



Sidcotians  
Live adventurously

# Sidcotian Friends

Autumn/Winter 2015



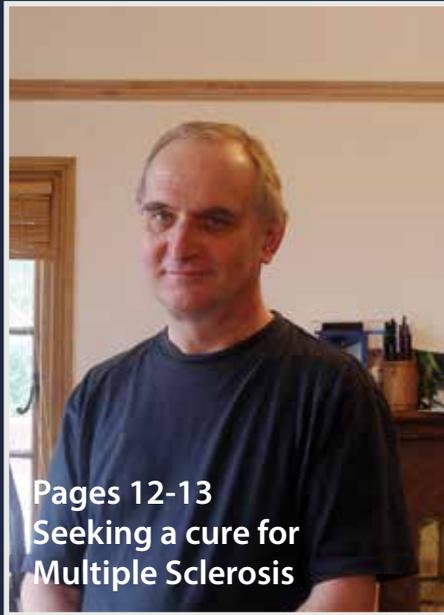
## Tread lightly on the earth

Sidcotians share stories of their connections to the environment and write about what matters to them as well as recalling memories of life, love and adventures at school and beyond.

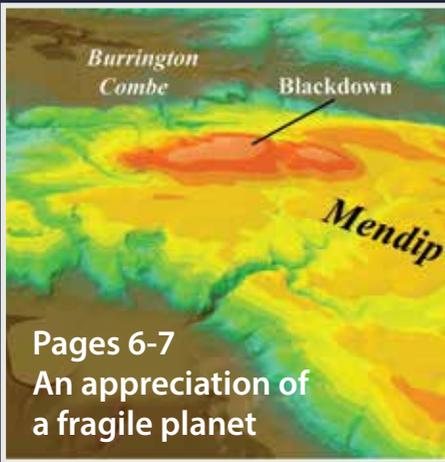
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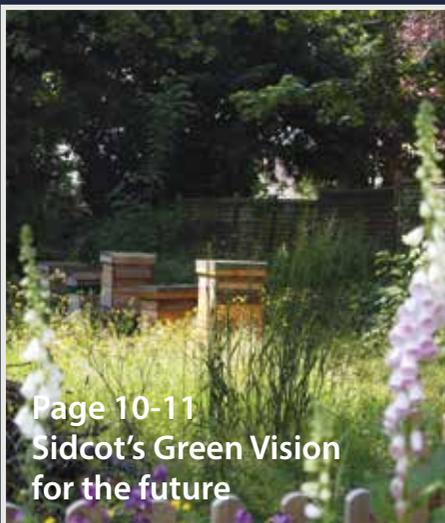


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## Get in touch

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Front cover image by Sidcotian Una Wood



Dear Sidcotians

What do you feel when you read or hear that the Arctic icecap is melting faster than ever before or that clean water, a rapidly dwindling resource, is being globally privatised so that the most vulnerable people will have even less access to it?

We are all exposed to these sorts of news reports every day, every time we turn on the TV or radio, or go online. Life is so precious, whether it is animal, human or entire ecosystems, so to see it inexorably damaged (and currently at such an extraordinary rate) makes me feel like a part of me is dying. Our bodies are connected to the great body of the Earth. The destruction of our world is experienced deep in our psyche whether we acknowledge it or not.

Do we switch off, tune out, ease ourselves out of focus in a self-constructed mythology? I don't believe this is the answer. We are here to bear witness to these extraordinary times and to maintain our gaze on the atrocities meted out to other human beings, the other species who share this planet with us and even whole bioregions. We are here to take our place in the world and do what we can to work towards a peaceful, equitable, more biodiverse and abundant world. We are also here to discover more intelligent and balanced ways of living, and to quietly test them out ourselves. In other words, we cannot ultimately turn away even though it takes great courage to maintain our gaze.

We need to develop our own sense of resilience and the capacity to find balance. Life is not only precious, it is a profound experiment in learning. People often ask me where I draw inspiration from. How do I keep going? I make it my responsibility to be as well informed as I can about the ills of the world and the systems that exact the damage. Then I make it equally my journey to learn more about the solutions: from the grand, inspiring projects that regenerate whole landscapes to the small techniques we can use in our daily life.

I will never forget standing by a lake in Portugal and watching the early morning mist settle on the banks watering the community's planted fruit and nut trees, and raised vegetable beds. Nature had brought back eagles, otters, ducks and amphibians in response to the reaquification of the landscape, and the dying cork oaks are now starting to grow again. I know that when human beings apply themselves to Earth restoration, Nature responds by regenerating at an exponential rate. It is frankly humbling.

When the pain of the world chews at my sanity, I seek balance and equanimity from simple things. I believe we humans need to cultivate humility. It is the pathway



to true stewardship, so culturally at odds with most of the developed world's history and worldview.

I believe that most people are innately good. Somehow as a collective upon this planet we have lost our way. We have become enthralled by a destructive worldview prosecuted by the very few at the potential expense of our very existence. What I write about here isn't a purely personal exercise in establishing balance or a way of seeking poise in the face of ecological breakdown. It is vital that we, together, keep working on the resilient solutions in whatever way we can, even if it feels like most of the world isn't listening. Then, when the majority of people finally wake up to the realities of our destructive impact on this planet, we will be able to offer some of the answers.

It is my pleasure to introduce this issue of Sidcotian Friends magazine, with its theme of treading lightly on this Earth, and to wish you the very best with your own individual efforts to live in harmony with Nature.

*Maddy Harland (1974-1976)*  
 Founder and Editor of  
 Permaculture magazine



# “It is our only home. Let us care for it together.”\*

## The worst kind of tourist?

We clattered and banged our way down North Island, leaping in and out of hot pools, scrambling, shoving, scampering across bridges, peering into caves, paddling across lakes: exclaiming in loud British voices about the fantastic campsites, the great facilities, the warm welcome, the empty roads, remarkable view, the snow-capped mountains purple-shrouded as each day drew to a close.

Hanging over the edge of ferry rails we felt like explorers, windswept and ragged from our roller coaster ride from the North but we barely blinked, an unstoppable tourist machine ticking off the must-see sights. We sought out Lonely Planet’s “hidden gems”, New Zealand’s best kept secrets, and patted ourselves on the back for living adventurously and going off the beaten track in our shiny camper van. We were, in all probability, some of the worst kinds of tourist.

In Kaikoura the Dusky dolphins eyeballed us knowingly when we gave watery curses as cameras failed to capture more than a shadow and, on deck, we recorded a hundred splashes of an Olympic dive. Onwards to Christchurch, we waved from the open viewing carriage of the train at seals and children playing on the beach and inhaled the rich reds, browns, greens and yellows of the land as we clinkety-clacked by. We thought we saw it all but we missed what was really important.

Until, further south, where we joined the largest herd; a battalion of lenses, an incessant digital clicking, a hundred tourist insects on a boat in Doubtful Sound, the hubbub of a city in the middle of paradise. Even I, with my tourist uniform, felt squashed and overwhelmed. And then the captain killed the engine and the silence was so loud it felt like someone had placed their hands tightly over my ears. It was as if I could see colour and shape in more brightness and intensity – water tumbling down the rocks like coloured silk scarves,

a million silver stars dancing where the light caught the sea, the hundred shades of green, the shapes of each tree, each fern, each individual leaf.

And, for the first time on my entire whistle stop tour of New Zealand, I realised I was holding my breath.

That was two years ago and in truth I have never felt such an emotional connection to a country before. It seems I came here as a tourist and left, reluctantly, three weeks later with a piece of New Zealand lodged somewhere inside. As I write this, I have been living and working in this breath-taking country for three months. It is a privilege to be here, to know that by working for a conservation charity like the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society I am, in some small way, the voice for nature, taking a stand and speaking out to ensure we protect this incredible, awe-inspiring, wondrous yet fragile, environment forever.

Jess Winchester  
(Staff 2013-2015)



\* [www.quaker.org.uk/facing-challenge-climate-change](http://www.quaker.org.uk/facing-challenge-climate-change)

## Commuter Car Chaos... Re-cycle that Bike

How much better life would be if we could do away with commuting, no more relevant than at nearby Bustling, Bursting, Bristling, Bristol, writes Peter Naylor (1956–1962). Perhaps my education and youth spent at Sidcot 'on the job' so to speak, helped seed my aversion to the wasteful time-consuming task of having to drive, bus, or train to work and back. With me it was never an option and the last 35 years of work (play?) was spent just 50 metres from the Pottery!

*Top image: Peter Naylor pictured with Tony Watts (1957-61) in the days before commuter chaos*



*Pollute, Commute, Pollute  
In futile, frenzied, foray  
We haste to work;  
What waste to work  
When walk to work  
Or bike to work  
Would work much better  
Much fitter---less bitter  
And leave our lives unfettered,  
Unstressed,  
How blessed this World would be.*

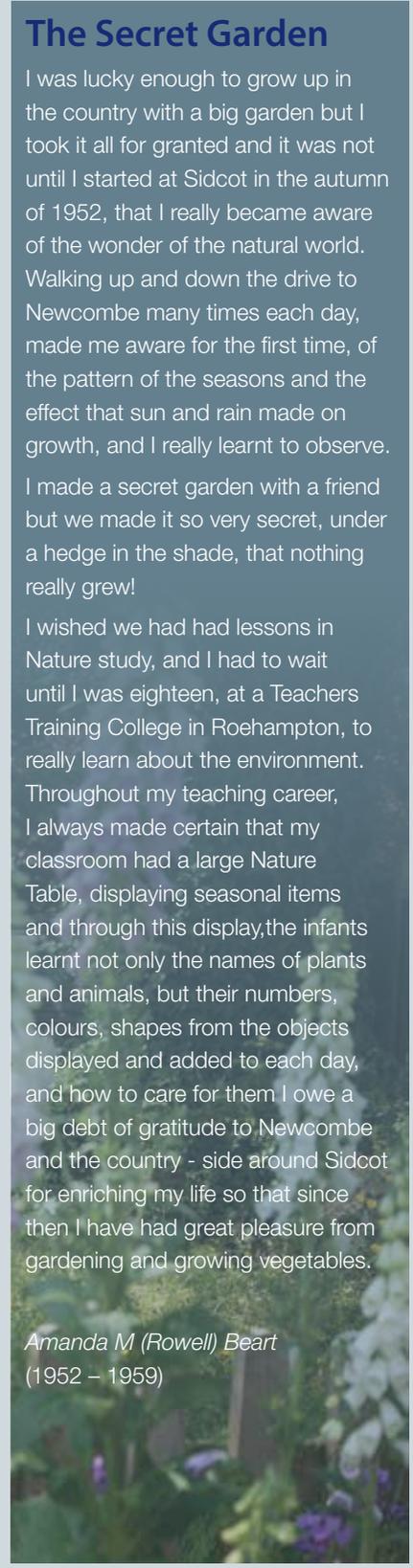
## The Secret Garden

I was lucky enough to grow up in the country with a big garden but I took it all for granted and it was not until I started at Sidcot in the autumn of 1952, that I really became aware of the wonder of the natural world. Walking up and down the drive to Newcombe many times each day, made me aware for the first time, of the pattern of the seasons and the effect that sun and rain made on growth, and I really learnt to observe.

I made a secret garden with a friend but we made it so very secret, under a hedge in the shade, that nothing really grew!

I wished we had had lessons in Nature study, and I had to wait until I was eighteen, at a Teachers Training College in Roehampton, to really learn about the environment. Throughout my teaching career, I always made certain that my classroom had a large Nature Table, displaying seasonal items and through this display, the infants learnt not only the names of plants and animals, but their numbers, colours, shapes from the objects displayed and added to each day, and how to care for them I owe a big debt of gratitude to Newcombe and the country - side around Sidcot for enriching my life so that since then I have had great pleasure from gardening and growing vegetables.

*Amanda M (Rowell) Beart  
(1952 – 1959)*



## Cheaper than the gym!

I answered a request for help with gardening in the churchyard of a 14th century church. The tiny church is no longer in regular use, though not deconsecrated, and to begin with the interior of the building was refurbished for a Music and Arts Centre while the churchyard was neglected.

About seven years later I am still gardening every Thursday morning along with a group of about another dozen volunteers. From a field of cow parsley, wild garlic and nettles, with a few tombstones visible, we now have a restful place with flowers planted on many graves, and the grass neatly mowed or strimmed.

I can strongly recommend gardening as a way to "use it or lose it", excellent exercise, good company, in the fresh air - and cheaper than the gym!

*Lucy Rickman Baruch (1934-37)*



## An appreciation for our fragile planet

As a geologist, I have had the good fortune to explore some of the world's highest mountains and deepest trenches. I have seen spectacular landscapes and seascapes and have built up an understanding of planet Earth and its vulnerability to environmental change.



My passion for geology began at Sidcot in the early 1960s. Back then the school allowed us the freedom (mainly at weekends) to explore our surroundings through walking and biking. We found a school that was built on a ridge overlooking a wide valley surrounded by inviting hills. The 'seven sisters', as we called them, could be recognized by their distinct scenery, which ranged from the broad stark hills of Wavering Down, Bleadon and Blackdown, through the pert forested hills of Banwell and Sandford, to the craggy summits of Crooks Peak and Callow Hill. Incised into south and north flanks of these hills were the gorges of Cheddar and Burrington Combe.

It was while exploring Burrington Combe, just to the south of the "Rock of Ages", that I found my first fossil and what a thrill that was. The rocks there, it turned out, were teeming with life: sponges, corals,

crinoids, brachiopods and clams were present in abundance. Two fossils in particular caught my eye: Zaphrentis – a solitary, horn-shaped, coral with delicate internal chambers which attached itself to the seabed and Productus – a heavily ribbed, thick shelled, brachiopod that was capable, while young, of free-swimming. I found the fossils to be diagnostic of particular limestone layers or strata and so was able to build up a detailed picture of the environment in which the life forms had lived. Perhaps the most striking feature of the limestones was that they were now a few hundreds of metres above sea-level and they dipped about 45 degrees to the north, which I knew from previous walks and bike trips was opposite in direction to the same fossil-bearing limestones I had found on Callow Hill and Crooks Peak. Sidcot, it turned out, was located in the eroded out core of a giant fold

structure that had formed as a result of compressional forces associated with the closure of an ocean and the building of a mountain, relics of which can still be seen today in the Lizard peninsula of southwest Cornwall.

A question I remember grappling with at the time was 'When did this giant fold form?' I knew from the fossil record that the limestones were Carboniferous in age and so I decided to study the flat lying and younger Trias conglomerates, sandstones and marls that overlay them. These rocks, which had onlapped the flanks of the fold and, in some cases, had transgressed into its eroded core, took me first to Shipham and Rowberrow and then, to further afield, to Charterhouse, West Harptree and Priddy. I did not find any fossils, but I did come

*Fossils (sponges, shells and sea lily stem fragments) found in the lower limestone shale (c 350 million years old) of Long Bottom near Shipham*



Crooks Peak

Wavering  
Down

Callow

0 metres

300

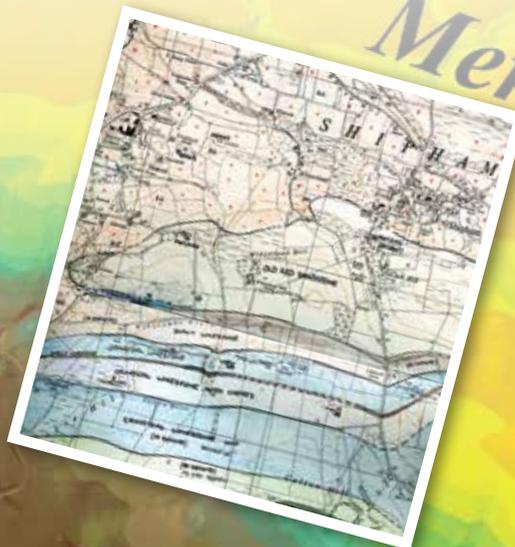
across minerals – lots of them – especially Galena (Lead), Pyrites (Iron) and Calamine (Zinc). The minerals, which had been mined in Victorian, Medieval and Roman times, were found in narrow veins that post-dated the giant fold and so the Earth movements that had raised the limestones out of the sea, forming a Mendip “island”, must have occurred during the Carboniferous and Trias, about 270 million years ago. I was so pleased with my collection of rocks and minerals that I entered them in the annual school General Meeting Exhibition and won a prize of 15 shillings from a Mr R. J. Weare who later arranged for the entire collection to be moved from the school and put on permanent display in Axbridge museum! My interest in geology was growing and so I sought advice from Mr. Lindley, the Geography teacher at Sidcot. I was deciding whether to take A-levels and since I only had 5 subjects at O-level – one of which was Woodwork - I asked him if I could sit the O-level exam in Geology. Mr. Lindley advised me his specialty was human rather than physical geography so he might not be able to help me. He must have sensed my determination though and so very kindly offered to set me essays on selected geological topics - and to mark them. I sat the exam a few months later and to the surprise of both of us I passed – without ever having had a single lesson in the subject!

When I left Sidcot, I knew I wanted to go on to University and read Geology. Unfortunately, I did not have either Latin or a foreign language at O-level, which was a requirement then. Fortunately, University College, London, which was founded by the libertarian Jeremy Bentham and since its inception has been one of the most progressive universities in the country, stepped up and made an exception. I found the Department of Geology there to be a classical one. The student-staff ratio was 0.3 (today the ratio is typically 10-15!) and I learnt so much about how assemblages of fossils could be used to correlate strata, how rocks and minerals formed, how forces deep in the Earth shaped the rocks found in mountains and deep-sea trenches, and how glaciers had re-surfaced the landscape many times during the past hundred thousand years or so. I particularly enjoyed the field trips to Dorset and Yorkshire and to far-away places such as Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Portugal. We even had a trip to the Mendip Hills where we were taught how to make a geological map and it was exciting for me to be back in a landscape that I knew so well.

Looking back, I have had a wonderful career as a teacher and researcher in Geology that has taken me to the far corners of the world's continents, oceans and seas. Sidcot for me started it all. Its setting in an area of outstanding natural beauty in the Mendips Hills was a geologists' dream and the school allowed me to pursue these dreams. I often think back to my time at Sidcot and to the inspirational teachers that I met there. The school gave me the freedom to explore my surroundings, nurtured my passions and helped me to better understand the environment and appreciate the fragile planet that we call home and I will always be grateful for that.

*Tony Watts (1957-1963)*

Professor of Geology in the University of Oxford and a Fellow of the Royal Society.



Mendip Hills

Cheddar Gorge

## Quaker values help break new ground in business

I was a co founder and CEO for 10.5 years of the Organic Milk Suppliers Cooperative (OMSCo). We started with five dairy farmers and it ended up as a UK wide cooperative with 350 farmers, including Stuart Hailey (1955-1959) and Bruce Carlisle (1979-1981). David Whiting (1960-1967), a former international marketing director for Duracell and OMSCo, developed an award winning marketing campaign that grew the market by 30% per year. Drawing on Quaker business values, the organisation broke new ground in the milk industry through its collaborative approach to business relationships with processors and multiple retailers.

Sally (Cary) Bagenal  
(1962-1967)



## Explore the wide open spaces

Coming to Sidcot was a real breath of fresh air for me in every sense. As a young person from inner city London recovering from a serious accident, which involved learning how to walk all over again, the wide open spaces of Sidcot offered every incentive to get out and explore. I just loved the calm serenity of the Coombe, and the beauty of the natural surroundings. I found the exhilaration of the Mendip Hills with their fine views and their almost magical sense of history irresistible.

Although I used to moan about being cast out of the school on Saturdays and most Sundays, there is no doubt in my mind that on the whole they were a good idea, although rather too zealously enforced on occasions! Similarly the runs and the pig drives had their educational value. I am indebted to all those committee members and headmasters over the years who acquired land for the school around The Island, effectively providing a green belt (in my time anyway), which has stood the school in great stead, in terms of recreational facilities, revenue stream, and room for potential educational expansion.

One regret that I have now is that being a non-cyclist my horizons were quite limited, and I am conscious going back to Easter reunions that I did not make full use of



Roger (front right in blue) ready to explore the great outdoors with friends at Easter Reunion

the potential the magnificent countryside locally provided. This is one of the reasons why I enjoy coming back to Easter reunions, that very often they provide a walk or a minibus trip just outside my zone during my schooldays.

I have now been a member of the Ramblers' Association for about twenty-five years, and more recently a footpath secretary for the parish of Hitchin with the North Herts Ramblers. I am also involved with Hitchin Forum, one of whose aims is to protect open spaces and the environment of Hitchin.

I hope I am helping to preserve our green and pleasant land for future generations.

Roger Jarvis (1966-1970)

## A little bit makes a difference

My generation grew up in war-time austerity. All my life I have saved water, switched off lights and cycled whenever I could. Not, until recently, to help save the planet but because I hate waste. I see it as natural Quakerism. I saved old bit of wood, screws, nails, hinges and shelf brackets. Until I moved into sheltered accommodation this last summer I always had a shed full of such stuff. When I moved most of it went into landfill. Oh dear!

I would have loved to generate my own electricity and I admire the ingenuity of these schemes, but the capital outlay has always been

beyond my means. I bought a small car just before we started taxing them by measuring emissions, and resent that I could be avoiding road tax altogether if I had been better advised. I applaud schemes to digest sewage and lived for the past twenty years with an anaerobic septic tank, but few people can afford the space.

So I have done my little bit over the years. I have to be content that millions of little bits always make a difference. The vast floating islands of plastic cups in the Pacific are a sad testimony to that principle.

John Southern (1941 – 1948)

# Sidcotian Friends Reunited

## Golden Girls & Boys Reunited!



The Class of 1965 held their 50th reunion at Newcombe on Easter Saturday. The School provided a wonderful lunch, the sun shone and we had the biggest turnout so far, with one person travelling from Australia, another from Israel and messages from others who live around the world.

We have held reunions every 5 years since the 20th reunion and this has led to us keeping in touch in a

special way. It has helped that Julie (Woodhead) Edmondson has kept in touch with us all and therefore made the reunions easier. Also several members of the form have been involved in the running of the Old Scholars Association so they feel a strong connection with the school. In the afternoon the Headmaster led a tour round the School so some of us went on that followed by President's Tea.

It was also a special year as Steve Martin, our new President, spent a great deal of time with our form when at school so we were able to support him at the Annual Meeting. In 2020 we may have to start the reunion earlier as we all had so much chatting to do and there didn't seem enough time!!

Wendy Hewitt (1956-1965)



## Wanted



## For Long Term Relationship

Friendly, Quaker school seeks long term relationship with someone special who has database skills, is IT literate, a great communicator and, above all, is prepared to place Sidcot at the heart of everything they do. Fundraising or communications / marketing experience would be a great advantage, as would personal experience of the school. The Alumni Relationship Manager will be responsible for a wide range of duties including donor development, fundraising from trusts and prospect cultivation. Training is available for the right candidate. Evidence of database management and an appetite to grow with the job will be required.

For a detailed job description visit [www.sidcot.org.uk/jobs](http://www.sidcot.org.uk/jobs). Any queries please email [marina.jonas@sidcot.org.uk](mailto:marina.jonas@sidcot.org.uk). Closing date 9 November 2015.

## Exhibition: Contemporary Printmaking - Print & Process

This November brings together for the first time five Printmakers all based in the Bristol and Somerset areas. This alliance will showcase some of the most innovative artworks from their respective portfolios, demonstrating each artist's individual approach to their particular working practice.

Liz Bird and Gail Mason (members of Spike Print Studio in Bristol), Bronwen Bradshaw, Pennie Elfick and Tony Martin (members of Somerset Printmakers and Fingerprint) will demonstrate original

printmaking's ability to convey a myriad of aesthetic concerns – the private and the public, the emotional and the conceptual, the figurative and the abstract all via a multiplicity of traditional and contemporary methodologies.

Also on show will be a selection of print-works by Sidcot School Art Students.

There will be a chance to meet the artists and enjoy a conducted tour of the show on its opening day. Please refer our website for timings and booking details.

The exhibition is free of charge and runs from Saturday 7th November to Saturday 12th December. Visiting times are: Thursdays and Fridays 11am – 5.30pm and Saturdays 10am – 4pm (last entry 30 minutes before close). Please note that the gallery will close at 1pm on Friday 13th of November for a private function.

Sign up to our newsletter to receive invites to related events, talks and private views. [artscentre@sidcot.org.uk](mailto:artscentre@sidcot.org.uk)

Diary dates! [www.sidcot.org.uk/arts/whats-on](http://www.sidcot.org.uk/arts/whats-on)



I love walking through the beautiful countryside that surrounds the school and watching the changing of the seasons, the golds, reds, yellows and browns of the leaves as Autumn gets under way. Sidcot has often been referred to as an "island", a safe haven for our students where they can explore and develop and discover for themselves what really matters. But as teachers the one thing we will not and cannot protect them from is the ever-growing threat to our environment. Pollution, global warming, climate disruption, the devastation of rain forests, threatened extinction of species and habitats – some of which, like the inhabitants of the deepest seas, we have yet to discover. The list of environmental challenges we face makes grim reading but, as Maddy Harland says in her insightful introduction and as our

Quaker values teach us, we must stand up and be counted, be resilient and face these challenges head-on.

As a Headmaster I firmly believe it is our responsibility to protect the earth and to teach our young people to treasure and preserve it across the generations, leading by example wherever we can and encouraging our students to think creatively to find solutions to environmental challenges. It is heartening to read that so many Sidcotians actively work to protect our planet, either professionally, through campaigning or just as importantly by personally tending their own green corner of the world.

More heartening still, is I can report to you in these pages that the school has invested heavily in renewable energy with the installation of biomass boilers that will heat the main school building and solar panels at the Junior School. Students continue to put us to shame with their commitment to green initiatives, through Sidcot Action for a Greener Environment (SAGE) throwing themselves into recycling campaigns, "Waste Week", gardening club and energy saving activities.

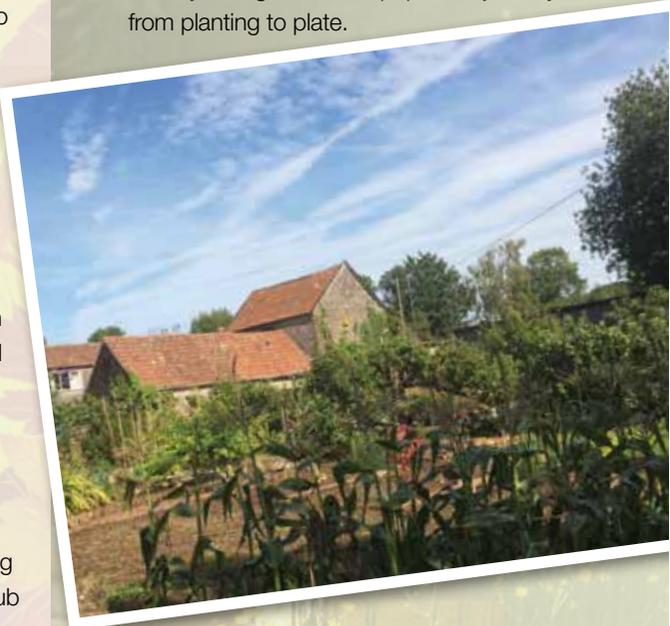
With every passing day we are all learning to tread more lightly on this earth and the world can only be a better place for it.

Iain Kilpatrick  
Headmaster

## Sidcot's (Green) Vision

At Sidcot we believe it is our responsibility to treasure and preserve it across the generations. We are working towards a cleaner, greener future.

**Combe House Gardens** – Fruit and vegetable school gardening clubs encourage healthy eating and show pupils the journey from planting to plate.



**Pupil-led initiatives** to reduce food waste on campus & Switch off campaign - switch off cards in classrooms to reduce electricity.

**Sports Centre** – Solar hot water panels, which heat the swimming pool water.

**School Grounds** – School beehives, bird boxes, bee and bat boxes across campus, gardening club activities for Senior and Junior School, planting to attract butterflies – Nature is a part of every day life.

**Junior School** – the installation of solar panels and a cabin for Eco Committee and Gardening Club meetings. Bird Boxes, Wildlife pond areas and mini orchard wild area. Children take part in gardening activities – making bird boxes and growing vegetables. Forest School continues to be central to learning with pupils all the way up to Year 6 enjoying regular nature sessions in the fresh air.



# ion for the Future

responsibility to protect the earth and to teach our young people the generations. The following are just some of the ways we greener more environmentally minded school community:

**Arts Centre** – New build opened in 2009 with high thermal massing – super insulated heated by air source heat pumps. Lighting system – daylight saving facility with occupancy detection.

**Self service in the Refectory** to reduce food waste. We buy local and source organic food in the kitchen where we can and actively promote healthy eating and good procurement.

**Nature Trails** – one for Sidcot School and a shorter trail for the wider community, building links with local schools for everyone to participate in the natural environment that surrounds us.

**SAGE (Sidcot Action for a Greener Environment) Group** – the group meets every 6 weeks to discuss green initiatives and is made up of staff, students and a Governor.

**Sidcot is a Fairtrade School!**  
Seven School Bus Services cover Bristol, Burnham, Chew Valley, Portishead & Clevedon, Wedmore, Worle and Uphill and reduce the number of miles travelled to and from school.

**Recycling Schemes** – enhanced waste management offering paper, cardboard, plastic and aluminium recycling in the boarding houses and paper recycling boxes in every classroom and central bins in key locations across campus. Pupils take responsibility for emptying classroom bins.

**Oil to biomass conversion – a lighter carbon footprint**  
Sidcot has made huge savings in CO2 emissions by converting inefficient oil boilers, supplying space heating and hot water, to Hargassner biomass boilers. The oil consumption of the main building was around 748,500 kWh per year or 72,600 litres of oil amounting to around 185 tonnes of CO2 every year!

The decision to convert the oil boilers to biomass with gas back-up is based on reducing the CO2 emissions of the school by using biomass fuel which can save 93% of emissions by oil heating or up to 97.5% if low carbon footprint pellets are sourced.

Biomass consumes about 10% of the emissions for oil for every unit of energy used. Expected savings will be 167 tonnes of CO2/year.

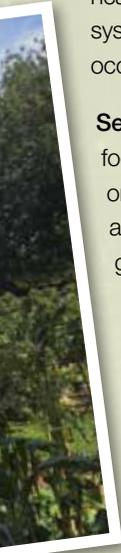
## Yurt Village opens

This Summer the Yurt Village, made possible in part thanks to the generous donation from former Governor and Sidcotian Bridget Marriott (1949-1954), was officially opened providing a venue for outdoor learning and the first ever Sid-Fest. Encouraging students to engage more directly with their environment, the yurts provide outdoor learning spaces and have inspired some Year 6 & 7 students to think about global issues like climate change.

## SUSTAINABILITY

The opening of the new yurt village has inspired Year 6 and Year 7 students to write poems about the environment and why we should care for the planet:

*Global warming is punishing the earth  
Use things twice, don't fight it – learn  
Paper is precious, think about the trees  
How many plastic bags do you think  
you've seen  
Litter is bitter, it's making the world rot  
If that's not enough – well that's a lot!  
One man's rubbish  
is another man's treasure.*



## Encouraging original thought – seeking a cure for Multiple Sclerosis

It is always a privilege when Sidcotians share their stories of life, love and adventures both whilst at school and the years following, but sometimes we receive something quite remarkable. This account by **David Wheldon (1961-1968)** encompasses all of the above as he describes his approach to his wife's medical treatment when she developed MS.

Sidcot was my home from 1961 to 1968. It was a strange sensation, that first night in Combe House, sleeping in a dormitory with other boys, all unknown. The lack of privacy was most unnerving. But you get over it and start making friends. The close proximity of others teaches you consideration. You make mistakes — as I certainly did — but hopefully you learn from them. The countryside round Sidcot is beautiful and very varied. I recall the moving line of steam which marked the passing of the early-morning branch-line train (rather unfairly called the 'Cheddar Slug'.) The railway's engineer, Francis Fox, was educated at Sidcot.

The close proximity of others teaches you consideration.

I wished to study medicine; Bristol was my goal. The Headmaster, Richard Brayshaw, disagreed and strongly suggested I apply to various London medical schools. I didn't take his advice — without connections you didn't have a hope — and I applied to and was accepted by Bristol.

Bristol was wonderful. I particularly enjoyed neuroanatomy. For my student elective I joined Betty Brownell, the neuropathologist at Frenchay, and studied the disease Multiple Sclerosis (MS), a mysterious and complex illness. In its most common form



the patient suffers relapses — typically paralysis of a limb, numbness, blindness — but these soon improve. Relapses and remissions can continue for decades. However, over time the remissions become less complete and at some stage the disease often turns progressive. Then it is usually implacable. One remembers the wonderful cellist, Jacqueline du Pre, who died of the disease at 42. There was a hot debate at the time as to the cause of MS. A Belgian physician, Paul le Gac, found evidence of an infection with an as yet undescribed pathogen he called a 'neo-rickettsia'. Others, such as Ephraim Field, claimed that MS was a primary auto-immune disease. The latter view prevailed, even though animal models were poor and inexact.

Having graduated and completed my house jobs I went to Oxford to study pathology at

the Radcliffe Infirmary. For an old institution the Radcliffe was most uncared-for.

Rain poured in through a sky-light and one night the entire ceiling in a huge, empty room opposite collapsed. The hot water for showers was never more than luke-warm. But it was worth it. I was privileged to study neuropathology with David Oppenheimer, the doyen of the specialty. The textbook Oppenheimer's Diagnostic Neuropathology is named in his memory. I also studied microbiology. They must have liked me, for they re-appointed me twice to more senior posts. Eventually I was put on the teaching staff of the university and gave lectures on bacterial infections of the central nervous system.



In 1980 I was appointed consultant medical microbiologist at Bedford. This involved working in a first-class lab worthy of a teaching hospital. The staff were superb. In 1990 I left to work on writing. To sustain myself I applied for microbiology locums up and down the country.

The best event in my life occurred during a nine-month locum in Preston. My violin needed repairs; I took it to the Violin Shop in Blackpool. In answer to the doorbell a slim young woman glided silently behind the counter. Her name was Sarah Longlands; she had studied art at Manchester and the Slade, London. We married a year later.

In 2002 Sarah suddenly found difficulty walking. Her right arm became paralysed and she was numb from the waist down. Her gait was becoming spastic. Her speech was becoming slurred. A brain scan showed lesions typical of MS. The neurologist took me aside and told me that Sarah had a very aggressive form of the disease and had not long to live. He recommended finding a nursing home.

The neurologist took me aside and told me that Sarah had a very aggressive form of the disease and had not long to live.

The diagnosis made, we sat that evening in our dining room. I came to the conclusion that I was looking at an infection — infections, after all, are my subject. It just *looked* like a toxic infection. An internet search quickly led me to a paper by workers at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. These scientists included Prof Ram Sriram and Dr Chuck Stratton. Both Ram and Chuck were most helpful when I contacted them by email. They had discovered a link between the

respiratory pathogen *Chlamydia pneumoniae* and MS. This bacterium is notoriously difficult to grow: it hides secretively within the host cell.

We started appropriate antibiotics. Sarah became delirious for about five days, and then began to improve.



The first improvement was a clearing of her mind.

In the twelve years since starting treatment Sarah has had no new symptoms of MS and her disabilities have been rolled back. Her right arm — which had been paralysed for six months — is now fully functional. Sarah can paint and draw once more. Her MRI scans have shown great improvement. Sarah can now stride several kilometers on her elliptical trainer. It should be said that spontaneous recovery from progressive MS is almost unknown.

Since Sarah's improvement I have advised and treated numerous people with MS. (I never asked a fee as the treatment is novel.) If the disease is caught early enough the results are generally very good. In late disease the benefits are often less obvious as there is usually severe scarring in the brain and spinal cord. Compliance is critical. One might ask why large, comprehensive

trials of antibiotics in the treatment of MS have not been undertaken. The answer is uncomfortable to consider. Trials of new drugs in the treatment of the disease are financed by pharmaceutical companies; the same companies fund research. There is no money to be made



from out-of-patent antibiotics. It is as simple as that. It comes down to money and profit.

I am grateful to Sidcot for its encouragement of original thought and its challenging of the rote acceptance of prevalent ideas. Mark Twain said, famously, "I never let my schooling interfere with my education." It's a witty quote, but I don't think it's applicable to Sidcot.

## The Education Trust: Helping students live adventurously since 1927

"I left the volunteer project with a deeper understanding of the culture and environment, and the knowledge that my work has made a big difference. I want to thank Sidcot and the Old Scholars for helping me with this trip of a lifetime, I have truly had an unbelievably amazing experience, and one that I will never forget!"

So writes Milly Humphries who was able to travel and volunteer overseas last year thanks to an Old Scholars Travel Award from the Education Trust.

The Trust was established with less than £500 in 1927 by a small group of forward-thinking Old Scholars who wanted to advance the educational opportunities of past and present students. Today, close to 90 years later, hundreds of Sidcotians have benefited from that foresight.

As well as assisting students in their charitable overseas endeavours, the Education Trust also funds one student a year through a bursary and contributes to the whole school community through donations for educational equipment.

In his Presidential address at Easter this year, Steve Martin applauded the Travel Awards for the opportunities they provide to students and made it his mission to help raise further funds so that even more

students can benefit in the future. If you have been inspired by your travel adventures or equally if you valued your own education at Sidcot and wish to help provide this chance to other children who would not otherwise be able, the Education Trust will ensure any donation you give is wisely spent.

To make a donation to the Trust please contact Roger Pugsley on 01904 766693 or email [r.pugsley@sky.com](mailto:r.pugsley@sky.com)



*Milly Humphries used her Travel Award to volunteer for a conservation project in New Zealand*



# Postcards from 'The Island': School news

## Chemistry Teacher Rewarded for Gold Standard by HRH Prince Edward

Sidcot Chemistry teacher Jim Scott has received royal recognition for helping hundreds of teenagers achieve their Duke of Edinburgh Award. Jim was presented with a certificate by HRH The Earl of Wessex for 25 years of voluntary service for the leading youth charity.

The presentation was a complete surprise to Jim who is Head of Science and thought he was visiting St James's Palace to accompany two former students who were collecting their Gold Award.

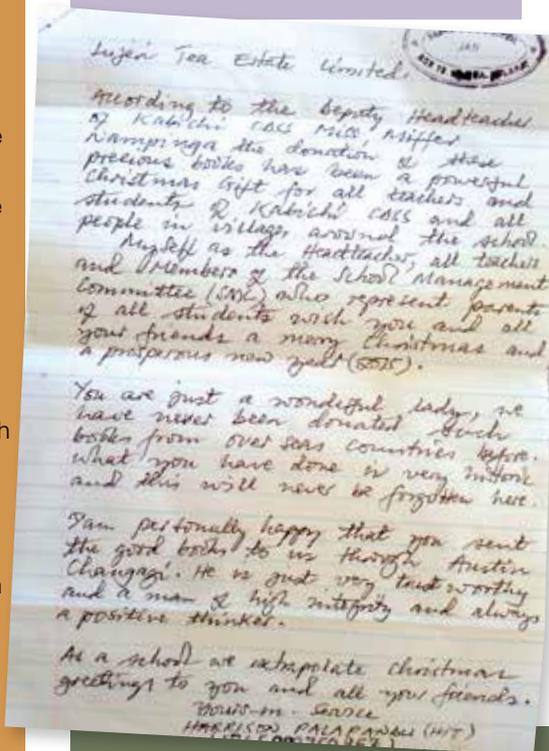
He said: "It was a real privilege to meet Prince Edward and to receive the certificate but working with young people and seeing them achieve so much through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is reward enough for me."

Before Jim joined Sidcot School in 1999, he was a member of staff at Gordonstoun where he helped supervise Prince Edward's Gold Award expedition in the Cairngorm mountains. Jim was presented with his 25 year service award by Prince Edward and Olympic gold-medallist James Cracknell.



## Postcards for Peace

On the last day of the Summer Term postcards for peace were posted to the Al Madad Foundation where they will be shared with children in refugee camps throughout Turkey and Syria. The aim is a simple gesture of peace through art: children connecting to children.



## A vote of thanks from Malawi

Teachers and students, led by Charlotte House who teaches Religion, Ethics and Philosophy, collected text books and equipment for a school in Malawi before Christmas. This letter, pictured above, from Head Teacher Harrison Palapandu demonstrates the impact of their gift:

*"On behalf of all members of staff of Kabichi Community Day Secondary School I would like to profoundly thank you for donating assorted, and very important books to our school which will help our students in increasing their knowledge in Biology, Geography, English and Mathematics.*

*"We have received all the books you sent in total and unutterable happiness and the donation of these precious books has been a powerful Christmas gift for all teachers and students of Kabichi CDSS and all people in villages around the school.*

*"We have never been donated such books from overseas countries before. What you have done is very historic and this will never be forgotten here."*

## Hair today, gone tomorrow!

Year 11 student Genevieve Lane has raised over £800 for the Little Princess Trust who provide wigs for children who have lost their hair due to cancer, leukemia and alopecia. Her hair was cut off in front of an audience of friends, family and sponsors and will be sent, together with the funds raised, to the charity.



## Let your life speak

Sidcot School and the Sidcotian community extends its sincere condolences to the friends and family of those listed below for whom we have received notification of death.

**David Jeffrey**  
(1940-1949)  
16 March 2015

**Ron Watts**  
(1939-1948)  
23 June 2015

**Jean (Carr) Fisher**  
(1948-1950)  
30 July 2015

### John Barclay Pick 1921 - 2015

You don't often hear the term 'a man of letters' these days, but John Pick, was such a man. Unfailingly learned, gentle, loyal and modest in demeanour, he published as J. B. Pick and made his living as an accomplished journalist, novelist, poet, scholar and literary critic. His novels include *The Lonely Aren't Alone* (1952), *A Land Fit for 'eros*, with John Atkins (1957) and *The Last Valley* (1959), a tale of exhausted mercenaries during the Thirty Years War which was made into a memorable film, directed by James Clavell, starring Michael Caine and Omar Sharif.

Born in Leicester, John Pick was educated at Sidcot School 1933-1939. He gained entrance to Cambridge University but when war broke out he left after only a year to serve with the Friend's Ambulance Unit. His liberal sympathies were evident in early publications, such as *Under the Crust* (1946) which describes the lives of coal miners from the author's own experience, when he chose to work underground for a year and a half, before ill-health forced him to stop. Pick was a young poet and the editor of a small review at the time, and few literary men, apart from George Orwell perhaps, have taken their research quite so far. In later years he went on to publish the Liberal document *Democracy at Work*, with Stephen Abel (1976) and *Freedom Itself: an Enquiry with Witnesses* (1979). In the years after the war, Pick and his wife Gene moved to Ullapool where he made a lifelong friendship with Scottish novelist Neil Gunn, before returning to London in 1957 and then to Leicester.

Pick's first collection of poems, *Expeditions*, was published in 1946 and a retrospective volume *Being Here: Selected Poems, 1943-2010*,

was warmly introduced by the poet Alastair Reid. In fact, in the intervening years John had been producing books of verse almost annually in small volumes designed by his wife Gene. In recognition of this work, Pick won the Callum Macdonald Memorial Award for small volume publications in 2001. His output in these earlier years included a study of Robert Graves's poetry, *The Poet as Cynic* (1949), and several different compendiums describing games for one player.

The Picks moved back to Scotland to live in Galloway in 1979 and although he was never to be employed by a university or college, his literary interests began to bear serious critical fruit. He had become an authority on the hitherto neglected early 20th century Scottish novelist David Lindsay, producing *The Strange Genius of David Lindsay*, with Colin Wilson and E. H. Visiak in 1970. Pick wrote several essays on Lindsay's strangely visionary work and edited and introduced reprints of his fiction. He went on to develop a wider critical interest in this field, which he made his own with a substantial monograph *The Great Shadow House, Essays on the Metaphysical Tradition in Scottish Literature* (1993).

His friendship with Neil Gunn and a strong but not uncritical admiration for his fiction led Pick, along with F. R. Hart to produce the first critical biography of the writer, *Neil M. Gunn: A Highland Life* (1981). This was followed by *Selected Letters* (1987) and *The Anarchy of Light* (1991), which was a celebration of Gunn shared with much younger poets W.N. Herbert and Richard Price. Pick returned to the theme in 2003 with his study *Neil Gunn in the 'Writers and their Work'* series.

Please email your notifications or obituaries to [alumni@sidcot.org.uk](mailto:alumni@sidcot.org.uk)

John was a founder member of the Canongate Classics reprint project, pioneered by Stephanie Wolfe-Murray, and he introduced the very first volume to appear in the series, which was Willa Muir's Imagined Corners, chosen as something of a statement of intent for a publishing venture that spanned some 17 years and 116 titles. John went on to edit and introduce seven books in the series, but it was a lifetime's experience with books and reading, that made his advice such an invaluable part of the project. He remained a vital member of the editorial board from first to last, and those who worked with him remember his delight in bringing what he called 'hidden gems' back to light, and his trenchant reader's reports on likely titles. He had an acute ear for well-written prose (and an utterly unforgiving one for leaden lines) and would often read particular passages aloud to make his point.

John Pick's long contribution to Scottish literary culture was recognised in 2014 when he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies. As an independent minded person, he was no follower of fashionable ideas or established reputations, and as an acute critic and a gifted writer he was indeed a true man of letters. From another of his own poems: 'Look sharp, see deep, and don't relent; / Use short words, say only what you know, / And when you've said it, go.'

He died peacefully at his home in Balmaclellan at the age of 93. He is survived by his loving wife Gene and two sons, David and Peter.

*Roderick Watson*

### *I Have Internal Metre*

I have internal metre  
By which I live my life  
Out of step with all I see  
Around me. But the time

Will come when Fate  
And I shall walk a step  
So similar I need not be.

### *I Can Fold Days*

I can fold days  
Into a book. You can't.  
You just live pages. See?  
You just live lines.

You just live words -  
You, in the end, live gaps  
Between the words.

I am the Fate. I read  
In silence. I hold the book.  
I read you into being.

*Poems by David Wheldon*

## Class notes:



I have really enjoyed hearing from so many friends, former classmates and members of the wider Sidcotian community in the last few months! We all have different memories of our time at school – one memory sparks another great tale of mischief and adventure. I look forward to seeing your photos - we can scan and preserve them for the future so do please keep sending them in. It is the casual photos that are so good. They encapsulate the times so well. We hope to do a story on the Pig Drives in a future addition so pictures of walks are very welcome. Do you remember doing the Seven Hills? Do keep in touch. We always enjoy hearing from you.

### Wendy

Wendy Haslam  
Sidcotian Alumni Liaison (volunteer)

PS We can't always publish news and articles in full – if you'd like to read more, visit our blog [www.sidcotians.com](http://www.sidcotians.com)



### 1940s

I was amazed to read about the poor nutrition in the 60's. Although our food during the war was not exactly thrilling, I think it was probably quite good. There seemed to be no shortage of milk, which came in churns everyday, and we had porridge with golden syrup at breakfast. Because the gardener was so good we had gooseberries and strawberries from the school (which we helped pick) and vegetables. I think we picked peas and maybe beans as well. We had a lot of cabbage (which I hate) but we must have had other vegetables as well every day for lunch, and boiled eggs occasionally, and I quite liked dried egg (which could be scrambled). There were some interestingly named things: Chinese mud which was a brown blancmange (there was also a pink one) - not very appetising. Also Dead Baby which was meat rolled up in pastry, so that you could see the baby at each end! We had individual china dishes with our number on for butter and margarine, 2 oz. of each per week, but some of the boys who were hungrier than we were swapped 1 oz of their butter for all our margarine, so they ended up with 5 oz in all and we with 3 oz, all butter, which suited me! We were hungry, but there seemed to be plenty of bread. In the Autumn the whole school went blackberry picking and most of it was turned into a rather watery jam which we ate on our bread for tea.

*Phyllis (Alexander) Collins (1941-1946)*

### 1950s

We were very struck by the comments about feeding standards in the sixties (Spring issue Sidcotian Friends). I wonder if there isn't some exaggeration, stemming from the general rise in expectations after the relative privations of the war and post-war years. In our time, when all food was produced in-house, it was sometimes lacking in imagination but was always wholesome and sufficient (particularly, if you knew how to suck up to marvelous Winnie who "saved" the left-overs from the staff table. I honed my infantile socialism on my contacts with the lovely "working class" folk in the kitchens, gardens and grounds.

*John (1948-53) & Eleanor (1948-54) Copestake*

It was nice to find my letter in such distinguished company and in a well-made journal. I usually find old-school mags very boring, but this one wasn't. I do find it hard, though, to reconcile the emphasis on equality with the continuation of private schools, especially expensive boarding schools, and at a time when Cameron is promising a whole lot more 'free schools' at the expense of state comprehensives.

*Greg Wilkinson (1948-51)*

What do you think? If you would like to share your point of view, please email [alumni@sidcot.org.uk](mailto:alumni@sidcot.org.uk)

Another excellent issue of Sidcotians. I am reminded by your article on militarism of how surprised the Head of my children's primary school was when I objected to a display of military weapons at the school fair. He must have listened because it was not repeated! I also objected to the greasy soup we were given at Sidcot for supper. I was sent to the Headmistress, Miss Hooper. I'm not sure if it was changed. So in a minor way I had a voice but not like the courage shown by some people.

*Fiona Williams (1945-1953)*





## 1950s

### 1934 In Motion

A journey in a classic car  
Is tougher than one thinks.  
You must go back full 80 years  
To board our Hillman Minx.

With running boards to step inside,  
And holes within the floor.  
One wiper on the upright screen,  
Loud clicks to close the door.

A handle crank to start from cold.  
The battery is 6 Volts.  
Spoked wheels, and narrow  
cross-ply tyres,  
Leaf springs so `mind the jolts`!

Brake horse power `30` at your call,  
Slow progress up a hill!  
Syncro-mesh came later on.  
Gear changing is a skill!

Motorways are not for us!  
We go as fast as able  
Along the roads marked `A` and `B`.  
Our brakes are worked by cable.

The time has come to head for home,  
The sun is in the West.  
The dynamo is old and weak,  
The lights are not the best.

*Geoffrey Pearce (1950-56)*

## 1960s

Having done 'the tour' with the Headmaster, I was particularly impressed with the new arts and science facilities. My career as an industrial designer was kicked off by the inspirational arts and science teaching at Sidcot: I am indebted to James Bradley and Richard Hinton. I applaud having the exhibition space for professional artists to display their works and inspire pupils and the local community.

I would suspect that there is now a more responsible approach to Health and Safety for the pupils. We had an old Austin Seven car kept behind the wood working shed to dismantle and drive - the bodywork was stripped off and it was driven at great speed up and down the steep hills behind Newcombe House! Great fun but probably illegal!

*Nick Swinstead (1958-63)*

### An apology to Pam (Parker)

Went (1962-3). We wrongly stated that her Form is in regular contact on Facebook – in actual fact this should have been attributed to Penny (Morgan) Cameron (1961-66) who said: "While we were in the UK we caught up with some of my class mates. We stayed with Wiz and Murray Marks; and met up with Paul Aitken and Christina Kingsmill for lunch in the Cotswolds. The great thing about meeting up is that with Sidcotians you just carry on as if you have never been away! Most of our class are in very regular contact on Facebook which is great!"

## Happy 100th Birthday!!

We were honoured to help celebrate the 100th birthday of one of our former teachers on Friday 7th August 2015. Richard (Dick) Hinton, was appointed Physics Master at Sidcot in September 1948. Both Dick and his wife Joyce threw themselves into life at Sidcot, assuming responsibility for Third Form boys boarding in Combe House, a role they performed for more than 16 years. In 1974 Richard was appointed Senior Master until his retirement in 1976.

Dick is remembered with great fondness by those he taught. Wendy Haslam, (1961 - 67), said: "I remember Dick as a very gentle teacher who commanded the respect of the class and worked hard to make Physics an enjoyable lesson, even for those of us for whom it did not come naturally. He is a man of great integrity and wisdom and has touched the lives of so many in such a positive way over the years. He looked for the best in all and still has that twinkle in his eye."

Steve Martin, President of the Sidcotians, presented Dick with some photos from his time at the school, flowers from the school garden and some honey from Sidcot's very own bees.



## 1980s

I have just volunteered for a week at the Northern Quaker Summer School which was brilliant! Isaac went as a young person and thoroughly enjoyed it. Young Quakers are definitely a breed apart from the rest - wonderfully insightful and full of adventure! We had an amazing session on conflict management and resolution amongst many others. They are so wise!

Allie White (1981-88)

DAILY TIMETABLE	
8-8:45	Breakfast (and FG tidy up!)
9:15-9:30	Freetime and Staff meeting
10:30-10:45	Family Groups
10:45-11:00	Meeting for Worship
11:30-12:30	Guest Speaker / Workshop session
12:45	Lunch (and FG tidy up!)
1:45-3:15	Workshops - see list
3:15-3:45	Freetime burials
3:45-4:45	Freetime young people and staff meeting
4:45-5:30	Family Groups
5:30-6:00	FG Challenge
6:00-7:00	Dinner (and FG tidy up!)
7:30-9:00	Evening Entertainment
9-10 pm	Epilogue
10-10:30	Bed
10:30 pm	Lights out in bedrooms

### Well done to Sidcotian Bryony Evens

who survived a 102 mile sponsored ride on a tandem bicycle this summer! Was this as tiring as Easter Reunion?

## 1990s

### Congratulations to G. Seth Roberts

(1996-98) and Rattiya Laithaweewat who were married in Bangkok on 28 August 2013 but celebrated with a party and non-religious ceremony at Frenchay Quaker Meeting House and Frenchay Village Hall on 8 August 2015. Further celebrations will be held in Thailand on 2 January 2016.

### Recent Leavers

Even today I am still in love with Sidcot, it has been very difficult to come back to Spain and to leave that marvellous school where not only science, maths, music and English is taught, but Life. In Sidcot you learn to live a different life, they teach you to make a difference and at the end, this is what would define you, the differences you make with the other 6,000,000,000 people that live in this planet, will be all your success in life.

Nowadays, through this struggling economic situation where it is very difficult to start a business, where we are taught to study to make money in order to pay our studies, instead of being taught to do what we love, it is more necessary than ever

that we apply this principle which I believe every single Sidcotian has in their mind: Live Adventurously and Learn to make a difference.

Urbez Fernandez Hernando (2010-12)



Please send us details of your family news, employment and relocations and we will make every effort to include them in Class Notes. We are limited with space so please be aware we may need to edit your submission. Photographs are always welcome – please make sure you send a large / high resolution file as an attachment.

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