

# Queen Mary's Club

*From All  
Quarters  
2021*

News and  
information about  
Old Marians from  
all corners of the  
World



# Events 2021

## **Wreath Laying**

Wreath Laying was scheduled to take place on Friday, 2nd July. Sadly, the decision has been taken not to take a party to Wreath Laying again this year, due to the uncertainty with Covid.

## **Saturday 25th September: Annual Dinner**

(book online at <https://www.qmclub.org/events>)

or by cheque via the Alumni Office

## **Committee Meetings**

Your Management Committee meets every 2 months on Wednesdays so the remaining meetings this year are:

Wednesday, 12th May

Wednesday, 14th July

Wednesday, 8th September

If you are interested in becoming a Committee member, please contact Tim Lawrence or the Alumni Office via the email on the back cover, or the Club website.

# Foreword by Richard Langton, Headmaster

It is hard to sum up what the last 12 months has been like in the life of the school. The usual milestones of exam results, competition success, exciting trips and other achievements have simply not occurred or have been very different in their nature, but the School has ploughed on with its core mission of providing high quality education for the students. We have placed wellbeing at the top of our agenda and the community has come together in support of all.

We were presented with the unenviable task last spring of developing systems for awarding students their GCSE and A-level grades. Things weren't helped by a national trend towards last minute 'U-turns', but I was proud of the professionalism shown by the staff in establishing the grades and of the students for their achievements. Our sixth formers left us to take up the usual exciting range of university and other opportunities.

We saw some 'normality' in school the autumn term, albeit with staggered starts/finishes, year group bubbles and lots of new rules. Staff and students adapted incredibly well to new styles of teaching, even if certain year groups had no access to the science labs or workshops for their studies. Sport, music and other activities continued, but there were no fixtures and year groups couldn't mix for practices or ensembles.

We welcomed our first 180-strong cohort of Year 7 students in September, including 30% from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom came from across Walsall. The local primary outreach work had to be curtailed in the spring of 2020, but we are looking at digital solutions and are committed to continuing to provide opportunities for disadvantaged young people from the town.

The substantive closure of schools in January, through to March of 2021, meant a shift back to remote education. I have been so impressed with the innovation shown by the staff and with the engagement of the students over this time period. The feedback has been universally positive and I'm sure that everyone has developed new skills and expertise.

We welcomed back the school in mid-March, and undertook the huge task of

providing asymptomatic lateral flow tests for all as they returned. This was carried out in typical QM style, with the operational skills of the CCF officers coming to the fore!

I hope that the summer term, into the autumn, offers a return to normality and we are considering how to re-launch the QM experience. The staff and students are chomping at the bit to re-explore international shores, be back at Farchynys, re-engage in CCF activities, represent the school at sport and play in music concerts.

Despite the national restrictions, we have continued in our development of the campus. The hall extension is complete and the additional classroom block (which will form an extension to the humanities provision) will be completed in June. Both are part of the successful Selective Schools Expansion Fund. We have also completed work on the Student Welfare Hub, which brings together our SEND and SEMH teams and enhances our pastoral provision. The delayed outdoor cricket nets (built with money raised by parents as part of the QMA) were completed in the autumn and have already seen extensive use. We were named in the top 100 English schools for cricket by the *Cricketer magazine* for the third year in succession and I hope that the new facility enables us to continue our success.

Former students Dr Ben Spencer MP and Rob Denton joined us for a series of very engaging Speech Day events in October 2020. All took place online, but embodied the ethos of this tradition. A wide range of alumni have also supported the school through a series of online careers events and I am very grateful for this.

I continue to enjoy my interaction with Marians of all generations and look forward to continuing to do so. Sadly, we have decided that we will not be able to run our usual *Wreath Laying* trip in July, but I am very much hoping to show off the new hall extension at the *QMC dinner* in September.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has supported the school over this, most challenging, year. Your contact and humour is uplifting and part of what makes QM great.

Floreat Reginae Schola Mariae

Regards

# Editor's Introduction

I have been fortunate during my long association with QM to have worked alongside some agreeable, highly intelligent and talented individuals - both staff and pupils.

I am sure that many of you will remember Tom Perrett who was my colleague in the History Department for 20 years. Tom was one of the intellectual giants of the Common Room and could be relied upon to bring commonsense and perspective to any problem. His teaching was inspirational and his contributions to the Governing Body's discussions were wise and considered. He was popular and his sense of humour was legendary.

Tom had joined the teaching profession in his 40s after a career with Banks's Brewery. He was a talented manager and an inventive and considerate Head of Department. However, by his own admission, he was not a great administrator, but he countered criticism of his filing systems with the retort that he had successfully organised "*the booze ups*" in the brewery during his time there.

In 1970s QM there were no computers. There were few televisions, no photocopiers or calculators. There were hardly any telephones, certainly no whiteboards – only blackboard and chalk. I recall Tom proudly demonstrating our first video player: not of course, a DVD, nor a video cassette, but reel to reel tape. Tom pressed "Play" and the machine disgorged yards of tape onto the floor to the general entertainment of the audience. I wonder what he would have thought of the role ICT has played over the last twelve months. Actually, I have no doubt; he would have come to terms with it quickly with his customary pragmatism.

Pragmatism has certainly been our watchword in recent times. In adapting to changed circumstances, not only has teaching been delivered on line, so have meetings, interviews, parents' evenings, CCF parades and even Speech Day.

QMC committee meetings have taken place on Zoom and there has been a gratifying response to Judy McCoy's efforts to expand our Linked In network. Dozens of Old Marians of all generations have been in touch – with many offers of help and support to the School and the Club. This is very encouraging and greatly appreciated.

However, we are all looking forward to face to face meetings and I hope that summer will bring better times.

With best wishes

Tim Lawrence [alumni@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk](mailto:alumni@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk)



NEWS  
FROM ALL  
QUARTERS

### **David Etherington QC ( 1964-73)**

The Bishop of London, The Rt. Rev. and Rt. Hon. Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, has announced that David Etherington QC has been appointed as the new Chancellor for the Diocese of London. He took up this post in February.



The Chancellor acts as the independent judge of the Consistory Court, overseeing legal issues across the Diocese, especially those which relate to the use of and alterations to church buildings and land.

He is an established criminal and regulatory barrister and ecclesiastical lawyer and judge. He studied Law and Public & Social Administration at Keble College, Oxford. He practises as Queen’s Counsel at Red Lion Chambers in London and is involved with training in Professional Ethics and Advocacy for the Bar. David will step down as Chancellor for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich – a position which he has held since 2009 – upon taking up his new role in London. He will remain in post as Chancellor for the Diocese of Norwich and will continue to carry out his responsibilities as Deputy Chancellor for the Diocese of Ely.

### **Andrew Peach (1984-91)**

Andrew Peach has been appointed as a presenter of the six o'clock News on BBC Radio 4. He continues to present news programmes such as PM on radio 4, The Newsroom on BBC World Service and the Andrew Peach Show on BBC Radio Berkshire. The Radio Academy Award judges described him as “an assured host, balancing great seriousness and warmth” and said “ he is empathetic and probing and formulates questions that are short, to the point and perfectly timed.”

### **Johnathan Bates OBE (1980-87)**

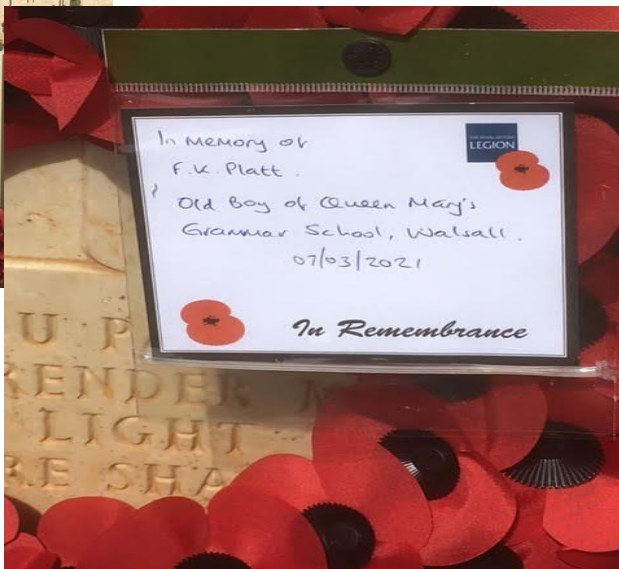
We congratulate Johnathan Bates on the award of his OBE listed in the Queen’s Birthday Honours 2020. Johnathan is Analytical Team Leader, Department of Health and Social Care (Leeds, West Yorkshire) and his award is for public service.

## **Emeritus Professor Michael Taylor BSc PhD DLitt (1957-63)**

Michael is once more living in Australia, having returned in late 2015. His academic career has taken him around the world. After QMGS and the completion of a BSc and PhD at UCL, he spent 8 years at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, then 11 years in Canberra, mostly at The Australian National University. Michael then moved to the University of Western Australia, in Perth. From there he moved to a Chair at the University of Portsmouth and finally to a Chair in Geography at the University of Birmingham. On retirement he moved to north Norfolk but then back to Western Australia where his daughter and her family live. Michael now lives in Bunbury, south of Perth.

## **Neil Kirk (1981-88)**

Neil visited Medjez-el-Bab War Cemetery in Tunisia to visit QMGS old boy:  
Lt. Frank Kenneth Platt, Royal Artillery.





# Paramveer cleans up in the Red Bull Basement 2020



## Paramveer Bhachu (2010-17)

Paramveer, who left us in 2017, was a shining example to all. He was always looking at ways of being innovative and entrepreneurial, so his competition win came as no surprise. I asked him a few questions about his experience and what it means to him to achieve this recognition.

**Can you explain what the Red Bull Basement is and what sort of global interest it generates?**

*Red Bull Basement is an annual competition empowering student innovators to use technology to drive positive change. It encourages entrepreneurs to look at all aspects of life in their communities and imagine creative ways to do things better. Being tied to the Red Bull brand, you can imagine the type of interest it generates with students entering from all over the globe. Throughout the competition, industry experts are available to consult and network with, making it an excellent platform for improving your outreach.*

**What inspired you to enter and what was the brief?**

*My business partner, Joanna Power, is a member of the Brunel University Entrepreneurs Society, which encourages students to take their innovative ideas and enter competitions, and first heard of Red Bull Basement from there.*

*At the beginning of lockdown, Joanna saw a brief on a website about how students can reduce the amount of water they waste. With our combined experience in product and graphic design, we thought we could do better.*

**How did you come up with the idea for the Aqua Lava X?**

*We know that other students, like us, are concerned with reversing the effects of climate change and saving resources such as water. However, it is easy to make excuses when showering, for example, as if you do not pay the water bills it does*

*not directly affect you. In my first year, I remembered how much of a pain washing clothes was when machines were not available, it was expensive and an effort carrying washing to and from the laundrette.*

*We came up with the idea for a portable electric washing machine, which makes doing laundry easier (15-minute cycles), cheaper (one-off cost vs yearly spending at the laundrette) and is environmentally friendly (by reusing water collected from your shower to wash the clothes).*

**What was the format of the competition, and when did you realise you were in with a chance of winning?**

*Our entry into the competition began with the submission of a 60-second pitch video describing our idea. Members of the public then cast votes to decide on their favourites. The results went on to a panel of judges who decided which ideas would represent each county. Once chosen, the development phase began, where teams had approximately 30 days to develop their idea with industry experts' help. This led to the global workshop and final (held online), where the top ten groups pitched their final solutions.*

*Winning Red Bull Basement was a complete surprise to both Joanna and me. During the week of the global workshop, we met with every group participating and came across some fantastic ideas that we thought were worthy of winning, so to be awarded first place was completely unexpected.*

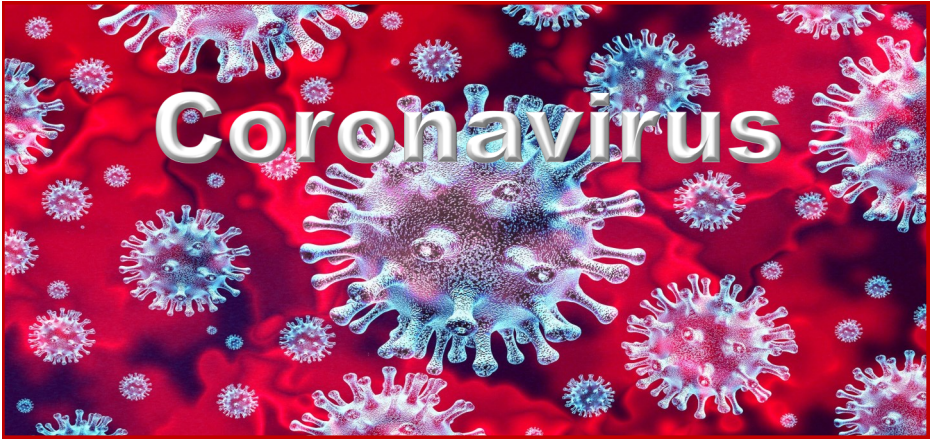
**On both a personal and professional level, what does winning this competition mean to you?**

*Being a global winner has been a fantastic experience. On a personal level, putting my time and energy into a project and seeing others notice the value in it has been a significant boost to my confidence. It has encouraged me to try many more things and branch out; you never know what it could lead to. On a professional level, the competition has allowed me to grow my industry network, which should be of great advantage in the future. It also has the potential to change my future endeavours, as forming a start-up business is becoming an increasingly viable option.*

**So what's next?**

*Our focus right now is getting the Aqua X on the market. We are starting the year by looking for funds to put together the final working prototype, finish the design for manufacture and batch production. So far, we have created cardboard, CAD, and look-like models and are very excited to get a real version worked up.*

*Not only will we be looking to develop the internal workings of the machine and start mass-production, but we would also like to focus on developing the business through plan creation and marketing.*

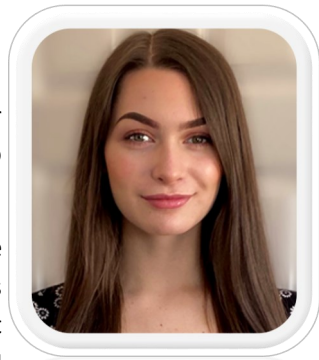


**2020-21** will be remembered by many as a time of sorrow, for those we lost to this dreadful virus and for the restrictions it put on our daily lives. It has however, made us reflect on what is important: family, friends, health, our NHS, our children's education, work and the environment, naming just a few. I thought it was important to include a few contributions from Marians on how it has affected their lives and on how some coped with the isolation, change of routine and sheer hard work.

**Phoebe Pinney 2018-2020 (Head Girl)**

Phoebe, who left us last summer, recounts her experiences of moving from the sixth form to university in the midst of a global pandemic.

A particular anxiety near the beginning of the pandemic for a lot of year 13 students such as myself, was the uncertainty surrounding what would happen with our upcoming A-Level examinations. When the government announced that they would not be taking place at all, it was a massive shock to all students and teachers across the country. Our school career ended rather abruptly with no time to properly process the situation or celebrate such a large milestone in our lives.



I am sure that many students were delighted at the idea of not having to go through the stress of exams, but for me this was quite a nerve-wracking prospect as I had no idea whether my given grades would be enough to get me to my goal of Cambridge University. On results day, my heart sank opening the envelope to reveal that my grades were far below what I was expecting - the A -Level results given to me under the government's algorithm had all been lowered from what my teachers had predicted.

Panic set in further when I found that I had neither been offered a place at Cambridge, nor at the University of Manchester which was my next choice. I was lost and scared in the few hours after opening my results and felt cheated out of the grades that I could have achieved if I had been able to work hard and sit the exams. However, after communicating back and forth with the University of Manchester over the course of this long and distressing day, they offered me a place on my desired course which was a massive relief.

Six months on, I am now starting my second semester of Computer Science at the University of Manchester and things are, of course, still far from normal. With the effects of coronavirus still rife, I have not once set foot inside the university, instead doing all my work remotely from my student halls in Fallowfield, which has definitely come with its challenges. I am very happy with the university I am at and could not imagine another course more suited to me, but I am acutely aware that many first-year students have not been as fortunate as me with their university experiences.

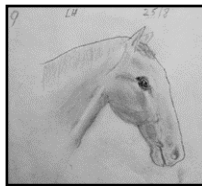
This year has taken its toll on everybody and students have certainly felt the brunt of it too. With a lack of reassurance, rapid decline in student mental health and no certainty over how our studies will progress from here, I am sure it has been quite a worrying time for many young people, coupled with the everyday apprehensions of living during a pandemic. However, I look forward to the day that I can attend lectures, explore the city that I'm in and enjoy the social aspect of the 'university experience' to a fuller extent.

## **Dennis Bayley (1947-54) Ontario, Canada**

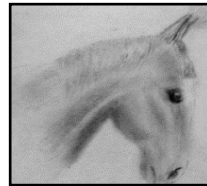
During the lockdown I decided to learn to draw with my left hand which has not been my dominant one since I started school just before I was 5 years old . At that time I only drew with my left hand but at primary school I was hit on the knuckles if I used my left hand and so became right-handed . Eighty years later I decided during the pandemic lockdown to see if I could still draw left-handed . See the results, drawn over time, below:



1st attempt



9th attempt



14th attempt



In addition to my left-handed drawing experiment, I used the lockdown to lose my "spare tyre". The attached photo shows what 1700000 steps on a cross-trainer last year plus 45 minute walks daily ( weather permitting ) and inability to dine out does for a waistline.

What an amazing achievement !

## **Rhys Llewellyn 2014-2016**

Since the beginning of my final year, I have loved working in my local community pharmacy, better understanding the challenges and opportunities the sector provides, as well as supporting an essential service in these difficult times. Having worked in the Pharmaceutical Industry for a year, and having secured my first choice Pre-Registration place with North

Bristol NHS Trust, working in the community is helping me to gain a full appreciation of the profession and those who serve in it. I was fortunate to



be offered the opportunity to become a trained Vaccinator which is something I am very proud of and have been working on over the past couple of weeks. I recently worked a day as a vaccinator and will be doing so again over the coming months to help in the national effort.

The challenge of performing the procedure, which is potentially stressful and uncomfortable for patients, as well as representing students of pharmacy, is one I am grateful for and will continue to meet head on. Whatever role we can play as members of our profession, be it in advising and managing medicines in the community, supporting wards in hospital or even in providing direct service though vaccination, we seek out these opportunities, show our skills, and demonstrate value we can all offer.

### **Owen Strickland (1984-92)**

Owen has gained a prestigious national title at the ‘Oscars’ of the wedding industry, by being named as the Best Magician in the UK in 2021.

The former police detective has delighted audiences with his close-up magic

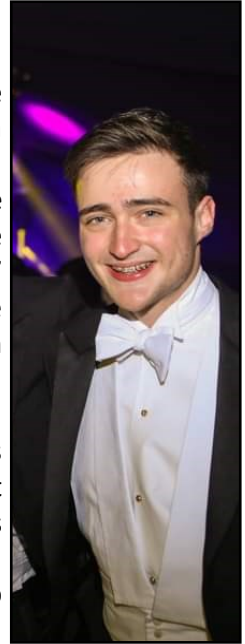


tricks at many weddings and corporate events. Having already won the regional award several times he is delighted to have also scooped the national award this year.

“Being a magician is all about bringing joy to people’s lives and escaping reality for a while”, said Owen.

## ‘The Student’

Emphasising the word ‘the’ in the title is deliberate because it implies the existence of a typical example, an example which exists most prevalently in headlines. Casting an eye back over a few months, ‘students’ have ‘demanded refunds and safety-nets’ whilst at the same time ‘hosting parties which ignore all guidelines.’ Speaking as a student, I can tell you I wish I had the time do even half of what the papers report. The point I wish to outline is that in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic we’ve grouped together, labelled, categorized and caricatured every group of society. Some of this has been part of vital scientific research and important national organization. However, much of it has overlooked the importance of individual perspective and the uniqueness of each and every human experience. So here is mine.



My first encounter with the pandemic was in Italy in April as a member of staff on the ski trip. Stepping off the plane and facing down the barrel of a temperature gun, I never once imagined that in the space of two months I would have my exams cancelled, my residence closed, and I would be forced into a long-distance relationship. In fact, even after returning from the trip and reviewing the experience with friends who were anxious to hear about life in a virus rife country, I had to inform them everything was as normal there as it was in England. We all said our good-byes. We made our preparations to leave, which meant stowing 8 weeks’ worth of supplies into a cupboard for our return and leaving it to avalanche on an unsuspecting victim.

We were told we wouldn’t be returning. The next time I saw my friends for a drink it wasn’t at the pub but on ‘zoom’. The next time I saw my tutor they were a pixelated face on a screen. Just writing this paragraph I have stopped several times to make sure I have the timeline correct. The important sentiment being that as the country crawled to a halt, life sprinted ahead as realisation upon realisation piled up.

The paradox being that as the pressure mounted anxiety was forced to the forefront of your mind, but you had ample time to sit down and think everything through.

After this initial 'to and fro', the turbulence settled, and the dust rested and taking stock of it all I think I realised online learning hadn't been as beneficial as promised. There was quite a sense of unchecked knowledge and some genuine understanding felt encased behind a wall of stress. However, the summer had arrived and alongside the long days came a sense of clarity and life untangled itself. The knowledge I had picked up was consolidated and my online mock exams were a success. Having had time now to reflect on university life online I can appreciate it does have positive and tangible effects. Everything just takes twice as long.

The theme of the summer in many ways was rekindling, and the summer months took on an appearance of spring's rebirth. The pursuit of hobbies and socialising now took on a whole new dimension as they offered portals to life as it was, but they presented fresh challenges. A taste of normality returned and seeing friends was now possible, you just needed to be organised with booking restaurants and finding the park equidistant between everyone. I got to climb again, with a new climbing partner, which lifted my mental health through the roof with it being a familiar comfort sprinkled with a refreshing twist. Online cadet activity offered a connection back to QM and also offered the sense of familiarity with a new twist. I even managed to spend time with my girlfriend caring for her clinically vulnerable brother. It was the last piece of the puzzle from the previous four months which had culminated in me understanding myself in ways I had not before. Lockdown, online learning and post-lockdown life had taught me I needed to learn to find drive and motivation within myself as much as I could look for it in life, experiences and those around me.

The return to university in December in many ways was the most unexpected challenge of pandemic student life. Those that I have spoken to certainly agree with me. Life in isolation and personal revaluation had been universal, and as such communal living now felt confined and fractured at times. Living together certainly kept us sane and happy and



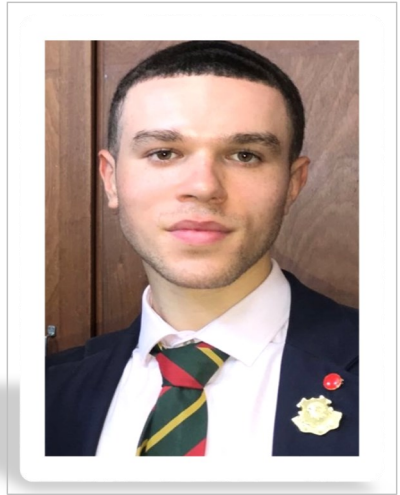
without the company of others some of the sinking feelings no doubt would have become tsunamis. However, whenever the outside world offered the fear of transmitting the disease or the pressure of keeping track of guidelines and rapidly increasing piles of work, everyone withdrew into themselves. Taking our tests before returning home and discussing what we were all returning to was the final reminder that once life does return to normality, connecting with people again wouldn't be immediate, no matter how much everyone knew it would be vital. Perhaps we had spent so long looking down at our phones it now felt alien to be able to hold eye contact in a conversation.

To focus on the headlines or the major political hotspots would be to miss the very idea that people have faced down a pandemic whilst still campaigning for causes like Black Lives Matter. Whilst still working incredibly hard to provide an education. Whilst still manning food banks. All of this will have required an extraordinary sense of personal dedication from individuals and it is these stories that matter most, and we should endeavor to reveal. Hopefully as the arts drag themselves back onto their feet these stories can be told to an extent never before seen. So, anyone who has been in a group which had been categorised as something like the elderly, the left/right wing or the students, remember it is your personal story which matters.



Zachary Elliott  
Captain of School  
(2019/20)

Current Mechanical  
Engineering student at  
Imperial College London



What to think when exams have been cancelled? A question I found few answers to in the period between schools closing on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and A Level Results Day on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2020. The warm summer walks and endless amounts of football on TV couldn't tell me what to expect with any certainty, and as a matter of fact, neither could the government.

The height of ambivalence came just before results day upon news that Scottish Highers algorithm-based results had been ditched due to evidence of grading based on socioeconomic factors – an inevitable yet hard pill to swallow. From an outside perspective, it's easy to assume news of no exams would be what every student dreams of, but when the next 3-4 years of every aspect of your life depend on these results (and potentially having to sacrifice the next 12 months of your life retaking them), I'd personally much prefer having some degree of control over this.

Fortunately, for myself results went exactly as I had wished and I secured my place reading Mechanical Engineering at Imperial College London. At this point, Covid-19 cases were declining, 'Eat Out To Help Out' was everyone's favourite slogan and the idea of normality genuinely felt like something not too far away. I'm sure everyone reading this will remember embarking on their first fully independent journey, setting up base away from home, and exploring what your new surroundings have to offer. This period of freedom lasted a little over a week at my university, with the tiering systems being introduced on the 14<sup>th</sup> October.

The pockets of time that restaurants and bars would reopen were spent frantically trying to meet new people, as all society events had been cancelled or moved online where it is noticeably more difficult to develop lasting friendships in such a fast-moving environment. I made some great friends during the first term, but most I've only ever seen over a webcam.

My experience may be slightly different from most students' this year as I had a knee surgery just before moving into halls meaning I was on crutches for 2 months and couldn't walk very far. This was surprisingly suitable for lectures, which consisted of rolling a metre from my bed to the desk and opening up the laptop, 5-days a week, for 13 long weeks. Being a social learner, this was never going to be easy, but learning a completely new skill in total isolation was something I struggled with greatly. No amount of online tutorials or classes can provide you with the same motivation or curiosity as a face-to-face discussion with someone who shares your passion for a subject. If any problem is to be solved in an educational lockdown setting, I feel this needs to be the first.

After the Christmas break, my university took the decision to ask everyone to stay at home and offered a full refund on the Spring term's accommodation costs. So now I study, and indeed write this article, in the same room I did so for my years at QM. An ironic journey!

I'm optimistic that my future university experience won't be tarnished by the lack of activity this year, and that our final years with minimal responsibility will be well spent! For myself at least, despite all the social restrictions and unfavourable working environment, the lockdowns have enabled me to put more time into creative pursuits, personal projects and self-development with mentors as well as supporting others going through these tough times.

Everyone will have their own unique memories of lockdown; some of loss, others of growth and also those of the crippling uncertainty and isolation. As students, I think what we make of the last 12 months is quite defining in our appreciation of freedom and the connectivity we have taken for granted up until this point. A notion that hopefully won't leave us once we start the transition towards post-covid times.



# The 1554 Circle

You can make a  
lasting  
difference to those who follow  
in your footsteps...

***...by making a gift that will enable future generations of Marians to become better prepared to face the world.***

*Join the newly named 1554 Circle by making a bequest in your will and know that your generosity will help the School for years to come.*

*Although it is not something any of us likes to think about, there are some very good reasons why we would be grateful if you could remember Queen Mary's Grammar School in your Will.*

*The School has an ever-present need for such bequests as it has taken positive steps to make a grammar school education available to all boys who are able, regardless of their circumstances. Currently, our intake is made up of 30% of children who come from a household that is in receipt of Pupil Premium, which means that they are living in a household facing very challenging financial times.*

*The generosity of Old Boys and Friends of the School can help us to provide not only a great education but also the opportunity to provide a current or future Marian with the rounded life experiences that set them apart.*

*We ask you to take part in this time-line of giving and join this newly formed Circle. Please see the next page for details of how we would use such a gift. If you are interested in joining the Circle or have any further questions please contact Judy McCoy at School for further details T: 01922 720696 or [alumni@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk](mailto:alumni@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk). The Circle will have its own annual event - we look forward to welcoming you.*

*Floreat!*

*Richard Langton, Headmaster.*

## **How will my gift support the School?**

### **Students**

We have always tried to maintain the values of the original founders of the School, who wanted it to be a Free School for the education of the boys of Walsall. Our boundaries have stretched somewhat, but we do not charge for the education we provide. A recent initiative to reach out to pupils who may never have been entered for the examination has proved to be one of the most successful in the country. We now provide familiarization sessions to primary school pupils in the local area and are attracting able boys who would otherwise not have benefitted from a grammar school education.

### **Teachers**

We are always keen to support teachers in their own scholarship, by funding study or research, which in turn enhances the intellectual stimulus provided to the students.

### **Fabric**

We must continue to maintain and develop the fabric of the buildings and grounds, not always with grand projects but sometimes just to keep the weather out! Improved access for those with disabilities is important and something which we have embraced. This has resulted in being able to offer equal opportunity to pupils with limited mobility or hidden difficulties.


We also have the added benefit of being one of the few state schools to still maintain a Welsh outdoor facility at the Coach House at Farchynys, where pupils can spend time outdoors in the beautiful surroundings of the Mawddach Estuary and Snowdonia.



From the  
Archives...

Sports facilities have always been an important feature of the Sutton Road site. In May 1970 the official opening of the newly installed swimming pool took place. Still in use today, it is a valued asset for the use of pupils, staff and also the wider community. This along with the Sports Hall, provide amenities throughout the year when the field is not dry enough to be in use.



  
THE GOVERNORS, HEADMASTER and STAFF  
of  
QUEEN MARY'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL, WALSALL  
*cordially invite you to the*  
OFFICIAL OPENING of the  
SCHOOL SWIMMING BATH  
*at 3.00 p.m. on*  
Saturday 16th May, 1970  
*by A. D. MUNROW Esq., O.B.E., B.Sc. Director of Physical Education  
at Birmingham University and Chairman of the Sports Development  
and Coaching Committee of the National Sports Council.*





# OBITUARIES

## **Keith Grant Howard**

(Headmaster 1979-1995)

Passed away 3rd December 2020

KEITH HOWARD was the thirty-fourth Headmaster of Queen Mary's School. A man of unshakeable convictions, his tenure marked a period of consolidation in Marian history, achieved through hard work, unflinching duty, and sheer strength of character.



His arrival in Walsall coincided more or less with Mrs Thatcher's in Downing Street. Their political outlook may have had important differences, but they were agreed on this: education was the means by which anyone, given the right conditions, could pull themselves up by the bootstraps. Mr Howard shared the optimism of the 1944 Education Act, which brought secondary education – including, crucially, at grammar schools – within every family's reach. His belief in selective education and the purpose of Queen Mary's was visceral: he had benefitted from a similar start in life at Caldrey Grange Grammar School on the Wirral. Mr Howard knew in his bones, in the very core of his being, what was best for the School and its pupils. For sixteen years, he worked tirelessly to secure it.

The 1944 Act may have been the touchstone for Mr Howard's educational philosophy, but he did not fall into the trap of always looking to the past for inspiration. Gillian Columbine, who had been appointed to the position of Headmaster's Secretary a year before his

arrival, remembers his fascination with the latest trends in pedagogy and school management. He was intrigued by new things, she reports, and inspired my own interest in education. Others too were made to think more deeply about teaching. Stuart Holtam, his successor, points to his role as a pamphleteer, publishing his opinions to a wider audience. He enjoyed debate, revelled in Oxbridge classes for the General Paper, valued others' opinions.

There were, however, certain values that were non-negotiable. Among them: courtesy, discipline, and hard work. Some Heads, even as early as the 1980s, were already conceding that you had to pick your battles, arguing that going after every unbuttoned collar, fore-shortened tie and untucked shirt was an unnecessary waste of energy. Not so Mr Howard. His study window looked out on the drive (a view he wished to keep clear at all costs) and he was known to leap up, mid conversation, in hot pursuit of an untrained Fustie or recalcitrant Sixth Former whose uniform breach had caught his eye. His standards were uncompromising precisely because he was convinced that a tidy appearance favoured a tidy mind; good discipline was the pre-requisite of good results. Under his influence, the School smartened up.

Consolidation does not sound exciting; it does not, perhaps, stir the emotions or attract wide-spread plaudits. It can be transformational, nonetheless. Mr Howard's commitment to getting the basics right, his attention to detail and his intolerance of anything half-hearted or half-baked combined to lay the foundations of a new era of academic excellence for the School. His success almost took the Queen Mary's Community by surprise. When the Conservative government introduced School Performance Tables in the early 1990s, it was

found that the School at the top of the Premier Division was in Walsall. The Daily Mail visited Sutton Road and published a double page spread asking, 'Is this the nation's top school?' The statistics allowed no gainsaying. Queen Mary's topped the tables before anyone had thought how to manipulate and massage results. Mr Howard's modest self-deprecation should not be allowed to mask the significance of this success: it was a crowning achievement.

Foundations for the future were laid in other ways too. Mr Howard was convinced that the School knew what was best for its pupils. He knew them all by name; it was self-evident that he could better judge their interests than anyone sitting in Whitehall or Walsall's Council Chamber. When the opportunity came for greater financial independence through Local Management of Schools or Grant Maintained Status, he grabbed it with both hands. It was not all plain sailing - the School had to negotiate some turbulent times in its funding – but Mr Howard prepared the ground for the School to take greater control of its own destiny. He gave it the confidence to do so.

Strong convictions and the confidence to carry them through may have shaped Mr Howard's professional persona, but there were depths to his character that this essentially private man did not always allow others to see. Out of the limelight, in quiet and unobtrusive ways, he was memorably caring and kind, always ready to offer support to those who needed it. Such help was never in word only: he knew how to roll up his sleeves and pitch in; he was prepared to dig in his own pockets to find the money that would tide someone through a tough patch.

He was famously thrifty. No-one was allowed to complain that it was too cold in classrooms which, in his day, opened directly on to the main Quadrangle, if they were not wearing a thermal vest. He was from a generation that knew how to mend and make do. Wooden chairs from the 1960s found a new lease of life in the late 1980s when Mr Howard set up a lunchtime workshop to repair them. Look after the pennies, he would argue, and the pounds will look after themselves. In this, as in so many things, he was proved right. The pupil who, under the Headmaster's tutelage, effectively ran the chair repair scheme went on to become top brass in international banking and a major donor to the School.

It is important not to overlook that Mr Howard was a clever and cultured man. Those who were privileged to visit Keith and Elsbeth in their Herefordshire home after he had retired not only enjoyed generous hospitality – rich Dundee cake by a roaring log fire – but also found a home full of books, pictures, and artefacts: the record of a life characterised and enriched by intellectual curiosity. His interest, of course was never passive. He was a linguist who spoke impeccable French and Russian; he was a musician who sang tenor and played the cello; he was an athlete, who played club rugby for Biarritz. He wore his learning and achievements lightly, however, and channelled his efforts neither into pursuing his own ambitions, nor establishing his own reputation. A man of selfless integrity, his preoccupation was always to provide opportunity for others. For that, many generations of Marians have reason to be profoundly grateful.

Mrs Howard writes:

*To all Old Boys, parents, members of staff and friends who wrote entries to the digital remembrance site in memory of my husband Keith.*

*I was deeply moved by all your thoughts and kind words, and I want to say a big thank you to you all—my thanks also go to those who wrote to us at home, letters and cards. I couldn't reply because no address was added. Reading them all gave me much comfort at this difficult time.*

*I often remember the very happy years we spent at QM.*

*Thank you all,*

*Elsbeth Howard*

## **Roland Holland**

(QMGS 1937– 44)

Passed away on 4th June 2020

Roland was born in 1926 at Walsall Wood, gaining entry to Queen Mary's in 1937.

He excelled at languages and music, playing organ and piano. A highlight was his composition of an "Overture to King Lear" played by the School Orchestra at the performance of King Lear by the Dramatic Society in December 1944 by which time Roland was serving in the Army (Intelligence Corps 1944-1947).

His army service included a fast track course in Chinese (Mandarin) at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. He was also able to be in Trafalgar Square on VE Day, attended Prom Concerts and the Victory Test Match at Lords!

He was sent to serve in Burma and on leaving the Army he was accepted to Birmingham University to study French. He first taught at Brownhills Secondary Modern School but then in 1957 was appointed as one of three staff to set up the new Grammar-Technical School (Aldridge Grammar School) - being based initially at Pheasey Junior School and then Barr Beacon, before moving to the new buildings at Aldridge in early 1960 where he remained until retirement in 1983.

Whilst French was his main subject, he was very active in musical matters, both in and out of school—being organist and choir master at Walsall Wood, Stonnall and Shenstone. He created a lasting legacy on leaving Aldridge School by launching the Roland Holland Music Prize—an annual event which he was able to attend and present the prize up until 2019. He was also pleased to be able to teach Chinese to general studies students in the last few years of his career.

## Colin Douglas Tyler

(QMGS 1943-50)

Passed away February 2020



Colin was a modest man, always encouraging others, insightful and hugely respected by his peers. From a working-class background, growing up through WW2 in the Black Country, he enjoyed sport, art and classical music. He became a senior partner at Wragge & Co, then one of the largest law firms in the country outside of London. His teenage years were difficult; his own father, a toolmaker, died in 1943. One compensation was his friendship with Mac Dudson and the camaraderie of other sports enthusiasts at Queen Mary's Grammar School. He enjoyed his years at QM.

He did well at School, largely thanks to his father's intervention in the early 1940s to get him tutoring in maths and English, and went on to gain a State Scholarship to Emmanuel College where he read Law and met the love of his life. He did his articles at the Walsall firm of Frank A. Platt and Beazley and having passed the Law Society examinations, he married Margaret Hughes in August 1958.

Colin was a very determined individual, something that was honed by his mother and his experiences at Cambridge. He specialised in Company Law and quickly found himself thrown in at the deep end at Wragge & Co. He became a Partner in 1963, a position he held for thirty years.

The family first settled in Walsall with their sons, David and Richard, but moved to Moseley in 1968 to be closer to Colin's work. Adding a good knowledge of Tax Law, he soon established himself as one of the pre-eminent corporate lawyers outside of London. By 1993 Wragg & Co had expanded to 45 partners and 500 staff. He was a key player in this



expansion. His work took him all over Europe and to Brazil and to the USA in the 1980s. Colin served on the Law Society's Company Law Committee and during his last five years at Wragge & Co, he concentrated on Commercial and Trade Law. He became Chairman of the Medical and Disability Appeal Tribunals, a role he was to continue until 2002.

Colin and his wife Margaret both loved the theatre and art museums. Following his retirement they went on a nine week trip discovering Africa. They enjoyed playing tennis and golf together. They also shared a passion for gardening and gardens.

The last two decades of Colin's life were pretty tough for him with mental and physical health in significant decline, but he remained an avid reader, interested in current affairs and sport. More recently his zest for life had returned so he started taking daily walks in the garden and was regularly completing The Times crossword on a Saturday.

Colin's recent resurgence began with Girton 150 and the announcement of the Memorial Research Fellowship in geography he had set up to commemorate Margaret's life. It is fitting that his own gift to Emmanuel College will help students from low-income families. The garden in the centre of South Court at Emmanuel will be named Tyler's Garden in his memory. He has been elected as a Benefactor Fellow at Emmanuel and a Barbara Bodichon Foundation Fellow at Girton. Emmanuel also nominated him in February 2020 for membership of the Cambridge Guild of Benefactors.

Colin's final nine months were his best for some time and overall, he went out on a high. He loved watching the cricket World Cup final with both of his sons. He didn't quite make 'ninety not out' as he chatted about in February 2020, but it was 'a very satisfactory innings'. Despite the lockdown restrictions all four of Colin's grandchildren managed to attend his funeral.

## William (Bill) Francis Perkins

(QMGS 1944-46)

Passed away 12th November 2019



Bill Perkins was born in Aldridge in the spring of 1932. He attended Queen Mary's before joining the Royal Navy, followed by a career in industry.

One of Bill's passions was Rugby Football and it was Mr Terry, Head of Lower School, who first introduced him to it. His enjoyment of the game was cemented by W.B. Hopkins, also a very

well known player at Walsall Rugby Club and with whom Bill maintained a close friendship. Bill played for various sides in the 50s and 60s and became a stalwart of Walsall Rugby Club, holding the post of President between 1985 and 1991. Many of the friendships established at QM became lifelong through his continued association with both Walsall rugby and cricket clubs.

Bill's career enabled him to travel extensively and in 1981 he started his own company specialising in smoke and ventilation systems. Bill successfully grew SE Controls into an organisation employing over 150 staff with operations in the UK, the Far East, Middle East, India and South Africa.

Bill's wife Deirdre died in 2016. Bill is survived by his daughter Caroline and son William.



**Frank W(indsor) Higgins**

**Stage name: Frank Windsor**

(QMGS 1939-47 )

Passed away 30th September 2020

After leaving School Frank started his National Service in the RAF in March 1947. He was an air radio mechanic, and as a Leading Aircraftman served on Transport Command airfields in the South of England. On demob in June 1949 he found regular work in radio and was a founder member of the Oxford and Cambridge Players. He studied speech training and drama at the Central School of Speech and Drama, then based at the Royal Albert Hall, London. Frank belonged to the world of the London



stage, having appeared in such productions as *Androcles and the Lion*, *Brand* and *Travesties* with the Royal Shakespeare Company. However, he is probably best known as Detective Sergeant John Watt, a role which he played in *Z-Cars* from 1962 to 1965, and thereafter its spin-offs *Softly, Softly*, *Jack The Ripper* and *Second Verdict* .

Frank never liked to be without work and accepted radio and television roles with relish. From 1987 to 1989, he starred in the comedy drama *Flying Lady* written by Brian Finch. He also starred as a rather old-fashioned headmaster grappling with problems in education in *Headmaster*, which started as a single play in *Play for Today* in 1974. It was expanded into a six-part series in 1977.

He was the subject of *This Is Your Life* on 3 December 1975 when he was surprised by Eamonn Andrews at the Metropolitan Police Sports Club in East Molesey. A hard-working man, he was well-liked in show business.

Frank enjoyed home life; he made wine and enjoyed keeping his dogs. He was also involved in work for the World Wildlife Fund and the Variety Club of Great Britain.

Frank was married to Mary Corbett, a former dancer, from October 1959 until his death. They had two children. Frank died at his home in London in September 2020, at the age of 92.

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