

# The High Life

## Part 1

Four years ago, I graduated from University with a degree in History, an abominable haircut and precisely no idea of what to do next. Had you told me that I would end up in Indonesia flying an unglamorously named aircraft ('Grand Caravan'? Seriously?) to curiously named places, I would have been mildly surprised.

With an increasing sense of despair at the array of "thrilling" career opportunities available to the arts graduates, ignoring my mathematical incompetence (ask Messrs Watts & Broncz), and poor hand-eye co-ordination (five years in the Eltham 'D' team), I applied to Oxford Aviation Academy, and astonishingly was accepted. Plan A was to be a British Airways First Officer, then came the recession which left me with a pilot's licence, and almost no prospect of a job. I found myself walking around Greenwich at 10pm wearing a big, fluorescent yellow jacket, politely asking drunken people to be quiet.

After another evening trudging around in the pouring rain being subjected to personal abuse, I noticed that one of my classmates was posting photos of himself on Facebook wearing three gold bars, sitting on a sun-kissed beach and drinking from a coconut. By February this year, I had left the inebriated and bellicose nocturnal denizens of Greenwich behind, and flown to Indonesia with dreams of becoming the next Saint-Exupery. Five months on, I'm still loving it. I've seen dawn break over fog-flooded valleys from 8,000 feet, plunged through thunderstorms and watched a man on a moped chasing cows off a runway. I've flown from Medan to Balikpapan to Jakarta, and my next stop is Papua. As a former Chalmers boy, I can only hope I don't meet



his fate. Eventually, I hope to end up back home, flying a big jet for a living – but I'm not disappointed it didn't happen straight away. This is a real adventure, one of the few places where you still get a chance to do something close to the kind of flying I fantasised about after too many hours spent reading 'Wind, Sand and Stars' (and 'Biggles', obviously) as a kid. It's the most rewarding, challenging and entertaining job I can imagine having, and I feel privileged to be doing it. I do miss a good cup of tea, though.

*Charlie McQuillen (2002)*

## Part 2

After 18 months at flight school, 43 written exams, 150 hours of flying training and 10 flying exams, I had finally landed my dream job; I'm the First Officer of an Airbus A320, flying all over Europe for easyJet, based at London Stansted.

Since my first airshow at 8 years old, like Leonardo, my eyes have always been drawn skyward. I still get excited when I see aircraft in the sky, it is still sinking in that I'm getting paid to fly a 66 tonne jet at 38000 feet and 80% of the speed of sound.



Chinese College, one of whom, Mr Hyu, remembered being ball-boy during a tennis match involving Eric: he also presented us with copies of his book written about Eric's life in China. We were all very moved when he asked us to join in the Lord's Prayer as we stood on the platform of the railway station, "in memory of Mr Eric Liddell, the man who urged us all to lead a righteous life."

# Eric Liddell, the first Gold Medal Olympian from Tianjin

Pupils in the Junior School have now been learning Mandarin for three years. Over half-term a small party went from Eltham to China to establish links with schools for future trips and exchanges. It also enabled us to visit Tianjin, the birthplace of Eric Liddell, and to discover what remained of his time there.

We visited three schools in Tianjin, all of which acknowledged the debt they owed to the Anglo-Chinese College, the school where Eric Liddell taught Science. We visited the house in the former Cambridge Road,

where the Liddells lived, the sites of the Anglo-Chinese College itself and the Union Church where Eric married Florence MacKenzie. Finally we visited the Minyan Stadium which Eric helped redesign in 1929 and where in a 400 metres race he defeated Eric Peltzer, the world record holder at 500, 800 and 1500 metres. Liddell's gold medal for this achievement is displayed in a Local History Museum, where his other achievements are also recorded.

We enjoyed the company of two 80 year old gentlemen who had attended the Anglo-

A typical day starts an hour before the first of the four flights for the day, in the crewroom, where I prepare the flight plans, routings and fuel. With only 20 minutes on the ground at each destination, the turnarounds are some of the highest workload a pilot has to contend with, so I try and prepare as much as possible before hand.

My view from the 'office' window is one which few can equal. At 38,000 feet the sky is always clear, the sun always shines and the view is breathtaking. The pilots, without a doubt, have the best seats in the house.

Every phase of the flight has its own routine; the take-offs are exhilarating, the cruise beautiful, the descents focussed but the approach and landings are concentrated, busy and second to none. It's not until I get off at the end of a 12 hour day and look back to see the 174 empty seats, that I remember how much was behind me. It is a pity that since 9/11 we no longer have an open cockpit but if you find you are on one of my flights, you are more than welcome to come up and visit anytime we're on the ground.

*Olivia Hudson (2003)*

# My first 200 recitals with CODA

In 1982, whilst organising amateur recitals in Tatsfield, I arranged for a young Italian pianist, Corrado Ruzza to play, with proceeds going to St Mary's Church, dating from 1075. With 36 hours to go I learned that Corrado had returned to Italy without notice and I was left having sold tickets and with no artist to perform. I telephoned Jerrold Katin (father of Peter Katin), who was booking young artists to play for his Peter Katin Subscription Recitals in Bromley, asking if anyone could help at short notice. He gave me names and telephone numbers but almost all of them were already engaged for our date.

One pianist asked if he could contact a cellist friend who might help out. I was grateful, telling him that I had only £25 in ticket sales, which they could have. They arrived, played us a marvellous recital and I learned that the cellist, studying in Cambridge, had motored down and was going back the same night - all for half of £25! The cellist turned out to be Timothy

Hugh, unknown at the time but later to win a major prize in the Moscow Tchaikovsky Competition.

The next morning, my late wife and I decided to help young artists by engaging them to play for CODA (Concerts Originaux Des Amis) and I re-phoned those who had said they would be pleased to help in the future. So CODA took a new turn – we abandoned St Mary's and looked to the young artists! First to play, in 1983, was Nigel Clayton, then 22 and someone who became such a tremendous help (and a great personal friend) in the years to come. He is now a Professor of piano at London's Royal College and our President, with more than 50 CODA recitals to his credit.

I had met the pianist Eileen Joyce who agreed to be our first President, sometimes playing duets with Nigel, and others. When my wife died, in 1985, Eileen allowed us a memorial recital at her home and Jerrold arranged for Peter to give his services, playing a memorable programme.

In 27 years I have engaged 162 different artists for CODA. As time passed my young artists asked for help with first London recitals and I also gained experience by promoting a total of 21 such events at important London venues, including two for Amnesty International at the Wigmore when I was able to meet the then Sir Yehudi Menuhin. In the late 1980s I met my present wife, Valerie, who took over the job as CODA's Honorary Treasurer.

I have not missed one recital, having personal recollections of the artists and programmes, aided by the CODA book wherein all artists are asked to write after playing. I hope many more CODA programmes are still to come



*Arthur Boyd (1944)*

# A new History of the School

As many of you know, the school moved from Blackheath to our present site in 1912. To celebrate 100 years at Mottingham, we are going to produce a new pictorial history of Eltham College. It won't attempt to rewrite history (literally) – after all we already have a very good written record of events up to 1990 (Eltham College Past and Present). This new book will be based much more around photos, with text to tell the stories behind the pictures. We're not going to attempt to cover everything that has happened here in the past 100 years, but to produce a pictorial record of events big and small and of the people who have made Eltham College what it is today.

The book will be published in about November 2011, but I am beginning work on it already. So I NEED YOUR HELP. We have a wide range of photos and documents here in the School Archives, but I'm sure OEs have many more. Our pictures are often more formal – rugby teams, prefects etc. – whereas you probably have some more interesting shots which never made the pages of the Elthamian. I'm looking for anything interesting – for example photos of pupils somewhere in the school, or on a school trip which show an event or a way of doing something which is different from today. It could just be the uniform or the hairstyles, or the cars the staff drove, or it could be a building which isn't there now. I don't just

mean pre-war pictures; some great shots were taken only a few years ago, I'm sure. The sort of headings under which I'll be looking for pictures are: Lessons, Sport (range of different sports), Staff – especially those who were here a long time, Chapel, Buildings, Trips, Special Events, World War II, Boarding, Chapel, Scouts, Music, Drama.

If you have any pictures or documents which you think might be of interest, please get in touch. E-mail is best – ms@eltham-college.org.uk Or you can write to me at the school. If you'd like to scan your photos first, that's fine, or send me the photos and I'll scan them here and return them. It does have to be the original, though, not a printed version in a newspaper or magazine. I'll be writing again in due course to ask for reminiscences on certain subjects. I can't guarantee that everything I'm sent will appear in the book, but we will be putting additional material on a special section of the website at the same time.

I look forward to hearing from you!

*Mark Stickings, Archivist*



Keep in touch [www.elthamians.net](http://www.elthamians.net)

# PLANE TALKING

A NEWSLETTER FOR OLD ELTHAMIANS

JUNE 2010 – ISSUE 6

## Summer Celebrations

The final weekend of the term started with Sports Day and a nail biting climax to the House Competition. It was still in the balance when the Open events were run. In the end Chalmers won by 2 points from Carey.

One of the highlights of the end of term is the ECCO concert, this year back in the marquee. A sell out audience of 650 listened to the slightly more

serious first half, which included Walton's *Henry V Suite* and Elgar's *Nimrod* from *Enigma Variations* played by the Eltham College Community Orchestra of pupils, OEs, parents and staff. Then, after interval refreshments, the star of the show was Anna Simmons (2007) who sang the solos in Rutter's *Feel the Spirit* before leading the traditional end of concert *Land of Hope and Glory* and *Jerusalem*.



*clockwise from front left: Susanne Brewer (92), Chris Brain (98), Hakan Enver (97), Andrew Sheehan (92), Michael O'Connell (97), Ben (94) and Catherine Cartwright (98), Sarah Brain*



On Sunday two games of cricket against the school resulted in victories for the OEs. In the 1st XI game, Guy Heskins (2006) and Charlie Robson (2006) both made 50s in setting the school a challenging 256 in 40 overs. The school were in trouble early on when Kunal Desai (2005) took 3 quick wickets and Charlie another 4 of leg spin. The OEs second team were set a challenging target of 186 off 30 overs. The game was finely balanced until James Sellick (2008) hit 32 in one over on his way to 62 not out.

At Speech Day we were treated to an inspirational address by guest of honour Phil Packer (89). The school presented him with a cheque for £5000 for the British Inspirational Trust (BRIT), mainly raised in sponsorship from the first Blackheath to Eltham College Fun Run. This event took place in June as, literally, a trial run for a bigger version in 2012 to commemorate the centenary of the school's move to the Mottingham site.



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## Golf Society

The first meeting of the OEGS was held on Friday 7th May 2010 at Chislehurst Golf Club. This was a great success enjoyed by 22 OEs covering 57 years at Eltham (1940 to 1997); they were joined by the Headmaster and three staff members.

A warm up game in the morning gave newcomers to Chislehurst a taste of what was in store in the afternoon resulting in some substantial downward handicap revisions at lunch when the cards from the morning round were checked! The scores in the afternoon were impressive and trophies and prizes were presented to the winners. We are grateful to the School for the gift of six redundant cups. The winners were:

The Inter House Fives Cup (awarded for the best average Stableford score of the four houses) was shared by Livingstone and Moffat each with an average of 32 Stableford points.

**The Achilles Cup**  
(awarded for the best Scratch Stableford score)  
Winner: Gavin Caldwell  
(Chalmers 83 - 94) 30 points  
Runner up Richard Williams  
(Moffat 78 - 88) 30 points

**The Senior 100 Hundred Yards Cup**  
(awarded for the best Stableford score 0 - 17 handicap)  
Winner Jon Chase  
(Chalmers 77 - 87) 36 points

**The Old Boys Race Cup**  
(awarded to the runner up handicap 0 - 17)  
Winner Adrian Baulf  
(Chalmers 53 - 63) 35 points

**The Discobolus Cup**  
(awarded for the best Stableford score 18 - 28 handicap)  
Winner Andrew Freeman  
(Chalmers 80 - 87) 41 points

**The Single Wicket Cup**  
(awarded to the runner up handicap 18 - 28)  
Winner Nick Byers  
(Carey 73 - 80) 37 points

We are grateful to Chislehurst Golf Club for their hospitality and we will be booking a similar event early in May next year. Our database of OE Golfers now exceeds 60, a good number on which to build a successful Golfing Society.



From left to right: Denis Bews (48), Ray Franklin (73), Mark Murrell (89), Phil Wood (77), Robert Hillman (89), Steve Allen (89), Gavin Caldwell (94), Colin Thomas (50), Hamilton Matthews (90), Adrian Baulf (63), Alan Sylvester (79), Ian Beith (55), Nick Byers (80), Pete Fotheringham (77), Richard Garnett (90), Tim Prifti (87), Steve Jeal (90), Bob Freeman (87), Giles MacGregor (83)

## Do as you're told – eventually!

It's certainly been a rollercoaster ride since leaving Eltham College in the Summer of 2002. There was the gap year backpacking through the Southern Hemisphere followed by an amazing 3 years studying at the University of Leeds. It was at this point, upon completion of my degree, that I found myself wondering what to do with my life. Do I stay on and do a Masters, or should I follow in my brother's footsteps and attend the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst? To my Mother's delight, I decided to stick around for another year with the belief that an additional qualification would promote my chances of snatching a well paid job in the city. There was only one condition however...under no circumstances was I to join the Army.

You can imagine Mum's reaction then, when

I came home from work 2 years after having completed my Masters with the news that I was to deploy to Afghanistan in little over 2 weeks and that I had volunteered to do so (something which she has yet to find out)! For most people, volunteering to go to the most unsociable place in the world for 6 months would seem a touch hasty. But when you've been training for something for a little over 2 years, the urge to go out and get it over with almost starts to eat you alive, especially when you are an enthusiastic young officer without a tour under your belt!

Having only been informed about my deployment 2 weeks prior to departure, I was a little apprehensive to say the least. At first I had no idea what to expect, but as the final days in Blighty approached, the details

began to fall out. I was to serve as a step up Battle Captain with the 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards. Our mission was to promote infrastructure and restrict the Taliban's freedom of movement in the hostile area of Babaji located in South Central Helmand.

I could write a book about what took place in those 6 months but suffice it to say that it has been without a doubt the most amazing time of my life to date. I would recommend it to anyone who truly feels they want to make a difference. The friends I made and the experiences I gained will remain unbeaten as I prepare to leave the Army in August of next year and finally go into the city for that job which I was supposed to take all those years ago.

Tom Moger 2002

## Old Friends Renewed

May is the month of regional reunions. This was the thirtieth SW reunion organised by Chris Cutting, and Barry Sutton had made quite an effort to rally those from their year group to celebrate this anniversary. This event has grown under Chris's stewardship; his first attracted 13 and was held at his house! Barry managed to attract the same number from the 55 leavers. Michael Johnson, Peter Trowel, Alan Furness and John Taffs unfortunately had to leave before the photo and somehow Griff Fellowes escaped the lineup!



Left to right – Chris Cutting, Gordon Holmes, John Warren, Lionel Cole, Peter Dart, Robin Firth, Barry Sutton, Maurice Moss.

Adrian Ruffle (63) and Nick Matthews (59) have not been organising the SE reunion for quite as long, but their organisation is an equally well-oiled machine. Almost 100 attended at the Wilderness Golf Club in early May. One of the attractions this year was the visit from Australia of Paul Evans.



Malcolm Richardson (72), Richard Foster (67), Dave Hodgson (68), Paul Evans (70), Jim Ford (68) and Andy Ford (83).

## It was 20 years ago today

The 1990 leavers and some of their old teachers returned to the school, many for the first time, on 12th June. For some it was a tricky decision as it was the night of England's opening match of the World Cup; as things turned out, they made the right call. Andrew Bailey had travelled from Italy, Nick Tappin and Rick Payne from Switzerland, we even had (Mr) Julian Davies making the trip over from Kingston. A tour around some of the old haunts resulted in some finding "Beast 1979 - 90, Treav 79 -90 and Tim 90 carved on the North wing pillars. You know who you are, and when does graffiti become urban art?

Thanks very much to Chris Gunning, whose constant updates by Facebook and email ensured a good turnout, making the evening such a success.



## Bob and Jules, Paul and Kim

After more years than some would like and others care to mention, four members of staff are leaving us this summer, two to greater things, two for a well-earned rest.

Paul Floyd (2003 - 10) is poacher turned gamekeeper; he is to become Director of Studies at Cokethorpe in Oxfordshire, making sure others fill in their mark books! Kim Wyatt (2001 - 10) is moving to Warwick School as Head of English.

Bob Draycott retiring means that for the first time since 1987 there will not be a Draycott at the school. Andy and Mark joined the school as boarders in 1987, Bob joined the staff in 1993 and Stephanie joined the Sixth Form in 1994. Bob is staying locally and has not taken his last service here, he will be officiating at three OE weddings this year. One in August: Peter Galloway (99) and two in December: Julian Ramsey (92) and that between Tom Lockyer (2002) and Sarah Atkins (2004).

Julian Hind (83 - 2010) is going with Jane and Freya on a round the world trip involving many of the New World wine producers. Starting in the Americas he then travels to New Zealand, Australia, Thailand and South Africa, spending 6 months in Australia. Julian has been studying for his vintners examinations and will go into the wine business on his return.

We are delighted to announce that the ranks of OEs on the staff continue to grow. Sarah Horton (Bernardes 98) returns to the French department after a year off for the birth of her son Benjamin, Peter Swaffield (72) will be taking over from Bob Draycott and Katie Gleeson (2003) will be working part-time in the PE department.



Above: Paul and Kim, Left: Bob and Julian



## Legal Affairs in Order

Phillip, Tom, Michael, Dominic, Steve



An audience of over 100 pupils and parents listened to the advice of OEs in the legal profession in March. Only one, Michael Hillman, had taken law at university, all the rest had taken a law conversion course after graduating.

Steve Allen (89) is Chief Counsel at BG Group, the UK's 3rd largest oil company and Dominic Harris (94) is a pensions lawyer at CMS Cameron McKenna. Michael Hillman (91) originally qualified as a barrister, then in 2003, he was awarded his Higher Rights of Audience in all criminal courts and now principally practises in the Crown Court. Philip Linton (95) is a senior associate in commercial litigation at Stephenson Harwood, whereas Tom Morgan (2004) talked from the perspective of someone who is right at the beginning of their training contract. In fact, 7th March was his second Monday in his first seat. Being the most recent graduate, Tom talked about the process of taking a law conversion course.

We are very grateful to them for giving up their time to come back and enlighten the present crop of potential entrants to the profession. The next event will be in November when we will be focussing on Engineering; any volunteers?

## Arise Lord Jim

Old Elthamian Jim Knight (83), who was the Member of Parliament (MP) for South Dorset from 2001 until 2010, was created a life peer on 28 May; Baron Knight of Weymouth. He held several ministerial posts during his time as an MP including Minister of State for Schools in the Department for Education and Skills. When Gordon Brown disbanded the department, Jim moved to the newly created Department for Children, Schools and Families, as the Minister for Schools and Learners.

He was officially introduced into the House of Lords on Wednesday June 23, supported by the Life Peers, Lord David Puttnam, the Oscar-winning film producer who is now an educationalist, and Lord Andrew Adonis, the former Secretary of State for Transport, both of whom have visited Eltham in recent years. Lord Adonis came to visit the school last year and Lord Puttnam has, like Jim, spoken at Speech Day.

Jim is Eltham College's first Lord since Fenner Brockway although how long he sits in the chamber remains to be seen. Lord Knight said: "I've always said that I favour an elected second chamber and I think it's important that there are members of the House of Lords who are willing to vote for their own demise; I would certainly put myself into that category as and when the question arises."

