#### THE CHESTER ASSOCIATION OF OLD KING'S SCHOLARS



# THE VANBRUGH THEATRE

WAS OPENED ON JUNE 27TH 2011 BY

## **RONALD PICKUP OKS**

.

THE VANBRUGH THEATRE PROJECT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROSITY OF THE LATE ROGER SNELSON, OKS

# DEATH OF Ronald Pickup

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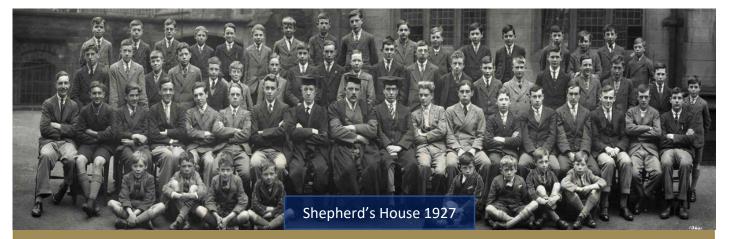




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## Introduction and Contents





## CAOKS Newsletter

Editor Anthony Russell

The past year has been a difficult one for all of us, and the Association has, like much of society, gone into hibernation. However, with the arrival of Spring, there appear to be signs of real improvement. The school is operating, and as you will see from these pages CAOKS hopes to hold two social events, an informal get together in July and the annual dinner in October.

However, we have all suffered losses. Almost everybody will have been touched by the virus, whether from illness, or the death of loved ones. This issue is dominated by tributes to one of our best-known OKS, Ronald Pickup, a staunch supporter of the school. We have also lost two former Presidents, Brian Crowe and Michael Jessop.

Memories are important, and the articles received from OKS for this issue reflect on a number of aspects of school life in the past and some research into the life of an OKS three centuries ago.

Nostalgia is inevitable in an association such as ours, for the single factor which connects us all is in the past. But it is important to look ahead, and a pause in our activities has created an opportunity to decide how CAOKS can best serve its members in the future, and as the President says the officers have been thinking about this issue and ideas from all OKS as to how this can be achieved are welcome.

Meanwhile, enjoy this issue, and please do send any news or other contributions to me for publication in future newsletters.

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# From the President *Ravi Jayaram*

I did not anticipate when I wrote my first piece for the newsletter as president of CAOKS that 18 months on life would have turned into a hamster-wheel of masks, hand-sanitising, social-distancing and lockdowns. I had hoped to have been able to write about how CAOKS had organised some amazing social events, how we had brought alumni together and how the organisation had grown. Today I'm just happy that I can meet a couple of friends in the garden for a glass of wine. For me lockdowns have helped me reflect on how I had lost sight of the importance of the simple things in life. Being able to hear the

breeze and birds singing, and to be able to walk down a road without the constant hum of engines in the background was an absolute pleasure. It also made me realise the importance of friendships and how easy it can be to neglect them. We all get caught up in day to day living and rarely take time to take a step back to take an overview. Times like these are where having strong friendships becomes really important. I am sure that many of you like me have taken advantage of Zoom-like technology to keep in contact with friends and keep an eye out for each other.

As we get older, friendships can be transient in many ways and can be a function of location, time and circumstances. They may drift as things change. However, I think that the friendships we form at school are different. They are forged in shared experiences as we grow up and I think that friendships from those years have a more solid foundation. I can pick up where I left off with childhood friends even after long periods without contact due to those common bonds. This is why I think that organisations like CAOKS are very important for all of us. I have always been very upfront about my own views of the organisation. When I left King's, I made an active decision not to join. I perceived CAOKS to be nothing more than an anachronism from when the old-boys network was the way to get on in life. The confident absolute wisdom of teenagers is quite a thing to behold (especially now that I am frequently on the receiving end of it). My view was I would keep in touch with genuine friends and there was no need for CAOKS to be part of that. With age however comes wisdom (although some of those close to me might question that I have yet to acquired said wisdom) and an acknowledgement of the debt that I owe the school for making me the person I am today. It has been an absolute pleasure to be part of CAOKS and to finally understand the importance of being able to not only re-establish contact with some of my own peers but also to meet King's alumni from other generations and to recognise the commonality we have in our shared experience.

As you will be fully aware, the school itself has had to face up to the challenge of Covid and all its associated uncertainties. George Hartley and the team have worked incredibly hard to keep things going but throughout all of this George has always made time to be part of CAOKS meetings and discussions. This reflects the value that the school has for its alumni association and I am confident that in spite of a few rocky years where there was a lack of clarity as to where CAOKS sat in the priorities of the school, we can now continue to move forwards together.

Elsewhere in the newsletter you will read about the new constitution for the organisation which will be voted on at the virtual AGM later this year. I hope that some of you will be able to attend this but please try and have a read and comment if needed. As a committee we are happy with it but fresh eyes are always very helpful. All being well the annual dinner will take place at the school in the autumn as well as the London alumni event, but we are hoping to have a less formal outdoor CAOKS event at the school in late June (roadmap-permitting) so watch this space for details. This should be a fantastic event and it would be lovely for old friends and new to come along.

Finally, a request to younger CAOKS members. We really want you to be part of CAOKS and have a say in what we do and how we do it. If you are interested in being part of the committee please feel free to contact me or any of the other committee members to chat about things.

In the meantime, I hope you all stay healthy, safe and sane. Let us hope that the rest of 2021 carries on the upwards trend.

## Officers' Reports



From the Secretary Adrian Ackroyd

#### No regrets!

Off to pastures new now. It has been an honour to guide our alumni association for so long. I just hope I pointed it in the right direction with my, at times, abrasiveness and not suffering fools gladly approach.

King's has the oldest alumni association in the UK and "not many people know that". (One bonus point if you name who, where and when first said). In fact, we would be first in the world if not for a pesky Canadian school who beat us by a few months. So, eat your heart out Eton, Marlborough, Rugby et al.

A résumé - I reluctantly walked (or more accurately, was frog marched by my mother) into King's as an 8-yearold and to be honest I was a right handful until I left at 18. I'm still the holder of some records never to be beaten – unfortunately they revolve around the number of Headmaster's detentions etc, though I did do okay at athletics and hockey which is probably why I wasn't expelled.

King's gave me a brilliant foundation, for working together in a team and the courage of going it alone when needed. It was a privilege to be taught by some inspiring people. My career started off as an undergrad and then a postgrad. As a result, I have quite literally travelled the world doing an eclectic mix of tasks – the only continent I have not been to is Antarctica (far too cold when you've worked mainly in the Middle and Far East!)

I did meet a former teacher a few years back who bluntly informed that I was the reason he nearly gave up teaching as a career (and to be quite frank, he should have). Not being too diplomatic, I once approached a very fresh-faced group at an U6 Leaver's Lunch – I asked one where he was going to Uni and to keep in touch. Much to the hilarity of the others he retorted "I am head of (redacted department)". Oh well, win some, lose some!

Probably to the consternation of the School's legal team I am writing a detailed memoir of my life. It mainly focusses on my time at King's, the dramatic mistakes I've made and some of the changes I persuaded big corporates and government to take on board. Watch this space!

I can hear a huge sigh of relief that the maverick is at last handing CAOKS on. But we have a great Executive Committee, an immensely talented crew at the School in the Development Office and another inspirational Headmaster in post.

Even though I failed the exam twice (so I have probably got the idiom wrong) I think it is time to say something along the lines of "au revoir pour toujours de moi", and as a nod to my long-suffering wife and my forbears too "Alba gu bràth".

Stay safe.



From the Dinner Secretary <sub>Robin Hardi</sub>

Spring approaches, the rules relax a little and life brings with it a hint of optimism for the future. So much so that the committee have taken a positive step and have decided to relaunch CAOKS events in 2021. Therefore, I am delighted to announce two events are now introduced into the social calendar, a Summer Get Together (3 July) and the Annual Dinner (16 Oct).

In light of so little opportunity for gatherings we don't feel we can wait until October for the Dinner and have introduced an early summer event. This will take the form of an afternoon BBQ at the school, with a bar, a little music and an opportunity for a few games for those feeling energetic. It will be an informal event, just

## Officers' Reports

an opportunity to get together to have a chat and rekindle friendships. The details are; Saturday 3 July, in the school grounds, 2pm start, closing at 6pm, BBQ, cash bar, ticket price £10 incl. meal and welcome drink, dress code smart casual. Tickets available from the website, please see link below:

# <u>https://www.kingschester.co.uk/summer-alumni-get-together/</u>

Then of course to the Annual Dinner. October seems a long way away without even a hint of a summer holiday on the horizon but by then, hopefully, the situation will have recovered and an indoor dining event is something we can all look forward to. The school catering team are again lining up a superb meal and we have a keynote speaker in Jonathan Samuels, Anchor on Sky News, who is also an alumnus. The dinner details are: Saturday 16 October, at the school, 6.30pm start for 7.30pm seated. Black tie/formal wear, ticket price £40. Tickets available from the website, please see link below:

#### https://www.kingschester.co.uk/alumni-dinner/

I know we are all torn between wanting to get life back to normal and being cautious for our health but I hope you will feel you can take the opportunity to enjoy these social events and meet up with old friends.

Take care and I hope the situation will continue to improve for us all in 2021.



## From the Treasurer Mark Thorp

CAOKS is in a healthy financial position having recorded a surplus for the year and with cash reserves of £26,000 at the end of 2020. Many of its costs, in particular producing the newsletter, are now being met by the School. As a result, the Association has additional resources available.

We continue to provide support to the Benevolent Fund to enable it to make the Exhibition and Baty Travel awards. CAOKS is also now looking at other ways of supporting the School and in particular the bursary campaign.

### CAOKS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021

AGENDA

The Annual General Meeting for 2021 cannot take place at the school because of the continuing restrictions arising from the pandemic. The Executive Committee has decided that the AGM should take place this year, particularly as it was not possible to hold last year's AGM for the same reason. The AGM will take place on **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 6.15 pm** by means of a Zoom video link. Details of how to join the meeting, voting procedures and the agenda and how to view relevant documents are set out below.

- 1. Apologies for absence
- 2. Minutes of the 2019 AGM
- 3. Matters Arising
- 4. Hon. Secretary's Report
- 5. Hon. Treasurer's Report
  - a. Accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019
  - b. Accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020
- 6. Adoption of new constitution

- 7. Dinner Secretary's Report
- 8. Newsletter Editor's Report
- 9. Report of Events held 2019-2020
- 10. Events proposed for 2021-2022
- 11. Honoraria
- 12. Election of President
- 13. Election of Secretary
- 14. Election of other Officers and Committee
- 15. Any Other Business

# Officers' Reports

#### NOTES

Re: 12. The Executive Committee has nominated Anthony Russell OKS (1970) for election as President to succeed the current President, Ravi Jayaram, in the Autumn of this year.

Re: 13. The Executive Committee has nominated Peter Bernie OKS (1976) for election as Secretary, to succeed Adrian Ackroyd who has indicated his retirement, with effect from the 2021 AGM.

Re: 14. All the current officers and committee are nominated for office by the Executive Committee, and they agree to serve for a further year. It is necessary for a further OKS Member of the Executive Committee to be elected because the Newsletter Editor will continue in that post while serving as President. In the event of no OKS standing for election at the AGM the Executive Committee will co-opt a suitable person to serve on the Executive Committee until the next general meeting.

#### JOIN THE AGM BY ZOOM

Topic: CAOKS AGM 2021 Time: Jun 8, 2021 06:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting by clicking on the link below or accessing the Zoom site and clicking JOIN MEETING:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82327711523?pwd=Q25YNytIbG84R2I4U0dtRjFGZDczdz09

Meeting ID: 823 2771 1523 Passcode: AGM2021

#### DOCUMENTATION

The relevant documents are as follows:

- 1. Agenda (set out above)
- 2. Minutes of 2019 AGM
- 3. Accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019
- 4. Accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020
- 5. Proposed new constitution (published in the November 2020 newsletter
- 6. Proxy voting form

A pack of all relevant documentation may be accessed by using the following link:

https://www.kingschester.co.uk/caoks-agm-2021/

Members who receive only a paper version of the newsletter will <u>not</u> be sent paper copies of these documents with the newsletter. However, anyone who is unable to access the documents on line should contact the Development Office (tel: 01244 689494) and paper copies will be sent.

#### PROXY VOTING

A proxy voting form is available using the link above, or will be supplied on request. There are options for giving the President discretion to use your proxy vote as he sees fit, alternatively to indicate your vote in respect of the following decisions:

- 1. Acceptance of the Minutes
- Approval of the accounts for the years ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020
- 3. Adoption of the new constitution
- 4. Election of Officers

## Headmaster's Message



From the Headmaster *George Hartley* 

Whilst it's been another term significantly disrupted by this dull and dreadful pandemic, the school has ended on a high with the welcome return of all pupils and staff for the last 3 weeks. It has been a joy to witness the buzz of learning in classrooms again, encounter the busy bustle of the corridors and hear the laughter of children playing outside; a wonderfully refreshing change from coming into my study when the school was closed to pupils and felt like the Marie Celeste.

The return of everyone on Monday 8th March was made possible by the remarkable efforts of our Bursar Hayley Jordan, previously of the army logistics corps, who successfully set up a testing station in the music department's recital room which delivered almost 3,000 lateral flow tests in two weeks. Hayley was ably supported by 24 volunteers from our support staff (including the whole of the finance team) who bravely stepped forward to carry out the tests. For someone who used to set up camp for a battalion in the Afghan desert, I guess this was a 'piece of cake' in comparison.

It some ways it was a pity that we couldn't continue 'in session' into the Easter holidays, particularly to allow the pupils to enjoy each other's company for a little while longer, though one must remember that all the pupils and teaching staff had undertaken a full term of teaching and learning and therefore needed a proper rest. Again, the quality of remote learning during the period of school closure was excellent and whilst it was obviously no substitute for being in school, nearly all the pupils continued to make the academic progress we would normally expect of them.

Looking ahead to next term, we naturally hope that the restrictions we are having to operate by in school will be further relaxed, most notably the need to wear face masks at all times indoors and hopefully with regard to pupils in different year groups being able to mix again. Whilst the co-curricular programme was almost back to full strength for the final few weeks of term, it would be good to be able to play other schools in fixtures again.

I must say it was very impressive how such activities did continue during the period of school closure, with sporting activities being remotely set, choral pieces being assembled from individual singers and perhaps most remarkably the continued production of this year's school play; The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe. This has now been filmed with no fewer than four separate casts and we eagerly await the premieres next term.

Thank you to all of you who have engaged with the alumni appeal for the King's 100 Challenge over recent weeks. It was good to see many of you at the 'virtual get-togethers' and even better to have received many generous donations this far. If you benefitted from attending the school and can support the appeal by helping to provide a King's education for bright pupils from lower income backgrounds in the area today, please do so.

We also enjoyed an excellent meeting of the Tudor Society in March, which was a based around a celebration of the actor and OKS Ron Pickup's life. The actor Nickolas Grace provided some highly entertaining anecdotes from his time at school at its original site and his career thereafter and others chipped with their fond memories of Ron and their time at school. We intend to keep going with virtual gatherings, as well as face-toface events, the former having the advantage of permitting people to attend from the comfort of their own homes, from anywhere in the world. If you want to find out more about joining the Tudor Society please contact Liz Gwyther at eeg@kingschester.co.uk; you would be very welcome.

Writing this at my desk in school in the warm Chester sunshine, I do feel very optimistic about the future of King's. As we hopefully emerge from this most extraordinary of times, the school does seem to be in good fettle and as I outlined in the last newsletter, there are various ways that we will actually benefit from Covid-19 going forward in terms of the innovations and various experiments we have been obliged to undertake over the last 12 months. Perhaps most importantly, I have no doubt at all that we will emerge a stronger, more resilient and more cohesive community than ever.

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#### SCHOOL NEWS

#### Development of the Sixth Form Centre

We are delighted to share plans for our new, purposebuilt Sixth Form Centre, due for completion in Michaelmas Term 2021, subject to planning permission. The new centre will involve a significant extension to the current Sixth Form facilities, all of which will undergo a comprehensive scheme of renovation to match the new state-of-the-art building.

The project, due to commence in the Summer Term, will result in an increase of approximately 440 square metres and the creation of a second-storey with five seminar-style classrooms. In addition, there will be a number of new study areas to suit different learning styles and attractive, bespoke social areas.

The development will include:

- Conversion to two-storey building
- Five seminar-style classrooms
- Extended and improved 'common room' social areas
- Sixth Form café and seating area
- Separate study areas for silent, individual study
- Study pods for group learning
- Areas for informal, collaborative work
- Wholescale renovation of existing facilities
- Contemporary design throughout

The development represents a change from the latest proposal contained in our 10-year Masterplan, which would have seen a new centre completed in 2023/24.



The Headmaster, George Hartley, said: "We are committed to honouring the pledge in our strategy for 2018-2025 to develop the school site on behalf of our pupils, parents and staff. This revised plan for a new Sixth Form Centre achieves everything we wanted in terms of vastly improved facilities and will provide an outstanding learning environment for generations of pupils, whilst representing a significant cost saving in comparison to other proposals and minimal disruption. Most importantly, the relatively short construction period will mean that pupils returning to school following the summer break will be set to benefit that term from all the fantastic opportunities afforded to them through this very exciting project."



#### Support Staff Step Up

When the government announced that pupils would be allowed back in the classroom on the 8<sup>th</sup> March, everyone at King's was delighted. It did however present a logistical challenge, as all 750 Senior School pupils had to have 3 lateral flow tests prior to their return. That meant administering around 2,250 tests. 'Operation Test' was planned with military precision and the school's support staff, including the Site Supervisor, Head's PA, External Lettings Manager and the Alumni team were drafted in and trained to do the testing. It was a great combined effort and has enabled pupils and staff to return to school with confidence. Pupils now carry out their own tests at home, twice a week.



The Team of Testers

#### The King's 100 Challenge Appeal

Many thanks to everyone who has supported our King's 100 Challenge for Bursaries,



launched in January. It is 20 years since the school last launched a general appeal to all alumni and former parents and we have been encouraged by the response. The school Leadership Team and Governing Body are totally committed to increasing bursary provision at King's, despite the financial and operational challenges that have arisen from the pandemic. We are very grateful to everyone who has donated and will be sharing an update on our progress at the end of May.

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We are aware that many of our members prefer a paper copy of the CAOKS magazine and others like to scroll through an online version. It has been some time since we asked which version you preferred, so please do let us know by clicking on this link

#### https://www.kingschester.co.uk/caoks-post/

OR by calling the Development Office on 01244 689494. If we do not hear from you we will continue with your current arrangement. If you prefer a hard copy, there may be a small charge to cover printing and postage for those not already paying a subscription to CAOKS. It was agreed at the 2019 AGM that those who continued to pay their annual subscription would have these regarded as donations to be used in the Association's charity work and residual administrative costs.

#### Farewell and Good luck to Nadine Isaacs

Many of you will have met Nadine Isaacs at one of the many events she has organised for alumni over the past three years. The list includes the London Get-togethers at the Royal Institute of British Architects and The Oxford and Cambridge Club, Year Group Reunions, the Bartered Bride Reunion, Henley 2018 & 2019 and the Alumni Dinners at School. She is now heading off to pastures new to take up a fantastic role with a national charity. Her sunny outlook, kindness, warmth and exceptional organisational skills will be missed by all and we wish her the very best of luck in her new role.



Nadine is on the back row on the far left

Events

#### Reunions

It has been a great shame that we have been unable to run any reunions this year, but we intend to resume the programme with reunions for the following year groups next year:

1962, 1972, 1982, 1992, 2002, 2012. Dates and timings will be listed in the next issue.

#### King's at Henley - See you next year!

Our Tea Party at Henley has been another casualty of the pandemic, but we'll be back with the Prosecco, Pimm's and strawberries next year, all being well!



#### The King's Tudor Society

The King's Tudor Society has held two online events since the last issue. Shortly before Christmas an online drinks party was arranged. Members who registered were sent a "goody bag" containing a mulled wine kit and other festive fare for refreshment. They were entertained with Christmas music and were made aware of how the school was operating under Covid conditions.

On 23rd March, as a tribute to Ronald Pickup, his fellow OKS actor, Nickolas Grace, entertained the Tudor Society with amusing anecdotes of his days at the school, his career and his own friendship with Ronald. The alumni team had compiled a slideshow of photographs of Ronald in many roles. Members contributed some of their own memories of

schooldays and entered into stimulating discussion with Nickolas about theatre generally.





Nickolas Grace as Anthony Blanche in 'Brideshead Revisited'

Membership of the King's Tudor Society is open to any OKS,

or friend of the school, who has indicated an intention to make a legacy gift and who expresses an interest to join. Any OKS who would like more information about the Society should contact Liz Gwyther, at the school.

#### NEWS OF OLD KING'S SCHOLARS

#### Mark Chakravarty OKS (1989)

Congratulations to Mark Chakravarty who has recently joined the Board of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

NICE was established in 1999 to end the so-called postcode lottery of healthcare in England and Wales, where treatments that were available depended upon the NHS Health Authority area in which the patient lived. NICE has since acquired an international reputation as a role model for the development of clinical guidelines. Latterly NICE has played an important role in developing best practice guidelines for many issues relating to the COVID pandemic. Since leaving King's, Mark has become a highly respected business leader and physician with 20 years' experience in various high-profile organisations including, Procter & Gamble and the NHS. Most recently he was the Global Head of Communications and Patient Advocacy at Novartis Pharmaceuticals.

We wish him the very best of luck with his new challenge.



Mark attending his school year reunion in 2019

#### Matthew Groome OKS (2014)

We recently learnt that Matthew Groome has won the Civil Engineering Contractors Association North West award for 'Young Professional of the Year!'

After leaving King's, Matthew studied Quantity Surveying & Construction Commercial Management at Nottingham Trent University. Two years full time at the University were followed by a sponsored placement at Laing O'Rourke, where he qualified as a Quantity Surveyor and was involved with million-pound projects, such as the re-development of Terminal 2 at Manchester Airport. Whilst at Laing O'Rourke, Matthew was a finalist for the 'Undergrad of the Year' award.

In January 2020, Matthew moved to COLAS and is now a Senior Quantity Surveyor within the civil engineering sector, working on a £12 million road works project across the North West. Matthew's award nomination was submitted by the COLAS management and governing bodies. They stated that he had "immediately made an impact on our business, embracing and demonstrating our brand values 'Caring, Sharing and Daring.' He is also a Mental Health Ambassador for the company and regularly raises money for MIND – a charity close to his heart.





Matthew (pictured left) thoroughly enjoyed his time at King's and is convinced that the skills he gained and the opportunities he had to participate in so many extracurricular activities, such as

rowing, have helped him progress in his new career.

#### Eleri Reece-Jones OKS (2017)

Eleri Reece-Jones from Rhuallt in Denbighshire, was diagnosed last month with Hodgkin's Lymphoma and decided to share her story on the TikTok social media platform.



It is a "fly-on-the wall" step by step journey from her initial diagnosis, through each of her rounds of treatment and how it affected her. During the intense course of treatment she was wrongly diagnosed with COVID during one stint in hospital when her swab was confused with someone else's, yet remains positive and inspirational. Eleri managed to carry on one of her favourite activities, paddle boarding, during her treatment. She said the response has been "really overwhelming". Eleri, whose brother Owen is in Upper Sixth, has since been interviewed on by various media outlets, including the BBC.

Following King's, Eleri went to Cardiff University as a medical school student and she is currently completing a sports science degree at Bangor University. She has

been using the social media platform to share her cancer journey and raise the issue of access to GP surgeries in the pandemic, and has now had 4.5 million views, 700k likes and she has 40.5k followers.

Headmaster George Hartley commented "I am very sorry about Eleri's diagnosis but amazed at her bravery and drive to raise awareness for her condition and GPs. She is an incredible person of whom we are all very proud"

All at King's wish Eleri their very best wishes for a speedy recovery.

#### **ALUMNI EVENTS 2021**

To book your places for the two CAOKS events below, please use the on-line booking facility if you are able to do so – the links are found below. Tickets may also be booked through the Development Office at the school (Tel: 01244 689494).

# SUMMER GET-TOGETHER – at the school

#### Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July – 2pm to 6pm

Tickets - £6 Adults/£4 Children – to include meal and welcome drink

#### Dress code -Smart Casual

https://www.kingschester.co.uk/summer-alumni-gettogether/

#### ANNUAL DINNER – at the school

#### Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October–6.30pm for 7.30pm

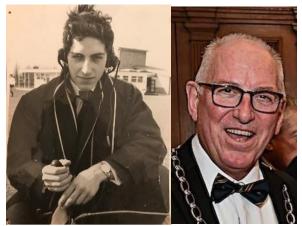
Tickets - £40

Dress code – Black Tie/Formal Wear

https://www.kingschester.co.uk/alumni-dinner/

#### ARMY CADET FORCE MEMORIES 1961 - 1969

David Ling OKS (1969) recalls his days at the school before he commenced a highly successful career in the wine business, based in France, where he has made his home.



David Ling – then and now

David Latham's fascinating article in last Autumn's Newsletter about the 1960 opening ceremony answered a question on my mind since hosting the Queen Mother at our Alsace wine cellars many years ago. Asking about my background, HM said she recalled the King's School inauguration for an "amusing incident" with the boy who gave the welcoming address. At last I know what she meant!

During my 48 years in Alsace, whenever my schooldays are mentioned, our extra-curricular activities often cause eyebrows to be raised, presumably because they would certainly not be permitted with today's "woke culture" and health and safety regulations! Examples include boys dressed as girls for our operatic performances (Pirates of Penzance 1963)... or "blacking-up" with Bisto gravy powder to portray aborigines in a concert sketch (Nevasa school cruise 1967)...

Particular incredulity is reserved for the Army Cadet Force, which is strange as France only abolished compulsory military service fairly recently. Ignoring the usual French gripes about any form of school uniform, remarks include "why join the Army if you are not obliged to" and "wearing military uniform in school is aggressive"..., which is why I always say the ACF was a bit like the Scouts but with guns. Those who remember me will agree I was a hopeless scholar and even worse sportsman, having no competitive instinct. Salvation came as school projectionist, skiving off lessons as required to lug the trusty Bell & Howell and its awkward stand from class to class whenever films had to be shown!

Above all I became a keen member of the School's ACF (then 52nd Detachment, Cheshire Regiment). Thanks to the watchful guidance of self-styled "Hot & Cold" Humphreys, I rose to the dizzy heights of Sergeant-Instructor on Paul Consterdine's watch. The ACF also enabled me to skive off sports yet be useful. A first experiment, manning a field telephone half-way round the annual cross-country course to signal incidents, progressed gradually over the years to the 1969 Chester Regatta: a fully-fledged military operation along the Meadows, with live coverage by radio, phone, launch and Land Rover!

What today's generation may not appreciate, but I belatedly do, was the glorious opportunity to try so many varied and interesting things. One grandfather, a Great War veteran of Palestine, told me never to volunteer for anything but I found it often paid to volunteer for everything. Especially Army courses: driving armoured vehicles, amphibious trucks, bulldozers, landing craft and locomotives on the Army Railway at Longmoor, so I held a train driver's permit before passing my driving test! It was all so easy, given instructions where and when to report, a kit list, a rail warrant, jump on a train and that was that, no endless form-filling, liability insurance or other paperwork that I can recall.

For what they are worth, here are a few random flashbacks:

- admiring (maybe) glances at our uniforms from girls on the bus out to Wrexham Road.
- incongruously having to wear indoor sandals with our battledress in School on Fridays.
- Harry Humphreys fitting the front boot of his rearengined Renault 10 with clips to hold rifles crosswise – just the right width - to take cadets to the indoor rifle range at Chester Castle.
- sloping off to the ACF cadet hut during break time for a cup of Nescafé and Radio Caroline.
- taking a field telephone home to Hawarden on the B10 Crosville bus to finish repairing it but



while fiddling around accidentally setting off the ring tone: such astonished looks from the other passengers, imagine, a phone ringing on a bus, unthinkable in those days!

- arriving back from one camp so smelly (cowpats in the field...) that my father refused to have me in his car, so I was carted off home in the back of one of his company's delivery vans.
- one winter field exercise in Snowdonia... our team (Godfrey Wardle and I) decided to set off early before anyone else. In atrocious weather we struggled to each compass point in deep snow, saw nobody but got safely back to base only to be reprimanded as the exercise had been cancelled after we left, rescue services been alerted but could not find us, and to add insult to injury our "exploit" did not count as nobody had signed us in at the check-points!



The ACF hut in the 1960s - now the site of the music school

- being issued wartime compo rations on a field exercise, so old the carton disintegrated plus the list of what was in each tin. Some got stew, others soap, sweets, cigarettes or chocolate...
- trying to pee into the boiled-dry radiator of our old Scammell lorry on Snaefell (Isle of Man).
- training with DUKWs on a lake in Shropshire, some instructors had trained drivers for the D-Day landings: "you lot are all the same, using brakes on the water instead of your rudder"!

- during the railway course at Longmoor, participating in the film "The Great St. Trinian's Train Robbery" in pigtails and waving hockey sticks. Less funny was pushing a dummy railcar up a sloping track before each take with the camera tilted to simulate running on the flat...
- also, at Longmoor, taking our own little train to go to the village pub in the evening, cool!
- at Longmoor too, a lecture on psychological warfare. One film of turning Communist rebels into heroin addicts in Malaya would probably deter anyone tempted by drug abuse today...
- but not funny at all, a cadet from another unit, son of a detested RSM, going berserk on the ranges at Sealand and running screaming in front of the targets during live firing. Grabbing his ankle, we flipped him below unharmed but I still have a ricochet scar to show for it...
- satisfaction however, 20 years later (the day after a wine dinner at Fallingbostel, Germany, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Tank Regiment, my other grandfather's unit at Cambrai in 1917) deemed qualified to drive the latest Challenger tank and ride in a US Abrams... Thank you ACF!

Maybe the French have a point when they say such "exploits" would not be tolerated today. No doubt too, my contemporaries can add to or correct the above...



David Ling as his school friends do not remember him!

## Oral History Project

Andrew Green OKS (1970) reflects upon his work at the University of Hertfordshire after a distinguished career as a BBC radio presenter and producer



I wasn't really looking for a fourth career move after school teaching, classical artist management and then a long, ongoing stretch in journalism and BBC broadcasting (mainly in the fields of history and music). However, the offer from the University of Hertfordshire was intriguing. Would I care to combine my passion for history (inculcated first, of course, at King's) with the interviewing skills that were my professional stock-intrade...and develop an oral history dimension to the university humanities department's portfolio of student options? I would and I did.

The initial contract for my senior research fellowship was for three years. Yet here I am, thirteen years into the job (now an Hon Fellow) and well past state pension age, still training students, staff and members of the local community in the art/science of recording the memories of people from all walks of life. The burgeoning list of projects under our collective belt gets ever-longer. For example, we've sound-recorded interviews with dozens of those who worked for the world-famous de Havilland aircraft company, upon whose one-time Hatfield site a large part of the university now stands. In partnership with the University of Western Australia we gathered memories of migration to Perth on that sun-scorched Antipodean coastline. There have been projects on the experience of living with disability and on the challenges of retirement (converted to an award-winning Radio 4 documentary). Outside agencies using our expertise have included Waitrose, Watford Football Club and the august Society of Radiographers.

There's never been such an interest in oral history (however described) among both professional and amateur exponents. At one basic level, a family member might decide to note down or sound-record recollections of the Second World War from grandma and/or grandpa. Local history groups set about harvesting community stories told via reminiscence exercises. In a different dimension, complex academic studies and multi-part radio/television documentaries are often rooted in eye-witness material. Intrinsically fascinating stuff in most cases, but whether consciously or sub-consciously, the underlying impulse driving practitioners of any sensitivity is the reality that if memories aren't captured in some form, they will simply disappear. That's mortality — the most bluntly obvious of realities...and yet the average undergraduate around the age of 20 doesn't find it easy to fully grasp what a fragile commodity human memory is. Older tends to be wiser in that regard.

So that's one challenge for me — to embed an aesthetic sense in students' minds which embraces that fragility. Another is to get across the apparently simplistic yet significance-laden mantra that 'Everyone Has A Story To Tell'. It's a truism borne out in our well over a thousand interviews with people from all manner of backgrounds — abundantly demonstrating for one thing that socalled 'ordinary people' don't exist. Learning basic skills interviewing skills — especially the ability to *really* listen and then react to your subject's testimony — enables you to *help* individuals tell their stories, to develop these into richer and more colourful narratives. Time and again, the process brings to the surface memories which might not otherwise have ever been triggered.

The Covid crisis nonetheless forced a major re-think of just whose stories should be collected. Even with Zoom available, it proved impossible to continue with our main 2020 project. However, a replacement exercise was staring us in the face. The first lockdown in March last year offered oral history team members the opportunity to chronicle this extraordinary passage of events. Indeed, as a memory-focused operation we had a *responsibility* to capture the Coronavirus story as it unfolded, with the emphasis firmly on the individual experience. Some team members have faithfully kept

# Features

audio diaries across the past year and more. Others have provided reflections on key stages/turning-points in the crisis.

Recorded (and archived) training interviews between team members have been Covid-themed - for example, examining objects which have carried a special significance in people's lives as these daunting events have unfolded. To mark the first anniversary of the initial lockdown, team members enumerated both the negative and positive changes the crisis had brought to their everyday existence. Moving, enlightening, evocative stuff. In addition, thanks to the work of a veritable army of dedicated snappers, a substantial collection of Covid-related photographs has steadily built up, recounting this haunting collective story in a multitude of visual ways - and enabling the creation of a string of colourful video mixes of images and testimony. All in all, an archive we can rest assured will be of interest to researchers, way into the distant future.

The way in which the Covid crisis has turned us in on our own resources has re-emphasised that oral history should never be seen as some ivory tower pursuit. The approaches employed are life-skills. We could all ask better questions of ourselves in many areas of our lives...and listen more attentively to the answers that emerge. Nothing pleases me more than when students occasionally let slip that learning to interview has changed them as people, has taken them out of the bubble of their own consciousness and brought a new awareness of the reality of other lives. It's a deeply satisfying and engaging activity.

So...if any OKS (of whatever age!) would like a pointer or two in how to explore this fascinating area of interest, you have only to ask.

#### Andrew Green OKS (1970)

#### Questions, Questions...

Andrew welcomes all OKS to his Zoom-based interview series, 'Questions, Questions...'. This features oral historians, those who weave magic with eye-witness testimony in their work...and also people in the public eye whose careers have benefited from asking the right questions at the right time. Guests in this last category have included tv/radio presenter Chris Tarrant, best-selling novelist Sarah Harrison, England cricket captain Mike Gatting, veteran Guardian journalist Polly Toynbee and tv weatherman John Hammond. These are privately run, invitation-only occasions, usually on Fridays at 5pm. Contact Andrew gardengreen333@yahoo.co.uk for news of forthcoming interviews...and an invitation to any you wish.

#### The King's School in the 1940s and 1950s Arnold House in Wartime – Michael Ellis adds to the story

Although I was there the three years before him (i.e. 1942-45) my memories of Arnold House are almost exactly the same as Mike Clutterbuck's (*A Distant Pom Recalls, CAOKS News, Dec 2020*). The teachers, the room layout and uniform were exactly the same, but I'd like to add some war related differences.

At the top end of the sports field was a rather dank air raid shelter into which we descended when the air raid warning siren went off. Air raid rations were sometimes handed out, either nasty tasting Horlicks milk tablets or occasionally the popular barley sugar sticks. Daylight raids on Chester had ceased by 1942 and so rather than presaging danger, these excursions became a welcome break from lessons.

While I can't remember what the arrangements for lunch were, I do recall a few of us would sometimes go to a "British Restaurant" (one of the nationwide cafeterias intended for war workers) in a church hall in Upper Northgate Street;



there one could have "Soup and pudding" for 4 pence. You had to stuff your cap in your pocket as we weren't supposed to go there.

The day before 8 May 1945, everyone seemed to know that the war against Germany was about to end, and expected the announcement to be made that day. My parents said I needn't go to school, but I was a keen type (some would say a swot!) and got on my bike (my first 'two-wheeler') and cycled off on a warm, sunny morning through a strangely quiet town to school. The door was closed and locked. After a little while, a couple of other lads arrived and we mooched about in the playground for half an hour or so, until Mr Broome arrived and told us to go home and come in the next day. The following day was a normal school day, with no acknowledgment of the great event from our stern teachers.

Looking back, I feel our teachers, Miss Lester Smith, Mrs Bentley and Mr Broome, and indeed all adults, did their best to protect children from the realities and deprivations of the war. Arnold House continued, as it did later in Mike Clutterbuck's time and probably as it had done before 1939, to provide stability and preparation for later life.

Michael 'Mick' Ellis OKS (1952)

#### The Dinner Hour 1948-56 – More Recollections from Mike Clutterbuck (OKS 1956)

In my first year at the Senior School, lunch was provided to a number of local schools in a large church hall somewhere just behind the Town Hall. Once, the School Sergeant, Mr Hankinson, in charge of the lunch finances, kept us all in to discover which of us had paid with a low value French franc instead of the obligatory shilling. The procedure began when we all filed in, seized a plate from the plate stacks and passed the servers who put the appropriate amounts on our plates. I have no strong recollection of the flavours but I do remember the jam tart we were supplied with for dessert. This consisted of a rock-hard pastry base cut into about two-inch squares with a smear of solidified jam on top. Hardly anyone ate theirs as we had a better use for them: these flat squares were taken outside and made brilliant missiles. You could hurl them like skimming flat stones across water.

The following year, the school had organised its own private lunch arrangements provided for all those who needed it (this meant most of us) at the Bluecoat Hospital building in Northgate Street. There were two sittings, one at 12.20 and the second at 1pm. We queued up in the front courtyard while the prefects marshalled us and let us in to our accustomed places on the tables. There were nine boys to a table, four sitting along each side bench plus the table monitor (a senior boy) at the end whose job was to maintain order, check that our portions were fair and that we were well behaved. He saw to it that knives, forks and spoons were collected and then restricted to their legal use. There were always two courses, and as soon as the first one (meat and two veg) was ready for collection and the Latin grace was spoken by the teacher on duty, the monitor directed one or two of us to collect the various bowls from the kitchen; he then supervised the allocation of food to the plates. The food, prepared under the strict direction of the portly Mrs Griffiths, was nutritious and occasionally even tasty (although we criticised it on principle). For the table monitors mushy peas were a discipline problem: peas could have their mush licked off and could, with a surreptitious flick with a finger, be fired in any direction.

While the food was being consumed, the duty teacher would make an occasional stroll around the room checking (and probably privately wincing at) our eating habits. Any other teachers could, if they wished, partake of a free meal on the understanding that they too were regarded as on duty. Authority then, in the guise of teachers and prefects, sat at the transverse table at the head of the room. Our table manners more closely related to speed rather than elegance, yet indigestion never seemed to be a problem in spite of the hurry to finish quickly and enjoy the freedom for the rest of the dinner hour. Once the tables were cleared of the debris and wiped down, we were dismissed and went out to explore the city centre with its multitude of little passages and alleyways, especially down Watergate Street, normally bereft of traffic. In those distant days, it was very rare to see a car in the street. On the way back to school, one could stop at the little bakery behind the Town Hall and purchase a penny bun, a bun with icing on for a penny ha'penny, or if you had wealthy parents, a cream bun for tuppence ha'penny. But woe betide any careless boy who tried to eat his bun in the street. This was a detention matter if caught; you had to wait until you were back inside the school playground next to the Abbey Green.

## Bishop Thomas Wilson OKS (circa 1680)



Thomas Wilson was born in Burton and Ness in the Wirral in December 1663. The family home still stands in the middle of this beautiful village and was recently up for sale as Bishop Wilson's Cottage. It is a Grade II listed building, comprising a cottage, dairy and cheese room, now a house with an attached outbuilding dating from the early 17th century and with 19th and 20th century alterations. It is recorded as the birthplace and residence of Thomas Wilson, later Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man (consecrated 1697) and founder of the village school, now known as The Old School.

Having studied at the King's School Chester, he went on to read medicine at Trinity College, Dublin, destined to become a physician. Instead, he was ordained deacon in Kildare Cathedral and priest in Chester Cathedral in October 1689, the year after the Glorious Revolution. In 1694 the Lord of Mann, William Stanley the Earl of Derby, appointed him to be his personal chaplain and tutor to the earl's son. In 1697 Wilson reluctantly accepted promotion to the vacant bishopric of Sodor and Man, at the urging of Lord Derby, to what was perhaps the remotest, least well run, and most poorly endowed of the dioceses of the Church of England. Nevertheless, he turned down an extra living in Yorkshire, having set his face against pluralities and non-residence.

When he came to the Isle of Man, he found the buildings of the diocese in a ruinous condition. So, a rebuilding project was one of his first acts; he eventually rebuilt most of the churches of the diocese along with establishing public libraries, partially inspired by his interest in the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). Founded in 1698 by Thomas Bray, this society had education as a core part of its mission. One of the key priorities for Bray and his friends was to build libraries in market towns. In its first two hundred years, the Society founded many charity schools for poor children in the seven to 11 age group. It is from these schools that the modern concept of primary and secondary education has grown.

Bishop Wilson was a reforming spirit. He oversaw the passing in the Tynwald (the Manx Parliament) of the Act of Settlement 1704 that provided tenants with better property rights to sell and pass on their lands. He worked hard to restore ecclesiastical discipline on the island after an annual synod that same year, although in this respect he clashed with the civil authorities, partly because of the reduction of revenue from Wilson mitigating fines in the spiritual court he controlled and partly by subjecting all citizens to the rigours of the church courts in matters of morality. At one stage he was imprisoned in Castle Rushen gaol during which time his health suffered.

Occasionally he left the island, when he was met by great crowds who admired his reputation for spiritual independence as an honest and caring Bishop (unlike many of his contemporaries!). He met General James Edward Oglethorpe, the founder of the colony of Georgia, in London. Because of that meeting, he became interested in foreign missions as an early advocate of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG).

Having been made Bishop at the age of 36, one would have expected him to seek greater preferment. But he declined the offer of the much wealthier see of Exeter choosing to stay on the island till his death in March 1755 at the age of 92, having been a Bishop for nearly 58 years. His personal piety expressed itself in energetic charitable activity such as the creation of schools and the protection of his flock from the demands of the civic authorities. As a result, he was much loved; it is said that his funeral was attended by nearly the whole adult population of the Isle of Man.

Though not a household name in the annals of the Church of England, he was a shining example in the 18<sup>th</sup> century of and episcopal pastoral concern and a paternalistic advocacy of his flock which his fellow bishops rarely displayed.

#### Tim Macquiban OKS (1970)

## Howard Crawford OKS (1965)

Howard Campbell Crawford, son of Robert and Agnes Crawford, died on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2 aged 72. He lived in the Ilkley area and worked in Information Technology.

## Brian Crowe OKS (1959)



Alderman Brian Crowe passed away suddenly after an accident on the farm on 11<sup>th</sup> January aged 76. Brian (Jim) attended King's from 1953-1959 and was President of CAOKS in 1987-8.

Whilst at King's, Brian developed a passion for the Army Cadets and joined the Territorial Army after school followed by the Parachute Regiment. Brian left the Paras in his twenties to take over the family farm in Mollington, Cheshire alongside his wife Rosie. Brian and Rosie have three children: Clive, Camilla and Claudia; And six grandchildren. Brian's eldest, Clive, followed in his footsteps and attended King's from 1982-92.

Brian's devotion to his local community saw him serve on the Mollington Parish Council for 40 years. He was elected to the Chester City Council in 1993 and served as Lord Mayor of Chester in 2002-3. In their capacity as Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, Brian and Rosie attended a record number of events during their tenure. Brian even did a charity skydive and slept outside on a pavement in Chester to help raise awareness for a local homeless charity – both firsts for a Lord Mayor and a testament to his commitment to his role. From there he went on to be the first chairman of the new Cheshire West and Chester Council in 2008, spending 11 years contributing to the Council as a member of many committees including Licensing, Fire Board, Corporate Parenting, Planning, Scrutiny, Community Governance and City of Chester Charter Trustees. Brian was also Leader of the Chester Conservative Association twice and a feared political opponent - that said, he had friends in all parties.

Upon his retirement in 2019, Brian's former colleagues elected him an Honorary Alderman of the Borough of Cheshire West & Chester in recognition for his long, distinguished record of service alongside which he was awarded an Honorary Master's Degree from the University of Chester in 2019.

Aside from his political ambitions, Brian enjoyed being a Freeman of the City of Chester and was an active member of the Saddlers & Couriers Company. He was a Freemason, a member of the Pitt Club and continued on the Parish Council and Backford Charities after retirement.

Outside of work, Brian loved spending time with the family at their holiday home in Abersoch, North Wales. An avid sports fan, he enjoyed nothing more than playing football and cricket with his grandchildren in the garden, or on the beach in Abersoch. He supported Liverpool FC and never missed a game; a former season ticket holder who watched Liverpool win European Cups in Rome in '77 and in Paris in '81. Many remember him for his support from the sidelines watching school teams play football and cricket whilst Clive was at school.

Over the years, Brian has had many hobbies including rally driving, golfing, fishing and more recently beekeeping. Brian enjoyed playing snooker at home and at the City Club, going to Chester Races and watching Chester Jets play basketball.

The family were overwhelmed by the hundreds of people, friends and local residents, who lined the country lanes of Mollington to pay their respects to him on his way to his funeral. A local paper paid tribute to Brian calling him 'a giant of the community'.

#### **Clive Crowe**

## Malcolm Donaghy OKS (1955)

Dr Malcolm Charles Donaghy who attended the school from 1947 to 1955, died on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 at the age of 83. He lived in Cheadle Hulme and had practised medicine in that area. He is survived by his widow, Judith. They had four sons, Nick, Michael and the late Kevin and Jonathan.

## Mark Hawes OKS (1973)

Mark Hawes died on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020, aged 66, following a battle with bowel cancer involving major surgery and chemotherapy.

Mark was born on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1954 and entered the senior school in 1966. He was a member of Shepherd's house and Captain of Rowing in his final year, 1972-3. On leaving school he took a degree in pharmacy in London and completed a pre-registration year at Greenwich Hospital developing ward pharmacy.

For over 30 years he worked for a major American pharmaceutical company, initially engaged in research, receiving the RP Scherer Award for outstanding research. An interest in computing led to him being offered a post in managing model laboratory computing systems in which he became an acknowledged expert. Building a company-wide laboratory information management system led to regular trips to the USA and Europe.

After work on IT projects Mark returned to research and he joined various teams to develop robotics, his knowledge of instrument control and programming being crucial. His final project for the company saw him creating capabilities for scientists working on Alzheimer's disease.

Following redundancy in 2010 he became involved in a number of IT projects and digital photography, making many new friends who valued his positivity, pragmatism and sense of humour.

Mark had a long and happy marriage to Gil, and also leaves a daughter and granddaughter.

## Michael Hoddinott OKS (1941)

Michael Henry Owen Hoddinott has died at the age of ninety-five years old. He was a chorister at Chester

Cathedral in the 1930s, moving to The King's School in 1939 for his higher education.

After spending the war years in India in the RAF, he returned to Chester to work as a chemist at The Associated Lead Works. It was here that he first met his wife, Mair, whom he married in 1949.



Throughout a long and happy life, he took a very keen interest in all aspects of life in Chester, campaigning for cycle ways to be developed, the city's trees and green areas to be protected and for Chester's great heritage to be guarded for future generations to enjoy. His daughter Gilly comments: "He was always writing a letter to somebody!"

## Michael Jessop OKS (1973)



Michael Jessop, former President of the Association and a long-serving Governor of the King's School, died on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021, having suffered a heart attack shortly before Christmas.

Peter Michael Hubert Jessop was born on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1953. He entered the Junior School in 1962, and the Senior School with a County free place in 1965.

Always strong academically, Michael was active in many aspects of school life. His sport was rowing, his slight stature making him an ideal cox. His interest in rowing continued at university and he attended Henley Royal Regatta as a member of the Stewards' Enclosure.

Michael took part in many music and drama events at school. He became Leader of the Choir and Secretary of the Operatic Society, performing the important role of Usher in a production of "Trial by Jury" by Gilbert and Sullivan. He played the title role in the 1972 school play, "Julius Caesar", and was Secretary of the Literary and Debating Society. Remembered as a conscientious prefect, he left the school in 1973 to study law at Durham University.

On leaving university he qualified as a solicitor, articled at the well-known Chester firm of Walker Smith and Way, becoming a partner. He took early retirement from practice, acted as an estate agent for a time and then operated a grocery business in Tarvin where he lived, later opening a restaurant (Jessop's) above the premises.

Michael became an enthusiastic attender at CAOKS events and was elected President of the Association in 1992. During his presidency he used the President's Evening to hold a curry supper and introduced a supper visit to Francs restaurant in Chester. His presidency coincided with Joe Marsh (known to generations of King's pupils as "Jammy") taking on the role of editor of the newsletter and re-invigorating it.

It was customary at that time for the President of the Association to be invited to attend Governors' meetings during his term of office, and as a result of his enthusiastic interest in all aspects of school affairs Michael was invited to continue as a full Governor of the King's School, a role which he carried out with distinction for a quarter of a century. He was proud to have been involved in the appointment of three headmasters (Turvey, Ramsey and Hartley), and made a significant contribution to the governance and life of the school in many ways. He was a founder member of the King's School Tudor Society comprising those who have promised bequests to the school, and a rose is planted in his name in the rose garden.

Michael was what is sometimes called a polymath. He had a wide range of interests. He was a bon viveur, a generous host and convivial companion. He was a regular at Chester Races, a member of the Chester Claret Club and the Cheshire Pitt Club. For many years he was a member of the Chester Bach Singers, where his excellent tenor voice was a considerable asset. He had a considerable knowledge of the history of Chester. Always immaculately dressed, Michael was a complex and private person, witty with a great sense of humour, but not everyone found him to be easy. For many, though, he was the most entertaining of companions. He held strong opinions which he never concealed and he could be blunt and acerbic. He was openly gay. His political views were Conservative but he was out of sympathy with current fashion, being very pro-Europe with no time for the populist policies of the present government which he did not regard as Conservative.

Michael lived in a beautiful house and garden in Tarvin, with a menagerie of various animals, and a particular love of dogs, sometimes referred to as his children. Sadly, Michael's later life was dogged by ill-health which he bore with courage and fortitude. He suffered 3 strokes, and prostate cancer from which he recovered, driving himself to Clatterbridge Hospital for regular treatment.

Michael Jessop was one of the school's greatest supporters for which he deserves to be remembered with gratitude for generations. He was an interesting character who will be missed by many, particularly the good friends whose lives have been touched by him.

## Andrew Nixon OKS (1981)

Andrew Nixon, born 20<sup>th</sup> April 1963, died on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021, aged 57. He was a pupil at the King's School from 1971 to 1981.

## Ronald Pickup OKS (1959)



The distinguished actor, Ronald Pickup, died peacefully on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021, aged 80, surrounded by his family, after a long illness.

Ronald Alfred Pickup was born on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1940 in Chester, the son of Eric and Daisy Pickup. Eric Pickup was a lecturer in English and French at what was then the Diocesan Training College for Teachers, which became part of the University of Chester. The family lived in Blacon. Ronald Pickup was a pupil at the King's School from 1950 to 1959. His younger brother, David, also attended the school.

At school Ronald Pickup, known to his friends as Ronnie, later as Ron, displayed an exceptional acting talent, taking part in many of the drama productions in the 1950s. In July 1954, at the age of 14, he was in the cast of "Murder in the Cathedral" by T.S. Eliot as one of the chorus of Women of Canterbury, and at this early stage in his acting career he made his mark. In the first of several reviews of plays in which Ronald participated at school, Mr J. D. M. Lyons, remembered by many generations of OKS as Head of History and conductor of the Operatic Society, wrote:

'The speaking of the verse was very good. In a group such as a chorus there is likely to be some uneven speaking, but in general the tone and pace were excellent. Pickup was noteworthy for his thoughtful expression.'



The cast of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"

In February 1956 Ronald was Oberon in Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream". Of his performance David Lyons wrote in the school magazine:

'I thought the woodland scenes particularly good – Pickup as Oberon showed himself as a natural actor (in the best sense of the words); it was quite remarkable how he held the stage, his youthfulness a nice touch, when one recalls so many Oberon's over-majestic and avuncular.'

In November of the same year the school put on "Richard of Bordeaux" by Gordon Daviot, a pseudonym of Elizabeth Mackintosh, better known by another of her pen names, Josephine Tey, with Ronald in the title role as Richard II. Again, David Lyons wrote a glowing review for the school magazine:

'This was, I think, the best production we have had in recent years. It is, of course, a star actor's play, and it showed Pickup's range and sensitivity very well. All the petulance, the charm and the sad dignity of Richard were there, and the flickering changes of mood which make Richard so interesting as a character study.'



"Richard of Bordeaux"

It must have come as no surprise that Pickup's final major role at the school was as Hamlet in November 1957. This was an outstanding performance, remembered by many, which passed into legend. "Tec" Evetts spoke of his admiration for his pupil, and this performance in particular, on many occasions. David Lyons's review commenced:

'It is not often that a school can think of performing "Hamlet". In many ways it was a very good choice: the company has in R. A. Pickup an actor of quite exceptional talent with the right personality and sensibility for the principal part, and the production could justify itself on these grounds alone...Pickup gave us a youthful Hamlet, petulant and extrovert, with occasional glimpses of the brooding inner life...His speaking in a whole series of wonderful scenes was most beautiful, well-pointed and well-timed, qualities not so common on any stage today. It was, in fact, a most memorable occasion.'

On leaving school Ronald read English at Leeds University, and then trained for the stage at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), graduating from there in 1964, awarded the annual Bancroft Silver Medal. It was whilst studying at RADA that he met his wife, Lans Traverse, a fellow student, and married her in the summer of 1964.

It was in 1964 that he received his first career break in an early episode of Doctor Who, playing a physician at the time of the French Revolution into the middle of

which the time lord (the first Doctor, played by William Hartnell) had landed. One of his last screen parts was in a horror film, "End of Term", acting alongside the fifth Doctor Who, Peter Davison.

Between these parts, Ronald Pickup accrued more than 150 television and film appearances in a career lasting over half a century. The television credits include roles in many landmark series such as Fortunes of War with Kenneth Branagh, Jekyll and Hyde with Michael Caine, The Chronicles of Narnia (as the voice of Aslan), Hornblower, Foyle's War, Midsomer Murders, Inspector Morse, Doc Martin, Downton Abbey and The Crown in which he played the Archbishop of Canterbury. He also starred in a four-part mini-series "The Dragon's Opponent," portraying World War II bomb disposal expert Charles "Mad Jack" Howard, 20<sup>th</sup> Earl of Suffolk.

Ronald Pickup appeared in numerous films, including "The Day of the Jackal" (1973) as the passport forger who ended up dead in a trunk. He was the aging lothario, Norman Cousins, in "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" (2011) and its 2015 sequel. He played the composer Stravinski in the 1980 film "Nijinski", and many other historical characters during his career, including Prince John, Verdi, Nietzsche, Einstein and George Orwell. His most recent films were "Darkest Hour" (2017) in which he portrayed Neville Chamberlain, and "The Happy Prince" (2018) - about the last days of Oscar Wilde - as the judge.

Throughout his distinguished acting career Ronald Pickup amassed numerous accolades for his stage performances. In the 1960s he was one of the actors who performed regularly at the National Theatre at the Old Vic under Laurence Olivier. He is particularly remembered as Rosalind in the all-male production of "As You Like It" (1967), and for the 1971 production of Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night" in which he was the tubercular younger son of James Tyrone, played by Laurence Olivier. After the National Theatre moved to its home on the South Bank he played Cassius to John Gielgud's Julius Caesar (1977).

At the National Theatre Ronald played the role of Tusenbach in Olivier's staging of Anton Chekhov's play "Three Sisters". This was followed by brilliant performances in two further Chekhov plays in the 1980s - Astrov in "Uncle Vanya" and Gayev in "The Cherry Orchard".

Ronald's theatre roles were wide-ranging, one of the most acclaimed performances being his portrayal of Lucky in Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" (2009) also starring Simon Callow, Ian McKellen and Patrick Stewart, presented in London and on tour. Ronald's last stage appearance was as Mazzini Dunn in Shaw's "Heartbreak House" alongside Derek Jacobi at the Chichester Festival Theatre in 2012.



#### Ronald Pickup with the King's School cast of "Waiting for Godot"

Ronald Pickup was a loyal supporter of the King's School and he returned to visit on many occasions. He was always very encouraging and supportive towards the pupils involved in the productions he attended, discussing the performances with the cast and others involved and always happy to be photographed with them. His attendance at these events was much appreciated by all, and the knowledge that he was in the audience thrilled the performers.

In 2011 he opened the Vanbrugh Theatre, and in 2016 he took part in the school's 475<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events and was given a King's School Chester Leading Light Award, presented by his fellow OKS actor, Nickolas Grace.

In addition, Ronald attended other events at the King's School and his company at these was greatly enjoyed by those who were present. He was a modest man who had the rare ability for one so famous of making whoever he was speaking to feel important. His interest in the arts was not confined to the stage and screen. He also enjoyed music and painting. One OKS recalls seeing him on several occasions in the audience at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

He is survived by his widow, Lans, their marriage lasting 56 years, son, Simon, and daughter, Rachel, also an actor who appeared with her father in an episode of "Midsomer Murders" and a film written and directed by Simon Pickup, "Schadenfreude".

#### Some tributes and reminiscences

Tributes have been received from many Old King's Scholars and others associated with the school including the following:-

The Headmaster: Ron was a steadfast supporter of King's drama and always came up on the train from London for our major productions, staying in the Queen Hotel where we'd meet for a pint or bite to eat beforehand. He was incredibly good company and whilst instinctively modest about his career, would invariably open up with a glint in his eye after a drink or two and share some wonderful anecdotes. Notable highlights included his fascinating recollection of the various Chekhov parts he played over a London lunch together last year (which inspired me to re-read his three great plays) and a rather poignant account of the fact Robert De Niro had to be hidden away and protected by his bodyguards when offset during the filming of Roland Joffe's masterpiece "The Mission" in Columbia. I last spoke to Ron when he rang me last summer, completely out of the blue, to apologise for not having made it up for our production of "The Sound of Music" in February. It was a typically thoughtful act from a person of impeccable manners who was fiercely loyal to the school. I only knew Ron for a few years but he had become a friend, and I shall miss him.

**Dr Ann Marie McMahon:** During my time at King's the old assembly hall became the Vanbrugh Theatre, and Ron was, not surprisingly, called upon to perform the official opening. The new theatre was christened that evening by a sort of soiree involving a range of student musical and dramatic performances. No mingling with the VIPs for me on that occasion, however, as I spent the evening, by no means for the first time, backstage.

Thereafter, my personal memories of Ron centre on his immense kindness in coming to see productions I directed of 'The Crucible' and 'Nicholas Nickleby'. On both occasions he was supremely encouraging of the students, and I shall always remember, in particular, how he sat on the floor with the cast and crew after 'The Crucible' and spoke to them simply as fellow makers of theatre. Attentive to all, Ron was exceptionally attuned to the student who had just played the leading role, John Proctor. The lad in question was, quite literally, trembling with the emotion of the role - a beast of a role, indeed - but Ron understood that and was able to reach out to him from his own great experience and make a contact which that young man will never forget.



## Ronald Pickup with the cast of the King's School production of 'The Crucible'

It was at Ron's suggestion that, straight after 'The Crucible', I nipped in quickly and obtained the performing rights for a production of 'Oh! What a Lovely War' - subsequently much in demand, as the centenary of the start of World War I was imminent. This was then the first production at King's under Clare Howdon, when Drama became a recognised subject on the curriculum. 'Nicholas Nickleby', based on the RSC's 1980 adaptation, was my swansong after many plays and musicals at King's, and Ron was both typically warm in his praise of the students - who had stepped up to a very demanding piece - and very generous to me personally. Perhaps this moment sums up my encounters with Ron: towards the end of his kind words I joined him on stage, and as he finished speaking I made to shake his hand, only to see him shake his head and open his arms for a great bear hug. A lovely man, indeed!

John Tremlett OKS (1967): Up to the age of seven I lived in Blacon, my cousin lived next door and the Pickups next door to her. Ronnie taught my sister and me to 'sledge' down the hill behind our houses on tea trays. Ronnie and his brother had a rope hanging from a tree branch, with a large knot at the bottom, between two hen houses. We would climb onto one and then jump for the rope, hoping to swing to the next hen house. I managed to knock myself out when I missed the rope first time. Ronnie got in a lot of trouble for that! I remember that he used to mow the lawns with his father's Atco Roller lawnmower (ride-on) steering with his feet whilst reading. He sent a Christmas Card to my parents for over 40 years after we left Blacon. A wonderful person as well as a great actor.

Alan Vallance OKS (1983) Ex-President of CAOKS: At the Cathedral Service to mark the 475<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the school, I sat next to Ron and Nickolas Grace waiting to take our turns at the lectern for the readings. Very down to earth, charming, friendly and, in spite of his illustrious career on stage and screen, Ron turned out to be just as nervous as the rest of us before getting up in front of maybe a thousand people in Chester Cathedral. I am truly honoured to have followed in his footsteps with a Leading Light Award in 2019. A great man, and wonderful to be able to remember my time with him whenever I see him on film and TV in future.

Our revels now are ended. These our actors, As I foretold you, were all spirits and Are melted into air, into thin air: And, like the baseless fabric of this vision, The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe itself, Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff As dreams are made on, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep. *William Shakespeare From The Tempest, Act 4 Scene 1* 





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