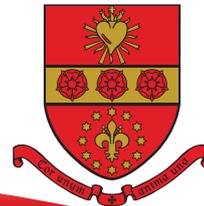


# newsletter



## Welcome from Louise Hopper, Chair, SFOGA

It always surprises me how quickly we move from one year to the next – the seasons pass and I find myself in May, attending the Leavers' Supper and welcoming the current Year 13 cohort to the Old Girls' Association. I reflect back to when I left in 1996 after 14 happy years: the friends I made, the achievements, the hopes and the ambitions as I left. I still feel I had the best start in life.



SFOGA moves from strength to strength, welcoming more old girls all the time. Our new look section on the school website, online portal and active Facebook page are certainly helping to reach out to those who may have left many years ago, moved away and lost touch with the College. I'm also delighted to report that many old girls have helped support current Year 12 & 13 students by offering work experience opportunities. I was lucky enough to spend my work experience at the BBC Pebble Mill studios in Birmingham, thanks to a parent of a SFC girl who knew my passion for TV production. I would encourage any of you who think that you can help current girls with work experience, or act as a mentor to old girls who have recently graduated, to get in touch with SFOGA by emailing us [sfoga@st-francis.herts.sch.uk](mailto:sfoga@st-francis.herts.sch.uk) and updating your work / industry information on the SFOGA portal. This will become a unique networking tool we can all benefit from in the future.

A final word. Please start thinking about future events. 2018 will see the College celebrate its 85th anniversary and SFOGA its 70th – we are all keen to make this a very special joint event and hope that many of you will be able to join in. More details at the end of this newsletter.

## Mrs Bronwen Goulding, Headmistress and President of SFOGA



Recently, I was invited to a dinner party with a story telling theme. There were a mixture of tales from beautiful poems written about places which had been visited, funny stories and stories of extraordinary coincidences. It was these that struck me the most. Many of these coincidences were

about friendships made, lost and rediscovered at amazing times and in countries far from their original inception; at times in peoples' lives when the rediscovery of these people was very important. The story which struck me the most was of gentleman had been through a very difficult time after burning out in a very powerful and successful career. While musing on his life, in a bar overseas with a female friend, he discovered that she also had a friend from the same town in which he grew up. Her friend turned out to be an old school friend of his and one whom he had lost contact with and missed. She texted him that very moment and within five minutes he was in the bar and the two friends were reunited. Despite the decades of time since their last meeting, it felt, he said, that no time had passed at all and they are thick friends once again and have been best friends, again, ever since. Recently, I attended a huge reunion. While I grew up, I attended a church youth group where I met my husband. We went on camping holidays, long walks, paddled canoes and rowed small rowing boats in all weathers. Some of the people from this group, I had not seen for nearly 40 years but it was as if no time had passed at all. So why am I telling you these stories? Not because I want to share about my social life but because I thought about you and your wonderful friendships which are so evident at the reunions. Thank you for being part of the St Francis' community and I'd like to remind you that our door is always open to you for a trip down memory lane.

## Welcome to two new Committee members

**Rosie Eccles** (2009) attended St Francis from 2002 - 2009. She studied Drama at Queen Mary, University of London and subsequently completed a Master's degree at King's College in Cultural and Creative Industries. She now works as a Philanthropy Manager for the Science Museum in London. Rosie still has a keen interest in drama. She enjoys frequent visits to the theatre and occasionally participating in amateur dramatic productions.



## Rebecca Christensen (Poole - 2005)

Since leaving St. Francis', I graduated in Criminology & Criminal Law and then worked at Tesco Head Office (Technical Dept). I and my Danish husband Jacob have two beautiful children, Flynn (4) and Freya (21 months). I never thought that my greatest challenge in life would be having children. I have to use all my multi-tasking skills - and still sometimes lose. Social Media introduced me to blogging and my

love of photography. I now work from home; (or attempt to type whilst fending off both kids with cartons of apple juice, primed to spill on my keyboard); produce family portraits using natural light and do brand product photography. I often take part in events to empower women. I am honoured to be on the SFOGA committee: it reconnects me to SFC and enables me to help the girls experience the nurturing environment that made me the woman I am today.

## SFOGA developments



SFOGA has launched its first overseas group for members. The **SFOGA Hong Kong** now has 77 members. The group aims to enable former students to keep in touch and provide mentoring and careers advice for past and present day students from Hong Kong. There is a separate Facebook page for the group so if you would like to join, do get in touch. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SFOGAHongKong/>

Photos from the archive are proving very popular on our Facebook page. If you have any memorable photos, please share them. The response can be phenomenal.

## Our Charity

SFOGA is glad to donate £500 to celebrate 30 years of the **Kanyike Project**. A SFC Sixth Form group visited Uganda in July 2016 and took a cheque out with them. 'Everything that we saw made us realise how important it is to keep supporting the project. Seeing children without shoes and only one change of clothes, or seven children sharing one textbook, were just two of the many things which opened our eyes to how different our lifestyles are'. <http://www.kanyikeproject.org.uk/news-blog-feed/2017/6/20/st-francis-college-2016-trip-to-kanyike>



SFC is generously hosting a Musical Evening on Friday 10 November 2018 to raise much needed funds. With Alex Hetherington as compere and many former students performing music from jazz and soul to opera, there will be something for everyone to enjoy.

For information <http://www.kanyikeproject.org.uk/musicivent>

**AFRICA**

**Janice White** (1987) moved back to Tanzania to look after her dad, with her husband Andrew and children Tristan 14, Lauren 11 and Noah.

**AMERICA**

**Linda Shaw** (Lavell Sproule-Jones – class of 1961) loved attending St. Francis' from 1956 – 1959 when her father was stationed in England with the US Air Force. Fortunately, in her last year at SFC she took her GCE O Levels. She had one more year of US High School to complete when she returned to the US when her father's tour of duty ended. However, with her seven GCEs, there wasn't a whole lot of coursework they could offer other than American History and American Government (requirements for graduation), so her last year in High School was a bit of a breeze! After university, she married a Welshman she met in Graduate School. They joke that Canada was their compromise when they moved there with his job. And there she still is – almost a half-century later! She was so happy to visit St. Francis' in 2014 – and especially to come to the Old Girls' Tea for those who had attended St. Francis' before 1969. It was wonderful to reconnect with old friends! Her younger sister Judy (now Howard) still keeps in touch with several St. Francis' friends. She lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma and has recently retired from her career as a teacher.



**Daxa Patel** (1976) and her three sisters (originally from Zambia) - Rekha (73), Panna (74), Daxa (76) and Tina (prep school 76) - are all St. Francis' Alumni. She left the UK in 1989, went to Eastern Oregon, USA and got married in 1990. She then lived in Zimbabwe for 8 years and moved back to Portland, Oregon, in 1998. Now all her sisters and brother live within a ten minute drive of each other. Her oldest sister Rekha passed away 11 yrs ago. At one time, her family were all scattered across the world but they are so grateful they ended up together in Portland.

**Kathy Leggatt Jackson** (Leggatt - 1983) and her sisters Flea (Philippa Leggatt Carey) and Betsy (Leggatt Drummond) are all good. Pippa is in Hounslow while Betsy and Kathy still live in the Cayman Islands.



**Ali McManus** (1983) completed a PhD at the University of Exeter. She wanted an adventure after a long time studying and left for Hong Kong in 1994. The plan was to stay for one year; but one year turned into 19, working at the University of Hong Kong. She moved to Canada in 2013 after a random job

application and is now a Professor in the School of Health and Exercise Sciences at the University of British Columbia. She runs a Paediatric Exercise Research Lab and focuses on the vascular harm caused by too much sitting, as well as the vascular and metabolic responses to exercise in the growing child. She has just been on a research expedition to Nepal, studying the long-term vascular and metabolic adaptation to altitude in Sherpa children. 'I feel very lucky to have found such an amazing job in one of the most beautiful places in the world and would love to hear from any other old girls in British Columbia'. Ali is third from the left in the group photo.



**Elsa Lum** (1989) emigrated to Canada with her family on graduating from SFC. She is currently single, lives with her Dad and works as a Children's Minister in a Chinese church in Toronto. Her interests range from art and craft, music, and sports to fitness and wellness, whilst her hobbies

include running, swimming, beading crafts, drawing, painting, and piano playing.

**Frances Clark** (class of 2020) left England in July 2016, age 14, because her dad got promoted to work in Canada. Moving to Canada has been one of her most amazing experiences so far. 'I still remember the moment my father told me we would be moving. I will never forget that moment, that feeling of 'is this a dream?' with my stomach dropping like on a rollercoaster ride, my eyes starting to fill with tears. I will also never forget the moment I told all my classmates - a month later - with (surprisingly) a huge smile on my face. I think it was because of my excitement for a new adventure. I'm one of those people that can't stick to the same routine for too long, I welcome change.



Of course I'll never forget SFC. How could I? I speak fondly about SFC to all my friends here, in Canada. Every time I tell them a new story about SFC they get really excited and want to move to England. It's rather amusing.

**ASIA**

**Yasmine Saleem** (2014) spent two years in the Maldives and is currently studying Theatre Production at the University of Winchester.

**SFOGA Hong Kong group** celebrated Chinese New Year in style and we were delighted that Anthea Yu (2003) flew to the UK for the SFC Careers' Fayre (and to re-new friendships). This group is a definite success and has much to offer the SFC community.



**AUSTRALIA**



**Mikaela Goodall** (class of 2005) has been working for the Australian Border Force (Customs) for ten years. This is her work mate Nelson the narcotic detector dog. They spend every day working and training together and have had many successful drug seizures.

**Rachel Parsons** (2005) lived in the UK from 2002 until 2010 but decided to move back to her home town of Brisbane to be a better granddaughter and aunt to her (now) three beautiful nephews. She has worked in Human Resources for Deloitte, Qantas and currently Dulux. She's just finished a Masters in Human Resource Management (Change Management) even though she promised herself she'd never do any more study after she finished her final undergraduate exams! Recently she's been training to hike the Inca Trail, see the Bolivian salt flats, and to visit the Iguazu Falls on the Brazilian and Argentinian borders. Her sausage dog, Pepper, loves it when those training weekends involve her too.



**EUROPE**



**Gloria Holland** (West - 1970) writes 'how can I be 65? It was only yesterday we sat in the sixth form common room singing Leonard Cohen songs that my friend Rosie could play on the guitar. After a lifetime of struggle, I have been a teacher, a deputy head, a psychologist

and the CEO of a local mental health charity. I have four daughters and six grandchildren.

At 63, we decided to give it all up and move to France. Not just a holiday home but really live here. I adore being back in Hertfordshire and pass St. Francis' to remember my school days, then meet someone I know for coffee in Hitchin. I adore seeing all the family and friends who are still local. But most of all I am blessed to return to the big blue skies of South West France. As I fly over Bordeaux, I think I am home.

England became too much. Being here is like stepping back to all that was good about my youth. Never be afraid to take that step into the unknown'.

**Jane Coward** (Keating - 1982) now lives in Kinloch Rannoch and runs her own care business, 'Rannoch Care'. When not caring for the people who live around Loch Rannoch, she can be found paddling on it or attempting to grow things in the poly-tunnel at the bottom of her garden. The other 3 "Keating sisters" - Susan, Joanne and Alison - all enjoy holidaying with her in the Scottish Highlands. Her son, Alex, is in his last year at school and looking forward to leaving home to either train as a commercial airline pilot or study engineering at a Scottish Uni. Good luck to all St. Francis' College students also sitting A Level exams and leaving school/home this summer. Life is great!



**Nicola Laurent** (Smith - 1986) moved to Luxembourg 2007 from the Netherlands, when her husband finished his military career and started work here as a NATO civilian.

'I can't believe I have lived in Luxembourg for nearly 10 years and I have watched my three boys grow into men here'. Life in Luxembourg is very nice! It's a very wealthy country so everything is very well kept and clean; but we do live in a bit of a bubble, with money and low crime rates. The real world is still out there and it can come as a bit of a shock when you leave the country. That said, it has been a very good place to bring up three boys as they had a lot more freedom in their teenage years than I may have afforded them elsewhere, as the country is relatively safe and has free night buses to bring everyone home at the weekend. This is probably just as well as the legal drinking age here is 16. Interestingly, this does not seem to lead to problems of alcohol abuse as they quickly learn a sensible approach.

Languages are interesting here: it is incredibly international with nearly 50% being non Luxembourgish, so every day you certainly hear every European language spoken and many others. The country itself also has three official languages, French, German and Luxembourgish (a mix of French, German and Flemish with a few words of their own thrown in for good measure). You never know quite which language shops or workers will use; but in truth it is often a mixture as everyone here is used to the mix of languages and therefore very tolerant. It is common for children here to speak half a dozen languages fluently and they put me to shame.

Luxembourg itself is very pretty with a lot of open space and many forests. So if you like to walk, I would recommend a visit. No mountains but some seriously big hills (up to 950m) and beautiful gorge walks in the Mullerthal area. I am a Duke of Edinburgh Award and an Explorer Scout Leader so I have walked – and love – much of this small country. In the towns, old meets new: there are many historical buildings but it's also the modern architects dream as there seems to be no limit on design or colour of buildings. Luxembourg city itself is beautiful with a lot of green spaces and most of the town is pedestrian only.

Schooling in Luxembourg is quite interesting. The local schools are used to foreign children and for the most part have good systems in place to teach the required languages. Primary school is taught in German and most of secondary in French!

I hope this has given a bit of an insight into life in Luxembourg'.

**Emma Drew** (1990) has – unfortunately - not much news from Italy. She's still living in Bologna where she runs her own translation business, specializing in medical and pharmaceutical translations. She is still mum to Sebastian, now 13 years old, and Belle, their miniature Schnauzer (who is much more biddable). She says, 'Thank you for all the work SFOGA does: it's so nice to get the newsletter and catch up on what everyone's doing'.

**Kate Nicholls** (1990) initially came over to Iceland with some friends on a jaunt to celebrate New Year and met her partner Sigg in a queue for a burger at 6am on New Year's morning! The rest, as they say, is history. She's now been living here for seven years and has three children aged 7, 5 and 21 months. They've done

things the Icelandic way (much to her mother's horror) and, having had the kids, are now getting married (in July). Overall, life here is great. The cold weather and very long dark days in winter can be a bit challenging but Kate has the privilege of being able to watch the Northern Lights from her front garden, having ski slopes half an hour's drive away and enjoying life in a relaxed, clean and safe place with the most stunning scenery. She's working as a British solicitor in one of the local law firms alongside another Brit and finds the working environment much better than in the UK – less hierarchy, better quality of work etc. She's currently studying for an LL.M with the University of London which she squeezes into her "spare" time.



**Dee Herbert** (Sagoo – 1993) lives in the Frankfurt suburb of Oberursel, Germany, with her husband Christian and kids Dylan (10) and Natasha (6). They moved here from Zurich six years ago and decided to stay as they enjoy the quality of life. Their kids attend Frankfurt International School in Oberursel. They benefit from a bilingual education and very diverse student base due to the expat community in the area.

Awaiting the outcome of Brexit to see how it affects her family! 'I'm 13 years free of colon cancer and enjoy life to the fullest'.

**Caroline Sheahan** (Hughes - 1995) 'had a ball in SFC Sixth Form' and made some forever friends: she saw Naoko Nakayama in Singapore in recently and they both met Lucy Blakeborough this spring.

Her family moved from Dublin to the UK in 1993, for work reasons, first to Letchworth. Windsor was the next stop. She worked in the UK until 1999 and then decided it was time to leave home: this was her chance to return to Ireland. Dublin, where she had grown up, was of course her location of choice. Life has changed very much since then. She survived the trials and tribulations of the working world and continues to do the daily grind. ? She married Denis and they have a baby boy, Callum, who turns one this year. He keeps all who meet him on their toes!

Ireland is a fantastic place to live. Luckily, they live about 30 minutes from the sea at the foot of the Wicklow mountains, so there are plenty of forest walks and lakes to visit. Her favourite place to go walking is the historic Glendalough. She misses the UK and tries to get back about once a year to visit her many friends dotted about the country! However, Dublin will always be home and is great city to live and visit!

#### OTHER NEWS

**Sharon Lambert** (Norman - 1982) has left teaching and youth work and is now a children's party presenter with Sublime Science and having a blast in the best job ever! 'Thanks to Margaret Gibbs (SFC former Head of Drama) who taught me from the age of 5 to rid me of my lisp, helped me to project my voice and so much more. I couldn't have had the careers I have without her!'

**Nicola Fox** (1987). Neil Armstrong first walked on the moon in 1969, when Nicola was nine months old and she watched the TV coverage from her crib. Was this the start of her passion for astronomy? At SFC, she was actively encouraged to study the sciences, but fainted whenever she had to do a dissection in biology and her chemistry partner was definitely suicidal (blowing up test tubes, spilling concentrated acid, practically gassing the class by leaving the fume cupboard open etc.) So she took the safe option of physics, completing a PhD in Space Physics at Imperial College, London. She is currently at NASA working on a mission to launch a spacecraft in 2018 which will 'touch the sun'. Nicky would love to be in touch with current students. [nicky.fox@jhuapl.edu](mailto:nicky.fox@jhuapl.edu)



**Anneli Lort** (class of 1991) has written her first novel called The Sweet Spot. It is a classic romance with a contemporary and sexy edge (the nuns would be shocked) although it's certainly NOT fifty shades! It is set in a fictional, sleepy village and on the glitzy



international sporting stage. There's no release date yet as she's literally just signed the deal. They're aiming for July but that's not set in stone. She got her love of writing from 'Miss Penny – my English teacher at SFC, who set me off on this (very long) road and I have mentioned her in the acknowledgements for inspiring me. I'll be shamelessly plugging the book once it is launched and am hoping the SFOGA girls will get out there and buy it!

**Rachita Saraogi** (2010) is so glad that the SFOGA Facebook page gives us all a chance to keep connected with St. Francis' and all those who were there. She thought she would share something which has been a labour of love for the past eighteen months and now launched. She has co-founded a social enterprise, Sisterhood. They deliver creative workshops to teenage girls to raise their self-confidence. Call to action: we would love your support in taking Sisterhood further by introducing us to schools and youth clubs that would be interested in having our workshops.



**Lucinda Coyle** (2016) will be performing in the West End of London for the second time in August. She has been cast in an upcoming production of Sondheim's "Sunday in the park with George" and thought she would put the news out there.

### St. Francis' College news

#### Recent events

On Tuesday March 7th, St. Francis' College celebrated International Women's Day with another evening of inspirational women speakers. SFOGA member Dr Preti Taneja (1995) joined Professor Tanya Bryon and Dr Hannah Macleod to talk to a packed audience in the school theatre. All three gave amazing and captivating talks, but Preti's account of introducing Shakespeare into a refugee camp was particularly moving.



**Farewell and best wishes** to all who leave the College community this year: Alison Blomfield – Head of Prep PE; Sandra Harrison – Head's PA; Maria Kerr – Laboratory Technician; Veronica King – Teacher of Prep 1; Lydia Lowry – Teacher of Physics and Chemistry; Sharon Thomas – Prep Classroom Assistant; Jackie Watts - Prep Classroom Assistant; and Charles Wright – Head of ICT.



#### And finally

**Adrian Mallett** 1943 – 2017. SFC Head of Art – and much more.

'Gather round girls' was your catchphrase. Or 'giiiiirls' in that slightly drawn out, laconic way, which really meant 'that's quite enough, you lot. Now get back to work'. While you often joked, 'oh, I'd never have this much trouble in a boys' school', I think you knew how much we adored those hours in the art room. Nothing gave more joy and comfort than the freedom and wisdom of your classes. To take on a school full of female know-it-alls and make all of us love our art lessons takes a special kind of teacher. A teacher who for years wanted to retire; but we would plead with you to stay on. Who took on the challenge of all the giggling girls and helped drive us to become the women we are today. (The truth is we all wanted to impress you but we wouldn't let on). For many, the measure of a great teacher is the results their students achieve but you did so much more than help us attain top grades. You taught us that our individuality and creativity should be celebrated. You helped us to find confidence and to be able to build something meaningful from just a vision. To stop us rubbing out, you made us

draw in biro so we learned how to cope when things didn't go as planned. You taught us that patience, perseverance and maintaining a sense of humour are important.

In Kanyike, you're a true legend: the funds you raised through the Re-cycled Fashion Show have changed so many lives. Whether sitting in your favourite chair and striking your handsome pose; clapping one-handed; strutting your stuff in a string vest on the catwalk; 'dancing' in the Sixth Form revue; wearing your knitted, rectangular ties or proudly driving your little red sports car, you're one of a kind Mr M: a true gent and our very own BFG. Some thoughts from your SFC students.



#### **John Stevenson** 1946 - 2016.

Committed Governor and Chair of Governors Seventeen years ago an unwanted visitor, Alzheimer's, came into our lives. We said OK but you're not taking him without a fight. We laughed, we cried, we ran half-marathons, we walked fells. We enjoyed the simplest things life can offer... Family, love and laughter. At times we felt like we were winning. But the visitor wasn't just visiting. The visitor was here to stay and slowly started to steal him away from us. Six and a half years ago the visitor stole him from our

home and into the care of some of the most patient people I have had to pleasure to meet. Together with their help, guidance and support we fought on. We could still laugh, we could dance, we even found pleasure walking endlessly in circles together. But the visitor wasn't content at the damage already caused. Over the next six and a half years it stole his voice, his character, his physicality, his attention, his grace, his dignity. Alzheimer's, you have been incredibly cruel, unpredictable and there was a time when I was completely at a loss as to how much longer you intended to plague this lovely man. Today I am forced to acknowledge that you finally won in stealing him completely from our loving family. But you will never steal our love or memories. We will still sing his favourite songs, wear his famous red socks, drink his Newcastle brown ale, recite his 'I'm a little Prairie Flower' ditty (with dance) and most importantly share our fondest memories with his grandchildren because with a love as powerful as ours, he will always live on.

The Visitor by Rebecca Peak (Stevenson – class of 2002)

### Coming events

In 2018 there are two major anniversaries - St. Francis' College's 85th and SFOGA's 70th.

We are delighted to invite all SFOGA members – former Students and Staff - to join us on Saturday, 30 June 2018 to celebrate.



Festivities will start at noon with a drinks reception, followed by a formal lunch.

There will be opportunities to exchange memories, explore items from our growing archive and re-visit the familiar places of your school (or teaching) days. And there will be cake!



More details to follow. Please save the date. We hope this will be a major reunion.

### Breaking news

Norma Alcock (Reed – 1957) has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday honours for services to vulnerable children. Over 35 years she has been responsible for raising £1.8.m for the NSPCC. Congratulations!