



HARRODIAN

# HER STORY

A collection of essays written by Harrodian pupils and teachers about inspiring female relations



*Her Story* was conceived by Harrodian History Teacher and Head of Politics Charlotte Arnold and invited both our pupils (from 13s/Year 9 to Sixth Formers) and our teachers to write about a female relative who they had found inspirational.

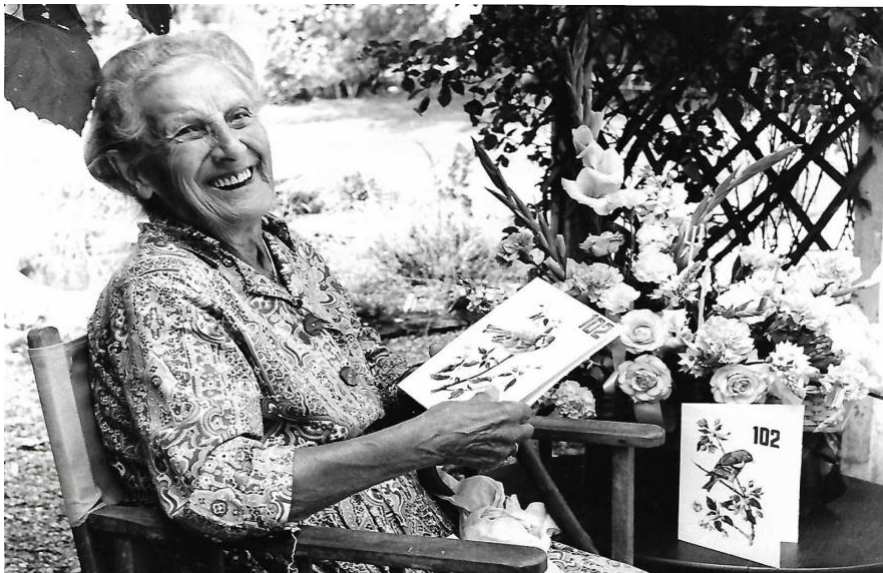
# Contents Page

(links below)

1. [Alfie Todd \(15s\) – Constance Etheldreda Todd](#)
2. [Ethan Junemann \(14s\) – Dilys May Stubbs](#)
3. [Daisy Peasley \(14s\) – Mercia Lombardi](#)
4. [Kenan Sirinel \(14s\) – Maria “Baba Masha”](#)
5. [Digby Don \(English Teacher\) – Janet Keiller](#)
6. [Hamish Mulcahy \(15s\) – Dr Janet Wood Shakespeare](#)
7. [Grace Gibbon \(14s\) – Sylvia Julia Bate](#)
8. [Kitty Osborne \(L6\) – Elaine Leon](#)
9. [Maxi Traynor \(14s\) – Isabel Yolanda Pita Ordeñana De Decker](#)
10. [Warren Rodricks \(Mathematics Teacher/SLT\) – Grace Rodricks](#)
11. [Casper Warwick \(U6\) – Hilja Murro](#)
12. [Sam Cullis \(Head of Media Studies\) – Christine Trodd](#)
13. [Felix Mynors \(U6\) – Angela Mynors](#)

**Constance Etheldreda Todd (née Lunn)**  
**12 August 1873 – 13 January 1976**  
**by Alfie Todd (15s)**

With a life spanning six monarchs, which she proudly recollected to the family all of whom she had met, and just over a century of life experience, Constance Etheldreda Todd was a woman who pushed the boundaries to ensure she was not restricted to the subservient countryside lifestyle, which was so common for women in the early 19th Century. Even more remarkable was that her life almost didn't start at all. Born in a period in which child mortality rates were at its height, with 14.5% of females dying before their first birthday in the 1870s, Constance managed to battle severe illness to survive against the odds, with the dean of the local Marton church even pre-selecting her grave spot.



Constance grew up in a time of peace in the late 19th Century and lived the quintessential rural life, nestled in the Yorkshire countryside. However, she was evidently unsatisfied with this calm life and went to finishing school in Berlin to study music and languages, a skill which would later become invaluable.

An infamous family story is in 1890, when she was personally recognised by the controversial Kaiser Wilhelm II, as stated in her obituary since she was 'the only girl who curtsayed instead of groveling flat on the pavement as did the German children'.

She pursued academia throughout her early life as she went to train as a nurse at East Ham Hospital before she was drafted into the British Hospital in Paris on the outbreak of World War One, being one of the 8,000 contingent of nurses who served overseas in the conflict. She was an invaluable member due to her ability to speak fluent German. This proved to be a formative experience which ignited a sense of national duty which lasted throughout her life and into the Second World War.

However, this was not without its difficulties. She was married, happily, to her husband Richard Todd in 1903, who was the rural dean of Woolverstone, however as a woman there would have

undeniably been a pressure to be domesticated and have children, however she subverted this stereotype, only mothering one son whilst balancing her nursing commitments overseas.

Constance took a step back from service as she welcomed the births of her grandchildren and subsequent great-grandchildren, but there was still a desire for her to contribute to the new World War Two war effort. This was documented in her obituary as it states that she was the 'Holder of the W.V.S medal for service over-self, Mrs Todd has knitted a fantastic 6,000 blanket squares and actually sewn together over 150,000 and rarely seems to stop'. The medal in question was awarded to volunteers who completed forty duties for the armed forces over a period of fifteen years, encapsulating her willingness to serve.

Her 102 years of life experience still sets an example to the family of the importance of seizing every opportunity.



**Dilys May Stubbs**  
**30 May 1922 – June 1988**  
**by Ethan Junemann (14s)**

My father's mother's mother - The Codebreaker

My great-grandmother, Dilys was born on the 30th May 1922 in West Yorkshire, her parents both being born in Yorkshire also. She spent most of her early life in Ripon, Yorkshire.

In 1940, a year after the war started, she left school and sought employment as a general clerk for the Northallerton Council but 3 years later she and her sister Winifred joined the Wrens-WRNS (Women's royal naval service) which employed about 74,000 women.

They both worked there daily, Winifred worked in Hut 11 as an operator for Bombe which was Alan Turing's machine that cracked the Enigma. Dilys worked in Block H on Colossus which cracked the Lorenz Cipher but more importantly is recognised as the first programmable computer ever. She was one of 273 women who were assigned and worked around the clock in 8-hour shifts.

Unfortunately, Dilys was unable to ever talk about her life at Bletchley due to the Official Secrets Act for WW2 which was a law that outlived her. I'm grateful however, that her sister Winifred did live long enough to share her memories which has allowed me to tell both their stories.

Today she and her sister are recognised on the Bletchley Park roll of honour as Stubbs Sunderland and Stubbs Terrell. They will be remembered for their huge parts in the fight of World War 2.

## **Mercia Lombardi (née Thompson)**

**1910 – 1960s**

**by Daisy Peasley (14s)**

Mercia Thompson was born in 1910 in Cheshire, North West England. She was educated there and in her early twenties met Edmund Lombardi, an Italian marble import exporter. They fell in love and married but as the Second World War loomed imminently, realised that staying in England would be difficult for Edmund as an Italian national. Edmund strongly urged Mercia to flee from England and in 1936, the couple looked to emigrate to Australia, a country neutral during these troubling times of terror. Their boat docked in South Africa for a couple of days to break up the journey and they hired a car to briefly explore the country. They fell in love with the landscape and decided to stay for the foreseeable future.



Mercia and Edmund, above

They bought a farm, Applethwaite Farm, and both turned their hand to apple farming, which neither had done before. Mercia, however, had a passion for gardening and took this new skill in her stride. Edmund and Mercia sold the apples that they had hand grown, and Edmund noticed that the apples that he was unable to sell fermented, and he wanted to do something with them rather than let them go to waste. They contemplated creating apple sauces and jams, but then they discovered they could turn them into a juice. They then carbonated it and created Appletiser, the first bottle was sold in 1966. It was made of 100% pure apple juice; it was simple and instantly popular.

The couple had two children, named Jose and David, who grew up on the farm helping out. The company grew exponentially; they required more and more employees, and they recruited people who were both black and white. The Lombardis had always passionately opposed Apartheid and refused to divide their workers. On the farm, they built a church and school for their employees and their children as they believed in education for all and freedom to express personal faith. In doing so, they created one of the only places in South Africa where everyone could be together, safely and respectfully. This was hugely progressive at the time, where the racial divide was very prominent. Mercia helped in the school as much as she could, and encouraged friendships between children and families of different colours. She insisted that everyone was equal and should be treated accordingly.

Mercia sadly died in a car accident in the 1960s but Edmund set up the Lombardi scholarship at the eminent Stellenbosch University in her honour to ensure under-privileged children could continue to learn for years to come. She is remembered as a loving and selfless woman who devoted her life to helping people, whatever their background.

# **Maria “Baba Masha”**

**1910 - 2002**

**by Kenan Sirinel (14s)**

Maria, or as we know her, Baba Masha, was my great-great-grandmother and was born in 1910 in a tiny village in Belarus on the border with Poland. Her life was hard and challenging and she barely got by at times, but she never complained, was always optimistic, and always had a smile on her face. She survived both world wars, the Russian Revolution in 1917, and the tragic loss of her husband in 1944. When the Imperial Revolution in 1917 happened there were years of struggle due to civil war in the region. By the time she was 15, she had survived the First World War, the Imperial Revolution, and the civil war.

In 1944, at the age of 34, Maria found herself alone with 4 children, all under the age of 10, the youngest being 2, after her husband went missing in action in Germany. It wasn't until 1975, at the age of 65, that Baba Masha was given closure on the topic and was informed by the authorities that her husband had died in the war and was buried in a mass grave. Baba Masha never remarried. So in 1944 she was left alone to raise her 4 kids on her own, and had to carry on with her life.

After the Second World War, Baba Masha was working on a farm and providing for her kids when she discovered her passion for alternative and herbal medicine. As she was spending a lot of time in fields and forests, Baba Masha was well learned in the uses of herbs and plants, and started treating her children and close family with herbal medicine. Her brews and ointments worked, and she knew the healing power of herbs, and knew what to use, how much to use, and how to mix it to cure various illnesses, ailments and aches. She also had a natural skill for helping people, and was able to help villagers with various mental health issues.

Later in her life she became known as “magic hands Maria”, and that she had healing powers. She was a very influential, yet humble, loved and respected by her children, family and community, and had people visiting from her village and neighbouring villages to be healed. She was known in the region as a powerful healer, who never turned anyone away, or required any payment for her services. Unfortunately, she died shortly before her 93rd birthday in 2002, and I never got to meet her and get to know her. So many years after her death, people still talk about Baba Masha in the village my grandad is from and her memory lives on.

**Janet Keiller**  
**1737 – 1813**  
**by Digby Don (English Teacher)**

Janet Keiller (my great great great great great grandmother)

In November, I was interested to hear the phrase 'marmalade dropper' being used to describe David Cameron's return to the Cabinet. Why marmalade and not jam? Is it that marmalade, along with the morning paper, became part of the British breakfast ritual?

My mind turned to 'James Keiller and Son' Dundee marmalade. James Keiller was my great great great great grandfather, after whom the marmalade brand was named, but this story is about his mother, Janet Keiller. She was instrumental in starting the business but, times being what they were, in the early 1800s, her name did not feature on the label.

The story goes something like this. In the 1790s, a ship from Seville was forced into Dundee harbour by a storm; the ship was carrying a cargo of bitter Seville oranges. Upon seeing a bargain, Janet Keiller's husband, John, bought the spoiling fruit (at a discount) and took them to the Keiller's confectionery shop. Janet then made a marmalade out of the oranges, deciding to leave the rind in. This 'chip marmalade' developed something of a cult following locally, in the late 1700s, due to its superior taste and the belief that it aided digestion.

My father has collected a number of Keiller marmalade jars and enjoys telling the story of Janet Keiller and how she 'invented marmalade'. We can surmise, simply from the word 'marmalade' that Janet Keiller cannot have made the invention; it has its etymology in the Galician / Portuguese 'marmelada' and came into the English language in the 1400s via the French 'marmelade'. It is easy enough to imagine the Portuguese making a jam out of quince and oranges in the 1300 and 1400s.

I'd argue that Janet Keiller went on to achieve something more significant. She standardised a recipe and method for Dundee marmalade - rind (chip) in - that became popular enough to form the basis of a successful brand and a 19th Century business. By 1888, the company's headquarters and factory had moved to London, via Guernsey (sugar-tax-avoidance), to produce vast quantities of marmalade for export to the British Empire.

Despite her name not being on the label, Janet Keiller was clearly a driving force behind the early success. In context, in 1797 she was sixty years old and had run a confectioner's shop for over thirty years. She had eight children. In the space of a year, in 1797, she set up a factory in Dundee to increase production of the marmalade. After the death of her husband and until her own death, in 1813, she continued in partnership with her son, James. I'm sure she chivvied him along. The marmalade sold well in 19th Century Dundee, particularly, which was a relatively wealthy place known for its jute and journalism business. Jute, jam and journalism, as the adage now goes.

Less known is that Janet Keiller also made the first Dundee Cake. These were a favourite of Winston Churchill so, who knows, without her perhaps we would not have won the war.



## **Dr Janet Wood Shakespeare (née Jackson)**

**1903 - 1986**

**by Hamish Mulcahy (15s)**

My great grandmother, Janet, was born in Scotland at the turn of the last century in 1903. Janet, known as Jess, was one of 5 children, although only three survived beyond infancy, leaving her elder sister Anice, herself and her younger brother Jim. Her father was the farmer of Hassendean Farm, near Hawick, in the Scottish Borders. Jess loved the farm and she was a bit of a 'tomboy' supposedly riding bullocks bareback, quite a feat! However, when she was only 9 years old tragedy struck and her mother died of pneumonia, before the availability of antibiotics.



A family picture, above (Janet, known as Jess, on the right in a slouch with her socks down!), approximately 1907

Her father remarried the 'evil stepmother' who she hated. Jess was then sent to a boarding school near Edinburgh and inspired by her mother's early death, she went on to study medicine, graduating from Edinburgh University in 1926, at a time when very few women studied medicine. In April 1927, she set sail to Canada, via New York and seeing sights such as the Niagara falls too – when it was snowing! In Toronto, she worked in a women's and children's hospital returning to Scotland in 1929.



Jess in her school uniform



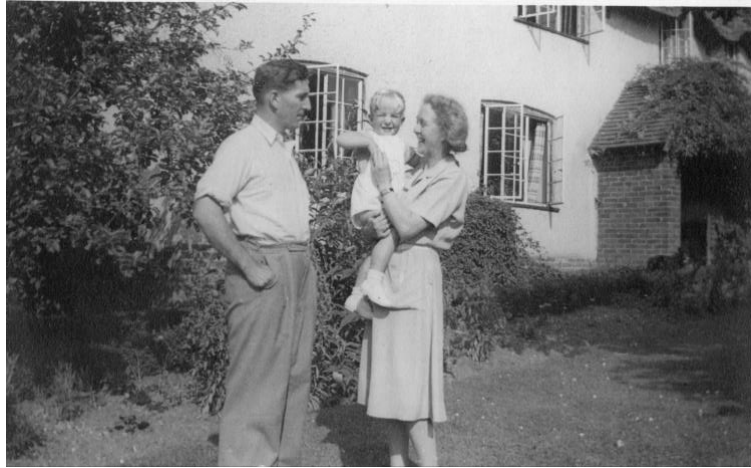
Toronto 1927

Her next adventure was to South Africa where she spent most of the 1930s, working in a hospital and setting up her own GP practice, as well as meeting the love of her life, an Imperial Airways pilot. Captain Joseph Shakespeare flew flying boats from Alexandria, Egypt, to Durban, South Africa at a time when air travel was just developing. They married in 1937 and came back to Britain just before the start of the second World War.

Now Dr J.W. Shakespeare, Janet set up a GP surgery in Sarisbury Green, Hampshire, far from her beloved Scotland. In those days it was before the start of the NHS and she worked on her own. She delivered babies, did minor surgeries, e.g. taking tonsils out of children and also used the new anaesthetics, most commonly ether and chloroform. During the War, her husband was away flying most of the time and she continued to work as a GP, having her only son at the age 38, considered very old for a first-time mother then. There was also the excitement of her husband being the co-pilot to fly Churchill back from a meeting in the US, with President Roosevelt; this was the first time a British prime minister flew across the Atlantic.

However, in 1943 tragedy struck again when her husband was killed flying over Northern Egypt. She was heartbroken and her son was only two. Janet brought up her son alone and worked continuously as a single-handed GP at the same practice until her late retirement in her early 70's! Janet carried on living in the same house she bought with her husband her whole life, with a beautiful garden with many South African plants. Her life drew to an end in 1986 after suffering a stroke. Overall, she had a life ahead of her time as a female doctor, a traveller, a working mother and as a single parent.

I would have loved to meet her, and I think that we have lots of questions we would have loved to ask.



The happy family 1942



Her retirement in her 70's after more than 50 years of devoted work as a doctor.

**Sylvia Julia Bate**  
**15 April 1918 – 12 August 2005**  
**by Grace Gibbon (14s)**

Sylvia Julia Bate. A mathematician. A mother. A widow. A wife. A sister. A daughter. A woman. These are just a few of the words Sylvia's daughters have used to describe the woman Sylvia was. Born in 1918, the end of a horrific time for the world, heading into the beginning of another atrocious war that would shape our world today. Sylvia grew up in Leeds with her mother Sarah Elizabeth and her father Horace. This is her story...



Sylvia grew up happily with many siblings and fell in love young. She loved a man called Clifford Sibson. Sylvia's father Horace didn't want them to get married because the war had just broken out, this was 1939 and Clifford was to be drafted to war. Horace was worried that something could happen to Clifford and his young 21-year-old daughter would be left a widow, heartbroken. However, they really wanted to get married despite all the risks. And so they did... In fact, at their wedding they had to carry gas masks in their bags in preparation of any gas bombs being dropped. Sylvia described along with her wedding dress, she had a satin purse hanging from her wrist containing a gas mask.

Sadly, it was not a happy ending for Sylvia and her husband of only 6 months, Clifford. Clifford went off to war and is thought to have died on the 14th November 1942. She would never see or hear of him again. Sylvia had received a letter from King George writing Clifford Missing in Action, presumed dead. Anyone whose spouse was missing, with no body discovered, was not allowed to remarry for 7 years - in case the missing person showed up again.

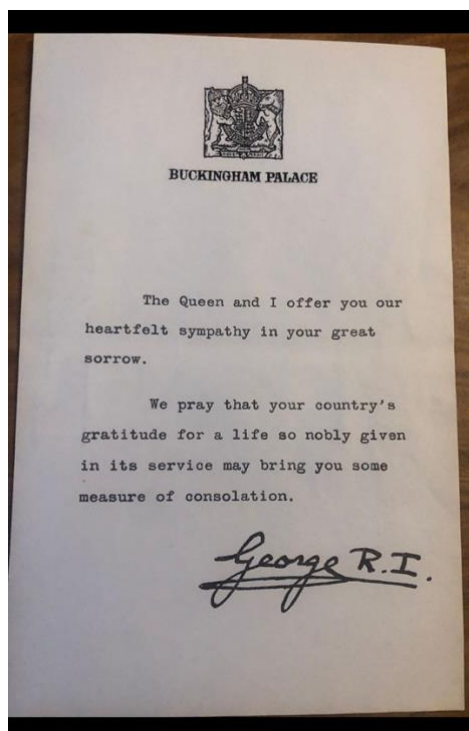
Sylvia's father's fears had turned into a reality.

Sylvia met a man named Arthur Watts during the war. He knew of Clifford but Sylvia did not speak much of him after his death. After the war ended in 1945, Sylvia moved out of Yorkshire to London to be with Arthur. Arthur had also been previously married. He had come home to

find his wife with another man. Arthur and Sylvia could not marry at this point because he was not properly filed for divorce and she had to wait 7 years. So the last few years had been difficult for them both. They eventually got married in 1952 after having 3 daughters named Maureen Julia Watts, Christine Sylvia Watts and Linda Margaret Watts (My grandmother). They then went on to have a last daughter Sheila June Watts. She was the one who discovered Clifford...



The youngest sister, Sheila went through her mother's drawers and found paperwork containing letters from the King, along with marriage certificates for both marriages and she realised her mother had been married before she met her father.



This explained all the confusion when the girls grew up watching their mother cry on Armistice Day with no explanation.

Sylvia had found love again but her first love never left her and she kept memories of him and their marriage certificates within the family, still to this day. Sylvia experienced a lot through her life! At the end of the war, she was in Paris and witnessed some of the many tens of thousands of women who had their heads shaved.

These French women were being punished for “collaborating” with the German’s throughout the war! In many cases it was because they had to fend for themselves and their families but some generally had romantic relationships with German soldiers.

Despite a rollercoaster of events – being born after a huge war and growing up into another life-changing war – Sylvia was always a strong, intelligent woman and a great mother to her four daughters. She was an inspirational woman and her story will always be remembered.

**Elaine Leon**  
**21 April 1923 -**  
**by Kitty Osborne (L6)**

Elaine Leon, an influential, self-reliant and powerful advocate for her view. My Great Grandmother. She was born in 1923 on the 21st April in South Africa, which at the time was characterized by a complex societal landscape marked by racial segregation and the institutionalization of apartheid policies, shaping the country's trajectory toward a deeply divided and discriminatory system. My great grandmother now lives in Vancouver so I do not often see her. However, growing up, my mother spent every summer with her in Monte Carlo and she played a key role in my mother's upbringing.



Elaine's formative years unfolded in the urban landscapes of Johannesburg and Cape Town. Her mother, having spent her entire life in Zimbabwe in a stringent Jewish community, adhered to an arranged marriage with a rabbi, leading to profound limitations on all her personal decisions and opportunities. Fate intervened when Elaine's father, following his father's instructions, resided with the couple in Zimbabwe for a period. Love blossomed between Elaine's parents, prompting them to depart from Zimbabwe. Consequently, Elaine's upbringing deviated from orthodoxy, and she found herself distanced from her extended family, as the choices made by her parents led to their exclusion from their communities, as they generated considerable controversy.

While residing in apartheid-era South Africa, Elaine actively engaged in societal and political affairs, advocating for progressive change and equality through her support for the relatively right-wing but liberal Progressive Federal Party. This party fought against the separate development under apartheid which meant that rights were solely based upon race and immensely differed. She dedicated significant time and energy to combating the racial-based apartheid system, promoting education as there was no freedom of press or information in South Africa, meaning that riots and key information from the townships were not reported on. As well as contributing a key role to the Black Sash movement, a non-violent, women-led

resistance group highlighting white opposition to apartheid and for most of the 1960's and 70's, this was the only consistent white opposition to the government. Alongside her husband, Alan Henry Leon, Elaine co-founded the Claude Leon Foundation, focusing on diverse projects such as water initiatives, medical science programs, engineering fellowships, and support for township communities, reflecting her lifelong commitment to community development and humanitarian causes. These provided her not only with a driving fuel of purpose, but a burning desire to help others and provide solutions not just highlight issues.



My great-grandmother, Elaine, raised two daughters and a son in South Africa. During World War II, her husband, Alan, joined the Allies, leading to a transformative period for Elaine as she navigated the impact of the war. In South Africa, this era reinforced conservative gender roles but also sowed seeds of change in attitudes, contributing to the eventual dismantling of apartheid. Elaine, a lifelong enthusiast of artistic hobbies, frequently crafted embroidered home gifts for the family. Once her children reached adulthood, Elaine and Alan, like many relatives, relocated. The couple moved to Monte Carlo, seeking refuge from South Africa's deteriorating political climate. Their journey continued to London, and today, my great-grandmother resides in Vancouver, embodying a personal story intertwined with historical and cultural shifts.

My great grandmother is the matriarch of the family. Up until her demise into dementia, she was the nucleus of an extended sprawl of family and friends that had become dissipated all over the world. She not only governed and organised the family but kept everyone connected. She is fiercely respected, for her grace and wisdom enriches those who know and love her. Her legacy is continued by my grandmother, the family representative of the Claude Leon Foundation, and her stories are shared amongst us all, keeping her soul present. She fought for her beliefs and guided our family, an indescribably strong woman.



# **Isabel Yolanda (Del Niño Jesús) Pita Ordeñana De Decker**

**16 January 1921 – 2020**

**by Maxi Traynor (14s)**

My great Grandmother was born 3 years after the end of the first world war in Ecuador as the eldest of nine children. Her family owned a large cattle farm, named after Saint San Pedro, in the coastal region of Ecuador where they eventually used the money to send her to school in Ecuador's largest city, Guayaquil. She was known for being incredibly hard working and intelligent, shown in her stellar academic achievements. As a young girl she aspired to become a doctor, and she challenged herself to become one. However, at her school she was discouraged from going to university and instead educated in being a homemaker and a good wife.

Many years later she met a man called Hulberto Decker, he was also from a coastal farm. He was described as handsome and quiet, quite the opposite to my great-grandmother, and he loved music and he had a radio which he would tune into the BBC every evening. His family was German, they had fair skin, blonde hair and blue eyes.

My great-grandfather's mother-in-law did not support their relationship. She could not accept nor support their relationship because she wanted her son to marry someone German and it was particularly upsetting to her as she saw it as stealing her eldest son from her. It is said that she was considerably rude to her daughter in law and that she never truly accepted the marriage.

Later, the couple would move to Guayaquil and start a family, where she would have 3 children, one of them, my grandmother. She was a very kind woman who saw the struggles of many poor Ecuadoreans, and often did her best to help them. One of these people was called Jose. He was the son of one the farm's foremen, he was born with a disease where dangerous and life-threatening tumors would grow around his face often causing disfigurements. Yolanda would go out of her way to help him by taking him to the best, specialist doctors to have very difficult operations. Time and time again she was told that Jose's disease was terminal and that he would not make it to adulthood. She was told that the money had better uses and it would all be in vain and that eventually he would succumb to his illness. However, she was undeterred and after 16 operations, he beat the disease and has continued to live on to this day.

Not only did she fund the life-saving surgery for Jose, but when she passed away she left him a bus; which her mother bought from the profits of the farm to make some extra money, so that he could have a stable career while making a decent living, as she believed that he would not be able to accept a job due to his facial disfigurements.

During the pandemic, Ecuador was particularly affected by covid and unfortunately, the hospitals that were overrun were not able to care for her as they prioritized those with covid-19. Fortunately, when she passed it was when she was surrounded by people she loved. She left an impact on the world.

**Grace Rodricks**  
**14 January 1939 – 7 July 2018**  
**by Warren Rodricks (Mathematics Teacher/SLT)**

It is an interesting dichotomy, superhero and supervillain. In the comic books it comes down to a matter of choice, perhaps more accurately, choices. There is usually a traumatic event, a big moment. A character could then go one way or the other. A life of crime or a life dedicated to others. Spiderman is a classic example of this. Faced with two paths, he started down one, only to change to the other. Super heroism is a choice, even in the tragedy that life is, we choose to do good or not...

Trauma. It certainly seemed to find my mother. A sister's death at the tender age of twenty-one from an aneurysm. A brother's life cut short due to a car accident. A miscarriage that was never spoken of until her final moments. Any of the events as a single entity could have caused her to embrace anger. All three? Surely, enough to send her down a path of perpetual bitterness. But it didn't.



Rather, she chose love. As she and her husband left the warm climes and family support they had grown up in to travel across the world to a cold and wintery tundra, she chose love. When faced with racial abuse from strangers and smug condescension from 'friends', she chose love. When she lost him, the man who meant more to her than anyone else, she chose love. Her superpower was love, which she chose every single day of her life.

Now to look at her, you'd never say she was the hero of the story. In a crowded room it would be easy to overlook her. For she would want to be overlooked. Quiet and demure, she would have happily disappeared into the shadows. You would walk past her gazing upon the more glamorous, listening to the more melodious. And in doing so, it would have been your loss. For the time needed to gain an understanding of this woman's heroism could be lost to the garish, the obnoxious, the verbose.

You see, the thing about heroes is that they never really crave the limelight. They are thrust into it but they don't want to be the story. For every Tony Stark, there are countless Batmen or Supermen who don't want to be known. And this was her. Superhuman in every sense of the word but happy not to be in the spotlight.

I know some will suggest that she should not be considered superhuman. She was an accountant. She was not a singer. She was not a dancer. She was not a writer. But never mind what she wasn't. For she was a daughter. She was a sister. She was a wife. She was a mother. My mother. Without her, I would have never had the opportunity to be the best thing that I am today...a father. Heroes make the world a better place. They inspire us to be better, to do better. She was a hero. She still is. She will be forever.

**Hilja Murro**  
**11 October 1918 – 14 December 2013**  
**by Casper Warwick (U6)**

This is the story told to me by my grandparents about my great-grandmother. Hilja Murro was born in Tartu, Estonia, one month before the First World War ended, with the Russians resuming control of Estonia. From 1918 to 1920, Estonia fought for independence against the Russians, gaining success with the Treaty of Tartu in 1920. During this war, Hilja's father, Theodor Murro, was killed by the Communists.



When Hilja turned 21, the Soviets reoccupied Estonia which led to mass deportation of Estonians to Russia. During this time, Hilja married Bernard Lemming, whom she met at the University of Tartu. In 1941, the Germans commenced Operation Barbarossa so Valga and Tartu, the birthplaces of Hilja and Bernard, were occupied.

At this time, Hilja was expecting the birth of her daughter, Thea. One morning, the town was unusually quiet and Hilja was worried that the Russians might be rounding up men of military age (around 50,000 Estonian men had been conscripted into the Russian army). She stepped outside, dressed only in her nightgown, to see what was happening. As soon as she stepped out of the door, she was swept off her feet by a massive explosion and ended up several metres down the street.

The explosion occurred when part of the 'Great Stone Bridge' was blown up. Hilja nearly died in this explosion, and when Bernard saw her, he took her to a friend's house near Tartu Hospital. More bombing and shelling was to follow, so Hilja had to crawl across the road to the hospital in her nightgown, while in advanced labour. While an army doctor delivered the baby, an artillery battery was firing from the hospital grounds. Eventually, Hilja returned to her friend's house with her baby daughter, and Bernard went back to their own house to retrieve their belongings. On his return, he found that their house and all their belongings had completely disappeared. Hilja then lived the next days in just her nightgown.

In 1944, the Russia Baltic Offensive started. Hilja was 25 and Thea was two when general conscription into the German army was announced. About 38,000 Estonian men were conscripted, in the 1st Estonian Division to fight against the Russians, including Bernard. This left Hilja, alone, with two-year-old Thea.

One day, Hilja was walking down a quiet country lane to buy medicine when she was fired at by a Russian plane with machine guns. She then decided it was time to leave Estonia, so she sent a pre-arranged signal to Bernard for him to desert the army and meet them at the border. He did not come and they never saw each other again.

What happened next is unclear as Hilja did not want to talk about what happened to her. However, Hilja did say that she and Thea 'saved each other', as young women were treated poorly by soldiers, but as a mother with a small child, they were less vulnerable.

Hilja and Thea somehow made it to the British Zone of occupied Germany and subsequently emigrated to Australia, where she lived for the rest of her life. From her story, it is hard to comprehend that my grandmother and great-grandmother had to go through such a terrible experience - an experience that is still happening to people all around the world.

**Christine Trodd**  
**27 December 1929 – 27 February 2013**  
**by Sam Cullis (Head of Media Studies)**

My grandmother Christine Trodd was the presenter of BBC Radio's Music and Movement broadcasts in the early 1950's. She was pioneering in using live musicians to illustrate the programme rather than just using the piano. Music and Movement was conceived to show that a child's cognitive skills could be enhanced by encouraging association with physical movements using music as the vehicle.



Children were able to enjoy using their imaginations to act out their ideas from the programmes encouraged by Christine in the studio. These programmes were presented live on the radio for schools and were probably the trailblazer for the development of schools' music such as Singing Together and Time and Tune.

Christine was skilled at knowing what best was needed both in preparing the scripts and optimising the different instruments of the orchestra using both a gentle, but firm disciplined approach to the programmes. The style of presentation is typical of its times, (1950s), but quite attuned to the prevailing ethos of post war recovery and the health benefits of physical exercise and valuing the place for imaginative and creative education for a new generation of children.

## **Angela Mynors (née Norie)** **10 March 1940 –** **by Felix Mynors (U6)**

Angela Norie was born in Camberley, Surrey on 10 March 1940 to Evelyn and Claude (née Elles) Norie. Evelyn was a Lieutenant Colonel in the British Army for the first four years of Angela's life until he lost his life eighteen days following D-Day. This left Claude as a widowed mother of two young children with Angela and her younger brother Hugh.

The largest challenge in Angela's life has been various medical hardships. These started when she was a child and fell victim to risky surgery attempting to mitigate against scoliosis. This involved her having one leg bone shortened but this only led to issues arising from it. Due to her having limited mobility it meant that she was unable to join in many activities with people her age and she had to give up her passion for horse riding.



Being born in such an era that she was, Angela was only in academic education until sixteen years old and was then sent to an academy to learn household skills. After this she didn't attend university, going on to work at an art gallery. During her time working at the art gallery, she met a strapping young man called Peter Mynors, an engineer and passionate cyclist. She developed a relationship with Peter and they went on to be married in 1967. Two years later they had my aunt, Geraldine, and then in 1972 my father, Rowland.

In this period of her life, she was still mostly physically able, working as an assistant to her aunt, Gill. However, this did not last as she was told by a doctor in the 1980s that she should remain completely supinated and not move for a year. This meant that she was stuck in Ravenscourt Park Hospital for a whole year, only being able to see her children and husband as visitors. On

top of this she developed skin cancer twice making her incredibly ill for long extended periods of her 40s.

Despite these hardships, she still managed to complete an incredible challenge with her husband on the front of a bicycle. My grandparents are intensely passionate about cycling and are proud users of a Pino tandem bicycle where the front half has a recumbent seat with the back half having an upright one. This specific type of bike has allowed Angela to cycle all around Europe despite her mobility limitations. The most impressive part of her cycling career culminated in 2022 when she managed to tot up all of the kilometres that Peter and she had cycled. With every journey added up, she had managed to cycle the equivalent of circumnavigating the globe around the equator.

Angela Mynors is an intelligent, loving and resilient woman who has overcome great hardships and managed to live a full life as a daughter, sister, mother and grandmother. She is greatly admired and I hope her story will live on in the memories of her family for generations to come.