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ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk



PAGE 3

MICHAELA STRACHAN

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Stay connected P2 | Feature: Michaela Strachan P3 | Alumni news P4 | Alumni events P5 | Alumni visits P6 | Fond farewells P7 | Did you know P8 | School news P9 | Choice Grenfell production P10 | From the archives P11 |

STAY CONNECTED

Kelly O'Hara

Alumni relations officer

alumni@claremont.surrey.sch.uk

Kelly Hilder

Development officer

development@claremont.surrey.sch.uk



KEEP IN TOUCH

We're always keen to keep in touch with the Claremont Fan Court community. Whether it's memories of your school days, stories of your travels, career details or reunions.

Please email alumni@claremont.surrey.sch.uk with your updates.

HEADS' BLOG

An extract from our March 2020 heads' blog, fostering a culture of collaboration, written by head of the Prep School, Mrs Helen Hutton-Attenborough. The blog is a reflective piece of writing in line with the school's character qualities.

Schools are at heart people-based organisations, built around teams of adults and children. The relationships within them, the teams that exist and the leaders that guide those teams are fundamental to the culture of a school. A parent visiting the school recently said to me that he was constantly amazed by how many new things children have to embrace, and how daunting he would find this as an adult...

www.claremontfancourt.co.uk/headsblog

Join the online alumni community

- Create an online profile
- Keep your contact details up to date
- Connect with old school friends
- Register to attend alumni events
- Receive school and alumni news

www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk

A warm welcome to all our alumni

It's a privilege to be writing to you as the new Chair. My connection with both Claremont and Fan Court schools goes as far back as 1965, both through my mother's role as guardian to overseas students and our family's affinity for the schools' religious foundations. Two years after the merger, I took up a post at the school as Housemaster and English teacher (1980 – 1990), soon after to be appointed Senior Master. I am now committed to fostering the school's ethos and mission as it progresses at a remarkable pace.

In these exceptional circumstances, the challenges faced by the school are unprecedented. With the current closure, educational activity is continuing very successfully online, as is evidenced by the hugely positive feedback from parents.

We value your interest and support. Please do feel free to let us know if you would like to help our plans to invest in the future of the school and in extending bursary provision to support talented young minds. Although we will not be able to host this year's Summer Meeting or the opening of the Sir Sydney Camm building next term, I look forward to meeting you in person at our alumni events, our careers evenings or at the next Summer Meeting.

Wishing you all safekeeping during these challenging times.

Andrew Sutherland

Chair of governors



A word from the editor...

Welcome to the spring edition of the alumni newsletter. I hope that you will enjoy catching up on all our most recent events, visits and communications and that it provides somewhat of a welcome distraction whilst the coronavirus requires us to self-isolate in our homes to support our NHS. To that effect, we are sorry that we had to cancel our careers evening and postpone our London drinks event. We were so grateful to all of you who offered to attend the careers evening and we hope that you will be available to come along to this event next year instead. Keep an eye out for a new date for our London drinks event too!

Kelly O'Hara

Alumni relations officer



ALUMNI FEATURE

MICHAELA STRACHAN RETURNS TO CLAREMONT

Wildlife TV presenter and Claremont Fan Court alumni, Michaela Strachan (1974-1982), returns for a visit



Michaela has recently been in the UK filming Winterwatch on BBC 2 before heading back to her home in Cape Town, South Africa.

During her visit, Michaela enjoyed a tour of the school's wonderful Forest School in the Pre-Prep and Nursery where she donned a pair of stripy wellington boots and chatted to the children about their favourite animals.

She met with a group of Prep School eco-warriors, who are launching their own special recycling scheme and wildlife protection initiatives. She was delighted to see how much the children were learning about local wildlife and then talked about her own passion for the preservation and protection of the planet. She even suggested that a wormery could be the next welcome addition to the Prep school.

Next, it was on to the Senior School's newly modified media studies classroom, where two sixth form students interviewed Michaela in the green screen studio, before enjoying a tour of the school's new Sir Sydney Camm science and technology building. Michaela was very impressed with the art and textiles on exhibit, remembering fondly the rabbit pin cushion she made during her own textile lessons.



ALUMNI NEWS



LOVE AT FIRST BITE

Nicole Dodds (1993-2005) and Lauren Dodds (1990-2006)

We were delighted that owners of Afternoon Crumbs, Nicole and Lauren Dodds, agreed to join us again as judges for this year's Surrey schools' baking challenge hosted at Claremont Fan Court School on Tuesday 3 March. This year the competition was held in the school's brand-new Sir Sydney Camm science and technology building - the perfect space to inspire beautiful bakes!

Nicole and Lauren Dodds opened their cake shop Afternoon Crumbs on The Parade, Claygate in 2016. They design and make beautiful bespoke cakes and cupcakes to order for all occasions or just an everyday treat! Nicole hand makes everything onsite and Lauren is the friendly face behind the counter and runs the business side of things (she loves a spreadsheet!).

Cupcakes are available to buy in store every Tuesday - Saturday from 12pm.

www.afternooncrumbs.com



LOOK AT ME NOW!

Sophie Matthew (1999-2011)

When current Claremont Fan Court Prep School student Sasha B celebrated her ninth birthday with a trip to Mamma Mia she had the added excitement of being met by a leading cast member and Claremont Fan Court alumna, Sophie Matthew. You may have read about Sophie in our last edition.

Sasha and her parents were treated to a backstage tour and were introduced to a few other cast members and dancers. Sasha's mother, **Karen Brewis (nee Allison, 1979-1990)** said, "We were able to walk all around backstage and see where they do their quick changes/set changes. We went on stage too - walked through three doorways on set and met some of the other cast members and dancers. Sasha was fascinated. It was very special".

After the show Sophie met Sasha at the backstage door and presented her with a programme which had very kindly been signed by the cast members.



If you would like to share your news/memories or arrange a visit we would be delighted to hear from you. Please email alumni@claremontfancourt.sch.uk

STANMORE HOUSE: NEW FOR SEPTEMBER 2020

After a consultation with members of our Fan Court Community at the start of the year, the senior leadership team has agreed on 'Stanmore' as the new fifth house name. Stanmore was chosen because, like our existing Claremont Fan Court School house names, it represents a location rather than a building or person associated with our school. In the same vein as Norwood, the original location of Clear View School, Stanmore represents the early foundation of the pre-Fan Court school, when the support and generosity of others provided the time and space which allowed Fan Court to survive and ultimately to flourish.

Our inclusion of a fifth house has come about as a result of developing the Senior School pastoral structure to ensure that pupil care remains central to school life as the school grows. In September 2020 the Senior School will be moving to a vertical tutoring system, whereby tutor groups will consist of small numbers of pupils from each school year. This will encourage our pupils to spend time with peers from different year groups, improve and consolidate peer to peer mentoring and will be more reflective of life outside of the school environment. Adding a new school house helps us to facilitate some additional pupils as well as ensuring our existing house tutor groups are not too large.

If you are interested to learn more about Fan Court School, its foundation and early life at the school you can now read chapters of the **Fan Court School – 1932-1968** booklet on the alumni web portal:

www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk/resources/fan-court



UPCOMING EVENTS

HERITAGE OPEN DAY | Saturday 12 September 2020 11.00am - 5.00pm

Once again, the mansion ground floor rooms will be open for self-guided touring, with information boards provided. Visitors can also pre-register to join one of our guided tours* to learn about the history of our former royal palace, bookable from 1 July 2020 via thelittleboxoffice.com/claremont. Tea and homemade cakes will be available to purchase in the Great Room.

**please note places on the guided tours are limited and pre-booking is essential*



CHOICE GRENFELL | Saturday 3 October 2020, 7.30pm

Claremont Fan Court School is pleased to host Choice Grenfell, a wonderful tribute to the unrelentingly genteel, comedienne and monologist, Joyce Grenfell. How fitting that a play about one of our most treasured alumni written by a school alumni and playwright, Andrew Brewis, should return to the Joyce Grenfell Centre (JGC) as part of its UK tour. Tickets: www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk/event/choice-grenfell

ALUMNI LACROSSE, TENNIS, CRICKET AND FOOTBALL TEAMS

Are you interested in playing sport with fellow alumni?

We'd like to arrange an alumni game of lacrosse, tennis and/or football with a view to setting this up as a regular event. Would you be interested in joining these?

Contact alumni@claremont.surrey.sch.uk to register your interest.



ALUMNI VISITS

Janet Crommelin Brook (nee Commelin)

Class of 1987, Longcross

In January we were delighted to welcome Janet along with her husband and four children back for a visit whilst they were on holiday in the UK and Europe. Janet now lives in central Australia, where she and her husband run a successful 780,000 hectare organic Hereford cattle farm. Their way of life is so rural they have to travel 500km every fortnight to collect fresh food and they order their dry groceries annually.

Read more about their cattle business is available via www.obeorganic.com/farmers/cordillo-downs/



Orlena Lackenbauer (nee Michele Ligon)

Class of 1966, Esher

Orlena Lackenbauer, nee Michele Ligon (1963-1966, Esher) returned to visit the school in October 2019 while visit the UK with her husband from her home in California.

After regaling my husband about the amazing school that I attended in England, I was able to bring him there and have a tour to show off the "Downton Abby" beauty. I got my first flood of memory and emotion when driving up the regal drive, where at the end of term many Rolls and Bentleys used to pick up their girls and then there would be my American family of seven heaving up the drive in a VW bus! Mortified!

The entry hall looked exactly as it did between 1963-66, aside from the pupils' artwork and reception desk. The large room to the side of the entryway was lavishly furnished with plush carpet and couches where the headmistress, Miss Doran, used to read stories to us on Sunday afternoons in front of the

cosy fireplace. Where the library is now was the dining room. We practiced our etiquette in there and enjoyed typical English high tea as well as all other meals. Upstairs the yellow classroom used to be my dorm with about 6 beds. I remember our lovely Irish Matron, Miss Patton, used to come in to say goodnight. She was a dear and I loved her accent.

I also remember the clunky elevator that was strictly verboten. We absolutely had to explore the mysterious basement where Clive's bath is. Back then there was nothing down there but dingy, cold stone floor and walls, dim lighting and the possibility of something scary in the dark corners. It was a delight to see that space used for art classrooms. Seeing the school change from a girl's boarding school to a busy co-educational day school was a big change but the basic beauty of the architecture remains awesome. Although I was a bit of a rebel there, I have always been proud of Claremont and grateful I had the opportunity to attend a proper English girls' boarding school - one with such history!



FOND FAREWELLS



GORDON HUNT

In January 2020, after 8 years Gordon Hunt retired as Claremont Fan Court School Chair of Governors. Mr Hunt joined the governing body in 2005 but his association with the school goes back much further. Mr Hunt became a teacher at Fan Court School in 1967 where he and his wife, Barbara, were also house parents. After the schools amalgamated in 1978, Mr Hunt taught in the 'middle school' before being appointed as deputy head six years later. In 1989 he became deputy head pastoral in the Senior School and headmaster for a further 11 years.

We thank Gordon for his continued commitment and loyalty to the school over the years and wish him every happiness in his retirement.

JUDY TILSON

In March 2020 we bid farewell to Marketing Manager, Judy Tilson, after almost 16 years as an integral part of the Claremont Fan Court School team. She leaves the school to enjoy a retirement full of travel, tennis, golf lessons and time with her grandchildren – so she will have plenty to keep her busy!

Judy joined the school in 2004 and immediately set about repositioning Claremont Fan Court on the Surrey schools map by increasing local marketing presence following the closure of the school's boarding house. Over the years, she has been instrumental in attracting local families along to visitor mornings, which in turn has driven a healthy increase in pupil numbers. A wonderful new website launched by Judy and her team in 2018 also helped to position the school successfully in a competitive market.

As well as plentiful open events, Judy has worked tirelessly to ensure summer meetings ran smoothly each year and worked with colleagues to organise smaller events including the Surrey schools' baking challenge which soon became a firm favourite of hers. Often the first to arrive before events and the last to leave, Judy's commitment to the school has never faltered.

Many of our alumni will have met Mrs Tilson on their very first visit to Claremont Fan Court and will remember her being involved a number of school and alumni events across the years. Sadly the COVID-19 restrictions limited her leaving celebrations but we were delighted to be able to enjoy a cup of tea and special retirement themed cakes on her last day at school.



OBITUARY

Pamela Fortune, teacher and boarding mistress (1989-1992)

On our return to school in January we received an email from one of our alumni, **Antonia Baker, nee Fortune, (1988-1992)** who kindly shared with us the very sad news that her mum, Pam Fortune had passed away over the Christmas holidays.

Many of you will remember Pam who taught in the middle school and was boarding mistress here from 1989-1992. Toni remembers that Pam really enjoyed her time at Claremont, she wrote of her mother's time here: *"Life was busy as she was never off duty, between teaching and boarding duties but it was rewarding and she made some good friends here. She was a great teacher and her classes loved her."*

She will be greatly missed by Toni, her two sisters and their families. Our thoughts are with them.

DID YOU KNOW?



THE VANBRUGH HOUSE

The mansion building that houses our senior school today was not the first house built on this site. The original house was built in 1708 by Sir John Vanbrugh, the architect of Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard. The plans for the Vanbrugh house are in the Victoria and Albert Museum and show a small square house with battlements, built at the lower part of the lawn to the front of the current mansion. Vanbrugh also built the White Cottage for his gardener.



In 1714 John Vanbrugh sold the house to the would-be Duke of Newcastle, who significantly increased the property size and parkland by some 300 acres. The Duke enlisted William Kent to landscape the gardens, and construct the boundary walls. The ha-ha wall can still be seen at the rear of the current mansion and preserves an uninterrupted view of the parkland at the rear. Over recent years the ha-ha walls have undergone a full programme of refurbishment and restoration.

In 1768 on the death of the Duke the estate was brought by Lord Clive, who decided to demolish the original house and build a new one at the top of the hill. This was partly due to damp and partly because he could not understand why someone would build a property that could not take advantage of the fabulous views. Lord Clive employed Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to build the new property, working alongside a young Henry Holland, who would become Brown's son in law. The building work took 4 years and the interior was not completed until 1772.

Many of the fireplaces that still exist in the mansion today were moved from Vanbrugh's original house.



Sir John Vanbrugh

SCHOOL NEWS

COVID-19 - A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMASTER

Dear alumni,

Even before Boris Johnson's announcement on Wednesday 18 March we had been considering the right approach to the COVID-19 situation for our pupils and, on Friday 20 March, Claremont Fan Court School moved to remote teaching.

I do not underestimate the issues that remote learning creates, but it is our duty to keep our children and staff safe and well, while ensuring we can deliver the best standard of teaching and learning available. We had anticipated reaching this stage for some weeks, and each school already had clear plans for delivering remote learning, maintaining pastoral oversight and for ensuring quality assurance. We have the advantage for pupils from year 4 making use of the school laptops and the benefits of Google classroom, and we have sent home learning packs for younger children. We are also rolling out conference calling for some lessons, and this

will increase after the Easter break. Thankfully, technology enables a seamless process of submission, marking and returning of work in a way that was unimaginable before.

Parents and pupils in exam years have had a particularly challenging time, and we are currently working carefully on deciding the grades we recommend to the awarding bodies. We have reservations about this process, because it risks overlooking the fact that some pupils peak more than others in their June exams, but it is the fairest process that could exist, and we are making sure we are utterly rigorous in the recommendations we make.

None of us would wish to be in this situation, but our challenge is to make the very best of it, and that is our focus now. Given the decision to close belongs with the Government, the decision to open will also depend upon them. I am reminded that this is not the first time that the school has had to adapt to overcome a situation beyond

its control. In 1940 Claremont was forced to relocate to Llandrindod Wells in Radnorshire, Wales to protect its pupils and avoid the impact of war. On that occasion school life changed for six years before returning to Esher. While I hope that the COVID-19 lockdown continues for months rather than years, it is my belief that we will show the same spirit of resilience to carry us through.

Personally, I always miss the buzz of school life when Claremont is not in full operation. There is something quite delightful about the way our pupils use the campus and interact with each other and us. I hope this period is brief, but most of all we will be wishing and hoping for the health and wellbeing of our whole school community.

With my best wishes,

Mr William Brierly
Headmaster

SPECTACULAR SCIENCE

In celebration of British Science Week, our Pre-Prep children explored the wonderful world of science. The children were joined by visitors from the Prep and Senior School who hosted exciting experiments from baking soda balloons, to making bubbles and investigating absorption with coloured water. The children were delighted to see spectacular science in action.



ENGLAND LACROSSE NATIONALS

Claremont Fan Court enjoyed a successful few days at the England lacrosse nationals at the beginning of March, holding their own against some of the best lacrosse schools in the country. Our 1st team reached the final 16 in division 1, the U15s qualified for the championship final 16 – a feat never achieved before by the school – and our U14s played all the way through to the division 1 final. A superb effort by each team, well played girls!



CHOICE GRENFELL PRODUCTION

CHOICE GRENFELL COMES TO CLAREMONT

On Saturday 3 October Claremont Fan Court School will host a production of "Choice Grenfell" here in our very own Joyce Grenfell Centre. Choice Grenfell is a wonderful tribute to the unremittingly genteel, comedienne and monologist, Joyce Grenfell. It seems very fitting that a play about one of our most treasured alumnae written by a school alumnus and talented playwright, Andrew Brewis, should return to the Joyce Grenfell Centre (JGC) as part of its UK tour.

In this delightful new show, Joyce (Suzanna Walters) is our guide for a delightful delve into some of her most endearing characters, ably accompanied by her trusted pianist William Blezard (Andrew Brewis).

Andrew Brewis (1978-1985), attended Claremont Fan Court when the school celebrated Joyce with an Arts Festival in her memory and a gala at The Aldwych Theatre in London. Andrew remembers playing his trombone in the orchestra backing The Moody Blues. Other Claremont Fan Court alumni who were involved in the gala include: **Jeanette Bevan, Robert Gildon, Tamsin Bland (nee Bennetts), Karen Brewis (nee Allison)**.

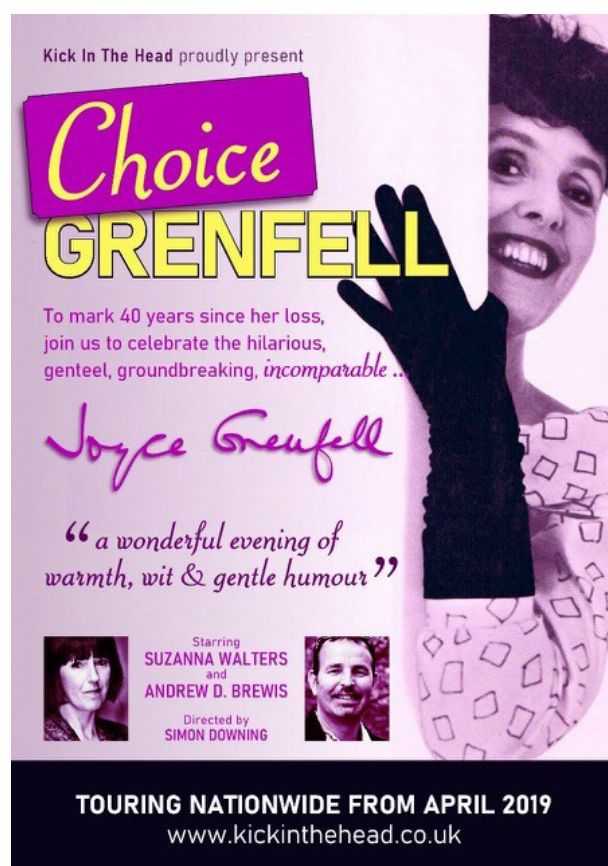
Andrew is now a parent at the school, with a daughter currently in Year 4. He is a full-time performer, writer and theatrical producer and has been heavily involved with producing and starring in a nationwide tour of Choice Grenfell. It's been selling out theatres across the UK and he's delighted to be bringing it to Claremont. A percentage of ticket sales will be donated to the school's development fund to extend and renovate the JGC.

This is indeed an opportunity for current parents and past pupils and staff alike to find out who this amazing person actually was, and why we have the theatre at our school named after her. Andrew has very kindly offered to return to school on Friday 2 October so that our Year 7 and 8 students can enjoy a special complementary performance with a Q&A session afterwards.

As Joyce would have said "We request the pleasure of your company".

Tickets are £20 and available via ticketsignite.com. The production starts at 7:30pm.

To find out more about this performance, read an interview with Andrew and Suzanna and reviews of the show please visit www.kickinthehead.co.uk/choice-grenfell



JOYCE GRENFELL CENTRE A SPACE TO GROW

The Joyce Grenfell Centre has served us well, as the senior and prep dining hall and as a space for meetings and performances – but we have now outgrown it. We will fund a significant part of our redevelopment work on the Joyce Grenfell Centre via fundraising and donations. If you can support this project, please contact Mrs Kelly Hilder development@claremont.surrey.sch.uk. For more information about our development plans and how you can support the school, visit www.claremontfancourt.co.uk/supportus.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Here is a picture of the 1st lacrosse team from 1991. We think this could have been the team who went on tour to Australia with Karen Donaldson (PE teacher). Have we named everyone correctly?

Front row: Charlotte Kilmister, Janis Moon, Antoinette Curzey and Georgia Evans

Second row: ?, Zoe Everden, Emma Dewey, Katie Evans and Elisia Robinson

Third row: Faye Moss, ?, ?, ?, Caroline and Ann Pearce

Back row: ?, Justine Alpe and Iona Scott

Are you in this picture? Did you go on tour? We would love to hear from you. Perhaps you'd like to get involved in a reunion lacrosse match back at Claremont - let us know via alumni@claremont.surrey.sch.uk

FAMILIAR FACES

Let us know if you recognise anyone in this lovely Pre-Prep and Nursery School class photo. Perhaps you are one of the pupils?

We estimate the date to be the early 90s but do get in touch if you can help any further with details.





HOW ARE WE DOING?

If you enjoyed reading this latest edition of the alumni newsletter, please drop us a line and let us know what you liked most.

GET INVOLVED IN OUR NEXT EDITION

Contact us to share your story with the Claremont Fan Court alumni community or make suggestions as to what you'd like to see in future editions.

You can opt out of receiving future editions of the newsletter at any time. To do this, please contact us using the contact details below.

Claremont Fan Court School
Claremont Drive
Esher
Surrey
KT10 9LY

alumni@claremont.surrey.sch.uk
www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk

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