

ST. MARY'S HALL ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2017 e-LETTER

Dear Friends

Well that was 2016! Christmas and the New Year are well and truly over and we are into February (I'm late again!); my wonderful, and not nearly long enough, holiday in New Zealand has come and gone; HMRC have confirmed receipt of my Self Assessment form, so that was January sorted!

There is lots of news to pass on to you all since the last e-letter. The new Admin Team is gearing up for our first Skype meeting in March – we have almost all just about managed to overcome the technological setbacks and set up our Skype accounts (easier for some than others who never use it!)

TEAM NEWS

Just a small note of amendment to the Terms of Reference – I, as Editor, am now managing the 100 Club and not the Manager.

Sue McDonagh (1969-76), our new website administrator, has had a bit of a tumble and broken her wrist! Hopefully recovery will be speedy, but we did think that this would impede the spring clean of the website. Not so! Between them **Sue** and **Lis Eastham (Ferguson 1969-1976)** have managed to give it a bit of a 'once over' and I understand that the latest membership database is now available to view. If you want to have a browse around the website and have forgotten how to do so:

Website: www.smhassociation.org
Logon: smhmember
Password: elliott18362009

I would reiterate the following though: **PLEASE DO NOT SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH ANYONE AS IT COMPROMISES EVERY MEMBER OF SMHA.**

NEWS FROM SUE CARNOCHAN

Sue writes: "I recently contacted the lady in charge of the Royal Sussex County Hospital Charity Fund. When she learned that I had taught at SMH and that I had been the Archivist, she invited me to meet her at the school which I did. I took her on a trip down memory lane visiting many of the old classrooms and saw how they had been transformed into offices. In each one I told her what they had been used for i.e. science, library, history, R.E. I asked her to take photos so that past pupils could see what they looked like now in 2016 and here they are. The boarding accommodation is being used by doctors and nurses. I found the visit very interesting and pleasing to know that the school is being well looked after and used for the community."



The Library – now the Trust HQ



Headmistress' Office – now Reception



Science Room – now Finance Office

It's hard to recognise the rooms now isn't it? There have been several posts on the Facebook Virtual Common Room site recently with photos from 2009 when the school closed down. In the next e-letter I will do a section showing some of those and other photos posted since, as I am aware that a number of you will not have seen them.

Loosely following in a similar vein, **Sue Meeks** sent me the following photos of her, **Olive Ridge**, **Sue Carnochan**, and **Jo Stubbs** sorting out documents in the reference library at Roedean with the man from The Keep after SMH closed. I think **Olive's** expression in the fourth photo shows exactly what a large task they all undertook.





Just to fill in this space – and because we have a number of new members receiving this e-letter for the first time – the SMH Archives are now accessible through the East Sussex Records Office website at [The Keep](#) which is located at Falmer, Brighton. You will need to register for a Reader's account but that only involves giving an email address and your name, address and telephone number, following a link in the email which is then sent to you, and creating a password.



Obituaries

Father David Pain: **Pamela James** has reported that **Father Pain**, one time Chaplain to the School, has died. His funeral took place at St Mary's Convent, Burlington Road, Chiswick, London on 21st January.

Eleanor Gerdani (Loe): **Neda Baharan** has told us "It is with great sadness that we report that **Eleanor** passed away on Wednesday 4 Jan after a long battle. She was at SMH until 2001/2002."

Lady Bryson: **Susan Roller** emailed me on 14 January "I note that today's Times has the following: **Lady Bryson** died on 5 January 2017. Private cremation followed by a memorial service in March to be held at St Nicholas Church in Brighton.

I assume that this was 'our' **Lady Bryson** who taught domestic science in the late 1970s? I think that my SMH cookery exam (written) was the only one I ever remember failing! However something from the practical classes must have sunk in as I'd like to think I was a reasonably good cook these days...."

Gillian Green (1968-1976): We have received notification via a photograph posted on the Facebook VCR (shown later in this e-letter) that **Gill** has passed away since the School closure reunion in 2009.

Jane Friend (Barnwell) 1949-?: On 14 January **Lis Eastham** wrote "It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of **Jane Friend**. The information has reached me via my FB Feed in the form of a post from her son. Unfortunately, information is limited but Jane was at SMH from 1949 (known as **(Peggy) Barnwell**). Jane joined the Facebook VCR in January 2015 (one of the early ones) and was one of our regular contributors."

Her son, Ed, says of his mother "I'm here to pass on the sad news that **Jane**, our mother, passed away peacefully in hospital yesterday morning. Many people will have fond memories of our mother the piano teacher. To me, my mother had two possessions to herself of which she adored. The first one was her beautiful grand piano. The second was a pair of brown suede boots with suede tassels which she kept in pristine condition for almost three decades as they went in out of fashion as trend would dictate. To me, they always looked cool. Our mother played her piano to perfection. As a child, I would lie under the piano while she played. Here is a link to my most favourite piece of music she played flawlessly whilst I ate toast under the piano and often fell asleep there. Please listen and enjoy your memories of Jane. We love you mum."

He includes a link to Mozart's Piano Sonata No 12 in F

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grVHXY5cM8>

Pat Carr (1931-38): We have received news that **Pat** died in December 2015.

Our condolences go to all their families.

News of Old Girls ...

Kicking off this section is a photograph taken by **Maggie Knappe** showing **Mr Liddell** on the final day in July 1975 of those in her year who weren't staying into sixth form. Although the quality is not too good it was posted on the closed Facebook page where the following were identified: **Terry Damm, Anna Tinner, Gina Behar, Philly Davis, Caroline Rea Halvatzis, Melanie Rose-Fine, Millie Ashby, Shelley Luer (Hayes), Allisa Poole Phillips, and Jenny Carley**. Fond memories! But sadly, few of these ladies will see their name in lights as they are not on the Association database! If anyone has contact, please ask them to get in touch with me at: secretary@smhassociation.org to rectify the situation!!



Talk about shades of 'Six Degrees of Separation' - in an email from **Alison Grimston (Pile 1976-1983)** she mentioned that (at the time of writing) her daughter was going out with the son of SMH Old Girl **Julia Behar (197?-1977)** who had known **Alison's** sister **Liz Pile (1970-1979)** at school. **Liz** also gave us her professional advice on the wording of the Terms of Reference at the General Meeting last year.

Jane Gilmore (Bayly 1952-1958) wrote to me following the last e-letter: I also remember doing "The Lady of Shallot" but unfortunately have no idea where it came from or who wrote it. It was nice to remember Miss Wynn. I had forgotten her name but have memories of her playing the organ in the hall/gym while someone frantically pumped it behind the scenes!

*Following a tidy up of the database, we have written to all those who do not have an email address to see if they are now on line or to confirm that they are still happy to receive a postal Newsletter once a year, which will be an annual roundup of these quarterly e-letters. In response to the letter, **Ruth Wiffen (Bradbrooke 1953-1957)** rang **Penny Harrison (Titheradge 1969-1973)** and in the course of the conversation, **Ruth** mentioned that she was contemporary of **Rosemary Wilton**, sister of actress Penelope, who we mentioned in that 'famous associations' piece in last year's newsletter and that she had been one of the actresses in a house competition where, with **Rosemary** playing Shylock, they had won the House Cup for extracts from *The Merchant of Venice*. **Ruth** was also wondering what the San / Art block was being used for by the Hospital and whether the playing field (lax pitch in our day) had been sold off or built on as the one on the other side of the road had. Since several of you work / have friends who work at the Hospital, does anyone know?*

Tricia Searle (Swalwell 1962-1968) has also recently found us. She wrote to me with her recollections: "I had the dreaded '**Connie**' (**Miss Conrady**), who was so different to anyone I had experienced before. Having led a life of relative freedom since birth in Burma, with lots of love and laughter - I found the way she ran the school unnecessarily harsh. I was often in trouble because I just honestly didn't agree with a lot of the petty regulations (as I found them!!). We had a rather tempestuous relationship! I recall one disagreement with her, just before she left, when she did actually say, that although she did not agree with what I was saying, she respected my point of view and that I was prepared to stand my ground! She was very old school and I'm sure she mellowed in later years! The change of atmosphere when '**Noddy**' (**Olwen Davies**) arrived was palpable! Thank goodness for **Miss Farmer, Miss Bristol, Mrs Webb, Mrs Ellwood, Mrs Sheasby, Miss Griffiths** and '**Eggy**' (**Mrs Eggleton**)!! It wasn't all bad!"

Tricia also mentioned that **Jane Roberts (1964-1969)** asked to be remembered to **Noddy** when someone next speaks to her. She tells us that **Jane** moved from Royal Service to the hospitality industry, where she worked her way to top management in London. Made redundant in 2000, she decided to leave London and "opt out" of the rat race. She is sad SMH has closed and that she could not remain "with" the OG's as she has no modern technology.

Shannon O'Neil (199?-1997) posted her thoughts on the SMH VCR Facebook page, remembering **Miss Heather Ford** who died from a brain tumour on 1 December 22 years ago: "I remember hearing the news as if it was yesterday and her sudden tragic death rocked the school.

I was one of the last pupils to see her as she left work in her track suit as I was loitering by the main door, I assume I must have been waiting to use the phone but some had also been selling World Aids Days ribbons there as well so maybe it was that. The relief/joy that we had as 6th formers that she hadn't turned up for our swimming lesson the next morning made us not question her absence. To this day, I don't know how Mr Knight composed himself during the subsequent maths lesson. He humoured our jokes about her just not turning up and even congratulated us for being on time and not looking like drown rats. He knew that he could not share the sad news until after lunch. Assuming that this was to stop rumours by telling all pupils the news together as well as giving the teachers time to get over the immediate shock. I think the way that Mrs James and her team delivered the news and supported us to process our grief over the next few days and into the spring term was remarkable - many schools could learn from this. For such a small school, we were pulled even closer together as a family. Every pupil from nursery to Upper 6th had been taught by her, everyone was affected.

I dreaded PE, those freezing sessions on the netball court not to mention the lesson when I broke my collar bone, being made to surrender our earrings and the damp second hand swimming costumes if you forgot your own! But Miss Ford was the woman who was patient with my sporting ineptness and suitably compassionate with my many sport related accidents. It is only after her death did I really appreciate that. She was the one who taught me to swim, was there as I put on my first pair of skis (and picked me up when I crashed into a tree quite soon after) and went the extra mile to support my rehab after my knee operation. She had me in the pool everyday treading water but made it fun as she doubled it up with the wee ones in the nursery and pre-prep learning to swim. You forget the monotony and pain of physio when you are trying to keep a 4-year-old in a white cap afloat!

Swimming, skiing, supporting disabled children and adults in the pool, and having a knee that works are all things that that I enjoy as an adult and I have Miss Ford to thank for that. I will always be grateful, continuing to hold her in my head and in my heart. May she rest in peace."

Another report from the Facebook VCR; back in September **Penny Harrison** reported (I would have included this in the last e-letter but ran out of room) a telephone conversation that she had had with **Noddy** who sends you all her best wishes: **Noddy** particularly wishes to thank those who contributed to 'Such Fun'** declaring she has learned things about the school she had never dreamed of. One comment deserves to be verbatim "I am a little relieved I never had the **Read-Jahn** woman as a pupil - I think she might have been a handful". Anyway, a couple of tales:

First, the Hilary Ghost. Apparently before Miss Payne came to run St Hilary one Miss Barr(?) was in charge. When Miss Davies started she lost a matron at the end of each of her first three terms. When the third one left she pressed her for a reason and was eventually told that it was so difficult coping with Miss Barr's sister who lived at the house in complete secrecy! She slept on the floor of the bed sitting room which was all the Head of House merited and did not come out until the girls had gone up to school, when she emerged to bathe and wander round. Most of the girls knew about her and referred to her as 'The Ghost'. On at least one occasion **Noddy** had shown prospective parents around and the sister had been one room ahead of her, flitting out as they entered! Following this Miss Barr was encouraged to retire.

This prompted **Noddy** to tell me how she acquired **Miss Payne**. **Miss P** had been head of a very small girls school which closed and many of the girls had transferred to SMH necessitating phone calls between **Noddy** and **Miss P**. During one of these calls **Miss Payne** said "I don't suppose you have anything for me?" She was formidable, once falling off a high ladder when paperhanging but refusing to go to A&E until she had bathed and changed even though **Noddy** thought she might have broken her leg. It would not, apparently, have been 'proper' to have gone while grubby!

I gave Noddy your love and best wishes. She remains resolutely cheery although her sight is failing fast and she still has a bad ulcer on one toe.

** 'Such Fun' is a compilation of Old Girls memories of their days at SMH which is available on the Facebook VCR.

And talking of "that **Read-Jahn** woman", **Shirley (1954-1959)** recently sent me this: "Good friend **Rowan Fookes (Caukell 1954-1956)** flew out from Europe to spend 2015 Christmas and New Year 2016 with us all in Sydney. Here are (L-R) **Pam Bailey (Read-Jahn 1984-1959)**, **Shirley**, **Horst (Shirley's husband)**, and **Rowan** sitting on the roots of an enormous tree in the Camperdown Cemetery in Newtown, Sydney, The tree is variously known as a *Ficus Macrophylla*, a Moreton Bay Figtree and an Australian Banyan."



What a magnificent tree!!



***Shirley** also posted this photo of her (R) and **Pam** (L) five years ago when **Rowan** (C) came out to Australia for **Shirley** and Horst's wedding*

Veronica Smith (Alsop 1953-1962) also contacted us following receipt of the 'email letter'. She says that her modem has now been sorted – and not before time! (her words, not mine) – and her iPad and iPhone are at the ready. She would be pleased to hear from anyone who knew her!

Bridget Sudworth (Last 1960-63) has also emailed me: "I read your newsletter with interest, particularly the two obits of two of my contemporaries, **Brita Seeberg** and **Jenny Riley**. It's always a bit of a shock to be reminded of one's mortality and they were both young - well, I would say that, wouldn't I? We are fact, in our early 70s now which makes us ancient even though still feeling like 25 at times!

I have never really kept up with the OG Association as we all left so very long ago but I did meet up with **Penny Barnes (Hunt 1957-1961)** years ago (she wrote the obit for **Brita**) and am still in touch with **Tina Challacombe (Cocks 1958-1963)**, **Anna Crowe (Crowley)** and until last year, **Ros Williams (Reid)**. She may have moved but hasn't given me a change of address - I knew her house in Exeter was on the market.

I have been married for nearly 50 years now and live in the Welsh Marches, two married sons and five grandchildren. Life is very busy indeed but in between the tricky bits (family ill health/deaths); there are still some very happy times."

Helen Thompson (Carden 1976-1980) has been in contact following our letter to her mother-in-law **Vivien (Greenyer 1933-1940)** wondering if she now had an email address. **Helen** said that sadly **Vivien** does not use the internet but they have arranged that **Helen** will print off the quarterly newsletter for her. **Vivien** used to thoroughly enjoy reading the St Mary's Hall magazine so I hope that she will enjoy reading the quarterly e-letters, and if she wishes to contribute, my details are at the end!

Hilary Leathes (1962-1969) is trying to contact **Hilary Arthur** who was St Mary's during the '60's. **Hilary A** was younger than **Hilary L** so thinks she would have been at St Mary's mid to late 1960's early 1970's. **Hilary L** is actually trying to contact her sister **Susan Amor (Arthur)**. **Sue** lived on the Chichester Canal. A mutual college friend is over from Australia and also keen/concerned as to what has happened to her. So any help would be great. If anyone is able to help please email me at secretary@smhassociation.org

Jo Vicat (1969-1976) has recently shared these photos on the VCR Facebook page, taken at the Reunion in 2009 when the school closed:



L-R: **Lucinda Monnington, Gill Green, Jo Vicat, Belinda Jenkerson-Kenshole and Felicity Johnson**



L-R: **Belinda Jenkerson-Kenshole, June Purley (1969-1976), Gillian Green, Felicity Johnson, Johanna Vicat, Sian Spencer (Williams 1967-1977)** What a gloriously sunny day it was!

Sadly, **Belinda, Felicity** and **Lucinda** will not see this mention of them as they are not on the SMHA database and therefore not receiving emails from us! It would be great if anyone knows of their whereabouts and could ask them to get in touch –

secretary@smhassociation.org

Amy Ellison (1988-1995) has recently posted on the Facebook page, and I thought I would give her a shout here too. She says: "My choir is looking for a new pianist/ musical director. As a talented and diverse group, I wondered whether anyone would be interested or know someone who might be?"

Women of Note



Women of Note, an experienced and established women's choir based in Brighton, is seeking a piano-playing Musical Director/Accompanist to run weekly rehearsals and further develop our extensive repertoire.

We are a group of 12, some of whom have sung together for over ten years, who currently rehearse on Thursdays from 8pm-10pm in Hove. We enjoy singing a wide range of music, in parts, accompanied and/or a Capella.

Some read music, others don't, but all enjoy performing in the Brighton area to raise money for local charities, and learning both classics and new compositions.

We are looking for someone to take the lead in choosing new pieces for us to learn and perform and to bring out the best in our small and enthusiastic group. A good sense of humour, reliability and the ability to eat quite a lot of cake is essential.

For more information about Women of Note please visit our website at: <http://womenofnote.org.uk/> and to express an interest please email us at: womenofnotesing@gmail.com.

The 100 Club

Have you joined the **100 Club** yet? "Why is she asking?" I hear you say! If I've already told you that I am running the Club, then surely I know the answer to my question! Yes, you are correct. I do know the answer, and it's probably "No". The income we raise from running **100 Club** helps with the day to day running costs of the Association – bank charges, stationary and postage etc – and is a valuable source of income. There are currently 58 numbers in use so do I know that if you like a little flutter, now is a good time to join! Whenever I put a notice like this in the e-letter, entries increase and that optimum moment is gone! If you haven't already done so, it is a very simple process. The year runs from January – December and entry is payable by cheque/BACS transfer on a pro rata basis for the remaining number of months to next December at £1 per number per month. 50% of the income is distributed to the first and second numbers drawn on a 30/20 basis. The other 50% goes towards the running costs of the Association.

November 2016 Draw – 60 entries

1st number 50 **Sue Meek**
2nd Number 4 **Margaret Habershon**

December Draw 2016 – 55 entries

1st number 17 **Margaret Ellis**
2nd Number 14 **Hilary Briegel-Jones**

REUNION ALERT

Rosa Cook (Suffolk 1985-1990) is organising a reunion in Brighton on Sunday 7th May 2017 for Old Girls who took their GCSE's around 1990 plus or minus a year or two. Any staff or old girls who would like to attend - please message **Rosa** via Facebook or email her at: thecooksdownunder@yahoo.co.nz for more information.

If you fall outside that age group but would still like to attend don't hang back, because as **Rosa** says, it would be lovely to see as many people as possible. However, please keep in mind that those in the 1990 age group will have first dibs on places!

SMHA Virtual Common Room

We were delighted to welcome our 200th member to the **Facebook Virtual Common Room** over the Christmas Holidays. This is an amazing achievement in less than two years of starting the Group. However it still means that nearly 600 of you who receive this e-newsletter are NOT members and although clearly it is not for everyone, it may be that some of you have concerns which are unfounded about the Group. We are especially pleased that a lot of the recent joiners to the Group – and therefore also to the Association – were at the school when it closed, or shortly before. It's great to have reconnected with you!

If you are absolutely determined that engaging in 'social media' on whatever level is not for you, then please jump to the next article but if there is the tiniest bit of you that says "I am interested but do not know how/ have concerns over security/suitability / do not have time" or some other reason then please read on.

Yes – you do need to be a member of Facebook to be in the Group but this is not a security risk to you or your computer. **Lis** or **Penny** will be very happy to help you to set up an account and to ensure that you have your privacy settings as high as they can be which would mean that only those you specifically allow to see your account can do so – and they will only see posts and photos which you allow them to. Those of us in the Common Room are quite often not friends outside it so we only see comments in that group and have no idea what our fellow members are 'up to' elsewhere.

No – you are not the 'wrong age' for it! We have a very active set of Old Girls who were at SMH in the 1950s in the Group and we have recently reunited two who were at school from 1949 and lived next door to each other but had been out of touch for half a century. Without the Common Room this would not have happened.

We're also particularly pleased to be attracting a number of OGs who attended in the 1990s. They are also recruiting their friends to join and of course that means an ever growing Association as well as a crowded Common Room.

No – you don't HAVE to do anything! You will be notified when new things come on to the page if you want to, but you can opt out of this (**Lis/Penny** can show you how) so you only need to look when you want to.

Yes – it takes some time in your busy life, but only the amount of time you want it to. It can be every day, once a week or much, much less. That is completely up to you. No one is expected to conform to any one profile.

If these answers change your mind then please go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SMHAclosed/> to join or set up your account, with or without our help (<https://www.facebook.com>) and then ask to join.

If you have other questions but are starting to think about joining, then contact **Lis/Penny** with your questions and we will help you: lis.eastham@tesco.net / pennyharrison55@btinternet.com

And Finally....

Just a final word to thank the group of printers who have ~~been co-erced into~~ volunteered to print the annual roundup newsletter in July and send it out to those members who do not receive this quarterly e-letter electronically. We are extremely grateful for your continued help with this and those that receive it are, I am sure, equally appreciative.

The next newsletter is due out at the end of April 2017 – deadline 14 April!! As ever, I am extremely grateful for anything that anyone would like to send me (or publish on the VCR page). Your photos, memories, requests to contact old friends are all welcome. You can contact me via email or my home address (both below).



© Can Stock Photo

Jane

Jane Watson (Amherst-Clark 1963-1971)

Email: secretary@smhassociation.org

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Public Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Marys-Hall-Association/265334070191137>

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