

ST. MARY'S HALL ASSOCIATION

SPRING 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

You may be surprised to receive this just two months after our winter e-Newsletter but the Team agreed, in December, that it made sense to change the 'quarters' to fit in with the Jan-Mar, Apr-June, July-Sept, Oct-Dec pattern. A somewhat thinner issue, you might think? Time will tell, so read on!

The winter edition included a number of your 'memories'. It stimulated a great deal of feedback, much included in this edition, and all of it very interesting. So please carry on telling us how SMH was for you – especially those of you in the younger end of the membership – we hear far too little from you!

It is amazing to think that this year is the tenth anniversary of the closure of our School and, therefore of the establishment of our Association in its present form. It has been suggested that we mark this on Founder's Day, 1st August 2019, and plans for this will be fully revealed in the summer e-Newsletter, to be circulated in June. Please keep an eye out for it. A 'teaser' item appears later in this edition.

This is also the second year when we are deeply in debt – not financially, but in gratitude, to **Sian Spencer**, our Finance Officer, whose report on the accounts is being independently examined and will then be placed, in full on <https://www.smhassociation.org/administrative-team.php>. Members have until 30th September to review the accounts and ask Sian if you have any queries. Otherwise, as per our Terms of Reference, they will be considered to have been formally adopted by the Association.

I am very sorry to report that **Susan McDonagh** who has acted as our Website Editor for some time now, is unable to continue in this role. The other Team members and I all hope that she will be able to come back to serve on the Team in the future but meanwhile we continue to enjoy her interactions in the Common Room!

Lis Eastham, who has assisted Sue in the role recently, has stepped up to act as Website Editor. We – YOU – are so fortunate to have Lis, whose circumstances leave her with time and energy to act as Facebook Administrator, 100 Club Administrator and now Website Editor. I must put aside false modesty and say you're also fortunate that I also have time and energy to act as Manager and Newsletter Editor.

However, the time will come when either or both of us will not be able to do all this between us.

PLEASE would you, dear reader, consider whether you can take on editing the website or the newsletter for us? Or taking over the small but important tasks associated with being Facebook Administrator? These tasks are not overly demanding, are very rewarding and Lis and I can – and would – hold your hand while you made yourself familiar with the processes.

Hoping, with every one of my fingers and toes crossed, to hear from someone soon.

With 1000 members it is unthinkable that no one has the time or talent?

LASTLY – please read on for details of the upcoming Reunion.

Very best wishes,

Penny Harrison, Team Manager SMHA

smhaenquiries@gmail.com / 07946772620

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

N Olwen Davies, (Noddy), Headmistress from 1965-1973,
is sorry that she cannot correspond any longer due to her macular degeneration, or indeed to read for herself cards or letters we write but says that if we would like to ring her she would be glad to hear from anyone.

(We would suggest 'mid-morning' as a good time.)

Her telephone number is 01962 733610



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

The first prize pays out more than your original subscription!

And look – some new members, so the prize money has gone up!!!

You’ve missed the first three draws of the year but you can still join, paying by BACS*, and pay pro-rata for the rest of 2019.

*Overseas members with no UK / sterling bank accounts can now join using PayPal.

100 Club rules are on our website.

Winners (since winter e-Newsletter):

<i>February 2019</i>	<i>March 2019</i>
1 st Prize (£13.50) Juliet Elcock	1 st Prize (£14.40) Margaret Ellis
2 nd Prize (£9.00) Angelica Meletiou	2 nd Prize (£9.60) Tricia Searl

The winter e-Newsletter won me a record postbag! You very much enjoyed it (and I very much enjoyed editing it).

Judith Patten (1950-60) wrote that she “must have missed many of the anti-Connie tales posted in the VCR. Awful woman. I have a feeling that I have said before that I actually got caned on the hand by her. And at her 90th birthday celebration (I thought I would face the old bat!) I said something to her to which she responded "you were always a bully". I looked at this dastardly old woman and asked what on earth she was talking about "there was that business when you were 8" she responded (by this time I was in my 50s). I explained that the person whose face I had stuck bits of collage making 'stuff' was my best friend, she had asked me/let me, we were both bored on the top deck of the bus; and it was indeed a joy to hear the immortal words "things might have been different if only I had known". Not a good listener our Miss DC. Anyway, this was the first time I had heard Rowan (Fookes)'s story. WELL DONE YOU, wow I wish I had had the guts to do something like that! I really disliked being a day girl and finally convinced my parents that I wanted to be a boarder for my A level years if they insisted on me staying there. My late daughter went to a school (St Paul's Girls' School) she absolutely adored, it was so interesting to see how different life could be if you really loved where you spent such a long time.”

Judith Barrington (1948-61) told us "I lived in constant fear of Connie." **Angelica Meletiou (1957-63)** replied "She was the scariest person I'd ever met! I remember one lunch time she sent me out because I dared to sneeze during silence. I had always been told never to hold the sneeze in!

Judith Patten added another memory: "She hauled me over to talk to her as I left lunch "if I hear you coughing again you will be in the Sanatorium for a week". I can see her in my head and can very often stop coughing because of her standing there with the front door behind her looking unutterably fierce . Looking back what really annoys me is that my parents believed her and never thought to ask me about what had happened. I had decided to give myself a day off school the day after my caning by claiming I felt ill and then the postman arrived with a letter from her saying that I had had to be "chastised" (those were the days when letters came the next day); my feet hardly touched the ground as I was pulled out of bed and off we shot to the school. All so very unfair "guilty until proved innocent" - "Miss Conrady says...." UGH!"

Angelica Meletiou was happy to report that it was “very different for me. My Mother was marvellous she believed me.. and one time with the incident of her (Connie) taking away my cross and chain as punishment she got our Vicar involved and Connie ... wait for it... apologised to me in front of my Mother and our Vicar!”

Sarah Mylne (Boyd 1950-60): “ I, too, disliked DC - she was sarcastic and unkind, and never missed a chance to say something mean to me. I was in detention one day after school, in the geog. room just along from her office, for bad handwriting, and she forgot to tell me I could go home. My mother phoned the school to find out why I hadn't got home and DC came along in a long dressing gown type robe - the boarders had all had their supper and gone to their boarding houses - and I had to have a taxi home!! I don't think she ever forgave me for making her look incompetent!”

Heather Johnson (Heald 1948-57) replied: "Like Judith P. I became a boarder for my last two years at SMH and loved it. When I returned to the school the year after I left I was greeted by Connie saying "Here's Heather, as bumptious as ever" How nice!!!"

Anthony Elliott commented : "All I can say is "Wow"! Not all of it comfortable reading by any means, but all of it understandable to me, who went to boarding school in 1944 at the age of seven."

And **Shirley Read-Jahn (1954-61)** sent a LONG email saying : "Am just reading my newsletter. So much work goes into it, well done! Do I sound boring if I say, surely yet again, how much I appreciate all you do on behalf of our SMHA?"

This news is excellent: "*we have just enrolled our 1,000th member*" and congratulations on that!

As, indeed, is this news: "*we have a NEW MEMBER of our Management Team! We have been joined by Bethane Harland, (1999-2009)*". I think you OGs are very brave to take on all that work, I really do. All I feel I can offer is snippets here and there that perhaps can be included.

Wow, I LOVED that video of the hospital, and our school, AND I did see St. Hilary, my unforgettable home for 7 years! Thanks so much for that.

About Laura Eaton, whom I never had as a teacher, having left long before she started teaching, I was intrigued by this line: "*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!*". This is EXACTLY what I teach in belly dance, to teach people how to do a tummy-roll! Breathing in, you pull the imaginary orange back to your spine, then lift it up, then expel it gently forwards and downwards, while expelling your breath...! Isn't that a funny coincidence!

Re the Chattri War Memorial I was interested to read, "*Sarah Mylne (Boyd, 1950-60) commented that "way back in the 1950's Jenny Cowan and I used to cycle up there on our own with a picnic in our bike baskets and not a care in the world!"*" because no way did I, or any of my school chums, have bicycles. BIKES, at SMH? How did Sarah and Jenny rate having bikes, was it when they were sixth formers, perhaps? And they were able to score a picnic from the kitchen? Goodness, I'm so surprised. Or maybe they were day bugs and just used their own bikes to go on picnics? What freedom they had, compared to us imprisoned boarders...

I totally relate to what Heather Johnson said, "*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*". Not having a father at home in the holidays (or a brother) meant I had no idea whatsoever about boys or men. I could have got into big trouble. Especially after the ridiculous birds & the bees talks given to us at SMH (see my chapter in "Such Fun!" on the SMH website).

On a different note, **Penny Gardiner (Buck 1961-65)** emailed me after she received her newsletter to say how much she appreciated the comments about the 'anniversary' of SMHA and to add "I read reminiscences of walks on the Downs with interest. Does anyone else remember where we used to stop for a breather, a pub garden somewhere towards St Dunstan's and Rottingdean, and there in 1964, **Anne Lenegan** taking the eye of Alfred Hitchcock? She was a stunning blonde, a Kathy Kirby lookalike and he was looking for a new starlet. It never came to anything and tragically, Anne was fatally injured in a car crash during her UVI year

The loss of Anne hit us in all very hard. She had been on a weekend exeat, staying with **Pat O'Connor** who by then had left SMH and Pat's father was driving Anne back to school on the Sunday night. The A23 took its toll and they both died; a double tragedy for everyone. In the UVI dorm in Babington we waited for Anne to come in, later and later, until you knew something wasn't right. She survived some days in hospital but there was never any hope really. Anne and I were the youngest, 16, and least mature of our tiny UVI and were the only two (of ten) not made prefects. When Anne died, I was made a prefect. Not an easy or happy decision by the school and bothers me even now.

Bridget Sudworth (Biddy Neville-Last 1960-63) wrote me one of her LOVELY long letters by email after the winter e-Newsletter pinged into her inbox. (I hope she, and all of you know how VERY much I love hearing from you?) Extracts follow – if reproduced in full it would be a Random Rambling all on its own ☺

"You have done a masterful job on the 'Winter's Tale - Random Ramblings' piecing together all those different debates. Thank you so much for providing such an interesting narrative. And funny too! I loved the fact that Rowan Fookes actually had the courage to chuck an ink pot at Connie - how I wish I had done that! Connie was not my favourite person. Her study door often stood open so we could see her (and that pestilential Coco, the scrawny poodle) working away every time we shot up the stairs two at a time to the classrooms; in the 5th form they were on the same floor but as 6th form, we went on up to the attics where we had such glorious views of the south coast. The prefects' room was the study for us lot taking A Levels if it was the same room where girls were made to stand on desks and recite or memorise pages from the dictionary - although I don't remember the prefects exacting such punishments in our time.

My mother defended me royally in the face of Connie's insistence that I should give up History O Level in my first year at SMH (I am passionate about history.....). My mother won. On reflection they had much in common. They were actually twins with 2-3 years between, Connie being the younger! My mother had no time for her at all and she was at least a good judge of character if nothing else. One should never malign one's mother and I am grateful to her for many things but she was a very difficult woman. Never my best friend unlike my school friend **Tina Challacombe (Cocks 1959-63)** who had a lovely, lovely mother.

The debate about the value of boarding school never ends, does it? I have had so many discussions on the topic over the years and always try to sit on the fence simply stating that for me it was paradise; liberation, independence, the making of me etc. and after that I leave the talk to others. As a retired teacher, I just celebrate any form of excellence regardless of how it was achieved though maybe more respect on the quiet if it was really worked for, for whatever reason and through whatever educational channels. I looked at your last email which was in May last year; as a consequence of which I wrote a piece which you thought might prompt some feedback. If it did, then I didn't know about it though sure you would have let me know*. It's of no consequence; what is important is that a personal recollection like that from other people would be of great interest to bods like me who don't do the VCR (sorry, sorry!!!! still thinking but not quite there yet!). If you can lure others into writing a bit about what became of them, what wonderful copy that would make.

*As I replied to Bidy, yes, feedback aplenty insofar as memories always prompt memories, so thanks again to her for writing her first piece and to everyone who tells us about their days at School. I wish we heard more of the post 1980s days...it would fascinate us "old Old Girls" if nothing else!

'Random Ramblings', inspired feedback which filled the postbag more than any other item in a newsletter, including this, from Jan Johnson who took the time to tell us of her experiences with Mrs Leslie:

When I arrived at the school in 1977 I don't think anything had changed much in the last 15 years. The ethos was very traditional, for example "Dido and Aeneas" classical plays and Shakespeare tragedies were very much the norm for school productions. This didn't begin to change until younger teachers with more progressive ideas began to encourage more modern musical entertainments - "The Boyfriend" produced by Mike Wells, one of the younger male teachers, was a very successful production.

I thought Mrs Leslie was a strong, committed and compassionate headmistress. I've spoken many times and fondly of film nights in her flat for lonely boarders missing home comforts and of how she noticed small but vitally important things. I went to St Andrews primarily because of the effort she made to keep me in the school and the example she set. I know she was enormously proud because she continued to write to my parents for many years. She met my husband and held my baby daughter on her knee. She knew that going to St Andrews shaped and changed my life in many wonderful ways. Mrs Leslie taught me that giving up is not an option and that lesson has stayed with me forever. I will forever be grateful to SMH for giving me a head start in life that others in my family did not enjoy. And Mrs Leslie was a prime mover in that.

I think we have to acknowledge, however, that the tail end of Mrs Leslie's tenure was a time of enormous change, not just for SMH but for all fee paying schools. We had a lot more young male teachers, a lot more overseas students and there was much less focus on traditional subjects such as Latin and Needlework and the beginning of investment in technology. The school acquired its first computer during this period, a Research Machines 380z. Learning programming language at school was enormously influential and led me to pursue a career in information technology. Mrs Leslie recognised the pace of change and I think this was probably a factor in her decision to retire and hand over the reins to Miss Harvey, who was seen as much more progressive and likely to bring in pupils on the strength of her previous headships of better known schools.

The views of each and every one of us will be coloured by personal experience and this is as true of my views of Mrs Leslie as are the views of others who contributed to the previous newsletter item. All are valid. All contribute to a picture of a lady who led SMH for many years. Certainly she was not without her faults, but then by all accounts neither was Miss Conrady who I did not know and whose tenure I therefore cannot comment on. But we all need to share the good and the bad. To censor our opinions, or to fail to voice them would be like removing threads from a tapestry. So I hope we will hear more about girls' views of their Heads (and indeed other teachers) and how they influenced their lives.

I was interested that Jan spoke of 'the last 15 years'. I wonder whether each OG felt that the school moved forward in 'her time there'? ["Please discuss!"]

Even Miss Conrady brought us the St Mary's Hall Burlington NJ exchanges which so enriched our school while they lasted, and continues to enrich our Association to this day. I left just four years before Jan arrived and can attest to the fact that the school was transformed by Miss Davies who took the fly in aspic inherited from Miss Conrady and

ground it under her progressive heel. She gave us new art and science facilities, gym, hall, dining room (see elsewhere in the newsletter) and inspired the girls of her era to believe that anything was possible!

And by the way, under Noddy we trialled the first computer, which was a beast of a thing brought on a lorry from school to school to test whether computers had any application in education. (The consensus was 'no' by the way – well worth re-reading that piece, which was reproduced in a newsletter not long ago).

Reading Jan's fascinating insight of her time makes me think that time must have stood still when she left, though. My mother once had a member of her teaching staff of whom she wrote, in an end of year skit, "she came with a rush and she went the same way, leaving chaos behind for a year and a day" Of Noddy I think I would say, after reading this... "She got us unstuck, then she went on her way, leaving time standing still for a thousand long days"



SCHOOL'S CENTENARY.—An amusing incident in the "Pageant of One Hundred Years" given by the scholars of St. Mary's Hall School, Brighton.

These two lovely images were brought to our attention by Sarah Mylne, who had found them on the www. One, we believe, is already in our Galleries in the website but the other is new to us. Thanks, Sarah – please keep them coming; and if others of you see similar photos please send them to us!



St. Mary's Hall, Hervey Terrace and Playing Field.

17th January was the 227th anniversary of the birth of our Founder, Henry Venn Elliott. We celebrated on our Facebook Page and in the Common Room but thought those of you who missed that might enjoy knowing the strange coincidence which it threw up.

As you will know, HVE based St Mary's Hall on Cowan Bridge School in Yorkshire.

Cowan Bridge was attended by both Charlotte and Emily Bronte (Charlotte used her time there as the background for the opening chapters of "Jane Eyre").

Their sister Anne's birthday was....17th January! She would have been 199 this year.

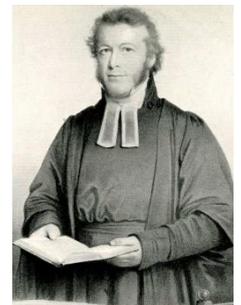


Anne Bronte

Cowan Bridge



Plaque commemorating the Bronte sisters who attended Cowan Bridge



Henry Venn Elliott

ELLIOTT, HENRY VENN (1792–1865), divine, born 17 Jan. 1792, was the son of Charles Elliott of Grove House, Clapham, by his second wife, Bling, daughter of Henry Venn, the well-known vicar of Huddersfield. Charles Elliott had eight children by his second marriage; Henry Venn was his eldest son and fourth child; other children were Charlotte Elliott [q. v.] and Edward Bishop Elliott [q. v.] Henry Venn was sent to school, under a Mr. Elwell of Hammersmith, when eight years old. In January 1809 he was transferred to the Rev. H. Jowett of Little Dunham, Norfolk. He went to Trinity

College, Cambridge, in October 1810; became a scholar of his college in 1811; and graduated as fourteenth wrangler in 1814, winning also the second chancellor's medal. He was elected to a fellowship of Trinity in October 1816. He had suffered from overwork, and in July 1817 set out to recover his health by a foreign tour, which extended to Greece, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, a journey attended with some risk in those days. In August 1820 he returned to England. He resided for a time at Cambridge, and was ordained deacon in November 1823 and priest in June 1824. After holding the

cure of Ampton, Suffolk, for two years, he returned to Cambridge in 1825. His father had now moved to Westfield Lodge, Brighton, and soon afterwards built the proprietary chapel of St. Mary's in that town. It was consecrated 18 Jan. 1827. Elliott was appointed the first preacher, and inherited the property upon his father's death, 15 Oct. 1832. For a few years previous to 1832 Elliott held also the priory of St. John's, Wilton, near Salisbury. He took pupils for a time, among whom were Sir Edward North Buxton and the sons of Lord Aberdeen. He was afterwards fully occupied by his various duties.

In 1832 he made proposals for the foundation of a school for the daughters of poor clergymen, in imitation of the school founded by his friend Carus Wilson at Cowan's Bridge, Yorkshire, in 1823. The school was opened as St. Mary's Hall on 1 Aug. 1836. Elliott himself gave liberal donations, many of them anonymously, and during the rest of his life took an active part in its management. In September 1849 the new church of St. Mark's, intended to provide for the district of Kemp Town and St. Mary's Hall, was opened, after many obstacles had been overcome by Elliott's energy and liberality. Elliott took a prominent part in providing for the religious needs of Brighton, then rapidly developing. He was

a sincere evangelist, and especially anxious for the strict observance of Sunday. In 1852 he spoke at a public meeting against the proposal for opening the Crystal Palace on Sundays, and his remarks were taken to amount to a charge of venality against the 'Times' for defending the measure. He repudiated the intention, but was severely censured for his rash language. Elliott died at Brighton on 24 Jan. 1865.

On 31 Oct. 1833 Elliott married Julia, daughter of John Marshall of Hallsteads, Ullswater. She was a lady of poetical talent, and one of her religious poems is given in Lord Selborne's 'Book of Praise.' She died of scarlet fever on 3 Nov. 1841, her fifth child, Julius, having been born on 24 Oct. preceding.

Her death was followed by those of his mother, 16 April 1843, his favourite sister, Mary, three months later, and his eldest son, Henry Venn, a very promising lad, from the effects of a fall, on 2 June 1848. His second son, Sir Charles Alfred, a distinguished member of the Indian civil service, was created K.C.S.I. in 1887. Julius Marshall, the third son, was killed on the Schreckhorn 27 July 1869. He also left two daughters.

His works consist of a number of separate sermons and a collection of hymns.

[Life by Josiah Bateman, 1868.]

If you have not already booked to attend the second SMHA Virtual Common Room Reunion Lunch which takes place on Saturday 6th July 2019 from Noon at Prezzo in the Marina Village in Brighton why not check out your friends' availability and come along?

There is still time to do so.

Please either 'join' the get-together in the Common Room, or email smhaenquiries@gmail.com.

Those at school between **1958** and **1966** will undoubtedly remember '**Miss Armstrong**' and many of us who network in the Virtual Common Room enjoy seeing occasional comments from the now Jessie Redfern

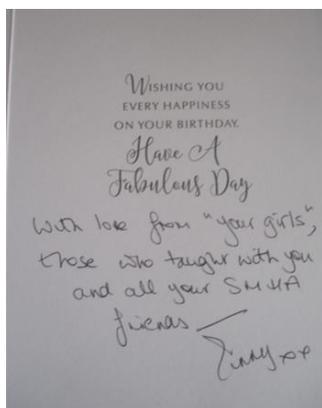
We were delighted therefore to be able to send her birthday greetings for 11th January.

Thanks to an efficient PO Jessie had her card in good time and emailed me to say

"Would you kindly thank everyone for my 90th birthday card. It was a lovely surprise to see the birthday wishes:

"My girls, those who taught with me and all my SMHA friends."

I feel very thrilled to be remembered in this way and send my love to you all. **Jessie Redfern (Armstrong)**"



Penny Hamilton (Wallis-Jones) was one of several Girls to wish Jessie a very Happy Birthday on the day itself!

Heather Wright (Stevens) added : You made me feel at ease when I joined SMH in Transition (pinafore darlings!) in 1960! I don't expect you to remember Heather Stevens with the long, golden plait. **Micki Aston (Sheftell)** said that she too had happy memories from Transition in 1960. "Lovely kind Miss Armstrong made us young homesick boarders feel so much better! Many congratulations on your birthday and many happy returns of the day." **Sue Burroughes (Anker)** also commented that Jessie "eased my transition from day school to boarding school life.... my first teacher at SMH! Always remembered."

It's always rewarding when modern communication help us keep in touch with our 'older' members and it's a source of great satisfaction to us that teachers and girls in their 80s and now 90s are happily sitting round in the Common Room with the youngsters !

If you have knowledge of a teacher of yours from SMH who is going to celebrate a special birthday, let us know and we will mark the occasion! smhaenquiries@gmail.com

A reunion – 'just' three Girls but how lovely to see it, occurring in the 'dead days' between Christmas and New Year!

L-R **Alison Turner (Cox, 1979-86)**

Shani Mason (Waller, 1980-86)

Vicky Mokhtar Riley (1980-86)





And here are three more Old Girls – taken in 1950 in the school grounds, are **Jenny Booth, Sally Landau and Valerie Herbert** - 1950
Susan Metzner, (Snelling, 1947-55) commented that their 'gardens' are in front of the wall and Miss Smith was their mentor gardener at weekends. **Susan** was inspired to send in this, and the two lovely photos below, after seeing our autumn e-Newsletter and we are very much indebted to her! Please do have a look in your own albums, cupboards and scrap books and scan some of your memories for us to enjoy.
 Below (L) Sunday group walk 1953, **Joan King, Barbara Bashford, Gillian Townsend Green (Weston/Metcalf 1947-54), Jenny Booth** and **Sheila ?** Wearing summer Sunday uniform.
 And R) Outside Babington. On their way to swim in the sea before bed...**Jenny** and **Susan** (sitting) also taken in 1953



Unfortunately Jenny, living in Ottawa and in touch with Susan has not felt able to engage with us, but our good wishes have of course been sent to her.

No trace has been found of the Girls in Bold/Italic. Maybe one day?!



Meanwhile both **Oliva Gordon (Nedeham-Browne 1950-55)** and **Sue Redwood (Reynolds 1953-58)** mentioned **Sue Snelling** in the Common Room and we believe they are all back in touch now.

Girls (and staff) whose memories go from the spring of 1968 to 2009 will be universally delighted to hear that I heard from **Eileen Aviss, (Miss Coles)** much loved music teacher at SMH for 41 years just before Christmas! We hope she might send us some news of herself soon!
 News of this in the Common Room prompted memories of such as **Miss Hauser, Miss Wynn, Mrs Escritt (?sp)** and of course **Miss Ratner**...as well as many beloved part-timers such as **Mr Aviss!** Then fast forward to **Mr Jay** and **Mr Roser**. We have an amazing timeline of excellent music at our School, don't we?
 I'll apologise in advance for the doubtless many names I have omitted to mention...why not write in and tell us how they inspired your musical life?

CHARITY BEGAN AT SCHOOL...for many of us.

Close to all members' hearts is the ethos instilled in us at SMH of 'doing good things' whenever we can.

We're all aware, I know, of **Susanne Rea (Nicholls 1956-61)**'s work to eradicate Polio, having asked you to help previously. But, just to remind you... Rotary International launched the fight against polio in the mid-1980s - with the help of other organisations it has become the biggest public health initiative in history. From 350,000 cases of polio in 1985 the number dropped to fewer than 1000 in 2001.

In 2014 the Gates Foundation joined Rotary's End Polio Now campaign by agreeing to triple all monies raised towards the eradication of polio. *In 2018 there were just 31 cases of polio in 2 Countries*

A year earlier, Susanne had a stellar moment whilst sitting on her couch in her home in Australia - her thought being that if friends got together (no matter how few or how many) to have a fun meal (or just a cup of tea) and donated a small amount to the campaign this could bring in much needed funds.

With the help of a friend and fellow Rotarian, Mukesh Malhotra a member of the Hounslow (UK) Rotary Club "World's Greatest Meal" came into being.

The first event was at Susanne's Rotary club in Cairns (Australia) in December 2013.



Penny & Susanne
at a WGM event

As at 1st March 2019:

USD \$3,265,216.80 has been raised (a total of USD \$9,795,650.40 with matching funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). This translates to enough funds to buy more than 16,325,000 polio vaccinations!

For more information on the WGM go to www.wgmeal.com

Old Girls have supported the initiative on several occasions, either with individual events or by funnelling their donations through Penny Barnes who is a member of the Rotary Club of Storrington & Pulborough District



Another Old Girl, **Jo Grey (French 1983-88)** [pictured, left] has also been featured in more than one past Newsletter. With symptoms stretching back to her SMH days, it wasn't until the year 2000 that Jo was diagnosed with the rare genetic disorder, MEN2A. Despite her fight for life and the subsequent diagnosis and treatment of her son (then aged 3), she soon became involved with the new and obscure AMEND charity, driving it to become one held in high regard by patients and clinicians alike. AMEND provides free information resources and professional support services to families affected by a range of rare endocrine cancers and syndromes, represents the patient voice internationally, and grants much needed research funding into the conditions.



Further information can be found at www.amend.org.uk.

Our third 'blushing' Old Girl is our very own Team Member, **Jan Johnson**. The Johnson family have been raising money for Kidney Research UK since 2012 and in that time have collected the amazing sum of close to £12,000 for the charity through the auspices of Anstruther Rotary Club and the Bank of Scotland.

Kidney disease is a silent killer. Three million people in the UK are living with it right now and there is no cure. Kidney Research UK is a charity that funds research that focuses on the prevention, treatment and management of kidney disease.

The 2019 JustGiving site address is:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/kidneyresearchuk2019>

Here (right) is Jan, pictured with her husband and daughter, all walking for Kidney Research.



Why, I hear you ask, are these three Old Girls and their charities being featured???
Wait just three months and you will find out ☺

“Old Girls and what they do” brings me neatly on to **Shirley Read-Jahn**. Many of you ‘know’ Shirley from previous articles and the Common Room as well as from her school days but I don’t think all of you will be aware of this chapter of her fascinating life story.

WHY I WRITE BOOKS by Shirley Read-Jahn

All my life I've had books I've wanted to write swirling about in my head.

At SMH I was friends with Rowan Fookes (Cawkell), who was in my sister, Pam Bailey (Read-Jahn)'s, form, two years ahead of me. Rowan is one of my dearest friends to this day. Rowan used to tell me about her early life in the Falkland Islands, and how she had a king penguin which became her pet. I never forgot that story and early in 2018 I asked her if I could use that story to write a book. Happily, she agreed. I used her story as inspiration for the three books that grew from the roots of her tale.

In retirement, not only did I want to write stories, but I had been diagnosed on February 1, 2018 with Parkinson's Disease (PD). After discussions with my neurologist specialist and nurse, and PD exercise physiologist, I learned that the best way to stay ahead of this incurable disease is to take one's medications, do intense exercise (I do tai chi, aerobics & weights, table tennis, swimming, and teach belly dance), and to do everything I can to maintain hand-eye coordination. Table tennis is good for that.

That is where my *Prince Oliver Penguin* trilogy books came in. I discovered I could paint, not having drawn or painted since my school days at SMH—childlike, though, the illustrations for my books are! Art requires very focussed hand-eye coordination.



Having PD as a budding author is difficult inasmuch as I make endless mistakes when typing, all of which I correct as I go along. I used to type 98 wpm with no mistakes, but now I must go far slower, focus hard, and make my hands obey me. Similar to when I walk. My left arm no longer swings naturally, but I can "think" it, to make it swing. My legs feel like lead, but I can "think" them into commanding me.

I am a self-publisher, through Amazon. Of course, I first offered my books to publishers, but I learned that the norm now is that you have to be some sort of known personality, or celebrity, for a publisher to take you on, or fit a slot they are looking for. To self-publish has been a fascinating, quite hard, experience, but again, it's forced me to focus and not to give up in any way.

My next book is currently in the throes of being read, proofed and formatted. It is called *Hidden in Plain Sight, a British Military Agent's Story*. It is the story of my father's work during WWII with the very secret MI-19, working out of Moscow, and England. Hopefully it will have been published by the time this article appears!



Left, Shirley selling her books at a Christmas market.

Right, Christmas 2018 with sister Pam on Pam's deck at Tamarama Beach, Sydney



Different 'eras' of Girls struggle sometimes to reconcile "the San" with "the Art block" and so on. Under Miss Davies' leadership we had one of the biggest building programmes of the post-war years and I think that it was not until the VI form House and swimming pool were built that any more significant structural changes were made. Browsing through 1969's newsletter I found this article which goes some way to explain the pre/post 1969 buildings. There are some delightful illustrations of the new and repurposed rooms in the newsletter – it's well worth a read!

STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS AT ST. MARY'S HALL

DURING THE LAST three years a remarkable structural change has taken place at the Hall. Extensive modernisation has been made in some parts of the school, whilst additional facilities have been added to others.

The first major change took place during the summer holidays of 1966. The enormous old Common Room connecting the Elliott Wing with the main body of the school had, for several years, served no real purpose. This expensive waste of space was converted into three sizeable classrooms, now devoted to classics, mathematics and modern languages, as well as serving as form rooms. A new corridor was constructed along the western side of these rooms to maintain easy access to the Elliott Wing.

This first improvement was followed by a whole spate of others. During the summer of 1967 a well-equipped physics laboratory was installed at the east end of the first-floor corridor. As well as the main laboratory which contains all the necessary equipment for teaching to advanced level and spacious working area for practical work, there is a dark room and two large store cupboards.

Some of the most dramatic changes in the school have been the most recent. During the past few months the basement, which previously was at best dingy, has been transformed, and better use has been made of the space. The western end, previously occupied by the stockroom and part of the kitchen, has been converted into a spacious new dining room, large enough to seat all girls at one sitting. It is surprisingly light, with the two additional windows on the western side, and even more surprisingly it is quiet, owing to the sound-absorbent tiles in the ceiling. Furthermore, a new, well-planned kitchen has been built on as an extension to the dining room, so that all catering facilities are now conveniently on one floor.

At the other end of the basement the old wooden partitions of the cloakroom have been removed, making the total floor area seem considerably larger, and more than doubling its capacity as a cloakroom.

The removal of the dining room and kitchen to the basement left an extensive area on the ground floor for conversion into a variety of rooms. The old kitchen has been made into a very large English room that will serve a dual purpose as a lecture room when the need arises. It will be invaluable in the latter capacity by reducing over-use of the Elliott Hall. The old dining room has been converted into two staff rooms and a history room. Each subject now has its own room, where teaching can be carried out and display material used to the best advantage.

Extensive alterations have been carried out not only in the school, but also in the boarding houses. Considerable space in Elliott House has been used more effectively to enlarge dormitories as well as to provide more private studies and recreation areas. Even more important, a well-equipped sanatorium has been removed from its old building at the back of the school to more compact quarters in Elliott House. The space released in the old building will lend itself to further conversion and provide additional teaching facilities. Finally, St. Hilary House now has more staff and common rooms as well as new fire exits from all dormitories.

These alterations have doubtless caused some temporary inconveniences, but, despite these, there can be few people who do not think them thoroughly worthwhile. The additional amenities have greatly facilitated the smooth running of the school and the continuing achievement of the aim which it has for so long pursued—namely an all-round education in the truest sense of the word.

A. HOWARD, U.VI.

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Three small images of photos from the newsletter to whet your appetite!



English Room (Old Kitchen)



Part of Dining Room (Converted Basement)



Physics Laboratory (First Floor East)

All this was, of course, followed by the construction of the 'new' Chapel and Hall, with stage at one end and Chapel at the other, with new music cells. A dramatic improvement! ☺

WHERE IS SHE NOW?

Hoda Barakat contacted me in January to say:

"I would love to get contact details for Sara Al Shaikly who left SMH in 1987. She was the year above me in school. I have often wondered where she was." If anyone can assist Hoda please email smhaenquiries@gmail.com

No “Random” Ramble this time - a very themed and focussed discussion”

Prisca Furlong (Baillie 1964-69) got the chat going on one of our very favourite topics - FOOD - one wet and windy Sunday in January when she asked the Common Room "Did any of you learn to make a roux sauce in DS classes at school? I did but I clearly wasn't well taught or observed by Miss De B... very sweet though she was as a person ... because my sauces were always lumpy and only fit to be thrown away which put me off making sauces from scratch until 54 years later ... a couple of weeks ago. I was doing cauliflower cheese to go with the Sunday roast for the family and when I discovered I didn't have the packet instant cheese sauce I thought I had, I had to bite the bullet and attempt a roux sauce. With the same false confidence I adopted somehow on the day I passed my car driving test I set to... I placed a healthy chunk of butter in the pan and added a little sieved flour. Miracle of miracles the paste was smooth... my confidence increased and I gradually added the milk. No lumps at all! Finally, after all these years, I realised the secret is to have plenty of butter to add the flour to. If only I had been told that when I was 12! Now I'm addicted to making sauces!"

Kim Cook (Kimmin 1959-64) said " Well done! Yes, Prisca, roux sauce was one of the first things we learned, along with short-crust pastry (used to make cheese and tomato tricorns), Victoria sponge sandwich, thick beef stew, and many other recipes I still use, but without using the actual recipe...! My DS exercise book has long since disappeared, but I've used the basic recipes so often that I now use guesswork, with plenty of improvisation. We also learned about kitchen planning and hygiene, plumbing, heating, and other useful adjuncts to the actual cookery. I've always been very grateful for what Miss de Baughn taught me."

Lilly Nicholson (Chester 1994-99) sent "Congratulations!" adding "It's all in the sieve and stir"

Penny Barnes (Ryall/Hunt 1957-61): "Thankfully I chose Latin over DS" but Shirley Read-Jahn retorted "Wish I could have done both."

Prisca said that she I wasn't given the choice... "because I only got 65 percent in my first year French exam I was placed in DS instead of Latin - I've always regretted not doing Latin!"

Lis Eastham (Ferguson 1969-76) was made to do Latin (by her father), but, in her words "was so rubbish at it that I eventually switched to DS but hindsight is that a Latin grounding is a very useful thing. I went on to become a Catering Manager...and I can make a roux without even thinking about it (sorry, Prisca). Well done though for biting the bullet, though!"

Prisca commented, very truly, that "Success breeds success and early failure can put a child off ever having the confidence to try again... until needs must in a desperate situation." She added that "I just love the sound of Latin... especially singing masses etc and over the years, having spoken pretty basic Spanish in Peru for several years and having to learn Latin botanical names for my garden design course, I have a bit of understanding so I can decipher quite a lot of it in the archives when I'm trying to get to grips with old documents... not enough for full comprehension unfortunately." Lis concurred, saying she sings (in the choir she is a member of in her French home) "I sing in Latin and French and Italian, it has been beneficial when getting to grips with French fluency....and I use Botanical names to figure out what a plant is in French....I just I don't study it."

I recalled that there was "no opportunity for cookery for me, but lucky lucky me I had a mother who was not only a superb cook but a great teacher so roux (and other things) were in the DNA. I remember clearly being invited to lunch in the DS room, down by Elliott and the San, by 'general VI' schoolfriends - a GREAT treat."

Prisca said that "Penny was lucky to have a mother who enjoyed teaching her to cook. I never went near the cooker at home in all my growing up years... unlike some of my day-girl school friends like **Corinne Andrews (Hannant 1963-69)**, and **Jane Watson (Amherst-Clark 1963-71)** who I remember put me to shame in the kitchen... not least when I helpfully suggested to Miss de B that I go round the DS lab to see whose cooker was causing the burning smell... only to discover it was my boiling potatoes that had burnt dry! In the end I learnt by trial and error and cookery book." (And Prisca is a wonderful cook...so it just goes to show that you only need a brain and perseverance!)

Jane owned up that her family has "a long standing joke that I burn something in every meal I cook! It started in the Post Office years, and I like to keep them happy now if I cook for them. Meals I cook for myself are spot on."

Sian Spencer (Williams (1967-77) had a "Welsh granny taught me how to make cheese sauce with the all in one method in the 1970s; all ingredients in the pan cold heat up together stirring all the time. My French saucier uses the same method and is still used weekly. It is now making some very strange noises but Moulinex have stopped making them so I am keeping it going. It was always my task as a youngster to make the Sherry sauce that went with the Christmas pudding (basic white sauce sugar and a fair glug of Sherry). As the youngest in the family why it fell to me no idea but probably because I was the most sober particularly in my teens after a day skiing."

Heather Johnson felt sure that "Miss de B must have taught us how to make a roux sauce but it was actually my mother who taught me. It was always my job at home to make the white sauce and I still make them regularly. Sorry

it has taken you so long Prisca to get it right but sure the family are all enjoying your sauces now. I also made the brandy butter at Christmas time, always did it while listening to Carols from Kings. Mine was beaten butter and icing sugar and rather more brandy than Mrs. Beeton suggested, delicious!"

Jackie Riley (Rogers 1978-81) recalled making rice pudding...One of my personal favourites then and now!

Katie Johnson (Cook 1979-85) said that at SMH "I was taught the "proper" way with butter and flour, then gradually add the milk. I've since discovered the "chuck it all in" method and not looked back since!"

Shannon O'Neill (1989-91) recalled only ever making cakes..."I specifically remember Mrs ?Rotherham saying my chocolate cake looked like a cow pat! Seriously, I was baking with one and non-dominant hand whilst nursing a broken collar bone."

This reminded Prisca of her father who used to say to her sister and her: " 'A bit sad, Prisca' or 'A bit plain, Jane'. My cake baking has improved though since the time, as a young adult, I made a chocolate cake that you couldn't get a knife into. In disgust and disappointment I threw the whole thing out of the window into the snow which I thought would soften it for the birds. The following day my 2 yr old son came running in from the garden saying: 'Mummy, there's a dead rat out there....' ... we never worked out whether it had been hit on the head by a solid flying chocolate cake or whether it had tried eating it and died of indigestion!"

Marie Fieldhouse (York 1989-96) reminded Shannon that "we did more than cakes - I remember doing winter salad (some kind of coleslaw?) and a curry (I remember that in particular as I forgot to bring in a container and had to transport it home in a bucket! It did not look appetising in a bucket 😊) And we could cook whatever we liked in our last ever HE lesson. I chose a chocolate cake recipe my Mum had, which included mayonnaise as (it turned out) a key ingredient. I thought this was very weird and left it out, with the resulting cake a complete disaster! I wasn't particularly good at HE..."

Prompted by this Shannon recalled, "Oh yes we had Miss W (I can't remember her full name) in Y3. It was quite traumatic to the point I almost blocked in out! She was a vegan and asked us to cook something without eggs, probably to get us out of the 'HE is about cooking cakes' attitude. I was indecisive about what to cook and Miss W suggested I made the same as the boarders – a chicken curry. Mrs James usually ate whatever I made and I used to get nice little thank you cards from her so my cooking must have been OK."

"No wonder you don't like to remember that," replied Marie, " although how kind of Mrs James. Yes, I think it was with Miss Wed that we branched into meals. My main memory of that, however, is having to write up what we did and evaluate ourselves. I think many of my evaluations included low points for remembering to bring in the right equipment and ingredients."

Prisca voiced many of our thoughts when she commented that it was interesting that by Shannon/Marie's time it was Home Economics and in hers it was Domestic Science!

She also mentioned to Marie that she once made a chocolate cake with mayonnaise in it when her children were little which, "unusually for me, was a success but I've never made it since... it was nice and moist without being sad." Shannon said she was off out of the Common Room to look up how to cook a mayonnaise cake! And Prisca said yes, she was off to her recipe books, too!

Marie chimed in that she has "not made many cakes as an adult but I have started baking more since having children, so maybe I should attempt a mayonnaise cake for old time's sake"

So, the room emptied and the sounds of beating of butter and sugar echoed round the SMHA world!

***Has this prompted any memories for YOU
of your 'cookery' 'domestic science' 'home economics' (etc.) lessons at school?
Do tell us – we love hearing them!***

***Or have you been cooking from your copy of the SMHA Cookbook?
There are lots of ideas for new things to do as well as the old favourites.***

***You can download a copy any time from
<https://www.smhassociation.org/the-vault.php>***

Sad news to conclude this edition.

As many of you will know, **Arabella Van der Merwe (Driscoll, 1984-91)** died on 30th January 2019.

Emma Saxby shared this news with friends in the Virtual Common Room.

Bella died at home in Plettenberg Bay. She had her appendix removed in December and they discovered a cancerous tumour on her colon which was removed. The prognosis sounded hopeful and that, coupled with her characteristic tenacity and classic 'Driscoll humour', meant family and friends thought they had many more years with her yet, but it appears she may have had a reaction to chemotherapy and she died very suddenly in her sleep leaving her husband, Werner and two children, Lilyella and Sofia.

SMHA contacted Arabella's sister Sofia to send our condolences and asked if she would share with us the details of any memorial service in the UK*.

Henrietta Nesbitt (Duveen), Ali Coates, Emma Butterwick (Terrot), Lalida Richardson, Kate Lowe, Naomi Levy (Slater), Helena Vergel de Dios (Bastide), Emma Thomas (Davies), Camilla Wells, Holly Stokes (Garmston), Jane Pinnell (Garland), Claire Grinyer and Sally Tang were among her many friends who commented when Emma shared the news. Many others recorded their sadness.

Typical of their memories is this, from **Ali**, who wrote: *"Arabella was my room-mate all through my years at SMH. She was my closest friend and I would never have survived school life without her. I started in the middle of 3rd year and felt I was never really accepted or fitted in with anyone. Arabella befriended me and took care of me, standing by my side when I was alone. She was an incredible remarkable beautiful woman, with the biggest heart. I loved her very much and cherish the memories I have of her. Her husband has lost a wonderful loving wife and her girls have lost the most amazing mother a girl can have. We from SMH have lost a sister and amazing friend, the world has lost a remarkable amazing woman and heaven has gained one hell of a special angel."*

Annabel Galsworthy drew on her very special friendship with Bella to send this tribute:

To my darling ALSD also known as Arabella Bella and Udi. The impact you had on my life is immeasurable because for the majority of it you have been there - over 30 years of love laughter and friendship and generally causing chaos. Everyone who knows me knows you because we were always 'us', a team. I know I would not have survived without you always encouraging/nagging but most of all loving me. You not only introduced me to my husband (whose shoes you then went on to fill with squirry cream to 'see if he was a keeper') you made me a better person. As for a memory I would like to share with Lilly and Sofia - I have chosen one of a million which is when I talked you into entering the Diamond White beauty contest. You looked totally stunning and we thought you were a sure thing but you turned up wearing trainers and the door code meant you couldn't get in the club!!! Frantic dash to the phone box (no mobiles then) and my mum turned up with allowable footwear! You rocked it darling xxxxx

For myself I can add only that I knew Arabella only from our Association interactions. She was unfailingly kind and helpful and I am glad that even after her passing there is ample evidence of this since the news of her death, shared on our SMHA Facebook page, has led to us reconnecting with several contemporaries of hers. She would, I am sure, have found this a positive legacy. If other friends have special memories they would like to share with us do send them to smhaenquiries@gmail.com for the next e-Newsletter (by 31st May 2019 please)

*If any members wish to contact Sofia, this is her email address: sofia_driscoll@yahoo.co.uk



Left, from a 'long school photo', Arabella, in the centre. Others we have identified include:

Bottom row, **Nicky Slater** and, to her immediate right **Marie Levine**.

Top row far left **Rosemary Fox** and next to her **Suzannah Ayres**.

If you can identify yourself, or any friends we will be happy to update this in the next issue.

And pictured on the right, Arabella, with husband, Werner and daughters Lilyella & Sofia



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.

We are selling off the LAST few lovely prints of the school and have reduced the price to a real bargain £8 including p&p, so think hard about whether you want one and then act, or miss out for ever!



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!

HOW TO FIND US

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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)

(Vacancy, covered by Penny)

Sian Spencer, (Williams, 1967-77)

Lis Eastham, (Ferguson, 1969-76)

(Vacancy, covered by Lis)

Jan Johnson, (Launchbury, 1977-84)

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