



# THE OLD PALUDIANS NEWSLETTER

August 2021



## WELCOME TO THE SUMMER EDITION

It has been good to read the articles within. There are updates from people who have commented on their lockdown experiences. We did not expect lockdown to continue as long as it has.

There are a lot of memories in the 1950s. Could this mean that one has to be really old to write about school days? Of course this is not the case, but how lovely it would be to have some contributions sent in for the next Newsletter from those who are a little bit younger too. There are some very well written memories from the 1970s and we do need more of those.

Come on ladies, from the High School, there are a lot of you out there as well as ladies from the school as it is now. Why don't you put pen to paper, or fingers to a keyboard and let us know how you are

doing. Or you could send in an old school memory about your time there? We would all love to hear from you.

Some of the contributors are saying how much they valued their time at school and how it helped them to become the people they are today. That is so good to hear.

Meanwhile I do hope that the Newsletter is a good way of keeping you all in touch with what is going on within the school, and with each other, during these unprecedented times.

Please let me wish you all a very happy summer-time.

**Glenys Laws** (*nee DICKINSON SHS 1959-65*)

*Editor*

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Most members preferred a Spring Reunion, so I am pleased to announce that the next Reunion is planned for 19th March 2022 at UCGS, Lascelles Road, Slough.

I have an advantage over readers because I have read the draft Newsletter, so I know what is in it. So, I would like to add to what Jean and Rajesh have said upon the retirement of John Walsh, Head Caretaker UCGS. He was always available, any time of the day, to help move things, guide me around the ever-changing labyrinth of school corridors and anything else I asked. Welcome to what must currently be the longest serving Old Paludian.

Reading the SGS recollections, I recalled my start at the school in the prefab huts in lowly 2C in 1943, heated by smelly coke stoves with burning ash spilt all over the floor. When the siren sounded we dashed across Lascelles Road to the shelter (such as it was) carrying our rations tins, sealed with window strengthening tape and containing the mandatory Horlicks tablets.

Although we have missed out on Reunions, we

keep contact with the school through the funding of project grants and our annual contribution to the Old Pals Essay Writing Competition Anthology, which has just been published for 2021. This book contains some excellent work and I strongly recommend getting a copy, if you are interested.

The relationship with the school continues to strengthen with our two school governors and the excellent collaboration we have with the Head (Mark) and Deputy (Oliver) with whom I have enjoyed working.

The request for volunteers to fill the vacant Committee positions was disappointing with only one member putting their name forward. In the meantime, Alan, Celia, Glenys, Ian, Jane, Kav and Rajesh will continue their excellent work towards the next Reunion, when we will be asking for volunteers again.

This will be my last message as Chairman, but I hope to see many of you at the March 2022 Reunion.

**Ron Fidler** (SGS 1943-49) *Chairman*

## JOHN WALSH RETIRES AFTER 35 YEARS

I would like to wish John a very happy retirement.

He was a very good friend of the Old Paludians during my time as Chairman. He always helped the Committee with preparations for the Annual Reunions and then at the end of the day he was there to return the tables and chairs to normality ready for School the following Monday. Without his willing support Reunion Day would have been much more challenging for the Committee.

His was always a friendly face whenever I went into School and he helped with storing some of our archives.

I am sure that committee members from my time join me in wishing John and Carol all the best for the years ahead.

**Jean Tyler**

(SHS 1950-56 Chair 2000-2014)



### Presentation of a memorial plaque for John Walsh

I'm in a somewhat unique position to speak about John. I was a student at the School when he joined to be trained under Mr Barnes – formerly of Slough High School who had come out of retirement on the sudden death of our caretaker to help – becoming Head Caretaker the following year.

It was quite a change for us to have a young, dynamic person in charge of the school facilities as John's keen eyes and ears limited what we could get away with, but John was notable for his diligence, good humour and easy rapport with students and staff alike and the school and facilities continued to be very well run.

It was many years before I returned to school to attend a Reunion of the Old Paludians Association and I was very pleased to see John again almost exactly as I remembered him but with the odd grey hair here and there if you look really closely. Joining the Old Paludians Association Committee and becoming Chair of Governors I've had a number of dealings with John over recent years and it's fair to say he's highly respected by the Old Paludians for his assistance and hard work for the Annual Reunion. Jean Tyler the former Chair of the OPA said this when she informed John was retiring... "John Walsh was the best friend that the Old Paludians ever had." ... which is quite impressive for an organisation over 100 years old - but heartfelt. I can only endorse Jean's sentiment and thank John for everything he has done.

As a Governor I was impressed at the way John and his team managed the facilities here at Upton not only on a daily basis but during the upheaval of



In grateful appreciation of the loyal and exemplary service of  
**John Walsh,**  
Head Caretaker,  
to this school and for his assistance to generations of Old Paludians on the occasion of his retirement after 35 years.

14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

the recent refurbishments to keep things running smoothly. It's hard to imagine now just how extensive the refurbishments were but they touched every part of the school.

Which brings me to my final point. Since I first met John as a student I can't think of a single inch of the fabric of the school which hasn't been fully refurbished, replaced or added. That means of course that today and here - John is actually the oldest part of the school. This is entirely fitting. With 35 years as Head Caretaker (in old terms) - Site Controller as he is more properly known, John is an institution. He'll be sorely missed and difficult to replace but he does now at least become an Old Paludian so he'll attend the next Annual Reunion as an honoured guest.

Many thanks John. Have a great retirement. It's very well deserved.

**Rajesh Sharma**

*Old Paludians Association  
Chair of Governors*

I was able to speak to John later in the evening. He was very moved by the commemoration and expressed his affection for the Old Paludians and for his career at the school.

## MISCELLANY

### Sheila Eimermann née Perks

(SHS 1952-56)

*Sheila wrote this at the end of last year.*

My 2020 story started with an operation at the end of January, which meant no physical activities for two or three months. No tai chi, tap dance or exercise classes and no country walking. Still, a great chance to work on my family tree and start knitting for a great grandson due to be born in the summer. I decided to work on my crochet skills and made a patchwork blanket from odd balls of wool. My first country walk was to be March 22nd and I was really looking forward to it but of course lockdown came on the 23rd. The country walks became city walks around Hackney, Islington and Haringey, discovering all sorts of interesting buildings and many green spaces. It did of course require a lot of dodging skills and zigzagging to avoid people who seemed completely unaware that there was a pandemic in the country. We gradually ventured further afield to Epping Forest and again I discovered parts that I had not seen before, including a lovely old house where John Clare spent time when he was ill. We wanted to get right out into the countryside but worried that we'd be chased off with villagers brandishing pitch forks. Once I was back to full health I felt very energetic and did a much needed spring clean. My neighbours obviously did the same as many objects appeared outside houses for anyone passing to take. During my clearing out I realised that I had a lot of tins of paint donated by a friend who moved from a large house to a flat. It was marked 2012 but most was in good condition and there was enough for me to redecorate my hall from front door up to the top of the house. Still full of energy I found paint from 2001 which was again in really good condition and repainted my living room. Then I touched up all the rooms where needed. My great grandson was born on July 10th and I have managed to see him three times and get lots of WhatsApp pictures from my granddaughter. My classes all restarted on Zoom and I'm now doing tai chi, tap dance, line dance and exercise classes plus country walking again. I have managed to meet up with friends outside with packed lunch and distancing. All in all it's been a hectic year but I will be glad when I can get back to seeing all my

family in the flesh rather than on Zoom. We have met infrequently in small groups outside but I want a big family gathering. And hooray, we now have some vaccines on the way. Oh, I nearly forgot that I have been making my own very delicious bread with a really good wholemeal flour from my local baker and no longer buy ready made bread.

### Keith French (SGS 1963-70)

#### What I did in Lockdown

Lockdown, what a strange concept, I don't think any of us realised at first how serious and long lasting this curtailing of our freedom would be. I'm not sure if I would have taken any notice at all of the directive or indeed the letter that I received from the Health Secretary stating that because of my asthma I was considered vulnerable and would have to take even more care than the rest of the population had it not been for my wife's authoritative voice of reason which was quickly followed by a message from my former GP. Both of these were aware that I wasn't really one of those people who could simply stop whatever it was I was doing. I was used to working at least seven days a week! To be told I had to stay at home was not an easy thing to grasp. I was however quite lucky in that I live on a farm so being able to get exercise by walking around the fields where there was nobody else to be seen was a real bonus.

This meant that I couldn't be involved in the day-to-day running of our business. I suspect my son might have been secretly pleased about this because it obviously meant that I couldn't interfere or deliver my advice, however well meaning it was intended! The business of running heavy lorries on highway maintenance and recycling road planings carried on much as before and in fact was probably even busier. The Government said that the road network had to be maintained and many local authorities saw the reduction in traffic as an opportunity to get some vital repair work done. However, shielding and lockdown dictated that I could not work with other staff or drive a lorry. The vintage vehicle rallies were all cancelled so there wasn't much point in preparing exhibits for the Brighton Run or the other events which we had attended regularly up until 2020.

On one of my daily walks around the farm I ventured into a copse near the house, to find a sea of bluebells hidden from view by a massive encroachment of brambles. Scrambling through I found the long forgotten remains of a tree house that had become largely overgrown and had suffered from

the ravages of the weather. I had built the structure about 25 years ago. My son had asked if he could have a tree house so together with the help of the caretaker for the local school I set about the task one Sunday afternoon. We got four telegraph poles and set them up in the middle of the copse and then joined them up by bolting heavy timbers between them and then screwed the deck all across the top of it to make a platform. Malcolm, my caretaker friend, in his broad Geordie accent asked me 'what are you going to do now like'. I replied 'there's an old garden shed over there in bits let's put that up there' and so we lifted it up with a digger and by about 8 o'clock that night there it was, a tree house complete with outside platform, rope swing and access steps made with those used by BT engineers to climb those very telegraph poles. The tree house provided endless days of fun including some wild camping sleepovers for our son and his friends. I'm not sure that my wife was particularly comfortable with this concept and I remember we had to sleep with the window open so that we could occasionally check that the campers hadn't fallen off the platform or been eaten by wild animals. Eventually as with all childhood things the children grew out of it and it was left to quietly decay on its own until being rediscovered by its builder many years later, a little like an archaeologist who had found something that he knew was there but just hadn't bothered to look previously.

I set about clearing the space and considering what I might do with it. I loaded all the tools I needed into an old Peugeot estate car that had been abandoned by one of our workers and over the next few weeks drove up and down the field to the copse and cleared all the brambles from the site and opened it up again.

Then I sat there in my self isolation and thought, what can I do with the remains of the tree house? I didn't want to take it down but some of the superstructure was simply too rotten to re use. Then my imagination kicked in, I would turn it into a woodland stage, well what else! I had been singing folk songs for a few years and had even had a go at entertaining drinkers in a couple of pubs and the local folk club. I always got a round of applause but whether that was in appreciation or sympathy I'm not sure! So I began to think that as soon as we were able to meet up with friends and family again we could simply use the space and enjoy ourselves. I have a couple of mates who play guitar and so the plan was hatched.

Over the next three weeks I created a two tier stage with roof and sides and an upper deck for future

expansion! Having built the structure, I realised that there could be another use for it too. I could make it into an outdoor cinema, we got a screen and a projector and ran a power line across a field and set up lights in the trees. The 'grand design' was finished off by adding socially distanced seating and a fire pit to improve the ambience.

Well, after all that, was it successful? Definitely a resounding yes! As soon as we were allowed to meet up again cinema evenings became a popular event with our friends and now in 2021 requests for repeat visits are already in the diary.

The reader might be forgiven for thinking this was enough for me, but they would have been wrong. Amongst other things, I put pen to paper and wrote some poetry, I also revived an almost forgotten cartoon character, 'Froggy', originally created by my mother over 50 years ago. This little chap now finds his way onto social media sites and in celebration cards and stories. Last but not least I reinvigorated my interest in classic motorcycles. In between the lockdowns I found myself riding a 650cc Sports Matchless as part of the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride, which raises money for prostate cancer research and men's mental health. I guess as I went along the country roads I was remembering my youth racing up the Lacelles Road after school, however this time I travelled at a much more sedate and sensible speed!

I sometimes wonder if we will ever return to the fast pace of life that we all put ourselves through before the lockdown or will we perhaps think about some of the benefits we have enjoyed from spending time with friends and family and decide it's time to take things just a little bit easier?

#### The Battle of Covid Nineteen

*Like an unseen creeping warrior mist it came,  
Spreading slowly with stealth it's foes unaware,  
Engulfing each nation as night falls on day.  
Leaving stunned peoples everywhere, life gone awry.*

*Defence came too late for some, fallen too soon,  
'lock down, lock down' the battle cry heard.  
Panic ensued, fear of no food, no masks and no gowns.  
The World's Generals, regularly seen so arrogant past,  
Floundered in panic, their confident direction now lost.*

*Words didn't help but the strongest shone through.  
Guiding the foot soldiers, some mistakes made too.  
The profits of doom on their soap boxes stood.  
New found social media their messages read.  
But with unity strength were the doubters rebuffed.  
And the hopes of so many broke through the clouds*

*The people stood strong to help fellow man.  
Sacrificing so much to give care or a hand,  
Without stopping for one minute to think or decline.  
Rallying behind the example of Tom, to cling to a hope,  
That once again realising our world 'lives as one'.  
The invisible enemy vanquished!*

*The road will be long, the setbacks be many.  
The life that we know, never again be the same.  
But love will shine through, our friendships recovered,  
Our journey will end holding hands with each other,  
As we meet, rainbow's end, no challenge too far.*  
**Keith French**

## Valerie Kershaw née Speed

(SHS 1949-54)

Keeping in touch is a lovely idea.

Just to say that I keep fairly busy with one thing and another but in these strange times I have been really delighted to be able to sing on Zoom with my normal choir, Harrow Philharmonic, but also on YouTube with the Self-Isolation Choir which is really enjoyable. We have rehearsed Handel's 'Messiah' and Mendelssohn's 'Elijah' and other lovely music during the year. I was in the School Choral Society; as was Jean (Wisbey) Pritchard, with whom I am still in close touch.

I also join Extend exercise classes twice a week online. I had a shoulder replacement operation in August, which has gone well.

I now live in Stanmore, Middlesex and have two children and four grandchildren and enjoy being with them when possible.

My sister Daphne (Speed) Boyles at SHS, I think from 1939 to 1945 is now 92, and rather frail but still living at home in Derbyshire, with help. Her three sons are a huge support, and she has seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

It will be good to get back to more normality and meet up with family and friends again.  
All good wishes to everybody.

## Mary Haydock née File (SHS 1944-51)

My husband and I have made the most of our "visitors" during Lockdown. They fly in every day at regular times. The most allusive is the magpie who calls twice a day, but the minute we get out the camera to record his visit he is gone!

We also enjoy our weekly visits to Lackford Lakes, where we enjoy watching the intrepid "sailors" falling onto the lake! Unfortunately now we are in Tier 2 that pleasure will be denied.

## Athar Siddiqui (SGS 1974-78)

I was pleased to see the Christmas Newsletter but as I scrolled I saw hardly any contributions from my era. I remember many fellow pupils from my time when it was a boy's school. Alas no contribution to Old Pals. Therefore I have decided to right this wrong.

What was the world like in 1974? Ted Heath was the Conservative Prime Minister later changed to Harold Wilson's Labour government. Leeds United, Derby and Arsenal were the big football teams. England lost to Poland in the World Cup qualifiers and started their long decline after their heady days at the top. George Best, Bobby Charlton, Bobby Moore, Billy Bremner and a young Kevin Keegan were still famous footballers of the day. Long hair, flared trousers and platform shoes were the fashion of the day. Muhammad Ali was at his boxing peak, Showaddywaddy, Mud and Slade were the big pop bands. Elvis was in decline while Abba took the world by storm in the popular Eurovision of 1974. Jon Pertwee was Dr Who (my all-time favourite). There were just three channels on TV, phone booths were everywhere and you could make a call for 2p, or make a longer call for a princely 10p. We bought our first colour TV that year, and there was a single telephone located usually in our cold hall. Love Thy Neighbour was the big TV hit. Space travel was still fascinating as only five short years earlier man landed on the moon.

Calculators were rare and we had to calculate long multiplication using laborious logarithms. Microwave ovens and video players were unheard of, computers were huge things with spinning dials you saw in science fiction. We used paraffin heaters and every boy had green parka coats.

All boys carried battered brief cases and we played football in the playground with balded tennis balls. Many boys smoked behind the bike sheds and on their way home - it was seen as a sign of coolness. Tweets were what birds did and online was the work of a circus tightrope walker. Elizabeth was the Queen. Ok some things haven't changed...

I was transferred to SGS on 4th Feb 1974 in my 3rd year. I remember a lot from my time at SGS. Stern Mr Painter was the headmaster and his rather formidable deputies were Mr Roberts and Mr Binstead. Nice Mrs Bowater was our biology teacher. No-nonsense Mrs Holgate taught us English, Musician Mr Vaughan (he appeared on New Faces) was our Physics teacher, Wiley Mr Cullingworth Chemistry, big Mr Thompson History, stylish Mr Riley Maths, and the very aged Mr Portus for Geography. I can see the faces of my other teachers but I am

struggling to remember their names. I was in House Gray which had its leanest years while I was there. Hampden won everything.

I achieved 10 'O' levels and four 'A' levels and left SGS in 1978 to go to Manchester University to gain Honours in Nuclear Engineering, followed by a Masters in Engineering from Liverpool University.

At SGS I was a keen footballer and played in their second 11. Every break time we played football (that bald tennis ball). I was also a cricketer and recorded four for 25 against the old foe Desborough in 1977.

The school squash court opened around that time and this became my sport for the next 20 years. Probably the most famous boy from my era, that I know about, was Philip Hubble who won the silver medal in the Moscow Olympics butterfly swimming in 1980.

I went on to have a career in engineering in the aerospace industry ie Rolls Royce Derby and British Aerospace in Hatfield followed by five years in America in the late 80s, working as an engineer on the F16 military engines. Coming back to the UK in 1991 I joined Lucas Aerospace in Birmingham as a Principal Engineer. In 1996 I transitioned into the world of IT working nine years at IBM and 11 years at Computer Sciences Corporation. After a few other roles I am now a Business Architect at ERIKS, an engineering company in Birmingham.

Nowadays I enjoy playing golf and badminton although my game in the latter is in decline. I am also CEO for a Charity and I keep the grey matter going by being a student of the Arabic language (makes our French lessons-une pièce de gâteau- by comparison).

I have a wife, three children and a granddaughter. I am 61 and have been living in Solihull since 1991.

## Russell Hancock (SGS 1958-65)

With regard to the Christmas Newsletter some of the names mentioned spark memories: Mr Madge reading short stories by "Flying Officer X", the old huts down the road from the main school and being allowed home early when there was a thick fog. Mention was made of Ron Brown, a few years senior to me but who I knew better as a sailing companion in later life. He is thankfully still with us but one of his compatriots, John Savage, sadly died a few years ago.

I remember other staff members who did not stay so long but still left an impression: Peter Smith, French Master, who drove (restored?) an old Citroen and Mr Barwick, English Master, reading from "The Hobbit" in the aforementioned huts.

Like one of your other correspondents I still wonder what it was all about. My two elder brothers both went to SGS so that was probably the prime reason. There was a chance later to transfer to Burnham Grammar school but I was not keen, so stayed put.



Early reading for Russell Hancock

# MEMORIES OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

**Barry Gates** (SGS 1954-60)

**Wilf: A brief introduction, some musings and an afterthought.**

## Introduction.

I grew up in a small village just over the Middlesex border in Beechy Buckinghamshire, about 3 miles from the last station at the western end of The Piccadilly Line in Uxbridge. At that time it seemed a rural childhood. Some teachers were neighbours as was a headmaster. These were small schools, a few minutes walk from home. I knew many of the children from all years. Today the village it is inside the noose of The M25.

## Wilf

Going to Slough Grammar School in 1954 was an experience, two bus connections to make, an hour travel each way every day. A markedly different environment, 700 boys, many masters wore gowns, a formality of structure and Dr. Long (Wilf) as headmaster. In my mind's eye, a grey man in a dark grey suit, a black gown, low on humour, he emitted an atmosphere of austere grey authority.

I can only recall one lesson from Wilf, sometime in year one, Religious Instruction and perhaps just a few moments from that lesson. Wilf standing at the blackboard writing in chalk "Ur of the Chaldees", in a neat hand, head back, peering through the bottom of his glasses. Perhaps the lesson addressed Abraham and early Christianity, the subject is lost to me now. It is that image of Wilf in my mind's eye that sets my impression of him.

Step forward a couple of years to a morning assembly, some worship to start the day. Wilf used the opportunity to sermonise or address a matter occupying his mind. This particular morning it was the general standard of school uniforms. He called two boys onto the stage, one I knew from my class, the other I knew little of him apart from his name. Indicating the boy I knew he remarked "this is how I expect you wear the uniform", pointing to the other boy remarked "this is unsatisfactory". No account taken of personal circumstances of either boy or what might result from marking one out from another in front of their peers. My early teenage mind reacted against this as a gross injustice to the victim of his spotlight.

A caning was almost a rite of passage for a 1950's schoolboy. The misdemeanour that put me bent over the desk was more a result of bad timing than evil intent. Wilf's sermon that morning had addressed "behaviour in the classroom". An hour or two later, waiting for Mr. Portus to arrive for a geography lesson, three of us decorated a wellington boot with references from The Goon Show and lobbed it one to another. (The Goon show was a very popular subversive, absurdist radio programme of the 1950's.) Portus walked in as the boot was in flight, we were off to see Wilf and sentenced to one stroke each. Wilf's technique was smooth, victim over the desk, cane in the right hand, four or five paces back, turn, a swift pace forward, deliver the stroke, repeat as necessary. The style was professional standard and must have involved practical training at some point in time. We collectively said "thank you sir" as we exited his office. A strange reaction. No note given to explain the punishment. Recalling this now in the 21st Century, I find it remarkable nothing was provided to parents, explaining why a child was legally assaulted at school with a wooden stick.

## SCHOOL STORY

**Don Fraser** (SGS 1953-58)

There were always a few games of football going on in the Junior School playground and on this particular day there were some first or second year lads playing with a ball about four inches [10cm] diameter in slightly damp conditions. During the course of the game one of the lads lobbed the ball over at about head height - Head Master's head height! It smacked him squarely on his right ear. The players froze in horror at what had just happened. Your favourite striker could not have landed that ball more accurately! The amazing thing about the whole episode was the Head's reaction, or to be more accurate, a total lack of reaction. He did not raise his hand to his stinging ear, he did not turn to see who had kicked the ball, absolutely no bad language and his pace did not falter in the slightest. The only clue to suggest that anything had happened was that he had a very slight grin on his face as he walked on towards the school building and disappeared. By this time the initial horror had dissipated and it was smiles all

round at having got away with it, even though it was obviously a freak accident. As for the lad who had kicked the ball, I doubt if many SGS boys could have topped the bragging rights on that one!

## A second anecdote

When we were in the fifth year the SGS introduced a new athletic field event - the pole vault. The equipment was set up on the school playing field and in front, set in the ground, was the box. The purpose of which, was to locate the bottom end of the pole as the athlete went up and over. The box was basically a wooden construction, very approximately 18 inches [46cm] wide with a forward sloping base down to a depth of about eight inches [20cm]. The pole was made of aluminium, nothing like a modern pole that is extremely flexible and made from fibreglass. None of us had ever tried pole vaulting but one of our group, Dave, was keen to give it a go. I had to admire Dave's determination. I'm not sure many of us fancied a tumble from umpteen feet up! He began his run, pole horizontal at shoulder height, the bottom end of the pole located accurately in the box, and Dave began his majestic ascent. At around four or five feet [120 or 150cm] high, our hero came to a shuddering halt, and he plopped back to the spot he'd just taken off from. What on earth could have happened? We all ran over to check it out. Oh dear! the wooden lining of the box had split open and the pole had gone right through and was now stuck in the ground. Dave was ok, definitely surprised and a bit shaken, but fortunately unhurt. Not so the pole, it was now bent, not exactly 'L' shaped, but definitely irreparable. I think it had been reduced to scrap metal.

## MEMORIES OF FAR OFF SCHOOL DAYS

**Ken Kilminster** (SGS 1964 - 72)

Back in September 1964 as a fresh faced wide-eyed unsuspecting newcomer to secondary education I marched up to the gates of the imposing brick built building in Lascelles Road stopped, and wondered what was going to happen next. Well what happened next, over the following eight years, was to delight, entertain, strengthen, sadden and uplift me: oh yes and educate me!

Looking back on my experiences as a schoolboy at Slough Grammar School for Boys, renowned for its sense of tradition, as well as its academic and sport-

ing achievements. I can honestly say that I feel a sense of pride and happiness and camaraderie. I also feel a family pride reflecting on the fact that I was the first of three brothers who attended SGS during the 60s and 70s, and particularly that the eldest son of my youngest brother is now attending the same school, and having the same opportunities as did his father and uncles before him.

Tradition was very obvious from day one at SGS. The Masters strode the corridors resplendent in their flowing black robes - or so it seemed to those of us fresh from the seemingly informal environment of junior school. Many of the teachers disrobed after school assembly in the morning, but the image was still there. A couple of years after I had joined SGS the Headmaster, Dr Long, retired. One vivid memory I have of those far off days is of Dr Long's final assembly; at the end of which he walked to the exit of the hall and shook hands with every boy to say goodbye as we trooped out to start our lessons.

My career choice, within the scientific arena, was probably moulded by the time spent in the laboratory facilities at SGS. Initially in the 'old huts' on the opposite side of Lascelles Road to the main buildings (where the seemingly ancient scarred wooden benches and obsolete looking equipment evoked images of the ghosts of Rutherford, Darwin and Herschel, working alongside our own venerable teachers, or was it that the teachers just looked like Rutherford, Darwin and Herschel?). After a couple of years these museum pieces were replaced by custom built laboratories within the main school buildings that were far better equipped and allowed enquiring minds to delve into the mysteries of chemical, physical and biological experimentation, and we also had our science lessons there! However, I do sometimes wonder what modern day Health and Safety Officers would have made of experiments with benzene and mercury and the unpredictability of the combination of coal gas, Bunsen burners and eager first formers (let alone the devious and calculating fourth formers!). Lab coats were only worn by boffins in science fiction B movies and safety goggles were only used by garage mechanics, operating the oxy-acetylene torch (or Mr. Di Gerolamo the Art Teacher, improvising the fluidity and style of Inter Milan FC in iron and brass). Still, I do not remember any serious accidents or even minor ones in all the years spent learning to swing the lead pendulum, tell the difference between lead and tin or dissect a dogfish (aahh, the wonderful smell of formaldehyde).

School life at SGS offered much more than just a sound academic education if you wanted it. Extra

curricular activities such as sport, the performing arts, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and the Army Cadet Force were all available, as well as all manner of after - school clubs and activities such as chess, debating, radio and television, first aid, even Subbuteo; all of which provided an opportunity to prepare each student for the 'Great Outside' of University, College or even 'work'!

Recently looking back through some of my old school reports and copies of the school magazine *The Swan*, I have come to realise how much I owe to the hard work and patience of the staff who most of the time provided an interesting and enjoyable education, when not handing out detentions, lines, low marks (I am convinced that my essay in biology deserved more than a C) and stinging remarks (an enthusiastic participant during music lessons, but unfortunately Ken is tone deaf).

During my final years at SGS, I had the opportunity and privilege to serve as Senior Prefect, and House Captain of Herschel House, as well as captain of the school soccer second XI. During this period, I learnt much about responsibility, and the organisational skills that stood me in good stead in my later career as a Scientific civil servant, and more recently in setting up my own business in desktop publishing. Although I have many memories (and stories may be in that book I keep meaning to write), of the teaching staff at SGS there are two that I should share here. Mr Wharmby, a much liked and respected member of the senior staff, was senior housemaster of Herschel House and gave me a lot of help and support during my term as House Captain in my final year at SGS. During the inter - house cross country tournament in my final year, I remember seeing, at about the halfway stage, a solitary figure through the murky gloom ( it always rained during cross country) as I splashed through the cold muddy water in amongst the thorns and scrub of the copse in Upton Park. It was Mr Wharmby clapping and cheering on each and every Herschel boy, as we suddenly found our second wind and a new source of energy to take us to the finish line. It worked as Herschel stormed the senior event and took the overall school cup as cross country champions for 1972.

The other teacher I will single out is Mr Inger, who in his role as sports master gave me and my fellow players in the school second XI much support and encouragement to make that 'club' such a happy and successful team. Mr Inger also had the honour of scoring the best goal conceded by the second XI (1970 to 71) in that annual feast of soccer and entertainment. He may have scored the best goal, but we

won the match. Five - three.

As we get older, we tend to look back on 'the good old days', usually through rose coloured spectacles and remember how much better things were and how happy we were. I feel I was particularly fortunate to attend Slough Grammar School for Boys during those far off days of the 60s and early 70s. It was a hard work, but the staff tried to make it enjoyable and entertaining (sometimes unintentionally) and sometimes it was, dare I say it, fun. Have I told you about the time the melodic strains of a 'Whiter Shade of Pale' being played by unseen hands on the school organ echoed across the empty corridors during exam time. When a rather bony looking pupil accepted school colours from the Headmaster Mr Painter during end of term assembly before ascending majestically and mysteriously into the lights above the school stage. Strange that the skeleton from the biology lab also went missing that year.

Apologies if some of the above is not entirely correct, my memory is not what it used ... um ... sorry what was I saying?

## CAN ANYTHING GOOD COME FROM SLOUGH?

### Charles Overton (SGS 1962-70)

I lived in Slough from the age of five until I was twenty-three years old. I then moved on to work in Kent, Essex and France but returned to Bucks where I served as Vicar of Chalfont St Peter from 2005 to 2016.

When I first was there, there was a distinct reserve amongst a small number of parishioners who seemed to regard a state-educated lad from Slough as less than they had hoped for, even though I was the preferred candidate from a list of nineteen applicants.

'Can anything good come from Slough?' seemed to be an echo of John 1 v46, 'Can anything good come from Nazareth?'

That reserve seemed to melt when, in the context of a conversation which mentioned the then High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, "Mr Alexander Boswell". I chipped in "Oh, Alex!"

"You know him?" was the astonished reply!

That was my passport from Slough to respectability and a happy and fruitful ministry in that parish. I had met Alex at Corpus Christi College, Oxford 1970-73.

I will forever regard Slough with affection... it was a great place to grow up and SGS was a school of

which I was proud, where I was very well taught and encouraged, and which sent many of its students to fine universities up and down the land.

## MEMORIES OF SCHOOL

### Dick (Richard) Croker (SGS 1956-63)

#### Chemistry coffee

On many occasions in the chemistry lab we had to distill a liquid.

Bunsen burner, flask with liquid clamped above. Clamped condenser coil with cold water feed. A collecting beaker. A few of us set up two sets of equipment and filled the second flask with clean cold water. We had minimum cooling and the outlet ran into a beaker of coffee under the bench. Very refreshing. Until one day when, as usual, I set up the equipment and all went well until Mr Morgan asked why I was the only one doing a distillation. Another visit to Headmaster.

#### On eating an apple in class

I took an apple to school each day. How do you eat it without arousing suspicion? Sit ( as one always should ) at the back of the class. It was easier in Biology. I had carefully dissected the apple and had peel, pips, hard pip surround, stalk and flesh neatly laid out and started to eat the parts and note how they tasted and what it felt like in the mouth. The classroom had a door at the back leading to a small staff research lab. All the while I had been unaware of the Headmaster's presence behind me. I think he was quite impressed by my rigour but noted that I was not dissecting an ox eye or similar.

#### Midnight walks

I cannot remember who organised night walks. We would catch a train to a night's walk away from school and hike back. One destination was High Wycombe. After a short time, we came to a park which we had to cross because we always tried to keep off roads. The tall gates were closed. I climbed up along with a few others to see if easy enough for all of us. A small boy pushed the gates open. On another occasion I had decided to wear my noticeably short lederhosen, a present from my German penfriend's mother. I must have been mad. We came to a stream and we had to cross. I said I would jump it and if all went well the rest would follow. There was a stinking bog where I landed. So, it turned out well with no muddy trousers for the rest of the night.

On another occasion some of the group started singing as we went through a small hamlet. They were asked to be quiet. On approaching the next dwellings, a blue light could be seen coming our way. I told all but a few to hide behind a convenient bank by the verge. I was asked if I had seen a rowdy group of youths not long ago. I was honest and replied I had not ( it was dark ) and they departed. We had all walked up into the wood to continue our journey as the car turned round. Another escape. What days!

#### The Sport called Flinkpots

In the first and second forms we were based in the hutments. The desks were wooden and had hinged lids. We used metal nibbed pens and ink was from an ink pot. Starting at the back of class someone had the bright idea of putting an ink pot on the edge of the desk lid and by giving a sharp tap under the lip it would flick to the desk in front and so on. We had races between rows.

#### Hockey and why did no one believe me?

Can you remember my dislike of games from a previous edition of the newsletter? I was quietly minding my own business on the wing, not paying attention to the football game I was meant to be a part of. I was approached and asked if I could play hockey. I replied that I did not play any games and particularly not hockey because I had never ever played it and had no intention of being beaten about the shins. I was led away quite forcefully and told to put shin pads on and stand in goal because they were a man short for a match against another school. I protested - but to no avail. If they are called 'backs' in hockey then those players of ours were useless. I think we only lost by about 26 to nil. I was reprimanded for not saving many goal attempts. I replied that I did say that I had never played but they thought I was being modest.

#### German Pied Piper

Mr Sonnicks ( I cannot remember spelling ) had a novel way of teaching German grammar rules. The sentence construction "Wann, Wie, Wo" was one such. He "sang" it and we had to join in and dance up and down the aisles until it was firmly in our heads - several teachers knocked on the door to complain but I think we all remember that rule and many others.

#### Maths and how to enjoy it

Can you remember Mr Davies ( Davis ? ) He looked as though he had been sleeping under a hedge on one

occasion. He had. His land lady had locked him out. He had to teach us Calculus and we had heard that it was difficult. He had a great knack of getting our attention. He held up a school bell, a small box, a bottle and a tin and asked which would hold most beer. On the Applied side he was equally interesting. He asked us how we would work out how to hit a sniper up a hill with a cannon ball and how he would be able to hit the cannon loader. We were hooked and I enjoyed his lessons. I think I can still remember most of these things, but now the bottles and cans have volumes printed on them, so it is not really necessary.

### French in the corner with a dunce's hat

Mr Wall thought that a good punishment for misbehaviour was to make me stand in front of the class with a dunce's hat. It did not bother me so instead I was told to stand outside the Head's door. Not an uncommon sight. On my return at the end of class I was promised detention if I did not complete the test he had set correctly, by answering immediately as he read out the questions. He was disappointed. (I still speak to myself in French and German and the odd bit of Latin.) What else is there to do in lock down?

### Morris dancing

One of my many escapes from the outdoors was to join the woodworking club. While others made canoes or turned fruit bowls, my brother and I made two large partitioned boxes with hinged lids for our Meccano. They are still in perfect condition with their contents. Mr Doncaster, woodworker par excellence, ran a Morris dancing side and I joined. Great fun waving handkerchiefs and bashing each other with wooden sticks.

### Geoffrey Dalton (SGS 1953-60)

I enjoyed reading Barry Gates' contribution to the Old Pals Christmas Newsletter expressing fond memories of Harry Doncaster, the Woodwork Master. As I was at Slough Grammar School between 1953 and 1960, I'm sorry to say I don't remember Barry - probably because he was in the year below us. However, I was also in the Morris Dancing team and Barry's canoe propped up on trestles in the woodwork room definitely rang a bell.

Skills we learnt back then obviously "made a difference", to quote Barry. I have since become an approved woodturning tutor with the AWGB (Association of Woodturners of Great Britain) and I give woodturning tuition in my workshop in the village of Winster in the Derbyshire Peak District.

Winster has a thriving Morris Dancing tradition but I chose not to revive my Morris days with the SGS team when my wife and I moved there in 1981. It was extraordinary, though, to be reminded of the group I was once a part of. Apart from Harry, I don't remember many of the faces except, I think, for Roger Monks (third from left in the 'photo in the last Newsletter) who joined SGS at the same time as I did. However I do recall dancing at several of the SGS summer events complete with handkerchiefs to wave about and short stout sticks that were part of a potato-dibbing routine. The dance progressed by bashing off imaginary loose soil against the sticks of your fellow dancers, hopefully not to cause too much damage to your partner's knuckles.

Regarding health and safety, these days Harry would be strung up by the H&S police. The lathes, the glue pot bubbling away in the corner and the massive table saw with a bed about the size of a pool table, were so obviously dangerous that we acquired a sense of safety borne out of the need for self-preservation. I don't remember much in the way of PPE. If you were stupid enough to cut yourself, you got one of your mates to patch you up. "For goodness sake, Dalton, don't bleed over the bench, bleed over the sawdust on the floor!"

Another string to Harry's bow was to MC the annual school dance. Dave Holford, who was in the year above us, formed a band, The Dave Holford Four. We frequently played outside of school at local events and a couple of times we were called upon to play for the annual school dance towards the end of the fifties. Sadly, Dave passed away in 2018 but I am still in touch with Eric Hill who progressed from dance band work to enter into an eminent career as a classical guitarist. I am on bass, Eric is on guitar, Dave on accordion. The drummer was a friend of ours and the trumpeter was drafted in for the occasion. Harry Doncaster, out of his woodwork apron, appears in an unfamiliar dinner suit.

## MEMORIES OF SGS STAFF

### Alan Singleton (SGS 1957-65)

#### Here are some random memories from my time at school.

The 'photo of GAD in the Lockdown Newsletter jogged my memory although I remember his moustache as being larger than it appears in that photo; he always wore a long gown and I remember had a rather lumbering gait.

If I remember correctly, his potential career as a mathematician was somewhat spoiled by the war and he turned to teaching. As I now look back, we had some superb teachers in that era, and GAD was outstanding in inspiring pupils, and was clearly in love with his subject in a way one rarely sees.

He was very keen on the then early stage of computers and took us on a field trip (somewhere quite local) to see one - operated by punched cards, and very large, while, no doubt, having less computing power than present-day watches. He tried to teach us some very basic programming and it was a good introduction to the binary system.

For a while, he took a special interest in me. This was partly because one day he presented, verbally, a particular problem to the class and I managed to solve it correctly in my head. I can do that kind of thing sometimes, although not consistently. It really consisted of what we later learned as Venn diagrams, so perhaps no great feat. However, I then went on to be one of the first at the school to get three As at A-level (rare in those days), with two of them in maths, and an Open Scholarship to Oxford to study physics. My friend, Barry Walker, also did well and GAD started to give us private tuition in the third-year sixth. However, I'm afraid I turned out to be a disappointment to him - I left half way through the third-year sixth, although I was head boy at the time, while he was teaching us something called Higher Maths A level. Barry left too, but we unwisely came back to do the exams - I got an 'E' and Barry a 'D' and we heard that GAD was furious - I never dared to go back and face him after that. I do remember him with admiration and affection.

#### Other random memories:

As you probably know, years were arranged into three classes A, B and C alphabetically by surname. As Singleton, I was in 1C, 2C etc. In the early years

we were in huts on the other side of Lascelles Road, as some of your correspondents have noted. We often had foreign teachers for a year at a time, and one, when we couldn't answer one of his questions, said 'I know you are only C class, but even you should know this...'. We were outraged, but not one of us dared to correct him - such was our deference in those days; another foreign teacher for art, Italian I think, was totally astonished that we had never heard of the painter Titian (how many 12 year olds would know of him - then or now, I wonder?)

### Vincent Evans

I remember him as a kindly and gentle old man. For most of us art was just one lesson a week, and not taken seriously, but we didn't mess him about. He had a very large painting on the wall behind his desk - perhaps the one referred to in the Newsletter - which we didn't take much notice of. That is, until, one day, he showed us a reproduction of it in a large and impressive published book - I think even we then realised that Mr Evans was quite something.

### Music

Mr (John?) Mutrie was our music teacher. He took the choir, of which I was a member, to London, to give a demonstration (possibly at RCM or somewhere similar) of a piece of music - possibly a bit of Brahms' German Requiem which was a favourite. This was to illustrate the results of a new teaching technique he had devised. The only problem was, he had never in fact practised this technique with us! We, of course, went along with it.

Of course, as I write, more things pop up but I think that's enough for now. I now live near Bristol, but brought my 36-year old daughter for her first visit to Slough just before lockdown, and we walked past the school, past my old home in Sussex Place, and onto the High Street. Then we went to my father's grave in a church in Langley - it took us an hour to find it. All very nostalgic for me and she said it was very interesting to her. We paid for her to go to Bristol Grammar School, but I do believe Slough Grammar School was just as good, and better in some ways - due, in large part, to the quality of the teaching which we rather took for granted.

## MEMORIES OF SLOUGH HIGH SCHOOL

### Barbara Hillier née Colgate

(SHS 1941-48)

I'm still here! I was 92 this January. I still live at home with my delightful live-in carer and enjoy visits



from my three daughters, Anne, Margaret and Janet all of whom also attended Slough High School for girls. My seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren also visit when allowed. Regards to anyone who remembers me.

### Yvonne Davis née Ranscombe

(SHS 1962-69)

My first day at Slough High School is imprinted on my mind. I was the sole pupil from my primary school, to transfer there. This meant that I had no friends with me on that momentous occasion. In those days, there were no pre-school visits so I arrived at the school building with no idea of where to go or what to do.

My first form mistress was Miss Joyce, who was a friendly kind lady who allotted me a single desk three from the front, next to the corridor wall. 30 other pupils occupied the remaining single wooden desks and chairs. On looking around I spotted a friendly cheerful face, who it transpired, had the same birthday as I did. We struck up a friendship which has lasted for 60 years.

We celebrated our 60th birthdays together on QM2. We had cruised together in the upper sixth on an educational trip to Greece and Egypt, organised by Miss Sanderson and Miss Harris. Unfortunately, the Egyptian itinerary was cancelled due to the war in Israel. I was a hopeless sailor and spent the evenings prostrate on my bunk. My lovely friend kept me company missing out on the activities enjoyed by the others. Hooray and thank you for wonderful friends.

### Betty Wess née Cohen (SHS 1941-46)

After reading the Christmas Newsletter Betty writes "You don't seem to have news before 1941" and she

would like to add a little bit more about her time at school.

We had a different time at school being wartime. Firstly we had problems with our uniform which meant we eventually had to change the style to the gym slip. I would say that a group of us were the first feminists. I recall Gwen Knight now Gale, Ruth Oates, Eileen John and myself. We ran the first jazz club in the school. With Ruth Walkman we also formed a dance group. So rather than going out to play it kept us inside the hall, so no going outside in the cold. It all sounds very naive but we found ways of rebelling. Gwen had asthma and occasionally had an attack in assembly. We all fell about because her wheezing was put on and we knew it.

Wartime gave us a certain freedom. If the siren went off you either went home or straight to school. We preferred going out nights to a pub in Chalvey where we met up with some grammar school boys. I think it was the Red Cow and was run by the Hoskins family. We challenged all the rules and most times got away with it. For a dare I had to walk through the boys grammar school one afternoon, with the school in full session. I did it. Unfortunately I have lost touch with my friends except Gwen who I think is amazing. She has a memory like no other. I can't get to the reunions but have very happy memories of school.

## WANTING TO GET IN TOUCH

### Elsbeth Christie née Adcock

(SHS 1958-60)

Elsbeth asks if anyone can supply any information on Mrs Beck, née Gerber - German teacher (1955-76). I was reminded forcefully of her during the funeral in Windsor Castle - it took me suddenly back to the days when a friend and I were invited to tea in her flat there. Now I really want to know how she's doing. If anyone can help please contact the Editor who will pass the message on.

### Richard Croker (SGS 1956-63)

Richard asks - Is there anybody who remembers the Midnight Walks?

If you do, it may jog my memory and my brother's a bit more, for the next edition.

## IN MEMORIAM

### Colin Dutton (SGS 1952-57)

John Forrest says that he is sorry to announce that Colin Dutton passed away in Wexham Park hospital on Sunday 31st January from the dreaded Coronavirus. He lived in Slough practically all of his life.

I was saddened to learn the news that Colin has succumbed to the dreadful coronavirus. He will be a great loss to his friends and particularly to his stepson, always referred to as his son.

I have known Colin since school days and will remember him as a friendly, kind, sincere and uncomplicated personality, always a credit to the old school. It was a great pleasure when we learned a few years ago that he had finally married, after so many years as a bachelor. His new life was clearly a time of great happiness and we were sad when his wife pre-deceased him around two years ago. Colin will be missed when we finally get back to our annual gatherings.

**Anthony Lucas-Smith (SGS 1952-60)**

Colin and Jack Freer were in the same class as me at Wexham Road/The Lea County Primary, so I knew them both from shortly before my fifth birthday in 1946. I have often met them at annual reunions and we got on so well with each other that each time it was just like continuing a conversation from the previous time. As Anthony says, Colin had a warm, friendly personality and it was very pleasant to chat with him and catch up on family news.

**Alan Jervis (SGS 1952-59)**

### Dennis Delaney (SGS 1949-54)

Jennifer Delaney says:

It is with regret that I have to tell you that my husband Denis passed away in November 2020.

### Peter Rolfe (SGS 1950-54)

Angie Rolfe says that Peter died on 4th of June

### Pat Parsons née Boulton (SGS 1953-61)

I am sad to report the death of an Old Pals life member, my friend Pat Parsons, who died in January in New Zealand. We both joined SHS in 1953, Coronation year. Although she and her family emigrated to New Plymouth, NZ some forty years ago we never lost touch and in more recent times corresponded regularly by email. Over the years they made various trips to the UK which were always a delight.

Pat graduated from Bristol University Medical School in 1964 and she married ex SGS pupil Dr Alan Parsons in 1966. Once settled in NZ, Pat and Alan went on to have exemplary medical careers. At her funeral service, live-streamed around the world, ex-colleagues spoke highly of working with Pat in the various clinics she had set up and also in her role of community chief medical officer for Taranaki District. We school-friends who kept in contact with Pat miss her dearly.

**Avril Sutton née Esson (SHS 1953-58)**

### John Daly (SGS 1951-56)

Mrs. Maureen Daly says:

Sadly John Daly passed away in October 2020

### Shirley Redford née Collins

(SHS 1951-55)

Michael Redford let us know that his wife Shirley had died in the Local Hospice on 19 June 2021.

### Jean Jones née Lunn (SHS 1941-46)

We have been told that Mrs Jean Jones has died on 10th March 2021



# OLD PALUDIANS ASSOCIATION

## STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

	INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
Reunion Day income	£642.00	£1,294.00	Reunion Day expenditure (net)	£0.00 £80.00
Donations	£1,278.00	£953.00	Reunion lunch account	-£338.00 £980.00
Subscriptions	£30.00	£70.00	Grant for essay anthology	£0.00 £300.00
Raffle	£0.00	£203.00	Provision 2020 grants	£300.00 £0.00
Books & Memorabilia	£0.00	£22.81	Provision for 2018/19 grants	£0.00 £1,500.00
			Stationery	£43.98 £39.98
			Printing	£0.00 £187.00
			Postage	£0.00 £343.63
			Computer costs	£0.00 £80.62
			Stripe fees	£6.31 £7.84
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b><u>£1,950.00</u></b>	<b><u>£2,542.81</u></b>	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b><u>£12.29</u> <b><u>£3,519.07</u></b></b>

Brought forward from previous year: £1,464.27 £2,440.53

Income for year £1,950.00 £2,542.81  
 Expenditure for year £12.29 £3,519.07  
 Net income for year £1,937.71 -£976.26

Carried forward to next year £3,401.98 £1,464.27

Represented by:

Balance at bank at 31/12/20	£6,343.98
Provision for 2018/19/20 grants	-£2,300.00
Reunion lunch accrual	-£642.00
	<u>£3,401.98</u>

I hereby certify that the above shows a true record of the finances of the Old Paludians Association as at 31 December 2020.

Signed..... Treasurer Date.....12/2/21.....  
 (Celia Johns)

I have examined the books and vouchers produced to me and certify, as far as I am able, that this is a true statement of the financial affairs of the Old Paludians Association

Signed..... Date.....13/2/21.....  
 (Elizabeth Goodchild MAAT)