

News and Views Extra

August 2020

Looking back.....and forwards



It's likely that we've all been doing a good bit of both over the past months, a healthy balance of taking stock, and then getting on with what comes next. Most of us have probably had much more time to our own thoughts than normal, and maybe found that some of the enforced changes have brought things we actually want to continue - at the same time as longing for the people and things we're missing.

This betwixt and between bit of late summer seemed a good point to share some of the news and stories you have been sending, as well as looking forwards to themes we could explore in future editions. I often tell friends that I work on Jane Austen time since giving up my car nearly ten years ago, and that's what the Old Wealdens News and Views, both emailed and posted, feels like too. We ask questions, give opinions, tell stories; and people respond in their own good time, as the memories and ideas emerge.

So, with a look back to schooldays first, we're going to start with a bit of 'Boys' Own' heroics - could easily have been a girl, obviously, but in this case, it wasn't.

Welcome to new member Peter Scott (1956):

Heading for home, down that hill

I cycled to school, which was not without its mishaps. At that point I had not become the keen cyclist that I became later and was not very careful about maintaining my bike. My rear brake cable had failed. One day I set off down the hill from the roundabout and put on my front brake. There was a jolt and that cable failed as well.

If you remember the hill, it was long and steep and finished in Harrow Weald shopping centre which had quite a few cars even then. On the left there was a pavement and a wide verge with shrubs. I had to make an instant decision, because I was speeding up rapidly. I ruled out hitting the high street at some phenomenal speed.

So, shrubs it was then. I leaped off my bike which careered on. My legs were going like the pistons in a formula one engine. I managed to steer left and smashed into some very dense shrubbery which brought me to a stop. I was completely unharmed as was my bike, which was a fair way down the road.

Ed. Peter still does fun things with high speed machines that benefit from regular maintenance, and has an invitation to you if you fancy joining him.....



Model aircraft flying

Peter Scott 1956

Pictured above are turbine powered scale models of the English Electric Lightning and the Avro Vulcan. They are impressive (they're not mine), and even more when flying with their jets screaming. They are inspected by a representative from the Large Model Association as they are designed and built, then given an airworthiness certificate by the Civil Aviation Authority. The certificate for the Vulcan has now run out and it can't fly any more. As an introduction to the sport I thought examples of the biggest and smallest and the most aerobatic would best show the variety. It is two of my own models that feature in the next two photos.



My aerobatic scale model of a Goldwing Slick 540, the fullsize version of which is flown in the Red Bull city competitions.

You might be thinking 'boys with toys' and of course you would be right. Once over that hurdle, though, I want to give you the flavour of the hobby and perhaps even attract some of you to try it. Girls are getting involved I am pleased to say, many through competitions for schools run by the governing body the British Model Flying Association (BMFA), so although traditionally it has been a male hobby that is changing. One of my grand-daughters is waiting to learn to fly when Covid allows.

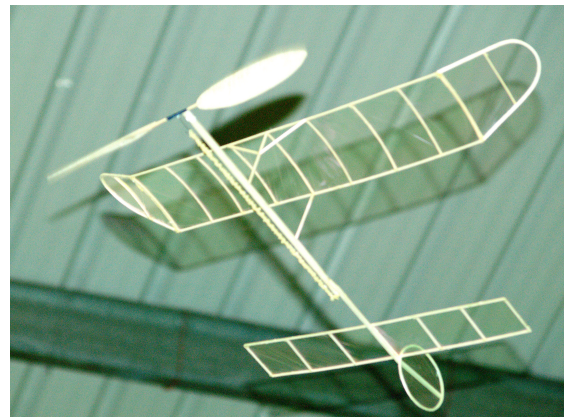
It is a creative and highly skilled activity, done mostly outdoors in beautiful countryside.

The skills are in design and building and the manual discipline of flying the models through radio control. Some flyers build their own models in the traditional way from balsa and ply. Others, who want to spend all their time flying, buy ready made. The technology is constantly changing so there is also the intellectual challenge of keeping up to date. It is a hobby you can't bang your head on. There is always something new to learn and of course new people to meet.

Above all there is the joy of seeing an aeroplane moving around the sky under your control. Flying is dealing with all the elements of nature. There is always gravity trying to smash your model into the ground if you make a mistake. There is the force of the motor and the air, and the warm upcurrents called thermals, that you use to stay aloft. We are often accompanied by birds – gulls, buzzards, kestrels and kites. Sometimes they show us where the thermals are by circling. Sometimes they chase us around the skies. Mostly they are simply enjoying themselves and so are we.

My ultralight indoor model
made of balsa and
covered in mylar film
half a micron thick.

This is not radio controlled of
course.



This hopefully gives you a sense of the breadth of the hobby. We fly models of all sizes from indoor rubber powered models weighing as little as a gram to giant scale models powered by gas turbine engines. We fly gliders that can stay in the air for hours off windy slopes or a tow line, aerobatic models that can do things that full-size aircraft can't and immaculate scale models that you can't tell from the real thing.

Whilst I was at HWGS I was a member of Kenton Model Aircraft Club, along with several friends at the school. We flew at Northwick Park, now lost as an open space I believe. We went to the National Championships held over three days in Lincolnshire and to other sites, including Chobham Common, when we could persuade a parent to take us.

So, that is a taster but to see more go to [my website at www.peterscott.website/flying](http://www.peterscott.website/flying). If you look at [my club's website at https://northreppsmfc.com/](https://northreppsmfc.com/) and click The Club/Our Field you will see the delightful airfield I mostly fly at, near Cromer in North Norfolk. NB It is a live camera so there is no point in looking when it is dark!

Have I tempted you? There will be a BMFA club near you, wherever you live. Go to <https://bmfa.org/>, click the menu icon and Info/Find a club. Many clubs will offer you training to get you started, as we do at Northrepps. I have recently trained a new member in his eighties who has never flown before and he is sorry he didn't start sooner. He has become an excellent pilot. We all mostly only regret the things we didn't do.

And another invitation:

It is a delight to report that in April, [Pamela Gilmour](#), one of our [1966 members](#), started a dedicated [Facebook group for Old Wealdens](#), and how timely it was, just as we were having to keep our actual distance from each other, but still wanting to keep close! The group is growing fast, and well worth a virtual visit :) [Pamela writes:](#)



I think of Facebook like Marmite - in other words you either love it or you hate it! In my case I love it and while I do appreciate that there is some less than desirable stuff on there, I also find it excellent in communicating with friends and sharing their experiences etc. What I have particularly found so rewarding is tracking down people from my youth - which brings me to my reason for sharing this with you.

Facebook has some amazing groups linked to areas where you live, and last year I joined numerous Harrow groups and located so many people who had a wonderful time 'talking' to long lost friends. I posted many things about my primary school – Bridge School - including photos, and so was asked to create a group for the school, which I did.

During this dreadful lockdown I did find myself on Facebook more often than usual and one day was looking on the Harrow Weald County Grammar School page. I had posted on it many years ago but I found it hard to locate various things people had put on so I decided maybe a new group was needed. I discovered that the old site was a 'page' and it would be a lot better to create a 'group' which is what I did on 27th April. Within 3 days we had 71 members and on writing this (June) we have 127. I was truly overwhelmed by the response and there is not a week that goes past without new members requesting to join.

Going by the many postings on the group I am confident that it has been a success. People have dug out photos, school reports, dance drama programmes, uniform, and so much more. One of the most common beginnings to a posting is 'Does anyone remember...' which often results in 50+ comments from people. I initially posted the large school photo of 1969 and ended up splitting it up into 5 parts and reposting it so it was easier to find yourself in the picture! Having been to a few reunions I was able to post photos I'd taken of the school buildings which those who had moved away had never seen and which prompted endless conversations. One member posted a photo of 1972 which had 110 comments. I am sure people were prompted to go up to their lofts and dig out so many pieces of interest.

There was one comment asking 'How many OWs have a Wikipedia entry?' which made us all put our thinking caps on. The results? Michael Rosen, Dudley Bright, Merlyn Rees, Ken Follett and a few more. Another popular subject was remembering members of staff - Mrs Young, Miss White, Mrs Jones, Mrs Passfield, Mrs Fitzgerald (formerly Franklin), Mrs Hill, Mr Becker, Mr Sudlow, Mr Willig, Mr Hickman, to name but a few – and also the great variety of incidents that pupils had encountered.

So, if you are on Facebook please feel free to join our group: [Harrow Weald Grammar School is what you need to type in.](#)

Ed. It is wonderful that the group has already got so many people connecting and talking - that's what it's all about isn't it, whatever the forum. Links between our various groups will make it even richer, so here's to that.

The group is of course open to any Old Wealdens, not just members of our actual Old Wealdens Association, but we hope that mutual connections will be made and the Association will thereby get new members too - who may then come and actually take tea with us, and share great food and chat too, maybe next April, once we're allowed out to play again :)

We do sadly have some deaths to report, received since the last News and Views went out. As usual, the determining surname is that by which peers would first have known them. Married surnames follow where needed. To make sure that all members have a chance to read them, ALL the tributes will of course be repeated in the paper edition.

Tributes to friends we've lost



It was Kay Haig (1963) who first alerted us to the sad death of lovely Alistair McGECHIE, who died at home with his family, on June 16th. Alistair of course shared being Editor with Peter Luck in recent years, until forced to stand down because of illness. Kay saw a message posted by Marshall Colman on the Facebook group, and then Alistair's fellow 1957 entrant, chairman Chris Overson, gathered in responses from their year group. Chris said he thought he had been in the same classes with Alistair all through school.

[Penny Butler \(Secker\) 1957](#) told us that she has been in touch with Alistair and his wife Lynne throughout his illness, and through her we learnt that [fellow 1957 Old Wealdens Marshall Colman and Ken Ward](#), who had visited him regularly, both spoke at Alistair's funeral on June 29th.

The affection Alistair clearly engendered comes through in the messages people have already sent, and there will undoubtedly be more to come; and although I (current Ed.) didn't meet him, a real regret, I did feel I had, simply through his writing on the subject of the OWA over the years. All his contributions, as Chris Overson says, were 'beautifully and thoughtfully written'. His photo says a great deal, doesn't it, the warmth and depth of his character coming through even more clearly on the screen than on paper.

[Lynne Nesbit \(Fridkin\) 1957](#) wrote: I have memories of him as a gentle boy with soft eyes. What comes to mind as I recall him is an image of a soft faced deer loping along on long legs. And a lovely smile. I send my condolences to his family.

Tony Radford 1957 has memories from across the years, of enduring friendship:

We were both in the 1957 cohort, he in B and I in C, but he lived not that far from me so we would sometimes catch the No.18 bus together up Locket Road (where I lived). He was always interesting to talk to and good company.

One incident from our 1st year at the Weald concerns a PE lesson with Mr 'Hoppy' Hawtrey who decided we should do some boxing - no head punches allowed. I was an archetypal 7 stone weakling at that age whereas Alistair was quite well built, but we were to box each other. I caught him, fairly early on, with a peach of a right hook to the solar plexus, and he went down like a sack of potatoes, looking very white and unwell. I was somewhat shocked by what I had done as I harboured no ill intent towards him. However, despite my being very thin and slight and possibly likely to be ripe for bullying (boys being what they are at that age), that incident did my street cred the world of good, and nobody ever tried physical intimidation with me thereafter.

More recently Alistair, Ken Ward (1c 1957) and I met up in London, and Alistair organised a fascinating walk for us involving buildings and other places of interest; and naturally, for us, ending up in a good real ale pub. One place we visited that sticks very much in my memory - I am a very keen historian now, despite disliking it at school - is a graveyard adjacent to St Pancras Station where there is what is known as the 'Thomas Hardy Tree'. Hardy's father was the civil engineer in charge of the building of the Station and the new Midland Railway main line

Ed. Photo borrowed from Wikipedia



made it necessary to move some of the graves in St Pancras churchyard. They were relocated to their current site and Thomas Hardy planted a memorial tree and arranged some of the coffins from the original graveyard in a fan-like pattern around the tree, which is still there to this day.

Alistair had obviously unearthed this story and wanted to share it by taking Ken and myself there - quite fascinating and a measure of Alistair's capacity to locate places and stories of interest.

Donald Whitehouse 1940 Sixth-form

His wife, Marian, has written to tell us that Donald died peacefully on July 16th. She said that he always enjoyed reading about other Old Wealdens; and his own most recent contribution was in the February News and Views. He had asked if anyone else had memories of the [farming camp at Long Compton](#), and this was going to be a question asked in the next edition. Donald clearly had loved it, and wanted to share stories. Please do share yours, if you have some, whether you were there, as Donald said 'as farm worker or cook'.

Simon Quin 1942 – 2020

Harrow Weald 1954

We usually hear about the sad loss of our friends and contemporaries through their families or other friends letting us know, often when they contact Keith Mayes about their membership; but occasionally it happens that we find out by chance. This happened in June to [Steve Packer \(1954\)](#). [Steve wrote to us:](#)

[By chance I came across the obituary of a good friend from my time at Harrow Weald in today's Guardian. Written by his daughter it tells of Simon's important work over many years with the IMF on poverty and income inequality. There is a small error as to where he went to school but that is unimportant.](#)

Simon hadn't been a member of the Association, and his daughter knew little of her father's time in London, or at school (and hence the error in the newspaper), as Simon's work meant that they had lived in Washington for much of her life. Steve and I (Ed.) both contacted Paula through her website, given in the Guardian piece, and she immediately gave us permission to use her tribute in the paper News and Views, but also said how much she'd love to hear about his time at school, from anyone else who knew him then. The link to the piece is:

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jun/22/simon-quin-obituary>

It is a lovely tribute by his daughter, and the large photograph of his wedding day will just make you smile. We will put at least some of it, plus hopefully the photo, in the paper edition in February too.

David Morgan 1948

Keith, our Membership secretary, received this simple message, below, which feels so much more than the kind duty of a son. We are always truly grateful when family members tell us these things at such huge moments of their own lives.

June 2020

I understand that my father, Professor David Morgan, may have been a member of your association. Sadly he has recently passed away and I wanted to inform you of this so that you can amend your records.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Kind regards

Julian Morgan



Wallace Mackenzie

Founder member

1933

You may remember this happy photo from issue 43 of News and Views. It arose from the 'ethos' discussion that members had contributed to so richly, and for me, personally, I will never forget the day the phone rang and it was Wallace, telling me about sitting on the floor in the hall at the very first assembly - and so much more. The lunch was apparently very merry, in the loveliest sense, and Chris Overson said that they'd heard about the affair between Wallace and Colleen (Old Wealden 1939, and later wife of Merlyn Rees) - on stage, in a post-war school play!

So, it was very sad to hear, in March this year, that Wallace had died, in October 2019. How fitting, though, that he was able to host that lunch when he did, something he wanted to do very much.

Rest in peace, with our thanks, all our fellow Old Wealdens, some gone far too soon, others at the end of long lives - all missed and appreciated.

Apology and request

I am so sorry that in the February News and Views, issue 43, I made errors in the Tributes section that I failed to pick up before printing, and only 'saw' recently. It is thanks to [Roger Gunn 1946](#) that one of them became obvious to me, but only after a good bit of ferreting and research. Roger had queried his own memory first, very kindly, but it was down to me.

Roger's query partly involved the day of the awful train crash at Wealdstone station on October 8th 1952. As Head Boy, he and Head Girl [Pauline Deverson](#) were asked to work with the team of prefects to find out if any 'school' families were affected, so that they could be supported. It was a traumatic day for everyone, although no direct connections with the school were found.

As for my errors, they happened because of a lifelong struggle with names/ words that are similar, combined disastrously with an above average tendency to remember a lot of them - just tagged on my brain because I've seen them written somewhere, sometime. It makes for a vast possibility of confusion. This publication should never be about its editor - but this briefly does need to be, with apologies. I have built in checks and balances, but if you notice something that has slipped through, I will always be grateful to be told. It really matters that

people's stories are recorded accurately, and above all that they know they are not being lightly confused with someone else. I don't forget people - but I do frequently get their 'labels' wrong, and once in the groove of it, find it extremely difficult to 'see', however many times I read through. It is very different from a 'typo'.

[Pauline \(Laudner\) Lambert's daughter](#) was entirely forgiving and understanding that I called her mother Pamela in the tribute in issue 43, and made me feel a little better by telling me that her sister, also an Old Wealden, had indeed been Pamela, so it wasn't so jarring as it might have been. Apologies also went to [John Cutting](#) for mis-naming him in my intro to his tribute to [Olive](#). People are endlessly kind, but I'm sorry, and I will try harder!

[Keith Mayes](#) sent me this to help in the midst of my attempts to untangle the muddle I was in, and as they are so beautiful, these boards, with so much history on them, I thought you would like to see them again too.



Ron and Nancy Young

Over the months since [Graham Kingsley 1950](#) read of Ron Young's death, in a Jesus College Cambridge publication, as reported in issue 43, we have been gathering warm memories of both Ron and Nancy. [Chris Overson](#) and [Chris Wilmot](#) have been in touch with their daughter Diana and son Nicholas, and through them we have some lovely memories to share. These, together with some from Stephen Berg et al will hopefully appear in the next paper edition of News and Views.

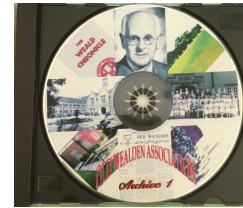
Jean Dodgson 1944

I am so sorry that the obituary for Jean, promised briefly on page 14 of issue 41, in February 2018, didn't happen. It was missed in the handover between Peter and me, and entirely my fault that I didn't pick it up sooner.

If you have anything you would like to say about Jean, it will certainly go into the next paper edition. Apologies to her friends and family that the obituary and tribute didn't appear when it should.

Remember these?!

Some worked brilliantly, some were a bit fussy - and mine wouldn't open for any money - I kept hoping, and would occasionally look longingly at it.....but now technology has sorted it - thanks to an Old Wealden who kindly got in touch.



Great news from Pat Moloney 1964

I used to be a member but the reunions always happened on a Watford FC home game day. I am on the Facebook group though, and someone mentioned that the archive CD of The Weald did not work on Windows 10, so, being in IT, I found a company that converted it all to a different format.

Pat has generously shared it with us, on an internet folder - link below:

<https://btcloud.bt.com/web/app/share/invite/KDx541Ycqh>

It has all sorts of great stuff, including 6th Form College magazines, Old Wealden Magazines from 1978 (No.1) to 1999 (No.22), The Weald Chronicle 1933 - 1974 (84 editions, some termly), plus some photos, including some of those long 'whole school' ones.

Even better, there's also a 'zipped' folder at the bottom of the list, that you can use to download anything you want to your own computer. I did, it was easy, and I'm not particularly techie, so do have a go.

Tempted?!

Thank you again, Pat, for all this - so much browsing to look forward to.

You've been posting!

Thank you so much for all the contributions you have been sending. This newsletter could be a great deal longer, but it's already a little longer than planned, and so it's probably best to leave it at that - except for just one more piece, a thoughtful and calm place to end on for now.

There is so much great stuff waiting in the wings, though, and another newsletter is planned for November, at the latest. Apologies if your piece hasn't appeared yet. A random opinion poll did confirm my own thoughts that reading on the screen isn't quite as relaxing as having a paper copy on your lap. I make no apology, however, for ending with the whole of [Marian \(Harding\) Whitehead's](#) response to the thoughts of 'ethos' in issue 43. It's a lovely read.

Memories and Thoughts of an Old Wealden (1948 – 1954)

I was stopped in my tracks by a familiar 'voice' from my past when reading the February 2020 issue of News & Views. The voice was that of Jimmy Britton in a letter written in 1933 'to a scholar of Harrow Weald County School fifty years hence'. After so many years, encountering the letter was a shock, but how typical of Jimmy that it was concerned for the young, for their future, and was able to enter imaginatively into their lives.

Long after I left Harrow Weald, Jimmy Britton became hugely influential in my professional life, as colleague, academic supervisor and friend. We first met when he was the Goldsmiths' College, Professor of Education and I was studying part-time for an Advanced Diploma in Education. Jimmy was introducing London University Advanced Diplomas and Masters' Degrees in Education at the College. I was a local teacher, originally trained at Goldsmiths', and keen to add to my existing qualifications (note the passion for learning imbibed at Harrow Weald!). Soon after starting to study again I was appointed as a lecturer at Goldsmiths' and became a colleague of Jimmy Britton. We found quite early on that we had another shared experience, that of life in an extraordinary school on Brookshill. As the Editor's googling indicated, James Britton created the school's remarkable English Department along with Harold Rosen and Nancy Martin. They all three went on to inspire generations of English teachers and primary school teachers through their publications and work at the University of London Institute of Education and Goldsmiths'.

The essence of working with Jimmy was an inspiring combination of warmth, fun, collegiality and rigorous but adventurous scholarship. Perhaps we later Old Wealdens might recognise these characteristics because they were also nurtured at The Weald and remain part of the ethos we remember. How else can we explain the enduring power and influence in the lives of its alumni of a local authority school that lasted only a few decades and had only three Headteachers?

Jimmy Britton was a fine poet and it is good that the Editor has emphasised this in the recent News & Views. He was also the author of an influential and very readable book on the role of language in child development and education: *Language and Learning*, 1970. Here was a professor, a poet and a scholar of English, revealing the roots of language, learning, literature and literacy, in the earliest months and years of childhood. If only current schooling could return to such rigorous, humane and well-researched approaches!

Another Harrow Weald teacher who had a significant influence on my life, including the decision to train as a teacher at Goldsmiths' College, was Merlyn Rees. Merlyn was himself an ex-Goldsmiths' student and President of the Student Union when the College was evacuated during the war to Nottingham University. He supported my application to Goldsmiths' after a Cambridge College made it abundantly clear to Miss Drury and Mr Crowle-Ellis that they were unwilling to consider special entry students (no matter how difficult their family financial circumstances). Merlyn continued to encourage and monitor my career for many years after my Harrow Weald days. I also have a vague memory of joyful celebrations in school when his forthcoming marriage to Colleen was announced. Was he chaired through the corridors? Was Colleen there too? Perhaps other OWs may remember! Along with my best friend, Daphne Cripps (1948), and under the supervision of the inspiring Art teacher, Connie Passfield, I hand-coloured the historic railway maps that Merlyn prepared and used in his Masters dissertation.

No memories of Harrow Weald would be complete without acknowledging the firm but quietly caring support of Miss Drury. She certainly convinced me that I could achieve anything and also spent time persuading my parents of the same. I should also mention Mr Crowley who gave generously of his time and involved his influential contacts in order to introduce me to the world of journalism. It all helped! As did the joy of music and school and house choirs with Irene Pyke and the world of literature opened up by Mrs Gaastra.

And now more memories come flooding back. Geography and elegance in Miss Sellers' classes; amazing drama productions (*As You Like It*, 1953); country rambles in Bucks and Herts led by Ron Young; a leaving gift of a poetry anthology from Clare Pope ...

Time to stop reminiscing and return to the ethos of The Weald. The essence must surely be in the relationships that developed between these remarkable adults and us, their pupils. These teachers demonstrated on a daily basis what it was to be enthusiastic life-long learners and caring human beings. Because they did care about us and were deeply engaged in our learning and development. I think I am back to the themes of Jimmy's 1933 letter. His new school of pioneers never lost its adventurous spirit and remains a tremendous community.

Marian (Harding) Whitehead
May 2020



Keep safe, keep sending, keep
in touch - any sort, any length, any time.
Thank you!

August 5th 2020
Old Wealdens News and Views Extra

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