

OLD WESTCLIFFIAN ASSOCIATION

(formed 1926)



NEWSLETTER 2015

1. OFFICERS & COMMITTEE 2014 - 2015

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

VICE PRESIDENTS:

R. Arnold
T.W. Birdseye, *JP*
H.P. Briggs
H.W. Browne *C.B.E.*
A.J. Burroughs
Dr. P.L.P. Clarke
R.T. Darvell, *BA (Hons)*
D.A. Day
J. Harrison
A.A. Hurst, *BA (Hons)*
N.C. Kelleway
M. Wren

CHAIRMAN - M.A. Skelly, *MA*

HON. SECRETARY - T.W. Birdseye, *JP*
HON. TREASURER - C.R.N. Taylor, *FCA*
HON. ASST. SEC. - R. Arnold

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

A.J. Burroughs
R.T. Darvell, *BA (Hons)*
J. Harrison
A.S. Hurst, *BA (Hons)*
Father J. McCollough
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*
810 London Road, Leigh on Sea, Essex, SS9 3NH
Telephone - 01702 714241, Mobile - 07752 192164
Email: terry.birdseye@gmail.com

2. AGM 20TH JULY 2015 AT 8 PM AT THE SCHOOL

3. ANNUAL REUNION DINNER - FRIDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 2015
6: 15 PM FOR 7:00 PM AT THE SCHOOL
DETAILS ON PAGE 3.

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2. Annual General Meeting, 20th July, 8 pm at the School
3. O.W.A. Annual Reunion Dinner, Friday 11th September 2015 - 6:15 pm for 7 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
(ii) Honorary Secretary's Report
(iii) New Members
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5. Honorary Treasurer:
Income and Expenditure Accounts for year ended 31st March 2014.

6. President.

7. Chairman.

8. In Memoriam.

9. Obituaries.

10. News of and from Old Westcliffians.

11. Old Westcliffian Lodge No. 5456.

12. Editor.

13. (i) The Old Westcliffian Association
(ii) OWA application form

3. OWA ANNUAL REUNION DINNER - FRIDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 2015

**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 £27.50 (£16 FOR STUDENTS IN FULL TIME EDUCATION)
 TICKETS WILL NOT BE ISSUED**

DRESS - LOUNGE SUIT, ASSOCIATION TIE (£8, Available from Asst. Sec. - see page 39)

MENU

Smooth Affinity Pork Loin and Blueberry Pate served on a bed of
 crisp leaves, onion chutney and French bread

Roasted Sirloin of Beef served with Cherry Tomatoes
 and Red Onion with a red wine sauce

Passion Fruit Mousse served with Vanilla Ice Cream
 and compote of Exotic Fruits

English Cheese Board with celery, grapes and biscuits

Tea or Coffee with Chocolates

(Vegetarian Meal available on request)

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REPLY SLIP: O.W.A. ANNUAL REUNION DINNER - FRIDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 2015

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"
 TICKETS WILL NOT BE ISSUED**

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

It is that time of year again when it is time to pen my annual report. The Association is in good health but our funds have been somewhat depleted by a donation of £5000 to the school CCF. We will be making a further donation towards a CCF honours board. We do not want to increase the subscription, so we are very reliant on the generosity of our members. Anything you are able to give, therefore, would be most welcome.

We congratulate the school CCF on achieving independent status and hope that it will go from strength to strength. The OWA were represented at their celebration day in February.

During the year we have lost some members. Those about whom we know are mentioned in these pages. Our hearts go out to their loved ones.

In the last letter, I mentioned that this newsletter would be combining with the Westcliff Diary. Although a laudable intention, it was not possible to achieve on a practical basis, so we will continue with the status quo for the foreseeable future.

A little while ago, we lost one of our most ardent supporters, Judge Gordon Rice. He was one of our most prolific benefactors. It is only fitting, therefore, that the OWA should fund a school trophy in his honour. It will be awarded for his great passion, cricket.

This year we have a change of editor Shanie White. We thank her for taking on this important task and we look forward to working with her. I paid tribute to Alison Clarke in the last newsletter but I make no apologies in doing so again. Alison was a good friend of the Association over many years, and she will still be looking after the database.

Last year our Dinner was as always a jolly occasion and a tremendous success, and we were pleased to welcome many of our younger members, thanks to the support of Alex Cass. This year the Dinner will be on 11th September in the school hall. Our speaker will be Nigel Holdcroft, a local solicitor and a former leader of Southend Council. He is also an OW. Why not come along and make up a table?

The AGM will be at 8pm on 20th July. Why not come along and lend support?

We are still working in collaboration with the Parents' Association and I have periodic meetings with their Chair, Jemima Clarke.

I thank you the members for your continuing support and to my committee. Lastly I thank our chairman, Michael Skelly, for his always reliable counsel.

My good wishes to you all.

Terry Birdseye
Honorary Secretary

4. (iii) NEW MEMBERS

Chris Bracey	(63-70)
Kieran Braun	(07-14)
Leo Connell	(07-14)
Kieran Dillane	(07-14)
Charlotte Dudley	(12-14)
Robert Everitt	(62-67)
Ian Forbes	(07-14)
Daniel Harrington	(07-14)
Dominic Herriott	(07-14)
Kirsty Hickey	(12-14)
Luke Hill	(97-04)
Rohit Hirachan	(07-14)
Elliott Holmes	(07-14)
Nick Humberstone	(07-14)
Charlotte Hurst	(12-14)
Jack Lewin	(07-14)
Bradley Lindsay	(07-14)
William A.J. Marrant	(07-14)
Henry A.P. Marrant	(06-13)
Joel Oyelese	(07-14)
Natalie Pavelin	(12-14)
Maddie Scates	(12-14)
Manu Shrivastava	(06-13)
Alexander J. Turner	(07-14)
Darrell Williams	(66-73)

Total 25

4. (iv) MEMBERS DONATIONS

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

Neil Clark
David Clough
J.M. Dawson
Alan Hurst
Derek Slope
John Western

5. HONORARY TREASURER

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31st March 2014

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
INCOME		
Life subscriptions	225	200
Profit on ties etc	78	108
Donations/raffle	516	450
Surplus on function	<u>-</u>	<u>170</u>
	819	928
EXPENDITURE		
Deficit on function	131	-
Printing, postage & stationery	609	916
Sundry expenses	<u>30</u>	<u>30</u>
	<u>770</u>	<u>946</u>
SURPLUS (2013 DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	<u>£49</u>	<u>£(18)</u>

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2014

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
ASSETS		
Stock of ties etc	605	314
Cash at bank	5,050	10,292
Cash at building society	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>£5,657</u>	<u>£10,608</u>
FINANCED BY		
General fund brought forward	10,608	10,626
Surplus (2013 deficit) for the year	<u>49</u>	<u>(18)</u>
	10,657	10,608
Donation to WHSB for CCF	<u>5,000</u>	<u>-</u>
General fund carried forward	<u>£5,657</u>	<u>£10,608</u>

.....
C R N TAYLOR FCA
HONORARY TREASURER

.....
A R MILLMAN FCA
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

6. PRESIDENT

When I first had the privilege of being elected President of the OWA I said that one of my objectives was to bring the Association closer to the school of today. Our aim would be to enable Old Westcliffians in later life to put back something into the school from which all of us gained so much. The past year has, I hope, seen considerable progress in this direction.

We have continued to give active support to the School's Combined Cadet Force, now a newly independent and thriving 75 strong unit. You may remember that we gave the CCF a £5,000 grant last year. We have followed this up in the current year by donating a new CCF Honourous Board, which will be prominently displayed in the school in the future. In addition we have established a new School Prize for progress in Cricket. The prize will be awarded annually in memory of eminent Old Westcliffian Judge Rice, a well-known and much admired figure in Southend Regal Circles, cricket enthusiast and lifelong supporter of the OWA. As always we welcome donations from old members to enable the association to support the works of the school.

Last year our Annual Dinner in September was widely regarded as one of the most successful in recent years. It was greatly boosted by a significant number of OWS who had only recently left the school. Their presence undeniably enhanced the proceedings and we hope to see even more in the future years. Attendees last year spanned 7 decades. Our thanks go to all who contributed to the event.

Finally a significant milestone. Most of you will know that our sixth form has been co-ed for some years and this has now filtered through to our own membership. Your committee has been looking at ways in which we can adapt to this change not least in expanding our range of OWA badged goods from ties and cufflinks to brooches and scarves. A small change perhaps but symbolic of our willingness to move with the times!

I look forward to the coming year and wish you all well.

David Norman MBE
President

7. CHAIRMAN & HEADMASTER

It is a pleasure to meet Old Westcliffians during the course of the year and it was a particular pleasure to have so many in attendance at our annual dinner last September. In my remarks I noted that, in life, experience remains the greatest of all teachers and that seems to emphasize the importance of the OWA to the School. I believe the value of the connection between the School's past and present, and the transmission of its core values by Old Westcliffians to current Westcliffians cannot be under-estimated.

WHSB is a Grammar School and as such it is committed to social mobility. A recent study by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission noted that Independent Schools educate 7% of the population, but provide 71% of senior judges, 62% of senior officers in the armed forces, 53% of senior diplomats and 36% of Cabinet ministers. We need to do all we can to offer able state-educated pupils the ability to compete for entry to best universities so that they can have access to the very best opportunities in our society. There can be little doubt that the decision to close the majority of Grammar Schools has contributed to the reduction in social mobility.

Earlier this year, I was speaking with an Old Westcliffian who was entering his third year of studies at the LSE. He had already completed internships in the USA and China. However he has been one of the fortunate ones. Too often these opportunities are the reserve of the elite. I believe that we can do more as an association to identify opportunities for our young alumni to gain valuable experience.

Curriculum Change

Once again, we are about to experience another period of upheaval as the Department for Education changes the A Level and GCSE qualifications. Some of these changes we welcome, in particular a focus on raising standards. However, education at this School is about far more than a set of grades and it cannot be reduced to mere statistics. No statistic can measure one's core values and how one's character has been shaped by teachers and peers.

This year we have been introducing our WHSB Learner Profile, which will help structure our curriculum for enhanced pupil enjoyment and success. The Learner Profile clearly defines for pupils, parents and staff the School's key goals in terms of the development of pupils. The aim of this project is not so much a new venture, but an organised acknowledgment of what we already do well. The Learner Profile focuses on seven specific attributes of learning, namely that pupils:

- be **intellectually curious** (widely read, reflective, and inventive);
- have **personal integrity** (honesty and accountability; reliable and just);
- be **collaborative & supportive** (participating in School life, and are compassionate, tolerant and dutiful);
- be **open to opportunity** (open minded and well-balanced, not being afraid to take risks);
- be **globally aware** (knowing the global dimension and cultural aspects of learning);
- be an **effective communicator** (literate, numerate, presentable and competent with new technologies);
- be a **lifelong learner** (ambitious, and aspirational; resilient and flexible).

These seven attributes inform our lessons and how we co-ordinate both curricular and extra-curricular aspects of learning, as well as encouraging pupils to recognise their own potential as independent learners. The School encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, hence becoming better prepared for the world beyond WHSB.

Capital Development Projects

The Sixth Form Building is progressing and the first layer of the roof has been installed along with 50% of the glazing and the majority of the cement panel walls. The first fix for mechanical and electrical works has also begun. It is anticipated that the building will be completed by the end of the summer. Difficulties with sub-contractors and the sensitivity of the exterior cladding to weather conditions have delayed the completion of the Science Building, but the cladding is now almost complete which will mean that the scaffold can soon be removed.

These capital development projects will substantially improve the quality of our facilities. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues involved in the project for their hard work, with a special mention for Jon Gershinson, Vice Chairman of Governors, who has provided considerable support and expertise in helping the School to progress the project.

Outstanding Parents' Association

I have been very pleased to note the increased collaboration between the OWA and the School's Parents' Association. It was my great pleasure to attend the Parents' Association Winter Ball at the end of the Autumn Term. It was a splendid evening and the feedback was most positive. The School is fortunate to have such a dynamic and committed Parents' Association Committee. Each year they raise and donate thousands of pounds to the School. I am grateful for their commitment to make a contribution towards furnishing the new Sixth Form Building. Moreover, I am no less grateful for the strong sense of community spirit they promote through the activities and support they provide to parents of WHSB pupils. I sense that strengthening the links between the Parents' Association and the OWA will do much to enhance the work of both organizations.

Dr Liam Fox at Speech Day

The School was delighted to welcome Dr Liam Fox as our Guest of Honour at Speech Day last November. Dr Fox is a former Chairman of the Conservative Party and served as Secretary of State for Defence in the Coalition Government. There is a general consensus at School that his remarks were well judged and amongst the best we have heard for many years. His theme had immediacy and relevance for our students and it had a decidedly 'upbeat' tone. The senior students enjoyed his humorous observations and easy delivery. However, it was his focus on the importance of being prepared for life's challenges and the value of making a positive contribution that served to reinforce the School's aims. Dr Fox was a wholehearted participant throughout the event and I am most grateful for the way in which he engaged so many of the prize and certificate winners in conversations, as I know those personal exchanges meant a great deal to the students.

Local Entry to the School and Expansion

WHSB continues to increase its local entry. We have had a significant increase in priority area pupils this year moving from **82** in 2014 to **107** in 2015. This leaves the School just 8 places short of filling its 115 priority places for local pupils. The School is giving consideration to increasing the number of priority places in the future.

The increase in local entrants owes much to the work of the Westcliff Centre for Gifted Children (WCGC). This Term has seen a change to the WCGC Saturday activities. Rather than offering a series of one-off events to small numbers of children, the WCGC 'Festival of Education' on Saturday 14 March hosted 125 Year 5 students who had lessons in six different subjects during the day. Parents were also invited to join us for afternoon sessions on the 11+ Test. Local Primary School Headteachers and their senior colleagues were also invited to come along to see what we do on the days and to be involved in a consultative meeting to discuss the further development of the WCGC program. I would like to offer my thanks to Mr Cass, ably supported by Miss Rankin (Director of Lower School Studies), for his work in relation to the programme.

The current Government has encouraged successful schools to expand. Our latest building programme has provided us with additional capacity and so the School will enrol one extra Year 7 Form Group in September 2015. This will give the School a Year 7 of 185 pupils, rather than our standard 154 number. The change will present challenges, however it will also allow us to offer the opportunity of an outstanding Grammar School education to more pupils. The three other Grammar Schools in the town are also planning to expand their numbers.

Combined Cadet Force (CCF) Independence

On 8 January 2015, the School marked an historic moment with the first parade of the newly independent WHSB Combined Cadet Force (CCF). We are the first School in the United Kingdom to avail itself of the opportunity to establish a Cadet Force within the School through the Government's Cadet Expansion Programme and now, having first formed a partnership with Brentwood School's Combined Cadet Force (CCF), we have been granted independence, thus creating the newest CCF in the United Kingdom. WHSB is a pioneer of this new Cadet Force model and in this respect the staff and pupils at the School are most proud.

This historic achievement was celebrated on 12 February 2015. The celebration included a special assembly, a parade, a demonstration introductory session to potential cadets from Year 8 and a buffet dinner. We were joined by Col G Wilson, Commander of Colchester Garrison who inspected the parade and who was most impressed with our recruits. The Inauguration Day received extensive media coverage (The Echo, BBC Radio Essex and Anglia News). Further details can be accessed through the School's website.

The CCF continues to thrive within WHSB and we now have 73 Cadets in Years 9-13 involved in a whole plethora of activities. Currently, we are oversubscribed and therefore it is our aim to apply to increase this number to 100 in the academic year 2015-16.

I was delighted that we were joined by a number of Old Westcliffians during the celebration. The OWA has been a tremendous supporter of the CCF and has recently agreed to support the purchase of a CCF honours board. The CCF owes much to its many friends and supporters for their financial contributions and encouragement.

Assistance with School Sport

The School has a proud sporting tradition. The value of sport in building character, developing confidence and promoting camaraderie can hardly be over stated. It encourages self-discipline which has served many a pupil well when managing academic work. The School is looking to strengthen its sporting provision and we hope to appoint some sports coaches to join us at the beginning of the new Academic Year. However, we would welcome active volunteer assistance from Old Westcliffians with an interest in, and preferably experience of, managing and assisting student rugby and football teams.

We anticipate that volunteers would work alongside our coaches to support the teams and therefore a good level of fitness would be necessary. It is understood that volunteers may not be in a position to commit to every Saturday, however we would be seeking to establish a pool of volunteers and so reduce the overall commitment required from individual volunteers. Those volunteers who are interested in offering assistance should contact Mr Partridge, Director of Resources and Support Services, via the School's email address. I thank you in anticipation of your support.

Maintaining Contact with the School

We continue to build our database of Old Westcliffians and we would be grateful for your support in making contact with former students with whom we may have lost touch. If you have not already done so, please register with the OWA through the School Website. We would also appreciate your support in encouraging other Old Boys to register with the OWA.

The School continues to thrive however we also face many challenges. The current round of public expenditure austerity and the ongoing decline in the number of high quality graduates attracted to the teaching profession are particular concerns. We shall continue to tackle these challenges head on as we fast approach the School's centenary. We know that we can count on your support in ensuring the next 100 years sees us go from strength to strength.

A School derives its strength from its community and we have a tremendous community at WHSB. Our students are intelligent, industrious and principled young people and our staff are dedicated, hard working and ambitious for their students. It is a privilege and delight to be Headmaster.

I give you all my best wishes and look forward to seeing you at our annual dinner if not before.

Michael A Skelly

8. IN MEMORIAM

Stanley Brown	19/09/13
Jim Nutchey	23/09/14
Geoff Singer	04/10/14
Patrick Smith	17/10/14
Geoffrey F Smith	July 14
Dr Stuart Tucker	2014

All will be sadly missed

9. OBITUARIES

*Peter Ayerst
Stanley Brown
Jim Nutchey
Geoffrey F Smith
Patrick Smith*

PETER AYERST

Excerpt from The Times Obituaries
1 July 2014

Wing Commander Peter Ayerst

Wing Commander Peter Ayerst, DFC, fighter and test pilot, was born on November 4, 1920.

He died on May 15, 2014, aged 93.



Ayerst experienced combat in several theatres of war. During the Battle of France, he flew a Hurricane, with No 73 Squadron. Peter Ayerst found himself in the front line of the Second World War virtually from day one. His Hurricane squadron was dispatched to France in the autumn of 1939 and, once there, he became one of the first RAF pilots to find himself in combat with the Messerschmitt Bf 109, a formidable Luftwaffe fighter,

Scrambled from Rouvres airfield in the Seine-et-Marne on November 6 to intercept an intruder, Ayerst realised that, in his pursuit, he had drifted over the frontier into German airspace. Turning for base he spotted what he thought was a squadron of Hurricanes. This was a consoling sight but, closer up, they suddenly looked unfamiliar. Then he saw the “large, ugly, bloody great black crosses painted on either wing”. With the impertinence of courageous youth, he gave the rearmost Messerschmitt a burst from his machineguns and peeled off, fleeing back into France with the German squadron, 27 Me 109s in all, on his tail. As the rounds from 20mm Mauser cannon whistled past his ears, he was beginning to wonder how much longer he had to live when he ran into a large French patrol of Morane-Saulnier MS 406s and Curtiss P-40s. What ensued was the first massed dogfight of the Second World War. The French fighter pilots were magnificent. Ayerst’s inadvertent excursion into Germany led to the destruction of nine Me 109s that day.

He made his first kill in April 1940. "I clobbered my first Me 109 and damaged another," he wrote in his logbook. He destroyed another Me 109 shortly afterwards. Battle hardened by then, he was wiser than the rookie pilot of the previous autumn. He flew on fighter operations almost throughout the war, becoming an ace, with eight combat victories, and winning the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

Peter Vigne Ayerst was born in Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, in 1920, one of four children. His father, Samuel, worked in the City. His mother, Hazel was a teacher. He went to Westcliff High School, where he shone at rugby, which was one of his grand passions. He would later play for Canterbury. After leaving school, he joined his father in the City, but he developed an interest in aviation and in 1938 he joined the RAF. He was posted to No 73 Squadron just a month before hostilities began.

Amid the chaotic retreat of the British Expeditionary Force and its accompanying RAF squadrons, he organised the evacuation of No 73's personnel. Sixty of its ground crew embarked for England in the liner *Lancastria*, which was bombed off the coast at St Nazaire. Thirty-five of them perished. The Battle of Britain found him instructing an operational training unit, helping to provide the vital flow of combat-trained pilots. Among those he trained was "Johnnie" Johnson (obituary, February 1, 2001), who would become the RAF's leading ace.

Ayerst never missed the chance for a spot of impromptu action. One evening as the instructors were contemplating the first beer of the day, a lone Heinkel 111 dropped a stick of bombs on nearby RAF Sealand.

Ayerst and two comrades ran for their Spitfires yelling at the ground crews to get the engines started. Intercepting the He 111 at 2,000ft, his colleagues fired at the intruder without noticeable effect.

The last to attack in the fading light, Ayerst hosed it with .303 rounds, hit it in both engines, and watched it crash land. In the streets below, a 16-year-old musical hopeful who had earlier been playing the cornet in the Alhambra Theatre, Shotton, watched this aerial drama. He was to become the band leader Syd Lawrence.

Ayerst was posted to North Africa in 1942 and was in the thick of intense air fighting in the run up to the Battle of El Alamein. Hit by flak over the Western Desert, he executed a classic "wheels-up" landing behind enemy lines in the sands of the Qattara Depression. Flinging himself from the cockpit, he lay flat on the ground as German small arms fire peppered his Hurricane. As night fell he had just decided to start walking east towards the British lines when he heard a lorry engine. Assuming fatalistically that it was a German vehicle he was delighted as he rose from his hiding place to hear "Enny'one there?" in an Australian accent.

In April 1944 he arrived back in Britain. Preparations for the Normandy landings attracted high altitude reconnaissance flights from German Focke Wulf 190s and Junkers 88s, which Ayerst and his fellow pilots in No 124 "Baroda" Squadron climbed to intercept at 35,000ft. After D-Day they switched to low-level bomber escorts.

The hectic pace of his life left little time for romance - but that was about to change. Stopping off at the Three Compasses Hotel in Canterbury for a beer one lunchtime in December 1944, he was attracted to the looks, liveliness and wit of the young woman behind the bar. She was Betty, daughter of the owners and the widow of a Halifax pilot, killed in 1942. She liked him too, but when he first proposed a month later her answer was: "No bloody fear, I've already lost one husband. While you're on operations there isn't a chance."

All was not lost. Shortly afterwards the authorities decided that he should not be risked further in combat. He was selected as a test pilot on production Spitfires at Vickers-Armstrong at Castle Bromwich and he and Betty were married in June 1945.

Ayerst left the RAF and for the next three years he and Betty happily ran the Three Compasses. But he found the call of flying irresistible and by 1949 he was back in the RAF where he was to remain until 1973. In that time he commanded Vampire squadrons in Germany where he had a reputation as a fine commanding officer.

The second half of Ayerst's adult life was almost as action packed as the first. Property development in Iran was going through a boom in the early 1970s. The marriage of his daughter Jane to an Iranian aristocrat, Hedayat, the son of Aga Khan Bakhtiar, a former government finance minister, gave him unrivalled contacts, enabling him to act as consultant to British property development and engineering companies, who were hoping to cash in. Even after Jane's marriage was dissolved he retained his friendship with her in-laws.

His closeness to Iranian politics also enabled him to sound timely warnings as the revolution approached. Jane married again - this time to a Lightning pilot, John Baggott.

In England Ayerst became an authority on asbestos in buildings. The company he founded in 1985, with himself and Betty as directors, became one of the leading consultants in the field. Only with Betty's death in 2001 did he hand over the reins of the business to his grandson, James.

Of his life, he said modestly to Hugh Thomas, the author of his life story, *Spirit of the Blue*: "I was just so bloody lucky on so many occasions."

STANLEY BROWN

My dear husband Stanley Brown died on 19 September 2013.

Stanley lived in Northern Ireland for over fifty years, he was a successful business man. Stanley looked forward to receiving his 'Old Westcliffians' magazine, it was a great joy to him. It kept him in touch with his old loved school.

His wit and wisdom is greatly missed by his family and friends in Northern Ireland and Southend.

I thank you for sending the magazine. In later years when he could no longer travel, it brought his beloved Southend to him.

He is greatly missed by his wife.

Alma Brown

JAMES GEORGE NUTCHEY - "JIM"
(1927 – 2014)

Jim Joined Westcliff High School in 1938 and was one of the few remaining students who were evacuated to Belper in Derbyshire during the early part of World War 2.

He completed his National Service in the Royal Navy before joining Lloyd's of London where he worked at for over 40 years. He became a very highly regarded and respected Claims Director, with particular emphasis on North America and leading the market in the highly contentious matter of asbestos

Jim loved sport, playing rugby for Old Westcliffians RFC and cricket for Shoebury CC, later becoming a keen golfer at Boyce Hill Golf Club where he played with many of his old school friends in the society known as 'Last of the Summer Wine' and he enjoyed many golfing outings to The New Forest and Scotland.

In his retirement he greatly enjoyed watching sport especially cricket as a member of Essex CCC where he continued to act as a total gentleman, a trait he had shown throughout his life.

His later years were spent with that cruel and heart-breaking disease of dementia but he leaves behind many happy thoughts with his wife Greta, his family and his numerous friends.

Dick Clarke...son in law.

GEOFFREY FRANCIS SMITH

I am writing to inform you that my uncle, Geoffrey Francis Smith, has recently passed away. At almost 95 years of age when he died, I imagine he was one of your oldest association members, and his passing will have dropped the average age of your membership noticeably!

Up until late 2013, Geoff had lived entirely independently in Westcliff, and was still pretty active socially. It was only due to a serious fall in his kitchen, which left him with substantial residual damage, that we were able to persuade him to move to a residential care home close to my own family home in Grimsby, and it was there that he lived for the remainder of his life.

He passed away peacefully in his sleep during the night of July 10th; as per his wishes, we are arranging for his funeral to take place at the Southend Crematorium on Monday, 4th August at 2:40 pm.

Jerry Woolner - Nephew

PATRICK SMITH

Patrick Smith was at the School in the 1940s, living in Leigh at the time and being a member of St. Clement's Church Youth Club. He played rugby for the School 3rd Fifteen.

Leaving school he was an Insurance Broker in the City and having married, lived in Sunbury-on-Thames.

In his retirement he was an active member of his local Probus Club. He died of cancer on the 17th October 2014.

Norman Lawrence

10. NEWS OF AND FROM OLD WESTCLIFFIANS

GORDON BAREHAM

I don't know if the following reminiscence is of interest but it concerns a specific rugby memory that corresponds with the anniversary of the death of Winston Churchill. I recall playing a game of rugby for an OWRFC XV, probably the A XV against a Wasps XV away at their Sudbury ground on a cold and miserable Saturday afternoon in January 1965. I have a quite vivid memory of both sides standing for the short silence before kick off to pay our respects to the great man. I cannot recall the result but we probably lost, as in those bygone days of totally amateur rugby, when a team like Old Westcliffians played the lower teams from the London sides such as Wasps, Saracens, London Welsh or Roslyn Park it was not unusual to play against a first XV player returning from injury. This made such fixtures both exciting but daunting as you had no real idea who you might be playing against. In those days, if you were playing against these clubs 2nd XV the game would be played on the main 1st XV pitch. The Wasp's pitch was a muddy sloping one with the club house at the right hand side of the pitch when playing up the slope.

It was not unusual to mix with current or past internationals in the after match beer and on one away game at the Wasps, I remember talking with Peter Yarranton who was then a Wasp's legend and who went on to be a pillar of the game. I think I am right in mentioning that Yarranton played for the Wasps Vandals against the OWRFC 1st XV, but not when I was playing. There will be others who may be able to remember.

Just typing this fosters other great memories of OWRFC rugby [and cricket] in the late 1950s and 1960s. The game of rugby has moved on so far from those times and although I now live in deepest Somerset, I follow Westcliff Rugby from afar on the internet and log on at around five pm every Saturday during the season to see their result and read with interest the subsequent match reports. Another of many recollections of yesteryear is the journey to play Old Gravesendians and Gravesend. In those days there were no bridges or crossings; only the Tilbury Ferry which added to the fun of the fixtures. We would either travel by train or by car which was left on the Essex side and we walked on the Kent side. After a usual win against the O.Gs., who could forget an evening of alcoholic celebration in The Tivoli, the first floor clubhouse of the O.Gs. They had a good singer named John who knew even more rugby songs than the most accomplished singers of "The Old Boys". As I said earlier, how the game has changed both on and off the field. I am told, by some, for the better, but that is open for debate!

Gordon

GRAHAM BRACK

(1966-74)

Here we go again!

Since we stand just five years from a significant anniversary in the life of the school, and given how long it seems to take us to get things organised these days, it seems appropriate to get the Centenary celebrations under way, and I thought it might be helpful for those of us who were at Westcliff in 1970 to add our recollections of the Fiftieth Anniversary so we don't make the same mistakes again.

In 1970 I was in the fourth form. I will preface my remarks with the disclaimer that my memory is not infallible, nor is it particularly systematic, and since we were gearing up for GCE O-levels much of my attention was focussed on those; but I played my part in the celebrations, I hope, and some very vivid recollections remain amidst the rather more fuzzy reminders of the seventies.

A number of possible ways of celebrating fifty years were suggested. I was rather keen on the entire school being evacuated to Derbyshire to relive the experience of the wartime generation of Westcliffians, but Mr Cloke – while supportive of many of our enthusiasms – had some reservations on that one. A brief history of the school was planned, though I do not remember at this distance who actually wrote it, and the first excitement of the year was speculation around which of the most senior masters would choose to retire at the end of the summer. While a number indicated that they might, I don't recall anyone actually doing so – except, of course, Mr Cloke himself, who stepped down shortly afterwards, to general sadness. He was entitled to some time to himself, but he left a very large hole.

It is, perhaps, a measure of the boys' affection for him that while I can remember him being imitated frequently, I recall nothing malicious in the characterizations. He rose considerably in my esteem when a fussy master questioned whether the 1970's patterned shirt one of our form was wearing was in keeping with the school uniform rules. Mr Cloke inspected it carefully, and then pronounced that in his judgement it was "predominantly white", which was literally true if you considered the large purple and blue paisley splodges to be sitting on a white background.

One of the activities connected with the Jubilee was the production in the art room of a large facsimile of the school's badge which would be mounted over the main entrance. Mr Jones – "Jones The Art", in deference to his Welsh background – superintended the production of the pieces, aided by the woodwork teachers. Having little ability in either department, my services were not required, but it was good to sneak in from time to time to see how it was going. On one such visit I noticed that Mr Jones seemed rather stressed and that work seemed to have regressed somewhat. After some discreet questioning I learned that when the various sections were brought together, the lion had one paw too many, because the paw that held the upraised sword was mirrored by another in the normal position. The second iteration was paw-perfect.

This artistic lapse was not, alas, unique, though we were rather surprised when the author of the Jubilee history detected another one. Looking at the stained glass window in the school hall, the badge as worn on the school blazer, and the actual grant of arms, he noted that the usual representation was incorrect.

I would love to record what was wrong, but after listening to the detailed argument I can only remember the head-magisterial view that if nobody had noticed for fifty years, it couldn't be that important.

Things may have changed, but I suspect that most of the boys of my era could barely have described the badge with their eyes closed even though they saw it every day. This was certainly the experience of Mr Harden, then deputy headmaster, when he asked us to translate the school motto, *Fide et Fortitudine*, during an assembly. If there is such a thing as mingled consternation and silence, it happened then; silence, because most of us had never taken Latin and those who had weren't going to make fools of themselves by getting it wrong in public, thus exposing themselves to Mr Harden's derision; and consternation, because quite a number of us didn't know we had a school motto, any more than we knew that we had a school hymn until it was used to close the Jubilee celebration ceremony held at the Cliffs Pavilion. *Endue me with Thy Holy Spirit, Lord*, in case you were wondering.

For quite a while it was hoped that this special year would be marked by a landmark sporting achievement. This was frustrated because in the sports in which we always did well, we did as expected, and in those in which there was usually less success, there was less success. But the Under-15 basketball team, in which your writer was a minor cog, set out on a splendid run in the English Schools Basketball Cup, and after several good thrashings of less gifted opponents, were edged out in – I think – the quarter finals. I have an idea the score was something like 52-51, but since I wasn't able to be there, I may be wrong.

I will simply state as a fact that when I was present, we won, and the game I missed, we lost, and leave you to draw your own conclusions – though, in fairness, I should add that two points was about the limit of my contribution to most games.

It occurs to me now that the Old Boys who attended the celebrations in 1970 and who seemed so astonishingly decrepit and ancient were not, as I then thought, kindred of Methuselah, but were around the age I shall be in 2020, and if, as I hope, I am spared until then, perhaps the fourth formers of that day will listen to my ramblings with the same bemused tolerance and fortitude that we exhibited then and, I trust, you are experiencing now in reading this.

Graham

DAVID CLOUGH
(1935-41)

Apart from a few years during the war, I have lived in Westcliff all my life. My penultimate School Year, 1939-40, was probably the most traumatic in the School's history. I was in Lower 6 Science. Air-raid shelters were dug and the School was shrinking in size - several boys departed as they were taken away from the town by their parents. Some of the Masters were called up.

At the time of DUNKIRK, my parents were also considering evacuating the family and had taken me and my two younger brothers to visit friends in Somerset, when we heard that the Southend schools were to be evacuated.

We had to get my brother, who was at the Southend High School, and me back to Westcliff quickly.

I remember that we caught a train from Bridgewater to Paddington and were brought back to Westcliff. On the Wednesday we were given a form to fill in our medical details.

For the evacuation, we had to be at the School at 5 am on the Sunday when we were taken to Southend LMS Station (Southend Central) for the first train which left at 7 am. We had a good trip to Belper stopping at Kentish Town to change engines and Derby. My brother went on a later train, to Mansfield.

Arriving at Belper we were bussed to a primary school on the outskirts of the town, where we were allocated to foster parents (or host families). Towards tea-time, there were four of us left un-allocated. We were put into a car and taken to two houses who took two each. Gone were the comforts of home. Gas lights downstairs and candles upstairs. We were luckier than some as we had a flush toilet - albeit in the back yard.

The next day we had no instructions as to what to do so we explored the town, meeting many boys and masters doing the same thing. We got the message to meet at 6 pm for instructions – outside a sub post office. We were told which church halls we were to go to for lessons in the morning.

We were to share premises with Strutts High School (which was named after a local benefactor). It was a mixed school – separate schools for boys and girls were not something they were used to in Belper.

We used various halls in the morning and the school in the afternoon.

The Strutts' pupils used the same halls in the afternoon and their own school in the mornings. This system continued for the rest of the term. There were special arrangements for those taking outside exams.

Come the summer holidays, some boys stayed in Belper, some returned to Southend and others went to see relatives, elsewhere.

The next term started in September and we carried on as before. The following summer holiday, I left to take up a Government Course at Nottingham University. I was eventually sent to Marconi at Chelmsford, where I tested crystals for Radio Sets.

David

DON DAY

Teaching Rugby

Perhaps there is no better way of teaching enthusiastic youngsters to play rugby than by setting the highest possible example as a teacher yourself.

At Westcliff High School we have been fortunate enough to have many instances of this approach and over the years that experience and enthusiasm has shone through and into the old westcliffians rugby football club.

It is with no disrespect that I refer to past teaching staff by their Christian names or nick names for they are a revered body of playing friends who did much to shape the lives of many young boys on the rugby pitches.

Firstly it is necessary to go back to the 1930's when Harry Crabtree was the first master not only to captain the club (1931-1933), gain many eastern county caps, but also be honoured with an England trial during which he scored a try

Towards the late 1940's Graham Holborn joined the staff, was club captain (1946-1947) when he inspired many devious movements which fundamentally gave rise to his nickname of "tippy". A name with which he is fondly remembered.

In the late 1940's Stan Beaumont joined the school from Yorkshire where he had represented the county. He soon became an important member of the 1st XV becoming captain of the club (1951-1952) his game as a very positive and elusive fly half, meant that it was soon recognised by the eastern county selectors.

During the years after the second world war there was no more ardent "rugby master" at school than Claude Webber whose coaching approach was somewhat radical and unfortunately not backed up by much playing experience, nevertheless his ardent enthusiasm and commitment to his "rugby laddies" was most compelling and the school XV's were behind him 100%. His outlook formed the basis upon which a number of Old Westcliffian club captains can look back with gratitude and pride.

Other masters who have played in the old boys 1stxv are George Ward (wing) and Trevor Dickenson (front row) who taught their own brand of skills and skulduggery for the benefit of eager learners.

As can be seen by drawing reference to the aforementioned staff it was imperative that a solid, steadfast and humanitarian

person was available to steer both the school as headmaster and the Old Westcliffians RFC as president of the club through difficult informative years. This was of course Henry Cloke who occupied these positions from the date of his appointment as headmaster to his retirement. His efforts on behalf of the rugby club, never missing out an AGM, providing sensible, sound and profound advice on the many topics that can only cross the path of a dedicated president. His scholastic achievements are legendary and his personal friendships with so many of the clubs players will be remembered and cherished by all those who had the pleasure of his company.

During these years one of his pupils at school was Jimmy Harrison who won a place at Loughborough college and played for both their 1st XV and 1st VII at Twickenham. On coming down from Loughborough Jimmy joined the school and the Old Westcliffians RFC where he was club captain for six years. He played for Essex and the eastern counties on many occasions including an overseas trip to France. One of the lasting legacies of Jimmy's playing career was his expertise as a 7's player where knowledge acquired at Loughborough and a high degree of physical fitness enabled him to lead the Old Westcliffians to victory in many national 7's competitions

The above gentlemen have made a great impact on the development of the Old Westcliffians RFC and helped to form the bedrock upon which Westcliff RFC has been able to build and progress, albeit under somewhat different playing criteria.

Thank you gentlemen

Don

BOB EVERITT



Our trip to Venice around 1966 Here's a photo of some of the class adorning Horses of Saint Mark up in St Marks Square in Venice..... Barry Gilbertson on the left is hanging off the horses leg with his Brownie 127 in hand, then there's Harry Schwartz standing next to him, and Peter Cole (..the best number 8 that Westcliff ever produced..) holding on under the horses belly ... Phil Staines on the right, and I believe that's Peters brother next to Phil...

Happy days

Bob

MICHAEL FELTHAM

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 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 bijou 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!*

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. It was 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.

“The Bogs”, as they were universally know, 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 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 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.

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

FRED GRISLEY BSc MIPI
(WHSB 1945-1949)

AMBITION

Spring 1954

A cool clear breeze blew in off the Bristol Channel, creating a few puffs of cumulus cloud in the early morning sunshine. I relaxed in my seat, hands on knees as I gazed across the Somerset countryside to the far side of the field where, in 1685, the Duke of Monmouth lost his bid for the crown to the army of James the second. My headset crackled: “All set?”

“Roger”.

“DOG FOX to Tower, ready to roll”.

“DOG FOX, you are cleared for take-off, wind two-six-five degrees thirteen knots gusting eighteen”.

“DOG FOX rolling”.

Out of the corner of my left eye, I saw the twin throttles slide forward. The hum of the engines increased to 14,700 rpm of thunder as the Meteor 7 shuddered against the brakes. They squealed as they released, I was pressed back into my seat by a greater acceleration than I had ever experienced, and the aircraft leapt towards the far boundary. The bump---bump---bump of the tyres over the run-way expansion joints increased in frequency until it became a drum-roll. The nose-wheel came up at 85 knots, and the rumbling ceased as we lifted off at 120. Three thumps signalled the retraction of the undercarriage as Weston Zoyland airfield disappeared rapidly astern.

We did not climb. Shrieking like a banshee, the METEOR tore across the tops of the apple orchards at 20 feet. I snatched a glance at the ASI as we leap-frogged a power line. 310 knots. I was no longer relaxed. 400 knots. My fists clenched. 440 knots. Without warning my instructor rolled the aircraft inverted! Suddenly I was watching trees, farmyards, cows, flashing past the top of the canopy so close I felt I could reach out and touch them. They were too close for comfort and so was my critical 'pucker factor'! My toes curled and my buttocks clenched. This first ride in a METEOR was unusual to say the least.

460 knots. The stick jerked forward, I was flung into the shoulder-straps, and the ground dropped away as we bunted upwards at $-2\frac{1}{2}G$. A red mist shrouded my vision, my gorge rose and I clenched my teeth. Just as a technical yawn seemed inevitable the sun appeared, centred in the windscreen. The negative G ceased as suddenly as it had begun and the stick slammed over sideways. We started to roll upwards --- over and over --- over and over --- over and over ---

1938 – Summer Morning

--- Over and over --- over and over --- the little boy rolled repeatedly head-over-heels on the grass. His parents and elder sister looked on with amusement. They knew this was his way of expressing intense joy. The cause of this outburst was a brightly coloured biplane executing a slow roll as it passed 100 feet overhead, the pilot clearly visible hanging in the straps and waving! It was leading a tail-chase of three others strung out at 50-foot intervals copying every move. Higher up and further away three silver bi-planes in vic formation, their wingtips linked together by streamers, their top wings bright with chequer board patterns, executed loops, rolls and other manoeuvres.

Crowds of spectators were making their way to a gap between the hangars beyond which could be heard the sounds of a military band in conflict with the roar of the engines.

The boy had not paid much attention to aeroplanes in the past. They had been infrequent far-away specks in the sky avoiding the town and pursuing leisurely, uninteresting courses into the distance. This was his first air show, an Empire Air Day, and life would never be the same again.

The year 1938 was a time of rapid and extra-ordinary changes. The modern monoplanes appearing in small numbers, sometimes only a prototype, were easily distinguished by their dark camouflage from the larger numbers of silver biplanes with their bright squadron colours. Bristol BULLDOGS, Gloster GLADIATORS and Hawker FURYS cavorted through their demonstrations. Handley Page HEYFORDS and Fairy BATTLES (the old and the new) bombed a 'Fort' in the middle of the airfield which was demolished by fire, explosion and the crackle of gun-fire. None of these aircraft were known to the boy but his father identified each one and answered a barrage of questions to the best of his ability. (Within a few weeks their positions would be reversed!)

A Bristol BLENHEIM, a Handley Page HAMPDEN and a Vickers WELLINGTON put in an appearance. A Vickers VIRGINIA trundled past with a man on each wing clinging to the rear interplane struts. Together they pulled their ripcords, were snatched away by their parachutes and landed to great applause in the front of the crowd.

An Armstrong Whitworth WHITLEY came snarling into view in characteristic nose-down attitude. Two Hawker HURRICANES scrambled to intercept and rapidly dispatched it with black smoke streaming to disappear behind a convenient row of trees.

HAWKER HURRICANES! Now there was the main attraction as far as the boy was concerned. A line of them stood wingtip to wingtip on the tarmac. Unlike the delicate, graceful biplanes they looked tough and purposeful. Even in repose, their hump-backed profiles gave the appearance of predatory creatures ready to pounce.

Two HURRICANES stood away from the others, 30 feet apart in line abreast. One of them was roped off with a trestle under the tail-wheel supporting it in flying attitude. A queue of spectators attended the other, waiting their turn to climb up on the port wing-root to peer into the cockpit. A pilot in white flying-suit stood on the other wing to explain the controls and the instruments, and to answer questions. The boy and his father took their turn. He was lifted onto the wing and then up to the cockpit rim. The instrument panel with its row of dials, the panels of switches, the various levers, and particularly the stick with its spade grip and gun-button in the 11 o'clock position would remain for life engraved on his memory.

As his feet touched the ground again a shattering roar made him jump and clutch his father round the knees. The other HURRICANE had opened fire. Eight Colt-Browning .303 calibre machine guns blasted at a combined rate of 10,000 rounds-per-minute into the gun-butts 100 feet away.

The sand writhed and spurted under the hail of metal, streams of links and shell-cases poured from the under-sides of the wings to clink and bounce on the tarmac, and burnt cordite perfumed the air.

Autumn 1954

A painfully new Pilot Officer with uniform and wings to match walked across the North Weald tarmac looking forward and back, left and right, checking angles and distances, gradually slowing, then coming to a halt. This was the spot. I glazed at the gun-butts. They hadn't changed. The sand had undoubtedly been dug out from time to time to salvage the metal but, who knows, a few 16-year old .303 bullets might have been overlooked and still remain in the bottom of the pile.

The memories of that first air-show came flooding back. They had never been far away. I thought of the intervening years; the aeronautical books and magazines, the model aircraft, National Service, square bashing, Canada, first solo, O.C.U; a kaleidoscope of memories culminating in this magic moment on this very same spot. I'd done it. I'D DONE IT!

A pair of METEOR F.8s with maroon and yellow flashes roared past, their wheels folding, and disappeared beyond the trees. Another pair was just on the break over-head. I seized this opportune gap in the traffic to walk across the end of the runway two-zero on my way to Hangar No. 4 and my first day as a member of 604 SQUADRON.

1938 – A Summer Evening

The crowds were thinning as they made their way to the exits and car-parks. The family of four was amongst the last to leave. Father, mother and sister trudged slowly. The little boy, overwhelmed and intoxicated with all he'd seen, was tireless. He would have turned more head-over-heels on the tarmac, but father had a firm grip on his hand, so he hopped and skipped instead. He stopped suddenly and turned, dragging his father to a halt. Together they gazed back at the sky, silent and empty now against the evening sun. The planes had landed or flown away. The HURRICANES had taxied in from their last demonstration of formations, dog-fighting and aerobatics. They stood by the hangar in a silent row, its symmetry broken only by the different angles of the Watts two-bladed propellers. The line steadily depleted as, one by one, they were wheeled inside.

“Daddy, Daddy” shrieked the little boy, ensuring a maximum audience. From all directions heads turned.

“What is it lad?”

“One day I'm going to be a FIGHTER-PILOT in the ROYAL AIRFORCE!”

Fred

JOHN JARVIS

1943 AFTER BELPER – 1948

27 FEBRUARY 1960 – FRANCE 3 ENGLAND 3 STADE COLOMBES PARIS

28 FEBRUARY 1960 – RACING CLUB DE FRANCE 0 OLD WEST-CLIFFIANS 3 STADE COLOMBO PARIS

On 22 February 1960 Barry Bridge sent out his final notice on the Old Westcliffians RFC Paris Trip. His organisation had been superb, arranging a trip to Paris for 36 people when some had not been abroad before.

We all had to be at Southend Airport on the 26th 45 minutes before take-off flying with Tradeair Ltd, with a baggage allowance of 33lbs, which included kit for the players. On the plane free drinks were served and also a supper box. In those days prices were a lot cheaper. The cost of air fares, landing costs, International ticket, coach trips and a tip to the driver was £6.13.3d.

Barry arranged proformas on the plane so that when we arrived at the Hotel Franklin that night at about 11.30 we had already chosen the type of room required. We had a choice of sharing a double room or having a single room all either with or without a bath. The costs varied between sharing a double with room with bath being £1.2.0d, or a single with bath for £1.19.0d per night, plus 9% tax. These prices of course included “petit dejeuner” and a 15 % service charge.

The following day, Saturday 27th at Stade Colombes we watched quietly as England played very badly to draw.

After the game a group of us went out to see the Follies Bergere and then on to something more “exciting”. In the early hours of the morning we ended up in the Vegetable Market of “Les Isle”. There was a general exchange of rotten fruit before we reached the first floor restaurant that had been recommended. Here we had Onion Soup. I have travelled many places in the world and dined in restaurants from the most expensive to the cheapest, but never before or since have I tasted French Onion Soup of such excellence as on that night!

Others of our party had a more interesting time. The French/Algerian conflict was at its height and some of our members got caught up in a “Hands Up” searchlight patrol in some back street. Later at the hotel one person having upset his colleague, jumped from one balcony to another on the second floor, and having made it to his room, then slept the night in the wardrobe! In the morning the argument could not be remembered.

The next day we were to play The Racing Club de France. Following a few words from Jack Slater, Denny Bridge and of course Don Meddle, always trying to get the best from us. We won by one try – 3-0. A try only counted for 3 points in those days. Don Day missed the conversion (one of the few in the season), but could be forgiven having been up with us most of the night.

Afterwards at their clubhouse, 5 Rue Eble Paris VII (Telephone No SUffren 41.70 - it must have gone years ago!) The drinking after the game was red wine; we were in a circle every other one being an opposition. A jug of wine was passed around and if you could finish it the previous person in the circle had to replenish the wine. Great fun - at first!!

We left at 7.30pm.

Perhaps the plane home should never have been allowed to take off. In the flight large groups were running up and down the plane to make it more interesting for the pilot.

At Southend-on-Sea airport we were met by our wives and most of the magnificent, oily stinking berets that we were wearing were immediately confiscated and either thrown away or burnt.

WE WERE HOME!!!

The team consisted of:

Jack Slater
Mike Lambert Freddie Bartram
Don Day Johnny Jarvis
Bernard Broad
Brian Scarsbrook
Geoff Bentley Denny Bridge
Jimmy Harrison
Mike Suckling Brian Towersey
Malcolm Whitfield Gus Chesney
Ian Francis

Ken Jones Touch Judge

The rest of the party was Sydney Arscott, Jumbo Bowen, Barry Bridge, Barry Coker, Dig Digrum, Martin Edinoff, Mike Hale, Jimmy (Brian) Kempson (my national Service friend who brought Llandaff North twice to our Easter Festival and we played them in Cardiff whilst on tour. He later become Assistant Secretary to Welsh Rugby Union in Cardiff.) Don Meddle,

Derek Price, Don Smith, Ken Soper, Peter Stead, Geoff Tears, Hugh Thornton, Mike Warwick, Brian White, Gordon White, Barry Wilkes, Courtney Young.

John Jarvis

PETER KING
WHSB (1943-1950)

As the OWA secretary stated that he was short of articles this year I will try to put a few words together. This could be boring and grammatically incorrect as one of my early recollections was of my father's expression on reading my very first WHSB school term report. It listed me as top in woodwork but bottom in English, he was not amused!

I first started school at West Leigh in 1937 but became caught up in the mass evacuation of children from the borough in the summer of 1940. My friend Ian Harper and I travelled to and lived initially in the small village of Kniveton in Derbyshire. Ian's brother, already at WHSB, went separately to Belper to the Herbert Strutt school. We were only away from home for 18 months before returning south as the invasion scare had passed. However 1942 still seemed a bleak year until we heard the news of the improvements in fortune for the allies at El Alamein and Stalingrad.

I joined the WHSB in the autumn of 1943 at a time when we used to practise proceeding to the air raid shelters that were dug into the grass bank at the top of the playing fields. Some nights at home were still being spent in a Morrison shelter listening, to the unmistakable beat of the enemy aero engines as bombers droned up towards London.

One day several friends and I went up to a field on which we often used to knock around at cricket to find it totally covered with army vehicles.

We found out the reason a few days later when there was an announcement made at lunchtime in the old school dining room.

A cheer went up when we were told that the allies had landed in France.

Although it was 1944 there was still trouble to come-on the so called home front. I clearly remember sitting at home one evening when the pulse jet on a V1 cut out overhead. Before getting to our shelter the flying bomb whistled down and there was a loud explosion up the road. It had landed about 350 yards away, but the blast was enough to blow the front door open, breaking the lock and bending the leaded light windows.

After the war was over, at school it was time for me to choose between arts and science. I chose the latter and by the autumn of 1948 found myself in a small 6 Science class taught by "Daddy" Smith (Pure Maths), Messrs Bately (Applied Maths), Robinson (Physics), Webber (Organic Chemistry) and "Black Harry" Smith (Inorganic Chemistry). In the last year one had to decide whether National Service was to follow or whether one could obtain deferment by entering higher education.

At this point headmaster Henry Cloke came up with an idea for me for which I have always been grateful "Why not go up to Loughborough College and try for a scholarship where John Ayres was successful last year," he suggested.

At that time Loughborough did not have university status, but it was possible to take the London University degree externally as they covered the syllabus. Anyway I was fortunate in following in John's footsteps in obtaining a degree in mechanical engineering followed by gaining a National Service commission in the REME. I was posted to an infantry workshop under canvas in Thika, Kenya.

Incidentally had it not been for the National Service interlude I would not have met my wife. On returning home from Kenya my subaltern colleague introduced me to his girl friend's twin sister who I eventually married in 1961.

I was fortunate in being demobilised before the Suez crisis just in time to join a two year post graduate apprenticeship in mechanical engineering at Metropolitan Vickers in Trafford Park Manchester. Subsequently I worked a short time for AEI-John Thompson Nuclear Energy Company at Radbroke Hall just south of Knutsford in Cheshire.

Unfortunately even then the nuclear power industry seemed to be heading for contraction so I left to take up a job in London in the busy petrochemical industry. The rest of my career was spent with M.W. Kellogg which since my retirement in 1997 has become part of Kellogg Brown & Root. I worked for a few years on process systems but for much longer specifying, selecting and carrying out the engineering associated with the installation of large rotating machinery such as pumps, compressors and turbines. As much of the machinery was manufactured abroad this involved a fair amount of interesting travel to coordination meetings and to witness tests.

The years seem to be passing quickly now and I have already been retired 18 years, but thankfully am fit enough to keep the garden in shape and play a couple of 9 hole rounds of golf a week. Living on the periphery of North West London I must admit that I have only attended the OWA dinner about half a dozen times. I will try to make it to the next one, but I now wonder whether I will recognise anyone I knew!

Peter



Rugby Team 1965/66:

Back row: Hinton, Allen, Staines, ?, Churcher, ?, Thorpe, ?

Front row. Jim, Schwartz, Everitt, Cole, Henry, Page?, Gilbertson, Mason, Mason

Bob Everitt



Cricket team names are a little sketchy.. 1963/64?

I am bottom right, next to me Rick Barnes and then possibly Page? Along the bottom left, Kevin Fowler with the hat, next to Colin Hastings.

Back row with hat – Simon Arnold and Stuart Eno next to him behind Henry!

Bob Everitt

PROF KEN MACKINNON

Keith Warren wonders how Henry Cloke came by the nickname of The Boot. I can supply the answer. At his first school morning assembly, when the majority of us actually saw Henry Cloke for the first time, we all stood to attention when he made his entry from 'stage right', loping into sight, gown akimbo. My fellow classmate next to me asked me what I thought of him. I said, 'He reminds me of an old boot, with its great tongue hanging out. Come to think of it, that would be a good name for him, The Boot' – and it stuck.

I think I should put together some further material on The Boot, and also follow up some of the points made by Keith Clough and John Cowan. Incidentally, the English master was Mr Howells ('Lefty'), and not Howes. So expect something from me in the not too far distant future, I very much hope.

Prof Ken MacKinnon

KEVIN MANSEL

I thought Keith Warren's attempt to capture the essence of Henry Cloke was very enjoyable. The Head Boy for the end of year 'skeleton' assembly was Antony Barnett, the first Jewish head boy - probably why that obscure text from Ezekiel was chosen. Half of the sixth form were in on the prank which is why it was so breathtaking.

Henry was a loveable man who took great pride in us all.

My personal favourite memory was when in an assembly at the time of the 1964 election, he told everyone to go and look at a poster done for the school election campaign just outside the staff room. It said 'Don't Think - Vote Tory like Father' I was the author and the designer, working for the Labour candidate, Rick Morgan.

Thanks again

Kevin Mansell

GRAHAM PARSONS

WHSB. 50s and 60s sometime

What a difference a continent makes to your perspective.

Last week I was talking to another old boy on the phone who lives in Westcliff. As old men often do we discussed the weather. The weather outlook for Westcliff the home of our favourite school was for a cold snap where the temperature might fall to zero Celsius replacing the warmth that global warming brought to the planet this year. It was characterised as a grim prospect that might challenge the nations capacity to run the turbines to warm the hearts and homes of the nation.

On the other side of the planet I live in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada where I am also seeing early effects of global warming. The Canadian Prairies has one of most volatile climates in the world. This year we were riding through the downside of volatility through much of early January with temperature highs of -40 Celsius and higher with the wind chill - now that is cold!

Last week we, on the other side of the world, got the wonderful news that the polar vortex would weaken and temperatures would rise to around zero Celsius. Even the prospect of the rise made people smile. When it arrived parkas were replaced with light jackets and there was a feeling of an early spring in the air and in the steps we took.

Global warming is changing the planet. The North Pole is melting and ocean currents and climates will change. In spite of the a continent apart we may still respond to the same temperature in different ways. What a difference a continent makes!

In the meantime I am writing this in an airport on my way to Phoenix, Arizona where I will be guaranteed a timely end to the cold set on my timetable and the best of American Football - Go Seahawks.

Graham Parsons in Denver, Colorado

AMIT SHAH

My partner and I are planning on kayaking the Mississippi River this summer from source to sea. We are organising this completely independently, i.e. no company has put this together for us, and this will be our first expedition together. Through the trip we are also planning on collecting scientific data from the river and riverside in order to produce some environment-influenced artwork, showing what kind of impact man has had on the river as we paddle down it.

Finally, through the trip we are hoping to raise awareness for the British Exploring Society (BES, a personal development expedition-based charity) as well as around £3000 - £5000 in order fund a place for a young person on one of BES's trips. This will be a huge task for us, but BES is a charity close to my partner's heart as she joined them on a trip when she was just 16, and I myself went on an adventure (albeit with a different company) at 19 but had been planning since I was 16 at WHSB. In fact, it was a fellow Westcliffian who introduced me to the adventure but didn't join me in the end.

We are doing this by ourselves, and we need to source money and equipment to do this, so any publicity would be fantastic and hopefully make a good read.

Amit Shah

NIGEL STEVENS (WHSB: 1962 - 1969)

As a "County Boy", ie one who lived outside the Southend Borough, I had the disadvantage of knowing none of my fellow Primary School graduates when I arrived at WHSB in September 1962. I did, however, have the dubious privilege of being the younger brother of an experienced fourth former (Paul) who, with a few of his mates, kindly shared with me all sorts of misinformation about the school and its procedures!

There was only one other County Boy that year, and we found ourselves in the same D- stream class for that first term.

His name was Terry Sunshine, and more than once he got into difficulties when asked by a master "... and what's your name then, sunshine?" and he replied "Yes"! Our room was down in the dungeons, and we were steered through those first three months by Mr Ward, a mild, bespectacled man who, for some reason that I never fathomed, had acquired the nickname of "Bucket". I still cringe with embarrassment when I recall that I once called him 'Dad' and not 'Sir'.

The end of that first term saw me 'promoted' to the B-stream where I got to meet another tranche of the 'cream of the country', as we were frequently reminded that grammar school entrants were. For the remainder of that school year, and for the next four, I was on the register of Mr Winslow's class. He was generally pretty fair to me and I never knew why he had attracted such an unpleasant epithet (which I shall not repeat here). The classes were really quite large and, although I have clear memories of many of my contemporaries it is with regret that I have to advise that I see none of them today ... partly as a result of not living locally to the school, partly because I went to work in the City straight from school in 1969, and partly, I guess, because other priorities got in the way at that time. On the few occasions that I have attended the Annual Dinner over the years I have been unfortunate not to have met anyone from my year at all.

The staff at the school left distinct impressions in many cases, and in others just a name, if that. I shall, however, write a few words about those who were the 'major players' in my time at WHSB. The Head was, of course, Henry Cloke, a man revered for his position and his undoubted abilities if not necessarily for his sartorial elegance.

Harry Harden, as his deputy, was a dapper individual who, it seemed, I only got to meet when on the wrong end of some misdemeanour or other. As well as being my form master, Jeff Winslow taught me maths, and a better maths teacher one would have to go a long way to find ... the number of us in that class who achieved good passes in our maths G.C.E. 'O'-level taken a year early was amazing. I would bet that most in that class could still recite the outcome of 'a plus b all squared'!

English for me was hosted mainly by Arnold Shone who managed to successfully drum into me not just the basics but some of the niceties of our language and who, I believe, went on to a senior management role at WHSB. French was from various teachers over the years, including Mr Hart, he of the satin paisley waistcoats, and the incomparable Madame Meyer, over here for a year and who left an indelible impression on many pubescent boys.

German was presented by George Price, one of life's true gentlemen, and a subject which I started in my second year in favour of Latin which I had studied for two terms but which seemed almost incomprehensible (although it is surprising just how much of those two terms' worth has stuck !). Mr Price was an uncle of one of the boys in my brother's class and, frankly, seemed pretty much like an uncle to everyone who knew him.

Geography was primarily delivered by Josh "Felix" Turner and history by Charlie Day, complete with many recollections of when he was in India.

Both of these had a predilection for dealing with even mild malefactors by twisting the tufts of embryonic sideburns, an extremely uncomfortable experience but one which left no lasting evidence!

Physics was partly provided by Mr Richards, a small man with an unending repertoire of punishments available to him. Chemistry teaching seemed to change every year, and was never a subject to which I related well. Mr Webber was, of course, ever-present although he never had the pleasure of me in his class. I do remember, though, Chris Hudd who taught chemistry for one year and had a motorcycle combination ... he once ran me up to the London Road bus stop in the side-car, the floor of which was three or four inches deep in assorted exercise books!

PE was in the hands of Harry Brownley, and Games, rugby in particular, ably demonstrated, encouraged and supported by the young and agile Jimmy Harrison who appeared not to have succumbed to the 'tea and toast' that seemed a permanent fixture of the New Gym's staffroom. Rugby featured large also in the life of music teacher Gerwyn Parry, a Welshman who very soon advised me that his view was 'I never, ever, want to hear you sing again'.

Non-academic staff are less easy to recall, although Miss Davey has to be mentioned with respect and admiration, as does, at the other end of the scale, 'Gestapo Joe' who patrolled the grounds in such a manner as to literally put one in fear of where you trod.

Although I did not finish the Upper Sixth in any blaze of glory, my education at WHSB stood me in good stead for a varied, successful and rewarding career, largely in London. I have worked for small enterprises, major corporates, and as a consultant to public bodies.

Having retired (twice!), I have found myself until recently imparting the knowledge of maths that I acquired from Mr Winslow all those years ago to others who, for one reason or another, did not quite get it first time around. This was a new career challenge for me, and I thank the Southend Adult Community College for giving me that opportunity for the last six years. I have now retired again (finally, this time, I think) and revel in the pleasure I get from my family – my wife of over forty years, three married daughters and their husbands, and five lovely granddaughters to keep me busy.

Finally, to all my fellow classmates, I apologise to any I may have offended over the years, and for seeming being able to find a laugh in just about everything that happened. I do not know too much about my former classmates' current status and whether any ended up in prison, but I do know that one sits in the House of Lords! To him, and all my contemporaries, I wish good health and happiness, and, you never know, we may catch up one day.

Nigel Stevens

MIKE TOOBY

I read with great interest the 2014 newsletter. There was a picture of the 1952 junior rugby side of which I became a member in the following year, and therefore contained many of my teammates. In addition it showed "Bunny" Croston who was actually my uncle (Mother's brother), and Cecil "Claude" Webber who was head of Rugby when I later reached the exalted ranks of the first fifteen.

Bernard Croston came to Western Australia to live in the 1980's and died here, aged 89, in 2001. My mother, his sister, survived him by just two months. His wife Kitty lived on another 11 years until she died here aged 97.

There was also reference to the Gardening Club, which was run by "Black Harry" Smith. I joined it in 1953 and left the club and the school in 1957. In 1956, whilst Harry Smith was in hospital, the club was run by Jack Williams and myself. Jack later became best man at our wedding, and now lives in Eye in Suffolk. He and I have been in contact ever since leaving School, even though we have lived half a world apart for most of the time

For the record I left WHSB in 1957 and have never returned to it. I was married and lived in Scotland for 9 years after leaving Reading University, and migrated with my wife and three sons to Western Australia in 1971. We now have nine grandchildren scattered around Australia.

Regards

Mike Tooby

JOHN TWITCHEN

Old Masters

I was at Westcliff from 1956 to 1961 when Henry Cloke was around. To be honest I found the school impersonal during those years. It was far from a warm atmosphere.

I'm reminded of a freezing January morning when we had to turn out for rugby. I left my pants on under my shorts. Claude Webber, who had also taught my dad found out. He saw fit to pull down my clothing and give me a good whacking on the bum in the middle of the field. You would not get away with much of that these days. It did not make a man of me. Nothing much ever did!

I do believe that it was a real privilege to be taught by certain masters. They made an indelible impression on me for life. In particular, I think of Geoffrey Winslow, who was a brilliant and committed maths teacher. A first-class man. Then there was H.I. Browne who again taught my dad. When he presented the Punic Wars I was there with Hannibal and the elephants. He opened my eyes to the wonders of history, which I have loved all my life as a result.

Finally, I think of one of the finest men I have ever met, Harry Harden, the Deputy Head. He was Deputy Head when he was passed over in favour of Henry Cloke joining the school. What a sad situation for him, and a great loss of his potential leadership of the school over the succeeding years. Harden was a brilliant, dedicated, and disciplined teacher. A good bit of the Latin he drove into me is still there after so many years.

He also took great interest in the future of the boys as the Careers Master, and his kindly wife got involved too. They even called round to my home. It was very tragic that after his wife died he took his own life. I have always wished I had thanked him more than I did. At the instigation of my dad I wrote a letter to Harry a year or so after leaving the school. He sent me a charming hand-written reply.

Men like Winslow, Browne and Harden must be so difficult to replace as the years roll on. Well, I salute and thank them all.

John Twitchen

PHILIP WAND, MAJOR, FCA

I read in the latest newsletter that Val West thinks he is the oldest "Old Boy". This year I am 96 and still going strong. I attended Westcliff High School from 1929 to 1934. These years cover my being an articled clerk to a Private in a Welsh regiment and gradual promotion over 7 years to Major, Essex regiment. I currently reside in Puteaux France, and am presently unable to return to my home in America.

Your readers may also be interested to hear I have just been awarded the Arctic STAR not bad at 95!

Philip

JOHN WELLS

(WHSB 1963 to 1970)

I have suffered Myodil-induced Adhesive Arachnoiditis since 1973, this was caused by a Myelogram (I had five in total!). A contrast medium (Myodil - copyright Glaxo) was injected into my spinal fluid for an X-ray procedure - before the days of the modern scanners. The Arachnoiditis causes scar-tissue growth inside the Dura, and thus some disability in the lower body; it mainly causes extreme pain (in my case my legs - especially my knees). I survive on moderate doses of morphine; this is not a 'pain-killer', but does take the worst edge of the pain. Last month I was very lucky to have been offered, and had, a 'Stimulator' installed inside my spine; and an associated power, CPU and radio receiver installed inside my abdomen. I have, too, an external radio-controlled 'zapper' to alter the signal strengths in my legs. This greatly reduces my leg pain, but unfortunately doesn't touch my (less severe) back pain. This, for me, is great news - but currently I am still recovering from the two operations, and from morphine withdrawal (as I can now reduce the dosage of this poisonous drug). Future looks great!

I took ill-health early retirement (spine problems) from academic work in 1986, but continued 3rd year Oxford Physics tutorials until a couple of years ago. (I went to Hertford College, Oxford to read Physics, then went to Wolfson College for my D. Phil.).

My brother (Stephen Wells, 1965 to 1971) attended WHSB, he won an exhibitionship to Cambridge in Economics. My father (Derek Wells), and two uncles (Reg Wells and Ron Turnidge) - all three now deceased – also attended WHSB.

John Wells M.A. (Oxon), D. Phil. (Oxon)

VAL WEST

I first want to wish you a Happy and Healthy New Year!

I've been trying to assemble stories of my RAF years. It has become the rambling recollections of an 86 year old mind. Turning back the clock even further is a problem, however I am sure that many of those (if any are left) of that period 1940/1944 there may be a few who remember Mr. Rosborough. He taught French and Maths, and had the reputation of being a strict disciplinarian. The reputation which I never recall ever being exercised preceded him like a wave and when it was his lesson everyone was seated and poised ready to listen and learn. I can't recall him ever raising his voice or having had the need to.

His reputation stemmed, it seems, from a legend that ,during the Gallipoli expedition The Baron, as he was known to us, would march along the lines dressing down soldiers who had buttons undone. He was, allegedly, a Sgt. Major. Whether any of this was true is almost beside the point, it made him in our minds, an heroic and frightening figure .

Six years after leaving school and having completed our National Service, three of us who were in the same form for the largest part of our academic careers, were walking up Southend High street, when coming towards us was The Baron..... We all smiled politely as we approached him and he stopped looked at us and said" Edwards Howell, and West.... well how are you lads doing?"

I wonder of all the many hundreds of boys, who were privileged to be in one of his classes, he remembered?

There are always a few people who make a mark on our lives, friends, family, colleagues, ministers, but the few that really mould your character the most are that group of dedicated teachers who open your mind to the world.

"The Baron "was such a person

Val West

JOHN WHITE

WHS and the ATC

During the war, Harry Harden (our Latin teacher) formed a wing of the Air Training Corps at the school.

It was quite popular and my guess is that there would have been around thirty or so schoolmates in the wing. Initially, the emphasis was on marching drills but later, we got into the morse code and basic navigation.

Also aircraft recognition at which several of us were already pretty proficient. Cadet members I recall were Bob Nicholl and David Roberts (later a teacher at WHS).

Then the move to Belper with a change of emphasis – I recall church parades which were not too popular and drills. Some cadets had air experience flights, one of which ended in tragedy when the Hampden bomber one of our cadets was in crashed, with all on board being killed

On our return to Westcliff, there was a dramatic change with gliding becoming available at Rochford aerodrome. A squadron of Spitfires and a flight of Westland Whirlwinds (twin engined fighters) were based there but we had room to operate several Slingsby Cadet gliders.

These had a very poor glide angle and were easy to damage, but equally easy to repair. All launches were by means of a winch – employed elsewhere in establishing a balloon barrage around London and other locations.

Retrieval of the cable (and glider) was accomplished using a 'Beaverette' vehicle. Initially the cadet pilot, having been strapped in, was tasked with keeping the wings level, assuming there was a breeze blowing. Once competent, ground slides were attempted, leading to low hops with the glider barely leaving the ground under the control of the winch operator.

Next came high hops, climbing to around 50 feet or so. Then the big one when the cadet pilot was allowed to release the cable after a reasonably high launch.

I managed a flight of 42 seconds which was enough to gain me the coveted 'A' Certificate of the FAI. I would add that when I received a plaque for 'outstanding services to gliding' in Australia in 1999 it caused some amusement.

We also had the opportunity to go on air experience flights, one of which ended in a crash at Rochford. The aircraft was a De Havilland Rapide, a twin engined light aircraft. Take off was normal and we had a good flight but the pilot was a bit hot on approach, floated over the airfield and ended up hitting a concrete blockhouse which tore off the starboard wing and ruptured the fuel tanks. Fortunately there was no fire and all occupants escaped unscathed. Another experience was a camp at Fairlop which had a squadron of Mustangs based there.

They were busy every day over Northern France – there was also a Tiger Moth which we had the chance to fly (with an instructor I would add). This added to my enthusiasm for aviation, which I was able to take up in a big way when we moved to Australia (but that's another story!).

John White, Canberra Australia

11. OLD WESTCLIFFIAN LODGE NO. 5456

In an effort to be ecological, the Old Westcliffian Lodge has had a “recycled” Master this year with the role being held by Daniel Blunden, who has done an excellent job. Although the Lodge has had no new members since last summer, a useful programme of ceremonies have been performed.

The members of the Lodge entirely consist of former pupils and staff at the school, thus enabling a common bond to exist between the Lodge members. The Lodge takes great pride in the quality of ritual performed, but this does not prevent it being done with a smile on one’s face, and with some gentle humour being achieved at the expense of other Lodge members.

The Lodge is open to all former pupils, staff and governors of the school, and we the Lodge members would be delighted to meet with any of you who might be interested in joining the Lodge, or indeed want to learn more about Freemasonry in general. If you would like to know more, the names of three members of the Lodge and their contact numbers are appended below.

Terry Birdseye (1957-1962) 01702 714241
Arthur Millman (1967-1973) 07973 145978
Greg Bermon (1988-1995) 07772 296230

12. EDITOR

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the Newsletter, and being my first time as Editor, I must say I found all of the items really interesting (yes, I did read them all).

Sadly there was not room for all of the articles, and I had to cut out Keith Warren’s epic piece “De-bagging”. However, the story was taken from Keith’s autobiographical work “Go Carts, Girls and Gob Stoppers”, available as an ebook from Amazon direct publishing, if you are interested.

We could do with some more photographs in the next edition, the one in the current Newsletter taken in Venice in 1966 was great, and it reminded me of some of the old Beatles films, “A Hard Day’s Night” in particular, looking at the clothes and the haircuts!

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Terry for asking me to edit the OWA Newsletter, I found the “tales” from Old Westcliffians really fascinating and I also think me grammar’s improved!

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 OWAs.

Shanie White

13. (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 June or 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.

✂.....

13. (ii) The Old Westcliffian Association

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

Application for Life Membership Subscription	£10
Life Members’ Tie	£8
Cufflinks in Presentation Box	£15

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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: dick.arnold@virgin.net

