

PLANE TALKING



A NEWSLETTER FOR OLD ELTHAMIANS

WINTER 2008/09 ~ ISSUE 3

Blackheath or Bust

Any visitor to Reception at school will see the alabaster bust of Nehemiah Griffiths on display. We are indebted to Alastair (1964) and Derek (1960) Browne for its return.

As a pupil, Alastair was helping to clear out the cellars, where the bust was stored. Since no-one at the time knew who Nehemiah Griffiths was, Alastair was told he could have it, as it was going to be thrown away. Last November Derek, pictured with the bust, contacted the school and asked if we would like it back.



Nehemiah Griffiths lived in Blackheath, on the Cator Estate. He was the senior partner in the firm of N Griffiths, Tate and Fisher, a Shipping and Insurance Company; he later became chairman of the Commercial Union Insurance Company.

His connection with the School for the Sons of Missionaries began in October 1855, when he became a member of the School Committee (in effect a Governor), and was entrusted with the purchase for £1,800 of land next to Blackheath Station, where the new school was to be built.

At the time the school occupied temporary premises in Mornington Crescent, Camden. Nehemiah Griffiths chaired what would now be called a Premises Sub-Committee and was responsible for the building and furnishing of the new school, which was opened in November 1857.

Mr Griffiths continued to be an active Governor after that. In November 1864 he helped to clear large debts by organising a dinner in London, which raised around £1,500 – astonishing for those days. In January 1865 he took over as Chairman, which he remained until he resigned in February 1874, aged over 80, owing to ill health.

His legacy is the first permanent home the School ever had, where we stayed for 55 years until the move to Mottingham in 1912. Subsequent generations of SSM and Eltham College pupils owe a great debt to him. As the school history notes, this was “the opening not just of a building, but of a new epoch.”

Archive Corner

The School Archives Office always welcomes reminiscences and contributions from Old Boys and Girls. Please email Mark Stickings at ms@eltham-college.org.uk with your memories of the school. In particular, we hope to build up a collection of pupils' memories of members of staff. Some of us were struck by the recollections in the latest OE Magazine about Bill Scott – how he spent some of the First World War in Dartmoor as a conscientious objector. That sort of thing needs to be recorded, before it is forgotten. If you feel able to put pen to paper about one particular teacher, or any other aspect of your time at Eltham College, please get in touch. And please don't think Old Boys/Girls means really old – we would be very grateful for memories from the 1980s and 1990s as well as from earlier periods. A selection of these will form

part of the updated history of the school, to be published in 2012 in celebration of 100 years at the Mottingham site.

Our first rugby international was Herbert Sibree, who played for England in 1908. Members of the Sibree family visited the school last term to join us in commemorating the 100th anniversary of his first cap, and to exchange memories and photos of his life. In the photo are also (l to r in the back row) Adrian Baulf, Stephen Smith, Brian Richardson, Mark Stickings and David Norris.



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Blue is the Colour

After an intensive term of training twice a day, a special diet, an alcohol ban and a sleepless night before the game, Jonathan Cross (2007) represented Cambridge University at Twickenham in the U21 Varsity Match on 11 December 2008. Cambridge were triumphant for the first time since 2004. After going behind 3-0 in the first minutes, Cambridge U21s were able to dominate the rest of the match. Two quick scores after half time stretched the lead to 17-3 before a late penalty put the final score at 20-3. Jonathan, as scrum-half, contributed to the two tries scored by the Light Blues.



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The success of the Eltham College 2007 rugby tour of Singapore and Australia convinced Jonathan that he should pursue his rugby career at University. He is delighted that he has been able to play at Twickenham, and is hoping to play again in next year's match, "unless someone better turns up" he said in a typically self-deprecating way. Jonathan will continue to play for his College in Rugby Cuppers although it has all got a little more serious as the Blues can also play this term.

He is currently in his second year at Jesus College, reading Natural Sciences. Jonathan is far left in the picture.



The Air that I Brive



Ben Cohen and Tim

After a successful rugby career, former Scotland A centre Tim Exeter (1983) became a Conditioning Coach, a job that took him to West Bromwich Albion FC, Coventry FC, Portsmouth FC and the Wales football squad. He returned to rugby, spent 7 years with Northampton Saints and this season has moved to Brive, renewing acquaintances with former Saints favourites Steve Thompson and Ben Cohen, along with Andy Goode from Leicester Tigers.

Tim writes:

I have always had the desire to work abroad in either France or Italy, this year an opportunity arose to work with CA Brive in the Top 14 (French equivalent of the Premiership).

Brive won the Heineken Cup against Leicester in 1997 and lost to Bath in the final the following year, an incredible feat for a relatively small place of 50,000 inhabitants. The club fell on hard times but is now on the up again. Club rugby is huge in France, twice a week there is a rugby only national paper called Midi Olympique! There is also a national Daily Sports paper L'Equipe. The crowds are noisy, bands etc and we are in the heart of French Rugby Country.

We have a diverse group of players about 50% French and the rest, English, Welsh, South African and an Aussie. The group has really pulled together and everyone is having either French or English lessons so language is never a problem. For me to coach in a foreign language with people who have a different outlook and attitude is a great challenge and finally I get to use my languages from Eltham!

It has been hard for my family as Helen my wife only learnt French at school and 3 months ago she gave birth to our daughter Elodie. Furthermore Cameron, Megan and James have had to go into a French school, they learn more every week and no doubt it will be a great life experience for them. Brive La Gaillarde is 2 hours north of Toulouse and is a beautiful area, old France with a great Saturday market. The club website is www.cabrive-rugby.com it is worth a look.

I had a great reunion with some OE's at the end of last season at Northampton and now they are all planning to come here to watch Brive v Toulouse in April 09!

Tim Exeter (1983)

African entrepreneurs benefit from TradeRelief



Jake Lomax, Ben Wynne-Simmons, Richard Palmer with designer Nick Wright, OE

Four Eltham old boys have joined forces to create an innovative new development charity called TradeRelief. Though it is still in its pre-launch phase, Jake Lomax (1999), Ben Wynne-Simmons (1999), Andrew Palmer (1999) and Richard Palmer (2001) have successfully funded three businesses in Western Kenya which should create employment opportunities and social benefits for the local community.

"TradeRelief is about building relationships between developing country businesses and the individuals who can give them the chance to succeed. We want to enable entrepreneurs to exploit business opportunities that bring benefits to the surrounding community. Uniquely, we track the success of the small businesses we work with and communicate to donors the quantitative difference their money has made," said Ben.

TradeRelief's target is the 'missing middle' between microfinance and commercial lending, using donated capital to provide flexible financing to businesses that have a real chance of improving the local economy.

With Richard's company Infozure providing pro-bono web and design services, Ben's debt structuring knowledge gained as a consultant at EY, Jake's development expertise from a career in NGOs in London, Kenya and Palestine and – most importantly – Andrew's hard-earned city cash, the four are working to build TradeRelief into a driving force for real change in developing communities across the world.

Along with five other experienced volunteers, they are finalising the operational model and are in talks with partners in India, Palestine and Washington, seeking to repeat their successes and offer more business opportunities through their website in the coming months. Visit www.traderelief.org for more information about TradeRelief.

President's Message

My two thoroughly enjoyable years as President have positively flown by. In that time there have been outstanding OE celebrations, in particular the Association's 100th Anniversary and two spectacularly successful Winter Reunions, each attracting around 250 OEs. No less notable and enjoyable, in their own way, have been the annual South East and South West Reunion lunches each May.

As custodians of the Association and its assets, the Committee has begun a review of its relationship with and management of the OE Sports Club. This work will continue under the able leadership of my successor, Ian Beith to whom I take this opportunity to

wish as fulfilling a time as I have enjoyed.

The election to the OEA Committee of four new members all under 35 and including its first lady member augurs well for the future. In similar vein it is a real pleasure to see an increasing number of both current school pupils and recent leavers looking to Foxbury as the venue to continue to play their chosen sports.

I cannot leave without expressing my gratitude to all whose service to the School and the OEA happily reflects the "family" spirit we have come to expect of Eltham College and the Association. They include the OEA Committee, the Headmaster, the OE 1st

XV and 1st XI skippers, and last, but by no means least, Simon McGrahan and Penny Waterson from the School's Development Office who do so much for OEs.

We are aware that this newsletter is heavily sports biased, but we can only publish articles which are submitted by OEs; everyone is invited to write articles and email them to sjm@eltham-college.org.uk.

Finally, my thanks to the OEA membership for giving me the honour and opportunity to preside over the Association and to whom I wish all the very best for the future; cheesy it may be but Floreat Elthamia.

David Norris (1958)

Winter reunion



The Committee were pleased to welcome back over 200 OEs in December for the Winter Reunion. This year, in addition to the regular activities normally associated with a reunion, we had the added attraction of singing carols with the School Chamber Choir in the Chapel service, before braving the bracing conditions outside to enjoy what the day had to offer.

There was the choice of a formal lunch in Room 1 or al fresco in Old Quad while being entertained by the Rhythm and Blues Band before venturing out onto the fields to watch the more energetic run around after the variously shaped balls. For the record the Headmaster's team won the hockey and the President's team won the netball and rugby.

Afterwards in King George's Hall everyone was able to thaw out over tea and enjoy the displays of photos from various vintages and to take part in the quiz, identifying past and present members of staff. John Hood made a guest appearance, which gave everyone one of the answers!

News from Foxbury



Links between the Old Elthamians Sports Club and the school have rarely been stronger. Last season almost 40 OEs played, however occasionally, for the cricket teams. Following on from last year's promotion of the cricketers in the Kent League, Old Elthamians 1st XV are now top of London SE3, the Super 2s top of the Invicta League and the 3rds top of the Kent Metropolitan Conference League.

On Saturday 8th November the club held a sell-out Dinner & Dance with an auction, in the King George's Hall at Eltham College. It was a fantastic night with the band The Space Boys playing the night away.

Plans for the new Grandstand are moving along. The Sports Club committee has agreed that it can go on the grass side of the road. It is hoped to have the Grandstand open for Sunday 8th February, for the Kent Cup match against Blackheath.

OE SNIPPETS • OE SNIPPETS • OE SNIPPETS • OE SNIPPETS

Congratulations to George Band who has been awarded the OBE for services to Mountaineering and Charity in the New Year's Honours list.

In July 2009 Mrs Head-Rapson is taking a group of L6 pupils to Kenya to work, building houses for the poorest in rural communities, with Habitat for Humanity.

SE Reunion will be held on 9th May 2009 at Sevenoaks

SW Reunion will be held on 16th May 2009 at Taunton

OE OFFICERS

President Ian Beith, T: 020 8650 5480;
E: ianda.beith@btinternet.com

Treasurer Robin Foster, T: 01732 365 119;
E: robgeo@silvery.wanadoo.co.uk

Secretary Roger Scopes, T: 020 8455 7814;
E: rogerscopes@btinternet.com

OE SNIPPETS • OE SNIPPETS • OE SNIPPETS • OE SNIPPETS

University Challenge

December 18th was the most important day in last year's university calendar, their equivalent of A-Level results day. It was the day when the government announced the results of RAE2008, a national census of research. Universities receive money from the government to support their research activities. The government has devised a census to ensure that research money goes to the best departments. If results are good departments gain not only more money, but recognition, better students and can attract good quality researchers.

Since leaving university I've been writing software for universities, one aspect of which tackles the problems which arise from taking part in a census such as the RAE. Bizarrely, although research is often perceived to be their most important activity, universities and their researchers have little idea what research they produce. Currently, most universities are unaware of how many papers their academics have created in the past 12 months and in which areas these papers have been produced, how many members of their Arts faculty have exhibitions currently open, or which people in the music department had new compositions performed at the Proms last year. We are helping researchers discover what is happening inside their own institutions and this is long overdue.



Daniel (right), talking to Jonathan Histed at the Winter Reunion

When the web was first used by researchers in the 1990s it introduced them to a world community; it wasn't necessary to travel thousands of miles to work with a colleague. The new internet, with its Facebook and MySpace profiles, has a different flavour and looks set to transform research again. The tools which we're producing will make research available to the public and help researchers find people with related interests.

I'm sure that many universities would agree – with the results of the RAE just announced, and the economic downturn, money may not be so easily available for the next few years and efficiency of research will become more important. To be competitive, universities are having to employ the same ideas that big business adopted a long time ago. Understanding what they produce and how best to use that is now key to their success.

Daniel Hook (1996)

Ergo he does

Three years before I left Eltham College, rowing appeared as one of the options for Wednesday afternoon games. It was a long journey to the Royal Albert Docks and with lots of other distractions at the time, I lasted all of four weeks and only really got into the sport as a university fresher.



After seven years of accumulating degrees, MEng in Mechanical Engineering, Imperial College London and MA & MSc in Industrial Design Engineering, Royal College of Art, I am now training full time on the ARA High Performance Programme at Molesey Boat Club, just upstream of Hampton Court on the River Thames.

My first Great Britain vest came with selection for the World University Rowing Championships in Belgrade, Serbia, in September 2008. This was quickly followed the next month with senior squad selection for the E.ON Hanse-Cup against Beijing Olympic Champions Canada, Olympic finalists Holland and host Germany. Three days of racing and concerts culminated in a 12.7km 'sprint' in front of 100,000 spectators and a live set from German favourites *Right Said Fred*.

Rowing in Great Britain is highly competitive (six Olympic medals in Beijing) and gaining selection for the World Championships this summer is not going to be easy for anyone. Through the Winter we will be training 15 times per week to build the foundations for the Summer racing season. Let's hope all these miles pay off...

Henry Ellender (2000)

Old Elthamians in Oz

What a wonderful evening we had at the Lord Nelson on Saturday night; so much fun and reminiscing.

The first to arrive for the pre-dinner drinks was none other than John Hitch who left Eltham in 1937 and is now aged 93. He travelled all the way from Adelaide. Derek Andrews thought he'd be the oldest there but Comport 'Pipped' him at the post. An array of school photos, magazines and paraphernalia were there for all to view. Soon the back bar was filled with tumultuous energy and glamorous partners.

It was with some difficulty that we managed to vacate the bar to go upstairs to the restaurant. We had two tables: 'olduns', cut-off date of leaving 1965, and 'younguns', 1967 to 1998. Roy Gower welcomed all present and later proposed the Toasts to 'The School' and 'Our Teachers and Classmates'.

The wine flowed freely and conversation became animated during the meal. I then introduced David Stewart-Hunter, our keynote speaker, as the genius who got 9 'O' levels in one hit, the producer of the winning play *Tell-Tale Heart* in 1963, and a prominent member of the XX Club. David proceeded to give a very entertaining speech.

After dessert, Lester Martin led the assembled throng in the school song *Floreat Elthamia*. It was sung with much gusto by the older members, if a little off key! We gather that some of the younger members were not aware of the school song. What's happened to tradition? Katie Oliver, the only female Old Elthamian present, was also unaware that it was de rigueur to swim naked in the school baths. Lester put her right when she thought we also swam naked at the school swimming carnivals at Eltham Baths.



In the menu cover we had included the origins of Eltham College and it is fitting to note that there were two sons of missionaries in attendance – John 'Jock' Collis and myself. Thank you to all those who made it a night to remember, especially to those who travelled from as far away as Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane. You were the stars.

Alastair Browne (1964)