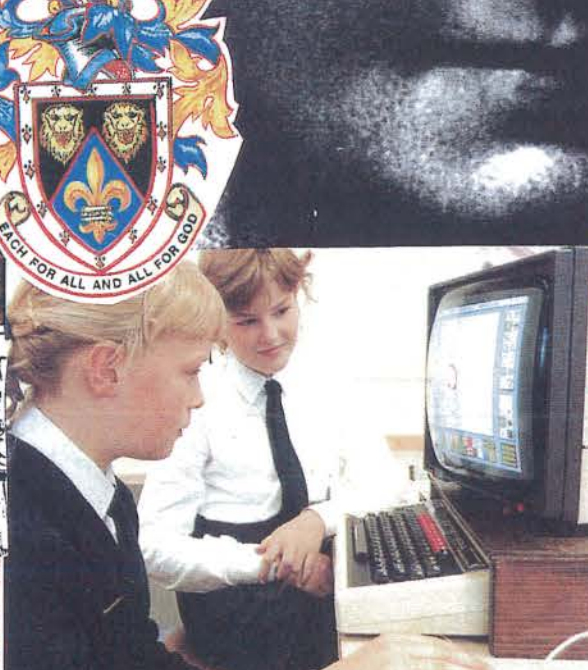
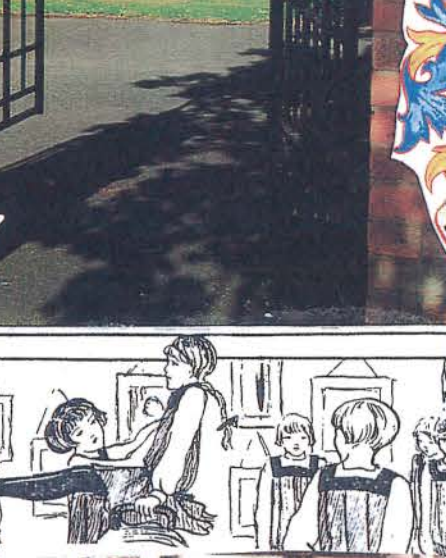
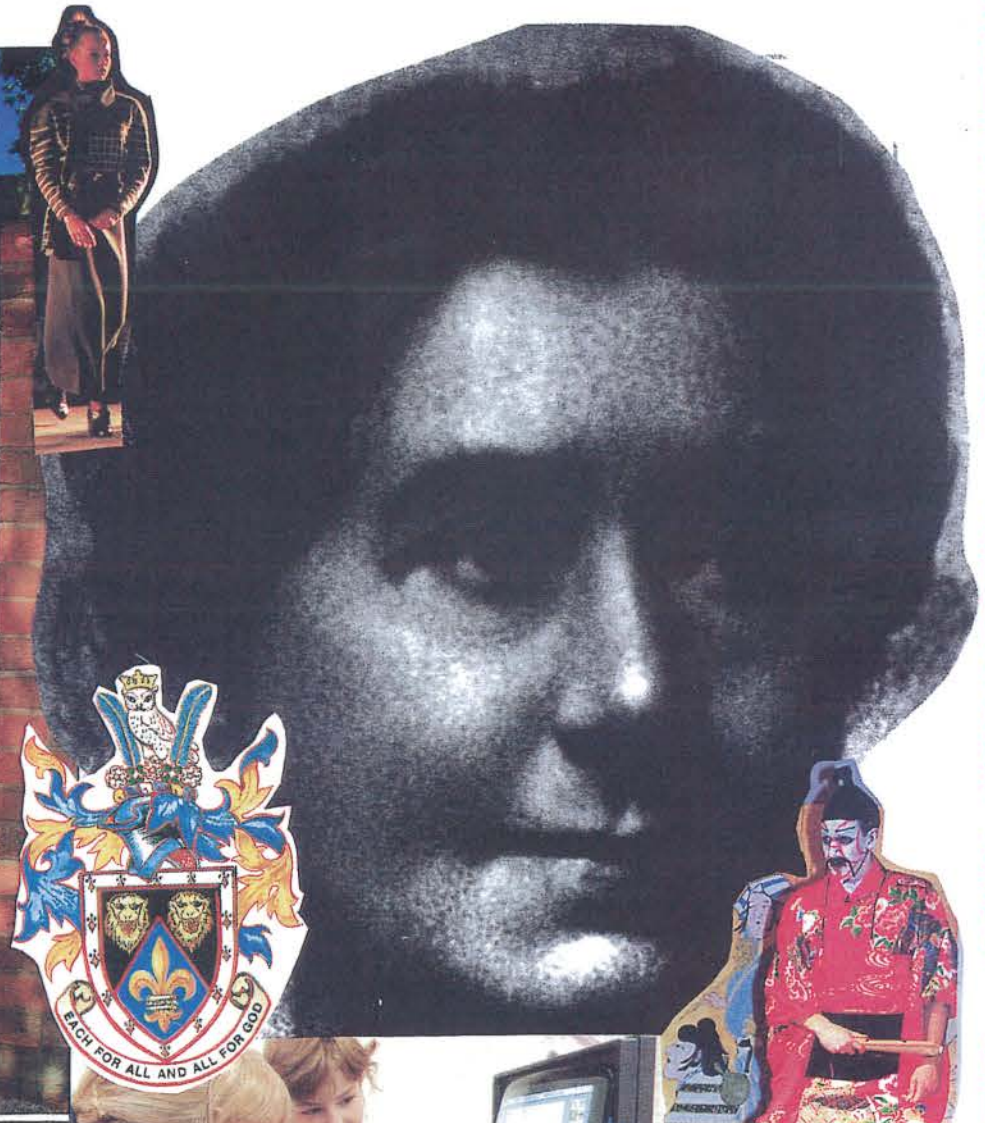


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WGHS circa 1910 - glimpses of the past



School Building



The Garden - minus the Jubilee Hall and Newstead



The Hall



Room 10



The Art Room - Shortly afterwards to be converted to a hospital ward during the 1914 - 18 War



The Library - In what is now Room 2

A Head Count

We all know who the present Headmistress of WGHS is: one might say of Mrs Langham, 'once met, never forgotten'! Many will remember previous Headmistresses, having served on the staff with them or having been at school under their 'command'. There are several current members of staff who were at school in Miss Knott's day and who recall her imposing but kindly presence very well, and a number worked with Miss Hand during her relatively recent 'reign'. But possibly not many will know much about the High School's earliest history and those splendid and indomitable ladies who shaped its beginnings. Since the Millennium is a time for both looking back and assessing what has gone by **and** looking

forward to things to come, this might seem an appropriate moment to attempt 'A Head Count'. Each of the Headmistresses has contributed something unique to the school and each tenure has been characterised by particular academic, political or social developments. I am indebted for my information about them to Miss Margaret Hardcastle, a previous Head of the History Department, who in 1978 produced an excellent short history of the School, now sadly out of print. The charming little line drawings which accompany the text are the work of Mrs Barbara Wyles, a former Head of the Art Department, who collaborated with Miss Hardcastle in her project.

Miss Allen was the first Headmistress of the High School, appointed in 1878 at a salary of £100 a year plus 'head money' at a rate of £2.00 per year for each pupil. She attended Newnham Hall, Cambridge, where although unable to take a degree - because before 1870 Cambridge did not *allow* women to take its Tripos examinations - she obtained a first class Cambridge Certificate with Special Distinction. She was about six feet tall and considered 'imposing' and one man, then in Kindergarten, remembers fearing that he would be 'run over' by Miss Allen when he passed her in the corridor. A few weeks after becoming Headmistress she resigned, upon discovering that she was not to have control over appointments and could not have a relative or friend to stay with her. The Governors hastily relented, promising that they 'would not interfere with her discretion as to a *lady* friend residing or visiting her' and she was reappointed. She had another brush with the Governing Body later when they decided to remove the greenhouse from the school garden. On 13th November 1878 Miss Allen sorted matters out with a memo; 'Greenhouse to remain. I do what I like in it at my own expense.'

In 1894 Miss Allen, who had not been in good health for some time, resigned and told her successor, Miss Gertrude McCroben, 'You will find them all good girls.' Though she went to live in Italy she did not forget the High School and when she died in 1925 aged 86 she left a bequest of books to the school library.

Miss Gertrude McCroben was thirty one years old at her appointment, 'a gracious and dignified lady of stately bearing'. She had been educated at Bradford Girls' Grammar School and Newnham where she had read Mathematics. She had previously taught at Manchester High School for Girls.

Despite her training in Mathematics, Miss McCroben taught English and her lessons on the romantic poets were described as 'most inspiring'. Eager to foster 'school life', that is a meeting of girls and staff outside lessons, she founded the Miscellaneous Society which met on Fridays from four to five p.m. Activities included addresses from speakers, acting, concerts and debates. Boarders were accommodated on the top floor (where VU now live) and parents were assured that the school's aim in caring for

their daughters would be 'their moral and spiritual welfare with careful attention to home comforts particularly in the case of delicate girls'.

Miss McCroben was keen to introduce sporting activities and herself taught Swedish Drill with Indian Clubs! Hockey was introduced in the Autumn term of 1895 and pandemonium ruled at first as no-one knew the rules. It was played in the garden with 'light knotty sticks rather like bent branches of trees' and was hindered by the presence of a large flower bed in the middle of the playing area!

Miss McCroben retired in 1920 after twenty-six years at the High School and retired to Kew. She would stay in every Sunday 'so that the old girls would know where to find her'.



'Greenhouse to remain. I do what I like in it at my own expense.'

A Head Count



'Miss McCroben
(Centre front)'

Miss Martin came from Normanton and had six hundred pupils under her care (a huge increase from 58 girls Miss Allen encountered in 1878). At Speech Day in 1920 she told parents that she had a prejudice in favour of school uniform and would very much like all girls to possess a navy blue coat and skirt, and also a white dress



'Few seemed energetic
enough for such sport'



'Hockey was played in the garden with the inconvenience of a large flower bed in the middle of the playing area... with knotty sticks.'

for school functions, 'nothing at all elaborate, no lace or ribbons.' She hoped girls would not visit 'cinema entertainments' in the evenings and advised the Vth and VIth forms to be in bed by 10.00 p.m. at the latest and 'she would rather say 9.30 p.m.' The school had a royal visitor in 1925 when George V's only daughter, Princess Mary, came to distribute the prizes at Speech Day in Unity Hall and Miss Martin spoke of her desire for a school hall big enough to accommodate all the girls and their parents. Her words did not fall on deaf ears and two years later, the money having been raised, Princess Mary came back to lay the Foundation stone for the Jubilee Hall, which was actually opened in October 1928 by Lord Eustace Percy, President of the Board of Education.

Miss Martin retired as Headmistress in 1933 and a presentation was made on the lawn where, before the ceremony, clock golf and quoits were arranged but 'few seemed energetic enough for such sport.' She knew all her girls individually and was ready with unsparing help for each of them. She died in 1939.

A Head Count

Miss Maris was the next Headmistress and she quickly instituted some changes. Medical inspections were introduced in 1934 and the Head Girl and Deputy Head Girl were for the first time elected by staff and senior girls. Beige socks replaced long black stockings and a new hymn book was published. In 1935 Miss Maris organised the first of her school party visits to Switzerland. We know that the girls found the travelling arduous because one, on arrival, said that they felt 'like a thick bunch of bluebells crushed in the hand of some holidaymaker.' 1937 was Coronation Year and Coronation mugs were presented to all the girls and they had a 'special' twelve day holiday. In August 1940 Miss Maris became Mrs Kingswell and was relieved to hear from the Governors that 'her marriage would not in any way interfere with her position as Headmistress.' Life was different during the war: girls had to bring their gas masks to school and staff had to check them regularly. Sticky white paper criss-crossed the windows to prevent hazards from flying glass in the event of an explosion and 1890 evacuees arrived from the Channel Islands and were put in the Jubilee Hall pending the finding of permanent homes for them! Fire watching was organised and school activities were curtailed because of black-out. Most school journeys were no longer possible so some girls went instead to a harvest camp: in 1941 it was fruit picking in Huntingdonshire! At Speech Day in 1947 Mrs Kingswell was aware that standards of behaviour were changing and pledged to 'combat this deterioration in honesty and truthfulness.' She retired in 1949 and became a Governor, remaining interested in all High School affairs up to her death.



'Girls had to bring their gas masks to school... sticky white paper criss-crossed windows'



Miss Knott saw huge expansion in the overall numbers in school, in the size of the sixth form and its buildings. Work on the Science Block began in 1950 and a year earlier Mrs Crowe had become the first woman to be Spokesperson of the Governors. Times were changing! The Science Block came into use in 1952 when Dame Myra Curtis, principal of Newnham College, Cambridge, performed the opening ceremony. Three days later a Thanksgiving Service was held in the Cathedral to celebrate the school's 75th anniversary. Members of the Preparatory School were enormously impressed and wrote, 'I liked the cwier singing Wen Miss Knott read from the Bible I felt a shiver go down my back Going out was such a scwosh I had not time to put my cap on.'

Miss Knott earned the affection and respect of girls, parents and teaching staff alike. She was praised for her 'courage, optimism and high endeavour' and was said to have an uncanny instinct which made her choose exactly the right moment to start a project and to celebrate its completion. She could view the school, its building and the lives of those within as a whole, her vision encompassing its past history, its creative present and its future potential. She was distinguished in other fields: for fourteen years she was a JP; she was President of the Yorkshire Branch of the Association of Headmistresses and on the National Executive of that body also; she was chairman of the committee of the Association of Independent and Direct Grant Schools and also served on the School's Council. When she retired, she planned her own future – pottering on cliffs ... bathing in rough seas ... bird watching ... country walks ... reading. She continues to live in retirement in Godalming, Surrey, in a house she shares with Miss K. Rowan-Robinson (Mistress-in-charge of the Junior School 1955-1962) and takes a keen interest in all High School activities.



Miss Hand playing Ring-a-ring-o'-roses with members of the Junior School on her last day as Headmistress

Mrs Patricia Langham arrived in 1987 and soon made her presence felt. A tall, glamorous blonde with an unmistakable style of her own and a lively personality combined with a wicked sense of humour, she soon decided that certain aspects of High School life needed re-vamping and set about the task with great energy and determination. Corridors were deemed dull and uninspiring and various paintings soon appeared to enliven them; rooms were re-decorated; the Jubilee Hall had a 'make-over' and a host of building projects was launched. Her future 'shopping bill' was soon in the region of £20 million and Governors, staff and pupils alike waited with bated breath for the next announcement! Girls were invited to submit requests, some of which were granted and turned to reality. Unimposing villas on Wentworth Street became very imposing teaching centres for Art, Economics and Careers and were named Cliff and Hepworth, and a magnificent new Sports Hall miraculously appeared next to the Junior School playground and was named the Hartley Pavilion. Even the girls' toilets in Beaumont were eventually given a 'facelift', as were the facilities at the back of the hall. Now the magisterial imagination has been unleashed, one can only say "watch this space" (or should it be "You ain't seen nothing yet!").



Miss Yvonne Hand had taught at the High School for eleven years and had been Deputy Head for some of them prior to becoming Headmistress. In her first year as Head the future of the school came in question when, in 1974, a Labour Government took office and announced its intention to discontinue the Direct Grant. In the same month, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council also decided not to take up any more places at the High School or QEGS. The Governors, seeing little chance of any future co-operation, confirmed that the schools would remain independent of the local authority and announced their Storie bursary scheme to assist financially parents who could not otherwise afford to send their children to fee paying schools. Miss Hand wrote in the 1976 magazine "All members of the school community remained calm in spite of press reports that Wakefield Education Committee's Chairman had spoken of the 'possibility of establishing a Sixth Form College in the Wakefield area and that the Girls' High School or Queen Elizabeth Grammar School could be used for this purpose.'"

Miss Hand's tenure of office saw the construction of the new kitchen and dining block and an awkward interim period when food had to be imported from kitchens in Leeds in containers. When, in January 1977, the new kitchens were fully operational, there was a rejoicing that Miss Young, the meals supervisor, could now provide 'chips for everyone'!

Miss Hand retired in 1987 and lives near Helmsley from whence she continues to take a keen interest in High School affairs.

No doubt memories of WGHS, fond or otherwise, are swapped in a good many places all over the world. A glimpse of the news items in the Old Girls' Association section of the magazine indicates how widely High School pupils cover the globe, and in what a fascinating and varied number of occupations or domestic scenarios. Here are a few memories culled from previous members of staff who have kindly written to contribute to this millennium booklet. They may, perhaps, unleash a few which others would be willing to share in a future magazine

From Mrs Helen Gill, Editor and current member of the English Department

I retain quite painful memories of my first encounter with Miss Ross during my early days in IV Lower. She was not a tall person by any means but she certainly had a strong presence and commanding voice. Lost – as IV Lowers tend to be during their first week at the High School – I cottoned on somewhat belatedly to the fact that I should be in the Science Block (now STC) in a Physics lesson. Carrying all my worldly possessions with me, I staggered over the road and turned into the gates of the Science Block, only to collide with Miss Ross who was hurrying in the opposite direction. I bounced off her, dropped all my bags and landed heavily on the pavement. I recall looking up at her dazedly and her furious expression as she barked at me, "You **stupid** girl!"

and,

There was one delightful R.S. lesson when my friend, Lizzie, who had a natural genius for malapropisms, was asked to commence a bible reading. Clearing her throat and assuming a suitably pious facial expression she began: "Genitals, Chapter 1, verses 1 to At this point I collapsed. There was, however, only the slightest glimmer of a twitch at the corners of the mistress's mouth. What splendid self-control.

Miss Margaret Hardcastle, former Head of History, writes

By 9am I was afraid that my first day of teaching at WGHS in 1966, might be my last. Miss Bosward, the Deputy Headmistress, who kept a careful eye on everyone, girls and staff, had given those new to the school our instructions the day before term began. We were to arrive in good time. I was late. The bus from Huddersfield was stopped by a tree across the road. I managed to collect my form's dinner money, then in assembly I realised I had left over £40 on the staff desk in Room 24. I had visions of burglars helping themselves to it. I left the hall hurriedly, after assembly, not waiting to go out in the proper order. The money was still there and I survived.

I would like to assure some IV Middles who attended a Music Club concert some years ago that Mr Jackson and I were not up to anything naughty behind the hall curtains. I was singing, 'Softly awakes my heart' from Samson and Delilah. Mr Jackson, my Samson, was dressed in a toga, as befitted the Head of the Classics Department and a wig, suitable for Samson. At the end of the aria I stretched out my arms from the leopard skin covered couch on which I was lying and when we were a few inches apart Mrs Armitage hastily closed the hall curtains. Many of the IV Middles obviously had a very good imagination, for when the curtains were pulled back for us to take a bow, their eyes and mouths were wide open in amazement.

From Mrs Mary Larner, previously Head of Modern Languages

I think I am the only person ever to have cancelled Prayers. It happened when Miss Hand was out for the day. Beaumont was in the building stage, the Hall corridor wasn't there and we had to go into the yard, or across the garden at the end of Newstead, to get into the Hall. It was sheeting with rain and after waiting for a quarter of an hour for it to stop, I just cancelled it! What power. I enjoyed that!

and – more hilariously

I was once teaching IV Upper the countries in French and I had asked them to pool what they knew so we could put it together alphabetically. So after L, M, N and O, I said "Let's have a P, then." Luckily, I laughed first! Miss Hand, whose study was near my teaching room, **must** have wondered at the ensuing chaos.....

If you have any memories of life at WGHS – your experiences as a pupil, parent or member of staff – which you would like to share, do send them to The Editor, Mrs H.M.E. Gill, at School. Whilst it may not be possible to use all of them, there has been some interest expressed in a regular section featuring High School Memories.

The Chase

Hearts beating to the pounding on Alaskan snow, pulses racing with exhilaration; the group moves in unconscious formation, almost telepathic, slicing through the trees like bullets: graceful, powerful. Then, the crisp smell of snow is laced with the sharp smell of blood. The hunt is over; the wolves can feast.

J Henderson

Perfect World

I am trapped in a world where everything's perfect. I wished I could be in that same world too. The next chapter starts, my eyes frantically scan the page. It ends unexpectedly. Sudden joy rushes over me as I know they will live happily ever after.

Laura Gilbert

First Day

A stomach full of knots. A dry throat devoid of words. Clank. The gates close behind me. Locked in this prison, I clutch my bag. Giants tower over me. The bell rings. Everyone disappears. I wander aimlessly around hoping that my legs will lead me to the right place.

Anna Jewsbury & Ashley Armitage

Spinster

I've been working for hours, intertwining silken threads to make my beautiful lace work. The skills have been passed down from generation to generation. The intricate movements are by now instinctive. I never get it wrong – it comes out perfectly every time. Finally I am finished. It's wasted – a child breaks my delicate cobweb.

Rosemary Harker

The Mysterious Man

Alone he stands on the dark hillside. The bright sun penetrates the clouds and suddenly he moves. His staring black eyes drift and he begins to change. His body withers away and his features dissolve. Gone is the smiling face, replaced by a blank expression. He is disappearing, goodbye my snowman.

Joanne Eaton

Splash!

Splash! Bubbles appear on the surface of the water. I had dived into the water, head first. I grabbed something. Pull, tug. It refused to move. Snap. I got it. Water rushed past me as I turned over for air. All my feathers were sticking up, a nearby swan wasn't too impressed.

Anugrah Singh

The Surprise

They gathered around waiting. It screeched noisily upwards leaving a bright white trail behind. But it stopped, it hadn't worked, there was just silence and darkness all around. They all turned disappointedly away. Then there was a bang and everyone gasped as it exploded with a burst of colour.

Rachael Hogley

IV Lowers were asked earlier this year for 'bright ideas' which would improve life in 21st century Britain. They could write seriously or humorously with suggestions for the Prime Minister to implement. Judge for yourself from the selection printed below which approach they adopted!

Dear Mr Blair,

I have a proposal to make which could make a noticeable difference to some of the problems in Britain. My solution is simple; as well as Saturday and Sunday as a time for relaxation and recovering from the pressures of school and jobs, I suggest that we also have Wednesday as a day of rest.

A lot of people are having family problems because they are stressed, tired and overworked. A lot of high powered career people have no time to spend with their families or on their own personal interests. This can lead to conflict. Many children are not able to concentrate properly at school as a result of staying up late with overwhelming amounts of homework, which they do not have enough time to complete. I feel that if we had another free day in our week, we would be able to unwind and appreciate life more.

If we are to be allowed to take one more day off, I would suggest that it be recommended that people do not spend it sprawled out in front of the television set but fill their time with more educational activities that would help to make our country a better place and the lives of other people happier. For instance, they could become involved in an organisation that helps the environment, tend to their gardens, visit the National Trust or help the elderly. More importantly, people could spend a lot more time with their families, simply by taking a quiet walk or having a picnic. I believe that this extra day of freedom will totally refresh everybody, giving much better results, both in school and jobs. Also, if they feel that they are under less pressure, maybe there will be a decrease in the number of people who smoke, take drugs, drink excessively or even commit suicide.

When confronted with this letter, you will probably jump to the logical conclusion that with more time away from school and jobs, pupils and adults will not have enough time to tackle the amount of work expected from them. This is indeed a problem but I think that because it is no longer the case that they have hardly any time left for themselves, people will work much more efficiently and quickly than they do at present. I know that I would!

Please consider this proposal with utmost care because I believe that labour and relaxation are of equal importance in this world and people are having to spend too much time on one and do not have enough time for the other. I do not think that one day will make much difference to the first but it will make an amazing difference to the latter and will help to make Britain a better place for the Millennium.

Yours sincerely,

Natasha Roberts

Dear Mr Blair,

I have just had a brilliant idea and am writing to communicate it to you forthwith. Some people feel that pop stars and celebrities generally earn too much money for too little work, and I suggest compiling a 'Dream Team' to put in some voluntary work as teachers in our school.

My team is as follows:

ENGLISH AND ELOCUTION - H.M. The Queen
MATHS - Carol Vorderman
R.S. - The Pope
FRENCH - David Ginola
D.T. - Handy Andy from CHANGING ROOMS
TEXTILES - Lawrence from CHANGING ROOMS
FOOD - I Fat Lady, with help from HAROLD and MADGE
CHOIR - Celine Dion
ART - Van Gough
GEOGRAPHY - Richard Branson
HISTORY - George Clooney
POLITICS - William Hague

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Robson

Dear Mr Blair,

I have invented something for those people who crave chocolate but do not currently buy it because of its high calorie content. My design is a handbag or pocket-sized pressurised canister which will dispense a fine mist of chocolate over the entire surface of the tongue hitting all the taste buds but adding only two calories.

It should certainly increase sales of chocolate since those people who avoid it at the moment will be encouraged to buy my spray for a low-calorie chocolate sensation. At £2 a canister for 50 sprays, it would be excellent value.

I enclose an order form for you, Cherie and the kids, and commend it as a useful Christmas present for all the members of your cabinet.

Yours sincerely,

K. Pilling

Dear Mr Blair,

I would like to propose a raft of ingenious ideas to celebrate the Millennium, most particularly a flying carpet with a rainhood for inclement weather, a pulley device for catching (and torturing) brothers in your bedroom and secret headphones to communicate discreetly with friends during maths lessons.

The flying carpet would relieve congestion on Britain's roads and could be flown by anyone over the age of 7 who is mature enough not to crash it. It is, of course, supplied with air conditioning, has an easy-to-operate joystick and directional adjustments which can be made by altering the weight distribution.

The anti-brother bedroom securing device is a simple system of pulleys attached to the floor and door handle. Upon unauthorised entry, a heavy bottle falls upon the head of the intruder whilst simultaneously another heavy object is propelled towards that part of the male anatomy which males protect at all costs.

The headphones and speakers for discreet use in maths lessons are small and come in a variety of colours to blend with the wearer's hair and thus be almost invisible.

I can supply detailed diagrams of all three devices if required.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie Atkinson

Dear Mr Blair,

I would like to propose the demolition of the Millennium Dome! Crowds of people could pay a fee to watch the demolition and the proceeds could then be spent on my great idea – a giant needle and thread to sew up the rip in the ozone layer. Public opinion (namely that of my family) has shown that no-one is really interested in the Millennium Dome

Yours sincerely,

Claire Sowerby



Sarah Cunliffe



Ban Hassoon



Katherine Hart, VI Lower



Catherine Robinson, V Upper GCSE



Katherine Hart, VI Lower

The Dandelion Puff

The dandelion puff
Is a very queer clock,
It doesn't say tick,
And it doesn't say tock,

It hasn't a cuckoo,
It hasn't a chime,
And I really don't think
It can tell me the time!

Mary K Robinson



*Kate Anderson
V Upper GCSE*