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Issue 19

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

[www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk](http://www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk)



## ALUMNI FOCUS MUSIC Y MAMBO WITH SARAH WILLIS

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# STAY CONNECTED

## Kelly Hilder

Development and alumni office  
alumni@claremont.surrey.sch.uk  
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](mailto:alumni@claremont.surrey.sch.uk) with your updates.

## HEADS' BLOG

An extract from our December blog, entitled 'Joy', written by our head of Preparatory School Mrs Helen Hutton-Attenborough. The blog is a reflective piece of writing in line with the school's monthly character qualities.

*"this term at school has been one which has brought unexpected joy. With a return to face to face teaching, the camaraderie among pupils and staff has been palpable, with us all valuing ever more the joy in the positive relationships between us. There is a gentle understanding of the shared challenges, and an atmosphere of care for one another, as well as a determined optimism to make the most of being at school together. From the youngest to the oldest pupils in school, we have been delighted and impressed by their ability to keep a positive attitude towards working hard..."*

Read the full blog at  
[www.claremontfancourt.co.uk/headsblog](http://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](http://www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk)

## A warm welcome to all our alumni

Dear Alumni

In a year of unprecedented challenges our support and teaching staff have excelled beyond all reasonable expectation. To achieve the highest standards in 'remote learning,' they have gone the extra mile repeatedly. This has been reflected in the showering of complimentary feedback from parents.

With similar exceptionality, this year pupil numbers across the prep and senior schools have held up and applications have increased, exceeding places by a long way. Hence, we are poised to enhance the educational experience of our pupils through the development of further facilities.

Whilst much has changed since the school was first established in 1922, our values emanating from the Christian Science foundation have not; the following words, used to describe the school, are still true today: "forever developing itself, broadening and rising higher and higher from a boundless basis."

I hope you enjoy your read.

**Andrew Sutherland**  
Chair of governors



## A word from the editor...

As the impact of the pandemic continues to affect us, Kelly O'Hara left Claremont Fan Court School at the start of term and we wish her well for the future. In what now feels like a long year of restrictions, rules and uncertainty, we find ourselves entering a more familiar time for peace, joy and hope. The announcement of a new vaccine offering reassurance for so many in the new year is welcome news. There is hope that even though restrictions are still in place we have an opportunity to see (at least some of) our family members. It is my hope that there will be time for everyone to relax and enjoy the peace and joy that the festive break can bring.

Merry Christmas and I look forward to staying in touch with you all throughout 2021.

**Kelly Hilder**  
Development and alumni office



# ALUMNI FOCUS: SARAH WILLIS



**Sarah Willis (Radnor, 1980-1986), a French Horn player and member of the Berlin Philharmonic orchestra, explores the combination of Mozart and popular Cuban mambo music.**

After leaving Claremont Fan Court School, initially joining as a boarder, Sarah attended the Royal College of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. In 2001, she joined the Berlin Philharmonic, becoming the first female brass player.

During her career, Sarah has performed with a number of orchestras across the world, including the London Symphony Orchestra. She is a presenter on the German TV station Deutsche Welle and hosts a regular online series Horn Hangouts which is streamed live via her website and her Youtube channel. This series includes interviews with famous musicians, as well as tips on playing the instrument. In 2016 Sarah also appeared as a judge on the BBC's Young Musician competition. In January 2020, Sarah travelled to Cuba to film her latest musical project for her album Mozart y Mambo which allowed her to celebrate her love for Mozart, especially the horn concerto, combined with the joy of traditional Cuban music. During the visit she explored how the melodies and rhythms of composer Wolfgang

Amadeus Mozart complemented popular Cuban mambo perfectly.

*"There is a statue of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in Havana. On my first visit to Cuba in 2017, I was told by one of the local musicians: "Mozart would have been a good Cuban". I was intrigued by this comment and thus began the inspiration for this album."*



Source: [sarah-willis.com/](http://sarah-willis.com/)

The new album is available to buy now via Sarah's website: [www.sarah-willis.com/mozartymambo/](http://www.sarah-willis.com/mozartymambo/)



# ALUMNI NEWS

## YOUNGEST LE MANS 24 HOUR RACE CHAMPION

Our congratulations to **Phil Hanson (Norwood, 2013)** who is celebrating his latest victory after winning his maiden Le Mans 24 Hour Race in September 2020. The event is the world's oldest active endurance sports car race, held annually since 1923 near the town of Le Mans, France and considered one of the most prestigious automobile races in the world. Racing teams must balance the demands of speed with the cars' ability to run for 24 hours without mechanical failure.

Phil attended Claremont Fan Court School for 11 years before leaving in Year 9 to conclude his education elsewhere. He began by driving on the karting circuit and started his racing career when he won the Whilton Mill Club Championship in 2014.

In 2017 he became the youngest overall finisher in his Le Mans 24 Hour debut, finishing 9th in the LMP2 class and 11th overall in the twice-around-the-clock race. At just 17, Phil was also the youngest Asian LMS champion, as well as being the youngest driver to record an overall victory in the European Le Mans Series, previously winning the 4 Hours of Spa in September 2018.

In October 2018 Phil joined United Autosports, driving alongside Paul Di Resta and Filipe Albuquerque. His team successfully went on to win the annual twice-around-the-clock endurance sportscar race in France by almost 33 seconds.

You can find out more about Phil's career and achievements via his website [www.philhanson.racing](http://www.philhanson.racing)



## KARIM KICKSTARTS INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

Trainee pharmacist and former pupil, **Karim Saleh (Radnor, 2015)**, is to feature in a new campaign to highlight the growing importance of global health in keeping people safe. The Health Legends initiative showcases the dedication of individuals from around the world who are passionate about making a difference to health in their communities and beyond.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how we're all connected and by sharing their personal experiences, they hope more people will be encouraged to get behind the campaign.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Saleh has been working in a pharmacy in Elmbridge supporting local residents. "People were receptive and understood when we had to change things, like how many people were allowed into the pharmacy at one time. This pandemic has shown us that we are all affected by global health problems. With the threat of new viruses emerging like COVID-19, infectious disease research and the supply of vaccines is more important than ever. My goal is to work in vaccine provision in low- to middle-income countries. These countries end up being the most severely affected due to weaker infrastructure, weaker health literacy, and just short-staffing in general."

Saleh is driven by a strong passion to make a big difference in the global health arena, after being inspired by how Egypt handled their outbreak of Hepatitis C. "Egypt had one of the worst rates in the world for Hepatitis C infection. But they managed to devise a very cost-effective way to tackle the problem. Almost everyone in the country received antiviral treatment against Hepatitis C, which cut down the spread of the disease to reach record low diagnosis numbers. It is so exciting to see local interventions that end up having a global impact, and global interventions that work well on a local level too. That's what I want to be a part of." says Saleh.

### How can you be a Health Legend?

Anyone can be a health legend. To read more about the campaign and how to get involved visit [www.healthlegends.com](http://www.healthlegends.com)

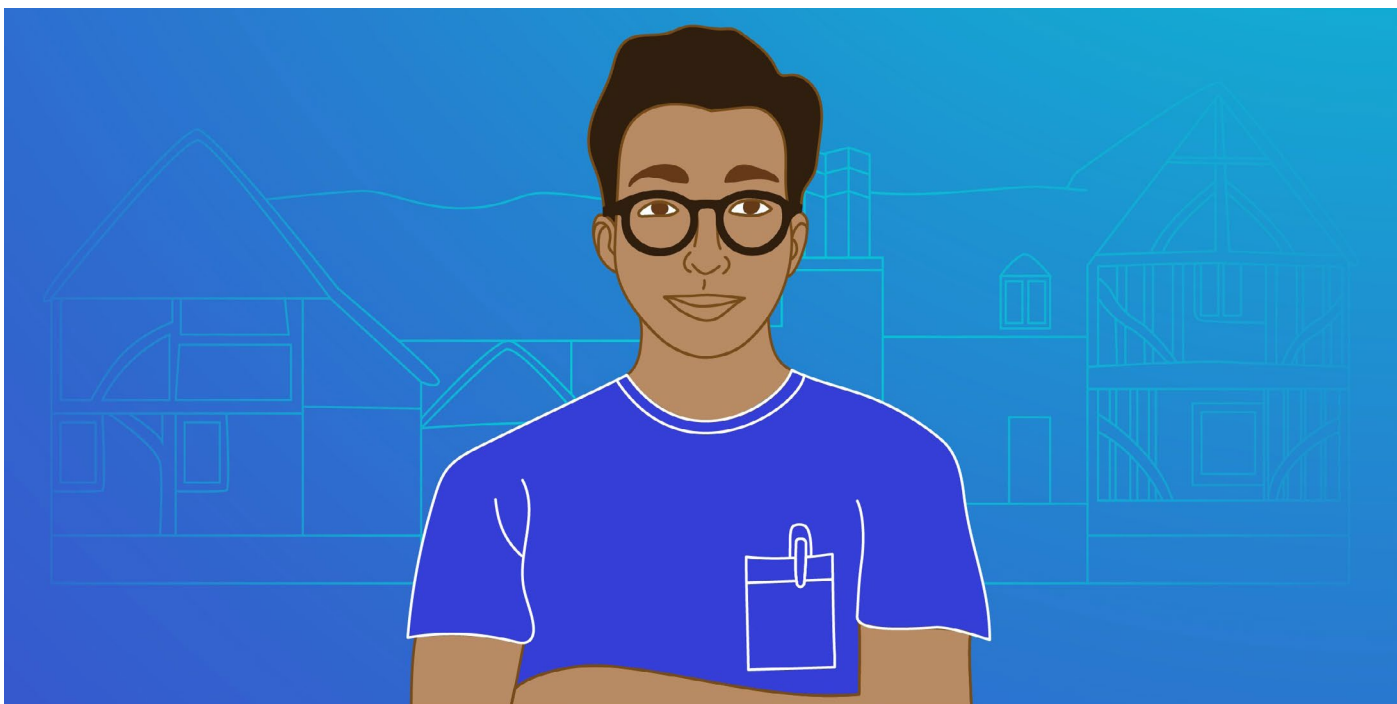


## BACK TO SCHOOL

As school resumed for the academic year 2020-21 we are pleased to welcome back two former pupils as new members of staff. Former head girl, **Madison Bell (Norwood, 2016)** has joined the Preparatory School as a Year 4 teacher after studying Primary Education at the University of Winchester.

**Millie Tyson (Esher, 2011)** has joined the support staff as an apprentice office administrator, currently working in the Senior School office. Millie completed her A levels at Esher College before attending Kingston University to study dance.

The school currently has a total of 13 alumni working in both teaching and support roles across the whole school. It is wonderful to welcome back our former pupils to inspire and support the next generations.



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](mailto:alumni@claremontfancourt.sch.uk)



# ALUMNI NEWS

## SURF'S UP FOR RUBY WYBORN

Former pupil **Ruby Wyborn (Longcross, 2017)** has set up surfing academy Ruby's Rippers, focused on encouraging more girls to take up the sport. After leaving Claremont Fan Court, Ruby took a gap year to live in Australia working at a specialised female surf school to develop her surf coaching skills. Ruby then returned to the UK to study Economics at Plymouth University. Alongside her studies she continued coaching and worked at all female surf camps in Cornwall and Morocco. After gaining experience Ruby decided now was the time to set up her own surf academy.

Ruby returned to her Yorkshire roots and explains here why she was inspired to set up her own surf academy in the North East.

*"The North Yorkshire coast has some of the best surf in the country, but quite often I'm the only girl out there in the surf. Having grown up surfing in the North East, the lack of girls included in the surf community in the area is far too apparent. Whether this is due to the fact that surfing remains a largely male dominated sport, or by the lack of girls sticking with the sport through to their*

*teenage years remains unclear. So, I decided to set up the surf academy in an effort to encourage more girls to give it a try.*

*So many girls drop out of sport as teenagers because they can't find the right one to suit them – it becomes too competitive, or it's just not fun anymore. Surfing is a fantastic alternative to the traditional sports and it's such a great way to find a community of like-minded, active friends. It is such a good sport not just for fitness, but for mental health too.*

*Ruby's Rippers Surf Academy, accredited by Surfing England and Dexter's Surf Shop, runs a six-week programme of expert tuition to help girls find their surfing feet and develop their confidence in the water. I am aiming to continue with the academy in the coming years and add more programmes to get girls into surfing and engaged in sport more generally."*

Find out more about Ruby's surf academy via her facebook page: [www.facebook.com/rubysrippers/](https://www.facebook.com/rubysrippers/)



"Surfing is a fantastic alternative to the traditional sports and it's such a great way to find a community of like-minded, active friends."



# SCHOOL NEWS

## CLAREMONT SUPPORTS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Claremont Fan Court School was awash with yellow on Friday 9 October in support of the Young Minds UK #HelloYellow campaign to mark World Mental Health Awareness Day. All parts of the school participated, with both pupils and staff wearing yellow such as headbands, socks, ties, hats and face masks. The campaign advocates that nobody, including young people, need feel alone with their mental health and that looking after our wellbeing is just as important as our physical health.



## ODD SOCKS IN THE PREP SCHOOL

Prep School pupils and staff arrived at school on Monday morning wearing a fantastic array of colourful odd socks to kick start anti-bullying week from 16 – 20 November. The odd socks day initiative run by the anti-bullying alliance aims to raise awareness around bullying by celebrating individuality and what makes us unique. With compassion our character quality for November, pupils understand the value of kindness and looking out for one another, so wearing odd socks has been a wonderful way to show we are united against bullying.



## NATUREWATCH WALKATHON

Equipped with waterproofs and wellies, our Pre-Prep and Nursery children embarked excitedly upon the annual school walkathon on Wednesday 11 November; this year a sponsored event as part of our naturewatch week. Carrying spotter cards, our intrepid explorers adventured around the school's leafy grounds, through the wild woods and up the hill to the Belvedere tower in search of local wildlife and natural habitats. Children also enjoyed finding and collecting natural materials including pine cones, colourful autumn leaves and bamboo twigs to take back to their classrooms.



# FAN COURT FOCUS



## THE HISTORY BOYS!

The annual Fan Court plays of the 1950s were based on British historical characters and events, with titles such as the Queen Elizabeth Play (1951) and the King Charles Play (1952). As a boys' Preparatory School there was a notable shortage of girls to fill the female lead, but as they say - the show must go on!

Thanks to the recent donation of a photo album into our archive we are delighted to share a selection of photographs from these early Fan Court productions. It looks like such a fun way to bring history to life.



## THE ASHES CRICKET BAT

In 1953 former pupils David and Christopher Courtney presented Fan Court with a cricket bat signed by the England and Australian cricket teams. Cricket fans amongst you will know why 1953 is a significant year, since it's when England regained the Ashes, for the first time in 20 years.

After a wet summer, the series came down to the final test match at The Oval. Both sides agreed that the Test be converted to a six-day affair (rather than the traditional four days) to help force a result after the stalemate of the previous four matches. England won the toss and on the third day began their second innings needing just 131 runs to win. The anticipation was high. In the 1950s BBC television coverage of home test matches was limited to 15mins before lunch and the final full session each day. Due to public demand the BBC had been forced to reschedule programmes to ensure there was live coverage of the entire day's play. At 2.53pm on the fourth day the announcement finally came "England have won the Ashes!" The Sydney Morning Herald wrote "Anyone who has ever fallen under the spell of cricket will insist to this dying day that it is the finest game in the world".

David and Christopher Courtney left Fan Court in 1951, We don't have a record of where they went after Fan Court or how they came by the signed cricket bat but we are very grateful to still have such an interesting piece of memorabilia.






# FOND FAREWELLS


**MRS JANE JENKINS - BURSAR**

After ten transformational years with Claremont Fan Court School, Mrs Jenkins is retiring as bursar at the end of the autumn term. Since joining Claremont, Jane has established robust systems and teams to manage both the financial and operational wings of the school. Under her management, the school's masterplan development projects have taken shape, with the completion of the new Sir Sydney Camm science and technology building in 2019 and refurbishment of Stable Court, just about to begin. As well as her role as bursar, Jane has always been a passionate supporter of the school's heritage and has promoted a number of heritage events to ensure Claremont remains accessible to the wider community. We thank Jane for her continued dedication and commitment to the school over the years and wish her a very happy and relaxing retirement.




**MRS FRANCESCA SIMPSON - ADMISSIONS DEPARTMENT**


After fourteen dedicated years Mrs Simpson has moved on from Claremont Fan Court School. Francesca, who is herself an alumni of the school, returned to Claremont in 2006 initially working as a secretary and Senior School admissions secretary. With burgeoning growth in applications, Francesca eventually became the stand-alone Senior School admissions secretary. We wish Francesca the very best in her new adventures.



**MISS KATE PRESTON - GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT**

Miss Preston is leaving Claremont Fan Court after four energetic and fun-filled years teaching Geography and leading the department. From standing in rivers and climbing volcanoes to organising the highly anticipated annual Geography cake competition, she has well and truly thrown herself into the role and her enthusiasm for her subject is infectious. Miss Preston will be very much missed by us all and we wish her all the best in her new school.



**OBITUARY**

**Mr Anthony Oakley - former bursar**

It is with sadness that we share the news that Mr Anthony Oakley passed away on Thursday 4 December 2020.

Mr Oakley worked as bursar at Claremont from 1982 to 2000, and later served as the deputy chair of governors until 2012. He is remembered for his attention to detail and great care, balanced by compassion and understanding. Former head, Mrs Linda Cox, recalls his great dry sense of humour and lovely singing voice, both of which he put to good use in taking the role of Fagin in the 2002 Prep School production of Oliver.

We send our sincere thoughts to his wife Gill and sons Timothy, Robert and Jeremy at this sad time.

# DID YOU KNOW?



## GRADE II LISTED MILESTONE

In 1768, the year the Duke of Newcastle died, a milestone was placed beside the driveway running in front of Claremont House. The milestone is a scheduled ancient monument (SU 130) and is grade II listed. It gives the distance to Cornhill, Westminster Bridge and Newcastle House by Hyde Park Corner (17 Miles, two Furlongs and eight poles).

It is commonly thought that Claremont Drive and Blackhills were

part of the route for the original Portsmouth Road rather than running directly through Esher as it does today, however this is not correct. The driveway was in fact never part of Portsmouth Road, it was an estate road built by the Duke of Newcastle to convey guests and visitors to and from Claremont.

The Portsmouth Road has always hugged the north-west boundary of Claremont Fan Court and Claremont Landscape gardens. Indeed, it was

so close to the lake and grotto that, for tranquillity's sake, Lord Clive decided to move it back and drive a cutting through Horseshoe Clump Hill which is the route still used today.

An 18th century survey of Claremont gardens and parkland shows the road in roughly the position it is in now but before Lord Clive had it moved slightly to the west to make room for his enlarged lake, which is now part of the National Trust's Claremont Landscape Garden site.



# LOOKING AHEAD



## Clock tower restoration

The renovation of the clock on Stable Court has been made possible thanks to a generous donation from alumna and former head girl, Merlyn Suckling (nee Venning), class of 1967.

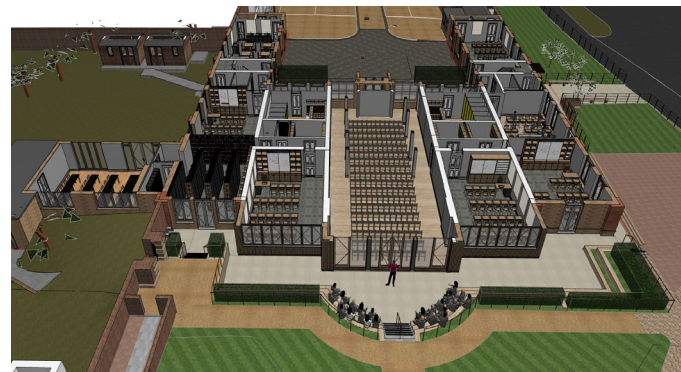
Stable Court is home to the Prep School and the clock tower restoration project forms part of the wider renovation work being undertaken on this important grade II listed building. The priority of heritage focused projects which offer less direct educational value are often lowered by school leadership teams when managing costs. The clock tower restoration will cost over £30,000 and was only made possible thanks to this donation.

Merlyn's donation to cover the cost of the work has ensured full restoration of the clock including the clock face and workings, and hopefully reinstatement of the

## Refurbishment of Stable Court

Phase 1.2 of our school development masterplan will see the refurbishment of the grade II listed Stable Court building which houses our Preparatory School.

Since the original conversion work in the 1950s the interior of Stable Court has changed very little compared with the layout that we have today. Up until 2005 the upper floor rooms were used by boarders, while the lower floors have always been classrooms. The continuing success of our Preparatory School has seen pupil numbers increase and teaching and learning practice develop, but the building has evolved very little.



At the centre of the classrooms will sit a large multi-purpose hall. This space is designed to inspire lifelong learning; a space to serve pupils, teachers and parents. Flexible seating will allow for individuals to work independently, for small groups to come together to collaborate, as well as whole classes or large groups of several classes to learn together.

Removal of the large stage area will ensure this space can be maximised and will also open up the rear of the hall to provide additional light.

Replacing the large roof structure over this space will ensure the space remains warm and dry.



## JOYCE GRENFELL CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

Phase two of the project will include the redevelopment of the Joyce Grenfell Centre (JGC) to include a new school library, transforming our performance space into a dedicated theatre setting, relocating and enlarging the refectory as well as upgrading our music school.

The Joyce Grenfell Centre acknowledges one of our best-known pupils and the building 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. By renovating and extending the JGC we can bring scattered activities together and provide better facilities for all of them. The JGC will become the beating heart of the campus.

While phase one of our master plan was funded primarily through reinvestment, work on the later phases of the masterplan will be contingent on fundraising.

## YOUR SUPPORT

The success of Claremont Fan Court School is built on the success of those who have gone before. This includes our alumni, and our current pupils as well as our founders who guided the school's ethos, recognising that each can do more than they think is possible.

As we approach our centenary year in 2022, we are embarking on a comprehensive development plan – a sound foundation for the next 100 years. This plan includes developing our site facilities to adapt to our increased pupil roll and developing our teaching and learning practices to meet the skills our children will need. We also want to ensure that while Claremont is a school of choice for many, we are still able to embrace pupils who will contribute to the school, by expanding our bursary fund.

If you are interested in supporting Claremont Fan Court School advance into the next century we would welcome your support: [www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk/supportus](http://www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk/supportus)



# CHRISTMAS AT CLAREMONT

## CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

The school's annual Christmas carol service at Christ Church, Esher took place a little differently this year to ensure the event could be run in line with covid protocols. Instead of filling the church pews, the choir, speech from Mr Brierly, pupil readings and string ensemble performances were all pre-recorded for the Senior School to watch online. Despite the difference in set up, it was wonderful that the performances were still able to go ahead inside the church and the event continues to be a lovely way in which to celebrate the festive season.



## SCIENCE DEPARTMENT 'CHEMISTREE'

Oh Chemistree, how lovely are your branches!

The colours on the tree are made from acids and alkalis with indicators such as phenolphthalein, methyl orange, methylene blue and screened methyl orange. The pale blue is copper sulphate and the purple is potassium manganate (VII) which are transition metal compounds!

# SUPPORT US

## DONATION FORM

1. Contact Details: please use block capitals (mandatory fields marked \*)

Title\* \_\_\_\_\_ First name\* \_\_\_\_\_ Surname\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Address\* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Donation Focus

I would like to make a contribution to:

- ☐ Bursaries  
☐ Heritage  
☐ Building Development Fund  
☐ Where most needed

PLEASE COMPLETE SECTION 3A OR 3B.

### 3a. One-off Donations

- ☐ I enclose a cheque, made payable to **The Claremont Fan Court Foundation Ltd**, for the amount of £ \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ I have made a bank transfer to the Beneficiary details below for the amount of £ \_\_\_\_\_

Beneficiary details: Claremont Fan Court Foundation Ltd, NatWest Bank, Account Number 41112822, Sort Code 60-08-04

### 3b. Regular Donations

I would like to contribute a regular gift of:

- ☐ £ 10 ☐ per month  
☐ £ 50 ☐ per year  
☐ £ 100  
☐ £ \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ I have set up a Standing Order/updated my Standing Order to the Beneficiary details below, referenced DONATION.

Beneficiary details: Claremont Fan Court Foundation Ltd, NatWest Bank, Account Number 41112822, Sort Code 60-08-04  
(For international donations, please contact the School prior to submission of your Standing Order).

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Gift Aid

Gift Aid allows the Claremont Fan Court Foundation (registered charity: 274664) to reclaim tax back on your donation. By gift aiding you agree that you are a UK taxpayer and understand that if you pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all your donations in that tax year, it is your responsibility to pay any difference.

- ☐ I would like to Gift Aid my donation.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return your completed form to:  
Kelly Hilder, External Relations Coordinator, Claremont Fan Court School, Claremont Drive, Esher, Surrey KT10 9LY  
khilder@claremont.surrey.sch.uk 01372 473727





## 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.

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Claremont Fan Court School  
Claremont Drive  
Esher  
Surrey  
KT10 9LY

[alumni@claremont.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:alumni@claremont.surrey.sch.uk)  
[www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk](http://www.claremontfancourtalumni.co.uk)

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