



WHITGIFTIAN ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER 393 - JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

FROM THE PRESIDENT 2020

I was really looking forward to my second year in office, which started off with the usual chess match against the School and the overseeing of an OW family scattering a member's ashes at his beloved Croham Road ground.

The rest of the year was starting to take shape when along came the virus Covid-19 which took everything into Lockdown. But before that, I was able to support the School's swimming at the Bath Cup, rugby at the Cup semi-final win at Sherbourne and the music and drama in the PAC. With the Association there was the Fives Club SW tour to support, the OWRFC supporters' lunches and Golf Society AGM and Dinner to attend.

Then Zoom took over with committee meetings, AGMs for the Whitgift Benevolent Society and Old Whitgiftian Trustees Ltd, and even the School's end of year Whitgift Life Celebration and Christmas Carol Service.

So whilst I was able to pay a visit to the Founder's home village itself, there was not to be the Founder's Day Service nor WA Annual Dinner although our Remembrance Wreath was laid at the School Memorial in the open air and then again at the Sportsman's Copse Memorial at Croham Road. I am very pleased to report that the Sportsman's Copse has since received, through the efforts of the management and ground staff, the following fresh trees:- 2x River Birch, 2x Silver Birch, 1x Hornbeam, 1x London Plane and 10x Beech.

The WA's own AGM was also held on zoom with members' questions being fully answered and the Officers and Committees re-elected to continue the smooth running of the WA and Sports Club.

Thankfully, there is now light at the end of the tunnel and I very much look forward to a return to normal and another year serving as your President.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, OW (1956-63)



This year's Remembrance Service was held at the School in dry, cloudy conditions but carried out to the strict Corona Virus regulations in a somewhat curtailed manner.

There were no visiting guests, the choir members were socially distanced amongst the Sweet Hill trees and only one Junior School year group were in attendance. However, the Corps of Drums preformed, the flag party played their part and the

School chaplain, Rev Alan Bayes, led the prayers.

It was my honour to lay the WA wreath in memory of all those OWs who were not able to return Home. The Chair of the Common Room and the Head Boy also laid their wreaths.

Following a socially distanced cup of coffee in the Water Gardens, I then

moved on up to Croham Road to lay a Remembrance Cross on the OW Memorial in the Sportsman's Copse and to sincerely hope that a return to normality next year will see the attendance of many OWs once again.

A full video of the Service is available on the School's website.

RICHARD BLUNDELL
WA PRESIDENT



UPPER FIFTH 1952-53 REUNION 2020



We had been meeting annually since 1959 without a break. So, when it became clear that our intended autumn 2020 meeting could not take place physically it was time for the grit and determination of the elderly (we span 82 to 85 in age) to express itself. Global pandemic, or not, the Upper Fifth would meet somehow for our 62nd time.

Accordingly, I offered to host two back to back Zoom sessions. I did so in some trepidation – with the exception of hosting one or two test runs with the younger generation these would be my first and second ever! Other members were ignorant of that and the offer was taken up with alacrity with existing 'zoomers' and with only a little less alacrity by those who would need assistance to reach the starting line in time for the meetings.

In the event and thanks to much forbearance all round, we foregathered. Here we are: (top row from left) Roger Hilton, myself, John Hamilton; (second row) Ian Brown, Nick Hartley Gerald Haywood; (third row) Geoffrey Howard, Peter Kennedy, Kenneth Rokison. With apologies to

them and you, my readers, but two present- John Trott and Alan Stocks- had had to leave the meeting before I took a photograph, mea culpa. In short, 11 in all out of the 18 of us still soldiering on.

We began proceedings in our youthful manner – BYOB – with toasts to the Upper Fifth (for its first ever virtual meeting and keeping that unbroken annual meetings record going and to Absent Friends (those living or alas now passed on) and the wine (well certainly mine was far from virtual).

And, thanks to Zoom, for the first time since 2012 we had all three of our overseas residents present, at once, along with a number of colleagues for whom, alas, travel any distance is no longer feasible. A true USP for Zoom in the future.

Given age and the circumstances I believe we can be forgiven if school reminiscences gave way this year to more personal accounts relating to family life – as youth to adult, with or without partners, children and grandchildren. As to the last, one of us (who shall remain nameless) claimed the grand-progeny prize with seven (in truth, as a subsequent visit to the files showed, first -equal.) And who knows that figure may yet be beaten, courtesy of one of our children.

It would have been odd, if not improper at a time of much suffering by others, if conversation had been kept wholly COVID-free. Avoidance

by us all, thus far, has been constraining for several, but all would agree another blessing to be enjoyed and grateful for and added to the many from which we have benefited and duly acknowledged over our 68 years.

More general conversation prevailed if under some strain when sharply divergent views were aired on Scottish weather and a hint of antipodean crowing arose when it was reported that the temperature in Brisbane was a pleasant 34C (i.e. 22 degrees above that in Croydon at the time!

We closed with a rendition of Carmen – alas, neither a plus for Zoom nor for collective Upper Fifth endeavour (save for the stalwart effort of our lead singer)!! In our goodbyes reference was made to a then recent event in the USA and the value of the British monarchy from which hint sprung a final toast to The Queen.

We parted in good spirits still as determined as ever to reach that magic 70th Anniversary Reunion.

PETER WARREN
CONVENOR/SCRIBE

Congratulations to Dr Peter Milla OW (1953-59), Professor of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition on his lifetime achievement award 2020 for his fundamental contributions to gastroenterology and to Chris Trott OW (1976-84) for his appointment as HM Ambassador to the Holy See at the Vatican in Summer 2021.

WHITGIFTIAN BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

Members are reminded that the Whitgiftian Benevolent Society exists to offer help and support to all OWs due to significant changes in personal circumstance causing distress.

If you or someone you know are in need of support, or if you would like to help the work of the Society by becoming a

subscribing member, please get in touch via Richard Martin (Chairman) on housemartinrip@btinternet.com or 01323 890028 or Peter Dunn (Secretary) on peterdunn75@gmail.com.



MEMBER'S CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

I write to tell you about a close friend of mine and fellow Whitgift alumnus (Simon Hughes, 1998-2006), whom I feel has made a positive influence, in terms of promoting equality, particularly regarding men and taking leave from work.

I thought it was worth sharing to hopefully help provoke thought and discussions around this area, which sadly continues to be particularly scarce to this day.

Simon is by no means a pioneer but was very vocal amongst his peers with his decision to resign from his successful senior role (Head of Collections & Legal at one of Europe's fastest growing Fintechs) back at the end of 2019 to become a full time Dad to his wonderful daughter.

Simon shared with his friends the challenges and celebrations, the ups and downs, and the daily lessons parenthood provided, whilst reminding us that it was something women tended to experience in the traditionally accepted status quo of modern society, often at the expense of their working life or career.

It's sadly still surprisingly rare to see men take this step, particularly at such a stage in their career, given how much Simon had achieved in his industry ahead of becoming a dad. However for Simon, taking leave to look after his daughter turned out to be a delightful decision and he endlessly promotes the benefits to his friends, peers and anyone who wants to hear!

It isn't a topic spoken about enough amongst men as it's typically women who 'sacrifice' their career to care for children, so coming from an all boys' school, a topic like this should, in my opinion, be brought to the table for conversation.

And just to show that anybody taking leave to look after a child doesn't have



to see this as a career 'sacrifice', Simon is now juggling parenting with the launch of his new business venture WorkCap (an ethical, reputationally conscious business consultancy with a focus on credit control and debt recovery), aimed squarely at helping small/medium sized businesses survive the pandemic and be set for growth when we're out the other side. His website can be found at workcap.co.uk/about-us.

It's another admirable action that sums up Simon's outlook and mindset, aimed at having a positive impact on people and their livelihoods, something we all saw in Simon very early on in our Whitgift journey!

I hope you find this content useful, but if not then I'm just happy to share it with the reader, letting them know there's Whitgift alumni out there pushing to promote positive perceptions and doing good things to help others succeed.

Yours faithfully,

STEPHEN NEMETH, OW (1998-2006)

THE SPORTSMAN'S LUNCH

Due to this wretched virus, there has been no inter-school sport this autumn and with no matches to watch there has been no occasion for the lunch especially under the strict governmental regulations. With interest and support waning amongst members, this seems the ideal time to blow the final whistle on this function.



I have very much enjoyed the last 17 events when we have eaten lunch and tea in various venues around the School from a packed Old Library to a select few in the Staff private dining room, via the Founder's Room and Sixth Form Centre. We have had the opportunity to support the School Rugby, enjoy exciting games of top-class schoolboy rugby and of course watch with pride the blossoming of our current crop of England International and top premiership players (20% of the side in some matches).

For the record, over the years we have watched games against seven different schools, winning 12 and losing 5 with points for 379 and 258 against.

But, as with everything, it is the people who you meet along the way that make these afternoons so memorable. I remember, at the very first lunch we had, Martin Turner in his England rugby blazer, Raman Subba Row in his England cricket blazer and Gerwyn Williams in his Welsh rugby blazer. Since then, we have had many other different blazers on show, naturally Whitgift colour blazers (which still

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fitted!), OWRFC and OW blazers, other local Old Boys' club blazers, Light and Dark Blue university ones and I even had the audacity to wear my Father's school colours blazer!

Roger Utley the ex-England international came as the Harrow coach, although unfortunately his old Headmaster ,Ian Beer (OW and England) was too unwell to join him. In 2006, Mike Wilkinson as that year's OW President brought along his School 1st XV team members in a 45th reunion of their famous 1961 unbeaten season.

But it was in 2014 that we were joined by the first Englishman to hold the Webb Ellis Rugby World Cup, even if it was in an All Black shirt, when John Gallagher, as a proud parent, was able to witness his son Matt score one of the finest individual tries ever seen on Big Side. From full back inside his own 22 taking a difficult high ball he set off up the slope beating most of the John Fisher side to score between the posts at the pavilion end.

It was only in 2018 that I was at long, long last able to present the School with the framed shields of the National Schools seven-a-side campaign- 1966 Runners Up and 1967 Winners, although unfortunately the captain Chris Saville was unable to be with us that afternoon. I know for a fact that Gerwyn Williams regarded that win as the pinnacle of his School coaching career even trumping his magical 1961 "Whoosh" rugby move (for whose initial introduction onto Big Side I modestly claim the credit)!

These and many other happy memories, such as the School Chaplin Rev Colin Boswell writing special rhyming graces for the lunches and Phil Seear wearing the Millfield tie, he was given by their captain when Whitgift spoil their unbeaten season 50 years previously – which will live on.

Happy Days!

RICHARD BLUNDELL OW (1956-63)

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL

If one were to compare this issue's school news section with an equivalent one from previous Michaelmas terms, it might appear that this has been an uneventful, forgettable term. This could not be further from the truth. Indeed, the fact that we have made it through the term at all, what with the multitude of measures that have had to be adopted just to allow us to stay open, is quite some feat! As such, the small victories that I am going to be commenting on – the Remembrance Service, House drama event, introduction of contact into rugby - should not be considered as small at all; rather, they have been significant milestones to be cherished in this most unusual of times.

Earlier on this year, I was very proud to announce that Whitgift had been appointed as the 2020 Independent Boys' School of The Year. Well, I am pleased to report that we have followed up this prestigious award with another one, having been given the Outstanding Progress – Independent School Award at this year's Education Business Awards. Now in their 15th year, these awards have established a reputation for showcasing success stories and examples of operational excellence in the UK Education System.

On Thursday 19 November, Whitgift was nominated for this award after half of our IB students achieved 40+ points in the International Baccalaureate, a feat typically achieved by only the top 10% of students worldwide.

The awards ceremony, which took place online on Thursday 26 November, was presented by Comedian and Impressionists Darren Altman and Jess Robinson, both stars of Britain's Got Talent. Whitgift was among some exceptional finalists and we are therefore honoured to have been selected as the winner by the judging panel. This achievement highlights the excellent work from the students, staff and parents at Whitgift.

On Wednesday 11 November, Whitgift held a Covid-secure Remembrance Day service, honouring all those who lost their lives in the line of duty. Traditionally, the School invites Old Whitgiftians to attend, however as visitors are unable to come on site at present, the service was filmed and shared with OWs and the wider community. First Formers, socially distanced, watched from the field. The service began with the Corps of Drums and members of the CCF performing the duty of Flag Party, followed by Revd Alan Bayes opening with The Act of Remembrance. The horn of the bugle marked the lowering of the flags at half-mast, and all stood still for the one-minute silence.

Wreaths were laid in honour by: Head of Fourth Form, Mr Roberts, on behalf of staff; Mr Richard





However, this year students had the added challenge of choosing locations around the school site and filming within the Covid-secure guidance. Each film was reviewed by judge, Mr Daniel Pirrie, former Director of Drama at Whitgift, before a 50-minute online video

Blundell, on behalf of OWs and School Captain, Gus Bradford, on behalf of students. Lower School Captain, Nicholas Seal, gave a reading which was followed by the song *For the Fallen* by the Whitgift chamber choir. The second reading came from Gus Bradford, and the chamber choir was joined by members of the brass band for the hymn, *O God, our help in ages past*. The service ended with prayers, and the exit of the Flag Party and Corps of Drums. If you would like to view the service, a recoding can be found in the news section on the school website.

Of all the co-curricular activities offered by Whitgift, the two hardest hit by the restrictions imposed by the virus have been Drama and Music. It was, therefore, heartening to see them begin to get back on their feet in the second half of term. It was actually the House system which got the ball rolling with their annual Drama competition. Unable to take the usual form of live theatre this year, new Director of Drama, Mr James Hammond, set a challenge for each House to produce a 5-minute film instead. There was still the usual frantic buzz and energy around the School as students finished scripts, organised rooms for rehearsals and got their cast and crew together.



premier for the School community in the evening on Friday 13 November. 'A Comfier Seat' by Tate's was the evening's winner, meaning they held on to their title as Drama champions for yet another year. Helmed by rising star, Kit Connor, the piece was so slick Mr Pirrie commented that he could have been at the Southbank watching professional short film making and that it had grasped what makes short film so compelling.

The second half of term saw the music department finally able to hold rehearsals for 'cross-zone ensembles', as they were dubbed – basically, boys from different year groups in bands and orchestras were able to rehearse in the same room, but more spread out than usual and behind Perspex screens. The monumental effort to get these up and running has been worth it as November and December saw a flurry of performances from a variety of groups.

On Sunday 1 November, the Minster Choir sung the Choral Evensong at Croydon Minster in a service which went out live on BBC3. On Friday 4 December, several different ensembles performed a Michaelmas recital in the Concert Hall; par for the course in previous years, but a logistical miracle this one!

To round things off nicely, the choristers shone again in the annual Carol Service, which was streamed live to the Whitgift community from Big School on Thursday 10 December, and then, as last year, the staff choir serenaded the boys with

Christmas classics as they walked into school on the last day of term. Clips from many of these and more can be enjoyed on the school's Twitter feed if you would like to hear what the boys and staff managed to achieve.

Finally, in addition to the dulcet tones of instruments and voices in harmony, November also saw the return of another sound that had been greatly missed at Whitgift, although this was of a very different nature. When the RFU announced that contact training could return towards the end of the month, and then a modified version of the game itself from December, the initial impact was almost imperceptible. However, as the realisation of what this meant began to spread throughout the school, a buzz in the air began to grow and the sense of excitement became almost tangible. Props began to lift their heads out of their books and look out the window towards Bigside instead; second-rows stopped scouring the top shelves of the library and began to migrate towards the wide open spaces that awaited them outside; and flankers closed their laptops and laced up their boots in anger for the first time since March. Yes, tackling was back!

A new symphony of grunts, defensive calls and the crunching sound of flesh on flesh was to be written. The backs had enjoyed a lovely few months honing their passing skills playing the Ready for Rugby game offered as an alternative by the RFU, but it was a pale substitute for the real thing and now it was the forwards' turn to come out to play. You could detect a hint of manic glee in Mr Wilkins' eye, our esteemed head of rugby and a former gnarly Wasps forward himself, as he spread the news to boys and coaches: that's right, next term school rugby fixtures are back (presuming, of course, that there is not another u-turn!)

Epsom, Wellington, Millfield... it will be good to see you again!

DOMINIC EDWARDS OW (1988-96)

WHITGIFT SCHOOL RUGBY FIXTURES 2021

Please check the web site for confirmation.

Sat 16 Jan	School 1stXV v Epsom	H	14.30
Sat 23 Jan	School 1stXV v Northampton	H	11.00
Sat 30 Jan	School 1stXV v Hampton	H	10.30
Sat 6 Feb	School 1stXV v St Joseph's	H	10.30
Wed 10 Feb	School 1stXV v John Fisher	A	14.30
Sat 27 Feb	School 1stXV v Wellington	H	14.30
Sat 6 Mar	School 1stXV v Sedbergh	tbc	
Sat 13 Mar	School 1stXV v Millfield	A	13.30

FROM THE WHITGIFT SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI OFFICE

I am grateful to the Whitgiftian Association for giving me the chance to introduce myself as the new Director of Development at Whitgift. I have settled into school life well and it is fantastic to have all the boys on site and to be operating as normally as we possibly can.

I started in March 2020 in lockdown from Cambridge where I had been working previously at The Leys, as Head of Development, and before that Downing College as their Deputy Director of Development. Much as though it was a strange time to start at Whitgift, it was also an exciting one with the 2025 Vision having been drawn up and the foundation stones for the very ambitious Whitgift For All bursary campaign having been laid. I very much look forward to being able to tell you more about this when we are in a position to publicly launch in the spring of 2021.

As part of this campaign the school is

committed to offering a comprehensive alumni relations programme to all OWs and not just those that contribute financially to the WA. Whether this be in the form of reunions, the production of newsletters (only electronic) or the offering of our online platform Whitgift Connect (<https://whitgiftconnect.co.uk/>).

Supporting me in this is Zohra Jeraj as the Alumni Relations Coordinator who many of you will know. She is your first point of contact for all OW matters and would be delighted to help you as the school fully takes on OW matters. Please feel free to email her with ideas for the programme going forwards (alumn@whitgift.co.uk).

I am very much looking forward to meeting as many OWs as possible when restrictions ease as we build a meaningful friend and fundraising programme.

THOMAS NORTHCOTE
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

WHITGIFT SPORTS CLUB NEWS



Following our request for donations I am delighted to say that we had a great response from our members and were able to put together food and goodie parcels which will be given to those in need from Nightwatch Croydon.

I would like to thank all those members who donated, in particular, David

RECENT DEATHS

RONALD "BUNNY" BRANTON
WVRC PRESIDENT, OW (1930-38),
D. 2ND DECEMBER 2020, AGED 100

MICHAEL BULL
OW (1950-57)
D. 28TH MARCH 2020, AGED 81

DEREK COUNCELL
OW (1948-56)
D. 9TH DECEMBER 2020, AGED 83

PAUL McCOMBIE
OW (1958-65)
D. 8TH NOVEMBER 2020, AGED 73

JOHN MILTON DIXON
OW (1943-50)
D. 10TH DECEMBER 2020, AGED 87

JOHN S SCLANDERS
WA VICE PRESIDENT, OW (1941-46)
D. 11TH NOVEMBER 2020, AGED 91

DAVID SNOWBALL
OW (1943-51)
D. 1ST JULY 2020, AGED 87

REV CHARLES STALLARD
OW (1946-53)
D. 10TH SEPTEMBER 2020, AGED 85

JOHN C TOWNSEND
OW (1939-45)
D. 6TH NOVEMBER 2020, AGED 91

DAVID WALLS
OW (1951-58) D. 28TH APRIL
2020, AGED 80

Stranack, Andy Clarke, Chris Clarke, Amy Atkinson & family, Ian Watson, Warren Vaughan and P&I fruits Covent Garden.

I would also like to thank amey for their donation of mugs and Ethstat Ethical Stationery for their donation of PPE.

I am so proud that we have been able to help such a great cause in such difficult times for all.

SUZANNE PISCINA
CLUB MANAGER

Submissions for NEWSLETTER 394 covering March/April closes Saturday 20th February.

All news and photographs should be sent to editor@whitgiftianassociation.co.uk