

# LAUREL LEAVES



## The Edgbaston High School Laurels Association Magazine

Summer 2025



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# CO-CHAIR'S WELCOME

Hello and welcome to the Summer 2025 edition of Laurel Leaves which my co-chair Sally Hartley and I are excited to share with you.

2025-2026 is a very special year for EHS, it is the School's 150th Birthday. The atmosphere in school is one of celebration and pride of the achievements of the pupils over the last 150 years. The school is living proof of the importance of independent girls' schools, giving girls the space to learn and thrive and achieve their dreams. We want to celebrate this with you all. We have grand plans for events to mark EHS' 150th Birthday and have set up a sub-committee for this. We are planning a Back to School Day in April where we will open the school to alumnae and recreate school days from the past, with an assembly, classrooms set up like they used to be, lunch in the school hall, inspirational speakers, performances from current pupils, and a fashion show with the old uniform. We are also hosting a Birthday Tea Party in January for families of current EHS pupils who also have Laurels members. On 19th September 2026, we will be having an event in London with speakers, drinks and food. Elizabeth Mullenger is helping us organise this exciting event. These special 150th events are in addition to our annual events which include our Merry Little Christmas carol singing event with the alumnae choir, and our Summer Lunch and AGM.

Our recent Laurels Association events were successful in bringing together former pupils, retired staff, current students, and current staff to reflect on and celebrate the EHS community. I hope you enjoy reading about our Open House, and the Summer Lunch and AGM in the following pages.

The EHS Laurels Association Committee have worked hard this year, contributing to articles in Laurel Leaves, working on the archives, organising events, and attending meetings.



“ The atmosphere in school is one of celebration and pride.

*Caroline*

I would like to thank them for their ongoing hard work and support. Regretfully, Anne Lacey has stepped down from the Committee for personal reasons. Since retirement from EHS, Anne has been an active member of the Laurels Association, she has been Co-chair and Treasurer. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Anne for her dedication to the school and the Laurels Association. We are looking forward to seeing her at future Laurels events.

Finally, I would like warmly welcome our new Alumnae and Staff Leavers to the Laurels Association. I hope you enjoy your first edition of Laurel Leaves!

*Best wishes  
Caroline Sprackman*



# MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMISTRESS



Even after 150 years, the need for girls' schools remains as vital as ever.

*Clare Macro*

There is no doubt that Alice Jane Cooper, the pioneering first headmistress of Edgbaston High School for Girls, played a transformative role in shaping the school's early identity after its founding in 1876. Her leadership laid the foundation for a progressive, academically rigorous, well-rounded education for young women, and her legacy continues to inspire generations of our girls.

She challenged Victorian norms and even got the school in the paper for allowing the girls to take part in a cricket match. Thankfully, raised eyebrows at the sight of girls playing cricket are long gone, and I am delighted that we now have our very own EHS cricket square that allows us to host hardball cricket matches with confidence.



Eagle-eyed readers may have noticed that since we were founded in 1876, January 2026 will mark our 150th birthday – which means we’re currently in our 150th year. Naturally, that calls for a celebration in true EHS style: full of energy, togetherness, and sheer fun.

We started, quite literally, on the front foot—with a whole-school SoFunk dance marathon, led by the brilliant Sharon Brown. There was bright sunshine and energetic pupils; the very youngest were front and centre, even if they seemed ever so slightly sceptical about what was actually going on. More than 800 girls and staff took to the Astro, dancing non-stop, in an attempt to set a new Guinness World Record. Whether we make it into the record books or not, the experience is already etched in EHS history.

Then came a moment of EHS brilliance: 850 of us gathered on the field, forming a giant “150”, captured from above by drone. As we stood together, the youngest beside some of the oldest, it was impossible not to feel the interconnect-edness and sense of belonging that defines our school.

As we look ahead, this year will be rich in celebration. There’s much still to come:

- EDGfest—our very own school festival of performance, art, and House pride
- Special assemblies, commemorative brooches, and a digital archive, preserving 150 years of school history

- And our Give Back initiative, honouring “150 Years of Service” with community acts led by pupils and staff

There will also be specific events for Laurels, so please do join us in as much as you can, to celebrate this incredible milestone for the school. As ever, we ended the year in the most fitting way—singing the school song together. The collective foot stamp on the word ‘rank’ in the line, “There is no school in all the land to rank with EHS,” rang out as powerfully and proudly as ever. For me, it was a striking symbol of the strength and determination of our community. It reminded me that, even after 150 years, Edgbaston High School remains committed to championing and pioneering the education of girls.

EHS fosters lifelong friendships, instilling in our students the confidence to dream boldly, speak up, shape their futures, and believe that anything is possible. Our mission is just as vital today as it was when Alice Cooper first founded the school. She worked tirelessly to advance the cause of freedom and independence for girls and women—and it is our responsibility to carry that legacy forward.

Even after 150 years, the need for girls’ schools remains as vital as ever. Edgbaston High School is proud to have served generations of girls, and we will be honoured to continue doing so for many years to come.

*Clare Macro*



# 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

Lindsay Lucas (née Farnath, 1973-1981)

## Past Staff Representative

Chris Evans (staff, 1998-2017)

## General Committee

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)



# MEET OUR NEW YEAR 13 LAURELS ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTATIVES

We are delighted to introduce our newly appointed Laurels Association Year 13 Representatives, Elisha and Millie. Both are excited to take on the role and share what they're most looking forward to in the year ahead.

Elisha shares:

"Hi, I'm Elisha, and I'm thrilled to have been selected as one of the Laurel Liaisons for the 2025-26 academic year. I joined EHS in 2019 as a Year 7 student, and I'm currently studying A Levels in Maths, Economics, and Spanish. I hope to pursue a career in the finance sector.

This role is a chance for me to give back to the community that has nurtured me over the years. It's a big year for me personally, as I prepare to sit my A Levels—but it's an even bigger year for our school, as we come together to celebrate the 150th anniversary of EHS. I'm really looking forward to being part of this special milestone and working with the Laurels community throughout the academic year."

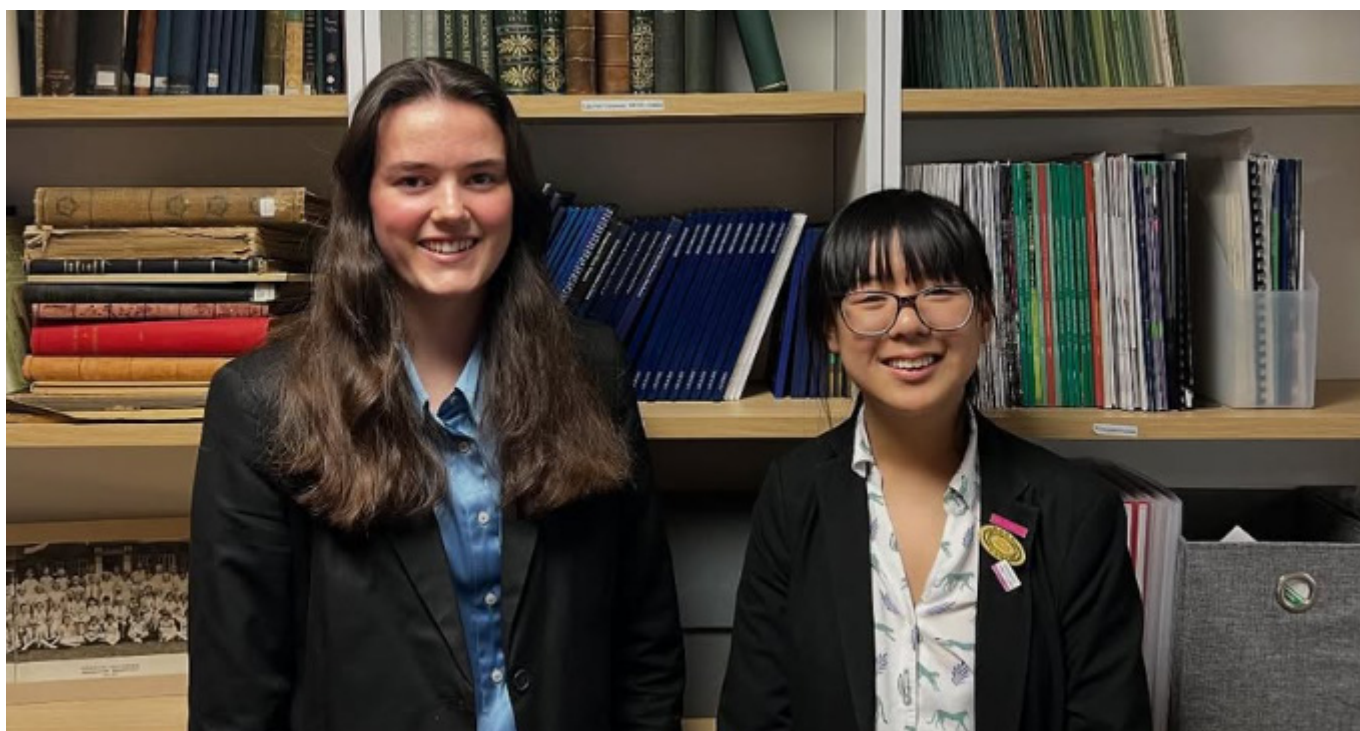
Millie adds:

"Hello, my name is Millie and, alongside Elisha, I am excited to be your next Laurels Association Representative for 2025-26. I joined EHS in 2014 in Year 2 of the Prep School, and I am now studying A Levels in History, English Literature, and Psychology. I hope to study History at university.

I have loved being part of EHS, and it's wonderful to now have the opportunity to talk to the Laurels about their experiences of the school. My family has a long history at EHS—both my grandmother and great aunt are alumnae, and more recently my older sister, who left in 2022. EHS is such a special place, and I feel truly honoured to have been given this role in my final year of school."

The Laurels Association Representatives play an important role in school and LA life. They help at events, contribute ideas, lead enrichment classes linked to alumnae activities, and keep the school connected with our former students.

We can't wait to see all that Elisha and Millie bring to the role this year, especially as we celebrate such a historic milestone in the life of EHS.



# OPEN HOUSE 2025: A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

**On Saturday 8 March, Edgbaston High School flung open its doors for a very special Open House, a warm invitation for our Laurels to return, reminisce, and reconnect.**

The halls of EHS once again echoed with laughter and conversation as alumnae wandered through the corridors they once knew so well. Friends reunited, stories were shared, and memories came flooding back – from favourite teachers and school traditions to the unforgettable moments that helped shape their journeys.

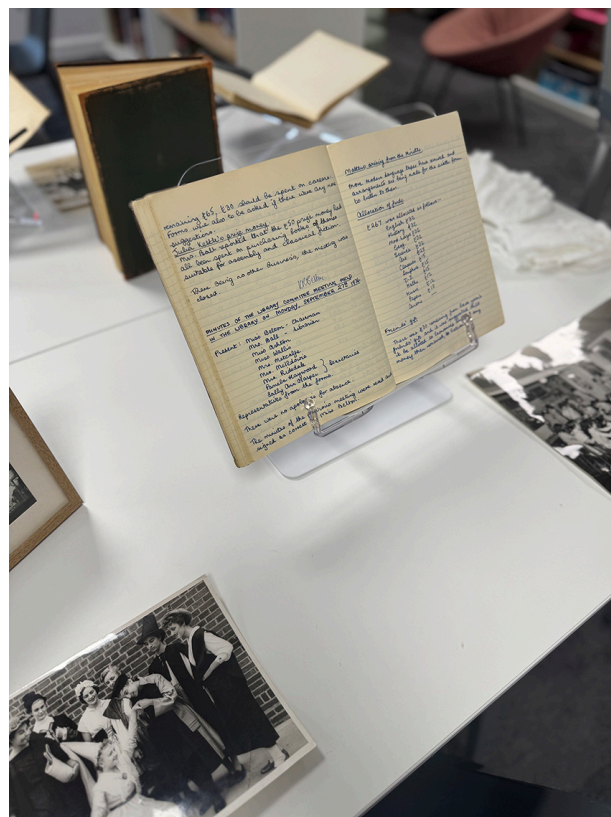
This year's event had an extra layer of nostalgia, thanks to a carefully curated display of archive materials. From decades-old photographs and school publications to handwritten registers and uniforms from days gone by, our archives sparked curiosity and plenty of smiles. Many guests delighted in spotting themselves, or family members, captured in class photos and school events from years past. Some even brought along their own pictures to contribute to the collection, helping us preserve and celebrate EHS history for generations to come.

As a fitting finale, we marked our 150th birthday in style, with celebratory cupcakes and heartfelt tributes to a school that continues to leave a lasting impression on all who pass through its gates.

Thank you to everyone who joined us. Your stories, laughter, and photos made this year's Open House truly unforgettable. We can't wait to welcome you back again soon.









# LET THE 150th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS BEGIN

We are delighted to be celebrating a remarkable milestone – 150 years of Edgbaston High School – and the festivities are already well underway both in school and across the Laurels Network.

In school, we kicked off the anniversary year with a spectacular world record attempt: the largest ever SoFunk-athon! An incredible 843 staff and pupils gathered on the school astroturf to dance to funk and soul. We'll soon find out whether we've officially secured our place in the Guinness Book of Records – watch this space. You can relive the moment by scanning the QR code here to watch the video.

And this is just the beginning. Throughout the year there will be plenty more opportunities to celebrate – from in-school initiatives and house

challenges to service and charity givebacks marking this very special anniversary.



For the Laurels, we are excited to share several upcoming events designed especially with you in mind:

- Laurels Birthday Tea – January 2026.  
A warm and welcoming gathering to celebrate with old friends and new.
- Back to School Event – April 2026  
Step back in time with a nostalgic twist – don your old uniforms and be transported to the early 20th century school experience.

To help shape and support these events, a special 150th birthday committee has been formed within the Laurels Committee, and they are busy planning celebrations that we hope will be truly memorable.

We are also delighted to offer 150th celebration badges, now available for pre-order. If you would like to secure a commemorative EHS badge, please email [ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk](mailto:ehsla@edgbastonhigh.co.uk) and we will add you to the list.

It promises to be a truly unforgettable year, and we look forward to celebrating this once-in-a-life-time milestone together.





# FROM THE LAURELS: MEMORIES OF EHS

As part of our 150th celebrations, we've been delighted to hear from alumnae who have shared their fondest—and often funniest—memories of their time at EHS. From classroom moments to staffroom stories, these recollections bring the spirit of school life vividly back to us. One such memory comes from Gillian Mary Whittaker (née Bird), whose tale of schoolgirl determination in 1945 reminds us that some things—like wanting to fit in, or a touch of teenage rebellion—are truly timeless.

In this picture I am the only one wearing three quarter length socks. In 1945, it was not easy to buy stockings, and I longed to wear them.

EHS had a second-hand shop for the school uniform and I was so pleased to find a pair of stockings. I put them on in the Cloakroom before assembling for prayers and proudly stood in my stockings for what seemed like an eternity, as we heard the sound of Headmistress Miss Caswell's door slam, her steps along the balcony, clip clop down the stairs, through the door and up onto the platform.

I had nothing to hold up my stockings, so with the force of gravity they made their way down my leg. By the end of prayers, I looked like Nora Batty!

Gillian Mary Whittaker (née Bird)

Pupil 1935 - 1946

Staff in Westbourne 1977 - 1986

We are so grateful to Gillian for sharing this charming story, which not only paints a vivid picture of life at EHS in the 1940s, but also shows how humour, resilience and individuality have always been part of the EHS spirit. If you have a memory—funny, poignant or anything in between—that you'd like to share with fellow alumnae, we'd love to hear from you.

*Margaret Goer, Sheila Upton, Rosemary Wainwright,  
Pat Windle, Diana Dawson, Gillian Bird*



# A WONDERFUL SUMMER LUNCH

This year's Laurels Association Summer Lunch, held on Saturday 5 July, was a truly special occasion – a chance for alumnae to reconnect, reminisce, and celebrate all that binds us together as members of the EHS community.

The day began with the Laurels Association AGM, where we reflected on the many successes of the past year, from welcoming new committee members and supporting school events to awarding this year's Laurels and Initiative Awards. We also looked ahead to an exciting year to come as EHS prepares to mark its 150th birthday with a programme of celebrations.

The lunch itself was filled with laughter and lively conversation as memories were shared and new connections made. A highlight of the afternoon was celebrating some of our most recent EHS leavers, whose fantastic commitment to the school was admired by all – no matter how long their time with us, each has left their mark on the community.

The Summer Lunch was also an opportunity to look forward. Plans are already well underway for the school's milestone anniversary, and the Laurels Association is proud to play its part. From supporting the installation of new seating pods in the Rose Garden to working on the digitalisation of archive materials, the committee continues to ensure that our contribution has a lasting impact for current and future pupils.

As always, the warmth and spirit of our alumnae network shone through. We are so grateful to everyone who joined us for this year's lunch and look forward to seeing many more of you at our upcoming events.









# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## **Merry Little Christmas**

Saturday 6th December 2025

## **Birthday Tea Party**

Thursday 15th January 2026

## **Back to School**

Saturday 25th April 2026

## **Summer Lunch and AGM**

Saturday 4th July 2026

## **London 150th Event**

26th September 2026

## **Committee Meeting Dates:**

Tuesday 14th October 2025

6:30-7:30pm by Zoom

Tuesday 11th November 2025

6:30-7:30pm by Zoom

Tuesday 3rd March 2026

6:30-7:30pm by Zoom

Tuesday 9th June 2026

6:30-7:30pm in person at EHS  
and by Zoom





# DANCING THROUGH LIFE: THE STORY OF CAROL HANNIS

When Carol Hannis walked the corridors of EHS in the 1950s, she could never have imagined that her love of ballet would one day leave a lasting legacy on the international stage. What began as training under Phyllis Kempster and Morwenna Bowen at the Solihull School of Ballet soon grew into a lifelong dedication to dance. After two years at the Ballet Rambert School, Carol's path took her overseas - and so began an extraordinary journey.

In 1972, Carol founded her own ballet school in Athens, teaching the Royal Academy of Dancing (RAD) method. Just a year later, she oversaw the first RAD examinations to be held in the city, a milestone that opened the door for countless young dancers in Greece. By 1977, she had extended her reach even further, introducing RAD classes at the US Military base in Athens. The school flourished. Carol's students began to win places at world-renowned institutions, including the RAD College in London, the Royal Ballet School, Central School, and Rambert. Her influence touched families as well - her daughter, Lucy Hannis, trained at the Royal Ballet School, danced with the Greek National Ballet in the 1990s, and has carried her mother's legacy forward by taking over the school in 2008.

Carol's impact did not stop there. In 1993, she founded the Athens Region of the RAD Association, further embedding ballet into the cultural fabric of the city. Over the years, four of her students have gone on to dance with the



Greek National Ballet, while many others have become teachers in their own right, spreading the art of ballet across Athens and beyond. Among them is Helen Mellissinou, who now runs her own RAD school in north London, The Finchley Ballet School.

From her days at EHS to shaping the future of ballet in Greece, Carol's story is one of vision, determination, and artistry. Her life reminds us that passion, when nurtured, can grow into something that inspires generations.

# STAFF LEAVERS

## Mike Tomaszewicz 45 years, Teacher of Chemistry

This year we celebrate an extraordinary milestone: 45 years of dedicated service from a truly remarkable teacher, scientist and colleague – Mr T.

After studying Biochemistry at the University of Birmingham and beginning his career at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Skin Unit, Mr T completed his PGCE in 1979 and soon after joined EHS. From that moment, he has been a constant presence in our school, teaching under five different Heads, embracing changing syllabi and technology, and inspiring generations of girls to love Chemistry.

Known for his trademark dry wit and clarity, Mr T made even the trickiest of topics feel achievable. His favourite compound? Acidified potassium dichromate – “because it's pretty.” His love of Physical Chemistry, Acids and Bases, Kinetics and Equilibria has never wavered, and his students will long remember the way he brought those concepts to life. For many, the turning point came in those small moments: a lab experiment that suddenly clicked, a UCAS reference that opened a door, or a word of encouragement that gave them the confidence to keep going.

Beyond the lab, Mr T was a regular on school trips – from skiing adventures (including the famous broken leg of '92) to the Sixth Form tour of the United States. Always game for the next challenge, he supported students in ways that reached far beyond the classroom.

Over four decades, Mr T's legacy has been written not in headlines but in thank-you cards, exam scripts and the lives of thousands of girls who discovered, through his teaching, that Chemistry is not just about reactions and equations – it's about curiosity, precision, and resilience.

His intellect, humour and humility have been a gift to our community, and he leaves behind a legacy that will shine as brightly as his beloved potassium dichromate. On behalf of colleagues, students and alumnae past and present: thank you, Mr T, for everything.

*Mrs Macro*



## Val Woodfield 32 years, Prep Teacher

Val has dedicated over three decades to the Prep Department, first joining in 1992 before a short adventure abroad and then returning to where she truly belonged. From the moment she stepped back through the Prep doors, she became an anchor of stability, care and warmth for generations of girls.

As a form teacher, Val has been a constant source of encouragement and reassurance, guiding girls through their first steps at EHS with kindness and patience. She has also been the spark behind so many Prep highlights: from swimming sessions that built water confidence and courage, to magical Christmas festivities that created memories still cherished by girls long after they left Prep. Her creativity, good humour and ability to make every day special have left an indelible mark on Prep life. Colleagues speak of Val's warmth and wit, her generosity of spirit and her unwavering dedication to the girls in her care. She has been not only a teacher, but a mentor, a cheerleader and a trusted friend to those around her. Her presence in the staffroom has been as valued as her presence in the classroom, and her impact is felt in the laughter, traditions and sense of community she has helped foster.

Warm, witty and wonderfully dedicated, Val has been at the very heart of Prep for more than thirty years. As she steps into retirement, she does so with the love and gratitude of the whole school community. We wish her the happiest of retirements – though she will be sorely missed, her legacy will remain a treasured part of EHS.





**Karen Newling**  
**29 years, Teacher of**  
**Mathematics**

Almost thirty years ago, Karen walked through the doors of EHS, unaware of the thousands of girls' lives she would go on to shape. Her journey began in 1996 as a Teacher of Mathematics, and she quickly became a much-loved and respected member of the department. Nearly three decades of dedication, compassion and commitment later, Karen has made a truly outstanding contribution to EHS – both in and beyond the classroom.



In 1997, she took on the role of Duke of Edinburgh Co-ordinator and became a driving force behind its success, empowering girls to take on the challenge with confidence and courage. Even this year, Karen has been camping “in style” on Bronze and Silver expeditions, still as enthusiastic as ever. Her presence has ensured that the Duke of Edinburgh Award remains a valued and thriving part of EHS culture.

Then in 2003, her boundless energy led her to become the school's Educational Visits Co-ordinator – or, as colleagues affectionately call her, the “Queen of Trips.” With a genuine gift for turning ideas into itineraries, Karen has masterminded an extraordinary programme of learning beyond the classroom. Since 2019 alone she has accompanied 33 school trips, an astonishing achievement even allowing for the 18-month pause in 2020-21. The much-loved Year 10 Maths trips to Paris – with their customary stop at Disneyland to indulge Karen's love of all things Disney – remain a highlight for generations of girls.

If trips and DoFE weren't enough, Karen has also served as Head of Year 10, Key Stage 4 Co-ordinator and Senior Teacher. Calm in a crisis, with true leadership and vision, she has always put girls at the heart of every decision and helped shape the school's direction over many years. To her students, Karen is remembered as caring and creative – many still fondly recall her song for remembering the area of a circle. To her colleagues, she has brought fun and friendship to the staffroom as the unofficial social secretary, a lover of printing, and the ever-reliable supplier of stationery (particularly bulldog clips!).

Without question, Karen's career has been marked by professionalism, compassion and joy. As she takes early retirement, she leaves EHS having given immeasurably to the school community. While we will miss her enormously, we wish her every happiness as she creates wonderful new itineraries for her own adventures ahead.

*Jenny Lambert*

**Abi Aston**  
**23 years, Deputy**  
**Head of Prep**

Abi began her EHS journey as a Year 1 teacher, later becoming KS1 Co-ordinator and, for the past eight years, Deputy Head of Prep. Always kind, thoughtful and enthusiastic, she has been a constant source of inspiration. Her sense of fun has lit up the staffroom, whether coaching netball, sharing stories, or describing her campervan adventures. A gifted teacher, organiser and leader, Abi leaves behind a legacy of dedication and joy.



**Lesley Bowler**  
**16.5 years, Prep Teacher**  
**and Alumna**

Since joining the Reception team in 2009, Lesley has been a calm, kind and reassuring presence at the heart of Prep. Loved by girls and colleagues alike, she is known for her perseverance, quick wit and stories that filled the classroom and staffroom with laughter. An alumna herself, Lesley has given so much back to the school community and will be deeply missed.



**Maria Romero**  
**16 years, French**  
**Language Assistant**

Maria's warmth, creativity and positivity have left a lasting impact on the MFL Department and the school as a whole. A valued colleague and friend, she has been an integral part of French teaching at EHS, and her generosity of spirit has enriched countless lessons. As she returns to Spain, she takes with her our gratitude and very best wishes.



# STAFF LEAVERS

## **María Aznar-Lopez** 12 years, Teacher of Spanish

María's energy, warmth and passion for Spanish language and culture have shaped the lives of so many EHS students. Always generous with her time and support—whether on trips, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, or in the staffroom—she has been both mentor and role model. Her teaching was full of creativity and care, helping students to find joy in language learning. We thank María for her outstanding contribution and wish her every happiness in her next chapter.



## **Michelle Hayward** 5.5 years, Teacher of Swimming and First Aid Trainer

Michelle has transformed First Aid provision at EHS and made Lifesaving Club the largest in the school. She has inspired many girls to achieve their full lifeguarding qualifications and led Prep Swim Squad to national success at ESSA finals. She has also supported memorable trips, from ski trips in Canada to surfing adventures in Cornwall. A driving force in sport and swimming at EHS, Michelle leaves a legacy of enthusiasm and achievement.



## **Jacqui Fellows** 9 years, Prep Ballet Teacher

Known affectionately as "Miss Jacqui," she has brought joy, patience and passion to our youngest pupils through ballet. Her gentle encouragement has inspired confidence and creativity in Nursery and Kindergarten girls, leaving them with memories they will treasure.



## **Chanelle Harris** 2 years, Teacher of PE and Dance

Chanelle's choreography and leadership have taken dance at EHS to new heights. With precision, passion and high expectations, she has inspired students to perform with skill and confidence, culminating in powerful Dance Company performances such as Vengeance at the Great Big Dance Off. Alongside her discipline, Chanelle's warmth and approachability have made her a hugely popular teacher. She leaves behind an incredible legacy after just two years.



## **Katie Egan** 6 years, Teacher of Geography, Head of Year 8

Katie first joined EHS in 2009, later spending two years teaching in Thailand before returning in 2019. Her love of fieldwork has taken students to Carding Mill Valley, Malvern, Iceland, Morocco and even Southern Africa. More recently, she became Head of Year 8 and took on responsibility for Careers, including launching the popular EHS Careers Instagram. Dedicated, caring and adventurous, Katie has given so much to EHS and will be greatly missed.



## **Hollie Chambers** 2 years, Teacher of Psychology and Sociology, Head of Futures

In just two years, Hollie has had a big impact as a dedicated teacher and as Head of Futures, guiding students through their next steps beyond EHS. Known for her kindness, humour and supportive approach, she has been a wonderful colleague as well as a true friend to many. Hollie's laughter, energy and care will be deeply missed—but her influence will live on through the many students she has supported.





**Amy Hutchinson-Wade**  
**1 year, Teacher of Classics**  
**and English, Charities**  
**Co-ordinator**

Although only with us for a year, Amy has made a remarkable impact. She has inspired girls as both a teacher and form tutor, while also taking on the role of Charities Co-ordinator, leading fundraising efforts with energy and passion. Organised, caring and a true team player, Amy has been a wonderful addition to EHS and will be sorely missed.



**Temporary Contracts**

We also say farewell and thank you to colleagues who have been with us on temporary contracts:  
**Beth Goulbourne, Jason Laverock, Eleanor Leason**  
and **Nafisa Saiyed**.

# A LASTING GIFT FOR THE 150th ANNIVERSARY

In honour of the school's 150th birthday, the Laurels Association has kindly gifted two elegant barrel-shaped seating pods for the Rose Garden, creating a lasting tribute for our community to enjoy.

To mark the school's 150th birthday, we are delighted to announce the purchase of two beautiful barrel-shaped seating pods for the Rose Garden. These unique structures will provide a peaceful retreat for current pupils – a quiet spot to sit with friends, enjoy the outdoors, or simply take a moment of reflection during a busy school day. The Rose Garden has always been a much-loved space within the school grounds, and the addition of the seating pods will ensure it continues to be a place of calm and inspiration. Designed to be both practical and eye-catching, the pods will offer shelter and comfort all year round, creating a lasting legacy of the anniversary celebrations.



This special addition to our grounds is not only a gift to the pupils of today, but also a symbol of the school's commitment to providing spaces that nurture wellbeing, friendship, and community for generations to come.

# THE LAURELS ASSOCIATION

## BUILDING THE NEXT CHAPTER

As many of you will know from recent correspondence from the Laurels Association data team, we have been working hard to ensure our records are up to date so that we have the correct details and the best means of keeping in touch with our wonderful alumnae. A huge thank you goes out to everyone who has already taken the time to update their information.

Please note that these changes are still being processed and not fully implemented just yet. If you continue to receive correspondence using outdated details, don't be alarmed - this will be resolved in the coming months.

In the meantime, we're delighted to share some exciting news. The Laurels Association network is evolving, and we're taking things to the next level with the introduction of a new, fully customisable community platform. Designed to support limitless users, the platform will build engagement and help alumnae make the very most of the network.

From reconnecting with lost Laurels and organising reunions to exploring our archives digitally and keeping up to date with the latest news, the opportunities are endless. This is the next step in ensuring we remain relevant, connected, and above all, united as a community.

We can't wait to share more details as the rollout unfolds - watch this space!





# THE LAURELS INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Here at EHS, we are fortunate to have such an invested alumnae network. Not only do our leavers go on to achieve fantastic things in their chosen fields, but they often return to share their stories, inspiring the next generation of students to follow their passions.

Most recently, we were delighted to welcome back three wonderful Laurels:

## **Kate Buxton** **Stage Manager**

Kate kindly squeezed in a visit to EHS amidst her busy schedule as a Stage Manager for touring theatre companies across the UK and Ireland. Responsible for everything from lighting, props and staging to the safety of the crew, Kate gave us a fascinating insight into the complex and creative world of theatre production. We were thrilled to hear about the shows she has worked on – and to congratulate her team for winning an Olivier Award for the Hey Duggee stage show! Kate told us it was her experiences in EHS productions that first sparked her passion for theatre, making her return especially meaningful.



## **Polly Starkie** **Sports Journalist**

Polly returned to deliver an inspiring assembly about her career in sports journalism. From launching a podcast with her dad at just 16 to reporting on the 2025 Ashes in Australia,



Polly's career has already taken her across the world – and she hasn't even finished her degree yet! Her advice to students was simple but powerful:

"Be proactive! Look for opportunities and take risks!"

It was a joy to welcome Polly back on her way to Edgbaston Cricket Ground, and we look forward to following her next steps.

## **Zaineb Al-Ani** **Architecture**

We were also delighted to welcome back Zaineb, who gave a brilliant assembly on her journey into Architecture. Her talk was filled with practical advice and encouragement, including:



- Networking is invaluable – it helps secure work experience and future job opportunities.
- Always make a good impression – employers often ask around before hiring.
- Extra reading can deepen knowledge in specialist areas.
- Learn to say no and set boundaries to avoid burnout

Zaineb's honesty and wisdom resonated with our students, and her words of encouragement will no doubt guide them in the years to come.

Through visits like these, our Laurels continue to inspire, mentor and connect with EHS students – reminding us all that the bonds built here last a lifetime.

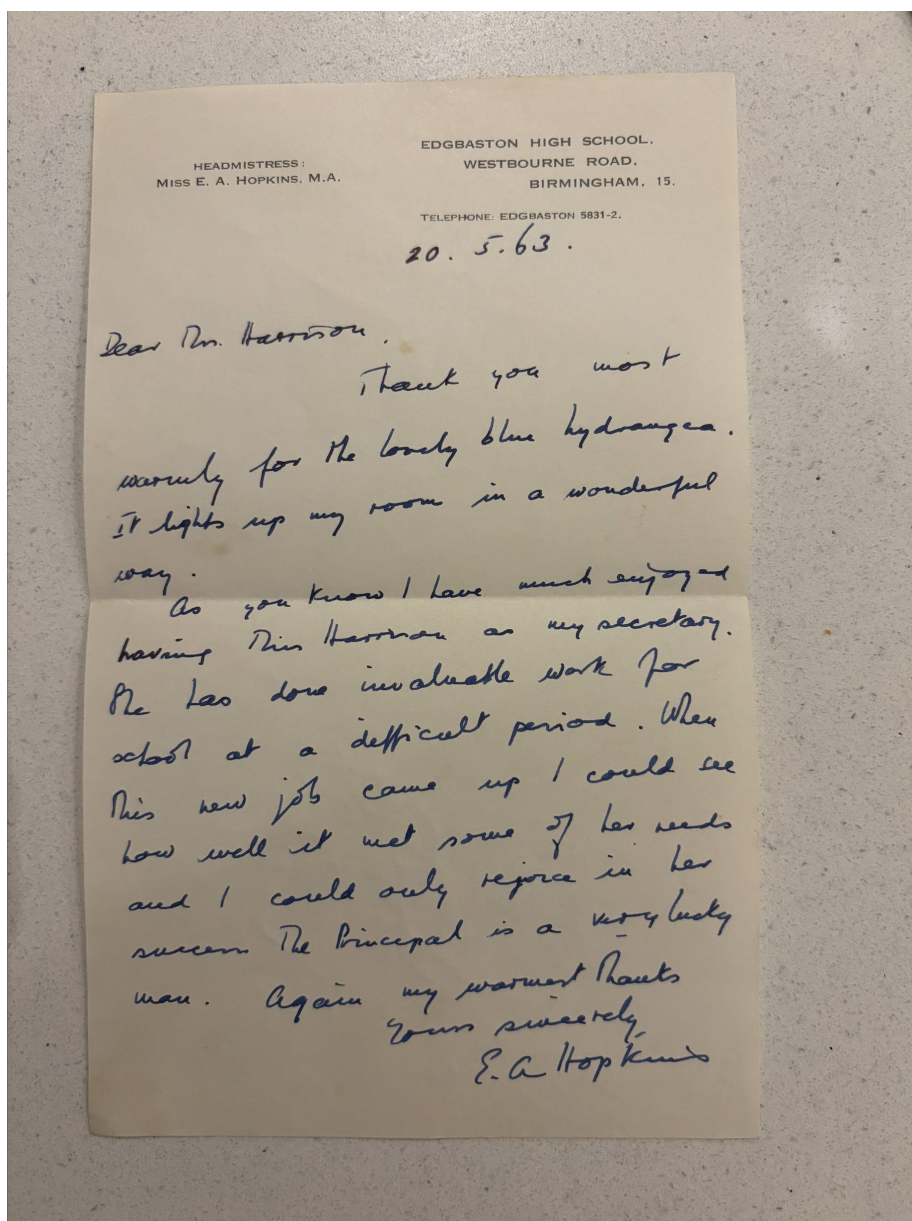
# A LETTER FROM THE PAST: A CHANCE FIND IN WALES

One alumnae supporter's eye for old handwriting led to an unexpected discovery – a piece of EHS history tucked away in a Welsh antique shop.

Every so often, the past makes its way back to us in the most unexpected of ways. During a holiday in Tywyn, Wales, an alumnae supporter browsing in an antique shop came across a bundle of old letters. Among them was one dated May 1963, written by none other than Miss E. A. Hopkins, Headmistress of EHS at the time.

The letter was addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Harrison of Walsall, and refers to a pupil named Murial—believed to be their daughter. While little else is known about the family, research suggests they may have had ties to the Frank F. Harrison Engineering College in Walsall. The finder has even contacted the Walsall Archive to see if more information can be uncovered.

What struck them most was the human detail within the letter: Miss Hopkins gently referencing a “difficult period” that Murial was going through. Though the exact circumstances remain a mystery, the letter offers a fascinating glimpse into the



personal care and attention shown to pupils more than 60 years ago.

We are grateful that this piece of school history has been brought back into the EHS story—reminding us how powerfully letters and handwriting can connect generations.

If you've come across any unexpected EHS treasures or memories—whether in an attic, a photo album, or even a charity shop—we'd love to hear from you. Who knows what other pieces of our school's history might be waiting to be rediscovered?



# STAY IN TOUCH

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.

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# A PLATINUM CELEBRATION

EHS Alumna Gillian Mary Whittaker (née Bird) and her husband Geoffrey celebrated an incredible milestone on 30 April 2025 - their 70th wedding anniversary!

remained connected to the school throughout her life. She first met Geoffrey while carol singing as a teenager, and the pair became sweethearts. When Geoffrey, who served in Korea with the Royal Artillery, was posted abroad, Gillian cherished his letters - a suitcase full of them still remains today.

Married in 1955 at St Peter's Church, Harborne, the couple went on to raise two daughters, Caroline and Julie, both EHS alumnae.



After 66 years in their Harborne home, Gillian and Geoffrey recently moved to Penarth, South Glamorgan, where Gillian still insists on lunch at 1 o'clock sharp!

Among the treasures unearthed during their move were uniforms, photos and memorabilia, much of which has now been donated to the EHS Archive - though Gillian wisely held on to her lacrosse and hockey sticks.

Over the years, the Whittaker's have received cards from the late Queen and, this April, a very special card from His Majesty The King marking their platinum anniversary.

Congratulations to Gillian and Geoffrey on 70 wonderful years together - a truly inspiring love story.