

# GDST GIRL

FOR LIFE

## ALUMNA OF THE YEAR

The Butty Maker  
from Birkenhead  
*Alumna of the Year Winner*  
*Louisa Blake*

The Rules I Live By  
*Dame Rosemary Squire*

The View from Here  
*GDST Women*  
*on COVID-19*



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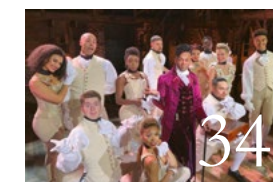


### LOUISA BLAKE

Louisa Blake, Birkenhead High School Academy alumna and this year's GDST Alumna of the Year, could barely be on a more topical mission – giving up her school holidays (as an assistant headmistress) to run her own charity, Looby Lou's Lovely Lunches. The self-styled "bunny maker from Birkenhead", is determined that children will not go hungry out of term-time, and distributes up to 250 lunches every day around the Wirral.

### SARA NATHAN

Refugees at Home, the charity set up by Wimbledon High School alumna Sara Nathan five years ago, is going from strength to strength and hitting headlines along the way, with Match of the Day presenter Gary Lineker famously stepping up to host a refugee last year. Refugees at Home currently has more than 900 registered hosts in cities all over the UK, who have hosted in excess of 2,300 refugees in their spare rooms to date.



### COVID-19 – THE VIEW FROM HERE

One year on from the beginnings of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK, and times remain as uncertain as ever. To get a picture of how COVID continues to affect everyone, we talked to alumnae from across the GDST– from the clinical research associate to the West End actor, the entrepreneur and the university careers consultant – to see how they, in their very different worlds, are all adapting to this new reality.





This has been a year like no other. A real rollercoaster of a year, when the GDST, alongside the entire education sector, indeed every sector, has been challenged in unprecedented ways.

So much has happened and changed over the past year, with the first national lockdown and the move to Guided Home Learning, while schools continued supporting the children of key workers, then reopening at the start of the new academic year in September and locking down again in January this year.

Our approach sought to provide the best education for our pupils, supporting families who needed it most, whilst ensuring long-term sustainability – a delicate balance.

GDST staff have shown incredible dedication and commitment, as well as ingenuity. It was inspiring to see the way that the whole of the GDST pulled together, sharing resources and expertise to support pupils with new GDST-wide learning programmes, lectures and online courses. And our girls demonstrated the confidence and resilience we have always tried to instil in them – flexible, fearless and forward-thinking.

GDST alumnae also came together as never before, to support each other and the wider community, through GDST Helps, giving to our Academy Student Support Fund or to bursaries and hardship, and in so many other ways highlighted in this magazine.

I am grateful to, and proud of, the many GDST alumnae who responded positively in this hour – year – of need, both within the health service and beyond. I hope, in the years to come, this time will be remembered not just for recent events, but for how the GDST family – staff, parents, students and alumnae – responded to the challenges we faced – and continue to face – with confidence and integrity. When the history of these times is written, GDST alumnae will surely be counted among those who made a difference.

With very warmest wishes

*Cheryl Giovannoni*

Cheryl Giovannoni  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

# GDST GIRL FOR LIFE

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## NEWS

### Learning Unleashed

Lockdown posed many challenges, not least how to engage and extend the Year 13 cohort of students, after the government's decision to cancel exams in Summer 2020. The GDST's answer was Limitless Learning, 160 academic enrichment and life-skill courses on anything from Animation to Zoology, delivered by teachers and volunteers from across the GDST family.

A four-week programme for Year 13 GDST students during lockdown, Limitless Learning was the brainchild of Emma Pattison, Headmistress at Croydon High School. For the first time ever, Year 13 students from across the GDST were divided into small seminar groups - with a subject-specialist teacher they may well have never encountered before. 110 staff, alumnae and other volunteers took up the challenge of delivering the groundbreaking programme.

### Feeding Communities



The GDST and The Thomas Franks Foundation teamed up, under the Feeding Communities at Christmas

banner, to combat holiday hunger over the festive season, preparing and distributing 12,000 meals for disadvantaged children and vulnerable adults across London and Oxfordshire.

Six GDST schools volunteered use of their kitchens and catering staff for meal preparation. They were: Streatham & Clapham High School, Oxford High School, Croydon High School, Northwood College, Wimbledon High School and Kensington Prep School.

The GDST has helped Feeding Communities since its inception in March 2020, opening a number of its kitchens for the preparation of meals. These resources, alongside many hours of voluntary work from GDST staff have been vital in getting Feeding Communities off the ground and have helped feed thousands of people in London and across the UK. Feeding Communities has provided 250,000 meals to those in need since March 2020.

### Up Close and Personal

The GDST family pulled together to help frontline workers in the NHS, with staff and students helping to make all important Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).

At Portsmouth High School, Assistant Head and Head of Design Technology, Mr Field used his workshop to create visors and other PPE to send to local doctors' surgeries, while at Howell's School, a Year 7 student helped her father



to manufacture and assemble 3D printed visors which were then sent into nearby Intensive Care Units. Back at Portsmouth, girls were also making scrubs bags for NHS workers and students at Shrewsbury High School donated safety specs and disposable gloves and aprons. The art department at Croydon High School used its 3D printer to make safety masks and Mrs Curran, Head of DT at Sydenham High School made safety visors for local doctors' surgeries and mental health services. At Blackheath High School, inspired by the rainbow pictures showing support for health workers, an enterprising student designed her own line of t-shirts and bags – 'BHS for the NHS' – which raised hundreds of pounds for the all-important NHS Charities Together.

### GDST Helps

Such was the scale of offers to help by alumnae in the first few weeks of lockdown that the alumnae team set up GDST Helps, a Facebook group, to connect the offers with those who



needed it. It gained traction fast, with more than 1,300 members joining. GDST medical alumnae including psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors offered online help for people affected by the lockdown and crisis, while others offered support ranging from home schooling and online tutoring, wellbeing and yoga to professional HR advice, connecting on overseas charity work, creating COVID-19 film projects, and a vast range of university and careers advice.

GDST Talks

Last year saw the launch of GDST Talks, our series of online seminars for GDST parents and alumnae.



Led by distinguished experts sharing their experience and advice on the big issues of the day, featured speakers have so far included Dr Deborah Woodman, on helping your child understand COVID-19; Destine

Lord on how to speak to your child about racism; Dr Marisa Porges on how to raise bold, courageous and resilient women; and Professor Abi Gewirtz (a South Hampstead High School alumna) on reassuring your child when the world feels like a frightening place. More talks are lined up for this year – all online. So do keep an eye out for invitations, and please also check GDST Life, our online network, where we post them for viewing afterwards, too.

In Good Voice

The pandemic was no obstacle for the GDST Song Contest, with all 25 schools and academies competing in last summer's virtual singing contest. Each school submitted a solo or group performance of a song or musical piece, which were then edited together by GDST tech wizards and streamed live during the school day, together with clips by five GDST students who 'hosted' the event online.

Bromley High School won the 'Most Creative Piece Award' and Blackheath High School won 'The People's Choice Award'. The Chief Executive Award, chosen by Cheryl Giovannoni, went to Oxford High School's The Sevenths, who performed an acapella piece.

It's a Numbers Game

Another event which went online in 2020 was the GDST's annual junior maths conference. This enabled it to be opened up to all Year 6s across the GDST family resulting in nearly 500 students taking part in 140 teams. The task? A series of challenges on the theme of 'Pattern'.



Pupils were given a number of activities designed to explore fractal patterns via tasks on 'Sierpinski's triangles', both in number exercises and practical challenges – such as modelling and building the biggest set of balloon triangles possible. Schools then shared their work via an online platform – flipgrid – where girls could view and review each other's work.

Inspiring Changemakers

More than 25,000 young people from across the UK joined Norwich High School for Girls for its Inspiring Change Makers Summit 2020.



The online conference, the first ever staged by the GDST school, followed on from its pioneering Inspiring Females programme, first created four years ago. The 2020 event reached more young women than ever before from across the state and independent sectors – and was supported by an illustrious roll call of exciting women leaders from chef Prue Leith to engineer extraordinaire Yewande Akinola.

The Belvedere Academy

Pupils, staff, families and local governors joined together at The Belvedere Academy during the autumn term to reframe what is meant by the term "Belvedere Girl".



This culture has long been central to the outstanding provision and outcomes available for all pupils at the Academy - but it was in need of a rethink and rebrand to ensure that it retains its relevance for all and to equip it for 2021 and beyond. At the suggestion of one of the alumnae with whom the Academy has been working recently, the term "Being Belvedere" was coined, and all stakeholders involved in defining what it means to "Be Belvedere". Moving forward, visuals are being created to go around the Academy and termly form awards are being trialled, voted for by the pupils to celebrate one member of the form who has demonstrated some or all of the "Being Belvedere" characteristics.

Blackheath High School

Blackheath High School has been awarded the prestigious Eco Schools Green Flag.

Eco Schools is a long-standing global education programme that empowers students to raise environmental awareness, drive change and make a real difference to the world around them.



Through a combination of Eco Club activities, student-led campaigns and whole school initiatives, Blackheath students have tackled their first three Eco Schools topics: Biodiversity, Energy and Waste, with enthusiasm and determination.

To mark the school's 140th birthday in 2020, everyone across the whole school community made individual environmental pledges, making this year's Eco Schools Award a poignant recognition of the school community spirit.

In recent years, they've helped monitor and increase biodiversity in and around the school. A mini-beast hotel, stag beetle nursery and thriving wildlife pond have all helped to encourage a wide variety of species. For the energy topic, students carried out energy audits and ran energy-saving switch-off campaigns.

Lastly, but by no means least, enthusiastic litter pickers have cleared litter and plastic waste from local streets and the Heath, and many students have worked particularly hard to reduce waste in school - especially single-use plastics.





# my SCHOOL MEMORIES

Writer and broadcaster Rebecca Stott remembers arriving at Brighton and Hove High School (now Brighton Girls) as her invitation into a world where women's voices were heard.

When I arrived at Brighton and Hove High School in 1976, wearing my neat, new green uniform and satchel, my hair in long thick plaits, I must have looked like a rabbit caught in the headlights. I was a rabbit caught in the headlights. I'd grown up in a strange Christian sect called the Exclusive Brethren, a group closed to the outside world. Brethren leaders taught that Satan ruled the whole world outside our 'fellowship' and that those bad people would snatch our souls for Satan if we let them. They told us that if we didn't follow Brethren rules to the letter, we'd be left behind when God took all the Brethren off the planet in what they called the Rapture. We had to be obedient if we didn't want to get left behind to face the terrors of the Tribulations.

Brethren rules included no television, universities, pets, holidays, beards, cinema, music, novels, unions, restaurants, even no sharing of walls, drains or driveways with non-Brethren and absolutely no mixing with non-Brethren. We girls were not



allowed to cut our hair, wear trousers or question the authority of men. We were expected to get married young, stay at home and have many children. And yes this was in the suburbs of Brighton in the 1960s, hidden right in plain sight.

A few years before I arrived at the High School, my family had left the Brethren after the world leader was caught in a sexual scandal. (I've written about all of this in my memoir *In the Days of Rain*.) My parents did their best to fit in. They took us to the cinema. They bought a television set. They

took us to an Anglican church. All the rules and facts and frameworks I'd ever known had been changed utterly overnight. I did not know what to think or who to believe.

It's a hard story to tell, but I can't tell you what Brighton and Hove High School meant to me without explaining that childhood. My new teachers didn't know about my past or about what was going on at home, but they helped me put the world right side up again and to think for myself. I was lucky. It was a precious gift.

I was shy and awkward at first, but I was also curious. There was so much I wanted to know and ask: why do you do that? Is that normal? Does everyone do that? Is that allowed? Every part of school life seemed strange and new. There was a wall hung with oil paintings and photographs of women teachers and headmistresses, for instance, women esteemed for their opinions, leadership and scholarship. My French teacher told stories about her travels alone across Russia and France and the flat she'd lived in in Paris during the uprisings of 1968. I could have listened to her talk forever. I heard one teacher propose that God might be female. Some teachers didn't seem to have husbands. Most of them had been to university. I started writing little stories in the back of my schoolbooks, stories full of a dreamlike wonder.

In my first year a girl called Neela joined the class. She had arrived from Malaysia to live with her English grandmother after her father had died. Everything she had ever known - her religion, her culture and her customs, the way she dressed - had turned upside down too. Both of us were disorientated, but we were also brimming with curiosity and



**“We girls were not allowed to cut our hair, wear trousers or question the authority of men. We were expected to get married young, stay at home and have many children.”**

wonder. We became close friends. She told me about temples and gods and funeral pyres and different ways of looking at the world.

And then there was Mrs Hancock our history teacher. She would be teaching us about the Second Reform Bill or the French Revolution. She'd come in and give us a textbook account. Then she'd leave the room and come back and tell it a completely different way using the same set of facts but from a different point of view. She wanted to show

us that there was no neutral way of telling history, that it depended on where you were standing. It was one of the most valuable insights I have ever gained. I use her as an example often in my teaching.

Given the experiences my family had gone through and how difficult it still was at home - my father left my mother with five children to raise in 1976; he ended up in prison in 1980 - I wasn't an easy or a very compliant student. I veered from being angry to daydreaming to truancy. But at home I'd be reading late into the night in the tiny pantry my mother had converted into a bedroom so that I could have some privacy for my studies: history, classics, poetry, novels. I was following my own new interests.

And now when my nerve fails me, or when I get stuck in a rut, or I feel I don't belong, I take myself back to that staircase and the wall of portraits, or back into Mrs Hancock's classroom and listen to the voices of girls discussing anything and everything in every possible way.

## Rebecca Stott

Rebecca Stott is an award-winning non-fiction writer and bestselling novelist, BBC Radio Four broadcaster and Professor of Literature and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, where she teaches on both literature and creative writing modules, and supervises PhD students writing historical novels.

She is the author of two historical novels herself, New York Times bestseller, *Ghostwalk*, and *The Coral Thief*, and in 2003, wrote a biography of Charles Darwin called *Darwin and the Barnacle* and a 2,200-year history of Darwin's predecessors called *Darwin's Ghosts*.

Her most recent book, *In The Days of Rain: A Daughter, A Father, A Cult* (2017) is her own story of her childhood growing up in a highly secretive and separatist Christian fundamentalist cult in the 1960s. *In The Days of Rain* won the prestigious 2017 Costa Book Award in the Biography category.

She is a regular broadcaster on the Radio Four programme, *A Point of View* (currently available on BBC Sounds), and has just finished her latest novel set in the sixth century. She has three children, Jacob, Kezia and the actress Hannah Morrish, and lives in Norwich.

## Birkenhead High School Academy

In addition to celebrating alumna Louisa Blake's GDST Alumna of the Year 2020 win (see pages 20-22 for the full profile piece), BHSA was proud to welcome Louisa as the guest speaker to the school's virtual prize giving event for all GCSE, BTEC and A Level results.

In other news, the BHSA Sixth Form team has been hugely resourceful in adapting its offer online, creating a suite of videos and a range of online events promoting Sixth Form at BHSA. In addition to its established Instagram account @BHSAsixthform, there is a new YouTube channel too, with fresh content including subject taster sessions, welcome talks and much more now available to view.



## Brighton Girls

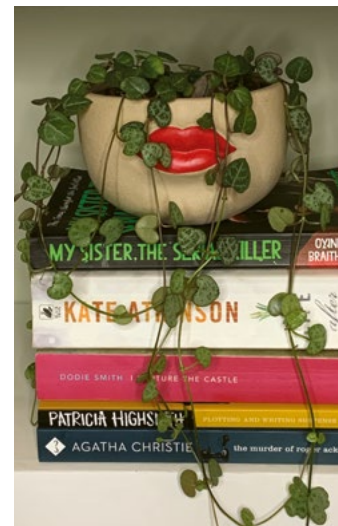
Brighton Girls is thrilled to announce a multi-million-pound development that will reshape it into a modern, future-focused school. This new project, designed around the Head's vision for the school, will reunite the Prep and Senior

School at its Montpelier site. The plans will create innovative learning, performance, social, and green spaces, as well as new venues to support the local community, in everything from the arts, to sport, to wellbeing.

Head, Rosie McColl, explained "We want to create a setting where there are big sisters to mentor little sisters in a school that is a home to girls aged from four right through to 18. My vision is to take everything that is already brilliant about Brighton Girls and to enhance and develop it, creating a school where individuality can flourish and where our girls gain the confidence and self-belief to follow the path that is right for them."

# my SHELFIE

Best-selling novelist and Portsmouth High School alumna Lucy Foley on the books that have inspired, educated and entertained her.



### Life After Life, Kate Atkinson

I'm a huge Kate Atkinson fan — I think I've read everything she's ever written. I could really have picked any of her books: I love her more literary fiction and I love her Jackson Brodie detective novels for the fact that they offer a complete refutation of the idea that crime fiction is plot at the expense of character. Kate Atkinson's characters are fallible, loveable, they jump off the page. This is perhaps my favourite of hers because it's so clever conceptually: a life lived again and again, starting in the same way but taking different paths. It's a fascinating premise because I think it's something we all wonder about: what if we'd said yes to that invitation, or missed that train, or slipped on that patch of ice? Would our lives be different? Would we be different? As a reader I continued thinking about it long after I finished the final page and I'm hugely inspired by it as a writer because it's such a fabulous exercise in storytelling — yet in the hands of a lesser talent one that could be tedious or confusing. It's an example of a wonderful author at the height of her powers.

### I Capture the Castle, Dodie Smith

I hold so much affection for this book: I read it when I was a similar age to the protagonist, Cassandra, and I really felt that I was being spoken to by a friend. It's such a wonderful, tender coming of age story: by turns thrilling, poignant and slightly magical. Who wouldn't want to grow up in a tumbledown castle with this loveable, slightly mad family and adventure around every turn?

### Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction, Patricia Highsmith

As a writer I'm grateful for Highsmith's generosity with her wisdom and experience in this 'how to' book (which is so much more than that): she talks us through how to tease out the narrative strands and develop character, how to know when things are going awry, even how to decide to give things up as a bad job. She's unabashed about sharing her own 'failures,' and in my experience, there's nothing more encouraging for a writer than learning that our literary gods are mortal! As a reader, it provides a fascinating insight into the genesis of one of my favorite novels of all time — *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, as well as the rest of her brilliant oeuvre. And because it's Highsmith, it's so much more than just a manual: it's hugely engaging and, while accessible, also provides a glimpse into the mind of a genius. I've read it twice — while working on each of my thrillers, *The Hunting Party* and *The Guest List* — and I know I'll be returning to the well-thumbed copy on my shelf again soon!



**The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, Agatha Christie**

I was hugely inspired by the queen of Golden Age crime in writing my two murder mysteries, *The Hunting Party* and *The Guest List*. I first read her books as a child and enjoyed them for the pure puzzle, trying to guess the solution. Later, I came to realise quite how dark they really are: not at all the cosy crime they're sometimes made out to be. Her murderers are husbands and wives, neighbours, doctors, shopkeepers: Christie looks at what makes ordinary people kill one another — and to me that's a far more terrifying premise than the crazed axe-murderer. I particularly love this book simply because it's so clever, the sort of read that makes you actually chuckle with surprised pleasure when you read the solution, because it was there all along but so well-hidden in plain sight. It's also equally enjoyable a read when you know the solution and read through, as I have done, trying to work out how Christie does it.

**My Sister, the Serial Killer, Oyinkan Braithwaite**

This is such a fun read! And perhaps that's an odd thing to say when it's narrated by a woman who's helping her sister clean up after she's murdered her boyfriends, but to me it was a brilliant example of how there can be an element of lightheartedness, even comedy, in the thriller genre. I love Korede's matter-of-fact narration and deadpan humour. I also like that alongside the thriller elements there was a brilliant exploration of the complex, thorny bond between sisters. The love, the jealousies, that tension of sameness and difference — of coming from

exactly the same background but being very different people (hint: in this book one sister saves lives for a living, the other one takes them). I love the sense of place: the book is set in Lagos, Nigeria and there's such a strong depiction of local customs, culture and language. It's also utterly gripping: Oyinkan Braithwaite writes in short, punchy chapters and somehow moves back and forth in time so deftly you don't notice she's doing it: she has the lightest touch. Because of that light touch, when we are confronted with the darkness in Korede and Ayoola's past, it comes like a punch in the gut.

**Lucy Foley**



*Lucy Foley (alumna of Portsmouth High School, Class of 2004) studied English Literature at Durham and UCL universities. She then worked for several years as a fiction editor in the publishing industry - when she also wrote The Book of Lost and Found, which was a bestselling debut of 2015. Lucy now writes full-time and her first two crime novels, The Hunting Party and The Guest List, are both Sunday Times best-sellers.*

**Bromley High School**



Bromley High School's new multi-million pound extension and refurbishment of the Junior School building completed in 2020, incorporating a new dance and drama studio for both junior and senior girls.

The redesigned specialist teaching spaces reflect the importance Bromley places on providing the best possible learning environment, with the new Science Lab, Digital Hub and light-filled Art Studio and Design and Food Technology room, all looking onto fields and woodland.

In other news, Bromley High Junior School has been shortlisted for a prestigious i25 award, for innovation in the independent education sector. The school's entry, developed by Sheetal Kowalczyk, Head of Junior School Science, brings science to life through a digital nature trail. Consisting of 16 posts across two miles in a local nature reserve, students and the public access scientific information and photos through QR codes, via a mobile phone.



**Croydon High School**

An outstanding panel of speakers joined Croydon High School for its eighth annual National Council of Young Women (NCYW) Sixth Form Conference.

Seema Flower, an inspirational woman for whom being almost entirely blind seems to be only a minor inconvenience, left all attendees realising how much we take for granted in life. Students from The Orpheus Centre captivated with their attitudes to life, whilst Dr Pooky Knightsmith spoke powerfully about autism, depression, and other 'hidden' disabilities. Sarah Shannon talked about her life with cerebral palsy, but also as a double Paralympian swimmer and psychology graduate with a PGCE specialising in special needs. Finally, Croydon born Adam Pearson, an award-winning disability rights campaigner, actor and presenter with an incurable genetic condition neurofibromatosis, held the audience in the palm of his hand as he explained his approach to life.

As the Conference ended, all felt subconscious prejudices had been challenged.

**Howell's School, Llandaff**

Students at Howell's School, Llandaff were excited to see camera crew, make-up artists and catering trucks take over the car park during the autumn term. Netflix were in situ for two days, filming in the swimming pool for a new series which will air later this year.

Over the past couple of years Cardiff has been the location for landmark shows such as *His Dark Materials*, *Sex Education* and *A Discovery of Witches*, as well as long-running series like *Casualty*, and Howell's is in high demand from location managers who fall for the school's Victorian Gothic architecture, the stunning wood panelled Great Hall and the Edwardian glamour of Hazelwood, Oaklands and Bryn-Taf. The BBC filmed school scenes from *Decline & Fall*, starring Jack Whitehall in Bryn-Taf, and Jodie Whittaker burst through the doors of the Great Hall during a recent episode of *Doctor Who*.

Netflix, S4C and Sky are filming dramas at Howell's in 2021, and as details remain top secret until closer to the airing dates, keen-eyed Hywelian's should keep watch and see who they can see creeping down the Stone Hall steps.





SARA NATHAN

# CHANGE MAKER

Refugees At Home founder Sara Nathan talks to us about Gary Lineker and the importance of the last banana.

A Wimbledon High School alumna, Sara Nathan OBE has packed a lot into a career as a journalist and broadcaster. A BBC journalist for 15 years, she was the editor of Radio 5 Live's first morning programme and was the first female editor of a TV network news programme when she became editor of Channel 4 News in 1995. She has also had a portfolio of public appointments including on the Ofcom board, Judicial Appointments Commission, as a Public Appointments Assessor and as a tribunal chair at the Nursing & Midwifery Council.

In 2015, Sara co-founded Refugees At Home, a UK charity which connects those with a spare

room in their home to refugees and asylum seekers in need of somewhere to stay.

We spoke to Sara via Zoom, on a rainy November afternoon when London was in lockdown, and asked her what inspired her to establish Refugees At Home.

"It was at a time when there was a lot of news about refugees, and I was looking for something to do without having to go to Calais or Lesbos; something that was compatible with our lives. I kept having conversations about it with my brother, Timothy, and sister-in-law, Nina. We were all empty-nesters, with grown-up children who had left home, and we were all casting about wondering what to do next."

Her grandparents, she says, had hosted refugees from Nazi Germany under the Kindertransport scheme while the late mother of her sister-in-law had fled occupied Vienna around the same time.

"Taking people in was something that we knew we could do," she explains. "My brother looked into hosting refugees, and tried to find

organisations that would set that up, and he discovered that there was really nothing around. Eventually we sat down and said, 'No-one is doing this, and somebody has to. I suppose it had better be us.' It wasn't really that we wanted to do it, we all had very full lives, but it was something we felt we had to do."

Refugees At Home piloted towards the end of 2015 and began operating formally in February 2016. Today, they have almost 900 hosts on their books nationwide. In total,



Photograph by Janie Critchley Photography

"No-one is doing this, and somebody has to. I suppose it had better be us."

those hosts have taken in 2,315 refugees for some 179,000 nights over the past five years. All refugees are vetted and referred by other charities, such as the Red Cross or the Refugee Council. Hosts range in age from 20 to over 90, and may be

students, retired people, the single or widowed. Occasionally—very occasionally—they are premiership footballers.

At the end of last year, *Match of the Day* presenter Gary Lineker hosted a refugee via Refugees At Home at his home in Surrey. The former England footballer had long been critical of the Government's response to the migrant crisis, prompting many to ask whether he was prepared to put his words into action and offer a bed in his home.

In response he got in touch with Refugees At Home, and Rasheed, a law student from the Balochistan region which straddles Pakistan and Iran, stayed with him and his sons for three weeks.

**Did their high-profile host mean an increase in applications to get involved?**

Sara laughs, "When he applied, our manager was on honeymoon, and I was on holiday. It did go slightly mad with interest from all over the place.



We do a lot of host recruitment on social media, so if someone in the public eye shows an interest in hosting, or even just retweets something, the amplification of the message is really powerful."

**If hosts come from all walks of life, and live in cities all over the UK, what sort of people are the guests that Refugees At Home support?**

"The one thing my guests have in common is that they have all been chaps," Sara says.

"We have many more male guests, 70% are young men, and I prefer hosting men. I've had five Syrians, a couple of Iranians and Sudanese, a Pakistani, Somali, Afghanistan, Eritrean. The range of educational attainment is very wide. One of my current guests is studying law, my first guest had run a bar near his home town in Idlib in Syria and had no English whatsoever, and is now a very successful Deliveroo driver with his own accommodation. I've hosted construction banksmen; students; an Iranian tailor; someone who is now doing a PhD in Pharmacology; Mo, who now runs Mo's Eggs, a Syrian brunch pop up.

"Our guests tend to be from one of two groups: either people who have been refused asylum and haven't got back in the system yet, or people who have been granted refugee status and have nowhere to go because they are being evicted from Home Office accommodation. We seldom take people who have just arrived."

From March 2020, with the country in a national lockdown and

**"Houses with refugee guests do not run out of oil or loo paper"**

us all encouraged to stay at home, and keep at least two metres away from any other person, finding temporary homes for refugees must have been a bit of a struggle.

"Lockdown is not wholly conducive to hosting a random stranger in your home, so we didn't make any placements for about ten weeks, but then when the initial lockdown lifted in June, we started again," Sarah explains.

"We have had hosts who have said they don't know how they would have got through lockdown without their guests. Guests are amazing foragers. You don't get to the UK as a refugee unless you are amazingly enterprising and resilient, clever and determined. Houses with refugee guests do not run out of oil or loo paper, because in a city there is always an Arabic or Farsi speaking shop around the corner, and they will find it."

The benefits to the guests are clear, but they are also abundant for the hosts, Sara says, "It is a really interesting and engaging thing to do. You are meeting people you wouldn't otherwise meet and hearing about things you wouldn't otherwise hear about. Both about where they come from, and about your own country. There are things that I—a well-educated, middle-class woman

in her 60s—have never come across in this country and now I have. It is so important that we understand what people are having to face, and they are facing it with poor English, not understanding how Britain works, and if you can be their advocate and mediator to some extent then that is so productive.

"And I haven't told you about the food yet," she smiles. "Anyone would host once they had tried Moha's grandmother's recipe for cauliflower! It involves baking a whole cauliflower, and uses tahini sauce and pomegranate molasses. It is utterly delicious."

**For someone considering hosting with Refugees At Home, what are they being asked to do?**

"The expectation is only that you provide somewhere for someone to sleep, and access to a bathroom and a kitchen. All you need is a spare room with a door that closes, and a reasonably open mind and generous heart. You don't need anything else and you are not expected to do anything else. If you want to provide food and conversation, that is only going to enrich everybody's experience, but you don't have to."

**Having hosted 23 young men in the last five years, does Sara have a set of rules she expects them to follow?**

"Most hosts have basic house rules, and it's amazing how the trivial things matter, not the big things. When we started it was: no pork, no seafood, no smoking in the house, and no playing loud music. Those seemed really important and they

still are, but there are two really important ones I added later: if you drink the last of the milk or eat the last banana, for God's sake tell me before midnight."

**Talking to Sara towards the end of 2020, it's hard to imagine what the UK will look like in a year's time, but what does the future hold for Refugees At Home?**

"It's hard to think strategically beyond the end of the pandemic. What we actually want is not to be needed at all. If the Home Office policies changed to the extent that people could work while they claim asylum, and they weren't evicted, or universal credit kicked in earlier. If the system were not so punitive and hostile, we would not need to exist at all."

*For more information on Refugees At Home:*  
[www.refugeesathome.org](http://www.refugeesathome.org)

**MEET THE HOST**



Cordelia Smith is an alumna of Northampton High School, and is currently part way through a training contract with a London law firm. She will qualify as a solicitor later this year, and has been hosting with Refugees At Home since 2017.

**How did you become a host with Refugees at Home?**

In 2017 I moved to Manchester for work, and I thought that I might rent out my spare room on Air BnB for some extra pocket money. Then I read about Refugees At Home, and hosting just seemed like a more useful use of my spare room than anything else.

**How was your first hosting experience?**

My first guest stayed with me for about a month. His English was extremely basic, which I knew before he arrived, but I had managed to get a Sorani Kurdish-English dictionary out of Manchester Central Library. We were quite similar in personality, so we got on, despite the language barrier. We got through a lot of Masterchef, which meant that we talked a lot about food, and what sort of things we both like to cook. It was one of those things that, as soon as you do it, you think, "Why haven't I done this before?"

**How did you feel before he arrived?**

I was quite nervous, because it was a man who I had never met, and I had said he could come and live in my house for a month. But I had references from a family who had hosted him previously, and he had far more to lose than a stranger who booked the room via Air BnB.

**Have you hosted again?**

I had another guy who stayed for another month; his English was great, so we could talk a lot more. It was a much sadder hosting experience, because he was able to really talk to me. He told me, "I am treated like a problem, most of the time, but you are actually treating me like a person."

I haven't hosted since I moved to London, because my spare room is currently my office, but I hope to when I no longer have to work from home.

**What is the best thing about hosting?**

That it is such a tiny thing for you to do, but it will make such a massive material and emotional difference to somebody.

**What advice would you give to a new host?**

Don't be put off by other people who are worried on your behalf. My mum was really worried—which I completely understand!—but it's not just a random man; it's someone that you have references for, and there is support available if you need it.

## Kensington Prep School

Kensington Prep School has had another record-breaking year with girls achieving a total of 42 scholarships and awards to senior schools. The school's focus is growing great minds that are curious, creative, happy and healthy which was equally true when the school needed to move to virtual learning online (the school stayed open throughout for the daughters of key workers). The extensive guided home learning programme offered not just the core subjects but also science challenges, sports activities, outdoor learning ideas, music concerts, artistic skills and drama.

The school has launched a new website with a new alumnae section and searchable digital school archive where alumnae can search their name (and those of friends and teachers) for photos and details of activities when they were at school. The archive is in the alumnae section of the new school website:  
[www.kensingtonprep.gdst.net](http://www.kensingtonprep.gdst.net)



## Northampton High School

Late last year, the Northampton High School community came together to celebrate its first ever Purple Day, in support of Mr Bailey and Pancreatic Cancer UK.



Having supported Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month throughout November, the school held its Purple Day on the 19th, turning purple and coming together to enjoy fun tasks, take on gruelling challenges, raise awareness and show support. The day kicked off bright and early, with Director of Sport, Mrs Blake, setting off at 7.30am for a gruelling 24-mile run (which she added 2.2 miles to, to make it a full marathon), while students of all ages took part in their own fun activities. Alumnae also got involved, with the Class of 2020 getting together for a Zoom catch-up, and to talk about cancer, and how to raise awareness and help educate those around them.

To date, the school's fundraising total stands at a whopping £8,144, for which a huge 'thank you' goes out to all, for such generous support.

## Northwood College for Girls

From mid-November last year, a group of Northwood College Sixth Formers attended weekly cookery lessons in school. The girls learnt how to cook healthy dishes and then how to pack and chill them. From delicious recipes ranging from Roasted Red Pepper Frittata to Chicken Curry, the girls prepared meals which were collected by local charities and then delivered to local families and individuals in need.

A total of one hundred dishes were taken per week and Jon Whitmarsh from the Emmanuel Church Foodbank, commented, "The food has made such a difference and the feeling of mattering has brightened their lives. These meals are such a blessing – a real ray of light."

October 2020 marked NWC's most successful Harvest Festival to date. Co-ordinated by Year 11 students, the Festival attracted over 5,000 donations by NWC families – giving everything from food products to toiletries - which were assembled in school and collected by the Hillingdon Foodbank.



## Newcastle High School for Girls

The miles have melted away to bring opportunities for Newcastle alumnae to come together in new ways this year. The school was pleased to invite former Head Girl teams from NHSG to a forum to discuss issues surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement, and welcomed alumnae as speakers at an online event during Diversity Week. Online reunions have seen get-togethers with friends far and wide—from the Scottish islands to Canada. For the first time, the NHSG Christmas Carol Service was brought to alumnae, and worldwide geographical limits have

been lifted when inviting alumnae to support school activities so that they can inspire the next generation.



At the same time, the school has been celebrating NHSG's heritage through the trailblazing women who have passed through its doors within the newly-published Alumnae Through the Decades magazine, charting the achievements of alumnae from the 1870s onwards.



BIRKENHEAD HIGH SCHOOL'S LOUISA BLAKE

# ALUMNA OF THE YEAR

Photograph by Briony Mitchell

Louisa Blake, founder of social initiative Looby Lou's Lovely Lunches, and an alumna of Birkenhead High School Academy, is the winner of the GDST Alumna of the Year award.

Long before Marcus Rashford began campaigning for the government to extend the free school meals provision into the school holidays during the first national lockdown last year, primary school assistant headmistress Louisa Blake established Looby Lou's Lovely Lunches to provide a packed lunch to children during the holidays.

She explains, "Working in schools all over the Wirral I saw that over the holidays, some children change because they lose their stability, their place of safety, their place of warmth and where they know that they are going to get a hot meal every day. The government provide free school meals for families in difficulty throughout term time but when it comes to the holidays they don't provide anything. I wanted to make sure that children get a least one proper meal made for them every day."

Free school meals have been at least partially funded by the government for more than a century, because of concerns about malnourishment and children being too hungry to concentrate during lessons. Children of all ages—from nursery to sixth form—may be eligible if they live in a household that receives income-based benefits. In England, about 1.4 million children claimed for free school meals in January 2020—17.3% of state-educated pupils.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many families lost their main source of income overnight, with redundancies, reduced hours and contracts not renewed. Analysis by the Food Foundation estimates a further 900,000 children in England may have sought free school meals since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Louisa has firsthand experience of needing to accept support to put food on the table and saw the parents of the children in her classroom experiencing the same struggle.

She says, "When I was a young child, my parents separated and that left us in a difficult financial situation. During that time, my mum reached out to the Salvation Army in the Wirral and they provided us with food parcels and a treat for Christmas; without that we would have had to go without."

"As a teacher, I saw how much of a struggle it can be to make sure that your children are fed and that they have everything that they need for school; that they have leisure time and that they are well looked after. It is not a family's fault that they don't always have the means to provide this."

"Now I find myself in a position where I can pay things forward and repay the act of kindness that was given to us when I was a small child."



As a primary school teacher, Louisa would often have children in her class who had come to school without eating breakfast, and when the morning breaktime came around these same children would be the ones without a snack in their bag. She began to take in fruit and packets of biscuits to give to the children who had not had anything to eat since they woke up. At the same time, Louisa began volunteering with a local grassroots charity who were cooking meals for the local homeless population.

"I began preparing meals for the homeless whenever I could, we would prepare 25 to 30 meals and take them to the night shelter. One day I thought 'I could do that with lunches for children,' so I enlisted the help of family and friends and then managed to get a team of volunteers which has grown massively over the four years that I've been doing this. I still cook for the homeless but during the school holidays my priority is Looby Lou's Lovely Lunches," she explains.

Thanks to the generosity of a local businessman, who gave her £500 to get started, and donations of food and fundraising from friends, family and local businesses, Louisa was able to offer a packed lunch to children across the Wirral.

"When I first began Looby Lou's Lovely Lunches, I thought 30 to 50 packed lunches a day would be revolutionary, but we now distribute up to 250 lunches a day. Each lunch bag is a brown paper bag which has a Looby Lou's Lovely Lunches label on it, and inside each bag there is a soft drink, a piece of fruit, a sausage roll or a sandwich, a bag of crisps,

"I was up against nine other formidable women who were all worthy winners of this award, so to have the booty maker from Birkenhead win the award is amazing!"

individually wrapped chocolate biscuits, a yogurt and a little treat." Louisa was delighted to be nominated for the GDST Alumna of the Year Award by her old school, but she admits she never expected to win.

"I was up against nine other formidable women who were all worthy winners of this award, so to have the booty maker from Birkenhead win the award is amazing! To represent Birkenhead High as an Alumna of the Year is really something to be very proud of," she says.

Louisa remembers her school days in Birkenhead as a time when opportunities opened up to her and inspired her career in teaching. She explains, "When I attended Birkenhead High it was a fee-paying school and you had to sit an examination to gain a place at the school. I was very lucky to receive a free place because my family were not in a financial position to pay for me to attend.



"I remember going to the school office every Monday morning to get my free school meal money and it was done in such a way that didn't make me feel awkward or uncomfortable around the other girls who didn't have the same need. That is what Looby Lou's Lovely Lunches is all about. Living on the Wirral, you find that there are beautiful areas of incredible houses and lots of affluent families, but you will also find areas of severe deprivation and the children living there don't deserve to feel that they are less important than those living in the big houses up the road.

"I am so proud to win this award, it is recognition of the importance of supporting others, and it shows that you can make a real difference to people's lives, by choosing to do something, even if that starts off very small."

### Norwich High School for Girls

In December, Norwich High School for Girls alumnae were invited to join the school community for the school's first ever online carol service, recorded earlier in the year in St Peter Mancroft Church in Norwich.

Pupils from Upper 3 through to Upper 6 rehearsed in newly-formed choirs within their year and form group bubbles, and combined to produce a beautiful service of Christmas anthems, carols and readings. During the service, a collection of over £1,450 was received online in aid of EACH (East Anglia's Children's Hospices), a local charity supporting families and care for children and young people with life-threatening conditions across Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk.

"Thank you to all our girls, staff, families, friends and alumnae who supported this lovely festive occasion," said Mr Barlow, Director of Music and Creative Arts. "And congratulations to the girls and staff who worked tirelessly to make it happen."



The service is still available to view on the school's website and on YouTube.  
<http://bit.ly/3oPCMfh>  
[www.youtube.com/embed/m8VUcKkY\\_mc](http://www.youtube.com/embed/m8VUcKkY_mc)



### Notting Hill & Ealing High School

It was an award-winning year for Notting Hill & Ealing High School, earning not just one but two major national school awards.

The year began with an award for creativity at the prestigious TES Independent Schools Awards 2020 for the school's Da Vinci Programme. Aimed at Year 10 pupils, it allows teachers to cross disciplines to deliver fascinating and inspiring lessons with creativity at their heart. Making the award, the judges said that, "this is a girls' school that is not afraid to give pupils a voice of their own and that takes their learning well beyond the subjects and concepts of the curriculum".

This theme also brought the school the title 'Independent Girls' School of the Year' by Independent School Parent Magazine. NHEHS won praise for the myriad of initiatives and programmes it runs, including the launch of its Film Festival which inspired a student-led campaign to #SetTheExample, raising awareness of underrepresentation of women in the film industry.





### Nottingham Girls' High School

Junior School pupils at Nottingham Girls' High School enjoyed 'making someone else's day' by writing a Christmas card to a member of the school's community. Cards were sent to alumnae (over the age of 80) and a total of 149 were posted during the festive period. Julie Keller, Head of NGHS said, "We felt it was so important to keep connected with our community, especially as many members have had to isolate this year. We know the girls enjoyed writing them as much as the recipients enjoyed receiving them. Pupils have also enjoyed receiving replies, particularly the girls in Year 5 who are studying the topic of World War 2." One of the letters received is an account by an alumna who was evacuated from a GDST London school to NGHS. She refers to education now being 'interrupted by the virus' echoing her own schooling being disrupted by the war. Girls have loved these real-life accounts.

"We felt it was so important to keep connected with our community"

### Oxford High School

An Oxford High School student brought together schools and academies from across the country for a virtual conference entitled *The Economy v The Environment*.



Emma, aged 16, organised the event, which involved 25 schools and ten leading experts, after this year's National Economics Conference for students was cancelled due to the pandemic. It is the first time Emma, who wants to study land economy at Cambridge University, had organised anything like this, but she was determined that coronavirus would not impact the fight against climate change. She introduced the day of talks herself, which started with a video from Prof Dieter Helm, Professor of Economic Policy at Oxford University, who posed some thought-provoking questions for students such as, 'Can you be part of an Extinction Rebellion protest and then take a long-haul flight'. Other distinguished speakers from the world of science and economics talked about climate policy, alternatives to fossil fuels, the need for "mass innovation" and a focus on breakthrough technologies.

### Portsmouth High School

As a result of generous donations from its alumnae and school community, Portsmouth High School raised £10,000 to build two outside reading rooms at the Senior School, in the Library Garden. These were completed last October, and have created two new teaching spaces in memory of a much loved former Head of Drama, Mrs Rosemary Comrie. Rosemary's Rooms are being used by all year groups for outdoor drama productions, lessons and also as a lovely space to relax with a book. "Girls relish the opportunity to be able to be outside, in breaks in all weathers, especially this year during COVID-19, said Headmistress, Mrs Jane Prescott. "The girls and staff use the space for reading, relaxation and performances, and staff are able to take groups into an outside place, sheltered from the weather, to perform mini plays and other activities."



### Putney High School

The show has very much gone on for Putney's vibrant co-curriculum programme despite the lockdown. Co-curricular is always central to the school's ethos and even with pupils learning from home, they have been involved in more than 100 clubs and activities online each week.

Virtual options have ranged from football to e-concerts, robotics to 'theatre visits from our sofas'. Pupils in



the gymnastics club trained together, Scrabble club met weekly to battle it out online whilst those in KnitWits continued to knit their way through Thursday lunchtimes.

The co-curricular programme plays a huge role in developing skills and attributes from confidence and creativity to problem solving and collaboration. Perhaps more importantly, the clubs are another way in which pupils are connecting with each other.

# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Since 1998, the GDST has provided bursary assistance to 6,200 pupils. In 2019/20 alone, 1,105 pupils benefited from a bursary. But how does a bursary come to fruition?

The process from first enquiry to first day at a GDST school can often be a journey of more than a year. We went behind the scenes to find out what happens – from initial outreach to the lived experience of a bursary student - and to meet some of the people that make a GDST bursary a reality.

In most cases, it starts with outreach. **Sarah Penny, Coordinator of Partnerships, External Links and Co-Curricular at Newcastle High School for Girls (NHSG)** explains. “My role is to develop links with local primary schools and the community at large, to raise aspirations, increase awareness in the kinds of opportunities that NHSG can provide, and expand engagement with the school.”

Programmes that the school runs help to create strong relationships between NHSG and participating schools and pupils. These include *The Shine Programme*, now 11 years old, the new *Science is my Superpower* initiative with

Newcastle University, and the SWIRE project, where NHSG in partnership with another school is a hub for the SWIRE Chinese Centre Newcastle. Sarah sees the consequences of these programmes clearly, “Once we start to develop relationships and engage through these initiatives, we are able to generate more enquiries for bursaries from the schools we are involved with.” And although it takes a lot of work, she says, “It’s all worth it, when you see the children here in school agog at amazing and exciting new things.”

On the other side of the UK, at **Howell’s School, Llandaff, Chrissie Hall-Davis** is there for the next stage of the journey, as one of the first people that a potential bursary candidate will meet. She describes her role as administration, parent liaison, paperwork, sales (to make sure that Howell’s has the edge and is the preferred school for a strong candidate) and support throughout the process.

“For many families we are their first experience of an independent school; I want them to feel welcome.”



**Chrissie Hall-Davis,**  
Admissions Officer,  
Howell’s School, Llandaff

“Warmth is an essential characteristic for the role,” she says. “Some people may have a pre-conceived idea about the school, and for many families we are their first experience of an independent school; I want them to feel welcome. The school buildings are large and imposing, and you don’t get to see much beyond that in the first instance – so it’s important that we can give people a sense of who we are.”

Once Chrissie has an application registered, she’ll pass it onto the GDST’s central team for financial assessment, and then steps in again to help organise the interview process and entrance exam. She’ll hold the candidates’ hands until they are in the school, helping with their uniform, transport issues and anything else that’s needed.

Each school has its own approach to and challenges with bursaries. **Dr Millan Sachania, Head Master of Streatham & Clapham High School** in south west London, describes a process which demands very individual attention from the head, a detailed understanding of local dynamics, and a careful balancing act to secure the best candidates. He estimates that just under 20% of applications to the school will be for bursaries at some level, and so outreach for him is not a key concern. What is, however, is the number of wealthy, high profile schools in the capital that Streatham & Clapham has to compete with to recruit the strongest candidates.

After a highly personalised and meticulous process, he will make offers for the, on average, four

“Managing the balance between scholarships, bursaries, entrance examinations and admissions is the most difficult part of one’s role as a head.”



**Dr Millan Sachania,**  
Head Master of Streatham & Clapham High School

places he has available every year. Experience in this, he believes, counts for a great deal. “In my view, managing the balance between scholarships, bursaries, entrance examinations and admissions is the most difficult part of one’s role as a head,” he says. Always conscious of the local competition, he goes on, “Finding our bursary pupils at 11+ is one thing. Keeping them for Sixth Form is another, and we have to compete to make sure we do.”

**Julie Keller, Head of Nottingham Girls’ High School (NGHS)**, is a head who likes to be involved from the first open event right through the process. She is passionate about bursaries, but mindful, too, that it’s crucial to make sure the awards go to the right girls - and she sees her active involvement as vital in this. She is also very clear that a bursary is about more than a girl joining the school; that it’s about the whole family joining the NGHS community, and establishing strong, mutually supportive relationships.

“It is important that they really want to come to the school, and are as invested emotionally in us as we are in them.”



**Julie Keller,**  
Head of Nottingham Girls’ High School




Outside the schools, the bursary programme relies heavily on the team at the GDST, headed by **Eileen Osborne**, which focuses on the financial assessment and eligibility of all applications. Eileen and her team will process up to 1,500 new applications every year for just 250-300 places across the GDST's schools.

This work is all done centrally, so that the system remains impartial and consistent. It also removes any local pressures that schools might be under to make awards. As Eileen puts it, part of her role is to play 'detective' and look behind the figures. "While 99% of applications are honest," she says, "there are always one or two who will try to pull the wool over your eyes, so we need to have an enquiring mind."

She's also conscious that empathy plays a huge part. While she is deep-diving into the financial case for every application, and will not meet a candidate until after an award is given, she and her team are the link between the charities and the schools, and will manage the relationships with corporate donors.

And so we come to the recipient. **Choi**, currently in her last year at **Croydon High School**, tells us her story. She had been looking at a number of schools in her area, but it was her first visit to Croydon High School that made the impact. "It wasn't only about grades and attainment. There were lots of really small reasons which all came

"It was like a dream. I had wanted to go for so long, and then there I was!"



**Choi,**  
Student at Croydon High School

together to make Croydon my first choice," she says. Its grounds, science department and swimming pool all caught her eye, but she says the moment that clinched it for her was when she met the other students. Choi recalls, "They were like-minded people who [I knew] I wanted to be with."

She goes on, "I'd had an offer from another school, but Croydon was the one I really wanted to go to. When the offer came in, accepting it was a no brainer: I was so happy. It was like a dream. I had wanted to go for so long, and then there I was!" Choi is planning to study medicine. Always a keen scientist, this ambition

began to form for her when she was going through a series of operations as a child. "I remember the doctors and nurses and how I was really inspired by them. I wanted to bring joy to others like they did to me. In medicine there is a big thing about not just treating, but caring, and that's how I feel about it."

And her last words on her experience at Croydon High School? "It just ticked all the boxes for me. There wasn't anything that could have been better. I had all the support I needed - in an environment where I felt I could flourish."

Summing up what a GDST bursary means, Eileen Osborne echoed Choi's words, "It's about more than academic results," she says. "It's about the doors that are opened, the networks the girls become part of, and the confidence that all of this gives them."

*In 2019/20, the GDST distributed £20.4m in bursaries and scholarships, equivalent to 9% of all GDST fee income, and at any time, some 3,000 pupils will be receiving either a bursary, scholarship or both. More than this, though, the GDST is gearing up for a major fundraising step-change, with the launch of new bursary campaign to raise £18.72 million between now and 2025/26.*

# Help girls learn without limits.



Our bursaries change lives. By donating, you will be helping bright students achieve their full potential. Every gift makes a difference. To give, call 020 7393 6898 or visit [gdst.net/support](https://gdst.net/support).

**GDST**  
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST



# WHAT CHLOE DID NEXT

This winner of the GDST Trailblazer of the Year 2020 is Howell's School, Llandaff alumna Chloe Smith.

Photography by Briony Mitchell

Chloe was nominated for the award as the founder of the Bigmoose Coffee Company, which mentors, trains and employs vulnerable and homeless people in the city of Cardiff. Established in 2015, Bigmoose became a registered charity in 2019 with a focus on mental health, homelessness and the prevention of suicide.

Chloe has now set her sights on helping young people who are still in education, and approached Sally Davis, Principal at Howell's School, Llandaff to pilot the idea, offering a unique programme of support. We met up with her at the end of December, just a few days before Bigmoose was forced to close its doors when Wales went into Tier 4, and the coffee shop was buzzing with shoppers popping in for lunch or a quick pitstop coffee.

**What prompted you to start mentoring young people?**

At the beginning of last year, we'd just taken on a new manager who was running things at the shop, which freed up a lot of time for me, and I spent most of the first lockdown thinking, "What do I want to do, and how can I fill that time?" Over the summer, I went into Howell's and saw Sally Davis and we began developing the idea and looked at me mentoring specific students, offering one-to-ones and really focussed support tailored to their individual needs.

**In practical terms, how has that worked?**

I've done some work with the whole of Year 11 in groups of eight, and I'm now in school twice a week,

seeing 11 different students aged between 15 and 18, for one-to-one sessions. We work on self-care and self-worth; how to plan their weeks; staying on top of their work and I offer mental health support. I have created a journal for them to use to help them to be more mindful in the way they act and the way they look after themselves and not just work-work-work all the time.

**What are the main concerns that the students have?**

I think everything feels like it's too much for them; they are overwhelmed with COVID, their exams, their friendships, and coming in and out of lockdowns. They tell me they are working for six hours on a Saturday, but when we look at their phone use they are being distracted from every direction, so it's about teaching them how to work smarter, not harder. I use the Forest app with them—you put it on for a certain amount of time and as long as you don't touch your phone, it will grow a little tree, but if you use your phone, it kills the tree. So we're building our own little forests, one tree at a time.

**What are you hoping to give the students?**

The goal for me is to give them a toolbelt that they wear every single day for life. No-one else can see it apart from them, and within that belt they need to have different tools that will help them through different situations. The journal will go in there, some meditation practises and breathing techniques to help during a moment of anxiety or before exams.





“The GDST has played a huge part in my story so far, and it’s definitely part of my future.”

**One term in, how much progress have you seen?**

I set them individual challenges each week, and I will email them through the week so I can check in with them between sessions. A lot of them struggle with confidence, particularly with public speaking or even speaking during lessons. I set one student the task to put her hand up in a lesson twice in a week, which might not sound like much, but it was a really big deal to her. And we came together again after two weeks, and she’d managed to do it. That is so much progress for that student, and a step in the right direction towards feeling confident in other areas of her life.

**Why do you think that it has been a success?**

The students don’t see me as a member of school staff, so we’re able to have a really open dialogue, and because I’m still quite close to their age, I think they can relate to me. And they have seen the changes

that have happened as a result of the things they have told me, so they feel like I’m on their side.

**What sort of changes have there been?**

The Year 11 girls told me that they want to have more PE lessons, and that they felt that they knew what they needed to revise, but not how to approach the revision itself. We’re doing a gifting programme, where Year 11 have had nine lesson periods gifted to them over the term; they are doing extra PE sessions, and Sally has led How To Revise workshops with them in small groups.

**What is the next step for the students you are mentoring?**

The goal is to sign them off, taking away the skills they have learned and coming back to me when they feel they need a refresher session. I’d love to introduce the people who have made such good progress through the Bigmoose programmes to Howell’s, so that they can inspire the students as well. Sharing stories is so important; in life you can learn so much from other people’s experiences.

**Will you be offering this programme to other schools?**

I’d love to do more work with the GDST. This has been a brilliant pilot, and I’ve had so much support from Howell’s and Mrs Davis. Together, we’ve worked out exactly how to make it work, but I’d love to do work across GDST schools, whether that is offering talks or popping in for a full day. The GDST has played a huge part in my story so far, and it’s definitely part of my future.



**Royal High School Bath**

Last December Royal High School Sixth Formers spent an afternoon pausing to reflect on their futures with a virtual Careers Conference. Generously supported by the Friends of RHS, ‘Picturing your Pathway’ began with inspiration from work happiness expert and author of The Radical Sabbatical, Emma Rosen.

The girls learned how Emma had changed tack aged 24 from her ‘dream pathway’ when she realised it wasn’t right for her. Sharing highly practical tips, she recounted how she went about sampling the 25 jobs she’d ever considered, from farming to international security, journalism to landscaping, to find where her skills met her aspirations. She encouraged the girls to flip their approach on its head, focusing on the process rather than a pre-determined end result.

Mr Hayward, Head of Sixth Form, summed up the afternoon, “This is the new paradigm of careers education. Thinking about pathways rather than just about jobs and hearing people’s stories was hugely enlightening for the girls as they consider their options beyond Sixth Form.”

**Sheffield High School for Girls**

Former Sheffield High School for Girls pupil Suzanne Liversidge, Global Managing Partner of law firm Kennedys, is the first ever female global managing partner of a top 30 law firm and was recently recognised as one of the most innovative leaders of a law firm in Europe in the Financial Times. Suzanne, who was at Sheffield Girls’ during the 1980s, has ensured that her staff have been her priority during the pandemic. She is an advocate for authentic leadership and strives to promote a culture of kindness throughout the global organisation. She has fond memories of her time at Sheffield Girls’ and is still in touch with a lot of her friends from school.



Suzanne said “I am very flattered to get that recognition, but accept it on the basis that this is a team effort from Kennedys and not an individual performance.”

“I remain a very proud Sheffield Girls’ pupil and always reflect positively on the role the school and its staff played in my personal development.”

# COVID-19: THE VIEW FROM HERE

A year on from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we talked to alumnae from across the GDST network about their memories of 2020 and their hopes for the future.

New Normal. Social distancing. Clap for carers. What began as an unknown illness making a few headlines in February 2020 became a global pandemic in a matter of weeks, and a year on, a catalogue of new words and phrases is firmly in our everyday vocabulary. As we worked from kitchen tables, stalked the supermarkets shelves for tinned tomatoes and attempted to home educate our children, COVID-19 shook economies, forced social lives online and spurred a race to produce a vaccine against the virus that has killed more than two million people worldwide. All across the globe, personal and professional lives will never look the same again. We asked some of our alumnae to reflect on a time that none of us will ever forget.



Oxford High School alumna, Dr Eleanor Plews, is a junior doctor at a busy London teaching hospital. She is one of hundreds of GDST women who have been at the frontline during the pandemic, and we are grateful to them all.

**What were you doing at the start of 2020?**  
Graduating in the Summer of 2019, I had just made the big move to begin my job in a busy London hospital. By February, I felt I was finding my feet; enjoying my work and life in the capital. I think back to when the first patients with Coronavirus came into the hospital - there was fear, but life carried on.  
However, within a week everything changed. Colleagues were becoming ill themselves and I was transferred from one department to another to provide cover.  
As a doctor in my first year of training I provided cover to the wards out-of-hours and at night. I was working on night shifts in those early weeks and every patient I saw was COVID positive. I remember the sound of my bleep going all through the night with my nursing colleagues

asking for medical reviews of their patients. I remember running down dimly lit corridors with blood samples to run tests. I remember confirming that the worst had happened and trying to provide support to families.

**Did you see any positives during those difficult days?**  
Suddenly, there was more support for us: a brand new year group of doctors stepped up—forefeiting their graduation celebrations; those that retired returned to clinical practice; mothers left their newborns to come back from their maternity leave early. We worked closely in teams; I was supported at difficult times and decisions were never made alone. Every Thursday at 8pm I would be on the edge of tears walking towards the start or end of my shift and hearing the applause of those staying at home. Food donations were pouring in to the hospital so that after a 13-hour shift I could sleep rather than queue for the supermarket round the corner.  
My story won't be different to the scores of GDST women working in healthcare settings across the world. It has been a time of the very darkest nights yet there have been some moments of hope. We have had to be adaptable, determined and empathetic. I hope I have done my profession proud.

“It has been a time of the very darkest nights yet there have been some moments of hope.”



Sheffield Girls' alumna Debbie Woskow is the co-founder of AllBright, a members' club and community that celebrates and connects women at work. She is the former Chair of Sharing Economy UK and is a member of the Mayor of London's Business Advisory Board.

**What were you doing at the start of 2020?**  
Our objective at AllBright is to build a global sisterhood of awesome, connected women. The business is two years old, and we have physical spaces in London and Los Angeles. At the start of 2020, we had just opened our LA club so I was flying to LA once every three weeks, and we were figuring out opening in New York.

**What impact has COVID had on your business?**  
The main thing that COVID did for us was accelerate all of the digital plans and pivot the strategy to be more digital. The business was driven by the physical until the beginning of 2020, and now it's the reverse. The big success story of COVID for us has been the growth of our digital platform, and our digital membership.

**What impact do you feel this pandemic has had on working women?**  
It has predominantly been women who have carried the mental load

of the house, the children, home-schooling while trying to work or run a business from home and drive revenue and invest in culture. We did a study called *Making It Work*, which shows that two thirds of women in the UK want to pivot in their careers as a result of the pandemic. I think that's because it's made us more focused on what work can mean, how we want to work, what it means to have an entrepreneurial mindset.

**Have you seen any positives come out of the pandemic?**  
We've got one dog in the fight, which is the impact that this has on women, and I think one of the hugely positive things to come out of this is that I don't think working from home was really taken seriously by the corporates or by company executives as a real option until now.

**Are you optimistic for UK businesses for the future?**  
Being optimistic is part of the DNA of an entrepreneur. We need to be positive, and look for the opportunities, but don't get me wrong: it's going to be really hard. The day that we had to furlough all our club staff while my business partner had COVID was a pretty dark day. But tenacity and grit are the two most important qualities for any entrepreneur. It's what I have learned from my mother and my grandmother who were entrepreneurs, and from being in a girls' school where everything seemed possible. All those things taught me that you've got to keep fighting and pivoting. I feel that the answers to positivity lie with women. That's the opportunity and this is our moment, we can't let this set feminism back 30 years.





Sutton High School alumna Natasha Leaver is a West End stage actor and dancer, currently working as a drama and dance teacher.

#### What were you doing at the start of 2020?

On Monday 16th March, at the time of our daily warm-up, I, along with the whole of the company of *Hamilton: An American Musical* was asked to meet on stage. We were told that with Boris Johnson's recommendation to avoid pubs, clubs and theatres prior to the official lockdown, the theatre was no longer a safe and secure working environment. We packed some of our personal belongings (thinking we'd be back on stage in two weeks) but the following Monday, the country went into a national lockdown.

#### What's happened since then?

As a Union representative, I have been involved in negotiations with many West End producers, to discuss huge adjustments to our contracts, along with around 60 others from different West End shows. It was a very scary time because producers were not obliged to pay their employees or indeed keep anyone employed, and that put thousands of people's

"I was desperate to do something to support all the amazing parents trying to juggle childcare and working from home during lockdown"

livelihoods at risk. Some casts were lucky enough to receive a small grant-style payment from their producers, but for the majority, this wasn't enough to survive on. *Hamilton*, along with most other productions, has been closed since 16th March. We don't currently have any idea when we might return to work.

#### How have you pivoted things since then?

I have taught children's dance lessons from a young age so I've been able to host a multitude of 'Hamilton-Style' workshops, both in-person and via Zoom, as well as teaching for private events and weekly classes at the London Dance Academy.

#### For you, have any good things come from this?

I was desperate to do something to support all the amazing parents trying to juggle childcare and working from home during lockdown, so I have written a children's podcast where my little listeners get to decide how the story develops. I love that I have had time to do this, and hopefully bring a lot of joy and fun in this strange time to the children I teach.

#### What do you think are the long-term prospects for the creative industries?

I am 95% certain that live entertainment will bounce back as it always has done. There is no experience comparable to live events, however much we all love television and other pre-recorded media. Palpable, human energy transcending from the stage to the audience and vice versa, is a unique experience.



Sydenham High School alumna Elaine Osei-Kofi is a senior field clinical research associate for a pharmaceutical company.

#### What were you doing at the start of 2020?

I work on behalf of pharma companies. My job is to go into test centres to make sure that the drugs companies are following all the regulations set by the Department of Health. I make sure that the data

is correct, that the patients are being treated correctly and I check for the efficacy of the drugs. My data is used to confirm that the drugs are safe and efficacious. This then means that the pharmaceutical companies can sell into the market.

#### How did that change with the onset of COVID-19?

The first thing was that I lost my job (I spent five months completely out of work). Now, I'm working for a biotech company which focuses on oncology, where I'm working on a breast cancer study. The drug I am working on is currently being marketed in the US, but will hopefully be released in the UK market soon.

#### What impact has the pandemic had on drugs research?

There has, of course, been a huge amount of money spent on researching a vaccine for COVID-19, as well as looking at drugs to treat the virus and conditions that relate to it. On the other hand, there has been a lot of disruption in hospitals, with no research nurses in hospitals.

"I think people learnt a lot of lessons in the lockdown, so we are now seeing dedicated specialists in hospitals."



Kathryn Saunders, a Newcastle High School for Girls alumna, is a careers consultant at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

#### What were you doing at the start of 2020?

As a careers consultant at LSE, my role is to equip students with the tools to articulate their experiences, skills and values in international labour markets; including one-to-one guidance, skills seminars and workshops. I would usually see several students for face-to-face appointments during the day, as well as attend events and meetings. COVID has meant switching my career guidance appointments and skills seminars online.

#### What's happened since then?

When it comes to career thinking, the students and professionals I work with have been wrestling with emotional exhaustion and uncertainty about what the future holds. Although navigating the job market has always sparked anxiety for many people, the pandemic has resulted in a significant dip in opportunities available and the largest fall in graduate recruitment since 2008/2009.

With unemployment rates rising, my reassuring patter of telling clients "everything will be okay" no longer felt helpful. Empowering job seekers to take proactive steps to define (or redefine) career goals and adapt in this environment has become more important than ever.

#### For you, have any good things come from this?

We are living through an unprecedented time but also during a point in history where individuals are displaying amazing acts of human kindness – people want to give back and help others. Whether you need support yourself or know someone who might benefit from your help, there has never been a more important time to reach out.

"We are living through an unprecedented time but also during a point in history where individuals are displaying amazing acts of human kindness."



Elsie Owusu writes on the benefits of increasing equality of gender, race and cultural diversity in architecture.

**Architecture, as a profession, should resemble the society it seeks to serve**

That is why we set up Architecture: Incubator with support from the Stephen Lawrence Trust and The Prince's Foundation. We want to find and support the next generation of talented BAME architects and, also, make existing practices more culturally diverse. All too often I attend presentations in multi-cultural areas like Shoreditch or Brixton and encounter a monochrome group of (mostly male) architects,

reminiscent of the 1970s. You think, what happened? We are trying to represent the demographic of these exciting city centres, just outside. If you're excluding talent locally, you know you're missing out on vibrancy and the potential for creativity and positive change.

*“People tend to champion others who look and sound like them.”*

**Education is the answer**

It's essential for the school curriculum to keep up and employ teachers from diverse family backgrounds. It is also important that kids start designing when they are young. Architecture and urban design should be part of the curriculum for three to five years olds. At that age, most children are free from prejudice about gender, race, cultures and definitions of art and architecture. In Ghana, JustGhana Green Clubs, programmes of art, urban design and environmental education have

**ELSIE OWUSU OBE**

# IF WE BUILD TOGETHER THEY WILL COME

been set up in the capital, Accra, and rural villages. Green Clubs work with kids from three years old upwards, so there's no break at university age, young people think, suddenly, 'Oh I'm going to be an architect now'. The process should be gentle, incremental and seamless.

**I wasn't the only black woman at the Architectural Association (AA), strangely enough**

I started in 1974 when there was quite a large contingent of black and

brown people from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. It was very exciting. In those days, foreign governments used to pay for students from abroad to study at the AA. I was one of 15 "home" students, supported by the Inner London Educational Authority (ILEA). We enjoyed full maintenance grants and the fees (£580 per term) were paid. My daughter was very young then and I was part of a small group of radical architecture and art students mainly from the AA, Slade and Royal College of Art, living in Brixton and Stockwell.





### In some ways, we have gone backwards

Comparing today's statistics to those of 25 years ago when RIBA and Architects Registration Board first did the surveys, the situation is worse. In 1992, the number of BAME architects stood at 2% and now it's at 0.9%. Compared to the demographic of people from ethnic minorities, which in London is 43% and it's 13% nationwide, by any measure 0.9% is pretty dire.

### We need champions as well as models

In 2014, I was selected as a role model, by RIBA. Being a role model is important but the effectiveness can be overrated. In my early years in architectural practice, there were very few role models but I was lucky to meet people who supported me and had confidence in my abilities. These were my champions. Women and men in positions of power, who supported my practice because, after seven years' study, talent and competence is assured - and confirmed by admission

to the profession via ARB registration. Young architects must have projects in order to create successful practices. The problem is that many people in power tend to champion others who look and sound like themselves or their children. It's this circular process from which we must escape, to gain access to the best architectural talent.

### Society of Black Architects helped to create change in architecture

SOBA was established at more or less the same time that Stephen Lawrence was tragically murdered. Stephen was a talented young black man who wanted to be an architect. It was clear, in the early nineties that there were few opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds. We set up SOBA as a network, to talk and meet other people, strategise on how to change the profession. SOBA is now a thriving online international network. Judging from recent surveys by the Architects' Journal and the Stephen Lawrence Trust, however, discrimination in the profession is stubbornly high.

After three decades, architects of colour remain resilient and have achieved some notable successes. These include inspirational figures such as Dame Zaha Hadid and Sir David Adjaye, both these exceptional talents have each been awarded the RIBA Gold Medal - Sir David in 2020. We praise their success and achievements - and recognise we still have much to do.

*This article is based on an essay originally featured as part of Designing Diversity, a project by London recruitment agency Represent.*

## Elsie Owusu OBE

*Elsie Owusu OBE is a British architect, born in Ghana and based in London. She is an alumna of Streatham & Clapham High School. Elsie was the founding chair of the Society of Black Architects (SOBA) and has been a Council member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) since 2014. Her portfolio includes co-leading the design of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom in 2009 and London's Green Park tube station in 2011, as well as work in Ghana and Nigeria. After a long career in architecture, Owusu is an outspoken critic of "institutionalised discrimination" in the profession. She was awarded her OBE in 2003.*

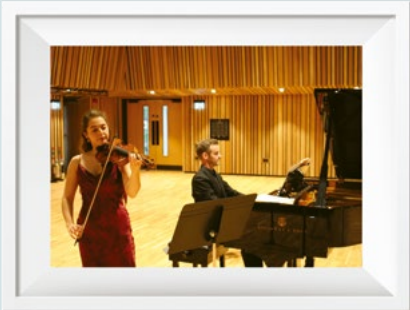
## Shrewsbury High School

Shrewsbury High School has announced exciting plans to unite on one site as part of the school's ongoing development and aspirations for the future. From September 2021, all pupils and staff, currently on two separate sites, will be based on one site at Town Walls.

Headteacher Jo Sharrock, who joined the school as Head in 2018, said, "Shrewsbury High School has been educating girls in the heart of Shrewsbury for over 135 years. From next September, we will truly become one school, with our Prep relocating from its current site to unite with our historic Senior School on one super site, at Town Walls. We will be going back to our roots, concentrating our full energies on what we know and do best - the all-through education of girls.



"Since becoming Head here, my team and I have given much thought to how the school can best continue to thrive. Shrewsbury High is now consistently achieving high standards across all areas of school life: examination results, pastoral care and co-curricular activities. We have a strong ethos, clear vision and, financially, we are in a good position. These are exciting times."



## South Hampstead High School

It is just over one year since the completion of Waterlow Hall, South Hampstead's state-of-the-art performance space completely funded by the school's wider community. The pandemic has not stopped distinguished guests and performers from speaking virtually to the school community, opening doors, hearts and minds.

In October 2020, the school was delighted to welcome former bursary pupil and renowned musician Mathilde Milwidsky who played a spectacular live-streamed concert to launch the Towards 150 Bursary Campaign. The concert is available to view on the school's website. Later in the term, alumna and award-winning BBC journalist Katya Adler shared fascinating insights into her life and career, live from Brussels, with the South Hampstead community. When it is safe to re-open, everyone at South Hampstead looks forward to again welcoming alumnae back for networking events and reunions.



# THE RULES I LIVE BY

Dame Rosemary Squire shares some of the rules she's lived by, that have served her throughout her career.

## *Aim high*

As a woman at the top you can really make a difference so aim high, you'll get much further than you think! As CEO and Executive Chair of the Board, I have been able to directly influence the policies that lead to a more diverse workforce. I'm proud to have opened doors for several women who moved up through the industry as a result of their skill and ambition – the West End and Broadway producer Sonia Friedman was one of them.

## *Earn your spurs*

No-one gets a seat at the top table straight away - it's likely that you will have to do the entry-level jobs on the way up. You'll have to do the rotten hours. But when you have done it, and know what it is like, you can understand and respect the job when others do it. Tearing tickets at the door and showing people to their seat – I've done that and it helped me understand that everyone in the company has a vital role to play.

## *Find yourself a great mentor*

A mentor can help you see the big picture but also provide practical advice when you are finding a particular issue challenging. I was lucky to have an inspirational mentor in the Neal Street property developer Christina Smith – she gave me confidence in myself when I was just starting out as an entrepreneur

and approaching deal negotiations for the first time, saying, "if I can do it, so can you."

## *People really matter - so be kind*

It doesn't have to be the grand gesture (although that's great too!) but it can be as simple as making the introduction that finds someone their first job, telling a colleague you appreciate them, or just making someone a cup of tea. Be generous and it pays back with loyalty, friendship, good morale. I have tried to make this principle shape the working culture in my companies. I want work to be fulfilling, supportive - and fun.

## *When you're going through hell - keep going.*

Winston Churchill's words have really inspired me. There have been times in my life when I felt like giving up; my daughter was very ill, I faced discrimination and set-backs at work. It's important to realise that everyone feels this sometimes, even when they are at the top of their game. At these times, just putting one foot in front of another was the thing that saved me. My parents taught me to persist in the face of difficulties. Persisting leads to resilience – a very useful skill.

## *Take chances*

The vast majority of people are happiest playing it safe – but it's through taking risks that you can really stand out. Opening our first theatre in the middle of a deep recession, acquiring a big group of theatres when we were a relatively small player - some of the biggest successes in my career were built on the back of opportunities that others might have been too timid to take. Do your homework, be the best-informed person in the room, face your fears – and jump. Next time it will be easier.

## Dame Rosemary Squire

Nottingham Girls' High School alumna, Dame Rosemary Squire co-founded the Ambassador Theatre Group, one of the world's leading theatre companies, and now runs Trafalgar Entertainment Group, a live entertainment business that owns and runs its own venues, as well as creates, distributes and live-streams content.

In 2020, she was awarded the GDST Alumna of the Year Award for Exceptional Contribution. Dame Rosemary was awarded a DBE (Damehood) in the 2018 New Year's Honours List for services to theatre and philanthropy.



## Streatham & Clapham High School



Stuart Lawrence, brother of the murdered black teenager Stephen Lawrence, gave a powerful and uplifting talk to Streatham & Clapham pupils last October. The event, which took place during Black History Month, marked the beginning of a year-long series of guest lectures and activities addressing issues of race, diversity and inclusion.

Later in the year, pupils also heard from Streatham & Clapham alumna Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Class of 2003), MP for Streatham, who spoke about her career and what it's like to be a black female politician in the UK. Further events featuring prominent alumnae of colour are planned for the Lent and Summer terms.



## Sutton High School

In December 2020, Sutton High School became the first school in the UK to adopt the Halo Code, changing its uniform policy in a bid to support the movement to end hair discrimination across schools and workplaces.

The school was lucky enough to host The Halo Collective, who came in to launch the initiative for girls from Year 6 to Sixth Form, teaching them about the history of black hair and the significance of this movement in celebrating and acknowledging cultural diversity.

The launch was covered by the *ITV News at 6* and an article was featured in *The Times*, an exciting and momentous day at Sutton High for all involved!



## Sydenham High School

Sydenham High School was delighted to welcome back alumna and former GDST Alumna of the Year 2012 winner Claire Bennett in January to speak to the Senior School girls on *'Peak Performance - Building a resilient approach'* and kick off our 2021 Lecture Series.



Claire's wealth of experience as a former member of the GB women's foil fencing team and a well-respected performance life coach made her the obvious choice to deliver a session designed to inspire and equip pupils with practical strategies for the year ahead - and the rest of their lives.



Claire represented Great Britain in European and World Championships from the age of 14. As Captain of England, she won individual Bronze and Team Gold at the 2010 Commonwealth Fencing Games. She shared her athlete story and reflected on the highs and lows of her elite sporting career. She also shared tools and techniques to help build a resilient approach and reflected on her transformative years at Sydenham High.

## Wimbledon High School

WHS #TogetherApart captured the community spirit throughout lockdown. Wimbledonians did what they do best – they adapted and moved to online learning, the school having won *Best Use of Technology* at the TES independent school awards earlier in the year.

Students volunteered at local foodbanks and, at Christmas, the school donated food hampers and much needed technology for partner schools. Girls wrote to older alumnae as part of the *WHS Connect* Campaign and key worker alumnae reported back from the front line of the pandemic response.



The school's 140th birthday alumnae magazine, *Ex Humilibus*, captured some of these stories. A talk by film producer Rachel Wang (Class of 1992) at the first ever virtual Birthday Reunion and a fascinating "In Conversation" event between Head, Fionnuala Kennedy and author, Afua Hirsch (Class of 1999) gave everyone pause for thought on diversity and inclusion as the school moved into its next decade.



THE SOUNDTRACK  
**LISA POWER**  
TO MY SCHOOL DAYS

One of the founders of Stonewall UK, Lisa Power has campaigned internationally for LGBT+ rights for more than 30 years

Social activist and  
Croydon High School  
alumna Lisa Power,  
shared with us the  
soundtrack to her  
school days.

I got into Croydon High School in the first year that there were no interviews for girls applying for the assisted place scholarships. I probably wouldn't have got in if there had been, as my accent was all wrong. My mother had been refused a place, as her mother ran a pub. During my time at school I hung out with the other misfits. I didn't understand why I didn't fit in then; I was just an ugly duckling. My friends and I would huddle around the radio at lunchtimes and listen to Radio One, which started in 1967, and the very silly comedy show, *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again*.



**1966**  
*Paperback Writer*  
by The Beatles

I used to swim a lot at the Croydon Baths and was very keen on it until I hit puberty. I remember ploughing up and down the pool to *Paperback*

*Writer* – they played the hit parade in some sessions there. *Paperback Writer* is a lesser known Beatles song – it didn't appear on any Beatles album. I also remember after swimming, I'd be treated to a sixpence (approx. 2½p) cup of chicken "bouillon" soup. Croydon Baths in those days still had slipper baths – for people that didn't have baths in their own homes – so there'd be the pool entrance and a separate one for people going to the slipper baths for a private bath.



**1967**  
*Respect/Save Me*  
by Aretha Franklin  
(Double-A side)

There was a stall in West Croydon that sold second hand ex-juke box singles, with oversized holes in the middle, so you couldn't play them on a regular record player unless you had an adapter. I did, so it meant I could buy these singles more cheaply. And I bought this one by Aretha Franklin without even knowing who she was. I don't know why I chose it, but it became really important to me.

Many years later I flew over to

New York to see her (I knew she'd never come to the UK as she had a phobia of flying). It was the weekend of Whitney Houston's funeral, so I was worried she might not be able to do the concert, as she was Whitney Houston's godmother. But she did the gig, and brought a gay black pastor with her to preach to the crowd which we all knew was making a point.

**1968**  
*Walk on Gilded Splinters*  
by Dr John

*Walk on Gilded Splinters* has a weird, New Orleans voodoo feel about it – and it's a song I've been listening to ever since I first discovered it. I've been to New Orleans too, and have a set of vintage Mardi Gras beads which I wear. I became fascinated by voodoo and witchcraft, which came together with my love of medieval history. I was reading 1600s witchcraft texts, too. Incidentally, Keith Thomas' classic book *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, which I read at school, is also one of Hilary Mantel's favourite books – she was a schoolgirl at the same time.







1969  
I Heard it Through  
the Grapevine by  
Marvin Gaye

I was listening to a lot of Motown and Stax—music that came out of the Blues, which I discovered much later. *I Heard it Through the Grapevine* became “my song” later at Lancaster University, when I was part of the alternative scene and had just come out. We used to go to Quack Disco, which was mostly gay run and held at the Catholic Club (who were clearly more interested in our money than our sins). I’d always hit the dance floor when *I Heard it Through the Grapevine* came on.



Lisa Power MBE

Croydon High School alumna, Lisa Power MBE, is a lifelong, highly influential social activist, co-founding the social justice and equality group Stonewall. As Secretary-General of the International Lesbian and Gay

Association, she was the first out LGBT person to speak on LGBT rights at the UN in New York. She subsequently became Policy Director of the Terrence Higgins Trust, the UK’s leading HIV and sexual health charity. She is currently a Trustee of Queer Britain, the forthcoming LGBT+ museum, and Chair of the global HIV Justice Network. She was awarded an MBE in 2011 for services to sexual health and the LGBT community.



1971  
Maggie May  
by Rod Stewart

There was a shop in Croydon called Bus Stop Boutique – just at top of the North End shopping street – where I bought my first black velvet suit. I remember, it was quite Elizabethan-looking, with a peplum jacket. I still love velvet suits. Maggie May was playing in the store, and I remember it all very clearly. I got to see Rod Stewart when he and The Small Faces played The Greyhound, the pub my grandmother had run decades earlier.

THE  
WRITE  
STUFF

Many of us will have been looking for new reads over the past twelve months. So if you’re looking to expand your reading list, here is the latest crop of books to have been published by GDST alumnae.



NON-FICTION

**Big Brain Revolution** by Dr Michelle Tempest (Croydon High School)

**Blockchain Hurricane: Origins, Applications and Future of Blockchain and Cryptocurrency** by Kate Baucherel (Northampton High School)

**The Brilliant Abyss** by Dr Helen Scales (Sutton High School)

**Improv Your Life: An Improviser's guide to embracing whatever life throws at you** by Pippa Evans (Notting Hill & Ealing High School)

**Intrepid Duettes of the Inca Empire Part 1** by Helen Pugh (Royal High School Bath)

**Leader: Know, love and inspire your people co-authored** by Katy Granville-Chapman (Notting Hill & Ealing High School)

**Let's Get Visible!** by Sapna Pieroux (Sheffield High School for Girls)

**Thinking the Plant: The Watercolour Drawings of Rebecca John** by Rebecca John (Putney High School)

**Wartime London in Paintings** by Suzanne Bardgett (Notting Hill & Ealing High School)

**When the World Feels Like a Scary Place** by Professor Abi Gewirtz (South Hampstead High School)

**Your Business, Your Book** by Ginny Carter (Putney High School)

CHILDREN'S & YOUNG ADULTS

**The Dragon Ark** by Curatoria Draconis aka Emma Roberts (Streatham & Clapham High School)

**The Extraordinary Life of Amelia Earhart** by Sheila Kanani (Wimbledon High School)

**Fig, Dudley and Peggy in The Little Paws Hotel series** by Clare Luther (Portsmouth High School)

**Gem and I** by Lucy Silver and Rosie Chomet (both Putney High School)

**Nothing Ever Happens Here** by Sarah Hagger-Holt (Notting Hill & Ealing High School)

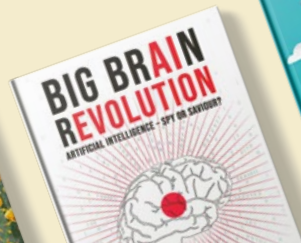
**Pia's Plans** by Alice Kuipers (Sydenham High School)

**Poseidon's Plastic Problem** by Ellie Boyle and Lizzie Nightingale (both Streatham & Clapham High School)

**Sophie Says I Can, I Will** by Esther Marshall (South Hampstead High School)

**What Breathes Through its Butt? Mind-Blowing Science Questions Answered** by Dr Emily Grossman (South Hampstead High School)

**When the World Went Inside** by Charlie Golding (Northampton High School)



# GDST EVENTS AND KEEPING IN TOUCH



## GDST’s alumnae network launches online

Last autumn, we launched GDST Life, the new online network for alumnae and Sixth Formers. More than 1,300 alumnae have now signed up to it, of which more than 200 have volunteered as mentors.

GDST Life is there for alumnae to find each other; to give you unrivalled personal and professional connections, mentoring support, new networking opportunities, events, news and resources, groups and societies and more. It’s there for students, too, from the moment they join their Sixth Form, giving them the opportunity to connect with others across the GDST family of schools. If you’re an alumna over the age of 18, please join us by signing up here: [www.gdstlife.aluminate.net](http://www.gdstlife.aluminate.net)

## GDST Empowerment Mentoring (GEM)

This year sees the launch of a brand new mentoring pilot, specifically designed to support the GDST’s Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) alumnae. The brainchild of Streatham & Clapham High School alumna **Adwoa Osei-Asibey**, the GEM (GDST Empowerment Mentoring) Programme has mentoring at its heart, but it’s about more than that. It’s about community, creating safe spaces, celebrating each other, and building enduring access into the working world.

Adwoa approached the GDST with her idea last year. “After a particularly tough year for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, with the disproportionate impact of COVID and then with the murder

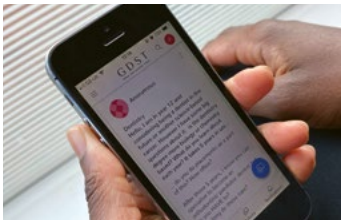
of George Floyd in America last summer which put the Black Lives Matter movement centre stage, I’m really happy that we’re able to offer something specific for our BME alumnae, with the go-live on our GEM Mentoring pilot scheme,” she said.

## Mentoring at GDST Life

After seven years, our original mentoring programme has now gone online, at GDST Life. This means more mentees than ever can now find, and contact direct, the mentor that’s right for them. So if you are looking for a mentor, do please check out GDST Life. And if you can’t find a suitable mentor there, please get in touch with us at [info@gdstalumnae.net](mailto:info@gdstalumnae.net) and we will try to make the right match for you from the larger alumnae database.

## Rungway for Sixth Form support

Rungway®, our bespoke mentoring app that connects alumnae with GDST Sixth Formers, goes from strength to strength, and now has over 2,500 members. As an alumna, if you think you could help answer a Sixth Former’s questions and want to get involved, just put [app.rungway.com/gdst/request-invite](http://app.rungway.com/gdst/request-invite) into your web browser and enter your email address to receive instructions from [runway@](mailto:runway@) on how to sign up.



## EVENTS

All of our events during 2020 were forced to move online – with pros and cons. On the one hand, it meant that we could share events more widely, but on the other, we’ve missed seeing many of you at GDST and school gatherings over the year.

So, what’s been happening? Towards the end of last year, two major alumnae events each attracted audiences in their hundreds, as schools were able to share their events across the network. Broadcaster and writer **Afua Hirsch**, discussed race, racism and belonging with Wimbledon High School’s head, **Fionnuala Kennedy**, while **Katya Adler**, the BBC’s Europe

Editor, talked about her career and the political landscape at the end of 2020 with South Hampstead High School headmistress, **Vicky Bingham**. Already this year, Bromley High School have shared their talk by author of *Black and British*, **David Olusoga**, and South Hampstead opened up a second school event, with **Diana and Mark Carney** in February.

And then there was the great **GDSTea Party**. Last October, alumnae from around the globe and of all ages, from last year’s leavers to octogenarians, came together to recreate the spirit of the GDST family over a cup of tea. Alumnae were encouraged to take part in school-hosted events, or simply to get in touch with an old friend for a chat.

## 2021 Events

At the time of going to press, we are still, regrettably, unable to confirm any live events, tours or visits. However, we hope to revisit last year’s private tours programme as soon as we can, and will keep you advised of all

relevant online events, as they occur. We are also sharing recordings of events on GDST Life, so do please feel free to catch up there.

## Help Girls Learn Without Limits

Our goal is to make a GDST education available to all girls, whatever their background. To do this we’ve launched our Help Girls Learn Without Limits campaign to massively increase our bursary income for the GDST’s 150th anniversary in 2022/23.

To learn more about how you can help, visit our website at [www.gdst.net/support](http://www.gdst.net/support) or contact our Philanthropy team

Tel: 0207 393 6898  
Email: [giving@wes.gdst.net](mailto:giving@wes.gdst.net)  
No matter how small or large, any gift to support bursaries will help to ensure more girls can access and benefit from a quality GDST education.





# GDST

GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

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## A L U M N A E

**f** [facebook.com/GDSTalumnae](https://facebook.com/GDSTalumnae)

**t** [@GDSTAlumnae](https://twitter.com/GDSTAlumnae)

**in** GDST Alumnae Network

### **HOW TO FIND OLD FRIENDS, MENTORS AND MORE**

Join GDST Life, our alumnae online network,  
by signing up at [www.gdstlife.aluminate.net](http://www.gdstlife.aluminate.net)

### **HOW TO KEEP UP TO DATE**

To keep up with GDST news and what's happening, go to  
[www.gdst.net/alumnae](http://www.gdst.net/alumnae) or GDST Life at [www.gdstlife.aluminate.net](http://www.gdstlife.aluminate.net)

### **HOW TO BOOK**

Look out for our event invitations via email, or join GDST Life and  
search under the events tab. [www.gdstlife.aluminate.net](http://www.gdstlife.aluminate.net)

### **HOW WE LOOK AFTER AND USE YOUR DATA**

We promise that your details are safe with us – you can view our  
privacy policy at [www.gdst.net/privacy-notice](http://www.gdst.net/privacy-notice)

You can choose how we contact you by updating your  
details on our new alumnae portal.

### **HOW TO FIND OUT MORE**

Phone us on 020 7393 6898 or email us at  
[info@gdstalumnae.net](mailto:info@gdstalumnae.net)