

e-NEWSLETTER



APRIL 2014 – Number 1
Editors: Alistair McGeachie and Peter Luck



For Members, Family and Friends of the
OLD WEALDEN ASSOCIATION

Welcome to the 2014 series of e-Newsletters

We have received a number of apologies in relation to the coming Reunion and they usually include some news or enquiries:

From Dorothy Corney (1944) ...

My husband and I meet fairly frequently with Moya Maitland (nee Purves) and her husband. Geoff and I have a very good circle of friends (not OWAs) and we meet regularly for lunches, to play cards and for holidays. This keeps us quite active and long may it last. I am still a member of townswomen's choir – thank you Miss Pyke!

From Daphne Bird (1937) ...

I am sorry that I will be unable to travel from Mendocino, California, to join you all! I always enjoy

reading the Old Wealden so much, but at 88 years old, find there are few of us left. I did write a letter last year, asking if there were any people left from the years 1940 to 1942, but there was no word printed in the next newsletter. I am still in touch with Helen Jarvis Fox, and Joyce Fergusson Richardson, now living in Texas, and am curious to know if there are any of those we knew left, and if so would love to hear from them!

A message from Enid Squire in Ontario, who taught at the school from 1952 ...

I am still alive and well but usually go to England in September. I enjoy reading the newsletter. Didn't see the back asking for info!! [Ed. – *It was the back of the Reunion letter, not the Newsletter (paper version)*].

From Hilda Mary Halsey (Biggerstaff) who was on the staff from 1949-54

I am always interested to read the HW News & Views. Despite the passage of years names jump out of the page. I marvel at the range of work the pupils went on to achieve after my five formative years teaching Mathematics under 'Spike' Barlow and Crowle-Ellis. The friendly supportive staff continued my education – they realised I needed it! Singing in shows and playing tennis really helped. Thank you Rene Pyke, Barbara Gaastra (?) Sybil Blockley and 'Fran' in particular and unnamed others.

A letter from Sylvia Park (nee Pounds) ...

Thank you for sending me the Old Wealden News. I am now over 91 years old and am pleased and cheered to know I am not forgotten. I was almost a founder member of HWCS having joined it in 1934 from Fulham High School for Girls, a very quiet and ladylike school. It was a bit of a shock at first, but I soon began to enjoy a more robust environment.

Does anyone remember my nephew George Dufet, a pupil there during the forties, or my contemporaries?

STOP PRESS

Did we get it wrong when we sent some of the Reunion letters by e-mail?

Numbers intending to come to the Reunion on 26 April are lower than usual, and we are wondering whether part of the reason may be that those with email addresses received their mailing by email and we asked them to print it off and then return it. Was the request to print it off a turn-off for some?

It has been suggested that the emails might not have been opened yet or they were opened but then not acted on.

It is not too late if you still want to attend the Reunion but you need to act quickly. Email Keith Mayes at

keithcmayes@gmail.com

so that we at least know the numbers and make sure there is food for all who attend. We can settle up the money side on the day. – PL

The headmaster was Mr. H. Barlow Butlin, whom I admired and liked very much. Miss Drury I remember because I met her a few years later when I went to Teachers Training College, where she taught me again. (I now have 7 grandchildren and 11 g.g.ch).

A letter from Margaret Andrew (1936) ...

I'm afraid I will not be able to attend the reunion on the 26th April. I came to one a year or two ago with David Cobb and Ray Bicknell, but there was nobody else there from our time and nobody wished to know us! I was in touch with Daphne Harrison and Barbara Sachs for a time.

I came to the school in 1936 and, on the whole, enjoyed my time there. I was much involved with singing and playing the piano, and I had the privilege of accompanying Derek Collier who became very well-known and played at the first night of one of the Proms. I took part in athletics but not tennis, which I have regretted ever since, although I still play now at 87.

I teach the piano and singing and when I hear about pupils taking school exams I tell them that I did four A levels and the Roman history exam was taken in an air raid shelter next to a smelly Elsan. I remember wondering if the facilities in those days were as malodorous! I am grateful that I can still sing and I raise a good deal of money for charity with a pianist, violinist and flautist.

I have been happily married twice. My first husband, Derek Morrell, who set up the Schools Council, very sadly died at the age of 48. My second husband, John Andrew, was a neurosurgeon who set up this speciality in Abu Dhabi when he retired. As I hate the cold, I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the heat! I have two children and four grandchildren.

I apologise for the fact that this letter is all about myself.

With kind regards and every good wish for a successful reunion,

[ED – Please do not apologise if your message is all about you – we want to know all about you. – AM]

A request from Jenny Challacombe (Duwell) 1951 ...

I would like to still receive the "paper" version of "The Old Wealden" – I enjoy "turning the page" with a cuppa in the garden, on a train or bus etc. – having spent my working years in offices, it still feels like going into one when switching on the PC in my study/office/general storage area! My tablet has an even smaller screen! I would happily pay a bit more for my subscription in order to still receive the paper version. I hope the Reunion is successful, unfortunately I am not able to attend the 2014 event. Regards to all.

[ED–Please note that we will continue to send the paper copy of the "News and Views" to you. You do not need to request it. – AM]

A message and a request from Mollie Mathieson (Villar) (1936) ...

I would love to come but it is a long way at my age especially as there are so few of my year left – although I do know of two who are not members. Did anyone ever find out what happened to Alec Seale (?) ? He has left Watford but I never had his address in the Lakes.

A message and a request from Donald Whitehouse (1940-42) ...

I would love to hear about anyone's recollections of the school farming camp (at Long Compton?) as farmworker or cook. And any news of my fellow worker, Pete Hoper (Soper?). Apologies for late response 90th birthday upset my schedule

An apology from Gwenne Gladman ...

My husband and I are very sad that we will be unable to attend this year's reunion. Family from New Zealand arriving that very day – I love them, but what rotten timing!

I hope that everyone has a wonderful day as usual and we will do our best to be with you next year. For this year it's in spirit.

Sing up the Weald!!

And a greeting from Shirley Read (Rowles) (1945) ...

80 years old now! Still in contact with contemporaries Milly (Willis) Margaret (Richens) Peter Roach. Really enjoyed the newsletter – a big thank you to all who keep it "alive".

A brief message from Rena Allen (Lawrie) (1933) ...

Regret unable to attend reunion this year. Expedition of taxi, train main line, Northern then bus detours. However I send all good wishes to those who may recall me 1933-37.

And we have received a long and informative email, full of memories, from Peter Brannan (1936) ...

Having seen the article by Roy Cook, who was in my form at HWCS (Class of '36) I thought I could add a couple of comments.

Our cross country runs used to take us through the grounds of Bentley Priory but this route was abandoned some time before the war when, on one occasion, we were met by an RAF Policeman with rifle and fixed bayonet!

We did not realise at that time that the Priory had become the headquarters of RAF Fighter Command, and would become famous as the focal point of the Battle of Britain.

When war broke out classes were cancelled and we were given homework assignments to do at home but this was soon reversed, and things returned to normal.

Trenches were dug in the school field in an attempt to protect from air raids, but until the time I left school (prematurely) in 1940, these were never used.

Along with rather too many other young lads I had a distinct "crush" on Mollie Vickers and we used to escort her to her home in Kenton on our bikes in a group that became known as "The Escort" to her considerable embarrassment. Mollie and I are still in frequent e-mail contact to this day, 74 years later.

Memorable events include conducting "speed of sound" experiments in the school field, and the occasion when Birdie Swallow had me blowing into a very dead pair of sheep's lungs during a biology class. Birdie's daughter Veronica was also in our form. We produced some terrible stinks in those science classes.

We lads played a distinctly dangerous game of "Horsey-horsey" that involved opposing teams lining up against the wall, bending over and inserting our heads between the legs of the lad in front. The unfortunate lad in the front had to prevent his head from hitting the wall while the opposing team leapt upon our backs in an attempt to topple the formation.

When I passed the "11-plus" exam of those days I was disappointed not to be sent to the Harrow School for Boys on Gayton Road, but this was, on looking back, the best thing that ever happened to me.

Greetings to any of my former school friends who are still around, including Ron Beadle, Dougy Barnes and Viv Crellin.

And Best Wishes to all Old Wealdens.

And an update on the last newsletter from Marian (Harding) Whitehead (1948) ...

With reference to the 'Letter from Bruce Fraser to Mollie Mathieson' (News & Views, p.7)

The wonderful senior English teacher was probably James Britton and the 'crush' on the art teacher led to a long and happy marriage. Jimmy Britton wrote the words of the school song and went on to be a very distinguished academic and professor at London University (at the Institute of Education and at Goldsmiths) and advised the government on the teaching of English in the Bullock Report of 1975. He and his wife Roberta (the art teacher) had two daughters, Celia and Alison, who have also had distinguished careers: Celia as a professor of languages and Alison as a well-known potter.

Jimmy Britton started a remarkably talented English department at Harrow Weald which also nurtured Nancy Martin and Harold Rosen. They both became internationally known and respected experts on the teaching of English at a time when it seemed that education was on the verge of a golden age – how did we get that so wrong?

A letter from Thelma (Ergis) Emmans (1943)

It IS a small world !

MANY THANKS to all concerned for a visually stimulating and interesting magazine. As ever I have read it from cover to cover more than once and my husband Keith, who is not an Old Wealden, also reads it with interest.

I have to confess that yes, I have an e-mail address and will in future be willing to receive the magazine in its various parts on my computer, but I know in advance that I will miss the format of the old magazine. I am:

thelma.emmans@talktalk.net.

Two of the items which struck me in particular in this latest issue are the obituary of my oldest friend Margaret (Evans) Fuller; and Margaret (Nicholls) Cole's mention of Harry and Michael Rosen.

Margaret was terribly kind to me when I arrived from London in 1939, a very frightened and bewildered 7-year old, at Harrow Weald Infants' School. We became friends straight away, went to different Junior Schools, and met up again at the Weald. I was already teaching French and Latin at Heriot's Wood when Margaret joined us to teach music.

When Keith and I moved to York, Margaret and Julian came up for my 60th birthday party, and for the weekend celebrations for our 40th wedding anniversary (known as the Ruby Do). Margaret's Christmas and birthday cards were always the first to arrive.

And now to the Rosens – Mr. (later professor) Rosen did indeed teach us English – I think when I was in about the 3rd or 4th year. Subsequently I did some teaching at Watford Grammar School and taught Michael (known as Mick in those days) his French A-level literature. Before this he too had been a pupil at Harrow Weald until the end of the Vth form.

But this is not the end of the story, because my daughter Anneliese, who is a performance poet and works with schools on the appreciation of literacy and language, has had occasional e-mail contact with Michael. And so have I.

Which made me remember that I taught Mr. Lowry's daughter Hilary, French at Heriots Wood. And the man who came to do our School Certificate French orals in 1948 had previously taught my sister French at an evening class in London, and much later I taught his daughter at Heriots Wood. Isn't it a small world?

PS: The grammar school was Heriots Wood. I think it was re-named Bentley Wood when it ceased to be a grammar school.

A message from Bob Chambers (1948) ...

IN response to your leaflet "Have you got something to say?" And prompted also by Jennifer Harding's (Biggs) letter in the last OW N&V where she reported the loss of her husband, and in which she said "Neither Clive nor I achieved a great deal at school...." I must offer a resounding 'SNAP'.

It might have been some fairly serious illness causing me to stay down in year two for another year, or maybe I wasn't very bright, but I left in 1954 with only three 'O' Levels. Nevertheless I entirely endorse Jennifer's comment "but it (HWCS) did instil in us the desire to learn and showed what could be done...." In my case my teenage years were much more about Boys' Brigade where almost every evening saw me engaged in a variety of activities including playing side drum in our silver band. So not much time for homework!

At school I wasted a great deal of my time and, I'm sorry to say, that of several teachers. My Pupil's Report Book makes quite depressing reading. The only thing about me anyone is likely to remember is my part in a small singing group made up of Michael Annals, Laurie Elliott, Gordon (Bert) Bryant, and yours truly. We would sit out on the East Field at break time singing pop songs of the day, mainly for ourselves but also for those of our classmates who would sit and listen.

Considering this – and also my membership of the 5th Hendon Boys Brigade Silver Band – which gave me the opportunity to play at the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Festival Hall – you'd have thought that I'd have been one of Irene Pyke's star music pupils, but not so! Her comment in my Pupil's Report Book range from 'Not good enough' and 'Unnecessarily low' to 'Tries'. And that's as good as it got. I simply couldn't cope with the technical stuff – Sharps, Flats, Treble Clefs

and Stave lines. And it was the same with Maths particularly Algebra. Spike West said, "He has misunderstandings which he must make an effort to master". Finally from this tale of woe FRY (Ron Young) in a Physics report said "I think he is wise to drop this". Not a Report Book to be proud of but it was mainly the "technical" stuff which confused me. Music Theory – sorry Miss Pyke, Maths, particularly Algebra – sorry Spike, and Physics (whatever was the Coefficient of Linear Expansion?) – Sorry FRY.

To this day I remain a technophobe relying heavily on my wife Margaret (a refugee from Cophthall Grammar School, Mill Hill) to work her magic with our computer. And as for the Virgin box in the corner – well it seems to have a will of its own recording programmes willy nilly!

Nevertheless the singing has continued. Soon after leaving school – or maybe before – I'd started to teach myself a few guitar chords using my Lonnie Donegan Songbook. This led to my helping to form – and perform at – The Dunstable Folk Club 1969-1971 where as visiting guests performed I was able to meet a number of well-known

folk artists including Ewan McColl and Peggy Seeger (stepsister of Pete Seeger who died only recently).

On moving to Petersfield in 1973 I began playing and singing with a group of friends and, with occasional changes in personnel, we continued until last year, raising quite a lot of money for numerous local causes. The picture I've sent (*see below*) shows me in the centre and the young woman banjo player is my late daughter Christine. This was taken in the 1980's at the Petersfield Festival Hall where we took part in several Age Concern Music Halls.

But back to the learning thing. I'm sure HWCS did give me the desire to learn and in the 1960's I passed the exams of the Institute of Shipping Executives. But it wasn't until the 1980's, when a short period of redundancy found me working in Youth Training with young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties and where part of my responsibility was the teaching of Life and Social Skills, that I studied for the City and Guilds Further Education Teaching Certificate. This I really enjoyed and went on to study on an Access to Higher Education course in which I achieved a top



grade. As a large part of my remit at Portsmouth Council of Community Service, where I spent the last 10 years of my working life, I delivered training to numerous Voluntary and Community Groups in Volunteer Recruitment and Support, Fund Raising Strategy, and Business Planning. Skills which I was able to take on into my retirement, working with a number of organisations around East Hampshire.

So HWCS wasn't a waste of time. I still think back with immense fondness and respect for many of those teachers who had to put up with me and who helped lead me into a rewarding and, I hope, useful life.

For any of my contemporaries who may wish to put a face to a name, as I was then rather than as a singing cowboy you can find me on the 1954 school photograph in the back row flanked on either side by Johnny Fuller and Peter Heath. We are just under the tree and I'm the one with the mop of black hair. Would that it was still the case!

Richard Weston (1956) wrote concerning N&V 36 and the question of house mottoes ...

In News & Views 36 I note that (page 4, column 3) Malcolm Bentote's item quoted his own Tennyson House motto but gave Shakespeare House's as "**Damn'd be him who cries 'Hold enough'.**"

Peter Luck writes:

In full that should have been:
**"... Lay on, Macduff;
And damned be him that first
cries, 'Hold, enough!'"**

Macbeth act 5, sc. 7.

Sensibly, for House purposes, that was almost certainly shortened by omitting 'Lay on Macduff'. However, most interestingly, that was not always the Shakespeare House's motto. In a very early edition of '*The Weald Chronicle*' (1934) it is shown as:

**"'Tis not for mortals to
command success, but we'll
do more, deserve it."**

Doing some more searching I've just opened Weald Chronicle Vol. 20 No. 3, September 1953 and the motto is shown as the "**Damned be him...**" version.

Richard Weston goes on:-

I can identify with Linda Jane's musical item on page 7/8.

I attended some twenty or so of Mr Matheson's Granada London

Symphony concerts.

Miss Pope was my first Form Teacher, and sang alto in the Senior Choir.

I too went to Greenhill Primary School. I recall Miss V. Bannister; it was not she herself but rather Miss W. Miller, who led my final year to the end-of-term Granada events.

While at HWCBS, Miss Pyke taught me Music to O level; on evenings after school, and at lunch times, I was in various of the School choirs and learned the 'cello from Mrs Witts.

With kind regards and best wishes.

A further comment from Peter

On a follow up about that Shakespeare House motto I have delved through the past copies of "Weald Chronicle" which I have, and found that in the September 1953 edition the motto had changed to the "**Damned be he ...**". As I say I don't have all the copies, but presumably that is about the time it changed. I do have a 1948 copy and that is still "**'Tis not for mortals ...**". So some time between 48 and 53.

Do we have a controversy here? Can anyone resolve it?

SEEKING A LIFT !

One of your Editors had a call very recently from Cynthia (Hine) Thomas (1944) who would like to attend the Reunion but needs a lift.

Cynthia cannot countenance making the journey except by public transport and that can only be described as highly uninviting.

Cynthia lives in Leicestershire and wonders whether any Old Wealden who is making the journey by car from that area might possibly be persuaded to give her a lift.

If so please call Peter Luck (020 8422 2082) and I will pass on to you Cynthia's contact details.

Pat (Norton) Jones (1943) writes from Worth Matravers in Dorset to Joint Ed Peter Luck

SADLY I am unable to join you and all our friends at this year's Reunion. I think the time has finally come when I have to say 'Sorry, but no thank you' to the Reunion invitation. The Committee has worked so hard arranging such joyous occasions for us Old Scholars that I feel I am letting you down. I live on the most southerly tip of Dorset: St Aldhelm's Head. Our bungalow is about a mile from the Channel, and the trip to Harrow and back has become too far to contemplate. I have had some wonderful occasions meeting up with my past school friends whilst adding to my life-time's memories. I was saddened and very sorry to read of the death of your dear sister Diana in the In Memoriam section. I read with interest of her life with you and your family and then with her husband Bert. You must miss her very much.

Nineteen-forty-three seems such a long time ago (it was!) but I remember very clearly that first day, wearing, so proudly, my new school uniform (second-hand my sister always reminded me) anxiously expectant of meeting my similarly placed 'mates'. It was so lovely to see the two photos of 4A and 5B in the last News & Views. It brought tears to my eyes when I thought back to those war years when often our lessons were taken in the shelters. Soon after I started at HWC in September 1943, my family had the terrible news, on 18th November 1943, that my cousin Teddy was missing, believed shot down off the

north-western coast of France. We were a very close family and we were all very proud of him as he was in the prestigious 617 Squadron. He was returning home from a raid on the Italian Antheor Viaduct when he was taken out.

The staff had an unenviable teaching task during raids, keeping on top of their current syllabuses, whilst maintaining a calm atmosphere in some fearful times. I have only praise for them.

I came to Harrow Weald County from The Bridge Junior School in Wealdstone. It was taken over by the RAF latterly so we had to walk to the Grant Road School and take lessons there for half days only. I remember walking to school past the Baker's Shop which belonged to 'Mr Baker', father of Eileen Baker (now in Canada). He was such a kind man giving us a hot roll to eat on our way! Eileen and I won a competition, winning a Bounty Book for Girls, for learning all the sixty-six books of the Bible off by heart! That exercise has proved very useful – believe it or not? It has been lovely to read about her in the News & Views.

The School Certificate, which I was more than surprised to achieve, stood me in good stead when I decided to train to be a Primary Teacher at Brentwood College, Essex. I taught for eighteen years at Rayleigh, Essex. As a child I loved taking part in all the sports especially tennis and hockey. We had extremely good facilities and

two very dedicated teachers in Mr Hawtrey and Miss Blockley. It was amazing how, knowing that we were having a hockey match, I could actually get up early in the morning. Being on time was my worst failing and I often paid with a detention for being 'late again'. The strict discipline paid off as I learnt not to be late. My time at Harrow Weald gave me something to be proud of and some unforgettable times which I cherish. What a brilliant School it was. Looking back, my school years were the best of my life because they prepared me for what was to come later.

I am married with two children and two grandchildren who have all achieved success. What more could anyone want? I have worked at three different occupations: Clerk/Receptionist with London Transport in London; BEA Ground Staff at Heathrow and the most rewarding of all – Teaching – all thanks to the grounding I had at HWCS!

I am not convinced that a Grammar School is the answer to improving education but what goes on inside schools is definitely the answer. Every child should be given that.

I keep in touch with Jean (Upton) Barlow and Barbara (Penny) Summerfield, my two closest friends from HWC and feel much sadness at the passing of so many others. I look forward to receiving this year's News & Views (including the e-versions) with interest. I do hope the Reunion is a great success and lots of fun. I will be thinking of you all.
