

Carol Handley

1929-2024



Alumni Memories July 2024

Yes, I remember Ms Handley well. I was at Camden from 1960-67 and one of my favourite classes with her was an optional Greek Literature in Translation course in which she explained some of the more famous plays and we girls took the part of the Chorus. Brekekekex, koax, koax! and Popoi, totoi! remain in my brain to this day. She was always enthusiastic, passionate and encouraging and a wonderful teacher.

Pat Olver

I transferred to Camden part of the way through my secondary education - the Latin teacher at my previous school was so stern and critical I had come to hate and fear Latin class. Imagine my surprise when my new Latin teacher at Camden turned out to be warm and charming with a real gift for making the subject interesting. Mrs Handley was an inspiration and succeeded in giving me a real interest in Latin - I even passed my O Level!

I'm very sorry to hear she's no longer with us and send my warmest condolences to her family.

Julia Bass (Graduated from Camden in 1967)

How sad!

I will never forget how kind Mrs Handley was to me. From my interview for the school when I was 11 and for always "looking out for me" after my mother died in the 4th year.

She was exceptional and always made me feel I could succeed in anything I chose to do in life. (I am a broadcast journalist who has travelled the world with a front seat to history for more than 25 years)

Please pass my condolences to her family.
Zoe Harris

Thank you for this email. I am sad to hear of Mrs Handley's passing. I was a Camden girl from 1956-1962. I did start A level Latin with Mrs Handley but had to leave before the end of the year. She was a very nice lady and I always enjoyed her lessons. My condolences to all of you at school and to Mrs Handley's family.

Beverly Shearn, nee Seller

I'm sorry to hear this news. I remember Mrs Handley as a smiling, warm headteacher. She had a quiet, gentle air of authority. She was welcoming and put me at ease during my interview to be accepted at the school. I lived around the corner from her and when I waited at the bus stop for the 214 she would drive past on her way to work and often offer a lift to me and as many other Camden girls as she could get in her car. She was friendly and supportive in her conversations while she drove us to school. She always looked elegant.

Sarah McMenemy

I certainly do remember her.
Gr8 inspiring woman who interviewed me as a wee thing.

Sophie Duncan

My memories of Mrs Handley

I remember Mrs Handley extremely well because she was so kind to me. I only came to the school for the sixth form years in 1960, as we moved around with the RAF. I stayed on for the 'third year' sixth form to do Oxbridge entrance exams – in fact we were only at the school for the autumn term of 1962. Cambridge weren't interested in me but I was offered a place at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford to study Botany. However – the Matriculation requirements for Oxford Botany School – included two languages at 'O' level. I was very poor at languages and had only just managed to scrape through French 'O' level at my previous school. So in late Dec 1962 when offered a place, I realised I had to take Latin 'O' level in January. We'd prepared for this and I had been having Latin lessons with Mrs Handley but, as I had hoped to go to Cambridge, I hadn't taken this very seriously. Oxford was the only University in Britain that required two languages at 'O' level to study Botany!

Mrs Handley told me not to worry. 'Have a good Christmas' she said. And then after Christmas I was to walk across Hampstead Heath, from where I lived, to her in Highgate every day in order for us to work out how I could pass Latin when I knew so little! She managed to get a translation of Caesar's Gallic Wars Book 1 in English – which I read til I knew it by heart. I then could for example recognise a mention of 'ten thousand soldiers' and write down all I could remember of that paragraph in English. With this kind of exam technique – I managed to pass the O level after 10 days serious study.

I was so grateful to Mrs Handley (and her family) for giving up her post-Christmas break to help me. Especially, as once I had passed, I knew from springtime 1963 that I was definitely going to Oxford the next autumn and not to Bristol where I had an offer of a place.

Please pass on my sincere condolences to Mrs Handley's family.

Alison Telfer

That is such sad news.

I have happy memories of Mrs Handley; she was firm but fair.

But for me her pastoral care was lovely. My parents separated when I was about 15. Both her and Miss Stooke were so supportive and caring. They made it all a little easier.

Kim Hills

I remember Ms Handley. She taught Greek with great enthusiasm and I loved the subject. She was always so elegant and well dressed and hard working. She was an inspiration to us girls

Dixie Locke (Baker)

In the late 70's Mrs Handley would often pull up at the 214 bus stop by Grove Terrace and invite any girls waiting for the bus to jump into her blue VW camper and get a ride down to school. Loads of us would pile

in, sitting on the floor if the seats were all taken. There can't be many Heads then or now who would do that. She certainly wasn't your usual Head.

Sophie Levey

Hello. I am alumni from 1982-1988 and she was very much in full effect.

The one overarching memory I have of her is stern kindness.

And, her exasperated shrill of warning to us at various morning assemblies back in the days before the traffic light crossing was installed directly opposite her window on the unforgiving Camden Road.

"Girls! Please! Use the proper crossing by Murray Street or the Canteloves gardens when crossing to the garage! Please! GIRLS!"

I am sorry to say that I actually didn't realise she was still with us. I knew that many of the teaching staff have already passed on that I knew. Mrs Ely, Mr Fallows, Mrs Rowlands.....

May she rest in peace. Dear Mrs Handley.

Thank you.

Lucy Iliffe

I was very sad to hear today of the death of Carol Handley. Here are a few thoughts and tributes from my time as a pupil at GSC 1971-1978.

My name is Alison Martin (nee Hutchings) and I started in 1Alpha in 1971, leaving CSG in 1978.

It was due to Carol Handley's love of the Classics that there were four Classics teachers, and Mrs Hunt taught me Latin and Ancient Greek to O-Level. The Classics flourished at Camden under her supervision and inspiration.

Carol Handley knew all the girls so well. Her assemblies were thoughtful and kind and she often read from Classics to make a moral point - such as the time she read about the death of Socrates to a hushed and riveted assembly hall of girls. When the hall roof fell in, the school was closed and we were organised quickly to be taught at the American School near Regent's Park for the remaining weeks of the summer term.

She used to arrive in a blue dormobile having picked up stray girls walking up the road on the way to school!

I played harp and viola and performed frequently in school concerts and she always had complimentary words to say about our performances.

Carol Handley had a life well lived and was an inspiration to a generation of girls. I was privileged to know her.

Alison Martin

I am so sorry to hear that Ms Handley has passed away.

I was a pupil at Camden from 1962 to 1969 (a long time ago!).

I do have one clear memory of her. During a Latin lesson I started to feel faint and then did actually faint

onto the desk. I have a very clear memory of her bending over me saying, "Barbara, are you alright?". I remember her as a firm but fair teacher who we all held in great esteem.

She was definitely a role model who inspired me to become a teacher.

Barbara Mazliah (nee Harris)

Thank you so much for passing on that sad news, although it has to be said Carol had a good innings.

Mrs Handley (as of course she had to be with us) was an outstandingly kind and patient teacher whom I only encountered directly in my third year when I began to study Greek.

I started at Camden in 1967, following in the footsteps of my sister Kate Alexander. That year us first year's were introduced to several new teaching methods; Nuffield Science, Cambridge Maths and (I think) Nuffield Latin, as the then Labour Government's approach to education seemed to be more towards the practical and away from theory. Looking back now it was a remarkable stage of educational methods and I'm proud that Camden embraced it all. It was very exciting for us to have this new form of teaching and from what I could tell, the teachers all found it refreshing too.

So the 'new' way to approach to the ancient classic language of Latin was to teach it as though it were a modern language with the emphasis on using the language rather than learning endless declensions of vowels, as was the tradition. Consequently, my attempt to learn Greek in my third year (1970) fell short as I had no idea what a declension was, let

alone grasp its usage! Mrs Handley took this ragged band of third years under her wing and coached us all with infinite patience and humour and I scraped through my O Level.

Carol relaxed into her role as headteacher beautifully, as we all knew that she would.

Aside of my mother's, which was a fine trained calligraphic hand, Carol Handley had the most beautiful italic handwriting. Many of the staff also did. I do hope that particular trait of Camden staff has endured!

Anyway, that is sad news but as I say, my memories of Carol Handley are all bathed in sunlight.

Many thanks for this opportunity to share my thoughts about her. I share my school report here, with her entry for "Greek". This seems to be one of my better school reports ...

Chloë Alexander

It is with great sadness that I learned of the passing of Carol Handley. I am writing from France where the news has reached me.

Mrs Handley, as we knew her, was our form mistress twice, the second time in the upper sixth, At that time she had not yet become Head Teacher, a post she so thoroughly deserved.

I remember with great happiness how she looked after us. She was one of the fairest people I have ever met. She had no favourites and would treat each one of us with kindness and respect. You could go to

her with any questions, she was very approachable and accessible and you sensed that she wanted the very best for each of us. She was so enabling and warm and interested in our lives,

For this reason, we kept in touch, Every Christmas until two years ago, I would receive a beautifully handwritten card in her neat copperplate writing. She would want to know about the other Camdenites I kept in touch with, and what we were all up to Her interest in us was genuine and she was so encouraging about how our lives were unfolding since leaving Camden, Her praise and congratulations were generous , she showed real pride in how our jobs, our Family lives and our values were given a strong foundation in our time at Camden.

When she lost her husband years ago, she still remained positive and full of purpose. When she went into a care home latterly, her mind remained as sharp as ever. She wrote as clearly as when she was our form teacher!

Carol Handley will never be forgotten. She had a positive, steadying and caring influence on so many of our lives.

Condolences to all the members of her family.

Irene Wyndham, former Camden pupil

I have the best memories of Mrs. Handley, who was my Greek teacher in the late fifties, and sometimes filled in for Miss Clegg in Latin. Alas, I did not pass my O level Greek, but did make it through A level Latin. (I would have preferred to do German rather than Greek, but my mother had visions of her

daughter becoming a classics scholar). Mrs. Handley was patient and kind (perhaps too patient?), and we were somewhat in awe of her scholarliness, style and youth, compared to most of our teachers who had been at Camden since before WWII. I left CSG before she became headmistress, but it is difficult to think that she just about reached her centenary – I only remember the young gracious lady she was and that I did enjoy her classes, and learned so much about Greek mythology, culture and of course all that grammar and linguistic history – who can forget the aorist?

Anne Johnston (Drake) 1955-61

I have memories that you might not be able to include, but up to you!

I joined CSG in 1968, as Miss Burchell, legendary headmistress, was retiring. She was replaced by Miss Dennis. Mrs Handley later took over. The atmosphere really did lift. Mrs Handley knew many of us and always smiled and stopped to talk when she could. When Mrs Handley told us that the governors had asked her to become our headmistress, wild shouting, stamping of feet and cheers! She looked so touched.

Armorer Wason

I was at Camden from 1972-79. When I was in year 5 as it was then, our German teacher must have been ill as no teacher came and nor did a substitute teacher on a Friday afternoon.

I was doing some work, when two girls in the class started to pick on me. They were being overtly antisemitic. It was very distressing because, in addition to the abuse, no one stood up for me. That weekend, our English teacher had asked us to write something about adversity. So I wrote about what had happened. By mid morning, Mrs Handley had talked to me about the experience. Shortly after the two girls were called into her office. They were suspended and told that this incident would go on their records. I was very impressed at the speed with which she acted and that she displayed a zero tolerance for the antisemitic behaviour. The class was also spoken to and it was not accepted that they didn't hear or see anything. That's how the Nazis had got away with their terrible acts. It's the way I would like to think a Camden girl should act, standing up for injustice.

And Mrs Handley made sure that she showed the way.

Dr Jacqueline Marshall (nee Hall)

Carol Handley was headmistress of Camden when I went and I will never forget her kindness. Her calm, her sense of justice, her gentleness, her sternness, her cleverness. She always seemed to know who we all were. And where we were in our endeavours. She helped me to feel proud of myself when I did well which I think was a great gift. She was a powerful role model for a girl who grew up in the theatre - she remains emblematic

in my mind of that incredible generation of educators of women - who gave of their time, energy and life force in order that girls might achieve and learn. We felt the force of her care, her belief in us, in our futures and I shall always be grateful to her for guiding me and inspiring me.

Emma Thompson

I was very sad to hear the news of Carol's death, as I worked with her for such long time. Sadly, our contact became much less in later years, and I last saw her at Eric's funeral in 2013. There will be so many people who will send in their memories of Carol, and their warm appreciation of all that she did for the Classics. Here are my own thoughts about her, and I hope that I have written the kind of memoir that you want..

Sometime in early summer, 1959, I arrived at Camden for my interview for a post in the Classics department. We had been firmly told at college that we must wear a hat for interviews, so I did as instructed,. I had my interview, with Carol and Miss Burchell, and to my delight I was appointed. Carol later confessed that she had had a problem "getting round the hat". So, in September I started on my first job. I certainly could not have been in a better place, or with better guidance. Carol's help and encouragement were so valuable to me, and personally we got on very happily from the very beginning. Later on, when I had serious problems in my life, no-one could have been kinder to me, or more supportive than Carol was. Her work for the Classics outside school was enormously impressive, especially the part she played in the Joint Association

of Classical Teachers Summer Schools in Greek. Her own career progressed, as she first became deputy head of Camden, and then, in 1970, headmistress, whereupon I was privileged to step into her place as Head of Classics. When I left, in 1973, she wrote me a wonderful letter, saying how happy she had been, working with me for fourteen years. Similarly, I shall always feel so grateful for my time at Camden, with Carol.

Anne Mathews, formerly Anne Doughty, teacher of Classics at CSG 1959- 973: Head of Classics after Carol became headmistress

I'm so sorry to hear this. I am not sure how Carol's health was this last years. I somehow thought she had died some years ago. I wish I had been in touch. I think she would have been rather tickled that this old Camden girl had become the first woman Chief Master of her late husband Professor Eric Handley's old school, King Edward's, Birmingham! His name is on the honours board. As I approach retirement, I can't help thinking that Carol must have unwittingly prepared me for the role I do now.

If there is a funeral or memorial, please do let me know.

Katy Ricks (Koralek 1979)

I started at Camden School for Girls in 1971, and stayed until the end of 1978 - after doing the Oxbridge term.

Carol Handley was a wonderful Head of the school - I was extremely happy there. I remember her reading Greek prose and poetry in assembly on many occasions, and in particular Plato's account of the death of Socrates. After one of these assemblies I went home and told my mum I was going to learn Greek. We were all already learning Latin. I went on to do Latin and Greek A levels, and read Classics at Cambridge. Carol Handley set me on a path that has given me such joy in life and so many memorable experiences. Both at the school with the extraordinary classics teachers she employed, and at Newnham where I formed a life-long bond with the college and other classicists. I didn't pursue classics directly after leaving university - but the classical world has informed everything I have done since, and I will always be grateful to Carol Handley for opening this door so early on in my life.

I am incidentally still in touch with Ann Hunt, Bob Lister, Terry Buckley and Ann Spratling, and attended Geoffrey Fallows funeral a few years ago - all very wonderful people.

Karen Gledhill

I was at Camden from 1956 to 1963 during which time Carol Handley taught me Latin at both O level and A level. I remember her as a very kind and considerate teacher, rather a contrast to the teacher who introduced us to Latin in the Second Year who was a bit of a Tartar! Carol was my form teacher too at some point.

As you may imagine, we were a fairly small group for A level Latin and I recollect the classes as very friendly and sociable which was no doubt due to the

approach of Mrs. Handley and also of Mrs. Doughty, the other Classics teacher at that time.

I remember Carol as very smartly dressed. She drove a car which was probably a classic even then, a convertible Triumph, possibly a Roadster, which was quite different from any car I was familiar with.

Some twenty years after I left Camden and while Carol was headmistress I wrote to ask if I could call in as I would be in London. I had a very warm welcome from her and found her exactly as I remembered - very smartly dressed and with a wide peacock-coloured shawl draped elegantly over one shoulder!

I hope this little note will give some flavour of the Mrs. Handley I remember. I am sure that others will have known her better and can add much to the Tribute.

Elaine MacDonald (nee Rawdon)

I was very sorry to hear of Carol Handley's death. I came to Camden for the 6th form in 1980 from a school I really hated in Finchley. The headmaster of that school was a nasty disciplinarian who caned the boys! I was very unhappy. Carol totally transformed me and my school experience. I remember her walking past a group of us 6th formers in my first week. I cowered and expected all the others to be as fearful as me. But Carol stopped and chatted to us all and was so full of warmth and encouragement. It was a revelation. She seemed to have time for us all and know us too. Even people like me who had just come for the 6th form.

She made the school a happy high functioning place.

I really am so grateful. After being called an academic failure at my previous school, I thrived and got all As and into Cambridge. It was life defining.

I just want to thank her.

Abigail Morris

A friend passed on the sad news that Carol Handley died recently. It was good to hear she lived well into her nineties.

I have fond memories of Mrs Handley. I was at Camden from 1966 until 1973 the year the roof fell in. The word that comes to mind when I think of Mrs Handley is Kindness. She often used to drive past me on the way to school in her VW camper van. She would often stop and offer me a lift. I can't remember if I ever accepted.

I certainly remember being sent to see her for some misdemeanour and she was very kind and understanding.

Emily (Strang)

