



Northampton High School

Alumnae News - 2021/22

Welcome



Opportunities to reconnect with our alumnae over the last year were sadly reduced due to Covid and the difficulties to host events. Through our last Alumnae Newsletter, delivered in May 2021, we were able to connect the past with the present, to share celebrations, news

and staff updates. Connecting on a more personal level is also important and Old Girls Association (OGA) committee meetings took place during the year, along with the very important Reunion Lunch team! The Reunion Lunch has been held annually in January for a number of years; due to Covid we were forced to cancel 2021's event, and given the continued Covid situation, the committee took the wise decision to postpone the Lunch from January 2022 to the summer 2022, when, hopefully, we will see the severity of the latest strain reduced. With (hopefully) warmer weather and brighter skies, it will be a wonderful opportunity to open windows and doors for ventilation and open the school to friends old and new. More about how to book your tickets for the Lunch in the newsletter.

Despite Covid, life at Northampton High continues to be vibrant and fast-paced. Whether in school physically or working remotely, the community thrives on a rich timetable of extracurricular activities, events, speakers, experiences and festivities. At the time of writing we are looking forward to celebrating the school's 144th birthday in May, and are preparing for our annual whole school birthday assembly, when the Head Girl and the youngest pupil jointly cut the cake and share in birthday celebrations (including cake for all!).



The delicious birthday cake for our 143rd birthday, celebrated in 2021

This autumn will mark the 30th anniversary of being based on the current Hardingstone site - a milestone and an occasion of note. We are fortunate to occupy this purpose-built modern site with generous grounds and fabulous facilities, and make good use of every inch of the campus.



The school being built in its new home of Hardingstone

We have been fortunate to reconnect with a number of alumnae over the past year who have delivered virtual talks, made impromptu visits and have given presentations and run workshops. We welcomed, amongst others this year, Maddie Skillen, Rosie Saxton and Claudia Pieczka - Maddie gave an inspiring talk on Women in Tech Careers which was part of our involvement in the Erasmus+ project on Equal Opportunities. Likewise Rosie and Claudia, both recent alumnae, gave their insights as part of the same project but on British Sign Language. Sally Kettle, transatlantic rower, author ('Sally's Odd at Sea') and speaker, presented books for our library with exciting news of books soon to be published.

Paralympian swimmer and alumna Ellie Robinson MBE joined us for our recent Sports Presentation Evening, and gave an inspirational speech as well as an audience Q&A #AskEllie, before awarding the prizes and certificates to this year's deserving winners. For more information and to see all our school news, visit www.northamptonhigh.co.uk/news-and-views/.

Connection is a two-way process, and we always welcome news, suggestions and visits from our alumnae - whether from near or far. We love to celebrate your successes, share in your progress and support you through your challenges. Do keep in touch via GDST Life, LinkedIn or by email. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Adele O'Doherty
Acting Head

Committee News

Firstly, on behalf of the Old Girls' Association Committee, I would like to express our thanks to Carolyn White for her many years of dedicated service to the Old Girls, and for her time in post as Chair of the Committee. We thank Carolyn most sincerely for her long and distinguished tenure.

As the newly-elected Chair, I thought I would take the opportunity to introduce myself, and to tell you a little bit about me and my time at Northampton High.

I work at the school as a Maths teacher, however my time at the school started many years ago in 1977, when I joined Miss Morgan's class as Alex Verden in Towerfield, when the school was still on Derngate. One of the first things I remember about the school is our whole-school trip to Chester - by train - for the centenary celebrations! For those of you who were not on that trip - can you imagine - the whole school!

Anyway, after moving into the Senior School during Miss Lightburne's headship, and studying for O and A Levels, I left in 1986 to study Maths and Psychology at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London. Following my PGCE studies at the University of Cambridge, I took an around the world trip, working in Auckland, New Zealand, for 6 months.

On my return home, I started my first teaching position at Vandyke Upper School in Leighton Buzzard. After a short break from teaching, I returned to the High School in 2009, commencing my time as a teacher in the Maths department, with the privilege of working with my former Maths teacher, Carolyn White. Carolyn had sparked my enjoyment of the subject at school and inspired me to train as a teacher. It was both strange yet rather lovely to see people like Di Claridge, Will Asbury and John Glover in the staff room when I came for interview! Since then both my daughters have attended the Senior School, with my younger daughter now in the Sixth Form. It was Carolyn who suggested that I join the Old Girls' Association Committee, and the rest, as they say, is history!

One of the main roles of the OGA is to organise the Annual Reunion Lunch, which we are pleased to be finally able to do again following Covid. We all hope that you will be able to join us, even though it is to be held at a different time of year this time.

Please do keep in touch, and we hope to see you in July!

Alex Down
Teacher & OGS Committee Member

An association of almost 70 years for former OGA Chair



As I started to write this article, I realised just how long I have been associated with Northampton High School in three different capacities. Firstly, as a pupil, starting in Spring Hill in 1953 at the age of six in Mrs Mossman's form, UTrM (Upper Transition M).

I have never been quite sure what we were transitioning between, but maybe they had to call the years between Kindergarten and First Form something! Some of my friends had started at the age of four in Kindergarten which, for many years, was Miss Cook's form. I'm sure that some of you reading this will have no idea what I am talking about, but I'm sure that it will bring back memories for others.

Spring Hill was a lovely square white house on the corner of Cliftonville opposite the Accident and Emergency Entrance of Northampton General Hospital. I remember reciting tables, copying handwriting cards and having an enforced nap at lunchtime on rugs but, actually, not a lot else! Then up to Derngate, first in Towerfield and then in Main School, as it was always called. The Headmistress of the School at that time was Miss Marsden, followed by Miss Lightburne who came when I was in 6.2.

An association of almost 70 years for former OGA Chair

I then went to Nottingham University in 1966 where I read Maths. One of the great things about Northampton High was that you were always encouraged to pursue your interests. There were no thoughts about girls not being able to do Maths and Physics, and I know that it is still the same today. Having taught for three years at the Boys' Grammar School (now Northampton School for Boys), I stayed at home having three children over the next eight years.

In 1980, I applied for the job of my dreams - teacher of Mathematics at Northampton High. Miss Lightburne was still Headmistress and the interview was very informal. Just a chat really! I was given an Upper Third Form and my classroom was Room 11 in the attic. While my children were still young I concentrated on teaching and looking after my form, but later I took on more responsibility on the administration side. During the last two years of Miss Lightburne's time as Head, Mrs Gill Hicks and I started to do the School timetable.

When Mrs Mayne came in 1988 she said that she was happy for us to carry on doing it and then I gradually took on more and more, taking over cover for absent staff, examination and invigilation timetables. My third hat was as Chair of the Old Girls' Association. In 1989, Mrs Wanda Davies retired. She had been the liaison between the Old Girls' and the School, having herself been a pupil and a member of staff. Those of you who were at the School at the same time surely cannot forget her standing on the stage with many envelopes addressed to various members of the Association and reading out the names of local villages. It was like a poem. The letters, containing the latest Newsletter, were laid out at the front of the stage and, if you lived in one of these villages, you were supposed to collect one or more and deliver them. We never knew how many still languished at the bottom of bags never to be seen again!

If she asked you to do something it was impossible to refuse so, when she was about to retire and she came and asked me to take over her role I couldn't say no. At the time it was the tradition for the Headmistress to be the Chair of the Old Girls' Association and this continued until Mrs Mayne's retirement in 2007.

In 1992, Spring Hill, Towerfield and Main School moved to one site in Hardingstone, becoming the Junior School and the Senior School. Then, with the help of Mrs Anne Rodwell, Miss Liz Savage, Mrs Gill Allen and the rest of the committee we started the tradition of the January lunch. This began with small numbers enabling us to cater for the event ourselves. The numbers increased

to such an extent that this was no longer possible and the kitchen staff, under Mrs Dawn McCue, took over the catering, producing a fantastic array of food. I know that some people would very much like to have a hot lunch but I have always held to the belief that people come to catch up with their friends and a buffet lunch is so much easier to prepare and serve.

We improved the newsletter and actually sent it out by post to ensure that it reached its destination. I printed out about 1000 copies in the reprographics room over the October half term and then we had a 'stuffing envelope and stamp sticking' session in A4 the following week. In 2007, Mrs Mayne retired and Mrs Sarah Dixon took over as Head. As she had her hands full dealing with the transfer of the school to the GDST, she asked me to take over as Chair of the OGA. I retired in 2010 having stepped down from all the administration duties in 2008 to work for the final two years as a part-time teacher of Mathematics - a wonderful way to finish my career.

We sold our house in Northampton and relocated to a small village in deepest Suffolk. I continued to edit the Newsletter until 2019, but the printing and sending out was taken over by the School and the GDST, producing a much more professional version than I could ever have aspired to. My thanks go to Mrs Jo Fitzroy-Ezzy and Mrs Amanda Wilmot for their help with this. I also came regularly to Northampton to chair committee meetings and help organise the January lunch. Then, in June 2021, I had a slight stroke and so decided that the time had finally come to step down as Chair of the OGA.

When I retired in 2010, I passed on the mantle of liaison between the School and the OGA to Mrs Alex Down (née Verden) and she has now taken over from me as Chair. I taught Alex in my first Lower Fourth group in 1980. She came back to teach Mathematics at the High School in 2009, and I'm sure that it was never her intention, as it was never mine, to take over either of these roles, but I am very pleased that she has agreed to do so. I have seen six Headmistresses come and go, even going to the funerals of Miss Marsden and Miss Lightburne, as well as those of Miss Cook, Mrs Davies and Mrs Hicks and Miss Savage. My daughter, Steph, has taken over from Miss Savage as Treasurer and Anne Rodwell is hopefully continuing as Secretary. My thanks go to them and to the rest of the committee members with whom it has been my pleasure to serve over the years. So, finally, after 68 years, admittedly with a short gap in the middle, I am finally relinquishing my last role at Northampton High School.

Carolyn White

Summer Reunion Lunch - Tickets on sale!



The annual Northampton High Reunion Lunch is a highlight of any 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 (please enter via the Junior entrance).

Ticket prices have been set at £15.90 (£15 ticket cost plus processing fee of 75p (5%) and booking fee of 15p per person). The increase in price reflects the increased costs involved with the catering; we trust that this still offers excellent value.

To book tickets, please go to <https://www.trybooking.co.uk/BPBR>. You can also scan the QR code below to book your tickets.

Alternatively, please send a cheque payable to Old Girls & Associates of NHS with a self-addressed envelope to Alumnae Relations, Northampton High School GDST, Newport Pagnell Road, Hardingstone, Northampton NN4 6UU for the return of a ticket, as proof of purchase.

For any queries, please contact alum@nhs.gdst.net. We look forward to seeing many of our alumnae community on Saturday 9 July 2022!

Scan this QR code to book your tickets today!



Alumnae news

Congratulations to Rhiannon Mayne (daughter of former Headmistress Mrs Linda Mayne) who attended the High School from 1989 to 1998, when she left for Edinburgh University to study Geophysics. The International Astronomical Union has recently named an asteroid after her: Asteroid Rhiannon Mayne. The asteroid is one in the same asteroid belt as Vesta, the subject of Rhiannon's research for her PhD. Rhiannon is an associate professor at Texas Christian University and curator of the Monnig Meteorite Collection.

Congratulations to Melanie Spencer at the High School from 1997 to 2004 and Olympic athlete Caitlin McClatchey whose debut broadcast of their radio play on the BBC was at the end of March 2022. Having taken quite different paths since leaving Northampton High, they come together as writer-director and athlete, writing this electrifying drama about swimming, ruthless ambition and abuse of power. To listen click here: [BBC Radio 4 - Drama, Contender](#)

Congratulations to Professor Sasha Roseneil (Northampton High student to 1983), who has been appointed as the next [Vice Chancellor of the University of Sussex](#). A fantastic achievement! Sasha is currently Pro-Provost (Equity and Inclusion) and Dean of the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences at UCL and will become Sussex's ninth Vice Chancellor – and first female Vice Chancellor – in its 60-year history.

Advances in Educational Technology (EdTech)

Our approach to all things digital, as outlined in our Digacy programme (more information here), has continued to help transform learning in and out of the classroom. Our pupils from Year 4 upwards bring their own 1-to-1 devices into school every day and pupils in the Junior School from Reception to Year 3 have access in class to individual, school-owned, devices. These tools help to create an engaging, inclusive and individualised learning experience for all pupils.

Our Digital Leaders scheme has started this year, involving pupils from Year 5 to Year 8 supporting others in terms of online safety and helping teachers to find new ways to build educational technology (or EdTech) into their lessons.

Our ePortfolio programme goes from strength to strength, encouraging students to create personal websites - looking at themselves through 360 degrees - and highlighting their achievements and ambitions presented on an online.

Recent Alumnae Success

The atmosphere in school on A Level results day last summer was truly wonderful, as students celebrated their results and confirmation of university places. It was a particularly happy occasion, as parents, students and staff were able to meet in the High School without social restrictions for the first time in many months.

We think of Sixth Form at the High School as part of a four-year journey: from the start of the GCSE years through to the completion of A Levels. But on results day we see that these four years are themselves, of course, merely part of an ongoing journey. Our students performed remarkably well at A Level - with 40 percent of grades at A* - meaning that almost all students met the requirements for their first-choice university destination. The energy and enthusiasm on results day, as students looked firmly towards taking their next steps, was palpable.

It is such a pleasure to see the wide range of courses that our students are pursuing. There are too many discrete stories of success, but we have identified two that highlight key characteristics and the holistic development in Sixth Form of a High School student: individual skill, hard work and talent to overcome a variety of written tests, numerous interviews in the face of a truly international competitive candidate group numbering thousands; Sophie Cox will read for a BA in Theology and Religion at Cambridge University, and Lia Halpin, meanwhile, will be pursuing a sales degree apprenticeship at Mondelez, one of the world's leading multinationals. Every student has her own success story, and we are proud of each and every one.

Inclusivity for all

The road to true equality and equity in opportunity is, of course, a journey and one that organisations across the world are at differing stages. As schools within the GDST, we are all on this road, and are working in similar and different ways to reach a common goal.

At GDST level, the programme 'Undivided' was formed in the summer of 2020, committed to forming a steering committee to work on a GDST Charter for Action. This committee is drawn from across the GDST and involves students and alumnae as well as staff. The Charter for Action was published just before Easter 2021, and can be found at <https://www.northamptonhigh.co.uk/undivided-inclusion-and-diversity/>.

As a school, we have a Staff Inclusivity Working Group, working on this golden thread that runs through everything we do. We are working with our students, governors and other stakeholders to ensure that the



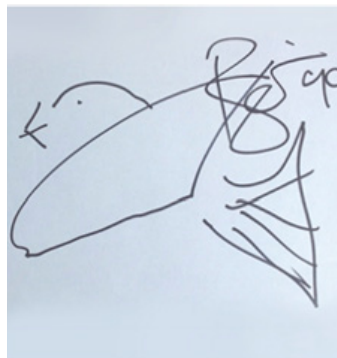
It was wonderful to welcome the Classes of 2020 and 2021 in November last year, braving the dark November evening to join us for dinner in the Theatre. The two year groups were hard-hit by Covid-induced disruptions to their A Level studies and Sixth Form experience. So it was a real pleasure to hear all about the students' lives since leaving the High School - at university and at work, whether it was training to be a vet, studying Maths or working for an MP. It has by no means been plain sailing for these two year groups, especially during this Covid-period, making it all the more remarkable that they have done so well and are continuing to pursue their goals.

'Undivided' thread is robustly integrated in all that we do as a school.

Initiatives so far have included completing an audit of our curriculum and co-curricular activities; workshopping what a truly inclusive school community will look like, and what we need to reach this goal; hosting Student Voice Lunches and capturing student perspectives on what we do well and what can be improved; a number of societies to develop the long-term participation of students have been established, such as Learning Leaders, 'Fem Sock' and Languages Culture Club to keep a watching brief on all things inclusivity, in addition to a plethora of themed assemblies, speaker events, charity action and parent-facing talks.

We look forward to sharing our progress over the months and years to come.

Doves for Peace



DAVID BOWIE

Northampton High School has agreed to be part of our efforts to raise money for the Save the Children Fund through Doves for Peace. The plan is to visit the school and explain, through two assemblies, the work of the charity in helping children affected by war.

We hope to invite the children to take part in an art competition. The children will be asked to create images of doves through painting, drawing, printing, stitching or sculpting. This competition will be judged within school key stages and the winning entries will be framed and form part of the charity auction, to be held in October 2022, at Fieldings Auctioneers Ltd in Stourbridge, Worcestershire. The High School girls have a wonderful history of fundraising for important causes, and we hope that their participation in Doves for Peace will be an interesting and worthwhile project for all.

We will be at The Old Girls' Lunch on Saturday 9 July 2022, where we will be able to show some examples of artwork to be sold and answer any questions about the charity. Here is more information from Heather Anderson, one of the project architects: "For the past 23 years I have been involved in fundraising, firstly for Unicef and now for Save the Children. Doves for Peace was established in response to the plight of innocent child victims of conflict around the world.

It was founded by my old art college friend, Dorothy Claxton (Dot), in October 1999. Her neighbours won a Radio 1 competition with the prize of meeting David Bowie in the studio. He kindly drew our first dove in felt tip pen on A5 paper. 20 years later to the day and one day prior to our auction, we received a dove from America drawn by Duncan Jones, David Bowie's son. This was the 200th contribution to the auction which raised £30,987 for Unicef, with our specific request that the money was used to help children tragically caught up in the Syrian conflict and which the charity promised to ensure. **(1)**

My first dove was drawn by Nigel Lawson, one time Chancellor of the Exchequer. Way back then he lived fairly close to us. The house was down a very long drive and as I walked down it I had no idea of what sort of reception I would receive. I was greeted by his very enthusiastic daughter who kindly promised to pass on the request. Such a pity I failed to ask her to contribute! I didn't foresee Nigella's future fame! It was a coincidence that my first dove, and final dove, drawn by Theresa May, were both by famous politicians. **(2)**

Our strategy is to write to famous celebrities in all walks of life including artists, politicians, astronauts, musicians, actors, sports people, presenters, writers and poets. When we post the request we enclose all the information about our charity, drawing paper, our mission statement, our charity verification letter and a stamped addressed return envelope. We invite our celebrities to produce a dove in any medium they choose.

We also try to catch our celebrities on the spot. Catching celebrities on the spot has been surprisingly successful.

It is far easier than going through their agent or posting a letter which they may never receive and they are usually very interested and delighted to help. I managed to secure a dove from Earl Spencer and David Dimbleby at a book fair at Althorp, and Dot and I were able to spend a fabulous half hour with Hilary Mantel at the RSC in Stratford, after rushing out of the theatre to the stage door. She drew while she chatted to us. Her dove is beautiful. Dot secured a drawing by Antony Gormley while visiting Tate Britain with a pupil who had won an art competition. **(3)**

Slowly our collection increased but finding a gallery or an auctioneer proved difficult and we wondered at one time if we would have to abandon the project. However, luck was on our side. Dot decided to approach Fieldings Auctioneers in Stourbridge. She showed the assistant the photographs of the doves and asked whether he thought they might be interested. The assistant rushed off with the pictures and returned minutes later with Will Farmer (of 'Antiques Roadshow' fame), who was really excited by the collection. There and then he offered to auction them free of charge! He gave us another ten months to add to the collection. It gave us fresh impetus and we managed to procure another 80 or so doves.

The auction was an amazing and exciting experience. Will gave us a champagne reception and took up the gavel as auctioneer. His enthusiasm, wit and humour made the whole evening thoroughly enjoyable and a total success. The auction was truly international, with doves being bought by bidders as far away as Australia and many in Europe. He was very adept at upping the price! **(4)**

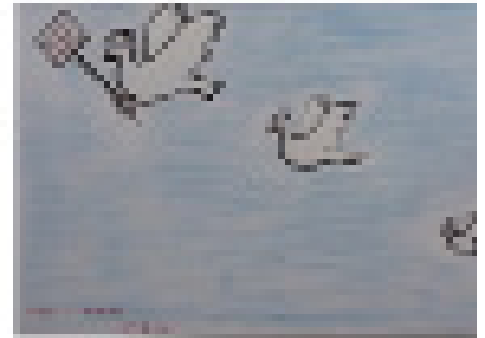
Doves for Peace



Stephen Fry



Jonathan Dimbleby



Roger McGough CBE

Will's enthusiasm doesn't stop there. He has promised us a second auction for Save the Children to be held late next year. He is a good friend of Fiona Bruce who he persuaded to try to collect a dove from every member of the BBC News team. Fingers crossed!

By the time of the auction, Save the Children had taken an interest and asked us if we could repeat the process for them. It was at this point that Jane Stock (a retired Northampton High Junior School teacher) asked if she could join us. She has been a very welcome addition, giving us new ideas and succeeding in collecting some beautiful doves from her contacts and textile artists (textiles are her passion and speciality). Jane is the proud owner of Tim Peake's fabulous dove, which she successfully bid for at the auction. **(5 and above)**

All our doves are sold framed, paying for which entails raising a lot of money. One way of doing this is to produce and sell Christmas cards for sale in my village. This involved ringing round asking for printing quotes. It was clear that it was not going to be easy to make enough money to produce a profit...that was until I rang the printers who used to produce the Northampton High School magazine who I remembered made such a quality job of it.

I spoke to a very nice lady and explained my past connection with the firm. She asked my name and when I told her she exclaimed, "You used to teach me!" It turned out to be Nicola Thomas who is now a director of Belmont Press. Their generosity is without question and has enabled me not only to raise money for the framing for the last auction, but also to repeat the process to raise money for the next one.

The cards sold out in five days last year. To raise further funds, I used Just Giving, invited companies to sponsor a frame and finally my husband and I raided the attic and held a stall on Buckingham market. To eke out the money, our husbands did virtually all of the framing.

This is our most recent acquisition is from Ralph Steadman. I just love it! **(6)**

We are still in the process of acquiring more doves. This time round it has proved far more difficult to reach the rich and famous, but we have had many beautiful works of art from artists and have had recent promises from Andrew Lloyd Webber, Sophy Rayworth and Ricky Wilson. **(7)**

Perhaps you would like to contribute a dove yourself or you know someone in the public eye you could ask. It can be in any medium, usually no smaller than A5. It will make a fabulous contribution to our charity. Contributions can be accepted at the Senior School office between 7.30am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

For more information, please contact **hfkda@icloud.com** and **janestock2@gmail.com**, visit us on Instagram **@doves.for.peace** or on at **https://dovesforpeace.co.uk**.

Jane Stock & Heather Anderson

To view all of the photos referenced in this article, please scan this QR code



Staff News



We were sad to say farewell to the following long-serving colleagues in the summer 2021:

Mrs Caroline Petryszak, Head, stood down from her role for personal reasons. Mrs Petryszak led the school through one of the most difficult and

challenging periods that schools have had to face. She was able to provide stability to the school when it was needed, as well as seeing it successfully through an ISI inspection (graded 'Excellent' in all areas), and we are grateful to her for her leadership and direction of the school, especially through the unprecedented global pandemic.

Mrs Adele O'Doherty, formerly Deputy Head Pastoral Care and Guidance, took up the role of Acting Head for the 2021/22 academic year, and will hand over the reins to Dr May Lee, who will join the school as Head in September 2022. Dr May Lee joins us from South Kensington's Queen's Gate School, having served as a senior leader for many years in three leading all girls' independent day schools.

Ms Charlotte Hurst-Ramsay has left the school to pursue the role of Head of PSHE at a school in Brackley, after 17 years at the school as a teacher of PE and Head of PSHE. She says, "The school and pupils are amazing and always go above and beyond to help you out. There hasn't been a day when someone hasn't made me laugh and I shall really miss that. The school has inspired my love of all things pastoral, and from my first promotion in 2006 to Head of Year and then Head of Lower School, I have enjoyed coming to school. The school has also inspired my love of travelling, with school sports tours and ski trips."

Mrs Clare Care left us as Head of Drama after 16 years and remembers her interview at the school, as she had just graduated from stage school. She says, "I have really enjoyed my time at the school and the freedom to choose the many plays, musicals and shows that I have directed over the years. This has supported my creative flair and enabled me to grow as a practitioner and experiment with the ever changing face of theatre."

Mrs Frances Duck, Learning Support Teacher, and **Mrs Alice Luikinga**, Cover Supervisor, both from the Junior School, left us at Christmas 2021. Our thanks go to both Mrs Duck and Mrs Luikinga, who, combined, have given 13 years of unstinting service to the school. Mrs Luikinga has been a 'key player' in the life of the Junior School, covering classes, running our Late Prep provision, and supporting learning across the school. Mrs Duck is known by all the students in Junior School as a friendly and supportive face, often found in our KS2 library; she will be especially missed by the girls she has worked more closely with. Mrs Duck has made a real difference to pupils' confidence and understanding of tricky concepts, and behind the scenes, has worked hard with other agencies to support our learners with additional needs.

We are delighted to be welcoming:



Miss Emily Hair, who joins us in the summer term as Head of Junior School. Miss Hair, who has held a number of senior leader roles, was most recently Head, then Executive Head, of primary schools in Wellingborough. We look forward to welcoming Miss Hair to the Northampton High family.

Retirement News

We said goodbye to a number of colleagues at the end of the academic year and, as they left, we asked them to share with us their abiding memories of working at the school.

Julia Cantwell had been at the school for 11 years, to begin with as a teacher of Physics, then Head of Science and most recently as Director of Sixth Form.

"I first visited Northampton High School twelve years ago when I was invited for interview by Sarah Dixon. I remember the warm welcome I received when I walked into the foyer and leaving that day feeling so positive about the school, the students and the staff and really hoping that I would get the job.

I did, and the next eleven years flew by. The Science Faculty was, and is, full of wonderful talented teachers always willing to go the extra mile for the students. There was a lively extracurricular programme with guest speakers, often alumnae, clubs and societies and, of course, the popular field trips and visits to broaden horizons and inspire our students. There were many memorable moments but visiting Geneva with the Sixth Form physics students with Mr Earp and the geographers stands out. We toured the particle accelerator at CERN and were so proud of the way our students impressed the research scientists with their questions. The next day we were challenged in a different way climbing high into the Alps to walk on a glacier, truly magical.

In addition to the various roles I had in the Science Faculty, I also led the Outreach and Partnerships programme for a number of years. There were many projects and programmes with the local community but the SHINE programme, working with local businesses, saw our Sixth Form students welcome girls from local primary schools to the High School and lead hands-on workshops to inspire them to be the scientists of the future. We all felt that these Saturday sessions were making a real difference and, as always, volunteering time and expertise was such an important experience for our students.

Working with the Sixth Form was always a fundamental part of my role at the High School, firstly as a tutor, and latterly as Director of Sixth Form. I often said that I thought this was the best job in the school. Working with the tutor team to help every Sixth Form student to work out their individual, ambitious and appropriate next step was a real privilege and I enjoyed every one of those discussions in my office to help make plans a reality.



What I didn't see coming was that the last year of my teaching career would coincide with the COVID pandemic. Delivering the academic curriculum and pastoral programme remotely for much of the year while ensuring that students and staff had the support they needed was the most difficult thing that I have done. Trying to prepare students for university, apprenticeships or a gap year while working in year group bubbles, often over Zoom, required us all to dig deep to keep going, however frightening and challenging the situation.

Time has flown since I retired in August, and for me the highlights have been travelling to San Francisco at Christmas to see my daughters, revisiting Switzerland where my son now lives and spending time at our bolthole in France.

I have so many wonderful memories of working at the High School for three very different Headteachers: Sarah Dixon, Helen Stringer and Caroline Petryszak. The warmth, professionalism and friendship of colleagues and the endless enthusiasm and positivity of the students made my time at the High School so precious.

I very much look forward to keeping in touch and hearing about the next stage in the life stories of the students I taught through the Northampton High alumnae network."

Retirement News

Russell Attwood came to the school as Head of Biology 17 years ago and with him came his joy of teaching and, of course, his pumpkins and memorable assemblies every autumn with his own particular style and an original song.

"I retired from teaching in 2021 after 17 years at the High School and 39 years in the profession; it was time to move on to other things. I have so many fond memories of Biology lessons, the amazing classes and fabulous students at Northampton High. You taught me so much, I only hope I taught you a bit of Biology in return. In recent years, I came to realise that my role was less about sharing my knowledge and more about motivating students. In these days of Google and YouTube, anyone can learn Biology online (or any other subject); what is needed for success is the motivation and drive to engage and succeed. Again, I was taught so much about this by the dedication and commitment of the students and my colleagues at the High School. I feel fortunate to have experienced so much friendship and care from the High School community for those 17 years.

Those of you who remember me, will probably be aware that I enjoy growing and cooking pumpkins. My retirement has given me more time to devote to the pumpkin patch (aka my allotment in Kettering) and develop my role as secretary of Kettering Allotments Society, helping to manage over 350 allotments in the town. I have also been appointed as a regional mentor for the National Allotments Society to cover the East Midlands.

Being slightly infamous for my eccentric pumpkin assemblies, I once got approached by a parent of one of my students to give a talk to her village's gardening club. This has developed into another part-time career, and I now give talks to gardening clubs and other societies on a regular basis. It is great fun to share my passion for pumpkins with a wider audience and reprise some of those assembly pumpkin songs. Since I have retired I am going further afield with these talks and have reached Oxfordshire and Lincolnshire; my ambition is to do a pumpkin show at the Royal Albert Hall...by the way, it is totally true that I once received a letter in the post addressed to "The Pumpkin Man, Northampton High School.

Remaining active and giving back to society is important to me in my retirement and I have been fortunate to be able to help support NHS workers by joining the staff wellbeing team at Kettering General Hospital. This office is coordinated by the Mindfulness and Chaplaincy team at KGH and helps hospital staff cope with the challenges of life, including Covid and its consequences.

Again, my experience at the other NHS was invaluable in securing this role, both as a form tutor and staff union representative. Northampton High enabled me to develop these transferable skills.

The library at the High School is amazing and it always felt such a shame that I was often too busy to read all of the books that I wanted to. Retirement has allowed me the time to read a little, for example, on those occasional days when the weather in Kettering is inclement and I cannot visit my beloved allotment.

A few recommendations if I may: for any Biologists, 'Gathering Moss' by Robin Wall Kimmerer. For Ecologists, 'Wilding' by Isabella Tree. For Nigerian fiction try Wole Soyinka's 'Chronicles From the Land of the Happiest People on Earth' and for poetry - 'Over the Moon' by Imtiaz Dharker. Copyright permitting, I would love to conclude by sharing the poem she wrote to commemorate the centenary of the first world war and votes for women, which refers to the bravery of Malala Youasfzai and others campaigning for girls' education.

A Century Later, by Imtiaz Dharker

The school-bell is a call to battle,
every step to class, a step into the firing-line.
Here is the target, fine skin at the temple,
cheek still rounded from being fifteen.

Surrendered, surrounded, she
takes the bullet in the head

and walks on. The missile cuts
a pathway in her mind, to an orchard
in full bloom, a field humming under the sun,
its lap open and full of poppies.

This girl has won
the right to be ordinary,

wear bangles to a wedding, paint her fingernails,
go to school. Bullet, she says, you are stupid.
You have failed. You cannot kill a book
or the buzzing in it.

A murmur, a swarm. Behind her, one by one,
the schoolgirls are standing up
to take their places on the front line.

Retirement News

Elizabeth Pearson retired after 14 years as a Biology teacher. "As I sit here in the spring sunshine, it is lovely to have the time to enjoy the garden and see friends. But retirement also means that I miss the girls and colleagues at Northampton High School. It was an amazing place to work for 14 years. The girls were all so keen and ready to learn. We had a lot of fun and I enjoyed every minute of my time in the labs, where I was able to use my teaching experience to help the students. I was just one very small part of a very special Biology and Science department within the school. I couldn't have done this job without the support and friendship of all my colleagues.

Looking back I have many fond memories. It's only when it is time to leave that we truly know how special a place is. Memories include the Biology A Level Field Trips to Devon in June each year where we (mostly) seemed to get fantastic weather. We carried out field work on the sand dunes of Braunton Burrows with massive skies, deserted beaches and the shimmering blue sea. Where else could you get such a fantastic job?

Other memories include trips to Oxford Natural History Museum with Year 10 where we encountered giant cockroaches, Salcey Forest with Year 7 to observe Mr Attwood's favourite whispering tree, Whipsnade Zoo with Year 9 where the sea lions always put on a good show and the Wellcome Sanger Institute with Year 12 which was awe-inspiring. I often felt lucky to be paid to do this fabulous job as a Biology teacher. It wasn't all about visits but I think for the girls these are some of the stand-out memories and brought Biology to life.

My form groups were always special but I was so sorry to say such a hasty good bye to my U5S group in March 2020 when the pandemic rudely interrupted their last few months of school. We didn't get to say a proper goodbye and had a hastily arranged photo on the stairs in reception before leaving and packing up for the last time and going to Guided Online Learning!

I will always remember this group and thought about them all a lot during Lockdown. I wish them well in their future lives. Little did we know that we had already had the last proper assembly in the school hall as the pandemic brought them to an abrupt end.

Science department coffee time was always fun and I have missed the day-to-day banter. Not only that, but the opportunities to dress up and be part of Michael Jackson's 'Thriller' for the last day of school for Year 13 will live with me forever! Christmas was another special time at the High School when the giant Christmas tree went up in reception and singing 'Ding Dong Merrily On High' down the corridors had to be seen to be believed! Christmas lunches were amazing as well, and the Catering Team were always so kind and produced delicious food.

There were also colleagues in many parts of the school, who I got to know and again; it's only when you leave that you realise you were part of something so amazing. My daughter also enjoyed 5 years at the High School and has many fond memories. We are all so grateful to Hannah's teachers for the way they inspired, encouraged and helped her to achieve her GCSE results. Retirement still means getting up at 7am to take her to new school for Sixth Form. It was quite hard to adjust to this new way of life at the start. Now, though, I am enjoying the chance to try new hobbies and spending more time with friends. I am looking forward to my husband retiring as well. I remember my time at the school with great affection. I wish you well for the future and I hope to keep in touch".

Alison Scanlan retired after 5 years at the school as a Geography teacher. She says, "I have loved teaching in the Geography department and Humanities Faculty; the staff are brilliant and so caring and supportive. It has been refreshing being able to teach and the girls have been welcoming and want to learn. I shall really miss you all."

GDST Life - The online alumnae network

The GDST's alumnae network is online, giving its members access to unrivalled personal and professional connections, a host of new networking opportunities, mentoring support, events, news and resources, groups and societies and much, much more – for life.

Join GDST Life: <https://www.gdstlife.aluminate.net/groups/northamptonhighalumnae>

Obituaries

High School friends were saddened to learn of the death of Doreen Holland. Doreen taught piano at Northampton High for several years and died in October 2020 after a long illness.

She had been diagnosed with Parkinsons eight years earlier but endured her reducing mobility with great fortitude. The hardest thing was when a stroke meant she could no longer play piano or paint and sew. Having moved to Devon in retirement to be closer to the family, Doreen and her husband had been together 70 years. Doreen's daughter, Linda Simmonds (née Holland), told us that Doreen remembered her time teaching at Northampton High fondly, from the room at the top of the Mackintosh House and then at Hardingstone.



Archives

Our thanks go to our team of archivists who carefully log and curate all of the items in our Archives, held in the Edward Cripps Room (ECR).

Should you have any Northampton High School items that you would like to rehome, please do contact us at alum@nhs.gdst.net.

Raise Her Up Podcast

We are thrilled to present the new GDST podcast, Raise Her Up, where every fortnight expert guests are interviewed on big topics of parenting.

Available on Spotify, Apple, Audible or wherever you listen to your podcasts, Raise Her Up gives the tools and practical advice on how to approach the contemporary 'big subjects'.

Find out more here: <https://www.gdst.net/parenting-and-education-podcast/>

Reunion Lunch

Tickets are on sale now for our annual reunion lunch. To book tickets, please go to <https://www.trybooking.co.uk/BPBR>. You can also scan the QR code opposite to book your tickets.



LinkedIn: Please join us!

Our LinkedIn group is a professional channel and allows us to grow our school's connections across different alumnae, parents, and staff.

We invite you to connect with the Northampton High School GDST (official) group on LinkedIn. You can also link our LinkedIn profile to your employment/study history.

Amanda Wilmot
Director of Admissions and Marketing
alum@nhs.gdst.net