

# The Old Thomasonian

Issue 4 | July 2024



## From the Editor

Dear Nicola,

It has been a busy time for the alumni community since the last edition of The Old Thomasonian was published in December.

We have held 'sell out' reunion events across the schools and are delighted that these hugely popular occasions have led to a surge in registrations for [Thomas's Alumni](#), which has seen its membership rise by 57% in the last six months.

Once again it has been particularly rewarding and a source of great pride to reconnect with former pupils and to catch up on their personal and professional news. Since Christmas, we have introduced a number of events involving alumni pupils including talks and advice panels (who better to inspire our current pupils, than those who have trodden the same path); 'After Work' drinks and a football match!

Looking back, looking forward, we hope that you enjoy the variety of reflections and reports below. Special thanks goes to all who have contributed to the issue; we love hearing from our OT community so please do keep in touch with us ([alumni@thomas-s.co.uk](mailto:alumni@thomas-s.co.uk)) and with each other.

Best wishes from all at Thomas's,

**Nicola Diggle** (Alumni Development for TLDS and Alumni Lead - Battersea)

**Helen Stewart-Morgan** (Alumni Lead - Clapham)

**Andrea Street** (Alumni Lead - Fulham)

**Allie Barnes-Wright** (Alumni Lead - Kensington)

## Interview with Founding Principals



Reflecting on the history of Thomas's, some Year 10 pupils thought it would be interesting to find out more about the early days and what motivated Founding Principals, David and Joanna Thomas, to open a school. The pupils invited Mr and Mrs Thomas to Putney Vale for a tour of lessons, followed by a chat over lunch. Here they learnt how an actress (having missed the last bus home) accepted a lift from an army officer, fell in love, married, had three children and later decided to open a kindergarten in order to occupy their mischievous younger son! The rest, they say, is history and you can read the full interview [here](#):



Never ones to rest on their laurels, Mr and Mrs Thomas often asked their charges for feedback and areas for improvement. In 1986, Class 3W from Thomas's Kensington, offered these reflections:

[Read More](#)

# Focus on Curriculum Development



The society in which we live and work is rapidly changing. Educators are called upon to embrace these changes and to reflect upon and refine the curriculum in order to ensure that pupils have the knowledge, skills and dynamism to thrive in this evolving world. In this article, Annette Dobson, Head of Thomas's Fulham and Curriculum Lead across the group of schools, details the developing curriculum at Thomas's and how, in many ways and since the beginning, the schools have been pioneers in what and how children should be taught.

[Read more](#)

## Where are they now?



Thomas's Battersea

### Rupert Henderson

Class of 2008

Rupert or 'Rupi' as we all knew him by, arrived at Battersea in September 1999 and stayed until July 2008, when he left at the end of Year 8. Rupi moved onto Westminster School where he continued to develop his passion for all things theatrical, his talents for performing having been spotted from a very young age. In this article Rupert, reflects on his nine years at Battersea, on how he was encouraged to embrace his love of theatre and on how our main school rule: *Be Kind* is just as relevant today.

[Read more](#)

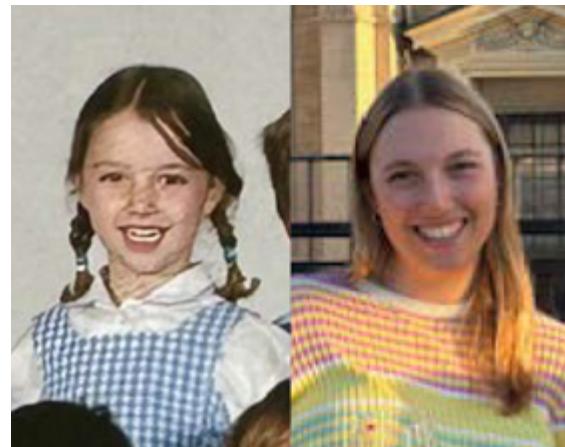
Thomas's Clapham

### Sabrina Kitson

Class of 2011

Sabrina arrived in Reception at Clapham in September 2002 and completed the full nine years at the school, leaving in July 2011 to attend King's Canterbury. From there she went on to study English at Edinburgh and is now an Insurance Broker in the City. In this article, Sabrina writes with wonderful vibrance, looking back fondly on her Thomas's days and remembering everything from tears at drop off to ballet, choir, sports tours and the fabulous, enduring friendships that she still enjoys today

[Read more](#)





Thomas's Fulham

## Ella Lord

Class of 2015

Ella was a pupil at Fulham for seven years, arriving in 2006 and leaving at the end of Year 6 to move on to Thomas's Clapham. From there, she went to Wellington before taking up her place to read Engineering at Oxford University. Ella remembers her time at Thomas's with great affection and attributes her continued love of Sport to those early days.

[Read more](#)

Thomas's Kensington

## Nathalia Garcia

Class of 1995

Nathalia (née Chubin-Norman) was a Thomas's Kensington pupil from 1988 until 1995 when she moved to Godolphin and Latymer Girls' School. From there she went on to study English Literature at Trinity College Dublin and later, an MA in International Studies and Diplomacy at the University of London. Nathalia writes with great warmth and nostalgia about her Thomas's journey and wonders whether her post carol service trips to *The Wiz* are responsible for her career in the video game industry!

[Read more](#)



# World of Work Talks



As part of our growing alumni association, we have been delighted to welcome to Putney Vale, some former pupils who have kindly given up their time to come and speak to Year 11, about their chosen professions. There is something rather special and particularly impactful for current students to hear from people who have gone before them and who have the shared experience of having attended the same school. For the teachers who taught these former pupils, it is a moment of joy and great pride to hear what has become of them.

If you are a former pupil and would be interested in joining our Alumni Skills Bank, please do get in touch: [alumni@thomas-s.co.uk](mailto:alumni@thomas-s.co.uk)



**Alexander Aldridge**  
**Class of 2009**

Alexander or 'Al' as we knew him by, began his Thomas's journey in 1998 when he started at Thomas's Kindergarten. He left Battersea at the end of Year 8 to join Marlborough and then headed off to Exeter University before embarking upon a life in the British Army. Captain Alexander Aldridge is now Adjutant of The Royal Lancers. He talked about how he came to join the army and what a typical day might look like for him. He also spoke about the earning potential and his own experiences of the benefits and job satisfaction to be gained from pursuing such a career.

[Link to Presentation](#)



**Christos Shepherd**  
**Class of 1997**

Christos joined Thomas's Pimlico Kindergarten in 1987 at the age of three and left Thomas's Battersea in 1997 to move on to St Paul's. He then studied at Bristol University before completing his MBA at Stanford. Christos has embraced life as an entrepreneur, starting and selling three companies and is now an operations focused value creator in private equity. He is particularly passionate about the concept of compounding and how its benefits accelerate over time so that instant gratification pales in comparison to the profound effects of sustained effort, patience and consistency.

[Link to Presentation](#)



**Charlie Thomas**  
**Class of 1987**

Charlie joined Thomas's in 1984 and stayed for three years, before leaving in 1987 to attend Hawtreys Prep School in Wiltshire. From there he went on to Cheltenham College and then to Southampton Solent University to study Fine Art Valuation. Passionate about this field, Charlie worked his way up through the ranks (first as a porter and then as a cataloguer in the furniture department) and is now UK Group Director at Bonhams Auction House. He spoke to the students about specialism, the choice of routes for a career in Fine Art and how to stand out from the crowd.

[Link to Presentation](#)



**Charlotte Metcalfe**  
**Class of 2004**

Charlotte spent nine years at Thomas's Clapham, arriving in Reception in 1995 and leaving at the end of Year 8 in 2004. She moved onto Woldingham School in Surrey before studying Politics at Exeter University. Having followed Mrs Moneypenny in the Financial Times for several years, she noticed a lack of women in finance which sparked an interest in Investment Management and led to a career as a Chartered Investment Manager at Rathbones. Charlotte has a particular passion for championing female financial literacy and encourages women to invest via evening talks and supper clubs.

[Link to Presentation](#)

## In conversation with Alumna Aaliyah Sharif, Class of 2013



It was a real privilege to join the Thomas's Foundation community in early June, to listen to a discussion between Ben Thomas and alumna, Aaliyah Sharif. Aaliyah spoke with great eloquence about her time at Thomas's Battersea and reflected on the life altering opportunities she experienced in the three years at the school and beyond, as a result of having been awarded a bursary. Aaliyah paid particular tribute to her mother for recognising her ability and for pursuing opportunities that would offer her an academic challenge and further her learning. A young midwifery student at the time, Aaliyah's mother would work a 12 hour shift with the NHS and then go straight to Kumon Maths (where she was as a marker) in order to fund Maths development classes for her daughter. She later applied for a bursary place at Thomas's for Aaliyah who joined Year 4 in September 2013. At the end of Year 6, Aaliyah moved onto James Allen's Girls' School and is now studying Biological Science at the University of Leicester. When asked whether she would choose the bursary path again, Aaliyah replied: *Yes, without a doubt. It has set me up with opportunities I never thought I would have had and I would never have realised that they were even possible.*

[Watch Interview](#)

# News from Thomas's Foundation



[Thomas's Foundation](#) embodies the Thomas's Schools' values, bringing the community together to support educational opportunities. Through the Foundation, our community gives back to those most in need, supporting local schools, community organisations, children and their families in the belief that every child deserves an enriching education.

[Read more](#)



# Staff Reflections



## Thomas's Battersea

**Tricia Pearce**

**2007-2017**

Tricia Pearce's decade as Head of Upper School at Battersea was a whirlwind of order, discipline and supreme efficiency. She had extraordinary energy, brilliant wit and a penchant for cardies! Passionate about Music, here Tricia reflects on the opportunities provided by the breadth of a Thomas's education enjoyed by pupils and staff alike (I certainly remember singing our own version of *A Whole New World* with her and Ben Thomas at the Leavers' Service in 2017...).

[Read more](#)



## Thomas's Clapham

**Joanna Copland**

**1995-2013**

Jo Copland has been part of the fabric of Thomas's since the early days, having worked for the group of schools for over two-thirds of their being, benefitting them with her wisdom, patience, productivity and good humour. In July 2023, after 30 years at Thomas's, Jo left in order to begin a new adventure as Head of Pre-Prep at Fulham School. Here she reflects on her time at the schools, her binding memories and the lessons she took with her, as she began her exciting new chapter.

[Read more](#)

**Thomas's Fulham****Mick Armstrong****2012-2019**

Mick worked for six of his ten years in the UK, as a dedicated member of the Fulham P.E. Department, before being lured back to his native Australia in 2019. It is hugely apparent that his time at the school was cherished and in this article he writes with great clarity, eloquence and fondness about his Thomas's days. He pays tribute to the staff, pupils and parents he worked with and offers special thanks to Annette Dobson for allowing him to fly back to Australia one weekend, in order to watch an Australian Football match!

[Read more](#)**Thomas's Kensington****Lawrence Ellis****2023-to date**

Such was the impact of a Thomas's education on former Kensington pupil, Lawrence, that he returned first as a Gap Student and then as a full time member of staff! Lawrence is now an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant, a role which he pursues alongside his acting career. The fact that Lawrence is both an alumnus and current member of staff provides him with a unique insight into the life of the school and how it has changed. Changed it has but clearly, in Lawrence's mind, the heart of the school remains very much the same.

[Read more](#)

# Events



Our Alumni 'After Work Drinks' proved hugely popular and we thoroughly enjoyed welcoming back into the four schools, our 18+ years alumni pupils, their parents and former members of staff. Over canapés and cocktails, old friends were reacquainted, stories were shared and joint adventures were relived. There were many cuddles, a great deal of reminiscing and a huge amount of laughter; nobody was ready to leave and conversations carried on long after the 8pm cut off! You will find full photographic reports of these events below



  
**Thomas's**  
BATTERSEA

[Read more](#)



  
**Thomas's**  
CLAPHAM

[Read more](#)



  
**Thomas's**  
FULHAM

[Read more](#)



  
**Thomas's**  
KENSINGTON

[Read more](#)

We aim to hold similar events across the schools over the course of the next academic year and are also planning a cross-schools Alumni Sporting Fixture, dates and details to follow. If you ever find yourselves organising your own reunions, please do let us know and make sure that you send in your photos! ([alumni@thomas-s.co.uk](mailto:alumni@thomas-s.co.uk))

# It's Coming Home



For a number of years, the PTA and PE Department at Thomas's Kensington have worked together to host a fun and friendly Parents and Teachers Charity Football Tournament. This year the event was held in aid of the Royal Hospital Chelsea and, for the first time, included an Alumni Team. Former pupils, parents and members of staff were encouraged to dust off their shin pads and join a team with the promise of restorative drinks and a BBQ lunch afterwards. Chief cheerleader, Allie Barnes Wright, commented on the agility and fancy footwork shown by the alumni team and you can enjoy her full match report below.

[Read more](#)

# Battersea Alumni Panel



There was much excitement, hugging and noise as nine alumni pupils returned to Battersea in June, to speak to the Year 8 leavers. Before doing so, we took them on a tour of the school so that they could remember their Thomas's days, re-visit favourite haunts and meet up with some of their former teachers. A trip to the Lower School was a particular hit and the group enjoyed being photographed, sitting on the Reception chairs and taking a trip down memory lane with Mrs Miller who shared their Year 1 learning journey scrapbook (from 2009), with her current class. The former pupils then formed part of a panel in the Great Hall where they spoke to the Year 8 leavers with extraordinary eloquence and insight. It was a hugely successful event and one which we hope will become part of the annual leavers' programme. In his 'News from the Head' that week, Ben Thomas declared: I could not have been more proud of the sage advice given by these young adults, whose experience was recent enough to be entirely applicable to this year's leavers. I could not agree more. You can read the full report and see photographs from the event here:

[Read more](#)

# From the Archives



In this newsletter, we celebrate Alumni Section 32: all those former pupils who have turned 21 this academic year. We wish them all health and happiness as they reach this important milestone in their lives. Children no more, here are some photographs of them when they were in Year 1. A very Happy 21st Birthday to you all!



This newsletter can only be sent out to our registered alumni. Please do forward it onto anybody who you think might be interested and encourage them to join Thomas's Alumni themselves:

[Thomas's Alumni - Former Pupil Registration](#)

[Thomas's Alumni - Former Parent Registration](#)

[Thomas's Alumni - Former Staff Registration](#)