

e-NEWSLETTER

June – 2017



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

Editor:
PETER LUCK (1943)

Editorial

Welcome to this first e-edition of our e-Newsletter this year.



It is slightly larger than our usual 'e' and for good reason: we have some first-class pieces to inspire and entertain you.

A piece of sad news: my co-editor, Alistair, is seriously ill and has had to resign his post. Our heart-felt wishes go to Alistair; perhaps the piece submitted by Lynne Nesbit can inspire him to beat his problem.

Alistair was the contact point for much of the content that we have published over past years and we will want to find a new co-editor in due course.

The recent Reunion was well attended – as usual – and most of the well-known faces were present. We just have to live, now at our age, with the fact that we may not all be there tomorrow!

– Peter Luck

CHAIRMAN CHRIS SETS OUT SOME DETAILS REGARDING THE BURSARY

Below is a letter which goes to applicants for the Nancy Young Bursary. It helps to explain what is involved and what is required from applicants. See page 10 for a current example.

NANCY YOUNG MEMORIAL BURSARY

Thanks for your enquiry. The Bursary (open to OWs and their children and grandchildren) is for a project involving qualities of initiative, possibly adventure, not directly related to the applicant's work (though we have stretched this point to help several applicants who wanted money towards medical 'electives' required of medical students who spend time working/studying abroad in 'developing nations').

We explicitly don't give grants for academic studies (because if we did we would expect to be overwhelmed with applications!)

The grants are modest - £200 - £250 would be typical.

An applicant should write to me (email will do) explaining what they are planning, and how it will demand initiative and help their personal development, and why they need a grant. The letter should be by the applicant, not the Old Wealden parent or grandparent. The Committee takes the decision collectively. A successful applicant is expected to write an account of his/her experiences – 400 to 500 words – for our annual newsletter.

Hope this helps.

Best wishes,

CHRIS OVERSON
Chairman OWA
chris95@btinternet.com

YOUR NEWS: Please send submissions for future New sletters to: p.luck123@btinternet.com

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

By Lynne Nesbit (Fridkin) (1954)

I ALWAYS ENJOY reading in the NOW Newsletter – the little vignettes from everyone's lives; how we have all scattered, out of those old school doors to all quarters of the country, even the globe, taking with us whatever we wanted to keep of our experiences and probably holding onto a few we could do well to relinquish. Inevitably, as well as the successes, adventures and joys, there are stories too of illness, bereavement and sadness. I would like to share a bit of my story which bridges the two aspects – a story of illness, wellness and not a little joy.

Serious diagnosis

In 2010 I was diagnosed with terminal cancer of the bone marrow. In fact, it was so serious that my consultant said I had both lymphoma and myeloma equally badly and he really didn't know which one to treat. The strange thing was that although the blood results showed this to be the case, I had no symptoms at all and it was just a "lucky" chance that the condition was discovered. The consultant finally came down on the side of a rare form of multiple myeloma but informed me that there was no treatment called for at the time. When I asked my consultant what treatment would he have given me and why was he not offering it, the consultant replied very comfortingly that the disease was incurable and he could only offer chemo or radiotherapy or a bone marrow transplant, each of which would merely alleviate the symptoms ("and cause a whole lot more", thought I). He also advised that as well as seeing him privately at

Blackheath Hospital, I should also see him at Kings College Hospital "since you'll end up there anyway." How encouraging....!

Better Than Ever !

And here I am now, in 2017, feeling bonnier than I have ever felt in my life at the age of 71 and being told in the latest MOT that my physical body is 15 years younger than my chronological age! How could this be?

How Could It Happen ?

The answer lies in the soil! Where did that phrase come from? I just read it out to myself with a Suffolk accent! I live in Suffolk now but it can't be Suffolk soil as I have only just arrived here a couple of months ago. I believe the answer lies in different places, Mother Earth's soil being just one of them. If any of you out there have also received a Big C diagnosis or know someone who has, from what I have learned and experienced for myself, I recommend that you take full control of your own body and learn as much as you can about cancer and the many ways it can be alleviated or even cured long-term (i.e. not just for the next five years), despite the gloomy prognoses of your medical advisers. Their knowledge is considerably limited by their partial training, which is sponsored by Big Pharma. Healing is not in the interests of Big Pharma, I've come to realise, only the sale of drugs.

So, what have I done? Well,

attitude is the first line of defence as well as attack. I took the attitude of taking responsibility for my health. Let me put taking responsibility into a wider context for you.

Having Time To Sort It

The context in which it is put is CHOICE !!! When you have received your own diagnosis – of anything, not just cancer – provided you are not at risk of dying within a couple of days if you don't have that recommended operation to clear a blocked colon, or valve to the heart, or whatever, then you have some time to find out and consider what else is available besides the very limited selection offered by your physician. Fortunately for me, I had that window of opportunity.

What To Choose?

However, there are some far more fundamental choices to make before selecting alternative therapies: do you wish to choose to be healed at all? Some people actually wish to die anyway, for a variety of different reasons which only honest contemplation will reveal. Others, on the other hand, don't feel they have yet achieved everything they wish to, that there is unfinished business in their lives and would like more time to complete it. Still more discover that the very diagnosis itself gives them a new perspective on life – its value and purpose. The gift of the diagnosis has provided them with a new level of energy and understanding and they would like time to pursue new goals.

continued

Sharing ...

I made the choice to live, thereby giving myself the power to choose to take charge of my own body, my own health and wellbeing, using the expertise of my consultant simply as his title implies – to consult but not to submit oneself entirely. During a recent consultation, my consultant said (half-jokingly) that I didn't need him. I told him "You are the tree under which I shelter!" I shared with him from the beginning what I am doing. He wanted to know in detail, though his manner towards it all was somewhat dismissive at first. I sense it isn't any longer. He even agreed to read my book on hyperbaric oxygen therapy and show it to his professor. So, I recommend you enjoy a good relationship with your consultant, who is a specialist and therefore

in a good position to offer advice and monitoring of your particular condition. However, as a specialist, he can only see part of the picture. You have the responsibility to keep the whole picture in view.

Keeping the whole picture in view might mean that a more conventional approach to healing becomes necessary at some time. However, even the contra effects of that can be mitigated with alongside alternative therapies.

Well Advised ...

Once I created a strong intention for myself, somehow the appropriate people came into my life. I was very well advised on cancer-healing nutrition (go organic and watch your water source) and found out a lot myself; I received healing emotionally and spiritually; I

found out which websites and books were useful. One thing led to another and soon I found I had created my own very personal path to healing myself which suits me admirably. It takes time and it takes money to take responsibility but I don't intend to hand over that responsibility to an ill-informed (even if well-meaning) health "professional". His stake in my life is not quite the same as mine.

I have never felt so well with so much more energy than I had before. For me, the diagnosis of terminal cancer had become a great gift! If anyone would like my bibliography and list of supplements and alternative healers and suppliers, my email is fairygodmother2@gmail.com I should be very happy to email it or speak to anyone. ***Here's to your good health!!***

'LIGHTING THE FLAME'

By Sir John Baker (1949)

FOR HOW many of our post-war generation of school children with our lives still in grey times did Harrow Weald CGS light a flame we still keep alive today? I was rooting through some of my music scores recently and found a copy of Alexander Gibbs' "The High Adventure" written in 1953 and first performed in the Albert Hall on 6 May 1956 at the National Festival of Schools Music. The vast choir of students singing on that day included, at a guess, forty from Harrow Weald. I was one of them.

Stirring content

The work, conceived for the Festival of Britain, is the story of British heroics from the Spanish Armada to the Battle of Britain, full of uplifting sentiment (if you are a patriot) and Sub-Elgarian lush Englishness – at least, as I recall 60++ years later. The music was challenging, but an SATB contingent had been rigorously and joyously prepared by Irene Pike, and the performance in the Albert Hall was a real blast – in every way. For most if not all of us this was our first experience of public performance in London's vast iconic domed concert hall, home of the Proms. Irene had earlier kindled my love of singing; this performance turned that love into an inferno.

Finding my way

After school, at Oriel College, Oxford, I sang in choirs and groups large and small, and after doing National Service sang with the Bach Choir and the Harrow Choral Society in the Albert Hall, Festival Hall, Alexandra Palace, St Paul's Cathedral, and many other venues. I got to know the conductors, composers and singers of the day – Malcolm Sargent, Colin Davis, Georg Solti, Ben Britten, Michael Tippett and Janet Baker – as well as a vast range of music such as the great Masses and Requiems (including Ben Britten's War Requiem), Rossini's Stabat Mater, the big three Elgar choral masterpieces, Belshazzar's Feast, Tippett's A Child of our Time, and the Bach Passions.

When in my mid-30s, work demands put an end to time for rehearsal – I had to stop performing. But the fire lived on: I became a Trustee of John Eliot Gardiner's Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists, Chairman of Oxford Philomusica, and between 1994 and 2002 Chairman of English National Opera.

All this from Irene Pike's spark. My pay-back has been to invest time and money in musical education for

children both as Chairman of ABRSM, for seven years (do you remember those grade exams?) and as Chairman of the Mayor's Music Fund in London, set up by Boris Johnson when Mayor to provide instrumental lessons and shared musical experiences for children with musical talent but not the family means to meet the costs.

Now in my 80th year, I am heavily involved in the Yehudi Menuhin School (think Nigel Kennedy, Nicola Benedetti, Alina Ibragimova) which is just down the road from our Surrey home. It is Britain's, and perhaps the world's, leading music school with seventy international students from age 8-18. Their talent is truly breath-taking and their concerts are joyous occasions.

Thanks to Harrow Weald

So from my own time at school in Harrow Weald to my involvement with these extraordinary young people today, the wheel has come full circle. Thank you, in memory, Irene Pike. Thank you, Harrow Weald. And we should need no reminding that a great school is much, much more than an examination factory – Secretaries of State for Education, please, please note!

The Archive by Rosemary Luck (1941)

THANKS ARE DUE to our Chairman, Chris Overson (1957), for a splendid display of memorabilia at the Reunion, made possible by the vastly increased space available in our new location. Many thanks also to Heather who houses the entire archive for us.

We should also put on record the excellent work done by David Lush (1943) who collated and organised the archives. David sadly died in 2013.

There were many items in the archives not seen before and I found the Headmaster's (E. Barlow Butlin) Year Books most fascinating. He used a school exercise book for each year and pasted into them official letters, Weald Chronicles, Sports Day programmes, lists of staff and prefects, Parents' Association events, concert and drama programmes and so on.

For example in the 1946-47 book there is a printed programme for the 'First Annual Reunion Dinner' held at

Lysbeth Hall, Soho Square, W1 in September 1946. It was a formal affair – evening dress optional, a 3-course meal followed by seven toasts. They were to The King, The School, The President (EBB), The Guests, The Ladies, Absent Friends and The Association. Each toast was proposed and five of them were responded to, making a total of 12 speakers, all teachers or OW's.

Later that year there is a list of suggestions for the School Advisory Council, one of which came from Form 1C: "That when the 3rd Form is reached pupils are placed according to ability – most intelligent in the 'A' form, and least intelligent in the 'C' form." (Selection gone mad!) – and what happened to the 'B' form?).

In the 1941-42 Year Book there is a foolscap page of meticulous instructions for the "Emergency Feeding Scheme" organised by Mr Butlin, Miss Henwood and Miss Drury who each led a team. A plan is drawn on the reverse showing the "flow of the

traffic" (i.e. the public) into the hall and out.

One instruction reads: Miss Henwood's team will go into action first. They will at once start the preparations, light fires, fetch china, fetch and open stores, etc."

A further paragraph reads: "The public must leave as soon as they have finished food. Any homeless people should also be taken to the waiting interview with the organiser. They may afterwards wait in Room 9 until billeting arrangements are made for them."

A general admonition is typed and underlined across the page:–

"Whatever happens, please keep calm and cheerful!

Do not listen to rumours. Do not pass them on."

I was a 'weed' in 1B at this point and I'm not aware that this scheme was ever needed or used but it does give a feeling, or a memory, of the atmosphere at that time.

More About Memory . . .

I WAS INTERESTED to read Alistair's reprinted editorial 'More About Memory' and wondered if his comment on pubs "(though, of course not as customers - that would be wrong)" should have been followed by an exclamation mark.

This reminded me of an incident that occurred to a group of our year who used to spend quite a few Saturday evenings in The Case is Altered in Old Redding, and became very good at darts. I think the following can now be told without incriminating anyone (we did not drink lemonade). Our group usually consisted of David Pike, Chris Pass, Robert Reed, Gordon Pollard and me. One evening, and it was during the week, our group was out for

some reason which I can't remember, and we were walking past the Alma when someone said "let's go in for a drink". Robert Reed said, "I will get the drinks", whilst the rest of us went to a table. We then looked across the room and sitting near to the bar was, to our horror, Mr. Crowle-Ellis, our headmaster. Too late to stop Robert who hadn't seen him, we were alarmed when our headmaster got up as the drinks were served, but so relieved when he said "Have this on me boys, I don't often get this opportunity to buy you a drink".

We thought we should remain at our table, but as we got up to leave with new courage we asked him if we could buy him one to which he replied "No thank you boys, if I have

another I may not be able to take prayers in the morning". The sequel is next morning at assembly the school were waiting to stand up for Mr Crowle-Ellis's entry, as we always did, when Miss Drury, the Senior Mistress, moved from her chair to the head's seat to take assembly. A few grins were exchanged.

This story supports what a good and human headmaster we had.

I am disappointed that so few of my year are members of OWA and will not be able to share this memory.

**From Gerald Mabb (1953)
Weymouth**

YOU WROTE . . .

From Freddie Thomas (1944) ...

The paper issue which came out in February was very interesting. Keep up the good work!

O O O

From Linda Lamont (wife of Willie [1945]) ...

My husband William (Willie) Lamont is in a nursing home in Lewes, where he had been for three years, but he still likes to get news of Old Wealdens and fondly remembers his old school days (from 1945 onwards). John Butcher, his friend from that time and Best Man at his wedding, visits him regularly and keeps him up to date with Old Wealden news.

Best wishes – Linda Lamont

O O O

From Sheila Franklin (Whittle) ...

A fun memory is when Ken Follett entered school – first morning he got left behind after Assembly and his large wide eyes met mine – he was lost – but we found his classroom and in that short time it was obvious he was a strong character.

About a year or so later he was in detention when I was on duty. They were all settled when one of the desk lids opened and a tune was piped softly from what I think was a recorder, and the dark, wicked expressive eyes, met mine, over the desk lid !!!

I had to laugh. Six months ago I found Ken's book "World Without End", 1,237 pages !!

I read every one – an amazing book re the 14th century, a period in history unfamiliar to me. I learned so much from a very gifted scholar from Harrow Weald. He was one of many – it was a wonderful school. I loved every minute of my twelve and a half years there!

O O O

From Reg Lewis (1940)

I was disappointed to hear that the OWA can no longer have use of the Original Building. As someone who survived the disruptions of the War it has many memories.

O O O

From Marion Mole (1945) ...

Dear Keith – Thank you for sending details of the 39th Reunion. I'm afraid that I shall not be there this year and am unlikely to attend future events either. I do, however, enjoy receiving all the news of Old Wealdens. Would it be possible to receive all communications electronically, I wonder? Email, attachments and the like? Paper storage has become a bit of a problem since I'm likely to throw anything away!

My thanks and congratulations to all of you who keep the OWA alive for so many of us.

All good wishes for the Reunion.

Regards – MARION

(ED–The only item we don't do electronically is the paper version which comes out in the New Year. However, I don't see why we couldn't send that electronically as well, it's only a matter of making another pdf and sending it. There would be a bit of duplication for some but for someone like Marion it would be an obvious plus. – PL

O O O

From Mrs Jessie Jones, Staff from 1964 to 1974 ...

I am sorry I won't be able to attend the OW Reunion this year as my husband and I have moved from Ruislip to a retirement complex in Chester and, due to age, etc, we are unable to travel to Harrow Weald this year.

I was very fortunate to attend the first meeting of OW, organised by Nancy Young, and which have been so well organised by many of the Old Wealdens ever since. Keep on the

good work.

I was very lucky to teach in such a happy school and many thanks to all the staff and students for all the wonderful memories I have of Harrow Weald Grammar School.

O O O

From Angela Buisson (1947) (née West) ...

I did send a few notes about myself to the last Newsletter but as my maiden name was not recorded no-one will know who I am.

After I left School in 1952, I worked for the Post Office at Northwood Hills. That was for six days a week! When I came off my bike on an icy road and narrowly missed being run over by a lorry I decided it was prudent to change, so I went to work at the Kodak factory in Harrow View which was just a short walk and a more civilised five days a week.

Then I thought how I had really enjoyed French at school with Mrs Wyn Jones so I went to France as an Au-Pair in February 1954. Very soon I was offered a post as an assistant in a girls' school. I enjoyed those months teaching so in September, 1955, I went to Kesteven Teacher Training College. There I met my husband and this year we are celebrating our Diamond Wedding Anniversary. It was his French surname I was after! But he is English !

O O O

From Daphne Smith (Yarwood) (1943)

Many thanks to the Committee and all involved in making sure the OWA carries on. Although I can't join in the April gathering the magazine update is really great ... huge thanks!

Ever appreciatively – Daphne

THE WEALD IN WARTIME

By John Stops (aka David) 1938–1945

I STARTED AT The Weald in 1938 in form 1C. Outside the form, Room 2 in the East corridor, hung the clock which Miss Jackson, the form teacher, recommended we noted as a landmark.

Having been in the Cubs, I joined the School Scout troop, the Second Harrow Weald. They met in the gym. The Scoutmaster was Mr Swallow, aka Birdie. He was assisted by Mr West, aka Spike. In 1939 the troop went for a summer camp at Houghton Mill, in Huntingdonshire. The site was on the banks of the Ouse and we had the use of two rowing skiffs, one of which we used to rescue a lad who had fallen into the adjacent lock and was clinging precariously to one of the gates.

A privileged visit

Birdie had arranged for us to visit the close-by RAF base at Wyton, where we were allowed to board one of the Blenheim bombers. Within a few days, these same aircraft carried out the first RAF action of the war, a raid on Heligoland.

My uncle's firm had been evacuated to Sussex and he asked us to look after his nice house in Hatch End. We heard the declaration of war there, seated on a sofa with my father and sister Betty who was two years ahead of me at The Weald. For a few weeks, we walked the three miles to school and back. Then we got bikes. Inflation had already set in: Raleigh Sports Light Roadster had for years cost five pounds, ten shillings, but had already gone up to six pounds, three and ninepence.

The first few weeks of the war saw short days at school, but the

expected blitzkrieg did not immediately start and we reverted to normal hours. We were not unprepared, as along the West side of the North field a line of air-raid shelters had been installed. They were brick-built, buried to half their depth and then covered by the excavated soil. It was not long before the Battle of Britain began, and with it lessons in the shelters. The head of maths was Mr E. W. Maynard Potts, author of our geometry text books. He was introducing us to the concept of negative numbers. Not one to turn down an educational opportunity, he chalked a line on the mortar to represent zero and those in need counted the bricks, up for positive and down for negative.

The war came close to us when a German bomb demolished the back and one side of the nice house. We made our way to the front door, but were halted by the voice of the air raid warden who shouted: "Don't open it, it'll all fall down". We got out by clambering over the pile of bricks which had been the side of the house. Fortunately, an Aunt who had been living in our house in Harrow Weald had just left, so we moved straight back in.

Taking turns

When the daylight Battle of Britain had been won, the air raids came at night. We took our turns at fire-watching with a member of the staff. Friday nights were covered by the senior scouts patrol. Our base was the ante-room to the office of Miss Drury, the senior mistress, above the main entrance. One night, there was a particularly intensive raid and the duty staff member, Miss Marjorie Sellars, Geography, decided that we should make for the

shelters. We had got as far as the boys' entrance when we heard the whistles of three bombs so we dived to the floor, with Miss Sellars underneath. Walking home the next morning, we were not allowed to turn into Elms Road or College Road, and got home via College Avenue. The first bomb had landed two hundred yards up the road from our house. Sadly, it killed a Weald pupil, Dorothy Walker. The second bomb landed further up College Hill Road and the third demolished a house just into Elms Road.

Joining the ATC

The school squadron of the Air Training Corps, No. 794, had just been founded. On Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings Mr Brewin, Biology, became Flight Lieutenant Brewin, supported by Flying Officer Bergin. On Sunday mornings the boys' playground became the parade ground. At that time, we had been asked to do little talks to the class using the epidiascope in the Lecture Room. I had just acquired a little book called "Spot Them In The Air" so I did a talk on aircraft recognition. On the strength of that, I was called upon at age 14 to instruct on aircraft recognition for the ATC. The squadron did two camps. The first was at RAF Brize Norton, where we got to fly in Wellingtons, by that time being used as trainers. I was put to lie on the crew access door, just in front of the pilot's feet. It was held shut by the sort of catch you might find on a cupboard door. So I kept my fingers crossed.

Projects

At about this time, a Projects Week at the end of the Spring Term was introduced. Our form master was Mr W. E. Williams, who wrote

the music for the School Song, Music lessons would be enlivened by his rushing to the window and shouting "Get off the cricket pitch". He didn't think much of the Projects Week so his project was to take some of us on a hike in rural Hertfordshire, sleeping out at night. It was enlivened by unforgettable aerobatic displays by an aeroplane then unknown to us. Shortly afterwards, the silhouettes came to the ATC and the Mosquito was unveiled to the public. If you turn South at Junction 22 on the M25, you can still see that very machine and the field from which it made its first flight.

Training on gliders

Our second ATC camp was at RAF Benson where they were training army pilots to fly Horsa troop-carrying gliders. They practised the very steep approaches that they used in operations to pack them in tight. The view of the approaching ground along the fuselage and through the pilot's windscreen was quite alarming. One cadet (not one of ours) walked up to the pilot on landing and said: "You must be frightfully brave to fly these machines." The reply came in a laconic Australian accent: "Believe me, son, we're s*****g hard bricks."

The ATC also arranged area athletic meetings, often at the Headstone Manor playing fields. 794 always won, which was a bit unfair as few of the other squadrons enjoyed our facilities. We had the 440 yards track on the East field and, above all, our coach, Alberto Hauptrief, for whom the concept of a good loser did not exist. I would do the high jump and the 4x220

yards relay. Peter Masters-Thomas took the first leg and handed over to me in the lead, which I would pass on the Ken Anzola, who would also have won the mile and the 880 yards. Ken passed to Derek Hine who also won all the sprints and the 440 yards.

Meanwhile, Birdie had joined the Home Guard and acquired skills which he passed on to the scouts. Once, he hid from us in Harrow Weald Common. We couldn't find him, so we sat down to think, whereupon Birdie erupted exultant from a pile of leaves.

Picking plums

During the summer holiday we were encouraged to "do our bit". If you were in the scouts, you could go plum picking, camping beside the river at Evesham. We exercised quality control by eating lots of plums, so constipation was not a problem. Alternatively you could go to farming camp, staying in the village school in Long Compton in Warwickshire. The catering and housekeeping was looked after by the girls and the boys were gathering the grain. The reaper left the corn in sheaves which we had to stand up to dry in "stooks" of six. One day, a large aeroplane passed overhead. I thought "it's a Manchester". But then I saw it had four engines – it was a Lancaster, probably the very first. When the sheaves had dried, it was carrying time. We got quite good with pitchforks loading the sheaves onto a flat trailer. The trailer was pulled by a huge shire horse called Duke. I can still hear the farmer's voice: "Stick in there, Duke" whereupon Duke would pull the trailer to the rick yard. The pace of unloading into

the elevator was set by the farmer, anxious to secure the crop whilst it was dry. The trick was to keep the centre high so that the edges could be laid with the cut stalks pointing outwards and downwards. Our reward was six old pence an hour and our souvenir was the thistles which took weeks to get out of our hands.

New weapons of war

Towards the end of the war, residents had to take turns firewatching. I remember one night when I was on duty with my Dad when an aircraft making an unfamiliar sound started to appear. They had a glowing red light in the tail. They were the first V1 flying bombs. When the engine stopped, you knew the bomb would fall. Next came the V2 rockets. They were supersonic, so the first you knew was the sound of the explosion when they landed. At least if you heard them, you knew that they had missed you. They were only in use for a short time, as their launching sites were soon overrun by the invasion.

So the war ended in Europe and, soon after, in the Far East. A gang of us from school went up to London to celebrate!

O O O

John Stops (aka David) 1938–1945

After graduating, he joined Saunders-Roe at Cowes in the Isle of Wight and at Beaumaris in Anglesey before moving on to nuclear power. He is now in his 28th year of retirement back in Beaumaris. He still likes aeroplanes and reads "Flight" from cover to cover!

From Mrs Jennifer Biggs (1948) (née Harding) now in Wokingham, Berks.

I WOULD HAVE LIKED to attend the Reunion but unfortunately it is always held around the date of my birthday – 30th April – and we have our own celebrations at that time.

This year, I will be 80, and I remember Pamela Reeves and I share the same birthday. We were at Harrow Weald Infants, Juniors and then the County School together. If anyone is in touch with Pam, please wish her a Happy Birthday for me!

I was very interested in Peter Luck's "Schooling, Seventy and More Years Ago", as my sisters and I were all at the same Infant and Junior Schools, though my sisters didn't go to the County School. My older sister, Molly, remembers in 1939 the headmistress at the Infant School was Miss Bedford and one of the teachers was Miss Cordingley. I remember Mrs Green and have a photo of our class (including Pam Reeves). During the war, when the siren went, we were shepherded across the road to the air raid shelters in the Recreation Ground. It took us a while to get us assembled and the All Clear would go not long after we arrived, if we were lucky. If not we chanted our tables.

Taking our sweet coupons to Reece's shop on a Saturday morning was a real treat, with our sixpence pocket money.

Miss Harris was a teacher at Harrow Weald Juniors, I'm not sure if she was the Head at that time. She coached me in Maths, English, etc. after I had been off school for two months with pneumonia in 1947. Going to hospital in the ambulance through snowdrifts was quite exciting. The coaching paid off as I passed the 11+ and ended up at the County School a very weedy 'weed'. Is that term still used for first-year pupils?

I strongly agree with the last paragraph of Peter's letter, there was nothing wrong with the system and changing things hasn't necessarily improved matters.

Best wishes to all

JENNIFER

From Jenny Challacombe (1951) ...

BEST WISHES for a happy Reunion on 23 April. Unfortunately it clashes with an important family occasion so I will not be able to attend, but hopefully will do next year.

I enclose three photos from what I think was the 75th anniversary.

Group photo: Front (l to r): Ann David, Francis Spandler and me, Jenny Challacombe (née Duwell).

Back (l to r): Valerie Worby (née Welch) and three gentlemen.



Ollie Kingsland writes to our Chairman

Dear Chris,

I AM WRITING TO YOU today to apply for a Nancy Young Memorial Bursary. I'm 16 years old and the grandson of Pearl Ralph, OW, who was Pearl Webber in 1955.

I am looking for a grant to support my plans for this 11 week summer which I have been blessed with. My plan, therefore, is to walk the 267 mile Pennine Way (from Edale in the Peak District to Kirk Yetholm in Scotland) with a couple of friends and one of their Dads.

Our plan is to walk the length totally self sufficiently which will demand my initiative because I will be carrying a 10-15 kg backpack (full of camping equipment, clothes, food and all the backpacking supplies) for 20-40kms a day for 2-4 weeks. Therefore I am applying for the bursary to help fund and change my current 'family' camping equipment into lightweight gear so my rucksack will not weigh 99999kg!

My love for walking and outward adventure seemed to emerge from completing Duke of Edinburgh Bronze, joining the school climbing club and tagging along with them on some amazing trips to Snowdonia, in all conditions! I have been trying to continue these skills and experiences and have walked and camped all over Kent. This is also how I am aiming to develop my personal skills by turning up the notch and walking the Pennine Way. However, GCSE's have seen this love grind to a halt for the last year. The Pennine Way will help refresh and spark this love for the outdoors again. This is important for me as I have decided to up tracks and say goodbye to school after my exams and move out of home to study outward adventure at Shuttleworth College in Bedfordshire. Our Pennine Way trip should help lead me with confidence and build up skills to take on to my new college and help with the self-reliance of living without Mum and Dad.

The kit I am hoping to buy with the support from the grant will not only be used for the Pennine Way trip but will be used throughout all my trips and practicals at my new college, and possibly my career.

I cannot explain how much I am looking forward to the trip. We are already well in to the planning of the trip and this makes it even more exciting. The Bursary will be able to make it accomplishable and really make the difference for the trip because I will be able to have all the right kit and equipment.

Thank you very much for this opportunity and I will look forward to hearing back from you.

Ollie Kingsland

Tailpiece ...

WEEDS TO ROSES

Does anyone remember being called a "weed" when they joined Harrow Weald County Grammar School in the first form? When I first went to the school in 1963 this term was still in common use.

Enduring the change from being the oldest and biggest pupils at primary school to being the youngest and smallest at grammar school was daunting enough but to be called "weeds" by one and all was a hurtful experience.

I believe that some unfortunate (male) first formers went through an unpleasant "de-weeding" process at the end of the first year when they were unceremoniously (perhaps that should be ceremoniously) pushed off the mound in the North Field behind the New Building (where we now have our annual reunions) into the stinging nettles that grew at the bottom. I think that it was second form boys who carried out this process but it may have been older boys. At that time most first form boys wore short rather than long trousers so it must have been quite painful.

I understand that the term "weed" was the only name that survived from the "Garden of Knowledge" or the "Garden of Learning" created by Mr. Crowle Ellis, the previous headmaster, sometime in the 1950s. There was a progression from weeds (first form), through cabbages (second form) until the pupils became roses in either the sixth or upper sixth form. Can anyone remember the other plants correlating to the other years or the correct name of the "Garden"? Can anyone throw any light on the "de-weeding" process or other rites of passage? If so, please send your reminiscences to the editors for publication in a forthcoming News & Views.

Keith Mayes (1963)

Editor: I think the term 'weed' has been in existence longer than Keith suggests. In fact my sister Rosemary has used it in her piece elsewhere in this Newsletter (she was a 41er) and I can certainly vouch for the fact that I was called a weed in my first year (I'm a 43er).

However, as far as the extension to naming older years as other plants, that is something which never existed in our time, and as Keith tells us was the creation of Mr Crowle-Ellis. - PL