

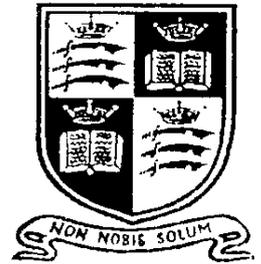


EC SOSA

Edmonton County School Old Scholars' Association

Website: www.ecsosa.org.uk

NEWSLETTER September 2021



WINTER DRAWS ON ...



After many years as custodian of the Herefordshire house and gardens, with his late wife Julia Trevelyan Oman, Lady Strong CBE, Sir Roy Strong CH has hung up his gardening gloves, downsized and moved to a town house nearby. He has donated The Laskett to the charity Perennial, who manage several gardens of note. Over the years many of our members have visited The Laskett, but in future Sir Roy will not be at home. We wish him a happy retirement in his 86th year.

Photograph © John Swannel

PARTY TIME—May 1952

By MARTIN HOLST (1951-57)

What did you do with a sweet ration of 2 oz? A small bar of chocolate, tubes of Polos, Fruit Pastilles or Fruit Gums. The gums lasted longer with Rowntree's, encouraging you to make them last in the mouth then award yourself titles of Junior, Senior, Major Gumster or, for an hour, become a Gumster in Chief. Anything sweet was a 'special treat', and with meat rationed to 8d per person so was anything containing it. Meat and fish paste were a way of augmenting such meagre provisions.

There was no pressure for fashion as clothes were also 'on ration', and you were grateful for what you could get. Shorts for boys took less of the ration, and school uniform, winter or summer, for years 1 and 2, was shorts, even on the coldest days.

Food and drink were the great attractions of parties in those days. There was, however, something different my parents had to offer. They were health conscious and avoided 'added sugar'. This meant that there was plenty for making cakes, bottling fruit, making jam and for 'party fare'. We were also vegetarians, and meat was replaced in the ration books with provision for extra eggs, 3/4lb cheese and nuts (when available). Cashew nut cream came in huge tins and was delicious.

There were games (remember "Pass the Parcel" and "Musical Chairs?"). Drink included bottles of Corona,

White's Cream Soda, Tizer. The highlight was food with sandwiches, which included egg and cress and, most memorable, cheese with pickle, or tomato rolls. Ice cream was absent (no fridge in those days), but plenty of jelly and blancmange. Cheese had the reputation (probably false) for promoting dreams. And endless supplies of cheese rolls were dubbed as 'nightmare specials'.

My memories of Form 1 are happy ones. Homework was quite demanding, but still allowed plenty of time for participation in sports and youth organisations such as Scouts, or in my case Boys' Brigade. Television had yet to become a diversion and was in very few homes. Radio provided music, serials, and, for boys, 'Dick Barton Special Agent' - I have yet to forgive the BBC for replacing it with The Archers—'An everyday story of country folk'!



This photo is of my 1952 birthday party How I wish I could recall names. I am on the far left, next to me is David Brett?, beyond that I need help!



Obituaries

JAN BLIGHT (Simkins) (1947-52) From her son Chris



When we were children, our house became a menagerie with rescued animals. A lot of them were short term, being released back into the wild, while some stayed for years. A blackbird with a wonky wing, a sparrow with clubbed feet and a starling which insisted on eating junk food, to name but three. Then there were the pets over the years – cats, poodles, a fish, ducks, a tortoise and... one year, a goose (though, to be fair, that did end up as Christmas dinner).

With dad being away for long periods, working for the BBC, mum had to cope with all this and more. The worst being... the spiders. Mum had a tremendous revulsion to these creatures, which was unfortunate since we lived next door to a farm and a semi neglected large barn. Or, to put it another way, a spider factory – turning out thousands of these beasts, all of which made a beeline for our cottage. Her first line of defence was a permanently plugged in vacuum cleaner, the second involved waylaying a semi drunk farmer on his way back from the pub at night – to catch that spider halfway up the stairs, though this led to misunderstandings and had to be discontinued! Eventually she mastered the 'inverted glass and piece of card' technique and re-homed them humanely in the garden shed.

Her early working life included being a bookkeeper for the Falcon Hotel in High Wycombe, working at Barclays Bank also for Sir Francis Dashwood, no less. Then she got the ultimate job. Bringing us up! Since dad died in '84, she has been both mum and dad to us - and she was blooming good at it. She dealt with the finances, bought and sold houses and advised us on, well everything.



RON CORTON

Remembered by Norman Pallin

I regret to say that Ron Corton died on March 6th following a heart operation. He came to the ECS in 1953, same year as myself, and we left in the same year, 1959, but he missed the 5th form and went straight into the lower sixth. He was also a Prefect, so a bit posher than me, but we were good friends, enjoyed rowing in skiffs, walking the countryside, wandering about Hampshire and the Lakes, and quite a bit of camping.

Ron went into banking and in 1965, having married a Finnish lass, Laila a Nurse at North Middlesex Hospital where they met, they shipped out to Canada where he then worked for the Bank of Montreal in a fairly up-market position, remaining there until his retirement. They bought the Toronto Finnish Embassy building and remained there for the duration. They had two children, Simon and Anitta, who have stuck to Canada, but I believe Laila is now in an advanced form of dementia. I remained in contact with Ron over the years, meeting him on his couple of returns to the U.K., and in my seafaring days wrote lengthy notes to the lad.

HOWARD SOLLEY (1949-56)



Howard Solley was a pupil at ECS from 1949 to 1956. He passed away at home on June 4, 2021, surrounded by his children and grand-dog, Sadie. Born in London, England on January 28, 1938, he was the son of the late Ivy Hammond and Albert Solley. Beloved husband of Priscilla, cherished dad of Andrew, Sarah and Andy Benson, and grandad to his much-loved grandson, Jack. Howard was predeceased by his wife "Cilla" in October 2016 after 49 years of marriage.

Having emigrated to the USA Howard started his career as a 'Brain Drain' recruit, along with a few other British aerospace engineers and metallurgists. Over his 33 year career with the Chandler Evans Company, Howard distinguished himself as an undisputed expert in his field, including a reputation for highly-technical and elaborate record keeping systems. His work took him all over the world.



PATRICIA BARNES (CHRUGHTON) (1946-51)

Pat died on 28th July after a short illness. She was one of the handful of ladies who called themselves 'The Class of '46', and who started meeting at the Stag and Hounds Pub for lunch. Through Pat and her husband Peter we progressed to the Ponsbourne Park Hotel lunch club, and by then husbands were included. Pat organised all of our get-togethers—a lovely lady who will be greatly missed.



MALCOLM PRIOR (1945-53) writes

I remember Jim Beale and John Ramsay. Played football with Jim in the Old Scholars team, and John was one of my brother Alan's best friends. He lived in the older part of Amberley Road.

With significant heart failure and knee arthritis for 9 years each day is a struggle now, but I still have a busy social life and will be driving down to see my older son in Cornwall and to see friends in Swansea later in the summer.



JOINT PRESIDENTS

Susan Tranter (Executive Head Teacher)
and Cliff Wilkins

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EDMONTON COUNTY SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

By SONIA GRIMES (Cranstone) (1959-64)



I started in the first form at Edmonton County in September 1959. Some time before that I went to the school to be measured up for my uniform. This took place, as I remember, in what was at that time the school library. It was in

the front end of the top corridor, next to the Domestic Science room. So there I was, having the tape measure run down from waist to knee while I knelt down. My mum was not too happy: "I want a bit more length on the gymslip please!" she said. "No madam, that's the measurement for the shorts" was the reply—they were the heavy serge navy blue pleated type, later worn for much disliked hockey practice, but 'short' they were not!

On my first day I walked along the Great Cambridge Road, 'over the hill' from Bush Hill Park, and looked down on a large school field, bounded by the railway line on the far side. Creaking leather satchel; bumping my hip, and fully kitted out in school beret, blazer, as well as (calf-length) gymslip, I arrived and accessed the school via the entrance on the far left side, facing the school field and long jump sand pit. No-one but the elite used the front entrances, and only staff and prefects were allowed to use the front staircases, as I later found out.

There was a short flight of stairs to the girls' cloakrooms, and we were shown our own metal pegs among rows of the same. Here is where we kept our plimsoll and gym kit bags (all home sewn with draw string tops in those days), and in wet weather our hooded and belted gabardine raincoats. Here too is where we would get changed for PE and sports and return to our first experience of 'showers' (for me anyway) in an area I remember as being just a grey concrete room with added water jets. There were long wooden benches below the pegs, and on that first day we were told to sit there until we were led off to our classrooms.

The school must have been a bit short on space at that time, so makeshift rooms were used for the first formers. These consisted of the Stage (rear of the long curtains in the assembly hall), the Gallery (a tiered balcony above the school hall, (opposite end to the stage) and the Art room (accessed via a little staircase from the upstairs back corridor).

We were not streamed as to ability at this time, so the forms were called 1S, 1G and 1W (after Mr. Woodward, the Art Master). I was in 1W. Our form master was a kindly man with a full head of grey hair – not strong in discipline, and willing to see the best in everyone. Even when we produced our most unskilled artwork he would look appreciatively and murmur "interesting"..." He must have been a talented artist though, because periodically it would be announced in school assembly that "Mr. Woodward has been hung in the Royal Academy again this year", followed by chuckles from the whole school. I believe at the time the long-legged, moustachioed Mr. Brooks (music) was form teacher for 1G and short and bubbly Miss Burbidge (biology) was with Form 1S.

Our Senior Mistress was Miss Staples, a diminutive older woman with a very short haircut and a 'firm but fair' reputation. Nothing got past "Staps" - we had to file past her

each morning on our way to our form rooms, while she ran her eyes over us for any uniform infringements, which were soon called out. I was in the habit of wearing a very thin gold ring, which I removed each morning as we approached Miss Staples, tucking it inside the top of my satchel before replacing it on my finger when danger was past ... until the day I forgot to do that. Just ONE day, and Miss Staples noticed it—and that was the end of my ring wearing.

The Senior Master was equally astute and imposing—Mr. Eलगorn, who still wore a black academic gown over his immaculate sports jackets, and cut a figure of elegance descending the front stairs. In complete contrast, our Headmaster, Mr. Hudson, was always a bit of an enigma—While Mr. Eलगorn had the presence and demeanour of authority, Mr. Hudson did not. The boys nicknamed him 'Mr. Pastry', a dishevelled clown character popular on children's T.V. at the time. Mr. Hudson always wore a grey suit; the same grey suit year in and year out, with pockets which became fuller and saggier over the years, and he walked with a kind of rolling gait as though he was used to being at sea. The school magazine would always feature an article about Mr. Hudson's adventurous holidays, always somewhere obscure and unexpected.

I was not aware on that first day at Edmonton County of what a privilege it was to be starting a grammar school education. For me (and for my sister), it was "just school", we often reflect thankfully on the quality of our experience. We had a private education at the expense of the state.



Here is a message from your Chairman.



I am somewhat at a loss to say anything positive at present after months of uncertainty. At least we achieved a successful July lunch at The Plough, with several of our regular members in attendance. The October luncheon will therefore go ahead. See 'Dates for your Diary' on page 4.

With thanks to Arthur Spencer and his daughter Christa we have been able to scan and publish several Newsletters on the ECSOSA Website. They start at May 1984, and apart from a couple of gaps we have a set right up to 2021. An earlier solitary edition of July 1975 is also there. If anyone has even older editions not included in our list, or copies of 'The Stag' we would like to borrow them to copy for the archives. Contact me at diddy11cg@talktalk.net or phone 01296 484382.

It is interesting how the Association has changed, or should I say shrunk, since the 1975 Newsletter. We no longer have a headquarters and no longer run any kind of sporting activity. At one time we had eight football teams! With the current average age of our members I am reminded of the Monty Python football sketch, 'Brain Surgeons versus Long John Silver'.

Having said that I am at a loss to say anything positive, I am sure that one thing to come out of it is that I bet many of your gardens have never looked so good!!

David Day

“ALWAYS WELL DRESSED”

By CHRIS BRITTON (1966-73)



Pam Perry’s item in the June 2021 Newsletter reminded me that I spent all my 7 years at Edmonton School avoiding games and P.E. lessons as best I could too! At times I even felt rather sorry for Ian Wolstenholme, who was the Games/P.E. Master for the whole time of my school years. Try as he might He could never get me to participate in any of his lessons with even a modicum of enthusiasm, and frequently he had to read excuse notes from my mother, which were patently of the flimsiest kind. The only time I felt quite justified in not taking part was when I had a verruca (remember those?) on my left foot, which was treated for some bizarre reason at North Middlesex Hospital by putting some sort of acid on it to burn it out. (Yes, it was damned painful when the acid was applied).



But, back to my constant unstated feud with Mr. Wolstenholme: Despite the fact that he could quite justifiably write in my end-of-term report every time “Must try harder!” or even something sarcastic, such as “More credible excuses would be welcome”, he was always more than fair and confined his remarks to

something along the lines of: “Christopher struggles at times with this subject”.

What amazed me then, and even now, is that he would also usually add that I was “always well dressed”. Now, was this just a way of finding something—anything—positive to say about my performance at his subject, or did it fall to him as Games/P.E. Master to make a comment regarding the way pupils in his charge appeared turned out?

His final comment in Summer 1973 reminds me that I was excused in order to attend extra German lessons. That at least paid dividends. I went on to study German at King’s College, London, and graduate with an upper second B.A. with Hons, degree, and to this day, no sport of any kind has ever taken root in my passions! I can just about watch a tennis match at the standards of the All-England Championships at Wimbledon (indeed, I actually went there once while I was at Edmonton), but that is about the top and bottom of my interest in sports—as a spectator.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wed. 13th Oct 12.00 Noon. Lunch at the Plough.
Wed. 16th Feb. ‘22. 12.00 Noon. Lunch at the Plough.

NORMAN PALLIN (1953-59)

I go by the name of Norman Pallin. Pongo was my nickname at school, but at sea it was Curley, as Normsky and the crew called me, well, never mind. At Ford Research and Engineering it was Garden Gnome, Mobile Muff (always had a beard) and Storming (before the Gulf war). But, back to the point. I left Silver Street Junior school for ECGS (as it was then) in 1953 (with an 11 plus), and popped into form 1A and David House. I was a retiring wimp, scared of everything and everybody, and had no concept of sport. My father, who was a bit of a footballer, got me a pair of boots and a pot of dubin, but I just stood on the field’s football pitch knowing not what to do. So, in the unlikely event of the ball coming my way, I kicked it in a random direction. At the start of every match the team leaders would pick their favoured ones, and at the end of the process I was always the last. Same with cricket, caught a ball on one occasion and dropped it, which caused much fury. I could never find any interest in bashing a ball around a field, unless it was for the amusement of a dog!

On wandering through my old school report—a bit tattered but still readable, the most amusing is an entry from, I believe, Mr. Elengorn in 1959: “Finds this subject completely beyond him”. Odd, because I have lived in France for the last 18 years and can converse reasonably well in the language. Woodwork (Mr. Lowe) “Tried but has a great deal of difficulty”. I now have a massive workshop and turn out all sorts of bowls, pens, picture frames (to house my wife’s lovely landscape photographs), lamp stands, kitchen stuff, and I also have a reputation for mending things, which I enjoy. Neighbours, or voisins as they call themselves here, have latched onto this. Garden tools, toasters, the odd bit of pottery, and even a toilet. All for free!

My real joy was Botany, Zoology and Chemistry. Oddly, that was the reason I joined the Merchant Navy. I was fascinated by Marine Biology and the ecology of the oceans, read loads of books by Hans and Lotte Hass, Cousteau and so on. Mr. Newall, (Biology and stuff), suggested, when I was in the lower 6th, to contact the Min. of Ag, Fish and Food at Lowestoft. I did, and it changed my life. They invited me for a visit and I went up on the train and spent many hours being shown their work, their three research ships, photographs, and best of all, even Cousteau had done work for them on the Calypso! I was asked if I would like to take a trip on one of their vessels to see what it was about. I agreed and it was arranged that I would sail the Sir Lancelot out of Lowestoft for a couple of weeks, up the North sea, turn left into North Atlantic and look for cod. I did, and in November, cold and windy, I had a job of weighing the fish, measuring length and condition, parasites, looking at stomach contents, dissecting the ‘ears’ and cutting out the otoliths and, (bit like the rings in trees) tell the age of the fish. The sea got me even more than the fish. I loved the tightness of a small ship, but also the companionship of the researchers and crew. Only 6 crew and 3 biologists and me! But most of all, the sea. It’s a fairly impressive chunk of the Earth’s surface, and a bit on the wild side. And lonely—I liked that.



To be continued

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