

The Fairview Chronicle



"Loyal and True to you, dear Convent Home"



February 2024



**Brentwood Ursuline Alumnae Society
Committee Members**

President – Vicky Squirrell

Honorary Member – Richard Wilkin, Headteacher, BUCHS

Committee:

Chairman:	Ruth Westrip (néé Richards) – left school 1973
Treasurer:	Janet Dean (néé Thompson) – left school 1969
Chronicle:	Valerie Ichikawa (néé West) – left school 1959
Reunion Administration:	Michaela Langstone (néé Cole) – left school 2004
	Sarah Penfold – left school 2004
	Judith Moore (néé Breen) – left school 1977
	Stephanie Hedley-Barnes – left school 1997
	Nicola Cuthbert (néé Watson) – left school 1972
	Elizabeth Diaferia (néé Noyes) – left school 1982
Secretary:	Angela Corless (e-mail: acorless@buchs.co.uk)

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To contact the Alumnae, or a Committee Member, please e-mail  
[brentwoodursulinealumnae@gmail.com](mailto:brentwoodursulinealumnae@gmail.com); or write c/o BUCHS, Queens Road,  
Brentwood, CM14 4EX.  
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Front Cover: Fairview, drawn by Sister Bernard (Mother Mary Bernard)
taken from the souvenir card for the Old Girls Meeting on 30 May, 1945.

Chairman's Letter

Hello Everyone!

Welcome to your 2024 edition of the Fairview Chronicle. Some of you may not have heard the very sad news that in March last year our Chairman, since 2015, Marian Mann (nee Butler 1970-1977) suddenly passed away on the 8th of March 2023. This was only a few days after our very successful committee meeting on the 4th March at School. Marian was thrilled to have our committee of 5 now grow to 10, including Angela Corless (Deputy Head) our Secretary. Having been the Vice Chairman these last 3 years it fell upon me to try and carry on with the Reunion Day's arrangements, with the help of a now bigger committee PTL.

We were very fortunate to have 90 year old Maureen Mullally - Clarke willing to make a video of her talk and, this was very successfully shown on the big screen in the Main Hall. So good was the talk that we had permission to put it onto the website for all to see. After the talk we had a tasty tea organised by the committee and many said they had had a lovely afternoon.

Sadly, we had some difficulty finding names of those who had emailed Marian that they were coming last 21 May 2023. We also had problems getting into our website, so we have had to close our old email address alumnae@buchs.co.uk. The new email address is brentwoodursulinealumnae@gmail.com. Please send us your email or postal address details, as soon as possible, so we can keep in touch with details of the day and to send out the Fairview Chronicle online or by post. God Bless you and I hope to see you in May.

In May last year we experienced a big change with the memorable Coronation of King Charles III after the 70 years reign of his Mother Queen Elizabeth II.

God willing we will be having our next Reunion Day on Sunday 19th May 2024, and have a very interesting talk and lovely tea planned for all.

Ruth Westrip (née Richards, 1966-1973)

Treasurer's Report

The Society has £531.94, with stationery and postage costs still to be deducted for the 2024 Chronicles which some alumnae receive by post.

At our committee meeting in November, the decision was made to give the £500 fundraising from the raffle money (at the last three Reunions) to the school. This assists with their updating of facilities such as the cookery room for the current students. Thank you to all who contributed through these raffles, as well as some alumnae who generously sent donations even though they were unable to attend.

Janet Dean (née Thompson)

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**The Next Annual Reunion is on Sunday,
19 May, 2024**
Our speaker will be
Dame Kathleen Dethridge (née Caldon)
speaking on
*" A life in education... lessons learned
from Classroom to Westminster..."*

Kathleen Caldon was born in Barking, Essex, in 1962. After attending the Brentwood Ursuline she studied at Durham University, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography. She subsequently received a postgraduate certificate in education from the university.

Kathleen became a teacher in 1985, a deputy head teacher in 1988, and head teacher of Churchend Primary School in Reading in 1998. She was an Ofsted Inspector from 2000, was made a national leader of education in 2008, and was an associate director of the National Education Trust from 2011. She was also a founding trustee of the College of Teaching. In 2015 she published “A Practical Guide to the Early Years Foundation Stage”. The same year she was appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE). In 2020 Kate became Regional Schools Commissioner for North West London and South Central England.

We look forward to seeing you at the Annual Reunion

If you received this Chronicle by post you will also have received a reply sheet to let us know if you will be attending or not, and as mentioned in the Chairman’s letter, if you received your Chronicle by e-mail would you kindly respond to: brentwoodursulinealumnae@gmail.com. We would stress that it is important that everyone who plans to be at the Annual Reunion lets us know, as we need to cater accurately for the number attending. Last year unfortunately some people who had informed us they would be attending did not do so, resulting in a quantity of unused food and a financial deficit for the event. Now that there is no annual subscription, the Alumnae cannot afford to make a loss at the Annual Reunion.

Please try to respond by 9 May to help guide us with catering numbers. Thank you.

There will be a charge of £7.00 at the door to cover the cost of teas and other expenses involved in opening the school for our Annual Reunion.

The memorabilia stand at the Reunion is always very popular, so if you have photos or other items, please bring them along to add to the display.

Past Pupil News

It is with sadness that we have learned of the passing of a number of past pupils and other people connected with the school:

- **Elspeth Brewer (néé White):** 8 May, 1932 - 27 March, 2020. Judith Deane and Elspeth were at school together from 1944 until about 1948, when Elspeth left aged 16. Elspeth married in 1968 and had twin sons, one of whom sadly died in his early fifties.
- **Pat Falks (néé Young), died on 15 February, 1922, aged 80.**
- **Sheila Barnett,** died at the Beeches Care Home, Brentwood, on 13 May, 2023. She was at school from 1943-1948. Upon leaving she joined the Bank of England, where she had a long and rewarding career, retiring in 1992. This information was received from Amanda McKiernan (néé Everett, 1969-1976).
- **Evelyn M de Hidalgo (néé Willis)** died in a care home in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands, on 17 October, 2023. Known as Evie, she was in the same year group as Teresa Kinnear. Evie, her sister Rosalind and Teresa were all boarders. Evie had a son called Diego. The information about Evelyn, and Rosalind below, was received from **Teresa Kinnear (néé Glinka-Janeczewski).**
- **Rosalind Herrstrom (néé Willis),** older sister of Evie, died in Sweden in 1997.
- **Marion Barlow,** died at the end of August 2023. She was a very popular teacher at the Ursuline where she taught drama, English and RE in the 80's and 90's.

- **Anne Rowe (néé Alker)** died in December 2023. She was born on 1 April 1942 and was a student at the school from 1953-1960. Her group of friends included Mary Bates, Eileen Brooker, Isobel Gowers and Kitty Moran. The friendship lasted throughout school and beyond. Kitty, now Katherine Howard remembers her fondly: “I first met Anne when I joined the school seventy years ago. I had missed the first year in Belmont because the family had moved from Staffordshire, where I had attended primary school, first to Lincolnshire and then to Essex by which time I had already completed the first year of secondary education. This meant that I had missed all the lessons where girls were taught the italic style of writing, with the slanting nibs and the “thin up, thick down” strokes. Everyone’s writing was immaculate, and Anne spent much time doing her best to pass on to me her knowledge – even giving me one of her pens. Since nobody was pressuring me to conform, I soon abandoned the exercise – but I have never forgotten Anne’s kindness and patience”. “Anne excelled in art and music. In the art classes the work she produced was stunning. She also liked to make people laugh. When she took part in the school’s production of Pirates of Penzance, she discovered that getting the steps wrong in the dance she took part in actually made people laugh – and she went for it whole heartedly!”

On leaving school Anne worked for the Ministry of Aviation in London for the Air Licencing Board. Anne had a beautiful voice and accepted a place as First Soprano with the London Philharmonic Choir where she performed at the Royal Festival and Albert Halls. Anne was also a member of the Brentwood Diocesan Choir where she met her husband David in October 1963. They were married on 1 May 1965 and went on to have three children, Heidi, Dominic and Helena. Heidi and Helena both attended the school; Heidi from 1977-1984 and Helena from 1980-1987.

In 1969, David’s job took the family to Chester-le-Street in County Durham. In the early 1970s Anne worked from home as private secretary to Jack Cunningham MP who lived locally, she continued to work for him in Westminster in 1976 following the family’s return to Billericay. Anne and David

continued their love of choral music and were both fortunate to sing in the choir for the Papal Mass at Wembley in 1982.

In 1983 Anne took up the position of librarian at the school until she retired in December 2003. During that time, she went to Kintbury and had the opportunity to join the school exchanges with a language teacher, accompanying the girls on visits to France and Erfurt in Germany. Former teacher and friend, Jane Ranzetta said “Anne was always very popular with the pupils and the staff because of her wonderful sense of humour, her kindness, her patience and her ability to listen and make time for everyone”.

Anne had a beautiful smile and infectious laugh. She would light up a room when she entered it and had the rare ability to make people feel at ease when she met them for the first time. This extended to her ability to connect with young people at the school.

Anne sadly passed away on 6 December 2023 after declining health, she is greatly missed by David, her family and everyone who knew her.

- **Katie Butler**, born on 27 January, 1977, passed away peacefully at 8.00 a.m. on 3 February, 2024. Katie was at the Ursuline from 1988 until 1993.

Teresa Kinnear keeps in touch, and has written to let us know that she recently went to visit **Sonia Dowse (née Swanson)** who, like Teresa, is living in a care home in the Perth area of Scotland. Now approaching 93, she is one of the oldest former pupils who used to attend the Annual Reunions regularly.

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## **School Memories of Doreen Wilson (née Locke)**

My Name is now Doreen Wilson, and I came to the Ursuline in 1941 and stayed until 1947 - impressionable years in a young girl's life. I have lived in the United States for almost 32 years where we came for my husband Peter's company, originally for two years and loved it so much we stayed. Our home is in Chadds Ford, a beautiful country village 25 miles west of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the heart of the Brandywine Valley. It is very English and is where the Wyeth family of artists live and paint. N. C. Wyeth, father of Andrew, whose studio and home is nearby, illustrated such books as *The Swiss Family Robinson*, *Treasure Island* and *Robinson Crusoe*. The three Wyeths, including Andrew's son Jamie, have exhibited all around the world and we were delighted to see in Cambridge, on a visit to England, the same exhibit we have in the Brandywine River Museum, just five minutes from our home here. The Brandywine Battlefield is close by, and my husband and I are involved in the re-enactment of the battle won by the British in 1777.

Last August, having attended a cousin's wedding in Essex, my husband and I were making our way back to Sheffield Park House, where my sister lives, when we could not resist knocking on the door of my old school. We were welcomed by Sister Philomena, who so graciously showed us around the House and made us a delicious tea, for which we were especially grateful. We were so pleased to meet Sister Gabriel, and after singing the school song together (which I remembered even though it was almost 50 years) we had a wonderfully exciting conversation recalling memories of school days. I arrived at The Grange at the age of ten, for my entrance exam, when Mother Margaret Mary asked me the meaning of the word "Yarn" and I answered "Wool" as well as tale or story, which seemed to impress her. Mother Margaret was our headmistress in Belmont, where we had to change out of our outdoor shoes into house shoes, a habit I still follow at home. It was lovely in Belmont where we used to have lessons under the big trees in the garden in good weather. I remember a concert where my friend, Anne Moore (who has been my friend since we were five years old) and I sang a duet, "Little Modest Violet Blue" (Rosamunda). We got through the first verse, but after a great start each sang different words to the ensuing verse!

During this year, I became seriously ill with Aplastic Anaemia and was taken in the night to Rush Green Hospital because my doctor suspected typhoid fever. As my Haemoglobin dipped to 23% I was given numerous blood transfusions and after six months was transferred to St Barthomew's Hospital and was absent from school for over a year. Mother Barnard sent me a Christmas Tree decorated by the girls and when I returned to school in 1943, and thanked her, she said "I never expected to see you alive, dear child". How kind she was to be so thoughtful to me. What a thrill to see her this summer, 53 years later. My husband and I met her at the Chelsea Flower Show just after we were married. Mother Bernard was our art teacher. My friend Beryl Ludlow was from Uppingham, and I believe went to New Zealand. We have also been to that beautiful country and on the way home stayed in Tahiti. Beryl was an exceptional artist and I have a drawing of hers in my autograph book. She got distinction in her finals and I got a credit, drawing and painting a ballerina on a chocolate box for my matric.

I remember Mother Genevieve (far be it from me to call her Mother Gen, as did the girl whose mother used the short form to Mother Ursula, our Headmistress, causing her to call an assembly to admonish the culprit). Mother Ursula after assembly, would say "Pass out", to which the girls would feel like pretending to faint. Mother Genevieve gave out new exercise books when one was filled, first counting the pages. I had made a mistake in my English grammar, and knowing the pages were to be counted, I glued clean paper on them and then had to bear the humiliation of being asked in front of all the girls what had happened to my book. I said that I had done my work wrongly and Mother Genevieve announced loudly "I should think you did do it wrongly." Paper was scarce because it was wartime and it is unlikely that any girl today could imagine having to account for each and every page in an exercise book. Sheila Hurford (about whom I was pleased to hear during my visit to school) wrote the word "Excercise Book" on the front of each of hers and when one teacher corrected the spelling I asked her if she was going to correct the other books, to which she replied that she intended leaving the wrongly spelled word to see if the other teachers spotted the mistake!

There are so many memories – Mother Gertrude Mary who taught us needlework, who was so kind to us girls, loved the pearl buttons I

took in for a blouse I had made of Viyella. When I saw a card of pearl buttons in Lewes, Sussex, I bought them remembering how much Mother Gertrude appreciated them. Because of the war, material was scarce and we were only able to make half of an apron for our University Entrance Exam. As the exam began, Mother told us it was the same method as making a sleeve with a cuff. The biggest problem was having to take turns with the few sewing machines. During the domestic science exam a girl was sent after me as I was carrying a bath of dirty clothes in water, to say, "Mother says not to forget the soap." Here I learned to iron a shirt.

Mother Borgia taught us Latin, but the most important lesson she taught me was "Always stress the correct way to do a thing – never the wrong way". This was because at the bottom of our Latin text books was printed, "NOT Britannia est insula, but Britannia insula est." Mother Borgia disagreed with the text book from which she taught us. Every two weeks we had a little ceremony in the assembly hall, called Proclamation where those of us with high marks would be presented with a medal. It was important to me to wear one. We also had teams within the whole school and at one time I got 90 good marks and no bad marks and for this was honoured. In Science our lay teacher told us that at night she would pour two cups of milk into a saucepan to heat for her cocoa, and after heating and returning it to the cups, it overflowed them because of expansion. Between lessons we went to the loggia and were served milk into our own goblets from a milk churn, the sister using a ladle for pouring. Once I was given a precious apple from Devon by my father for milk break and had taken a bite out of it as I walked through the gym, causing Mrs Mulley, our maths teacher, to make me throw it in her waste basket as she stood by the door and then she said to a nun, "What a waste of food". She collected lots of miscreants' snacks in that way, but later I went to the cloakroom and recovered my apple, washed it and ate it. Mrs Mulley was a particularly good maths teacher who taught us to think for ourselves and as she put it, "to dedooce." Her daughter, Miss Novelle frequently came into her conversations, and we were constantly hearing about her antics.

To be continued.

## **Brentwood Ursuline Alumnae Society – Annual Reunion 2024**

**Reunion Date:** Sunday, 19 May, 2024  
**Venue:** Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School, Queen's Road, Brentwood, CM14 4EX

### **Programme:**

|                         |                                                             |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1.00 – 1.50 p.m.</b> | <b>Registration</b>                                         |
| <b>2.00 p.m.</b>        | <b>Meeting – Guest Speaker:<br/>Dame Kathleen Dethridge</b> |
| <b>3.00 p.m.</b>        | <b>Tea in the Refectory</b>                                 |
| <b>5.00 p.m</b>         | <b>Close</b>                                                |