GORDONSTOUN
Plus Est En Vous

Cally Oldershaw FGA DGA FGS

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Recognised for her leadership in geology, gemmology and Earth sciences, through her prolific authorship and influential work in policy and education.

Cally Oldershaw is a renowned Earth scientist, geology and gemmology specialist and influential academic, who has championed education and policy change for more than four decades.

Born in Wiltshire in 1959, Cally spent most of her formative years living in Portugal with her family. At the age of seven, the family returned to the UK and she attended St Joseph's Convent primary school and Theale Grammar School in the Reading area, before joining Gordonstoun in 1974.

Her best memories of school all feature time out in the fresh air through Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, geology field trips in Scotland and to Italy and Cyprus, Mountain Rescue Service activities, Surf Life Savers visits to the coast, and sports including sailing, skiing, golf, hockey, tennis and squash.

Cally left school, travelled, and worked as a merchant banker in the City of London for a few years, before deciding to continue with her passion for geology. In 1987 she gained her BSc Geology degree from University College London and joined the Geological Museum in South Kensington as an Exhibition Scientist. When the Geological Museum merged with the Natural History Museum, Cally joined their Mineralogy Department and became the Curator of the National Collection of Gemstones.

In 2000, she joined the Geological Society as their Parliamentary Liaison and Education Officer, and helped establish the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Earth and Environmental Sciences. She ran the All-Party Group for 15 years as its Administrative Secretary. More than 100 meetings and conferences were arranged to inform and educate; giving policy makers, key decision makers, academics and industry experts the opportunity to meet, discuss and shape UK policy on key environmental issues. As an Education Officer, Cally promoted the public understanding of science and helped develop and advise on national school science curricula.

Cally is the author of numerous books, articles and textbooks on gemstones and Earth sciences, has been a guest lecturer for the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London and was the first Lady Chair of the Gemmological Association of Great Britain and Chair of the Earth Science Teachers'Association.

Through her leadership and advocacy, Cally has advanced education for students and professionals alike, inspiring people to look at our world through a new lens, with awe and wonder and a more conscious sense of stewardship.

My choice of school changed my life right from the start.

I enjoyed the academic side of Gordonstoun, but it was the opportunity to study geology, a subject not taught in many schools, which really changed my life. I had never considered Geology before, but my inspirational teacher, Bryan Pennington, brought the whole subject to life and I was captivated. I'd always loved the outdoors and studying Geology whilst getting so much time to explore the wonderful Scottish landscapes, encouraged my love of the outdoors and instilled a greater understanding and appreciation of our amazing planet Earth.

Gordonstoun taught me other important skills too and was a wonderful environment in which to make friends for life. The setting, with the mountains, the coast and the beautiful landscapes were wonderful. The Silent Walk taught me the discipline to take time out and reassess, and the concept of keeping a personal record is something I, and many of my contemporaries, find we still do to set goals and hold ourselves accountable. I think I left Gordonstoun with a far broader understanding and appreciation of the many opportunities available in life and the confidence to 'just give it a go' - encouraged by the school motto.

The Natural History Museum was a dream job - I remember my wonder as I was handed a set of keys and told to make myself at home.

It really was awe-inspiring.There is so much that visitors don't see and here I was, a recent graduate, with access to all the incredible collections, both in the public galleries and behind the scenes. My first job was to select items and create exhibitions that would speak to all ages.It meant working with both scientists and creatives - and I loved the contrast of the work. I developed a real passion for education and that was the reason I moved on; to engage with parliamentarians and impact education and policy.

The conversations I started around environmental issues with those in power may not have seen instant impact - but may have been the foundation of many of today's policies.

Much of what the meetings covered was really ahead of its time - the turn of the century was the very beginning of things like renewables, climate change, nuclear waste disposal, coastal management, ethical sourcing of gems and so on. My role was a holistic one: to put the right people together in a room to start those discussions to inform and educate policy makers about the importance of the Earth and environmental sciences.

I'm proud of the role I played in highlighting Earth science issues and enabling people to move forward with them. Seeing the fruits of this work play out over the decades is hugely rewarding. Geology is such a vital part of our past, our present and our future and if I can inspire someone of any age to view our world differently, and be awed by its power and its story, I'll have achieved my goal.