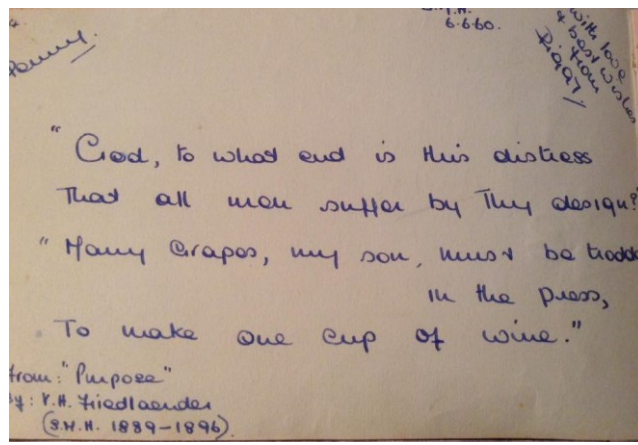


In December 2017 an Old Girl shared with the members of our Virtual Common Room pages from her lovely Autograph Book. There were some truly lovely drawings, painting and words, but one of the most interesting was a quotation from an Old Girl, V H Friedlaender:



We tracked her entry in the school registers from our wonderful website:

AGE	ENTERED	FORM	LEFT	PAGE	PARENT'S NAME AND ADDRESS	DIOCESE	REMARKS
10 3/4	10 9 3/4 / 89	I			Mrs Friedlaender 138 Church Road Canterbury N.	London St. Martin in the Fields	
10 3/4	10 9 3/4 / 89	I			The Rev. W. Collier The Vicarage, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London	London	

Here, with thanks to the East London History Society's newsletter of Summer 2008, is the story of our Old Girl, Violet Friedlaender:

Violet Helen Friedlaender wrote under her initials as V H Friedlaender; the surname was sometimes anglicised as Friedlander. She joined the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1908, and became honorary secretary of the Forest Gate branch during the summer of 1909. She was born 'in the East', probably Palestine, as it was from Palestine that she travelled as a child to foggy London, where she was sent to St Mary's Hall (age 10 ³/₄).

Her book Pied Piper's Street records memories of going home for school holidays in horse-buses coloured 'blue, green, red, yellow, white and chocolate-coloured', but lacking a display of numbers or destinations; how the colour-blind ever got home is a mystery. Friedlaender's father seems to have died while she was still young, but her mother and brother shared her enthusiasm for women's suffrage.

By 1909 the women's movement had split, and although the WSPU was still dominant, the women of East London, who had been so prominent in it in the early days, were largely sidelined, and the Canning Town branch was in disarray, if not totally disbanded. When a serious attempt to revive the fortunes of the movement in West Ham was made, it happened in the more prosperous side of the borough, in Forest Gate. There had been open-air meetings in the north of the borough before VHF set about reinvigorating the WSPU there.

That same year in summer she and her mother organised a WSPU camp on the coast, and the following year VHF was busy organising WSPU publicity during the two General Elections that occurred in January and December 1910. The WSPU grew increasingly militant nationally in its tactics, and in 1912 she took part in a window smashing campaign, and was sentenced to four months' in jail.

Somewhere about this time, West Ham WSPU made a banner, in silk and velvet, inscribed with the words 'Courage, Constancy, Success' beneath 'West Ham' and a logo – a medallion adapted from Sylvia Pankhurst's 'angel of freedom'. The lettering was produced by VHF and her brother. (The flag is now held by the Museum of London).

In March 1909 the weekly paper Votes for Women published the words of a song VHF had written to the tune of 'Marching to Georgia'. It goes with an appropriate swing:

Hurrah! Hurrah! We battle for the right,
Hurrah! Hurrah! For peace with honour fight;
Prisoners of war, we greet you!
Victory is in sight;
March with the Women's Army.

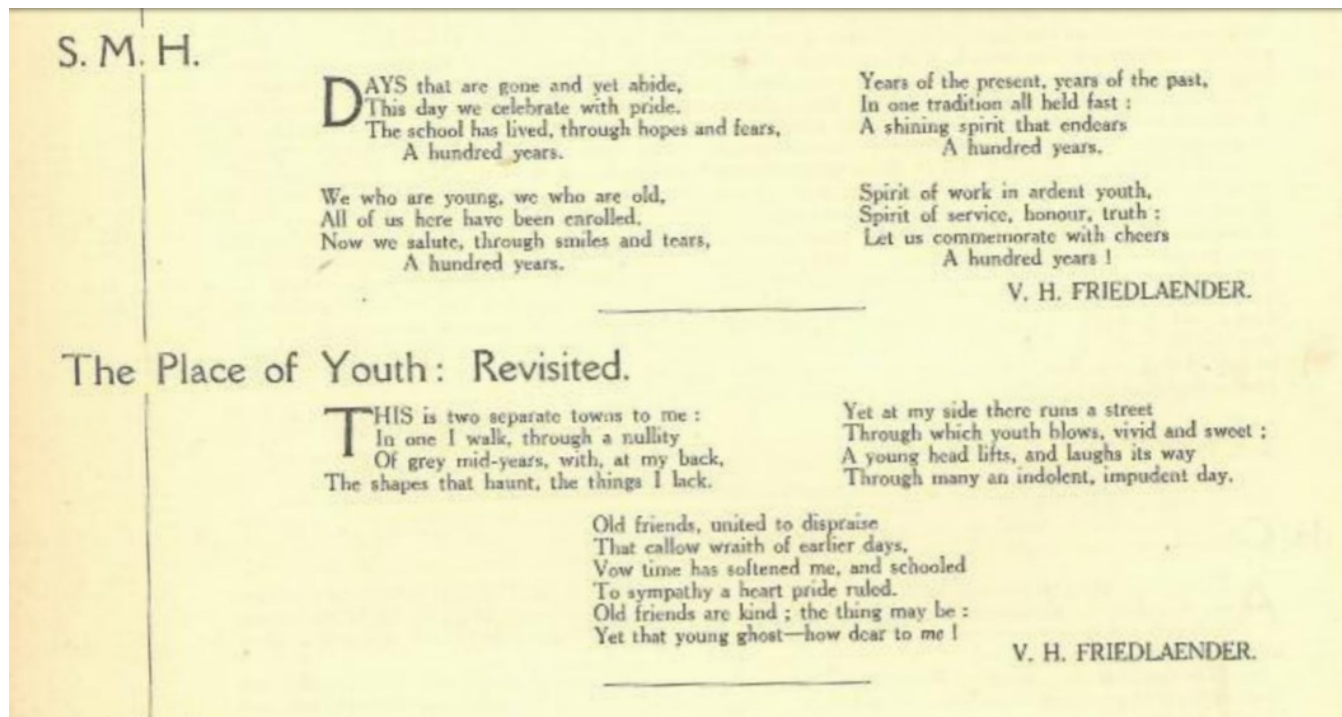
The Woman's Press, the publishing arm of the WSPU, also produced two calendars for the year 1910. The cheaper one cost a shilling, and was said to include 'mottoes'. the number and authorship of which were not noted in advertisements. The dearer calendar, costing 1/6d, was designed by Sylvia Pankhurst, and a motto was provided for each day by VHF.

Since both Sylvia Pankhurst and VHF were writers, it seems very likely that they belonged to the Women Writers' Suffrage League, which was very active about this time; in 1909 the League was cooperating with the Actresses' Franchise League to put on shows starring Ellen Terry at the Scala Theatre. Friedlaender's novels show she was very conscious of her position in society as a woman and an artist.

Her first published novel came out in 1922. In Mainspring: the Growth of a Soul, a man says to the leading female character: 'And in all these years I've never met the woman – the woman artist – who was willing to burn her boats; who, when it came to the point, really had the nerve to do it, and to know she had done the right thing, as I see you know it'.

Friedlaender published poems for many years, and a collection was brought out in 1931, called Mirrors and Angles (often miscalled Mirrors and Angels). Most of the verse had previously appeared in Country Life, but poems were also culled from a wide variety of other journals and newspapers, from the Spectator and the Nation to the Manchester Guardian and the Queen. She died at Buckhurst Hill, on the Essex fringe of East London in 1950. Suffragettes such as Friedlaender knew that in time the rights they had fought for would be taken for granted.

In 1936, the 100th anniversary of the founding of St Mary's Hall, Violet penned this for the Centenary Newsletter



Then, in 1950, comes this item:

**IN MEMORIAM.
V. H. FRIEDLAENDER.**

I have been asked to write about Violet Friedlaender, who died on June 23rd of this year, after a few months' illness. It is difficult for me to do this because of my sorrow at losing her, after 60 years of friendship. We made friends in Form I at the Hall, and I have received her tender sympathy ever since unflinching. Her insight and sympathy were her chief characteristics. The obituary notice in the "Times" described her as "Poet, Journalist, Author and Suffragette." The divine spark of genius is in her poetry. As a journalist, she was on the staff of "Country Life" for many years. As an author, her chief works were her novels, "Mainspring," "The Colour of Youth," and her volume of Essays, "Pied Piper's Street." These writings show her sympathy with youth, together with her sense of humour. Her strong feeling for those who suffered in life's battle, or were unjustly treated, took a more practical form, and revealed her as an ardent reformer. . . She found the austerity and discipline in school-life, as it was in our young days, hard to endure, but she declared in later life that no other training would have fitted her so well to combat her life's hardships.

She had a large circle of friends who enjoyed her writings from a literary standpoint, and no doubt, also admired her for her independence of character, her industry and honesty, her love of perfection, the purity of her life and work, and refusal to fall below her high ideals. The example of her character, added to the charm and beauty of her work, cannot fail to bear fruit.

To this inadequate appreciation I add two of her poems which reveal her more clearly than I can.

These words are written to her dear memory by her friend, Agnes Hobbins.

The poems run:

Planting Trees

Today six slender fruit trees grow
Where yesterday were none
They have been planted by my hand
And they shall dazzle in the sun
When all my springs are done

Two apples shall unfold their rose
Two cherries their snow, two pears;
And fruit shall hang where blossom blows
When I am gone from these sweet airs
And none live on who cares

My heart is glad, my heart is high
With sudden ecstasy!
I have given back, before I die
Some thanks for every lovely tree
That dead men grew for me

The Road

We shall not travel by the road we make
Ere day by day the sound of many feet
Is heard upon the stones that now we break,
We shall be come to where the crossroads meet.

For us the heat by day, the cold by night
The inch slow progress and the heavy load,
And death, at last, to close the long grim fight
With man, and beast and stone: For them the road

For them the shade of trees that now we plant
The safe, smooth journey, and the certain goal
Yes, birthright in the land of covenant;
For us day labour, travail of the soul,

And yet the road is ours as never theirs
Is not one gift on us alone bestowed?
For us, the joy of joys, oh pioneers,
We shall not travel, but we **make** the road!