

THE

Sibford Rocket

December 2018



The annual magazine of Sibford Old Scholars' Association

INSIDE:

Weddings special

Wendy waves
farewell

White out ...
snow stops play!

PLUS

Old Scholars
remembered

News from the
annual reunion

AGM reports



SOSA

Welcome to the 2018 edition of **The Sibford Rocket**, the annual magazine of Sibford Old Scholars' Association (SOSA).

In this issue we celebrate marriages; we look back at the Sibford life of SOSA stalwart and staff member, Wendy Finch, who retired in 2018 after 39 years at the school; we take a trip down memory lane and share some of the past stage productions performed by Sibford students; and we catch up with a former Sibfordian who is now working for the government in Alaska.

Elsewhere in the magazine we feature news and pictures from the annual reunion; notes from the AGM; and we look back at the lives of SOSA members who have recently passed away.

It's always a pleasure to hear from past scholars and I'm grateful to those of you who have got in touch to tell their stories.

If you've got news that you'd like to share in a future issue of **The Rocket** then please do contact me. You can send an email to abromhall@sibfordschool.co.uk or write to *The Sibford Rocket, Sibford School, Sibford Ferris, Banbury OX15 5QL*. I look forward to hearing from you.

In Friendship
Ali Bromhall
Editor

Cover Sibford School in the sunshine.

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.

Do we have your contact details?

We are in the process of updating our SOSA members records database. We have some new and exciting ideas around sharing with you SOSA news using social media, the website and the traditional magazine, but in order to achieve this we need an accurate record of members' details. Please contact membership@sibfordoldscholars.com and let us know your contact details. We are particularly keen to capture email addresses and change of postal addresses. I look forward to hearing from you.

Holly Poncini, Membership Secretary

A blast from the past ...



Old scholar Nikki Knott bumped into Robin Greaves, wife of former Sibford Head Kenneth Greaves, while out shopping in Chadlington near Chipping Norton. Nikki said: "I have been friends with her son for a long time and our children all went to school together but this was the first time I have seen Mrs Greaves since I left Sibford, She is now 91 and looking amazing. We had a good giggle and she mentioned wanting to come across to Sibford, which is something I will try to arrange."

Reader's Letter

I've just been reading *The Rocket* (2017) and was interested in the piece about SOSA giving a clock in memory of Mike Finch and not any old clock but a Thomas Gilkes clock.

My father Charles Lamb, late of Sibford Gower, also bought a Thomas Gilkes clock many years ago because of the Sibford connection. In fact he took out a bank loan as he was so determined to have the clock! Mother still has it in her sitting room (see picture). The case is walnut and you can make out Sibford and Gilkes on the face.

He didn't go to Sibford as he won a scholarship to Banbury Grammar as indeed his sister Mary also did but his two siblings Peter and Winifred went to Sibford School. My mother Linda Lamb née Holmes and her two brothers Thurstan and Martin Holmes also went to Sibford and my brother Richard Lamb and myself, Catherine Lamb, also did!

There is quite a Lamb connection with Sibford and the school so it was interesting to see the clock connection too.

Kate Lear



Welcome to The Rocket Wedding Special! Weddings have been to the fore in 2018. St George's Chapel in Windsor witnessed not one but two Royal weddings during the year. Prince Harry married Meghan Markle on Saturday 19 May, and on Friday 12 October, Princess Eugenie married



her fiancé, Jack Brooksbank. Meanwhile, the SOSA reunion on 16 June was missing a familiar face ... former president Ashley Shirlin was instead tying the knot with fellow old scholar Amanda Brown (née Cade). We've also had news of other old scholar weddings this year. So without further ado we'd just like to say

CONGRATULATIONS!



Ashley & Amanda



Dette & Tony



Will & Ella



Will Bovill (at Sibford 2005 – 2007) married Ella Vogel on 19 May 2018.

The country themed wedding took place at New Mills registry office, followed by a reception at the Castleton Rotary Centre in the Peak District National Park.

Will and Ella have recently bought a house on the edge of the Peak District which they are currently renovating.

Will is working as a Graphic Designer in Manchester and Ella as an outdoor activities instructor at a centre in Castleton. She is currently undertaking her training in Mountain leadership.

Many old scholars will also remember Will's mum, Angy who was horticulture teacher at Sibford from 1984 – 2017, and it won't be a surprise to learn that Angy was responsible for all the flowers at the wedding.



Old scholar Bernadette (Dette) Wagerfield married Tony Timson on 31 August 2018.

Dette, who was at Sibford from 2007 – 2013, was a weekly boarder initially in Margaret Fell and latterly in Fielding. The wedding took place at Casewell House in Brize Norton ... and the Sibford flag was flying high.

Margaret Fell house parent, Joyce Scannell, was among the guests at the wedding as were old scholars Beth Whitaker (2008 – 2013), Ana England (2007 – 2013), Sian Ousbey (2008 – 2011), former Head Girl Emily Sloan (2008 – 2014) and Alex Beaumont-Dark (2010 – 2012) ... pictured left and above.

Ashley Shirlin (at Sibford 1969 ~ 74) and Amanda Brown (at Sibford 1972 ~ 78) were married on 16 June at The Guildhall in Poole with a number of old scholars present to celebrate their nuptials. Their marriage was featured in the weddings section of the September issue of *The Dorset Magazine* and we reproduce the article here with their kind permission.



The Second Time Around *by Sophie Cass*

Every wedding day is special, whatever your age and whether or not it's your first time walking down the aisle.

Whether you are in your twenties or your sixties, your wedding should be a special day to remember. From finding the wedding dress that is right for you to picking a theme, colour scheme and sorting the guest list, both older and younger brides have a multitude of elements to consider – but what additional challenges do older brides face, and how different is it to plan a wedding the second time around?

We talked to recently married

57-year-old Amanda Shirlin-Brown from Dorset about her experience as a second-time bride.

Amanda tied the knot on 16 June, 2018 at The Guildhall in Poole watched by 80 of the couple's close friends and family.

She and her now-husband, 60-year-old Ashley Shirlin, first met at school in the 1970s; after separating with their first partners, they began to see more of each other before moving in together in 2012.

"We got engaged in Christmas 2017," said Amanda, "and the wedding planning only took us a couple of weeks. The only

potentially stressful aspect was telling our respective children, but all three were happy about the event."

To add a personalised touch to her big day, Amanda designed her own wedding ring with the help of Westbourne-based jewellery designer, Emma Leonard. "Ashley ordered the diamond from the internet and it was delivered in the post. The rest of the jewellery I wore came from important people in my life, and Ashley wore a silk handkerchief that was my dad's."

One of the most important elements for any bride is her dress. Amanda put in a lot of time researching style, colour and design of dress to try and find the right look for her. "I finally found a 1950s-inspired dress from Coast, and combined it with a vintage bag from Cornucopia in Bridport and pink suede sling back shoes from Tesco."

The day itself began with Amanda having her make-up done by Louise Godfrey from Loulabelle. "Both Ashley and I were dressed in Navy, while my best woman (and my cousin) Joanne Pierre wore navy and white. Ashley's Malaysian relatives flew over to be with us, and his half-sister Rosnah did a reading during the ceremony to welcome me into their family. His daughter Maria did the other



Old Scholars wedding reunion: Ashley and Amanda are pictured with Catherine Stokes (née Hunt), Pippa Lacey, Debbie Jenkins (née Price), Anita Sampson (née Brown), Chris Leo, Widge (Giovanna) Hammett, Simon Matthews, Martin Brown and Wendy Finch.



Nansen wedding reunion: Tim Chalk, Stacey Morgan (née Tom Grubb) and Ashley.

reading and his son, James, was his best man.”

The newlyweds enjoyed a buffet lunch in the medieval hall at the King Charles Pub in Thames Street which had been decorated with bunting and flowers. “My priority for the day was to have a happy, relaxed and fun time with friends and family rather than to be overly concerned with too many extras,” said Amanda. “The day was very personal to us with our friends and relatives helping with many aspects of it – such as our friend Sandy West who made and decorated our beautiful and delicious three-tier wedding cake.”

For older brides-to-be and second-time brides currently planning their wedding, Amanda advises them not to over-think the day. “I visualised myself actually getting married and it made me feel much less nervous. It’s such a special day, so just enjoy the moment.”

- *Ashley and Amanda’s wedding photograph on page 3 shows: Ashley and Amanda (centre) with (from left to right) Ashley’s daughter Maria, his son James who was his Best Man, Amanda’s cousin Joey (who gave her away) and Joey’s husband Derek.*

Record deal for Tom ...

*The rock band ‘Flowers for Charlie’ recently signed to Northern Quarter Records and in April released their first single ‘Hearts Apart’ which is available to stream on various digital platforms. The band, whose influences include Green Day, Queen and Billy Joel, is made up of four students from the Royal Northern College of Music. Guitarist in ‘Flowers for Charlie’ is Tom Smith who has also produced and mixed the band’s first EP from which the single is taken. A former Sibford scholar, he speaks to **The Rocket** about his memories of Sibford.*



Tom pictured at The Mill in 2010...



and playing in Flowers for Charlie

My musical ambitions were nurtured at Sibford. I first started playing guitar at the age six but things didn’t really start to take off musically until I joined the school.

Some of my fondest memories are of performing with all my friends in the annual gigs at The Mill Arts Centre in Banbury where we undertook tributes to some of the musical greats including Queen, Elton John and The Beatles.

Most games afternoons I would play truant and hide in the music department to record in the studio with my friends rather than play sports. Apologies to my PE teacher Richard Ferley, who I understand is still at the school. I imagine he’d be very surprised to hear that I’m now a veteran marathon runner!

It was a special time. I knew the music department, under the leadership of Matt Platt and Mike Ahmed, really cared about making great music and nurturing creativity with the students. Not only that, but it was apparent that the whole school ethos respected music’s place in the curriculum and gave it the credence it deserved to allow the students to flourish.

My time at Sibford was so special to me and I believe that it is a testament to the school that I’ve got where I am today. Indeed it was Sibford that encouraged me to apply to the Royal Northern College of Music when I left in 2014, and it was here that I met the other founding members of Flowers for Charlie.

- Flowers For Charlie are described as a hard hitting Rock band whose sound incorporates the best of pop punk with an unapologetic and flamboyant edge.

In September 2017, following a hugely successful run at Edinburgh Fringe, the play 'Half Breed' was performed at the Soho Theatre in London. Nominated for Best New Play in the 2017 UK Theatre Awards, 'Half Breed' is a partly autobiographical dark comedy about finding your voice. It was written by, and starred, Natasha Marshall, whose mother Kega Marshall (née Gay Watts) was a pupil at Sibford from 1974 to 1978 and was Nansen Deputy Games Captain. In the wake of her daughter's success ~ *The Times* said 'Marshall holds our attention: she's got something special about her' while the *Guardian* said 'Natasha Marshall's debut show is a little cracker' ~ Kega has penned the following for *The Rocket*.

2018 ... the year of reunions!

For the past few years I have enjoyed attending the Sibford Old Scholars' reunion in June. This year's was particularly memorable because more past pupils from the class of 1978 attended.

Memories and stories were shared as we explored the grounds. What was a particular good memory for me at Sibford was to meet other children who were transracially adopted like myself.

My journey has taken many different paths.

This summer I went back to my country of birth after a gap of 19 years. Returning to Kenya after so many years was a huge emotional undertaking for me and I was glad that my daughters and husband were able to join me on the journey.

I had not seen my birth father, Matayo, or his 12 children for a very long time. Life always moves on. His children, my half-brothers and sisters, are themselves now



Kega and the Class of 78 pictured at the 2018 reunion

married with their own children.

Arriving in Nairobi, my first plan was to make the long trip up to Western Kenya to the city of Kisumu. I was lucky enough to be reunited with Crispus, a dear Kenyan Quaker friend from all those years ago, who helped with translating.

Although my birth father and I had exchanged letters, his replies were infrequent and then the communication stopped all together. I was not even sure if he was still living in the same place so it was with much apprehension that I made the journey with faith and hope on my side.

The sheer volume of traffic, combined with the fact that no one seemed to take any notice of the highway code, meant that driving was quite a frightening experience. Heavily laden buses and matatus (minibuses) filled to capacity were overtaking on dangerous bends and hills – the inevitability of

accidents seemed to be something other road users take for granted. Animals wandered on to the road unattended, and regular police checks were all part of a day's drive.

We drove through Naivasha and stayed a night in Gilgil before reaching

Kisumu at the start of evening rush hour on market day! I was relieved when we finally found our accommodation overlooking beautiful Lake Victoria.

I was determined to find my father in the Nandi Hills whatever the outcome. On the day of the planned reunion my younger daughter Gemma suddenly fell ill, and we found ourselves at the Aga Khan Hospital at 1am! She had an infection, which was thankfully treatable.

Eight hours later, and having only had one hour's sleep, we were making our way towards Kakamega and Kapsabet on treacherous dirt roads. We got lost several times but were always helped by local people. The dirt track roads became even worse, but at least we were getting closer to where we needed to be.

Eventually we reached the district of Serem and Emugul. This is where the wild countryside started and our road ended. We had to walk up and down hills to find Matayo's home ... but find it we did.

His house is a small clay bricked building with a tin roof and no windows. He has no electricity





or running water. His kitchen is a completely separate building made of mud bricks. He owns one cow, several chickens and a tiny tea plantation. Inside the house, in pride of place, was the bicycle I had bought him the last time we met all those years ago. His needs have certainly changed, but fortunately our gifts were very much appreciated.

My birth father was extremely warm and welcoming. He wore his Sunday best, and he kept smiling all the time. The women prepared and cooked traditional food – a feast on an open fire. It was a real celebration! My birth father gave several excited speeches in Kalenjin explaining my adoption from when he had been a very young man. This was translated into Swahili and English by the local pastor and two relatives. Traditional songs were sung by the women, and everyone joined in with the dancing. There was a lot of laughter and joy!

As a teenager at Sibford I never dreamed that I would ever travel back to Kenya and meet my birth family. I certainly didn't imagine that my journey to find out about my culture and my Kenyan roots would lead my eldest daughter, Natasha, to write a successful play about her own story (Half Breed). Nor did I think that her next play would be all about my story. I can't wait to see it and I will be sure to let Sibford Old Scholars know when it is playing at theatres.

Part of an award-winning team

Congratulations go to old scholar Isobel Chapman, Operations Director at #techmums, after the charity was named the winner of the 2018 BIMA Advance Award for Inclusion & Diversity.

The BIMA Awards are the longest standing and most prestigious digital awards in the UK.

#techmums received their award for their 'techmumsTV' initiative, a social enterprise that supports mums across the UK, helping them to gain confidence with digital technology and supporting them in boosting their skills and transforming their lives.

The awards ceremony took place in London on 13 September. Isabel, who was a pupil at Sibford from 2005 to 2007, later tweeted 'This is how excited @TechmumsHQ were at winning a @BIMA #BIMAAward for #techmumsTV for Inclusion & Diversity last night!!'

After leaving Sibford, Isabel went on to the University of Leeds where she gained a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre & Performance. Today she is a qualified specialist in gender and equality and has extensive experience in diversity and inclusion. She has worked in engaging young people from deprived communities and has helped to design and deliver education, employment and

Training (EET) programmes. Isabel became Head of Operations at #techmums in May 2018 and was previously Development Officer for Art Against Knives, a London-based charity working with young people at risk of violent crime.

#techmums was founded

by Dr Sue Black OBE, whose story is reflective of the transformative effect education in tech can have in helping women to bring their families out of poverty. At the age of 25, she was a single mother living in a domestic violence refuge with three children



and few formal qualifications. Sue enrolled on a maths-based university access course which led to a place on a Computer Studies degree. She has since gained a PhD and had a successful 20-year academic career. Sue was awarded an OBE for 'services to technology' in the 2016 Queen's New Year's Honours list. She is now a UK government advisor, thought leader, Honorary Professor of Computer Science at UCL, social entrepreneur, writer and public speaker.

Picture: Isabel returned to Sibford in September 2016 as guest speaker at the school's Evening of Celebration which marked the achievements of GCSE and A Level students. She is pictured with Tracy Knowles, the school's Assistant Head (Pastoral).

All the world's a stage

November 2018 saw current Sibford students present 'The Accrington Pals'. Written by Peter Whelan and set during the first few years of World War I, the play formed part of the school's activities to mark the 100th anniversary of the Armistice.

Sibford, of course, has a strong reputation for dramatic productions, and **The Rocket** was delighted to discover some archive programmes and photographs of some former theatrical delights.

The archives were given to **The Rocket** by Mary Franklin, daughter of Jim Shields, science teacher at Sibford from 1956 until his retirement in 1980. Jim was also a keen supporter of Sibford's dramatic productions and was in charge of lighting for a number of productions. Mary discovered the programmes along with other Sibford memorabilia when clearing out the attic of his former home.

We thank her for this trip down memory lane.



February 1972 ... Sibford School presents **Romeo and Juliet** featuring Philip Sinclair as Romeo, Deborah Elliot as Juliet and Winnie Malcolm as Nurse.



November 1974 ... Sibford School presents **Alice** featuring Rebecca Wright as Alice, Louise Collins as Frog Footman, Lone Harris as Fish Footman and Neil Francis as Humpty Dumpty.



November 1975 ... Sibford School presents **Zigger Zagger** described in the programme as 'a modern play, written in 1967, with soccer hooliganism as its background, but mainly a contemporary morality play, in which the young teenage hero, Harry Philton, who is torn between Good, represented chiefly by his well-meaning suburban sister and her husband, and Evil, represented by his sloppy mother and a



young soccer hooligan called Zigger Zaggar.' Harry was played by Ashley Smith and Zigger Zaggar by Gerald Spires. Earlier in the summer the play had been performed by the National Youth Theatre in London where one of Sibford's second-year sixth formers, Peter Fleming (at Sibford 1970 – 76), was the Assistant Stage Manager. Peter used his experience to stage manage the Sibford production.

The History of Craft Education in Schools

Many old scholars will remember Graeme Sagar, Design and Technology teacher and assistant house master at Sibford during the 1970s and 80s. Graeme is currently working on a book on the History of Craft Education in Schools ... which includes reference to the large part Quakers have played in its development. Much of the content can be seen on his website www.gsagar.org. Below he shares some thoughts with **The Rocket**.

Nearly 30 years after leaving, Sibford School still occupies a large place in my memories. This first encounter with the Quakers had a permanent effect on my life and my spirit. Few days pass without me remembering those times.

My early education was at Wombwell Secondary Technical School from where I went to study teacher training at Dudley College of Education.

It was at Dudley where I first met Hugh Maw and it was also during my time there that, as part of our course, we were taken to visit Sibford School in Oxfordshire ... little did I know then that I would eventually spend 20 years there!

My first teaching position was at a comprehensive school in Sheffield after which I joined the Sibford staff in 1970 as a Metalwork Teacher and Assistant Housemaster in Nansen House alongside Alan Jarvis. I was appointed by Jonas Fielding, headmaster at that time, and replaced Jeff Easton who moved to York.

The early 70s was a time of change in this subject area, with the separate subjects of woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing being merged to allow the wider concept of design and technology to develop.

It was time to move forward, and creating direct access to both workshops, together with a design area, seemed to be a good plan. I have strong memories of spending any spare moment working alongside Norman Coxan wielding a sledge hammer and chisel to knock the wall through between



Graeme with his wife Mary

the workshops and inserting the supporting RSJ!

It was at this time that Stuart Hedley was appointed to replace Lindsey Martin who had taught Woodwork, and we then had the opportunity to pool ideas and make a really effective working environment. Fitting out cupboards, work benches and book cases became a necessity so with sleeves rolled up we got stuck in. A really exciting time for us both.

Jonas Fielding sadly retired, which gave rise to us joining forces to create a silver rose bowl which was presented to him on behalf of the staff - Stuart producing a superb hand hammered bowl and I making the lid, finial and box. Then there came the silver bowl marking the retirement of John Gilchrist.



These were the days when craft teachers had to do their own maintenance on top of everything else. Nevertheless, when Mike Finch informed me that a milling machine was available from Cadbury's, and he was willing to help collect it, the chance was too good to miss. Consequently, we had an evening out with a van and collected what was a very heavy bit of kit.

We were becoming a truly unified subject with woodwork at one end, metalwork at the other and a design area in between.

Very diverse projects were produced whilst keeping sights on real craftwork. This was further augmented when Eric Morecambe walked through the door and, with his usual glasses wiggle, asked if we made coffins!

▶ continued page 12

The end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018 saw Sibford School, along with much of the rest of the country, hit by not one but two severe snow storms!

Flakes began falling on Saturday 9 December, just hours after pupils had celebrated their Christmas Ball, and it wasn't long before the campus was a total white out.

Inches of snow and the threat of black ice resulted in the school being closed to day pupils for 48 hours. Meanwhile boarders made the most of the winter



wonderland by reviving the age-old tradition of sledging on Oddie's Field.

And less than 12 weeks later, the 'beast from the east' brought in more arctic conditions and icy blasts, forcing the school to declare another 'snow day' on Friday 2 March.

It was therefore interesting to come across the following account of the 'Great Snow Storm' of January 1881, at the time when Robert Oddie was Head of Sibford.

The Great Snow Storm of January 1881

The severe weather which culminated in the great snow storm of January 18th and 19th, having somewhat abated, gives me an opportunity of recording some of the difficulties we have recently passed through.

It was after many sharp nights during which the thermometer seldom registered less than 28 degrees of frost (Fahrenheit) that on the morning of Tuesday January 18th we found the wind blowing strong from the North East with ten degrees of frost; the gale gradually increased in intensity until it blew a hurricane and the cold was almost unbearable to the strongest and most enduring, no one venturing out of doors except those of us who had livestock to attend to or for some other reason where compelled to do so.

About two o'clock in the morning, the snow which had fallen a day or two previously and was perhaps two inches deep, began drifting and a clearance of all exposed places was soon made together with large quantities of dust from the ploughed fields which might be seen coming like a cloud towards you and ultimately lay many inches thick under all the hedgerows and in sheltered spots and in many places will require carting away when the snow has all melted. Great damage was

*Written by Joshua Lamb
(a few days afterwards)*

done at this juncture to thatched buildings and ricks.

About dinner time it commenced to snow and we were soon surrounded by the most terrific storm ever known by anyone now living in this neighbourhood.

It came so thick and fast that it was impossible to see any distance in front of us drifting very much all the time. The snow blew into my face and neck and the warmth of the flesh partially melted it till it became one solid mass of ice and snow, my mouth, eyes and nose being the only parts visible when I reached home at night and at times they too were almost closed by it, great icicles formed even on my eyelashes and I found the effect for several days, my cheek swelling where one great cake of ice stuck all day.

We had got the turnip sheep in an exposed situation where hay racks and hurdles were blown about like ninepins by the blast so we took them away into a meadow where we found many of them snugly buried under blowing snow next morning.

The storm continued through the night all next day and closed about six in the evening having snowed continuously for about

thirty hours. All the roads which lay at right angles to the storm were liberally chocked with snow and it took ten men a week to open them in our village, the drifts in many places being level with hedges. A great number of lives have been lost in the snow, two strong men that I well knew were frozen to death, one of them being Henry Hosting of Banbury who was out with a load of flour from Grimsbury Mill and was overpowered on his return near Deddington and took refuge in a hovel where his body was found eight days afterwards. The other was a wool buyer of Oxhill named Allitt who was returning from the Banbury Twelfth Fair and was frozen to death between Epwell and Shenington.

The week succeeding the storm was also very severe, the thermometer generally registering 20 degrees of frost each night and on one occasion it went below zero.





The early Sibford woodwork shop ... the teacher is Roland Herbert

I had the good fortune of being involved in The Educational Institute of Design, Craft, and Technology and was very grateful to John Miller for his support when I took up the national presidency.

Apart from all that happened on the teaching and boarding front, I remember the enjoyment of staff craft evenings where many quality pieces of work were produced by colleagues, friends, and parents.

As an off-shoot to the subject, Fibreglass Canoe building developed as a spare time activity based in a prefab in the Manor garden. During lunch times, evenings and even some weekends, my little teams of four or five boys would be organised into efficient labour groups, finally achieving a grand total of 45 canoes which we then used on local rivers. A further memory which many can share with me was the yearly Hobbies and Activities Eisteddfod developed by Ken Francis, a true eye opener to the diverse interests and expertise of the students. I had the dubious pleasure of running it on behalf of Ken for the last few occasions – the logistics of planning and coordination were somewhat challenging I remember.

On leaving Sibford in 1990 I took up the position of Head of Design & Technology at Woodbridge School in Suffolk. My professional involvements continued to progress including the development of a European project with schools in Finland,

Hungary, and Germany. I also became an inspector with the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

I am still involved with the subject ... I just can't let it go ... and I hope that people will enjoy reading some of the snippets in my History of Craft Education in Schools ('warts and all' as it is very much a work in progress in its early stages!).

On a personal level it was shortly after leaving Sibford that we as a family hit stormy waters which culminated in the loss of my wife Pauline following a resurgence of cancer in 2002. Today I am married to Mary and we spend a good deal of time in our caravan enjoying the delights of the Dutch flowers in spring, the trail of Hans Christian Anderson in Denmark and walking in Derbyshire. We also have the occasional trip to Trinidad so that Mary can see her family. Grandchildren take up a lot of my time of course ... but I still manage to find moments to get into my workshop continuing my silverwork but now keeping up with the times and working in 'Argentium Silver'. I also give the occasional talk on Silversmithing.

If anyone has any little stories relating to past craft teachers at the school – particularly Reg Rountree – I would love to hear from them.

- Old Scholars might like to know that Graeme has a small outlet for his work in a Cooperative venture in Wickham Market, Suffolk: www.wminspirations.co.uk

The 21st March 2018 marked the end of an era when Wendy Finch retired from Sibford School after a career that spanned five decades and six Heads! Her departure has left a big hole to fill ... both at the school and in SOSA. **The Rocket** asked her to share some memories of her 39 years at Sibford.

I arrived at Sibford on the 24th August 1978. Ken Greaves was Head at the time and I had seen an advertisement in the Banbury Guardian which was worded something like 'Sibford School requires help in the Sewing Room to look after and maintain children's clothing – you may be required to help with some ironing.' All I can say is that it was a good thing that I liked ironing!

My previous job had been as a clerk in a bookmakers so, as you might imagine, moving to a Quaker school was something of a stark contrast! The job, however, was ideal for me because in those days support staff only worked term time. My son, Richard, was just nine-years-old so it meant I was able to enjoy school holidays with him.

Working alongside the school housekeeper, Margaret Dring, who I'm sure many readers will remember with affection, was an experience in itself. I vividly remember my first two days which were spent making 280 beds ready for the children to come back – we had a lot more boarders at Sibford in those days. Margaret was a perfectionist, all the beds had to be made with hospital corners and the bedspread and top sheet had to be folded back exactly nine inches at the top ... she would go around the boarding houses and pull off the bedding of any that didn't come up to standard! To this day I am very fussy at home with how the bed is made and

Wendy waves goodbye



Wendy on her last day working at Sibford School

towels always have to be folded lengthways first and stacked in the cupboard with the folds towards you.

Margaret was a character. We weren't allowed to talk casually while we were working ... her mantra being that if you were talking then you weren't working ... so we spent most of the day in silence except when she had gone to lunch when we caught up with news. However, as soon as she appeared on the drive, silence was once again maintained.

However, although she could be a tyrant, Margaret was also very compassionate and was a great source of strength to me and I feel privileged to have been able to work with her.

When Margaret retired in 1982 (by now Jim Graham was Head), I took over as school housekeeper, a position I held until 1993. By this time Summer Lets were becoming the norm – and so the job that had started off as part

time became very much full time! During this time I also became Assistant House Mistress in Gillett, working with Lesley Norton.

I stayed in Gillett for two years and moved out only when I married Mike. In true Sibford fashion the flat was needed immediately for another member of staff so I had to vacate it on the morning that we married ... so not only was I getting dressed for our wedding but I was also packing up crockery and spring cleaning the bathroom at the same time!

The following year there was a vacancy in Fielding for House Parents and somehow or other Mike and I were 'persuaded' to apply for the job and we moved in during the Summer of 1986. We spent two years in Fielding, an experience I wouldn't have missed but not one I would want to repeat either. I found that working full time and then going 'home' to look after around forty 16 and 17-year-olds very tiring. As we all

know, youngsters have so much energy and don't seem to have the need for sleep. We moved out of Fielding in 1988 and went back to just doing our full time jobs ... it was wonderful to have evenings and weekends back.

It was in 1991, with John Dunston now Head, that I decided I needed to change tack and perhaps move on from Sibford, and so I signed up for evening classes in word processing and basic computer studies. However, fate seemed to take a hold again. A vacancy arose in reception. I applied for it and got it ... and that is where I remained ... only moving upstairs to the 'DOS' office for my last couple of years.

When I first started in reception we used type writers and Gestetner machines and everything was paper-based. There always seemed to be a 'mailing' on the go and I would be surrounded by boxes in my office of letters, reports etc that needed posting out to parents. By the time I left nearly all correspondence was emailed ... the introduction of the internet and email has made such a huge difference to how we work these days. I was lucky because I had done my word



Ye-ha ... Wendy as a cowgirl at a SOSA reunion in the 1980s.

processing course but I remember that when the first computers were introduced to Sibford we were encouraged to play the game Solitaire on screen so that we could get used to moving a mouse!

We had little way of keeping track of where pupils were during the day without actually going along to the classrooms and so it was with Chris Cox, head of science, that I helped to write a database package that worked alongside the finance and bursar's packages and meant that we could look up instantly to see where pupils should be. We used this for two or three years before adopting the pre-built system of PASS, thankfully our package merged easily with PASS and our data went from strength to strength. Indeed it has only been in the past couple of years that PASS has taken more of a back seat at Sibford ... and it was the introduction of another system, SIMS, that led me to think that perhaps my days at Sibford were coming to an end.

I have so enjoyed this job. Every day has been so varied. I have taken delivery of sheep's eyes for the science department; looked after live mice for pupils; sent the maintenance and gardening team off to try and catch a pot bellied black pig; and retrieved various items of clothing from all sorts of strange places. The children and some of the staff thought we had everything and everyone hidden in reception. I remember when senior master Tony Skeath came in one afternoon complaining about how busy he was. To ensure we all understood he fell to the floor mimicking a dying fly ... just as the door opened and some visitors walked in! Then there was the time a young woman came in to say she had an appointment in the Junior School. I walked her over, chatting away, thinking I vaguely recognised



Wendy and Mike pictured at the 2011 Reunion.

her. It was only later I realised she was an Oscar winning actress! Still, I suppose it could be thought I was upholding the Quaker tradition of all being equal!

When I reached my 20 years' service at Sibford, it was another Head, Sue Freestone, who presented me with flowers. Sue moved on in 2004 and Michael Goodwin took over the helm. I vividly remember his interview day. He arrived in casual dress and trainers and it was only when he changed into his suit he realised he had left his shoes behind. Brian Holliday found him a pair from lost property but they were a size too small and by the end of the day had split! Michael later introduced the Golden Shoe Award, presented annually to staff who had made a goof! Michael retired in the summer of 2016 and so it was Toby Spence who was Head of Sibford when I finally retired.

Sibford is very special, we all know that. It offers so much support to its community. There have been occasions when I have not found things easy. When Mike died in 2016 it was obviously a

very difficult time for me but the staff were all there offering me support.

There is something about Sibford which can't be explained. We get many visitors who talk about its feeling of warmth and friendship when they leave. Most people would determine support at Sibford as being 'educational' but I believe that it is total support. I have often said that when you come to work at Sibford you either come for a short time or, if you traverse that line, then you are here for life. We truly are a 'society of friends' – a family who look out for each other.

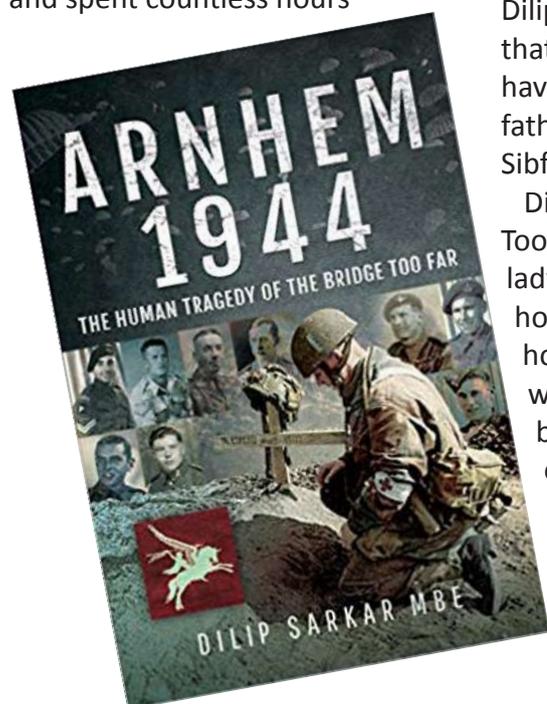
My Father, who was a lovely, gentle man with high morals, always said that we were all put on this earth to help one another and that is what he had tried to do during his life. I have been so fortunate to have been able to share some of what Sibford gives to its family and for that I am truly grateful for it has taught me many things – compassion, tolerance, patience and the fact that there is always some good to come of everything.

The airborne battle for the bridges across the Rhine at Arnhem ranks amongst the Second World War's most famous actions – inspiring innumerable books and Sir Richard Attenborough's epic 1977 film, 'A Bridge Too Far'.

However a forthcoming book by Sibford old scholar Dilip Sarkar, titled 'Arnhem 1944, The Human Tragedy of the Bridge Too Far' provides a fresh narrative and approach.

Instead of looking at the battle, Dilip (at Sibford 1973 ~ 77) concentrates on the tragic stories of individual casualties including: Private Albert Willingham, who sacrificed his life to save civilians; Major Frank Tate, machine-gunned against the backdrop of blazing buildings around Arnhem Bridge; family man Sergeant George Thomas, whose anti-tank gun is displayed today outside the Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein'; Squadron Leader John Gilliard DFC who perished flying his Stirling through a hail of shot and shell during an essential re-supply drop; and footballer Sapper Sid Gueran, a paratrooper killed by Arnhem Bridge.

During the course of his research, Dilip made numerous trips to Arnhem and Oosterbeek, travelled miles around the UK, and spent countless hours



A fresh look at a bridge too far

communicating with the relatives of casualties – achieving their enthusiastic support. This detailed work, conducted sensitively and with dignity, ensures that these moving stories are now recorded for posterity.

“The new book focusses firmly on the stories of casualties and how the effect of these tragic losses reverberate down the generations even today, affecting families all these years later,” Dilip told *The Rocket*. “I am sure that my outlook on war has to have been formed owing to my father’s Quakerism and my time at Sibford.”

Dilip adds: “In the film ‘A Bridge Too Far’, Liv Ullman plays a Dutch lady called Kate ter Horst, whose home was turned into a field hospital. Over 300 casualties were treated there and Kate became known as the ‘Angel of Arnhem’ for her kindness towards the wounded and dying. Kate is now deceased, but her daughter, Sophie, who was aged five during the

battle and who sheltered in the cellar with her siblings, is also a philanthropist and has written the book’s foreword. It was no surprise to me to learn that although neither Kate or Sophie were/are Quakers, there are Quakers in their family and so, like me, they very much identify with the Quaker way.”

Dilip visited Sophie at the famous house in Oosterbeek. They are pictured above outside the house with a visual of the book’s cover.

- ‘Arnhem 1944, The Human Tragedy of the Bridge Too Far’ will be out early in 2019. Published by Pen and Sword books it is currently available to pre-order.

Photos and medals of Sapper Sid Gueran, as featured in Arnhem 1944.



From music at Sibford to the wilds of Alaska

News has reached us of former Scholar Stuart Greenfield (at Sibford from 1997 – 2001). Stuart, who was previously at Beachborough School, played the euphonium and the viola and joined Sibford on a music scholarship.

His mother Christie Greenfield tells us: “Stuart enjoyed his boarding and academia at Sibford and tried hard with his lessons, but dyslexia and other issues meant his studies were unpredictable. However the music teachers, his euphonium exams and competitions gave him the much needed success and discipline to persevere.”

Christie goes on to say that Stuart was also inspired by head of science Christopher Cox and gained a passion for the environment.

Stuart left Sibford when he was 16 and went to Sparsholt College to study environment and agriculture. Having achieved his HND he was accepted at Aberystwyth University to do a Bsc Hons Science/Environment Degree. He graduated with a 1st and also started the University Archery Club, which now competes all over England, for which he was awarded university colours. He then went to Lampeter University to study Anthropology for his Master’s degree.

He applied to go to Trinity College in Belfast and was accepted to study for his PhD ... a

move that was to change his life. Mrs Greenfield said: “When he was accepted by Trinity College I thought ‘oh good ... he’ll be working on The Burren (a region of environmental interest in County Clare). How wrong was I! Instead he headed for Alaska!”

Stuart spent two years in Alaska studying the effects of bear and moose with man within the confines of progress development. He worked with the National Countyside Group and had to be taught self-preservation from hungry bears and rampaging moose ... his shooting skills came on in leaps and bounds!

It was while in Alaska that he met local girl Julia, who had a degree in Maritime Deepwater Studies. The couple returned to the UK for two years to give Julia the opportunity to experience the English way of life but in 2013 they went back to Alaska, got married and now have a little girl called Zoe.

It was on his first return from Alaska that Stuart wrote: “I have just got back from Alaska. where I had the great honour of meeting several incredible and exemplary people, one of whom was a lady who was in her eighties, had half of one lung and had just finish building her own chimney and outside decking. This was after a lifetime of travel, raising four kids, setting up the first old-age people home in Alaska and homesteading her own land. She told me that she could do anything she wanted, maybe not as fast as someone else, but she could do it. It was one of the most amazing things I have ever



heard. My parents once told me to be true to myself and I never once thought what it actually meant. For years I wore the symbol of the oak tree on my school blazer with the words “Trouthe and Honour, Freedom and Curteisie” and I never realised I was living them as best I could the whole time.”

Stuart now works for the Alaskan Government in Land Law and Boundary Torts. He flies out into the wilderness, assesses the topography, draws up written legal documents and interacts with officials and natives/citizens ... some not always receptive to the laws to be implemented!

Christie adds: “In August this year we flew over to Stuart and his family. They are expecting another baby in February and he still plays his Euphonium, plays violin for Medieval re-enactment and is an avid fisherman. We met many of his friends who accepted us a part of their own families and enjoyed parties, BBQs and fishing trips. They are very much part of a community with a real family ethos that was a real pleasure to experience. Stuart misses England, its seasons and the general environment. However, he knows that Alaska is the only place he can work.”





AGM 2018

The Head's Report

“Sibford School is looking glorious just now. The oak doors to the Hill Building have just been stripped and re-varnished and they open onto the school grounds looking absolutely stunning. The Junior School orchard – as with most of our trees, is looking fabulous in bloom. There is a hard-working team behind this and I open my report with a thank you to our Associate Staff who perform such an important role in making the school what it is today.

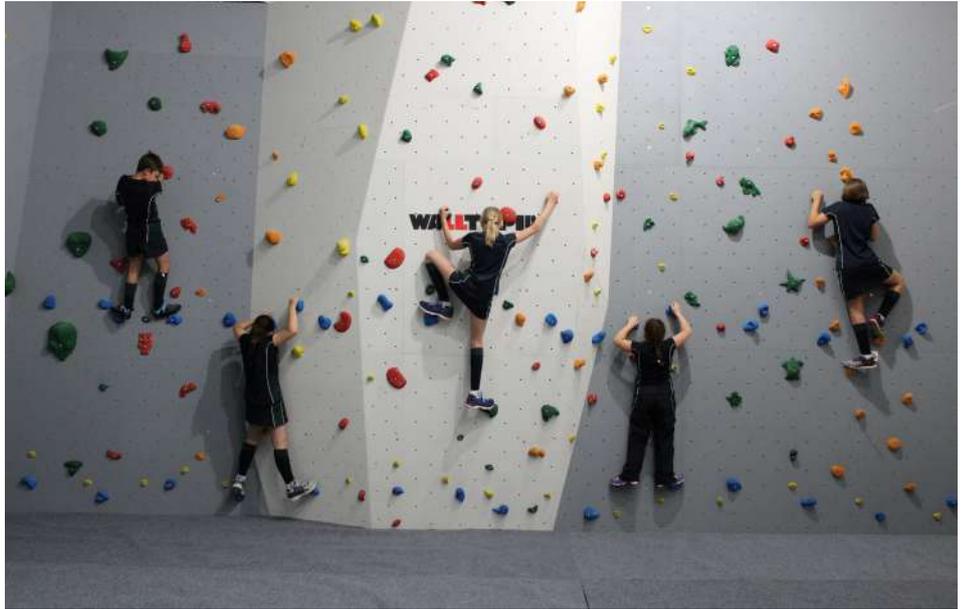
ISI inspection

I will elaborate more fully upon the Compliance inspection feedback when we meet in person. Suffice to say that the phrase I have been given by our Reporting Inspector, Collette Culligan, was that ‘it could not have gone any better’. In compliance terms this was clearly evident and yet we have been given some important feedback to reflect upon for the future – both short and longer term. Many people have worked extremely hard to ensure our successful inspection.

When I called colleagues together for a celebratory cuppa with cake I did make mention of four individuals for their particular contribution.

Neil Urquhart has added great value to our team in the short time he has been here. His ‘can do’ approach and eye for detail have made a significant difference and we will miss him next year.

Bunny Baker took on the mantle of Head of Boarding from Maggie Guy and ISI had a specific focus on this area as they reviewed our Boarding provision and National Minimum Standards. She has



The climbing wall mentioned in the Head's report has now been completed.

worked hard to ensure our continued success in this area.

Similarly Helen Hoy has been under scrutiny as Head of Early Years. With the close support of Edward Rossiter they ‘passed’ with flying colours.

Last, but by no means least I would like to recognise Tracy Knowles for her leadership of the pastoral side of the school – and, in particular, safeguarding. Tracy sets herself very high standards and she worried that she might, in some way, be found wanting by ISI. In short – she was not found wanting in any way and the verbal feedback we have received is that we would be judged ‘outstanding’ by ISI in pupil personal development.

Above all, however, it was a team effort. There has been a good deal for us to learn and we have clear goals for our full Educational Quality Inspection in three years’ time.

Staff news

We have been busy with appointments of late. On the whole, fields of applicants have

been strong although there have been exceptions to this rule.

Appointing high quality staff is clearly fundamentally important to the future of the school. A few recent appointments are as follows:

Ally Lynch: Business Manager from September 2018

Sally Anne Ward: Head of English from September 2018

Harriet Meddows: Head of Maths from September 2018

Claire Ferley: Director of Sport from September 2018

Lee Riley: Head of Senior School Sport from September 2018

Ian Humphries: ICT Engineer (already started with support from Blue Planet).

Julia Morel: Head's PA (already started).

Further to these appointments we have had two relatively late resignations from Emma Sutcliffe in Textiles and Fiona Donaldson in Administration. We are actively seeking to fill these vacancies.

We are also recruiting a full time receptionist and we have appointed three Resident



Graduates for September 2018.

Development

Plans for the Climbing Wall are signed off and a schedule of works has been completed. Work will take place over the summer and the wall will be ready for the school to use on 1 September 2018. Fundraising continues and we have strong support from PSFA via school initiatives (such as climbing the height of Mount Everest) and the May Ball.

Due to financial constraints major development is more limited however there will be the 'usual' summer schedule of works. At this moment, plans for the re-development of the pavilion have been put on hold.

Safeguarding / Security

ISI were happy with our security measures (an area we did have some queries about given our open site) and yet we have had helpful feedback upon developments and what should happen next. In essence our new lanyards have been given a 'thumbs up' by ISI and, as a community, we have slipped relatively comfortably into an expectation that we will be adorned with our green necklaces. I had not initially seen the entertaining film made by Neil Madden and students which explains what is what with our green, amber and red lanyards – it was a fabulous way of informing our pupils of what is what.

We do have advice regarding our rolling programme of locks on doors. The recommendation is to continue as we are. I am pleased at the sense in this approach. A new lock has been put in place at the back of the Hill Building. We are all getting used to the system of lanyards which have appeared with no noticeable murmurs from the

community or visitors.

Marketing

Our marketing group has reconvened in school with a number of developments to review and discuss. Marketing remains an absolute priority for us.

I had a (second) successful visit to China in March and we welcomed two groups from Fuyuan International School in Shenzhen as we develop our links in Asia. I learned a great deal about the variety of marketing methods our competitors use in the international field and we already have some quick wins from my two trips to China.

That said, it is clearly important to develop and nurture these links and that will only come with a longer term strategy. This is being developed in line with our whole school marketing plan. Further development of our international links – both in Asia and Europe are being actively explored.

Closer to home we have made further developments to our social media campaigns (including the placement of Sibford School information on specific sites) and we are developing links to both local schools and further afield. We have welcomed more Heads from local feeder schools. We have now been visited by the Croft and St. John's Priory School. We have also contacted Dormer House regarding a visit next term. A second visitor from Chandling's School (Deputy Head) has also



Friends from Fuyuan International School pictured during their visit to Sibford

been to see us. We have been visited by a national recruitment agency who have offices in Oxford.

Bunny Baker, fresh from her success when ISI visited the school, is working with me on a marketing plan for boarding. This plan will include short, medium and longer term goals. We will need to think about investing in infrastructure as we move forwards although I do not expect the costs to be exorbitant.

Over the past fortnight we have held further meetings with Richard Cziborra and John Cook (the former being a retired marketing/recruitment manager, principally for HE), Suzanne Rowse and Kathy Campbell (British Boarding School's Network) and Peter Harris, international educational consultant. These meetings and subsequent review will crystalize our marketing developments from



2018. There remains a clear sense that 'person-hours' will need to be clearly ring-fenced for the international/boarding market from the Autumn Term 2018.

Open Mornings

We were unfortunately unable to hold our Open Morning in March due to inclement weather. To this end it was fortuitous that we had organised an additional event for the Junior School in February. Our most recent event on Friday 4 May saw double the number of prospective families from this time last year. Interest in the school both for September 2018 and beyond remains high.

Year 7/Retention

Current projected numbers for Year 7 in September 2018 are 37 confirmed and five 'in the pipeline'. My hope is that this will convert into a firm cohort of at least 40. We did give serious consideration to reducing our number of Year 7 tutor groups from three to two as a cost saving exercise. On balance however we decided to stay as a three form entry for now at least. The implications of reducing to a two form entry are significant.

As with last year we are uncertain as to how many of our Year 11 students will stay into Year 12. It is a time of year when many of our students are considering their options and it would be helpful for us to have less uncertainty at this time. Ensuring a quality product with a good deal of choice is important and I have been pleased by the raised number of external applicants to the school this year.

Quaker News

Further to my meeting with Paul Whitehouse in April, Friends School Council (FSC) and Executive Group met in York which happened to coincide with when we were



The Sibford equestrian team is going from strength to strength

being inspected. To this end I missed the meeting however Paul was able to report our desire to further develop a common website which would be known as the 'Quaker Education' website rather than FSC. This has met with approval and will, once completed, be a useful resource for celebrating Quaker education and values as well as sharing resources and good practice. It should also be a useful marketing avenue.

Paul Whitehouse is also encouraging all Quaker Schools to become a 'Quaker Recognised Body'. With the backing of School Committee I would like to support this as a way to strengthen bonds with Yearly Meeting. I understand that Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of Friends House, is also supportive of this action. Seren Wildwood and I have moved forward with our application since our last meeting. This is to be ratified at our next full meeting of School Committee.

Zoë Simms and I met with Tim

Yeomans from Sibford Meeting to further explore Sibford School, alongside Sibford Meeting, becoming a 'Sanctuary Meeting' – which we were all broadly supportive of. This would mean that we would support local refugees and their families - not least through the occasional use of our facilities. I understand that similar projects have been undertaken in the past.

We are hosting Quaker Heads and Deputies tomorrow and on Monday.

Extra-curricular

After a busy term it was a pleasure to see our pupils enjoying their annual Sports Awards dinner at Ettington Hall. Triathlon, equestrian, swimming and traditional sport are all well represented by the school with our fundamental raison d'être being 'sport for all'. I am looking forward to throwing climbing into the mix next year!

We have held a successful



debating competition with local schools (organised by Francis King) and plans for Accrington Pals – both musical and dramatical – are well underway.

Scores of children continue to sign up for and partake in Duke of Edinburgh and they have been particularly challenged by the weather before Easter. Plans for summer trips to Borneo are also now finalised with last minute fundraising being flavour of the month.

School / Committee links

Our Senior Leadership Team has discussed the proposed closer links between Committee and we are supportive of further collaboration. We agree that sensitivity is important and we feel that a development of existing links – to share good practice/calm any nerves would be a sensible route ahead in the short term.

Behaviour

Behaviour remains impeccable for the vast majority. I regret that we have experienced the challenge of ‘Vaping’ at Sibford. This has been a national phenomenon and we are reviewing policies and procedures accordingly. That said, I consider it a strength of the community that we have been able to quickly unearth a problem and act accordingly.

Whilst I have no doubt that further challenges will come again in the future I would commend our pastoral team for handling a challenging case with care and diligence.

School roll

The school roll currently stands at 419 pupils (compared with a total of 403 pupils in February).



Notes from the AGM

Members and non-members attending the Annual General Meeting were warmly welcomed by President, Harriet Langridge. There were 23 members and attenders present.



1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from: Wendy Finch, Grace Beckerlegge, Tim Briggs, Michael van Blankenstein, John Watson, Mark Compton, Andrew Gilbert, Guy Kingham, Simon Barfoot, Charles Dixon, Ashley Shirlin, Amanda Shirlin-Brown (née Cade)

2. Obituaries:

Lister Mathews, Anne Muir, Arnold Lamb, Josh Brooks, Janet Sewell, Hugh Maw, David Laity
The meeting held a few moments of silence.

3. Minutes:

The minutes of the last SOSA Annual General Meeting held on 17th June 2017 were unanimously approved by the AGM and signed as a true record by the President.

4. President’s Report:

Presented by Harriet Langridge
My year started out with attending the 175th celebrations, a lovely day put on by the school, I’m sure Toby will tell us more about it.

My aim whilst on the committee has always been to try and involve younger old scholars in the SOSA goes on, to this end during one

of my many visits to the school I had lunch with the Sixth Form Leadership Team, we talked about Old Scholars and the School, and how I would very much like to try and involve recent Old Scholars.

We decided that a good way of doing it would be to invite the last five years of leavers (including the present year’s leavers) to a black tie dinner - at the Presidential Dinner.

To this end I personally invited those Old Scholars to join us this year. We got replies from about eight, and I’m pleased with that. From little acorns and all that! I will be doing the same for next year’s reunion, and hope that successive Presidents will take up the cause. I really must thank Ali Bromhall, Cate Mallalieu-Needle, and the Six Form Leadership Team for their help in this.

The committee is changing quite a lot after this year; during the year we have welcomed Tom Williams, Holly Poncini and Paul Roberts as co-opted members.



Wendy Finch

They will all be taking on different roles, and I thank them for taking the plunge.

This year we lose two stalwarts of SOSA from the committee, Wendy Finch, as the membership secretary, and Richard Hughes who, after so many



Richard Hughes



Richard Hughes pictured at the AGM
years as a School Committee representative stepped in at the last minute, and has been our Treasurer for the year. Thank you both for all your hard work.

Simon Matthews has moved on to the Sibford Old Scholars Charity (SOSC) after a year on the committee.

Navid Sadzadeh was unfortunately quite ill during the time that his job was at its peak, so I hope he's now quite well again, and keeps well for next year!

The Rocket was, again, produced by Ali Bromhall; our thanks to her for another great magazine. We have asked Ali if she would become our Honorary Magazine Editor, and I'm very pleased to announce that she has accepted. Thank you Ali.

I think I ought to mention Ashley and Amanda, and thank them for their work on the committee, and also wish them well in their marriage - of course they will be Mr and Mrs Shirlin by now.

I've enjoyed my year as President, especially getting to know the school again, thank you all.

5. General Secretary's Report:

Presented by Richard Hughes on behalf of Ashley Shirlin

I am unable to give this report in person as today is my Wedding Day. You may be interested to know that this morning I married a Sibford Old Scholar – Amanda Brown (née Cade)

As concerns **The Rocket**, Ali once again produced an excellent publication. The General Committee believe that it is appropriate that Ali becomes the Honorary Magazine Editor (Proposed by Ashley Shirlin, Seconded by Harriet Langridge).

There have been significant changes concerning SOSC.

Mark Bennett and I are no longer trustees. Amanda Shirlin-Brown (née Cade) has been elected as Chair. Simon Matthews has become a trustee and was elected to be SOSC's treasurer. Paul Roberts (a co-opted SOSA Committee Member) has become a trustee.

There is little to report on SOSC at this point in time as Amanda has not received the Charity's documentation including the

cheque book despite repeated requests for this.

The trustees hope that this situation will be rectified in the near future and there will be better news to report next year.

SOSA's membership currently stands at 1,319 for whom we have 309 email addresses. This AGM sees the retirement of Wendy Finch from the role of Membership Secretary. Wendy is not here today as she is at my wedding but I am sure that the Meeting would like to record our thanks to her for all the work that she has undertaken over the years.

With the change in Membership Secretary we need to turn our attention to how things work in the future especially in relation to the website. I will be holding a meeting with the new Membership Secretary over the summer in order to explore how we can move things forward.

With regards to the website, some individuals received emails stating that their email addresses had changed. This was not a case of the website having been compromised. As I've explained to many people and as is explained on the website I remove email addresses from the website if emails bounce so as to ensure that people receive paper in place of email. On this occasion several valid emails bounced, possibly due to some people's own email servers being unavailable. It would be useful if all SOSA members reviewed their on-line records to check their email addresses or to register if they have not done so already.

As former committee members know, SOSA has struggled on occasion to fill committee places and we have often been in the



position of having to re-cycle the same faces. This year the Committee took the decision to co-opt three individuals so that they could see how we work. To this end Holly Poncini, Paul Roberts and Tom Williams were co-opted. All three of these individuals have shown enthusiasm and have undertaken several tasks within SOSA and SOSC. I hope that you will all support the election of these individuals later in this meeting.

I hope that you all have a great Reunion and I look forward to seeing you next year.

6. Treasurer's Report:

Presented by Richard Hughes

The Income and Expenditure account for the period ended 31 March 2018 and the Balance Sheet as per 31 March 2018 were circulated. The Balance Sheet showed a total of £10,999 in the bank.

Paul Frampton expressed concern over the relationship between SOSA and SOSC. SOSC was set up as a charity so gift aid could be claimed but as it is a separate entity should it be included in SOSA business? Trustees of SOSC should be able to attend the AGM and report. He suggested the two should be kept separate. As the school is a registered charity any gifts made directly to the school can also be gift aided.

7. Head's Report:

Presented by Toby Spence

See page 17.

8. School Committee Report:

Presented by Margaret Shelley

Margaret reported on School Committee business ... details of which have already been covered in the Head's report.

9. Elections:

All the following individuals were elected unopposed:

Treasurer

– Paul Roberts.

Proposed by Harriet Langridge and seconded by Navid Sadrzadeh.

Vice President

– Navid Sadrzadeh.

Proposed by Harriet Langridge and seconded by Paul Roberts.

Membership Secretary

– Holly Poncini.

Proposed by Harriet Langridge and seconded by Margaret Shelley.

Committee member

– Tom Williams.

Proposed by Richard Hughes and

seconded by Paul Frampton.

Paul Levy who had been asked to be the next president had had to step down due to ill health, so Harriet was asked to stand as president for a further year.

10. Any other business

- Ian Weatherhead asked if the silver salver had been sold and if not to keep an eye on the price of silver with a view to selling it. Paul Frampton proposed, seconded by Ian Weatherhead that the salver be donated to the school for an annual award to be decided by the school. With the exception of two abstentions the vote was carried.
- Paul Frampton asked if the association was compliant with GDPR. Holly Poncini explained how it works and stated that the onus is put on members if they want to receive information and how they want to receive it.
 - Several members had expressed concern that they had not received notification of the reunion. Members were asked to check the website. Ashley Shirlin is to be asked to contact members reminding them how to access the website to ensure they are kept up to date.
 - Members asked whether the AGM could be held in the morning. Toby Spence would not be able to attend but his report could either be read out at the meeting or at the presidential dinner and any questions asked then.



Harriet Langridge at the AGM



Having left school in 1980 after Sixth Form, 2018 was my fourth old scholars reunion.

At my three previous reunions a few people from around my era had been there, and, as always there was plenty to talk about with our common link of having lived and breathed Sibford through our teenage years.

This year however was a special one for my particular year group, as it marked 40 years since we had taken our O Levels and therefore 40 years since most of us had seen each other.

Thanks to the wonders of social media, mainly Facebook, several of us were in contact and steps were taken to locate as many people as possible from our year group to attend the reunion. This turned out to be a huge success when we all met up on the familiar school field in the SOSA marquee to be amazed at how the years faded away and the memories were awakened.

It was so good to walk around the familiar, and indeed less familiar, grounds and buildings of the school, and to see what has become of our former home at The Manor.

We had a very enjoyable and delicious lunch - a far cry from the days of eggy bread (always a favourite Sibford breakfast!); and later an amazing three course evening meal.

The day just rushed by with so much catching up to do - and hopefully we will make this a regular trip in June each year to recall even more of our old Sibford adventures.

A huge thank you to Harriet for her organisational skills on the day, and for shepherding us to meals when required!



By Heather Collinson née Elsworthy above and below pictured with Harriet taking part in 'Rockets' at the 2018 reunion.





AGM 2018

ANNUAL REUNION ... PICTURE SPECIAL





AGM 2018

ANNUAL REUNION ... PICTURE SPECIAL





It's lovely to see you all today, both regular visitors and new faces. Long may this continue, especially the recent leavers whom I personally would like to welcome to SOSA.

Which brings me on to my thoughts for this address:

Why are we here?

Sibford School, why do we return?

Well, unlike now, when I was here in the 70's, the school was about 300 boarders and 60 'day kids'. We had friends from all over the world, and even Hook Norton, by the time we left!

There's a big difference in the school between now, and then, but we keep coming back.

The Manor was my 'home' for five years, in all its Hornton stone glory, but, sadly, it was slipping down the hill towards the Gower, and sold off. The Hill, however, has stayed, but has had additions to it. The Sports Hall, Orchard Close and Art and Music Block more recently, and I do remember this dining hall replacing the dark one at the Manor whose roof was kept up by acro props!

But all this is just bricks and mortar – it could all be replaced.

Like the rule which stated that pupils couldn't use the front door, only the Scholars' entrance. It seemed really weird seeing a green blazer going through the front door the last time I was here. So, it can't be the bricks and mortar – those that we have left on top of this rather draughty hill, are actually, quite unremarkable. And apparently the amount of green fields and countryside around here doesn't do it either, according to



Harriet Langridge is pictured with young old scholars Honor Parker, Fiona Neil, Emily Gibb, Molly Jones (who all left the school in 2018) and Charlotte Bryan (who left in 2016)

one of my friends.

So, it must be the friendships that are forged within the time that we are bound together with the Sibford twine.

I had good times and bad times, but most of all I had 'times' here. I've kept in touch with some of my friends, and lost touch with others. When we left school, if we moved and didn't tell anyone, or didn't write the letters we promised to write then we fell 'off the radar'. Some wanted to leave their schooldays as precisely that, and got on with their lives, after all wasn't Sibford preparing us to do that?

But you can bump into a Sibfordian practically anywhere in the world.

During my Overlanding in Africa we were in Nairobi, in the Thorn Tree Cafe, where traditionally messages are left for fellow travellers, and I met Katherine Stewart completely out of the blue. I also did a 'women's rock climbing course' in Wales years

ago, and one of the other climbers had been to Sibford and told me she hated it!

Now, fast forward to the last few years ... and the internet. This has made rekindling friendships easier, I have met up with several of my housemates whom I hadn't seen since 1980! I came back for reunions, they didn't! Distance that was a problem in getting to the reunions before, means that keeping in touch is easier through the internet.

I'm glad to say that this has encouraged a few Lister Girls (and others) to come back this year for the first time in years. They have been meeting up for lunch for a while though! It's been great to meet up with them at The Trout and now see them back here.

Now, of course, with the school currently mostly having day pupils and with the influence of the internet, gatherings of recent leavers can take place anywhere and with ease. So, it's all about the friendships and people that mean



something to us, not the bricks and mortar, but is it?

Although, as I said before, there have been many changes here to the buildings, I still look at different parts of the school and it brings back memories: British Bulldog in the summer on the playing fields; hockey and cold knees in the winter; Mr Shields showing us a partial eclipse through a telescope and coloured filters; and enjoying the athletics in the summer (the only colours I ever achieved).

I remember the corridor from the Scholars' entrance being so dark to me as a first year, the metalwork shop where I started to use the machines I learnt more about in my apprenticeship, and the only time I haven't protested at being called a boy - well, it was a cheery 'hello boys' from Eric Morcambe! Then there was the path up from the Manor which we trod every morning, the tree we got Liseli stuck up in the corner, being introduced to Monty Python on LP record in Nansen Boys' common room, and, coming back to this building, the double yellow lines we had to stand behind so that we didn't block the double doors into the kitchen.

So, sometimes we want to go back to a place to trigger some of the memories we have of the time it represents, like taking photographs when we're on holiday, thinking we'll never go back. And it's great to talk about those memories with others that were there, even if you have slightly different recollections of the same things!

Sibford represents to me the centre of a circle, one that formed a part of my life that developed a part of me, but one circle of many. I hope that it does the same for you.



Instead of rewriting my profile this year (*please see last year's issue if you need a refresher!*) I thought I'd use this opportunity to advertise Old Scholars to a younger audience.

My aspirations for SOSA would be to hand it on to a younger committee but, as we all know, these things take time, and also guidance from the older guard.

In this regard I am quite excited that we now have Holly and Paul joining us on the committee in

major roles, as well as Navid who has been with us for a few years and is our President next year.

One problem that we all have is that after leaving school our lives begin to get ever more full ... further education, careers, marriage and/or families. All leaving little time to organise a bunch of people who just happened to go to the same school as we did.

I feel that the task in hand must be to find a way of engaging 'the younger generation' in SOSA, but without encroaching too much on their lives. The unfortunate thing is that no matter how much I want this, I can't crawl into recent leavers' minds to reel them in!

Last year I visited the Sixth Form Leadership Team, and although some of them couldn't make it because of exams, it was great to meet those that could. We had a good natter about what they would like from SOSA, and this led to me personally inviting all recent leavers from the past five years to the 2018 Presidential Dinner. I was so pleased that some of them made the time to come, and hope that more will make it in 2019.

But, although I still think I'm 24, I really do need help from those who actually *are* recent leavers (or even 24!). We need to know what we can do as an organisation to ensure that the legacy of Old Scholars lives on in a way that suits the younger generation.

We need ideas, good or bad ... so please do get in touch.

Last year, in my President's Profile, I said 'It's good to talk' and I think that motto still stands.

Harriet

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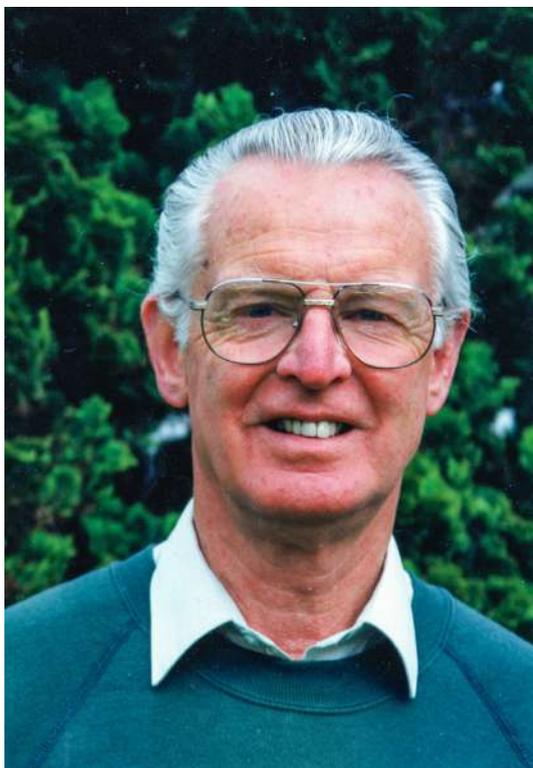
Lives Remembered

Hugh Waring Maw
June 1920 ~ March 2018
Head at Sibford 1956 ~
1962

Hugh Maw was the fifth Head of Sibford School ... taking over from Arthur Johnstone. His funeral was held on Wednesday 4 April at Stourbridge Crematorium and was followed by a reflection on Hugh's life at Stourbridge Friends' Meeting House. A Memorial Meeting to celebrate Hugh's life will take place at Bull Street Meeting House in Birmingham on Sunday 17 March 2019 at 2pm, all welcome. Hugh's family have written the following for The Rocket.

Hugh Maw was born in India, the fourth son of Quaker Missionaries. He was educated at the Downs School, Colwall and at Leighton Park School, Reading, before studying Zoology and Botany at Bristol University. He registered as a Conscientious Objector in 1939 and after a gruelling tribunal received an unconditional exemption from military service so he could continue his studies and then train to be a teacher.

Hugh's first teaching post was at Sidcot School, where he taught PE and biology and where his mother, Mildred, was matron. It was during his time



at Sidcot that his friendship with Daphne Southall (at Sidcot 1939-46) first began, allegedly following an incident when he wrote in red ink "7 out of 10. Not good enough. See me"!

Hugh and Daphne subsequently married in 1949 and went on to have three children and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Hugh left Sidcot in 1945 to work as an assistant PE and Swimming Instructor at the Bournville Day Continuation School, a job he combined with being a youth worker at Cadbury's. Whilst enjoying his time at Bournville he became increasingly aware of the utter destruction and deprivation abroad as a result of the war and felt he was being called to volunteer with the Friends' Relief

Service (FRS). In January 1946 he started six months of training before going out to Berlin with the FRS for a year followed by a further six months in Cologne. Hugh's diaries from this time were later written up and published in 2014 as a book titled 'The Training and Experience of a Quaker Relief Worker'.

It was in September 1956 that Hugh commenced his Headship at Sibford School. He set about transforming the school and relished his role.

He modernised the management system and implemented a major building project to create three boys' dormitory houses, which freed space for more classrooms, a new Art Department and a purpose-built Music School. He believed strongly in educating the person as a whole and built towards this end. Sport, other outdoor activities and musical productions became an important part of school life. After leaving in 1962 he maintained a life-long affection for Sibford and actively supported the Old Scholars' Association for over 60 years.

At the end of his career Hugh turned to teacher training and became a Principal Lecturer at the City of Birmingham College of Education on a pioneering Health Education course. Alongside his lecturing he was involved with Youth and Marriage Guidance counselling and was for a time Chairman of the Institute of Health Education.

In 1978 Hugh took early

retirement and was able to devote much of the rest of his life to continuing his service for the Society of Friends in various capacities at local, regional, national and international levels. A very active member of Stourbridge Friends Meeting from 1965, he first became an Elder in 1970. He served on many Warwickshire Monthly Meeting committees and was involved with the Peace Education Project, and lead, alongside Daphne, several Family Gatherings. He represented the Monthly Meeting centrally on Quaker Peace and Service Central Committee, on Representative Council, and on Meeting for Sufferings. He also served on the Brummana (Lebanon) and Middle East Committees.

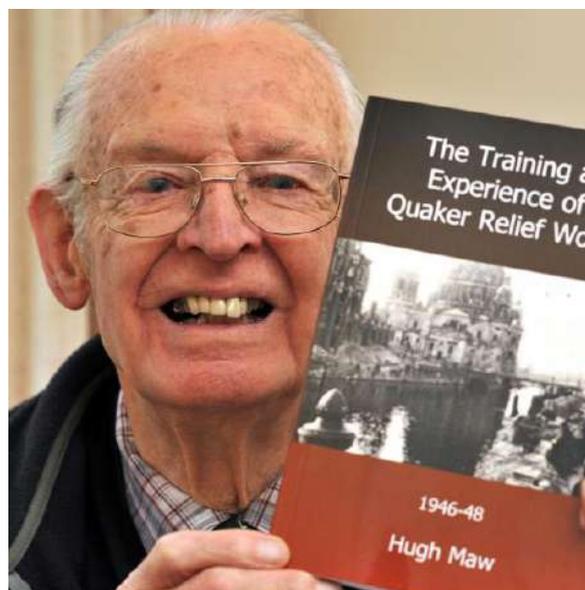
At national level Hugh served on London Yearly Meeting Agenda and Arrangements Committee and together with Daphne he attended many Yearly Meetings, especially enjoying the residential ones where they had the chance to meet up with family and Friends/friends over a longer period. They enjoyed being Yearly Meeting representatives to South Africa YM and attending Friends World Committee for Consultation World Conference in Kenya (1982). He

represented QPS and FWCC at the U.N. Conference on the question of Palestine as an NGO Observer (1983).

Peace was a very strong value Hugh held throughout his life. He was an active member of the World Disarmament Movement and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and along with Daphne helped start a local Peace group in Hagley. Stourbridge Friends Meeting continued to be important to him to the very end of his life.

Hugh was a prolific writer and great correspondent. The family have several volumes written up from his diaries of his early life as well as letters he sent out every Christmas for over 50 years. In these he writes about his love of sports, especially cricket, hockey, rugby and skiing. Early enjoyment of drama productions came in handy for performing on various stages throughout his life. During two university vacations, friendships led him to join the International Ballet School which he thoroughly enjoyed despite some disapproval by family and Friends and he danced in several West End shows and infrequently on other occasions joined shows at other venues.

Retirement also brought many opportunities for travel. As well as enjoying caravanning widely in Britain and Ireland Hugh and Daphne travelled extensively abroad and continued to enjoy learning about Natural History on many study



Hugh pictured in 2014 with his book: 'The Training and Experience of a Quaker Relief Worker.'

tours.

Hugh will be remembered by many with great affection for his encouragement, guidance and spiritual wisdom.

Anne Muir

July 1934 ~ February 2018
Deputy Head at Sibford
1979 ~ 1987 and
SOSA President 1991 ~ 1992.

Anne Muir passed away peacefully at Godswell Park Care Home Bloxham on 16 February 2018, aged 83 years. The beloved sister of John, loving Aunt to Angus, Jennifer, Jacqueline and Kate and a dear friend to many, her funeral service took place at Bloxham Parish Church on 26 February and it was appropriate that the funeral director was Edd Frost (current SOSA committee member). We reproduce below Anne's presidential profile as published in the 1991/2 newsletter.

I was born in Glasgow in 1934, and my home was in Dunblane in Perthshire. My father ran a family firm dyeing and printing textiles.

During the war they manufactured parts for aeroplanes. In a small country town in Scotland, with my father at home, my junior school years passed remote from the grimmer realities of a wartime childhood. My father worked all hours; my mother, a doctor, looked after our evacuees, gave first aid classes, and did blood transfusion work. Wartime for me meant little more than gas masks and blackout, rationing and the absence of bananas, and the five-inch restriction on



else; but when I left Sibford providence had a surprise for me, taking me to very different but equally beautiful and friendly surroundings in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. My work in the central administration and personnel section there is enormously enjoyable and brings me into contact with a great variety of people every day. Such time as is left after commuting is genuinely free for the piano and other activities. I love living



David Laity
Died November 2017
At Sibford 1933 - 1938

David Laity passed away peacefully at home in Tywardreath Highway on 25 November 2017. Aged 96 years and formerly of Tregays, Lostwithiel, David was beloved husband of Eileen, loving father of Philip and Sheridan, dear father-in-law of Kathy and Rafael, treasured grandfather of Eileen and Paz, and adored great grandfather of Eric, Veryan, David and Rafael. His funeral service took place at Glynn Valley Crematorium, Bodmin on Thursday 7 December 2017.

- We have also been informed of the deaths of Lister Mathews (at Sibford 1949 - 1954) and Anita Bird (at Sibford 1958 - 1962). Anita died on 3 November 2018.

bathwater.

The family moved south in 1948, but I had come two years earlier to board at Malvern Girls' College. I lost my Scottish accent! But I was very happy there. Malvern gave me a love of music and an ideal to pursue in teaching. It was a school which truly loved its children long before people were talking about 'pastoral care'.

After that Southampton University, a year in central France as English Assistant in a lycée, and education training at Bristol University. Teaching French and Spanish then took me to Cheltenham and south of London to Sutton and Bromley. I worked in a variety of schools – grammar, secondary modern and direct grant. My last job before Sibford was in Newark-on-Trent as deputy head in a co-educational 14 – 18 comprehensive school.

In my 29 years of teaching I was contented and thought I never wanted to do anything

in Bloxham and enjoy my tranquil home. Holidays are short and very precious! I like going abroad, especially to France and once in every five years to visit my brother and his family in Australia.

When I came to Sibford in my mid-forties it was a calculated move. I had thought carefully about the characteristics and qualities I hoped to find in what I planned should be my last school. Sibford had them all. My years there had their ups and downs, but it was for me in every sense the ultimate school and I could never have left it for another. It is a great joy to me that, through SOSA, I can for a while be part of it again with a role to play in this most exciting of years, the 150th anniversary.

The late Anne Muir writing in 1991.



Youngsters have the final word ...

Keeping you up to date with snaps and snippets received from some of our young old scholars



Racing and Relevés

Brothers Luke (at Sibford 2008 – 2014) and Colby (2008 – 2016) Catton have travelled in two very different directions since leaving school.



Luke has become an apprentice professional jockey and on 20 December 2017 rode his first winner when he came home on his horse Bamako Du Chatelet at 20/1 in the 3.25pm at Lingfield.

Meanwhile Colby is following his dream to be a ballet dancer and is currently at Elmhurst Ballet School, which runs in association with Birmingham Royal Ballet and is a world renowned centre of excellence for the training and education of ballet dancers.



Golden moments

2017/18 saw three young old scholars awarded their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

Max Ostrand (at Sibford 2008 - 2017) received his award from TV presenter Phillip Schofield. Max's 'residential' section of the award was to go sailing in Gibraltar and no sooner had he received the award than he was off on the high seas again, accompanied by his cousin Anna, sailing the family yacht from Santa Maria Azores directly to Cuba.

Michael Burton (at Sibford 2010 - 2017) received his Gold award from Prince Edward at St James' Palace in London. Michael is currently at Hull University where he is studying medicine.

And in May 2018 Oliver Lorimer (at Sibford 2008 - 2015) was presented with his Gold in the gardens of Buckingham Palace by HRH The Earl of Wessex.

Congratulations to all.



Charity celebrates anniversary

A new charity set up by old scholar Abbi Meadows (at Sibford 2006 – 2014) celebrated its first anniversary in March. Siblings Talking Aspergers (STA) provides space and activities for children and young people who have a brother or sister with Asperger's or autism.

The charity marked the occasion with a party inside a yurt. Speaking at the event, Abbi said: "I feel very privileged to have met some amazing families over the past year. STA has grown more than I ever imagined."



SIBFORD OLD SCHOLARS' ASSOCIATION Officers and Committee from 01/08/2018



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VICE PRESIDENT

Navid Sadrzadeh

RETIRING PRESIDENT

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Paul Roberts

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES



Margaret Shelley (January 2012 until December 2019)

Amanda Shirlin-Brown (January 2018 until December 2021)



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.

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