

Old Palace Alumnae News

Dear alumnae,

I have to admit that this has been a difficult letter to write. By now you will have all heard the devastating news from the John Whitgift Foundation regarding their decision to close Old Palace in August 2025.

I know that this has come as an enormous shock to the Old Palace community; whether that is staff and current students or alumnae. It's very hard to think that after 136 years of educating young women in and around Croydon, Old Palace will soon be no more.

The closure has raised so many questions, from what will happen to the Grade 1 listed buildings and the memorials in the garden, to where the archives should be stored and whether the OPA will be able to continue and in what form? All I can say at this stage is that as Chair of the OPA committee, I will be taking an active role in these and other discussions, assisted by members of the current OPA committee. In the first instance, the Foundation is establishing a working party in March to manage the closure, and we will be seeking assurances that all our concerns will be fully considered.

However, this is the time I need to call upon help from our alumnae. Please consider joining the OPA committee for the last 18 months of the school's life to help us shape Old Palace's legacy and ensure the continuation of the OPA. We are holding an AGM on the same day as the Summer Reunion so this is your chance to put your name forward. Please email: opalumnae@oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk if you would be interested in joining the committee or you can complete the form: [here](#)

In an autumn term like no other in the school's history, I would also like to pay tribute to our much-loved friend and pupil, Elianne Andam, who was so tragically killed just a few days after the announcement of Old Palace's closure. The whole community was deeply shocked by this senseless death, and I wrote a letter to Mrs Burton on behalf of the OPA in which I asked her to send Elianne's family our love and support. I also placed an arrangement of flowers in the Medieval Garden as a tribute to Elianne and arranged for a donation from the OPA to the family in her memory.

In time, the School will be organising its own memorial to Elianne, and the OPA will be there to assist in whatever way it can.

Finally, we are looking ahead to what will be the final official **OPA Summer Reunion on Saturday 29 June**. Tickets are £15 and will include a tour of Old Palace, welcome drinks and lunch followed by the AGM.

The booking form will be available on the OPA page of the Old Palace website from Monday, 15 April. Go to: www.oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk/the-old-palace-alumnae-opa/

We look forward to welcoming alumnae to this and other events that we have planned for 2024. This includes our **Founder's Day on Monday, 30 September 2024** at 2:30pm and our final **OPA Carol Service on Monday, 9 December 2024** at 6:00pm.

Meanwhile, if you would like to organise your own, small year group reunion at Old Palace, we can organise afternoon tea and a short tour weekdays during term time from 4:00pm-6:00pm (April 2024-June 2025). Please email: opalumnae@oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk

Katherine Homatas

Chair OPA



Summer Reunion 2023

We welcomed over 80 alumnae to our annual OPA Summer Reunion and what a lovely day it was; the sun shone, we enjoyed an excellent lunch in the historic Banqueting Hall and our Sixth Form guides kindly showed guests around the Old Palace.

**Final OPA Summer Reunion
is Saturday, 29 June 2024**

Bring your OP
memorabilia to the
Summer Reunion

We'd love to see your old school
hat/jumper/photos one last time,
so bring them along to the Summer
Reunion and we'll display them for
all to enjoy.



Carol Service

It was wonderful to see so many OPA alumnae at our Carol Service in December.

Whilst the news that the School will be closing in August 2025 was still fresh in everyone's minds, we all came together to celebrate Christmas and enjoy some festive carols, beautifully sung by the Old Palace choir. We raised £500 for *Lives Not Knives*.



Class of 2023

It was fantastic to catch up with old friends from the Class of 2023 as they collected their exam certificates. Wishing you all the very best for 2024!



Sister Act

For those lucky enough to see the performance of *Sister Act* (Seniors – end of January), you will recall one of the repeated lines is "I have no words...!"

I echo that in writing in praise of the production. It was simply superb, enormous fun and an absolute example of Old Palace at its best. Given the school was founded by an order of nuns, there was something poetic in having what may well be the last big production being *Sister Act*.

Given the challenges faced in managing a cast where people kept leaving the school, to produce something of this quality is amazing. I like to think that while Mother Emily Ayckbown may have slightly disapproved, she would have been in awe of the confidence, strength, ability and pride shown by everyone involved.

Mrs Burton



Prize Giving Guest Speakers



Guest Speakers Jumana Ebrahim and Taiyeba Sulemanji with Madinah (centre).

We were delighted to welcome Taiyeba and Jumana as guest speakers at our Year 9-13 Senior School Prizegiving in Croydon Minster last summer. They gave an emotional and inspirational speech, sharing their own fond memories from their time at Old Palace, but also celebrating the life and achievements of their dearly departed sister Salma.

At the ceremony they awarded the inaugural 'Dr Salma Hussain Award for Special Contribution to Drama' to Madinah; a worthy recipient. Salma so loved drama at school.

Thank you to Mr and Mrs Hussain, Taiyeba, Jumana and the whole family for their thoughtful and welcome prizegiving contribution.

'Memories of Old Palace' Project

We are seeking volunteers to take part in our **'Memories of Old Palace'** project.

Could this be you?

The aim of the project is to capture stories from former students so that we can continue to share the history of Old Palace. You would be interviewed by a Sixth Form History/English student, who would then be responsible for recording and reporting your memories for our archives.

Alternatively you could write your own account to share, should you prefer.

If you would like to take part, please contact opalumnae@oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk as soon as possible.





Elianne Andam: 2008-2023

Elianne was a much loved member of the Old Palace community who will be missed by all.



Friends of Old Palace: Guided Tours 2024

Monday, 28 October – Friday,
1 November

Doors open at 1.30pm: Tours start at
1:45pm and last approximately
2 hours

Adults: £7

Concessions (60+) £6

Children U16: £3

To book ring: 0208 656 5563 or
email: fotoptours@outlook.com

www.friendsofoldpalace.org/

Do you know...?

Do you know Valerie Singleton (1968) or Cheryl Trundle (1971)?

Mary Elizabeth Parkinson and Sue Bonner are both trying to trace their old school friends, so if anyone is still in contact with Valerie or Cheryl, do drop us a line and we will pass their details on (check with them first, of course!).

opalumnae@oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk

Do you know Srimani Perrera (1993)?

Dr Simin Hussain (1993) would be grateful if anyone still in contact with Srimani Perrera's family could get in touch with her. Srimani was at Old Palace until 1993.

Please email: opalumnae@oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk and we will pass on your details.

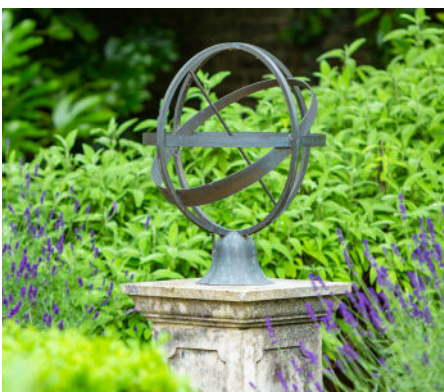
Group 'afternoon tea' visits

Should you wish to organise an additional, more personal event, for your year group for example, please contact opalumnae@oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk.

We would be delighted to help publicise your event, and arrange a tour and afternoon tea during your visit.

We are unable to facilitate group visits at weekends; afternoon teas can be arranged during weekdays in term time from 4pm-6pm.

You can of course book a tour of the Old Palace through the Friends: www.friendsofoldpalace.org/



Dates for the Diary

Thank you for the many enquiries we have received regarding visiting Old Palace one final time before we close our doors in August 2025. We are pleased to confirm the following events. Please visit the OPA website for further details: www.oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk/the-old-palace-alumnae-opa/

AGM (Annual General Meeting)

Saturday, 29 June 2024

2:30pm The Guard Room, Old Palace. All welcome.

We encourage alumnae to consider joining the committee for the last 12 months of the school's life. You can put your name forward [here](#).

Final OPA Summer Reunion

Saturday, 29 June 2024

- 11.00am: Tours of Old Palace/ Coffee
- 12.00 noon: Welcome Drinks
- 12.30pm: Lunch
- 2:15pm: Cutting of the cake/ Presentations
- 2:45pm: Future of the OPA (incorporating AGM)

This will be our last ever Summer Reunion, and we intend to go out with a bang, so bring your classmates and join us for a very special reunion.

Tickets will be available from 15 April. £15 per person

Final Founder's Day Service

Monday, 30 September 2024 at 2:30pm

Following the service there will be afternoon tea served and a chance to tour the school.

We would like as many alumnae as possible to join us at this final service.

Final Alumnae Carol Service

Monday, 9 December 2024 at 6:00pm

Carol Service, with refreshments and tours from 4.30-5.30pm and again from 7.00pm-8.00pm



Keeping in touch

We have been working hard behind the scenes to ensure the OPA database of contacts is up to date, and to ensure a smooth transition following the closure of the school.

This is of course still a work in progress, and further details will follow in due course. In the meantime, please encourage as many of your alum friends to connect.

Either via social media:



Or via our website:

www.oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk/the-old-palace-alumnae-opa/

To add your email details to the database, please email:

opalumnae@oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk

The OPA newsletter is now being distributed electronically so please ensure we have your current email address. Postal copies are available to those who do not have access to email.