

Presidential Profile – Ashley Shirlin

I was born in Stockton-on-Tees in 1958 but left when I was 3 months old never to return again until I was in my 40's when work took me there for a few weeks.

The first eleven years of my life were somewhat nomadic. My father was a civil engineer and we spent time in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Uganda interspersed with periods in Deddington, Shirley and Banbury. My mother was born in Banbury and both her parents were Mayors of the town so we tended to gravitate to Oxfordshire. My father was born in Manchester but I only met his parents once as they retired to Australia where their two daughters had settled.

By the time I was 10 my parents had split up with my father moving to Malaysia for the rest of his life. This was a difficult time and I had the choice of attending the defunct Quaker School of Wennington in Yorkshire where my much older brother had been schooled or Sibford. I wasn't terribly keen on being a year younger than my classmates so spent my last year of Junior School living in a Banbury Childrens' Home. However, in 1969, I began the first 5 years of relative stability in my life when I arrived at Sibford.

Fortunately I was reasonably bright and quite sporty so my life at School was easier than many of my classmates. Without doubt my 5 years at Sibford had a lifelong effect on me. My oldest friends are people who I met there and although I have failed miserably on occasion to live up to the motto of Truth, Honour, Freedom and Curtesy these are principles that I hold dear.



Oxfordshire 1500m Trials

After Sibford I studied for my 'A' levels at Banbury Technical College and then read for my degree in Economics and Econometrics at the University of York. Upon graduation I had few job opportunities so ended up moving to Essex, which I had never visited before, in order to take up a job in computing of which I had no knowledge!

Whereas I never expected to remain in Essex for more than a couple of years I lived there for nearly 30 years and have spent even longer working in IT. For 20 years I worked for a variety of companies in the software/insurance industry and was fortunate that this took me to the City, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and the USA. For the next 10 years I ran my own computer company working mainly throughout England and for the last 5 years just working for myself.

In my 30's and 40's I was involved with SOSA and served on the Committee as General Secretary, a post I have now returned to. I also arranged several Reunions for my generation in London and at the School. At its peak we managed to get 180 people to attend!



London Reunion

At my first job I met my wife and married when I was 23. Sadly things went awry and we divorced after about 28 years. I have 2 brilliant children who have returned to Essex after attending their respective universities in York and Roehampton. James has become a teacher but more importantly is a fellow Leeds United supporter. Maria is beginning to make her way in life but also more importantly is a fellow cat lover.

This would usually be the end of a person's family background but in my case there is far more. I mention above that my father went to Malaysia in the 1960's never to return. During the latter part of my time at Sibford and for a couple of years afterwards I travelled to Malaysia during the summer holidays and met his new family. My father had become a Muslim and had taken a second wife much to the annoyance of my C of E mother. Tragically I lost touch with them after that time but some 15 years ago I was contacted by one of my Malaysian half-brothers. I've visited Borneo most years since then to see my dear step mother, my 2 step brothers, my 4 half-brothers and my half-sister and their families. I have a vast number of nephews and nieces!



Singapore 2014

About six or seven years ago my life changed dramatically. I now lead a quiet life in Dorset. My partner is Amanda Brown (nee Cade) who I met at Sibford. I still undertake some IT work. I watch Leeds United when I can. I've become involved with SOSA again.