

THE

December 2015

Sibford Rocket



The annual magazine of Sibford Old Scholars' Association

INSIDE:



She's behind you!
Panto queen takes to the road



Strolling down memory lane

Paperback writers ...



Five books, four authors, all connected with Sibford

PLUS

SOSA launches new charity
Old Scholars remembered
News from the annual reunion
AGM reports

 **SOSA**

Welcome to **The Sibford Rocket**, the 2015 annual magazine of Sibford Old Scholars' Association (SOSA).

We hope that you will enjoy reading about what some of our former pupils are up to these days and share in their memories.

This issue has become something of a literary fest as we feature news about five new books published by friends of the school. The final resting place of one of Sibford's most unusual Old Scholars is revealed. There are also reports from the annual reunion and AGM and we remember old friends no longer with us.

If you've got news that you'd like to share with other Old Scholars don't forget to get in touch ... you can email me at abromhall@sibfordschool.co.uk or write to The Sibford Rocket, Sibford School, Sibford Ferris, Banbury OX15 5QL.

In Friendship
Ali Bromhall
Editor

Cover photograph: Beech Drive in Autumn captured by Michael Goodwin.

The Sibford Rocket welcomes articles from Old Scholars and other interested parties. Please note, the Editor reserves the right to edit articles for reason of length or legality.



S O S A

Sibford Old Scholars Charity

In last year's *Sibford Rocket* your elected SOSA Committee raised the topic of possibly changing SOSA into a registered charity.

Following much research we found that there were too many obstacles to overcome in order to achieve this. The Committee concluded that SOSA should be left as it is but that a separate organisation should be created to take advantage of Gift Aid.

Sibford Old Scholars Charity (SOSC) has been created and approved by the Charities Commission and HMRC as well as the SOSA AGM. The Trustees are: Ashley Shirlin (SOSC Chair and SOSA President), Mark Bennett (SOSC and SOSA Treasurer), Nikki Knott (SOSC Fund Raiser and SOSA committee member) and Amanda Brown (SOSC Bid co-ordinator and SOSA committee member).

The aims of the charity are to provide funds to potential pupils, current pupils and Old Scholars for educational purposes as well as to the school itself.

Full information on SOSC, including the constitution and how to apply for support, along with the means to donate online, can be found at www.sibfordosc.org

Enclosed in this year's *Sibford Rocket* is a separate flyer which contains more information on SOSC and a donation form. As a registered charity SOSC can claim Gift Aid from HMRC if a donor is a UK tax payer who is paying sufficient tax. This means that for every £1 a person donates we can claim a further 25p. Also, please consider putting SOSC into your will, especially if your estate is above the inheritance tax threshold.

Any donation is welcome whether it be £1 or £5,000.

In the few months that SOSC has existed we have raised £17,000! This has enabled us to help support a current pupil. This pupil would have had to leave the school due to a change in the parent's circumstances had we and others been unable to help.



The hills are alive for Libby

A young Sibford pupil who won a scholarship to a prestigious stage school has received rave reviews for her performance in Bill Kenwright's *The Sound of Music*.

Libby Griffiths was cast as Brigitta in the UK National Tour of *The Sound of Music* and spent from December 2014 to August 2015 touring with the show visiting venues including Bromley, Southampton, Sheffield and Glasgow.

In a review of the show at the

Mayflower Theatre, Southampton, James Butler, writing in the *Portsmouth News*, said: "*Vocally there wasn't a weak link, particularly when it came to the von Trapp children. William Keeler as Friedrich and Libby Griffiths as Brigitta both delivered brief solos; Keeler's demonstrating an astonishing falsetto and Libby Griffiths' a rich tone beyond her few years.*"

Libby was at Sibford from 2011 – 2014 before being offered a place at the Redroofs Theatre School.

Lifetime passion for the Bard began at Sibford

Shakespeare is regarded as one of the world's most influential poets and dramatists. Ben Jonson commented that: 'He was not of an age, but for all time!' And, as we sit on the cusp of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, those words still ring true today.

Shakespeare's legacy will be marked in numerous ways during the quatercentenary year. However, in April 2015 a Sibford Old Scholar took an early lead with the publication of **Women of Will ... following the feminine in Shakespeare's plays.**

Described as '*a profound, and profoundly illuminating, book that gives us the playwright's changing understanding of the feminine and reveals some of his deepest insights*', **Women of Will** offers an exploration – fierce, funny and fearless – of the women of Shakespeare's plays.

The author, Tina Packer, is hailed as one of the foremost experts on Shakespeare and theatre arts and is also an actor, director and master teacher ... not bad for someone whose first opportunity to visit the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon was thanks to Sibford School!

Writing in 1965 from her dressing room overlooking the Avon at the RSC, where she was playing the Princess of France in *Love's Labour's Lost* and Luciana in *The Comedy of Errors*, Tina recalls: "It was from

Sibford that I first came to this theatre. I saw Michael Redgrave in *The Merchant of Venice*, sat up in the gods holding Graham Veeck's lovely hot hand; went to the mop fair. It was the first time we had seen civilisation for weeks and I was overwhelmed.

"I wrote a piece about it for Gladys Burgess, about the hush that descends upon the audience just before the curtain goes up. To this day I have not forgotten that feeling ... only instead of the expectation I felt then, now I'm sick to my shoes with fear."

It was during her time at Sibford (1950 ~ 1955) that Tina, or Christina as she was known then, took her first stage role starring in *Five Birds in a Cage*, a one act play in which she was cast opposite fellow Old Scholars Jamie MacDonald-Brown, Edward Goudge and Hilary Naylor.

After Sibford, Tina went to sixth form at the local grammar school where she lost sight of any acting ambition. "I had two unhappy years," she says. "I found the atmosphere stifling; missed the liberalism of Sibford."

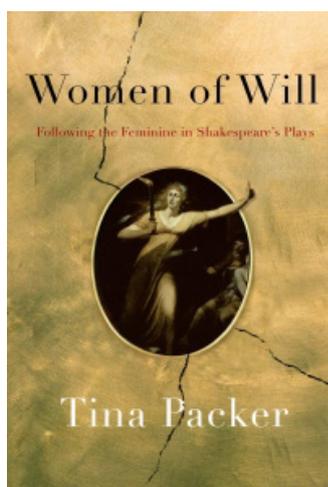
Tina broke away by going to Paris where she stayed for nearly two years ... latterly writing for *Woman* magazine. She returned



to London, still with the magazine, and it was only then that the seeds sown at Sibford began to grow shoots.

"The music AJ (Arthur Johnstone) made us listen to; those wretched recorders we'd been made to play; the mock elections and political dissertations; the art competitions we'd had to enter; all those pacifists and missionaries from China who'd spoken to us at Sunday Evening Meeting; the beautiful shrubs surrounding the school; the fact that 'no man is an island' repeated over and over again ... these things meant nothing to me then ... all I was interested in was fellers and food!" she says. "Now their importance and truth began to emerge. And with this came the realisation that one must do what one wants to do most and to the best of one's ability, otherwise your life is wasted. I arrived back at my original ambition of the theatre so I left *Woman* and went to RADA."

It was to prove an excellent move. Tina was awarded the Ronson Award for the most



‘Do the best of one’s ability’ ... advice from Tina Packer

promising actress of her year and after leaving RADA was offered a couple of roles in TV before none other than Peter Hall offered her the parts in the 1965 RSC season.

Tina has enjoyed a successful and varied career. She appeared alongside Cliff Richard and Dora Bryan in the film *Two a Penny*; played Dora to Ian McKellen’s David Copperfield for BBC TV and appeared in six episodes of *Dr Who* as Patrick Troughton’s love interest.

But Shakespeare has always remained her first love and in 1974 she moved to the States having been granted funding by the Ford Foundation to conduct an 11-month project researching the visceral roots of Elizabethan theatre. She then received two further grants from the Foundation which enabled her to travel the

world, looking at the relationship of mind, body, sacred texts, stand-up comedy, voice and actor–audience relationships.

It was in 1978 that she founded the Shakespeare Company, Massachusetts with the aim of ‘creating and running a theatre company that merged the power suits of British actors and American actors: the spoken word and the physical body.’

The move was a success and today the company attracts more than 60,000 patrons annually, offers one of the most extensive actor training programmes by a regional theatre in the USA and is also home to an award-winning and nationally recognized theatre-in-education programme.

Meanwhile, Tina has directed most of Shakespeare’s plays (some of them several times), acted

in seven of them (never when directing) and taught the whole canon one way or another at over 30 colleges in the United States. She has also received the State of Massachusetts’s highest honour, The Commonwealth Award, and has been presented with six honorary degrees (which gives her great pleasure as she never went to regular college).

It was during the mid-90’s, that Tina first conceived the idea for **Women of Will**, and subsequently received grants from the Guggenheim and Bunting fellowships to fund the project.

Developed over a 15-year-period, **Women of Will** was first a one-woman performance piece, followed by a two-actor piece, five plays and, finally, a book ... marking Tina’s New York debut as both an actor and a writer.

Women of Will is published by Knopf, a division of Penguin Random House.



Tina’s school friends Sylvia Williams (née Webster), Judi Thorpe (née Heuthwaite), Anthea James (née Lunn), Eleanor Smith (née Blunsom) and Hilary Mills (née Naylor) are pictured presenting Michael Goodwin with a copy of **Women of Will**.

Tina may be living more than 4,000 miles away from Sibford but she still keeps in touch with many of her former classmates.

Eleanor Smith (née Blunsom) went over to the States to visit Tina in September and saw her in a performance of *Mother of the Maid* at the Bernstein Theatre in Lennox. The comedy follows the tale of Joan of Arc, as seen through the eyes of her mum, played by Tina, who is doing her very best to accept the fact that her daughter is different.

Tina gave Eleanor a copy of her new book **Women of Will** to present to the school ... which she duly did, accompanied by some of Tina’s other school friends.

School days stand Suzy in good stead

Oh yes they do!



When Suzy Aris left her Sibford school days behind her in 2006, she never dreamt that she'd end up touring the country in a bright yellow bus offering the widest range of pantomime packages around.

But that is exactly what she's up to now ... oh yes it is!

And she credits Sibford for helping her to flourish into a successful business woman with a flair for the arts.

"I look back very fondly on my time at Sibford," she says. "If it wasn't for all the opportunities and lessons I received at school I don't think I'd be where I am today, co-owner and director of a thriving business that is helping to deliver the highest standard of touring theatre to all ages."

On leaving Sibford, Suzy went on to complete a three year diploma at Masters Performing Arts College in Essex. The skills she learnt and perfected resulted in her travelling around the world and performing on some of the grandest stages.

It was while she was on a national theatre tour of the UK that she met her fiancé and soon-to-be husband,

Simon. Both being in the performing sector, it wasn't long before they started to pool their experience and set up their own production company, 'The Panto Bus'.

"The Panto Bus covers everything from theatre in education, production shows, musical theatre and of course pantomime," explains Suzy, who plays a vital role in ensuring that all the touring pantomimes that visit theatres, schools, hotels and other performance venues are up to scratch. In addition, she is the main seamstress, costume and set designer as well as the choreographer for all the productions and is also a regular performer in the shows too.

"Who would have guessed all that of little Suzy Aris, pupil at Sibford School?" she jokes.

And as *The Sibford Rocket* went to press, Suzy was looking forward to a busy few months.

"We have three pantos on the go for 2015; Cinderella, Aladdin and Dick Whittington," she said. "We held auditions back in September and discovered some fantastic talent so I'm looking forward to some fantastic shows."

Charlie drops in by special delivery!

Sibford School receives many deliveries from a variety of different courier services, but a recent DHL arrival proved especially interesting.

Former pupil Charlie Chong is now a Senior Manager with DHL's Air Freight division in Hong Kong and took time to visit the school during a holiday in the UK.

"I was at Sibford in the late 1980s," said Charlie. "It was a marvellous time and I remember the teachers with great affection."

After leaving Sibford, Charlie went to City College in Norwich before returning to Hong Kong to work.

His 2015 visit to the UK was a treat for his 45th birthday and he was accompanied by his girlfriend, Mandy Ng So Chun.



Graduation news



The school recently received a letter from Angela Milln, director of student recruitment, access and admissions at the University of Bristol, sharing news of two SOSA members.

Angela wrote: *At the University of Bristol we're keen to celebrate the success of our graduates and share their progress with their previous school. Therefore, we thought you would like to know that this summer these students graduated with the following degrees:*

Jennifer Guy, Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery.

Cory Jones Bachelor of Arts in History with First Class Honours.

We hope you will be as proud of them as we are.

SOSA would like to congratulate Jenny and Cory, and all other members who successfully graduated from university this year.



Jennifer Guy (top) at Sibford 1998 ~ 2008 and Cory Jones at Sibford 2010 ~ 2012.



Stepping out in style

Former Sibford pupil David Podmore (1974 ~ 79) took Quaker Advices & Queries 27 'Live Adventurously' to heart over the late May Bank Holiday weekend when he travelled to East Lancashire to tackle a 100-mile 'non-stop' walk.

David was taking part in the Red Rose 100 Challenge, organised by the Long Distance Walkers Association.

And, as well as completing the distance in a time of 42 hours and 13 minutes, he also raised £780 for Greyhound Rescue West of England and £300 for the Oxford Animal Sanctuary.

"This is the second time I have attempted the LDWA 100 challenge and it went extremely well," said David, who has many happy memories of his time as a Penn House boy.

"The weather was just perfect and the scenery was outstanding as it took in Pendle Hill (where George Fox had his famous vision which led to the formation of the Society of Friends) and the Forest of Bowland."

Each year the LDWA 100 challenge is held in a different location. Walkers have to complete the course in no longer than 48 hours and are permitted only short refreshment breaks at

designated checkpoints.

"Last year's event, the Valleys 100, took place in South Wales and I finished in 46 hours and 43 minutes, so I was really pleased with my performance this year," said David. "The event has been running since the early 70s and approximately 30,000 people have entered it over the years ... with just over 3,500 actually completing the distance within the time, which goes to show what a hard challenge it is."

Spurred on by his success this year David has now applied to enter the Dorset 100 in 2016 when he will again be raising money for Greyhound Rescue West of England where he works as a volunteer.



David is pictured above with some rescue greyhounds and top, with three miles down and 97 to go!

Recalling happy memories

In September, the school received a visit from Judy Beattie (née Davidson) who was a pupil between 1950 and 1957.

Judy has been living in South Australia since emigrating in the late sixties, but has never forgotten her time at Sibford.

Now a retired teacher, Judy was in the UK to visit her daughter who lives in Evesham, and so she didn't hesitate to enjoy a nostalgic trip back to her old school.

"I have so many happy memories of Sibford," she says. "Walking to Meeting in the Gower, tobogganing in winter and throwing water on the boys' playground at the Manor to make a slide ... actually, if I remember correctly, I fell and cut my eyebrow so badly that I had to go to hospital in Banbury for stitches!

"Then there were the midnight feasts in the girls' common room, where we cooked oranges and made toast; Sunday afternoon walks and bike rides; weekly letter writing sessions; and, of course, the staff ... Arthur Johnstone, who introduced us to some lovely

music, and who could forget the 'Big Three' ~ Miss Prior, Miss Brigham and Miss Burgess ~ and the knowledge they gave us. Happy days."

After leaving Sibford, Judy got a job working in a nursery school in Birmingham before attending Bedford Teachers' College. On completing her course she secured a job teaching in a primary school also in Birmingham.

She married her first husband in 1961 and the couple moved to Redditch in Worcestershire where their three children were born (*fast forward to 2015 and they are all married and have given Judy a total of eight grandchildren*).

"We emigrated to Australia in 1969, which was a great adventure, especially as we were accompanied by three small children!" says Judy.

"We initially settled in a hostel in Adelaide before buying a caravan and travelling through Alice Springs to Darwin, where I spent a year teaching."

The family then retraced their steps to Adelaide and Judy subsequently enjoyed a career of more than 30 years as a primary school teacher. Unfortunately, her first marriage ended in divorce but she later met and married Bob, a Scot from Paisley.

Today, both Judy and Bob have become Australian citizens and live in a lifestyle complex in the wine growing district of McLaren Vale. "As we are a



gated community we all feel safe and secure," says Judy. "We have a communal swimming pool and gym and a huge hall where we enjoy many activities. Since retiring we have travelled overseas quite frequently and enjoyed Thailand and Indonesia. However, two years ago, on a trip to Bali, I fell off a nine metre cliff and sustained significant damage to my right side. I had to be evacuated by Air Ambulance back to Adelaide where I spent three months in hospital and rehab. I had a lot of nerve damage to my leg and foot, which can apparently take a long time to recover from, but I am fortunate to be here and am grateful to all those who put me back together."

During her visit to Sibford, as well as recalling memories, Judy also took the opportunity to visit the Junior School to speak to some of the young pupils.

"We were so impressed with what has been achieved in recent years," she said. "I think the children are very fortunate to be able to take advantage of all the facilities that Sibford has to offer."

- Judy is pictured (top) with current Sibford pupil, seven-year-old Evie Bothwell; (left) with husband Bob and (inset) in her school days.



Final resting place of a most unusual scholar is revealed

In the corner of a Midlands cemetery, located in the heart of the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter, lie the final remains of one of Sibford's most unusual pupils.

Edward Warrulan, at Sibford from 1847 to 1851, is believed to be the only Sibford Old Scholar ever to have been presented to Queen Victoria.

Noted as the school's first ever black pupil, Edward was the son of an aboriginal chief or king named Tenberry. We know he died in 1855, but discovering his final resting place has, until recently, not been easy.

However, thanks to the Jewellery Quarter Research Trust, we now know the exact site of Edward's grave.

Established in 2010, the Trust's aim is to research the history and times of people and places in and around Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, particularly those buried in the two historic cemeteries of Key Hill and Warstone Lane.

Doug Wilks, Chair of the Trust, visited Sibford at the 2015 Open Day and Old Scholars' Reunion and brought with him details of Warrulan's final resting place; public grave number 503, Section F, Warstone Lane Cemetery, Hockley, Birmingham.

Explained Doug: "Because it is a public grave, the last resting place

of this son of an aboriginal king remains unmarked, but, thanks to our research, we know that this is where Edward Warrulan, who died of pneumonia aged around 19, is buried."

The location of Warrulan's grave is now included on the JQRT's searchable data base and his biography, which includes mention of his time at Sibford, is featured on the JQRT's website, alongside those of others interned at Warstone Road and Key Hill. These include John Baskerville, printer and typographer responsible for the Baskerville typeface, and William Butler, founder of Mitchells and Butlers Brewery.

But how did this son of an aboriginal chief end up at Sibford School?

It was in 1845 that Edward Warrulan, real name Warruloong, was brought to England by Edward John Eyre, a celebrated explorer considered a 'Protector of Aborigines'. Eyre introduced the child into the leading evangelical and scientific circles of London. At that time there was a tradition of presenting 'exotic' people to the Queen and so it was that, on 26 January 1846, the young Warrulan, dressed as a typical English gentleman, was introduced to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert by Eyre and Colonial Secretary William Gladstone.

It is reported that the Queen was 'pleased with the general appearance and manners of the youthful representatives of her subjects of the Antipodes.'

To find out more about the Jewellery Quarter Research Trust visit www.jqrt.org. Further details about Edward Warrulan's time at Sibford School are included in Michael Finch's history of Sibford School, *A View from the Hill*, copies of which can be ordered through the SOSA website: www.sibfordoldscholars.com/shop

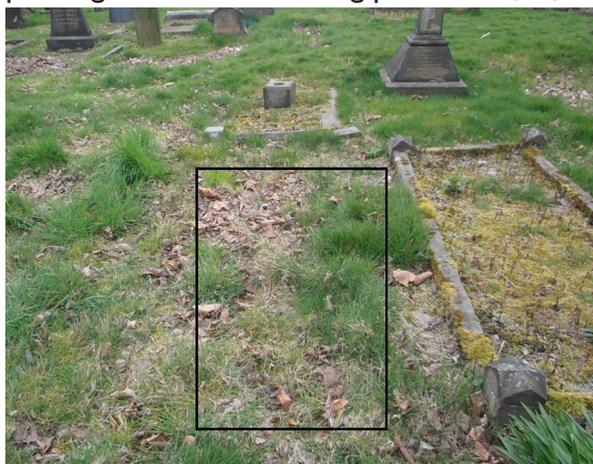


The young boy remained in England under the care of Eyre who referred to him as 'my little protégé' but, in 1847, when Eyre was appointed Lieutenant Governor of New Zealand, the child was placed in the guardianship of eminent Quaker, Thomas Hodgkin, and sent to study at Sibford where it was hoped he would have 'a guarded and religious education, instruction in the ordinary branches of useful elementary education and be encouraged to engage in some pursuits of farming or horticulture.'

After finishing school, Warrulan spent three years as an apprentice in Banbury under the careful eyes of the Quaker families in the area. He was subsequently employed at J. Middlemore, a leather establishment in Birmingham. In 1855 he spent the summer holidays with the Hodgkin family but, on returning to Birmingham became ill. Pneumonia followed and he died on 23 October.

• Pictured above: a sketch of Warrulan when he was presented to Queen Victoria as featured in the *Illustrated London News*.

Left: Warrulan's unmarked grave.



From pilots to pike!

Two new books from Dilip Sarkar

2015 has seen the publication of two very contrasting books by Old Scholar and historian Dilip Sarkar.

The Final Few, Dilip's latest historical book, was published in September to mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

It tells the stories, largely through first-hand interviews, of five Battle of Britain survivors and also features over 50 historic photographs from the personal collections of the pilots themselves, many of which have never been reproduced before.

"This is not a book glorifying war, far from it," says Dilip. "What it does is contextualise the experiences of these men (one of whom lives not that far from Sibford), and discusses issues of remembrance and survivor guilt."

The second book **River Pike**, is Dilip's first angling book, although the subject is one that has been close to his heart since childhood.

Indeed, the first thing Dilip ever had published was an article in an angling magazine, which he wrote when he was just 16.

"I'm a river pike-fishing fanatic," he says. "These fish grow big, are in most English waterways, and have teeth - the freshwater shark! I became fascinated by them as a child, but was appalled at how these wonderful, yet delicate, predators, were ignorantly persecuted - so I began returning pike alive to the river, even before coming to Sibford.

"There has only been one previous book on the subject, published nearly 30 years ago by the late John Sidley. So I thought it was about time a comprehensive work on the subject was published, to help put river pike on the map and to get these magnificent creatures the respect and understanding they rightly deserve."



The Final Few is published by Amberley Publishing. **River Pike** is published by Harper Fine Angling Books.

Dilip is pictured above with a pike, shortly before the beast was returned to the water.

Amonn skates to golden success



Congratulations to Old Scholar and heart patient, Amonn AL-Mahrouq, who stormed to victory during the April 2015 International Inclusive Ice Skating Championships held in Braehead Curling Rink in Glasgow.

After his previous success at the 2013 Championships, where he won gold in both the compulsory and free categories, Amonn was determined to retain his coveted 'double gold' title, which he did in impressive style.

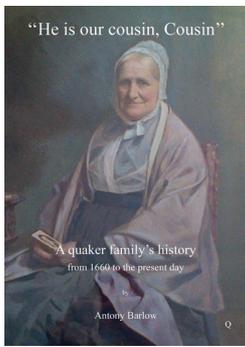
He said: "The competition was a little awkward as I had only 12 days' preparation

time due to having the previous five months away from ice-skating. However, I thought I would have a go and see just how far I could push myself."

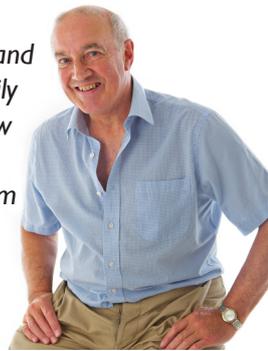
Amonn, who was a pupil at Sibford from 1990 ~ 94, has not always enjoyed an easy life. He was born in 1977 with a life threatening heart defect (VSD), which required complex and ground breaking surgery when he was just 16 months old. However, never to be deterred by his unfortunate circumstances, Amonn made an incredible and truly remarkable recovery - thanks to his dedicated family and teams of specialists, surgeons, doctors and nurses.

He has always been interested in ice-skating and now trains at Guildford Spectrum Ice Rink where he has integrated quickly and feels 'part of the family'.

"Everybody needs role models and being part of the Inclusive Ice Skating Movement means I have had the pleasure of meeting some amazingly positive skaters, all of whom have inspired me to continue to improve and push the boundaries of my ice skating," says Amonn.



A new book outlining a Quaker family's history going back some 300 years has recently been published. **He is our cousin, Cousin** is written by Antony Barlow (pictured right) and features many Sibford Old Scholars. Antony says: "The book is very much a personal family history, but I have also endeavoured to tell the wider history of the Society, recounting how Quaker philosophy led them all to help others less well off, to fight for the great issues that have engaged the Society of Friends since its inception, from persecution and pacifism to temperance and anti-slavery and most recently civil partnerships for gay couples and same sex marriage. In this, as in the other causes, one or other of my family have been leading champions. It is a fascinating history and one of which I am very proud." Below Antony shares some of his family's connections with Sibford School.



The Barber family at Sibford School

My mother, Joan Barlow (née Barber), like her sister Winifred and brother Reginald, were all old Sibfordians and my family, therefore, has had a long association with the school.

When my mother died in 2007 at the age of 93, I became the custodian of most of the family archives, and it was this that set me going on writing the history of my Quaker family.

My father and my mother came from very different Quaker families. My father's family dates back to the very beginning of the Society of Friends, to one James Lancaster, who was arguably George Fox's first follower. It is his Bible that has come down through the family and which still shows the water marks where James dropped it in the incoming tide, whilst fleeing persecution across Morecambe Bay.

Until the late 19th century, Quakers tended only to marry within the faith. My father's family is therefore an intricate network of cousins, encompassing many of the best known names in Quakerism from the chocolatiers Cadbury, Fry and Rowntree to the nametape makers Cash's of Coventry, from anti-slavery campaigners such as Samuel Bowly to my grandfather, John Henry Barlow, the leading pacifist of WWI.

My mother's family, on the other hand, came from a very poor family in the Black Country. Indeed, my maternal grandmother, Ellen



Antony's grandmother, Ellen, pictured in 1900

Barber (née Eyre) was orphaned in 1885 and both she and her sister were put into Crowley's orphanage in Birmingham. Happily for them, one of the Quaker Cadbury family, Edward and his wife Dorothy, were on the board and they took a kindly interest in the young sisters, often taking them out on trips into the countryside, where Ellen eventually met her future husband, William Barber, an apprentice printer from Coleshill.

After their marriage in 1900, Ellen and William, with help from the Edward Cadbury family, moved to Bournville but, sadly, my grandfather was discovered to have a weak heart and died young, leaving my grandmother to bring up the children alone. However, with scholarships and

financial help from Quaker Trusts, her children were enabled to go to Sibford School. Winifred Barber, joined in 1915 and left in 1918, her brother, Reginald, was at the school from 1918 to 1921 and finally my mother, Joan started in 1926 and left in July 1929.

Despite her husband's death, my grandmother, who was made of stern stuff, was determined that her children should not suffer the poverty she had lived through and always strived her hardest, so that her children and grandchildren could succeed, which indeed they did. And it is surely a great tribute to her that, within less than a hundred years, two of her grandchildren – Winifred's son (my cousin Michael Rutter,) and my own brother, David Barlow – became a credit to her indomitable spirit. Michael was knighted for services to psychiatry and David became Secretary General of the BBC.

Among our family archives I discovered many memories of Sibford School. Win recalls being quite homesick to start with. The matron, she says, "sensed that I was unhappy and used to come and sit on my bed and put my hair in curlers, something that I would have never had done at home. Actually, it was quite uncomfortable to sleep with my hair like that, but she thought it would make me happy."

Win always had a great sense of humour and could tell a good

Watching the birdie!

How school project helped launch a lifelong hobby

The 1948 edition of the SOSA Magazine* recalls a summer holiday excursion to Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire made by teacher Arnold Darlington and a party of five Sibford boys.

The magazine records that during the visit 'they established a new record for bird ringing'. They also made a film entitled 'The Home of the Shearwater', which 'shows the Sibford School Science Society doing survey work on the island' and is described as being 'in colour' and 'believed to be the only film of the Manx shearwater in existence'.

One pupil who remembers that visit to Skokholm well is Jim Newman (at Sibford 1944-48). Indeed, his involvement with bird ringing while at school was the start of a life-long passion with all things ornithological.

And so when he came to visit in May this year, accompanied by his cousin Don Newman (who was a teacher at the school between 1955 and 1957), he was delighted to be shown a brand new addition to the school ... a bird hide which has been built in the Forest School area.

"I enjoyed four very happy years at Sibford," said Jim. "And it was lovely to visit after all these years and see the school is still flourishing.

"The school facilities are superb and very different



from when I was a pupil but the atmosphere seemed similar with calm and smiling children.

"Arnold Darlington had a big influence on me. The school was an official bird ringing centre and we used to have traps in the grounds so that we could catch the birds, weigh, measure and ring them before setting them free. I think the new hide is excellent and am very pleased that bird watching is still encouraged at Sibford."

Jim and Don are pictured above at the entrance to the new bird hide.

*Archive copies of the SOSA Magazine can be found on the SOSA website: www.sibfordoldscholars.com.

story, as on another occasion she writes about her first impressions, remembering: "Soon after I started at Sibford, a prefect asked me to put her bath water on. I thought it was a most peculiar thing to ask me to do and I said: 'Why? Have you got something wrong with your hands?' She said 'You cocky little new kid'. But I certainly didn't go and put her bath water on! I had never come across anything like that before and I found it all very different and I was very miserable for the first few weeks, but after that I was happy."

My mother, on the other hand, always told me that she had been very happy at the school from the beginning, although in one letter home she did reveal that there was one glaring culinary omission,

confessing how she "greatly missed not having mint sauce!"

The only boy, Reginald, known as Reg, developed a keen love of sport during his time at Sibford and was renowned as an excellent all-rounder.

Reg left school at 16 and started a life-long career with Cadbury's, ending up as Export Manager. But he always remained a staunch supporter of Sibford, becoming one of the icons of SOSA and ultimately their President, before dying from cancer in 1965 at the age of 59.

Reg loved and respected the school so much that he sent his eldest son, Graham, there in 1948. Graham left in 1952 and then went on to King's School in Canterbury, subsequently going into the RAF



Joan Barber pictured circa 1933

for his National Service, before joining British Airways as a long distance pilot. Sadly he too was to die young, in a flying accident in 1980, aged only 44.

He is our cousin, Cousin, is published by Quacks of York

Hugh publishes account of post-war relief work

Former Sibford Head Hugh Maw has written a book about his experiences in war-torn Germany during the aftermath of World War Two.

Hugh, who is now 94, kept a diary of his time working for the Friends Relief Service in post war Germany. He was based in Berlin and Cologne as an ambulance and truck driver, delivering International Red Cross food and relief supplies.

His book, **The Training and Experience of a Quaker Relief Worker**, has already created considerable interest.

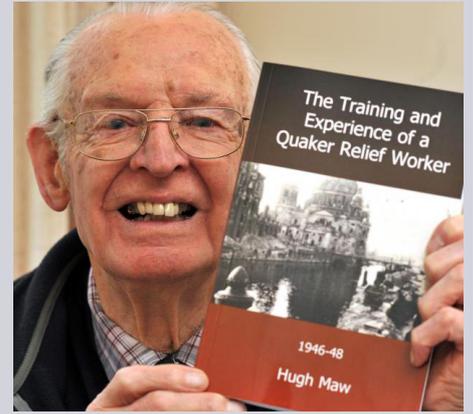
"I had the book published because people kept asking for my original diaries and were urging me to put them into print," says Hugh. "All profits made by the sale of the book are going to German

Quaker relief work and to Palestinian and Israeli medical charities and so far we have raised some £20,000."

Hugh was Head at Sibford from 1956 ~ 1962. The

Training and Experience of a Quaker Relief Worker is published by Words by Design.

• Photo courtesy of Stourbridge News



Love of sport unites girls together

When Deborah Cooke joined Sibford School in 1966 at the age of 13 it was a daunting prospect. Most of her fellow students had joined the school at the age of 11. However, she soon became friendly with two local girls, Rachel Clark, who was a boarder, and Sally Walton, who was a day girl.

The friendship was to prove long lasting and, although Rachel emigrated to Canada, the three continued to keep in touch.

And so when Rachel got married earlier this year and brought her new husband Ken to visit the UK, a trip back to Sibford to share some memories was a must.

"This is the first time that any of us have returned to Sibford since we left," said Debbie (now Harley). "We were all in different houses but what brought us together was our love of sport."

Added Sally (now Nolan): "I represented the county at athletics and remember being encouraged to practise the hurdles in the corridor of the Hill building ... I can't imagine that being something that would be approved of now!"

While Debbie was the first and only member of her family to attend Sibford, both Sally and Rachel had strong relational ties with the school.

"My mother used to say that the Morley family, relations on my grandmother's side, were connected with the original founders and my great aunt Kate was



Debbie, Sally and Rachel pictured at Sibford

a pupil here in the 1800s," said Sally. "My mother and her brother, Barbara and Clarkson Pickering, were pupils at Sibford as were my two sisters, Ruth and Pam."

In Rachel's case both her mother, Frances Jones (born 1916), and her father, John Smedley Clark (born 1903), attended Sibford, although they didn't meet until much later. "They first set eyes on each other at the Three Counties Show near Great Malvern," said Rachel. "The

story goes that it started to rain and so they ran into one of the tents to take cover. They got talking ... and discovered they had been pupils at the same school!"

Rachel's sisters Wendy, now 78, Diana, now 75, and Jane, now 70, all attended Sibford but it was almost a different story when it came to finding a school for the baby of the family.

"Mum took me to take the entrance exam at Friends' School, Saffron Walden but I didn't want to go," said Rachel. "I loved sport and knew about the Sibford hockey team from visiting my sister Jane and so eventually mum relented and Sibford it was."

Since leaving Sibford the three girls have all enjoyed very different careers. Debbie spent many years working in a number of hospitals as a medical secretary, Sally worked in a bank and for the past 15 years has been a post lady. Meanwhile, after emigrating to Canada, Rachel has spent 22 years working for a travel agency in Vancouver.



AGM 2015

The Head's Report

“ I am pleased to welcome so many Old Scholars and especially pleased to see so many (relatively) younger Old Scholars here today. It is good to see the Old Guard too. I hope you have had a lovely day and thank you for my invitation to lunch, and to this evening's presidential dinner. I am sorry that the weather has interrupted proceedings, but glad that it doesn't seem to have dampened spirits.

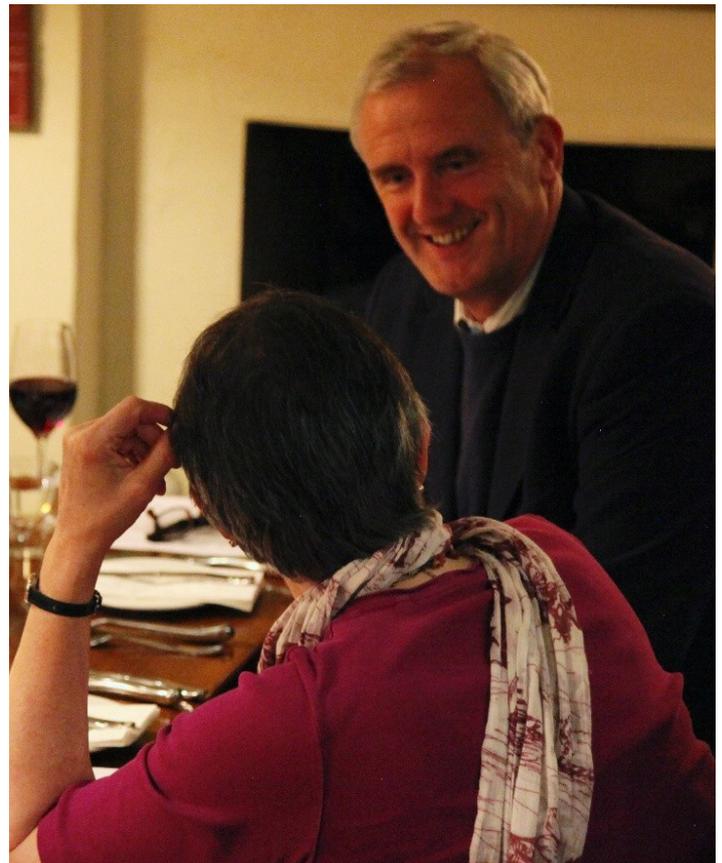
I am aware that many Old Scholars will have spent the day not only reminiscing about their time here, but also making comparisons between now and the 'good old days'.

We have been celebrating 'excellence' and celebrating our recent inspection report, but it is clear that 'excellence', perhaps like 'beauty', is in the eye of the beholder.

Certainly, I don't think any of us would consider that 'excellence' is an absolute term – what was excellent in 'your day' might not be similarly judged today, but I think that what many of you enjoyed and celebrated about your school

days was the excellence of community, the spirit of Sibford and the friendships you formed here. If you have read our ISI report, you will see that many of these same values were recognised and applauded by our inspection team. I still think this spirit springs from our Quaker roots and Quaker ethos.

In 4.3 the report says 'The spiritual development of the pupils is excellent. Quaker values are central to the life of the school' and again in 5.8, 'Those leading the school are strong advocates of Quaker values and have been very successful in



Michael Goodwin is pictured at the pre-reunion dinner in the Wykham Arms chatting to Chloe Bennett.

enshrining these values, giving the school its distinctive character and underpinning the caring, nurturing environment that allows pupils of all ages to prosper'.

I know that one of the big differences

you will have noted between then and now is the cost of an independent education at Sibford School. Of course, we still have some students who are funded by a Local Education Authority, and many students are on bursaries (we re-distribute nearly £400,000 in bursaries and almost the same again in other discounts). However, our most expensive full boarding fees are now over £26,000. Clearly, it is quite difficult to raise this from taxed income. Data from the recent Independent Schools' annual census shows that fees for boarding across the country have doubled since 2004 and that the fees have increased 3.5 times faster than average incomes have grown since 1965.

The impact of this is, of course, that our customer base has

“ Pupils' personal development is excellent.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.

The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

The majority of teaching seen in lessons was good with many examples that were excellent.

The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.

All children make excellent progress in their learning and development.

Quaker values are central to the life of the school.”

ISI Inspection Report 2015



shifted. The 'commercial and professional' class that used to be able to pay for fees – the kind of people like your parents – are now largely excluded from our boarding market. Boarding is becoming a luxury product, and customers who are used to buying in luxury markets have demanding expectations – so to be judged 'excellent' in boarding in the recent inspection report is all the more remarkable.

The other change in our customer base is that it has become more international, and SOSA might want to think about how it maintains links with an increasingly international ex-student body (SOSA Shanghai branch might be a more attractive venue than those reunions held at SOSA East Midlands or in Selly Oak Meeting House). Many British boarding schools now have significant numbers of overseas boarders. We are nervous about going down this route because we worry that we might lose sight of the very core values which we all recognise, so we currently limit our international boarders to around 10% of the total.

Of our current 430 pupils (note



The school has held an imaginative range of fund raising events in the past year. Above, pupils wear woolly hats to raise money for St Mungo's Broadway which helps people recover from the issues that create homelessness.

this much bigger school!) we only have 60 boarders. The Junior School – a recent invention for you of course as it was only opened in 1989 – now has over 100 pupils (both these figures showing a growth since my last report to you). A growth in pupil numbers and sound financial management have led to another change from your time at school – Sibford is free from debt, and I think you will agree that the condition of the buildings, the refurbishments and upgrades, as well as the high standard of our beautiful grounds, point to a very different kind of school to the one many of you attended. Oh, and the food is lovely now too!

Maintaining 'excellence' is no easy task and I hope you will allow me to say a huge thank you to my colleagues, teaching and associate, who work so hard to make it all happen. This year we are saying farewell to several colleagues who are retiring; foremost amongst these is Di Howes, who has been Science Technician here since 1984. We thank her for her service, and recognise that Sibford today stands on the shoulders of many giants who laid principled foundations.

I was pleased to see in the report that inspectors recognised how successful we have been in recruiting excellent new staff – the music and the drama, which some of you will have enjoyed this morning, both led by Heads of Department

new to the school this year, but they too catch the Sibford spirit that has brought you back today.

This report is meant to be my report to you on the school year, but, thanks to Ali Bromhall's excellent magazines, constantly updated website and involvement in other social media, many of you will already know (if you want to) all about our news, all about our successes. If you haven't kept up-to-date on Facebook or on our website, then maybe you don't want to know (which is fine – we all live busy lives) ... so I won't go on for too long. I know our General Secretary and President are keen to beat the 47 minute record for an AGM. But this world of instant messaging must surely be one of the most significant changes for our boarders – no more weekly letters home!

One highlight of my year was the creation and opening of our new Peace Garden in November 2014; part funded by Old Scholars and opened by the parents of Conrad Lewis, an Old Scholar killed in Afghanistan in 2011. The project involved students and staff in collaboration – a process that was as important as the impressive end product.

Our Forest School has been further developed this year with a new bird hide and our Year 8 students took part in a stunning Shakespeare Festival at the start of the academic year. Our charity work has strengthened with a degree of inter-house and inter-form competition and an imaginative range of fund raising ideas, including regular sales of milk shakes and sponsored leg waxing. We have extended our links with local schools, sharing our resources, facilities and experience in an attempt to widen our community.

If I can return to the subject of inspection though, I want to end with a concern. I worry that the whole inspection process, especially with increased pressure from central government about 'rigour' and 'standards', is making schools increasingly focus on outcomes which can be easily measured and that school leaders will spend time producing data instead of focusing on a more important task – that of helping to develop well-rounded young people.

The 'excellent meal' we enjoyed with Old Scholars last night was not so judged because there were four potatoes not three, or 67 peas not 62, but because of much more subtle judgements about taste, presentation, atmosphere, and company. They are hard to measure, but no less valuable for this.

Our successes can't always be simply measured, and we certainly don't make a pig fatter by constantly weighing it, but I hear from your comments today, and I agree with you, that the school feels to be in good heart. Thank you for your continued support and interest. Thank you for coming back. See you next year!

Comments

- *David Smith commented that it was a shame that current pupils were no longer let loose in the countryside.*
- *Ian Weatherhead asked whether the Head communicated with other private schools. The Head replied that he had meetings with other Quaker School Heads and other organisations.*
- *Ian Weatherhead also asked if the school had contact with the British Council. The Head replied that he was one of the first 80 Heads to visit China thanks to the British Council.*

Sibford Peace Garden



In his report Michael Goodwin made mention of the new Peace Garden which was part funded by Old Scholars. Michael is pictured above at the official opening with Tony and Sandi Lewis (parents of former Sibford pupil Conrad Lewis who was killed while serving in Afghanistan) and Phil Cavill, President of Banbury Rotary Club (Rotary donated 500 crocus bulbs, representing the End Polio Now campaign, to be planted in the garden).

Coincidentally, Phil is the father of two former Sibford pupils, Nicholas Cavill (at Sibford 1985 ~ 1990) and Katherine (1987 ~ 1992). He told *The Sibford Rocket*: "Due to the caring ethos at Sibford we watched both Nick & Kathy flourish during their time at the school and develop into confident young adults who went on to achieve success in their chosen careers."

Nick and Kathy both now live in Sydney where Nick is Vice President (Corporate Solutions & Claims) at Swiss Re International (Australia) and Kathy is Marketing Director (Australia & New Zealand) at Nutricia, a division of Group Danone.

Nick recalls: "My lasting impression of Sibford is just what a great place it was to go to school, and how lucky I was to go there. Being such a small school, it felt like you knew everyone, and there was a real community feel to it. Although, on the flip side of that, the small size of the school meant we didn't win many of our sporting fixtures against the larger schools in the area!"

Adds Kathy: "I spent a very happy five years at Sibford and have many fond memories, especially of all the extra-curricular activities ... playing hockey, rounders, netball, tennis, squash and completing my Duke Of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Awards. I made some great and lasting friendships during my school years and strongly believe that Sibford played a huge role in shaping me into the person I am today."



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

1. Greetings and Apologies:

Presented by Edd Frost

Grace Beckerlegge, George & Margaret Bunney, Helen George (née Beresford), Anna Green, Tom Davies, Jimmy Setna, David Laity, Alfred Holland, Arthur Harrison, Eddie Goudge, Hilary (née Thornton) and John Haddleton.

2. Obituaries:

Presented by Edd Frost

Philip George Manasseh at Sibford 1938-1946, died 25th August 2014 aged 84; Sheila Stewart (née McCairn) teacher at Sibford in the late 1940's-early 1950's, died 3rd September 2014 aged 86; Margaret Byatt (née Boardman) at Sibford 1944-1947; Norman Smith at Sibford 1935-1938; Fred Rowley at Sibford 1948-1952, died 19th July 2014 ; Raymond Bond; Peter Smart; Chris Evans; Philip Morris; John Edward Smith at Sibford 1960-1966; Hazel Evelyn Lake (née Parkin); David Frederick Jeffrey, Mary Waterfall (née Eaves)

The meeting held a few moments of silence.

3. Minutes

Presented by Edd Frost

The Minutes of the last SOSA Annual General Meeting held on 14th June 2014 were unanimously approved by the AGM and signed as a true record by the President.

4. President's Report:

Presented by Edd Frost

This year has seen two new members on the committee, Mark Bennett and Nikki Knott, who we welcomed and greatly appreciated their expertise and new ideas to committee over the past year.

This past year the committee has addressed a number of issues

including Charitable Status, our publication of *The Sibford Rocket*, the inclusion of younger Old Scholars, and of course the management of SOSA finances.

For the first time in some years the SOSA magazine, *The Rocket*, was published separately from the school's own magazine. We also moved the publication date and sent it out in December rather than with the reunion invites. This, we feel, seems to have worked well and I would like to thank Ali Bromhall publicly for her production of the magazine, which I felt was very well put together.

Over the last few years SOSA has reported significant losses. As a result of this, this year the committee made a conscious effort to halt this trend as our finances were somewhat low. Peter Robinson will report in greater detail but we are pleased to report that our income exceeded our expenditure. I am also pleased to report that we still managed to donate to a number of projects.

The committee was particularly proud and pleased to have made a significant contribution to the new Peace Garden which, for anyone who has not yet seen it, is a superb structure that was created to mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of WWI. A beautifully created and crafted area that will be appreciated and enjoyed for, we hope, many years to come. We also were very pleased to continue to support a number of current pupils who were in need of our financial assistance with various school trips and educational needs, something SOSA has always been pleased to support.

Also, very importantly, we have been pleased to have digitised the SOSA archive albums. Several of these are already available on the website. We were also able to

utilise the scanning skills of a young Old Scholar, Beth Birkbeck, and were able to pay her for her time.

I do hope you'll agree with me that today has been an enjoyable event. Old acquaintances will have been reignited and old stories shared as we all gather in the place that holds so many memories of our school days.

I would like to thank the SOSA Committee for all their efforts over the last year and their support to me, their President. In particular I would like to thank Ashley Shirlin for his support and management of my duties as I will be first to admit that I needed prodding and nudging at certain times whilst trying to run my own business.

We say goodbye to Caroline Mills who will be leaving the committee after being involved for many years. Caroline is the only current member of the committee who was actually at school at the same time as me (although she was many years older than me!) and it was especially rewarding to pass onto Caroline the SOSA Presidency last year from my previous term back in 2012/13 knowing that her family history with Sibford goes back many generations.

All there is left for me to say now is that it is also a pleasure to be passing the Presidency this time to Ashley Shirlin who, many of you will know, has a long history also with SOSA. In fact he's had more come backs than JR having many roles within the organisation for many years. Ashley will, in his two year term, be steering SOSA towards the school's 175th Anniversary in 2017 and I can't think of a better man to be doing the driving.

Thanks once again to Michael Goodwin and the staff of Sibford for being so welcoming to us all

here today and encouraging us to share with the busy life of the school.

Thank you.

5. General Secretary's Report:

Presented by Ashley Shirlin.

Although I was General Secretary some years ago, I would like to start my report by thanking Mike Finch for his help, assistance and support over the last year. I think he let me off easily during my previous term by undertaking a lot of tasks himself!

I'd like to comment on four main areas and raise them for discussion.

Makeup of the Committee

When I was previously General Secretary, the SOSA Committee was much bigger. I entirely understand the reasons for reducing the size of the committee but I believe that it may have gone a little too far and that we should consider a number of changes.

I think we should re-introduce the roles of Membership Secretary and possibly Reunion Secretary on three-year terms as we did last year for the Treasurer. I also think that we should co-opt three younger Old Scholars each year on one-year terms.

As concerns a Membership Secretary, Wendy Finch has been undertaking this role for several years as a co-opted member of the committee. Again, it seems sensible to formalise this role especially as the re-launched website is generating additional work. I'm delighted to say that Wendy is happy to continue in this role and would be appointed as Membership Secretary if this meeting approves the re-introduction of this elected post and if there are no other candidates from the floor.

It has fallen to me, as General Secretary, to undertake the role of Reunion Secretary. It has become



President Edd Frost (right) and General Secretary Ashley Shirlin pictured at the 2015 AGM.

apparent since the invites were sent out that this role has grown significantly. Advertising (and re-advertising) the reunion on social media is a time-consuming exercise. For example, I have published the names of people attending the reunion on the website this year as I did for the 1974 Leavers' Lunch last year. This has encouraged additional people to attend. Whereas I enjoy arranging reunions I believe that this role might better be undertaken by an elected Reunion Secretary. I hope the meeting will support a late rule change to introduce an elected Reunion Secretary.

SOSA has long struggled to attract younger Old Scholars. We have tried several things in the past but, to my knowledge, the only approach that was reasonably successful was when pupils became helpers at the reunion and then went on to become committee members initially involved with the reunion itself. Harriet Langridge (Jones as was) is a great example of this.

Even when we recruited younger Old Scholars we have had problems in retaining them for a number of reasons. By co-opting three younger Old Scholars each year, a group of friends could join together as was the case in the past. I believe that this would make SOSA and the committee less intimidating as there is safety in numbers and they would not have to go through a potentially competitive election at the AGM. This wouldn't require a rule change.

The meeting unanimously approved the re-introduction of both the Membership Secretary and the Reunion Secretary.

Membership and the Website

With regards to membership over the last year, Wendy advises that: "In September 2014, 64 leavers were added to the SOSA database making 1,303 SOSA members recorded, of which 188 are addresses unknown, making a total of 1,115 contactable members. Those with email addresses are 259."

Wendy continues to keep the



SOSA address information up-to-date and adds information on Old Scholars who do not wish to become SOSA members to the alumni database.

Mike and Wendy will continue to add information to the alumni and Mike has now completed inputting data from the 1842 – 1892 Admission Registers making a total of 3,734 records held – as the last pupil to enter the school is number 9,133 we still have a little way to go with this project.

We should thank both Wendy and Mike for their continued efforts in this area.

As many of you are aware the SOSA website was re-launched in April 2014. In terms of visitors, the website has done very well with about 4,700 unique visitors who have viewed about 25,000 pages. The three main areas of interest on the site are the photo albums (recently scanned in by a young Old Scholar), copies of the SOSA Magazine (going back to 1904) and the reunion information pages.

Where the website has not been terribly successful is that less than 150 people have registered on the site. I think we need to simplify the

on-line registration form in order to stop putting people off. If people register we can contact them directly.

Every couple of months or so I email all the people registered on the site. These emails contain information on the availability of new photo albums, the reunion, **The Rocket** and other news. I also post this information on various Sibford Facebook groups which contain a lot of members not on the SOSA database.

Although, by trade I'm an IT person, I only use Facebook. It would benefit the Association if a younger Old Scholar took up the reins of co-ordinating information on social media. I would hope that a younger Old Scholar could take up this role.

The use of the internet, in general, is making a significant impact on SOSA. We have saved money by not sending the reunion information to SOSA members whose email addresses we have on record. Many of the Old Scholars attending today's reunion have done so because of the online promotion of the reunion. About 40% of the money collected for

today's meals was paid for on-line.

SOSA will always have significant printing and postage costs, primarily associated with **The Rocket**, but as this is also available via the website this may diminish over time. I personally, however, enjoy receiving **The Rocket** in the post and I know that many others feel the same.

Liz Cordiner commented that she found the website to be extremely informative.

Voting

With regards to voting, the committee is interested in hearing the views of the AGM on the topic of allowing postal and electronic voting. This year I made available to the entire membership the majority of the proposed rule changes in advance of the AGM. It seems harsh to me that we disenfranchise SOSA members who cannot attend the AGM for one reason or another.

Mike Finch commented that after many years of being against postal voting he had now changed his mind and was in favour. The meeting unanimously agreed that electronic and postal voting should be adopted. The committee is to propose the appropriate change to the constitution.

175th Anniversary

The final point I'd like to raise concerns the 175th anniversary of the founding of Sibford School which will take place in 2017. It may seem a bit early to consider this but some things take longer than others to organise. I'd like to suggest that we put aside £3,000 of SOSA's funds to undertake a joint project with the school along the lines of the new Peace Garden that SOSA helped to support and that we, as Old Scholars, separately mark this occasion. For example, Mike Finch could produce an addendum to his book 'A View



Duke of Edinburgh expedition in the 1970s ... photograph from one of the albums that has been scanned and now feature on the SOSA website.

from the Hill' covering a life story from each of the last 17 or 18 decades. He has already made a draft start on this idea.

Paul Frampton commented that SOSA should have more ambition than to allocate £3,000. He stated that parents of existing pupils were funding SOSA through their contributions but nothing was being received from Old Scholars.

Ian Weatherhead proposed that SOSA should have an ambition to raise £25,000. This was agreed by the meeting.

To conclude, this last year has been a fairly brutal re-introduction for me to the role of General Secretary. I can't honestly say that I've enjoyed it as there have been a few issues that have caused friction but hopefully Old Scholars will see that I and the committee are trying to serve all Old Scholars, whatever their age group, even though there may be disagreements on how this is best achieved.

6. Charitable Status:

Presented by Ashley Shirlin

At previous AGMs, going back over many years, SOSA has considered becoming a Registered Charity. The fundamental problem has been that the Charities Commission has regarded SOSA as an 'old boys'/girls' organisation' and has therefore not been prepared to accept its change to Charitable Status.

Last September the SOSA Committee formed a sub-committee comprising Peter Robinson (SOSA's Treasurer and the school's Business Manager), Nikki Knott (a committee member and a fund raiser for a number of charities) and myself as SOSA General Secretary to investigate charitable status.

Following our investigations it became apparent that the Charities Commission's previous

objections would still apply unless we completely replaced the SOSA Constitution with a document of some 25-30 pages. Additionally, expenditure on **The Sibford Rocket**, the reunion and the Archives would not be regarded by the Charities Commission as legitimate charitable expenses.

In light of this, the sub-committee reported back to the full committee that it would be preferable for a separate organisation to be created if Old Scholars wished to donate using Gift Aid. This was approved by the SOSA Committee.

In the 2014 **Rocket** we sought the opinions of all SOSA members and also used social media to ask for additional views as well as asking the opinions of Old Scholars who had registered on the SOSA website. No objections were raised at the time and indeed many people supported the concept.

With this background, three of the committee – myself, Nikki Knott and Mark Bennett along with another Old Scholar, Amanda Brown, decided to commence the process of setting up a Registered Charity as this takes considerable time.

There are many forms that a charity may take. The route that we felt was most appropriate was to set up a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) with the only members being the trustees. CIO's are now, generally, what the Charities Commission prefers. The Mount Old Scholars Association is also considering this option. Our reasons for not having a wider membership are primarily associated with the cost and effort involved. However, it is anticipated that SOSC trustees will primarily be sourced from the SOSA Committee. The SOSC Trustees believe that donations are



Ashley Shirlin at the 2015 reunion
better spent on the aims of the charity rather than administration. It is also important to point out that SOSC trustees do not personally benefit from the charity. The SOSC constitution has been written so that there is no limit on the number of trustees and we have also allowed for non-old scholar trustees in case an organisation wishes to make a significant donation but also wishes to appoint a Trustee.

As concerns the aims of SOSC, these are entirely associated with education for the needy. The Charities Commission has a very specific way in which aims must be worded and very specific causes that they approve. However, in essence, SOSC will give money to prospective pupils, current pupils and Old Scholars who are in need of financial assistance. SOSC will also give money to the school for projects that benefit all current pupils.

I'm delighted to report that the Charities Commission approved the formation of SOSC and so the organisation now legally exists. The constitution, along with its Grant Making Policy and other documents, are available via the SOSC website. I've also



printed a couple of copies of the Constitution for those interested in reading the full 14 pages today. The flyers that have been displayed in the SOSA marquee and that you have on your chairs, detail the aims of SOSC and provide additional information.

So, what does this mean in practice? We envisage that SOSA will continue as at present, with income deriving from what the school collects on our behalf from current pupils. This income will then be spent primarily on **The Rocket**, reunions and the archives as well as the existing SOSA aims. SOSC will be a fundraising organisation independent of SOSA finances. Old Scholars can either donate to SOSA or SOSC. However, by donating to SOSC, the Charity can claim Gift Aid, which increases a donation by 25% if the donor is a UK tax payer and is paying sufficient tax.

As concerns giving money away SOSC is integrated with the school's bursary procedures as concerns prospective and current pupils. Peter Robinson has kindly agreed to act as an advisor to SOSC in cases where a bid is received directly via the SOSC website or from the school itself.

Where bids are received from Old Scholars or the school itself the SOSC trustees will assess each application according to the Grant Making Policy.

Some comments have been made that the four SOSC trustees jumped the gun by forming the charity prior to this AGM. We did however attempt to consult with Old Scholars via **The Sibford Rocket**, the website and Facebook along with other discussions. We also went through the process of obtaining the approval of the SOSA Committee. I'd rather be here today saying that we

have an organisation that has been accepted by the Charities Commission and HMRC rather than be in this position in 12 months' time. Interestingly, an Old Scholar donated £5,000 purely on the basis of my email last October detailing SOSC's aims during the consultation period.

An unbelievable amount of work has been undertaken by the SOSC trustees and others. In order to ensure that donations go entirely to the charity's aims one of the trustees donated £2,000 towards initial set up costs like the flyers. Our objective is to raise £50,000 a year via SOSC. Whether we achieve this target or not will

depend on the generosity of Old Scholars. As things stand the SOSC bank account contains about £6,800. More significantly, an Old Scholar has pledged £5,000 a year for the next five years. When you include Gift Aid this £25,000 becomes £31,250!

I hope that this meeting will support what we have done and what we are hoping to achieve. I also hope that this support might also take the form of hard cash!

Anne Muir and June Ellis congratulated Ashley Shirlin for setting up the charity.

Mike Finch stated that SOSA had been trying to resolve the issue of charitable status for 50 years.

Treasurer's

I prepare this report covering two periods, one for the year to 31st July 2014 and the second for a period of eight months to 31st March 2015, in the hope that those present will agree to a change in the reporting year.

It has always seemed an anomaly to be reporting on a period so long after it has concluded and the suggested change makes good sense for this reason. However when agreeing to this change you should be mindful that the SOSA year will no longer align with the school year and therefore the inspection of accounts would need to be completed by an external party. This would however be the case with a change of Treasurer.

So this will be my last report as Treasurer as after this meeting I will pass the role to Mark Bennett who has agreed to stand for this post.

You will find that you have two sets of accounts in front of you; the first is for the period from 1st August 2013 to 31st July 2014.

The income for the year totalled £12,765; this is made up of the

annual subscription from the school and those sums paid by Old Scholars as an annual contribution to membership funds.

Other funds were realised from the annual reunion and donations including the sale of the history of Sibford, 'A view from the Hill'.

A one off payment of £4,640 is also included which was due to a miscalculation in the contribution due from school to association over a number of years. This matter was discussed at last year's AGM and an apology made at this time.

Expenditure for the year totalled £15,588. The most significant expenditure related to magazine and newsletter costs including postage for these. A one off for the new website totalling £1,880 is shown in the figures presented.

SOSA kindly agreed to support the building of a new Junior School play area – the school is grateful for this support.

Overall for the year the accounts show a loss of £2,914.

The balance sheet shows that the Association had total funds

Ann Muir proposed and Simon Matthews seconded that SOSA should support SOSC. This was unanimously agreed by the meeting with one abstention.

7. Treasurer's Report:

Presented by Peter Robinson.

A copy of the report is shown in the grey panel below.

8. Head's Report:

Presented by Michael Goodwin.

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

9. School Committee

Representative's Report:

*Presented by Margaret Shelley
School*

A large part of the Spring term was spent waiting for the school

inspectors from the Independent Schools Inspectorate, who finally came just before Easter. We then had a long wait for their report, which the school received at the end of May. Their report was very positive, and you will probably not be surprised to learn that the school is praised for providing an environment that enables pupils to 'develop in confidence, self-esteem and tolerance'. There are lots of 'excellents' in the report, which the school has been celebrating this morning.

The school joined in with activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the start of World War One with the opening

in November of a Peace Garden. All the students – from the youngsters in the Junior School to the Sixth Formers – were involved in designing and making the garden and the garden was opened at a very moving ceremony by Tony and Sandi Lewis, parents of Conrad Lewis, a former pupil, who was killed in Afghanistan on 9 February 2011. The Peace Garden is behind the horticulture area and is a place where staff, pupils and visitors to the school can go for quiet reflection. I hope if you haven't already found it that you will go and have a look at it while you are here.

As well as looking back, the school is looking forward. Dean Wood (an Old Scholar), who runs the car dealership at The Firs Garage, has lent the school a plug-in hybrid car so that the students can learn more about technology, engineering and environmental issues. Dean has also invited some of the present students to go to The Firs to learn more about both the hybrid technology and career opportunities in mechanics, engineering and the motor industry. You'll probably see the car parked in the school grounds, and the school has installed a charge point for electric vehicles.

School Committee

There have been a couple of changes to School Committee since the last SOSA AGM. We said goodbye in December to Alex Wingfield and John Gould, who both reached the end of their term of service. We were joined in January by Philip Jones, a Friend from Leicestershire, who is a retired solicitor now working as a street pastor.

Cindy Poulton, who was the SOSA rep on School Committee for eight years and who was then co-opted to be Assistant

Report

of £9,652, with £3,872 in the current account and £5,430 in an investment account.

The second set of accounts is for the period from 1st August 2014 to 31st April 2015.

These show income for the year as £11,691; this includes a donation of £4,855 to the Sibford Old Scholars Charity, which has now been transferred to the new charity at the request of the General Secretary.

Costs for the year totalled £5,291 – it is hard to compare with previous years as this is for an eight-month period; however the most significant costs relate to the magazine and newsletter, the cost of which has reduced significantly.

The decision to have a lunch and evening meal resulted in additional expenditure.

It is pleasing to report a surplus for the part-year of £6,400 and £1,545 when the one-off donation is transferred.

The balance sheet shows a healthy position with £10,254 in the current account and £5,448 in investments.

The 2013/14 accounts 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.

The part year accounts have not to date been inspected but on this basis I ask that they are approved.

Comments

- *Ian Weatherhead commented that the level of interest being received was low. Ashley Shirlin responded that long term investments were no longer viable since the abolition of the Life Membership Fund. Paul Levy commented that a higher interest account would only net an extra £27 and this wasn't worthwhile as the funds would be tied up. Hugo Finley concurred.*
- *Ashley Shirlin proposed that the accounts be approved; this was seconded by Edd Frost and unanimously agreed.*
- *Margaret Shelley thanked Peter for all his efforts.*



Old Scholar Dean Wood (pictured alongside Sibford Business Manager Peter Robinson), has lent the school a plug-in hybrid car so that the students can learn more about technology, engineering and environmental issues.

Clerk of the Finance and Premises sub-committee, will have been on School Committee for 12 years at the end of 2015. We have so valued her experience and her commitment to the school, but the memorandum and articles set an absolute limit of 12 years of service and we shall have to say goodbye to her at the end of this year.

I shall have been on School Committee for four years at the end of 2015 – under the memorandum and articles of association I could be re-appointed for a further four years if the AGM wants me to continue.

It has been good to see Richard Hughes back at school.

Michael Goodwin commented that the recent ISI report had categorised the school governors as being 'excellent'.

10. Proposed Amendments to the Constitution:

Presented by Ashley Shirlin

Clause 3 – Following the comments at last year's AGM concerning an 'opt out', a complete replacement of Clause 3 was proposed.

Mike Finch proposed that Clause 3c be extended to include 'They would be invited to make an appropriate donation.'

Ashley Shirlin proposed, seconded by Mike Finch, that Clause 3 be replaced by the previously circulated wording and extended by Mike Finch's amendment. This was unanimously agreed.

Clause 4 – Following the comments at last year's AGM regarding SOSA's financial year, Ashley Shirlin proposed, seconded by Mike Finch, that the previously circulated change be made. This was unanimously agreed.

Clause 5 – For the reasons detailed in the General Secretary's report concerning the re-introduction of certain posts a rule change was proposed. The previously circulated amendments were slightly amended to allow for the election of a Reunion Secretary and a Membership Secretary. Ashley Shirlin proposed, seconded by Mike Finch, that the changes be made. This was unanimously agreed.

Clause 7a – Following the comments at last year's AGM

regarding whether the accounts had to be signed by a 'qualified accountant' the previously circulated change was discussed. Hugo Finley commented that he felt that an appropriate accountant might be required but Peter Robinson informed him that this was not necessary as SOSA's income was below the threshold. Ashley Shirlin proposed, seconded by Mike Finch, that the previously circulated change be made. This was unanimously agreed.

11. Election of Officers:

Presented by Edd Frost.

Treasurer: Mark Bennett (1/8/15 – 31/7/18). Proposer: Ashley Shirlin, Seconder: Clyde Goodwin. School Committee Representative: Margaret Shelley (1/1/16 – 31/12/19). Proposer: Erica Strofton, Seconder: Loraine Spencer. Membership Secretary: Wendy Finch (1/8/15 – 31/7/18). Proposer: Ashley Shirlin, Seconder: Erica Strofton.

Committee member: Amanda Brown (1/8/15 – 31/7/18). Proposer: Mike Finch, Seconder: Wendy Finch.

Committee member: Harriet Langridge (1/8/15 – 31/7/16). Proposer: Ashley Shirlin, Seconder: Jon Leo

Reunion Secretary: No candidate. The above committee members were unanimously elected.

12. Honorary Life Membership:

Edd Frost informed the meeting that Erica Strofton had been awarded Honorary Life Membership. This was met with unanimous approval.

13 Any Other Business

Mike Finch thanked the President and the General Secretary for their handling of the AGM.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 17.36.

Going back

It took me years to build up the enthusiasm to visit my old school. Some old school friends pushed and prodded until I gave in and said, "OK". I felt so nervous. Who would be there? Would anybody remember me? What's the old place like now? A billion questions came to mind.

The road into Sibford Ferris did not appear to change – Greens was still there! Sadly, gone was The Manor as we knew it. I spent many a day down in Gillett House, avoiding Ms Warren and the big dog Rollie. The best memory that comes to mind is when Helen Matthews and I were in First Form ... hungry one night we snuck downstairs, easily got into the kitchen, found the goodies ... and then we heard the door! Somehow we both hid in the cupboards and felt we had dodged Granny (aka Ms Warren) until that darn dog sniffed us out ... oh well, another punishment!!

Getting to the school grounds is now via a different entrance – the first sight of The Hill was great from the Hook Norton

Road but then pulling round the side of the sports field the view was totally different – a field of solar panels (great they are eco-friendly) and huge brightly coloured buildings – this was not the school I remember.

Once inside the school I realised, in a good way, so much was the same. I fondly looked around my classroom and memories came flooding back: Mr Higgins, English; Mr Rye, French; Doss (Mr Gilchrist), Geography (famed for his excellent aim at chalk throwing).

I ventured into the cookery room – the room of nightmares for me!! I hated cooking (and still do). My best memory in that room was the massive slab of cooking chocolate in the larder behind the door. (Yes I checked – it was locked on reunion day!).



Old Scholars enjoying the reunion lunch ... school dinners were never like this!



June Ellis (right) pictured with Jeanne Little (née Darling) at the 2015 reunion

I was surprised to see so many people and loads from the era when I was there – some people had really not changed – others had changed beyond recognition. I don't think I had lost all possibility of being recognised as people with no hair or beards (or both) were coming up to me to say, "Hello



Anita Sampson and Amanda Brown catch up on some school memories. Below: Some of the many Old Scholars who attended the 2015 reunion.





Anita” (they didn’t look like that at school so I had no idea half the time who they were.)

In a funny way it was all as if it was yesterday being there again. One thing was very, very different – I attended the SOSA lunch – I so don’t remember the school dinners tasting like that ... it was delicious.

To my great delight I met Miss Ellis (I still can’t call her June) – her big smile and those eyes that appear to say, “What are you up to now?” were upon me once more. It was a warm sort of homely feel. I got to know Miss Ellis very well at school – mainly because I spent so much time standing outside her office at The Manor ... we couldn’t all be angels now could we?

I know from my old school friends that a lot of time and effort goes into arranging the reunions (and sometimes for very little gratitude) but I have to confess, I now regret not having visited more often. I was able to catch up with so many of my old classmates and intend to maintain the contact. We laughed so much about old times. I am looking forward to the 40th anniversary of my year leaving at next year’s reunion and also the 175th anniversary of the school in 2017 – hope to see you there.

Happy memories: Anita Sampson (who was at Sibford from 1971~76) is pictured (top) at a 1980s London SOSA reunion held on the TS Queen Mary and (right) during school days with Ashley Shirlin!



African Vision Malawi

The 2015 reunion also saw the return to Sibford School of Steve Johnson (at Sibford 1971~76) who brought with him a display about African Vision Malawi, a charity that was set up in 2005 by another Sibford Old Scholar, Heather Palmer née Lewis (1972~78).

The charity’s vision is to work towards seeing a healthy, educated and self-sufficient community in Malawi. As Medical Supplies Manager, Steve is currently raising funds to supply two clinics and a new maternity unit (opened by AVM in 2013).

Steve (whose father Colin was at Sibford during the 1940s) is pictured above at the 2015 reunion chatting about the charity. For further information, visit: www.africanvision.org.uk.



2015 Reunion Attendees

Amongst those attending the AGM and/or reunion were the following – with apologies to anyone we’ve missed:

ABERCROMBIE Barbara (née Secombe); BARFOOT Simon; BARRETT John and Gill; BEEBY Judith (née Bunce) and Colin; BELCHER Liz (née Tew); BENNETT Chloe and Nick; BOND Ann; BROMHALL Ali; BROWN Helen (née White); BROWN Amanda (née Cade); CAMPBELL Cari (née Stuart) and Tudor; CASSON Diana (née Ricci); CHERRY Richard; CORDINER Liz (née Hockley); CRAWFORD Andrew; DAVIDSON Brigid; ELIAS Jan; ELLIS June; EVANS Anne (née Tucker); FINCH Mike and Wendy; FRAMPTON Paul; FINLEY Hugo; FLETCHER Ruth (née Harrison); FROST Edd; GOODWIN Clyde; GOODWIN Michael; HENDERSON David; HUGHES Richard; JENKINS Debbie (née Price) and Mickey; JOHNSON Steve; KROHNERT Nikolai and Nadja; LEO Chris; LEO Jon; LEVY Paul; LEWIS Katie (née Weeks); LITTLE Jeanne (née Darling); LANGRIDGE Harriet (née Jones); MACE Wendy (née Hutsby); MATTHEWS Simon and Lesley; MILLS Caroline (née Bond); MUIR Anne; PHILLIPS Pat (née Williams); RICCI Eleri (née Williams); ROBINSON Peter; SAMPSON Anita (née Brown); SHELLEY Margaret (née Smart); SHIRLIN Ashley; SMITH Sue (née White); SMITH David Carlton; SPENCER Lori (née Rollett); STEED Russell and Janet; STROFTON Erica (née Eden); THATCHER Josephine (née Hindle); TITLEY Imogen; VEAZEY Rachael (née Davis); VEYSEY Bryony; WARDLE Tim; WATSON John; WEATHERHEAD Ian and Christine; WEEKS Judith; WHITE Kevin; WHITE Robert; WILLIAMS Tom; WOODS Dean; WRIGLEY Richard; WRIGLEY Pat.

(List collated by Mike Finch)

It seems like only yesterday that I made my last presidential speech. On that occasion I shared memories of my time at Sibford, and was delighted that some of the staff who taught me were here to re-live those memories ... and then laugh at my misdemeanours and scrapes!

So what do I talk about this year? Well, I've thought a lot about this over the past few months. Two years ago, as well as recalling memories, I also shared with you the fact that I had just established my own business as a funeral director in Banbury. Having previously worked in the town for some years and then left to take up a more challenging role in Birmingham, I decided that Banbury, the area I was born and grew up in, was where I should be offering my skills and services.

It's been a very fast two years of learning ... something I never thought I would have to do again after leaving school! Learning to market oneself; to promote a brand that is namely me; to get out and introduce myself to a community in order to earn their trust and respect. This has not been easy and, indeed, proved very challenging. It was, however, a make or break chance I had to

take in order to survive and support my own family.

During my five years at Sibford I never once understood Quakers: what they were; what they stood for; and – most importantly to a THEN blonde haired, blue eyed boy,

who took great pride in how he looked – how they dressed!

How could sitting quietly in a circle for set periods of time or gently discussing issues, rather than arguing it out with a bit of violence thrown in, be relevant in today's world? For some time after leaving Sibford I still couldn't understand Quakerism and thought I had managed to escape their ways.

BUT I WAS WRONG!

Having lost both my parents within the space of four years my life changed dramatically. I felt that my purpose was to be of support to those who were bereaved. Any of you who have experienced

the loss of a loved one will know what a devastating and unbearable time it can be.

So, after some years of trying, I managed to secure a position within the funeral industry.

It was in January 2010,

while at work, that I took a call that would once again bring me into direct contact with Quakers. It was from Rosemary Berrington whose father, Norman Coxon, a Quaker, had died. She was staying at his sheltered accommodation in Banbury, it was snowing and she wanted to make some funeral arrangements. As a SOSA committee member, I was aware of who Norman Coxon was, added to the fact that he had lived in Adderbury (my home village) for many years and was a well-known face in the local care home.

Until meeting with Rosemary, however, I didn't realise quite how long Norman had been associated with Sibford School. It was such a privilege to be overseeing the arrangements and a wonderful first experience of a Quaker funeral.

"No formalities, no structure", exclaimed Peter Whittle, as we all met outside the crematorium chapel. "We must all just amble in as we enter." I rather nervously tried to picture my four pall bearers trying to 'amble' whilst bearing Norman's coffin! I should, of course, have realised that Peter meant those in attendance, who should be following on behind



Outgoing SOSA President Edd Frost pictured at the reunion lunch with Steve Johnson, Anita Sampson, Amanda Brown and incoming President, Ashley Shirlin.



Edd is pictured chatting with 2011/12 SOSA President Erica Strofton



without any kind of order and certainly not processing.

Incidentally it was during Norman's short committal service that the largest and loudest military aircraft flew over the crematorium chapel which brought about much conversation due to Norman's many hours of peace protesting outside the gates of Croughton Air Base with other local Friends over many years!

Later in the day we attended Norman's Memorial Meeting, held at the school in the Oliver Studio. This was my first experience of a Meeting, apart from school ones, and to see and hear Friends and family stand up and talk about Norman, some deep, some amusing, but all relevant, was quite novel.

Norman Coxon's funeral was the best introduction to Quaker funerals that anyone would ever wish to have. And, to this day, at the beginning of every Quaker Memorial Meeting when a burial is being carried out, I will always mention to the families, in a light hearted manner, that there must be no processing ... just an ambling!

Following Norman's funeral I seemed to be the contact for other Quaker funerals that needed arranging and quite soon I got to know many of the local Friends in the area who would always be in attendance. I grew to enjoy the quiet and personal manner of Memorial Meetings, and am always impressed with how an Elder explains how the Meeting runs to non-Quakers in attendance, stressing that anyone is welcome to stand up and say a few words. I consider the Quakers to be the most user-friendly faith group for putting people new to the experience at their ease.

Margaret Le Mare, another well-known local Quaker and

ex-member of staff and school committee, passed away in March 2014 at the ripe old age of 107, and it was my privilege to conduct her funeral. A pint-sized Quaker, who could put many a man in their place (even Mike Finch on quite a few occasions I gather), Margaret's life was lived to the full and certainly, up to her 99th year, she led a very active and eventful life, yet still at her core giving off that calming and quiet persona.

When Judith Weeks' son, David, sadly died in his 50's, it was his wish to be brought back to Sibford where he is now buried. On his funeral day school minibuses ferried what seemed like hundreds of inner city London faces into the sleepy Oxfordshire countryside for what was a really unique Memorial Meeting.

Through the overseeing of David's funeral, I got to know Judith very well and she soon became my 'Quaker Guru'! If I ever have questions on how to deal with Quaker issues or ways, I will always ring Judith, who will tell me what's what. Something I am very thankful for.

Soon after David's funeral I carried out the funeral of a Quaker lady who had died in a local nursing home. Her burial took place at Jordan's Meeting and it was here that I encountered my first 'Militant Quaker', the equivalent of any waspy church warden that I had ever met over the years! In my profession, I consider it the norm and the right thing to always refer to the deceased and any person I don't know, especially when older than me, as Mr or Mrs. It was after the burial that this little lady ushered me over to one side and said: "Mr Frost, a word of advice. When dealing with Quakers, we **never** refer to each other

as Mr or Mrs, it's always the first name". I politely listened, letting her have her say, and then quietly mentioned that all afternoon she had addressed me as **Mr** Frost ... where was the difference? Never the less, I was on the telephone to Judith Weeks the next day telling her the story. I now know why Michael Goodwin will greet anyone by their full name, something I now try to do also, albeit sometimes slightly tongue in cheek!

These happenings are just but a few of the goings on in the life of a funeral director with Quaker connections. Some amusing and some lovely moments to cherish forever and the very best funeral teas ever! A huge enquiry will take place if you don't have that fourth slice of cake as you leave the Meeting!

My five years at Sibford were exceedingly happy and I had the best time. And, although I never got the Quakers at the time, I really do feel that their ethos and teachings did in fact impact on my life more than I ever imagined and I will be forever grateful to Sibford for the life skills taught and the friends I made.

The above is an abridged version of the speech given by Edd Frost at the 2015 Presidential Dinner.



Meet the new president

Introducing Ashley Shirlin, SOSA president 2015 ~ 2017

I was born in Stockton-on-Tees in 1958 but left when I was three months old. The first 11 years of my life were somewhat nomadic. My father was a civil engineer and we spent time in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Uganda interspersed with periods in Deddington, Shirley and Banbury.

My mother was born in Banbury and both her parents were mayors of the town so we tended to gravitate to Oxfordshire.

By the time I was 10 my parents had split up with my father moving to Malaysia. This was a difficult time and I had the choice of attending the, now defunct, Quaker school of Wennington in Yorkshire, where my older brother had been schooled, or Sibford. I wasn't keen on being a year younger than my classmates so I spent my last year of junior school living in a Banbury Childrens' Home.

The first five years of relative stability in my life began in 1969 when I arrived at Sibford. Fortunately I was reasonably bright and quite sporty so my life at school was easier than for many of my classmates. Without doubt my five years at Sibford had a lifelong effect on me. My oldest friends are people who I met there and



Ashley competing in the Oxfordshire 1500m Trials

although I have failed miserably on occasion to live up to the motto of Truth, Honour, Freedom and Courtesy, these are principles that I hold dear.

After Sibford I studied A Levels at Banbury Technical College and then read for my degree in Economics and Econometrics at the University of York. Upon graduation I ended up moving to Essex, which I had never visited before, in order to take up a job in computing, of which I had no knowledge! I remained in Essex for nearly 30 years and have spent even longer in IT. For 20 years I worked for a variety of companies in the software/insurance industry working in The City, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and the USA. For 10 years I ran my own computer company, working mainly throughout England, and for the last five years have worked for myself.

In my 30's and 40's I was involved with SOSA and served as General Secretary, a post I have now returned to. I arranged several reunions for my generation in London and at the school. At its peak we managed to get 180 people to attend!

It was at my first job that I met my wife and we married when I was 23. Sadly things went awry and we divorced after 28 years. I have two brilliant children, who have returned to Essex after attending their respective universities in York and Roehampton. James is now a teacher but, more importantly, is a fellow Leeds United supporter. Maria is beginning to make her way in life but, also more importantly, is a fellow cat lover!

This would usually be the end of a person's family background but in



Ashley in 2014 in Singapore. Inset at a London SOSA reunion in the 80s.

my case there's more! I mentioned that my father went to Malaysia in the 1960's never to return. During the latter part of my time at Sibford, and for a couple of years afterwards, I travelled to Malaysia in the summer holidays to meet his new family. My father had become a Muslim and had taken a second wife ... much to the annoyance of my C of E mother. Tragically I then lost touch but some 15 years ago I was contacted by one of my Malaysian half-brothers. I've visited Borneo most years since then to see my dear step mother, my two step brothers, my four half-brothers and my half-sister and their families. I also have a vast number of nephews and nieces!

Seven years ago my life took another change and I now lead a quiet life in Dorset with my partner, Amanda Brown (née Cade), a lady who I originally met at Sibford. I still undertake some IT work. I watch Leeds United when I can and I've become involved with SOSA again.

Grace Mary Allen

Teacher at Sibford 1942 ~ 45

Died May 17th 2015 aged 93

Grace Allen's first teaching post was at Sibford School during the last three years of the Second World War.

She kept up her links with some former pupils and colleagues for the rest of her life. She went on to teach briefly in Halesowen before



spending the rest of her career teaching music at Manchester Teacher Training College.

In 1979, along with her dear friend Jean Morley who had also been a teacher at Sibford, she moved up to Scotland to live near her brother and his family. Jean predeceased her in 1996.

Grace often talked of Sibford and the special memories she held from her time there. A service of celebration, including a time of Quaker silence, was held in Perth on 30th May 2015 to celebrate Grace's life.

Raymond Quinton Bond

at Sibford 1940 ~ 1945

Died 10th December 2014

Written by Caroline Mills

Born in High Wycombe during the summer of 1932 Raymond was the youngest of four children to his parents, a concert hall singer and Master Carpenter. Both parental professions became instrumental in Raymond's creative life.

Raymond was sent to Sibford as an evacuee from Birmingham. Living initially with a family in Burdrop, he began his time at the school in 1940. His mother and his grandfather were pupils at the school before him, as were his sister and brother. So too were

Lives Remembered

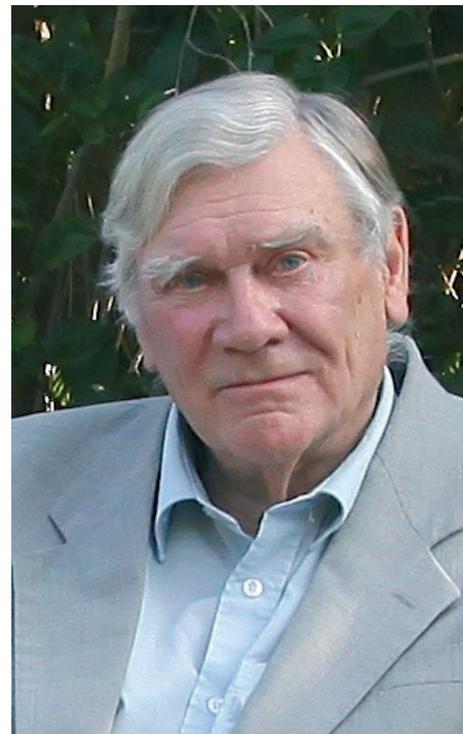
numerous uncles and cousins.

Despite wartime hardships, Raymond's school days were happy ones and in later life he would triumphantly regale with tales of a naughty school boy – one who would climb the sky-high brick chimney of the laundry room at the old Manor House (former school buildings) to sit atop and watch Coventry burn during the Blitz, and one who would enjoy visiting the nearby crash sites of fallen aircraft, looking for shrapnel and deadly wartime souvenirs.

Education continued first at Bootham School in York and subsequently at the Royal Academy of Music where he studied the clarinet under the renowned clarinettist, Jack Brymer. Obligated to carry out National Service in Belfast for two years, work soon followed in the orchestra at The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon and on tour with the Carl Rosa Opera Company. However, Raymond decided to abandon music as a career, although it did remain a key element throughout his life.

Raymond joined the National Magazine Company in 1957, working initially on 'She' magazine before moving to Hultons to devise marketing campaigns for Eagle and Girl comics and latterly various trade publications and national exhibitions for Odhams and Trade & Technical Press.

Having wooed his future wife Ann with his rare 1932 Aston Martin Le Mans open-top sports car, the couple were married in 1958 (the car needing to be sold to pay for the wedding!). By 1967 they had also become business partners as they set up their own



publishing company, Presshouse Publications Ltd. It was the beginning of a 32-year venture until retirement, producing five leading magazines for education establishments, from pre-school to university in addition to commercial printing and publishing work.

Though running a business was demanding on time, Raymond was not devoid of play. Life outside work involved renovating a semi-derelict 16th century farmhouse – ongoing from 1969 until his death; obtaining his private pilot's licence; performing and playing both the clarinet and piano whenever possible; photography and enjoying his vegetable garden and orchard. His greatest passion, however, was woodwork, something that he developed while at Sibford. He liked nothing better than to be in his workshop, creating something beautiful and practical for friends and family.

Raymond's associations with

Sibford did not end with schoolboy tales. Sibford School remained significant throughout his life. At the outbreak of war, his father had made the black out curtains for the Hill Building; Raymond was a part of The Quinton Band, a large family gathering of musicians that would play at Sibford Old Scholar reunions during the 1940's and 50's. No less, it was even a Sibford Old Scholars' reunion that he brought Ann to on one of their first dates! Indeed, Raymond's love for Sibford and the surrounding area is the very reason that the couple bought their beloved home in Whichford in 1969 and chose to settle in the area.

In later years, Raymond's connections to the school were numerous, including: as a parent; through business having produced and printed the school magazine and prospectus and the Sibford Old Scholars' magazine during the 80s and 90s; as 'employer' to work experience students from the school; through countless SOSA and school functions and through his carpentry. Even today, Raymond's woodwork can still be seen around the school, in the shape of beautifully carved noticeboards and signs.

Indeed Raymond's final public outing, on the 11th November 2014, was to Sibford, to the dedication and opening of the school's new Peace Garden to mark the centenary of the First World War. It therefore seemed fitting that the Peace Garden should become Raymond's final resting place.

Raymond was considered a generous, loving and gentle man by all he met (many have commented that he was a true gentleman) and one who Lived Adventurously. He is survived by his wife, Ann, three children and nine grandchildren, three of whom are current pupils at Sibford.



Chris and Anne Evans

Chris Evans

at Sibford 1958 ~ 1963

Died 17th February 2015 aged 68

Written by Paul Frampton

Old Scholars who knew Chris would have also known his wife Anne (née Tucker), whose father Leslie was Bursar at Sibford for many years.

Chris and Anne met at Sibford, married in 1969 and had two sons, Stephen and Simon, and five grandchildren. Chris died suddenly at their lovely home near Shipston. A terrible loss just as increasing retirement beckoned with new contributions to make including help with the restoration of the Great Western Heritage Railway and more time to enjoy the family. Chris and Anne were a great team, always keen to make a difference, to be creative and to improvise. Serious achievers!

After Sibford, Chris studied at Oxford Art College and Leicester Polytechnic and was one of the bright young industrial designers to burst out of the 1960's ... keen to improve the many products people used around the home. He worked for Mettoy, Ogle, Prestige and Hasbro to name but a few.

As a professional, Chris moved from industry into University teaching first at Loughborough, then Bournemouth, Luton, the Open University and finally Aston. His approach was slightly unconventional, full of enthusiasm, challenge and inspiration. But he was also incredibly practical and loved precious metals, working with the Guild of Cotswold Craftsmen. He designed and

crafted the engagement ring which Anne still wears today.

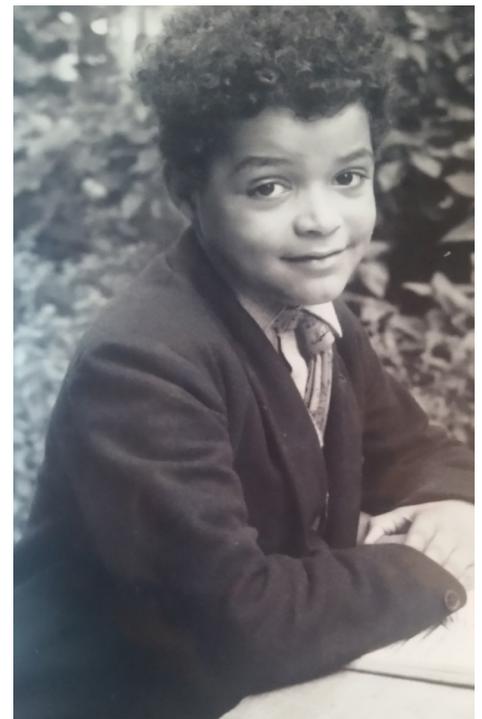
My memories of Chris at Sibford are of a talented, good looking, nice guy, annoyingly good runner – he did the London Marathon in 1982 – good footballer, someone who enjoyed music and crafts, a calm gentle prefect, indeed an all-round super person who was fun to be with. Having met again recently after many years I am so sorry Chris is gone. We shall all miss him, especially his adored family but hope Anne will keep in touch with Sibford and Old Scholars – I am sure she will.

Philip Gray

at Sibford 1969 ~ 1975

Died 21 July 2015 age 57

News has reached us of the death of Old Scholar Philip Gray. Born on 28 May 1958, Philip was a pupil at Sibford School from 1969 ~ 1975. An academic student, he left Sibford to take up an apprenticeship at J.E. Hanger & Co, the first limb fitting company to become established in the UK. The apprenticeship was for five years but Philip, together with another apprentice, proved such a keen student that he was fast



Philip Gray, pictured shortly before joining Sibford School in 1969

tracked jumping from the third year straight to the fifth year. Having passed out from Hangers, Philip continued to work for the company for a number of years before moving to the Museum of London where one of his jobs included the restoration of the Lord Mayor of London's State Coach. A keen traveller, Philip gave up work in later years to look after his foster aunt in Roehampton. He suffered a number of health problems including diabetes and asthma and died from pneumonia on 21 July 2015. He is survived by his brother, Roland, and a daughter.

SOSA president Ashley Shirlin adds: "Phil was a classmate of mine for five years at Sibford. In all years there are a few people who are liked by all; Phil was one of these people. I lost touch with Phil after we left school but discovered him again in the 1990's when I worked near to him at the Museum of London. For a brief period of time we'd meet up for the odd beer and Phil would recount his stories of bungee jumping all over the world. Phil came to a couple of London reunions much to the delight of all who attended. I was privileged to attend his funeral and to meet his brother Roland. Tragically I must have passed him on many occasions in Roehampton as I visited there regularly when my daughter was at the University. RIP Phil, you were one of the best"

J Philip Morris

at Sibford 1939 ~ 1944

Died 23rd April 2015 age 87

Written by Jeanne Little (née Darling) at Sibford 1941 ~ 1945

Philip was born on 28th August 1927 in Moseley, Birmingham of Quaker parents. He had one sister, also a Sibford Old Scholar called 'Pegeen' (a shortened name for Margaret) She was a great traveller and spoke several languages. After looking after her parents at Seaford she came to live with Philip. Sadly she became unwell



Philip Morris pictured in 2013 after finding a lump of ice embedded in his back garden. The skyfall was thought to have come from an over flying plane.

and died in Warwick hospital some years ago.

Philip attended Tindal Street Primary School before going to Sibford where, in his final year, he was Head Boy. After Sibford he went to Birmingham's renowned Art School to train as a silver smith. He was also, as many will be aware, a more than competent wood carver ... he carved a replacement statuette of the Nellie Millard memorial when the original, carved by his great mentor Roland Herbert, went missing.

Philip registered as a conscientious objector and went to Russia and Europe to do voluntary work in schools. He later qualified as a teacher of crafts in secondary schools in the South of England. He married Rosamund Flinn, also an Old Scholar, who came from a well-established Sibford village family and they had two sons, Christopher and Stephen. Philip lived in Hemel Hempstead, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield before retiring to Stratford-upon-Avon where he was Clerk of Stratford Meeting for over 20 years.

Unfortunately, in the early part of this century, Rosamund died

of cancer at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford. Despite this set-back, however, Philip continued to be active, belonging to Stratford Art Society, Amnesty and a local photographic society. He had a small but lovely garden full of many plants. He knew the names of most of them and where they came from. He also had an allotment by the Stratford Canal where he grew vegetables and kept himself and the local Meeting well supplied. He also continued his wood carving in the cellar of his house which he called his 'studio'.

Philip was a great supporter of SOSA and became its President between 1996 and 1997 ... only missing one reunion during this time. He became a close friend of Jeanne Little, also an Old Scholar, and they did a lot of travelling together to South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi, where his son Stephen lives. Venice was also visited on their way home.

Philip was an honest, truthful, and high principled person. Apart from his two sons he leaves behind him four granddaughters. He will be sadly missed, but following his Quaker beliefs he did live his life adventurously.

Margaret Elizabeth Rhodes (née Richards)

at Sibford 1950 ~ 1955

Died 9th August 2015 age 76

Sylvia Williams (née Webster) at Sibford 1948 ~ 1955 writes:

Margaret was born in Bournville, Birmingham on 21st April 1939 to Howard and Vera Richards. Maggy, as she was known to all her school friends, was at Sibford from September 1950 until July 1955. She had an older brother, John, who also went to Sibford (1947 ~ 1953). Maggy and her brother were brought up as Quakers following the religion of their mother.

Maggy and I first became friends in 1950. We travelled together from Snow Hill Station in Birmingham to Banbury, used to meet up in the holidays and stayed at each other's houses on many occasions. Maggy, with her happy, friendly personality and ability to talk to all ages, was a particular favourite of my parents, especially my mother.

At school, apart from the usual academic subjects, Maggy enjoyed sport, particularly hockey, and was also very good at art. She won prizes at the Banbury Arts and Crafts Festival and gained Royal Life Saving Awards. She was also House Captain for Nansen.

After we left school, we went cycling together across Wales to Ireland, staying in youth hostels. We also went to Germany, travelling by bicycle across Belgium and Holland to Hamburg and then down to Stuttgart and Heidelberg.

In January 1958 Maggy enrolled as a trainee nurse at the General Hospital in Birmingham. She

completed her training in March 1961 and received a certificate as a State Registered Nurse (S.R.N.) She became a Staff Nurse and also obtained a Midwifery Qualification. She then went to work in Switzerland, returning home in May 1962 to receive the Queen Elizabeth School of Nursing Prize at Birmingham University. This award is given to the nurse who makes the greatest contribution as a 4th year nurse.

On 1st December 1964 Maggy became the first Ward Sister in the Ophthalmic Ward at Selly Oak Hospital. She had initially set up this ward and this is where she met her future husband, Peter Rhodes. They married at Bournville



Meeting House on 15 September 1967 and had a good, happy marriage with three lovely sons, Edward, Nick and Stephen. Their sons are all married and Margaret and Peter were blessed with five grandchildren, the eldest now 11 and the youngest 3.

When Edward started school, Maggy and three friends established a pre-school nursery in Blackwell in Worcestershire, which ran successfully for many years.

After a 10-year break from nursing, when her sons were all at school, Maggy returned to nursing. Initially this was with consultants in private practice, at Five Ways, Birmingham and then at a private hospital in Droitwich in Worcestershire. Her work mainly concerned patients with cancer.

Maggy continued to be an active Quaker, initially attending Bournville Meeting and later transferring to Barnt Green in Worcestershire. She was an

Elder/Overseer, latterly becoming Convenor of Elders and Overseers, a member of the Area Meeting Overseers Support Group, Assistant Clerk and Clerk of Meeting. She was also a member of the Management Committee of Oaktree House, which provides sheltered housing predominantly for Friends.

Over the years Maggy and I have kept in touch with a number of school friends who live in different parts of the country. Several Old Scholars who were in the same year as us at Sibford have met annually for many years, sometimes visiting the school, going to the theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, or visiting each other's houses. We all felt that we had got to know and understand each other because we were full-time boarders at school and supported each other when our parents were not there to give advice.

Maggy loved to paint and was very interested and knowledgeable about the history of art. We regularly visited art exhibitions together and I have a painting that she did for me of The Manor House at Sibford Ferris. When my first child, Stacey Elizabeth, was born in 1964, Maggy became her Godmother and last October she and Peter came to Stacey's wedding.

Maggy died peacefully at home, well looked after by Peter. Her funeral service at Redditch was held in the form of a Quaker Meeting. In the reading it was said that Margaret lived by the words on the school crest 'Truth and Honour, Freedom and Courtesy.'

We have also received notification of the deaths of:

Samantha Ley

at Sibford 1995 ~ 1999

Peter Smart

at Sibford 1951 ~ 1956

John Edward Smith

at Sibford 1960 ~ 1966

SIBFORD OLD SCHOLARS' ASSOCIATION Officers and Committee from 01/08/2015



Ashley Shirlin



Edd Frost



Mark Bennett



Nikki Knott



Harriet Langridge



Amanda Brown

PRESIDENT

Ashley Shirlin

VICE PRESIDENT

Position Vacant

RETIRING PRESIDENT

Edd Frost

GENERAL SECRETARY

Ashley Shirlin Tel: 07545 704620 Email: ashleyshirlinsosa@outlook.com

TREASURER

Mark Bennett

REUNION SECRETARY

Position Vacant

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Nikki Knott, Harriet Langridge, Amanda Brown



SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Richard Hughes (January 2014 until December 2017)

Margaret Shelley (January 2012 until December 2019)



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

Email: wfinch@sibfordschool.co.uk



SOSA HONORARY ADVISER

Michael Finch (Non committee post)

SCHOOL MEMBERS



Michael Goodwin (Head)

Tel: 01295 781200 Email: mgoodwin@sibfordschool.co.uk



Peter Robinson (Business Manager)

Tel: 01295 781210 Email: probinson@sibfordschool.co.uk



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