

OLD MAIDSTONIAN SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER: SUMMER 2005

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*To find out a lot more about what is happening
at the School you can get the information from the
Maidstone Grammar School Web-Site at
www.mgs.kent.sch.uk*

Since the last edition what has happened? Well, the School has completed its' first year as a Language College and certainly the trend of youngsters giving up on such subjects does not apply to MGS. Besides the normal curriculum lessons there are booster classes for those working towards public examinations and a whole range of evening sessions available to students, parents and other members of the community. French, German, Spanish and Italian can be studied at beginners, intermediate or advanced level and from this autumn there will be a chance to look at doing it for examination. Of course, there was a demand for the short 'holiday' courses to gain a sprinkling of words to use whilst abroad. A number of local children also study Urdu and Bengali and in another year Mandarin Chinese is likely to be offered.

The new buildings are well on the way to being completed. The area known to most OM's for the canteen and workshops along with the CCF huts is now revamped with a three storey teaching block containing eight teaching rooms, four art studios and three computer suites together with various offices and storerooms. There is also the new two-level refectory which will seat around three hundred and fifty persons plus provide an internet-café style area. Both facilities should be occupied by late October.

Last November saw a full Ofsted Inspection. The report that appeared in the Spring makes excellent reading: one wouldn't expect anything less for our beloved institution!

See inside for...

ANNUAL SUPPER 2006
A.G.M. - REPORT & ADVANCE NOTICE

Old Maidstonians who fought and/or died
in armed conflicts

As part of the celebrations for the forthcoming centenary of the C.C.F., I am trying to create a database about the Old Maidstonians who are listed on the four memorial boards in the School (three student memorials and one staff memorial).

If you have any information about those who are named the please let me have details:

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Dr Brian White (OMS President 2004/05)

* * * * *

Being a cadet in the CCF (by Alan Atkinson 1954-61)

“I have very fond memories of being in the School CCF. I immediately think of the smell of ‘blanco’ that we used to plaster on those uniform belts. I enjoyed the ‘camps’ we went on. I can remember lying, with my rifle and blank ammunition, all day under a beautiful summer sky in Norfolk, waiting for the ‘enemy’ to turn up (they never did luckily). Meanwhile I watched the jets from nearby airfields doing aerobatics overhead, and scoffed all the provisions I had!

“My claim to infamy was that I was given charge of the glider display on a very important field day. Most will recall that the glider was of a very basic ‘A’ frame construction, launched like a catapult with two teams of people pulling on elastic. The highest it ever got, until that day, was about six inches. I decided to make it a very special performance that afternoon. I asked my friend *Nick Black* if he would like to pilot it, and gave him instructions to pull back on the stick as far as possible. Meanwhile, had removed the two bolts that restricted the movement of that particular stick. We gave an extra-big pull on the elastic, *Nick* pulled back hard, and the glider went vertically upwards. We knew nothing then, of course, about stalls, and we just watched, mouths open, as the plane stopped ten feet above the ground, dropped like a stone and disintegrated. Luckily, nobody was hurt. Quite rightly I got a severe telling off.

“As a follow up, I was about to land Concorde in New York 30 years later, with *James Burke* (ex-MGS and, of course, television) sitting in the cockpit. I recounted the story, we had a big laugh, and I rashly said that I didn’t make landings as heavy as that any more. Well...I then thumped the Concorde on to the tarmac...and *James* said ‘so you’re still crashing them in!’”

Book return missed?

Back in June the editor received an e-mail which...well, here is the main content:

I am not directly an ex-pupil of Maidstone Grammar School but I have come across an item that still belongs to the school.

I'm rather partial to old books, especially the works of English Romantic poets such as Shelly, Wordsworth and Keats.

As a present for my birthday this February I was given a 1924 edition of "Selections from the poems of John Keats", University Press (Cambridge). I have only recently realised its strange significance.

I live in the West Midlands, where the book was purchased, but was born in Maidstone. When I saw the label on the inside cover I was quite surprised, it clearly said how the book had been issued to a *D. A. Whyatt (form 6A)* in November 1949. As I am now in possession of the book and the 'returned' column is left blank I can only presume the book was never handed back. The book had previously been lent to a more trustworthy *K. S. May, 1945-47*.

Knowing the nature of charity shops I have assumed that Whyatt is deceased and that the book was on a bookshelf somewhere, forgotten, and donated, instead of being returned after all these years.

Does anybody reading this newsletter know of either O.M. mentioned? One wonders what the fine would be if it had been a library book - now 56 years overdue!

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Bad weather. Surely not in England?

For people living in Kent at the beginning of March they might recall that there was a fall of snow. A few flakes seems to cause chaos and so it was; of course, it makes good media stories and so Sky Television decided to descend on MGS. Hence the following e-mail from *Roger Whitlock...*

I turned on the TV this morning to get the latest from Sky News. There was a reporter standing outside what appeared to be a familiar set of gates, talking about the snow in Kent, and the closure of the schools. Next, a view of a very familiar school hall, followed by an interview with the headmaster. You can imagine my delight at seeing MGS on TV!

Yesterday (03 March 2005) the temperature here in Benoni, South Africa, was about 28C and we have just entered Autumn. Even at 06h00 today it was warm enough for just a pair of shorts! Seeing the snow and MGS was a mixture of nostalgia and delight although I didn't have to battle through the snow to get to work.

After forty years, some images are instantly recognisable.

News of Old Maidstonians

DOUG BARNES (1945) now lives in London having moved south from his long time home in Leeds. He retired some fifteen years ago from a Readership in Curriculum Theory at the University of Leeds and, so the internet states, has written books on the subject as well as being the recipient of an OBE.

CHRIS BOOBIER (2005) has just completed his studies at MGS and was School Captain. Along with *Ed Pateman-Jones (2005)* he will be doing some travelling including a visit to Ecuador where they will take part in some conservation projects in the Andes and Amazon basin.

BEN BABINGTON-BROWNE (2000) will commence his Army Officer training at Sandhurst in September. Meanwhile he has spent a good part of his final year at London University involved in a number of military exercises both in the UK and Europe. Additionally, he was a member of a team participating in the 15km Classic Nordic race where competitors ski along tracks in the snow, and two biathlons involving skiing and shooting.

GARY CARCARY (1976) writes to say that he continues to work with the Cadburys Group as Third Party Quality Assurance Manager. The last year has been particularly busy with many new products being added to the range but manufactured in a variety of countries - he needs to check them all out! A restructuring means that he now has responsibility for a region that includes Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Likely to keep him busy for a while!

HARRY ELLIS (1945) lives in the Bristol area (and is regularly in touch with *Doug Barnes*), but does spend much time in Brittany.

IAN HALE (1975) obtained an open Exhibition to read Mathematics at Jesus College, Oxford. Lived in Nottingham for 21 years and been a solicitor for the last nine years. Married with three teenage children.

JOHN HALL (1978) wrote to say: "I graduated from MGS with a love of art and history and bugger all else, and went to Sussex for a BA in American Studies. Then to St. Catherine's College, Oxford, for a D.Phil in Modern History, and was a professor at Albion College, in Michigan, for ten staggeringly cold years. Appallingly bored with Michigan, I quit my tenured position and decided to go to law school.

I graduated with a JD from Stanford in 2000. While at Stanford, and since then, I have worked in Asia, particularly Cambodia and the Philippines, doing a variety of human rights work. I was also temporarily a serf at a massive law firm, O'Malveny & Myers, in Los Angeles, then in-house with the electricity company, and have now returned to academia.

I am currently a professor at Chapman University School of Law, here in lovely Southern California, where I teach international law, human rights, employment law and torts. I have recently returned from the Philippines where worked on behalf of 10,000 peasants facing violent eviction at the hands of developers (seven of the farmers had been murdered and all so the developers can build golf courses, believe it or not!)

I am married to Dare Law. As her name would suggest she is also an attorney (for the US Dept. of Justice). We have a four year-old daughter, Sophie.

I'd love to hear from anyone who remembers me, unless I owe them money."

ALAN MCDUGALL (1994) is now Assistant Professor in Modern European History at the University of Guelph, Canada. Earlier this year he produced his first/major history publication "Youth Politics in East Germany: The Free German Youth Movement 1946-68".

PAUL OLDHAM (1963) completed twenty-five years service as a Councillor on the Maidstone Borough Council.

JULIAN PARISH (1978) has been involved with the learning and use of languages throughout most of his career since completing his studies in Modern Languages at Oxford. Since 1996 he has been working for Microsoft, where he has worked on the planning and development of international versions of both Encarta and Office. For the last couple of years he has been responsible for the management of linguistic resources: this work involves co-ordinating the use of the dictionaries and wordlists used in applications such as the spelling checkers in Office, but also the linguistic components used in Internet search technology, handwriting and speech recognition, across more than fifty languages. After working in the US from 1997-99 he has been at the company's European Head Office in Paris for six years.

LES PEARCE (1934) lives near Bristol and would be delighted to hear from anybody who remembers him. After MGS he lived in Hollingbourne and had many years with the police force.

IAN WALUBE (2001) gained a degree in H.R. Management at Leicester University and is now studying for his Master's.

ADRIAN WOOLVEN (2000) who was School Captain 1999/2000 passed out of the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell, as a Pilot Officer (Navigation) in June.

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GARMENTS

TIES

The Honorary Treasurer has a supply of both styles of Old Maidstonian tie and these can be ordered using the Return Sheet of this Newsletter.

The 'crested' version is a Jacquard Woven Tie with all-over motifs of the crest in gold, red and blue on a navy background. It is of polyester Rep and 54" x 3 1/8" in size. Cost, including postage, £8.50

The 'striped' version is also a Jacquard Woven Tie with a main colouring of navy blue containing angled stripes of gold, purple and white. It is of Polyester Rep: 54" x 3 1/8" in size. Cost, including postage, £6.50

O M SCARF

The Honorary Treasurer has a supply of scarves that cost just £9.50, including postage. Measuring 54" x 9", the Acrylic Scarf is made with two sets of stripes of silver, mauve, gold, navy, silver on a navy background.

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DOT.COM

If you are looking for a former classmate or member of staff and the Society can't help, then take a look at

www.friendsreunited.com

There are now more than 4,300 former MGS students listed (by year of leaving) plus various pages relating to the School itself. It is free to view and use as a research tool but a nominal membership subscription is needed to use its messaging service.

It is not intended to trawl through the names to find articles for inclusion in the OMS newsletters.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Following the success this year of holding the meeting immediately prior to the Annual Supper, next year's AGM will follow a similar pattern.

The formal notice will be given in the Winter Newsletter which will also give the venue. It is hoped that a tour of the new Teaching Block and Refectory can be included during the evening.

ANNUAL SUPPER

Next year's Supper will be held in the Main Hall at M.G.S. on Friday 24th March 2006 with sit-down at 7.30pm.

Details of tickets will be included in the next newsletter but the price has been set at £20.00 - a very modest increase on this year.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

There are two types of subscription available:

The 'Ordinary' rate is £5.00 per annum and is due at the start of the year. This can be paid by cheque or cash but Standing Order is preferred; a mandate can be obtained from the Honorary Treasurer.

'Life Membership' can be taken out by anybody with the amount depending on age. There is a great advantage in doing it this way since you are then "in for life" and an increase won't affect you. The current rates are:

Up to 30 years of age = £60
31 - 50 years of age = £40
51 and over = £20

OBITUARIES

It is with regret that the Society records the death of Old Maidstonians and our sympathy goes out to their families and friends.

CLIVE EALDING (1956) who had spent most of his working life as an aeronautical engineer died suddenly on 25th May 2005 at Newbury Hospital.

SIDNEY J W HALE (1938) passed away in July 2003 aged 82.

COLIN J S STANDEN (1946) passed away at his Harlow, Essex, home in March 2004.

ANDREW TAIT (1974) regrettably died following a road traffic accident in January 2005. He was a keen tri-athlete and marathon runner and a member of the Maidstone Harriers Running Club. He was married with two children.

MRS MAUREEN WINGROVE passed away on 30th March 2005. During the 1960's, 1970's and through to mid-80's she was the supervisor for the Number Two Cleaning Team at MGS (*when the cleaners were part of the School staff*).

STEVEN WINN (1997) died in a road traffic accident in February 2005. After leaving MGS he had attended Sheffield University and was working as a financial advisor for a company in London.

The following is a tribute by his daughter to a beloved father, an 'old' Maidstonian who passed away this summer.

SYDNEY WILLISHER COATS (1921 - 2005)

Syd was born on 4th February 1921 to Albert Sydney and Jessie (nee Lipscomb) Coats at Holland Road, Maidstone. They soon moved to 247 Upper Fant Road, corner of Dover Street, Maidstone, where he spent his childhood living above his parents' general store. At St. Michael's Infant School he was picked as a monitor for the two youngest classes. His father's mother, Caroline Matilda Stanford, lived with them. He called her Gran and they shared a bedroom. He was very sad when she died in a bus accident in the Wye Valley when he was eight years old. His uncle, Joseph or Stanley Coats, was head teacher or second master at Lower Fant Road School.

Syd's great-great-great-great-uncle through his mother was Edgar Willsher, Kent and England bowler, who instigated legalisation of over-arm bowling in 1864. Opening England's bowling against Surrey at the Oval in 1862, he was no-balled for bowling over-arm. After being called six times the England team left the field and play was abandoned for the day. The umpire was replaced the final day, when Willsher took 6-49.

His grandfather William Coats was a printer on the Kent Messenger Stanhope Press. Syd's father joined the Royal Artillery Woolwich in 1900, driving a gun carriage at Edward's VII's funeral. In WWI he was one of the 'Old Contemptible' (British Expeditionary Force) at Mons, Le Cateau, the Marne, Aisne and First Ypres, twice poisoned by gas. He received a French medal of which only 26 were awarded to members of the British Army.

From 1932 Syd attended Maidstone Grammar School, where he won the Victor Ludorum and matriculated in 1938. He belonged to the Scouts and at some point missed nearly a year of school through rheumatic fever.

In 1938 Syd joined Kent County Council and with former school friends and colleagues discussed joining up, as war seemed inevitable. They attended the Drill Hall in Union Street and on 5th May 1939 at Maidstone he signed on for four years or Duration of the War. He was a driver in the Territorial Army unit of the Royal Army Service Corps, 507 Company, part of the 44th Home Counties Division. Apart from summer camp at Lympne in August for 15 days, 'route marches in new boots', he was still at work, where 'the younger members of staff were expected to

do a stint of sandbag filling'. Finally, on 2nd September, he reported for duty at West Borough School, was billeted in Tonbridge Road (not far from his home) and began guarding his transports, Timpsons' coaches, on Barming Heath.

From February 1940 Syd was training at Royal Arsenal, Woolwich and by August 1941 was at Rowfant House, near Crawley. He remained there until December 1942. He was appointed Acting Lance Corporal on 24th December 1941 (granted substantive on 6th November 1942) and posted to 96 Mixed Transport Company on 24th September 1942. On 15th December he was posted from Rowfant to 490 General Transport Company at Guildford and embarked from Glasgow on Overseas Service on 26th March 1943.

Syd disembarked at Algiers on 14th March 1943, following Operation Torch, the Allies' campaign to drive the Axis powers from North Africa. Syd had a permanent dock pass dated 7th May 1943 for Philippeville, a port in eastern Algeria, presumably to collect supplies. This was close to Tunis, only taken on 7th May by the British, with Bizerta taken by the Americans. The Axis powers surrendered on 12th May and nearly 250,000 Germans and Italians were taken prisoner. He drove lorries loaded with petrol, rode motorcycles through the Atlas Mountains and helped run an Italian POW camp. On 13th February 1944, now W/Cpl, he was transferred to 918 ADT Company and from 23 August 1945 was mustered as a Clerk (T) Cpl Cl. II.

On the dockside embarking for Italy on 6th June 1944 he heard of the D-Day Landings. He had clerical duties supporting the Allied advance through Italy, then went to Austria. He enjoyed skiing, in his uniform and army boots. As acting Sergeant he had 28 days' UK leave on 31st October 1945 but spent that Christmas in Austria. He returned to England finally the following February and was discharged in August 1946 from RASC General Transport Company 918 at Ore Place, Hastings.

His identification with his comrades in North Africa and Italy is clear from the presence of the poem '*The D-Day Dodgers*' among his papers. It was a response to a comment made by Lady Astor in the House of Commons in 1944, which appeared to devalue the Italian campaign in relation to the Normandy campaign.

Syd was awarded the Africa Star (1943), 1939-45 Star and Italy Star (1945), Efficiency Medal Territorial (1948), 1939-45 War Medal and Defence Medal. On 6th April 1946 his Commanding Officer described his Military Conduct as 'Exemplary', and wrote a testimonial: 'This man has rendered

invaluable Service to this unit as chief clerk for a long time. His hard work, perseverance, enthusiasm and clerical ability is sure to make him invaluable to any future employer.'

Syd returned to Kent County Council Education Department at Springfield, marrying in 1947. He was also Presiding Officer at elections, and once was almost snowbound at Nettlestead. In the 1960's he became Assistant Borough Education Officer for Bromley in Chislehurst. Following reorganisation, when he was paid an honorarium in respect of extra responsibilities, he became Administrative Assistant in charge of the Selection Section which dealt chiefly with the 'eleven plus' examination. On 1st August 1968 he took charge of the section dealing with 3,000 teachers. N October 1968 he moved house to Bromley. He continued to be a senior member of the department until his retirement in 1985. Syd is remembered at Bromley 'as a lovely gentleman, a man of honesty, reliability and integrity'.

Syd always took a keen interest in sport, following athletics, cricket and the fortunes of Arsenal Football Club as 'The Gunners' were associated with both his father's and his own army units. He loved travelling to Italy, Austria and Switzerland and enjoyed gardening, music, radio comedy and photography.

Syd died on 7th June at Belle House Rest Home, Bexhill-on-Sea, after a short illness, aged 84.

Reference was made to 'The D-Day Dodgers' so here are the words:

We're the "D-Day Dodgers" way out in Italy,
Always drinking Vino, always on the spree;
The 1st Armoured Div and their Sherman tanks -
For we are the "D-Day Dodgers" - the lads who
dodged D-Day!

We landed at Salerno, on holidays with pay,
Jerry turned the band out to play us on our way;
We all sang songs and the beer was free,
We ran Company Dances till half-past three -
For we are the "D-Day Dodgers" - the lads who
dodged D-Day!

Naples and Cassino were taken in our stride,
We didn't go to fight there - we just went for the ride;
Anzio and Sangro were all forlorn,
We didn't do a thing there from dusk till dawn -
For we are the "D-Day Dodgers" - the lads who
dodged D-Day!

On the way to Florence we had a lovely time,

We ran a bus from Rimini: right through Gothic Line
Soon to Bologna we will go;
Where Jerry is gone beyond the Po -
For we are the "D-Day Dodgers" - the lads who
dodged D-Day!

We hope the boys in France will soon get leave,
After six months' service it's a shame they
are not relieved;
Because our wives don't shed their tears -
For we are the "D-Day Dodgers" - the lads who
dodged D-Day!

Once we had the griff that we were going home,
Back to dear old Blighty, never more to roam;
Then someone whispered "In France you'll fight"
We said "Not that - we'll just sit tight" -
Back to dear old Blighty. Never more to roam;
For we are the "D-Day Dodgers" - the lads who
dodged D-Day!

Oh, Lady Astor, listen please to us,
Don't stand on a platform and make a lot of fuss;
You're the nation's sweetheart
and the nation's pride,
But your lovely mouth is far too wide -
That's from the "D-Day Dodgers" - the lads who
dodged D-Day!

If you look around the mountains
in the mud and rains,
You'll find battered crosses, some of
which bear no names;
Heartbroken, toil and suffering gone,
They are the boys who slumber on -
They were the "D-Day Dodgers" - the lads who
dodged D-Day!

*Composed by Major Hamish Henderson
(51st Highland Division - 1944)
Sung to the tune of 'Lili Marlene'*

Please return this form to:
ROGER BROWN THE GATE HOUSE BARTON ROAD MAIDSTONE KENT ME15 7BX

SUBSCRIPTIONS

I enclose the sum of £..... being my subscription for the year(s).....

I enclose the sum of £..... to cover the cost of Life Membership

(Rates: Up to 30 years of age = £60, 31-50 years = £40, Over 50 years = £20)

GARMENTS

I enclose £..... for the purchase of crested tie(s) at £8.50 each

I enclose £..... for the purchase of striped tie(s) at £6.50 each

I enclose £..... for the purchase of scarf(ves) at £9.50 each

YOUR DETAILS

Name:..... Year of Leaving:.....

Address:.....

.....

(Cheques should be made payable to: Old Maidstonian Society)