



ECSOSA

Edmonton County School Old Scholars' Association

Website www.ecsosa.org.uk

Newsletter June 2026



Ron Wright reaches 100

Report by Arthur Spencer

I attended a lunch to celebrate Ron's centenary.



His birthday was on the 3 March 2026
His years at ECS were from 1937 to 1940.
Ron was in the Air Force Cadets and went into the RAF around 1943. At the end of WW2 in 1945, he was in Belgium.
His sister and later 2 daughters were also at ECS.
He lived and worked in Edmonton, and Southgate and with his late wife Irene ran a successful radio/tv and appliance retail business, Wright's Radio.
He was Chairman of Edmonton Round Table and served that national organisation in various roles. He was the founding President of Bush Hill Park Rotary Club.
He was also Chairman of the local Conservative Association.
He now lives near Stevenage.
Ron is one of only three known Old Scholars who has a pilot's licence. He owns a Piper Archer aircraft and we have featured his flying exploits in previous editions.

Obituary—

Alan Silvester 1954 -1961

Two years after suffering a stroke following heart surgery, Alan died in hospital in Leicester at the end of February.

Without doubt he was one of the most popular figures among his contemporaries and a friend to all.

At school Alan was not only a diligent student but an excellent footballer and a



fine athlete. He was also a member of the highly successful Old Eds football team in the 1960s.

Alan spent his entire working life in the gas industry firstly in London but relocated to Leicester in the 1970s.

He leaves a widow, Jeannette and son Richard. His funeral was on the 8th April.

Reported by Mike Margetts

What Were We Taught at ECG — and What Did We Learn? Musings by Martin Holst 1951-57

What exactly did we learn at ECG?

I suspect that if a group of us from different years sat down together, we might remember many of the same things: parsing sentences, memorising poems, struggling with Shakespeare, and perhaps discovering — sometimes quite by accident — something that stayed with us for the rest of our lives.

1. School Lessons: What We Were Taught

English Literature

I am afraid I did not come away from school with a love of Shakespeare. I seem to remember a little of Macbeth, but not much more. Many years later I enjoyed seeing Frankie Howerd as Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Globe. The film of The Taming of the Shrew with Elizabeth Taylor was also great.

However, reading Shakespeare never really appealed to me at the time. I sometimes wonder whether we were ever invited to reflect on themes such as the antisemitism in The Merchant of Venice. Nor do I recall discussing how Shakespeare's plays could glorify "England and St George" in ways that suited the monarchy and the politics of his day.

Then there was poetry. We seemed to dissect it rather clinically. What exactly is an iambic tetrameter, and how does it combine with trimeter?

I still have a book of poems that we had to write out, learn by heart, recite in class, and illustrate.

I only have one decent illustration — drawn for me by a girl in the class — for the poem Boats Sail on the Rivers by Christina Rossetti.

Another poem, Everest by Horace Skipp, about the first climbers to reach the summit, inspired me greatly. My father's experience in amateur dramatics helped coach me. When I recited it to the teacher, the whole class fell silent and listened. That was the moment when I realised the power of that form of expression, and the memory has stayed with me ever since.

Today pupils are often invited to write their own poetry. I sometimes wonder what we might have produced if we had been given that opportunity.

English Grammar

Being a grammar school, it was not surprising that grammar featured strongly in the curriculum. We learned to dissect — or analyse — sentences. We called it parsing: identifying subject, predicate, and object, and learning about subordinate clauses. Perhaps the most useful skill we learned was précis writing — an extremely valuable discipline when you later come to write documents in adult life.

Ironically, I learned more about English grammar through studying French. Conjugations of verbs and grammatical structures revealed features of English I had never previously noticed — such as the subjunctive mood. "The cow be in the field." What mood is that?

2. New Languages: Mathematics and Computers Language and Life

Doing a mathematics degree required a very restricted form of language. In three years I did not write a single exercise in ordinary English. In one branch of mathematics every proof began with a formula such as: "Given $\epsilon > 0$ there exists δ such that ..." The mathematics department tie that I still proudly wear at reunions has $\epsilon > 0$ emblazoned on it.

New Language Adventures

Although I never became fluent in French — for various reasons — I later tried Spanish and German, with little more success. However, the future held even greater linguistic challenges.

On leaving university, I might have gone into computer programming, but machine code did not appeal. Instead, I wanted to learn how to "talk" to machines in a different way.

I attended evening classes and learned enough ALGOL to write simple programmes on the town hall computer, although FORTRAN would probably have been the more practical choice.

Later, when I moved into teacher education, each institution was encouraged to acquire a computer. So I learned BASIC and even had an article published in the Inner London Authority magazine. A move to another institution, however, brought a completely different challenge.

St Mark and St John had acquired a Diel Algotronic computer from Germany at great expense. A whole new mode of operation — effectively a new language — had to be mastered, only to be discarded later.

At that point I gave up until computers became a little more user-friendly. Eventually, of course, they did.

(to be continued)

Reprinted from Oldie Magazine Spring 2026.

Memorial Service – Norman Tebbit –

1931 -2025 (ECS 1942 – 47)

The memorial service for Lord Tebbit, former chairman of the Conservative Party and trade secretary, was held at St. Margarets, Westminster. The front of the service sheet displayed Tebbit's coat of arms, with two polecats, in honour of Labour leader Michael Foot's description of him as a semi-housetrained polecat. John Major attended as did former Cabinet colleagues, Michel Howard, Kenneth Baker, Virginia Bottomley, Norman Lamont and Norman Fowler. Also in attendance was Mike Gatting, former England cricket captain, reflecting Tebbit's love of the game.

The Rev Mark Birch, Canon Rector of Westminster Abbey, paid tribute: "In the wake of the Brighton bombing, and the ensuing years of devoted care for Margaret, his wife, the nation saw another side of him: his tenderness and faithfulness, fulfilling his marriage vows.

Michael Dobbs, author of *House of Cards*, gave the eulogy. He recalled Tebbit's RAF service and how he survived a crash in a plane he was flying. 'For some reason, the RAF gave him another,' said Dobbs. He added that Tebbit considered politics as a contact sport – perhaps that's why the Tory Party were never 'comfortable with him – or Margaret Thatcher'. Later in her career, said Dobbs, Thatcher was persuaded that Tebbit was plotting against her. That was 'total nonsense' – Tebbit went on to secure a third election victory for her in 1987. Tebbit himself might have made a 'very great prime minister' Dobbs said, but after the Brighton bomb in 1984, he had only one ambition – to look after Margaret. Dobbs said Tebbit was a 'God fearing man. I have the suspicion it might have been mutual'.

The Very Rev Joe Hawes. Dean of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds, paid tribute to Tebbit, one of his parishioners. Tebbit gave the Dean his recipe for game pie after the Dean's attempt was 'imperfectly cooked'. He also gave him a pair of Super Soaker water pistols to ward off the cathedral's pigeons. The Dean gave Tebbit the last rites three times. Tebbit said 'Every time you say "Go forth from this world O Christian soul," I seem to perk up nicely... I'm not sure my maker is ready to meet me, but I am ready to meet him.'



Ian Ducan Smith, MP for Chingford, Tebbit's old seat and formerly Tory leader, recalled the day Tebbit asked him out shooting. He had to decline. Tebbit said that whenever things were looking grim, 'I like to go out and shoot something.'

The hymns were 'Praise my soul the King of heaven', 'I vow to thee my country' and 'Lord of all hopefulness'. The psalm was 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills'. Lord Sterling of Plaistow read Proverbs 27 'Do not boast about tomorrow'. James Shakespeare, Tebbit's grandson said a prayer for his grandparent's careers.

The choir sang Verdi's 'Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves' and the anthem Andrew Lloyd Webbers 'Pie Jesu'. The Central Band of the RAF played 'Nimrod' and the RAF March Past. The St Margaret's bellringers rang Grandsire 'Tittum' Carvers, a peal rung by members of the Tebbit family in 1830 in Soham Church. Norman and Margaret Tebbit are buried in Soham churchyard.

HARRY MOUNT – EDITOR – THE OLDIE.

ANNUAL LUNCHEON—23RD MAY 2026

GOFF'S OAK PH

8 Old Scholars attended, what is likely to be the last event. Numbers have fallen over the last few years and it is attended mainly by an older generation of Old Eds from the days before the school became a Comprehensive.

Sadly, 4 members who had been expected were unwell on the day and could not get there.

The Goff's Oak Pub and restaurant is a very pleasant venue with ample parking. It also has the advantage of being outside the London ULEZ Zone thus saving £12.50 a visit.

Unfortunately, the quality of the food on the day was somewhat unsatisfactory and if we are still around to hold another luncheon next year we will seek another venue. This did not prevent us from having an enjoyable time and conversation went on until nearly 4pm.

There are other groups of old scholars who meet generally with their contemporaries as reported on Facebook and your editor would be pleased to receive reports of these events.

David Day—Chairman/Secretary.



Pat Norris—Angela Painter



Verona Moore—Jean Patten



Ann Barnard
Shirley
Coode

ERRATA—March edition gave Annual membership as £25 but should be £12.50

Dates for your Diary

Lunch at The Plough

Wed 10th June 2026—12.30

Wed 16th September 2026—12.30

David Day

David

Pennell



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