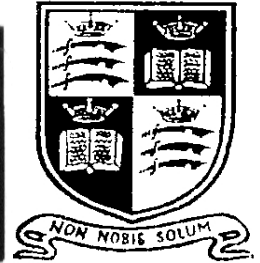


# EC SOSA

Edmonton County School Old Scholars' Association

Website: [www.ecsosa.org.uk](http://www.ecsosa.org.uk)

NEWSLETTER June 2013



## E.C.S. The Good and the Bad ?

Personal Reflections by Paul Smith (1958-65)

After 16 years' experience of the headship of two inner-city comprehensive schools, I thought it would be interesting to reflect on the qualities and deficiencies of my own schooling at Edmonton County School from 1958 to 1965.

It is important, of course, to bear in mind the time and to acknowledge that many of the deficiencies and some of the strengths reflect the norms of that period. To ignore this would be like criticising the school for failing to make us computer literate.

Another factor is the moral issue of grammar schools. They enabled working class children to aspire and achieve social mobility in greater numbers than is the case today. However, the cost was a sense of failure and inferior facilities and opportunities for 80% of the children who failed the 11+ examination. However much our primary school teachers tried to discourage the words, children and parents thought in terms of passing or failing the 11+, and parents who could afford it often paid for the advantage of coaching to prepare for it. There is evidence that the nature of the 11+ did not accurately assess intelligence and that it favoured the middle class.

A key feature of Edmonton County School, which was certainly not the case in the schools which I ran, was the long length of service of most of the teachers. This gave the school immense stability and meant that pupils knew the same teachers throughout their time at the school. A potential problem could have been the lack of innovation from teachers joining the school, but I never felt that the teachers lacked enthusiasm or an interest in new ideas. Promotion seemed to be based on length of service whereas in my experience in later years, a young, ambitious and skilful teacher could be promoted above more experienced colleagues. As pupils, we never encountered a young Head of Department or Deputy Head. Did this inhibit the strive for excellence in staff?



I think that the teachers were dedicated, wanting the best for the children and the school as they saw it. They gave of their time freely and a great strength of the school was the focus on developing the whole-child and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. For example, these included quality dramatic productions, a range of sports, excellent school magazines, school trips and many school clubs. Pupils were given the opportunity to take responsibility and the 6th form was actively involved with the rest of the school. The system of prefects afforded valuable experience.

Many teachers were very good at the craft of teaching and high academic standards were set with the stimulus of annual examinations which prepared us well for G.C.E. examinations. I think 6th form stay-on rates were good.

I now come to a review of some of the school's deficiencies. There was an acceptance of a middle class ideal to which we were being prepared to aspire. As was the norm in those days, there was little attempt to recognise any strengths in the cultures from which we came. Working class culture was ignored. This extended to limited consultation with parents. We were still in the age of deference and parental views were neither sought nor valued. We were not encouraged to respect or understand other cultures as England was beginning to become multi-cultural. Although the few black pupils were accepted and shown no racism by teachers, we were not encouraged to respect their culture. I recall that one black boy was called "Scruff" rather than his real African name and I saw no teacher challenge this, but it was challenged by a 6th former. There were also some instances of anti-Semitism amongst the pupils and nothing in the curriculum challenged this so few years after the holocaust.

Similarly, in common with society in general at the time, there was little attempt to challenge sexism. These were the days of separate male and female staffrooms and it was not until 1961 that the phasing in of equal pay for women teachers was complete. We had role models of some very strong female heads of departments but in our time the Head and First Deputy were male. There were still boys' subjects and girls' subjects, so I did not learn to cook until my adulthood and the girls did not study woodwork, for example. It is significant that there is only one female listed on-line as a former pupil achieving distinction in life who, I am proud to say, is my sister, Professor Annette Karmiloff-Smith, C.B.E. However her talents were not developed by the school, which she left at the end of the 5th year.

To be continued .....

## Obituaries

### JACK FRASER (1944-51)

I have only just heard of Jack's death which occurred 18 months ago in his home in Pinner.

This is what we know of the life of one of the personalities of the late 1940/50's—Jack Malcolm Fraser.

Jack Fraser was at ECS 1944-51, and went on to University College to read Geography, and later joined the Oil Industry. While at school he was the sportsman par excellence—you name it and he excelled at it: swimming, running, later football and cricket, throwing the discus.. He was Head Boy in 1950-52 and Captain of Andrew House. He excelled at any ball game. I recall his playing billiards at Newlands Hostel in the Lakes on one of Jack Long's School party weeks in 1950. He had never touched a cue before but within minutes he mastered the techniques of speed and spin on the snooker table! He played football for Edmonton Schoolboys, then a leading team in the country, and possibly London Schoolboys, and later represented England Schoolboys at cricket, where he was an all-rounder as medium-fast bowler and batsman. I believe that he also won the schoolboy discus championship in 1951.

I did see him years ago—perhaps around 1970, while I was having my hair cut. In the next chair a young child arrived to have his first trim and dad was standing over him, trying to keep his head straight and the scissors out of his eyes while the barber 'did his thing'. We exchanged only a few words of greeting while the barber worked away!

### Arthur Spencer (1945-52)

### IAN SQUIRES (1955-60)

Reported by Alan Brown (1955-60)

Ian was at Edmonton County Grammar School (as it then was) from 1955-60. He enjoyed his time there, making friends with Brian Abdy, Alan Brown and Barry Lee, as well as Marion and David Eva and Janice Lingard. He left school in 1960 to join the Midland Bank Trustee Dept. in Threadneedle Street.

In 1966 Ian married Linda Farrington, and in 1969 he moved to Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Trustee Dept. in London. Ian and Linda had a son, Nick in 1971, and a daughter Louise in 1973. In 1982 he was sent to the Channel Islands, where a huge fraud was uncovered at the bank, which led Ian to head up an auditing team for all of the banks' worldwide off-shore offices. A year later Ian and his family moved to Hong Kong for 6 very interesting and happy years. They all travelled extensively during these years.

The family returned to the UK in 1989 to live in East Sussex, and Ian joined Acuma (American Express) as a Financial Consultant. He then went to the Prudential for a few years, finally joining St. James Place as an associate partner and became semi-retired in 2004.

Ian kept in touch with Alan and Barry through the years, but sadly, in 2012, he was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease, from which he died in November 2012 aged 68.

### EILEEN WATTS (Nee Garwood) (1938-43)

Chance events can set the pattern of our future lives, and in Eileen Garwood's case her father persuaded her to apply to the Civil Service. Called to London for an interview and tests of competence in English, mathematics and current affairs, followed by a comprehensive medical examination. She was accepted at a temporary clerical assistant, appointed to serve in the London Telecom Region office at Crouch End. Although more attracted to the drawing office, the only vacancy was in accounts dept., and there she became adept at totalling a bill, mostly in her head.

With the coming of peace in 1945, competition for employment became fierce and she passed the examination for Clerical Officer, set up now, one would have thought, for a lifetime of service with what would later become British Telecom.

Marriage, at that time, was not regarded by the institution as a state that would bring it any benefit. Women were given a choice: work through years, expect no promotion nor a pension, or on the other hand take what was described as a 'dowry', somewhere in the region of £100. demoting to the lowest grade and a temporary worker. Newly married to Alan Watts, and in company with many others, Eileen decided to accept the dowry. In the last 15 years of her employment she was reinstated to her former job classification and status.

With her husband's promotion to the Bristol office, and a delightful home in the Mendips, it was time for her to resign. In recognition of her 25 years of committed service she received a further £100, but no gold-plated and engraved wristwatch.

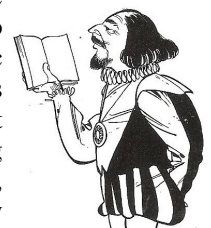
She died on 9th January 2013 at Halesworth, Suffolk.

### John Norrington-Davies (1938-43)

#### THE SCOTTISH PLAY By Malcolm Prior (1945-53)

Browsing through old copies of the Newsletter I came across the item

from Eric James (March 2011) in which he referred briefly to Miss Emery's "lavish production of Macbeth", which I have good reason to remember. My brother Alan was one of the stagehands, and when he stayed after school for rehearsals I took it upon myself to stay too and get involved—I guess I was tolerated rather than welcomed, as I was only in the 2nd or 3rd form—but it turned out to be fortuitous, as on the day of the 2nd night's performance Alan went down with a stomach bug and Emma asked me, because I knew the routine, to step in to the breach. It was indeed an outstanding production, as reported in one of the London evening papers, but I wonder if any Old Scholars are aware of the real life tragedy linked to it? This came a short time later when the Intimate Theatre put on a production of Macbeth where the Producer and Director tried a different approach; the whole play being enacted in a purple half darkness. The play was a flop and was torn to shreds in the same paper, being compared as vastly inferior to Emma's school production. The tragic consequence of this was that he took his own life. Incidentally, in the photo on that Newsletter I recognise the figure standing at the very back near Eric as Alan Lowe, who was in the same year as Eric and my brother.



**TWO TO TIMBUKTU** (Continued)  
By **Gwen Young (Atkins)** (1947-52)

So we left the comfortable hotel in Timbuktu with our clean laundry ready for the next stage of our journey through Mali. With the tents on top of the minibus we put our trust in our African drivers yet again as we made our bumpy way into the Dogon country via Douentza and

Bandiagara. The Dogon tribes have only let visitors into their part of the world in recent years. They live a very meagre existence in the escarpment of the mountains and carry all their water and provisions up very rough and rocky pathways.

Each village has an animal they believe protects them. At one it was crocodiles, so we visited the local lake where they live a comfortable existence being cared for by the villagers. We found them quite menacing even though the lake was fenced off.

The area just outside a school was where we pitched our tents and we had the luxury of using the new shower and toilet block (about 50 yards away across sandy scrubby ground), but not before the locals had filled the overhead water tanks for us. As if by magic yet again our African crew had set up the table and were cooking us another great meal.

We were invited to visit one of the villages. Having a dodgy back I elected to have a local lad give me a hand up the steep and rocky paths. Occasionally we had to stand to one side to let the local women pass. As sure-footed as mountain goats they were carrying large containers of water on their heads. I struggled onwards and upwards! When we arrived in the village we



were entertained by traditional dancers, some on stilts and others wearing animal masks, while we sat around on whatever we could find, in the shade if possible.



The elders of the village govern what goes on and meet regularly in a special building with open sides and a very low roof. The latter so that no-one can stand up and dominate any discussions. Should we take a leaf out of their book?

We travelled a long and dusty road back to Segou in the minibus for the annual African Music Festival—what an experience! The Festival is to showcase new and established African groups and solo artists. It was like Reading or Glastonbury without the rain or mud; just very sandy underfoot, hut sun overhead and not many European faces. There were stalls selling T-shirts, posters, CDs and the usual ephemera found at such festivals, with music and other entertainment during the day from smaller tents. The main stage for the evening concert is erected on the shore of the Niger river. Health and Safety doesn't exist needless to say, and the rickety stands we climbed to our seats were slightly dodgy and not very comfortable.

We were back at the same hotel in Segou that we had previously visited before going to Timbuktu. But the 'Authorities' had commandeered some of our rooms for 'Officials' and we had to double up for 2 nights. Pat and I shared with two others in our group—a lady of 81 and an American lady, Vivian, who just loved travelling with English groups. We organised ourselves in our rather cramped room and Vivian said "What I'd really like now would be a nice cup of tea." No sooner said than done! We always travel with kettles and teabags, and in no time at all Pat had made her tea. "This is the ultimate experience" she announced, "I'm in the middle of Africa with two crazy English ladies who've made me a cup of tea. They'll never believe me when I get back home."

On our way to dinner that evening Pat and I were joined by two very handsome Tuaregs, who had come for the Music Festival. They were inviting us to have tea with them, but we declined as we were on our way to dinner. However, when we came out of the hotel they were waiting, so we took our lives in our hands and walked with them down a dark and dusty road to sit on carpets on the ground and partake of their delicious mint tea—a whole long rigmarole of making it. Inevitably out came the jewellery for us to look at—"No pressure, we just want you to see what we make". We bargained and eventually bought our Tuareg crosses. Did we get bargains? I doubt it, but they will always remind us of a very interesting hour learning about a very different way of life.

Our adventure was coming to an end as we made our way back to the Bamako hotel before flying home. Decent toilets again—what luxury! No more 'bush' toilets, 'long drop' toilets or 'back of the boats' toilets.

We travelled with Explore Worldwide, as we had been on other adventure holidays with them, and yet again they got us home safely; Yes—we've been to Timbuktu and back again!!

 **Saturday 19th October 2013**

**CELEBRATION REUNION**

It's time to reunite and celebrate with our 50th Anniversary event of the School's extension. It's an honour for us to enjoy the school, which celebrates those fifty years. We wish to ensure as many Old Scholars and Staff interested in rekindling friendships in the school community can join us in our celebrations of those 50 years on the day. Even if you cannot make the day itself **do** contact us, we still need your input and help to spread the word to former pupils of all eras ... Please contact Carol on 01634 681031 OR Email [carolbarry1963@hotmail.com](mailto:carolbarry1963@hotmail.com)

**DENNIS MADELEY, (1946 to 1950)**, is hosting a reunion at the **Wheatsheaf Pub** in **Baker Street**, Enfield to make contact with all his old friends and fellow pupils from that era. Dennis has organised a Jazz Band to play Mod/Trad and Mainstream Jazz, so all can enjoy the evening and "Bag the Breeze". It starts at 8 p.m. on **Saturday 22nd June**. and all are welcome.

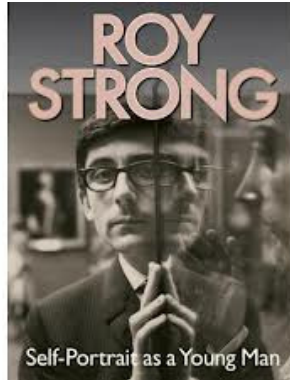


Dennis is currently working on TV and films and has appeared on *Holby City* many times. He recently played Arthur, an Army veteran in a Salvation Army Appeal Fund commercial shown on all commercial channels over Xmas. Hope to see as many people there as possible to make it an enjoyable evening.

The lunch at Crews Hill of ECSOSA stalwarts usually brings forth the September 1950 enlarged panoramic photo, still incompletely named, always with recollections of what 'X' or 'Y' did while at school or had done since leaving. However, the lunch on 15th May brought forth at least one copy of the latest



Roy Strong book "Self-portrait as a Young Man". No-one can have possibly been unaware of the event as his publicist had worked wonders in getting every newspaper and magazine in the land to generally favourably review it and draw heavily from it in the many write-ups ... and the book and reviews were passed round among the few who hadn't seen a mention somewhere or other.



The following conversation was overheard:

- A. Roy's a historian isn't he?  
 B. Oh yes. ... And a very distinguished one at that!  
 A. But isn't the object of history to be as accurate as possible?  
 B. Well yes, but history can only ever be a record as seen through someone's eyes ... It's just like taking photos of the same thing at very slightly different times and from slightly different angles. No two photos are identical, but the odd one will show up something that the others don't, and they are the real gems of photography, or history, where Roy has certainly thrown new light and interpretation, especially on Tudor and Elizabethan matters.  
 A. Oh! I suppose that's why historians keep on re-writing it all the time! But being a historian, shouldn't Roy have checked ALL his FACTS?  
 B. Well, of course, I'm sure he did! What's your angle? Have you read it?  
 A. Well no, I just looked at the pictures in a copy in a bookshop! (*Grabbing a circulating copy*) Take a look at THAT picture in the book (*the lower half of the page was covered with the menu from the Plough*) Who's in the photo?  
 B. Oh, that's easy peasy ... Jack Long with Miss Fothergill .. We always called her that didn't we? ... though I think she was known as Fothers among the staff. Don't know where the photo's been taken—not the school field—what about on one of the Lake District weeks?  
 A. No, I reckon it was taken on Leith Hill.  
*And the menu card was removed ... to reveal the names of Miss Doris Staples and Mr. Jack Long.*  
 A. Everyone would recognise that as Miss F ... How can Roy have possibly got the name wrong?  
 B. Well, I suppose it proves that even the best of us make mistakes!

**PIANO LESSONS:** My mother agreed to let me start studying with Miss Middleton, in retrospect not a very good teacher, who used the outmoded English fingering system in which the plus sign (+) signified the thumb, then 1, 2, 3, 4 for the remaining fingers, instead of the "Continental" system now generally accepted, which used 1 for the thumb, then 2, 3, 4 and 5. The music she taught wasn't much either, neither easy classics nor popular melodies, unless you count an oversimplified transcription of "The Bluebells of Scotland". Still, I had made a start, and my next teacher was a church organist (*Name omitted deliberately*). He was a much better musician, used the Tobias Mathay system, Bergmuller studies, and some easy pieces of Bach and Beethoven. But there were other problems! On one occasion he reduced me to tears over some psychological game he was playing on me, completely unrelated to music. I decided to leave and moved on.

My next teacher, Mr. Elliot, who played in local dance bands several times a week, a real pro, finally. He could play the Chopin "Fantasy Impromptu", and taught me the standard chord symbol system that we still use to this day as well as some classical repertoire.

By this time I had heard some other kid at the Higher Grade School playing the great blues-based style known as "Boogie Woogie", and all the wonderful songs that were emerging via British and Hollywood movies, and finding their way onto the radio. No television yet, no cassette players, no CD's, and we didn't even have a record player. So radio and live performance were paramount, and it seemed to me that music was everywhere I turned, and most of it was something I could understand, even if only intuitively.

I began practicing boogie woogie, and buying song sheets of popular songs, along with scales, arpeggios and the usual routine every beginning music student follows. My parents hated it, especially my father, and even my mother once asked in a moment of frustration "When are you going to learn something we know?" I think they were hoping that I would learn all the old Variety and World War I songs they had grown up with, and entertain them at family get-togethers, which were every other week, or so it seemed. And since they never, ever, went to the movies, originally because of lack of money, they were isolated from the mainstream popular culture of the day



More next time....

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Wed. 3rd July.	12.00 Noon. Lunch at The Plough. 7.30 p.m. Committee Meeting Cambridge Campus.
Wed. 2nd Oct.	7.30 p.m. Committee Meeting Cambridge Campus.
Wed. 9th Oct.	12.00 Noon. Lunch at The Plough.
Wed. 16th Oct.	A.G.M. 7.30 p.m. Cambridge Campus
Sat. 19th Oct.	Reunion. Cambridge Campus.

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