

# GDST GIRL

FOR LIFE

The Magazine for the GDST Alumnae Network | 2018/19



## The Big Interview

Cressida Dick, Alumna of the Year 2017

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# Welcome to GDST Girl for Life

Cheryl Giovannoni

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**H**ello, and welcome to this first edition of GDST Girl for Life.

We are living in a time of rapid change. It's also wonderfully exhilarating, as women are taking their rightful place in the world.

This year also marks the start of an exciting time for the GDST as we embark on a new, ambitious phase.

You will see from this magazine that we have launched new branding for the Girls' Day School Trust. We wanted our new branding to be clean, confident and contemporary, and our new-look, GDST Girl for Life magazine is a big part of this.

We chose it as the title of our alumnae publication after a number of focus groups with alumnae of all ages, as it reflects how we feel about you – wherever you go, and whatever you do, you will always be a part of the GDST community. We also hope it represents how you feel about us.

We are thrilled to be celebrating GDST girls and alumnae in our moving new film. If you haven't yet seen it, take a look at [www.gdst.net/spirit](http://www.gdst.net/spirit). It features girls from all 25 of our schools, together with Jenny Beavan OBE, Dr Emily Grossman and Commander Maryla Ingham representing our alumnae. I hope you enjoy watching it.

And finally, we are looking at how we can ensure that our communications with you remain relevant and resonant. If you visit our web pages at [www.gdst.net](http://www.gdst.net) you will find more up to date and topical news from our schools and our far-flung GDST family.

So do, please, let us know where you are and what you're up to, because it's you that make the GDST alumnae family what it is.

With best wishes

*Cheryl*

Cheryl Giovannoni  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

# GDST and Alumnae News

**GDST Spirit** - Our own marketing executive and Blackheath alumna, Eliza Cummings-Cove, describes being on set for the recent GDST film shoot.

One bright December morning, my colleagues and I arrived at Shepperton Studios to shoot the GDST's new film, GDST Spirit, along with girls of all ages representing each of our schools, and three illustrious alumnae; Jenny Beavan OBE, Dr Emily Grossman and Cdr Maryla Ingham.

With rehearsals, choreographed dance routines and lines to camera, the girls were professional and enthusiastic to the last. But what really struck me – as an alumna – was how they started the day as complete strangers, but finished it the best of friends. The excitement of shooting at an iconic film location was major, but it was the GDST spirit that made it such a great experience. Do have a look at the finished film at [www.gdst.net/spirit](http://www.gdst.net/spirit).



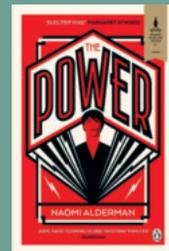
## Damehood for Rosemary Squire

Rosemary Squire was given a damehood in this year's New Year's Honours List for services to theatre and philanthropy. A Nottingham Girls' High School alumna and Patron of 'The Space', the school's performing arts centre, Dame Rosemary is the most prominent woman in British theatre today.



## The Power chosen by Obama for 2017

Former US President, Barack Obama, has named Naomi Alderman's *The Power* as one of his favourite books of 2017, stating that "With some extra time on my hands this year to catch up, I wanted to share the books and music that I enjoyed the most." Naomi is an alumna of South Hampstead High School, and *The Power* is her fourth novel.



## GDST team goes in to bat

At 11am on Friday 27th April, a GDST combined cricket team, drawn from 10 different schools, with girls from Years 9-12, will take on the MCC in a 40-Over match to be played at Hampstead Cricket Ground. All of the girls on the team are of county standard, and were selected by their individual schools.

## Alumnae make Forbes 30 Under 30 list

Lindsey Noakes, Bianca Miller-Cole and Susie Ma have all made it into the prestigious Forbes 30 Under 30 list this year. Bianca, a Sydenham High School alumna, is the founder of nude hosiery and nail polish brand Bianca Miller London, while Susie, an alumna of Croydon High School is the founder of Tropic Skincare. Lindsey, a South Hampstead High School alumna, founded Gather, to address the urban sanitation crisis in emerging cities.

## Political promotions

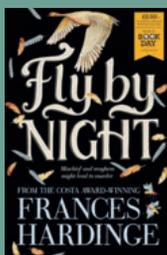
Two alumnae have been promoted this year in Parliament, with Belvedere alumna Esther McVey MP becoming Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and Heathfield alumna Suella Ferndandes MP appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department for Exiting the European Union.

## Alumnae take royal roles in *The Crown*

Two GDST alumnae look set to take leading roles in the next season of Netflix's hit TV series, *The Crown*. Golden Globe and BAFTA TV award winner Olivia Colman, an alumna of Norwich High School for Girls, will be the new Queen Elizabeth II, with Helena Bonham-Carter, BAFTA award winning star of *The King's Speech* and South Hampstead High School alumna, all but confirmed as the new Princess Margaret.

## Fly by Night chosen for 2018 World Book Day

Following on from her 2015 Costa Book of the Year award winning novel, *The Lie Tree*, Ipswich High School alumna Frances Hardinge's 2005 fantasy novel, *Fly by Night*, has been selected as a World Book Day Young Adult title for 2018.



## Sophie Kinsella takes the stage at Putney

Author Sophie Kinsella thrilled her audience at Putney High School with stories of overcoming challenges and embracing creativity. She spoke of the graft needed to achieve your goals, and promised, "You'll get there, but you might have to be flexible on where it is!"



STOP PRESS: The Helen Fraser GDST Young Musician of the Year 2018 winners are... Charlotte Clapperton from Croydon High School (Young Vocalist), and Miriam Kenedy from Blackheath High School, (Young Instrumentalist).

# School News



## Bath

The Royal High School, Bath, celebrates creativity, as its Junior School is named a finalist in the TES Independent School Creativity Awards for 2018.



## Croydon

Croydon High School alumna and UK representative for Youth for Change Larissa Kennedy, is named in Barclays' Future 100 List of the most influential women at university.



## Belvedere

The Belvedere Academy is a finalist in the Best School Music Department category of the Music Teacher Awards for Excellence 2018.



## Howell's

Howell's School alumna Emi Howell is now touring her play, Looking for Mummy, the story of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, the British mother controversially detained in Iran.



## Birkenhead

Broadcaster and author Clare Balding meets Birkenhead High School Academy girls, and the school's reading dog, Rita.



## Kensington

Kensington Prep School is celebrating 20 years on its Fulham site with a TES Independent Prep School of the Year 2018 nomination, and the transformation of its library.



## Blackheath

Rooftop celebrations take place to mark the topping out of the multi-million-pound redevelopment of Blackheath High School's new Senior School building.



## Newcastle

Newcastle High School for Girls alumna Hattie Crisell pays a visit to talk about her work as acting Fashion Editor of The Times.



## Brighton & Hove

Empowering plays with strong female leads fighting for women's rights are the theme as Brighton & Hove High School puts on Made in Dagenham to rave reviews.



## Northampton

Alumnae from around the globe come together to plant trees to commemorate 25 years at Northampton High School's Hardingstone site.



## Bromley

Renowned concert pianist and Bromley High School alumna Joanna McGregor joins celebrations to mark the school becoming the only all-girls 'All Steinway' school in the world.



## Northwood

Superheroes celebrate successes in new rewards programme at Northwood College for Girls, in a move to empower pupils.



### Norwich

A local exhibition explores how Norwich High School for Girls did its bit in WW1, with fundraising drives, allotments on the school grounds and work in munitions factory canteens.



### Notting Hill

Notting Hill & Ealing High School's Junior School is named Sunday Times Parent Power Independent Prep School of the Year 2018.



### Nottingham

With the benefits of a school dog well-documented, Delilah at the Juniors is joined by Saffy, the miniature Labradoodle, at Nottingham Girls' High School Seniors.



### Oxford

Oxford High School Sixth Former, Jo Baptista, wins the prestigious Women of the Future's Young Star Award and is praised for her "passion for STEM and feminism".



### Portsmouth

Fundraising among staff, girls, alumnae, governors and parents at Portsmouth High School scales great heights for new climbing wall.



### Putney

Putney High School marks its 125th anniversary with an alumnae weekend in May and an exhibition of their favourite 125 memories.



### Sheffield

The "Old Gym" is transformed into the state-of-the-art Trinity Building at Sheffield High School for Girls, providing sport, performance and fitness facilities, cookery space and classrooms.



### Shrewsbury

STEM excellence at Shrewsbury High School receives recognition with a nomination for TES Strategic Education Initiative of the Year Award 2018.



### South Hampstead

South Hampstead Junior School celebrates diamond anniversary (60 years) on its Netherhall Gardens site.



### Streatham & Clapham

Streatham & Clapham High School opens a brand new glazed entrance and dining area, complete with extensive landscaping, as the latest phase in its development programme.



### Sutton

Commander Maryla Ingham, GDST Alumna of the Year finalist 2017, returns to Sutton High School to inspire Junior School girls with a talk about her Royal Navy career.



### Sydenham

Sydenham High School's rowers pull together to support Cushing's Disease survivor Kiko Matthews' transatlantic record bid in aid of King's College Hospital.



### Wimbledon

Ambitious partnering programmes at Wimbledon High School take students around the globe, to Ghana, Japan and Sri Lanka, on exchanges, leadership and teaching experiences.

# Global GDST Girl

Updates from around the world



**Cherry Beadsworth**  
Notting Hill & Ealing  
High School

Runs an educational consultancy in Malaysia with her university soulmate since 1998



**Betsie Brown (née Borchardt)**  
Norwich High School for Girls

Owens her own business in music marketing for blues and roots artists, based in Memphis, Tennessee



**Danielle Chapman**  
Putney High School

Has a house-call veterinary business in Manhattan, New York



**Jenny Delasalle (née Slater)**  
Birkenhead High School

Now fluent in German since moving to Berlin five years ago



**Lauren Doble Alshehhi**  
Putney High School

Met husband, a professional footballer, through her job at UAE FA, and now joined by baby Zayed



**Liz Foxwell-Canning (née Riley)**  
Nottingham Girls' High School

Her consulting experience put to use in Christchurch, New Zealand after the 2010/11 earthquakes



**Lindsay Kerr**  
Shrewsbury High School

Vintage clothing business owner and media commentator on sustainable fashion in Valencia



**Virginia Maxwell**  
Nottingham Girls' High School

Professor of Forensic Science at the University of New Haven, Connecticut



**Lucy Ogg Keats**  
Streatham & Clapham High School

Currently in the US, after her home in St Thomas (US Virgin Islands) was destroyed by Hurricane Irma



**Lara Shekerdemia**  
Notting Hill & Ealing High School

Chief of Critical Care at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, after a stint in Melbourne, Australia



**Juliette Swenson (née Smith)**  
Bath High School

Watercolourist living west of Charlottesville, Virginia



**Caroline Walford**  
Putney High School

Packed her bags and moved to Hong Kong, where she works in financial services

# Raw Talent

Jenny Raw talks women's rights at UN



When I joined Nottingham Girls' High School as a quiet 11-year old, I couldn't have imagined speaking at the United Nations as a GB delegate to the Commission on Status of Women (CSW)

alongside MPs, diplomats and civil society representatives. Yet this is what happened during my final year of school.

CSW is at the forefront of the debate surrounding women in society and the sometimes appalling realities they face, from FGM, to child marriage, to human trafficking and sexual assault.

Compared to these horrors, the micro-aggressions we face may seem trivial. After all, when girls are being denied basic human rights, such as an education, does it really matter if I'm described as "bossy" instead of "assertive"? The message from the UN was yes, it really does.

The fear of being labelled as ridiculous for calling out gender discrimination needs to end – and I think we can be the generation to stop it. We can stop it by adopting a zero tolerance stance on gender discrimination of any kind, and we can band together.

I feel really lucky to have grown up within a powerful female network, at my GDST school. And I think that as we pursue careers in often male-dominated industries, we need to ensure we look out for each other. Let's be empowering and transformative leaders, and women who help other women. Because mutually supportive women are a force to be reckoned with.

## Your School Needs You

The impact of continuing alumnae involvement

**Valerie Dunsford, Head of Sheffield High School for Girls, talked to us about the importance of keeping alumnae within the school community, the insights they share, and the value that each and every alumna brings.**

We've got so much talent and expertise in our alumnae, and so much curiosity among our students about the world beyond school, that putting them together is a really important thing for us to do. This year, our alumnae brought a host of career options to life at our Year 9 Design and Year 10 Futures days, from film-making and songwriting to entrepreneurship, wealth management and politics. They also introduced our Year 6 girls to the healthcare world, and next year will be turning to the technology sector.

The aim is to create a pathway between life at school and afterwards, using the insights from our alumnae to inspire and help students see how they can shape their own futures. By sharing their experiences of the working world, alumnae can open up new ways of thinking for young people, get them excited about their futures, and give them the impetus to follow their dreams.



**Valerie Dunsford,**  
Head, Sheffield High School for Girls

And that applies to all alumnae: no matter what you're doing now, or where your journey has taken you, your impact is profound, so please keep your school relationships alive and get involved. Your school needs you.

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# Alumna of the Year

## The Big Interview: Cressida Dick

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**Judy Mitchem, Director of Marketing at the GDST, talks to our Alumna of the Year, Cressida Dick, who is Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.**

**Cressida, can you tell us a little about your memories of Oxford High?**

Well, I made some wonderful friends, people I'm still very much in touch with now. I had great fun, I played lots of sports. I learned to love nature and I think, gained hugely in confidence. The school, and my family as well, always made me feel I could do almost anything I wanted, if I just applied myself and took it seriously and didn't take no for an answer.

And I'm so grateful for that, because I know that even nowadays, lots of young women don't have very much confidence, which really frustrates me. But I was very lucky and I think I also learnt quite a lot of resilience and, I hope, quite a bit of humility. Along with an interest to learn all the time, which has stood me in good stead.

**What tips would you give our GDST girls about managing your career and leadership?**

Well, we're all different. But I do think it's worth trying to do something that you really love. I've been lucky enough to do that – I've loved every moment of my police service. Of course you'll have some harder times, so it's important to try to build your own personal resilience.

I know that often, people are taught that you have to set out with very clear goals, and know where you want to be in future years. But my working life has been a series of accidents and opportunities and encouragement from other people.

I believe to some extent you get back what you give. If you as a leader look after your people, you're interested in them as human beings and you are prepared to surround yourself with people who say "No, you're wrong," not "Of course you're

right," which can happen particularly in senior positions, then you can learn to be a better leader all the time.

The last thing I would say is to look at leaders both in the school environment and outside world and see what they do. Every day I try and take something from somebody around me and think "If I could do a bit more of what they do" then I could get better.

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**“Do something that you really love. I've been lucky enough to do that – I've loved every moment of my police service.”**

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**So you're constantly learning and constantly evolving?**

Absolutely. For me, having a mentor or somebody who is outside my immediate work environment, who is there to tell me as it is and what they see in me, and to be quite objective about that, has always been very useful. I think that would be useful for people of any age – whether they're setting out on their working life or they are in their 70s. To have a mentor or coach is really helpful.

**That's a really good tip. And lastly, I'm sure people would like to know something about you out of work. Tell us how you relax.**

Well, policing, like a lot of jobs, is quite tough. So I take a lot of my inspiration from what I have seen in other people – the courage, the determination and the compassion.

But I also think in any job, even in a big and busy role where there's a lot to do, working long hours and doing our very best



to protect and support people, you have to be able to relax. You're a much better leader if you have the energy to think clearly and critically.

So I do spend time in the countryside when I can. I like to exercise a lot, I enjoy myself with my friends, and I am very lucky to be a good sleeper. I find that when I am concentrating on my work, I'm very focused and when I've decided it's time to relax, then I'll relax very easily.

I always try to make sure I protect a reasonable amount of time off, and I insist that my people do too. I think if you're grounded, you're balanced and well supported at home and you know how to enjoy yourself and relax, you'll be a much better leader.

**Well we are very proud that you are a GDST girl.**

**Thank you.**

I'm very honoured and very surprised that I've become Alumna of the Year. I wish you and the GDST all the very best for the future. It's a great organisation!

“Of course you'll have some harder times, so it's important to try to build your own personal resilience.”

You can watch the full interview at [www.gdst.net/big-interview](http://www.gdst.net/big-interview).

# Destined for Greatness

Emily Wilding Davison's fight for the vote



Famous for throwing herself in front of the King's horse at the Epsom Derby in 1913, Emily Wilding Davison, Kensington High – now Prep – School alumna and suffragette, dedicated her life to achieving gender equality. She joined the Women's Social and Political Union in 1906, before leaving her teaching job to dedicate her time fully to the union in 1909. She was arrested nine times for her pains, with tactics including breaking windows, setting fire to post boxes and even hiding overnight in the Palace of Westminster, hoping to question the Prime Minister over votes for women.

Whether the fatal consequence of her actions at Epsom was intended or not, what is known is that she was a fearless crusader for the cause. Upon her death, the pavements of London were lined with 50,000 people as her coffin was carried through the streets, accompanied by 5,000 suffragettes. Her funeral has been described as "the last of the great suffragette spectacles", and she remains an icon of first-wave feminism.

A lesser known fact is that it seems Emily was destined for greatness from a young age. Not just fearless, pioneering and committed to empowering girls and women, her school records indicate that she showed great academic prowess too. A never-before-seen 1890 record from the GDST archives, showing Emily being awarded three prizes for her performance in The Oxford and Cambridge Schools Board examination, may give just a little insight into the person she would become.

## Then

1832

**Great Reform Act:** First women's suffrage petition to Parliament.

1872

**Girls' Public Day School Company** launched

1908

Dr Erie Evans, Howell's School doctor, co-founds Cardiff and District Women's Suffrage Society.

1913

Emily Wilding Davison knocked down and killed by the King's horse at the Epsom Derby.

1918

**Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act:** Women over 21 given the right to stand as an MP.

1918

Constance Markievicz is the first woman MP elected to Westminster.

1918

1918

**Representation of the People Act:** Voting extended to all men over 21 and, subject to certain conditions, many women over 30.

1918

**General Election 14 December:** Many women over 30 and all men over 21 entitled to vote for the first time.

1923

Two GDST alumnae are among the first ten women in Parliament.

Katharine Stewart-Murray (Wimbledon High School): first Scottish female MP.

Dorothy Jewson (Norwich High School): Labour MP for Norwich.

## And Now

A total of 489 women have been elected to the Commons since 1918.

GDST alumnae have remained a constant presence in politics since 1923, with some 25 high-profile ministers and parliamentarians.

32% of MPs are now women.

2018

Esther McVey promoted to Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Suella Fernandes to junior minister in the Department for Exiting the European Union.

208 women MPs, up from 191 in 2015.

3% of women MPs are GDST alumnae.

Seven GDST alumnae are currently MPs.

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# Women in Politics

100 years of women's votes

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To mark the 100th anniversary of votes for women, we asked a current pupil to put some questions to a former one. Maddie Hazelden, a Year 11 pupil from Norwich High School for Girls and winner of the GDST Vote 100 politics essay prize, talked to Portsmouth High School alumna, Meg Hillier MP, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and Labour MP for Hackney South and Shoreditch.



**How did your GDST education prepare you for your career as an MP?**

It showed me the power of women and gave me the belief I could do whatever I set out to do. It provided a great academic foundation, and it was a good feminist environment, too. It was very supportive: it's unusual even now to be in an organisation that's run by women for women.

**What do you love about your job?**

I love the variety, and I feel privileged to meet so many enthusiastic people. It's an honour, too, to be able to help so many people with problems – for instance, people in my constituency who are on benefits, or who are newly arrived in the UK. I also have easy access to decision-makers and influencers. I can use it on behalf of my constituents.

**What are the key issues facing women in politics today, and how have you overcome them?**

In terms of women in Parliament, I think we're reaching a tipping point. Things are better now than ever, but even so I still sometimes find I'm the only woman in the room. The pressures of the job and the working hours can put people off. It can be a struggle – for men, too, actually. But at least in my role I have some flexibility and control – more so, perhaps, than I might have in a business environment.

**Do you have any advice for young women entering politics?**

The first thing I'd say is: "Go for it!" But the main advice I'd give is to get a good job first. Politics needs women with more and different kinds of expertise. Also, if you're in work you'll be moving in varied circles, which helps bring diverse experience to politics. Another good thing about working first, of course, is that you'll have something to fall back on. No one keeps their seat by right and forever.

**As only 32% of MPs are women, how in your opinion can we increase this?**

By supporting each other, and also by supporting 'people who don't look like me', because that increases the variety of women entering politics. Mentoring helps in particular, and the major Westminster parties each run their own schemes. What perhaps is less well known is that women in Parliament support one another on a cross-party basis too. We meet at Westminster, let off steam and share problems, and it's private: it doesn't leave the room.

**Will the current attention being drawn to the imbalance of power between men and women in Westminster be a turning point for the future and in what way?**

I'd like to think so. As I say, it's getting better. We need to encourage younger women who are thinking of entering politics. Women already in Parliament need to demystify it. They need to go out more and say what it's like.

**What debt does today's society owe the suffragettes?**

Well, without them we wouldn't be here in politics! They showed us we can challenge the orthodoxy and win. They showed us too that we can be bold, that we can take a stand and question authority – in the workplace, at school, everywhere.

We have the right to vote. We also have the right to own property, and the right to see our children after a divorce. These are things we take as a given now, but it wasn't always the case. We've had to fight for these parities – and we need to keep fighting.

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# Full Throttle

A chat with our Emerging Talent award winner Emilie Weaving

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There's a history of motorcycle racing in Emilie Weaving's family, so it's no surprise it's been a lifelong passion of hers.

“ I've been working towards a career as a Crew Chief in Moto GP for as long as I can remember ”

Emilie left Shrewsbury High School in 2008 with ten A\*s at GCSE and a love of maths and physics that stood her in good stead as she started to get to grips with the practical and theoretical sides of engineering. While studying for her A-levels she also worked as a trainee mechanic at Ducati, where she became their only female qualified technician – and they offered her a full-time apprenticeship. How could she refuse?

Since then she's worked in the British Superbike race paddock – again, the only woman in such a role – and she's moved to JCB Power Systems to work as a mechanical development engineer, while also studying for a degree in mechanical engineering at Birmingham City University.

Emilie's still on track for her career goal to be the first female Crew Chief in Moto GP. “I'm hoping to get back into the British Superbike paddock for the 2018 season as a data engineer,” she says. “From there, I can establish my place and hopefully work my way up through the ranks.”

Her ambitions don't stop there. Emilie is a keen player of American Football and is currently in her third season with the Derby Braves, competing in the British American Football League National Championship. She's hoping to be put forward for the Team GB trials this summer.

And there's more. Emilie knows better than most how hard it can be to break into the motorcycle racing industry, and she's keen to help other young women follow her lead. As a mentor, she can advise them about the doors on which to knock – and about how long to keep knocking...

“I've never had a problem in my career with being treated differently,” she says. “I've always found that, once I've shown what I am capable of, there is no negativity attached to being a female.”

So if it all sounds good to you, Emilie would love to help you join her down in the race paddock some time...

About the Award:



A big thank you to the alumnae judges and sponsors who generously contributed time and funds to the awards (now in their third year).

**Alison Hodge** - Sydenham High School  
**Deborah Sims** - Brighton & Hove High School  
**Jo Elder** - Howell's School, Llandaff

Emilie will be investing her prize money in a lathe and milling machine as part of her plan to open her own automotive engineering business, producing road and race motorcycle components. A special mention must also go to Leila Brown, (Notting Hill & Ealing High School) who is a rehabilitation engineer with the NHS. She used the funding she received to attend an international symposium, advancing her knowledge in postural management and building her networks.

# A Day in the Life...

of Dr Sheila Kanani of the Royal Astronomical Society and comedy circuit

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**We talked to her about her career, her memorable moments at school, and asked her to offer some advice. All in 20 minutes.**

Officially my day starts at 9.00am, but in reality it tends to start on the train, as I use the commuting time to juggle emails, tweet and so on.

As the Education, Outreach and Diversity Officer at the RAS, my days are always busy and diverse: I might be doing a school talk one moment, and a public lecture or keynote address the next. I might also be called up by Sky News or the BBC to comment on rumours of an alien invasion! But whatever my day looks like, I love interacting with people and “wowing” them about the UK space industry.

I got here by happy accident. I became interested in space when I was 13: I watched Tom Hanks star in Apollo 13 and from that point on, I was hooked. I was inspired by astronauts Helen Sharman and Michael Foale, both of whom came through the science route, so I set my sights on physics as my way in. I studied physics up to PhD level, and then went into teaching

(I found I was better at talking about science than actually doing it). And it was when I was teaching that the post at the RAS came up. In terms of the big moments, I'd say a recent GCSE science lecture I gave to 1,300 students is a stand-out, along with my side-job of being a science stand-up comedian. Long story short, when I was doing my PhD, I was asked to do a set in a pub to help make science more accessible to people. It's something I still really enjoy doing.

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**“I watched Tom Hanks star in Apollo 13, and I was hooked.”**

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Thinking about my days at Wimbledon High School, I have really good memories of my physics teachers in particular – Mrs Gallivan and Mr Yee. I also have great memories of playing sport, and a lot of great friends with whom I'm still in touch. These days, I'm pretty busy with my two-year old son, although I still play hockey and the saxophone.

Over the years I've learned you have to be really proactive to make things happen. Also, when I was younger, I wasn't one of those people who just breezed through everything. So my advice would be that if you are really committed, determined and passionate about something, you can do anything you want.

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**“Over the years I've learned you have to be really proactive.”**

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# Positive steps to wellbeing

Guest columnist Louise Ridley learns about The Positive Project

A programme in GDST schools is boosting the wellbeing of teachers and staff by training them to track and regulate their emotions. Over 139 teachers have been on the Positive Programme, a four-day course that teaches neuroscience and psychology as tools to protect teachers against burnout, with practical techniques they then pass on to pupils.

“With the right situations, a lot of very healthy, good teachers can burn out,” says Dr Brian Marien, a former medic who devised the programme. The cornerstone is what he calls ‘emotional literacy’: an awareness of how brain function and mood can affect behaviour. “If you can understand how emotions work, and how they hijack your thinking and influence how you feel physically and behave, you can then start to think ‘Ok, well if that’s the case, what can I do to mitigate it?’”

It’s important to normalise the fact that everyone experiences highs and lows, Marien says. “If people are frightened about being anxious or depressed, then when they do feel anxious or depressed, they can actually pour petrol on the flames.” Teachers learn to spot risk factors: “One of them is perfectionism, one of them is caring too much... one of them is ruminating.”

Teachers and pupils use the programme’s ‘emotional barometer’ to record their moods on an app, from which anonymised data helps staff understand what is affecting their mental health. “The commonest things to move youngsters’ moods are exclusion from friendship groups, and exams,” Marien says. “For teachers it tends to be the weekends and the holidays, deadlines and workload and home life.” Over 1,300 students and staff have used the app, entering 23,000 data points between them.

Evergreen Armstrong, Head of Year 7 and a drama teacher and Head of Wellbeing Innovation at Putney High School, began participating in the programme during the summer term of 2016. She said it “signposts that intrinsic link between teacher wellbeing and student wellbeing.” After going on the course, Putney teachers wrote Positive schemes of work to deliver during PSHE lessons for girls across different key stages, starting with emotional literacy and



going into the science further with older age groups. “We teach about the inner coach and inner critic to Year 7, for example, while in Year 11 and older, a learning objective will be to understand neuroplasticity and how ‘rewiring’ your brain can develop learnt optimism,” Armstrong explains. Teachers and pupils discuss how to apply this knowledge to challenges that the girls suggest: for Year 7s it’s often about the transition to Senior School, while those in the Sixth Form use Positive tools to prepare for the change of going to university and life beyond school. The programme’s ideas have also given a useful framework to Putney’s own mentoring programme.

Armstrong continues, “The girls value being able to talk about their emotions using a shared language, and enjoy the Positive lessons being part of their PSHE curriculum.” It has benefited them in extra-curricular subjects too. “For a Sixth Form girl who does rowing, for example, it provides tools to cultivate greater self-discipline and self-motivation – turning failures into discoveries and being able to approach her passion in a more resilient way.” Armstrong is also working on an Action Research Project, measuring the effect of the Positive Schools Programme on pupils’ academic attainment.

The Positive Group, which runs the programme, hopes to expand it to schools beyond the GDST, and to other countries. Putney is considering how it can embed the ethos more formally into lessons beyond PSHE. Marien says the important thing is that the course is not prescriptive. “Teachers can bring this into music lessons, they can bring it into games lessons, they can bring it into yomping across the South Downs, or they can bring it into their pastoral care. That’s the future of this programme: the teachers become the experts.”



Louise Ridley is a Putney High School alumna and journalist who has worked for BuzzFeed UK, HuffPost UK, The Evening Standard and the BBC.

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# A GDST education for all?

Susan Hamlyn of the Good Schools Guide charts the history of bursaries

In the mid-20th century, governments of both persuasions paid for bright pupils from less well-off families to attend independent schools. My sister and I benefited from this scheme, as did around a quarter of our contemporaries at South Hampstead High School in the 1960s and '70s. This was the Direct Grant system. No distinction was made between those, like us, with "free places" and those whose parents paid for the fees. In most cases we didn't know and didn't think about it.

These schemes funded places at 174 schools – among them 24 belonging to the GDST – and gave girls such as us the opportunity of an academic education. Virtually all our contemporaries went to university – many to Oxbridge (not common for girls back then) – and most later went into law, medicine, social work, publishing, academia or the arts.

"So what?" you might be thinking. The point is that without these free places girls like us would not have had such opportunities and might not have gone on to enjoy the careers we have and contributed to society as we have been able to do.

With the withdrawal of government funding, the schools faced a dilemma. What would happen were they to lose a substantial percentage of their brighter pupils? They began to see that they must make it possible for able pupils from less well-off homes still to accept places by subsidising the fees. The means-tested bursary was born.

The GDST, along with similar schools, began to build funds via countless schemes and appeals and, gradually, families got word of these opportunities and applied for subsidised places for their bright daughters. This became even more important as fees – at all independent schools – began to rise disproportionately to average incomes, and even to London house prices! Today, the GDST invests almost £13m annually in the funding of bursaries, which support nearly 1,100 senior school pupils.



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“Without these free places, girls like us would not have had such opportunities.”

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Generations of alumnae from the days of government-funded schemes now have daughters, or even granddaughters, in GDST schools. They have the satisfaction of knowing that the opportunities afforded them – opportunities that propelled them into higher education and their rewarding careers – are still available to girls like them: to the able and talented whose families could not afford today's school fees.

**Susan Hamlyn is a director of The Good Schools Guide Education Consultants and is herself a GDST alumna (South Hampstead High School).**

The GDST wants to support every bright girl who needs a bursary. From our own research, we know the impact that a bursary can have, and we are therefore determined to build up the GDST Bursary Fund. If you would like to help give a girl this transformational opportunity, please go to [www.gdst.net/openingdoors](http://www.gdst.net/openingdoors), follow the links through the GDST website or phone us on **020 7393 6898**.

And if you'd like to see how GDST bursaries can change lives, have a look at our video stories of Soke Alli-Usman and Bethan James, again at [www.gdst.net/openingdoors](http://www.gdst.net/openingdoors).

# What's coming up

## Alumna of the Year Award 2018

Nominations are still open for the 2018 GDST Alumna of the Year Award, so you can still propose and support anyone who you feel deserves recognition for their work. We want to hear our alumnae's stories from all walks of life: the pioneers, the campaigners, the inventors, the inspirers, the leaders, the creators, the carers, the professionals and the entrepreneurs. The closing date for nominations is Tuesday 20 March, with voting closing on Thursday 24 May. Nominate online at [www.gdst.net/AOYA](http://www.gdst.net/AOYA).

## Networking

Our City and Law alumnae networking groups are both going strong under the leadership of Susie Wakefield (Law) and Priti Verma (City) and have events scheduled over the next few weeks. If you'd like to get involved, want to learn more, or make suggestions for new groups, do contact us at [info@gdstalumnae.net](mailto:info@gdstalumnae.net).

## Ride for Girls First

We are offering six places this year in the Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 cycling event on Sunday 29 July 2018 ([www.prudentialridelondon.co.uk](http://www.prudentialridelondon.co.uk)). So if you want to raise money for the GDST Bursary Fund, and are up for the 100-mile challenge, please contact us at [info@gdstalumnae.net](mailto:info@gdstalumnae.net). Places will be offered on a first come first served basis.



## Mentoring update

Now in its fifth year, the GDST alumnae-to-alumnae mentoring programme is going from strength to strength – from just 23 mentoring partnerships in the 2014 pilot scheme to 83 last year. A total of almost 500 alumnae have now participated in the programme since its inception. Applications for the 2018 mentoring programme are still open, so if you want to participate, either as a mentor or a mentee, find our application forms on the GDST website, or email us at [mentoring@wes.gdst.net](mailto:mentoring@wes.gdst.net).

**GDST**  
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GDST Alumnae Network

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## Behind the scenes at the Royal Albert Hall

Wednesday 16 May, 11am

£15.00

Join us for an arranged Secret History tour of the Royal Albert Hall, the place where the GDST began, to see behind the scenes and learn some of its secrets; from ghost hunters to gangsters, from suffragettes to swindlers and stars.



## Suffragettes and pioneers

Tuesday 26 June, 11am

£12.00

Enjoy a tailor-made guided tour of Westminster to learn about women's influence in politics over the years – from the suffragette movement to the current day – and the GDST women that have helped to shape history.



## Managing stress and building resilience

Tuesday 16 October, 6.30pm

£10.00

Central London (venue to be confirmed)

Understanding your emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses to everyday stresses has become key to building resilience and boosting wellbeing. Dr Brian Marien will speak about the Positive Group's ([www.positivegroup.org](http://www.positivegroup.org)) work with GDST staff, drawing on the latest advances in neuroscience, medicine, cognitive, social and behavioural psychology, to provide new insights and practical skills to help individuals fulfil their potential. To learn about Dr Marien's work with GDST schools, see Louise Ridley's article on page 14. Further details about this event will be posted on our website.



**How to keep up to date** - To join us at any of our events and keep tabs on new events, check our website ([www.gdst.net/alumnae](http://www.gdst.net/alumnae)).

**How to book** - Please book events online at [www.gdst.net/events](http://www.gdst.net/events).

**How to find further information** - Or assistance, please phone us on 020 7393 6898 or email us at [info@gdstalumnae.net](mailto:info@gdstalumnae.net).