

verve

The magazine of the GDST Alumnae Network | Issue 15/16



Keeping it in the *family*

*How one GDST school shaped the lives
of three generations of women page 4*

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'A day in the life' page 10

*Getting under the skin of Clare and Rebecca
Hopkins, co-founders of Balance Me*

For the love of Niamh page 12

*An interview with our Alumna of the Year,
Alison Maguire of the Lily Foundation*



Alumnae
Network



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Cover image:

Left to right: Tibby Flint, Dr Mary Jane Flint & Dorothy Tacchi (photo: Nicky Gibson, KG Photography)

Welcome to Verve 2015-16, the magazine of the GDST Alumnae Network

This edition looks at how our alumnae have been shaped by their GDST education. We'll be finding out how lessons learned in the classroom have informed career choices and how the skills and experience gained in school are inspiring the next generation of female leaders and entrepreneurs.

On page 10 you can read about 'A day in the life' of Clare and Rebecca Hopkins, sisters and alumnae of Sheffield High School, who co-founded innovative skincare brand, Balance Me. Look out for the competition to win limited edition products too.

On pages 4 to 6, we hear from three generations of the same family who all attended Newcastle High School for Girls (formerly Central Newcastle High School). Their memories of classrooms, teachers, food and friendships offer a unique insight into the history of a school that has certainly stood the test of time.

Food crops up again in our new feature, 'The best of meals, the worst of meals' (page 7), where we divulge the mealtime memories of two notable alumnae from the Royal High School, Bath: food writer and TV presenter, Mary Berry, and co-owner of Jimmy's Farm, Michaela Doherty.

We congratulate the first winner of our Emerging Talent Award on pages 8 and 9, and celebrate the achievements of our 2015 Alumna of the Year on page 12. Find out what our Chief Executive, Helen Fraser, and Director of Innovation & Learning, Dr Kevin Stannard, are reading on page 15.

Our inaugural 'unsung hero' is Suzanne Price, Catering Manager of Howell's School, Llandaff. You can find out why the school would be lost without her on page 14. As always, the back cover is devoted to alumnae events taking place in 2016. It's the perfect place to start when you're planning your diary for the year ahead.

With best wishes,
Anna Hill
Media Relations Manager



"We're hosting more events than ever in 2016. Head straight to the back page to find out more"

Making a difference

The GDST rejoices in its uniqueness, says Chief Executive, Helen Fraser. It's equipping young women to face a challenging future with confidence.

At the Girls' Day School Trust, we're proud of what we call the GDST Difference. We celebrate what makes us unique: we're a nationwide network of independent girls-only schools, and no other organisation offers as much as we do.

We share in tangible and unmatched ways. For example, we organise Trust-wide arts, sciences, languages and cultural events. We also provide careers guidance at an organisation-wide level as well as within individual schools. We share best practice in teaching right across our network. What's more, prizes and scholarships are available to a degree that no individual school, inside or outside the Trust, can replicate.

All these things are markers of our difference. But there is so much more. Meet any GDST girl, talk to her, and you'll find how confident, courageous, composed and committed she is. It's something she shares with her peers, but in her own way.

The world our girls are entering is changing. Young Malala Yousafzai won the Nobel Peace Prize, Hillary Clinton put her name forward in the presidential election, and the UN-backed #HeForShe campaign has gained worldwide momentum in its bid to encourage men to stand beside women in support of gender equality. There is still much to do, but we've come a long way from the days of the suffragettes.

Our schools are equipping girls and young women for the challenges of the future. Leadership, communication and organisational skills have never been more important. This year we held an inspirational Young Leaders' Conference, in which teams drawn from across our schools worked together to design a fundraising event and marketing campaign to boost awareness of one of four national and international charities, including the Lily Foundation which you can read more about on page 12.

Academically, too, we maintain our difference. Our students continue to outperform their peers at every age and every stage – including outstanding results in this year's A Levels and GCSEs.

Our sustained success is the result not of some magic formula but of continuing hard work and shared commitment and, as we face 2016 and the challenges it brings, I would like to thank our staff, our students and you, our 67,000 alumnae, for the support you give.

I also want to take this opportunity to let you know that I will be stepping down from my role as Chief Executive of the GDST in August 2016, at the end of this academic year. I have enjoyed every minute of my time with the Trust since I arrived at the start of 2010 and I can honestly say I have never had a dull day in the last six years. As I hand over the reins to a new CEO, I will look forward to my retirement with extremely fond memories of my time with this wonderfully inspiring organisation.

You are a uniquely talented network. You are an inspiration to the girls who follow you. You are part of the GDST Difference, and part of what makes us so proud.

Keeping it in the family

Verve readers often send their own daughters to GDST schools – but it's rare for three generations of a family to attend the same one.

When Dorothy Tacchi arrived at what was then called Central Newcastle High School, she was ten years old. It was much friendlier than the school she'd previously attended and the class sizes were smaller. There wasn't much in the way of extra-curricular activity, but that wasn't surprising, really. After all, the war was still on. It was 1944.

"Yes," she says, "such a long time ago. But this school made a real difference to me, and I made so many friends. We've all stayed in touch and meet regularly to this day."

Dorothy sent her daughter, Mary Jane, to the school and, when the time came, Mary Jane did the same with her two girls, Molly and Tibby. Interestingly, they've all either gone into medicine or are heading that way. Dorothy was a family planning doctor who rose to become chairman of the National Association of Family Planning Doctors (NAFPD); Mary Jane is a psychiatrist; Molly is in the first year of her medical degree; and Tibby is in Sixth Form at the school – now called Newcastle High School for Girls – taking sciences and humanities A Levels with a view to also studying medicine.

Was the school fairly formal in your day? Has it changed?

Dorothy: The headmistress was rather forbidding, and we were expected to show great respect to the teachers. They were the only people allowed to use the main entrance. Everyone else came in at the side.

There was a small table in the hall that had been donated to the school in 1918, and the head stood behind it to speak to us while we sat facing her on the floor. That table is still here!

Mary Jane: These days the girls actually talk to the head. Fancy that! They chat quite naturally. We were more shy.

We weren't allowed to sit on the windowsill upstairs. We did, of course: we all wanted to look at the boys in their school swimming pool across the road. So we weren't shy in that sense, I suppose. . .

Tibby can have more of a laugh with the teachers than we did.

GDST girls tend to be very 'can-do.' Was that spirit instilled in you?

Dorothy: Well, yes. School certainly built our confidence. For instance, we held debates. I absolutely hated them, but I did them. I had to – we all did. And I'm sure it helped.

Mary Jane: They do so much now. I'm really impressed by it all. It makes a difference. The school helped Molly gain insights into medical research before she made her university applications. It gives not just knowledge but confidence, as Mum says.



Left to right,
Dorothy Tacchi,
Dr Mary Jane Flint
and Tibby Flint

Tibby: We have lots of structured help now. Presentation skills, leadership skills, sports leadership, social skills. And then there's speech day: we get some really inspirational and interesting female role models who come to speak to us.

Dorothy: We used to go to City Hall for speech days. They were so long and dull. Don't ask me who spoke. Local dignitaries, I think. All men. Very boring and irrelevant for us girls.

Did the school support your academic and career choices, or push you in a certain direction?

Tibby: I haven't been pushed. I've been completely free to make my AS subject choices. I know which of them I'll probably drop at A2 next year, and I'm under no pressure to change my mind. It's up to me.

Mary Jane: That was true for my generation too. Several of us chose to do sciences A Levels and then went on to medical school. Nobody told us we had to. We wanted to.

Dorothy: I was the first in our family to study medicine, but not the first in this school. It had a good track record in science subjects even back in the 1940s. And no, my A Level choices were mine. I took chemistry, physics and biology and went on to study medicine here in Newcastle. I lived at home. It was cheaper!

The school is judged to be one of the best in the country for sport.

Dorothy: I believe so. But there wasn't a great deal of it that I recall in those war and post-war years. I do remember tennis in the summer.

Mary Jane: I don't remember much sport either, but maybe that was me. There was netball and hockey.

Tibby: We have so many now. Things you might expect – yes, like tennis, netball and hockey. Athletics and cross-country too. But also trampolining and cheerleading on the one hand, and rugby and boxing on the other. We have a great reputation. Some of our girls compete in their sports at a national level.

What about the food?

Dorothy: When I first arrived – this was still during the war – it was served in tins. I've never had rice pudding since!

Mary Jane: Things had improved in my day. When I started in Junior School I remember the lunches were delicious. But there was no choice.

Tibby: The food's very good now: hot meals, salads, lots of variety. We have a School Forum and there's a Food Forum sub-committee, so pupils can report back on what they like.

Mary Jane: Nothing like that in our day!

And the uniform?

Dorothy: Brown! And we had to wear awful school tunics.

Mary Jane: Yes, brown! And big dark brown knickers. Oh dear.

Tibby: It was purple when I started. But when we merged with Church High a year or two ago it changed. It's teal in Senior School now. Not in Sixth Form, obviously.

Last question. You've all attended the same school. Do you think it has affected the way you approach life?

Mary Jane: Oh, absolutely. It shaped me – not just in terms of my education but in terms of my expectations. It made a big difference to me.

Dorothy: It gave me a greater chance in life. My parents were on a limited income. My place was grant-aided. I wouldn't have had the start I did without it.

Mary Jane: We didn't look at any other options for Molly or Tibby. It's given them confidence, but without arrogance. I'll always be grateful for that.

Hear from Tibby's sister Molly over the page.

Molly's long vocation

Molly's first year studying medicine at Bristol is going well. There was no family pressure to follow her mother and grandmother, she says: it was something she always felt she had a vocation to do.

Nor was there any pressure at school. "No one pushed us on subjects to take," she says, "but if you asked they'd help you. We also completed questionnaires somewhere around Years 7 and 8 to help us gauge our likely career direction. I already knew what I wanted to do, so I gave the answers I knew would produce that answer!"

Molly's memories of her years at Newcastle High are still fresh. She clearly enjoyed her time there: "I never had a teacher I didn't like," she says. "We had a good relationship with all of them, especially in Sixth Form. It was less formal – more like a partnership, really."

She was active in sport – she was part of the teams representing the school at national level in both netball and cross-country – and she appreciated the support in 'soft skills' girls are now given. "The GDST were part of it," she says. "They led sessions on how best to present yourself, for instance, and there was another on empowering girls, which looked at inequalities in the workplace and how best to tackle them."

Anything she misses? "The food!" she says.

“ I'm living in catered accommodation here in Bristol, and the meals at school were much nicer! ”

Molly Flint

The best of meals, the worst of meals

Mary
Berry

Several alumnae have pursued careers in food – but what do they remember of lunch at school? We asked two well-known past pupils of the Royal High School, Bath.

What is your most vivid memory of lunchtime at school?

Mary Berry (MB), food writer and TV presenter:

We sat at long tables on benches, it was very noisy and the aim was to sit as far away as you could from the teachers!

Michaela Doherty (MD), co-owner of Jimmy's Farm:

'Fish and Chip Day' was a monster day. The queue used to run through the corridors as everyone waited for their monthly treat. The salad bar was ignored and the line was filled with chatter. There would always be those that would try to queue jump with weak excuses and get booed by the line. There was always enough though for the grateful masses.

What was your favourite meal at school and why?

MB: I used to love the salad at Bath High. They mixed a very sweet dressing which encouraged me to enjoy it.

MD: We had the best salad bar I can remember. Exceptional – smoked fish, fresh salads, cheeses, slaws, pickles, rice, fresh veg. I used to love it and felt it fed the soul as well as the body. Invariably you might be able to get a baked potato or some chips alongside, but the offering was very generous with some great dressings.

What was your least favourite meal at school and why?

MB: The thin roast meat, sliced cold then heated up in gravy, not pleasant!

MD: Cod Mornay. My heart always sank when the smell reached the classroom at the end of a morning.

Did your time at the Royal High inspire you to pursue a career working with food?

MB: Certainly it did. We had an amazing domestic science teacher, Miss Date, who was inspirational, encouraging and such a kind teacher.

MD: Lunchtimes were invariably quite a quick affair with netball, hockey, music or choir rehearsals within this time slot. I always remember thinking that I wished I had more time to spend chatting with mates and enjoying what was on offer. Food played an intrinsic role at this early stage but life was busy at school and perhaps more time should have been spent enjoying it!



Michaela
Doherty



Igniting the entrepreneurial spark



The GDST Emerging Talent Award was launched in 2015 as part of our commitment to supporting alumnae in their lives beyond school. Aimed at former students who may benefit from financial assistance to realise big ideas in particular fields, this year the focus of the competition was technology. Entries were of a very high standard with stand-out ideas in evidence across the board.

Winner: Zita Jessop, South Hampstead 2004. Royal College of Surgeons Research Fellow, Plastic Surgery Registrar (WCAT), The Welsh Centre for Burns & Plastic Surgery

We were delighted to announce Zita Jessop, an alumna of South Hampstead High School, as the winner of the GDST Emerging Talent Award. She gave a well prepared and expertly pitched presentation on her medical research work to the alumnae judging panel.

Zita is undertaking a PhD in 'Biofabrication of a new class of auricular cartilage constructs' at Swansea University and is a Plastic Surgery Registrar. The panel, made up of alumnae and a GDST representative, was impressed with her passion and potential to be a role model to women.

Zita has been awarded £3,000 to help fund her travel and time at conferences during her PhD. This will include spending time at the Wake Forest School of Medicine in North Carolina, USA next year. She will also be able to use the award to help with further funding proposals to the UK and EU.

On winning, Zita said, "I feel very privileged to receive this award, which will play a pivotal role in developing the technology to engineer new tissue for clinical use by plastic and reconstructive surgeons."

Runner up: Charlotte Burmester, The Royal High School, Bath, 2009

A very close runner-up was Charlotte Burmester, an alumna of The Royal High School, Bath, who is now based in rural South Australia and has set up her own IT support business. Charlotte works in local schools to provide IT and classroom support and runs IT lessons within the local community. She will use her award of £1,000 to run additional discounted lessons, get further training so she can run certified IT courses in the community, and purchase equipment to improve her business.

The GDST and applicants of the Emerging Talent Award would like to thank the alumnae and company sponsors for their generous support throughout the competition.

The awards, which have been jointly funded by sponsor donations and the GDST, would not have been possible without their vision of encouraging more women and girls into technology.

Judges:

- Susan Trapp (Notting Hill & Ealing High School): Head of Process Services at 1E
- Emily Hill (Central Newcastle High School): Recruitment Manager at Softwire
- Kate Craig-Wood: Founder of Memsnet and green technology expert
- Gillian Cross, Deputy Headmistress (Pastoral), Streatham & Clapham High School





Zita Jessop, winner of the GDST Emerging Talent Award 2015

Transforming reconstructive surgery

Zita Jessop, winner of the GDST Emerging Talent Award 2015, is helping to pioneer exciting new surgical techniques.

The Welsh Centre for Burns & Plastic Surgery in Swansea is home to the ReconRegen research group, which is developing new ways to engineer tissues for reconstructive surgery.

Zita Jessop, an alumna of South Hampstead High School, studied medicine at Cambridge and is a Registrar at the Centre. Zita is undertaking research with Professor Iain Whitaker who is one of the UK's few professors in plastic and reconstructive surgery. It means she is able to undertake her PhD while also gaining surgical experience.

Among the conditions the Centre addresses are ear deformities which, whether through skin cancer or trauma such as burns and animal bites, affect more than one in 500 people in the UK. "Reconstructing ear cartilage is a challenge," Zita explains. "Current best practice is to harvest and use the patient's own rib cartilage, but the disadvantages can include pain, lung damage and chest contour deformity. Synthetic alternatives have problems too, not least the possibilities

of infection or rejection, and tissue-engineered cartilage using unrelated cells and materials tend not to be robust. So we're looking at ways of using tissue-specific stem cells from the patient's own ear cartilage."

It's how those cells are being used that is so ground breaking. Zita is part of a multi-disciplinary team that's developing 3D bioprinting techniques to create an organic model, layer upon layer. Because the structure is made of cells from the right part of the patient's own body the chances of problems will be significantly reduced, and of course the disadvantages of taking cells from elsewhere in the body are removed altogether.

It's still early days, though: at the moment the team is making small trial samples. "It's very exciting," says Zita. "We believe tissue engineering is the future for plastic surgery. I was delighted to win the GDST award. It was a real honour but also the prize fund is key in these early stages. It allowed me to attend a 3D bioprinting course in Utrecht and we have been able to set up a custom-made

3D bioprinter in the lab. We also used some of the funds to present our research at the British Association of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, and this in turn has enabled us to gain additional funding from the Royal College of Surgeons as well as the Medical Research Council, a first for Swansea University and amounting to over £250,000. We really do feel we're at the start of something big."

Zita's come a long way from her school days at South Hampstead, but she's never forgotten the support she received. "I had some inspirational teachers," she says, "Vivien Ainley, Vivienne Durham, Lynn Frank and Jet Harris to name but a few, who all encouraged me to pursue my ambition to become a surgeon."

Practical support of this kind is hugely important in the early stages of a career – and the Emerging Talent Award will be building and sustaining momentum behind the work of GDST alumnae for many years to come.

Centre and right,
Rebecca and
Clare Hopkins

'A day in the life'

Sheffield High School alumnae Clare & Rebecca Hopkins are sister founders of Balance Me, a high-tech premium British-made skincare range that delivers well-being to the skin, naturally.



Where do you live?

London

Who do you share your house with?

Rebecca – husband and two daughters aged 11 and 9 and our kitten, Gracie

Clare – partner, daughter aged 5 and son aged 3 and our cat, Sylvie (plus a host of builders this year as we renovate our house!)

When do you get up and leave the house?

Rebecca – between 6 and 6.30am depending on whether I can squeeze in an early morning run on the common near my home. I leave at 8.30am and drop my youngest daughter at school. She scoots on the pavement and I scoot on the road!

Clare – it depends on my children! Ideally, 7am on a weekday is my preference. If I leave home before 8am I have time for a swim in my local outdoor lido. If I'm taking my children to school or nursery I leave just before 9am.

What do you have for breakfast?

Rebecca – porridge, fruit, a glass of water and a cup of English Breakfast Tea.

Clare – Banana, muesli and orange juice in between feeding my children mouthfuls of Ready Brek. I have a fresh coffee when I arrive at the office.

How do you travel to work?

We both drive scooters!

What do your mornings consist of?

Rebecca – I will check emails and social media/press endorsements first thing and then I will often have a media or brand partner meeting, followed by team updates or director catch ups. Each day varies but with careful forward planning, I can pack in a huge amount in my schedule!

What has been the most exciting day of your career to date?

Rebecca – We have had so many 'highs' in our 10 years since launch but I think I must pick one it was the day the cosmetics industry (Cosmetic Executive Women – 1,000+ members) voted Balance Me 'Best British Brand' in the spring of 2013.

Clare – I can list many: our first Waitrose order; hitting our sales targets; winning high profile magazine cover mount deals. I love the commercial side of this business and seeing our sales grow each year.

What do you most enjoy about your job?

Rebecca – the variety and creativity and our speedy decision-making process. Because we remain self-owned we can action an idea so much faster and see it come

to fruition bypassing a complicated approval process. I think it is one of the reasons why we are so popular with our customers and media/brand partners.

Clare – the commercial and strategic side. I love doing deals that bring in strong revenue and drive our profit margin.

What are some of the regular challenges you face at work?

Rebecca – keeping on top of my 'to do' list. As our business has grown, so have our responsibilities. Employing 15 staff at our London HQ can be a full-time job in itself to ensure everyone is motivated and productive each day!

Clare – the logistics. I handle the operational side of our business and in the last two years we have moved from 'teenager to adulthood'. We have had to upscale our operations in advance to accommodate and I have just had to organise a warehouse move. It has been very stressful but I have a great team to support me!

What time do you leave the office?

Rebecca – I try to arrive home by 7pm each evening and on Mondays I take the girls to their swimming lesson. I juggle my work/life responsibilities as much as I can!

Clare – Between 5.30 and 6.30pm but ideally I will always be home for story time and have an hour with my children before they go to bed.

Do you take work home with you?

Rebecca – I try not to by packing in as much as I can during the day and working through lunch most days. I like to spend time with my family when I get home and I find I am much more productive the following day if I have switched off from technology for a few hours each evening. Having said that, the temptation to check emails late at night can be an issue and then I find my mind starts to race. ...

Clare – Sometimes I will if I am very busy as I would prefer to see my children before bedtime and then work after supper. But it is better to switch off at home and be fresh the following day. Working late can be a false economy!

What time do you have dinner?

Rebecca – Again this varies depending on the day of the week and social/work engagements but I will either eat with the girls at 7pm or with my husband around 8.30-9pm. At the weekend we religiously have a family Sunday evening roast together.

Clare – Between 8.30 and 9pm. Earlier if it is my turn to cook as I can rustle up something very quickly whereas my partner will go to town with his cuisine.

What is your proudest achievement in the last year?

Rebecca – launching our 'future proof youthful skin' Collagen Boost product range that features natural peptides to promote natural collagen production. Our cleanser and moisturiser already feature in our top 10 best sellers less than six months since launch and we've enjoyed huge support both from key opinion formers and the beauty industry!

Clare – adding a new factory; moving warehouse and installing SAP into our business as well as bringing in new business in the UK and overseas.



★ EXCLUSIVE ★

Verve Reader Offer

Balance Me are offering three lucky Verve readers a chance to win the limited edition, 10 year anniversary Super Moisturising Hand Cream and Radiance Face Oil. Simply email info@balanceme.co.uk using 'Verve competition' in the subject line. Alternatively, if you can't wait to get your hands on their award-winning skincare essentials, Balance Me are also offering a special 15% discount and free UK delivery for readers – visit balanceme.co.uk and enter the code VERVE15 at the checkout.

This competition and offer are run by Balance Me. Visit www.balanceme.co.uk for Balance Me's full terms and conditions and privacy policy. Competition, discount code and free delivery end at 5pm on Thursday 31st March.

For the love of Niamh

As Head of Research for the Lily Foundation, Alison Maguire has led a ground-breaking change in UK law, a hope for those affected by mitochondrial disease, a debilitating genetic condition with no cure. She is our Alumna of the Year – chosen by you.

A few weeks after she was born, Alison Maguire's daughter Niamh had the first of what proved to be many – very many – seizures. For a long time they couldn't be explained. They were accompanied by gastrointestinal issues, muscle spasms and weaknesses and loss of vision.

It was only after three years her symptoms could be diagnosed. Niamh had a cellular condition called mitochondrial disease. The mitochondria in our cells generate the energy that enables our organs to function – and Niamh's weren't working properly. The disease currently has no effective treatments and no cure and Alison was told her little girl was going to die.

Alison decided to learn as much as she could about the disease. She had a medical background: after she left Croydon High School she'd gained a First in Biological Sciences at Warwick and, though tempted to stay on for a PhD, had decided to travel before pursuing a successful career as a chartered accountant. With the knowledge she now gained about mitochondrial disease she was able to ensure her daughter received the best and most appropriate treatment and lived her short life to the full.

Niamh died in February 2009 aged just four and a half. The very next day Alison found a leaflet for the Lily Foundation, a charity that had been set up 18 months earlier by Liz Curtis following the death of her own daughter, Lily. Alison got in touch with Liz – and they were both surprised to find they lived in the same small Surrey village.

"Liz told me she was being contacted by families asking for information about mitochondrial disease," says Alison. "She was struggling to help them, as she had no medical background. I felt straight away that I had found my calling."

She certainly had. Alison's role at the charity soon became full-time, and she now heads up both the research and finance arms of the charity.

Alison works closely with leading experts to identify innovative research initiatives and help improve patient access to information, and she was active in setting up from scratch a nationwide gene testing programme to give families a genetic diagnosis for their disease, helping them better understand the progression of their condition and the risk of having more affected children. "This testing is not available on the NHS," says Alison. "It's been a lifeline to so many families."

The charity has also been instrumental in changing the law to permit a new IVF technique called mitochondrial donation. This pioneering technique was developed at Newcastle University and can prevent the transmission of some types of mitochondrial disease from mother to child, ensuring affected families are spared the heartache of losing further children. Alison worked hard throughout the campaign to explain the importance of this work to parliamentary committees and to the media, and was delighted to finally see the legislation passed on 3 February 2015.

Since then Alison and the Lily Foundation haven't been standing still. They are funding researchers in Newcastle, at UCL London, at Guy's & St Thomas's and in Oxford. A Lily-funded Mitochondrial Nurse is in place at Great Ormond Street and, by the time you read this, another specialist nurse should be in post in Newcastle.

"It's all incredibly exciting," says Alison. "I really can't believe how much we have achieved in such a short space of time, and I feel very lucky to be doing what I am doing!"



To find out more visit
www.thelilyfoundation.org.uk



Alison Maguire,
 GDST Alumna of the Year 2015,
 with her daughter, Niamh



We asked Rosemary Squire OBE, CEO of the Ambassador Theatre Group, to think back to her schooldays for our Q&A.



How my GDST education shaped me

Rosemary Squire OBE, CEO of the Ambassador Theatre Group, and right, with her husband and business partner Sir Howard Panter.

Rosemary Squire has been described by the Arts Council England as “the most prominent woman in British theatre of the modern era.” Together with her husband and business partner Sir Howard Panter, she has also been named Most Powerful Person in British Theatre by the Stage Newspaper every year since 2010, and again in 2016.

What are your most vivid memories of your time at Nottingham Girls’ High School?

House plays, cheese pie and red cabbage salad, the carol service in church on the last day of Christmas term, and Richard Eyre visiting from the Nottingham Playhouse.

Did you have a particularly inspiring teacher? If so, who and why?

Bunty Cardwell, my English teacher. Her passion for literature and ideas have stayed with me.

How did your time at school contribute to your love of the arts?

Lots of practical theatre and music, house plays, school plays, choir and orchestra.

What experiences from your time at school have you drawn on most frequently in your career?

A can-do attitude. Attempting something almost insurmountable; a ‘you can do A Level Spanish from scratch in two years’ ambition!

What single lesson would you pass on to someone wanting to follow a similar path to you?

Be ambitious and indulge yourself with a proper vision. Work hard and be prepared so you’re ready for the break when it comes.

How would you sum up how your GDST education shaped you?

I’m a diligent team-player, ambitious but fun-loving and tenacious!



Starring rolls

(and three-course lunches)

At GDST schools everyone plays an important part. Here we celebrate an, as-yet, unsung heroine – Suzanne Price, Catering Manager of Howell’s School, Llandaff.



Suzanne Price
with Howell’s students
Sasha Yilmaz and
Jemima Scott

In the early 1970s, a member of the services team was interviewed at what was then still known as Cape Kennedy in Florida. “What do you do?” he was asked. “We help put people on the Moon,” he replied. “If we didn’t organise this place and keep it clean and tidy, nothing would get done.”

He was right. It’s not just about the astronauts: when you’re reaching for the stars, everyone has a role to play.

It’s no different at a GDST school. Everyone at every level does something useful and so contributes to the school’s character and achievements. Heads and teachers are prominent, but there are others – many others – with important contributions to make. *Verve* decided it was time to seek out and celebrate the GDST’s unsung heroes and heroines.

Suzanne Price has been at Howell’s School, Llandaff for 18 years. As Catering Manager she’s responsible for organising lunch for nearly a thousand staff and students every day, as well as breakfast for those who want it. And there’s the catering for the mid-morning break, for the tuck-shop, for the Sixth Form café and for after-school care, and various visitors to feed too – sometimes in large numbers.

“One morning I can ask her to cater for a full sit-down four-course meal for a hundred guests,” says Vanessa Yilmaz, the school’s Director of Development, “and the next minute I can be requesting treats for up to 500 children from maintained schools. She always says yes, and the quality is high in everything she and the team produce.”

Times have changed in school catering. Many people will remember lunches featuring mince, mash and the like – see our ‘Best of meals, worst of meals’ feature in this magazine – but these days you can expect options including wraps, multicultural cuisine, panini, smoked salmon and cream cheese bagels. “We aim to provide a healthy and balanced yet student-friendly and parent-satisfying menu!” says Suzanne.

Suzanne loves her work, and in particular the variety of it – not just in terms of the many choices she and her team give students and staff each day, but in terms of the many marketing events the school organises. “They help us develop our skills,” she says. “It makes the job exciting. Each day is a new adventure!”

Each day is also quite long: Suzanne starts work at 7.00am. On one occasion she had to cater for an additional 400 local primary school children and found herself that afternoon working alongside James Sommerin, Wales’s Michelin-starred chef, for a marketing event the school was holding that evening. The day finished at midnight. “The highlight was working with a creative masterchef,” she says. “The lowlight was definitely all the dishes!”

Vanessa Yilmaz says, “We simply couldn’t do all this without such a dedicated catering department led by Suzanne, who is so passionate about what she does. Her loyal and flexible in-house team of staff cover the breadth of catering and always with a smile! Staff, students, governors and parents adore her and her team. Last year they featured in our whole-school Christmas assembly with their rendition of Proud Mary. They received an unprompted standing ovation – and quite right too!”



*Is there an
unsung hero
or heroine at
your old
GDST school?*



If you know someone who deserves an award for work behind the scenes, please let us know. We’ll pass it on to your school. Your hero or heroine could be recognised locally – or even in the next issue of this magazine!

**Please contact
info@gdstalumnae.net**

What we're reading



May We Be Forgiven
A M Homes

The Invisible Bridge:
The fall of Nixon and the rise of Reagan
by Rick Perlstein



Helen Fraser,
Chief Executive, GDST

This novel won the Women's Prize for Fiction (Orange/Bailey's Prize) in 2013. I read it then and reread it recently for the Bailey's 'Best of the best' and loved it both times.

It is the story of a very ordinary American, Harold (a minor academic trying to write a life of Nixon), to whom extraordinary and horrible things happen - things which he meets head on with a dead pan emotional stoicism. The novel begins with a Thanksgiving dinner given by Harold's hugely successful brother George, who is a bully and a psychopath. In the kitchen where Jane (George's wife) and Harold are washing up, Jane suddenly kisses Harold.

This sets off a chain of events which includes a car crash where George kills everyone except Ricardo, the son of the family in the other car, and George's

subsequent murder of Jane. Harold finds himself in charge not only of Jane's two teenage children who are overwhelmed with grief, but also of Ricardo.

With three lost children, a dog, a couple of frail old people who move in, and some erratic women whom he meets on the internet, Harold finds his life, and his hands, full. But out of the chaos and loss, redemption and forgiveness arrive.

It is blackly funny and really moving - a novel about how one man rescues himself and a lot of other people from the darkest of circumstances.

May We Be Forgiven
A M Homes, Granta,
£8.99 (paperback)



Dr Kevin Stannard, Director of Innovation & Learning, GDST

You know you're getting old when what you thought was current affairs suddenly appears as history; albeit a first pass at 'contemporary' history, written while many of the protagonists are still alive.

I was a teenager when the Watergate scandal broke, and remember the election of Jimmy Carter to the presidency, carried, or so it seemed, on a tide of disgust at the shenanigans of Nixon and his cronies. I don't recall Ronald Reagan coming into the picture until later, when Carter had lost the plot and his chance at a second term, beaten by the ex-B movie actor.

This book tells the story of Nixon's implosion and Reagan's unlikely ascent. In the aftermath of Watergate there was a sense of crisis in US politics, and a loss of confidence in America's role and status in the world. Trust in politicians was at an all-time

low, and economic prospects seemed extremely poor. Little wonder Carter won the White House.

Yet within four years, Americans elected as president a man who rejected both the diagnosis and the prognosis. Reagan had refused to condemn Nixon as corrupt, and scoffed at talk of systemic crisis. From the mire of political and economic paralysis and corruption, suddenly it was "Morning in America".

From a disgraced Nixon to a resurgent Reagan: the 'bridge' of the title represents that transition. At the time, almost no-one noticed the causal link, and the existential crisis soon passed. It was as if Watergate had never happened.

The Invisible Bridge: The fall of Nixon and the rise of Reagan,
Rick Perlstein, Simon & Schuster,
£25.00 (hardback)

VERVE 2016 Events

Join us for our varied and fun events. For more information and the fastest way to book your place go to www.gdst.net/alumnae. Alternatively, send back the enclosed booking form. Book early to avoid disappointment – events sell out fast!

Behind the scenes tour of the Royal Opera House
Tuesday 8th March, 2.30pm,
Central London, £10.50

Visit backstage and the front of house areas of one of the world's leading theatres with an introduction to the colourful history of the theatre, an insight into its redevelopment and a look at current productions as it prepares to open its doors for the evening performance.

Secrets of the Strand: a walking tour of Westminster and the City
Wednesday 13th April, 11am,
Central London, £25

A tour with blue badge guide Sarah Fordham, we will discover the secrets hidden in some of the back streets and alleyways from haunted arches, private chapels, a disused underground station and a "Roman" bath. In the afternoon we'll visit one of London's architectural gems, Two Temple Place, an extraordinary late Victorian mansion built by William Waldorf Astor.

Wicked Women of Brighton
Tuesday 10th May, 11.30am,
Brighton, £7

Willful princesses, music hall stars, headstrong courtesans and entrepreneurs; Brighton has always attracted women who dare to do things differently. Hear some of their stories and other female claims to fame on this walking tour.

An exclusive guided tour of Mapledurham Estate
Thursday 11th August, 11am,
Reading, £10

Join us on this exclusive tour of Mapledurham House, a 12th Century estate where we will be guided around the house, shown the hydroelectric Archimedes screw turbine and see the last working stone-ground flour mill on the Thames.

A walking tour through Chelsea and visit to The Royal Hospital
Thursday 8th September, 11am,
Central London, £23

Blue badge guide Sarah Fordham will lead us through Chelsea, along The King's Road and Cheyne Row, to the magnificent Duke of York's HQ and the 17th Century Pleasure Gardens transformed annually for the Chelsea Flower Show. This will be followed by a guided tour of The Royal Hospital by a Chelsea Pensioner.

A guided tour of Emma Bridgewater's Factory with lunch
Wednesday 5th October, 11.30am,
Stoke, £30

Join this behind the scenes factory tour which will give you a genuine insight into producing each Emma Bridgewater piece, followed by lunch and the chance to create your own half pint mug in the decorating studio.

Be Inspired!

Speak up with confidence to further your career!
Tuesday 15th March, 6.30pm,
Central London, £10

To have impact and influence, it's not just what you say but how you say it too! Do you wish you could speak up in meetings or in groups or even in an interview and deliver a powerful and memorable message? In this interactive session two experienced coaches will give you practical tips to speak up 'dynamically' and also give you the self-confidence to do so by overcoming all those limiting beliefs that hold you back from turning know-how into action.

Be Inspired! by our alumnae
Thursday 26th May, 6.30pm,
Central London, £10

Every year we are fascinated to hear about our inspirational alumnae through the Alumna of the Year Award. You'll get the chance to hear from previous and current nominees, ask questions and meet fellow alumnae during an informal evening with drinks and canapés.

Getting noticed: how to stand out for those starting out
Wednesday 21st September,
6.30pm, Central London, £10

Are you starting out in your career or trying to decide on a career path to go down? We will look at how to stand out from the crowd, create a great application, boost your confidence and get yourself onto a good career path. Practice the art of networking with fellow alumnae during an evening of interesting discussion with drinks and canapés.

Working with head-hunters and recruiters
Wednesday 19th October,
6.30pm, Central London, £10

Join us for this workshop to look at how to be spotted amongst the highest calibre of candidates and recruited for top management positions. This engaging and interactive session will be accompanied by drinks and canapés.

A private guided tour of Cragside Gardens
Wednesday 22nd June, 11am,
Durham, £22

Enjoy a private guided tour of one of the largest 'manmade' Rock Gardens in Europe, which leads down to the Iron Bridge and the Formal Gardens for magnificent views. Your ticket also includes entry to Cragside House, the first house in the world to be lit by hydroelectricity and crammed full of ingenious gadgets.



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.