

January 2006

# *St. Mary's Chronicle*

## *SMART 2005*





# CONTENTS

Chairman's Letter . . . . .	1	Life changes after ten years and now in Ox . . . . .	18
Secretary to SMOGA . . . . .	2	Observing the Iraqi elections . . .	19
Hatched, Matched and Despatched . . . . .	3	Prunella Scales Biography . . . . .	19
SMOGS Yellow Pages . . . . .	4	SMART . . . . .	20
Can you help?/Small Ads/ Work Experience . . . . .	6	New Site . . . . .	22
Community News/Travel Awards . .	7	Memories of Wantage . . . . .	24
Are you passionate about SMS? . .	8	4 North Poles Expedition . . . . .	32
Reunions . . . . .	9	Cambodia . . . . .	34
SMOGS Snippets . . . . .	12	Gap year thirty years late! . . . .	38
SMETS . . . . .	13	Message from Headmistress . . . .	40
Obituaries . . . . .	14	Staff Profile – Janet Kingdon . . .	42
Karen Hill Tribes . . . . .	16	World Challenge Expedition . . . .	43
		Ski Club News . . . . .	49

**NONSTOP**  
SKI & SNOWBOARD

IMPROVEMENT & INSTRUCTOR COURSES

WWW.NONSTOPSKI.COM : 0870 850 2074

**NONSTOP**  
SAIL

ADVENTURE TRAVEL & RYA TRAINING

WWW.NONSTOPSAIL.COM : 0870 850 2074

## The Carriage Clock Co

Dealers in fine antique Carriage Clocks

*A wonderful and memorable wedding or retirement present*

10 Chapel Street  
Deal, Kent CT14 6HW  
Tel: 01304 361068



website: [www.carriageclockco.com](http://www.carriageclockco.com)  
email: [sales@carriageclockco.com](mailto:sales@carriageclockco.com)



Victoria Humphries  
Berrymead Cottage  
Lower Hamswell  
Bath BA1 9DE  
Tel: 01225 891361  
Mobile: 07836 733163  
e-mail: [victoriahumphries@berrymead.co.uk](mailto:victoriahumphries@berrymead.co.uk)  
Website: [www.smogs.co.uk](http://www.smogs.co.uk)

January 2006

Dear SMOGs, Girls, Parents, Staff, Ex Staff and Governors

As always I sit here in the first week in January wondering where to start when typing this letter. There is so much to report and yet again the magazine is full of fascinating articles comprising SMOGs achievements, reunions, news from school and the unique SMART exhibition that was held earlier this year. Those who were lucky enough to attend were very pleasantly surprised and amazed at the standard of work that both SMOGs and current pupils have produced. For me, one of the highlights of the Chronicle is Memories of Wantage (page 24); liberty bodices, fortnightly hair washing, Ronnie the rook, roller skating, remedials, school outings, Pilgrim's Progress, sausage rolls on Sunday, school food – spam and train crash . . . its all there, and what is scary is that some of it was still the same when I was at St Mary's in the 80s!!

Sadly this is going to be my last letter to SMOGs as having been Chairman for almost seven years I feel that it is time to hand over at the AGM in May later this year! I have thoroughly enjoyed the past few years and it is great to see how the SMOGA has grown and developed, however it is now such a full time role that the SMOGs committee has decided to restructure the Association. I am thrilled that Ali de Lisle (1990) has agreed to take over as Chairman. She has been on the SMOGs committee for a few years now and has always been incredibly loyal and supportive of SMS. In addition to a new Chairman we have decided to recruit a paid Secretary (see page 2 for details) – this person (ideally a SMOG!) will run the SMOGA on a day to day basis.

A great loss was felt this year by both 'older' Old Girls and the Community following the death of Sister Brigitta in February. She was Headmistress in the late fifties and early sixties and her mantra: *'If you think you can, you can'* was an inspiration to many of her pupils. She was certainly loved and respected in equal measures and her obituary on page 14 is a testament to her amazing life.

On page 22 of the Chronicle you will find the proposed plans for the new school – I think you will all agree that the architects have done a fantastic job. Key highlights of the last year include . . .

- Sir Godfrey Milton-Thompson (Chairman of the Governors) signing the contract for the sale of the existing school. This is a major step and followed a great deal of legal and commercial negotiation.
- A main contractor has been selected: a national builder with the resources to build the new school quickly.
- Our detailed planning application will be heard this month. As much has already been covered in our successful outline application, we are confident of success.

As for the human interest story (or rather non-human interest!) – a set of badgers has been found in the northeast corner of Challow Park. An artificial badgers' set is being planned to encourage them to move away from the building area.

So, I guess it is goodbye from me! Thank you so much to you all for your regular emails and phone calls – I'll certainly miss them, but I am looking forward to being able to spend more time with my ten month old son, Ben! I do hope that you enjoy reading this 2006 Chronicle and thank you very much indeed to all those who have contributed to it.

With best wishes

**Victoria Humphries** (Riches, 1988)  
Chairman SMOGA

## SECRETARY TO THE SMOGA – £15K P.A. (£3K PRO RATA)

The Secretary to the SMOGA (St Mary's Old Girls' Association) is a newly created part time role and over the course of the year will average out at one day per week (i.e. sometimes a couple of hours, sometimes 1½ days e.g. when the Chronicle is being done). Salary of £15K per annum (£3K pro rata).

The Secretary will ideally be a SMOG with a genuine interest in and affection for St Mary's. They can work from home but must be able to get to Wantage/London for three meetings a year, and for other ad hoc meetings. All travel expenses will be paid. The Secretary will be answerable to the Chairman and will be in regular contact with school.

### Skills and attributes needed by the Secretary:

- An excellent phone manner
- A genuine interest in answering queries and chatting to SMOGs
  - Excellent computer skills (including email and internet)
  - Initiative, self motivated and highly organised
- Publishing, fundraising, website and database experience all preferable

### Job Description

#### Admin

- Liaise with Chairman and Treasurer (School Bursar) on regular basis
  - General phone and email enquiries
- Change of contact details on database both email and postal
  - Liaising with school and year groups for reunions
- Tracking and filing ideas for SMOGs emails and Chronicle
  - Compiling and sending out monthly email
- Prepare agenda for meetings and coordinate venue/catering etc.

#### Adverts

- Follow up enquiries and sell advertising when appropriate
- Create advert if no copy given      • Chase payment/send renewals

#### Chronicle

- Edit and compile whole magazine      • Type up any articles sent by post
- 'Create' articles/snippets from information sent via email during year
  - Follow up possible articles      • Liaise with printer

#### Travel Scholarship

- Coordinate interviews and applications
- Follow up interviews and chase articles for magazine

#### Other

- Organise complete overhaul and regular maintenance of SMOGs website
  - Develop and organise fundraising initiatives for SMOGA
- Encourage SMOGs to remember SMS in their charitable giving/covenants
- Liaise with AROPS (Association for Representatives of Old Pupils' Societies)

To apply please email or post a CV and covering letter to Victoria Humphries by February 28th 2006 – interviews will be held in March 2006.

Berrymead Cottage, Lower Hamswell, Bath, BA1 9DE or [victoriahumphries@berrymead.co.uk](mailto:victoriahumphries@berrymead.co.uk)

# HATCHED, MATCHED AND DESPATCHED

## ENGAGEMENTS

**Ali Bailey-West** engaged to Mark Grace

**Harriet Carter** engaged to Steven Williams

**Kate Champkins** engaged to Robin Cleaver

**Charlie Estcourt** engaged to Bryan Ko

**Georgina Eyre** engaged to Cris Daly

**Alice Faulkner** engaged to Charlie Stone

**Alex Forrest** engaged to Nick Whiting

**Louisa Hanbury-Bateman** engaged to Anton Revertera

**Victoria Johnston** engaged to Henry Goodwin

**Alice Lowther** engaged to Charles Leigh

**Hatty Morley** engaged to Nicholas Elwes

**Clare Oliver-Bellasis** engaged to Tim Harriss

**Clare Stephens** engaged to Henry Cecil

**Alexandra Swabey** engaged to Alexander Oppenheim

**Camilla Sykes** engaged to Ben Bateman

## WEDDINGS

**Sophie Neville** married Simon Williams-Thomas on 2nd October 2004

**Tor Matthews** married Angus MacLean on 21st May 2005

**Frippy Bailey West** married Harry Jameson on 28th May 2005

**Clare Oliver-Bellasis** married Tim Harris on 30th July 2005

**Melanie Matthews** married Michael Christian on 14th October 2005

**Lulu Tindall** married James Johnston on 15th October 2005

**Catherine Smith** married Maurits Le Poole on 15th October 2005

## BIRTHS

**Edwina Darke (Watson)** a son, Archie, in July 2004

**Juliet Hibbert** a daughter, Grace Elizabeth Murdoch, on 7th November 2004

**Jane Selden (Varley)** a son and a daughter, Oliver James and Isobel Rose, on 21st November 2004

**Kate Holmes (O'Connor Fenton)** a son, Max, on 29th November 2004

**Juliet Twining (Creedy)** a son, William Peter Joseph, a brother for Louise, on 4th December 2004

**Harriet Challis (Naylor)** a son, Lucas Christopher Ian, on 24th December 2004

**Jessica Hanbury (Copcutt)** a son, Hector, on 1st January 2005

**Emma Nation-Dixon (Shelton Agar)** a son, Charlie, a brother for William and Imogen, on 21st January 2005

**Victoria Humphries (Riches)** a son, Benjamin Nicholas Jasper, on 6th March 2005

**Suzannah Trotter (Estcourt)** a daughter, Daisy Jane, a sister for Jessica, on 31st March 2005

**Emma Logan (Moyle)** a daughter, Clova Elizabeth Perry, a sister for Jack, on 9th April 2005

**Fran Del Mar (Gladstone)** a son, Finlay Christopher John (Finn), a brother for Harry, on 14th May 2005

**Rebecca Jones (Ellis-Jones)** a daughter, Georgina Constance, a sister for Freddie, on 25th May 2005

**Susie MacInnes (Forestier-Walker)**, a son, Fergus John Edmond, a brother for Skye, on 28th June 2005

**Elizabeth Cowen (Holland)** a son, Henry Frederick Joseph Huxley, on 24th July 2005

**Rebecca Boyes (Beharrell)** a son, William, on 18th August 2005

**Olivia Bradshaw (Forrest)** a son, George James Anthony, on 31st August 2005

**Camilla Apponyi (Anderson)** a son, Benedict, on 13th September 2005

**Venetia Curtis (Powell-Brett)** a son, Angus, a brother for Ludo and Caspian, on 7th October 2005

**Hester Witt (Morley-Fletcher)** a daughter, Chloe, on 17th October 2005

**Camilla Bateman (Sykes)** a daughter, Jasmine Kate, on 4th November 2005

**Lucinda Burghes (Armitage)** a daughter, Isobel Astilbe, on 21st November 2005

## RIP

**Patricia (Pippin) Partington** died of cancer on 8th December 2004

**Sister Brigitta** died very peacefully on 18th February 2005

**Katy Hamilton-Baillie** died of cancer aged 47, on her barge in France, on 12th March 2005. She was incredibly strong to the last and almost as beautiful and vivacious as she was in her school days.

**Virginia Cholmeley** died in late May 2005 aged 59yrs

**Lady Marcia Rose Bulmer (Levenson Gower)** died on 3rd August 2005 at home on North Uist

## SMOGS YELLOW PAGES

### Animals

**Serena Perkins (Pease, 1982)***Pet Nanny*

Pet care in the South West London area  
020 8875 0341 or [serena@petnanny.co.uk](mailto:serena@petnanny.co.uk)  
or [www.petnanny.co.uk](http://www.petnanny.co.uk)

### Catering

**Clare de Lisle (1993)***Groovy Grub & Clare de Lisle Catering*

A fun, creative and light-hearted way for children to learn to cook. Adult catering also provided for.

020 7731 4699 or 07803 244 440 or  
[clare@groovy-grub.co.uk](mailto:clare@groovy-grub.co.uk)

**Catherine Rait (Duckett, 1992)***Noodleshack*

THE best take away noodles you will ever eat – available at point to points, big events and in markets in Oxford, Winchester, Salisbury and others  
[cat@noodleshack.com](mailto:cat@noodleshack.com) or  
[www.noodleshack.com](http://www.noodleshack.com)

### Clothes and Jewellery

**Sarah Egerton-Warburton (Russell, 1988)***EW Designs*

Semi precious and fresh water pearl jewellery in a vast range of styles and stones  
020 7630 0478 or 07740 451408 or  
[egertonwarburton@btinternet.com](mailto:egertonwarburton@btinternet.com)

**Georgina Fowle (Broke, 1987)***Exclusive jewellery*

Jewellery designed to your requirements  
020 8673 5297 or 0876 350959 or  
[www.gallina.co.uk](http://www.gallina.co.uk)

**Rachel Stanley-Evans (Pooley, 1992)***Rachel Pooley Creations*

'Frocks for formal and frocks for fun'  
01993 832388 or  
[rachel.stanleyevans@btopenworld.com](mailto:rachel.stanleyevans@btopenworld.com)

**Eloise Tooke (1999)***Eloise Alice – Couturier*

Bridal, evening and occasional wear  
07720 899746 or  
[eloisealice@vogue.co.uk](mailto:eloisealice@vogue.co.uk)

### Gifts and Furniture

**Nicola Corbett (Peel, 1995)***Nicks London*

'Home service' selling wide range of fashion accessories and gifts  
07855 256338 or [www.nickslondon.co.uk](http://www.nickslondon.co.uk)

**Charlie Estcourt (1990)***TouchWood*

Chinese antiques and made to order furniture  
[www.touchwoodhk.com](http://www.touchwoodhk.com)

**Jacquetta Hardy (1996)***QvU Limited –*

*Antique and Bespoke Classical Lighting*  
Importers of both antique and bespoke classical lighting  
01367 252 092 or [info@qvU-ltd.co.uk](mailto:info@qvU-ltd.co.uk)

**Frippy Jameson (Bailey West, 1996)***Children's Toy Boxes & Furniture*

Hand painted children's toy boxes and bespoke furniture  
07768 390 320 or [frippyb@hotmail.com](mailto:frippyb@hotmail.com)

**Susannah Veale (Godsal, 1988)***The Country Cupboard*

China, glass and selected tableware and kitchenware  
01608 730872

### Holidays (Abroad)

**Melissa Brownlow (1986)***France (Verbier)**Mountain Beds*

Tailor made skiing in Verbier and elsewhere  
07000 780 333 or  
[www.mountainbeds.co.uk](http://www.mountainbeds.co.uk)

**Chloe Grant (1987)***Southern France (Alet les Bains, Aude)*

16th Century, two bedroom cottage, 25 min from Carcassonne, 1hr to Pyrenees and Mediterranean  
[chloe.grant@tiscali.fr](mailto:chloe.grant@tiscali.fr) or [allezalet@tiscali.fr](mailto:allezalet@tiscali.fr)  
or [www.holidaygites.co.uk/france/Languedoc-Rousillon/46](http://www.holidaygites.co.uk/france/Languedoc-Rousillon/46)

**Kim Horwood (ex Teacher)***Far Frontiers*

Unusual and exciting holidays  
01285 850926 or [www.farfrontiers.com](http://www.farfrontiers.com)

**Alexandra Jubb (1996)***France (Val d'Isere)*

Flat to rent in centre of town, sleeps four. Available for short lets.  
07768 87 8941 or  
[ali.jubb@victoriasoames.co.uk](mailto:ali.jubb@victoriasoames.co.uk)

**Peta Keane (1992)***West Indies (St Lucia)*

Luxury villa offering complete privacy in the exclusive Anse Chastanet area of Soufriere, [pkeane13@yahoo.com](mailto:pkeane13@yahoo.com) or  
[www.labatterie-stlucia.com](http://www.labatterie-stlucia.com)

**Sophie Neville (1979)***Southern Africa*

African holidays learning to play polo or going on safari on horseback  
[sophie@sophiennville.co.uk](mailto:sophie@sophiennville.co.uk)

**Tessa Wheeler (Codrington, 1960)***Morocco (Tangier)*

Fully staffed villa, sleeps 8/10 – swimming pool and large garden. Owned by same family since 1950s  
[tessawheeler@chilham-castle.co.uk](mailto:tessawheeler@chilham-castle.co.uk)

**Lucinda Yorke (Thomson, 1983)***Italy (Umbria)*

19th Century farmhouse sleeps 12. Swimming pool, well equipped. Perugia and Assisi within 1hr  
[robert@lulyyorke.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:robert@lulyyorke.freeserve.co.uk)

### Holidays (UK)

**Julia Marlowe-Thomas (Heaton, 1977)***St Mawes*

Large house looking across harbour. Five bedrooms/three bathrooms. Available all year.  
01235 833216

**Rose de Sales la Terriere (Hodgson, 1964)***Dunalastair Holiday Houses*

Self-catering cottages in the beautiful Glen of Rannoch in Highland Perthshire  
[dunalastair@sol.co.uk](mailto:dunalastair@sol.co.uk) or  
[www.dunalastair.com](http://www.dunalastair.com)

### Hotels/B & B's/Pubs

**Tish Bradley (Way, 1966)***Oakwood Lodge Guest House*

Fantastic budget B&B, very near Heathrow  
07720 074800 or 01895 466554 or  
[www.oakwood121.co.uk](http://www.oakwood121.co.uk)

### Interior Design

**Olivia Clarke (Stevens, 1991)***Interior Designer*

Advice, designs, curtains, room layouts and much much more!  
[florrie@oliviaclarke.com](mailto:florrie@oliviaclarke.com)

**Georgie Fuller (1993)**

*Georgie Fuller Creative Design and Decoration*  
Everything from painting and decorating flats and houses, colour consultations, furniture painting and specialist paint finishes  
[georgiefuller@onetel.com](mailto:georgiefuller@onetel.com)

**Photography****Venetia Curtis (Powell-Brett, 1987)**

*Venetia Powell-Brett Photography*  
Weddings/Parties/Portraits – private and corporate  
020 8673 1048 or 07850 693453 or  
[venetia.curtis@btopenworld.com](mailto:venetia.curtis@btopenworld.com)

**Services****Ursula Aitken (Leigh, 1964)**

*Community Handbook (Thatcham, Berks)*  
Editorials, local facts and figures, essential information and advertising for the Thatcham area  
0118 9886070 or  
[ursula@thatchamconnections.co.uk](mailto:ursula@thatchamconnections.co.uk)

**Dallas Dacre Lacy (1984)**

*Butlers, chauffeurs, nannies, PAs, housekeepers etc.*  
A personal service for all your needs  
020 7887 6214/5 or  
[dallas.dacrelacy@regusnet.com](mailto:dallas.dacrelacy@regusnet.com) or  
[www.dallasdacrelacy.com](http://www.dallasdacrelacy.com)

**Sue Riches (Maxwell, 1963) and Victoria Humphries (Riches, 1988)**

*Anything is Possible*  
After Dinner Speaking/Motivational Lectures and Personal Development Courses (including advice on how to speak in public and interview training)  
07836 733163 or  
[www.anythingispossible.co.uk](http://www.anythingispossible.co.uk)

**Treatment/Therapy****Dr Caroline Hewitt (1980) BSc MRCP (Dermatologist)**

*Cosmetic Dermatology Service*  
Soften the signs of time . . . new and safe treatments for the correction of facial lines and wrinkles, and for lip enhancement  
0118 930 5846 or 07866 592 680 or  
[Caro4line@aol.com](mailto:Caro4line@aol.com)

**Venetia Hibbert (1996)**

*Netia Hibbert – Professional Makeup Artist*  
One on one makeup lessons for everyone  
[netiah@hotmail.com](mailto:netiah@hotmail.com) or  
[www.netiahibbert.com](http://www.netiahibbert.com)

**Deborah Pyner (Adams, 1987)**

*Diet Freedom –*  
*GL diet based on low glycaemic eating*  
A book and healthy, natural and convenient food and snack products to help whilst on a diet  
[deborah@dietfreedom.co.uk](mailto:deborah@dietfreedom.co.uk)

**Kate Rugge-Price (Garton, 1990)**

*Reflexology*  
Can bring relief to a wide range of acute and chronic conditions  
020 8673 7101 or  
[katerpathome@hotmail.com](mailto:katerpathome@hotmail.com)

If you would like to advertise in the Yellow Pages or on the website, [www.smogs.co.uk](http://www.smogs.co.uk), please contact Victoria Humphries (details on page 1).



## CAN YOU HELP?

**Victoria Dickie (Price, 1963)** is looking for **Bridget Traherne**. Can anyone help? If so please email Victoria on [victoria\\_dickie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:victoria_dickie@yahoo.co.uk)

**Louisa Hanbury-Bateman (1995)** is looking for any **SMOGs based in Germany or Austria**. If you can help please email her on [louisahb1@hotmail.com](mailto:louisahb1@hotmail.com)

**Libby Cotton (Montgomery, 1962)** – I am still in touch with a few friends but would love to hear more of more! There are quite a few of us around East Anglia who we see quite often – but if there is anyone out there who would like to get in touch it would be lovely. If you would like to get in touch please email Libby on [old.vic@onetel.net](mailto:old.vic@onetel.net)

We are still trying to find contact details for **Gaynor Stuart-Burnett (Irvine, 1958)**, **Carol Egar (?) (Hazard)** and **Mary Cooke** – if anyone can help please get in touch with Victoria Humphries.

**Victoria Hall-Smith (Stephenson, 1976)** – ‘I would love to get in contact with some old friends, particularly **Virginia Strode Smith** and **Caroline Vernon**. If you have you any e-mails or address for them I would be very grateful.’ If you can help please email Victoria on [tord5hs@fmail.net](mailto:tord5hs@fmail.net)

## SMALL ADS

### FOR SALE

#### Steam Launch

Wendy Desborough (Deputy House Mistress at school) writes . . .  
*For Sale – The Duchess of Argyll*. A 42ft elegant steam launch with an automatic oil fired boiler, ready to go in 20 mins. Hull, mahogany on oak with teak decks, built in 1883 by Turks of Cookham and maintained by Stanley and Thomas. 1905 Davis of Abingdon twin cylinder engine, 1942 Cyclotherm horizontal boiler. Won Thames Traditional Boat Rally Best in Show in 2003. Price £69,950. Contact Mark Stanley on 01753 833166 for further info and pictures.

#### Newly Built House On Stunning Croatian Island Of Brac

Looking for an investment? Or somewhere to stay with your family in part of it, and rent the rest. I've just finished building a house with four apartments on two floors – each floor has one x two bed apartment and one x one bed apartment, each with bathroom and living/kitchen and a large terrace. Sea views from the top floor. Parking, garden, air-conditioning.

The house is situated on top of a hill, about five mins walk down to sea, shops,

bars and restaurants in Milna which is a beautiful old Venetian fishing harbour. Now it has two marinas, which cater for the fabulous sailing to be enjoyed round the Croatian islands.

Nearest airport is Split which has now has BA flights from Gatwick three times a week, plus there are numerous other ways of getting there, car ferry from Ancona etc.

Price: €360,000, £244,000, US\$444,000. Ready for immediate occupation . . . all you have to do is buy the furniture.

Contact Joanna Casey (Bryant, 1971) on 01242 238101 or [nicejoanna@aol.com](mailto:nicejoanna@aol.com) for photos, more info. etc.

### WANTED

*Looking to buy . . . A detached country house, e.g. old farmhouse perhaps. Large rooms. Minimum of four bedrooms and at least three reception rooms. Garage, workshop and other sheds or room to build them. Ideally, it's own mooring space of 60' or more, on, or connecting to, somewhere near the centre of the main canal system. Not a town house, but not too far from habitation/village. Reasonable amount of land. Any fair price considered! If you can help please contact Morwenna Akehurst (Lynne-Jones, 1962) on [Mmlakehurst44@aol.com](mailto:Mmlakehurst44@aol.com)*





## SMOGS TRAVEL AWARDS

This is just a reminder to let all SMOGs know about the Travel Scholarship. When it was established it was primarily aimed at Y13 (UV1), however as more and more people are having later 'Gap' years and sabbaticals from work, we have opened it up to any SMOG of any age. The only criteria are that your travels/adventures are 'worthwhile' – they can be UK based or worldwide. Interviews are held annually, usually in November, however for special cases we can award money at different times of year. If you would like to know more, then please do get in touch with Victoria Humphries (details on page 1).

### Travel Awards given out in 2005

**Kerensa Purvis** – £160  
India (September 2006)

**Venetia Willis** – £160  
Malawi (January 2007)

**Sophie Elwes** – £280  
Ghana (January 2007)

There are no travel reports this year as all last year's recipients are either still travelling or have not travelled yet!

## COMMUNITY NEWS

At the Convent, Sister Anne Julian is much involved in spiritual direction and retreats; she is also Warden of The Servants of Christ the King in this country. Sister Honor Margaret exercises her priestly ministry among us, and we all celebrated the Golden Jubilee of her Profession in November, with much joy. Sister Deirdre Michael continues as Oblates' Sister and has visited Oblates in South Africa as well. Sister Valeria looks after the Community's Associates. All three also have a ministry of spiritual direction. Sister Louise delights everyone with her beautiful flower-garden. Two Sisters have moved to St Raphael's Wing (the Convent Infirmary): Sister Hilary from her rewarding work at St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, and Sister Enid Mary, who has handed over her work with Wantage Overseas, but still keeps in touch with Indian friends.

At St Katharine's House, Sister Jean Frances is in charge of the group of Sisters, including Sister Margaret Elizabeth, who share the pastoral care of the residents. Sister Jean Frances is also involved in spiritual direction.

At our house in Smethwick, Sister Phoebe Margaret, who was ordained in South Africa, is assisting at St Mathew's Church, in a very poor area. She also has other commitments in the Diocese of Birmingham.

*Sister Valeria*

## WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

### Fashion Industry

Alex Longmore (1993) – I can currently offer work experience for leavers and/or sixth formers who want to get a taste of working in the fashion industry. I am a fashion stylist and journalist whose work is varied. I dress many celebrities and style main fashion stories for many newspapers, magazines and advertising campaigns. It is a great opportunity for anyone who is interested in fashion or who wants to work in the industry. My office is based in Battersea. Travel expenses will be covered and I can offer short slots of two weeks and longer opportunity for leavers. Please will anyone who is interested e mail me at: [alex@alexlongmore.co.uk](mailto:alex@alexlongmore.co.uk)



St Gabriel's  
Summer 1991

## ATTENTION ALL SMOGS! ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT SMS? WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

We are always on the look out for new members on the SMOGs committee and before you turn the page because you think it is not for you let me tell you a little bit about it.

We meet three times a year – twice at school and once in London. Our meetings are informal and fun, you'll be treated to yummy eats and wine from the school catering department (they did win the Tatler School Food Award in 2004!) and when we meet in London we have a delicious dinner. We do try to follow an agenda and talk about a range of issues surrounding SMS – what's going on within the school, reunions and events, the exciting new school buildings, the travel award, networking between SMOGs and any other ideas anyone has to improve the service to existing SMOGs and to future ones within the school.

We are looking for people who have a genuine interest in the School, are committed, will make an active contribution, to help make this a dynamic committee for the dynamic, new look 21st century Wantage . . . !!

If you are interested or have any questions – no strings attached, please email – Victoria Humphries on [victoriahumphries@berrymead.co.uk](mailto:victoriahumphries@berrymead.co.uk) or Ali de Lisle on [alidelisle@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:alidelisle@yahoo.co.uk)



Photographs taken by Dr Hughes in the 1990s





## A GOLDEN REUNION FOR 1955 LEAVERS

About four years ago several of us decided that we could not let this, albeit ageing, date pass without marking it with some sort of celebration. Tracing most of the form was not too difficult, as many of us had kept in touch over the years. However a certain amount of sleuthing was required for those who had scattered further afield and the few who had changed their names more than once since leaving.

Should we meet in London or at St Mary's? After circulating a questionnaire, it was decided that we should approach the school. Some of us had not been back since leaving and as it is only two years before the move to Challow Park; we might never have the opportunity to be there again. Jonathan Webster, the Bursar, was delighted to have us, and so it was that on Sunday 19th June 2005, easily the hottest day of the year, twenty nine of us gathered at St Mary's. Some had come from as far as California and Milan, and most had had long journeys.

There were nervous looks around the car park. Would we recognise everybody? Would anybody recognise us? Then, delighted squeals of relief. Nobody had changed that much and some hardly at all. We all gathered in the Bulge for drinks, giggling over old photographs and with much to catch up on. We were very fortunate that Sister Hilda Kathleen, our Recreation Mistress in the Senior School, had been able to come down from the Convent Infirmary to be with us for the afternoon. There were so many memories overwhelming the senses and so little time to indulge them.



Echoing years of training, we filed into the Refectory, where Mrs Lee had produced a really superb feast, bearing no resemblance at all to our ration book meals of the past. Towards the end of lunch, Isabelle Barber, the Admissions Secretary, arrived with various records out of the Archives relating to our time at the school. Our fees for a term in 1948 were £60! – plus 4gns for dancing and music. They had only gone up to £75 by the time we left in 1955.

Isabelle then took us on an extensive tour of the school, beginning with the chapel. Much had changed, but nothing so much as the dormitories. Where we had had single rooms, now two beds were squeezed in, with the resulting loss of privacy. Clothes were tumbling out of unclosed drawers and shoes were scattered everywhere – a hurried exit for leave weekend perhaps? The face of Miss Hill sprang immediately to mind, and not very pleased, either! We were enormously

impressed with the Art and Photography Department. Evidence of much talent and expertise abounded and opportunities to stretch the imagination were so much more than in our day.

The Head Girl Boards in the Hall testified to the past fifty years, though the Hall itself remained exactly the same. More memories came flooding back, Miss Davies playing Men of Harlech as we marched into Assembly, Pilgrim's Progress, HMS Pinafore, concerts, ballets and poetry competitions; all things that had bound us together fifty years ago, and which were common threads uniting us back here now.

No one regretted coming that day, although a few had been a little doubtful beforehand. Addresses were exchanged and friendships rekindled. We will be amazed how quickly our thoughts will be turning to a Diamond Celebration in 2015.

*Penny Cunningham (Crawford, 1957)*

FEDERICA ALLIATA (JAMES, 1956)



*Christian - Lucilla Eastwood*



*St. Michael - Bridget Piper  
Apollonia - Valentina Jones  
Christian - Lucilla Eastwood  
"The Valley of Humiliation"*



*in the "Pilgrim's Progress" Disguise to  
Dorchester Castle*

*(back left) Jane Dawson-Adams  
(back right) Lucy Smith  
(front left) Lucilla Eastwood  
(front right) Frances Clapham  
Pilgrim's Progress  
Spring Term 1933*



*(back left) Mary Nicholl  
(back right) Cherry Sanderson  
(center) Lucilla Eastwood  
(front) Frances Clapham*



*Sister Helen Patricia*



## REUNION AT ST MARY'S IN MEMORY OF SISTER BRIGITTA CSMV

The SMOGs Sister Brigitta "Picnic Lunch" was the brainchild of Margaret Hughes (Von Loesch, 1955) in memory of her Aunt Sister Brigitta. (*Maggie went to the school with her twin sister Annette from Germany, and then later on worked as a Matron and taught Dressmaking very successfully for a period when most of us were at St Mary's*). Sister Brigitta died peacefully at the Convent in February. Maggie cleverly arranged with Sue Sowdon for us to be able to congregate at the school during the summer holidays, and to have the use of the school Lobby – in case of rain.

We all remembered Sr Brigitta with great affection as a fantastic and extremely fair headmistress in the 60s – as well as a superbly inspiring and interesting teacher of Divinity. The idea was to raise enough money to create a Sister Brigitta Memorial Prize for a girl at the school and almost £600 of donations were taken by Hilly Kirkpatrick; contributions are still being taken – so please get in touch with the St Mary's Bursar at any time if you would like to give some money.

Maggie Hughes also very generously donated a lovely "Phoenix" bronze sculpture of a horse's head made by herself recently to raise money for the prize. Maggie's twin sister Nettie was sadly unable to attend – due to the long-awaited arrival of builders that week! Maggie had collected some lovely pictures of Sister Brigitta at various stages of her long life – in India and in the UK, which we all appreciated looking at.



Sister Jean Frances, Miss Betteridge, Ginnie Annan, Susie Becher, Angela Bell, Antonia Vanrenen and Lizzie Buxton



Fiona McFarlane, Tessa Pertwee, Maggie Von Loesch, Gris Forbes, Sister Valeria and Xandie Butler



Maggie Von Loesch and Sister Honor Margaret



Sister Honor Margaret and Tessa Pertwee



Sister Honor Margaret and Hilly Kirkpatrick

In the event, sadly it actually poured with rain all day on Monday August 22nd, so we pooled our picnic food in the Lobby outside the Hall – with great success! Sisters Valeria, Honor Margaret and Jean Frances, as well as Sister Bridget Mary, who never taught at the school but knew Maggie Hughes and Sister Brigitta very well, came along to the event which greatly added to the value of the lunch party. Susie Ievers (Gibson) had made us all a fantastic huge chocolate cake covered in M & Ms, so when Sister Honor Margaret let it slip that she had just celebrated her 81st Birthday, we all sang *Happy Birthday to you* to her in the Lobby and she tucked into a delicious slice of Susie's cake with gusto!

Maggie Hughes, Miss Betteridge, Angela Bell, Antonia Vanrenen (*who is now working as an ordained Priest in Wantage/Grove and thus a frequent visitor at St Mary's Convent!*), Priscilla Kennedy, Griselda Forbes, Elizabeth Buxton, Susie Gibson, Virginia Annan, Hilly Kirkpatrick, Ann Showers, Fiona McFarlane, Ursula Leigh, Xandie Butler, Tessa Pertwee, Jane O'Connor Fenton, Susie Becher and Patricia Way all



Tessa Pertwee and Sister Jean Frances



Scilla Kennedy, Tish Way and Hilly Kirkpatrick

turned up at the school for this get-together in the Summer drizzling rain.

After lunch, the Sisters disappeared back off to the Convent, and Angela Bell (the School's Domestic Bursar) and Miss Betteridge took us on a guided tour of the present day bedrooms at both St Mary's and St Gabriel's, which was great fun. The party broke up shortly before 4.00 p.m. and we all wended our various ways home.

*Tish Bradley (Way, 1966)*



Maggie Von Loesch,  
Sister Honor Margaret and Suzie Gibson



Lizzie Buxton, Maggie Von Loesch and Suzie Gibson



Hilly Kirkpatrick, Susie Becher and Jane O'Connor Fenton

## 1958 LEAVERS

**(Monday, 27th June, 2005)**

On a lovely sunny summers day, twenty of us leavers from 1956 'O' level year met again, from as far away as Scotland and America. Some of us hadn't seen each other since then and the joy and chatter was amazing. Such fun to see each other again and to catch up after all those years, and so many memories to recall. One or two were unable to come; one or two said they were rather apprehensive about it all. Some of us had to be reminded of faces to put to names who, in reality, hadn't changed one bit, just a few more grey hairs, and some looking almost as they did when they left school.

We all caught up on what everyone was doing, had done, grandchildren etc., and it was so interesting to hear what routes had been chosen in peoples careers. We had journalists, farmers, academics, horse breeders, physiotherapists, a social worker, a Lord Lieutenant and a High Sheriff amongst us. Everyone had brought their own picnic lunch, and it was a truly happy and memorable afternoon – I don't think anyone wanted to leave, but we have now all caught up with each other, names and addresses carefully recorded by Juliet Winlaw (Alderson) who organized us all so efficiently.

Those who came were:- Juliet Winlaw, Sandy Steward, Mary Bridgeman, Sarah Lambert, Alexandra Goudime, Ianthe Agelasto (also Caroline came later) Caroline Seebohm, Gillian Welchman, Victoria Bathurst Norman, Kathy Lyttelton, Julie Kenderdine, Charlotte Eastwood, Ann Baring, Lavinia Turton, Marcia Lane Fox, Janet Prain, Anne Davy, Jennifer Davies, Caroline Cuthbert and Penny Lawley. We have recently caught up with Sally Cook, now back from South Africa.

*Mary Bayliss (Bridgeman, 1958)*

## SMOGS SNIPPETS

All SMOGs are now 'filed' under the year that their year group left St Mary's. For example, if you left in 1981 after O'Levels, you would be called a 1983 leaver, as that is when the final person in your year group would have left.

If anyone would like to get in contact with any of the people below (or any SMOGs), then please do contact Victoria Humphries (details on page 1)

### Elizabeth (Libby) Cotton

**(Montgomery, 1962)** – I am still in touch with a few friends but would love to hear more of more! I have been married for 35 years and live in Suffolk – four daughters aged 32, 30, 28 and almost 18 so still doing school runs! Two grandsons aged seven and five and hopefully more on the way sometime soon!

**Xandie Butler (Burke, 1963)** – My husband, Edward, is now fully recovered after having had bladder and prostate cancer last year. Sister Valeria was wonderfully supportive throughout – writing and praying. Edward thinks she is an angel. We have also become grandparents – Katie had a little girl, Emily, in May. I have been in touch with Penny Davies (Dixon), Tish Bradley (Way), Susie Ievers (Gibson) and Meriel Buxton (Cowan). Susie tells me that Hilly Kirk-Patrick has remarried and is very very happy.

**Suzie Gibson (Ievers, 1964)** – Recently Maggie Hughes (Von Loesch, 1955) and I had a wonderful trip to Munich. Gris (Forbes) put us in touch with Bettina (Klages) and her husband Klaus Kosack who live in Munich. It was just by chance that Gris wrote to me, about Bettina's wish to re-kindle her English connections from her two years in the VI Form at St Mary's, as we were about to leave for four wonderful days visiting Maggie's cousins (with three little girls aged six, four, and two). Bettina and Klaus were so sweet and kind to us. They took us to the English Garden where we shopped in the wonderful Christmas Market. Then we had delicious Gluhwein outside the Chinese Tower. After that we were taken in an open horse-drawn carriage to the

Lakeside Restaurant where they gave us a fab Sunday Lunch. The sun shone on the lake and the snow – it was magical. We look forward to seeing Bettina again in England hopefully next mid October (2006) when she would love to meet up with others whom she was at school.

**Julia Harris (Purser, 1971)** – After 27 years of taking children to school, this September was something of a shock to the system – no one was going back to school and as my youngest son is having a gap year, there was not even the packing up and going off to university to deal with. It is definitely very odd! My eldest son is in the Army and got married a couple of years ago, and last year had to go to Iraq for the summer; the second son is also in the Army and has just returned from a tour of duty in Iraq this summer – the last two summers have consequently been rather a strain. The third son is not in the Army and as yet does not really know what he wants to do but is happy doing whatever he does, and the fourth son is taking a gap year and at the moment thinks he will go to University in Cape Town followed by, guess what, joining the Army! It is something of a family tradition and rather built into the genes. I am living in Brighton with my partner and although I do not see many people from SM I do keep in touch with a few, Janie Holmes (Bristow), Rosalie Rayburn, Susie Belcher (Groves) and Tamara Jenkinson. On a trip to the West Country recently we called in to see Victoria Humphries and met her son and heir, a very cheerful and contented little person.

**Rosalie Rayburn (1971)** – I returned to England for a 10-day visit in early June. The last time I had travelled to England from my home in the US, was in 2001. Despite a hectic schedule, I managed to spend some time catching up with the few St. Mary's friends I still keep in touch with. Janie Holmes (Bristow) very kindly made space for me and my traveling companion at her new flat in Mortlake. We had a lovely evening sitting on her balcony watching people row up the river. It's the ideal spot to watch the Boat Race. During a brief visit to Cheltenham, I met up with Joanna Casey (Bryant). We lost touch with each other in about 1971. About two years ago we reconnected via



Rosalie Rayburn, left, and Joanna Casey (Bryant), met up again in the summer of 2005 after a gap of more than 30 years

one of those "look up your old school friends" web sites and found we had both spent time living in the Middle East. It was amazing finally to meet face to face after more than 30 years. Of course we both looked exactly the same! Just before flying back to the U.S. I spent a weekend with Julia Harris (Purser) who lives in Brighton. We drove over to Guildford for a rendezvous with three of her four sons. Julia's second eldest son Charles is my godson. I continue to work as a journalist in New Mexico where I focus a lot on solar and wind energy projects.

### Mary Cantacuzene (Mason, 1971) –

Anyone who knew me as rather a naughty girl at school will be astonished to know that I was ordained Deacon this Michaelmas (2005) and will be ordained Priest in 2006...it's amazing what God can do! I am an Ordained Local Minister which means I can stay living in my own home parish and minister in the local benefice (Bures with Assington and Little Cornard) in Suffolk. I am non-stipendiary so only work for the church for about 15 hours a week. This year as a Deacon I can conduct Baptisms and Funerals, preach and lead services (but not conduct Weddings or preside at the Eucharist until



Mary Cantacuzene



I am "Priested"). So much to learn still . . . but all so interesting and inspiring. After leaving S.M. I went to Paris and Winkfield and did the whole "deb" thing; married a lovely White Russian "Guisha" aged 22 (it sounds so young by today's standards!). We have been divorced for eight years but still great friends; he lives in Lausanne in Switzerland. We have three "children"; sons Rodion (26), Alexei (24) and daughter Erzi (21). I started counselling for a doctor's surgery in 1988 and have been an accredited Psychodynamic Counsellor since 1994. I teach and supervise counsellors and have my own private practice in Suffolk and in the City. I have a niece (Chantal Mason) at St. Mary's and would love to hear from any SMOGs from our year; I'm still 6' tall but have given up ballet (surprise, surprise) and don't run quite as fast!

**Sophie Williams-Thomas (Neville, 1979)** – On October 2nd 2004 I married Simon Williams-Thomas. We met on 1st June, shooting long bows at the Worcestershire Archery Society, and now live on the estuary in Lymington looking out towards the Solent. We have just returned from a month in South Africa where we went riding in the Waterberg at Ant's Nest where Henrietta Williams (Stucliffe, 1976) is taking her family at Easter. I am still organising horse safaris and polo holidays but will have to concentrate on my archery this summer.

**Caroline Tufnell (1981)** – I am back in London town and am running a nursery school in Chiswick for a friend and am loving it! Trying to do as much reflexology as I can when time permits and there isn't much presently!

**Juliet Murdoch (Hibbert, 1985)** – Like Nicola Cotterell last year, I too have been meaning to write in with news for years but have not quite got around to it. So here goes . . . After leaving school in 1985, I went to Sheffield University and read Electrical and Electronic Engineering. After graduating in 1988, I decided to become a patent attorney (those are the guys that help draft the document that protects a person's invention). I got a job with a private practice and worked there for 2.5 years before I had to scratch the travelling itch. So off I went for a year and a half and had the most fantastic time. I

have to say that I think I appreciated it more than if I had gone straight out from education as I really knew what I was missing (9 to 5, four weeks holiday a year etc.)! When I got back, I worked as a patent attorney for BT and then Nokia – the latter involving a lot of trips to Finland and learning about saunas and drinking cider with ice in it! In October 1999 I went on a sailing holiday in the British Virgin Islands and met my husband, Iain Murdoch. We married in September 2001 – a beautiful day at my parents' house in Herefordshire. In 2002 I started work with a private practice back in London and we moved house and now live on the edge of Wandsworth Common. 2003 was a quiet year to recoup and then in 2004 I got pregnant, was made a partner (in that order) and gave birth to a gorgeous girl, Grace. Having never been a broody person, I have to say that parenthood is great! I keep up with Fiona Clark (Bateman) who lives in Portsmouth with her husband Simon and three children; Oliver (my godson), Arthur and Matilda. Fiona has entered the world of education and is also doing a postgrad qualification, so life is very busy. Gayatry Mosier (Jacob) is living in Cleveland, Ohio with her husband Pat and three children; Julia, Jessica and John, who keep her fully occupied. Diana Morrisen (Hutton-Stott) is expecting a baby in July 2005, her sister Juliet (1988) having had a daughter, Lucy in March 2004. I have also heard recently from Penny Drew who is now in Queensland, Australia. She has lost a very impressive nine stone and is working at a framers at the moment, having recently sold her art gallery. So that's my news for the past 20 years! I would love to hear from others in my year so do get in touch – [jhibbert2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jhibbert2000@yahoo.co.uk)

**Anna Hazlehurst (Davenport, 1990)** – I have got the latest *St Mary's Chronicle*, and laughed when I saw Camilla Sykes' update: what she has failed to mention in her brief message is that she has graduated from the Slade and is now a very talented artist – also having a marvellous time in Spain! I got married in May 2003 to Dominic Hazlehurst. We have just moved to our new house, not so far from Wantage! I see Camilla whenever possible, and hope to be visiting her soon.

## SMETS

### Janet Price

I was interested to read the latest edition of *St. Mary's Chronicle* and I've sent it on to Susanne Potschkat, who is very interested in the plans for the new buildings. She was my first German Assistant in 1983/4 and she came to St. Mary's again in 1998/99. She is still teaching in Hamburg and comes to stay with me quite often. It's great to meet up with ex-St. Mary's staff from time to time and it looks as if we shall be seeing each other again in April. Glad to report that Mrs. Wigmore's arm and Mrs. Clark's wrist are mended again! I'm a granny now and really enjoying my grandson Matthew, who was one in January. My eldest son, James, his wife Steph and Matthew are living in Winchester, which is quite close. My second son, Tom, and his wife Sara, who is American, live in Philadelphia and my daughter and her husband are in Washington DC, so I had a lovely visit to the US to see both of them over Christmas and New Year. They've had loads of snow this winter!

### Kim Horwood

Head of Boarding at Bedgebury School, Kent. Still in contact with ex members of staff including Nicola Brewster. Earlier this year I saw Victoria Langmead (1998) at Destinations at Earl's Court as she is now in the travel business.

## SISTER BRIGITTA CSMV (JULIA BRIGITTE VON LOESCH)

5th September, 1916 to 18th February, 2005.

Born in Germany of mixed German and English parentage, Brigitta came to England just before WW2 and earned her living by teaching French and horse riding. In 1945 she joined the Anglican Community of St Mary the Virgin in Wantage, Oxfordshire and after life-vows, taught at their boarding school for girls.

Her students testify to her thoroughness, inspiration, challenge, discipline, and love, when they had overcome their awe of her! She had a vigorous, spacious mind and would tell her students: 'If you think you can, you can!' And proved it as when she taught herself Hebrew to qualify to study for the Lambeth Diploma at Oxford. She also introduced elements of outreach by which the girls spent free time with the handicapped or joined a 'Buffalo Committee' to raise funds to buy buffaloes for St Crispin's Home, Pune, India.

From 1957 to 1965 Sister was Superior at St Mary's School, Wantage, where she exercised strong, transforming leadership. The Sisters gained immeasurably from their weekly study of the Scriptures and radical books, as well as from long country walks and picnics in all weathers. Sister was Novice Mistress briefly, Assistant to the Superior, and from 1967 to 1973, Sister Superior at the Oxford house of the CSMV.

Her questing spirit took her over many boundaries of belief and culture. She learnt Serbo-Croatian and visited monasteries in Romania and in former Yugoslavia. From the autumn of 1973 she lived as a solitary in a caravan, first on the grounds of a CSMV house, and later in Wales.

In November 1977 Brigitta joined Christa Prema Seva Ashram, Pune, which had been reopened in 1972 by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and those of the Community of St Mary the Virgin. With Christ as the Guru, the life was one of worship, study and service, (especially hospitality), rooted in both the Christian and Indian Scriptures. At the daily Eucharist and the Sandhyas, the readings, chants and singing would vary from Sanskrit to Hindi and Marathi.

Brigitta identified with the deep religious values of Hindu culture and entered into the ancient path and discipline of yoga meditation. She was open to others' search for truth and shared of her own. Memorable was her teaching from the Gospel according to St John and from the Upanishads, Gita and Yoga Sutras. She sought to uphold the ashram's purpose through many



struggles, succeeded Sr. Sara Grant as Acharya and was at Ashram till she returned to England in 1999.

Back in Wantage, Brigitta endured the loss of much that had become second nature to her in the ashram. When she had to move to the Convent Infirmary her inner focus on the way of surrender grew still stronger. On 25th January 2005 we celebrated the 56th anniversary of her profession. Soon after, she suffered a severe stroke.

Brigitta herself had once said:

*I am not afraid of death. Like most people I fear pain, helplessness, loss of faculties, but I am confident that together with age come the power to bear and accept, to let go and not to cling. Certainly I want to enter consciously into my own death, not so drugged that I'm unaware of it: to me it's the **most interesting event** of my life, and I want to there when it happens. After all, it's the **ultimate opportunity** for you to face the truth of yourself.*

*I don't believe in re-birth of reincarnation myself – at least not in simple terms. I would rather regard it as being a myth, like purgatory. Actually, I see purgatory and rebirth as being parallel, although it's sheer speculation, as the Bible gives us no information as to what happens after death. But there is a beautifully passage in one of the Upanishads where death is described as 'reaching the further shore' and with it comes the realisation that there is no river dividing the living from the dead, there is no journey, and no further shore, because one has been there all the time . . . Likewise, we do not enter the presence of God when we die, because we have been there all the time. It is only our ignorance, our blindness, that separates us from God.*

*I'd like, if I may, to quote from an Upanishad: 'Concealed in the heart of all beings lies the Atman, the Spirit, the Self smaller than the smallest atom, greater than the greatest spaces. When by the grace of God man sees the glory of God, he sees it beyond the world of desire and then sorrows are left behind'.*

And so it was at her Samadhi, when she let herself go in total awareness. Her requiem and burial were solemn but overflowing with joy. Besides her Sisters, family and friends, a large number of ex-pupils came to mourn, and to give thanks for someone who had shaped their lives.

### Comments from SMOGs

To me, Sister "Brig" WAS St. Mary's. In so many ways she led me through my years there. As I left in 1954 she must have been a good age and WHAT a life well lived. I've never forgotten her.

*Mary Edwards (Wearne, 1954)*

I was so sad to get your email about Sister Brigitta, she was Sister Superior when I started at St. Mary's and I remember her as the kindest person.

*Penny Marsh (1968)*

## KATY HAMILTON-BAILLIE

Katy Hamilton-Baillie died of an untreatable and debilitating cancer on 12th March 2005 just before her 48th birthday. She had married in 2002, Peter Polish, her companion of many years and together they moved, for the last few months of her life, from their cottage near Carmarthen, to a barge in France – the movement of water beneath her assisted her comfort: anyway, Kate never did anything by halves. To her last evening, shared by one of her two brothers and her sister, she exuded the humour, tough realism and combative free spirit that she wore proudly throughout her life. She was brave and uncomplaining and, like her Mother, who was severely handicapped for over 40 years, she never hoisted her pain onto others.



Kate was best known as author of the *Rough Guides* to France, Provence and Paris, her distinct style, tastes and good sense enhancing and enriching many people's travels. Her love of all things French, indeed foreign, opened her up and hence her readers to an intimate and culturally sensitive understanding of the country. She also co-wrote *Coastline Britain* giving readers a feel for the threats faced by a vulnerable part of Britain's natural heritage as well as the extraordinary challenge faced by those who depend on the coastline to make a living. She was also the editor and publisher of *The Red Kite*, a small, radical journal supporting the Democratic Left of Wales, which none the less engaged a wide cross section of contributors and readers.

After Cambridge Katy joined the Battersea Labour party, helped edit *The East End News*, joined the Communist Party, became a solidarity activist when caught under the bombing of Beirut in 1982, joined a journalists' conference in Algeria during the fundamentalist violence in the late 1980s, visited Gaza in 2003 getting through the Israeli controls in her wheelchair. Her life was a constant swirl of passion far left of centre politics and for issues such as human rights, freedom, gender relations, peace and reconciliation. Her ashes were scattered at a Peace Cairn she had had erected on a hill in Carmarthenshire, to encourage peace and reconciliation between the Israelis and Palestinians, for whom she always had enormous sympathy.

But her passions were not all political. She had a deep knowledge and appreciation of literature and poetry, she loved looking at paintings, loved studying new architecture, loved going to art exhibitions; she had an unaffected delight in gardening, not for its end result but for the surprises born of nurturing plants; her love of music embraced Cathedral Choirs, her love of travel and exuberance about the wonders of creation, took her to China, to most of the middle east and most of Europe.

Above all, Katy showed unwavering loyalty and devotion to her parents (who just pre-deceased her) and her siblings, and was loving and forthright to her huge and utterly unpredictable circle of friends. She was totally unfettered by what others thought or what fashion dictated, she was unjudgemental and truly sympathique. She saw funny and peculiar things round corners where other people might see a dead end. She had an ability to enjoy other people's passions and abilities even if she had not thought the subject as one of interest before. She was, except in her depressions, exuberant, focussed, beautiful and grateful to all those who cared for her.



# KAREN HILL TRIBES

## *Penelope's promise to Richard!*



◆ Penelope Worsley

◆ Richard Worsley

It is now nine years since our son Richard Worsley died. He was killed in a car crash aged 24 while serving in Germany with the Light Dragoons. It came as a terrible shock, of course. That day I had this urge to make sure that all those who knew him were told of his death. Amongst these were the Karen hill tribe people he had worked with in his Gap Year in northern Thailand.

Richard had spent six months living in the stilted houses in small remote villages in the forests of northern Thailand 100 miles due west of Chiang Mai. There are around 400,000 Karen people in North West Thailand. Eight million Karen people live in Burma where they are persecuted, but the Karen people who live in Thailand have been there for hundreds of years and are settled people with Thai ID. They are the largest of several ethnic hill tribes frequently referred to as the 'farmers in the forest' who live at one with nature.

Richard had loved the whole experience. He had become very involved with their

lives, learning of their difficulties living as subsistence farmers in remote areas, many kilometres from the nearest town, hospital and schools. The extreme climate meant heavy rains destroyed their rice fields and houses. Transport and communication was difficult in such remote areas and there was often no electricity or clean water. He learnt of their hospitality and generosity, of their strong spirit and sense of fun, of their loyalty, of their strengths and determination to help themselves. He helped to build water systems and taught the children to speak English. On his return he asked me if I would help them one day. He knew they wanted help so they could develop their own lives – help to help themselves. I promised that one day I would try.

Now Richard was dead and the Karen people said: 'Good men do not die, they remain in the sky to guide us for ever. We will not forget Richard'. Three months after he died they dedicated a water system to him deep in the forests

and I remembered what he had asked me to do. Now my opportunity had come. I had many years of working with charities and had also run my own fundraising consultancy. I knew how necessary it was to set up a charity with sound principles and a clear focus. First of all I needed to go out to Thailand to see for myself where he had been, to meet the people and to find out how we could help. I travelled alone to Bangkok and travelled 1000 miles north to Chiang Mai before driving another day deep into the forests where a young team of volunteers together with the Karen people were installing a water system. The Karen women cleared their house for me and gave me the space to sleep. There was the mat and blanket under the mosquito net in this large bare wooden room with slatted walls. The latrine was out in the woods. The rain was slashing down. The mud was terrible. The mosquitoes were appalling. The Karen people looked after me, bringing me water to wash my hands, making sure I did not fall on the steep steps, offering me their friendship and hospitality as well as their moonshine whisky! They seemed to know how difficult all this was for me. I soon realised what Richard had found so wonderful about these people and I came home to set up the charity and get involved.

It was the year 2000 that I really started the Karen Hilltribes Trust. I had many problems at home with sick members of the family, but somehow this work began to take over. I made a short promotional film about the work and told our friends about the needs and what we proposed to do about it; clean water would give them better health; provision of transport, accommodation and food would give children the chance of an education and we could improve opportunities for income generation. 75% of children never go to school because they don't have £5 a month to pay for transport or food; levels of malaria are high because they cannot afford a mosquito net; 1000s of people sleep in front of the fire without blankets in freezing temperatures at Christmas because they don't have £2.50 to buy one. Many people die of typhoid through the lack of clean water. I visited Thailand twice a year and began to explore many villages and learn more.

There was a need to build a dormitory so that children from remote villages could live somewhere close to the secondary school. This meant buying land which could only be done by setting up a separate Foundation in Bangkok. I had to find lawyers and accountants and a team of supporters in Bangkok. Once the Foundation for the Karen Hilltribes in Thailand was formed (linked to the UK charity) we raised the funds to buy a small teak plantation. Then I had a telephone call from a major international company who said they had heard we were a small charity doing wonderful work and they would like to give us a real boost with serious funding support. They gave us the money to build a dormitory in the teak plantation for 50 children, as well as the first year's running costs! What an inspiration. Hopefully this would encourage others.

Five years later in December 2005 I can report that we are now helping around 400 children to get to school who never had this chance before. 14 are going on to university. We have set up a Training and Resource centre to train people to teach better English to the Karen children. We are sending 50 volunteers a year to live and work with the Karen people, just like Richard did. Some are helping to install clean water systems and others are teaching in the primary and secondary schools. We distributed 4000 blankets this winter and 2000 mosquito nets. The dormitory now houses 75 children and we are now raising funds to repair another dormitory for 100 children. We are installing eight water systems a year. Funds have been raised for 30 rice granaries. We have just bought a tractor so that flooded rice floods and broken irrigation systems can be restored to productivity. We are working in an area around 100 square miles. In all over 20,000 people have benefited from the work of the Karen Hilltribes Trust during the past five years.

For me, it has been an interesting journey! What has given me the skills to do all that we have done? Yes, I could build on a life time of experience in the charity sector and on my experiences in community work. I was a member of the St. John Ambulance for 30 years; I spent 11 years setting up a Sue Ryder Nursing Home for 45 sick and disabled people

near Hull; I chaired many charity meetings and was a trustee of one or two; I ran my own fundraising consultancy to raise significant funds for a cathedral, a theatre, a school and various national charities. I had experience of international conferences. However this was a new challenge. The charity had to be very focused and clear in its aims and objectives. I had to find the right Trustees. The projects to be funded had to be controlled with reports being sent back to the UK to reassure funders. I had to build a large library of photographs to illustrate our work. I had to find out what the Karen people wanted and not impose our ideas on their culture, but rather help them to help themselves. I had the problem of recruiting, motivating and training young English people to cope with the challenges in their Gap year. I visited Thailand two or three times a year to meet people and see the projects and raise funds in Bangkok. I had to be available for people 365 days a year, 7 days a week. I had to cope with my own energy and balance this work with my family. It has been a great challenge but it has been very rewarding. It has been exciting to bring people together across the world, to 'make things happen' and to make a difference. None of this would have been possible if I had not found encouragement and support from all those who I talk to, young and old alike. It is the communication skills of motivating people in this country and the communication skills that are necessary to help people in another country that is the main criteria for our volunteers and what I have found most helpful. Now at the age of 63, I must plan to develop a staff who will take over from me so that the charity will continue long after I have gone. I have no doubt of that and so far the plans are going well. I also know that Richard would be very pleased to think so much is being achieved as a result of his death.

If you would like to know more or get involved either as a volunteer or help us raise funds, please write to me or telephone. Mrs P Worsley, KHT, Midgley House, Heslington, York YO10 5DX.

[www.karenhilltribes.org.uk](http://www.karenhilltribes.org.uk) or  
email: [Penelope@karenhilltribes.org.uk](mailto:Penelope@karenhilltribes.org.uk).  
Tel: 01904 411891.

*Penelope Worsley (Fuller, 1959)*



Children in front of new dormitory



Clean running water

# LIFE CHANGES AFTER TEN YEARS AND NOW IN OZ

*G'Day to all of the SMOGS, to which there are some  
that I am sure reside in this wonderful sunny country  
I have recently moved to.*

I left St. Mary's in 1991, having only completed the first year of A levels, to continue my passion for cooking having gained wonderful teaching at St. Mary's from the fantastic Mrs Wigmore. I finished a one year diploma at the Tante Marie Cookery School and followed this by working overseas and gaining experience in various food organisations. I ended up as a mere commis chef at a top class restaurant in Knightsbridge where the Australian Head Chef swept me off my feet and is now my husband of ten years and father to my two lovely children (Sophie and Harry). My parents took an instant liking to Alan although told me I had to be 21 to marry and no younger – so I decided a week after my 21st was appropriate!!

Staying in London, we left our jobs and opened our own establishment 755 Restaurant in Fulham. Some of you may have dined with us to which we are grateful for all your support. For those of you that did not, I am afraid it is too late as it is now a bookshop!! Working hard was our only hobby at that time and after four years we left to become country folk and bought The Royalist Hotel in Stow-on-the-Wold. The hotel is certified in the Guinness Book of Records as the Oldest Inn in England and dates back to 947 AD. It came complete with a bear pit, leper holes, ancient beams and a 10th century wall frieze. After closing for eight months and completely refurbishing the interior

we opened and within a year had gained four rosettes and other prestigious accolades. We built our staff brigade from eight up to twenty-five and had two restaurants, two bars and luxury bedrooms in the main building.

The arrival of children was next on the agenda and funnily enough they had a huge effect on our life!! After four years we decided enough was enough and we sold the hotel and moved to Australia. We decided that The Sunshine Coast was going to be our home and we bought 10 acres in Montville which is a hinterland town one hour north of Brisbane and 30 mins from some of the most wonderful beaches in Australia.

In the midst of building our dream house we were beginning to look for an appropriate school for Sophie and Harry. Although we did not expect to find anything close to the standards of St. Mary's (!!) I have to say we have come pretty close!! We saw an advertisement for the Suncoast Christian College and then noticed that it was attached to a church – The Suncoast Christian Outreach Centre. Well, we thought we better attend the church once as this could get our foot in the door to securing a place for the children at the college!! It was certainly different to how I remembered church back in England. In fact, I remember sitting there amongst the 1000 congregation thinking that this was not a church at all!!

The music was loud and everyone just seemed so happy and full of life, not to mention that the pastor (vicar) was not even wearing a dog collar!!

During the service the children began to wriggle and become very restless. I was on my way to take them out and I got shown where the crèche was in progress – what a great facility – as this meant I could return to Alan and check he was listening to the message/sermon. After the service we were taken aback with the kindness, hospitality and red carpet treatment and not to mention the cakes given at the visitors table! Overwhelmed by the whole morning we thought we would go back the following Sunday as it was such an eye-opener. I have to say that this was just the beginning and now nine months on we are just loving it and have made loads of friends. For those looking for a positive and energetic outlook on life I can highly recommend the Christian Outreach Centre. Have a look on their website [www.coc.org.au](http://www.coc.org.au) click international and then directory – you are sure to find a church near you wherever you are. I would love to hear how you get on so please feel free to email. The same goes for anyone visiting Australia – our home is open to any SMOGS needing a bed for the night or a cool off in the pool! [alan-georgina@bigpond.com](mailto:alan-georgina@bigpond.com)

*Georgina Thompson (Yuill Walker, 1993)*



# OBSERVING THE IRAQI ELECTIONS

Baroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne MEP (1958) was in Iraq in January 2005 to observe the elections – she sent back the following report . . .

The first place I visited was Al Shaiba, a small town on the outskirts of Basra, which suffered terribly under Saddam. The official in charge of the polling station described how a permit had to be obtained to travel even a few kilometres outside the town. Speaking in the polling station that he and his colleagues had recently finished painting, the election official said to me: “This is the first day of freedom for Iraq. We have been in prison for forty years and now we are free.”

I looked on as polite young women searched female voters before they entered the womens’ voting room. Although there was an obvious concern for security this in no way seemed to deter voters or

officials. The election official beamed as he told me that of 2,000 people eligible to vote at his station 1,300 had already done so. He expected the final turnout to be over 1,800 people, or 90 percent.

I spoke to some voters who had queued since before 6am in order to exercise their franchise. Each was dressed in their finest clothes: cream and gold headdresses and flowing black robes for the women and the classical blue and white headdress and brown linen robes for the men. Each was delighted that their “day of freedom” – as one voter said to me – was here. The queuing was orderly and good tempered. In many ways it reminded of the queue for Centre Court seats at Wimbledon.

We moved on to a second polling station where people had bedecked the town in multi-coloured ribbons, which criss-crossed the streets. The official in charge

of this polling station told me that this was a local tradition usually only reserved for weddings and festivals, but that today was the greatest festival he could remember.

The election was never going to be a panacea for all Iraq’s ills. The key to resolving many of the problems is not actually the election itself but the process of establishing a government and drawing up a constitution that will follow it. Whatever the sneering about these elections in the West, the contrast between the lack of freedom under Saddam and the great exercise in democracy being undertaken today could not be clearer. If Iraq emerges from these elections with a respected and broad-based government, and a draft constitution that reflect the needs of all Iraqis, the election will truly be a success.

*Emma Nicholson (1958)*

## AUTHORISED BIOGRAPHY OF PRUNELLA SCALES – ‘Prunella’

A new biography authored by Teresa Ransom (Risidill-Smith, 1953) is now in the bookshops. This is Teresa’s fourth published biography, the earlier ones featured; Fanny Trollope (mother of Anthony), Marie Corelli (popular Victorian novelist) and Madame Tussaud (of waxworks fame). One fact learned from the latter is that Madame’s first name is Marie – didn’t you ever wonder about this?!

The new book is a biography of well-known British actress, Prunella Scales, –

remembered for such epic series as *Fawlty Towers*, *Mapp* and *Lucia* and more recently a new production about Queen Victoria for BBC television which Teresa watched being filmed. Writing about a living person was a new experience and Teresa reports having had a great time in the process, which included sitting in on Master Classes in acting given by Prunella.

Her form-mates at St. Mary’s, who knew her when she was just a girl are so proud

of her successes, as Jennifer Harding (Simpson, 1953) writes – “A recent literary lunch at London’s Savoy Hotel featured a stimulating dialogue between Prunella Scales and her authorized biographer Teresa Ransom. *Prunella*, published by John Murray, is an absorbing and illuminating read and a splendid addition to Teresa’s stable of outstanding biographies. So let’s support her, girls.”

*Diana Moriarty  
(Blackburn, 1953)*

# SMART

## ST MARY'S ART – LONDON, JULY 2005



A level winner –  
Charlotte Puxley

SMART – Well! I booked the Arndean Gallery in Cork Street which is available to rent through my friend Sara Stewart at Fine Art Commissions. Although not a SMOG herself, Sara agreed to join our committee. Marvellous! Victoria Humphries (Riches, 1988) contacted SMOGs, and I contacted some contemporary artists and those involved in the art world to see if they would either submit art or help in some way. It worked! The SMART committee was formed (virtually all SMOGs). Many had never previously met!

St. Mary's ran an art competition, and winners in the different mediums were picked by five inspired people in the art world; Julian Barrow – painter, Harriet Bridgeman (Turton, 1959) – who set up the Bridgeman Art Library, Philip Blacker – sculptor, Nicky Philipps – SMOG portrait painter and Richard Wentworth – sculptor and Principal of the Ruskin School in Oxford.

We were away! Daisy Coombs (1992) came on board as the caterer for the event, with her delicious food from Daisy Daisy. The judges sorted the art from SMOGs and others to go on exhibition and they along with the prize winners and school art had a week's free exhibition in Cork Street, the premier address for art in London!

A week of exhibition and four nights of party lay ahead! The launch night exceeded all expectations. More than 400 people attended including those from the art world and beyond. Tatler photographed the event thanks to Clare Milford Haven (Steel, 1978). Prize winners from the school received beautiful silver crosses, designed and presented by Simon Benney of Walton Street. Fabulous!

The three other nights were for parents and old girls reunions. The greatest shame and sadness was that the main evening for the SMOGs reunion was the night of the 7th July atrocious bombings in London. A few wonderful die hard SMOGs came in true gallant style, but sadly it was not the prescribed 200 plus we were anticipating.

However it must be said that this was a great week for St. Mary's. Funds were raised towards a cross or chalice for the anticipated new Chapel, to be designed by Simon Benney. A committee of SMOGs got together and put on a superb show of art from St. Mary's past and present. Contemporary artists got to show their work in a top London location. St. Mary's sixth form girls helped put on the exhibition and more importantly were on show to the public at large! A student from the school even sold a piece of work to Jeffrey Archer, and as the public face of St. Mary's it was great fun!

Huge thanks to everyone involved. It would not have been possible without the help, enthusiasm and cooperation of many.

*Janie Wentworth-Stanley*

### St Mary's Prize Winners

#### A level:

Winner – Charlotte Puxley

Runner up – Hayley Dyer

#### GCSE:

Winner – Lizzie Paget

Runner up – Olivia Parker

#### Key Stage 3:

Winner – Alice MacDonald

Runner up – Imogen Lawson-Cruttenden

### Thursday 7th July – SMART

The awful events in London at the beginning of July cast a shadow on Thursday's SMART party in London. So many people had bought tickets for the Thursday night in order to see the wonderful display of art (I didn't know that so many SMOGs and current pupils were so incredibly talented!), and it was desperately sad that the terrorist attacks prevented most people from coming. We had well over a hundred tickets sold to

SMOGs for the evening, which was a marvellous response.

However, the interest shown by SMOGs of the 50's and 60's makes me realise that perhaps we could re-inspire this interest and organise another event . . . but what? Has anyone got any ideas as to format and venue? London would probably be best as it is accessible to most. It would be a great opportunity to see the plans of the new school and perhaps we could get someone involved in the planning to come and talk to us about it. Sadly we would not be able to see the display of art again, but perhaps when the new school is finished in two years we could have some form of exhibition there.

Please email me with suggestions. Without your input nothing can happen, so please, let me have ideas – [sueriches@smallplace.co.uk](mailto:sueriches@smallplace.co.uk)

*Sue Riches (Maxwell, 1963)*

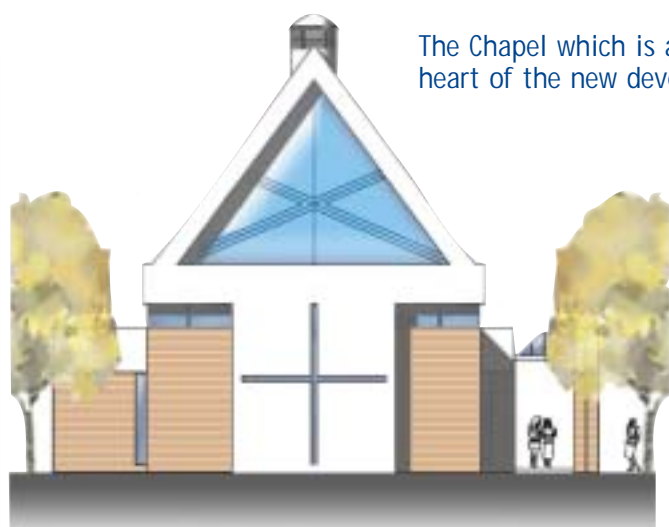


A level runner up – Hayley Dyer



GCSE winner – Lizzie Paget





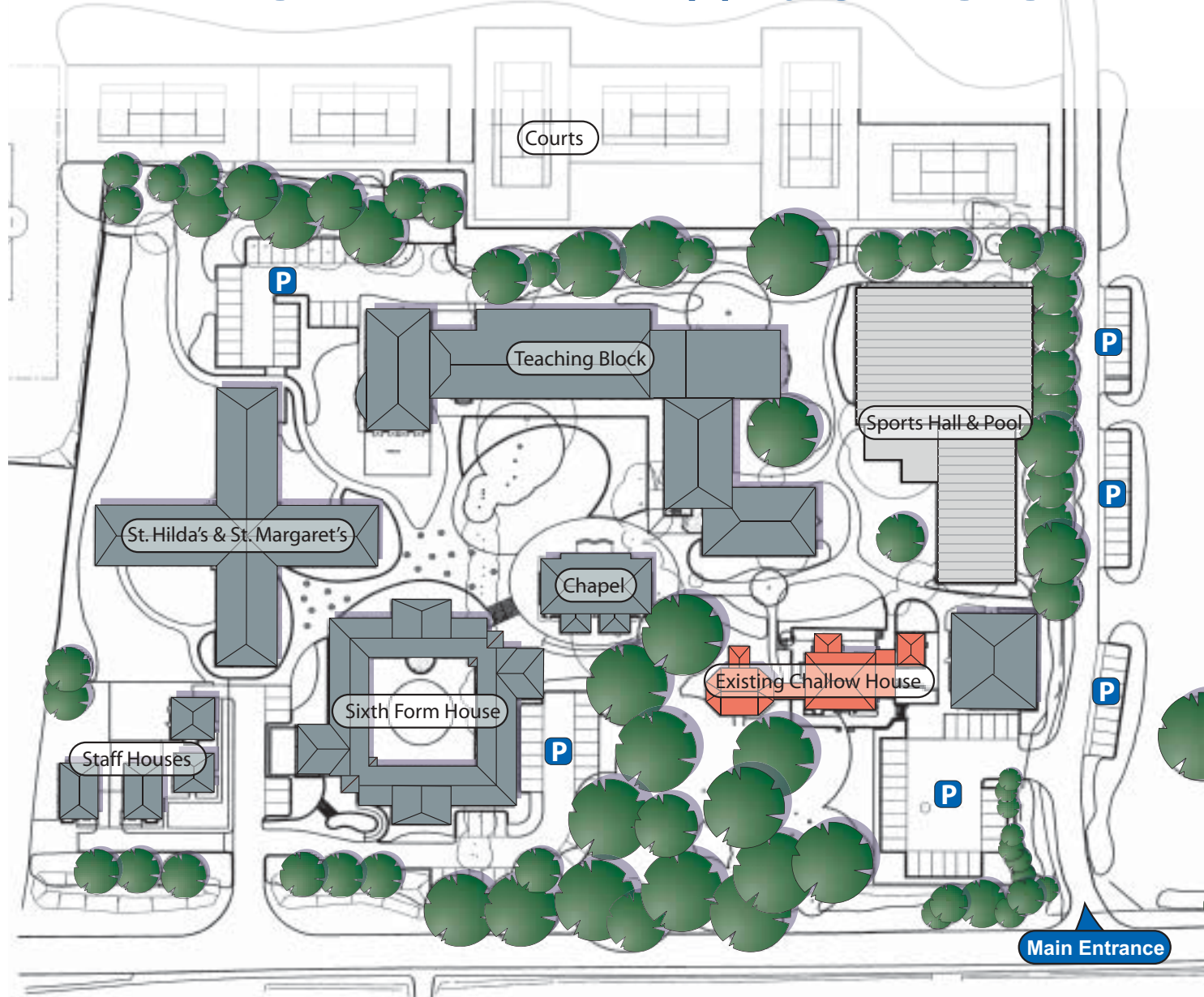
The Chapel which is at the heart of the new development



EAST ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION

# PLAN OF THE NEW SCHOOL



The Teaching block which will provide state of the art facilities and makes the most of the view northwards across Oxfordshire.



SOUTH ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



SECTION LOOKING NORTH

Sixth Form House with its own enclosed courtyard garden



SOUTH ELEVATION

## SMS 1926 TO 1933

I came to SMS in the summer term of 1926, the youngest girl they had had so far, a few weeks short of my tenth birthday. They had just started the first form and there were six of us ten year olds. I came because my mother had been there from 1898 to 1902. She was, I think, the first professional woman that the school turned out. Her form mistress, Sister Annie Louisa, later to be the mother of the community in my day, suggested to her that she should become a doctor, and she studied under the first generation of women doctors. I treasure a signed copy of her autobiography by Elizabeth Blackwell that she gave to my mother. I think that Sister Annie Louisa was instrumental in bringing the school into the twentieth century by starting the teaching of science; she also made the girls there the very first girl scouts before the day of guides. She knew of the scout movement and feeling that girls should have something similar got them working on the same lines, which is why when the guides started the school troop was called the First White Horse. It is pity that it seems to have stopped, for in my day it was very flourishing. We used to camp on the playing field in the summer term at weekends in the thirties.

I think that when my mother was there shampoos were not quite as they are now for I can remember her saying that they used to brush fine oatmeal through their long hair to de-grease it. When I was there we had our hair washed once a fortnight and dried by the fire in Fidelity (does the room still exist?) We also had our hair brushed every now and then, and it was years before I realised that that was to make sure we did not have nits. Baths were on four nights a week with one morning bath and one after games. There were no Sunday baths in order to give the man who stoked the boilers a day off. It may amuse you to know that my mother's eldest sister went to a school run by the Wantage sisters in London and they were given cotton shifts to wear in the bath so they did not have to see their own bodies! The girls were more sensible than the nuns and used to bath without the shift, and wring it out in the water afterwards. That was about a hundred and twenty years ago of course, and it did not happen at Wantage.

When my mother came she and her friend Maud Segar, were the only ones who did not wear corsets. When gym was introduced, the girls wore rather long tunics and had to remove their corsets. One girl was so ashamed of having to show her ankles that she hid in her cloakroom cupboard, and one had been so tightly corseted for so long that her weakened muscles could hardly hold her up. Extraordinary.

We didn't have corsets, though most girls had stays which were much the same thing, but we did have more clothes than nowadays, probably because the central heating was less efficient – and they were a bit different too. Starting with woolly vests, we then had liberty bodices then cotton knicker linings (two pairs a week) and warm navy knickers over them, black lisle stockings were later replaced by light coloured ones and were held up either by suspenders on the liberty bodices or suspender belts. For games we wore bright blue woollen ones – don't ask how often they were washed – and after games we changed into blue serge dresses with tussore collars in the winter, and blue long sleeved cotton ones in summer. In 1930 we had summer tunics which we loved. They were beige cotton with a pale blue trim worn with the same ties and blue woollen braid girdles that we had in winter. You can see the winter tunics in the old photographs – we were rather proud of them as they were a lot nicer than the ones most girls had to wear. The girdle was pale blue woollen braid, and blouses were viyella in winter and cotton in summer. Juniors wore pinafores that did up at the back to keep the tunics clean and when we older we had blue linen sleeves over our white blouses when we were in class.

As to lessons they were five full days a week and on Saturdays up to break, after which assembly to hear the week's progress, and after that mending, which meant sewing on buttons and darning. In the afternoon there were matches, which of course we watched if they were at home. Before matches we always sang the "Hockey Song" with great enthusiasm even though we no longer played hockey but lacrosse. It was a great song, written I believe by Sister Annie Louisa. As juniors we had gym each day, at least twice a week when we were older and the academic

side took more time, and games each afternoon. Then we changed into dresses and had lessons followed by prep after tea. That is until the new timetable was devised which was much better. There was no longer time for prep but the lessons were lengthened so any prep was done as part of class time, with of course the mistress there to help if necessary. If you had a period, gym and games were forbidden, for who knows what dreadful things might have happened if we had exercised! Some girls even felt that a bath was dangerous.

Though we led a rather sheltered existence in other ways we were possibly freer. We could climb trees without being told we might fall and hurt ourselves. There was tall conifer at the end of the shrubbery at St. Gabriel's up which most of us went a little, as we each knew how far we could go. A few actually reached the top and picked a twig to show for it. Ruth Railton, afterwards probably one of our most distinguished old girls, was one who did. She was a very all round girl too. We soon learned how to do it though I do remember jumping on the down swing – it hurt but I never thought of going to the Matron. After all I was only hurt because I was silly which is a good way of learning. We also had a giant stride which was great fun. It is probably unknown these days. There was a tree in the middle of the lawn at St Gabriel's that had a branch that stuck out at about five feet up. We used to jump up, throw our legs over it and hang upside down without being told we might fall on our heads. No one did and the branch got quite shiny as a result. I wonder if it is still there. Some girls had pogo sticks and stilts. The daring ones jumped off the ha-ha wall into the ditch on stilts, which was quite a feat of balance. Later when we were at St Mary's we roller-skated on the concrete tennis courts so we managed to get a lot of exercise one way or another.

My first term was enlivened by Ronnie the rook. He had fallen from his nest in the elm trees, four beautiful trees in the St. Gabriel's field, now I suppose victims of Dutch elm disease. Elizabeth Odgers found and nurtured him and he became extremely tame, distinguishing himself by landing on Sister Rachel's head once, when she was visiting the convent. He was always allowed freedom and vanished



during the summer holidays which were extra long that year as the New Wing was being built. I can just remember the jumble of huts which had stood there earlier, but after seven years 'New' seemed unsuitable and it was renamed Willow.

SMS was always a musical school and I am everlasting grateful that even girls who like myself did not play an instrument had "ear training", which was musical theory, and drama was also very much part of our lives and is still useful to me. One great difference was the amount of sleep we had. As 'babies' we went to bed at 6.30 and I can remember the sounds of the seniors playing cricket as I lay there in St. Monica. Time was gradually lengthened until as seniors we went at 9.00, only the prefects being allowed to stay up till 9.30. The rising bell went at 7.00 or 7.15, when we collected the can of hot water that the maids had left at our doors. We assembled in the hall where the patrol leaders checked that we were properly dressed and that our knickers did not show, then breakfast followed by bed making and in winter twenty minutes of stick practice. This was in St Mary's - I don't know if St Gabriel's did it too. Lacrosse took over from hockey around 1929. For games we played netball and lacrosse in winter, walks if it was unsuitable, and if it was raining hard I don't remember what we did but it would have been some sort of exercise. In summer it was rounders and tennis.

We were a placid and well behaved lot – no bullying or unkindness. Drugs were medicines given by a doctor, and no one particularly bothered about weight or anything. Anorexia had not been invented, and we were happy to accept life as it came, knowing it might be more complicated when we left school and content to wait till that happened. We were sheltered indeed, but given a very sound grounding in how to work and play and live with other people.

I also saw television in 1933 somewhere in the town. The VIth were allowed to go. It was a very early telecast, done in the rim of a wheel and viewed in the dark. The picture was about the size of the writing on a page viewed from the side. An historic occasion.

*Mary Wilson (1933)*

## ST MARY'S – 1942-44

### Daily routines

The bell goes and we fetch hot water in our cans. I am in a dormitory on the top floor, later used as an Art Room. Along the passage are the music practice rooms, and Miss Maling's study. The following year I am in a small single room in 'Cherry'. Further along are rooms called Saints, and the bathrooms. This area is rather dark and scary, as a ghost of a long departed schoolgirl is said to be seen there. Prefects come to check on the stripping of beds. I am a fag, so responsible for the taking and fetching of Sylvia's laundry, cleaning her shoes, and helping with the Prefects Sunday tea, when they will entertain a member of staff. We will benefit from 'left-overs'.

After breakfast we line up in the lobby for the Matron, accompanied by four prefects. The leaders inspect us for clean hands, necks and general turnout. After making our beds, we might need to visit the dispensary for doses of Radium Malt, Milk of Magnesia or Parishes food (iron). We then join a member of staff for a quarter of an hour's housework.

At Assembly in the hall we march in, in height order, to a rousing march played by Miss Davis. Sister Janet sweeps in, closely followed by her Jack Russell, Jeremy.

At break we have cocoa and fresh buns, or in summer outside it will be milk, sometimes turning sour. We are ravenous by lunchtime. With hands washed and hair brushed, we hurry along to the Prefect's calls of 'don't run, don't talk'. Grace is said by a member of staff or a prefect. One table is with 'Mamo' for French conversation. The lunch is very good, but the juniors have to gobble, as they must fetch the second helpings. After lunch we get half an hour on our beds with a book. Games lists are up in the lobby. I dislike 'lax' and wish I could play netball instead like those in 'St Gabes'. There are no showers, and baths are only twice a week at night, so I suppose it's back to basin and ewer. For games, we will have worn our brown flared skirts, with the thick blue stockings rolled down. Then we change back into straight skirts. In the summer term it will be pink, blue, green or fawn floral cotton



Teresa Chance

frocks, which come back stiff from the laundry.

Tea will be bread and dripping, a tiny pat of butter, and the jam, Fry's chocolate spread, fish paste or something of the sort brought from home with your supply of after-lunch sweets. On Sundays we get chocolate cake.

Prep will be supervised by a leader, or by your own form captain. In winter the school will have that distinctive fuggy smell, caused by the blackout. Supper is not a favourite meal, unless it is the cherries we get in the summer. No it is baked beans on fried bread, under-cooked baked potato, terrible fishcakes rolled in something bright orange, or watery scramble made with powdered egg. I do remember a breakfast when at my table our fried bacon included a cockroach!

'Rec', after supper, was noisy, but peace could be found in the weaving room, (opposite St. Augustin's refectory) or, for the seniors, in the Library. In summer we might take a walk over to St. Gabriel's, and have a turn on the swings.

In the Lobby, one wall had a large board specially prepared with tapes to hold letters. Opposite was a very big glass



Watercolour by  
Teresa Chance, 1944

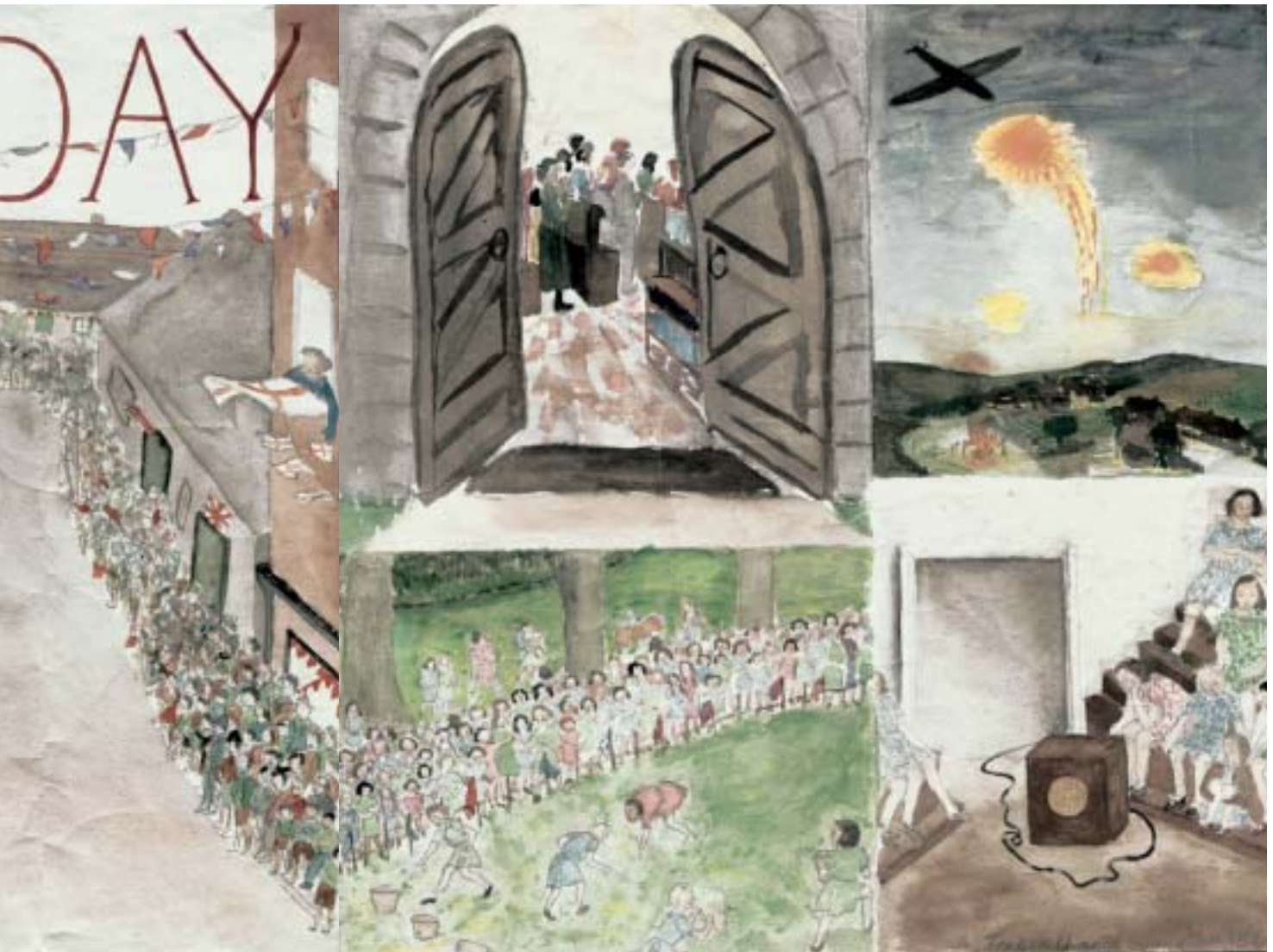
The 6th Form 1947.

*l to r top:*  
Ann Wather,  
Judy Francis,  
Jane King Wilkinson,  
Fiona Fraser,  
Angela English,  
Daphne King,  
Elizabeth Cornell,  
Self, Ann Knight.

*l to r bottom:*  
Zara Hoskins,  
Jane Marriott,  
french girl, Primrose  
and Phyllida Cooper,  
Jill Richards.







fronted bookcase, which was opened on Wednesday afternoons. Outdoors there was the excitement of roller-skating on the hard courts. In the evening we had dancing to records. We learnt ballroom dancing in the hall, with Miss Lane, and she also taught ballet. Miss Franklin took gym and remedials. She also awarded badges for deportment.

### Weekends

On Saturdays we had Mark Reading (our place in the form), announcements, and the giving out of starred work. Then we collected our laundry and were given any mending, which we took to the hall to do. In some ways, it seemed an aimless day, unless we were allowed to go home. (But not, if I remember, on the first three or the last two weekends of a term). More likely was a visit from the parents, and tea out in the town. If you had a term-time birthday, you would invite a senior to take tea in a refectory on your own, with your friends. If you were lucky, you would have special food and a cake sent from home.

On Sundays in winter we wore a rather unattractive dark blue dress with a detachable white rounded collar. In summer the thin silky dresses were much nicer.

I remember feeling faint during early Mass, but knew to put my head down between my knees. Breakfast would include some unpalatable milky coffee. Afterwards would be the ordeal of House meetings, dreaded by a Prefect, who would have to tell those with reports to stand up be subjected to a telling-off. Then she would give a pep talk about trying to be top house. (We always sat for meals with other girls in the same house, and there would be inter-house matches).



Miss Angèle Félice and Miss Jenny Davis attending the wedding of Teresa Kennedy, (Chance 1947) at S.S. Peter and Paul, Wantage 1955.



The Prefects sleep out 1947 – privilege!  
(Angela English, Elizabeth Cornell, Teresa Chance and Daphne King)



The Chapel at St Mary's Wantage.

Time for High Mass and the Sacristan and Boat-boy would change into their white attire. The choir met in the Weaving room; the main choir wore beautiful long blue veils, and the assistant choir short white ones. The rest of the school wore chapel caps.

On Miss Malings' retirement, blind Mr Avery from the town took over to play the organs. I remember some beautiful Bach. At choir practise the whole of the grand piano would shake with his powerful playing. I eventually became on the top four in the choir, and we would give out the beginning of the Magnificat or the first verse of a psalm in plainsong. I particularly remember the last hymn of the summer term – 'Praise to the Holiest in the Height'. The choir would often add a descant. In wintertime we would go for a walk in 'crocodile' formation, wearing our long blue cloaks with lighter blue hoods. We had a more peaceful after supper recreation on Sundays. The two top forms were read to by Sister Janet. The lower forms had some sort of quiet game organised by their Rec sister.

### Special Occasions

For me, the ones that were most memorable were those connected with the Chapel. And those occasions when we were, so to speak, released from the confines. The last occasion the White Dress Dance was held, was on the All Saint's, All Soul's weekend in 1942; very special and very exciting for a twelve year old. We dressed in our party frocks and came down to a place transformed by lights, candles, flowers and music. We each carried a tiny programme with pencil attached on which we noted down our chosen partners. I'm sure a wonderful supper was provided.

Early in the spring term came Candlemass with our procession carrying candles. I only remember one early Easter, kept at School. The silence and the solemnity of Holy Thursday and Good Friday. The Pascal Candle and Veneration of the Cross. And then Easter Morning, early, outside the Chapel, with Sister Janet and three Marys to roll away the stone.

Another occasion etched in my memory was of course my Confirmation and First Communion. The Bishop told us to make



◆ 6th Form picnic at the White Horse Hill 1947 (Kan, Jude, Icky, Floss, Angie, Daph, Corny and Wilky)

◆ Vigi and Judy – Winter 1947

use of the talents God had given us. We also attended an impressive veiling at the Convent.

In the summer term we had lovely outings with picnics for Ascension Day and Corpus Christie. Another picnic I remember was a Girl Guide outing with a lovely bonfire and sausages. On our return to school in September we would go blackberrying.

The outing that I really enjoyed was the opportunity to sing with the Bach Choir in Oxford. Miss Kempthorne had taught us our part of the Bach B minor Mass very thoroughly and although as an alto I was in a row directly in front of the basses, it did not make any difference. Other schools sang their part. Other forays would be a French play with Mamo, and a series of lectures on English Literature with Miss Osborne, as well as expeditions on our bicycles to study Church Architecture with Miss Viner.

The other memorable event was the bi- or tri-yearly performance of Pilgrims Progress, very ably produced by Sister Janet.

As for the War, I only remember watching King George VI inspecting soldiers, and then the School Sports for VE Day. We were given opportunities for listening to the news and reading the newspaper. I imagine we were far more in touch with events during our holiday.

*Teresa Kennedy (Chance, 1947)*



## SMS DURING THE WAR

My mother, Philippa Cunliffe-Owen, and I were delighted to receive the SMS Chronicle. My mother was at St Mary's during the war and we both read Evangeline Evans' account of the war years with delight. The father who won the Gold Cup was my grandfather, Sir Hugo Cunliffe-Owen. It was Parents' Day and he was at SMS with my Mum, but he did not expect his horse, Finis, to win (his wife also had a horse running which was favourite). Someone asked him during the afternoon if he knew who'd won the Gold Cup, he replied that he didn't. They said 'You have!' He was so delighted; he stood up and announced his victory and a day's holiday for the whole school. Apparently he paid for the whole school to go for a trip down the river on a boat! My brother still has the Gold Cup in his house.

*Xandie Butler (Burke, 1963)*

## FORTY YEARS ON

### November 1968:

"Sally, Sally, come quickly. Your mother's car is in the Circle!" "Pardon?" I splutter. I run to the window and there, sure enough, is my mother's car. I run to the Bulge – no sign of anyone. I sit and wait until my mother comes out of the Headmistress' office.

My mother looks at me. "They have asked us to take you away Sally" she says, not unkindly. Again I splutter "Pardon? What for?" "For reading letters behind your hymn book in chapel" my mother replies as mystified as me. "But I don't, they know I don't, I'm in the choir for goodness sake, they sit behind me! They know I don't".

We look at each other. I wonder what my mother has said to Sister and I don't have long to wait, "I told her we wouldn't take you away but that you would leave at the end of this school year".

Relief! I was leaving. Actually I wanted to leave now! But where to go in the middle of an academic year? My planned career already now in tatters by a nun accusing me of something I didn't do. I accept it's sensible to stay until the end of the summer term.

### July 1969:

The end of my time at St Mary's. All I feel is relief. The five unhappiest years of my life are over. I have planned a new career. I have organised what to do with the next year. School can't hurt me again. I leave without a backwards glance.

### November 1969:

I am attending at interview at The Middlesex Hospital in London for a place as a student of Radiography – my new chosen career. I was told by school not to apply to London as I wouldn't get in. I still applied! The interviewer looks at a letter, then at me, then back at the letter. She then looks me straight in the eye "This reference from your Headmistress is so bad that I am going to ignore it. It looks personal to me, nobody can be that bad!" I get my place – phew! Can I now put school behind me or will my experience continue to effect me?

### October 2005:

For some reason I've never understood about a year or so ago I started getting SMOG news via email. I get a kind of masochistic pleasure from it! It seems the nuns left the school in 1972 – I wonder if that's a coincidence or not. It seems the old scratchy brown tweed tunics, matching brown tweed coat for best, blue shirts and delightful thick blue stockings have been replaced. I think back – actually, I liked the blue cloaks!

Another email – the school is moving! They are setting up an exhibition over half term. My daughter, a teacher, thinks I should go. "Come on Mum, I'll come with you, let go lay some ghosts to rest!"

So I find myself on a sunny Wednesday in October driving down the M4 to Wantage with my daughter. As we approach the town I feel sick. What am I doing!

First we visit the museum. Not much there sadly. However a white chapel cap catches my eye – I thought they were blue. Yes, how did we manage never to set each other alight? Next the parish church where I was confirmed in November 1964. The organ has moved, the altar has moved, pews have been removed – I don't recognise it at all. We walk through the square and round into Newbury Street. St Alfred's Kitchen is now a Chinese

restaurant. I start to feel really sick now. We walk further up to St Gabriel's House, still there. We turn back and round the corner towards the main entrance to school. A bridge over the road! A new swimming pool complex it looks like. I'd forgotten the Fire Station but not the alley down the side of school to the fish and chip shop where we used to go regularly to buy 6d worth of chips. We walk to the circle and make our way to the door by the bulge. We ring the bell. A cheerful lady answers and lets us in "Yes, come in, feel free to walk round".

This is spookily the same! We go the chapel and a shock awaits me – the door to the Beetle House is open! I tentatively put my head round the corner to find two more cheerful ladies! "Yes", they say, "this is where the nuns lived but this is a staff coffee room now. Look round". I can't. It doesn't feel right; it feels like I'm trespassing. We go into the chapel – totally unchanged except they've removed the nuns' stalls and choir pews in front of the organ. I tell my daughter how I used to spend many hours in the chapel as a Sacristan and also learning to play the organ. I also tell her that I used to take communion every Sunday – not because I was religious per se but because if you did you got hot sausage rolls at late breakfast. We used to take the sausage out and put butter and marmalade on the warm pastry. Delicious!

We move back to the bulge and beyond. The staff room is in the same place. Automatically I look at the board to check there isn't a note for me. Relief there isn't! My daughter laughs at me. Opposite is the refectory. Again, apart from the hot food counters, unchanged. I reminisce and remember: Train crash was a favourite (tinned tomatoes on toast), battered spam soaked in grease on the first night of every term and mince with soggy fried bread.

The library was the same, the corridors were the same, the lobby outside the hall was the same. Hang on! The board where they put our post on has gone! The tuck shop at the bottom of the stairs has gone! Into the hall – yes, exactly the same. To be honest it doesn't even look as if its been painted since I left! Off we go down to the music block – but no, this is all art now. Where have the practice rooms



gone? We wander back into the lobby and see someone. "Where's the music block gone?" I ask. She kindly takes us outside and lets us in the very nice new modern music block. Thank goodness some things change! We chat awhile with this very pleasant and friendly lady who turns out to be the new deputy head.

We learn some more facts: There are now only two houses, St Hilda's and St Margaret's. When did poor old Saints David, Andrew, Patrick and George get the boot? St Gabriel is now St Anne. Perhaps they had a clear out of men!

We take our leave. We've seen enough. We head back to the Market Square to The Bear for a drink and something to eat. So – did my experiences of school have an affect on my future? Yes most definitely. My children went nowhere near either a boarding school or a convent. I became passionately interested in education and more importantly the rights of the child. I

also became a school governor of our local girl's school some eight years ago and have been Chairman of the Board for the past four years.

We arrive home and I get out my school reports and old school photographs. I start to chuckle. "You know, we used to have nick names for the all nuns" I tell my daughter. "Baby Beetle, Amoeba, Honor Marge, Saj. I can't remember the names we had for Sisters Phyllis, Antonia, Jean Frances and Alison Mary". We turn to the school reports. "These days" my daughter states importantly "teachers are supposed to write positive and encouraging comments on school reports. There isn't one positive, encouraging or supportive comment on any one of these reports. They don't even wish you well when you leave". "Oh well", I sigh, "it's history now".

It seems to me that history is now going to take an even bigger step with the

school's move. I'm glad it's moving. It will leave the ghosts of the past behind. I wish the school well in the future. May it have compassion for its girls and nurture them whilst giving them a good education.

I look at a photograph: Upper IVB 1965 Can I remember all the girl's names? Not quite so I cheat and look at the back where I've written them all down!

*From left to right:*

*Top Row: Mary Meade, Sally Hamilton, Elizabeth Dunn, Me, Mary Joyce, Elizabeth Bayes.*

*Middle Row: Elizabeth Madden, Susan Crook, Jean Clifford, Susan Cheshire, Victoria Blake, Diana Speir, Fiona Roderick.*

*Bottom Row: Sally McAlpine, Georgiana Balfour, Janine Coombs, Sister Helen Ninian, Elizabeth Mann, Jackie Mole, Jean Rankin.*

I hope all my classmates from way back then are healthy and happy. I am!

*Sally Jenkins (Green, 1969)*



# 4 NORTH POLES EXPEDITION

*Last September a fellow SMOG, Henrietta Acloque showed me an article in The Metro calling for ordinary volunteers to join Jim McNeil, a Polar explorer leading a British expedition to the North Pole in 2006. I applied and succeeded in getting through a written selection and a cold and wet Welsh selection weekend in mid December.*



Amazingly out of about 550 applicants I was selected and went into training, involving many weekends on the hills of Wales and Cumbria, advanced wilderness medical courses and an intensive but fantastic three and a half weeks up in the Canadian arctic based off the tiny community of Resolute

## The Arctic Training, Cornwallis Island, Canada:

We went out for our main Polar training session last April to Resolute, a small Inuit community where most Polar Expeditions are based from. It was out here that I was suddenly engulfed by the reality of what we were setting ourselves to achieve.

We arrived to a balmy -32 and having got the preliminaries of living out on the ice, we embarked on main training, walking from 9-6, open water drills and emersions, polar bear scenarios, medical situations, search and rescue, snow caving, evacuations and just living and working as an efficient unit out on expedition. One of the biggest realisations is how in such freezing temperatures, the easiest things become problematic, and everything is frozen. Most mornings I had to defrost my eyelashes to open my eyes!

The Inuit were very friendly and intrigued by what we were doing. We often had the children after school over to our tents for hot chocolate. One really felt

part of the most Northerly community in the world.

The scenery was incredible, at times cruel, and at other times, just so impressive you just could not believe that you are lucky enough to be experiencing it. We also came across many Polar bears, on one day alone we saw nine and just crossing a fresh set of tracks makes the hair on the back of your neck stick up. Yet, though exceedingly dangerous, there is something just so impressive about living and being with them out in their habitat.

## 4 North Poles

### 1. The Geomagnetic Pole 79°46'N, 71°45'W (2005)

The Geomagnetic Pole is basically the north end of the axis of the magnetosphere, the geomagnetic field that surrounds the Earth and extends into space. This, like the Magnetic Pole is constantly moving though it is at present situated over the Darling Peninsula, Canada. The explorer David Hempleman-Adams was the first explorer to go here in 1992. This pole is the one that my team is going to and we will be taking a new route, covering over 250 miles of sea ice from Alert at the very top of Ellesmere Island in northeast Canada down the Nare Strait between Greenland and Canada to the Pole situated on the Darling Peninsula back on Ellesmere.

We will be aiming to cover an average of 10 miles a day, however, there will be days where barely a couple will be done as we are expecting to come across a good deal of rubble, (broken ice pushed upwards by tide and pressure) and also open water which we will have to cross. We will also be pulling exceedingly heavy pulks (sleds) as we are doing this leg unsupported and will be starting out with over a month's food and fuel. It will be not only an exceedingly remote and rare expedition, but it will be incredibly beautiful.

### 2. The Magnetic Pole 82°50'N, 116°27'W (2005)

Our sister team will set out in 24 hour darkness in February 2006 on the Arctic Ocean to reach the Magnetic North Pole which is now some 322 miles north of the Canadian coastline. (So far north that

it has not been reached for four years.)

The Mag. Pole is a wandering location on the Earth's surface migrated northwards well into the Arctic Ocean where lines of magnetic force exit. This is the pole to which your compass points to.

### 3. The Arctic Pole, or the Pole of Inaccessibility 84°03'N, 174°51'W

From the Mag. Pole, Jim, (our leader) will then lead a small party to reach the Arctic Pole a further 448 miles to the centre of the Arctic Ocean. The Arctic Pole is on the surface of the Arctic Ocean and is not only the most distant point from land; but the most difficult location to attain. This has never before been reached and is the last true world first in polar exploration.

### 4. The Geographic North Pole 90°N

Having reached the Arctic Pole, Jim will continue to the Geographic North Pole some 411 miles away. Here, because of the length of journey (1181 miles plus 20% for ice shift) and the time it will take (120 days) the expedition will await a summer pick up by the Russian ice breaking ship that visits the pole each year. The Geographic Pole is a fixed location on the surface of the Arctic Ocean which is the northern axis of the Earth's rotation.

### Fundraising

I do have a phenomenal amount of money to raise, but I would not be channelling all my time, energy and dedication to this unique and exceptionally challenging expedition if I did not think it could be achieved.

To do this we are looking to get a mixture of corporate and private sponsorship. If your business or you know if some one who would be interested in getting on board, do please get in contact with me as we also have devised a business incentive scheme. I am also organising several fund raising events in London. Donation cheques can be sent in the below address, made out to Ice Warrior Expeditions, and sent to Ice Warrior Expeditions, 7 The High St, Ascot, Berks, SL5 7JF or alternatively you can now donate online at [www.ice-warrior.com](http://www.ice-warrior.com). Thanks.

*Arabella Arbuthnott, 1998*

### Editors Note

*On behalf of all SMOGs I would like to wish Arabella the very best of luck – having travelled in the Arctic I know only too well how incredibly challenging the trip will be, however I have no doubt that she will come back having loved (almost!) every second.*





# CAMBODIA

*One evening in November 2004, I had supper with an old friend whom I hadn't seen for a long time. She was going to Cambodia for three weeks in the New Year. Realising it was the perfect opportunity to take the gap year I had never had, a few weeks later I left my job and spent the next five months in Cambodia, travelling for one month and teaching villagers in a pagoda outside Siem Reap for the next four. I moved on to Vietnam for a month, and then to Laos for a short time. Australia came next, where I have remained for three months, staying in Sydney with some lovely old Wantagers – Harriet Hindley and Harriet Bulwer Long. I have been doing short courses in black and white photography, creative writing and acting whilst contemplating my next move. I'm going home for Christmas, but I have a feeling I might be out here again soon!*

*Below are excerpts from Abigail's report . . .*



Phnom Penh. Our first day together and we decided to get to grips with the main mode of transport – bikes. After ten minutes, my lesson ended in disaster as I decided to career towards a tree stump and a wall at 20 mph, confusing the accelerator for the brake on a number of occasions. I made myself fall off in order to avoid what was rushing towards me, and landed with the bike on top of my leg. In a flash 70 Cambodians (or Khmers) had appeared from nowhere and had gathered around in groups here and there to gawp at the spectacle. I was to find out later that it is not done to make a mistake in Cambodia. It is almost as if they have a genetic fear of losing face and would rather ignore a



problem than give it notice. I pulled myself from underneath the revving machine, and felt as if I was a live performance artist under the gaze of the crowd, so many blank faces watching a film. With an infected wound and later vein, the trip did not get off to an auspicious start.

Infection or not, Imogen (my friend who I was travelling with) and I left the fumes of the city, and went up to Ratnikiri, the precious mountains in the North of Cambodia. The region is home to tribal villagers who continue to live out their centuries-old existence surrounded by jungle, and near to the famous and massive lake created by a crater, a million miles

deep and filled with crystal clear water and surrounded by huge bamboo shoots. According to local legend, somebody disappeared trying to work out how deep it was. Owing to my accident, we unable to fly and instead endured a 12 hour journey through landscape that only a few years earlier had been the hide out for various bandits and the site of a few attacks. I have never, ever, EVER been over such bumpy terrain in my life. It was how I imagine travelling over the moon to be – at speed and with no suspension! The potholes were really craters a foot deep and a metre wide. It went on for EIGHT hours. The boot kept opening, the car filled with red dust, and at one stage the battery came out of the bonnet. At this point we were near a village, but it suddenly dawned on us how utterly remote our surroundings were and that only the maddest westerners would undertake this journey – usually on dirt bikes I've since found out. Occasionally we did pass another vehicle – trucks jammed packed with Cambodians, coming out of the windows and sitting on the roof clinging on for dear life.

The journey drew on. We passed villages lined with sugar palms, with one small shack for a shop and laughing, naked children pausing to stare, fascinated by our foreign looks. We sped through miles and miles of jungle and as the sun went down, a vast canopy formed on either side stretching miles into the darkness. Small fires started to appear, burning near and far in the undergrowth in order to remove tendrils that might cause forest fires before the dry weather, as well as to clear land for agricultural use. It was really quite eerie. As the stars came out we tried to console ourselves by learning the constellations – it was impossible to listen to any music as the CDs kept jumping. It was also impossible to sit on the seat for more than three seconds at a time – we had to hold on to something and also hold up our chests for fear of ending up with breasts around our ankles.

In Ratnikiri we learnt all about tribal village life – to this day the villagers all meet and make sacrifices for every important event such as building and choosing houses, for marriage, feasts and deaths. If they want to choose a suitable piece of land for agriculture it is decided by the nature of the dream of the village

elder that night. The main religion in these more rural parts is Annhimism – and even in the cities, households still believe that there are spirits in everything. In the tribal villages, until relatively recently, they've led a subsistence life. Slowly this is being eroded by outside forces such as illegal logging and Christianity, the latter teaching them not to make sacrifices of their animals, but instead take them to sell at the markets. Thus currency, the market economy, is gradually changing the ancient bartering of their ancestors. Illegal logging is still going strong and all around us there were signs of the jungle disappearing. There were some nights a few months on in my trip where we would ride past giant covered trucks near the temples of Angkor as they thundered past, using the darkness as camouflage for what the government are secretly allowing and publicly condemning.

\* \* \* \* \*

Time to go back to the city, and as we drove to catch our boat South to Phnom Penh, we were joined by a bronzed and leathery-skinned man, who told us with huge smiles that his entire family had been killed by the Khmer Rouge and that for three years he had hid in the jungle, living on whatever food he could find. He now has another family and had recently converted to Christianity. The boat trip down the Mekong River was amazing, we motored along as the sun set and the river threw up unexpected rapids, swirling menacingly and tipping the boat from side to side. Silhouettes of fishermen throwing their nets from curved boats came in and out of view and villagers came out to wave from the banks either side.

\* \* \* \* \*

Back in Phnom Penh, we went to Teoul Sung, the prison where the Khmer Rouge tortured 15,000 Khmers and eight westerners between 1973-6. Only seven people survived. We walked around rooms empty apart from the shackles and iron beds in the middle of the room and pictures of bloody corpses found there when Phnom Penh was liberated by the southern Vietnamese. Room upon room of photographs, the Khmer Rouge having meticulously documented each person they interrogated, tortured and killed. In one room there were photographs of some of the former child soldiers. Some had been traced back to the villages to

where they had returned after the war. With each quote and photo, there is the sad and sorry fact: You either worked for them or were tortured by them. I feel sure I have encountered a few of these people in various episodes out here, each time the terror and violence showing itself in their eyes.

What is so heartbreaking is the beauty of this place. The landscape totally got under my skin. There had been a huge drought when I first arrived but soon I was to taste my first tropical storm, the rain poured incessantly for half an hour and the lightening flashing for two. It was a reminder that this barren dust bowl would soon turn into a lush green jewel. With all this beauty, it's amazing to think that 60 or so people every month are still being maimed or killed by landmines buried beneath the surface of an outwardly majestic and peaceful terrain. I went to visit the Halo Trust and was shown a huge map of the areas they have yet to clear. It's really bad around the Thai border and because 60% of the population are under 24, the need for more land grows every day. Thus the villages continually expand out into the fields and often families find that as they start to build their houses and plant crops they lose their children, their spouses, their animals to these hidden horrors. Amputees are around every corner in Siem Reap, but there are no social services to speak of, so many of them rely on begging to stay alive.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the beginning of February, the holiday was over and I went up to Siem Reap to start teaching. Myself and four other volunteers lived together for a bit in a house near Psaa Leu – the sprawling market either side of highway six. I had a nocturnal rat in my room which ran over me once when I was cooking and a gecko outside with its amazing call. I slept on a wooden bed with no mattress, and listened to the drunken ramblings of the owner downstairs and the amplified noise of a thousand different speakers. One night we came back to find a whole group of drunken Cambodian men – the owner's friends – had taken over our balcony and were cooking god knows what on the gas fire, drinking huge amounts of beer (which they can't take) and singing songs. In the day their children would think





nothing of coming up and just staring at us or swinging in the hammock. There was a little shrine to the spirits where there would always be offerings of incense and fruit – bright pink dragon fruit, milk fruit, or mangostines – which are amazing – apparently Queen Victoria offered a prize to anyone who could successfully bring one back to grow in England.

Towards the end of February, the other volunteers left and it was now my turn to teach English at a pagoda called Wat Brin, 15 minutes outside of Siem Reap. Every evening we taught for three hours, and I would ride out of the town on the back Lux's (the Khmer teacher) motorbike as the light was going down (the BEST time in the world). Once off the main road, we drove along a mud road, the sugar palms stretching for miles up into the sky out of the flat, flat land, silhouetted and surrounded by water buffalo roaming in the watery fields either side. Elegant wooden houses built on stilts and painted a lovely soft grey/blue lined the dirt track. School children finish at about this time and we would become entangled in thick rows of wonderfully old fashioned bicycles, some four sizes too big, often three to a bike, young voices shouting happily to each other as they made their way home, clothed neatly in white shirts and navy blue skirts or trousers, dark shiny hair tied back tightly, waving and shouting hello to us as we passed.

The children we taught came from the villages surrounding the pagoda and we would have fleeting glimpses into their houses on the drive in. We would see women preparing supper over coals with earthen pots. They would look up and smile, often in amazement, as even though they are so close to Cambodia's second city, they have little time to venture out and see next to no foreigners. Having white skin is something everyone desires in Cambodia and there were many women, with old and crinkled faces, twinkling eyes, who came up to touch me and make admiring noises. I of course returned the compliment and am secretly amused, if only they knew how their smooth hazelnut skin was desired in England! The idea of going darker is abhorrent and they cover up religiously, face creams that lighten the skin lining the shelves of the pharmacies and market stalls.

The school at Wat Brin is also part of a Pagoda complex, set half an hours walk off the main road. The complex of buildings was on a much bigger scale, with a dining hall where the nuns would prepare food, wash, pray and eat after they had seen to the monks. The latter leaning out of windows and over balconies, calling and taking every opportunity to practice their English. It was the walk to and from the classroom, and the ride deeper into the village to the second school, which was incredible. Another dusty track with pot holes the size of cars, lined with gently swooping palm trees and shacks, stilted houses with beautifully swept front gardens, women elegantly silhouetted in the door-less doorways, palm-wine sellers walking slowly under the burden of their lethal liquid – balancing the palm tree containers across their necks, the children clambering up to stare in at you through the classroom windows, some so young they burst out crying just to see your weird whiteness, the classroom a wreck with the bench/desks nailed in one long row together, falling apart, covered in dust.

At Wat Brin there were three Cambodian teachers and we slept in one big room together at the house – another stilted affair, this time 20 feet off the ground and without a loo or shower. Washing was an antique art, carried out as it has been for centuries – standing in nothing but a sarong underneath the house in the chilly morning or in the evening air as it lost its heat, pouring a tin bowl of water over yourself collected from the well. Dripping, you wash as the children from the village think nothing of coming up and speaking to you whilst the corrupt officials lazing in the political party headquarters next door oggle. You wash as the cows are being herded back from the fields by children in rags with sticks, guiding the water buffalo that roam into the garden right under your nose. Village life absolutely as it was and how it has been for hundreds of years, including the absence of any fridges! Ice is delivered from the ice factories in two metre long slabs and hacked, sawed and grated. Every household has an ice box but by the end of the day, a cold beer is impossible to find! Last time I was there, I cooked under the house for the teachers by gas light over hot coal in a big old metal pan – stir fry vegetables, rice and god knows what else that crept onto



our plates in the flickering light! A good opportunity to teach them about light pollution – the sky was a blanket of stars.

I tried a lot of different food – fried locusts, beetles, brain, tongue, and the national delicacy of the common people, cooked for you on the side of the road – a two week old baby duck still curled up in an egg dipped in pepper. However I couldn't muster up the courage for fried spiders, of which a few trays passed me, piled high. Atkins will no doubt be smiling in his heaven. I sang to the children at each school, taught them *The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round* and *Let it Be* for the older children.

\*\*\*\*\*

The village, Kompong Proc, becomes flooded after the rainy season and at that time the only way to get to each house is by boat. I was there at the driest time of year, and it was so weird to look down the two mile long street (if you could call it that) with houses rising up 40 feet on either side knowing that the water would rise so high. The girls bought lunch and we skewered tiny catfish through the eye and barbecued them over coals and ate steamed rice whilst listening to the obligatory karaoke videos. They all motored off to the big lake after that – a lovely place where you swung in hammocks, ate homemade ice cream offered to you by countless sellers and swim – fully clothed of course. The lessons could be great fun and I got on well with the students and the teacher, who became a great friend.

The markets were amazing – the women sat on the floor displaying their vegetables and fruit, live fish in low trays, chilli, garlic and fresh green herbs in baskets, all beautifully presented. There were fresh baguettes for sale and people wheeling carts around selling snacks that they cooked over hot coals. It was absolute pandemonium, with motorbikes and bicycles, flies, rubbish, people staring, bargaining, crowded and at times unbearable, at others wonderful and medieval. And yet, everywhere you looked, the west and perhaps China and Japan were seeping in and I fear that the bicycles with huge pigs balancing on baskets on the back and the rows of women wheeling their huge bundles of sticks at dusk will be forever eclipsed by the din of motos and four wheel drives.

\* \* \* \* \*

On a trip to Phnom Penh, I met Lux's parents – his father works at the National Museum and they were busy photographing their collection of 10 million Buddhas with an ancient camera in the bowels of the earth... I was given a guided tour and told them all about the Bridgeman Art Gallery. It was a beautiful place actually and you could sit in the courtyard and read for about 10 minutes before being accosted by monks trying to practice their English. The latter are a cheeky lot actually – they come round begging for alms but one Khmer told me that he was in a shop and a monk walked in and asked to buy a TV, DVD player and a remote control in order to watch films in his bed. It's really only the older monks that abide by the rules. Although it is traditional for young Cambodian boys to spend only a short period of time in the monkhood, the younger generation seem to regard this brevity as an excuse not to take their spartan life seriously.

The contrast is extraordinary in Siem Reap though – one day I sat in front of two of the most beautiful colonial hotels and watched families, all with the day off, making offerings with flowers and smoky pungent incense at a shrine, drums and music and chattering, all in aid of the New Year, a photographer trying to persuade them to have their pictures taken. They are such lovely people, so full of love, so ready with a smile. I don't know if it's going too far to see a nation's soul reflected in their karaoke videos, but they are so sweet and innocent, so full of pure emotion which they are ready to give at a drop of the hat no matter the consequences. It's very uplifting! It's a national pastime to go and sing in the karaoke rooms – phoning out for a song, warm beer and roughly broken ice, each room equipped with two microphones and grubby plastic sofas. Some rooms are full of parties, some with just one lonely man drunkenly expressing his broken heart with the flattest singing you'll ever hear, the music so loud it makes your ears ring. The only English songs they have are special 90s/80s classics . . . *Unbreak My Heart*, *Right Here Waiting* and *Hello*. I busied myself mastering all three.

*Abigail Deacon (1995)*



# 'GAP YEAR THIRTY YEARS LATE!

*Having never had a gap year, I thought that when my youngest son left school I would take a part gap year and travel around Australia. This thought became reality when in January this year my partner, George, and I took five weeks off work and started on our tour.*



We flew to Singapore where we broke our journey for two days. It was an amazing disappointment. It was squeaky clean with little or no character. When I lived there forty years before, the noise from the villages, the smells and the vibrancy of the place just hit you as you got off the plane. Now there were no birds, no cats, no dogs, no monkeys – I think in the two days we were there we saw one 'poodle' in a car, one lizard and a terrapin in an ornamental pool and a few very unattractive looking and sounding black birds. It certainly was not the Singapore that I knew and remember with fondness. However, we did achieve one aim which was to arrive in Australia less exhausted!

Our next stop was Perth. We stayed with a cousin of mine who lives just outside Perth and were given a very 'royal' welcome. Bush fires had been raging in the hills behind them for a few days but were fortunately under control by the time we arrived. We were taken round Perth, to the Indian Ocean, where we swam – it was cold – and to Fremantle. We then hired a car and went south to the

Margaret River, where we sampled some of the wines, went for walks, swam with dolphins and even, almost literally, bumped into a huge red kangaroo one early evening. On Australia Day we headed back to Perth and watched a spectacular firework display from the balcony of my cousin's house and then the next evening my partner enjoyed a lazy sail down the Swan River – being a seasick sufferer I decided to stay firmly on shore.

From Perth we flew to Ayers Rock. Miles and miles of red landscape, and hours later we arrived at this outpost in the middle of nowhere. That evening we witnessed a sandstorm which was pretty amazing, followed by a dramatic thunderstorm. What a welcome. The next day dawned cold as we hung around at crack of dawn to see the sun rise over the rock – because of the weather conditions the sun rise was not that spectacular but we were then dropped off near to the rock and walked round the base, arranging to be picked up a couple of hours later from the Visitor Centre. The rock was interesting and the walk was easy so we enjoyed that. The

Visitor Centre was, I thought, not very inspiring – there was nothing at all about the geology of the rock and if you wanted to find out about that sort of thing you had to pay for an information sheet. The Aboriginal displays were not grammatically easy to understand and the spoken words were delivered in a flat monotone which made listening exceedingly tiring. The only thing that we had any degree of difficulty with was the flies which at that time of year were simply dreadful. The heat was fine, it being about 40° but with a little breeze so it felt as if one was standing in front of a hairdryer. In the afternoon we went out to look at the Olgas, another different rock formation a few miles away from Ayers Rock. On the way from the Olgas back to Ayers Rock to see the sun set we saw camels ambling across the desert – apparently left there by the Afghans who had been imported with their camels to help construct the Adelaide to Alice Springs railway lines, the camels are now part of the Australian desert.

The next stop, another few hours of flying over red landscape and roads stretching off like the Start Rite shoe advertisements, was Cairns. The green, lush rain forests were a welcome sight after the red parched desert. We stayed in a lovely hotel in a place called Palm Cove – very romantic with a golden curving beach edged with palm trees – the only problem was that we could not swim because of the box jelly fish which were in abundance! We had three days in Queensland and managed a trip out to the barrier reef where we snorkelled and where my partner marvelled at the corals and fish and I found it rather tame after my experiences off Singapore all those years ago. We did find ourselves swimming along with a turtle which was nice for us but probably not so nice for the poor turtle as people tried to touch it. We also went on a trip up to Cape Tribulation, taking in a boat trip on the Daintree River, where we didn't see any crocodiles but only a vast quantity of fruit bats. However, as we left a nature reserve just south of Cape Tribulation we did see a cassowary just before it melted into the jungle, which was a wonderful sight as I believe they are quite rare. The only koalas and crocodiles we saw were in a

koala park near to where we were staying. Again, we were lucky with the weather as it was not too sticky albeit the temperature was in the mid-30s.

This was not the case when we flew to Canberra, where we were to stay with some friends of one of my son's. The temperature when we landed in Canberra was 8° and something of a shock to the system. We had to put on all our clothes and keep moving to keep warm! We had a guided tour of Canberra and spent one morning in the War Museum which really was very well laid out and a wonderful and moving experience, although I found it a little hard to cope with knowing that my second son was just about to go off to Iraq – it all felt a little bit too poignant. From Canberra we were taken to the Snowy Mountains with the intention of walking to the top of Australia's highest mountain. However, Thredbo, where we were staying was rather chilly, being only 3° or so and there was snow on the mountain tops. We took the ski-lift to the half way point and were met with a raging wind and with the wind chill factor the temperature was - 15°. We were well wrapped up in borrowed clothes and set off along a well defined path. However the path soon disappeared under snow and we scrambled across to where we could see the path emerging. It was all absolutely beautiful, with little streams appearing beneath the snow covered banks and views for miles, except when the cloud came right down and obscured everything for a few minutes before lifting and letting you see again what was around and ahead as well as below. Finally we reached the look out point, only to see a large stretch of snow ahead and the top of the mountain completely invisible. We decided at this point that with inappropriate footwear we really would be foolish to go on, so headed back 'home'.

From there we were to meet up with my brother who lives a little further south and east of the Snowy Mountains. After an interesting drive hurtling across unmade roads we eventually arrived at his home in the middle of nowhere to be met by his wife, his stepson and stepdaughter and his own young 18-month old son. We had a lovely few days with them in the quiet unhurried surroundings of his home and

it was good to make the acquaintance of my nephew. Kangaroos seemed to graze just outside the window, and there was a wombat thumping about under the house during the night. The wombat was not a welcome visitor as it was eating their produce and after an abortive attempt to flush it out using water jets, it had to be 'got rid of' (after we'd left). They gave us a wonderful tour of New South Wales coast and hinterland and it was very sad to say goodbye after our all too brief stay.

The holiday was coming to an end. We drove from Canberra to Sydney, via the coast. We were very lucky to have been lent a flat by a friend of George and we were luckier still to be lent his car. We did all the things that you expect to do in Sydney, visited the Opera House, walked in the Botanical Gardens, went to Manley, walked on Bondi Beach (disappointingly small!) and swam – 'played' would perhaps be a better description – in the sea. We even managed a drive up into the Blue Mountains and a walk which took us to the edge of a canyon where looking down the 'blue' from the trees made you realise why they are called the Blue Mountains. It was certainly a spectacular view.

There was so much we didn't see but we did feel that we had done justice to the things we did see and do. We then flew home via Bangkok. We had about 48 hours in Bangkok and I think we probably slept for about 8 of those 48 hours! We had a river/canal tour, we visited the Grand Palace and temples, we took a trip up north to the hills and ended our visit by going for a ride on elephants. This must have been the highlight of our visit to Bangkok – it was a lovely experience and so peaceful, wandering through the jungle for 15-20 minutes – too short, but better than not at all! Bangkok was all that Singapore was not and it was definitely the best way to end our holiday.

We returned to England on a snowy February day with very many happy memories and hundreds of pictures – fortunately being on the digital camera many of these could be discarded in the cold light of day. Now we are saving up for the next 'part' gap year and another destination.

*Julia Harris (Purser, 1971)*





# MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMISTRESS

Dear SMOGs

Can it really be more than three months since we welcomed the girls back to school after the long summer break? This term, although the longest, has simply flown past!

This term we said hello to a number of new staff; Mr. Murphy has returned as a full time member of the History department following his success in covering Miss Callaghan's maternity leave last Autumn, Mrs. Faherty has joined St Margaret's temporarily as Tutor for Senior Boarding, Miss Desborough and Mrs. Sheridan have joined the Mathematics department and are also working in the Sixth Form houses as Deputy Housemistress and Resident Boarding Tutor respectively, Mr Lillington-Martin has taken over as Teacher-in-charge of Classics. Mrs Pickles has taken over in the Cookery department and Mme Rayner is covering Mme Kervella's maternity leave. We have new subject residents this year with Miss Kaso in PE, Miss Murray in Music, Miss Tattersall in Art and Miss Lock in Drama; our new gap students are Miss Hogman and Miss Lefsrud. Last, but certainly not least, Miss Appleyard has taken up post as Deputy Headmistress. We extend a warm welcome to all of our new staff and new girls and hope that they will all enjoy being part of the St Mary's community.

St Mary's staff are also doing their bit to ensure there are plenty of children to fill our schools! Mrs Schrader, who works in Administration, has returned after the birth of her son; Mme Kervella has just given birth to a daughter on 2nd December, Mrs. Wilson will rejoin us soon after the birth of her son in August and a new member of staff in the Classics department, Mrs. Dawes, will join us in January after the birth of her daughter.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Dawes arrival means we finally have to say goodbye to Miss Marshall who is returning to full time study. We wish her every success in her studies and thank her for all that she has done in her time with us. Fortunately, Miss Marshall is only going down the road to Oxford so I am sure we will see her quite often. We should also thank her for managing our "Youth Speaks" teams this year. Both Senior and Junior teams

were very successful with the Junior team winning through to the next round. Another farewell this term is to Miss Jackson, our Australian GAP student, who will be returning home to take up her University studies. Again, we extend our thanks to her and wish her well.

The PE department swept into action in the first week of term and have not stopped until the final whistle of term! Each year I think that they could not possibly achieve higher accolades than the previous term, yet they and the girls always manage to push the boundary even further. This term was no exception. The County Lacrosse trials were held early on in term; no fewer than eight members of Year 10 were selected for the Under 15 team, four girls were selected for each of the 1st team and 2nd teams. We are a small school in comparison with our lacrosse playing rivals so to have this many girls selected was exceptional; the words quality not quantity come to mind! Particular mention should go to Lucy de Roeper who was selected for the 1st Senior team while still only in Year 11; it will come as little surprise to know that Lucy was also awarded a Millennium Scholarship in PE. Well done Lucy! With so many County players in our U15 lacrosse team, they were bound to be a force to be reckoned with and have remained unbeaten all term. Both the 1st and U15 teams won through to the semi-finals of the Midlands Schools Tournament; however, both semi-final matches went to extra time and then to a sudden death situation where, unfortunately, they both lost out. The netball teams have been equally successful with the U15 team winning the Vale of White Horse Tournament. The U15 Netball team has also been unbeaten this term. The U16 team were runners up in their Tournament. The girls are keen and talented sportswomen and our thanks go to the PE department, led by Miss Gane, for the tremendous effort they make to help the girls achieve such success.

On the academic front, I have already mentioned Lucy's success in the Sixth Form Scholarship examinations. This year, the competition was the stiffest I have known with girls having to achieve an overall score of more than 95% to be awarded either a Samuel Gurney or



Sue Sowden, Headmistress

Millennium Scholarship or a score of 94% combined with exceptional musical talent for the Ruth Railton Music Scholarship. Poppy Deakin was awarded the Ruth Railton Music Scholarship, Xenobe Purvis and Cherry Shi were jointly awarded the Samuel Gurney Academic Scholarship and Millennium Scholarships were also awarded to Chloe Crisp for PE and Geography, and jointly to Victoria Guy and Serena Boheimer for Textiles Technology. In addition, eight Millennium Certificates of Distinction and two Certificates of Merit were awarded. All of the girls who entered acquitted themselves well and should be proud of their performance.

The first part of term was dominated by the "Nelson" competition sponsored by the Chair of Governors, Sir Godfrey Milton-Thompson as part of the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. All of Years 7 to 11 went to Portsmouth to visit the "HMS Victory" and the Trafalgar exhibition, whilst the Historians in Years 11 to 13 went to the Maritime Museum at Greenwich. Other curriculum trips this term have included a successful RS Christianity Study day in Oxford for Year 10, two Geography field trips for the Sixth Form and Classics trips to the British Museum following a talk on Ancient Persia held in school and to two Classics plays, and the A level English students went to see "Journeys End" in London. These are just a taste of the variety of trips that have taken place; to list them all would take up far too much space.

Earlier in the term, we were able to get a glimpse of what our "World Challenge" girls experienced when they went to Honduras. The trip was a time of great personal growth for all who took part. So much so, that Miss Lee has launched the next expedition which will be to Nicaragua and Costa Rica in the summer of 2007.

It is important for all of us to learn to look outside of our needs to those around us. This term we have established a Charities Committee, under the leadership of Miss Francis, Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Squires. Each House is adopting a charity, as are the staff, and they will be holding fund-raising events throughout the year. A group have already been active with the Queen Mother's Clothing Guild. The Art Department have been involved in a project with the Charlton Centre, which is a centre for adults with learning disabilities in Wantage, to create a sensory room. A group of Year 8 girls visited recently taking with them some cushions made by the girls. During the cold winter months when the Duke of Edinburgh girls have continued helping with local groups, such as Riding for the Disabled; however, they are looking forward to be able to get some expedition practice in next term as the weather gets milder.

In September, the Drama students in Years 10 to 13, joined by the A level History and Politics groups, were treated to a production of "Animal Farm" by Splendid Productions, followed by a workshop for the Sixth Form Drama groups; this was an excellent opportunity for the girls not only to see the performance but also to have the chance to work with a professional company. This was followed in October by a Brecht workshop for the Sixth Form Drama students.

As the term draws to a close the Music department has been particularly busy. Throughout the term we have enjoyed lunchtime concerts where the girls have been able to showcase their talents. The Chamber Choir has performed in a concert in Longcot as well as singing at the Mayor's Carol Concert, and of course they have been busy preparing for our own Carol Service. In the meantime, the Performing Arts Faculty has been rehearsing for the School play "Bugsy

Malone". The performances will be in the week leading up to the Spring half-term.

In November, we held a Confirmation Service for girls in Year 9 and 10. We were fortunate to be able to welcome the Bishop of Oxford as celebrant. This was his last visit to St Mary's before his retirement in June. I am also very pleased to announce the appointment of Revd Dr Stephen Brian as our new Chaplain. Dr Brian is currently a Parish Vicar in the Guildford Diocese. He will join us officially in September 2006. He is also a well qualified and experienced teacher and will be joining the RS department.

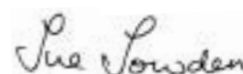
The plans for the new school have now been finalised and we are in a position to be able to give you an idea of what the buildings will look like. There is a special feature elsewhere in this Chronicle.

As I write this Year 11 are busy in their mock examinations. Earlier in term they had a taste of life in the Sixth Form, they visited A level lessons to see for themselves the difference not only in the style of teaching but also in the relationship between staff and student. They will be making their A level choices at the end of next term and this was a good stepping-stone to help them think about their future.

Year 12 are out on work experience. This involves a huge amount of organisation and I am sure that the girls benefit from the experience. Some have already said they would love to continue with their placements as they are enjoying themselves so much.

And so this brings me to the end of term. My apologies for all the items and events I cannot report on; they really would fill a book. It only leaves me to say that I hope you all have a safe, peaceful and happy 2006.

With best wishes



**Mrs. Sue Sowden**  
**Headmistress**

## STAFF PROFILE – JANET KINGDON

When I came to St Mary's in September 1986 as a fresh-faced 28 year old, I did not expect to still be here 20 years later! Nevertheless, hundreds of girls, two Head's, five deputies, four Bursar's and soon to be five Chaplain's later, a lot has changed. However, I am not the longest serving member of staff with Miss Francis, Miss Hughes, Dr Hughes and Mrs Kus (now Mrs Turner) still here – no doubt they will share their memories at a later date.

That first term was like stepping into another world! The culture shock of "knicker-checking" is no longer something that has to be done at the start and end of every term. The large St Gabriel's dormitories are a far cry from the four-bedded rooms that Year 7 and 8 (UIII and LIV) enjoy now in main school. St Gabriel's has been re-named St Anne's and the dormitories have been converted into single study bedrooms for Year 12 (L VI). Old girls would think they are in the lap of luxury with the number of showers and bathrooms that we have had to install in all areas and equipment in Rec rooms for making snacks etc. It used to be a bit of a joke that the favourite weekend outing would be to a motorway service station where St Mary's girls would immediately occupy the entire bank of telephones! These days all houses have phones in private booths.

I was appointed as 2nd in the Maths department, working alongside Mr Cooper, Mr Middlebrook, Miss Eastoe and Mrs Criddle. The staffroom in those days was full of individual desks with departments all sitting in a long row. We were rather a musical bunch and would often be heard singing, no doubt to the annoyance of others trying to work! Since then I have risen through the ranks via Head of Department to being Assistant Head. It now falls to me to create the school timetable – fortunately staggered lunchtimes are no longer required – not so bad for the girls as they never had the late morning followed by the early afternoon, staff were not so lucky(!). Neither do we have the dubious pleasure of evening lessons – working until 4.30 is now plenty long enough to concentrate so girls now have the chance to do

activities and clubs until prep begins at 6.00. Years 10 and 11 (LV and UV) are now allowed to work in their rooms during their "frees" and if a teacher is absent, their class is covered in their classroom by another teacher so there's no more crowding into the Library with nowhere to sit or Sixth Form girls having to sit with classes.

One of the other joys (!?) that came my way was to check Year 11 (UV) out for their lunchtime shopping once a week – were they in 3's, did they have their cloaks/blazers on and did they come back in time for afternoon lessons which invariably started by passing the bin around for the chewing gum etc that had been bought. These days, girls go down to Wantage at 4.30 in their home clothes and takeaways have replaced the chewing gum as things that must not be bought. More freedom in one way but in another we have to be far more strict, necessarily so, because of all the Child Protection/Health and Safety laws. Still, I don't think those of you who were around in the 80's would have minded the freedom that the current girls have. Even Year 7 (UIII) are allowed to go Christmas shopping these days instead of staying at school for a party.

Uniform – now there's a word that conjures up memories. The sight of girls hitching up their tweed skirts or tunics so that they could run are long gone, as are

the thick cream tights. These days we don't have to worry about girls hitching skirts up, quite the opposite as fashion dictates that our more user friendly kilts should be worn as low on the hips as possible, even if they were not designed to be worn like that.

Even though I have been here 20 years I still forget which area is which upstairs. All the first floor is accommodation now. What were an English room and a Rec Room above the "goldfish bowl" are now dorms, what was Rec room next to the RS room behind the Hall is the Cookery room. And the Cookery room in what used to be St Gabs is now a Housemistress Flat. So many room changes have happened; "Sick Wing" is also a flat with the Gardener's Cottage becoming the Health Centre, and the upstairs Lab is now a Rec room – the list goes on. I think one room or other has changed use every year that I have been here – it's strange to think that we only have one more year here and then it will all brand new.

One thing that really hasn't changed and that is the girls themselves. Names keep springing into my mind – why is it always the naughty ones that you remember most? Today's girls are more worldly wise perhaps; mobiles, ipods and laptops abound but they basically have the same worries, concerns and angsts that the girls of '86 had.





# ST MARY'S WORLD CHALLENGE EXPEDITION TO HONDURAS, JULY 2005



value of money in Honduras so handing over \$3 was the equivalent to a full day of work for some. We drove through San Pedro Sula into the most run down part of the city. We were finally deposited in a side street and hustled into the hostel. Immediately Shevs' language skills were called upon and we negotiated the hiring of three rooms between the team.

In spite of our exhaustion little sleep was had that night. The following morning we walked out into a sauna and straight into a culture shock. What we saw was nothing like anyone had imagined. There were signs of poverty everywhere we turned, and people too, it was so busy! The smell on the streets was at first overwhelming but after a while we tolerated it, the majority of it anyway. The team were on a mission to find a place for breakfast which proved challenging to say the least. When we finally read the map right and discovered a small café to eat we had our first encounter with Honduran food, the "breakfast typicos". The team thought it was disgusting, only Miss Lee and Mick seemed to think it was acceptable fare! It consisted of mashed kidney beans, eggs, grilled plantain, rice and salty cheese, tortillas and sour cream . . . this happened to be not only the breakfast typicos but the whole day typicos in Honduras!!

San Pedro Sula is one of the richest cities in Honduras which was a shock to us because it looked like Brixton on a bad day. Another shock was the size of the guns held by the security guards all over San Pedro. There were security guards everywhere, on street corners, in shops, even in restaurants. They were intimidating.

World Challenge has been in our lives throughout the past two years. It seems like only yesterday since we sat in the hall watching the presentation. We signed up to what we knew would be a life altering experience, but no-one realised quite how true that was to prove. We have all matured through our experiences not only in Honduras but also through the fundraising, which was a lot harder than we all thought it would be, but well worth every penny. It is hard to believe that it is all over, when something this huge has been in the back of your mind for two years, it is hard to let go. However, I am sure that none of us will ever forget what we did, saw and achieved in Honduras, and this will definitely be with us for years to come.

We finally landed in Honduras some thirty two hours after we had left school. We had travelled from London via Madrid, Guatemala and El Salvador. When we finally disembarked we were all absolutely shattered, we really wanted to sleep, but instead we found ourselves waiting in a very long queue for immigration which seemed to take forever. We were surprised to discover that

this poor and developing country we had come to had all of the modern technology for iris scanning and finger printing for entry into their country, perhaps we had been misled? When we finally got through to the baggage area we confirmed what we had already suspected from the luggage sticker on her passport, Tara's bag had indeed been sent to Lima in Peru. This was our first "disaster" and it prevented Tara from having clean clothes and left three people without a tent for the whole month. The bureaucracy for report the loss of the baggage took so long that the airport security people were actually delayed in locking up for the night!

Finally, we were able to leave. We knew that for this first night our transport had been prebooked as had our "hotel", but we were not sure whether our transport would still be waiting as we were ours later than our predicted arrival. We walked out of the airport into a wall of heat. Our first mistake was to let the group of kids outside the airport take our bags and deposit them on top of the van. We could have lost more luggage at this stage, and as yet we had no comprehension of the



### The project phase

The morning we got up to leave we sat down for breakfast only to find out that bad news can come in all shapes and sizes and at the unlikely moments. This was the morning we found out about the terrorist attack on London. The fact that we had no easy way of contacting everyone to check they were ok probably made the news even harder to take; if we had been at home it would have been so easy to get information! We all went off to make brief phone calls, however a lot of lines were down and it was impossible for all of us to get through. We were on a deadline as we had to catch a bus out of the city.

On the way to Copan from San Pedro Sula we were chatting and taking in all the spectacular sights surrounding us. We had barely been driving for half an hour when we suddenly heard a noise like a gunshot. There was absolute silence inside the bus as it started to swerve across the road, what had actually happened was that the tyre had burst and when the bus came to a standstill we were all ordered off the bus so that the shredded tyre could be replaced.

When we finally arrived in Copan Ruinas we met our contact Flavia who directed us to Marco Tulios' campsite on the edge of town. There had been unexpectedly heavy rains and the site which Flavia usually put world challenge groups on had been washed away! To our surprise where we ended up was no ordinary campsite, it was a building site! With the added luxury of a loo which was not a loo but a tin box with a hole in the ground, the builders there found it highly amusing to see the looks on our faces as we discovered it for the first time!

We vacated the premises two days later after visiting the ancient Mayan ruins and stocking up on essentials for the project.

We collected Ronald our project organiser and took a very bumpy bus drive up the winding mountain mud roads towards our destination, a small village called Agua Caliente, meaning Hot Springs.

As we drove through Agua Caliente towards our camp site at Finca el Cisne, Ronald pointed out the school where we would be working that week. The community looked very poor and everything seemed to be in pretty bad condition. We had observed that some

time before reaching the village the power lines had finished and Ronald confirmed that there was no electricity in this area and there would not be any before 2007 at the earliest.

We were delighted to find that the next campsite had grass on which to pitch our tents! Ronald did his best to scare us with horror stories of creepy crawlies and flying insects but we were so glad to be away from the building site that this seemed like heaven; we even had a loo and a shower! We met Carlos, the son of the owner of the Finca, he has studied agrobiology in the States and is trying to preserve the local environment as far as possible, whilst at the same time encouraging employment and health and hygiene. The task ahead of him is a huge one. He talked to us about where we could cook and how to dispose of our rubbish ecologically. There was a shelter which had a little kitchen and a big table to accommodate all of us, so we were able to eat together. After a long day we all went off to our tents but not before Mick had been made to go round the tents to remove the hairy spiders! We had our first good night of sleep since we had arrived.

We all woke up early on Monday morning ready for our first day of work at the school, only to find that some animal had broken into our storeroom and eaten most of our supplies which was not a good start to the week! It meant that that morning we had marshmallows and biscuits for breakfast, not the best for a day of hard manual labour!

When we arrived at the school Ronald was there with the Headmaster who let us into the school's derelict building which we were going to be working on. It was an absolute mess, really awful and dirty. The first thing we did was to get all of the furniture from the edge of the room to the middle. Once we had done this, we washed all of the walls and the floor to try to get rid of some of the grime. With a short break for lunch we went back to the campsite for sandwiches. The afternoon was also spent cleaning and sweeping inside and we also got to work on chipping off some of the old whitewash and plaster from the walls outside. Our day ended at about five as we had to get back to the campsite and cook before dark. A very tired group made their way back to the campsite for supper and then a good sleep.



During the week we did a mixture of jobs; we would either be working on the buildings or teaching English to the children and occasionally the teachers too. One afternoon there was a huge thunderstorm and the river which ran close to the tents rose in a matter of minutes, some of the group had to stay behind and move the tents and the rest of our stuff around while the others went back to the school and carried on working. Everyday Ronald would bring some supplies so we were able to get on with some more jobs like filling in holes in the walls and sandpapering the windows to get them ready for varnishing. The children kept on walking in on us and seeing what we were doing which was meant to be a big surprise. The children loved to help do little jobs and it was wonderful to watch them working together, although they did seem to get great pleasure from pointing out bits that we had missed!

One night later in the week V, Antz and Elle decided they were going to have an early night while some of the others stayed in the hammocks chatting and reading. Earlier that day it had been raining and their tent seemed to be the one which flooded the easiest, because of this they had had to move all of their kit into the main area of the tent. Once they had moved these back into the porch they were settling down to sleep when V said calmly "Guys I think we need to get out of this tent now!" and then she pointed to a scorpion just behind her. Elle screamed like mad and all three of them ran up to get Mick. Mick went down to get the scorpion out despite the fact he had no idea what to do with it!

Another comic event happened one afternoon when a group of people went on a small trek up river and found a really good place to swim. While they were there Lara had an encounter with a friendly admirer, formally known as a water scorpion, who she did not find for some time as he was finding the perfect patch to pinch!! Unfortunately for Lara this happened to be somewhere inside her shorts!!

When we finally finished the project we were delighted with the results. The inside of the classroom was completely redecorated and we had managed to paint educational pictures onto the walls, the holes in the floor were filled in, the

shutters closed again and the doors were properly treated.

The outside of the building was completely treated, painted and fresh concrete had been laid. The loo block was completely painted with diagrams of the hygiene and water cycle and the doors were rehung. We presented the finished product back to the community along with our gifts for the school. They seemed delighted with it and the headmaster thanked us profusely apologising for only being able to give us thanks in words. By that stage we were all feeling both emotionally and physically drained but we made our way down to the "football pitch" to end the week with a game of competitive football against what it emerged were the national girls team! The result was a "draw"!

### The Trek phase

We moved from Copan Ruinas to the base for our trekking phase, Gracias. The story of the name of the town is that settlers were looking for somewhere flat enough to settle and when they finally found the spot all they could do was say thanks you, hence Gracias! Our first impressions were not so good! The guidebook described this as a graceful, old colonial town, but we could never find any part of it which fitted that description!

We set off to the bus station our guide for the trek mid-morning. We got on the bus and claimed our places. It was one of those large, old, battered yellow buses which when full people can ride on the roof as well! An hour and a half later the bus finally left the station. The seats were designed for two people but with a bus jam packed: we were packed three, four, and sometimes five to a seat. People stood all down the aisle, nose to nose. The doors were kept open and people hitched onto the back and sat on the roof. And that was only when we left Gracias. Still the bus managed to crowd more and more people into it during our two and a half hour journey. The majority of the roads in Honduras are unmade and so due to the weight, and lack of tread on the tyres, we got stuck going up the mud road and started slipping backwards, the tyres spun uselessly on the track, so we unloaded half of the passengers from the bus, freewheeled down the track and after a huge acceleration we powered up the hill, where we had to wait for all of the passengers to take their places once more!







After more meandering, it seemed as though we were driving around our mountain and never getting any closer to it, we finally arrived at a plateau where a small village stood. We unloaded our bags and hauled them onto our backs before heading off towards our first campsite. It was a two hour walk and despite the fact that our guide had assured us that it would not rain ten minutes into the walk the heavens opened! It was a steep, muddy and slippery track and with seventy litre packs on our backs our job was not an easy one!

We finally arrived as dusk was falling and were very relieved to find that we did not have to pitch our tents. The guide offered us the floor of his house. His house was small and he had a large family who all slept in one room, we had the main room, and there was a very basic cooking area and a porch with some benches on. There was no electricity and the loo was one of the most basic that we had yet encountered! Apparently we were quite an attraction and many people of all ages came to have a look at both us and our equipment. Despite having audience all night long we were too exhausted to care and climbed wearily into our sleeping bags long after sunset, some of us full of the daunting thoughts of what the next few days would bring.

We had a 5am wake up call with the intention of departing at 7am, but this was not to be! We had only managed to purchase very poor quality fuel and consequently the water took two hours to boil to make our porridge. We finally set off at 8.30am much to the amusement of our audience! Our first day was a steep climb, half of it up a dried out river bed. Unfortunately V fell ill and she and Miss Lee had to leave us half way through the morning. We carried on, our morale much lower as a result. It started raining at lunch time. Our catering skills were still sadly lacking and we had not allowed for how hard the climb would be and how much sustenance we would require, so we had only allowed some tortilla wraps and some horrible orange processed cheese for this meal!

Later on, when the rain seemed set to stay, we decided that to live happily in these woods, one had to be small and agile and WATER RESISTANT, just like those wretched giant mozzies! We traipsed on, soaked to the skin despite our waterproof

jackets. Eventually we got to a little mud shack in the middle of the woods. The guides lit a fire and we dried off and warmed up before starting to cook our delicious supper of pasta, rice and dehydrated chicken curry (Yuck!).

Another 5am start with a departure at 8am was planned for the following morning which slightly better than the day before. We were getting the hang of the bad fuel and having to warm it up first before we could light it. We set off, trekking through thick foliage, barely able to see the path. During our ascent the day before, the scenery had definitely changed. Pine trees were more common now and the ground was thick with bushes and small trees. The trees had been well decorated by other plants; the best description would be that of a garden growing on the thick branches of the larger trees. The morale was generally better than it had been the day before and after two hours; we got to drop our packs before heading on up to our ultimate goal. Taking water and snacks, we set off up to our final climb, at least that is what we thought; It was a climb over and under trunks and enormous roots but we eventually got there where a sign greeted us:

The team was both ecstatic and mightily relieved! Many people had believed they would not make it to this point, but they were there, on the top of highest peak in Central America. Once the photos were completed and the snacks opened, we settled down to wait for the fog to clear so that we could see down into the valley and partake in the apparently amazing view which we had climbed all this way for. Some time later, and with several reassurances from the guides that it would clear, we gave up and headed back down. We lunched where we had left our packs and then, to our dismay, headed off uphill to our next campsite! We trekked through the soggy landscape and then across a boulder field. That was tricky but enjoyable for some! We helped each other down and it became a real team effort! Our final campsite was another, slightly larger mud shack. Someone was already sleeping there but he had set up a tent and was nowhere to be seen so we didn't bother him. By then, we were suffering more than we expected to physically. Backs and hips had suffered from the rucksacks, feet from blisters and knees or ankles from the steep

descents. Supper, another long, slow process, was pasta, rice and a tomato sauce made of tomato puree, Heinz Tomato soup and pork and beans. Another yucky meal!

Yet another 5am start with a 7am departure (finally on time!) We thought we were heading back into the real world. It seemed to take longer to get there than we had expected; our clothes were drenched, and by this time we smelt really bad! Our path meandered up and down past rivers. The scenery was definitely changing and the fog lifting. A couple of injuries slowed us down but we eventually left the river and headed down to the visitor's centre: our final destination where we waited for our transport back to Gracias. We were alive, that being an achievement in itself, so tired that celebrating had to wait, our minds just on sleep and food.

To our relief we found out that our "bus" was totally dependent on our own timing rather than a timetable, as it was a friend of one of our guides. The transport was rather smaller than we had expected. In fact, to put it more accurately, we were expecting a minibus but what we got was a run down truck, the type all Hondurans drive around the country. We piled the bags up high, loaded the invalids into the front and bumped our way back down to Gracias along a pot holed road, almost losing the bags a couple of times. The relief as we walked back into our hostel and were greeted by Miss Lee and V was immeasurable. We showered and ate and started to feel human once more . . .

### The "R & R" phase

Although this was the part which we had been looking forward to so much because we thought that we would be able to relax and have a "holiday", it was probably the hardest part of all. Suddenly the team all wanted to do different things with their time, differing interests emerged. However, we pulled ourselves together and headed off to Lake Yoja, the largest fresh water source in Honduras, and an area essential to the economy. From there we headed on to the Pulhapanzak waterfalls, the highest in Central America. They were stunning.

Then we headed right across the country to the coast and took a boat out to Roatan, the largest of the three Caribbean islands which belong to Honduras. Here we discovered a whole different way of

life. The language used was a mixture of English and Spanish, which seemed odd having spent the previous three weeks only being able to communicate in Spanish.

Our diet improved with the input of fresh fish and we spent our days swimming and snorkelling on what is one of the few remaining unpolluted coral reefs in the world. The only downside of our time there was the dreaded sandflies, or "no see ums" as the locals call them!

After almost a week of sunshine we finally made our way back to the airport. Our flight home was long and delayed by storms and there was an air of sadness over us all. It is almost impossible to describe the relationships which develop during such an intense and shared experience, but we are certain that we have made friends for life. Of course, even the end of our expedition could not run completely smoothly, and whilst we had already arrived in London our luggage remained in Madrid!

Our World Challenge leader was Mick Wood and our heartfelt thanks go to him for enabling us to have such a successful expedition.

The next expedition has now been launched. Tanya Lee will be taking a team to Nicaragua and Costa Rica in July 2007.

*This article was written by the team:  
Mo de Courcy-Wheeler, Anntonia Redding,  
Shevonne Harper, Tara Myerscough,  
Florence Lovett, Stephanie Stanton,  
Hayley Dyer, Lara Crisp, Venetia Lawson-  
Cruttenden, Eleanor Morse.*

*The article has been edited by  
Tanya Lee, our link teacher.*



# WORLD CHALLENGE EXPEDITION OUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

A speech written and presented by Venetia Lawson-Cruttenden and Florence Lovett during the presentation afternoon at school in September.

When telling you about this trip, it sounds like we only really did three things, the project phase, the trek and the R&R. However it was so much more than this. We saw things out in Honduras that we find very hard to explain.

San Pedro Sula was a large city and was well off compared to other places we visited, like Gracias. However it was still a huge culture shock as it was still so poor. I'm afraid we cannot give you an example of what it was like because even the poorer parts of England don't compare.

Copan, which we went to after San Pedro, is a tourist town and was the prettiest place and the most developed place we went to. It had museums and, although you could see poverty everywhere, it wasn't nearly as apparent as some of the other places we went to.

Aqua Caliente was even worse. It was the village where we worked at the school. It was about an hour away from Copan, but it was hard to get to for the villagers because not many of them had cars. There was one village shop, which sold some essentials and the hot springs, which are a tourist attraction. This village was so run down and made us all realise how much we take for granted at home and how blessed we are. These people are lucky if they have brick houses, but they probably wouldn't have had much inside them. They have no electricity and cook on fires which are set in concrete or something that looks similar. Their showers consisted of a hose on a line with cloth over it so you could not see any more than the person's head. We were told that in our hiking bags we had more possessions than most of the people in Agua Caliente had in their houses. Ronald, our guide told us that the lady who owns the shop opposite the school will eat whatever is left of the food she sells, but will not buy much for her and her family. At least once a day we bought some drinks from this lady,

bearing in mind that we were there for eight days this must have boosted her takings considerably. Although these people do not have much themselves they gave so much to us. One day they even cooked us lunch at the school. But more than that they were so kind and ready to help us with anything. We were welcomed in and given a great send off, however it was heart wrenching for us to have to say goodbye to them. But we really hope that we gave them just a little bit more than they would have had without us.

Gracias was again a very poor place, however some people did well out of it, the poverty was so noticeable because you had something to compare it to. There were restaurants which were very good next to little mud houses, which were the size of small garden sheds. It was one of the ugliest places we went to at first glance, but sometimes when you really looked there was something beautiful about it. Most people said hello to us and smiled, although we were once more continually stared at.

On the first night of the trek before we started hiking up the main part of the mountain we stayed in one of the guide's house. This had four rooms in it, with a porch. They had a kitchen area with an old clay stove, a living area with only a cot and a hammock in it and a bedroom, as well as a sort of hall with a table in it. It had mud floors throughout, no running water and no power. Everyone seems to just walk in to other people's houses and look after the children and come to talk. Again we had an audience, it felt like we were in a zoo, us being the animals and every one coming up to our cages and looking at us non stop, even when we were getting changed and then when we were settling down for the night.

I (V) got the dreaded bug just before setting on our trek and so half way up the mountain on the first day I had to go back down, accompanied by Miss Lee. We stayed at the house again and this time they were even more welcoming to us. We got down there at about eleven am, with only our books to amuse us, we thought.

Although we did spend a lot of time reading, so much so that I finished the book I had started that day, the children amused us no end. They kept laughing at us and seemed to find us fascinating, which was odd to us. They also found Miss Lee's walking sticks great fun as well. At one point Miss Lee and I had a snack of nuts and when we had had too much Miss Lee gave them away to one of the children who promptly snatched them off her and was not going to share them with anyone. However being a teacher she has "the look", which meant that this boy did share them rather reluctantly with his friends! Later on in the evening the children put on a little dance for Miss Lee and I and when I showed them I was interested in the fire flies, which if you don't know are flies that light up about every thirty seconds, they proceeded to go and catch them for me and give them to me to hold. They even let us use their stove to heat up our tortilla wrap and make a hot drink on. I'm telling you this to try and explain how generous these people are and how willing to give whatever they can to you despite the fact that they have nothing. One thing that struck me was the fact that the children played the same game nearly all the time, which was football. Now to most children in this country it would get very boring, but when I questioned Miss Lee about it she said that they had no access to TV and therefore to the world outside, we were a real novelty to these people and they were interested! This really had an impact on me.

We hope that this gives you a bit more information of what we saw because this trip to Honduras was far far more than just the three phases and much more than any of us dreamed of. We wish we could explain everything so much better so you could get a real picture of it but we are unable to find any comparison to the UK and the words would never be enough. We have all learnt so much. And we now hope that none of us will ever really complain about the small things in life now we have seen the bigger picture.



---

# SKI CLUB NEWS

## BRITISH SCHOOLGIRLS' RACES – FRANCE, 2005



It was St. Mary's tenth consecutive year of competing at these prestigious races in Flaine and our third consecutive year of winning medals! All the girls showed tremendous skill and energy despite the harsh weather conditions of this season (an average temperature of  $-27^{\circ}\text{C}$ !). Particular congratulations to Lara Crisp who won two silver medals for British-based non registered Junior racer in the Giant Slalom and British-based non registered Junior racer in the Combined (Slalom and Giant Slalom).

This is what the ski team members had to say about their trip:

"Another year, another Flaine, and this year we were determined to make it the best year so far.

Our first day was spent skiing with an ESF instructor who helped us to improve our racing techniques. In the afternoon, when we had regained all our energy, we went off-piste and did a Boarder-X course, which was so much fun!

I was very nervous on both days of racing; however I found skiing the course much easier and much more fun than I had originally anticipated. We all made it from top to bottom on both days (twice!) and were happy with our times.

We made a great team together and we all really enjoyed ourselves. I can't wait for next year!"

*Ali Jubb, Arabella Benson, Chloe Crisp, Lara Crisp, Lucy de Roeper, Emma Payne, Emily Weller*

---

## PHOTOS OF SCHOOL



Chapel 1 ▲



Chapel 2 ▲



Chapel 3 ▲

These fantastic photos of school, which have been taken by Clare Wells, are being sold to help raise money for the U15 lacrosse tour to America this April. If you would like to buy a copy, they would be on a mounted card frame and cost £5. A perfect memento of St Mary's!

Please contact: Clare Wells – [c.wells@stmarys.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:c.wells@stmarys.oxon.sch.uk), Anne-Marie Gane – [amgane@stmarys.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:amgane@stmarys.oxon.sch.uk). Call school on 01235 773800 and ask for Clare or Anne-Marie.



▲ Circle 1



▲ Circle 2



▲ Circle 3

# ST MARY'S SCHOOL



19

87