

# memo

## At the helm

Iconic LGHS headmistresses  
who paved the way

## Serendipitous success

Kathryn Cearn (OG82) shares  
her unusual portfolio career

## A legacy of learning

Individuals whose gifts  
continue to make an impact

AGE  
QUOD  
AGLS

*A school  
of unusual  
excellence*

150 years of Leeds  
Girls' High School

*The magazine for LGS, LGHS and GSAL alumni*

**ISSUE 13 SPRING 26**

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**The Grammar School at Leeds**  
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# Memento

Welcome to

It is an honour and a joy to write my first message to you, GSAL's alumni community, as Principal.

From my first visit to GSAL, I was struck by students' curiosity, confidence and compassion, as well as the dedication and warmth of the staff and wider school community. Now, one term in, I can say that I also feel a powerful sense of legacy. It's clear that this inheritance - one of academic excellence, innovation, passion and groundedness - is the foundation of the school I am privileged to lead today.

This issue of *Memento* shines a spotlight on one of our founding schools - Leeds Girls' High School (LGHS) - as we celebrate 150 years since its foundation. The initial registration documents for LGHS declare the founders' intentions to provide "a high-class education for girls" - truly radical for the times. LGHS certainly remained at the forefront of educational development: in 1927, it became the first school in the city to have its own swimming pool, and it was an early adopter of teaching computing and other STEM subjects. It seems that while plenty has changed in the world of education over the last 150 years, some things never date - like swimming and STEM. This historic anniversary will be marked later in the year at a special event - keep reading for further information and booking details. We hope you will be able to join us.

There is plenty to look forward to in this issue of *Memento*. We begin by delving into LGHS history, sharing what we know about some of the school's iconic headmistresses. Then, in *Serendipitous Success*, alumna Kathryn Cearnis OBE (OG82) tells us about the role chance has played in her career, and how her industry experience became a gateway to a portfolio of fascinating non-exec positions. In *Sister Act*, Nadia Manzoor (OG04) and Sara Manzoor-Balai (GSAL10) share the impact being alumnae has had on their personal and professional lives and Margaret Jowett



(OG54) reflects on how the school motto - 'age quod agis', or 'do what you do, and do it well' - continues to be a guiding mantra in her ninth decade.

Elsewhere in the magazine, we're sharing photographs and memories of LGHS then and GSAL now - and marvelling at how classrooms, sport and the library have changed. This issue is also packed with the usual news, celebrations and events, as well as extending a warm welcome to the newest members of our alumni community: GSAL's class of 2025.

This important anniversary edition of *Memento* is accompanied by a letter inviting you to support your old school. We hope you will consider getting involved, whether by sharing your time, offering guidance and mentoring, supporting careers opportunities, or making a donation to our bursary fund. Your support helps young people find their purpose and do it well - a sentiment captured by 'age quod agis'.

I look forward to meeting many more of you as we embark together on GSAL's next chapter.

**Michael Hall**  
Principal

*P.S. Next year we will be celebrating the 475th anniversary of the founding of Leeds Grammar School (LGS) - stand by for a special edition of Memento dedicated to LGS and its impact.*



NULLIUS NON MATER DISCIPLINAE  
1552 - 2027

# A SCHOOL OF *unusual excellence*

*Since 1876 until its merger with Leeds Grammar School (LGS) to form The Grammar School at Leeds (GSAL) in 2008, thousands of girls passed through the doors of Leeds Girls' High School (LGHS).*

As an educational institution, it was established to provide a “high-class education for girls” - an aim which was “far sighted and courageous” for the time, requiring “optimism, conviction and skill” - or so writes Helen Jewell in the LGHS centenary publication *A School of Unusual Excellence*. In the 1870s, British universities had only just started to admit women to degree courses, and girls’ grammar schools were necessary to prepare young women for the academic opportunities now on offer. Girls’ education was really, however, only in its infancy, and schools like LGHS were pioneers in the field.

Aged just 24, Miss Catherine Lucy Kennedy was appointed the first headmistress and drew up the school’s first curriculum. She proposed four daily lessons of 45 minutes each, with an additional half an hour given to “prayers and lunch”. She argued for prominence to be given to Latin; it was, she believed, “the best medium for teaching Grammar, and as being a key to French, Italian, Spanish and in



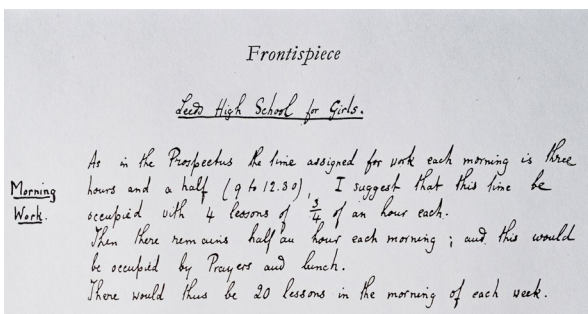
Four of LGHS’ early headmistresses pictured together. L-R Miss Powell (1892-1902), Dr Lowe (1905-32), Mrs Kirk (1933-49) and Miss Joseph (1903-05)

some measure to our own language.” In 1876, 42 pupils were enrolled and the school was housed in St James’ Lodge, a roomy house on Woodhouse Lane. Her ambition paid off: in 1885, an LGHS girl was accepted to Newnham College, Cambridge.

### Age quod agis

In 1892, the school adopted ‘age quod agis’ as its motto, which translates to ‘do what you do, and do it well’. Miss

Helena Powell, headmistress at the time, said she wanted something “short and terse; something that would stand wear and tear.” The varied nature of her students’ destinations was also weighing on Miss Powell’s mind. A motto would need to apply equally to the girl who “stays at home” as well as the girl who goes into “medical work” or “teaching”. She settled on ‘age quod agis’ on the basis that, despite its association with St Ignatius of Loyola, it wasn’t overtly biblical (“it would not do to have words of Holy Scripture to be scribbled on notebooks,” Powell argued) and satisfied her desire for something snappy, memorable and broad. Even in 1892, Miss Powell was declaring her intention to prepare girls “for nothing narrower than life itself, to fit them for completer living” - an ambition which chimes with the aims of GSAL to this day.



An extract from Miss Kennedy’s first LGHS curriculum

**In 1876, 42 pupils were enrolled and the school was housed in St James’ Lodge**



Miss Dora Walker (OG1894), author of the school song

The motto was preserved in two stained glass windows, one of which was installed at the new Alwoodley site after the LGHS and LGS merger in 2008.

### Buildings, boarders and gifts

By the late 19th century and early 20th century, the idea of girls' education had gathered some traction. In 1898, LGHS became part of The Grammar School Foundation and, with student numbers nearing 200, investigations began for larger premises. Four years later, the school purchased Morley House Estate in leafy Headingley. The new school was opened by Princess Louise, the daughter of Queen Victoria, in 1906. A *Yorkshire Life* article described it as comparative luxury, "built of red brick, gabled and pedimented, the new building had a long row of rooms which faced south



**The Princess...thought all the children and the bigger girls too, looked so well and alert and happy and that your school has a most delightful atmosphere."**

Extract from a letter to Miss Sykes from Bridget Cuthbert, Lady in Waiting to HRH Princess Mary after her visit to LGHS in 1959.

to overlook an expanse of lawn and playing field." In 1909, the first school boarding house opened at Fir Dene, Bainbrigge Road, Headingley; then in 1912, Rose Court was purchased - again, to provide accommodation for boarders. In 1920, negotiations began for the purchase of the Buckingham Villa Estate, and in 1926 the school celebrated its Golden Jubilee with the building of a swimming pool. "Oh won't tomorrow be splendid fun / For now the swimming bath is done," wrote Alison Smith (OG35) in her highly-commended poem in the school magazine. Around 600 students were on roll at the time.

In the school's 150 year history, there have been a number of notable - and fascinating - gifts from staff, former students and friends of LGHS. In 1894, Mr H J Walker donated an organ (rebuilt in 1919 as thanksgiving for the Armistice); his daughter, Miss Dora Walker (OG1894) became a teacher at LGHS and wrote the school song.

In 1906, three former headmistresses - Miss Kennedy, Miss Powell and Miss Eleanor Theodora Joseph - gave a cast of the Venus de Milo to the school, only for it to later disappear without trace.

And in 1934, the school's library - fitted out with furniture from Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson - was opened after an anonymous donation of £6,000 five years previously. The inscription on the panelling of the bay window facing the door simply read "The library was the gift of a friend."

### World war two

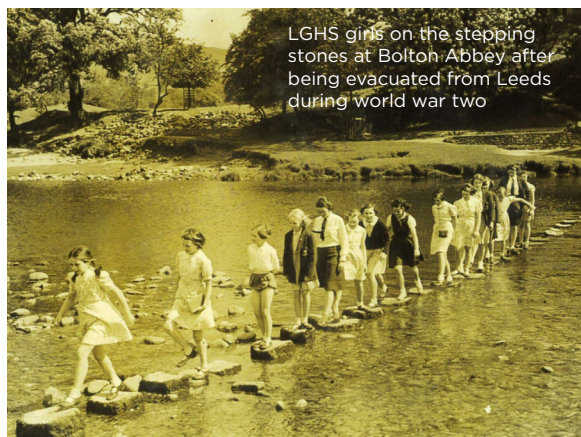
In 1939, some students were evacuated to Lincoln shortly after the outbreak of world war two. The following year a room in Rose Court was converted into an air raid precautions post and three further rooms were taken over by Leeds General Infirmary for storage. In 1940, the school was evacuated to a more suitable venue at Bolton Abbey. Students were divided - while many went to the countryside, a number stayed behind in Leeds - although together

in spirit, according to headmistress Mrs Leslie Kirk, who wrote in the school magazine in 1941: "There exist certain basic things which are abiding - our community of interests, our common purposes, our steadfast hopes."

### Entering the modern age

The 1950s and 60s at LGHS were characterised by extensive building works, including new cloakrooms, a dining room, kitchen, laboratory conversions and a refitted gymnasium. In 1959, HRH Princess Mary visited to officially open the new buildings and, in 1966, new classrooms and a lecture theatre were added on top of the library wing, as well as a sixth form cloakroom, additional accommodation for staff and a biology laboratory for senior students. In 1976, the school celebrated its centenary and another big change: the move to independent status.

In the 1980s, the Elinor Lupton Centre - named after former LGHS governor and Lady Mayoress of Leeds - was acquired primarily for music and drama. In the late 1980s, joint drama productions with LGS started to take place, as well as joint general studies lessons for sixth form students at the two founding schools. In 1997, HRH Princess Anne opened the extensions to the buildings at Rose Court and the senior school. It was a very different school to the one visited in the 1950s - still characterised by the spirit of 'age quod agis', but one with a much broader and more holistic curriculum, a thriving arts and music scene, international links aplenty and extensive charitable initiatives.



LGHS girls on the stepping stones at Bolton Abbey after being evacuated from Leeds during world war two

*Over 150 years, Leeds Girls' High School (LGHS) benefitted from the leadership of nine remarkable women. Uncover the LGHS journey through the stories of the women who shaped it.*

# At the helm

## 1876-1891:

### Miss Catherine Lucy Kennedy

The daughter of a clergyman, Miss Catherine Lucy Kennedy was appointed as headmistress aged just 24, and proved an inspiring

figure with exacting standards. "She was without exception the woman of the strongest intellect I have ever known," said one former pupil. She was variously described as a "first-rate Classical scholar", a specialist "in every subject" and "a decided Churchwoman" who went on to have a huge impact on hundreds of young women.

Fourteen years into Miss Kennedy's tenure, pupil numbers had risen from 42 to 176; by the time she resigned in 1891, 54 first classes had been awarded in the Cambridge Higher local examination and three girls had won open scholarships at Cambridge. Old girls recall a teacher whose eyes could "flash with righteous anger" and who could often be heard cry, "My dear, when I was your age I had to know all this and much more off by heart!" but many more remember her as "sympathetic, loving and most patient" who welcomed news of her former pupils' marriages - "though to herself marriage had never appealed personally."

After leaving Leeds, Miss Kennedy became headmistress of the Clergy Daughters' School in Warrington, latterly known as St Elphin's, and the school expanded and thrived under her leadership. Despite suffering from neuralgia for much of her life, Miss Kennedy's demise was unexpected and relatively sudden at the age of 59. Miss Powell, her successor at LGHS, wrote that Miss Kennedy had "made the school", adding: "It might be for me or others to carry it on, but there was no construction needed: that was done - a work which would abide."



## 1892-1902:

### Miss Helena Langhorne Powell

A gifted historian who was awarded first class honours from Newnham College, Cambridge, Miss Powell came to Leeds after seven years teaching at Oxford High School.

In her time at LGHS, Miss Powell worked industriously to bring about progress. A believer in holistic education, she oversaw the creation of a hard tennis court and gave the girls permission to play cricket. She also founded the Old Girls' Club and the Guild of Charity which emphasised social service - a GSAL value to this day. The school also adopted its motto 'age quod agis' and founded the school magazine during Miss Powell's tenure.

Before she resigned, Miss Powell persuaded the LGHS governors to move the school from Woodhouse Lane to the "purer and quieter air" of Headingley.



Miss Powell (1892-1902), Dr Lowe (1905-32), Mrs Kirk (1933-49) and Miss Joseph (1903-05)

## 1903-1905:

### Miss Eleanor Theodora Joseph

Another historian, Miss Joseph was only headmistress for two years, but had a significant impact on those who knew her. One old girl described her as "wonderful" but "in quite a different way" to her predecessors: "so human and understanding!" After leaving to get married in 1905, Miss Joseph remained in touch with LGHS and attended the school's Diamond Jubilee in 1936. In a film she contributed to in 1939, Mrs Webb (as she was by then known) said she saw herself as the bridge between the strict discipline of the school's early days and the broader curriculum which followed. After her death in 1942, she left £100 to found the Theodora Webb prize for history or geography.

## 1905–1932:

### Dr Lucy A Lowe

Dr Lucy Lowe spent “27 supremely happy years” as headmistress at LGHS, during which there were many



highlights. In the same 1939 film to which Miss Joseph contributed, Dr Lowe described the visit of Princess Louise to LGHS as well as the gift of a new organ which “brought new harmonies into school prayers and school life”. In 1927, she oversaw the opening of the school’s groundbreaking swimming pool and started the fund for the LGHS university scholarship. In 1932, a special supper to mark the end of her tenure saw 600 old girls return to LGHS – testimony to her impact and popularity.

## 1949-1970:

### Miss Marilyn G Sykes



A linguist and keen musician, Miss Sykes was known for her high standards and firm discipline. In an article in the *Yorkshire Post* in 1953, she wrote: “We are in danger nowadays of trying to make learning too easy and of taking away the discipline which is essential to it.”

## 1977-1997:

### Miss Philippa Randall

Over her 20 years as headmistress, Miss Randall saw the arrival of the internet, young enterprise initiatives taking off and the establishment of European and international exchanges. Rose Court had two major extensions during Miss Randall’s tenure, Ford House gained a new library and at least 20 new classrooms were added to the senior school, as well as a new sports hall, swimming pool and a new centre for music and drama, the Elinor Lupton Centre. But for Miss Randall, the highlight of her time at LGHS was the “enthusiasm, initiative, energy and talents” of her pupils.

## 1970-1977:

### Miss Audrey Jackson



Miss Jackson was the first LGHS headmistress to have attended school in Yorkshire. She was also the first headmistress to have a scientific background, with a degree in botany and zoology. She declared her intention to be approachable, telling the *Yorkshire Evening Post* in 1973 that a headmistress must be “totally unshockable” so that pupils can always ask for help.



Miss Randall (1977-1997) and Mrs Fishburn (1997-2007) outside LGHS

## 1933–1949:

### Mrs Leslie P Kirk

Mrs Kirk had a tough act to follow, but earned a reputation as a sympathetic and understanding headmistress – qualities which were much-needed during her leadership. In 1934, she oversaw the official opening of the school library with its beautiful Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson furniture. At the beginning of world war two, Mrs Kirk wrote to her students to urge them to stay focused. “We must, each one of us, look to the spirit in which we go forward,” she wrote. “The future depends on that which the members of this school can learn now and practise later.”



## 1997–2007:

### Mrs Sue Fishburn

Mrs Fishburn’s welcome address on the LGHS website was ahead of its time. “In an increasingly complex and rapidly changing society, no school can teach all knowledge,” she wrote. “But it must prepare students to take advantage of the sources of knowledge available. Our emphasis is on teaching students how to ask questions, how to find out and above all how to think.” Mrs Fishburn, who studied physiology and biochemistry at the University of Birmingham, was headmistress at LGHS until its merger with Leeds Grammar School (LGS) to form GSAL.

## And let’s hear it for the boys...

The next issue of *Memento* marks 475 years of LGS, covering key figures from the boys’ school history from founder Reverend William Sheffield right through to the last LGS headmaster – and first GSAL Principal – Dr Mark Bailey.

*“I have serendipity to thank for a lot of things that happened in my career,”*

*says Kathryn Cearns, née Verity, OBE (OG82).*

“I’d say to people starting out in the working world today, don’t underplay the serendipity factor. Think about what you enjoy, what you’re good at, but leave some room for chance.”

Kathryn - who intended to study physics at university but ended up with an English literature degree from Goldsmiths - has certainly heeded her own advice.

## SERENDIPITOUS *SUCCESS*



The daughter of an estate agent, Kathryn started at Leeds Girls’ High School (LGHS) in 1975. “Academically it was challenging, but it did me good,” she recalls. Kathryn has fond memories of singing in the junior and senior choirs, going on ski trips and winning her house colours for music. “Many of the teachers were excellent and very caring,” she recalls.

After the leafy suburbs of North Leeds, London was a bit of a culture shock: “Damien Hirst was a student at Goldsmiths, and they had a huge dance centre - it was definitely different.” But Kathryn was determined to soak up everything the capital had to offer - especially theatre. “I still have all my theatre programmes from my £3.50 ‘student standby’ days,” she says, laughing.

After university, Kathryn trained to be an accountant. “Working for my father in the holidays had piqued my interest in business, and accountancy felt like a good route into businesses of all kinds.” But on qualifying, a recession hit, limiting Kathryn’s graduate employment options. “Someone pointed out a job at BPP, a training and publishing company. I joined the team as a technical author.”

Six years later, Kathryn used her experience as a springboard to a role with the UK Accounting Standards Board (ASB), where Sir David Tweedie was Chair - “The Board was packed with top CFOs, audit firm partners and academics. David’s leadership was inspirational; I learned a huge amount” - before moving to an international law firm. “I was there for 14 years, 11 as partner-equivalent. I was training staff,

advising clients and providing internal guidance on accounting and auditing issues - some pretty high-profile stuff,” she says. After her role was made redundant, Kathryn embraced the opportunity to reinvent herself and took on a range of consultancy roles. Redundancy turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to her, she recalls, crediting the pace and variety of her new professional life with leading her to non-exec work.

“When people hear I’m a non-exec director, they often say, ‘When did you retire?’ - to which I say, ‘I haven’t!’” Instead, Kathryn’s industry experience became a gateway to a portfolio of varied non-exec positions, mainly in the public sector. She currently sits on six boards, including: the British Medical Association’s audit and risk



Even in the best run company, women still feel like they've got more to prove."



Kathryn was awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year Honours list 2017 for her voluntary services to government financial reporting

Kathryn was awarded the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales' outstanding achievement award for 2025

*Quickfire questions*

**Favourite subject at LGHS:** I always loved English and art.

**Favourite LGHS teacher:** Miss Dearden was lovely, so enthusiastic...and Mrs Cleverley was excellent, too.

**Best school trip:** Leysin in Switzerland.

**Single sex or co-ed?** I think the diamond model is really interesting! Is that a cop-out? I think co-ed would have been fine in sixth form but I was better off without boys before then...

committee; DfT Operator, which is bringing train operating companies into public ownership; the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and the Press Recognition Panel, which she chairs. She has also been on the board of the UK Supreme Court, Crossrail Ltd and on the external audit and risk committee of the International Monetary Fund. After serving as the independent chair of the Financial Reporting Advisory Board (FRAB), she was awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list of 2017 for voluntary services to government financial reporting. In 2025, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) named Kathryn as the winner of their outstanding achievement award.

Does she have any advice for new non-execs? "Be curious and diligent," says Kathryn. "No one on the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Board expects me to be an expert - even though I have a useful A-level in

physics! However, they do expect me to be a fresh pair of eyes, and to use my experience to ask questions and get to the heart of complex issues." And for aspiring non-execs? "Start researching what you might find interesting early on," she says. "And build up experience while you're still working full-time - perhaps look for a trustee role with a small charity or serve as a school governor." A remote executive assistant helps Kathryn manage the challenges of a busy diary where, in her words, "no two weeks are the same."

Even in 2026, Kathryn sometimes finds that she's the only woman in a room - although those occasions are becoming rarer. "I still think it's harder for women," she says. "A lot still falls on their shoulders, and I don't just mean domestically. Even in the best run company, women still feel like they've got more to prove." She believes that building young women's self-confidence and resilience early on can help. "At school, I felt that aspiration was instilled

in us, even if career advice was more limited than it is now. It's great now to see so many young women going into STEM subjects, for example. If my recent work has taught me anything, it's that this country needs more engineers, and those engineers do great work."

And so finally, any words of advice for GSAL's newest alumni as they head off to university? "It's the same advice I'd give to new non-execs, really," she says. "Find out what you're interested in and good at, and follow that. Have a plan, take it seriously...but make sure to leave some room for serendipity."

*In the classrooms and corridors of Leeds Girls' High School (LGHS), girls were encouraged to work hard and aim high whatever their ambitions; later, in the working world, many found themselves drawing on the confidence, resilience and values instilled over the course of their school days.*

# Sister

## ACT



Nadia and Sara remember LGHS as a safe, special place

As we mark 150 years of LGHS, we hear from two sisters: Nadia Manzoor (OG04) and Sara Manzoor-Balai (GSAL10). In conversation, we reflect on the experiences they shared as part of the LGHS community, while discovering that the true hallmark of a Leeds Girls' education is not similarity, but rather finding the confidence to succeed on one's own terms.



## Nadia and Sara

### On schooldays

**Nadia:** I've always been a total geek. At lunchtime I'd be in the library doing my homework and at night I'd be reading and making up magic shows...

**Sara:** And I was the opposite. I'd always be begging my parents for sleepovers and to go to parties!

**Nadia:** When I was in sixth form, Sara was in UIII and her friends would wave to me in the corridors - like, "She's head girl!" - but Sara would ignore me. She was too cool for me - she still is now!

**Sara:** We both loved school, but for different reasons. Nads was super academic - always top of the class - whereas I loved the LGHS community. I still do! But we were both entrepreneurial - do you remember when we used to sell daffodils outside our house and Mrs Scholey stopped to buy some?!

**Nadia:** We were so excited! We loved all of the teachers ... Miss Pickering, Mrs Street, Mr Brindley - oh, the Malawi trip!

**Sara:** Oh yes, Malawi was the best. And



Nadia Manzoor was named finance's number one rising star by Forbes and has developed a mental fitness app for young people

all the plays we did, too! I also have such strong memories of the nursery classroom and the library at Rose Court. I remember mixing honey and apple together in the baking room. I loved all of it! LGHS was such a safe, special place.

### On work and careers

**Nadia:** My career has evolved as I've evolved. I started out in law before moving into finance and tech. But really - even from kindergarten bake sales - I've wanted to do something that helps people and now I'm finally getting back to that with my app.

**Sara:** By the way, Nadia won't tell you this but she's the youngest woman in history to sit on the board of a FTSE 250 company. And Forbes described her as finance's number one rising star. My story is a bit different ... I probably wasn't as focused and didn't get my first choice uni, but I matured a lot during my undergrad and went on to do my PGCE at the University of Cambridge.

**Nadia:** We actually both studied at



LGHS was more than just a school - it was a way of being, a community, a place full of incredible people who fostered the idea that we could do and be anything.

Downing College - same place, but different times and paths.

**Sara:** I became a teacher and later head of assessment at Wetherby Kensington, before founding an education consultancy that supports children and their families with personalised tuition, academic guidance and entrance exam prep.

**Nadia:** What I find super-inspiring about my sister's career is that she's found her true talent. I'm blown away by how good she is at what she does. In London, people I hardly know come up to me and say "Your sister is phenomenal, she's transformed my child's life." But she didn't build her success via the most conventional route.

**Sara:** I think you find your calling at your own pace.

**Nadia:** I'm really proud of you. Are you proud of yourself?

**Sara:** I am. My client base is really special and I've worked really hard. The success of the children I work with is incredibly important to me and I feel really passionate about being part of their journey. I found some aspects of school tricky, but my teachers always encouraged me. Now I'm that encouraging teacher for the children I work with.

### The impact of LGHS

**Sara:** I think the school motto - which I always interpreted as 'do what you love and do it well' - is such an important message. As soon as I found what I was interested in, that was it.

**Nadia:** For sure, but I was too focused on 'achieving' - we spend so long chasing things in the external world, but I've come to believe that true success is what we feel inside ... that all of the magic we're searching for is already there inside us. I'm now building a mental fitness app to help young people to find that place.

**Sara:** Nads and I had such different personalities and experiences but we've both got to really wonderful places in our lives.

**Nadia:** Professionally, but personally too - which I think is just as important. We've both become mums recently and our babies were born just five and a half weeks apart.

**Sara:** We're both based in London but I said to my husband recently that I'd love to send our daughter to GSAL. Most of my friends are still the girls I met at school when I was three. It's absolutely shaped who we all are.

**Nadia:** LGHS was more than just a school - it was a way of being, a community, a place full of incredible people who fostered the idea that we could do and be anything. I don't think we could have been given a more precious gift. We can't thank our parents enough for sending us there and all they continue to do for us.



Sara Manzoor-Balai has founded an education and childcare consultancy and specialises in supporting children and their families through the admissions process for London prep schools

# FROM pupil TO parent TO teacher

*Margaret Jowett née Coley (OG54) has seen all sides of Leeds Girls' High School (LGHS), from a pupil in the 1940s and 50s, to over 20 years teaching speech and drama, to life as a parent.*

Here she tells us how her time at LGHS prepared her for a fascinating and varied freelance career - and why she's not ready to retire just yet.



Margaret in 1959

Margaret Jowett's energy and vivacity belies her 87 years. "The job of a speech and drama teacher keeps you physically healthy. You're always on the go," she says. "I have a friend from drama school who's still teaching at 92. People like us tend to go on until the end!" Margaret's partner recently turned 100 and, instead of giving a speech at his birthday celebration, she devised a 30-minute show about his life in words and music. "I love doing the research for shows and I've always loved performing," she says. "I feel very fortunate that I've been able to do what I love."

Margaret's passion for drama and performance started at school. "My happiest times were spent studying

English with Miss Roth," she says, recalling how she encouraged pupils to act out the plays and perform poetry as a spoken piece. "I wasn't particularly academic," says Margaret, who had attended a small weekly boarding school in Essex before making the journey north in the thick snow of 1947 to sit the LGHS entrance exam. "But I was fairly outgoing and had a lot of confidence!" Margaret was part of a school production of *The Tempest* and also excelled at tennis, representing the school at various levels.

After O-levels, Margaret joined the Northern Theatre School, run by pioneering actress and teacher Miss Esmé Church. "I'd always wanted to be an actress," she says. "I went at 16 - I think



Margaret (back row, far right) and the LGHS first VI tennis team in 1954



LGHS pupils in one of Margaret's drama workshops



School gave me the skills and the confidence to have a fantastic varied lifestyle

my father thought that would give me enough time to do something else if it didn't work out." Three years of training followed in acting, voice, literature, drama, singing, dancing, fencing and touring with the Northern Children's Theatre company. Afterwards, Margaret went to work in the theatre as a character actress and stage director: "We were doing a play every week. I worked with all sorts of interesting people including Susannah York and Dame Judi Dench."

By the early 1960s, Margaret had moved into personnel and was working for Marks & Spencer before marriage and children rerouted her career again. "My eldest daughter was old enough for Ford House when I started my own school of speech and drama, Speech and Drama Workshop," says Margaret. From there, she met Miss Briggs from LGHS. "She was retiring and her job was about to become available, which is how

I came back to LGHS as a peripatetic speech and drama teacher. That was in 1975 and I stayed until 1998."

Margaret balanced school teaching with raising her three daughters, two of whom were at LGHS. "I still had my own drama school and I was doing the occasional bit of television work. I also became the local representative for London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) and ran their examinations - oh, and I also did simulated patient schemes for trainee doctors and reading at London concerts for The Esterhazy Singers. After I was widowed 30 years ago, there were times I had five different jobs," she says. When Margaret arrived at LGHS, around 35 girls took speech and drama as an extracurricular activity; by the time she retired, numbers were up to 120.

Margaret taught many pupils at LGHS who went on to creative and media careers such as author Emily Kerr (OG04) and BBC journalist Lucy Manning (OG93). Many boys from Leeds Grammar School (LGS) also attended lessons outside of school including Simon Gillis (OL00) of See-Saw films. "They stay in touch, which is lovely," says Margaret. "Of course, there were lots of children who wanted to act and perform, but I got equal amounts of satisfaction teaching those who were more introverted or suffered with speech impediments."

Although retired, Margaret's diary is full. She creates and performs themed word and music shows as part of a duo called *Serendipity* - "We have about 18 shows, a lot of them in costume" - and

has spent 20 years doing presentation work in stately homes like Harewood House and Ripley Castle. Along with *Serendipity*, she runs a concert season

employing professional musicians at Boston Spa - "I do ten a year, and we're getting audiences of 70 or more at a time" - as well as interactive presentations for dementia groups. Over the years, she has directed local productions and even played Mother Superior in a production of *The Sound of Music*. "I'm always happy when the phone rings and someone asks, 'Can we book you?'"

Margaret's long association with LGHS spanned several decades and five headmistresses. She says the friends she made and the foundations that were laid while a pupil have supported her throughout her whole life. "School gave me the skills and the confidence to have a fantastic varied lifestyle," she says. "I was no academic, but LGHS gave me the desire to do the best I could - that's what 'age quod agis' meant to me."



Margaret as Queen Elizabeth in a *Serendipity* performance

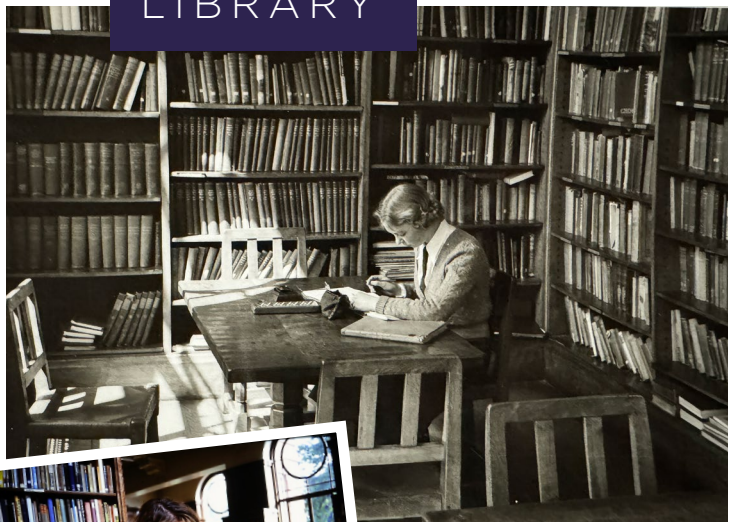
A lot has changed since Leeds Girls' High School (LGHS) was founded in 1876 - and we don't just mean the buildings and curriculum...

# Chalkboards TO smartboards

However, some things will always endure: the emphasis we place on sport, including hockey; STEM; the performing arts and the value of having a peaceful place to study.

Here, we trace four key aspects of LGHS history through the decades with photographs from our archives and comments from past head girls.

## LIBRARY



## STEM



# HOCKEY



## Let's hear it from the head girls...

One of the great LGHS traditions was the head girl's letter to her successor, imparting words of wisdom to the girl chosen to follow in her footsteps. Here are a few snippets from over the years...

“ “ *1981-1982*

“Just take everything in your stride and don't make mountains out of molehills. If you forget to do something, it won't be the end of the world.”

*1988-89*

“...Contrary to popular belief, the head girl does a lot more than the vote of thanks on Speech Day and help Miss Randall hand out certificates, which is actually impossible as:

- a) You've never set eyes on half the girls
- b) You don't know the names of most of the girls you do recognise

And c) to top it all, they all shuffle up so quickly that at the end you wish you'd taken the easy option and completed an official Mensa test and the London Marathon all at once!”

*1999-2000*

“Look forward to your year ahead. While I can't deny it will be hard work, I can guarantee you will thoroughly enjoy it and will take and use your experiences throughout life. Remember to prioritise as A-levels are the most important thing, but also remember to enjoy the year as you won't have another one like it! Good luck!”

*2004-2005*

“Don't underestimate how much people respect you for being head girl - ranging from the little Year 7s who follow you down the corridor to your fellow sixth form common room friends who can't quite understand how you manage to undertake head girl duties while doing your A-levels!”

# PERFORMING ARTS



## Former LGS headmaster awarded PhD

*John Davies, headmaster of the Junior School at Leeds Grammar School (LGS) from 1992 to 2006 and archivist at The Grammar School at Leeds (GSAL) since 2013, has been awarded a PhD by the University of Leeds.*



John, who taught history at LGS from 1976, wrote his thesis titled *Field Marshal Nicholson 1845-1918: a great brain. The making and impact of a Whitehall warrior.*

A PhD is the culmination of a lifelong love of history: a passion which John credits his former history teacher, John Darley, with inspiring. "He took me on my first history field trip, to the Imperial War Museum in London, and engendered in me my interest in world war one," he recalls. "And he encouraged me, at a time when not many people went to university, to apply to study history. It is largely due to his influence that I wanted to go to university to study history and then to become a teacher."

## Inside Westminster: Lord Elliott of Mickle Fell welcomes students to Parliament

*In November, Lord Elliott of Mickle Fell (OL96) gave economics students from The Grammar School at Leeds (GSAL) a front row seat to parliamentary power with a behind-the-scenes tour of Westminster and an exclusive Q&A session.*



Lord Elliott, described by the BBC as "one of the most effective lobbyists at Westminster," founded and served as chief executive of the TaxPayers' Alliance, Big Brother Watch and Business for Britain. He later became chief executive of the Vote Leave campaign in 2015, co-founded the Jobs Foundation, where he remains president, and was appointed to the House of Lords with a life peerage in 2022.

The group of 30 students had travelled to London to attend the PolEconUK conference where they heard from speakers including former Chancellor Ed Balls. They were then welcomed to Parliament by Lord Elliott for a tour of his parliamentary office, Westminster Hall, St Stephen's Chapel and the Committee Corridor.

The visit concluded with an inspiring talk from Lord Elliott and a Q&A.

## Katie White OBE MP leads the fight on climate change

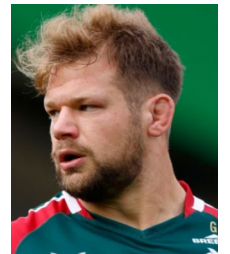
*Katie White OBE MP (OG99) has been appointed Minister for Climate in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.*

Katie, who was elected MP for Leeds North West in July 2024, has previously worked for Friends of the Earth, WWF and ONE.org and, twenty years ago, spearheaded the campaign leading to Britain's first Climate Change Act. As well as campaigning for a greener Leeds North West, Katie is a passionate supporter of the campaign to end violence against women and girls, improve mental health support for young people and is a voice for local businesses.

On her appointment, Katie said she was "over the moon". She added: "It is a huge responsibility, but also a real privilege...the challenges we face are serious, but there is also real hope. We have world-class scientists, businesses that want to innovate, and people across the country who are already making changes in their daily lives...from Otley Chevin to the Dales, there is a real pride in protecting what we have and passing it on in better shape," she said.

## Cracknell wins his first cap for Wales

*After playing for Wales under-20s, Olly Cracknell (GSAL12) was called up to the senior squad in 2017.*



Now at the age of 31, he was called off the bench to face Argentina during the Autumn Nations Series and presented with his first cap by Leicester Tigers' teammate Nicky Smith.

Olly, who was born in Leeds, has Welsh heritage through his grandfather. He credits his parents with inspiring his tenacity: "My mum has a very persistent personality," he told the BBC. "My dad was very resilient in a different kind of way. He was diagnosed with terminal cancer when I was young. He managed to live for another 17 years ... he'd put it to one side and take things as they came."

Olly's talent and determination was evident during his GSAL days. After a GSAL rugby tour to South Africa, he was one of three students offered contracts by South African team Border Bulldogs. And when Olly played his first match with Wales under-20s, two members of GSAL staff - John Mackenzie and Owen Edwards - were there to cheer him on.



## Class of 1965 meets for 60th anniversary

On the apt date of Yorkshire Day in August, 21 LGHS old girls met at Sandmoor Golf Club for a lively, nostalgia-filled lunch. The event was particularly special as Clare Wilson née Drew (OG65) was in the UK from her home in Australia visiting family and rejoined her classmates after many years.

Later in the afternoon, a number of alumnae visited school to see the Lawson Library and reminisce over LGHS archive materials. Huge thanks to Paddie Breeze née Hogan (OG65) and Victoria Littlewood née Waite (OG65) for organising.

## Class of 2005 celebrates 20th anniversary

A reunion afternoon tea brought together members of Leeds Girls' High School (LGHS) class of 2005 from across the country. Organised by head girl Maria Staiano-Sharp (OG05), the event was made even more special with the attendance of Mrs Jagger, Mr Brindley and Ms Fazal.

A lively quiz in the Lawson Library rounded off the official part of the afternoon before some attendees headed off to the former Elinor Lupton Centre in Headingley - now a Wetherspoons pub - for a celebratory tippie.



## Upcoming events



**Jazz night with Lucy-Anne Daniels (GSAL20)  
A Leeds Jazz  
Festival event**  
Date: Friday 22 May 2026  
Time: 7-10pm  
Venue: The Grammer  
School at Leeds

Join us and alumna Lucy-Anne Daniels (BBC Proms, Southbank Centre x Montreux Jazz Festival Residency) with her band for an unmissable cabaret-style jazz showcase. Expect top-quality performances in a relaxed, intimate, soulful atmosphere - complete with exceptional music and company. Outstanding student performances will also feature.



### Were you on the 1976 LGS rugby tour to Portugal?

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the tour, and we're eager to reconnect with former pupils and teachers from LGS who took part. If you were on the tour, or know someone who was, we'd love to hear from you. Please email [alumni@gsal.org.uk](mailto:alumni@gsal.org.uk).

### Save the date

Contact [alumni@gsal.org.uk](mailto:alumni@gsal.org.uk) for more information

#### Alumni lunch - London

Date: Saturday 7 March 2026  
Time: 12 noon-3pm  
Venue: The Holly Bush, Hampstead

#### Spring concert

Date: Tuesday 31 March 2026  
Time: 6.30pm-9pm  
Venue: The Grammar School at Leeds

#### LGHS annual golf day and dinner

Date: Friday 1 May 2026  
Time: From 2pm  
Venue: Wetherby Golf Club

#### Summer concert

Date: Thursday 18 June 2026  
Time: 6.30pm-9pm  
Venue: The Grammar School at Leeds

**See page 22 for details of our special event, celebrating 150 years of LGHS.**

## Amara shines in Alan Bennett's *The Choral*

*Amara Okereke (GSAL15) stars alongside Ralph Fiennes in historical drama The Choral, written by Alan Bennett.*

Set in 1916, the film tells the story of a Yorkshire choir's struggle to survive as members enlist in the army. For their annual performance, the group is forced to change its entry rules - and Salvation Army nurse Mary, played by Amara, is one of the society's young newcomers.

*The Choral* is the latest in a string of professional highlights and achievements for Amara, including playing Laurie in *Oklahoma!* and Cosette in *Les Misérables* - a role for which she was awarded the 'best actress in a musical' accolade at the Stage Debut Awards. In 2022, she made history as the first Black actress to play Eliza Doolittle in the West End revival of *My Fair Lady*.



Photo credit: Nicola Dove

Amara Okereke's career reaches new heights with her role in *The Choral*

## Miss Birch answers Scotland's call

*Katie Birch (GSAL16), alumna and now GSAL teacher, has plenty of cause for celebration after being selected for the Scotland women's hockey squad this season.*



Katie Birch (GSAL16 and now teacher of geography and PE) has been called up to represent Scotland in hockey

Katie excelled in hockey during her schooldays alongside her twin sister, Rebecca, and was vice-captain of the 1st XI field hockey team. She was awarded full school colours for her dedication to hockey and commitment to the house system. After four years at the University of Iowa studying geography with a minor in sports studies and sport and recreational management, she returned to the UK, gained a teaching qualification and took up her post as a geography and PE teacher at GSAL in 2025.

A busy year lies ahead for Miss Birch balancing teaching with a demanding hockey schedule - most notably, the World Cup qualifiers taking place in Hyderabad, India, in March 2026. We wish her all the best!

## Shaheen named Leeds' unsung sporting hero

*Shaheen Alghofari (GSAL18) was awarded the Unsung Sporting Hero award at the Leeds Compassionate City Awards 2025.*



Shaheen with his Compassionate City award

The award, sponsored by the Leeds Rhinos Foundation, recognises initiatives which help make Leeds a great place to live, work and visit.

Shaheen was celebrated for a boxing project designed to support young refugees in the city. The initiative was praised for boosting participants' physical and mental wellbeing, giving them the opportunity to build confidence and connection to their community through a structured sporting activity.

Shaheen left GSAL to study dentistry at King's College London, where he was president and later treasurer of the university boxing team. A keen boxer and swimmer, he has been engaged in community projects involving marginalised communities since his teenage years. On receiving his award, he said he was "excited for more opportunities to do more with isolated groups."

Yona Knight-Wisdom (GSAL11) has been inducted into the Leeds Beckett University Sport Hall of Fame



## Yona enters sporting hall of fame

*Jamaican Olympic diver Yona Knight-Wisdom (GSAL11) was among the first 37 athletes inducted into the Leeds Beckett University Sport Hall of Fame, recognising his inspiring impact on the world of diving.*

Yona, who was spotted by a scout during a talent identification session at The Grammar School at Leeds (GSAL), was the first male diver to represent Jamaica at the Olympic Games. His career highlights include competing in three Olympic Games and finishing second in the 1-metre springboard event at the 2019 Pan American Games. He was also chosen as joint team captain for Jamaica at the Paris Olympics. Since retiring from competitive diving, Yona has focused his attention on coaching, consultancy, speaking and podcasting, as well as founding a sports project in Jamaica.

Reflecting on his latest accolade, Yona described it as a “privilege”. “When 18-year-old Yona first walked onto The Acre, he could never have imagined his name being up on the walls 12 years later,” he said. Yona was awarded his degree in sport and exercise science from Leeds Beckett University in 2016.

## Sun shines on annual golf day

*In May, 10 golfers took to the Wetherby course in glorious sunshine (a rare occurrence for this popular annual event!) while non-players enjoyed a walk in the local area.*

Lynne Pearson (OG65) was this year’s winner and Vickie Thompson (OG64) was runner up.

The group were joined for dinner in the evening by former GSAL Principal Sue Woodroffe, who was delighted to be presented with a white rose by the Old Girls’ Committee ahead of her retirement.

The 2026 annual LGHS golf day and dinner will take place on Friday 1 May at Wetherby Golf Club.



L-R Sue Jacklin (OG70) and Sue Woodroffe presenting Vickie Thompson (OG64) with her runner-up prize at the annual Golf Day

# 2025 LEAVERS' BALL

IMAGES BY SIMON DEWHURST  
PHOTOGRAPHY LTD

The Grammar School at Leeds' prize-giving and graduation ball was held on Saturday 5 July 2025 in the recently-opened performing arts centre, The Cryer.

It was a day of firsts and lasts, with Sue Woodroofe giving her final address to students, parents, staff and governors after 10 years of fond farewells. The occasion was also marked by the inaugural awarding of the Zvi Eiref award for outstanding achievement. This new honour is in memory of Zvi Eiref (OL56), a young Jewish boy who came to Leeds in the late 1940s from a war torn Middle East. With the support of Leeds Grammar School (LGS), Zvi achieved remarkable academic success, and this award celebrates his values of hard work, determination, and making the most of every opportunity.

In total, 80 GSAL students were recognised for their commitment, tenacity, talent and achievement. We are proud to welcome them as the newest members of GSAL's alumni community.

Congratulations to the class of 2025!







AGE QUOD AGIS  
1876 - 2026

CELEBRATE

*150 years*

OF LEEDS GIRLS'  
HIGH SCHOOL

*You are warmly invited  
to join us as we mark  
150 years of Leeds Girls'  
High School.*

Enjoy an afternoon of memories and reconnection, fascinating archive materials and light refreshments. A wonderful opportunity to come together with former staff and old friends, reminisce and celebrate LGHS's remarkable legacy.



**Date:** Saturday 20 June 2026  
**Time:** 2-4pm  
**Venue:** The Grammar School at Leeds

Book tickets:



# A *legacy* OF LEARNING

Leaving a legacy to GSAL is a way of having a profound and lasting impact on the lives of young people. They help fund bursaries, enhance facilities, support prizes that recognise excellence and enrich students' everyday experience. Each legacy is a statement of belief in the transformative power of education and continues to shape lives for years to come.

Here, we share the stories of three remarkable individuals whose legacies continue to make an impact at GSAL: Elinor Lupton, Robert Tebb (OL43) and Joan Dearden.

## Elinor Lupton



Elinor Lupton (1886-1979) may have been born into privilege - she was a member of the wealthy land-owning Luptons of Newton Park Estate - but she was determined to give back. Her grandmother had founded the Leeds Ladies Association for the Care and Protection of Homeless Girls, and her father encouraged Elinor and her sister Bessie to get actively involved in charity work from an early age. During world war one, she and Bessie served as Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses; during world war two, she drove fire service vehicles as part of the Leeds Auxiliary Fire Service team. Elinor was undoubtedly a trailblazer, and dedicated her life to public service.

Elinor read classics at Newnham College, Cambridge, before returning to Leeds. There, she began her long association with LGHS, when she joined the governing body and served in various positions from 1915 until she retired in 1969. Elinor's generosity to the school was legendary: in 1939, when the school's finances were in a critical condition, she guaranteed a bank overdraft; in 1945, she donated £12,000 to establish a trust fund, laying the foundation for GSAL's bursary fund today. The school honoured her 64 years of service and numerous bequests by naming their new arts building the Elinor Lupton Centre.

## Robert Tebb



Robert Tebb was born in 1927 and attended LGS until 1943. After being evacuated with other boys from LGS to Hartington Hall in the Yorkshire Dales, Robert developed a passion for music, playing piano at the local church and starting a school choir.

Robert's career moved from supermarket distribution to running supermarkets across Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. By the time he retired at 73, he had served as President of the Yorkshire Federation of Grocers and ran several cash and carry businesses. However, alongside business, music and performance was a constant in Robert's life. He formed the Headingley Players concert party in 1950, then founded the hugely popular Headingley Amateur Operatic Society in 1961. He also started the annual Sounding Brass and Voices performances at Leeds Town Hall, with brass bands accompanying a choir of 200 voices. From 1978 until 2002, Robert organised the LGS Christmas carol concert at Leeds Town Hall. He also served as chair of Leeds College of Music and deputy administrator of the Leeds International Piano Competition for 25 years.

During his life, Robert donated regularly to LGS and GSAL, supporting music scholarships and the installation of the new school organ. When he died at the age of 94, he left a significant gift to GSAL. The piano competition in his name still takes place at GSAL annually and one of the school's music practice rooms is named in his honour.

**For more information on legacy giving, please contact the team at [alumni@gsal.org.uk](mailto:alumni@gsal.org.uk)**

## Joan Dearden



Joan Dearden, former physics teacher and head of science at LGHS, was a staunch proponent of girls' education. Her close friend Jill Oldfield, also a former LGHS teacher, said that teaching girls was "absolutely her vocation." As well as science, she was passionate about crafts: when she left LGHS, she presented the school with some embroidery she'd made of white lace snowflakes on a green background. The inscription read "Each snowflake is unique - like our girls."

Joan's intellectual curiosity endured throughout her life. Even after retirement, she met with other retired teachers regularly for an informal study group where each member would prepare a talk on a chosen subject. She studied ancient Greek and, after suffering from sight loss, tried to learn braille - although she admitted she was only really successful when she could still see the dots!

Joan was also a keen musician, playing the piano and organ to a high standard. She was a committed member of Clayton Methodist Church, where her remembrance service was held after her death in 2023. Joan left a significant gift to GSAL in her will, ensuring a powerful legacy alongside the personal impact she had on countless pupils (Joan's obituary also features on page 27).

# FOND *farewells*

## Tony Harrison (OL55)

1937-2025

Tony Harrison, the outspoken poet and dramatist who championed working class voices and occasionally courted controversy, died in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and was buried in Holbeck, Leeds alongside his parents.



Photo credit: Jason Alden

Harrison gained a scholarship to Leeds Grammar School (LGS) in 1948. From a working class family in South Leeds, he often felt alienated by LGS's disciplined and unrelenting regime. He immortalised an incident with an English teacher who mocked his accent in the much-anthologised poem *Them & [uz]*: "Poetry's the speech of kings. You're one of those / Shakespeare gives the comic bits to; prose!" However, despite criticising his 'elitist' education, he put the classics and ancient languages he studied at school to good use. His writing became known for its themes of alienation, discord and challenging authority, as well as for marrying classical forms with vernacular language.

The Bard of Beeston published his first poem in a University of Leeds magazine, where he was also involved in the student revue alongside LGS contemporary Barry Cryer (OL53). Cryer later recalled holding Harrison down and smearing his hair with Brylcreem for a scene that required him to play a 'posh' character. His debut collection, *The Loiners*, was published in 1970 and won him the Geoffrey Faber memorial prize. Other notable achievements included the screening of his controversial film poem *V* on Channel 4 in 1987 (outraging the *Daily Mail* and Mary Whitehouse in the process) and his long professional relationship with *The Guardian*, where he made his views on the Bosnian conflict and the invasion of Iraq clear in verse.

Harrison's last poetry collection was *Under the Clock* and his collected poetry was published in 2007. Faber published his sixth volume of plays in 2019. He was awarded the PEN/Pinter prize in 2009, and the David Cohen lifetime achievement award in 2015. After a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, Harrison retired and was nursed by his partner, Siân. He is survived by Siân and his children, Jane and Max.

## Jonathan Sigsworth (OL97)

1979-2024

Jon tragically died from sudden cardiac death in September 2024, at the young age of 45. He attended Leeds Grammar School (LGS) from the age of 8 through to 18, where he formed lasting friendships and a strong foundation for the years ahead.



After school, Jon built a successful career in logistics, rising to become managing director of Gallowglass Group, where he was admired not only for his professionalism but also for good humour. Laughter echoes through every chapter of his life.

An avid cyclist in his spare time, Jon's greatest joy was his family - his beloved wife Jayne and their children George and Sofia, with whom he shared many adventures, laughter, and love. Jon was a treasured son and dearly loved brother to Nicketa (OG93) and Natasha (OG94). He was their constant, someone they could depend on for his kindness, brilliant sense of fun and quiet strength. To his friends, Jon was a loyal companion, always ready with a quick wit, a listening ear, and a sense of humour that could lighten the heaviest of days.

He is remembered not only for his achievements, but for the warmth of his friendship and the laughter he inspired in all who were lucky enough to know him. Jon is deeply missed and will be forever cherished.



## Eileen Devlin

1947-2025

Eileen joined the staff of the Leeds Grammar School (LGS) Junior School in 1983 and was an

outstanding teacher in every respect. Firm but fair, she had an engaging sense of humour and was regarded with respect and affection by everyone she taught. As well as subject leader for maths, many pupils would remember Eileen's colourful and attractive corridor displays (and her immaculate Gothic script) as well as her co-production of the annual Junior School production with colleague Thelma Simpson.

In 1998, Eileen was joined by her husband Patrick on the staff. They made a formidable team until retiring together in 2007. Eileen passed away suddenly on 3 October 2025. She is deeply missed by all who knew her.



## Adèle Thompson (OG73)

1955-2024

Dancer, choreographer, abseil-dancer, stilt artist and teacher Adèle Thompson passed away at her home in Ibiza in February 2024.

Adèle's professional achievements were almost too many to list. She studied at the University of Cambridge and then trained at London Contemporary Dance School before launching into a prolific career. She danced in arena operas across England, Europe and Japan, was a founding member of STOMP's European touring company and performed in the Oscar-nominated short film *Brooms*. She was head of movement, music and equilibristics for the New Millennium Experience Company and helped create the first degree in circus arts for Circus Space, London. She went on to become one of the core artistic team at the Millennium Dome and, from there, was invited to devise, direct and perform in an aerial entertainment for Manumission in Ibiza.

At the time of her death, Adèle had only recently retired from her role as dancer in residence at Queens' College, Cambridge, a position she held from 2006 until 2020. Her energy, expertise, creativity and love of dance will be much missed.

## Gerald Robert Dowling (OL49)

1932-2025

Bob, as he was known by family and friends, passed away on 1 April 2025 aged 92.

Bob was a pupil at Leeds Grammar School (LGS) from 1942-1949 and was in Harrison House. While at school, he met Peter Stubbs and the pair remained close friends throughout their lives. He loved his time at LGS, and was a great supporter of the school.

As a young man, Bob completed his National Service with the RAF. After his training, he was part of the first cohort of pilots sent to Canada, training on large planes followed by jet fighters such as the Vampire. National Service gave him a taste for travel, and he later became a commercial traveller selling tiling.

Bob was a keen rugby player and, after leaving school, he went on to play with the Old Leodiensian 1st team. He met his wife, Carol, after he was injured during a match and taken to Leeds General Infirmary where she was the physiotherapist on duty. Bob and Carol were very happily married for 68 years and had three sons and a daughter.



## Matthew Wightman (OL04)

1985-2024

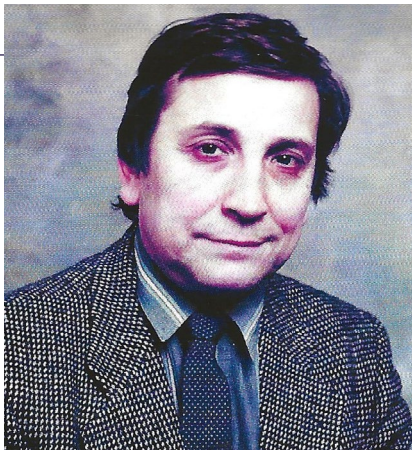
Born in Leeds, Matthew joined Miss Solomon's form in Junior School (then still on Clarendon Road) in 1993. Awarded a service tie for his enthusiastic contribution to the school Roleplaying Society, he was in Mrs Ringrose's sixth form set, leaving LGS in 2004. He went on to read computer science at the University of Cambridge, graduating with a first, and was awarded senior scholar status by Robinson College.



Matthew worked for sixteen years at a software house in Oxford, developing products used by financial regulators and institutions around the world. Colleagues describe his ingenuity, eye for detail, and unmatched technical knowledge, but also his considerate and helpful nature, not least his role in training and supporting new staff. He was part of what defined the company culture, and is hugely missed by colleagues past and present, both personally and professionally.

He is widely remembered by friends and colleagues alike for his delightful amateur photography of urban wildlife, of which Oxford had plenty! He also had an abiding affinity for interactive fiction, being both a technical expert in the design of the software, and a long-standing judge in the annual interactive fiction competition for independent authors.

Matthew died at his home in Oxford on 8 October 2024 after a short flu-like illness. He is survived by his brothers Andrew (OL94) and Peter (OL98), and his father David.



## Geoff Caseley

1943-2024

Geoff retired from his post as head of classics at Leeds Grammar School (LGS) in 1997 after 21 years of distinguished service. His teaching and leadership of the department were characterised by quiet, effective scholarship and he ensured that LGS's strong tradition in classics was sustained. A graduate of Balliol College, Oxford, and a committee member of the Leeds branch of the Oxford University Society, many of his students went on to study at Oxbridge.

Geoff coached and umpired cricket, gave strong support to the house system and was a patron of the LGS Concert Society. He also loved opera, attending 261 performances at Covent Garden and archiving the programmes to prove it. For a number of years, he served as examinations secretary at LGS; he was also an aspirant thespian who relished roles in the staff pantomimes. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

## Ian Hotchkiss 1951-2025

Dr Ian Hotchkiss passed away in August 2025 from cancer at the age of 73.

Born in the Isle of Man, Ian relocated to Doncaster in 1980, and was known to many as a capable teacher and a stalwart, caring man.

His many accomplishments include a PhD in fluorine chemistry and a long career in teaching, beginning when he was invited to help build Saudi Arabia's first university, King Faisal University. He later taught at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School before moving to Leeds Grammar School (LGS). He was variously appointed as head of chemistry, head of science, AQA chief examiner for A-level chemistry, deputy head, academic and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

He will be remembered as a caring father, a superb chemist, a man of robust morals, wide travels, great humour and tremendous courage. Not a day went by that he did not work for the benefit of others, especially his wife Jacqueline for whom he cared throughout her long illness until her death in May 2024. Ian's sons, Jeffrey and David, said, "Thousands of men and women were set onto a better path having been passed through his classroom." He will be greatly missed.



## Malcolm Sunderland

1936-2025

Having taught in Bradford for 34 years, Malcolm came to the Leeds Grammar School (LGS) art and design technology department in 1992 to provide temporary cover. His expertise and enthusiasm inspired success beyond the expectations of his students. What started as a temporary position turned into a second career of 12 years.

Malcolm's teaching methods boosted many of his students' confidence and motivation. Beyond the department, his understanding of the needs of the Hindu community also aided LGS's multi-faith culture.

A man of many parts, Malcolm was a great raconteur but was also admired for his capacity to listen. He had a military background; he was an expert gardener, and a keeper of the rare breed of Jacob sheep.

Malcolm died in June 2025 aged 88.

## Michael Offlow Jackson (OL47) 1931-2025

Michael Offlow Jackson, retired Detective Chief Inspector in the Regional Crime Squad, passed away in May 2025.

Michael had several amusing stories about his schooldays at Leeds Grammar School (LGS), where he sometimes found himself in trouble for lack of effort. On one occasion, his form master wrote 'lethargic' on his behaviour report card. "I didn't know what this meant," Michael admitted, and so he asked another master - "I thought it might be something good!" The master told Michael to look it up, which he did. "I was not pleased, as you can imagine," he said.

Michael went on to a distinguished career in the police, achieving the second highest score out of 70 candidates in his sergeant examinations. Michael described his family as "wonderful" and is much-missed by his two daughters, two great sons-in-law, five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.





## Michael Pitt (OL69)

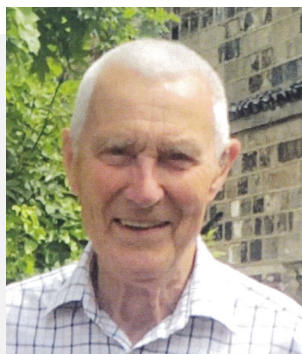
1951-2024

Michael, or 'Mike' as he was known to many, left Leeds Grammar School (LGS) in 1969 when the school was still at the Moorland Road site. He went on to study old and medieval English at the University of Leeds. After graduation, he moved to Nottingham where he worked in the bursar's office of the University of Nottingham before moving to another role as resident tutor in Lincoln Hall.

In the late 1990s, Mike was a trailblazer in setting up the University of Nottingham Malaysia campus - the first ever branch campus of a British university outside the UK, earning him the distinction of the Queen's Award for Enterprise.

Mike loved hiking in the Dales and Pennines as well as walking in the Greek islands. He travelled the country attending cricket test matches and regularly in the company of like-minded friends from LGS days. His other interests included a love of classical music, especially that of Handel.

Mike's life was celebrated by many of his friends at a memorial service in St John's Church, Beeston on 13 February 2025.



## Frank Pickering 1939-2024

Frank Pickering was appointed as head of biology in 1971. He quickly made his mark as a quiet but conscientious teacher who was always determined to bring out the best in pupils.

Frank was avuncular, kindly and ever sensitive to the needs of others. He coached and refereed senior squad rugby as well as singing in the chapel choir. When Tony Verity, headmaster, needed qualified men to seek out an outdoor centre, Frank was appointed to the team - hence the delights of Water Knott.

In December 2024, East Riding Crematorium was filled to capacity by Frank's family, ex-colleagues and friends. The service was enhanced by a contribution from the Drifffield Male Voice Choir. A devoted husband to Beverley, father to Simon, Mark, Andrew, David and Rachel, and grandfather, Frank will be much-missed.

## Joan Dearden

1929-2023

Joan taught science for 38 years; a career which she described as "extremely hard work but most enjoyable." From 1962 until her retirement in 1989, she was head of science at Leeds Girls' High School (LGHS). She remained fascinated by science into her later years. On developing Charles Bonnet syndrome caused by age-related macular degeneration, she became an active member of the Macular Disease Society and did a number of interviews to raise awareness of the condition.

Joan was also a talented musician. She first heard a piano being played at Sunday School and persuaded her parents to allow her to start lessons aged six. When she began teaching, her first purchase was an upright Broadwood piano. At 35, she learned to play the organ and once said that her greatest joys in life were playing at church services and attending recitals.

Joan also loved needlepointing, lacemaking and knitting. After injections of lucentis into her left eye partially restored her sight, she took up crafts again and knitted for several good causes including local hospitals. A beloved cousin, very dear friend, neighbour and colleague to many, she passed away peacefully at home in December 2023.



## Rhoda Wallace (OG65)

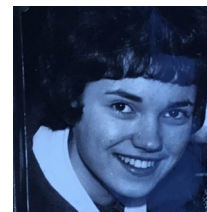
1946-2025

Rhoda Wallace was born in 1946. Her father was the vicar of St John and St Barnabas, Belle Isle and Hunslet.

At school, Rhoda contributed to the school's musical life through leadership of the choir, and organising St Andrew's House in the annual music competition. She was a soloist in school concerts from 1961 and sang Aeneas in the school production of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* in 1965. Outside school, she sang in the Leeds Philharmonic Society.

After training, Rhoda went to Whinmoor St Paul's as a student teacher, remaining there until retirement as head in 2006. She had a remarkable teaching manner, always quiet but in command. Inspectors at her last Ofsted noted her enthusiasm, leadership by example, and clarity of vision.

In retirement, she served at Leeds Minster for a time as a churchwarden. Her friend, Jane Morris (OG65), described being with her in her final moments as a privilege.





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