

Tamsyn Imison: A woman of many parts

The part Tamsyn played in SFCP as Trustee and Chair of Trustees, marked by the Tamsyn Imison Essay Award, was considerable and mirrored her work in education and other fields.

Tamsyn was a woman of many talents – she was not only a daughter, sister, wife, mother, aunt and grandmother but also an artist, teacher, patron of the arts, gardener, urban gardener and, of course, a significant member of the SFCP community.



A Headteacher of some distinction, Tamsyn's commitment to education was one of the pillars of her life, personal and professional. Her Sixth Form education was at Milham Ford Grammar School. Here she came under the influence of a number of educationalists – all women – who were ahead of their time, not least the Headteacher, Mary R Price, herself a well-regarded Head: such was her vision she had both local and national roles promoting a wider education for girls than was then the norm. Mary Price's influence on Tamsyn was significant and sincere and Tamsyn visited her in retirement to thank her. It is worth remarking that, in 1974, Mary Price was co-author with Nonita Glenday, of 'Reluctant Revolutionaries: A Century of Head Mistresses 1874 – 1974' (London: Pitman, 1974). If their research was to be of the recent past then Tamsyn would surely have featured in it.

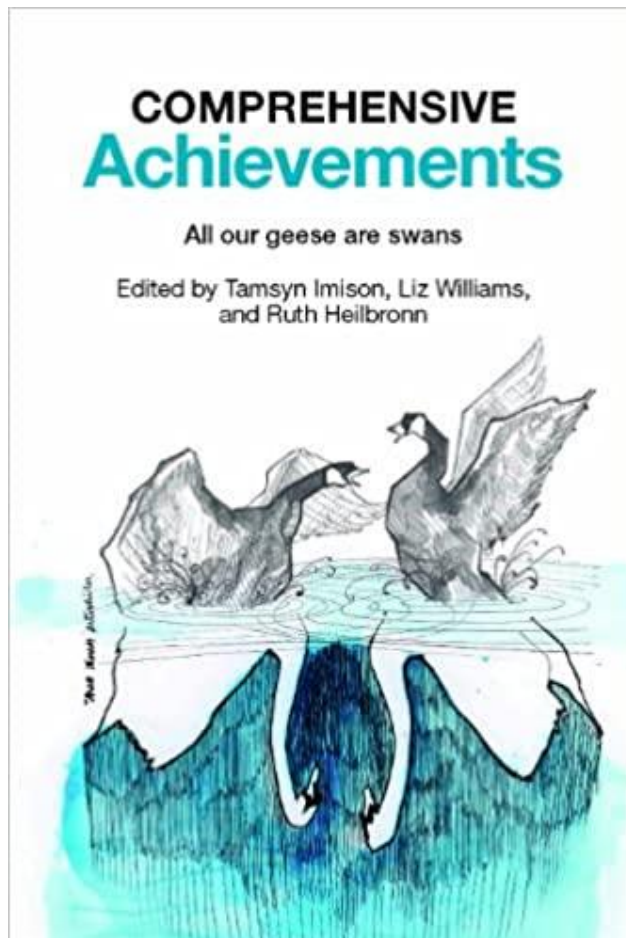
As a firm believer in the principles of Comprehensive education and equal opportunities for all children Tamsyn, no reluctant revolutionary, and her colleagues set out to prove that every child, when offered a broad based and creative education, was able to achieve success in their lives. Through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, her school, Hampstead Comprehensive School in West London, set out to show that every student had value and deserved to have the best a school could provide. A strong and principled leader, Tamsyn strove to introduce sometimes challenging (and challenged) initiatives but held fast to her beliefs and encouraged her colleagues to be equally ambitious and brave for those young people entrusted to their care.

Tamsyn enjoyed the classroom. She was a 'teaching Head' and she engaged at many levels with her students at Hampstead where the School Council benefitted from her work with SFCP: the Socratic approach was one way in which she encouraged students to look at the world around them and understand it better.

In 1998 Tamsyn was awarded the DBE and in 2010 the Dame Tamsyn Imison Building was opened at Hampstead Comprehensive School. It provided for ICT education, one of Tamsyn's particular interests.

Tamsyn wore these accolades lightly and always highlighted the contributions of others to projects in which she had been involved and the recognition they achieved.

A contributor to many texts and author of articles in Journals, including *Enquiring Minds – Socratic Dialogue in Education* (Eds Rene Saran and Barbara Neisser, Trentham Books 2004), Tamsyn undertook, with Liz Williams and Ruth Heilbronn (Chairman of Governors and parent and Senior Teacher respectively at Hampstead Comprehensive School), the immense project editing the reflection on the outcomes of the work of staff and students, parents and Governors in *Comprehensive Achievements: All our Geese are Swans* (Trentham Books 2014). The breadth of contributors illustrates the inclusive nature of the school's philosophy.



Amongst these are SFCP affiliates Rene Saran, Chair of Hampstead Governors when Tamsyn was appointed and sometime Trustee and Secretary of SFCP, now an Honorary Fellow; and Angella Hodgson, parent and Governor whose daughters attended Hampstead Comprehensive School and who became an SFCP Trustee and Socratic Facilitator.

Some names of students will be readily recognised by the reader but it is clear that intention of the book is to show that a Comprehensive School must welcome the achievements of all its students – and staff - and that it is the responsibility of all community members to ensure their successes are equally applauded and valued.

In retirement Tamsyn applied the same principles to her community involvement as a resident of Halesworth, a small market town in East Suffolk to which she and husband Michael retired. Her contributions there in art, music, community projects and friend to all have been marked by the introduction of 'The Tamsyn Imison Community Project Award'.

Dorothy Moir

(edited by Dieter Krohn)