



NEWSLETTER OF THE OLD MAIDSTONIAN SOCIETY

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Maidstone Grammar School is celebrating an incredible milestone this academic year. It will be 475 years since the Royal Charter was granted in 1549, so let us leave our mark to commemorate this significant event.

To acknowledge this milestone we are launching a fundraising campaign to modernise the front reception of the school, which will include the installation of a video wall. This will enable visitors to review highlights of the School's achievements over the years and will be of huge interest to all Old Maidstonians by stimulating and updating many memories. Our target for this project is £165,000 and we already have a substantial donation from an Old Maidstonian to kick-start the campaign. If you would like to lend your support, please complete this online donation form (<https://forms.office.com/e/Gv2...>).

All donors will be recognised in a special Old Maidstonian '475 Electronic Celebration Book'. We are very excited about this project and really hope that we are able to achieve it during the School's 475 th year, so we very much value your support. For the 475 celebrations we are planning a week of special events from Friday 19 April to Saturday 27 April 2024. These will include events organised by the Parents' Association, the Old Maidstonian Society, the School, and the CCF. More details will follow nearer the time but please keep this week free in your diaries particularly Saturday 20 April 2024 which will be the OM Sport Day and OM Supper. Another date to keep free is Saturday 13 July 2024 where we will invite you to join us for strawberries and cream at an Old Maidstonian Garden Party which will include a tour of the school as well as catching up with old friends.

I hope that as many Old Maidstonians as possible will join me in supporting this dynamic and worthwhile enhancement of the School's reception area, and enjoy seeing the results for themselves during the 475th celebrations. We are looking forward to the celebrations - it will be a special year, so please join us in making it a year to remember. Olim Meminisse Juvabit
<https://mgs.kent.sch.uk/wp-con...>

Dan Abnett
MGS 1979 - 1984
Comic book writer, novelist

Editor's note: If anyone would like to send in particular memories as part of the 475 th celebrations, they should email them to oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk

From the Chairman

I am writing this a week before our annual London Get-Together at The George in Southwark. At present about 40 people have booked to attend, and I am looking forward as always to meeting many fellow Old Maidstonians.

I shall be bringing along some copies of a new flyer we have devised, which asks OMs to help us make contact with former schoolmates whom they are still in touch with and who are not already members of the Society. Copies of the flyer will also be available at the Supper next April, and at all our events over the coming year.

The old saying that you never get a second chance to make a first impression may or may not be true, but it has struck me - and many others - in recent years that our school's front reception area is in need of updating. The School's fundraising campaign, which President Dan Abnett covers in his article, will – with the Society's support – enable us to mark the 475th anniversary of MGS – by providing a much improved reception, with a video wall centrepiece that reflects the school's past, present and future. I hope you will want to make a donation to help us achieve our target in our school's milestone year.

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to Old Maidstonians everywhere.
John Clayton

Editor's note: Here is a recorded message from John, regarding 'MGS475':
https://youtu.be/okJgOrsHGqk?si=AxefQ16jsVgSLX_v

Reflections from the first Headteacher of Maidstone Grammar School

Christmas is fast approaching, and the end of 2023 marks the time when we move into 2024 and into the School's 475th birthday year. It is 475 years since the town of Maidstone was issued a Royal Charter to establish a school in Maidstone. Since that time Maidstone Grammar School has grown in size from a few boys being taught in All Saints' Church to a school of today with nearly 1450 students. Throughout 2024 we will be marking this important milestone with a number of different events, and I look forward to welcoming many Old Maidstonians at the OM Sports Day and OM Supper on Saturday 20 April 2024. However, since we started the academic year back in September we have already had a whole-school photograph, opened the new Sixth Form Study Centre and lecture theatre, launched the MGS475 Fundraising Campaign to raise money for a new Reception, and prepared for the selling of MGS475 branded merchandise. We are well and truly marking the occasion in a big way. Do join us, even if it is only to buy some MGS475 cufflinks!

Despite looking ahead to the coming year it is also important to look back on last year and remind ourselves of a few memories. The year was full of delights, like the wonderful production of Shrek: The Musical in March and the Queen in the Quad event as part of the Pride celebrations in June. But the year also included a moment of tragedy with the death of fellow Maidstonian, Harrison Fordyce. The news shocked the School, and in some ways is still being felt today. But despite the joyful and tragic nature of these events, they all illustrated one thing: how Maidstonians feel about each other and their school. I have always said that MGS is like an extended but close-knit family; families have their highs, and they have their lows, but whatever they go through, they go through them together. This comparison that we saw between the joyful and tragic moments is exactly what MGS went through last year, and I was once again humbled to see the power of humanity in each and every Maidstonian.

The end of the year back in July was also a time to say goodbye to a number of my colleagues who left the MGS community. Mr Brown, an Old Maidstonian himself, left after one year to begin his university placement after supporting the PE Department as the PE Technician. Ms Onah, who was also with us for one year, left after supporting the Computing Department. After two years of service, Mr Saunderson left to start his new career as a PE teacher, and Mrs Grant left to retire to the Cotswolds after being the School Librarian. Leaving after three years, Miss Payne moved to another school in Kent after working in the History Department, and Mrs

Fowler left the teaching profession and her role as Head of French to start a Masters. Mr Campbell, after three-and-a half years' service as the Head of D & T moved to Thailand to work in an international school; and Miss Collard left after four years to continue her career as an English teacher elsewhere in Kent. Old Maidstonian Mr O'Hanlon left after five years as Head of Geography to work closer to home, and Mr Ferguson, one of our deputy heads and Old Maidstonian, left after six years to take up his first headship post in a school just down the road. Mr Ferguson made a huge difference to the progress of MGS in so many ways, and so I thank him for his contributions, support and laughter during his time. Mr Knight retired from the teaching profession after giving seven years' service as well as being an animated character in both the classroom and the staffroom. Also after seven years, Miss Lancaster left MGS to continue her career in China. With the support of her departmental colleagues, she turned the English Department around – having both vision and passion for her teaching and the care of her students. We thank her immensely for putting English back on the map. Mrs Lynch taught geography for 30 years, and after 14 of those 30 at MGS, retired in the summer to move back to Northern Ireland. I described her as the barometer of the School, and was often the one member of staff I went to, to seek her views on whatever I was thinking at that time. She was an outstanding teacher, and I know the students she taught miss her. Mr Conisbee, one of the Student Services Managers retired after giving MGS 17 years' service. Mr Conisbee was integral to how the Student Services Department developed since its beginning in 2006, and I know the many students he supported are grateful for the time and care he gave them. Finally, Mrs Byatt, a member of the office team, left MGS after 24 years. She was a stable and friendly face in the main school office for nearly a quarter of a century. She was integral to the workings of MGS, and I know that many of my colleagues miss her support and friendly manner.

In addition to these 15 members of staff, I also wish to acknowledge a governor. Lindsey Evans stepped back from her role as a governor after 24 years. She joined the school community as a parent governor when her son, Henry, attended MGS from 1999 to 2006. Following that, Lindsey continued her service as a governor being chair of the curriculum committee before becoming chair of the full governing body for five years in 2010. Throughout her time she was committed to the progress of the School as well as being committed to the support of me in my role. As chair of the governing body her role was to be a critical friend for me, and in that time she listened to me and helped me solve many problems along the way. The relationship between a head and a chair of governors is a unique one, and over the last 11 years Lindsey and I have developed a very special friendship that I know will continue far beyond the school gates. The end of the 2022-23 academic year may have marked the end of her 24 years' service, but did not end the friendship that we have. On behalf of the entire MGS community, thank you Lindsey for your service and leadership, and I wish you well for your future.

Returning to this year, there is one more important aspect of MGS that I feel needs mentioning. I am no longer the headmaster of Maidstone Grammar School. Don't worry, I did not leave, I simply changed my job role to headteacher instead of headmaster. After 474 years, and the fact that we live in a completely different society, the time was right for MGS to not have a headmaster, but to have a headteacher instead. So, over the summer holiday, my name was removed from the Headmasters Board that hangs in the Hall, and underneath the name of the previous head, Dr Argent, a new heading of Headteachers was placed, with my name rewritten below it. Changing my job role from headmaster to headteacher is not a small thing; it reflects a different and more modern time that we live in. MGS will always cherish its past, but at the same time will also acknowledge its future, and so the time had come to do make this very important change. I hope you can all agree.

Mr Tomkins

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

A new Co-Webmaster needed

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 society at oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk

A protocol for providing for providing links to members' contributions

The OMS website has limited space in which to host contributions from its members, so it provides weblinks to members contributions for informational purposes only: they do not constitute an endorsement or an approval by the OMS.

The OMS is not responsible for the content of external sites. Please note: where possible, the OMS has taken reasonable steps to ascertain that the content was considered appropriate to draw to members attention when the weblink was added; however, the content may have been subsequently edited and the OMS takes no responsibility in such circumstances.

If people post material on YouTube or another platform, then those organisations will moderate content.

Musings from the Penthouse

475th Year Celebrations – part 1

By now, everyone in the school, the Old Maidstonian Society and others will have been made fully aware of the school's magnificent reign in Maidstone over the last 475 years. Whilst there are no magazines or similar materials which date back to 1549, there are some accounts taken from memories of OMs as well as a number of accounts and documents in the Archives. I will not dwell on the actual birth of the school by Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, 1st Earl of Hertford, Viscount Beauchamp, KG, PC. who was also known as Edward Semel and later fell into disrepute for his mismanagement of government (what changes over time? Not much), ending up in the Tower of London and being executed (Current politicians beware!)



The earliest item that I have found is the School Rules of 25th April 1574 as ordered by the Maidstone Burghmote. I have abbreviated them in order to save boredom. –

- 1st – Acknowledging God to be the author of all good gifts. At 7 am every day the Master and all scholars are to humbly kneel and make prayers.
- 2nd – After prayers, teaching and apposing scholars until 11 am when they shall go to dinner. Following dinner, all scholars shall return at 1 pm until 5 or 6 pm for teaching, then depart for the night after making their prayers.
- 3rd – The Mastr. shall have his house and wages during his life, not being convicted of some notable crime, as to be a common gamester or haunter of Taverns or Alehouses, not sound in Religion, Prodigal in apparel or other extraordinary expence.
- 4th & 5th – *concern payment to the Master during periods of illness of himself or in the school.*
- 6th – None shall be taught in the School but first the Mastr. be spoken with by his or their friends and the Mastr. shall have them to understand such points of the Statutes as appertain to the Scholler that is to be admitted.
- 7th None shall be admitted to the Schoole who for his evil demeanour hath been expelled any other School.
- 8th – Those Scholers whose friends dwell out of the liberty and Parish of Maidstone at his admission shall pay to the common box of the School xijd and every Town Child of Maidstone or of the same parish hereafter admitted iijjd which shall be employed to the maintenance of common books needful in the Scholl as a Dictionary and other like.
- 9th – Also considering the coldness of the School it is thought good that evry Schooller put in the School shall pay yearly at or before Mayday alias the first of May yearly towards School a Matt and iijjd and to have no more person for a meal and Matts but only a iijjd and to be employed to that use and to no other use.
- 10th – Lastly the Mastr. shall in the week call his Schollers to account how they have frequented Divine Service and for their behaviour in the Church at sermon time.

(The above are all as listed in *Memorials of All Saints' Church* by W B Gilbert and in *Antiquities of Maidstone*)

One has to presume that the Master had a better spelling knowledge, and also that the monetary values were 'iijjd' as 3 pence and 'xijd' as 11 pence. ('j' was used to represent the numeral 1 at the end of a series of numbers.)

In 1576, Rowland Stubbersfield, M.A., was the third Master of the school from 1575 through to 1585 and was paid quarterly as can be seen from this receipt -



Mr Stubbersfield was succeeded by Thomas Symondson (1585 – 1628), who has a little anecdote about him, on the Kent Online Parish Clerks website in that -

Symondson was a member of the Common Council. In 1621 he was excused attendance at their meetings on account of his great age, and his presence being also required at the school.

Regrettably I don't have any idea of when he was born but 43 years of teaching and managing the lives of boys must have taken its toll.

School Uniforms are first referred to in 1222 when the Archbishop of Canterbury mandated that boy students wear a robe-like outfit called the *cappa clausa*.

In the 16th century, charity school pupils were given second-hand clothes. In 1552 the Christ's Hospital charity issued an obligatory uniform for its scholars, designed to emphasise their low status with a russet (later blue) coloured cassock. Breeches were not worn until 1706 when they were provided for the sick and weakly, then later for all pupils. The pupils of the Free School (MGS) were wearing breeches by 1780 when this sketch was made.



We have a number of accounts of what life was like during the school's time in Corpus Christi buildings, but that will do for Part 2.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year. May the world's regions experience a Peaceful New Year as well.

Icarus

The Grammar School – My Moulding

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

Combined Cadet Force

Membership of the Cadet Force was compulsory, unless you were a conscientious objector. Scouts were also allowed out if they wished, but few did. We started in the Basic Section for one year, and then were offered a choice of Army or Air Force. I of course chose the Air Force – more glamour and the chance of learning to fly. I also liked the uniform and like most boys of my generation felt I was a Spitfire pilot in the making!

Our CCF days (Wednesday afternoons) were partly educational and partly experiences. Apart from boring drill, which was challenging when using old WW 1 Lee-Enfield 0.303 rifles which were very heavy, we did have access to the school's firing range. It was only 25 yards long, situated in a loft over the cycle sheds, but it was fun to fire 0.22 rifles with real bullets. I eventually got my Marksman's badge, made more difficult as due to my weak right eye I had to fire using my left eye to aim. This made reloading for rapid fire quite difficult.

Another activity, which had lured me into the RAF Section while watching out of classrooms, was helping to fly the school's glider across the field. It was launched by using two huge elastic ropes, attached to a hook on the glider's nose, which were stretched out by two teams of boys. When maximum tension had been reached, the pilot pulled a lever to release the bungy rope and the glider hurtled across the field. All was OK unless the bungy broke and snapped into the pullers. This did happen once, and several boys had nasty bruises on their legs. But I really wanted a go to fly it, as Tony, my sister June's boyfriend, was at the time flying real gliders at the Detling RAF base just a few miles from Maidstone on the top of the North Downs. Malcolm Burleigh, a sergeant in the CCF, destroyed the glider by flying it too well. It took off dramatically and finished up lodged in the window of the physics laboratory on the first floor. It was a great view, with Flight Lieutenant Thompson running along screaming 'push the stick down, not up' at the top of his voice. It was a delicate operation to extricate first Malcolm from the glider, then the glider from the school building. Sadly, it never flew again during my time.

A feature of our RAF cadetship was the annual camp when we spent a week at an RAF base. My first was at **Driffield**, an operational training aerodrome for Gloster Meteor jet night fighters in Yorkshire. This was very interesting for us, as at the time they were flying operationally from West Malling, the nearest RAF base to Maidstone, about ten miles from home. The Meteor twin jet aircraft first flew at the end of the war. The Mark 10 had been modified to carry a crew of two, and with an extended nose to contain radar to enable it to carry out its night fighter role. It was quite exciting to have them flying around all the time.



Another feature of interest was a rocket-propelled ram to train pilots on ejector seats. Our Chief Officer, Flight Lieutenant G I F Thomson (nicknamed, inevitably 'Gift'), the religious instruction master (ironic!) was fired up the ramp, together with some of the senior NCO's. I didn't get a gig though. A memorable experience was a trip to Bridlington to ride on an air/sea rescue launch into the North Sea. A big powerful beast it was, and we were out for well over an hour.



There were a number of interesting activities. On the firing range I got to shoot with a 0.303 rifle of the type used in both World Wars. The recoil nearly broke my shoulder! Far more fun was firing a Bren light machine gun. It had automatic loading, using the exhaust gas from the firing action to load the next bullet. This eliminated the recoil, so you didn't have to flinch and just concentrate on the target.



There were also some Canberra bombers based at Bridlington, and a couple of the senior NCOs were lucky enough to score flights in them.

Camp the second year was much less exciting. It was at **Hawarden** near Chester, close to the Welsh border. We had a pleasant day trip to Chester, and walked round the city walls. We had drill competitions with several other contingents, and I had a short flight in a Chipmunk training aircraft. I also got my first ever flight, in an Avro Anson, a workhorse used in marine patrol, night fighting and transport. It was quite a buzz!

Avro Anson



Our third camp was at a Transport Command aerodrome at **Andover** in Wiltshire. It was pretty boring, except for a pleasant trip to Winchester and Salisbury with a side visit to Old Sarum, with prehistoric earthworks. I scored a flight in a Chipmunk trainer across

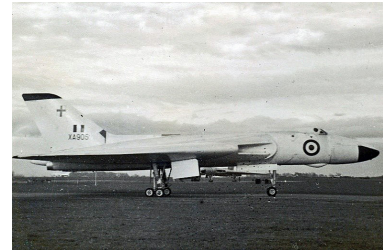
Salisbury Plain to Wendover, the RAF base which was home to the Queen's Flight. It was a very bumpy journey and I was feeling rather queasy when the runway hove into sight. Sadly for me we were ordered to do another circuit of the airfield as one of the Queen's planes was due to take off. I couldn't hold it in and was sick in the cockpit. My pilot was not amused. As a result, when we landed I spent the whole time on the ground cleaning up!



The next year, to my surprise, I was appointed to the position of senior NCO, Warrant Officer, together with crowns on my sleeve and a thick baton to wield on parade. To this day it is a mystery how it happened. I do not have a visible military bearing, my marching was rolling rather than sharp, but I enjoyed the prestige. Who wouldn't?

That year was the most exciting camp. We went to **Waddington**, an operational Bomber Command base with Avro Vulcan bombers flying 7-hour patrols with loaded atom bombs on board: the Cold War at its scariest! We were the first cadet contingent to be

hosted at the base, and the security was surprisingly lax. We all had conducted tours of Vulcans in the hangars, and two of my sergeants were left in the cockpit alone for nearly an hour, having a fine time reading the operational instructions!



The worst thing about the camp was that our huts were at the end of the runway. The operational flights would take off about 10.30 pm as we were trying to get to sleep, and return at about 5.30 am before we wanted to wake up. They were VERY noisy aircraft, but quite beautiful to watch in the air.



Music

There were a number of musical influences on me when I was growing up. First, my parents were interested; Dad sang in the Church choir (Knightrider Street Baptist Church), and later was a founding member of a Welsh Male Voice Choir which grew out of the Maidstone Welsh Society, a strong social expat group. I became a treble in the church choir, and later sang some solos in church, as also did my sister. When I went to the Grammar School I joined both the school Choir and the Choral Society. With the latter I sang in many classical works including Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, Borodin's *Prince Igor*, and, which I shall return to later, Bach's *St Matthew Passion*.

When I was 8, I had a year of trying to learn the piano, but sadly my teacher died of a heart attack, and my efforts died with her. At Grammar School I foolishly tried to learn the violin. A poorly played violin makes a dreadful sound! The peak of my efforts with that instrument was to play second violin in the school's second orchestra in a concert featuring the overture

to the opera *Carmen*. Despite that sad experience, or perhaps because of it, it is still one of my favourite operas.

An amusing experience was when I joined the 'Sixth Form Gramophone Society' more colloquially named the 'headmaster's bum club', as we met weekly in the winter terms in the Headmaster's living room (his house was in the school grounds). He would play classical works on his gramophone while we sat around feigning great interest. In those days the long-playing vinyl record had only just arrived so most of the music was played on older records with only about six minutes' playing per side. If playing a symphony, he would put on a stack of eight or even ten records, so the music was punctuated by regular clunks as the auto changer operated. How technology has changed, with the iPod able to hold many months of music! One memorable day we listened in awe as he told us of his visit to Buckingham Palace to receive the CBE from Her Majesty. The gong was passed around for us to admire.

Academic

As school is mainly to learn, I shouldn't forget the academic side. As I mentioned before, MGS had a proud academic record, and I was happy to compete in that area as usual. I won several form prizes through the years and got passes in the seven GCE O level exams I sat in the 5th form. I just scraped through in Latin and Maths, but did better at the subjects I enjoyed; funny about that! Latin, English, maths and a foreign language, in my case French, were the necessary minimum to gain Oxford or Cambridge university entrance, so they were a must.

In the 6th Form I elected to take Geography and History, my two favourites, at A Level. My history fell a bit by the wayside, and my A Level result was only average, outdone luckily by the Scholarship level paper result I sat at the same time. I think I was a better writer of exam papers than remembering factual details. Luckily my Geography results were very pleasing.



I went on to take college entrance exams for Oxford and Cambridge, of which more later, and my achievement in getting a place at Oxford gained me a final school prize, for which I had to return from Oxford to receive it from Lord Wolfenden, a famous judge who had recently gained notoriety by leading a government study into legalising homosexuality, which he supported: quite an historical event!

Receiving my prize from Lord Wolfenden

I can't leave my school story without confessing to taking part in a final end-of-term escapade. Several of the boys in the year below me who were also leaving hatched a plot to put a tailor's dummy, dressed in school uniform, onto the bell tower above the Hall. While I was only in a support role, playing lookout and carrying duties, my admiration goes out to the intrepid climbers who got it up and tied it in place. It lasted several days while the authorities worked out how to get it down again!

Farewell *Alma mater*! On to the new world of university.

The Stage

I've always enjoyed performing and, given the chance to act at school, took it. In my first year the Junior Dramatic Society did a mediaeval play, *Everyman*. The producer was 'Bob' Rylands



who was also my form master at the time. I played 'Knowledge' much to the amusement of my friends. The play was very statuesque, and quite boring!



My second stage role was the leading lady, Adriana, in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. I wore a huge, hooped skirt and had a wig of dark hair with ringlets cascading over my left shoulder. Though I say it myself, I looked quite fetching. This was borne out by my being pursued around the change rooms by one of the senior actors; a challenging experience for a fourteen-year-old! It was a fun production, but I battled to learn my lines well; always a problem with me and poetry.

Based on my success in that role as a female impersonator I was cast the next year as Lady Capulet, mother of Juliet, in *Romeo and Juliet*. This is when my thespian career came to a swift halt as, halfway through rehearsals, my voice broke! The new voice turned out to be unreliable and squeaky.

Next year, I played the third witch in *Macbeth*, complete with scary makeup including a lump of putty to make my nose even bigger. Finally, my stage career ended as a soldier in *Hamlet*, with only a few lines to grunt, and a role in removing dead actors from the stage: an ignominious end.

Farewell *Alma Mater*! On to the new world of university.

My school days at MGS, 1938 to 1943

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

The Masters

The masters whom I remember were all hard-working. As well as teaching their particular subjects, all took other activities – swimming, rugby, cricket, and the two training corps and also after-school activities, such as chess, stamp collecting, Scouts, orchestra, choir and dramatics. Those who taught me I remember well.

One I remember best was K A Sawdy ('Snoop' – with his soft soled shoes you could not hear him coming). He was my form master for a year and as well as teaching German took swimming, rugby and cricket. He was also a Scouter. He was a very good- humoured master. In one lesson he referred to a German drinking song which we begged him to sing. He declined saying he had no beer. So at the next lesson we took a bottle of beer and a glass and it was my job to open the bottle under cover of the desk and having poured it to present it to Mr S. He asked 'what is this?' We explained that now he could sing the song. 'Not now' he said 'after school' and put the beer on his desk. After a few minutes further teaching he said 'I had better drink this in case the headmaster walks in' and he promptly downed it. After school he duly sang the song at the piano. On another occasion a few of us decided to write our homework in German Script. Of course he could read it and then made us write further homework in script which naturally took us ages.

- C S (Joey) Cocker taught French, trained cross-country runners and also supervised shooting on the range for the Training Corps, and was House Master of West Borough. He was my form master for two years.
- B W (Wally) Hammond taught handicraft and physical training and also took rugby, swimming and Scouts. He was also an officer in the Air Training Corps. Another officer was V S (Willy) Fawcett who taught art, but without much success with me although I did somehow manage to get something hung in the exhibition.
- When EC Julier gave up his baton in favour of his 'cello, J A Tebbs took over management of the orchestra and in the summer term 1941 he resurrected the school choir, which I rejoined. I owe him a debt of gratitude for telling me I was a

tenor not a bass, which I was singing in my church choir. I enjoyed the tenor line more and sang it in a variety of choirs over the years. Alas I had to revert to bass when I found I could no longer reach the top notes. A particular musical event was the division of the whole school into voice parts and after practising, performing *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* accompanied by the school orchestra. A form mate of mine, J Clinch, played the oboe solos brilliantly I thought. Oddly, although I seem to remember this event well I can find no reference to it. The piece was, however, performed as part of a concert on 22 March 1943.

- T P (Tom) Gutteridge is also clear in my mind. He taught physics and was also an officer in the Air Training Corps, which I joined on its formation in February 1941, transferring from the Training Corps. I was keen and quite good at navigation and the two of us would retire to the physics lab and set problems to solve. This may have been after I left school and was a member of O Flight. My *Valete* records that I attended camp at a then unmentionable aerodrome in 1942 and 1943 but I fear I have no memory of those except that one camp coincided with my birthday, which did not please my mother who thought I should not go.
- G R Ashton taught geography, but his 'ers' when speaking were so frequent that our efforts to record the number, while also paying attention to the lesson, failed. I cannot remember our excuse when he caught us at it.
- G K Keast taught physics and it was well not to be caught talking in class as his habit was to come behind the offenders and rattle his ruler between their ears.
- A Stewart, an OM, joined the school to take physical training and games and was very successful in passing on his enthusiasm and skills.
- H B Mathews taught chemistry, was also house master for Corpus Christi and took rugby and cricket.
- J F L (Jimmy) Heard, Head of the Junior School, taught maths, and knowing that I was a bit slow at mental arithmetic' delighted in asking me to do some with a smile on his face, anticipating that I would probably fail. This habit he continued when on leaving school I joined O Flight of the ATC. He had been Commanding Officer since its formation.
- In the Autumn term 1940, R Kemp (Latin, rugby and cricket) left for war service and among other new arrivals came the first lady teacher, Miss K de Glanville, and many others followed. Alas I have no memory of these ladies, never having been taught by them.
- And of course the second master G B (Beta) Phillips ,who acted as Head for some months when Mr Woolgar was unwell.

We all knew the Sergeant who lived on the premises and was janitor, caretaker and messenger and anything else that was needed. He interrupted many lessons to deliver something to the master.

Later War Years

After the problems and difficulties caused by the early war years, my last two years were relatively uneventful. I played a lot of rugger, some cricket, swam a lot, including doing lifesaving, and in 1943 took part in the resumed athletics competition and the cross-country race in which I was placed 14th: the final house place which counted in the competition, in which Corpus Christi came second by a margin of only 6 points. Both rugger and cricket were often played at the adjoining Mote ground and some of us could claim to have played cricket on the County wicket.

In 1942 following a shortage of copy and in the interests of economy, *The Maidstonian* was produced only twice instead of the usual three times. The following year a war-time shortage of paper led to this practice being continued during the rest of my time at school.

Water polo was introduced in 1943, taken by Messrs Keast and R H Peters. I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr Peters who got rid of cramp in my leg so quickly and successfully that I was

able to continue in the match. That knowledge has stood me in good stead on many occasions since.

My swan song contribution towards Corpus Christi becoming cock house for the fifth time in succession, was in the swimming sports in 1943. I was knocked out in the heats of the race I was expected to win, having come second the year before to a boy since left, but I also took part in the one length back stroke just to make up the numbers. To my surprise I not only managed to win this race but also to equal the record. I was told on my wedding day in 1952 that the record had just been equalled again.

My association with the school continued after leaving, with my membership of O Flight of the ATC until I was called up for service in the Navy in November 1945.

Finally

A final word - Yes - I did enjoy my schooldays at Maidstone Grammar School and I am very grateful for my education there, both academically and in sports and other activities, which went a very long way in enabling me to have a successful career while continuing with sports

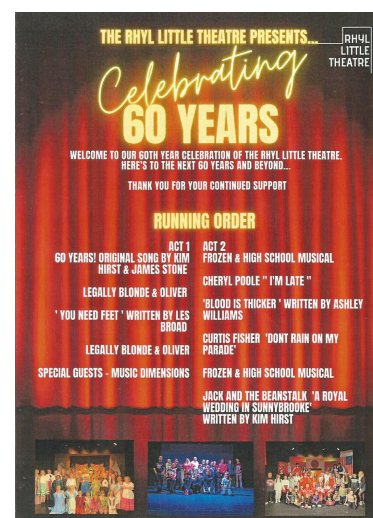
News of Old Maidstonians

Les Broad (1962 to 1969), who now lives in Wales, has written about the Rhyl Little Theatre 60th Anniversary Show.

'For those who may not know, *You Need Feet* was a song recorded by that fine *Carry On* actor, Bernard Bresslaw in the late 1950s; it was a spoof of Max Bygraves' *You Need Hands*, but nowhere near as well-known. I stumbled across the record many years ago (oh, OK, I admit I bought it by mistake), and it occasionally pops up in my mind, usually for no clear reason. It was always intended to be a comic song, not to be taken seriously, despite being (as far as I know) the only pop song ever to refer to Scunthorpe. After joining the Little Theatre's 'new writing' team early this year, events moved apace: I discovered that it's the oldest dedicated children's theatre in the UK, its car park was the site of the infamous egg-throwing incident with John Prescott as the 'victim' (although the chap he punched in retaliation might not agree!), and I was offered, and accepted, a directorship of the charitable company which runs the theatre. These three facts are not, of course, related.

2023 is the theatre's 60th anniversary year, and a special show was planned for 15 September, to showcase the talents of the theatre's youth group and feature some output from the 'new writing' group. Rehearsals passed as they so often do, with many a mind thinking 'we've got 48 hours to go, how's that mess going to turn into a presentable show?' 'It'll be alright on the night' hasn't become a well-known saying for no reason, but I still have no idea how it happened!

I'd been thinking about that song for weeks before the show, so much so that it had acquired the status of an ear-worm. So I'd thought some more and wondered if there was comic potential in inventing a fictional college - 'The Rhyl And District College Of Popular Music Appreciation' - and have four eccentric professors from that college - Professors White, Black, Green and Brown - present an intellectual analysis of the song, line by line. Once it was written it seemed to work. White was Chairman, and a great enthusiast of *Carry On* films in general, and Bernard Bresslaw in particular, and a huge admirer of the song. Brown was eccentrically dressed, as camp as a row of tents (the actor's idea, not



mine). Green was a dodderly old fool, who rambled away, more or less to himself, about the historical connections and the socio-economic references. Brown was an eccentric lady who dealt with the dancing aspects, and managed to work in some belly-dancing, at which she really wasn't competent. Thrown into the mix were a tea lady, a broom-wielding stage hand and a useless electrician who turned up to fix Green's microphone when it spun away from him, and chaos was guaranteed. The whole thing ended with an audience-participation singalong, which I expected to be a complete failure: I was wholly wrong there. The audience started laughing as the 'Professors' came on, and continued to chuckle, or roar with laughter, throughout, until that singalong, which must have raised the roof - the next time it rained the thing leaked!

Martin Lee (Staff: 1990 to 2004) has made various videos, some of which have already been well-received. If you would like to access any of Martin's videos, please contact him directly at martinlee96@gmail.com. He says that he now has two new musical videos which are available.

Paul Ryan was involved in the development and implementation of 'Hawk-eye', the sports ball-tracking technology which can assess LBW decisions. Apparently, it was first used competitively in a cricket match in Smarden, where Paul lived at the time, in a match between Little Chart and Smarden. The full story can be found here: [When Hawk-Eye took its first wicket in a Kent village match and helped revolutionise cricket forever \(kentononline.co.uk\)](http://kentononline.co.uk)

Kenneth Frank Smith, a regular correspondent, and a retired US Air Force Colonel, has sent some more of his memoirs.

'Maidstone Grammar School (MGS) was an imposing walled-in fortress-like edifice at the end of Barton road, that had an archway with a lived-in Gate House (for the custodian, a retired Sergeant Major), through which one passed into the school's "inner sanctum", as well as becoming instantly immersed in a long historic tradition.

'I received a scholarship and entered at the 3 grade, in the lower "c" academic stream (i.e. 3C, 4C, Upper 4C, then "Remove B"). I don't know why or how "Remove" became established as a level, but it was where the classes were smaller (presumably the remainder from other boys being "removed" – i.e. leaving School either for academic attrition or expelled for misconduct), and the lower streams were merged. Initially I was in Remove B. Although I was doing acceptable work and passing my exams at the C level, I felt that I had missed too much during a year's evacuation to Wales. I therefore insisted on staying down one year to repeat the Remove Level – despite my Mum's embarrassment and her (as well as my teachers') pressure to move on up to the next level – the 5th Form. So I stayed down a year, but laterally "upgraded" to "Remove A." Staying down turned out to be good for me because now instead of being the youngest one in the class, I was the eldest, and also had the advantage of "doing over" some work that I hadn't quite grasped earlier.

'The faculty at MGS all had characteristic nicknames and memorable personalities:

- "Wacker" or "Wac" W A Claydon – the Headmaster, aka "Isiah" because his eyes were higher than everyone else's!
- "Puggy" Richmond – History
- "Uncle Tom" Gutteridge – Physics (The physics lab was known as "Uncle Tom's Cabin")
- "Smart Alec" Stewart – Athletics
- "Agatha" Christie – French
- "Killer" Kemp – Rugby
- "Nogger" Knight – Work Shop) and memorable personalities.

'However, despite their status, almost all teachers were approachable and seemed sincerely interested in our wellbeing, in addition to trying to impart knowledge.

'We had to join the military cadet corps. Since there were no naval cadets at the school, I had the choice of army or air force, and chose the ATC - Air Training Corps. However, it was a surprise to learn most of the ATC instructors were my school masters who donned uniforms for ATC training day. (I guess that they were in the RAF Reserves, or were too old for - or exempted from - active service, and had previously been in the Royal Flying Corps during World War I.) Also, there was Sergeant or 'Sarge' - the school's head custodian – a stern character whom we all liked and respected. He was actually a retired Army Sergeant Major and relived his glory on cadet days. There was an immediate courtyard inside the school gateway, which the cadet corps used for "square bashing" drill and as a parade ground. Actually, the cadet corps was a good deal as when I was called up at 18 for my two years' National Service, as a former ATC cadet I was assigned to the RAF, and I was given additional leadership responsibilities over my peers during basic training.

'I was persuaded to transfer from the scout troop in Loose Village to the Grammar School troop, but that didn't last long. Rather than fun and games, it just became another extension of school. The Scout Masters and Assistants for various badges and activities were school masters, and prefects were troop & patrol leaders who enforced regimentation and discipline, and they all carried over their status - and prejudices about us - from the classroom. After a short period, I realised that it wasn't mandatory to belong to the school troop, and quit.

'For many offences at grammar school - such as talking out of turn in class, failure to do homework, being late, running in the halls, stepping on the quad grass, or not wearing your cap properly, etc., etc., the punishments were **lines** (e.g. "I shall not run in the hall" a hundred or more times) or **stanzas of poetry to memorise**.

'These were initially handed out by praefects and masters. The first offence often incurred double jeopardy because the praefects would also assign penalties for disgracing the House. More severe offences were punished by masters with one or (a maximum of) two hours for each offence in **Saturday morning detention**; or by being immediately sent to the headmaster's office for **caning**! Since any master could assign detention hours, these could quickly build up. Thus, on Friday afternoon, a memorable event before going home was to gather around the main school notice-board to see whether we were on the detention list; and if so, the total hours for each offender. You could work off up to three hours per Saturday (9 am to 12 noon), and up to two hours could be carried over to the following week. However, if you accumulated more than five hours during the week, a visit to "WAC" for caning was substituted. Sometimes you could 'double up' by using detention time to write the lines or memorise the poems assigned by someone else for other infractions, or catch up on your school homework.

'In addition to detention, a variety of other activities were held at school Saturday mornings – mostly voluntary – such as athletic practice, individual sports, music, drama, scouts and other extra-curricula clubs. These competed for my attention with the Granada's Saturday morning movies. Consequently, whenever I incurred detention and had to inform my parents that I was unavailable for home chores, shopping or running errands, I told them I had **school activities**, and to the best of my knowledge, they never suspected anything amiss. Indeed, in retrospect, I'm not even sure they were aware there was such a thing as detention; but even if they were, I don't think my Mom would have "joined the dots!"

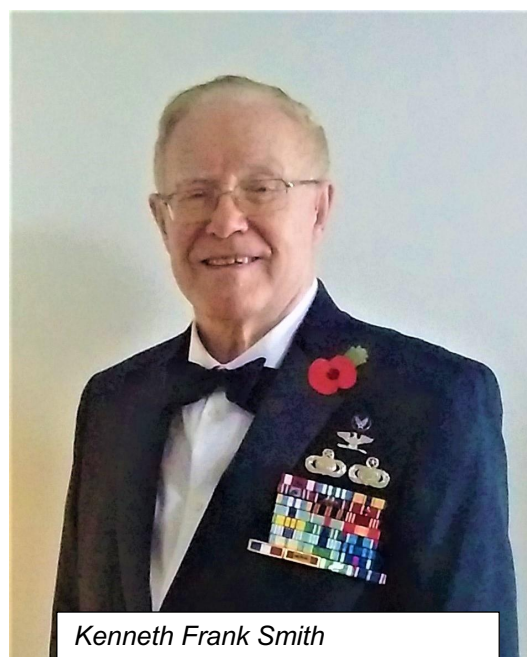
'Sarge also used detention as an additional source of cheap labour. He would stop by to see if there were any Saturday morning detainees to help him with a variety of projects, from cleaning the 'bogs' (i.e. the toilets) to cutting the grass, or rolling the cricket pitch. This was not 'forced labour' and no coercion was involved. Sarge was a likeable "benevolent dictator" to us kids, and volunteering to work with/ for him was preferable to sitting quietly (no sleeping allowed) in a classroom for the duration of your sentence, under the eagle eye of a master, praefect or other assigned proctor who had authority to impose additional penalties for violations.

'All-in-all, staying down in the 'Removes' made for a comfortable final school year for me at Maidstone. Then in the summer of 1948, my parents moved to Ruislip, and I transferred from MGS Remove A to '5 D' at Harrow County Grammar School.

To celebrate its more modern status, its motto was a blatantly egalitarian *Virtus Non Stemma* ("Worth Not Birth"). Despite the school's motto, the Headmaster, Dr. A R Simpson - "ARS" by acronym, and an "arse by nature" - was an elitist and a perfectionist. He openly disdained and regularly disparaged us worthless inferior wards at morning assembly and other occasions. Moreover, unlike Maidstone's masters whom I always thought sought to impart knowledge, although laced with the lash as a stimulus, many of the HCS faculty shared Simpson's haughty attitude and proclivities for imparting physical punishment on their pupils 'ends' (and other assorted body parts) as the preferred means for our attaining academic enlightenment. With a few notable exceptions Harrow's masters were intimidating, unapproachable and dismissive, and dedicated to discipline. Some masters had their own slippers (unleaded), and one master even had a 'short cat' (a thick leather covered rope like a billy-club), that they used to whack offenders during class, while others would throw whatever came to hand (chalk, board erasers, rulers, books), pull you by the ear, or the hair, or swipe you with their bare hands!

'Today, this would all be considered child abuse, but to us in those days it was all accepted as a "normal" part of the grammar school experience. Furthermore, if your parents ever heard you had been caned, clouted or slippered, they would more than likely say that you 'deserved it,' and sometimes even add a few whacks themselves for embarrassing them. So we tried to hide any punishments we experienced, and only bragged to our peers about how many whacks and bruises we'd received!

'In retrospect, MGS was an idyllic setting where camaraderie and school spirit abounded, evoking mostly good memories, similar to the images and atmosphere of the movies *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and *Goodbye, Mr Chips* - except that Maidstone Grammar School was a 'day' school, rather than a residential boarding school. After years of growing up in rural Kent, attending Maidstone Grammar School with kindly Uncle Tom Gutteridge as my House master, and emerging from that comfortable academic cocoon to the austere and unfriendly atmosphere at Harrow, I had difficulty in adjusting to Harrow's academic and social environment during my 'senior' year. For many years afterwards, I periodically had dreams - nightmares really - of being in school and having to take a test or exam on a topic for which I had not prepared. Nevertheless, I got outstanding results in all subjects during the final school-leaving exams! Indeed, I did so well that in addition to attaining my School Leaving Certificate and also matriculating in London University; becoming an 'Old Boy' - an 'Old Gaytonian' (as opposed to an Old Harrovian), as well as an honorary 'Old Maidstonian.' I have long since lost contact with Harrow, but still retain membership with OMS, and fond memories of MGS.'



Kenneth Frank Smith

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

Paul Passey (now resident in Axbridge Somerset) has sent some memories of **Andrew Parfitt**, whose obituary appeared in our Summer 2023 edition.

'Had it not been for Andrew, 60 years of my adult life could have been along a very different track. In July 1961, my A Level results were deemed more than adequate to take up teacher training, but only after I had reached the age of 18. Therefore, Form 6A3 was my resting place for one more year at MGS, under the care of the Deputy Headmaster, 'Bob' Rylands.

'It was Bob who directed me towards Culham College [Oxford Institute of Education] for my teacher training. (That's rather an exaggeration of Bob's level of involvement.) When I told him, as careers master, and before the A Level exams, that I wanted to teach, he had seemed quite shocked. He announced that he thought someone a year earlier had followed the same career path. "Ah yes, Parfitt, hmmm – I think I have a letter from him somewhere ... yes here it is. Hmm – he's at a place called Culham College - sounds perfectly fine ... why not try that?" He produced the letter, and I wrote to Culham. Andrew agreed to be my "College Brother" and keep an eye on a fellow Old Maidstonian.

'And that's how my future career was decided and began. As it happened, Culham College accepted my application - it was perfectly fine, and Andrew Parfitt was absolutely right.

'I remember fondly riding pillion behind Andrew on a BSA Bantam [I think] laden with his luggage and mine from Maidstone to Oxfordshire. In college he pointed me towards some life-long friends and steered me away from the Anglican chapel and towards the Congregationalists in Abingdon. When, after qualifying I returned to the Maidstone area, where I taught for 38 years, we met up occasionally at the teachers' centre and on courses. His career path changed: he "went into the Ministry". When he told me what he had done, I thought that he had joined a Government Department! Thank goodness he hadn't.'

'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!