

**Staff Obituaries**

**Last Updated April 2026**



**2026**

**Mary Cheney died 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026**

I am sorry to have to inform you that Mary Cheyney, Habs Boys former Librarian (and widow of Chief Librarian and Honorary Archivist, Keith Cheyney) passed away in Watford General Hospital on Monday 31 March. She was 92 years old and would have celebrated her 93rd birthday on 29 April.

In 1961, Keith was recruited by the then Headmaster, Tom Taylor, to create and develop the first Library at Elstree when the school moved from Westbere Road. In taking up this position, Keith became one of the first professional librarians in the country to be appointed to a school. Mary joined him in the library from 1972, providing steadfast support - often in the face of recalcitrant Haberdashers students - until her retirement in July 1993. She and Keith played a major role in the Habs Mencap Fun events (which then took place over a whole two weeks at the beginning of the summer holidays) in the day to day running of these occasions and providing three cooked meals daily for all guests. Among other many contributions to life here, Mary assisted Keith in the gargantuan task of moving the School Library to the new Bourne building which opened in 1992. She retired in the summer of 1993 and received a wonderful Common Room tribute from Frank Hanbidge.

Roger Llewellyn

**2025**

**Leo Guidon died 13<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

Leo joined Habs in September 1955 as Teacher of Languages, on completion of his studies at St Catharine's College, Cambridge (where he was a direct contemporary of Alan Taylor, later Habs Director of Music) and after National Service in the Army. In 1961 he was appointed Head of Spanish and two years later became Head of French, before being made Head of Modern Languages in 1966. He was then appointed Senior Master in 1968. Meanwhile, due to his enthusiasm for all things cricket, within one year of joining the school he was running the school 2nd XI and during his second year he assumed overall responsibility for the sport. This role, he eventually handed over to Doug Yeabsley in 1966.

When Leo became Senior Master, he helped the then Headmaster, Tom Taylor, with the timetabling of lessons and the boys' subject requests. On Tom's retirement, this entire task fell to Leo. Without his acute analytical skills, meticulous attention to detail and infinite patience in creating each boys' personal timetables and the accommodation of all O and A Level choices, many students would have been unable to study the wide-ranging and wondrous variety of subjects available at Habs.

Roger Llewellyn

2024

**David Thomas died 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024**



David Thomas, died after a short illness on 24 June 2024 at his home in Abbotskerswell, Devon. He would have been 97 years only three days later.

David taught at Haberdashers from 1948-1968 as Head of PE, and was instrumental in the establishment of the school's Boarding House when the school moved from Cricklewood to Elstree in 1961, being appointed its first Head. He was often the first member of staff a new boarder would meet as they (often apprehensively) approached Aldenham House and his smart, besuited, naturally welcoming demeanour did much to steady the nerves of boys and their parents.

David was born in Pontypridd, but for work reasons his family moved to London when he was a young boy. He trained at Loughborough College, and served in the R.A.F. as a physical training instructor, before being recruited by Headmaster Tom Taylor to join HAHS in 1948 – where he soon proved to be an inspirational teacher and sports coach. A celebrated hockey international, Habs boys could not help but be impressed while he played hockey for Hounslow Hockey Club, Middlesex, Wales and Great Britain. He played hockey for Wales for 12 years from 1950-1962 and was captain for the last four years, representing

his country of his birth at the 1950 Commonwealth Games, 1954 World Cup and 1958 European Championships. He was also Wales coach and manager from 1961-65. He was capped 14 times for Great Britain and scored 5 goals, one of which was GB's opening goal at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics where, unfortunately, GB came away empty handed after losing the bronze medal match 1-3 to Germany. At the time, caps were not awarded and it was only last year that he was presented with two caps – one for Great Britain and one for Wales – in recognition of his sporting achievements.

David left Habs in 1968, having been appointed manager of Bingham Sports Centre (the first of the country's joint use schemes) and became Director of the National Sports Centre (now called Sport Wales National Centre) in Cardiff prior to its opening in 1971. He was Vice Chairman of A.R.M. in 1972 before becoming its chairman for 1973/4. He later went on to be Recreation and Amenities Officer for Shepway District Council (now called Folkestone and Hythe District Council).

Roger Llewellyn (OH 1983)

#### **Laurence Broderick died 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024**



Habs former Head of Art, **Laurence Broderick** died yesterday (Thursday 18 April) aged 88 in Cambridge.

Having begun his career as an historical and educational illustrator and painter, Laurence taught Art at Haberdashers from 1959 to 1981, becoming Head of Department in 1965. Having enjoyed considerable success in a number of private exhibitions while at Habs, he then became a full-time sculptor working most especially in the media of stone and bronze. His best known work was "The Bull", a monumental 15 feet long public sculpture erected in 2003 at the Bull Ring in Birmingham - one of the largest bronze animal sculptures in the country.

The chance discovery of the book 'Tarka the Otter' (by Henry Williamson) in the School Library led Laurence to try to capture the fluid movement of an otter in stone. Then, having encountered his first wild otter off the Island of Ornsay, he made Skye his second home and for 26 years held annual sculpture exhibitions on the island - dividing his time between there and Waresley, near Cambridge. Otters remained the favourite subject of his sculptures for the rest of his life - and Laurence was also joint president of the International Otter Survival Fund, a charity dedicated to the conservation, protection, and care of otters in the UK and worldwide.

### **Christopher Trinder died 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

A few weeks ago, Chris Trinder passed away peacefully in Watford General Hospital. He was one of the cleverest men to have taught at Haberdashers' in recent years. After being awarded a Double First Class Degree in Economics at St. John's College, Cambridge, he had a distinguished twenty-year career as a lecturer at Essex, York and Oxford universities, and as a widely respected professional economist with many academic articles and books to his credit.

In 2000 he changed direction, took a PGCE at London University's Institute of Education, taught at Bacon's City Technology College and at Stonyhurst College, before joining Habs in September 2003. He made an immediate impact on the school, dedicating himself to teaching sixth form students of economics, challenging them to think for themselves and encouraging them to follow in his footsteps and study at Cambridge. In one year six of his pupils were admitted and four of them were subsequently awarded first class degrees.

His knowledge of business and finance led him to take responsibility for Young Enterprise teams and to inspire the students who took part to make innovative proposals which were awarded prizes at the national finals. He coached school chess teams and built-up table-tennis from scratch until it was a significant activity during senior school games. Known as an outstanding form tutor, he not only advised his tutees and wrote generous and supportive references, but also surprised them with his enjoyment of Dizzee Rascal's music and devotion to Wolverhampton Wanderers. He had a lively sense of fun: few will ever forget his uproarious end-of-term tiddly winks competitions.

After retiring from Habs in 2011, Chris was free to give his time to his many interests, not only his continued fascination with economics, and pastimes of chess, music and Wolves, but to his liking for cigars, fine wines and travel. It is a tragedy that he did not live long enough to enjoy them to the full.

Thanks to Dr John Wigley for the Obituary.

**2023**

**John Rolfe Died 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

To many of the boys taught by John, he will foremostly be remembered for his indispensable role in the Habs Geography department, but I know many of you will be aware that his influence and service to the School was much more profound than this.

John arrived at Haberdashers' Aske's Hampstead School (as it was then) in September 1959 as a teacher of Geography. At the time, there was much excitement and anticipation at Haberdashers as it had just been announced that a new site had been purchased for the School, based around Lord Aldenham's former manor house and its 60 acre estate. Two years later, it would fall to John and a team of 5th and 6th formers (who are still referred to as 'The Removal Men' - and equally continue to meet regularly for monthly lunches in London) to assist with the decanting of the Westbere Road site to Elstree on a fleet of lorries and vans.

At the new school, a boarding house was created on the upper floors and side buildings of Aldenham House. David Thomas became the first resident housemaster for the 80 boys living there, with John being his able assistant. With his famed knowledge of London and South Hertfordshire highways and byways, he was also put in charge of the nascent coach network to transport boys to and from Elstree. Beginning with four routes from the nearest railway and tube stations he oversaw its expansion to the largest network of any school in the country. Much as Headmaster, Tom Taylor had spent endless weekends in the late 1950s exploring the outer reaches of London in search of a new site for Habs, John now enthusiastically checked the coach routes at weekends by driving around the major and minor roads of the area with his wife, Margaret, who soon found her own role at Habs as Headmaster's Secretary. When John retired from teaching in 1995, he continued to organise the school's coach service (which had also included Girls School students from 1974) for another year.

While a student at Southampton University, John had been a member of the University Air Squadron and he continued this interest at Habs by assisting Dick Hewson (the then Head of the Geography department) in organising the School's CCF Training camps. In the mid-1960s, John took over from Dick as Head of department, and soon began attracting a wealth of young and able geographers to inspire and galvanise generations of Habs boys. His steadfast mentoring and encouragement of these junior colleagues led to many attaining promotions at other schools, not only to headships of department but also to senior leadership positions (with some also achieving this at Habs). It was therefore no surprise that during John's time as Head of department, Habs was said to have 'the premier school Geography department in the country'.

As Paul Hayler has said

'The Geographers all have special memories of John, largely because he gave us the opportunity to create those special memories. He never tried to restrict our individual ideas and he gave us such a lot of free rein. We were so lucky, he never asked us to work harder or improve our teaching, he just relied on us following his work ethic and we all did'.

In 1976, John recognised an opportunity to establish an exchange with a similar school in America, and with the Headmaster, Bruce McGowan's support he organised an annual visit which went on for over 25 years to Montclair Academy (now Montclair Kimberley Academy). Hundreds of Habs students and teachers benefited from this far-sighted initiative, since imitated by many other UK schools.

John was also the driving force behind the School's first annual Open Days, now a key event in the School calendar which annually attracts near 1000 people (with waiting lists in operation).

These are just a few of the activities, events and innovations to which John was central during his 36 years at Habs and more will be noted in a fuller tribute soon to be placed on the School's website.

John was a truly remarkable man, kind and generous with his valuable time and devoted to the School. We will miss him very much.

Roger de H Llewellyn Director of the Habs Foundation

(with thanks – and apologies - to Paul Hayler on whose valette article for John Rolfe in Skylark this tribute is based

**Roy Avery Died 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023**



Former Habs Head of History, Roy Avery, who passed away aged 97 at his home in Bristol on 17 January 2023, was not at all impressed by the school when he went for interview at Westbere Road. He had decided that the post-war grime of the North London suburbs was not for him and his young family. However, fortunately for Habs, then Headmaster Tom Taylor was able to promise him that within two years the school would have relocated to Elstree and the Aldenham estate – a far more attractive proposition.

Thus, it was that in January 1960, Roy and his wife Marjorie and their children Alison and Jonny (OH 1976) became part of the Haberdashers family. For five very happy years, Roy led the dynamic History department at Westbere Road and Elstree. He then stepped seamlessly into the role of Headmaster of Harrow County Grammar School and stayed there with huge success until 1975.

However, the city of Bristol was set in his DNA, first as a schoolboy at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, then (after Magdalen College Oxford where he was awarded a Sheppard exhibition) as a student in his teacher training year where he met Marjorie. He was so happy to join the Bristol Grammar School family as a young teacher in the 1950s and thrilled to complete the circle, coming back from London to become Bristol Grammar School's Headmaster in 1975 until his retirement in 1986.

At Habs, Roy not only oversaw and led by example a department of remarkable historians (among them Robert Irvine-Smith and Ian Lister) but also engaged and nurtured a younger generation of teachers. This included Keith Dawson – whose recruitment in 1963 then set in place a chain of events which would eventually lead to Keith becoming Habs' Headmaster in 1987. This unerring skill and judgement of character continued at his later schools, where the likes of Michael Cook (Teacher of English, Head of Middle School and Housemaster of Strouts) proved to be another of his astute appointments.

At Elstree, he drew great satisfaction from encouraging young ambitious students to reach their potential, opening the door to new opportunities. A warm, generous gentleman, modest about his own remarkable achievements and so very interested in and proud of others he would often say that he was a firm believer in the dictum 'Unhappy is the teacher who is not surpassed by his pupils'. It was a never-ending source of joy that many of his students chose to keep in touch with him long into his retirement.

Although he himself had a very young family, Roy threw himself completely into life at Habs, never being one to clock-watch or begrudge time spent with students outside the classroom. A keen sportsman, Roy was a regular umpire and coached School Cricket XIs. He sang in school choirs and was a pioneer in leading student trips to the USA.

With Professor Swinnerton (Tom Taylor's father-in-law) and an enthusiastic group of students he undertook the excavation of Penne's Place (see photo) and was himself the

author of the seminal 'The Story of Aldenham House' and the highly regarded publication dealing with the infamous Elstree Murder of 1823.

The entry in Skylark, Haberdashers' school magazine, for the Winter of 1965 informing the community of Roy's departure to Harrow County not only summed up Roy's contribution to the School, but also to those lucky enough to have known him. "His experience as a History teacher will be greatly missed, and many may find the absence of his quiet friendliness an even more noticeable loss."

Roger Llewellyn Feb 2023

**2022**

**David Scott Died 21<sup>st</sup> October 2022**



David Scott was Chaplain and Head of Religious Studies 1973-1980.

David Scott, Habs much-loved Chaplain and Head of Religious Studies, died on 21 October at the age of 75. He had been suffering from dementia for several years, and since 2019 had been living in a care home in Kendal.

As David's successor as Habs Chaplain, David Lindsay, has said

*'David will always be remembered by former pupils and colleagues with huge affection. More priest and pastor than schoolmaster, he endeared himself to just about everybody in the school - a gentle, caring, and most lovable man, who was also a fine wordsmith.'*

As Chaplain, David led the school assemblies for seven years, often dealing with tricky and controversial subjects, but always with good humour and wit. Famously, at the start of one

such assembly he jumped out of a large cardboard box to illustrate a point. Depending on which of the students who were present that day are relating the tale, this unexpected turn of events either amused or horrified the Headmaster and Second Master, Dai Barling.

As Head of Religious Studies, David initiated and encouraged discussions with students on a vast range of topics and his influence should not be underestimated. His five-minute crash courses for new students in learning each other's names are legendary and his lessons could sometimes be at odds with more senior members of staff who sadly mistook for impropriety the loud sound of laughter and fun from his classroom. As a counsellor, David was always approachable to students and staff of any faith or none, with any advice he was able to give being both positive and thoughtful.

At Habs, along with Richard Brett, he was the instigator, writer and producer of the first Junior School Plays, also writing the celebrated Captain Stirrick (later filmed by the Children's Film Unit) and after his time at the School a number of plays for the National Youth Music Theatre, - including Bendigo Boswell, which was televised in 1983. He, himself, was a very accomplished actor, appearing in a number of Habs Staff plays to great acclaim, in particular Hay Fever and A Penny for a Song.

David also became a very active member of the Friday afternoon Special Service Unit (now called School Community Service), taking groups of students to visit people with learning disabilities at Leavesden Hospital, where his gentle and attentive humour was greatly enjoyed by all.

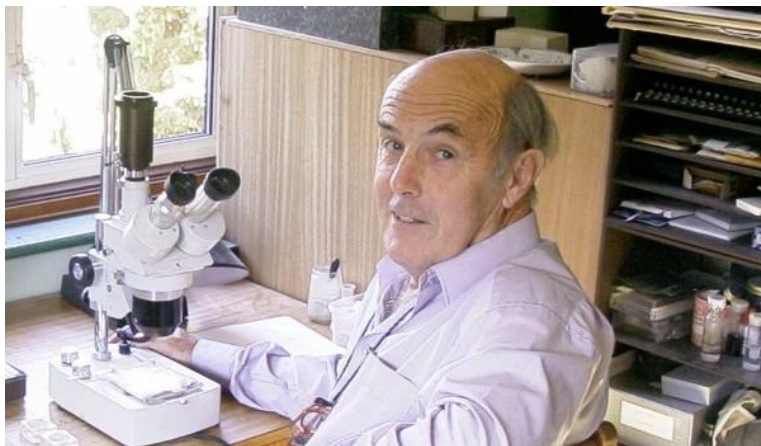
Meanwhile, David's poetry attracted national notice when his 'Kirkwall Auction Mart' won the Sunday Times/BBC poetry competition in 1978. This was to be followed by A Quiet Gathering (1984), his first collection of verse, and then by Playing for England in 1989 and, among other works, How Does It Feel? (1989), a collection of poems for children. It was no surprise that his talents made him an ideal speaker for Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day' and was very much in demand as a preacher and speaker outside the School.

Leaving Habs in 1980, he became vicar of Torpenhow and Allhallows in Cumbria, and in 1991 moved to Winchester to become the Diocesan Warden of the School of Spirituality and Rector of St Lawrence with St Swithun-upon-Kingsgate.

He was made an Honorary Canon of Winchester Cathedral and an Honorary Fellow of the University of Winchester and continued to publish volumes of outstanding poetry. In 2008, he was awarded an Honorary Lambeth DLitt by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams - himself a fellow poet.

Roger Llewellyn November 2022

## **Barry Goater died 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022**



The bare facts state that Barry Goater (who has passed away shortly before his 92nd birthday) taught Biology at Haberdashers between 1954 and 1988 and was Head of department for 30 years between 1958 and 1988. However, these facts could never fully pay tribute to the influence Barry had over generations of Habs students enthused by his love of the natural world, athletics and most especially running.

Barry was born in Southampton and attended Peter Symonds School in Winchester from where he went to study for a BSc in Botany at University College, Southampton. He already had a fervent interest in the study of Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) as this had been a family hobby shared with his beloved grandfather, who would allow the young Barry to accompany him collecting specimens.

Leaving Southampton in 1952, he then spent two years in the Royal Air Force completing his National Service and while there in 1954 had the accolade of being the Corps' Half Mile running record holder and champion.

Shortly afterwards, Habs' Headmaster Tom Taylor appointed him as a master teaching Biology, the first of his many roles at Haberdashers. Within four years he had been made Head of Department, while also taking over from Geoff Hickman as master in charge of cross country. The Goater Cup, the major inter-school cross country race, which was first held in 1963 and continues to be run to this day, remains a lasting tribute and reminder of his devotion to this sport. He spent 21 years as a Senior Officer in the School's RAF section and set up the School's Ornithological Society, taking boys and staff to nature reserves up and down the country in search of rare and sometimes exotic birds.

In 1988, Barry took early retirement, having spent 102 terms at Haberdashers, thereby qualifying him to be respectfully called a 'Termite', being one of the few Habs staff to have completed 100 terms at the school. (Although unable in recent years to attend the annual Termites celebratory lunch, he always requested that his very best wishes be given to his fellow members of this august fellowship.)

But this early retirement was not so that Barry might improve a golf handicap or take an academic interest in carpet slippers, but rather so that he might devote time to the study of European Lepidoptera, travelling widely in Europe between Portugal, Lapland, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria - but mostly in Spain and France. In 1989, he was made both a Freeman of the City of London and the Haberdashers Company and from 1992 was appointed a Visiting Fellow at the University of Southampton. He was the President of the British Entomological and Natural History Society and having written and co-authored hundreds of learned papers on Lepidoptera he was awarded the Butterfly Conservation Marsh Award in 2005 for services to Lepidoptera Conservation.

Former colleagues have said that the four things Barry held the most dear were 'Family, Habs, Cross Country and Moths'. There was never any doubt that 'Family' held sway, but there might be considerable disagreement as to the following pecking order. Visitors to the family home in Bushey found rooms bedecked with family cross country and athletics trophies and nets hanging with moth pupae. At times he was able to combine all three interests when leading a cross country practice run, as recalled in a recent tribute provided by the son of Vincent Williams (OH 1981) whose own death sadly predeceased Barry by a few months:

"My father, Vincent Williams, spoke of a man called Barry Goater. Barry was his running coach at secondary school, whilst on the side being an expert on butterflies and moths. He'd take the kids to the south coast for pre-season training and have them run along treacherous cliff tracks under the pretence of 'improving coordination'. On one of these death-defying jaunts, my dad spotted a particularly striking butterfly. Barry, giddy with excitement at my dad's discovery, improvised a container with a pinched pint glass in which to take it home. Barry left a lasting impression that spawned a lifetime love of running."

In the early years (1955 to 1962) of his time at the school, Barry took parties of Habs students to the Beaulieu Road Station area of the New Forest to work on biological research projects. These were then written up by the students and detailed accounts, called 'The Beaulieu Tomes' were kept by Barry which have recently been archived in the Hampshire Record Office, in Winchester. In Barry's clear hand The Tomes record the factual details of these projects, ranging widely from all the boys present flora to bird distribution, to butterflies, moths, newts, leeches and bryophytes (mosses, liverworts and hornworts). Barry has since been hailed as the first person to bring biological field work into the national curriculum, as well being the inspiration for the careers of many a Habs student in nature

conservation, ecology, and environmental concerns. One of the many students who benefited from these residential trips to Beaulieu Road was the celebrated author of 'Waterlog' and 'Wildwood', Roger Deakin (OH 1961). In 'Wildwood', Deakin wrote "A formidable lepidopterist, ornithologist and all round naturalist, Barry infected us all with his wild enthusiasm....he was the instigator of an extraordinary educational experiment."

This infectious enthusiasm also bore along many students who initially had no great interest in things scientific or the natural world. For a curious Habs student there could have been no greater pleasure than to accompany Barry on a walk around the school's grounds as he pointed out the plants and trees unique to the vestigial remains of the old Aldenham estate (once said to have rivalled Kew Gardens for its wide variety of flora) or to sit in a bird hide with him at Fen Drayton trying to spot a Red-necked Grebe.

Fiercely competitive, Barry was a demon player on the Staff Common Room billiards table, and his noisy playing would sometimes annoy not only those in the rooms below in the Craft workshops (Geoff Hickman, Dick Benbow, John Lear and Charlie Dinsdale among them) when a hard ball landed on the parquet flooring with a thud, but also Laurence Broderick next door in the Art Printing room.

Our thoughts are with Barry's sons and their families at this sad time. Generations of Habs staff and students have much to be grateful for, to a truly inspirational man whose enthusiasm expertly and kindly carried others along with him.

Roger Llewellyn August 2022

### **Geoff Hickman died 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022**



If the only legacy to Geoff Hickman, who peacefully passed away on 7 July 2022 (a month before his 95th birthday) would be the numerous small tables, magazine holders, trays and picture frames made over the space of thirty years by generations of boys in the School's

Woodwork shop, this would surely be enough to justify his position as a celebrated and fondly remembered teacher at Habs.

However, Geoff occupied a more unique role in the history of Haberdashers Boys School, as pupil, teacher and Housemaster

Geoff joined Habs in 1937 at its Westbere Road site in Cricklewood. When part of the School was demolished by a bomb in 1940, he moved with the other junior boys to the Chase Lodge playing fields in Mill Hill where the changing rooms were used as classrooms - only returning to Westbere Road one day a week when the senior boys swapped places and went by tram to the alternative school accommodation.

Before Geoff left school in 1945 to do his National Service in the Royal Navy, he played for the 1st Cricket XI and was a Calverts House platoon sergeant in the Junior Training Corps – the precursor of today's CCF. Returning to 'civilian life' in 1946, he returned as a pupil for a further year, becoming both 1st Cricket XI captain and Captain of the School.

After two years' training at Trinity College, Carmarthen, Geoff was invited to join the School's staff in September 1949, with responsibility for teaching woodwork, metalwork and 'small bookwork'. Outside the classroom, he devoted his time to the development of cross-country running at Habs, coaching the 2nd Cricket XI and helping to run the School's CCF Naval section, initiating training courses in Gibraltar and Malta .

Following the move to Elstree, in 1966 he was appointed Calvert's Housemaster, a role he held for eleven years and which greatly benefited from his quiet, kind and unassuming nature. One of Geoff's last actions as Housemaster, before handing over to Paul Hayler, was to appoint his successor's first House Captain, Deputy House Captain and House Recorder. Paul was told by Geoff

"They aren't necessarily the ones I would have chosen for my own House officials but they are the three I think will work best with you. I think you will get on well with them and that they will fit in best with your style of leadership".

As Paul reports, this judgement was absolutely right, and the team was just what was needed to ease the transition of Housemasters.

Meanwhile, Geoff was not idle in the Woodwork shop. He constructed and transported the stage-sets required for the annual tour of the senior School play to cities in Germany; was official supervisor of the School printshop for nearly twenty years; and, as the needs of the School developed for precision craftsmanship, he made various tables (especially for the Brett Study Hall), furniture for the Staff Common Room, cabinets, memorial woodwork,

library tables and the altar in the School chapel. He was a superb craftsman, even if he had managed accidentally to `plane off' a part of one finger.

He struck up a notable friendship with fellow legendary staff member, Eric `TEC' Carrington, and they regularly lunched together discussing the inadequacies of modern youth. They had cleverly worked out how to get quicker waitress service in the Staff Dining Room and their table was therefore where younger colleagues would also gravitate, but with the knowledge that they would be assailed with strident opinions on hair length and drainpipe trousers.

After a bout of ill health, in 1979 Geoff was offered early retirement by the then Headmaster, Bruce McGowan, which he gratefully accepted. He then relocated to Suffolk, and finally moved to Oxfordshire to be closer to his son, David (OH 1973) and daughter-in-law, Ann. Throughout the last 40 years, he maintained a great interest in the life of Habs and was frequently in touch with the School, visiting when able and taking great delight in the new equipment available in today's equivalent to his Woodwork shop – the Design and Technology department.

Geoff's steady influence over generations of Habs students should never be underestimated. The time and space afforded in the Woodwork shop, allowed pupils to benefit not only from Geoff's sound advice on technical matters, but also life-skills. I also suspect that many reading this will still have the small table made in that workshop, well over forty years ago...

Roger de H Llewellyn (OH 1983)

### **David Griffiths died 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022**



David Griffiths, the much loved and inspirational Habs former Head of History and Head of Sixth Form passed away peacefully on 23 March aged 85 in Watford General Hospital. He had suffered a serious fall last week at home in St Albans from which he never recovered.

David grew up in the suburbs of Cardiff and while showing himself to be a natural academic all-rounder at his boarding school, Malvern College, his passion for the study of History led him to win a place to study the same subject at Queens' College, Cambridge – which he duly took up after spending his two years of National Service in the RAF.

He might have become a full-time academic but the lure of imparting his enthusiasm and joy to others for all things historical and after a year's PGCE took him firstly to teach at Embley Park School in Hampshire, closely followed by his appointment as Head of History at Silcoates School, Wakefield while still only on his 20s.

At the invitation of the then Headmaster, Dr Tom Taylor, David joined Habs in September 1968 and very early the true width and depth of his vision and interests were recognised when he was approached to assume responsibility for 6th Form General Studies (now termed Enhancement & Enrichment) and the Special Services Unit (known now as the School Community Services). He also coached a Rugby XV and led numerous school trips to West Africa, Italy, Eastern Europe and - a much celebrated one closer to home - to Northumbria and Hadrian's Wall in 1969.

In 1977, Bruce McGowan appointed him not only Head of History but also a Boarding House Master and it was his job ultimately in 1983, along with David Davies, to oversee its closing. He remained Head of History until 1989. In these twelve years, David is said to have been widely regarded by Oxford and Cambridge tutors as the finest Head of History in the country. Indeed, in 2000, soon after he was appointed to Habs, our current Head of History, Stephen Clark, wrote to his Oxford History tutor to thank him for his reference. The tutor wrote a note back that simply said "Haberdashers, well done! The one with the buses and the brilliant Welshman."

In 1989, David became Head of Sixth Form - a role he imbued with wisdom and great sensitivity until he retired in 1996. Many a Habs boy who passed through Sixth Form in this time has commented on David's sympathetic ear, his thoughtfulness, sound advice as well as being a source of endless support. One Sixth Former simply summed him up in two words, saying David was a 'diamond geezer' and no-one could gainsay this estimation.

In the short time since his passing, the Habs jungle telegraph has been alive with tales of David's endless kindness, wit, friendship, intellectual curiosity, generosity of spirit and, most of all, humanity. There have been reports of his prowess as a musician, singer and composer; rave reviews of his performances in Habs Staff plays (his *Governess*, *Miss Prism* in 'The Importance of Being Earnest' was a particular triumph) and the Griffiths' family's assistance in the organising and running of the annual residential holidays for children with learning disabilities (the precursor of today's annual Habs MenCap Days) which cemented him long and affectionately in the memory of the many dozens of participants.

Many generations of Habs students and staff owe so much to him. All who were taught by David at Habs, or who were fortunate enough at some time to have been in his orbit, will have their own special memories of him, and while remembering these we should be thankful to have known a truly wonderful man – a gentle man and a gentleman.

Our thoughts are with Flora, his ever supportive and wonderful wife and their children, John and Fay, and grandchildren Zuzanna, Matthew, Helen and Oliver.

In retirement, David was a popular and much sought-after volunteer guide at St Albans Cathedral, and it is highly appropriate that his funeral should take place there.

David's family have requested that in lieu of flowers should anyone wish to make a donation to do so, please, to the DEC Appeal for Ukraine. [www.dec.org.uk](http://www.dec.org.uk).

### **David Bowers died March 2022**

David grew up in Iver in Buckinghamshire and his happy family included two younger brothers Robin and Paul. He had early memories of being a toddler playing (no doubt quietly and sensibly) at the back of his mother's classroom – she being a teacher of the youngest children at the local primary school.

David proceeded to Slough Grammar School where his academic prowess led to him taking Lower School Certificate (the equivalent of the GCSE today) a year under-age. Two years later he won a place to read French and Spanish at Balliol College, Oxford. He remembered his student days with great affection and was regular in attending reunions. He subsequently did his PGCE year at Oxford with a term's teaching at Colchester Royal Grammar School where the following year Mike Anderson did his teaching practice with both student teachers remembering Dick Norton as a pupil there. All three became Mod Langs colleagues at Habs.

As a linguist David had a fine ear, a natural precision and a remarkable memory. He was also very musical. Early involvement in a church choir led to commitment to faith – a quiet but deep experience which stayed with him throughout life. He was a fine pianist and played the church organ for many years. He was a composer and had works performed in concerts by amateur orchestras. Teaching took him to grammar schools in Hitchin and Portsmouth, to the Licensed Victuallers' School and Harrow School. At Habs there was a time when the timetable worked only because David taught all four of the main languages: French, German, Latin and Spanish. He subsequently taught at Mill Hill School – and then kept his hand in with supply positions in various schools.

In his private life he was known as a caring friend and neighbour – and he showed great dedication in patiently supporting his wife Penny through a long period of illness. He looked forward to family reunions when brother Robin would come over from the USA. He was an

active and loved member of St. Michael's Church in St. Albans for over 40 years. He reached the age of 80 years in reasonable shape but a stroke shortly afterwards led to a loss of activities and independence. He gave up driving and the piano. He said goodbye to the beautiful garden he had created with such diligence. In all this he never complained. Finally he moved to a Care Home in Thame where he was regularly visited by Paul. His last few months were very hard but he bore it all with gentle dignity.

David's self-effacing honesty and peaceful nature may reawaken memories of gentler times. A faithful servant rather than a self-promoter, he expressed loyalty and acceptance at every stage of life.

Stephen Wilson March 2022

**2021**

**Dr Peter Barry died 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021**



We were deeply shocked and saddened to learn the news that our former colleague and friend Dr Peter Barry passed away on Monday 13 December, having suffered from motor neurone disease. Peter taught mathematics at Habs for 36 years from 1982 to 2018.

Having been educated at Cardinal Allen Grammar School in Liverpool, Peter secured a place to read mathematics at Imperial College, London. After completing his BSc. in 1975, he went on to be awarded a distinction in his masters in 1976, before embarking on his Doctorate which he completed in late 1979. Peter then started work with EMI electronics as a Systems Engineer in the Electronic Warfare Products group, whilst attending evening study classes to learn about the applications of various computer languages, at a time when computers were very much in their infancy.

Peter was a perfect role model of how to control a classroom. He was one of those colleagues who would happily take on any ability of any year group, and obviously his expertise with further maths and STEP students was invaluable. Peter also acted as our Year 11 coordinator for many years, writing and re-writing whole year courses for IGCSE and Additional maths which made life so much easier for Year 11 teachers and students

alike. Peter was meticulous in producing solutions to exam papers and his written solutions even surpassed those of Stephen Charlwood for neatness, which anyone who knows Stephen will tell you is no mean feat!

Peter was an experienced middle school tutor, and as with his teaching, he was not afraid to speak plainly and directly if anything did not meet his high standards. Peter advised countless students who went on to study Maths and engineering successfully at university. I will never forget Peter's four-word report appraisal of a GCSE Maths student whose efforts left a lot to be desired: "No effort, no chance!" Sometimes, Peter's intervention with Year 8 students spurred them on to see mathematics in a different light, as was the case with one Michael Broadwith, and it was no surprise when Mike completed his epic Lands End to John O'Groats ride in 2018 that he asked to have Peter make the presentation to him on the Quad in front of the whole school.

Aside from Peter's love of his academic subject, he was very committed to activities outside the classroom, both at Habs and outside school. At University, Peter played college chess and football, and was a member of cross-country and athletics teams, as well as being involved in water polo, Thai boxing, and squash, which he continued to play at Habs right up until he retired. Peter was Head of Athletics at Habs for many years, and the success which the school has enjoyed in recent years is due in no small part to the enthusiasm and dedication which Peter put into the role in his time at the helm.

Conversations over the last couple of days have reminded us of small things – the fact that Peter would only ever wear a short-sleeved shirt, whatever the weather; how in the early days of mobile phones, he would wear his on a belt clip like a gunslinger, and that he would only ever drink black coffee and eat a packed lunch in M01 whilst carrying on producing worksheets and model solutions to past papers. We miss Peter holding court at morning break in the corner of the common room talking with friends about the issues of the day, putting the world to rights.

Many will know that Peter suffered the sadness of the loss of his son Peter Jr. (who was an Old Haberdasher and a fine athlete like his father) just last year, prior to his own diagnosis of MND in February 2021. Our thoughts are firmly with Peter's family who have endured so much over the last two years.

**Michael McLoughlin died 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021**



We are sorry to have to inform the wider Habs community of the passing of Michael McLoughlin, the highly respected former teacher of Mathematics and Housemaster of Meadows, who died on 22 July 2021 aged 89, after a short illness.

Michael McLoughlin joined Habs in 1976 from Douai School where he had taught Mathematics for ten years while simultaneously holding the post of Head of Theology and being a priest and a member of the monastic community at Douai Abbey.

Michael had done his National Service at Sandhurst, read Mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge, and subsequently obtained a PhD in Theology from the University of Louvain, so he was therefore entitled to be called Dr McLoughlin; but, typically self-effacing, he chose not to use this title at Habs. (Throughout his life he maintained a scholarly interest in theology and until very recently continued to write articles on the Gospels.)

Michael immediately threw himself into the life at Haberdashers' and embraced all opportunities which became available to him – just as he encouraged his students so to do.

He taught Mathematics with skill and success. His innate modesty concealed the fact that he could have coached French, Latin and Ancient Greek. His commitment to the co-curricular life of the School was total. For many years he ran the Aeromodelling Club, while his Electronics Club inspired and enthused generations of Habs' boys long before Electronics was more formally taught.

He assisted with Philosophy courses in Sixth Form General Studies (now Enhancement and Enrichment) using his thesis that the existence and applications of mathematics encourages belief in the soul – a difficult idea that he was more than well qualified to address. On a weekly basis, he drove and accompanied Habs boys to Harperbury Hospital to visit patients there as part of the Friday afternoon School and Community Service activities.

On the retirement of Eric 'TEC' Carrington in 1981, Michael was appointed Housemaster of Meadows, a role he fulfilled until 1997. Two more different people in this position one could not have imagined, but Michael's hard work, sincerity and gentle nature inspired confidence and trust from the members of his House. Michael was known to be a key exponent (and proponent) of 'pastoral care', long before the term became fashionable in schools and colleges, and his quietly spoken, sympathetic words of counsel were appreciated by all.

At a time when Habs was one of only three schools in the entire country to have a computer (many will remember the main frame 'beast' which inhabited a room on the upper floor of Phase Three), Michael helped to enthuse students in this new-fangled technology and any number of OHs may now recognise that their subsequent careers in IT were inspired by his considerate and thoughtful encouragement.

When Michael retired in 1997, after 21 years at the School, Habs lost a truly popular and excellent teacher who endeared himself to students and staff alike.

At the request of Michael's widow, Patti, if anyone would like to write any messages of support and sympathy, could they please be sent to [foundation@habsboys.org.uk](mailto:foundation@habsboys.org.uk) from where they will be forwarded to Michael's family.

*With thanks to the late Doug Whittaker, upon whose 1997 Skylark article this piece is written and Dr John Wigley for correcting, enhancing and improving the words above.*

### **Jack Hurst died 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021**



We are sorry to inform the Habs Community that Mr WJ (known to all as Jack) Hurst, former Habs' Head of Languages from 1968-1991, peacefully passed away on 26 March aged 91.

Jack was appointed as a teacher of languages in 1961 when the School moved to Elstree. It quickly became evident to the Headmaster, Tom Taylor, and senior colleagues that a truly exceptional teacher and polymath had joined Haberdashers. He became Head of Spanish in 1964, Head of French in 1966 and Head of Languages in 1968 – a post he held with great distinction until his retirement in 1991.

Jack was a first-rate teacher whose passion for his subject was boundless and generations of pupils benefited from his infectious and compelling enthusiasm for languages. Former colleagues also remember him as a true friend, and a lovely, generous man with a real zest for life.

Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time. If you should wish to express your condolences and sympathies to Jack's family

**2020**

**Margaret Flashman died 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020**



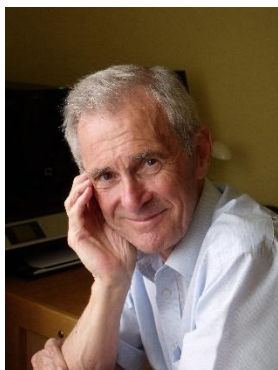
We are sorry to have inform you that Margaret, the wife of Basil Flashman, the much respected and fondly remembered Headmaster of the Habs' Prep. School, passed away on 8 May 2020. She was 91 years old.

Having spent the War years as pupil at the Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls, Margaret re-joined the School at Acton in 1968 proving to be a popular and inspirational teacher of Domestic Science, as well as an appreciated and approachable colleague. For a number of years, she also taught the joint Boys' and Girls' Schools Sixth Form General Studies (now termed 'Enhancement & Enrichment') Domestic Science course. After twenty years sterling service to the Girls School, Margaret retired in 1988.

Basil, meanwhile, had been made Headmaster of the Boys' Prep. School in 1966 and, as the Head's wife, Margaret was in her element. She maintained a great enthusiasm for meeting people, hosting School occasions and making new Prep. parents feel welcome via newly initiated cheese and wine parties and coffee mornings with mothers – all vital to the building of the Prep School's reputation as a caring and sociable institution. Margaret was a wonderful ambassadress for the School and was known as such throughout the Habs community. Such was the affection for the Flashmans that when Basil retired in 1989 the Prep. parents gave them a superb evening reception, which they were driven to and from in a specially provided Rolls Royce.

Basil died in March 2014. Margaret is survived by her son David and daughter Geraldine (both of whom were educated at Elstree) and ten grandchildren.

**John Carleton died 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020**



It is with great regret that we have to inform the wide Haberdashers community of the passing of John Carleton, the School's highly respected former Second Master, who passed away peacefully in the early hours of 15 April 2020. He had been suffering from dementia for three years.

John Carleton was born in Paddington Green General Hospital, early in the New Year of 1938. When the Second World War broke out and the Blitz began, John was evacuated with his mother to his grandmother's house in Wales. Here the family stayed for the duration of the hostilities, before returning to West London but not without John having assimilated a distinctive Welsh accent (at times....) – which many of his teenage charges at Haberdashers will recall.

He attended St Clement Danes secondary school in Hammersmith and then in 1956 went to Exeter University to read Chemistry and whilst there met his wife Janet.

John was appointed to the role of Chemistry teacher by Headmaster, Tom Taylor in 1960 and very quickly proved himself to be a first-class educator. Passionate about his subject and an outstanding classroom practitioner, he earned the respect of boys and colleagues alike, while also providing guidance, support and care for those who were lucky enough to find themselves around him.

In 1966, Tom Taylor approached John to become Head of Chemistry, and never one to shirk a challenge (he was already the School Liaison Manager for the construction of the new Phase Two Science Block – which has since been replaced by the Aske Building) John embraced the opportunity.

In 1970 John became acting Head of Science and was confirmed in this post in 1972. Under his tutelage, science flourished at Haberdashers with the recruitment of a group of young colleagues whose wish to adopt new methods of teaching was matched by John's steadfast encouragement of innovation. Many Old Haberdashers of that generation owe so much to John and his refusal to settle for second best, always gently coercing his 6th Form pupils to strive for the 'outstanding' and not just for the 'very good'.

On the retirement of Dai Barling in 1982, John was an immediate first choice for the role of Second Master at Habs. As Bruce McGowan's right-hand man for five years, he effectively ran the School during Bruce's Chairmanship of the Headmasters' Conference in 1985. When Bruce retired in 1987, John again was a great ally, friend and source of support to Keith Dawson, and his wise and sage advice helped to ease Jeremy Goulding (as John's fourth Headmaster at Haberdashers) into his new position in Aldenham House in 1996, before himself retiring in 1998.

In retirement, John and Janet kept in close contact with Habs and were enthusiastic supporters of School Music and Drama as well as attending the near annual gathering of the Termites (Habs members of staff who had spent 100 terms or more at the School). They also enjoyed travel and spent much time in France, a country they loved and knew very well.

A dedicated family man, John was intensely proud of his children Andrew and Louise (who both attended the Schools at Elstree) and their own families, based in the UK and Germany.

In Keith Dawson's own words: "He was one of the best friends the School can have had in its long history. John had the essence of Habs in his bones and he gave more than a professional lifetime to serving and supporting it. He was straight as a die, a firm and trusty friend who could be relied on to speak difficult truth when necessary. The boys he taught admired him and spoke of him decades later with warm affection; those he hadn't taught respected him as an understated but resolute disciplinary rock who kept a tight ship without any hint of vindictiveness.

John was also a man of rare, hidden talents. My wife, Marjorie, vividly remembers his coming to the rescue when someone helping in the Head's House had locked her car keys in her car. With deft, and evidently practiced, use of a credit card John had the driver's door open within 20 seconds. Jaws dropped, awestruck."

David Lindsay, Habs former School Chaplain, recalls:

"John gave his life to Habs – a fine teacher, a superb administrator, but, more than that, a thoroughly decent man with a caring and compassionate heart".

Finally, for those of us who were fortunate enough to be taught at Habs during John's long time there, the words of David Thomas, his erstwhile colleague at Westbere Road, ring clear.

"He was all that a schoolmaster should be".

(With thanks to the late Simon Boyes on whose valedictory piece in 1998's Skylark this tribute is based)

The above was issued by the School 17th April 2020

Clive Hyman ('79) adds:

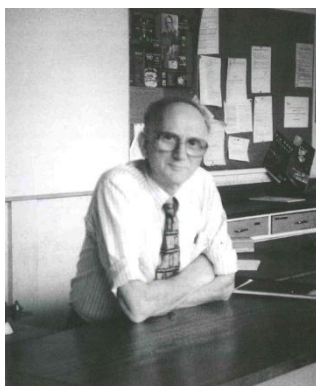
I was privileged to be taught chemistry by both Simon Boyes (his first job post Cambridge) and John was head of science when I was a sixth former and was taught chemistry by John in my 6SSc 7th term entrance exams to Cambridge.

He inspired me to succeed and helped and supported me through the period of my sixth form at School and was a very able second master. It was a privilege to have known him and be taught by him.

I have very special memories of him as a teacher and dare I say as a friend.

May he rest in peace.

#### **Dr Michael Levin died 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020**



Michael Levin, who died on Wednesday 22 January aged 86 after a long illness, taught Physics with great accomplishment at Habs from 1972 to 1997, and for those of us who were taught by him his enthusiasm and knowledge of his subject was second to none.

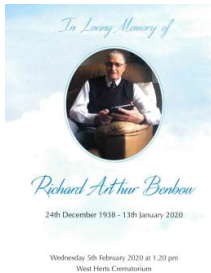
He also was a vitally important member of the Careers department as well as overseeing a very successful generation of Habs Chess players. His funeral took place last Friday. Michael was himself an Old Haberdasher, joining the School at Westbere Road in 1946 and leaving in 1950.

After obtaining excellent degrees from Imperial College, London, and spending some years working for the National Coal Board, the lure of Haberdashers was such (as with a number of OHs) that in 1972 he returned to teach – having been recruited by the then Headmaster,

Tom Taylor. Michael's sons Jonathan (OH 1980) and David (OH 1982) both came to Habs, as indeed did a number of his nephews.

Our thoughts and condolences are with his whole family, and most especially his widow, Henny.

### **Dick Benbow died 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020**



Former Head of Habs' Practical Design, Dick Benbow died on 13 January 2020, having celebrated his 81st birthday on Xmas Eve.

Dick joined Habs in February 1968 from City University where he had been Chief Technician for almost three years, having fulfilled similar roles at Hatfield College of Technology and the Borough Polytechnic (before which he did his National Service as an Armourer attached to the 1st Battalion Royal Regiment).

At Habs, he was initially recruited into the Handiwork Dept, but the then Head of Science, John Bausor, persuaded Dick to use his considerable skills and knowledge to increase the application of practical science in the School's curriculum. When a new block was added for Physics and Geography in 1974, it included a special workshop for the new subject 'Practical Design' and Dick was made Head of this department. The workshop had a range of basic equipment and machinery, including a vehicle inspection pit to teach car design and maintenance.

With Dick, the boys also designed and built digital clocks, audio electronics, and the basic electronics of computers and many other items with a technical content, as part of the School's curriculum-broadening X and General Studies periods, with the workshop being open at lunchtimes for keen boys to continue their individual projects.

When Art and Craft moved into what had been the Prep School (in the old BBC Block), Dick's work transferred to the Design and Technology department and electronics became an optionally examined subject in the Science Dept. Dick was a superb Design & Technology teacher. His technical knowledge across multi materials was vast and though he was a strict disciplinarian in the workshop, he had the most wonderful (and wicked) sense of humour which he generously shared with his colleagues.

He was also an incredibly loyal supporter of the CCF Navy section, not only running that cohort for a number of years but devoting much of his holiday time accompanying cadets on a number of Adventure Training Expeditions, Range Firing weekends and Sailing Courses.

Dick suffered a heart attack in February 1992 and decided to take early retirement a few months later. Meanwhile, in 1981 his wife Lillian had begun working in the School Shop and remained there until she retired in September 2003.

Dick was a consummate 'family man'...he cherished his marriage to Lillian and was enormously proud of his children, Stephanie and David. Following his heart attack, Lillian nursed him back to rude health and made sure that he kept up his daily exercise and routines, such that he was still playing golf at the beginning of December.

As many of his former colleagues have said already, Dick was equipped with plenty of advice and help to those who were less practically inclined. He was one of the many excellent teachers who did so much for the School's reputation and in the process inspired generations of Habs Boys.

**2019**

### **WENDY MORELLI (Prep School 2000-2019)**

It is with sadness that we learn of the passing of Wendy Morelli who worked at the prep School for almost 20 years. Mr Rossetti (Prep Headmaster) writes:

Often the first to welcome the boys in the morning and the last to see them on their way home in the afternoon, Wendy knew each boy well, overseeing them in the playground and working with them in the classroom. She cared deeply for them and had high expectations of them, always ready with the right word of praise, always the first to notice anything amiss and never indulgent. She was a veteran of many Prep School Ski Trips, when boys, often for the first time, would be travelling abroad away from home: at once able to comfort them and to ensure they took care of their things (and remembered their gloves).

Wendy was a key supporter of Art and Drama in the Prep. A member of an amateur dramatics company, her enthusiasm and talent for theatre was inspirational for the boys. She worked countless hours in preparing costumes and staging for all Prep plays and supporting in their direction. A colleague full of joy, energy and dedication, Wendy was a true friend to the larger Habs Prep Community and her own children Tom and Lisa as well as her son in law, Ian (Matthews), all worked at HABS at one stage.

### **MARY HARDCASTLE (1988-1991)**

Mrs Myra Hardcastle, member of the Habs Modern Languages dept from 1988-91, died aged 70 on Wednesday 8 May from complications arising from MS and a possible stroke. Mrs Hardcastle was a very fine teacher and an excellent linguist, speaking French as fluently and naturally as a native speaker. We are grateful to Richard Hayler (OH 1997) for his memories, set out below, of being taught by her.

'The first time I had consciously uttered a single word in a foreign language was in my first year 7 French class taught by Mrs Hardcastle. She explained in the opening minute that we were to address her at all times as Madame Chateau-Dur, which typified her instinctive, immersive approach to teaching modern languages.

The Textbook, Tricolore 1, rarely got a look in during her lessons. Every member of 1.11 was given an adopted French pseudonym, we watched sections of French language films and were presented with non-curricular exercises ranging from cheese tasting to translating articles copied from Paris Match. Every classroom incident was an opportunity to learn a new word or phrase. Once caught doodling on the question paper during a French listening test, the whole testing process was stopped not primarily to admonish me but to appoint me as the class 'gribouiller' expert. Everyone was assigned an expertise in or of something, from the positives (neat handwriting) to the negatives (answering back). Every opportunity to squeeze out another drop of varied French language.

Mrs Hardcastle's lessons were a memorable shock to the system. She was a proudly unconventional teacher, who taught with passion and enthusiasm for the subject and obvious joy at imparting to her students the ability to converse in modern languages.'

**2018**

**ALAN TAYLOR MBE (1961 to 1996)**



It was with much sadness that the School learned that Alan Taylor, former Director of Music at Haberdashers, passed away last lunchtime on 23rd November 2018 at the Lister Hospital, Stevenage.

Alan was a chorister at St. Catharine's College, Cambridge and graduated with an honours degree in Music followed by a post-graduate Diploma in Education. A first post as a Head of Music in Nottinghamshire was followed by his recruitment to Haberdashers in 1961 by the then Headmaster, Tom Taylor (no relation). On the retirement through ill health of Dr Eric McLellan one year later, Alan was rapidly appointed Director of Music at Habs, a role which he held for the following 34 years. As teacher, composer, conductor and choirmaster, Alan oversaw and led performances of the School Choir at the Royal Opera House, the annual Christmas Carol Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and latterly at The Barbican.

Generations of Habs boys benefited from his inspirational teaching and his ability to coax the very best out of his choirs. Recordings of concerts made during those 35 years still bear testament to this. Some OHs will also remember him as a skilful Fives player and teacher.

Out of school, Alan worked with all the major conductors and his choirs were continually in demand for performances in the London concert halls, taking part in many broadcasts, Promenade Concerts and recordings. His contribution to Music and Music Education was recognised in 1982 with the award of an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Very appropriately last Thursday was of course St Cecilia's Day, the patron Saint of Music, and the final carol Alan composed (The Cradle) is due to be sung at the School's Carol Service at St Albans Cathedral three weeks after his passing.

**DFB "DAVE" WRENCH (1962 to 1970)**



Rugby international, teacher, cadet leader, councillor, community stalwart - Dave Wrench, who has died aged 81, was a man of many talents.

The youngest of three brothers, he was born in Winsford, Cheshire, where he attended the local primary school before winning a scholarship to Sandbach School, where he excelled at sport.

He was playing rugby for Wilmslow - later Winnington Park - by the age of 17 and also turned out at county level when a student at Leeds University, where he obtained a chemistry degree.

He then took an MA in education at Cambridge University, where he won a rugby blue as a much-feared prop.

Mr Wrench worked for a time for Procter and Gamble before going into teaching at Haberdashers' Aske's School, in Hertfordshire, playing rugby for Harlequins, where he was captain for a season, and going on a number of overseas tours.

He later played for Northampton and as well as representing the Barbarians made two appearances for England. In a 'fantasy' Cambridge team named by Phil de Glanville and Damian Hopley, he was selected as tight head prop.

Mr Wrench, who was married with three sons and a daughter, took up a teaching post at Taunton School in 1970.

He was a county and Taunton Deane councillor until 1992 and previously chairman of Wellington Town Council starting a twinning link with Immenstadt, in Germany.

Tony Brown, of Wellington Town Council, said: "David was a great doer. Nothing put him off and he did a lot for Wellington."

Mr Wrench married Audrey in 1993 and the couple recently celebrated their 25th anniversary.

The couple retired to Durston, when he became involved with the Conservatives and was chairman of North Curry, although he was forced to give up politics due to ill health.

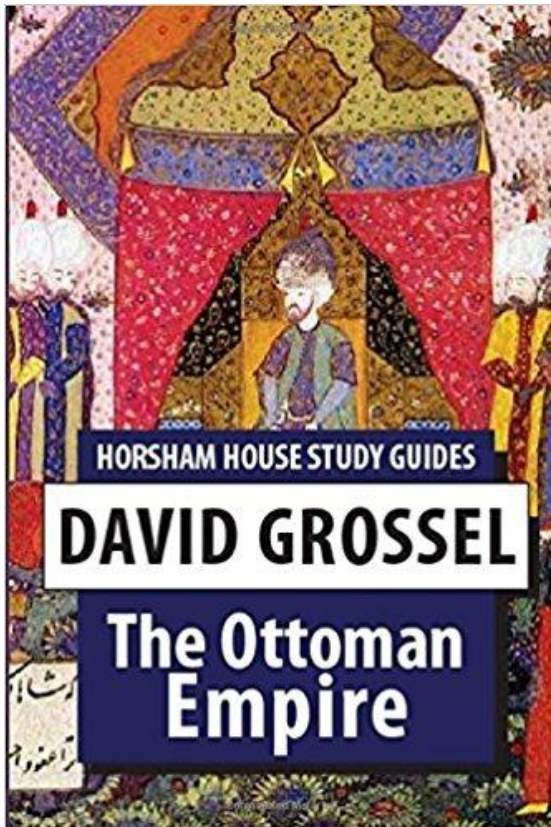
Mrs Wrench said: "David loved to get involved and helped build an extension to our village hall."

"He had a wonderful voice and loved school productions, his favourite being Guys and Dolls.

"He was much more than a teacher. He was a role model to his students to achieve the best standards in what they wanted to do and their abilities could achieve."

Reproduced from [www.thisisthewestcountry.co.uk](http://www.thisisthewestcountry.co.uk) 25th June 2018

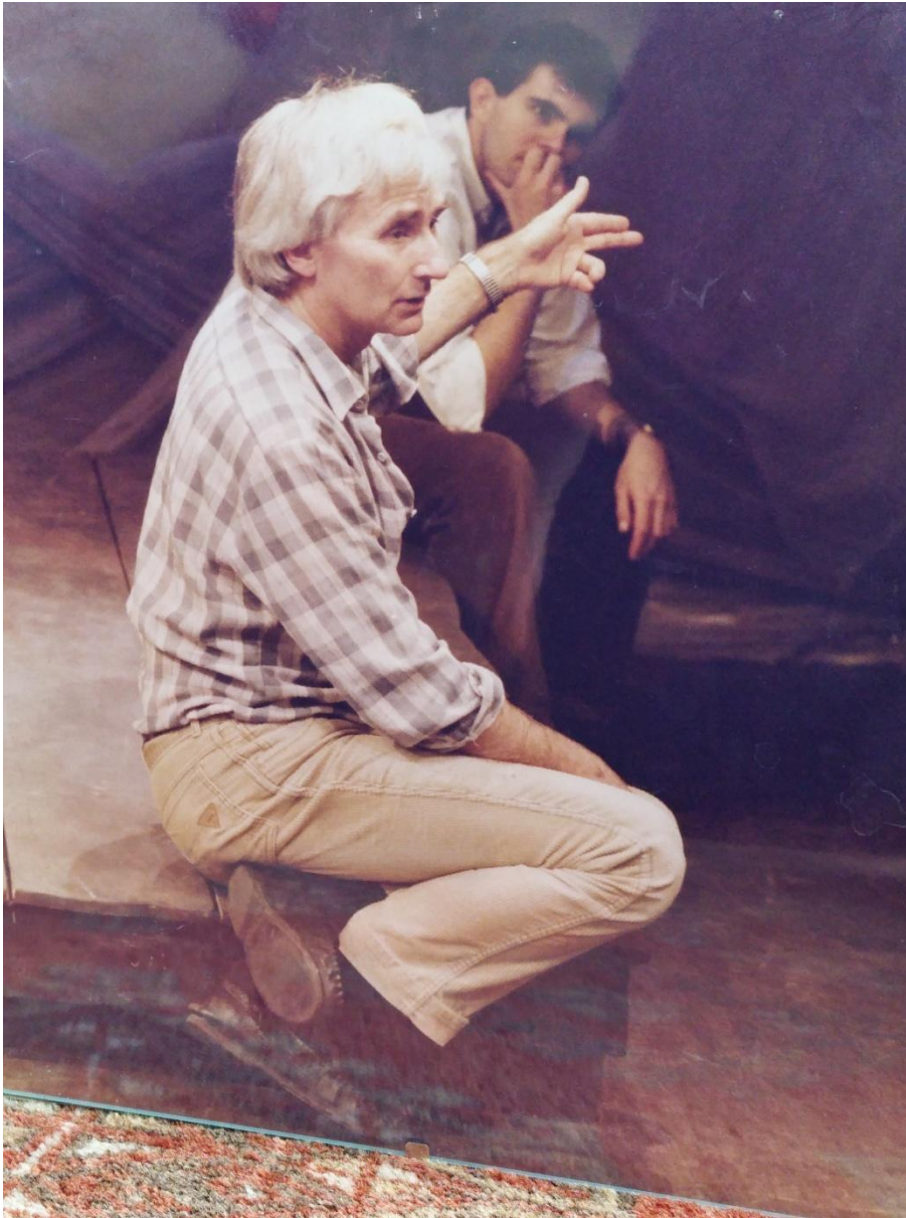
**DAVID GROSSEL (1974 to 1980)**



David Gossel, who died on May 8th, taught History at the Boys' School in Elstree from 1974 until 1980. His dry wit, broad academic interests, vast knowledge of past and present, and his devotion to Fulham FC were a potent combination. He was deeply admired by those whom he taught throughout the school but especially in the sixth-form and he inspired many boys to read History at university. Fresh from a first-class degree at King's College, London, he had been appointed together with Stuart Moore when the school suddenly lost two History teachers at Christmas 1973. He taught subsequently at Kingston Grammar, UCS, City of London Boys' School and King's College, Wimbledon, where he was deputy head in both schools, and he enjoyed a final swansong at the Hampton School. We send condolences to his wife, Lucy, and his two daughters, Rosie and Eleanor.

Professor Lawrence Graham May 2018

**2017**  
**STEVE WILKINS (TEACHER 1973-2000)**



Written by his daughter, Katherine Bailey

John Stephen Ross Wilkins (JSRW) was born in Taunton to Gwen and John Wilkins. As his dad was also John he was called Steve, his first middle name. He has an older sister Jan and a younger sister Beth.

As a child he loved playing in the sandpit creating wonderful bridges and tunnels with his Dinkys and pushing around a wheeled white 'horse Dobbin'. He shared a bedroom with his younger sister and they used to create shadow plays with coloured lights (improvised from battered traffic lights) and watch the ensuing drama; (quietly of course). He built his own model theatre, and had a gift for oil painting and pencil drawing.

He grew up with theatre as their dad was heavily involved in the Taunton Thespians, a group still going today and his dad was instrumental in getting a purpose-built theatre (The Brewhouse) constructed in Taunton, which is still an active theatre today.

Steve wrote and directed his first play which his sisters acted in when he was at Taunton School. He enjoyed making intricate set designs for plays which his dad was producing at Taunton School, where his dad taught.

After an interview at New College Oxford, he returned home saying "I've dined at New College for the first and last time" and to his pleasure was offered a place to study modern languages. During his time at Uni he created a character called Bartholomew and did over 50 little drawings of him, each with a different comment/meaning.

He lived for a year in France to improve his language skills, worked as a waiter where he had to decant cheap local wine into more expensive bottles and take maggots out of the cheese!

He was involved with the set designing and making at Oxford University Dramatic Society (where he met Bridget who he later married) as he was technically and artistically clever. That was the exciting part, not Modern Languages for him at Uni! He designed and built the set for "Can't do much without a screwdriver" with the Oxford Experimental Theatre Club which transferred to London. He also toured Europe with OUDS and designed the sets and toured England with the Prospect Theatre Company.

He did a year's teacher training and then went to teach French and German at Epsom College but also did the school plays. There he was allowed to keep his long hair and quirky clothes because he was the drama teacher. But he felt that teaching foreign languages was like 'teaching a telephone directory' so went to central school of speech and drama to do a one year's teachers course.

Following that he got the job at Haberdashers and moved to Hertfordshire. At Habs he cleverly ran a theatre going club for the boys there which allowed him to go to the theatre in London regularly, sitting in good seats for reduced (schools) prices.

A very practical person, good at building beehives, mending things and making to scale models of his sets. He hated to waste things and was frugal with money. He inherited a

love of vegetable gardening from his parents, but also kept chickens, geese and ducks for many years.

He was very active on the parish council in Park Street, Hertfordshire to try to ensure that the M25 was constructed on the best route.

His daughter Katherine was born in July 1980, however he and Bridget divorced in the late 1980's and he moved to Kings Langley.

Steve met Clare through Haberdashers as her daughter Vanessa, had been in one of his plays, 'The Boyfriend' and they married in 1994. He was welcomed into the family by Clare's 3 children, Vanessa, Sarah and Anna, and, in time, their children.

He loved holidays in Cornwall, both as a child at Polzeath and as an adult at Rock near Padstow.

He was not a good cook, his best dishes being microwaved omelette or mince beef, fried with onions and beansprouts on pasta! But he did enjoy helping Clare to cook or make jams and marmalades although they would then argue who was NOT going to do the washing up!

He and Clare trained as yoga teachers and Steve gave yoga classes to the boys at Haberdashers school during their lunch break. Although he had a tendency to fall asleep during the relax at the end of the session! He was also well known for sitting crossed legged on the floor in a yoga style.

He directed over 90 plays at Habs and acted in many staff plays, usually as the madman. He was very proud in 1992 to give away his niece Elly when she married Simon in Taunton, Somerset. He gave Katherine away when she married David in 2008 in Staffordshire.

He retired in 2000 after 27 years teaching English and being Head of Drama at Haberdashers Askes School for boys in Hertfordshire, a school which remains one of the top independent schools in the country. He and Clare moved to Lyme Regis where they lived until 2016. All Steve and Clare's children, their partners and grandchildren enjoyed many holidays in Lyme with them during that 16 years.

He sang in Lyme voices with Clare for many years and was heavily involved with The Lyme Regis Society, especially the restoration of shelters at Marine Parade and also the planning group who responded on behalf of the society to planning applications in Lyme.

He had his professional directorial debut in 2007, age 67 with Joey, King of Clowns. A one man show about the life of Joseph Grimaldi written and performed by Tony Lidington, a former pupil. It opened at the Georgian Theatre Richmond and toured the UK including The Grand Theatre, Blackpool.

In 2010 he became a grandpa to Abigail Jean and again in 2012 to James Stephen.

Sadly Steve was diagnosed with dementia which he faced with typical stoicism and bravery. He died in London on 1st November 2017 age 77.

## **2015**

### **Andy Funnell, Maths teacher 1969-1976**

Andy Funnell has died following a battle with cancer. Andy taught maths at Habs from 1969 - 1976 where, alongside John Crampin, he introduced many boys and members of the staff to the joys of the huge mainframe computer that appeared to work on punched paper. Most never did quite understand exactly how it worked but one typing error meant you had to start again from scratch and waste half a ream of punched card. Andy and John made the staff computer lessons great fun.

Andy was also a useful sportsman and several times played centre forward for the staff team playing the senior boys at soccer in some very enjoyable lunchtime matches.

Andy married his wife Kathy during his time at Habs, they had a son called Jamie.

## **2014**

### **Basil Flashman 29 October 1926 to 4 March 2014**



Born in Northern India Basil came to England at the age of 6 on his own by boat to join his widowed mother in England. He attended Bembridge School on the Isle of Wight as a boarder. After a school life which included wartime evacuation to the Lake District, his working life began as a journalist for the Gravesend and Dartford Reporter but in 1944 he was called up to the Army where he served with the Intelligence section in Cairo and India. While in India he learnt to play Hockey, which he later developed at Habs, and will be remembered by many for the starring role he played in staff v boys matches over many decades.

After the war Basil returned to college (where he became college boxing champion) and trained to teach at Westminster school achieving a distinction and a pure "A" for teaching practice. He began teaching in 1951 at the Grange School Ealing (with a class of 55 pupils in his first year) and then moved to Habs Prep School in 1957. The Prep School moved to Elstree along with the main school in 1961 and was housed in what was known as the BBC block. It had been constructed for BBC wartime use and was reputed to have a concrete roof so thick that it would withstand a direct hit from a one ton bomb so it was perhaps an ideal site for 150 energetic Habs prep boys. Basil liked it because it brought the Prep school onto the same site as the main school, allowing the prep staff to integrate more fully with the Staff Common Room. Basil was appointed Headmaster of the Prep School in 1966.

After 22 years in the BBC block Basil was rewarded with a magnificent new Preparatory school which was formally opened by HRH Princess Margaret in June 1983. This new school building, complete with its own classrooms, assembly hall, changing rooms and playground allowed Basil to have the school he had dreamed of and to encourage new ventures in music and sport including its own orchestra, choir and concerts.

After 32 years at Habs Basil retired in 1989. Not only had he overseen the new building but he had led the Prep School camp for 25 years in succession and the Prep ski trip for 22 years in succession. He had become a legend in his time for his terrible jokes nestled within a great sense of humour, his huge powerful motorbike, the elaborate models he inspired the boys to make from cornflake packets and the like, and for the care he took over every child

in his school. He was awarded the Freedom of the City of London and became a Freeman of the Haberdashers Guild.

Following his retirement from Habs Basil founded Manor Lodge School. He remained at the school until it had reached 300 pupils and by which time he was 70. Despite taking a little time off for holidays across the world he then joined the advisory committee of the Brewers Livery Company, the committee of the Herts County Educational Foundation, The Watford Probus committee and the governing board of several schools. He was on the Governing board of Harperbury Hospital education centre, Chairman of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme for South West Herts, Chairman of the Citizens Advice Bureau for Borehamwood and the Hertfordshire Educational Trust. He returned to Habs on numerous occasions for School plays and Carol Concerts.

Basil's funeral will take place at Aldenham Church at 2.30 Friday 14 March 2014. Basil's family welcome all who wish to attend. A reception will take place at Aldenham Golf Club. The family have established a UK Charity 'The Basil Flashman Education Trust'. It will have as its primary focus, life-changing educational opportunities for children in the developing world. The charity will take up registration with the Charity Commission once donations reach the legal threshold of £5,000. All donors are eligible to be members of the charity and, as such, will receive accounts and the reports of the trust and have the right to attend general meetings. The trustees will be chaired by Basil's son in law Nic Journeaux (a senior partner of the law firm Carey Olsen) an experienced trustee of the Busoga Trust which has a 30 year track record of excellent work in water and sanitation in Uganda. Full details of the Basil Flashman Education Trust and how to donate are available by e mailing Nic at [nj.jsl@mac.com](mailto:nj.jsl@mac.com) The charity aims to have an internet presence shortly.

The school will be hosting a service of commemoration in due course. In the meantime, on behalf of the school and its wider community, I extend my sympathy and support to Basil's family. He will be missed.

Peter Hamilton

Headmaster

**2013**

**Margaret Taylor (1916 - 2013) - Passed Away Saturday 10th August 2013**



Keith Dawson paid the following tribute to Margaret at the Service of Thanksgiving for Margeret's life held at St Michael's Church, St Albans on Thursday 26th September 2013.

I thank Margaret's family, and especially Jenny and Alison, for asking me to say just a little about Margaret and her long association with the school that she knew and loved for 66 years. How wonderful that today there is no cause for sadness and every reason to rejoice. Margaret lived a long, rich and beautiful life. She made the world a better and a happier place for having been in it. What more could we wish for?

Two-thirds of a century is such an improbably long time that I find that I need some milestones and staging posts to get a sense of the epic quality of Tom and Margaret's life in schools. When he came as Headmaster to the School in Hampstead in the summer of 1946 Tom was a youthful 38 and Margaret just 30 but Tom had already been Head of the City of Bath School for 6 years, so Margaret began her life as a head's wife at the ripe old age of 24. When I first met her in 1963, Tom had been a head for nearly a quarter of a century but Margaret was still only 46, and her association with HABS was to continue for another 50 years.

Half of Tom's years at HABS were spent at Hampstead. During that time the Taylors lived away from the school and Margaret led a busy life bringing up a family of five girls and, at long last [!], a boy, Jeremy, whose birth was celebrated by the Headmaster granting the School a day's holiday. [Try doing *that* these days!] Even so, John Lear remembers that Margaret soon gained a reputation for being particularly helpful to others. Rodney Jakeman recalls her supporting athletic events at Chase Lodge. He also remembers some of the Taylor girls joining expeditions of the canoe club, organised by the redoubtable John Dudderidge.

The move of the School to Elstree in 1961 was, arguably, the most important event in its history. It was certainly Tom's greatest achievement, creating as it did the opportunity for HABS to become one of the leading schools in the country.

For Margaret the move was a seismic change. The setting for their new home was very beautiful but in those early days the new buildings were raw and un-lived in. They needed to be made into a real home, for the School and for the Taylor family. We all have Margaret to thank for the wonderful way she helped to create *both* these homes, as a wife, mother and daughter [her father, Professor Swinnerton lived at Elstree in his latter years] - *and for us, the extended family, in the School.*

When I arrived at Elstree two years after the move I found the whole atmosphere of the place thrilling. It was enterprising, dynamic, forward thinking, outward looking and it changed my life. But it was also, crucially, a *close, friendly community*. You felt you *belonged* and that people genuinely *cared* about and for you.

Margaret was at the heart of this.

In some ways she was quite scary to a young couple still a bit wet behind the ears. She was strong and tough-minded, down-to-earth and straight from the shoulder. She didn't put up with fanciful ideas or pretension and she had a clear, penetrating eye that kept you up to the mark. We soon found that she was also *kind*, generous-hearted, full of sparkle, vitality and a zest for life. Without in any way thrusting herself forward, she was a model and an inspiration for us all.

Marjorie and I were among those who became for a time specially close to Margaret and her family because we lived in the boarding house in Aldenham House for four years. Margaret kept a friendly and benevolent eye on our babies and infants and welcomed our 2 year-old Eleanor to the Head's house where she enjoyed the sand-pit and milk and biscuits. There was also the dressing up box and the chance to become a nurse or a pirate from the scraps of colourful jumble that Margaret kept for these occasions.

Of course Margaret had a much bigger box [whole rooms in fact] from which she used to conjure costumes for school plays. For many years she was a key member of the team responsible for the School's exceptional drama productions. On the legendary play tours to Germany in the 1960s: [9 performances in 6 different cities in 12 days] Margaret was one of us: dedicated, creative and supportive, not least back-stage. Thespian tantrums, hysteria - even broken bones during a performance - didn't phase her. She was a rock of comfort and calming good sense.

Margaret was just as involved in many other areas of school life. She was present at just about every significant school event. She took an active part in the MENCAP summer camps and other community work, she hosted the world class musicians [Barenboim, du Pre, Ashkenazy, the Menhuins] when they gave pre-London concerts in the School Hall at Elstree. Most of all, she knew a great deal about what was *happening* in school, both officially and *unofficially*. She and Tom cheerfully welcomed to their house lots of boys and every member of staff and their partners. She made us feel glad to be there, part of the school family, wanting to be involved. And all this time she had the rich personal life that kept her perennially young in heart.

Margaret's friendship and support for the School continued for four decades after Tom's retirement in 1973. She was one of the first people we met when Marjorie and I came back to Elstree in 1987 and we were pleased to welcome her to almost every school event in our time there. Peter Hamilton has recorded how this continued to the end of her life, remembering her extraordinary, sparky speech, at the age of 95, during the 50th anniversary celebrations of the move to Elstree and thanking her for becoming the first Patron of the School's Foundation campaign.

We shall always remember Margaret and keep a place for her in our hearts. Her indomitable spirit remained with her to the end. Phillip Parr recalls visiting her in St Albans Hospital when she was very ill indeed and seemingly asleep. "Hello Margaret, it's Phillip'. No response. 'How are you my lovely? [Then, daringly] 'You always were my *favourite* girlfriend.' And that much loved and familiar voice rang out loud and clear: 'I'm very glad to hear it!"

No-one has been a better friend of Haberdashers than Margaret Taylor. We all rejoice, we thank her - and we love her.

**The following eulogy was given at the Service of Thanksgiving by the Reverend Kenneth Padley.**

Margaret Swinnerton was born the youngest of three sisters in Nottingham on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1915. She grew up in a house of ideas and conversation. Her father was a professor in the University. Her school wanted her to take a degree in domestic science, an idea which Margaret ridiculed, cookery never resting among her prodigious list of talents. Instead she went to Birmingham to train as a physiotherapist. These medical skills remained throughout Margaret's life. For example, she whiled away the hours of her convalescence last winter at the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital in Welwyn by showing the staff that she understood the exercises required of her at least as well as they did.

In 1937 Margaret married a promising young teacher called Tom Taylor. Over the following years they were blessed with six children: Katrina, Elizabeth, Alison, Judith, Jeremy, and Jenny. Margaret had a deep love for her whole family and followed their divergent lives with

interest. They in turn blessed her with no fewer than 31 grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Work took the family successively to Guiseley in Yorkshire, Bath, and then in 1946 to Cricklewood when Tom became Headmaster of Haberdasher Askes boys school. This role was Tom's lasting legacy where he is remembered for moving the school to Elstree. Haberdashers became one of the deepest and enduring commitments of Margaret's life. She threw herself into task of headmaster's wife: entertaining staff at her own expense, undertaking international trips for example with the school play and orchestra, and continuing her involvement long after Tom's retirement in 1973, most recently in 2011 as guest of honour at the old boys dinner on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the new school buildings. Margaret and Tom moved to St Albans in 1974 from which base she pursued her diverse interests deep into retirement. Through her love of history she served as a cathedral guide and undertook Roman digs; she became the first female president of St Albans Architectural and Archaeological Society. Her love of people and especially children was evidenced through her charitable work for Save the Children Fund and through her support for playgroups such as the St Michael's Tiny Tots. She had a skilled artistic bent, and was adept both at painting and the piano. She kept fit through gardening, walking, and swimming. She had an unstoppable vivacity for life which belied her age. At 92 she could be found white water rafting on the Colorado and there is a photo from a similar period of Margaret in America up a ladder repairing the roof of a heritage log cabin. She was driving until the age of 95, benevolently chauffeuring to church those whom *she* termed 'elderly people'.

Margaret faced impairments, operations and accidents over recent years with stoicism and strength. Since last December she fought off norovirus, c. difficile and double pneumonia before finally being settled in Oaktree Manor Nursing Home where she received excellent care from the dedicated staff during her last few weeks. She died at Oaktree on the afternoon of Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August.

Personally, it was a huge privilege to have known Margaret for the last 1% of her extraordinary life. I remember distinctly at my induction last summer and on several subsequent Sundays that this little old lady kept sidling up and talking at my midriff, 'I'm the oldest you know, I'm the oldest'. Margaret was tremendously and rightly proud of all that she had achieved in her 97 years. She had of course intended to live to a hundred, a milestone that many in this room firmly expected her to make. 'I'm the oldest you know'. And yet of course by introducing herself in that way, she was speaking volumes of her deep-seated faith. She was telling me - what she later explicitly confirmed - that the God in whose providence we both believe had sent me to conduct her funeral. 'I'm the oldest you know'. I'm going to hand over now to others whose appreciation of Margaret goes back somewhat further.

**The following information was issued by the School and Margaret Taylor's family.**

## **Dear Members of the Habs Community (from Peter Hamilton, Headmaster)**

It is with much regret and sorrow that I advise the Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School community of the recent death of Margaret Taylor, who passed away in the company of her family on Saturday 10 August 2013.

A lady of boundless enthusiasm and extraordinary vitality, Margaret Taylor played a pivotal role in helping to elevate a well-respected London school into one of the leading independent schools in the nation.

She was only 30 when her husband, Dr Tom Taylor, himself only 38, was appointed as Headmaster of The Haberdashers' Aske's School, Hampstead. He quickly concluded that the extent of war damage to the school, its limited location and lack of easily accessible sports facilities, made a new location essential. It is rumoured that Tom and Margaret spent many a happy Sunday afternoon driving around Hertfordshire looking for a new location before finally alighting on Lord Aldenham's estate. As a result, in 1961 the school moved to a potentially ideal campus at Elstree and later adopted its current name, The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School. Dr Taylor retired in 1973 and died eight years later. The school which he did so much to revive is now recognised around the world as being one of the leading British independent schools, with an outstanding reputation for academic excellence, a remarkable range of extracurricular and sports activities, and a strong and supportive multi-cultural community, all within magnificent grounds and facilities.

Throughout his time at Haberdashers', Tom always relied on the steadfast support of his wife Margaret, and between them they built up a reputation that extended far beyond the walls of the school. Her involvement in so much of the school's life brought Margaret great fulfilment. Though the mother of a large family herself - 5 daughters and 1 son - she always had time for others, especially the staff and their children. She showed kindness and understanding toward everyone she came across. Her dedication to the boys at this flourishing school with all its activities were noteworthy. She helped make the costumes for school plays, including those travelling to Germany touring the country in two minibuses. She was a warm hostess for visitors and staff in their home in the grounds. She was a source of strength for all, always supportive and encouraging, and was held in the highest respect.

Margaret's support for the school remained undiminished throughout the years after Tom's death in 1981. She was a constant attendee of school plays and concerts, and her speech at the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the move to Elstree when she was 95 remains a high point for all. Equally, her willingness to be the first Patron of the school's fundraising campaign proved hugely important in establishing the credibility of the Habs Foundation. Her passing will be felt deeply by thousands of old boys, teachers and parents. They will never

forget her humour, her strength, her enthusiasm and vitality.

Margaret Taylor was a committed Christian all her life, a deeply spiritual lady and a very active member of the congregation of St Michael's Church, St Albans - the city where she lived in retirement. She had a remarkably wide range of interests and never lost her energy and enthusiasm for life. She was a qualified physiotherapist, an accomplished artist and a very competent pianist. For many years she was much involved in the establishment and running of children's playgroups. She was a keen and knowledgeable archaeologist, notably in the excavations of Roman remains in St Albans, and was an active member of several of the city's societies. She was a widely travelled lady and after attaining the age of 82, found time for many years to work with a daughter doing voluntary historic renovations for The National Parks & Forests of USA & Alaska - particularly enjoying the projects in The Tetons mountain range. She retired as a St Albans Abbey Guide only when she reached her 95th birthday. Throughout all, she never lost her love of gardening and continued to swim every day from Spring to Autumn until toward the end of 2012. Margaret will be enormously missed by her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and by her many friends.

Margaret expressed the wish to be cremated quietly. There will be a Service of Thanksgiving for her life at 2.00pm on Thursday 26 September 2013 at St Michael's Church, St Albans, AL3 4SL. Margaret requested no sombre colours or flowers but donations instead to St Michael's PCC ref. Margaret Taylor Font Restoration. This is the church where she worshipped for over 30 years.

The school will also host a Margaret Taylor Memorial Concert in due course, when gifts to the Habs Foundation will also be accepted in support of Music at Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School. Further details will be announced in due course.

### **John McNair - Head of Modern Languages 1950 - 1966**



I am writing to let you know of the recent death, at the age of 93, of my father, John McNair, who joined the Haberdashers language department at Westbere Road in 1950. He was with

the school for 16 years, becoming Head of Department, Head of the Sixth Form and Careers before leaving in 1966 to join the Department of Education at Manchester University.

As an old boy myself, we came together to the reunion event in 2011, and he was very pleased to see the school thriving, and to meet ex colleagues and some former pupils, who remembered him warmly. He was instrumental in raising the status of Spanish as a modern language to study, against considerable scepticism in the early 1950s. Some of the highlights of his career at Habs included taking a party of sixth formers on a cycling tour of Spain in the early 50s, with the late Len Moody (a very adventurous undertaking in those days!); singing in Gilbert and Sullivan performances at Westbere Road, and performances of the Mozart Requiem at Elstree, and pioneering the introduction of audio visual techniques in language teaching. He taught many pupils who went on to remarkable careers, but was particularly proud of John Rutherford, the distinguished Hispanist and translator of Cervantes, who first studied Spanish with my father, and remained in contact through his life.

I attach the obituary which I have written for his funeral.

### **John McCracken McNair**

**14th July 1919 – 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

John McNair was born in Liverpool in 1919, the son of Charles Stuart McNair and Elizabeth McCracken, and with three sisters, Mollie, Elizabeth and Christine. He was brought up in a strongly Presbyterian home, and although he later chose to leave organised religion, he retained the strong moral sense of those days throughout his life. He was educated at Alsop Boys School and won a scholarship to Queen's College Cambridge, where he read Modern Languages (French and Spanish), and rowed for his college.

In 1938, while working as a guide for the Holiday Fellowship he met Rene Brookes, with whom he shared a passion for hill walking, music and theatre, and who he married in 1942 while on leave from the army, the beginning of a deep partnership built around a strong set of shared values and interests which lasted 65 years

He graduated in the first year of the War, and as a conscientious objector he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. However, he then changed his mind about the justification for war, joining the Intelligence Corps and then the Seaforth Highlanders, serving in North Africa, Holland and Germany, and attaining the rank of Major. He was awarded the Military Cross for rescuing one of his men under fire, but after the war, with characteristic modesty, he never used his army rank, or talked about his achievements.

At the end of the war he trained as a teacher, living with his parents in Giggleswick in the Yorkshire Dales, and then with Rene's mother in Bridlington, where their first son, Stephen

was born, and then in Sidcup, Kent. In 1948 they moved for a year to Grenoble in France, where he taught in the Lycee, and where their daughter, Barbara was born.

Returning to England in 1950 they moved to Wembley where he joined the languages department of Haberdashers Aske's School (then in Hampstead). He began a long involvement with the Labour Party, and was active in the Pedestrian Association. He coached the school rowing teams, and took an active singing part in school productions of Gilbert and Sullivan.

In 1955 the family moved to Hatfield New Town, where Stephen and Barbara grew up. Haberdashers grew and thrived and he became in turn Head of Department, and Head of the Sixth Form. In 1957, Stephen joined the school as a pupil, and for the next seven years they shared the daily commute. John and Rene were both active in the Labour Party and Oxfam. He was a Group Scoutmaster, organising fetes and dog shows, and an active member of the St.Albans Bach Choir, memorable for performances of the Bach B minor Mass, and its Christmas concerts. Family holidays continued the passion for walking and camping, in the Lake District, Scotland and Wales, and in France and Spain where they spent long summers keeping up his language skills. They were pioneers of canal cruising holidays in the 1950s.

In 1966 he was appointed a Lecturer in Education at Manchester University, and they moved to Alderley Edge. Stephen had left home to begin his own career in education, and in the early 1970s, Stephen and Margaret produced two grandsons, James and Andrew, who spent happy holidays with their grandparents. Barbara left home in 1968, becoming a physiotherapist, working for some years in Zimbabwe, and adding two daughters, Grace and Thandi to his grandchildren.

John spent 17 years at Manchester, training language teachers, in the UK, and for the British Council in Nigeria and Sierra Leone. He completed an MEd degree, and became National Secretary of the Modern Language Association, and then Secretary of the International Federation of Language Teacher Associations (FIPLV). With Len and Hannerl Moody, old friends from St Albans, they embarked on a long planned project to walk the Pennine Way (sadly abandoned mid-way through ill health). In the final years before his retirement he undertook a major project to study the education system of Spain in the aftermath of the fall of Franco. With Rene he spent five months touring Spain in a caravan, visiting schools and colleges, interviewing policymakers and educators about the Spanish education system. The resulting book "Education for a Changing Spain", was the first on the subject (in any language). Although its publication in 1984 was supposed to coincide with his retirement, the Spanish Government persuaded him to return to work as a consultant as they reconstructed their creaking education system.

In 1984 he was diagnosed with cancer, and had his bladder removed. He rapidly learned to live with his "disability", and characteristically became an active volunteer for the Urostomy

Association, later becoming Regional Secretary for the North West, providing support and advice to countless cancer sufferers. With Rene, he moved to Todmorden, to be close to walking in the Pennines, but remain in reach of the University library in Manchester. Barbara returned from Zimbabwe with two daughters, Grace and Thandi, and John and Rene found a new lease of life as very active grandparents.

In retirement he rapidly threw himself into local life. With Rene he joined the Hebden Bridge Citizens Advice Bureau as a volunteer adviser. He became a volunteer reader for the RNIB, recording material as varied as the complete poems of Walter Scott, a Spanish textbook, and some fairly racy French poetry. He was also a reader for the Todmorden Talking Newspaper for the Blind, which he continued until a month before he died. He became a School Governor, and then chair of the Governors of Todmorden High School. He joined the Calderdale social car service, driving people to and from hospital, a job which continued until he gave up his licence in his late 80s. Once again he was active in the Labour Party (for whom he campaigned at every general election from 1952 to 2010), and he joined the Todmorden Choral Society. They travelled widely, in Europe by caravan, and in the USA, Canada and Zimbabwe.

Identifying a lack of opportunity for people in Todmorden to get easily to the theatre, with Jack Bednall and Hugh Neems, he helped found Todmorden Easy Theatregoing, taking coachloads of people to theatres across the North and beyond, and he was still producing the TET Newsletter, and managing its mailing lists until days before his death.

In 2007, after a long illness, Rene died: the end of a long and very close relationship. During her last months, first in Halifax Royal Infirmary, and then in Millreed Lodge in Todmorden, he was constantly by her side, talking, reading to her and playing music. Characteristically, they had planned for the event, and her lessons in cooking and gardening gave him the skills to live independently at home until the last few weeks. He came late to domesticity, and gardening, but, partly in tribute to her, he learned to prune, plant and harvest, to freeze and to make jam. In his last month he made the new year's marmalade, as she had done throughout her life.

The 2000s brought another generation, with Andrew's daughter Hope born in 2003. In 2011 he appeared as the proud grandfather when Grace married James, and in 2012 they produced a second great grandchild, Blake.

During the later Todmorden years, although his health continued to deteriorate (losing a kidney to cancer, with a hip replacement following a fall, and with severely declining hearing), his energy continued almost undimmed. He finally retired from the Ramblers Association at the age of 87 because he felt he was holding people back on longer hill walks. At the age of 92 he took part in a town twinning visit to Bramsche. His last edition of the Talking Newspaper was at the end of 2012. Throughout this period he had immense

support, moral and practical from friends and neighbours, especially Howard and Julie Lord, Marian Bednall, Doreen and Hugh Neems, together with a much wider network, many of them quite unaware of his age.

At the age of 87, again recognising a lack of opportunity, this time for adult education (the field where Stephen had made his career) he founded the Todmorden branch of U3A (the University of the Third Age). This became an overnight success, and one of his proudest achievements was when its membership passed the 300 mark at his last U3A meeting, a fortnight before he died. He was particularly active in the Music, Poetry, and Philosophy Groups. Challenged by a fellow member to run a session on philosophy and language he spent much time researching a presentation which finally led to a five week course in linguistic philosophy, almost certainly a first for any U3A branch.

In 2012 Barbara (herself newly retired) and her partner John moved to Todmorden to be closer. As he became less steady on his feet, and his hearing deteriorated, she accompanied him on hospital trips, they rescued him after falls, and helped him make the house easier to manage. At the end of the year his health deteriorated, and he spent some time in hospital, but in early February he returned home, confident of recovery and full of plans. In mid February 2013, days after a hearty pub lunch in Wensleydale with Stephen and Margaret, and shortly after his monthly U3A meeting, he fell ill again. Doctor Wild, who had been a supportive GP and friend through more than 20 years of increasingly complex health problems, gave him the news that he was dying. John received this with characteristic equanimity and turned his mind to planning funeral arrangements. On his last weekend his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren gathered round his bed. We gave him a toast, and he replied with a speech about his pride in us all, and his satisfaction with his life. Two days later he died peacefully at home, with Barbara and Stephen at his side. John McNair was a truly remarkable man. He was a modest man of great achievements, who devoted his 93 years to making the world a better, and fairer place, devoting limitless energy and optimism to helping others. He never thrust himself into the limelight (though he was privately pleased when people thanked him). Since he died many people have said that he was a true gentleman. He will be much missed by a host of people, as a father, grandfather, great grandfather, neighbour, friend, organiser and teacher.

### **Memories of John McNair**

From Colin Blessley

I would like to mark the loss of a great man, who, unbeknownst to him, had a major influence on my life.

Your father, as Head of Department, was highly instrumental in my following a Modern Languages degree course at the University of Bristol, which then allowed me to pursue a professional career in which languages played a significant role, notably Spanish, French, Portuguese and Italian, and ended up with my residing in Spain for more than 30 years..

He was my principal Spanish teacher through to A Level in 1964.

One aspect of his responsibilities at the Haberdashers which is not mentioned in your excellent document is that of Careers Master. I recall him providing me a lot of advice.

I was fortunate in participating in a three week-long School exchange programme to Barcelona in 1961, led by your father. The outward and return journeys were major logistical feats and I seem to recall that your father was sole team leader, with some pretty unruly students in his charge. I kept a diary of that trip, accompanied by some very amateur photographs (none of your father, I regret to say) and the entry for Monday 3 April 1961 reads: " In the morning I went with Jaime [my exchange host] to see Mr. McNair at the Plaza de Cataluña and had a long talk with him and he was very helpful in every way. After, at the P de C station he treated us both to a Coke [probably, my first ever].....At the fight I saw Mr McNair leaving La Plaza de Toros Monumental, though he didn't see me." One of the high spots of the trip was an organised tour to the Codorniu "cava" winery outside Barcelona where, unsurprisingly, we indulged heavily in the free post-tour tasting, all the time being studiously ignored by the leadership team. There was another official trip to the Montserrat, where, at a stop-off, Sandy Lockhart demonstrated an uncanny ability to drink wine from a "porron" (I do have a photograph of this exploit).

I repeated the trip the following year to the same family, with your father again shepherding the flock, although, being by now a mature 14, I did not keep a diary! The photographs showed greater maturity in subject matter and an improved photographic technique.

Since leaving the School in 1965, I do not recall having seen your father until 2011, but was very pleased to see him at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the Haberdashers' move to Elstree. We had the opportunity for a brief chat, when I let him know that, almost half a century earlier, my studies of languages had shaped my life.

### **Memories from contemporary Habs teachers**

Many thanks for letting me know of John McNair's death. He was an excellent colleague and I particularly remember his lovely speaking voice. Just before he left I worked with him as an assistant careers master, and then I became his successor as Head of careers. The 'careers library' was a shelf in his room - the room near the 6th form common room where much later Leo Guidon did all his work on the timetable

All good wishes

Roger Wakely

Formidable man, John McNair! I remember him well being in awe of him in the 1960s. Powerful intellect, gimlet eye, educational radical, not one to mince his words - and a colleague to look up to. A good, long life.

Best wishes

Keith Dawson

Thank you for passing on this message. John McNair was a great head of modern languages, totally unflappable (not surprising as a former major who was awarded an MC, though this was not widely known)

John Carleton

My contact with John McNair was brief, as I filled his vacancy when he left Haberdashers' in December 1965 to take up his post at Manchester University. He interviewed me, and then was very helpful during a day's 'induction' visit I made towards the end of that term. One advantage of 'replacing' a Head of Department mid-school year was that I had his time-table for a couple of terms!

I recall during my brief encounter with him a sense of profound respect, awe even, that surrounded him in the Department.

Dick Norton

**DOUGLAS WHITTAKER 28<sup>th</sup> April 1940 - 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012**



Doug's funeral took place on Thursday 20th December at West Herts Crematorium.

It was conducted by the school chaplain, Jan Goodair to a packed congregation of his family from Liverpool plus Habs Staff and Old Boys.

Jan provided some lovely memories of Doug's younger days from the family. Notably that Doug walked himself home halfway through his first day at primary school declaring that "it wasn't very interesting so I've come home".

Jim Tarpey gave a summary of Doug's career from a pupil at Liverpool Institute for Boys (the year behind Paul McCartney and George Harrison), to Christ Church College Oxford. Then to teaching at Habs, Bedford and Atlantic College before returning to Habs in 1968 where he spent the remainder of his teaching career.

Doug became Head of Maths in 1973, Section Commander of the Navy Section in 1976 and Contingent Commander in 1985; building the CCF up from 180 members when he joined to some 300 when he left. Doug's belief was that to help run the CCF you needed leaders but that you can't promote leadership unless you give students the chance to lead, so he was willing to trust his students and take the chance. This was high risk, sometimes too high, but the policy was vindicated by the future leaders he generated through the CCF.

Doug's lessons were always interesting. They may have appeared disorganised at times but pupils got very excited in his lessons. Calculations on the minimum amount of foil needed to wrap a kit kat may not have been wholly on the syllabus but they attracted pupils to his practical and challenging style of maths teaching.

Doug ran a morning briefing session for the staff in his large department. Some of what he said in those meetings was indiscreet but he got the message across and the briefings were very much part of Doug's character.

John Wigley reminded us of Doug's travels across the world from one polar ice cap to another and to every continent in between. Doug was not only an expert at getting to exotic places in the quickest way, but even more of an expert in getting there the cheapest way. It became tempting to use Doug as an unofficial travel agent because he was so knowledgeable.

In the UK Doug would visit the Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Royal Academy and Victoria and Albert Museums to see special exhibitions, all of which gave his conversation an energy and vivacity that we all recognized. His knowledge made it very difficult to argue with him, John described such discussions as akin to skating on thin ice on boiling water, you were always in danger of sinking beneath the counter argument.

Finally, John reminded us of how very brave Doug was. All through his school life he followed a brave line, taking risks in his stride – and as he came towards his own death he was equally brave

As Jan Goodair had said at the beginning of the service Doug led a full and fulfilled life woven into the lives of so many others.

Appropriately the hymns Doug chose were those sung on the first and last day of each term at Habs "He who Would Valiant Be" and "Jerusalem" and Doug had asked for donations in his memory to be used to develop Adventurous Training for pupils at Habs.

### **Simon Boyes 11th February 1950 - 25th January 2012**

Born on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1950, Simon began his 33 year career at Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School in September 1976. He progressed through roles such as Head of General Studies and Careers until he was promoted to Senior Master under Keith Dawson and then Second Master under Jeremy Goulding. For a time he was acting Headmaster following Mr Goulding's move to Shrewsbury.

Simon will be missed by his former pupils, who will recall a first-rate teacher of Chemistry; by his former colleagues, who will grieve a man who was a model of kindness and efficiency and who was always willing to offer support. He was as an outstanding Second Master and will be remembered by all those family and friends whose lives he touched.

### **An Appreciation of Simon Boyes by Jon Corral**

In an age where we see too many people 'on the make', I was fortunate to work with more than my fair share of colleagues who were selfless, generous and always willing to help. Simon was, even in this top set of good citizenship, a primus inter pares, a model of kindness, consideration and endless patience. If you think I exaggerate, ask anyone who knew him.

I had the privilege of working closely with Simon for my last 12 years at Habs. On the retirement of John Carleton in 1997, Simon became Second Master and I became Senior Master. Until the arrival of Simon Hyde a few years later, Simon Boyes and I shared responsibility for the major areas of school life; he all things academic, including timetabling and ICT, I extra-curricular activities, pastoral care and discipline. We had very different personalities and very different roles, and we complemented each other remarkably well, even though it became clear that with growing complexity the School needed to spread the management load at a senior level.

Simon and I always had adjacent offices, situated next to the Staff Common Room, so that colleagues had the best chance of making contact. With the boys you could generally tell whether they were waiting outside for Simon to help or for me to punish from the expression on their faces. He always had a queue of boys and staff, and he unflinchingly did his very best to find solutions to their problems, offer helpful advice and encouragement. There are people

who always manage to make you feel better after you have spoken to them. Simon was such a person, and that was achieved not only through his natural kindness but also because his advice was unfailingly practical and effective. He was never censorious, and if you made a mistake, his concern was to find the best solution as quickly as possible - something at which he was remarkably good.

Lest you think that benevolence somehow replaced academic rigour, I need to point out that Simon was one of the cleverest people I have known. He had an amazing ability to 'see round corners' (Keith Dawson's memorable phrase), and a sharpness of intellect which allowed us to see to the heart of any problem. He had such an easy manner and was utterly without pretension that he did not project himself as 'the clever Haberdasher', but I can assure you he was, and his simple charm and lack of vanity made him in many ways more effective as colleagues and boys were not afraid to approach him for help. In a crisis, Simon was the man you wanted around as he remained calm and incisive, analysing with remarkable speed what action was needed. He combined a lightness of touch with a focus on the essential and the most effective way forward.

Simon was an optimist who always thought positively and always tried to see the best in people. He was as a result a great chap to have around, and it is in the nature of our roles that we were indeed around for a large proportion of our waking hours. He was also virtually never absent through illness, and I could never match his 6 am morning jog before coming to school. It is because he was always there to help, always dependable, always the one to turn to if you had a problem, (in Habs speak the supreme 'go-to man') always prepared to drop what he was doing in order to help, that the news of his untimely death has shocked us all. It is particularly hard to bear that he should have worked so hard for so long, and that his well-deserved retirement be cut so cruelly short.

Simon was fortunate that he not only enjoyed a successful professional life but also an extremely fulfilling family life. Of his four children, Guy and James attended Habs' Boys', where they were involved in all aspects of School life, Guy becoming School Vice Captain. Elizabeth and their children will be devastated and perplexed, as we all are, at the cruel injustice of Simon's illness. But it will not surprise them to know that Simon enjoyed the greatest esteem and universal respect, and that he won the affection of all who knew him.

### **Simon Boyes an Appreciation by John Carleton**

Late in the Summer Term of 1976 Haberdashers' desperately needed a chemistry master for the Autumn term. Simon and Elizabeth Boyes were completing a post overseas and wished to return to the UK. There was no time for an interview and so Simon was offered a temporary post. In a matter of weeks, we realised that we had struck gold. Simon was an outstanding colleague with an original and penetrating mind and a real schoolmaster; the temporary post was confirmed without more ado. A first class scientist who kept well up to

date, not only on Chemistry but on a wide range of scientific fields and readily shared this knowledge with his colleagues, inspiring many stimulating discussions to the benefit of all concerned.

A master of the art of lateral thinking, he enjoyed a challenge and was capable of producing innovative solutions to what many people would regard as totally intractable problems and furthermore they would gladly accept his suggestions without rancour. If someone sought his advice it would be freely and thoughtfully given. On occasion when what needed to be said was perhaps not what the recipient would wish to hear, Simon would not avoid the issue, but would make his comments in a manner which was informative, supportive and non-confrontational.

He was always busy, but if anyone asked “do you have a moment?” the answer was always “yes”. Loyal, kind, caring, mindful of the needs of others, he was adept at maintaining a harmonious atmosphere at all levels within the school. He had a mischievous sense of humour and was master of the bon mot, but never at the expense of someone else.

Above all he was a first class school master, giving freely of his time and energy to aid students, colleagues and support staff. In the laboratory his constant aim was to inspire his pupils with an understanding and enjoyment of the subject at the appropriate level for their age. To his work in General Studies and Careers he brought caring and innovative approaches. It was abundantly clear that he enjoyed the universal respect of his students as well as that of his colleagues.

After his retirement he became a member of the local branch of the University of the Third Age, joining the Cryptic Crossword Group, where he quickly and typically made his mark. In his final weeks of life, though in considerable discomfort, he still spent time creating new cryptic puzzles to send to his most appreciative group.

Simon was a personal friend both in and out of school over more than 30 years. It was a privilege to have had his constant and unfailing support and guidance in the Chemistry Department and in the senior management team. He gave so much to the School over so many years and was looking forward to exploring new avenues in an active and fulfilling retirement, shared with his wife, Elizabeth, their children and grandchildren. His early and distressing death has taken away an outstanding man, selfless, kind and caring, who had given much to so many. He will be a great loss to us all.

Our thoughts are with Elizabeth and the family.

John Carleton

Second Master 1982-1998

**2011**

### **Alan Wood**

10.2.1926 - 30.08.2011

On 27th March Alan Wood failed to answer the phone when a neighbour rang, and he was found on his bedroom floor, having suffered a crippling stroke. He had been lying there for nine hours, making treatment very problematical. Passed for three months between three hospitals for specialist treatment, he spent August in a care home in Watford, and died there on 30th of that month, aged 85. His funeral took place at the West Herts Crematorium, Garston on Monday 19th September 2011.

He was for many years housemaster of Strouts, and knew his charges very well. He was retired for perhaps 15 years, devoting his time to several hobbies, including travel. Music, astronomy and electronics were particular interests. He became extremely competent on the computer. Keith Dawson wrote that Alan was a very fine man: straight as a die, understated, highly intelligent and a first rate schoolmaster in the widest, old-fashioned sense.

#### **A REPORT ON ALAN WOODS FUNERAL FROM PAUL HAYLER**

The Chapel at West Herts Crematorium was full today. Although very few people were expected, as Alan had no surviving family, he clearly had plenty of people who wanted to pay their final respects.

Alan was born at Billericay on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1926. His degree in mathematics came from Jesus College. He was teaching at the Royal Commercial Travellers School by the early 1950s so that may have been his first job. He was clearly very popular there as one can tell from the ex-pupils, now in the 70s, who attended.

Michael McLoughlin remembered Alan as the man who helped the whole Habs Maths Department to meet the challenge of teaching computing when many of them had little knowledge of it themselves. He also remembered Alan's frequent friendly use of the word "ouch" when someone made a mathematical mistake, "ouch" because it really hurt Alan that one of his pupils could make such a silly error. Despite his severe stroke Alan continued to solve square roots in his head until a few days before he died

### **Alan Bell**

Died August 30th 2011

Alan was born on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1929. He was a top academic and sportsman while a schoolboy going onto Loughborough College to study PE and Maths.

He did his National Service in the Intelligence Corps, he was demobbed in Egypt at his request where he took a job teaching in the school that King Hussein's son attended. He was incarcerated in Egypt as a spy when problems arose between UK and Egypt and as a result he was expelled from the country in 1951

He was the winner of the first ever "Gillette man of the Match" award for his 106 not out for Hertfordshire v Essex in the Gillette Cup.

He came to Habs in 1960 helping with the some of the best sports teams Habs ever put out and remembered for his Canal Boat holidays, educational cruises and for organising the European Summer School for Young Musicians.

### **Bob Tyler**

Died March 2011

Bob Tyler died, two months after being diagnosed with a brain tumour.

He taught at Habs for 17 years from 1971 – 1988, first as Head of German from 1971-82, then as Housemaster of Joblings from 1976-82 and later as Head of the Middle School from 1982-88.

Bob was always popular with staff and boys, hard working, good humoured and fair; with a strong singing voice and a strong supporting voice on the Rugby touchline too.

**2005**

### **Perry Keenlyside**

**2004**

### **Rod Tearle**

### **Bruce McGowan**

Bruce McGowan was one of the distinguished band of young men whose university education included an enforced gap for active military service in the Second World War. As an officer in the Royal Artillery, he gained a breadth and depth of experience, which later influenced his approach to school mastering, to the great benefit of his pupils and his colleagues.

By the time that he came to Haberdashers' Aske's, Bruce had already experienced sixteen years of headship in two other schools, and this was to stand him and his new school in good stead, as the seventies were a time of change, both at Elstree and on the national scene. The year after his arrival, our sister school moved from Acton to join the boys' school on the "other side of the wall". Though the two schools were run separately, there were many opportunities to be explored for joint activities, which he did his best to encourage.

In 1976 the government of the day abolished the Direct Grant scheme, a source of finance, which had enabled parents with limited income to afford places for their children in a fee-paying school. The decision was taken to become fully independent and it is to the credit of both Governing Body and Headmaster that the transition was seamless; academic standards were maintained and financial provision for those in need continued to be made available.

Being headmaster of a large school requires a certain gravitas, which he possessed, but he was determined not to be remote. With a sharp mind and a very keen sense of humour, he welcomed the cut and thrust of intellectual debate with both his colleagues and his pupils. He would visit many lunchtime societies and participate. Players would regularly see him on the touchline after school and at weekends, musicians and actors would know that he would be at every performance and at a good many rehearsals too. Likewise, he joined many school visits and C.C.F. camps, at home and abroad and led a number of expeditions himself. Former pupils would remain in touch, (including many from his previous schools) and he was a strong supporter of the Old Haberdashers' Association, who invited him to be their President in 1978.

He knew that he was answerable to others but bore the responsibility for what took place within the School. A number of committees regularly met to advise on academic and pastoral matters, but he never hid behind these when taking a decision. Improvements were made to the conditions of service of both teaching and non-teaching staff, helping to maintain a strong team. Better understanding between staff and governors was enabled by means of social activities.

Physical facilities were not ignored. He presided over a building development programme that included the Taylor Music School (1975), the Bates Dining Room (1980), the Sime Preparatory School (1983), the Design Centre for Art, Craft and Technology, the Chapel in Aldenham House and the Bruce McGowan Sports Centre (which the school governors named in his honour, as a tribute to his enthusiasm for sport and physical fitness).

His abilities were recognised in the outside world. He was a governor of several schools, a member of the Public Schools Commission in 1968-70 and heavily involved in the Headmasters' Conference over many years, being its chairman in 1985.

Throughout this time he was actively supported by his wife, Pat, who was at his side on all social and most official, public occasions. In their own home, they entertained staff, pupils and friends of the School after plays, concerts and numerous other occasions — events at which everyone, young and old, felt welcomed and at ease.

After retiring in 1987, he continued to take a keen interest in the fortunes of the School and, together with Pat, loyally attended plays and concerts. He was actively involved in voluntary work with several educational ventures, including being chairman of the Church Schools Company, a group of eight independent schools. Retirement also gave time for travelling and seeing their four children and five grandchildren, distributed about the globe. Sadly, retirement was curtailed by an ailment, which Bruce had known about for many years. He died, on 24th May 2004, at home in Woodstock.

## **Stuart Moore**

### **John Dudderidge (teacher at Habs from 1931 to 1969)**

died on 23rd January 2004 aged 97.

The first obituary is taken from the British Canoe Union website. The second obituary has been found on the Cambridge Canoe Club web site. An obituary about his life as a schoolmaster at Habs will be added, hopefully, in due course.

#### **From the British Canoe Union web site:**

"John Dudderidge was a founding member of the British Canoe Union, the governing body for canoeing and was a notable figure in the administration of the sport, both nationally and internationally for 45 years.

Canoeing was included in the Olympic programme for the first time in 1936. Dudderidge had acquired his first canoe three years earlier, and he was among those who recognised that it would be necessary to set up a national governing body, if a British Olympic team was to travel to Berlin. As with many sports Canoeing had started in Britain in the 19th Century when the Royal Canoe Club was founded by John MacGregor and continued with a number of clubs around the kingdom, but with no overall control. The British Canoe Association was founded in 1933. In 1935 Dudderidge became Racing and International Secretary, and set up a training squad, which were invited to train at Royal C C. In 1936 the British Canoe Union was founded, taking over competition from BCA, affiliating to the IRK and BOA, and Dudderidge took a team of three to Berlin. In 1938 he took a larger British team to Stockholm to compete in the First World Championships. At the Congress of the IRK (later rebranded as International Canoe Federation) held at this time he was elected to the Board of Management as one of two members for Europe, a position he retained until retiring in 1980.

At the outbreak of war in 1939, Dudderidge was appointed Hon.General Secretary of the BCU when the existing officer was called up to serve in the Forces. He guided the Union through the difficult war years and held this post until 1959, when he was elected President. Somehow, he also found time to assist in the foundation of Richmond Canoe Club at Richmond on Thames, now one of the leading clubs in competitive canoeing.

By 1946 the time had come to revive the International Federation, which had been a somewhat German dominated body, known as IRK (Internationale Repraesentantschaft fuer Kanusport). Out of the ruins a new international body emerged, the present ICF, and Dudderidge was at once elected Vice-President with responsibility for organising the 1948 Olympic Canoe Regatta, held at Henley, to be followed by the World Championship programme and the Congress. Dudderidge undertook all this with characteristic enthusiasm and inspired the many volunteers required to do the work. Not content with this work load he persuaded a firm which had previously specialised in manufacturing aircraft propellers to provide, as a gift, the dozen racing kayaks required for training the British team.

John W. Dudderidge was born on 24th August 1906 in Sheffield. He was educated at Magnus Grammar School, Newark on Trent and University College, Nottingham. After two years as Assistant Master at Manor House School, London, the rest of his professional career was spent at Haberdashers' Aske's School at Hampstead and Elstree, where he was Head of Physical Education 1931 to 1956, on the Science Staff 1956 to 1969 and Housemaster 1956 to 1966.

It must be remembered that Dudderidge worked for sport development at a time when there little or no government funding. He believed that those who had enjoyed the privilege of participation in a sport should be prepared to plough back some of that enjoyment and help others, in particular young people, to find similar satisfaction.

After the war, therefore he set out to promote Canoeing in schools, beginning with his own; persuaded the Outward Bound Schools to include canoeing activities in their curricula; encouraged developments in the Scouts and other uniformed youth organisations as well as in the Youth Clubs, and when the Central Council of Physical Recreation was given Bisham Abbey as a National Training Centre he pressed for canoeing facilities to be included, offering to run courses there and find other canoeists to help. He also sought to interest the Youth Hostels Association in setting up youth hostels to cater for travellers by water. It was through this involvement in youth activities that he came to realise that if the Union was to cope with the growing flood of would-be canoeists it would be necessary to train people for the work of teaching the basic skills, and conceived the idea of setting up a Coaching Scheme under BCU. He then began to organise training courses in various parts of the country in collaboration with local canoe clubs, and from these courses he appointed

selected people as coaches on whom to build up the Scheme. Pioneer courses were held in Sheffield, Leamington, Bradford on Avon, Ham Dock and other centres. When the Coaching Scheme was on its feet he handed over the Chairmanship to his colleagues who developed it to its present stature.

Ever enthusiastic for canoe touring, Dudderidge travelled widely at home and abroad; taking the opportunities offered by his official duties as an ICF Official at Olympic Games and World Championships in many parts of the world, he made a practice of staying behind when teams returned home, to find out more about the host country and its rivers. In 1965 he began a long dialogue with land-owning and angling interests in the hope that a policy of collaboration and reasonableness rather than confrontation might lead to the opening up of more private waters to canoeists, or at least prevent further restrictions. He was for many years the Chairman of the Access Committee formed to handle this work and found that English Law on property rights severely hampered progress. On one occasion he was called to address a committee of the House of Lords on this issue. This is still the case and the work he started continues.

Dudderidge's unfailing cheerfulness brought friends and recognition in many countries and the mere recital of awards and offices held indicates the wide spread of his interests. He received the BCU Award of Honour in 1961, with the Award of Merit from the ICF in the following year together with the OBE "for services to sport." In 1977, after seventeen years as President of the BCU he was given the title "President of Honour". In 1980 on retiring from the Board of the ICF he was presented with the Gold Medal and Honorary Life Membership. He represented Canoeing on the Council of the British Olympic Association 1938-1980, Member of the Executive 1969-1973, Deputy Chairman 1973-1977 and Vice President 1977-2004. As competitor or official he attended every Olympic Games from 1936 in Berlin to 1992 in Barcelona.

In his nineties, having retired to Cambridge, Dudderidge was still active with his local canoe club. He retained his independence and zest for living and at the age of 97 took his first gliding lesson, which thrilled him greatly. He married Evelyn in 1936 who predeceased him. John Dudderidge is survived by his two daughters, Hilary and Ruth, and two sons, Philip and John."

#### **From the Cambridge Canoe Club web site:**

Farewell to a distinguished paddler

John Dudderidge OBE, Honorary President of Cambridge Canoe Club since 1995 died on 23 January 2004 in Cambridge. Many members of the Club will be familiar with John and Aileen on their trips out on the River Cam in their open boat, and though over the last few

years they were grateful for help to launch the boat, once on the water they were off and away. John's vitality and interest belied his age, and perhaps Club members will have seen a newspaper photograph of John celebrating his 97th birthday last August with a flight in a glider.

John began paddling before there was a national canoeing governing body. This caused a problem in the run-up to the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin and the BCU was set up in that year so that a group of six paddlers were able to compete for Britain in the new discipline of canoe racing. JD raced with A. R. Brearley in the category 'folding pairs' (we think that this was with a single-bladed paddle).

In 1946 JD represented Britain at the creation of the new International Canoe Federation (ICF) replacing an older continental-based Internationalen Representation fur Kanusport.

The 2nd edition of the Canoeing Handbook reads 'The establishment of the BCU Coaching Scheme owes much to the work of John Dudderidge, who travelled extensively in 1959 and 1960 selecting people to organise coaching on a regional basis...'

'Later he produced a set of standards for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award' and more advanced coaching awards.

'The contribution that JD has made to the sport, the Union and the ICF is immeasurable. His personal involvement in so many different aspects has been greatly responsible for the development of canoeing. The OBE was awarded in 1963 and in 1964 the Award of Honour of the ICF. At the Moscow Olympics in 1950, John was presented by the ICF with a specially struck gold medal in recognition of his devotion and unique service, which has led to the growth in strength and stature of the pastime founded in the 'pleasure of the paddle'.

John and his wife moved to Cambridge in the late 1980s, but as his wife became increasingly ill he had little time for personal canoeing. After her death he made contact with Cambridge Canoe Club and soon after was elected our Honorary President. It was always a great pleasure when he attended Club events. He remained interested in the sport, in changes in canoeing administration, in all manner of canoeing events and in individual paddlers. John was always happy to present the Cam Marathon and Hare & Hound prizes and to make a speech afterwards. His sympathy for the loser in a competition will always be remembered. He argued that because of the loser the paddler who won had a better race, and it was up to the chaser to make sure that the winner deserved his title. John was always keenly interested in young canoeists as well as older ones, and was often seen in earnest conversation with paddlers about experiences on the water. His optimism and positive outlook inspired many of all ages.

Aileen, his companion in later life, proudly told us that she was taught to canoe by John in 1937. She lost her husband shortly before JD's wife died, and as John and she had a lot in common they used to spend their time together. An admirable arrangement, except that sometimes it was hard for Aileen to live up to John's physical activity and desire for a paddle after an afternoon of hard gardening!

The Club has lost an eminent friend and supporter as well as an Honorary President, who took time in his later life to serve our Club and local canoeing. He will be missed with great affection by all who had the pleasure of knowing him. To John's family and Aileen we send our sincere condolences in their sad loss.

A Memorial Service in the Quaker fashion is planned for 2 pm on Saturday 27 March at the Wesley Methodist Church, King Street, Cambridge and all will be welcome.

May & Bill Block

**2002**

**Denis Goddard**

**Eric "Tec" Carrington (Master 1944-81)**

From the time of Eric Carrington's appointment to the School History Department in the autumn of 1944 until his death in mid-September 2002, a considerable period of that time - 37 years to be exact - was devoted to life in the School in one form or another.

Using his own background in the game, he soon made his mark on Junior Rugby (Lower School Rugby I believe it was referred to then). His next appointment was to be 'Instructor in Drill and Physical Training' in the recently formed A.T.C. Both of these activities he enjoyed, and later became the Commanding Officer of the C.C.F. until his retirement in 1981.

Eric Carrington was a large man with a good stock of his own ideas under his belt. He showed a good sense of humour enjoyed by his pupils, if not necessarily by all his colleagues. Yes, if he liked something or somebody, he said so, and if he didn't he made his feelings quite obvious.

Eric's reactions to the change in the form of the School Magazine in 1961 were those which are not really quotable here!

After Pearl, his wife, and his family bought the Riviera Lodge Hotel in Mawgan Porth, Cornwall, he stayed on in Radlett and operated from a various number of residences.

His attitudes and manner, however, remained constant, and his contributions to life in the School are undoubted. I shall miss him, too, as a friend of many years.

Geoff Hickman

His son, Mike Carrington (1953-1958), adds the following:

"He had a hangman's noose or a set of stocks (both made by his pupils) in the corner of the room whilst he taught History! I well recall them as I spent 3 years in his History class. His knowledge of the subject was astounding. He seemed to know everything. People were always trying to catch him out. I tried for years and never really succeeded.

In his younger days he was a useful sportsman, representing his college at Cambridge at rugby and cricket, as well as being a handy tennis player. Despite being a life-long smoker, his physical strength stayed with him until past age 80.

During the war, he was at Dunkirk and the memories stayed with him for the rest of his life, although he never spoke of it to me or the rest of the family.

His devotion to the school and his pupils seldom wavered, and he constantly bought marking, reports, CCF work etc back home with him.

He did indeed have strong opinions about certain things, and did speak his mind. I didn't always agree with him, but in these days of political correctness when so many people speak with forked tongues, I think I still prefer his way.

In the early 1990's, he was made a Freeman of the City of London, and this seemed to please him.

He enjoyed classical music and in his youth was actually a good pianist, but he kept that talent well under his hat and ceased playing altogether in the early 60's. He detested nearly all pop music, but there was one exception to this rule. He had several Jim Reeves albums and listened to them constantly."

### **Tommy Sanderson**

**Simon Stuart** (teacher at the School between 1962 and 1977)

Died on 19th September 2002 after a long illness.

His son, Corin, writes:

"He was an English teacher at Haberdashers from 1962 or 3 until 1975 when he took a sabbatical to write his second book, 'New Phoenix Wings'. He had written his first book, 'Say' while still teaching. He returned to teach in 1976, but soon decided he wanted to devote his life to writing and left in Winter 1977. (I'm not 100% certain about these dates)."

*Simon Stuart - enjoying the sunshine at home, Xmas 2000*

**Address given by The Revd Mark Oakley, a close family friend and Vicar of St Paul's Church, Covent Garden on 1st October 2002.**

"You may not be able to see, but I am blushing slightly. Simon did not want any pious extras at his funeral. He wanted the funeral service taken from the Book of Common Prayer with its simple, stark, beautiful resonances. Simon wanted other words to be reserved for a later memorial service. But you know as well as I do that people like Simon are never laid to rest easily. There is too much affection and admiration in the air; this love, respect and friendship needs to be captured here and given voice to and, with Simon's family's agreement, some things do need to be said before we lay Simon next to his father in the churchyard.

This churchyard, of course, is just a couple of miles away from where Simon was born and where he grew up, the youngest of four boys (the two eldest are remembered on the war memorial in this church). After Eton Simon went up to Trinity, Cambridge where he began to deepen his love of English literature, a love that lasted a lifetime. He was able to translate that love, and to generate it in others, through his gifts as a teacher. And it is for those gifts that so many have had cause to be thankful. Recent letters have made it clear: Simon inspired, encouraged, was charismatic as he led you deeper into the necessities of literature. His mind was a storehouse of quotations, and these remembered texts were not kept there to be used to show off but because they were a part of his understanding and his being. We are laying to rest a great teacher, a teacher and a writer, with an incredibly energetic, encyclopaedic, searching mind.

Simon was not just a person of ideas, though, he was a practical lover of the environment and the earth, well before others were, and his love of Windyridge and his remarkable vegetable garden, of the world's life-forms from dragonflies, grasses and birds to spiders, bees and mushrooms, made itself known in detailed careful work as a naturalist. It seems only right then that Simon's coffin has been made out of wood that fell in the estate, from larches planted by Simon himself. And it is to the earth that his body is committed.

Simon lived with much illness through his life, first falling ill in 1958. He spent years on dialysis and he was always so very grateful to all those who helped him stay alive and who looked after him when he needed it most, including those who worked with him at Windyridge. Special mention must be made, of course, of the donor of the kidney that gave Simon another 15 years of life and therefore a gift that reached out to the whole family. The

donor and the donor's family are very much in our thoughts and prayers today.

Simon always said that he couldn't bear the thought of not seeing his children grow up and the transplant happily took away that fear. Everyone here knows how much Simon loved his boys, and how they loved him, and it is a great witness to their relationship that Simon's loves and interests have become their own loves too. Indeed, those of us who know Thomas, Corin and Tristram know that Simon justly died a proud man, a proud father. And we surround them, and Deborah and Pat and his family, with our love.

Simon: loving, interested in people, Windyridge host, engaging, analytical, sometimes severe, widening the view onto Chaucer, Shakespeare, architecture, music, natural history, sometimes contradictory and difficult, but always alive with ideas and passions. A charismatic talented teacher, an environmentalist, a husband and father, a friend. Simon, during his National Service, served in Malaya and in one incident gave his water-bottle to an injured enemy soldier, and then helped him to rest. Simon always joked that this incident would get him into heaven. Simon believed that death was "one long dark sleep". I hope that he will forgive this priest for one pious extra. It is a hope – that he sleeps now in peace where, in the words of John Donne, "there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light; no noise nor silence, but one equal music; no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession; no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity."

Let us, then, lay Simon in the earth in peace."

### **John Welbourne**

John Welbourne died suddenly on October 19 2002 at the age of 74. His untimely death is deeply lamented by his friends and colleagues at Haberdashers' who remember him so vividly. His funeral at Framlingham, Suffolk, was attended by a large number of staff, many retired, some still teaching.

He held a number of posts of responsibility at the school during his career. Many boys will remember him as Housemaster of Joblings. When he retired, he was Head of Classics, Contingent Commander of the CCF, and i/ c exams, a post he held for over twenty years. "They needed three people to replace me," he said!

It was on the retirement of T E Carrington that John became Contingent Commander of the Combined Cadet Force. His integrity, competence and humanity were qualities that he brought to bear with great effect in this post. He was professionally supportive, especially of young officers, and had considerable rapport with the cadets. While the daily drudgery of Corps administration was not his natural element, his undoubted strength lay in the organisational skills he put into the various annual camps and their attendant activities. In

these latter, when last minute hitches not of his making occurred, his ability to improvise saved many an exercise from disaster, converting them into a memorable experience for all concerned. Many Corps officers and cadets will recall their own personal favourites: for at least one officer the demolishing of a Welsh wall with a four-ton truck and the attendant furore stand out. There was also an element of foresight in his emphasis on adventurous training, knowing that the times they were a-changing, and that the military element of the Corps was no longer the priority it had once been. This was something of a tribute to the last Commanding Officer to have seen military service. He retained a sense of proportion, especially when dealing with some of the more hidebound elements of the military. Annual inspections, which could drive some units to distraction, found Colonel Welbourne airily advising his officers and cadets to 'do what you always do, but with a bit of polish'. On retiring from command, John felt it necessary to induct his successor into the arcana of administration. An aged file was opened and a yellowing paper fell to the ground. It proved to be a demand for an immediate reply on some matter or other and it was dated five years previously. John grinned and observed, "I am sure you will manage".

In the years in which we knew him one of his principal concerns, perhaps the main one, was that time spent in the Corps by both junior officers and cadets should be at once both character building and at the same time fun. During John's time in command there was a steady stream of young men entering the armed forces as a career, which it should not be forgotten was a primary *raison d'être* of the Corps and this must stand as a significant testimony to his success. The even greater stream of terrifying anecdotes that emerged in later years certainly suggests some people were having fun, not least Colonel John whose affection for 'thunder flashes' was legendary.

John was a man of great culture and learning as indeed befitted the Head of Classics, another role he took over, this time on the retirement of Tommy Sanderson. His book collection was vast, and his family have very generously bequeathed a number of his books to the School. There are folio editions amongst them. They are to be placed in the library with a dedication inside the front cover, and some will be housed in the Classics Department library.

Being master *i/c* examinations ensured contact with every boy in the school and every member of staff. It was a very public role. How many boys and staff of his era can still hear him announcing in his inimitable way: "Time. Stop writing now", with great emphasis on the "now". The tone threatened untold consequences to any boy who failed to release his pen.

John was particularly proud of his skill at making up the perfect parcels of examination scripts, which of course had to be wholly secure. He would delegate that task to no one.

John Welbourne was one of the great personalities of the Haberdashers' Common Room and everybody remembers his remarkable speed of wit and repartee. When chairman of the

Common Room his verbal wizardry entertained week in week out at the Friday morning staff meetings. On one occasion the then bursar, Jim Corbett, announced a new package whereby, were we to die in harness, three years salary would be paid to the next of kin. John in response rose and quoted straight from Keats 'Ode to a Nightingale': 'Now more than ever seems it rich to die...'

John's wife, Margot, seemed as much a part of the Haberdashers' staff as John himself. Her sunny personality drew us to her, especially on those Friday afternoons when, while waiting for John to finish his CCF work, she would be sipping sherry in Jack Hurst's office, and we gathered round her to chat and relax at the end of a busy week. They were happy times. Our thoughts are with Margot now, and the large extended family who are supporting her so well.

*Douglas Whittaker, Stuart Moore & Dick Norton*

### **Nick Clark-Lowes**

D.N. Clark-Lowes, who taught chemistry at Haberdashers' from 1963 to 1980, died last July at the age of 88.

Educated at Oundle, where he was Head Boy, and at Balliol College, Oxford, Nick had a mind to be ordained but found he could not accept the 39 Articles. Instead he chose to become a school master.

His early career was soon overtaken by the war. Commissioned into the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, he was evacuated from Dunkirk and later saw action in the Western Desert. Speaking to the boys about his experiences in North Africa, attention was always riveted when he spoke of the time a shell went between his legs and took the legs off the man behind him. Although he undoubtedly showed great courage and determination in the war, he spoke of it only occasionally and, once it was over, was entirely forward-looking, focusing on his teaching career.

In 1941 Nick was married to Audrey, the daughter of his Prep. School headmaster. By the end of the war he had one child and by 1953 he and Audrey had a family of four sons. In 1946 he joined Shrewsbury School where he is remembered for his extraordinary toughness; a man apparently oblivious to heat or cold, a leader of expeditions and camps in the hills and mountains. He rose to the position of Senior Science Master.

In 1954 Nick was persuaded to take over the headmastership of Hillbrow School, his father-in-law's Prep. School at Featherstone Castle in Northumberland. Despite hard and devoted work, it was difficult to make a success of a small family-run prep school (Hillbrow had 45

boys). Such schools were becoming a thing of the past by the end of the 1950s and in 1963 Nick moved to Haberdashers' Aske's School where he taught Chemistry and Religious Education for the rest of his career. His two younger sons attended Haberdashers.

His lack of interest in matters sartorial led the boys to give him various more or less affectionate nicknames. He was an excellent teacher though unusual; having spilt a few drops of acid on the demonstration bench he would be seen absent-mindedly wiping them up with his handkerchief.

Equally, stains on the ceiling and frequent experiments with highly toxic gases would struggle to pass the present-day health and safety regulations. Scores of Haberdashers will remember Nick with affection, in particular Rear Admiral Tony Higham who helped prepare a number of these exciting demonstrations. He was a man who always saw the good side of mankind and this will be the lasting memory of colleagues who taught with this remarkable man.

Always a Christian, he was fascinated by the realms of science and religion and their interaction and became increasingly interested in psychic events; some would say this sprang from his encounters with ghosts in the battlemented towers of the Norman Featherstone Castle. For ten years he was librarian of the Society for Psychical Research. Asked about the role of religion in his life he replied that it was very central. He was more concerned with the upbringing of children than the teaching of chemistry. He liked to think of himself as more a schoolmaster than a teacher.

**1999**

### **Michael Fitch (taught at the School 1964 – 1993)**

Michael Fitch, who was Head of English at Elstree from 1964 to 1993, died in November 1999 after a long and trying illness which he usually described, with characteristic understatement, as 'very inconvenient'. He was a great teacher, especially of clever boys, and his leadership over almost thirty years established the English Department at Haberdashers' as one of the best in the country. His much too early death is mourned by generations of his pupils and colleagues who were privileged to be counted among his friends.

Born in 1931, as an only child whose father died tragically young, Michael was always by disposition somewhat solitary and private. After infancy and prep. school in the West Country, Michael and his mother moved to London. He attended St Paul's as a Foundation Scholar, during and after the war of 1939-45. He left with enduring memories not only of frightening war-time bombing but also of a quality of education that remained his yardstick throughout his life.

As an Exhibitioner at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, he read English and History. History was almost as great a passion for him as literature. David Griffiths, who was Head of History for much of Michael's time at Elstree, remembers that 'his fascination with both the French Revolution and the Troubles in Ireland was very apparent and he was disarmingly (alarming!) - Keith Dawson) well informed. His range of knowledge fascinated Stuart Moore as much as it did me and the three of us would regularly be ensconced in the same seats in the Common Room pursuing some arcane point that interested Michael probably more than us. I am told that we looked like a trio of old crows 'sitting on the wa' but were never separated, which says much for the considerable respect - even awe - colleagues felt for Michael.'

After Cambridge, Michael's National Service was as an Education Officer in the R.A.F., mostly in Cyprus - at a dangerous time. Those who knew him in later years might be surprised to learn that he enjoyed these two years. Later, for six years, he commanded the R.A.F. section of the C.C.F. at Dulwich College, resigning in 1963 because, as he explained in his application to Haberdashers', 'I was beginning increasingly to doubt the value of this form of activity, except for a limited minority of boys'.

By the time he arrived at Elstree as Head of English at the age of thirty-three, Michael had nine years' experience at Dulwich. He had completely redesigned their school magazine, editing it for five years, and he had produced school plays, including an excellent 'Richard II' in 1963, a prelude to a string of memorable productions at Elstree.

Above all, he was already an outstanding teacher with his own clear ideas about what was important in teaching his subject and its (central!) place in a proper education. This was just as well. In-comers to Haberdashers' have to prove themselves to boys and colleagues alike, especially if they are appointed as head of department, and in the early 1960s the Common Room had its full share of the sharp-eyed and sharp-tongued. Michael certainly had more than one passage of arms in his early days but soon gained respect (very clearly here was someone to be reckoned with) and liking.

Michael had no formal training as a teacher and he was highly suspicious of educational theory. His ability as a teacher was instinctive and flowed from his intellectual and cultural interests, which were both broad and deep. In later years he often claimed to be out of touch. 'Of course', he would say, 'I know nothing these days', seeming to believe it. He would then launch into a penetrating analysis of the latest novel or film (he was an avid filmgoer), or tell of his recent visit to the new exhibition at the Royal Academy or the Tate. He had usually seen any play worth seeing well before colleagues and friends, and he was generous with invitations to the theatre, booking ahead for what he knew these particular friends would enjoy. Theatre-going to Michael was always an occasion, beginning or ending with good food and wine, and memorable talk.

For such a private man, Michael had an unusual talent for making and keeping friends, over a long time and great distances. Every holiday, a postcard would come, not with a scribbled conventional greeting, but with a witty and detailed analysis of the relationships between his fellow guests or a wickedly accurate description of the holiday location. Living on his own, he took particular interest in his friends' families - wives, children, brothers, sister-in-law and beyond. He had a special talent with young children and awkward adolescents, who began by finding him forbidding, discovering only later the mischievous twinkle that so many of his pupils recall.

Michael Fitch has left an enduring legacy. At the start of Robert Bolt's play 'A Man For All Seasons', Sir Thomas More tells the young Richard Rich that the Dean of St Paul's is prepared to offer him the post of schoolmaster at the new school. Rich, looking for preferment at court, is bitterly disappointed, but More presses him. 'Why not be a teacher? You'd be a fine teacher. Perhaps a great one. Rich is unconvinced. 'And if I was who would know it?' 'You, your pupils, your friends, God. Not a bad public that...' Thank you, Michael.

### **On his retirement in 1993:**

**'PROPRIETY VERGING ON MISCHIEF':** an appreciation of Michael Fitch  
SKYLARK 1993

Michael Fitch came to Haberdashers' in 1964 as Head of English. He retires in July. Colleagues and former pupils remember his years here...

Twenty years past, those of us fortunate enough to have Michael as both form master and English teacher considered ourselves fortunate indeed, both for the guiding, generous way he treated us as adults (whether we cared to be or not) and for the elegant, effortless way he communicated a deep enthusiasm for his subject. Michael projected the image of mild authoritarian - a facade we knew guarded a smile of delighted wickedness and genuine care. That wickedness surfaced, as is often the case, in the theatre. "A HANDBAG?" enquired Michael's Lady Bracknell, as the then youthful Keith Dawson (playing Jack Worthing) stood on in wonder and a cold assembly hall rang with laughter...

Having worked with Michael for several years I have come to respect him as a first-rate schoolmaster and value him as a true friend. Respect is due in no small measure for the intellectual rigour he brings to every task or problem and for his immense literary, historical and critical knowledge. We have always enjoyed and occasionally been humbled by the sharpness of his wit: pupils who bound uninvited into the English office, or those less than enthralled by 'Great Expectations', his fellow teachers, even (dare I say it) headmasters, have all felt the edge of his tongue in some exquisitely phrased quip. Yet he is as capable of

laughing at himself as at others, and is supportively sympathetic to anyone facing personal distress...

TIME: Chilly Sunday in March, late morning. Place: School Hall, cold as only the Hall could be. Dramatis Personae centre stage: cast of Royal Hunt/Merchant/Shrew/AYLI/Tempest/Murder/Alchemist etc. preparing for a run-through.

Dramatis Persona peripheral: JSRW jumping on and off the stage, mostly to keep warm, but also trying to organise the crowd, keep the principals busy - and see the wood through the trees.

Dramatis Persona magisterial: DMF, sitting in his favourite position in the front row of the balcony, scarf wrapped, sheepskin coat buttoned, thermos of special warming liquid in front of him, watching intently, taking notes, seeing the shape, tracing the subtext, intervening where necessary, and afterwards at lunch discussing at length: a rigorously critical sounding-board, an unerring artistic long-stop, without whose judgment and support over a dozen and more plays, drama at Haberdashers' would, for me, have been immeasurably impoverished.

.. His contribution to staff drama was unforgettable. Summoned through steely lorgnette and august corsage by "Prism, come here! Where is that baby?" I had no need to act; I simply quailed. Similarly, when directing, there was little to do; one just built in his improvisations. His appearance in 'The Real Inspector Hound' as a turbaned char, feather-dusting on the trot, made drudgery divine for those watching. Once, when rehearsing this 'ballet' - to his own hummed accompaniment - he was disconcerted by switching on an unresponsive wireless set. Instinctively he thumped it, jolting an inert Richard Baker into announcing that a murderer was on the loose. "Keep that", I shouted from the balcony. His resumed cleaning, executed with a blinkered zeal, and taking him to within inches of the murderer's prone victim, was one of the funniest parodies I have ever seen. The third time I saw him on stage was as Hallam in 'Penny for a Song'. It was difficult to believe that lines with such Fitchean resonances had not actually been written for him. "Tell me", he says, wishing to read some Wordsworth, "do you know of a secluded place in the vicinity of this house to which I can retire for a while... for the purpose of performing my usual literary chores of the day?"...

It wasn't like being taught, more like entering a charmed circle where things were worded differently. My introduction - "Why are you so languid?" the glasses lowered, eyes suddenly arranged into that merry theatrical squint - caused consternation in an untidy 15 year old. No schoolmaster had ever asked me such a thing. I wasn't sure what 'languid' meant, and had never dreamed that I might qualify for such a tricky, or interesting, description. There were plenty more of those over the next 7 terms, most, but not all, of them applied to people in books. The world had never seemed such an enthralling place before, and it hasn't done since...

Michael is a cerebral experience. The force of what he has said and how he has spoken is memorable. His report writing has a directness and perception that must have been as revealing to the students concerned as entertaining and informative to other readers. My particular favourite was an UCCA reference beginning "This boy is almost as clever as he thinks he is..". Neither shall I forget the look that briefly tenanted Michael's passive public face, a mixture of disbelief, despair and resignation that greeted the luckless colleague's remark that Shakespeare's 'King Lear' presented no great intellectual challenge. But above all he has been for many, students and colleagues alike, a stimulating draught of the best that our culture can offer...

... Michael, I have to revisit you inside 100 words! And really all the time since - still not out of range of your insights into my adolescent self and still, whatever I do, working words (even teaching English for a while). When I think of you, though, the literature is only part of it (I don't know that we particularly agreed on books), and I'm back with my early feeling - flattering, demanding, yes life-directing - of having been taken seriously. The things this has led to I acknowledge mine! But the difficult gift was yours...

... By traditional methods he ushered his pupils into the world of literary candour. They were shown the respect of being capable of feeling and analysis, even the occasional apercu... The very clever and the very unruly were kept in control by the withering stare and the ironic tongue. These weapons were put on display at the beginning of the year but thereafter were only wheeled on for amusement. There was no phoney pretence that the teacher/pupil barrier did not exist and the mutual respect established resulted in intense work and superb results, but above all a lifelong appreciation of literature...

... Sixth Form English with Michael Fitch was rarely dull. My 6B year involved an exhilarating plunge through English literature from Everyman to Eliot - not just the set books but a range of authors, whom, but for Michael's guidance, I might never have sampled. He could be a sharp critic, but is also a true enthusiast for his subject.

While literature can and does give one fresh insight into the human condition, it offers, above all, the chance to recharge one's imaginative batteries. Whatever one's profession, poetry and novels can still provide solace and inspiration. It is to Michael more than anyone else to whom I owe the habit of reading good literature for pleasure - a gift for which I shall owe him lifelong thanks...

... In our imagination, Michael belonged to an age altogether more rich and strange than the blandly positive one we inhabited. His last visit to church seems to have been to St Stephen's, Chelsea, where T.S. Eliot was a sidesman, so as to place a coin in the collecting bowl that Eliot handed him. We associated him with first productions by Beckett at the Royal Court, with 'Horizon', with the world of Desmond MacCarthy and Cyril Connolly. What did he use to sip from his flask in between those seemingly interminable close (and closed)

readings from Shakespeare? Only a refined cocktail or some pre-war eau de vie would have matched our imaginings. We never found out...

...One of my favourite memories of Michael concerns the time he came to visit us in Scarborough and we nearly drowned him in the North Sea, nearly got him shot on the moors above Haworth and were not able to arrange for him to sunbathe on the leads at Castle Howard. As for Haworth, we told him it was almost as far from Scarborough as it was possible to go and still be in the same county, but he petulantly refused to look at the map, saying "It's all in the same county; it can't possibly take three hours". So we went. The North Sea nearly got him at Boggle Hole, walking from Robin Hood's Bay to Ravenscar (look at the map!), whilst the custodian at Castle Howard, overwhelmed by visitors following the success of 'Brideshead Revisited', let us go almost anywhere but where Michael hoped to go - up on the leads where Anthony Andrews and Jeremy Irons had sunbathed...

Our best and most revealing times were, perhaps, on the 'Twelfth Night' German tour (1969); myself as stage manager sharing some of the burdens of a two week round of schools and theatres with (among so many others) Michael and Keith Dawson, the co-producers. I remember Michael bearing with unruffled poise the strains of improvised staging, minibus packing, autobahn travel and bilingual chat far into the wine-tasting nights.

At one hotel, somewhere on our itinerary, I recall someone coming out with the quotation: "I never saw anyone take so long to dress, with such little result".

Memory is a treacherous beast, but I think the speaker must have been Michael, with reference to himself. I always regret that I missed his actual stage portrayal of Lady Bracknell...

.. To the theatre with Michael on many occasions, but most memorably to see Peter O'Toole as Macbeth. O'Toole was mesmerisingly bad - somewhere out beyond laughter - but the rest of the cast was just plain awful. We'd been sniggering intermittently from the start but then there came the line "And so his knell is knolled" delivered with such stiff, weighty pomposity that we both let out a combined, uncontrollable guffaw. Sitting in front of us were a father, mother and two young sons, all in their best theatre-going clothes. No, you never laugh in 'Macbeth' except at the porter (who, on this occasion, had his work cut out), so four disapproving heads swivelled round in unison and glared at us. Michael, trying to straighten his face, was a picture, and that picture recalls for me now what I have always so much enjoyed in his company: a sense of propriety verging on mischief, his artfully constrained relish for the absurd, the occasional absolute surrender as on that evening at the Old Vic...

This year's production of 'Twelfth Night' brought back vivid memories of our joint production at Elstree in the late 1960's. Sharing play production, like marriage, is a relationship 'not to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, nor wantonly...' as Michael was wise

enough to know, and we rather carefully parcelled out the scenes. Leaving me to deal with "Sir Toby and the lighter people" he set about the real challenge of making the courtly scenes and the verse live, with wonderful effect. Only those who've done it know what skills and relentless determination are needed to help young actors really perform and Michael did this marvellously; I'm sure they will have remembered the experience to this day.

Those who saw it will also remember his brilliant Lady Bracknell in an all-male staff production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest' in 1970. Played dead-straight, it was scintillatingly intelligent and fresh - no tired echoes of Edith Evans for Michael. The famous 'handbag' line was a revelation: long pause, fixed stare, then a slowly raised eyebrow and in a 'how interesting, take me with you' inviting tone... "A handbag??" Deadly accurate and very funny...

*Contributors in order of appearance:*

Ivor Benjamin, Michael Lempriere, Stephen Wilkins, David Griffiths, Robert Sandall, Stuart Moore, Michael Bird, Ben Brown, David Lidington MP, Mark Archer, Marjorie Dawson, Michael Palmer, John Mole, Keith Dawson

**1998**

**Alan Jackson**

**Clare Anderson**

**Mike Palmer**

**Wilf Hewitt and Victor Todhunter**

After the last edition of News from Elstree when we reported the sad deaths of Wilf Hewitt and Vivian Todhunter, we received the following letter of tribute from Peter Oppenheimer (O.H. '56).

"I was sad to read the death of two Common Room 'characters' from the 1950s, both mathematicians: Wilf Hewitt and Vivian Todhunter ('Victor' was a sobriquet').

"Their personalities were very different. Wilf was a kind of dynamo, covering the blackboard with derivations to the accompaniment of high-speed verbal patter. He wore rubber finger stalls to protect his skin from being worn, and sucked lozenges to preserve his throat. He was a great enthusiast for Corps camps, where he acted as first-line-of-defence medical officer. His principle was that boys were afflicted at camp by only two ailments: blisters and constipation. If it wasn't the one, it must be the other. This principle generally worked pretty well, though I do have a vague memory, possibly libellous, of him dosing up with laxative a boy who turned out to be suffering from sinusitis.

"Mr. Todhunter was entirely different, reflective and quietly versatile, rather flamboyant. His versatility extended, apparently to doing The Times crossword before the start of morning school, though his pupils were not aware of this. He was, an amateur linguist and language textbook illustrator. As a side activity within the School he taught a group of us Russian up to 'O' level in our final year(s). I owe him a great personal debt for this. It helped me to get on to the Russian Interpretership course in my National Service (in the Royal Navy). One of the friends I made on the course turned out to be the (half-Russian) brother of my future wife. Moreover, since the collapse of Communism my knowledge of Russian has been a significant factor in my professional activities, reinforcing my well-established love of the language and its culture with frequent visits to Moscow and other parts of the country".

**1995**

**Bob Packer**

**Joan Pridmore**

**1993**

**Dick Hewson**

Dick Hewson joined the Staff of Haberdashers' in 1938 to take charge of the Geography Department. At the outbreak of war he joined the Army and was engaged in active service in Asia.

On his return he quickly established himself in the School, coached one of the most successful school boxing teams in the country, and became Housemaster of Hendersons. He attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel as Commanding Officer of the Combined Cadet Force; under his vigorous leadership the Band won numerous trophies and the Shooting Eight saw many successes at Bisley.

School 'holidays' were in fact among his most active periods, for he was very keen on all forms of outdoor pursuits, In addition to organising the Summer Camps for the Army Section, he introduced generations of Middle School boys to Alpine skiing slopes and passed on his own considerable mountaineering skill to cadets in Snowdonia, the Lake District, Ireland, Skye and Norway. He recorded these excursions on film, in earlier years in superb black and white and later in colour with his cine-camera which he used with great effect to supplement his teaching.

A quiet, modest, friendly man, he was admired and respected by all who came into contact with him, not least by the members of the Old Haberdashers' Rifle Club, of which he was President, but above all by his fellow officers and colleagues.

It was a great credit to his personal fitness that he still climbed and enjoyed skiing whenever possible. Being talented musically he was, on his retirement in 1970, allowed the time and opportunity to take up playing the violin once again.

After such a hectic and fulfilling working life Dick enjoyed a long retirement. To those at Haberdashers' our memories will remain of a man who was very much a man's man, a fine academic, a gifted schoolmaster whose care for the boys in his charge, usually in the open air, was uppermost in his mind. He was always kind to people - a true gentleman, a pillar of strength on the school community for almost the whole of his working life - he literally gave his life to the School.

**1992**

**Maurice Willat (teacher at Habs 1955-1981)**

Maurice Willatt taught Economics and Politics at Haberdashers' from 1955 to 1981. He was a fine man and an outstanding teacher. In 1927 he went up from Newcastle-under-Lyme to Jesus College, Cambridge, and four years later began his teaching career amidst the depths of the Depression. During the Second World War he served with the army in India and afterwards was headmaster of Elmhurst School in Somerset, from where he joined Haberdashers'.

Maurice came from a world which we have lost and he brought some of its magic to our own. No one who taught with him can easily forget his memories of Cambridge before the spies and of India under the King-Emperor, or his discreet diplomacy and his personal example. No one who was taught by him can surely forget his erudition and his wisdom, or his ability to cast new light upon academic and intellectual problems.

Maurice was not only an officer and a gentleman, but a scholar and a sincere Christian. In Chaucer's words "he loved chivalry, truth and honour, freedom and courtesy ... he was a very perfect gentle knight." We shall not see his like again and we shall be the poorer for it. His wife and family will be in our thoughts and prayers.

**1991**

**Bill Prior**

**1990**

**Dai Barling (Taught at the School 1942 – 1982)**

The news of the death of Dai Barling - mercifully peaceful - on June 6th, 1990 called forth many affectionate and admiring reminiscences of a great teacher and friend. He had retired in 1982 but was often remembered. As the news spread to generations of former pupils and colleagues, so the tributes came: tributes to the unique impact and influence of this remarkable individual on those who belonged to Haberdashers' in his time.

Known as "Taffy" to the boys and "Dai" to his colleagues, he was one of three sons of a miner in Aberdare. Having studied French at the University of Birmingham, he began his teaching career in that city. A conscientious objector in the Second World War, he was required to relinquish his post at a local authority school and worked for a while on the land. He came to Haberdashers' in 1942. Wartime conditions at Westbere Road were far from ideal (early duties included fire-watching), but Dai's initial enthusiasm for the school never faltered and for forty years Haberdashers' enjoyed the total dedication of this most loyal servant.

Dai will be remembered by so many boys as a fine teacher of French, equally respected by the undistinguished struggler and the brilliant high flier. Whatever other duties fell to him, Dai maintained his love of the classroom. In his teaching his own immaculate French, his affection for France, his delight in words and his unfailing precision both inspired and impressed his pupils. In the sixth form he taught French literature with panache and vigour: he rendered the conventions of earlier centuries accessible to modern pupils and he created for his classes a framework of ideas within which they could learn to criticise and to understand. Dai was also heavily involved in the teaching of Religious Education and in later years helped to establish a new and demanding 'A' level course.

Dai served as Head of French, was in his element as Housemaster of Joblings for eighteen years and was master in charge of Rugby. A fine athlete in his youth, he is also remembered as a very fast and agile member of the Wasps 1st Team. In 1964 he became Senior Master and then in 1968 Second Master. He was a superlative organiser of special events: he led countless school parties to France, he master-minded the memorable School Fete in 1967, he instituted the regular visits of the National Blood Transfusion Service, he learned to drive in order to be able to supervise the move to Elstree in 1961 ("the great migration"). He was a champion fundraiser, typically enlisting the assistance of a group of boys (some of whom he had first met in the Detention class) to collect large quantities of waste paper, proceeds from which were used to help charities and to finance a series of wonderful holidays for mentally handicapped children, which he led together with his wife in Aldenham House in the summer holidays.

He had been appointed to the staff by Dr Abson and went on to serve as deputy to two headmasters: Tom Taylor and Bruce McGowan. He spoke movingly of Dr Taylor's many achievements and qualities at the memorial concert in his honour. He quickly established a

close rapport with Mr McGowan and thrived on the team work which enabled the Headmaster, Dai and Leo Guidon as Senior Master to employ their various skills and talents for the benefit of the school. Dai became a friendly father figure with his well-chosen, quietly spoken words of encouragement and advice for everyone who worked at Elstree. He loved to see old boys of the school and former colleagues and valued highly his many lasting friendships. He played a significant role in the social side of our life, for many years as Secretary and subsequently Chairman of the Common Room.

A committed Christian, Dai enjoyed a wide circle of fellowship outside the school. In his younger days, he had mounted a soap-box near Marble Arch to preach the gospel. He often drove hundreds of miles to fulfil a preaching engagement. He had a strong intellectual interest in religion as well as a deep personal faith. Indeed, if one were to take the invidious course and select one feature about Dai which would be worthy of the greatest respect, it could well be that he was a man equally unafraid to subject his faith to the analysis of his own formidable intellect and to ensure that every aspect of his private and professional life should be exposed to the high demands of that faith. His life of faith and enquiry led to a number of publications and invitations for him to speak and to teach. The school was a regular beneficiary: his assembly addresses and his assembly notices served alike to encourage all members of the school to adhere to high moral standards in all of their activities. He fostered the school's sense of community, expounded the trust and interdependence which make our life together and he offered compassion, forgiveness and help to anyone whose activities might undermine the best interests of our society.

Dai often spoke of the blessings he enjoyed in his life, especially the blessings of a happy home. He spoke of the close-knit tribal life of his family. He and Mollie had three children: Peter, Anne and Judy, all now married with children of their own. Sadly, his wife died in 1979 after a long illness which required Dai to devote himself unstintingly to her care. The happy and fulfilled couple who had shared everything for so long were able to discuss rationally what the future would hold. It was decided that Dai would postpone his retirement and after the parting he threw himself as energetically as ever into the life of the school. Sustained by his faith and his family, Dai lived through the sad days of bereavement. He became ill himself and underwent an operation but bounded back as resilient and dynamic as ever.

The affection in which he was held was clearly demonstrated at his retirement assembly. On that occasion, as so often before, he held more than a thousand boys in the palm of his hand. They gave him two standing ovations, eloquent testimony to the love they felt for him. He told them of his plans for retirement. He had married again some six months earlier and he and Joy, who was able to join him at the assembly, were looking forward to life in Newton Abbot, to active involvement in local church affairs and in charity work, to the freedom to spend more time with the family and with friends, to the care of a beautiful garden, to reading and to writing. Dai and Joy were blessed with eight years of great happiness. They had both

suffered the loss of their first partner and delighted in the pleasure of their new life together. To Joy, to the children and grandchildren, we offer our sincere condolences at this time of sorrow.

Let the last words be his. In his concluding remarks in the funeral oration which he gave for a young friend whom he had known both as a pupil and as a colleague, Dai gave an indication of what he admired in others and his words could surely not be bettered in our attempts to describe our own debt to him:

"He did so much by his influence and actions alike, to make the world a better place. May his passing provide for all of us who had the privilege of knowing him the inspiration to emulate his example, which he set with such humility and steadfastness. Thanks be to God".

Stephen Wilson

### **Michael Hepworth**

It was with shock and sorrow that the Common Room and School learnt of the sudden and unexpected death of Michael Hepworth in March of this year. Although he had left the School in December 1988 to become Head of Mathematics at The Parse School in Cambridge he retained personal and professional links with friends here.

A competent and dedicated teacher in mathematics, he will be remembered here also for his youthful mien and the remarkably wide range of his talents beyond the classroom as linguist, musician, and water sportsman, all of which talents he gave cheerfully and unstintingly to friends, the school and beyond. An excellent teacher and colleague, a good friend, and a sad loss to all.