



WHITGIFTIAN ASSOCIATION

Whitgift School, Haling Park, South Croydon CR2 6YT. Tel: 020 8633 9926 www.whitgiftianassociation.co.uk

President - RICHARD BLUNDELL

Chairman - JONATHAN BUNN

Editor - RICHARD BLUNDELL

NEWSLETTER 386 - NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019



Maybe, unlike good wine, the singing does not improve with age! The evening was enjoyed by all, partners included, and demand was there for a repeat in 2021.

These informal events are a great opportunity to renew friendships and make new ones while catching up on lives after school. Watch the newsletter and website for details of the 2021 dinner so you don't miss out – you do not have to be resident in the South West to join us.

On 28th September, eighteen Old Whitgiftians and their partners gathered for the biennial South West Dinner at the Tiverton Hotel (which just happens to be in Blundells Road!) Most arrived early to enjoy a pre-dinner drink and chat in the bar.

The informal setting allowed couples to sit together with colleagues of a similar generation and enjoy a convivial evening chatting to other OWs and their partners. The excellent meal was served by very efficient and attentive staff after which Simon Kennedy OW (1959-66)

welcomed the attendees and proposed the health of the Queen and our Founder.

Andrew Gayler OW (1956-64) updated the members on goings on in Croydon from the viewpoint of the Association and our President Richard Blundell OW (1956-63) covered the changes at the School.

The evening finished in traditional style with the singing of Carmen, the school song, which was sung with great gusto if very little else! More practice required for next time.



AIRCRAFT OVER WHITGIFT

David Linney OW (1959-66) and I were both cadets in the Whitgift School CCF RAF section. David chose the RAF as his career and following his last assignment on Harriers he joined Flight Refuelling Aviation at Bournemouth flying Dassault Falcon 20 executive jets that are used for training Navy personnel in aircraft defence.

In 2006 Sir Michael Cobham, the second son of Sir Alan Cobham, died. A

memorial service was held at St Clement Danes in London on June 13th 2006. A flypast by two aircraft was arranged with one being flown by David Linney. The aircraft on their way back to Bournemouth overflew Whitgift School and the unique photo was taken of David's aircraft G-FRAK overflying Whitgift School.

A copy was made and framed and presented to Howard Bairstow on his



70th birthday and this now proudly hangs in his home.

HOWARD BAIRSTOW OW (1958-66)

OW SWIMS THE CHANNEL



Terrifying

That's the only word I can use to describe how it feels to be hanging off the back of a boat in the middle of the English channel in the middle of the night waiting for the shout to jump in to the pitch black, freezing cold water.

The shout came and I jumped, immediately submerged and thrashing frenziedly to the surface. My goggles were smeary so I could only just about make out the bright headlamp pointing to starboard which was to be my guide for the next hour. I'd done plenty of training, but that was all during the day.

Laps and laps of Dover harbour, waving at the ferries, with the reassuring sight of other bright swim caps all around. The five of us team mates swimming as a pod, stopping every kilometre to check how everyone was feeling, joking about the waves and the cold and how

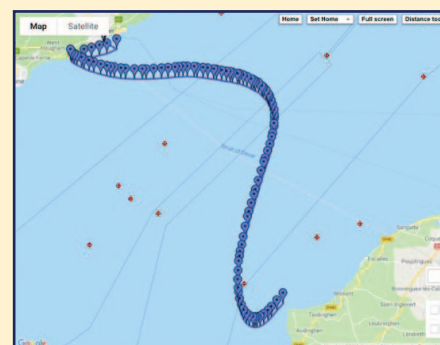
much cake we would eat when we got out. This was totally different; I was very aware that I was all alone, unable to see or hear the rest of the team on the boat. Vincit qui patitur indeed.

In the town of Dover you get to meet lots of channel swimmers and trainers, and the consensus is pretty clear that mental strength is what will get you across the 22 miles. There is a special atmosphere around the channel swimming community drawn towards this oddity of a challenge. Peculiar nicknames, alarming swimwear, camaraderie and cake.

I had been interested in swimming the channel for years, an idle daydream that wouldn't go away. The more I scratched the itch with research, the more I got drawn into it until I found myself on the beach in April for our first training weekend about to walk into 12°C seawater. The team and I

bonded over these training weekends in Dover, sharing jelly babies and mild hypothermia. You can see France from Dover, but it and the big swim seemed so far away.

Fast forward to mid July and the phone call comes in: it's tonight! We made our way down to Dover harbour and puttered round the corner in our boat The Optimist. Denise started us off from Samphire Hoe at around 22:50, with an hour of powerful front crawl. The sea was calm and the skies were clear with a big bright moon





giving our special evening a magical feeling. Next up was Bex who again is an incredibly strong swimmer. All the while as it got closer to my stint, I became more tight lipped and anxious.

When it came to my turn all thoughts of singing songs in my head to pass the time vanished as I just tried to keep the right distance from the boat, not so near it would crush me, not so far that I would get lost! Eventually I was able to settle into a rhythm and just push as hard as I could. The shout to come out brought on the next challenge: how to climb up a ladder with both hamstrings cramping. The relief I felt was huge and wrapped in a dry robe, hot chocolate in hand, I began to relax.

Jamie and Abi took their turns, then Denise and Bex again. Over those four hours I got to watch the sun rise over the channel, so flat the sea almost seemed solid. As the water became clearer, it became easier to spot the jellyfish, eerie creatures that bring pain. Although they often appeared in large clumps of hundreds, the captain wasn't going to be steering around them, so it was head down and try not to think about it. The best head position when swimming is looking almost straight down so it isn't until they are floating directly past your face that you are aware of each one, followed swiftly in my case by a jolt of adrenalin.

That dawn swim was pretty magical, yet even 8 hours in, the coast of France still looked like a very thin, very far off strip

along the horizon. We were one of seven boats that went out from Dover that night and two had already turned back: the failure rate is pretty high.

I went to one of the cabins and crashed into an instant deep sleep, woken

all too soon to be told I was up again. Because of my nap I had no idea how close we had suddenly got. Looking ahead and to the left I could see the lighthouse of the Cap Griz Nez, the closest point of France to Dover. This had been an incredible team effort but I can't deny a bit of me wanted to be the one who got us to land.

I jumped in and swam for all I was worth. Every hundred strokes or so I would look up and the sight of the land so close by gave me more belief and strength to keep pushing. Suddenly the lighthouse was right ahead of me and I redoubled my efforts to torpedo on. When I next looked up the lighthouse appeared to have moved and was now to my right, which surely was cheating? Then I got the shout to get out, thwarted in my efforts to be the one who got to land first by the incredibly strong tides along this stretch of coast.

A few minutes after I got on the boat, we were deemed so close it was time for all of us to jump in and finish the job. The last few minutes were exhausting as the coast kicked up the waves, but the elation of hitting land and walking onto the beach was immense. We hugged and took photographs, hunting around for stones and shells to take back,

HONOURS FOR OW

Alex Dawson OW (1996-2004) was awarded an OBE in Prime Minister's Resignation Honours. The citation reads as follows:

Alexander Dawson - "Former Director of Research and Messaging, 10 Downing Street, Special Adviser to the Home Secretary and Director, Conservative Research Department. For political and public service."

As noted in the most recent edition of OW News, Alex is now at Global Counsel, a political advisory firm, as practice lead in UK politics and policy.

then swam leisurely back to the boat where we toasted our success with Champagne.

Thinking back on this now I'm so grateful to everyone who sponsored me, and supported me through, but also for the health and opportunity to take on such a challenge. I did this to raise money for Aspire who support sufferers of spinal injuries. With the help of hundreds of people, (including OW Peter Rae who did the whole thing in 1985 – huge respect), I smashed my fundraising target of £3,000 and got to £4,219: money that will really change lives.

13 hours and 8 minutes! Really chuffed.

OLIVER LITTLE (1988-96)



PRESIDENT'S BLOG #77

A walk across the School junior playground on the brand-new green rubber safety surface brought back memories of a scarred left knee from the original 1931 gravel surface!

A WSPA committee meeting was followed by a Headmaster's reception in Big School concerning OW support for the Bursary Scheme, then back into Big School together with 2,000 other people for Open Morning and a check on the WA presence amongst all the marvellous display boards and a brief visit to Whitgift Sports Club (WSC) for their RWC braai morning.

A trip to Devon for the SW Area Dinner enabled the meeting of a wide range of OWs, ably assembled by Simon Kennedy, at an extremely convivial evening of OW fellowship.

Out onto Big Side to check on the winning ways of the School first XV in Trophy and Cup matches and a visit to WSC to listen to the Corps of Drums play their latest repertoire of music ready for their upcoming events.

Into the Founder's Room for a main committee meeting discussing matters of state and a swift visit to the School PAC to find school drama in fine form.

Then an invitation from the John Whitgift Foundation (new re-branding) to enjoy the "in harmony" concert in the newly refurbished Fairfield Halls and to listen to wonderful music from the pupils of all three Schools.

A lunch at WSC to help celebrate a special birthday for a very senior member with the gift of the new OW woollen scarf to help keep him warm.

Lastly, my Sincere Thanks to all those members who conveyed their thoughts, words and prayers of condolence to me at this very sad time and it was humbling to meet so many OWs at Mary's funeral.

RICHARD BLUNDELL OW (1956-63)

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL

An annoying feature of my timetable this year is that I have lessons on Wednesday afternoons, meaning I can never venture out to watch the First XV when they have a home midweek fixture. I can, however, hear the cheers made by the crowd when Whitgift scores, and this has led to the unexpected consequence of some of the most dramatic lessons I have ever taught! When the team were facing up to local rivals, John Fisher, in the annual epic derby, I happened to be teaching Rudyard Kipling's *If*, and just when I was reaching the rousing climax of the nation's favourite poem,

*'If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And – which is more – you'll be a Man,
my son!'*

... a guttural roar erupted from Bigside as the Firsts sealed their 22-0 win with a magnificent try.

Incidentally, the 2nds and 3rds enjoyed even more comprehensive victories against the old rivals, winning 59-5 and 59-7 respectively; a rare clean sweep against John Fisher's senior sides.

Just one week later, the Firsts were up against our other local rivals, Trinity, in the second round of the National Cup. During this fixture, I was teaching George Orwell's classic, 1984. Whilst attempting to explain the ramifications of the analogy, 'It was like trying to make a move in chess when you were already mated.' for the oppressed protagonist, Winston Smith, I repeatedly had to contend with the joyous cheers of the Whitgift supporters, as the team racked up a frightening 65-8 score line against the gallant but ultimately vanquished Trinity boys, who certainly would have empathised with Winston's forlorn state

of mind by the time the final whistle was blown!

Not that it has all been plain sailing for the First XV. Initially, the success of the incredible summer tour to New Zealand was continued, with the boys beating Wellington College by a single try in a pulsating final to retain the Esher Cup. But Wellington were to prove too strong in the full fixture later on in the term, with the size of their pack being too much to handle.

The same was the case against Sedbergh in the first match of the season, meaning the side reached half term in a very similar state to last year's team, having registered a series of impressive victories against many of the best schools in the country, but unable to knock over the two sides who really are at the pinnacle of the school game in England.

One team that did reach half term unbeaten are the U16 As. They were unlucky not to get to Twickenham in last year's national competition, being knocked out by Wellington in a drawn semi-final by virtue of the fact they did not score as many tries. This year they gained revenge, beating Wellington 18-10 in a brutal fixture. In their unbeaten run thus far, they have also racked up scores such as 62-5 and 52-7 against Warwick and John Fisher respectively. Much was also expected of the U15 As. The reputation they garnered last year as an unbeaten U14 side was such that this year, some teams (most notably, Warwick and Millfield) actually refused to face them. They began the season with a stunning 38-0 victory away at Wellington and continued to sweep all before them right up until the very last game before half term – the second round of the National Cup against Trinity, who also have a very strong side at this year group.

Due to a very unfortunate calendar clash, the fixture took place on the same day that five of the team were flying out to Valencia on a Spanish exchange. Losing a third of their players proved too much of a hurdle to overcome and Trinity were also outstanding on the day, playing some excellent rugby to triumph 28-13. It looks like I'll have to rely on the Firsts to get my Twickenham trip this year!

In other sports news, the U15A cricket team had some unfinished business at the beginning of term, travelling to Arundel Castle to play in the finals day of the National T20 competition. They competed hard, but ultimately succumbed to Sedbergh to finish runners up.

In hockey, the First XI have begun the new school season in scintillating fashion, beating Kingston Grammar and Cranleigh 3-0 and 7-0 respectively. As usual, they warmed up for these national league fixtures by playing 'friendlies' against Oxford and Nottingham universities, impressively drawing against both of these much older teams.

Finally, year 11 student, Daniel Lindsay, should be congratulated for being selected to represent Great Britain at fencing in the U17 Sabre team. This is a great achievement and the start of what we hope will be a successful international career.

From sports to drama, this year's theatrical run got off to a typically roaring start with the House Drama

competition. The event took place in the Performing Arts Centre on the evening of Friday 11th October and was, as ever, a great deal of fun. Guest judge this year was OW Matthew Dan (2004-11), who since leaving the school has worked as an assistant director at Shakespeare's Globe, the Royal Shakespeare Company and Chichester Festival Theatre. When Matthew was in the sixth form, he actually lead Smith's House to successive titles in the drama competition, something yours truly pointed out to him at the beginning of the evening, but any concerns of mine about favouritism were quashed when he announced Tate's as winners at the end of the night.

Matthew commented how impressed he had been with all eight Houses, and particularly the fact that five of them had written their own plays, but in the end the Tate's offering, written by, directed by and starring the young Rocketman himself, Kit Connor, just edged it!

The other major performance this half term was the inaugural Whitgift Foundation Concert, which took place at the recently opened Fairfield Halls on Wednesday 18th October. The concert featured more than 300 students aged between 10 and 18 from Whitgift, Trinity and Old Palace. They performed a programme of choral and orchestral

music with a range of exciting repertoire including Grieg's Piano Concerto, 1st Movement, the exquisite Rutter Gloria, as well as two world première performances. Unfortunately, I could not be there, but from all accounts it was an excellent evening and certainly something to be repeated in the future.



To conclude, you may be interested to hear that the school has entered into an educational partnership with the Mobius Foundation, a not for profit organisation working towards environmental sustainability. The partnership will launch the World Environment School, Coorg (WESc) - the first school of its kind in India and South Asia to take a leading role in promoting and delivering environmental education with sustainability. It will be based in Karnataka, South West India and open to students from India and around the world from 2021.

Whitgift's partnership with WESc will focus on providing academic support to the School, including establishing all aspects of the curriculum and syllabus development, assessment and best-teaching and learning practices. Part of the WESc syllabus will include the International Baccalaureate, where Whitgift holds the position as the top boys' school in the UK.

Chris Ramsey, Headmaster said, "We hope that Whitgift's involvement, alongside a number of international partners will make a genuine difference to education in a growing economy and allow us to participate in a sustainable educational model. Over time, as well as us sharing our knowledge, I'm excited at the prospect of how our students and the entire school community will benefit from collaborating with such a forward-looking 'green' school."

DOMINIC EDWARDS OW (1988-96)





WHITGIFTIAN ASSOCIATION



WA Presidential Lunch
Saturday 23rd November 2019 at 11am

At Whitgift School,
Haling Park, South Croydon CR2 6YT

The President, Richard Blundell, warmly invites fellow OWs to join him for lunch followed by the opportunity to watch the English National Rugby Champions play Millfield out on Big Side, the School football play John Lyon School and also experience the WAVPA in action and the major Production rehearsals in full swing.

During the drinks reception in the Founder's Room from 11.00 until the lunch at 12.00pm, we will hear a report on the recent NZ rugby Tour and learn more of the School's extra co-curricular activities from a senior staff member.

This will be the 17th and last lunch hosted by Richard Blundell and will be limited to 40 places in the Old Library.

Dress code Jacket Tie or Sports Blazer

Ticket price £30 per person

Book by email to treasurer@whitgiftianassociation.co.uk or telephone **020 8660 5562** with payment via BACS to Whitgiftian Association (Sort Code 56-00-46 | Account No. 01064495)



WA PRESIDENTIAL LUNCH SATURDAY 23RD NOVEMBER 2019 AT 11AM

RETURN TO: WA President, c/o Whitgift School, Haling Park, South Croydon CR2 6YT

Please book places for the WA Presidential Lunch @£30 per person.

Dietary requirements

Years at Whitgift Phone no Email

Name Address

..... Signed.....

☐ I enclose cheque for £..... payable to Whitgiftian Association

☐ I have paid by BACS

GOLF SOCIETY NEWS

The last open event of our season was held on a fine late August day at Betchworth Park. 20 players contested the Autumn Cup, which is now in its 7th year, having been donated by Mike Spanswick and Pip Burley in the year when they were both Presidents, Mike of the society and Pip of what was then the OWA.

Betchworth played well, although the greens were a little slow, having undergone significant treatment in the preceding weeks, and there were a couple of temporary greens, which is always frustrating and adds an extra element of chance to proceedings. All round, the scoring was good, and certainly better than the corresponding event in 2018.

The winner was, as last year, Don Anderson, who retained the trophy with a very creditable 38 points, playing off 10. Mark Chatham was runner-up with 37 points (he also won both Nearest the Pin and Longest Drive), and Paul Cohen (36) beat Mike Berners Price to third place. It was great to welcome David Hedges – a stalwart of the Halford Hewitt team – and our thanks went to Mike Spanswick for organizing the day.

The last match of the season was played against Croham Hurst in September. Given the close connections between the club and the school, there are several players who qualify for both sides, so this is always a fun afternoon. Croham Hurst repeated last year's win, this time by a score of four matches to two. An excellent dinner followed.

The Grafton Morrish is a prestigious tournament and with a wider entry than the better-known Halford Hewitt, it is arguably more difficult to win. Whitgift successfully negotiated their qualifying round at Royal Wimbledon and reached the final stages in October at Hunstanton and Brancaster. The team had a fairly easy win in Round 1 against Coventry, but then narrowly lost to Sutton Valence in the second. That meant we played in the Solihull Salver on the Saturday, which is for both first and second round losers.



John Gould with tour winner Tony Mason

The Salver, which Whitgift won in 2018, is different from other Plate competitions – each school's three pairs play scratch foursomes stableford. Whitgift's team scored a total of 91 points which meant we finished in a tie for fourth (out of 28) and qualified for the Committee Bowl on the Sunday.

The Sunday suffered from persistent wind and rain. In the semi-final against Merchant Taylors, Whitgift were 2.5-0.5 winners. A tense final followed against Millfield. Stuart Hollins and Mark Coppell won the first match 3 and 2; Tom Bloxsome and Jack Raisen lost 2 and 1; and in the deciding match, Nic Gates and Neill Williams lost to a birdie on the 19th, the first extra hole, having had a chance from 10 feet to win on the 18th. So close, but well done to the team.

CENTENARY

16th June 2020 marks exactly 100 years since the society's first meeting after WW1. We will be holding a centenary meeting at Purley Downs, the society's first recorded venue.

The golf event will be followed by a reception and gala dinner, and proceeds from the day will be in aid of the charity Variety Club Golf, which runs a programme Golf for Disabled Children.

Society members will all receive invitations to the event but any other OWs or societies interested in participating in some way are invited to get in contact.

If you wish to participate in our events, and/or join the society, you should contact the secretary at peterbgale@sky.com.

PETER GALE (HON SEC) OW (1963-69)

AUTUMN TOUR

Another year and another superb OWGS golf tour, this time revisiting Suffolk. 17 OWs enjoyed 3 days of golf, much convivial eating and drinking and the odd reminiscence of schoolboy misdeeds.

Sunday didn't augur well, with the main Woodbridge course closed due to rain. The club kindly allowed us on to the 9 hole Forest Course which we enjoyed, however after torrential rainfall we decided against a second nine.

Back to our hotel in the very picturesque seaside town of Aldeburgh, looking decidedly dark and stormy. Monday dawned with better weather prospects as we enjoyed a pre-breakfast amble along the promenade, now able to appreciate the delights of this beautiful fishing and arty town.

If we had thought it impossible to improve on our 2011 Suffolk tour's venues of Aldeburgh and Thorpeness, we were mistaken! Ipswich proved to be a top quality and very attractive course, heavily bunkered, but a great challenge. And finally to the Links course at Felixstowe, now in sunshine, an absolute delight. Rounding things off with local fish and chips, we felt thoroughly spoiled.

As usual we inserted a good competitive spirit with prizes up for grabs. Congratulations to the 3 days' winners, Peter Kelley, and Tony Mason (twice!), and also to Messieurs Scovell, Anderson and Longhurst with excellent performances throughout. Well done to Tony Mason for ending up as eventual tour winner. And not forgetting the much coveted 'house cup' to the Dodd's team of Longhurst and Scovell.

We are so appreciative of all the effort put in by our tour manager John Gould for laying on this treat, and to Alan Scovell for the huge job of getting all the scores entered and competitions sorted.

TONY HARRIS OW (1964-72)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 9 Nov	OWRFC Past Players Lunch	WSC	12:00
Mon 11 Nov	Remembrance Service	School	10:30
Mon 11 Nov	President's Buffet Lunch	WSC	12:00
Tues 12 Nov	Careers Convention	School	18:00
Sat 23 Nov	WA Presidential Lunch	School	11:00
Sat 30 Nov	Christmas Carols	The Ritz	15:45/17:45
4-7 Dec	School Play, "Hairspray"	School	19:30
Fri 6 Dec	Christmas Concert	London	18:30
Mon 9 Dec	WA Annual General Meeting	WSC	19:00
Thurs 12 Dec	School Carol Service	Croydon Minster	19:30
Sat 14 Dec	OWRFC Supporters Lunch	WSC	12:00
16 June 2020	OWGS Centenary Celebrations	Purley Downs GC	tbc

FIXTURES

Wed 6 Nov	School 1st XV v SE Essex College	Cup	A	14:30
Sat 9 Nov	OWRFC 1st XV v Purley John Fisher	L	H	14:30
Sat 9 Nov	School 1st XV v RGS High Wycombe		H	13:00
Sat 16 Nov	OWRFC 1st XV v Old Walcountians	L	A	14:30
Sat 16 Nov	School 1st XV V Dulwich		A	14:30
Sat 23 Nov	OWRFC 1st XV v Chipstead	L	H	14:30
Sat 23 Nov	School 1st XV v Millfield		H	13:30
Sat 7 Dec	OWRFC 1st XV v Old Freemans	L	A	14:00
Sat 7 Dec	School 1st XV v St Joseph's		H	14:30
Sat 14 Dec	OWRFC 1st XV v Trinity OMW	L	H	14:00
Thurs 26 Dec	OWRFC 1st XV v Old Alleynians		A	14:00
Sat 11 Jan	OWRFC 1st XV v Kingston	L	H	14:00
Sat 18 Jan	School 1st XV v Harrow		A	14:00

RECENT DEATHS

MICHAEL ADAMS

OW (1939-46)

D. 19TH OCTOBER 2019, AGED 91

PROFESSOR WILLIAM (BILL) MILLER

OW (1943-51)

D. 24TH JULY 2019, AGED 86

WELBURN (BILL) INGLIS NEWMAN

OW (1947-1952)

D. 4TH AUGUST 2019, AGED 83

RAY SCOTT-WHITE

OW (1945-52)

D. 3RD OCTOBER 2019, AGED 85

NORMAN WEST

(STAFF) (1967-98)

D. 13TH OCTOBER 2019, AGED 85

GEOFF WRIGHT

OW (1954-60)

D. 19TH OCTOBER 2019, AGED 76

WHITGIFTIAN ASSOCIATION 500 Club

SUMMER 2019 DRAW

1st prize £100

P J McCrombie Ticket 121

2nd prize £50

D C Hunter Ticket 42

3rd Prize £50

D Cooper Ticket 130

4th Prize £50

D J Westnedge Ticket 246

Date of draw: 21st September 2019.

Independent Scrutineer: Peter A Dunn

FCA, OW (1956-64).

To join the 500 Club and be in for a chance to win a quarterly prize, please contact

treasurer@whitgiftianassociation.co.uk.