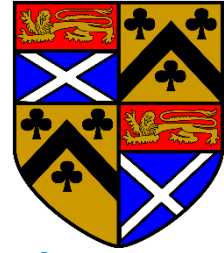


# The Rochester Grammar School 2024 Alumni Newsletter



## Welcome to the 2024 RGS Alumni Association Newsletter!

Thank you to all of you who have sent email addresses for us to use instead of receiving the newsletter expensively by post. We still need more email addresses please. It may also be possible to access the newsletter via Facebook.

I have received some very interesting and exciting snippets of “Lives Since RGS” and some of these feature in this newsletter.

Thank you to those of you who have kept in touch this year; we are always delighted to hear from you and enjoy reading news from alumni and your associates. It is always wonderful to see old friends and classmates reconnect and to hear about and see our school as it is today. By popular request we have continued with different and cheaper format of our 2024 alumni lunch. Part of the request was to be able to spend more time chatting during lunch. As a result, we are continuing with a buffet (instead of a sit-down, catered lunch), which is cheaper and should allow people to mingle and chat.

A booking form for the lunch can be found at the end of this newsletter or attached to this email. You may print or copy as many as you like, so why not pass one to a friend? A membership form, is also included so that you can encourage friends from school days to join us and stay in touch all year round. We of course take the security of your personal data seriously. We securely retain only name, time at RGS and contact details of members for our own purposes. If you wish to update your details or be removed from our mailing list at any point, please contact us on [ruth.rivers@rochestergrammar.tsat.uk](mailto:ruth.rivers@rochestergrammar.tsat.uk), at which point we shall delete your details permanently.

This year’s newsletter features lots of news and information from 2023–2024 so far, but we are always open to contributions. If you feel inspired while you read this edition, please do not hesitate to contact us with ideas for next year’s content. If you have news or photographs which you would like to share, or any other questions, you can contact the committee through all the usual channels and Ann’s (Chairman) and Carolyn (Treasurer and Membership Secretary) details are at the end of the newsletter. In addition, you can email us [RGSKentAlumni@gmail.com](mailto:RGSKentAlumni@gmail.com) or on twitter [@RGSKentAlumni](https://twitter.com/RGSKentAlumni).

Happy reading!

With our warm regards,

The Alumni Association Committee

## AGM and Annual Lunch 2024

The Rochester Grammar School Alumni Association invites you and your school friends to join us for our AGM, a tour of the school and then lunch on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

Our annual lunch reunites old girls (and boys!) and offers an opportunity to catch up and hear about the school day. No menu is included on these pages, but we would ask that you clearly note any dietary requirements on your booking form to ensure that we cater for all.

Note that we also hold our 2023/24 AGM before the lunch, and we warmly invite all to attend to hear about our activities and plans for the future. Members are reminded that they are entitled to vote on any matters raised at this meeting. Following this, as in previous years, we shall enjoy lunch together, an update on school life and the annual raffle. Donations of prizes on the day are appreciated.

**Why not contact friends from your year and organise a reunion? If you cannot join us for the whole day, please feel free to just come to the lunch. To attend, please complete the form at the end of the newsletter.**

Don't forget your camera or your purse! We should love to see and share your pictures of the lunch with suggested captions; we shall include as many as we can in next year's newsletter. We ask all of those who attend the lunch to contribute £1 to the fund for the Alumni Award as explained later in the newsletter.

Timetable for the day:

**10:30am** Registration

**11:00am** Tour of the school, conversation time for those who wish to catch up with friends

**12:00pm** AGM

**1:00pm** Lunch

**2:30pm** School update from the executive officers, more time for conversation, school songs

**4:00pm** Depart

## Minutes of the AGM

### The Rochester Grammar Alumni

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#### Minutes of the AGM

Held at the school on Saturday 14th October 2023

		Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome</b>	
	Ann West welcomed everyone to the AGM.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>	
	Sheena Florance (Simpson), Wendy Williams (Noyes), Ruth Chatwin (Coveney), Liz Feege (Stigant). Pat Boyle (Grubb) and Heather Gilbert (Simpson)	
<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes of the Previous AGM</b>	
	The minutes of October 2022 had been published in the newsletter and were approved without amendment.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
	<p>There had been no contact from the school with AW re work experience for students. However, AG reported that there had been a request via the Facebook page for help with the careers fayre.</p> <p>After a delay and change in staffing at Medway Archives, it is hoped that a detailed list of items held in school can be made and then all will be transferred to their storage.</p> <p>AW confirmed that the link with schools in Trinidad has been lost following the death of Pat Stevens.</p>	<p><b>AG to email AW if such contact made again</b></p> <p><b>AW to contact members if needed.</b></p>
<b>5</b>	<b>Chairman's Report</b>	



<b>6</b>	<b>Finance Report</b>	
	<p>CB reported that the balance on the school account was £4438.89, a small reduction on last year. The main activity was payment for the lunch and attendant expenses and postage for newsletters which had to be posted abroad. As in previous years, everyone at the lunch would be invited to contribute £1 towards the Alumni annual prize.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Update on School Business</b>	
	<p>In the absence of Mrs Brinklow, AW read out her report on school events and activities. She highlighted excellent IB and GCSE results in 2023, including a student who achieved the maximum mark of 45 in her IB, a feat managed by a tiny number of candidates. There had been considerable outstanding sporting achievements and a large cohort of students undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh award at all levels. There were also a number of trips both at home and abroad which provided amazing enrichment experiences for students. Members queried who paid for trips and it was explained that any trip not part of the curriculum has to be paid for by parents. AW suggested that there may be grants for students in financial difficulty which would enable them to enjoy the same experiences. Mrs Brinklow's full report would be published in the next newsletter.</p> <p>It was noted that RGS admission policy had been changed to give priority to students who lived nearer rather than the highest 11+ score.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
	<p>Alumni thanked Ann West and the other committee members for organising the AGM and lunch.</p>	

The meeting closed at 1.00pm

## **Mrs Brinklow's report for the AGM October 2023**

Last year I reported back to you and talked about the disruption that the school had faced due to covid and the related restrictions. I am pleased to report that the last academic year has been far more settled for our students and we are enjoying being able to build our school community and increase the activities and opportunities for everyone to participate in.

Our new Year 7 students have had a fantastic start to their journey at RGS. We have made some changes to the pastoral structure and transitioned from Vertical Forms to year groups during Tutor Time. We have been pleased to be able to return to Whole School Assemblies and have even been teaching the new Year 7 students the school song.

As you will be aware, the Sixth Form students now only study the International Baccalaureate. In July we were delighted with the results that they achieved due to their hard work and determination. Our students achieved an average point score of 35 which outperforms the global average of 30.24. For context, 35 points is equivalent to A\*A\*A at A-Level. One Year 13 student scored 45/45. This places her in the top 0.5% globally and she was one of only 25 students in the UK to obtain full marks.

Our GCSE results in the summer were equally impressive. 62% of our students achieved a grade 7 or higher. More than 1 in 3 results were a grade 8 or 9. Our provisional progress score is 0.83. This means that, on average, in every subject an RGS student took, they achieved 0.83 of a grade higher than would have been expected. Given that a progress score of zero represents good progress and 0.5 represents outstanding, 0.83 is truly exceptional progress from our students. There are several standout individual performances with 11 students achieving more than 8 grade 9s across their subjects and two students obtaining 11 grade 9s and 1 grade 8.

We are incredibly grateful to all the staff at RGS who work tirelessly to give our students the very best opportunities and learning experiences.

It has been a real pleasure to have extra curricular activities increase and whilst there are too many to go into detail I will highlight a few key moments:

Our Duke of Edinburgh programme is as popular as ever. In the last financial year we had the highest number of completed awards in Medway – a total of 218. Even this weekend we have staff and students on expedition in Dartmoor working towards their Gold award and a few weeks ago the Silver expedition took place around Tunbridge Wells where they camped near a heritage railway line and had steam trains passing by late into the evening.

We took part in the EEP Robotics Challenge. 340 schools took part in regional heats and 34 made it to the final in Birmingham. Our students were the Teamwork Challenge Winners.

Our Year 9 students took part in their first Industrial Cadets Bronze award. They held their own against Year 12 students and won the People's Choice Award. Year 12 students took part in the Think Maths Pi Representation Challenge which saw more than 350 entries this year. One of our Year 12 students took second place with their entry!

Our Sixth Formers competed in the Bar Mock Trial Competition at the Royal Courts of Justice in London. Competing against 21 other schools in the final, our team placed 9th overall. 144 schools across the country started the competition so this was a fantastic accomplishment. One of our students also won the individual prize for "Best Witness".

Our annual residential trip for Year 9 students took place in June with staff and students travelling down to Bude, Cornwall to take part in an activity filled week. This included surfing, canoeing, kayaking, climbing and everyone's favourite body boarding. The students and staff thoroughly enjoyed themselves and developed crucial skills in team work and more importantly interdependence. The week was designed to push students out of their comfort zones and for them to find out what they were capable of. The girls should be very proud of themselves, for all giving 100% to every activity.

We have more opportunities planned for the year ahead with trips to Japan and Italy taking place in October. There are trips arranged to Bletchley Park, an Economics Conference, The National Theatre, German Christmas Markets, the local pantomime all booked in before the year ends. There really is something for everyone to be involved in.

In March we presented our production of "We Will Rock You" and, as always, the students put on a fantastic show of music, singing and dancing.

Our new Sports Hall and gym have been used by the school for nearly a year now. It still has the wow factor when you walk in and see the fantastic facilities we are able to offer students. Whilst the building work has been an upheaval, it has been well worth it for what we now have access to. The PE department were overall Medway Secondary School Games Champions for the first time this year as well as winning the Medway District Athletics for the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. We also have a number of very keen footballers and our Year 7 students won their first match of this year 10-2. I suspect I will be updating you on their achievements for the next few years.

We are looking forward to the year ahead and I will report back to you at your next AGM.

## The Alumni Award



The award is a beautiful trophy which is given annually, for service before self, as the trophy remains in school, it is accompanied by a gift voucher. This is funded by voluntary donations of £1 from those who attended the annual alumni lunch.

Awarded to Rose Stokes for all her services and dedication to the Medway Youth council/parliament.

## The Butterfield Cup

This cup is awarded for commitment to school.

Awarded to Eleanor Hicks for being involved in so many extra-curricular opportunities, and for being an all-round supporter of many whole school calendar events. Eleanor has shown this contribution since Year 7.



## New Alumni Student Links

We welcome the new Executive Officer Team and our current Alumni Student Links. Olivia, Blessing, Antonia, Grace, Elle and Karina are the pathway which keeps RGS students from former and current years connected. The students contribute to assemblies, act as role models for the younger years and support at all school events.

The students are fundamental in the smooth running of RGS' Student Voice and are working to enhance the community feel of the school. The students have a particular interest in environmental issues and social justice and will be exploring changes that the school can implement in every day life.



*(left to right – Grace, Elle, Blessing, Olivia, Karina, Antonia)*

## Social Media Report

The Alumni Facebook Group now has over 1,100 members and continues to grow steadily. With posts frequently reaching over 800 members, it offers a fantastic opportunity to keep up with what is happening at the school, catch up with old friends and reminisce over school days. Popular topics being the memory that many of us share of the walk (frequently in the rain) between the old school and the new school, our favourite teachers and how sad many of us still are that the old school was pulled down.

The Facebook Group is also a source of information for members. Copies of the Annual Newsletter can be found on the page, together with details of forthcoming events, such as the Alumni Lunch, which this year is being held at the school on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

We continue to seek copies of photographs that members may have of their time at RGS. These are being saved to the Facebook Group in albums for everyone to enjoy. We currently have photographs from all the way back in the 1920s, which is truly remarkable, particularly when considering that we have yet to receive any photographs at all from the 1970's!

So, if you have yet to join the "RGS Kent Alumni Association", please look for us on Facebook, submit a membership request and come and join us.

## **SYLVIA STREET RGS 1943-1951**

I started school in April 1939 at Gordon Road school, but in September the war started and the evacuation happened. I didn't go, and we spent a lot of time outside. Then a local teacher nearby started a small school in her front room and I started there. I loved arithmetic, as well as writing stories, and she said I should take the entrance for the R.G.G.S., she was an old girl herself. It was 1943 and the school had returned from its evacuation.

I passed, (!! ) and found myself in 2B. A short time later I was moved to 2A, the scholarship class. I think the teacher was Miss Williams. I soon got to know the other pupils, and really enjoyed the lessons. If there was an air raid there were shelters in the area in front of the library, and sometimes we had our lunch there! I wonder how many remember the wooden pavilion on the games field, which sadly got burned down! We then had to use a small metal structure. I liked the school, and most of the lessons, but I was no good at art, and those powder paints!!

A highlight of my time at R.G.G.S. was a visit from Dame Sybil Thorndyke. She gave a very interesting talk about her acting career. Also, I remember taking part in Miss Gamble's plays. I wanted to go to uni. after she took us on a visit to Cambridge, but did poorly at A levels (those new exams!) So when I left, I went to Burroughs Wellcome and worked in the control labs. I liked it there, but later I became a nurse at St George's, at Hyde Park Corner.

I stayed in the N.H.S., until I got married, and later on re-joined and became a Health Visitor.

## **HILDA CRAWSHAW WARD RGS 1953-1960**

After school I went to Medway Technical College for 1 year. After leaving the college I worked for Kent County Council and then had various jobs in London. I became a company secretary. I married in October 1970 and my husband's job took us to New York City in November 1971. I went to Denver, Colorado, USA for 4 to 6 weeks and still live in the area today!

I went on to get an Accounting Degree and became a Certified Professional Accountant, similar to a Chartered Accountant, and worked in healthcare from 1983-2000. I took early retirement and consulted for hospitals, the Colorado Medicaid Program etc until 2014. I am now retired and love to travel. I remarried in 1985 to an American. I was a keen skier and hiker, now I love reading and meeting with friends.

I remember having to wear 'Rose Brown' stockings to my absolute horror. I recall learning to play tennis and hockey and being at Ravensworth in the Sixth Form. I can remember destroying Pat's grey skirt in the Chemistry lab by spraying it with acid. Her mother remade the skirt for school by the following day!

## **JO GREAVES RGS 1980-1986**

My maiden name was Sadgrove and I was at RGS from 1980-1986. I was sad to hear Miss Trollope is in a care home now, She was my Headmistress during my time at RGS. Mrs Furley, I recall, was the Deputy Head. I have memories of having to file past her after assembly so she could see if you were wearing the correct uniform. Once I know my shoes did not pass muster as they were two-tone. It was the 80s after all! My most favourite teacher in 6th form was Mrs Hough - my English teacher. She was an inspiration. I have quite a few photos from the 5th year portacabins and 6th form terrapin. I was in Pickwick house. I recall my school days with real fondness - especially the "old building" which I know sadly is no more.

After RGS I went to Reading University to study Film, Drama and English. I left with a 2:1 honours degree and went straight into temp work at the National Rivers Authority (now the Environment Agency) in the survey department to try and pay off my uni overdraft. To cut a long story short I ended up as a PA for different commercial companies (LogicaCMG, Halcrow, Capita) - a job I still do now in an all girls independent school The Abbey, in Reading. It reminds me a lot of RGS which is probably why I feel so at home. I have worked at The Abbey for the last 13 years as PA to the Bursar.

I met Rob, a Solutions Architect, in 1991 and we married in 1998. We have one son Will who has just completed his A levels and hopes to go to uni in September.

I hope this info provides some interest. My Mum Pat still lives in Chatham - in fact she lives in Walderslade Road in the same house as I grew up in.

## LATEST NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL

### Rochester Bridge Trust £5000 Grant

We are thrilled to have won a generous £5,000 prize towards STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education from The Rochester Bridge Trust!



Clare Brinklow, Principal said: “We were very pleased to welcome Langdon the Lion to our STEM club, and to receive this money towards our science, technology, engineering and maths provision. Thank you very much to the Rochester Bridge Trust for its support, and to everyone who voted for us – this all makes a difference to the students and we are sure it will help inspire many future civil engineers.”

Organised by the Rochester Bridge Trust, a competition to nominate which school should win the award attracted 5,077 votes from the public, RGS was successful in winning with 1,041 votes placing us in top spot. The second and third place schools secured 740 and 421 votes respectively.

Caroline Chisholm, Education Manager at the Rochester Bridge Trust, explained: “As the custodians of Rochester Bridge for more than 600 years, we are acutely aware of the crucial part civil engineering plays in safeguarding the country’s infrastructure. Through our STEM education programme and range of engineering scholarships the Trust is keen to inspire young people to consider civil engineering as a future career.

“Congratulations to Rochester Grammar School on gaining so much support from the public and winning the competition, which was open to state secondary schools, colleges and academies in the qualifying area.”

Thank you to all of our students, parents, staff and community who took the time to nominate RGS for this prize, we couldn't have done it without you.

## Bar Mock Trial National Final

After winning the Kent regional heat in November, our Year 12 students attended the national final for the Bar Mock Trial competition for the 2nd year in a row at the Royal Courts of Justice in London.



The students had an amazing experience in one of the most prestigious courthouses in the country, arguing hypothetical cases against other regional winners from around the UK in front of real judges. The standards were incredibly high, but the hard work and preparation from the RGS students shone through with 2 of our students, Tom & Khivi, winning individual awards for being the highest scoring barristers!

A huge thanks to Young Citizens for their organisation of the competition.

## Events and Productions

In March, our students impressed their friends and family with their production of Grease. The production ran for 3 nights and was a huge success.



To raise money for the set, performance rights and costumes, the cast and crew camped out at school overnight and completed a sponsored overnight rehearsal ahead of the production. No sleep took place and the team rehearsed the production for 10 hours!

In February, a team of 40 students travelled to the O2 in London with staff to participate in the Young Voices show with over 9,500 school children from the South of England.

Our choirs have visited local care homes to sing for the residents where they are always warmly received.

Our senior choir, NChant, have participated in Choral Evensong at the cathedral a number of times of the year and have been complimented on the singing and professionalism.

## OBITUARIES

### Miss Betty Trollope Headmistress, 1974-1988

Written by Jane Houseago (Betty's God-daughter)

These are a few thoughts and recollections of my beloved godmother, which I hope will bear resonance with your own.



A few years ago, Betty and I were having lunch together in Norwich. Betty, who enjoyed good food and a glass of wine, suddenly stopped eating. She looked me the eye and announced: "I do not want to die. I love life too much." Upon another occasion, she insisted that, as long as Queen Elizabeth kept going, so would she.

It is a curious fact that out late Queen, Betty and my mother and father were contemporaries – born in the six months between November 1925 and April 1926, just a few years after the Spanish flu epidemic. Their childhood bore witness to the great Slump and the Depression of the early 1930s. In the mid '30s, Betty and my mother found themselves in the same class of a Catholic convent school, vying with each other for the place at the top of the form, while outside,

Moseley's black shirts strutted the streets of Norwich. Too much of Europe was in the tightening grip of fascism.

As the two friends entered their teens, war plunged the girls into unspeakable horrors. In 1940, Norwich – with its engineering works and munitions factories serving the numerous airfields springing up across the country, was the first city in Britain to be blitzed. My mother recalled vividly the terror and the devastation inflicted upon the local population by the Luftwaffe.

It is in these formative experiences that the source of Betty's guiding principles can be found, and those of her great friends, my parents: duty, service, faith and friendship. In the transcripts of Queen Elizabeth's early broadcasts, I found the same principles clearly expressed.

As the war ended and the second Elizabethan age began, I believe Betty, and my parents, chose paths of service out of determination to rebuild their broken world.

With a Degree in Classics from London University under her belt – a notable feat for a woman in the late 1940s, Betty chose to teach and instil her principles, and those identified by the Queen, in the next generation – first, in Barnet in North London, and then as the much respected Headmistress on Rochester Grammar School.

Being surrounded by a sea of young faces throughout one's professional life must have its benefits. Betty was always young in heart. And, she shared their youthful sense of adventure. Eunice Tope, who was Betty's Head of Science at Rochester Grammar, great friend and fellow traveller, described her style of leadership as compassionate, always putting the welfare of the pupils first.

A group of former pupils from Pickwick and Haversham at Rochester Grammar recalled Betty fondly: "Her tales of Greek mythology, her passionate belief in the need for excellence in women's education and her confidence that her girls could achieve anything remain with us today, forty years after we left school in 1983."

I knew little of Betty, the pedagogue I knew her as a wonderful godmother. At first, she was a mysterious and glamorous figure, rarely seen but hotly-anticipated, who sent the best Christmas and birthday presents. However, once Betty retired and her beloved mother, Kezia, had died, we were able to meet more often and explore our numerous mutual interests.

Many of you will not be surprised that one of these was fashion. Betty adored shopping. She, my mother and I would meet regularly at Fortnum and Mason in London, where Betty would insist upon stalking the dress department, in which I was expected to model the hats for her. We rarely left the place. Coffee and gossip became lunch and more gossip, until my father arrived – hot-foot from Dean's Yard and his Central Reader's Board meeting, for tea and ecclesiastical gossip.

Aged 93, ever hopeful, Betty purchased two new trouser suits at Norwich's equivalent of Fortnum and Mason and announced somewhat mischievously over coffee that she might have her ashes scattered at Bluewater. I was not certain she was joking. Fortunately, her executors were saved a difficult conversation with the Health & Safety managers of that illustrious shopping centre. Betty's ashes are safely interred in the Rochester Cathedral Cloister Garth.

Betty also had the insatiable curiosity of a true academic. Despite this, I tried and failed to interest her in opera. She insisted that she preferred instrumental music. One evening at Restoration House, I finally understood why. Wolfgang Holtzmair gave a technically-masterful account of Schubert's *Wintereisse* accompanied by Imogen Cooper on the forte piano. As the two musical lines wound together against the furt and flare of the open fire, we were transported to a Bavarian hostelry. Betty appeared transfixed. There was no sign of the inevitable fidgeting which accompanied her quicksilver mind. It was clearly not the human voice she rejected.

While all of life can be found in the great operatic works of Monteverdi, Mozart, Handel, Puccini and Britten, and the great literature which inspired them; like Shakespeare and her favourite authors of Ancient Greek and Rome; it was not past lives that interested her but present ones. Betty loved people. This love underlined every act of her life, whether attending Arts Society events, Soroptimist meetings, or being an honoured custodian and supporter of Jonathan Wilmot and Robert Tucker's work at Restoration House. Robert described her recently as "a singular character, with unbending integrity and a dedication to causes she found worthy."

Considering her literary ancestor, Anthony Trollope – who wrote those magnificent observations of clerical life, *The Barnchester Chronicles* – it always amused me that one of these causes was this Cathedral. Here she not only became the Chairman of the Association of the Stewards, or 'chief usherette' as she labelled herself, and a member of the Cathedral Council, but retired to Cloister House in the Cathedral precinct. The ever-changing flow of clergy and congregation was her mainstay and it gave her much joy to serve everyone who worshipped here.



Betty's love of people meant that she was a great friend, always interested in the lives and welfare of the people that mattered to her. With grit and determination, she would travel long distances to visit them, even when she could no longer drive and had to rely on me to help her change from one London terminus to another.

In recent years, it gave her enormous pleasure to be driven to Norwich twice a year to catch up with family and friends.

Betty could be sharp in wit and observation. She could wither with a look of disgust or irritation. She could be fierce. Fierceness in a lady is a necessary quality, even now. Bright, single women still have to fight their corner. Betty once called me a 'battle-axe'. I thought it a rather wonderful accolade from a resolute lady I deeply admired.

Despite her talkativeness and many enthusiasms, I sensed Betty was essentially a very private person, whom some people found difficult to get to know. She had the knack of the discreet, of encouraging others to talk about themselves (frequently a favourite topic!) and rarely offered personal information. I once asked my mother if Betty had ever considered marriage. My mother believed there had been someone special, as Betty always wore an engagement ring. However, my mother feared something unhappy had happened and, ever the lady, had not liked to pry.

Old age is a cruel mistress. Faculties fail, friends fade, the familiar becomes foreign. I am grateful to Christine Tucker, Secretary to the Friends of Rochester Cathedral, whose office adjoined Betty's house. For the regular listening ear she gave Betty most days when loneliness bit and she needed company. To the kind and thoughtful staff of The Copper's Arms where Betty lunched everyday, a tremendous thank you for bringing her hot food when she was ill.

Suddenly a nasty fall at Cloister House meant that Betty had to move into a care home. Although Betty knew the care home was the best place for her; for someone who loved conversation and the stimulus of the outside world, lockdown must have been a trial. The loss of her sight and her hearing must have felt like a double lockdown. It was impossible to speak to her by telephone.

Farewell to an amazing lady.

### **Eve Orry Chemistry Teacher, 1992-2003**

“She was such a dedicated teacher and loved working at the school.”

### **Ellen Niblett**

My Mother was born Ellen Susannah Elliott on 1 January 1900 to William Joseph and Susannah Charlotte Elliott. Her parents ran a greengrocery business in Rochester High Street at the bottom of Strood Hill, (later the site of the Odeon cinema – I'm not sure if that's still there!) and William also did furniture removals with a horse-drawn van. They moved to James Street some time in the twenties. Mum recalled skinning beetroot after it was boiled in a large cauldron, ready for sale in the shop.



Ellen (known as Nellie to some) won a scholarship to RGS and attended the school until 1917 or 18. The attached copy of a photo inscribed on the back in my Mother's handwriting as "Rochester Grammar School for Girls, Sixth Form and Staff 1917" shows her as the tallest one to the left on the back row.

I believe she suffered from an adenoid problem, possibly caused by a side-effect of the 1918 flu epidemic, the treatment for which delayed her progressing to Goldsmith's College, London until 1919 where she obtained an English Degree and Teachers' Certificate.

I have never known where my parents first met, but I was most surprised to find from the 1921 Census that she was staying with my Father and his parents on that census day, being recorded as a Goldsmith's student. My Father was from Dalston, North London, so I remain puzzled as to how they met because of the apparent lack of geographic proximity. They married in 1927 and moved to Crouch End in North London.

She took up a post as teacher at (the private) Winchmore Hill High School for Girls (WHHS) and stayed there, apart from some time off around the time of my arrival in 1932, until 1939 when the school abruptly closed pending the outbreak of war.

She then worked for a short time for the War Damage Commission, inspecting properties in the East End of London for which claims had been raised.

Her teaching career resumed in 1942 at Tollington Preparatory School (TPS) in Tetherdown, Muswell Hill, where she eventually became Deputy Head. TPS was the Junior part of the Tollington Grammar schools in Muswell Hill, with Boys also in Tetherdown (which I attended from 1942 to 49) and Girls not far away. In the sixties the two grammar schools became a new comprehensive school and TPS moved to the old girls school building

My parents moved from Crouch End to Muswell Hill in the late fifties.

Mum formally retired aged 65 in 1965, but remained "on supply" until 1970, when she was most put out by being told that she could no longer work for the local education authority as she was too old – she then undertook private coaching at home for many years, eventually giving up in the mid-nineties. My Father died in 1984 but Mum continued to live in her home, with varying levels of support, past her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday until moving in to a residential home in Muswell Hill in 2002. She passed away there in January 2004.

## Member Details and Profile

Please fill in this little profile for us - we know that there are people out there trying to contact their old school friends and they are really interested to hear how you are faring. If you are willing for the information to be published and shared with other members of the Alumni Association, please complete the form below and return it to:

Mrs Ann West  
c/o office@rochestergrammar.tsat.uk

Surname:

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First name(s):

.....

Current Address:

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School years:

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Telephone Number:

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Email Address:

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What did you do when you left school?

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What have you done since then e.g., work, family, interests, travels?

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What are your thoughts about school, what "events" have stayed in your memory?

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Don't stop here if you have more to tell, just carry on overleaf