

Minutes of the 108th Annual General Meeting of Sibford Old Scholars Association held on Saturday 14th June 2014 in the Oliver Studio at Sibford School at 17.15.

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

1. **Greetings and Apologies:** Presented by the President Caroline Mills.

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

Caroline Mills then introduced Mike Finch to act as Chair.

2. **Obituaries:** Presented by the Vice President Edd Frost.

Alan Carlton-Smith. At Sibford 1931 until 1935

Jeffrey Wainwright Chattin. At Sibford 1937 until 1940 *

Janet Alison Chattin. At Sibford 1934 until 1940 *

F. Brian Dancer. At Sibford 1935 until 1941 *

Alun Edwards. At Sibford 1944 until 1949

Michael D.T.Farr. At Sibford 1938 until 1943 *

Irene Glaister. Former Chair of School Committee between 1990 and 1996 and SOSA Life Member *

Arthur Grant. At Sibford 1941 until 1945

James Hindle. At Sibford 1956 until 1962 *

Jonathan House. At Sibford 1978 until 1984

Christopher Jordan. At Sibford 1966 until 1970

Hazel Evelyn Lake (nee Parkin). At Sibford 1935 until 1941

Margaret Le Mare. Former teacher, member of the School Committee and Life Member of SOSA *

Winifred Lycett. At Sibford 1927 until 1932

Lindsay Martin. Former Housemaster in Lister Boys and Design & Technology Teacher between 1967 and 1972 *

Desmond Rose. Cousin of Mavis Stiles who was a great supporter of SOSA *

Peter John Stowe. At Sibford 1944 until 1948 *

The Meeting held a few moments of silence.

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

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

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.

4. **Chairman's Report:** Presented by Mike Finch

- a. Since the last AGM held on 15th June 2013 there have been three full Committee meetings which were well attended and where we have discussed a variety of matters which I will outline to you in this report. We are most grateful to the School for allowing us to meet on a weekday and also to provide us with lunch – this is much appreciated. The Committee members put in a great deal of time and effort in supporting SOSA and I'm sure, on behalf of everyone present we thank them for their efforts. Unfortunately we lost one committee member through the year as Elinor Pedlar-Ball had to stand down because of personal circumstances.
- b. We reported to you last year that the Elm Garden would have a plaque installed outlining why the garden is there and how it is connected to the Association and the School. This is now in place and last evening we had a short ceremony after our Committee meeting to record the event which took the form of a short meeting for worship. We concluded in time honoured fashion by having a 'Rocket'. If you have a chance to view the plaque before you go home then please do so.
- c. Concerns were expressed at the last AGM about the high annual distribution costs to send out our various mail shots, which currently run at around £8000pa. It was agreed at the first Committee meeting of the year last September that the President would draft out a letter to go out to all members with the next mail shot asking members if they would be happy to receive electronic copies of our publications which would save the Association a great deal of money. Out of 880 copies sent out only 29 actually replied - 23 were happy to have an electronic copy but two of these would still like hard copies. There were 6 who said no to electronic copies. Since then we have ascertained from a cross section of the membership that they would much rather receive a hard copy which they can sit in their armchairs and read at leisure. Since this letter was sent out, changes to our website have produced a much better response when users were asked to complete their Registration details.

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

Newsletter and we would also abandon the distribution of the 'Sibfordian' to our membership. The Sibfordian would still have a contact page about SOSA and would be available to members, on request, for a small charge, directly from the School. The Rocket would be sent out in December which we understand from a cross section of the membership would be the preferred time to receive the magazine. We would then have a second mail shot around April time when the Reunion details are despatched. The savings involved would be something in the region of £2500 – this is a significant amount of money. We will come back to this later in the meeting when we discuss changes to the Constitution.

- d. The Alumni project continues although we have been re-evaluating its usefulness. When it was first launched the feeling was that it might help the School with any future appeal that it might undertake. In reality the only relevant part in helping with an appeal would be the details of pupils who have been to the School over the past 10 to 15 years - and the SOSA database, which is included in the Alumni and encapsulates around 1000 current addresses of SOSA members. This information is already in place. Therefore the period between 1842 to 1999 would be valuable on the Archive data base as an historical record but not in helping any possible appeal in the future as addresses and details would be long out of date.
- e. We also looked at the possibility of re-introducing an Old Scholar's Careers Fair to advise pupils, about to leave school, on possible career outlets. This was successfully held on Friday 28th March when the amazing breadth of old scholar expertise was apparent. We are most grateful to the team of Caroline Mills, Ashley Shirlin and Ali Bromhall who organised this event.
- f. We have also discussed the value our own SOSA website and unanimously felt that it was due for an up-grade to make it more pro-active and relevant to present day needs. We are delighted that an old scholar with the correct expertise in this field, and a member of the Committee, Ashley Shirlin, has undertaken this task and those who surf the web will be highly impressed with the transformation that he has brought about. It has also brought about an influx of information on old scholars with several new members to SOSA. Since the new site's launch at the beginning of April over 550 individuals have visited the site and over 100 people have registered on the site. New material is added to the site on a weekly basis and SOSA Members are encouraged to Register if they haven't already done so and to contribute their own memories and 'photos. One of the most popular areas of the site is the availability of all SOSA Magazines dating back to 1904. The site also has the facility for individuals to make Donations and we have received around £100 via this route so far.
- g. As indicated earlier in my report the Committee are recommending changes to the Rules and Constitution. The re-organisation of SOSA in 2009 gave us a fresh launching pad for our Association which has always been an evolving organisation and continues to do so. In reality, after the 2009 changes, the main admin of the Association was carried out by myself and Paul Frampton, which we were very happy to do. Paul has already taken a well-earned rest from the Committee and now, I too, feel that the moment is right for me to stand down from the Committee and to take a back seat away from the coalface. Because of this the Committee feel strongly that we needed to re-introduce the role of a General Secretary to lead the

administration of our Association. Coupled with this we also felt that the Treasurer should be an elected member of the Committee and is not by definition the School's Business Manager. I can assure you that Peter Robinson is very happy with this arrangement and supports the idea of the Treasurer being an elected member. We also feel it is right to return to a staggered three year election of committee members to enhance the continuity of the committee. Most of the other changes to the Constitution proposed are simply a question re-wording of certain Items. We will return to the changes when we reach Item 8 on the Agenda.

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

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

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

5. **Head's Report:** Presented by Michael Goodwin.

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

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

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

This is my 10th year at Sibford. You know that I was previously Head of a maintained school and at interview, back in 2003, I was asked if I imagined being Head of an independent school would be different. I mused that it might not be – after all, in both types of setting, there were pupils and parents, teachers and timetables, curriculum and pastoral concerns. Despite this poor answer, I am delighted still that I was given the chance to be Sibford's 11th Head ...but looking back, it really was a poor answer. I didn't recognise that there were three distinctions. The first is the whole issue of marketing and recruitment. Of course, at Sheringham, we had to recruit pupils, but most of them came to us from our catchment area, and none of their parents had to be persuaded to part with £12,000 per year. I think

we have done well over the years to keep pupil numbers up – we have 407 on roll today, compared to 360 back in 2004, and as the economy maybe begins to ease out of recession, we are confident that numbers will grow again over the next five years. I am particularly delighted with the growth in numbers in our Junior school, which was close to being closed down six years ago and now has over 90 pupils.

The second difference I failed to spot was you lot – Old Scholars. I couldn't have predicted the strength of this Association and your loyalty to and love for this place and each other... which I think springs from the third and most significant difference – the Sibford spirit, our ethos. Of course, the School now isn't the school that you all attended and loved....Nansen Boys is Margaret Fell, the Manor is no more, only 60 of our young people board..... listening to Vince Clare talk last night about how the fifth form boys “disciplined” younger boys in the house (standing on tiptoes, nose to the wall, with the nose having to remain within a pencilled circle!), one can be glad that we have not stood still – no institution can or should. BUT, what I have worked hard to maintain is our Quaker core, and an attitude and a spirit which is unique.

The theme of our Open Day today has been “People who inspire me” and I suspect that some of you are here today because a teacher at Sibford School inspired you in some way in your past. Take a moment to think about that teacher...my thoughts went to Margaret Le Mare , an indomitable teacher of Modern Languages who joined the staff in 1959 and who famously introduced cutting edge technology in the form of a Language Laboratory in the 1960s; perhaps many of you endured this contraption? As many of you will know, Margaret died earlier this year aged 107...if that isn't an inspiration I don't know what is. When I asked you to remember an inspirational teacher, which Sibford teachers did you think ofJune Ellis perhaps who began her Sibford career 50 years ago? John Gilchrist? or for the younger ones...Tony Skeath? Brian Holliday? Mike Spring? (praying that there won't be silence)... Take a moment to share those names with us now.

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

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

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

Writing in the British Medical Journal, he says “ there is danger in an education policy which encourages schools to ‘maximise students’ academic attainment and ignores their broader wellbeing, personal development, and health.”

At every open morning we hold, I stress to parents how Sibford cares for the mental wellbeing of its pupils. Yes we want them to do the very best they possibly can, but I'd rather see a student leave here as a well-rounded person with three grade B's at A Level, than as an A* student totally unable to cope with the real world (but by the way results last year were strong again, with nearly 90% of pupils securing at least 5 GCSE grades at A*-C and nearly half of our A level grades being a or B grades)

“Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts”. It’s a well-known quotation, and has an obvious relevance to education.

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

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

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

We encourage our young people to work on their three Rs, but with a different spin. For us (as I know it was for you), Resilience, Respect and Relationships are the best starting points for true learning. We are fortunate in having the support of enlightened parents, who recognise that memorable learning is more likely to take place when a child is fully engaged in a meaningful activity.

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

As a Quaker School we are well aware that a calm centre to our lives can give us purpose, and we still begin each day with a period of silence, a method that Quakers have been practising for more than 300 years. William Penn, in 1699, described silence as being ‘to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment’. At Sibford School, our experience is that when students become calmer they become more focussed and more able to learn.

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

A moment ago I observed that children who are encouraged to obsess about target grades and government tests are often frightened to experiment and their creativity and love of learning becomes inhibited. I would argue that the same is true of schools and school leaders who obsess about Inspection regimes and regulations. We have had a busy few months re-writing policies to reflect changes to legislative demands and we need to be strong to resist the tide of bureaucracy which can so easily be a mask to avoid the

importance of our central work, and the focus for any inspiration that we might find – our children, their learning and their futures.

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

Paul Frampton congratulated the Head on making this year's report different to the previous year.

6. **Treasurer's Report:** Presented by Peter Robinson.

Treasurer's Report to AGM 2014 for year ending 31st July 2013

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 firstly for the accounts which you have in front of you.

The income for the year totalled £6,483, this is made up the annual subscription from school for pupils currently in the school and those sums paid by old scholars as an annual contribution to membership funds.

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

Of this sum the most significant expenditure relates to magazine and newsletter costs including postage for these. The reunion for the first time included a lunch time event for those celebrating fifty years since they left Sibford, this reported elsewhere was well attended and brought a number of Old scholars back to the school for the first time since leaving in the 1960's. A plinth was bought for the Elm site, this depicts historical elements of the site and I encourage you to look at this when passing, it has certainly proved to be of interest to many passersby.

Overall for the year the accounts before exceptional items shows a deficit of £109. As many will know the Association had held a significant sum of money in various investment funds for a number of years, with interest rates low it was agreed that support would be given to two major projects, the refurbishment of the school Hall a space dear to many past pupils for many reasons!! And a farm building built to re-introduce livestock to the school. This most generous gift totaled £36,144 and was most gratefully received by the school. I hope you have seen both.

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

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

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

- Current account – £7,576.72

- Business Investment Account - £5,423.19
With funds in excess of £5,000 due from school in July.

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

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

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

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

7. School Committee Representative's Report: Presented by Margaret Shelley

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

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

The Junior School Playground was completed in the autumn half-term thanks to a donation from SOSA of £4,000. The end product looks excellent and the children are having great fun using it. The Forest school site has had further work done on it and I hope that you have had a chance to look at it.

Old Scholars have been generous with their time. Jessica Memarzia, a former Head Girl, currently doing research at Cambridge gave a presentation to staff and pupils in 'The Teenage Brain' and spoke to students about science and psychology as a career. At the Careers Fair in March current students were given the opportunity to talk to a number of old scholars about the work they are now doing.

Three new Friends were appointed by Sibford General Meeting to join School Committee from the start of 2014. Unfortunately one was subsequently unable to take up the appointment so Kat Denison, a School parent and a Friend has been co-opted. PSFA has found us two new parent members, Richard Bee and Stuart Fowler who have already become active and involved.

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

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

8. Proposed Amendments to the Constitution: Presented by Mike Finch

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

Clause 7a – Paul Frampton enquired if SOSA paid audit fees. Peter Robinson informed him that we did not. John Haddleton advised the Meeting that a signed Examination of the Accounts should be adequate. The SOSA Committee will investigate this matter and make proposals at the next AGM.

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

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

9. Election of Officers: Presented by Mike Finch.

General Secretary	Ashley Shirlin	1/8/14 – 31/7/17
Proposer: Chris Leo	Secunder: Margaret Shelley	
Treasurer	Peter Robinson	1/8/14 – 31/7/15
Proposer: Edd Frost	Secunder: Erica Strofton	
Committee Member	Nikki Knott	1/8/14 – 31/7/17
Proposer: Ashley Shirlin	Secunder: Mark Bennett	
Committee Member	Mark Bennett	1/8/14 – 31/7/16
Proposer: Ashley Shirlin	Secunder: Mike Finch	
Committee Member	Chris Leo	1/8/14 – 31/7/15
Proposer: Caroline Mills	Secunder: Mike Finch	
Co-Opted Member (Membership & Alumni)	Wendy Finch	1/8/14 – 31/7/15

co ordinator)		
Proposer: Ashley Shirlin	Seconder: Mike Finch	

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

Edd Frost was proposed as President for 2014-1025 and this was accepted by unanimous acclaim.

The Chair informed the Meeting that Caroline Mills was unable to take up the post of Vice President for the 2014/15 due to pressure of work and therefore SOSA President in 2015/16. She would however continue on the Committee as Retiring President.

Caroline Mills Proposed, Seconded by Edd Frost, that Ashley Shirlin be elected as Vice President for 2014-2015. The Meeting unanimously agreed this appointment. Ashley Shirlin stated that it would be an honour to serve the Association as Vice President.

10. Honorary Life Membership:

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

11. Any Other Business

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

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

There being no other business the meeting closed at 18.20.

These Minutes were signed as a true record by the President at the AGM held on 13th June 2015.

Signed 13/06/15