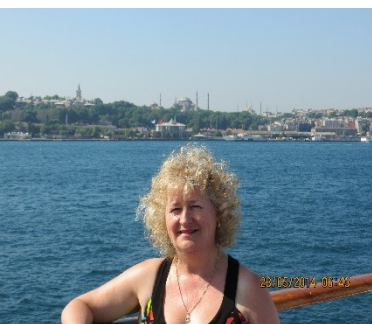


## LIFE AFTER TANFIELD



NAME Julie Knox (née Rowland)

PUPIL AT TANFIELD FROM 1967 to 1972

I started at Tanfield when it was still SGS but it soon after became Tanfield. I loved my first year there but lost interest when most of my friends moved into the A stream in the second year and I moved into the Alpha stream. My grades plummeted and I was more than happy to leave in 1972 after achieving 4 O-levels in the 5<sup>th</sup> form. Had I worked harder I am sure I would have got more but I didn't revise at all. I started my working life as a professional dancer in night clubs in the North East which I loved and did for 2 years before becoming a croupier at a casino in Newcastle.

After a year in the job I was made redundant when they closed one of the casinos and I decided it was time to grow up and get a 'proper' job. I did my city and guilds certificate in computer programming which is something Tanfield hadn't offered at the time as it was quite new and not something girls really did. This was the time when a basic computer read punch cards or paper tape and filled a room. I went on to do a year of my HND in computer studies at Sunderland Poly but when I got a vacation job as a computer operator at Birtley Co-Op I knew I needed to get back to full time work as college life was not for me. So I wrote to all the companies locally that I knew had computers offering to do anything to get a start and was taken on as trainee programmer by Caterpillar Tractors.

From there I moved through a series of jobs in the public (local government and NHS) and private sectors, progressing from programmer, through systems analyst, project manager to eventually becoming the Head of IT at Gateshead Council, where I implemented a lot of change to secure the future of my 72 staff. I was now more a manager than an IT person, procuring large contracts, managing a significant budget and the large number of staff who delivered all sorts of services from Help desk to Business Analysis and regular systems development. I was as a female still in the minority in the IT sector and had spent most of my working life often as the only female in the department. Things started to change when I was at Gateshead as IT was becoming more of an option in schools and colleges. From here I went on to become the Regional Implementation Manager for the NHS National Programme for IT. This was my last job and I was lucky enough to take early retirement at 51. I was made redundant twice during my career and the second time for the two months I was out of full time work I had a part time job in a local saddlery and another promoting cigarettes (which I hate and have never smoked) in supermarkets, until a suitable job came along. I had responsibilities and would have taken any work to make sure I could make ends meet.

I married quite late and have no family which was by choice but have always had a passion for animals and kept horses for 44 years. I lost my home bred horse in quite tragic circumstances and went on to write a book about his life to try to raise funds for a vaccine to prevent other horse owners from going through the same thing. The book My Quest For Life is still available on Amazon

and Claire King the actress and amateur jockey, kindly wrote the foreword for me. I still have a rescue long haired German shepherd who I enjoy doing training with and a few years ago I did a walk with wolves in Cumbria.

I also have a love of cars and have owned sports cars for the last 20 years and completed my advanced driving test, done a stunt driving course, a skid pan course and numerous off road courses. I did complete 2 hours of flying time with a lesson in a private plane and a helicopter, but decided if I continued there would be nowhere to park the plane! So in summary I've quite enjoyed life and am proud of how things turned out in the end.