we are aware that not everybody has an email address or access to the internet, so we shall be continuing to send it out to those people by post.

I would like to thank the rest of the committee for their help and support. In particular, Mrs Alex Down, who I persuaded to take over from me to liaise between the School and the committee when I retired in 2010, and Mrs Anne Rodwell who has done an excellent job as Secretary for much of the last thirty years!

Best wishes,

Carolyn White

## Where are they now...

In future editions, we would like to put a call out to alumnae in our 'Where are they now...' section.

If you would like to be featured as in this section, please get in touch. Likewise, if you are looking for old friends or would like to contribute to this section, or any element of the newsletter, please do get in touch.



# Staff News

We said goodbye to a number of colleagues at the end of the academic year, including **Mr David Norman**, **Mr Godfrey Green** and **Mrs Lucy Flannagan** who had joined us on short-term contracts.

**Mrs Elizabeth Arkell** moved to Oundle School, where she has achieved her ambition of becoming Director of Academic Music after three years at the High School. Mrs Arkell is a highly accomplished keyboard player, both organ and piano, and we were fortunate to be able to hear her play regularly as a sensitive and encouraging accompanist to our instrumental players. Her intelligent and thoughtful approach as a musician and mentor will be missed by many students.

**Miss May Balchin** left us after two years to take up a position as a Classics teacher closer to her family home in Bath. Miss Balchin completed her induction year with us and became an inspiration to many students who appreciated her clarity of thought and her passionate approach to the teaching of Latin and Classical Civilisation.

**Miss Karen Bricknall** took up a position as a full-time Teaching Assistant in a local school, having served as a Creative Arts Technician at the High School. She was a great advocate of performing arts in general, and particularly supportive of school concerts and productions.

**Mrs Erica Ford** retired from the PE Department at the end of the last academic year. Joining us in 2010, she quickly established herself as a key member of the sports faculty and her reputation as a netball coach developed year on year, until, in her final year with us, she achieved her ambition of taking her team to the National finals, where the school placed 12th overall.

From Erica Ford on her retirement 'I have many happy memories of Northampton High School, as well as a few 'Phew, glad I don't have to do that anymore!' moments! (early morning clubs and early starts for GDST Rallies being the highest on this list). I will miss the camaraderie and the support from colleagues when things don't quite go to plan, the Rallies, the weekends at Condover

Hall, the Sports Awards evenings, the Gymnastic and Dance Displays but most of all the girls who help make all these events worthwhile. They have been truly amazing, and I thank them for making me want to get up and do all of the above every year! Whilst I have retired from school life, my passion for sports and in particular netball will continue through coaching and volunteering. I am looking forward to being able to travel outside the school holidays and spend more time with the family. Thank you, Northampton High, for keeping me (mostly) out of mischief for the last nine years!'

**Miss Emily Gibbard** left us after a three-term contract as a Graduate Sports Assistant. A High School alumna, she moved on to pursue a career in education and secured her first teaching position at the Royal Latin School in Buckingham.

**Ms Zeliah Gunal** left her position as an IT Technician to take up a full-time role in the mobile phone industry as a Technical Support Guru. She will be missed by pupils and staff for her calm and supportive approach to resolving IT issues.

**Mrs Jo Hackett** left Northampton High to begin her exciting new role as Director of Sport at The Loughborough Schools Foundation. Mrs Hackett joined the school in 2010 with the brief of developing sport and the range and breadth of fixtures and extracurricular activities on offer at the school. Her influence went far wider than the school itself, however, as she became GDST Consultant Teacher for Sport in 2016. Her legacy will be a full and blossoming sports curriculum both here and in the wider Trust, where she championed the development of cricket in particular.

**Miss Sarah Hanlon**, our School Counsellor, left us after nearly 4 years to take up a new role in Manchester and to begin her Masters studies. Sarah is a highly accomplished and thoughtful counsellor whose holistic approach to mental wellbeing enabled her to work well with the rest of the wellbeing team to support our students in times of need.



# Staff News

**Mrs Kim Li-Lakkappa** successfully completed her treatment for breast cancer and has consciously taken time out to recuperate fully. She joined us as a Biology Teacher four years ago, having been a High School parent for several years beforehand. Mrs Li-Lakkappa brought her inventive teaching style to the classroom and a 'can-do' attitude and energy to everything that she did. An active member of FONHS, she was instrumental in many fundraising campaigns and a highlight of her time at the High School was organising and preparing students for their trip to Zanzibar earlier this year.

**Mrs Dawn McCue** left her position of Catering Manager after almost 12 years' service to the school. During this time, she managed the implementation of many changes to school catering, including the introduction of compulsory lunches, the new sandwich room, the refurbished dining room and the very popular salad and jacket potato bar.

**Mrs Stephanie Sinclair** left the Junior School after a year for family reasons. It was, she said, the best year of her teaching career, but her husband's career forced a move back to Suffolk, and she and her two daughters, who also joined us at the High School, bade a sad farewell.

**Mrs Jo Webb** left us to follow a slightly different direction as a Teacher of Mathematics at Moulton. Mrs Webb's highly-respected skills as a teacher and sports coach translated effortlessly into the classroom, both as a PE specialist and also as a teacher of Psychology for a number of years. We are sure her new Maths pupils will benefit from her calm and methodical approach.

We also bade farewell to three minibuss drivers: **Mr Paul Jinks, Mr Chris Mannion and Mr Alex Smith**. As the first dedicated team of school minibuss drivers, they helped to develop the service over the past few years, and we now feel confident to introduce an extended late bus service.

**Governors:** There have been no changes to the makeup of the Governing Board this year but I would like to take this opportunity to thank **Mrs Deirdre Newham, Chair of Governors**, and all members of the board for their unstinting contribution and support.

**Staff Long Service Award 20 Years** – Debbie Hill & Jo Purvey-Tyrer

**15 Years** – Russell Attwood, Kevin Boom, Dee Brown, Kathryn Farrar, Charlie Hurst, Rebecca Hymers and Rina Laubscher

**10 Years** – Heather Berry, Alex Down, Sonia Fraser, Keith Sampson



# Alumnae Obituaries



## Mrs Patricia Perrett, Head of Spring Hill

Mrs Pat Perrett was a highly respected Head of Spring Hill for many years. She was a capable, forward thinking school leader who always had the best interests of the children at heart. She was keen for the school to be kept up to date with current thinking but at the same time ensured that all new ideas were discussed thoroughly and that no rash decisions or changes were made.

She always impressed upon the staff and parents that as an independent school we could afford to look, listen and learn before needing to make decisions about new practices. Mrs Perrett was Head at the time that the National Curriculum was introduced and worked hard to ensure that the staff were kept up to date with the changes on the horizon.

Mrs Perrett was a highly organised Head and for most of her time at the school she was also a class teacher for the oldest girls. In a time before emails and mobile phones she started each day with a page of closely written notes attached to a clipboard. As the day progressed particular children and staff were spoken to, management and teaching tasks were completed and these written reminders were neatly crossed off her



daily list. She was the Head when the move to the new site at Hardingstone was first announced and in this capacity attended the initial meetings to discuss planning for the new buildings. The paper plans must have looked so modern and ambitious after working at the beautiful, but sometimes impractical, Spring Hill building.

Mrs Perrett left Spring Hill in 1990 and died in the Autumn of 2018.



# Alumnae Obituaries

## **Marcia Williams (née Field), Baroness Falkender**

News of the death, on 6 February 2019, of Baroness Falkender has ignited many memories of a long-gone political era and the role in Harold Wilson's administration of Lady Falkender, an Alumna of the High School.

The nature of Lady Falkender's role, as Political Secretary to the Prime Minister, has long been a source of controversy. It was said that, as a kind of eminence grise of the Prime Minister, she exerted a disproportionate influence over Mr Wilson from behind the scenes of elected power. Episodes such as the publication of the Lavender List brought accusations that she misused her position and the trust Mr Wilson placed in her. Her retort was a successful court action for libel. (It would not be the first time that a Secretary would take down dictated notes from her boss in her own hand!) These dramas, worthy of a modern soap opera, disguise the fact that, in the febrile world of post-war British politics, Marcia Williams's career was a remarkable achievement. This was a man's world and women had yet to make significant inroads into the corridors of power. During the whole of her active career (1956-83), there were never more than 29 women MP's in the House of Commons, occupying less than 5% of seats, and, when she took up her role, it would be two years before women would be allowed to sit in the House of Lords.

In this world, Marcia Williams achieved a notable position of influence, most particularly during the Labour governments of 1964-70 and 1974-76. Despite the atmosphere of in-fighting and jockeying for position, which is a familiar feature of political life, especially at its highest echelons, Mrs Williams was able to gain and retain the trust of Harold Wilson for over a quarter of a century. Marcia and some contemporaries ascribed this to her readiness to speak the truth as she saw it when others around him were happy telling him what he wanted to hear, alongside her ability to steady him when the going got tough. In 1974, she was herself



elevated to a peerage, as Baroness Falkender, and sat in the Lords for the next four decades, becoming the longest-serving female Labour peer. After her retirement from her work at Downing Street, Lady Falkender worked as a political journalist for the Mail on Sunday and continued to manage Harold Wilson's private business until his death in 1995.

It is often hard to see beneath the surface of a prominent political personality. Harder still, often, to see the young person beneath the veneer of fame. But Ann Burrows (nee Cauldwell) remembers Marcia Field, as she then was, vividly. As Sixth Formers together in Derngate in the late 1940's, Ann remembers Marcia as a quiet, calm and studious young woman, but someone who also had a sense of fun and adventure. The pair enjoyed singing 'Three Little Maids from School' in the School Concert and, when Marcia visited her friend in Grendon in 1949, she arrived on the back of her brother Tony's motorbike! Intriguingly, it is said that Marcia was influenced by one of her teachers at the High School, the Hon Janet Margesson. The daughter of a Conservative Cabinet Minister, Janet Margesson was a prominent Labour supporter. It is tempting to speculate on the impact this encounter may have had on Marcia William's decision to enter political life and service to the Labour Party after her graduation.

# Secure your tickets - Reunion Lunch, Saturday 25 January 2020

The annual Northampton High Reunion Lunch is a highlight of the year, when alumnae from both the Derngate and Hardingstone school sites get together for a delicious two-course meal and catch up with friends old and new.

As in previous years, the Lunch will take place from 12 noon to 2.30 pm in the Dining Room at the School's Hardingstone site. Ticket prices have been held once again at £12 per person.

To book tickets, please go to <https://www.northamptonhigh.co.uk/alumnae/news-and-events/> or return the booking form insert in this newsletter as soon as possible. For any queries, please contact [alum@nhs.gdst.net](mailto:alum@nhs.gdst.net).

We look forward to seeing many of our alumnae community on 25 January.

## Contact Us

For changes of address, alumna updates, all alumnae queries and contributions to the newsletter, please contact:

**Tel:** 01604 765765    **Email:** [alum@nhs.gdst.net](mailto:alum@nhs.gdst.net)

Or alternatively write to:

**Alumnae Relations, Northampton High School,  
Newport Pagnell Road, Hardingstone,  
Northampton, NN4 6UU**

**Website:** Updating your details could not be easier – either via emailing [alum@nhs.gdst.net](mailto:alum@nhs.gdst.net) or by completing the online form here <https://www.northamptonhigh.co.uk/alumnae/contact-details/>.

If you would like to share any notices about your own alumnae events or meet ups, please let us know and we can post the information on the Facebook pages for you.

**YouTube:** Please Google search 'Northampton High School GDST' to be able to view our YouTube channel

**LinkedIn:** We plan to further develop the Northampton High LinkedIn account, to allow alumnae and friends of the school connect across the platform. Watch out for further information. [linkedin.com/in/northampton-high-school-gdst-13bb1457](https://www.linkedin.com/in/northampton-high-school-gdst-13bb1457)

**Facebook:** Follow us on Facebook - [@NorthamptonHigh](https://www.facebook.com/NorthamptonHigh).

There is also a very active alumnae group account for those who attended the Derngate site - [@NorthamptonHighforGirlsDerngate](https://www.facebook.com/NorthamptonHighforGirlsDerngate).



NORTHAMPTON  
HIGH SCHOOL

GDST  
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

We believe in our girls. And they believe in themselves.