



# Hills news

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Alumni news from Hills Road Sixth Form College.

# alumni

Spring 2025



Performing Arts students  
excerpt of *Wuthering Heights*.



***“The energy and atmosphere were just joyous, and you couldn’t help but feel proud to be part of the Hills Road journey.”***

PARENT

## Anniversary extravaganza!

On 11 March, the Hills Road community gathered at the Cambridge Corn Exchange for a magnificent Birthday party, celebrating 50 years of sixth-form excellence. Past and present members of the Hills Road community came together for this one-off variety performance. With over 300 performers, the evening was a dazzling display of talent, passion, dedication and pride.

Hills alumni SuRie and brother Benedict Cork were the evening’s lively hosts, who later returned to the stage for their own performance.

The evening began with alumnus Jordan Ashman, winner of Young Musician of the Year 2022, setting a captivating tone with his virtuoso

percussion skills. The Hills Wind Orchestra followed with the powerful melody of *Soaring* by John Williams, a piece well known as the film scores for Superman and Star Wars – a tribute to Hills Road in the 70s.

The stage was then filled with energy and exuberance as Year 12 Dance students upped the tempo with their joyful, upbeat homage to popular music from the decades. It’s impossible not to love a performance that includes *Spice Up Your Life*!

Hills student Jade Mearns delivered a moving rendition of *Feeling Good*, before Performing Arts students brought the haunting world of *Wuthering Heights* to life in a captivating excerpt.



CELEBRATING  
50 YEARS OF  
SIXTH FORM  
EDUCATION  
EST. 1974

Alumnae Maddie Combes and Abigail Halliday, together with good friend Callum Madely, enchanted the audience with their interpretation of Bruce Springsteen’s *Dancing in the Dark*, before the College Choir wrapped up the first half of the evening with a rousing and unforgettable ABBA medley.

**More on  
pages  
4 & 5**

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# Congratulations to the new Student Council for 25-26

Hills Road's Student Council for 2025-2026 has been elected! This team of ten students works to enhance the College community, represent student voices and liaise with management and external observers.

Council members attend weekly meetings, dedicate around two hours per week to their roles and take a leading part in transition events, Open Events and Year 11 welcome days.

**“We're so happy that our campaign has led to us becoming your new Student Council. We look forward to a successful year!”**

**YOUR STUDENT COUNCIL**

To be elected, students followed a rigorous process, securing nominations, undergoing shortlisting, crafting a manifesto, presenting at hustings and running a compelling campaign to earn votes.

We wish you the best of luck and are confident you will excel in supporting your peers and making a meaningful impact.

## Dates for your diary

**Wednesday 23 to Friday 25 April**  
**American Psycho at The Robinson Theatre**

A cool, crisp, funny, bold, political, satirical musical with a lot of blood and a gorgeously 80s vibe, starring our awesomely talented Y13 students.

**Book now**

**Monday 12 May**  
**Hills Education Trust: academisation consultation closes**

**Read more**

**Saturday 19 July**  
**50th Anniversary Summer party**

## Meet Liz Brinsdon, our new Development Director

“I am delighted to be joining the team at Hills Road at a pivotal time in the College's history. It's an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved over the past 50 years as well as planning for the future.

As the parent of a student at Hills Road and a Cambridgeshire resident, I am well aware of what an amazing education the College provides at a critical point in the lives of young people. This includes not only exceptional A level provision, but also enrichment activities, careers guidance, wellbeing programmes, the Extended Project Qualification and more.

However, resources are increasingly stretched, and the support of the Hills Road community – past and present – will enable the College to offer opportunity, resources and facilities that simply wouldn't otherwise be possible.”

To find out more about how you can get involved with shaping the future of Hills Road, contact Liz Brinsdon: [lbrinsdon@hillsroad.ac.uk](mailto:lbrinsdon@hillsroad.ac.uk)



Liz Brinsdon.



## Captivating performances at the Chamber Concert

Congratulations to the talented instrumentalists, accompanists, and vocalists for an outstanding Spring Chamber Concert! The audience enjoyed a spectacular programme featuring piano performances, including duets and original compositions.

String, woodwind and percussion soloists and ensembles also delivered

exceptional performances, showcasing works by Bach, Gluck, Schubert, Debussy, Rachmaninoff and more.

The evening was a true celebration of musical excellence, demonstrating the thriving music culture at Hills Road. A huge well done to the dedicated music team. Read about our Kings College special in the summer edition of *Hills News*.

## Dance showcase dazzles!

The spotlight shone on our incredibly talented dancers with this term's Showcase. The Year 12 dancers performed a group routine of Medley and Memories, while the Year 13s were sharing some of their exam pieces that will be performed for their A level exams later this month. And the standard was impressively high.

Dance is one of the only A levels where teamwork and collaboration are as important as attainment since students are judged both as dancers themselves and as choreographers of others.

This sense of creative collaboration to achieve the artistry and harmony of the small group ensembles was remarkable. Some of the choreography told a story; created a mood or feeling, or communicated social messaging – all through powerful dance routines, expertly crafted.



The solo pieces – where dancers build a routine based on a choreographer of choice – were also striking, with a variety of ambitious routines executed to a very high level.

Good luck to our Year 13s for their examined performances!

## In brief

A huge thank you to Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, for hosting the Women in STEM Year 12 Day! Students enjoyed an insightful tour and engaging workshops focused on application support. They also had the valuable opportunity to connect with current STEM students, academics and researchers.

Rapper, singer, and songwriter Rosca Onya performed at the Junction on 10 February 2025. His debut song, Jack, honours his late friend and mentor, Jack Merritt, a former Hills Road student who tragically died in the 2019 London Bridge attack. Jack was a passionate advocate for prison rehabilitation and gained media recognition for his work with Learning Together. The concert also featured Hills Road student and saxophonist, Vasco Reisner

The College was delighted to host Professor Andrew Balmford, a renowned Professor of Conservation Science at the University of Cambridge, as part of our 50th-anniversary guest speaker series. In his talk, Andrew addressed the challenges of a world where media coverage of environmental issues often highlights negativity.

A special thank you to Iain Mahoney who shared his personal journey through drug addiction and recovery, providing valuable insights, raising awareness and offering important information for students.

Year 13 students took part in a thought-provoking session exploring the future of technology led by Jonathan Sansom, Director of Digital Strategy at Hills. The talk focused on AI's growing influence, from social media to revision tools and highlighted the importance of developing creativity, teamwork and ethical decision-making skills.





The Addams Family by  
Performing Arts students.



Hills alumni SuRie  
and Benedict Cork.



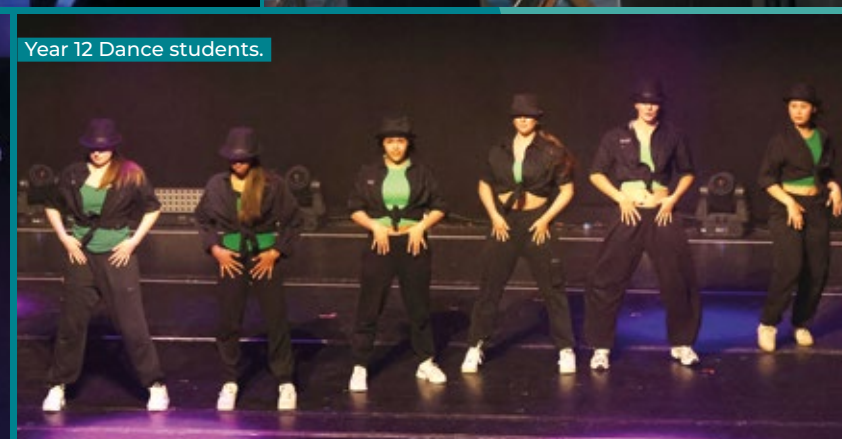
Hills Wind  
Orchestra.



Jordan Ashman (2020-22),  
winner of Young Musician  
of the Year, 2022.



Ollie Massey Band.



Year 12 Dance students.



Jade Mearns.



The College Choir.



Maddie Combes.

## Hills@50 showcase

Continued from page 1

The pace of the evening intensified in the second half with an energetic flashmob performance by the Zach Chung Tech Team, with renditions of *Sweet Dreams*, *Billie Jean* and *Seven Nation Army*. Next came Folk Roots, whose joyful rhythms and lively melodies filled the room.

Year 12 dancers returned to the stage with a graceful performance of *Memories*, followed by the Ollie Massey Band, delivering a passionate rendition of *Old Love*, highlighted by exceptional guitar skills.

The evening then took a theatrical turn as Performing Arts students stepped into the spotlight, lighting up the stage with their musical theatre brilliance through songs from *The Addams Family*.

SuRie and Benedict Cork performed a medley of songs, each one a tribute to

their favourite memories of Hills Road. Their set was filled with nostalgia, taking listeners on a journey of their key moments at the College.

For the grand finale, the Jazz Orchestra electrified the crowd with *Cut to the Chase* and *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy*, culminating in the inspiring *Gonna Fly Now*.

Words can hardly capture how incredibly proud we are of everyone who invested their time, effort and enthusiasm into making this unforgettable evening come to life. Your dedication made it all possible.

A special thank you goes to our amazing audience. Your unwavering support made the night truly unforgettable, and the way students cheered on their fellow performers created an incredible party atmosphere!



FolkRoots group.



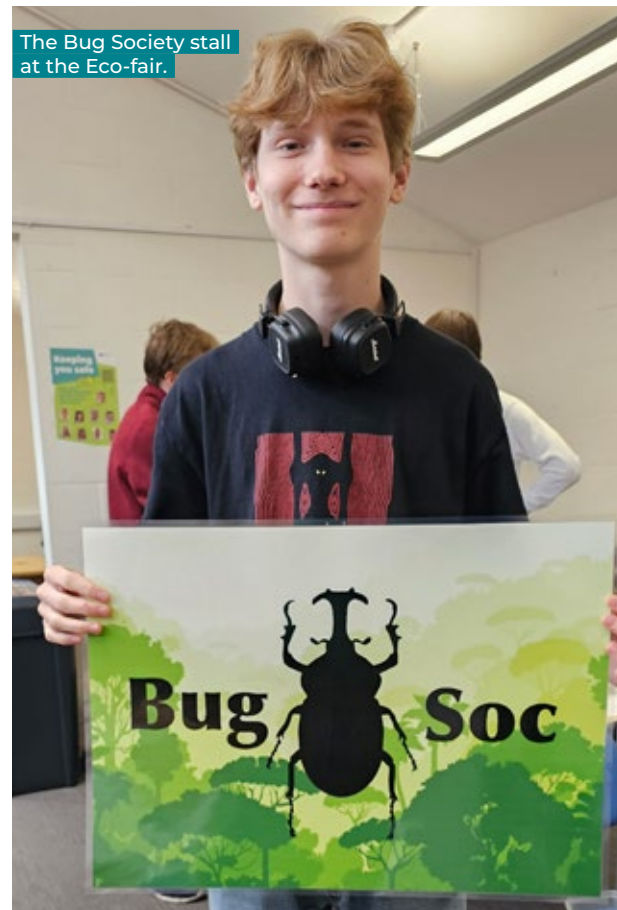
Zach Chung Tech Team.

“

**“Wow. What a fantastic night! Everyone put on such a stellar display of talent. Very inspiring and uplifting. Students and staff should be commended for their efforts and for their professional performances throughout the evening.”**

GOVERNOR





The Bug Society stall at the Eco-fair.



Pop-up clothes swap.



Earth Society turtle bake sale at the Eco-fair.



Y13 Student Council.

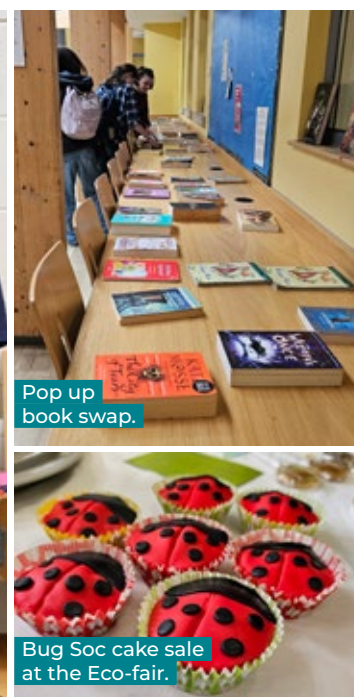


# Eco fortnight ends the Spring term on a high!

Eco Fortnight was bursting with activities, bringing the College community together in celebration of sustainability.

In the first week, students attended whole-cohort presentations before exploring a lively Pop-up Eco-Fair, including stalls from the Bug Society and Environment Society. Next door, the bustling clothes and book swap drew eager participants, offering a diverse selection of clothing, shoes, accessories and jewellery, alongside a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books. The event showcased students' commitment to reducing the impact of fast fashion.

The second week featured the highly anticipated HR 4.5 Fun Run, where



Pop up book swap.



Bug Soc cake sale at the Eco-fair.

students and staff took to the course in their finest fancy dress. The event kicked off with an energetic warm-up in the Quad before participants set off from the starting line, continuing this much-loved annual tradition. Each finisher received an eco-medal embedded with wildflower seeds, ready to be planted to support bee-friendly habitats.

Throughout the week, an inspiring lineup of sustainability guest speakers shared insights on how we can all contribute to addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis. Speakers included Craig Bennett, CEO of Wildlife Trusts; Alan Rusbridger, former Editor of The Guardian; Helen Cox, Deloitte and Amy Munro-Faure, Cambridge Zero.

Eco Fortnight raised funds for environmental charities, including the College's chosen initiative,



Just One Tree, a global reforestation programme dedicated to removing CO2 from the atmosphere. Donations are still coming in, so keep an eye out for the final fundraising total in the summer edition of *Hills News*.

A huge thank you to the dedicated students, staff organisers and enthusiastic supporters who made Eco Fortnight such a success.







## Celebrating International Women's Day 2025

The College came alive on International Women's Day (IWD) as our vibrant community united in support of the IWD #AccelerateAction campaign. Students and staff proudly wore purple, symbolising our shared commitment to gender equality.

A highlight of the event was Ruth Jepkemoi Singen's inspirational talk, where she shared her remarkable journey as Programme Manager at Cambridge Judge

Business School and as a biodiversity conservationist. Her story of leadership and empowerment was insightful and inspiring.

The celebrations continued with a speech by Year 12 student Lizzy Fordham, a finalist in the Articulation competition (see page 11). Meanwhile, the Student Council's bake sale raised funds for Women's Aid Cambridge, reinforcing our student's commitment to supporting our wider community.

## Bringing faiths together: World Religion Day

On Monday 22 January, the College welcomed a panel of speakers to celebrate World Religion Day. Guests included Rev. Nell Whiscombe, Cathy Michel, Kelli Nelson, Rev. Master Leandra Robertshaw, James O'Neil, and Imam Zakarya Gangat. They took part in a Question Time-style discussion, answering student questions. Topics ranged from the relationship between world religions to the role of faith in politics, education and law. Thanks to everyone involved in the event.



## Y13s get career-ready!

During January, the Hills Road Careers team hosted a mock employment interview event for Year 13 students in collaboration with Form the Future CIC.

Fifty eager students participated, gaining valuable real-world interview experience. Each student engaged in a professional-style job interview, improving their communication skills and boosting their confidence for future opportunities, whether through university, a gap year, an apprenticeship, or employment.

The event was part of the Hills Apprenticeship Sessions, launched in September 2024, to provide weekly apprenticeship guidance. It complemented the 270 mock entry interviews held in November for university applicants.

A special thanks to the professionals who volunteer their time to conduct the interviews. We look forward to sharing news about further initiatives supporting student development and career preparedness. Students can find the latest opportunities on the Careers service page on Sharepoint.

[Read more](#)



***"Hills Road is committed to providing students with practical experiences that enhance their readiness for the professional world, no matter what path they choose."***

BEKKI CLARK, HEAD OF CAREERS

## Hills students engage in Black Manifesto panel discussion

Students were inspired by Rt Hon Diane Abbott MP, Lord Simon Woolley, and Russell Profitt at the Black Manifesto panel discussion hosted by Homerton College in Cambridge.

Formulated by a group of Black and Asian councillors ahead of the 1979 general election, the Black People's Manifesto set out the demands of minority ethnic voters and also became central to the Labour Party Black Sections movement.

To mark the 45th anniversary of the historic manifesto, the panel addressed the entrenched systemic



inequalities and pervasive problems faced by people of colour, offering valuable insights into the radical and racial history of Black politics in Britain.

***"To listen to these influential figures speak about issues that resonate so personally and reflect broader societal issues is hard to describe. It is, at once, humanising, humbling and inspiring."***

TASHATHA MOKOBI

## Shaping futures, igniting ambitions!

Once again, the Careers team delivered an outstanding programme for Careers Talks Week for our Year 12 students.

Over 30 speakers from local and international organisations, universities, GAP specialists, degree apprenticeships and our own Careers advisors joined

students online to inspire and guide them on their future pathways.

Talks covered a diverse range of topics, from 'The Future of Building Computers' by ARM, 'Green Jobs and How to Find Them' by Cambridge Zero and 'Data Science and Economics

Degree Apprenticeships' by Bank of England, providing valuable insights into emerging industries and career opportunities.

Students who missed any of the talk can access the recordings on the Careers Student SharePoint page.



## Employer fair is a big hit!

The College's annual Employer Fair took place in March, providing students heading to university or directly into employment with valuable insights. Over 25 employers from various sectors, including ARM, Deloitte, Cambridge Consultants, AstraZeneca, Apple

and PEM, discussed part-time jobs, apprenticeships, gap year roles, work experience and graduate opportunities. This event enabled students to learn what employers look for in future applicants and explore potential career paths with industry leaders.



As part of our 50th-anniversary celebrations, we invited former students to share their unforgettable memories and experiences from their time at Hills Road!



**Beverley Hines**  
1974-78

**“Armed with our O level results and no longer in uniform, around 60 of us girls arrived at Hills Road in September 1974. We made up about ten percent of the student population, and the upper sixth was still entirely boys! It felt like no one had really expected us. There were no girls’ toilets, so we had to share a tiny staff one. Some of the old boys’ High School teachers – all men – struggled with calling us by our first names, being used to the formality of surnames instead.”**

Beverley was one of the first girls to join Hills Road in 1974.



**Molly Smith**  
2019-21

Molly joined Hills as a shy teenager in 2019. With the College’s pastoral support, she was encouraged to develop into a confident speaker and is now the creator and presenter of the BBC Sounds podcast *The Weigh Up: Eating Disorder Diaries*. Molly also won the BBC Rachael Bland New Podcast Award for her advocacy in an interview with Stacey Dooley. Molly’s Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), a support book for those with eating disorders, sparked her passion for advocacy and journalism.

### Molly’s journey at Hills

**What subjects did you take?**  
Economics, Psychology, and English Language & Literature

**What’s your best memory of Hills?**  
Chair yoga in an Economics lesson!

**What was your EPQ?** A support book for people with eating disorders

**After Hills** University of York and BBC Radio Cambridgeshire.



**“You don’t have to know everything by 18. Embrace uncertainty, work hard, and remember – perfection doesn’t exist!”**

**Molly Smith**



**“If I had not attended Hills Road Sixth Form College, there is no way I would have got into medicine. Two teachers who stand out were Mr Tomkins and Mr Griffiths. Both were exceptional teachers who had mastered the art of teaching science subjects, bringing out the best in students. Now a retired psychiatrist with a career spanning science and the media, I am indebted to all that Hills Road offered me. It was a privilege to have the opportunity to attend such a brilliant centre of excellence!”**

Tony is a retired psychiatrist who built a diverse career across science and media.

**Tony Rao**  
1981-83



**“I absolutely loved my time at Hills. From singing in Helen’s jazz choir to performing in Richard Fredman’s musicals, helping to put on Hills Road’s Got Talent, and getting involved in so many other things – it was a chaotic, beautiful whirlwind of two unforgettable years. I’m forever grateful for the experiences and all the life lessons Hills gave me during my time at the College.”**

Benedict is a singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, whose music has amassed over 50 million streams.

**Benedict Cork**  
2009-11



**Ali Kirkman**  
1991-93

Ali joined Hills Road in 1991. Her love for languages, books, and singing endures, especially cherishing memories of carol singing at St John’s College chapel, a tradition that continues today. Hills Road sparked Ali’s passion for languages and lifelong friendships. A standout moment was the College’s first German work exchange in Hamburg, where she worked in a children’s home. After studying German and French at Oxford, Ali’s career took her across the world, including a decade in Malaysia. Ali is now back at Hills Road, as Vice Principal, playing a part in the very institution that first sparked her passions!



**“It’s a surreal and proud moment to write this as Vice Principal at Hills Road, reflecting on my journey from being a student here in the 1990s to now serving this incredible community.”**

**Ali Kirkman**

### Ali’s journey at Hills

**What subjects did you take?**  
English Literature, German and French

**What enrichment did you do?** I was fortunate for my programme to include Russian!

**What’s your best memory of Hills?** Working in a children’s home in Hamburg as part of the German work exchange

**After Hills** German and French at Oxford, working around the world.





## Cheerleading team shines at Dream Extreme competition!

Our cheerleading squad showcased their incredible talent and dedication at the Dream Extreme competition, earning an impressive second place in the Senior School Level Two Division.

With a strong initial score of 82/100, the team wowed the judging panel

with their energy, skill and creativity. The routine featured excellent execution, dynamic stunts and powerful tumbling, with standout scores in showmanship and creativity. Judges praised their tight formations, engaging choreography, and overall energy.

## Highlights

**Netball:** The netball 2's have been in great form, securing a 46-29 win against Colchester Sixth Form and a 45-32 victory against East Norfolk in their return to AOC League action.

**Badminton:** The mixed badminton team delivered a dominant 10-0 victory away at City of Islington College, showcasing their depth and versatility.

**Basketball:** The men's team continued their unbeaten run in the league with a 72-45 victory away at East Norfolk, with the team's chemistry and teamwork playing a key role in their performance. However, their luck changed in a fiercely contested game against Colchester. Despite the narrow loss, the team showed great determination and fighting spirit – a tremendous effort by all the players.

**Men's football:** The men's team secured yet another four-goal victory with a comfortable 4-1 win at home against East Norfolk. The first team also faced Oaklands College in a tough match, with key players missing from the squad. Despite the setback, they won a hard-fought 2-1 victory.

**Women's Rugby:** The team put on an outstanding display at the Northampton Saints Rugby 7's competition, reaching the quarterfinals of the Cup. It was an incredible performance against a top-level side – an amazing effort all around.

The men's tennis team secured their place in the East Region Last-4 Finals Day with a dominant 10-2 victory over St Columba's in the South East Knockout Draw. After a heroic effort at the Finals, the team suffered a narrow loss but still claimed fourth place out of 150 schools, which is a fantastic achievement.

