



THE OLD EAGLE HOUSE SOCIETY

Douglas Buchanan (Chairman)

56 Longdown Road, Little Sandhurst, Berkshire, GU47 8QQ

Email: douglas@oehs.org.uk

NOVEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER

Where has the year gone? It just feels like yesterday that we were awaiting for the excitement of the new millennium and now it is seventeen years later. The school has changed in many ways and from numbers around 240 the roll call now is on the 400 mark. This has not stopped Eagle House in excelling in all spheres of education. The emphasis now is on the “whole person” and not just concentrating on the academia and so the lucky pupils are introduced to more and more experiences to develop their character and to be compassionate towards all.

Remembrance Parade 2017

The annual Remembrance Ceremony in Sandhurst. Eagle House was represented by our Heads of School.



The passing of a very young member

The very sad news is the sudden death of Charlie Perry (OEH 2003 – 14) who passed away at the beginning of November. The diagnosis was a non-infectious metabolic condition. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time. Charlie’s mother has been a Year 3 teacher at Eagle House for many years. Charlie was a very talented pupil who always gave 110% and he always thought about others before himself.

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

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

Parmiter’s successors in 1938 were two brothers, both Old Wellingtonians, Anthony and Paul Wootton, who maintained and possibly enhanced the standard of education, but were altogether more modern. They also brought with them a new Senior Master, a Mr Watson, who displayed an astonishingly wide range of skills. He played and taught

hockey, tennis and swimming, revolutionising our skills. He was a musician of some standing (clarinet?) and an excellent singer and librettist. He had also been an aficionado of London night clubs and would regale us with tales of pre-war London society. He was substantially ahead of his time in teaching sounds and conversation in French using wind-up gramophones combined with notes and illustrations (a junior Linguaphone?) long before tape recording. I still remember learning and retaining vowels this way, at the age of 11.. We respected him immensely for all his skills. 25 years later, in 1967, we were told by Paul Wootton that Watson, still at EH, had composed the song that was a close runner-up to 'Puppet on a String', the winner of that year's Eurovision Song Contest. A man of all skills. And he stayed at EH for over thirty years.

The finances at that time have since puzzled me. When I started in 1935 there were 43 boys, rising to 50-55 when I left. The annual fees were about £150. Total income therefore around £7500. Out of that, 3 Oxbridge masters, an Art Mistress, two matrons and all the ancillary staff to run a large house with many acres, and feed us all. The Woottons at one stage also drove a Rolls Royce. And we mustn't forget the salaries of the two headmasters and a multi-talented senior master, plus presumably some return on capital. How did they do it?

Like any other really good teachers, The Woottons and Watson were all performers, and to a great extent the other masters were, too, though 'the big 3' were exceptional. They produced a number of scholarship winners and 'top of the list' Common Entrance results to major schools, plus coaching games to a high level (in my day, the rugby 'Outside' line-up included a future Irish International, a Schoolboy International and a Private Secretary to the Duke of Kent, at that time, probably the best of all, and team captain, too).

For our Saturday evening entertainments, the Woottons and Watson would compose, contemporise existing songs, or just sing something new that they had picked up at a night club or two. They had a fine line in cross-talk... G & S "I've got them on the list", using boys' names, was always popular and I can still sing two other songs, both performed by them in the depths of WW2, as the lyrics indicate. "Oh.. what a surprise for the Duce, the Duce, he can't put it over the Greeks" ending "he's had no spaghetti for weeks" and "Mr Schmidt and his Messerschmidt" concluding "and the Messerschmidt .. made a proper mess of Schmidt". Good uplifting stuff for us in 1940-41, and I think for them too, though inaccurate, as Messerschmidt was making mini-cars after the War.

I found the school work interesting and enjoyed most of it, especially French and English. I learnt later in life from my mother that the school had been expressly forbidden by my father to teach me Greek, as I might have been in danger of being put up for a scholarship, and my father didn't want yet another academic in the family. . 'We don't want any more 'clever dicks', he said, not infrequently, though there wouldn't have been any danger of that . So, with encouragement from him and my mother, I did

my best to concentrate on being 'good at games' for the rest of my school life, sometimes to the irritation of Wellington masters who thought I 'could do better'. At home, throughout my school life my work was never once commented on or encouraged (except tangentially by my grandfather and uncle, the 'clever dicks' of the family, who couldn't really interfere). However, my games and athletic prowess, or the lack of it, were always subject to criticism, not directly by my father who would seldom communicate, but through my mother "Your father thinks you should be winning some more races" or, earlier "He thinks you should learn to catch a ball better" She then demonstrated efficiently the methods I should adopt (Cheltenham Ladies' alumnae always played sports well). I don't think this concentration on games was unusual among my contemporaries, but in my case was probably excessive.

From the school archive: "Where are they now?"



**WISHING YOU ALL
A HAPPY FESTIVE SEASON AND A HEALTHY 2018**

There will not be a newsletter in December.