I was pleased to hear from Chris Nicoll who was arranging a Reunion of the Class of 90 to celebrate their 40th birthdays. Thanks to Annie Fairley and Michelle Mannion and the School Archive for supplying documents for a quiz. These included rolls and magazines containing disputed swimming records and articles about the unbeaten rugby team of 1986/7.


The Hilton Garden Inn hosted a Reunion for Old Boys living in the area. The event, which was attended by the Headmaster, Mark Bishop, and Geoff Wilsher (59) from the TMWA, was very enjoyable and it was good to chat to John Oswald (36), Mike Bennett (58), Steve Percival (66), Ed Gilbert (71), Richard Gilbert (74), Mark Howard (74) and Mark Helyar (84). Apologies received from a dozen others will, hopefully, ensure that this event is repeated.

Please let me know if you would like to host a Regional Reunion.

It was a pleasure to welcome Grahame Brooks (46), Bob Cooper (51) and his wife Anne, John Starling (53) and Peter Matthews (55) to the School for another delicious Tea, followed by a viewing of Archive items and tour of the School.

The Trinity Archive will be relocating within the School this year to a larger area, making it possible to display more artefacts and documents, many of which have been donated by Old Boys. The date of the official opening will be advised but please let me know if you are interested in attending this event.

Please also let me know if you would like to visit and take a tour of the school.

A regional reunion is being planned for Cambridge. It is hoped to invite all Old Boys living in the area plus those who studied at Cambridge.

Successful Reunions have already been held for pre 1995 and 1996 to 2006 Leavers. We would now like to catch up with our 2007/8 Alumni. The Founder’s Day Supper would be a good opportunity to get together or I am happy to receive suggestions of other venues.

Alex Budge is arranging a Reunion for all 1988 Leavers and 5th Year 1986 Leavers which will take place on the weekend of July 27th/28th.

The plan is to meet at the school late afternoon for refreshments and a tour, followed by drinks and food at a pub or restaurant. There will then be Sunday Lunch with families at the Clubhouse. The group last met five years ago and it would be good to get everyone together for the 25th Anniversary. Former and current staff who are interested in seeing what happened to their former pupils are also invited.
Before I fell into teaching I had been a paid writer. From as far back as I could remember, I had thought of the job of a newspaper reporter as the most glamorous possible, its only rival being that of an artist, in Paris of course. In fact I had applied to Croydon Art School at the end of my time in the Fifth Form. At that time it was in a building on the corner of George Street and Park Lane and rather nearer North End than Montmartre, after a fairly cursory look at a few pictures, the principal had offered me a place, remarking to my father, who had accompanied me, to ‘make sure he has a padlock for his locker, things do sometimes get stolen.’ So appalled was I at the notion of attending an educational establishment where some of the inhabitants might be thieves that nothing would have persuaded me to accept the offer. Instead, after one term in the Lower Sixth, and still somewhat unsettled, I got an interview with the Croydon Advertiser as a trainee reporter.

Was it as glamorous as I expected? This is the Croydon Advertiser you are asking about, remember. But, yes, in a way it was. We trainees got virtually no training and were thrown in at the deep end but the older reporters and editors were very friendly. I remember in particular the Sports Editor, Gerry Williams, a very nice chap, a Welshman, who later used to regularly comment at Wimbledon for the BBC. Most of my work was fairly mundane but one regular assignment was reviewing local drama productions, some of which were surprisingly good. I regularly fell in love with the leading ladies. As the curtains parted on one production in Purley, I was amazed to find the set looked just like a Whitgift Middle one and, on referring to the programme, discovered that the producer was one Griffin who had come to teach English at the school shortly before I left. On another occasion I was sent to review a production at the Civic Hall and, on parking my bicycle outside, was asked by a passing policeman ‘Where are you going, Sonny?’ ‘I am a newspaper reporter,’ I replied with great dignity. He grinned and clearly had to restrain himself from ruffling my hair. Doesn’t seem to happen so much lately. Then there was Daz, the cinema critic, a rather grand, tall blonde lady. She used sometimes to pass tickets on to us lesser mortals. A couple of us went several times to the Davis, once the biggest cinema in the UK, seating no less than 3,725 and often full, which didn’t stop it being pulled down in May 1959. It lost some of its seats, temporarily, earlier on when Rock Around the Clock was shown and the rock and roll revolution, led by the middle aged Bill Haley and his Comets, began.

My most difficult assignment was an interview with a National Serviceman at New Addington, home from leave in Korea, the war in which British soldiers were serving as part of the United Nations force against the North Koreans and the Chinese. The latter were still considered as evil an enemy as the Russians. I wonder what my sixteen year old self would have thought if he knew he would one day have two quarter Chinese grandchildren? The young soldier had been commended in dispatches for rescuing a comrade under ‘friendly fire’ – what a curious phrase - from the Americans. His mother sat me down on the sofa, handed me a cup of tea and I asked if he would describe what had happened. He replied, politely, that he wouldn’t. ‘What possible right,’ I thought, ‘do I, a callow sixteen year old who had to leave cub camp after the first day on account of home sickness have to insist on an answer?’ So I took my leave and returned to the office. The Chief Reporter said nothing but I realised I had failed a test.
Most of the reporters, who were in their thirties, had ambitions centred on Fleet Street. One way of improving their chances of this was lineage. This was getting a local story into the national press. Not only were they paid extra, so much for so many lines published, but the more often they achieved this, the better known they became in the right circles. One who had reported on an appalling tragedy had, at the time, been employed on a Medway area paper. One dark winter night in 1951 a bus had run into a troop of cadets in Chatham, killing twenty four and injuring eighteen. As a result, Parliament had passed legislation that any military group marching at night had to be properly lit, back and front. A reporter’s job is to report what he sees, good, bad or ugly and it is his living.

The entrance to the Advertiser offices was in the High Street just down from Grants. I never quite got over being able to proceed beyond the front office and into the mysteries beyond. I’ve always been fascinated by what goes on behind doors through which the public are not admitted; probably why I became a teacher. One of my regular haunts was the top floor, a dusty area with bare floorboards where the files were held. It was my job to search through these and find something from twenty five and fifty years earlier which would tickle the fancy of the readers. Beyond the offices was a really mysterious area, in that we needed permission, not always granted, to enter it. This was the printing works. Few unions were more powerful than the print ones and, on the rare occasions when we trainees were allowed within, we always had to be accompanied by a member of the National Union of Journalists. What made the works even more of an almost independent republic was that its outside entrance was off Surrey Street, two levels below that of the front office entrance and something of the character of what is still the most characterful area in Croydon permeated it. It was also very noisy with the machines clattering away so that any verbal communication required the sort of volume which came natural to Surrey Street stallholders.

Any embarrassing moments, as Wilfred Pickles would ask? The worst I think was when the Chief Reporter, doing a piece on the birthday of the Bishop of Croydon, asked me to ring his secretary and find out his age. Fine, except that it was the Bishop who answered the phone.

In his article, Michael describes how he intended to make a small sketch of Croydon from the roof of the Greyhound. As this seemed incomplete, over the next few months he made more sketches until he had completed a full circuit of the north, south, east and west. It was 11ft 6ins wide and had to be cut in half for blockmaking. As the Greyhound no longer exists, it is a snapshot of Croydon’s past.

Up until then I had never spoken to one, let alone asked his age. I was aghast, coughed and spluttered, turned bright red, not that the Bishop would have known this, and finally blurted out, ‘how old are you?’ Fortunately this was the famous and much loved Bishop Bardsley who moved on to become Bishop of Coventry when the new Basil Spence cathedral there was dedicated. He just laughed and told me.

From reporting I transferred to the photography department. This was not, as it turned out, a good move. The chief photographer was an ex wartime RAF type, complete with obligatory handlebar moustache. Pleasant enough but not what one would call over dedicated to the job and of little help to a struggling trainee. Much the most exciting assignment was to sit behind the Palace goal at Selhurst Park, the best seat in the house. We were using old fashioned plate cameras and at the crunch moment, as the opposition bore down on the goal, I clicked the shutter, only to find I had forgotten to remove the slide. Not good. In those days all newspaper photographs were reproduced in black and white as a series of dots. The finished quality as it appeared in the paper was often truly dreadful, the subject barely recognisable. Shortly after this the Croydon Advertiser took over the Croydon Times and the chief photographer of the latter revealed a far more creative approach to his work. It also meant there were twice as many photographers on the payroll as were needed. Thus my employment came to an end – for the time being. The Managing Director, Mr Stiby, shook hands as he showed me the door ‘come back and see us after National Service’ which I did some years later when studying at Croydon Art School. From time to time I was asked to do a drawing of something of local interest, the interior of the Fairfield Halls when they first opened and a panoramic view of the town from the roof of the old Greyhound public house where I had an evening washing up job.

This was just one of many career opportunities I’ve indulged in, not all of them connected with art or writing, although I have managed to have something in excess of fifty books published and exhibited a good few paintings and drawings.
Thank you to all Trinity Alumni who have so generously donated items to the Archive and provided careers support to our current students. Others have offered financial support.

These offers are very welcome and of great value. If you would like a copy of the brochure ‘Moving forward Together’ which explains ways in which you may like to help, please let me know.

It is a great pleasure to meet Old Boys at the events but, if you would like to visit the school, I am always delighted to take tours.

Please contact me on:

alumni@trinity.croydon.sch.uk
or 0208 662 5121
We had reached the stage in our narrative when Miss M.F. Adams, Headmistress of Croydon High School for Girls, had banned her pupils from taking female roles in Trinity School plays, having taken umbrage at some of the dialogue in 'You Can't Take It With You', mounted in 1953.

The 1954 School Play was 'Libel' by Edward Wooll. This 1935 drama was also filmed, but not until 1959 (starring Dirk Bogarde), in a version updated from the First to the Second World War. There had been a radio adaptation in 1941 with Ronald Coleman. The story is highly melodramatic: is the man believed by all to be a respectable baronet actually an impostor, who has stolen his identity in a wartime prison camp? At a certain point, even the baronet’s wife (who now had to be played by a boy, Christopher Great), becomes less certain than she had been before. (The programme says: 'This play is founded on a combination of facts, though the characters are entirely fictitious'). The play is set entirely in a courtroom, which made for a very solid stage set and a very static play. Making a brief appearance as a witness with a French accent, I had to sit through all the rest behind a wooden panel pretending to be an interested spectator.

We were a new set of actors, most of the previous coterie having finally left school. At one end of the scale, John Kear displayed a convincing level of suppressed emotion in the main role of Sir Mark Lodden. At the other end, the programme records that seven boys were on stage as Jurors, presumably with no lines to speak at all - impossibly expensive for professional theatre and not something amateurs would want to do either. I also remember the enormous pains which were taken on the clothes and the make-up for the boys who had to play women’s roles. The wife and daughter of Mr Brierley, the woodwork master, had always been entrusted with this aspect of productions - from now on they had to excel themselves.

Our generation must have done something right in 'Libel', because, in 1955, producers Alan Clark and Jack Griffin decided to risk us in Shakespeare’s ‘Henry IV, Part 1’ (noting perhaps that there is not much of a female presence in this very masculine history play.) The risk nearly didn’t pay off. A few days before the first night, they were in something like despair. The whole cast were given two days off lessons for a series of panic rehearsals to try and bring us up to scratch. Whether it worked in the end, we were no doubt the last people to judge. Our doting parents were hardly going to tell us afterwards that we were rubbish but I think that John Kear was triumphantly successful as Falstaff. The Brierley cosmetic team concentrated mainly on him this year and their combination of padding, costume, wig and whiskers ranked as a work of art in its own right. Scene-building was less of a priority, granted Shakespeare’s fluid changes of venue from palaces to battlefields but the costumes must have been expensive. For the second-half battle scenes, we were all dressed in false chain mail made of grey-painted string - presumably hired - and waving quite dangerous swords. (I was the Earl of Worcester, losing the battle and being executed at the end). There were a lot of us in these costumes and in the cast. In contrast again to what you would now see, even at the RSC, different boys were cast as non-speaking Lords, servants, travellers and three different sets of soldiers. These extras numbered as many as twenty in addition to an already large speaking cast of twenty one. It was probably the difficulty of organising so many into a viable stage spectacle which led us to near disaster. Whatever the result, the camaraderie of amateur dramatics lingers strongly in the mind. If there were space (and with memory jogged by the programme), I could provide a list of friends and contemporaries recalled most of all because we acted together.

My dramatic swan-song in 1956 was Gogol’s ‘The Government Inspector’. Annie Fairley has a programme for a school production of this play but it is from before I came to WMS and has a cast including John De’Ath (who was in ‘Sly Corner’ in 1950). It’s interesting that the school chose it again - it is another play, perhaps, which does not put too much stress on the female characters. I took what, on the face of it, is the leading role, the fake Government Inspector himself, played by Danny Kaye in the ‘Inspector General’ film, which is in fact something of a travesty. The real anti-hero of this ferocious satire is the town Mayor, who appears throughout the play, whereas the impostor is only on for the central scenes. The Mayor was played very memorably by Neville Hudson, who had been a deliberately theatrical Owen Glendower the year before. I have a good feeling about those rehearsals and performances, and about the jokey friendly team which made up the cast. Were you one of them?
In 1949, there was no actual theatre in the school at North End – no proscenium or draw curtains, just dull drapes at the back of a bare platform. We had to change scenery in a blackout: it’s trendy now but was considered laughable then. To stage a full-length play, considerable resourcefulness was required and, in the post-war atmosphere, money was tight. School concerts had sometimes included acted extracts from Shakespeare but, with exams out of the way, a group of us felt that the time had come to put on a full length play. In this, we were greatly encouraged by our producer Alan Clark, an English master. We chose ‘The Apple Cart’ by George Bernard Shaw, a play about a proposal to get rid of the monarchy which collapses when the King says that he will stand for President. For the first time, we got approval for the revolutionary idea of bringing in sisters and friends to play women’s parts. I was production manager and played Joe Proteus, the Prime Minister. The following are extracts from my diary notes at the time, rather in the style of Adrian Mole aged 18 ¼.

Up to 23rd and 24th July, ‘The Play’ was the chief thought of Derek Chapman and myself and one of the chief worries of Mr Clark. The main difficulty was the stage and after that came the programme. Silcock was quite prepared to get on with setting up the stage when we were informed a week beforehand by Mr Brierley that the curtains were going away to be cleaned. Fortunately, we discovered some very large flats in the groundsman’s store which had Buckingham Palace painted in outline all over them in black distemper on a white ground. This all had to be scraped off so that it would not show through the pale blue distemper which we had decided to use for the play. This job was given to the juniors but the painting, which took 21lbs of distemper, was done by a wider group.

Another difficulty was the balustrade for Act II, where the King entertains his mistress, Orinthia, on the terrace. This had to be painted on rather shiny black paper from which the paint had a marked tendency to dislodge itself at the slightest provocation and which was pinned onto two trestle tables, sometimes used for cricket teas. After being used twice for that purpose, great were the flakings thereof.

We had to borrow four floodlights and a spotlight from the Croydon Players but, as they did not let us have bulbs, they had to be borrowed from other sources. Some of us had been going to the Croydon Reference Library for lectures on Dramatic Art arranged by the Theatre Guild and Mr Clark had agreed that the Dramatic Society should try to subsidise the cost. The Head, however, didn’t agree so we put advertisements in the programme which required a lot of traipsing around by Clark and myself. We made arrangements for ‘The Green Dragon’, whose owner Harry Harkin was an Old Boy, to advertise but the Head disapproved. We then had success at Pickford and Newton and the Croydon Times and, after much frantic letter writing and arguments about the way it was printed (it was typed out and run off on a Roneo machine – an ancient form of duplicator), we came to an arrangement.

In spite of all this, Dress Rehearsal night finally arrived and everything went off pretty smoothly. We were delighted to find that, by all fair standards of comparison, the play turned out to be no mean success. On each night, in spite of some totally unforeseeable mishaps with regard to cue-forgetting, the play went with a swing and, although the audience only gave us the belly laughs, they seemed to enjoy it all right. On the last night bouquets, made up of flowers bought by myself and Chapman, were presented on stage to the girls and they were very pleased. I arranged for telegrams to be received on the first night from Mrs Robinson (Hon. Sec. of the Croydon Players) and the Old Boys. We had a little party after the show for the cast, technicians and Alan Edney’s father’s bakery produced an iced cake, with cider to drink. It rounded off the proceedings pretty well, and, the following day, the costumes had to be returned. Criticisms in the Times and Advertiser were both very good. Peter Hill who played King Magnus received an important part in the Croydon Histrionic Society’s forthcoming production of ‘The Taming of the Shrew’.

On the following Monday, the School Dance took place. I took the MC role and a number of us including Lloyd-Williams, Sexton, Blunt, Deal and girlfriends conga’d out of the door and down to the bottom of the Lower Field. Bottles of cider and cups were produced and we had a crazy little toasting party. This was the last school function for many of us and the next step was National Service.

The Desmond Day Theatre Prize (Production) is awarded annually at the Upper Sixth Graduation ceremony, when Mr Day attends to present the Prize.
Although the weather was typical of the summer that we had and therefore very wet, I enjoyed meeting all those Old Boys who were able to attend the ‘All the 2s’ Reunion. The Reception took place in the new Sixth Form Centre, (on the site of the old gym), and after Tea, biscuits and cakes, there were tours of the school including the Trinity Museum, which showcased an exciting and diverse collection of objects donated by students and their families, staff and Old Boys. The tours were taken by our Prefects, representing our Co-Ed Sixth Form. All the guests enjoyed the picnic, entertainment and fireworks which took place on the field and, hopefully, they managed to take cover from the intermittent showers.

Rod Clarke (62) writes that he was interested to see the latest additions to the school and thoroughly enjoyed the Concert. It was a shame that the weather prevented some Old Boys, who had a long distance to travel, from attending and I have already put in a request for sunshine and warmth for this year!

SCHOOL NEWS

Trinity now has a fleet of fifteen new Steinway pianos and a composition by fifteen year old Freddie Meyers was given its first public performance recently in the Concert Hall. Trinity is the first secondary school in London to become an ‘All Steinway School’. Prof. Wulfson, President of Strad Europe Ltd, brought in some magnificent violins made by Stradivari and Guarneri for a lecture recital. Our students also had the opportunity to play these magnificent instruments.

For the third year in a row, the Trinity team of Peter Chambers, Ejaaz Ahamadeen, George Webb and Edward Tidball has been named regional winner of the ifs Student Investor Challenge. Against a backdrop of a poor economic climate, these Upper Sixth students turned their start-off virtual £100,000 share portfolio into a stunning £147,949 since trading began in November. The students report that the Challenge has taught them about risk management and also about the need to have confidence in the stocks owned.

Trinity hosted a Philosophy of Religion Day and welcomed Dr Peter Vardy who is the author of several books on the topic and former Vice-Principal of Heythrop College, UCL. Sixth Formers from local schools took part in a day of presentations and debates on topics such as ‘Freud, Jung and the Psychology of Religion’. In the light of proposed changes to GCSE and the EBacc, the day highlighted that, for many bright students, the subject provides an exciting intellectual challenge.

Trinity presented ‘Guys and Dolls’ before Christmas. The Concert Hall was transformed into a twilight world of gangsters and their molls. It was a tremendous success and the first musical to draw on the talents of a co-educational sixth form.

Mike Brearley, former England cricket captain, spoke to our Sixth Formers about the importance of leadership at a time when they are considering university choices and career paths. Mike now pursues a career as a writer and psychoanalyst and shared his insights and experience of leadership.

One of our Lower Sixth pupils, Sophie Foreman, has been selected to represent England at U20 level at the Cross Country championships in Antrim this month. Sophie is part of the Tonbridge Athletic Club and has won numerous competitions at local and regional level including the Surrey Schools 3000 metre championships and the London Cross Country championships.
I’ve been wanting to write this story for a long time. If you’re having a bad day, I hope it raises your spirits. If you’re having a bad time generally, I hope it helps you to put things into perspective. If you’re having a good time, I hope it helps you be thankful for what you have.

**13th February 1997**

My girlfriend (now wife) and I packed our bags, left our jobs, jumped on a plane and moved in together, 11,500 miles away from everything we owned and knew. Living in Sydney, Australia had been a dream for ages and we’d spent over a year making the dream come alive. I had a medical through my sponsoring company — BT (British Telecom) - a couple of days before we left the country. A couple of days into the trip I received a fax (remember them?) asking me to call the doctor who’d carried out my medical. I called and he told me, ‘t’s probably a mistake, but your blood counts are a bit low, you should probably get them checked out…’ I put the phone down and did exactly what any perfectly healthy 27 year old who’d just landed in Sydney would do. Ignore him completely.

**Fast forward to July 1997**

I woke up one morning with a pain in my buttocok. No sniggering… I was struggling to walk which was pretty odd, not to mention uncomfortable. This then forced me to register with a local doctor and I asked her to take a look. After much probing from not one, but two doctors, I was about to be sent away with some anti-inflammatory pills. Before I left though, the wise doctor suggested she took some blood from me, just to be on the safe side. A couple of days later the pain had gone but I went back to the surgery anyway as she’d asked me to report back that all was well. I walked in smiling and she told me to sit down. It turns out all wasn’t well. In the space of thirty seconds, my life turned on a sixpence. It turns out the pain in the buttock was an infection. The reason it was unusual was because my blood should have been capable of fighting such things with ease. It seems my BT doctor should have made a little more of a fuss about the blood test I had back in February. Considering it was thirteen years ago, I remember the next few weeks vividly. I was with a specialist haematologist within about two hours. He and I sat stony faced across his desk and, after some initial introductions, I asked the very simple question anyone reading this would have asked, because it’s the only thing that matters at that time. ‘Am I going to die?’

‘I don’t know’, was the reply. ‘We need to do some tests to find out what’s wrong.’ Later that afternoon, I had dozens of vials of blood taken, a bone marrow scrape (which is the most unpleasant thing I’ve ever had happen to me) and various other scans over the space of two hours. ‘Why me?’ is all I remember asking time and time again. For the next two weeks I had lots more tests scheduled in. The doctors and nurses were incredible and the private health insurance I was given twenty four hours before I left the country was a godsend. For those two weeks I had no idea if I was going to have my life shortened to just 27 years or whether I would be OK, or something in between. I drove a lot for some reason. I remember heading out into the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney and sitting and looking at the view. I also remember taking great comfort from knowing that I had lived my life to the max.

I wouldn’t have changed anything. The biggest battle in my head was coming to terms with not being with Suzanne any more – that was hurting me in a big way and there was nothing I could do about it. I went back to the consultant for the diagnosis a couple of weeks later. They’d narrowed it down to three possible causes – one very bad, one bad and one not too bad. In order to complete the diagnosis, I had to have my spleen removed. It was three times the size it should have been as it had been filtering pretty rubbish blood for who knows how many months or years. Removing it would help with treating me, as well as helping to absolutely diagnose the problem.

A week or so later I went into hospital to say goodbye to my spleen. My days as a six-pack model were numbered, and trips to malarial countries were now out the window. However, it was a small price to pay. They had narrowed it down to one of the three possibilities _It was the not too bad one_. I had Hairycell Leukaemia. It affects mainly men over sixty and is one of the rarest Leukaemias. I was pronounced a freak of nature right there and then. I still remember how happy the nurses were — there was palpable relief from all the medical staff and so we were, because they knew how to deal with it and the prognosis was good. The next few months I went back to work, apart from on Monday mornings where I put my feet up, had the most wonderful view and sat with a drip in my arm for my weekly dose of chemotherapy. I got a bit tired but other than that, there were no side effects — not what you come to expect when you hear about chemotherapy. Suzanne and I tried to keep doing the things we wanted to do. I’ll never forget driving to Broken Hill and back over a long weekend (Australians will know that’s an utterly ridiculous thing to do) and keeping the injection pack in bar fridges around the outback.

As December approached, my blood counts had returned to something resembling normal again – it really was a minor miracle. By all accounts I shouldn’t still have been standing up in July – I should have caught an infection and been wiped out, as I had nothing to fight it. Yet here I was, fighting fit again and carrying on with my Pilots Licence and working around Asia-Pacific. I was a seriously lucky boy. After a load more tests towards the end of my treatment, I was told that they hadn’t managed to eliminate all
the Hairycells (technical term for bad guys). There were still a tiny proportion in my bone marrow and it was possible the disease would return. It did in fact. Around a year after we returned home.

October 1999
I was treated again – this time in the UK at St George’s Hospital in Tooting, where I was now under the care of a wonderful consultant, Dr Claire Dearden, who to this day ranks in one of my top ten favourite people of all time. She’s an academic consultant who when I met her for the first time told me I have ‘her favourite disease.’ Phrases like that you never forget. I had the same treatment but this time over a week instead of over months. It was an enforced holiday in an isolation ward with just me and some computer games and the beginnings of the Internet via a 56k modem. Apologies to the NHS if I ran up a phone bill. Once again, I went into remission, but there was doubt about the long term chances of the disease staying away. A month before my son Matthew was born in 2003, the letter I was dreading came through the door. I was offered a new combination of antibody and chemotherapy treatment and have been in remission since 2004.

It’s not a rehearsal
And I like to think most days that I live that ethos. When I remember back to these times, when I see sad stories on the news, when I watch the Great North Run and hear the stories behind the runners, when I see a Leukaemia Research collection box, it hurts me more than most – however it’s one of the few scars I have from the experiences.

Has the experience changed me?
Not really I don’t think. I’ve always tried to live a very full life and took great solace from that fact. I’m incredibly driven, I take on too much, I get frustrated when those around me don’t move as fast, I rarely sit and relax, I run with the ball too much when I should pass (metaphorically speaking) and I can’t watch the sad films on Comic Relief or Children in Need. So what to the future? I was forty in 2011. What will I take forward with me for the next few years, thirteen years after the spectre of Leukaemia reared its very ugly head? I believe that the biggest learning point of all from this whole experience – which will be inscribed on my tombstone – “It’s not a rehearsal”. I genuinely subscribe to this. Grab chances while you can. It maybe too late tomorrow.

Mark is the founder of Being Smarter Ltd. and has been working with sales and marketing people in business for the past fifteen years.

YELLOW HOUSE (A resume of the happy years at Whitgift Middle School, North End) part 1
by John Gamêt

My first day at school was the 18th September 1944. My friend, Trevor Reed, sadly no longer with us, and I arrived at the main entrance some ten minutes or so after assembly had started. Inside the main door, to the right, was the school secretary’s office, a grey haired lady with a severe visage, a Miss Loveridge, who called one of the senior boys to direct us to the balcony in Big School. Access was gained via a gloomy stone staircase that wound up past the staff common room and the Headmaster’s study, to the entrance to the balcony. Our seats were to the right, some two to three rows down from the doorway.

In front stretched the big hall, a building of some height, like a cathedral. Mr Clayton, the Headmaster, was on the stage with some masters behind him. He sat or stood, at a dais, an imposing, portly figure. During the next hymn, Trevor nudged me and said ‘It’s like being at a funeral, ain’t it?’ This caused some amusement and eased the tension. I saw what he meant – rows and rows of boys all in black blazers.

After Assembly, we were taken to Form 1, which was situated in the second of the two Y shaped two storey buildings to the south
of the main entrance. The room was on the ground floor from which you could see an asphalt yard, a row of outside toilets and a high brick wall that divided the school from a row of houses. The gable ends showed above the wall which also divided the school from Alders and round to the back of the shops in North End. For a couple of years, lunch was taken in Alders. We climbed up a stout, steep, wooden stepladder to the top of the wall, stepping down onto a wooden walkway leading across the roof of Aldler’s Arcade to a large room fronting George Street, where we had a hot meal for 1/- (5p). Later, this facility closed and was transferred to a large house fronting Wellesley Road. This was situated between the main playing field and the lower field, where I believe there was a reservoir surrounded by a high chestnut paling fence. This lodge was to the north of the school site and opposite a row of handsome bay fronted residences of Victorian design and which had at least four storeys, including an attic. Two of these residences housed Croydon High School for Girls. The girls would stand or lean out of the windows, waving and shouting at us, to which some of us responded. Such activity was not the expected behaviour of the incumbents of the two top public schools and was soon nipped in the bud by the Boards of both schools.

Other fond memories include the awesome figure of Dr Shutt, all six foot plus of him, like Patrick Stewart of Star Trek, striding down the corridor, his gown flapping behind him as he moved. No one dared to block his path. Then there was Mr Dabby, He had difficulty in keeping us quiet. After a couple of ‘shut up, you therers’ he resorted to ‘every time I open my mouth, some wretched fool speaks!’ I don’t think that he realised what he was saying! Then there was the elderly Mr Ernie Hailey, master of maths and the school milk supply. His small hide leather attaché case, which he carried everywhere, always clinked ominously. When teaching geometry, he would say, ‘now an engineer is given a piece of string with two knots in it, which he places on the wood or metal which has to be cut and, by holding the two knots, he pulled the two ends until they met and that gave him the pattern to which he had to cut’. Chips Brierly, the woodwork master had a catch phrase ‘now boys get ready to leave.’ Another memory is of Mr Gilbert, a new master in his first year, taking a magnificent catch at mid wicket in the masters v school match.

Mr Stanley Meredith, Geography master and captain of the WMS Cadet Corps looked resplendent in his uniform as he marched in front of the Founder’s Day Parade, followed by the drum and pipe band and the school in forms with masters in full regalia of mortar boards and gowns. Along North End we went down Crown Hill, spectators lining the route to the Parish Church, now Croydon Minster. The cadets were mostly dressed in World War 1 uniforms – tightly buttoned to the neck tunics, baggy pantaloons of scratch serge, putties from knee to boots and forage caps.

Dear old snuff, Mr Garrett, the master in charge of the younger boys was a father figure, like Robert Donat in ‘Goodbye Mr Chips’ and he was thought of just as well. Mr Waters, the maths master, was tall, willowy, with an almost bald head, trying to disguise it by plastering down about six strands of long hair, which slipped down every so often. He also had glasses which would slip down to the end of his nose and was another teacher who had difficulty keeping a class in order. He wrote on the board with his back turned while bedlam ensued. A hush then descended and you could hear a pin drop. Mr Waters was perched on the end of his desk in an eros type pose, the arrow pointed directly at us. We looked in awe with open mouths while he said ‘I may not be able to teach you maths but you will remember this for the rest of your lives – he was right!

Another master I remember was Tabby Taylor, a short wizened man approaching retirement. He looked and moved a bit like a cat. An art master, who’s sarcastic remark ‘what’s that, last year’s bird’s nest’ brought you back to earth after you thought that you had created a masterpiece. When studying perspective, he asked ‘what happened to the chair if you placed it at the end of the classroom?’ hoping to draw us out. I put my hand up and said ‘it goes smaller’. Everyone chortled and, at that moment, the door opened and Horace the Porter came in. Mr Taylor said ‘what do you think that this bright spark says when a chair is put at the end of the room – he says it goes smaller!’ Horace chortled too and I felt embarrassed. Mr Taylor said ‘what you mean Gamêt is that it looks smaller’. When he retired, he said in his farewell speech ‘remember if you’ve got health, you’ve got everything’ and he was right. Perhaps he was helped with Mr Hailey’s milk!
In the 1930s, Woodside (or Woodside Green as it was also known) was a green buffer between the south eastern extremity of London (Norwood) and the northeast point of Croydon (Addiscombe). There was a tree-shaded green surrounded by a cluster of houses. You can read a great deal about it and many other localities — Shirley, Addington, West Wickham and Hayes etc. in a book published in regional sections in the late 1800s entitled ‘Village London in Southeast’. There is a facsimile version in the School Archive. Among the interesting chapters, there are two devoted to the Whitgift Foundation. One refers to the school itself and the inauguration of the new building in North End somewhere around 1880 and another to the Whitgift Almshouses.

Woodside Junior School is situated at the junction of Blackhorse Lane and Morland Road. It took both boys and girls from seven to eleven, strictly segregated. The playground was divided by a seven foot brick wall. The Headmaster was Mr Lister, a rather avuncular gentleman. My class master (not form master) was Mr Baker, an elderly (it seemed to me) man who ruled his class, not with a rod of iron but a twelve inch round ebony ruler. It was very effective.

Teaching was all by rote – chanting tables and reciting poetry. I can still remember chunks of Henry Newbolt’s ‘Admirals All’. Every morning began with half an hour of mental arithmetic, which stood me in good stead in later years at Board meetings, when I could work out the answer to cash questions while my colleagues were punching numbers into their calculators.

In those days, access to further education was through the scholarship exam which, each year, allocated a fixed number of places to the Croydon Grammar Schools. There were thirty places at Whitgift Middle School, fifteen places at Whitgift Grammar School and thirty at Selhurst Grammar School. Pupils from every junior school in the Croydon catchment area sat a competitive paper of arithmetic and English. You had two opportunities — one at ten and a repeat at eleven. Because my birthdate was October, I was only nine and a half when I was entered and, to everyone’s astonishment, I came eighteenth with automatic entry to WMS.

My time at the school was not the happiest of my life for a number of reasons. Having won my place at the first attempt, I was always a year younger than most of my form mates. From being a precocious young star, always at the top of my class, I found myself struggling to compete with others of equal ability. Added to this, my entry to the school coincided with a family breakup, which was hard to cope with. My passage through the school was uneventful. In the end, I was academically successful and the disciplines of pre-war grammar school education enabled me to make a success of my career. I have been intrigued by the references by many Old Boys to Woodside School and others. How many of us were there? And what about the girls? Does Woodside Junior School have an Archive?
J Bruce Forsyth (50) writes:
David Clarke was born on the 18th October 1931 and died on the 22nd of June 2012 after a long and hard fought battle against mesothelioma. We had been friends since we met in primary school over seventy years before. It seemed to me that it might be of some general interest to acknowledge the role that Whitgift Middle School played as a foundation for both of our lives.

Easter 1942 saw my family move from Olton, south of Birmingham, to Wallington and the edge of Croydon airport. A place was found for the summer term in Collingwood, a private prep. school, and into the charge of its inspirational Headmaster, Wilfrid Ingham. There I found David. He left for the first form at Whitgift Middle School (now the Trinity School of John Whitgift) at the end of that term. We met up again a year later in one of the three second forms of that school. We were both more interested in science than the arts, so after Matriculation, we entered the Lower and then the Upper Science sixth forms and David became School Vice Captain.

We were taught Chemistry by the Deputy Head Master, Dr Gerald R Shutt. It appeared that he knew Selwyn College’s Tutor in Chemistry, Dr P J Durrant, rather well, which helped in both our attempts to gain entrance to Cambridge following two years National Service. During those two years spent in the RAF, we were both occupied with radar, David on CHL: chain home low, whilst I set to on CMS - centimetre search. The six months difference in our ages meant that David went up to Cambridge in 1951 and I followed him in 1952. We both read Natural Sciences, David specializing in Chemical Engineering and I in Physics.

David joined ICI in Yorkshire where he met his future wife, Sherry, at a dance. His next employment took him into atomic energy for four years during which Julian and Adrienne were born. The family moved to the London area when David joined the CEGB at their headquarters.

David enjoyed his sports. In Cambridge he rapidly rose to a place in the First college boat, rowed at Henley and was invited to row in several of the Trial boats for the Great Race. Damage to his hand prevented his possible selection for the 1953 Boat Race Crew. Water became a life-long interest – the construction and use of a sailing dinghy (where Mr Brierley’s able tuition came in very useful) – the purchase of a small sailing cruiser for use on the Thames estuary and, when his joints began to creak, cruising on the British Waterways.

I was privileged to be invited to say a few words at his funeral, following Julian’s address, and was able to acknowledge David’s role as Path Finder for my first tastes of the RAF and Selwyn. In return, I claimed to have had a significant role in David’s initial instruction in balcony dancing, a skill I had just acquired at Miss Barbara Mark’s academy in Wallington and which I attempted to impart to a motley bunch of fellow sixth-formers in sessions held in The Hole (the basement of the Junior School and seat of the Sixth Form Club). I maintained that, without this skill, David and Sherry’s romance might never have got off on the right footing. We both were regular attendees at the Founder’s Day Dinner and Selwyn’s Commemoration of Benefactors. I shall feel his absence for the years to come.
I was called up in April 1946 and did my six weeks basic training at Maidstone. Towards the end we were interviewed by a sort of careers officer, who asked if I had a choice of regiment. I opted for the Royal Signals (my father’s outfit) and, after a weird test to see if I could differentiate between pairs of rhythmic pips (were they the same or not?), I was on the train to Catterick Camp in North Yorkshire, where I remained until demob. For three or four weeks, I lived in a fairly luxurious block built in about 1940, being trained as an OWL (Operator, Wireless, one Line). I was then transferred to another course of a higher grade to learn how to repair radios etc. Here, the accommodation was awful with seventy men sharing three loos and six washbasins. I presume that I was put on this course because, between leaving WMS and call up, I had worked as a trainee in Mitcham Works, which made radios for both military and civilian use. I didn’t do very well. I could manage the theory, no sweat, but I just could not file a small piece of brass to specification.

Back to square one – in the luxury hotel but having to wait for a new course to start. So I was on Sergeant Major fatigues for a couple of weeks. I was then sent to another part of Catterick on a pre-WOSB (War Office Selection Board) course. Apparently, because I talked posh (thank you school!) and didn’t swear every other word, I was officer material. The army mucked that up beautifully. It seemed that the course had shifted to another area a week or two earlier. So, after lodging my pay book with the pay officer, one found a billet (always the first thing to do, I learnt). I found myself spare and was on Sergeants Major’s fatigues again! There were about twenty of us, the S.M. never called a roll call and numbers seemed to vary as bodies came and went. Rather than clean the toilets or shift coal, I came up with a cunning plan. Missing the parade, I donned battledress, got a clipboard and tried to keep out of everyone’s way. If I met an officer, I saluted smartly and went urgently about my non-existent business. Eventually, the course started. The only thing I remember was learning to drive a series of lorries. So, thank you army, I passed my civilian driving test first go. We then had to wait for the next WOSB – about three weeks. I’d kept the clipboard so no fatigues! Eventually, the three day Board took place. I failed – not because I ate peas off a knife but, with hostilities now over, the War Office could afford to pick and choose. So, back to doing nothing whilst waiting to be assessed. The officer was kind when I asked to be a clerk – a grade 3 post.

I was no fool. Clerks did not have to wear boots but more comfortable shoes. After the customary week or two, I was posted to yet another unit for a six week course. I learnt how to touch type and surprised myself by coming top of the course! I was quite attached to Catterick by now (I’d met a nice young lady) and a packet of cigarettes to the corporal who did the postings got me posted to the Orderly Rooms of the training unit. Under a civilian Chief Clerk, I learnt a lot about general office procedure. I cruised along happily until the civilian left and a most unpleasant Sergeant Major took his place and a mutual dislike matured.

Winter 1947 was bitterly cold with fuel severely rationed. Everyone was wearing as many clothes as possible. I caught bronchial pneumonia and was rushed to the camp hospital which was as warm as toast and, even in 1947, got me better. Back in the Orderly Room, the S.M. grinned evilly at me ‘Burn, I’ve got news for you. You’re posted to a brand new unit where National Service men come straight from Civvy Street. You’ll have to smarten yourself up there’. Plus, of course, highly colourful language. But, joy of joys, the new unit was right back to comfortable square one but, this time, not in the barrack room. I was to be in the pay office and shared a large room with three other clerks. The S.M. trusted us to keep the room clean and tidy without supervision. We were excused all other duties and shared an office with a Captain and two N.C.O.s. Instruction was given in touch typing. There were shops, two churches, two cinemas and an evaluation centre (play reading and music appreciation) which I joined. Richmond was a bus ride away which had a fine musical tradition and I sang with three choirs.

Being a very big camp, Catterick had plenty of facilities. Each unit had its own NAAFI and voluntary services, such as the YMCA, were numerous. There were shops, two churches, two cinemas and an evaluation centre (play reading and music appreciation) which I joined. Richmond was a bus ride away which had a fine musical tradition and I sang with three choirs.

I finished my service doing a useful if mundane job in relaxed surroundings with surprisingly good food. Being a conscript, as opposed to a National Service man on demob. I got six weeks pay, a suit, shirt, coat plus a handsome handful of clothing coupons. I also left with a brand new battledress which turned out to be very useful in my first proper job with the YMCA in Germany.
Learning and Using Languages by David Picksley

It was learning French through phonetics in form 2A with Mrs Gray that started me on the route to languages as my favourite study, and perhaps a career. Mr Dalrymple and his enthusiasm for Latin took me further, to eventual “A” levels in both subjects in 1951. We all knew then that National Service for two years was to follow. I was called up to an infantry regiment, the Royal Sussex. After the first shock, the four months that followed were, certainly in retrospect, an experience I would not want to have missed. I would not support a return to National Service, but, living, training, drilling, working and suffering with a group of lads (locosire fireman, hod carrier, farm worker, etc.) such as I never had met at my school should be a prerequisite for any aspiring cabinet minister! The downside was that the battalion was being prepared for armed duty in Suez. Fortunately for me, I had been chosen, perhaps because of my Latin, to join a unit learning Russian.

In 1950 the PM, Clement Attlee, set up a working party to consider how best to arrange a school for Russian linguists. Russia had gone back from being an ally to being a military and social threat. In 1948-49 there had been the Berlin blockade and air-lift, Czechoslovakia in 1948 and Hungary in 1949 fell into the power of the Soviets. There was a war going on in Korea and communist insurgents in Malaysia. Everyone felt that the cold war could likely turn into a hot war. Five thousand interpreters of Russian might then be needed for interrogations, communications listening and all the tasks which war with Japan had shown up as urgent in a war situation. Courses were established within the language faculties at Cambridge and London Universities. I was sent to Cambridge, where accommodation had been found hurriedly in the area around the city. My first of several stops was at an officers’ mess at RAF Waterbeach. We were given the status of officer cadet and the rank of acting sergeant, paid, uniforms abandoned and conditions were arranged everywhere to ensure that all our attention was given to learning (there was later some time to enjoy Cambridge, including the cricket at Fenner’s with Peter May, David Sheppard and Ramon Subba Row and other stars then playing for the University).

Buses were sent daily to take us to Cambridge. Formal grammar classes were daily with Professor (later Dame) Elizabeth Hill. Conversation was in small groups with émigré Russians imported from Paris and, later with them, we read and translated aloud “Crime and Punishment”. The idea was total immersion in the regional history, politics and culture. On Saturdays we saw Russian classic films, we learned games, songs and parts to be acted in plays. Thirty words had to be learned each night. Tests were held weekly, many of which, if failed, meant a return to unit, in my case, to one of those wars. Standards were high e.g. unprepared translations to Russian of “The Times” articles. After one year in Cambridge, a move to Bodmin, back in to uniform for six months but no drills, just more language, but with added service vocab, jargon and background facts on Soviet forces, ranks, equipment and formations etc. Great rugby at weekends in the winter against Cornish clubs. On Coronation Day, 1953, there was a thoroughly shambolic celebration in uniform on the parade ground. Civil Service Commission exams and GCSE ’A levels followed before the course finished.

Today, the military threat from Russia has been replaced by the economic and trade challenge which comes from China and indeed other BRIC countries. It is just as great if not greater. While we cannot expect the government to set up schools for Mandarin, Hindi, Portuguese and, indeed, Russian, yet even greater numbers than our five thousand are urgently needed in business with these states. Russia was closed to us, for obvious reasons, as to most visitors in the 1950’s, but now, the opportunities are there for major corporations and even smaller exporters, to set up language training, jointly or severally, within our own universities, with scholarships, and also within the countries themselves, inside or outside their universities. It is a fallacy that we do not need to learn languages because everyone speaks English. It may be true where visitors go in the cities and hotels but that is far from good enough. My own business experience has taught me that the same total historical, political and cultural immersion that I met in my language training is quite as important as the language itself and that you must communicate at all levels.

From University, where there was more Russian plus French, I joined the British Oxygen Company in 1956 as a graduate trainee. After a practical course on gas welding and a period on the road as a salesman, I was moved to an export department which was being set up. Why? Because this man knows languages and this is something new! It is no longer a surprise to me that history keeps producing the same situations. From 1947, the partition of India and the end of British rule (Burma had gone earlier), the Empire was crumbling. For ages, imperial preference had ensured that the Empire, and subsequently the Commonwealth, was almost a closed market for Britain. Trade was conducted, not with the industries and users of products, but through hundreds of merchants in the City of London, acting for themselves or as agents, along with The Crown Agents buying on behalf of the overseas colonies and administrations. The nation was almost bankrupt following the war and the government was calling for “export or bust”. There was no waiting for the orders to come any more. You had to go and get them. So what is new? The Euro zone crumbles, and, like me, just then you have to find the orders elsewhere. The new export department of British Oxygen, i.e. my boss and I, went off to sell oxygen welding and cutting equipment in the Middle East and Europe.
After a short spell of residence in Rangoon, leaving just before the military coup of Ne Win which led to the regime which we hope is finishing only now, I returned to England and joined the Morgan Crucible Company. The part of the company in which I worked was, for its time, very well organised with linguists to meet its aim of selling carbon components in Europe against a strong European competitor. A dozen or more correspondents and travellers worked with agents or local branches. I met the French and Spanish contacts, speaking French with both, and building good personal contacts. For a smaller company a few years later I toured Europe to demonstrate its products. Siemens in Germany were very well organised and, when contacted in advance, would prepare a gathering of interested design engineers who expected to have every item explained, in German. I had enough of the language to do this as long as I kept to my subject. There is no doubt that this was appreciated. At exhibitions in Germany or Italy, I made sure that I knew enough of the language to present to visitors who, even if they were shop-floor workers, still had an important buying influence, even without any knowledge of English. There is no reason to assume there is any difference today - you need to know how to connect with these people just as much as with their managers.

For domestic reasons I needed to have a job without travel for some years and worked in shipping and export finance in London. After this I joined Rank Xerox, Eastern European Division, at first, in shipping (machines for the 1980 Moscow Olympics, before Maggie might try to veto me), then market planning and pricing. This involved estimating machine type quantities and prices for sales to the state buying organisations, which were then the sole customers in each of the Soviet Bloc countries. My contact in Tecnepromimport, the USSR organisation, remained unchanged over the decade. He, Volodya, became a good friend as we met each year in London or Moscow and even travelled together to visit plants in England, France and India. He could see that I was interested in his country and system and knew something of the culture, which is why we got on. Each year the annual price negotiations took place in Moscow. These were in the office of our ex-pat country manager, he and I on one side of the table, Volodya and his manager or minder on the other, with our manager’s secretary (a KGB colonel, no less, I understand) at one end, to interpret. These formal contractual discussions were conducted in our own languages, even though they could have been in either. When the contract was ready and signed we celebrated with a dinner provided at the office by one of the top Moscow restaurants. Among the many toasts, on occasions I proposed one to Pushkin or another to Lermontov, following with a short poem learnt by heart. The Russians are pretty proud of their literary heritage, and this went down rather well. It is a trick I taught my colleagues, and it always proved successful for them too.

The wall came down in Berlin, the Soviet Bloc collapsed, and Rank Xerox, Eastern Europe had another challenge. They had to reach the users, the real customers and this was an entirely new era for them. The wheel had come round again. Just as with the end of the British Empire, the intermediate buyers disappeared and a new set of marketing challenges had appeared. This time they were not for me. I was approaching retirement age and a good early pension package was proposed and accepted. It was time to become a ‘consultant’ and a language teacher in a local 11-16 comprehensive. Here is a new set of discussions for another day; at what age and to whom to teach which modern languages.

It was nice to hear from Mike Pratt (58) after the distribution of the last issue of the Newsletter. Mike lives in the Philippines and suggests that it would be a good idea to list Alumni who live abroad, so that Reunions can be arranged. Having spoken to Alumni living overseas, I sense that many would like to be in touch with those living in their part of the world. If you would like to arrange a Reunion, I would be happy to assist. I’m sure that there are many more living overseas than I am aware of but the following gives an idea of where Trinity Old Boys have put down roots.

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It is Friday 27th April 2012 and my wife, Sara, and I are packing all the necessary items that we will need for a late-spring break in the southeast of England: waterproof jackets, thermal underwear, umbrellas, wellington boots. We have accepted the very kind invitation from the school authorities to attend the CCF Annual Inspection and have booked ourselves a few nights of luxury at the Burgh Heath Premier Inn. Here on the Welsh Borders, at the furthest known edge of the universe, it has been raining cats and dogs for weeks but we pack knowing that in Croydon there is a Drought Order and hosepipe bans, so we shouldn’t need all this stuff. The invitation gives the dress code as ‘jacket, tie and medals’. I have the first two items and even a pair of trousers but, sadly, no medals. Sara offers to make me some, Blue Peter style, out of chocolate buttons and kitchen foil, but I decide to settle for the nearest thing: my gold level Duke of Edinburgh Award badge.

Fast-forward to Sunday morning. It is cold and wet. The rain hasn’t stopped since we left home; global warming is a wonderful thing. We arrived at the school at the appointed time of midday for the pre-lunch reception and were treated to a magnificent and delicious cold buffet prepared and served by the school catering staff. I don’t remember school dinners at North End being like this!

And so to the main event. It had been decided that, due to the inclemency of the weather, the inspection and most of the activities would be held indoors, so we VIP Guests were led up to a line of chairs set out on the stage of Big School, now renamed the Trinity Concert Hall (it doesn’t quite run off the tongue so well, does it?), for a grandstand view of the action.

As everyone knows, brigadiers are elderly, portly gentlemen with droopy grey moustaches and a liking for gin. However the Inspecting Officer, Brigadier Iain James OBE, who was a pupil at Trinity from 1971 to 1979, was young, spritely and provided, quite literally, a shining example to the cadets of military dress and deportment.

The RAF Section provided an impressive display of drill, and a special Mention in Despatches should be given to Sam (I didn’t discover his surname), the cadet sergeant in charge. In the mid-1960’s I was senior NCO in the RAF Section and had to give orders to the section at parades, so I know how nerve-racking it can be. However, I was never in such an exposed high-profile situation as Sam, but he carried it all off with aplomb and didn’t make a wrong move (at least none that I noticed). Various displays and demonstrations were put on in other parts of the school and, as on previous occasions when I have visited the school and been given conducted tours, I quickly became disorientated. How long does it take for pupils to find their way round, I wonder? Has anyone ever visited every part of the school?

The RN Section prepared themselves for life in the present-day decimated navy by pushing pretend boats through wooden representations of marker buoys scattered on the hall floor. They were also practising semaphore; a skill that I thought had been lost in this age of radios, satellite phones and GPS. Other cadets were giving demonstrations of CPR, (a few moments of consternation being caused when the legs of the patient were pulled off, leaving only a head and torso; it was a good job that the ‘patient’ was only a dummy!), rock climbing, sub-aqua diving and archery. As a matter of interest (probably to no-one but myself), I took part in the first session of the newly-formed Archery Club, sometime around 1960, and still have my bow (a real wooden one, not one of these high-tech things they have now), arrows and all the ancillary gear. Incidentally, the Archery Club was quite a popular Saturday morning activity as it offered an opportunity for boys to indulge in a bit of social intercourse with the caretaker’s daughter.

With a bit of improvisation the RN Section might have been able to float their RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat) on one of the lagoons formed on the field by the heavy rain, but it was left to the Army Section to brave the elements outside with demonstrations of basha (temporary shelter) building, cooking and section attacks. Interestingly, the hexamine stoves they used for cooking were exactly the same as those issued to us in the 1960s on our Arduous Training camps in the Brecon Beacons; I still have one in the side pocket of my rucksack for use in case of emergency. Section attacks involved a great deal of splashing and body-surfing in the water on the field (standing the cadets in good stead if they have an annual camp in the paddy fields of South East Asia) and, although they must have been soaked through and very cold after giving demonstrations to several parties of visitors, I didn’t hear any of them complain. In the present ‘Nanny State’ environment, I had expected, at best, wooden imitations of rifles (or plastic replicas of wooden imitations as timber has all those nasty, dangerous splinters) but somehow the dead hands of those killjoy ‘Elf’ and ‘Safety’ have been avoided and the cadets were carrying genuine SA80s.

Deep in the bowels of the school, the rifle range was open, and I was very pleased to accept the invitation of the Rangemaster, Flt Lt. Preece, to join one of the details in firing five rounds. A sensible precaution was to issue everyone with ear defenders, items that were unheard-of when we used to fire on the range in the asbestos shed at the edge of the Lower Field at North End. The disadvantage was that, whilst wearing the ear defenders, I couldn’t properly hear the orders being given so, not knowing what to expect, I was never sure whether I was shooting when I should have been loading, or vice-versa. The end result was a bull and
Three inners, but one stray round in the next ring enlarged my grouping to 1¾ inches. It wasn’t a result that would have pleased me when I held my Marksman’s Badge whilst in the cadets myself, and drew the comment, ‘You need to get your breathing under control, boy’ from Flt. Lt. Preece. Maybe he didn’t quite say that, but it was all I could do to prevent myself answering, ‘Yes, sir’! I just want to have another go now!

All of the members of the Guest Party commented on the confidence and self-assurance with which the cadets who addressed the visitors carried out their tasks. These boys, and girls now, are a great credit to the school and we all agreed that we would have been quaking in our boots if we had been put into similar situations at that age. Maybe they were, but they have been taught not to show it!

The day was topped off with tea that included vast quantities of various types of delicious cake made by the members of the catering staff, who, once again did an absolutely sterling job. And so ended a very enjoyable day, for which we thank the Headmaster and all his staff—we look forward to the next one. As that great orator and linguist, George W. Bush once said “Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?”. On the evidence of our day, the answer must be, “Yes, they is.”

MORE NEWS

It was good to hear from Philip Hiscock, a former master at the School from 1950 to 1985. He mentioned how pleased he was to receive news of the School and Old Boys. He sends his best wishes to all Alumni who might remember him.

Nishaan Saccaram (97) is now a trustee of a small charity based in Streatham called music4children, which has links with the community and an orphanage in Nepal opening in 2013. He now works in IT security.

It has been good to hear news of Timothy Orchard (85), who studied medicine at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and obtained his MD from Oxford University for research into inflammatory bowel disease. He is now a consultant in gastroenterology at St Marys Hospital, Paddington, where, beside his clinical work, he teaches students and research programmes. He is now Professor of Medicine at Imperial College.

It was good to receive a completed ‘Keep in Touch’ card recently from Peter Clarke O.B.E., who left WMS in 1937. He relates that he only spent two terms in the Upper Sixth as a relative was able to arrange for him to be articled as a Solicitor.

With three years war service counting towards what was then five years articles, he only had a month’s articles to complete when he was demobbed in April 1946. He says that the profession of solicitor suited him admirably and he only retired in 1997.

Peter’s voluntary activities include serving as National Treasurer of the English YMCA for ten years and he was awarded the O.B.E in 1987 for services to the National Council of YMCAs.

Other interests have been serving as a Board Member for the Mission Aviation Fellowship, being a legal advisor of the Museum of Army Flying and a trustee involved with the Glider Pilot Regimental Association Benevolent Fund.

Peter was living in Spring Park Avenue when at WMS which would have been much closer to the current premises! He remembers that Mr Whitfield, who taught English Grammar and literature, influenced him for good and also recalls Messrs Ecclestone, Avery, ‘Pop’ Preston, Brierley (whose catchphrase was ‘now boys....get ready for leaving!’) and the teacher who composed the School Song.

He was a member of Red House as was John Elliott Randall, who was a Sergeant Pilot in his Glider Regiment and lost his life on 10th July 1943 during the Sicily Airborne Operation.

A recording of the School Song doesn’t exist. Perhaps if there are enough Old Boys willing to come to Trinity to sing it, we could provide a recording for the Archive!
I heard from Ryan Huckle (97) recently who has changed career from advertising to taking a graduate entry medical degree. Being interested in the fields of nutrition, endurance and performance, he attended the Student Wilderness conference, where another Old Boy, Mike Stroud, was the keynote speaker. The audience appreciated the stories of his adventures, including a previous trek with Ranulph Fiennes across Antarctica and his seven marathons in seven days on seven continents.

Dr Stroud will be providing the medical expertise for The Coldest Journey, which set off on the 6th December on what will be the start of the world’s first ever attempt to cross the Antarctic in winter, led again by Ranulph Fiennes. It is widely regarded as the last true remaining polar challenge. The 2000 mile journey will expose the team to temperatures as low as –90° and they will operate in near permanent darkness.

Ryan was able to chat to Dr Stroud at the Conference and hopes one day to be able to emulate some of the great scientific challenges that he has undertaken.

Trinity students, staff, parents and Old Boys are invited to join together to perform the Brahms Requiem on 7th March. The Head of Academic Music, Michael Holiday, would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to take part on meh@trinity.croydon.sch.uk. There will be a Sunday and evening rehearsals.

Are there any tenors or basses who would like to take up singing again? The Croydon Philharmonic Orchestra are currently recruiting for new members. They perform at venues across London and the south of England and their programme comprises classical choral music supported by a professional orchestra and soloists. Rehearsals have started for The Armed Man by Karl Jenkins which will be performed in April. Further details can be found at www.philharmonic.org.uk

The Coldest Journey

Ryan Huckle and Mike Stroud at the Student Wilderness Conference

Brothers in Arms by Mark Gardiner part 2

Being a son of the British Empire in the early years of the last century allowed some the privilege of easy emigration to the far reaches of the world, and the Old Boys of Whigift Middle School were no exception. Several had left Britain behind for careers in North & South America, Africa, British India or Australasia. Many of those were to die on far-flung battlefields in Imperial colours. Among those Old Mid Whitgiftians who fell in the Great War were two pairs of brothers whose lives had put thousands of miles between them in both life and death.

The Eve family was a large one, with four sons and four daughters. The eldest two sons, Evelyn and Frank, were born in Norwood around 1886, and both attended Whigift Middle School, as did at least one of their younger brothers, Arthur (Archie). Their father, also Arthur, was an export merchant, and the family had moved to Purley and later Wimbledon Park. Before the war, Evelyn was an engineer’s draughtsman in the fledgling motor industry, who had already held positions at the famous companies of Daimler and Humber, and was living in lodgings in Coventry, where he had also been a territorial in the Warwickshire Royal Horse Artillery. A former manager commented that: “He possessed much original skill in designing”. Evelyn enlisted in the Army Services Corps in November 1915 aged 29, and his trade background found him selected for training as a Motor Transport Driver.

Evelyn was assigned to the 631st Motor Transport Company which mobilized on 8 January 1916 and was attached to 38th Brigade Royal Garrison Artillery detailed for service in East Africa. An advanced party sailed from Avonmouth on 5 February 1916, with the main body sailing from Devonport three days later, arriving at Mombasa on 14 March 1916 via St. Vincent and Durban. Unfortunately security measures had resulted in no-one expecting their arrival, and they were stuck aboard ship for a further two
Charles and Frank Roffey were the sons of a coal merchant, and according to the 1911 Census both were still living at home – 55 Church Road, Croydon – with their parents, sister and grandmother. Charles was the elder son and a bank clerk. By the time he attested in December 1915, aged 27, he had married Phillis Ida Victoria in February 1915, and was now living in Streatham Hill; they had a son, Eric, in August 1916. Frank was eight years younger and attended Whitgift Middle School until 1911, when he took up an apprenticeship with the Central Croydon Motor Company. Upon completion of this Frank left England on 30 July 1914 for ANZAC Bay on the Gallipoli peninsula to join his unit, where he soon incurred one day’s Field Punishment No.2 for absence from parade. The battalion war diary for 10 August 1915 recorded: “2.45am Enemy attacked heavily but were repulsed. 1 Killed and 1 wounded. ‘Frank was the man reported wounded and missing. Later an informant wrote: ‘On the 10th Aug. 1915 I saw Roffey brought down from the sap with a bandaged hand, and the men who took him down to the dressing station told me and others that he had died on the way.’ It was not until the following April that a Court of Inquiry ruled that he had been killed in action. Frank’s body was never recovered or identified, and his name is commemorated on the Lone Pine Memorial to the Missing overlooking the Gallipoli battlefields.

In December 1915 Charles attested for service, aged 27 years 10 months, and being married was placed in reserve. He was not mobilized until May 1917 when he joined the Honourable Artillery Company – despite the name an infantry unit – and arrived in France on 18 July 1917, just in time to take part in the Third Battle of Ypres. The 2/5th HAC formed part of the 7th Division, and Charles was reported missing on 21 September 1917, a few days before the battalion took part in the Battle of Polygon Wood. The circumstances are unknown, and on 9 October 1917 it was accepted that Charles had died on or since 21 September. His body was not recovered and his name is recorded on the Memorial to the Missing at Tyne Cot, on the ridge just below Passchendaele.
With the exception of prefects and possibly sixth formers, boys were not admitted into the school until the first bell sounded at 8.50am. Quite a crowd would gather outside beforehand. The rule was rigorously enforced by the prefects who stood guard inside the entrances and its application often involved standing outside in inclement weather. There had to be a torrential downpour or the bitterest winter circumstances before the doors were opened prematurely to us. Once able to enter, coats were deposited in the cloakroom and a register was taken by the form master, dinner money was paid once a week, exercise books in which homework for a particular subject had been written were collected by a boy deputed for that task and taken to the room of the master concerned.

Boys then made their way into Big School, where they sat in the rows of folding chairs that had been allocated for their form. These rows of chairs were noisy items of furniture and made a fantastic collective retort when the whole assembly of 559 boys stood up. A prefect was assigned to each form. He stood near his form in the central gangway and at a not very well defined point required silence from his charges. Meanwhile, masters would be arriving to sit on chairs at the back and side of the stage. Attendance by them in Mr Clayton’s time was not particularly good. The elderly Mr Nichols was usually seated there before the boys came in, obscured behind an open copy of ‘The Times’. He would usually be joined by Mr Cove. I seem to remember that Mr Clark and Mr Monk were also regular attenders. Dr Taylor and Mr Turner were quite notable absentees. At the approach of the Headmaster, the Head Boy would walk from the door at the side of the back of the stage down the central gangway, giving stentorian glances to right and left to check on stillness before prayers began. Occasionally, he would call out a boy still talking or misbehaving and require him to go on the stage and stand at the front throughout prayers.

There was a distinct difference of style in the prayers conducted by Mr Clayton and those conducted by Mr Berthoud, the former, generally speaking, being somewhat more complex and with a number of rubric requirements. In Mr Clayton’s time, boys were provided with copies of the Whitgift Middle School Hymnal and, inserted in the back of this, was a small leaflet with the forms of prayers for different days of the week. The form bore some resemblance to a minor liturgical office. A hymn in the early part and a reading of a lesson by a prefect also formed part of it. At the conclusion, Mr Clayton would give out the notices, covering under that head, general rebuke on unsatisfactory trends in behaviour or deviant actions that had come to his attention. The different years stayed behind on one day each week for what might be described as doctrinal teaching based on solid Anglican principles as evinced in the Book of Common Prayer. Boys were urged to learn the collect for the following week when volunteers were asked to recite it from memory, a number of whom accomplished it successfully and there were no sanctions for those unable to do so. All this was probably seen as preliminary groundwork for the confirmation course, opportunity for which was afforded at the school under the tuition of the Venerable C F. Tonks, Archdeacon of Croydon on Saturdays mornings.

Each month, the monthly order for each form was adduced by the form master from subject marks and the boys were arranged in a descending order of merit. The opportunity of having all the boys in a particular year group together once a week gave Mr Clayton the opportunity to ask the boys who had come first, second and third to stand up, be noted and receive his congratulations, appropriately graded in tone to the position they had secured. This passed off happily for all concerned but more awesome, though awaited with perhaps greater interest, was the requirement for the boy who had come bottom to present himself. Mr Clayton indicated before naming him that naturally someone had to be bottom of a class, that while it was not an enviable situation, neither was it necessarily a permanent one and with more consistent application and commitment, the boy would progress to a more favourable position. Mr Clayton was a kindly man and in no way sought to worsen the guilt that the bottom boy must have felt. Mr Berthoud dispensed with this weekly meeting of a whole year after prayers. There was no doctrinal teaching by him though I believe that the Confirmation classes continued into the mid-50s at least, but no longer were first, second, third and bottom boys required to present themselves before their peers and Headmaster.

Prayers at the end of term took a different form. In Mr Clayton’s time, there was a generally good attendance of masters on the platform and the Headmaster was accompanied on stage by his wife and his secretary, Miss Loveridge, sitting either side in high-backed wooden armchairs. Miss Loveridge’s highly vocalised singing of the hymn added a distinct and unfamiliar female tone to the usual masculine rendering. Mrs Clayton presented various awards. The end of term prayers followed a rather more complex structure with a number of additional prayers. There was then the reading of the termly orders for all forms, starting with the bottom boy in the first form and ending with the top boy in the Upper Sixth. It was a matter of surprise to me that this boy was always the Head Boy, suggesting that qualities of intellect were wonderfully combined with qualities of leadership. The proceedings concluded with the singing of the national anthem and the school song, boys returned to their form rooms and lockers and then dispersed for the holidays.

MORNING PRAYERS

by John Martell

In the next issue, John describes Assemblies in Mr Berthoud’s time, the Nine Lessons and Carols and reflections on the Headships of Mr Clayton and Mr Berthoud.

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