

newsletter



Welcome

Welcome to another SFOGA Newsletter - what an outstanding year! Our grand reunion last summer celebrated the 80th Anniversary of the Foundation of St. Francis' College. Over 150 'old girls' and former staff members reunited for a lovely chapel service, delicious meal and much reminiscing as we explored together. The Committee continue to plan ahead for some exciting future events including a Vintage Tea Party reunion for former pupils of the 1930s-1960s this summer. Thank you for your support of SFOGA. **Susan Podmore**



New Committee Members



Sheila Edgar first joined St. Francis' in the English Department in 1968. After leaving in 1973 to have children, she returned in 1981 to the school she loved, and stayed until her retirement in 2002. Then she joined the Royal Collection Trust in London to train as a Tour Guide for Clarence House, The Royal Mews and Buckingham Palace Gardens. She still works at the sites occasionally, but also takes sessions with school groups at The Royal Mews: hugely enjoyable, like Teaching - but without the marking!

Mary Fenton taught History at SFC for over 20 years and was Head of Sixth Form from 2004 until her retirement in 2012. She expected to hugely miss the lively banter of the Sixth Form Common Room and the cut and thrust of History lessons; but the gap has been filled with the non-stop chatter of her twin grandsons now 3 years old as well as her work as a Trustee of the Kanyike Project and as a volunteer for the Jennifer Trust for Spinal Muscular Atrophy.



Letty Glaister (1996) spent a very happy twelve years at St. Francis', and is delighted to be joining the SFOGA Committee. She currently works as a Partner at Tees Law, in Bishop's Stortford, specialising as a solicitor in the Wills, Trusts, Tax and Probate department. However, she will soon be going part-time in order to launch her own business: in May she will open a luxury hotel for cats, "Longcroft Royston"! She is looking forward to having more time to work in the local rural community and to helping with future SFOGA events.

80th Anniversary Gloria

The 80th Reunion Celebration saw a large number of old girls reunited to commemorate St. Francis' College's 80th Anniversary. They shared great memories. The chapel service was a highlight for me. Listening to old girls sing brought goose bumps. My lifelong friend came from Los Angeles and my cousin joined us for tea, heightening my joy. The photographs added another dimension and left me with a real keepsake. I would do it again in a heartbeat.

Gloria Holland



Early Years Centre

My mother, Joan Burke, was honoured to be asked to open the Early Years Centre and tell the staff, students and parents about her time at St. Francis'. I and my daughter Keely Birch were delighted to be invited to attend the official Opening. It was lovely to see that the Centre is located on the original site of the Kindergarten in my day. It brought back many fond memories of Sr Breda and my happy days in Kindergarten at St. Francis'. My brother Brian Burke was also present and reminded us that once upon a time boys had been allowed to attend the Kindergarten as well.

We were very impressed by the design and the equipment on display and hope that the Centre will enrich and enhance the lives of all the young students who attend it for many years to come.

Angela Burke

A Plea from the Committee

Please let Mrs Purchon (Membership Secretary) know your new address if you move house so we can keep our database up to date. The College and SFOGA would also like to compile lists of email addresses of former pupils. If you are happy for us to hold your email address, please email with details, including the date you left St. Francis' College, to kpurchon@st-francis.herts.sch.uk.

We are always delighted to hear your news. Please email susan.podmore@ntlworld.com or mary.fenton@ntlworld.com. Alternatively, visit the SFOGA Facebook page.

We hope to set up international branches of SFOGA. Anthea Yu (2003) has agreed to run the Hong Kong branch. Any other volunteers, please?

And what other events would you like us to organise? A Staff reunion is planned for April as part of SFC's 80th Anniversary celebrations and a Vintage Tea Party on June 14th, specifically for pre-1970s pupils. Both events promise to be very enjoyable. Please let us know your ideas!

News from the Members

Sophia Stutter (Sophie Baty – class of 1976) was widowed some years ago and left with three small children. She is now one happy mother: her twins, Antonia and Robert, should be heading off to Oxford this autumn. Her mother **Diana Kelly** (1945) loved her time at SFC, especially the nuns. During the 1940s, prep-age boys could be boarders and her uncle **Michael Kelly** (now a spritely 82) was a pupil. Sophie used to hear stories of the boys raiding the sacristy for the (unconsecrated) communion wine and understands they gave the nuns a merry time!

Sofi Napier (Safinaz Patel 1979) was a boarder for 4 years and would love to get news from old class mates.

Vicky Funston (Lunt - 1990) has lived in Perth, Australia for the last 11 years, with Australian husband Scott and two daughters, Charlotte 7 and Elizabeth 3. Currently a stay-at-home mum, Vicki is hoping to get back into TV production in 2015. She regularly visits the UK and hopes to make it to the next school reunion.



Kate Nichols (1990) lives in Reykjavik, Iceland, with her partner Siggí and their daughter Elly 3 and Frodi 2. It was special that Frodi was born on what would have been her Dad's 75th birthday. She's back to lawyering full-time, winding up one of the Icelandic banks that were involved in the crash of 2008, as well as doing a BA in Icelandic and a distance-learning LL.M with the University of London.

Susan Podmore (Joyce 1990). Susan and her husband John are delighted to announce the birth of their daughter Lottie on 27.11.13, a precious and long-awaited little girl. At the time of writing, Lottie is 5 months old, and her proud big brother Archie is 10. Susan is currently on maternity leave from her job as a health visitor with Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust.



Jo Cole (Reader - 1991) says life is ticking along! She is married to Jamie and they have two mini-people - Francesca 8 and Thomas 5 - filling their lives with fun, chaos and a touch of mayhem. They run an electrical contracting company and Jo is gently getting back into the classroom by doing supply work at their children's school. jojim.cole@sky.com

Clare Benn (1992) is married and has lived in Australia (Adelaide) for 6 years – she loves it over there! She has a girl, Lexie 3 and boy, Braxton. She qualified as a Chartered Surveyor and is currently Manager of the SA Government's Rec & Sports Asset Portfolio. She would love to hear from fellow classmates. Clare.benn@y7mail.com

Dee Herbert (Gurdeep Sagoo 1993) has been declared free of colon cancer for over 10 years. Diagnosed in 2003 when only 29, she underwent the pioneering APPEAR procedure to preserve her fertility and allow her to live a normal life. It was a tough time – chemo and surgery, but she says 'I am a stronger person as a result. It certainly taught me to appreciate each day! She runs a cancer support group for English-speaking expats. 'It's hard enough coping with disease, but being abroad away from family and not speaking the language are additional pressures for people to deal with.' Now a stay at home mum she lives near Frankfurt with her husband Christian and two children, Dylan 7, and Natasha 4.

Eva Reader (Sobek – 1993) is living in Scotland with husband and three children Alexandra 9, Lara 8 and Albert 4. evasobek@hotmail.com

Kate Shepherd (Moyler – class of 1994) married David in 2000 and has two boys 7 and 5. A qualified solicitor, Kate now lives in the East Midlands and runs a legal training business.

Holly Clark (1995) is busy looking after three children - Gabriel 6, Noah 4 and Grace 8 weeks. The family live on a small farm in Wheathampstead, with sheep, cows, pigs, chickens and ducks! She trained as a nurse and would like to go into midwifery one day. Her sister **Emma Clark** (1994) has two daughters, Ella 10 and Scarlett 6, and lives in Hertford where she teaches the Reception Class in a local school.

Fiona Saxby (Costigan – 1995) will graduate with an MSc in Biomedical Science this summer and hopes to begin a PgDip in Radiotherapy.

Nicole Deutsch (Tassell - 1995) married her partner, Emma, at Warwick Castle – the first civil partnership to be conducted there. In mid-2012 they moved to Stotfold and in July 2013, Nicole gave birth to twin boys, Jack and Alfie. Sadly, her Mum passed away from cancer, just 3 weeks after the boys were born. Joshua is now 13 years old and a fantastic big brother to the twins.



Junko Chodo (Kawai – 1997) is expecting a baby in the middle of April.



Annabel Howe (Hatch - 1997) has 'no mega exciting news' but would like to keep in touch. Currently living in SW London with her husband and children Edward 5, Jemima 3 and Tabitha 1, she is contemplating going back to work at DEFRA in 2015 after a 6-year career break. Her sister **Jan Hatch** (2001) has just had baby number four - Isabella! She is very much in touch with school friends, 'Definitely all friends for life' annabel.howe@icloud.com

Alexa Pickersgill (Sartorius - 1997) is married to Nick (a property lawyer - they met at work) and has two daughters, Imogen 3 and Zara 7 months. In a somewhat dazed state after Imogen's delivery, Alexa was surprised to realise former SFC student **Josie Trussell** (2000) was one of her midwives. Imogen has just started at St. Francis'. She loves it; but Alexa finds it surreal to see her wear the same old tartan skirt! When not in "mummy mode", Alexa is an in-house lawyer for BP, responsible for the UK network of service stations which she finds fascinating and challenging.

Jo Sanderson (Lloyd - 1997) married her Aussie husband James in 2008, then travelled around Europe on honeymoon. They now live Down Under (Melbourne). She is Business Manager for the Food Division of a Global Distribution company and is responsible for increasing business in Australia and New Zealand. She's currently enjoying a year's maternity leave: they have a beautiful boy, Thomas.

Clare Stutchbury (1998) is getting married in June 2014.

Alice Rochester (1999) spent a busy gap year in France and in Uganda (the Kanyike Project) before a degree in Product and Furniture Design at De Montfort University. Alice has worked her way up to be Senior Designer Manager in the Cambridge studio of Harriet Kelsall Jewellery Design, leading a team of fabulous designers. HK is the UK's leading bespoke jewellery design company. Alice met and married 'the most beautiful man' and now has a delightful 4-month-old baby girl.





Cheryl Murray (Morley – class of 2000) now lives in Surrey. Cheryl and her husband welcomed their daughter, Lucy Corinne, into the world in January 2014.

Genevieve Tompkins (Medhurst - 2000) and Chris's first baby, Sebastian Lewis, was born 23rd April 2013. She lives in Arlesey and works in advertising in London. gtompkins@jaa-media.co.uk



Stephanie Rochford (2001). After three and a half years in the City, Stephanie embarked on a new career path in the not-for-profit sector in February 2013, working for the International Secretariat of Publish What You Pay, a global coalition campaigning for transparency in the oil, gas and mining sectors. She has recently become a Trustee of the Kanyike Project and is looking forward to working with the other Trustees to support the charity and, hopefully, going to visit the villages one day! stephrochford@hotmail.com

Alex White (Curtis - 2001) got married in 2010, and now has a 1 year-old daughter Audrey Primrose. Alex works full time from home in Ely for the design and illustration company, We Three Club, which she runs jointly with her husband, Chris. They predominantly work within the music industry; projects include T-shirt designs for the Rolling Stones and giant billboard campaigns for Manchester City FC.



Suzie Wooldridge (Suzanna Lloyd – 2001) married Steve and has three children, Charlie nearly 7, Olive 5 and Elana 3.

Naomi Cash (2002) lives in Sydney, got married last year, and works as a Registered Nurse at one of only two paediatric hospices in the whole of Australia. Nothing compared to the 44 we have in the UK! A royal visit to her hospice is imminent....naomicash@hotmail.co.uk

Aliya Haji Mowl (Haji - 2002) married Tom Mowl in October 2013.



Hannah McGough (Li Ting Chung– 2002) married Sean in January 2011 and in 2012 they decided to pack it all in and spend 18 months mixing work and travel. They returned to a stormy UK in February 2014 and are beginning to settle back into life here. Hannah is particularly enjoying spending time with her brand-new nephew, James, produced by her lovely sister-in-law **Fay Li Ting Chung** (Clark - 1997), another St. Francis' girl.

Emma Sherlock (Borthwick - 2002) is taking a break from her programme with BBC Radio Cumbria to have a baby. Baby number two is 'due to pop in mid-April. We've also moved house ... out of the city and into the countryside! It's a bit of a project, which is fun with a 2 year old and being pregnant, but it's getting there!

Debbie Crofton (class of 2003) is getting married in June 2015

Rose Sarkar (2008) organised a sky dive in aid of the Brain Tumour Charity. Rose and fourteen colleagues from Dunnhumby took the plunge and raised £4000.

Adunni Haruna (Elizabeth Haruna - 2003) read Political Science at The University of Leicester but is now a full-time international supermodel, radio producer and actress. Nominated for Best Female Model at the 2013 BEFFTA Awards, she won Best Model at the Ankara Festival, Ben TV 2013. She has walked in over 300 runway shows and nine Fashion Weeks, from London to Las Vegas and Pakistan. She has worked for many TV channels (as researcher, producer and presenter) and appeared in movies made in Bollywood, Hollywood and Nollywood. She recently co-hosted an International Women's Day event at the UK Carnival Arts Centre, Luton and gave a poetry and guitar performance.

Annika McQueen (Cooper - 2003) married Gordon in London, December 2013. She will be promoted to Key Stage 1 Co-ordinator at Bassett House School from September 2014 annikamcqueen@yahoo.com



Katie Moffat (Glazebrook – 2004) has seen much change over the past two years. From working as a Community Staff Nurse in Stevenage with a variety of patients – 'from wounds to end of life care' – to wife (she married Andrew on a lovely day in November 2012) and now mother: she gave birth to a 'gorgeous daughter', Abigail Elizabeth, in February 2014.

Natalia Vukelic

(Gunn - class of 2005) married James on 8th June 2013.



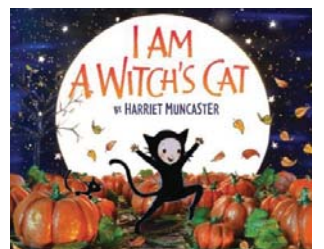
Rebecca Christensen (Poole - 2005) married Jacob in 2011 and their son Flynn was born two years later.

Namita Dahad (2005) is getting married this April to Raghav Mandhana.



Bonnie Ng (2006) has been working as a civil engineer and recently volunteered to help with a water supply project in Qing Yuan of Mainland China with other young engineers. They designed and constructed a new water supply system for the villagers, since their existing source was contaminated. 'It is so encouraging that the villagers now have their own clean and reliable drinking water, through which their health can be safeguarded. I hope I can continue to contribute to society!'

Harriet Muncaster (2006) is to publish her first children's picture book – I am a Witch's Cat - in July, with another book to follow. She is getting married in June to Henry Petrie but will still be Muncaster for professional reasons. She posts artwork/boo news on her blog. www.victoriastitch.blogspot.com



Emma Luke (2006) qualified as a chartered accountant in 2012, and has worked in London for four years. She and her fiancé bought an apartment in London in spring, 2013. Her wedding will take place in June when fellow SFOGA friends **Emily Taiano** and **Fiona Macintosh** will be bridesmaids and her sister **Farrah** (2008) her maid of honour. Emma is running the London marathon in April 2014 so has been training hard. 'It's going to be really tough but I am hoping I can complete it in a decent time'

Amelia Loveys (2012) has just met HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at an impressive Gold Duke of Edinburgh Ceremony at St James's Palace.

Charity



It goes without saying that former students continue to raise £1000s for a range of charities. The SFOGA chosen charity is the Kanyike Project –

www.kanyike-project.co.uk - with which the College has been associated since the Project began in 1986. Former Art students celebrated Adrian Mallett's 70th birthday last year – he wanted a 'living wake' - and raised £1000 for the project, thanks to Adrian's generosity. Groups of Sixth Form students now follow in the footsteps of pioneer Alice Rochester, who worked for the project for three months in 2000. Eleven current students are looking forward to visiting Uganda this summer and taking equipment for the newly-built nursery. Can we encourage all our members to remember Fr Kakuba's passion about the village where he grew up and help the villagers in their quest for sustainable development? Every penny makes a difference!



Retirements

Best wishes to those staff who have left the St. Francis' College community this year:

Soo Pope - Assistant Head
Mike Collis - Bursar
Julia Whyte - Head of Modern Foreign Languages
Audrey Hinnells - Head of Maths
Ailsa Middleton – Head of Home Economics
Sue Simpkin - Head of Biology
Debbie Hammond – PE Department
Val Sibley – Independent Listener in the Boarding House
Alan Clowser - Assistant Caretaker

We hope they all enjoy a long and fulfilling retirement.

Staff News

Margaret Gibbs is 'still battling on, trying to be an artist', attends History of Art lectures and is now studying millinery. She will exhibit at Oxfordshire Art Weeks in May in Chadlington church and you can see her paintings on her Face book page or on the Oxfordshire Art Weeks website. Her own website might follow!

Vincent Conyngham has been Head of Music at St Martin's, Ampleforth, for eleven years. For the second time, one of his choirs competed for the Choir of the Year Award on 'Songs of Praise', singing his arrangement of 'I the Lord of Sea and Sky' in the initial round. His choristers are singing in Bach's 'St Matthew Passion' and enjoy Choral Tours: Lisbon this Easter and Rome, Venice, Prague, Malta, Bavaria, Austria, France and Spain in past years. Vincent finds it 'a great privilege to conduct choirs during services and concerts in the magnificent setting of the Schola Cantorum of Ampleforth Abbey'.

Obituaries

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of **Daisy Blair**, aged 95, in August 2013. Mrs Blair came to work at St. Francis' College in 1969 with her husband, Colonel Neville Blair. They were appointed to develop extracurricular activities for students in the Boarding House, and it was thanks to her enthusiasm that the St John Cadet and D of E schemes were introduced to the College. Together they influenced the lives of many



students and are still remembered very fondly. After retiring from the College, Colonel and Mrs Blair set up the voluntary car service at Lister Hospital where she was a volunteer driver until her 90th birthday.



St Mary's Church in Hitchin was packed during the Memorial Service for **Sue Cracknell** who died on 15 February, 2014, after a courageous fight against leukaemia. Sue inspired the choral and madrigal groups at St Francis' for several years until she retired in 2000. The tributes that the family have received bring back memories of the passion and enthusiasm which she brought to music at the school.

Susan Penny, who died on 15th March, 2014, joined St. Francis' College English Dept in 1973. She helped to edit the Golden Jubilee magazine in 1983 - the first school magazine for some years - and was instrumental in reviving SFOGA. These had both fallen into abeyance so this was a major contribution to the SFC community. When David Ganderton became Head, he appointed Susan as Head of English, following Angela Flynn, (who had a great deal to do as Senior Mistress). She lived in the Boarding House for two terms before her retirement in 1987, while her husband renovated their next home in Warwickshire. Susan was very popular with the Boarders. In fact, everyone responded to her because of her kindness, understanding and enthusiasm for English, particularly Literature.

Father Christopher, former chaplain to the College, has recently died at the age of 86. He served the local community for almost 50 years. A wise, warm-hearted, "people" person (and Arsenal fan), he will be greatly missed.

Rachel Sterland (1994), a former pupil, died tragically young in January this year and will be remembered as an outstanding student.

Gwen Wrigley died suddenly in December 2012. Gwen was a pupil here at St. Francis' College in the 1950s and returned to work as a Receptionist for a number of years before her recent retirement. She is remembered by many former pupils for her kindness and the support she gave to the girls in the Boarding House.

St. Francis de Sale's Award

Did you know about the St. Francis de Sale's Award? Now that the College is entering its ninth decade, it is possible for three generations of the same family to study with us. This award is open to daughters or grand-daughters of former pupils and offers a 20% reduction in fees!