

CONNECT

The Magazine for the Friends of NGHS 2020

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CONTENTS

Welcome from the Head	4
School News	6
School Events	8
Those Were The Days	10
Guided Home Learning: an NGHS success story	12
Diversity and Inclusion	15
Inspiring Alumnae	16
Peggy Mason Bursary	18
Dame Rosemary Squire	19
FlyGirl	20
Whetstone of Wit	23
Obituaries	26
Getting Involved	29
Philanthropy	30

FEATURE STORIES

Those Were The Days

Fond memories are recalled by Rae Hold, NGHS Alumna 1954 - 1961. Hopefully our doors will soon be open again for alumnae to tour the school, but for now enjoy Rae's account of her NGHS school days from 60 years ago.



Guided Home Learning

Since the start of the Covid-19 crisis, the phrase 'guided home learning' has become part of our everyday vocabulary. Two of the biggest success stories to come out of the lockdown period have to be the epic music collaborations, and the remarkable Summer Exhibition to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day.



WELCOME FROM THE HEAD

Who could possibly have foreseen the events of the past year since our last issue of Connect was sent out to you? They defy belief, yet here we all are, back at school and continuing with the provision of excellent education for our girls.

Of course it has been a challenging time but it has not all been bad news, so let's start with some of the positives.

On a personal note, the arrival of my baby daughter, Hope, in January, has been the most wonderful and uplifting event for my family. She is an absolute treasure and brings so much joy into our lives - we feel truly blessed and would like to thank the school community for all of the gifts and good wishes sent our way.



Just before I finished to go on maternity leave, the school was visited by the Independent Schools Inspectorate - a nail biting time for all of us. I should have known that there would be absolutely nothing to worry about. My dedicated staff, our wonderful girls and the brilliant school totally blew the inspectors away, resulting in the most amazing and positive report rating us as excellent. I am so proud that they recognised us for what we are - a progressive, creative and different school with the needs of our girls and our staff at the forefront of everything we do. Well done us!

Things appeared to be going swimmingly and then, COVID-19 happened and continues to affect every aspect of our lives. I do have to heap praise, gratitude and admiration here onto Katrina Handford-Smith, my Senior Deputy Head, who acted as maternity cover during the most challenging time the school has ever faced. She treated the crisis with professional calm, steering the school through lockdown and our guided home learning programme ensuring that our girls continued to receive the very best education we could provide and still feel part of the precious NGHS family. It's a whole new world of remote learning and virtual classrooms, but we made it work and know that we can do so again in future if necessary.





Of course, all of this changed the face of the exams season and I really do feel for the girls who were due to sit their GCSE and A Level exams and had to settle instead for a new system of grading. Having said that, our girls yet again should be proud of their success and achievements because they really did do exceptionally well under the circumstances. The future is still bright for all of them.

Lessons in lockdown produced some truly outstanding work, not least the incredible music collaborations, some of which

even made local news headlines. Hundreds of girls together, but apart, singing and playing beautiful and inspirational songs and concerts which our parents and whole school community relished. Our Music Department and peripatetic staff must be applauded - they have achieved some great results during this strangest of times.

That brings us right back up to date, though by the time you receive this, things may have changed again, and we will be ready. We are as busy, if not busier than ever. There is a lot of

catching up to do and some big issues to address. The formation of a GDST steering committee on Diversity, Inclusion and Meaningful Change is a big and vital addition to the school community. We have all been affected by recent and ongoing events and racial tensions, particularly but not exclusively in the USA. As education providers it is our duty to make sure that not only our girls but our staff too, have access to training and materials to help them recognise, confront and ultimately eradicate racism in society. It's hugely important to us - there is a lot of work to do but exciting and positive steps are being taken already.

With that, I do hope that everybody in the NGHS alumnae community is keeping well and I'm really sorry that we have not been able to enjoy any of our reunions or other social events. But this crisis will pass and I look forward to seeing some of you when the time is right and it is safe to gather again. In the meantime, thank you for your continued support of the school and please enjoy reading this latest issue of Connect.

Julie Keller
Head



SCHOOL NEWS

ISI inspection, excellent in all areas

We achieved the highest possible rankings from the [Independent Schools Inspectorate](#) just before Christmas and were rated excellent for both academic achievement and quality of personal development. We couldn't be more proud of our exceptional school, a community made up of a dedicated team of staff and truly inspirational group of girls. The inspectors were bowled over by the positivity, warmth and incredible results achieved by the school and described their visit as a "joy to be here."



Planting trees for a greener future

Pupils in Year 5 wanted to make a positive difference to the environment, so in November they planted 90 British hedgerow saplings along the boundary fence of Upnah Wood, plus a variety of spring flowering bulbs in Upnah playground. These will look lovely



and keep the school green for years to come.

Similarly, girls from our Senior School Green Team went along to the amazing Young People's Forest at Mead near Heanor in Derbyshire, created by the Woodland Trust. There they planted 200 trees which will grow into part of a beautiful forest, adding to a wonderful natural landscape and providing a home for a large variety of wildlife.



Talking Book for the RNIB

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is really popular at NGHS and through their volunteering section last year, girls

raised £1,500 to sponsor a Talking Book for the RNIB. They raised the money through a variety of initiatives including bake sales, non-uniform days, a Braille Trail, hiking the Yorkshire Three Peaks, book sales and film lunches. We received a lovely letter of thanks from the RNIB Fundraising Team saying:

"With your support we can restore the absolute joy of reading to blind and partially sighted people here in the UK"



Nursery Launch

We had a wonderful afternoon earlier this year spreading the happiness at our official Nursery launch celebration event with special guest Shonette Bason-Wood. Shonette is a happiness speaker, Guinness world record holder and Education Awards winner, and we had a lovely afternoon of fun and games at our launch.

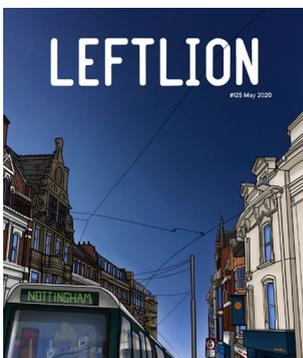
Our Nursery is the latest addition to the school enabling us to now

provide our very special brand of education to girls as young as three. We're delighted with how it's going so far and our youngest girls are really enjoying being part of the NGHS family. We can't wait to see them progress up the school.



Nottingham Young Creatives Awards

What a stunning Nottingham scene! Congratulations to Ava in Year 13, winner in the graphic design category of the Nottingham Young Creatives Awards. Ava has just left NGHS to start an art foundation course after which she hopes to pursue her passion for graphic design and illustration at university.



Whole School Carol Concert

We were delighted to host our first ever whole school Christmas Carol Concert at St Mary's Church in the Lace Market in December. It was wonderful to have the entire school community together under one roof and in such a beautiful and historic building. It was a truly special occasion to which parents were also invited and they absolutely loved it.



Chamber Choir Diva Concert

We're incredibly proud that our Chamber Choir took part in The Limelight Orchestra's celebration concert at the Nottingham Royal Centre on International Women's Day. It was a real privilege to be involved in this, especially as a share of the proceeds went to the Nottingham Women's Centre, a charity for which the school regularly raises money.



Music Award Finalists

It's well known that music provision at Nottingham Girls' High School is pretty special. So we were really proud to have been shortlisted as finalists in the Outstanding School Music Department category of the Music and Drama Education Awards. Mr Rolfe, Mrs Fowler and Mrs Sail represented the Infant and Junior School Music Department at a glittering ceremony in London. We were not winners on this occasion but everybody had a great time and we are still incredibly proud to have been finalists.



SCHOOL EVENTS

School productions

The Squire Performing Arts Centre hosted a variety of productions before the theatre had to close under the current Coronavirus guidelines. The girls continued to command the stage and we have enjoyed a variety of performances including Mary's Knitting and The Puzzled Penguin from our Infant and Junior School, to the fantastic Drama production of Back to The Land by Do Shaw - a story of courage, community and crops performed by the Senior School girls. The opening night of our big Senior production of [Beauty and The Beast](#) could sadly not take place. However, the Sixth Form girls did get a sneak peek of the full dress rehearsal and it was an absolutely fantastic performance.



Even in lockdown the music hasn't stopped

With the passion and dedication of everybody in the Music Department and our devoted peripatetic teaching staff, our girls have embraced guided home learning and produced some outstanding pieces.

[NGHS Somewhere Over the Rainbow](#). Recorded over two days in April 2020 in tribute to our tremendous NHS and inspired by the rainbow designs used in windows around the country to show support. 113 musicians. 135 videos. One school. This project even attracted the attention of local media and appeared on BBC East Midlands Today.

[We'll Meet Again](#). Nottingham Girls' High School Infant and Junior girls with Emma Brown (2003 alumna). The NGHS community, united remotely through the challenges of lockdown to celebrate VE Day and 75 years of freedom and friendship. This became especially poignant since the sad passing of Dame Vera Lynn shortly after it was recorded.

Visit the NGHS music channel on YouTube: [Nottingham Girls' High School Music Department](#).



NGHS Careers

Alumnae continue to pay it forward and return to school to talk to girls about their careers. The NGHS Careers Department presented 'Careers in Healthcare' in March. More than 100 girls and parents took their places in the Djanogly auditorium to listen to five female speakers share personal experiences of their own careers in healthcare. We were lucky to hear from two alumnae; Alina Burney, NGHS alumna of 2014, who is now a pre-registration Pharmacist. Her amusing patient anecdotes quickly dispelled any notions her audience may have had about the role of the Pharmacist being behind the medical scenes. And Dr Louise Braham, NGHS parent and alumna of 1989 shared her experience of her career in Clinical Psychology working at Rampton High Security Hospital. Alumnae are so valuable to our school and such great role models for our girls, so if you'd like to get involved and share your career journey please do get in touch.



Thank you to our staff leavers

It's always sad to see staff leave NGHS but we're incredibly grateful for the amazing contribution to girls' education that they've made during their time here.



We said goodbye to Miss Sophy Dunn who left our Chemistry Department as she moved to a sister GDST school in Birkenhead. As well as being a teacher for ten years at the school, Sophy is also an NGHS alumna so had spent many years here altogether.

We also said goodbye to Mr Marc Mole who had been with the Maths Department since 2008, and Mrs Shelley Summers who was a fantastic cover supervisor across the Senior School. Miss Charlotte Mills, another alumna of the school who taught in our Reception classes, also left us this year. We wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

We can't express how very sad we were to have said goodbye to our one-in-a-million Head of Outdoor Learning, Miss Jen Lynn. She had been the most incredible champion of all things outdoors and inspired so many girls to try new things, step (or leap) out of their comfort zones

and embrace the wide world. Jen saw the potential in so many outdoor spaces at school and turned them into exciting outdoor learning areas which are loved by everybody. Her legendary trips and excursions have changed girls' lives and her charity ventures raised huge amounts of money for worthwhile causes over the years. We will miss her immensely and are so sorry that we could not give her the send-off she truly deserved as we were plunged into lockdown. But she takes with her our very warmest wishes and sincere thanks for everything she has done for the school community as she embarks upon the next adventure of her life.

Finally, a huge thank you to Sian Griffith, now Sian Johns. She was one of the lucky ones who got married just before the country went into lockdown in March. Sian covered the alumnae role during 2019 and she did a fantastic job. We wish her well in her new marketing role.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

Blog post by Rae Hold NGHS Alumna 1954 - 1961

We love to hear the tales, stories and anecdotes of our alumnae about their time at NGHS. These are often shared as we wander around the school, walk along the Covered Way, through the Senior Hall, popping down to the dungeons, or just standing in Clarence Lodge outside the Head's Office.

Fond memories are often recalled and we've been very lucky that Rae Hold, NGHS Alumna 1954 - 1961 used some of her time in lockdown to share her memories. Hopefully our doors will soon be open again for alumnae to tour the school, but for now enjoy Rae's account of her NGHS school days from 60 years ago.



"I have been intending to put fingers to iPad for ages, and now, here I am. Miss Gornall would have instructed me to write in complete sentences, but I haven't got time for that. I was at NGHS from 1954-1961, and really enjoyed my time there. What do I remember?"

** Arriving at school on the first day and not knowing anyone else there. Really nerve wracking.*

** Sitting cross-legged on parquet floor in the Hall at the front of the Upper Third block. On the front row on the stage were the Third Year Sixth Oxbridge entrants. SILK stockings!*

** Queueing to go into the Hall for morning assembly, having remembered to take the small blue hymn book. Mine is still on my bookshelf. Amazing how small the print is!*

** Girls fainting in Assembly was a regular occurrence.*

** Singing the beginning/end of term school song. On the last day of term, I think we attended only until 11 am. Were then handed our end of term report in a sealed envelope, and then we 'escaped' for the holiday.*

** Lots of hymn practices. Loved those, and the singing of the hymns each morning. Loved music lessons too. These were in the Hut across the road, with Miss Sandy.*



* *More singing memories - I was in the School Choir. At Prizegivings, at the Albert Hall on Derby Road, we would be sat right at the back on the stage, next to the huge organ pipes.*

* *Was also involved with School Plays. Some of these were staff and pupils together. I remember going home late after one evening performance, travelling on the train from Nottingham Victoria station. Must have been very tired, missed my stop at Radcliffe, and found myself at Bingham station. No mobiles then! Worried parents - yes!*

* *Something else I enjoyed - learning to develop rolls of camera film in the photographic studio. That would be a museum entry now, I think.*

* *Catching the bus on Games afternoons to Thackeray's Lane. Later, to Redhill Lodge Drive, I believe?*

* *We had trips by coach or train to Wembley Stadium for the Women's Hockey International matches. What an atmosphere! On occasions, we were watching our PE teachers playing. I remember Margaret Glossop, and Biddy Burgum.*

* *Remember spending a freezing cold week in April of O Level year on a Geography Field trip in Snowdonia. Unheated chalets. Good fun, and I learned a lot as well.*

* *Buying uniform at Dixon and Parker's. Kneeling on the floor to have skirt length measured - 1 inch above the knee (until you grew!). Later on I had a pleated skirt. These lost their creases when you'd sat in them and needed regular pressing. I got round this by sewing the edge of each pleat on the sewing machine. Took ages, but it saved hours of damp pressing! Did you have a blue Science/Art overall? Two buttons at the back. I decorated mine by printing Bambis round the bottom with a Lino-cut before I left. I still have the overall and use it for painting and decorating. It is heavily patched, but it is over 65 years old!! More for the museum?*

* *Money belts with a tiny zip pocket for 'dinner' tickets.*

* *Cloakrooms in the basement.*

* *Having to have 'indoor' shoes.*

* *Having to have a Fog address, to stay with someone near to school, in case public transport was cancelled due to poor visibility.*

* *New text books being distributed at the beginning of the year, and having to take them home to cover them in brown paper or wallpaper - to make them last! A bit different from I-pads and laptops!*

* *Privileges in the Sixth Form - being able to walk in the Arboretum at lunchtime. Dancing lessons, and dances with the Boys' High. Privileges??*

* *Last memory - the 'traffic lights' system outside Miss Milford's study. These indicated whether you could knock, wait for amber, or shake and shiver for longer if the light was on red!*

Those were the days!"

"Money belts with a tiny zip pocket for 'dinner' tickets."



GUIDED HOME LEARNING: AN NGHS SUCCESS STORY

Since the start of the Covid-19 crisis, the phrase 'guided home learning' has become part of our everyday vocabulary.

Following a GDST specific approach to school life during this unique time, we were committed to ensuring that the school remained a community, built on strong relationships between staff, pupils and parents. None of us had any idea how this would work out, but here at Nottingham Girls' High School we have been thrilled with its success.

We have always been proud of the fact that we are a progressive, forward thinking school at the forefront of 21st century technology. Our classrooms have interactive whiteboards where Google Classroom and other technologies are always in use. The girls already have their own iPads and are totally familiar with,

and comfortable in, the digital world. So once Google Classroom was up and running, there was no stopping our progress. Aided by the dedication and hard work of our staff in putting together a flexible timetable and lesson plans for this new way of teaching and learning, we continued our mission of providing the best possible education for our girls, as we have always done. This was made even easier by the girls' enthusiasm and willingness to embrace their new home classrooms. We sought feedback from parents and girls throughout the period, and made changes along the way, taking their suggestions on board. Increasing videos and live lessons for our younger girls for example. And our parent community could not be happier with how all of this worked out, as you can see from just a few of the very many



positive comments we received:

So lessons began and the work came flooding in, and we could not be more impressed with the high standard of what the girls were producing and their level of engagement. From amazing artwork to inventive science experiments, creative Geography projects to exhausting fitness routines, our girls were really on it! Even enrichment clubs continued to run online with girls getting together for such fun things as Pet Club and Movie Club.

Two of the biggest success stories to come out of [guided home](#)



learning during the lockdown period have to be the epic music collaborations, and the remarkable Summer Exhibition to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day. Girls from Nursery through to Year 8 were tasked with producing creative work in over 20 categories including baking and cake decorating, stop motion animation, painting and drawing, and even dressing up. Research has shown us that girls learn best when they can engage in a subject deeply, so themed project work is ideal. The girls loved it and grabbed opportunities with both hands, immersing themselves totally in the required tasks. The judges, made up of an inspirational group of alumnae, governors and GDST colleagues had their work cut out in choosing winners, but we know that ALL of the participants are winners here.

Our girls also had the benefit of access to the Limitless Learning programme from the GDST, created for both Year 11 and Year 13 students. We wanted to keep our young women engaged and



firmly focused on their bright futures, despite the cancellation of their GCSEs and A Levels. With subjects spanning academic study, careers, mental health, leadership and life skills, we are confident that the Limitless Learning programme gave our

Year 11 girls a great head start. Our Year 13 students had access to a range of targeted careers activities, too. The Real Models Careers Talk series featured successful women from a range of professional backgrounds sharing their personal stories and





advice, whilst the Careers Start Live sessions engaged students in debate and discussion around how they could gain and develop the skills, experience and leadership qualities sought by employers. The Inspiring Changemakers Programme event featured online workshops and presentations from an array of high-profile and dynamic women sharing their professional and personal experiences to motivate our students.

Of course we are aware that there is nothing quite like being in the

classroom, being face to face with friends and teachers, enjoying the fun and camaraderie that is an essential part of successful school life. Again, current technology has made this possible in a safe and responsible way. Girls across all year groups took to meeting up with staff, with friends and with each other via Zoom, Facetime, Google Meets or any other such communication platforms. The joy on their faces was palpable. The essential relationships between girls and staff must have no barriers, especially during these

challenging times. Providing feedback, support, praise and encouragement as well as fun and laughter ensures that our girls still feel very much part of the NGHS family, the school community. And indeed the same must be said for the staff too. Virtual staff room meetings and gatherings have become a way of life in this strange new world, even now that we're back at school.

So for the time being we must all make the best of these unusual circumstances. Our hearts go out to the girls for whom this year should have been their last in school, whose exams have been jeopardised but whose futures are not. We believe that guided home learning and the limitless learning at NGHS has delivered the very best education we could possibly provide under the circumstances. And as things slowly start to change and the school continues to come to life again, we will proudly reflect on how well we as a whole, as the NGHS community of girls, staff and parents notched up another success story.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity and inclusion is on the agenda more strongly than ever, with racial equality at the forefront of our minds this term and going forward. There's a huge amount of activity taking place in school and across the GDST family. GDST Chief Executive, Cheryl Giovanonni, shared her mission statement, has engaged with our community for feedback and discussion, and has set up the UNDIVIDED Steering Group for action and real change.

We couldn't be more energised by the positive changes taking place and the exciting opportunities we have to help our girls and our society. These are examples of some of the projects taking place:

Curriculum

One of the most important areas we're reviewing and adapting is our school curriculum. We will ensure our girls understand all sides of the stories they learn about. History, English and Art are some examples of the subjects for which we're building new plans. The PSHE (Personal, Social, Health Education) curriculum is also undergoing changes to ensure issues of race are discussed openly and often. Alongside a revised assembly programme and new extracurricular clubs, we're

UNDIVIDED

THE GDST IS COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY,
INCLUSION, AND REAL CHANGE

excited for the new term and for these new chapters.

Policies

We have updated our policies to explicitly reference our expectations of behaviours including use of language, and the repercussions of displaying any kind of racial prejudice.

Training

NGHS Staff are committed to understanding more about issues of race, and we have pledged to provide an ongoing, long term training programme to educate us all on these important matters. Unconscious bias was our first training session which took place on the first day of term, for every member of teaching, support, catering and caretaking staff. It was incredibly educational and thought provoking and we look forward to the forthcoming sessions.

Representation and inspiration - with help from you, our inspiring alumnae

Role models are important to young people, and we are actively

finding ways, alongside our GDST colleagues, to diversify the racial representation of our teaching staff.

We are also supporting our girls with inspirational role models from all different ethnic backgrounds through mentoring and networking programmes and our next "Inspiring Alumnae" campaign. We always love to hear from you all, and we would be delighted to get in touch with our alumnae from a range of ethnic backgrounds so that we can share your stories with our current pupils. **Please email a.hooper@not.gdst.net if you would like to take part.** Whatever you're doing, whatever your journey, we know you'll provide inspiration for our girls.



INSPIRING ALUMNAE

Aiesha Maxwell, NGHS Alumna 2002

Procurement Systems Supervisor at KBR Inc

Aiesha left NGHS in 2002 and went on to study Maths and Astrophysics at the University of Cambridge at which she also stayed on to complete her MPhil. She had a very positive experience at school and thrived in an environment of choice and opportunities. It was wonderful to welcome Aiesha back in 2012 for one of our alumnae reunion events too. Here is Aiesha's story in her own words:

"In 2002, I matriculated at the University of Cambridge to study mathematics. After my second year, I switched to astrophysics and graduated in 2005. To be honest, I chose to study mathematics (and later astrophysics) because it seemed fun and I didn't really consider what I was going to do when I graduated! I took a gap year and during that time decided a career in engineering or manufacturing would be a good use of my skills. I went back to Cambridge, this time to complete the Advanced Course in Design, Manufacture and Management (ACDMM now ISMM - Industrial Systems and Manufacturing Management) Masters programme. After graduating in 2007, I joined KBR UK Ltd on a Procurement Graduate Scheme and since

then have worked in a variety of procurement roles, including Purchasing, Subcontracts, Materials Management and Supplier Relations, and have been in Procurement Systems for over five years. During this time, my career with KBR has taken me to multiple locations, from Leatherhead, UK to Houston, TX, USA via Dubai, UAE and Ulsan, South Korea. I have also worked on a variety of projects with diverse groups of people, and each new opportunity has allowed me to learn more about myself and the world we live in. I am passionate about inclusion and diversity and am currently on the board of directors of the Houston chapter of KBR's women's Employee and Business Resource Group, dedicated to increasing female leadership in the company, as well as improving overall diversity, for the benefit of all. Additionally, I co-chair the KBR Charity Golf Committee, a group of young professionals that organize our annual golf tournament. We're in our 13th year and to date we have raised over \$6 million for more than 50 local and national charities.

"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair!"

My advice to young girls today is to challenge yourself. Step outside of your comfort zone. Travel and try new experiences. There will be times when people tell you that you can't do something or that you don't belong because of your age, your gender, your race, your lack of experience, or any number of other reasons. Sometimes that person could be you! Stamp down on those naysayers and seize the opportunities life presents.

"As a student of NGHS, there's no doubt that you have the potential to be a leader of the future, in whichever field you choose."

I also share one of my favourite quotes by Shirley Chisholm, politician, educator, author and the first black woman elected to the United States Congress: "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair!" This applies wherever people feel excluded, not just in politics or the workplace. The next step is to make yourself heard. Don't let others talk over you and don't let them rephrase your ideas to sell them as theirs. Own your ideas and own your identity. As a student of NGHS,



there's no doubt that you have the potential to be a leader of the future, in whichever field you choose.

From the moment I stepped into the building at the NGHS open day, I knew that this was the school for me. As I toured the departments, each filled me with wonder at all the fun, creative and educational applications of their topics. Learning new things felt like opening a world of opportunities, a world I had never considered before. Before NGHS, I had never really thought about going to university after sixth form; my parents had gone, but as mature students,

so I thought I'd probably be the same. My time at this school inspired in me a desire for learning and discovering. Here I could be passionate about art and about science, without them being mutually exclusive. Here I could ask questions that were off syllabus and my teachers would give me pointers on where to find out more and make up my own mind. Here I made memories and lifelong friendships I cherish to this day."

"My time at this school inspired in me a desire for learning and discovering. Here I could be passionate about art and about science, without them being mutually exclusive. Here I could ask questions that were off syllabus and my teachers would give me pointers on where to find out more and make up my own mind. Here I made memories and lifelong friendships I cherish to this day."

PEGGY MASON BURSARY

Nottingham Girls' High School has been left a generous bequest from one of its alumnae which will create the 'Peggy Mason Bursary'. The gift has been left to NGHS by Miss Mason who attended the Prep School and Senior School until 1939. It will fund six Sixth Form bursaries, the first of which was awarded in September 2020.

Peggy left school early at her father's request to help and to start work in the successful family bakers at the start of the Second World War. As a very bright and capable student, she regretted not finishing her academic studies and going on to further education.

However, she embraced the baking industry with her usual enthusiasm and learnt the business inside out. She would take delight in explaining, when asked, how the government and bakers worked together to keep the country fed even with restricted grain supplies during the war.

The family bakery business was bought by Canadian entrepreneur, Garfield Weston, in the 1950s and it became part of the Association of British Foods (ABF). As the business expanded ABF built a new bakery - the Sunblest Bakery - on Hucknall Road which her brother Peter ran as the Managing Director.



At the bakery Peggy was responsible for organising all the staff from the newly acquired businesses and overall production. This was no mean feat. When she retired, two people took over her workload - evidencing her strong work ethic. She had an excellent knowledge of business and was pivotal to its success. Her ability to deal with administrative and financial matters enabled her to run the business efficiently, and in addition she took great care to always look after and be sensitive to the needs and welfare of the staff. She was both a pioneer and an innovator not only in the world of work but also elsewhere, particularly in her involvement in sport.

Throughout her life Peggy enjoyed sporting activities, especially squash. She became an influential committee member of the Nottingham Squash Club. She was so involved and such a force with which to be reckoned that she altered the dynamics of the Club in what was initially a male dominated environment.

She became a referee but was also instrumental in the writing of a new rule book. A lover of all sports, later in life she enjoyed tennis and golf and become proficient at both.

In the 1970s, she turned her attention to an idea which had arisen from her passion for sport. As a keen Wimbledon fan, she considered that sportswear for women tennis players desperately needed improving. She consequently set up a business with friends, selling beautifully designed tennis dresses, which were worn by the likes of Margaret Court and Evonne Goolagong Cawley - female tennis professionals of the 1970s and early 80s.

Peggy was a true GDST girl, a passionate believer in fairness, confident and fearless, she was much respected in her community and amongst her many friends.

Peggy had no children of her own but nevertheless was acutely aware of the importance of a good education, particularly as her schooldays had been considerably foreshortened by the war. The generosity of her bequest will provide a lasting gift of education for talented girls. **To find out more about legacy giving visit:** www.gdst.net/legacies

DAME ROSEMARY SQUIRE

GDST Exceptional Contribution Award

We were delighted to welcome [NGHS Alumna, Dame Rosemary Squire](#), back to school this term to collect a very special prize from the GDST. Rosemary was awarded the GDST Exceptional Contribution Award for her continued devotion to philanthropy.

Head, Julie Keller, enjoyed spending time with Rosemary, hearing about her memories of NGHS, her subsequent success in the Performing Arts industry and the reasons behind her absolute commitment to helping young people. Dame Rosemary credited her success to her resilience and can-do attitude. She explained that she was inspired to embrace every opportunity presented to her as a young woman. She tried things out, worked hard and didn't let anything hold her back.

She gained valuable life skills, as well as academic success, during her time as a teenager and young adult. Her passion for Music, Drama and the Arts, meant that she always felt she would forge her career in this field. She has always enjoyed what she does, and has achieved extraordinary success.

Rosemary is one of the most prominent women in British theatre, and co-founder of the Ambassador Theatre Group, one of the world's leading live theatre companies.

She now runs the Trafalgar Entertainment Group, a live entertainment business which owns and runs its own venues, as well as creates, distributes and live-streams innovative content. She has topped The Stage 100 for seven consecutive, record-breaking years. She was awarded a DBE (Damehood in 2018) for services to theatre and philanthropy. Her philosophy of giving back to the next generation runs through all she does, with her active charity and fundraising work and her inspirational message to young entrepreneurs that they can succeed in the arts.

Rosemary played a huge part in developing The Squire Performing Arts Centre for the School and local Nottingham community. Her vision and financial support has meant that NGHS girls, all the way from age 3, are able to perform on a professional stage, in front of 250 people. They are able to experience all the excitement, creativity and camaraderie of a professional theatre, from learning how to operate the technical box to performing in the orchestra. This has brought a huge amount of confidence and joy to our NGHS family, and has been at the centre of many of our girls' favourite memories of their time here.

We always love to welcome Rosemary back to school. It's a pleasure to spend time with her, and she always leaves us feeling inspired. Thank you Rosemary, for everything you have done and continue to do and congratulations on your well-deserved award.



FLYGIRL

An Interview with Avarni Bilan NGHS Alumna 2003 - 2010

Tell us about the exciting new initiative of FlyGirl

FlyGirl is a networking and empowerment platform for local womxn that is particularly focused on supporting womxn of colour. Through the curation of events, workshops and one to one sessions, FlyGirl works to enhance the careers, businesses and personal lives of all womxn involved. We work with local community groups, brands and individuals alike to help bridge the gap between where they are now, and where they want to be in the future. This can be anything from life coaching sessions, business development workshops or aromatherapy massage; wellness is as important to us as the business side of things! We are very fortunate to have a lot of really motivated, inspirational and passionate womxn who collectively form the FlyGirl community; some of them wish to gain something whereas others are purely here to give back.

Though we work particularly hard to support womxn of colour, it has always been very important that FlyGirl is open to ALL womxn regardless of race. We want to

facilitate positive change by creating spaces where womxn can come together to support one another in achieving their dreams . . . because we all know the resulting power of putting a group of womxn together in a room! Whether you're asking us to solve a problem or create something entirely new, great things happen when womxn come together in force and FlyGirl is essentially all about creating safe and comfortable spaces for womxn to learn, empower and support one another, be it physically or online.

What made you want to set this up?

Over the years I have been fortunate enough to work with some really incredible womxn who have inspired and pushed me to be the best version of myself, both professionally and personally. Through my career in global brand management and events marketing I've also built up an extremely varied network of contacts, so I wanted to do something that utilised my experience, skills and position of privilege to positively impact



local womxn. In doing this, I also wanted to make sure that the final platform would practically respond to the clear lack of representation that womxn of colour experience on a daily basis and that it would create a place for womxn of colour to unapologetically address topics that may largely only apply to us.

As a womxn of colour in the UK it can unfortunately be very normal to feel as though you're constantly inhabiting places that aren't meant for you and that your experiences and opinions aren't valued or appreciated. So I wanted to create a space that was specifically for these womxn, without ever denying a place at the table for any other womxn who want to get involved. In particular, I wanted to focus on how we can use our industry

connections to create brand new opportunities for womxn of colour which for one reason or another have previously not been on the cards. For example, in the UK, only 21% of the STEM workforce (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) are womxn, and the percentage of womxn of colour is even smaller. So we've been working with our industry links within these areas to see how we can improve employment and work experience opportunities for these womxn, making roles within these industries seem attractive and attainable!

How is everything going since COVID-19 and lockdown?

Initially FlyGirl was set up to be an event series where womxn could come together in close and comfortable proximity with one another to explore various different topics. The ban on large gatherings has inevitably prevented that from happening and the full schedule of launch events that I had planned haven't been able to take place as of yet. However, we've adapted very quickly and are just delivering as much as we can either remotely or on a one-to-one socially distanced basis. In some ways it has actually been advantageous as Covid has brought about a real change in how people are



thinking at the moment across a broad range of areas, and I think that in the long run this will only make FlyGirl's potential impact stronger. For example, a lot of people are now experiencing job instability, redundancies and many have been left thinking of how they can get more involved within their own communities rather than thinking as globally as they were before. This makes things really quite exciting from our point of view, as there are a lot of womxn wanting to get involved now who maybe pre-Covid wouldn't have been as interested. And as people are losing their jobs and re-evaluating what really matters to them, we have been able to support a number of womxn during the transitional stages of starting new careers and in some cases going self-employed for the first time, which can be a really daunting process.

Have you had to overcome any barriers?

I think maybe the most significant barrier that I've had to overcome is not to let the way others view

“fortune really does favour the brave!”

me impact how I perceive myself. I have often been told that I'm too young, too much of a womxn, too typically Indian . . . or not Indian enough! After a while you begin to believe whatever people tell you about yourself, and these perceptions can alter how you act and can really hold you back from being the most authentic version of yourself. For example, if you're told enough times that you aren't qualified enough to apply for a certain type of job or a particular salary bracket, it can be really easy to take that for gospel and never bother to apply. The jobs in which I've been most successful were the ones which, on paper, I was possibly less qualified for, but deep down I knew I would be able to do a great job so I applied anyway. In my experience, 9 times out of 10 the person interviewing you probably isn't as qualified as he/she could be for their own job anyway, so fortune really does favour the brave!

What is the key to your success?

I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm successful by everyone's definition of the word, but I get excited by what I do and no two days are the same so I'm always

kept on my toes. I also work with a lot of seriously interesting and inspiring people so I am very thankful for that. If you equate happiness as success, then I think the key to it is having a fluid way of thinking and taking risks wherever possible. I'm a big believer in the law of attraction, so for me even when things don't go my way and I'm left disappointed by certain scenarios, I try to remain fluid in my thinking with as little rigidity or stubbornness as possible so that I can eventually picture my way out of that situation. For example, if your happiness is based on a very specific outcome in life, you are more likely to be left disappointed if you don't end up there, but if your mindset focuses on enjoying the journey rather than the destination, you'll probably be less anxious and just be able to enjoy the ebb and flow of life a bit more. And taking risks is so important because nothing great ever happened by staying in your comfort zone!

Tell us about your time at NGHS

Like most people I don't think I realised how good I had it at school until I left and entered the real world. While at times it may have felt like the standards we were expected to uphold were ridiculously high, in reality, being pushed to excel at everything

has probably shaped me into who I am today. I was by no means the most academic achiever when I was at school, but I would like to think that the overall experience was a really positive one and I've taken away much more on a personal level than I did academically. I often still think about my teachers, Mr. Lumb, Mrs. Woolliscroft and Miss. Peacock, for how wonderful they were and how much of a positive influence they had on my life back then. And to this day, nurse Brenda is still one of my favourite humans of all time!

Do you have any words of wisdom for the next generation of NGHS girls?

Don't take no for an answer, apply for the job you don't think you're fully qualified for and never ever settle for less. Devote time to the things that make you light up with joy and never underestimate the power of being kind to others. Oh, and drink more water and sleep for at least 6-7 hours every night; never more, never less.

You're a great role model for all of us. Who are your role models?

I recently watched a Netflix documentary about US congresswoman Alexandria

“never underestimate the power of being kind to others”

Ocasio-Cortez and have been obsessed with her ever since. Both as a womxn of colour and as a young person of considerable influence, I think she is fantastic and an inspiration to us all. She went from being a restaurant waitress to one of the most promising democratic candidates of our generation in just under a year, and I don't think there are many people in such considerable positions of power who can say the same. But my long-standing role model has got to be human rights activist and Nobel Prize laureate, Malala Yousafzai, for all she has done for womxn across the globe, in particular for Pakistani and Pashtun womxn.

Footnote:

Avarni deliberately refers to womxn to demonstrate solidarity with transgender women or others who identify as women.

WHETSTONE OF WIT

by guest editor Rachel Whitty,
Librarian and Archivist at NGHS

As part of my role in charge of the Archive here at Nottingham Girls' High School I have the privilege of looking after our rare collection of school magazines entitled Whetstone of Wit.

Established in 1877, two years after the opening of the school, The Whetstone of Wit Society was founded 'for the mutual aid, instruction and amusement of its members'. The society was originally the idea of a fifth form pupil named Annie Gardner who, along with a group of friends in her class, came up with the idea one June morning. It is believed that the name for the society originates from the Shakespeare play 'As You Like It', which the girls were studying. The Headmistress at the time, Miss Hastings, was made the 'Lady Patroness' of the Society and attended meetings in order to offer advice and guidance. In the Annual Report from Christmas 1878, Miss Hastings states that '...there were two principle aspects in which the Society might be regarded: - I. In its social aspects. II. In its literary aspect.' She considered the first to be the most important. The Society was founded with a strict set of rules, including that 'no member must on any account undertake work which can possibly interfere with the honest fulfilment of school or home duties'. There was also a subscription fee of sixpence every term as well as strict fine of one shilling for anyone who flaunted the rules!



From 1877-1892 the issues took the form of a pamphlet style school magazine featuring essays, poetry, short stories and debating notes. It was unique amongst early school magazines as it was the first to be edited and produced entirely by the girls themselves. What is particularly interesting about Whetstone of Wit is the fact that Annie Gardner and her friends remained as contributors to the publication. In fact, by Christmas 1892 the Annual Report states that 'The



Society now consists of forty-four members, of whom twelve are honorary members, 29 old girls and three present girls.'

The pamphlet editions came to an end in 1892 when it was decided that further contributions were to be collected and bound in one single edition. These individual publications were passed around on a subscription basis from one member to another. These editions were different in content, contained a large

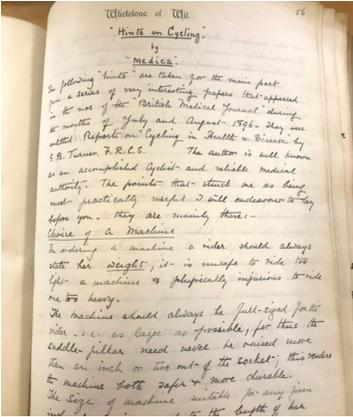


number of illustrations, were highly decorative and were bound with a bespoke, hand crafted cover. As the years went on it also featured photographs of the children of these founder members. However, some things remained unchanged. The rules were always set out and the edition always included poetry and essays. The original girls continued to contribute and many took on pseudonyms. Annie Gardner for example, wrote under the name



MEMBERS OF THE WHETSTONE OF WIT

Back row: ~, ~, Emma Mumby, ~, ~, Marion Morley, Caroline Paton, ~, ~, ~
Middle row: Lilla Danks, Helen Bell, ~, ~, Maggie Vickers, Mabel Parr, ~
Front row: ~, Kate Ashton, Alice Evans, ~, Amy Hurst, Annie Gardner

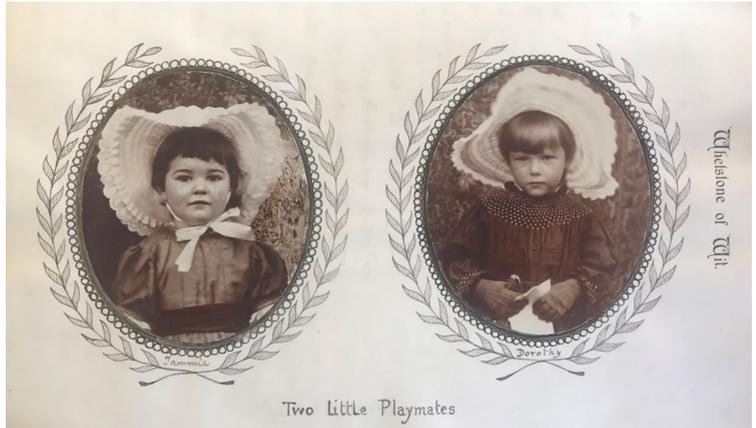


Mark Tapley. Another addition was the inclusion of criticism of the work submitted. This often proved quite cutting. One contributor in particular asks 'Are not Nook's butterflies a trifle flat?'

edition had been circulated to the subscribers, it was gifted to one of the members. I believe the ones we possess, have been returned to us by family members.

We currently have seven copies of these Whetstone of Wit publications dating from August 1895 through to June 1902. It is something of a miracle that we have as many as we do. Once the

We know that The Whetstone of Wit Society met in October 1922 and that nine of the original members were present. As time passed it was noted that The Society consisted mainly of NGHS Alumnae. We do not know when the last edition was produced.



OBITUARIES

Former Staff

Mrs Sylvia Cobb

February 1925 - August 2019

Sylvia began teaching at NGHS in 1948, when she married and moved to Nottingham, from Haywards Heath. She taught French and some Latin until 1953. Although her time at the school was relatively short, she made lifelong friends among the staff and enjoyed attending reunions until the last couple of years.



Sylvia loved people, and belonged to the Nottingham Bach Society, the Alpine Garden Society and local wildlife groups. She was an enthusiastic member of the Methodist church. She often came across former pupils, who remembered her fondly.

She was delighted when her daughters went on to attend the school; Elizabeth from 1964 to 1971, and Annette from 1969 to 1976. It enabled her to keep up to date with the progress of the school, and reconnect with former colleagues, including the wonderful Sheila Harris, who embraced the next generation of Cobbs with typical grace.

Sylvia personified the standards for which the school is renowned; humour, knowledge, friendship, loyalty and service.

Mrs Ute Finnis

Mrs Ute Finnis was German Assistantin at NGHS in the early 1990's. She died on Boxing Day 2019 of ovarian cancer, aged 70. Ute grew up in the North Sea village Wremen, qualified as a bookseller in Stuttgart, and at 20 emigrated to Australia, working in Alice Springs, Coober Pedy and Adelaide, where she co-managed a foreign-language bookshop. At NGHS "Frau Finnis" was held in genuine affection for her generosity of spirit, and for the depth of learning in both German and English cultures which she imparted to her pupils.



Mrs Pam Priestland

Mrs Pam Priestland sadly died after a long illness on January 1st 2020. Pam taught History at NGHS in the 1990's and her grasp of English history was wide ranging and scholarly, and her students and colleagues benefitted greatly from the depth of her knowledge of sixteenth century England. She also delivered History classes for the WEA for many years and led a very successful local history group which researched and published several major works on the area around Radcliffe on Trent. Pam



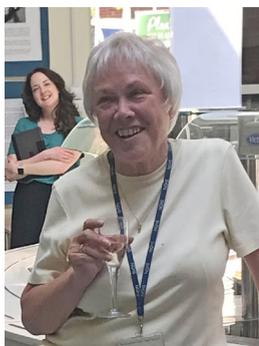
was committed to the life of the school, both as a member of staff and as a parent. After retirement she and her husband, Neal, moved to Yorkshire to be nearer their daughter, Katherine, and family.

Daphne Pearson

Daphne Pearson (Ballisat) who taught Geography at the Girls' High School between 1948-1958 sadly died on the 27th February 2020.

Edna Collingwood

Former staff member, Mrs Edna Collingwood, passed away on Friday 21st August and we are truly devastated. Mrs Collingwood had retired just last year in May after 33 years spent working at NGHS, originally under the grand guise of 'Assistant to the Domestic Bursar'. She had many varied support and administrative roles during her time here including working in finance and latterly, in catering and estates.



Everybody knew and loved Edna and will have required her help at some point or other while working here at NGHS. She was also a firm favourite with the Infant and Junior School girls particularly, who could be seen and heard waving at her and calling to her in the Dining Hall at lunchtime

Mrs Collingwood's two daughters, Alex and Victoria, are alumnae of the school too, and we send them and the whole family our condolences.

Former Pupils

Dr Anne Phillips

NGHS alumna 1940 -1948
11 July 1930 - 31 July 2020

Written by Professor Chris Calladine

My sister, Anne Phillips, who has died aged 90, was a doctor who devoted her life to caring for sick people in Nigeria. After studying medicine in Birmingham, much of her work took place in or around the city of Onitsha, where she eventually became director of diocesan medical services, supervising seven rural hospitals and health centres.



Anne was born in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, to Reuben Calladine, a colliery clerk, and his wife, Mabel (nee Boam), a primary school teacher. She was attracted to the life of a medical missionary as a child, and after Nottingham Girls' High School she studied medicine at Birmingham University, where she met her future husband, John Phillips, a fellow student.

She embarked on her medical career in Nigeria soon after marrying John in 1954. They first spent three years in Onitsha: Anne worked at Iyi-Enu hospital there, and rapidly discovered how to practise medicine with rudimentary facilities, while John taught at the local grammar school.

In 1958 they moved to Emevor, a remote village in the Niger delta, where John became head teacher of a newly founded boys' boarding grammar school. Anne set up a village clinic that attracted patients from a wide area, with eight different language groups - there were boys in the school who acted as interpreters for all of them. John had two Nigerians

on his teaching staff, but none of the three taught maths or science, so Anne became a teacher and set up a school science laboratory. She also looked after the medical needs of the boys.

After seven years in Emevor the couple moved back to their former posts in Onitsha. During the Biafran war, when Onitsha was in the frontline, they moved away to take temporary posts in Sierra Leone and central Nigeria, but when hostilities died down in 1971 they returned to Onitsha and Anne resumed work at Iyi-Enu, which was being rebuilt after near-destruction.

From 1978 to 1987 she was the hospital's medical superintendent, and for six years from 1987 onwards she was director of diocesan medical services.

In 1993 Anne and John retired to Sheffield, where John died suddenly in 1995. She worked there in general practice, chaired the local Sue Ryder group, and became deputy churchwarden of the cathedral before moving to Cambridge in 2015.

A kind, considerate lady with a great sense of humour, she always put others before herself, and was a godparent to 40 children. She is survived by me.

“Courtesy of Guardian News & Media Ltd”.

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www.gdst.net/support/support-us

G D S T
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GETTING INVOLVED

Events

We do hope one day soon we will be able to welcome alumnae back to school for reunions and tours. For now, we are planning to run some virtual events in the not too distant future. It's a case of watch this space!

GDST LIFE

The alumnae network goes online

Introducing GDST Life... The GDST's alumnae network is now live online, giving its members access to unrivalled personal and professional connections, a host of new networking opportunities, mentoring support, events, news and resources, groups and societies and much, much more - for life. Join GDST Life today: www.gdstlife.aluminate.net

GDST
LIFE

STAY PART OF IT

Career Talks

Could you share your stories and advice with our girls? We are always looking for inspiring alumnae to tell their story from a range of careers and life experiences. We are looking for speakers to talk to the girls virtually, you don't need to come back to school, we can do it online! It doesn't matter where in the world you are, we would love to connect with you. We believe that every NGHS girl has a story to tell! If you are willing to share yours to inspire our current pupils, please email FriendsofNGHS@not.gdst.net.

Memories and Archives

We love to hear from our alumnae and many of you send in and share your amazing pictures from your time at NGHS. We have been so thankful for the technology that we can now offer the girls; can you remember the ICT suite in the 80s?



PHILANTHROPY

by Mrs Aisling Hooper,
Alumnae and Fundraising
Manager



What an extraordinary year it has been! I really do hope you have enjoyed the 2020 edition of Connect magazine. Despite the fact that this year will no doubt be remembered for all the wrong reasons, we still felt it was important to document all of the other news from the school during the year.

I want to say a huge thank you to our community for continuing to support the school in so many ways during these times, and to share with you an update of how financial contributions, either donated to a specific fund or fundraised by our school community, have been used.

Earlier this year I worked closely with the GDST to launch the [Help Girls Learn Without](#)

[Limits](#) campaign. The campaign was designed to increase the philanthropic support that both the school and GDST receives so that we can continue to commit to making more **bursary awards** each and every year. **These will give more girls the opportunity to learn to be confident, happy and fearless with the belief there is no limit to what they can achieve.**

I have been overwhelmed by the support from our community; a huge “thank you” to everyone who has donated to this campaign, it has made a real difference. We are still inundated with applications for bursary places and we know that through this campaign, we can help more girls benefit from an NGHS education, fulfil their potential and change the world for the better. At NGHS around 11% of Senior School girls are in receipt of this financial support and your donations really are making a difference.



I am so grateful to our new, existing and regular donors and I am delighted that our [Donor Tree](#) in the Squire Performing Arts Centre continues to grow as we add more engraved leaves to mark the continued support of our donors.

The **Opportunity Fund**, a new initiative that was introduced in 2018, continues to provide support to girls who are on a bursary at school, enabling them to access our Outdoor Learning provision. We know this has a positive impact on their development including building confidence, resilience, teamwork and hopefully a lifelong love of the outdoors. To date, 23 girls have been able to access financial support to attend trips which make memories that last a lifetime, such as the Bushcraft trip and even completion of their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Awards. Our parents really value this fund:



“This is wonderful news, and so incredibly generous! I want to extend a massive thank you to everyone involved in raising funds so these opportunities are in reach of the girls who need a hand up. I can assure you, it means the world to us.”

The **Schools Project Fund** is an important fund which enables us to maximise opportunities for the girls through purchasing additional equipment and resources. In our Upnah Woods the girls now have a huge yellow canopy to provide shelter around the campfire so they can still sing and toast marshmallows when the weather is not so great. We have also been able to purchase a grand piano located in the Senior School Hall, and a rowing boat and new oars for the NGHS Rowing Club.

If you would like to find out more about our [Philanthropy](#) initiatives, purchase a leaf on the Donor Tree, discuss a fundraising idea, or if you would like to make a donation, please contact me.

Finally a huge thank you to everyone that has contributed to this edition. If you did want to share your story please do get in touch.

Aisling

Aisling Hooper
Alumnae and Fundraising
Manager

Contact details:

☎ 0115 935 4410

✉ Friendsofnghs@not.gdst.net

Nottingham Girls' High School
9 Arboretum Street, Nottingham
NG1 4JB

“The bursary has allowed my daughter to have the best of opportunities in not only academic but extra-curricular activities that I wouldn't be able to afford. I can see how her aspirations reflect the ethos of the school and her personality is being nurtured to bring out a strong woman leader.”



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