



Hills news

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Alumni news from Hills Road Sixth Form College.

alumni

Summer 2025

Amy, Ashani and Daisy
raised almost £600 for
Pancreatic Cancer UK.



“Social Action Week is our commitment to a week of curriculum time for all Y12 students to engage in a social action project of their own. This way, all our students have the opportunity to experience how they can make a positive difference to the world both individually and collectively.”

JO TRUMP, PRINCIPAL

Social Action Week 2025

Students at Hills Road once again showed their passion for social change during Social Action Week 2025, from 19 to 23 May. Go to pages 4 & 5 to read more.





From left: Gary, Kate, Mary, Natalie and Jill.

Royally Honoured: Hills Road at the Palace

Five long-serving staff members from Hills Road were invited to attend honour of attending a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday 14th May. The event, celebrating contributions to education and skills, welcomed around 7,000 guests to enjoy afternoon tea in the Palace gardens.

Representing Hills Road were Gary Wing (Teacher of Mathematics), Kate Murdoch (Director of Music), Mary Scott (Teacher of English), Natalie Moss (Sports & Tennis Centre Manager), and Jill Phelps (Head of German), with an awe-inspiring combined 151 years of service. Kate called the day "a real treat", while Natalie said she felt "humbled" to share it with colleagues.

And yes – they did see the King!

College rated Outstanding in 2025 Ofsted inspection

Hills Road Sixth Form College is delighted to announce the College has received an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating in its 2025 inspection, continuing the College's record of Outstanding outcomes in all frameworks and judgement areas since Ofsted began.

Coinciding with our fiftieth academic year, the College is proud that the 2025 report highlights Hills Road's exceptional teaching, inclusive ethos and outstanding provision for academic and pastoral support.

“College staff champion student wellbeing, they care deeply and place student support at the heart of their actions. Students recognise this and appreciate it greatly.”

OFSTED, 2025



Students' charity fundraising efforts awarded with prize

Two students have been awarded a prize each by The Cambridge Virtute et Fide Lodge. Josh O'Neill raised money for Jimmy's Food Bank by organising a music concert and Izzie Allanson raised money for Addenbrooke's Charity Trust by participating in a charity run in memory of her mum.

The students have their names engraved on a shield, which is displayed in the College. They also received a certificate and a small cash award. The Lodge was started in 1964 by a group of teachers and students from the College's predecessor, the Cambridgeshire High School for Boys.



Master, Peter Morrison presenting the shield to Josh and Izzie with Secretary, Keith Poulson and Treasurer, Tony Hore.



Shield success for University Challenge Society

Hills Road's University Challenge Society made a stellar debut at the National Schools' General Knowledge Competition – Britain's largest general knowledge quiz for schools. Alex Greenham, Magnus Burt, Cara Davies and captain Djia Sanath-Vijay powered through knockout rounds to reach the finals at Winchester College in April. After a close quarter-final loss, they bounced back and went on to

triumph 660-420 over Exeter School in the Shield Final, placing third overall in the competition. As for highlights, Alex points to his final round answer, "Oology – the study of eggs," which led to a bonus question on shakshuka – correctly answered by Djia. One of only two state schools in the finals, the team impressed with both knowledge and teamwork. A fantastic achievement – well done!

New swift boxes installed around College

The College now plays proud host to 10 swift nest boxes on campus to support this endangered species.

The initiative, led by a group of Year 13 students from the College's Bird Society, aims to provide much-needed nesting sites for swifts – a species now on the UK Red List for Birds and which highlights the College's commitment to biodiversity and sustainability. The team of students worked in consultation with the Action for Swifts organisation in order to determine optimal placement and box design.

The idea for the project came from students Ieva Alikovaite, Arthur Wells, Molly Shaw and Jay Wilkinson. One of the boxes has a special feature – a swift attraction system, which is a small speaker that plays swift calls



Dick Newell of Action for Swifts and Chris Graham holding two of the boxes.

in the early morning and evening to encourage young, non-nesting swifts to investigate the site.

Ieva has also designed a custom nest camera, which the College hopes to install in one of the used boxes next year, once nesting activity is confirmed.

In brief

Hills Education Trust: In April, the College announced its plans to establish a new Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) initially comprising Hills Road Sixth Form College as a standalone 16-19 Academy. We are pleased to report that the results of the public consultation supported this change, and the Trust will launch on 1 September 2025. Please visit our website for details.

RoboCon 2025: Hosted by Hills students, the Dragon's Lair-themed competition brought together twelve teams of young engineers from secondary schools across Cambridge. Congratulations to our organisers – your innovation made it unforgettable for all involved.

Thanks to our guest speakers: This year's Guest Speaker Programme featured engaging talks from bestselling author Sarah Vaughan, Circuit Judge Helen Arthur on legal careers, and Professor Andrew Balmford FRS on conservation. Their insights helped students explore real-world issues beyond the classroom.

“Swifts are social nesters. This system helps them find us, especially those that haven't nested before or whose previous sites have been lost.”

DR CHRIS GRAHAM,
HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY





Fundraising with heart

The College campus was transformed into a vibrant hub of creativity, and passers-by on Parker's Piece marvelled as students hosted everything from bake sales and coffee stalls to games, craft activities and even paint-throwing challenges.

Some groups added a personal cultural touch, such as serving traditional Ukrainian food.

This annual initiative saw Year 12s raising funds for a wide range of causes – from Médecins Sans Frontières and Medical Aid for Palestinians to local groups such as Cambridge Women's Aid.

All activities were student-led, reflecting the planning and teamwork that define Hills Road's Future Ready programme. As of publication, Year 12s have raised over £40,000 through their efforts. A huge well done to everyone involved for their energy, compassion and imagination!



Total raised so far: £40,962.43

Hills Road alumni from across the generations share their stories.



**Sarah Claydon
(nee Scott)**
Class of 2001

“I’d always felt that university was what everyone did but I’m a practical person and university didn’t feel the right fit for me. I decided to start working in theatre but being indoors all the time was hard. I love the outdoors and was inspired to train as a gardener.

I spent two years working towards an HND in horticulture which was greatly supported by my Geography A level. Trinity Hall, Cambridge, took me on as a newly qualified gardener and I then moved to Trinity College, Cambridge, to be Deputy Head Gardener for 11 years.

In 2021 I was appointed the first woman Head Gardener at Pembroke College, Cambridge. The College is an oasis of calm in the city centre. When I took over, the impact of limited resources during the Covid pandemic meant the gardens were tired. We quickly started a plan to renovate each area and introduced more sustainable horticultural practices. Today, the gardens are again full of colour, scent and wildlife and a haven from the world outside. I have an incredibly talented team and they share my passion for horticulture which has made coming to work an absolute joy.”

Sarah studied English Literature, Geography and Theatre Studies.



Ben Szreter
Class of 2012

“My time at Hills was a lot of fun and the perfect staging post between school and university. It felt like a very exciting place to be, with all these interesting people from across the county coming together.

After I left university, I worked for Cambridge United FC then Daniel Zeichner, MP for Cambridge. I then joined the Behavioural Insights team in London working on using behavioural science in public policy. I could spend an hour working on home decarbonisation, the next hour working on countering misinformation in eastern Europe.

Eighteen months ago I moved to work for Labour Together; a think tank connected to the Labour Party. I worked in the election campaign and since then, I’ve been supporting the government to deliver on its priorities, to understand public opinion and look at longer-term policy development.

My time since Hills Road has flown past, but I still have brilliant memories. When I got married last year, one of my two best men was someone I met on my first day at Hills Road.”

Ben studied History, Chemistry, Maths and Economics.

“The variety of subjects I studied at Hills Road has been extremely beneficial throughout my career in physiotherapy.

All of my A level subjects have supported my career of over a decade long working in professional sport, private practice and most recently in a clinical specialist role in the NHS. I’ve had wonderful opportunities to travel across Europe with my work and volunteer at national events such as the London Marathon.

My current role at Addenbrooke’s involves working with patients who have sustained complex traumatic injuries, requiring limb reconstruction. My underlying psychology knowledge from my A levels has been invaluable when liaising with members of the multi-disciplinary team around patient care.

I have many fond memories of my time at Hills Road not just whilst studying but also playing netball. Our coach Linda Swain gave us the best memories driving us around the county on some cold, windy days to play a sport we love!”

Charlotte studied Human Biology, Physical Education, Business and Psychology.



Charlotte Oakman
Class of 2010



Adrian Wykes
Class of 1977

“I arrived at Hills Road from St. Paul’s in London and Colin Hill, the Headmaster, gravely told me in his office: ‘I’m afraid we’re not St. Paul’s, you know.’ But on the first day we gathered in the assembly hall with the opening of Mahler’s 4th Symphony playing, and I took this to be an excellent portent. I experienced good teaching (Hollis, Mallyon, Cottrell, Barlow), under-rated facilities (the library, the Purbeck Road cricket nets), good friends and a very successful cricket team in 1975 (thanks to Ian Reid of the PE staff). We even had the county wicket-keeper, Alan Ponder, teaching us Pure Maths A Level!

[Watch part of a match here](#)

There were, of course, vestiges of the old Cambridgeshire County High School for Boys in 1975 that evoked the era of ‘Syd’ Barrett and Roger Waters and led to the Pink Floyd Christmas hit of 1979, but change was all around us.

And did any students or teachers realise then that Shaun Wylie, our A Level Statistics teacher was not just a Bletchley code-breaker but Alan Turing’s most trusted colleague?

After leaving Hills Road, I failed in my attempts to emulate cricketers Sobers and Hendrix, but as Percy Pavilion I played List A cricket for Cambridgeshire. I then went on to teach for forty years in public sector secondary schools in Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Essex and Luxembourg.”

Adrian studied Geography, History and Maths.

Cambridgeshire High School for Boys preceded Hills Road from 1900 (as 'Cambridge and County School for Boys') to 1974.



'The County' in 1924.

Peter Jennings, at 94, is one of our longest-standing alumni. He started at the Cambridge and County High School for Boys (known as 'The County') in 1941.

“When I started there were two levels of entry to The County – scholarship or fee-paying. I had my fees paid by Trinity College where I was a chorister.

The Headmaster at The County was Mr Main and Mr Newton-John (Olivia's father) took over from him. Other teachers that I remember were Mr Layng (Latin), Miss Shorthouse (French) and Mr Gumbrell (Maths). Captain Mantell ran the Cadet Force and through the cadets, I had the privilege of leading the VE day parade in Cambridge in May 1945.

I left at 16 to go to the Cambridge School of Art. There was no advice about career planning then! After art school, I got a Regular Army Commission and served for 7 years. Then after 20 years with Unilever I was head hunted to the Board of Imagination Ltd, a creative international presentation company, where I remained whilst also running my own presentation company, until I retired 30 years ago. Although it was many, many years ago now, I still have fond and clear memories of my time at The County.”

Mark Housden was part of the last intake at Cambridgeshire High School for Boys in 1973 and tells a tale of two grammar schools and a sixth form college.

“I started at Cambridgeshire High School for Boys in 1973 and over 40 years later, in 2017, retired from Oakwood Park Grammar School, Maidstone. These events are inextricably linked as it was my school days that inspired me to become a teacher.

From my first History lesson with Mike Muncaster I knew History teaching was for me; Charles Malyon and Peter Holmes confirmed it. Ian 'Shiner' Reid moulded my sporting life as cricket and rugby coach. Ian led cricket tours to Hampshire; at Oakwood Park, I led rugby tours to Canada, Ireland, Portugal and South Africa. Ian took me to my first rugby international (in his lime green BMW) –

England/France; I'm now a season ticket holder at Leicester Tigers. Ian introduced me to Granta Cricket Club; in Kent I played for Gravesend CC. The most unlikely inspiration came when Roger Dalliday recruited his form as extras in the staff play *Volpone*; years on I became a regular cast member in Oakwood Park school plays.

'The County' and Hills Road set me up for life. My favourite 'piece of guidance' came through a comment in my report book from my Form Master, Mr Edwards ('Spud') in 1975; 'A good all round performance'. He really did underline round, hinting that a diet might be in order!”

Sir Kevin Tebbit was at Cambridgeshire High School for Boys from 1958 to 1965 and went on to have a long and successful career in the Civil Service, including as the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence.

“It is late summer 1998, at the Cabinet Office in Whitehall, and the weekly meeting of the two dozen or so Heads of the various Government Departments. A couple of these senior officials are from the same school.

But it's not, as might be expected, Eton, Harrow, Winchester or Westminster. Instead, it is the Cambridgeshire High School for Boys. For Hayden Phillips, the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport has just been joined at that gathering by fellow alumnus, the newly appointed Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence.

That was a special moment in a career that began when I joined the Civil Service Fast Stream in the late 1960s. I spent my first ten years in policy roles at the Ministry of Defence, followed by nineteen years as a diplomat in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. After a brief period as Director of the GCHQ intelligence agency, I returned to the MOD to take on its top role. My overseas postings included Rome, NATO Headquarters in Brussels, and British Embassies in Ankara and Washington, D.C.

None of this would have been possible, for a child of a working-class family of very modest means, without the opportunity, guidance and inspiration provided by what was then 'The County'. Everything sprang from that, for which I shall always be deeply grateful.”



Former Head of Biology, Ian Harvey, shares his recollections of 50 years at Hills Road

“I started at Hills in September 1975, fresh from research and naïve about teaching but enthusiastic. It's all about communicating and enthusing and I had the help of great mentors: Peter Bilton, Ted Holden, Joyce Perry and George Barlow.

The early years were great fun. I taught O and A level Biology and contributed to the Enrichment programme. I ran the boys' rugby second XV, established the girls' soccer XI in the University league, and helped run basketball, tennis, badminton and cross country. I ran enrichment activities such as Puzzles and Problems, Psychology (before it became an A level) and a great project with Ted Coney (Art) and Geoff Hollow (Geography) about the redevelopment of the Kite.

Back in the day staff did lots of drama. Teachers then had more time to breathe and do lots of enjoyable things. I acted in *The Mikado*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *Volpone*, *The Government Inspector*, *The Alchemist* and my final role as Father Mullarkey in *Once a Catholic*.

I spent 42 years full-time at Hills, 30 of those as Head of Biology. The halcyon days were spent with a department of Ian Perry, Karen Spofforth and Lindsey Wither.

You'll notice my avoidance of using the word “retirement”, I've just stopped teaching at Hills. I like to say I'm redirecting my time, experience, enthusiasm and energy in directions which I think worthwhile and which give me fulfillment. The key word for me is fun.

So, what does life hold for me now? I volunteer as a CPR and defibrillator trainer for the East Anglian Air Ambulance and I am an active governor at Royal Papworth Hospital and at Stratton School in Biggleswade. I also work in Sierra Leone – introducing practical science to schools that have no labs, equipment, electricity, gas, or running water has been a brilliant challenge. I co-founded the Ramatu Foundation for Girls and Women Empowerment in Makeni, north Sierra Leone.

I'm still contributing to Hills, notably the lunchtime speaker programme for our biologists, creating the evening speaker programme for staff, student and parents, running the staff quizzes and the interview preparation sessions for students.

I also do lots of work in primary schools, introducing practical science activities. Primary kids are full of raw enthusiasm and a young man came up to me with a piece of paper and said “Please could I have your autograph?” I signed it “Ian, the owl pellet man”. At another school, after my activity a young girl said to the teacher “Was that science?” and the teacher said yes. The girl replied, “I want to be a scientist”.



Teaching at a school in Makeni, Sierra Leone.

“I gave a talk to PhD students at Bristol University about teaching. It made me think hard about the job – what are the good bits and what's less good. Top of the good list is the students, enthusing them and helping to launch their careers in biology, medicine, vet medicine, etc.”

Ian Harvey

A rare glimpse: Performing at King's

The College marked a major moment in its 50th anniversary celebrations with a sold-out concert at the iconic King's College Chapel, Cambridge, in April 2025.

Showcasing the College's vibrant music department, the evening featured current students and guest performers, including distinguished alumni Tess Jackson (Classic FM 'Rising Star', Associate Conductor, National Youth Orchestra) and Annemarie Federle (Principal Horn, London Philharmonic Orchestra).

Set within the stunning Chapel – renowned for its soaring fan vaults and superb acoustics – the concert provided a rich musical contrast to the College's celebratory variety show at the Corn Exchange in March.



Photography of the dress rehearsal by Mark Dalton. With kind permission of the Master and Fellows, King's College, Cambridge.

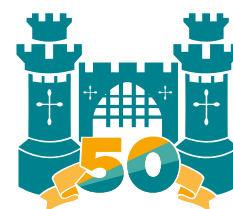


“It was a real privilege to hear our students perform in such an iconic space. King's College Chapel offers a level of atmosphere and acoustic quality that few venues can match, and it was wonderful to see our current students sharing the stage with alumni who are now forging careers at the highest level in classical music.”

JO TRUMP, PRINCIPAL”

This memorable event, met with overwhelming demand, was one of several special occasions planned to mark Hills Road's golden anniversary.

Read more: hillsroad.ac.uk/latest-news/50th-kings-college



Discover more of our celebrations through Hills@50 – a seven-part film series celebrating five decades of people, progress, and purpose. From our founding in 1974 to future ambitions, each chapter brings the College to life. Following their 'premiere' at the Corn Exchange, you can watch the films now on our website!

Watch
here



Aarnavh Trivedi,
Cricket.Maria Amojó,
Women's Basketball.

Hills Road triumphs at AoC Nationals 2025

Hills Road students delivered outstanding performances at the 2025 AoC Sport National Championships, held from 4-6 April at the University of Nottingham. Representing the East Region in five disciplines – badminton, cricket, cross country, table tennis, and women's basketball – our athletes showcased exceptional talent and

determination. Highlights included a silver medal in cricket, a bronze for Cerys Bithell in cross country and double silver for Rachel Li in table tennis. The women's basketball team achieved a commendable fifth-place finish. These achievements underscore the dedication and skill of our students on the national stage.

“I’ve never been on a school trip with everyone competing in such a diverse array of sports. From the beautiful university campus to the heartfelt support from fellow students and staff, it was truly a memorable experience.”

RACHEL (TABLE TENNIS)

Boaz Au,
Badminton.Rachel Li,
Table Tennis.