

Sevington School Newsletter

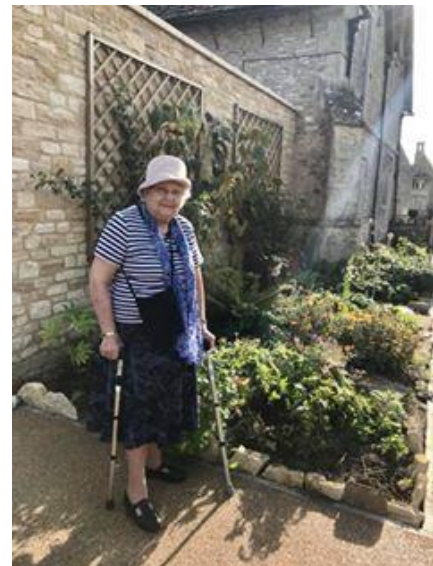


Autumn 2019

Dear Friends,

As a school, our year at Sevington always starts in September. This is also the time when we look back at the previous year and review what we've achieved. It is only a year since we completed improvements to the toilet facilities and pathways, making them accessible to visitors with mobility issues, and judging by the feedback we've had since then, these developments have been widely appreciated. This year we organised five openings to the general public and were rewarded with large numbers of interested visitors. Our fame must be spreading!

Thanks to the hard work of many volunteers in the Spring, we have been able to completely overhaul the gardens, creating new beds and a new paved area and replanting throughout. In the Summer, we were delighted to welcome to Sevington Mary Williams, the wife of Don, our late Honorary President, and their daughter Jeni. We were so pleased that they declared the new garden to be "glorious", as it was in large part due to their support that we were able to carry out the work. We have dedicated the garden to the memory of Don, who worked so hard to set up the original Sevington School Project almost thirty years ago and took a particular interest in the garden. His initial ideas on the preservation and use of Sevington remain largely unchanged today.



Mary in the new garden

We have been pleased to welcome some new members to our group of Friends over the past year, but were sorry to lose a couple of loyal and long-standing Friends who have left the area. The support our Friends give, through their annual subscriptions, donations, involvement and practical help, is invaluable to us and we are very grateful to them. The Annual General Meeting of our Charity, at which Friends have voting rights, takes place in mid-November and we very much appreciate subscription renewals reaching us by the end of October, so that we can send out invitations and documentation. We hope to see as many Friends as possible at the AGM. Although there is business to conduct, it is also an opportunity to catch up with old friends (with and without the capital!).

I hope you enjoy reading our news, and many thanks go to all the contributors to this Newsletter. If you have some news of your own, or any suggestions of what you would like to see included in the Newsletter, please do contact us.

With best wishes from all at Sevington,

Isobel

Isobel Moore

Friends of Sevington School
are cordially invited to the Charity's
Annual General Meeting
to be held on
Saturday 16th November 2019
at 10.00 am
at Sevington Victorian School

A Family Experience of Sevington

So how did the two young gentlemen in the cover photo fare during their school visit?



It seems to have been a serious occasion under the watchful eye of Miss Squire.

And for one young lady it was a close encounter with the instruments of correction!



Sevington Open to Visitors

This has been our most successful year to date with group visits starting with a Walking for Health group in December - very muddy they were, but very appreciative - and ending with Apple Day on a windy, changeable day in late September. We've had big groups and small groups, old groups and young groups, but what they all have in common is their delight and fascination with the school. I don't think we've had a single negative comment and the garden, the new toilet block and improved paths and ramp have all gone down very well.

The Open Days have been particularly popular this year, averaging over fifty visitors each session. The most interesting people turn up and this year we met a pair of sisters who were actually born in the school in the late fifties and another lady who was a descendant of Mr Neeld's illegitimate daughter, and eventual heiress, Anna Maria Inigo Jones. We've had a metal detectorist, an expert on Victorian pen nibs and a visitor who donated a beautiful and authentic Edwardian costume.

About five hundred people have visited this year, contributing over £2,000 in entry fees and donations and this will be used for the upkeep of the school. Meanwhile I would like to thank the 15 volunteers who gave so generously of their time and skills. It's the volunteers, each with their area of knowledge or expertise, that make the Sevington experience so special. We could never do it without you.



A group from Bath Spa University enjoying a visit

Dinah Starkey

Who's the next Prime Minister?

When I can't get to sleep, my equivalent of counting sheep is to test my memory with lists. During the political turmoil in June I used to ask myself: who are the current candidates to be the next Conservative Prime Minister? This was quite a challenging question, as the number first kept rising, then gradually became smaller and finally ended up with two for the final vote. Afterwards I moved on to: who were the Prime Ministers during the reign of Queen Victoria? I thought I'd done quite well to name five, only to discover that there were in fact ten, most of whom reappeared in dizzying fashion to cover the twenty terms of office.

One problem of being Prime Minister in any era is that you do not have control over your legacy in the eyes of the general public. So what do we remember of some of Victoria's Prime Ministers? Here are three of them.



When Victoria came to the throne, the Prime Minister was William Lamb, **Viscount Melbourne** or, as she referred to him in her journals, Lord M. For the first four years of her reign, he was her mentor, tutoring her in government and politics. They developed a close friendship, with Victoria regarding him as a father figure. This relationship itself led to a political crisis in 1839 when the Whig Melbourne resigned to be replaced as Prime Minister by the Conservative Sir Robert Peel. As was the custom, Victoria's Whig ladies of the bedchamber were to be replaced by Conservative ladies. Victoria refused to allow this, Peel refused to form a government and Melbourne became Prime Minister once more.



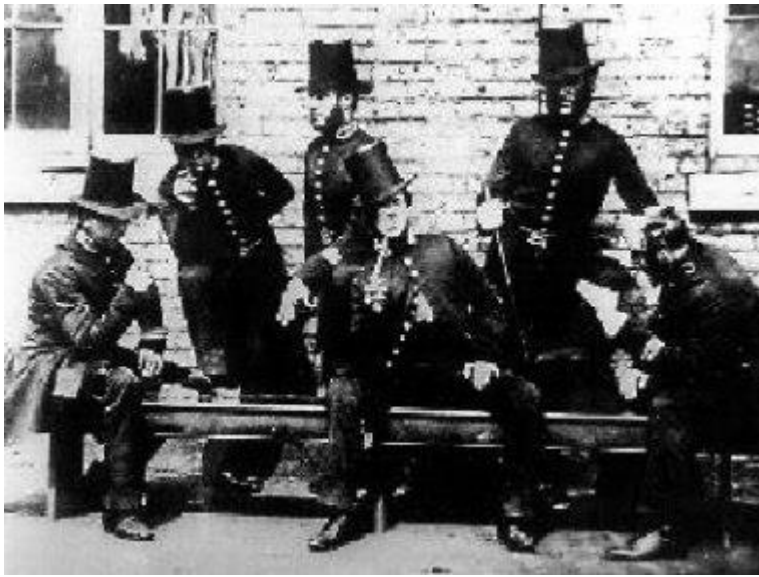
But what Melbourne is perhaps best remembered for is the scandal surrounding his personal life. Just seven years into their marriage, his wife, Lady Caroline Lamb, had a passionate and very public affair with the poet Lord Byron, whom she famously described as "mad, bad and dangerous to know".



Sir Robert Peel was a very different Prime Minister, a social reformer who oversaw the introduction of the Mines Act of 1842, forbidding the employment of women and children underground, and the Factory Act of 1844, limiting working hours for children and women in factories. Arguably his most important achievement, however, was the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. These laws had protected and benefitted the landed aristocracy but had kept food prices high for the urban working classes, and in abolishing them Peel had to face strong resistance from within his own party.

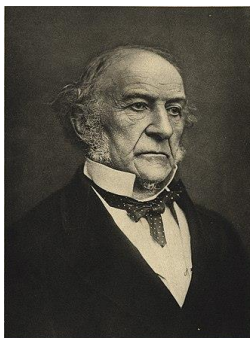


But what do we all remember of him from our schooldays? That the reason we still call policemen “Bobbies” is after Sir Robert Peel who set up the Metropolitan Police Force during



his time as Home Secretary. Originally the officers were known as “Peelers” and wore blue tail-coats and top hats, so that they would not be confused with soldiers. They patrolled the streets of London armed with a wooden truncheon, a pair of handcuffs and a wooden rattle to raise the alarm. They worked seven days a week, with only five days holiday a year, for which they were paid the weekly

sum of £1. They were required to wear their uniforms both on and off duty, so that they could not be suspected of spying on the public.



William Gladstone served for twelve years as Prime Minister over a political career of more than sixty years, which he began as a Conservative before becoming a Liberal. He was both the only Prime Minister to have served for four terms and the oldest Prime Minister, leaving office for the final time in 1894 at the age of 84. He was a passionate supporter of home rule in Ireland, but, despite his campaigning, it did not gain the approval of Parliament in his political lifetime.

And here’s the final indignity - who would wish to be remembered by future generations for a bag? Gladstone was renowned for his love of travelling. The original Gladstone bag, named after him, was said to have been designed by leather shop owner J. G. Beard, who traded in Westminster and was a keen supporter of Gladstone. The bag was a small portmanteau suitcase built on a rigid frame that could be opened into two separate parts. It was made of strong leather and originally closed using leather ties. The bag became popular with doctors, both because of its professional appearance and for the fact that it was self-standing and allowed the contents to be easily organised and accessible.



At the time of writing, our present Queen has had fourteen Prime Ministers, including the current incumbent. I wonder what they’ll be remembered for in centuries to come?

Isobel Moore

Introducing our Newest Miss Squire

Hello Friends and Sisters of Sevington,

My name is Nicky Howcroft and I'm a fledgling sister at Sevington School (in terms of experience, not age!). I've recently been shadowing Miss Hannah Squire as her cousin from Martock, and would like to say a big thank you to Sylvia, Julia, Sue and Jenny for all their help in showing me the ropes. I have been made to feel very welcome and I'm delighted to be joining the Sisterhood! The school is charming. My own children visited years ago and their experiences there remain amongst their most treasured memories of primary school. I have to add that the garden is becoming more and more beautiful each time I visit.

My own education was characterised by many Victorian features. We stood when a teacher entered the room, we had shoe, nail and hair inspections, and there was an award for good deportment called The Red Girdle. We wrote in ink in Copperplate and even wore pinnies. We carried jugs of cold water to the dormitories for washing. Needless to say, I am feeling quite at home at Sevington!

I look forward to meeting you all and getting to know you over the coming months.

Nicky Howcroft



Nicky getting ready for work at Sevington

Charabanc Trip to Sezincote



On a delightfully sunny day in August, the Miss Squires old and new set off for a day trip to Sezincote near Moreton in Marsh. Sezincote is a small, privately owned stately home belonging to Edward and Camilla Peake who open it to the public between May and September on Thursday and Friday afternoons. The house sits in beautifully landscaped gardens and parkland, thought to have been designed by Humphrey Repton. Its unusual name – pronounced *Seezincott* – is believed to come from Norman French, *chesnes*, meaning oak and *cot* meaning dwelling and there are still many oak trees in the park. The whole estate comprises around 4,500 acres of agricultural land and it is a working estate with various farming enterprises.



The house was built in the Mogul architectural style of Rajasthan in 1805 and was designed by Samuel Pepys Cockerell, a grandson of the diarist, for his brother Charles Cockerell who had been in the service of the East India Company. The appearance of the main house is most striking with its weathered copper onion-shaped dome and indeed so impressed the Prince Regent on his visit to the house in 1807 that he was inspired to incorporate Mogul aspects at the Brighton Pavilion.

Although the Cockerell family respected and revered Indian culture, attitudes through the Victorian period changed to one of paternalism, seeing Indian culture as primitive, and so the interior of the house does not reflect its exterior. Inside it is neo-classical and recognisably English.

To one side of the house is the Orangery which you may recognise as it has featured recently on Poldark, standing in for Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. It stands at the back of the Persian Garden with its canals and Irish yews.



The gardens are a delightful feature of any visit. They are very romantic in nature, with their temples, grottos, waterfalls and canals. The parts that retain their Indian feel are the Thornery, which is the water garden to the north of the house, together with the Indian Bridge with its Brahmin bulls.



If you are tempted to visit this delightful estate you will find Batsford Arboretum nearby and if you require refreshment, follow the example of the Miss Squires and eat at The Manor House Hotel in the beautiful Cotswold town of Moreton in Marsh, just five minutes from Sezincote.



Nikki Wright

Gateway to a Victorian World



The last stage of our garden renovation was to install a new hardwood garden gate. We had not intended to replace the old broken gate in order to allow easy access for wheelchairs, however several unsolicited canine visits forced us to change our minds! The gate was specially made, wide enough for our purposes and in traditional style, and will doubtless have weathered nicely by the Spring.

Shakespeare raises Funds for Sevington



in July Sevington School was offered the opportunity to run a raffle at the Seend Cleeve House Open Air Shakespeare production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Trustee Dinah Starkey (pictured) and teacher Jennifer Adams manned the stand in full costume, and thanks to many generous donations of prizes, the raffle raised £164 for the school.



Why not join our 100 Club for your chance to win a cash prize while raising money for a good cause?

Our latest winners:

July: David Sealy

August: Karen McCormack

How does the 100 Club work? The subscription is just £12 for a year. Each month, £1 of this is used for entry into a draw. One half of the proceeds goes to the Charity and the other half to the winning member as a prize.

What are the proceeds used for? These go towards helping the Trustees to maintain the Sevington School building and grounds. This is a significant cost given its Grade 2* listing status.

Can I join part way through the year? Yes, you can. But please note that the draws for September, October and November will be made after the AGM in November, so NOW is the ideal time to join or renew your subscription.

How do I join? Full details of how to join or renew your subscription can be found on our website: www.sevingtonvictorianschool.co.uk

**Please support the work of Sevington Victorian School by joining the 100 Club and encouraging your friends and family to do likewise.
The more members, the bigger the prize!**

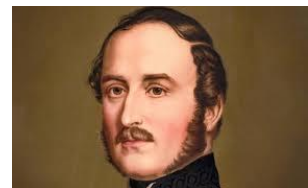
Schoolroom Howlers

Thanks to our teachers for providing the following anecdotes:



We always talk to the children about the garden and food that grows there. They have no problem spotting the apple and pear trees, but responses to seeing a quince are always interesting. So far, when asking them what they think it might be, I have had suggestions of pear, lemon, lime, avocado, pomegranate and pineapple!

I recently asked a class of ten-year-olds, having studied Victoria's bust on a penny, what was the name of our dear Queen's late husband, obviously hoping for Prince Albert as the answer. One lad put up his hand and said "Dave!". Not David or Prince Dave, just Dave. I don't know how I kept a straight face!



Tessa Leatherland/Nikki Wright