

THE

December 2014



Sibford Rocket

The annual newsletter of Sibford Old Scholars' Association



INSIDE:

The former pupils who helped create the sea of poppies at the Tower of London

Sibford scholar's fitting career revealed

The origins of a SOSA tradition unveiled

PLUS

News from the annual reunion, former scholars remembered and AGM reports



SOSA

Welcome to **The Sibford Rocket**, the 2014 annual newsletter of Sibford Old Scholars' Association (SOSA).

For younger readers this is a new name for the publication ... but for many it is the return of an old name ... the SOSA newsletter was called **The Sibford Rocket** from 2000 until 2007.

The revival of the name reflects a change in communication with Old Scholars. Since 2008, SOSA members have received two magazines: **The Newsletter** (published in April) and **The Sibfordian**, the school's annual magazine which also featured SOSA news (published in September).

With the increase in postal costs, the committee has decided that, with effect from 2014, SOSA will now produce just one magazine, **The Sibford Rocket**, which will be published in December. SOSA will no longer be involved with, or distribute, **The Sibfordian**. For those of you who still wish to keep up to date with news of current activities at the school, a copy of **The Sibfordian** 2014 can be requested for a minimum donation of £2 to cover postage. Alternatively you can read a digital version by visiting the Sibford School website: www.sibfordschool.co.uk.

But why ... either now or in the past ... call the magazine the 'Rocket'? It all dates back to the 1920s when a curious one-off activity suddenly became a SOSA tradition. To read more about the origins of 'rockets' turn to page 10.

Elsewhere in **The Sibford Rocket** you'll find news about Old Scholars involvement in Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red ... the fabulous installation of ceramic poppies at the Tower of London; details of Sibford's past and present association with an Oxfordshire hospice and the tale of how a former Sibford pupil stitched up Beatle George Harrison! There's also reports from the annual reunion and AGM and we remember old friends no longer with us.

In Friendship
Ali Bromhall
Editor

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Chris Phillips ... then and now

With **The Sibford Rocket** being distributed in December, who knows what the weather will be like when the magazine drops through your letterbox? Sibford Old Scholar Chris Phillips is pretty confident it will be warm and sunny ... but then he is currently living on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, Australia! In deference to the British weather however, he recalls a particular chilly time at Sibford ...

The Winter of 1947 was one of the coldest I have ever experienced. Large parts of Southern England were covered in deep snow ... and Sibford was no exception.

It was normal practice at that time to sleep in one of the two big dormitories at The Hill and walk down to the Old School for morning breakfast.

I recall that we had all the dormitory windows open all night as it was considered a great deal healthier! The early morning frosts used to freeze the water in our hair on that walk down from the Hill before breakfast.

Snowfalls always created great tobogganing down the slopes of Oddie's Field and many boys actually brought back their own toboggans from home for the winter term.

During a particular cold spell the heating at the Hill broke down. Not only that but the school was cut off for two weeks. All road deliveries were halted and I remember some of the older boys had to bring in supplies such as milk and bread by sledge.

I have a firm recollection of walking along the Sibford/

Banbury road with my eyes level with the telephone wires ... that gives some indication of the depth of the drifts. Somehow we survived it.

We must have been quite a hardy lot in those days because we always seemed to wear the same clothes, shorts, although we were allowed long socks and a V-necked jumper under a blazer in winter as further insulation against the low temperature.

The boy's common room was a large hut situated near the entrance of what used to be the boy's changing rooms. I believe it was built with money provided by Old Scholars, but long gone now. It was heated by a stove that, once lit, was fed with coke from a pile outside which miraculously never seemed to reduce in size. It was possible to get this stove so hot that we were able to toast bread on forks held adjacent to it.

My memory tells me that this was the only time we felt really warm during these cold periods, but age tends to play tricks on one's memory in the way that Summer always seemed to be endless during childhood!

Sibford's connection with the sea of poppies

The Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red installation at the Tower of London has attracted more than four million visitors since the first poppies were 'planted' on 5th August 2014.

Undoubtedly many Old Scholars will have been among those who have been to see the exhibition, which ultimately featured 888,246 hand-made poppies, one for each of the British and Colonial soldiers, sailors and airmen who perished in the first World War.

However, what they probably didn't realise, is the fact that former Sibford pupils have been involved in creating many of those poppies.

Adam Keeling (1990-95), Theodora (Tio) Keeling (1999-2004), Kylie Cobb-Stainer (1990-96), Simon Garne (1991-93), Robert Rivett (1990-2001) and Laurie Freeman (2004-05) all work at Whichford Pottery near Shipston on Stour.

Ceramic artist Paul Cummins, who came up with the idea for the installation, approached the pottery (which was founded by Adam and Tio's parents, Jim and Dominique) to ask them to help.

And since then the team have been making around 9,000 poppies a week ... ultimately contributing 95,000 poppies to the installation.

Columba Keeling (at Sibford 2002-2009) also joined the poppy production line for two months before beginning an MA in Amsterdam. Meanwhile, sister Maia (1996-2004), who runs the pottery coffee shop, The Straw Kitchen, made sure the team was kept suitably refreshed during their labours.

Tio said: "We feel very privileged to be part of this incredible art installation. It has been a project that has captured people's imaginations and showcased



British ceramics at their best. The whole team has worked very hard to make sure tight deadlines were met and we are proud to have been chosen to use our skill and experience to produce these poppies."

At the beginning of November the whole team went to London to visit the installation.

"It was incredible," said Tio. "It was a very moving experience and we all went very quiet and contemplative when we saw it."

Pictured:

- Above: The poppies take shape ... the team has been producing some 9,000 a week.
- Below left: Old Scholars Kylie Cobb-Stainer, Robert Rivett, Simon Garne, Tio Keeling and Columba Keeling.
- Below right: Robert Rivett, poppy project production manager, with some of the last poppies to leave the pottery.



An unlikely reunion

When Andrew Rice-Oxley was a pupil at Worksop College he never dreamt that he would one day be working alongside his then English teacher 'Higgins'.

Nor, for that matter, did he suspect that his wife, Susan, would also end up sharing a staff room with the aforementioned teacher. But that's exactly what happened when the pair joined the staff at Sibford back in the 1970s.

Susan was the first to arrive in 1973, initially employed to teach biology (while June Ellis enjoyed a sabbatical year). "The



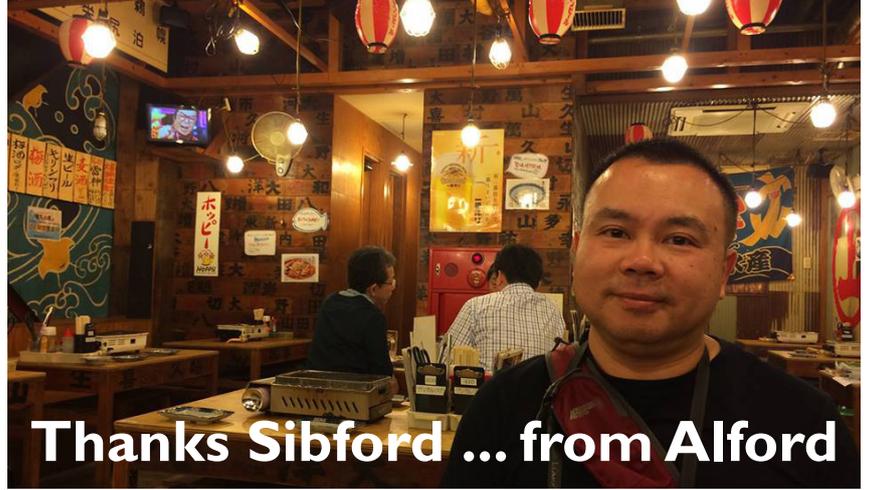
Quaker tradition of using only first names was very strong so we didn't know each other's surnames," she explains. "I knew this chap who taught English was called Geoff but I only discovered his surname when I was asked to pass a note to a 'Mr Higgins'." In passing on the message Susan let slip her own surname to which Geoff exclaimed: 'Are you any relation to the Worksop Rice-Oxleys?'

"The penny suddenly dropped," says Susan. "Higgins had been quite a character back in the day and Andrew and his brothers were always recalling him. When he mentioned Worksop I immediately said: 'so you're the famous Higgins' ... and we had a good laugh."

Shortly after a vacancy came up for an English teacher and Higgins was delighted to find himself working with his former pupil.

"We both came on short term contracts," said Andrew. "But ended up staying at Sibford until 1977. I enjoyed some happy times working under Higgins and remember with special fondness the end of year shows we produced."

Now retired, Susan and Andrew run a bed and breakfast hotel on Offa's Dyke Path and would love to see any former Sibford pupils who might remember them. For further information visit: www.banksideoffasdyke.co.uk/
Andrew and Susan Rice-Oxley are pictured on a recent visit to Sibford School.



When I was six, my cousins and I had a tradition of playing Monopoly whenever we gathered for Chinese New Year. The game struck me as a game of luck. No skill required, just roll the dice and buy the houses. Years gone by, I feel lucky to play the same game ... but in real life as a business.

My name is Alford Lau. I am a real estate investor residing in Calgary in Canada. I make a living by improving properties physically (space and content), legally (title) and/or financially (income or financing to the next buyer).

Having a real estate agent licence and a wife who is an interior designer has helped me improve the odds of making a profit, but I believe one of the most important reasons I didn't lose my shirt during the 2008 economic crisis is due to the financial prudence instilled in me from my earlier career in banking. A career I would never have had if it hadn't been for Sibford.

I arrived at Fielding House in 1985 and was greeted by the house mistress Catherine Tissington and her husband. The next couple of months were some of the darkest in my life. All the nicest people in the school would come and introduce themselves to me ... but I could not understand them. It was humiliating and frustrating, but I hid my anxiety by pretending to be calm and quiet. Luckily, EST teacher Tony Rye accelerated our learning of English and by the end of the academic year, I found myself conversing in English better than friends who had stayed in the UK for a few years.

Time at Sibford was wonderful. Life was structured, I had a lot of support from peers and staff alike, and am very grateful for their understanding and patience. Fielding was the living quarter for 6th form. We had a lot of freedom but were expected to maintain our rooms respectfully. The meals were served at a specific time in the canteen. I miss the custard and apple pie!

From Sibford, I would graduate from North Oxfordshire Technical College with a diploma in business and finance. Unlike my schooling days in Hong Kong, I got respectable academic results for the diploma which landed me acceptance by Leicester Polytechnic for a higher diploma in same. Due to loss of focus, I didn't finish at Leicester but was lucky enough to land a job in Barclays Bank PLC in Hong Kong as a junior member of the corporate banking division.

I would switch career many times from then on, mostly in the finance and trading industries, but all of these would not have happened if I hadn't experienced the care from Sibford. I am now 47, happily married with the same caring girl I knew from Leicester Polytechnic and have a considerate daughter now 18.

Amy hatches wedding day surprise

Amy Anderson (née Charles) joined Sibford in 2002 for Sixth Form ... and describes the subsequent two years as some of the best of her life. "My past experience of school was a difficult one," she says. "I was bullied, there was no support for my dyslexia and it was 'uncool' to work hard or achieve. Sibford was a totally different story. I loved it



Amy and Mark are pictured on their wedding day with sons Jacob (standing) and Oscar.

and left with three good – and before coming to Sibford, unachievable – A Levels." During her time at Sibford, Amy was heavily involved with music and drama and subsequently went on to work in the music industry. She returned to Sibford for Open Day in June 2013, a visit that planted the seeds of a novel idea for her forthcoming wedding ...

In 2013, thinking ahead to my wedding on 6 April 2014, I came up with the crazy idea of recording the first dance song as a surprise for my soon to be husband on the big day (I'm a singer by trade).

I needed somewhere that wouldn't cost a bomb and where I'd be able to find some musicians to help. That's when I came up with the idea of approaching Sibford to see if my old school could assist.

Thankfully, true to Sibford's charm and willingness to help, music teacher Matt Platt accepted the challenge and roped in people across the school to help make this project a success.

My part of the recording only took an evening, but the editing and instrumental parts took quite a while to get right because Matt and the team are such perfectionists!

I was given the recording of the song – 'Come Away with Me' by Nora Jones – a few weeks before our big day and it was discreetly delivered to the DJ, ready for the 6th of April – all under everyone's nose!

Needless to say, the surprise went off without a glitch! My husband had no idea ... and the only criticism I could make was the fact it was actually done too well! It wasn't until I told Mark 'that was me and the Sibford team on that recording' before the penny dropped!

We're so incredibly touched and thankful to Matt and co for their care and attention throughout and to Sibford for letting us use their facilities and staff. Even though I left Sibford over 10 years ago – this school keeps on giving to its old scholars! Thank you for everything.

Exploring the teenage brain

Former Head Girl, Jessica Memarzia (at Sibford 2005-2007), returned to school in October 2013 to talk about the complexities of the teenage brain.

"I'm hugely passionate about talking about the brain and mental health," said Jessica. "Sibford gave me all the necessary tools that I needed to attend university and follow this research path and so I was delighted to come back and

share some thoughts with pupils, parents and staff."

After leaving Sibford, Jessica completed an undergraduate degree in Experimental Psychology and Neurophysiology at Oxford University, where she developed a strong passion for developmental neuroscience and young people's mental health. She subsequently studied for an MSc in Mental Health at the Institute of

Psychiatry, King's College London, and has spent the past year working as a research assistant in the Developmental and Lifecourse Research Group at the Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge.



Tailor-made! Sibford scholar's fitting career revealed

It is always a revelation to discover the diversity of careers that Sibford Old Scholars follow. There have been actors, adventurers, brain surgeons and broadcasters to name but a few. But until recently we didn't know that we had a top tailor in our midst. Mike Finch reports on the career of John Barrett, who was at Sibford from 1956 to 1961.

John Barrett was brought up in London and came to Sibford in 1956 when Hugh Maw was Head. John recalls: "I have a lot to thank Hugh & Daphne for. When I first arrived at Sibford I was in poor health and Hugh arranged for me to have a spell at Banbury Hospital where I spent several months. After a period back home I returned to Sibford in full health and eventually became a Prefect. I always think of Sibford as my family home and all my friends at Sibford as my real family."

It was at Sibford that John demonstrated some of his first talents in tailoring. For a small consideration he would taper his friends' trousers, a fashion that was in vogue in the late 1950s. He also altered a girl's skirt and the school Matron commented that he was the only boy who never asked to have a button sewn on!

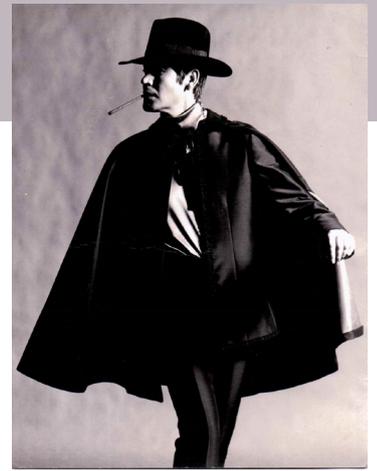
John left Sibford in 1961 and was apprenticed as a Tailor and Cutter to H. Huntsman in Savile Row. In 1965 he moved to Lillico & Hacker of Maddox Street and during the next two years was promoted to Head Cutter and Designer, became a Master Tailor (the youngest ever

in London's West End, all before he was 21) and was appointed as a Junior Director. He left in 1967 to join Courtlands as a Master Tailor, specialising in film wardrobes and Judges regalia.

John felt his greatest privilege was being part of the team cutting and designing the Royal wedding dress for the marriage of Princess Alexandra to Angus Ogilvie in 1963. Meanwhile, some of his most exciting times were when he was working with Gerry and Sylvia Anderson on their 'outer space' films. During this period he found himself rubbing shoulders with a host of celebrities including Omar Sharif, Katie Boyle, Peter Ustinov, William Hartnell, The Rolling Stones and The Beatles ... in 1969 John was at a concert by the Fab Four in Covent Garden and ended up doing a last minute repair when George Harrison split his trousers!

David and Richard Attenborough were two celebrities for whom John worked for on a personal basis, making their suits and topcoats. He comments: "Richard would arrive in his convertible green Bentley and always greeted me with the words 'Hello darling, how are you today?' David could be a nightmare as he couldn't stand still for me to do a fitting, but both of them were real gentlemen and a great pleasure to know."

In 1971 John made a life changing decision and left tailoring. "I wanted to get married and buy my own house but wages in tailoring at this time were too low to achieve this," he explains. However, he didn't leave the industry altogether and became a successful



fabric sales representative with a number of companies, eventually becoming Sales Marketing Director with Worthington PLC. In a twist of fate, John was forced to leave Worthington's when his parents were taken seriously ill and he became their main carer for some five years.

In 1997, he set-up his own business 'John Barrett Agencies' supplying tailors merchants. But, three years later, he decided to move away from London. "By now most of the main garment manufacturing had moved abroad," he says. "Some of my friends had gone into liquidation and I wanted to get away from the rat race."

He opened a B&B Hotel in Exeter, which he ran for 10 years before retiring and moving to Silverton in Devon where he met his second wife Gill. They married on 17th April 2014. Now in his 70s, John seems to have embarked upon a new career in charitable work. He set-up St. David's Soup Kitchen in Exeter, is currently Vice Chair (soon to be Chair) of Silverton Parish Council, and is also a Director of Exeter Community Initiatives - the largest charity in Exeter.

John follows a long line of successful Sibfordians and as they say in sporting circles: 'The boy done good'!

Pictured above: Cape and jacket designed by John in 1969. Left: John and Gill on their wedding day.





The Katharine House Hospice is located in Adderbury, four miles south of Banbury on the borders of Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire amidst beautiful gardens where peace and tranquillity prevail.

The Hospice building was completed in 1991 and today the specialist palliative care services offered include in-patient, day hospice, community care at home, home night nursing, support for patients at Banbury's Horton General hospital, out-patients, lymphoedema treatment and bereavement support.

The hospice stands as a living memorial to the life of former Sibford pupil, Katharine Gadsby, who in 1984, tragically died of cancer at the age of twenty. Since

the time of her death her parents Neil and Heather Gadsby, together with friends and many other people have worked tirelessly to raise funds to develop the hospice services.

Neil continues to be Chairman of the hospice and ensures that the key principles on which the hospice was built are never forgotten. On the following page he recalls his first impressions of Sibford School, his respect for the Quaker ethos and recalls some of the many connections that exist between the Hospice and the School.

Meanwhile, head of fund raising at the Hospice, another Sibford Old Scholar looks back on her school days and shares her delight at being able to come back to receive a cheque in support of the hospice

Former pupil heads hospice fundraising

I was a day pupil at Sibford School in the early 1990s and look back on my time at Sibford with very fond and happy memories, writes Helen Mariner (née Yeomans).

The school's Quaker values and focus on the uniqueness of every child greatly helped me to build confidence and make strong friendships. I particularly liked the quiet of the morning meeting, the beautiful setting and the excellent variety of activities on offer.

My biggest passion at Sibford School was music. I regularly played the flute at morning meeting and took part in the Banbury Young Musician of the Year competition. Just before I left Sibford School in 1993, I performed in the orchestra for a production of 'Brilliant the Dinosaur,' written and conducted by Richard Stilgoe ... it was a wonderful way to end my time there.

Twenty years on, in November 2013, I joined Katharine House Hospice as Head of Fundraising, and was delighted to see what



Helen Mariner receives a cheque for £670.38 from Sam Halliday and Gareth Bown, two of the current Sibford pupils who have been raising money by holding regular milk shake sales during the school lunchtime.

a close partnership and synergy there is between Sibford School and Katharine House.

As a pupil I was aware that Katharine Gadsby had studied at Sibford, and also that she loved music, too. Being able to visit Sibford School again in my new role and represent Katharine

House is a real privilege, and I very much look forward to working together in the future.

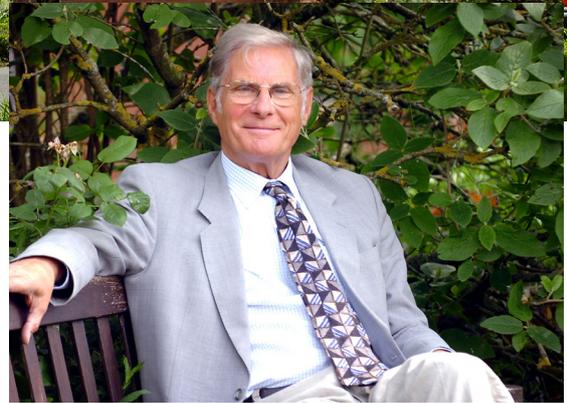
I'd like to say thank you to Sibford, both for the education, support and care I was lucky enough to receive 20 years ago and also for the school's tremendous support for Katharine House.



Katharine House Hospice and the Sibford connection

By Neil Gadsby
Chairman

Katharine House Hospice Trust



In recent years Sibford School has joined many others in the local community to support Katharine House Hospice.

Enterprising events have been highly successful in raising funds for those who turn to the hospice at the end of life, but also I believe are of educational value to the participants. I understand that this applies particularly to the business studies students, through their sale of milkshakes. It is heart-warming to know the desire to help the less-fortunate is alive and well, but, of course, it would be in a Quaker society.

My first experience of Sibford School was as a parent seeking a suitable secondary education for my daughter, Katharine. Although not Quakers ourselves, my wife and I were attracted by the ethos summed up by the Quaker testimonies - 'Truth and Integrity', 'Justice and Equality', 'Simplicity and Peace'.

The school seemed to provide an ethos that would encourage friendliness and consideration for others; independence – freedom to be oneself within the constraints

of caring for others and the development of a quiet mind.

A focus on practical skills, as well as intellectual studies, was another attraction; and of course the belief that all have something of value within them is essential to human wellbeing.

Having recently re-read Michael Finch's history of Sibford, 'A View from the Hill', I am reminded of Goethe's belief that 'Education is a wise unfolding of what nature teaches us' - an excellent description of the Sibford ethos.

I think Katharine's five year experience of Sibford up to 1980 confirmed that we had made the correct choice. The opportunity to be creative practically and musically as well as ending up with academic achievements, which lead to tertiary education, is testimony to the success of the experience.

Unfortunately Katharine died in 1984. Shortly afterward the eponymous charity was founded with a view to establishing a hospice. Katharine House opened in 1991 and since then has benefitted many thousands of people at the end of life, as well as

their families. So the contribution that Sibford School has made is very highly valued.

Three other interesting connections with Sibford are of note. Last year Helen Mariner, who was a Sibford pupil, was appointed as Fundraising Manager, bringing with her a wide experience and a personality just right for the hospice. The Deputy Chairman of the Trustees of the hospice is Richard Greaves, son of Kenneth, who was headmaster at Sibford from 1972 to 1980, and thus was Katharine's headmaster. Another former pupil Paul Eddington was an original patron of the charity.

I think that the relationship between the two organisations is an example of what politicians have referred to as 'The Big Society', which in my view has nothing at all to do with politicians, but is the way in which many of the good things in a community happen spontaneously.

It remains for me to say thank you to Sibford for their highly valued support of Katharine House and of course for Katharine's happy and successful school career.

The above article originally appeared in the 2014 issue of The Sibfordian

Kim Wheeler was born in London on the 29th July 1954 and was immediately taken into care. At the age of 11 he was sent to board at Sibford School. Despite a rocky start, Kim eventually settled in and when he left, aged 15, it was with a love of outdoor pursuits and music. Kim worked in what he describes as 'several dead end jobs' before finding contentment driving 40 ton trucks. He was also a professional decorator and owned his own decorating business. Over a period of 30 years he suffered from several physical and mental injuries resulting in near death and finally disability with an incurable spine injury and was ordered to cease all types of manual work. Today he is doing what he always wanted to do ... writing and making books. He has written over 100 published poems and prose and several books, inspired by his own experiences. He is also a self-taught photographer. Here he recalls his memories of Sibford School in the 1960s.



The Sibford I hated and adored!

Once the trauma and shock of being told 'you're going to boarding school,' eventually dissipated, I actually thought 'hey this could be fun'... oh yeah right! Youth and ignorance, aided by stupidity, hope and an uncanny knack of being wrong, can totally ruin a child's dreams.

Not one single word was spoken during the 70-mile drive, and we silently found our way to Penn House where we were greeted by the grinning housemaster who spoke at some length with my Mother. I heard a distant, 'well goodbye then,' as I stood silently staring out across the barren school fields wondering 'what did I do to deserve this?'

I had joined Sibford in the second form after spending my first year of senior school at a local school appropriately named, 'Headstone.' I therefore had the misfortune of having to sleep in the first formers' part of the dorm; the humiliation still haunts me to this day.

On the bed across the way was a kid reading the Beano, 'oh I like the Beano,' I whispered to myself and with a quick flick of the wrist, the Beano came flying over to my bed by one grinning Andrew Arnold, my first friend. I jumped on the rock face of a bed and smiled.

Soon I was to be shown the rest of Penn as other pupils arrived,

some carrying truckloads of tuck, I quickly hid my term's ration of a box of Ritz biscuits and a fork. The school food was appalling and we were always, always hungry apart from those who had Grocery stores in their locked lockers.

The first night sleep was greeted by some uncontrolled sobbing, my mind raced to find a crumb of kindness or even a few caring words. I slept well, I felt fine, I was happy to be away, really very happy. How long would this last? I wondered ... well in truth not that long.

I soon settled into the overly strict regime. I closed my brain and stared out of the window for the rest of term. I began to fail and fail dramatically. My only source of light and happiness? New found friends, some sports and riding my bike as fast as I could away from this hell ... and then came music, ahh music, Jimi Hendrix and Rory Gallagher, my saviours in times of loneliness and despair. The opening salvos to Pinball Wizard, Purple Haze and All Along the Watchtower, the simple but beautiful love songs of The Beatles, the raunchy riffs of the Stones, Kinks, Eloise by Barry Ryan and the tranquillity of Bridge over Troubled Waters. Yes at last I had found a place where I was accepted. Detention followed detention.

Writing 'lines' one thousand times was not teaching me anything but to get angrier and to be honest, I had already had enough of that. So school was beautiful when it was beautiful but also incredibly cold and harsh.

Then out of nowhere came a real breakthrough, Table Tennis, oh joy what absolute unbridled joy, I could play and remove all my rage and anger and man did I play and I got good. Why? Because Table Tennis let loose the boundless energies I had enclosed, developed over many years of restrictions and strict rules of order.

I left Sibford crying, I left behind some of the nicest kids I have ever known. I was leaving my new family to return to my old family who, some four years prior, was happy to leave. Now almost grown up, with many wonderful experiences of fun but without many qualifications, I returned home. It was one of the saddest days of my life.

Thank you Sibford ... but I'm still unsure why. I hated you ... and I adored you, I loved the girls and the rubbish films, the dancing with pretend guitar in hand on disco nights. I loved where you were situated and I guess there was no better place for a child like me to

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SOSA gets new website

At the beginning of April 2014 a new SOSA Web Site was published.

So far over 1,000 individuals have visited the site and over 120 people have registered which isn't bad going.

The site, which is managed by Ashley Shirlin, contains information on SOSA, recent photographs and photos from the Archives and other news.

Once registered, users can make their own comments to share on the site.

"I update the site on a regular basis and hope that Old Scholars will visit it on a regular basis," says Ashley.

"Although you don't have to register on the site to view the majority of the content SOSA would appreciate it if you did as this is a much easier way to keep your information up to date and to provide you with more regular updates."

SOSA Support

SOSA has been delighted in recent years to be able to provide financial support to the School.

It's good to be able to give back something to the institution that provided us with our own education.

Recent donations have included: £30,000 to refurbish the Hall, £4,000 to the Junior School Adventure Playground, £6,000 to a new farm building, enabling the school to continue its agricultural heritage and £300 to help individual scholars.

We have also given £500 to help with the creation of a new Peace Garden, which was officially opened on 11 November 2014, (see article on page 12).

It's hardly rocket science

To many of our readers, especially those who have joined SOSA's merry band in recent years, 'The Sibford Rocket' might leave them with incredulity and total incomprehension on how SOSA had evolved such a mysterious legend into their folklore and why they chose to name their annual magazine in such a way – but don't be alarmed – it's all a bit of harmless fun – but is it? - Our Archivist Mike Finch has the answer.

Early in 1920 some London Old Scholars went away for a weekend conference at a house near Guildford. On Saturday evening, an open-air concert was followed by the final item on the agenda ... an action event with all present asked to give an imitation of pyrotechnics (it must have been a Quaker conference!).

Shortly after the weekend's events, SOSA's London Branch, who were rehearsing for the entertainment they were going to give at the next Old Scholars' Reunion (which was then held at Whitsuntide), thought that an adaptation of their Guildford 'Rocket' might prove popular (the biggest understatement in SOSA's history!) if introduced at the Elm Garden along with the traditional walk and sing-song.

The action of 'The Rocket' was discussed, criticised, amended and perfected and on the Whit Monday evening of 24th May 1920, it made its bow to the astonishment of the late and long-lamented Elm trees looking down in bewilderment as Old Scholars performed their very first Rocket.

The following Whitsun, The Rocket was done much better and it was agreed that thereafter it should become an annual event. Its popularity grew like Topsy and it soon became de facto at Old Scholar gatherings and not exclusively at the Elm. The walls at the Old Gym at the Manor have reverberated to our community effort; the Dining Room at the Hill has become the main venue usually held after the Presidential Dinner although this year it was performed in the car park outside; it terminated the first Birmingham Branch dance in the 1920's; the walls of Friends House have many times rung with our descriptive clamour.

Rockets have been performed in Epping Forest and on the Malvern Hills at the conclusion of summer outings. Even at Paddington, Liverpool Street and New Street rail stations the public have marvelled at our unique tryst. Once, on an Old Scholars' outing to Jordans, the Rocket was performed on the small platform at Seer Green station to the amazement of other

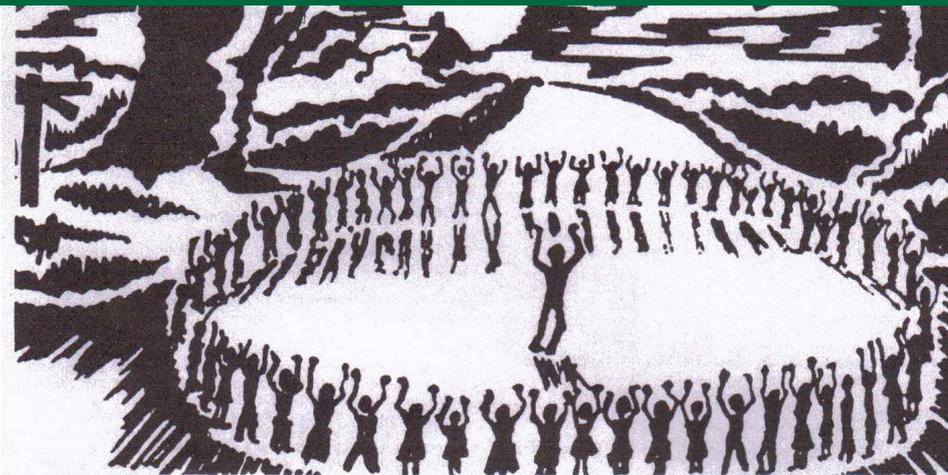
waiting passengers who applauded and demanded an encore!

But surely the greatest location for a Rocket must have been at a Sibford Appeal function held in the Orangery at Blenheim Palace in 2001.

The 'Silent Rocket'



... the story behind an odd tradition



emerged in the 1930's when the then Headmaster, the indomitable Arthur Johnstone, complained at being kept awake by the late night revelry at the Elm. In quiet defiance of the admonishment handed out by 'AJ', a group of Old Scholars led by such notables as Kathleen Rice, Henry Lawrence (School Committee Member!) and Harry Randall (CBE!) decided to hold a silent Rocket outside of the front door of the Manor where the Head and his wife lived at the time. However, they were so engulfed with laughter they merely succeeded in waking 'AJ' yet again!

Mini Rockets became part of the repertoire in the late 1950's. The Rocket circle had traditionally straddled the Elm crossroads but with the increasing volume of traffic it was felt that, in the interests of safety, the event should be held in the Elm Garden, much to the disgust of the young bucks of that time (Pete Baily, Nick Bennett and Mike Finch) who decided to have a mini circle with a mini Rocket on the side of the road! Now some 55 years on, this is also part of the tradition.

Numbers attending the

Rocket at the Elm have varied according to weather conditions. The unofficial attendance record is 125, set in the immediate post-war years of the late 1940's – but it has been pushed close on many occasions – this year there was a very respectable 65 present in the school car park outside the dining room.

This magnificent unique tradition has stood the test of time and despite such ingenious innovations like live rockets, the 'real event' has stood the test of time and still endures after 94 years – and long may it continue. (But honestly, how many of you managed to touch your toes last time?)

Pictured opposite page: 1948 cartoon by Margaret Fairnington (Kissack). Above: 1930s cartoon by Howard Quinton. Below: SOSA President (2013/14) Caroline Mills and Mike Finch lead 'Rockets' at the 2014 reunion.



continued from page 9

be between the ages of 11 and 16. Still, when I hear those old songs from 1966 to 1970, it's Sibford I remember, the happy place, the happy child and his happy friends which now, is sadly a lifetime and a distant memory ago.

So here I am now, 60-years old and a published author and photographer. I only took up writing books a few years ago. I should, in all honesty, have been doing this at Sibford and perhaps if I had, I may well have made a decent career out of it.

My first book *Battle Scarred Journey* is not an easy read, it wasn't easy to write. I wrote it for two reasons, one, as a way to self heal as I found writing, cathartic and secondly, to help so many others, who, through no fault of their own just fell over and found it hard to stand.

Sibford was a Quaker Boarding school where we were taught to care and look out for others, in this book of brutal honesty, I believe I have.

Please visit my website: www.kimwheeler.co.uk.



New Peace Garden opened

Sibford School marked Armistice Day 2014 with the opening of a new Peace Garden.

The garden, which was part funded by SOSA, was created by pupils in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I and also as a tribute to former student, Conrad Lewis, who was killed in Afghanistan on 9 February 2011.

Returning to the school to perform the official opening were Conrad's parents, Tony and Sandi Lewis.

A commitment to peace lies at the heart of Quaker belief. Quakers think of peace as an approach to living in the world and working for social change, rather than simply an ideological opposition to war and to violence.

And the Peace Garden, which will be a place where pupils, staff, Old Scholars and other visitors to the school will be able to go for quiet reflection, therefore seemed a fitting tribute to Conrad.

"We couldn't be more humbled, pleased



Sibford head Michael Goodwin is pictured with Sandi and Tony Lewis seated on the Conrad Lewis memorial bench in the new Peace Garden.

and delighted to be here today," said Tony Lewis. "What has been produced is absolutely appropriate for the school, really appropriate for Conrad and beautiful for us. I think it is a stunning memorial to Conrad and to peace and we will certainly be back with Conrad's brother and sister and other

friends and family over the months and years to come."

The Armistice Day ceremony, which was attended by more than 400 people, included readings by pupils, staff and parents and, following a silence at 11am, concluded with the playing of Abide With Me by 15-year-old pupil George Johnson-Briscoe on trumpet.

Tony Lewis said: "It is a real honour to open this Peace Garden. Conrad would be surprised, humbled and absolutely delighted to be remembered in anyway at Sibford School but certainly in this way. He loved being here

"Sibford gave him so much, including a strong set of values which came out in later life and certainly when he joined the army and went to Afghanistan. I thoroughly believe that he was doing a job for peace out there, bringing peace to a nation that had struggled for many, many years and bringing change to the children and the people of Afghanistan."



Tony and Sandi Lewis were accompanied at the official opening of the Peace Garden by Conrad's dog Peg. Peg was one of many stray dogs in the Quadrant compound when Conrad arrived there back in October 2010. The pair became constant companions.

A month after Conrad's death Peg was helicoptered from the Quadrant to Camp Bastion, then transported in an armoured convoy to the Nowzad dog sanctuary in Kabul and then finally flown to the UK. She then spent six months in quarantine before being allowed to start her new life with the Lewis family.

Pictured: Left: Conrad with Peg in Afghanistan (picture courtesy of the Ministry of Defence) Inset: Conrad's school photo. Left: Peg with Sandi and Tony at the opening of the Peace Garden.



AGM 2014

The Head's Report

“ A warm welcome to Old Scholars, and in particular to those who are here for the 40th anniversary of leaving school, in 1974.

I am especially delighted to see Richard Hughes back with us and pleased to see that he is making a good recovery.

Paul Frampton, who left the School sometime around 1936!, told me at dinner last night that my Annual Reports to Old Scholars were always the same. I suppose there would be an inevitability about this if I were to report on the life of the School. Whilst particular events and highpoints will change from year to year, in the main, the life of the School flows unchanged. I don't propose to dwell on the events – we have a great website, a lovely magazine, and you can all read! Better still, you can experience the School and I hope that as well as meeting up with each other today you have had the opportunity to wander round and engage with some of our current pupils.

This is my 10th year at Sibford. You know that I was previously Head of a maintained school and at interview, back in 2003, I was asked if I imagined being Head of

an independent school would be different. I mused that it might not be – after all, in both types of setting, there were pupils and parents, teachers and timetables, curriculum and pastoral concerns. Despite this poor answer, I am delighted still that I was given the chance to be Sibford's 11th Head ... but looking back, it really was a poor answer.

I didn't recognise that there were three distinctions. The first is the whole issue of marketing and recruitment. Of course, at Sheringham, we had to recruit pupils, but most of them came to us from our catchment area, and none of their parents had to be persuaded to part with £12,000 per year. I think we have done well over the years to keep pupil numbers up – we have 407 on roll today, compared to 360 back in 2004, and as the economy maybe begins to ease out of recession, we are confident that numbers will grow again over the next five years. I am particularly delighted with the growth in numbers in our Junior school, which was close to being closed down six years ago and now has over 90 pupils.

The second difference I failed to spot was you lot – Old Scholars.

I couldn't have predicted the strength of this Association and your loyalty to and love for this place and each other, which I think springs from the third and most significant difference – the Sibford spirit, our ethos.

Of course, the School now isn't the school that you all attended and loved....Nansen Boys is Margaret Fell, the Manor is no more, only 60 of our young people board. Listening to Vince Clare talk last night about how the fifth form boys 'disciplined' younger boys in the house (standing on tiptoes, nose to the wall, with the nose having to remain within a pencilled circle!) one can be glad that we have not stood still – no institution can or should. BUT, what I have worked hard to maintain, is our Quaker core, and an attitude and a spirit which is unique.

The theme of our Open Day today has been 'People who inspire me' and I suspect that some of you are here today because a teacher at Sibford School inspired you in some way in your past.

Take a moment to think about that teacher ... my thoughts went to Margaret Le Mare, an indomitable teacher of Modern Languages who joined the



Pictured at the 2014 reunion: (Left) Paul Frampton chats with Michael Goodwin. (Right) June Ellis (centre) with former pupils Chris Leo, Pippa Lacey, David Leatherbarrow, Micky Jenkins, John Leo and Heather Collinson.



'Live adventurously.'



'...that of God in everyone.'



'...walk cheerfully over the world...'

staff in 1959 and who famously introduced cutting edge technology in the form of a Language Laboratory in the 1960s; perhaps many of you endured this contraption? As many of you will know, Margaret died earlier this year aged 107... if that isn't an inspiration I don't know what is.

When I asked you to remember an inspirational teacher, which Sibford teachers did you think of? June Ellis, perhaps, who began her Sibford career 50 years ago? John Gilchrist? Or, for the younger ones, Tony Skeath? Brian Holliday? Mike Spring?

Of course, your best teacher might not be someone else's – inspiration is deeply personal, but I hope that Sibford School in total has been, if not an inspiration, at least a beacon to guide.

At a time when central government direction of examinations and curriculum feels particularly oppressive and burdensome, your presence here is a timely reminder that the purpose of all schools is to inspire young people; there is an inevitability that they, like you, will become older, but how they turn out might depend more than a bit on their experience of school.

Professor Chris Bonell of the Institute of Education has argued this month that education policy shouldn't focus solely on academic attainment.

Writing in the British Medical Journal, he says: "There is danger in an education policy which encourages schools to 'maximise students' academic attainment and ignores their broader wellbeing, personal development, and health."

At every open morning we hold, I stress to parents how Sibford cares for the mental well-being of its pupils. Yes we want them to do the very best they possibly can, but

I'd rather see a student leave here as a well-rounded person with three grade B's at A Level, than as an A* student totally unable to cope with the real world (but, by the way, results last year were strong again, with nearly 90% of pupils securing at least 5 GCSE grades at A*-C and nearly half of our A level grades being A or B grades).

Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts - it's a well-known quotation, and has an obvious relevance to education.

The ways in which schools promote the welfare of pupils cannot be neatly encapsulated in grades and levels, nor summarised in league tables. Here at Sibford, we abandoned SATs at the end of Key Stage 2 in September 2008, not only because we believed that 'teaching to the test' can harm students' mental health but also because we wanted to use the time more productively.

That is not to say we should not be alert to evidence of intellectual and social development. But we do need to see it in terms of subtle changes in each unique individual, rather than linear progress on a Department of Education graph.

Children who are encouraged to obsess about target grades and Government tests, are often frightened to experiment and their creativity and love of learning becomes inhibited. As adults, we don't expect to become better at everything we want to learn – whether yoga or golf, bread-making or gardening – without experimentation and mistakes, and it seems strange not to encourage this resilient attitude in young learners.

We encourage our young people to work on their three Rs, but with a different spin. For us (as I



know it was for you), Resilience, Respect and Relationships are the best starting points for true learning. We are fortunate in having the support of enlightened parents, who recognise that memorable learning is more likely to take place when a child is fully engaged in a meaningful activity.

This year we have continued to develop our outdoor learning programme, where children can, for example, build living willow structures – a far more meaningful way of practising measuring, thinking about shape and design, and, equally important, developing additional 'soft skills' of team work and communication while at the same time having fun! These experiences and attitudes not only promote more authentic learning, but also a greater sense of emotional well-being.

As a Quaker School we are well aware that a calm centre to our lives can give us purpose, and we still begin each day with a period

of silence, a method that Quakers have been practising for more than 300 years. William Penn, in 1699, described silence as being 'to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment'. At Sibford School, our experience is that when students become calmer they become more focussed and more able to learn.

I hope that if you have been inspired by our beautiful grounds that you might take time to thank our hard working grounds staff, or that if you have enjoyed your time with us today, you might pause to reflect on the 'behind the scenes' work of office staff, maintenance and catering teams who make all this possible ... behind every great man there are people and structures and systems that enable inspiration to flourish, and indeed where some of us can also find that inspiration.

A moment ago I observed that children who are encouraged to obsess about target grades

and Government tests are often frightened to experiment and their creativity and love of learning becomes inhibited. I would argue that the same is true of schools and school leaders who obsess about Inspection regimes and regulations.

We have had a busy few months re-writing policies to reflect changes to legislative demands and we need to be strong to resist the tide of bureaucracy which can so easily be a mask to avoid the importance of our central work, and the focus for any inspiration that we might find – our children, their learning and their futures.

I hope the day has shown you that we continue to Live Adventurously – I feel privileged to be part of the adventure and thank you all for coming today and for playing your part in the life of Sibford School. ” ”

- *Paul Frampton congratulated the Head on making this year's report different to the previous year!*



As a Quaker School we are well aware that a calm centre to our lives can give us purpose, and we still begin each day with a period of silence, a method that Quakers have been practising for more than 300 years.

Members and non-members attending the Annual General Meeting were warmly welcomed by the President, Caroline Mills. There were 41 members and attenders present.

1. Greetings and Apologies:

Presented by the President, Caroline Mills.

Chris & Janice Bateman, Sally Clayton (née Law), Peter Copestake, Liz Cordiner, Margaret Fairnington, Eddie & Margaret Goudge, Robert Inverarity, Hugh & Daphne Maw, Tanya Ross (née Carapetian), Jimmy Setna, David Carlton Smith, Linda Smith (née Heming), Ian & Christine Weatherhead, Jenny Wilson,

Caroline Mills then introduced Mike Finch to act as Chair.

2. Obituaries:

Presented by the Vice President Edd Frost.

Alan Carlton-Smith at Sibford 1931–1935; Jeffrey Wainwright Chattin (1937–1940*); Janet Alison Chattin (1934–1940*); F. Brian Dancer (1935–1941*); Alun Edwards (1944–1949); Michael D.T. Farr (1938–1943*); Irene Glaister, former Chair of School Committee between 1990 and 1996 and SOSA Life Member*); Arthur Grant (1941–1945); James Hindle (1956–1962*); Jonathan House (1978–1984); Christopher Jordan (1966–1970); Hazel Evelyn Lake (née Parkin) (1935–1941); Margaret Le Mare, former teacher, member of the School Committee and Life Member of SOSA*; Winifred Lycett. (1927–1932); Lindsay Martin, former Housemaster in Lister Boys and Design & Technology Teacher between 1967 and 1972*; Desmond Rose, cousin of Mavis Stiles who was a great supporter of SOSA*; Peter John Stowe (1944–1948*)

The Meeting held a few moments of silence.

(Deaths of those names marked with an asterisk were reported in the April 2014 newsletter)

3. Minutes

Minutes of the last SOSA Annual General Meeting held on 15th June 2013:

These were circulated in the April 2014 SOSA

Newsletter. The Minutes were unanimously approved by the AGM and signed as a true record by the President.

4. Chair's Report:

Presented by Mike Finch

Since the last AGM held on 15th June 2013 there have been three full Committee meetings, which were well attended and where we have discussed a variety of matters, which I will outline to you in this report. We are most grateful to the School for allowing us to meet on a weekday and also to provide us with lunch – this is much appreciated.

The Committee members put in a great deal of time and effort in supporting SOSA and I'm sure, on behalf of everyone present, we thank them for their efforts. Unfortunately we lost one committee member through the year as Elinor Pedlar-Ball had to stand down because of personal circumstances.

We reported to you last year that the Elm Garden would have a plaque installed outlining why the garden is there and how it is connected to the Association and the School. This is now in place and last evening we had a short



Edd Frost, Michael Finch, Mark Bennett, Caroline Mills and Ashley Shirlin pictured at the Elm Garden

ceremony after our Committee meeting to record the event, which took the form of a short meeting for worship. We concluded in time honoured fashion by having a 'Rocket'. If you have a chance to view the plaque before you go home then please do so.

Concerns were expressed at the last AGM about the high annual distribution costs to send out our various mail shots, which currently run at around £8000pa. It was agreed at the first Committee meeting of the year last September that the President would draft out a letter to go out to all members with the next mail shot asking members if they would be happy to receive electronic copies of our publications, which would save the Association a great deal of money. Out of 880 copies sent out only 29 actually replied - 23 were happy to have an electronic copy but two of these would still like hard copies. There were six who said no to electronic copies. Since then we have ascertained from a cross section of the membership that they would much rather receive a hard copy which they can sit in their armchairs and read at leisure. Since this letter was sent out, changes to our website have

produced a much better response when users were asked to complete their registration details.

We discussed the matter of postage costs fully at Committee and unanimously agreed that a radical approach should be adopted, which would involve a major rethink and a Rule change. Our feeling was that we should return to funding and supporting just one periodical - our own magazine, which would be called, as before, **The Sibford Rocket** – last published in 2008.

This would replace the SOSA Newsletter and we would also abandon the distribution of **The Sibfordian** to our membership. **The Sibfordian** would still have a contact page about SOSA and would be available to members, on request, for a small charge, directly from the School. **The Sibford Rocket** would be sent out in December, which we understand from a cross section of the membership would be the preferred time to receive the magazine. We would then have a second mail shot around April

time when the Reunion details are despatched. The savings involved would be something in the region of £2500 – this is a significant amount of money. We will come back to this later in the meeting when we discuss changes to the Constitution.

The Alumni project continues although we have been re-evaluating its usefulness. When it was first launched the feeling was that it might help the School with any future appeal that it might undertake. In reality the only relevant part in helping with an appeal would be the details of pupils who have been to the School over the past 10 to 15 years - and the SOSA database, which is included in the Alumni and encapsulates around 1000 current addresses of SOSA members. This information is already in place. Therefore the period between 1842 to 1999 would be valuable on the Archive data base as an historical record but not in helping any possible appeal in the future as addresses and details would be long out of date.

We also looked at the possibility of re-introducing an Old Scholars' Careers Fair to advise pupils, about to leave school, on possible career outlets. This was successfully held on Friday 28th March when the amazing breadth of Old Scholar expertise was apparent. We are most grateful to the team of Caroline Mills, Ashley Shirlin and Ali Bromhall who organised this event.

We have also discussed the value of our own SOSA website and unanimously felt that it was due for an up-grade to make it more pro-active and relevant to present day needs.

We are delighted that an old scholar with the correct expertise in this field, and a member of the Committee, Ashley Shirlin, has undertaken this task and those who surf the web will be highly impressed with the transformation that he has brought about. It has also brought about an influx of information on Old Scholars with several new members to SOSA.

Since the new site's launch at the beginning of April over 550 individuals have visited the site and over 100 people have registered on the site. New material is added to the site on a weekly basis and SOSA Members are encouraged to Register if they haven't already done so and to contribute their own memories and photos. One of the most popular areas of the site is the availability of all SOSA Magazines dating back to 1904.

The site also has the facility for individuals to make donations and we have received around £100 via this route so far.

As indicated earlier in my report the Committee are recommending changes to the Rules and Constitution. The re-organisation of SOSA in 2009 gave us a fresh launching pad for



The Old Scholars Careers Fair. Pictured from front are: Richard Huddleston (at Sibford 1980 – 1985) currently a relationship manager in corporate banking with Barclays; Richard Pike (at Sibford 1976 – 1979) Head of Quality and Technical Director at frozen food Company COOK; and Anna Backman (at Sibford 2002 – 2008) a designer jeweller and silversmith.



our Association, which has always been an evolving organisation and continues to do so. In reality, after the 2009 changes, the main admin of the Association was carried out by myself and Paul Frampton, which we were very happy to do. Paul has already taken a well-earned rest from the Committee and now, I too, feel that the moment is right for me to stand down from the Committee and to take a back seat away from the coalface.

Because of this the Committee feel strongly that we needed to re-introduce the role of a General Secretary to lead the administration of our Association. Coupled with this we also felt that the Treasurer should be an elected member of the Committee and is not by definition the School's Business Manager. I can assure you that Peter Robinson is very happy with this arrangement and supports the idea of the Treasurer being an elected member.

We also feel it is right to return to a staggered three year election of committee members to enhance the continuity of the committee.

Most of the other changes to the Constitution proposed are simply a question of re-wording certain items. We will return to the changes when we reach item 8 on the Agenda.

Finally, during this year we have been able to help with the funding of a new adventure playground for the Junior School, which you should go and view, and we have also been able to support a pupil to enable them to join a school trip that they couldn't have done without our support. Our Treasurer, Peter Robinson, will shortly outline the details during his report.

And now, in concluding this report, I would like to express my

personal thanks to you – SOSA's happy band of brothers and sisters - for all your amazing support over the years. It has always been an honour and a privilege to serve this Association which I'm sure will remain strong and buoyant in the future. I will try and answer any specific questions that you may have on my report. Thank you.

Nigel Halladay offered his thanks to Mike Finch and Ashley Shirlin for the high quality of the Archives and the Web Site.

5. Head's Report:

Presented by Michael Goodwin.

A copy of the report is shown on pages 13 to 15.

6. Treasurer's Report:

Presented by Peter Robinson.

A copy of the report is shown in

the panel below.

7. School Committee

Representative's Report:

Presented by Margaret Shelley

Firstly, I would like to say how good it is to see Richard Hughes here today. We are so pleased he made it and we are glad to see the progress he has and is making. Continue the good work and come back soon to keep me company on the School Committee.

Last year Seren Wildwood reported that the School had not been wholly immune from the effects of the recession, the School was, nevertheless, in good shape. There have been some pleasing developments since then.

The Junior School Playground was completed in the autumn half-

Treasurer's Report to AGM 2014

Reporting on a year that concluded nearly 12 months previously does appear a little peculiar and within the report I have also taken the liberty of referring to matters that have occurred in the current year, which concludes this July.

So firstly for the accounts that you have in front of you. The income for the year totalled £6,483. This is made up by the annual subscription from school for pupils currently in the school and those sums paid by Old Scholars as an annual contribution to membership funds.

Other funds were realized from the annual reunion and donations including the sale of the history of Sibford, 'A view from the Hill'. Copies are still available!

Of this sum, the most significant expenditure relates to magazine and newsletter costs including postage for these. The reunion for the first time included a lunch time event for those celebrating 50 years since they left Sibford, this reported elsewhere, was well attended and brought a number of Old Scholars back to the school for the first time since leaving in the 1960s.

A plinth was bought for the Elm site; this depicts historical elements of the site and I encourage you to look at this when passing. It has certainly proved to be of interest to many passers by.

Overall for the year the accounts, before exceptional items, show a deficit of £109.

As many will know, the Association had held a significant sum of money in various investment funds for a number of years. With interest rates low it was agreed that support would be given to two major projects: the refurbishment of the School Hall, a space dear to many past pupils for many reasons, and a farm building, built to re-introduce livestock to the school. This most generous gift totalled £36,144 and was most

term thanks to a donation from SOSA of £4,000. The end product looks excellent and the children are having great fun using it.

The Forest School site has had further work done on it and I hope that you have had a chance to look at it.

Old Scholars have been generous with their time. Jessica Memarzia, a former Head Girl, currently doing research at Cambridge, gave a presentation to staff and pupils in 'The Teenage Brain' and spoke to students about science and psychology as a career.

At the Careers Fair in March current students were given the opportunity to talk to a number of old scholars about the work they are now doing.

Three new Friends were appointed by Sibford General Meeting to join School Committee from the start of 2014. Unfortunately one was subsequently unable to take up the appointment so Kat

Davison, a School parent and a Friend, has been co-opted.

PSFA has found us two new parent members, Richard Bee and



SOSA contributed £4,000 to the new Junior School Playground

Stuart Fowler who have already become active and involved.

An out-of-the-ordinary induction day was held for new Committee members in March, which included a talk by holocaust survivor Zigi Shipper but it gave new members an insight into the kinds of experience our students have.

School Committee will be starting shortly to consult as widely as possible with a view to developing the School's next strategic plan. Whilst a great deal of Old Scholars' time together enables us to reminisce about our school days and catch up on what we've been doing since then, your SOSA Representatives on School Committee will be helping to look forward to the next five years. What will the School look like in 2020? Let us have your thoughts.

8. Proposed Amendments to the Constitution:

Presented by Mike Finch

Clause 3a – Mark Bennett commented that there should be an opt out option. Ashley Shirlin explained that the Web Site contained an opt out option. This Rule will be discussed further at the next SOSA Committee Meeting.

Clause 7a – Paul Frampton enquired if SOSA paid audit

for year ending 31st July 2013

gratefully received by the School. I hope you have seen both.

Clearly this commitment has had a significant impact on funds but still, at the end of the reporting period, left funds of £12,565.

Since the end of the financial year it has been noticed that the annual subscription had not been calculated in the manner intended in the Constitution and, consequently an adjustment has been made and an additional sum of £4,640 paid into the SOSA account. I apologise for this oversight and will ensure the appropriate procedure is adopted moving forward.

At the end of April 2014 the SOSA funds remained positive with the following money held -

- Current account – £7,576.72
- Business Investment Account – £5,423.19

With funds in excess of £5,000 due from school in July.

The accounts now form part of the overall school accounts, although they are not reported within them due to the extent of the activity taking place, and are agreed on this basis. I ask that these accounts be agreed.

John Haddleton and Nick Bennett Proposed and Seconded that the Accounts be adopted. This was unanimously agreed by the Meeting.

Following the treasurers report the following comments were made:

Paul Frampton commented that SOSA had supported the School as far as possible. He wondered where the Association would now get further funds. He additionally stated that he had never been invited to make a donation.

Michael Goodwin commented that SOSA could support the School in different ways such as via the Web Site and by a Legacy Scheme.



fees. Peter Robinson informed him that we did not. John Haddleton advised the Meeting that a signed Examination of the Accounts should be adequate. The SOSA Committee will investigate this matter and make proposals at the next AGM.

Clause 7b – Nigel Halladay queried the wording of the clause as to who could sign cheques. Russell Steed stated that the intention of the Clause was that any two of the Signatories should sign cheques over £250. It was agreed by the AGM that this detail would be incorporated with the current amendments.

Mike Finch proposed that all the changes as detailed in the proposals be adopted, this was seconded by Ashley Shirlin and unanimously agreed by the Meeting.

9. Election of Officers:

Presented by Mike Finch.

General Secretary: Ashley Shirlin 1/8/14 – 31/7/17

Proposer: Chris Leo

Seconder: Margaret Shelley

Treasurer: Peter Robinson 1/8/14 – 31/7/15

Proposer: Edd Frost

Seconder: Erica Strofton

Committee Member: Nikki Knott 1/8/14 – 31/7/17

Proposer: Ashley Shirlin

Seconder: Mark Bennett

Committee Member: Mark Bennett 1/8/14 – 31/7/16

Proposer: Ashley Shirlin

Seconder: Mike Finch

Committee Member: Chris Leo 1/8/14 – 31/7/15

Proposer: Caroline Mills

Seconder: Mike Finch

Co-Opted Member

(Membership & Alumni coordinator): Wendy Finch 1/8/14 – 31/7/15

Proposer: Ashley Shirlin

Seconder: Mike Finch

Mike Finch thanked the outgoing Committee on the Meetings' behalf and made particular reference to Erica Strofton who would be standing down this time having given the Committee outstanding service over the past few years.

Edd Frost was proposed as President for 2014-2015 and this was accepted by unanimous acclaim.

The Chair informed the Meeting that Caroline Mills was unable to take up the post of Vice President for the 2014/15 due to pressure of work and therefore SOSA President in 2015/16. She would however continue on the Committee as Retiring President. Caroline Mills Proposed, Edd Frost Seconded, that Ashley Shirlin be elected as Vice President for 2014-2015. The Meeting unanimously agreed this appointment. Ashley Shirlin stated that it would be an honour to serve the Association as Vice President.

10. Honorary Life

Membership:

Caroline Mills informed the Meeting that David Foulds, a former teacher, had been awarded Honorary Life Membership. This was met with unanimous approval.

11. Any Other Business

Caroline Mills gave special thanks to: Erica Strofton, Margaret Shelley, Judith Beeby, Amanda Brown and Liz Belcher for providing refreshments during the day.

Paul Frampton wished to formally thank Mike Finch for his 55 years of service to the Association. The Meeting expressed their appreciation with a spontaneous round of applause!

There being no other business the meeting closed at 18.20.

A gathering

The idea of writing a report for this event was daunting to say the least! I have visited Sibford a few times since leaving in 1978, always with slight trepidation. Don't get me wrong people are always very friendly and of course it's always good to see new people.

I am now a bit more involved than I have been in the past so being able to reflect on shared experiences and stories has been a pleasure as well as fun! So here goes...

School Sports Day, Open Day, Old Scholars' Reunion and a Fortieth Anniversary luncheon all on a single day in June. Perhaps the School should offer Event Management as a possible option!

In preparation for the Old Scholars' Reunion and the Fortieth Anniversary event, a tremendous amount of communication and organisation went on behind the scenes before the 15th June arrived to ensure it ran smoothly and successfully – what an achievement by all those involved.

The Archives had a new home this year in Room 7 in the main building, which worked very well. They always create a lot of interest so there was plenty of room to sit and enjoy vintage and more recent photographs and ephemera from previous years' events.

Lots of new names signed the Visitors' Book when people came to get tea, coffee and cakes in the marquee, not to mention a record number of sales of SOSA ties!

During the Anniversary Lunch June Ellis was presented with a sizeable homemade cake to celebrate 50 years being involved with Sibford. Following this Chris Leo presented Mike Finch with a tankard thanking him for his dedication and work with SOSA and in particular his work archiving photographs and recording key events in the Association's history.

of friends old and new



The AGM witnessed some new blood to the Committee in the form of Nikki Knott and Mark Bennett. Nikki has considerable experience working with charities and Mark is a successful property developer.

Caroline Mill's Presidential Speech was thought provoking following the theme of the School Open Day ~ 'People who Inspire me'. This was followed by an informal, delicious barbecue with excellent food provided by the School Catering Manager and his very able team.

Of course no SOSA Reunion would be fully complete without Rockets, which was led by Mike Finch outside the dining hall with a large number of new people joining in the ritual. I wonder if anyone has found it on YouTube yet?

Sincere thanks and appreciation go to Ashley Shirlin for organising the fortieth anniversary lunch, to Mark Bennett for the liquid

refreshment at the Anniversary luncheon, to Daniel Re'em for the 40th anniversary cake we enjoyed with our coffee, to Nigel Halliday for the 50th anniversary cake presented to June Ellis, to the Sibford School caterers for providing excellent food and refreshments throughout the day.

Special thanks also to Erica Strofton, who is retiring from the committee this year, for consistent hard work on the SOSA committee.

Pictured above: (standing) John Barrett, (back) Liz Belcher, Judith Beeby and Paul Frampton, (front) Christine Pritchard, Margaret Shelley, Gill Barrett and Erica Strofton. Right from top: Gail MacLaren, Karen Mulholland and Nicki Knott. Tom Leeman, Peter Fleming, Vince Clare, Kate Jack, Steve Salmon and Debbie Jenkins. Gathering at the SOSA Marquee. Judith Beeby, Richard Hughes and Erica Strofton.





In less than a month's time much of the nation will be glued to their television screens while bystanders line the way to watch Chris Froome and Bradley Wiggins contest the Tour de France when it begins on Le Grand Départ from the Yorkshire Dales.

2014 also celebrates 60 years since the creation of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and, as I write my address, I am sat in the heart of it. The meadows are strewn with a vivid child's yellow, the buttercups glossy against the harsh silvery walls that desperately try to contain them. Behind me is a field of Swaledale Sheep, their horns so curly as to suggest, according to old wives, that they've eaten a lot of burnt toast rather than the verdant rain-soaked pasture. Lonely lambs are being bottle-fed by the farmer next door and, in the distance, are the distinctive layers of limestone rising up to make Malham Cove and the creases and crevices (or clints and grikes) of wonderous limestone pavement.

Everywhere I go there are bicycles, tricycles, penny-farthings and even children's scooters painted as brilliantly as the buttercups to herald, according to banners everywhere, 'the greatest bike ride on earth'. The Dales has turned yellow.

But two days ago I passed Quaker Meeting Houses in Ilkley

and Skipton. Soaking up the natural beauty of Upper Wharfedale and the lesser-known Langstrothdale, I stopped at the church in the tiny hamlet of Hubberholme. The pews are covered in scuttling mice – of the wooden variety created by The Mouseman of Kilburn – but the churchyard is the final resting place of author and broadcaster J.B Priestley, whose links to Quakerism are well documented.

Stepping out onto the fells just above, I noticed Scar House. George Fox visited it in 1652, and again in 1677. The house, though under the care now of the National Trust, is reputedly the first piece of land owned by the Quakers and contains a Quaker burial ground. The Dales are as big on Quakerism as they are on yellow bikes.

Rather like Sibford, The Dales are central to the beginnings of the Quaker movement, with large numbers of 17th century residents associating themselves in Malhamdale, Upper Wharfedale and Skipton, where the Society of Friends held its first yearly meeting.

In 1681 John Squire of Airton (where I'm currently sitting amid buttercups) had 20 stooks of barley taken and, in 1682, Thomas Hall, of the same village, had wool and lambs taken. Both confiscations were for their failure to pay church tithes as a result of their Quaker

tendencies.

That the Yorkshire Dales can celebrate 60 years as a National Park – and that we can enjoy its magnificent natural appearance while watching cyclists squabble over who wears a yellow jersey – is, in part, thanks to two Quakers ... Arthur Raistrick and John Dower.

Born in 1896, Arthur Raistrick came from a family of Dales folk. During the First World War, like so many conscientious objectors, Arthur was imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubs for refusing to enlist and whilst in the Scrubs he learned to pick locks! His educational syllabus improved latterly as he gained a PhD in Geology on the configuration of coal seams. Initially, with a criminal record, he found work hard to come by, but managed to secure short-term contracts undertaking pit safety.

In 1929 he married Elizabeth, a noted historian and fellow Quaker, and they moved to Linton-in-Wharfedale where they converted a large barn to live in.

In 1939 he helped to establish The Dalesman, one of the most respected regional magazines today, and wrote about The Dales extensively for decades. He found work as a university lecturer and is credited with founding industrial archaeology as a discipline. He also wrote a book – Teach Yourself

Geology, thrilled to help local Dales residents understand their natural surroundings. A keen walker, he became President of the Ramblers' Association.

With friends, he began to excavate the now famous industrial museum and World Heritage Site in Coalbrookdale, Shropshire. When it came to the official opening, Arthur was not invited because, as a Quaker, he would not bow before the royal visitor (although he did apparently promise to be courteous). Undaunted, he found a way in through an unlocked (or possibly using his skills acquired in Wormwood Scrubs) back door to greet the royal visitor.

He turned down the offer of an OBE from Harold Wilson in 1974 and died, aged 95 in 1991. The Yorkshire Dales Society, of which he was a founder member, declared him 'The Dalesman of the Millennium'.

Arthur also helped to shape the National Park. He would walk from his home in Linton to Kirkby Malham where his friend and fellow Quaker, John Dower, lived. There, they would discuss issues such as nature protection and public rights of way, not yet under legislation. Both were passionate about social reform and believed that the countryside should be there for all to enjoy, whatever their background.

The concept of creating National Parks can be traced back to William Wordsworth. In the 1835 edition of his Guide to the Lakes, he suggested that the Lake District should be regarded as a, 'sort of national property in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy'.

While Yellowstone was the first ever National Park, created in the

United States in 1870, it took a while for Britain to catch on about the importance of protecting landscapes.

The National Trust, Ramblers' Association (of which Arthur Raistrick was President) and the Youth Hostels Association were some of the bodies that managed to establish the Standing Committee on National Parks in 1936 to press the Government for more formal protection.

The committee's secretary was John Dower. From his cottage in Kirkby Malham, he wrote the report in 1944 that set the scene for National Parks in England and Wales. He spoke with local farmers in the Dales and was well aware of the great contribution hill farming and local culture made to the special landscape qualities of the area. He also believed that supporting farming communities was essential to the National Park.

It was not until 1947 that Dower's key recommendations were endorsed. Most of these were included in the National

Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 – leading to the creation of the National Parks. The Bill that led to their creation stated that their two core purposes were: 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage' and 'to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities'.

As an architect, John Dower also designed Malham Youth Hostel. Opened in 1938, it was the first purpose-built youth hostel in Yorkshire.

So what, you might be asking, has all this, other than Quakerism, got to do with Sibford, 200 miles away on the fringes of the Cotswolds? Sibford seems to me to be our own little 'National Park'. Like John Dower's vision, we are well aware of the great contribution that our school makes to the special landscape within which we are privileged to be a part of.

The School, rather like his vision, provides ways in which young



Pictured: Opposite page guests line up for the President's BBQ; President Caroline Mills with daughter Kate. Above Caroline with 2014/15 President Edd Frost.



people can afford to access and experience beautiful countryside, whatever their background. And, as a school, it certainly, 'promotes opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities.' It's even a part of daily school life, 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage'. And while Sibford might not strictly be 'national property', the School is a place, in Wordsworth's words, 'in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy'.

We, pupils, staff, parents and Old Scholars, are merely the custodians of our little national park for future generations to enjoy. And, like the Dales, one of our special qualities is our community.

Fabulous as it is to see all old scholars today, I'm absolutely thrilled that I have been joined by a little sub-community - no less than fifteen of the 24 relations who have passed through the School either as pupils or in some voluntary capacity. And, equally, that I have been joined by my best friend from school Rachel Wratten, whose aptitude for the Express crossword in an after-morning-break maths lesson was profound.

I was, on the whole, a good pupil. Hardworking and diligent, I always did my homework on time (my nickname was 'Swot'), received good reports, got stuck into the community life of the School and I'm proud of my record never to have received a detention in my five years at school! I do, however, have a confession to make.

In my second year at Sibford, I was required to wear a pair of, what were deemed by my parents, 'sensible' shoes for school. A disgusting brown, with a grotesque 'girly' stitched pattern, an incongruous out-of-fashion



Caroline with relations who have passed through the School either as pupils, in some voluntary capacity, or are connected by marriage: Ann and Ray Bond, Bronwen Lilley (née Quinton), Davy Quinton, James McIntosh (son of Jen McIntosh), Colin Lilley (husband of Bronwen), Kay Bohm (daughter of Loraine Brown) and husband Neil, Paul Mills, Yvette Quinton (wife of Davy) and Caroline Mills (née Bond). Seated: Loraine Brown (née Quinton), Jen McIntosh (née Quinton) and Hedley Quinton. Front: Kate, Lara and Dominic Mills.

strap and buckle and a hideous, clumpy rubber heel of seismic proportions; they were the most revolting pieces of footwear I have ever come across. They certainly were not 'de rigeur'. By contrast, I wanted to wear the modish plain and simple black pump – not dissimilar to those worn to school by the girls today – and I was allowed a pair of these for after school use.

So, having been dropped at the entrance to what is now Margaret Fell House, to walk the footpath to school, I would wait for my parents to leave, take off the grotesque clumpy monstrosities, and slip on my comfortable, black flats. Of course, my friends perfectly understood my plight, and we soon realised that I could not possibly return home with a brand new pair of shoes every evening. So, at lunchtimes, when we were allowed to return to their dormitories in Lister Girls, a couple of friends would climb out of the window onto the flat roof that was covered in road grit. There, they would scuff

the toes of the hideous specimens, before returning back inside for me to flex and bend the fronts to create a creased, well-worn appearance.

Time turns full circle. Today, my Year 8 son wishes to brush his hair forward to keep up with the times. I insist that it is brushed back to maintain a tidy appearance for school. I have no doubt that as soon as I leave the school drive, his fingertips comb it all forwards.

I hope that you have had a lovely day catching up with old friends, making new ones and seeing the School at its magnificent best. In some ways it has been a disappointing year for me as President, lacking in time to do so many things that I would like to have done. Nonetheless, it has been a privilege to be your President this last year.

The above is an edited version of the speech delivered at the evening barbecue at the Annual Reunion on 14th June 2014. A full copy of the speech can be found on the SOSA website.



Reunited ... the class of '74

Following Paul Frampton's successful 50th Anniversary Leavers' Lunch at the 2013 Reunion, I decided to see if there was any interest from my year for a 40th Leavers' Lunch in 2014.

Some 25 years previously, Tim Gebbett and I had traced a lot of people from our generation and held some big 'do's in London and Sibford. In more recent years, I've arranged smaller events, so at least I had some people to start with. But, did I really want to spend nine months tracking people down?

Life is a lot different for me now compared to 25 years ago. I work from home rather than having to face the grind of a daily commute to the City. I now live with a woman who went to Sibford who is more understanding of my fascination with what happened to a group of people who were thrown together for five years in the back of beyond!

Anyway, for better or worse, I decided to see if there was any interest from my old classmates.

A bad start ... the first person I Googled was serving life in prison! Very upsetting as the individual had been a mate of mine. I don't know how many of you have ever visited a prison but it isn't fun, especially seeing someone who has been inside for eight years.

Things seemed to improve when I found a chap who I'd shared a dorm with and had heard nothing of since 1974. More despondency, however, when he said he hated Sibford and all who went there.

I nearly gave up the entire reunion venture when I also



By
**Ashley
Shirlin**

discovered that another former dorm mate had died in very sad circumstances.

However, a few chums like Mark Bennett and Catherine Hunt told me to keep going and other people began to come out of the woodwork.

2014 also happened to be the 50th Anniversary of June Ellis (former Deputy Head) starting at Sibford. I know that most of my generation had run-ins with her, but it couldn't have been easy dealing with a bunch of adolescents from such diverse backgrounds, all crammed into a boarding school miles from anywhere!

I'd met June again over the years and found her to be a rather charming and amusing lady. With her anniversary in mind, therefore, I also started to trace some of the other staff who were at Sibford at the time. Boarding House Staff tend to be held in high esteem as they shared our lives so closely, so it was a pleasure to chat to Graeme Sagar who I know I led a merry dance in Nansen! I was also delighted to trace Bruce Bury who had become a bit of a hero of mine.

By the beginning of 2014 it was pretty obvious that a 1974ish Reunion at Sibford in June was very much on the cards and over the next few months more people

were found and added to the list.

As with all these things, some people dropped out. Mary Feaver broke her arm and other people had unexpected personal issues to cope with. Paul Johnson however overcame his initial reticence to attend and decided to come. I was very pleased, as the mortality rate amongst Nansen Boys of that era is somewhat high, so it was good to see him and most of my few remaining housemates.

On the day itself it was very unnerving waiting to see if anyone actually turned up! Fortunately nearly everyone did. I get a buzz from meeting old classmates after so many years apart. Oddly I don't enjoy the limelight of organising a reunion, I'd much rather just sit quietly with some chums and reminisce. Although there were some nervous people there I like to think that the majority enjoyed the event. Mark Bennett supplied all the drink. Nigel Halladay and Dan Re'em contributed money for a cake to present to June Ellis and a second one featuring the School Badge.

Would I do it again? Probably not! Chivvyng up people is soul destroying and when you're organising you don't get to chat to many people.

Should someone else do it for their year? Yes, without a doubt! I'm happy to provide any tips on what to do and what not to do.

Finally, I would like to thank all those people who did attend and I look forward to seeing many of you in June 2015 at the SOSA Reunion if you can come along.

55 years of SOSA dedication and commitment

by Chris Leo

As many of Old Scholars will know, Mike Finch has stood down as an active SOSA committee member after many years' service.

Mike has been involved with Sibford Old Scholars for many years, (virtually from the time that he left Sibford as a pupil in 1954!)

I myself have been on the SOSA committee for five years and have known Mike since 1980.

I was very glad at the 2014 reunion to have the pleasure of presenting Mike with an engraved tankard for his 55 years dedication and commitment to SOSA. The presentation took place at the Fortieth Anniversary luncheon when we also took the opportunity to present Mike's long-suffering wife, Wendy, with a bouquet of flowers.

Mike has achieved a huge amount during his involvement with Sibford Old Scholars. He has been SOSA president twice, has held most committee posts, and is also the longest ever serving SOSA committee member.

For many years now, Mike has been researching the history of Sibford School and the surrounding village, and this led to him writing and producing an



extremely interesting and informative book called 'A View From The Hill'.

The book covers the history of Sibford from when the School first opened in 1842 through until 2010 and includes many great photographs.

Mike has also spent a lot of hours compiling and putting together a huge Sibford archive collection, and this is something that many future generations will be able to benefit from, for years to come.

Sibford Old Scholars owe a huge debt, gratitude and thanks to Mike Finch for all his hard work over the years.



Head to head

The Memorial Service to celebrate the life of Philip Manasseh (see opposite page) resulted in two Sibford Heads meeting up for the first time.

Jim Graham was appointed Head at Sibford in 1980. As Head during the time that Philip was Chair of School Committee it was hardly surprising that he should attend the memorial, which was where he met up with current Head Michael Goodwin.

"I was delighted to meet Jim for the first time," said Michael. "I invited him up to school but said I would totally understand if he didn't want to come ... after all, I've never been back to my old school in Norfolk."

After initially declining Jim changed his mind. In a subsequent email to Michael Goodwin he said: "Thank you very much for inviting me back yesterday. I was enormously impressed by all you showed me and by the lovely relationship you obviously have with all the members of the school community. Sibford is very fortunate."

Jim is pictured (right) at the front of the Hill Building with SOSA President Edd Frost (left) and Michael Goodwin.

Margaret Ann Byatt (née Boardman).

At Sibford 1944 – 1947.

Died 27 January 2014.

Margaret's daughter Belinda writes:

Known as Ann at school, one early memory Mum described was becoming a vegetarian ... because the headmaster was, and she felt she would receive better food!

She has been known as Meg since attending university in Southampton where she met and married Peter Byatt. The couple moved to Chester and had two children, Belinda and Christopher (known as Kit).

Meg trained at Teacher Training College and took a job at the College of Further Education where she taught English and general studies, She subsequently became the lead for the adult literacy scheme in Chester.

The Byatt family attended a reunion of Sibford Old Scholars in the early 1960s.



In 1988, Kit married Shellie, a Quaker, and Meg enjoyed the resonance with her earlier experience of attending a Quaker school.

She became involved in local

politics as a local councillor for the City of Chester and was elected Lord Mayor of Chester in 1993. The same year she was blessed with the arrival of her only grandchild.

Meg battled cancer twice and won, and also developed diabetes, actively engaging with, and enthusiastically supporting, Diabetes UK as a result. She was also active in many other local charities and was a governor at local schools.

She died peacefully at home with Belinda and Kit by her side. Her funeral, at Chester Cathedral, attracted a large congregation from local civic and political life, as well as many friends and family. Her ashes were interred next to Peter's in the Cathedral's Garden of Remembrance.

Lives Remembered



Philip George Manasseh

At Sibford 1938 – 1946. Died 25th August 2014 aged 84.

The following tribute has been compiled by Andrew, Tim, Tony & Pam Manasseh:

Philip Manasseh, affectionately known as 'Pip', was born in Birmingham in 1930 and went to Sibford from 1938 until 1946. He became a Prefect and then Head Boy in 1946.

The Manasseh family was originally from Brummana, a suburb of Beirut. His grandfather, Antonius (a widely admired doctor) had married Henrietta Benington, a descendant of many generations of Friends in the north of England. His father, George, attended Friends' School Saffron Walden, and later settled in England marrying Eunice Harper.

Philip went to Sibford with his elder brother Tony and his sister Meriel in 1938. At just eight years old, he was the youngest boy in the school, so the older girls took him under their wing. Pip excelled and his dedication to Sibford remained with him for the rest of his life.

After Sibford he took up farming in the Midlands and it was at a Sibford Old Scholars weekend where he met his future wife, Janet Oldham. They had known each other at Sibford, and, keen to make sure he did not miss the moment a second time, he visited Janet at weekends on his motorbike.

Philip and Janet married in the summer of 1956 and set up a

Philip Manasseh is pictured above at the 21st anniversary of Sibford Junior School held in September 2010.

dairy farm in Staffordshire. Their two sons Tim and Andrew were born in the early 1960's and they all enjoyed an idyllic life which combined looking after a herd of Friesian cows, haymaking in the long summers and potato picking each autumn. Philip saw his dairy herd safely through the foot-and-mouth epidemic of 1967 but decided to move into education. After qualifying at Harper Adams University he took up a post at the Department of Agriculture at West Oxfordshire Technical College, Witney, Oxfordshire.

Whilst leading a busy working life, Philip was deeply committed to The Society of Friends. He took an active interest in the Society through his involvement in a number of causes and committees, as well as serving as Clerk of Oxford Meeting. He also maintained close ties with Friends' School Brummana and served on the School Board for a number of years.

He was a regular at the annual SOSA Reunions and introduced his sons to the unique range of SOSA 'jollifications', which of course included the mysterious 'Rockets!' He loved being involved in a wide range of pursuits, particularly those where he could bring people together to share his fellowship, enthusiasm and humour.

He liked the limelight too and was not shy of the stage. Many Old Scholars will remember his comedy performances in the Annual Reunion entertainments. His devotion to Sibford continued through the SOSA where he was General Secretary between January 1978 and December 1981, and President in 1985. He also joined the Sibford School Governing Committee in 1978 and became its Chair/Clerk between 1980 & 1989.

Sadly, Janet passed away in 2004 and a memorial was held for her at Sibford Gower Meeting House. He

donated Janet's grand piano to the music department of the School. He was a kind and generous man who took time for people, to listen to them, and to offer a considered view. Above all, those around him always knew him as a really gentle man – and also a real gentleman.

Philip derived great joy from his grandchildren. He travelled widely to watch his grandsons James and Charlie playing in school cricket matches. He had many trips to Brussels to be with Andrew's family, and his two granddaughters Lily and Rebecca.

Eventually, he succumbed to Parkinson's Disease, a condition about which there remains much to be learned. Inevitably, this restricted his ability to do all the things that he wanted to do, although he never gave up being the character he had always been.

A memorial was held on Friday 19 September 2014 at Friends' Meeting House Sibford. Over 100 people came from his different walks of life to remember him. His ashes have been scattered at Sibford and so he is reunited with his beloved wife and resting in a place that meant so much to him.

Fred Rowley

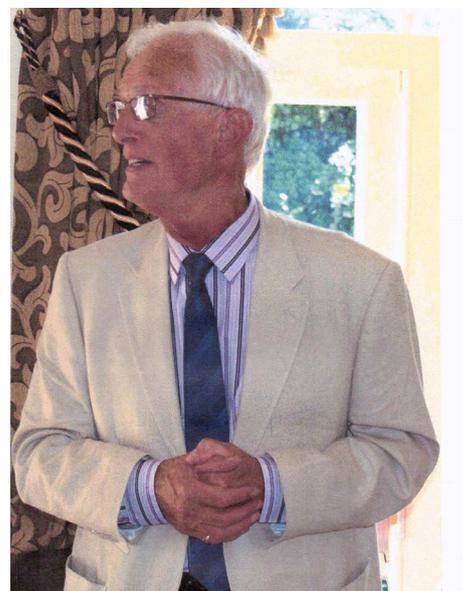
At Sibford 1948 – 1952.

Died 19th July 2014 aged 77.

Fred's older brother William writes:

Fred was happy at Sibford but his time there was not marked by great academic achievement. Years later Fred realised that he was dyslexic. After Sibford he went to Cadburys, Bournville to do an engineering apprenticeship. After national service in the FAU he returned to Bournville but soon went on to work at other Cadbury factories finally spending three and a half years in Accra, Ghana working on the installation and commissioning of a plant to make Bournvita.

Soon after returning to the UK he went to work for a firm on



the Slough Industrial Estate and became Works Director. After a take-over he moved to a joinery firm on the Arundel Estate in West Sussex, again as Works Director. When that closed due to falling sales he became self-employed, doing general property maintenance, joinery and kitchen refits. He enjoyed the work, especially meeting people. He was well respected and in demand almost to the end of his life.

In 1962 Fred married Jane and the couple celebrated their Golden Wedding two years ago. They have a son, daughter and four granddaughters.

Away from work, Fred became a Prison Visitor at Wormwood Scrubs, on D wing and later a JP, first in Maidenhead and then in Arundel.

Fred credited his former headmaster, Arthur Johnstone, for awakening his interest in music, and wherever he lived, always managed to find a choir to sing with. He and Jane lived for nearly 30 years in Angmering, West Sussex where Fred sang with the Arun Choral Society and stage-managed their concerts in Arundel Cathedral.

He died of a very rare complication following chemotherapy just three weeks before his 78th birthday. Some 200 friends and family were present at his funeral on 31st July.

Sheila Stewart (née McCairn)

Died 3rd September 2014 aged 86.

Well known authoress Sheila Stewart who was born on January 6th 1928 was an English and PE teacher at Sibford School between 1948 and 1952 and left an indelible mark on those who she taught during that period.

She was born Sheila McCairn in the fishing community of Appledore in Devon, and it was only in later life that she discovered from her birth certificate that she was illegitimate. Shortly after her birth her mother Maisie moved to London leaving her in the care of 'Danma' and 'Danpa' Cox, elderly and impoverished relatives whose diet, Sheila recalls, "consisted largely of shellfish collected on the Taw estuary".

One day when Sheila was three a 'lady' turned up at their tiny cottage. She recalls "Danma gave the lady a brown paper bundle and I trustingly held out my hand to her. I did not know that I was walking away from Danma Cox for ever."

From then on she was brought up in various children's homes under the auspices of the Waifs and Stays Society committees and patrons. She remained in brief contact with an 'Auntie Flo' who lived in Barnstaple and learned years later from her that the Coxes had 'fretted' that she had been taken away by 'the welfare' and had, though illiterate, treasured the piece of paper that 'the lady' had left them with Sheila's name and address written on it.

Despite the 'terrible shock' of abandonment, the bullying by other girls and the harsh regime in many of the homes, Sheila survived to become a successful, caring and complete human being and an accomplished authoress. Most of Sheila's companions left school at 14 to work as domestic servants,



but she confounded expectations by becoming the first 'Home' girl to pass the entrance exam to grammar school in Ealing. However by the time her enrolment had been sorted, her Home had been evacuated to Engelmere Wood, Ascot during the Second World War. She was allowed to attend Bracknell grammar school where she thrived in the academic environment.

After she left the care of the Society she trained as a teacher at the Bishop Otter College, Chichester and after qualifying as a teacher she came to Sibford in 1948. She taught at the School until 1952 when she married Eric Stewart, a member of one of Sibford's long established families.

After the birth of her three children she established a private nursery school in her home, later moving to purpose built premises in Bloxham – many of the ideas she pioneered at the school were documented as 'best practice' by the Department of Education.

After the publication of her autobiography *A Home from Home* in 1967, Sheila sold her school to concentrate on her writing. Her second book

Country Kate (1971), written in Warwickshire dialect was a lovely family portrait of an elderly countrywoman who had grown up as the daughter of the local vet before the First World War. This won her the Writers Guild Award in 1974 for best radio feature script. Her other books about country life were *Lifting the Latch: Life on the Land* (1987) and *Ramlin Rose: The Boatwoman's Story* (1993).

Many Sibfordians of the 1970s will recall her brilliant Review commemorating SOSA's 75th anniversary – which she wrote, produced and performed in – at the 1978 SOSA Reunion. It was repeated later in the year for a school audience. She also delivered an evocative Leslie Baily Address at the 1988 Reunion on her books with actual recordings of some of her interviews with the people she had written about.

Despite her busy life Sheila found time to be a keen member of the WI; an enthusiastic gardener; and an active member of her village community (Brailes) playing a leading role in organising flower shows, pensioners' Christmas parties and many other events.

We also remember the following, whose deaths have been reported to us:

Alan Carlton-Smith

At Sibford 1931 – 1935.

Alan was a member of one of Sibford's well known families. His brother John was also at Sibford as well as his nephews, David and Barney, and his nieces, Helen and Deborah.

Alun Edwards

At Sibford 1944 – 1949.

Alun was Head Boy in 1949. He was also at Sibford with his sister Rachel (Davis) 1946-1951 and his younger brother Dafydd at Sibford 1947-51.

Jonathan House

At Sibford 1978 until 1984.

We have received notice that Jonathan died early in 2014.

Christopher Jordan

At Sibford 1966 until 1970

We received notice that Christopher had died early during 2014.

**Hazel Evelyn Lake
(née Parkin)**

At Sibford 1935 until 1941.

Hazel was the daughter of legendary Sibford teacher Frank Parkin. She was also a teacher before her retirement. She died in May 2013.

Winifred Lycett

At Sibford 1927 until 1932.

Winnie was a committed Quaker and was a member of Selly Oak Meeting in Birmingham and previously, before it closed, a member of Farm Street Meeting. She died on 19th March 2014 aged 97. She was a great supporter of SOSA and in particular of the Birmingham/Midland Branch of SOSA for many years. Her friendly disposition and humour will be remembered by her many friends.

Norman Smith

At Sibford 1935 until 1938.

Norman had lived in Australia for many years.

Presidential profile

It hardly seems any time at all that I was preparing to submit my presidential profile for my first term of office, back in September 2012. But it is quite special to be taking over the reigns, once more, this time from last year's president Caroline Mills, someone who I was actually at Sibford with, albeit a few years apart.

My hopes and aims for this term of office are, as they were in 2012/13, to build upon the relationship with the School and the Old Scholars that left in the 1980s. I started my time at Sibford in the mid 80s ... and currently the SOSA membership seems to be very light of past pupils from this time. It would be fantastic to entice more Old Scholars back, building upon the momentum from two years ago when we were joined at the annual reunion by ex-members of staff Chris Bateman, Bryan Holliday, Stuart Hedley, David Foulds, Chris Guy and Anne Muir. We very much hope that they, together with other staff from the 80s, will join us again next year.

2015 just happens to be 30 years since I started my time at Sibford as a pupil. Being that very small, blonde and cocky 11-year-old boy seems a lifetime ago! To mark this anniversary, at next year's Open Day and Reunion on June 13th, we in SOSA are planning to provide a lunch for past pupils from the 80s together with as many ex-members of staff



that we can get hold of.

These 'anniversary' lunches have been a real success over the last few years where different year groups have gathered and enjoyed their time together celebrating 50 years and 40 years of being at the school.

I am really looking forward to serving the second term of my presidency and very much hope to fulfil the aim of attracting more 80s pupils to the reunion and giving those attending Sibford School for the first time in many years the opportunity to see Sibford as it is today and to view the many fantastic changes that have taken place.

If you were at Sibford in the 80s and are reading this then do get in touch. We'd love to see you in 2015.

Edd Frost

Registered Charity Status?

Your Elected SOSA Committee have investigated the possibility of changing the status of the Association into a 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)'.

The primary advantage of this change would be that SOSA would benefit from Gift Aid on Donations, thereby increasing our income.

The disadvantage, aside from the effort involved, is that we would have to drastically amend our Constitution.

Most importantly, we would have to change SOSA's Objectives which are currently:

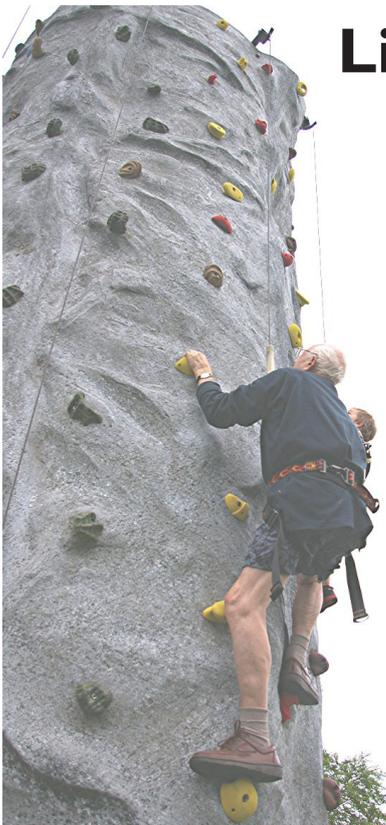
- To foster interaction between former scholars and staff and present day pupils and staff.
- To further school day friendships.
- To enjoy the mutual benefits that can arise through a sustained relationship with the School and former scholars.
- To encourage a spirit of loyalty amongst present scholars.
- To assist the further development of the School.

The Charities Commission have guidelines for Objectives and so we would need something like:

- For the advancement of education of children attending or wishing to attend Sibford School by the provision of bursaries to scholars who have need of financial assistance;
- For the advancement of education to former scholars of Sibford School by the provision of grants to former scholars who have need of financial assistance.
- For the advancement of education to scholars of Sibford School by providing and assisting in the provision of facilities at the School which would not otherwise be provided by the School.

As the SOSA Constitution would also go from a few pages to more like 25 pages we feel that it would be better to set up a separate organisation just for donations.

The Committee would appreciate your views on this! Please forward any comments to: Ashley Shirlin, SOSA General Secretary, 46 Upton Road, Poole, Dorset BH17 7AH or email ashleyshirlinsosa@outlook.com



Living adventurously

Old Scholar Philip Morris (1939-1944) is determined to make the most of intrepid opportunities.

He explains: "I was helping on the Transition Stratford stall at the River Festival and had just peddled the ball to the top of the tube, generating electricity, when I saw another challenge: the climbing wall.

"This is the way, at nearly 87, I am finding new ways to live adventurously. The man running the climbing wall said the youngest person he's had on it was just three ... but that I was by far the oldest person he'd ever had!"

2014 Reunion Attendees

Amongst those attending the Reunion were the following – with apologies to anyone we've missed:

Marie-Claire Aldington, Simon Barfoot, John & Gill Barratt, Anne Barth, Judith (Bunce) & Colin Beeby, Mark Bennett, Nick & Chloe Bennett, Liz Belcher (Tew), Kay Bohm, Ann & Ray Bond, Amanda Brown (Cade), Loraine Brown (Quinton), Bruce Bury, Paul Cook, Natalie Carapetian, Diana Casson (Ricci), Richard Cheney, David Chowne, Vince Clare, Andrew (Frank) Crawford, Robin Donald, Tony & Carole Dring, June Ellis, Heather Elsworth, Mike & Wendy Finch, Peter Fleming, Ruth Fletcher (Harrison), David Foulds, Paul Frampton, Edd Frost, Hugh Goddard, Clyde Goodwin, Michael & Voky Goodwin, Sheridan Gordon (Laity), Rachel Gordon (Wratten), Hilary (Thornton) & John Haddleton, Arthur Harrison & Joan Lambert, Phillipa Harrison & Paul Williams, Nigel Halladay, Stuart & Yvonne Hedley, David Henderson, Louise Henderson (Davidson), Brian & Jane Holliday, Susan (Kitson) & David Hill, Dean Holloway, Richard Hughes, Frances Hughes, Gillian Hundy, Catherine Hunt, Kate Jack, Juliet Leicester-Hope (Spendlove), Bronwen Lilley (Quinton), Jeanne Little (Darling), Peter Jeffrey, Paul Johnson, Stephen Jordan, Nikki Knott (Higgs), Nikolai Krohnert, Nadja Krohnert, Pippa Lacey, David & Eileen Laity, David Leatherbarrow, Tom Leeman, Jo Lingwood, Chris Leo, Jon Leo, Gail Maclaren, Jen MacIntosh (Quinton), James MacIntosh, Beverley Manning, Simon & Lesley Matthews, Paul Martin, Mark Mercer, Caroline & Paul Mills, Philip Morris, Ralph Moyle, Anne Muir, Karen Mulholland, Nigel Payne, Paul Pharo, John Platts, Debbie Price, Christine Pritchard (Smith), David & Yvette Quinton, Hedley Quinton, Michael Raw, Dan Re'em, Eleri Ricci (Williams), Graeme Sagar, Steve Salmon Lee & Manjula Sayers, Fred & Erica (Bond) Sessa, Margaret Shelley (Smart), Ashley Shirlin, Tony Skeath, Richard Slater, Gerald Spiers, Patrick Smart, Russell & Janet Steed, Stafford & Lesley Steed, Catherine Stokes, Erica Strofton (Eden), Jim & Sue Thelton, Bryony Veysey, Sarah Waterfall, John Watson, Judith Weeks, Mary (Kopp) & Will Wheeler, Seren Wildwood, Mike Williams & Gill Gray, Neil Williams, Rachel Wratten, Mike & Jenny Wollerton, Richard & Pat Wrigley and David Young.

SIBFORD OLD SCHOLARS' ASSOCIATION

Officers and Committee from 01/08/2014



Edd Frost



Ashley Shirlin



Caroline Mills



Nikki Knott



Mark Bennett



Chris Leo

PRESIDENT

Edd Frost

VICE PRESIDENT

Ashley Shirlin

RETIRING PRESIDENT

Caroline Mills

GENERAL SECRETARY

Ashley Shirlin

Tel: 07545 704620

Email: ashleyshirlinsosa@outlook.com

TREASURER

Peter Robinson

COMMITTEE MEMBERS Nikki Knott, Mark Bennett OBE, Chris Leo



SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Richard Hughes (January 2014 until December 2017)

Margaret Shelly (January 2012 until December 2015)



Please note that if you wish to contact any of the above Committee Members please do so by addressing your enquiry through the General Secretary – Ashley Shirlin (details as above) who will forward on your emails/correspondence etc. Ashley is also the person to contact for general enquiries and to submit information for inclusion on the website.



SOSA MEMBERSHIP & ALUMNI CO-ORDINATOR

Wendy Finch

Tel: 01295 781238 Email: wfinch@sibfordschool.co.uk

SOSA HONORARY ADVISER Michael Finch (Non committee post)



SCHOOL MEMBERS



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Peter Robinson (Business Manager)

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Ali Bromhall (Community Development Officer)

Tel: 01295 781216 Email: abromhall@sibfordschool.co.uk

Ali is also the person to contact if you wish to submit information for inclusion in the SOSA Magazine – The Sibford Rocket.

For further information about Sibford Old Scholars' Association visit our website: www.sibfordoldscholars.com

For further information about Sibford School visit: www.sibfordschool.co.uk