

Alfredians

A Newsletter for Old Alfredians

Spring 2025



Events
& Visits

Beyond
KAS

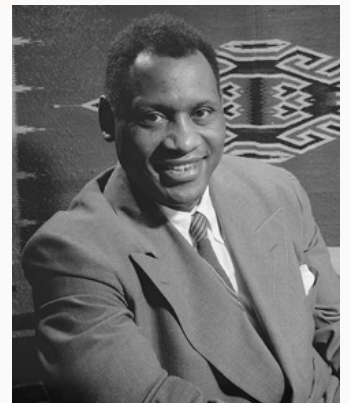
Memories
in Motion

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Reunion Lunch, February 2025

We welcomed a small group of Old Alfredians from the early 1970s to lunch on a beautiful blue-sky day at KAS.

Conversation flowed throughout a delicious lunch, with memories of school days and discussions about careers, life and world events. We could have talked all afternoon in the Lower School Hall, but instead we walked around the school, and in particular Ivy Wood.

During a DT lesson, **Daniel Albert (OA 1974)**, **Peter York (OA 1962)** and **Sebastian Cody (OA 1974)** met **Felix Ronneberger (OA 2021)**, currently working in Design and Technology. A number of our current students also discussed their work with our OAs, who were impressed by the facilities and the creative opportunities afforded to current students. They also spent time chatting to staff members **Adam Findlay** and **Chris Raymond (OA 1999)**.



Sebastian Cody, Mike Wood, Sheila D'Souza, Jonathan Savitt, Lorrain de Peyer, Robert, Daniel Albert, Peter York and Annabel Cody

We were delighted to be presented with a book authored by **Michael Wood (OA 1970)**, *The Memorial Garden: Unearthing Marylebone's Hidden History*. Due to its local/specialist nature, the book is currently only available from Daunt Books (84 Marylebone High Street, London W1U 4QW) and via the St Marylebone Society website (stmarylebonesociety.org).



“What a lovely event yesterday! The group might have been small but it worked exceptionally well.”

I was struck by everyone's love for the school and the gratitude for being invited in again.”

Annabel Cody
KASS President



Peter York with Adam Findlay in DT



Classes of 1966-75



Archive table



Mike Wood and his book

“ We very much enjoyed the Reunion Lunch and meeting you and your colleagues. Thank you very much.” **Mike Wood and Sheila D’Souza**



Jonathan Savitt, Sheila D’Souza and Mike Wood



Daniel Albert with a DT student

“ What a lovely lunch and fun afternoon. Thank you so very much for organising it and how interesting chatting to you all.” **Lorrayn de Peyer (OA 1972)**

OA Reunion at KAS Fireworks

The OA Fireworks Reunion was as fun as ever last term! A wonderful turn out of Old Alfredians stopped by the Sixth Form Centre for drinks and to meet up with former teachers and friends alike. It is always great to have the newest crop of OAs return for their first reunion. We also had some of our OAs from the 1950s stop by for the reunion. You can see all the photos from the evening at www.kasconnected.org, but please enjoy this snapshot for now.



Louis Starkey, Noah Schneiderman, Jolyon Michael, Sonny Starkey, Liam Michaels and friends



Xenia Bowlby, Tamlyn and Peter Ross



KAS staff Amal and Fiona with Tara Dobson Silverton and Charlotte Baker Maher



Deborah with Shaan Bhaskar, Maeve Lock and Oona O’Brien

Festive Tea, November 2024

In November last year, Kara hosted the annual King Alfred School Society (KASS) Festive Tea in the Old Library. Our Head, Robert, also joined our lovely group of Honorary Members, Life Members, KAS Friends and Former Parents. We all enjoyed a thoughtful discussion on the latest KAS news with a particular focus on psychology and the well-being of our students.

It was a wonderful way to kick off the Festive season. Thank you to all who joined.

KASS (Society) membership is open to all Old Alfredians and former parents. Scan or click the QR code if you'd like to become a member.



KASS (Society) Membership is offered to all parents and staff on joining the school – and indeed to any former parents, staff and Old Alfredians who want to remain actively involved. Membership entitles you to take part in the running of the Society, attend and

vote at the Annual General Meeting, and elect or stand for Council. The annual subscription fee for membership funds educational research projects and conferences. By becoming a member of the Society, you will have a voice in furthering the aims of the School.



Guests at the KASS Festive Tea



Stephen Morrall, Tom Bloch, Stephen De Brett, Kara Conti & Tamlyn



Guests at the KASS Festive Tea



Xenia Bowlby and Christine Prowse

Dear Tamlyn and Deborah,

Thank you SO much for yesterday's delightful tea and interesting conversations with kindred spirits.

I always leave KAS events with a warm glow. You have done wonders for making the Old Hands feel still a part of the school and this is so important to us....once captivated by KAS, forever in our blood.

Have a lovely Christmas and New Year.

Lots of love,
Christine

Thank-you letter
from Christine
Prowse



EX CORDE VITA



OA Reunion Lunch – 1940s & 1950s

In February, we hosted our annual Old Alfredian Reunion Lunch with OAs from the 1940s and 1950s. From **Alfred Willis** (son of former KAS chef at Royston) joining us to **Anthea Goldsmith (OA 1953)** celebrating her 90th birthday to Year 6

meeting the OAs from their Festive Post exchange, there wasn't a dull moment to be had. Thank you all for making this reunion so special. Turn to page 15 to read about Alfred Willis and his donation to the school, and page 20 for more details on Festive Post.



Classes of 1940s and 1950s



Hugh Sheridan with a Year 6 student



Anthea Goldsmith with a Year 6 student



Paul Davis and a Year 6 student



Anthea Goldsmith



Gillian Sonin with a Year 6 student



Graham Samuel & Anthea Goldsmith

“Once more you've all excelled yourselves! Thank you for a splendid lunch and terrific company including the delightful pupils... quite charming. It took me back to my own time in the Junior School. I think it is great that you keep us all in touch with KAS. Thank you again.
Jane Epstein (OA 1964)



Alfred Willis and Paul Davis

“Just to say thank you to you and all involved in today's OA lunch; it was a delicious lunch and a great get-together, and so nostalgic for me, meeting friends from school days.

I really admire the KAS policy regarding alumni and loved meeting Kiki, who had sent me a Christmas card.

Paul Davis (OA 1951)



Alfred Willis and photo of his mother, Marie Willis, at Flint Hall Farm



Robert with OAs from 1940s and 1950s



Royston archive display



Ulf Ehrenmark and John Bayes



Xenia Bowlby with Year 6 students

Christian Strobel (OA 1994)

We were happy to welcome **Christian Strobel (OA 1994)** all the way from the United States for a visit to Manor Wood in October.

Joined by his wife, young son and OA classmate, **Nick Nielsen (OA 1994)**, the crew strolled our green spaces, reliving moments from their childhood.

We popped up to visit Pam in

her office, where they ran into yet another OA classmate and staff member, **Hayley Fornara**. Hayley, Pam and Christian are pictured here.



Our OAs are always welcome back to visit us here at the school. Email us at

oa@kingalfred.org.uk if you'd like to stop by and say hello.

Thomas Bernard (OA 1974)

In October, we welcomed another OA from the USA. **Thomas Bernard (OA 1974)** visited KAS and spoke to the Year 9 students.

Tom worked for NASA for 30 years, designing the Thermal Protection Systems on the Space Shuttles. He spent a fascinating hour with Year 9, sharing his stories from his time with NASA. Did you know that many day-to-day items we take for granted

were invented by NASA scientists? Cochlear implants, camera phones and smoke detectors are just a few.

Tom answered lots of questions from students such as 'Why is space travel necessary and/or important?', 'Do you believe there are other forms of life in the universe?' and 'What happened on Columbia?'.

With photos from inside the space shuttles and launch videos, Tom brought his role to life.

He also shared that it was at The King Alfred School that Maths finally clicked for



him through the support of his teacher Roy Greenfield. If only Roy knew that his dedication led to Tom using Maths every day in his crucial work with Rockwell International and NASA.

Thank you, Tom, for coming back to KAS and sharing your story!

Reach out to us at oa@kingalfred.org.uk if you would like to share your work experience with the next generation of Old Alfredians.



Claire Yacobi (OA 1961)

Right before the holiday break, we were delighted to welcome **Claire Yacobi (OA 1961)** back to the school. She was accompanied by her sons, Gilad and Leor — both dedicated educators and deeply interested in the school's history and educational approach.

Claire's visit was a beautiful example of how connections and experiences are passed through generations. Sharing stories of her time here while her sons explored the campus was a heart-warming reminder of the enduring bonds that tie us together.



Robert and the Yacobis



Claire, Gilad and Leor outside the Old Library



Tamlyn and Claire on the field



Exploring the Treehouse



Visiting the Forge



Gilad & Leor with KAS teacher Chris in DT

Rhodri Beynon (OA 2020)

Rhodri Beynon (OA 2020) visited KAS in January to talk with students in Nuray's Film Studies class.

As a filmmaker and film and TV student at NYU, Rhodri had good advice for KAS students considering film studies or a career in the industry.

He shared: "It was so lovely to

come back and reconnect with everyone at KAS. I have many fond memories of my film studies class with Nuray, so being invited to chat with the current Year 12 and 13 students about their projects and my experience studying Film at NYU was an absolute pleasure. I'm so excited to see all the amazing films they'll create in class!"



Above: Rhodri and KAS Film students
Left: Rhodri and Nuray

A.G. Cook (OA 2008)

Alexander Guy Cook (OA 2008), known as A.G. Cook, took home the 2025 BRIT Award for Producer of the Year in early March. The award recognises his work on Charli XCX's album *Brat*, as well as his solo record, *Britpop*. *Brat* also took home the BRIT award for Album of the Year, further cementing the creative success of A.G.'s work.

In an interview with BBC's Mark Savage, A.G. spoke about his creative process, saying: "You really have to have conviction about what you're doing and not make compromises and have your own lane for it to make sense."

Damian Christian, MD and President of Promotions at Atlantic Records, and Chair of the BRIT Committee for 2025, praised his achievements, saying: "What a year A.G. Cook has had – from his expansive solo record *Britpop* to the world-beating *Brat*,



he has pushed the boundaries and delivered incredible music. He is a true creative and has worked with the world's biggest artists – always getting the best out of them and helping them evolve their sound."

We love to celebrate the success of our Old Alfredians. Congratulations, A.G., on earning the title of 2025 Producer of the Year!

Anthea Goldsmith (née Ionides) (OA 1953)

OA Anthea recently appeared on the BBC special *D-Day 80 – Tribute to the Fallen*. She sadly lost her father, Theodore Alexander Maurice Ionides – a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy – on D-Day when she was only nine years old.

He was a joyful, loving father and his loss left a hole in her heart. Today, Anthea bears a tattoo in his honour – a beautiful way to remember him and the other brave souls who made the ultimate sacrifice on D-Day. Her heartfelt tribute serves as a powerful reminder of the personal impact of war and the enduring love between a father and his children.



Anthea's sister, **Penelope Rowlatt (OA 1955)**, right, also shared the impact of the loss of her father.

"My father was a warm, funny, loving person [who was] hugely important in our tiny family, although he was away a lot of the time because of the war. I was heartbroken when we heard he had been killed, and for many years I hoped he might one day walk back up our garden path and come home. I have missed him all my life, and particularly remember a walk I once had, just with him, in Highgate Woods. I'm sad that my children didn't have him as their grandfather, and they are sad about that too."



Anthea in the documentary; scan or click the QR code to watch it



Click or scan the QR code to see Anthea's BBC tribute to her father (she appears from 28:22 to 33:42 and 1:08:05 to 1:10:22).



Theodore Alexander Maurice Ionides and his daughters

How KAS Launched My Career in Entertainment

By Eve Hobsbawm (OA 2022)



Alongside its forward-thinking approach to exams and education, what drew me to join KAS as a Sixth-Form student was primarily the Film Studies

course – and the idea that I could watch movies as homework!

Although it turned out I still couldn't escape the essays, it was a fantastic two years that taught me so much about the practical, creative and academic skills needed for making and analysing films. It solidified my love for entertainment and my ambition to make it into a career.

However, I didn't feel that production was where my strengths and passion lay. Only when I completed my internship at Bohemia Euphoria, facilitated through King Alfred's, did I find my dream job and place in the business. Bohemia Euphoria is the streaming platform attached to Bohemia Media, a distribution company founded by Phil Hunt, a dad at King Alfred's. A film distribution company buys the rights to films. Then, it distributes them in cinemas or streaming platforms (e.g. Bohemia Euphoria, Amazon Prime, Sky Store, etc.). They also handle the marketing and promotion around these releases. During my internship, I created a content strategy to promote their films on TikTok. I enjoyed this process as it married two of my favourite forms of entertainment: social media and film.

While discovering this passion for digital entertainment marketing, I learned that although university can be a fantastic experience, the film and television industry values hands-on experience as highly. After completing my A-levels, I decided to go straight into freelance social media

marketing for entertainment clients. I made a portfolio with some of the assets I had created during my Bohemia internship and film studies course, and after many rejection emails, I finally found two clients with whom I worked for about eight months.

Luck struck again when I contacted Phil, asking if he needed a freelance social media manager for Bohemia Euphoria (which I noticed still hadn't launched its TikTok). Coincidentally, he was also looking for a marketing communications coordinator for his other company, Head Gear Films.



Eve with her Head Gear Films colleagues

I have now been working there for about two years, part-time for Headgear Films and part-time for Bohemia Media. These two years have been incredible, full of opportunities I could never have imagined, such as attending the Cannes Film Festival and working on the theatrical release of Jessica Chastain's film *Memory*.

Although I am new to this industry, I've included three things I wish I had known in school that might help you on your journey.

1 Don't be disheartened if you know you want to work in entertainment but don't feel like you resonate with being a director, producer or any of the other classic roles. There are so many jobs in the industry, and new ones are still being created. There is 100% a place for you and your unique talents; it's only a question of finding it.

Continued from previous page...

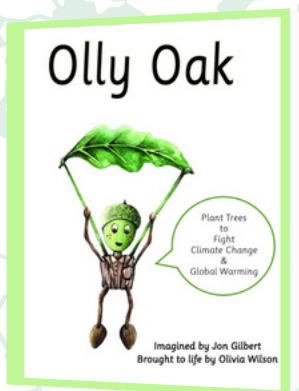
2 I know this is something everyone says, but your network is essential, especially in entertainment, where some of the best jobs aren't publicly advertised. You are in a great position at KAS, surrounded by numerous alumni and parents in the industry, so don't hesitate to reach out on places like KAS Connected and leverage those connections to get a foot in the door.

3 University can be a fantastic experience and the right decision for someone's career, but it's important to remember it's not the only option. In this day and age, editing software, cameras and AI have never been so accessible and

powerful. You can shoot a movie or start a company from your bedroom. Nothing can stop you from becoming the next Spielberg or [Netflix CEO] Ted Sarandos if you're passionate enough.

Entertainment is a challenging industry that hasn't fully recovered from the pandemic, particularly in theatres. Every time a film gets made, especially independently, it's a mini, time-consuming miracle. You will work long hours, but I cannot tell you how fulfilling it is to collaborate with people who share your passion for films and TV shows. KAS opened the door for me, and they can do the same for you!

Jon Gilbert (OA 1970)



Jon Gilbert (OA 1970) called to arrange a visit and tell us about his children's book series, *Tree Fellas*. His first book of the series, *Olly Oak*, has now been published. Jon was one of our

'Lost OAs' and, lucky for us, he reached out. He hopes to visit the Lower School one day soon to read from his book series.

Andrew Berton (OA 1972)



Andrew Berton (OA 1972) was sad to miss his year group's reunion in February. We were fortunate to have him attend last year as his travels from Australia

coincided with the reunion date, but no such luck this year. Andrew did reach out with a lovely update though, sharing this beautiful photo of his Christmas celebrations on the beach with his mum and partner. A wonderful way to celebrate the festive season!

LOST



We love to stay in touch with our Old Alfredians, but we're missing contact details for over 1,600 OAs! One of the best ways to stay in touch is through email. If you're not receiving emails from us, please let us know. Simply use the QR code below to enter your details. If you know of other Old Alfredians who are not in touch, pass along the QR code so they can submit their details too.

OAS

KAS, the bellows, and the Robeson & Willis families

Our Development Director, Tamlyn Worrall, writes...

In early January, an oversized shoe box arrived on my desk. Intrigued, I untied the yarn, unwrapped the heavy brown paper and slowly lifted the lid. Inside was a pair of beautifully crafted bellows, handsomely decorated with copper patterns and an inscription of thanks.

Sent to us by **Alfred Willis**, they were a gift that had been presented to his mother, **Marie Willis**. She had been the cook and general stalwart of the school when it had relocated to Royston in Hertfordshire in the Second World War, and they were presented to her in 1945.

Marie had lived as one of the labourer families at Flint Hall Farm, and along with her husband, Jim, took great care of the evacuees when the school was based there during the war.

In 1942, she gave birth to a son, whom she named Alfred in honour of the school, and we were delighted to hear from Alfred in December 2024.

One of Alfred's memories was his connection with **Paul Robeson Junior (OA 1945)**, son of the legendary singer, actor, professional football player and rights activist. Paul Robeson Senior lived in Hampstead in the 1930s and, with great wisdom, enrolled his

son at KAS. Whilst the chronology becomes a little murky, it would appear Paul Robeson Junior kept in touch with the school after the war, and this is how he and Alfred Willis connected.



Right:
Alfred
Willis
and the
bellows



Left: A closer look

As a person who transcended their place and time, the association with Paul Robeson Senior is a proud one for the school. Please read on to learn more about Paul Robeson Senior, past KAS parent.

Paul Leroy Robeson (1898 – 1976)

was an American bass-baritone concert artist, actor, professional football player, and activist who became famous for both his cultural accomplishments and his political stances.

In 1915, Robeson won an academic scholarship to Rutgers College in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where he was the only African-American student. While at Rutgers, he was twice named an All-American in football and was elected class valedictorian. He earned his law degree from Columbia Law School while playing in the National Football League (NFL).

After graduation, he became a figure in the Harlem Renaissance, with performances in Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings*.



Alfred as a baby
with his mother,
Marie Willis



Paul Robeson Senior

Robeson performed in Britain in a touring melodrama, *Voodoo*, in 1922, and in *Emperor Jones* in 1925. In 1928, he scored a major success in the

London premiere of *Show Boat*.

Living in London for several years with his wife Eslanda, Robeson continued to establish himself as a concert artist and starred in a London production of *Othello*, the first of three productions of the play over the course of his career.

He also gained attention in *Sanders of the River* (1935) and in the film production of *Show Boat* (1936). Robeson's political activities began with his involvement with unemployed workers and anti-imperialist students in Britain, and it continued with his support for the Republican cause during the Spanish Civil War and his involvement in the Council on African Affairs (CAA).

After returning to the United States in 1939, Robeson supported the American and Allied war efforts during World War II. His history of supporting civil rights causes and Soviet policies, however, brought scrutiny from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). After the war ended, the CAA was placed on the Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations.

Robeson was investigated during the McCarthy era. When he refused to recant his public advocacy of his political beliefs, the U.S. State Department withdrew his passport and his income plummeted. He moved to Harlem and published a periodical called *Freedom*, which was critical of United States policies, from 1950 to 1955. Robeson's right to travel was eventually restored as a result of the 1958 United States Supreme Court decision *Kent v. Dulles*.

Between 1925 and 1961, Robeson released some 276 songs. The first of these was the spiritual *Steal Away*, backed by *Were You There*, in 1925. Robeson's recorded repertoire spanned many styles, including Americana, popular standards, classical music, European folk songs, political songs, poetry and spoken excerpts from plays.

Diana Shelley (OA 1961)

In the Autumn 2024 issue, we shared some of the beautiful photographs taken by the late **Gene Shelley, Diana Shelley's** father, and are now sharing the final photos (right and overleaf).



Gene (pictured, who was Bursar at KAS from the late 1960s into the 1970s) took these photos while Diana was a pupil at KAS. Specifically, he took the photos in 1948 or 1949. Even then, this photos

captured the creative, free and playful spirit of KAS with our smallest pupils being outdoors for a good part of their learning.

In these photos, you can see children building, hammering and even sawing! Certainly, health and safety regulations were not as restrictive as

the present day. Enjoy the photos, and if you recognise any faces that are not named, please email us at oa@kingalfred.org.uk. ➡➡



1940s KAS students



Patricia Amendt, Tessa Bulbulian and Joe Jacobs



Miriam Brown



Outdoor learning



Preetam Nandi



Cathy Boyle & Lucy Moy-Thomas



Outdoor learning, 1948 or 1949



Diana Shelley, Lucy Moy-Thomas, Renate Schneider & Miriam Brown



Outdoor learning, 1948 or 1949



Outdoor learning, 1948 or 1949



L: Unknown; C: (Top) Lucy Moy-Thomas, Cathy Boyle, Miriam Brown, Diana Shelley, Tessa Bulbulian, Unknown (Bottom) Preetam Nandi, Unknown; R: Cathy Boyle & Lucy Moy-Thomas



Outdoor learning, 1948 or 1949



Judy Williams (OA 1964)

Dear Tamlyn,

Thank you for your welcome! I have been receiving the newsletters and indeed it was seeing photos of old classmates at the reunion lunch last February that prompted me to find a way of being in touch by email. I would certainly have attended had I known about it so please let me know if the "oldies" are invited back 😊.

My memories of KAS are all good and I was certainly privileged to have been with so many inspiring teachers dedicated to the A.S. Neill educational principles (while earning less than the Burnham scale salaries of the 50s). I'll try and write down some memories.

Judy

Silvia Beever, Former School Nurse (1990-99)

It was so kind of you to send me the latest copy of the Alfredian newsletter, and I have read it from cover to cover twice!!

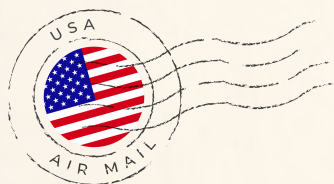
You have no idea how much I appreciate you remembering to post it to me when you have so many other contacts from KAS.

It is absolutely amazing how you presented the whole magazine and please thank Deborah and Lyla too for all their hard work.

Silvia (92 years old)



Evan McHale (OA 1969)



Evan wrote from the USA with memories of his friend **Jake Wynter (OA 1969)**, who passed

away many years ago...

"Jake Wynter, fellow student first form, King Alfred School. He died very young, in his late twenties. He was a delightful kid.

Nettie Pollard (OA 1969), me and Jake spent much of our spare time climbing trees and in Squirrel Hall, overlooking the sports fields. When he and I had play fights, he would get right up in my face like he was about to stop playing and pounce. But the look in his eyes was always the same: gentle.

Jake had a great sense of humour and drama. He constantly faked me out and made me laugh at his theatrics. I got

lucky when I met Jake and Nettie, first form, school year 1961-62.

He also recalled memories of their KAS teacher, **Malcolm**:

"I think the best way I could describe Malcolm is his attitude, rather the way that Colin Firth play-acts Vermeer in *Girl With A Pearl Earring*... [He was] kind of like right-there-concentrated teaching us kids, while at same distracted – like, why should he bother try to teach us rowdy kids? It worked like a charm.

"I remember that after lunch, he would read us chapters from H. Rider Haggard's novel *King Solomon's Mines*. Wow! We were entranced."

Evan kindly made a donation to the school in memory of his friend. Thank you, Evan, for thinking of your friend and your school.

Derek Cheek (OA 1963)



Reading the comments in the Spring edition of *The Alfredian* regarding the Amphitheatre – or Open Air Theatre, as we knew it – reminded me of an occasion when the

school was honoured with a visit by Trinidadian-born British sprinter McDonald Bailey. He had won (so I have just looked up) a Bronze medal at the

Olympic Games held in Helsinki in 1952. Maybe the visit was the following year. Needless to say I cannot remember anything other than sitting there in awe, me loving everything sport-orientated.



Regards,
Derek Cheek
(OA 1963)

Oriel and Jocelyn Sullivan (OAs 1975 & 1981)

Oriel (Only) Sullivan (OA 1975) and **Jocelyn Sullivan (OA 1981)** have shared some priceless memories of their time at KAS, and their mother's.

Although officially retired, Oriel is still active in research as Emeritus Professor of Sociology at UCL. Meanwhile, Jocelyn is currently a yoga teacher and wellbeing mentor, having previously worked as a social worker. *They write:*

"Our mother, **Sheila Bathurst (OA)**, must have been at KAS in the 1930s; she was born in 1927. During the war, she was evacuated from London and went to St Christopher's, and then on to Oxford University after the war.

She married David Sullivan and had three daughters: Oriel, Tessa, and Jocelyn. We all spent our entire school years at KAS. Oriel (the oldest) joined in 1961, and Jocelyn (the youngest) left in 1981.

For some years, our mother (then Sheila Sullivan) also worked in the KAS office. Quite a family history!

We held the memorial party for our mother in the Old Library over 15 years ago now, and it was indeed memorable. A lovely venue."

Oriel's memories

"The thing that stands out for me is the friendly and engaged relationship we had with the teaching staff. Strangely (or perhaps not), the KAS site still forms an important location for my dreams!"

Jocelyn's memories

"For me, KAS was like a safe family home. I formed many friendships at school and learnt to have meaningful relationships with the teachers too.

One of the greatest things that school taught me was to be curious which I think is one of life's important lessons; being curious means you never stop learning. I think that came from being part of the KAS community: I have never been afraid to ask questions!"

We love receiving your letters and emails. If you would like to share your own memories of KAS, email us at oa@kingalfred.org.uk, or write to us at The King Alfred School, 149 North End Road, London NW11 7HY.



Head's Message

In early February, The King Alfred School Society held its Annual General Meeting. If you have been to a KASS AGM before, you will know that – while, yes, there are some formal elements to proceedings – it is an occasion for lively conversation, celebration (this year we paid tribute to the long service of two community members) and meaningful reflection.

At the event, I spoke about how the profound shifts since Covid have altered life for all of us over the last five years.

Following the pandemic, the world witnessed the death of George Floyd and the impact it had on the issue of Racial Equity; the acceleration of the Climate Crisis; increasing scrutiny over the role that Technology plays in our lives; and communities affected by conflicts around the world.

“The profound shifts since Covid have altered life for all of us in the last five years

Alongside this, we have seen an ongoing rise in the needs of children and young people. Covid amplified already-present mental health challenges and at the same time, there has been a rapid increase in referrals and diagnoses for neurodiversity. It is true to say that it is positive that young people's needs are identified and

supported; and it is also true to say that this presents genuine challenges for schools to meet the needs at this larger scale.

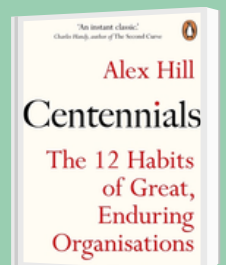
“Organisations that have thrived for 100+ years have a common thread: stable core, disruptive edge

Other big changes have been the shifting relationships between families and schools. On a national level, the 2023 Chief Inspector of Ofsted report noted, the ‘social contract’ between parents and teachers has become fractured since the pandemic. Increased financial pressures, most recently the introduction of VAT on school fees, can also impact the nature of our connection.

So, with intense change on the global front, rising needs of young people, and added pressure on both families and schools, how should we at KAS respond?

In his book *Centennials*, Professor Alex Hill analyses organisations that have thrived for more than 100 years. He finds a common thread: ‘stable core, disruptive edge’.

He would argue that our first response should be to double down on our core - staying true to our purpose, our ethos and our values:➡➡



- We are resolutely and proudly a human place;
- We believe in long-developed relationships;
- Resting on strong academic foundations, we believe in holistic education that nurtures all parts of a young person;
- We value every individual, supporting everyone to fulfil their potential, whatever that may be;
- We understand that young people grow and develop. Mistakes are part of growing up and we will support them through that process;
- We see the drivers for good in everyone – all have something special and unique to offer, and it is our role to provide the space where that can be nurtured and thrive.

“KAS has a special philosophy of education and school life, and so long as we remain true to it, we will undoubtedly continue to thrive”

Simultaneously, we need to give space for our 'disruptive edge'. We need to continue to develop our educational provision to ensure the needs of all our young people are consistently met; use data intelligently, in support of honest questioning, evaluation and reflection; and by being agile, creative and outward facing as leaders, getting the most from our growing partnerships and networks.

Despite the pandemic, or perhaps because of it, KAS is in a stronger position than this time five years ago. Internally, we see through the data how we positively impact educational outcomes, and it has been a time of exciting educational growth and innovation. Externally, we are a powerful force for progressive development within the wider system and regarded by many as being one of the leading holistic schools in this country and beyond.

This gives me optimism as we navigate our next chapter. KAS has a special philosophy of education and school life, and so long as we remain true to it, we will undoubtedly continue to thrive.

If you want to listen to my full speech, and also hear the other speakers at the event, you can do so by scanning or clicking the QR Code.

Wishing you the very best,

Robert



Robert enjoying a game of chess with a Year 9 student at faster sessions held this term

The Old Alfredian connection

The relationship our Old Alfredians continue to have with the school and with each other is testament to the experience pupils have at KAS. The school legacy endures, and the connections live on.

Two events have stood out among the many gatherings and reunions: Class of 2024 A-Level Certificate Presentation & Recent Leavers Drinks as well as our Festive Post exchange (more details of which can be enjoyed on the following pages).

In a recent address to the school, Robert wrote:

"In January, we welcomed back our most recent leavers for their A-level certificate evening. This was a cohort that achieved the school's best-ever set of A-level results and who made highly commendable progress between the GCSEs and A-levels by coming in the top 7% of schools nationally - so there were many congratulations all round.

What struck me most, however, was the way they carried themselves as young people and the way they expressed their kinship to each other and the school.

After the presentations, I also enjoyed talking with ex-students who were either nearing the end of university or out in the



Recent KAS leavers at the A level presentation evening

world making their way. It was genuinely fascinating to hear about their experiences of studying and working – the highs, the lows, the challenges they faced. The world has become more complex for this generation, and it was heartwarming to hear about the way they felt KAS had prepared them.

Fast forward to the future, and I hope that they will link with current pupils as Old Alfredians (OAs) do today.

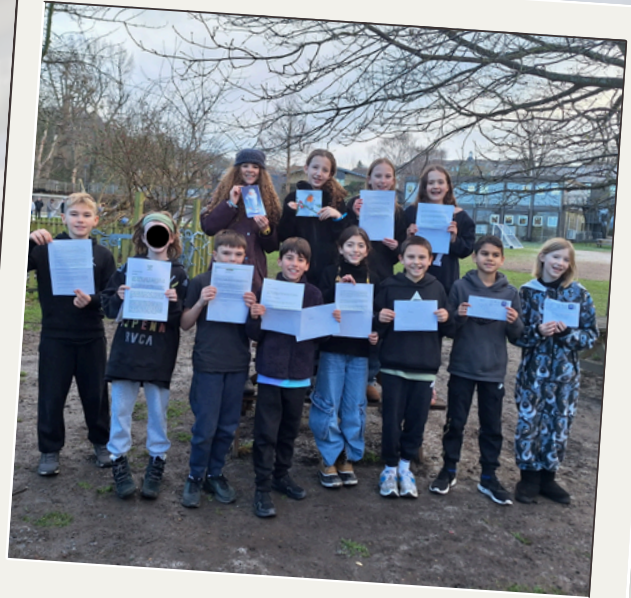
At the end of last term, Year 6 corresponded by card or letter with some of our OAs who are in their later years. There was one particularly poignant letter from an 81 year old. He shared that although he had struggled as a child with dyspraxia and dyslexia, he was 'quite good at Maths', which he went on to study at Cambridge. He then went on to become an engineer and teach the subject at University.

Relaying such memories was powerful for the young man who received the letter – encouraging, inspiring and a special form of Alfredian connection across the generations."

Festive Post

We know how much OAs appreciate receiving a card from a current KAS student as part of our Festive Post initiative, but the excitement and anticipation of our Year 6 students when they receive replies to their cards is infectious.

We took over the replies one Friday afternoon, and they were desperate to see whether their card had had a response from their OA pen pal. It means a great deal to them, and also reiterates the value of the written word, traditional post and connections across generations. Thank you so much for your replies, a selection of which are featured here.



Year 6 students with their Festive Post replies

POST CARD

Mimi,

you asked me about my book. It is about helping people understand themselves better so they can be happier. I will tell you one thing in my book, which you will also find in other books. It is that we often have thoughts which are not true! We may think something like "I am not good at this" or "I am not good enough" or things like that. We can think things like that so often that

we hardly notice the thoughts and come to think they are true and they are not. We are OK - you are OK! And we all have things to learn. It is also important to talk to someone we trust if we are feeling worried about anything - I did not realise this when I was 10."

Jocelyn Ryden-Smith
(OA 1958), in reply to Mimi



Sammy,

In my day there were far fewer buildings on the site, so there was much more space for us to enjoy. We had a council with student representatives of all the classes and the council made the rules, and tried to ensure the school ran well. One year we gave a member of staff (a geography teacher) the sack because he didn't comply with the values of the school.

Penelope Rowlatt (OA 1952)



Maddie,

I have so many happy memories of my school days; it is difficult to think of the funniest. During break time I always went on the big swing or a trapeze. I also enjoyed climbing trees. My worst and most embarrassing moment was when I climbed the big tree in the open-air theatre but could not get down. Someone sent for the history teacher, John Hanson and he had to come and help me down!

Gillian Sonin (OA 1955)



Naya,

To reply to you – yes, I did love my time at KAS. I felt the teachers were kind and tolerant, and I made good friends there, and the whole atmosphere was good. Perhaps I didn't work as hard as I should when I got older, but I was probably not too bad a student when I was your age.

Graham Samuel (OA 1956)



Boyd,

My dyslexia was a problem in Junior school but KAS gave me self-confidence. The staff were sympathetic to my problems with language and writing. I didn't go to university because I needed good grades in English, a modern language and maths. Maths was no problem, so I left full-time education at 16 and got a job with a major civil engineering company as a student under agreement (similar to an apprenticeship).

This scheme was run by the Institution of Civil Engineers and entailed working 5 half days a week; one day a week the company released me to study for a Higher National Certificate in Civil Engineering. This required me to study at Westminster Technical College (now a university) with lectures from 9am to 8pm. I completed the course in six years and was able to become a Graduate Member of the Institute of Civil Engineers.

The company I trained with allocated me to the Tunnel section which entailed the design and supervision of tunnel contracts. On completing my studies, I joined a civil engineering contractor and was involved in building major tunnel works such as the Victoria Line and the Jubilee Line in London and the Newcastle Metro. I was also involved in underground railways in Hong Kong, Singapore, Copenhagen and Cairo. In the latter part of my career, I was Managing Director of the Tunnelling Division. I left the contractor and became a self-employed consultant for the last few years. I enjoyed my working life and proved that you can be successful in engineering with dyslexia.

Donald Neal (OA 1952)



KAS
Festive
Post

Ell, Mark & Ray,

This is to thank you for your lovely Christmas card and answer your many questions.

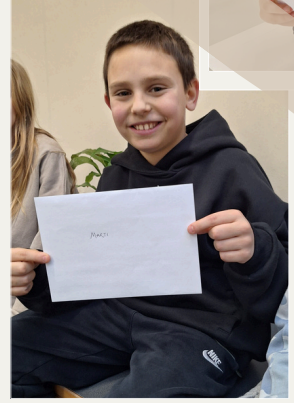
Firstly, I joined KAS in 1948. The war was well over by then. We had evacuated out of London down to the country, to Denham. But my dad had to work in London and spent many nights on top of the Cable and Wireless Building (down by the Thames,) scooping up incendiary bombs from the roof with a wooden board and throwing them over the parapet. Otherwise, the country's communication system would have been dead.

Before K.A.S. I was at an ordinary prep school where I was considered dim if not dumb. There is nothing ordinary about our school is there? It saved my life and I'm sure you will be happy there. Music poetry and English is a consummate mix. I was most at home with drama, because I could just do it. (fings is easy when fings is easy, innit?)

The headmaster when I was there was Monty. A very special man. The other teachers taught because they loved their subjects. For any pupil, that is the greatest gift. My nose bled when I tried boxing. Watch your head. The rest of you is just an engine; YOUR HEAD IS YOU. Try fencing.

Dr WHO was a challenge. We were given a small studio in Lime Grove and a small budget within which we had to create science fiction. In the two days that I was given a film crew and could go outside on-location, we could realise the images that the story demanded. Still, we got the thing off the ground and now you can't stop it. I enclose some of those shots and have signed them in case you want to swap them for some conkers. Enjoy life and keep on trucking.

Richard Martin Thomas (OA 1953)



Farewell to Pauline

In December 2024 KAS said farewell to our dear Modern Languages teacher, **Pauline Moloney**. This was Pauline's eighteenth year at KAS, and she has been a wonderful French and Spanish teacher, inspiring students with her passion for languages and culture.

She has also gone above and beyond to support the extra-curricular life of the school; from organising the annual French Drama Festival (now in its 10th year) to planning French and Spanish trips that immersed students in new experiences, as well as designing and making costumes for the Middle and Upper School shows.

For Pauline, coming to KAS was more than just a job. Her dedication, work ethic and motivation to ensure the best outcomes for all students is sorely missed. For our Old Alfredians, her joyful presence at our reunions will also be missed.

Pauline shared a few heartfelt words on her departure...

"It is so hard to sum up 18 years in a few lines. When I joined KAS my daughter was in Year 3; she is now 26. This really anchors some kind of reality in this big chunk of professional life!"

Over the years I have taught languages to over 2,500 students and organised around



Pauline Moloney

30 trips in France and around the world, two of which were during bombings.

I have sold ice creams, camped at school, organised quizzes, been on ski trips and summer camps, and set up competitions (do you remember the bunting one for KAS 125th anniversary?).

Creating the French Drama Festival has been my proudest professional achievement in the UK. It has become an event of renown that schools and students look forward to every year. When I announced I was stepping down last week, the audience gave me a standing ovation which moved me to tears. It was an incredible send off.

I have made many many friends over the past 18 years at KAS, and really absorbed the school ethos and values which I have now taken with me to the Loire Valley. It has been an honour to be a member of the KAS staff and community, and I hope that many of you will keep in touch."

À bientôt y hasta pronto, Pauline! Wishing you lots of happiness in your next step.

Farewell to Kara and Sarah at the KASS AGM



At the KASS AGM, the Society said a heartfelt thank you to two important members: **Kara Conti** and **Sarah Phillips**.

Their dedication over the years has surely impacted your experience as Old Alfredians at KAS for the better. Robert, our Head, put it best in an address to the school:

"It is always fascinating to discover the connection between ancient philosophy and modern science. One particular area of interest is 'the felicity of virtue', or doing good to others irrespective of self-interest. As Buddha put it, 'set your heart on doing good. Do it over and over again, and you will be filled with joy'.

The Positive Psychology Movement founded by Professor Martin Seligman came up with identical conclusions – a key ingredient of contentment is investing in the community beyond yourself. As you might recognise, we have taken this notion and inserted it into our KAS Deeper Learning Wheel, under the heading 'contribution'.

We recognise this very kind of contribution of two remarkable people.

Sarah Phillips has been at the heart of the Governance in the school for 28 years. Initially as a parent, she joined Council in the mid-90s and was one of the school's longest-serving Treasurers. Sarah has devoted countless hours to the school –



Sarah Phillips and Xenia Bowlby



Kara Conti

crafting policies, supporting the finance team, navigating difficult decisions. Her experience has been invaluable over the last ten years – helping me to stay connected to the ethos and history of the school, and always able to put in context any of our idiosyncratic institutional features. Whilst I am delighted that she will stay connected, she will be much missed in her role.

Meanwhile, **Kara Conti** has reached 40 years of involvement – her ruby anniversary. She has attended 200 Council meetings, chaired Council, run KASparents, been a teacher, parent, grandparent and, for 25 years, President of the King Alfred School Society [KASS].

It is hard to find a person with a more generous spirit, and one of the highlights of each year is when she invites all the new staff to her house for tea and a welcome into the KAS family. Like Sarah, she has always been an important conduit to our past, and at the same time, she has remained open and ready to embrace change. I have valued her camaraderie and energy, her guidance and support, and she will be a difficult act to follow.

Both Kara and Sarah role-model the KAS values, and whilst perhaps at moments they may have wondered 'why am I doing this', I know they have not only given but also gained so much from their involvement."

As Old Alfredians, we will honour their contribution to KAS at this year's KASonbury, on Saturday 5 July 2025. Please mark your diaries and join us for lunch to thank two remarkable members of our community.

Old Alfredians are also invited to join the King Alfred School Society (KASS). Click or scan the QR code for the membership form.



Right:
Sarah,
Kara
& Sixth
Former
Tommy



Left:
The
KASS
AGM



Connections Talk with Samuel Wright, associate of Ali Kazimi (OA 1987)

Huge thanks to OA **Ali Kazimi**, Managing Director of WTS Hansuke, who arranged for his colleague **Samuel Wright** to deliver a Connections Talk on Financial Services Consulting to our Sixth Formers.

We were excited to welcome Samuel, Associate Consultant at WTS Hansuke, to speak to our Sixth Formers. Having recently graduated and navigating the early stages of his career, Samuel brought engaging, fresh and relatable insights to the students.

His talk wasn't just about finance - it was also about life. From Jim Morrison's wisdom on being an "actor or spectator" to tips on building momentum after achieving success, Samuel left his audience inspired – evidenced through thoughtful questions the students asked in the Q&A. Samuel even had a group of eager students stay behind to seek further advice.

Thank you, Samuel and Ali, for this insightful and inspiring talk!



Above
and right:
Samuel
with Sixth
Formers



Left:
Samuel
presents
to
students

Connections Talk with Phil Hunt

Phil Hunt, a KAS parent, independent film producer and founder of Head Gear Films and Bankside Films led another Connections Talk in February.

Phil spoke with Sixth Form students and staff about his experience in film production. He opened by saying: "Don't think of it as a 'career' – it's your life." He went on to encourage students, saying: "The education here at King Alfred allows you to be a free thinker. You've got to believe in yourself!"

Phil's support for current students is shown through the work experience he offered to **Eve Hobsbawm (OA 2022)**, who is now on Phil's team at Head Gear Films; a great example of our KAS Connections coming full circle! Thank you, Phil, for sharing insights into your life, work, and passions.

Let's keep our KAS community strong and stay linked via KASConnected.org. Scan or click the QR code below to join.



Above and right: Phil with Sixth Formers



Left: Phil presents to students



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Inside the Industry: Working in Film

Last term, our Connections Series ventured Inside the Industry and took a deep dive into what it truly means to work in film.

A panel of seasoned pros shared their stories of triumph, failure, and the moments in between that shaped their journeys. From first jobs to big breaks, they offered up a roadmap for navigating the twists and turns of an industry that's anything but predictable.

The real magic, though, happened when the audience stepped up to the mic for the Q&A—asking questions, sparking conversations, and reminding us all that there's no one way to make it in film. It's



Connections



about passion, persistence, and a little bit of luck.

Thank you to our amazing panellists, KAS students, staff, and parents, as well as the students from Parliament Hill for joining us for this special evening.

Let's keep our KAS community strong and stay linked via KAS Connected. Here you can find work experience, job opportunities and mentorship by connecting with other Old Alfredians, KAS parents and staff. If you haven't already joined, click or scan the QR code. Once signed in, you can also view a video recording of the evening! Simply navigate to 'Resources'.



The panel: Clemente Lohr, Miranda Bowen, Nuray Jemil (moderator), David Arnold, Teddy Leifer, & Sonita Gale

“It was exciting to see the desire and passion amongst students for pursuing careers in film - and great to see that KAS is providing the opportunity, even within A-level subject choices, to begin this exploration.

Teddy Leifer



Nuray Jemil



Clemente Lohr and Miranda Bowen



Clemente Lohr and David Arnold



David Arnold, Sonia Gale and Teddy Leifer



Miranda Bowen



Teddy Leifer

“ So nice to meet you all... very inspiring stuff to hear what you have all done already. And thank you Nuray, Tamlyn and Deborah for organising.”

Clemente Lohr



KAS students

“ Thank you for being so brilliant last night. It was such an enjoyable evening and so elegantly organised. It was fun to do something for the school, and I hope I'll get to work with Nuray some more.”

Miranda Bowen



Spencer Johnston & Liam Michaels



KAS canapés



Parliament Hill students



Juri, Liv and Julia Leitner

“ I was so happy to be there, and I love that you are doing these sessions.”

Sonita Gale



KAS students



Liam Michaels, Spencer Johnson & Clemente Lohr



Lottie May Chainey and guest



Audience members



Robert and guests



Audience members reading the event's programme

“Taking part in the panel was my pleasure. The King Alfred School is a great place for the Arts. Lovely to see everyone there.”

David Arnold

Robert's reflections on the evening – and the value of creative industries

In 2022, Government figures showed that the 'creative industries' in this country generated £126 billion in value to the economy and employed almost two and a half million people.

It has therefore been hugely dispiriting to see how the arts have been marginalised in state schools over the last 15 years, and I was glad to make this point in the school's submission to the Curriculum and Assessment Review. The Performing Arts and Visual Arts not only give so much on a personal level but are essential in creating an economically and culturally thriving society.

The place of creative subjects at KAS has always been a source of pride. The nurturing of creativity comes not only from great teaching and resources, but also from an environment that is stimulating and safe – providing space where you can express who you are and take risks, collaborate and grow.

This half-term, the creativity witnessed has been inspiring. The recent jazz concert felt not unlike an evening at Ronnie Scott's. The feedback from the students who went on the Photography trip to Paris spoke volumes about the journey they are on to express themselves through the subject. ➡➡

.....→ We've also had dramatic productions of *The Ballad of Raggedy Alice* in Upper School and *Oliver!* in Lower School.

One event I found particularly significant was our 'getting into film' Connections evening. The audience of current students and recent Old Alfredians were spellbound by their stories and advice, which broke down the mystique and outlined practical steps to make one's way in the industry.

They also shared the fundamental characteristics required for success – which, in truth, are similar to many other fields. This transmission through the generations was powerful, and one of the tangible benefits of being in our richly

creative community, and we were also pleased to be able to open up this event to students from our local state school partnerships, conscious that access needs to be for all.

This event formed part of our 'Connections' programme, which prepares students for life after KAS. It consists of regular in-school talks to students, special bi-annual events, and an online networking platform that offers guidance, advice and work opportunities. Whilst including the Arts, it covers all industries, and we are planning to focus on AI in our next event. If you would like to know more, then please email development@kingalfred.org.uk.

Axe Monsters

In the Autumn Term, KAS held the annual Axe Monsters concert in the Main Hall. As Robert recalls: "Started back in the 1980s, this is always a joyous evening of music making from our students, showcasing covers and their own compositions. It forms part of our rich musical heritage, which can be traced back to **Cecil Sharp**. Credited as the person who rescued and championed traditional English folk music, he was one of the school's seven founders. Last year (2024) marked the centenary of his death, and it is a fitting moment to remember his KAS legacy."



Right and below: Axe Monsters performers



Left: Cecil Sharp



Manor Wood piano

KAS has brought a piano outdoors. It now lives under the treehouse on Manor Wood just near the Flying Fox.

Most afternoons, you can hear the sound of KAS students or teachers playing a short tune intermingled with cheers and squeals from children playing on the field. Sometimes, if we're lucky, the field is quiet, and we get vocals layered over a piano melody. Anyone close enough is treated to a lovely concert.

We're sure you might remember similar moments like this around the spaces at KAS. Share your memories of art in unexpected moments and spaces at KAS with us at oa@kingalfred.org.uk.



Jon Saffron (OA 1979) shared, "When I was at KAS in 1974, we had a piano in Squirrel Hall, also outdoors". **Sophie Dackombe (OA 1980)** added, "Lovely idea. [I] loved that the common room had a piano and was always played."

Squash collaboration

Early in the new year, **Justin Parsons (OA 1979)** called to see if the school would be interested in a partnership with his squash and tennis club. Their four new courts provide a chance for coaching and promoting the sport to younger generations specifically schools.

Head of Sport at KAS, Tom took along four students for a taster session which has now led to squash being added to the School's sport offering and a great collaboration between a local sports club and KAS.

Thank you, Justin for thinking of KAS!

KAS 125 Book

See The King Alfred School over the years through beautifully curated imagery from our archives with this special KAS 125th anniversary book.

This beautiful book documents the experiences of past and present students and staff, creating a rich tapestry of stories.

You can still order a limited edition copy via The King Alfred School website. Scan or click the QR code to get yours.



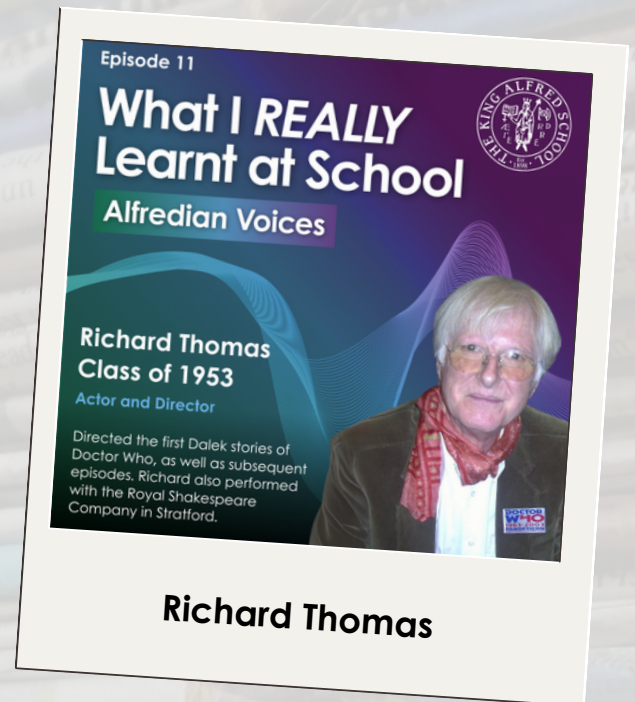
Alfredian Voices: What I REALLY Learnt at School

Five additional episodes of our podcast, *Alfredian Voices: What I REALLY Learnt in School* are now available to enjoy!

In our latest release, we sit down with Old Alfredian, **Richard Thomas (OA 1953)**. Known for directing the first Dalek stories of *Doctor Who*, Richard reminisces about his time at The King Alfred School. He shares his memories of learning calligraphy, experiences with teachers like Renée Soskin and Miss Marsh, and how attending the school helped him flourish after struggling in earlier education at other schools.

Richard also reflects on his acting career, including his role in the film *Brief Encounter*, his work with the BBC, and his adaptation of a Strindberg play into a six-part series.

This heartfelt conversation takes place in Richard's home, offering a personal glimpse into his journey from student to successful director and the enduring influence of his school days.



Richard Thomas

In our earlier episodes, you can hear from these Old Alfredians:

- **Preeyus Patel (OA 2009)**
- **Sara Berman (OA 1993)**
- **Ian Lush (OA 1978)**
- **Helen Craig (OA 1950)**

Scan or click the QR code to listen to or watch these episodes.



Amy Cash (OA 2020)

Amy Cash (OA 2020) came back to KAS to record the intros for our next set of *Alfredian Voices: What I REALLY Learnt at School* podcasts.

It was a lively day in the Music Department, and Amy's cool and focus shone through her recording session. She stayed on for a quick visit with our Head of Drama, **Lucy Hall**, and Music & Performing Arts teacher **Nell Buckingham**.

Thank you, Amy for helping to make our OA interviews even more special by adding your voice.



Left: Amy with KAS teachers Nell & Lucy

Right: Amy recording the intros



John Peisley – Former Head of Science

John Peisley, our beloved KAS staff member from 1974 to 2011, passed away at the Royal Free Hospital towards the end of 2024.

John was Head of Science at KAS for many years. He started in 1974 and was here until July 2011, when he left to spend more time with his family in Cornwall, and sailing his boat – one of his many passions.

John was a true Alfredian and many OAs and ex-colleagues will have very fond memories of him. Famous for many reasons, including spectacularly blowing up a microwave on the field during an experiment – he was pivotal in designing and building KAS's fleet of sailing boats, which have been used for countless Middle School camps, Great River Races, Welsh Harp 'Sailing Choice' sessions and more. They are very much a part of the legacy John leaves the school.

On the news of John's passing, we received an outpouring of affectionate messages and memories from the KAS community. A selection is published here, along with some pictures from his time at KAS.

"What a loss – and what an absolute legend." **Stephen de Brett (former staff and parent)**

"How sad. I remember him so fondly. His tweed jacket, particular gait and easy smile. He was a lovely teacher." **Sara Berman (OA 1993)**



John Peisley

"Absolutely gutted. I've got endless stories about JP from betting pints on the rugby results, blowing up bits of the playing field, having a cheeky drive of the school minivan with him, and building a coil gun we accidentally overpowered. I wouldn't be where I am now without his hands-on physics lessons, and I'll miss him dearly."

Sonny Malhotra (OA 2005)

"So sorry to hear this. John was one of the best teachers. He loved his subject, loved teaching, took an interest in everyone, did everything with passion and always had a laugh with students and his colleagues. A wicked sense of humour! I loved talking to John about cricket which he loved so much! Such sad news. Rest in peace John." **Richard Bernstein (OA 1995)**

"Such a great man. Often remember him appearing out of a cloud of pipe smoke from the teachers smoking area looking like Hagrid. Exploding microwaves on the main pitch and swearing all the time. Got me an A in physics and made every class a laugh he will be missed greatly. A true KAS legend who stood for all the right values the school offered." **Theo Goffe (OA 2011)**➔

.....➞ "Dear dear John, loved him so much. A force, and lovely, lovely man. Many memories of him. It's not with sadness I say this but with such a smile. His laugh and smiles I never will forget. Or that moment during the Midsummer Night's Dream rehearsals when to get the lanterns up in the trees in the Amphitheatre he threw huge weights up over branches which seemed to land randomly back to earth with a loud thump. Wish I had had a moment to let him know how important he was to KAS and to me." **Robert Hersey (former staff)**

"You could build a spaceship with the bits a pieces he kept in his pockets. A giant teaching spirit." **Will Fairman (OA 1999)**

"Such sad news. What a wonderful and unique man. Apart from physics, he taught me cryptic crosswords, off-spin bowling, how to build a go-kart and much more about life. He was an (unconventional) role-model to me, and I think of him regularly still, over 30 years on. Rest in peace, John" **Ari Andricopoulos (OA 1995)**

"He truly embodied what KAS was about during my time there." **Rory Hackett (OA 2006)**

"John was my best action buddy, he got me into sailing and other fun pursuits. Always admired his bright intellect and freedom of thought. Loved talking to him, he was a walking encyclopedia. I'll hopefully have a pint (or two) with him up there one day." **Edo Skender (former staff)**



"I only met up with him a month ago for a drink and was hoping he was still around when I reached out; he still had a memory of an elephant from building the tree house together and going on school trips. John always had time for his students and always went the extra mile. I do hope The King Alfred School will do something in his honour, like a memorial or a plaque in his memory, it is a truly sad day but I'm glad I managed to meet him some 30 years later to say thanks to him... so sad and may you rest in peace." **Francois Chklar (OA 1996)**

"Shocking news. He taught me A level physics in 1977, 1 on 1 and his first year of doing so. He introduced me to Led Zeppelin in 1975; I later became a drummer and he invited me to play with my band at his retirement party at KAS in circa 2013. He had a huge influence on me and I will miss him enormously." **Robbie Steinhouse (OA 1980)**

A gathering to remember John will be held at KAS on Thursday 8 May 2025 at 5pm. Please save the date. All Old Alfredians, Former Staff and parents are welcome to join us and share memories of John with his family.



Simon Ryder-Smith (1935-2022, OA 1953)

Simon started at The King Alfred School in the war, when the school had moved to Flint Hall Farm near Royston in Hertfordshire. He lived with his mother, Rosalind (known as Ros) who was a teacher at the school, and younger sister Jocelyn in an old gypsy caravan.

The farm had two very large barns; the larger of the two was called Big Barn. When Simon was about eight, the school was assembled in Big Barn. There was the sound of a flying bomb overhead and the engine cut out. As everyone knew, this meant it would come down to land. Everyone dived for cover – all except Simon, who remained standing alone in the middle of Big Barn. He was calm enough to remember that when the engine cut out, the bomb would glide downwards and land somewhere else.

After the war the family moved to London and both children went to KAS in North London. Simon was always clever and inventive, and in his teens, without anyone teaching him how to do it, he built the



Simon Ryder-Smith

family's first television set, and it worked! Jocelyn can remember him later making a radio for her to take to university.

After Simon left KAS, he went to Queen Mary college, which was part of London University, and gained a degree in Electrical Engineering. He then worked for an electronic company when transistors were an innovation, and he was greatly amused when someone contacted the company referring to a radio as simply 'a transistor'. He later worked for NEDDY, the National Economic Development Council.

Simon loved to travel and had a special love for India, Sri Lanka and the Scottish Islands. He became a skilled photographer on his travels. He was also inventive and created practical and original ideas; for instance, a clever foldable highchair. He was witty, intelligent, caring and unassuming, and is much missed by his family.

Simon had three children, by his first marriage. His son Toby died aged 23. Simon leaves daughters Jessica and Cassia and grandchildren Lissy, Meg and Tilly. Simon also leaves Helen, with whom he had a very happy second marriage, and sister Jocelyn. Simon was born on 12 August 1935 and died on 6 August 2022.

**Right: Simon
with his mother
Rosalind and
sister Jocelyn**



**Left: Simon in
his youth**



Frances Mary Quetton, née Lee-Jones (OA 1949)

Frances's children Tim, Kate and Matthew write...

"It is with very much sadness that we announce the death of our mother **Frances Quetton (née Lee-Jones)**, who passed away on 5 October 2024.

Frances, who often went by 'Polly' at the time, attended King Alfred from the late 1930s till 1949 or 50. She and her sister Jennifer resided in Mill Hill and customarily took the Underground to school between Edgware and Golders Green stations. In fair weather, they sometimes rode their bikes instead.

Her KAS days included the wartime evacuation to Royston, living in the poorly-heated wooden huts. She learned to milk goats and (at the age of twelve) drive a tractor, as well as spending an entire day in a farmer's field, where she and her classmates helped to pull out an invasive weed called Charlock. To stay warm on

winter days, many of the children wore fingerless gloves in the classrooms.

After graduation, Frances continued on to St. Mary's College, University of Durham.

Frances sometimes spoke of her and her sister's classmates Mary Keleman, Francesca Collingwood (who later married Henry Doughty), Tess Hoyland, Ruth Laymore and Janet Samuel among others. Mary's family had fled Czechoslovakia before the onset of war. In 1949, during her 'Alpha' senior year, Frances and her schoolfriends **Myra Chanda** (who later married Richard Gool) and David Mitchell travelled north from the Barnet Bypass to York, hitch-hiking in the back of lorries (not particularly recommended these days) and sleeping in farmers' fields (probably still recommended, with some provisos). More significantly, she and Mary Keleman twice undertook bicycling holidays on the Continent – one from Lille to Salzburg, the other from Dijon to Marseille – the goal being to cycle 60 miles a day.

Very recently, in the past year or two, she had participated in an alumni project; hand-written correspondence with a KAS Sixth Form student, recounting some wartime memories of the school.



Frances Mary Quetton



Back: Mary Keleman, Frances Lee-Jones, Myra Chanda, unknown
Front: Unknown, Jennifer Lee-Jones, unknown, David Mitchell