

Lady Anne Blunt

Zain Hasan 9-B School Council

In the British International School Riyadh, students are placed into one of four houses - Blunt, Doughty, Pitts and Palgrave. These houses are named after famous explorers who ventured into Arabia. I am in Blunt House, which was named after Lady Anne Blunt. Her husband, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, was a poet and the author of books and pamphlets about politics. The Blunts are credited with saving the thoroughbred Arabian horse from extinction.

Lady Anne Blunt, the granddaughter of Lord Byron was an Arabic scholar, author and explorer. She was born Lady Annabella King, daughter of the first Earl and Countess of Lovelace. Lady Anne was taught by a succession of governesses under the surveillance of Lady Byron. Her drawing master was Ruskin, and the great impresario Joachim was her violin teacher.

In adulthood she became the first western woman to make a recorded journey to central Arabia, the first to enter the citadel of Hail, home of the ruling House of Ibn Rashid. She wrote two of the best-known books of Arabian travel and exploration, *A Pilgrimage to Nejd* and *The Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*.

Lady Anne is famous for some of her artwork. She spoke fluently in French, German, Italian, and Spanish, had a considerable artistic talent and some musical skills. Later on Arabic, not English, became her first language and, she insisted, the language of her dreams and thoughts. She was a courageous woman, tough, resourceful, cool-headed in life-threatening crises, self-reliant and adaptable. She had a major interest in Orientalism and horses.

In late November of 1877 Lady Anne returned with her husband to the Middle East to begin their first expedition. However it was not until January 9, 1878 that their caravan departed from Aleppo.



Above: A delightful study in water-colour of a mare and foal at her Sheikh Obeyd Stud [near Cairo] by Lady Anne Blunt

In late 1878 the Blunts decided to return to the Middle East, this time to enter and explore northern Arabia, Najd and the highlands sacred to all Syrian Bedouins as their ancestral homeland. Isolated by rugged mountains and fierce deserts, few regions in the world were more inaccessible than this. Only three European men had come before them in this feat. Lady Anne was the first European woman to visit the Arabian Peninsula.

On December 15, 1917 Lady Anne died in Cairo. She will always be remembered as the pioneer in the field of female exploration. The Lady achieved remarkable feats that few women have attempted. Also thanks to her, the Arabian horse was saved from extinction.

This is why our Green House has been named after such a majestic woman. I am proud to be in Blunt House because of Lady Anne.

