

Minutes of the 107th Annual General Meeting of Sibford Old Scholars Association held on Saturday 15th June 2013 in the Oliver Studio at Sibford School at 17.15. YET TO BE APPROVED

Members and non-members attending the Annual General Meeting were warmly welcomed by the President Edd Frost. There were 44 members and attenders present.

Greetings and Apologies:

Were received from Grace Beckerlegge, Ann Brown (McCallum), Bruce Bury, Alan Carlton-Smith, Adrian Douglas, Hilary and John Haddleton, Felicity Hedger, Jim Hilling, Mike and Jill Holman(Edwards), Alfred Holland, Richard Hughes, David Laity, Philip Manasseh, Elinor Pedlar-Ball, Claire Phillips, Anne Rose (Stiles), Jimmy Setna and Margaret Shelley (Smart).

1. Obituaries:

Oina Baldry (Paterson) 1934-40, Beryl Bell (Grossmith) 1932-37, Tim Boulton 1988-90, Sir John Burgh (Hans Schweinburg) 1938-1941, Jeffrey Chattin 1939-40, Margaret Dale (Norton) 1931-35, , Nigel Fox 1965-70, Rob Hart 1951-56, Ian Hedger 1928-35, John Hicks 1937-43, Jack Simpson 1934-38, John Taylor 1940, Lilian Ward(East) 1928-34, Beryl Ryan (Wright) 1944-49, Graham Veeck 1950-54. Phil Brown – husband of Loraine Brown (Quinton), Derek Chowne – husband of Shirley Chowne, and Sue Holland – wife of Alfred Holland.
The meeting held a few moments of silence.

- 2. Minutes of the last SOSA Annual General Meeting held on 23rd June 2012.** These were circulated in the SOSA April Newsletter . The Minutes were unanimously approved by the AGM and signed as a true record by the President.

3. Chairman's Report:

Edd Frost presented the following Report.

There have been three committee meetings since the last AGM which were all very positive and well attended. We have discussed a variety of matters which I am very happy to report on. Firstly I should say a big thank you to the School for making the Committee so welcome and for their valuable and continued support. My thanks also go to our hard working and dedicated Committee.

Tree planting took place in memory of Diana Lloyd in October when an Acer tree was planted in the garden of remembrance at the Hill by her husband John Lloyd, and in November a holly tree was planted in Holly Tree field by Holly House in memory of Norman Coxon by his daughter Rosemary Berrington. These were both moving and happy occasions to remember two much loved old scholars. Both events were well attended by family and friends.

Further to our report at the last AGM we have discussed the future of the Elm Garden. Our findings are that it is still an important part of the heritage of both SOSA and the School. The School have very kindly offered to look after the maintenance of the garden on our behalf and move to improve its look. Very shortly a new plaque will be installed to explain to the

general public why the garden is there. It is also the Committee's wish to encourage Old Scholars' that if they so wish the garden can be used as a garden of remembrance and suitable plaques could be attached to the inside walls in remembrance of past Old Scholars'.

We have also had to review the make-up of the Trustees of the Elm garden in view of the untimely death of John Taylor. The remaining Trustees are Martin Dodsworth, Mike Finch and Peter Robinson. Our solicitors advise us that three names are sufficient and there is no need to add a fourth so long as this meeting is happy with that arrangement. (The Meeting unanimously agreed to this arrangement.)

We are still in the early days of our new constitution which is still evolving, and which we believe is making steady progress in fashioning our society to 21st Century needs.

The financial position of the Association remains buoyant and our Treasurer, Peter Robinson, will report on in detail later in the meeting.

Wendy Finch continues to work on the Alumni project which is slowly taking shape. We are extremely grateful to Wendy for her work on this and for the many other ways in which she helps in the work of the Association and the School. August sees her starting her 36th year at Sibford – that is some record. (The Meeting roundly applauded this tribute.)

You should have all received the latest Newsletter and Sibfordian and our thanks go to Ali Bromhall for all her hard work in editing these important links to Old Scholars'.

That concludes my report, but if you have any queries I will be happy to try and answer them. (There were no questions.)

4. Head's Report:

Michael Goodwin presented the following Report.

It is lovely to see so many Old Scholars', who, I hope have enjoyed seeing the School and some of the activities today, and whom I am sure have greatly enjoyed catching up on each other's news. Particular welcome to Paul Frampton and his guests who are here to remember 50 years since they left the School. A huge thank you to him for organising this special reunion.

How much has changed in those years... I mean in the School ... you all look just as young as you did then, I'm sure.

Seriously, if you think of what has happened in your own individual lives in the last fifty years, it is no wonder that we are different... that we have been transformed.

The theme of our Open Day today has been "Transformations" and your presence here is a timely reminder that the purpose of all schools is to transform young people; there is an

inevitably that they, like you, will become older, but how they turn out might depend more than a bit on their experience of School.

Fifty years ago, in 1963, of course the School still owned the manor. Jonas Fielding had just begun as head – the sixth in the series since 1842 (I am number 11!). The Main Hall was not even built. Gillett House on the manor site didn't open until 1965... stalwarts like June Ellis, John Miller, Jenny Brown, Mike Wollerton, Stuart Hedley and Kate Long had not even joined the school – many of you will have such fond memories of these characters, and others I'm sure... (if you have forgotten about them, Mike Finch tells me you could buy his book – A view from the Hill!).

Back then, there was no Junior School – now there are around 90 children here aged 3-11.

Then nearly all of you were boarders – now only 60 of our 400+ students' board. Then... and after then too (Paul will remember his stint driving our Appeals in the late 1980's)... the School was not well off and often in debt. We might still be not well off, but we are now completely free from debt, have made operating surpluses in recent years, and have not had to use our overdraft facility for a long time. All the building work – hall, changing rooms, etc, have been done from reserves. Then, quite a lot of the fabric of the place was a little tired. Now, whilst there is still work to do, I think you would agree that under the direction of Peter Robinson, our buildings and grounds (as well as our accounts) are in pretty good shape.

For all this, we face transforming economic times and whilst we are pleased to have kept fee increases for next year low again (at 3.75%), we have faced challenging decisions this term to look at ways to reduce our staffing costs to make sure that we continue to balance our books.

A number of staff will leave us this term, some because posts have been made redundant, as we try to re-align ourselves, to transform ourselves.

Three of the current generation of "stalwarts" will retire.

Michael Spring from the full time post at Head of Art after 30 years' service to the School (though he will return to teach Photography at AS in September), Patsy Howes, who has worked in Orchard Close/Junior School for 18 years and Mary Memarzia, Head of Sixth Form who has been here for 12 years. We thank them for their service, for the lives they have touched and transformed.

In addition, we have quite a list of other staff leavers this year... schools' are organisations that transform, as students leave and join, and as staff gain promotions, new posts or retire. In addition to these three colleagues, we say farewell this year to:

Chris Orr (Head of Business Studies and Penn Houseparent)

Alan Wallis, Physics, Vanessa Evans (RS, part time)

Debbie Simpkins (MFL, part time), Roger Moss and Ita Caulfield (Maths)

On the Associate staff front:

Sarah Newbould (Junior School Teaching Assistant) and Justine Tibbetts (SENCO Support and exams) have both opted to take voluntary redundancy.

I was struck by the fluidity of the School as I looked at “whole School” photos in the SOSA marquee this afternoon... we rather like George Washington’s axe which as some of you will know is the subject of an apocryphal story of unknown origin in which the famous artefact is “still George Washington’s axe” despite having had both its head and handle replaced.

The ship of Theseus, also known as Theseus’s paradox, is a paradox that raises the question of whether an object which has had all its components replaced remains fundamentally the same object.

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus attempted to solve the paradox by introducing the idea of a river where water replenishes it.

I would like to hope that Old Scholars’ can still recognise the waters of the Sibford they knew still running through the modern day river.

I am convinced that one constant Old Scholars’ and current pupils would recognise is the Quaker values of the School. I am grateful for the support of the School Committee for their support to me, and for their holding onto the Quaker core of this place. I am sorry that the SOSA reps to School Committee, Richard Hughes and Margaret Shelley, cannot be with us today – we hold them in the Light.

I would like to think we are still transforming young people. Our value added results are still strong. I don’t know what our exam results were like 50 years, but I know that 10 years ago, when I became head here 63% of our students gaining 5 grades or more at A* -C was seen as a success. Last year, 91% of our students achieved this benchmark, 93% the year before and 94% the year before that. We are transforming the quality of education.

I could agree that GCSEs have been “dumbed down” and welcome more rigour and consistency in our examination system, but this climb in our results is about an improving, a transforming School. At A level, half of our grades in 2012 were at A or B. This means that our young people are able to go into the universities of their choice, to begin the next stage of their transformation.

Our influence to bring about change, to make a difference has extended this year to employing Resident Graduates for the first time. The downturn in the economy means that it is hard for many gifted young people to get a foot on the employment ladder and we are delighted that two of our Res Grads are leaving us with places on PGCE courses, to train to be teachers. We have also worked in partnership with Oxford Brookes and Wroxton College to give teacher training experience to student teachers, which in turn helps us to reflect on our own practice and transforms student teachers into competent and qualified, and moreover employed. Teachers.

External pressures and changes – not least from the Secretary of State for Education... goodness knows what direction he will take us, and a transforming economy requires us to make constant adjustments. We have seen a rise in the number of bursary applicants again this year and we are glad that we are able to fund so many families who simply could not afford the fees.

I think we are also living in more litigious times and this has been a harder year than I would have wished as I have defended the School's name against a couple of time consuming complaints and challenged underperformance from a very small minority of teaching and non-teaching staff who haven't got it quite right.

We currently have 418 students currently on roll – slightly down on last year, but we are holding our own in increasingly difficult economic times. The Junior School has grown to capacity and this will lead to some changes over the summer. Early Years will move to occupy both the current space (which is now full to capacity) and the current Year 1 and 2 space; Year 1 and 2 will move to the current Year 5 space so that all of our youngest children will have access to a “currently being developed” outdoor classroom at the back of the School. Year 5 will move upstairs to the current Year 6 space, and Year 6, which will need to be split into two smaller classes will move over to the senior school – to the rooms near Michael Finch's archive. We think this will help develop our transition from Year 6 to Year 7 and strengthen a sense that we are 3-18 School.

Longer term, we need to see if this works; if it does we may move the Year 6 to the new build we plan at the rear of the Hill building (on top of the current old changing rooms), or we may have to extend the current Orchard Close building.

In terms of numbers for next year, we are reasonably confident that we might reach 400 from September; though planning in a school which, on average recruits 40 pupils every year between May and September, is always difficult. If we have concerns, it is that our new Year 7 and boarding numbers are slightly smaller than the previous year. Reassuringly, Sixth Form numbers have bounced back up, in part because of the loyalty discount we have offered to our current families – 5% off fees for each senior school year attended equates to a 25% fee discount for a child who started in Year 7.

I visited a recruitment fair in Moscow at the end of the Spring term and we have already had our first Russian student join us. It may be that we have to be more determined in our overseas marketing next year to make up for the shortfall in boarding numbers, though we need to be mindful to keep the balance of overseas and UK boarders' right.

I am sure that you will have already admired the transformed hall which I talked to you about this time last year – which has (new) (I wrote new – but since it didn't have them before) windows, a new roof, new cladding... raked seating and new lighting and sound theatre equipment, and more sustainable heating. We are delighted with it.

Less glamorous, but longer overdue, the same project saw the re-roofing and insulation, and installation of new windows to the Design Workshops.

We have extended our outdoor learning this year to include animal husbandry – with two calves in our new barn in the Autumn term, lambs in the Spring term and two very fine Gloucester Old Spot pigs for the Summer term. The barn is empty today.... we are having sausages for lunch on Thursday.

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

5. Treasurer's Report:

Peter Robinson presented the following Report:

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

So I will report initially on income for the year and then what has been spent, concluding with what is proposed moving forward.

The income for the year totally £51,941, this appears significant but takes into account £44,000 realized upon the maturity of SOSA investments. This with interest due and funds from the current account which were invested in a business investment account – unfortunately current returns are low and hence the decisions later in this report.

Therefore real income for the year totalled £7,933, the majority of which is from annual subscriptions, £6,000 being from the School.

The significant costs for the year fell to the Newsletter and Magazine, totalling £8,461, this figure includes two years publications due to the way the School accounting period falls.

Overall for the year the accounts show an excess of expenditure over income of £3,629, with one-off expenses for the Digitization completed using a previous donation of £2,000 shown in the 2010/11 accounts. SOSA also offered parental support and displays for textiles (Dolls).

The total funds held at year end were £48,678 made up of

- Current Account - £2,071
- Business Investment Account - £46,257

The financing of these show an adjustment to funds of £6,000 this is the sum received annually from the School for membership, but as this is paid at year end it should not show on the accounts as funding to the following year and is therefore shown in this manner as a one-off adjustment to financing.

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

After some discussion the attached Accounts were unanimously adopted by the meeting. It was further agreed that the SOSA Committee consider investment options for SOSA Funds at their next meeting.

Current Position

During the last twelve months SOSA paid £30,000 to the School to support the refurbishment of the Hall, a well-used space, the work was long overdue. Funds totalling £5,000 were also set aside for the build of an agricultural building that houses livestock through the year, something that some Old Scholars' may recall occurred in their school days.

The current account presently holds £2,238.37 with £6,000 due from Sibford School, and no expenditure due.

The total funds held at present are as follows:-

- Current Account - £2,238
- Business Investment Account - £10,386.01

6. School Committee Representative's Report:

Given both Richard Hughes and Margaret Shelley the SOSA Representatives were both unwell this report was presented by Seren Wildwood – Clerk/Chair of Sibford School Committee.

While I feel privileged to have been invited to report to you on behalf of School Committee, I am deeply saddened by the reason you have me here this evening and not one of your two representatives on the committee. Richard Hughes, as you have heard, had a car crash a few weeks ago and is still in hospital, and Margaret Shelley is not well enough to be here this evening. In that well-loved Quaker phrase, we have been 'holding them both in the Light', and the whole of School Committee joins all of you in sending them our very best wishes.

School

Whilst these are tight times and whilst economies are necessary to keep us on budget, the School is in good shape. Bank loans that were taken out to build the art and music block and the swimming pool have now been repaid, and the School is, therefore, debt free for the first time in many years. The work to refurbish the School hall has been done from existing reserves, and the hall is already proving to be a useful community asset.

The Junior School is flourishing, and a new loyalty discount scheme designed to encourage the current year 11 students to continue into 6th form, together with other moves to promote the 6th form, seem to be successful in increasing anticipated numbers for years 12 and 13 next year.

Recent changes in the PE and music departments have led to a regeneration in both areas. School Committee in March heard an inspiring presentation by Richard Ferley and Michael Ahmed, Head of Physical Education and Head of Music respectively. Working with the North Oxfordshire School Sport Partnership (which we are all fighting to save, following Government spending cuts, despite the promise of an Olympic and Paralympic legacy), Sibford's PE department has introduced a much wider and more imaginative range of sports and activities, such as dance and trampoline, which appeal to students who are less enthusiastic about the more traditional, competitive team games of rugby, cricket and netball. Even here, though, there has also been change – through the School Sport Partnership, the list of fixtures has been reviewed with the result that Sibford students have a more realistic chance of winning their matches, with the resultant boost to morale that such successes bring.

School Committee

School Committee worked last year with the School's senior leadership team to produce a new strategic plan for the School, and I hope that you may have noticed quotations from the plan in panels about the School as you looked around this morning. Sustainability has become a significant strand of our strategic thinking, since Quakers in Britain made a commitment in 2011 to become a low-carbon sustainable community. Sibford wants to play its part in that and I was delighted that the School, when assessed last year, retained its Eco Schools Green Flag status. I'm very grateful to all the pupils who continue to push the project forward as Eco Schools representatives and to Simon Baker, who holds it all together.

Three new Friends joined School Committee at the start of 2013. Two of them were able to attend an induction day in January, and we look forward to meeting the third when she is able. Cindy Poulton, whom School Committee co-opted to serve during 2012, when her period of service as a SOSA representative came to an end, was appointed by Sibford General Meeting to serve for up to a further 3 years to enable her to serve as Assistant Clerk of Finance and Premises Sub-committee.

At Sibford General Meeting in November, we gave notice to the General Meeting that we wished to reduce the total number of governors from between 20 and 24 to between 16 and 20, while maintaining the requirement that at least three quarters of them must be membership to the Society of Friends. Sibford has one of the largest governing bodies of any of the Quaker schools, and we have been wondering whether that is the best use of our time and resources, whilst not overlooking the need to have enough governors to serve on sub-committees and groups such as the Development Group and the Investment Group and on panels to hear complaints and appeals. (We were fortunate in having received neither

throughout the school year 2011-2012.) The decision will be made at Sibford General Meeting in November 2013 whether to change the memorandum and articles of association to allow us to reduce the number of governors.

Michael Goodwin, Peter Robinson and I sit on the Friends' Schools' Council, a body that exists to support Quakers working in education and to promote Quaker schools and the values and ethos underlying a 'Quaker in Education – a dialogue'. The conference enabled participants to share common challenges and to share solutions to the issues they face in working by Quaker values in the educational environment in which we operate. The council holds an annual training weekend for governors of Quaker schools. This year the weekend focussed on sharing best practice, which proved to be most interesting for the participants. The council is also currently helping to support a PhD study into what makes a Quaker education unique. The results of the study won't be ready for a few years, but we shall be sure to let you know when they discover what you all probably already know!

7. Election of Officers – from 01/08/13 until 31/07/14.

The following Officers were unanimously elected and we are grateful to Mike Finch for presenting and leading this section of the AGM.

President : Caroline Mills

Vice President : Edd Frost

School Committee Representative for 01/01/14 until 31/12//17 : Richard Hughes

Committee Members : Erica Strofton, Chris Leo and Elinor Pedlar-Ball

Co-Options : Ashley Shirlin – Minutes Clerk and Mike Finch – SOSA Adviser.

Honorary Life Membership was awarded to Mike and Penny Spring.

Edd Frost thanked the retiring SOSA Committee Members Adrian Douglas, and in particular to Paul Frampton for his outstanding contribution over the last few years.

8. Any Other Business

1.The question of electronic circulation of the Magazine and Newsletter and the use of the SOSA Website was discussed and a letter is to be sent to all Members on this subject due to the enormous cost of postage.

2. June Ellis extended her thanks to the Committee and the School for an excellent Open Day and Reunion.

The meeting closed at 18.10 – a 55 minute record!

Signed as a true record by Caroline Mills (President 2013-2014)

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Saturday 14th June 2014