

ST. MARY'S HALL ASSOCIATION

WINTER e-NEWSLETTER

Please note that this information is confidential to SMH Association members only and should not be passed to anyone else. If you have SMH friends who have not received this newsletter, ask them to contact smhaenquiries@gmail.com so that we can ensure that they are correctly registered, thereby keeping all members' data protected.

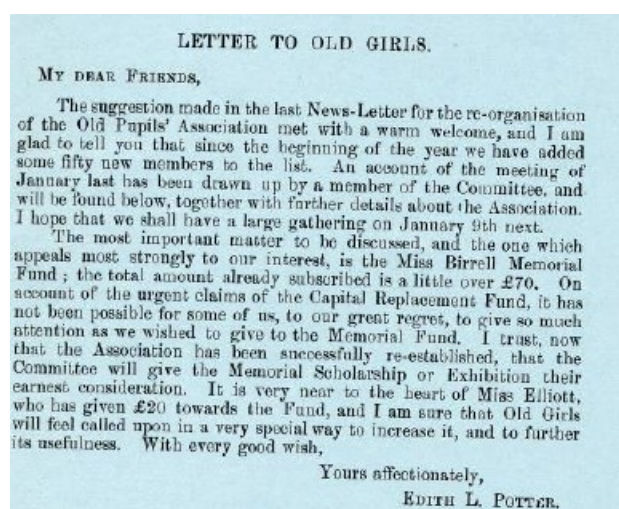
MESSAGE FROM YOUR TEAM

Dear Friends

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

As 2018 closed I reflected on the 110th anniversary year of the founding of SMHA in the form in which it continued until the closure of our School.

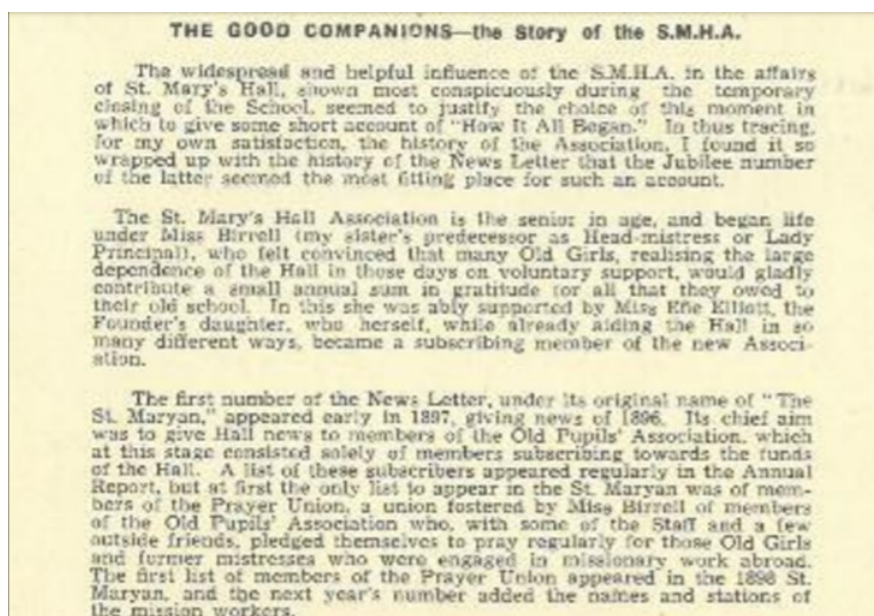
In 1907 the proposal was made to reorganise the way in which former pupils networked (not that they would have used that term then!) best explained by this letter from 1908:



We are fortunate to have a list of those present at the inaugural meeting (the eagle eyed will spot 'our Suffragette')

Those present at the meeting were:—Miss Potter, Miss H. Potter, Miss Harwood, Miss Thornburgh, Miss Webster, Miss Perry, Miss G. Stewart, Miss Elliot-Smith, Miss P. M. Potter, Miss Wright, Miss Harrison, M. E. Ashwin, E. Ash, A. Curtois, E. Curtois, Mrs. Coad, M. Coe, L. Coombes, E. Charlton, M. Davies, E. Davies, R. Elwin, C. Eacott, C. M. Field, N. Giddens, E. Gillett, I. Geary, G. Geary, Miss Hughes, G. Head, W. Howlett, I. Heany, A. Hobbins, E. Holland, P. M. Innes, K. Jennings, V. Jones, C. Kilpack, F. Kyle, L. Lamb, M. Leachman, H. Leachman, D. Ohlson, J. Ostle, H. F. Pinnock, G. Raynor, A. Rawson, F. Smith, Mrs. Sharpe, E. M. Saunders, B. Saunders, J. Short, M. Short, E. Snowdon Smith, M. Snowdon Smith, W. Snowdon Smith, Evelyn Snowdon Smith, A. Sibthorp, Edith Shirt, Ethel Taylor, J. Thomas, E. Woodgate, E. Ward, F. Wood, D. Wallace, M. Young, A. Williams, G. Robinson, V. Friedlaender, E. Fitzgerald.

Fast forward to 1948 and the 40th anniversary, coinciding with the first post-war year of SMH when this report appeared:



Links between Old Girls and the Hall were thus being already forged, and these were strengthened by Miss Birrell's continuing, after her resignation in 1899, to keep in touch with her own former pupils who had left the school, urging them to join both the Old Pupils' Association and the Prayer Union. Until her health began to fail she contributed a letter to each number of the St. Maryan, addressed to all Old Girls and making the same plea.

Miss Birrell was, in 1899, succeeded as Head-mistress by my own sister, who early realised that if the Association was to expand and grow, it must be something more than a mere body of subscribers; it is true that all Old Girls were invited to Founder's Day celebrations every autumn, but they came then as individuals only. Helpful advice was again given by Miss Effie Elliott, and in 1900 the first Annual Meeting was called, being held at the Alliance Club, in Curzon Street.

The News Letter (the old title of the St. Maryan, being definitely dropped) of 1908 gives an account of this meeting, at which the necessity was urged of re-organising the Association "that it might become a real help both to past and present pupils, as a link to join the old pupils together, and as a source of support, both spiritual and practical, to the Hall."

A Committee of six was formed, with Miss Potter as President, and it was agreed that an Annual Meeting should be held in London during the Christmas holidays. The name of the Association was to be altered to "The St. Mary's Hall Association," a more inclusive title now that former members of the Staff could be admitted as subscribing members.

This meeting, at which 70 members were present, thus marked the beginning of the S.M.H.A. as we now know it, though its activities and its constitution have steadily developed right up to the present time. Not all these developments can be noted here, but some may be mentioned.

The earliest Committee, for instance, had a President (the Head-mistress) and an Hon. Secretary (an Old Girl), but, for convenience in administration, the Hon. Treasurer was a member of the School Staff, and the News Letter was sent out from the Hall.

Contrast with this the imposing list in the latest News Letter, of 20 members of Committee in addition to the President, two Vice-Presidents (former Headmistresses), and officers. It was by Miss Gray's wish, soon after she became Head-mistress, that the editing of the News Letter passed into the hands of an old pupil, and this provided another link between it and the S.M.H. Association.

Both past and present pupils guided by the decision made, not long before the temporary closing of the School during the war, that the Elliott scholars should be ex officio members of the Committee, and so able to bring members closely in touch with contemporary affairs of the Hall. As a reciprocal gesture the list of names and addresses of members of the S.M.H.A. first given in full in the News Letter of 1904, had added to them the occupations pursued by them at the time.

The coming of the war reduced the size of the News Letter to an alarming extent, partly because of restrictions on paper and printing, but chiefly because the Hall itself was "for the duration" of the war, not functioning as a school. News of Old Girls became its most important item, revealing the great number of those engaged in war work of many kinds.

Though reduced in size, the News Letter still clung to life—even cheerfully—firm in the faith that the Hall's renewal would not long be delayed. And through all the crippling years of war the St. Mary's Hall Association increased in strength, taking up the task of keeping alive the "Idea" of the Hall. It met the Governors' appeal for a guarantee of monetary assistance, raising funds by many ingenious methods. Reward came when the Governors reported to the Association that its efforts had made possible the re-opening of the Hall in 1946.

Recognition of the help given was also shown when, during the war, the Governors resolved that two members of the S.M.H.A. should be chosen to serve on the Governing Body of the Hall.

Now that St. Mary's Hall is in vigorous life once more, and increasing steadily in numbers and enthusiasm under the leadership of Miss Robinson, this concession will do much to keep the Association in touch with school events. Once more the News Letter will aid the good work by being able to include in its pages a diary of the school year, and once more will be able (after a decent interval) to welcome new "old girls" to its growing list of members of the Hall's own Association.

H. R. POTTER.

Interestingly far less was made of the 50th anniversary, in 1958's newsletter but I was delighted to see that in 2008 my esteemed predecessor **Penny Gardiner (Buck)** produced a newsletter paying fitting tribute to the Centenary commencing with these words: *"Today, January 11th 2008, seems a good day to write this piece because today, 100 years ago, St. Mary's Hall Association as we know it was born. In celebration of the centenary a copy of the SMH Newsletter, specially printed for the members of the newly formed Association of 1908, forms part of this 2008 Newsletter. Musing on what might shape SMHA over the next 100 years, or just the next ten, led me to think of the challenges we could experience in meeting our constitutional objectives which are, in summary, 'to link' and 'to support' within the SMH and SMHA communities."*

Prophetic words, Penny, since 11 short years later we met together in sorrow and, yes, in anger, to face the fact of the School's closure and the possibility that our own Association might meet the same fate. How gratifying to know that now we have a larger Association than at any time in our history, (we have just enrolled our **1,000th** member) and a more active one. We have lost much, but it has resulted in us gaining an enormous amount in the shape of friendship and fellowship with those we might otherwise never have known.

We are most grateful to the MANY Old Girls who took the time and trouble to write to me back in October and say how much they had enjoyed the autumn edition! It is a pleasure to put the news together for you all but even more so to be thanked for doing so – meaning that although I am still editing it 'while waiting for a real editor to come along' I am very happy indeed to be doing so! One OG wrote this:

"Just spent a very pleasant time reading the latest newsletter. Thank you for a great job, done so well. Reading the memories of Black Rock swimming pool, I well remember swimming there, in my woollen (I think) swimming costume. Our class went on a Wednesday morning. Wednesday being the best morning of the week - breakfast fresh rolls, boiled eggs and a banana, and lunch after swimming was sausage meat roll (not a sausage roll, just meat in a large roll) one for each table plus rich onion gravy. We did have rolls on Sunday but they were a bit stale and not lovely and soft.

Another memory was at Babington House, where we once had an Italian matron, she used to come into the bathroom - consisting of about 6 cubicles, with a curtain at each for the door, - she would call out "Presto, Presto Chichester Presto". Chichester being our dormitory.

You can use these if you want a filler in the next edition.

Kind regards,

Anne Bell (Bearne 1956-59)

Fillers are never needed – my problem is making these small enough to email out – but I am chuffed to bits to make space for Anne's email as I know it will prompt more memories from others as well as being a great read on its own!

Anne and I have become good friends since I started on the SMHA Committee, now Team back in 2009 even though she started at school when I was one year old. Our 'virtual' friendship is a perfect illustration of how our Alumnae Association takes the real ethos of SMH and extends it for the 21st Century. I hope with all my heart that girls who were 1 when I started at school (1969) will remain friends with me...and that those who were one when they started school...(well you get the idea!)

Another Anne also wrote thanking me for her newsletter, adding: *"I too am one of those who seemed to spend a lot of time outside Connie's door, often accused of doing something I hadn't done. She never apologised having learned the truth! I too remember playing Jacks and no one has mentioned Yoyo's which we carried in our gymslip pockets! The Class of '53 is arranging it next meeting in June. This time we are all heading to Bristol. We will keep you posted after the event.*

My poem was "Is anybody there cried the Listener, knocking on the moonlit door" It was read to us in Art class and we then had to paint an appropriate picture. Some things stick!!

Kind regards

Anne Valentine (Bethell 1953-59)

A third follow-up from autumn came in the form of an email from **Tim Elliott** who wrote, re.

"In the Face of Danger" – "I knew Colonel Strome Galloway really quite well: at one brief moment he had been the Canadians' ultimate superior officer (he's long dead now - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1476954/Colonel-Strome-Galloway.html>) and he remembered SMH most clearly. He told me that he had been appalled at how badly the resident Canadian company had treated SMH." I know **Ruth Ferguson (Powell, 1948-50)** whose book we referenced in the original article will be interested to see this.

Anthony Elliott also contacted me to say *"Thank you so much for the SMHA newsletter. Well done with the growing membership. That's terrific – keep up the good work. We hope you have a good turnout for the Carol Service, but regret we are unlikely to be there, due to mobility problems."* It's lovely to hear from members of the Elliott family who, goodness knows, have no 'need' to keep in touch, but I was happy to pass on his good wishes to St Mary's Church, via Sian, and to send him in return this image which Common Room Girls will have seen already:



It is a carte-de-visite of the Revd. Julius Marshall Elliott.

It was captioned in the original Facebook post with the information

"He was the mountaineering vicar of St Mary's Chapel, who met a tragically early end falling from the peak of the Schreckhorn in the Swiss Alps in July 1869. St Mary's Primary School in Mount Street was founded (as the Julius Elliott Memorial Schools) in his memory in 1872. The font in St Mary's Church is dedicated to his memory too." Neither Anthony nor Tim Elliott think they have ever seen this card before!

Another "St Mary's" well known to us is our "twin" school, SMH Burlington, New Jersey now Doane Academy where a beloved tradition is the Christmas Mystery is the annual re-enactment of the Christmas story set in their Chapel of the Holy Innocents. Students are chosen to play the parts of Mary and Joseph, the Angel Gabriel and other angels, shepherds, and the three kings, with appropriate choral and organ music interspersed throughout the various scenes of the scripted play. The Christmas Mystery is SMH Burlington's oldest tradition, with lore placing its origins at the school in the 1840's. The script that is currently used is unchanged since 1930.

Following the Mystery, (a rehearsal for which is pictured, right) a festive dinner, complete with passing of the yule log, is served in the school's dining room.

The chapel itself, envisioned by founder Bishop George Washington Doane and designed by Scottish architect John Notman who had emigrated to Philadelphia in 1831, was consecrated in 1847 and is cited as the first example of Gothic Revival architecture in the United States. The chapel is the spiritual and communal centre of the school, where Morning Prayer is celebrated and later many graduates have chosen to be married. In 1967, our dear exchange student **Jeanette Cureton (Smith)** and her husband Bryant were among them.



We, of course, no longer have a School Chapel and have historically been welcomed at St Mary's Chapel/Church, St George's and St Mark's, all in Kemptown as well as at Brighton College and our in-house purpose built chapel of the 1970s. However we are truly fortunate to have been invited for a second year to share the service of Lessons and Carols with St Mary's Church, where our Founder was Curate at the time he opened our school and after which we were named. See page 7 for a report on this year's service

And, saving perhaps the best till last, I bring those of you who have not seen it in the Common Room already the wonderful news that we have a NEW MEMBER of our Management Team! We have been joined by **Bethane Harland, (1999-2009)** who is now our LinkedIn Administrator and whose remit includes 'special projects'. Bethane brings much needed succession planning to our Team, shifting our average age from nearly 60 to only a tad over 50! When accepting the role Bethane wrote *"I am also extremely grateful for your offer of a position on the Management Team! I have very much enjoyed helping by setting up LinkedIn. I feel as though I owe a duty to SMH for the grounding it gave me over the years, and helping out has also served to make me feel very nostalgic about my time there."* Hopefully these wise words will resonate with others of you who may feel, in time, that you, too, could give back a little of what SMH gave to you. **We are still in need of a Newsletter Editor...** ☺

Very best wishes,

Penny Harrison, (Titheradge, 1969-73) Team Manager SMHA

smhaenquiries@gmail.com / 07946772620

on behalf of SMHA Management Team, all of whom are listed at the end of the Newsletter.



If you want to be in it (and you need to be in it to win it 😊) then email **Lis Eastham:**
smha100club@gmail.com

Members pay £12* a year per entry into the 100 Club and each month 50% of the 'pot' is paid out in prizes. **If you join in the next couple of weeks you'll make it into the February draw...**

Overseas members with no UK / sterling bank accounts can now join using PayPal for £13* per annum. Please contact Lis for details. (*Members joining from this point on pay pro-rata – Lis will advise on this.)

The first prize paid out each month is still greater than £12 so one win put each month's winner in profit! "Even" the second prize gives you a 2/3 return on your stake, and the more people who join, the greater the winnings.

Payment is by BACS and winnings are paid straight into your bank account. Lis will ask for those details and explain how to pay when you contact her.

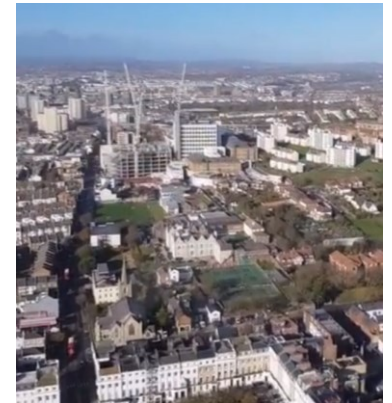
Winners (since autumn e-Newsletter):

November 2018	December 2018	January 2019
1 st Margaret Ellis £13.50	1 st Jan Johnson £13.50	1 st Margaret Ellis £12.30
2 nd Christine Edmondson £9	2 nd Kathy Howard £9	2 nd Daphne Bonner £8.20

If you missed this video, which I highlighted on FB in November, do 'play' it – great shots of the buildings looking well cared for:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1i1FuTqEn1M&fbclid=IwAR380qDOUZy6jciawkehprfcXKt8YWbCrdOUxpRPj2hEGjEmVB-NDJsFD0>

There's even a glimpse of St Hilary...



We've updated the **website** with many items since the autumn, including a selection of images of SMH found while browsing around the www. We have used many of them to create some really beautiful new Page Toppers for the different web pages and of course all of them can be found in the different Gallery pages, but meanwhile here are two, dating back to the very earliest days of our school, to whet your appetites.



Sad news to start with. As Girls who network in the VCR are aware, **Laura Eaton**, singing teacher at SMH for 17 years from the late 1970s to the early 1990s died on 5th November. **Alison Platt (Schuller)** had previously shared a lovely photo (right) of her conducting the Chamber Choir in 1985. **Chris Ellison** recalled her "making us imagine that we had an orange in our sinus cavity that we had to stretch upwards to lift our soft palate. Very odd imagery really, but it really helped me develop my tone!" **Kate Lowe** added that "she was a fantastic singing teacher, lots of fond memories" and her colleague **Anne Corris** commented that she was a wonderful colleague who very sadly lost her son, Robert, in the twin towers disaster.



I also received this email in November which I was able to share with Girls in the VCR, from John McCall who some of you met at the 2014 'school tours' reunion.

My mother **Margaret McCall (Jones 1934-40)** died on Tuesday 20th November. She had said her farewells to her numerous family and died quite peacefully. The evening before she had talked by Skype to her grandson Matthew in Gabon and to my brother in Mexico.

I hope you are aware how much she valued her contact with the Association and especially with you, Penny. Please keep her in your thoughts the day after tomorrow, when all her family down to the two great grandsons will be gathered here.

One last contact of hers I would like to share with you. At the end of September she had a long chat on the phone with fellow Old Girl **Marigold (Dancey) Durrant** whose own 94th birthday it was. She has lived all over the United States as her two husbands were both in the US Air Force, and moved about two years back to West Virginia to be near one of her daughters. They are evidently a long lived family as her brother John, who is a retired Headmaster of Marlborough College, in his late nineties was recently at the school to inaugurate a new boarding house named after him.

Thank you so much, Penny, for all your assistance the last few years in getting my mother her newsletter, and for your friendship.

John followed up, after the funeral, by replying to my message of condolence with this:

Thank you so much for passing on condolences from **Ann Wood**, **Heather Johnson** and those others who had contact with my mother. Please let them know how much it is appreciated by the family.

I particularly enjoyed the extracts you sent us from early newsletters (what an effort you put into that!) as I had no idea she had been such a regular correspondent. They certainly bring back memories of life in Pakistan and the Seychelles.

She was, I know, proud of her family who were all gathered here on Tuesday for a joyful funeral service. My brother's eulogy very much emphasised Margaret's love of travel and meeting people which never left her. On the, thankfully rare, occasions when the emergency services were summoned she was more interested in finding out all about the paramedics than in discussing her own problems.

She was so happy to attend the 2014 reunion and show off the school to me and only regretful she couldn't manage the full tour

While it would be wrong to be sad for Margaret who lived a very long happy and fulfilling life and died as she would have wished, I was very sad for myself to have lost a lady I came to know and admire greatly. It is one of the greatest joys of my 'work' for the Assn. to have such lovely people in my life and to lose one is always sad. How lucky many of us were to meet her in recent years and to read her about her fascinating globe-trotting life in old Newsletters.

An unexpected encounter in Greece occurred late in 2018!

Ann Longhurst (Trustrum 1975-84) wrote to say that while visiting her daughter who is working as a lifeguard in Greece she signed up to play tennis and found herself on the same court as **Ruth Mehmet (Wooderson 1976-83)**. So it really is true that wherever you go in this big wide world of ours there is an SMH friend waiting to say **HELLO!** Here is the pictorial evidence – which Ann reckons to be 35 years on from their last meeting.



Let's hope Ann and Ruth meet up again slightly sooner than 2053 – maybe it will even happen in **Brighton** at the second **SMHA Virtual Common Room Reunion Lunch which takes place on Saturday 6th July 2019 from Noon at Prezzo in the Marina (same venue as last year)?!** If they – or any of you – do want to come along please either 'join' the get-together in the Common Room, or email smhaenquiries@gmail.com.

2018 CAROL SERVICE!

Thirty SMHA members indicated in the Survey we conducted early in 2018 that they hoped to attend the Carol Service, whose date and time had already been published. Frequent reminders and details of parking, after service arrangements (etc.) followed in e-Newsletters and through social media.



Many thanks to one of our oldest Old Girls, **Brenda Matthews (Martin 1948-53)** who struggled on public transport from Rottingdean to attend the service. Sadly Brenda left before the after-service get-together so **Sian** was unable to say hello to her and ask her to sign our visitors' book or invite her to join **Jo Stubbs (Podd 1977-84)**, **Alison Herga (Edmonds 1962-70)** and **Lyn Colman (Johnston 1962-68)*** for drinks and nibbles. **Brenda** sent us these lovely photos.



***Alison and Lyn** also attended the Carol Service in 2017.

Camilla Tilden-Smith (1969-73), and Vivienne Straiton-Taylor, (Straiton, -68) both sang in the choir but neither was able to touch base with Sian afterwards.

It is a shame, however, that after a HUGE publicity effort, and expressions of interest from 30, this was the size of the Association presence. It seems fairly clear from this that 'you' no longer have the wish for such an event, despite the number of comments about it after last year's service and in the Survey (*those commenting adversely sadly did not give us or the Church a second chance*) so your Team has asked Sian if she will continue to maintain her personal links with the Church, and, if invited to do so, continue to give one of the readings. We will, of course, publicise the date and time of the event and I know that if Alumnae wish to attend they will be welcomed.

St Mary's Hall and St Mary's Church continue to be linked in our hearts and minds.

Lyn Colman, Sian Spencer, Jo Stubbs, Alison Herga
at St Mary's Church



Plus honorary 'Old Boy' David Spencer ☺



Sian also found time back in August to fulfil a long-standing ambition and visit the Chattri, near Patcham. She sent some lovely photos of it for the Common Room to admire and this prompted us to ask whether any Old Girls ever visited/studied it at school??? Maybe YOU did?

We've written an item for the website with all the information we gleaned about the Chattri and many lovely photographs and images. Do check it out on: <https://www.smhassociation.org/the-vault.php>

The 'short' version is that the **Chattri** is a "war memorial in the English city of Brighton and Hove. It is sited 500 feet (150 m) above the city on the South Downs above the suburb of Patcham, and is accessible only by bridleway. It stands on the site where a number of Indian soldiers who fought for the British Empire were cremated during the First World War. The structure has Grade II listed status, reflecting its architectural and historic importance. In 2017, as part of the 100th anniversary of World War I, the site of the Chattri was dedicated as a Fields in Trust Centenary Field because of its local heritage and significance."

Our interest was piqued by the reason for siting the burning ghat here, rather than by the memorial itself! Here, credit to Royal Pavilions, Brighton & Hove Museums, is an image of a watercolour by Clem Lambert painted in 1920 and showing the original burning ghat:



We have dealt with the reasons for its location in the full article but one member of a Facebook Group (Brighton-Past) speculated that the Indian Troops had been exercised here to 'toughen them up' which brought back memories of weekend walks, in "croc" on the Downs, cloaks flying in the breeze, presumably for the same reason! The full article also includes an invitation to attend the memorial service on **Sunday 9th June 2019 at 2.30 pm** at the Chattri Memorial. There will be access for vehicles right up to the site and everyone is welcome. Details will be posted on www.chattri.org nearer the time. It would be great if any OGs attended to see some photos of what will undoubtedly be an interesting and moving event.

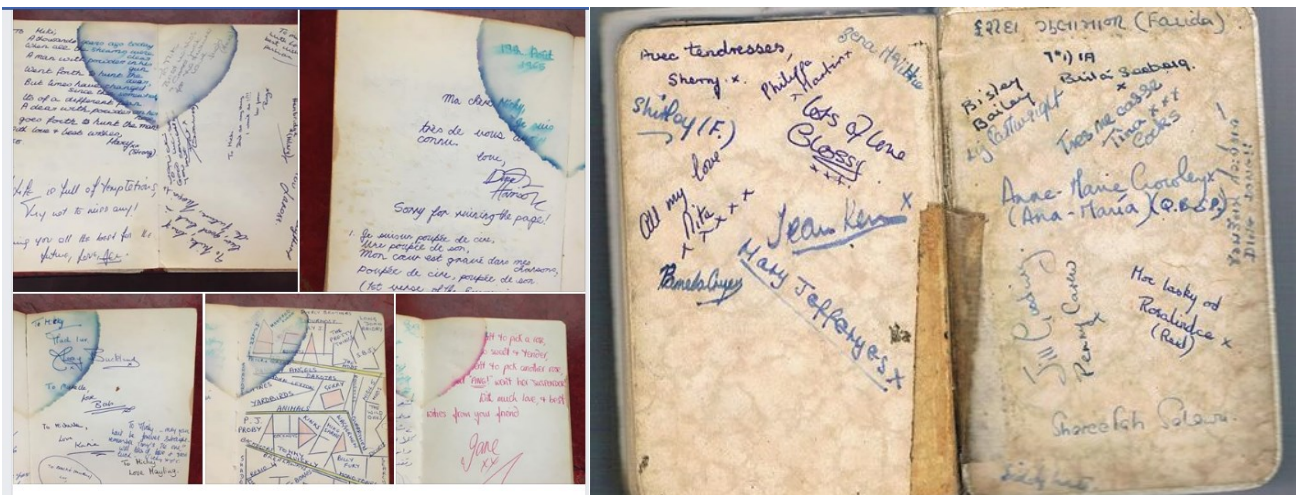
No Old Girl has yet recalled studying the ghat site or the Chattri at SMH but various members did remember the site itself.

Sarah Mylne (Boyd, 1950-60) commented that "way back in the 1950's **Jenny Cowen** and I used to cycle up there on our own with a picnic in our bike baskets and not a care in the world! I don't recall ever seeing any one else up there - we had the Downs to ourselves. I had cycled over to Patcham where Jenny lived from Woodingdean - we were totally unfazed by the hills and rough tracks, and our bikes did not have gears in those days!!

Marie Fieldhouse (York, 1989-96) said: "Ooh, I have seen the sign for this so many times on my way back on the A27 to Lewes and wondered what it was/is but have never got round to looking it up!" and **Caroline Hearne (Simmons, 1975-81)** added "**Elizabeth Ager (1974-82)** and I made an abortive attempt to walk here a couple of years ago. It was a freezing cold December day with an icy wind. We made it half way before both admitting it really wasn't a joyful experience and walked back to the M&S cafe on the trading estate to drink hot chocolate in the warm. We never managed a second attempt." We're very happy to have shown you what is there without the 'need' to go back!

Just to finish on a different, but connected, note, do have a look at St Mary's Church local history article in September's The Kemptown Rag which recalls the time when a very wealthy Maharaja gave Liberty's a blank cheque to decorate the Royal Pavilion for a ball. <https://www.facebook.com/thekemptonrag/>





Autographs from schooldays are much treasured by our older Old Girls but not too often mentioned by younger ones...Did this not happen post 1990 or are you all just reticent about sharing them? We would love to see them and hear how and why you collected them!

Above (left) are some images from **Micki Aston (Sheftell, 1960-66)** and (right) **Shirley Read-Jahn (1954-61)**. Micki says that *Mary Strong*, *Jennifer Goodwin*, *Ann Judd* are all she remembers from the first image, **Deborah Harrison's** sister *Dinah* in the second, then *Mary Buckland*, *Katie McNeil*, *Mayling Lee*, and finally 'Kenya' who is of course **Mariam Verjee**. The amazing artistry of *Rosemary Tucker* features on the bottom row with **Jane Davies**, still a close friend of Micki's finishing them off. The stain (Dinah's fault apparently) is from a cocktail!

Shirley's signatures are in the back of her Book of Common Prayer. We recognised Shirley Foulsham, **Tina Challacombe (Cocks)** Brita Seeberg, Liz Cartright, Elizabeth "Busy" Bailey, **Anna-Marie Crowe (Crowley)**, Rosalinde Reed, Penny Carew, Jill Gooding, Philippa Hardman, Jean Kerr, Mary Jeffreys, Nita..., Gloria "Glossy" Wayne, Gina McVittie, **Sherry Carter (Coe)**, Farida... and Shareefah Salawu.

Lots of familiar names – very few now, sadly, with us now. (Italics are of those with whom we have lost touch).

Random Ramblings from the Common Room / "A Winter's Tale".

I've saved this long piece up for the winter e-Newsletter when I imagine us all curled up in front of the fire with our hot or alcoholic beverage of choice having a wander down memory lane! One of the best things about our SMHA Virtual Common Room is that Girls of all ages engage with topics which strike a chord. One of these - the games we played - was featured in the autumn e-Newsletter; this article covers several topics and many years. Thanks to everyone who contributed their thoughts and memories - please keep them coming, and if you did not comment at the time but have thoughts you would like to add, please do so. Our Newsletters are rapidly becoming an extension to our living memoir, "Such Fun" (which can be found on our website, of course).

I do want to preface this with the comment that a few Girls had a different experience of Miss Conrady than those expressed below. We will never know why her behaviour was generally so unacceptable, but a few Girls have commented in the past that she was very kind to them and it must be sad for them to see how very rare this was...And even sadder for those whose memories are awful that you never saw that side of her. I have speculated before whether her undoubted ill health was a factor, not that this is any excuse. It is sad that this aspect of her personality has so overshadowed her very positive qualities as an administrator in the post war years, shown in the newsletters 'of her time'.

Shirley Read-Jahn told us that she was reading the hilarious book "Terms & Conditions" by Ysenda Maxtone Graham about English boarding schools 1939-1979. [Commoners will recall that Emma Thomas (Davies, 1982-91) mentioned this a year or so back]. It seems to have stopped in 1979 with the replacement of blankets by the ubiquitous duvet – presumably the beginning of the end!

A review of the book caught Shirley's eye: "...a funny, vivid and excruciating book, which has left me filled with admiration for the brave, damaged survivors of this lost world" Virginia Nicholson, The Times. DAMAGED? Shirley shouted: "Really? I think it made us very strong. Do you agree?"

Chris Ellison (1983-91) commented "I think it untied us from our mothers' apron strings, especially considering how many of my peers live/have subsequently travelled and lived abroad. It opened us up to new horizons and made us fearless in the face of change."

Micki Aston in her inimitable style added "Yes I blooming well DO agree. Boarding school toughens you up like nothing else can do. I don't know what it's like nowadays, but back in the 60's it was very character building, and I will be forever grateful for my time as a boarder at SMH. Without that grounding, I know I'd be a much different person than I am, and I will be everlastingly thankful to my parents for making that decision to have me board, especially as my home was only a 20 minute walk from the school."

Juliet Rose (O'Hea, 1961-67) commented "I can't say it toughened me up, cos I'm still a big softie, but it was a very happy time and I still have two very good friends from my time there, **Vivienne Lagraulet (Goff 1962-67)** and Anita Kent (Bowden)." [The latter sadly not reconnected with SMHA]

Jenny Child (1972-81) found this an "interesting comment. As far as we are concerned, it very much depends on when you were at SMH. Hate to say it, but I know several who do feel very damaged by their time at school, and their experience has haunted them right into their adult life. There are only a few from my year in the VCR, and sadly, I think there's a reason for that. There is a lot of nostalgia for the Noddy years, but things changed after she left. Hopefully they got better before the end.

Shannon O'Neill (-97) added, "Yes, there are a number of OG who chose not to reconnect with the Association, wishing to leave their SMH years behind."

I absolutely endorse this...It is for individuals to choose - the Assn. in general and the VCR in particular exist to be available not to force ourselves on anyone. I am VERY happy that approaching 1000 Old Girls HAVE chosen to join in - with over half of them in the VCR! I hope we never try to force anyone to engage with us but since 2009 our mission has been to keep the Assn. alive for those who want it and those who may want it in the future.

Carolyn Jackson-Brown (Sycamore, 1974-78) told us "My life was interrupted for a while by a hasty departure from SMH, but everything about the place still inspires me. I am one of Jenny Child's cohort who never met Noddy. I think it is safe to say that the course of my life was completely changed by her replacement. I probably over-ruminated and caused my own pain so I can still see down every corridor and hear the squeak of all of our shoes on the lino. However, this week, as I sent my accepted doctoral thesis to the publishers I could see Mrs Leslie's handwriting on my report saying I was 'not fulfilling my potential' and wanted to tell her, that 'I got there in the end'. All these years later these people acting in loco parentis carry such power. It is up to us how we handle it though. I loved SMH, slogging the rounders ball to second deep, and playing the piano in the music cells with the light off...boarding was an amazing experience. We are not fussy eaters and can do what we need to do when the bell goes (unlike my children)! Happy days...kind of..."

I added that I thought Jenny Child made a very valid and interesting point! Clusters of Girls sitting round in here had an overall positive experience when they look back (although there were tough bits for all of us, I think), but some had a really tough time due to staff rather than environment and I think that is very sad. MY hope is that networking here helps those Girls whose time was negative by letting them share some of these feelings, if they wish - but also by reading and seeing happy memories which occasionally prompts happy moments of their own. I also think 'damage' is an emotive word and perhaps not well chosen by the writer, but it is beyond question that our years at SMH, whenever they happened, have been 'character-forming' - we may have happy, sad, great or awful memories of our boarding-school but by golly we have memories! Different, too, for boarders versus day-girls - the book focusing only on the former.

Sarah Tizzard (Cockett, 1995-2002) added that she "wouldn't say I was 'damaged' by my time at SMH, and in some ways life was pretty cushy for us in the 90s. However, living with other teenage girls when you don't necessarily get on with each other is challenging and there were definitely some difficult times. I think I have as many good memories as bad though!!"

Carolyn Jackson-Brown "left in 1978 (not by choice) and only this last Sunday, I spotted an eiderdown in an antiques shop just like my one at SMH. Memories of Mlle Jacquot checking the nametape at the beginning of term and many Enid Blyton moments in Elliott House with it made me actually go over and stroke the pre-duvet item and go 'Awww'. Do any of us actually ever forget SMH?"

Micki Aston told us she still has her school blanket from 1960 "now residing in the boot of my car, in case I need it in a snowy winter. Complete with name tape!!!"

Kim Cook (Kimmins, 1956-60)'s school blanket (called a rug on the uniform list), bought in 1954, is still in regular use and still has both the original manufacturer's label "and my name tape. In fact it has two name tapes, one at each side! Can't think how that happened, as I had to sew all my own name-tapes, and I loathed the task!"

Penny Barnes (Ryall/Hunt, 1957-61): "I totally agree that it helped to make me independent and, as an only child, has given me life-long close friends. I found the strict rules difficult to adhere to, and was often in trouble with certain members of staff, but they were not cruel...just strict! However, having a laugh back down in Babington at night time with lovely friends made up for that. My parents would drop me off at the beginning of term and I know

my mum would cry on the way home so I knew they missed me which also might have helped knowing it was done for my benefit. The hardest for those boarders whose parents lived abroad was not seeing them for sometimes a year....and for one close friend it was 3 years! Today, you see boarders flying back to HK and Singapore for half term!! My eldest son once said that if he hadn't gone through a few tough times at his boarding school, he wouldn't have coped so well in the business world of today."

Angelica Meletiou (1957-63) shared with us that she found it strange "how different life can be in the same place, through the experiences of others in the same place and environment..."

I am one of the happy ones...I was a very average student... got into scrapes with prefects, who I found much scarier than the Staff. I had come from abroad and from a totally different kind of life, however, in no way though, can I say that I was in any way damaged or that my time at school was anything but an overall positive to take into my life. One of the reasons for being here in our VCR is because I cherish my time there, the friends I made then, some of which have accompanied through all of my life, now the new ones made here and the feeling of belonging and "home" I get from being with you all cancels any negative there might have been... and I can only thank: SMH for having had a part in making me who I am! And all of you for being here now!!!"

Sarah Mylne (Boyd, 1950-60) commented that she has read the book Shirley mentions. "Most of the schools she writes about were not very academic, unlike SMH, which was. Not that I was very academic, but I think in my day we had some excellent staff who were very good teachers. As a day girl who sometimes stayed the odd night in Hilary, I saw both sides of life! There was a lot of fun in school, and hard work, and I still have a couple of SMH friends, and it's good to still hear news of others via this page. My only gripe is how mean Doris Conrady could be - I felt she actively disliked me for whatever reason, and as a result I was always wary of her. I know others also feel the same about her. My Mother taught at another girl's boarding school, where I also sometimes stayed the odd night, so I got an interesting insight to boarding from 2 similar schools. I did think that the book didn't really cover enough schools - but that's my opinion. It's an enjoyable read and actually did make me think how lucky we were at SMH!"

Jane Fowlie (Badger, 1965-72) was a day girl but when she changed schools aged 14, in 1972 she noticed that the boarders at her new school seemed much happier. "There was more freedom and far fewer petty rules. Boarders and day girls mixed! They didn't at all in my day at SMH but I think that was a protective thing, it must have been hard. I'm friends now with someone who boarded at SMH, who has had long lasting negative and damaging effects from the experience. Not necessarily due to the school itself, but because of being "sent away". I know it has to happen sometimes though; my older sister boarded and seemed to enjoy it on the whole."

I boarded in 1972 and have to say in Hilary I think we were (nearly all) very happy, due to Miss Payne who was an amazing Housemistress. But no, we did not 'mix' much with day girls though those of us who thought of our stomachs and our freedom (like me) made sure we had some friends to go out with at weekends and to bring us in FOOD!!! I treasure the memory of my friendships with **Cathy Daniel (Winter, 1965-72)**, Kay White and Angela Recknell from those days (only Cathy is a member now, sadly) and of course with my lovely boarding AND day-girl friend, **Rosemary Batts (Haylock 1969-73)**, with whom I am still in regular touch.

Heather Johnson (Heald, 1948-57) "My main regret was that I felt there had been no opportunities to learn how to socialise and mix with the opposite sex, or even with adults. I left school totally unprepared for a mixed social life and it took me a while to feel comfortable in the company of young men. It didn't help that I was an only child. The year after I left I think there started to be mixed events with Brighton College."

Sarah Mylne said that "While I was at SMH we went regularly to what was called the 6th Form Conference - where nearly all the schools in Brighton and Hove met up to go to events where we had a speaker and then divided up into MIXED SEX!! groups for discussion and debate - and once we went to Varndean, I think, for a dance!! We were all summoned to the green drawing room by Conny and among other things we were warned not to wear any perfume, since this could "give boys the wrong idea" and that boys had less control than girls!" (This led to several comments of the inherent dangers of Old Spice and Brut; of Tweed and Lavender Water!)

Penny Barnes asked "Does anyone remember the prefects' room at the top of the building? As a punishment from a prefect I was sent up to the room, where 5 or 6 prefects sat round a table. I was made to stand on the table....they then gave me a subject to talk about for 5 minutes (it might have been shorter...it seemed like hours!!). I was 12 or 13 and they would have been 17-18....really scary!" **Sue Burroughes (Anker, 1960-64)** "spent an inordinate amount of time "visiting " the Prefects Room but usually got away with copying out the front page of The Times in my best handwriting.....mindless and pointless!" **Angelica Meletiou** remembered "being summoned to the prefects' room!! I had to learn a randomly chosen page of the dictionary as I'd have to give the definition of a word chosen by them the next day. They scared me to death. Connie was formidable and scary but the prefects and their punishments were positively horrendous!"

(Thankfully prefects were a thing of the past by 1970 - though they may have come back???)

Deborah Harrison (1964-68) told us that her boarding school years were "the most miserable of my life. However, I was able to achieve my goal (and the reason I went to boarding school) by getting into medical school. In spite of all the teachers' criticism of me, I was the only one of my year to get three A-levels. It certainly didn't prepare me for the future and even less so for University interviews. But, after that and university I have been able to enjoy a career that I've loved." Prompted by questions, she added "I went to Bristol and after my house jobs and a year in anesthesia was offered a chance to finish my post grad training at Yale - a post I was urged not to refuse. I was a consultant at Yale for 10 years and director of Obstetric Anesthesia then went into a less academic environment (I am a clinician, not a researcher/paper writer) just over 30 years ago. There I spent a lot of my time specializing in neurosurgical cases and complex spinal procedures (also taking Obstetric call). Have just fully retired - have really enjoyed my work and am delighted to do something I really loved. That's in spite of the staff at SMH giving me 'career' brochures on becoming a lab tech!"

Jenny Child, (who had asked Deborah for more information) replied "I wasn't exactly encouraged either, which made me all the more determined to get into medical school. I went to Charing X & Westminster and qualified in 1987. The Head said to my Mum "She might get there one day, I just hope she's never my doctor". Nurturing self-esteem, a sense of worth etc. was really not her thing, and that was the problem for our generation. It set a very unfortunate tone. Along with Carolyn J-B who has just got her PhD, I'd love to be able to tell her I did it. Despite everything."

Deborah Harrison added that she "qualified in 1974 and was definitely not expected to go to med school. It's amazing how we were discouraged in those days. The only reason I survived the SMH years was the realization that this was the only way to get to med school. So, hate my school days or not, it enabled me to follow a satisfying career."

I was moved by these two comments and added that ""We" were positively expected by such teachers as Noddy, Mrs Allen, Mrs Parsons, Mrs Webb, Miss Bristol and more (must not forget Cynthia Palmer!) to be independent. The day of the adoring wife ready with slippers and the pipe for her husband to return was OVER. I felt a bit sorry for the girls who were cut out to be excellent homemakers and not for careers out of the home, believing then, as now, that women and men should as far as possible be able to choose."

Rowan Fookes (Cawkell, 1954-56) told us all what a few of us already knew, that she came to SMH aged 11 from the Falklands. "I knew nothing of how English society worked. Gee, we barely had roads in the Falklands. My parents vanished. I was dumped in a school where to talk in the corridor appeared to be to a par with attempted murder. Of course I never conformed/behaved. Miss Conrady regarded me as something spawned from the devil. One day - in her study for the umpteenth time being told how wicked I was - I had enough. I picked up an ink pot she had on her desk and threw it at her. Missed, but made a satisfactory mess on the wall. That was that!"

Shirley Read-Jahn told us of the visit she made to SMH with a then beau to show him "where I'd spent 7 youthful years. When we entered what had been Miss Conrady's study, the lady giving us the tour told us the story about Rowan, just saying it was a girl from the fifties...I told her I knew Rowan very well, and was so proud of what she did!!!"

Deborah Harrison understood what Rowan went through. "Although from not as far away as the Falklands I also came from a totally different environment without a clue as how to behave and interact. I was miserable and this was interpreted as 'bad behaviour' and 'non-cooperation'.

Kim Cook shared with us her own story which I reproduce here in full, despite the length, as I think it is an insight into her life and times and all of us should have the chance to read it:

"Although I'd not travelled anything like the same distance, I was still in a strange environment, and felt I didn't fit, as I was there on an LCC (London County Council) scholarship. Some members of staff (Mrs Parsons, Mrs Lawrence, Mrs Allen and later Mrs Capildeo, and of course, 'Jackie') were fair, but others, particularly Mrs Webb, were horrible, and Connie was just beastly. Like Rowan, I was blamed for everything, whether or not I'd done wrong. During my very first term I kept getting severe stomach pains, and was repeatedly taken to the San. [then sited in the building which became the Art Block in the late 60s]. Invariably Connie had me taken back to class or house, and told me off for malingering. One day I was on the Dispensary Bed when Dr Beynon came in to see a San inpatient. He heard me groaning and insisted on coming in to the dispensary to see what was going on. He promptly diagnosed acute appendicitis, and called for an ambulance. It came up the back drive, and along the track above the top tennis court (as far as it could go), and I was carted from San to ambulance on a stretcher covered with a red blanket. Connie appeared, looking furious, and sat, ramrod straight, in the ambulance passenger seat. All the way to hospital she berated me for being a nuisance and preventing her from doing her duty of care to others who were far more deserving! I went straight into theatre, had my appendix removed, and was there for over 2 weeks. That, and my situation as a council scholarship girl, put the mark of Cain on me, and thereafter I was always considered

troublesome, was regularly made to stand outside Connie's door, or the staff room door for punishment, and made to eat meals in the biology lab in front of dissected specimens. My letters home were censored, and if I wrote anything suggesting I was unhappy, I was made to re-write the letter. When I complained in the holidays, nobody believed me, saying that if what I complained of had been true, I'd have mentioned it in my letters! Not surprisingly, I felt very trapped. After I left, I came back once to meet friends at a garden party, but even then Connie was so spiteful and sarcastic, I vowed never to go back while she was alive. I was eventually persuaded to go back in the late 1990s, and it was amazing to hear how many others of our era had been really unhappy, but had borne it with more silence and stoicism than I had. In an odd way, it was a relief to learn that I hadn't been the only one who'd been targeted".

Deborah Harrison "... was very much in the same situation. As my letters were also censored I used to sometimes write in French in the hope they'd pass muster. Also, because of the way numbers worked out, for the first couple of terms I had all my meals away from others in my form and with a group several years younger - total misery. The worst was one term when my dorm room mates consisted of several girls from Hong Kong, who never spoke English in the dorm."

Vivienne Lagraulet "When I was at SMH and still young and innocent (!) some boarders were expelled for going AWOL and spending the night on the beach with boys from Brighton College - or so rumour had it. We thought they'd been terribly daring and brave."

Rowan Fookes then moved us off topic (a bit) by picking up on a comment Kim Cook had made about about throwing hats* into the Thames at the end of term (summer e-Newsletter).

She told us that at the boarding school she went to after being "kicked out of SMH, we - end of O levels - threw our hats into the Thames. Arriving at Victoria Station we telephoned the police. 'Terrible accident must have happened,' we said, 'hats floating. Maybe drowned.' No doubt the police sighed and thought that's the third today. We meanwhile had, on the train, changed into mufti. Thought ourselves the first (and last) word in fashion and sophistication. Only one of our group refused to get out of school uniform. She, later, was the first to have a child, the first to marry, the first to have an affair - not necessarily in that order. Not sure there's any moral there!"

Kim Cook responded: "Never thought of that one, Rowan! Don't know if anyone else did. If our train happened to be on a line not close to the side of the bridge, some leavers' hats landed on the rails between us and the side. Think what anyone would have made of those, especially if another train had run over them!"

*(see also autumn's e-Newsletter for **Diana Rawlinson (Sheppard 1963-69)**'s story about hats)

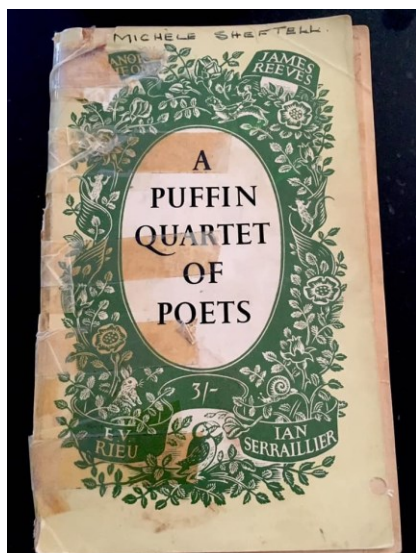


Micki Aston showed those of us in the Common Room this lovely photo of another mini-reunion – **Virginia Craig, Micki** and **Odette Ford**, in Brighton in September 2018. The mini image shows Virginia's amazing sense of fun as she and Micki had a ride on Volks' Railway earlier in the same day! The sixties at SMH must have been "Such Fun"! (despite a certain Miss D.C. – or maybe because of her?!)

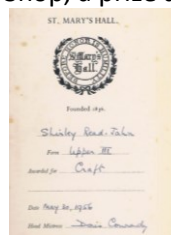


And here is another ray of autumn sunshine to brighten up these cold dark days (for us in the northern hemisphere, anyway). It was captioned in the Virtual Common Room thus: "49 years on for best friends reunited; **Sandie Newman, Sue Scott-Gatty (Hayllar)** and **Angie Risley (Charles)** [all 1969-76]" To which we could only add that we all thought look as if they had left school only the other day. Miss Fabian (**Cynthia Palmer**) commented she had recognized them instantly!





This lovely photo is of a treasured book from school days which **Micki Aston** found when dusting her bookshelves. Who else, we asked, has books from schooldays? **Shirley Read-Jahn** found her book of Common Prayer (cf) and a copy of the Old Curiosity Shop, a prize awarded for “basket weaving”.



We would love you to send in images of any books you still have, (with associated memories) for the next e-Newsletter!

As a sad aside, **Sarah Mylne (Boyd, 1950-60)** commented that she had her book of Common Prayer **STOLEN** at school. (This really shocked several of us).

MEMORABILIA If you would like to order any of the items advertised on <https://www.smhassociation.org/buy-smh-memorabilia.php>, please contact Jan Johnson smhasales@gmail.com. She will let you know how to pay and then fulfil your order. The bonus of looking on this website page is the brilliant ‘page topper’ of “The Loos”!

LONG SCHOOL PHOTOS These are available as downloads from the website at £3 per download. Check out <https://www.smhassociation.org/gallery.php> then email smhaenquiries@gmail.com with details of the one(s) you would like. They are superb as downloads – really clear and able to be magnified to show you and your friends in all your glory!

As a footnote to these two ‘shopping’ opportunities, Old Girl **Belinda Lindeck (1948-1952)** receives her Newsletter annually, thanks to our “printing elves”. 2018’s elf was **Jan Johnson** who, noticing the years Belinda had been at SMH, popped in a ‘long school photo’ for that year into her envelope, together with a few notelets and, it being that time of year, a birthday card. In September I received a lovely note from Belinda, thanking us for the items and saying that the photo had caused great hilarity among friends and family visiting as they played ‘spot young Belinda’ (third row with pigtails apparently!). Belinda very kindly also enclosed a donation for the funds which more than covered the postage and indeed the cost of a photo & notelets.

HOW TO FIND US

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Password elliott18362009

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Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SMHAclosed/>

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Please use address/phone only if email will not serve your purpose ☺ Thank you!

SMHA Management Team

Penny Harrison, (Titheradge 1969-73)

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