



CHRONICLES OF GEORGE WATSON'S LADIES' COLLEGE AT 150

EDITION 2



Dear Ladies

In our first edition of this newsletter, as 2020 drew to a close, we outlined our plans to come together in 2021 and celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of our school. We received a wonderful response from great numbers of you who are very keen to get involved with the projects and events that are taking place. Those current Watson's pupils who are working on both the Oral History and Collecting Stories Projects have been thrilled to engage with so many of you and in this edition we have shared their experiences so far.

It was with a great deal of optimism that we had scheduled our events for 2021; however, we ensured that we had alternative plans in place should we need to postpone due to continuing restrictions. The preparedness instilled in us all at George Square has once again proven most useful! We, therefore, have taken the decision to move our main weekend of celebrations, scheduled for 19 and 20 June 2021, to the close of the anniversary year on 18 and 19 June 2022.

The Development Office has now contacted all those who had already booked their tickets. If you have booked, but are yet to hear from them then please get in touch. If you were perhaps delaying your booking due to Covid then we hope this change in date might give you the confidence to now book your place. There are still places available for all events and you can book online at www.gwc.org.uk/GWLC150

We do still have many lively events planned before our anniversary year reaches its finale in 2022 including online events this June, a *Celebration Ceilidh* in November (see page 4) and a *Music of George Square* concert in March 2022. The school will also be inviting us all to join them for a series of special *Women of Watson's* events including a Business Breakfast, *The Caritas Lecture* and a panel discussion with Women Leaders. Further information on all of these events, including how to book tickets, will be shared with you by email in the coming weeks.

To ensure you receive invitations to these exciting events, along with future editions of our newsletter, then please do let the Development Office know your email address. You can contact them at development@gwc.org.uk or by phone 0131 446 6008. We will also share news of events on the GWLC 150 Facebook Group and on the website at www.gwc.org.uk/GWLC150

We hope you have a pleasant Easter and look forward to seeing you, in person, just as soon as it is safe to do so.

Gillian Sandilands		P. J. Morrison	Janet Young
	Catherine Stratford	Anne K Runnalls	

Gillian Sandilands née Begg (Class of 1978) Chair
Pamela Chesters née Beveridge (Class of 1974)
Pat Morrison née Thomson (Class of 1957)
Eileen Potts née Fletcher (Class of 1977)

Anne Runnalls, Former GWLC Staff
Liz Smith, (Class of 1978)
Catherine Stratford, Hon. Heritage Officer GWC
Janet Young, (Class of 1974)

GWLC 150 Committee



THE THREADS THAT BIND US TOGETHER

A huge thank you to everyone who has shown interest in being part of the Tapestry Project. We now have over 60 of you (including current staff and pupils) who have signed up to take on the challenge!

I am currently collating all that information and seeing whether we might create some actual or virtual stitching groups according to geography and internet access. The plan is still to encourage and embrace all offers to stitch and to offer workshops or short video tutorials to support the work.

Now that we have a core of dedicated people, I would really like to repeat my invitation to others who have felt a bit shy of throwing their hat into the stitching circle. With the prospect of coming out of lockdown later in the year, there may well be opportunities when attending an event, or passing through Edinburgh, for those of you who would like to just add your bit, to come along and put a few stitchers into the border that will frame the piece. So please don't feel that you cannot make your mark – the border will need lots of occasional stitcher to make it complete. Details of how this part of the project will work will be sent out by email in due course.

The design is progressing well and has benefitted from the unintended delays following the Covid pandemic. Many former pupils have, in a variety of ways, shared their stories and their memories of school, so have really given us a different and more universal way to celebrate the years that have passed and to create a piece that is relevant to us all. We are still hoping to share the final design in the summer and then launch the project itself.

Do get in touch if you would like to join us or have anything you would like to share or ask.

Janet Young

Janetyoung.lazda@gmail.com

WATSON'S HISTORY CLUB COLLABORATES WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Breagh Dixon (S2) reports on how this Project has been developing.

The History Department launched an exciting project to honour the 150th anniversary of the founding George Watson's Ladies' College (GWLC150). The History Club team, who meet on a Tuesday lunchtime, came up with a fantastic idea of collecting evidence about what life was like at the Ladies' College, based at George Square. It was decided interviewing past pupils would provide a deeper understanding of their personal experience and bring memories to life. A group of volunteers from the History Club, ranging from S1 to S6 with the support of Ms Stratford, got to work creating interview questions and inviting past pupils from the Ladies' College to be interviewed.

As part of our preparation, we got the opportunity to hear from the European Ethnological Research Centre (EERC). The EERC is a research centre within Celtic & Scottish Studies at The University of Edinburgh. Its primary concern is the promotion of research into everyday life and society in Scotland and the publication of the results. This was beneficial to our group as it explained our ethical responsibilities in relation to interviewing individuals. We were honoured to have them come into our school and present us with all the information and important rules we needed to become professionals!

Then Covid-19 arrived, but not to be deterred we reorganised our initial plans of meeting face-to-face to make sure the Oral History Project continued. The interviews moved



online and were conducted just before Christmas using Zoom. The IT Department helped to make sure everything ran smoothly! Although a little bit nerve-racking the volunteers enjoyed finding out about the similarities and differences of schooling in the past. Many serious, funny and inspirational stories were shared. For example, teachers used to smoke in the school, turning the walls yellow! One woman, who went on to become a journalist, actually stopped a war for 20 minutes, in order to get her wounded cameraman to safety! The meetings were recorded so that we wouldn't lose any valuable information shared by our interviewees.

As a result of the success of the first round of interviews, more ladies have come forward to share their memories. We hope to conduct our next round of interviews after Easter, when we are all back in school and allowed to meet after school once more.

In the next stage of the project the EERC at the University will have all our interviews transcribed professionally. Extracts will be used in an interactive exhibition online and the recordings will be preserved in our School Archives, and the University's Archives. We hope to create a book too, so that we can commemorate and preserve this important time in Watson's history. It will also create wonderful memories for both past pupils and for future generations.

THANK YOU FROM THE COLLECTING STORIES TEAM

Dear Ladies,

We are writing to say a huge thank you for all the time and effort you put into the responses we received. It is clear that your elegant written style is the result of a George Watson's Ladies' College education! Your accounts will not only be beneficial to the projects connected with GWLC150 but also to the school Archives, as a permanent record of life at George Square and St Alban's Road. We have thoroughly enjoyed reading through your stories and they have given us, as current pupils, an understanding of school life at George Square. From your writing, we have been able to draw parallels between our experiences as Watson's pupils today, compared to yours.

We have never visited the previous school at George Square. However, the detailed descriptions in your letters gave us a great sense of the building and the surrounding George Square Gardens where you spent your lunchtimes. One of the highlights of the campus on Colinton Road is the space and grounds that surround the school. It is lovely to sit outside at lunchtimes, but Scottish weather can make this difficult. We could relate to your accounts of being told off for spending lunchtimes in the cloakrooms, escaping the weather!

Another aspect that came through so many of your accounts was the uniform. A key aspect of being a Watson's pupil is the maroon uniform. Although we still have strict rules about keeping a smart appearance at school, we couldn't imagine having to wear a beret every day! Our uniforms have adapted since the Ladies' College however, as many of you described, the pride in wearing the maroon blazer is still very much prominent at school today.

Many of you looked back fondly on the teachers you had at the Ladies' College. We loved imagining ourselves, in the classroom with you, being taught by them. One of the things we noted was the difference in discipline. The importance of representing the school outside of the campus is equally important now as it was at the Ladies' College. We were amazed by stories of complaints sent to the school about Watson's girls eating chips on the bus! We understood that being a 'George Square Girl'



came with high expectations and misbehaviour was reduced due to fear of disappointing teachers and peers, which we completely relate to today. We also recognise the difference in society's expectation of how young ladies have to behave. We hugely appreciate the opportunities we have to voice our opinions and feelings at school which might have been lacking at the Ladies' College. We have the freedom to select the subjects we study and with Watson's being such a large school we can have a huge variety to choose from. Reading your accounts, that described subjects including sciences being discouraged, as they weren't expected to be studied by females really allowed us to appreciate the freedom of the choices we have.

It was great to see in your stories, that wherever in the world you were writing from the sense of belonging and the values gained from your time spent at the Ladies' College continue with you today. As the three of us are finishing our time at Watson's we recognise the fondness we have for the school. It was clear that many of you shared a sense of privilege to have been a part of the George Watson's Ladies' College community.

We hope that you enjoyed sharing your stories with us, we have loved reading them and learning about school life at George Square. Your stories have highlighted to us the values and traditions from the Ladies' College that have been passed down to girls here at George Watson's today.

Ex Corde Caritas

Eliza, Lorna and Molly

GWLC Community Photo Project

Over the coming months we are embarking on a community led project to fill the gaps in our GWLC photographic archive. Whilst the school archive does hold a large number of class photos, we do have missing classes as well as many unnamed photographs. The plan is to find one or two volunteers for each year group who will liaise with the rest of their year to collect the class photos and pupil names that the archive is missing. These volunteers will have access to a shared online drop box where we can collate these class photos and names before saving them digitally in the archive.

If you have original photos that you would like to donate to the school archive, please do get in touch with me (Tom) as completing the physical collection would be a fantastic accomplishment during GWLC 150.

If helping us as one of our volunteers interests you, please contact either myself or Pam Chesters.

Tom Bennett

Historic Archive and Collections Officer
t.bennett@gwc.org.uk

Pam Chesters née Beveridge

(Class of 1974)

pamela.chesters@yahoo.co.uk



George Watson's Ladies' College

Celebration Ceilidh

Saturday 13 November 2021
7pm to 10.45pm

George Watson's College,
Colinton Road

Dress: Anything Goes
(but a touch of tartan welcome!)

**All former pupils
and friends of GWLC
welcome!**

Book Tickets Online at www.gwc.org.uk/GWLC150

Tickets
£25*
(Over 18s
Only)

WOMEN WATSONIANS SILK SCARF

This specially-commissioned hand-rolled silk scarf is a Limited Edition which has been crafted by the renowned Fox and Chave. Priced at £35 (including UK delivery), the classic design incorporates the Flaming Heart in maroon and comes boxed.

We hope you will wear your Watsonian scarf with pride and that we will rival our male contemporaries in their Watsonian ties!

If you would like to purchase a scarf please contact the Development Office development@gwc.org.uk or 0131 446 6008



Update Your Details with the Development Office

To ensure we can continue keep in touch with news of our projects and invitations to future events please do update your contact details with the Development Office at:

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- @ development@gwc.org.uk
- ☎ 0131 446 6008
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