

## Old Palace Alumnae News



### Dear alumnae,

After celebrating a wonderful OPA Summer Reunion, a very special final Founder's Day Service and Carol Service, we still have a final event to look forward to – "Old Palace Open House Day" on July 1st. We are looking forward to welcoming you, together with your families and friends to Old Palace on this very special occasion. Members of the Friends of Old Palace have kindly offered to join us on the day to share their immense knowledge of the buildings with visitors. There is no need to sign up to attend as numbers are not restricted – the event is open to all.

I am delighted to welcome three new members to our OPA Committee, Veronica (Barnes) Jean (Loh) and Sophie (Filon). The OPA Committee are working hard to set up the new OPA contact database and have this up and running as soon as possible. Please do ensure that you 'opt in' as requested to

ensure your contact information can be transferred to us in the summer (as outlined in the 'Stay Connected' article opposite.)

The Old Palace Alumnae Committee know how much Old Palace School means to every one of us and this is reiterated in our school song;

*"Of this our school we love so well,  
And in this old and stately building  
Its praise and honor tell.  
Its stones are very dear to us....."*

We are mindful of the challenges that lie ahead with trying to preserve the history and heritage of Old Palace. We, the Committee are continuing to do all we can to support the School and School community at this time, and we are in communication with the John Whitgift Foundation. The letter included with this communication may answer some of your immediate questions.

My thanks go to Helen Richards and her team for organising and producing this Spring Newsletter.

On a final note, the OPA Committee continue to look for new members to join our team with new ideas and a fresh impetus to drive a new era of the OPA forward.

Katherine Homatas

Chair OPA

### Stay Connected

Work has been continuing behind the scenes to ensure the smooth transition of communications this summer - from the school, to the direct ownership of the OPA committee. Jacqueline Derbyshire is spearheading this work, and she is creating a new secure database to store your contact data.

The Old Palace Alumnae contact database is currently owned and maintained by the John Whitgift Foundation. From June 2025, the OPA plan to take over the management of the alumnae contact data, so that they can keep in touch with news and updates. They require your permission to do this.

Please note that in order to transfer your contact data to the new database, we require you to opt in to this transfer. (Without this, the school will be obliged to remove your contact details from the database).



This is very quick and easy. You can complete this short online form via this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/EiPtBgP6r5> or using the QR code above.

In the meantime, please continue to connect with us at OPALumnae@oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk, and to follow us on our website: [www.oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk/the-old-palace-alumnae-opa](http://www.oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk/the-old-palace-alumnae-opa) and on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn as @OPJWSAlumnae



### Fundraising Autumn Term

We raised a fantastic £1200 last term thanks to the generous donations from alumnae at the Founder's Day and Christmas Carol Services. The monies raised supported the Separated Child Foundation and Salvation Army's 'The Well' project in Croydon.

# Final OPA Summer Reunion June 2024

Our final summer reunion was held on a glorious day at the end of June. Here are a few photos from that memorable occasion.



# Alumnae Visitors & Afternoon Teas

There have been several visitors to Old Palace in the Autumn term. Our thanks first of all to those who offered to speak to students about their career experiences, including Demi, Bethany and Nicolina.

The school also hosted mini-reunion afternoon teas for the Class of 1982, 2002 and 2004, with time to catch up and tour the old buildings. It brought back a lot of memories for many!



Nicolina Andall, pictured with Mr Christie



Bethany Cockshutt



Class of 2002



Class of 2002



Demi Bako, pictured with Mrs Smith



Class of 1982



Class of 2002

# Founder's Day Service

We were absolutely delighted to welcome over 500 alumnae to join staff and students at our Founder's Day service on 30th September at Croydon Minster.

The afternoon was made even more special by the attendance of Sisters Hilda Mary, Anita and Vivien from St Michael's Convent, Gerrards Cross - the Community of the Sisters of the Church were also founded by Emily Ayckbowm, in 1870.

The Old Palace Choir was also boosted in number by 40+ brave alumnae choristers, and they truly helped to make it memorable occasion.

Everyone was welcomed back to school for muffins and tours afterwards, allowing plenty of time to catch up with old friends.





# Carol Service

By popular demand, the Alumnae Choir returned in December to sing splendidly at our Carol Service, held in a full capacity Banqueting Hall. Conducted by Maria and accompanied beautifully by Veronica and Marian, our final service ended fittingly with a resounding rendition of the school song.





**Old Palace of  
John Whitgift School**  
Independent Girls' School



Old Palace  
**Alumnae**



## Tuesday, 1st July 2025

# Old Palace Open House Day

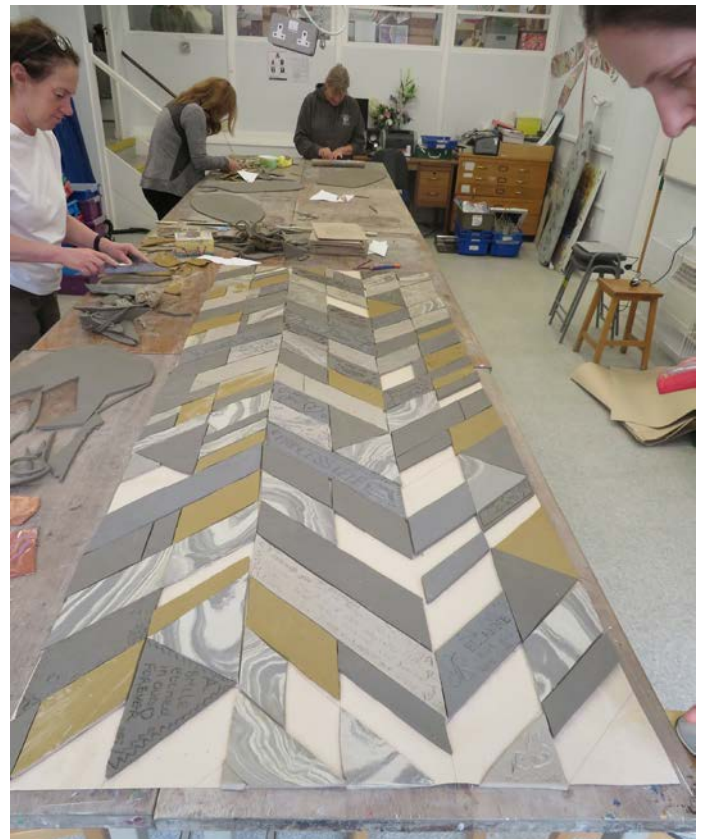
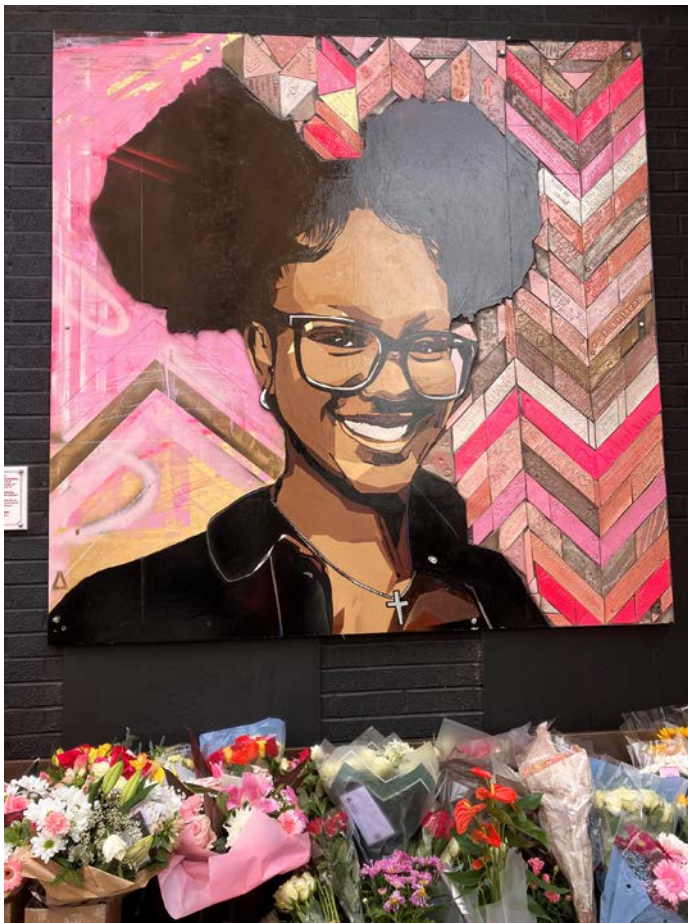
A final opportunity to visit Old Palace.

The school will be open 10am – 3pm for alumnae, friends and family to explore the buildings and revisit old haunts.

This is a perfect opportunity for you to organise a reunion for your year group.

**Save the date!**

# Elianne's Mural



Those of you who live locally may have seen the wonderful mural of Elianne located outside the Whitgift Shopping Centre on Wellesley Road in Croydon. This was unveiled on 27th September, to mark the one-year anniversary of Elianne's passing.

Students, staff, her family and the wider community had the opportunity to contribute to the final artwork, which was produced by local artist Alec Saunders. It features a portrait of Elianne alongside ceramic tiles engraved with adjectives her loved ones used to describe her.

The mural space also features a bench that was once used by Elianne and her friends, provided by the school, and a stone plaque, carved by local stonemason Ivan Cudby, featuring Elianne's photograph and a message from her family, as well as planters of wildflower seeding.





## Josephine Mary Tuck (née Akers)

9 April 1935 – 23 December 2024



Jo sadly passed away just before Christmas. An esteemed and very respected member of the Old Palace Alumnae Committee, Jo was also a former OPA Newsletter Editor for 8 years. Jo worked incredibly hard, writing numerous articles and her enthusiasm to get things done and make a change was infectious for the OPA Committee.

Jo also ran the Old Palace Alumnae Associate afternoons at school once a year with Maureen (Bunn). After retiring from the OPA Committee, she continued to support and attend our OPA events each year – quite a drive from Bearsted, Maidstone. Jo was always encouraging, full of ideas and always an ardent supporter of the Old Palace Alumnae and Community.

As a tribute to Jo, we are publishing her memories of “Old Palace in the late forties and fifties” in her memory. She loved Old Palace and followed in the footsteps of her grandmother, Florence Mary Reeve (from the Reeves family) who started as a pupil in 1894.

*A few more words about Jo's life...*

In 1946 Jo joined Old Palace School and immediately loved it. She appeared in leading roles in Gilbert & Sullivan productions and excelled in English and French. Jo was Vice Head Girl and achieved three A Levels and on leaving School she attended the French Institute in South Kensington for a two year French course. In 1959 Jo reached the Final of the Miss Secretary competition and won £50.

Jo often visited France and never lost her love of the country and spoke French to a very high standard. She worked for many years as Head of Department at a Kent College and was made a Member of the Royal Society of Arts. In her late 60's Jo achieved a BA in Humanities from the Open University and graduated with Honours just before her 70th birthday.

Locally, Jo was Secretary of the Bearsted History Society and was responsible for organising Speakers for their meetings and in 2022, Jo started more French lessons and was a star pupil. Jo was extremely proud of her family, her daughter, Vanessa and son, Jonathan and her grandchildren, Catherine and James. Jo also loved animals and adored her cat Paddy, who was her constant companion for the past 7 years.



## Old Palace in the late Forties and early Fifties by Jo Tuck

*(née Akers) 1946-53*

After attending four different schools, I passed the entrance exam to go to Old Palace in 1946. And how everything has changed since then – for instance, the fees as I recall were seven guineas (seven pounds seven shillings) a term!

Our first classroom was a prefabricated building in front of the current Cathedral Building. But it was out to the “washhouses” at the other side of the main school building to reach a toilet, which seems to me to have been frozen for a good part of the winter. Not until the sixth form could we use a toilet indoors, in the main building – with one washbasin and one mirror for the whole sixth form!

The Banqueting Hall was used for gym and was also our refectory. Attached to the very high beams were climbing ropes which, when no-one was looking, you could swing on from one end of the hall to the other. Climbing those ropes to the top was quite an achievement. At lunchtime, in the winter, sometimes soot blew down from the rafters onto the jam on top of the sponge pudding – not good!

Three netball courts, I think, were squeezed into what is now the school Garden. Hockey games meant WALKING to Duppas Hill and, in the summer we took the trolley bus to Wallington, to the old gas company sports ground near the aerodrome, for tennis and rounders. Swimming was at the old public baths in Scarbrook Hill.



Midsummer's Night Dream



Jo telling fortunes



Jo with Jane Rogans

My special pleasure was taking part in the inter-school debating competitions, which were run by the Council for Education in World Citizenship. For the first debate which involved me, I well remember the motion was "We shall never have world citizenship unless we give up national sovereignty."

On another demanding occasion (and I was still only 15 I think) the motion was "If you answer violence with violence, you forfeit what you are fighting for."

When I left school in 1953, after getting three A levels, I went to the French Institute in South Kensington for two years and qualified as a Translator Secretary.

I was thrilled to be Vice Head Girl, but always regretted not being Head Girl!



Jo carrying the school banner



### Margaret Ann Alderson 1947-2025

Maggie very sadly passed away in her sleep, at home, in the early hours of Monday, 20th January 2025 at the age of 77.

Maggie was born in Croydon on 5th June 1947 to Wynne and Mary Vaughan. After Primary School, Maggie passed the Eleven Plus exams and went to Old Palace School before studying Maths at Lancaster University. Following a Teacher Training course, Maggie started teaching maths at Greenshaw High School in Sutton where she met Grant whom she married in 1971. Maggie and Grant had a son, Ian, in 1975 and a daughter, Jane, in 1979 and have five grandchildren, Elizabeth, Nicholas, Louise, Samuel and Oliver. Maggie ended her teaching career at Kingston College as Head of Maths.

Maggie was a regular attendee at our OPA Summer Reunions each year meeting up with her class friends and it was always a pleasure to see her.



**Pamela Joy Gill (née Allum)**

October 1942 – February 2025

Pam joined Old Palace School at the age of 10 in 1953. In her first year Pam recollected that they did a lot of work about the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth 11 and the Commonwealth tour which the Queen and Prince Philip had made. Seven years later in 1960, Pam was Head Girl and presented the Queen with flowers when she visited Old Palace in Croydon’s Millenary Year and had tea. Pam was very happy at Old Palace and particularly enjoyed French and Latin and left to study French at Reading University. It was a four year course and included a year studying in Paris. After passing a BA Honours degree, Pam took a short secretarial course and worked for two years in Switzerland as a bilingual secretary with the Nestle organisation on the shores of Lake Geneva.

Back in England, Pamela taught French for a few years before returning to secretarial work spending 20 happy years as a legal secretary. Pam studied for a diploma in Translating with the Chartered Institute of Linguists and took on some legal translating. At the age of 70, Pam was back working as a legal secretary on a temporary basis.

One thing that was very important to Pam at Old Palace was belonging to St Anselm’s House and she was House Captain during her last year. St Anselm was a great Benedictine Saint and that is perhaps why later on in her life, Pam was drawn to Ampleforth Abbey, a Benedictine monastery in Yorkshire and became an Oblate there.

Pam was a loyal member of the OPA and a regular attendee of our Summer Reunions. She will be sadly missed by her family and friends.

**Founder’s Day Service 2025**



Old Palace Alumnae

**Saturday, 27th September 2025**

Croydon Minster have invited the OPA to organise a Founder’s Day celebration service in the afternoon of the final Saturday in September.

We hope this will become a new annual tradition, and a focal point for future reunion events.

**Save the date!**

