

# Old Alfredian Reception: July 2006



## Diary

All Alfredians and their families are warmly invited to the following events.

For further information contact the Alumni Office  
020 8457 5282/5200 or [oa@kingalfred.org.uk](mailto:oa@kingalfred.org.uk)

### Autumn Term 2006

#### Thursday 16 November

Soloist Concert  
Main Hall 19.00

#### Wednesday 22 November

'Unplugged' Concert  
Main Hall 19.00

#### Tuesday 28 November

King Alfred School Society AGM  
Lower School Hall 20.00

#### Saturday 2 December

A day-long event, 'People's London', held to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Raphael Samuel's (OA 1945-1952) death.

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1  
10.00-22.00

17.00 The Raphael Samuel Memorial Lecture:  
*The Redemptive Powers of Violence?*  
*Carlyle, Dickens and Marx on the Legacy of the French Revolution*

[www.rafael-samuel.org.uk](http://www.rafael-samuel.org.uk)  
or email [b.taylor@uel.ac.uk](mailto:b.taylor@uel.ac.uk)

#### Tuesday 5 December

#### Wednesday 6 December

#### Friday 8 December

#### Saturday 9 December

Dido and Aeneas  
Phoenix Theatre 19.00

#### Friday 8 December

Christmas Craft Fair  
Main Hall 15.00

#### Wednesday 13 December

Christmas Concert  
Main Hall 19.00

### Summer Term 2007

#### Saturday 30 June

Open Day and Summer Event 13.00-16.00

Old Alfredian Reception 16.00-18.00

Note this is a new date instead of 7 July as listed in the spring 2006 *Alfredians*.

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The copy deadline for the next issue is 1 March 2007.

We always welcome news from Old Alfredians for publication in *Alfredians*, which should be sent to

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# Alfredians

A NEWSLETTER FOR KING ALFRED SCHOOL ALUMNI

Autumn 2006

As we start the 2006/7 academic year the school's roll is 607 pupils, the highest number of pupils in our history. I have been looking through the Annual Reports in our archive, in particular the years 1936, 1946, 1956 ... up to 1996. It is interesting to pick up on the issues of the time: numbers in the school being the first; then staff – those leaving and new staff members, often including an Old Alfredian; exam results and news of pupils who have left. Buildings; trips; initiatives – a cyclical picture emerges. Some issues had a much greater importance than now, for example, epidemics and their harmful after effects and complications for staff and pupils. Music and stage

productions are always covered in detail and their importance continues today. As I meet prospective parents and talk about the sort of education we give at K.A.S. I am always asked about our exam results. However, I feel that it would be helpful if I could let parents know how our pupils are doing after they have left us, to give a fuller picture of the school. We have included a questionnaire in this magazine to help build this picture. Some 'find their feet' immediately, others take longer. Please reply either using the form, post card, letter or email, especially those who have left in the last 5 years. It would also be interesting to know how K.A.S. and its ethos has been an influence both

academically and socially. I noted in the 1986 Annual Report that Gabbittas Thring was commissioned to draw up a questionnaire to canvas parental opinion of the school. The response was a bit of a shock – only 36% of parents replied. The low return rate came as a surprise to Gabbittas Thring who were used to an 80% response! To get the ball rolling, I am listing our 2006 leaver's destinations. We wish them well and look forward to receiving their results in due course!

**Dawn Moore**

Head



## 2006 Leavers

Leah Acheson Roberts	Byam Shaw	Art Foundation
Angelica Bergese	Birmingham Conservatoire	Music
Carla Bradley	Manchester	Ancient History & Archaeology
Humfrey Brandes		Post A-level application
Paul Burke	Imperial College	Civil & Environmental Engineering
Katy Cummings	Durham	Anthropology
Yingying Dai	UCL	Economics
Natalia Eaton	UCL	Law
Dominique English	Dublin	English/Philosophy
Rory Hackett	Oxford Brookes	International Business Studies*
Lauren Hales	Nottingham	Architectural Environmental Engineering
Victor Hall	Sussex	French & Spanish
Joby Hollis	Sussex	Chemistry
Joshua Jaswon	Guildhall	Music
Jessica Kaplan	Oxford	PPE
Nick Kirkby		Post A-level application
Hannah Kluman	Leeds Metropolitan	Film and Moving Image
Sophie Levy		Post A-level application
Oliver Levy	Sussex	History/Sociology
Daniel Lynton	Leeds	Accounting & Finance
Chloe Madeley	Leeds	Film Studies

Anna Maguire		Post A-level Oxbridge application
Matthew McDougal	Salford	Sports Equipment Design
Lily Meades	Leeds	Sociology
Jacob Mohun-Himmelweit	University of East Anglia	International Development
Yessica Marks		Post A-level application
Rob McSweeney	City & Guilds	Art Foundation
Phoebe Morris		Post A-level application
Azlan Mustapha		Post A-level application
Alexis Nearchou		Post A-level application
Wanda Orme	Brunel	International Politics*
Buster Palmano	Brunel	Product Design Engineering
Sam Reynolds		Post A-level application
Caia Ryszkowska		Post A-level application
Ryan Saban	Salford	Aviation Technology & Pilot Studies
Fangyuan Shou	London South Bank	Accounting & Finance
Anton Spice	Byam Shaw	Art Foundation & Oxbridge application for English
Kitty Stafford-Clark		Post A-level application
Jemima Stevens	Birmingham	Geography
Louisa Tarn	Nottingham	Economic/Hispanic Studies*
Imogen Taylor		Oxbridge application
Olivia Taylor-Weale	University of the Arts	Post A-level Oxbridge application
Samantha Tigner-Orchudesch	Royal Academy of Music	Photography
Richard Vockins		Music
Karla Walker	University of East Anglia	Post A-level application
Sam Walsh	Kent	American Studies
Sam Warner		Law
William Watson	Leeds Metropolitan	Post A-level application
Nathan Wood	Leeds	Politics
Aaron Zipper	Leeds	English & History
		Economics & Management

\* Withdrew from their offer

fact, main feeder roots and will affect the tree if cut. This kind of care meant that the whole structure had a minimal effect on the surrounding trees and characterised the level of care that went into the whole project.

The most dramatic and obvious feature of the building is the sedum roof. Sedum, which is a ground cover plant, is a wonderful roofing material as it increases the roof insulation, provides a habitat for ladybirds and butterflies (especially rare butterflies), reduces the run-off of surface water and the overall visual impact of the building.

On one end of the building, facing the park, are two large solar panels. These will provide all our hot water. The walls and roof are insulated with a special product made from newspaper. Recycled carpet and natural rubber have been used as floor coverings and the gutters are galvanised, being more carbon neutral than plastic. The whole building is clad in cedar wood which, apart from being consistent with the other buildings at Ivy Wood, will help it to sit more sympathetically on the woodland site. Even the windows fit our brief, they are called Eco Plus windows. These are just some of the features that make it a sustainable building.

Of course, as with any building, there are compromises but the overall intention is clear and the philosophy of the building is consistent with what we are trying to do in the department. So when we are talking about eco design or sustainable technology we want to be able to point to examples that we are talking about and use the building as a teaching aid. We also want the building to set the tone for the department and in a sense to be a design role model. For this reason we have called it a teaching building. However, this does not just refer to sustainability. Another way in which the building teaches is through some of the exposed structure which demonstrates important structural principles. Although the building is mainly a Design and Technology centre it will have a range of other functions and these had to be considered as

## New Design and Technology Building

We started discussing the design for the new building about three years ago and one of the features of the process has been the close relationship between everyone concerned. At the beginning we were having discussions with Suzanne and Geoff, the school architects, several times a week. It was the closeness of this relationship that has played such a large part in the success of the finished building. With the purchase of the Ivy Wood site we

could expand some of our core ideas. In particular we wanted to develop our work on sustainable technology and strengthen its role as one of our guiding principles. For this we wanted a building that was consistent with those principles as far as that was possible. As a result we have a building that, from an environmental point of view, sits very lightly on the site. It sits on 32 very thin concrete piles. The holes for these piles had to be dug by hand for the first few feet, checking for tree roots. If any root thicker than an inch was encountered the hole had to be moved to a clear spot. Amazingly, roots of such a small size are, in



part of the design. First of all it will provide a home for Middle School PSHE (Personal Social Health Education) and the studios have been adapted for this purpose. The same studios will be used by Reception and Year 1 for their ICT (Information Computer Technology) lessons and we have found ways to make this possible. Adaptations will be made to the workshops so that Reception and Year 1 can use them for their Design and Technology lessons. The school architect's office will also be in the building bringing the real world of design into the centre of our activities.

As you can imagine we are absolutely delighted with the result of the finished building and cannot thank Suzanne and Geoff and the whole team enough for the sensitive and long suffering way they have worked with us over the years to produce a building of real flair and beauty.

**Stephen de Brett**

Head of CDT Department



## Namibia 2006

On 7 July, Jamila Yousef, 14 year 11 students and I left for Namibia. This was the third K.A.S. trip to Namibia, continuing our work with Elephant Human Relations Aid (EHRA) at the A.Gariseb Primary School, some 6 hours drive north-west of Windhoek.

We found last year's refurbishment of the toilet blocks and classrooms still intact, and received a positive and warm welcome from the 'learners', who organised a cultural evening and entertained us with singing, dancing and demonstrations of the marriage ceremonies of the main tribes. Like most schools in southern Africa it is a boarding school. This year our students helped to refurbish the hostel where their students stay during term time. The hostel was chosen because K.A.S. students in 2005 were struck by how stark the conditions were – bare concrete floors and cracked, crumbling walls – for students as young as five to live in. By the end of the week six rooms and both

shower blocks had been painted, including elephant murals in the shower blocks. Broken windows in the hostel were replaced, and new taps and shower fittings were installed by other EHRA volunteers who were working alongside our students.

The school secretary, Magda, has started to use one of the PCs donated by K.A.S. parents for school administration and notices. Money raised by K.A.S. students is to be used to build a PC room, with tables and power points for 20 PCs donated by a Swiss company. They are to be installed by a Namibian charity, SchoolNet, which will network them and provide much needed staff training. They will run Linux, not Windows, an increasingly common approach in developing countries.

This year the elephants were much harder to see. Record amounts of rain on higher farm land had kept them out of the river bed for longer than normal in the winter because water is plentiful. In many places the country was

unrecognisable with large areas of the desert covered in white, wispy grass. This seemed to help our students in the second week's 'challenge' phase: they set a new record for completing the 26km unguided hike.

There is still much to be done in the school and we are looking forward to returning next year, and seeing how the ICT project will continue and whether the internet can be installed with the help of SchoolNet. Jamila is taking a sabbatical during the 2006/7 academic year and will be returning to Namibia to work with EHRA for three months. Finally, thank you to everyone who has supported this project and we hope we can rely on your support in the years to come. For further information on EHRA's work in Namibia, see their website [www.desertelephant.org](http://www.desertelephant.org)

**Ed Webb**

Head of History and Government & Politics

## Angela Retires from Admissions

After 28 years of walking through the King Alfred gates I am leaving on 31st July. I first came in 1978 when Suzy, my eldest daughter, was 4. I left her in the Reception class and walked down the driveway crying. Jan Howe (a stranger to me but a current parent then) came up to me and asked what the matter was. I told her I had just left my little girl. She asked who the teachers were and I said Nancy and Audrey. "Don't worry; she couldn't be in better hands." For me this sums up the school.

My younger daughter, Lisa, came at 4 and was discovered to be dyslexic. She has gone on to become a screen writer and Suzy a TV producer. I was on the Parent/Staff committee for 4 years and became chairman of Parent/Staff, joined Council and worked on the

Grounds and Buildings Committee. Lisa was just in her last year at school when I resigned from all committees intending to support her in her 2nd year GCSEs.

One morning I was standing in Pam's office when she mentioned the Admissions Secretary had gone. "Can't I do this, it's only showing people around?" say I. Pam gets Francis (the then Head) and he says "Yes, show people around and send out prospectuses." What fibbers they turned out to be! The phone never stops, I have to work a computer, negotiate with teachers for children's visits and listen to parents whose children are geniuses, being bullied, are emotionally or physically unwell, and who think King Alfred is the answer to any problem.

I think this is a wonderful school with some exceptional, dedicated and patient teachers.

The children can walk out of here with various certificates but more than that they can leave here with confidence in themselves and the ability to speak with dustmen and kings.

Thank you for having me.

### Angela Ratner



## Goodbye to Brenda

Brenda first came to work at King Alfred's in 1985, just about the same time that Pauline put in her first appearance in the laundrette in Albert Square; when the school still had an 01 STD code; Nikki Archer was in charge, and Brenda started on the princely sum of £43.35 per week.

When I joined the school in November 2002, with some trepidation I ate my first school lunch

in years – and was pleasantly surprised. I was introduced to Sheelagh, Brenda, Beatrice, Thelma and Teresa. Sharon, Katie, Amina and Jose were still to join us.

Slowly I learned the duties of a bursar. Before Tom Bloch retired in December he explained to me that I had a very important duty to fulfil – it wasn't that I had to build 4 classrooms by the following September; nor to appoint a deputy head in succession to Dawn. But I had to appoint Sheelagh's successor and my whole credibility with the school would depend upon it! Brenda saw me through: she spotted Stuart and his fate was sealed.

It would be very easy to take the catering team for granted. They make it seem so easy. Each day they produce over 600 lunches, breakfast for the estates team and sandwiches for meetings and, on occasion, packed lunches for the Lower School. But it isn't easy – it requires meticulous planning, good cooking and a lot of hard work.

Brenda optimises these qualities. She has been a rock on which the school has been founded. She has helped her colleagues along the way and seen them grow and develop. We shall all miss Brenda as part of the very important support team of this school. We wish Brenda the happiest of retirements, and that she will have the time and opportunity to fulfil all her dreams in the next phase in her life.

But there is a postscript, and I think it says something about K.A.S. In my research of this piece I looked up Brenda's personnel file. As I closed it, my eyes fell on the reverse side of a piece of paper in her file. It was the pupil list for the 1985 Reception Class. Among the names was Joanna Silver, who starts this year as a Year 1 teacher: at K.A.S. what goes round comes round. We all wish that everything good comes around to Brenda Chaloner in her retirement!

### Kate Alcock

Bursar

# Childhood Freedoms and Adult Fears

## Growing up in a risk-averse society

This is an edited version of a talk given by Tim Gill on 4 May 2006 at K.A.S. You can read more about Tim Gill's work on [www.rethinkingchildhood.com](http://www.rethinkingchildhood.com)

My favourite examples of excessive risk aversion – all genuine – include bans on playing conkers, egg boxes, toilet rolls, and even making daisy chains! These are, of course, extreme cases, which is why we hear about them. But they are important, because they are a symptom of a much wider malaise which is widespread and ultimately damaging to children. Firstly, we underestimate children's ability to get to grips with the people and world around them, in particular their ability to bounce back from adversity. Secondly, we grown-ups have become ensnared in a blame culture that leaves everyone involved in children's lives afraid of being held responsible for anything bad that might happen to them.

My talk is in two parts. The first part looks at physical risk: specifically, at how risk aversion has shaped the physical environments and challenges that we offer to children, especially in playgrounds. The second part looks at social and emotional risks that come from children's interactions with each other.

### Part 1: Playgrounds

Back in the 1970s Esther Rantzen led a campaign for safer playgrounds, using her role as presenter of 'That's Life' to illustrate the supposed dangers by dropping porcelain plates onto tarmac surfaces. Schools, councils, safety experts and Government swung into action. The result? Two decades of dull, dismal playgrounds and bored children.

I've worked in children's play for over a decade and for most of that time what I call the myth of absolute safety has been the primary goal of playground designers and managers. This

safety-at-all-costs mindset has led to the astonishing fact that in the UK up to half of the total cost of a new playground goes on safety surfacing. This is despite the incredibly low level of serious accidents on public playgrounds, and in spite of the fact that the jury is out on whether safety surfaces do anything to prevent serious injuries.

As a result, children are being denied the chance to learn some key physical competences, quite possibly leaving them less safe as they grow up. Here's how architect Helle Nebelong, the Danish designer of beautiful public spaces in Copenhagen, puts it:

*"I am convinced that standardised play equipment is dangerous. When the distance between all the rungs on the climbing net or the ladder is exactly the same, the child has no need to concentrate on where he puts his feet. This lesson cannot be carried over into all the knobbly and asymmetrical forms with which one is confronted throughout life."*

Once you vanquish the myth of absolute safety, the question becomes one of balance. The task facing playground designers is giving children challenging, stimulating environments where they can test themselves and take risks, but where the likelihood of serious harm is kept to a minimum. This task is not easy. Children have a natural appetite for risk. No child would ever learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly driven by an instinctive impulse to learn new skills and competences regardless of the risk of injury. As I said, the possibility of severe injury in a playground can never be entirely ruled out. But that is no reason to stop building them. And it is no reason to build them so 'safe' that even a porcelain plate will not break if dropped.

I suspect that I am preaching to the converted here. After all, no-one who visits K.A.S. – or reads its prospectus – can fail to be struck by the adventurous appearance of its playgrounds. I hope to give some insights into just what it is about these play spaces that makes them so special and valuable. Part of what makes them

special – and here I turn to my second theme – is what the spaces allow in social and emotional terms.

### Part 2: Social Interactions

This second section begins with a true story from my own childhood. I was about 11 years old and was with two or three other boys playing about in a field on the edge of the village where we all lived. I decided – most likely in an attempt to impress the other boys, who were a bit more streetwise than me – that it would be a fun thing to do to climb up a tree and then urinate from the top. Truth to tell I was a bit of a sensitive soul back then, and, whatever my initial motivation, afterwards I felt somewhat ashamed of my actions and swore my friends to secrecy. Inevitably, some weeks later I fell out with one of the boys and he took great pleasure in telling the rest of my class about my performance. But my classmates' reaction was, in effect, to ask what all the fuss was about, and the incident quickly faded from everyone's memory except mine. What did I learn from this event? For a start, I learnt a lot about which friends I could trust with a secret. I also learnt that my peers had rather different standards of behaviour than I had thought. These are both valuable insights for a just slightly pre-adolescent boy.

This story illustrates of the themes of my talk: how children and young people learn about the complex, implicit set of rules, codes which collectively makes up what I will call 'everyday morality'. I believe that children need freedom and licence if they are to properly get to grips with everyday morality, and that adults need to have a much more sophisticated approach to all this than they do at the moment. Childhood memories offer insights far beyond their nostalgia value – of the importance of giving children time, space and real freedom. In the moral sphere, as in other spheres of child development, children need a foretaste of the autonomy and independence that will eventually come their way as adults.

I use the term 'children's play' just as much for the hanging about of teenagers as for the more



recognisably playful behaviour of younger children – in the full knowledge that few young people would talk about their free time as 'play'.

One of the ways that children's play is distinctive and special is that it is children's taste of freedom. Choice, freedom and self-direction are at the heart of what we mean by play. This freedom is not, of course, absolute. One problem for adults is that children's play is not always about nice, warm-glow things like building sandcastles, climbing to the top of the space net or making chocolate chip cookies. Sometimes it is about destroying someone else's sandcastles, fighting for the right to get to the top of the net or stealing those cookies. Children can be selfish, competitive, rude and nasty when they play, as well as sympathetic, cooperative, respectful and nice. Play involves all the emotions. When children play, what they choose to do is nearly always important. But is not always pretty: children can be horrible to each other and to adults. They always have been and they always will be. Crucially, children's horribleness is quite different to grown-up horribleness, though it may sometimes look very similar. It is one expression of an important childhood learning process.

When we talk about children's "social and moral development" this dry, academic-sounding term embraces a vast and complex world of cues, responses, rules, conventions, emotions, understandings, beliefs and desires. And it points to an equally vast range of life skills. Here is just a handful:

- Knowing when you are being invited to join in a game and when you are being discouraged;
- Working out when to stand up for yourself and argue with someone you disagree with, and when it's better to back off;
- Dealing with criticism, ridicule and the abuse of power;
- Knowing the difference between mock anger and real anger, and between play fighting and real fighting (I'll come back to this);
- Being able to take a joke – and knowing

what to do when the joke goes too far;

- Learning about loyalty – to friends, to family, to other people and groups – and about how far loyalty can justify actions that might harm or hurt those outside your circle;
- Learning how to respond to, and where appropriate resist, peer pressure;
- Knowing how to work together to achieve a common goal;
- Understanding what counts as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in different groups and contexts, and why;
- Learning who you can trust and how far you can trust them.



You could not hope to teach children such an impressive set of social skills. But children learn these skills through play when they are given the chance to practice them – a lot of practice. Much of what looks to adults like bad behaviour is simply children practicing, getting the hang of all these skills. Like my aerial water display, it's sometimes unclear what's being practiced or why, but it's nearly always important and valuable. If we watch them so closely and jump in so often that they never have the chance to see social situations through, we will severely limit their ability to pick up all these skills.

Now I want to look briefly at the range of roles that adults have in helping children develop their own everyday morality – especially parents

and teachers. Their most important role is that of role models. Adults also hold power over children's lives; to a lesser or greater extent they meet children's basic physical needs – food, clothes, shelter – and many of their emotional needs. As a result of this power, adults are often in a position to intervene to help children or to stop them from getting hurt. Similarly, adults are called in by children to arbitrate in disputes – something I'll come back to later. Adult power also means that they take on the role of gatekeepers in children's lives: they allow some experiences, and prevent access to others. Adults can teach and guide children – though as I've hinted already, I think



that the scope for this is more limited than we think. Finally, adults are, in a straightforward sense, human beings with whom children interact as fellow human beings.

So, to the big question: how should adults intervene in the development of children's everyday moral competences? Though I don't want to give you a manual, I do want to propose one overarching principle, and draw a couple of corollaries from that. The overarching principle is that adults should aim to help children to become morally self-reliant; in other words, to make their own way through the moral mazes they encounter, rather than unquestioningly following the rules and prescriptions of others.

My first corollary is that adults should aim to help children and young people to appreciate the consequences of their actions. And children are hardly likely to come to a full appreciation of the consequences of their actions if they are denied the space and time to follow them

through. My second corollary – and one I'm going to explore in some detail - is that adults should be clear about why they are doing what they are doing when they get involved in children's play, and how this might affect children. This is where things get complicated.

To show this, let's take a fictitious scenario involving two children in a school playground - I'll call them Tony and Dave. Tony has given Dave a swift, hard and deliberate kick during a game of football. The playground supervisor sees this, and – significantly - both Tony and Dave know she has seen it. Does she do something, or does she let it pass? In such



circumstances – where children know an adult has witnessed some behaviour that is clearly unacceptable – it is almost always right for the adult to act quickly and decisively, and almost never right for the adult to ignore the behaviour. What action they should take is another matter but they should do something. To do nothing is to give a clear and unhelpful signal to both children that Tony's behaviour is acceptable.

But say the playground supervisor sees the kick, but neither Tony nor Dave realise the episode has been witnessed? Here things get more complicated. My key point is that sometimes, it might be reasonable for her to do nothing. For this will allow the situation to unfold in ways that might help the children involved to learn or develop their understanding and social skills. One of the problems with a zero tolerance approach is precisely that it does not recognise the value in letting children learn for themselves what might happen if they are unpleasant to each other. Of course, there are times when intervening might be the right

course of action – most obviously if there is a risk the situation will escalate dangerously, but also perhaps if it is part of a pattern of behaviour that warrants getting involved.

Here's another tricky scenario. Tony tells the playground supervisor that Dave has been bullying, victimising, or hurting him. But she has not seen any evidence of this. What should she do? Again, I cannot provide a formula. But I suggest that one reasonable response in some circumstances may be to suggest that the children try to sort it out amongst themselves. This is not as callous as it sounds. It fosters children's moral self-reliance. It also conveys



the expectation that the children concerned indeed may have the capacity to sort it out – a helpful message. And it makes clear to children that adults will be wary of getting involved in what may be a complex dispute, where there may be no obvious rights or wrongs and where there is the possibility of scores being settled.

The messages that adults give to children about their ability to handle difficult situations can have a powerful influence on children's moral and social self-reliance. This is why I worry about approaches to bullying that suggest or imply that children should always tell adults whenever anyone does something unpleasant to them. Giving children the message that bullying is something they will never be able to deal with on their own, and that they always have to get an adult to sort things out, is not

going to help them on the road – the sometimes-painful road – to learning how to look after themselves in the face of hostility or threats. And there is good research evidence that over-protected children are indeed more likely to become, for instance, victims of bullying.

I want to be very clear here. I am not saying that adults should always tell children they can overcome bullying or violence without any help. I am not saying that children shouldn't be told that it's ok to ask for help if they feel they need it. I am not for a moment saying that children should be left unsupported on the basis that bullying toughens them up. What I am saying is that children should be encouraged and supported in learning how to make their own judgements about what would help them deal with difficult situations. Part of this involves getting children to ask themselves the question 'what can I do by myself?' and to come up with some helpful answers. Apart from anything else, this acknowledges children's own deeply held wishes and views on the subject. But there will always be occasions when they cannot 'sort it out amongst themselves', or where it would be wrong even to suggest they do.

So far I have argued that adults need to be thoughtful and careful about when and how they intervene in social situations where children are learning what we might call 'social survival' skills. I also believe that it is essential for children to have some time when, to all intents and purposes, they are outside of the adult gaze altogether. I think that it is vital for 'responsible adults' sometimes to be absent – to be looking the other way, as it were – if children are to have the fullest opportunity to play freely and independently, without the distortions that come from knowing that a grown-up is watching.

This is all the more crucial when you realise how much more constrained and scheduled children's lives have become in the last generation or two. Here's one of the more striking statistics: in a single generation, the



"home habitat" of typical eight-year-olds - the area in which they are able to travel on their own - has shrunk to one-ninth of its former size. As I wrote in a comment piece in the Guardian in April last year, these changes give children a cruel double whammy. They frustrate children's natural urge to explore and push boundaries. And they expose the resultant behaviour to the ever more judgmental gaze of adults. If we are not to deprive children of the raw material they need to make sense of their growing moral and social engagement with the people and world around them, we have to take some risks ourselves: to recognise the value of what I called in that article 'benign neglect'.

This point about sometimes not interfering is absolutely critical. So I want to dwell on it a little longer, by looking at one type of social play behaviour where we're getting things badly wrong, with damaging consequences. That is where children explore conflict and power relations through physical, social play - rough-and-tumble play, play fighting and gun and superhero play. Psychologists looking at rough-and-tumble play have known for years that adults are very poor – and children very good – at judging the difference between play-fighting and real fighting. This matters because there's growing evidence that such play, far from being a simple mimicry of unpleasant adult behaviour, in fact has developmental origins and benefits. Specifically, it helps children learn how to form and maintain friendships, learn about their position and status in their peer group and develop their wider social skills. Just think how much a child learns about understanding facial expressions, tone of voice and body language, for example, through engaging in play fighting. The practice of restricting or banning such behaviour – common in most nurseries and pre-schools – stops children from learning some key social skills. It can lead to a form of learned helplessness, whereby children become dependent on adults to step in, having been denied the chance to learn and apply these social codes and conventions for themselves. Worse still, banning play fighting inevitably sets up damaging relationships with children who may then become labelled as difficult,

perversely increasing the likelihood of longer-term behavioural problems.

There is a real and unavoidable challenge here. How do adults tell the difference between play and real fighting? How do we know when to step in, and when to hold back? As I said, I don't think there are any easy answers. It is possible in this scenario to come up with easy answers. One is not to allow any fighting. The other is its opposite, the rule of the jungle. But both these positions strike the wrong balance between risks and benefits. So we are left in the position of having to make balanced judgements based on our (sometimes false) beliefs and attitudes and our (always incomplete) knowledge of the facts. We hope we get it right most of the time. But we will certainly get it wrong some of the time.

Our problems around play fighting are both a demonstration of how we are going wrong and a cautionary tale of the possible consequences of our mistakes. We are going wrong for two reasons. First, we have too little faith in what the K.A.S. prospectus succinctly calls "the natural way in which children go about the business of learning"; in this case, their capacity to learn for themselves the subtleties of getting along and resolving conflicts in a peer group. Second, we adults are too quick to step in and stop any possibility of hurt or harm, too quick to blame each other, and too categorical in laying blame. Evidence of harm is ipso facto evidence of negligence - just as in playgrounds, where an injury is taken to be proof that someone is to blame. But hurt and upset are not always the result of negligence. Sometimes they are a justifiable consequence of a sound judgement.

To summarise, we need to be honest that being a good parent or teacher involves giving children a taste of real freedom. We need to remember that childhood is not always pleasant, and neither are children. In doing this, we need to be aware of the effect and influence that we have as adults in children's play and free time. We need to be aware of how changes in childhood are limiting children's opportunities to socialize and learn through their play. In all of

this, we need to take a balanced approach that avoids the dangers of overprotecting children and both depriving them of freedom now and leaving them ill-prepared in the longer term. And our guiding light, our North Star in navigating this difficult territory is to help children to become more morally and socially self-reliant and to appreciate better the consequences of their actions.

Which brings me to my final question: what does all this mean for K.A.S.? Returning to the twin themes of my talk, I hope I've convinced you that you need to preserve the rich, challenging and even slightly dangerous offers you make to students in the school's playgrounds. But you also need to ensure you maintain a shared, coherent vision for children: that you take seriously your school's belief in children's natural eagerness to learn and continue to reflect on and discuss these issues. And an essential part of this is being prepared to give children the space to make mistakes and learn from them: to take the first, essential steps in allowing them, in the words of KAS's prospectus, "to take responsibility for planning their own lives".

If we take this K.A.S. maxim seriously – and I think it's essential that we do – we first of all have to give children the chance to try and fail. It comes down to this: how can we expect children to grow up to become adults who take responsibility for planning their own lives, if we never give them any real responsibility as children – if we are constantly watching over them, ready to jump in at the first hint of trouble? After all, childhood is a journey, and its destination is autonomous adulthood. Sooner or later, we all – parents and teachers - have to let our children make their own way in life, while we wave them goodbye, our fingers metaphorically crossed behind our backs. Do we really think we're doing the best by them if throughout their childhood we deny them the freedom that our hearts tell us was such a magical ingredient in our own lives?

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## Suzanne Bolas

October saw us sadly saying goodbye to Suzanne Bolas, the school's architectural advisor.

Suzanne made it physically possible for the school to grow to its current size, incorporate new and green technologies and changes in teaching methods. Many will associate her with the big projects she designed and oversaw – including the beautiful, child-friendly classrooms and playground at Ivy Wood and more recently, the new CDT Building.

However, to do so is to overlook the many smaller projects where she inventively made the most of very little; creating space and light and attractive working environments. Suzanne saw that buildings were painted, blinds installed and that taps worked. Without this attention to detail, the school could not have functioned.

Suzanne's leaving party took place after her last Grounds and Buildings meeting. Chair, Stephen Brandes presented Suzanne with a fitting, but not exactly long lasting memento of her time at K.A.S. – a cake, of the combined Ivy Wood and Manor Wood sites. I'm afraid that by the time the committee and staff got hold of it, there were only a few crumbs left. Thank you Suzanne for everything you have done for the school. Enjoy your retirement and do drop into see us from time to time.

**Kate Alcock**

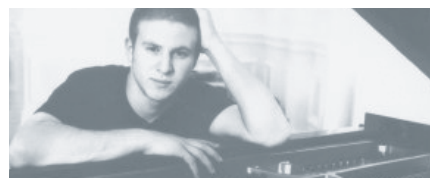
Bursar



## Oli Rockberger

Lots of readers will remember Axemonster appearances, recitals and "call-overs" by singer/songwriter and pianist Oli Rockberger (26) who was at KAS from 1986-1998. Oli won a full tuition scholarship to attend Boston's world famous Berklee College of Music in 1999, and went on to graduate in 2004 with a 1st class Degree (Jazz Composition, Performance and Music Business). Oli is establishing himself as a quality international performer with many high profile performances to his credit, with some recent highlights including - The Phoenix Jazz Festival (Japan), Brecon Jazz Festival (UK), City Showcase (London, opening for Hamish Stewart) as well as performances alongside Jackie De Shannon, Frank Mc Comb, Branford Marsalis and Abe Laboriel amongst others. Oli has released two independent CD's

as a solo artist - "Hush Now" (2005) and "The Oli Rockberger Band" (2003) - both have garnered much positive press and radio airplay, including Jazz FM, BBC Radio and numerous online US music podcasts. Both disks are available for purchase on iTUNES and at [www.cdbaby.com](http://www.cdbaby.com). Oli currently lives in Brooklyn, New York where he is an active performer on the NY scene as a solo artist, and as a live and studio sideman musician. For more information about upcoming performances with his group in NYC and other shows, and for news, audio clips etc, visit Oli on the web at – [www.myspace.com/olirockberger](http://www.myspace.com/olirockberger) and at [www.olirockberger.com](http://www.olirockberger.com).



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## Sri Lanka July 2006

Students and staff from K.A.S. last visited Kinniya King Alfred Pre-School in October 2005. We knew before we left that with the political situation was not looking good and getting access to Kinniya, a small Muslim community in the Tamil area of the north east, was going to be difficult. Still, not wanting to give up, my wife, Isabelle, Jiaur Choudhury (IT and Computing at K.A.S.), and a group of K.A.S. students flew to Sri Lanka. We were met in Colombo by Sameera Jayasinghe, our Project Director. After discussing group safety with the British High Commission it was decided that it would be impossible for the whole group to go to Kinniya, but Jiaur and Isabelle went for one day to deliver books, equipment and toys for the children in the school. Francis, the Head of Kinniya King Alfred Pre-School, and who has been central to the development of the school will visit K.A.S. this autumn. His visit will help keep us focused on this project when the current political situation means that it is impossible for us to return as we had hoped. It will give Francis the opportunity to work alongside Lower School teachers and learn new



pedagogical methods and approaches. Kinniya King Alfred Pre-School has just been inspected and the report was excellent – the quality of its teaching and pupil care was said to be the best in the region. Francis and the teachers are working under very difficult conditions – bullets have come through the school walls, but fortunately no one has been hurt, but the threat is real. Earlier this month 5 NGOs were killed by Tamil Separatists in a neighbouring village. Despite this, Francis refuses to be distracted from the needs and care of the children and staff - an inspiring example to all of us here at K.A.S. Other good news is that just before Francis left for London, he took Sahana to visit the heart consultant who operated on her last October, who said she has recovered successfully from the operation and is in excellent health.

**Julian Cottenden**

Deputy Head

## NEWS OF OAs AND CORRESPONDENCE



**Correction:** Paul Davis on the right in this photograph was incorrectly captioned as his friend Howard Davis in the last issue – apologies to both!

**Roland Boissevain 1947-1949** His 34-year career spanned from the switchboard to deputy chairman of Merchant Adventures Ltd/Merlin Lighting Limited. He has sailed for over 50 years, including 2 Atlantic crossings, now suffering from motor neuron disease. Lives in Bosham, West Sussex.

**Peter Seglow 1945-1953** writes, "You'd be unlikely to have heard of Le Tignet. It's 5 miles to the east of Grasse in the south of France. The population of the old village is certainly under 1,000. Yet it is home to two Old Alfredians and has been visited by two others all from the same class.

I first came here in 1991 having fallen in love with the area. Together with my partner, I bought half an acre of land and we built a small house. 5 years later, after my retirement from a career in academic life it has become our virtually permanent home. David Waterman and his wife Sheila bought a house in the same village in 2002. Julie Heyting (now Julie James Bailey) and Pat Essex (now Pat Issacs) have visited one or other (or both) of us here. David and I still talk about our time as K.A.S. We have fond memories of those early post war days at school.

If, all those years ago, someone had told me that four of us from class would meet up again

in the south of France nearly 60 years later I would have been wholly unconvinced. I still can't quite believe it."



Photo circa 1951. Names (as in 1951), from the left – back row: David Waterman, Howard Davies, John Tunnel, Eric Zilberkweit, Francis Morland, Felix Moore, Peter Seglow. Front row: Sheila Woolf, Sally Harris, Anthea Ionides, Sally Rapson, Pat Essex.



David Waterman (Waserman) and Peter Seglow in Le Tignet, France 2006



**John Tunnell 1947-1952** writes, "I was delighted to read the article by Howard David on page 6 (Alfredians spring 2006). Howard was a classmate of mine and so was Anthea Goldsmith (née Ionides) whom he met at the summer 2005 Reunion. This prompted me to look out the photograph of our class taken, I think, by Felix Moore circa 1950. (From left to right: Sally Rapson, Howard Davis, Anthea Ionides, Felix Moore, Pat Essex, John Tunnell, Sally Harris, Peter Seglow and Sheila – sorry Sheila I have forgotten your surname!) It occurred to me it would be good if we could all (or as many as possible) somehow meet up again at a forthcoming OA Reunion and even take another photograph, maybe? Crazy

thought, perhaps! And find out what we have all been getting up to over the past 50 years or so!

Like Howard I have many happy memories of K.A.S. friends and the staff there who did so much to help us, including Fred Johnson and Ros and Hetty Barber. I bumped into Hetty quite by chance in Arundel at Christmas time in 1968 and it was great to see her again and have a good chat. She had not changed at all! I also remember Mr Kemp, the maths master and Mr Fuller, the English teacher, who took the trouble to organise a trip to the Old Vic to see Twelfth Night, one of our set books. He believed that Shakespeare needed to be seen and not just studied – and how right he was! I have seen the play many times since and always enjoyed it. Looking back I think we were so fortunate to have teachers who cared for each of us as individuals in the true K.A.S. tradition."

### **Hardy (Burghardt) Lochow 1963-1968**

recently contacted the Alumni Office and has written to say "hello" to Old Alfredians whom he has not been able to contact and to find some missing links.

"Hardy Lochow – Hardy who? My parents must have been in an extremely odd mood when they furnished me with first names that nobody can pronounce and certainly cannot spell except some people in a small settlement up in the Outer Hebrides. Maybe it was just the normal paranoia of parents after the war that had survived the Holocaust and living in central Europe. Some of you will remember me by my nicknames like "Bogey" (David Robson was responsible) or "Derry" (no idea where that one came from). Since 1970 my official first name is Hardy after a decisive vote among workmates and superiors fed up with calling me "Thingie." There are two old friends I would love to contact. David Robson (Dave turned me on to photography) and Christopher Fair (editor of "Locus Classicus" and "Quintessence"). Chris and I were the only ones brave enough to take geography for A levels at the time. My biography since leaving K.A.S. is a



rollercoaster. Harmlessly starting off as an entertainment-editor/photographer for an international news agency, my first major assignment was working for IOPP (International Olympic Picture Pool) at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich which changed my life dramatically. Thereafter I was posted to Tel Aviv, Beirut, Frankfurt, Brussels, Johannesburg, Singapore, Hong Kong (where they called me lo chow), Los Angeles and back to Frankfurt. In 1992 I quit as general manager of EPA (European Pressphoto Agency) - there were plenty of reasons, it being the height of the Yugoslav wars. I married a Romanian lady I had met during the revolution and lived in the Carpathian Mountains for some time, returning to Frankfurt with my wife and kids. Now divorced, I work as a freelancer helping friends in the rock business, although I did return to Kosova 3 years ago for an assignment. I am writing a book about the years between 1972 and 1992 and hope to have the book in print before the Frankfurt International Book Fair next year. I am planning to move to Essex, close to

family friends, and to find a small flat in Hampstead."

#### **Victoria Marshall (née Silverton) 1972-1985**

After leaving K.A.S., Victoria did her A Levels at Charterhouse and then studied Zoology at Newcastle. She followed this with a City & Guilds in Zoo Keeping and a PGCE. Having been a zoo keeper at London University and a science and biology teacher she is now a full-time mother at home with Charlotte (4), Samuel (2) and Alexandra (1). Charlotte started reception at K.A.S. in September – the third generation of her family to attend K.A.S.

**Alice Biddulph 1988-1998** is now doing the Suzuki teacher training courses (cello) at KAS at weekends. "It is great to be back there again. My level 1 is at the end of July so very soon I'll be a trained Suzuki teacher."

**William Richards 1992-2001** is now attending Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island where he is studying engineering and sailing for the university.

## Deaths

We record with sadness the deaths of the following members of the K.A.S. community

**Catherine Aitken** on 1 August 2006 aged 83. Parent/Staff Committee Chair (1971-1975) and Council Member (1967-1978); wife of Ian Aitken (pupil 1933-1942), mother of Susie (pupil 1962-1976) and Jane (Pupil 1966-1978), and grandmother of May Sutton (pupil 2002-2004).

**Brian John Frances Galpin** 24 May 2006 aged 86 (pupil 1929-1932)

**John Hannon** May 2006 aged 81, K.A.S. builder 1972-1984

**Sarah Judith Miller** 28 February 2006 aged 69 (pupil 1949-1954)

**Michael Sellers** July 2006 aged 52 (pupil 1966-1972)

## K.A.S. and BALLET

Alfredians of a certain age may be unaware of the strong connection, over many years, between King Alfred School and ballet. Older Alfredians will know of Peggy van Praagh, ex-pupil (1920s) and ex-teacher (1930s) who went on to found the Australian National Ballet. The memorial in the centre of the ornamental pond of her design is a constant reminder to many younger Alfredians that Ivy House was the former home of Anna Pavlova.

In the month of May this year, the school received two distinguished visitors: Veronica Tennant, a former Prima Ballerina with the National Ballet of Canada and Leo Kersley, himself a former member of our Royal Ballet. They were here as a result of their acquaintance with Celia Franca. Celia was a pupil at K.A.S. in the 1930s. Although she went on to have a career with the Vic-Wells Ballet,

forerunner of the Royal Ballet, intriguingly there is no record to suggest she came under the influence of Peggy van Praagh. At the Vic-Wells, she met, and at that time married, Leo Kersley. Later, she emigrated to Canada, where she founded the National Ballet of Canada and where Veronica became her pupil.

They were both charmed by Manor Wood, the original King Alfred School, and thrilled to learn that we now own Ivy Wood. Across the road, we were lucky enough to gain access to Ivy House to see the semi-permanent photographic exhibition of Pavlova 'at home'.

On our return, reminiscing, Veronica remembered that she first danced Aurora, in 'Sleeping Beauty', with Nureyev at the Met! Distinction indeed.

**Brian Rance**  
Archivist

