



ST MARY'S OLD GIRLS' NEWSLETTER

Issue One : September 2017



May 2016 saw our last reunion. It was a beautiful sunny day and was so well attended we held the welcome drinks in the Senior Hall, as the library would have been too crowded!

The "Old Girls", all of whom are so very glamorous, arrived in their droves and were delighted to see old pals and teachers alike, Miss Timberlake being a particular hit!

Keeping with tradition the ladies (and some men!) queued at the Servery for their lunch, which was a delicious chicken dish followed by cheesecake and chocolate torte, and afterwards were free to wander the grounds of their beloved school with their friends.

Of course we didn't let them leave without taking a group photo – as you can see it was a very popular event! We now look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the next reunion in 2018.



Spotlight on pupils past ...

Maria

I attended St Mary's from 2012 to 2014 after joining the School for 6th Form. I was conscious of the fact that the majority of the girls in Year 12 had been at St Mary's together for many years prior to my joining, and were therefore a tight knit community, so I initially felt intimidated. However, I was delighted to find the girls were so friendly and welcoming, and within no time at all I felt as though I had been at the school for years.

During my two years at St Mary's my confidence grew and I learnt to be true to who I am. I was trusted with a lot of responsibility whilst at the school, from running fundraiser events and planning the Year 13 Prom, to being House Captain for Butler, all of which built my confidence and shaped me into the person I am today. I had a passion for Business and Spanish, which St Mary's helped me develop a deeper understanding of. I chose to attend Brighton University as, at the time, it was one of the few Universities to offer Business and Spanish together.

Life has been busy and exciting since leaving St Mary's! During my time at Brighton University I have worked at a Law firm in Miami, Florida on a placement, after which I attended the Universidad San Pablo in Madrid for 6 months to complete my year abroad. I am now looking forward to my final year at University after which I plan to work in fashion marketing in London, and I specifically hope to establish a ladies' swim wear line.

Good luck, Maria, we have no doubt you will be successful in all you do.



Tara

I attended St Mary's from 2007 to 2012, and with two sisters still in the school and my mum being Chair of the Parents' Association, it's quite a family affair for us and St Mary's!

After leaving St Mary's I went to the University of Gloucestershire to study Creative Writing and went on to complete my PGCE. I never left Cheltenham and now teach English in a large secondary school in Stroud.

St Mary's absolutely helped me build on my resilience and helped prepare me for the challenges I face as a teacher. The consistent encouragement and support from teachers built up my ability to persevere in all I do, overcoming any obstacles I may face. Now, in my own teaching career, I continue to use these skills every day. For example, I had the toughest Year 11s in the school but by being resilient and showing them the same level of support, encouragement and faith that my own teachers did, they all now believe in themselves and their abilities to achieve their goals.

It's so interesting how I now see my school days in a new light since becoming a teacher. I was the typical girl at the back, trying to get away with not doing much - but my teachers always spotted me and brought me back to tasks! Now, I enjoy surprising the kids by knowing that they have their phone out or are making excuses - all because I've been there, done that and got the T-shirt! I realise now how privileged, lucky and fortunate I was to go to a school like St Mary's. A school where the staff are not only passionate about their areas of expertise, but they also have that same passion for the students that they teach, and for their successes. This has definitely embedded itself into my role as a teacher; I strive to engage kids in the subject and to achieve the best they can - if you care, the pupils notice and it makes all the difference.

It is so tricky to pick one memory as my fondest from my time at St Mary's! From accidentally setting off the fire alarm and interrupting the A level exams, to performing in several productions! I thoroughly enjoyed my role as head of Temple West - I still have the hoodie - and I also loved being the only student in two of my A level classes (couldn't get away with not doing any homework though!). Probably my all time favourite is my last day as I saw Mrs Jones (my old English teacher and Temple West leader) wearing the green scarf we had bought her as a parting gift. Set off the waterworks!



Harriet

Each year the SMA awards a bursary of £300 to a Year 13 girl to help carry out a project which would enhance her future studies, her personal development or enable her to participate in a charitable project which is of particular significance to her. Last year the bursary was awarded to Harriet Stallard who used the award to subsidise a trip to visit a variety of European Art Galleries. Harriet came back to St Mary's in June to give a very interesting talk about how she had used the award and the impact it had on her choice of further education. She gave an engaging and informative account of her travels around Europe's major cities; Krakow, Berlin, Amsterdam, Zagreb, Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Frankfurt and Amsterdam, examining art and architecture. It was all in the cause of research for an extended essay that Harriet was working on for Leeds University's Access to Study Programme. The title of her essay was "to what extent did political development effect art in Europe?" Her research enabled her to complete her essay and in fact gain a distinction. However, more interestingly, Harriet's experience of studying the art led her to reappraise her chosen university course and she in fact elected to go to the University of Arts in London to study Graphic Design, instead of Sociology and Crime at Leeds. Harriet has done incredibly well during the course of her first year at UAL, gaining a first for her work and also a very exciting internship over the summer- quite a feat for somebody at the end of their first year of studies!



...and Heads, past and present.



Miss Audrey Timberlake Headmistress: 1972 - 1984

When I look back on my years at St Mary's there are so many wonderful memories, but one remains very special to this day.

At the end of each term, we gathered for Final Assembly, a collective "family" event. As the School eventually filed out of the hall, Mrs Hill (Deputy Head) and I stood one on each side of the open doors. As each girl passed, we shook her hand and wished her "Happy Christmas", "Happy Easter" or "Happy Holiday" according to the term.

My timetable, in any one year, did not allow me to teach every class, but at least three times a year, every girl was greeted, by one or other of us, as an individual, a St Mary's girl.

Mrs Fanny Balcombe Headmistress: 1995 - 2010



in the morning, to keep fit, and it's great thinking time. I'm chairman of my choir, I belong to a book club, a theatre appreciation group, a NADFAS group, a Rotary Club, and I spend much time with friends and family, talking, laughing, arguing, eating...

In 2012 we spent a lot of time in the Olympic Park and other venues at many Olympic and Paralympic events - what a fantastic summer that was. We then had an excellent stay in Glasgow in 2014 at the Commonwealth Games. As a working woman, I would never have had the opportunity to spend day after day at such marvellous events and I really appreciated the freedom that retirement had given me.

Through Rotary and my church I have been engaged in charitable work for others and volunteering. For several years I worked in the kitchen of our church coffee shop - great fun! - and I was church warden for several years (less fun and more hard work!) My dearest mum needed much care before she died at 92 in 2015 - she certainly kept us busy and always entertained! I thank God for her every day.

Six months ago, my husband David and I sold our tiny cottage in East Devon and bought a lovely, characterful and bigger house nearby, with a view to moving there permanently in the next

year. At present we're backwards and forwards all the time - quite tiring - but we're already gathered in to a great church there and have been warmly welcomed into the village by its active and somewhat dotty inhabitants! My overriding preoccupation at present is growing a potato in a bucket for the village summer show - a new departure for me but I find myself checking my bucket really rather frequently and thinking about compost!! All part of living forwards - always something new to think about!!

I hope this gives you a picture of 'Mrs Balcombe's Retirement' - I am very happy and very blessed. St Mary's had an unassailable place in my heart.

My favourite thing about St Mary's was something intangible - it was the loving atmosphere and ethos, which made the school very special and distinctive.

Daft things: I loved the sandy-coloured buildings and the gravel.

I loved my peaceful office and the long curtains.

I loved the little chapel services.

I loved standing on the stage in assembly and looking at all the girls looking back at me - it made me feel happy.

THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS!

As with most people, once one retires one is so busy it's hard to remember having time to work! I've spent the last 7 years exploring life and discovering new things and enjoying learning, just like I did when I was a student but with more wisdom and a bit more money!

My activities have included much reading, choral singing, yoga, concerts, theatre, opera, films. I walk almost every day for up to an hour, first thing

Mrs Jean Ross Headmistress: 2010 - present

Whilst walking through Prep - or Junior House as you may recall it - one very little girl bade me good morning and her friend asked 'Who is that?'. 'That's Mrs Ross', her friend replied, 'she's the caretaker'. Whilst she went on to elaborate, very kindly, that I was the person who took care of everyone, she is actually quite right. I am the caretaker of this wonderful school rooted in 145 years of remarkable teachers, remarkable Heads and truly remarkable girls.

Whilst we do, as you would expect, have new buildings, new teachers, lots of new ideas and even, dare I say it, a new uniform, we have not lost sight of the ethos and traditions which you have handed down to us over the years. Chapel, the Flag Ceremony, Lord Dismiss Us and Lord Behold Us, the Library, Kirk, Latham, Temple West and Butler, to name but a few. And of course, Cedar Lawn, now sadly without the Cedar Tree but it has been carved into a lovely wooden sofa for the girls to enjoy.

Miss Timberlake always reminds me that this is her school and both she and Mrs Balcombe, as well as all of you, can be absolutely assured that I take great care of this amazing school, ever conscious of the fact that it has been fashioned by generations of St Mary's girls. We are immensely grateful to you all.



Memories, photos & favourite things about St Mary's...

Receiving the literary prize from Roald Dahl 1976!
- Susan

Music lessons back in the 70s, classmates and cookery with Mrs Hobley - Giselle



1984: ready for swimming



The water was freezing!



1972 Jean's first school year...

Taking Mrs LeBretton's boxer dogs for walks around the school grounds - she was amazing too.
- Miriam

Definitely the choir with Mrs Channon! She inspired me to become the professional singer and Music teacher I am today. She was truly an inspiration! I remember her so fondly. I loved the circular music room with the piano in the corner! - Rebecca



1977: The pool

I Loved domestic Science and the inspirational Mrs Hobley... many happy memories to cherish from 1977-82. - Lisa

I was just a young girl whilst at Lower St Mary's (ages 6-9) but I do have one distinct memory that had the whole school buzzing. Cilla Black's son started at Lower St Mary's during my second year I believe. We were all a bit starstruck even at such a young age! - Jean

Being part of the choir, my friends and our crazy Maths teacher who would carry on writing on the wall if she ran out of room on the blackboard!! - Polly

At St Mary's 1964-74 Remember fondly Miss Stockdale from Little St Mary's. Also memories of Miss Prescott our Art teacher. Still have my enamelling! Mrs Gauss who I visited at her home down here in Cornwall - Annie

I go back to the days of Miss Chalk, dresses to the knees and navy knickers for PE. And we held a séance down in the cellar! - Carol



... and allowed to wear a dress for school photo

Welly the Cat!
- Jess

The chocolate sponge pudding and swimming competitions!
- Victoria

The friends I made and still lucky to be friends with them 28 years later
- Samantha

Roast dinners, crazy foam dessert and cookery lessons - Johanne

Being thrown out of Art class for getting paint on the teacher's new smock! - Nerida

The woods in the Junior House playground. Absolute health and safety nightmare but so much fun to run around in and Mrs Majico was on hand with her dettol and cotton wool in the blue kidney shape bowl! - Tiffany

Apart from being happy in school for the first time in my young life... and some wonderful, memorable teachers - Mrs. Hobley, Mr Bailey, Mrs Britton, Miss Stairs, Mrs Hill... oh I could go on... the best part for me were the friends I made in my first year in 1970, many of whom are still my best friends today - you can't beat that! Oh - and the roast potatoes on a Wednesday!!! - Sarah

The most precious years of my life - what a wonderful school with Miss Timberlake at the helm. Still see all the girls regularly - we're now all turning 50!!! Am sure the spirit of Wellington the cat still lives on. - Paula

Playing team tennis and Miss Timberlake when she interviewed me for my place at school and telling me to be quiet and stop answering for my mum! - Karen



1978

Crazy Foam... oh yes, sport, netball, swimming, rounders lacrosse. Miss Owen, Mrs Hill, Mrs Rambsbottom ... we had fun! Food was great the skin on the custard and chocolate yummy - Nicola

Oh such happy days, from being allowed to excel at sport, Miss Last (not first) encouraging Art and finally an outstanding Miss Timberlake for giving me belief in myself.. - Amanda