



James Gillespie's Trust:

www.jamesgillespietrust.com

Alumni Section:

alumni@jamesgillespietrust.com

James Gillespie's Trust: Alumni Section

Newsletter September 2025

Hello, and a very warm welcome to you all!

Hard to believe that it has been almost 6 months since we last put out the newsletter, and that our next Gillespie Gathering is just a few weeks away, on 27th September! This next one will be a little different to previous ones in that it will be led by the students currently attending James Gillespie's, giving us all a little insight into what a range of talents these bright young people have.

It has been such a lovely summer, with some beautiful stretches of warm dry weather but the poor gardens are beginning to look very dry! The farmers have enjoyed getting a bountiful harvest in early this year, so maybe some refreshing rain would be appreciated by the land now.

Fiona and Linda, in common with most of the girls that started the senior school in 1967, celebrated their 'significant birthdays' this year, and we would like to wish all our friends who shared our time at the School then a very happy birthday, whether that be belated, or still to happen! Hopefully you were/are all very spoiled by your friends and family.

But we also need to take a moment to remember those who are no longer with us, or those who struggle with their health, or the health of their loved ones, and say that we keep them in mind and offer our prayers and good wishes of support.

As always, this is your newsletter and any ideas or articles or photographs will be warmly and gratefully received by the Alumni team.

Yours,

*the Alumni team -
Fiona, Linda, and Dave !*

Calling 1969-1975 Students - 50 Year Reunion!

Hi everyone,

Can you believe it's been 50 years (or a wee bit more!) since we left Gillespie's? Some days it feels like yesterday, and other days... well, let's just say the mirror tells a different story! 😊

To celebrate this milestone, Lynne and I have organised a relaxed afternoon get-together:

Date: Saturday, 20th September 2025

Time: 12pm - 3pm (and you're welcome to stay longer in the bar afterwards!)

Venue: Black Ivy, Alvanley Terrace, Edinburgh

We've planned a delicious afternoon tea with sandwiches, savouries, desserts, and a celebratory cake! You'll also enjoy a glass of fizz (with non-alcoholic options available) and tea/coffee.

To add to the fun, we're putting together a presentation with photos, memories, and music from our school days. This is where you come in! Please dig out any old photos or share any fun memories you have from our time at Gillespie's. You can send them to jghs69to75@gmail.com.

Tickets are £35 per person. Any proceeds left over after covering costs will be donated to the James Gillespie Trust, who have been incredibly helpful in tracking everyone down and publicising the event.

To book your place, please email me at jghs69to75@gmail.com. Please also let us know if you have any dietary requirements.

Bank details for payment of £35 - Account name - Lynne McNicoll

Sort code - 800214

Account number - 11129561

Please add your name as the Reference

We can't wait to catch up and reminisce with you all!

Best wishes

Elaine Mack (née Sinclair)

Lynne McNicoll (née Murray)



P.S. - We have a WhatsApp group so when letting us know you are attending, please include your phone number.

2025 Gatherings

The focus of the two 'Gillespie Gatherings' in 2025 is on the school as it is today, marking the 10th anniversary of the opening in 2015, of the new Malala building and the 2015 (Nov) consultation on school uniform.

In 2015 JGHS was named Scottish State School of the year in the Sunday Times Schools Guide, and this was reported in The Scotsman and Tatler magazine.

At our April 'Gathering' we had a talk from the head teacher, Mr Neil McCallum, and we were offered tours of the new school and buildings.



For our forthcoming **September 'Gathering'** we are inviting participation from the student body in the form of an exhibition and presentation of schoolwork and projects.

The specific projects will be put together at the start of the 2025 autumn term and information may not be available before this newsletter is published. Details will be outlined on the website as soon as they are confirmed. This will include the timing — probably in the afternoon but perhaps the morning. This will depend on the availability of the students who may have other Saturday commitments.

Watch the website!

Gillespie Gathering April 2025

Our Spring Gathering this year was held on 26th April, and we were delighted to see some familiar faces, and a few of our 'regulars' come along to this event.

Unfortunately, Dave Philip was not able to come along on this occasion, but our thanks to Gordon Grubb, who came along to help with the process of setting up some of the wonderful memorabilia that we have to display!

Refreshments were on offer, as always, and our thanks to all those who very generously gave donations to help with the work of the Trust.

Neil McCallum is currently the Head Teacher at the School, and he gave a lovely informative talk on the school and how it fits into the local education system. He was able to outline to his audience how





James Gillespie's High School has moved with the times, and that it is not just a new building, but a new way of educating our young people.

Most of us had not realised how much Gaelic language is integrated into the new school, and that by using the annexe in the main for Gaelic education, not just the Gaelic language, it made it a tricky time working out the timetables for all of the students!

Following a few requests during previous gatherings wondering if our alumni would be able to look around the new school, we were delighted to have been able to arrange this with Mr McCallum and Mr Porter.



So, with the help of some of the students several small groups were shown around the new buildings. We were also shown around Brunsfield house, and were able to see the changes that have gone on there. There were certainly lots of memories shared during our wee tour, and likely this was the same with each of the other groups.

1970-1976 Cohort Reunion

The girls of the class of 1970 to 1976 met up for a reunion on Sunday 11th May. It had been 28 years since our last reunion and some of us had changed a bit but the characters were just the same!

It was lovely to hear how everyone had fared in life, and we also raised a glass to absent friends. We had 31 girls/ladies at the event but have managed to trace around 60 girls from our year so far. We would love to try and trace more people if we can as we plan to have a 50-year anniversary event next year for those who left after 6th year. It was a great afternoon, and most people stayed to the bitter end laughing and sharing stories of old times.

Julie.Howieson@btinternet.com (formerly Julie Stirton, now Julie Hutchison)

1959-1965 Leavers Reunion

Early afternoon on Saturday 10 May a group of ladies who left school in 1964/1965, met in Edinburgh for a 60th anniversary reunion. We welcomed girls from Canada, America, Egypt and all over the UK and I am sure they will join me in saying we had a truly wonderful day, wonderful meal and a lot of laughter and some tears.

Margaret Runnicles (head girl 1964-65) made a speech, and I read a poem written to jolt some memories (see below).

I had also brought the domestic science cookbook we had at school, for the girls to see from which I pointed out the recipe for Sheep's Heid Broth!

Many of the girls met up with old friends for the first time in a long time and have plans to meet up and keep their friendship going. If we are around, we will organise another get together in 5 years' time.

A great success!! **Irene Sime (née Leslie) 1959-1964**

Message from Margaret Thomas (née King)

who was unable to attend the 1959 to 1965 leavers reunion on 10 May 2025.

"I have excellent memories of High School and made some close friends, especially Sarah Mackenzie. Fond memories of all the good teachers, particularly the English teachers. A female teacher introduced me to poetry which has become a lifelong interest.

Summers were spent playing rounders at lunchtime and buying sweets from the local shop. I played Hockey from S1-S6, latterly in the 'First 11', with memorable games against North Berwick, Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy (with oranges at half time). Winter walks to Blackford Pond when Meggetland was too cold. "



Margaret King

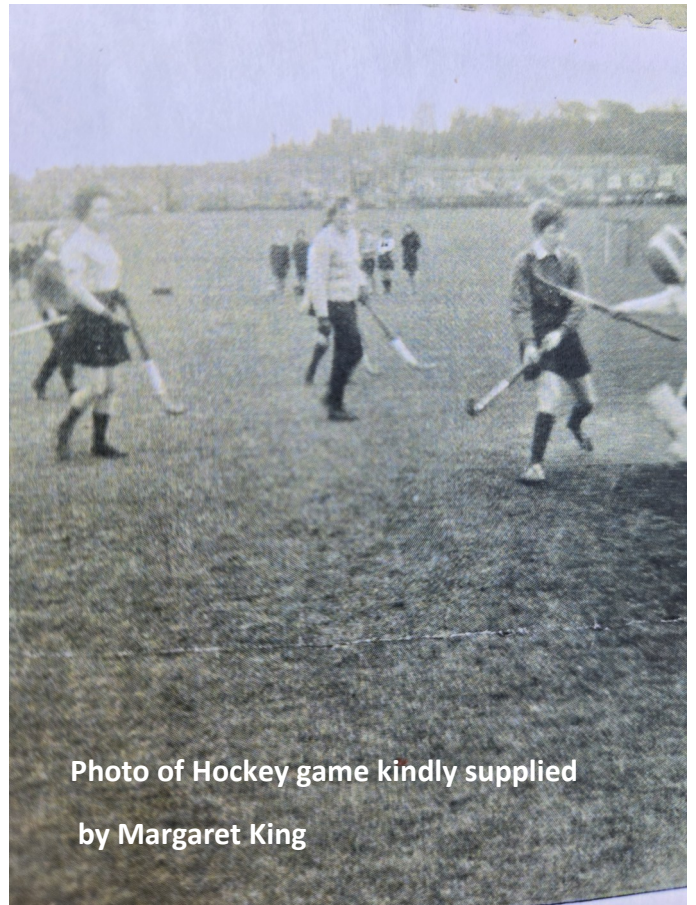


Photo of Hockey game kindly supplied
by Margaret King



BELMONT CAMP AND CASTLE, MEIGLE, PERTHSHIRE

Irene's Ditty - REUNION

We've been left now for near sixty years
We shared many hopes and some fears
At Gillespie's High School
We were ever so cool
And the teachers? Well, they were all dears!

In the first year we had to wear socks
And a hair net protected our locks
Shoes were strapping or lace
And to hot up the pace
On our head we'd to fasten a box!!

For school dinners we'd to walk to the huts
To give gastronomic delights to our guts
Mondays leftover Dutch roast
As Tuesdays meatballs they'd boast
It was all right if you kept your eyes shut!

Slimming clubs would have created a riot
'Cos sponge and custard was our daily diet
With an occasional break
For caramel shortcake or chocolate mousse ...
Then we would all want to try it!

Our Motto was Faithful and Strong
Fidelis et Fortis our song
We were let by Miss Steel
Was she really real?
She certainly had no sex appeal!
(To be fair neither did we in that uniform!!)

If my memory serves me right, we had no
sex education, unless you were lucky
enough to take the sciences! In Biology
Miss Ferguson huffed and puffed her
red-faced way through telling us
2 rabbits had a special cuddle)

Now Lamby in the gym, she was queen
Her divided shorts just had to be seen
(Ali Anderson's were frankly obscene!!)
Lamby's home to school link
Was a car that was pink

Unlike the school dress which was green
Once, golf she attempted to teach
In the gym she hit a real peach
But as I recall
When she hit the ball
It went somewhat out of her reach!!

(That's a polite way of saying that she broke the gym window)

Now some will remember the choir
And Tommy singing "Higher girls, higher!"
In the Usher Hall
We'd give him the call
By stamping our feet till on fire!

After reading this ditty I wish I could fall
Into conversation with our Mr Dall
'Cos the countries you see
That he taught you and me
Are no longer in the world at all?!

Miss McIntyre was the history head
"The natives are revolting" she said
On the new EEC
She taught you and me
How I wish she'd taught Nigel instead.

Zeugma, Hitotes and pun
Oxymoron just another one
That Jimmy did teach
As rare parts of speech
And Essays of Elia were fun.

Our domestic science lessons were great
And when we'd a meal on the plate
Mrs Jenkins would say
"Clear your dishes away"
You've sewing to do that can't wait!

Our punishments fitted the crime
A 'late mark' for not being on time
If badly behaved your name was engraved
In the ORDER mark book as a sign.

In our house we took a great pride
By colours we knew our own side
Roslin and Gilmore were two
They were yellow and blue
Splyaw red, Warrender green as a guide.

I'm so glad we're here for this do
And I am pleased to see you, you and you.



Muriel Spark Walking Tours – fundraising events

The JGTrust Alumni team have put together a new fundraising project in the form of a planned route for a 'Muriel Spark Walking tour'.

"It was very enjoyable, informative and entertaining"

The Edinburgh-born author, Muriel Spark attended James Gillespie's School from 1923 to 1935 and is one of the most famous James Gillespie's alumni.

"Lots of interesting places to see I would recommend others to join you if you do another one"

Muriel Spark (née Camberg) was born on 1 February 1918 and brought up in the Bruntsfield area of Edinburgh. Muriel regularly visited Morningside Library and from a young age her particular interest was in poetry. At Gillespie's she was known as 'the school poet'. Some of her poems can be found in the school magazines.

She left Edinburgh in 1937 and moved to live with her husband Sydney Oswald Spark in Southern Rhodesia. The marriage was not a success and Muriel returned to the UK in 1944 where she took a job with the war department in London. She only occasionally returned to Edinburgh to visit her family, to visit the Edinburgh Festival and to accept an Honorary Degree.

Muriel Spark died in Italy in April 2006.

The route of the 'Muriel Spark Walking Tour' takes in some of the Edinburgh locations that were important to Muriel Spark when she was growing up in the Bruntsfield area of the city.

It includes a few of the key locations used in the film adaptation of 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie', one of Muriel Spark's most famous books.

The walk is led by **Fiona Donaldson** from the Alumni Team, beginning at Morningside Library and finishing in Princes Street.

This fundraising event is open to JGHS alumni and friends, and anyone interested in Muriel Spark.

We are raising funds to support the work of the James Gillespie's Trust and invite minimum donations of £10 per person.

Following the success of the first 'Muriel Spark Walking Tour' on 7 June, further walks were planned for 26 July and 6 September. Both the June and July walks attracted 5 to 8 participants and were very well received:

"Thank you for the fascinating walk you led us on today, Fiona. You brought Muriel Spark to life through the places that are so much a part of her Edinburgh story ... it almost felt that we might bump into her on her way to school, or catching the tram to get home to her mother at lunch time!"

"Congratulations, Fiona, on providing our group with a very informative and most enjoyable Muriel Spark Walking Tour. It was very comprehensive, and your passion and depth of research shone through"

"It was a great morning, thank you Fiona! You made it really interesting and informative, as well as entertaining."

The next 'Muriel Spark Walking Tour' will be on Saturday 6 September.

If you are interested, please contact the Alumni team for further details. Should there be sufficient demand, additional dates will be offered. Thank you. jgtalumni@gmail.com

Other Worlds

After this world is fast asleep,
What do the other worlds do?
Do they keep watch all night, awake,
In misty skies, and blue

Do they frown or laugh on a world below
That only to substance clings,
Do they scoff at the people who sleep to wake
To think of money and things?

Muriel Camberg (Spark) 3 Senior B

Taken from the school magazine July 1931

Pan's Pipes

There's a piping in the rushes and a dreaming in the
reeds,
And there's music that's a-quiver all around
But it's old and wild and free, in a sort of wicked glee,
And

everything's rejoicing in the sound
Now trolling through the forest comes a sadder, older
tune,
To tell of things forgotten long ago.
Now the ancient tales revive, now the myths have
come alive
And the music still is sounding soft and slow

Lamenting in its beauty, rejoicing in its wrong
In a wayward trollof things all gnarled and torn,
All the lovely things are few. Oh! He knows a thing or
two,
This piper so forgotten and forlorn.

And he smiles so wild and free in a sort of wicked glee,
For no one else will ever pipe like Pan.
When other pipes are dumb he will make sweet music
come;
And no one there to hear – not any man!

Muriel Camberg (Spark) Form 1 B

Taken from the school magazine July 1932



Muriel Spark nee Camberg 1918-2006

Eric Liddell - 80th anniversary of his death

2025 is the 80th anniversary of the death of Scottish missionary and Olympic athlete Eric Liddell.

Born in China in 1902 to Scottish missionaries, he returned to Scotland with his family in 1907. He captained his school's rugby and cricket teams, and then studied Pure Science at the University of Edinburgh before going on to enrol on a Divinity course.

His athletic career took him to the Olympic Games in Paris in 1924 where he won gold in the 400 yards in a new world record time of 47.6 seconds.

In 1925 he returned to China where he met and married a Canadian nurse, Florence Mackenzie.

He worked as a missionary across China and he was interned in a Japanese prison camp.

In the camp, he organised sports, taught science, cooked, cleaned, counselled and preached until February 1943, when he died in the camp hospital from a brain tumour.

The sports building at James Gillespie's High School is named after Eric Liddell.

Trustee Profile: Elizabeth Boakes



Lizzie Boakes

Elizabeth has three children at James Gillespie's and joined the Trust as she saw it as an opportunity to learn more about and give back to the school.

She has been a Trustee for two years. She is currently working on a new fundraising project for the Trust in order to help its finances become more self-sustaining.

Elizabeth finds that being on the Trust gives a brilliant insight into the many ongoing projects at James Gillespie's and engenders an even greater appreciation of the hard work that the staff put in.

In her other life, she works as a conservation scientist at the RSPB, researching metrics and guidance to support global businesses to understand, mitigate and report their impacts on biodiversity.

GILLESPIE DISCIPLINE!

The 50s was still an era of strict rule and discipline,

one of the effects of the recent World War.

The regime at

Gillespie's was of this ilk and there were plenty checks and controls over our behaviour.

A school-girl's life is full of fun,

By often doing what shouldn't be done!

So punishment marks were implemented,

For every conceivable crime invented.

Such as

LATE MARKS

When the school bell tolled and you were late,

Scrambling through a rear entrance gate.

Hoping to evade the prefect's frown,

Or a duty teacher in long black gown.

Too many late marks if reported ...

Brought the gallows, the birch or at least deported!

More likely you were given the severest warning,

No further lateness in the morning.

BEHAVIOUR MARKS

Navy skirt and woollen stockings,

Decent, smart and far from shocking.

But strictly in conflict with the school rule,

My tight skirts and bobby socks super-cool!

The funny hat, of course by us abhorred,

A source of friction and discord.

Nail polish, ear-rings or painted face,

Were out of bounds and out of place.

DETENTION MARKS

Should you have misbehaved in school,

A giggle, a chat or played the fool.

Passing notes or throwing paper,

Pulling pigtails or other caper.

All these things could get you lines:

'I must not commit these dreadful crimes!'

Or a Detention Mark for your inattention,

Which could eventually lead to your suspension.

Norma Allan, 2015 ©

Written for the opening of the new school in 2015 and printed here with the permission of the author.

Published in Norma Allan's book 'Box Hats and Blue Stockings'

