

OLD WESTCLIFFIAN ASSOCIATION

(formed 1926)



NEWSLETTER 2018

1. OFFICERS & COMMITTEE 2017 - 2018

PRESIDENT - D A Norman, MBE, *MA*
(*Oxon*), *M. Univ (Open)*

VICE PRESIDENTS:

R. Arnold
T.W. Birdseye, *JP*
H.P. Briggs
A.J. Burroughs
R.T. Darvell, *BA (Hons)*
D.A. Day
J. Harrison
A.A. Hurst, *BA (Hons)*
N.C. Kelleway, *FCA*
C.R.N. Taylor, *FCA*
M. Wren

CHAIRMAN - M.A. Skelly, *MA*

HON. SECRETARY - T.W. Birdseye, *JP*

HON. TREASURER - C.R.P. Hennis

HON. ASST. SEC. - R. Arnold

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

A.J. Burroughs
R.T. Darvell, *BA (Hons)*
J. Harrison
K. Hickey
A.A. Hurst, *BA (Hons)*
Father J. McCollough
D. Partridge
B. Warby
School Head Boy,
or his Deputy

HON. AUDITOR - A.R. Millman, *FCA*

NEWSLETTER EDITOR - S.V. White
email: terry.birdseye@gmail.com

Hon. Sec - Terry Birdseye, *JP*

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**2. AGM 16TH JULY 2018 AT 7:00 PM AT THE SCHOOL
ALUMNI NETWORK SOCIAL COMMENCES AT 7:30 PM**

**3. ANNUAL REUNION DINNER - FRIDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER 2018
6:15 PM FOR 7:00 PM AT THE SCHOOL
DETAILS ON PAGE 3**

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2. Annual General Meeting, 16th July, 7:00 pm at the School
3. O.W.A. Annual Reunion Dinner, Friday 7th September 2018 - 6:15 pm for 7:00 pm at the School, Kenilworth Gardens, Westcliff on Sea, Essex, SS0 0BP. If you would like to look round the School, please be there by 5:30 pm. Details and reply slip on page 3.
4.
 - (i) Honorary Secretary - Careers Guidance Support Form
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3. OWA ANNUAL REUNION DINNER - FRIDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER 2018

At the School: WHSB, Kenilworth Gardens, Westcliff on Sea, Essex, SS0 0BP
6:15 PM FOR 7 PM OR 5:30 PM SHOULD YOU WISH TO LOOK ROUND THE SCHOOL
COST £29.50 (£17.50 FOR STUDENTS IN FULL TIME EDUCATION)
TICKETS WILL NOT BE ISSUED

DRESS - LOUNGE SUIT, ASSOCIATION TIE (£10, Available from Asst. Sec. - see page 43)

MENU

Terrine of red pepper, sun dried tomatoes and avocado

Braised rump of English beef and ale pie
with seasonal vegetables and new potatoes

Raspberry Torte - fresh sponge with raspberry mousse, summer fruits and ice cream

Cheese Board with celery, grapes and biscuits

Tea or Coffee with Chocolates
(Vegetarian Meal available on request)

- NO BOOKINGS WILL BE TAKEN AFTER THE DEADLINE OF NOON ON WEDNESDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER.
- ALL CANCELLATIONS AFTER THIS TIME MUST BE PAID FOR.

REPLY SLIP: O.W.A. ANNUAL REUNION DINNER - FRIDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER 2018

.....

FROM: Name:

Address:

.....

Postcode: **Phone:**

TO: TERRY BIRDSEYE - 810 LONDON ROAD, LEIGH ON SEA, ESSEX, SS9 3NH
TELEPHONE: 01702 714241/terry.birdseye@gmail.com

PLEASE RESERVE PLACE(S) FOR:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>* YEAR DATES AT SCHOOL</u>	<u>COST</u>
.....	(.....)
.....	(.....)
.....	(.....)
.....	(.....)

TOTAL: £

*** PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR YEARS AT SCHOOL. THIS IS IMPORTANT.**

CHEQUE PAYABLE TO "OLD WESTCLIFFIAN ASSOCIATION"

*** PAYMENT MAY ALSO BE MADE USING "TICKETSOURCE" VIA THE SCHOOL WEBSITE**

4. (i) TO: HONORARY SECRETARY O.W.A. - TERRY BIRDSEYE

OLD WESTCLIFFIAN ASSOCIATION

Careers Guidance Support Form

As in previous years, we are continuing with our careers advice network. The intention is that both current pupils and Old Boys can tap into the wealth of knowledge about careers and universities held by us, the membership of the OWA. Those seeking advice will be able to search anonymised data and then submit pertinent questions for direction to the appropriate alumni by an intermediary at the School. In order to set up and sustain the network we are asking willing Old Boys to supply a brief resume of their career history below:

Name:

Years at WHSB:

University, Subject, Degree Level, Dates 1:

.....

.....

University, Subject, Degree Level, Dates 2:

.....

.....

Profession(s)

.....

Email Address:

.....

By signing below I consent for this data to be kept on record and to be used solely to match those seeking careers advice with those offering it.

Signed: Date:

4. (ii) HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

Fellow Members, another year has rolled by and it is time to pen my report. The Association has had a good year with staunch support from the school, particularly the CDO. My thanks, as always, go to David, Nicki and Jemima for all their invaluable help.

I have been notified of seven OW's who have passed on, namely Hugh Wolds, Harry Bacon, Keith Denton, Dr. D.F. Morley, Stephen Hasler, John Jarvis and Donald Hanscombe. Our thoughts are with their families and loved ones.

Thank you to all those who responded to my appeals for articles for this newsletter. It is always good to hear from you. There have been many distinguished OW's over the years and their stories are not just of great interest but in some cases inspirational. Please remember to send me your views and memories for publication next year. It is *your* newsletter! If your article was not included this year, please do not be offended. In the end we had rather too much copy and it will be top of the list for next year!

Thank you to those who have sent donations. Our subscription level is very low and has remained unchanged for many years. This is because of your generosity in sending donations which help to keep us afloat.

Our last annual reunion dinner was a resounding success, with just over one hundred attending, spanning many generations. We were pleased to welcome Neal Martin, celebrated wine critic and OW as our guest speaker. I must thank Alec Cass for his sterling work in drumming up support for these dinners. He may have moved on in his career but I think that his heart has never quite left his alma mater. We wish him well.

As you will see from page three, our dinner this year is on 7th September. Our speaker will be Neil Harman, celebrated sports journalist and author and latterly chief tennis correspondent for the Times and an OW. Please try to support this. You will not be disappointed. They are always fun evenings.

The AGM has been poorly attended in recent years and to try to generate more interest, we will be combining it with our summer Alumni social on 16th July. The AGM will commence at 7pm and the Alumni social at 7.30. Please try to support these events.

There are two Alumni reunions each year, one locally, and one in London. They are very enjoyable and a chance to meet socially with fellow OW's and the Headmaster and some of his team. The last one was at the historic Wilton's Music Hall in Graces Alley. The next London one will be on 18th October in Davy's Wine Bar the City Flogger, 60 Mark Lane, EC3, a stone's throw from Fenchurch Street Station.

I am very conscious that the centenary of the school is fast approaching in 2020. David Norman, our President, represents us on the steering committee. We do not yet know what form the celebrations will take but we are looking forward to them and the OWA will play its full part to help make them a success.

Please take some time out to look at the website. You will find items of interest including back numbers of this and the Alumni newsletter.

I must thank Shanie, our editor, who somehow miraculously pulls it all together!

In conclusion, I must thank Mike Skelly for his unfailing support, not just to me but to the OWA, and to my committee for their help and advice.

I wish you all health and happiness.

Terry Birdseye
Honorary Secretary

4. (iii) NEW MEMBERS

Joseph Bills	(10-17)	Liam Lau	
Jake Breathwick	(10-17)	Ryan Lawrence	(15-17)
William Clarke	(10-17)	Neal Martin – (Hon. Member)	
Alexander Darnley	(15-17)	Christopher Maxwell-Smith	(96-01)
Robert Daubenspeck (Teacher)	(97-05)	Samuel Neagus (Teacher)	(03-10)
David Dickinson	(04-11)	Rhianna Neagus	(10-12)
Richard Donovan	(01-08)	Anuj Patel	(10-17)
Sam Drewery	(05-12)	James Reader	(10-17)
Miles Graham	(10-17)	Daniel Rhodes	(10-17)
Dr. William David Gorrod	(56-63)	Robin Sanderson	(42-52)
George Gunlee	(10-17)	Hassan Sarfraz	(10-17)
Raymond Hunwicks	(47-52)	Eulalie Taneka	(15-17)
Samuel Jessep	(10-17)	Luke Trower	(10-17)
Jilse Joshy	(10-17)	Anthony Tse	
Ryan Kaminski		Louis Tuck	(09-16)
Jamie Knight	(10-17)	Edward White	(10-17)

Total 32

4. (iv) MEMBERS DONATIONS

Members who have given donations over the last year, which are received with grateful thanks:

Geoffrey Brown
Len Hooker
Father John McCullogh
John McGladdery
Robin T Sanderson
John Western

5. HONORARY TREASURER

OLD WESTCLIFFIAN ASSOCIATION

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
INCOME		
Life subscriptions	265	280
Profit on ties etc	186	163
Donations/raffle	429	1,290
Surplus on function	194	59
	-----	-----
	1,074	1,792
EXPENDITURE		
Printing, postage & stationery	213	276
Sundry expenses	144	130
	-----	-----
	357	406
	-----	-----
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	<u>£717</u>	<u>£1,386</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2017

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
ASSETS		
Stock of ties etc	412	704
Cash at bank	6,965	5,956
Cash at building society	2	2
	-----	-----
NET ASSETS	<u>£7,379</u>	<u>£6,662</u>
FINANCED BY		
General fund brought forward	6,662	5,776
Surplus for the year	717	1,386
	-----	-----
	7,379	7,162
Donation to WHSB for CCF	-	500
	-----	-----
General fund carried forward	<u>£7,379</u>	<u>£6,662</u>

C R N TAYLOR FCA
HONORARY TREASURER

A R MILLMAN FCA
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

6. PRESIDENT

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to continue to serve as President of the OWA in what has been an exciting year for our Association. We have continued to develop and strengthen our ties with the School. OWA members have been present at all major School activities. We have been involved in supporting the Cadet Force as well as offering career mentoring support for current members of the School. The OWA is also represented by myself on the Centenary Committee.

The School itself is placing greater importance in keeping in touch with old alumni in the run up to the Centenary year 2020. The OWA has been given a “slot” in all School dispatches to former students, giving us a platform to reach a wider number of potential members. Our reduced rate lifetime subscription for school leavers has proved very popular and has helped to bring in much needed “new blood”. This has been reflected in the significant increase in attendance at our Annual Dinner where numbers topped a hundred for the first time in many years.

We are indebted to the Headmaster, Michael Skelly for his support for the OWA. I should also like to place on record my thanks to Terry Birdseye for his continuing valiant efforts as Secretary of the Association.

I look forward to seeing you in September at our Dinner!

**Councillor David Norman MBE, MA (Oxon), M Univ. (Open)
President**

7. CHAIRMAN & HEADMASTER

It has been another busy and positive year in the life of Westcliff High School for Boys and I am pleased to have this opportunity to report to Old Westcliffians on recent School news. We remain heavily oversubscribed and we have expanded to take 185 pupils in both Years 7, 8, and 9. Our Westcliff Centre for Gifted Children, 'Go for Grammar' programme continues to attract increased numbers of local entrants to the School and our local entry for September 2018 shows a significant leap forward.

We enjoyed a strong performance by our Public Examination cohorts this year. In a year when schools have had to deal with wholesale reforms to the public examination system, we achieved our best ever A Level results, with a record breaking 82% of entries graded either A*, A or B. We topped the local performance tables and sat high in the national tables, as 53% of all grades were either A* or A. Our A* percentage was a remarkable 22%. The majority of our students progressed to the established universities and ten students from Westcliff went up to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. At GCSE Level we enjoyed another very strong performance, with 70% of entries graded A* and A (or 7, 8 and 9 in the new currency). We are delighted that the School also topped the local performance tables for achievement and progress, and was ranked in the top 40 performing schools in the country. In short, the pupils and staff rose brilliantly to the challenge posed by the new examinations. Of course, these results are the fruit of hard work by pupils and staff, and we do not take them for granted. Moreover, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff for their outstanding commitment to the School and its pupils.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has appointed contractors to commence work on the internal refurbishment of the School's Technology Building. The building is over twenty-five years old and the facilities and interiors require significant improvements. The project involves some reconfiguration of the space, new windows and doors, as well as upgrading of services. We are particularly pleased that we shall be installing a state-of-the-art food room with sufficient capacity to allow a full class to undertake cooking at the same time. The project also includes adding a small one storey extension to the north end of the Science Building. This will provide an additional full size Science laboratory to further develop our significantly improved Science facilities.

I am pleased to report that the School's Combined Cadet Force (CCF) was granted permission to launch its Royal Navy Section from January 2018. Twenty-five cadets have been recruited and we expect this number to grow to rival the Army section which now has just shy of 100 cadets.

The official inauguration of the WHSB CCF Royal Navy Section has been organized for the Summer Term. We are delighted to welcome Commodore Elford, Commander Regional Forces and Naval Regional Commander Eastern England, as our Guest of Honour at the Inauguration. Our Royal Navy cadets have already been in action this year and recently formed a guard of honour on HMS Bristol for Vice Admiral Sir Jonathan Woodcock, Second Lord of the Admiralty.

On the sporting front, the School has also been rebuilding and two new members of staff joined our new Director of Sport, Mr Morrish, at the start of the academic year. The numbers participating in sport have increased significantly and our most recent triumph has been to be crowned County U15 Basketball Champions, something we have not achieved in over twenty years. Our Drama, under the leadership of Mr Jefferies, goes from strength to strength with a company of 150 actors, musicians and technicians staging 'The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui' in March 2018. Those same musicians have already given four outstanding concerts this academic year, performing a range of repertoire including Dance Macabre and Rhapsody in Blue, to name but a few.

The School will celebrate its Centenary in 2020 and an interesting introduction to the School's early beginnings appears in the summer edition of the Westcliff Diary. Work on the planning of our Centenary celebrations in 2020 is well underway, and we have established a Centenary Committee, and a Centenary Team, both of which will support the arrangements. Our pupils and the staff have been consulted in the planning stages, and their ideas will be shared with the Centenary Committee during the Summer Term.

The objectives for the Centenary have been agreed by the Centenary Committee. These include providing opportunities for the entire WHSB community (past and present) to mark the year. We also hope to establish a Centenary Fund to support an agreed project(s), and we plan to fully exploit the educational opportunities arising from the Centenary for our pupils. The Centenary will also allow an opportunity to further strengthen our links to the local community and our alumni.

I am delighted to share with the WHSB community that Dr Alan White has agreed to write a book on the history of the School, and this will be published in our Centenary year. Many of you will know Dr White, a former Head of History and Deputy Headmaster at WHSB, and an accomplished author. Further details of the plans for the Centenary will be shared in future editions of the Westcliff Diary and via the website and other communications. Our centenary year will commence in January 2020 and we shall need the help of our community to make this a year of celebration, but also a year that leaves behind a lasting legacy for succeeding generations of Westcliffians. The success of the School relies on the strength of its community and the Centenary is a wonderful opportunity for our community to come together to support the School as it enters its next century.

There are many lessons to be learned at School; some from teachers and advisers and some from fellow pupils. The learning can be collective and individual. Amongst the most important lessons is to understand that learning continues throughout one's life and that experience is perhaps the greatest of all teachers. In my experience, managing that lifelong learning is all the easier when one has firm foundations provided by an effective education. It helps one appreciate that life is not without risk and setbacks, but both can be managed through resilience, understanding one's true worth and a little help from our friends.

Please continue to stay in touch with the School and I hope to see you at the AGM and/or Annual Dinner, if not before.

Michael A Skelly

8. IN MEMORIAM

Harry Bacon (44-52)	21/07/2017
Keith Denton (64-69)	04/06/2017
Donald Handscombe (Aged 99)	22/02/2018
Stephen Haseler (53-62)	20/07/2017
Sir Derrick Holden-Brown (34-39)	06/03/2018
John Jarvis	01/09/2017
William Brian Kirk	28/02/2017
Dr W.G.P. Lamb	02/03/2018
Dr. D.F. Morley	29/02/2016
Ivor Stanley Smith	18/02/2018
Jack Williams	29/12/2017
Hugh Wolds (42-48)	April 2017

All will be sadly missed

9. OBITUARIES

Harry Bacon	21/07/2017
Donald Handscombe	22/02/2018
Stephen Haseler	20/07/2017
William Brian Kirk	28/02/2017
Dr W.G.P. Lamb	02/03/2018
Peter Ayerst tribute	
Ivor Stanley Smith	18/02/2018
Jack Williams	29/12/2017

HARRY BACON

(4 November 1932 – 21 July 2017)

Harry started at WHSB in September 1944; in his second or third year at school, he developed Ankylosing Spondylitis, a condition which was wrongly thought to be Polio, rife at that time among teen-agers. Because of the misdiagnosis, due to lack of knowledge in the medical profession at that time, he received what turned out to be totally inappropriate treatment. He was able to return to school after missing a year, initially in a wheel chair.

He gradually became stronger, and was eventually able to play Cricket at a fairly good standard.

Harry and I became friends when we were in the 6th form together.

I remember that we both enjoyed singing Gilbert & Sullivan choruses in "Bertie" Bates's music lessons. I have to say that Harry's many talents did not stretch to being able to sing in tune, although he always enjoyed Classical music. One other abiding memory of our 6th form years was of a Chemistry practical (probably with "Black Harry"), when we had to make Carbon Dioxide from Marble chips dissolved in an acid. Unfortunately, Harry misread the label on a jar of sand, and wondered why nothing happened! This became a standing joke between us, literally for the rest of his life.

In 1952, after A levels, Harry went to the College of Estate Management, London University, graduating with a B.Sc. He qualified first as a Chartered Surveyor, then specialised in Town Planning, initially in the Planning Department of the LCC (London County Council) in County Hall on the South Bank. Later, he joined the Basildon Development Corporation Planning Department, eventually becoming Head of Planning and Transportation. He finally worked as Executive Officer for the Commission for New Towns.

Harry and I remained close friends, and I had the privilege of being Best Man at his wedding to Rosemary (always known as Romy) in 1962. They lived nearly all their married life in Maldon, where they brought up their three daughters. Harry and Romy and the girls lived a very full life in Maldon; he was very involved in all sorts of local Maldon activities, associations, societies, charities, etc.

This is not an exhaustive list, but I think these included a Housing Association, Abbeyfield, Sheltered Housing, the Maldon Society, Probus, U3A, the Maldon Alms Houses, the Essex Wildlife Trust, Rotary, and the Basildon Hospice. He was a very active member of the O.W.A., frequently attending the Annual Dinner. Harry had a very great respect for Henry Cloke as a Head Master and a good person, who had been extremely helpful and supportive while Harry was recovering from his early years of partial disability, and later.

Harry was always good at carpentry and DIY generally. He constructed an extensive climbing frame for his family, and also built a Mirror sailing dinghy. He was a great gardener, and had many other interests including photography (he was really good) and music. He was so knowledgeable about a very wide range of subjects, and also had strong political views.

I feel honoured to have counted Harry as one of my best friends for nearly 70 years. I knew Harry as a real gentleman, in the literal sense; first of all, he was a very loving Husband, Father and Grandfather, and immensely proud of all his family. As a friend, he was very loyal and supportive, and always great fun to be with, having a dry and quirky great sense of humour. He was a very kind and caring person generally, and always willing to help those less fortunate. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Peter White (1945 – 1952)

DONALD HANDSCOMBE – 14.06.1918 - 22.02.2018

I write to inform you of the death of my father, Donald (Don) Handscombe. I am not sure of the exact dates when he was at Westcliff, but he was born on 14 June 1918 and died on 22 February. He was a keen rugby player in his time, representing both the school and the county.

Linda Ashley

DONALD HANDSCOMBE—Obituary from The Times - March 06, 2018

One of the last survivors of Churchill's wartime 'auxiliaries', tasked with sabotage and even assassination if Germany invaded

Donald Handscombe was one of the last survivors of the so-called Auxiliary Units formed on Winston Churchill's orders in 1940 to carry out sabotage and even, it is thought, assassinations in the event of a German invasion.

The secret nature of the force was paramount. Driving to a 'training session' wearing denim overalls with his revolver in a holster, Handscombe was arrested and held by the police until a series of discreet telephone calls brought the regional MI5 representative to the scene to order his release.



The patrol leader Donald Handscombe

Subsequently every auxiliary carried a signed Home Office pass marked "Do not delay or detain this man. Call ..." - with a telephone number to call for an explanation.

Volunteers were selected for their local knowledge, resourcefulness and composure when being informed that their active-service lifespan would be unlikely to exceed 12 days.

Any hint of a loss of resolution - missing a training session, for example - led to instant dismissal.

It was not unknown for a patrol leader to be dismissed because their patrol believed that they were unsuitable. About 6,000 auxiliaries were enlisted, all drawn from reserved occupations to avoid them being called up for service in the normal way.

For purposes of security they were to operate in the small groups of between four and eight men, led by individuals such as Handscombe, knowing only their own operating base in the countryside and how to report events to their controller. This cell structure was designed to avoid any auxiliary taken prisoner revealing under torture the location of any other group.

To afford them protection under the Geneva Conventions and an administrative unit, each man was enlisted in the local Home Guard battalion.

Having only recently turned 20 when he was first approached, Handscombe was asked in a pub, the Bread and Cheese, by someone he knew through his local rugby club whether he would like an extra job in the national interest. He was helping to run his father's extensive complex of greenhouses at the time - hence his reserved occupation - but decided that he could take on more work.

He was interviewed by five individuals, none of whom was known to him, and told that he had been accepted for the Thundersley village patrol in Essex. Strong, self-confident and well educated, it was not long before he was sent to Coleshill House in Oxfordshire for training as a patrol leader. Instruction in hand-to-hand combat, the use of sniper rifles and demolition techniques was provided by army specialists and the training was passed on by patrol leaders to their men.

When attending his leadership course at Coleshill House, Handscombe asked a question that may well have arisen in the mind of many resistance fighters: "If the enemy takes hostages and threatens to shoot them unless the sabotage stops, what should we do?" The instructor remarked that he had never been asked this question before, but said he would seek advice. Several weeks later Handscombe was informed that, despite any threat to hostages, sabotage and other operations should continue.

Donald Handscombe was born in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, the son of Arthur and Doris Handscombe, and was educated at Westcliff High School, Westcliff-on-Sea.

Before the war he had played rugby with Charles Newman, who subsequently led the commando raid on the dock gates at St Nazaire in March 1942. Hearing of an upcoming secret operation, Handscombe requested leave from the auxiliaries to join the force. "You are just the sort of chap I want," said Newman. "We'll take a rugby ball and have a game while waiting for the Germans to do something." Handscombe's request, however, was not authorised.

When the war was over he returned to managing the family agricultural business and married Audrey Harvey in 1950. They had a son, Martin, who expanded the business until he could describe himself as "a gentleman of leisure" and a daughter, Linda, now a retired local government lawyer. It is believed that Churchill's secret "auxiliaries" were kept armed and ready for sabotage long after any serious risk of a German invasion of the UK passed - perhaps even as late as 1944.

Donald Handscombe, one of Churchill's "auxiliaries", was born on June 14, 1918. He died on February 22, 2018, aged 99

Extract from The Times

STEPHEN HASELER

Stephen Haseler, politician and academic, died in 2017 aged 76.

Stephen was involved in Labour politics from a very young age. He was an outstanding and eloquent member of the WHSB Literary and Debating Society and by his mid-teens, had become a committed European. He represented Labour (unsuccessfully) in the School Election of 1959. On leaving school he went on to the London School of Economics where he eventually obtained a Doctrine in Politics. Shortly afterwards he published his first book "The Gaitskellites" and became well known in moderate circles in the Labour party at the highest level.

Stephen never made any secret of his ultimate ambition to become a Labour M.P. and when he contested Saffron Walden in the 1966 election he was the youngest Parliamentary Candidate in the country. He subsequently served as a distinguished member of the Greater London Council and eventually became Deputy Leader in pre Ken Livingstone days. But unfortunately by the early 80s the political tide in the Labour Party was running against moderates like Stephen and he was a founder member of the up and coming Social Democrat Party and narrowly missed becoming its President.

Stephen subsequently pursued a successful academic career in Britain and in the U.S.A. He became a committed Republican and was regularly called on by the media when a critic of the House of Windsor was needed. It was not a path to popularity!

Sadly, we were never able to tempt Stephen back to his old school.

He was an excellent lecturer, well loved by his students.

I am sorry that our paths tended to diverge after 1980, but I shall never forget him as one of the people who, in our school year, inspired me and others to become politically engaged.

David Norman

WILLIAM BRIAN KIRK (known as Brian) - 1.7.1928 - 28.2.2017

Brian died peacefully after a determined struggle with a long illness.

He was born in Leigh and enjoyed his school life at Westleigh and Westcliff High School. In his first year he was amongst those evacuated with the school to Belper. This period made a strong impression on him as he saw and experienced at first hand the life of coal mining families.

After he left school the war was still on, although drawing to a close. He therefore followed his passion for the sea and ships by joining the navy. At the end of the war he continued that interest by joining a shipping company.

Sadly this industry was on the wane and after a few years he changed career and joined the National Bank of New Zealand where he stayed until he retired.

Brian had many interests to which he directed his energies, in particular an interest in adult education and he chaired the WEA for some years.

He loved nature, particularly birds and the outdoors, and carried on enjoying and studying the natural world until two weeks before he died. He had also been a founder member of the local Ramblers Association, and the U3A.

Amongst his other interests were books, particularly nature books and he was an avid reader. He also loved music and never missed any of the local concerts.

A gentle sensitive man with a mischievous sense of humor, he is sadly missed by his widow, three sons, and a stepson.

Katherine Kirk, MBE

A MEMORY OF MY LATE FATHER BY CHRISTOPHER KIRK

Below is a brief write-up about my father who died last year.

I just missed last year's deadline, so I was hoping you may still be able to include this in this year's newsletter even though it's oldish news. I suppose there aren't many WW2 old boys left alive nowadays, but hopefully some OWA members may remember him. I did bring him to an OWA annual dinner a few years ago, but he didn't see anyone he remembered there. (I know that he knew someone with the surname Brenchley, and he certainly knew Sid Arscott).

Much obliged, and I will look forward to bumping into you at future OWL meetings.

WILLIAM BRIAN KIRK - (1928 – 2017)

Born in Leigh, Brian Kirk joined Westcliff High from Westleigh in 1939, then spent most of the war years on evacuation in Belper. There he developed interests in rugby, walking and nature. He matriculated in 1944, and after stints with the Royal Navy (HMS Nizam) and Union Castle Shipping in London, he spent the remainder of his career in banking, at the National Bank of New Zealand. He retired in 1986. After nearly twenty years' gradual deterioration from Alzheimer's disease, Brian finally passed away peacefully at the Palmerston Residential Care Home in Westcliff on 28 February 2017, aged 88.

By his first wife, Waltraud, he leaves three children, Christopher (1967-73), Duncan (1974-75) and Swain (1971-77) and five grand-children. By his second wife, Katherine, he leaves a stepson. He had a wide range of interests, including paddle steamers, classical music and the environment.

He never forgot the hardship of the war years in Belper and was formerly active in the U3A and in the Workers' Educational Association. He was a former governor of Belfairs High School.

Christopher Kirk

DR W.G.P LAMB

Physicist whose career covered an eclectic range of subject matter and who was one of the few surviving members of the 1950 King's College, London team that contributed to the discovery of the structure of DNA William George Percival Lamb - known as Percy to colleagues and friends - who has died aged 97, was a versatile scientist, whose theoretical and practical skills were employed in a wide range of applications, over a long career and into retirement.

He was born, an only child, to William and Letitia Lamb (née Scears) in 1920 at Southend, Essex. He lived in Westcliff-on-Sea throughout his life apart from periods at university and when work placements took him further afield.

His father was a civil and structural engineer who was often involved on large scale projects where precise load calculations were essential. Percy, as a child, was introduced to these problems in simple form by his father and, from these early beginnings, developed an affinity for mathematics.

In later life he described these tests as 'rather like playing with Meccano but having to explain why I chose one particular piece and not another'

He attended Westcliff High School for Boys and went up to Queen Mary's College at London University in 1938 to read Physics. He was awarded the Wignall Memorial Prize for the best work done by a first year student before graduating in 1941 with a First Class Honours degree. From London he moved to the Cavendish at Cambridge where he attended lectures given by Bragg ('quite useless as regards to note taking but interesting otherwise') and tutorials on Sundays at his home at 3 West Road.

In 1942 his father died and he returned to Westcliff to be nearer to his mother as the war situation was still very serious. He joined the Armaments Research Establishment (ARE) at Havengore (Shoeburyness) and started work on the testing and measuring of blast waves from 4000lb and 8000lb bombs; a time which he described the most pressing aim was 'trying not to get oneself killed'.

He remained with the ARE until around 1947 when he went on to Kings College London (KCL) to work for a PhD in Biophysics under the supervision of Professor John Randall FRS.

His PhD research at KCL, into the study of chromatic threads of the cell nucleus using light and electron microscopes, coincided with the formation of a MRC team, led by Maurice Wilkins, to study the structure of genes (later recognised as DNA) brought him into 'Randall's Circus' as it came to be known.

Among his colleagues were Franklin, Stokes, Gosling, Seeds, Brown, Fraser and others. Wilkins went on to share the Nobel Prize, with Crick and Watson from the Cavendish, for the DNA discovery.

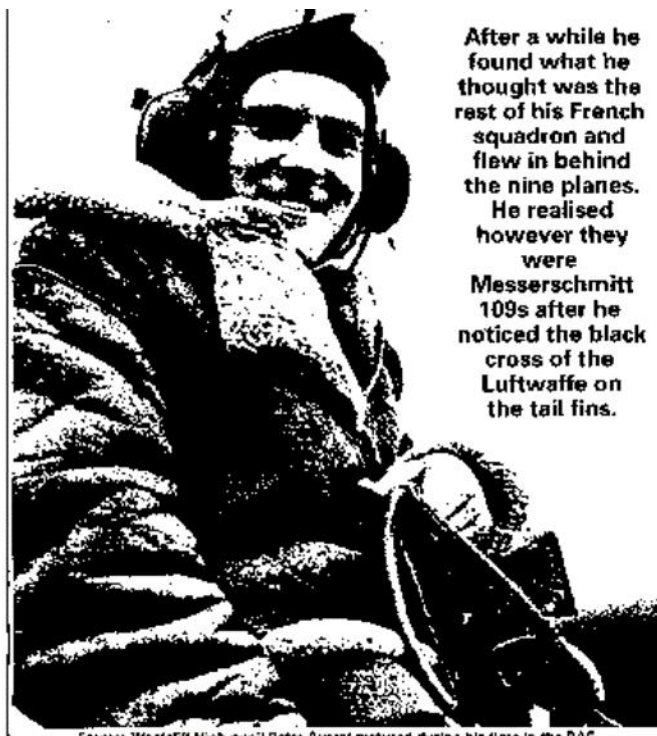
He left KCL towards the end of 1952 and returned to his earlier work on blast waves measurement, this time joining AWRE at Foulness. While at AWRE he worked on the destructive effects of nuclear weapons including the UK's first atom bomb test off Western Australia's Monte Bello Islands.

In 1959 he joined J D Bernal's department at Birkbeck to develop an electron microscope unit before moving to the Sir John Cass College of Science and Technology (Cass) as a Research Fellow in the following year. His work at Cass with the Ultra High Vacuum Group investigated the interaction of gases with pure transition metals and the theoretical study of the kinetics of outgassing.

In 1970 he became involved with the theoretical investigation of the factors surrounding collision avoidance of vessels at sea. While having no practical experience in navigation he brought his meticulous mathematics and analytical skills to bear on the problems of multiple vessel interaction in narrow waterways such as the Dover Straits. His work in this field was recognised by a Fellowship conferred by the Royal Institute of Navigation. He remained at Cass until he retired in 1985 but continued working on various projects well past his ninetieth birthday. He never married.

William George Percival Lamb, scientist, born 12 July 1920; died 2nd March 2018

WESTCLIFF BOY WHO WENT ON TO BECOME WWII HURRICANE ACE



After a while he found what he thought was the rest of his French squadron and flew in behind the nine planes. He realised however they were Messerschmitt 109s after he noticed the black cross of the Luftwaffe on the tail fins.

Wing Commander Peter Ayerst, a pilot, wearing a flight helmet and goggles, smiling. He is wearing a flight suit and is seated in the cockpit of a Hurricane fighter plane.

ONE of the Second World War's leading-Hurricane pilots was a boy born and brought up in Westcliff and who went on to attend Westcliff High School for Boys.

He was known at the time as a popular and talented rugby player on the pitches of Leigh and Westcliff.

Peter Ayerst did not receive the sort of publicity enjoyed by his Spitfire pilot colleagues because the Hurricane was never as high profile in people's thoughts as the more glamorous Spitfire.

But Peter Ayerst's record is one of which Westcliff can be immensely proud.

Wing Commander Peter Ayerst, as he became, flew throughout the Second World War. He joined RAF in 1938 and was the last survivor of the Battle of France, he also took part in the First dogfight of the Second World-War at the age of 19.

He was awarded the prestigious Distinguished Flying Cross in 1944, and died at the age of 93, in 2014.

In October 1939 he became the first RAF pilot to go into combat with a German fighter plane ~ and that was by accident.

While on a patrol over France, at the age of 19, he momentarily flew off in the wrong direction. After a while he found what he thought was the rest of his French squadron and flew in behind the nine planes. He realised however they were Messerschmitt- 109s after he noticed the black cross of the Luftwaffe on the tail fins. He gave a short burst of fire before diving out of the way. Another 18 Messerschmitts arrived as did the rest of Wing Cdr Ayerst's patrol and the first combat of the war broke out.

In 1944 he was awarded the prestigious. Distinguished Flying Cross for his gallantry and devotion to duty. Wing Cdr Ayerst, who shot down nine enemy aircraft during the Second World War, was the last surviving British fighter pilot to take part in the Battle of France.

He died on Thursday, May 15, 2014 in a care home in Beckenham, Kent. His granddaughter, Gemma Baggot, was quoted at the time: "Peter enjoyed spending time with all the family and enjoyed a lovely glass of red wine or a good gin and tonic whilst talking over good times.

"Peter was also a fervent rugby fan all his life, having played as a centre in his younger years."

In an interview before his death, Wing Cdr Ayerst recalled the day he came face to face with the enemy. He said: "I was the first RAF fighter pilot ever to come into combat with a Messerschmitt 109. "On that day our squadron was the first offensive fighter patrol of the war: As I was turning around to Comeback to France, underneath me I saw nine aircraft in line. - "I thought 'here come our boys on this patrol'. "I joined in formation, tagged on the end and saw bloody great black crosses. So I pulled up and gave a quick squirt at the enemy and went down. "Unbeknown to me there were another 18 of them making 27 altogether."

Of surviving the entire war, he said: "One stayed with it, got through it and, if you were lucky, came out the other side."

Wing Cdr Ayerst underwent advanced flying training in Lincolnshire in 1939 and achieved a short service commission to the RAF.

He flew Hawker Hurricanes in. 73 Squadron which was based in Rouves, northern France, from October 1939 through to the fall of France in May 1940.

Teaching

After returning to Britain he was based in Cheshire, teaching young fighter pilots aerial warfare.

Wing Cdr Ayerst was married to wife Betty who died in 2001. They had one daughter, Jane, and two grandchildren, James and Gemma.

IVOR STANLEY SMITH – 27/1/1926 – 18/2/2018

Ivor Smith was a distinguished Architect, whose death was reported in the national press. The following is abridged from his obituary in The Guardian.

He was born in Leigh-on-Sea, and his family was evacuated to Belper (so he will have been a pupil of WHSB). His interest in architecture began in Belper, where Ivor became fascinated by the rugged mills and churches of the Derwent Valley. His training at the Bartlett School of Architecture, evacuated from London to Cambridge, was interrupted by Second World War service. He completed his degree course at Cambridge University, and moved to the Architectural Association in 1950.

In partnership with Jack Lynn they designed the famous Park Hill estate in Sheffield, which is now a listed building. This is a single structure containing 994 flats, four pubs and a shopping parade, stretched along the hilltop above Sheffield railway station. It consists of many individual blocks, varying from four storeys high at one end and thirteen at the other, making for a level roof line. Three walkways in the air interconnect the flats, two of which touch the ground at the highest point of the hillside. These “streets in the sky” were designed to be wide enough for children to play on, and for small delivery vehicles.

Ivor Smith left Sheffield in 1962 to further his architectural career. He later combined this with teaching, first in Cambridge, then at University College, Dublin, Bristol School of Architecture, and Herriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. He founded the Caribbean School of Architecture, finally teaching in Kingston, Jamaica.

JACK WILLIAMS

A WHSB Friendship of 65 Years

Jack Williams and I met in September 1952, in form 3B at WHSB, on my first day at the school. He was the first friend I met in Westcliff after my family moved into the town. Our form master was no less than Dennis Saunders, who played amateur soccer for Pegasus and England, and had our undivided attention. My name is Mike Tooby, and once Jack and I had met up in the morning break, a friendship was forged in the schoolyard that has lasted for 65 years, ending with Jack’s demise on 29th December 2017.

That in itself is not particularly remarkable. What makes it so is that Jack and I have always been very different people, and for most of those 65 years we have been half a world apart.

We left school in July 1957; Jack to enter the Merchant Navy, and I to do my national service near Aldershot. A couple of years later Jack found himself in hospital in Australia for six months with TB, and I had moved to Reading University. Returning home Jack was told he had to leave the Merchant Navy because of his health.

He was devastated by this, but, being the man he was, he got straight down to work and he begun a teaching career, I believe in Maths, to which he was well suited by the mathematics of navigation.

We did see a bit of each other, and I introduced him to my future wife, so our on-going friendship was between the three of us. Jack was Best Man at our wedding in 1963, by which time he was established at a school in England, and we were working in Scotland.

We still met from time to time whenever we came South of the Border, but in 1971 we migrated to Western Australia, and have been here ever since. Still the friendship has flourished, meeting up several times in the UK, and twice in Australia. The last time we were all together was in October 2016 in Dorset, where we were visiting our grandson, by which time Jack was a very sick man. The parting on that occasion was difficult, because we two old men were well aware that we would not see each other again. We were kept in touch for the last 14 months of his life by his sister Anne Ridler (who lives in Kenilworth Gardens) and his daughter Jill.

As I have said, Jack Williams and Mike Tooby were two very different people on two very different journeys, but what started in 3B in 1952 between two fart-and-giggle schoolboys has lasted a lifetime. Rest in Peace Jack.

Mike Tooby



RHS Summer Show, 1955

Jack Williams, front left
Harry Smith, rear left
Enoch Day)
Brian Osborne) across rear L-R
Mike Tooby)
Unsure, front right.

Setting up display of Gardening Club Raspberries.

Jack and I ran the Gardening Club in 1957 when “Black Harry” Smith was sick.

Harry Smith was our chemistry teacher, and was a brilliant photographer. He featured on RHS calendars for years after his death.



10. NEWS OF AND FROM OLD WESTCLIFFIANS

ALAN CROSS - WHSB 1952-1958

Since becoming a member of the Old Westcliffian Association, I have read, with considerable interest, articles and profiles of Old Boys through your newsletter. Although I am now living in Jersey in the Channel Islands and haven't returned to the Southend area for a number of decades, I will make every effort to do so within the next year and have noted that 2020 is the 100th Anniversary of WHSB. I've really no excuse as there is now an excellent airlink from Jersey to Southend Airport.

Although I left Hadleigh and a teaching post at the King John School, Benfleet in 1965 to further my career as a teacher of Physical Education, I continued to return from Kent to play for the OWRFC 1st XV under the leadership of captains such as Malcolm Whitfield, Ian Francis, and the evergreen Jimmy Harrison, etc. I was also fortunate to represent Essex and Eastern Counties RFC alongside other Old Boys such as Gus Cheney. I have very fond memories of those days and would like, through the medium of the WHSB Alumni Network Newsletters, to pass on my best wishes to 1952 entry Old Boys and to members from OWRFC who might still just remember me galloping down the left wing.

After a short spell of teaching/lecturing in Bexley, Kent and in Cheltenham, I settled down to married life with my wife Ann and our two young children, in Leeds where I was a lecturer at the then Carnegie College of PE.

In 1980, I was appointed as Adviser of Physical Education for the States of Jersey. I was fortunate to take early retirement in 1998 and subsequently got heavily involved in two multi-sport Games organisations, first the International Island Games Association and then the Commonwealth Games Association. This involvement provided me with the marvellous opportunity to attend Games programmes at Islands around Europe and beyond, and attend, as the Jersey Association's President, the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne (2006) Delhi (2010) and Glasgow (2010). I am now, at the age of 77, happily retired from all forms of work and committees and enjoying golf and tennis and 5 delightful grandchildren who are all living within 10 minutes of my home.

None of this might ever have happened without the encouragement and support I had in my childhood from both my parents, from the staff at WHSB, and even friends made, in those formative years, through sports such as rugby. At the time I'm sure that I wasn't aware of this.

Look forward to keeping in touch through the newsletters and to the occasion when I manage to attend a reunion.

Regards

Alan

PETER DOLBY RECEIVES AWARD



Peter Dolby became involved with the Endeavour, and the formation of the Trust to help preserve her from 2001. This followed a public meeting, held to gauge local public interest and possible support. In the initial stages he was involved in restoring her travelling each week to Great Totham to help out with sanding, painting and the traditional method of pitch application and sealing of the caulking with pink lead.

In 2005 he was part of the crew that took Endeavour over to Dunkirk to take part in the 65th commemorative anniversary. This trip now forms part of the talk that Peter gives to schools, scout groups and adult community groups.

Peter also took over the writing, compiling and distribution of the newsletter which is produced 3 or 4 times a year.

He also helps to man a stand which is present at events in the 'old town' of Leigh on Sea, talking to members of the public about the history and importance of our local ship Endeavour, selling merchandise and encouraging trust membership.

He is in regular communication with the local press; radio, newspaper and television, providing information about events and the boat's history, and ensuring that the public are kept informed about the latest news and opportunity to see the vessel in action.

He organises the summer and winter receptions for 100 + guests, sending out details, organising tickets (and delivering them by bike to save on postage costs!) collecting raffle prizes from Trust members as well as from local businesses.

In addition to his roles of education and fundraising he is also the Treasurer, producing quarterly financial reports and compiling the full accounts for their ratification at the AGM, which he also organises with a slide presentation of the year's events!

As a trustee he is responsible for compiling and submitting the annual return to the charities commission. As membership secretary he maintains a membership list, monitors payments and chases up late payers and ensures that all members receive a newsletter and notifications of events.

After two very expensive years for the Trust, following a gear box replacement and larger than annual maintenance costs, Peter was instrumental in securing funding and grants from local organisations including local retail outlets, totalling in excess of £7000, which has significantly helped in keeping our historic boat Endeavour afloat in pristine condition for the public to enjoy.

Peter's contribution to the Trust and to the Endeavour is immeasurable. His organisational skills, dependability, attention to detail, generosity in his time and dedication to all aspects of the Trust, coupled with endless patience and a sense of humour ensure the smooth running and heightened profile of the Trust and hopefully ensures that a local historic boat of considerable significance will be around for future generations.

Extract

MICHAEL C FELTHAM (WHSB 1953 TO 1958)

MEMORIES OF ANOTHER AGE

I first attended the school, at the start of term in September 1953. As a boy of twelve tender years of age, it was, to say the least, a culture shock! Upwards of 780 pupils of all different age and sizes, sculling around in umpteen different directions, with hawk eyed Masters looking for those who erred.

At this time, the school building was very much a sort of time warp to the mid-1930s: the two quads were open to the elements and since lower school pupils had to wear grey flannel shorts and grey socks to just beneath the knees, when the wind blew along the corridors, as we assembled two abreast for the beginning of periods, it could be a mite cold in Winter! I have ever since, empathised with wild Scots highlanders in their kilts.

The science labs were also, shall we say, interesting: the mahogany benches and white porcelain sinks are now in all probability the sort of items, avid salvage dealers re-polish and sell for vast amounts of money to trendy decorators, developing old warehouses into bijoux designer pads.

Our year-one chemistry Master, "Bertie" Bates, (also then the music Master) enjoyed a quaint habit, if he suspected a boy's attention was preoccupied elsewhere, of quietly sauntering up and lighting the gas outlet (one to each pupil space and handily placed for Bunsen burners) and singing the errant lad's eyebrows. The flame erupted with a roar and a two foot orange flame (not much oxygen, you see, thus I must have remembered something from chemistry) burst forward like a German *Flammenwerfer*!

Our Class Master at the time was one “Moke” Morris; an elderly man who could easily be persuaded to move away from boring geography and tell us stories of his time in the first World War. Clearly, the dear old chap suffered a prostate problem (plus an addiction to Woodbines!) and often left the class to visit the Staff Room: whereupon, chaos usually ensued...

Unfortunately, our classroom abutted the Junior Chemistry lab and one day, Claude Webber was occupied doing something in the adjoining preparation and storage room; which possessed a convenient door into our classroom. The feared and white-haired Mr Webber came along the quad to see what on earth was going on. After giving the class a real dressing down he returned to whatever he was engaged upon. Now, one of the members of the class was a tiny lad called Frost; naturally he was known as “Jack” Frost. Well, he would be, really. As Claude retreated and entered the lab, Jack, swinging on the huge round brass door handle like a chimp at the zoo (he was that small), said “It’s alright lads, Claude’s gone!”

“Oh no he hasn’t, lad!!” said Claude who had returned to the lab, waited a bit and then sneakily (We thought) came back into our classroom via the interconnecting door! He then proceeded, to slipper the whole class. As he would, really.

Many years later, my then fiancé, Maggie – my lovely wife now for over 50 years – and I were attending a Southend Rugby Club dance at the Halfway House, on the seafront. As we left, a huge guy, resembling a Springbok Prop Forward came up to me and in a Basso Profundo rumbled; “Hello, Michael; I don’t suppose you remember me, Jack Frost”: stooping over to shake my hand with a paw like a blacksmith! It’s a funny old life...

The “Upmarket” chemistry lab, was the domain of “Mr Chemistry Smith”, as the Head always called him; AKA, the much feared Black Harry owner of an outsized gym shoe used to chastise offenders of the rules. Black Harry was also a keen horticulturist and ran The Gardening Club: detention penalties were often digging an unused parcel of the school garden, comprising mainly sticky Essex clay. Not much fun, then!

The Upper School chemistry labs were not much different, excepting there were more advanced and most interesting chemicals stored therein. It must be remembered, the end of World War Two was only eight years before; and most red blooded boys, of inventive and questioning nature, were utterly fascinated by the illicit manufacture of err, well bombs. Your scribe must confess to a similar interest. I lost count of the garden sheds reported as structurally compromised by these endeavours, owned by diverse and long suffering parents.

By Year Four, the school was, at last, welcoming into its Master’s ranks, new, younger men, to finally make up for the sad loss of so many staff in World War Two. My class were based in The Junior Library (which also made us the librarians) and our new class Master was a young man called Dickinson, who also taught (or tried in many cases!) English. In his early days it seems he had been in a rush to move and get in post and had not had the time for a haircut; accordingly, he was awarded the sobriquet of “Ugg”: a Neanderthal man in a daily paper strip cartoon of the time.

He was a wonderful teacher and also loved rugby. Three little Ugg stories worth recalling.

Ugg was a stickler over grammar; one of the lads in the class was not, shall we say, the brightest bunny in the burrow. He raised his hand during one lesson and said "Please Sir, can I be excused?" "You most certainly can, White." White stood at his desk and made to dash to the loo. "Where do you think you are going, White?" thundered Ugg. White sat down and asked again. Repeat scenario. Eventually, with his little legs crossed, White realised his error and asked "Please, Sir; MAY I be excused?" You most certainly MAY, White;" said Ugg; "And If I were you I would hurry in case you suffer an unpleasant accident!"

One damp day on a Wednesday afternoon, the class was assembled on the rugby field; there were insufficient lads for two 15s, so Ugg decided he would, here and there, make weight on one side. After three or four interventions, our side cried "That's not fair, Sir! You are bigger, faster and we cannot tackle you since you're a Master!"

"You are allowed to tackle me – if you can!" said Ugg. A conspiracy was hatched. The next time Ugg as much as touched the ball, the whole of our fifteen pounced on top of him! As Ugg rose from the damp, wet mud, dripping off his face and soaked into his kit, he shouted: "Right you are all in detention, after school tonight!"

In fact, he took it all in good part with the only caveat – "Don't do it again!"

Which act endeared him to us, immeasurably. This little memory reminds me of how the majority of our Masters were deeply respected and treated as mentors and how we all came to regard them as a sort of uncle: oh that it were the same, today.

The final tale. The class decided to play a near end-of-term jape on Ugg. I was asked if I could set up a large banger, with a time fuse, and this would be secreted behind one of the huge oak bookcases. In those far off days, I had experimented with typical Nelson's Navy type slow fuses. Mine were made from blue tissue paper scrounged from our greengrocer; (In those far off civilised day, soft fruit came in thin wood or cardboard boxes wrapped around with blue tissue. Soaked in a strong solution of Saltpetre, or Nitre, or, correctly, Potassium Nitrate and allowed to dry, et voila – a slow fuse. Trouble was time of burning. I had carried out many experiments, timing a set length of fuse against the clock; and reached a rough average.

Before Ugg's lesson, the big blokes moved the hugely heavy bookcase and books away from the wall; I placed the device in situ, lit the fuse and the bookcase moved back.

The class started and we all kept looking at our watches waiting for the bang! Which, err, didn't happen. Fuse must have gone out. A considerable time later, the bang occurred: and all the blokes jumped out of their skin! But Ugg neither moved nor said anything; despite the large cloud of blue smoke pouring out next to the wall.

Shakespeare I guess: "Lo! The engineer hoist by his own petard!"

"The Bogs", as they were universally known, were dark Satanic places, cold, damp, stone floored and always accompanied by the hiss of escaping water. And, sadly, redolent of young boy's urine, as such academic temples to micturition inevitably were.

Until around 1957 and the construction of the splendid new gym, the old job was a pretty tired and a dire proposition.

As were the changing rooms: and even more so, the communal baths. Once again, the floors were made from a sort of concrete mix, which seemed always exceedingly cold and damp: particularly in bare feet.

During late Autumn and Winter, weekly games on a Wednesday afternoon, for the last two whole periods, were, insofar as the Head and Masters were concerned, *de rigueur*. An excellent excuse for not participating, was probably death! That said, if it was rugby and Claude Webber was involved, before he would accept such wimpish reason he might well ensure the boy was in fact dead, first: by trying to exterminate him.

As with games, the bath post rugby was also *de rigueur*: before we all repaired to the changing rooms, one Master was early on, tasked to plug the wastes in both baths, to turn on the huge rusty spout taps, whereupon a cascade of rather rusty and dubious warm water gradually filled the baths: guaranteeing by the time a horde of muddy boys arrived, the water was rather, shall we say, tepid. Now these baths bore little if any resemblance to such splendid works of architectural excellence as are found, for example, at Bath. Rather, they were oblong poured concrete troughs, covered in archaic white tiles, whereon the surface was crazed, pitted and brownish.

Bathing in these evil tributes to personal hygiene, was organised by a distinct pecking order: Upper School and prefects enjoyed first dibs: and the order gradually progressed, downwards, year by year to the humble first year pupils. By which time, not only was the water rusty and nasty, it supported a cloud of mud and once one was immersed (if sitting in a few inches of lukewarm water, vaguely reminiscent of the annual delta deluge flooding over the land abutting the Nile and the Mississippi; see I also remember, some of my geography lessons, too!), might be so dignified.

Moving along, the woodwork room, that dark cavern, inhabited by “Willie” Wildrich, whilst commodious, was to say the least archaic: I have often suspected many of the tools, had been used to build some of Nelson’s warships! (Willie, a tall virile and powerful man, was infamous, for breaking at least two sticks, in the annual staff .v. pupil’s hockey match!)

Alongside the woodwork room, was a disused metalwork room, never then used, and full of heavily rusted machine tools and equipment: which was a great pity, I always felt: how useful some of that kit could have been in making illicit explosive devices.

Desks were as old, it seemed as Methuselah: I seem to recall his name carved into one!

They were solid oak, the tops slid backwards and forwards, in theory, in order to accommodate boys of all lengths and ages. One had to be somewhat judicious in adjusting these monsters, as the whole hinge top desk bit would fall off.

The school fabric was old: it desperately needed repainting; the textbooks had been repaired so often they were more butterfly tape than cover and binding. Exercise books were as rare as hen’s teeth and all equipment was past its sell by date and fragile.

However, I would not have missed it for the World and am eternally grateful to have received a thoroughly rounded education, which has served and benefited me, more, perhaps, than I can ever realise.

When today, I read whining articles in the media, where so-called teachers are trying – and failing – to explain, that the general underachievement of pupils is due to the old chestnut, “Lack of resources and class sizes”, I always think; “Huh! You ought to have attended WHSB, back in the immediate post-war years of the early 1950s.”..

Michael

DR ERIC C FINCH

I very much enjoyed reading the Alumni Newsletter. 'Copenhagen' by Michael Frayn (at the School this week) is a great play - especially for a physicist like me. Jean and I saw it in Dublin some years ago. Incidentally, the names 'Mike Skelly' and 'Kevin O'Neill' sound quite Irish in origin.

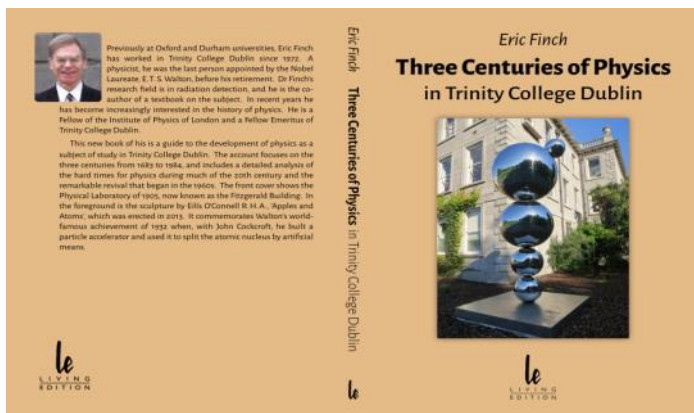
On page 3 of the newsletter there's a request for more information on 'Belsfield', the original home in Victoria Avenue of Westcliff High School. My parents and I originally came to live in Southend In October 1952. I was seven, and for three months I attended Victoria Avenue infants' school, which was then housed in 'Belsfield'. There might have been a junior school there as well, but I can't remember. I certainly remember the big house with its enormous bay windows, exactly as in the newsletter photograph, and my own classroom with its high ceiling. I don't know how long the school stayed there or whether the Municipal College ever used the house.

We were living in an apartment carved out of one of the old houses in Royal Terrace overlooking the estuary and the Shrubbery. This meant that I had to walk to school through the High Street and Victoria Circus and past the two railway stations. At that time there were no office blocks along Victoria Avenue, and I think the road itself had only a single carriageway. In January 1953 we moved to Westcliff and I transferred to Chalkwell Hall infants' school, a move that led me four years later to Westcliff High.

In case this is of any interest to the School Community Development Office, I'm copying this email to them. Unfortunately, I've no photographs of relevance. It's good to hear that the school is thriving; I haven't been back for years. Although I've been retired from Trinity College Dublin since 2012, I maintain my contacts with the College through my emeritus standing.

A year ago, I completed a 250-page book on three centuries of physics in Trinity. The book had kept me very busy ever since my retirement! Below is an image of the cover (back, spine and front) of my book that was launched last November, to give you an idea of what I've been up to since I 'retired' five years ago.

With best wishes Eric



LEN HOOKER – WHSB 1948 TO 1953

I left the school in 1953 after five of the happiest years of my life, so I suppose it is not surprising that even after 65 years, I can still hear the melodic Lancastrian voice of Harry Harden intoning the alphabetical list of form members for V ARTS 1953.

“ALLEN, AXE, BARTTRAM, BAST, BERMON, BOUCHER”. We sat in silence as failure to attend or interruptions would mean detention. “BURDETT, BUSSELL, COCKS, COTTEE, DAVY, FINCH” – the list went on “FOX, GAUNT, GROVER, HOGG, HOLT, HOOKER” – all responded with a “yes sir”, “KLIEN, LIPMAN, LLOYD, MALONEY, MELLING, MULLORD, PHILMORE, SHALET, SMITH, TAYLOR (A), TAYLOR (A J), TAYLOR (W J), TEARE, VANDERPUMP, WILLISON, WILSON”.

I have retired to comfortable sheltered accommodation in the Kentish Town of Faversham and I spend most of my time swapping yarns with fellow presidents, one of whom recognised my description of one of my school-day incidents involving a sporting and musically talented form-mate. Amazingly (the odds must be incalculable) this form-mate whom I had not seen for 65 years lives just 300 yards from me.

We met the other day, and I am pleased to say he has not changed a bit!

So, I am congratulating myself on my extraordinary memory, after all those years. However, it must be admitted that I cannot for the life of me remember what I had for breakfast this morning!

Oh, I almost forgot, my Kentish neighbour from those bygone days is the famous International pianist David Willison – another proud and highly successful Old Westcliffian. Thanks for the memory David!

Len

LEN HOOKER

In September 2013, I visited the school buildings to attend an “Old Boys dinner” and was given the guided tour by the School Captain. The drastic changes since my days left me in very sombre mood:

ALMA MATER

Last night I went to yesteryear (that’s six decades ago)

To my cherished Alma Mater in a place I thought I’d know

No more the spartan cloister nor blackboard grey with chalk

No more the scent of polish on the floors.
No more the frenzied urgency to run and never walk

No more the ink-stained walls and creaking doors.

This new-age monument is packed with plastic, glass and steel

With electronic gismos high and low.
Some futuristic trappings are inclined to make me feel

That this is something I’m not mean to know.

Surrounded by the gentle ghosts of mentors of my day

I breathed a silent prayer of thanks and quietly crept away.

Len

KEVIN MANSELL

A MEMOIRE OF MY MOST INFLUENTIAL TEACHER – RON COATS

60 years on, of all the masters I encountered at WHSB, the one who lives in the memory, and has the strongest claim to have influenced my development was Ron, R.L. Coats. I often wonder where he is and what he is doing, if he is still with us in his late 80s maybe. Was it Leonard, my father's name, or maybe Lionel? From Ron I imbibed, as I think my closest friends did too, a certain intellectual posture in trying to make sense of the world, a gentle scepticism that just avoided cynicism, an acceptance of tradition, but a profound suspicion of the stuffier aspects of our heritage. He taught an approach to life and invited us to fashion our own personal combination of loyalty and dissent.

The illustration of this style that comes to mind most readily is his oft-repeated, mock-resigned request to our class to get out the standard English textbook 'Paragraph to Essay' which he always called 'Paragraph to Backside', economically conveying to pupils the inevitability of submitting to the rules of grammar, but with a reluctant, grudging ennui. We knew it was important to conform, but not with any great enthusiasm.

Ron was visually quite striking, tall and lean, an angular face with gaunt cheekbones and floppy hair: there may have been a missing tooth or two. Sartorially economical, with one suit and two jackets, one a blazer with the arms of a college on the pocket and one a tweed sports jacket with patched elbows; a couple of striped ties; one shirt front and a couple of stiff collars.

Grey flannel trousers and a pair of cords, leather shoes. Were there sandals in summer? In the winter, a bright red sweater. The blazer had a design with a red cross on a white background, maybe it was Durham, maybe University College London, maybe an American university. Ron seemed to be distinctively Anglican. Did we hear his father was an Anglican priest? Did Ron play the organ? It was hard at the time to disentangle the myth from the reality: at a distance, futile.

He taught me English for 3 ½ years and was my form master for 3 years. Why was he chosen by Henry Cloke to be the form master of his first Remove form? I like to think it was because he offered an intellectual rigour but a sharp recoil from intellectual pomposity. I don't remember anything but an effortless exercise of authority: never having to raise his voice or clap his hands, though there was recourse to more measured corporal punishment.

His pastoral influence was memorable but understated. A decisive turning point in my self-confidence was when he wrote on my rather skittish essay on my family ".....You will pass muster as much for your attitudes as your ability..." I had no idea what 'pass muster' actually meant: it sounded vaguely positive but I felt I had to be sure and approached his desk at the end of the lesson to make sure I understood what he was saying. Ron was left-handed and wrote with a wonderful style and flourish, which privately I tried to copy, though it was difficult being right-handed.

Another aspect of the myth was his American experience. I remember him, for some reason as having studied in the States. Or had he been in the US military?

The evidence for this is scanty: he threw the rugby ball like a quarter-back in an American football team, corkscrew style. He had a certain kind of military bearing that could have emanated from experience in an officer corps. One sensed underlying physical power, maybe ruthlessness, which was displayed on the rugby field. He deployed a painful closed knuckle rap to the central top part of the skull by way of chastisement, but I can't remember what I had done to warrant this. Though he seemed a rugby man, he responded enthusiastically to our request to be allowed to use the Old Gym, which had five-a-side goals, for Friday night football. This involved delicate negotiation with the not-necessarily-friendly -to-2R Harry Brownlee. Ron supplied the football and I remember on a couple of nights when we were short of boys for 2 teams, he turned out too, as a goal keeper, and played energetically, throwing himself around with great abandon. Why did he make himself available in this way?

Ron also held soirees at his upstairs flat in the Southend Road opposite Chalkwell Park, maybe a dozen of us at a time, 8-11pm. I remember listening to classical LPs, and serious adult-type conversation, hitherto completely unknown to me. There may have been readings from books, but I have no memory of any. I don't remember what we drank, but it wouldn't have been alcoholic, maybe tea and coffee. No more than a dozen of us at a time. It felt like a serious privilege, totally beyond my experience socially. But for me, there was an extra thrill. Because of the late finish, Ron would not hear of me catching the last bus to Canvey Island- is it possible there wasn't one after 10.30pm? - so I was a pillion passenger on the back of his powerful Italian scooter. Did I wear a crash helmet as we roared through Leigh, Hadleigh, Thundersley, South Benfleet and finally down the hill and over the bridge to Canvey.

It is hard to describe the mixture of awe and gratitude this provoked in a 13-year-old, or the puzzlement at why he was prepared to carve out an hour at the end of a long day to ensure that I was safe home.

I don't remember that I was a favourite, but I like to think that he may have made that effort to be 'inclusive' to a pupil from Canvey Island, who otherwise would not have been able to attend.

There was a pupil, who seemed to be slightly out of place in 2R, a brilliant rugby player, but physically and maybe emotionally frail, of whom Ron seemed especially protective. Otherwise, he seemed to have no special favourites. Maybe he opened up more to this boy, as I remember Ron being quoted by him or, maybe a secondary source, as having confided that there was no feeling quite as memorable as when a girl 'first opened her legs to you'. Was it accurate or just the projection of a fevered adolescent? It certainly added to Ron's mythic status. Ron had a fiancée, Jean, who became his wife, and I think by the time he departed WHSB for Bridgewater Community College in Somerset, she was pregnant with their first child, who would therefore now be in their mid-50s.

This was after our O-Levels. I achieved an unlikely grade 1 in English Language thanks to Ron (for some reason we never did English Literature). There was a generous collection: I remember a set of classical LPs, chosen by Jean. We were passed over to Alec Henderson for the Sixth Form, who was hugely influential for me too, and carried on the tradition of soirees, but in his room in his parents' house in Southchurch. How on earth did I get back to Canvey from there? I don't really remember, but by then a couple of boys had cars.

I suppose that in many of us, memories and fantasies of schoolmasters live on. It's disappointing that my internet searches have yielded nothing of Ron. Would he have risen to a place of authority and eminence in British education? Would he have emigrated? Did his marriage last? Were there more children? Did he live long? Is he still alive?

Maybe the school knows the answers. But do I really want to know or would it compromise these rather unreliable memories of a uniquely memorable mentor and role model?

Kevin

JOHN TWITCHEN - WHSB 1956 TO 1961

AN AMUSING MEMORY OF "SPIKE" LIMBERD

He was a remarkable man. An excellent biology teacher, and very kindly to us boys.

His main catch-phrase was "No smut, boys", particularly when we were engaged with human biology and reproductive issues in which we lads had an unhealthy interest.

He once showed us a film about human reproduction in the then, new science block. Such was my interest in this production that a day or two later I persuaded one or two mates to sneak into the science block at lunchtime where I put this film on for our mutual gratification. We were enjoying this entertainment in the dark when the door opened, and in walked Spike. I feared a caning, but surprisingly Spike congratulated us all on our interest in the film, and there was no sanction applied at all. I think we all went on to pass the "O" level as a result of Spike's commitment.

We nicknamed Spike "the Scull" because he was a small, ravaged-looking man. This was as a result of his imprisonment by the Japanese in the war. He seemed to harbour no bitterness about his mistreatment as far as I can remember.

John

VAL WEST

I remember writing a make-up French Exam, during the days of the V1 Missiles. The warning was sounded several times. It was in the summer holidays and like a few other people, I needed the French result to complete the Matric. We were told "Turn over your Papers File out" to the Air Raid shelters, which were dug into the top of the upper playing field. No talking!! After several such excursions we were told to fold our papers and leave. We were to be judged on what we had completed. I passed. I wonder if anyone remembers this event? Since that time and the fact that I married a Swiss woman, whose native tongue was French, I, of necessity, developed a better understanding of the language.

Tried it out last summer when, with my middle son and his wife, we took her ashes to place them with her two departed sisters. A bitter sweet journey. So many memories of the five years we spent, during the winters, after retirement, in a small, but nice, apartment in Aigle, where she now lies. My sons have all agreed, at my request, that when I go my ashes will be scattered at the top of one of my favourite Ski Runs. Sorry to be a bit morbid, but at my age all my life is behind me. My great grandchildren, 7 at last count, have all their lives before them. I wonder what marvels they will see? Things we can't even guess at!

Val



Students from Westcliff High School for Boys at the RSME Boat School

Young cadets enjoy an exciting day out

A group of combined cadets from Westcliff High School for Boys were given a special invitation to the RSME Boat School.

The aim of the day was to show the cadets a different aspect of the military which they would otherwise not have been privileged to experience.

The year 10 pupils went to the Royal School of Military Engineering Boat School, where Drew Sherston had organised a range of activities for them.

These included a teamwork element, where pupils had to paddle across a lake in a military vessel. Lieutenant Harry Tresidder, who teaches physics at the school said: "The reason our cadets were invited was that our school's staff instructor had previously served with Drew Sherston. We are very proud of them and they represented the school impressively".

Extract from the Southend Standard, December 15, 2017

WHSB CENTENARY '100 YEARS 100 STORIES'

As part of the ongoing archiving project of the School's photographs, documentation and memorabilia in the run-up to 2020, the Community Development Office team is looking to engage with all past and present staff, Old Westcliffians, parents/carers and friends of the School to collate 100 stories in commemoration of the first 100 years of the School. They are looking to the present School and Alumni community to assist with compiling 100 engaging, thoughtful, commemorative and entertaining accounts that are reflective of the School's rich and colourful history. Stories should be between 400-500 words in length and include a suitable heading, your name and the years that you either attended or worked at the School. Please also include any relevant photographs where possible.

If you have any queries or require any further information please contact Mrs Clarke or Mrs Weller in the WHSB Community Development Office community@whsb.essex.sch.uk.

G C THOMPSON

MEMORIES OF THE 50'S (IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

During the great London smogs, pupils from Canvey Island and beyond were allowed to leave school early.

The school tuck shop positioned in the scorers' room of the old cricket pavilion was opened and closed within a year due to concern from local shopkeepers.

Soft sticky buns were available to buy for 3d from a position in front of the war memorial plaque which was attached to the West side of the hall. This facility was organised by Mr Bately (maths) during the morning break – at this time the quad was open to the elements.

For an unknown reason, there were 4 periods on Wednesday afternoons and not the usual 3.

Free milk was positioned in crates in the yard for morning break. The crates were unsupervised so some got served 1/3rd pint bottles and some were unlucky.

Meeting girls from next door was discouraged – they started and finished school earlier than us to keep us apart.

The 1st XV rugby pitch was positioned amongst the cricket squares at the top of the playing field.

Each form had to collect a rugby ball from a special rack at the beginning of the lunch break. This was supervised by Mr Webber (chemistry).

The pole vault pit was filled with unraked sand.

Swimming lessons during the summer term took place in the Westcliff open air pool situated on the seafront – buses were provided.

For some years desks were positioned in the hall and the open corridors due to overcrowding.

On the first day of the school year all text books had to be taken home and covered in brown paper.

They were inspected the following day. All boys had to provide their own bible.

There were two sports days – one was called the Browne sports and the winning house was provided with a cream tea provided by Mr and Mrs Browne.

There were no annexes across the road until about 1958 so science laboratories doubled up as classrooms as did the junior library.

The senior library was next to the music room positioned close to the main entrance where the careers office occupied a “broom” cupboard.

Before the present gymnasium was built in the mid 1950's, the only gym was what is now the present library – no showers were available after PE/lessons!

Just a few memories of a wonderful 7 years – perhaps they have jogged your memory?

G C Thompson

JOHN WHITE (WHSB 1938 - 1945)

Memories flood back. Of Harry King (aka Six foot of misery) and his ancient car, registration PM which we interpreted back in 1938 as “Push Me”. He horrified Form 1A by finishing a talk on hens’ eggs by swallowing it raw! He was a great teacher, in spite of his nickname and had a house out at Barling and a yacht moored on the River Blackwater as I recall. Harry King also took a party of first formers down to Devon in the summer holidays. Around ten of us camped in a barn at Burrator on the edge of Dartmoor with Harry King as our mentor.

Day trips were to various places, including Widdicombe (of Widdicombe Fair fame), Princetown (of prison fame, where I struck up a conversation with one of the inmates out cutting the grass – he came from Benfleet!). Also, on the list was Plymouth where I disgraced myself by being so interested in the Ark Royal docked there that I missed the bus back to Burrator – Harry was not amused.

Our English teacher Mr Rosborough (aka “The Baron”) inspired terror in most of the first form and hence, I learnt little from him as did most of my fellow pupils. However, in contrast, most of the other teachers were first rate. I found history pretty boring, being based mainly on the various Kings and Queens of England, with virtually nothing on the lives of the masses and nothing of other countries (including the rest of the UK).

Another vivid memory was several years later, when we had returned from exile in Derbyshire back to Leigh, but with the war very much in evidence. As a sixth former and a prefect, I was rostered on to sleep at school overnight on fire watch duties. This was usually quite boring and the equipment we had was pretty minimal, consisting of a bucket of water and a stirrup pump and another bucket full of sand! By this time the enemy activity consisted of the odd low level intruder aircraft at night, with V1s (aka Doodle Bugs) and later V2 rockets which were quite scary, as one had absolutely no warning of their impending arrival and the first we knew would be the sonic boom (they were supersonic) and a very loud explosion from the warhead. If this happened during school time (which it did at times) there was always the fear that your home had been hit!

By this time, I had joined the Air Training Corp at school, with Harry Harden in charge. A lot of drilling was indulged in but also learning the Morse code and aircraft recognition. Rarely, we were also given orientation flights either in a twin engine de Havilland Rapide and once a Percival Q6. On one of these flights, the pilot misjudged the approach on landing and ended up hitting a Pill Box at Rochford aerodrome. Both starboard wings were torn off but fortunately the fuselage was relatively undamaged, although we had to wade through petrol from the ruptured fuel tanks to get on to safe ground. There was a big positive though with the ATC as far as I was concerned – that was the opportunity to learn to glide. The gliders were Slingsby Cadets, virtually a primary glider with a proper fuselage. A winch (Wild Winch) was used to tow the single seater glider across Rochford aerodrome, first just as a ground slide, then low hops (maximum 1 metre above the ground) followed by high hops and, day of all days, we were allowed to release the cable and glide straight ahead for a landing. That day (31st December 1944) I gained my International A Badge with a dizzy flight of 42 seconds – the longest flight of the day. Since then, I have managed to get my Gold C Badge, with three diamonds, so it was the start of a long acquaintance with the sport.

Obviously, I would be delighted to hear from any pupils of that era who may remember what it was like.

John White (WHSB 1938 - 1945)
Canberra, Australia

PETER WHITE (WHSB 1945 – 1952)

As my elder brother John has contributed to this Newsletter, and I have written an Obituary for my great friend Harry Bacon, I thought I should say a little bit about myself.

Like many others, I attended West Leigh Junior School, interrupted by a spell in Belper when my brother was evacuated there with WHSB. I left Westcliff after A levels in 1952, and went to Imperial College in London, from where I graduated in 1955 with a B.Sc. (Eng.) in Civil Engineering. I was told that British Railways, then in the throes of an extensive Modernisation Plan, had a good Graduate Training scheme, so with the minimum of fuss I signed-up, intending to stay just for the 2 years of training.

39 years later, I retired from B.R., as it still was. I worked successively in Stratford, Kings Cross, Leeds, Newcastle, Preston, Liverpool, Manchester and London, which was quite typical if one wanted to progress. My last two jobs were Assistant Director of Civil Engineering at BRB HQ on the structures side, and Infrastructure Manager for North West Regional Railways, back in Manchester. I took early retirement from B.R. at the start of the process towards privatisation and did odd bits of Consultancy work for a few years, including two exciting short spells in Hong Kong, concerned with the railway being constructed to serve the new Airport at Chek Lap Kok, which included the longest suspension bridge in the world carrying a road and a railway.

With my wife Margaret and three sons we lived at various times in Billericay, Leeds, Preston, and Formby on the coast north of Liverpool, before finally moving in 2011 to Cambridge, to be near one of our sons and his family. We now have five Grandchildren, varying in age from 18 to 2.

Thinking back to my school days, I have been amused to read many comments in the annual Newsletters about various Masters. Obviously the most important subjects were those which prepared me for University and career, especially Maths, Physics, Chemistry and English. Background knowledge of French and German languages has enriched my life generally and made foreign holidays more enjoyable. Music, under “Bertie” Bates, inspired me to appreciate the joys of Classical music all my life, and especially singing in Choral Societies. This started in the School Choir, and I took up choral singing again in 1979. Latin has also helped, the language of so much choral music.

I have kept in touch at various times with fellow Old Westcliffians. I knew Alan Burroughs from our Scouting days, and Keith Stephens as we both attended an international youth camp in Germany in our young days. During my time working in London, I met another contemporary, Roger Browne, at a Civil Engineering function, and subsequently in his office. Harry and I attended the annual Dinner at the School a couple of years ago. It was so good to meet some of our contemporaries, including Keith and Alan, and see the changes to the buildings. Most of all, it was very satisfying that we were able to be there together while it was still possible, having started our friendship at the school.

Peter

JOHN WRIGHT

I taught music at the school until 2008. I was privileged to work with an astonishing number of exceptionally talented young musicians. Among them was Toby Shaer. Toby plays folk fiddle and Irish whistles with equal virtuosity. He was a frequent performer at the 'chamber concerts' series that we started in 2006. Toby offered something to these primarily classical evenings that was both a little different and deeply felt. In those days, his private listening included the early recordings of Irish singer-songwriter Cara Dillon.

I now live in Guangzhou, Southern China, where I was thrilled to be able to hear Toby performing alongside Cara on an Asian tour that, as well as Guangzhou, took in Shanghai and Shenzhen. I was delighted, and unsurprised, to find that Toby has not merely become an exciting and successful professional musician, but that he has retained the modesty and warmth of character that his teachers and classmates would remember.

Best wishes

John



11. WESTCLIFF RFC (Formerly Old Westcliffian RFC) – Review of 2017

The club has enjoyed great good fortune over the past twelve months, and eagerly anticipates the momentous happenings scheduled to occur over the next couple of years.

On the playing front, the 2016-17 season saw the 1st XV achieve its highest ever position in the leagues, finishing seventh in National Three London & South East, which is the fifth national tier of rugby – thus arguably placing us in the top one hundred clubs in the country. For the first time at this level, we posted more than ten victories and indeed could have had a few more, losing several matches agonisingly in the last minutes. Notable victories were recorded over sides of the pedigree of Guernsey, Sutton & Epsom and Guildford but without doubt the most satisfying of all was our first victory over Southend since 1982, in a tense match at Aviation Way, watched by over a thousand people. Westcliff prevailed 10-7 and thus gained revenge for their 15-17 defeat at Warner's Park earlier in the season, when a last ditch penalty attempt just dropped wide of the posts. In finishing seventh, we now have the distinction, for the first time ever, of being the highest-placed Essex club nationally. Harry Branch was an ever-present throughout the league campaign and Jack Jones was leading points scorer with 125 points. Further down the club, the Bulldogs (once known as the Extra A) were champions of the Shepherd Neame Merit Table Division Five, losing only one match all season.

This season, we have performed even better still, and at time of writing sit fifth in the table, with ten wins under our belts already and another ten matches still to play. Of the eighteen squad players who represent the 1st XV, it is usual for at least fifteen to have come through the mini and junior ranks.

We have demolished Southend twice, by 69-5 and 52-0, and other notable results have included a high-scoring double over Westcombe Park, a fifty-point win over Sutton & Epsom, forty-point victories over Sidcup and Towcestrians and a tight win against a Barnes side currently in second place. Further misery was inflicted on Southend when the Lions comfortably saw off Southend Priors to win the Senior Essex Cup for the first time in the club's history, after it was agreed between the clubs that the second strings should compete for the trophy in view of the proximity of the league season. A great achievement.

Old boys in the 1st XV squad include Robert Smith, son of Bob Smith, Reece Whiting, Andy Roskams, Rory Lane, Jack Hopkins and Billy Marrant.

We were also delighted to see former lynch-pin Ben McKeith turning out in club colours again for a few matches, after nearly four seasons out with serious injury, before crocking himself again! We are at least grateful to have Ben's expertise on the coaching team.

Chief coach is Chris Waring and team manager Rick Compton, both sterling OW's.

The Lions, ably skippered by OW Ben Dane, are currently unbeaten and top of the Shepherd Neame Merit Table Division One while the Rhinos (formerly the A XV) are performing respectably in Division Four. The 1st XV lost impressive back Chris Dudman at the end of last season when he emigrated to Malta – since his arrival, Chris has played for the full Maltese side in the second tier of world rugby, having taken on Israel, Croatia and the Czech Republic, also representing the island at seven-a-side.

Pick of the youth sides is the Under Sixteen unit, who regularly put out two sides each week, both of which recently reached the Essex Cup semi-final.

Mini rugby exists right down to under five level and the ladies team is in the process of being reincarnated. The club also received a prestigious award from Southend Borough Council as the club of the year.

Off the pitch, the main talk concerns our move to some brand new premises, which is now scheduled to occur late in 2018. With Aviation Way being turned into part of the Airport Industrial Park, we are to be relocated to new premises just a few hundred yards away from the existing location, on which work has already started. The new ground will boast four pitches, floodlights and a state of the art new clubhouse, which embraces many of requirements for modern-day buildings, for example disabled access and individual showering facilities in each dressing room.

We will be in many ways sorry to leave Aviation Way, where we have, of course, been since 1984, but there is no doubt that this move has come at the right time as we aim to continue our quest to remain the senior club, not just in Southend, but in the county.

The club's centenary takes place in 2021-22, and no doubt we will be preparing suitably. All OW's are more than welcome to visit us on match days and more members are always welcome, be it at social, senior or junior level.

Nick Crowe

WESTCLIFF RFC – CENTENARY

The Rugby Club celebrates its centenary in 2022 and as part of my retirement project I intend to produce a publication celebrating 100 years of OWRFC/WRFC. Thanks to Dick Davies and Don Day, I have a huge amount of playing stats to be occupied with but I would be grateful for any input you might wish to make available, for example:

- Notable moments in the club's history.
- Especially notable individuals over the club's history.
- The move to 1008 London Road and life at 1008 London Road
- The move to Aviation Way – copies of relevant meetings etc
- Links to WHSB e.g. past copies of school magazines/ photos
- Links to OWA
- Links to OWCC
- Sevens exploits
- Easter Festivals and incidents of interest (!)

- The effects of league rugby
- Captains' reports or reminiscences relating to particular seasons (all teams, not just the 1st XV) or matches
- Club entertainments over the years e.g. Old Tyme Nights, Carnivals, Pantos, Ladies Nights, Summer Balls
- Youth and mini rugby over the years
- Club tours, both senior and junior, over the years
- Youth section county honours – trophies and county representatives
- Anything else which I have not mentioned above.

Any relevant photographs or copies thereof would be gladly received / borrowed.

Someone has the old Committee Meeting minutes covering the period 1922 – circa 1984. Anyone help me on this?

If any of you have any further suggestions that I might look at, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Although we're talking four years' time, time passes rather more rapidly as one ages, and there is potentially a hell of a lot to do.

Regards

Nick Crowe

12. OLD WESTCLIFFIAN LODGE NO. 5456

This year has been an exciting year for the Old Westcliffian Lodge. We have now opened our doors to all.

We would still prefer Old Boys or Staff from the school but would now consider family members of students as well.

Our new Worshipful Master for 2017/18 is W Bro Don Day who is also a Vice President of the OWA.

We have continued our support of the school by giving £500.00 to the CCF and give a prize on speech day each year.

The highlight of our year continues to be the Lodge meeting we hold at the School. We are able to entertain and welcome other Old School lodges to show off our school which most of us attended and of which we are proud.

We are always looking for new blood. If you are interested ask either the Lodge Secretary Frank James on f.james441@btinternet.com or the Association secretary Terry Birdseye both of whom will give details of how to apply.

Frank James

Terry Birdseye (1957-1962) 01702 714241

13. EDITOR

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the Newsletter this year, and again there have been a huge number of articles.

There was one article that I was unable to fit in, as it was quite lengthy (a first hand account of Hurricane Ivan!) but I will ensure that this is featured in next year's OWA Newsletter.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Terry for his help and advice.

As previously, should you know of anyone not receiving their Newsletter, please ask them to get in touch. They can either email their details to terry.birdseye@gmail.com or contact the Hon. Secretary by post. Please also keep us informed of email and postal address changes.

With best wishes to all OWs.

Shanie White

14. (i) THE OLD WESTCLIFFIAN ASSOCIATION

The Association was formed in 1926 to enable pupils to have a means of keeping in touch with staff and colleagues.

The Annual Newsletter forms a good link between members at home and abroad.

The AGM is usually held in July.

Our Annual Reunion Dinner is held in September.

We welcome a growing membership and our Honorary Secretary will be pleased to welcome new members on receipt of an application.

14. (ii) The Old Westcliffian Association

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*** Please make ALL cheques payable to “Old Westcliffian Association” ***

Application for Life Membership Subscription	£10 (£5 if in full time education)
Life Members’ Tie	£10
Cufflinks in Presentation Box	£15
Ladies Brooches	£12

NAME:

YEARS DATES AT SCHOOL:

ADDRESS:

.....

..... POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

PLEASE NOTE THAT IF YOU DO NOT PROVIDE AN EMAIL ADDRESS, AN ADDITIONAL £5 SHOULD BE SENT FOR FUTURE NEWSLETTER MAILINGS.

Send membership cheques to:

Terry Birdseye
810 London Road
LEIGH ON SEA, Essex, SS9 3NH
Tel: 01702 714241
Mobile: 07752 192164
Email: terry.birdseye@gmail.com

Send cheques for ties and cufflinks to:

R. Arnold
8 Orchard Grove
LEIGH ON SEA, Essex, SS9 5TR
Tel: 01702 521877
Email: dickandmaryarnold@gmail.com

