

News and Views Extra

Part 2

September 2021

Again, apologies that this e-News had to come in two parts.

News of friends lost

Along with the lovely fun of things, there's also of course the sadness at losing old friends, and since the last e-News went out in April we have heard of the death of two Old Wealdens.

Marian Warner née Kingdom 1945 died in June this year, and in May we heard from his wife Jill that **Roger Gunn 1946** had died on 16th April. Jill said: 'He was a great fan of your Old Wealden Newsletter, and always read it with great interest.' Roger contributed to it too, in particular his memory of the responsibility on him as Head Boy, together with Head Girl Pauline Deverson, to co-ordinate enquiries among the school population at the time of the dreadful rail crash at Wealdstone.

As always, if you have memories you would like to share, of friends lost, do let us have them for the annual magazine.

On a happier note, it's always great to welcome a new member...

...and especially when it's thanks to an 'old' one (sorry Fred!)

In June we had a lovely surprise message from **Fred Moore 1947** (the 'old' one in this story. I'm ducking as I write this.....)

Fred wrote: I was away visiting some friends at their holiday apartment in sunny Eastbourne. We went out for dinner in a nearby bistro and during the conversation it emerged that my friend Hazel went to.....Harrow Weald County Grammar School. I have known Hazel for about thirty years and we have never ever mentioned schools. "You do mean Brookshill, don't you?" she asked in some disbelief. "The school with the quadrangle?"

Fred then did a good job of selling us to his old/young friend, and Hazel joined up. We're delighted to have you Hazel – and thank you for joining up so promptly, and for real (some say they want to and then somehow don't get round to it.....)

So, **Hazel Johnson née Hodges 1966** would love to hear from others in and around her start year, and her email address is hazel@uwclub.net

And the more the merrier, so, if you have an Old Wealden friend who'd really like to join but isn't sure how, or whether it's worth it, be like Fred, and give them a friendly prod. You could forward this to them, as a taster, or to get their help with some naming, maybe. The person you need then is **Membership Secretary Keith Mayes 1963**, who will make the next bit really easy.

His email address is: owahwsecretary@gmail.com

And, if you've already done that, thank you.

Adding to the fun.....

It's always a pleasure when members respond to something they've seen in one of these publications, and add to the fun. One of the 'jazz band' got in touch after he saw himself on the front page of April's e-News – **this from Michael Rosen 1957**:

Paul Fowler forwarded me the latest edition of the OWA news.

Several points: I think the first on our boys' register was Kenny Monk. The late A. McG and McGloughlin were in the B class. Quozz (Quarrie) came late and he wasn't in C class.

As for the 'band', well we did create a band- the Pinner Village Stompers. Here's my account of it - to date: 19,500 views. (*Ed. link below*) I can remember the day we did that pose for the photo because Dave Stollar told me off for holding the trumpet wrong. Ever since then, every time I see a jazz trumpeter, I remember Dave shouting at me.

very best
Michael

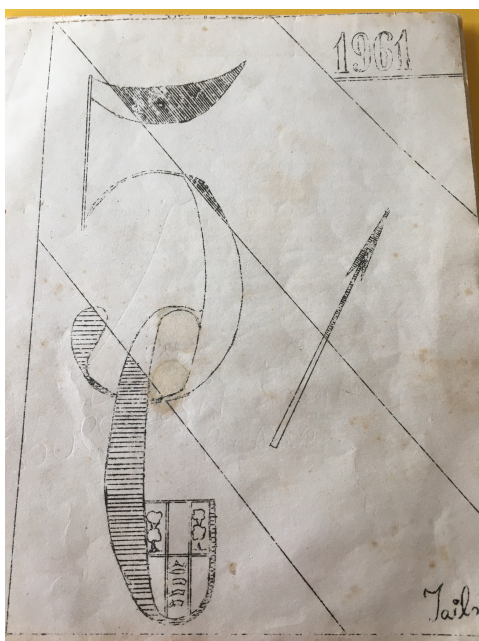
I should join the OWA again. What do I do?

(Ed. it's in the pipeline, hopefully! He's had other things on his mind....., and we wish you well Michael – great to hear you back on the radio too!)

Here's the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryG0UazcdxA>

It was so strange to watch Michael's brilliant monologue, and from his characterisations immediately recognise some of the people in Tony's photos. You won't regret a minute spent watching this.

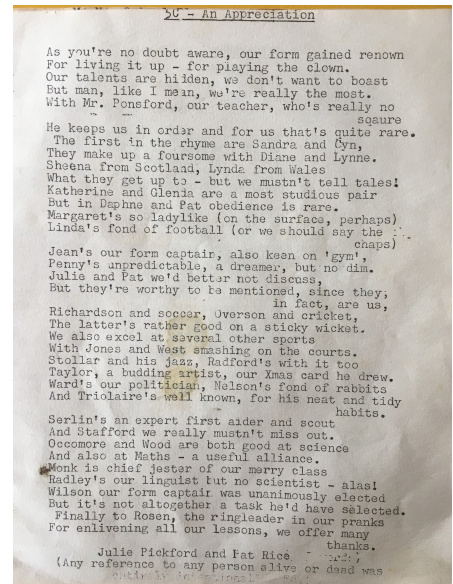
Also after that April e-News visit to 1C, in its 1957 vintage, another of their number, **Graham Taylor**, sent us a glimpse of how they turned out later.....seems they needed a firm hand, in the person of Mr Ponsford, who gave room to their multiple talents and exuberance, while succeeding in keeping them in school. No mean feat. He supported them in producing, in 1961 (must have been the autumn term?), the 5C magazine - which Graham has kindly now donated to the archive.



Graham has confirmed that he's the 'Tails' who designed the front cover - and apparently he had a good line in Christmas cards back then, too.

As an introduction to their classmates, Julie Pickford and Pat Rice trod a fairly careful line between warm appreciation and character assassination - and it's a very clever poem.

And yes, the indistinct wording right at the bottom does actually say 'entirely intentional!'



It's important to note that not everyone in 5C that year was naughty, as a full read through the magazine makes clear. They were clearly all appreciated by each other, though, valued for just who they were. Sounds as if it was a very healthy community - if hard to handle at times - Mr Ponsford will have needed his debrief in the staffroom, some days, that's for sure.

The magazine editor was Michael Rosen, who in his editorial said that on his desk at home, as he worked on putting it together, he had 'the careful and conscientious writing of Margaret, the graph papers of Mr Ponsford, and the scented paper of Julia and Pat'. He also had 'Overson's left-hand round the wicket, googly writing'. Chris's contribution, 'Cricketena' has the same funny easy style that characterises his contributions today, and he still tells a good story. We'll save it for another edition. We don't need to ask, though, Chris, if you still have that 1913 Wisden - or 'that old yellow thing' as the second-hand bookseller called it before he charged you all of six old pence for it.

One thing's certain - it didn't appear on the 5C 'For Sale' board, which has some great bargains. I'm hoping I'm still in time for those white skating boots - my size, too. It's on the 'back' cover of this, where all good For Sale boards should be. Enjoy..... and thank you Graham.

A first day - and a scary pupil?

One of the 1958 members asked if they could help with putting names to photos was **Mary Brown née Green**. Her reply included the following memory of her own first day as a teacher at Harrow Weald, involving the much lamented Richard Weston. **Mary wrote:**

As a new member of the French department in September 1958 I was given 3A as my form. I was unsure of my duties, and when I suggested "I suppose we have to elect a form captain" the whole class shouted "Richard Weston!" "But he`s not here" I replied. "He`s always form captain" they insisted, so weakly I agreed to appoint him, in absentia. "You`ll have to look out, Miss. He`s a big tough fellow." My heart quailed. Several days later a pale, smiling but rather apologetic face appeared round the class-room

door. "I'm Richard Robin Weston. I've been ill," My fears subsided, and he was a very reliable form captain! Amazingly, I can still recognise that friendly, slightly hesitant smile in the photo on page 12 of the February edition of "News and Views."

Mary was indeed a member of the Senior Choir, and she continues:

Yes, I continued to sing in choirs, if rather under false pretences. We sang for a few years in the Windsor and Eton Choral, and for a much longer period in the Slough Philharmonic. The best we can do now is sing the hymns in church.

I am still in touch, mainly by letter or phone, with Hilary Kendall (née Searle, Geography) whose husband died in June this year. She and I did come to a couple of reunions many years ago, and I have always enjoyed reading the Old Wealden News.

*Mary told us some other 'staff' stories, including a funny one involving **Myrddin Jones**, but we're saving that for a retrospective tribute to him, to come in a later edition. Several other members have suggested that they would like this, and so **do please send your own memories of this wonderful teacher who inspired many students to engage with innovative drama, and whose English lessons were so brilliantly and consistently alive** - and thank you for your story Mary.*

And so, to finish, our archive.....some food for thought.....

At its core is the 'official' one, so comprehensively described by Chris; but it's also all of our own personal keepsakes of the time, significantly including the stories we've told of it over the years, in News and Views, and elsewhere. I (Ed.) have just added a note to my family, in the 'when the day comes' folder, to ask them to make sure that any bits and pieces of OW they find, go to wherever we have all decided our history should be preserved. I don't want to pass them on yet, because I have fun digging them out now and then, to answer conundrums, and smile over; but I don't want them to go to the recycling without someone who knows about these things having a look over them first. So, is this poring over photos, trying to get the details right, only about the fun that it does undoubtedly offer, or is there a bigger reason that we should care about? Here's a bit of food for thought.....

Genizah

'Genizah is a Hebrew word meaning 'treasury'. To the Jews of medieval Cairo, a Genizah was a place for worn out scrolls or other sacred texts. Brought to Cambridge by scholar Solomon Schechter in 1897 the contents of the Genizah of the Ben Ezra Synagogue are among the University Library's greatest treasures.

Through the Genizah manuscripts....we reveal the social, business and personal lives of the remarkable Jewish community of Fustat, Old Cairo, a thousand years ago.'

One day back in September 2017, wandering in Cambridge with an old Greenhill Primary school friend who lives in Canada but returns every couple of years to see friends and family, we sought out his old study buildings, and for the first time, although I'm so geographically

close, I went into the Cambridge University Library. Without an alumnus with me, I would have probably passed by, wishing I could go in, but a little daunted. It was late in the day, the exhibition advertised outside would be shutting in under an hour. But, we went in, we picked up the programme – from which comes the above quote - and walked into the Milstein Exhibition Centre.

For that hour, we lost ourselves. There were accounts of alms given, among many others, to 'the orphans of the astrologer 8, the acquaintance of the man from Damietta 6, the supervisor of milk 4, the afflicted newcomer 3, the widow of the seller of honey sherbet 4, Yaqub the blind man 3'.....There were many letters, formal and less so, scraps of messages, some asking for work, a contract for eye surgery, orders of payment for business, inventories, announcements of engagements, marriages, a trousseau list, a fascinating prenup arrangement, bills of divorce, legal queries, family disputes – and most fascinating of all, to both of us, records from the classroom: some attempt at writing the alphabet, abandoned by the child in favour of some doodling, another's stick man, a letter home bemoaning a child's bad behaviour in class – 'impervious to argument and not at all quiet'- and another praising the hard work of a child but telling his father that sadly 'another child called Abu I-Hasan ibn Wuhayb rose up and broke his writing-board with the full knowledge of the other boys. Greetings.'

The big events - wars, natural disasters, disease – also appeared in the collection – but always embedded in what it had meant for individuals coping with their lives.

The story of how the collection we saw that day came to be there is as amazing as the collection itself. The details of the retrieval, sorting, preservation and translation of that treasury of items, over years, was also told that day – [but here is the short version, as given in the programme notes.](#)

Lost Jewish treasure found by Scottish twins

In 1896, intrepid twins Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson returned to Cambridge from a research trip to Egypt and Palestine. They brought with them a treasure lost for a thousand years: a page from the original Hebrew book of Ben Sira. The page had accumulated along with thousands of other documents in the Ben Ezra Synagogue, Old Cairo, in a chamber called a Genizah. The Jewish community had been placing their worn-out books and documents in the Genizah since at least the 11th century CE. Cambridge lecturer Solomon Schechter was so excited by the sisters' remarkable discovery he travelled to Old Cairo to see for himself what the Genizah held. The Chief Rabbi of Egypt gave Schechter permission to take whatever he liked. Schechter declared that he 'liked all', and shipped almost 200,000 manuscripts back to Cambridge.

Food for thought for sure - and anyone else going to Google those twins? I certainly am.....

Back to our own special archive, you will remember that **Rosemary Luck 1941** gave us a wonderful piece about founding Head Barlow Butlin in Issue 44, and his two successors during the 'school' era will follow in Issue 45, thanks to **John Carr 1960**, who is well under way with that. It is a great read, and brings those personalities so clearly back to mind. A treat to come. It is hoped, too, that specific memories of **Nancy Young's time as Principal of the Sixth-Form College will be featured too, in a future edition.**

For quick reference

- The website is www.oldwealden.org.uk

It has quick links to every e-Newsletter, from 2013 onwards

- btcloud.bt.com/web/app/share/invite/KDx541Ycqh - the link to the old CD content, and you can download. eg: *Sixth-Form College Magazine No.1 summer 1980. It's brilliant!*

This is all courtesy of Pat Moloney 1964

- Facebook Group address is '**Harrow Weald Grammar School**

NB the address on the back of Issue 44 is incorrect - please take a pencil to it and remove the word 'county'. The old 'page' included that word, and it's no longer functional, so if you want to find the group, please use the correct address, above. The group is run by Pamela Gilmour nee Gentry 1966.

Contact details for the committee remain the same, and are all in the latest paper magazine, page 26. Your comments and contributions to the editor are always welcome, phoned, written, sketched, any time, any sort, any length; and if by email, this is the address for them: ljane1948@gmail.com

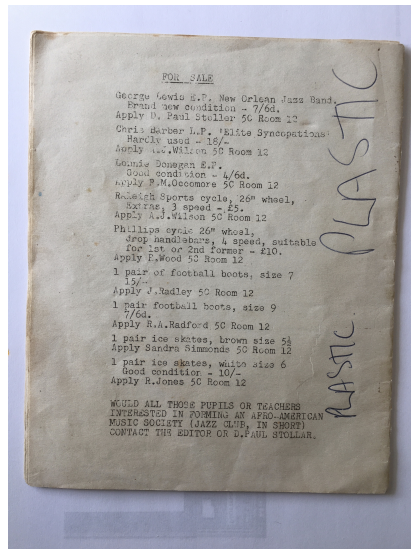
So, it is looking hopeful, at least, that we may be able to have an actual reunion on 30th April 2022, in the Memorial Hall, Harrow Weald, as last time, so do make sure to keep the date free if you're hoping to come. Keith Mayes will invite you nearer the time if it's happening, and up to date information will always be on the website too. Meanwhile some of the 1960 year group are meeting up for lunch on October 2nd, just down the road, with numbers restricted by the venue, but at least a real chance to catch up in person. Let's hope that can happen on a bigger scale in April.

And, in a bit of **breaking news**.....we now have **films on the website! Robin Benton 1960** has been experimenting with ways to make them easily viewable, and it's looking good. At the moment there are just two, one from Ian Davies that many of us watched up in the old gallery some years ago, and which featured in Issue 43; and one of those made back in the day by teenaged John Radley 1957 with full supporting cast. They are wonderful bits of our archive, so do have a look. The website remains work in progress, but the films are up and ready for you. More will be coming soon.

The best of wishes to all, from all the committee.

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Meanwhile, as promised..... if you fancy a bargain, check out what 5C has on offer, on our, and their, 'back' page.....



Zoom in, and grab a bargain - it's worth a try!

Just one thing - **Please apply direct to seller!**