



The Old Maidstonian

The newsletter of the Old Maidstonian Society

No. 36 – Winter 2021

Your Committee 2021 – 2022

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From the President

Foreword by John Clayton, Chairman of the OMS

One of the benefits of communities like OMS is that in a changing world and at moments of uncertainty they provide us with the ability to come together, to find things that connect us, to find comfort in our shared experience.

Recently we have had the opportunity as an OMS Committee to start a conversation about experiences that perhaps aren't shared enough. The conversation was on the issue of violence against women and girls. It was brought to the committee by our President, Nancy Powell, and it prompted discussion among the Committee and a conversation with Deputy Headteacher, Rachel Johnson.

This has been a conversation that we, as a Committee, have benefitted from having. We thought that the OMS may equally benefit and so enclose below some correspondence that outlines the key themes.

Some conversations are hard to have but we have gained from having this one and hope that you will as well.

Email to OMS Committee from Nancy Powell 2 October 2021

Like many I have spent much of this week thinking about the issue of male violence. The murder of Sarah Everard by a serving policeman is absolutely shocking. The response of Government and Police Leaders with a list of suggestions for women in Sarah's position makes me despondent and look elsewhere for ideas.

I have grappled for much of the week with writing this, but concluded that very few women have the opportunity to express themselves in this way to a community predominantly comprised of men and so I come to this Committee to ask if we can be part of the change that needs to happen.

Perhaps there are speakers whom we can look to fund, to support the work MGS already has underway? Perhaps there are other resources that MGS have identified we can have a role in delivering.

Below I outline some thoughts and experience to start the conversation.

On 11 March of this year, I wrote my first ever letter to my MP. I wrote about a young woman passing 20 minutes from my front door to be dumped dead in a woodland. In that correspondence I acknowledged that what happened to Sarah Everard was rare but explained that harassment, groping, flashing, verbal abuse, catcalling, being told to smile, standing too close, were commonplace and that encouraging women to brush off this pipeline of disrespect as banter had gotten us to this point.

Three months later my MP replied. Questions were being asked I was assured.

On Thursday 30 September, in addition to the sentencing of the policeman who killed Sarah Everard, there were FIVE other headlines that related to violence against women, including the premeditated murder of the teacher Sabina Nessa by a man not known to her, as she walked to meet a friend. Lessons will be learnt, we are told.

From a very young age what takes place in women's heads is a permanent risk assessment. Is there street lighting? Is this the most direct route? Is he following me or going the same way? I had better take my keys out. Trust me when I say we have learnt the lessons. We need to know what comes next.

Why am I writing this to you? Well, I am the first female President of the OMS. I was also a volunteer case worker at a domestic abuse charity for several years and I have 44 years' of experience of being a woman in this country. As such, perhaps I am able to offer a view different from your own.

The problem is male violence and our normalisation of it. As a domestic abuse case worker, some of my clients were the wives of dentists, local councillors, investment bankers, soldiers and yes policemen. It isn't a problem with 'them', it is among you now. We are told on the news that these are 'isolated incidents'. Two or three women each week are murdered by intimate partners: that isn't 'isolated'. 3/4 of domestic abuse complaints are dropped without charge. 1.6% of rapes reported end in a charge. These data are shameful. And the response from those in positions of power to this? With sad faces they tell us that questions are being asked.

*There was an interesting piece of research published earlier this year pointing to a striking commonality among terrorists of all stripes. The majority of them were initially known to the police as a result of domestic violence complaints. Violent men are violent to **everyone**. If we stopped violence in the home, we might stop it spilling beyond.*

While the bigger picture is shaped, or not, by those in power, what is there within our power to influence? The vast majority of men are not the problem, but the problem is among you and will be down to you to correct. Women voicing their fears are too easily ignored. Men holding other men to account is necessary. We have learnt from discussions on race that simply not being the problem yourself is no longer enough: you need to be an ally. We need to provide ourselves and our young men with the tools for this. We also need to have a look at who the role models for young men are and we need to be more ambitious than thinking that they are just footballers, fathers and teachers. Every person reading this has the ability to correct or affirm the young men in their orbit.

A final thought. As a guest at Senior School Speech Day, I was struck by the young women receiving prizes. Under-represented in number, over-represented in achievement. In just a handful of generations their lives show little resemblance to those of their Grandmothers' or Great-Grandmothers'. Can the same be said for our young men? Have men looked at what women have done and adopted it for themselves? Is the same momentum for achievement and reinvention at their backs?

Would any of these thoughts, or voicing them, have changed the outcome for Sarah or the 85 women murdered since she was? Who can know? But if we stop tolerating low level disrespect, I like to believe that change will come.

As part of what followed this initial correspondence, a conversation about equality and diversity more broadly was had with Deputy Headteacher, Rachel Johnson, with a view to understanding what was already underway and identifying opportunities for OMS to support the school with that work. A short summary of key points from that conversation is given below.

An Update from MGS (by Rachel Johnson, Deputy Headteacher)

Events in recent months such as the 'Black Lives Matter' movement and the 'Everyone's Invited' campaign have highlighted widespread societal issues and concerns around equality, diversity and inclusivity.

While the responsibility for addressing these issues cannot rest solely on the shoulders of schools, it is important that we address them with our students in an open, honest and forthright way. At MGS we want our students to accept and respect one another's individual differences and develop a sense of empathy and understanding when it comes to the experiences and outlooks of others. To put it bluntly, we want them to be part of the solution not part of the problem.

In September 2021, we launched our new vision and mission for the school which is structured around two central 'pillars' – 'Inspire to Learn' and 'Inspire to Belong'. We want all students (and our staff) to develop a sense of belonging here at MGS - a feeling that they are known, valued, safe and supported - through their good conduct, support for one another, service and leadership and engagement in enrichment activities.

Specifically, we are developing our culture within school in the following ways:

The re-launch of vertical tutor groups (following COVID)

Each tutor group is made up of boys from across the full age range of Years 7 to 13, and girls from our Sixth Form. Verticality sits at the very heart of the culture that we are building – students are supported to interact and work together in form time as part of our structured tutor programme. For example, they support each other academically on Mentoring Mondays, play cards and games on Wednesdays and compete in mixed-age quiz teams on Thursdays. In these groups they have many opportunities to lead and support one another throughout their school careers.

The MGS Student Code of Conduct

This was developed with input from staff, students and parents and it lays out the key expectations for everyone in the school. Chief amongst these is treating others with respect and accepting our individual differences. This now forms part of our daily discourse in school and with students.

Tackling equality issues 'head on'

We are now talking explicitly to staff and students about a range of equality issues. For example, this term all staff and students have been fully briefed on the findings of the Ofsted review into sexual abuse in schools - we have explained in detail the full range of behaviours this covers, from sexism and misogyny to sexual harassment and sexual violence. A group of male and female sixth form students and male and female staff members also collaborated to produce and present a whole-school assembly on gender equality and sexism - this is an excellent example of the way in which staff and students are working together to raise the profile of these issues.

Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE)

We have revised and updated our PSHCE programme, which is delivered to all Year 7 to 11 students. This is taught by our very experienced Head of PSHCE staff in an age-appropriate way and it covers the new statutory sex, relationships and health education guidance. We are also focusing on making sure that all of our students understand 'consent', including developing and delivering a really detailed presentation on consent to the entire sixth form last month.

Whole school themes

For the coming year, we have identified whole-school themes which will provide a month-long focus, including a range of assemblies, events and displays. Each House has responsibility for preparing and delivering the theme to the rest of the school. In October, we marked Black History Month and later in the year we will focus on anti-bullying, gender equality, mental health and LGBTQ+ issues.

Student Voice

We want our students to be involved in driving this agenda forward, working together with staff. In order to create further opportunities for them to feed back to us we are developing four House Councils this year which will feed into a revitalised Whole-School Council. We are also providing regular opportunities for all students to provide us with confidential information on their own personal experiences, and any concerns they are having, through our regular online pastoral welfare surveys.

I hope that this provides you with an idea about the work that is going on to address these issues. We are not complacent but understand that there is much to do. We are very excited about and proud of the direction in which MGS is moving in order to become a more inclusive school.

In Conclusion

There are many themes included here that will raise different feelings for people. In relaying an outline of the conversation that we have had as an OMS Committee we are signalling our support for the work that the school has underway and our hope to be an ongoing part of a conversation that affects us all.

Many thanks for reading and if you would like to contact us about any of the issues raised above then please email us on oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk.

From the Chairman

Our Autumn Supper was a great success, and it was uplifting to be able to meet again with fellow Old Maidstonians in the school we love, especially having been unable to hold our traditional suppers in 2020 and 2021.

The feedback I received from many people on the night was, without exception, favourable, and I know everyone present felt it was 'great to be back.'

The bar was provided by Frederic's Bistro, one of the town's top restaurants, and once again the school's caterers provided an outstanding meal, with second helpings readily available. The weather was kind, allowing people to enjoy canapes outside if they wished. A highlight for many of us was a tour of the school's new facilities, conducted by the six prefects who gave up their Saturday evenings to help out.

Warm thanks are due to Secretary Richard Ratcliffe, Membership Secretary Sean Scurr and Treasurer/President-Elect Graham Walker for their help in making this such an enjoyable event.



May I take this opportunity to wish all Members of the Society a very enjoyable Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

John Clayton

MGS and OMS EVENTS

MGS Christmas Concert & Carol Service - All Saints' Church, Maidstone: 7:00 pm Thursday 16 December

All Old Maidstonians and their families and partners are warmly invited to this annual event.

Having been apart for most of the last two years, the festive period is a great chance to reunite and catch up with your fellow OMs, especially those of you who are recent leavers, so why not come along to All Saints' Church?

The Committee would like to take this opportunity to wish all members of the Old Maidstonian Society, and your families, a very Merry Christmas and a healthy New Year. We look forward to meeting you at events in 2022.

If necessary, the school can be contacted on 01622 752101, or by e-mail at school@mgs.kent.sch.uk.

Musings from the Penthouse

(Co-Editors' note: you will see from the this article that our stalwart Archivists, Roger and Jeff, will be retiring. We are sure that everyone who is connected with the OMS will want to thank them for all of the work that they have carried out over the years, and wish them all the best for the future.)

Kicking through the fallen gold, red and brown leaves in the woods recently, I mulled through the aspect of change and what that really means. John Keats's famous words from his poem 'To Autumn' sprang to mind:

Who hath not seen thee [*that is Autumn*] oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor...
... And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Autumn, a time of change when death seems imminent; the rotting seed heads and fallen nut shells, all lying there waiting for what? Suddenly a squirrel leapt out from behind a tree, one cobnut in its mouth and quickly grabbing another before darting away. Looking down at my feet I saw pine cones that had been chewed by mice and the empty seed pods that had seemed so wasted and desolate, now had a new meaning. Autumn is a time of change, a time of preparation for new life and ventures. Maybe life is taking a rest period before the energy of Spring.

A change - After seven years of working in the Archives, both Roger and Jeff are retiring at Christmas. I asked them for an interview, for their views on what had been achieved over those years and what hopefully they would like to see.



- *What have you enjoyed most about working at the school?*

Jeff – For me it was a way of catching up with the progress of MGS, seeing both how the buildings have changed as well as the attitudes of staff and pupils. One thing that both of us have witnessed is the way staff and pupils, sorry, students, react to each other – no more hands by your trouser seams, heads bowed as a master, or especially the headmaster, walked past in the corridor.

Roger – It has also been a pleasure working together and previously with Mrs Lois Birrell, our Archivist predecessor. In addition, I have enjoyed meeting other members of staff and appreciate the help that they have provided.

I also have noted the remarkable change in staff/student relationships. When I was at the school the headmaster (WA Claydon) only spoke to me twice. The first time was when he was standing in for a master who was ill and the second time on the day I left school. He was a very remote figure and was completely unaware of which university I was about to enter. In this respect the school has improved greatly.

- *Has it brought back memories of your time as a pupil?*

Roger – Absolutely. I have enjoyed seeing the changes in the building itself and being surprised how much has been demolished, for example the temporary classrooms, the icy cold swimming pool, the Scout hut with its school glider ‘hangar’, the woodwork shop and the adjoining Dining Hall. They have been replaced with some very impressive and useful buildings.

Jeff – We have spent a good few hours remembering our times at MGS – good and bad, funny and troublesome. The ghosts of our masters still linger in the air with their attitudes, characteristics and somewhat eccentric mannerisms in some cases.

- *What do you feel happy about in your achievements?*

Roger – We both feel that we have added much to the digitisation of the archives. Personally, scanning well over a thousand old photographs relating to the school and thereby ensuring that they will be preserved for posterity, and Jeff has digitised all copies of *The Maidstonian*, an essential asset for research.

Jeff – We have also managed to have some old cine films transferred to DVD, providing a glimpse of life at MGS in 1938. However, an archive is only of any use when it is used, so on top of all that we have been able to answer many, many questions from OMs, members of the public, outside public bodies, etc. who were seeking information about families, friends and events. Perhaps this has been the most rewarding part of being the archivist for me.

Also, based on files started by Lois, the archives now has a printed index of what is included in each storage box as well as CD/DVD, cine film and digital files.

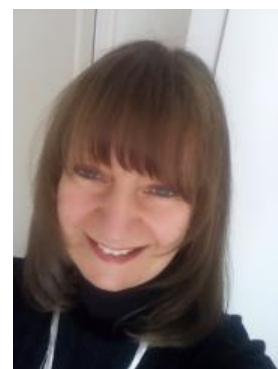
- *What do you wish that you had been able to achieve in your time whilst working in the school archives.*

Jeff – My greatest regret is that I have not been able to maintain the archives in the manner that they had been when we took over from Mrs Birrell, in 2014. She organised many heaps of papers from a number of storage locations into a workable archive. I would also have like to have digitised all copies of the *Journals* in the Penthouse, thus creating a fairly complete list of all students who had the honour of attending MGS, at least up to the time when only digital records are kept.

Roger - I feel that it is a shame that the archive does not receive more publicity. We have had several events when some of our items have been on display. These have always been well received and resulted in us obtaining more information to record. In addition, it would be great if a permanent display could be made. There were hopes for an Archive Museum using part of the old Headmasters' House but due to the Covid pandemic this has been prevented.

We wish our new Archivist and any future ones all the very best.

Another change - As Jeff and Roger depart to wherever it is that an old archivist goes (under a heap of paper waiting to be filed I expect), the school now has a salaried Archivist (shared with her duties as Librarian) in the person of Ms Kathy Grant, and I welcome her on behalf of all the memories hidden in the history of the school. Kathy works on only two days each week, and therefore her time with the archives will be very limited. Please do keep sending your requests, memories, etc. through to the school, as I am sure that someone will do their best to help you.



A loss – In my last article I asked for information from anyone who knew Aidan McElroy, as his mother was trying to find details of her late son for her granddaughter, who experienced only six days of life with him. Sadly, her other son, John has told me that Mrs McElroy died recently: a woman with a big caring heart, and a loss to the family and to mankind in general. Any memories of Aidan will still be gratefully received.

A time for change – Our president has written a very appropriate article in this magazine about the deaths of young women. I fully agree, but I have to ask myself whether we all need to change. If we all stop using labels, be they Black, White, Old, Young, Left-wing, Right-wing, Gay or Straight, etc. and treated each other with the respect that each individual deserves as a human being, thinking of just how we would feel if the roles were reversed, and taking responsibilities for our actions, then surely the world would be a better place. Comments such as ‘I would let a desperately ill patient (in an ambulance) die rather than break the protesting human barrier’ as has been said by one of the ‘Insulate Britain’ protesters recently, would then never be made.

Mind you, on a lighter side, John Cusack had a piece of his work published in *The Maidstonian* of 1994. Just note how little has changed in 27 years.

POLITICALLY CORRECT SPEECH

Politically correct speech, sounds good doesn’t it? What a web of entrapment we are spinning for ourselves.

How are we supposed to stop our young and impressionable, darling children turning into the sexist, racist monsters that we have in society at this present time. Well we could modify those mentally disturbing nursery thymes for a start: ‘Baa baa ethnic minority community sheep have you any wool’. ‘Sing a song of six pence, a pocket full of rye, four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie’ Some one should call the RSPB. ‘Otherly able Simon met a Pieperson’, ‘Little Miss Muffet sat on her tuffet eating her curds and whey, down came a spider and sat down beside her, and she told him to go away because she had just been on an assertiveness course’ - and the worst of the worst ‘Georgie Porgy pudding and pie [weightist], kissed the girls [assault] and made them cry [sexist] when the boys came out to play Georgie Porgy ran away [bullying]’.

I am sure that he feels that society still needs to change.

Icarus

Past Presidents of the OMS

The request in our previous edition for information about Past Presidents elicited the following information from Paul Clifford.

Five members of the Clifford family, from four generations spanning 115 years, have occupied the office. The first was Paul's great-grandfather, James Clifford in 1895. He was head of the family business of spinners and weavers based in Bank Street in the town centre. He was also active in local politics as a Conservative alderman for many years. His eldest son, James, who was a governor of the school, became President in 1926, followed by his younger brother, William in 1931. William had played cricket for the 1st XI. He had a distinguished career in the First World War, winning the MC. In 1951, Paul's father, Ted, who was later Deputy Chairman of the Maidstone Bench of Magistrates, was appointed at the age of 29. Paul was then President in 2010.

Paul says that he is impressed by the number of members of staff who have been President (he has counted at least ten), '... which says a lot about the relationship between the Common Room and the alumni and the ties of loyalty that MGS has forged over the years.'

[The History of the Maidstone Companies, Royal Army Medical Corps](#)

Brian White (Co-Editor) came across this publication online, at <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/e4t8pk2t>. It is possible that it contains information about OMs, including those who fought in the Boer War, so someone might like to investigate this.

[The History of MGS](#)

Brian White (Co-Editor) came across this publication online, at https://issuu.com/maidstonegrammarschool/docs/history_of_mgs_76b7a197c9e331. It was produced by some students a few years ago, and it contains some very interesting information. I don't know whether any hard or digital copies exist, and I can't see how to download it. If anyone can work out how to do so, please let us know.

[With reference to our last edition](#)

Robin Ambrose writes as follows: 'With reference to Roger Lukehurst's mention of Boxley Youth Club, please tell him that my book *Boxley Village Memories* has a chapter all about it, with photographs!

The Very Revd Archimandrite Kyril Jenner (aka **Malcolm Jenner**) wrote with two pieces of information:

'Page 10, the Choir photograph. The assistant music master who conducted the Choir was David Gatehouse, who was Arthur Lowe's stepson. David arrived at MGS in 1963 and taught me at school in the second year of A-level music and also privately on the organ (first at St Luke's and then at All Saints').

'Pages 15 to 16. Frank Sando lived for a time in Ditton, about 100 yards from the Cobdown Sports Ground. When at Junior School I used to walk past his house every morning. Some mornings we would see him emerge from his house and set off to run to work in West Malling (where the Research and Development part of Reed Paper Group was based), a journey of just over two miles.'

John Lucas has asked for some additions and corrections to be made regarding his communication in our previous edition. He writes as follows:

'I was employed by the school as an IT Teacher as well as a Computer Technician. I taught 'A' Level Computing and GCSE Information & Communication Technology, and rugby.

'Additionally, from 1986 to 2004 I volunteered as a rugby Coach and Referee for the school, this included my time under employment but for the majority of the years was as a volunteer, as I worked elsewhere and had no children at the school. Sometimes this even included refereeing two or three matches on a Saturday morning, having flown in from Wall Street (where I was working) overnight (landing at Heathrow *circa* 6 am) to arrive at school in the nick of time for the first kick off.

'Several years ago, **Michael P Cook**, aka Mike Cook, wrote to my ex-wife (former MGGS) telling her that he had become *de facto* National Lead Chess player for the 70+ age group. *De facto* as he hadn't played for a while and the other player (only one?) had been playing but his rating had dropped. By not playing, Mike's rating remained the same so his name was now at the top.'

'**Stephen Harvey**, aka Steve, and my former form master, now lives on the Isle of Skye with his wife Marcia although they are both not in the best of health. Once again reported to me by my ex-wife who remains in contact with them.'

'My younger brother has changed his name to Anton **Lukoszevieze** from Antony Lucas. Please note the spelling as people may wish to Google him. This is actually a mis-spelling of the Polish version of our Lithuanian family name, for our father was full-blooded Lithuanian and our mother English. Lucas became the family name through usage as the British could not cope with Lukoszevieve in the early 20th century, but LukoszeviEze was a misread version of the Polish LukoszeviCze being that nation's version of Lukosevicius. our Lithuanian family name. Phew!

'You rightly describe Anton as a "talented sportsman". He competed for Kent at the National Cross-Country Championships and regularly ran 800 and 1500 m at Crystal Palace. However, he was the youngest of four Lucas brothers at MGS. Paul, the eldest, was a rugby stalwart and amongst the fittest with great endurance, and is current Crossfit champion 60+ age group for Lithuania!. Next came Mark who was a county trialist at both rugby and soccer. Me, John, as third brother, captained my year group and the 2nd XV at rugby, captained basketball, and played korfbal and competed in athletics for the school. Not bad for the family of a bunch of peasant immigrants from Eastern Europe!

'I hope I haven't gone on but in middle age I was diagnosed with Rapid Cycling Bipolar Affective Disorder which means I can definitely go on a bit! Now unable to work due to cancer and a serious heart condition I volunteer nationally with Mind as a media spokesperson, and locally with the NHS on numerous committees and working groups.'

Some requests

Geoff Emerson would like to get in touch with **Christian Leigh (1962 to 1969?)** If anyone can provide some current contact details, please email them to oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk.

Martin Lee, who taught at MGS, has produced a very interesting video about his form, 10Le, from 1993, which was prompted by a class photograph. This is available on our website, at <http://www.oldmaidstonians.org.uk/martin-lees-video-request/>, so if you were a member of that form, please have a look at it! If not, please view it anyway, as it is so interesting, and Martin has now remembered all of the boys' names. He says that he sat down with the photograph and 'all of a sudden the names that had slipped his mind came back to him in a kind of domino effect.' If you have information about any of his students, please email oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk.

Sadly, Brexit and the pandemic have put paid to Martin's wonderful time (fifteen years) as a holiday company representative. He says that nowadays, you have to be an EU resident to undertake such a job; also, the Coronavirus outbreak decimated the number of available hotels. However, in his retirement he is having regular piano lessons again.

Information (reports, newspaper cutting, programmes, photographs, etc.) is being sought for the 1964 MGS production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. If anyone can supply copies, please email them to oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk.

News of Old Maidstonians

1549



When **Les Broad** visited Maidstone for the Autumn Supper, he was puzzled by the slab which is inserted into the surface of Week Street, which simply states '1549', with no explanation.

This will mean something to OMs, but what about other members of the public? Upon enquiry, an officer from the Borough Council provided the following information.

'In the Middle Ages, Maidstone belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1537, the king took control of the town from him. Then in 1549, Maidstone was given a new charter, which made it independent. Maidstone was given a mayor and corporation who ran its affairs. The same year the town gained a grammar school.'

What I Wish I Had Learned

This is the third of **Paul Cooker's** reminiscences.

Some of the most memorable challenges that we faced in school were those instances when we made life-changing decisions. Typically, these life pivot points were the choices we made in what classes to take, which university course to commit to, and ultimately, what career to pursue. All those decisions had profound impacts on our lives, but looking back, I see now that we were completely unqualified to make them. We really knew nothing of the world, and our parents only had their own narrow sets of experiences and prejudices with which to guide us.

A lot of useless knowledge was, and probably still is, drummed into young heads. Interesting as it might be to learn that Magna Carta was signed in 1215, or what the principal crops of northern Ghana are, or how to conjugate the Latin verb *amare*, these facts are very likely to be forgotten within days, and are extremely unlikely to have any practical use, let alone any life-enhancing effects. I do recognise that for someone destined for a relatively aesthetic, academic career, mastery of a wealth of arcane knowledge is helpful. However, the vast majority of students need intensely practical knowledge to help fill their mental toolboxes, and most importantly, be able to make sound decisions about the sorts of jobs they want, and the appropriate qualifications that they need to get.

Young people typically know very little about money management, how the economy works, or how the government functions. They are also likely to be ignorant of the law and the workings of the justice system. Politics is a conundrum wrapped in a lot of shouting and half-truths – and we expect our young men and women to make informed choices, including voting, before they know anything, other than the prejudices they have been brought up with.

I expect that many who are reading this will say, 'economics, politics, and law are all topics that are meant to be mastered in university'. I would like to respectfully counter that English, mathematics, chemistry, physics, history and geography, are also fully mastered at university, but does that stop them from being taught at a secondary level? So what is my thesis? Teenagers are expected to make very serious, life-changing, decisions very early in life without sufficient awareness as to what the world wants and expects from them to make a living, and be useful members of society

What do I wish that I had learned, then? I wish that I had learned to be an effective influencer and knew how to 'play the game' within a rigid structure. Just because you believe you have conclusively determined a better way of doing things, that doesn't mean that anyone wants to listen. If, after a couple of decades of education, you find yourself in a job that you realise you could have learned to do inside of a week, it's a pretty good bet that you need to find something else, unless you can find a way to expand on it and make a name for yourself.

I wish that I had learned to manage personal finances much earlier in life. It took me decades to develop a robust, highly-diversified portfolio of investments to provide a safety net for myself and my family. This did not involve immersing myself in some magical knowledge of markets and commerce. It just involved finding the right money manager with a proven track record and unassailably trustworthy credentials. They are not rare, it's just that people of means don't tell you about them, hoping to keep their secrets to wealth obscure.

I wish we had been instructed in the art of running for public office. In a country which prides itself as having the 'Mother of Parliaments', I find it amazing that the fundamentals of political activism and advancement are still treated as a hermetic subject, knowledge thereof being restricted to a few special insiders, anointed by the privilege endowed by going to the right Oxbridge colleges and joining the right London clubs.

Having served on a jury a couple of times, I wish that I had been exposed to a knowledge of law and judicial practice, therein enabling me to perform my civic duty with more understanding. All of us, at some point in our lives, are expected to comprehend and assent to legal strictures, whether it be in the process of buying a property, creating a trust, or making a will, but few of us truly comprehend what we are signing up for. Perhaps, even more importantly, when faced with legal proceedings, whether civil or criminal, it would be vital to have an understanding of one's rights and options in the face of legal peril.

And now that I live on the land, trying to be as self-reliant as we can, I sincerely wish that I had learned more about environmental issues. The increasing pressures on natural resources, changing weather, and burgeoning threats to the natural world, demand that we all need a heightened awareness about our individual impact on it.

So, do I think that my time at MGS resulted in a very incomplete education? Yes and no; while I strive to be pragmatic, dealing effectively with a slew of intensely practical issues every day on the farm, I am still an academic at heart. I received an education at the hands of passionate academics, intending to instill the virtues of studiousness, conciseness and insightfulness. I love my books, and I would feel lost without my extensive library. On the other hand, I went out into the world with an academic's naiveté, and a blindness to the terrible ugliness of the realities of commerce, politics and society.

I am fully aware that my ideas run counter to current educational guidelines and would require significant disruption to the status quo. Nevertheless, during those few shorts

years that students attend secondary schools, every possible effort must be made to provide instruction not only in the finer points of academia, but also in the broader realities of the world.

Tony Deane wrote a book during the Lockdown, which is set in 1967. He says, 'I was at Oxford in the sixties, so I drew on my memories of the city and the people. Time seems to have distorted them, though. I'm not sure that there was ever a boar with a blue rinse in Blue Boar Street, but there is now.'

Tony's book, which is entitled *The Last Splendiferous Day*, is available from Amazon at https://read.amazon.co.uk/kp/embed?asin=B09KM8ZL5M&preview=newtab&linkCode=kp_e&ref_cm_sw_r_kb_dp_YG1B7YX5BD1V1NFT7ZMA

Discover Midsomer with an Old Maidstonian

Geoff Emerson (1962 to 1969) is a *Midsomer Murders* tour guide in Thame, Oxfordshire (Causton, Midsomer). He can be found guiding MM fans around Causton on Wednesday afternoons from April to October as part of a rota of trained guides with knowledge of the relevant episodes and Thame's fascinating local history. Tours meet at 2 pm outside Thame Town Hall and places can be booked via the Thame Town Council website. Money raised from the ticket sales goes to the Mayor's charities.

Geoff's career as a thespian began when he took the part of Helena in the Lower School production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1963. He later had minor male roles, including Mouldy in *Henry IV Part II*. His acting career came to an end on leaving school, but has been revived in his role as a *Midsomer Murders* tour guide. Geoff explores our interest in murder and compares murder rates in Causton and Thame, he visits 20 film locations as well as the place of John Hampden's death and Robin Gibb's grave.

So, has Geoff fallen on hard times, or is this the pinnacle of his criminal career? Judge for yourself. Geoff can remember having thoughts about becoming a probation officer whilst at MGS. He went on to study Geography at Durham University because it had been his best subject at school. He did not know much about 'ologies' such as Psychology or Sociology which would have been much more relevant, but they were seen as a bit exotic in those days.

After Durham, Geoff trained to be a Probation Officer in Leicester and started his first job in Probation in Oxfordshire in 1974. Geoff has had numerous roles in Probation, including managing field teams, Community Service and working in prisons. In 2001 Geoff was given the chance to manage a project testing the effectiveness of Restorative Justice in reducing reoffending, improving the experience of victims. RJ involves victim and offender meeting together with a trained facilitator to discuss what happened; who was affected and how; and what can be done to repair harm. The research, published in 2008, showed that reoffending was reduced and that 78% of victims would recommend the process as a way of dealing with violent crime.

Geoff thinks his work in RJ has been the pinnacle of his career. It has changed the lives of both victims and offenders and has spread into the mainstream of probation and prison practice, albeit patchily. In retirement, Geoff continues to pursue his interest in RJ through supervising the practice of practitioners, work in schools and acting as a Trustee to The Mint House, a centre for restorative practice in Oxford.

Bo Crombet-Beolens has provided some information about **Frank Finn** (1868-1932), who was an ornithologist educated at MGS and Brasenose College, Oxford. He collected

in East Africa (1892) and became Assistant Superintendent of the Indian Museum, Calcutta (1894), then Deputy Superintendent (1895-1903).

Frank was the author of many books on the birds of India, including, *How to Know the Indian Ducks* (1901), *The Birds of Calcutta* (1901), *How to Know The Indian Waders* (1906), *The Water Fowl of India and Asia* (1909), and *Game Birds of India and Asia* (1911) among others. Hume first described the weaver, *Ploceus megarhynchus*, from a specimen in his own collection made at Kaladhungi (1869). Frank later rediscovered it near Calcutta, and it was given the common name 'Finn's Weaver'. Frank used over 100 of the illustrations from Hume's *The Game Birds of India* (1880) in his *Indian Sporting Birds* (1915).

Martin Passmore visited the school in September, and thoroughly enjoyed his tour. He was very impressed with all of the new buildings and facilities, but felt that it was very reassuring that many of the things that he remembered were still there to be seen, and that the friendly atmosphere that he recalled so well was still very much in evidence. 'Whereas my visit was nostalgic, it was wonderful to see what a modern, vibrant and focussed School MGS has become.'



Alongside is a photograph of Martin beside the bell from HMS Maidstone, which is in the entrance foyer.

Martin says that he has been conducting a fruitless search at home, trying to find a photograph of his father and an admiral at the unveiling of the bell. His father's links with HMS Maidstone go back to the early 1930s, when he was part of the design team at the Admiralty in London that put together the plans and drawings for the ship. Construction began in 1936 and the ship was launched the following year. Martin's father moved to Chatham Dockyard as Chief Draughtsman and then Chief Personnel Officer in 1961, hence Martin attended MGS from 1964. When his father learnt that the ship's bell was to be hung in the foyer, he thought it appropriate to present the school with a framed, hand painted copy of the ship's badge - which is what now hangs below the bell. Originally, there was an engraved plaque which acknowledged his father's gift and highlighted his links with HMS Maidstone.

Colin Robbins says that he remains eternally grateful to the understated **Alan Blake** for his unshakeable dedication to the MGS Scout troop. They undertook various treks, which he feels were very influential. On the physical side, members in general surprised themselves with their levels of endurance and consideration for others. In many places there was no access to outside help, and it was essential to operate as a team, perhaps politically, in a manner as close as one could approach to the ideals of communism!

Colin has sent memories of four Scout treks, together with maps of three of them.

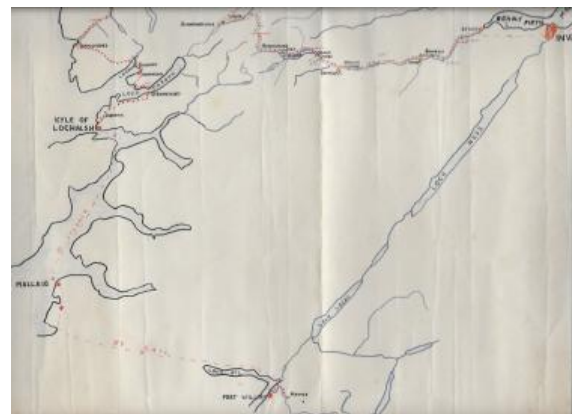
- **1955** As usual, we walked with our laden one-wheel carts between London stations. The route then took us from Windermere to Keswick and thence to Carlisle where we walked Hadrian's Wall from west to east, returning home via Newcastle. It was on Scafell that 'Boggy' Marsh fell and fractured his skull, and the mountain rescue team included members of the successful Everest team.



- **1956** This trek was conducted by canoe from the source of the Wye to the Severn. The canoe of Peter Evans and Ian Bartle turned over in the rapids, but they continued, albeit with clothing somewhat damper than that of the rest of the troop.



- **1957** The Scottish trek started at Inverness and took us through the Great Glen to Torridon and thence onwards to Kyle of Lochalsh, where we took the boat to Mallaig and then rail to Ben Nevis. Some ran to the summit. A cricketer wearing Wellington boots was evident at the Fort William cricket ground.



- **1958** Iceland trek: so rough were the seas *en route* that even the captain of the boat was seasick. Alarmingly, the glacier that we saw has gone and, one hopes by preference, so too has the whaling station that we visited. Unfortunately, our visit was cut short by the start of the 'Cod War'.

Past President (2005), Dr David Wilson, say that the arrival of our previous edition prompted him to write an account of how he and his wife, Rhoda, survived lockdown.



'When we were allowed out only for exercise, I started with the intention of walking every road in Chichester, where we now live, Rhoda sadly now having to accompany me in her wheelchair. After a while, the names of the various streets aroused my curiosity, and I discovered a book published by the City Council which explained how the streets came to get their names. The book was however rather out of date, so I complained to Clerk to the Council who is an acquaintance of mine. 'His reply was all too predictable: 'Why don't you revise it, then?'. So, with the aid of a long-serving councillor, Anne Scicluna, I updated the book, Anne provided the memories and I did the Internet research, photography and desk-top publishing. The upshot can be seen at (and

bought from!) <https://chichestercity.gov.uk/new-a-history-of-chichester-in-500-street-names-book-published/>



David and Rhoda taking photographs

'Book publishing is addictive especially when combined with an interest in family history! I've also completed a family history for my brother-in-law of which the high (or possibly

low) point was the discovery of an ancestor serving four months in Dorchester Jail for highway robbery. Four months doesn't sound much? Well, the proceeds of this robbery were 10½ d and a pair of trousers!

I turned my family history into a book some years back. I'm aware that other people's family history is boring, but if you think that your readers would like to know what a previous deputy head's background is, I offer the following highlights:

- An ancestor in Dublin Jail for high treason in 1698.
- A soldier promoted from the ranks of the Foot Guards to be an officer in the Sappers in the Peninsular War.
- An auctioneer and valuer who valued the contents of Top Withins, better known as Wuthering Heights.
- A widow who converted to Mormonism, emigrated and was probably the oldest woman to drive her own ox-cart to Salt Lake City. (A younger brother of my ancestor also converted and finished up with four wives and 38 children.)
- A family who emigrated to New Zealand to set up what became the largest ironworks in the Southern Hemisphere.
- A grandfather who was an ambulance driver at the first day of the Battle of the Somme.'

Obituaries

Paul Passey (1953 to 1962) has written about his memories of **Brian Beaves**, who died in April.

'Brian Beaves will have had profound influences on many, I am sure, and so my own memories by comparison will seem inconsequential. My days at MGS ran on parallel lines with Brian's, with the same form teachers and same subject groups in the main. Those lines overlapped gradually as we moved through the school. With other German 'scholars' aged about 15, we spent time together whilst on an Exchange visit to Gottingen, as shown in the photograph, with me on the left and Brian on the right.



'Then, inspired by Brian's success and obvious fun on the rugby field, I joined him eventually in a variety of teams culminating in 1st XV.

Brian is in the centre of the front row, and I am on the far right.

'Team sheets were posted with "B R B Beaves as captain" – three initials! That always seemed a mark of distinction, so my son was lumbered with 3 initials too!

'Brian broke his leg when we played rugby Sevens at Tonbridge and by his fortitude,

convinced me that it's not just how you play the game, but how you respond to the disasters. I would later play hockey in college, thinking it was safer.

'The abiding memory of Brian is bound up with our revered Headmaster, W A Claydon, the latter's confusion and aloofness, and my relative timidity. Both Brian and I wore the praefects' tie but you would have expected the Head to have known his own 1st XV captain. Nevertheless, in our final year, WAC stopped me on the Upper Corridor and grandly congratulated me as follows "Ah – Beaves – well done on gaining your place at Aberystwyth." "Thank you Sir!" I mumbled, not wishing to contradict his identification. After all I would be heading off to Culham Teacher Training College and any recognition was welcome.'

Andrew Shaw informs us that his father, **The Revd Michael Howard Shaw**, has died. Michael taught chemistry at MGS from 1971 to 1993. He lived locally at Vinters Park, but then moved to Longfield six years ago. Neil Turrell says that Michael also contributed to some of the more esoteric aspects of the 'A' Level RS course, and that he will be fondly remembered by his colleagues in the chemistry department, most of whom are still around. He will also be remembered by the many students he taught at MGS, particularly in the 6th Form where his depth of knowledge, combined with the more collaborative teacher/student relationship, allowed understanding and mutual respect to flourish.

John Bunyard says that **Martin Woods (1967 to 1974?)** has died suddenly. He featured in John's MGS memoirs, having been the guitarist/ composer in his all-MGS rock band in the 1960s/ 1970s, and much later his co-composer of four albums, one of which became the basis for a project at MGS a few years ago. John says that Martin was a lovely, funny chap with bags of talent, his only fault being an excess of modesty.

'In psychology, there's a 'Dunning-Kruger Hypothesis' which holds that people who rate their own ability highly tend to perform tasks less well, while the truly able underestimate themselves. The life of Martin Woods testifies to the latter. Had he possessed an ego to match his musical talent, many more OMs would be aware of the loss we suffered with his death.

'I first met him in 1970, when my family moved to a house in Loose just yards from his own. Although he was a 3rd-former, two years my junior, I was quickly taken with his offbeat persona. He'd a rugby lock's physique, yet was so quietly spoken as to appear diffident; but I soon became aware of his distinctive personal chemistry, embracing a left-field sense of humour, a passion for science, and a taste in music more wide-ranging than the norm in our circles.

'Most interestingly, he was teaching himself acoustic guitar, and encouraged me to master a rickety acoustic bass guitar he'd acquired. He opted to write his own increasingly complex material rather than play standards, and within a year had recruited a drummer (Nick Martin) and organist (Kevin Loader) from his classmates. Our debut at the Women's Institute Hall in Loose was a success, but our second appearance, in MGS's Small Hall, lacked the lead singer we'd borrowed and proved duly awful. So, Martin engaged another MGS boy, Glyn Jones, as lead singer/ rhythm guitarist, and we became the sardonically named 'Rookie'. Fortunately, the band's next appearance at the school was applauded by all but the teachers.

'We played together for several years until Martin, a solid mathematician, left for Sussex to study electronics. One Sunday I bumped into him by chance outside Hampton Court, after he'd been dumped by his girlfriend and had his collection of music manuscripts and instruments stolen from his car. Though at a low ebb, he could still manage his trademark

rueful chuckle. We went our separate ways; it would be nearly three decades before we spoke again.

'Finally, in 2010, he tracked me down on the Internet. He'd acquired software that let him remaster the hours of original material we'd recorded on a tinny cassette-recorder, and thoughtfully assumed I'd like a copy. He'd missed the band terribly, and asked if I'd like to work with him again. What followed was like turning on a tap. Over a period of six years, he composed more than 60 pieces under the name of 'Science in Music', organised into four themed albums for which I supplied the lyrics. We had two of these albums performed by professional singers, expertly recorded and produced by another OM, Jonathan Vincent. One became a film, and both were used for educational purposes in schools and workplaces.

'And here's the point about Martin Woods. Uniquely in my experience – I speak as one who spent a career managing extravagantly creative types – he combined extreme inventiveness with perfect amenability. As might be expected of one whose musical loves ranged from the harmonious Beach Boys to the strident Stockhausen, his versatility was astonishing; but so too were the consistently high quality and intelligence of his output. I could send him a challenging brief for a song, and in no time he'd send back a demo perfectly capturing the atmosphere I was after, helpfully adding a melodic guide-track to which I simply had to fit meaningful lyrics. Though certainly no pushover, he was never confrontational or egotistical. In short, he was every collaborator's dream.

'We last worked together in 2017. We had to put the final stages of a new 24-song project on ice when I got involved in a 30-month museum project; and then Covid intruded. Martin asked last year if I wanted to restart work remotely, but I demurred because of follow-on commitments. When lockdown was eased, I just had my daughter's wedding to contend with, and we could resume. It was not to be. On Friday 13 August, he died suddenly at his desk. Only 64, he left behind his wife Penny and son Phil, a fellow software programmer, and daughter Kassie, who shares his love of dogs professionally.

'One of Martin's gentler compositions, called *Remember*, commemorated an Alzheimer's victim who'd been a delightful flamenco dancer. The idea of the song was that, although first her memories and then her life were lost, she'd live on as long as her dancing was remembered. The track features him playing Spanish guitar in a way that was typically affecting, but without cloying sentimentality: an eloquent expression of his natural human sympathy. All the time his music can still be heard, Martin Woods won't be forgotten.'

Simon Yeandle has informed us that his father, **Geoffrey Yeandle (1945 to 1950)**, died earlier this year, at the age of 89.

'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 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!