

The Gazette

The official journal of the
OTTERSHAW SCHOOL OLD BOYS' SOCIETY



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Autumn 2016

OSOBS VISIT TO THE MANSION 2016



On a wonderful day of sunshine, on Sunday 11 September, some 20 members with wives and friends attended the event for a picnic in the formal gardens with the opportunity to stroll around the grounds once again.

It was a great pleasure to see that the Headmaster's Trees, an avenue of poplar trees we planted on the west side of the Mansion down towards the tennis courts, have successfully taken root. After an initial struggle through summers with little rain, the trees are well established and showing healthy growth.

Care by the residents keeps the formal gardens in good trim, and a happy band of OSOBS people enjoyed their meeting and picnic lunches on the front lawn.

A notable visitor was Jeremy Kind (OT 85), from the second intake of pupils in January 1949, who was in West House and left in 1953. The youngest visitor was Rob Walker (OTT 425), who joined North House in September 1973. Jeremy and Rob are the two newest

members of the Society. (Members can get in touch with them through Nigel Wright, our Membership Secretary.)

Those who had travelled the longest distance were Kevin and Mary Harris, in the UK from Phoenix, Arizona. Kevin joined West House in September 1962 and was a notable player in the Ottershaw Old Boys' Rugby Club in its early days (1965-1966).

The next Mansion visit is scheduled for the second Sunday in September 2017 – put the date in your diaries and try to attend this special day in our calendar.

The attendees at the picnic included Kevin and Mary Harris; Doi and Jill Evans; Dennis Pocock; Marion McEwan; Paul Zmitrowicz; Guy Tarring; Philip, Claire and Jessica Lascelles; Rob, Lixia and Florence Walker; Rick May; David Jones; Terence and Beth Nagle; Neil Carter; Tony Forward; Jeremy Kind; John Athersuch; and Helen and myself.

Peter Jones
President OSOBS

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Official bits and pieces

Website

More copies of OWN have been added to our website library. Currently these are available to anybody, but the Committee will decide soon if they should be put into the "Members Only" area. We are grateful to those people who have made their collections available for scanning, and to aid the scanning process we will soon be purchasing a fast scanner so OWNs and other documents can be copied quickly and efficiently.

Currently it takes about 10 minutes to scan and then compile each OWN, which is taking your IT Manager more time than he can really afford! Nevertheless, we are keen to build up this library, so if you have copies of OWN or Acorn we could scan, please contact Josh on managers@osobs.co.uk who would be pleased to hear from you.

Announcements

We have been advised of the death on 12 July of Chris Williams (OT 384) in California. Chris was in West House from 1953 to 1957, and there is a link to his obituary here: www.pacificviewcalifornia.com

We have also been informed of the death on 13 June of Michael Beddoe (OT 482). He was not an OSOBS member but his brother Robin is, and was good enough to tell us of Michael's passing. Our sympathies go to the families and friends of Chris and Michael.

STOP PRESS – We are sad to announce teacher John Oecken died 10 October – more in the next Gazette.

Membership

We offer a very warm welcome to the following three new members:

Peter Lewis	OTT 364	North
Jerry Kind	OT 85	West
Phil Harrison	OT 727	East

Diary

19 November 2016	The AGM: to be held at The RAF Club, 128 Piccadilly, London W1J 7PY
22 April 2017	The Williams Spring Luncheon: also to be held at the RAF Club
10 September 2017	OSOBS annual visit to the Mansion

The Gazette

Thanks for your contributions, which have enabled us to produce another 24-page issue. Please continue to submit articles and gently cajole others in the Society to do the same. Your Editor is ready to start work on the Spring 2017 edition, and his inbox awaits! editor@osobs.co.uk

Appeals

New OSOBS member Peter Lewis (OTT 364) is trying to contact another Old Boy, Jeremy (Jerry) Dyson (OTT 309). If you think you can help, please contact us.

A different Peter Lewis (OTT 522) was in North House between 1974 to 1978 and would like to meet up with old school friends. Please let us know if you would like to get in touch.

Old Boy Jim (Abo) Turner (OT 598 North) lost all his sporting photos from the early and mid-1960s during a house move. If you have any photos featuring Jim which could be copied, please let us know. Thank you.



The annual 1960s group meeting 2016

I can't really believe it was way back in 2010 that our little group was established and we began meeting up.

The seventh meeting of the 1960s Old Boys' Group (originally called "Oett's Boys" as we were then all from North House) took place on the afternoon of Friday 17 July 2016.

Again we met at The Castle in Ottershaw, and once more enjoyed good weather, a great buffet and a good turnout. Despite a major accident which caused huge delays on the M25 close to the Ottershaw turning many people still managed to arrive, although several contacted us afterwards saying they had been stuck for so long they had been forced to abandon the visit. As seems to happen every year we still managed to attract a new face, Richard (Dudley) Dixon, and of course we always welcome all Old Boys to these gatherings, whether members of the Old Boys' Society or not. We spent many hours reminiscing and catching up on the events of the last year.



In the photo from left to right are: John Chapman, Richard Dixon, John Young, Stephen Turner, Kelvin Lawry, John Burrow, Pat Gibbon, David Turner, Richard May, Josh Lovegrove, Andre Scruton and Colin Blowes.

Arriving too late to be in the group photo was regular attendee Dennis Pocock. Also there was David Turner's wife Eleanor and my two daughters Eva and Ana Lovegrove (who had been forced to come along due to other family commitments back in Spain). They afterwards commented on what a nice bunch of people we all were!

Our thanks once again to John Burrow for arranging the venue and the food, and to OSOBS for footing the bill for the buffet.

If you are interested in joining our little throng, please let me know and I will add your details to our ever-growing mailing list. We now have people attending these events from all the houses and from the entire 1960s.

For more information about us, find us at the website at :

www.osobs.com/1960s-old-boys-group

or use the link on that page to visit us on our Facebook page at.

www.facebook.com/Ottershaw-School-1960s-Group-1617244838554429/

Josh Lovegrove
OT 812 - North



Tulk House, The Castle, plebs and punishment

Arriving at Ottershaw School and within Tulk House in the 1960s (1966 to be precise – what a great year!) was a pretty big shock to the system for a 12-year-old used to being at mixed schools. Still, it was actually quite a nice, brave new world, escaping from parents and the family home. So, no real homesickness on my side.

Tulk House was, or seemed to be, a different proposition to the other houses – largely as Tulk and West were well away from the Mansion and the main school. And it had an added advantage over West House as it had even better access to the woods, the Trogg Way, Ottershaw village and the outside world. It also 'seemed' to be the house where there were (if not in '66, then certainly in later years) quite a few 'free-spirited' and 'independent-minded' boys. In addition, it was the house from which the impetus initially came to change the way discipline from prefects was administered to juniors. However, from what I experienced 1966 was still a relatively draconian time at Ottershaw School.

One of the joys of Tulk House's proximity to the outside world was its quick access to The Castle pub – yes, that wonderful place where even 12-year-olds could walk into the off-licence section and purchase nice big bottles of beer or cider. Out the back door of Tulk House, past Herr Volkner's cottage, along the path, up the Trogg Way, over the main Chertsey-Woking road, across the common, and hey presto you were right on top of The Castle, with access to beer and other delights.

It was common knowledge that Fifth and Sixth Formers from Tulk and West were regular visitors to the pub – both to drink in and to get take-aways over the little off-licence counter. Quite a few East and North prefects also used Tulk as a stopping-off point on their Castle excursions.

The first two terms went pretty smoothly, and I very much got into rugby, cross-country running and swimming in particular. Moving on into 1967 and the summer term,

myself and several other good close friends got billeted in a new dormitory with pretty relaxed dorm heads from the fourth year. The dorm probably held around 10 boys – a few that had arrived the same time as me, a couple of second-year boys, two from the third year and the dorm heads, of course.

Order in the house!

Having got through the first two terms pretty well – with plenty of the usual 'days' punishment, of course – it was seemingly plain sailing into the third term of the academic year. For those that are reading this and don't know what 'days' punishment means, allow me to explain. The dishing out of so-called 'days' (three, six or even nine 'days') was a privilege allowed by prefects in the Upper Sixth to be given to junior boys who misbehaved in some way or, for instance, if they were late. If given such 'day' punishments, it meant you would be woken up early in order to clean prefects' boots – rugby/football/cricket, shoes, shirts – washing/ironing, cleaning the prefects' common room or whatever – even making tea/coffee for some big slugs. Some of these 'days' dished out were probably no genuine acts of misbehaviour; however, they were often given for the most trivial things by pathetic prefects who just wanted a skivvy.

In that year and the next, in Tulk House 'days' were given out pretty willy-nilly by the most obnoxious prefects. I, for instance, once got three days in the second term for simply looking and smiling over something I had just read during an evening toy (prep) time. The prefect then doubled it to six 'days' when I tried to explain why I was smiling! Kind! Obviously, the prefects needed a slave for a few days – in this case, me.

The painful thing about having to do 'days', however, was that you had to do these extra tasks before you did your normal house duties, such as sweeping corridors, cleaning changing rooms and laying tables. So 'days' could quite easily get in the way of house duties – often requiring one to get some cover or swap duties with another junior,

usually when you were in a bad negotiating position. And, if you were late for meals because of 'days' or duties, you could get more 'days' if you collected three 'lates'.

The Castle is calling.....

So, feeling nicely bedded-in to life in good old Tulk House, a couple of weeks into the summer term a group of us new boys – myself, Graham Hillier, Paul Handley and Mick Silk (who was a second year, but had arrived at school at the same time as the rest of us) decided that we would make a foray to The Castle to sample some beer or cider. Mick was by far the eldest-looking, so it was he who would get the booze from the off-licence counter. Our expedition was squared with our dorm leaders, who really weren't concerned with what we did. So the expedition was on! After lights-out and the prefect check, down the stairs we sneaked and out the back door of Tulk House, and within seconds we were away through the woods.

The expedition to the pub went smoothly. I think we just got Strongbow cider, which was carted up to a nice grassy part of the common, where we guzzled the stuff down pretty rapidly. Deed done, we headed back to school and Tulk House feeling pretty pleased with ourselves. We proceeded to sneak back in, but little did we know that while we were out our absence had been discovered during a random prefect check on the dormitories. The game was up! As we were plebs, the housemaster – Mr White (Trogg) – had been informed about our absence by the prefects – and the fact that we had gone down the pub was a particularly serious affair. Trogg had also rightly notified the headmaster, Mr Dodds.

We had a very nervous night of sleep, with many whispers going round breakfast in the morning. Then assembly, and the entire school knew what had happened when Mr Dodds made a very stern announcement about the whole incident. With such a serious act to report he was naturally particularly severe, but also stressed the obvious dangers of boys leaving the

school during the night. His address that morning to the school also emphasised how no boy from the school – whatever their age – should be going to the village pub and, further, that anyone caught doing so would be dealt with most severely.

After assembly, we four boys from Tulk were called to Mr Dodds' study where, not surprisingly, he read the riot act to us. Rightly so, I am very surprised he did not expel all four of us there and then. Perhaps if I had only been one boy, he might have done just that – but four possibly made that decision a little bit harder. He did, of course, write to our parents telling them of this serious act, and he told us we would be punished under school rules rather than being expelled. That was then left to the school prefects. Presumably he had already spoken with the head boy, Trogg and the Tulk head boy.

We were then delivered to the East House common room where we were shouted at by the school head boy – Pete Shee, I believe, or was it Chris? He did go pretty ballistic, but that was to be expected. While all this was taking place, the other school prefects that were in the room at the time gave us all menacing stares, leaving us in no doubt that some serious form of punishment would be coming our way!

Punishment comes our way

The school 'days' that we were punished with were somewhat unusual, but I guess fitted our 'crime', and because we were from Tulk, and not the Mansion, it sort of allowed the school prefects to transfer the punishment responsibilities back to Tulk. So, we were given the punishment of quadruple changing – for the rest of the term!!!! Wah!! There was an awful lot of the term left!

This was a very heavy punishment, particularly for boys from Tulk House. It meant changing from school clothes to games clothes four times before every meal, and in order to do so before lunch and tea it required us to run at full pelt back to Tulk House. Changing at breakfast wasn't so bad, in a way, as we were already in the house, although we did still have our normal house duties to do – more of that in a minute. The full horror of this whole scenario soon dawned on us!

Let me run you through this – as soon as lessons finished before lunch, there were usually 15 minutes to get to lunch back at Tulk. But we had to run back to Tulk, which took at least five minutes in itself, run up six flights of stairs to the prefects' common room at the top of the house and get our changing log books signed to the effect that we were in school clothes. We would then run back down the stairs and into the games room and change into games clothes, then back up the stairs and get our books signed again, confirming we were in games clothes. Then repeat this whole process three more times! Thus, quadruple changing before every meal.

We actually got particularly good at this, and that term everybody became very familiar with our routines as we belted up and down the house stairs. But, of course, we were always late for lunch and tea – memorably. Sometimes we were also late for breakfast – it depended on what our individual house duties were – and whether we were also on house 'days'. Of course, we did also spend most of the rest of the term also on 'days' – largely because we accumulated so many 'lates' for meals! Again, this was inevitable. On that night, a certain Lower Sixth our house duty meant laying tables, then naturally we had to do a swap with someone, and often being in such a disadvantaged position we found ourselves also doing two lots of house duties each morning as we tried to juggle with the whole situation to ensure our tasks were fulfilled. Naturally, in the mornings

we were always up super early in order to do our house duties, other people's house duties, our 'days' punishments and, of course, our stint of quadruple changing before breakfast. Phew!

It was a long term, and although we became very organised, as we needed to be through all of this, we still ended up being the zombie kids of Tulk! Inevitable! Some of our peers in Tulk were great in covering house duties at certain difficult times, and that was a real help. The whole school knew who we were, of course. The seniors largely just hated us and thought we were being rightly punished. The juniors – third year and down – looked on and knew this was a situation they never ever wanted to end up in.

Punishment of a different kind

However, this is by far the end of this saga, as a more sinister side of the punishment cycle was to emerge. Other retribution was coming our way, where the senior boys would ensure we really got what we deserved in their eyes! Around three days after we had been caught out, we received a beating from some of the senior Tulk House bully-boy mob.

On that night, a certain Lower Sixth boy specimen came to our dormitory some time after lights out and called us out individually to go from bed in our pyjamas to the bathroom on our floor. Mick was called first. We all knew we could be called next and the waiting was quite terrifying. There was a lot of stern voices and a certain amount of noise, but this was



Braving the elements in the Isle of Skye

muffled by two doors and the length of the corridor. Mick came back, although we couldn't really see him in the darkness, and just got into bed pulling the covers up. Nobody said a word. Graham was called next and as he slept in the bed next to me when he came back into the dorm I could see and hear that he was sobbing heavily. I was called next, then Paul.

Bell! The call came. I sheepishly left my bed, went out of the dorm down the corridor to the bathroom. I entered to find eight or nine Tulk Lower Sixth and Fifth Formers waiting to put the fear of God into me and to administer some physical abuse. I soon found out how that would go when one of them grabbed my hair and starting leading me around the bathroom. I was released and another came up to me telling me what a 'so-and-so' I was and then promptly delivered a hefty 'thunderclap' to my forehead.

A 'thunderclap', for those unaware, is where somebody slams the hard part of their open hand lower palm as hard as they can against your



Jonathan sporting his Ottershaw tie

forehead – this actually makes your brain hit your skull, and you have a semi-blackout for a moment. So things proceeded with various people taking it in turns to have their 'bully-boy' moment, with slaps, punches, thunderclaps and verbal abuse. One nasty individual – don't worry, I won't name you here, but I can still recall your podgy sneering face – decided he would even bang my head a few times against the wall! Eventually I was sent whimpering back to the dorm.

Ch ch-ch changes....

As I mentioned earlier, Tulk was an interesting house in that there were – even then – some 'decent' liberals among the senior – or near senior – boys. And, of course, not all prefects within Tulk at that time were entirely comfortable with the way discipline was abused or being maintained. There were some good – but largely outnumbered – souls. Going down a year or two, there were also good individuals such as Bob Blijman and Robin (Len) Wills, who helped begin the process of change regarding such issues as anti-de discipline and punishment.

As we moved on over the next few years, these individuals and others eventually became house prefects where they drove a much more 'respect'-oriented system to keep order and discipline. So, by the time they were in the Lower and Upper Sixth we had no more of the house 'days' system and the prefects' 'perks' that presented. Moreover, the house and school largely moved away from prefects abusing their positions of authority.

I write this now, looking back some 50 years or so, but the events that took place that year are still very clear to me, and I'm sure to many others. I never forgave the 'thugs' of Tulk House, and always hated them while they were at school. I would happily confront them today about their actions during those years. But

we all tolerated an awful lot in our Ottershaw years, I'm sure. Even though I, and others, had this disturbing experience in the first year at school, I still hold my Ottershaw years as a defining time in my childhood, teenagehood and upbringing.

Footnote: So what did I do after Ottershaw, and where am I now? After leaving school I spent six years being financially independent of my then divorced parents in order to eventually go to university with a full grant as a mature student. I worked and travelled an awful lot, and have lived in the USA, Pakistan and New Zealand doing a range of jobs. I got a 2:1 degree at the School of Oriental & African Studies, part of London University. Since then I have been an economic researcher and an editor in financial journalism.

Today, I am editor-in chief and a director of a company I helped set up three years ago called Trade and Export Finance Media (TXF). We are based in London near the Oval, employing around 26 people. I specialise in global trade and project finance and spend much of my time chairing our conferences or moderating panels around the world. I am married and have two kids in their 20s, and we live in Staffordshire. I have always kept in touch with a number of good people from Ottershaw (such as Charlie Whelan, Bob Skinner, Jeremy Kidd, Tony Bennett-Smith and Rog Silk) and I meet with them from time to time. I'm happy for anyone to drop me a line at anytime (sorry, I don't do Facebook – but of course you can find me on LinkedIn).

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Do you have something to say? Have you had an interesting life since leaving Ottershaw? If so we would love to hear from you.

Why not contribute something to the next edition of *The Gazette*.

To submit a story, picture or anecdote, please email us at editor@osobs.co.uk



The Ottershaw legacy (1)



As a primary school pupil, especially after my father's death when I was seven, I suspect I was a bit of a wimp. (Oh yes, you say, that Peter

White!). Primary school days were the happiest, evidenced by the 36 out of 49 classmates we assembled when we all turned 30 and met up in the former school building with our favourite teacher, now sadly deceased. Holmesdale School, Reigate was ahead of its time, especially with its audio-visual aids facilities. We had a radio studio where we created our own programmes, and the school opened its own TV studios in the mid-'60s. It was an institution without boundaries, i.e. you were encouraged to succeed to whatever level you aspired to. Other schools were a disappointment after that.

I scandalised Reigate Grammar School, now an independent school, by leaving after one year to go to Ottershaw. Incidentally, I was later recruited to join their "Old Reigatians" despite my short stay, benefiting from a free membership with a salaried alumni department of four staff – all for marketing the current school, of course.

Reigate Grammar and, I believe, Holmesdale were later home to Fat Boy Slim, previously known as Norman (his original names were Nurtan Leo, I recall) Cook, as well as Keir Starmer and Ray Mears. But then Ottershaw also had its "celebs".

Ottershaw was a shock — if only because the grammar school pupils tended to wear short trousers into the second or even the third year, and Ottershaw's drafty dashes between West House and the Mansion made Bentalls' long grey worsted trousers a necessity! Only one of my year actually turned up in shorts: Pete Fellows!

My time at Ottershaw was not the happiest because I am one of those strange people who don't thrive on —

or succeed in — five to seven days a week of sport! Graham Reynolds said in my first report: "has made more progress than anyone else in the school" — he didn't mention how low the base was from which I started! The second term's comment was: "White has considerable difficulty in the inverted position." It was all downhill from there. I made moderate progress in swimming and cross-country, and lifesaving. That was it! And the swimming (of one length) meant that I could take my second-hand H.P.-bought bike from Curry's to school (by train and the lorry from the local transport firm W.S.Hunt, of course).

My year group (1960-66) is one of the worst for getting involved in OSOPS. I think there may be three of us who are members! I joined the Society in 1966 and was, from my time on the Ottershaw Weekly News, immediately given the Old Boys' Newsletter to edit (i.e. write) by a grateful Harry Burrow (then Secretary of the Society), who was delighted to get rid of it. I stuck it for six termly editions and then Kevin (KRDH) Harris took over. It was fairly short of interesting news, comprising mainly lists of pupils (sorry, "boys") and sport results. I was pontifical enough to call the editorial "Edpiece" — a sign of the late '60s. I had written for and very very occasionally been allowed by Tony Stowell to edit, the O.W.N. That led to pioneering (thanks to Oett) work experience on the Surrey Herald and a piece in The Daily Telegraph with my own byline and photo!

But I did enjoy the building projects we did: Masters' Common Room, Rifle Range, and undoing the good work done in Estate Work by building dams between Mr Volkner's bungalow and the Great Mole. I also enjoyed racing around the field in the go-kart which Oett bought as a prototype for all the others we were supposed to build. I found out how to bypass the throttle stop by pushing out the accelerator cable with my heel, and promptly broke the back axle. Oett's comment: "That White is a very quiet boy, but when he goes on that vehicle he goes!"

I wasn't one of the Golden Boys who were picked to drive the pick-up truck or the Dormobile 12-seater mini-buses with their lethal sliding doors. We sat on inward-facing wooden benches, so sharp braking would see us all piling into the back of the front three-person bench seat! Most memorable was a theatre trip to London (to see Laurence Olivier in *Love for Love*, although we only knew he was in it when we bought a programme in the interval). On the way back a thick-pea-souper fog rendered the sixth-former driving us completely blind, so someone eventually sat on the stubby bonnet as we crawled along in first. On shouting out that there was a red light ahead we stopped, only to discover we were on the far side of a set of traffic lights and sitting in the line of fire from cars intersecting our road. That night we ran short of fuel and needed to find a Surrey County Council garage to fill up. Mortlake (it was pre-1964 local government reorganisation, so still in Surrey) Fire Station was found in the fog and a sleepy fireman was roused to angrily give us — we just signed for it — one gallon from a hand-cranked pump.

There are many more tales to tell — about clubs, friends, Saturday evening compulsory 'entertainments', school plays etc, some of them printable and not libellous, but this will suffice for one edition.

Peter White
OT 658 - West





Recollections of a diamond expert (with construction skills thrown in)

My father was in the Air Force, which meant that he and my mother spent a good deal of time travelling around the world, taking my brother and me to various schools in the process, until I was about 11 years old. This didn't exactly give me the perfect start to school life!

Following my parents' separation in 1972 it was decided that I would benefit from going to boarding school, hence my arrival at Ottershaw. I enjoyed the experience thoroughly – not least because, unlike at many other boarding schools, there were a variety of pupils from different backgrounds.

One's background did not matter – we were all in it together. To a certain extent we all looked after each other because, although the housemasters for the four houses varied significantly (Tom Weston at North House was by far the most traditional and the strictest), they could not be around all of the time so a lot of the 'rules' were made by the pupils – notably prefects and dormitory leaders with whom, particularly in your first year, you did not argue!

Time at Ottershaw was mainly taken up with sports twice a week and

prep in the evenings during the week. However, there was some escape – we were allowed three 'leave-outs' per term, meaning that one could go home after sports on a Saturday afternoon and return by Sunday evening for dinner, and any boys whose parents lived too far away were allowed to stay with a friend's parents in the same way.

At first 'leave-outs' were something that I looked forward to – inevitably eating everything in sight at home! – but eventually a weekend at school was equally appealing: with over 200 acres of school grounds to explore, there was always something to do!

You may say that I am biased, but I still believe that North House was the best because at the tender age of 12 one needed some guidance and mentoring, and Tom Weston certainly offered that. His strict timing and pursuit of efficiency gave all in North House a definite feeling of stability – something which we thought was lacking in the other houses.

North House, for example, won the summer athletics cup every year for about 15 years in a row until finally being beaten by East House in the summer of my final year. Mr

Weston was visibly shocked and needed comforting at the prospect of handing 'our' cup over to the enemy!

I left Ottershaw in the summer of 1977 and later went to a Sixth Form College to further my studies. This was a mistake – there was no discipline, no one seemed to know what we were supposed to be doing or when, and there was little respect for the lecturers. It was a disaster for me so I left before completing my exams and started work, initially for a local engineering company. Later, however, something far more interesting appeared on the horizon.

It was 1978 and I had met my first 'real' girlfriend via Russell Mason (North House – OT 465), who lived next door to her in Virginia Water, Surrey. I got along with her father almost as if I were his own son. Seeing my plight in not knowing what I wanted to do with my life, he suggested that I apply for a job at the company at which he was a director, as they were looking for 'intelligent young men' (well, I was young, anyway!) on the understanding that I do so without mentioning him.

Somehow I was successful in my interview at the London branch of De Beers, the world's most influential and powerful diamond trading company, and I was amazed at the benefits offered and the fantastic offers as well as the good salary and chance to work overseas, which I had never dreamed I would experience. I started work there in 1979, training as a diamond valuer and polisher in London and overseas, which I enjoyed.

In 1983 I was sent to South Africa to work in the office there for one year as a buyer. I was provided with my own house, a company car and an office of about 300 people – 90% of whom were female!

I had a fantastic year there, often travelling to work for the day in a light aircraft to buy rough diamonds on the open market, and enjoyed the outdoor lifestyle – not to mention introducing myself to several of those females that worked in the



In pensive mood – Philip in the formal gardens at Ottershaw

office! I was very sorry to leave a year later to return to cold, dull, grim London, and life after my return seemed as if it would never recover.

I had to do something – I had saved some money whilst overseas and decided that the first thing I would do would be to buy a flat to live in. The property market in the London area in 1984 was fairly depressed and I bought a small run-down flat in Surbiton, Surrey for the massive sum of £25,000! This was partly because it was close to an old Ottershaw friend, Jeremy Wood (OT 427), and provided a fast journey into London.

The flat needed a complete restoration and I could not afford to pay anyone else to do it so the only answer was for me to get on with it myself! That old North House spirit came to the fore – the determination to succeed and win!

I spent evenings and weekends working there. Eventually (in 1988) I left De Beers as I found this building restoration work more enjoyable and interesting: it was taking up most of my time, and I was sure that I could make a living by investing in other properties ready for restoration, then subsequently selling them on.

To some extent I was right, but although I was making a fairly good living – even treating myself to a car that I had always wanted, a 1970 Lotus Elan Sprint – somehow the work became tedious after 10 years or so, with difficulty in getting payments from clients and consequent cash flow problems. It is definitely tough running your own business!

There had to be more to life, but I was not sure what: who needed a diamond expert with some additional construction skills?!

There was only one answer for it. Rob Walker (OT 425) had gone back to college sometime in the 1980s and gained a degree, and I would do the same. I decided to go to Kingston University to study for a degree in Building Surveying, something related to my employment at the time, and started the course in 1998.

Being a 'mature' student was tough. What would I live on, and where would the money for such things as



Philip with wife Claire and daughter Jessica on the bridge at Ottershaw Park

the college fees, and mortgage payments, come from? By continuing with some smaller building and decorating projects at the same time as studying I managed to scrape a living together, though it did have some impact on the grades which I received at university!

Somehow I graduated in 2001, proudly taking a degree certificate in Building Surveying with me. Since then I have worked for several practices in all areas of the profession, and became chartered with the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) in 2006 and a member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) later.

By then I had met my wife, Claire. A year after our marriage in 2004 I had persuaded her that we should buy the house that we still live in. Located in Thames Ditton, Surrey, it had been built in about 1830 and was probably the Curate's house attached to the village church. Though full of character, it was in a very tired condition when we discovered it.

The house required an enormous amount of work, starting with a new replacement roof and lead-work, rewiring, a new central heating system, replastering and complete decoration. Although the house

needs plenty of ongoing maintenance, I think its overall appeal makes the effort worthwhile.

I continue to work as a Building Surveyor, mainly in London although I also need to attend the Kingston office as well about one day per week.

Perhaps that's enough about me! If I may refer again to my contacts from Ottershaw, several years ago Greg Kendall (OT 478), who works in IT, came up with the format for the second version of the OSOBS website allowing Ottershaw Old Boys to remain in touch with each other. As a result, Greg usually sends out an email halfway through the month to advise where the last Thursday of the month's 'Pub Meet' will be – usually somewhere within the M25.

Greg's email address is gregkendall@hotmail.com, and he would be delighted to add you to the list. You will receive an email reminder of where the forthcoming 'Night Out' will be, and – who knows? – you may even bump into a few people that you haven't seen for decades. One thing is for sure, though – there will be plenty to talk about!

Philip Lascelles
OT 398 - North



And if to dream

An anonymous contribution

We received the following short story from an Old Boy who wishes to remain anonymous. Your Editor, who also has no idea who the author is, found it most moving.

Noticing a numbness in his hand like a kind of pins and needles: flicking the numbness away and thinking nothing more about it. Afterwards, with the doctor's suspicions aroused, the clinical tests and lumbar punctures and scans and nerve conduction tests with the telltale abnormal readings. And then the diagnosis: Motor Neurone Disease, just like that. No bloody way! You've got that wrong. I want a second opinion.

It was warm in the consulting room. Next to him Lois sat like a stone, hands in her lap. Dr Klein shed his white coat, summarised the situation in the kind but matter-of-fact manner they had agreed from the outset.

"The results weren't wrong, George, and there's nothing that can be done to stop the disease. It's one of the toughest problems facing medical science today and, although some progress is being made, there is no cure. You have perhaps a year and a half, it's difficult to be precise. My advice would be to finish work, make a list of some of the things you'd like to do while you can. I would like to see you even two months from now on."

George felt strangely relaxed, they now officially understood exactly where they were.

"As far as Felix and Amy are concerned, talk to them together. Be as honest as you can, especially when talking about lifespan and never give them false hopes. They might not, or will not fully understand what you're saying but they will be affected in different ways. They will be in a kind of shock to begin with. Watch out for any behavioural changes, mood swings and such like and deal with them the best you can when they occur. Don't let things fester. It will be tough at times but from what I've seen you two will do a great job."

George thanked him again and, tucking his crutches under his shoulders, he and Lois made slowly for the exit. The children didn't need to be picked up from school for a while, which gave them a little time to gather their thoughts and comfort each other. Neither of them said anything on the short journey home. On entering they just held each other instead, made little murmuring noises, smoothed hair, patted shoulders. Lois looked into his eyes and sighed; united in love, she and the children would watch him die.

Things wore on. George was housebound six months later and the palliative home care had started. Everything was beginning to be an effort, even simple everyday tasks, and he was becoming increasingly dependent on others. He still had some mobility, could speak and swallow, but was becoming more breathless with the weeks. He could not help worrying.

How badly were the children really affected? Could Lois cope with the burden? Money was a bit tight: they would have to be careful. And how on earth to fill his time?

He toyed with the idea of something with the Open University but felt he literally might not last the course. He read a lot, needing to keep his brain active. Then, something caught his eye. A short story competition: 'Seasons' in no more than 3000 words with a first prize of £1000. Why not? He told Lois and resolved to take the family to France with the winnings. Somehow.

A few days later, shifting his thighs round with his hands, he eased himself down at his desk, opened his laptop. It was increasingly difficult to depress the computer keys firmly or with any sort of rhythm. He had virtually lost the grip in his hands, which is exactly what Dr Klein had told him to expect. He guessed he would soon be forced to use an audio system to dictate to the computer having first seeded its memory with around 600 or so key words, which seemed such a tiny amount to George. But he realised, given the popularity of text messaging, it was perhaps not so surprising: the unanticipated deterioration of a great language at a speed that took your breath away. Steadily downward. A bit like me, he thought.

Staring at the blank screen, he was fully aware that from times long ago a great many talented people had had a bash at the Seasons. He badly needed inspiration. A theme with which to work. Maybe by focussing on the concept of Spring for a while something would occur to him. Not so easy since concentration was becoming more difficult as his cognitive powers slowly declined.

The four seasons. Right, firstly Spring. Birth, rebirth, newness of life and the hope that this year would be better than the last. Hope: George guessed that was the key. He still lived in hope. The hope that somehow he would astound medical science, pick up his bed and walk. Now wouldn't that be something to write about. George knew he was dreaming.

Spring equinox, occurring late in the month of March each year and slowly moving in time helped along by Julius Caesar and, later, a Pope as they grappled with the tilt of the Earth's axis or some such. Perhaps he could develop a historical or astrological theme.

There was *Spring-heeled Jack*, a phantom who terrorised the good people of Sheffield in the early nineteenth century and frightened passers-by, able to jump extraordinary heights, dressed in tight-fitting white garments with a black cloak and eyes that glowed red in the dark. The inspiration for a Sci-Fi account of the seasons, perhaps.

The *Paris Spring Collections*. He recalled some of the Houses. Dior, Louboutin, Versace, Chanel, Givenchy, all were names that smacked of colour and shape and

even perhaps a certain bouquet. They put George in mind of some sort of exotic flowers. Long-stemmed and imperious creatures springing to life on the hothouse runways of the great *salons* in a blaze of colour moving as though on roller-skates to gasps of admiration, envy, criticism. The beauty of the seasons, maybe.

Dreaming again, George recalled Paris – that was something. His favourite city. He imagined himself back there once more with Lois. Impecunious students, they hitched all the way and actually slept for a night under one of the bridges near the Île de la Cité. Nearly froze to death. Two coffees made to last an hour as they people-watched on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. *Paris in the Spring*. Magnifique! But whoever heard of *Paris in the Autumn*?

Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, the revolutionary ballet and concert which caused people to throw things and almost produced a riot. And then there was the Max Bygraves offering.....and old Vivaldi knew that his most famous work still soothed countless demoralised people stuck on the telephone. Perhaps there was a musical approach he could adopt.

Somehow, George could not get past Spring and was becoming a bit depressed as to how on earth he would fashion 3000 words on the rest of the seasons. He paused, the computer screen still blank. His legs were getting very stiff and now he felt his breathing a bit more laboured. Time to make a basic decision about entering the competition and no nearer the unique perspective he hoped to find. Perhaps his heart had not been in it. It was difficult to see anything remotely life-affirming ahead of him and there would almost certainly be no kind of harvest for him to celebrate. He was getting quite tired now.

The First Day of Spring. Of course. The photograph standing there on his desk said it all. In Cornwall, when the children were very young, they had gone down into Helston one glorious May weekend. The doors of the shops and houses hung with flowers and greenery. The sun shone all day from a clear blue sky. In the High Street with Amy perched on his shoulders, they watched as the villagers paraded and danced the famous floral dance. Bands played without ceasing, people sang and cheered and the pubs stayed open all day. Not a care in the world with his whole life ahead of him. Alive in the sunshine with his marvellous family. Scenes and feelings he would never forget.

He heard the noise of their old car in the drive. Lois had returned and somehow he knew then exactly what he would write about. Nothing grandiose or overweening. No flights of fancy. It was under his nose. Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter – the seasons of *his* life. His childhood, growing into maturity, he and Lois, the family, the middle years and now Winter. It was all there. After all, the story was complete. He was in the unique position of knowing how it would end. Not like his Dad, face down in his allotment when they found him, or Andy, his old sailing mate, who tragically drowned.

He and Lois had discussed the details many times together and with the End of Life people from the Society. They had all but rehearsed the details, for God's sake. He had visited the Hospice where he would spend his last days, hours. Could picture himself lying in that neat little room. Even met the kind people who would be there to see his departure was smooth, peaceful. Life seeping away as his breathing slowed, becoming more and more shallow and his heart, deprived of oxygen, stopping.

There it was, then. They had created a happy life together. The more he thought about it the more he remembered the good times. He knew he had been lucky. That's what he would write about. How thankful he was for his allotted span. He began to type.

Lois dumped her shopping on the floor in the corner of the kitchen. Moving behind him, she clasped her arms round his shoulders and peered at the work in progress. Her cheek was cold against his as she kissed him and squeezed him. Even so late in the afternoon there was still a faint aroma of Chanel No 5.

He covered her hands and for an instant everything was fine. They were in Paris savouring the coffee and people-watching; at Helston, smothered in the warmth of good fellowship; spellbound as they watched Amy in her first ballet display. Just getting on with life as the years went by. Together. Right then he felt safe, loved. And the future? George now realised, at times like these perhaps hope really could spring eternal. The dream had returned once more.

They sent the story off and thought no more about it. Lois had other things on her mind as George's condition worsened. Not long afterwards he made his final journey to St Aubin's Hospice. Everything was ready for him and, as planned, he passed away after a few days with his family at his bedside.

She bitterly regretted the fact that he was never to know he was the winner of the competition he had struggled with weeks before. The result came just too late. In their covering letter the judges said they had been touched by the tale of a life ordinary, a life lived, and impressed by the almost biblical simplicity of the concept when compared with other more clichéd entries. It added the winning showed promise and they urged him to enter more competitions. Lois knew exactly what she had to do.

They stood quietly beneath the 200-year-old Pont au Daube footbridge almost in the shadow of Notre Dame. It was a beautiful day. Each of them took a small handful from the jar and watched as the tiny particles of grit slipped through their fingers into the water, swirled once or twice in the current and quickly disappeared. After a brief moment of silence the three of them climbed the steps back up to the road on to the Left Bank.

"Where now, Mum?"

She smiled at them. "Trust me, boys and girls, I know where we can get a great cup of coffee."



“Ottershaw – the best thing that ever happened to me!”

Last year a couple of contemporaries of Roger Holroyd (OT 103 – West) suggested he might make a good subject for an article. I followed up the idea and subsequently made two visits to Roger and Joan's lovely home in Elstead, near Godalming in Surrey. The following is an amalgam of what we discussed on those two occasions.

Roger's father died when he was 10 months old, and as the years passed it seemed that he would benefit from a boarding education. (“I was a bit of a handful for my mother”, as he put it.) The family were based in the village of Shackleford, close to where he lives now. He attended the local school, where he was interviewed by Arthur Foot.

Having been accepted for a place at Ottershaw, Roger started in 1949 as a member of the second intake. As we started talking about his time there, he said: “It was the best thing that happened to me!” That was a sentiment he repeated throughout our conversations.

Although modest about his scholastic achievements, he enjoyed English and Maths (“to a degree”), and found science interesting. He was also a member of the Drama Society and took part in school plays. He remembers Tom Weston warmly and describes Jake Buttery, his tutor and housemaster, as “a character” and someone whom “you wouldn’t muck about”. At the same time, Jake “was much cleverer than people thought he was” as well as being “an understanding man”. Jake illustrated this latter quality when he unexpectedly visited the West House common room where Roger, 17 at the time, and some other boys were enjoying an illicit cigarette, which they quickly stubbed out in the tin with a hole in it prepared for the purpose. Instead of berating them, Jake simply said, “I’d put that out, if I were you.”

Among other fond memories were building the pavilion under the supervision of Arthur Oettinger, who was “a very astute man, a very nice chap, actually”. Roger seems to

have enjoyed every aspect of school life. When I asked him if there had been any bullying, he said he had not come across it or experienced it himself.

Roger enjoyed sport, including the opportunity to play squash, and “was all right at rugby, because I was big, really”. At Ottershaw with him was Mike Campbell-Lamerton (“God, he was a strong bloke!”), who excelled at rugby and went on to represent Scotland in the international arena while developing a distinguished career in the Army.

After O Levels, Roger stayed on for another year. He retook a couple of O Levels as well as studying English and Biology at A Level. Being a prefect and maintaining a good relationship with Jake, he thoroughly enjoyed this final year at the school.

Roger left in 1954 and worked in the meat trade for a few years before deciding he wanted a business of his own. He was assisted in this endeavour with a loan from Ray Hill, a butcher with whom he had previously done business and who knew his family. The loan was “one of the biggest pieces of luck I ever had”! (Roger hinted that the Inland Revenue might have been interested to know about the provenance of the

funds produced by Mr Hill!) With the money (on which he paid interest and which he repaid in due course) he bought an ironmonger’s shop and later a grocer’s and hardware store, which came with three flats above it that he rented out. Over the years he has prospered in business and has acquired a portfolio of properties in Elstead. In addition, he has a seaside home in Selsey, Sussex. Meanwhile, Roger has served on the Elstead Parish Council for over 50 years, being involved in planning, finance and charitable activities.

And what about Roger’s life away from work? In 1958 he married Patricia, with whom he had three children – Elaine, Alan and Clare. She was a hairdresser, supported Roger in his efforts to build up his business and helped ensure they had a happy family life. Sadly, she passed away in 2000 after suffering a brain tumour.

While running his ironmonger’s shop, Roger knew everyone in the local community, including Joan and her two children. In fact, Joan used to tell her children that in any emergency they should “go to Mr Holroyd”! She recounted one incident that clearly illustrated Roger’s role as the dependable



Roger and Tom Weston at an OSOBS function

person to turn to. One day she arrived home to find she had locked herself out. Help was at hand, however, as Roger used a ladder from his shop to climb through a window and open the front door from inside. On another occasion, Joan found to her horror that there was a frog in her coalbunker. Again, Roger gallantly rode to the rescue. (I forgot to ask what exactly he did to or with the unwelcome amphibian...)

A highly significant event in the Holroyd story seems to have been Roger's decision to ask Joan to accompany him to a dinner with some Ottershaw friends in late 2000. Things evidently took a favourable course as he and Joan got married in September 2001. Reflecting on his good fortune, Roger commented: "I've been lucky twice!"

A year after their marriage, Roger was diagnosed with bowel cancer and immediately underwent surgery. This turn of events concentrated minds, and Roger and Joan decided to go on a round-the-world trip before he continued the treatment. They enjoyed every minute of it. Upon their return Roger started a course of chemotherapy and eventually recovered. Joan, who has had a career in healthcare, used to lecture on the subject at the University of Surrey and was



Roger and Joan outside their home

Olympic Nurse Lead on the Emergency Medical Team at London 2012, was of course a source of strength for Roger. Incidentally, she regards the disciplined way in which he went off to chemotherapy every Wednesday as reflecting the influence of Ottershaw.

In terms of their joint family, Roger and Joan have five children and five grandchildren, with a sixth grandchild on the way. They make

the most of life: they enjoy going for a drive as well as visiting garden centres and RHS Wisley for gardening inspiration. As Joan put it succinctly, "Roger loves his garden." Throughout my two visits, Roger remarked several times on how fortunate he had been in life. It is hard to disagree.

Stephen Turner
Editor



From our on-line gallery



Patrick Rouse, Derek Measure, Jim Turner and Jones senior plus others on Elgar Balcony in about 1962
Photo supplied by Jim Turner



Recollections of Ottershaw and beyond

I had often thought about my days at Ottershaw, only recently disposing of my blue and grey striped Old Boys tie. I was under the impression that the Society I joined on leaving in 1953 had fallen by the wayside years ago. Recently I saw an advertisement for one of the apartments at Ottershaw. I googled Ottershaw and to my surprise found that OSOBS was in good health. After an email to Malcolm, Alison I received an application to re-join and have been enjoying reading copies of *The Gazette*.

My family were self-evacuated in 1939 before returning to Sanderstead in 1942. By this time, I had been to a number of primary schools as we were constantly moving around the country. I attended primary schools in Sanderstead and then Purley, and in 1947 started at a secondary school at Selsdon.

I have often wondered why I was chosen from thousands of Surrey schoolboys to share the brilliant facilities which I experienced at Ottershaw, especially as there were only 75 boys. In January 1949 I found myself deposited on the coach at Sutton station complete with trunk and grey and blue uniform. Only later did I feel that this had been the point that I truly left home, apart from holidays and latterly weekends until I married in 1962. I am not sure this had been my parents' intention, but subsequent events vindicated their decision to send me to the school.

Looking recently at the website promoting the Mansion apartments, I saw three were for sale. One, I suspect, is the library and looks magnificent. Viewing the sale details for the library apartment, I immediately recalled the mornings using cotton waste to clean the oak panels with the robust cleaning fluids dispensed by Mr Oettinger, and some days later applying linseed oil. All before breakfast, this was just one of our daily chores of housekeeping.

Whilst living, as we early attenders did, in the Mansion, I contracted measles. The result was being walked down the main staircase (an

honour, in fact!) wrapped in a blanket and shipped to Addlestone Isolation Hospital for a period.

I do not recall all the events which took hold of my life at Ottershaw but I do know that they certainly set me up for a successful and happy life.

Mr Buttery was my House Master. I bumped into him in a pub in Udimore (East Sussex) way back in the late '70s. Mr Oettinger was my mentor and clearly led me along a very useful path, which has stood me in good stead since. Among other things, he tested me to the hilt with various major projects in workshops, building a 15-foot canoe and a wrought iron fire screen, welding, using the Allen motor scythe, plus many different jobs constructing the racket pavilion and other facilities.

When we moved into the new West House, my last and first duties each day were to refill the boiler hoppers with coal in the hope that we would have hot water each morning. Sorry to say Mr Buttery was not best pleased when the boiler refused to keep burning away through the night.

A number of us used to go on Sundays on our bikes to nearby Chobham on the tank testing grounds to watch motorcycle scrambles. One boy won a bicycle in a national newspaper competition for his photo of a motorbike "flying" during the race.

I also recall that, with another boy whose name I cannot recall, I worked on the farm (Mr Cawley's) at the school entrance. We milked cows, cleaned out milking sheds, drove tractors, did ploughing and haymaking and even worked on the old threshing machine. We made the most of whatever spare time we had, although there were so many activities it was often difficult to decide what to partake of.

The farm gave me the calling to be a farmer. However, as you will see, I ended up as an engineer, far removed from the open air life. Of course, we had to do our bit picking potatoes and pulling up and de-topping mangelwurzel, all for

school funds, as well as things such as feeding, weighing and cleaning pigs, goats and chickens.

I recall that one evening a week the staff had a 'hobbies' evening in the workshop. It was my duty to assist them in their activities.

On leaving I was invited to sign the Honours Book for the work I had done on the Pavilion. Mr Oettinger had engaged me in all the building processes. My father was not greatly impressed with my academic progress, but he did give me £5 as a reward.

Having read the recent edition of *The Gazette*, I recognised Malcolm Pratt as being the boy who lived close to me at Sanderstead. From his article I realised that we might have attended primary school together, and we certainly attended Selsdon Secondary School at the same time, though surprisingly I did not know about it till a short time ago. At a recent meeting with Malcolm, who I discovered now lives close to me, he enlightened me that, from the newsletters and the book written about the school, I partook of many more activities than I can recall.

I left in 1953 to an apprenticeship with Petters at Staines as they built engines for agriculture and other industries. At this point the prospect of farming was wiped off the slate.

I served there for 4½ years, including one day a week at Twickenham Technical College to secure my ONC. (I did the HNC later at night school.) As my home was at Bletchingly, the time I lived in the apprentice hostel at Farnham. I shared a room with an Indian, a Greek Cypriot and another English boy.

At this time as I was so close to the river I used my canoe during summer evenings. Two years on the hostel was moved to Staines, a big house inside the factory fence, so no travel to daily work. There I shared a room with a Pakistani boy.

On Friday evenings I caught Green Line coaches to Kingston and then to Redhill for a weekend at home,

returning early on Sundays. Most Saturdays I either played rugby with the Old Caterhamians or sometimes Staines Rugby Club.

As an indentured apprentice I was able to gain deferment for National Service until three weeks after my 21st birthday. On 7 November 1957 I took a train to Oswestry to join the Royal Artillery. Again, as when starting work, my experience at Ottershaw stood me in good stead to survive the pressures placed on us by our superiors.

January saw me qualifying as a technical assistant responsible for calculating detailed information for transmission to the 25-pounder gunners. Having been posted to Woolwich for a few days leave, I was promoted to draft conducting NCO to take 20 squaddies to Germany. Not the best way to travel – on the Underground at rush hour to Liverpool St Station with a full pack and kitbags!

As a member of 45 Field Regiment RA (25 pounders), on a stormy January night I crossed the North Sea from Harwich to Hook of Holland then spent all day in a train to Dortmund. This was paradise! Our

barracks at Oswestry and Woolwich had been ex-1st World War wooden spiders, draughty and cold. The German barracks were triple-glazed and centrally heated – even the garages.

The Cold War was at its height so local leave was hard to get, but four of us who had struck up a good friendship made the best of our time there. I certainly enjoyed the experience. There was plenty of live firing twice a year at Luneburg Heath and I was a member of the regimental shooting team, with no lack of ammo for 303 rifle and Bren Gun competitions. Mind you, they only gave us pickaxe handles when on guard duty. During my time there I was sent to Hohne garrison, the School of Artillery offshoot of Lanknit, and gained top qualification as a Technical Assistant. Due to a shortage of drivers immediately prior to the exercise I was quickly given an army licence, so I had great experience driving three-ton lorries with plenty of off-road driving, as well as working in the command post.

It was an enjoyable time. Again, the opportunities I had been given at

Ottershaw ensured it was not just frittered away.

I returned to Civvy Street at the end of 1959 in the sales job I had secured prior to National Service. 1962 saw me married and I moved to the London office of a Manchester company selling principally heating and process pumps. In 1964 we moved to Stoneleigh and I worked in a small engineering company. After two years I was invited to be Commercial Director and helped grow the company from a dozen employees to 140. We lost our site in Chessington and built a factory in Hastings, and I moved to Pett, a village near there, in 1968.

The company was sold in 1988. I was not required by the new owners, but luckily with my experience in all matters of company practice I managed to secure two short-term accounting jobs which tided me over for three years till I was able to obtain a position as Purchasing Manager. Procurement had been my speciality since 1964. My wife having died in 1997, I retired early in 2000.

Since moving to Pett in 1968, then to Hastings in 1999 I have been able to enjoy the sea, gaining my offshore yacht master certificate. I have also pursued my love of walking, much of it in the open countryside.

Some of my major feats since retiring include walking along the South Downs Way, in the Wye Valley and along the Coast to Coast Path as well as elsewhere in England and in the USA, France, Spain, Germany and Switzerland. Maureen, my partner, and I have also travelled extensively in Europe and throughout the world, visiting many interesting places. We were especially struck by Antarctica.

I have recently submitted my detailed report to our Ramblers group coordinator for this section of the English Coast Path. The joint report covering the sections from Eastbourne to Camber will be presented to Natural England early next year.

As I approach my 80th birthday still in good health, we plan to keep travelling and walking the English countryside.



Jeremy out and enjoying a walk – and inset at school

Jeremy Kind
OT 85 - West



Adventures in Patagonia

Although Denys Hall greatly encouraged my interest in geography during his lessons in his 'Log Cabin', one continent we never studied, either for 'O' Level or 'A' Level, was South America. At some point during my time at Ottershaw, possibly for my 16th birthday, a relative gave me a book called 'The Uttermost Part of the Earth' by E Lucas Bridges, who was born and brought up in that part of Patagonia known as Tierra del Fuego, the largest of numerous islands at the southern tip of South America. Bridges was the son of a British Anglican missionary, but he spent much of his time with the local indigenous peoples, learning their languages and getting to know their customs. His book relates his family's experiences in Tierra del Fuego, but looks in particular at



The granite towers in Las Torres National Park

Patagonia isn't a country, but is an area of South America comprised of the southern parts of Argentina and Chile. The island of Tierra del Fuego is partly in Argentina and partly in Chile. It is separated from 'mainland' South America by the Magellan Strait and from smaller islands further south by the Beagle Channel. The opportunity to visit Patagonia eventually



The Perito Moreno Glacier viewed from 'The Balconies', with the 'rupture' channel in the foreground



Welsh gravestones in a cemetery near Trelew

the effects of European colonization on the traditional ways of life of the indigenous peoples. I remember being fascinated by the book and thinking that I would like to visit Tierra del Fuego one day. Many years later I read a book about Charles Darwin's famous voyage on the Beagle, which landed on Tierra del Fuego before continuing up the west coast of South America to the Galapagos Islands. My mind was made up; Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego in particular were top of my list of places to visit.



The railway tunnel near Gaiman built by Welsh settlers

arose in 2004 when my wife, Ann, and I joined a group organized by the travel company 'Explore'. The trip started with a long flight from London to Buenos Aires via Madrid. After two days of sightseeing in Buenos Aires we flew south to a town called Trelew, where a large sign said, in English, 'Welcome to Patagonia'. We had arrived!

Trelew is one of a number of towns which were founded by Welsh settlers in the second half of the 19th century. The Argentine government of the day was anxious to populate the barren coastal plain of eastern Argentina, and advertised in the European press for willing settlers. Over a period of about 50 years, several Welsh groups



Drinks are served on the Perito Moreno Glacier

After three days based in Trelew we flew south to Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego, the southernmost town in the world. There we had a boat trip on the Beagle Channel to see the amazing marine wildlife on and around the many rocky islands, and to view the mountains at the southern end of the Andean range. We also did a walk through Lapataia National Park, finishing at the point where the Pan American highway ends its 11,000-mile journey from Prudhoe Bay in Alaska.

From Ushuaia we travelled by public bus across Tierra del Fuego to Punta Arenas in Chile via a ferry across the Magellan Strait. For most of the eight-hour journey the road was gravel and bumpy, and the windscreen of the bus was covered with a metal grill to reduce the risk of breakage by flying stones. Punta Arenas had its heyday towards the end of the 19th century, when all ships going between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans stopped for re-fuelling and re-victualling. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, however, meant that most of the shipping no longer had to come so far south. Punta Arenas went into long-term decline, but is now experiencing renewed growth due to the discovery of oil and certain precious metals in southern Chile.



Our bus going onto the ferry for the crossing of the Magellan Straits

From Punta Arenas, we travelled north by private coach to Torres del Paine National Park, a place famed for its stunning mountain scenery, cascading rivers, abundant wildlife and lakes full of icebergs calving from glaciers. The National Park gets its name from three granite towers which rise nearly 6,000 feet above the glacial lake at their foot. The best view of them can be seen at the end of a six-mile walk with a 3,000-foot climb. Well worth the effort!

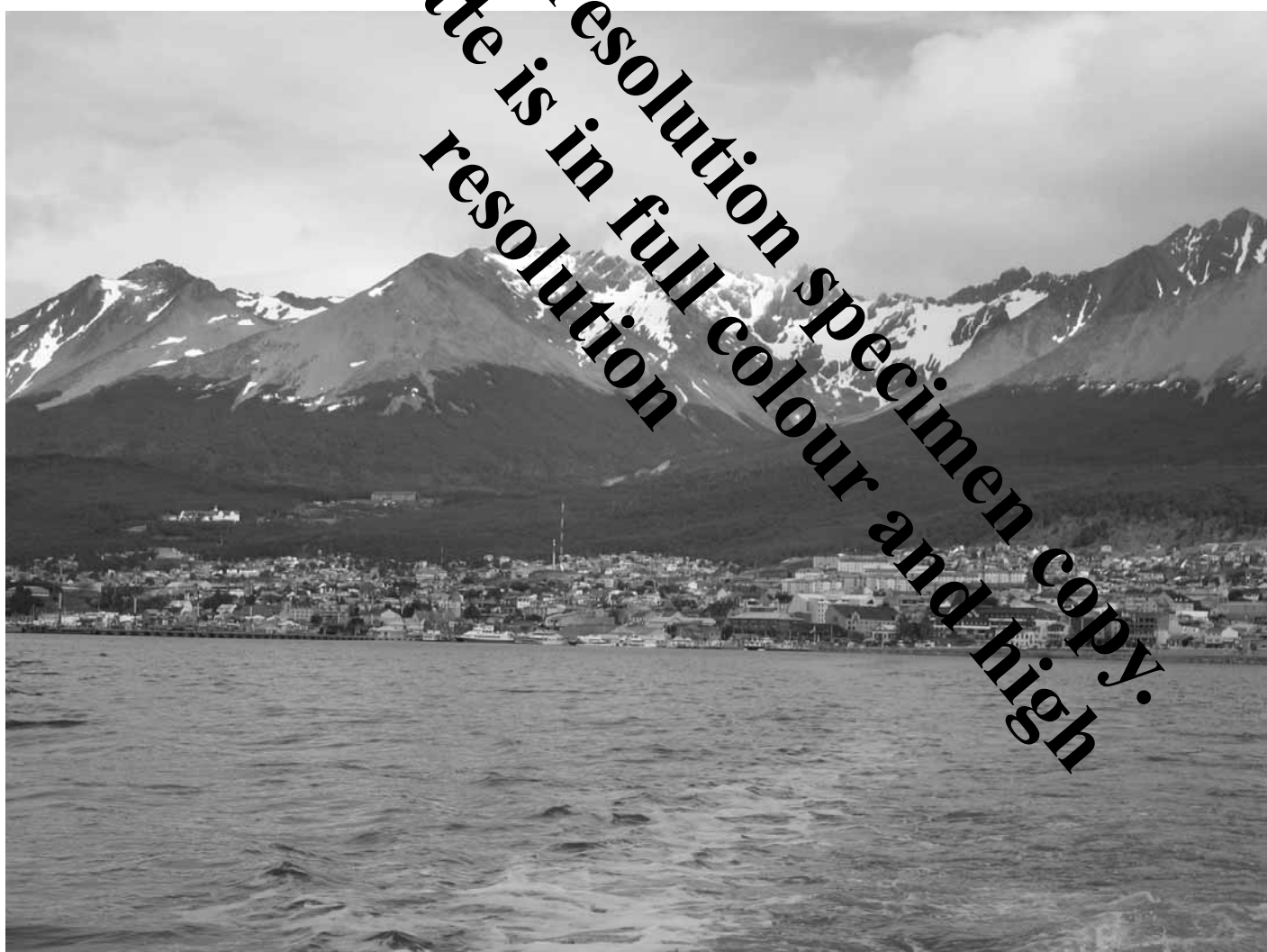
After three days at Torres del Paine, we travelled north again by coach, back into Argentina and into Los Glaciares National Park. We stayed first at El Calafate, beside the brilliantly turquoise waters of Lake Argentina, from where, amongst other things, we visited the Perito Moreno Glacier. Unlike most other glaciers in the world, this one is not retreating. It is fed by the South Patagonian Ice Field, and from time to time advances across one of the upper fingers of Lake Argentina, thereby damming its outflow and raising the water level, until every few years there is a 'rupture', when the water spectacularly bursts through the ice. This had happened



Laguna de Los Tres, with Mt Fitzroy in the clouds behind



The Torres Range and the Serrano River in Torres del Paine National Park



More distant view of Ushuaia from the Beagle Channel



Sign for the Ty Cwmraeg Tea House in the main street of Gaiman

one of which was blue and the other turquoise. On both days it was very windy, which made the going tough, but the views offered ample rewards, even though there were clouds on the very tops.



The amazing spread of pies and cakes at La Leona Café

From El Chalten we returned by coach to El Calafate, stopping en route again at the very remote La Leona café, where a couple from New Zealand provided the most amazing spread of cakes and pies. The airport at El Calafate was new, having been opened only a year before as part of the government's attempt to develop the tourism industry. From there we flew back to Buenos Aires and then on to London, bringing a truly amazing trip to its conclusion. The scenery, the wildlife, the history, the people and the culture of Patagonia make it a very unique destination, and although my wife and I have been lucky enough to travel quite a lot, especially since retirement, if anyone asks us which was our favourite holiday, we always reply "Adventures in Patagonia".

Chris Carter
OT 295 - West

a few months before we were there, so, from the many fine viewpoints, we could see what the impact of the 'rupture' had been. We also had the opportunity to put on crampons and do a half-day hike on the glacier, which, at one point, led us to a small table behind which someone was waiting to serve us glasses of Famous Grouse whisky on chunks of ice that were 1000 years old – a lovely touch for a visiting party from Britain.

Still within the huge Los Glaciares National Park, we travelled next to El Chalten, a former Argentinian army outpost near the disputed border with Chile but now mainly a centre for mountaineers wanting to tackle the daunting granite peaks of the Fitzroy Range (named after the captain of the Beagle). We didn't do any rock climbing, but we did two beautiful walks, one to see the needle-like Cerro Torre, and the other to a lookout from which there was a spectacular view of Mount Fitzroy itself, towering almost vertically above two glacial lakes,



The end of the world: Lapataia Bay, Tierra del Fuego

A happy gathering
with family and friends in Elstead, Surrey

Roger Holroyd's 80th Birthday Tea: Roger (centre) with OSOBS pals Peter Jones (left) and Tony Forward (right)



A mother's tale

My Russian grandparents came originally from St Petersburg. Because of the Russian revolution and the persecution of the "middle classes", they were forced to flee east to Vladivostok. There my mother was born in either 1918 or 1919. (We are not sure of the date as she never had a birth certificate.) Like many Russians, they were eventually forced to flee Russia for Harbin and then Shanghai, in China.

In pre-war Shanghai Europeans had established concessions where they controlled the area and policed it. This was the case with the British, followed by the French, the Americans and also the Russians. My Uncle Serge served in the Russian police in Shanghai and we have a picture of him in his uniform. My mother enjoyed the vibrant nightlife and was a professional dancer in the clubs of Shanghai. Here she met my father, a British soldier who had joined the Army at the age of 18 and, by the time they met, had reached the position of sergeant. In those days a soldier had to get the permission of his commanding officer to marry. Father's commanding officer was very reluctant but gave permission, saying the marriage would not last. He later admitted he had been wrong. They married in Shanghai in

1940. By this time the Japanese were taking control and my mother was evacuated to Australia. On board ship she met Musia Banks, who was also married to a British soldier, and then began a lifelong friendship. They settled in Brisbane, where my eldest brother was born on 2 March 1941. By this time my father had gone off to the war in Burma and Thailand.

He was one of the unlucky ones that got captured by the Japanese as he took part in a rearguard action. My mother received a telegram advising that he was "missing in action", presumed dead. However, he was to survive the three and a half years of captivity and was repatriated in November 1945. He then set about re-uniting with my mother and my brother Edward. Due to the power of the internet, we were able more recently to establish that they arrived back in Southampton on 21 July 1946. The following year my brother Jim was born in Folkestone. I followed three years later, being born in Richmond, Yorkshire.

Since my father was in the army, we were always on the move. As the youngest son I stayed with my parents, and as a consequence went to 13 schools between the ages of five and sixteen. Army schools were

not very good and as a result I went to Ottershaw in September 1963, following brother Jim who was already there. Our father by this time had risen through the ranks, ending up as a Major (Quartermaster) by the time he left the Army. My mother was working for the Medical Research Council.

Following my move to Scotland in 1979, my parents decided to move to Kirkcaldy to be closer to us. Sadly, my father died from a heart attack before the move was completed. My mother was devastated at losing him. I was given the task of buying her a flat in 1982 so that she would always have me as support. Edward and Jim were abroad. The years went by but in 1995 mother was diagnosed with cancer. She was given radiotherapy and was told that she was in remission. However, three years later the cancer was back and by this time she was quite frail. Sadly, she had a stroke and passed away on 30 April 1998.

There is a twist to the tale. Jim came to help me sort out mother's flat. We were in my house when Jim said that he had something to tell me. My brain went into overdrive as I tried to imagine what could be wrong! He said I had another brother and I assumed he was referring to Edward. "No", he insisted, "another brother!" For nearly fifty years there had been a secret. After our mother had received the news that my father was presumed dead, she had a relationship with a New Zealander, William Payne, resulting in the birth of my half-brother Bob in January 1946.

It turns out that Musia Banks and her daughter Natasha had always known there was another brother. Jim was working in Australia in 1996 when they decided they should tell him. He was successful in finding Bob. However, when he told our mother what he knew, she swore him to secrecy. Once she had passed away he felt free to tell me. I can only speculate on the terrible guilt she carried for all those years. From what I have learnt since, mother was forced to make a choice between her sons as Bob's father



Jim, Bob and David with Musia Banks and her daughter Natasha, who revealed the "secret" in 1996



Back row L to R: Louella (Jim's wife), Edward, Bob, James (my son),
 Claire (my daughter) and myself
 Front row L to R: Jim, Dell (Bob's wife), Sally (Edward's wife) and Eleanor

would not let him out of Australia. Mother's decision to leave him behind must have been heart-wrenching. Had she decided to stay in Australia, I would not be here today.

To me the story has a happy ending. I now have another brother, three nieces and two grand-nieces. Since my first visit to Australia in 1999, Bob's family have accepted me. He has a wonderful wife, Dell, whom he married in 2001 when Eleanor and I were there. I was his best man. We have made a total of seven trips to Australia, enjoying the wonderful climate. Perhaps the pinnacle was in 2006, when all four brothers got together as a surprise for Bob's sixtieth birthday.

David Turner
 OT 821 - North



Surrey OSOBS gathering at Christmas 2015



Standing L to R: David Dungate, Wally Pope, Roger Holroyd, David Jones, Tony Forward, Michael Morley and Anthony Delwiche
 Below and seated L to R: Michael Carter, Peter Jones and Michael Bywaters
 The Surrey group. Including other members not seen here, meets monthly for lunch in selected hostelrys around the Guildford area.



How Egyptology lost out to the Civil Service

On the afternoon of Wednesday 3 August I (your Editor) visited Richard Dixon (OT 844 - West) at his home in Barnet, North London, where he lives with his wife, Christine. (His daughters, Victoria and Claudia, have flown the nest.) We had been contemporaries at school, and on friendly terms, though had only met occasionally since leaving. We chatted about life at Ottershaw and his subsequent career. This is a summary of our conversation.

Richard was born in Birmingham but grew up in Weybridge, Surrey, where his parents ran an off-licence. The long hours required by the business sparked their interest in sending him to Ottershaw. He was interviewed by both Arthur Foot and Allan Dodds as the former was about to step down. Richard feels that he was accepted for a place because he declared he wanted to be an Egyptologist – and was able to explain what one was, to boot! He was put in West House.

He did not like the school. There was bullying, and the lower one was in the hierarchy, the more one was the object of bullying." The first two years "weren't wonderful", but by the third year life had become more tolerable. He recalls West and Tulk as being more liberal than North and East. (As a former North boy, I can confirm that this was true!)

Richard's best friend was Pete Massey (OT 857 – Tulk), who features in two of his recollections. One involves Pete being caught by one of the Masters while emerging from the rhododendrons after a furtive cigarette and talking himself out of any repercussions with an utterly implausible story. Sport provided the other memory: "I remember being carried over the try line by Pete Massey during a 3rd XV defeat!" (While on the subject of sport, I recall Richard professing to support both Aston Villa and Birmingham City – probably the only person, not only from the West Midlands but also on the entire planet, to do so!)

As for Richard's academic exploits, he remembers with affection the Master Jonathan Hughes, under whom he studied History 'A' Level. "Two of us passed, and I was one of them!" He left school with four 'O' Levels and two 'A' Levels, acquiring a further two 'A' Levels after a year at Kingston Tech (as it was then called). He was offered an unconditional place by the University of East Anglia to read History and Politics. However, due to family problems he could not take up the offer. His mother was ill with peritonitis and he had to generate some money to support the family. He did various odd jobs, including working as a railway maintenance junior engineer (a 'navvy'), during which he was severely electrocuted by connecting himself with a metal fork to a running rail. It took three weeks to recover.

He took the Civil Service examination, passed and was offered a job. At the time his father was in St Peter's Hospital after having suffered a heart attack. Sadly he passed away, on 4 June 1972, shortly after Richard had told him about his success on the employment front. His mother was in Woking Hospital at the time. "I inherited a rusty yellow 1964 Rover 2000 and a mortgage!"



Richard and Christine around 12 years ago

For his new career, Richard was given the choice of working for the Inland Revenue or Customs & Excise. He chose the latter. In August 1972 he started work in Holborn as a Purchase Tax Control Officer. When VAT was introduced the job title was simplified to 'Control Officer'. An abiding memory from those early days is of a visit to the Cambridge Theatre in London's West End to teach the well-known impresario Larry Parnes how to administer it. "He was very nice to me even though I didn't know what I was talking about!"

Not being keen on the VAT job, Richard applied to go on 'detached duty' to the London North Investigation Unit. In this role he probed the activities of illegal bookmakers operating in pubs and clubs. Part of the work involved rubbing down their socks as they would often keep betting slips in one sock and money in the other.

In the mid-1970s, Richard had several three-month tours of duty in the Road Fuel Testing Unit. With a driver allocated to him, he covered a substantial area. His purpose was to test the diesel fuel people were using to ensure that it was indeed duty-paid diesel. The job was not without its risks. On one occasion he was savagely assaulted by a notorious scrap metal dealer in Norfolk, who showed no remorse when questioned and was eventually imprisoned for three months for his failure to pay the modest fine imposed by magistrates. Richard learned his lesson: "I never approached another vehicle with my glasses on." Nonetheless, he was roughed up again, in Haringey, though that incident was less serious. In this phase of his career, Richard won the record for the greatest number of detections during a three-month stint. He also recalls how the first driver attached to him was awarded an MBE, which was later withdrawn after he was discovered to have been fiddling his expenses ever since he started the job!

During this period Richard also served as a Temporary Imported Vehicle Liaison Officer (TIVLO) for North London. The main purpose was to find people who had illegally imported vehicles or had purchased vehicles which were supposedly for export and therefore exempt from VAT and what was called Car Tax, and who tried to sell them or otherwise use them illicitly. He was the first person to seize a Range Rover in these circumstances. The other vehicles he encountered in the course of this work included Rolls-Royces, Bentleys, Porsches, Lamborghinis, Maseratis and almost every other luxurious or exotic marque you could think of! "On my best day in the job, I seized a Ferrari 512 BB in the morning and a Porsche Turbo in the afternoon!"

After his time with TIVLO, Richard worked on financial frauds involving restaurants and other businesses. In one such case, in the early 1990s, a Persian rug dealer absconded with more than four million pounds in duty outstanding, and turned up in Tehran, where he suggested that Richard meet him to discuss the case, even offering to provide him with an air ticket. As that was shortly after the Ayatollah Khomeini had established his enlightened regime there, it was an offer Richard felt able to resist! The miscreant eventually returned to the UK and, being wanted by both the Metropolitan Police and Richard and his colleagues, was arrested at Heathrow airport. After a trial at Southwark Crown Court during which Richard spent 12 days in the witness box, the defendant was acquitted. "Well, you can't win them all!"

Some of Richard's work included a stint in the Cocaine Target Team. Among the more memorable moments

was being left to arrest a 6' 7" suspect alone and witnessing a coke importer jump from a second-floor window after being arrested. He was also involved in the case of Susan Elizabeth Cole, a British girl whose identity, including her medical history, was stolen by a Nigerian criminal who used the information to import packages of cocaine by post.

From the early 2000s to 2006, Richard worked in the Customs Intelligence and Research Team. He was the British Representative in dealings with the European Anti-Fraud Unit (known as OLAF, from its French name) in Brussels. Some of the cases involved goods purportedly imported from one country but whose actual provenance lay elsewhere, the purpose being to avoid Anti-Dumping Duties or other prohibitive tariffs. The items involved were varied, and ranged from prawn rings from Myanmar to disposable lighters from Malaysia.

Richard was also to head up the Art and Antiquities Squad, which had to deal with the illegal importation of historically important objects from Saddam Hussein's Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East, as well as from the Far East. In the course of this work he was responsible for the exchange of intelligence between Customs and the major British museums. This was probably his most enjoyable job in a long investigative career. He is still in contact with some of those museums' leading experts.

The work sometimes included surveillance, with the longest involving that of a lorry which his team followed from Dover to London, then to Birmingham and on to Essex. The fraud concerned an attempt to avoid UK excise duty on a 40-foot container full of spirits which had been shipped abroad (supposedly to Spain) but was then reimported with false paperwork.

In 2006 Richard moved to the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). While working on one case with the Immigration Intelligence Team, he identified the perpetrator of an 'honour killing' and was dismayed when the authorities failed to prosecute him. He then spent two years on 'detached duty' with a charity called the Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD). His task was to teach the police how to deal with offenders with disabilities, including how to handcuff a double amputee or a wheelchair user. As he had a disability himself, this was a role he enjoyed.

Richard's last posting was as a Senior Intelligence Officer with the Middle Market Drugs Project (MMDP), working with former Met and City of London Police Officers. "I provided the intelligence for them to nick the criminals!" He retired in 2011.

Since his retirement, Richard has devoted a considerable amount of time and energy to charitable activities. He currently helps at the local food bank and assists the Royal Voluntary Service, which among other things distributes library books to people who are disabled, elderly or are otherwise without mobility. He also, as he puts it, "dabbles in art and antiques". Egyptology-related pursuits are sadly absent from his curriculum vitae and, for all I know but forgot to ask, he may still extend allegiance to both Villa and City!



Christine, Victoria, Richard and Claudia
at a family wedding last year

Stephen Turner
Editor



Watching cricket with Tom Weston

A successful and happy day was spent at Worcester County Cricket Club on Wednesday 27 July with our old schoolmaster and latterly Housemaster (North), Tom Weston.

Friend of many years and generous supporter of OSOBS, Tom was brought to the Club in Worcester by Richard Rand from his home in Hanley Swann near Malvern. Although increasingly infirm, Tom and his walking frame successfully made the journey to the ground and watched the 50-over game between Worcester and Northants, enjoying both some lusty batting by both sides and some fierce fast bowling!

Lunch was taken in the Graeme Hick pavilion in company with a small contingent of OSOBS friends listed below. Blessed with fine weather, the day was greatly enjoyed by attendees and our presence was greatly appreciated by Tom, who sends his thanks and very best wishes to us all.

Those attending were Tom Weston, Richard Weston, Richard Rand, David Evans, Jill Evans, David Hibbert, David Dungate, Party Luchurst, David Nokes, David Kennedy and myself.

Let us look forward to another such happy day next year!

Peter Jones



Tom Weston and David Nokes at the cricket get-together



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