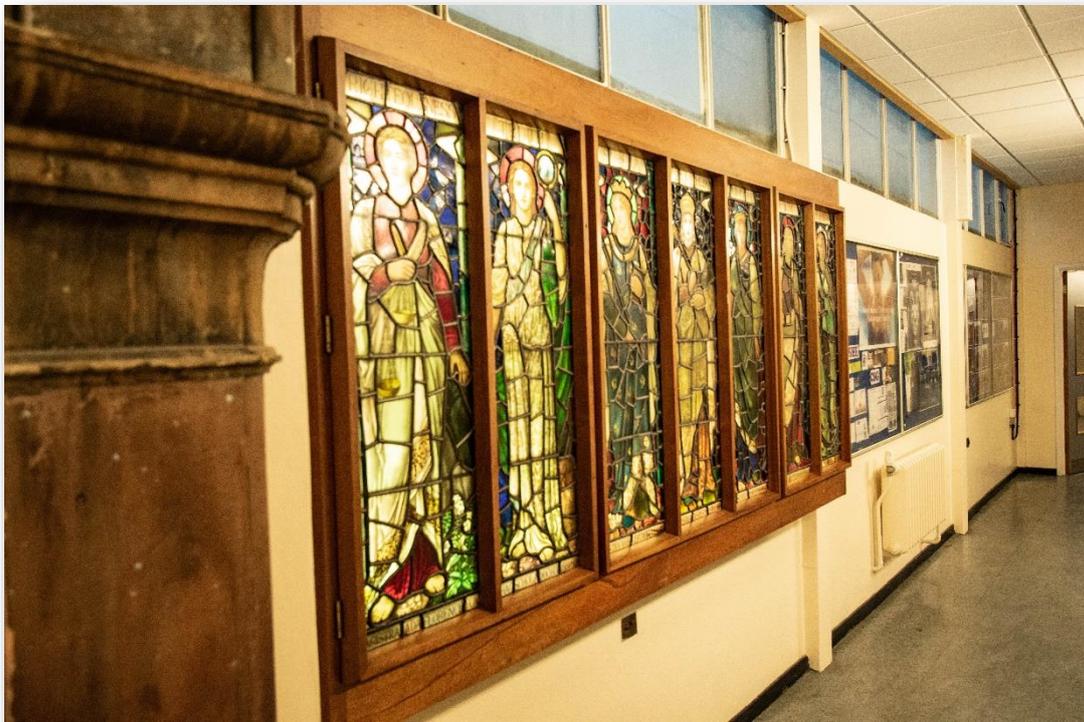




Friends Newsletter



2020

Foreword from the Headteacher, Ms Elizabeth Kitcatt

It's a real pleasure to be writing to friends of the school in February 2021. Along with all teachers in the UK and beyond, we see our students experiencing continuing disruption to their education and their lives, and it means a great deal to us that you, people with a connection to the school, are interested in our students and wish them well. Such continuity is important and it does help us to recognise that this experience will end and it will become part of the school's history, which, of course, consists of challenges as well as triumphs.

Lockdown is hard for students, teachers and parents, and maintaining motivation is difficult. Very young students are having to work much more independently than they normally would. We are aware of this, and we're addressing it in various ways, but my hope is that lockdown won't last too much longer.

I'm sure you will be thinking about this and will, no doubt, have friends and relatives in school who are telling you what it is like! Our students are engaging really well with remote learning, with pretty much 100% attendance most of the time. We have around 25-30 students in school each day. Teachers have become more and more skilled at delivering online lessons, using videos, games, quizzes, breakout rooms, discussions, brainstorming and practical activities much as they would in school. Students in the main school have registration with their tutor each morning as a way of maintaining routine, staying in touch with each other and their teacher and promoting a sense of belonging. The school is providing mentoring, higher education advice, learning and mental health support and is staying in regular contact with students and families.

If you'd like to see some of our students' recent lockdown work, please take a look at the Friday News on the website. Thank you, as always, for your interest in the school and I send you best wishes from the whole school community.

2020 has been a very challenging year, for students, teachers and schools as well as the wider community, and we are exceptionally proud of what our students have achieved in the face of such difficulty. August brought some outstanding GCSE and A Level exam results. Congratulations to all!

GCSE results were excellent. 97% of all results across all subjects were grades 9-4. 97% achieved grade 9-4 (standard pass) in both English and mathematics. 34 students achieved 9-7 grades in eight or more GCSE subjects. Our students worked especially hard to achieve top grades, not simply to achieve a GCSE result.

We were delighted with the **A level results** achieved as well with CSG students outperforming students nationally by a very significant margin. 98% of all grades were A* - C. 58% of all grades were A* - A. In addition 18 students achieved 3 A* grade A levels (9 in 2019), 80 achieved 3 A* - A grade A levels (47 in 2019) and 157 achieved A* - B grade (128 in 2019).

18 students gained places at Cambridge or Oxford and 6 have places at medical school

In school, teachers know that our students worked hard, engaged fully with their learning and responded very well to advice and guidance. They were all ready to revise and give their examinations their very best efforts when coronavirus struck and they were cruelly deprived of this opportunity and of the last few weeks of Year Eleven and Year Thirteen. As teachers we have never lost sight of this terrible experience and we applaud these young people who have, today, gained recognition for their hard work and application.

Brand New Food-Tech Room

Following some internal refurbishment over the summer, an old resistant materials workshop was transformed into a lovely new food technology room. CASCA kindly contributed some funding towards brand new, up-to-date equipment, ensuring that our students have the best possible environment to work in.



New Science laboratory

At the end of the academic year and as part of a continuing programme of improvements, we transformed a classroom to a fantastic new science laboratory (pictured below with Ms Butterworth), which can be used by 30 students. This increases our capacity to offer, in particular, Physics and Biology lessons.



Highlights from 2019-2020 academic year

Music & Drama

Twelfth Night

Congratulations to all the actors, dancers, musicians and stage staff involved in the extraordinary production of **Twelfth Night** at the end of the Autumn Term. The two performances were funny, moving, original and visually splendid, and the cast were incredibly well-rehearsed. Their delivery of their lines was clear and expressive, and the audience responded with huge enthusiasm to their wit and energy. As always with Shakespeare, the plot is complex, features a wealth of different characters, disguise, mistaken identity and gender confusion. All of this was handled brilliantly, and the performance was much appreciated by all who came along. Looking at the programme, it is especially impressive to see students taking charge of music direction and arrangements, choreography, sound, stage management, costumes and make-up - all of which added enormously to the impact of the play.

Warmest congratulations go to Justine Cohen and Laura Steel, who made this production happen as directors, producers, designers and inspirational teachers - and made it all run so smoothly.



Party dancing



Finale dancing



Olivia and Cesario



Full cast



Finale song

School Concerts

An ERSO (Ernest Read Symphony Orchestra) Concert took place on Sunday 24 November 2019 in St Martin's Church featuring our soloists, Chamber Choir and orchestra players (see below). It featured some fantastic music by Stravinsky, Mussorgsky and Charpentier.



erso
Ernest Read Symphony Orchestra
Conductor: Christopher Stark / Leader: John Crawford

'Firebird' Choral concert with Camden School for Girls

Stravinsky – Firebird Suite (1919 version)
Mussorgsky – Night on a Bare Mountain (arr. Rimsky-Korsakov)
Charpentier – Messe de Minuit
Music for solo singers and orchestra
Soloists: Evelyn Guenault, Martha Jack, Zachary Peard and Isabella Suschitzky

Sunday 24th November 2019, 6:00pm
St Martin's Church, Gospel Oak, 43 Viceroy Rd, London NW5 4NN
Admission free, voluntary collection at end of concert
www.erso.london

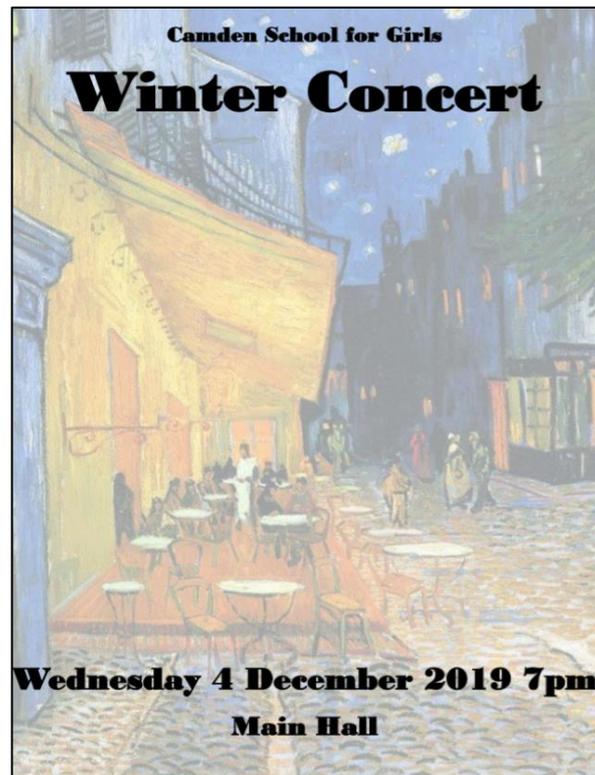
Sponsored by the Marchus Trust, the RN Charitable Trust, the Nappo Foundation and the Great Food Trust

THE MARCHUS TRUST  

mi
MUSIC
Member of



On 4 December 2019 the CSG Winter Concert featured the Symphony Orchestra with an incredible string quartet, baroque solo concertos as well as other solos and duets.



Camden School for Girls
Winter Concert

Wednesday 4 December 2019 7pm
Main Hall

Also in December students provided **Carol Singing** at **Euston** with 40 girls in the Junior Voices Choir, at a local **Health Centre** with the year 10 GCSE class and at **Highbury and Islington tube station** with the Sixth Form.

Finally our **Year Seven concert** on 19th December 2019 was a great success. All the Year Seven students participated, having worked on their performances during music lessons in the Autumn Term. As always, the programme was very varied, featuring 'The King of Rock and Roll' (Paddy McAloon), the Overture from Music for the Royal Fireworks (Handel), 'Don't Stop me Now' (Mercury) and many other enjoyable and challenging pieces. The Year Sevens were joined by several older students, including the Wind, String and Brass Groups, performing pieces that reflected this year's theme - A Right Royal Christmas.

Drinks and mince pies were provided to enhance the festive atmosphere and we were delighted to welcome so many parents and friends along as an audience.

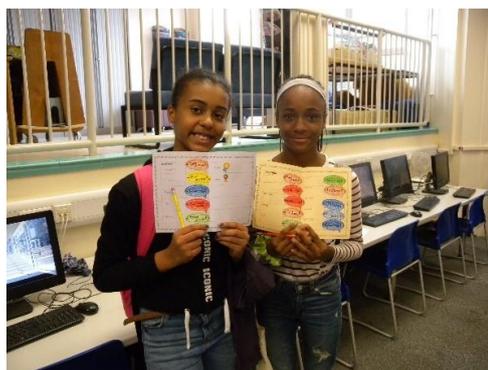
Many thanks to all in the music department for such an enjoyable evening.



European Day of Languages

It was the European Day of Languages on Thursday 26th September 2019. This is a special day celebrated throughout Europe to share and promote foreign language learning.

We are proud and excited about our languages here at CSG and we celebrated by hosting an event in the library at lunchtime. Year 7 and 8 students were very enthusiastic participants and staff and older students taught 20 different languages between them. There was a fantastic atmosphere in the library!



Well done to 7C and 8M who won the passport and quiz competitions.

MFL Department

Black History Month Assembly

On Monday 7th October 2019, members of the Main School Head Girl team as well as the Head Boy and Head Girl from Sixth Form presented the Black History Month Assembly. This year the assembly focused on individuals and groups who played a role in fighting against racism and injustice in the UK. Most people are aware of Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks and Malcolm X, but few people are aware of Harold Moody, Paul Stephenson and Olive Morris.

As early as 1931, organisations like the League of Coloured Peoples were fighting for black equality. Frustrated by the discrimination that led to him being unable to work as a doctor or even find somewhere to live, Dr. Harold Moody set up this organisation. Its primary aim was the fight to remove the 'colour bar' which meant that many employers barred black people from working for them.

However, over thirty years later, black people were still experiencing discrimination in the form of the 'colour bar'. In 1963 a man called Paul Stephenson decided to take action against a colour bar in the Bristol bus company, which said that they would not employ blacks or Asians. Organised by Stephenson and the West Indian Development Council, the boycott lasted for 60 days, with thousands of people refusing to take the bus in solidarity against this injustice. The boycott was successful due to its large media coverage and the black community rejoiced when the bus company lifted the colour ban on August 28th 1963. This was the same day that Martin Luther King delivered his 'I have a dream' speech.



Stephenson's efforts have been hailed by historians as fundamental in the passing of the Race Relations Act and other legislation which outlawed discrimination based on race in work places and public places.

The tripling of Britain's black population from 300,000 to 1 million from 1961 to 1964 led to increased racial and class tensions. In response, organisations and individuals, like Olive Morris and the Black Panthers, continued to fight for civil rights into the 70s and 80s, inspired by the likes of Stephenson. In 1975 Morris founded the Manchester Black Women's Co-operative, which led to the founding of other women's groups for Asian and black women in the UK. She died tragically at 27 from cancer, but her memory has inspired a generation of activists and advancements in civil rights.

Since these events, the position of black Britons has improved greatly. This is due to the fact that there are black people and communities who continue to fight against discrimination, just like Stephenson and Morris taught them. This celebration of black history is being done through education, through speaking out against injustices, and reclaiming British history as a history of all cultures. Think about what you can do this month, this week, or even today, which preserves equality and justice, and upholds the history of these individuals.

In 2019 there were a range of events celebrating Black History Month in school, including an exhibition, Plantain Day and a talent show. The talent show raised over £160 which was donated to the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust.



WOW, Women of the World Speed Mentoring Event at the London Eye



To celebrate **International Day of the Girl**, WOW organised a speed mentoring event for schoolgirls of London on the 11th October 2019. Six Year 13 students from CSG went along and met some of today's working women making an impact in their respective fields. Amongst the women mentoring in our pod was a documentary maker and BAME leader, founder of a fashion label, art curator, triathlete and dance company founder.

The WoW event was unique and informative; it was great speaking to such a variety of women from different professions and backgrounds. In particular, it was fascinating hearing Shirin Gerami's journey to becoming the first woman to represent Iran in a triathlon.

Grace

Bolanle Tajudeen, a curator and promoter of black female artists, gave me advice on universities and told me about a variety of degrees that I could pursue after sixth form.

Jenai

Education on Crime

On Wednesday 16th October 2019 students and staff had the opportunity to take part in the weapons sweep of Maiden Lane estate, also attended by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan (Camden New Journal article – click [here](#)). Our own designated school police officer, PC Mary Loizou, was also in attendance.

The knife crime event was educational, interesting and informative, highlighting how gangs get the younger children involved by enticing them into a lavish lifestyle. They then find it very difficult to break free.



Year 10 students Sophie, Clarry, Raya, Nawaal and Emily with Met Police Commissioner Cressida Dick and Ms Lynn Caufield (Attendance Officer)

After some interesting talks we went within the local community and helped the police officers, as well as the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick, to search for hidden knives around the borough. Information was given on how to become a police cadet and how police cadets are trained to go into shops to see if alcohol, cigarettes or fireworks are being sold illegally.

Lynn Caufield, Attendance Officer

Camden Youth Safety Week

During February 2020, Camden LA ran a Youth Safety Week starting on Monday 10 February. As we are all aware, several young people have, very sadly, been injured or have lost their lives in Camden as a result of knife crime. This has been devastating for their friends and families. We know that youth safety is a very high priority for the whole community, but especially for young people themselves and their parents and teachers.

We are enormously proud of our Year 11 student **Emmanuella Ogunlowo** whose poem, **'Here Lies'**, was selected as one of two Highly Commended entries in the Camden Youth Safety Multi-Media Competition. Emmanuella was presented with a £50 voucher and certificate at an awards event by Councillor Abdul Hai, the Council's Cabinet Member for Young People and Cohesion and Co-Chair of the borough's Youth Safety Steering Group. Camden School for Girls will also receive a £200 prize from the Council's Youth Safety Steering Group for Emmanuella's successful entry.

She was congratulated by Cllr Hai (pictured, far right) as well as former CSG student Councillor Georgia Gould, who is Leader of Camden Council (far left), and Keir Starmer, who was then MP for Holborn and St Pancras and Co-Chair of the Camden Youth Safety Taskforce (centre) and is now Leader of the Labour Party. Pictured with Emmanuella (second on left) and the local politicians are young people who compered the launch event and the 'Real Talk' debate on knife crime and youth safety which followed the launch and which was also held in the Council Chamber. Emmanuella also participated in Real Talk and contributed to the young people's debate on youth safety issues.



Please click [here](#) to see Emmanuella reading her poem **'Here Lies'**.

Year 11 Classics Study Day at Cambridge - Saturday January 18th 2020

Our trip to Cambridge began with an early start - meeting at the train station at 8:00. We arrived at Cambridge slightly early so we were able to have a look around the Classics Faculty, which was a great



way to introduce us to what Classics is like at Cambridge. We were able to have a look at the amazing museum in the faculty which was absolutely incredible and had fantastic sculptures. We recreated some of the sculptures, which was a lot of fun.

The first lecture we attended was about the Homeric World, specifically the Odyssey. It was very interesting as it fitted exactly with the course we are doing for our GCSE, so we were able to have a lot more specific knowledge about it which we can now use in our essays in our exams. It was also a great chance to learn what the sessions could be like if we pursued Classics at a higher level.



At lunch, we were able to have more time to explore the classics facilities. For most of us, this meant going back to the museum to explore the rest of the sculptures which we had previously missed, and (similarly to before) resulted in lots more photos of us replicating the statues.

After lunch, we had a choice of what lecture we wanted to attend out of three: Roman Britain, an introduction to Latin, or Greeks and Persians. Both of us chose to go for the introduction to Latin, which was surprisingly engaging considering neither of us had studied the subject at a high level. At Cambridge, if you do not have a Latin A Level you are required to do a 4 year course in order to catch up on the Latin you would miss, so it was a great introduction to what we could anticipate if we wanted to follow that path. It involved relating back to many languages' origins and how Latin shaped many languages such as French and English, and was a very interesting and useful introduction.



This lecture was one hour, so after it ended we joined back with our friends at the 'Women in the Ancient World' lecture, which was very useful as it is another of the topics we are studying in depth for our Classics GCSE. It was more interactive than the previous ones, as we were put into groups and were given some sources to annotate, which directly related to the sources we are required to be familiar with for the GCSE. It also allowed some of us to talk to new people when we were put into groups and to make new friends, which was a great experience.



After this, we walked back to the train station and got the train home, all very tired but we had enjoyed the day so much. We would like to thank Miss Maguire for taking us and for the classics faculty at Cambridge for catering for us so fantastically.



V&A Innovate National Schools Challenge winners

We are extremely proud to announce Anna, Margot, Rene, Eliza and Poppy from 9M and Emma from 9T are part of the first ever V&A Innovate National Schools Challenge winners!



The judging panel selecting finalists included chef Monica Galetti, Brompton Bicycles COO Paul Williams, sustainable fashion designer Phoebe English, and V&A Director of Learning and National Programmes Helen Charman. The V&A's Innovate competition challenges young people to be the change makers the world needs. 3,000 pupils (125 schools) from all over the country took part. Teams worked on design solutions to real world problems from a choice of three contextual challenges – Eat, Go or Wear – asking critical questions about the issues shaping our world.



DTs team of six innovative CSG girls won the category 'GO' which examined how we can better support the movement of people, things and ideas. The girls developed their concept over a series of lunchtime and after school clubs, and were highly praised by the judges for their thoughtful, well-researched, and innovative product. The following extract from their eloquently delivered pitch gives you a little insight into their winning idea: *"Our aim was to design a product that could ensure safety for young people traveling alone. Targeted at young women, our product, unlike other wearable products, shows you the safest route to your destination. One of the main components of our design is the wide wrap around screen that allows a larger and more detailed map to display the safest route to travel, using data such as crime rates, lighting, density and traffic speed. The route mapper uses data from police databases to see the location of past crimes and ensures you avoid dangerous areas. This can be accessed without drawing attention to the fact that you are using a map"* (the girls identified that using a smartphone increases the vulnerability of Google map users).

At the Pitching & Awards Day which took place in March, Paul Williams, COO of Brompton Bicycles, was the main judge for this category. He commended the girls on their extensive market and user research as well as detailed, explorative design prototyping. During the initial judging Masterchef judge Monica Galetti said she would like to give one to everyone she works with on late shifts at her restaurant! In fact, all agreed the girls were really impressive and the market viability and beneficial potential of the design solution made the team well deserved winners!

CSG wins ESU Schools Mace Regional Final!

On Monday 2 March, CSG hosted the **Regional Final of the English Speaking Union's Schools Mace competition**. The team from CSG was made up of Bluebelle (Year 13), Madeleine (Year 12) and Charlotte (Year 12).

The motions and positions were as follows:-

1) *This house would introduce a Universal Basic Income*

Proposition: Eltham College, Opposition: Alexandra Park School

2) *This house believes that tech companies must hand over users' personal data to law enforcement agencies if requested to do so*

Proposition: **Camden School for Girls**, Opposition: Westminster School

3) *This house would abolish the House of Lords*

Proposition: Brampton Manor Academy, Opposition: Bromley High School

The evening was a fantastic showcase for schools debating and the team from CSG showed their high standard over the course of their debate. The judges complimented them on their teamwork and analysis of this complex topic.



ASGS GIRLS' Leadership Conference 2020

On Monday 9 March 2020 students from Camden School for Girls attended the **ASGS Girls' Leadership Conference 2020** for **International Women's Day**, sponsored by **Ernst & Young**.



The day involved several inspiring talks and participation for the attendees in workshops. The ongoing discussions were thought-provoking and related to key ideas in feminism today, such as the importance of self-confidence for young women especially within the climate of social media and 'male gaze', what to be prepared for and challenges for young women's future, and the increasing awareness in promoting female agency around the world (be it helping develop programmes to educate mothers or learning how to maintain a positive mental relationship with yourself).

Speakers involved in creating the engaging discussions for the students were Founder of the Women in Leadership publication Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu, CEO of Özyeğin Social Investments Ayla Goksel, Author and Journalist Fiona Millar, Sunday Times Editor Eleanor Mills, and producer of Woman's Hour Lucinda Montiafiore.

It was an amazing opportunity to hear from women with such different personal backgrounds and experiences talk about such a wide range of topics, all of which resonated with everyone in the room as women in the 21st century.

Ruby

An interesting and educational experience - I found that the topics discussed were pertinent to us and very engaging.

Alice

Joe Orton Competition



Congratulations to Year 12 student **Emmy** who won her second writing in July. In June she won the EMC close reading competition and in July she won the **University of Leicester's Joe Orton competition**, which asked for students to send in fictional letters of complaint in the style of the playwright's alter ego, **Edna Welthorpe**.

Winning entry:

To Whomever is Responsible for the Uniforming of Female Zoologists,

Being a long time aficionado of the feeding patterns of eastern Chinese Panda cubs, when I caught a whiff of an exhibition on Asian Zoology in Grimsby, I was overjoyed and booked 2 (rather dear) tickets for myself and my cousin Mabel immediately. When the event came, armed with our best fascinators, not worn since Mabel's sister's wedding in 1947, and a day out's worth of werther's originals, we arrived at the site.

Only, to our abject horror and disgrace, we were affronted with far savager beings than we had expected. The Zoologist leading our group of uncorrupted panda-seekers was not only a rather know-it-all woman, but a rather know-it-all woman wearing shorts. There they were, in God's own England-canvas, thigh length and stinking of the devil. On a woman. Now don't forget my cousin Mabel is a church woman, and she could not believe her eyes, and this time it was not the cataracts- it took several gins to get her stomach settled enough for the bus home.

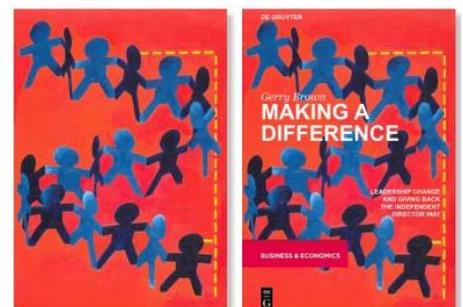
We will absolutely not be returning to your cesspit zoo of depravity,

Yours disgustedly,

Edna Welthorpe (Mrs)

Book cover designs

Congratulations also to **Aurora in Year 11** who created artwork for two book covers during lockdown which were published in Autumn. Aurora's original artworks are shown on the left.



Prize-winning Essay - Girton College Cambridge



In May, Sixth Form student **Isabel** received the following news:

“The judging of the Humanities Writing Competition at Girton College has now been completed and I am delighted to be able to tell you that your entry, **‘Identification of a Greek terracotta woman and the world that surrounded her’**, has been awarded joint second prize.”

This is a fabulous achievement - well done, Isabel!

Please read Isabel's essay [here](#)

RA Young Artists' Summer Show



Congratulations finally to **Honor** (Year 13) whose **‘Isolation’** submission (below) to the **RA Young Artists' Summer Show** was selected for both the online and on-site exhibitions. The RA said that they received over 17,000 submissions in total and were blown away by all of the entries this year. In these particularly challenging times, it is wonderful to see so many young people being creative and the positive impact that art can have.



Speakers & Visitors

The school invites many speakers from a range of backgrounds in to meet our students. The selection of articles below covers just some of the guests who were able to visit before the coronavirus pandemic struck.

Lucinda Montefiore

In September **Lucinda Montefiore, Producer of Woman's Hour**, gave a talk for the sixth formers. Montefiore was quick to establish what she would not be speaking about. She told us she wouldn't be speaking to us about her 'successes' in life such as her entrance into a career in journalism or her stellar job as a producer on a renowned radio show. Instead she talked transparently about the most vulnerable moments in her life as well as giving us advice on what to do if ever we were to find ourselves in such situations.



She began by speaking to us about her life as a teenager including her miserable experiences whilst starting at a boarding school. She recounted feeling particularly isolated and lonely at a school where everyone seemed so much better than her from her perspective. She described her hasty decision to change her appearance in an attempt to conform. For example, she grew out her hair to match the style of all the popular girls at her school and cottoned on to all the fashion trends at the time. Montefiore remembers feeling satisfied but in hindsight she realises that this was an attempt to suppress her true feelings. She described this as a bad mental habit which she felt contributed to her chronic depression which would revisit her at key times in her life.

On what seemed like a lighter note, she continued by speaking about another experience she had as a teenager. She told us about a holiday she took to Greece with friends when she was a young adult. However, it became apparent that despite being with friends in such an idyllic destination she completely 'self-sabotaged' the experience. She said her holiday was ruined as she couldn't stop comparing herself to her 'gorgeous' friend, who in her eyes was nothing short of the pinnacle of beauty whilst she felt ugly. She says she looks back at photos of that holiday wondering what on earth she was thinking when she clearly looked 'gorgeous'!

Her stories seemed eerily relatable to the modern teenage experience and despite the age difference between her and her audience I think everyone can relate in varying degrees to the feelings described in her personal stories. I couldn't think of anyone in our community who isn't guilty of using fashion as a way to conform (normally taking the form of wearing Evisu trousers) and whether we'll really

care about how we look now in 10 years, let alone 30 years' time. The way in which Montefiore compared herself to her friends really resonated with me because it bore an undeniable resemblance to the negative effects of social media. I asked her whether or not she felt that social media had exacerbated feelings of insecurity in teenagers today. She responded by saying that whilst she did think social media has contributed to making us feel less secure, she felt that comparing ourselves to others and low self-esteem are simply part of the human condition.

Towards the end of her speech she offered very valuable advice to us. She said that a feeling (good or bad) only lasts 2 minutes unless we feed it with our brains, which we often do when we obsess about a feeling, which can then often negatively impact our mental health. Her solution followed the lessons in the poem the 'Guest House' by 13th century Persian poet Jalaluddin Rumi which she read to us: whether you experience 'A joy, a depression' or 'a meanness' simply greet them and acknowledge them mentally and allow the feeling to take its course. This advice couldn't have been more relevant for the nervous new year 12s and A-level fearing year 13s. An inspirational speaker!

Cassius - Head Boy Sixth Form

Cornelia Parker

Also in September **Cornelia Parker** spoke to us about an eclectic range of sculptures and installations she created and what had inspired her to do so. With the use of a slideshow, Parker displayed several of these works which were produced on different platforms; from the roof of the museum of the Met in New York to the literal streets of Jerusalem.



One of Parker's pieces which was made from 4,500 red poppy cutouts, called **The War Room** was visually phenomenal, whilst enabling everyone to remember the civilians who had fought for the country in a very memorable way. Parker's artwork **Embryo Firearms**, containing a hidden weapon is very creative, where the weapon which is embedded in this piece can only be identified by x-ray vision. The students found the artwork **Precipitated Gun** which resembled a 'line of cocaine' but was actually the remnants of a gun that has been pulverised, very amusing as it is very abstract and ambiguous.

Parker's work in the streets of Jerusalem is most inspiring as she produced a masterpiece on the cracks of the street where she made casts of the cracks between the pavement slabs, a process she described as an attempt to 'record their contours, occupy their territory'. For this piece Parker poured latex into the cracks of a pavement in East Jerusalem. Once the cast was set she lifted it out and brought it back to Britain where it was cast in bronze so the work now represents a piece of that occupied territory both symbolically and literally.

In addition, in her collaboration with the physicist **Kostya Novoselov** (awarded the Nobel Prize for the discovery of graphene - the world's thinnest and strongest material) they used graphene to create a masterpiece of fireworks from literally a human breath!

She most definitely inspired the Sixth form students to unleash their artistic skills, even those of us who don't study art!

Maheema - Sixth Form Senior Prefect

The Rt Honourable Stuart Lawrence

In October **Stuart Lawrence**, brother of **Stephen Lawrence**, came to give a talk at our school and told us that he was aiming to talk at all 27,000 schools in England so that they can all be informed on this issue that is so close to his heart.

Stuart Lawrence encouraged us, as pupils, to be aware that *“education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world”* (Nelson Mandela). This quotation, he told us, was the reason why he decided to become a teacher.



Stuart Lawrence began by telling us about the previous insignificance of the bus stop he used to walk past every day, now he says he actively tries to avoid it because it was the place his brother Stephen Lawrence, who was violently murdered in an attack fuelled by racism, died. Even though Stuart evidently finds Stephen’s death something very difficult to talk about, he has made it his mission to speak out and try and make sure that young people know the importance of tolerance.

Stuart said that since the day his brother died he has been actively trying to live his life by following **The Golden Rule of Life: to always treat others the way you would like to be treated**. It wasn’t until Stuart was twenty-one years old, he said, that he really understood the idea that someone could so selflessly give themselves to a cause for the greater good because, if we as people only respect those who have previously respected us, then how do we meet any new people.

Stuart then spoke about success and what he believed it to look like. Stuart explained that at an age like ours, sixteen to eighteen years old, he had thought that success was something that could be measured in material things, however, he has now come to realise that success is something made out of the small things that money cannot buy: family, friends and happiness.

Stephen’s death clearly had a huge impact on Stuart’s life and because of this, he has also decided to talk about the ripple effect of any one person’s actions. The fact that one person’s actions might not just affect their immediate family but the whole world, much like Stephen’s case, means that every person has a huge responsibility to behave in a way that is beneficial to the community and not harmful to it.

Stuart has met some wonderful and inspirational people in his life; he said the most moving one was Nelson Mandela. Arguably, Stuart said, the fact that Nelson Mandela himself commented on the sheer horror of Stephen’s case was what moved the government to actively make a change.

Nelson Mandela said of Stephen’s murder that while in South Africa he was aware that people viewed black lives as unimportant, it was shocking to see that in the UK a black life could be seen as equally

unimportant. This statement changed the false narrative surrounding Stephen's murder, that it was because he was part of a gang or a drug dealer as some had previously claimed.

Stuart concluded by saying that since Stephen's death things have moved in a better way, through the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust he has helped 250 students into architectural courses, 6 of whom are working in architectural firms. The initiative is also beginning to help pupils into journalism and law, and he hopes to continue to help many young people all over England.

It was most definitely a very moving assembly for the pupils and Stuart himself.

Fina - Sixth Form Senior Prefect



Justin Rowlatt

Justin Rowlatt, was the Chief Environment Correspondent of the BBC and his approach to this assembly which took place in October was an engaging Q&A session on climate change, science, politics and other issues of interest to a young adult audience. One of the hot topics of the Q&A was the recent impact of the popular "climate marches" run by students across the globe, which drove the discussion towards the influential Greta Thunberg. Mr Rowlatt had recently interviewed her with what he described as "tough" and "interrogative" questions. He

made note of how her responses were "composed", he displayed clear admiration of her resolve, as many of us surely do too. He also told us that, notwithstanding the BBC's impartiality rules, the BBC doesn't have to allow climate change deniers equal voice as the science has been proved.

The Q&A didn't go without a surprise or two over other hot contemporary topics, and as all discussions eventually seem to go nowadays, we got onto Brexit. Interestingly Mr Rowlatt made the point of the positive implications that Brexit could have, it could further the independent actions Britain could take in regards to achieving a zero carbon policy, although he wouldn't be pushed into declaring his own personal view about Brexit. However, perhaps more surprisingly, was his anecdote of the UN environment conference, which Greta Thunberg had attended. After her "How dare you" speech, all world leaders were to state what action they were taking to tackle climate change, but only one mentioned the protests and marches held by students and Greta. To our surprise it was "our" own Boris Johnson. Whatever your opinion of him may be, to this I say kudos to you Boris.

Someone asked 'Is it possible for the individual to make a difference?' to which he replied yes, to an extent but that fundamentally it was all about global cooperation and the right government policies.

As a whole this 'climate assembly' was one of the most engaging and thought provoking assemblies we've had.

Tyler – Senior Prefect

Nessa Carey

Nessa Carey is a British Biologist who started off her very interesting presentation in October by saying the most amazing new technology of the century was Gene Editing. She addressed how we have always experimented with genetics, for example in farming, and continued saying how 'messing about' with genes doesn't always go well, i.e. bigger redder strawberries don't taste as nice because, during the editing process, they lost the variants of the genes that taste sweet.



She then explained the Big Breakthrough (2012). Viruses were adapted to produce CRISPR, which was a universal way of editing genes. The question of whether genetic modification is the same as genetic editing also arose in her presentation. However, she clarified that genetic modification corrected the mistake you needed to fix but you get many other errors alongside it. With genetic engineering, you're able to correct it without any faults.

An example of using genetic engineering was used to feed the world. Agriculture is using up more and more land, and by using genetic engineering it allows more plants to be grown and less space to be taken up. We can also use it to treat human genetic diseases; gene editing can solve sickle cell disease from bone marrow, the edited cells repopulate the sickle cells, which could eventually eradicate this genetic disease. She outlined that, if used correctly, genetic engineering could generally cure 85% of genetic diseases.

However, she also explained the more controversial elements of this technology. In theory you can use GE and in vitro fertilisation (testube babies) to get rid of a defective gene. However, this raises ethical issues, who gives the permission or consent? You can't really ask the parents or the embryo. She went on to explain how global consensus is extremely important. The world's first gene edited baby was created in China, which massively angered the Chinese government as it was not done with the consensus of the state or global community. Genetic engineering was described as "so easy" which is a positive but also, paradoxically, a negative because it means, as she succinctly put it "How on earth can anyone control it?"

Ms Carey went on to answer some questions from students which included:

When is it too late to have a gene edited?

She answered: Some conditions develop early, however we don't really know. Some mental retardation could be reversed but is it appropriate? The general rule, however, is the earlier the better.

How far are we from doing germline editing?

She replied: The NHS is several years from using germline technology because the technology itself still needs to improve further; we also move slowly in terms of ethical issues. However, health tourism is less well regulated in many places and may entice parents with children who have diseases to travel there and use germline technology.

Nessa Carey's speech and research was overall extremely enlightening and it was refreshing to have a new topic such as genetic engineering talked about, as it is still being discovered and improved.

Ayesha - Sixth Form Senior Prefect

Katy Connelly



In November **Katy Connelly** Researcher and Lecturer and author of '**Sylvia Pankhurst: Suffragette, Socialist and Scourge of the Empire**' visited the Sixth Form to discuss the often overshadowed Sylvia Pankhurst. Her talk began with Sylvia's origins in the women's suffrage movement and how she, alongside her mother and sister, founded a "far more radical campaign" in Manchester which had a focus on recruiting and working with working class women. Our speaker made sure to distinguish between the discrete and lawful suffragists and the more radical suffragettes. She detailed how the suffragettes earned their name after two women, Annie Kenny and Christabel Pankhurst, were arrested after

repeatedly asking whether or not the new Labour government would support women's suffrage.

They were the first of the movement to actively use civil disobedience to make their grievances heard. The fallout saw large press coverage of their arrest with the women being branded '**The Militant Suffragettes**'.

It's always inspiring to hear of such cases and the struggle activists from yesteryear went through to achieve women's suffrage. Much of the time it can feel as though the information we're being given about civil rights history is repetitive and tired; however Kate Connelly's talk provided us with a fresh insight into division within the feminist movements in its infancy. She highlighted why Sylvia stands out among her peers as an intersectional figure who cared not just for women's votes but also for the votes of women of colour and working class backgrounds. She also illustrated Sylvia as a figure who put her morals before her family when they adopted a distinctly elitist view of campaigning for women's suffrage.

Connelly linked all the points to the modern day during the question and answer section which followed her lecture. She gave examples of the same lack of intersectionality in considerably more modern cases. She impressed us when she linked the elitist pro-World War One suffragettes Emmeline and Christabel to contemporary feminist figures such as Cherie Blaire who supported the Iraq war.

I believe that Connelly gave us an exemplary lecture and personally found her talk thought provoking and inspiring.

Tyler: Sixth Form Senior Prefect

Eleanor Mills

Eleanor Mills, the **Editorial Director of The Sunday Times**, came to talk to us in December about the issue of Fake News and the need to protect true journalism. She began by telling us about why we need journalists and the importance of having a media that 'holds up a true mirror to society' and uncovers truths others would like to remain hidden.

In a world where it is increasingly easy to make things up, particularly through the medium of social media, she expressed to us the need to provide people with more facts instead of opinions. As a journalist, she recognised the necessity of shining a light on things that other people may have missed, for example the forceful displacement of people in the Congo in order to extract the cobalt, used in smartphone batteries, that is found there. From writing an article about this, Eleanor raised over £50,000 for the cause. In addition, the day before she came to talk to us, she had launched a campaign for Britain's poorest children and raised £150,000 in just 24 hours.

Eleanor warned us that people intentionally put out fake news and that it is affecting democracy. Studies show that people are significantly more likely to click on fake news than real news because it's usually more interesting and sensational. As a result, disinformation spreads faster than real information, and thus global social media companies, such as Google and Facebook, have a financial motive to allow their platforms to be used for fake news as it is clicked on more often. She gave a funny but also very scary anecdote about some fake news (now referred to as Pizzagate) which was put out during the American presidential elections claiming that Hillary Clinton was running a paedophile ring in the basement of a Washington pizza restaurant.

Eleanor took us through some of the ways to distinguish between real and fake news. She told us to ask ourselves: is that really likely to be true? Where is the information coming from? And is it from a globally recognised news organisation like the BBC where there is an editors' code in place?

Eleanor also mentioned the importance of having more female representation in the media, and how women are more likely to be 'trolled' online. She gave us a personal anecdote about how she had been tormented and called a 'feminazi' online after going on Good Morning Britain and giving her opinion on whether the term 'ladies first' was outdated!

Overall, Eleanor's speech was very thought-provoking and taught us all about the necessity of not believing everything we see, particularly when using social media.



Sixth Form Senior Prefect: Lois

David Schneider

The comedian, actor and director **David Schneider** came to give a talk to the sixth form in December about the progression of his career and the importance of growth. He began the talk by telling us about his time at Oxford University, where he got a PhD in Yiddish. During this time he says he really developed a passion for performing. Although his father was not at all keen on his ambition to be an actor, ultimately Schneider decided to follow his dream, and although he did remind us that there is a wealth of knowledge and advice that you will find useful from your parents there will come a time when you have to take your own path.



During a dip in his acting career, which Schneider says is an inevitable part of being an actor, he discovered that he really enjoyed writing. He started to develop a passion for writing films, radio shows and directing even more than he did performing. He told us that he had now stopped attending auditions as he wanted to focus on his career in writing and directing. Schneider joked that while he had stopped attending auditions, he had asked his agent to get him an audition for the TV show Game of Thrones as he particularly enjoyed it and would not pass up a role in the drama! As Schneider continued to talk about his career in writing and directing you could tell that it was something that he genuinely loved to do, and he is glad that he is now sure of what he wants to do with his life.

He told us that there will be a lot of pressure on us during this time of our lives as we will be asked what we want to do in life, but it is important to be aware that it is okay not to know and okay to change your mind, and like him we might not discover what we really love until we are 52 years old!!

Schneider then went on to tell us about his '**Life Hacks**':

'Nothing is Wasted' - As a writer Schneider told us, he would often get commissioned to write a script and over the course of it he would become increasingly frustrated and re-start, however he reminded us that it is important to remember that nothing is wasted and you can come back to your work or reuse old material later on.

'Keep making Things' - he also encouraged us not to get discouraged by set backs and not to let them prevent you from continuing to create.

David Schneider then went on to talk about his social media company. He said he was inspired by Twitter which he called his 'writing gym'; his company works in advertisement on social media platforms primarily Twitter and Instagram. He asked the audience whether they used TikTok which some of the senior prefect team got particularly excited about, he then went on to explain that a lot of the comedic talent that he has found comes from young people and is inspired by the content they make on apps like TikTok. Overall the talk was very interesting and inspiring.

Fiona Lali

In January 2020 **Fiona Lali** visited the school to speak about climate change. Fiona is a member of the **Marxist Student Federation** so she gave us a Marxist analysis of the causes and possible solutions to the climate emergency. She was suggested as a speaker by one of our own students who was keen to hear different perspectives on current issues.

Fiona spoke to us about the pessimism that has pervaded our society about issues such as climate change in the face of the frightening scientific evidence, mentioning Greta Thunberg's view that we have to act as if 'our house is on fire' and the stark reality of that in the context of the Australian bush fires.

She then went on to outline the idea that the current capitalist structure of the developed world means that there is no vested interest in green initiatives and that to remove the vested interests of businesses is the way forward.

She applauded individual actions such as recycling and changing one's lifestyle and acknowledged that climate strikes have raised consciousness. However, she believes that collective mass action followed by a planned economy based on need rather than profit is the route to real change.

Questions from the floor included whether she believed it would be possible to realistically change society in time given that we are at climate crisis point and whether her binary analysis of the people versus the government discounted the impact of legislation.

It was a complex, thought provoking assembly that challenged us to think about climate change as sharply political and economic.

Ms Schofield, Assistant Headteacher



Grace Blakeley

Grace Blakeley is a PPE graduate and has a Masters in African Studies and is author of '**Stolen: How to Save the World from Financialisation**'. She was originally thinking of working for the UN and was very interested in African economic policy. However, she soon became interested in politics, in particular with the Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn.

Grace has also been involved in both UK and global economics and she joined an economics think tank looking at macroeconomics and problems in the UK economy.

Grace's view is that the British economy has not been working for the vast majority of people since the 2008 financial crisis. She found her real life experience did not match up to what she was taught at university.

She outlined how a non neo classical perspective shows a different picture than the traditional view of efficient markets and the power of competition. It suggests that what is key is those who hold power, and, because of power shifts, we have seen economics changing over time.

In this model, the rise of finance led growth prioritises the welfare of a few core elite. In the 1970s our capitalist economic system began to change due to the removal of regulation. She believes many of the problems we saw in the 2008 financial crisis can be traced back to the 80s when deregulation and an increase in debt began.

What then happened is that businesses also changed, when the core incentive became only to maximise profit which led to privatisation increases. Grace outlined that she did not think that this was necessarily inevitable, but rather the result of many unwise political decisions.

She underlined that, as a consequence, we've had a stagnation in working conditions and in productivity which is unprecedented. Private and corporate debt is currently massively constraining economic productivity and the rise in far right politics is a worrying bi-product of this economic decline.

Grace pointed out that we have a choice as to how to reform our economic system. The book she has written is about how we could envision a different kind of economy and how who holds the power determines our economic system. She is personally sceptical about the European Union due to what she sees as its inability to adapt its own economy and the negative impact this has on the global south. She believes globalisation is not inherently good or bad, it just depends on who is in charge. Brexit is going wrong because the problem with the EU is its elite leaders which is an ongoing obstacle. We have to try to reduce nationalism and xenophobia across the board.

Grace Blakeley's assembly was very interesting, some of her views certainly gave us lots of food for thought and produced a very lively Q&A with the students.



Fundraising

Students raised a phenomenal **£3,635** in total in 2019/20 for ten different charities including **Macmillan Cancer Support, Hand on Heart, Greenpeace, Solace Women's Aid and Dementia UK.**

Macmillan Coffee Morning

On Friday 27th September 2019 our Studio was buzzing with activity as Mary Kavanagh and CASCA prepared for the Macmillan coffee morning. We were raising money for cancer sufferers in memory of our wonderful colleague and examinations officer, Donika Barbatovci, who passed away on 20th December 2018 as a result of the illness. It was very moving to take a moment on Friday to remember Donika and to reflect on the warmth and cheerfulness she brought into the school. Parents were incredibly generous in donating delicious cakes and other items to the sale, and their kindness really made it a joyful occasion. A fabulous **£1,465** was raised which will contribute to the excellent work carried out every day by Macmillan volunteers.



PINK Week

2019's Pink Week (16th-18th October) was a huge success and raised a phenomenal **£3,123**. The theme was 'Dreams for the Future' and we had people dressed as ballerinas, policewomen and cowboys. I can speak for everyone when I say we had a lot of fun.

The head girl team (dressed as the notorious Pink Police) ran around the school and burst into classrooms to collect donations for the charity we raise money for - **Breast Cancer Care**. At break we conga'd to Kentish Town and at lunch we had the catwalk, with teachers and students competing for one of our prizes. (The prizes were for best dressed, best teacher and best walk).

Breast cancer is an issue that has affected - and will affect - too many of the teachers, students and parents in the CSG community. We do not only raise money to help the women and men affected, we raise money because cancer is everyone's fight.

Chanya, Head Girl – Main School



Dementia UK

During February, 8R held a fundraiser in aid of Dementia UK in the school foyer. They sold out very quickly, and raised just over **£100** for this important charity. Thank you to everyone who came along!



Poppy Appeal



Each year CSG participates in the Poppy Appeal, raising funds for the Royal British Legion every November. Our Poppy Appeal organiser, Jonathan Williams, brings in a box of mixed goodies that are displayed at reception, and the students' and staff response is always excellent. Jonathan confirmed that during November 2019 we raised **£108.42p** for the 2019 Poppy Appeal!

Hand on Heart

On Friday 14th February 2020, to celebrate Valentine's Day and the end of our First Aid Fortnight, we held a **Red Food Sale** at lunchtime. We had an array of strawberries (some dipped in chocolate!), red velvet cake, cherry tomatoes, strawberry laces and cupcakes on sale. Over **£135** was raised for the Hand on Heart charity, who fund defibrillators for schools.



CASCA

What a year 2020 has turned out to be and what a huge impact it has had on CASCA's social and fundraising efforts. Our events were planned as normal and at the beginning of the year we were able to host the Jumble Sale, Dramstock! and The Indoor Carboot sale. Unfortunately our Quiz was cancelled as the school had closed its doors due to the pandemic. Our parents rallied round and generously donated their ticket costs to CSG. In return our infamous Quiz was sent out digitally to be enjoyed at home. It became clear quite quickly that our normal events would not be able to take place and we had to reassess how we could support CSG. In the Autumn term as our pupils returned to class we promoted our 20 for 2020 campaign, which aimed for a £20 donation for each pupil in the school. We wanted to ensure that staff and pupils could continue to work safely and with enough equipment whilst in their new teaching 'bubbles'. Importantly 30 new Chrome Books were purchased which have assisted students without computer access at home. Thanks to the generosity of parents, carers and friends of CSG we surpassed our target of £20,000 and secured funds of over £26,000. A truly amazing feat. We ended our year on a festive note with our Christmas Tree sale. This event goes from strength to strength and raised over £5,000. For all those who are part of CASCA it has been incredibly rewarding to still be able to support CSG during this time. We very much look forward to 2021!

Another fantastic Jumble Sale!

November's Jumble Sale was a resounding success. Bargains were bought, cakes were eaten and money was raised, all of which goes straight back to the school.

It raised a record breaking **£8,000!** Just amazing. This would not have been possible without a brilliant Jumble Sale team led by Richard Sanders and Mary Kavanagh and helped by Annette, Penny and Nicki. Thanks to all the volunteers who worked so hard and thanks also to all those who donated and came to shop.



Christmas stall in the foyer



Vintage clothing



Setting up

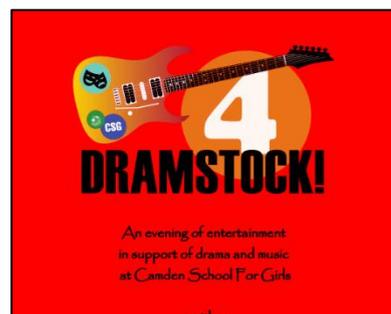


Dramstock!

At the end of January we enjoyed another fantastic **Dramstock!** now in its fourth year. The evening's entertainment raised a marvellous **£1,272**.

Thank you to Royston Deitch for organising and to Will Byers, Head of Music for arranging and marshalling the extraordinary talent that our school has to offer!

In addition the **Indoor Carboot** also raised wonderful **£1,688**. We also had an incredibly generous offer from CSG parent and stallholder Hugh Sachs-Simpson who donated his takings of £250 to CSG. Thank you also to Lucy Baron Thompson for organising and donating over £40 for the café.



Founders Day 2020

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, Founder's Day took place virtually on 3 April 2020 this year instead of in school. Our head students wrote speeches that precisely captured these strange and difficult times, while recognising the importance of Miss Buss's legacy in their lives and communicating a strong sense of optimism.

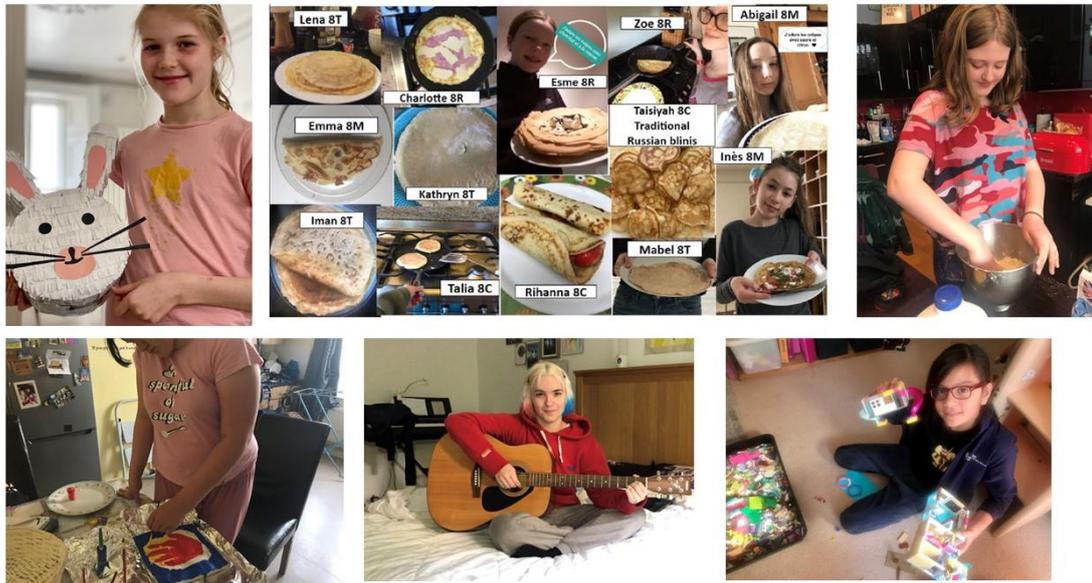


Whilst we were not able to physically be together as a community, we can imagine the **purple, green, yellow and white of the posies**; suffragette colours enlivened by Miss Buss's favourite flower, and the glorious music from our choir and orchestra. Please view our virtual Founder's Day website [here](#)

Lockdown learning

After the Easter holidays students returned to school for the Summer Term albeit remotely. Here are just a small sample of some of the brilliant activities that our students got up to during lockdown.

Piñata creating, baking and making music



Writing poetry

'When I grow Older' by Romy Year 7

When I grow Older I Shall Be Wild,
And not get hung up on my 'oldness'.
I will not say 'Look at those wrinkles'
Or 'God I look hundreds of years old.'
I will text my granddaughter every day,
And ask how she is.
I will remember every detail of what she had said the day before.
Then I will eat my breakfast,
Which changes everyday, like my mood.

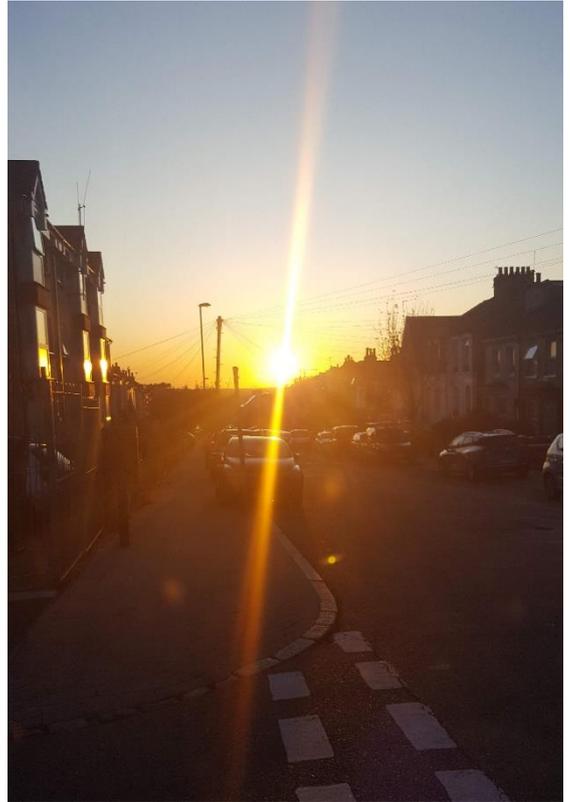
I won't sit around and knit, or sleep, or read the paper.
I'll cycle, or dance, or make fresh pasta.
I'll wear the newest trainers, with silver stripes and lilac laces.
I'll dye my hair green for the morning and blue for the afternoon,
And get home and eat 'whatever's in the cupboard',
Which could go from a can of lemonade to a Sunday Roast,
And it wont even be a Sunday!

I won't be a Lazy Grandma and doddle everywhere,
Or a Posh grandma, and go for 'Tea With The Girls'
I shall be wild.

Photography



Above: Spring photo by Eliza (9M)



Right: by Teagan (8M)

Macbeth Storyboarding



Making box art (Year 10)



Creating surreal collages inspired by Mira Ruido (Year 9)



Sixth Form students Kitty, Imogen & Hope made gowns for The Royal Free Hospital



Pop Art (Year 9) inspired by Roy Lichtenstein



By Lily

By Honor-Ray



Alumni News – Onwards & Upwards!

We are always keen to hear from our Alumni – please do get in touch and let us know what you have been up to you by emailing us at friends@csg.school We would love to hear from you!

Alumni News

Pop harpist **Olivia Ter-Berg** left Camden School for Girls in 2014 into further education and graduated from the University of York with a first class honours in Music.

During lockdown Olivia decided to put on a concert for her street, playing the harp and singing pop songs, to try and cheer everyone up. Whilst performing, a BBC Radio London Broadcast Journalist (Ross Ryan) cycled past and asked her if she would do an interview.

The result is in the link (click [here](#)) which features the interview with videos of Olivia playing that he and neighbours took. Congratulations Olivia!



Cleo Sylvestre was one of the 1956 cohort who moved into the Camden School for Girls at Sandall Road - they were all new girls in the new school - and Cleo was the only black pupil in the whole school. She was the first black woman to play a lead at the National Theatre and one of the first black actors to have a recurring role in a British soap.

Cleo recently spoke to The Guardian about her experiences including being praised by Laurence Olivier, directed by Ken Loach – and singing with the Rolling Stones in this fascinating article – please click [here](#) to read.



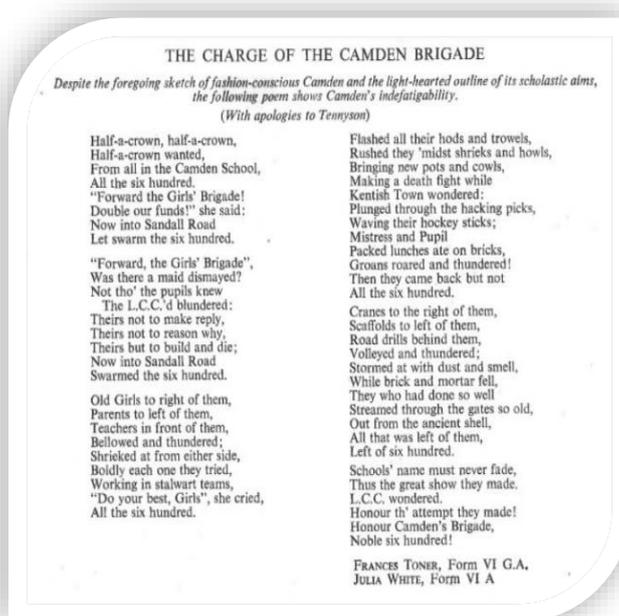
In Memoriam

Julia Griffiths



(From Headteacher's News, 11 December 2020)

We heard with deep sadness of Julia's death on 15th October 2020. Julia attended Camden School for Girls from 1949 - 1956. Julia was a House Monitor in the Upper Sixth and left to pursue teacher training at East Hampstead Training College, after taking A levels in history, English and economics. Julia wrote a poem entitled 'The Charge of the Camden Brigade' in 1956 which really captures the Camden spirit at the moment the whole school moved into its brand-new building that year:



Julia joined COGA in 1956. She became Chair in September 2011 and remained in that role until her death.

I met Julia when I took over as headteacher at the school in 2010 and was immediately full of admiration for her dedication, energy and commitment to the wonderful group of COGA members who remained in touch with each other and the school years (and decades) after leaving. Julia was a regular visitor to the school and very supportive of our music and performance events. She took a real interest in our students, interviewing our Head Girls and Boys and fully recognising their contribution to the school's sense of community through events such as Founder's Day. Julia also

interviewed members of staff and captured their perspective on the school's work - these documents are full of interest for current and future generations.

Julia was gifted in inspiring trust and confidence in others. Hard-working and generous, she brought out these qualities in others and showed real interest in people she met. This is reflected in the remarkable COGA Newsletter that Julia and the COGA committee produce every year, which is full of fascinating contributions from past pupils. Julia really personified those characteristics we aim to nurture in our students to this day; community spirit, inclusivity and joy in learning. She was immensely knowledgeable about the school, about members of COGA and about education, and it was always a delight to have a conversation with her.

Julia's work with COGA added something very special to the school - a very precious friendship with an incredible group of women who carry a sense of connection with the school and with each other through their lives. They are an inspiration to our current staff and students, and Julia personified that sense of the importance of connection, valuing the past and celebrating the present.

We will miss her so much and we are deeply grateful for her outstanding contribution to COGA and to the school.

In Memoriam

Kate Figes

(Obituary from The Guardian by Claire Armitstead)



Smart and accessible writing: Kate Figes in 2009. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

"I don't believe that any of us can ever accept the inevitability of our own death. Life is too bloody wonderful." So wrote Kate Figes, who has died of cancer aged 62, in her final piece of journalism, published only a fortnight ago. After listing some of the medical crises that had made her life rather less than wonderful over the last few months, she concluded that even this terrible year had its "surprising silver lining", in that "by coming that much closer to dying I have learned a little more about how to live well." Living well, for Figes, meant continuing to look beyond her own determined struggle to beat the odds.

Born in London into a family of writers, she found her own writing niche as a smart and accessible synthesiser of complex information, an indefatigable interviewer and an astute observer of people. It was not until her early 30s that she plucked up the courage to write full-time, because “it’s not easy to believe you can when your own mother is one too”.

In 1994, she published the first of seven non-fiction books, *Because of Her Sex: The Myth of Equality for Women in Britain*. A part-time job as fiction editor for *Cosmopolitan* led to commissions to write for newspapers, and in 1996 she became books editor for the *Mail on Sunday’s You* magazine, a position she held until her death.

In her early 30s, too, she married Christoph Wyld, a BBC foreign news editor she had met years earlier as a student on language placement in Russia, and gave birth to their two daughters, Eleanor and Grace. “In retrospect, motherhood is the best thing that ever happened to me,” she wrote, in a second book that made no bones about the conflicting emotions of its early stages.

Maternal ambivalence was such a taboo at the time that she received hate mail when *Life After Birth* was published in 1998; on its reissue 10 years later, she reflected that, while early motherhood was now widely discussed, the conditions facing women in terms of support both during and after birth had barely changed.

Her two forays into fiction, *What About Me?* (2004) and *What About Me, Too?* (2006), were light relief from the heavy lifting of her non-fiction – mouthy comic novels, written in emails, which reprised her recurring preoccupation with mother-daughter relationships.

Her difficult relationship with her own mother came up again in *The Big Fat Bitch Book for Girls* (2007), the first of a series of books for the imprint Virago. It combined sensible, research-based advice with painful personal reminiscences and mischievous recommendations for “top bitch viewing” (Mae West on Jayne Mansfield: “I heard she never turns anything down except the bedcovers.”)

In *Couples* (2010) she brought the same formula to long-term relationships, and three years later she moved on to infidelity, with *Our Cheating Hearts – Love and Loyalty, Lust and Lies*. Her great gift, according to her publisher Lennie Goodings, was her ability to move from the personal to the general, from the specific to the more universal in a way that illuminates and really helps us to understand life.

Typically, a recent outing to the opera produced the observation that the queues for the men’s loos were longer than those for the women’s because of the prevalence of prostate problems in its elderly clientele. Behind such witty aperçus lay the “enormous, boisterous laugh” that her friends recall as one of Figes’s defining characteristics, along with her loyalty and her fierce zest for life.

Yet her final book – a memoir, *On Smaller Dogs and Larger Life Questions*, published last year – painted her as a sad and needy child. The elder of two children of the feminist author Eva Figes (nee Unger) and her husband, John Figes, a personnel consultant, Kate was five years old when her parents split up, leaving her feeling abandoned and unable to confide in anyone about being badly bullied at her north London primary school.

In her memoir, she wrote that “the isolation and loneliness of that small girl who wandered between a home riven with the acrimony of divorce and terrible exclusion at school still haunts me sometimes”.



Kate Figs in the 1990s. Photograph: Kenneth Saunders/The Guardian

In a household dominated by the working routine of a single mother who was also a driven writer, she formed a close bond with her younger brother, Orlando. She went to Camden School for Girls, in north London. In a book about teenagers, *The Terrible Teens*, published in 2002 as her own daughters were hitting adolescence, she recalled smoking too much dope, failing her French A-level “not once but twice” and leaving home at 17 after a row with her mother.

She held it together well enough to win a place to study Arabic and Russian at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster). Her first job in the world of books was as a sales rep for the feminist publisher Pandora, for whom she went on to become a publicist and an editor. She carried its values energetically into her writing life.

Asked in an interview later in life how she relaxed, she listed tennis, walking, cooking, eating, listening to music and going to the theatre and staring out to sea from a beach hut on the south coast that she shared with a friend. On tennis, for which she conceived a mid-life passion, she was particularly eloquent, revealing a side of herself that wasn't about diligently listening and honourably reporting.

“I know that a ‘good’ girl is supposed to be kind, enabling of others, nice – not expressing all those natural human emotions of anger and selfishness,” she wrote in her memoir. “But in tennis there is a freedom to be me - sweaty and sunburnt, competitive and crafty, exuberantly lost in all the joy of play.”

In 2017, eight months after learning that she had an aggressive form of breast cancer, she and Orlando went to the German embassy to reclaim the German nationality their mother had lost when her Jewish family fled Berlin in 1939. Recalling the day in an article for the Guardian, she wrote, “I wore a cashmere jumper [in memory of her smartly dressed grandmother] and placed my mother's 1960s necklace on top, so I could take Eva with us, too.”

She is survived by Christoph, Eleanor and Grace, and Orlando.

- Kate Figs, writer, born 6 November 1957; died 7 December 2019
- This article was amended on 10 December 2019. Eva Figs' family fled Berlin in 1939 rather than 1937.



Support the school

As you may know, in the current financial climate, Camden School for Girls has faced significant and ongoing cuts to its funding. If you wish to support the school we now have a very easy to use CAFdonate page available [here](#) .

Did you also know that you can also include Camden School for Girls in your will? More information can be found on our Alumni website [here](#)

Thank you for your support!