

verve

The magazine of the GDST Alumnae Network | Issue 13/14



The
road
less
travelled



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Contact

- ✉ info@gdstalumnae.net
- ☎ 020 7393 6606
- 🌐 www.gdst.net/alumnae
- 📘 www.facebook.com/alumnae
- 🐦 @GDST Alumnae

Find us on LinkedIn

Registered charity no: 306983

Alumnae Relations Manager
Jennifer Grafton
j.grafton@gdstalumnae.net

Events & Database Records
Elinor Hatt
e.hatt@wes.gdst.net

This magazine is also available online at www.gdst.net/alumnae. For additional printed copies please contact us.

Editor: Robert Fenner,
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Fuchsia Dunlop, courtesy of Colin Bell

Welcome to Verve 2013-14, the magazine of the GDST Alumnae Network

We often hear about the common bond GDST alumnae say they share, and perhaps the best thing about this is that it seems to transcend what people do for a living, where they live, and even which GDST school they went to.

Despite this bond, there is no such thing as a typical GDST alumna – with over 55,000 people in the community, how could there be? It was the desire to celebrate the fantastic diversity that can be found in the Alumnae Network that was the inspiration for this edition of Verve.

With this in mind, we wanted to showcase some of the more unusual or at the very least “atypical” paths some former students have taken. We only have a little space here, so this is a relatively small sample but, we hope you’ll agree, an interesting one!

Turn to page 12 to read the interview with talented illustrator Hilary Audus, whose exciting career has included *The Snowman* and recently producing and illustrating *The Snowman and the Snowdog*.

On page 6 read about three alumnae who have taken a different route in the traditional profession of law, from Madeleine Heggs, the first female Social Security Commissioner, to Alex Laskowski, pursuing a future in Human Rights law.

Although the GDST schools are all based in the UK, there are 1,700 alumnae living abroad. On pages 8 and 9 you can find out more about our overseas community, from the most GDST-populated city through to the remotest known location inhabited by a GDST alumna!

Lastly, turn to the back cover for a listing of cultural and fun networking events lined up for 2014.

“We wanted to celebrate the fantastic diversity found in the Alumnae Network.”

Jennifer Grafton



With best wishes,
Jennifer Grafton
Alumnae Relations Manager

Plug in to the network!

With so many people in our community, it's no surprise there are GDST alumnae working in most industries, at all levels.

This means the Alumnae Network can be a fantastic resource for all sorts of things, be it careers advice, sourcing a new business contact, recruiting or just finding someone off whom to bounce an idea.

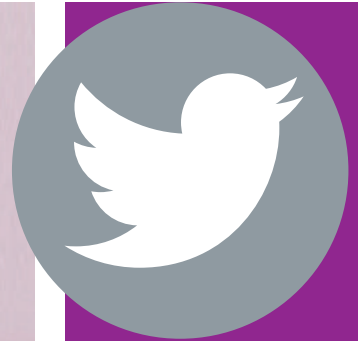
If you are interested in any of these things, join our fast-growing LinkedIn Group and tap into a pool of nearly 2,000 alumnae contacts. Also, if you ever want to connect with alumnae in a particular field, you can ask us for help by simply emailing info@gdstalumnae.net

140 for 140



As part of our 140th birthday celebrations we aimed to highlight our schools' many fundraising activities to see if we could raise £140,000 for our 140th year.

In true GDST fashion, the girls and schools out-did themselves and in fact raised a fantastic £154,000. Money was raised in all sorts of ways, from cake sales to sponsored runs (need to burn off the cake, perhaps?) and has been donated to a great array of deserving charities.



Follow us on Twitter

The GDST Alumnae Network is now on Twitter. We're tweeting and retweeting GDST and alumnae news, events, thoughts and comments on education, careers and topical women's issues.

Follow us @GDSTalumnae and spread the word!

Don't forget you can also chat with alumnae, find the latest news and more on our Facebook page – facebook.com/gdstalumnae

Hilary French, Headmistress of Newcastle High School for Girls, and Joy Gatenby, Headmistress of Newcastle upon Tyne Church High School.



Exciting developments for two GDST schools

2013 was a year of exciting and significant change for two GDST schools, with the launch of the new Newcastle High School for Girls and the merger of Heathfield School for Girls and Northwood College.

The announcement was made in January 2013 that Central Newcastle High School and Newcastle upon Tyne Church High School will merge to form Newcastle High School for Girls, a new leading independent girls' school in the North East. The transition is well under way and the new school branding was launched in autumn 2013.

Later in the year it was announced Northwood College and Heathfield School for Girls will join together to form a top independent girls' school in North West London. The merged school will be part of the GDST, and we are delighted to welcome Northwood College to the network. The two existing schools will operate in parallel until fully merging in September 2014.

We did it! GDST World-Record Science

In November 2012, 2,215 girls from GDST's 26 schools and academies took part in two science experiments to measure the value of acceleration due to gravity. At the time of going to print with the previous edition of Verve, we were still awaiting the results. We are delighted that since then Guinness World Records has confirmed that GDST entered the record books for taking part in the world's biggest practical science lesson in multiple venues!



Celebrating the best in art and music

Our 140th celebrations saw students from every GDST school and academy taking part in a range of inter-school events. In 2013 there was also the inaugural GDST Art Exhibition, hosted by Streatham & Clapham High School, which displayed outstanding works of art by GCSE and A-level students. We are delighted that in 2014 we will also be hosting our first GDST Young Musician of the Year and Young Vocalist of the Year awards.

The event, which takes place in February 2014, will be for students aged between 11 and 18, and will be hosted in the brilliant new performing arts space at Birkenhead High School Academy. Birkenhead alumna, composer Emily Howard, will be involved in writing music for the competition, and one of the adjudicators is also an alumna, renowned classical violinist Kerenza Peacock (Ipswich High School).

Pilot mentoring scheme

GDST was delighted to launch a pilot mentoring scheme for alumnae, which is running from autumn 2013 to summer 2014.

We believe that the Alumnae Network is an ideal community to support a mentoring programme. Mentoring is a great way to help both parties benefit from a mutual relationship – the mentee gains from the knowledge and guidance of someone more experienced, while the mentor gains a fresh perspective and a sense of reward. The aim of the pilot is to test the viability of a long-term, sustainable mentoring programme for alumnae starting from 2015.

Find out more at
www.gdst.net/alumnae

GDST Annual Conference looks at education and the gender gap

The theme for the 2013 Annual Conference, which brought together GDST Heads, Chairmen of Governors, Trustees and Senior Managers, was 'A rocky road to the top: grit, resilience, and the path to female leadership' and explored the role education has to play in addressing the gender gap.

Chief Executive Helen Fraser brought attention to the need for schools to help girls become more resilient, and called for educators and employers to help women combat the 'lost decades' between the ages of 30 and 50, where men overtake women in the workplace.

Considering why there are fewer women in leadership positions in every sector of society from politics to the police, Helen Fraser, said: "You sometimes hear the excuse, 'But they all go off and have babies'. That's not the real issue. We need to look at what society is doing that is holding women back – from a long hours culture in too many workplaces to an old boys' network that only likes to promote individuals who look, speak and think like the current leadership."



Helen Fraser
Chief Executive

Alumna Imogen Faux has a great passion for languages, a passion that led her to be living and studying in Cairo during what has arguably been the city's most turbulent time in living memory. Inspired by what she saw, and the experiences of the Egyptian friends she made, Imogen started to blog about life in Cairo and even came to the attention of international news channel CNN.

Here she tells us about what her experience meant to her.

Arab spring break

My name is Imogen and I'm in my third year at Oxford University studying French and Arabic. I finished at the Royal High School, Bath three years ago. This summer I returned from a year abroad in Egypt where I was living and studying at a crucial moment in the country's recent history. People's reactions when I tell them this tend to be either, "Thank goodness you're back safe!" or "Why Arabic?!" Certainly, Arabic might seem a risky venture into uncharted territories, linguistically, culturally – and at the moment – politically.

I was lucky to be at a school that fed my appetite for languages, throwing French, Spanish, and Italian in my direction – Chinese too, if I wanted – so the choice to study French at university seemed natural. I was sure I would enjoy any second modern language to complement this, and a friend's passing comment about Arabic was the initial spark that fired my imagination. At a time when the Middle East is in upheaval and the world feels its tremors, I was in no doubt that this would be an exciting moment to be taking the lid off Arab culture through learning the language – as well as being a time when communication and understanding between East and West is key. I had the encouragement from my teachers (and my own audacity) to hope to be part of that wave. The interest and enthusiasm I have received has been remarkable – not least from my long-suffering family! But I owe a lot to the resilience that continues to spur me on, and to the encouragement I received from everyone, a long time before first setting foot in Tahrir Square.

I returned to the UK this summer during the military coup, when rifts were erupting all around Egypt. I left a beautiful country unravelling in chaos, and with my friends scrabbling at the remains of their hopes, born in the revolution of 2011 which ousted Hosni Mubarak. Seeing them launching into life-risking situations to give aid was tough. But combatting the fear sparked by dramatic media reports back home has been equally challenging, and at first I couldn't help but feel a bit vexed by the alarm on people's faces when I said where I had just been. Most of the time, the vast proportion of the Egyptian population carry on with their lives, going to school and work, playing in the streets, quietly and peacefully hoping for better times – all this going unreported just a couple of streets away from the clashes.

Back in Oxford now, when someone says, "Egypt! Wasn't that dangerous?" a hundred vivid images fill my head: nights under the stars when sleeping by a desert oasis, diving into the alleys of medieval Cairo, hospitality and deep friendships, and the excitement in the eyes of children waving their flags on the night of the President's ousting. So I smile. "That's a good question with a long answer," I say. "Got time for a coffee?"

If you would like to read more by Imogen, you can find her blog at <http://blog.travelpod.com/travel-blog-entries/immyinegypt>



Sisters in law

The extent to which women have played an active part in the legal profession has changed significantly – and in living memory. We spoke to three GDST alumnae of different generations about their own experiences.

Charlotte Triggs OBE (née Parsons)
Senior Policy Advisor,
Crown Prosecution Service
The Belvedere Academy
Left 1974



I'm part of the Strategy & Policy Directorate at the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). I've been in this role for three years, although I first joined the CPS in 1990.

I spent the first 16 years of my career prosecuting in Northamptonshire. It was during this period that I became interested in sexual offences and victim issues. In 2006 I joined the CPS Inspectorate and became involved in inspections that included reviewing how the police and CPS handle rape cases. Together with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary we published the influential report Without Consent. In 2007 I was appointed by the CPS to implement the recommendations of the report.

My current role includes briefing and making recommendations to senior managers including the Director of Public Prosecutions, and writing and updating legal guidance for prosecutors. I love having the opportunity to influence change, especially in relation to an important issue like how rape is prosecuted, although my work isn't limited to women's issues. I'm involved in areas now I would never have anticipated when I became a CPS prosecutor in 1990.

Why did I choose to work at the CPS in the first place? It was the flexibility, really. By 1990 I'd had a career break to start a family, and unlike private practice the CPS provided the possibility of working part-time. It was flexible in other ways too: I wanted to be in court, and that would have been difficult back then in private practice.

Law is a popular career path now, but it's not something to be entered into lightly. Schools shouldn't just encourage pupils to pursue it, but give them facts so they can make informed choices about their prospects in the profession.

My GDST education was definitely a formative influence. There was an assumption you would go to university and the atmosphere was academic. Without boys to distract or compete with, it never crossed my mind that being a girl made it any more difficult to pursue whatever career I chose.

Alexandra Laskowski
Pupil barrister
Nottingham Girls' High School
Left 2006



I've always been interested in justice and human rights, and I always wanted to be a barrister. My school really encouraged me.

None of my family is in the law and I had no contacts, so I had to apply for a lot of things to get the work experience to be where I am now. You really do have to want to do it, and spend a lot of time volunteering for things and jumping through hoops.

After my law degree at Magdalen College, Oxford I took the bar exams in London at the College of Law. I was then an intern at Reprieve, the human rights group, working on the death penalty team.

In January 2011 I got a job in The Hague on the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, working on a defence case. I was there 18 months, and loved it. It played a big part in securing me my current role back in London as a pupil barrister at a criminal chambers.

“The great thing about working at the criminal bar is that you're in court every day. It builds up your experience in advocacy really quickly.”

Most of the older generation at the bar are men, but at my level it's mostly women. The change is happening. It will be interesting when we reach an age where we're starting families: there are so many of us that the system will simply have to change its working practices. There's no maternity leave for barristers, and right now women often come back very quickly after having a baby. They're self-employed, you see: they have their own clients and can't afford to lose them.

I've stayed in touch with people from Nottingham, and we compare notes. We agree school prepared us for our professional lives, and for our place as women in it. What we were told back then was true: we are the future leaders, and can achieve anything we want to achieve.

“The pastoral care, the standard of teaching and educational discipline have served me well throughout my life.”

Madeleine Heggs
(née Calderan)
Solicitor and Social Security & Child Support Commissioner (retired)
Notting Hill & Ealing High School
Left 1948



On leaving school I was articled to a firm of City solicitors and obtained an LLB before completing my service under articles. I married in 1953, accompanying my husband to the USA when he secured a post-graduate fellowship at Yale Law School. In that period I was employed as a legal research assistant in the trial law department of the University's attorneys. After returning to London I completed my professional training and was admitted as a solicitor in 1955 and set up my own practice in Ealing in 1957, specialising in conveyancing, probate and trusts. This enabled me to care for my children without outside help.

In 1976 I was invited to become a part-time Chairman of a National Insurance Local Appeal Tribunal. Prior to that date very few women held judicial appointments. I was subsequently appointed as the Chairman of other tribunals concerned with employment law, building regulations appeals and mental health.

In 1981 I received a full-time appointment as a Social Security & Child Support Commissioner: a judicial appointment at Circuit Judge level, determining appeals on points of law from local appeal tribunals. Of the 15 Commissioners I was the first practising solicitor and for the next 14 years was the only woman to be appointed.

I am grateful to the school for granting me a bursary covering my school fees after my father was killed in the war in 1940. The pastoral care, the standard of teaching and educational discipline have served me well throughout my life. Following my retirement I have taken part in careers evenings at the school and, as an Associate of the GDST Alumnae Network, I have met representatives of Old Girls' Associations and Head Teachers at Trust schools throughout the country.



Madeleine Heggs, Britain's first female Social Security Commissioner

Crossing continents



You'll find GDST schools all over the country – and GDST alumnae all over the world...

The GDST Alumnae Network is a truly international community, with nearly 1,700 alumnae living outside the UK and Ireland. In previous issues of Verve we've shared the stories of alumnae who have connected on the other side of the world, united not just by location but by their time at a GDST school. Here we give the lowdown on alumnae living abroad. There are those who went abroad to study and just never came home, people who pursued a career to a new country, people who have the travel bug, others who returned to their roots and some who have fallen in love and followed their hearts. (The following stats are based only on information known to the GDST, correct as of September 2013.)

There are
1,700 alumnae
living outside the
UK



Top cities

By world region

Alumnae numbers

North America	552
Europe (outside UK)	492
Pacific	294
Asia	217
Africa	58
Middle East	47
Caribbean	12
South America	11
Central America	5



We have 50 alumnae in New York

Top five countries

Most of our overseas alumnae are here

USA	369
Australia	236
Canada	183
China	150
France	118

Our oldest overseas alumna is 99 years old



We have 17 alumnae in Paris

Top five globetrotting GDST schools

Royal High School, Bath	264
Croydon High School	141
Howell's School, Llandaff	131
Birkenhead High School Academy	93
Oxford High School	91



We have 36 alumnae in Shanghai

One of our remotest alumna lives in Fiji, Melanesia

Image courtesy of
Hastings Observer

“I had nothing but support and encouragement the whole way. School gave me a good academic education and the confidence to approach my career with determination.

Caroline Morris
Hat designer

”

The road less travelled

A conventional job in conventional surroundings suits many, but not all. Verve spoke to three former GDST pupils who have chosen very different paths

Caroline Morris
 Hat designer
 Sutton High School, left 1974



Image courtesy of Hastings Observer

Achievements

1995: Freedom of the City of London and The Worshipful Company of Painter - Stainers
 2001/2 Year of the Artist: Artist in Residence Luton Museum. Research, demonstrations and teaching in care homes
 2004: Artist in Residence Kensington Palace in conjunction with an exhibition, 'Hats and Handbags' at The Queen's Millinery Collection. Demonstrations, teaching and display of millinery

I design and make bespoke hats and headpieces for special occasions. I work with my clients and dye materials and feathers and so on. I make my own flowers, which is quite a special skill.

I've exported my hats to America and Japan and worked with top couturiers such as Bruce Oldfield, Tomasz Starzewski and Jacques Azagury.

I've always been passionate about art and keen on fashion. My father travelled a great deal with his career and used to bring back beautiful textiles, dresses and accessories, which I loved. My mother was Austrian so I was also given national costumes to wear. I had quite a flamboyant wardrobe from a very young age!

After my degree at St Martin's I had a broad career path in design, fashion buying and management before going to Kensington and Chelsea College to study millinery part-time. I taught there for 20 years, and started my own business in 1996.

I've had nothing but support and encouragement the whole way. School gave me a good academic education and the confidence to approach my career with determination.

When I was 15, I took myself to Courtauld's with my sketches and designs. They said I had talent and suggested I do my A-levels and then apply to art college. That was the best advice.

I love what I do. It's not hugely rewarding financially, but it's creative, tangible and full of surprises in a sculptural way.

carolinemorrismillinery.com

Fuchsia Dunlop
 Cook and food writer
 Oxford High School, left 1987



Image courtesy of Jonathan Perugia

Achievements

Author of Every Grain of Rice: Simple Chinese Home Cooking (2012); Shark's Fin and Sichuan Pepper: A Sweet-Sour Memoir of Eating in China (a gastronomic memoir) (2009); Sichuan Cookery and Revolutionary Chinese Cookbook: Recipes from Hunan Province (2001). Awards include the Guild of Food Writers Food Journalist of the Year 2006, two James Beard awards in the US for food journalism, and four other book awards in the US and UK

I wanted to be a chef from the age of 11, but the fantastic academic education I received probably steered me in the direction of mixing cooking with writing. I love what I do. I enjoy the balance between the practical and intellectual, between using my hands (and tongue and nose!) and my brain.

After leaving Magdalene College, Cambridge, where I read English Literature, I got a short-term job at the BBC on the Asia-Pacific desk. One thing led to another, and while on a one-year scholarship in China I was invited to enrol as a full-time student to learn the arts of Sichuanese cookery. I think I'm probably the first foreigner to have attended a chef's school in China. It was a crazy and challenging experience, and the most amazing fun.

On my return I started writing restaurant reviews for Time Out, and my first book proposal was accepted. It's probably the book of which I'm most proud: it's a kind of love letter to Sichuan and its extraordinarily wonderful local cuisine. Other opportunities followed, and I now write for a number of UK and US newspapers and magazines. I also do some cookery teaching and lead gastronomic tours of China.

I don't feel I have much of a 'career path' to recommend to anyone: it's been very ad hoc, serendipitous and individual. I think pursuing a creative vocation of any kind is hugely risky, so having some qualifications and back-up skills is important. In my case, I've been lucky to have the anchor of my part-time job with the BBC World Service as a current affairs journalist, which is a good balance to the unpredictability of freelance work.

www.fuchsiadunlop.com
 Twitter: @fuchsiadunlop

Nikki Routledge
 McTimoney Animal Practitioner
 Portsmouth High School, left 1994



Achievements

Lecturer, practical tutor and examiner for the McTimoney College. Regularly treats showjumpers, dressage, eventers, endurance, western and many riding club, hunting and pleasure horses. Recently treated a reining horse that went on to win in four classes at a national event a week later

When I was at school I knew I wanted to work with horses, and I got a place on the BSc Hons Equine Science course at Hartpury College in Gloucestershire.

After finishing my degree I went to the McTimoney College and completed a post-graduate diploma and then a Masters degree in McTimoney Animal Manipulation.

This qualification has enabled me to do the job I love, working to relieve horses and dogs of discomfort and pain using chiropractic techniques. Once I had completed my training, I set up my own business around 2001 and have been self-employed ever since.

When I am called out to see an animal, I watch it move and physically assess its body for muscular tension and skeletal misalignments. Providing it is safe to do so, I will treat these areas and provide the owner with clear aftercare to follow and a proposed future treatment plan. This often takes about an hour, and I will treat between four and eight horses or dogs in a day. My working day can be very long, particularly as I drive to my clients' yards or houses.

I work outside most of the time. Every day is different and I like that. I became a mother in recent years, and my work has fitted around my child in a way that might not be possible in other careers. I really do have the best of both worlds.

School gave me a focus and taught me to apply myself. I remember a careers evening at which Mrs Thornton told me to give up the idea of working with horses and do something else. I think I was quite stubborn about the idea even then!

www.mctimoneyanimalassociation.org.uk

One small step at a time

The significance of some moments in life only strikes us in retrospect. Hilary Audus has developed an acclaimed and Oscar-nominated career in animation – but as she tells Verve, circumstances and timing have played their parts along the way.

When Hilary Audus, film director and animator, was a young pupil at Heathfield School for Girls, her future looked to be mapped out – and the assumption was a career in science. Her mother was a biology teacher at the school, and her father was a Professor of Botany. However, Hilary's strengths and interests developed in other directions too, and no one did or said anything to deter her. By the time she'd reached Sixth Form, her subject choices for A-level had become biology, history and art – a real mix, as she herself notes, and one the school not only allowed but positively encouraged. "Hurrah for Heathfield!" she says.

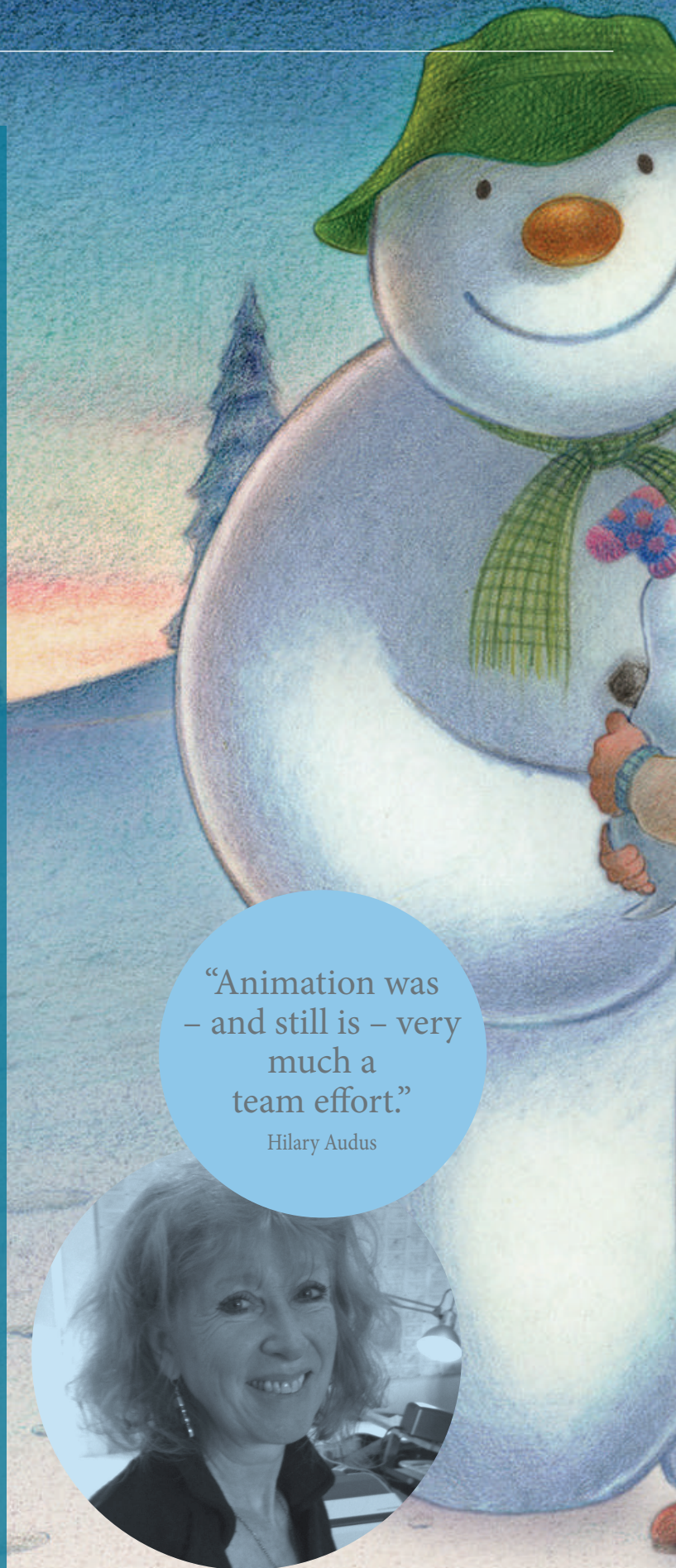
Hilary's father may have been a botanist, but he was also a frustrated artist, and so he too welcomed and supported her interest in art.

She arrived at Hornsey School of Art in 1969. If it had been any other place and the start of any other academic year, her life and career may have taken a different course – but that was the year of student unrest and disobedience both at home and abroad, and Hornsey students were in the thick of it. The result was that Hilary missed much of her first term because of a sit-in – and that, in turn, meant several introductions to the various art disciplines that formed part of her course had to be glossed over. And so it was that she was channelled into drawing.

A degree in illustration at Bristol was followed by a post-graduate year in animation at the Central School of Art. Why another change in direction? It was quite simple, really: Hilary had realised illustrators tended to work at home, and she didn't want to live in isolation. Animation was – and still is – very much a team effort. Moving story

“Animation was – and still is – very much a team effort.”

Hilary Audus



Hilary co-wrote,
directed and
produced *The
Snowman and the
Snowdog*



There are several high points in the career that has followed, and they are well known. Hilary was key animator and storyboard developer in the team that produced Raymond Briggs' story *The Snowman* in 1982. The film won the BAFTA award for Best Children's Drama in 1983, and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Short Film that year.

Hilary also directed and animated films including *When the Wind Blows* and *Father Christmas*, and TV series such as *Wind in the Willows*, *Beatrix Potter*, *Horrid Henry* and *Ivor the Invisible*. In 2012, she co-wrote, directed and produced *The Snowman and the Snowdog*, a sequel to *The Snowman*, which premiered at Christmas that year on Channel 4.

Today, in addition to her work directing animated films and also to her creative interest in sculpture, Hilary spends some of her time in education and training. She is or has also been a judge for bodies including BAFTA, the Portuguese Film Festival and the Media Innovation Awards.

Hilary is currently lecturing at Lincoln University. "I really enjoy it," she says. "As we all know, much animation these days is digital – but whether students are working in this medium, or in two dimensions as I do, they still need the same grounding. They still need to apply the same principles."

Will they be as successful as she has been? Hard to know. Part of it will be down, as it was for her, to luck and to seemingly minor decisions that only became important in retrospect. But part of it will also be down, as it was too for Hilary, to those qualities recognised, nurtured and encouraged in all GDST girls – talent, determination and hard graft.

From the page to the small screen

Traditional hand-drawn animation is one of the most painstaking of processes. It takes 12 drawings for every second of film. How does something like *The Snowman and the Snowdog* develop from its initial idea?

Hilary explains. "That particular film was commissioned by Channel 4. We submitted our script, and once they were happy with it a team of two or three people storyboarded it – in other words, they roughed out the main scenes in pictures. At the same time, the art director and I designed the characters and the locations. We then brought it together, filmed the storyboard and edited it to a length. In this case, that was 23½ minutes.

"This is called the animatic. We showed it to Channel 4, and with their approval we started giving a length and a shape to each scene. The layout department started working out details such as camera angles, and it was at this stage the team of animators really got busy, working scene by scene on pencil line drawings, while background artists worked on the backgrounds. The rendering team took these line drawings and coloured them all in, and the compositing department then brought it all together with the background art.

"There was no dialogue for the film, so the music was even more important than usual. As scenes developed and the whole film took shape, we had to keep the composers informed so they could reflect and enhance the mood we were trying to create.

"With all key elements in place, the physical work was digitised and edited to film. How long did it take? About a year – with on average 70 people working on it at any one time. And remember, this film was just 23½ minutes long."

Was it worth doing the old-fashioned way? Absolutely, Hilary says. "The feel is distinctive. It has its own personality. Digital has its place, but *The Snowman and the Snowdog* would have been very different if it had been made any other way."

Eyes on the future

Chloë Kirkham-Smith is Development Manager for the GDST and is also a Nottingham Girls' High School alumna. Here she explains the big difference legacies can make to future generations of GDST girls.

Legacies can be a tricky subject to talk about, but in my job I get to see the significant impact they have on our schools and our girls.

For many people the ability to give during their lifetimes is limited, and so our alumnae, former staff and friends often choose to remember the GDST in their wills in recognition of the effect the school had on their lives. It's a way to give something back, to say thank you, and to give others the opportunity to attend the school.

In the last few years the generosity of our legacy donors has helped to fund some valuable projects across the GDST.

For example, a recent legacy to Howell's School, Llandaff, has allowed the school to transform the outdoor, wooded areas for our Nursery, Infant and Junior Departments. The Junior School playground now enjoys an outdoor classroom and theatre space, which has enhanced the girls' wellbeing as well as developing their problem-solving and creativity skills. Reverend Ann Sheldon, whose legacy made it possible, was a Howell's alumna, and we are enormously grateful to her.

Music to our ears
Peggy Guillou, a Croydon High School alumna who had a keen interest in music, left a legacy which contributed to the school's music scholarship fund. Alison Cordingley, Head of the Junior School, says, "This significant legacy, which funds free violin and cello lessons for all Year 3 girls in the Junior School, is a wonderful gift, from someone who loved to share her passion for music. Group music lessons are more fun for most seven year olds.

"They learn from each other as well as from the teacher, and the collective sound is usually more pleasing in the early stages. Certainly the teachers and girls are very proud of their progress and the concerts are a pleasure to listen to. What is also significant is the rise in numbers of girls who choose to continue with instrumental lessons. We hope this would have delighted Peggy."

Legacies to The Bursary Fund, like the £30,000 gift to Ipswich High School for Girls, allow us to offer bursaries to bright and talented girls who would not otherwise be able to attend the school.



In the last few years the generosity of our legacy donors has helped to fund some valuable projects across the GDST.

Whenever I'm told of a legacy I'll look out all the information we have about the donor. If the family or solicitor has included their obituaries, it's always inspiring to read about their interests and where their lives have taken them, particularly as I'm a GDST alumna myself.

Last year I had the privilege of attending the Sunflower Circle lunch, for those who have chosen to remember Oxford High School in their Will and stay involved with school life. Such occasions mean that those who have pledged to leave a legacy to the school can hear the latest news. The new Head Girl gave her first official speech, and the Head was able to share the school's current projects and plans. Legacies are vital for the future of our schools. Whatever the size of the legacy, there's no doubt it has a positive impact on the school.

If you would like to find out more about legacies or other ways of supporting your school or a bursary, please go to www.gdst.net/supportus or contact Chloë on 020 7393 6669 or c.kirkham-smith@wes.gdst.net



Don't stop
me now

GDST women frequently blaze trails, and our Alumna of the Year 2013, chosen by you, is no exception. Aicha McKenzie was Britain's first-ever black rhythmic gymnastic champion, and she's founder and CEO of the sole men-only modelling agency in London. Oh, and she choreographed dancers for the London 2012 Olympics too...

Image courtesy of Jez Tozer

"By the time I arrived at Putney High School," says Aicha McKenzie, "rhythmic gymnastics was my life. I was on the British team and taking it very seriously. The school encouraged me to go after my dreams, and my sports teacher Maureen Hayes made sure I had all the support I needed, even if that meant missing a PE lesson so that I could catch up on my schoolwork in the library if I was in the middle of a busy competition schedule."

After becoming British rhythmic gymnastic champion Aicha competed at international level at the World and European Championships, winning three medals at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Canada.

Dance and choreography were a natural extension of gymnastics for Aicha, but her male modelling business, AMCK Models, began almost on a whim. "It started with the dance division," Aicha says, "and after an amazing first four years of business we decided to expand. Focusing only on male models was unique, and we did it just at the time when British designers were putting significant resources into men's fashion. Now our models have worked on campaigns and catwalk shows for the likes of Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen, Prada, Calvin Klein and Marc Jacobs."

Aicha has donated the cash prize that is part of the Alumna of the Year Award to two charities that mean a great deal to her. The first, danceaid, funds a multitude of projects that make a considerable difference to the lives of AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, where one in five are living with HIV and dying prematurely of AIDS. The charity helps disadvantaged children in the UK and Europe too. "They do this through dance," Aicha explains, "and so since dance was one of the first things that helped me to become successful I thought it would be great to give something back through the same medium."

The biggest influence on Aicha's life was her mother. After she died, Aicha took herself on a road trip adventure with a girlfriend that marked a great turning point in her life. She has recently come across a second organisation that struck a real chord with her. Cash & Rocket brings inspiring women together on a road trip to raise money for charities around the world.

Aicha's life is a busy one. She spends a great deal of time at the modelling and dance agency, casting new hires and assigning people to meet individual client briefs. She can also be found at her desk wearing headphones and listening to music as she formulates concepts and dance routines for shows, and sometimes she'll be in the studio or on set with dancers or artists, or at photo shoots. In addition to choreographing at London 2012, Aicha has also worked with Kanye West, Rihanna, Dita von Teese and Take That.

She remembers her days at Putney High fondly. "At school I especially enjoyed going on the trips," she says. "I had my birthday on a school visit to Spain which was so much fun. I loved the way Putney let us feel so independent but protected as young ladies – those moments when we sat in cafés in Paris with our friends feeling so grown up and loving life!"

To find out more about danceaid visit www.danceaid.org
For more information about Cash & Rocket visit <http://www.cashandrocket.com>

2014 Events



Private guided tour of Markenfield Hall, Yorkshire
Friday 4 April, 11.15am £6

Markenfield Hall is one of the finest moated medieval manor houses in the country. The Hall has a dramatic and at times tragic past, playing a central role in the Great Uprising of the North, resulting in it being confiscated for high treason. Join us for a private guided tour of this historic building, described as “one of the most romantic houses left in Britain.”



City Churches and Music: a guided walk discovering historic churches of London
Friday 9 May, 11am £13

Our excellent Blue Badge guide, Sarah Fordham, takes us on an exploration of some of the City's most intriguing, famous and secret churches. Oranges & Lemons churches, Agatha Christie's parish church, an altar sculpted by Henry Moore and another where the heart of a queen is buried. The walk will include a concert in one of the churches, which is still a vibrant part of City life.



Childhood Past and Present: a themed tour at the V&A Museum of Childhood, London
Friday 20 June, 2.30pm £4

The V&A Museum of Childhood houses the UK's national collection of childhood objects. Rare hand-crafted objects such as the earliest surviving English rocking horse sit alongside well-loved toys from the 20th century. Our specially-themed tour, Childhood Past and Present, looks at 10 iconic objects related to British childhood, spanning 300 years up to the present day.



Tour of the Gardens at Bowood House (with lunch), Wiltshire
Thursday 17 July, 11.45am £27

Bowood House, home to the Marquis and Marchioness of Lansdowne, sits in a stunning estate of over 100 acres. The extensive gardens were landscaped by Capability Brown and now encompass almost every period of garden design, including an extensive arboretum and dramatic features such as the 30-foot rocky waterfall. We will be given a detailed two-hour tour of the garden followed by a delicious fork-buffet lunch.



A tour of Eltham Palace Gardens, London
Wednesday 6 August, 2pm £10

Eltham Palace is a unique mixture of medieval royal residence and 1930s Arts and Crafts design. The garden contains a beautiful blend of medieval stone walls and contemporary planting put together as part of a special English Heritage project. Join us for this private guided tour of this little gem in South East London.



Behind the scenes: Ham House from the servants' point of view (with afternoon tea), London
Thursday 4 September, 2pm £23

Considered one of London's best kept secrets, Ham House is an imposing Stuart mansion which has remained virtually unchanged for 400 years. Join us for a special tour which takes a look at Ham House through the eyes of the servants. Not suitable for people with restricted mobility.

Be inspired! In the evening

Start-Up Success: Becoming an entrepreneur – Covent Garden, London
Thursday 10 April, 6.30pm £8

Are you in the process of starting your own business, or thinking about doing so? Our panel of alumnae entrepreneurs will be speaking about their experiences in business, from starting out to running an established enterprise and beginning a venture in the charity sector. There will be lively discussion and the opportunity to network while enjoying delicious drinks and canapés.

Special guest speaker Karen Easton (Sutton High):
Co-founder of Café Rouge.

MAC cosmetics evening at Peter Jones – Sloane Square, London
Thursday 26 June, 6.30pm £5

Relax with friends at the stylish Peter Jones store on the corner of Sloane Square. We will enjoy drinks and nibbles at the MAC make-up counter, where we will hear a presentation with tailored tips and recommendations. There will also be a raffle with the chance to win John Lewis vouchers, and the opportunity for late night shopping.

Discover the history of medicine: an exclusive evening at the Wellcome Collection – Euston, London
Thursday 16 October,
6.30pm £10

Sir Henry Wellcome established the Wellcome Collection as a place for the “incurably curious”, a repository of medical artefacts and a resource for scientists and doctors. Join us as we hear the fascinating history of the Collection and then enjoy a tour. The Collection will be open late, so you are free to roam around at your leisure after drinks and canapés!

How to book

There is no deadline for booking events, but tickets sell out fast. The quickest way to book a place is online via your account on the website – www.gdst.net/alumnae. Alternatively, fill out the enclosed update form and return with payment. Please ensure you provide an email address and telephone number when you book. Thank you.