

## **Mike Smith – Biog' for Knowstone Parish Council Website**

I moved to Knowstone with my wife Gabrielle and youngest son Joshua in 2013 having had quite a roving life globally. I was lucky enough to be born in Southwold (Suffolk) – like Knowstone, another beautiful part of the UK.

In 1967 I joined the Royal Navy as a young man, learning Electrical Engineering and serving for 9 years, the fun of sailing in flotilla and visiting foreign places seemed to set in me a traveling bug - for many years!

The Oil & Gas industry was my next step and I continued traveling, working for British and American companies in the UK, Europe, Africa, America, China, Singapore and Pakistan. Building oil processing plants in locations such as Sahara Desert and installing offshore platforms in the North Sea and South China Sea have been great challenges to have lived through and learnt from.

In 2007 Gabrielle and I set up our business consultancy company working with UK and global clients, mainly in Africa and Europe. Before moving to Knowstone we lived in Megeve, France and then Italy for 6½ years in a small village called Bergamasco and also near to Turin. It's a pleasure to at last 'set some roots' back in the UK and to be able to do that here in Knowstone.

In many of the projects and operations I led there has been a significant element of community support, citizenship responsibility and fostering of healthy political relationships, some in very remote and poor regions. This aspect of business responsibility connected well with my wish, from a young age, to be involved in politics some way. After settling here, I was asked to stand for District Councillor (South Molton) in the May 2015 Election, then later in that year I was co-opted to the Knowstone Parish Council, in May 2016 I was elected to Chair.

It's always been a busy work life for me and I enjoy that but I'm a strong family man too having three children, although two are not really children as they have their own families, so I am also a grandad of two lovely granddaughters and a super grandson.

We have business clients overseas (as we run quite an international business from Knowstone) but I make sure there is time with Gabrielle and Josh to enjoy our favourite sports of sailing and skiing. We all are quite fanatical rugby fans too, it's armchair viewing and cheering Josh on from the touch line for me though. Having said all that there is great pleasure in enjoying this area, walking or cycling through the most beautiful countryside and taking in the amazing views over Exmoor. I'm here to stay!