

Newsletter

St Elphin's School Old Girls' Guild

Autumn 2001

Issue 1

Welcome from the new OGG secretaries

WELCOME to the first issue of the new-look OGG newsletter.

Our first duty as "joint secretaries" is to offer a very warm welcome, on behalf of all the Old Girls, to the new Headmistress of St Elphin's, Mrs Erica Taylor.

Mrs Taylor's arrival (in April) was the first of a number of other changes at St Elphin's over recent months, not least of which was our "election" as joint secretaries of the Old Girls' Guild. Election is rather a grand word for what actually took place at the Annual General Meeting, held at the school in May (see below): we volunteered and, as no one else stepped forward, here we are.

So, who are we? We are Sarah Brain (nee Straw) and Melanie Thompson, who both arrived at St Elphin's one autumn day in 1977, and spent most of our first night looking for Sarah's trunk which had been delivered to a mystery location – Long C! We left older, much wiser, ready

to face the "real world" and with our luggage firmly in tow in 1984. For more details of what we've been up to since then, see page 4.

Over recent years we have made contact with several Old Girls and staff, and have enjoyed the get-togethers organised by Peter Pollard at York and, more recently, the reunion at the school.

Joining something called an "Old Girls' Guild" may be at the bottom of the priority list of fresh-faced teenagers keen to spread their wings, but a few years down the road they're bound to ask: "I wonder what happened to so-and-so?" The OGG is one way to find out. And as you will read on page 3, the OGG is a much-valued institution that is still doing its bit to keep old friends together – even those who must have left the school more than eighty years ago!

We think that the OGG is something well worth preserving, and we hope you do too, but like any membership-based

organisation, we can't survive without the commitment and effort of you, the members.

We need you to tell us your news, to come to events, and to let us know if you move house (see page 3 for contact details). But we also want you to be part of the action; to help us drive the OGG forward into the 21st Century so that the girls who are just joining the school will still be able to rely on the OGG to keep them in touch when they're happily retired.

Let's start as we mean to go on by opening up the debate: what do YOU want from the OGG; what links should the OGG have with the school; and should we have a new name? (How old IS an "Old Girl" anyway?)

We look forward to hearing from you.

AGM meets the new head

ON SATURDAY 19th May 2001, the Old Girls' Guild met for its Annual General Meeting. Mrs Erica Taylor, the new headmistress, welcomed everybody and, as there was no secretary present at the meeting, Christine Codling agreed to take the minutes, as follows:

1. Apologies were received from: Lady Osmond, Helen Yool, Suzanne Millar, Beryl Campbell, Ann Entwistle, Joan Trapnell, Judith Crook, Isobel Stevenson, Olga Putnam, June Gibson (nee Brierley), Ann Entwistle (nee Lyon), Ruth Burgess, May Aitchison, Helen Jay.

2. Treasurer's report. Teanie Dornan apologised for the absence of a written report, but explained the details of the current financial situation. A motion to adopt the report was proposed by Christine Codling, and seconded by Pheobe Milton.

All were in favour of the adoption of this report.

Stephanie Jones thanked the treasurer for all her efforts in what had been a difficult year.

3. Headmistress's report. Mrs Taylor explained that she had only taken up her

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Guild news: phone a friend!

THE OGG is launching a recruitment drive to renew contact with ex-members or non-members and encourage them to join.

We all start off with good intentions, saying "Yes, I promise I'll write" as we say goodbye to our school fellows. We may be true to our word for a few years, but inevitably people move house, change their names, and we lose contact.

The OGG is an excellent way to keep in touch with friends and, let's face it, it's also a great way to find out what happened to some of the people you thought you would never hear of again.

These days, six-formers who are leaving the school join the Old Girls' Guild automatically, unless they specifically say that they do not wish to be members. But for many years, members had to actively "opt in" when they left the school in the Upper Fifth or Sixth. To make matters more complicated, membership could be for three years, or life.

It's easy to see how many people inadvertently missed the opportunity to join, or let their membership lapse. This policy also meant that people who left the school during the academic year, or before they reached the Upper Fifth or Sixth were not offered the chance to join.

Now that the OGG membership database is fully operational (see box on page 3), it is time to start a recruitment campaign, to bring in all the girls who missed the opportunity first time round.

If you know people who are not members or who think their membership may have lapse, please contact them and ask them to join. If they send their details

– name, address, e-mail, years they were at the school, and their House – to the School (see box on page 3), we will check their membership status and invite them to re-join.

This recruitment campaign is a good way to widen the OGG net, and help members to keep in touch. But it is also an essential part of the work we need to do to reinvigorate the OGG's bank balance. More members will help to stabilise our financial position, which is, to say the least, shaky. More details will be reported in the Spring 2002 newsletter.

...or log on

SEVERAL OGG members have contacted the school to ask if they can e-mail other Old Girls. People wondered if the OGG had a page on the school's website or if the OGG has a link with one of the on-line alumni services such as Friends Reunited.

The OGG database does hold e-mail addresses (so please make sure you send your up-to-date data), but will not release details to enquirers to avoid misuse, as stipulated by the Data Protection Act. However, we are thinking of setting up an OGG "news group" using an established service provider such as Yahoo!

If you would like to join the news group, send an e-mail to: admin@st-elphins.co.uk, putting "OGG News Group" in the subject line. Messages will be forwarded to the OGG Secretaries, who will send you the joining instructions.

AGM report, continued...

position at the beginning of the Spring Term, but was very pleased to welcome the Old Girls to the school. She had previously been Headmistress at Queen Ethelburga's (North Yorkshire). Since her appointment, Stancliffe Hall had closed and she had been very busy interviewing prospective parents. Obviously this was very good news for St Elphin's and would considerably swell the numbers in the Junior School. She had many plans for the school and would, at a later date, produce a newsletter which she would make available to the Old Girls so they could keep in touch with all the new developments.

4. Election of officers: Treasurer – Teanie Dornan (proposed by Rosemary Chambers, seconded by Elizabeth M Taylor); Secretary – to be held jointly between Melanie Thompson and Sarah Brain (proposed by Peter Pollard, seconded by Mary Goodman).

5. Matters arising

5.1 *The Book of Remembrance*. This had been completed by Helen Cawood who had done a magnificent job. A vote of thanks was proposed by Mrs Onaç and seconded by Mavis Hunter. This would now be kept in the Lady Chapel along with the original book, which had been donated by the late Margaret Carmichael.

5.2 *York Reunion*. Peter Pollard reported that he had received several reservations already and asked if a reminder could be sent out with the newsletter which the new secretaries would be sending out as soon as possible. The reunion would be held on 10th November 2001 at St Williams College, York.

6. Any other business.

6.1 *Addresses*. A new list of Old Girls' names and addresses would be printed as soon as possible by the school. Would members please send their up-to-date addresses to the school?

6.2 *Donations*. The donation of £1000, which the OGG had presented to the school three years ago, had been divided between all the classes in the school.

6.3 *Membership*. Membership of the OGG was automatically added to every final account of leaving pupils.

In future all members of staff would be invited to join the Guild.

Teanie Dornan asked Mrs Taylor to add her signature to the Building Society Account.

7. Date, time and place of the next A.G.M.: Saturday 18th May 2002.

The meeting closed at 12.37.

Sign up for The Elphinian

THE St Elphin's magazine, *The Elphinian*, is published each year, and is enjoyed by pupils past and present as a record of achievements, a salute to departing staff, and a source of school news. Printing and postage costs are inevitably high, and rising, so free copies are now strictly limited.

Old Girls who wish to receive a copy of *The Elphinian* should complete the slip below and return it, with their payment, to: Mrs Helen Fairley, School Secretary, St Elphin's School for Girls, Darley Dale, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 2HA.

Please send me.....copy(ies) of *The Elphinian*, priced £6.50 each (incl P&P)
 I enclose a cheque, made payable to "St Elphin's" for: £
 Signature:.....
 Name (please print).....Year(s).....
 Address.....

Post Code.....

News

Correspondence received

If you wish to contact any of the people mentioned below, please write to the school (see box for details).

JO TRAPNELL (nee **MARTIN**) writes: I do receive the school magazine which I pass on to **GERRY NICOLS**, aged 100. She and her twin sister, **LENA**, who died last year, were at St Elphin's from the age of six. Lena was Senior Mistress at Tavistock Grammar School and taught Latin. Gerry also taught in Tavistock, at a prep school. She lives in a residential home now.

My sister **BETTY WILKINS** (nee **MARTIN**) and I were both head girls of St Elphin's. Sadly Betty died two years ago, leaving two daughters and eight grandchildren. Her husband had passed away eighteen months earlier.

My husband is recovering from a second hip operation, so we will be unable to visit the school this year.

We keep busy with our own eight grandchildren, and as you will see from the press we in Devon are suffering badly from the current Foot and Mouth problems. We, luckily, live close to the sea and are least affected.

DR RUTH ROSEVEARE has lived in Reepham, Norwich for seventeen years, since her retirement from India. She is in contact with a number of former St Elphin's Girls: **STELLA ALLEN** of Somerton; **MARY GOODMAN** of Edgbaston; **DR NOEL CARR** of Chichester; **MARY WEDD**

(nee **CARR**) of Sevenoaks; **MARY GARRETT** (nee **ROSEVEARE**) of Reepham, Norwich.

She writes: **MARY (GARRETT)** and her husband, Dr Arthur Garrett, lived and worked in Nigeria for 19 years, helping to eliminate Leprosy from the area in which they lived, and were getting good results at the time of their departure in 1959. They have recently written their memoirs, *Oji River: Place of Hope*, which they published themselves. The book is available in SPCK, Waterstones and Ottaker's, or direct from the authors (priced £9 including P&P). For further details, contact the OGG (see below).

ISOBEL STEVENSON writes: It is almost twenty years since I left the staff of St Elphin's when I took up my headship appointment in Jersey... Unfortunately, living so far from Derbyshire, I am unable to attend the reunion in May, which falls on my birthday, and I shall be having friends from Germany to stay.

Please give my greetings to all Old Girls at the meeting and to those who knew me during my four years at St Elphin's. If any of them ever come to Jersey on holiday, I would be delighted to meet them.

PETER POLLARD writes: An occasion tinged with sadness, the funeral of **MR L. A. HOPKINS**, former governor (about whom I have written elsewhere) had a happy conclusion, in that I then visited **BRENDA BOWER**, another former governor and generous benefactor to the school

through the "Tom Bower Award", established in memory of her late husband. Mrs Bower (who was Head Girl at Abbots Bromley, where she was taught by Miss Robinson, my eminent predecessor) lives in Cheshire and is now confined to a wheelchair and looked after by carers in her lovely home. Her spirit, though, is unquenchable. She thinks of St Elphin's with much affection and loves to talk about the school. Nor do her disabilities prevent her from taking short holidays both here and abroad. Indeed, in a few weeks' time she will be returning to Jersey, where she hopes to meet **ISOBEL STEVENSON** (see above).

I speak on the phone at intervals with **LADY OSMOND (SYBIL WELLS)**, another marvellous governor and friend of the school throughout my headship.

In June, I attended the Confirmation in Lichfield Cathedral of **CIARAN YEO**, whose father **STEPHEN YEO** was Director of Music from 1987-94. Old Girls who remember the Yeos and their delightful sons would scarcely recognise those young men now. Both Stephen and Ciaran Yeo sing in the Lichfield Cathedral Choir, as did **EDWARD YEO** until last year. **BOBBY** has just taken GCSEs and **MATTHEW**, the eldest, has now left school and hopes to take up a place at St Catherine's College, Oxford in September, reading PPE; no surprise to those who knew Matthew, now a keen supporter of New Labour.

I also keep in regular contact with **SUSAN HAYWARD**, Director of PE for a number of years.

Having worked with families in Germany and London, Mrs Haywood is now taking a similar job in Hertfordshire. Both her sons have done extremely well, and **RICHARD**, the elder, will receive his PhD from Clare College, Cambridge, later this year.

I see and speak to **RENE KNIGHTON**, who served St Elphin's so faithfully until she retired in the 1980s, after which she continued to look after me in St Katherine's and the then bursar, **COLONEL HOBBS**, living next door. I was very sorry to hear recently from **SHIRLEY MELLOR**, that her husband, **TOM**, had died. Both Shirley and **BRENDA FARRELL** keep in touch at Christmas, as do **MARGARET WALKER** and **MAVIS HUNTER**, those peerless secretaries who kept us on our toes.

Now, what about former pupils? Recently the contacts have been abundant. I so much enjoyed the June wedding of **NICOLA ALLEN**. Her marriage to Richard Tarbatt, whose sister (and bridesmaid) **SARAH TARBATT** was Head Girl in the year that Nicola was her deputy, has united two long-established Matlock families with close St Elphin's associations. At the wedding, I met so many former pupils: **CATHERINE MALKINSON**, **CATHERINE SAVAGE**, **LAURA-JANE QUICK**, **LOUISE** and **SARAH ROBINSON**, **KATIE ELSE**, **VICKY GORDON** and **ALEX DEL LUONGO** spring instantly to mind – and I do apologise to any whose names I may have omitted, and also for the fact (excusable) that I still use their names as we knew them at school. I felt proud of them all: delightful young people and a real credit to their old school. At the wedding service in Ashgrove Church I also spoke briefly with **PATRICIA HOOTON**. We keep in touch, and have such fond memories of the school's first visit to Onzain, Darley Dale's twin town in France. At the end of April I spent a weekend singing with a choir in Salisbury cathedral, and stayed at the home of former St Elphin's parents Barry and Margaret

Cooper. While staying with them, I spoke on the phone with **FIONA COOPER** in Australia and **RACHEL COOPER** in London. Both are enjoying successful careers and happy lives.

At the Summer reunion in May I had a joyful re-meeting with four Old Girls I've not seen for years: **LUCY BURKE**, **MICHELLE HAWTHORN**, **DEBORAH HALL** and **MELANIE JOWLE**. I can't begin to set down the memories evoked by seeing them again...

And finally, a very senior former pupil, **ROBIN WHITE** (nee **FITCH**), at St Elphin's during Miss Hudson's headship in the 1930s. One of life's coincidences brought about this meeting. She is a close friend of someone I know well in Thornton Dale; we met twice and over coffee reminisced happily about the history of the school. Her mother was also an Old Girl, contemporary with **RICHMAL CROMPTON**, and I was able to show her various photographs and magazines, and give her a copy of Miss Flood's "Memoires". She had not revisited the school in years, and, surprise, surprise, when looking at *The Elphinian* commemorative issue of 1994, found herself at the top of a pyramid of girls performing in a gym display on Sports Day, 1935!

Happy memories and greetings to everyone.

KAREN ASTBURY (1977-85) would like to hear from girls in her year, as she is trying to organise a reunion. Please contact Karen via the OGG.

JEAN BERRISFORD (nee **KING**) writes: I look back on my years at St Elphin's as being so very happy, albeit there was a war going on, and I imagine that "special feeling" is still there.

SARAH WICKHAM (nee **RAWLING**), 1984-92, is in regular contact with: **KAREN LITTLE** (Wilson, 1960s); **LUCY FAULDS** (nee **ROBERTS**, Kennedy, 1980s-1990); **LAURA BENNETT** (Pigot, 1986-93); and members of her own form

Contacting the OGG

AT THE May 2001 reunion, Mrs Taylor, the new Headmistress, kindly offered to provide administrative support to the Old Girls' Guild. This is a very welcome change to the system which has, in the past, made the secretary's job more difficult, and caused confusion for members.

As a consequence of this generous offer, all correspondence

(including change of address notices) should be sent directly to:

Mrs Helen Fairley, School Secretary, St Elphin's School for Girls, Darley Dale, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 2HA.

Please send e-mail to: admin@st-elphins.co.uk

Mrs Fairley will forward correspondence to the OGG secretaries.

(1992) SUSILA THUBRON and DEBBIE CROXALL. She would like to contact EMMA BUTLER (Kennedy, 1987-90): please contact the OGG if you have Emma's address.

KATH WOOD (nee BRADER) would like any information or to hear from JUDY HOLLAND who lived at Bank Top Farm, Hartington in the 1960s.

MARGARET WONTNER-SMITH (Wilson, 1936-44) now uses her first name, Diana. She returned to St Elphin's in September 1948 as matron of Rotherwood, and taught domestic science for one year. In 1949 she married KENNETH BROWN who taught music at St Elphin's from 1947-50. His two daughters, JILL and PATSY were at the school during this time as day girls and boarders. Sadly he died in 1963.

Sue Clarke writes to ask if anyone has information about her great grandmother, MARY BEATRICE

POGGI, who was a pupil at St Elphin's in the second half of the 19th Century.

SARAH BLAKE (nee PATTINSON, Powys 1982-86) lives in Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, and works as a freelance writer. Her mother, MRS PATTINSON, who was Lower VI house mistress in the 1980s, has retired and now lives in Duffield.

DR. LAURA BENNETT (1986-1993) writes: "I am currently working in Bristol, training to be a paediatrician. I am still in occasional contact with DANIELLE HAUGHEY (nee BOON) and SARAH WICKHAM (RAWLING)." She says that she has not heard from the SEOGG recently, but hopes that it is still active: "As with passing time it becomes more difficult to keep in contact with old friends".

In 1984 **BEVERLEY MIDDLETON** left St Elphin's to take a Secretarial/Business course at Chesterfield Tech. She then

joined Lloyds Bank, working in Sheffield for two years and Old Bond Street, London for one year, before setting off to backpack around Australia, and America for a year. She returned to live in California, where she married Dennis Nicolini. She has a six-year-old daughter, Hayley. She will re-marry Jeff Skaggs in October 2001 and is currently live in Novato, California.

"I keep in touch with SARAH KIRKHAM and LAURA RUDGE but would like to hear from other school friends," writes Beverley.

MELANIE THOMPSON is married and has one son (Adam, aged 2). She lives in Berkhamsted, and works as a freelance writer and editor (specialising in science and technology).

SARAH BRAIN (nee STRAW) teaches maths at Heathfield School, Ascot, and lives in Englefield Green, Surrey. She has two daughters: Charlotte (6)

and Emily (3). Her husband, CHRISTOPHER, spent 14 years as a Whitehall civil servant, but has recently embarked on a new career – bursar at St Elphin's!

Weddings

ELIZABETH LAVENDER (former treasurer of the OGG) to Anthony Gordon Bagg on 29 July 2000.

ANNE THOMPSON married Mr O'Neill in July 2000.

HELEN OGLEY (1981-1992) to Mr Horsley in September 2000. Helen is teaching lower juniors at a school in Wilerby, just outside Hull.

Births

To John and **RACHEL SOUTHWARD** (nee GREGORY): Benjamin David, on 11th May 2001, a brother for Jack.

Awards

KATRINA CODLING, who was the first recipient of the Old Girl's Guild bursary, and daughter of **CHRISTINE CODLING** (formerly secretary of the OGG) has recently been awarded a 2.1 in Marine Biology from Portsmouth University.

London link-up

THE OGG is planning a reunion in London in November 2002.

The venue will be Regent's College, an attractive location inside the "Inner Circle", close to Baker Street Tube Station and very handy for The Zoo. (Ask your partner to take the kids while you get on with the gossip...) The event, which will include a buffet lunch, will cost £25-30, depending on numbers.

Previous events in London have been marred by poor numbers, so this one will only go ahead if we receive enough "expressions of interest" (min. 30 people). If you would like to attend, please write to the OGG (see page 3) before 1st March 2002. Full details will then be posted in the Spring newsletter.

Reunion returns to York

PETER POLLARD has organised the third biennial reunion in York. This year's event will be held at St William's College, College Street, York (adjacent to York Minster) on **Saturday 10th November**, from noon to 4pm.

"Once again, let's try to get together former pupils and staff of all generations on what, I feel sure, will be a most happy occasion," writes Peter Pollard. "Group bookings have been popular at the two previous York reunions, as people seem happiest when supported by their friends and school contemporaries."

As well as plenty of opportunities to chat and meet the new Head, Mrs Taylor, there will be a three-course lunch, with wine available by the glass.

YORK REUNION BOOKING FORM

Please reserve.....place at the 2001 York reunion, priced £19.50
 I enclose a cheque, made payable to "S.E.O.G.G." for: £.....
 Name (please print).....
 Nee.....
 Address.....

Post Code.....
 Phone.....Dates/House when at school.....

Please return this slip (no later than 27th October 2001) to:
 Peter Pollard, Elgin, High Street, Thornton Dale, Pickering, North Yorks YO18 7QW. Tel: 01751 474229

Time travellers

CALLING ALL OGG SCIENTISTS: Conduct your own experiment into the paradox of time travel – come back to St Elphin's and see if you can detect any ripples in the space-time continuum as you climb the once-forbidden front stairs, peep into the staff dining room, or whistle a tune in the music "squares".

ARTS GRADUATE? DON'T MISS OUT. Experience that "Alice in Wonderland" feeling without falling down a rabbit hole: simply step through the front door of St Elphin's and enter the strangely familiar world where some things look smaller and others larger than before, and where, if you see a label that says "Eat Me!", you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Next year's OGG reunion and AGM will be held at the school on Saturday 18th May 2002. Further details in the Spring newsletter.