



NEWSLETTER OF THE OLD MAIDSTONIAN SOCIETY

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When I was invited to serve as President for the OMS, it didn't cross my mind to politely decline, citing workload or the pressure of deadlines. I accepted gratefully, not because it's an honour (though it certainly is), but because here, to my surprise, was an opportunity I didn't know I had been looking for.

I owe MGS a debt. It's not hyperbole to say that the trajectory of my career was significantly determined by the staff who taught me during my time at the school. I would mention, in particular, John Morgan and Terence Edwards, and also Graham Walker, now treasurer of the OMS committee and my predecessor as president (a role for which he deserves praise and thanks). I owe MGS my appreciation, and I think I've felt that way for a long time. I had an unrealised impulse to 'give back' to the school in some way that is, I'm sure, shared by many of you. However, until the invitation arrived, it had simply never occurred to me to participate in Society events. I don't know why that should be the case, but if it's true of me, then it may be true for you too. You might feel that impulse, but simply haven't considered how to express it, yet. Consider this, then, *your* invitation.

It's why the OMS exists. The Society supports the school's community in many ways, but its principal work is to maintain connections between the alumni and the school. It does this by sending communications *out* (through email, Facebook, Linked In, and this regular newsletter, for example) to keep alumni informed of events and achievements in the life of MGS, and by organising events to draw alumni *in*, or at least together (such as the Annual Supper, the London Gathering etc).

The most recent Supper was my first, and it gave me the opportunity to speak with ex-students from different eras, spanning decades. I was struck that Old Maidstonians all said the same thing, and that it was a reflection of my own feeling. They wanted to know how they might return the investment made in them during their time at MGS.

There are many ways to pay it on, as I have learned from joining the committee. Firstly, blunt as it might sound, with donations: the OMS and the School always appreciates support for its development projects. Second, through the mentoring programme, whereby you share the wisdom (or otherwise!) of your life experience and professional insight with the current school cohort. Third, the OMS committee, volunteers all, is always looking for willing help.

More than anything, you can contribute with your presence. We can send *out* all the news we like, but having you *here*, meeting old friends or making new ones, is the true measure of the Society's vitality.

Perhaps due to the pandemic, attendance at events has decreased slightly. Add to that the perennial issue faced by the OMS, which is the widespread nature of the alumni community (both geographically and in terms of age and interest), and questions arise as to how we stage an event that will appeal - or simply be accessible or affordable - to as many alumni as possible? We have recently sent out a survey asking you what types of events would appeal to you. I urge you to reply with any ideas.

In an ideal world, we would be welcoming back as many of you as possible at every event. This might mean we have to plan different types of events at different times of the year to broaden the appeal of returning. The forthcoming MGS 475 celebrations may give us an opportunity to try some of those ideas out.

So if, like me, you have a persistent impulse to support the school, but don't really know how, the single best thing you can do is to attend events. Reach out to your own network of friends and invite them to join you. 475 would be an ideal time to renew your connection with the school in person, and we would be delighted to see you.

Dan Abnett
MGS 1979 - 1984
Comic book writer, novelist

From the Chairman

After the success of our Annual Supper and Super Saturday in March, the committee is turning its attention towards next year's Supper, which will be held on Saturday 20 April. The Super Saturday sporting activities will be on the same day, and both events will get our school's 475th Anniversary celebrations week off to a flying start. Please make a note of this important date!

Our new President, Dan Abnett, is playing a key role in 475 plans, and immediate Past President Graham Walker is continuing to act as liaison with the school on the newly-invigorated mentoring scheme.

Another London Get-Together has been organised for Thursday 16 November at the George in Southwark as usual. More information will be circulated soon.

We have recently overcome longstanding difficulties and frustrations with our mail server, which led to Membership Secretary Sean Scurr being able to send to only 250 email addresses at a time. This made the process of sending out information messages, newsletters and other mailings an unacceptably time-consuming activity. Thanks go to Webmaster Malcolm MacCallum for researching alternative options and providing advice that has enabled us to start using a new programme that is already saving many hours of Sean's time, and is free to the Society based on current needs.

The new email service is already producing many more responses to the survey seeking members' thoughts on future functions and events, which we are currently circulating. If you have not yet replied, please do take a few minutes and let us know your views.

Plans are also afoot to run another Quiz this autumn, Details will be circulated when finalised.

As always, I am looking forward to representing the Society at Junior Speech Day on 14 July and Senior Speech Day on 8 September.

John Clayton

Careers work at MGS



Maidstone Grammar School has held the [Quality in Careers Standard](#) national quality award since 2012, successfully gaining re-accreditation in 2015 and 2018, and will be undergoing reassessment for this award in summer 2023.

The Headmaster has written as follows: 'I am pleased to confirm that the Governors and staff of are committed to gaining The Quality in Careers Standard by **July 2023**. We have incorporated this goal in our current development plan. Our aim is to provide an outstanding programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance activities that satisfy national requirements and provide guidance which enables us to address the career development needs of all our students.'

Unfortunately, Alec Clews has to relinquish his role as Co-Webmaster, and the society is looking for someone with experience of creating and maintaining websites, to work with Webmaster, Malcolm MacCallum. If you are interested in this role, please contact the the society at oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk

Musings from the Penthouse

Sitting in the garden of my little abode, sipping a Pimm's and delighting in the taste of some delicious strawberries, I was wondering what my musings could home into this term. Various brief thoughts flitted through my mind like the nearby bees working in the afternoon sun. Then it became so obvious: where else do people enjoy the delights of a garden with strawberries and a refreshing drink? Not at tennis, which you may have been drifting towards, but at a garden party. And which garden parties are the most well-known? Those at Buckingham Palace: the home of six past monarchs and now of another with his Queen. Having a new King to serve the country left me wondering about what had been recorded over the years about coronations.

Maidstone Grammar School (under its current or previous titles) has 'witnessed' some twenty coronations as well as the installation of a couple of commoners. Regrettably we do not have records of the earlier events from the school's point of view. As *The Maidstonian* has been published only since 1883, we are limited to just six celebrations, and even then there are only brief mentions of the school having a long-weekend holiday for Edward VII. The boys enjoyed two sets of holidays in the year when George VI was crowned.

Apart from a contingent of the school's Officer Training Corps (a precursor to the Combined Cadet Force) taking part in a combined parade to All Saints' Church for George V, every boy in the school was presented with a souvenir medal donated by the Borough of Maidstone and we have a mention of at least three NCOs seeing the 1937 coronation from the stands opposite Buckingham Palace. No sleeping rough on the streets for them though: they were accommodated in Rutlish School, Merton, on the previous night.

In 1953 it was a different matter altogether for the group of five CCF attendees who made their way to the capital. I give just a few clips from their report.



'Sgt Bennett MM was allotted a seat in Hyde Park by the Grenadier Guards' Comrades Association.' [Quite rightly so, given the service he gave to his country and the 40 years' service that he gave to MGS as caretaker and tuck shop manager.] The boys stayed in a military camp, 'which had not been used for years and it was necessary to board up the broken windows before they could get any shelter from the cold.' Breakfast was at three o'clock the next morning, before they travelled on to Victoria Station and the stands at the memorial, where they had an excellent view. Sheltering under their capes in an effort to keep out of the rain, they listened to the service from the Abbey via the loudspeakers. Four hours later, the procession returned, briefly passing by. A quick rush followed to the station.

The unofficial contingent fared less well despite managing to get themselves into a position opposite Clarence House but being 'constantly assailed by men of the Arthur English* variety, who tried to sell us coronation periscopes, made of cardboard.' These 'scopes were normally self-assembly which caused many problems owing to the rain. The trouble started when their party increased in size resulting in jostling with their neighbours: a German who

had lost his rucksack and insisted walking through the group to find it, and a 'man with large whiskers, a gown and mortarboard, who insisted on conducting community singing'. The result was that 'the former was finally placated with his rucksack and the latter with ripe, split tomatoes'. There was much complaining when the guards took up their places at 6.00 a.m. because of the obstruction to the view which had been so bitterly fought over.

*An early version of Del Boy from *Only Fools and Horses*

'The Queen's procession was more resplendent than any photograph could have suggested, and the very sight of Her Majesty's State Coach caused almost hysterical emotion.'

Problems at lunchtime started again when 'one unfortunate companion discovered that his rucksack had been used as a grandstand, and [he] spent some time sorrowfully regarding the remains of his sandwiches ... the returning procession was even more resplendent than the outgoing, there being the addition of the Commonwealth contingents.' Finally they managed to find their way back to Victoria Station, then to home and bed.

I had the pleasure of watching the procedures in a neighbour's tiny front room, filled with lounge furniture and well over a dozen people, who were all staring at a small screen no bigger than a dinner plate. Chaos ensued every time the National Anthem was played as everyone stood to attention and gustily sang their hearts out.

In 1953 there is a note in the Old Maidstonian section of *The Maidstonian* that 'GEL Yeandle (1950) is employed by Warner & Sons, weaving velvet for the Coronation.'



What greater honour for the school could be the fact that an OM was so closely involved in the enthronement? Warner & Son had been the primary supplier of velvets for coronations since 1902. The most recognisable design that Warner & Sons produced for the Coronation in 1953 was a power-woven pattern called 'Queensway'. This design was made with silk and metallic thread. Robert Goodden, who was a lecturer at the Royal College of Art, designed 'Queensway' especially for the occasion and it was woven by Warner & Sons at their mill in Braintree. 'Queensway' fabric adorned

the interior of Westminster Abbey, draped throughout the cathedral in both a blue silk in the nave, and a gold silk in the chancel – symbolising the transition into the most sacred space of the building.

GEL Yeandle started late at MGS, but clearly left his mark as he was part of the Senior House XV and XI, a sergeant in the CCF., School House Captain and Deputy School Captain as well as being an editor of our illustrious *Maidstonian* magazine.

It was also an honour for the school that the headmaster, Mr. WA Claydon was invited to one of the first garden parties hosted by the queen. My eyes haven't spotted him in this photograph and I suspect that he is not included as such a tall, upright man would be obvious in the crowd. I have been in contact with Warner Textile Archive, to see if they have anything more on Geoffrey Yeandle. To my surprise their archivist



Geoffrey Yeandle, Jolyon Tibbitts, and L. St. John Tibbitts during a Sales Meeting in Bermuda.

did get back to me with some very interesting

information about him. He was employed by them in the 1950s and as the years went by he was appointed to their Board of Directors. He became their Sales Director, as by the 1980s, in their words, he had '... a wide knowledge and experience in the company's export market'.

Warner's provided velvets and silks for many

state occasions around the world. He later continued to work with Warner & Sons offering talks on the history of the company. Unfortunately Geoffrey died early in 2021 according to his obituary in the Winter 2021 edition of this magazine: it would have been good to hear more of his story. (Queensway photo and Geoffrey Yeandle photo reproduced by kind permission of the Warner Textile Archive, Braintree District Museum Trust).

I trust you will all enjoy the summer.

Icarus

The Grammar School – My Moulding

This is the fourth in a series of articles by **Peter Evans (1950 to 1958)**

1956

This expedition was in many ways less stressful than previous ones, but still had its share of excitement. The challenge was to canoe down the River Wye from inside Wales to as near the sea as possible at Chepstow. First, we had to learn how to handle the two-man kayaks we would be using. They were of canvas stretched over a wooden frame (no fibreglass in those days!) and as such were prone to tears and leaks. The training course included repairs, using canvas patches and thick black Bostick sealant. This proved very important.

Our initial camp was at the Welsh village of Talgarth, near to Brecon and its Beacon mountains, so of course we had to climb them just for the challenge. They have a stark beauty, with their terraces of tilted red sandstone. They were average as mountains go, not too high (2,500 ft) and not too steep, so it was more of a hard walk rather than the scrambling we had done up the Lake District mountains the year before.



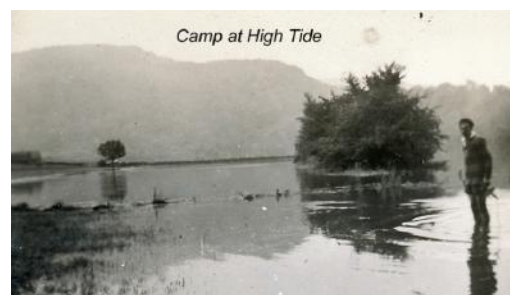
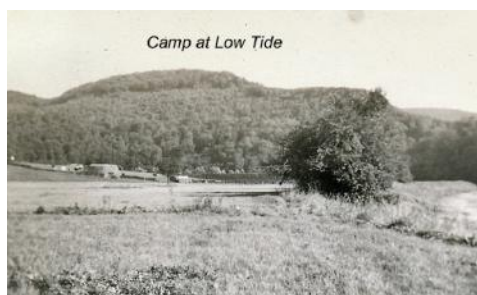
When we started down the river things went smoothly for the first couple of days and gave us a false sense of security. Safety was not so paramount in those days (no aggressive, greedy lawyers in those gentle times) so we weren't equipped with lifejackets. There were the usual macho contests between crews which led one afternoon to two canoes getting well ahead of our Leaders. That was fine till we rounded a bend to see ahead a faster flow leading to a rapid. We both tried to turn and get back upstream but the first canoe only succeeded in going down the rapid in reverse! We were a bit behind, and tried to get into the bank, only succeeding in being swept under a tree. I grabbed a branch, but my crewman up front swayed over, causing the canoe to capsize. He fell in, out of his depth, went down the rapid and was rescued by the first canoe. I found myself clinging to the branch while standing in the river up to my waist, but secure. I watched as our canoe sailed down the rapid on its own, but upside down. This meant that a lot of our gear was dropping into the river never to be seen again.



When the rescue and retrieval of our canoe was completed, I had luckily lost little, but for the next ten days had to walk around with two left shoes, having lost the right one of each pair! The rest of the trip was luckily less eventful. There were more rapids, but we didn't go it alone again. We climbed Symonds Yat, a rock overlooking a spectacular loop in the Wye river with views into three counties (Monmouthshire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire) and camped next to the spectacular ruins of Tintern Abbey. Here the tide was very high. and the campsite went from dry to very wet in the space of a few hours.

The overriding memory was of damp. It was a wet summer, and being beside the river, camped in riverside fields, we never really dried out. Finally, when we reached the end of our journey, it was

quite a challenge to get our canoes and gear up the steep tidal banks of the lower river. It was a quite unusual holiday, but I was glad when it was over.



1957

The plan the Scoutmasters had, was that each generation of Senior Scouts would have one overseas expedition in their three years, and in 1957, we were to go to Iceland. Knowing something of its exciting geology and geography I was really looking forward to it. We worked very hard at collecting newspapers and bottles to raise funds, and were very disappointed when we were told that the trip wouldn't go ahead. In those days, there were no 'cheap' flights to Iceland from the UK. The only practical way was by sea, with one boat sailing a weekly service. When they tried to book, they had left it too late and there was no more space.

Instead, the Scoutmasters created a great trek across Scotland. We took the train from Kings Cross right up to Beauly, northwest of Inverness, where we disembarked and camped nearby. For the next seven nights we hiked along the Monar Valley, nearly losing one of the party to drowning in a freezing loch where he decided to take a swim after lunch and got severe cramp. Luckily, he was rescued, and we continued on our way. That whole week we were travelling in one Lord's estate: his deer park! We had to have food drops along the way as there were no shops. One day the laird's ghillie brought us some trout fresh from the loch, and we ate them with delight!

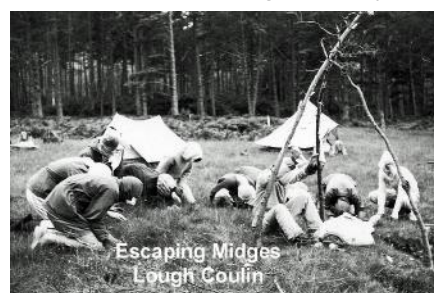


Setting out from Beauly



Raleigh Patrol on the march

At the head of the valley we had to climb a very steep slope to a pass to the watershed between the Atlantic and the North Sea, at Bealach Bhearnais. This was the toughest day I've ever endured. We were basically climbing along tiny sheep tracks, stretcher-ing our carts between four. It was a great relief to reach the pass at the summit and start the descent. That night, at Loch Coulin, we faced another challenge: the worst attack by midges ever. We stood in the smoke of the campfires with little relief. The next day we finally got to a shop and bought their entire stock of fly spray and bite cream.



*Escaping Midges
Loch Coulin*

That day was also memorable for us four patrol leaders, being taken in a rowing boat (to try to avoid midges) into the middle of the loch by the Scoutmasters and told to take a pledge to behave ourselves by not letting our fellow Scouts go into any pubs, as the next day we would be re-entering civilisation after ten days in the wilderness. Of course, the water being freezing, we had no alternative but to agree!

We continued deep into Wester Ross and reached Loch Torridon where we had a couple of days' rest, punctuated by a climb up Liathach, a 3,000 ft mountain behind us.

Our next leg was to hike around the Loch, camping the night at a village named Shieldaig where we played soccer with some natives. We



continued to a remote town on the extreme west coast of the mainland called Applecross. We arrived in a heavy rainstorm with strong winds which gave a challenging set of conditions to set camp and light a fire to cook an evening meal, but we managed!

Our next challenge was to cross the pass of Bealach na Bar, the highest metalled road in the British Isles. It was a hard slog uphill to get to the pass, but the descent, with multiple hairpin bends, was even harder, with all our strength needed to hold the carts back from running away.

We carried on down to a ferry which ran in those days across Loch Kishorn, and then on towards Kyle of Loch Alsh. Then a trip on a ferry to Mallaig where we took the train to Fort William. We camped a few miles out of town, at the foot of Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain. Next day we climbed to the summit. This concluded with an ego/testosterone fuelled race between yours truly and Colin Robbins. In the end exhaustion overcame ego, and we declared the race a tie, walking to the summit side-by-side. As a mountain climb it was boring, a track on which one could drive a truck.



I took a trip with Keith Parris to see the parallel roads of Glenroy, a geographic phenomenon caused by different shorelines on an old lake bed as it drained in post-Ice Age times. It was intriguing to see the lines clearly visible along the valley sides. That night, our last before heading home, a huge thunderstorm blew

several of our tents down, so we had to huddle into the larger and more robust ones for protection from the heavy rain. As a result, much of our gear was soaked so it was a good thing we were off to the train the next morning, and home via Edinburgh.



We arrived in Maidstone early the next morning, and as we walked up Barton Road, we knew that our GCE 'A' Level results were awaiting us on the noticeboard in the Porter's Lodge. The news was good, passes!

[... to be continued ...]

This is the first of two of articles by **Stewart Fuller**

Introduction

This is written from memory, assisted by my diaries and *The Maidstonian*.

They say that 'schooldays are the happiest days of your life', but it is also said that 'absence makes the heart grow fonder' and perhaps it is the latter that takes precedence for me, as I cannot remember any really bad days during my time at MGS.

Pre-war year

I was fortunate to start in September 1938 and so I had one full year of normal school before the war rather changed things. Several points are particularly memorable from that first year.

School was on six days a week, but Wednesday and Saturday were half days and games were usually held in the afternoons. In the summer, the swimming baths were open on those days, and during every evening.

It was my introduction to rugby, which I enjoyed and played well enough to play first for the Junior School, then the Colts, then the Second XV, and a number of matches for the First XV. Also, I played for the Junior House XV and then the Senior XV, when in one year we defeated all three other houses, despite being expected to lose. I can still remember one of the tactics which we used.

Talking of Houses, I was in Corpus Christi and in my first year we became Cock House for the first time ever. I may have made a minor contribution to this in the swimming sports by coming third in the beginner's length. In those sports I still remember SBD Fletcher's record-breaking one length – he took breath only once or maybe twice. I would add that the House successfully defended its title for the rest of my time at the school.

As well as games, I took part in some of the many after-school activities, including the choir and the stamp club. The school concert was my first introduction to classical music, which I have enjoyed ever since. My introduction to Shakespeare was a school production of *Julius Caesar*: it was very well performed and the sight of Fulljames as Brutus running onto his sword was so realistic that it remains with me still.

Early War Years

On 3 September 1939, the war came. School should have started on the 14th but I did not go until the 19th, and then only to collect a lot of work. Attendance was then infrequent and irregular, and often for just a half day as for some time only 60 boys were allowed at a time, but things improved as term went on and work on the trenches (air raid shelters) proceeded. We had plenty of homework and some masters took us on excursions by foot or cycle. I have only diary references to tell me anything about those but one trip was to the museum, one cycle ride included a German lesson and another trip was a nature ramble.

The house system was in abeyance during the first term of 1939/40 because of the limited numbers at school at any one time and School House had very few seniors. School social activities virtually disappeared with the exception of rugger and swimming. By the beginning of January term 1940, attendance was almost back to normal, but full time for all did not start till sometime in 1941.

Masters and senior boys undertook fire watching duties, but fortunately were never called into action. In the summer term of 1940 several senior members of the OTC (later JTC) did Home Guard duty and helped to train members of the Maidstone HG. A number of blast walls were built and windows covered with adhesive tape to prevent flying glass. Oddly I have no memory of these: my information comes from *The Maidstonian*.

Autumn term 1940 saw almost daily trips to the shelters where lessons continued in somewhat difficult circumstances. Fortunately, we were never troubled by bombs though

some fell not far away one night in September. The senior boys from Alleyn's school Dulwich were guests with us for a time. I remember they beat us fairly easily in a swimming match.

After some realignment, the house system resumed in January 1940, as did other activities like the orchestra, the film society and the stamp club, and cricket in the summer. Athletic Sports were held in May 1940 but were then discontinued along with cross-country running until 1943 for reasons I have not discovered. I played cricket for the Colts XI and then started with the Second XI, but my keenness on swimming and lifesaving got in the way so cricket came to an end except for playing for the Senior House XI in my last year. Mr Richmond took life-saving which I really enjoyed, gaining the Silver Medal and First Class Instructor's Certificate.

Form examinations had been suspended for the autumn term 1939, but resumed in the spring of 1940 and then continued without a break; external examinations never took a break as far as I know. Despite the irregularity of attendance and the interruptions caused by trips to the shelters, I do not think that our education suffered in any way. Some time was made up when the normal seven weeks' summer holiday was reduced to four weeks. *The Maidstonian* of December 1941 records almost normal school life, an atmosphere almost pre-war and no use of the shelters.

In the summer of 1940 the school ran a farm camp at a large farmhouse at Marden. which some 40 or so boys attended, including me after losing the first week to a bad cold. It was early rising and we were sent out to various farms to work on fruit picking, potato picking (back breaking) and corn shocking [stacking], and finally the camp's planned four weeks was extended for one more week to go hop picking.

It was at the height of the Battle of Britain and quite often we saw dog fights, with planes shot down and pilots bailing out. On one occasion, a breakaway barrage balloon was shot down. For me the highlight was when Mr Sawdy took me on his motor bike to see a Messerschmitt which had made a forced landing and was almost intact. It had been piloted by Von Werra who later was the subject in the film *The One That Got Away*.

I cannot remember the food but do remember that one boy complained that there was not enough and for his sins was locked in the larder to help himself. A number of us watched him through the window scoffing doorsteps of bread and jam. A number of masters did a sterling job in managing this camp – Messrs Richmond, Sawdy, Keast and Hammond, and the latter's wife did the cooking for all the boys on an old kitchen range. Other boys made their own way to local farms. I did the same for the following two years.

Mention should be made of the garden plots under the control of RT Lye and Mr Packer. I think this activity was originally meant for those boys who did not want to join the OTC, but it expanded. My diary records one day of digging. It had its ups and downs due to varying numbers of workers but was overall very successful in producing good crops of vegetables.

1941 saw the retirement of headmaster AJ (Nutt for some reason) Woolgar, and the arrival of WAC (Whacker) Claydon. He arrived with a reputation because of his initials but I think that it was undeserved. I remember his habit of raising one eyebrow very considerably. I also remember him as a most inspiring teacher. He took one lesson due to the absence of JCB (Jacob) Carter and he brought Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* so much alive to me that I learnt a lot of it by heart,

some of which I still remember

[... to be continued ...]

The Lord Beechings is no more

In the Winter 2022 edition, Brian White reported that the Lord Beechings pub was located right opposite Aberystwyth railway station. Perhaps disgruntled and frustrated rail travellers objected to its presence, as it has now become 'The Hoptomist'.



News of Old Maidstonians

Tony Bishop (1955 to 1962) asks whether anyone has access to the history of the MGS 'Aylesford Run'. He has located an original silver cup from 1927 (see below), which was awarded to his uncle, George Joseph Bishop, who won the race in that year. He presumes that this is a replica which was given to George, and that MGS might no longer have an original: Tony does not recall having seen it in his days in the late 1950s. This cup now resides in Sydney, Australia!



Tony has no idea when this practice stopped, but it could have been before the Aylesford Run ceased, if the element of cost became important when MGS changed its status in the 1940s, albeit retaining a seat as a Public School on the Headmaster's Conference.

Tony's father, Dick Bishop, was Captain of Cricket in 1928 or 1929. He can recall the photographs that hung along the upper corridor in the 1950s. Dick and George Bishop appeared in several photographs of the 1st XI.

Tony will be inquiring of his cousin as to whether he also still has the *Victor Ludorum* medal that was also awarded to George. He has no one to whom he can leave such artefacts after his death, and Tony thinks that it might be nice to see them returned to the MGS eventually, if he is agreeable.

If you have any further information about the Aylesford Run, please contact oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk

Les Broad (1962 to 1969), who now lives in Wales, writes as follows:

'In accepting me into its ranks MGS took on a difficult challenge: drumming academic knowledge into a largely unreceptive head. The School, though, is something of a force of nature and succeeded in getting me through a range of examinations, and in leaving me with an enduring love of the written word.

'One of the less foreseeable consequences of my affection for writing came about when several members of my creative writing group – based in Prestatyn – raised a rather obvious issue: we write, the rest of the group absorbs what's been written and then it disappears, for ever consigned to the depths of a rarely-opened drawer. What could we do to bring that writing to a wider audience?

'An afternoon of storytelling seemed to be an answer, and it could be given a veneer of professionalism by bringing in some experienced actors to tell our stories. "Right," we thought, "let's do that." A window of opportunity was identified, when nobody from our group was off on any jaunt around the UK or further afield, and the actors were between productions. It was a short window, but achievable.

'Tragedy struck when HM Queen Elizabeth II died, mere days before our storytelling date. Nobody wanted to show any disrespect; as a result, our advance publicity was just about non-existent and we settled on a date just before the end of the official mourning period. The audience was much smaller than we would have liked, but a further deferral would have conflicted with the actors' commitments to rehearsals for a new production.

'The theme was horror stories, gradually getting more frightening as the afternoon progressed. I had written a couple of stories which featured towards the end; these were greeted with entirely satisfactory gasps of sheer fear from the audience. Was I wrong to find that deeply gratifying? Afterwards, the feeling among both writers and actors was simple: "we must do that again." Later this year we will indeed do it again. There was, surprisingly, another, wholly unexpected, outcome. The actors, it seemed, were sufficiently impressed with exposure to my own work to issue an invitation. The theatre to which they are affiliated has its 60th anniversary this year and an anniversary show is being staged in July. They have asked me to contribute scripts for a number of comedy sketches to be included in that show; I have a feeling that these might include an analysis of a late 1950s pop song by the *Carry On* actor Bernard Bresslaw, carried out by four professors from a (possibly non-existent) music college, an explanation of why, exactly, the dragon came to be a symbol of Wales, and an introduction to the huge, vicious, man-eating Holy Island crab.

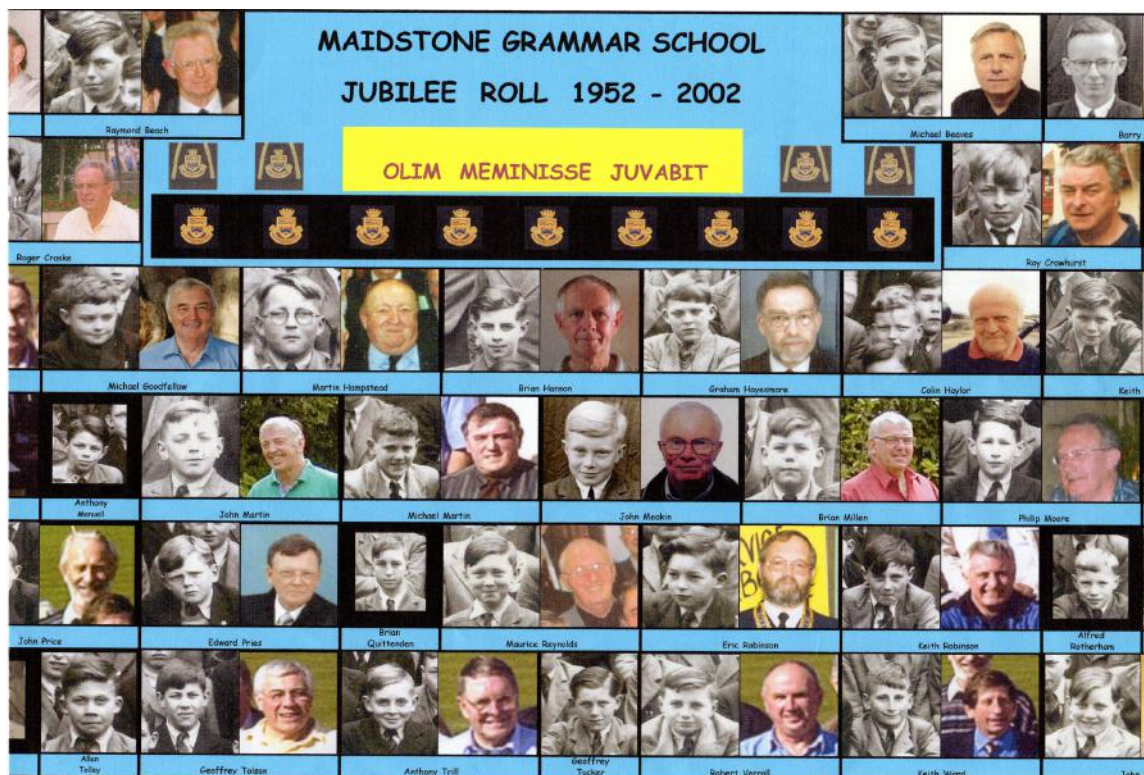
'We'll see what the great Welsh public make of all this in July, but their criticism must be verbal: they'll be searched on the way in to ensure that bags of rotten tomatoes are not brought into the theatre.'

[Two examples of Les's writing, entitled *A monks' vision* and *Thumb*, can be accessed on the OMS website.)

David Mason secured a copy of the music of the School Song from MGS, and he was able to play it to **John Hyde** (pictured right), who is now 92, and lives near to David in Lytchett Matravers. John reminisced about singing the song whilst walking down Maidstone High Street at the end of WW2. David was surprised to discover that Charles Holyman's tenure at the school spanned both of their MGS careers, given that John is 27 years his elder. John left MGS in 1949, having had a year off school, following an accident which had hospitalised him for six months. Subsequently, he had a career in the RAF and in local government.



Brian Millen (1951 onwards) says that several members of the 'Class of '51' kept in touch during their career years but, thanks to **Rodney Parkins** and **Ron Dillon** (both, sadly, now deceased), March of 2002 saw the 50th Anniversary Reunion for over 80 of that year at Cobdown Sports Ground, for an excellent buffet lunch. It was a great day, with lots of news and reminiscences flying about. After 'burning the midnight oil' for three months, **Robin Kent** presented each of the attendees with a Jubilee Roll, picturing faces from 1952 and, where possible, 2002. (A portion is shown below.)



Since 2002, a hard core have been meeting several times a year, both in Kent and London and, on 5 June, the MGS '51 'Old Reprobates' met for their early summer lunch at the Sichuan restaurant on City Road, which is always preceded by a drink in the Two Brewers on Whitecross Street. The four-times-yearly meetings are organised by **Martin Hampstead** and 'London Local' **Tim Moorey**.

Although numbers have dwindled a little over recent years, the lunches are still much enjoyed, this time by:

(from 12 'o clock, clockwise - **John Price, Tim Moorey, Martin Hampstead, John Martin. Brian Millen, Brian Bonny, Brian Spillett, Ray Beach, and John Wright.**)

The photograph was taken on Brian Spillett's handset, and Initially, he labelled the date as '2033'. Brian Millen wonders if they will still be meeting then at the same place!



The society offers its condolences to the families and friends of all of those Old Maidstonians who have died recently.

David Cutforth's obituary, which appeared in our Winter 2022 edition, has received some additional information from **Brian Mace (1960 to 1968)**.

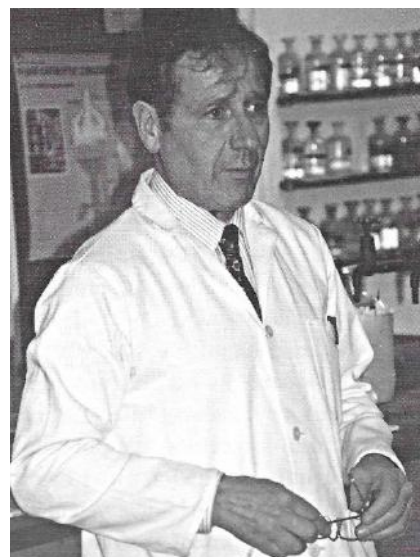
Brian says that in addition to the choral works mentioned, at MGS (usually in partnership with MGGS), David conducted many performances of many works, including Purcell: *King Arthur*, Orff: *Carmina Burana*, Verdi: *Requiem*, and Bizet: *Carmen* (concert performance). The MGS Orchestra performed Bach: *Double Violin Concerto* and *Double Piano Concerto*, Dvorak: *D minor Serenade*, Mozart: *Clarinet Concerto*, Corelli: *Christmas Concerto*, and Schütz: *Christmas Story*.

In the town he directed an ambitious programme of performances by the Maidstone Orchestral Society/ Symphony Orchestra including works by Beethoven: *Symphonies Nos 2 and 9*, Shostakovich: *Symphonies Nos 1 and 5*, Berlioz: *Symphonie Fantastique*, Mahler: *Symphony No 4*, Khachaturian: *Violin Concerto* and Schumann: *Cello Concerto*, with soloist Amaryllis Fleming.

Also, in May 1960, he led some of the earliest performances of Britten's *Noyes Fludde* involving many local school children as well as professional soloists. Performances took place in All Saints' Maidstone, Rochester Cathedral and St Nicholas Church' New Romney.

Bob Dutton (Head of Physics at MGS from 1970 to 1996), died during the dark days of Covid isolation, but it is important for the OMS to belatedly recognise this much-respected pillar of the MGS community. Not long after Bob's death, his wife Gill also passed away, so it has been a particularly difficult time for the Dutton family including their twin sons, Chris and James, who are OMs. Our thoughts and best wishes are with Bob's family and friends.

Under Bob, the Physics Department developed and maintained a reputation for popularity and high academic standards, assisting numerous MGS students along their career paths. Outside of the classroom, Bob served on the Parents' Association for over 20 years and presided over the stage lighting, persuading able helpers to rebuild the 'totally idiosyncratic' system that he inherited. Bob was central to MGS's sense of camaraderie, and integral in making the physics prep room a social hub and centre of independent thought and creativity. He was an energetic, sporting character; he ran the school's Friday evening family badminton club, he was a stalwart of the staff cricket team, and a very skilful squash player. He was always eager to take up new challenges including skiing, hang-gliding, and even participating in a parachute jump in New Zealand well into his retirement.



We have been advised by his daughter, Mary, that **Ralph Bernard Jenner (1946?)** died on 21 March, at the age of 87. He was residing in Wales.

We have been notified about the death of **Brian Lovelidge (1945 to 1951)**, who was born in 1934 and could remember events of the Second World War such as German bombing raids, the Battle of Britain, VIs (Doodlebugs or buzz bombs), many of which landed in and around Maidstone, and VIIs, one of the first of which landed landing on Bunyard's Nursery less than a mile from his home. During the Blitz, he slept at night in a Morrison air raid shelter in his garden.

Brian did well academically and excelled at sport. He was awarded first fifteen colours and was the school's discus champion, holding the record for many years. However, the highlight of his school athletic career was winning the Kent Schools' intermediate and senior discus events in 1951 and 1952, breaking the record in both, the former by nearly 20 feet. In both years he represented Kent schools in the England schools athletic championships.

While at school he developed an interest in farming and gained a place at Wye College, graduating with a BSc (Agric) in 1956. During his pre-college year (1952) he worked on a fruit, pig and arable farm near Mereworth, Kent and joined Maidstone Rugby Club, playing for the first XV (at the age of 18) which at the time was the best team in South East England apart from Blackheath.

At college, Brian played for the first XV (and East Kent) and was *Victor Ludorum* in athletics in his second and third years. He was also in the squash team, despite never having played the game before going to college. In his final year, he was a member of the college team that won the London University seven-a-side rugby competition: in the final, they beat King's College by five tries to nil, quite an achievement considering that King's was a much larger college than Wye.

After graduating, Brian did two years' National Service, including one year in Cyprus on internal security duties at the height of the EOKA (Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston) terrorist campaign, during which 371 members of the armed forces, mostly National Servicemen, were killed. He was a member of his regiment's shooting, squash, rugby and athletic teams.

Following his retirement from rugby in 1969, Brian began long-distance running and joined Medway Athletic Club (later Maidstone and Medway AC). During his 25-year racing career he ran five marathons, including London's in 1982, around 75 half-marathons and some 400 shorter road and cross-country races. Upon retirement from competitive running he was made an honorary life member of the club.

Brian's career in farm journalism began immediately after finishing his National Service in October 1958. For the first four years or so he worked alongside his mentor, Edgar Phillips, a well-respected freelancer. In March 1963 he branched out on his own and in the same month married Jillian. During his 50-year plus career he wrote regularly for virtually all of the national agricultural and horticultural journals and provided a press publicity service for numerous companies, including most of the international agrochemical manufacturers. He won the NFU-sponsored best horticultural journalist award on a number of occasions. After semi-retiring in 2000 he concentrated on writing about horticultural production, mainly fruit.

Brian leaves a daughter, Lisa, who gained a PhD at Cambridge University and is a self employed medical communications consultant.

The intrepid Jeff Wilkinson has tracked down his school *Valete* record:

B. F. Lovelidge [w.b.h.]; Cadet, R.A.F. Section, C.C.F.; Cert. "A" Part I, '50; 1st XV, '50-'53, Colours, '51; Maidstone Public Schools XV; All-England School Athletics Championships, '51-'52; L.A.C. Schools Sports, '52; G.C.E. O. Level (8), '51, A. Level (3), '52.

The death occurred of **Andrew C. Parfitt** (1960) on Wednesday 14 June, after a long fight with cancer. Following a period of teaching and deputy-headship in local schools, he felt the call to join the ministry as co-pastor and pastor of one of the larger churches in Maidstone, and also in some of the smaller ones at a later date.

Yet another school *Valete* record from Jeff Wilkinson:

Parfitt, A. C. [c.c.]; S.C.M.; Debating Society; Colts XV, '57; Colts XI, '57; G.C.E., 'O' '58-'60 (7), 'A' '60 (1).

We understand that **Robert Charles Parsons** has passed away, but we have no further information at this stage

We have been informed that one of our oldest OMs, **Robert Stevenson (1939 to 1947)**, has died at the age of 94 years and 5 days, following a house fire. He was not married but outlived all other close relatives.

One of the press reports included reference to the fact that 'he competed against and beat **Frank Sando** who went on to represent GB at the Olympics.' He was a tower of strength in NI athletics and was awarded an MBE for his services.

Robert was either mentioned, or provided material, in the following editions of the newsletter:

- 1973 (July)
- 2002 (Winter)
- 2010 (Summer)
- 2013 (Spring)
- 2014 (Summer)
- 2015 (Spring)
- 2022 (Summer)

Richard Webb (1991-1996) and Eleanor Webb (1994-1996) have informed us of the death of their father, **Tony Webb (MGS staff from 1971 to 2000, and Deputy Headmaster from 1981 to 2000)**.

Tony taught history initially, and latterly various subjects. After retirement, he worked on the school's archive, and our archives researcher, Jeff Wilkinson, says that Tony and his wife were two of the main architects and builders of the archive as it exists today. From piles of papers stored in many odd places, they formed a base which now stands proud in the Penthouse and was described by a visiting archive consultant as one of the best school archives she had seen.



Tony was a larger-than-life character who will be remembered by all who were at MGS during his tenure. He had many fond memories of the school which he had served for so long, and in recent years, although being ill, he would still attend the annual carol concerts. He wrote in our last edition about his cancer diagnosis and arthritis, but he was responding well to treatment; unfortunately he had a bad fall at home from which he could not recover.

Tony's cremation took place at Vinters Park Crematorium in Maidstone at 14:45 on Monday 17 July. The family members organised a further celebration of his life and that of his wife, Diana, who was also very much involved with MGS: she died at the beginning of the Covid lockdown and was deprived a proper send-off. That celebration took place at 16:00 on the same day, at MGS

Donations are invited to Macmillan Cancer Support and the Kent Autistic Trust, in Tony's memory. Details of a tribute page will be provided in due course, and the family would welcome any anecdotes or tributes - please email them as soon as possible to oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk

'Something for nothing' donations to our charity

If you buy goods or services online, many retailers will make donations 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 which is used by many retailers. Please help us by using this scheme. 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. About 7,000 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. Note that as well as making donations on your normal purchases, 'Easyfundraising' circulates special offers on goods, and opportunities for enhanced donations.

To join 'Easyfundraising' is (unsurprisingly) 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 that you can remember your password! To help you to remember to use the scheme whenever you buy from participating retailers, you can download Easyfundraising's 'Donation Reminder'.

(The Amazon Smile scheme has just been discontinued.)

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!