

## FRIENDS' SCHOOL OLD SCHOLARS' ASSOCIATION



Dear Old Scholar

In place of the, frankly, inimitable experience of a Friends' School Old Scholars' Association Annual General Meeting, we can still offer you a May newsletter. I do hope, however, that this is a newsletter which brings Old Scholars together in these tragic and unparalleled solitary times in much the same way as an AGM might. After sending out our request for information we've received a range of interesting news items, all of which we've included here. And thus, we present a newsletter of Old Scholars, by Old Scholars and for Old Scholars!

### **The School Site**

Firstly, we would like to give an update on the fate of the School site. As ever Old Scholars' Association Committee Member Douglas Kent (YG 1986) has been keeping his eagle eye on proceedings. We can report that the planning application has been withdrawn. We will continue to keep you up to date with any developments as we hear of them but please also check the website for further information and don't forget we also have our [Facebook group](#).

### **Friends During the Influenza Pandemic of 1918**

Thanks to an email from Old Scholar Roger Bush (YG 1952), I have some information about life at Friends' during the last grim pandemic. Roger also pointed me to the account of this by Henry Rowntree on Page 24 of the Tercentenary Book, [The School on the Hill](#)<sup>1</sup>. On returning from service with the Friends' Ambulance Unit during the First World War, Science Master George Stanley Pumphrey, found the entire School in quarantine. He, Dorothea Waring, the School Matron, and Dr John Atkinson, the School's Medical Officer, worked tirelessly. Although many pupils fell ill, there was not a single death. Stanley Pumphrey still taught at the school when Roger Bush was a pupil and Roger remembers Stanley telling students that he put their success in avoiding any fatalities partly down to a reliance on oranges (generously supplied by a local Friend, Mr Welch) and partly down to whisky! We presume the former was for the pupils and the latter their carers...

### **News of Old Scholars**

Firstly, we'd like to wish everyone the best at this time – especially those who are vulnerable, those who are isolated and the many key workers doing vital work!

Jake Nash (YG 2016) works as a support worker with adults with learning and physical disabilities and, as a key worker, has been working as he normally would. He reports that this has been a difficult time for the young people for whom he provides care, as the steps taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 include stopping all non-essential visits. At his

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<sup>1</sup> Here is a link to the whole book of *The School on the Hill* for Old Scholars' enjoyment:  
<http://www.fsswosa.org.uk/fsswosa/history/tercentbook/tercentbook.html>

work there has been 1 confirmed case among those for whom he cares, but he has since made a full recovery. Unfortunately, a number of staff have shown symptoms and Jake himself tested positive, but he would like it to be known that he is happy, healthy, and optimistic!

Noel Clark (YG 1961) sends greetings from a locked-down Australia where, he says, their isolation seems to have worked in their favour, as they've escaped the worst of COVID-19. He says, despite this being thanks to shutting borders soon after the outbreak, it was probably not soon enough as 60% of the known cases can be traced to arrivals from overseas, either Australian or foreign. Noel emigrated in 1968, working mainly in the mining and metals industry, and has lived in Newcastle (NSW), Mount Isa, Hobart and latterly Melbourne for the past 28 years. He retired in 2000. Noel let us know of the sad news of the death of his wife Michelle in 2019 of metastatic breast cancer aged 72. He describes her as his "darling, beautiful wife: they had been married for over 44 years. Though self-described as "never a 'school person'", like many of us he is finding it hard to come to terms with the fact that the school is no more. He invites anyone to "drop him a line".

*It is worth reminding Old Scholars that you can do this by logging into the Old Scholars' website and searching in "Find Friends". If you have forgotten your log-in details, please email me and I can help. A recurrent theme of messages I've received is the desire for Old Scholars to get in contact with one another, so do use this service!*

Jan Thomas (née Willson, YG 1968), Steve Willson (YG 1970) and Angus Willson (YG 1973) had planned a family gathering in Stroud to attend Tom Robinson's (YG 1968) concert. For the 1968 Year Group, 2019/20 are their 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Years: Jan was lucky and got her celebrations in before the virus with a "Purple Dress and Red Hat Party" at Cadbury Hall, Frampton. She



*Tom Robinson performing with the Tom Robinson band... it's unclear whether the tie is an FSSW vintage!*

celebrated with family and 90 others including Judy Holt (née Kemp, YG 1968). She said the party was "in aid of a lot of fun", but also the worthy causes, Toilet Twinning and Cotswold Boat Mobility. Tom Robinson's concert tour has been rearranged for 2021 so they, like the many Old Scholars' who would undoubtedly have seen him in Cambridge, have deferred until then.

Another from the 1968 Year Group Dr Simon Wallis has

also sent news. His brother Paul (YG 1972) is well and lives with "a great family". Simon has remained in contact with many Old Scholars, including his wife Celia Wallis (née Nickalls, YG 1972); her brothers Jason (1970) and Jeremy (1976) and Robert Greaves (YG 1968) with whom he remains in annual contact due to a British Long Distance Swimming Association event. Simon has been retired for 7 years having worked as a Consultant Physician from 1994 in Chorley and Preston Lancashire. Celia is a retired Child Psychologist, open water swimmer and leading light in the local Women's Centre. Simon has 3 children: an infection specialist, a vet and a poet. His current interests, luckily fairly compatible with the current lockdown restrictions, include: baking sourdough bread and cooking; working on the allotment; running; long distance walking – he completed a 40km

circuit of Ulswater last year; open water swimming – a 2018 holiday in Sardinia meant daily 5k swims, and languages – he continues with an Italian language book club and a French conversation class online! Simon isn't an active Friend but despite misgivings while at School he says he has been influenced by Quaker philosophy. This narrative is one I encounter fairly often: Old Scholars re-evaluating the value of Quakerism (in a secular or religious sense) after they have left the school.

Mike Connolly (YG 1958) has written a full newsletter which is featured on the Old Scholars' website. We have summarised here: Mike and his wife Maureen live in South Africa and have recently moved, after 28 years in the leafy suburb of Constantia, to Noordhoek Manor Retirement Village. In November 2018 they were delighted to host a visit from Richard Higgs (YG 1958), and his wife, Jo, with whom they have been in regular contact over the years. The Higgs are keen birders and were happy to record many interesting sightings. Mike, a bowls-playing member of Western Province Cricket Club, took Richard and Jo to show them over the wonderful Newlands Cricket Ground and the WPCC Members Stand. Naturally, he says, they reminisced about their cricketing exploits at FSSW: "amazing how one recalls all the good performances and quietly forgets the not-so-good days...!"

On 19 January 2020, Mike celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday with some special friends at a local wine farm. March and the pandemic has meant the great majority of those in the Village were immediately classified as particularly vulnerable over 65s. Mike reports that medical facilities, whilst of extremely high standard, are in general relatively limited in availability to the less well-off majority of the South African population. Like the rest of us Mike dearly misses recreation activities: including using his "modest" keyboard skills to be the accompaniment to the village's Sing-Along Group, bowls, snooker, darts and cricket watching – but remains fortunate to be able to take pleasant walks around the Village, with its spectacular views. Mike wishes "all my surviving classmates and other fellow 1951-58 scholars all the very best and hoping that there will one day be the opportunity to meet up and compare experiences of the past 80 years – and, particularly, to be able to talk about how everyone coped with 2020!"

Tony Watson (YG 1954) and Margaret (Pilly) Pilgrim (YG 1954) married on the 9th April 1960 at St. Mary's Church Saffron Walden. Congratulations to them on their 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary! Their plans to celebrate with a reception on the 5th April had to be postponed because of Covid-19, so they ended up with a Zoom reception on line with family and Margaret's brother John Pilgrim and family.



*Tony and Margaret getting married 60 years ago...*

### **Remembering VE Day**

Brenda Williams (YG 1948) remembers being at Friends' on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 75 years ago. She was aged 14. The day was made a Bank Holiday, so there were no lessons. What she remembers now is a giant bonfire built on the field which everyone enjoyed in the evening. Brenda asks: does anyone remember this or maybe remember her (Bren)? Please do get in contact via the Old Scholars' website.

Gillian Godwin (née Hopwood, YG 1945) has recently moved back to the UK from Nigeria. She and her husband became expatriates in 1954, set up their own architectural practice in

1956 in Lagos and finally left in 2017. Their two children came to boarding school in England, Carey Godwin came to Friends', YG 1977. Gillian and her husband now live in Ewyas Harold, a small village in Herefordshire on the Welsh Border, close to Carey who is their carer and lives at the other end of the village which Gillian describes as very useful during lock down!

She says that this last week has brought back memories of school and says that VE day was "a low-key celebration". She remembers a meeting in the hall – David Easton giving the first reading and she giving a second. Gillian had to register in June for National Service, after her 18th birthday. She was not called up and went on to study at the Architectural Association in September qualifying in 1950.

Gillian has asked for anyone who was from her Year Group (1945), or even those who might have been at the school when she joined in 1938, to get in contact!



*A photo of the 1938 Whitsun Gym Display, the year Gillian Godwin joined the school*

## Reunions

I have recently been sent some information about reunions we weren't aware of or have happened since the last AGM.

We had news from Wendy Pickthall (YG 1968) that she attended her first reunion in 20 years as she just moved back from America, which she described as "fab".



*Photo from Margaret Collison: (from left to right) Nuala, Sue, Joyce, Janet, Tony, John.*

In September 2019 the 1955 Year Group met at Friends' House in London. 10 Old Scholars met at Friends House in London, all of whom were 82 (or nearly). The group consisted of Tony and Ingrid Osborn, Joyce Prager (née Coffin), Sue Hourizi (née Haselgrove), Janet Claxton (née Hunn), Nuala Sterling (née Bradbury), Jill Verran (née Baker), Margaret Collison (née Shepherd), John Robertson and Alan Siltoe. The group met for coffee, stayed on for lunch and then some of them went to the British Library for

tea. Margaret Collison (YG 1956) wrote on May 1st 2020: "It all sounds so ordinary, but I think we were all aware that we might not manage it again and events have certainly made this year impossible. We have an email group which includes quite a few people who were unable to make it and keep in touch regularly. The friendships we formed at FSSW are long lasting and mean a lot to us."

## Obituaries

We are sad to announced the following death of Old Scholars since our last AGM: Mark Chamberlain (YG 1940); Crawford Dew (ex-staff member); Janet Pearson (née Pointer, YG 1965); Donald Bush (YG 1948); Eleanor Will (née Lane, YG 1952); John Veit-Wilson (née Hanno Simon, YG 1953). Fuller obituaries on the Old Scholars' website.

Mark Chamberlain died at the end of October: he was a conscientious objector during the Second World War and worked with the Friends' Ambulance Unit. He worked for G Costa & Co, an Italian food importer and had an interest in jazz and big band. Mark married Betty Ellis, of Reigate Friends Meeting, in 1964.



*Crawford Dew, photo taken and owned by Andy Griffin and features in "Thaxted's People: Portraits"*

Crawford Dew died on 6<sup>th</sup> November. He was a well-loved ex-member of staff, who worked as a supply teacher at the school for over 18 years: he worked in several different departments and often would help out at the last minute: testament to the respect in which he was held.

Janet Pearson died on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019. She was at Friends' between 1958 and 1963. She was Chairman of the Saffron Walden University of the

Third Age, a self-help, self-managed, lifelong learning co-operative for those who are retired or semi-retired. Janet is survived by her husband, son Timothy (YG 1989) and daughter Catherine (YG 1991).



*Janet Pearson, photo taken by Martin Hugall*



*Donald Bush graduating from Cambridge with an MA Hons. in Chemistry*

Roger Bush (YG 1952) has let me know of the deaths of two of his family members: his brother Donald James Bush and cousin Eleanor Will (née Lane) (YG 1952). Over a 10-12-year period five cousins from the family attended the school: Eleanor and her elder sister Leonie Welch (née Lane) (YG 1949), alongside the late Donald, Roger Bush and their younger sister Susan Cowhig (née Bush) (YG 1962). Donald studied at Clare College, Cambridge receiving an MA in Chemistry and went onto work as a Management Chemist in Boots in Nottingham. He sang with the Nottingham Bath Choir for over 50 unbroken years. Eleanor worked in the Diplomatic Service before moving the Papua New Guinea with her husband, Eric. She later became a Geography teacher in London. A fitting job for someone who travelled widely to India and Pakistan, Scandinavia, Canada, USA and two trips to Antarctica.

We have very recently heard about the death of the academic and co-founder of *Child Poverty Action Group* (CPAG), John Veit-Wilson on 10<sup>th</sup> May. John was well-known for his work on reducing poverty and whilst I await further information for his obituary, I would like to share some of the words from his last blog post:

*"Human rights conventions refer to a dignified and decent level of living. That means having freedom to choose to live a socially inclusive life, to do all the same silly, wasteful things that everyone else can do, whatever their personal problems, without themselves becoming poor. It means not being told how to live your life by other people who control your resources."* (John Veit-Wilson, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019).

**Who Should Old Scholars Contact for their Records?**

In the last newsletter we reported that we had contacted the administrator Grant Thornton LLP on behalf of Old Scholars to ask how Old Scholars can obtain their records when they need evidence of their time at the school. We have had no response, despite having now emailed Grant Thornton LLP twice.

**Numbers on our database and Facebook**

We have 1401 members for whom we have current email addresses, whilst we have 725 members on our Facebook Group (up from 650 last mailout – were I to allow all of the requests from Old Scholars from Friends' School, Lisburn in Northern Ireland, we'd have many, many more)!

**Annual General Meeting 2021**

We have yet to confirm a date for the 2021 AGM, but it should be in May and will take place at Friends' Meeting House in Saffron Walden. At the moment, Saffron Walden Friends are meeting, like the rest of us on Zoom, but are reasonably confident that by May 2021 the Meeting House will again be up and running and have had a good airing.

As always, if you no longer wish to be contacted by us, please email [fsswosa@gmail.com](mailto:fsswosa@gmail.com) and we will remove you from the mailing list. 101 emails did not get through from our previous mailout, so do please let me know of any email address changes, or if you know of any Old Scholars who have not received this email!

Wishing everyone good health and strength over the coming months.

In Friendship,  
Roland Fischer-Vousden (YG 2010)

[fsswosa@gmail.com](mailto:fsswosa@gmail.com) | [www.oldscholars.com](http://www.oldscholars.com) | May 2020



*A section from the biennial whole school photo – Recognise yourself? Can you work out when this was taken?*

*Remember that there is a full set of whole school photos in the archive section of the Old Scholars' website at [www.oldscholars.com](http://www.oldscholars.com)*