



THE OLD EAGLE HOUSE SOCIETY

Douglas Buchanan (Chairman)
56 Longdown Road, Little Sandhurst, Berkshire, GU47 8QQ

Email: douglas@oehs.org.uk

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Last February it was Doris misbehaving whilst I was compiling the newsletter and today it is Emma. There is a thin layer of snow on the ground but are expecting more. Tomorrow is the first day of Spring!

Latest inspection report

The school was inspected in November and unlike in the past, when it was given a pre-warning of the inspectors' visit, they were only given 40 minutes – yes, 40 minutes. The school has been awarded a rating of “Excellent”

From the ISI report:

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils' achievement is excellent due to the overwhelming majority of the teaching having ambitious expectations and setting challenging tasks.
- Pupils with SEND or EAL and those who have been identified by the school as more able achieve their potential as a result of them receiving teaching which effectively supports their needs.
- All pupils including boarders and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) have highly positive attitudes to learning.
- The pupils are extremely well educated in line with the school's aims to encourage them to show independence, leadership, a desire for knowledge and a motivation to succeed.

The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils' personal development is excellent as they display genuine kindness and respect for one another.
- Pupils are proud of their school and they are keen to contribute to it and to the wider community.
- Both day and boarding pupils gain considerable confidence as a result of their strong and supportive relationships with staff.
- Pupils display excellent self-discipline and resilience as a result of the school's outstanding Golden Eagle programme.

Click [here](#) if you want to read the full report.

The Rolls Royce – the story continues

Sam Nelson (OEH 1942 – 48) writes: In the 1940's, Anthony Wootton's Rolls Royce was very much in evidence. It was a, circa, 1937 two door fixed head coupe and was in frequent use throughout the war as well as in the years following. Some of us were lucky enough, as members of the school rigger / cricket / hockey teams, to travel in it to 'away' matches at other prep schools. It wouldn't surprise me that the car is still in existence today, given that 50% of all Rolls Royce ever built are still 'on the road'.

At the far righthand corner of the cricket field when facing the pavilion, there was an entrance to the kitchen gardens and also there was an old shed which housed a 'sawn-off' saloon, that is, with only the driving 'cab' and bonnet remaining. This vehicle was used for towing the large roller around the whole ground after mowing. The roller was also used for rolling the cricket 'square'. I wonder if this is the shed to which Chris Copley is remembering."

2020 – our 200th birthday

A suggestion from Peter Copley (OEH 1957 – 63): "It is certainly my intention to be present at the 200th anniversary celebrations, if I am still alive, which I should be!

For the older generation, I think we would appreciate some emphasis on touring the older buildings in the school (pre 1960), because this is what we remember. I'll keep in contact with you, if I think of some ideas for the celebration.

I always remember 1820, because Paul Wootton always had great delight in quoting Johnnie Walker's slogan "Born 1820 and still going strong".

Another suggestion is we have a coach trip and visit the sites of the three Eagle Houses in Hammersmith, Wimbledon and Sandhurst.

A prep school at peace and war. A personal account.

Continuation of Michael Ponting's memoirs of the 1930s at Eagle House

We sang in the school choir, and were actually recorded, in those days a big deal. We also did a lot of drama. On my last year, in 1940/41, I played a detective in a French play. Previously, Cinderella, also in French. We had a puppet theatre for which we wrote plays, made puppets and scenery and ensured that our characters' voices imitated as many of the staff as possible (they seemed delighted).

We played rugby in the autumn, hockey in the Spring and cricket and tennis in the Summer with matches for all the major games. One of our main rugby opponents was the Dragon School, Oxford. In addition to being then a much larger school than us and to some extent co-educational, they gained further respect from the rumour that they had a lightning-fast girl wing three-quarter. To our great disappointment, she never appeared, though a few years later, Antonia Longford (later Fraser / Pinter) played the part, and well, too.

All events, except cricket and rugby, were coached by (among others) the multi-talented Mr Watson who introduced us to the crawl, then virtually unknown in British schools; and a good second serve in tennis, which seems unusual even now for small boys. As was the custom, 'sports', otherwise athletics, took place over 3 days in the summer (one day for practice and two for competition) otherwise we did none, running no distance over 800m. I'm sure that greater involvement at an earlier age and proper graduated training are main reasons why athletic standards have improved so much, for boys and girls. (*My time for half mile, a record then, was comfortably eclipsed at an earlier age by our granddaughter Alice.*). A number of us shot regularly on the 25 yard range. We even had distance spelling matches with other schools (among them, St Peter's Seaford)

All these activities and others were necessary because we had no weekends at home and no TV, though we had some radio and records, a good library, and surprisingly a billiard table. We also had occasional films. And, of course. the concerts and plays.

My father came over seldom from India; so my mother spent from New Year till May with him. In Northern India, Spring was more bearable. My grandfather had to look after us during Easter holidays and occasionally visited us at school.

On Sunday evenings after chapel, one of the Woottons would read to us in the firelight of the great hall. We clustered around him, in the armchairs or on the floor, surreptitiously dipping fingers in his tankard of beer and totally rapt by *The Sword and the Stone*, the exploits of Richard Hannay and the works of PG Wodehouse. To my mind, AW's best Wodehousian performance was given under different circumstances during the blitz, when we had bedded down in the shelter at the start of an air raid. AW read us Wodehouse's 'Pighooey'. The hero's extended pig call, warbled by AW at the crux of the story, was more memorable than any I have heard since on BBC radio, and I could imitate it now. It banished all thoughts of the air raid.

It must have soon after this that PG Wodehouse blotted his copybook while interned in German-occupied France, by agreeing to co-operate with the Germans in broadcasting light-hearted pieces to America, still out of the war, getting better treatment as a result, without apparently being aware of the quid pro quo. Post-war, he was closely questioned, but never told that he had been cleared. He never returned to England though he continued writing his English fantasies. I was glad that he was knighted before he died.

1914 / 1918 / Roll of Honour

If you have not had a look at this publication it is a must – a moving piece of work. Click [here](#) to locate it.

Keep safe