



Old Maidstonian Society

Newsletter No.8 - Summer 2012

President:
David Leeke

Chairman:
Richard Ratcliffe

Secretary:
Brian White

OMs impress the President

The last time I wrote a 'From the President' article I had just taken part in the wedding of James Baker, whom I taught at MGS. This led me on to make a number of points about what defines MGS and its pupils. This time I write having just returned from beautiful Northumberland, where I was privileged to be part of another wedding of one of my form from the 1990s: Robert Carter (who was my first Senior Prefect) married Beth Gregory-Smith (a GP near Corbridge) whom he had met through their mutual love of the outdoors. The wedding was a lovely occasion and I was delighted to be able to be there. After MGS, Robert read music at the University of Hull and then went on to gain a Masters in performance (he is a clarinettist) at what was then the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. His goal was to become a professional clarinettist in one of the major orchestras. After a number of auditions where he was just pipped at the post by someone else, his spirits sank and he changed career and became a pilot. That was not before he returned to MGS when I engaged him as a temporary clarinet teacher! He now flies for Ryan Air on most of their routes and perhaps some of you have heard from the cockpit, 'This is Captain Carter - welcome to your flight.'



At the reception Kathryn and I sat on a table with one of his pilot colleagues and we exchanged stories about how we knew the groom. It caused some fascination that I had taught him 'A' Level music! His pilot colleague said: 'Robert's intelligence shines through in everything he undertakes and he's also a real grafter! He is hugely talented in so many different ways. Whenever I need a "phone a friend" it is always Robert, in all situations and regardless of the subject. He has such a rounded education and approach to life.' It seems yet again, that an MGS education is marked out in this way. And I return to my theme of last time - that we must never lose sight of viewing education as drawing out of pupils all that they have to offer. We need to guard against the danger of filling empty heads with ephemeral facts, and instead look to exploring with each individual different facets of their likings, tastes and strengths. Clearly it seems that we succeeded in drawing out from Robert all that he had to offer: in the eyes of his colleagues, he is certainly an educated and wholly-rounded person, as well as a true friend.

Coming soon:-

There will be three social occasions in the coming term which I hope that a number of you will attend.

The first is a barbecue for members and their spouses on Saturday 15 September which we hope to hold in The Quad (or the Big Hall if wet). This will start at 12.30pm. Ticket details will be available soon. A



Social Events
Watch your email for details

further email will be sent out in due course letting you know how you can book for this event, and information will be published on the website. Numbers will, of course, be required in advance for the caterers.

The second is a concert in the Big Hall on Saturday 17 November at 5.00pm, followed by drinks and canapés. The President will conduct The East Malling Singers, joined by OMs and friends, in a performance of Haydn's *The Creation*, accompanied by an orchestra of many OMs, led by Robert Simmons. Soloists include Nicola Corbishley (both Robert and Nicola studied here in the 1990s) and Brian White (OM Secretary). Tickets are priced at £12 (£10 concessions and free for children) can be purchased from Robert Greenham (of the East Malling Singers) on 01622 750943 or email greenham@blueyonder.co.uk. Tickets will also be available from the O.M.Society - details later.

The School Carol Service will take place in All Saints' church on Wednesday 19 December at 7.30pm. OMs will be most welcome to celebrate Christmas in this traditional service of familiar carols and readings with some other items performed by current school musicians.

The end-of-term service for students will take place on Thursday 20 December, in All Saints' church.

From our Chairman:

This year's supper has now been and gone and is fading very much into the distance. I thought that it was one of the best in recent years and it attracted a good crowd of all ages. The guest speaker was Nigel Dodd, who taught music and English at MGS in the late 1950's, and significantly was my own form master for two years before he departed to Clifton College in Bristol. Now in his eighties he has remained in Bristol and has made a major impact on the Institutions with which he has been associated there, plus the 'music scene' in the city. It was a pleasure to drive him and his wife back the following day.

Your committee are planning other social events for later this year and next spring: there is a real desire to do more than just run a supper each year. More details will be found elsewhere in this issue but I do hope that members will support the September lunch and the choral evening our President, David Leeke, is planning alongside the East Malling Singers.

We are also finding more interest from senior boys and recent leavers in the Awards Scheme which is encouraging, although not unexpected in these times of economic stringency. We do need donations from members if we are to fulfil the obligations we have set our stall out to achieve. Don't forget that donations qualify for Gift Aid!

As Nick Argent moves on at the end of term to a new assignment in India, we shall welcome in September a

new Headmaster, Mark Tomkins, presently Deputy Head at Judd School in Tonbridge. The autumn events I refer to above will afford us an opportunity to forge a close working relationship with him in support of the School.

I continue to be grateful to all of the committee for their support and hard work. The website is about to be re-launched and you will be able to see their smiling faces there!

I hope the weather improves and that you will all have a happy holiday season.

SPEECH DAYS

Junior Speech Day was held on Friday 13 July. The Guest of Honour was **Brett Payne**, a leading contemporary British silversmith, and an OM (c 1977). He has contacted the Society to say that he was made to feel very welcome at the school, and that he thoroughly enjoyed himself, finding it very moving to return after 35 years. He commented, 'It is strange how one's memory is triggered by the smallest of details: the coin "holes" outside the tuck shop for example.'

Brett was pleased to have seen the obituary of 'Chips' Melly, as 'Chips' taught him history at various points during his time at MGS, and he was always struck by what a gentleman he was. 'It's the detail that sticks with one and in his case I have a particular memory of his immaculately polished brown brogues; I often wear similar shoes myself these days and I always think of 'Chips' when I polish them.'

Senior Speech Day will be held from 14:15 on Friday 14 September.

ACCOUNTS SUMMARY

- The General Reserve Fund holds £1,349 at present.
- The Awards Fund stands at £10,742.
- £2,350 has been awarded in grants during this academic year, including £200 to a project to install benches outside the sixth form area: see below.



THE AWARDS SCHEME

Some requests for awards have not been within the remit of the scheme, and although we would like to reward excellence, there is a general view amongst committee members that our priority should be to alleviate hardship. The Treasurer will re-write the guidance notes in order to clarify the position, and these will be published in the Autumn Newsletter.



Graham Belson, Treasurer

THE OLD MAIDSTONIAN TRUST

The Old Maidstonian Trust (OMT) is the Society's charitable fund (HMRC XT30291), set up to help current and past pupils. This school year it has made grants totalling £2,350 and has funds to continue at this rate for the next four years. So we need to raise in excess of £2,500 each year as we think in these hard times there will be more calls on the fund.

Donations to OMT are eligible for gift aid which means HMRC pays OMT £25 for every £100 in donations. In addition, higher rate tax payers can reclaim the difference between the higher rate and standard rate themselves, so it's a good deal for both. Legacies, i.e. gifts to charities in wills, are generally exempt from inheritance tax, so if you leave a charitable gift it will be deducted from your estate before inheritance tax liability is calculated.

There are four trustees: Graham Belson, Gardner Crawley, Richard Ratcliffe (Chairman) and John Clayton, each of whom serve for three years and then offer themselves for re-election at the next OMS AGM, when other candidates may wish to stand. The OMS Secretary is also the OMT Secretary *ex-officio*, and any future Treasurer other than Graham will be the OMT Treasurer *ex-officio*.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Membership

We now have 950 members, with 45 new ones joining since April, and 56 current leavers have joined.

The Old Maidstonian Website

The new website is almost ready to go 'live'. Members will be notified by e-mail when this occurs.

Distribution of the Newsletter

The Newsletter is published during April, July and November. Those who have e-mail receive the Newsletter by this route, which reduces costs. Many

members either do not have e-mail, or for other reasons prefer to receive a printed version of it. The Society is pleased to oblige; however, it costs about £5 to produce, print and post, and the Society would appreciate any donations towards those costs.

Archive materials

The MGS and OMS Archivist, Dr Tony Webb, has been integrating the MGS and OMS archives, and this process will temporarily slow down the answering of queries from members.

NEWS OF OLD MAIDSTONIANS

Dr David Wilson (Staff: 1976 to 2002) wrote as follows: 'While I was part of a re-enactment at Fishbourne Roman Palace yesterday (14th July) I was recognised by **Ben Cheeseman** (date around 1990 or previous) who was there with his family. He is now running his own carpentry and house alteration design service near Chichester.

Alan Coulson (1970) writes that it is about 42 years since he left MGS after completing three years in the 6th form. However, he had 'started from the bottom' after passing the 11+. He was in 1C (Mr Binks), but can't remember all of his form teachers, and wishes that he had kept his journals! He thinks that Mr Yates (Geography) was his 3rd form teacher, and that Mr Traves (German) was one of the 6th form ones, together with Mr Tresilian (French).

(Editor's note: I was also taught by Mr Tresilian, and I was amazed just a few years ago when someone from his old Oxbridge college – I can't remember which one – told me that his name was still bandied about at the college after an interval of perhaps 50 years or more, because of his brilliance as a scholar!)

'I've visited the school a few times since then - most recently three years ago during my last trip to the UK. Unfortunately it was on a Sunday morning and there was absolutely no-one around! But my son and I wandered around the grounds anyway. Fortunately we were not arrested for trespassing, although if MGS has CCTV cameras, I'm sure that someone saw us!

'I spent five years with Barclays Bank before emigrating to Canada in June 1975. I have made several trips back - unfortunately mostly for funerals. The last one wasn't though: it was a celebration for my older son who had just graduated from university. We did a father and son trip to Kent, followed by a visit to Ireland to stay with my uncle and aunt, then a few days near Amsterdam to visit my sister and her family.

'I'm still gainfully employed (coming up for 37 years this June) by the Bank of Montreal in a suburb of Toronto.

I turned 60 last January, so I'm eligible for retirement but really not thinking seriously about it. I don't hear from many of my fellow MGS students... and I've almost lost contact.'

(Editor's note: I remember you, Alan!)

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**Gardner Crawley** (1955 to 1962), who is an OMS committee member and OMT trustee, has just been made a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, in part as recognition of his role with Rother Valley Railway. (Fellowship is the most senior grade of membership of the ICE.) (Ed: *Congratulations, Gardner!*)

In 1961 the news that the Kent and East Sussex Railway (K&ESR) from Tenterden to Robertsbridge was to close, became known to Gardner and two other sixth-form pupils at MGS - **Tony Hocking** (1955 to 1962) and **Marshall Vine** (1954 to 1962), the latter dropping out early on and being replaced by **Nick Rose** (1954 to 1963). They discussed among themselves the possibility of establishing a preservation scheme for the railway, and met in the second sixth-form private study room on the right in the new building (opposite the library). They agreed that letters should be sent to the Railway Magazine and Trains Illustrated as well as the Kent Messenger, the Tunbridge Wells Courier and the Kentish Express. Gardner can't now remember whether they jointly and severally composed the letters, but Tony signed and posted them. The gist of their argument was that here was a genuine standard gauge Light Railway, more or less in original condition, which was worthy of preservation and which could continue to serve the local area. Robin Doust appeared on Tony's doorstep at 12 St Luke's Avenue very shortly afterwards having seen the letter in the *Courier*.

As a result of this publicity they were summoned by Froggy Newcombe and asked to desist and abandon the idea as it could very well imperil the continued preservation of the Tallylyn Railway, of which he was a member. Clearly, they took no notice. An inaugural meeting of K&ESR Preservation Society was held at the Rother Valley Hotel on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1961. To the best of Gardner's knowledge, no minutes of that meeting still exist. The account of the meeting in Nick Pallant's book  *Holding the Line*  is based on a *Terrier* article by the late Robin Doust, and personal recollections by people whom Nick Pallant spoke to while he was conducting his research.

Ironically another OM, **Dr Richard Beeching**, Baron Beeching (21<sup>st</sup> April 1913 to 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1985), took the opposite view to preserving rural light railways. He was chairman of British Railways and a physicist and engineer. He became a household name in Britain in the early 1960s for his report *The Reshaping of British Railways*, commonly referred to as 'The Beeching Report', which led to far-reaching changes in the railway network, popularly known as the 'Beeching Axe'. As a result of the report, just over 4,000 route miles were cut on cost and efficiency grounds, leaving Britain with 13,721 miles (22,082 km) of railway lines in 1966. A further 2,000 miles (3,200 km) were lost by the end of the 1960s.

K&ESR was eventually able to purchase the track bed from Tenterden to Bodiam and progressively reinstated the track from Tenterden, to Rolvenden, Wittersham Road and Northiam. When K&ESR realised that it could complete the restoration of the track to Bodiam, it agreed to support the setting up of Rother Valley Railway as a separate organisation to complete the missing link back to the main line at Robertsbridge.

The Rother Valley Railway Heritage Trust is a registered charity, of which Gardner is founder and Chairman. It has purchased some of the track bed sold by BR to adjoining landowners and rebuilt the line from Bodiam to Junction Road, so a K&ESR train with paying customers could travel over it in the spring of 2011. So far in 2012, RVR has rebuilt 5 bridges and laid track up to Northbridge Street, Robertsbridge, and is currently re-modelling Robertsbridge Junction RVR Station as the terminus for K&ESR trains when the centre section is reinstated. Spending to date on the project is just under £¾ million.

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Alan Dodge (1949 to 1957) writes, 'Many thanks for sending the *OM Newsletter*; it is always interesting reading. It was mentioned in the last edition that **Tim Sharrock** (1949 to 1956) wondered what had become of **Ray Stillwell**. A few years ago, I met him when visiting Wyle Church near Salisbury. I think that he had been a GP in the area.

'I have lived in a village on the Somerset-Wiltshire border just south of Bath since 1965, and retired from lecturing in plant biochemistry at the University of Bath in 1998.' He writes, 'We occasionally had students from MGS in our department, and I remember **Stuart Ruffle** in the 1980s. Since retirement I have written three books on local history, including one on my original Kentish home village of Ditton, which was published last year (there is a copy in the MGS library). Through this book I have renewed links with a number of Ditton OMs of the 1950s, including **Bill Fullagar** (1958), **Raymond Beach** (1951 to 1958), **Donald Martin**, **John Woodger** (1949 to 1953), and **David** (1953 to 1958) and **Peter Stevens** (1954).

'I have been organist of our village church for over 40 years and a few years ago had the pleasure of playing with **Dick Panton** (staff from 1949) whom I met through a chance remark to a friend, who happened to be his sister-in-law! Mr Panton taught physics and maths and also played the violin in the 'MGS string quartet' at morning prayers. He now lives in Shrewsbury. Another chance encounter happened in the 1980s while visiting Marnhull in Dorset (the village of Marlott in Thomas Hardy's *Tess*), to discover that the vicar was a former member of MGS staff of the 1950s, **J. C. Priestman**! He was a little surprised when I called at his door and greeted him with "you taught me geography in 1954"!

'My brother, **John Dodge** (1946 to 1954), was until his retirement, Professor of Botany at Royal Holloway, University of London. He now lives in a village near Evesham in Worcestershire where he pursues his botanical interests in a large garden.'

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At the Junior Speech Day, **Clive English** introduced himself to the Treasurer as an OM. He is currently the Deputy Mayor of Maidstone, and was born in Walthamstow, London, before moving to Maidstone in 1961. He gained a BA (Hons) in History and Politics at Lancaster University and became a Methodist Church Accredited Preacher in 1990. He started his working career at Canterbury City Council Planning Department before moving on to the Royal Mail, where he worked in Data Management and logistics before retiring.

Clive has held various posts in Tovil Parish Council since 1987 and became a Borough Councillor in 1994. He has served on a large number of committees in the council, notably Planning and Transportation, Leisure Overview and Scrutiny, and as Cabinet Member for Regeneration. During this time Clive has also served on lots of outside bodies and trusts within the Maidstone area. His interests include playing chess, acting as a Boys Brigade Officer, and volunteering for charitable and conservation projects.

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Colonel David Evans (1981) wrote from Afghanistan to say that he will spend a period of ten months there with only two short breaks of two weeks each. He is finding his tour of duty interesting, and he is experiencing a huge range of incidents, with every day bringing something different. He comments on the many economic, social and other problems which are faced by the country, with (unlike Iraq), a lack of oil revenue to fund reconstruction.

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**Jack Foley** (1942 to 1947) retired this past winter after 25 years as honorary scorer for the Kent County Cricket Club. In recognition of his dedicated service he has been made an honorary life member. Prior to taking up the pen he was well-known around the various grounds used by the county club, as operator of the score-boxes.

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John Garner (1949 to 1956) has written with 'a few memories from one of Mr Holyman's singing pupils', and he comments that the small print in concert programmes to the effect that the 'boys voices were trained by Mr C. P. Holyman' was never sufficient acknowledgement of his out-of-hours work with them. He says, 'I have a copy of James Clinch's excellent book, *Gaudeamus*, but it is short on 1954-1956 detail, the years when I was singing at school, because the records had been destroyed, accidentally I hope!

'Years after leaving school I visited Mr Holyman at 44 Norrington Road; he was full of enthusiasm about the career successes of OM's, among them Philip Langridge, the internationally famous tenor, who had initially approached CPH and asked to be taught singing.

'I played violin in orchestras and chamber groups, and then in the sixth form was persuaded to join CPH's Male Voice Choir. The repertoire was mainly works with a three-part chorus but including a solo, which allowed CPH to select boys for further training for particular roles. We sang folk songs, Gilbert & Sullivan, spirituals, Mozart and much more: I was given bass parts.

'On one Sports Day, the Male Voice Choir gave an informal concert in the school hall. I remember Mr Claydon (the headmaster) walking out during a Gilbert and Sullivan piece – perhaps he had important business elsewhere. Another concert took place at the women's prison in East Sutton; we were collected from school in the green prison van, but the back doors were left open. CPH had said that we wouldn't be singing *Foggy Foggy Dew*, because most of the girls were in prison for sexual offences, but my solo was *Mary Had a Baby*!

'The method of voice training was "little and often"; for example, during morning school a small boy messenger would hand me a scrap of paper: 'Garner VIS1' 1.10 Art Room, CPH', and I would be given exercises by Mr Holyman: he seated at the baby grand piano (which, I believe, belonged to Mr Sawdy), and I attempting to fill with

sound the vast space of that room on the north side of school. CPH took great care of our voices, developing our capabilities but never over-stretching us.

'My first solo at a School Chamber Choir concert was a short Italian song (better vowels!) with piano accompaniment by CPH. Later, **John Dunmall** (tenor) and I sang a duet from *Così fan Tutte*.

'In 1955 CPH took four of us to the Festival hall to hear Victoria de Los Angeles, "the greatest soprano in the world". On the way back (psychology!) in the train, he invited me to sing the role of Harapha in *Samson*, the Choral Society's 1956 production. '**James Leigh** (tenor) was in the title role, with **John O'Kill** (counter-tenor), **Roy Simper** and myself (bases) and the professional Mary Thomas. Mr and Mrs Holyman gave the soloists tea at home before we were taken by taxi to the school. Our green room was the headmaster's study.

'CPH must have loved Mozart opera, as I do now, because we sang and acted (though not in costume) a quintet from *Così fan Tutte* at a chamber music concert. John Dunmall and I were the two men supposed to be in love with two women, a soprano and a mezzo-soprano, played by two boys from the Lower School, and CPH himself played the scheming older man. Later, Roy Simper and I acted a scene from *Don Giovanni* with chorus, on the stage in the hall during an assembly, and it was now time to leave MGS.

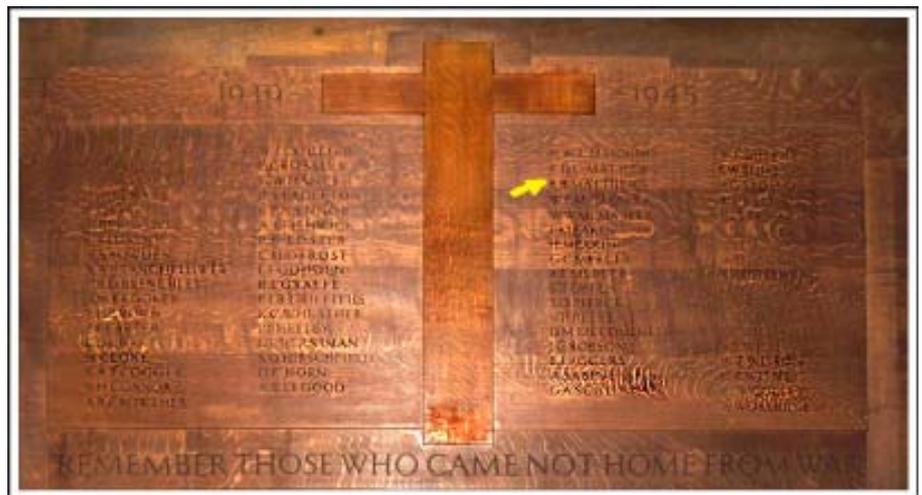
'During National Service, I was in Germany, and by coincidence, Roy Simper was posted to a regiment only one mile away. His German was of more use than my Latin, and he negotiated places for us in the local male voice choir, a sociable and happy bunch of men.

'Afterwards, I went up to Cambridge, where at the time OMs were represented in the two great chapel choirs: **Lindsay Heather** was singing bass at King's College, and **John O'Kill** was an alto at my College, St John's.

'Over the years, I have sung in amateur dramatic productions and even now, although no longer good enough for solo parts, I sing in a university chorus. I am just one of the boys who was given a whole new dimension in life by being "trained by Mr C. P. Holyman".'

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**Antony Heard** (1938) asked for a photograph of a war memorial in Maidstone, as one of his classmates is named on it. He was **B B Matthews** (known to his peers as 'Battleship' because of his size). (Editor's Note: I am not sure whether the particular war memorial has now been identified, but Matthews is listed on the school's own memorial board, a photograph of which is appended.)



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Graham Hocking (1949) eulogises about Australia, by quoting verse two of *My country*, a very well-known and loved poem by Dorothea McKellar:

I love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges, of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons, I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror, the wide brown land for me!

Graham's comments on the Australian climate, which were written in May, make interesting reading for those of us in the UK, considering the extraordinary weather that we have witnessed this year.

'The trouble with living "down under" is that, being basically a Christian country, a fair proportion of us spent a bit of time down on our knees praying for rain in the years 1999 to 2009, whilst we went through a decade of what is laughingly called *el nino*. This actually means a warming of the Pacific Ocean surface waters, resulting in "less than average rainfall", a polite term for a "green drought", when it doesn't actually stop raining altogether, it's just that you no longer get nearly enough! Our massive water storage reservoirs slowly depleted to danger levels, and we are

now saddled with a multi-billion dollar desalination plant which is years behind time, miles over budget, and will shortly be polluting the southern ocean with thousands of tonnes of concentrated brine.

'This is "tighten your water usage belt" time, reinforcing Australia's reputation as being the driest continent on earth apart from Antarctica, and resulting in progressive adjustments to our local water supply. We got to "stage three" restrictions, which means that in Melbourne we couldn't water our gardens except between 6 am and 8 am on "odds and evens" dates, and then only with a hand-held hose with a spray head attached. As we live at no 3 Carolanne Court, we are "odd", and as I reached and passed the 75 years mark during that decade our intention to arise with the sparrows every other day wilted somewhat, but we lost very little as a result of my neglect: I just watered each odd day for about an hour regardless of the time of day. We do have a fair-sized water tank in the garden, supplied from the rear of the garage roof. This is always full and overflowing, regardless, though drawing it off into watering cans is far too akin to hard labour for me. Fixing a hose to its tap produces only a trickle by gravity, so I bought a pump at Aldi, which eventually Michael, Gay's younger son, unpacked from its box, and it has stood on the floor in the patio ever since, a fair step from the tank and the nearest power point.

'During this period, the household responded nobly to the State Government's continual appeals to conserve water, but not to be outdone by a shortage of their product "Yarra Valley Water" managed to more than double the amount I am paying today for about half the water supply we used twelve years ago.

'It has rained since 2009, when we moved from *el nino* to *la nina* (a cooling of the Pacific Ocean), and it continues to do so, regularly - very regularly indeed, though we are advised that "the period of *la nina* is now over" and who knows what that may mean? Perhaps a return to "normal": and what is normal may one enquire?

'As we move from our virtually non-existent summer of 2011 to 2012, we slide gently into the last month of autumn in the southern hemisphere - May. So far our rain this month is already exceeding an average month's fall, and it is but merely the 3rd day of 31!

'Obviously, despite our many doubts, He, or She - according to your wish and belief or lack of same - "upstairs", is not unthinking, perhaps just a bit slow on the uptake? Other more important things to worry about? So we are now getting in spades what we missed out on for ten years: hard luck for those who lost the lives of loved ones and so much property in the bush fires during that time, and for the 200 or so killed as a fire storm swept much of the State. Oh how lucky we were at Mooroolbark after a pair of CFA fire trucks managed to "swerve" a fire front at the water meadows at Yering: had the wind been in the wrong direction or had their action failed, there would have been nothing to stop it coming our way, just a mere couple of miles, and a fire front moves at 20-30mph with a good following wind!

'In our front garden we have a quite large persimmon tree, which continued to thrive during the drought period, but bore very little fruit in both size and number. I pruned it heavily in the interests of its survival. Our huge liquid amber tree in the back garden progressively started to shed branches, a safety measure on its part, but after a couple of huge limbs descended rapidly in the down direction and dug quite large holes in our concrete-like clay lawn, our fence was obviously at some risk, and Gay decided that a fatal case of "chainsawitis" was indicated. So, some \$650 later it became a rather large pile of logs on the lawn, which Martin and I transformed into fire-sized pieces with the aid of a hired hydraulic log splitter: great fun! I pushed and pulled all the appropriate levers in approximately the correct sequence, and more or less at the right times while Martin did all the hard work with the able assistance of an hydraulic lift and tilt table. After about three hours' steady and hard work, it took just one litre of petrol to refill the tank before returning the unit to the hire shop.

'Gay's younger son, Michael, has wood fire heating at his home in Warfbirton, so after a fair amount of encouragement he carted all the wood up the valley in the pursuit of personal future comfort during the upcoming winter. We do have a wood heater, but the gas central heating suffices: I just have a small pile of wood for show.

'As we have had rain, the persimmon tree is now covered in large fruits, very bright orange in colour, and becoming ever more obvious as the leaves change colour and start to fall. A veritable feast for our avian population, particularly for the currawongs, large birds with a melodious call. They "mew" quietly to each other whilst pecking at the hard fruits; they are a winter visitor very similar in size and shape to their near cousins, the magpies. Crows also feed sometimes, and smaller birds, noisy mynahs, common blackbirds etc., as well. It is a good job that we don't want to eat the fruit, as we would have to bag up each one. They have to stay on the tree long after leaf fall, and preferably until after a frost, when they go all mushy inside and become sweet; personally they do nothing for me, being largely bereft of any particular flavour. One of our neighbours of southern European extraction called and asked if he could pick "some of the fruit" about four years ago, and I readily agreed, whereupon the greedy so-and-so stripped the tree of every single fruit, leaving not a jot for our birds! Lately he is to be seen just now and again

pushing a Zimmer frame up and down the court in between RDNS calls: that'll slow him down a bit, and he'd never make it across the front lawn now!

'Well, it's cold, it's wet, and it's windy, so I wish you all a nice bright spring in England, but mind that you don't run out of water! Meanwhile our dams are filling up slowly: they've risen from a low in the mid-20s to a present high in the early-60's percentage-wise, so by the time the desalination plant comes on line it won't be wanted. The State Government built a pipeline from the Goulburn River to a Melbourne water storage at great expense and despite huge protests from land owners, and at the time when the Goulburn was well down in its flow and when contracts to supply irrigation water to farmers were being denied. Apart from a test to make sure that it works, it has never sent a single litre of water Melbourne-wise, and very probably never will - what a waste!

'Top temp. today in Mooroolbark? 12.7°C, and, as a comparison, about 15°C would very often be a normal top temp. in mid-winter! Just up the hill at Ferny Creek, top was 9.7°C! Methinks winter is upon us, regardless of the month.'

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**Harvey Kennett** (1983 to 1988) took on the position of County Commissioner for Scouting in Kent in January 2012.

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Robert Ledniczky (2005 to 2012) becomes the first student from MGS to be awarded a place at the US Ivy League College Harvard where he will study liberal arts.

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**Duncan Norris** (1983) was around at the time of fellow RAF CCF cadets - **Mike Ifield**, **Graham Souch** (went on to fly 747s with BA), **Darren Ragsdale** (who went on to become adjutant of Greenham Common base at the time of the peace demonstrations), and **Howard Franks**. He writes, 'Although I was the first recipient of the Battle of Britain tankard as a cadet, shooting was my thing and I was in the school TARA and BASRA teams, and signed up for every trip to Milton Ranges for full .303 range practice. I remember fondly receiving my Marksman and Highest possible Score (HPS) badges on both .22 and .303.

'I also remember inserting the word "ablins" fairly liberally in a particular English essay for John "Chocs" Caley. This was unknown to me up until the night before the class, when Frank Muir explained it on a TV edition of *Call My Bluff*. Although I was pleased that I was adding something new, I was hardly surprised when every mention of the word was underlined and circled in red! I was called up to the front and had to explain to an exasperated teacher that the word was very obscure and meant "maybe"... a bizarre memory.'

**Terry McHattie** (1959 to 1963) Having read the Spring 2012 *Newsletter*, Terry decided to write in so that John Caley could update his records of service personnel. 'I was in forms 1C, 2L,3L and 4L, but had to leave prematurely because of problems within the family. Although I did not distinguish myself academically, I look back on those days with fond memories. I was not a great athlete though I always excelled at swimming, gaining all the house standards in one session. I was also a member of the choir under **Mr J M Edwards** and sang at John Caley's wedding for the princely sum of 5 shillings!

'After leaving MGS, I continued my education at Maidstone Technical College and Medway College of Technology, where I studied engineering with a view to joining the Royal Air Force. This was achieved in 1971 and I trained successfully as a pilot, serving until 1979. During this time I saw service in 22 and 202 Squadrons as a Search and Rescue helicopter captain. My career also included a two-year secondment from 1975 to '77 to the Sultan of Oman's Air Force where I flew the Bell UH1D (the 'Huey') on Army Support operations.

'Since then I have pursued my love of all things flying and became a Training Captain with British Airways on the Boeing 737. My job included extensive route flying throughout Europe, Russia and the Near East, as well as a fair amount of time in the simulator. I recall training one **Adam de Salve**, a cadet pilot and himself ex-MGS.

'Nowadays I am still actively training on the Boeing 737-800 series simulator, where I hold the position of Type Rating Examiner and TRE tutor. Much to my surprise, two more ex-MGS pupils have recently been allocated to me for training as TRE's. They are **James McPherson**, a pilot with Flybe, and **Stuart Milsted**, a pilot with BMI Regional. Small world!

'There you have it. An OM who moved from the CCF to the Royal Air Force, even though it took longer than planned! I am more than happy for my details to be circulated to other OM's and would always like to hear from contemporaries. We could always meet up at next year's OM supper.'

**Norman Parr** (1934 to 1940) notes that Antony Heard and he were contemporaries, and that Antony lived on Ashford Road in Bearsted, whilst Norman lived in The Landway, just round the corner. Norman was taught maths by Antony's father in Lower ii. Antony and Norman both rode to school on their bikes through Mote Park, and Norman has a vivid memory of Antony careering down the hill and using the park gates to bring himself to a halt, as his worn out brakes couldn't do so.

~~~~~

Mark Raymont (1979 to 1984) now works as a lawyer in UAE, having spent 14 years working in the City of London and a further six years in Hong Kong. 'I see that Russ Longmuir mentioned captaining the cricket team to Lemon Cup success. I was also in that team (taking three wickets in the final – if not the highlight of my cricketing career certainly pretty close ...) and we were coached by Ron McCormick. Happy days!'

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In response to a request in the last *Newsletter* for details of any OMs who joined the military, **Andy Rolfe** sent some useful information. He holds the rank of Wing Commander (Retired), with service dates of 1985 to 2008), and he is aware of the following people from his era who joined the RAF:

- **Squadron Leader Todd Stout** (1985 to 2002): Tornado Pilot
- **Squadron Leader (?) Ian Richardson**: Nimrod Navigator
- **Squadron Leader Frank Neill**: Tornado and C17 pilot
- **Wing Commander Sean Chiddention**: ex-Red Arrows and Harrier pilot

~~~~~

Dr Brian Whitehouse MBE (1940 to 1947) writes, 'By September 1940, when I started at MGS, the lively bit of the Battle of Britain was coming to an end. There were still evacuees from London schools billeted in the Maidstone area, and there were still several London schools sharing space with various Maidstone schools. If I remember correctly, at 60 or more years distance, there were regulations restricting the total numbers of people permitted to assemble in one place to 150, so we attended our new (to us) school for half a day a fortnight. My half days were alternate Saturday afternoons leaving time for gainful employment in the meantime!

'In July 1947, on advice from Bill Manning (then MGS Senior Maths Master, and Captain of the CCF), I wrote to the Air Ministry requesting immediate call-up so that I could start at the University of Bristol in October 1949. This received the usual instant attention of such organisations and I was called up to the RAF six months later. In the meantime I worked in the hop gardens as a hop booker, and subsequently in the orchards booking the weight of apples picked. The booking jobs provided a welcome, if small, income and were highly educational in a life experience sort of way!

'My hobby before call-up was building radio sets and amplifiers (no transistors in those days). To my horror I was "directed" towards a service career of wireless operator, which was certainly not what I was hoping! However, within five days of being posted as a wireless operator to RAF Syerstone, somewhere in the county of Nottingham, I spotted a message on the RAF station notice board and applied successfully to be a programme controller on the Forces Broadcasting Service (FBS). Posted to FBS, Malta, I found a "broadcasting station" in boxes, which had been transferred from FBS Jerusalem, waiting to be installed, so no programmes to control! "Can you use a soldering iron and a screwdriver?" I was asked. Having discovered that my answer was not only "yes", but that I really could do so, they promptly asked how I should like to be posted to Tripoli. My reply was probably, "Not much", which prompted the further instruction to pack, ready to join a ship leaving early the next morning for Tripoli, where I spent the rest of my service career as technician in charge of the technical aspects of a radio station, for which, in common with my predecessor there, I had had no training.

'FBS Tripoli was sort of wired-up ready to go, but the guy I replaced and who had done the wiring, had been an armature winder before call-up, and knew as much about wiring a radio station as I did about armature winding, which was not a lot! None of the shielded cables were bonded together or earthed, and if the studio had actually been used the snap, crackle, pop would have been heard many miles away! However, this didn't take long to sort out and thereafter we had quite a good radio station, and broadcasts included half an hour each day of Arabic and half an hour of Italian news broadcasts by locals from the city. I sat at the control desk during these transmissions - the closest I got to being a programme controller! I was even "Uncle Brian" on the weekly Sunday afternoon children's hour. Fortunately, we had no recording facilities so no audible record of those transmissions exists, and I blush to think of them even at this distance!'

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Antony Heard (1938) asks whether anyone knows the whereabouts of **Norman Manning**. (If you have any information, please forward it to the Editor.)

OBITUARIES

Alf Johnson (1949) died in May at the age of 78 after suffering from vascular dementia for a considerable time. He was a former president of Maidstone Rugby Club, playing on the wing for the first team as a young man and filling many positions off the field. After leaving MGS, Alf joined the Gas Board, working his way up to Area Service Manager for the South East. He was involved in many local good causes, for example as a prison visitor and fund-raising for the medical charity, the Blackthorn Trust. Alf leaves his wife, Valerie, two sons, Ian and Mark, a daughter Kim, and ten grandchildren.

Ron Parsons (1930 to 32) passed away in April 2012, aged 94. He was a life-long resident of Harrietsham and spent more than sixty years as a painter and decorator. He was a very keen sportsman, with cricket being his passion, playing and captaining the local village team for many years before moving on to the Bearsted C. C. His wife had pre-deceased him by twenty-three years and he leaves a daughter, two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Mark Worrall OBE (1976), the Leader of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, died unexpectedly in April at the age of 58, having suffered from multiple sclerosis for several years. Despite his illness, he was very active in local government, and well-known across Kent and nationally, being renowned for his service to residents of the borough. He was also the longest-serving local political leader in the country, and received many moving accolades from other politicians after his death. His council was rated as the top-performing district council in England by the Independent Audit Commission in 2004.

Mark took a degree in Political Science, Ancient History and Philosophy at Queen's University, Belfast, then started work for the Conservative Party before moving into marketing and working for the London School of Economics.

Mark had a great interest in cricket, and was closely involved with the Town Malling Cricket Club, of which he was President, and a member of the MCC. He was also Chairman of Age Concern, Malling, a school governor, and a non-executive director of the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

PHILIP LANGRIDGE BURSARIES

Our last President, Anthony Hayward, was at school with Philip Langridge, and he kindly organised donations to two bursaries in his memory. OMs (and the Society itself) have contributed £300 to be distributed equally between the bursaries administered by Co-Opera-Co (<http://co-opera-co.org>) and The Royal Philharmonic Society (<http://www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk>); both utilise today's leading singers and instrumentalists to mentor those who are up-and-coming. Any OM wishing to contribute now, possibly under the Gift Aid scheme, should deal with one or both of the organisations, stating that they are former pupils or staff of MGS.

AND ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

As products of the English examination system themselves, members may appreciate the following examination howlers. The Editor has collected large numbers of these over the years, both from personal experience and from colleagues, and will share them in *Newsletters* as the opportunity arises. Here are some biologically-related examples.

'When a boy reaches puberty, he says goodbye to his boyhood and looks forward to his adultery.'

'A major disease associated with cigarettes is premature death.'

'Artificial insemination is when the farmer does it to the bull instead of the cow.'

'You can delay the souring of milk by keeping it in the cow.'

'The body is consisted into three main parts: the brainium, the borax and the abdominal cavity, which contains the five bowels, A, E, I, O and U.'

'A fibula is a small lie.'

'Most people prevent contraception by wearing a condominium.' (Editor's note: undoubtedly, this would prevent conception as well.)

The first prize for a comment which can be read on several levels, and which is deceptive in its simplicity, goes to this mis-spelt answer which related to seashore ecology: 'Adult orgasms often occur on groynes.'

HEADMASTERS OF MAIDSTONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL - BY ROGER BROWN (1977)

We are pleased to be able continue Roger's fascinating series of articles on the Headmasters of MGS.

Number 9: WILLIAM WYSE (1650 to 1651)

Monarch(s) on the throne of England: After Charles I was executed in 1649 the monarchy was suspended until 1660; however, in 1653 a new position, Lord Protector, was established.

Prime Minister(s): the first PM was not appointed until 1721

Notable events during the period of tenure:

- 1650 (03 September) Battle of Dunbar between English and Scottish armies
- 1650 (29 September) Henry Robinson sets up the first marriage bureau in England

Location of School: Corpus Christi Hall

Following on from the disquiet and personality issues at the end of Richard Thomas's tenure, Andrew Broughton (an attorney who lived in Earl Street and was Clerk of the Court) got his way with the next candidate and nominated William Wyse to the post. Wyse lived in 'Beeching Lane, neere the citie of London'. He had been a sizar* at Trinity College, Cambridge, gaining his BA in 1627 and his MA in 1631. However, he resigned just four months into his appointment but no reason is recorded. Other details about him are also missing so information about his pre- and post- MGS life is not known, let alone his age and subsequent death.

*A sizar is a student who receives an allowance towards college expenses, in return for acting as a servant to other students.

Number 10: DANIEL PEEKE (1651) & NATHANIEL HASSARD (1651)

Monarch(s) on the throne of England: After Charles I was executed in 1649 the monarchy was suspended until 1660; however, in 1653 a new position, Lord Protector, was established.

Notable events during the period of tenure:

- 1651 (01 Jan) Charles II Stuart crowned king of Scotland
- 1651 (05 March) A major dike breaks, causing severe flooding to Amsterdam after a winter storm

Location of School: Corpus Christi Hall

When William Wyse had vacated the headship, the Maidstone Corporation made an inspection of the School and found it to be disorderly: they recorded, 'wee conceive they are farre short of what they ought to bee, both touching the Scholemaster himself in his department as also of the said schollers'. The result was a new set of rules being drawn up which lasted until 1844. Getting the school back to its intended status and ideals also saw the formation of an elite committee that included among its members Mr Thomas Wilson ('Mr Recorder'), Mr Thomas Wilson (Minister of Maidstone), Mr Barton (Minister of Harrietsham), Mr Thomas Elmstone (Minister of Boughton Malherbe – not the HM from the late 1620s), Mr John Crompe (Minister of Loose), Mr John Turner (Schoolmaster of Town Malling), Mr Freegift Tylden (Minister of Langley).

The committee's task was to examine the capabilities of candidates for the vacant headmaster's position. On 10th June, 1651, they met with Daniel Peeke and approved his appointment, but the Maidstone Town Council did not confirm the decision. Thomas Wilson then put forward a candidate of his own choosing, Patrick Heyburne, and although a date was agreed on which to examine him, no more of this gentleman is recorded.

The Committee then interviewed Nathaniel Hassard, who had graduated from Queen's College, Cambridge (which he had entered in 1615 as a sizar) with his BA in 1619 and MA in 1623, and also an MA at Oxford in 1627. The findings of the committee read: 'did by Mr Wilson as theire Mouth openly examine and appose the said Mr Hassard on the grounds of Religion and in Gramar, Rhetorick & Poetry, in the Greek and Latin Tongues'. The result was that Hassard was approved and '...by his care and endeavours might bee a helpfull and usefull instrument in the said place, for the instructinge of youth both in Religion and Learneinge and might likewise further his owne proficientcy...' The examination had been on 24th September and on 8th October the appointment was confirmed. With the high expectations from this gentleman it was a great shock that he died only a month later. Until the next selection of a suitable candidate, Thomas Wilson took on the role for almost the next twelve months.

YOUR COMMITTEE 2012-13

David Leeke (Staff 1989 to 2000)

david@leeke.org.uk

Richard Ratcliffe (1956-1964) – Chairman

rbr1@btconnect.com

Dr. Brian White – Secretary; Co-Editor (1962-1969)

drbdwhite@gmail.com Telephone 01622 756660

or 07828 925609, or write to 26 Little Buckland Avenue, Allington, Maidstone, ME16 0BG

Nick Ashbee (1990-1995)

nickashbee@btopenworld.com

Graham Belson (1960-1965) Membership Secretary,

Treasurer

oms@oldmaidstonians.org.uk, Tel: 01622 730514 or 07770 738041, or write to 22 Plantation Lane, Bearsted, Maidstone, ME14 4BH.

John Caley (Staff 1955 to 1998)

Tel: 01622 751801

John Clayton (1961-1968)

j.clayton@hikent.org.uk

Gardner Crawley (1955-1962)

gardner.crawley@dalsterling.com

Anthony Hayward (1951-1958)

anthony.hayward@hotmail.co.uk

James Kinsman (1999-2005)

james@macrolevel.co.uk

Prof. Malcolm McCallum (1957-1963) – Webmaster

m.a.h.maccallum@gmul.ac.uk

Ron McCormick (Staff: - 2004) President Elect

Simon Pain (1999-2005)

simon@macrolevel.co.uk

Peter Weaver (1950-1958) Co-Editor

p.weaver@iee.org

Dr. Tony Webb (Staff: 1971-2000)

dmwaww@gmail.com

OMS ARTICLES FOR SALE

Books

There are several books which have been produced by former teaching staff and which can be obtained through the Society.

WAC: Trials and Triumphs of a Grammar School Headmaster

A history of Maidstone Grammar School from 1925 – 1941 through the final reports of Headmaster Alfred John Woolgar, MA, and from 1942 – 1966 in the Speech Day Reports of Headmaster William Arthur Clayton, CBE, MA.

The book was researched and compiled by James Clinch (OM 1936 - 46, staff 1974 - 91)

ISBN-10: 0-9552145-0-5 ISBN-13: 978-0-9552145-0-9

Gaudeamus: An account of Music at Maidstone Grammar School

Published in 1997, this book is the definitive history of music at the School from the early-1900s with a prelude by Michael Tillet (Old Maidstonian) and postlude by David Leeke (staff 1989 - 2000)

The book was researched and compiled by James Clinch (Staff 1974 - 1991)

ISBN-10: 0-9530861-0-0

A History of Maidstone Grammar School Combined Cadet Force (1906 – 2006)

Researched and compiled by John and Diana Caley (Staff 1955-1998), the book was produced to commemorate the centenary of the Cadet Force at the School. It brought up to date the original history that the authors had written in 1981 at the 75th anniversary. It contains many pictures along with thirteen appendices of useful data and information. (Not published with an ISBN.)

MGS 1549 to 1965 – A Record

32 Pages, 6" x 9"

There are a limited number of hard-back versions of this publication, which is a revised and enlarged version of G.B.Philips's short history of the School produced in 1949, the quatercentenary year. G B Philips undertook the task in his retirement and the work was completed by N W Newcombe. The foreword was written by R R Rylands and notes that the publication, originally produced in 1965, also brings to an end the era of WA Clayton. (Please note that most have some sort of marking on the covers, and although in good condition, are not perfect.)



Garments



Ties

There is a supply of both styles of the Old Maidstonian tie and these can be ordered using the return sheet of this Newsletter or by e-mail.

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 was introduced in the 1970's additional to the OMS Striped tie

The **Striped** version is also a Jacquard Woven Tie in navy blue with angled stripes of gold, purple and white. The tie was the original OMS tie and predates the Crested version by several decades. The design was later used on the ties for the School Captain and Deputy School Captain from about 1994 and continues to this day, although the direction of the stripes is reversed.

There is evidence that the OMS tie may have been black, not navy blue, around the Second World War years, but there is no information as to when it changed to blue.

Both ties are of polyester and are 54" x 3 1/8" in size.

Blazer Badge

The OM's blazer badge is approximately 5" x 3" in size.



COMING SOON!

"College - type" Scarves

We have ordered a number of scarves in OM colours.

Watch for details by email and in the next *Newsletter*.



CD's of Past Annual Supper Speeches

2011 Annual Supper Andrew Dilnot - Guest Speaker

Paul Clifford – President

Nick Argent – Headmaster

Tom Woods – School Captain

1975 Annual Supper SW Johnson – guest speaker. Erudite and witty

Payment

The Society has established internet banking, and the facility is available to make payment using the internet.

The Natwest bank account details are:

Maidstone Branch, 3 High Street, Maidstone, ME14 1XU

Account: Old Maidstonian Society

Account no: 00051802

Sort Code: 60-60-08

Please use your surname and initials to assist us in identifying who the payment is from. Would you please also advise the Membership Secretary either by post, e-mail or letter if you have taken advantage of this facility and forward a completed order form. Alternatively payment may be made by cheque to: **The Old Maidstonian Society** and sent to the school.

MGS Archives

Original spare copies of The Maidstonian for most, but not all years, from the beginning are available. First come, first served - when they are gone, they are gone.

450th anniversary memorabilia is also available:

Ties: Plain navy blue with a 450th Anniversary crest at the bottom;

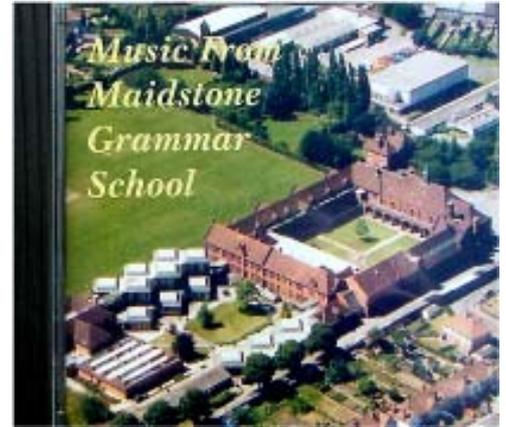
Sets of notelet cards, four different designs, with envelopes, packs of four;

10 notelet cards, single design;

CD of school music.



Tie



CD



Notelets

N.B. Payment

Payment for **ARCHIVE ITEMS** should be made by cheque to: **Maidstonian Grammar School** and sent to the school (not as for **OMS** articles which should be paid for as indicated above).

The order forms are attached as separate documents.



The Old Maidstonian Society Newsletter

Co-Editors: Brian White Tel: 01622 756660 Email: drbdwhite@gmail.co.uk
Peter Weaver Tel: 01435 864541 Email: p.weaver@iee.org

We Would Like to Hear From You **Copy date for next edition: October 13th, 2012**

The Society is always very pleased to hear from its members. Please update us as to your post-school history, and we will publish it in the Newsletter and on the website. If you would like to share with us some anecdotes about your time at the school then please do contact us. E-mail is a particularly convenient method of reaching us and is preferred.

