

# OLD BEXLEIANS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER 25 "BONUS" EDITION, FEBRUARY 2010

## INTRODUCTION

There have been 24 editions of this new series of OBA newsletters which began in 1999; before N/L 26 brings a new editing team and a 'normal' issue, and as it is snowing outside at the moment - giving me little to do - I thought a backward glance at each of these earlier editions might not come amiss [especially as it won't be another term before N/L 26 is published]. So, one page has been taken here to cover something from each previous issue.

[Eventually, once the new OBA website is up and running, it is hoped to add each full issue onto it.]

## Issue No. 1...January 1999

### Why a Bexley Grammar School ?

Even in the midst of the horrors of WW2, far-sighted people were already beginning to plan the brave new world of the future. High on the list of priorities was the education of the nation's children - and so was born the Education Act of 1944 with an emphasis on an education according to age, aptitude and ability.

Fifty years ago, Bexley was part of the Kent education system though it had a local Education Committee. It supported 16 primary schools, 7 secondary moderns and 1 technical school for girls - but no grammar school. [Erith G.S. and Chislehurst and Sidcup G.S. were not part of Bexley at this time.] Able pupils were dispersed in small groups to a large number of independent and Direct Grant schools in Chislehurst, Dartford, Eltham, Erith and London; with a rising birth rate, there was no guarantee that these schools could keep places open for future Kent pupils. And this situation "was at some cost in dissipation of communal spirit" within Bexley.

This lack of a grammar school was a sensitive local issue. In the annual Kent Intelligence Tests, Bexley pupils consistently scored above the county average but

were denied an appropriate education because of the lack of grammar school provision in NW Kent in general and in Bexley in particular. Locally there was an unusually high proportion of residents whose background and social outlook led them to desire a grammar school education for their children. The Borough Education Officer reported that "the Borough not only desires a Grammar School, it also needs the influence which such a school would undoubtedly exert on the life of the Borough...

moreover, a good Grammar School provides the keystone for the educational arch, and without it the primary and secondary schools do not form a complete whole...a Bexley Grammar School [especially the co-educational school proposed] would draw together the educational life of the Borough and would provide much needed encouragement for the intellectual and cultural interests of the town."

The 1944 Act probably helped to stimulate the growing local demand for this 'injustice' to be righted. Pressure was exerted on the Bexley Education Committee, the latter made frequent appeals to the Kent authority and the latter pressurised the Ministry of Education to put the proposed school on its building programme as soon as possible; the new local MP, Edward Heath, went with a Kent delegate to discuss the matter with the Minister in late 1950. Without further provision, it was estimated that the number of Bexley pupils gaining a grammar school place at 11+ would be 15% in 1953, 14.7% in 1954 and 12.8% in 1955. [A year after the visit to the Minister, the BEO commented, "I have damped down local agitation on this matter by stressing the need to make adequate provision for the primary school age range before turning to secondary schools."

18.8.52 eventually, the Minister admits the proposal onto the 1953-54 building programme.

28.8.52 Kent Education Committee issue a Statutory Notice of its proposal to build "Bexley Grammar School" for 550 pupils aged 11-18; objections to the proposal have to be lodged within 3 months.

5.9.52 the Minister approves the plan for a 3 f.e. mixed grammar school at a gross cost of £115,000.

22.1.53 Bexley Council had already earmarked Danson Park's 'Polo Field' as the site for the new school, 22.16 acres in all. It had to be released from its requisition by the War Department: 2 gun emplacements had to be removed as did a number of huts built on it as temporary housing; drainage was necessary and allotment holders had to be found other plots elsewhere.

19.2.53 it was decided to build the school in two phases.

29.10.53 detailed plans are submitted to the Minister.

11.11.53 these are criticised for being short of suitable Form bases and general teaching areas...revision was necessary - and all within the existing budget

16.2.54 the revisions are approved - building begins...

## BGS - THE EARLY DAYS

BGS opened its doors for the first time in September 1955 with just three 1st. and two 2nd. Year classes and seven [full-time and permanent] members of staff. The 2nd Year classes had been housed for their first year at Erith G.S. - the Danson Park site not having been prepared for the start of their secondary education. This co-educational grammar school grew in size to just over 500 pupils when, in 1960-61, it had for the first time pupils in all seven Years to the U.6th.

Initially there were approximately the same number of boys and girls in each class and the 1st. Year classes were labelled 1A, 1B and 1C [to avoid confusion, ground floor rooms were designated Alpha 1, 2 and 3, first floor rooms Beta 1,2, and 3 - and so on to the Gamma and Delta floors] with pupils being assigned to one of four Houses - Collins, Johnson, Kirkman and Prothero - named after four of the original staff.

At the end of their first year, a top stream was selected and these pupils went into Form 2A, eventually taking "O"-level Maths and English Language a year early, i.e. at the end of their 4th. Year. The remaining 1st. Year pupils went into 2B and 2C - two classes of equal ability. Setting for Maths and French for these two classes was considered desirable. It was difficult to convince some parents and pupils that 2C was not 'inferior' to 2B and it was some years before someone [DRW?] had the bright idea of dispensing with A,B,C and later D [which could then be used to designate floors] and replace these with Form staff's initials - for e.g. Miss P.G.Tips's 3rd Year class would now become 3PGT [harder for the school's timetables but leading to fewer ruffled feathers!]

Over the years, the boys' uniform hasn't changed very much with the exception that boys had to wear caps [yes, even 6th Formers] and were encouraged to 'doff' them when they met staff outside school. The girls had two uniforms - one for summer [yellow and white striped gingham dresses] and one for winter [grey pinafore dresses]; they, too, had to wear headgear: straw panama hats in summer and velour hats in winter, with the 6th Form having dainty little skull caps.

In the early days we had 3-weekly mark lists [later, half-termly] when Form staff had to add up percentages for each subject and total them to produce a Form order; the pupil who was top had to take the Form list up to the Headmaster, the late Mr.E.F.Lefeuvre, at the following Monday's school assembly. Those in the first 5 positions gained 10 points for their House and the remainder in the top half of the Form list gained 5 House points. The downside was that everyone given a school detention lost his or her House 10 points for each detention served. As an additional incentive to do well, anyone who had improved on the previous 3-weekly position gained a point for every place he or she had jumped, for e.g. if little Wayne [or Cynthia] improved

from 19th to 4th, an extra 25 points were gained for the House i.e. 10 for finishing in the top 5 places and 15 for the improvement. This system was hard on staff who saw their classes only once or twice each week and who believed in setting projects for homework - one frustrated Geography master started giving each pupil a 50% total with a position of 15th equal!

School assemblies were more formal, consisting of a hymn and a bible reading followed by a prayer and any notices for the day. The whole school could be housed in the Main Hall and everyone, including staff, was expected to attend.

The School quickly gained a good reputation for its academic results: one of the first 'A'-level candidates in 1961 [Joyce LeVine] was awarded an Open Exhibition in French at the University of Exeter; two years later, the first places were gained at Cambridge [by Bev Atkins and Robert Hewett] and this reputation has been maintained.

The School is very much larger now - with just over 1000 pupils: we hope that some of the School's successes will have stemmed from those early beginnings.

Ron Sawyer [writing in 1999]

## THE HOUSE CHAMPIONSHIP

This began in 1956-57 i.e. at a time when there were pupils in only Years 1,2 and 3.

Initially, boys competed in basketball, cricket, football and cross-country [the latter not becoming an event for girls until 1981-82] with hockey, netball, rounders and tennis for the girls; athletics was for both groups.

Until 1970, all pupils could earn House points on the basis of their academic term work and internal examination results [see above]; at the same time, points were lost each time a detention was served - for this reason, some actually made negative contributions to their House points total!

Other 'events' were gradually added - not all lasting for very long: shooting [netball], chess, drama, stamps, photography, fencing, badminton, debating, flower arranging, music, toys, speech, art, general knowledge quiz, swimming, volleyball and table tennis.

1970-71 saw a complete overhaul of the way in which points were awarded for these competitions: beforehand, points had been given using a 'weighting' system for individual events e.g. 500 for winning the senior football or hockey down to only 50 for 4<sup>th</sup> place in junior cricket and tennis; for other events, e.g. athletics[5000] and music[2000], each of these totals was divided according to a House's relative degree of success. All competitions were now scored on an 8-5-3-1 basis, with 'high tariff' activities scoring 12-7-4-2 basis [altered when other Houses were added. ]

## MILLENNIAL GREETINGS

from the OBA Chairman, Robin Ackerley S 70-97

When, a little while ago, it was suggested that I write a letter welcoming Old Bexleians to the new millennium, I was filled with misgivings. Firstly, I was afraid I might give the impression that I was there already, standing on the threshold of the new century offering drinks to new arrivals; secondly, I had no wish to imply that I was an old hand at this sort of thing.

At this point I have a confession to make: this is the first time I have written a letter welcoming ANYBODY to a new millennium. You may have already noticed that this looks like the work of a novice. What's more as I struggle for the next phrase, at the same time struggling with a word processor that insists, perhaps with a due sense of occasion, on typing everything in bold [itself an indication that I am hardly ready for the technological miracles of THIS century, let alone the next], I am left with the depressing thought that, having mastered the art of millennium-welcoming-letter-writing, I shall never get another opportunity to exercise my talent. [Editor - at this point please feel free to delete the terms 'mastered the art' or 'talent', if you consider them wholly inappropriate.]

Before you finalised your plans for riotous Bacchanalia on the 31<sup>st</sup>. December, I hope you spared a thought for the non-millennarian: he or she who thinks celebrating the end of 1999 is like applauding a batsman who has just completed his ninety-ninth run, and will therefore be suspending celebrations until the end of the following year. If you are one such, may I suggest you read no further [a suggestion I am sure you will seize on with delight]...until this time next year.

I have calculate [in all probability inaccurately] that some four and a half thousand\* Old Bexleians have been created this century. During the next century [God and politicians willing] productivity will have increased to about twenty-six thousand. \*\* That's a lot of Old Bexleians - enough to form our own private army...or a cricket team...or credit card. Moreover it just goes to show what you can do with statistics.

Have a very happy new year.

[\*this figure is already well over six thousand. \*\* as he's right about this probable inaccuracy, he's probably inaccurate about this figure, too. Are there any real statisticians out there?-ed.]

## TONY GLOVER S Jan.83 - Dec. 99

The OBA offers its heartiest congratulations to Tony Glover who left BGS at the end of last term and has now assumed the Headship of the Becket School in Nottingham - a Roman Catholic comprehensive school of over a thousand pupils. Tony came to BGS as Head of the Latin Department in 1983 and was promoted to a Deputy Headship in 1994. He has had an extremely successful career at BGS and is much admired and respected for his loyal service to the School by pupils, colleagues, parents, governors and the LEA: he has our very best wishes for a rewarding and successful career in his new environment.

## STEPHANIE BRIND [88-95]

Stephanie started to play squash at the age of 4 and entered her first tournament at 7; at 10, she won the British U.12 Junior Closed Championship. In 1993, she represented England at U.16 level, won the German Junior Open title on her first trip abroad and took part in the World Junior Championships. In the following year, she won the Dutch Junior Open title and was runner-up in the European Junior Championship. In 1995, aged 17, she gained England U.19 honours and achieved a World Senior ranking of 43. Her first Senior cap was awarded in April 1999 when helping England to win the European team title. She now has 5 such caps and considers her main achievement to date to have been part of the team which earned Gold for England in the August 1999 World Cup [mixed] competition. Currently she is ranked 6 in England and 10 in the world rankings. Stephanie has beaten the world no. 4, Natalie Grainger, a former South African international but who now represents England. She believes she can improve both rankings - her aim is the no. 1 spot -but knows it will be very difficult to overtake the [faster] top 2 in the world, the Australians Michelle martin and Sarah Fitzgerald.

The world squash tour lasts all year round and there are also smaller tournaments in which she participates; the English players take about ten weeks off in the summer for individual training and coaching. In the National League, played between October and April, she is currently playing for Broxbourne [Herts]; at the same time she also plays for the Amsterdam team 'Dickysquash' in the Dutch league.

Squash has taken her to most countries in Europe and to many other parts of the world - Egypt, Australia, Mexico, Singapore and Malaysia, and the USA.

## THE ORIGINS OF THE BEXLEY G.S. PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Within six months of the opening of BGS in September 1955, an active Parents' Association was in operation and had held its first function at the School - a Social Evening for parents and staff to get to know one another better. It was attended by Bexley's mayor and mayoress but bad weather on the evening of February 10<sup>th</sup> 1956 had reduced the expected attendance of 170 to 120.

18 months earlier, the parents of the 60 pupils selected to become BGS's first intake were invited to meet Dr. Sumner, Headmaster of Erith G.S. on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1954. These 11+ youngsters were to spend the 1954-55 school year at Erith G.S. - enjoying all the facilities offered to EGS pupils - before moving to the new BGS site in Danson Lane; together with a September 1955 enrolment of 90 11+ pupils they would form the School's first intake.

Erith G.S. was very proud of its flourishing Parents' Association and had invited these initial BGS parents to join the EGSPA - 40 of the 60 did so - as a forerunner to forming their own Association a year later. Two BGS parents, Mrs E. Clarke and Mr H.W. Jones, were elected to the EGSPA committee in order to gain experience of PA committee procedure.

Mr E. Lefevre, BGS's first Headmaster, met all the parents of the '54 and '55 intakes in the hall of Danson Primary School - our own not yet having been built - on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1955. He agreed to convene a further meeting for parents with the aim, if a majority was in favour, of electing a caretaker committee to prepare and submit draft rules for a BGSPA.

This meeting was held on 25<sup>th</sup> October when a unanimous decision was taken to form BGS's own Parents' Association. It was agreed to select a committee of 10 [5 men, 5 women], including Mrs Clarke and Mr Jones, to meet with the Headmaster and the Senior Mistress [Miss Margaret Johnson]. This committee would serve for one year, elect an acting secretary, have the power to co-opt, and draw up Rules for the Association which would be submitted to an AGM at which all the Officers would be elected - except for the President who was to be the Headmaster. It was announced that the EGSPA was going to make a donation of £10 to our PA funds; a collection at this meeting raised a further £7-0-3d. The Headmaster appealed to individual parents to donate any chess sets they weren't using and for any books which would be suitable for the new library.

The selected committee members [with their children shown in brackets] were: Messrs H.W. Jones [Keith, Y2], H.J. Gunner [John, Y2], P.J. Hanlon [Margaret, Y2], C.P. Lighthart [Raymond, Y1], J. Odam [Anthony, Y2] and Mesdames E. Clarke [Vivienne, Y2],

K.E. Bailey [?Keith or Thomas, Y2], E.M. Jarvis [Raymond, Y1], M.A. Collett [Pauline, Y2], M.D. Parsons [Patricia, Y1].

A further 20 parents made themselves available for co-option onto the committee.

This caretaker committee met for the first time on November 1<sup>st</sup> and again on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Its elected officers were: Chairman - Mr Jones, Vice-Chairman - Mrs Clarke, Secretary - Mrs Parsons, Treasurer - Mr Gunner. It agreed to propose that "the object of the association is to cultivate a closer relationship between parents and staff - past and present - in the interests of the school".

It drew up, as requested, draft Rules for the Association, recommending: membership, to include both parents, to be 2/6d or 1 guinea [£1-1-0] for Life Membership; an executive committee of 10 [5 men, 5 women] to include at least 2 parents of Y1 pupils.

The Mayor, Cllr. J.W. Bateman, agreed to become the Association's Patron during its first year; among the local luminaries accepting invitations to act as Vice-Presidents were the Town Clerk [Mr. A. Goldfinch], the Chairman of the Education Committee [Alderman M. Corr], the Chairman of Governors [Cllr. L. Hardy KCC], the President of Bexley Inner Wheel [Mrs. I.E. Colyer], the Chairman of Bexley Evening Townswomen's Guild [Mrs G. Exley], and the Headmaster's wife. The Borough Treasurer agreed to audit the Association's accounts for the first year.

Over 100 parents attended the first AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> December when the 'object' and Rules were adopted and ideas discussed for future programmes.

The Kentish Times covered the birth of the BGSPA in its editions of December 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, and the Social Evening on 17<sup>th</sup> February. This event was voted a great success with Lt. Comm. Day RN [Ret'd] acting as MC for the entertainment provided. There had been no charge for admission but a small charge was made for refreshments. PA minutes record that, for future events, long bread rolls were to be preferred to round ones! All unused food items were sold off except for 2 bottles of orange squash, 1/4lb of tea and 1/4lb of mustard - items which could all be kept for future events. The hire of the school hall had cost 15/- but the school caretaker, Mr. Giltrap, had very kindly returned his gratuity of 5/- to the PA for its funds.

The BGSPA was off to a flying start with the enthusiastic support and encouragement of the Headmaster, the staff and the school governors: today it is still as strong as ever. Throughout these intervening years it has, in its turn, offered tremendous support to the School - which remains indebted to the army of parent-volunteers who have marched in its ranks. It is to be hoped that, in turn and in return, they have enjoyed making this contribution to the life of a very successful school.

Such a tribute has been very much deserved.

“Everybody is both a performer and a learner”

ALAN BARKER 67-74

went on from BGS to Sidney Sussex, Cambridge. He spent 15 years as a professional actor but now runs ‘Direction’, a learning consultancy dedicated to ...

improvement in creativity, problem solving and communication.

These are extracts from the address he gave to the Annual Dinner of the OBA in September 2000.

“They say there are two types of people in this world: those who divide everything into two lists and those who don’t.

For example, there performers, and learners. Performers look for their natural talents and then spend their lives making use of them. They tend to avoid areas of incompetence and failure. Their motto is: Always do well. For some, it might even be: Be perfect. Learners, on the other hand, are interested in developing beyond their natural talents. They aren’t frightened of failure, because they know that failure can lead to greater competence. Their motto might be: If something is worth doing, it’s worth doing poorly until you can do better. Learners understand that perfection is an illusion and that a dedication to perfection might actually limit your growth. Learners know that there’s more to life than performing.

Of course, everybody is both a performer and a learner. We need to be both to be fully rounded people. Any good school helps its pupils to develop their capacities in both dimensions.

It was as a performer that first made my market BGS. Robin Ackerley was casting the role of Charles Condermine in Noel Coward’s ‘Blithe Spirit’. I read for the part. Apparently, I did it well, because people laughed in all the right places. Clearly, at the age of 13 or 14, I was already a pretty competent performer. I knew how to get the response I wanted.

I’d always wanted to be an actor. BGS gave me quite a few opportunities to practise: as well as the Coward, I took parts in ‘Pride and Prejudice’, ‘Trial by Jury’, ‘HMS Pinafore’, ‘Tons of Money’ and - most ambitiously and memorably - ‘Othello’, with my good friend Colin Russell. He played the Moor; I played Iago. I made the bold artistic decision to play him as James Onedin: ‘The Onedin Line’ was big on television at the time. So Shakespeare’s greatest and most complex villain had a very approximate Yorkshire accent...

...I kept performing when I left school. At Cambridge, I somehow managed to act in three plays a term. I specialised in old men: we took Beckett’s ‘Krapp’s Last Tape’ and Edward Bond’s ‘Bingo’ - about Shakespeare’s last weeks - to the National Student Drama Festival...

...I went into business too, as an actor. I started out at the Royal Shakespeare Company, where my first role was as a Shape in ‘The Tempest’. I was dressed in a rather fetching black rubbish disposal bag and rubber mask. I played innumerable soldiers in Peter Brook’s production of ‘Antony and Cleopatra’; I worked with David Suchet [before he became famous as Poirot] and John Nettles [in his pre-Bergerac days]; I worked with Tony Robinson [who as yet had not become Baldrick] and Patrick Stewart [long before he became Captain Pickard in ‘Star Trek’]. I spent 18 months in the West End, playing in ‘Once in a Lifetime’ and in Pam Gems’ ‘Piaf’ with Jane Lapotaire.

After the RSC, I hit the repertory circuit. The life of a touring actor has its ups and downs. A particularly memorable down was playing ‘The Crucible’ on a wet Wednesday in Milford Haven to an audience of about six. But the ups were the real highs: taking part in the Edinburgh Festival at the Traverse Theatre [and winning fringe First Awards]; touring London parks with the Bubble Theatre Company, acting, singing and playing deep into the night. Theatre was always my first love. It was the epitome of performance, and the rewards on a good night were unbeatable. But I also spent three fascinating years in radio at the BBC...

...For the last decade, I’ve worked as a learning consultant. I help people to learn, usually within the context of work. I train and coach, and I produce training materials. I also write books and articles. It took three years to decide to give up acting; it was a painful decision, but I’ve never regretted it. I’m still performing; my work is still made up largely of short projects that deliver the buzz of instant gratification when they go well. But it’s more interesting work: more intellectually demanding. Performing is becoming balanced with learning.

Helping others learn means having to be able to learn yourself. It’s not always easy to keep learning: we live in a culture that values performance far more than learning. I should know. Training is often described as ‘improving people’s performance’. The learning that leads to improved performance can make us feel vulnerable: we have to abandon the certainty of doing what we’re good at and put ourselves into a state of not knowing.

There are many different kinds of learning. The education system is sometimes criticised for concentrating less on learning and more on league tables. It is a very different system now to the one we went through in the early 70’s. The phrase ‘lifelong learning’ is much used these days; but our experience of education as young people clearly colours our attitude to learning throughout life. I think we were very lucky at BGS. The school showed us possibilities and opportunities that many of us might very well have missed: academically, culturally and in terms of work. What I learned at school - and the way I learnt it - certainly stood me in good stead for a life of increasingly rapid change. As a learner and a performer, I am grateful.

### 1954-55 : 'BGS' at Erith G.S.

The parents of children who passed the 11+ exam in 1954 were given a list of the alternative grammar schools for which they could apply: amongst these was the new BGS, to be opened a year later, and 60 decided on this option.

Erith G.S. - very highly regarded - had its 1954 intake increased from a 2 to a 4 form entry, each of 30 pupils, to cater for these 60 future-BGS pupils. [It was also allowed to maintain this larger intake later.]

Intrigued about this situation, the editor asked five of those who spent the year at EGS for their memories of this unique experience and the following account is drawn from their collective recollections. They didn't always see the year from the same perspective, as may become apparent.

The 60 pupils were placed in their own 'BGS' forms known as 'Bexley 2A' and 'Bexley 2B' and on a co-ed basis. The curriculum which they followed was typical for such schools at the time: English, Maths, Science, Modern Languages [French and German], History, Geography, Art, Music, RE, and PE, all taken together, with Woodwork and Metalwork for the boys, and Domestic Science [cookery and sewing] for the girls. Perhaps only for indoor and outdoor games did they mix with the other 1<sup>st</sup> Year EGS pupils. There appear to have been few school visits or trips - the only one recalled was a trip to Kew Gardens. There were school reports on their progress to take home but some uncertainty as to whether their parents ever had the opportunity to meet and discuss such progress with the teaching staff.

Everyone had to buy the EGS uniform for the year; obviously, no decisions could be made about the future BGS uniform until a Headmaster had been appointed and this did not happen until May 1955. It helped that both schools were to have a similar navy uniform: for boys this meant having only to replace cap, tie and blazer badge; the girls had to exchange a navy skirt for a grey tunic. There was to be some dismay, later, at having to replace EGS's heraldic-style blazer badge for the plainer BGS lettered one.

At their meeting with Dr. Sumner, the EGS Headmaster, on 1<sup>st</sup> July, parents had been promised that their youngsters would be treated and educated in exactly the same way as all other EGS pupils. Assemblies were taken, sitting in Form groups, with the whole school - as always, with the youngest nearest to the stage and the oldest at the back of the hall. They were placed in EGS House groups, named after some of the staff. They took part in inter-House competitions and some were able to represent EGS in inter-school athletics, football and cricket matches. [The boys were able to play both football and rugby during the winter terms.]

At midday, pupils could have a school dinner in

the modern and friendly canteen or take their own packed lunch. This was another occasion when they were able to mix with other EGS pupils, some of whom would have been known from primary school days. On the very large school field all manner of activities would take place - just as they have always done. And, even in those days, the visiting ice-cream salesman knew where and how to earn an extra bob or two.

Generally, relationships with other EGS pupils appeared to have been good. Perhaps, like any other group of new 1<sup>st</sup>. Years, there was only very limited mixing with pupils outside their own Forms. Though there was some feeling of being overwhelmed by the greater EGS numbers, they always knew they would be moving on at the end of the school year. Any friendships with EGS pupils soon disappeared once they left to go their separate ways. As with many, the change from primary to secondary education was probably more intimidating than the thought of mixing with people from a 'different' school. For boys though, again perhaps as usual, the older boys seemed much more aggressive towards the younger ones - and especially towards the future BGS youngsters. Overall, though, the latter seemed to accept the situation they were in and most, but not all, were able to enjoy the year - a reminder as to just how adaptable and flexible such young people can be.

At the end of the 54-55 school year there were no special farewells but a number of other memories of the year still remain: of a very large school where it took some time to get one's bearings; where most of the teachers wore long black 'cloaks'; of a nasty teacher whose lessons consisted primarily of note-taking and, if angered, would systematically hit pupils with the flat of his hand on each cheek, rocking the head violently; of very little French tuition as the teacher, the Deputy Head, was always being called out of class when the Head was out of school; of a young and inept Maths teacher who could not control the class and who, suffering ink pellets fired from rulers, retaliated by throwing chalk, and the blackboard duster or by bursting into tears; of breaking a toilet window when looking for flint inside stones, after studying rocks in a Geography lesson and of the very fair Deputy Head [not the one already mentioned] who handled this situation calmly; of one's first school fight - an altercation between girls!; of the EGS Head Prefect, Roy Godier, and his deputy, Vernon Etherington, who were seen as being very smart and inspiring.

At the end of the 54-55 school year, two 'BGS' pupils, Lynne Davis and Josephine Wright, decide to remain at EGS - they were very close friends and stayed perhaps because of the school's excellent reputation - whilst two EGS girls, Vera Flanagan and Margaret Sparrow, decided to transfer to the new BGS -possibly as it was closer to their homes.

[the editor would welcome further reminiscences from other readers who attended Erith G.S. during 1954-55.]

## MEMORIES

from Vanessa King [Mrs Adamson] 74-79

I do have very vivid memories of my days at BGS - mostly very happy, some a little scary - at least to an 11-year old.

My parents were very proud when I passed the 11+ exam, especially my mother whose youngest brother, **Dennis Knight [54-59]** was one of the school's very first pupils.

...with excitement and fear I set off for school...in a stiff new uniform, I was placed in Form 1B under **Mr. Tantony**. The first person I met was my second cousin, **Maxine Knight** [no relation to Dennis]. After a day of form filling, instructions and introductions, we had our first lesson - French with **Miss Carroll** - not too bad for a first day.

Day 2 arrived. At every lesson we were given books to take home and cover. I was quite small for my age and physically carrying all those books was a problem. I reached home in tears thinking I'd never get them all covered and back in time. How I hated the next few weeks. We met **Miss Lawson** for Home Economics and she scared the life out of me with her broad Scots accent...**Miss Pimlott** [to become Mrs Cumbo] took English, **Mrs Longhurst** took Maths and **Mrs Holbrook-Wilson** Art, which were all quite pleasant lessons. Then came Chemistry and Physics. Oh dear!! I couldn't possibly understand how **Mr. Jeffery** expected us to write up an experiment without using phrases such as, 'I did this, he did that', so I wrote my first homework up saying, 'we did...' The homework was returned with every 'we' circled in red. I felt mortified...Physics wasn't too bad under the instruction of **Mr. Spall**. However, when we had **Mr. Hawkins**, I was terrified again. He was a very traditional schoolmaster type...and he had also taught my uncle, Dennis Knight. Mr. Hawkins gave us homework set from a book of questions he had published. it was a typical joke that he had written the questions and was still working on the answers! Anyway, I couldn't work out the answers...

...after a few hard first weeks, I gradually got the hang of senior school life. I sorted out which books I needed to carry around, got them all covered, found my way around the school and made friends...

The best teacher in my memory was **Mr. J. Collins** who was our 5<sup>th</sup> Form master and took Maths. [This had not been my strong point and I'd struggled under a stream of temporary and other Maths teachers]. Then Mr. Collins came along. He was determined that everyone would get an A grade and he was going to make sure of it. He ran voluntary extra classes in the lunch hour and his motivation was such that I attended along with others who struggled. Whilst he was very strict and could certainly raise his voice, he had infinite patience with those who really tried. [Vanessa achieves a

B grade at 'O'-level.] The other thing about this teacher was that he had the respect of the class. It still amuses me to recall that he used to tell us how to plan things so we could get all our homework done, have tea and still be in the pub by half past seven!! ..with hindsight. I think he was extremely skilled at motivating a bunch of 15/16 year olds who thought they were grown up but actually had a long way to go.

At the time I joined the school, **Mr. LeFeuvre** was Headmaster. each morning he would stand in front of the main entrance, resplendent in gown and mortar board. He had a Prefect on either side of him. Rumour had it that he never spoke to a pupil below the 6<sup>th</sup> Form unless they were really in trouble. [He] used to say to the prefects standing by him, 'tell that boy to straighten his tie... Tell that boy to tie his shoes' etc. and the prefects would deliver his instructions. Prefects also lined the Dining Hall as there was strictly no talking from the time you passed down the steps to the Dining Hall until you came back up those steps after assembly.

I do recall very clearly your [i.e. **the editor's**] first assembly. You walked up on the stage and after Mr. LeFeuvre seemed almost [...modesty forbids -ed]!! I particularly noticed the lack of mortar board. That seemed like a good sign. The other changes I recall were re-naming the floors A - D, rather than Alpha, Beta etc. Classes were also re-named by the year and the teacher's initials rather than by the stream. Being in the C stream we were quite disappointed by this as we had looked forward to becoming 5C, the same as the notorious class in the TV series 'Please Sir'. These things matter so much when you are in your early teens!!!

I generally kept out of trouble at school, but was sent to your office on one occasion. I was in about the 3rd Year bit I was still petrified. I was sent to you because I had a collar on my jumper. You explained that you didn't object to the zip' just the collar and I was told not to wear that jumper again. I went home really upset. I was always cold in school and I had asked my mum to knit me this navy jumper with a zip and a collar because several girls had started wearing a similar style jumper to school. It was very fashionable and I was delighted when it was finished. I think I only wore it for two days before the school did one of the famous uniform checks that led me to be sitting in your office. I didn't like you very much at all on that day!!!

...There was also the 'coats check' whereby **Miss Mabbs** [presumably via a prefect] would confiscate all the coats that didn't comply with the uniform code...at home time, if your coat was missing, you had to go to claim it from her. She then knew who was breaking the rules [earning] a lecture on school uniform.

I can't imagine that in today's society you would get away with being so strict although, when I see the older children coming out of school [today], I do think we looked a lot smarter in the late '70's.

**It's a small world...Chris Payne 57-65**

I stayed a third year in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form to take Oxford entrance examinations, a year in which I was also Head Boy. I recall much of my time at the school with great affection, although there were less positive moments, largely associated with maths, physics and cross-country running. As someone who was put on their first diet at the age of 13 by the school doctor, being the little fat boy at the back of the cross-country run around Danson Park did not fill me with great enthusiasm.

Amongst the teachers who had the greatest impact on me were: **Mr. Johnson** [History and Form Master in my 3<sup>rd</sup>(?) year], who did more than anybody to instil a measure of self-belief; **Peter Collins**, who rescued me from being a duffer at maths...**Mrs Butterfield** and **Miss Chesterton** who, between them, made school plays a pleasure to be involved with; **Miss Griffiths**, **Mrs Ibbotson** and **Peter Kelly** who combined to make biology the basis of my career; **Peter Jaques** who started my 'management' career by appointing me as Cricket Captain in my final year.

After leaving BGS I retained very little contact with the school or with past schoolfriends, apart from being in touch with **Derek Abbitt** [best man at my wedding in 1969], and **Peter Crampton**, both of whom had been in my class throughout our time at BGS. My interest in the school was rekindled by a chance meeting with **Carole Cull [nee Samuel, 59-66]** who is married to one of my colleagues at the University of Reading. It's a small world.

In 1965 I went to Wadham College, Oxford, leaving at the end of 1971 with a BA in Botany and a DPhil. I got married in 1969 to Meg [a midwife at the Radcliffe Hospital at Oxford] and, by the time that we left for New Zealand in 1972, we had two children, Kate and Robert...My working career has been spent as a research biologist and research manager, concentrating at various times on viruses, biological control of insects and horticulture. This research has taken me to a Medical School at the University of Otago, New Zealand [1972-73], the Natural Environment Research Council, Oxford [1973-77], Glasshouse Crops Research Institute, Littlehampton [1977-87], East Malling Research Station [1987-90], and as Chief Executive of Horticultural Research International in Warwickshire [1990-99]. In 1997 I was surprised and pleased to be awarded an OBE for 'services to horticultural research'. two years ago, I decided I needed a change and applied for a post at the University of Reading, where I am now Professor of Horticulture and Landscape. I've also discovered just how hard teaching is!

Over the years I suppose that my main hobby has been gardening in one form or another and that is undoubtedly a contributory reason why I have ended up in Horticulture.

**Elizabeth Aldridge [Mrs Capewell] 58-65**

After BGS, I had 3 enjoyable years reading Geography at Girton College, Cambridge and spent two summers doing my thesis in Finnish Lapland - in the days when Bexley LEA funded such trips.

I used to drop in on the **Carr** family when **Michael** left BGS for a post at Homerton College...and had tea with **Mr. Brasher** [a brilliant History teacher] during his sabbatical term at Cambridge.

...I carried on playing hockey... captained the University team and got a Blue. I played for Gloucestershire a few times...and met my husband Richard, a geographer at St. Catherine's College...[when his job took him to Bristol] I followed and learnt about real life as a temp at the Youth Employment Office before doing a PGCE at Bristol University...I taught Geography in Midsomer Norton. After BGS Geography, I couldn't believe that some schools didn't do field trips so I introduced the Head of Department to the concept.

In my spare time I set up a hostel for young offenders and helped set up an early NACRO office in Bath. Since then I have had a typical '70's female career roundabout of voluntary work, paid part then full-time work, raising 3 children and developing myself and my professional skills. I worked as a Youth Worker with unemployed kids and set up Centres for young parents, became a Community Development Officer for Avon CC and then Principal Staff Development and Training Officer. Richard...moved to London in 1986 and I became District Youth and Community Officer in West Berkshire...My patch included Hungerford and a year after arriving I was thrust into dealing with the aftermath of the massacre...I also got involved in the Lockerbie and Hillsborough disaster responses [and] eventually left work to set up my own business [Centre for Crisis Management and Education] to research and develop good practice in supporting people and communities after disaster...With a Churchill Fellowship, I travelled to Israel, Australia and California to find some answers. Since then I have been involved in many UK disasters including Dunblane, Docklands and Manchester bombs, the Paddington train crash ...the Gulf Air crash in Bahrain, and the Omagh bombing...

I have rarely been back to Welling since my parents moved in 1970...I've only had on-going links with **Diane Kent**...[until] in 1980 a car drew up as I walked down my village High Street in Avon and out jumped a beaming **Chris Ray**...**Gill Edwards** also passed by at that time...

I especially remember the school plays, the great opportunities for sport, the Geography field-trips which widened my horizons, **Mr.Kelly's** Biology lessons, pond dipping and art lessons in Danson Park and the inspiring, brilliant teachers who taught me how to think and question and retain an independent mind - it's got me into all sorts of trouble since but life has never been dull!

## YEARS AGO

[at the time of writing]

### [60 Years ago...1951-52

“serious deficiencies in grammar school places in NW Kent” had already been highlighted by Bexley’s Borough Education Officer, Dr Stephens...he was supported by the Kent County Education Officer, E.W.Woodhead...and the new local MP Edward Heath had already accompanied a Kent delegation to discuss the matter with the Minister of Education.]

### 40 Years ago...1961-62

A 3 f.e. brought the school roll to 631. Staffing was HM + 38. New appointments included Ann Bligh [Mrs Williamson]-Maths, David Walker-Science, Peter Jaques-PE [now permanent], Pamela Mulvaney-PE and Mary Weaver [Mrs Willingham]-English. Retirements included Iorwerth Prothero-English, Margaret Johnson-Deputy Head, English, Charles Griffiths-Senior Master, English, Norman Hill and Rodney Brotherhood-both Modern Languages and John Gibson-Geography. \peter Kelly-Biology was in the USA for part of the autumn term on a Walter Hines Page Scholarship.

The Head Prefect was David Shaw with Bev Atkins and Barbara Jones as his deputies. 127 pupils were to gain an average of 5.9 passes at ‘O’-level; 40 gained 2.1 successes at ‘A’-level with Distinctions in the Special Paper being earned by Sheila Green an Michael Munson - Maths, Daniel Dupont and Bob Hewett - Geography, Joy Barry - Art and Bev Atkins - Zoology. The School’s first Speech day was held in the December when the Guest of Honour was W.C.Costin, President of St. John’s College, Oxford - Mr LeFeuvre’s former college. The Autumn term also saw the foundation of the Old Bexleians’ Association, which held its first social/dance in February. In August 1962, John Gibson led a school visit to Austria. Collins won the House Championship, Prothero were second. The Parents’ Association donated fencing equipment, garden seats, sports cups, picture frames and furnishings for the Prefects’ Room.

The Headmaster complained that the high cost of local housing made it more difficult to replace staff, of the need to repair the cricket practice nets, about the poor acoustics in the Hall, and about the shortage of both teaching and changing accommodation [ the latter taking nearly 40 years to be improved].

### 20 Years ago...1981-82

The roll has risen to 861 with 182 in the 6<sup>th</sup>

Form. A 4 f.e., with staffing now HM + 51.2 + a full-time Careers teacher. Appointments include John Deecraft, Jane Northwood and Glennis Maddock [late Mrs Ody]-both PE and with Beryl Roberts-English and replacing Margaret Mabbs as a Deputy Head. Resignations came from John Collins [again!]-Maths, Norman Brasher-History, Sue Ryan-PE, and from Jo Kitchin-French and Andy Leech-Latin who marry soon afterwards. In May, the school is saddened by the death of Geoff Moore-Modern Languages, who had joined BGS in 1964. In December, Robin Ackerley produces ‘Iolanthe’. The Head Prefect is Corinne Hayes with Tracy Freeman, Peter Nicholls and Richard Wilson as her deputies. 139 pupils gain an average of 6.2 passes at ‘O’- or ‘AO’-level; 97 average 2.4 at ‘A’-level. Distinctions on Special Papers go to Corinne Hayes, Paul Mackereth and Richard Wilson-Maths, Matthew Cooper-Physics, Peter Nicholls-Chemistry, and Andrew McCoshan-geography. Oxbridge places are awarded to Corinne Hayes, Andrew McCoshan, Andrew Nicholson and Penelope Prestage; Richard Wilson gains an Exhibition in Natural Sciences, to read Engineering at St. Peter’s College, Oxford and is awarded an ICI University Sponsorship. New ‘O’-level courses are introduced in Computer Studies, RE, and Electricity and Electronics.

Collins [captains-Patrick Downes, Paula Gompers] win the House Championship. School captains: Badminton-Neil Biddle, Basketball-Ray Mudie, Cricket-Adam Goldhagen, Football-Ian Robertson, Hockey-Clare Everson, Netball-Jane Sams, Tennis-Jacqueline Hoskins. Kent Schools’ honours go to Gavin Peacock, Louis Robinson, Brian Lord-football; Cheryl Collins-hockey; Helen Sharpe-netball. Paul Morris [Y8] represented Kent Athletics Club in the National Cross-country Championships; Debbie Clarke [Y8] was a member of the GB National U.12 Gymnastics Squad; John Kanes wins his first England judo international cap; sister Sandra Kanes is a member of the GB Ladies Judo team which wins the European Team Championship. Cricket: the BGS Girls team wins the Kent Junior Trophy; Pat Webb and Cheryl Collins play for Kent Junior Ladies 2<sup>nd</sup> XI; Clare Eveson represents Young England Ladies; Clare and Jane Northwood [PE staff] tour New Zealand with Kent Ladies CC. The U19 Basketball team lose only one match - to Langley Park [48-52] in the Kent Schools’ Champions Cup.

For the second year running, the school has a pupil, this time Christine Smith, who reaches the final shortlist in the W.H.Smith ‘Young Writer of the Year’ [age 9-12] competition. 250 pupils and staff take part in the Mayor’s sponsored walk in aid of the Elmstead Unit at Queen Mary’s Hospital; and the school also supports John Barrett’s daughter Angela, a civil engineer, in helping to finance the building of a water supply to the Nepalese sherpa village of Gairhi.

Through the efforts of Andy Leech [staff] the OBA is re-formed and holds its first Annual Dinner.

### **RON SAWYER 4.9.32 - 20.3.02**

Ron came from a well-known Welling family. Few things ever seemed to ruffle his feathers but he remained incensed about one of his reports from Foster's Primary School: 'Little Ronnie's maypole dancing has improved this term'. He'd hated having to dance round the school's maypole, did not like being called 'little' and, even more, he didn't wish to be known for any such dancing skills: he wanted his parents to see how well he was doing in the 3 R's. Perhaps his dancing experiences provided his life-long fight against the complicated in life. Dartford G.S. kindled his love for Maths and for all forms of sport: he played 1st XV rugby - renowned for his place-kicking skills and his tackling.

He took his Maths degree and, after national service in the Army, a PGCE at the University of Southampton. Having to teach other recruits had probably helped him to decide that teaching was to be the career for him.

Good Maths teachers were always hard to find: having dropped into BGS, uninvited, to seek out the possibilities of a post, Mr LeFeuvre had no hesitation in appointing him for September 1956. He was to teach at BGS for 31 years, broken only by 7 years [1966-73] as Head of Maths at Palmers School for Boys in Grays, Essex; with John and Peter Collins, he formed a formidable Maths Department trio.

Ron was always modest about his considerable intellectual ability; he was an extremely able mathematician. In December 1957, when taking one of Ron's classes, John Collins invited the Y8 class to suggest what the 'P' of 'RPS' stood for - there was little hesitation in the answer: 'Pythagoras'.

Ron was to give so very much to BGS - and he was also to get a lot from it! In the summer of 1959, Margot Godfrey, who taught Domestic Science, said to him, "We've just the thing for you: she can cook and sew and can probably run a home, too!" [It was an introduction to Miss Marjorie Anderson, who joined the BGS staff in the September.] If he had ever been sceptical about this advice, Ron certainly wasted no time: they became engaged in the following April and had a teachers' wedding in July 1961 i.e. on the first Saturday after the end of term.

In 1973, Mr LeFeuvre invite Ron to apply for a vacancy which had arisen for a Senior Master: it was not to be the last time that he was seen to be 'the right man for the job'. Almost immediately after his appointment, he became the School's Deputy Head, sharing these duties with Margaret Mabbs. He had always brought his considerable talents to bear in helping to shape the direction for this new school; these new responsibilities gave him even more scope to do so. For Ron, teaching was about much more than helping youngsters to pass examinations: this was important as a means of opening doors, but teaching was also about defining one's attitude - to learning, to one another, and even to life

itself. Generations of pupils, and colleagues, will forever be grateful for the support, encouragement, and friendship given by both Ron and Marjorie - always in a quiet, unobtrusive and self-effacing manner. Their children, Robert [75-80], Alan [77-84] and Jane [Mrs Cross, 81-86] were all educated at BGS. With both parents as teachers at the school, how do you get any 'street cred'? There was no need to worry. When Robert was 12 or 13, some of the older 'rogues' came up to him and said, "Your old man's alright. He doesn't take any nonsense - but he's alright." From young teenage 'rebels' this was some compliment.

With Ron, you always knew where you were. He was straightforward, down-to-earth, no bull. He had played his sport with the same attitude. Playing football for the staff against the School, he knew that, to get to the ball, the shortest distance was always in a straight line: this was the path he took and woe betide anyone who got in his way. A report written on a L.6<sup>th</sup> boy, who'd had poor exam results, illustrates the same approach: 'He is coming to the point of no return. These exam results speak for themselves - and the fact that he was holidaying abroad when he should have been revising with the rest of the class was both ludicrous and disturbing. If he wants to continue with the course and is prepared to do the work, I think he has the ability to succeed.' Pupil and parent both knew the score. But notice, at the end, the opposite of any 'sting in the tail': there was always hope!

Ron retired in 1994 but remained as busy as ever: if you want something done, ask a busy man - ask the Ron Sawyers of this world.

He was Chairman of the London Branch of the University of Southampton's Alumni Association. He joins the Blackheath Bridge Club, becoming the Director - the man who settles competition disputes - and a very popular Club Chairman. All sports held an interest for him: he had been a talented sportsman, especially at rugby and tennis, playing for Sidcup RFC and the Bexleyheath Sports Club; he turned out for staff football and cricket teams and ran and refereed many BGS football teams. He was an enthusiastic follower of horse-racing, at one time even owning a share in a string of horses - usually one hoof on each, he reckoned - enjoying his little flutters, especially if they came up!

His interest in Athletics took off when Robert and Alan became involved as competitors, with the Erith A.C. and then Bexley A.C. It was not surprising to find him involved with the Kent County Athletics Association in many management and administrative roles and elected as President of the County Executive. For some of these posts he was a volunteer; for others, he was chosen for his personal qualities - as a gentleman and because yet again he proved to be 'the right man for the job' - unique for someone who had not, himself, been a leading, competitive athlete.

And, perhaps above all, Ron remained a committed family man, proud of what Marjorie and his children and grandchildren had achieved.

**GEOFF'S GEMS**

Geoff Moore [S 64-82] edited the early editions of the School Magazine, between 1966-74, and these howlers probably came to light in his French classes.

**“Comment est le boeuf?”**

‘Il est l’opposite de la vache.’

**“Qu’est ce qu’ils vont manger?”**

‘Ils vont manger des sandwichs et un thermos.’

**“Elle avait senti la haine profonde des femmes.”**

‘She had smelt the bad smell of the women.’

**“Deux souliers gauches.”**

‘Two left-hand shoes.’

**“Dans quoi le facteur porte-t-il les lettres et les paquets?”**

‘Il les porte dans une boîte aux lettres.’

**[on the French monetary system]**

‘The names of the designers of the coins were also the names of the people who designed the coins.’

‘Amongst the French monetary system are a number of coins, the bulk of which consist of Francs,’

‘On the other side of many French coins are three words, these are “Liberte, Egalite, Fraternelite”, which in English mean in order, “Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood”, respectively.’

**[a French project]**

‘Sausages from Lyons are famed all over the world, also Lyons coffee is very well known.’

**“A football match.”**

‘Un coup de pied competition.’

**“Ils ne me feraient pas de mal.”**

‘They won’t take me for a meal.’

[on a 1<sup>st</sup>. Year day trip to France]

**“Note down any French goods which you recognize as having been on sale in England.”**

‘Socks, cheese, tomatoes.’

**“Chemin de fer?”**

‘Metro is really an abbreviation of “Metropolitan” and it is also called the chimney of fire in the underground of Paris.’

**[French composition - 4<sup>th</sup> Year]**

‘Woofa attracted le bulls attention et le bull imp. Chase [chased] Woofa.’

**“L’Entente Cordiale.”**

‘Lime Cordial.’

**“What is the Pont du Gard?”**

‘Guard’s van.’

**“Where is the Pic du Midi?”**

‘In the Pennines.’

**“What is under the Arc de Triomphe?”**

‘The Champs-Elysees.’

**“Dans ma maison, qui n’est pas un compartement?”**

‘The only sure way of catching a train is to catch the one before it.’

**“Le garagiste jeta un coup d’oeil sur le moteur.”**

‘The garage proprietor put a couple of eggs on the engine.’

‘The garage proprietor threw a squirt of oil on the engine.’

**“Elle s’installa dans un fauteuil.”**

‘She installed in a leaf.’

**“Quels vêtements portez-vous aujourd’hui?”**

‘Je ne porte pas des vêtements aujourd’hui.’

**[a 3<sup>rd</sup> Year pupil in 1973-74]**

‘In France many people speak English but the main language is of course French. It is a peculiar language to speak, because instead of saying ‘a green house’ as we say it, ‘a house green’ is said. But they have been using their language for centuries now and no-one, except me, has so far complained.’

[from the editor: my computer will not allow me to add accents - two are missing above...so the page is being filled with other ‘gems’ found by Geoff Moore]  
Chopin was born in Walsall.

His moral was low.

The Corn Laws made the price of bread sore.

Barley is for human conception.

When a bridge is made, instead of leaving the two blokes on top of each other, you put a line of rollers in between.

An alkali is a liquid which has a certain amount of alcoholic liquid in it.

Johannes Sebastian Bach was a Welshman.

Everything had to be used to take the place of the food we could no longer import. Even horses were replaced by tractors and farm labourers by women.

Make sure no incests are allowed in the kitchen.

Louis XVIII was a fat and deceased man.

Sieve the flour and salt into the bowel.

[note at the bottom of a piece of work] Sorry - I can’t get any father.

## RAYMOND HEAD 64-66 A LIFE IN MUSIC

[I had come across an article, in an early school magazine, about Raymond and his music.]

It seemed quite astonishing that even before joining the school's 6<sup>th</sup> Form he had numerous compositions to his credit and that the Royal College of Music had already given a public performance of a percussion piece which he had written. In the article he wrote, "I started writing music when I was 11, the number of compositions...[now] totalling about 70. These include works for the piano, numerous songs, sonatas, quartets, a wind quintet...a work for chorus and orchestra called 'Dreams of the Sea'...a setting for poems by W.H.Davies, Shakespeare & Tennyson...[this work] not completed as my ideas of composition and style change from month to month...I am searching for a style which can be applied to the various emotions I want to express...and it is generally considered that one's style is not fully formed until the age of fifty."

When he moved to BGS in 1964 with three other Westwood School pupils, the change came as a great shock. At Westwood he had felt secure and had succeeded academically but he needed 'A'-levels in order to qualify for a government grant for future college fees. To some outsiders BGS had quite a stiff and starchy reputation...Raymond came from a working class background and [very sadly] his parents never did feel brave enough to visit BGS for the concerts in which he performed, or even for parents' meetings. They were to miss a Christmas concert at which he played Chopin and which gave him his first opportunity to conduct - a modern piece by [now Sir] Harrison Birtwistle for choir and ensemble.

In those days, Bexley and Welling appeared to him as cultural deserts: there were no youth orchestras or music schools, no feeling of social interaction through music. So life was quite lonely and Raymond spent the whole of his teenage years escaping to concerts in London, usually on his own as neither of his parents were musical in any formal way. On Saturday mornings he used to attend the Royal College of Music Junior Department where he had composition lessons; invaluable meetings with like-minded people.

Raymond failed his 'A'-level Music exam - which he didn't find surprising as it was so academic. Personal creativity was never taken into account: Distinctions in Grade 8 piano and theory and his many compositions counted for nothing! After BGS, Raymond went to Dartington College of Arts in Devon and completed a teacher's course through the University of Exeter. The college provided an idyllic and creative environment: working with internationally famous soloists and conductors broadened his views on music and, for the first time, he had friends who shared his love of music.

After qualifying, he taught in a school near Cambridge but found it difficult to reconcile his creative approach with the lack of facilities or being told by his colleagues that he was making too much noise! [Whilst in this area, he gave piano lessons to the daughter of Michael Carr, his inspirational Geography teacher from his BGS days.] His world was shattered by the death of his mother and near-fatal illness of his father: teaching and composing stopped - the language of modern music could not help him to express his deepest feelings.

At Dartington he had been introduced to Indian philosophy, music, poetry and art: research in this area led to an MA course at the Royal College of Art where his thesis was concerned with Indian influences on Western architecture, taste and music - a pioneering study. He begins to publish articles and books on the subject, give talks on BBC radio, undertake research in the USA - including a Yale fellowship - and returns to composing and giving concerts in London and Italy. [He had earlier married and lived for a time in Italy.]

He had written 'The Indian Style', a book published in 1986 in London and Chicago; this was followed by a request for him to catalogue the collection of paintings of the Royal Asiatic Society of London - the results of which were published in book form and he had the honour of presenting a copy to the Prince of Wales. As the subject of Indian influence on the West had hardly been studied in depth before, Raymond is now invited to lecture at many universities in the UK and USA. Gustav Holst [1874-1934], the great British composer, had also been very much influenced by Indian philosophy and Raymond is among the enthusiasts reappraising Holst's influence, in the face of neglect, on English music.

[But how did all such experiences tie in with composing and with his article for that early BGS school magazine, with its suggestion that a composer reaches a maturity of style only in his early 50's?] "Well, I have found that by doing all kinds of things, of seemingly different things, my composing side had been steadily maturing. I went back to composition at the end of the 80's when I was teaching on a university course in London for the University of Colorado. During some aural work I found that I heard some new sounds in my inner ear. I accepted the prompting and began to compose. Fortunately, times had changed musically: the doctrinaire ideas of the 60's and 70's had been replaced by a new inclusiveness - Post Modernism: I could now be as lyrical as I liked without feeling old-fashioned." "My piano and voice teaching has introduced me to the tastes of a completely new generation and has led to a rapprochement with popular culture that I had never had before. I teach pupils who have all kinds of learning difficulties - from them I have learned a great deal and this all feeds into my music - orchestral, choral and instrumental and into my commissions. I feel that what I write has to be understood NOW by the ordinary, listening public... I think I am having a life - not a career...the future is full of possibilities."

**BOB TAYLOR 66-68**  
**from High Jump to High Flier**

Bob came from a Crayford family and attended Wentworth Primary and Crayford Secondary School before joining BGS's 6<sup>th</sup> form. A friend of his father's had taken him along to Erith Athletic Club, where Mary Rand was attempting to break the British long jump record. Bob found himself excited by athletics and became a 800 yards runner. A New Zealand teacher at Crayford School invited Bob to try high jumping and he was introduced to the 'straddle' technique; almost overnight, and to his great surprise, he discovered something at which he could excel and, for his age group, the no. 1 in Kent.

Cambridge Harriers offered more convenient training facilities - his parents giving him every support for what was an almost daily routine. T Crayford, he had already gained an 'A'-level in Art; transferring to BGS, and under Norman Brasher, he added History and EPA [Economic and Public Affairs] to his tally. As with other such entrants to the 6<sup>th</sup> Form, he was to find the transfer quite a culture shock.

From 1965, Bob became Kent Schools' High Jump champion. In 1967, he was Kent Junior [U19] champion, the English Public Schools' champion [somehow, BGS became included], the English Schools' champion, the AAA Junior champion, and he represented England in the Home Schools' International in Glasgow. It proved an exciting summer as he also represented English Schools at an international fixture in Montreal, Canada, against both Canadian and French Schools' teams; whilst there, there were also fixtures against Carleton University and in Toronto and Quebec. And he'd flown to Canada with the English team immediately after touching down at Heathrow from competition in Germany, where he'd represented Greenwich: off one plane, straight on to another.

The representative honours continued: there were internationals against schools' teams from both West and East Germany, against Sweden, and fixtures against various US colleges, Oxford and Cambridge and other British universities. Bob lived for and was fully absorbed in this world of athletics, his results appearing in almost every edition of 'Athletics Weekly'. He represented Great Britain and the AAA at both Junior and Senior levels up until 1973. He jumped 6' 5"/6'5" when the British record was 6' 10".

At BGS, Bob won the Senior High Jump in both years and the Long and Triple Jumps in the U6<sup>th</sup>.

After BGS, and via Kingston Polytechnic, he was awarded a BSc in Sociology from the LSE [the editor's alma mater], having found, as he put it, 'a college that would provide me with shelter so that I could continue my athletics'. he gained his University of London 'Purple', representing the university at fixtures

all over the UK.

In 1971-72 he stayed on at Kingston as President of the Students' Union - his leadership potential had been recognised. But his athletics career was now coming to an end and he was about to throw himself energetically in a completely new direction.

Bob's dad had served in the Royal Engineers in WW2, was one of the first to land on Sword Beach on D-Day, had fought all the way into Germany and had lived there for a couple of years after the war. At BGS, with the encouragement of Dennis Black, Bob had learned a little German and he now took himself off to work in Bavaria. Here, he met a number of American military personnel and, inspired by their tales and by Douglas Bader's 'Reach for the Sky', he decided to return to England to join the RAF.

A talent for athletics had led to one big change in his life: entering the RAF was about to do the same. He took a commission and had a full and varied career until 1987.

"Looking back, the RAF gave me some fantastic experiences. I was allowed to fly Vulcans until the squadron was disbanded in 1982-83. I had many tours of duty both at home and in Northern Ireland and in Germany. Few people realise that these were the days of the Cold War [the days before Polaris] and each day the Vulcans overflew Norway and Sweden, waiting to be called upon to bomb our specific targets far inside the Soviet Union."

Bob happened to be the station orderly officer, on night duty, who received the news that Britain was at war with Argentina. When he tried to pass on this message to his squadron commander, the latter, annoyed at being woken up in the middle of the night, didn't believe him, thought he was larking about, and instructed Bob to see him early next morning, with his cap on, in order that he could be disciplined! Bob had to find another way of breaking the news.

[Bob pointed out that, according to 'Queen's Regulations', it is only the most senior officer in the Armed Forces, in his role as the Queen's representative, who can order the country to go to war! Apparently, it is NOT the prerogative of the Prime Minister!]

During his service in the RAF, Bob met a young girl called Sarah, 11 years his junior, who was training to be a nurse - and, of course, they married and now live in the small village of Harrietsham in mid-Kent. Sarah is now a staff nurse on the Gynaecology Ward at Maidstone Hospital. Bob left the RAF in 1987 because his son, Stuart, was mentally handicapped and needed a father who was going to be at home for him.

Leaving the RAF meant another big change in the direction of the lives of Bob and his family: Bob established '1<sup>st</sup> Choice Computer Appointments' in 1988. It is an employment agency specialising in the recruitment of IT and Sales professionals for companies based in Kent, Sussex and Surrey. Based near Maidstone, it offers a first class professional and friendly service to clients and applicants alike.

## HAVE CAMEL, WILL TRAVEL The editor returns to the Gobi Desert

This was to be my second trip into the Gobi Desert. I was part of an 'Earthwatch'-sponsored but Chinese-led research project entitled 'Inner Mongolia's Lost Water'. Its aim was to achieve a greater understanding of the historic and modern processes of desertification in the Gobi and to examine the possibilities of restoring some of its fringe areas into productive farmland; to be able to do so would be of tremendous significance for China.

The Gobi covers a vast area, over 1,00 miles from west to east and 350 to 650 miles from north to south., extending over much of Mongolia itself and Inner Mongolia which is part of China. Much of the area comes under military jurisdiction: Earthwatch teams are virtually the only foreigners allowed into the area, which explains their curiosity to the locals - most of whom will never have seen anyone from the West before. The research areas can be reached only via the site from which China sends rockets and men into space. This trip was into one of the most remote parts of the desert, inaccessible to vehicles - leaving only one other form of transport!

From the city of Yinchuan, we had been able to drive for three days into the desert along quite reasonable roads being constructed to help exploit some of the area's mineral resources. At our base camp I was introduced to 'Yeer-eh-ting' - the closest I can get to converting his Mongolian name into something like English. He looked a big beast - bigger still once I was on his back; it seemed a long way down to sand which couldn't always guarantee to be soft.

He had some advantages: being bactrian, i.e. with two humps, he was capable of carrying quite a heavy load; though on the end of slim, racehorse-type legs, his four broad feet promised a degree of stability; his neck construction allowed him, whilst travelling and without slowing down, to munch anything he could find without his rider feeling he was about to be catapulted over the front hump.

But geographical texts never mention the camel's disadvantages: it spits, it snorts, it grinds its teeth, it can bite and kick at the slightest provocation and the water flowing between its numerous stomachs [BGS readers will know that the humps contain only fat] can sound like a miniature Niagara. So, you never pass directly in front of it - and certainly never close to its rear, as the exercise of its bodily functions leaves much to be desired!

He was always to be approached from his left side, in such a way that you could be seen, and he had to be persuaded to lie down to allow the climb on board, between the humps. He stands up in three distinctive movements: on to the front knees, back legs then fully

extend, then ditto the front legs. The rider, then, has the feeling of being thrown backwards, forwards and then backwards again; when alighting, everything works in reverse.

Balance? There is no rein to grasp as, travelling in short trains of five or so beasts, the rein is tied to the rear hump of the camel in front. There's no saddle: stirrups cross the camel's back between a couple of blankets, so we who do not have Korbut-like powers of balance can do so only by gripping the blankets hard, one hand fore, the other aft. We'd been advised NOT to try to cling to a hump - the beast doesn't like it!

This was the only mode of transport into the research area: another 3-day journey, riding for 6-8 hours per day for 2-4 hours at a time. Each day, one camel train set off with all our equipment, which meant that we had to carry all we needed during the day. We were advised not to use a backpack as this could rub the hump and the camel up the wrong way and create difficulties if we fell off. My answer was to buy a pair of Chinese long johns, tie up the bottom of each leg and use this as a pannier!

Each camel train was headed by a Mongol guide. Yeer-eh-ting was at the rear of a train of four camels and didn't like this at all! He would always walk alongside the camel in front, as far as his rein would allow. In traversing steep slopes, our guide would zig-zag to make riding easier but my beast would always walk the shorter [and steeper] hypotenuse rather than the longer [and gentler] other two sides of the triangle.

Alighting for lunch under the full glare of the sun - there being no shade whatsoever - we would find ourselves standing but stiff and stuck in the riding position. It required a 3-movement exercise of our own to straighten up: first the knees, then the back, and finally the head and shoulders. And, for a few moments before all the stiffness in our limbs had dissipated, John Cleese would have been proud to enrol us into his school of funny walks.

We journeyed into parts of the Gobi where few of the local Mongols, if any, had ever travelled. We came across old Stone Age sites where I was able to add to a collection of such implements begun on the first trip; but I did find a coin, thought to be over 200 years old - an indication that we were crossing some former trade route. How our guides managed to find the research area remains quite amazing. It was in an area of mega-dunes, the tallest dunes in the world, rising over 1,500 feet from their base. No rivers had ever flowed here so there were no valleys to act as landmarks - just constantly-shifting sands; vast tracts which remain, even for the Mongols, without a single place-name. We were heading for a lake-filled depression - perhaps only 50 miles as a good crow flies but at least double that distance by camel in such terrain.

We spent four days in the research area - climbing sand dunes, though tiring, a welcome relief from the camel riding we'd experienced, but in the knowledge that this would be the only way out again!

**1955 - 2005**  
**BEXLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL**  
**The Golden Jubilee Year is launched**

December 9<sup>th</sup> 2004 saw the official launch, at the school, of the Golden Jubilee Year celebrations. The President of the GJ Year, Sir Edward Heath, joined members of the School and guests for a very memorable and convivial evening.

**120 - and not [all] out!**

At the end of the Summer term 2004, four members of staff had, between them, given BGS 120 years of devoted and loyal service: on behalf of all of their colleagues and of all the pupils who benefited from such service, the OBA wishes to congratulate and pay tribute to them...

**JESS LAWSON, 73 - to date**, hails from Kirkcaldy in Fife. A Diploma in Domestic Science was followed by a PGCE. Later, whilst at BGS, she gained a BA in Social Sciences and the Advanced Diploma of Education in Technology, both from the Open University. She taught in Scotland but in 1973 was appointed as Head of Food and Textiles at BGS - the youngest ever Head of Department at the school. She has adapted, and very successfully, to the many changes in the teaching of her own subject area: those brought about by Sex Discrimination legislation in 1977 which opened all subject areas to both boys and girls; to the temporary loss, by LEA policy, of 'A'-level Home Economics courses at the school; to the National Curriculum forcing Food and Textiles studies into a broader and compulsory design and Technology programme. Her expertise was recognised by the LEA when she was seconded, on a part-time, basis for 18 months to act as one of its Advisory Teachers. Later, she assumed responsibility for 'A'-level General Studies, became the school's first Publicity Officer, was head of Johnson House and is now Head of the R.E. Department

**PETER SPALL, 74 - to date**, is a 'Man of Kent' educated at Borden G.S., gaining a BSc degree in Physics and Maths from the University of Reading. BGS remains his first and only teaching appointment. Upon the retirement of Jim Hawkins in 1980, Peter was appointed Head of Physics: again, the National Curriculum necessitated a more integrated and co-ordinated approach to the teaching of the sciences. In the same year, June Clayton joined the staff as Head of R.E. -an appointment which was to have a major effect on his future. Between 1985-96, Peter was elected by the staff to serve as a Teacher-Governor on the School's Governing Body. In 1996, he relinquished his Head of Physics role and, until 2004, became Head of 6<sup>th</sup> Form. He now teaches Maths. As a man of many practical skills, his talents have been fully sought in a wide variety of school activities. And he is one of the few to be

involved on stage in every one of Robin Ackerley's Staff Revues: 'The Village Idiot' played to such perfection [but completely out of character!]

**RAY GOMPERS, 74-04 [and to date]**, is a 'Kentish Man', born in Erith. After 'A'-levels at Dartford THS for Boys, he gained a BSc in Chemical Physics from the Univ. of Kent and a PGTC from Goldsmiths College. BGS became his first and only post; the ability to teach both subjects to all levels provided valuable flexibility to these departments. Ray has undertaken a number of responsibilities: Head of Physics from 1998 until retirement; i/c all stationery supplies to the whole school; together with a strong pastoral role - giving his time freely at lunch-time and post-school sessions with his Christian Fellowship group, and Wargames and Chess clubs in addition to his duties as a Form and classroom teacher. As always, everything is carried out efficiently and without fuss.

In 1976, Ray married Valerie who taught for many years at Danson Primary, with many future BGS pupils passing through her hands; they have two children, Margaret and John, studying Medical Biochemistry and Maths respectively. For many years, Ray was a governor at this school and the deputy Chairman of the Governing Body from 1990-96. His strong concern for pastoral support is reflected, also, in his work at St. John's Church in Danson Lane. When he retired from his teaching commitments, he immediately returned to BGS to run its reprographics department!

**PETER WELLS, 75-04**, was born in Leamington Spa, attended Cambridge H.S. for Boys, studied for a BSc in Botany at the University of Reading and for his Diploma in Education at the University of Oxford.

After teaching at Christchurch G.S. [then in Hants, now in Dorset] he was seconded in 1970 to teach Biology, for 2 years, in Kampala in Uganda: the school was 12 f.e., with 40 in each class, one half attending school in the morning, the other half in the afternoon.

Peter met his future wife, Pam, in Uganda where she was on a VSO placement. They married upon return to England in 1972 but, after a brief spell teaching in Basingstoke, wanderlust took them both off to Jamaica where Peter taught Biology and Botany between 1973-75.

[They now have 2 children, Matthew, who lives in Texas, and who is training to teach and Mirembe, who runs one of the BMA's committees.]

Peter now accepts the vacancy for Head of Biology at BGS upon the resignation of Michael Leveridge [S 69-75]. Immediately, he became involved in the design of the new science labs for the Jubilee Building and, soon afterwards, in the changes to the teaching of the sciences following the introduction of the National Curriculum; from 1996-02, he assumed overall responsibility as 'Head of Science'. Peter's influence on developments at BGS has been far-reaching.

He is a member of the Chapel Choir at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich and is Lay Chairman of its Chaplaincy Council.

## THE GOLDEN JUBILEE DINNER SATURDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005

The School Hall proved a splendid setting for the Dinner, attended by some 260 guests.

After the meal itself, the Loyal Toast was proposed by John Collins, S 55-71, 77-82.

Former pupils, one representing each decade, then treated guests to some of their own impressions of their time at the School:

for 1955 - 65 Don Wellman 56-73, S 68-02  
1965 - 75 Christine Webb [Mrs Spicer] 70-77  
1975 - 85 Mike Welch 72-80, S 84-90  
1985 - 95 Chris Ball 83-90  
1995 -05 Natalie Szrajber 96-03

The current Head Prefect, Tom Gaunt, also addressed the gathering, proving that today's youngsters are equally as eloquent as their predecessors.

The Toast to the School was proposed by David Jones, Headmaster 76-95 and Chairman of the Golden Jubilee Committee, with the response being made by the Headmaster, Mr Rod MacKinnon who provided an insight into his vision for the School's development as it now headed towards its centenary.

[the following are extracts from some of the letters sent to the School afterwards - and very much appreciated by the Golden Jubilee Committee]

...a superb occasion...the atmosphere was one of fun and appreciation of good times at Bexley Grammar School...the committee have given us a wonderful year. The launch by Sir Edward Heath set the tone in his speech full of humour. He referred to the immense opportunities available for students not only in their academic life but also in the community, sports and the arts...it was a splendid celebration...I write in deep gratitude for being able to share in such a splendid occasion...I liked the fact that people all felt we are a friendly, welcoming community - and yet there is a right emphasis on hard work and developing skills and attitudes: this is what we all worked for...

...thank you for a memorable evening last Saturday.

Thanks for putting on such an impressive event last weekend. Everyone seemed to have a really good time.

...Congratulations on such a successful Golden Jubilee year.

What a wonderful evening we all had on Sat. 17<sup>th</sup> September. It was a truly fitting climax to all the other celebrations that have taken place during the

year...congratulations to the Golden Jubilee Committee

on the success of this smooth-running and highly enjoyable event. It really was all worthwhile and very much appreciated.

Just a quick note to both congratulate you and thank you for such a splendid evening on Saturday...[my wife] commented that she had enjoyed talking to all those people who had such a significant influence on moulding me as an individual.

My years at Bexley Grammar School have always been so special to me...and being invited back was something I had relished for two years, since I was told about the reunion...1960-64 were golden years and I look back on them with so much affection...it was wonderful to be back, albeit briefly.

Please pass on our thanks to everyone involved in arranging the Golden Jubilee Dinner last Saturday. It was great to recognise so many faces and catch up on the past 40 years or so. We very much enjoyed the evening.

I would like to say 'thank you' to...all the members of the Golden Jubilee Committee for all the hard work which must have gone into organising the Dinner. It was a most enjoyable evening and for me, personally, a ready-made 70<sup>th</sup> birthday treat - a family reunion - for that is what we were in those halcyon days - a happy family. So, heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to rekindle old relationships.

Congratulations...the Golden Jubilee Dinner was an absolute marvellous occasion and memorable for all...you all obviously worked so hard to produce a perfect event. Everything had been considered and put into action. The Master of Ceremonies was a touch of genius.

I felt I had to write to congratulate the Golden Jubilee Committee for an excellent evening on Saturday...I thought you all did a superb job and I know that everyone I spoke to enjoyed it immensely.

I would like to thank...the anniversary committee for arranging such a wonderful celebration dinner last Saturday...Everyone would agree that it was all worthwhile. We thoroughly enjoyed the evening, catching up on the news and renewing old acquaintances. Let's hope that the next fifty years are as successful as the last.

[The Golden Jubilee Committee

The Headmaster, Mr R. MacKinnon  
Judith Allery 73-80  
Bev Atkins 55-63  
Carolyn Atkins [nee Plumridge] 56-63  
Sarah Burman, [HM's secretary], secretary  
John Collins S 55-71,77-82  
Peter Collins S 57-73, treasurer  
David Jones S 76-95, 98-99, chairman  
Tracy Staddon 76-83  
Don Wellman 56-63, S 68-02 ]

**CHERYL PURSSELL [MRS DOWN] 55-60**

**The School's opening day: September 1955**

50 years ago, as Carol Wilson, Dennis Wade, John Pritchard and I walked up the steps to the front entrance of Bexley Grammar School, a photograph was taken of us which appeared the following week in the 'Bexleyheath and Welling Observer' under the heading 'With eyes on the future'. We were the very first pupils to enter the school. I was only 10 years old but I can remember it as if it were last year. We were all so proud to be there, and also very proud of our new blue and grey uniforms. The girls wore grey gymslips over white blouses and the boys wore short grey trousers with white shirts. We all had blue blazers and blue and white striped ties, and flat black shoes with soles that couldn't mark the new floors, and on our heads we girls had blue velour hats, with elastic under the chin to keep them on, and the boys had caps, although we had no hat bands or badges because they weren't available in time for the start of term. There weren't many of us: just three first year forms and a second year taken from Erith Grammar School. The school was still being built, and as the form room block hadn't even been started we used the labs instead. I went into 1C with Mr. Collins, and our form room was the Advance Physics Lab. [The smell of freshly sawn wood takes me right back to those days even now.] The school was beautiful and everything was new, with a full set of equipment in every single cupboard in every lab, and the latest and best of everything, everywhere. Every pupil had his or her own complete set of brand new textbooks, always kept in our individual desks, unless we needed to take any home for homework - an unheard of luxury these days. We were so very fortunate, but we took it all for granted. The Houses were named after Miss Johnson, who taught Chemistry and was the original deputy head, Mr. Prothero, who taught English, Miss Kirkman, who taught French and, of course, Mr. Collins, who taught Maths. I was in Collins House, and our House always came top in everything because not to do so was unforgivable! Even the least sporty Collins pupil would go in for at least one heat for the annual sports, in order to get the 5 house points for doing so, and woe betide anyone in Collins House who was given a detention by another member of staff, thereby losing 10 points. A house detention would immediately be added to the school one, so the culprit ended up staying behind on two nights instead of one! It was, of course, long before the days of pocket calculators and a favourite punishment was to make you add up all the numbers between 1 and 100. I don't remember ever getting the same answer twice.

School lunches were extremely good, and in those early days we ate in the little dining hall to the left of the front entrance - maybe you still do - but as we went up the school and numbers increased we

overflowed into the Main Hall. Anyway, for the first couple of years, we sat 6 to a table with a tureen of potatoes and another one of another vegetable, a jug of gravy, a glass water jug and 6 glasses and 6 sets of cutlery to each table. A server would go up to the serving hatch from each table and collect a tray of meat, and this would then be shared out between the six. Afterwards, a tray of pudding with a jug of custard or beaker of cream would be shared out. It was called family-style eating and amounted to a Sunday dinner every day, and all for five shillings [25p] a week!

We were expected to work hard, and we did., at school and in the evenings with one and a half hours' homework each night that invariably took me twice as long. The teachers were treated with tremendous respect, and wore their gowns at all times, with their hoods as well on special occasions. Do they still do that? [No - ed.] I remember Mr. Prothero used to clean the board with the sleeve of his gown when he couldn't find a board rubber. The staff members I remember best are: Mr. Le Feuvre - Headmaster; Mr. Collins, Mr. Collins and Mr. Sawyer [Maths]; Mr. Prothero and Mr. Griffiths [English]; Miss Kirkman and Mr. Hill [French]; Miss Johnson [Chemistry]; Miss Marsh [PE]; Mrs Godfrey [DS]; Mr. Gale [Photography]; Mrs Wilson [Art]; Mr. Barrett [Music]; Mr. Kelly [Biology]; Miss Miller [RE]; Miss Lander [Physics]; Miss Chesterton [didn't teach me]; Mr. Carr [Geography]. And a really kind French master who joined our school in our 'O'-level year and came up to me as I was waiting for my French oral to tell me I had the best French accent in the school. I'm pretty sure that wasn't true, because I failed, but I went into that oral with a lot more confidence than I'd had two minutes previously. I wish I could remember his name, but I can't - just that it began with a 'B'. I'll always be grateful to him. [ed.- this was Rodney Bretherton, at BGS 6/59 to 8/62.]

As a brief update on what has happened to me since then: I left after taking 'O'-level, and went to Bexley Tech. in Townley Road, to take their 6<sup>th</sup> Form commercial course, then went to work as a secretary in a Mayfair advertising agency. Three years later, I became a medical secretary to two neuro-surgeons, then, after a few months as receptionist/entertainer at Atherfield Bay Holiday Camp, I went to work for Coty International. I got married at the age of 22 to my husband, Mick, and later moved to Somerset, the Staffordshire, and lastly to Sheffield, where he became Director of Pharmaceutical Public Health. We have now been married for over 38 years and have three wonderful sons. The eldest has just started his own IT company, the second is a Health Service manager, and the youngest is a pharmacist at Hereford Hospital. They are all married and we have three grandchildren. When our youngest son went to university, I went to college and qualified as a beautician and holistic therapist, which is what I do now when I'm not being a wife, Mum or Nan. I have had a wonderful, exciting, interesting life, have enjoyed it, and am still...

### NO COMMENT

[further extracts from earlier school magazines and the years when these howlers were found by BGS staff]

#### 1966-67

[1A] Q. What points should you remember in preparing and cooking vegetables, and why?

A. They should be put in a saucepan of water so they are kept clean when cooking. Water is used to tell when they are hot enough, for it boils.

[3A] A tired horse, having travelled swiftly to the gates of Verulamium, shouted, 'Open the gates'.

[on the Roman heating system]...the boiler which sent heated air around the hollow bottoms. This system was very warming and Romans could walk about with bare feet.

[4B] Other poems express the poet's view on the glamour of war and one of these was when the general and the admiral talked together about Nelson, for it was he who had knocked out Napoleon at Waterloo. He had killed himself doing it and thus he was collecting all the glamour and glory anyone could get.

#### 1967-68

[Y2] Q. Name 3 dances composed by Chopin.

A. Waltz. Foxtrot. Tango.

Q. Name 3 dances by Bach.

A. Waltz. Foxtrot. Fandango.

Man needs fat to stop him from being thin.

[Y3] When an epidemic blew up, he had to go from house to house vaccinating everybody left, right and centre.

John Peel...invented the Police Force.

Coaches were much more comfortable as they were attached to the chassis by strings.

There is an anti-locust centre in London which predates swarms.

[on the tapeworm] It is unlikely through the whole of its life history to engage another tapeworm.

[Y4] This apparatus fails because it cannot intimidate the thoracic cavity of a mammal.

[L.6<sup>th</sup>] Merchants could charge exuberant prices.

Shortly afterwards, Robert Clive committed suicide. This was the work of a man of great military genius.

The second difficulty caused by the death of Queen Anne was the reign of George 1.

A baby will learn to communicate by language at a faster rate if he has other humans around him than if he was all on his own.

Operations were being performed by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but there was a disadvantage: hardly anyone survived them.

[U6<sup>th</sup>] I give myself a treat at the weekends. On Saturdays, I don't do Physics.

#### 1968-69

[Y2] Nature usually makes a surplus of males but, as they are weaker, they usually die before they are 21.

[Y4] A transformer has many lamentations.

[6<sup>th</sup>] Master: 'I believe you are a misogynist'

Pupil: 'No, I'm Church of England.'

Q. Who wrote 'Finlandia?'

A. I don't know. Some 'fin or other.

Q. How had Lady Macbeth been occupied before the entry of the messenger?

A. She was in her bedroom, using her make-up.

#### 1969-70

[Y1] If a triangle has all its sides equal, then it must be a square.

[Y2] A puppet was put in the test tube to gather up the gas.

The Prodigal Son went off into a far country where he spent all his money on clothes and other stupid things.

[6<sup>th</sup>] I know there is a difference between boys and girls.

#### 1970-71

[Y1] Q. Name 3 rules in hockey.

A. Mustn't go on the cricket square.

The phone was left dangling with a policeman on the other end of the line.

An alkali is a green seed from a plant which swims in water. It turns the water green as well.

The garage owner adjusted the breaks and put in new sparkling plugs.

#### 1971-72

[Peers] who wished to denounce their titles could do so. In the mountain region, relief is forbidden.

Looking at yourself in the mirror, you see yourself looking at yourself. Your face looks twice as far away from you as it really is.

The country's eggs were in the town's basket as far as the factories were concerned.

Workhouse tasks included 'opium picking'.

When the baby comes right out of the womb, it is still connected to the mother by the umbilical cord. This is then cut by the doctor and knotted and put inside the baby.

Louis Philippe walked around the streets in an umbrella.

#### 1972-73

The Bio Tapestry.

The roofs of the [Roman] villas were tiled.

[of the feudal system] In the real thing there would be 100's of millions of peasants.

[on the French classroom] the classroom goes up in tears.

[to separate iron from sulphur] You take a magnet and this will magnify the iron out.

Four six-footed heroes.

#### 1973-74

Fish are also a form of meat.

These pigs the farmer will sell back...for a prophet.

I thought I might find refuse here as it was raining.

Extra money should also be thought of as a 'sir-charge'.

Clover is never used as a crop since when it is eaten by a cow it produces cyanide which irritates the cow informing it that the clover is no good as a food.

There are many ways that good, flaky pastry can be insured.

Water is used to conduct and generate electricity and hydro-electric power by building dams.

**GAVIN PEACOCK 79 - 84  
PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER**

‘Addicks’ fans will know that Gavin’s father, Keith Peacock [after attending what was then Erith G.S.and playing school fixtures against BGS and a certain Don Wellman] became a one-club man with Charlton, playing 533 games for them, scoring 106 goals. Gavin was to follow in his father’s footsteps.

He was born in Eltham in 1967, joining BGS from Hillsgrove Primary School in Welling. He was an accomplished scholar and his footballing talent was immediately obvious. He played for North Kent Schools, Kent Schools and then went on to represent England at all levels from U15 to U21. During 1995-95, he also took part in training camps with the senior England squad.

This experience gave him, at the age of 16, the opportunity to consider joining Liverpool, Aston Villa or any of the major London clubs. An important factor in his decision to sign apprentice forms for Queen’s Park Rangers in 1984 was that, in Terry Venables, the club was seen to have a young and highly-talented , and forward-looking manager; the club also had a reputation for bringing on their own players rather than buying talent from elsewhere.

Venables was, however, snapped up by Barcelona before Gavin could play for him. His debut, under Jim Smith, was, at home, on the club’s infamous plastic pitch, in a 2-2 draw with Sheffield Wednesday.

His career ran as follows: [matches, goals]

1984-87	QPR .....	17.....1
1987	Gillingham [on loan].....	6.....0
1987-89	Gillingham.....	64...11
1989-90	AFC Bournemouth... ..	56....8
1990-93	Newcastle United.....	105...35
1993-96	Chelsea.....	103...17
1996	QPR [on loan].....	5.....2
1996-02	QPR.....	186...34
2001	Charlton.....	5.....0

Gavin was 19 when he joined Gillingham - the club managed by his father. Both realised the necessity for fellow professionals and the fans to be won over and the need to avoid any charge of nepotism in team selection. His transfer to Bournemouth produced a record fee of £250,000 for Gillingham. His new manager, the young Harry Rednapp, was already gaining a reputation for his style of football and for his general management skills.

Gavin’s career was given a massive boost when Jim Smith arranged his transfer to Newcastle United. Keith’s family came from South Shields on Tyneside and the whole family had been devoted to the black and white of Newcastle rather than to the red and white of Sunderland. The opportunity to play for the club his

family had always supported was not one to be missed.

Gavin was to play under three very different managers at Newcastle - but each shared a passion for the game, was prepared to give youth its chance, and wanted the players to go out and enjoy their football. When Kevin Keegan was playing for Liverpool, his then manager, Bill Shankly, had instructed him to ‘cause trouble all over the pitch’ - and this advice was now passed on from Keegan to Gavin. Keegan’s motivational skills and player-management approach were considered second to none.

Promotion saw Newcastle return to the Premiership but, for family reasons, Gavin had requested a move to a London club. Earlier, Glenn Hoddle had been unsuccessful in trying to attract Gavin to join him at Swindon - but now he was prepared to pay £1.5 million to effect his transfer to Chelsea. In his first season for his new club, he was to score 14 goals, including both goals in the 1-0 wins, home and away, against champions Manchester United; Chelsea were the only team to beat them twice in the season.

Gavin also scored the only goal in the FA Cup quarter-final, and both goals in the semi-final before the Final was lost 0 - 4 to Manchester United. In the following season, Gavin experienced European Cup football as Chelsea progressed to the semi-final before losing to the Spanish club, Zaragoza. The arrival of Ruud Gullit as manager and the signing of a number of overseas internationals made it difficult for Gavin to keep his place in the team. Eventually, a return was made to QPR for the final six years of his professional career, which was not to end before a short spell with his father’s old club, Charlton Athletic. After retirement from his playing career in 2002, Gavin forged a successful career in the media, working with both the BBC and Capital Radio - [being one of the more articulate amongst former professionals acting as commentators on the game - ed.]

He is also a committed Christian and presented a feature on Faith in the game in “Football Focus” on TV in December 2006. “Football is considered a macho sport and people might think you’re soft or whatever for being a Christian and maybe they’re going to look at you critically for that. So you’ve got to be strong and say, ‘No, this is what I believe’. Sometimes it makes you more of a man to stand up and say that you do believe in Jesus Christ.”

And a couple of years ago, Gavin was invited to present ‘Songs of Praise’ from Rochester Cathedral.

In more recent times, Gavin has studied theology in a college in the Canadian Rockies; he and his family are over there at the moment [March 2010] where he is working for his local church.

**RODERICK MACKINNON**  
**HM BGS : JAN. 96 - AUG.2008**

Rod joined BGS as its third Headmaster in January 1996 but his family had had some earlier connections with this part of the country. His maternal grandfather, a journalist, grew up in Rochester but would have passed what later would be designated as Danson Park on journeys up the A2 to Fleet Street when he started his career in journalism at the turn of the 19th/20th Centuries. Rod's father and mother first met in Croydon where the latter had attended the Old Palace School; while Rod was commissioned into the Royal Artillery at Woolwich and eventually demobbed from there.

Rod was born into a military family whilst his father, a cavalry officer, was serving in northern Germany; various postings meant a much-travelled family and Rod attended a number of schools as his parents did not wish to send him to boarding school. The family returning to England in his teens, Rod finished his secondary education as a pupil at Aylesbury G.S. in Buckinghamshire. A-levels were followed by a degree in Engineering at the University of Leicester prior to attendance at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and his commission into the RA; his own army career was spent mainly in Germany.

Whilst at school his career interests had centred on the Army and on teaching - though there was no known family history in the latter. He recalled the impact of his own teachers- some excellent, some not quite so - and a belief that the education system should, and could, offer greater support to young people at such an important and impressionable time in their lives. Family values had instilled in him the idea that there needed to be a balance between getting a lot from life and the need to contribute towards the public good, i.e. a sense of public service.

So, in 1984, he resigned his commission as a captain in the RA and returned to the University of Leicester to study for the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education though, being a scientist, this wasn't a requirement for him to enter the teaching profession. Within a couple of months of training crews in the art of gunnery he now found himself discussing reproduction with 11-year-olds. Teaching practice in Melton Mowbray and Nottingham helped to prepare him for his first post, teaching Physics, at a comprehensive school in Southall, Notts. His career then took him to Tiffin Girls G.S. as Head of Physics, to Heathland Comprehensive School in Hounslow (a remarkable school that Rod maintains was and is, genuinely outstanding) as a Senior Teacher [the fields adjacent to the school being part of

the emergency

landing strip for Heathrow], and then to the Deputy Headship at Colchester Royal G.S. - an impressive school, catering for the top 5% of the ability range - before coming to BGS.

The 13 years Rod has spent at BGS represent, by far, the longest spell he has served anywhere; he thoroughly enjoys his work and would probably claim that, for him, there is no great difference between seeing teaching as both hobby and employment. During term time, it's all work from Monday to Friday before travelling home to Suffolk where Saturday provides relaxation and a welcome break - before Sunday sees thoughts returning to the week ahead. Running, often to or from school, helps to keep him fit during the week: in the holidays he is a keen walker, with the Lake District and the Cornish coast being favourite haunts, and a prolific reader.

The future? Someone had obviously kept an eye on Rod's career and on the tremendous success he has achieved at BGS and he was invited to visit Bristol G.S. when the Headship became available; he was offered the position for September of this year. This began, 475 years ago, as a grammar school for boys: it is now co-educational, independent, ex Direct-Grant, has a 5-form entry intake with 28 per form, about 250 in the 6th Form, a Junior School [of which Rod will also be the Head] and with a combined roll of about 1200 pupils.

He will be very sad to leave BGS but he has the satisfaction of knowing that he leaves an extremely successful school in good hands. And facing him is the prospect of an exciting new challenge...his own personal adventure through life might be taking a new direction but those family values will remain at the fore: there can be no doubt but that BGS's loss will be Bristol's gain.

**ROD MACKINNON'S LEGACY**

[the following comment is taken from the last Ofsted report before Rod MacKinnon's departure for Bristol ]

"What makes Bexley Grammar School outstanding is an unrelenting drive to ensure that all students achieve their very best, both academically and personally. As one parent commented, 'We are privileged to have such a fantastic school in our area.' Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels and high quality teamwork is a particularly strong feature. The headmaster provides inspirational leadership and is held in the highest regard by staff, students and parents alike. One parent summed up the view of many, 'The headmaster is an excellent leader who gets the best out of every child.' ...Management of its work as a specialist college is excellent and fosters the school's vision of always seeking to raise students' expectations and

achievements.”

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**JEAN TAPLIN [MRS PRATCHETT] 62-69**

### **A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE**

[extracts from Jean's account of a recent visit to BGS]

It was September 1962 when I first set foot in BGS. I had come from a small, 200 year old primary school of about 280 pupils, with 7 classrooms and a wooden hut for a hall. By contrast, BGS was just 7 years old, light and airy, and seemed massive. There were about 600 pupils, and I was one of the smallest. It took me a while to find my way around - I had been there a year before I discovered there were girls' toilets on the upper corridor of the main building.

Most of the classrooms were in a tall block, 4 storeys high, with magnificent views across the fields and Danson Park...

I was particularly impressed by the library. The walls were clad with wooden bookshelves, and filled with books on every subject imaginable...[it] commanded an attitude of reverence. I was also struck by the gym - a huge room with a highly polished floor. We entered wearing outdoor shoes at our peril. One of my abiding memories was of Mr Jaques demonstrating his skills on the newly-acquired trampoline, and wondering if he would hit his head on the ceiling. This was the room in which all our public examinations were taken.

By the time I left in July 1969, it had become a very familiar place and I took it much for granted. It had lost its freshness, many of the wooden, paired locker-desks bearing inscriptions by students with wandering minds. I went without a thought for the ending of an era, and soon moved away.

Thirty-nine years later I was to have the opportunity to retrace my steps...[I'd arranged to meet John Collins.] It was with curiosity and excitement that I made my way back to the school.

My first impression as I drove along Danson Lane was of the congestion. What had been a quiet, empty street was now double parked, with parking bays marked on the pavement, bollards and traffic calming restrictions. We made our way to the main entrance, now firmly closed and fitted with an entry phone... It was the first time I had used the front entrance, as it had been reserved strictly for the use of staff.

The entrance hall was as I remembered, with the main staircase curving gently down, and the two corridors going off at right angles to serve the two wings of the school. Apart from the secretary's office being renamed 'Reception'...it all seemed very familiar. A large trophy cabinet proudly displayed its contents to visitors.

[They are now joined by the Headmaster on their tour of the school.] I was led through the door of the former Inner Sanctum to find an office - and not even

a particularly large one. I got the impression that the staff were never living in the luxury we imagined behind that door! ...the Headmaster's office...no longer looked a place to be feared. It was twice the size of Mr Le Feuvre's office [a wall having been removed] and looked bright and welcoming...

..[back] to the steps down to the old Dining Hall. I recall a long room...with an 'L-shaped' bend opposite the servery. Each day, a member of staff would quieten the pupils, say Grace, read the menu [no choices] and then pupils would take it in turns to fetch the meals for their table. All very civilised! The [dining hall] seems much smaller than I remember, and the small dining tables, each with their anodised water jugs, have been replaced by longer canteen-style tables. The DS room [is now] a place to queue for meals and the rose garden has been replaced by an extension to the dining hall.

The [Main] Hall is much as I remembered ...the organ has gone...[as has] the daily singing of hymns... [and] the Headmaster's daily pilgrimage...wearing his gown and mortar board. Pupil numbers are now too high ...to all fit into the Hall [together]...a delightful stained glass window is set high in the back wall, commemorating the school's jubilee in 2005.

[following the corridor behind the stage] There is now a magnificent, huge Sports Hall, complete with...facilities that were not even dreamed of in my day. I recall, with envy, the days of shivering on a hockey pitch in biting wind and rain.

A huge amount of building has taken place over recent years...but there still seems plenty of space on the playing fields [though the old pavilion has gone]. The original tall classroom block has had a square tower added to the end nearest the field. The whole of the delta floor has been converted ...into a new library. It lacks the atmosphere of our old library, and is certainly no longer at the heart of the school...the old library is now the staff room - no air of reverence remaining there then!

Looking down into the playground [of which very little remains] the greenhouse is still there, and the old metalwork room [a complete mystery to me - girls just didn't go there]. The new buildings each have a character of their own, but are all attractively designed and spacious...extremely well resourced. With colourful displays and art work of all kinds on show.

Each faculty seems to be housed in its own building. As a Specialist language College, the facilities for learning languages are amazing...two language labs, with enough computers for a whole class...to French, German, Latin [are added] Spanish, Russian and Japanese, [and Greek, Gujarati, Turkish, Chinese, Italian, Punjabi] - ed., with trips organised to many of these countries.

We were welcomed into a 6<sup>th</sup> form Maths lesson [having 'Mr Collins of Collins House' as a friend opens many doors]...

I was left amazed by the changes I had seen...it is clearly a busy, inspiring place to learn with many opportunities, and it is not too difficult to see why it is

heavily oversubscribed.

[page 22] ISSUE 22.....AUTUMN 2008

## JOHN WELSH BGS's 4<sup>th</sup> HEADMASTER

John Welsh is a 'local' boy: his family lived in Bexleyheath and he was educated at Bedonwell Primary School and then at 'Beths', i.e Bexley and Erith Technical High School for Boys [now Beths G.S.]. Here, 'A'-levels were taken in English, Maths and Economics - the latter subject taught by one of David Jones' former pupils [from the latter's time at Ilford C.H.S for Boys] .

After a year working in the family business connected with the motor trade John decided on a career in teaching and read English and Education at Bishop Lonsdale College, University of Nottingham. His first teaching post was in Lewisham where he taught English and Drama; his talent was recognised even in his first year at the school during which he gained promotion for his contributions to the Department.

In 1977, two years later, he moved to St. George's School in Gravesend - a Church of England comprehensive - where, in addition to teaching English and Drama, he became the School Librarian; he taught here until December 1983. During this time he was offered a Head of Department post at a school in Southampton but he decided not to accept this promotion, considering that the move was not in the best interests of his two young daughters.

This consideration, concerning their primary school education, led John to move temporarily out of teaching and rejoin the family motoring business in Erith. Later, when the girls moved to secondary school, John was able to accept the offer of a post at Riverside School in January 1991. Again, in addition to his teaching commitments, he undertook to organise the school library which, up to that time, had consisted of boxes of books in various parts of the school and with no permanent home of its own.

The Riverside head teacher was John Sherbourne who had taught at BGS for a short period in the mid-1970's. He it was who, when a vacancy arose at BGS, and recognising that John's talents could be stretched further, advised that the post on offer was well worth consideration. A successful application saw John join the BGS English Department, headed by Robin Ackerley, in January 1991.

Over the next few years, John's workload and responsibilities increased considerably and he would wish to pay tribute to the inspirational staff with whom he worked in these various new roles. In addition to a greater involvement with English 'A'-level courses, he soon assumed a Head of Year role - taking one group from Year 7 through to Year 11. There followed the role

of SENCO, helping to develop the school's attitudes towards and care for pupils with particular educational needs; even pupils at selective schools often have individual problems which need to be addressed. When Deputy Head Nigel Ryan was seconded to work for six months for the LEA, John was asked to undertake Nigel's duties; eventually, upon the promotion of Miss Rhian Lloyd-Thomas to a Headship in 2003, Rod Mackinnon was pleased to recommend to the Governing Body that John be appointed to fill the Deputy Head vacancy so created.

Much of John's social life revolves around a very large and close-knit family - presided over by his 94-year-old mother-in-law, a veritable matriarch of Italian origin who had married an English soldier in 1945 and who had moved to this country soon afterwards. John has also always been interested in animals - as a dog owner and on horse-racing; he reads widely, is a lover of rock music and spends many weekends cycling.

He and his wife, Anna-Maria, have two daughters: Esther is a teacher in a Gravesend primary school whilst Kathy, who is to marry next year, is an inspector in a Mayfair casino.

John has a very special relationship with BGS - and is delighted to have been given the opportunity in recent years to help shape its progress; he can be justifiably proud of the part he has played in helping the school to achieve splendid accolades from the Ofsted inspectorate. He is particularly proud of the school's 'Leading Edge' status, whereby it is seen as setting standards for other schools to attempt to emulate. At the same time, as new generations join BGS, he recognises that the need to convince pupils that they can do anything they set their minds to is a never-ending task for both himself and his very-hardworking staff - again, to whom he pays every tribute.

John has always offered every support to the OBA: in turn, the Association looks forward to continued co-operation with him, in the interests of both past and present members of the school, and we wish him a very happy and successful Headship.

The School appears to be in very capable hands.

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### OBA

<b>President</b>	John Welsh, Headmaster
<b>Past Presidents</b>	David Jones S 1976-95 Christine Tadman S 1995 Rod MacKinnon S 1996-08
<b>Vice Presidents</b>	Bev Atkins 55-63 John Collins S 55-71, 77-82 Peter Collins S 57-73 Graham Godley 56-63 Andy Leech S 75-82 Andy Watkins 74-81 Ian Watkins 76-83

### SCHOOL BADGE UNINSPIRING

[from the 'Kentish Times' Friday, 27 September 1957]

If you had a child attending Bexley Grammar School would you be satisfied with the badge?

Many parents are not. Complaints have been made, and a parent of a boy attending the school told me that she had received a number from other people about it. The parents said: "The badge doesn't mean anything." "The badge is a terrible one", and "Surely the only grammar school in the biggest borough in Kent should have a badge that is worthwhile?"

The item in question is startlingly simple. Just the lettering "Bexley G S" in a white shield on a black background.

#### NO COMMENT

When I visited the school during a social evening to obtain some more views, the answer was strangely unanimous - "No comment." Mr E. F. Lefeuvre, head master, said it; Mrs. M. D. Parsons, secretary of the Parents' Association, said it; and the parents who were asked said it.

The only person to volunteer any information was Mr. H. W. Jones, Chairman of the Parents' Association, who said that the matter had been discussed at some length with the head master.

He had, he said, stated in committee that parents of many of the children who attended the school would not be able to afford the high cost of an elaborate badge (about 30s.) and it was not worth going in for anything cheap or shoddy.

#### THE COST

The present badge costs 6s. 9d. And the metal pin-on cap badge, which has the Borough Coat of Arms on it, which many parents have said can hardly be seen at all, costs 2s. 3d. A member of the Parents' Committee said he thought it "a simple badge which answers the purpose," and, in any case, it was the governors who had the final word on the matter.

[The] Only other person with anything to say was the Borough Education Officer, Dr. W. E. D. Stephens. His comment? "It's a matter of taste."

So Bexley Grammar School badge remains for the time being as it is : Cheap, simple, serviceable - and uninspiring.

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### TIM MUTTI 72-79

[Tim has been cajoled into agreeing to have a regular spot of his own in these newsletters - to write upon any item which takes his fancy - and this is THE first, hopefully, of many columns to come.

One problem - it's not yet clear how his column should be headed...'Tim's Turn'...'Mutti's Revenge'...'It happened like this...'...'Let me tell you a story'...'none

sound just right - so, dear reader, any ideas?]

I am not sure what was the greatest shock; turning up to BGS on my first day as a 12-year-old, or going back to school last September for the first time in 30 years. I was asked by David Jones to attend as guest speaker at the Old Bexleians' Annual Dinner and AGM, which was the first time I had returned to school since leaving in 1979.

The seven years I spent at BGS certainly made an impression on me. I still distinctly remember the excitement of lining up on the old netball courts on my first day in 1972, waiting to be taken to my new form. The Headmaster, Edward Le Feuvre, had previously written to my mother helpfully telling her of the necessity of purchasing a brand new cap and school scarf for me, both of which were apparently very popular amongst the pupils. There I stood in line proudly wearing both, and glancing around I noticed that only my parents and one or two other innocent souls had been taken in by this ploy; I was surrounded by a sea of bare heads. The cap probably lasted two or three days before it was confiscated by one of the rowdier members of the upper school, or inadvertently left on the bus on my way home; I cannot remember which. I still have a scarf, which naturally hangs in pride of place at the back of my wardrobe next to my prefect's tie. I think the tie was worn a little more often than the scarf.

I am sure that it will not come as a surprise to the more senior members of the Old Bexleians but, still, I was astounded by how much smaller everything is when you go back to school as an adult.

And that is not the only novelty.

First, there was the pleasant surprise of being able to use the old physics lab car park and then gain entry by the main door next to the secretary's room (previously, I am sure, reserved for the staff and official visitors), followed by a warm glow walking past the school canteen evoking memories of the days when we were allowed chips with everything, and chocolate chip sponge with chocolate sauce for pud, on a menu entirely devoid of any thought of politically correct dietary balance, and of "five a day".

Finally, the ultimate astonishment that comes with being able to have a conversation with David, Andy, John and Don rather than "Sir", and to find that they are human beings after all! Apparently the speech I gave at the dinner was probably much more restrained than I suspect a number of those who know me well were expecting. Certainly, I had to leave out a number of stories which, if I say so myself, would have had them rolling in the aisles. Sadly, telling these stories would have also seen me sued, or behind bars, or worse...

My evening ended triumphantly when I discovered that my crossword mentor David Jones [well, you had to do something in General Studies lessons] had been trying for over 30 years to win the Saturday Times newspaper prize crossword competition, unsuccessfully. He was appalled to learn that I had beaten him to it. I promised to let him have a look at the Parker Duofold pen which I had won some years ago, when the prize

was worth having...but, it's all about the taking part.  
**[page 24] ISSUE 24.....SUMMER 2009**

### **ANDY LEECH and the OBA**

"I attended Bolton School and to this day maintain strong links to my hometown in Lancashire, where I still have a golf club membership and a season ticket for Bolton Wanderers! Academically I quickly deserted the sciences in favour of Latin and Greek. My main school memories are of endless hours playing cricket and football in school and both of these but also golf in my spare time- the sporting commitments interspersed with odd moments of attempts to translate passages of archaic English prose into Latin and Greek. I went on to study Classics at Jesus College, Oxford and again spent most of my time playing college and university level sports, the highlight being twelve first class wickets for the University in 1972! After leaving Oxford I went to Bristol University for my teaching qualification, again representing the University. In all this time I cannot remember making a conscious decision to become a teacher but despite that somehow found myself being interviewed by Mr Le Feuvre one hot summer's day in 1975. Suddenly I was teaching 2B Latin in a hut just beyond the teachers' car park and then changing to take 4th or 5th PE or Games lessons and changing back for 2D English. Meanwhile Don Wellman introduced me to the Old Bexleyians Football Club and also Eltham Cricket Club which traced its heritage back to WG Grace and where I played my cricket until moving to Bexley Cricket Club in 1978. My habitual life pattern was re-established! In the early years I spent many happy evenings and Saturdays with various boys' and one girls' cricket team. Throughout my time at BGS I took the Under 14 football team.

After spending my 20s at BGS and upon marriage to Jo (Kitchin), who had joined the Modern Languages Dept, I thought it was time for a new challenge and moved to Berwick Upon Tweed High School as Head of Classics. I spent three and a half excellent years in Northumberland playing cricket, golf and refereeing football, whilst teaching Latin but also Greek and Classical Civilisations courses. The highlight of that era was the birth of our daughters, Helen and Cathy in 1983 and 1985.

In 1985, after a couple of interviews and some applications for better paid but far less interesting classics' teaching or school pastoral posts, I made enquiries about entering educational administration. This led to my becoming an Education Officer in Local Government, initially with Bedfordshire LEA and from 1988 with Warwickshire LEA. This was a far cry from Classics and involved me with Special Educational Needs Provision, Information Management, Grounds and Catering contracts and latterly large scale public service planning with some national work, being in 2001 seconded to Doncaster Metropolitan Borough for a

special project. In my later years with Warwickshire I studied for and obtained a Masters Degree in Public Administration from Warwick University.

In 2006, faced by yet another wave of local government reorganisation of many experienced, I was fortunate to be offered an early retirement package and in 2007 returned to my first love teaching Latin, Greek and Classical Civilisations- part-time at Rugby High School for Girls, a grammar school not unlike BGS. I'm also now taking girls' cricket practices and teams and a girls' football team. There is a certain circularity about my career path! At the time of writing I hope to continue teaching for a few more years.

Helen and Cathy have graduated from Sheffield and Glasgow universities respectively and are currently, as so many recent graduates, doing their best to find employment, which they both hope to do upon successful completion of masters' degrees. I meanwhile continue to play lots of golf, watch lots of football and turn out once or twice a year for the South Oxfordshire Amateurs, a long established cricket club whose first president was the legendary classicist and gentleman, amateur sportsman, CB Fry!" The early records of the OBA have been lost and it is not possible to give due acknowledgement to the contributions made by those former pupils who engineered the Association's initial success. Unfortunately, by the late 1970's, the Association was in desperate need of resurrection and Andy Leech set about this task with the vigour and commitment he brought to any undertaking which he considered a just cause.

"To strengthen the OBA in the 25th year since the school's foundation, I had the idea of making a big effort to contact all its previous pupils under the auspices of the OBA. I worked closely with the OBA committee, notably Bev Atkins, Graham Godley and Don Wellman and had encouragement within the school from David Jones, Ron and Marjorie Sawyer and Audrey Phillips who had maintained all the address lists. Peter and John Collins were very important to the initiative as were other OBs on the staff. Most of my Latin lessons, for a few weeks, concluded 5 minutes early as we divided rows and rows of addressed brown envelopes amongst those who lived nearest to the streets to be covered. Bit by bit the letters were all delivered either to the last known address or to forwarding addresses elicited from new residents or established neighbours. I spent several evenings in hitherto unknown and unappreciated outposts of the Borough of Bexley.

Meanwhile I had undertaken to support Glenys Strickland, who had taken on the task of producing a school magazine within Robin Ackerley's English department. I set out to write letters to anyone who replied and to gather the correspondence for inclusion in an OBA section. The letter invited OB's to a one off gathering in the school for which we organised some food and a bar. Although we hoped for a reasonable turnout we had absolutely no idea if anyone would come. They did! The hall, dining hall and music room were

tightly packed and it was an excellent occasion.”