



## Welcome

Welcome to the 2013 SFOGA newsletter. We hope that you like the new format, and enjoy catching up with some of the news of former pupils. We are very excited that we will be hosting our 80th anniversary reunion on May 18th at the College. The event begins with a service in our lovely chapel and is then followed by lunch in the dining room. Please do get in touch if you would like to attend. We have also included some information about who is on the SFOGA committee. New members to the committee are very welcome. Do please contact me on [susan.podmore@ntlworld.com](mailto:susan.podmore@ntlworld.com) if you require any information on SFOGA or have any news to share.

Susan Podmore, Chair of SFOGA

### The SFOGA Committee

#### Angela Burke



I am an Independent Speech-Language Therapist with a Private Practice based in Baldock. I attended St. Francis' Prep School before going to St. Angela's Secondary School. I then went to Newcastle University and obtained an Honours BSc in Speech Sciences.

I worked in London for several years then travelled to Newfoundland Canada to complete a one year work

contract in a Rehab Centre and ended up living in Canada for 25 years! I moved back to England in 2001 to complete an MSc in Human Communication at UCL and sent my three daughters Hannah, Keely and Sophie Birch to St. Francis'.

Not only do I have a strong connection with the School but my family also has very long tradition with St. Francis' College because my mother and four of her sisters were boarders at the School for many years. Two of my mother's sisters became nuns, Sr. Angela and Sr. Veronica. Sr. Angela was Headmistress at St. Francis' for several years and then went on to establish St. Angela's in Stevenage now known as John Henry Newman. Sr. Veronica went on to be Headmistress at Thomas Moore in Letchworth for many years. Many of my cousins attended St Francis in the 60's, 70's and 80's.

There is one remaining daughter left at the School now, she will leave this summer but we hope that our long tradition with the School will continue with the next generation!

My entire family have very fond memories of St. Francis', the nuns, the staff and the times that we have shared at the School.

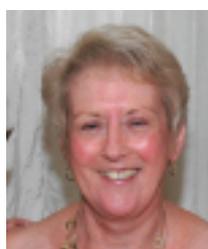
#### Carol Turner



I did two separate teaching stints at St. Francis'. The first one was in a full time capacity straight after qualifying at PE College. I returned for a second time (in a part time capacity) after a gap of 5 years when I had trained as a beauty therapist. Having specialised in dance at college I naturally got a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction from being involved in the many extra-curricular activities and productions which

involved dance at St. Francis'. I took early retirement from teaching at the end of 2002 but, as a Letchworth resident, I still see and socialise with many of the St. Francis' staff both past and present.

#### Margaret Gibbs



I taught Drama at St. Francis' College from 1968-1998. I loved my time at the School and saw many changes and different Heads. The most traumatic period was the end of the School as a Convent and the takeover by the Trust in 1984. Thankfully, the School not only survived but flourished. It was at that time that SFOGA was reformed as it had lapsed in previous years.

I became Membership Secretary and have swapped this role with Hon. Secretary over the years, preparing your Annual newsletter each year. Since 1984 your Committee have organised lunches, balls, decade reunions and other large reunions every few years. Our next reunion is in 2013 and this will be my last. I have decided to leave SFOGA Committee as I now live far away from the School and do not know recent leavers. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working for SFOGA and will miss you all. I hope you will still keep in touch, either directly or through Facebook.

#### Susan Podmore



Some of you will know me as Susan Joyce, I am the current Chair of SFOGA. I started as a pupil at St. Francis' College in 1976 at the age of four, in the infants hut with Mrs Rayner. After infants' 1 & 2 we moved into 'transition' where we were taught by my favourite nun Sister Mary Carroll - she was tiny and

I was a really tall child and I remember her borrowing my plimsolls when I was six for the staff rounders match.

Throughout Senior School I was definitely more of a 'musical child' than a 'sporty girl', sorry Miss Roberts. I started violin lessons aged seven and went on to play in the orchestra, the chamber orchestra (fondly known as chamber pot), and the string quartet. I also sang in the choir and madrigal group. I did, however, do D of E with many a soggy trip to Snowdonia or the Peak District and a fabulous Exploration to Bermuda where I discovered my freckly need for Factor 50 sun cream!

When I left St. Francis' after my A levels, I trained as a paediatric nurse at Great Ormond Street Hospital. After my initial training I completed a BSc in Children's Neuroscience Nursing. I ended up working at GOSH for 16 years in several different roles. Four years ago I decided to work closer to home as a staff nurse for the school nurses and health visitors in Letchworth. I was part of the team that came into St. Francis' to immunise the girls against HPV - so I am very sorry if you are one of the many girls I have 'jabbed' in my career. Last year I became a health visitor and I now work in Welwyn.

### Gloria Holland (nee West)



I left St. Francis' in 1969. I trained to be a teacher at Putteridge College, married and with our daughter Nikki moved to South Africa in 1975. I returned from there in 1982 having a second daughter before divorcing. I then met my soulmate Bob. I continued teaching until 2011, when I was made redundant from my post as the manager of an outreach team of teachers supporting behavioural issues in schools. Not ready to retire, I accepted a post as Chief Executive of Mind in Mid Herts, a mental health charity. We now have six grandchildren and two Harley Davidsons. I learnt to ride a motorbike at 48 and have not looked back. I will retire one day....

### Veronica Bolton



I attended St. Francis' College as a boarder from 1977 – 1984 as Veronica Wilson. I have fond memories of my time at the School and of the staff, including Sr Mary Anna, Sr Eileen, Miss Grulich, and Col & Mrs Blair. I had rooms on Our Lady's Corridor and Sacred Heart. Then Sr Veronica was in charge of my house when I was "down house" on Spring Road. I was a member of Eliot and St. Vincent School Houses. Remember the washing

up and cleaning rotas?

I was not particularly sporty or arty, but was often to be found in the Music rooms, or in the Theatre for the productions – Insect Play, Rock Nativity, Ancient Mariner, and Pinocchio. I was very involved with St John's Ambulance and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. I left school in 1984 after A levels and trained as a Nurse at the Middlesex Hospital in London where I lived for nearly 20 years. I am currently a Urogynaecology Nurse Specialist at Peterborough City Hospital.

### Vicki Semmens



I joined the teaching and boarding staff at St Francis' in 1989 for a year whilst gaining my OE (overseas experience) as we Kiwi's call it. I am still here teaching A level Business Studies and Economics and trying to turn my students into All Black and Manchester United supporters.

### Katharine Purchon



I have worked as School Librarian here at St. Francis' College since 2002. It is a wonderful role to have. Over the last 10 years I have also been able to begin the massive task of sorting the College archive and trying to piece together the history of our School. I joined the SFOGA committee in 2008 and have really enjoyed meeting and talking to many former pupils.

### Louise Hopper



I started at St. Francis' in 1981 under the guidance of Mrs Duffy and Miss Jackson. I remained with the School until the end of Sixth Form in 1996, I was House Captain of St. Benedict's, and studied A levels in English, Business Studies and R.E. After attending Bournemouth University and deciding that Journalism was not the career

for me, I became a Chartered member of the CIPD and am currently Head of HR for a TV advertising agency.

I joined the SFOGA committee earlier this year and am pleased to be able to be involved with the School again.

### Recent Leavers' Event

On July 1st last year SFOGA held its first ever open afternoon for recent leavers. Over 50 old girls who had left the College, within the last 10 years, came back to meet staff, look around the School and say farewell to Mary Fenton who was retiring as Head of Sixth Form at the end of the summer term. The afternoon began with a service in chapel and then the old girls had the opportunity to revisit favourite haunts in the School before afternoon tea was served in the dining room. It is hoped that this will be the first in a series of reunions to be organised by your SFOGA committee.



### News and Memories

**CHRISTINA STUART (Carande)** 1959 has lived in Paris, Barcelona, South Africa, Hong Kong and Jamaica and is now in Los Angeles. In Hong Kong she was a radio journalist and in London founded a management training company to coach business people in public speaking. She sold the company a few years ago and now enjoys retirement in sunny California. Christina is writing a book about her childhood and would very much like to contact anyone who was at school with her.

[stuartchristina@aol.com](mailto:stuartchristina@aol.com)

**FAY ROBINSON (McInulty)** says she is a very old girl (age 67) but would love to find some of her old friends from St. Francis' and share happy memories.

[fayrobinson@videotron.ca](mailto:fayrobinson@videotron.ca)

**JANE HUNTER (BAERLEIN)** 1964 Memories - Does anyone remember Proclamation which was held in the theatre after end of term exams? All the staff including Reverend Mother sat in a line on the stage then one class after another had to stand up. Then starting with 1st place each girl had to walk up onto the stage whilst her conduct and application were read out. She collected her report and returned to her place. We all seemed to take it in our stride as convent girls did then.



**EDWINA MULCAHY (McKeon)** has the honour of wearing the Green jersey for the Irish Hockey Masters. She says it has been a dream since a school trip to Wembley to see Ireland play the



Netherlands. The dream has now come true.

**MEG HEYWORTH (GOULDER)** 1966 I have retired from working as a self-employed public speaking coach, although I still am very active within the Toastmasters International Speaking clubs in my area. I wonder if any of the SFOGA's are members?

My next ambition is the travel around Britain finding all the railways, buildings, bridges, tunnels and other work done by Isambard Kingdom Brunel preferable by bike and railway. If any other SFOGA's are interested then let me know!!

[meg@heyworth.co.uk](mailto:meg@heyworth.co.uk)

**DEBBIE HOWARD (PAYINE)** 1975 Debbie's husband, David, is retired so they sold their house in Henley and bought a small house near Gatwick Airport and spend a lot of time in Portugal, which is great but means that they don't catch up with friends or family so often.

Debbie's children are both married and she now has three grandsons and with a fourth on the way she has her fingers crossed it might be a girl

[sweet\\_pea\\_debs@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sweet_pea_debs@yahoo.co.uk)

**LINDA FOSTER (GOUGH)** Linda has lived in Switzerland for the last two and a half years. Previously she lived in the US and Belgium. She has one son, aged 15. Linda passes the time with the American Women's Club for which she is the Membership Chair and with one or two projects with the P.A.

[maccfos@bluewin.ch](mailto:maccfos@bluewin.ch)



**HELEN BALKWILL-CLARK** 1978 Husband Roy is working in Singapore while Helen is holding the fort in London and travelling to visit him in the children's university /school holidays. Roy also travels home regularly. When son Peter finishes school, Helen will join Roy for the last two or three years of his contract. Helen has taken on a voluntary job as Events Secretary for the British Yemeni Society.

**SIOBHAN MCCABE** 1975-80 I was a pupil at St. Francis', 1975-1980, along with my little sister Theresa. Many happy memories -rounders with tennis rackets, cocoa and cakes on Sunday nights, fathers Pascal, Hilary and Christopher, Sr Eilish in St Agnes, Mrs Corrigan, Tata, Mrs Vine who brushed hair, Eliot, Chaucer and Spencer, SCR and JCR, the Blairs, The Cubicles, Sr Eilish's 'new shoes', Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Rock Nativity, Demon of Adachicahara, Sr Firmin and the tuck shop. Summer dresses with Xmas wrapping paper patterns and Mr Cousins the music teacher. Happy days.

**CLAIRE GOUGH** is very keen to have any news about Gillian Garrick and Michelle Nicholls. Can you help? Claire went to UCL as a mature student and studied Egyptology, gaining a 1st. She then suffered chronic fatigue which meant that she couldn't finish her PhD.

[mc.gough@btinternet.com](mailto:mc.gough@btinternet.com)

**SOFI NAPIER** 1983 After A levels she returned to Africa to attend University in South Africa. She qualified as a geologist and specialised in the diamond industry as an exploration consultant. Sofi has run her own consultancy for the past 10 years and currently lives in Johannesburg. Sofi would like to hear from other Old Girls and can be found on Facebook

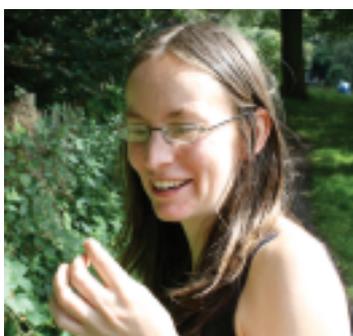
**NADIA ELLERTON (GIBSON)** 1981 Would like to find Janella Harper. Can anyone help?

[nadiaellerton@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:nadiaellerton@tiscali.co.uk)

**ADELE BASMA** 1985 Has three children, twins 22 and the youngest, 21, is studying acting at Kingston University.

[abasma@behandbutchoff.com](mailto:abasma@behandbutchoff.com)

**EMILY O'DEA** I remember the trip to Bermuda-how many of us fell off those mopeds and ended up with road rash? Sunshine, sweat and cockroaches in numbers I've never seen before, sunburnt lips after falling asleep on the beach having attempted to swim to the next island, falling out of my bunk bed, a great adventure.



**SUSIE WOOLDRIDGE (LLOYD)** 2001

Susie is living in Knebworth with her husband, Steve, and three children, Charlie 5, Oliver 3, and Eiana 1.

[susiemlloyd@hotmail.com](mailto:susiemlloyd@hotmail.com)

**JANICE WHITE (D'MELLO)** 1987 Janice has moved from Australia to Tanzania to help her father. She has three children, Tristan 10, Lauren 6, and Noah 4 with husband Andrew.

[janicewhite@gmail.com](mailto:janicewhite@gmail.com)



**SUSAN SWANSTON (WILSON)** 1984 Has now settled down in Australia with her family and is working as a GP.

**VERONICA BOLTON (WILSON)** 1984 Has gained her Masters Degree. She works at Peterborough City Hospital.

**LSA KA FAI LUM** 1989 Is serving as a children's Minister in a Chinese church in North York, Ontario. She has been working in the church for six years. She also teaches piano lessons as part-time work and does paintings during the holidays and days off.

[elsakflum@gmail.com](mailto:elsakflum@gmail.com)

**CLAIR VICTORY (GERAHTY-BONNEY)** 1987-89 Married in Westminster Cathedral and now has a successful restaurant business in London and a couple of Butchers' shops.

**TAMSIN EYRE (PHOENIX)** 1993 Married James Eyre in 2010 and had a baby, boy, Charles. They are living in Dorset.

**ESTELLE MORTIMER** 1995 Has moved around a lot but is now settled for a while. Her eldest child starts school this year and youngest (nearly 2) is already a real outdoors girl. Estelle and her husband Douglas are going for an outdoorsy lifestyle. Douglas is now an associate professor at Leeds University. Estelle has started up a company running Earth Science workshops for schools.....it's all good!

[Estelle.mortimer@yahoo.com](mailto:Estelle.mortimer@yahoo.com)

**ALEXANDRA MARSHALL (BATEMAN)** 1996 Had a son Daryk in June.

**CLARE EDWARDS** 1991 Is Assistant Housemistress of the Sixth Form boarding house at Wellington College in addition to teaching maths, CCF (RAF) and running polo.

[CLE@wellingtoncollege.org.uk](mailto:CLE@wellingtoncollege.org.uk)

**HANNAH NIVEN** 2003 Now has 2 boys, Freddie and Ralph. Hannah and Richard live in Baldock. When not having babies Hannah works for Aitchison Raffety Property Surveyors as marketing co-ordinator in Hitchin.

[hannahniven17@hotmail.com](mailto:hannahniven17@hotmail.com)



**EMMA NOBLE (YOUNG)** 2001 Is back in the UK from NYC. She moved back with her husband Lars. They married in a quiet ceremony in Kimbolton where her parents live. She is currently child minding in North London, taking a break from fashion.

[emmanobleuk@hotmail.com](mailto:emmanobleuk@hotmail.com)

**GAURI GARDE (NARAYAN)** Left St. Francis' in 1969 to do her A levels at Edgbaston High School for Girls in her home town, Birmingham. I then studied Dentistry at the Royal London Hospital Medical School. After working in Barking for a few years I married and moved to the USA where I am still practising Dentistry part-time.

## Staff News

MRS GILLIAN BOARDMAN (HARRISON), former staff, now lives near Huntingdon near her daughter Verity and granddaughter. Her other three children are in Australia, south of Melbourne. Gill is still in touch with Mrs Sue Lamberton and Mary Tucker. Gill would be pleased to hear from anyone who remembers her.

[gil@windgather.com](mailto:gil@windgather.com)

## The Rickshaw Theatre Project

Having pranced around on stage throughout my teenage years at St. Francis' in a variety of guises, as an undergraduate I went backstage. I produced several shows while I was at Cambridge and in my final year I discovered the Rickshaw Theatre Project. RTP is an organisation set up and run by Cambridge students that travels to India and Nepal every summer, taking drama workshops to underprivileged children, with the aim of boosting confidence, raising awareness of social issues and aiding with motor and social development. As one of two Tour Managers, I spent the two terms before the summer vacation knee-deep in administration and fundraising. SFOGA were kind enough to donate £100 towards the trip which took place in August and September 2012.

Our first stop was Lucknow where we collaborated with local groups, the JOSH Theatre Group and the Lucknow Book Club in order to work with Ehsaas and Pooran Shiksha Kendra, a free school for children of a local slum area. I worked with Ehsaas, an organisation that helps street children reintegrate into family and society; we worked with roughly 30 children aged eight to 16. Taking myths and legends as a frame, we sketched out three different sections of Homer's *Odyssey*. My group acted out the Cyclops story. At the end of our visit, we came together with the group who had been working at Pooran Shiksha Kendra in order to perform our pieces in front of an audience at a local auditorium.



The next fortnight was spent in Delhi, working with two organisations. I was working with Music Basti at Kilkari, a home for girls who would otherwise be on the streets. Initially we found the work at Kilkari particularly challenging. It became clear to us that some of the girls had been subjected to various kinds of abuse. By the second week, the 20 girls we were working with (aged 10 to 14) were full of ideas for a performance. They created a play about respecting your parents and working hard, which they performed in front of the rest of the children from the home and some representatives from Music Basti. It was fantastic seeing them put on such an enthusiastic and determined performance.

One of the most important phrases I took from the trip was 'empathy, not sympathy'. These bright, imaginative, energetic children do not need our tears, they need our attention, friendship and respect.

I'd like to thank SFOGA, on behalf of myself and the rest of the team of the Rickshaw Theatre Project 2012, for their support and generosity.  
Sophie Harrold 2002-2009

Staff retirements this year:

Mrs Mary Fenton – Head of Sixth Form  
Mr Jack Hobbs – English Department  
Mrs Wendy Bailey – Prep Department  
Mrs Jessica White – Prep Department

## Obituary

### DR PETA DEWAR BUCHANAN

8TH MAY 1936 – 25TH MARCH 2011

Peta came to St. Francis' College as a boarder in March 1946. World War II having recently ended during which she along with her parents were twice bombed out of houses in south London. St. Francis' provided her with peace and security. She took part in all the School productions and remained friends with Sr Mary Immaculate, herself an old girl. Following St. Francis' she undertook teacher training and then later went to university where she worked her way up the academic ladder to finally achieving a Doctorate in Precision Balances at Imperial College London. She taught for several years and then decided on a change and launched into studying History of Science, meticulously researching aged documents in Record offices far and wide. Sadly in 2010 she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour and died seven months later. She remained single all her life.



Mary Scanlon-Smith, Peta Dewar Buchanan, Pamela Batten (Roberts) and Bindy Singleton (Hewitt)

## 80th Anniversary Reunion

SFOGA will be holding a re-union to celebrate the College's 80th anniversary on May 18th. We hope that many of you will want to come and join us for what promises to be a memorable day.

The day will begin at 11.30am with a service in our chapel. Followed by a drinks reception in the School Library at 12pm and a buffet lunch in the dining room.

The afternoon is left free for you to spend time with old friends and to wander around the College and to look at some of the memorabilia from the School archive. Afternoon tea will be served from 3.30pm.

There are only 150 tickets for the event, so book your place now to avoid disappointment. Please write to Katharine Purchon at St. Francis' College or via email to [kpurchon@st-francis.herts.sch.uk](mailto:kpurchon@st-francis.herts.sch.uk).

## Prep II in 1980 with Sr Aquinas



Amongst these girls are Susan Podmore, SFOGA Chair and Vicki Butler-Henderson the television presenter, can you identify them?