ECSOSA

Edmonton County School Old Scholars' Association
Website www.ecsosa.org.uk
Newsletter - December 2025

ECS Jazz Band by Brian Ware 1950-57

We emigrated to Australia when I was in the 2nd form about October,returning 2 years later when I resumed in the 4th form. I went to school at Randwick Boys High School Sydney for 2 years before Mum decided it wasn't for her and we came back. Couldn't fly to Oz in those days and no telephones for us, so family communication was on a 3 month question and answer by sea mail. Took a lot of catching up when I got back, but eventually made it leaving in 1957.

In 1953 on returning from 2 years in Australia on the S.S.Orion we stopped off at Marseilles to pick up some holiday makers. On the remaining few days to Tilbury the ships Tannoy began to play traditional Jazz. Presumably on request, and the young people that had joined the ship jived their way home to London.

That was my introduction to Jazz, a music form which I love to this day, frequently tuning in to Tuba Skinney on Youtube. It wasn't long before my friends and I discovered Wood Green Jazz Club at the Fishmongers Arms. There we had the luxury of enjoying weeks of Ken Colyer, Chris Barber, Sandy Brown etc. The bug so infected us that it wasn't long before we formed the band seen in the photos, where we are practicing using the school music room. The band was led by Robin Blick with Alan Deighton on Trombone, me, Brian Ware on clarinet, Alan Leftwick on washboard and Jeff Heywood guitar. We never found any one prepared to drag a double base around.

The skiffle group seen practising in the so called Green House was Alan, Jeff and me on tea chest base. We played at various events such as a Barby in Epping Forest and in the summer of 1956 went camping to Broadstairs and played all the way there on the train with a poster declaring that we were Robin Blicks New Orleans Jazz Band.

In 1957 we left school, Robin a couple of years earlier, and went our separate ways. It was great fun while it lasted.

(*Footnote by David Day) My introduction to jazz was at the other venue The Cook's Ferry Inn, listening to Mick Mulligan with George Melly singing.)*

(Ed. Apologies for some fuzzy pics but hope you can recognise the musicians)

Martin Holst (1951-57) - Ponders!"

Did we every learn anything of practical use at Edmonton County Grammar?.Of course we did.! And, not just in the academic sphere. My maths led to a career in teaching and lecturing. But what about in daily living?The girls were certainly trained in Domestic Science, a subject now disappeared from the curriculum. I just wonder how many of those skills are used today in a world of 'ready meals' and 'take away' where white goods to do the most of the jobs at home. 'If I knew you were coming I'd have baked a cake'. When was the last time any of us did that.

Boys had Woodwork and Metalwork with Technical Drawing thrown in. Learning to interpret plans and elevations is really quite useful in any project ,or even just home buying.

What about the things we made? Well, I am still using some! I use the pin bowl when sewing on a button. I don't know what happened to the serviette ring. I later understood that getting a simple rectangle accurate was the first task in an engineering apprenticeship and it took a couple of weeks for a friend of mine to 'get it right'.

I still have the copper plate. The table on which it rests has a good Formica top but the legs are a bit wobbly. It does for storage in the garage. Who plays draughts today. Perhaps, if I ever go to a care home someone will give me a game on the board I made at Raglan.

The garden line was d when I cultivated veg in our garden, and eventually rusted out.

Sadly, my lack of skill in woodwork was almost the despair of Mr Woodward. I wanted to make a bookcase from Mansonia Walnut wood. It was supposed to be an exercise in dovetail joints which would be visible on top. The disastrous result had to be hidden so the top went to the bottom and what should have been the legs were fashioned into bookends.

But as you see it is still serving it purpose today I always felt it would have been useful to learn house decorating. As it was I learned my skill when with my girlfriend we volunteered to help an elderly couple who had multiple disabilities. He had been in the army, but was injured by a horse, now suffering heart attacks. She was blind. Both smoked like chimneys.

The ceiling was yellow. Stripping the wall paper and painting the ceiling OK. When we came to papering the room, we discovered he had been a professional decorator.

He taught us a great deal especially where to start and how to get round corners. As he agonised over our struggles to follow his instructions we were afraid he would get a heart attack!

Car maintenance is another skill for those far off days when you could do things for yourself beyond pumping up the tyres. I booked myself for an evening and bought a clapped out old Ford Thames van to practice on. I got more practice than I planned for doing a decoke, changing of front suspension, greasing (still have the gun) as well as routine oil change, topping up batteries etc. That van did run OK, though I must admit being a bit nervous going up the Hard Knott Pass in the Lake District 1 in 2.8.

I eventually sold the van for £44 having learned one thing above all else. If I could afford to pay someone else to do it, I would.

My cousin, Colin trained as a PE teacher but discovered that this was not so good as he got older going out in winter onto the school fields. He loved old cars and ended his teaching career in teaching car maintenance.

Like Domestic Science, Woodwork, Metalwork and Car Maintenance have disappeared also computer studies etc.

We were a Grammar school and English Grammar was not my favourite. However, writing compositions and precis have turned out to be of increasing value as my life has gone on. I now research things using AI which saves looking up books, or Googling. Whatever next?

What I practice now is unscientific untrained housework and full time care. Good job I had parents that made sure I did my share around the house. Perhaps what we learn around the home and teach our children endures when all other things just 'have their season'.

(Another footnote from Dave Day)
I recall making several items in woodwork and metalwork. A planished copper sugar spoon, A vice and the frame for the school 1950 panoramic photograph. I still have a wonky odds and ends box I made.

From Debbie Tait (Parker) i1966 - 1971

My parents, Ken Parker and Joyce Bickell and a couple of cousins, Ann and Janice Curtis were all at ECG and there was never any doubt that I would go there as well. Reading the article by Jackie Robinson in the last edition was just what I needed to finally write down a few thoughts on being one of the 'Last of the First Years' intake.

1966 - the year England won the world cup and the year I started at ECG in 1W, wearing the brand new kilt worn at regulation 4 inches above the knee and a blazer bought with 'room to grow', entering the darkened space of my form room, the gallery and then leaving in 1971 with my family to migrate to Melbourne, Australia, where I have lived ever since. Here are just a few of the many blurred memories from those years.

Learning French with the lovely Mlle Smith who gamely taught us to sing Alouette and gave us all a French name.

Learning Latin and German with a Scottish accent from Dr Bentley - I don't think she ever ever heard the decline of the Latin verb in the back rows of the class - the subversive variations of amo amas amat!

Reading The Hobbit for the first time. Squealing our way through showers after sports lesson

Loving History with all the celebrity Tudors and Stuarts. Fast forwarding to canals and railways and industrial revolutions and bypassing the more boring royals. Hiding in the tunnel down by the train line rather than actually trying to complete the cross country run. Playing tennis and chatting with friends down on the grass courts. The buzz factor and entertainment provided by the arrival of the 4 tech 1 and 2 boys! Music with Anne Blake and the joy in being given the opportunity to play the grand piano and accompany the choir. Anne was by far the most influential teacher in my time there - I've spent most of the past 40 years being a music/art teacher and loving it. Peter Stokes scooting across the music room/canteen on the mobile blackboard with chalk in hand ready to fire!

Our little rebellions - hitching up the kilts with braces and displaying badges on berets, moments before entering the school gates.

Listening to form 6 debates on whether Britain should join the common market - ha! Huddling around the radiators in the hall during winter lunchtimes. Sneaking into the same hall to listen to Mr Moses play Chopin on the grand piano. Having a very small part in a school play and singing Vera Lyn songs at an Old Folks Concert. Cooking ratatouille and serving it up in the mod 60s style burnt orange and brown lunch room in Domestic Sci.

Standing on the bridge and hearing Miss Staples comment wryly on the shortness of the skirts all around us.

I enjoyed a brief time in lower 6th before coming to Australia then spent the next year trying to ditch the English accent and become Aussie as quickly as possible. I adapted very easily to the more casual lifestyle here and trained to become a teacher. I learned to appear blasé about deadly spiders, voted for Gough Whitlam in my first election, let my inner hippie free and wrote dreadful poetry about saving the earth. I took up bush-walking and climbed mountains just to play my flute at the top.

I left England at the age of 16 and when I was 23 I married an Aussie. My daughter left Australia to travel the world when she was 23 and ironically met and fell in love with an Englishman and they now live in Oxfordshire so I still come over fairly regularly and feel as though I have a foot in both countries. I'm now fully retired, still involved with many musical activities, travelling, grandchildren and hiking around my beloved Dandenong Ranges which is where I live. I'd love to be able to tell Mr Long that after walking up and down my local hills I've finally got the hang of reading contour lines on those ordnance survey maps!

Obituary – Leslie Arthur Dean
b 17 Sept 1935, d 26 July 2025 - ECS 1947 – 1952
By Brian (Titch) Armitage

Les, the youngest of three brothers, attended Croyland Road School in the 1940s. I was in the same class. Education was interrupted by frequent visits to the air raid shelter. In 1947, Les followed in the footsteps of both brothers to Edmonton County School. Eldest brother Ingvald was a WWII naval victim and his name appears on the remembrance board.

At school, Les was good at football and the fastest and scariest bowler in the cricket team. After leaving school his position changed from full back to goalkeeper and he was outstanding when playing for Old Edmontonian Juniors.

In 1953, National Service called, and he joined the Middlesex Regiment. He qualified as a marksman to earn extra trade pay but spent most time as a clerk in The Regimental Headquarters. While on leave from Austria he met Betty (Jipps - ECS 1949-53). He was anxious for de-mob to hasten home to Betty. They married within two years and set up home in Winchester Road, Edmonton

In 1968 Les was offered a Position in the shoe industry and moved his family to Northamptonshire. He rose to the position of Chief Executive and travelled extensively to the Far East when manufacturing relocated.

Throughout life, Les and Betty were devoted members of The Salvation Army, a tradition continued by every member of their family. Always an excellent musician, Les played various instruments in the band. He also had the honour of conducting the massed bands of The Salvation Army at The Albert Hall.

On the 13th August 2025, a very well attended funeral was held at Nene Valley Crematorium, followed by a Service of Remembrance, which included a magnificent brass band, at Wellingborough Salvation Army Hall.

YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD!
Conker Championship at Stanbridge Earls!
Arthur Spencer (45-52) playing Conkers.
He lost!!

We regret to record the death of Joan Negus (Ivanoff) 1946-53 on the 15th November 2025. Details in March 2026 edition.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY
Lunch at The Plough
Wed December 10th 12.30
Wed March 11th 2026 12.30
Proposed Annual Luncheon - Sat 23 May 2026

Joint Presidents - Dr Susan Tranter, Cliff Wilkins
Chairman/Secretary/Treasurer - David Day
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Committee - Jean & Dennis Patten, Carol Coates.

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