



DITCHAM PARK SCHOOL

Past Staff Association Newsletter

Email: paststaff@ditchampark.com

September 2018

Dear Friends,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your comments and positive feedback on the last newsletter. It was very encouraging to see that you are enjoying the new format and I hope that as time goes on I will be sharing more of your news as well as that of the school.

Founder's Day and Prize Giving: On 6th July a group of past staff attended the school's Founder's Day and Prize Giving Service. We were very pleased to be given VIP status which included an invitation to the reception for Governors and guests before the service began and seats at the front of the hall. The reception provided the opportunity to meet the guest speaker, Helen Sharman and Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles. who is a Patron of the school and whose family has an historic association with the Ditcham site. Sir Sherard was Principal Private Secretary to Robin Cook, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1999–2001, then the UK's ambassador in Israel (2001-2003), Saudi Arabia (2003-2006), and Afghanistan (2007-2009).



Headmaster Graham Spawforth with Helen Sharman and Chair of Governors, Chris Pickett

During the service we heard speeches from the Chair of Governors, Chris Pickett and the Headmaster, Graham Spawforth. During his introduction Mr Pickett said that his 11 year old daughter had asked him if his speech was going to be as boring as last year's, to which he had replied "I expect so" – far be it from me to comment on that! However, he did speak with great passion and enthusiasm about

the planned developments and it is clear that the governing body are very committed to improving facilities across a wide range of the school's activities. In his address, Mr Spawforth spoke warmly about



his first full year at Ditcham, his pride in the school and the achievements of the pupils, of which there were many, including success in the Independent School's (ISA) Essay Writing competition and the ISA Art competition; as well as successes in public speaking and sport. Ditcham can now boast having two former pupils to have summited Everest – Holly Budge in May 2017 and Rupert Jones-Warner, in May of this year – what a fantastic achievement!



Sir Sherard presented the two cups for Public Speaking in Seniors and Juniors to the Ellett brothers, Benjamin and Laurence. The cups were donated by the Cowper-Coles family several years ago and are awarded each year to the pupil who has been judged the best public speaker after a series of hard fought rounds. The successful pupils have their name engraved on the cup and are given a medal to keep for themselves.



The highlight of the afternoon was the speech by Helen Sharman. Helen Sharman, CMG, OBE, HonFRSC is a British chemist who became the first British astronaut and the first woman to visit the Mir space station in 1991. Helen told the enthralled audience how she came to be an astronaut almost by accident. After studying science at university, she was working at Cadbury, ironically on the development of the Mars ice-cream bar (who knew that science and chocolate were so closely aligned – well probably the scientists among you but not us mere mortals who simply enjoy devouring

the end product!) when in 1989 after responding to a radio advertisement asking for applicants to be the first British astronaut, Helen was selected for the mission live on ITV, on 25 November 1989, ahead of nearly 13,000 other applicants. In May 1991 she blasted off in Russia aboard Soyuz TM-11 and on 26 May 1991, along with Viktor Afanasyev and Musa Manarov landed on the Mir space station. In the 1992 Birthday Honours, Helen was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for her pioneering efforts and the following year an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry (HonFRSC).

Helen spoke about the difficulties of growing plants in space because of zero gravity, explaining that whilst growing salad plants is possible, growing anything more substantial has not yet been achieved and this is still the reason why manned space exploration cannot go any further as there would simply be insufficient food to sustain the astronauts on longer missions. Interestingly she explained how science had been able to grow proteins in space which have helped in fighting illness and disease back on earth, for some reason the proteins grown much more prolifically and to a greater size outside of the earth's atmosphere.



Finally, and for the benefit of the younger audience, she addressed the perennial question asked of astronauts – how do you go to the toilet in space!! Well I won't go into that.

With the formalities over we enjoyed tea and cakes outside on the terrace where there was an opportunity to catch up with old friends.



Mr Spawforth with Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles



Margaret and Colin Cooke with Deanna Jacobs



Paddy Holmes with Deanna Jacobs and Fran Baker

Past Staff News: I was pleased to receive a letter from **Alan McCutcheon** who was Head of Geography from 1986 to 1993 and who has lived in Ulster since his retirement. Alan is sorry that distance and a slower pace of life prevent him from attending any events and functions but says he often recalls his



time at the school with pleasure and enjoyment. He has sent me this photo taken at the school in 1992. The tree providing shade is no longer there, but those in the background and the sandpit are still very much in evidence today!! Thank you for sharing this Alan.

I was also pleased to hear from **Linda Griffith**, former Head of Juniors, who now lives in the West Country and tells me that she and her family live an idyllic lifestyle albeit for many, one lacking wanderlust excitement. She has become involved with Youth Projects for both the local Rotary Club and The Arts Society, evaluating applications and awarding bursaries for art endeavours, setting up a local poetry competition and organising a children's art exhibition. All of which is very satisfying and keeps her in touch with schools and young people. Thank you Linda.

Finally, I heard from **Shirley Varnish**, former Head of Science, who attend the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Fair at the school in July which she thought was super and which you will have seen further detail on in the Headmaster's electronic newsletter at the end of term. However, Shirley's eagle eye for detail did register that the work benches in the Science block could benefit from a bit of TLC 😊

Ditcham Cycle Club



In my last newsletter I mentioned the Ditcham Cycling Club which was established and run for many years by Will Stretch. I was delighted to receive a call from Will who told me that following some recent calculations, it has been established that in the years between 2005 and 2017 the cycle club has raised an absolutely magnificent **£250,000** for charities through its members' participation in the annual Hayling to Paris Cycle Ride. I'm sure you will agree that this is a fantastic achievement and a credit to the young people, their parents and staff who have taken part in the ride over these past twelve years – congratulations to them all.

WELCOME: **New members:** I am delighted to welcome the following new members to the Association: **Helen Fairley**, former Prep Class Teacher; **Rosie Millar**, former Head of Latin; **Evelyn Cripps**, MFL Teacher and **Jill Poyner**, Science Teacher who all retired at the end of the summer term this year. Also joining us are: **Yvette Dall'Omo**, former Head of Drama, **Rev Bernard Fray**, **Paula Frith** former Head of Design & Technology, **Liz Millar** a former PE Teacher living now in her native Scotland and another Scot, **Anne Coleman**, former Head of MFL. Finally, I am delighted to say that **Andrew Rowley** and his wife **Katie** have joined our ranks. You will know, I'm sure, that Andrew was Head Teacher from 2011 until 2016 and Katie was a member of the PE Department. This brings our total membership now to 74 members.

Forthcoming Events:

The Headmaster has extended an invitation to all Past Staff Association Members for the following Autumn Term Events.

Harvest Festival	Friday 21st September	8:45am for tea and coffee followed by the Service from 9:00-10:00am, South Downs Hall
Open Morning	Saturday 6th October	10:00am – 1:00pm
Armistice Assembly	Friday 9th November	3:00-3:45pm, Martin Pryce Building
Guitar Concert	Wed 14th November	6:30-8:30pm in the Court Theatre
Stansted House Christmas Fair	Friday 23rd November	5:30-7:30pm – Ditcham musicians will be performing
Petersfield Joint Schools' Concert for Save the Children	Friday 30th November	7:30 -9:00pm at Churcher's College*
Friends' Christmas Fayre	Saturday 1st December	12:00 – 3:30pm at the school
Infant Nativity	Thursday 6th & Friday 7th December	2:00-3:00pm
Carol Service	Friday 14th December	2:15pm, St James' Church, Emsworth



* This is a ticketed event and tickets can be purchased through the school office. Please contact Lisa Tosdevine via: lisa.tosdevine@ditchampark.com or on 01730 825659. If you would like to attend any of the other events please let me know via: paststaff@ditchampark.com so that I can liaise with the school directly. Thank you.



Coffee Morning

I have arranged a coffee morning for any interested members at the Pavilion Tea Room, Stansted Park, Rowlands Castle on **Thursday 11th October** at 10:00am. I hope that some of our new members will be able to come along and there will be a table reserved in the main seating area. Lunch service starts at 11:30am so please feel free to arrive any time from 10:00am onwards. If you think you are likely to come I'd be grateful to know at your earliest convenience so that I have an idea of numbers. Please email me letting me know what time you expect to arrive via: paststaff@ditchampark.com. Thank you.

Remember, do please keep in touch with your news, photos and ideas – it's lovely to hear from you.

Best wishes.
Alison Chapman
Past Staff Association Co-ordinator