

# e-NEWSLETTER



**APRIL 2016**

Editors: Alistair McGechie and Peter Luck



For Members, Family and Friends of the  
**OLD WEALDEN ASSOCIATION**

## Welcome to this first issue of 2016



### Editorial – 1

I am now seventy – a fact of which I am inordinately proud. I know that many of you are a lot older – but nevertheless I am still proud of having reached this benchmark. The seventieth birthday has led me to reflect on my connection with Harrow Weald County Grammar School.

I can still remember my first day at the big school and our introduction to it led by Mr. Crowle-Ellis. He explained that there were no rules to follow – only to act responsibly. Which we did, of course. I didn't get a detention until the fifth year, when I fell among naughty boys. But that's another story.

I remember the "30s Building" (which has now been sold) which was the main place of learning when I started at the school. It had the library on the ground floor and the three laboratories (Biology, Physics and Chemistry – in that order) along the top corridor I remember, and the lecture theatre on the first floor too – we used to watch Geography films in there – it was above the woodwork room, which was next to the domestic science room (which the girls used).

So, the 2016 reunion will take place on 30 April. In the "New Building". I remember the building of the "New Building", and the disruption it caused. It replaced the temporary classrooms and the bicycle sheds on the edge of the North Field. The temporary classrooms are where I started my secondary career.

The North Field was for boys and football. The East Field was for mixed (civilised) socialising, cricket and hockey. (I don't know what went on in the South Field – but there were two football pitches there which we used in games on Friday afternoons). The East Field is now built on, as is the boys' playground. How Sad!

These are just memories, but we need your memories too. And your information, stories, anecdotes and pictures. We need them in order to fill the *News and Views*. Please send them in – it will prove to be a valuable archive.

– Alistair McGechie

### Editorial – 2



WE have to accept that this year there is a change to our annual fixture and we are using the Newton Building which we have used before when we have had a special reunion which called for the addition of a marquee.

The reason for this change is now known that the 'old' school building has been sold and is to be used as a care home. I have written a short piece outlining the schools I have been to and, sadly, how all of them have now been taken for another use. Whatever is happening to our education system? Perhaps someone could tell us. I don't think the politicians know!

In his piece on this page Alistair has exhorted you to send in some of your memories. We need material to keep this Newsletter going on a regular basis. Last year we had only two e-versions, although twice that number the year before. We would like, if possible, to keep everyone up to date more than twice a year.

– Peter Luck

# MEMORIES FROM 1939 to 1946

by Jack Gregory (1940-46)

**A**FTER sitting my 11+ exam in 1939 I was enrolled as a pupil at the Regent Street (London) Polytechnic. My parents proudly bought for me my uniform of green and red blazer and cap. Because of the onset of the Second World War the pupils of Regent Street Poly were evacuated to Minehead in Somerset. For health reasons I could not go so was enrolled to study at the emergency secondary school set up at the Sloane School in Chelsea. I was to travel between my home in South Kensington and the school a few miles away along the Fulham Road (near Chelsea FC ground).

In 1940 the Luftwaffe decided very unkindly to drop a bomb on my home. Fortunately, as my parents, my sister and I were all safe in a shelter only my home and its contents were lost. Luckily our cat, Whiskey, although badly scared and cut, also survived.

## And so ... to Harrow Weald

Thus I moved in with an Uncle and Aunt in Boxtree Lane, Harrow Weald and I became an 'emergency' pupil at HWCS dressed in my green and red Poly cap, which I continued to wear for some time. At roughly the same time another 11-year-old 'refugee', this time from Kilburn Grammar School in his black and red cap, was also enrolled. The two of us were allowed to continue wearing our distinctive colours. Although seen as 'different' we were welcomed into life at Brookhill. For some reason that I never discovered, Johnny Horwood or "him from Kilburn" decided that he didn't particularly like me and we had many a skirmish both verbally and physically. This all came to an end when, and I do not remember how, we got to knock 'seven bells' out of each other in a ring set up in the gym and were refereed by Mr 'Pedro' Hauptrief.

I commenced my Grammar schooling at HWCS mid-1940 in form 1C. Thereafter my progress was to 2C, 3S, 4S, 5S and 6G. Many memories of these years remain but they are fairly disjointed and mainly unconnected or related. In class I did not enjoy foreign languages or history and so the science stream beckoned. I studied primarily General Science, Physics and Biology. I enjoyed Geography and still do. I am unsure how much of this is down to the teacher and the teaching of Miss Sellers.

Frequently work had to be done in the Air Raid Shelters at the bottom of the North Field. Never did we know of the life and death struggle that

was being conducted from Bentley Priory, just up the road. What was left of the North Field became a soccer pitch where, on one memorable occasion, we played an RAF team that included Arsenal players Ted Drake and Bernard Joy (all 6 feet and more of him). I cannot recall the result, probably because I was the goalkeeper and it was not favourable! I kept goal for the school for several years and on the cricket East (and sometimes South) Field summers were spent keeping wicket and batting high up the order. I remember Mr Bergin having the idea that 1st XI players should be 'capped' and for years I was proud to wear the distinctive deep pink cap embellished with the school badge in gold and silver wire. Throughout the years much time was occupied on House sporting activity representing Chaucer. On the field the principal opposition always came from Shakespeare, with Tennyson and Milton invariably the 'also-rans'. Conversely I disliked swimming and worked hard to avoid trips to the Wealdstone Baths and school galas.

The obligatory cross country runs in the cold winter rain and mud around Grims Dyke, Clamp Hill and Old Redding etc. – supposedly 'character forming' – did not please me much either.

## Now for Exams

Following the years when school reports often carried the words "must do better"; "should do better"; "could do better" with hardly an 'A' grade in sight, School Certificate and Matriculation came along. Probably, more by luck than judgement, I gained entry to Goldsmith's College to train, would you believe, as a teacher. The phrase "those that can – do; those that can't – teach" comes to mind. Somewhat unfairly I feel, for all the good people that join the profession. The year I spent after the exams in the specially established Form 6G whilst waiting to enter Goldsmith's is another interesting little story in itself.

I have good memories of summer Farming and later Fruit Picking Camps. The train from Paddington to Great Rollright Halt loaded with kit and bicycles was fun, but the helter-skelter cycle ride down to Long Compton even more so. Memories are of the wooden camp huts; the collecting of straw for filling the 'biscuits' on which to sleep on the floor; cricket on the field full of cowpats all remain, as does the physically hard work and the badly scratched arms from handling the corn stooks. Subsequently apple and plum picking at Evesham was much easier and time

spent drinking a bit too much 'scrumpy' in a local hostelry comes to mind.

One interesting, well remembered and possibly unique feature of my time at HWCS came about when my family left Harrow Weald and returned to live in South Kensington. Because of the timing it was thought unwise for me to change schools. Therefore I started 'commuting'. Every school day I travelled by Piccadilly Line from South Kensington to South Harrow and then by 114 or 158 bus to Brookshill, returning every evening. It remains debateable whether this decision helped, or adversely affected, my exam results.

### Regaining Contact

Seventy-plus years have now passed since I left The Weald and after a gap of many years I joined the OWA in 2005. It has been good to regain contact with the old school through reunions and the medium of *Old Wealden News & Views*. It always intrigues me that I remember some events and some people from my school days very clearly; some very hazily and some not at all. On more

than one occasion I have read the recollections of others in *News & Views* and felt like writing to say "... ... I was there/involved and it did not happen like that at all ..." Whose memory is playing tricks?

### What came after School

Out of all this and perhaps much more that I could perhaps recall and write about I turned into an adult that did National Service in the Army followed by a working career that majored on the training and development of managers and staff firstly in WH Smith & Sons and then the Nestlé Company Limited. Life had been interesting, fulfilling and rewarding, but of course, not without its problems. Looking back I have much to thank Barlow and his teaching staff for during the years 1940 to 1946. Particularly I have good memories of the Halfpennys. Shovess was my form and Maths teacher supported by Shove with English and RI. Outside school the "soirées" and various gatherings at their home in Monroe Gardens were very formative and enjoyable. They were a very helpful and charming couple.

## MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS by Thelma (Ergis) Emmans (1943)

OVER the years I have had a captive audience ... family, husband, children, grandchildren, friends ... to whom I have recounted bits and pieces of my life at Harrow Weald County Grammar School. I have a habit of wanting to write about things too. To date I have written a short history of my family, beginning with my grandparents who left Russia and established themselves in Paris probably in the 1870s or 80s, then my parents leaving Paris in 1912 and fetching up in Harrow, then London, then back to Harrow Weald at the beginning of World War II. I've also written short accounts of three of my sisters' lives when each of them reached their 80th or 90th birthday. Then there is a sort of autobiography-cum-cookery book called *Crumbs!* And last week I finished an account of the past 25 years plus when I have been a volunteer worker at a local charity shop, helping to maintain our hospice.

So when I read the plea from the editor in the last 'Weald' e-magazine for more material, this gave me the opportunity to reach for my pen and pad again. So, where to begin? Well, it is in fact before I was going to be a pupil at Harrow Weald, but went there one day to take the scholarship exam. (Why was it later called the 11-plus? I was still only 10.) I was overwhelmed by the teachers

striding about (or so it seemed to me) in academic gowns; the sheer size of the place; the height of the windows that could only be opened or closed with a hook at the end of a long pole. And a school hall complete with a stage and a gallery. I did so want to be a part of it all.

### First day ... frightening

Arriving at school on the first day of term I was, of course, a frightened little first former, even more frightened when pupil after pupil went to the front of the room and handed an envelope containing money to Miss Nash, the form mistress. I didn't have an envelope or any money to hand over, and it wasn't for a very long time that I became aware that in those early days, parents who were able to had to pay a contribution towards their children's education. Obviously my father wasn't able to. Well off we were not.

But there were other interesting things to distract me: get to know all the pupils in my form; wonder at the size and maturity of the pupils in the sixth form ... not knowing, of course, that one of them, 'Bean' Evans, would five or six years later be my sister's husband, Dr John Evans of Royal Holloway College. I found the imposing figure of Mr Butlin even more imposing when I saw his

highly polished brown shoes from my place seated on the floor in assembly, and the way he would blow his nose and tuck his handkerchief up his jacket sleeve. How lucky we were to have had such a great man to be the school's first Headmaster. He decided not to have speech days; no form exam results in order of merit; well-enjoyed end-of-term parties; a collection for a 'good cause' to which every pupil was expected to contribute as we left assembly every Monday morning. Liberal ideas about education.

I wasn't quite sure why we had to be weighed and measured regularly instead of having a usual gym lesson with Miss Blockley, but I did enjoy so much the last end of term gym sessions when we played 'Pirates'. Swimming was never popular with me ... the bus to Wealdstone, the trek down Mason's Avenue, the usually cold water. I didn't overcome my hostility to swimming until I was fifty! But sports day was something else. No school on Wednesday afternoon, but every pupil had to turn up in school uniform and be registered on Saturday afternoon, with many old pupils and parents present for quite a grand occasion.

We had quite a scary time during the war ... at home, spending every night sleeping under a Morrison shelter; at school often spending hours in the air raid shelters, trying to take an interest in the lessons the teachers were trying to teach us, while air raids were going on above us. Feeling really sorry for Sixth Formers taking their external exams under these conditions. And the cold meat pie that the kitchen staff managed to produce for our school dinners so that we didn't go hungry, bombs or no bombs.

### **My grey school tunic ruined**

It was about this time that I was standing in the front row in the chemistry lab when Mr Bergin was heating something liquid in a flask on a Bunsen burner. Unfortunately it boiled over, which it was not supposed to do, and when I looked down I saw my grey school tunic covered in small holes! I think that the school fund probably paid for my new tunic.

I don't remember when it was that we started going to the Granada Cinema in Harrow for the concerts organised by Mr Crowley for all Harrow schools, with classical music played by one of the London symphony orchestras (I don't remember which one) conducted by Muir Mathieson. I came from a home where classical music on the radio and gramophone was the norm, and I appreciated these end-of-term concerts so much. I believe that they enriched many pupils' lives, and continued for a long time after I left the Weald in 1951.

After leaving the fifth form I became part of the first small group of pupils who entered 6G. I owe

a huge thank you to 'Shove', who initiated this Sixth Form General course (6G) with the intention of providing an unusual and interesting year for any pupils who, after the Fifth form, were too young to be accepted at Training Colleges or apprenticeships and would benefit from an extra year at school. It was a wonderful year, studying different aspects of our normal lessons plus extras like, for example, Mr J.V. Barker's history of the ancient Greek world. We also did non-academic subjects: the odd cycle ride on a Wednesday afternoon; evening get-togethers at each other's houses, including Shove's; and would you believe, going into school over one weekend to re-decorate our small form room.

### **Really stimulated ...**

I had been by no means a 'promising' pupil during my first five years at the Weald, totally undistinguished. But somehow this course really stimulated me, with the result that towards the end of the year Miss Drury persuaded my mother to let me stay on to do A levels and aim for university. And the rest, as the saying goes, is (my) history (in spite of the fact that I still couldn't do maths).

So there I was studying English, Latin and French for A level and adding a 'new' subject, Economics, at O level. But life in the Sixth form was not all hard work. We were fortunate to have a brilliant group of boys such as Richard Shead, David Lush and Brian Piggott who, with others, formed their own choir for a memorable school concert when they almost reduced the audience to tears with their rendition of the sea shanty 'Tom Bowling'. Not only that, but their sixth-form revue, 'All For Your Delight', was a great success. Who could forget their opening number, dressed as ballerinas in crêpe paper tutus (confectioned by me) or their rewriting of the folk song 'Bobby Shafto' as 'Arthur Shoveto', which so delighted the Rev. Arthur Halfpenny that he came to every performance to hear it again.

I had always sung in the school choir, with Miss Pyke an inspiring conductor and Mr Lowry an exceptional accompanist on the piano. We had great end-of-year parties, went carol singing around Stanmore and Hatch End, learned and sang some really interesting choral works for school concerts. And so in 1951 we sang a new work by Ralph Vaughan Williams which was probably our most challenging piece to date. Miss Pike then told us that the first public performance of this piece would take place in the Royal Albert Hall and that it would be sung by pupils from schools in the London area as our contribution to the Festival of Britain. Even better was the fact that some members of our choir were selected to take part in this

grand occasion, I think maybe four of us, and there we were on a Saturday morning at rehearsal in the Stoll theatre in London, lunch provided at the Royal Albert Hall and then two performances with a symphony orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult, and Vaughan Williams in the audience with his future wife, who had written the poems that he had set to music.

Soon after this it was goodbye Harrow Weald and hello Leicester University. So many memories of the Weald that keep re-surfacing: the lunchtime ballroom dancing twice a week in the

hall; the rivalry between the Houses; being friendly with the amazingly talented Ron Lacey, of later stage, screen and TV fame; getting to know Merlyn Rees and Colleen; the day away in Oxford that the new Head, Mr Crowle-Ellis, arranged for the leaving prefects; and much more.

I can't help thinking how fortunate I was to have been educated at such an excellent school.

PS – I forgot to mention that after we arrived at York I trained language graduates at the University where my husband, Keith, was a senior lecturer.

## YOU WROTE ...

**PAT (PAMPLIN) MITCHELL (1943) writes ...**

Dear Peter

Once again I must thank you, Alistair and the Committee for all you do to keep 'The Old Wealdens' going.

Sadly, once again, I'm not able to make Saturday the 30th for the Reunion.

I am involved with the English Speaking Union (Ouse Valley branch) and we have our National Championships for Public Speaking for 6th formers being held in Churchill College, Cambridge on that day.

My news is that I am delighted to remain in touch with several Old Wealdens.

Jean Robson, née Hall (1943), and I were delighted to share in the celebrations of Margaret and Roy Cole's 60th wedding anniversary in Loughborough. (Both are, of course, Old Wealdens, Roy 1940 entry and Margaret (Nicholls) 1943.)

I also had a phone call, late last year, from Eileen Lush, to say she was moving to Bedford ... and so she and I meet up regularly, chatting about David (1943).

Of course my life has changed since losing Maurice early last year. However, theatre including ballet and opera at nearby Milton Keynes, Northampton and Cambridge, and my love of driving, means I can always fill the car with friends and see the post- and pre-London shows.

A 30-day Med cruise last year, with an old friend from Zambia days was so good. I've booked a similar trip with Saga for Sept/Oct. It's great

having a chauffeur to pick the luggage up from the bedroom and seeing it next time in the cabin.

I play bridge regularly at 'The Club' and also socially ... and all this with my family means my life is very varied and full

How could I have forgotten mentioning Jean Edmark, née Dodgson (Denmark) and Eileen Baker (New Zealand) from whom I still receive Christmas cards.

As I've said before, any OW who wants to visit Bedford, with its beautiful view and excellent museum – just get in touch; there will always be a welcome, a meal and bed available.

Sincerely

– *Pat (née Pamplin) Mitchell (1943)*

**GENTLE PERSUASION – Uncle Bill style**

I remember my very first day at Harrow Weald; well, not so much the first day but the first lesson of the day; and not that so much as the first five minutes of that lesson.

It was 1944 and my mother had taken my sister and I away from Harrow for the summer and I didn't join the school until a few weeks into the term. My report book shows that I was absent 50 times! The first lesson was woodwork with "Uncle" Bill Monday. Mr Monday looked up from his chair as I stood in the doorway. "Who are you?" he asked. "Orchard, sir." I replied.

His face lit up. "You must be Archie's brother!" he said.

"Yes, sir." I said. (My brother Arthur, or Archie as he was known, had left the school at the end of the previous term).

"Has he told you anything about me?" I was

asked. Somewhat naively I answered, "He's told me what you do when boys mess about, sir."

"What, this?" he asked, and as quick as a flash administered his famous "gentle persuasion".

"Y-yes, sir." I stammered. I have no idea how he did it so quickly.

Mr Monday sometimes commented on the fact that only one boy had ever ducked when he administered his "gentle persuasion". It was my brother, Arthur or Archie who bore the scar for the rest his life for when he ducked, he cut the bridge of his nose as he made contact with the edge of Mr Monday's table.

*E. Orchard (1944)*

---

**From Barbara (Penny) Summerfield (1943)**

Dear Peter,

Sadly I will not be able to make the 30th April, and so send my Best Wishes to all I know on "That Very Special Day"

Reading through the magazine on page 8 is featured the Masters of that day. Memories are wonderful and it reminded me that early in the 70's I had moved to Sussex – in fact Burgess Hill – and was employed by the Sussex Dental Service. We had a mobile clinic and I used to visit many of the schools around Burgess Hill dealing with the children's dental problems and hygiene, one of them being Chailey Community College, and David Crowley was Headmaster and Dear Shove Halfpenny also teaching there and Mrs Shove teaching on a temporary basis. Dear Miss Drury coming down to Sussex to visit her brother who lectured at Sussex University. Whilst our mobile unit was in the Chailey school grounds I would join David for dinner most days and reminisce about our days at Harrow Weald. After several visits to the school he would come over and have a meal with my husband Gerald and I. Sadly David died during the 80's but there is a plaque to his memory and thanking him for all his initiatives during his time at the school (I believe he was the First Head to be appointed) hanging in the entrance hall of the school and he was buried in the grounds of Chailey Church, never forgotten.

I do still e-mail Celia Garland (Daly) who is still in Cape Town, and of course ring and see Jean Barlow (Upton) every other week, Jean lives in Charmouth; also at Christmas write to Pat Jones (Norton) all our year 1943. and Joy O'Brian (Swallow).

So Greetings and hoping you are keeping well Peter,

All good wishes

– *Barbara Summerfield, MBE*

---

**Chris Cornford (1949) writes ...**

Dear Alistair,

I notice from the recent edition of "News and Views" and from earlier issues that stories concerning Bob Chambers' vocal group are popular as are those about Clare Pope and this reminded me that I have an anecdote involving both!

Unlike my contemporary, Brian Jackson, I was occasionally allowed to sing with the quartet (I had a decent voice but was weak on the repertoire). Normally the group performed in the cloistered area adjacent to the girls changing rooms, where a satisfying resonance was to be found, but for some reason, perhaps because of the weather, we had on this occasion actually ventured inside the school building and set up in the corridor close to the library. We launched into a lusty rendition of the then popular song Cigarettes and Whisky and Wild Wild Women, but had not got very far into the number before a classroom door was flung open and the formidable figure of Miss Pope appeared. From her expression it was clear that she was not about to bestow a compliment! "Yes", she hissed, "And I'm one of the Wild Wild Women!" The five of us plus those listening beat a very hasty retreat and as far as I know the group never sang inside the school again.

Best wishes

– *Chris Cornford (1949)*

---

**Betty Robinson writes ...**

Greetings from down under. I'm sorry you are so far away. I belong to seniornet which is an organization designed to keep us oldies up to date with technology. At our meeting this week we were told we should think about including an item in our will stating who was the legal owner of any of our emails, photos, etc, floating around in the cloud. It's a great club – I haven't heard of anything similar in the UK. For the past 20 years I have been doing radio reading for the print disabled. I'm getting a bit croaky now so may have to give it up shortly. The world isn't getting any more peaceful, is it? You haven't heard from Betty

Silverstein lately have you? We were great mates but lost contact over the years.

Look forward to hearing from you again.

– *Betty Robinson (Tunstall 1944)*

---

## WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

Hi Alistair

Just reading my copy of 'News and Views' and came across this page when out popped my sister's name – Carol Ettershank. I have spoken to her and she recalls play costumes being stored in the loft and she with others were helping with costumes for one of the plays. She also said that in 1966 when she was in the upper 6th there was a school disco with the theme of 'Atlantis,' they made large fish and went in the loft to suspend them from the ceiling. I have sent her a copy as she no longer subscribes. She lives in Edinburgh and cannot get to the reunions very often.

I recognise a few of the other names. I am sure you will get some comments from other OWs.

– *Sue (Ettershank) Martin (1958)*

---

## From Angela Buisson (1947) ...

Still rambling, folk dancing, playing recorder and handbells. I belong to Hunstanton U.3.A doing play-reading, birdwatching and French films. I also do French conversation. Best wishes to any of my contemporaries who remember me.

---

## From Gillian (Hammerton) Broadbent (1953) Llanon, near Aberystwyth ...

I was saddened to read of the death of Brenda (Hawkes) Greaves. She was a close friend of my sister Karla (Hammerton) Everitt at school – both being musical and athletic. Karla sadly died in August 2004. Interestingly enough, one of my musical brothers-in-law – Nigel Broadbent – is in the LSO and knows Brenda's daughter who is also a violinist in that orchestra. – It is a small world!

---

## From Pat (Norton) Jones (1943) ...

So sorry I can't be with you this year but I will be thinking of you and wishing you all a happy Reunion.

I send all my love and best wishes for 2016 onwards.

---

## IN MEMORIAM

### JANET ANN BAKER (née Guy) (1941)

18th May 1930 – 26th October 2015

It is with much sadness that we inform you that Janet passed away on 26th October 2015, following a series of major strokes.

Whilst suffering from many of the aches, pains and infirmities associated with advancing years, she had until this time, been active in both mind and body.

An avid reader and crossword fan, she retained a degree of mental agility that was envied by many, and despite being afflicted by rheumatism and arthritis, walked several miles without the aid of a stick, almost every day.

Janet passed away peacefully in a nursing home in Cambridge with family by her side. She will be sadly missed.

– *Vanessa Tregunna*

---

# SCHOOLING: SEVENTY AND MORE YEARS AGO

By Peter Luck (1943)

**M**Y first school was Harrow Weald Infants' School in the main road almost opposite the bus garage. It was just around the corner from where we lived at 16 Weighton Road. It was a good introduction to learning in 1937. I can't recall the names of any of the teachers but one name springs to mind – Thelma Ergis now Thelma Emmans (1943) was another of the pupils – I think – it was a long time ago!

That school is there no longer. It's now a branch of Waitrose !

Next door to the school playground and directly opposite the bus garage was the sweet shop and Kiang Tea Rooms run by the parents of Bill Reece who was a 1942 entrant to HWCS. Bill was a life-long friend.

They talk about having an examination for youngsters nowadays but I don't think I had to take any tests and moved on at age seven to Harrow Weald Junior School, up the hill, in the Uxbridge Road halfway between Hall's Corner and Brockhurst Corner and right next door to All Saints' Church. Searching back through my memory banks I seem to think that during that time I sat next to Pat Pamplin (who has contributed some memories elsewhere in this issue). Teachers from that period I remember

were Miss Polkinghorne and Mrs Mealing. Mr Gooding was the head-master. I came along the Uxbridge Road only a few days ago and guess what: the school is no longer there but a modern building – Blackwell Hall, part of the church.

The aim after this school was to progress to the 'County School' just around the corner, in Brookshill. For this there was a test to be taken (I don't think they called it the 11+ in those days). I passed all right but thanks probably to my father who thought I should have extra learning sessions which took place at Mrs Mealing's flat in Locket Road. I think these sessions cemented what I had been taught and I passed OK to reach HWCS in 1943.

The rest, as they say, is history, which we all shared. But the news we get now is somewhat alarming. The old school building – the Austen Building – has been sold and is to be used as a care home. So all the schools which I feel very fortunate to have attended, and enjoyed so much, are soon to be no more.

When one reads about current education and the Academy structure which is being introduced one does wonder whatever was wrong with what we had. Not a lot, I would have said.

*In the paper version of "Old Walden News & Views" which was circulated in January of this year, the last page promised you a re-keying of The Times article detailing Derek's life and death in the first e-version of the new year. It follows herewith –*

*From the 'Register' feature of 'The Times' newspaper of Thursday 28 January 2016 we have the following:*

## **DEREK SUGDEN**

**Engineer who designed the acoustics at Snape Maltings for Benjamin Britten and added warmth to the sound at Glyndebourne.**

**D**EREK SUGDEN created the most important aspect of celebrated British concert venues – the acoustics.

The engineer was responsible for ensuring that an elegiac french horn or crashing cymbal could be enjoyed in all their purity at venues including Snape Maltings near Aldeburgh in Suffolk, Buxton opera house in Derbyshire and the new Glyndebourne theatre in East Sussex.

He joined Ove Arup & Partners in 1953 and, like the company's Danish founder, was a regular festival-goer at Aldeburgh which had been started in 1948 by Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. In 1965, the festival wrote to Arup asking for his opinion on converting a malthouse in nearby Snape into a concert hall. The Dane was in Australia, involved in the design of the Sydney Opera House and asked Sugden to look at the maltings. "I met Britten and Pears and walked round it and thought, 'Gosh it's in a terrible state'" Sugden recalled. "All Britten said about the acoustics was, 'I'd like it as full as possible for the volume.'" For Sugden that involved raising the walls by a metre, "And everybody liked it."

Within two years of the hall's official opening by the Queen, Snape Maltings was burnt to the ground on the first night of the 1969 Aldeburgh Festival. "The phone went about 7 am," Sugden



said. “We got in the car and met Britten and Pears in the wet ashes. I had a cry, but Britten said, ‘It’s all right, I’ve got over it now. We’ll start rebuilding it straight away’.”

They did, and 42 weeks later the Queen made a return visit. Earlier, Sugden had invited members of the public to take part in the acoustic tests, which were filmed for a *BBC Look East* report and included Britten detonating an explosion on stage so that Sugden could measure the reverberation.

Derek Taylor Sugden was born in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, in 1924 to a Methodist family who hailed from Yorkshire. His mother, Louise, was a fine singer for whom the chapel choir was important. His father, Douglas, was an engineering draughtsman who took the family for Sunday morning walks through the long tunnel where he would whistle to demonstrate how the sound varied depending on where he was standing. He also built coops for the family’s chickens, sending his elegant drawings to be published in *Poultry World*.

Sugden came to appreciate the rich acoustics of Watford Town Hall through a series of jazz gigs in his teens. He left Harrow Weald Grammar School in 1941 to take up an apprenticeship with an engineering company in east London and later became resident engineer at Plaistow wharf.

In 1949, he married Jean Metcalfe, who shared his Methodist beliefs before he turned away from religion. She died in 2007 and he is survived by their two sons and daughter. Ben is a teacher and musician, Mark is a musician, and their daughter Caroline Hillier is a graphic designer. He is also survived by his second wife, Katherine Douglas, a primary school headteacher.

Sugden was considering giving up engineering when a friend arranged for him to be interviewed by Ove Arup, who offered him a post on the grounds that his face would fit and they both enjoyed baroque music. “Although there was a

general direction, you were left to your own devices,” Sugden recalled of his employer’s ethos. “There wasn’t a sort of bogus management characteristic.”

He returned to Aldeburgh in 1977 to help create a recital room for the Britten-Pears School, later recalling a conversation with the composer Imogen Holst, a friend of Britten’s, in which she said: “Mr Sugden, we want you to arrange for all the lovely sounds like birdsong to be heard and all the horrible sounds like aircraft to be excluded.” When he explained that this would defy the laws of physics, she replied: “But, Mr Sugden, we have engaged the clever people at Arup.”

About the same time, he led the team that restored Buxton opera house, which has stood unaltered for almost 75 years; soon afterwards, the Buxton Festival sprang into life there.

In 1980, he set up Arup Acoustics, a specialist division to work with architects to ensure that the venues they created minimised unwanted sounds, such as external noise or air conditioning, while enhancing the musicians’ performances.

At Glyndebourne, where the new opera house, designed by Michael Hopkins, was built in the early 1990s, Sugden worked with the conductor Andrew Davis to ensure that the orchestral pit gave more resonance and warmth to the music than had been the case in the old house. His other projects included the Theatre Royal, Glasgow and the Jacqueline du Pré recital hall at St Hilda’s College, Oxford. In 2012, he was awarded the engineering medal by the Institute of Acoustics.

Sleep was his favourite occupation, especially after lunch, along with “idleness”, because “thinking about things is important”. He described himself as an “old leftie,” and even an anarchist, saying: “There is something about conformity that I find disturbing.”

Derek Sugden was born on December 27, 1924. He died on 30 December 2015.