



The Old Maidstonian

The newsletter of the Old Maidstonian Society

No. 34 – Spring 2021

Your Committee 2020 – 2021

President

Nancy Powell

Chairman

John Clayton

Secretary

Richard Ratcliffe

Treasurer

Graham Walker

Membership Secretary

Sean Scurr

Webmaster

Malcolm MacCallum

- Tony Bishop (1955 to 1962)
tony_bishop@btinternet.com
- John Clayton (1961 to 1968)
clytn4@aol.com
- Sam Coppard (2005 to 2012)
samuel.coppard@btinternet.com
- Gardner Crawley (1955 to 1962)
gardner.crawley@dalsterling.com
- Robbie Ferguson (1994 to 2001)
(Deputy Headmaster: *ex-officio*)
- Malcolm MacCallum (1957 to 1963)
m.a.h.maccallum@qmul.ac.uk
- Ron McCormick (Staff to 2004)
- Nancy Powell (1993 to 1995)
(Old Maidstonian Co-Editor)
iamnancypowell@gmail.com
- Richard Ratcliffe (1956 to 1964)
rbr1@btconnect.com
- Sean Scurr (1997 to 2004)
oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk
- Paul Smith (Staff, 1993 to 2017)
paul.smith@mgs-kent.org.uk
- Mark Tomkins **(Headmaster: *ex-officio*)**
- Neil Turrell (Staff, 1992 to 2009)
turrellneil@gmail.com
- Graham Walker (Staff, 1981 to 2018)
(President-Elect)
gmwalker57@gmail.com
- Brian White (1962 to 1969)
(Old Maidstonian Co-Editor)
drbdwhite@gmail.com
- Jeff Wilkinson (1956 to 1962)
(MGS and OMS Archivist)
mgsarchive@longrede.me.uk
- The current School Captain (*ex-officio*)
- The current School Vice-Captain (*ex-officio*)

From the President

Hello All. And so the highly memorable year continues, not just for OMS, but for society at large. As a result of Covid-19, social activity within the society continues to be dormant.



As we complete our second virtual AGM in March 2021, it is with the hope that in the course of the coming months we can look to resume activity where possible and assemble again as a full OMS for the Annual Supper in 2022. Whilst social activity has been out of bounds, the Committee has continued to meet regularly via virtual means, the newsletter has continued to be written and circulated, committee roles have changed and new members have joined.

I took up office as President of OMS in April 2019 and, with agreement from the OMS committee, will remain in that role until March/ April 2022. It has been extraordinary to serve a three-year term, but an opportunity I am happy to have been offered. Congratulations to the Committee for maintaining business as usual during this highly unusual time. May it not be long before we can all meet up once more and reflect on what a time it has been. Take care.

(Editor's note: not only is Nancy the Society's first female President, but only the third person to have held office for three or more consecutive terms since the foundation of the Society in 1884. The others were G T Cook, from 1916 to 1921, K E Loveland from 1940 to 1946 [both during wartime] and G B ['Beta'] Phillips from 1958 to 1960.)

From the Chairman

Greetings to all Old Maidstonians as we go into a Spring that we all fervently hope will fulfil the promise of an end to the series of lockdowns that were necessary in 2020, and a welcome return to 'life as we know it' as the fictional Captain Kirk was, mistakenly, quoted as saying.

The Society's committee meetings have continued to take place by Zoom, which has brought the added benefit of enabling those who live far from Maidstone, such as Tony Bishop, and others whose work commitments make it difficult to attend meetings in person, such as Sam Coppard, to play a fuller part, and their contributions have been especially welcomed.



If you would like to join the committee and play a part in what we do, please get in touch with me at any time: I will be delighted to hear from you. We usually hold a minimum of three meetings a year, plus our AGM. In particular, we are looking for someone with experience of creating and maintaining websites, to act as Co-Webmaster with Malcolm MacCallum, and another person to co-ordinate the Mentoring scheme. If you are interested in finding out about either of these roles, please let me know.

Despite the frustrations of not being able to hold our usual events, work has continued behind the scenes, looking ahead to when we can resume those much-loved staples in our calendar, and what venues can safely be used. Planning for specific dates is still problematic, but we are ready to proceed once clarity emerges.

Sean Scurr has stepped seamlessly into the role of Membership Secretary and earned the admiration of all for bringing his skills, and knowledge of more recent age groups, to this important role. Graham Walker has also recently taken on the role of Treasurer to the Society, and Treasurer to the Old Maidstonian Trust, and I must thank both Sean and Graham for their willingness to serve the Society in these posts.

Thanks are due to the former Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Graham Belson, for his past service on the committee.

I must reserve special thanks for Richard Ratcliffe, who – as always – has offered his vast knowledge and experience in what, for him, is the new role of Secretary.

We are all volunteers, united by our love of Maidstone Grammar School. It is an honour to be Chairman of the Society, and I look forward to being able to represent the OMS at as many events as possible as life begins to return to how it was before March 2020. I hope to meet many of you during the coming months.

John Clayton

[Notes from the Headmaster](#)

Hello Old Maidstonians. I am writing this article on the eve of welcoming the entire MGS community back into school. Before I continue, though, I wish to apologise for its length. The last few weeks have been somewhat busy (!) - and I want to thank the Old Maidstonian Committee for understanding the pressures that we have been recently experiencing - but I did want to update you all since the last newsletter, about what life has been like at MGS through lockdown.



So, from Monday 8 March students will be returning, but before going into lessons, those that have consented to do so will be having a Covid-19 test. The new Ron McCormick Pavilion has been transformed into the MGS Testing Centre. Over the course of the next four days over 1200 students will be having a test, in the hope that they all end up being negative! The work to undertake this mammoth task has been immense. Schools are not cut out to do this kind of work, so a huge thank you to the staff who have led a vast team in getting the school to this point. It has certainly been a huge learning curve. Whatever our opinions are with regards to opening up schools again and testing students on return, getting students back into school can only be a good thing. Once again, just like the first lockdown last year, the classrooms and corridors of MGS have been quiet. The heart of the school has been missing, and so from tomorrow, voices, conversation, and laughter will return. I speak for many members of staff in saying we are so looking forward getting back to our day jobs and seeing the students again. School is where they should be. Online remote learning can only go so far in maintaining an appropriate level of progress. It is in the classroom, engaging with others, where proper learning can take place; and so when the students return, the main priority is going to be teaching them how to be students again. But, just like back in September, the students will respond well to our aims, and very quickly will settle back into school life.

But, on return the students are going to have something else to get excited about. Finally, after nearly four years since the initial conversation, our all-weather pitch is ready to be used; and use it we will. You would now not recognise the school field. Taking up over half of it is our new full-size 3G all-weather pitch. Those students who love their sport, of which there are plenty, are going to love the pitch. PE and games lessons are going to be

transformed, and there will be an extra space to put the students during break and lunch time. The pitch was primarily funded by the local authority to support the School's expansion, and so having the pitch available to use is going to make a massive difference to the students during their unstructured times. The first time Maidstonians will set foot on the pitch is going to be at our inaugural Year 13 Inter-House Football Tournament. With the disruption that year group has been through, I wanted Year 13 to be their first to use it. So, on Tuesday 9 March, a number of students from that year will play out a mini football tournament to christen it. Once they have completed the tournament then all other students will have an opportunity to use the pitch. The School has watched it being built for the last six months, and I know that many are eager to go on it. Their wishes will now come true.

So with returning to school and the use of our new all-weather pitch, here's to a much brighter future.

Mark Tomkins

The photograph alongside was taken at the inaugural tournament on the new all-weather pitch. The Headmaster is shown with Christopher Haywood, the School Captain, and Thomas Micalizzi-Lloyd, the School Vice-Captain.



MGS and OMS EVENTS

It will come as no surprise that the school has also cancelled all non-essential events. If necessary, the school can be contacted on 01622 752101, or by e-mail at school@mgs.kent.sch.uk.

Musings from the Penthouse

In my last article, I had planned to include references to slavery and the sadder parts of the world's history. As Graham Walker was intending writing an article about his personal reflection on why the history of teaching is so important, the section was withdrawn. However this did make me consider the use of freedom of speech and political correctness. Donald Trump is now a great supporter of freedom of speech since his second impeachment trial failed! Somehow he did not seem too keen on the matter when other people's opinions clashed with his ideas. That did start a thought running through my head about political correctness. How does this relate to MGS and the archives? Reading back through drama and sport reviews in *The Maidstonian* shows just how different ideas were in past years.

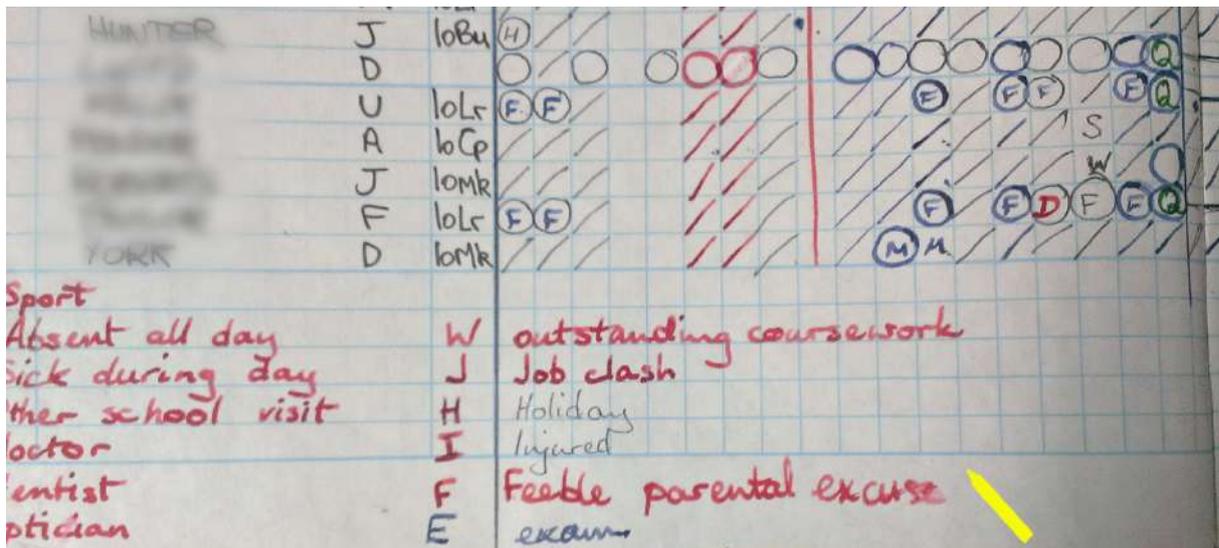
'The hitting of B*** was not successful on the turning wickets because he still will not use his feet to get to the pitch of the ball, and was consequently frequently beaten by spin and flight.' (Cricket review, 1956)

'K****'s Cassius caused me a little more concern... His voice tended to become monotonous and his vehemence a little wearing.' (*Julius Caesar* Review, 1957)

'.... While the only words one could not follow were when Biondello (R. B*****) made a virtue of becoming incomprehensible.' (*The Taming of the Shrew* Review, 1957)

There are many more caustic and very bold statements made about players and actors, but as my deadline approaches fast, I do not have time to search for them at the moment. Bear in mind that each of these pupils had to face the comments of their peers when *The Maidstonian* was produced. Some of the drama reviews were made by *The Daily Telegraph's* critic and some appeared in the local press as well.

More recently, masters used what would now be unacceptable comments in attendance registers, regarding parents' reasons for non-attendance of their children. 'F's' parents seem to have excelled in this respect:



School reports were often sanitised by the masters for consumption by parents, but letters to prospective colleges, universities and employers were more down to Earth. I have checked to see what was said about my life at MGS and unfortunately, or otherwise, there are few surviving records from my era. That was not down to the actions of any of the recent archivists, I can assure you.

Children say what they think but as we mature we learn to be more diplomatic. On the face of it, that is good, but it can lead to gossiping and back-biting. So should we be a little more frank about things? Hiding events in the past is nonsensical. How can we learn from our mistakes if they are hidden? Just food for thought.

Speaking of food, I am sure that the majority of pupils of my era will not forget the gypsy tart which was served in large metal trays to each table in the dining hall. Each section was cut by the kitchen staff and then served by a praefect seated at the end of the table, who always ended up with the last piece, which happened to be larger than the rest. One memory that always sticks in my mind is that one dessert of apricots, which had been reconstituted from dried fruit, came with an added ingredient apart from the custard – ants. It would appear that the ants had managed to get into the dried fruit over the summer break; they were then boiled alive and served to the boys. In



those days all we did was to fish them out and carry on eating: if you missed one or two, the custard would have hidden them anyway. Today, Health and Safety inspectors would have been called out.

Moving on from the past, if that is possible for an archivist, a number of OMs have been using the lockdown periods to research their family trees, and Jeff has been in contact with a number of them. James Tate was seeking information about his uncle, Maurice Oswald Jones (at MGS from 1916? to 1928) and has provided quite a detailed record of his life which, with the added information from the Penthouse, appears below. James also solved another question that has been hanging over the archives – Who is the lonesome boy featured on page 29 of *The Maidstonian* of 1965? James has admitted that he was the boy, and that the picture was not posed in any way. He was looking somewhat lost as it was his first day; however because he started in the second year he missed all the inductions for new pupils. It's good to see that he had already got into the correct school dress code – one sock pulled higher than the other.



As a result of Jeff's emails, James provided a link through to another OM, Nick Pearce, who was the last secretary of the school's Transport Society. Like all good secretaries, and archivists, I may add, Nick had not thrown away the files, and now they are in the process of being returned to MGS, fifty years on: perhaps more on that next time. Unlike James, Nick has been walking around the hills and coasts of his county, as well as sorting out his roof space.

Another enquirer was Nick Bonny, who was wondering whether there was any truth in what he had heard about Dr Philip Pettit (Headmaster 1972 to 1992) having written his own obituary. The answer was in the affirmative, and that it was published in *The Maidstonian* just after his death in 2002. Dr Pettit ('MAD Phil' as he was often called affectionately, due to the qualifications listed after his name) had intended to verbally record it but never got time to do so. It was read at his funeral service, very courageously, by his widow.



Nick also went on to say – 'A side of Dr Pettit that is often overlooked is his mischievous humour. Some years after I left, I became aware that he had even appeared on a light-hearted BBC entertainment show. The remit was something along the lines of people "making confessions". Two former MGS pupils admitted having carried out the old chestnut of unscrewing a blackboard and then introducing some dried fish behind it, before refixing it. What they were unaware of as they related their tale was that Dr Pettit was hidden away and

waiting in the wings, eventually striding on in full gown and mortarboard, theatrically swishing away with a cane to give them a piece of his mind! He was quite into his part, hamming it up beyond belief in response to the audacious act under consideration! I don't know who enjoyed his performance more - Dr Pettit himself or the audience! (The upshot of all this is that the confessors were requested to pay a not insubstantial "fine", which was passed on to one of Dr Pettit's favoured charities - which they were happy to do.)'

One question for those who have good memories: Stephen Mercer has written to ask about his father, Stanley Mercer, who attended the school in the late 1920s to mid-1930s. He, like James Tate, is compiling his family tree. Jeff was able to find mention of his father in *The Maidstonian*, along with seven other Mercers who were all at MGS around that

time. Having sorted out who was who, it was established that his father acted in the school dramas (including playing two parts in the same play), belonged to the scout troop and was a great sportsman. He won the Aylesford Cross Country race in just over 22 minutes, was placed in the top three in a number of athletic events, diving, boxing and the like, and played rugby for the school. He became an OM committee member and is mentioned on the OM Wartime Roll of Honour. Mention is made that he was made *Victor Ludorum* in 1935. Hereby lies the problem: Stephen and his sister (she taught briefly at MGS) seemed to think there is an honours board for those who achieved this honour. Mrs Friend has looked around the Hall and the corridors, but to no avail. Can anyone remember seeing such a board? If you can, then please email Jeff at his home archive address – mgsarchive@longrede.me.uk. Thank you.

Old Maidstrivia

1921

- With just 240 boys on the register, the House competition was extended from just sports to school work and physical training.
- Mr. Laurence presented a 'Good Chap' prize for the school, and it was noted that the use of typewriters in the school had increased significantly.
- The windows were unveiled to commemorate those who had fallen in WWI.
- Parents, who were rate payers, objected to educational expenses. They now had to pay £15 per head (£100 in 2021's buying power) out of the cost of £30.

1922

- In March, the school's first Shakespearean play, *Twelfth Night*, was performed.
- The Greasy Pole and Candle Races were included in the swimming sports. I should think that the temperature of the water was a great incentive to win the Greasy Pole event.
- Brunswick House was bought for the Junior School. There were just under 300 boys at the school now.
- Two gifts were made to the school – a 'Two Valve Wireless Installation' by Mr. Foster Clark, and 'Two Wireless Telegraphy Sets' by the War Office. The Officer Training Corp (OTC) set up a Wireless Section.
- Rugby now became the school's official winter sport.

1923

- As a reward for providing officers and men during the war, the War Office gave an ADP Lewis Gun to MGS. These gifts were made to only a few schools in the country.
- A Balloon Race was added to the swimming sports. (A help for those who could not swim?)
- Several boys qualified to receive blow-pipes for blowing bird's eggs. Nothing to do with the war effort. Just something their Granny taught them?

1924

- Twenty four members of the OTC formed a guard of honour for H.R.H. Princess Helena Victoria at East Station, Maidstone (right).
- A number of forms were taken to visit the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley Park.
- Alfred John Woolgar was appointed headmaster.



(... to be continued...)

A final point: an enquiry has been made by a Master's student who is exploring the role of grammar schools in the fashioning of British imperialism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The student writes that much has been done about identifying the roles played by leading public schools of the time, but almost nothing on the roles played by grammar schools and their alumni. This research fits in well with a major historiographical debate between 'maximalists', who saw the Empire as permeating all aspects of Victorian life and culture, and 'minimalists', who saw it largely as the preserve of a smaller elite.

If any readers have information about nineteenth-century OMs who made names for themselves in roles in government administration/ the Colonial Office/ the India Office, etc., it will be appreciated if they can send it to mgsarchive@longrede.me.uk.

Wishing you all well during this difficult time.

Icarus

Maurice Oswald Jones

As mentioned above in 'Musings from the Penthouse', James Tate has been researching the life of his uncle.

Maurice (right) and his sister, Margaret Oswald Jones, in 1928, presumably just after he left school at 17.

Maurice was born in Maidstone on 24 April 1911, the son of Oswald Charles Jones and Kate (née Darby). Kate was from Maidstone, her father being a tailor in the High Street. Oswald Charles was born in London but grew up in Shrewsbury. He trained as an electrician and established an electrical contracting business with Robert Morris, first in Worcester, but then in Maidstone in 1901, the firm becoming Oswald Jones & Co around 1910. It was initially housed in 12 Market Buildings, but moved to 9 Mill Street, where Maurice was born.



Oswald Jones & Co was a successful business, and OCJ became a significant figure in the development of electrical installations, and a consultant for the Council. He was also a collector, inventor and innovator.

In 1912, Oswald bought Snowfield Cottage, Bearsted Green, and the family remained there. He installed electrical lighting, initially with a generator, and broadcast the King's speech from his radio installation to an amazed crowd of villagers on the Green in 1924. He died in 1947, and Kate lived until 1963.

James does not know what subjects Maurice studied, or how he got on at MGS. He said that he had left just before the school moved to its present site in Barton Road.

Jeff notes that Maurice won a Form Prize when he was in Form UIIIa in 1923. In 1926, he achieved the General School Certificate, and Matriculation a year later. As was the norm, he donated books to the Library (seven in all, including three by Herbert Strand on

Scouting, but Maurice does not seem to have joined the MGS Scouts). His *Valete* report on leaving in 1927 or 1928. stated that he had been in School House, was a private in the C.C.F. and also was one of their drummers.

In 1928 Maurice made a speech to the school's Scientific Society and was most generous in donating half a guinea (£21.56 at today's purchasing power – a day-and-a-half's wages for a skilled tradesman) to the Pavilion Fund. His father gave double that amount. Money well spent, as the Pavilion has lasted for ninety-one years!

James thought that Maurice did not attend a university, but knew that he must have studied engineering, as his later profession was as a heating engineer. However, Jeff discovered that Maurice did go to university, having first studied engineering at Northampton Engineering College, where he was surprised at the number of nationalities studying there. *The Maidstonian* report of 1929 says that he passed the Inter BSc (Eng) examinations at London University. (There is no further OM report about him and access to other records held in the school are not accessible at the moment.)

Maurice joined or set up a company in London (but James cannot yet recall the name). At any rate he was very successful, and was able to indulge his passion for cars (he collected Talbots, and routinely drove the latest model Citroen). He bought a fine but derelict house in the Weald ('Normans') and restored it using traditional building methods. (James remembers visiting it once, and that it was an amazing place. Some years ago, when in Kent, he 'rubber-necked' it again from the drive). The house was beautiful, but his wife didn't want to live there, so they bought another house near Horsmonden, where Maurice lived until he died in 1997 (having sadly lost most of his money, James believes, due to the Lloyds' of London crash).

Maurice married Jean Russell in 1941. They lived in Rickmansworth until they moved back to Kent in the 1960s, and they had two children. Apart from cars, his main interest in later life was genealogy – and it was his work on the Tates which started James's interest in the subject, although sadly after Maurice had died, so only with the benefit of a fraction of the huge amount of data that he had accumulated.

Editor's note: In the 1950s and 1960s, the electrical contracting landscape in the Maidstone area appeared to be dominated by three companies: Oswald Jones, Pocock's and S J Wright. It strikes me that there has been a big shift in that respect, with many small electrical firms serving the domestic market today in Maidstone: the big firms seem to have gone, but I don't know why.

Memories of a police officer (4)

This is the fourth story from the series of articles by **Ron Dillon**, who joined Kent Police in 1962.

Maggie

'During lunch with Henry Darley a while ago, I told him the following story, which he felt might be of interest. After promotion to Sergeant, I went to Royal Tunbridge Wells, in whose area Lamberhurst was situated, and whose most famous resident was the Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher, MP, who resided at Scotney Castle when not in London. She was given armed protection 24/7 - from 06:00 to 22:00 by Metropolitan officers and for the other eight hours by local officers.

'On a Saturday night towards the end of 1978, I was one of two officers sent to guard her. For the first, and only time, I carried a pistol. We arrived at Scotney just after 22:00. Mrs Thatcher occupied the first-floor flat, which was reached *via* an external staircase leading to the front door. On our arrival, the door was shut and all was quiet so we had a drive round the area to make sure that nobody was lurking with felonious intent. On our return some ten minutes later, the outside door was open and the outside light was on. Dave, my colleague, who'd done this before, said that it was in case Carol or Mark (her children) were coming. Being a worrier, I said that I was going to check, so went up the stairs and knocked the door, which was opened by Mrs T herself - no make-up, hair all over the place and casually dressed to say the least, not a bit like her public persona.

"Good evening, Sergeant.' 'Good evening, Ma'am. I saw the door open and was concerned.' 'Thank you very much, everything's fine. Mark or Carol may arrive. Do come in.' I pointed out that I had a colleague. 'Bring him in as well.' So Dave joined us, as did Denis who had appeared by this time. 'Now Sergeant, would you like a drink?' 'Thank you, a little brandy would go down well.' 'Get the brandy Denis and NOT the cooking brandy.' I forget what the others had to drink, but Dave and I spent the next three hours talking to them. Nothing about politics, but it would be an understatement to say that I was amazed at her knowledge of local matters, even down to the man who ran an Ironmonger's in Pembury some five miles away. As we were leaving I produced my daughters' autograph books, which I just happened to have with me, and which she readily signed. (I'm not sure how impressed they were, being 11 and 9 at the time!) They then retired for the night and we tried to stay awake.

'Maggie had a new fan. She was so different from her public image.'

In Praise of Woodwork

This is the first of some reminiscences which have been provided by Paul Cooker, who wrote an interesting feature for our previous edition.

Mr. Knight was a formidable character in the classroom; he had to be to prevent the inevitable bloodshed that would have resulted from the introduction of careless boys to sharp objects. He did not suffer fools kindly, demanded attention, and as leader of the RAF section of the Combined Cadet Force received, albeit grudging sometimes, respect.

Speaking as a reluctant scholar, learning woodwork was one subject I sincerely appreciated. While I was no stranger to the occasional use of a hammer and nails, the thorough and methodical instruction in the use of a plane, tenon saw, chisel, and drill press, was embraced with sincere attention and pleasure in the execution. While stern in his approach to classroom instruction, Mr. Knight was gently patient one-on-one, clearly appreciative of those students who wanted to make an effort.

I still clearly remember all the carpentry projects that I undertook, simple as they may have been; the little toy boat, the mortise and tenon joint, the cut out and stained dinosaur figure, the plate turned on the lathe. It seems laughable now that it took almost an entire year to finish them, though, clearly, I learned a great deal in the process. It was not so much a matter of acquiring some skill as much as being exposed to some fundamental principles, gaining a realisation of the possibilities of, and building some confidence in, the craft.

In an institution that reveres academic achievement, woodwork, I am pretty certain, ranked rather low in esteem. I don't suppose that more than one in fifty (?) boys ever took the subject at 'O' level. But I am willing to bet that those lessons in the wood shop made a lasting impression on a much higher percentage of pupils.

All through my adult life I have built a wide variety of furniture, from purely functional bookshelves to an elegant secretary and an armoire. I have constructed several model railway layouts, and performed numerous house repairs and improvements. During the previous five years living on a small farm in Vermont, I have turned my hand to constructing chicken coops, tractor sheds, a truck shelter, two greenhouses, a shooting house, and most recently, a medieval style, heavy timbered, pub. The point is that, out of all the subjects I took at MGS, woodwork ranks as one of the more highly treasured and useful ones, even though I never attained any great level of merit in it at the time, or formal qualifications.

I know that I am not alone in this realisation. My brothers, Bernard and Mark, both products of MGS, both PhDs and having pursued highly successful technical careers, have also undertaken demanding and complex carpentry projects at various times. Bernard was close to finishing a remarkable set of ornate built-in bookshelves in his home just before he died. Mark and I saw them when we stayed with his widow, Susan, in California. We both agree that they are a stunning example of craftsmanship, and I am sure that he too thought a lot about Mr. Knight and woodworking lessons from long ago.

So, my message here is this, that it is not just those subjects that allow you to acquire accreditation and leverage to higher learning that matter. Some subjects, even those you might cast aside after a year or two, play a role in exposing you to life's possibilities, if nothing else. And occasionally, you may pick up on an area of past learning much later, and embrace it for all it is worth.

[News of Old Maidstonians](#)

Many readers will remember that in the Summer and Winter 2019 editions, we printed features from **Les Broad** about his grandfather's death in Mesopotamia during World War I, and a successful campaign to install a memorial plaque in Sessions House Square, Maidstone. This is dedicated to the memory of the men of the Royal West Kent Regiment, and the other British and Indian troops who were beseiged in the little Mesopotamian town of Kut. Les has got through a difficult year in terms of illness, but the lockdown gave him the chance to write a book about the war in Mesopotamia: it is entitled *Grandfather's War*, and copies are available from him at Rose Cottage, Llanerch Park, St Asaph, Denbighshire, LL17 0BB; 07717 052622; les_broad@yahoo.co.uk. The price is £9, and Les is kindly including free postage for OMs.

Les says that he was intrigued by the first part of Gary Carcary's account of his career (see below for the next section), in which he referred to his time at Goldwells in East Malling from 1977. Les spent a lot of time in East Malling during the long hot summer of 1965, with another OM, Julian Rabjohn. He says that every day, the heat caused the tranquility to be shattered by Babycham bottles exploding in the Goldwell storage yard!

Les is hoping to meet up again with Geoff Emerson: together with Christian Leigh, as part of their 'A' Level work, they spent three weeks in Norway, on the Sorfjord, south of Bergen.

John Bunyard (1965 to 1972) has followed up his work on an exhibition, his book *Maidstone: United in Football*, and his website, by adding a gallery to the latter, consisting of an extensive photographic tour of Kent that starts in Canterbury and of course features MGS: see www.oldbunyardskentpride.com/gallery.

Gary Carcary continues his fascinating description of a varied career in the food industry.

In March 1998, I took the personal decision to move away from a site-led quality management role, having been in that environment for 22 years and move into a group role, again with Trebor Bassett at their Maidstone Central Technical Office, to become a Product Quality Manager. That required me to assess global raw material suppliers, ensuring their fitness to supply into our five manufacturing sites across the UK, including those making Bassett's *Liquorice Allsorts* and Maynard's *Wine Gums*. This position started my globe-trotting adventures for the next ten years, collecting millions of Air Miles along the way (that helped to support our family holiday programme!), being fortunate to travel to most countries across the five continents, and being able to 'turn left' when boarding a plane - my biggest regret, not being able to visit Australia or New Zealand. Some key highlights were:

- speed boat/ helicopter transitions across Indonesia and the Philippines in assessing rural coconut suppliers;
- engaging in cultural exchanges within Iran;
- afternoon tea with the High Commissioner in the Colombo rowing club;
- cracking peanuts and brushing them on to the floor in Raffles, Singapore whilst drinking the obligatory *Singapore Sling*;
- seeing locals scavenging on the rubbish tips in the Philippines, providing an appreciation for our own lifestyle and what others have to endure;
- visiting the elephant orphanage in Kandy, Sri-Lanka, gaining an appreciation of the fragile eco-system that we live in;
- gaining an understanding of the differences between Eastern/ Western European culture;
- gaining an appreciation of the beauty, culture and political differences within China, from their major hubs of Shanghai and Beijing, to their sub-districts and rural communities;
- confronting a National Emergency due to flooding on touch down in Sao Paulo: thinking on your feet!
- above all, being able to meet, engage and respect people irrespective of their race, creed or colour - life experiences that have shaped my personal and career path.

In December 1999, following a merger with Cadbury's and with the closure of the Maidstone factory and Central Technical Office (now riverside apartments) I relocated to Sheffield with my family (having spent the first 42 years of my life in Maidstone, being a Man Of Kent, born on the East of the River Medway) where I was promoted into the position of 3rd Party QA Manager, forming a team that assessed, approved and continually developed all European 3rd party manufacturing sites and contract packing suppliers into Cadbury Trebor Bassett, ensuring their 'fit to supply' status: meeting all requisite legal, quality and technical requirements.

As with any company merger, Cadbury's were looking to centralise and economise and, in April 2001, my team was asked to relocate to Bournville (the home of chocolate and with tasting samples on every office desk!). So, up sticks and another house move to my current home in Evesham, with the River Avon running through its centre and being on the edge of the Cotswolds - idyllic, being close enough but far enough away from work. In 2004 I gained promotion to become the Cadbury EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) Quality Development Manager, managing a cross-regional team in those areas to deliver an aligned supplier approval and performance development strategy across their manufacturing sites - to 'level up standards and raise the bar through Continuous Improvement and Value Optimisation opportunities'!

However, after 17 years working within the Cadbury organisation, all good things come to an end and, with Cadbury being acquired by Kraft Foods, a decision was taken in 2007 to 'strip out' all regional teams, leaving redundancy as the only outcome. I embraced this

opportunity to set up my sole trader company Quest 4 Quality (Q4Q) and exploit the contacts I had made in UK and Europe, to support their quality and technical agendas. This was made dormant in 2008 when I was successful in gaining a position within the Dairy Farmers Of Britain company as their Group Technical Support Manager, providing technical advice to the eight site manufacturing teams in 'White Milk' production and supporting delivery of the Group Technical Standards, Policies and Procedures. Little did I know that this would be the start of my final career path before retirement, moving into the dairy industry, where I would gain valuable exposure and experience of chilled products having a short shelf life and the quality constraints it brings - whilst coming face to face with thousands of cows and their habits.

In 2009, Dairy Farmers went into administration, Q4Q went 'live' again before I was able to gain, in January 2010, a Group Technical Support Manger's position within Dairy Crest (home of *Cathedral City/ Davidstow* cheese brands, *Fryligh* cooking oil and the spreads and butter brands of *Clover, Country Life, Utterly Butterly* and *Vitalite*), supporting their ten manufacturing sites across England, a key focus being to drive raw milk quality compliance, performance and improvement in the supply chain from farm to creamery. During my time in Dairy Crest I covered over 300,000 business miles, got elected onto the Red Tractor Dairy Board, sat on the Dairy UK Antibiotic Working Group and managed the Group Pest Control contract within Rentokil. It was in 2016 that Dairy Crest decided to sell the liquid milk side of their business to Muller Wiseman and I was asked to be the Group Technical employee representative as consultations began, a transitional period that required tact, diplomacy and challenges at every stage as people's livelihoods were at stake, having to be available at all times and put minds at rest. Personally challenging but very rewarding for the social/ negotiating skills it required and further enhanced. The outcome of this consultation was that I stayed with Dairy Crest (now known as Saputo Dairy UK, following their acquisition in 2018) until 1 July 2020 when I 'virtually left the building' having spent the previous 12 weeks working from home in lockdown - challenging in itself, especially having to virtually transfer my role over to my replacement.

So, ... in summary, 43 years in industry without having a university degree, being able to develop/ mentor team members whilst providing the self-motivation to deliver personal career development and obtain professional qualifications, gain cultural awareness whilst giving respect to gain respect.

In between all of this, I look back at:

- 25 years running Blue Eagles Football Club, for players aged 7 years to Seniors, in Maidstone between 1975 and 2000;
- being associated with the Maidstone & District Boys Primary Football League since 1976 to date - some 44 years - being an active Life Vice-President;
- being a Kent FA and Worcestershire FA Referee till recently.

Now... going through all the legal paperwork as we begin preparations to move home within the Cotswolds (hopefully before Christmas) - just as well I am 'retired' although every day is as busy but more socially-biased.

Our Webmaster, **Malcom MacCallum**, says that Paul East's reminiscence of studying with Shirley Hodgson, née Penrose, sister of the 2020 winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics, Sir Roger Penrose, connected in two ways with his post-MGS life. 'As I mentioned in an earlier edition of *The Old Maidstonian*, it was Paul's elder brother, David, who introduced

me to some of the ideas and methods which later formed a starting point for my research in general relativity, while Roger is the co-author of one of my most-cited academic works.

'I have known Roger moderately well for more than 50 years, but I feel that to describe those interactions would be more about me than Roger, so I'll only offer a photograph of us at lunch during a 2015 celebration of the centenary of general relativity.'



'Any nerdy OMs who might be interested are welcome to contact me for a copy of the semi-popular articles I wrote recently about Roger's prize-winning work.'

'Shirley is not Roger's only distinguished sibling. One brother, Oliver, is an internationally renowned theoretical physicist and Fellow of the Royal Society, while the other, Jonathan, is a correspondence chess grandmaster and was British chess champion a record ten times. Their father Lionel, also a geneticist, and grandfather were also distinguished, as was their uncle, the surrealist artist Sir Roland Penrose, who first promoted Picasso's art in the UK.'

'Roger and his father together wrote a paper which set out the basis for some of the illusions which appear in the graphic art of MC Escher.'

James Wilson (1968 to 1975) has re-joined the OMS recently, after spending many years abroad as an expatriate. He wrote that he has always looked back with pleasure at his time at MGS, and went on, 'I crept with trepidation through the turreted entrance to MGS in short trousers and wearing my colourful cap in 1968. I left the school for the last time by roaring noisily away on my Royal Enfield motorbike in 1975.'

'I can honestly say that the intervening years were both formative and enjoyable – the competitive atmosphere, in academics, arts and sport, seemed to drive excellence. The open-air pool was always cold though.'

'I have many happy memories of being in the CCF, where I rose to Staff Sergeant – frequent range shoots (I won the Duffield Cup twice), summer camps at Cultybraggan, arduous training in the Brecon Beacons. One excursion to Larkhill artillery base ended with us firing a 25lb Howitzer...!'

'I studied food science at Leeds University, and after a brief but boring job in Wakefield making swiss rolls, went trekking, finding myself in Zimbabwe in 1981. I spent ten happy years there, acquiring a wife and first son, joined The Coca-Cola Company and travelled widely across Africa. I was recruited to head office in Atlanta for four years (where son number 2 was born) and then embarked on an expatriate life, with spells in Kenya, Ireland, Belgium and the USA again. Finally, I moved back to the UK in 2013, to blend secret flavours in a now-closed facility west of London. Despite the now regrettable carbon footprint, I travelled globally in my work, visiting over 65 countries. Since 2017, my wife, Jane, and I are now happily 'retired', running holiday cottages in Cumbria (www.rutterfalls.com).

'I am enormously grateful for the privileged education that I received at MGS – it launched me on a path of upward social mobility, driven by the confidence and discipline instilled by this great school.'

The *Downs Mail* reported that **Ken Kimber** kept himself very busy during the Lockdown by adding to his models of Maidstone scenes. His latest is of Aylesford railway station in the 1920s, and joins models of East Farleigh railway station, and the old tram terminus in Loose Road. He is now thinking of adding Maidstone West station to his collection.

Obituaries

It is with much regret that the Society records the deaths of Old Maidstonians, and others who were linked to the school. We extend our deepest sympathy to their families and friends.



We have been told that **Patrick B H Bailey (1937 to 1946)** died 19 February 2021, aged 93. He was always proud of his former school and mentioned it often. He loved to keep in contact and would attend reunions as often as he could do so.

In this photograph above of a rugby team, Patrick is 4th from the left in the back row.

The photo alongside is a more recent.

Peter Ewing (1943 to 1950) died on 10 January 2021 after a short battle with COVID. He leaves a wife, Joan, and a daughter, Jennie. He joined the Old Maidstonians Society, and attended many functions until we left Maidstone in 1968 and moved to Lancashire, then Cheshire and finally Surrey. He retained his membership and attended Annual Suppers from Surrey, until prevented from doing so by ill health.

We have been informed about the death of **Sean Grainger**, who died on 22 June 2020, in Nottingham. A funeral service honouring his memory took place on 18 July at Gedling Crematorium, Nottingham, in the presence of members of his family. Apparently, Sean was brought up as Quaker, and was a member of the Panthers patrol in MGS Scouts.

Sadly, **Pat Keast (1957 to 1965)** died from Covid-19 on 18 May 2020. Pat's father, George, was a mathematics master at MGS. Malcolm MacCallum (whose father also taught at MGS) says that George was one of the trio of exceptional maths teachers who educated his double maths group in the 6th form. The others of the trio were Alan 'Tiddles' Blake and John Skinner. Malcolm remembers that George taught applied mathematics in a very informal and engaging manner (he especially recalls 'clouts' and 'jerks' as names for impulses). John Skinner taught the straight pure maths and Alan Blake taught a great deal in projective geometry classes about formal proof and meticulous methods in pure mathematics.

We are grateful to John Evans, of the Rotary Club of Maidstone, for providing information for this obituary of **Bernard Mee**, who was born in 1944, and died in Pembury Hospital on Sunday 13 December. He had been seriously ill for many weeks and, against the odds,



was making a slow recovery when he unexpectedly suffered setbacks that he was unable to survive. He leaves a widow, Juliet, and a family. Three members of the OMS Committee were present on Bearsted Green on 28 January, to represent the Society and pay their respects as Bernard's funeral cortege went past.

Bernard was an enthusiastic Old Maidstonian, and the words of Richard Ratcliffe say much about him: 'In my early days on the Old Maidstonian Committee, and that would be back in the late 1980s, Bernard was always around. As Secretary to the Committee for many years he kept the paperwork moving with a quiet efficiency

which you notice only when things go adrift. They never did. He was always part of the hall layout team for Annual Suppers – the first to arrive and last to leave. No noise; no fuss; he just got on with it. When I first became Chairman he was a great support to me. In more recent times after he retired he got involved with many other things and we saw less of him. But we always knew that he was there if we needed him. People like Bernard are lynchpins of any organisation and that's exactly what he was. He will be sadly missed.' Neil Turrell agreed: 'He was a great supporter of the school and was always cheerful, unfailingly courteous and supportive.'

After leaving school, Bernard spent his whole career with the Gas Board where he specialised in their payroll. For many years he lived in Church Lane, Bearsted, where he greatly enjoyed village life and where he played golf at Bearsted Golf Club with friends.

He was a member of Maidstone Rotary Club for 22 years, having served as Treasurer, one of the more onerous and valuable roles, and in recent years as Foundation Officer. Bernard was a generous donor to Rotary Foundation, the movement's worldwide charity, that generosity having been rewarded with a Paul Harris Fellowship. And he was a past winner of our John Day Cup for golf.

Holy Cross Church in Bearsted was a very important part of Bernard's life. He had served as a Parochial Church Council member and as Treasurer. He was a keen bellringer and participated in guest ringing at many churches in the area before he retired from that last year. He had also been Secretary of the Cobtree Trust, a major local charitable trust, and Treasurer of a number of local charities.

Bernard was a quiet man who willingly took on numerous voluntary roles, the sort of person who underpins that so important sector. A great number of people who are largely unaware have reason to be grateful to Bernard for his selfless service.



Form 3X in 1955: Bernard is on the far left of row 3



Form 5G in 1959: Bernard is on the far right of row 3

Beryl Poyser, the Headmaster's secretary in the 1970s, who may be remembered by OMs of the period, died in October 2020, five days short of her 96th birthday. In 1979 she married the MGS staff member Hugh MacCallum, thus becoming our Webmaster's stepmother.

Christopher Maunder informed us that **Bob Whyatt** died on 1 January 2021, whilst residing in Worcestershire. His funeral took place at St Laurence Church, Wichenford, on 21 January.

[‘Something for nothing’ donations to our charity](#)

If you buy goods or services online, many retailers will make a donation to charity. This costs the buyer nothing, while the charity gets income. The Society and its registered charity, the Old Maidstonian Trust, has for some time participated in Easyfundraising, a scheme used by many retailers. This year Amazon has instead started its own scheme, Amazon Smile, and we are now registered in that scheme. Details of both schemes follow.

Please help us through one or both of these schemes. Funds donated go to support the school and its current and immediate past pupils, including through the Society's Awards. (For details, see the Society's website, <http://www.oldmaidstonians.org.uk> .)

‘Easyfundraising’ is the UK’s largest charity shopping fundraising site. Over 4000 retailers participate and to date they have donated over £31 million. In our first year in the scheme, with only six OMs signed up, we raised over £120. To join is easy. Visit <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk>, and click on ‘Find a cause’. Type ‘Old Maidstonian Society’ into the dialog box. We should come up as the first choice: click ‘Support this cause’ for us. Then fill in the form to create an account. It's very simple to complete.

Make sure you can remember your password! To help you remember to use the scheme whenever you buy from participating retailers you can download Easyfundraising's 'Donation Reminder'.

Amazon's scheme offers a smaller percentage donation (0.5%) than almost all retailers in Easyfundraising, but it is easy to use. To do so, visit <http://smile.amazon.co.uk> . If you have an existing Amazon online account, it is also valid for Smile. Otherwise register as a new customer. When you first use 'Amazon Smile', nominate our charity 'Old Maidstonian Trust' to receive donations. From then on use www.smile.amazon.co.uk, just as you would have used <http://www.amazon.co.uk/>.

For additional information, contact the Society's webmaster, Malcolm MacCallum, at webmaster@oldmaidstonians.org.uk or visit the Society's website's Fundraising page.

Many thanks for reading!