

REKINDLE

Keeping the Notre Dame flame alive

EDITION 1 • 2018



TEAM GB SPORTING SUPERSTAR
FI TILLMAN RETURNS TO INSPIRE
THE NEXT GENERATION *See page 3*

NOTRE
DAME
SCHOOL



THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNAE OF NOTRE DAME SCHOOL, COBHAM

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REKINDLE Cover picture shows, from left to right: PE Teacher Heather Marsh, Sister Faith Ede, Fi Tillman, Sister Maria Quinn and Prep Head Merinda D'Aprano

WELCOME TO REKINDLE



Hello! My name is Ros Roberts and as Alumnae Manager for Notre Dame School, I'm delighted to welcome you to the first issue of our new alumnae magazine, *Rekindle*.

The aim of the Notre Dame Alumnae Association is to keep the Notre Dame flame alive all over the world by reuniting friends, maintaining our community and using the power of our connections to mentor and support the current generation. As the mother of two Notre Dame girls, one of whom is now an alumna, it's my absolute privilege to be a part of this process.

I'm always happy to welcome alumnae back, so if you'd like to see how the school has changed why not come for a tour? If you live too far away, stay up to date by joining our Notre Dame Cobham Alumnae Facebook group, or keep an eye on the Alumnae section of the school website. We're also planning to launch an exciting new communications network online in 2018 so please make sure we have up to date contact details for you, including a current email address if possible (see panel below).
I hope you enjoy *Rekindle*. If you have any news and photographs for future editions, or can help the girls with careers advice or mentoring, I'd be delighted to hear from you.

Ros

Ros Roberts
Email: rroberts@notredame.co.uk or write to me at **Notre Dame School, Burwood House, Convent Lane, Cobham, Surrey KT11 1HA.**
Tel: 01932 869990 (ext 391). Alternatively contact me via Facebook or Twitter.

DON'T MISS OUT ON FUTURE NEWS AND EVENTS!

From next year, new data protection laws will prevent us from contacting you unless you have given your express permission - even if you are already on our database. If you left Notre Dame before September 2015, please go to www.notredame.co.uk and fill in the membership form under the 'Alumnae' tab. Include your email address (it will not be shared with anyone else) and be sure to tick 'yes' to the data protection question. We will make sure you continue to receive news and updates on our alumnae events and look forward to seeing you soon.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM YOUR OLD SCHOOL...



Proud: Merinda D'Aprano & Anna King

It's official - Notre Dame School is excellent!

The Independent Schools Inspectorate has awarded the school its highest possible accolade following a rigorous assessment process earlier this year.

A team of inspectors spent several days visiting lessons, meeting and interviewing pupils and teachers, checking facilities and scrutinising questionnaires filled in by parents. Their verdict - that the school was excellent in all areas - is a tribute to the hard-working staff and the strong leadership team of Anna King and Merinda D'Aprano, the Heads of the Senior and Prep schools, who said: "We are delighted with the Reports and the 'Excellent' grading across all aspects of our school. We are justifiably proud of the whole community, with excellence in teaching, Governance and Leadership reflected in the learning and personal outcomes of our pupils."



A full copy of the report is on the school website.

Happy 80th Birthday Notre Dame!

Incredibly, it's over 80 years since the school was founded in 1937 at Burwood House, by a small group of visionary Sisters passionate about the education of girls. Today, it's grown from just seven boarders into a thriving community of over 1,500 pupils, parents, teachers and the current generation of Sisters of the Company of Mary Our Lady.

To mark this special anniversary, Prep School Head Merinda D'Aprano planted an oak tree in the grounds opposite Burwood House on Friday 17 November watched by the Sisters, staff and pupils. The school also celebrated on Tuesday 21 November with a special Mass and Feast Day, and everyone was given a commemorative badge as a memento.

We are planning further celebratory events in 2018, so do make sure we have your up to date contact details including a current email address if possible. New data protection legislation coming into force this year means you have to give us express permission to contact you about school events, so you may need to re-register even if you are already on the database (see opposite for details).

We look forward to welcoming you back to join the celebrations!



Old Friendships become 'Forever Friendships' at London Reunion

Notre Dame School is always thrilled to learn about ex-pupils, especially when they reunite over thirty years after they left in 1985!

Earlier this year, Sarah MacDonald (Harding) decided to create a "Getting Back in Touch" Facebook page in an attempt to track down some long-lost school friends. She had often thought about her time at Notre Dame and the friendships she had made there.

Armed with a few names, Sarah got to work and by August 40 former pupils had reconnected. They shared their life stories, as well as reminiscing about school! Photos were shared of school trips and Sports Days; school girls in uniform and the ladies they are today! There were sad stories and tales of fulfilled lives, but at the heart of it was a very strong connection with one another. There was only one thing left to do - organise a Reunion!

This took place on Friday, 20 October 2017 at the BFI Bar and Kitchen on the Southbank. It was attended by 26 alumnae, many of whom had travelled from as far away as Qatar, Ireland and Spain just to spend time with their friends once more. Name badges were issued, but proved unnecessary because as Sarah said, "Everyone was just a little bit older and a whole lot wiser!" The Notre Dame girls wasted no time in catching up on each other's news and the room was filled with excitement, laughter, tears of happiness and admiration for one another. There was a buzz of elation and the sound of clinking glasses throughout the entire evening! Lost friendships became forever friendships.

Speaking afterwards Sarah (left) said: "I never thought that my Facebook page would reunite so many people. It has been the most amazing experience and such a wonderful night. We are all firm friends again - so this will be the first of many Reunions!"



Giselle brings Olympic magic to our new All-Weather Pitch



Muddy trainers and lumpy turf have been consigned to the history books at Notre Dame thanks to the opening of our fantastic new All-Weather sports facilities in 2017.

To a loud chorus of cheers from all the students, Olympic hockey player Giselle Ansley – who with her team-mates won Gold in Rio in August 2016 – cut the ribbon, ably assisted by Notre Dame alumna Fi Tillman, a member of the Team GB Women’s Wheelchair Basketball team (see below).

The facilities include four competition-standard courts for netball and tennis, a hockey pitch, running track and floodlights. Said Senior School Headmistress Anna King: “We are delighted with the level of sporting success our girls currently achieve and are confident that these new facilities will provide even further inspiration – and maybe an Olympic champion of the future!”



A welcome return for Team GB athlete Fi Tillman

What’s it like to be a Team GB wheelchair basketball athlete? That’s what students were able to ask when alumna Fi Tillman came along to talk about her fantastic sporting achievements and coping with disability.

A PE teacher before a motorbike accident left her with a serious spinal cord injury at the age of 32, Fi told the girls about the difficult years since and how her love of sport and

competition, gained during her years at Notre Dame, have helped restore her purpose in life and reshape her future.

Fi singled out her PE teacher, Mrs Heather Marsh – who is still at the school – for inspiring her love of sport. She also thanked Sister Maria and Sister Faith (now retired) for inspiring her to pursue a successful and fulfilling teaching career.

After a wonderful presentation in the Chapel, Fi ran a wheelchair basketball master class with our GCSE Sport students and also treated Year 4 girls to a race up the running track! You can read more about Fi’s inspirational story on page 11.

Goodbye and good luck to the Class of 2017!



Champagne glasses clinked on the lawns in front of Burwood House in July as this year’s Year 13 Leavers, their parents and teachers drank a celebratory toast to the future. After a delicious sit-down dinner courtesy of the school’s Catering Manager Mandy Crane and her team, the girls listened to moving farewell speeches by Headmistress Anna King, the Head Girl Layla Sanjooori and the Head of Sixth Form Janine Harber. Said Mrs King: “It’s always emotional to say goodbye to the girls, but we know they are well equipped for the future and we can’t wait to see what they go on to do!”

Meanwhile, Year 11 enjoyed a ‘Prom’ in June to celebrate the end of their GCSEs and the beginning of Sixth Form. We wish all of them the very best of luck with their A level studies.

Pizza + Prosecco = Party!

Excited chatter about university and gap year experiences filled the air one cold winter’s night early in 2017, when the 2016 cohort of Year 13 ND6 Leavers gathered for a reunion at Wildwood in Cobham.

Fortified by copious servings of pizza and celebratory glasses of Prosecco, the girls relished the opportunity of exchanging news and fresh friendships were forged as they discovered new experiences in common. Said Emilia Roberts: “It was wonderful to see everyone again and we’re all looking forward to catching up again soon.”



A sad farewell to Bridget Williams and Sister Catherine McLenaghan

It is with sadness that we report the passing of former Senior School Headmistress Bridget Williams and Sister Catherine McLenaghan ODN.

Mrs. Williams, who passed away in August 2017, joined the Senior School as Headmistress in 2003. During her 10-year tenure, the school thrived and many important new facilities were added. Known by her famous catchphrase ‘when the going gets tough, the tough get going’ Mrs. Williams is remembered with gratitude and affection by her pupils and colleagues.

Sister Catherine, who passed away in April 2016, was a key presence in the school for many years and a Governor from 2003 until 2014. A quiet source of strength, wisdom and support, she is sorely missed.

• *Mrs Williams’s family is raising money for the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund in her memory. To donate, please go to www.justgiving.com/fundraising/in-memory-of-bridget-williams.*



Happy 99th Birthday Sister Mary Agnes

Dozens of birthday tributes and bouquets of flowers marked the 99th birthday of Sister Mary Agnes Kerr in February.

Now enjoying her retirement in a care home in Cobham, Sr Mary Agnes was Headmistress of the senior school for 28 years from 1959-1987 and remains a much-loved and respected member of our community. Looking back on her years at Notre Dame, she said: “The girls meant such a lot to me

and I was very fond of them no matter how difficult they were. It nearly broke my heart when I had to retire.” Asked if she had a message for her former pupils she said: “Just ask them to pray for me and when I get to God, I’ll remember them and that’s a promise.”



Sophie goes under cover

Guess who made the front page of The Daily Telegraph on July 5 2017? No, not just Roger Federer – alumna Sophie Bond! As temperatures soared at Wimbledon, Sophie, 23 and a Championship regular for the last four years, had the job of keeping the world’s top tennis player cool under pressure – and a giant umbrella. A few days later, Federer went on to win his record eighth Wimbledon singles title against Marin Cilic.



Boys welcomed back to Notre Dame

Alumnae with long memories will recall that Notre Dame used to welcome both girls and boys. Now that tradition has returned and we are taking boys up to the age of seven.

Said Prep Head Merinda D’Aprano: “The early years are an invaluable time for sharing and learning to play and work together and research



has shown that boys thrive in a co-educational setting in the pre-prep environment. The school has a long tradition of family values, and keeping families and siblings together in the formative years will help parents and enrich our already vibrant community.”

Alumnae inspire the next generation

When it comes to inspiring the career choices of the next generation, our alumnae are always happy to help – and we were delighted to welcome back six of them at our Careers Fair in November.

Sophie Lightowers (Fashion Designer), Sarah Hadley (Teacher), Alicia Cox (Civil Servant), Francesca Edwards (Pilot), Bethany Eastwood (Vet) Emma Hadley and Shelley Eastwood (both Doctors) all gave up their evening to help and advise girls aged 14-18 on A Level choices and future careers. Showcasing over 30 different occupations, the fair was a great success and it was wonderful to see the older generation of Notre Dame girls helping the younger ones. If you can offer any career advice, work experience or can spare the time to talk the girls about your job, do get in touch with our Head of Careers, Karen Franco at kfranco@notredame.co.uk.



ALICIA AND ANNA ARE DEFINITELY HIRED!

► **University isn't the only route to a promising career - apprenticeships can also lead to a wide range of fascinating occupations, as these two recent alumnae are demonstrating....**



Alicia's on guard in cyberspace

Guy Fawkes may have set out to destroy the Houses of Parliament with gunpowder, treason and plot, but in these troubled times, it's more likely to be a sophisticated cyber attack that threatens the seat of government. So Alicia Cox only has to glance out of her office window at the Palace of Westminster to be reminded of the huge importance of her work as Assistant Private Secretary to Baroness Joanna Shields OBE, Minister for Internet Safety and Security.

Alicia (24), was promoted to this position in March, after just 18 months' training as a cyber security apprentice at the Home Office. Working for a Minister is, she says, a dream come true: "Baroness Shields has built some of the world's best-known technology companies including Google, AOL and Facebook, so I really am learning from an expert." Alicia studied 'A' levels in Maths, Biology and Geography but had no previous experience in IT.

Her role is to support Baroness Shields in her drive to remove terrorist, radicalising and extremist content from the internet, make it a safer place for children and promote safe,

open internet access for everyone.

Alicia credits the school for equipping her with the skills and confidence to operate at a senior level and thoroughly recommends apprenticeships as an alternative to university: "It's so rewarding to be able to combine a role that's serving the public with a world-class education and know that I am helping to make the internet a safer place for everyone."

“Baroness Shields has built some of the world's best-known technology companies so I really am learning from an expert”



Anna's cut out for a future in fashion

A tape measure, some pins and a flair for fabrics - these are the tools of the trade for fashion apprentice Anna Forbes, 19, who took up a position as Assistant Garment

Technologist with top fashion retailer New Look in June 2016.

A talented seamstress with 'A' levels in Textiles, Business Studies and Sociology, Anna had the perfect qualifications for an apprenticeship with this top-performing fashion company. Said Anna: "The competition was fierce but, thanks to the skills I learned at Notre Dame, I think they could see that I was independent, self-motivated and passionate about fashion."

Anna is based at the Company's London HQ and is learning her trade in the fast-expanding menswear department: "My job is to support the garment development process, from wearer trials and fitting sessions to monitoring final production," she said, adding: "I regularly communicate with manufacturers, so my background in Business Studies has really helped me appreciate the intricacies of the costing process."

Anna hopes to be offered a permanent job when her apprenticeship comes to an end in 2018: "I absolutely love what I do and am looking forward to becoming a qualified garment technologist, hopefully with my own apprentice, in a year's time!" she declared.



SNAP! JENNY IS THE IMAGE OF DIGITAL INNOVATION

► **A bright idea at university has grown into a multi-award winning fashion company for digital entrepreneur Jenny Griffiths, MBE. Here, Rekindle looks at how Jenny's revolutionary phone app is changing the way we shop.**

What do pop superstar Adele, tennis champion Andy Murray, actress Emma Watson and Notre Dame alumna Jenny Griffiths all have in common? They've been named by global media magazine Forbes as being among Europe's most influential people under 30. Not only that, but Jenny has also been awarded an MBE for services to digital innovation in the fashion industry!

Jenny, 30, who left Notre Dame for Bristol University in 2005, was awarded her MBE at the tender age of 27 after founding Snap Fashion, a multi award-winning fashion app that lets fashion fans find clothes using photographs.

The first fashion-focused visual search engine in Britain, Snap Fashion lets users 'snap' a picture of an item of clothing - whether in a magazine, on a website or on the street - and then searches for similar items from a vast catalogue of online retailers including top names like Topshop, New Look, Miss Selfridge, John Lewis, Liberty London and Harrods.

Jenny started developing the app as a Computer Science undergraduate at Bristol University. Looking back on her university years, she says: "I'd always had the idea for Snap Fashion and worked on it as part of my thesis. The degree was fantastic because it gave a really well-balanced view of computer science in the first two years and then we could specialise, so I specialised on the creative side.

"Visual search is a sector of computer science which teaches a computer how to see. It comes naturally to humans but to computers, it's just a bunch of pixels, so we've managed to programme a computer to see colours, shapes and even textures."

Asked how she had originally come up with the concept, Jenny adds: "Fashion is a really personal thing and it's sometimes really hard to describe what it is that draws you towards your favourite items... searching using pictures seemed like the obvious thing to do, and I'm proud to say that we were the first people to do it."

An instant hit when it was officially launched in 2012, Snap Fashion has been hailed as 'genius' by the fashion press and made it into the *Sunday Times* Top

15 Fashion Apps in the World list in its first year. Since then, the company has gone from strength to strength and has recently added shoes, handbags and menswear to the app. Continues self-confessed 'geek-chic' CEO Jenny: "We want to put the fun back into online shopping making it fast, fulfilling and the best way of discovering new brands. We now have 250 retailers on board and there are a quarter of a million 'snaps' using the app every month."

Jenny is more modest about her investiture at Buckingham Palace, during which she was presented with her MBE by the Princess Royal. Asked about the honour, which she received in the 2015 Queen's Birthday Honours List, she says: "It's just amazing because I'm obviously quite young and just

think that what I'm doing is normal. At the end of the day, we're creating a product that we all love to use!"

Everyone at Notre Dame is extremely proud of Jenny and wishes her and her talented team even more success in the future.

If you'd like to learn more about Snap Fashion, go to www.snapfashion.co.uk. The SnapFashion app is available for either iOS or android.



WHAT IS AN MBE?

The honours - CBE, OBE and MBE - were created in 1917 by King George V during the First World War as a way of rewarding civilians and servicemen in support positions for their contribution to the war effort. Now they are used to recognise an achievement or service to the community. According to the Cabinet Office, an MBE is given for an "outstanding achievement or service to the community. This will have had a long-term, significant impact and stand out as an example to others". The ribbon has grey stripes if it is awarded to the military, no stripes for civilians.



WISDOM, KINDNESS AND A POSITIVE INFLUENCE

► Eighty years after it was founded in 1937 with just seven boarders and a handful of Nuns, Notre Dame School still relies on the kindness, wisdom and calming presence of the Sisters, whose positive influence has helped shape many young lives. Here, we celebrate the most recent generation, photographed here in 2007.

When Notre Dame School's pastoral system was graded 'outstanding' by the ISI Inspectorate in January 2017, it was a fitting tribute to the efforts of the entire staff team including the Sisters of the Order of the Company of Mary Our Lady.

Whether they act as governors, supervisors, teachers, or play other important support roles, the Sisters are a constant presence around the school and inspire affection and respect in equal measure. Once retired, they continue to play an important role in the local community and maintain contact with many 'old girls'. Here's an update on the Sisters pictured in this photograph (with their religious names in brackets)...

Back row, from left:



Sister Anne Bayley (Sr Frances)

A former Notre Dame pupil herself, Sr Anne (pictured with Sister Christine) was head of the Prep School. Now retired, she lives with other Sisters at 'Lestonnac', the community house next to the Church of the Sacred Heart in Cobham.

Sister Sadie Grant (Sr Margaret)

Now retired, Sr Sadie worked as school cook with Sr Bernadette, who died in 2002. She lives in the community house in Walton, where she continues to cook for the Sisters. Her signature dish is a good old-fashioned roast!

Sister Christine Bayley (Sr Winifred)

Along with her sibling, Sr Christine taught at the school and also in Dublin, Then she did Parish work, but is now retired and lives in a care home.



Sister Anne Gill

A school governor since 2003, Sr Anne attended the school herself as a boarder from 1959 to 1965. She taught RE, Art and English at Notre Dame from 1973-5 before moving to South

America for 25 years to work with the poor. A fluent Spanish speaker, she returned to Cobham in 2001 and rejoined Notre Dame in 2003, where she is a constant presence around the school and continues to serve as a Governor on the Lestonnac, Finance and Building Committees.



Sister Julia Lanaghan (Sr Annunciata)

Sr Julia was the Head of Notre Dame Prep School from 1986-98, when she retired to work in the Diocese helping other schools. She sadly died of cancer in 2011.



Sister Nieves Escalada

Sr Nieves hails from Spain, where she was Headmistress of a school for 19 years before moving to Notre Dame in 2014. She serves on the governing body as the

Governor for Safeguarding, as well as sitting on the Health and Safety and Lestonnac Committees. Sr Nieves also assists the Chaplaincy in maintaining links with elderly residents living in Whiteley Village nearby.



Sister Catherine McLenaghan (Sr Martina)

After teaching Commerce and Business Studies at Notre Dame in the 1970s,

Sr Catherine taught in Dublin and Scotland before returning to the school as Governor serving on most of the committees from 2003-2014. Also a trained Samaritan, she

passed away in April 2016 (see obituary, page 5) and is very much missed.

Sister Patricia Kelly (Sr Gabriel)

Sr Patricia taught in the Prep school in the 1960s and went on to become a constant presence around the school and in the local community. In her later career on the governing body, she played a pivotal role in preparing the school for lay head teachers to take over in the late 1990s. Sr Patricia sadly passed away in January 2012 and the current senior school headmistress's office is named in her honour as the 'Patricia Kelly Parlour'.



Sister Faith Ede (Sr Jeanne)

As Head of the Prep School from 1969-77, and of the Senior School from 1987-99, Sr Faith was the last Sister to hold senior office in the school

◀ and had an enormous influence on many generations of Notre Dame girls. An alumna herself, she not only nurtured the caring Christian environment but also enhanced the school's academic reputation and undertook an ambitious refurbishment programme. Sr Faith lives in the community house in Walton and has continued her good works as a Parish Sister in Thames Ditton for the past 12 years. She maintains contact with many alumnae, telling *Rekindle*: "It's funny that when I was Head and bumped into girls outside school, they would scuttle into doorways to hide. Now they actually seek me out and it's lovely to stay in touch with so many."



Sister Mary Agnes Kerr (Sr or Mother Berchmans)

Many alumnae have fond memories of Scottish-born Sr Mary Agnes, who celebrated her 99th birthday in February 2017 and is now one of the most popular residents at the care home where she lives in Cobham. Also known as Sister or Mother Berchmans, she spent her entire teaching career at the school and was Headmistress of the Senior School for

28 years from 1959-87. Among her many achievements was an extensive building programme to add more classrooms. Sister Mary Agnes also played the organ at the Sacred Heart Church, Cobham and following her retirement, supported the community there as a Parish Sister for more than 20 years. She still knits scarves for the homeless and loves receiving visitors, of which she has many!

Front Row/Bench, left to right:



Sister Patricia Grady

Sr Patricia was a former governor and familiar presence at Notre Dame until her retirement in 2016. She also taught Year 2 in 1973/4, and Years 4 and 6 from 1984-1993. After teaching in Dublin, Glasgow and Spain, she returned to Notre Dame in 2015 to teach theology and food technology before finishing her career as full-time Chaplain. Sr Patricia is now Pastoral Director at the Royal English College in Spain, a seminary which trains young men for the priesthood.

Sr Jane taught PE, English and RE in the late 1940s and 1950s. After a spell teaching in Wincanton, she returned to Notre Dame in the 1970s and then retired. She eventually moved into a care home and passed away in February 2015.

Sister Jane Mogan (Sr Benedict)

Sr Jane taught PE, English and RE in the late 1940s and 1950s. After a spell teaching in Wincanton, she returned to Notre Dame in the 1970s and then retired. She eventually moved into a care home and passed away in February 2015.



Sister Mary Smith (Sr Stanislaus)

Now aged 102 and still in good health, Sr Mary lives in the community house in Walton. As well as teaching French to the girls, she was

instrumental in getting the Chapel, hall and maths block built in the 1960s. She became Superior after Sr Agnes Easdale, who died in 1988. Fluent in French and Spanish, Sr Mary did valuable translation work for the Order.

Sister Margaret Curran (Sr Margaret)

Less well known to the Notre Dame girls, Sr Margaret did pastoral work in the parishes and was very active in helping the St Vincent de Paul Society's work for the poor in the UK and Ireland. She passed away in 2011.



Sister Maria Quinn (Sr Assumpta)

Still a reassuring and regular presence at Notre Dame, Sr Maria taught maths, physics and RE from 1969-89. After spells

teaching in London, Dublin and Glasgow, and working for aid organisations in Brussels, she retired in 2006 but was persuaded to return to Notre Dame to run the Prep's After-School Club and now supervises senior girls' homework in the Learning Resource Centre. A member of the Lestonnac Committee and the governing body, Sr Maria continues to make a major contribution to school life.

OTHER SISTERS YOU MAY REMEMBER...

Depending on when you attended Notre Dame, other Sisters you may remember include the following, who are sadly no longer with us:

- ✦ **Sr Josephine Kearney (Madame)**, science teacher, who died in 1971.
- ✦ **Sr Catherine Gorman**, (pictured), first Head of Prep School. She died in 1972.
- ✦ **Sr Marguerite McDonnell (Sr Elizabeth)**, who was an infant teacher and dormitory mistress. She died in 1977.
- ✦ **Sr Monica Strongess** (home economics and needlework), who died in 1980.
- ✦ **Sr Agnes Lytton** (art), who died in 1995 and whose stained-glass window proudly adorns the Lytton Parlour in Burwood House.
- ✦ **Sr Marjorie Hughes** (Head of Junior School) who died in 2006.



A SPORTING CHANCE FOR FI



Fiona Tillman

▶ **Talented sportswoman Fi Tillman was just 35 and at the height of her teaching career when an accident on the way to work left her with life-changing injuries. Here, she tells how her love of sport, nurtured during her teenage years at Notre Dame, helped her rebuild her future.**

It was a sunny June morning in 2010 when Fi Tillman's life changed forever. One minute she was riding her motorbike to the job she loved as a primary school teacher in Seaford, East Sussex; the next she was flying through the air into the path of a refuse truck. "My bike had been hit from behind by a minibus," she tells *Rekindle*.

Fi was rushed to hospital with spinal and head injuries and spent the next few years undergoing multiple operations on her legs and spine. Surgeons did all they could, but her much-loved teaching career was over. Says Fi: "I adored my job as Head of Key Stage 1 at a unit for children with special needs. To have it ripped away with no warning was the hardest thing I have ever had to deal with."

Fi's love of teaching stemmed from her teenage years at Notre Dame from 1987-1991, when the kindness and support of her teachers had helped her through a traumatic period at home. "Notre Dame was my refuge and I have never forgotten the teachers who helped me. The headmistress, Sister Faith Ede, was my

stalwart and my form tutor Sister Maria Quinn was a sweet, lovely lady I could always rely on. I have fond memories of many other teachers, too, including Mrs. Cochrane, who retired in 2013, and Mrs. Marsh, who inspired my love of sport and is still teaching at the school."

Fi excelled at sport and went on to study for a teaching degree at university in Brighton, where she captained the women's basketball team and took them to three national finals, winning a Silver medal in 1996. She then began her career in secondary education before deciding to specialise in teaching children with special needs.

Confined to her hospital bed after the accident, Fi's sporting achievements became a distant memory as she struggled to come to

“Notre Dame was my refuge and I have never forgotten the teachers who helped me”

terms with her drastically reduced mobility. The turning point in her rehabilitation programme came in 2011 when she was invited to a wheelchair basketball taster session with the Sussex Tigers. Fi spent a year at the club before moving up to London and being coached by five times Paralympian Ann Wild OBE. At the age of 40, she made her international debut for Team GB at the Wheelchair Basketball World Championships in Toronto in June 2014, helping them to a best-ever finish of fifth. In the same year, Fi was also part of National Paralympic Day, a chance to celebrate the London 2012 legacy and raise money for charity.

Fast forward to 2018 and Fi's basketball career continues to thrive. As a member of Team GB, she helped her team to a bronze medal in the 2017 European Wheelchair Basketball Championships, is also the proud recipient of a Sports Aid Award and continues to receive British Olympic silver privileges.

With a second burgeoning career as a motivational speaker, Fi was delighted to come back into Notre Dame to address the girls and demonstrate the agility and power of wheelchair basketball: "Of all the places I've been to, the one I hadn't was the one that had the biggest impact on me. I had the most amazing support from all the teachers at Notre Dame and could never have gone on to achieve all I did without their kindness and support during my teenage years."



THE SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR NOTRE DAME GIRLS

► From enthralling audiences in London's West End to building flourishing careers in fashion and sport through to medicine and IT, our talented Alumnae continue to inspire the next generation. Here's a round up of what some of them have been up to...



After her most recent tour de force in 'Hedda Gabler' at The National Theatre, alumna **Ruth Wilson** is taking on a role closer to home in a BBC drama based on her own family. Due to air in 2018, *The Wilsons* will tell the true story of her grandmother Alison, who thinks she is happily married until her husband Alec dies and a woman turns up on her doorstep claiming to be the real Mrs. Wilson. Says Ruth, who is playing the role of her grandmother: "I am so excited to bring to the small screen the extraordinary lives of my grand-parents. There is a profoundly moving story and the BBC is the perfect home for it."



Fellow alumna **Patsy Ferran** will also be returning to our TV screens soon in the second series of *Jamestown*, a drama from the makers of *Downton Abbey* about English settlers in America in 1617. Patsy will reprise her role as 'Mercy', the naïve servant girl. The series was Sky1's highest performing original drama to date when it first aired in Spring 2017.



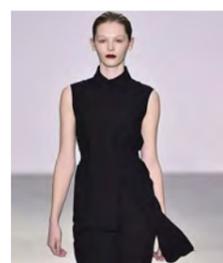
The music industry is notoriously tough to get into, but alumna **Jess Plummer** has landed her first job as a management assistant at London-based artist, producer and songwriter management company Solar Management. Jess, who graduated in 2016 with a First Class degree in Music, Theatre and Entertainment Management

from Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts, is now helping to manage up-and-coming bands and artists.

“Sophie's graduate collection 'Biophilia' was lauded by *Vogue* and featured on *vogue.com*”



The UK fashion industry is booming and so is the career of **Sophie Lightowlers**, who graduated in 2017 with a BA in Fashion and Textiles. Sophie's graduate collection 'Biophilia' was lauded by *Vogue* and featured on *vogue.com*. Sophie is now working on an assignment for a luxury design house.



Remaining on the catwalk, **Lauren Wright**, who left Year 13 in 2016, has just completed a hectic gap year modeling for top London agency Storm. Lauren's high profile assignments have taken her to Ireland and Paris on both commercial and editorial shoots and she's now in her first year studying Architecture at Oxford Brookes University.



Many of our alumnae are pursuing business careers and moving quickly up through the ranks to management positions. Take **Louise Gwyther**, for example, who graduated from Newcastle University in 2015 with a degree in Politics. Louise now works for a technology business that provides IT solutions to large companies. As Client Delivery Manager on one of the biggest accounts, Network Rail, Louise manages the client relationship and also the technical team in India.



Talking of promotion, **Madison Sharp** is enjoying a successful career in retail management after graduating with a degree in Business Studies and Finance in 2015. Madison has already been promoted six times, three at M & S and three at Lipsy and is currently making waves at Debenhams. Now engaged to be married, she says her inspiration was her dissertation on women in business, which made her feel she could achieve anything!



Former Head Girl **Claudia Buffini** has set up a network for young women under 35 called Fractio Vitri (*fractiovitri.com*). Now with 500+ members, the network encourages young women to develop positive responses to the challenges they may face in the workplace. Meanwhile Claudia's own career is going well - after graduating in 2016 from Durham University with a degree in Anthropology, she's now training as a branding consultant with London agency Pulse Brands.



Law is always a popular career choice and **Ellie Keighley Elstub** has secured a training contract with leading City firm Linklaters in advance of starting law school this year. The contract follows a three-year History degree at the University of Bristol, during which she did internships at commercial law firms Macfarlanes and Linklaters.



Many of our students have gone on to study medicine or veterinary science, including **Francesca Back**, who left Year 13 in 2016 and went up to Balliol College, Oxford, to read Medicine. Now in her second year, Francesca is loving her course and her favourite subject so far has been the anatomy of the heart and the cardiovascular system.



Also pursuing a medical career is **Sophie Bond**, who graduated with a Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Science degree in 2015 and is now well into a second degree in Occupational Therapy. Sophie's decision to go back to uni followed an immensely rewarding 'year out' working as a rehabilitation assistant on a neurological inpatient ward. Meanwhile, younger sister **Lucy Bond**, who left in 2016, is volunteering at Liv Village, a charity which looks after orphaned and vulnerable children in South Africa, before heading off to read psychology at Southampton.



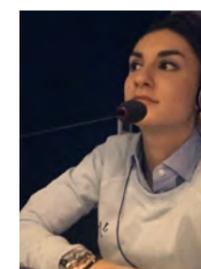
The **Eastwood** sisters, **Shelley** and **Bethany**, both embarked on medical careers, Shelley with people and Bethany with animals! Shelley is now a doctor, while younger sister Bethany (pictured) read veterinary medicine at Cambridge and qualified with a Masters in both veterinary surgery and natural science. She's now lead vet at Priory Vets in Redhill.



The effect of G-force on the cardiovascular systems of fast-jet pilots was the topic of **Francesca Edwards'** Masters research project in 2017. Now the proud bearer of a Masters Degree in Human and Applied Physiology from King's College, keen pilot Francesca has just been accepted onto EasyJet's Pilot Training Programme.



Former Head Girl **Dorothy Robertson** says 'hola!' She graduated in chemistry (with study in Europe) in 2016 and is now living and working in Bilbao, Spain, teaching English while she looks for a job in the renewable energy sector. Older sister **Evelyn** graduated from the LSE in 2013 with a degree in Social Anthropology and is now a social and market researcher at a transport consultancy, designing research programmes for clients such as the Department of Transport and Transport for London.



Languages have always been a strength at Notre Dame and **Georgia Kyprianou**, who left in 2012, is well on her way to achieving her Year 9 ambition of being a professional interpreter. After completing a BA in Modern Languages, Georgia has now completed a Masters degree in being a Conference Interpreter and her dream is to work for big organisations like the European Union or United Nations.



When it comes to dreams, they don't come much bigger than competing in the Olympics, and making a splash in Tokyo in 2020 is the goal of our champion swimmer **Hannah Burvill**. After an outstanding swimming career at Notre Dame, Hannah left Year 13 in 2016 and crossed the Atlantic to take up a full four-year scholarship to swim and study at the University of Iowa.

Now in her second year, Hannah has certainly made waves, sprinting to a new university record in the 100m freestyle event at the inaugural USA College Challenge, and smashing three school records in the relays. Says Hannah: "It's been hard work but a lot of fun, and I have really enjoyed being part of a new training programme. I'd love to think I could compete in Tokyo in 2020 - watch this space!"

We will, Hannah, we will!



WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE FEATURED IN REKINDLE ?

If you would like to be featured in a future article, please email Ros Roberts, Alumnae Manager, at rroberts@notredame.co.uk or write to her at the address on page 2. Don't forget to include a photo or two!

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

► We always love to welcome our alumnae back to the school and many of our 'old girls' have visited us in the past year. They are always amazed at how the school has changed but somehow feels just the same...



Valerie Neal (Poulter), Anne Rhodes and Wendy Denman, circa 1958

Valerie Neal (Poulter) and Frances 'Frankie' Nicholls (Lee) travelled all the way up from their homes in the Cornish seaside village of Portscatho to visit the school they last saw in 1958, when they left aged 16 for Kingston School of Art. They have fond memories of the "strict but fair" Sisters who taught them. Said Val: "Sister Stanislaus taught me probably the most important lesson of my life, which is that there is injustice and anger in the world and both are to be avoided!"



Frankie and Valerie today

Both Val and Frankie excelled at art and later studied sculpture and design at Kingston. Continued Val: "Frankie and I then worked for a film animation company in Richmond before moving to Cornwall, to a village where we had holidayed in our teens. We both married locals and our children grew up together. I later joined the HM Coastguard Search and Cliff Rescue and during 17 years' service, attended over 500 call outs.

"Frankie and I still love our art. I sculpt and Frankie paints and is also called upon every year to help paint the scenery for the local dramatic society (something we both did at Notre Dame!). We loved visiting the school again and seeing the statue of Jesus on the stairs and Mary out on the field. It's reassuring that while some things have changed, the school still feels the same."



Jacky Ling (Reeves) and Trish Winter (Starr)

Trish Winter (nee Starr) and Jacky Ling (nee Reeves) made a beeline for their old classroom when they visited the school recently. Seated at the desks upstairs in Burwood House, the two went on a nostalgic trip down memory lane as they recalled their happy time in the Prep school in the mid 1960s. Said Trish: "It was wonderful to be taught in such a lovely building surrounded by beautiful grounds. Notre Dame gave us the confidence to mix with all kinds of people, to put others before ourselves and always work hard, be reliable and achieve success. Today's generation are so fortunate to have a superb school with such caring staff."



Fiona Fennessey, now living in the US, finds an old Prep class photo

Fiona Fennessey, 17, recently came back to visit from the US with her mother Francine. Fiona attended the Prep school for three years before leaving to return to her native US in 2007. Now at High School in New York State, Fiona looks back on her time at Notre Dame with great affection and was taken on a tour by former classmate Christina de Sant Anna Munroe, with whom she is still in touch. During the tour, they came across a photo of their reception class, taken in 2005! How time flies...



Sister Anne Gill shows Virginia her old dorm, now a Prep School classroom

Virginia Harding (nee Nichols-Marcy) arrived at Notre Dame aged six as a boarder in 1945 and returned to visit us this summer from her home in Lewes, East Sussex. Said Virginia: "I have fond memories of appearing in a school play, dressed in a costume made out of crepe paper. I also remember gentle Sister Agnes Lytton teaching art and Mother de Lestonnac hitching up her habit to play rounders with us!" She was delighted to be shown her old dormitory (now a prep classroom) by Sister Anne Gill, a school governor and past pupil herself.

After a career in nursing and midwifery, Virginia changed course and at the age of 78, has returned to the stage with none other than Glyndebourne Opera in a variety of non-singing roles. "I started out helping with the props but in small opera companies, one has to be flexible so before I knew it, I was cast as a Witch in Macbeth!" she laughed. Indeed, as we went to press, she was about to embark on a six-date tour of Mozart's Cosi Fan Tutte. "It's tremendous fun and I feel privileged to be part of such a well respected opera company," she added.

As for former schoolfriends, Virginia would love to hear from Frances and Patricia Finnegan, the Warmlesy sisters, Lyndon Marks and Margaret Wigg. If one of these is you, do contact Ros Roberts (see page 2) and she will put you in touch.



Virginia flies through the air as a witch while performing in Macbeth at Glyndebourne



Virginia (centre) and friends in Notre Dame days



Linda Timothy, left, pictured with her family, was one of the very first sixth formers

Linda Timothy travelled all the way from Dubai to visit Notre Dame this summer while on a trip to the UK with her husband Rafa and ten year old daughter Bea. Linda attended the school from 1977-83 and was one of the very first sixth formers. She says: "Sister Mary Agnes made the brave decision to build a whole new sixth form block over the summer break and I remember my mother saying that the builders were too scared of her to even think of overrunning!"

"I have a huge amount of love and respect for the school and Sister Mary Agnes, who encouraged me to take the career path I really longed for. I will never forget how delighted she was when I passed my A levels and went on to university - one of the very first from the school to do so."

Linda graduated with a degree in Geology/Oceanography, before going on to do a MSc and a PhD. She's currently in Dubai working in the oil industry. Of her visit to Notre Dame, she says: "It has changed so much since I was there, but in other ways, very little. If we lived in the UK, I would unhesitatingly have sent my daughter Bea to Notre Dame."

Linda is keen to make contact with Katherine Sharp so Katherine, if you're out there, please do get in touch.

“ I have a huge amount of love and respect for the school. If we lived in the UK, I would unhesitatingly have sent my daughter Bea to Notre Dame ”

A FRIENDLY HELLO FROM...



Nadira Mirza, who attended as a boarder from 1953-1960. Nadira went on to work in the airline business at a senior level with Korean Airlines. She is now retired, living in Paris and has a 13-year-old grandson.

Hilary Tonge (Lunn). Hilary was at Notre Dame from 1950-60 and is still in touch with Frances Harryman (Farr). She'd love to catch up with **Carol Green, Hilary Jones, Sandra Rogers, Sarah Howard** and **Teresa Riley**. Hilary is now retired and lives in Wiltshire.



Virginia (Ginny) Boxall (Drew), who was a pupil from 1968-71. Ginny has her own photography business and her work often features on BBC South today in the weather slot. She's also a busy granny to four grandchildren and lives in Hampshire.



Karen Soulard (Gray). Karen was at Notre Dame from 1970-74. She trained in nursing before doing a double degree in science and primary school education. Karen now lives in France and has five children and 11 grandchildren. She's in touch with **Christine Pilley** but would love to hear from **Elaine Wilson**.



Elizabeth Cussans (Holmes). Liz attended the school from 1972-1980 and now works as an HR Director for a charity in Woking. She has one daughter and keeps in touch with **Nicky Clary** and **Kim Sharp**, among others.



Victoria Whitwam (Combe). Victoria attended from 1976-83 and after a career in journalism, trained as an NCT teacher. In 2013, she retrained as an English teacher and now teaches at Danes Hill School in Oxshott. Victoria lives in East Molesey and stays in touch with **Lisa Say** and **Natalie Meddings**. Her sister Rachel is also an Alumna.



Sarah Hadley, who attended from 1996-2006. Sarah married Christopher du Toit in August 2017 and is pictured here with her bridesmaids **Emma** and **Bessie Hadley**, plus **Theresinha Pocas** and **Hannah Longbottom** (nee Evans).

All three Hadley girls are alumnae of Notre Dame; Sarah is currently teaching English at Nonsuch High School in Cheam, Emma is a Senior House Officer at the Royal Surrey County Hospital, and Bessie has just graduated with a degree in Natural Sciences from Homerton College, Cambridge.



Emmeline Lyster (Haworth), who attended the Sixth Form from 1985-1987. Emmeline still keeps in touch with **Anne-Marie Scott** and **Helen Dennis (Forsdyke)**. After a successful nursing career, she is now a School Nurse Manager and has two children.

Vicky Bertorelli, who attended Notre Dame from Prep 3 to the Upper Sixth, leaving in 1992. Vicky did a Physics degree and then worked at 3M and Deloitte before moving to South America where she now teaches English.



Alex Schirn (Coley), who attended the school from 1995-2000. Alex owns the Monkey Music franchise for Weybridge and Cobham, running music classes for pre-school children. Alex is still in touch with many former schoolfriends including **Bella Watts**,

Olivia Lowdell, Alice Johnson, Kate Barley, Camilla Elhadj, Anjali Jenkins, Katy Sparkes and **Fran Crane**. The photograph (right) shows most of them at Alice's wedding in 2016.



Jaimie Rud, who writes from the US with news of her daughters Katie and Krissy. The family moved to the UK as American expats in 1994 and spent 10 happy years in Cobham. Both alumnae work for oil companies in the US, Katie for BP in Chicago, and Krissy for Exxon Mobil in Houston.



Michele Gawthorpe (Farmer) attended from (1985-90) and still keeps in touch with her Spanish teacher, Mrs. Heathcote-Yorke. Michele now teaches French and Spanish herself and will forever be grateful to Mrs. Heathcote-Yorke for helping her get a place at Oxford with her languages.



Sara Killingback, who left in 1979 after 11 happy years. Now known professionally by her stage name of Szara King, Sara earns her living as a singer, working all over the world in hotels, theatres and on cruise ships. If you want to listen to Sara sing, go to her website www.szaraking.biz.

Would you like to trace old school friends or get in touch with any of the alumnae featured here? Do you have any old photographs of your school days you'd like to share? If so, please email rroberts@notredame.co.uk or write to Ros at the address on page 2. All originals will be carefully scanned and returned to you.