



The Edgbaston High School Laurels Association Magazine

Summer 2024

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NOTE FROM OUTGOING CO-CHAIR



“ Thank you for your support, it has been a genuine privilege.
Anne

I have really enjoyed being one of your Co-Chairs for the last three years.

It has given me the opportunity to meet many of you and to continue my association with the school where I enjoyed part of my teaching career. I have loved to hear about where Laurels are now and what they are doing.

As I leave this role, I dive into my newest pastime - Open Water Swimming. Some of you may know that I was a good competitive swimmer in my youth and I have never lost interest. I took exams so that I could act as a timekeeper, judge and starter at events. I also undertook a swimming teaching course so that I could help children gain their first strokes in swimming in teaching pools.

I have continued to use swimming as exercise now that I have retired. Both of my children are eager Open Water Swimmers, in fact my daughter swam round some islands in Croatia recently. Anyway, imagine my surprise when I was given a wet suit for Christmas. There was no escaping for me now!! I have built up my experience in swimming in lakes over the last few months and am now taking part in Open Water events! Initially I thought it was awful - cold, weedy and windy. Now I am more confident and know that this will be a hobby for me for the next few years!

Thank you for your support as Co-Chair. It has been a genuine privilege.

Anne Lacey

MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMISTRESS



“We don’t need the words, we know it off by heart.”
Clare Macro

Whenever I meet alumnae of Edgbaston High School, we inevitably end up talking about school puddings or House events, both remembered very fondly.

It is true to say that the same sentiments apply to the current pupils. During a recent visit to Year 5, I asked the students about their favourite thing at EHS, and to my delight, ‘pudding’ came back more times than anything else, with Chocolate Concrete topping the list.

House events come a very close second, and although we do operate two different House systems at EHS, one for prep and one for senior, the spirit of competition is equally strong in both.

In the senior school we started two new House events this year (complimenting House Gala, Bake Off, Sports Day, and House Musical). One was House Music, and the other House Football, otherwise known as ‘Hayday Heroes’ in memory of the much-missed Miss Hayday. The whole



school was at the playing field to watch Year 7 & 8 and Year 9 & 10 teams play each house in rotation. If ever there was an advert for Girls only education, it was this; competitive, spirited, and good-natured, all in 28-degree heat with no regard for how hot and red-faced they all were. Miss Hayday would have been in her element.

Community is everything at EHS. Whether we are celebrating or remembering, it is the connections forged here that bring us together. Mrs Hartley, retiring after 15 years of fantastic commitment and loyalty to the school, often speaks of the power of memories to sustain us. One event that will stay long in my memory was the heartfelt farewell to Mrs Hartley by the entire prep school. From our youngest at 2 years of age to those just contemplating the step to senior school, everyone came together to deliver performances that brought tears and smiles to all in attendance. They had practised so hard, remembered so many lines, with my personal highlight being a rousing medley of songs from the Lion King. Mrs Hartley is leaving us with a legacy of wonderful memories, not only for herself, but also for all the many children that she has cared for over the last 15 years. It is a beautiful full circle moment that Mrs Hartley leaves EHS at the same time as her first Nursery girls, 6 of them, now 18 and in Year 13.

As Co-Chair of the Laurels, she had the honor of presenting all Year 13 students with their EHS leavers brooch at the Prizegiving Ceremony. As ever, to close the occasion we sang the school song, and just before we began, I turned to Year 13 and said that the words were in the programme. Those in the front row just smiled and said, “We don’t need the words, we know it off by heart.” The pride with which they sang the school song is fantastic, and the words, of course, say it all when we say goodbye to those who are leaving. It is indeed true that no matter the separation, the changes that happen or the passage of time, the bonds formed at EHS cannot be severed. I have no doubt that Mrs Hartley, Year 13 and all our leavers will experience the same strong connection to EHS, as all those leavers before them,

School Song

*In Education’s early days
When High Schools there were none, sir,
Some zealous pioneers there were
And soon they started one, sir,
All prejudice they did revoke,
Set custom at a distance,
The bonds of ignorance they broke
And overcame resistance*

*And this as law we will maintain
And this you must confess, sir,
There is no school in all the land
To rank with E.H.S., sir.*

*Though others fill our places here
The school endures for ever,
And separation, change and time
These bonds will fail to sever
And may our School now prosper long
And grow from year to year, sir,
A credit to our native land,
And to our hearts still dear, sir.*

We are fast approaching our 150th Birthday, but the school endures, and more importantly evolves and strengthens; it is indeed true that ‘there is no school in all the land to rank with EHS’.

Clare Macro



School House Logos

LAURELS COMMITTEE

President

Mrs Clare Macro, Headmistress

Vice Presidents

Dr R A Weeks (former Headmistress, 2006-2019)

Miss E M Mullenger (former Headmistress, 1998-2006)

Mrs S J Wakefield née Horsman (former Headmistress, 1987-1997)

Co-Chairs

Mrs Caroline Sprackman (nee Wall, 1988-2003)

Mrs Sally Hartley (former Head of Prep School, 2009-2024)

Secretary

Miss Sarah Learmonth (1993-2009)

Treasurer

Mrs Anne Lacey (staff, 1992-2018)

Lindsay Lucas (née Farnath, 1973-1981)

Past Staff Representative

Chris Evans (staff, 1998-2017)

General Committee

Priti Bansel-Branch (nee Bansel, 1985-1997)

Sophie Glover (1999-2010)

Anne Howarth (nee Stirling, 1954-1961)

Elizabeth Hughes (nee Case, 2003-2010)

Louise Della Pesca (nee Venables) (1994-2004)

Amy Ward (nee Slevin) (1990-2004)

Elizabeth Hartley-Lever (1998-2009)

Lesley Bowler (1969-1980)

Legal Advisor

Miss S Thomas (1961-1972)

Production of 'Laurel Leaves' publication

Helen Holmes (née Maros, 1980-1985)

Committee Meetings

All face to face with Zoom as an option for those who cannot attend in person.

Wednesday 2 October, 6.00pm – 7.30pm

Wednesday 20 November, 6.00pm – 7.30pm

Wednesday 5 March 2025, 6.00pm – 7.30pm

Wednesday 4 June 2025, 6.00pm – 7.30pm

Saturday 5 July 2025 – AGM

CAROLINE AND SALLY

Caroline Sprackman and Sally Hartley are taking over the roles as the next Co-Chairs of the Laurels' Association. We would like to introduce ourselves, to those of you who do not know us yet, and say how much we are looking forward to hearing from you and meeting many of you at events in the coming years.

"I am very proud and excited to be joining Sally as Co-Chair of the EHS Laurels' Association. I have been on the Laurels' Committee for a couple of years now and I feel this is a good time to take on the role of Co-Chair having learnt so much from Anne and Lizzie.



After leaving EHS in 2003, I studied medicine at Cardiff University and completed my GP training in South Wales before moving back to Birmingham in 2013. I now work as a GP in Edgbaston. I live with my husband and two children, Charlie and Sophie. Sophie started Kindergarten at EHS in September 2023, she loves school, and always has a fun and busy day. Since having Sophie, I have reconnected with EHS and enjoyed introducing her to school. We have attended several Laurels' events together where she is always warmly welcomed and given plenty of cake! The EHS Open House Event was particularly special as we had the opportunity to explore school in our own time, wandering around my old classrooms with school friends and reminiscing about school. Another special moment was this years' Summer Lunch when they served us chocolate concrete with custard, yum! I look forward to working with Sally to continue the good work of Anne and Lizzie and help our Association flourish."

Caroline Sprackman

"I echo Caroline's words of being proud and excited to take on this role although my journey to this point has been a very different one to hers. I am passionate about girls' only education and the huge benefits it offers.



I arrived at EHS to take on the role of Head of the Prep School 15 years ago, having previously taught at Haberdashers' Monmouth School for Girls where I was lucky to work with Dr Ruth Weeks, previous Head of EHS.

During all of my years at EHS I have served as a committee member of the Laurels, previously OGA, and have enjoyed all of the meetings and events and contact with generations of 'old girls'. Hearing stories and sharing memories is always very special which is why I was delighted to accept this role as I have just retired from my Head of Prep role. This is a great way to continue to support the school which has offered me so many happy years.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any news or ideas to take this most important aspect of EHS school life forward."

Sally Hartley

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Louise Della Pesca (née Venables)

I attended EHS from 1994 to 2004, starting in Prep when I was 8. I look back on my time with great fondness and feel indebted to all involved with the School for the brilliant experience I had, so I am very pleased to join the committee. I live in London now with my husband and two young daughters, but have moved around a bit since leaving School. I lived in the United Arab Emirates and then the United States between 2012 and 2020, but have always stayed in touch with my EHS friendship group. In the last year I have enjoyed meeting other London based Laurels at social events, and I look forward to meeting more.



Amy Ward (née Slevin)

I left EHS in 2003 after joining as a four-year-old. I studied Music and Music in the Community at the University of York and, after a stint living in Paris, became a teacher. I am now Director of Music at Tormead School in Guildford and it always makes me smile when I teach my choirs songs that I learned myself at school! Beyond music, my husband Simon and I live in Surrey with our two daughters. I ran the London marathon this year, ticking off my bucket list and raising money for Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation. I have fond memories of school and EHS will always have a special place in my heart. My music career is definitely thanks to the music department and the opportunities I had at school (thanks Margaret and Kate!) and I'm still in touch with several EHS friends and teachers! I'm joining the Laurels committee because I'd love to help grow the alumnae community and build on the amazing work that the existing committee is doing.



2023-24 A YEAR IN REVIEW

The Laurels has continued to flourish this year with the addition of several new events and members to the Committee, with the change in name and new logo being embraced by all. It goes without saying that our success is down to the hard work of many volunteers, committee members and Laurels themselves and we would like to thank the Governing Body for all of their support.

So, what's been happening this year?

In July 2023, a **Netball and Family Fun Day** took place on the school field with support from ex pupils, who took part in the netball game - ably umpired by staff member, Sara Hewison, with other colleagues there to cheer them on and socialise. The weather was, thankfully, fine and the event was enjoyed by all. A bouncy castle, Gruffalo trail and mini games were available for children as well as an ice cream van! We would like to thank all who were involved in the organisation of this event, especially Chris Evans, Caroline Sprackman and Sally Hartley. We hope to repeat this event in the summer of 2025.

In August 2023, Laurels Louise Della Pesca (née Venables) and Anne Lacey organised **Drinks In London**, an opportunity to network and socialise with other Laurels members. Despite a train strike and the rain, we had Laurels attend from as far as Bournemouth, and it was great to hear about what people are doing now and of some fantastic recent career changes.

In September 2023, a **reunion of the class of 2003** took place in school. This was organised by Laurels Clare Griffin and Rachael Griffith (assisted by Anne Lacey) and boasted a fantastic turn out. The event involved guided tours of the school given by Sixth Form students and afternoon tea and was a good opportunity to catch up with classmates from 20 years ago.

Before the year was out, we supported the **Year 7 Glamping Trip** which was well enjoyed in spite of the weather and held our annual **Merry Little Christmas** event in December which included traditional shaking of jingle bells and communal carol singing. We were pleased to welcome Laurels from London and Solihull to their first event on this occasion. Thank you to Sarah Learmonth and Heather Howell for their role in the organisation of this event.

In March 2024 the **Open House** event took place. Laurels from all over the country were interested to see the changes in the school since they attended, and we were excited to meet with the Year 13s to tell them about the organisation and what it can do for them.

During Spring, a second **Drinks In London** event was hosted with Laurels from all different regions of the UK in attendance, including two who lived locally and were able to attend easily by coming down from their apartments in a lift! Offering yet another opportunity for networking, comparing life experiences and chatting, the event was very much enjoyed by all.

With the academic year coming to an end, we held our annual **Summer Lunch and AGM** where we enjoyed a delicious summer-themed dinner and caught up with old friends. As ever, this was a highlight of the year and we look forward to the next one.

Finally, it is with honor that we were able to present this year's **Laurel Leaves Award** to Jaimie James and to Mollie Hewison and we wish them well with their ambitions. The **Pam Jelf Award** was granted to several pupils of which the committee thought was extremely deserving of this recognition. We thank Kevin Robson and the Cantores Beati Choir for raising money for the Fund this year. Once again, thank you to everyone who helped organise events and who have supported the Laurels this year. We look forward to another exciting year of events, welcoming in new Laurels and spending more time with each other.

DRINKS IN THE CITY



OPEN HOUSE



A MODEL STUDENT

Meet Milly, a Year 10 student who had the amazing opportunity to be part of a life-sized bronze sculpture project. This isn't your typical school assignment! Milly was chosen to model for a sculpture created by Harborne-based artist, Hannah Northam. The sculpture was commissioned by Hannah's old school, Strathcona in Melbourne, Australia, to celebrate its 100th anniversary. It features two schoolgirls sitting on a bench—one in a Victorian uniform and the other in modern attire.

Milly shared the fascinating process behind the artwork. "At first, I posed for photographs and got measured. Then, Hannah started crafting the sculpture from a wire frame, gradually building it up into a detailed clay model," Milly explained. "The sculpture was eventually sent to a foundry for bronze casting before its final journey to Australia."

Reflecting on the experience, Milly couldn't hide her excitement. "Watching the sculpture take shape and seeing Hannah's talent up close was incredible," she said. "Being part of something so unique was amazing, even if it meant sitting still for long periods!"

From the classroom to the art studio, Milly's journey shows just how extraordinary school life can be!



A SUMMER LUNCH TO REMEMBER

Each summer members of the Laurels' Association meet for the Annual General Meeting and a delicious lunch, which this year took place at EHS in the glorious sunshine. Always a highlight of the year, this year did not disappoint, with many Laurels coming together to share old memories and make new ones.

Guests arrived and headed out to the terrace for a welcome drink and greetings which was followed by the AGM. The Chair gave her report followed by the Treasurer's account. The new Committee members were announced and grateful thanks were given to Anne Lacey and Elizabeth Hartley for their hard work as

Co-Chairs, to Lesley Bowler as Secretary and to Lindsay Lucas as Treasurer.

A delicious summer themed lunch came next with favourite school desserts, including the much talked about chocolate concrete! Laurels also enjoyed catching up with old friends and their news.

The event closed with presentations to staff leaving EHS to move on to new adventures. Farewells and best wishes were given to Anna Dunvjak, Juliana Hall, Sam Park, Annelle Rowlands and Sally Hartley.

No-one was in a hurry to leave what had been a very enjoyable afternoon which is always the case when our Laurels gather.



STAFF LEAVERS

Ana Duvjnak

An indispensable member of the Biology department, Ana worked as a technician for 16 years.

Ana's knowledge of laboratory techniques and procedures was excellent and there would have been no practical investigations without her. Ana was innovative in trying out practical work and often taught the staff how to use data loggers and similar equipment. Ana was proactive in carrying out her tasks often going beyond what was asked: organising resources and helping with display work. Practical work is now an integral part of all science examination courses and Ana's contribution to this is reflected in the results attained by the pupils.

Thank you Ana, on behalf of all the pupils and staff. We wish you a long and happy retirement.

Anne Lacey

Annelle Rowlands

Annelle has worked at the school since October 2010. For a considerable part of this time she was the Director of Admissions and Marketing which included being responsible for the Laurels/Old Girls as an administrative role.

We wish to formally thank Annelle for all the work which she has done for us over the last 13 plus years. Annelle has been active in the production of the Laurel Leaves magazine and has helped to organise events such as the Merry Little Christmas, the Open House and the Summer Lunch. Annelle has always had a cheerful and positive attitude towards the Laurels and she will be greatly missed. We all wish her well as she spends more time with her family at home. Thank you Annelle.

Anne Lacey



Dr Damian Royal

Damian joined EHS in 2016 and his passion for Physics and Science in general became apparent to the girls very quickly. Damian's lessons have always been engaging and he has helped inspire numerous pupils to take their Physics further. He has encouraged the girls to explore the range of opportunities for women in STEM careers, introducing them to key figures who have led the way. His "wall of women in Physics" is a regular talking point. A number of the initiatives Damian has brought to the department have become central to our practice. Always keen to give the girls a different approach to Science, he has set up projects within school and opportunities for the girls to get out and see Science in different contexts. Damian has always endeavoured to get the absolute best from the girls, enabling them to achieve and often exceed their expectations. We would like to thank Damian for his commitment to the department and the pupils and wish him all the best with his future endeavours. He will be missed enormously by the staff and the girls!

Jacob Sabotig

Julianna Hall

When I said to an old girl that Julianna was retiring, she remembered her as the lady in the library, which indeed she was. However I will always think of Julianna as the exam lady and I know that it was this work that she herself thinks of as 'her baby'. In doing the exam entries, which has become progressively more complicated as the exam system has developed, Julianna has always been quietly efficient and methodical in making sure that each girl has been entered for the proper paper at the right level and in the correct subject, beaver away in her office - which should really be more accurately referred to as a cupboard - for hours on end. A number of us have been privileged to work with her to do that.

But if all that sounds dull, factor in girls not turning up for exams or having panic attacks, exam clashes, exam papers not turning up, pupils needing to play in sports tournament or having surgery on the day before the exams and countless other misadventures it was far from dull and at times very good fun. The day the



exam results were published was a source of great joy to both herself and her assistants and made it all very worthwhile. Julianna you did everyone proud in the way you approached your work. Thank you!

Cheryl Lund

Mrs Y Jin

An indispensable member of the team Mrs Jin joined EHS as a Mandarin teacher in 2018. Since then she has taught and inspired so many girls from beginners in the language to native speakers preparing for A level. For the last few years, she has also run a lunchtime club for practising Chinese character writing which has proved very popular. One of her pupils has written a touching tribute to Mrs Jin:

"Mrs Jin is a very kind teacher; at every start of the lesson she will always give you a break for eating a snack making sure that we have enough energy to have the lesson. Throughout my time in her class, Mrs Jin has taught us the Chinese language with a positive attitude and teaches us by using relatable stories making it more engaging and memorable. Her innovative teaching methods and encouragement have greatly influenced my decision to continue studying the Chinese language. Although I am saddened by Mrs Jin's departure from our school, I want to thank her for her remarkable contributions to teaching Mandarin and I'm very grateful for the opportunity to learn Mandarin with such an excellent teacher like Mrs Jin."

In the Modern Languages department we are all saddened by Mrs Jin's departure, as are all the girls she teaches, but we have very fond memories of her time with us. She is leaving to be able to spend more time visiting her family in China, particularly her father, and we send her all good wishes for the future.

Caroline Cardellino

Kevin Robson

Kevin arrived at EHS ten years ago as Director of Music, bristling with talent and enthusiasm, overflowing with energy and ambitious ideas for the Music Department. A gifted pianist, Kevin was not only the creator of amazing Music Assemblies (with his piano playing!) but Staff and pupils were also treated to wonderful concerts with his twin brother, John. On one occasion, Kevin's having an almost-identical twin in school proved problematic for Dr Weeks: at one, public event, she was just about to tell 'Kevin' off for not wearing a tie



to a public event, when Kevin walked up to her! She had unknowingly been talking to John!

Kevin quickly proposed putting on the full school's musical version of Les Mis, inviting boys into the cast: not only was it a huge success, but Kevin's orchestral, conducting skills were also a delight to observe - this was a gifted musician indeed. Phantom of the Opera and Miss Saigon, along with Gala evenings followed in subsequent years - his positive, "can do" approach meant that he aimed high, quickly resolved problems, and the more complex the situation the better!

He became committed to raising funds for the Pam Jelf Music Fund, initially funded by Pam's own financial legacy; she intended it to help current and former students in their musical development in school and beyond and Kevin, along with former colleagues and students of hers, have committed to continue that commitment. Kevin's final enterprise was a reunion concert version of Les Mis, where many of the original cast returned to join current students for an epic fund-raising, musical venture in December 2023. Raising over £3000 for the Pam Jelf Fund, he recommitted himself to helping in the future, even though no longer in post. We will hold him to that!

As he leaves for his new role in Solihull, Kevin takes with him his skills, energy and commitment to both students and to music-making in its own right. Many owe him a great deal for all he gave to their music-making at EHS, and all members of Laurels wish him well in the future.

Lindsay Lucas (with a contribution from Dr Ruth Weeks)

Sally Hartley

I first met Sally in 1983 when I joined Haberdashers Monmouth as a part time Chemistry Teacher. Sally was known throughout the school as an exceptional teacher in the Prep Department who always put her pupils first.

Sally later taught my two daughters and as a result I learnt first hand how rigorous she was as a teacher but also how she made learning fun and encouraged each and every child to reach their full potential.

Sally brought her love of children and boundless energy to her role as Head of EHS Preparatory School. Everyone who met her was left in no doubt that the children in her care were her first priority and her world revolved around them. She has that rare ability to make every child in her care feel that



STAFF LEAVERS

they are special and valued thereby ensuring that they gained a self-confidence which they would carry through life.

An academic education was important to Sally but so too was fun and a love of life and learning. Sally threw herself whole heartedly into school life by example; displaying a love of everything EHS which was infectious, whether that be in the classroom, on the netball court, helping at Friends' events, on her knees in nursery or wholeheartedly supporting and developing her staff.

As Headmistress of EHS I was always grateful for Sally's support. She was always there for me, and we could agree or disagree but always support each other. They were happy times. I cannot imagine that Sally will ever truly retire, and I am delighted that she is going to be Co-Chair of the Laurels, a role which she will undoubtedly enjoy and which will bring great benefit to the school. Sally, I and EHS thank you for everything. You have been a wonderful head of EHS prep, leading and nurturing in equal measure. We wish you a healthy and happy retirement.

Ruth A Weeks

Sam Park

Sam has been a mainstay of the English department for the past 16 years. She has done so much that it is hard to sum it up, but here goes. Sam's enthusiasm for literature is what motivates her and this has influenced so much of what she has done- from introducing new texts, masterminding the introduction of iGCSE, running a book club for A level students and teaching to the highest academic standards. She spent a lot of time encouraging and patiently supporting girls, especially those for whom the subject was a real challenge. They benefitted hugely from her insight and willingness to adapt to their needs. Her commitment to the English department has been really appreciated by the many English department HODs and colleagues alike.

Outside the classroom Sam developed the debating society. Internal debates ranged from 'The Jaffa cake is not a cake but just a biscuit' and balloon debates where it would be decided to throw Father Christmas out of the balloon. Sam often hosted external



competitions in school which involved a lot of running around to make sure all the competitors were in the right place at the right time and, in true Sam style, making sure there was enough cake for everyone to have second helpings! A memorable occasion was taking part in a competition at a local school...it had not been organised as meticulously as ours and over-ran massively. At 11pm they decided they had to leave but exited through a fire door and, as Sam and girls went through it, the security alarms all started ringing and all hell broke loose! Sam's other main interest is the theatre. She has run innumerable trips, some local, others to London, including scaring the girls rigid at The Woman in Black. Some productions turned out to be somewhat unexpected such as the production of A Streetcar Named Desire at The Old Jointstock which featured, somewhat surprisingly, death and bare buttocks! Sam took it all in her stride.

I finally need to mention Sam's work as a union rep which has been highly valued by colleagues from all departments. Sam, you've been involved in so much that you will be sorely missed by both staff and girls but I hope you have a wonderful time teaching in China.

Jenny Harrison

Vanessa Gutzmore

Vanessa joined EHS as the Chemistry Technician in November 2003. She settled in quickly and soon became the Senior Technician. Vanessa has a wide knowledge of chemical techniques. Staff and pupils could always be confident that apparatus, chemicals and investigations would be set up efficiently and accurately thus enabling accurate scientific data to be obtained in the investigations required for examinations at all levels. Vanessa was a member of the school Health and Safety Committee. She was valuable in ensuring that health and safety regulations were implemented rigorously in the Science Department.

Vanessa has now decided, after twenty years, to make a career change. We wish her every success in her new venture. She will be greatly missed. Thank you from the staff and pupils.

Anne Lacey and Avril Brookes



NEWS FROM THE LAURELS

“Lois Sutton

From tears being shed watching dad drive away after dropping me off at my accommodation, to even more being shed at the thought of leaving these no longer fresh-looking digs, I can safely say my first year at Exeter University has been filled with nothing but smiles and laughter.

Opening my results on the morning of the 17th August last year to find I had missed my A-Level grades to get into Exeter made me feel like my world had come crashing down. Exeter was the only option in my eyes. It felt like my place. I had opened my results at 8 am and was sat in the clearing office by 8:15am stating to Mrs Campbell, '...Even if it means I have to do French, I'll be going to Exeter' (I hadn't even done French at GCSE). She reassured me that wouldn't have to be the case and a degree in politics quickly changed to a degree in Communications; again, one of the best things to ever happen to me.

This year I have had the opportunity to study English, Politics, Film, Media and Communication Challenges. Alongside my studies I have been a part of the Tennis society. Not only has playing a sport at university stopped me from gaining the 'freshers weight,' it has also introduced me to some of my closest friends. Every Wednesday night at University is sports night, a night out whereby you wear your most ridiculous costumes and immerse yourself in university culture,

making sure to stay away from the rugby boys and running with the phrase 'I didn't like looking nice anyway'. With these brilliant Wednesday nights out comes a punishment if you are unlucky like me; 8:30 politics lectures on Thursday mornings. Often attended in last night's makeup or pyjamas, I wouldn't have it any other way. With these early mornings also brought with it the sluggish and giggly walks to Starbucks with my course mates reenacting funny situations from the night before while moaning about having to write an essay on global governance in the coming weeks, this was what I felt university life was all about. The memories I have made across this year are ones I will hold incredibly close and the people I have to thank for that are my incredible teachers at EHS who put the kettle on and reassured me that everything will be ok.



“Jess Scurlock

After leaving Edgbaston High School in May 2023 and taking my A-level exams, I finished my first year at university exactly a year later, which shows that time really does fly by! I am pursuing a degree in English Literature at Cardiff University and it has been an incredible journey so far.

One of the highlights of my university experience has been joining societies. Being a member of the rowing and sailing clubs and Christian Union has allowed me to grow and make life-long friends with whom I can't wait to spend the rest of my university years.

My independence has grown significantly in the past nine months at university as I solo travelled to Greece

to volunteer in a sea turtle conversation programme in the summer. I am also going on my sailing's society sailing trip where we will be island hopping around Greece too!

Living in Cardiff has been a joy. The city offers a multitude of sights and activities, from Cardiff Castle to the atmosphere down by Cardiff Bay. During the sunny weekends in May, I have loved visiting Barry Island to celebrate the end of my first year. The lively Cardiff Market, the arcades scattered throughout the city, and the many green parks make Cardiff a bustling and exciting place to live in. My first year at Cardiff University has been a mix of academic pursuit, personal growth, and unforgettable experiences. I am excited to see what my next two years have in store.

A FAREWELL FROM THE 2023 SIXTH FORM LEADERSHIP TEAM

The academic year came to a head with the 2023 Leadership team reflecting on their EHS journey, sharing lessons to pass on to the next generation of head girls and becoming Laurels themselves!

Keer K (now former Head Girl), Ruby M and Simran S (now former Deputy Head Girls) have exemplified the values of EHS, leading by example and encouraging others to reach their full potential. From organising school events to championing student voices, they have played a pivotal role in creating a positive school culture. Head Girl, Keer, said "I've been fortunate enough to have attended EHS since Nursery, as my older sister was a student in Senior School. My time at EHS has provided me with the skills necessary to continue into higher education and beyond, having been given the opportunities to flourish in a nurturing environment."

Simran too has deep roots at EHS, having started in Westbourne Nursery. Over the years, she has gained valuable skills that will serve

her well beyond school and said, "The opportunities I've received have made me resilient and boosted my confidence in public settings. Additionally, they've honed crucial life skills like time management and organisation, while also enhancing my leadership and communication abilities."

Ruby has spent nearly seven years at EHS, arriving with "a massive bag" and a bundle of nerves. During her time here she has transformed, thanks in part to the opportunities EHS has provided. "EHS has naturally given me a lot of support, especially in preparation for the transition between Sixth Form and university," Ruby said. "It has also allowed me to make friends who will definitely be friends for life."

Our departing leadership team have gained confidence of the course of their term in office, pushing themselves out of their comfort zone, facing personal challenges head on and ultimately applying their new and learnt skills to the responsibilities of being part of the leadership team.



2023-24 Leadership Team

In an area they all felt passionate about, they have been instrumental in furthering the inclusive school environment. "Something that we as a team wanted to implement was more awareness of culture in school," Ruby explained.

Simran added, "One of our primary objectives has been to enhance diversity and foster cultural understanding within the school community. To achieve this, we established a "culture corner" in the Learning Hub, where students can explore and appreciate various cultures." It has been one of their many successful initiatives that has given rise to the popularity of events such as the recent Celebration of Collective Cultures Day.

Keera, Ruby and Simran's leadership, dedication, and energy have inspired both students and staff, and they have created a wonderful legacy for the Senior School. Thank you girls for your service - we shall miss you!

And with that, allow us to introduce you all to the new leadership team, Head Girl Ruby Gayle, and Deputy Heads Tyra Jambwa and Amy Sargeant. They have already hosted the Senior Open Evening in June as well as the Year 7 Induction Day in July, making their mark on what is sure to be a fantastic year ahead of them. With their diverse backgrounds and shared commitment to EHS, the new team is ready to make a meaningful difference in the school community. We look forward to seeing what they will achieve in the months ahead!

Ruby is dedicated to expanding current programs; Amy plans to bring back some classic traditions, such as the legendary Sixth Form Sleepover; and Tyra is focused on empowering students to speak up and use their voices.



2024-25 Leadership Team

From dentists to bakers, pilots to mental health nurses, we are so proud of our girls and their achievements since leaving EHS.

In the Learning Hub, Annie Coley welcomed back EHS leavers to meet with our current girls and talk about their chosen careers.

Take a look at what some of them have been up to.

Laurel **Ellen Hahn** visited the Learning Hub to talk about becoming a Mental Health Nurse. She talked the girls through what happens in hospitals and the community, and how lucky she feels to work with so many different people. She also handed down some great advice on how to stand out when applying to University, suggesting work experience in a variety of places. "I worked in a care home which helped with my self-confidence," she said. "I also volunteered for the Samaritans Call Centre which prepared me for the job I am in now."



Tilly Wylde left EHS in 2016 after completing A-levels in Biology, Chemistry and History. "Initially uncertain about my professional trajectory, I completed a week of work experience at a dental practice", she explained. From here on she was captivated by the direct impact on the health and happiness of patients and completed a 5-year degree at King's College London. Tilly now works as a general dentist in practice, but is completing further hospital training in an Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery to become a specialist in the field.

The students were in for a sweet treat when **Natasha**, of **Natasha Bakes**, came back to school to inform the girls about setting up her own business in cake making. **Natasha** also talked of the importance of taking care of yourself with such a busy schedule and unsociable working hours, which was key to a successful business plan.

We love hearing about the future endeavors of our girls, so please get in touch with your story. Follow our EHS Careers Instagram account @ehs_careers for more Laurels stories.

Our email address has changed from oldgirls@edgbastonhigh.co.uk to ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk.

Have we got your correct details recorded? Please ensure you update us with your latest contact details by completing the contact form ('Alumnae' or 'Former Staff') via the 'Stay in Touch' page on the Laurels Association section of our website. Alternatively, do send an email to ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk with your name (including maiden name if applicable), address, contact number, email address and years attended).

Laurels News Bulletin

Don't forget to check your inbox for our e-newsletter and 'Laurels News Bulletin.' The newsletter is usually sent out to subscribers at least once every half term and brings you all the latest EHSLA news and events.

Not a subscriber? Sign up by completing the relevant form on our website. Alternatively, do send us an email along with your full name (and maiden name if applicable) and your years at EHS to ehsla@edgbaston.co.uk.
Let's get social



Follow us on Instagram @ehs_laurels



We are also on Facebook EHSLaurelsAssoc

Charmian Abrahms

I first met Charmian when she returned to an EHS reunion as a 'Golden Girl'! She was already in her late 80's and dressed elegantly yet absolutely uniquely, complete with beret and lipstick par excellence. Charmian immediately lit up the room with her wit and repartee!

Very quickly it became clear that there were 'no flies on Charmian' as it were: her acumen, wit and memory were laser-sharp as she regaled so many stories about the school during wartime and the late 1940's.

She was so funny, I took to her immediately and suggested writing her memories down! That was the beginning of a friendship with this wonderful lady, one who became incredibly precious to me.

She always called me, 'Dear', inserting the term of endearment into every sentence, but especially when emphasising a point - usually when correcting or challenging me!

I spent time during the pandemic with her, in the gardens adjacent to her apartment block - socially distanced by her sitting on a bench and me sitting on a ground rug! She had brought a flask of tea, two cups, a tub of milk, a bag of sugar cubes, two teaspoons wrapped in napkins and a packet of biscuits. She laid them all out on the bench then stood back! 'Help yourself, Dear,' she waved her hand across her offering, that endearing yet cheeky smile flitting across her face.

That afternoon I scribbled furiously as she recounted - in unbelievable detail - phenomenal detail about EHS from her early childhood! She accurately and precisely dictated her school timetable, her young friends and the nicknames and full names of every Prep school teacher from some 75 years earlier!

'We called her that, Dear,' she would explain, 'because, she was so straight-laced, you know!' This was just one of her throw away comments,



usually comical, as expertly painted a detailed picture of life and characters from her past.

She answered all my questions as if she had been in the room with each teacher, every friend, only days earlier! Let alone seven or eight decades ago! Her memory and recall were to be deeply envied, at her age, I remember thinking! After interviewing her for two hours and writing out all her answers, I sent her a copy of the article I had scripted!

She rang a few days later. On the landline - of course. 'Now, Dear, I have some changes to make,' she told me. 'I may have remembered incorrectly that afternoon you came - or you might have muddled it up - but we do need to sort this out now. Got a pen?' She then sat on the phone for a further two hours dictating, word for word, what she wanted me to say. She went through the entire interview with such precision, painstakingly stripping out anything she thought 'might be wrong' and inserting what she wanted me to say instead! Word for word!

But two hours spent in her company, doing whatever she wanted, were always two hours well-spent. I was proud to have written out her memories, and she seemed particularly grateful! They survive her, of course, becoming an enduring tribute, not only to the history of EHS, but also to the most extraordinary of nonagenarians!

At the last Summer Lunch she attended, I told her I'd arranged a veggie dish for her. She held forth for the entire meal, entertaining our table, tucking into her meal with equal verve! After the lunch, however, she pulled a face at me. 'That veggie tart was very dry, Dear. Very dry!' She was in earnest and I felt a little embarrassed at this news! Another thing about Charmian - she never held back and always told it as it was! I

apologised for the disappointment. Then her eyes flashed wickedly and we laughed! Even when complaining, Charmian possessed a unique charm, full of wit and humour! Her bright eyes and smile, along with her irrepressible presence, were utterly unforgettable!

That was how I will remember dear Charmian: her wicked sense of humour, along with her many tales of friendship with Sir Ian McKellan, her fascinating acting career.... Not least playing a regular role in 'Crossroads'!

But most of all, she always had the extraordinary ability to put a smile on my face.

'I do my exercises every day,' she once told me in almost conspiratorial manner. She energetically demonstrated some of her wilder moves adding, 'Got to keep fit in my 90's, Dear!' I crumpled into giggles at her incongruous antics, while secretly clocking that this must be one of her keys to keeping so fit and mentally vital at such an age!

Charmian Abrahms:
So independent. So bright and fiercely intelligent.
So warm and affectionate.

'Now they won't forget me, Dear,' she flourished in triumph when she had finished editing the article. She seemed oblivious to the two hours it had taken!

'Now you've got all the details right, Dear.'

And no, Charmian, I won't forget you! Nor will anyone else who had the pleasure and privilege of spending time with you. You were 'One of a kind.' They don't make them like you anymore, Charmian!

May EHS always cherish your memory and your joie de vivre.

Even though Charmian lived to her mid-90's, her accident still made me feel she was 'gone too

soon.' Odd, as she had lived to such a ripe old age and in such fullness - but I felt she still had so much more to offer! That says it all really - she died at 96 'too young.'

God speed, my friend. Rest easy. Thank you for so much fun and deep joy! You will be very missed!

Lindsay Lucas

Diane Todd

Miss Diane Todd, our Prep School Ballet Teacher, passed away, unexpectedly in March 2024.

Diane, joined Edgbaston High School to teach ballet to our youngest pupils in Westbourne and Prep in 1994 and had taught here for the last 30 years without a break. During that time she taught many hundreds of girls who started their ballet with her in Reception and then continued into Prep, and I am sure that they will remember these lessons fondly.

Diane was a special member of our school community described by everyone as a lovely lady. She was always calm and patient whilst sharing her passion for her dance with the children. She was also a valued colleague who shared many of her other interests including her love of nature and the outdoors with staff.

Diane will be greatly missed by all here at Edgbaston High School and our thoughts are with her family at this very sad time.

Pamela Martin

Sad news that Pamela Kathryn Anne Martin née Jackson died on February 2nd 2024. She left EHS in 1965.

Peter Martin.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 12 October 2024, late afternoon:
Thursday 14 November 2024, 6pm – 7pm:
Saturday 7 December 2024, Time TBC:
Friday 31 January 2025, 3.30pm – 5pm:
Saturday 5 July 2025, 10.30am – 3pm:
Saturday 8 March 2025, 11am – 3pm:
Summer term, late afternoon:

Birmingham Drinks get-together
Dark Remembered Days
A Merry Little Christmas
Laurels' EHS Birthday Celebration
Netball event, AGM & Summer Lunch
Open House
London Drinks

DARK REMEMBERED DAYS

Thursday November 14th
6-7pm
The Octagon

Join us in the newly refurbished Octagon to witness a revue-style production of words, live music and powerful visual images of the 1939-45 war years which also reflects more widely on the experience of conflict. Devised and directed by Elizabeth Mullenger with music from Bridget Snasdell and Carl Attwood.

Some of you might remember a previous production of this at EHS undertaken as a joint Sixth Form General Studies project with OldSwinford Hospital School Stourbridge.



It was, however, originally devised for King Edward VI Camp Hill when I was Head of English there as a cross-curricular project to bring the history and experience of the 1939-45 War years to students through literature and images which are generally less well-known than those of the 1914-18 War. As a post-war child I grew up with some compelling first-hand stories from 1939-45 and the script contains memories and testimonies from people who would have called themselves 'ordinary' but certainly were not. Recent events and disturbing trends have made me re-visit and re-shape "Dark Remembered Days": we have so much to learn from the 1930s and 40s.

The production at EHS is a shorter version of that performed at The Market Theatre Ledbury last November in aid of charities related to the war in the Ukraine. An older cast also presents a different dimension. We were recently invited to perform at the D Day Commemoration in Dymock Church in Gloucestershire, a poignant place which celebrates the group of 1914-18 War Poets who lived in the area.

The project made a lasting impression on those who have seen or performed in it throughout its various iterations. I do hope that a good number of you will be able to come on November 14th. We shall have performed it for a section of the Senior School during the afternoon.

Elizabeth Mullenger