



OLD RENDCOMBIAN SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

2021

47th Edition

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Digital Edition 2021

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OLD RENDCOMBIAN NEWSLETTER

Society Officers

At the Annual General Meeting on 6th July 2020 the following officers were elected:

President:	Bill White (Staff 1961-97) 3 Jessop Drive Northleach GL54 3JG Telephone: 01451 860943
Chairman:	Richard Tudor (1973-80)
Vice-Chairman:	Jessica Weston (1998-2005)
Secretary:	Jane Gunner (1975-77) Whiteway Farmhouse, The Whiteway Cirencester GL7 7BA Telephone: 01285 658627 E-mail: <i>jane@r2g2.co.uk</i>
Treasurer:	Claire Germaine (1990-93)
School Representative:	Alex Brealy (1980-87; Staff 1994-)
Committee Members:	Nigel Powell (1967-74) Neil Lumby (1968-73) Edward Thomason (2005-10, Staff: 2011-) Harley Phelps (2002-2009) Iain Whittaker (1980-87) Hamish Wilson (1971-78)
Hon. Auditor:	David Williams (1966-71)
Newsletter Editor:	Richard Tudor (1973-80) Keynes House, Water Lane, Somerford Keynes Cirencester GL7 6DS E-mail: <i>rictudor706@yahoo.co.uk</i>

The Minutes of the virtual 87th Annual General Meeting of The Old Rendcombian Society held on Monday 6th July 2020 hosted on Zoom by David Williams

Present: **Jane Gunner** *née Watson* (1975-77), **Hamish Wilson** (1971-78), **David Williams** (1966-71), **Keith Winmill** (1972-79), **Brian Smith** (1965-72), **Bill White** (Staff 1961-97), **Jonathon Fletcher** (1968-76), **Mark Naylor** (Staff 1995-2017), **Nigel Powell** (1967-74), **Bob Edy** (1959-67; Staff 2015-), **Chris Wood** (1965-71; Staff 1976-2009), **Michael Barnes** (1961-69), **David Beanland** (1974-79), **Geoffrey Bye** (1940-48), **Michael Dawson** (1960-67), **Frank Ferguson** (1953-60), **Michael Naish** (1952-60), **Nick Smith** (1984-91), **Richard Tudor** (1973-80), **Jess Weston** (1998-2005), **Lawrence Wragg** (1956-63), **Iain Whittaker** (1980-87)

1. Apologies: **Harley Phelps** (2002-09), **Rob Jones** (Head of College 2015-), **Claire Germaine** (1990-93), **Julian Comrie** (1946-54), **John Ellis** (1948-57), **Anthony Hillier** (1963-68), **Tessa Hicks** (1974-76) *née Wolferstan*, **Brian Fisher** (1966-73) **Paul Heppleston** (1956-62)

Prior to the start of the meeting Bill White said a few words in memory of Colin Burden (Staff 1963-97) who had sadly died on 19th June after a brave fight against cancer. Recently, Nigel Powell had included exhibitions of woodwork from Rendcomb on the OR website which Colin had very much appreciated.

2. The minutes of the 86th Annual General Meeting held on 30th June 2019, which had been circulated in the 2020 newsletter, were accepted as a correct record. Proposed by Jess Weston, seconded by Nigel Powell and agreed unanimously.
3. Matters arising
 - (i) Centenary celebrations
Brian Smith, Julian Comrie and Bob Edy had been organising a lunch in May 2020 for ORs who attended the College in the first 50 years. Sadly, because of the virus this had had to be postponed until 2nd June 2021. However, this had seen numbers increase to 108 people; 63 ORs, 45 partners and guests, 8 from the 1940s, 17 from 1950s, 38 from the 60s and later.

While the College was not yet in a position to make a decision on what form the rest of the postponed celebrations would take it was hoped that some, if not all, of what had been planned could be replicated.

In the absence of the Head, Richard Tudor read his report:

The year started with a bulging roll, new coeducational Junior House in Godman and hopes of a very exciting year. The rugby teams had mixed results but showed true Rendcomb grit while the Girls' Hockey teams were very strong in the top years. We Will Rock You, the school musical, was a great success, as was the wonderful Carol Service in Cirencester and the whole College Race for Life event. January saw the opening of the new 6th Form Centre in Old Rectory, Lacrosse, Boys' Hockey and some challenging Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. We have record numbers completing DofE and no less than 12 pupils are completing their Gold Award – a College record. The Junior School also started with great excitement – numbers were up, teams were strengthening and some wonderful trips were added to the usual forest school outdoor activities, music concerts and drama activities. In short both Senior and Junior Schools were very happy places!

Then in February Covid-19 began to emerge and the College quickly had to evolve into two schools, one that looked after key worker children (right through Easter) and one that taught pupils online. It is a great credit to the Rendcomb Family that we have made a great success of a difficult situation with the college being commended as a shining example of how it should be done. We have managed to provide a full curriculum for pupils, delivered exams, assessment reports, tutor groups, concerts, sports and pupil wellbeing throughout the period. I have led virtual open mornings, online exhibitions, virtual induction for new parents and countless Zoom meetings. This has not been easy but we have pulled together.

The Government has made life incredibly difficult (as it has for many businesses) but the team have managed their way through the garbled messages, poor guidance and U-turns. The teachers and Business Support staff have all played their part – please ignore what is being said in the papers about teachers putting their feet up – I know that we have never worked harder for the pupils and their families. We ended term with 94% of the Junior School back in classes and are now preparing for a full return in September.

4. To receive Honorary Treasurer's report

Claire Germaine's report had been circulated and showed that the final balance at year end was £15,971. Shop sales had increased by £135.48 and subscriptions were up. Two travel bursaries had been awarded totalling the annual allocation of £1,500. £50 had been spent on the tournament fee for Dean Close and £363 on sports strip for the team. Claire thanked David Williams for auditing the accounts and also Jane and the Committee for their support.

Mark Naylor noted that the contribution towards the cricket covers voted through the previous year had not yet been paid over to the Friends of Rendcomb who had paid for them.

Printing costs for the newsletter were much the same as last year with the postage cost up in line with the increase in stamps. The Society is very grateful to the College for franking them as this gives a saving. The accounts were accepted, proposed by Michael Barnes, seconded by Lawrence Wragg and agreed unanimously.

(i) The late Colin Hitchcock's memorial fund.

£250 had been set aside to future proof the Old Rendcombian website which was now a wonderful resource and archive, thanks to Nigel Powell's hard work but he stressed how forward-thinking Colin Hitchcock had been in creating the original website in the first place. Jane had asked the Head if there was anything the College might want that could be bought with the remaining £1,000 that was in line with Colin's interests. The Maths department had requested a smart screen which cost £1,950. However, the Friends of Rendcomb had offered to match the ORs contribution.

It was proposed by Michael Dawson and seconded by David Beanland and agreed unanimously that the money should go towards the smart screen. This subject to some form of plaque noting the Colin Hitchcock Fund, FOR and OR contributions.

The meeting thanked Claire and David.

5. Travel Bursary

Despite the virus currently restricting travel, Jane had already received two applications for the Travel Bursary, so it was recommended that £1,500 should be again allocated for the forthcoming year. It was proposed by Michael Barnes and seconded by Nigel Powell, and agreed unanimously that the Travel Bursary for 2021 be £1,500.

6. Any other business

It was noted that the Ball, that had originally been planned for the centenary celebrations, had been dropped by the College in favour of a music-based, open-air event. Some people felt a Ball would have been more appropriate. Jane explained that the projected cost of the tickets had meant that it would have excluded many of the people who would have most wished to go. It was agreed that the Committee would look at it again.

The meeting thanked the Committee for all they did for the Society.

7. The meeting thanked David Williams for hosting the virtual AGM and Jane Gunner for organising it. It was felt that such was the benefit of overseas ORs being able to take part that it was worth exploring being able to include them virtually next year at the regular AGM.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

SPORTS CONTACTS

Please ring well in advance if you wish to play, referee or umpire in any of the fixtures. Also, on Facebook.

College: Alex Brealy – *BrealyA@rendcombcollge.org.uk*

Edward Thomason – *thomasonE@rendcombcollge.org.uk*

Rugby: Harley Phelps – *harley.phelps@googlemail.com*

Hockey: Harley Phelps – *harley.phelps@googlemail.com*

Girls' Sports: Jess Weston – *jess_weston@hotmail.com*

Cricket: Edward Thomason – *thomasonE@rendcombcollge.org.uk*

A G E N D A

You are invited to the 88th AGM of the Old Rendcombian Society on Zoom at 7pm on Monday 28th June 2021. To attend please contact Jane Gunner via the OR website for the link.

1. To receive apologies for absence
2. To receive the minutes of the 87th AGM held on 6th July 2020
3. To deal with matters arising from the minutes
4. To receive Hon. Treasurer's report
5. Election of President
6. Travel Bursary
7. Any other business
8. Vote of thanks to the College



OR VIRTUAL AGM 2020

The First 50 Years: Celebration Lunch

The Celebration Lunch to mark the centenary of the College is restricted to pupils who attended Rendcomb in the first 50 years (up to and including 1970).

When the idea of holding a celebration for this group of ORs was first mooted, we thought that one of the simpler decisions would be to select a date to hold the event. How wrong we were! Coronavirus has dominated all of our lives over the last 15 months. Even the best laid plans have been completely thwarted.

The Committee has now decided that the celebration will be held on **Wednesday 1st June 2022**. The extended delay will mean that we can safely gather and enjoy the celebration without too many restrictions. Full details of the event and proposed timings for the day are on the Old Rendcombian website – *oldrendcombian.org.uk*

Whilst the long delay is frustrating there are some clear benefits. At the moment we have the prospect of more than 100 ORs and their partners attending the event. We cover most of the years between 1940 up to 1971. The breakdown at the moment is as shown below:

<u>Date starting at College</u>	
1940s	8
1950s	16
1960s	32
1970 + 71	8
Partners & Guests	44

We are missing a few years of ORs who started at Rendcomb in 1942, 1944, 1945, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1958. Can you fill one of these missing gaps? We really do want to make this a memorable occasion. The more ORs who make the effort to attend the event the better it promises to be. It is not too late to register. If you would like to attend this event, please contact **Brian Smith** (1965-72) for further details via e-mail – *rendcomb2020@gmail.com* – by **31st July 2021**.

THE NEWSLETTER

Jane Gunner writes: Much of this year's newsletter will inevitably focus on the difficulties and realities of living with a pandemic. At the time of the distribution of last year's newsletter we were in the first lockdown and I wasn't sure how we were going to get it to people but in true Rendcomb fashion, a small band of volunteers presented themselves and the job was done. A huge thanks must go to my secretaries, Val Baldwin and Pippa Lafford and to **Brian Smith** (1965-72) and **Chris** (1965-71, Staff 1976-2009) and **Jill Wood**.

We managed to time the stuffing of the envelopes perfectly. As it had to be done outside, we needed it to be dry, little wind but not much sun because of the glare on the printed magazines. Luckily 11 o'clock on the morning we picked, all conditions were right and we had 1,300 envelopes filled in under an hour and a half. Thanks too must go to Anne Hardy and Carol Endersby at the College for ensuring that the envelopes were then all franked.



RENDCOMB: The College through a Global Pandemic

There is so much that I would like to share with you, but this article could quickly become a thesis or even ‘The History of Rendcomb III’, so I have to give a potted version of the past twelve months. I would like to have had time to tell you the story about the member of staff who went to a pupil’s house, sat in their room and convinced them to get online, or the story about our catering team launching a ‘Feeding Communities’ initiative that has



gone countrywide, or even the story of the pupil who wrote to me during lockdown to check that I was okay. I hope that you enjoy the following and know that the College has shown itself to be a very special place for very special people in a very challenging time.

The run up to lockdown – Lent 2020

Back in February we began to hear about a strange new type of ‘flu’ that had taken hold in the Wuhan Province of China and was forcing their government to take extreme measures to. At this time all was normal at Rendcomb: we had a Spanish exchange group visiting and the pupils were celebrating another musical triumph in the form of ‘We Will Rock You’; however, this rapidly changed as the virus started to spread further. Very quickly, parents wanted their children home before national borders were shut. Over the course of a weekend nearly every German pupil returned home, with the Spanish not far behind and those from further East scrambling for the rapidly dwindling flights. So, it was a much-depleted Senior School that met in the Griffin Building on 23rd March to have what we suspected would be the Final Assembly of the year. The Head Boy and Head Girl gave brilliant speeches reflecting the friendships, community and progress of their year while I thanked all the pupils for their fortitude over



the recent weeks and reminded them that while we might not be able to prevent the spread, (very quickly Italy ‘lit up’ as another Covid-19 hotspot, with awful pictures appearing of a health service overwhelmed together physically), we would still be the Rendcomb Family.

Meanwhile the staff, led by one or two key figures, spent the final week of term preparing to move online. Remote learning was a completely new experience and, looking back, it was an incredible achievement given the lack of time to prepare for a Brave New (online) World. Lessons on Firefly, Teams and even stories and fun via Instagram became the norm, as teachers and tutors sought to stay connected to their pupils and ensured that they started lockdown with some great teaching and learning ‘under their belts.’ I will never forget the final staff meeting where we gathered in the Dulverton, socially distancing – this strange and unusual new normal – and I asked the staff to give their best efforts in the final eight days and to establish Rendcomb as an online school.

SUMMER 2020 – Remote Learning Part 1

As you would expect, the Rendcomb staff went way beyond what was asked of them and made a challenging situation as easy as possible. Teachers called families, helped them set up IT equipment, checked that pupils had made it home after hours of flights and days of quarantine and made sure that the school routine could be replicated from home. There were many

acts of kindness and the ‘can do’ attitude that Rendcomb is known for prevailed. One such story involves a Year 11 boy who had gone home and was isolating with his father, who was ill with cancer. One evening we received a call from this young man saying that he did not know what to do as he could not get a delivery and lived too far away to collect groceries. Within hours we had put him in touch with another family who helped him with the shopping and another member of our teaching staff, who lived locally was on standby, should he need any further support.

I think it is telling that, when he did not know what to do, he called his teacher at Rendcomb in the knowledge that they would find a solution.

It has always been thus at this special school!

Schools did remote learning in different ways and we took a view that pupils should not be tied to their desks watching Zoom calls or Team lessons for the whole day. Instead, we opted for a live part of the lessons, so that pupils could interact and then work independently on a set piece of work. A key factor was that pupils would be taught, set work and then *get feedback* as this enables progress and helps to maintain motivation.

Tutors checked in with their groups weekly and we managed to run online music, family quizzes, sports challenges and even exams!

For me, it was very strange running a school remotely: like most teachers, I thrive on working with young people and suddenly my direct interactions fell to nearly zero. I have to admit to setting up Zoom calls with pupils, so that I got to see and speak with them! There was one lovely moment when one Year 11 asked me why we were meeting to which I said that it was for my welfare; nonplussed, he asked me how I was!

Thankfully the Government allowed us to start re-opening at the start of June and within two weeks we had managed to reopen for all Junior pupils in a Covid-19 safe manner. It was a special period as the pupils enjoyed the summer sun and the park – which was now teeming with nature – and their friends. This reopening also allowed us greater insight into how we might reopen the whole College in September.

The Summer holiday brought us more planning and what I can only describe as the *exams debacle!* Even here teachers, tutors and the Head of 6th Form spent hours contacting universities and trying to solve problems caused by the algorithm. Much of the summer was spent trying to work out what we could deliver in September and make the Rendcomb Education as normal as possible. Of course, the Government did not see fit to send out its guidelines until the final week of the summer holiday but, being Rendcomb we had made our own plans and it was good to see that the Government agreed with them!

CHRISTMAS TERM 2020 – The Pupils Return

It was a joy to welcome the pupils back in September. While the school had to be ‘bubbled’ and cleaning had to happen constantly, it was wonderful to breathe life into the College with the return of all pupils. We decided to play to our strengths, i.e. a separated (not isolated!) location where we could control the movement of people on and off site. Pupils were split into bubbles of up to one hundred across key age groups to allow us to deliver sport, performing arts and activities on top of the usual fare of lessons. While some might raise an eyebrow at cross-year bubbles, our largest group was still about half the size of a year group in the local secondary. As you can imagine, the staff worked incredibly hard to keep everyone safe with ideas coming from all quarters. While we kept everyone safe, we were determined to provide the best possible educational experience so concerts still happened - in larger spaces - sport carried on with internal (rather than external) fixtures, the play became a film, Chapel and Assembly went online and were shown in tutor groups and the school felt almost normal for the pupils.



I was very proud to be one of the few schools, in the whole country, who had no Covid-19 cases and sent no pupils home to self-isolate during the

Christmas term and this meant that pupils enjoyed twelve weeks of uninterrupted learning. It was such a pleasure to have the pupils back and while it was not perfect, this period of time proved so valuable, both educationally and in terms of wellbeing. Thankfully, the remote learning, along with this period in College, ensured that the pupils made good progress. Rendcomb pupils have been fortunate to have such a great support system and I am saddened to see that so many of the young have had a very different experience with education – many being damaged permanently.

LENT 2021 – Lockdown Looms Again

As a Head you look forward to Christmas, not because of the obvious reasons but because it is the only time of year when the College shuts down for a week, so you know that there really is nothing to do or worry about. After wishing everyone a happy Christmas we continued to standby to provide support for test and trace and were also ready to help the many boarders who were residing in the UK. Unfortunately, the Government decided to announce their schools testing programme on the 18th December so we rolled back into action and began trying to work out how we were going to test 400 pupils and 150 staff at the start of term and then continue ‘serial testing’ i.e. allowing pupils to come into school and have a test every day for seven days, if they had been a close contact. I needed resources, staffing, a space that adhered to the requirements and to have this prepared by 4th January – essentially become a testing centre. Little did we know that we would then have to delay the start of term and ultimately switch to remote learning and critical worker provision once again.

The last twelve months have been an enormous challenge and I have realised how lucky I am to be a part of such a great school. The staff have always sought to teach the pupils – please don’t think that the unions represent all teachers – the pupils have shown incredible resilience and the families have worked with us to solve countless problems. I am also aware that others have had it a lot harder and I salute all those who are critical workers and particularly those on ‘the front line.’ What this pandemic has shown, however, is that the education that we provide at Rendcomb – ie. one that values the whole child, that values community and values individuals – is more important now than ever before, and while it was not the Centenary Year that we hoped for I believe that Noel Wills would have been proud to see how Rendcomb has responded to a year like no other.

Rob Jones Head of College

CONGRATULATIONS



Issy Bailey (2007-10) has been selected to represent Team GB at the Tokyo Paralympics, her second Paralympics. She writes: Even though the organising committee have recently announced that there'll be no overseas spectators at the Tokyo Games, we are still training hard and looking forward to competing in Japan. There will be six target shooters heading to the Tokyo Paralympics and the shooting team was officially announced back in January, so we've been able to train with confidence, knowing we've been selected. Our staff at British Shooting have worked really hard to create a safe training environment and to replicate competitions that have been cancelled, so we go to the Games as competition-ready as possible. Despite the setbacks that all sports have faced over the last year, we are glad to be headed back into competition and have high hopes for Tokyo. To anyone looking to get involved in disability sport, I'd say take every opportunity you can! Try lots of different sports, because you never know what you may take to. The Paralympics take place 29th Aug – 5th Sept this year in Tokyo, Japan and you'll be able to follow Issy's progress on Channel 4.

ACADEMIC SUCCESSES

Lauren Frances Seatter-Messer (2008-15) graduated July 2019 awarded 1st Class BA (Hons) in Fine Art and winner of the Fine Art Writing Prize from Oxford Brookes University.

James Tait (2002-15) graduated June 2019 awarded MEng Master of Engineering with 1st Class (Hons) in Mathematics and Computer Science from University of Bristol.

Eleanor Brealy (2010-17) graduated 2020 awarded 1st Class BSc (Hons) in Geography from Swansea University and commended for achieving over 75%. Eleanor was awarded the Sir Dudley Stamp Prize for best undergraduate physical geography dissertation in environmental sciences.

Her undergraduate dissertation was deemed to be of outstanding quality, originality and presentation and was singled out by the Board of Examiners as being exceptional.

Cerys Davies (2008-14) graduated 2020 awarded 1st Class BSc (Hons) in Sport Management from Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Olivia Ellis (2010-15) graduated in 2019 awarded 1st Class (Hons) in Law (LLB), from Cardiff University 2019.

BIRTHS

To **Emily** (*née Tennant-Bell*) (2005-10) and Greg **Noble**, a daughter, Matilda Clementine, May 2020

To **Amanda** (*née Graham*) (2000-07) and Adam **Sansom**, a son Theo Graham, September 2020.

To **Rebecca** (*née Hutchinson*) (2001-06) and **Oliver** (2003-08) **Richards**, a son William Brinley Graeme, October 2020.

To **Richard** (1997-2004) and Alice **Burden**, a daughter Molly Elizabeth, November 2020, a sister for Ethan.

To **Hannah** (*née Bishop*) (2001-05) and Callum **McMahon**, a son Bruce, November 2020, a brother for Ava.

To **Harley** (2002-09) and Holly **Phelps**, a son Oscar Joseph, February 2021

MARRIAGES

Geoffrey Hulbert (2000-05) married Karolina Soprun in February 2020, at Inglewood Estate an hour's drive from Melbourne. As it was about a month before the first Covid-19 cases arrived in Australia, family and friends were able to fly in from Europe, the UK, the USA and interstate.





Graham (2000-05) and Geoffrey (2000-05) with their parents Mac and Madge.



Kathryn Rew (2005-15) married Jonathan Maltz in October 2020 with 15 guests present.



Kathryn Dunlap (2009-10) married Rowley Bowen-Jones in January 2021.



ORs on the Frontline

The OR Society would like to thank and commend all those who are working so tirelessly and courageously for the benefit of others.

Jade Loughran (*née Harrison*) (2002-07) and her brother, **Peter Harrison** (2007-10), are both working in the NHS.

Jade wrote during the first lockdown in 2020: ‘I am an anaesthetist



working in intensive care in a busy hospital in Newport, South Wales. We are caring for the sickest patients with Covid-19, who require ventilators and other organ support. It’s a busy place to work on any day, but currently we have over 3 times our usual number of patients, and it is getting busier every day. **Peter** is a doctor working in cardiology in a large hospital in Leeds. With the Coronary Care Unit changing identity temporarily to a Respiratory Unit, he is on the front line looking after patients with Covid-19.

We are both incredibly grateful to everyone who is working hard to keep people safe. The NHS, key workers, and everyone who is staying at home. We are all in this together.’

In February 2021, in answer to a request from Jane, **Jade** gave this further update: Both **Peter** and I are still working in hospitals – Peter in Leeds and myself in South Wales. Our hospitals had a bit of relief at the end of the first wave but have again been incredibly busy in recent months. We are both well and so grateful for all the support everyone has shown for the NHS in recent times.





Abigail Tennant-Bell (2005-10)

I am a paramedic with South Central Ambulance Service working in Hampshire after completing my BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science at the University of Greenwich in 2018. It has been an incredibly trying time for us all on the frontline having to face new and difficult scenarios on a daily basis with more and more research being released. It's been a massive learning journey, as well as a rewarding one seeing how everyone in the NHS has adapted.

We are working extra hours to ensure we can bring the best care to our patients and bringing in new pathways to ensure people get the best care for their conditions. I am incredibly proud of everyone on the frontline and feel I couldn't have made a better career choice. I long for the days of 'normality' and no longer having to wear all of that PPE! I think it's easy for people to forget that we are dealing with all the 'normal' ambulance jobs as well as COVID-19 so we have been non-stop but as long as I'm making a difference to people's lives, I'm happy!

Tom Geerah (2005-10) is a paramedic with South Western Ambulance Service.

Ava Carpenter (2002-07) is centre manager at the NHS Foundation Trust's Sexual Assault Referral Centre.



April Brittain (*née Edwards*) (2001-09) married to **Henry Brittain** (2004-09) is a Ward Sister. She has been looking after patients with the Coronavirus.

Woolly underwear and the breakdown of tents

Jennifer Lane-Birkenstock (*née Lane*) (1980-81) about the Covid-19 pandemic in Germany from a GPs point of view:



The work of a GP the world over is defined by a certain routine. This ended abruptly with the Corona pandemic. How could we look after the people with respiratory infections and not endanger the chronically ill patients? It was learning by doing and constant readjustment as we learnt more about the disease and the pandemic. Dr. Christian Drosten (epidemiologist at the Charité Hospital in Berlin) and his podcast as well as the home page of the Robert Koch Institute became our bible.

Our practice consists of 4 GPs and 3 GPs in training. We employ 12 doctor's assistants (two of which are apprentices). By German standards this is a big GP practice. Mostly it is one or maximum two doctors who share an office together. The practice is on the ground floor.

In a way, Covid-19 was a great teambuilding effort with the Coach being the pandemic. This early phase was shaped by ourselves. Nobody told us what to do. We had to do it the way we thought was right. The first 3 months were marked by improvisation and the lack of protective material. We held short lunchtime meetings with everyone to update on the latest news and to make decisions on new procedures. Everyone was motivated and willing to invest time. Lunch and sticking to hours became irrelevant. Everybody's suggestions were heard and discussed. We were effective like never before.

We decided to put up a tent in the car park behind the practice to see the patients with infections. That has been going all through winter. Two tents were lost to storms. We were offered a tent by the Red Cross as a replacement. This tent was strong and big and really useful until it snowed in January 2021 and broke down under the weight of the wet



snow. We had forgotten about it at the weekend not being used to snow in our region. The patients with respiratory symptoms were seen by our doctors in the tent outside while the doctors' assistant was at the desk with the computer in the adjoining office at the open window – PCR swabs could be taken with little danger of self-infection and sick notes and prescriptions could be processed. Sometimes with rain and cold the patients understandably were a little annoyed about having to wait outside to be treated.

Apart from dressing up in woolly underwear, FFP2 masks, gloves, apron, hat and protective glasses (always steamed up) this system worked very well and we felt protected from infection despite treating people. We implemented a corona mobile phone number for people who were tested positive for Covid-19 and put under quarantine. This happened under the impression that the authorities did not manage to inform and keep in touch with people sufficiently as numbers increased. The idea was to give people the chance to ring us in case of deterioration so that we could help them with the decision whether to go to hospital or not. Early on in the pandemic it gave people security with an illness that they were unfamiliar with.

On top of that, the practice phones were overloaded as patients tended to ring more than to come to the surgery.

The routine work needed to be done as well. After realizing that signs telling people that they should not come inside with infections did not work we installed the apprentices at the doors as doormen. Despite their efforts numerous scares happened with these matters. Not everyone was honest and sometimes the questions were not precise enough. Luckily, we never had to close because of a Covid-19 case. Nowadays most patients have adjusted to the situation, they know the rules, keep the distance, wear masks and accept the chill due to venting. The patients have become confident again with coming to see us in person. Prescriptions are handed out of the window. The surgery has become a fortress.

We had also tried video consultation but found it inflexible and difficult to work. The elderly patients for whom it would have been helpful proved unable to work the system. Also, with the younger patients it proved difficult to send invitations for the appointment via e-mail as their addresses were not in the system. Also, the doctors found it difficult to operate. Privacy protection forbade the use of WhatsApp video calls which would have been easier.

We find that many patients are tense and release their frustration with the situation when they come to see us. They are often annoyed with the inconveniences that are involved. Our medical assistants perform splendidly in calming the tension.

Within a year we have worked our way through no masks to homemade masks to surgical masks to FFP 2 masks. We are thankful that so far, the pandemic never got out of control. But what we are waiting for is the vaccination, in my view the greatest gleam of hope. And here we envy Great Britain, Israel and the USA. At the beginning, Germans agreed with and trusted the measures taken by our government. After a year of lockdown and a comparatively slow start to the vaccination campaign, frustration and dissatisfaction are on the rise, making it increasingly difficult to get people to comply with the measures and keep the pandemic under control.

So far vaccinations have solely been carried out by the health authorities in care homes, big vaccination centres (people aged 80 plus) as well as hospitals (solely for the medical staff). But we have just learned that we will

take part in the campaign starting straight after Easter. This makes me happy and hopeful that the campaign will increase in momentum.

Dave Hughes (1991-98) founded the Cotswold Scrubs Project in April 2020. The project went from strength to strength after the first set of scrubs were given the go-ahead for use in the Departments of Critical Care (DCC) for both Gloucester Royal and Cheltenham hospitals.

The other scrubs which are being made were distributed to wherever else they were needed such as the Oncology Department in Cheltenham, the Medical Centres in Moreton-in-Marsh and Tewkesbury as well as local doctors' surgeries, community care nurses, health visitors and funeral directors.

OBITUARIES

It is with great sadness that the Society has learnt of the deaths of the following people. Our deepest sympathies go to their families and friends.

Tim Denehy (1946-48) died in August 2020.

In the relatively short time Tim was at Rendcomb we established a lasting friendship, writes **Geoff Bye** (1940-48). We spent a lot of time together playing games! He was a fast bowler for the cricket XI, while I spun the ball from the other end. He played on the right-wing at football while I accompanied him at inside left or right. We both enjoyed athletics and were decent sprinters. Mr Thackeray who took care of athletics suggested we compete in a schools' meet being held in Cheltenham in the summer of '48, but the Head did not agree.



No reason given!

The reason for him leaving Wellington College for Rendcomb was always something of a mystery.

I subsequently found out that it had to do with a visit to a pub where unfortunately some staff members were present. A similar risk was taken one evening during the summer term of 1948 when he and I casually popped into the Colesbourne Arms for a beer. No staff present, no problem! He was “Best Man” at my wedding in Croydon Parish church in 1952. As our lives progressed, we had few opportunities for face-to-face socializing. I left the UK in 1961, and have been an expatriate ever since. Tim’s career was London-based. We maintained our relationship by writing.

Tim’s life started in India where his father was an officer in the Indian Army. The family returned to the UK in 1936. On leaving Rendcomb in the summer of 1948, Tim did his National Service in the army and then went up to St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. He decided early after graduation that he wanted to have a career in advertising, an aim he fulfilled with considerable success, enjoying a 40-year career. He worked for several firms and had responsibility for a large company’s advertising programmes. The list is too long to show here but included Trex, Colgate, Mars Petcare, Mirror Group, Max Factor, Pillsbury. I could go on!



The letters I received from him were increasingly about his travels with his wife Hazel (a marriage which incidentally lasted over 60 years). Australia, Canada and frequently the Outer Hebrides and New Zealand were

mentioned. The travels continued even when Hazel was confined to a wheel chair. Nothing was going to stop them.

Tim made a big difference to my last two Rendcomb years. I continue to

be grateful for the friendship.

My thanks to his son Micky Denehy for allowing me to see Tim's writings, which helped to prepare this note.

Cat Ledger (1973-75) died in 2020. **Robert Barnard-Weston** (1968-75) writes:

The Irreplaceable Cat Ledger – some memories

I am far from being the only person who has described Cat Ledger as a phenomenon. From the moment I met her, I knew she was no ordinary young woman. Actually, from my perspective today, as a man in my sixties and a grandfather, I would now say we were barely more than children: I was sixteen and she was fifteen. Yet she had a wisdom, a way with words and a bearing that seemed far beyond her years.

Of course, there were other factors in the sense I had of being way out of my depth: women are renowned for being ahead of men in the rate at which they mature (many have told me we never make up the ground). My form-mates and I were also a group of time-served boarding school males who, for much of our lives, had only rarely encountered females during term-time at all. Suddenly there were twelve of these fascinating creatures in our midst; to say we were flummoxed would, I think, be an understatement.

Just my luck, then, to choose to engage this one in conversation as soon as she arrived at Rendcomb. A few minutes into that first encounter it suddenly dawned on me that the one trump card I had thought I might have in my hand was about to be rendered powerless: on top of everything else, she had a razor-sharp intellect! Years of training from some very fine educators had begun to shape even my disorderly mind into a usable asset and I had learned a certain confidence in this area. A raised eyebrow and sharp question at some ill-considered *non sequitur* I'd let slip, quickly made it clear that I had more than met my match.

Eventually, it dawned on me that this wasn't a competition but an opportunity to enrich my life in all sorts of hitherto unimagined ways. It wasn't all plain sailing – our disagreements were legend and usually led to one or both of us storming out of the sixth-form common room in high dudgeon. Always gracious yet never prepared to compromise when she knew she was right, I quickly realized that Cat did *not* back down lightly. I learned a huge amount from her as we set the scene for a lifelong friendship. After school we went to different universities, Cat to study English in Brighton. Cat then set about building a magnificent career in the

literary world while I became a professional eco-worrier, trying to call attention to climate change and social injustice. We kept in touch and met up for lunch or dinner when we found ourselves in the same part of the world at the same time. Over the years Cat teased me increasingly ruthlessly as my wife Kari and I produced more and more children. Then one day, over a delicious Ethiopian dinner, she looked me straight in the eye and said, to my great surprise “the maternal clock does not stop ticking just because we’re middle-aged. I am going to adopt a Guatemalan baby!”

Next time we saw Cat she had the adorable Fabiola in her arms. We visited their delightful French home near Carcassonne, where her partner Bernard cooked us all an exquisite lunch and we spent the day in the garden both meeting The Fab One and hearing about all the adventures that had gone into her becoming a member of the family. We quickly discovered that Cat was going to become as fierce and formidable a mother as she was an upholder of principles and a defender of friends. More even than before, her legendary wit and energy inspired everyone around her, combining brilliantly with her intuitive ability to see just what was needed to help and reassure others.

The years since then have passed far too quickly and, of course, have included the loss of this amazing woman. I cannot begin to imagine how it must feel for her family to have to deal with Cat’s absence. I can say, however, that the rest of the world, including the part that I occupy, is feeling a gap, where an irreplaceable part is missing. And nothing can ever fill that gap.

Colin Burden (Staff 1963-97) **Bill White** (Staff 1961-97) writes:



All Old Rendcombian will be shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Colin Burden in June 2020 from cancer and will wish to send their sincere condolences to Dorothy and to **Frances** (1995-02) and **Richard** (1997-04) and their families.

Colin came to Rendcomb in 1963 to take over woodwork and PE from

Roy Elliot who had moved to Bembridge School on the Isle of Wight. Colin will have influenced large numbers of ORs, particularly through his expert teaching of woodwork, of which Rendcomb already had an established reputation from the 1920s. Colin built on this reputation, taking pupils through the early stages of the three-legged stool to much more ambitious items. The atmosphere in the workshop on Sunday afternoons or in other free time was industrious and relaxed with pupils working on a wide range of articles and clearly showed the rapport Colin had with his pupils. The range of items made always amazed me, as did the high standard of workmanship. I remember being surprised when one pupil wanted to make a copy of my eighteenth-century bureau. The final result was first class. All this expertise was brought together in the Woodwork Exhibition of 1996, illustrating the high standard achieved over many years.

I always considered it tragic that such a successful subject disappeared from the timetable when Colin retired and the syllabus was changed.

Another of Colin's major contributions was his dedication to training the under 15 Cricket and Rugby teams in which he was able to pass on his love of both sports to generations of Rendcombians. I remember asking him why he did not play for a local cricket club at the weekend and he said he could not do it during term-time as he would not be able to be in the woodwork department! But at least he was able to

be Master in Charge of cricket before he retired. He was also involved in developing judo and would be pleased to know that one of his pupils (**Ben Almond**



Colin on dormitory duty 1965-66. His jackets were famous.

1978-85) still acts as a coach and has a son who earned his third national judo medal last year and went on to win gold in the Scottish Open. In Colin's early years at Rendcomb, any pupil who could not cope with Latin O-level did a woodwork course instead. Colin had studied Geography at Loughborough as part of his degree and felt the subject should be taught at Rendcomb. In due course, Geography was taught to O-level and became very popular. Chris Terrill was then appointed to take the subject to A-level. It was a major contribution to the curriculum.

After he retired, Colin became increasingly involved in the 'Friends of Rendcomb', becoming Executive Secretary. He worked hard contacting ORs to raise funds to support current pupils. His efforts were rewarded by increasing donations and the fact that the Friends of Rendcomb is still thriving. If you would like to make a donation in memory of Colin, you will find details in the newsletter.

Colin was a kind and supportive colleague, always ready to help and go 'the extra mile' (he did this literally by joining me for a weekend's walking on Exmoor when I had a damaged ankle, despite his dislike of cross-country walking). In the early days, we went on a number of holidays together, including a pre-Christmas week in Majorca. This cost £27 all-found including wine! Travel companies were trying to encourage people to take winter breaks! We also had a three-week holiday driving the length of France in my ailing Hillman Minx with John Jenkin, Director of Music. After his marriage, Colin set up his family home in The Whiteway, Cirencester where he and Dorothy always made visitors most welcome and also became involved in activities in the town. ORs will appreciate Colin's remarkable contribution to Rendcomb over many years. His funeral was taken by **Rev Bob Edy** (1959-67, Staff 2015-) and Colin is buried at Rendcomb.

I was at Rendcomb from 1971 to 1978, **Hamish Wilson** writes: where Colin had the exasperating task of teaching me woodwork. Given my practical ineptitude, I feel he did surprisingly well. It would be fair to say, I was more at home in the Art room or 'down the other end' [of the Arts' Block] as he teasingly referred to it. However, under his guidance, in the First Form, I made a cheese board which is still proudly used by my mother. I then went on to produce a bookshelf and a few other modest artefacts. However, my *piece de resistance* was undoubtedly the chessboard I made in the 3rd Year. He thought such a project would be way beyond my capabilities and initially turned down the idea. I think my crestfallen face may have persuaded him to let me have a go and I remember, to this day, his joy when

the squares actually matched up and the first Rendcomb chessboard was conceived!



At **Bill White's** 80th birthday party February 2016 *from left to right:* **Mark Webb** (1972-79), **Hamish Wilson** (1971-78), **Bob Edy** (1959-67, staff 2015-), **Colin Burden**, Dorothy Burden, **Lawrence Wragg** (1956-63), Ruth Edy.

His expertise and enthusiasm for his subject were reflected in the high quality of woodwork which was annually displayed on Founder's Day. This, unfortunately, put a fair amount of parental pressure on me as my father would routinely question why **I** couldn't make a coffee table, sideboard, record cabinet etc. Be that as it may, there were many boys who, in my time, pretty much lived in the 'manual' and thrived under Colin's dedicated stewardship.

Colin clearly loved Rendcomb and was a keen advocate of its unique ethos. I remember him telling me one OR Day of his disappointment that PW had been abolished and his concern that too much was latterly laid on for the pupils. In the seventies, so much was organised by the boys (and girls – though at that stage, they were admitted only into the 6th form) and the school's nurturing of self-reliance and initiative was something he very much approved of and respected. His commitment to the school was

phenomenal. Looking back and, having been a teacher myself, the time he freely gave to the pupils was staggering. Whether coaching on the sports field (his skill as a cricketer was much admired), supervising the swimming pool, building stage sets, taking groups on trips or advising as a form-master, he exhibited an outstanding level of care, encouragement and interest for the individual. I was touched and impressed by the welcome I received from him on OR Days and his continuing interest in what I was doing at the time. He was keen to show me the Griffin Theatre, knowing I taught Drama and in recent years was always interested to hear about the progress and development of the creative writing retreat I set up with my partner, Rebecca in 2017. As a key figure in the Friends of Rendcomb with his desire to give those less fortunate the opportunity of a Rendcomb education, he demonstrated his life-long dedication to the school.

This dedication was most apparent when Graham Moore posted Colin's death on our Year Group WhatsApp, releasing a tide of fond memories and even photos of things (including beautiful hand-turned bowls, a cassette rack and a tea-trolley) made in the workshop over forty years ago. There was great sadness to hear of his death and many lovely comments: 'I loved doing woodwork with him'... 'A thoroughly decent chap. Still use the things he taught us most weeks'... 'He was so very patient. It took me almost six months to make a small table'... 'I still use the bread board that I made in



the 1st Form every day'... 'I planed so much off the cheese board I was making that CCB had to think on his feet and it became the base of an adjustable lamp – mostly made by him! My Dad still has it!'

From left to right:
Chris Wood (1965-71,
 Staff 1976-2009)
Colin Burden
 (Staff 1963-97)
Roland Martin
 (1982-89, Headmaster
 2011-15)
Bill White
 (Staff 1961-97)

Someone once said to me that, as a teacher, you never know what seeds you sow. However, I know that Colin sowed many. He had a profound influence on life at the college and made a positive and lasting impact on so many Rendcombians' lives. He will be much missed and remembered with great affection.

Colin Burden (CCB)

My first encounter with CCB was in 1965 in the gym (then in the Conservatory) for a PE lesson. He was clad in his purple Loughborough tracksuit which caused some amusement, as did his accent. I had never really experienced formal PE lessons in my Junior school using bars, horses, mini tramps and other apparatus but no one needed to worry because Colin explained the exercises well and encouraged us to push ourselves in a safe environment. Who would have thought that we would be doing somersaults? My favourite was doing 'circuits' of exercises. We also went for runs in his lessons and, although I am sure that I cursed them at the time, I remember the Greenmeadow Farm runs with affection. This involved running out of the village past where Bill White used to live (number 9), crossing the brook that runs to Kennel Bottom, climbing up to Greenmeadow Farm, turning right on to the Whiteway, coasting down to Kennel Bottom either by the road or the copse shaped like Jewish letters and back to school for a quick shower.

In the summer term, there was the opportunity to swim or learn to swim in my case, expertly and enthusiastically taught by Colin and Bill White. Colin also organised the excellent Amateur Athletics Standards which included shot putt, long jump and triple jump. These took place beyond the balustrade towards where Park House now stands.

Colin coached both rugby and cricket, the latter being a sport which he really enjoyed. In later years he ran cricket in his typically efficient way and he was very proud of Rendcomb hosting an England under 14 match against Wales in 1991.

Another area where CCB was seriously challenged by my lack of natural skill was in woodwork. This took place on the 'manole' (Rendcomb's name for the manual workshop) which was facing the swimming pool but it moved to the new Arts Block in 1967, allowing us to try metalwork as well as woodwork. Colin spent hours outside of official lessons in the workshops so that pupils could take on larger projects or in my case simply finish my modest efforts (a pair of bookends in yew and a screw driver!). I recall that there were some very impressive pieces of furniture produced by the more able and electric guitars were also made. At a recent birthday celebration for

Hartley Moore (1964-71) we were reminiscing about the guitar he made at school and it is still in great shape. In 1996 Colin organised a very successful Craftwork exhibition for the 75th anniversary of the school. It showcased the standard of what had been produced in the workshop over the years. It is worth having a look at some of the exhibits at oldrendcombian.org.uk/woodwork. Colin's woodworking skills were considerable and he put this to good use restoring antiques, giving himself another string to his bow for retirement from teaching in 1997.

CCB also taught Geography with great enthusiasm. Sadly, in the 60s this was only taught to lower forms and was not offered at O-level but later the subject became a firm favourite at GCSE and then A-level, with Colin contributing to the success of the department. He was particularly inspiring to those who chose Physical Geography for their GCSE projects.

In 1976 Colin became one of my colleagues when I joined the teaching staff and it was immediately apparent that everything he did was carried out with careful planning and to a high standard. You could always rely on him for sound advice or help with anything.

I was also very privileged to be able to teach Chemistry to both of Colin and Dorothy's children, Frances and Richard, both of whom studied sciences at university, with Richard pursuing Chemistry and both were always studious and academic, a real credit to Colin and Dorothy.

Colin also faithfully supported Old Rendcombian reunions and other events with great enthusiasm, often to be seen chatting with former pupils at the pavilion. The OR Society will miss his presence.

So, it is with great sadness that I say goodbye and thank you to my teacher, my colleague and my friend. Colin will not be forgotten.

Chris Wood (1965-71, Staff 1976-2009)

Colin Burden was the very heart and soul of the Friends of Rendcomb, **Richard Wills**, Chairman of the Trustees writes: I simply don't believe that there was actually a day in the year that he wasn't ringing someone up or writing a letter on behalf of the Friends. I dread to think what the tally of his hours would come to (and his telephone bill) working on ways of raising funds for helping Rendcomb and pupils in trouble in particular. So serious he was that even when being overtly teased by other trustees (not me obviously), there would be a sparkle of recognition, a grin in the corner of his mouth but he would always finish what he had to say. He worked

tirelessly through his database of ORs, updating numbers and changing addresses and then the slog of contacting each one and gently offering different ways in which they could help the school. This made an enormous difference and I think he was hugely proud of the changes to so many lives that resulted from those efforts. I would also like to recognise and pay tribute to the time and support that Dorothy his wife gave him in his quest for supporting the college. He did this for over twenty years having taught at Rendcomb for another thirty before that. He was very kind considerate and great fun to have the pleasure of working with, he has left us with much to carry on with and we will do that thinking of him very fondly.

If anyone is interested in helping out with what we do and perhaps becoming a trustee there is a very happy team that would welcome you. All our love Colin you have more than earned a peaceful rest.



Colin aged
about 11
years old



Colin with HRH Prince Michael of Kent

Bill White and Colin Burden
on their retirement from
teaching at the College
in 1997.



The entry from the Rendcomb Chronicle Vol 13. No. 4 March 1964:
SCHOOL NOTES Autumn Term, 1963. We welcome **Mr. R. E. Caves**

who comes from Campbell College, Belfast, to take charge of Chemistry which is now to be taught as a full subject throughout the school, and **Mr. C. C. Burden**, from Loughborough Training College to take Woodwork and Physical Education.

Vale Colin Burden

Colin was my teacher at Rendcomb and although that was long ago, the delights of woodwork which he fostered in me are as alive now as they were then. Colin's patient, calm and supportive attitude helped greatly by bringing process and validity each step of the way in building a project.

I can still feel him standing nearby when needed, occasionally lending a hand to demonstrate a technique or hone a skill, his guidance left you feeling in control through building confidence and capabilities.

Still now I often awake to a new day with usually another building project to undertake and the early morning passion and enthusiasm is muted by a sense of inadequacy, I take a deep breath and remember that 'one step at a time' motto that I learnt from Colin.

Although living in Australia and the passage of time have restricted the relationship, I feel part of me has also gone with Colin's passing. All those memories: masses of wood curls around my feet at the wood lathe, the smell of oil as a forged iron fire poker is taken from the forge and plunged into whale oil, the sound of the bench saw- especially the big one that only Mr Burden could use.

We still use in our kitchen the first woodwork project I made: a small oak cutting board: face side, face edge and a spoke shave. I still carry in my tool box a mallet I made from purple wood; how many times has that chiselled out a hinge rebate over the last 50 years?

Colin was supportive in so many ways – the woodworking room called 'Manol' was open anytime, I could start as early as I liked sometimes 5am if I was really keen! He helped me transition into making furniture to sell, with **Nick Hance** (1966-73) and I making a set of teak dining chairs with woven sea grass seats for a client. Repairing old furniture was also important to Colin and that appreciation of tradition and quality are values I've continued to hold onto and use, there's always an old piece of furniture in my shed that I'm working on!

I've had Colin and Dorothy's phone number in my address book since I left England 40 years ago and I'm sure that had I stayed in the UK I'd have called him often for a handy tip or two, rather than saving them up for the Old Boys Day which I get to about once in a decade...

Thanks, Colin, for such great personal assistance and fostering positive attitudes that have provided me with the capacity to live life to the fullest.

Graham Jordan (1966-73)

Ron Caves (Staff 1963-69), **Bill White** (Staff 1961-97) writes:

Ron Caves died in a nursing home in Scotland in January 2021, aged 91. He met **Anthony Quick** (Headmaster 1961-71) while he was on a year's secondment to Charterhouse from Campbell College, Belfast in 1961. Anthony Quick then came to Rendcomb as Head in September 1961.

Although Physics was taught throughout the school, Chemistry was taught by **Jack Fell** (Staff 1934-73) but only in the 6th Form. A decision was made to establish Chemistry as a subject taught throughout the school to A-level and Anthony Quick appointed Ron Caves to do this in 1963. It was a successful move; Ron Caves proved to be not only a good teacher, but he got on well with all the pupils. Ron Caves was also passionate about rugby and coached the 1st XV with great dedication. He also made sure that staff coaching junior games were similarly enthusiastic, as I well remember! I recall asking him how long I had to go on coaching rugby, he replied, "Until you are as old as I am!" I did that – and more! I remember watching a 1st XV match in torrential rain on Top and I noted that Ron was not wearing his glasses. When they had a line-out near me, I asked Ron if he would like me to get his glasses. He shouted, "Don't you ever ask a referee if he needs glasses!" A wiser and a humbler man I rose the morrow morn! Ron had a good sense of humour, however.

Ron Caves left Rendcomb in 1969 and returned to Campbell College where he became a Housemaster and subsequently Deputy Head. When he retired, he and his wife moved to Scotland to be near their family. Although I had always kept in touch with Ron, the Caves family were close friends with **John** and **Anne Holt** (1968-96), and it was Anne who rang to notify me of Ron's death.

Rhona Stratford (Staff 1976-2009) and **Carol Varley** (Staff 1980-2016)

It is with great sadness I have to report at the end of 2020 Rhona passed away and in the first months of 2021 Carol also left us. I have put both of these long-serving members of the Housekeeping Team together as so often they were working as a team, to this day on key fobs and hoovers their names appear together. Many will have known Carol as Queenie, an affectionate name that was given to her by the 6th form when she worked in Park House which stayed with her for many years.

Both Carol and Rhona worked throughout the College in boarding houses and the Main Building. They were very well-loved and respected by students and staff alike always going out of their way to ensure that the college was left spick and span and supporting students in any way they could, often being a listening ear. There were some stories of student antics from days passed that they would never relay but names came up and they would both have a wry smile on their faces when certain names were mentioned. Whoever it was that demonstrated a lighter in the shape of a toy gun to Rhona and set the curtains alight, or the person who removed the glass from the louvre windows in their Park House bedroom to sneak out and said they had not left the room only to leave footprints in the snow outside the window, your secrets are safe.

It is a testament to how respected and liked they both were that at their respective retirement events the whole sixth form came to say goodbye and wish them a happy retirement and thank them for the long and dedicated service they gave to Rendcomb College.

Katharine Trotman *née James*. **Julian Comrie** (1946-54) writes:

I am sorry to report the death of Katharine, beloved wife of Robert Trotman, and younger sister of Helen. Born Katharine Hilary Lovel James, 23 September 1939, second daughter of **John** and **Kathleen James**, she died after a long, bravely born battle against cancer on 4th October 2020.

I first saw Katharine in about 1948, when she would have been about eight or nine, and got to know her well a short while later. Although she and Robert were my sister-in-law and brother-in law, having no siblings myself, the in-law part was totally ignored - they became my brother and sister, and the most delightful relations one could possibly wish for.

Many ORs will have benefited from the teachings of **Mr** and **Mrs James**, steeped in classical academia, specifically History and English: I have heard them described as 'the power house of Rendcomb'; Katharine however was determined to read science. Later in life, she and I enjoyed many quiet moments discussing some scientific discipline, in a house full of humanists!

Robert Trotman writes: Katharine and I met at Oxford while studying for our degrees. She had won a State Scholarship and was reading Zoology at St Hilda's, I read Modern History. We settled first in central London where Katharine obtained a Post Graduate Certificate in Education from King's College and then took up a job in a North Croydon grammar school, teaching A-level biology.

After three years we moved to a house in rural Surrey and started a family (we were fortunate to have four children; two boys and two girls). Katharine continued her participation in education, following in the footsteps of both her parents, by becoming a governor of the local primary school (which our children attended) and a trustee of a local educational charity (she eventually became chairperson of both). As the family grew up, she resumed her teaching career becoming a part-time biology teacher at St Mary's Prep School in Reigate, where she remained until retirement.

Katharine's great interest in the natural world was begun, with encouragement from her mother, and **Ernest Neal**, Biology teacher at Rendcomb until 1946, during her early years in Rendcomb, which was then I understand a small rural community where there were few playmates of her own age, apart from her elder sister Helen.

She was a keen observer of the detail in her surroundings and developed a strong recording habit. Her particular interest was in small animals, and after studying zoology at Oxford she subsequently passed her enthusiasm onto many through teaching and participation in wildlife trust activities. Her particular specialty became dragonflies and she continued to learn and experience more (always keeping careful notes). We visited many parts of Britain, particularly for the different habitats and, when the children had left home, she joined study expeditions abroad, including Hungary, Bulgaria and Costa Rica. Our retirement holidays in North America also included a strong wildlife dimension.

Katharine's interests extended beyond the natural world. Photography was a useful attribute for her observations and she was able to benefit from her FRPS brother-in-law, Julian; it also provided extensive family records. Gardening was another absorbing interest, inherited from her father, and she devoted many hours to nurturing new plants and tending our reasonably large garden, including two ponds which we installed. She was also skilled at needlework, was a keen member of a local embroidery group, producing many handicraft items and experimenting with different materials. Her main relaxation was novels and she was a founder-member of the local book

group. As is required of a mother of children at day school, she became a good cook with a wide repertoire. This also came to be appreciated by her nine grandchildren!

On top of all this, Katharine found time for enjoying renaissance art and classical music. She was particularly fond of Bach (many CDs) and we had several holidays in Italy focused on appreciating the paintings and sculptures. She was also a good communicator and mastered the control of modern technology. Katharine lived to the good age of 81, despite having had cancer and a number of other troubles over more recent years. She died peacefully at home last October.

Anthony (Tony) Partridge (Staff 1973-2000)

Bill White (Staff 1961-97) writes – Tony Partridge died in March at the age of 97. He had been in a local care home for some months. He was always



Photo by our greenhouses: **Harry Evans, Bill White** (Staff 1961-97), **Tony Partridge** (Staff 1973-2000)

given loving support by his family. Tony took over as Clerk of Works from Walter Telling who had held the post since 1930, apart from War service. Tony was a member of the Partridge family, local builders based in Birdlip

and had been involved in the building of the Headmaster's house, the Arts Block and Park House. Tony was a remarkable man, who could turn his hand to anything with his well-known cry of 'Anything is possible'. He was a tower of strength in the routine maintenance of all buildings and achieved remarkable results with his small work force. He was popular with staff and pupils because everyone knew that, if there was a problem, Tony would do his best to solve it.

In 1989, just as Tony retired, the PW (Public Works) system was abandoned. I was immensely relieved when Tony said he would be prepared to help with the

gardening which since it became part of PW in 1962 had been done by pupils (as some Old Rendcombians will no doubt remember!)

Tony and I got on very well together despite his opening gambit of "I think, but you don't agree...". I worked with him on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, sometimes joined by 6th Formers who were interested in gardening and we managed to achieve a satisfactory standard. After I retired from teaching, I worked with Tony on two or three days a week and we gradually built up a



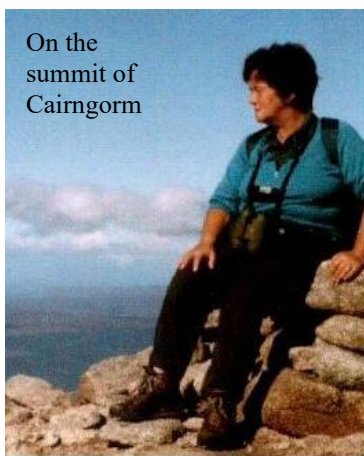
nursery garden, producing almost all our own plants. The missing urns were replaced on the terrace, which meant one of us had to do some weekend watering (automatic watering was installed when we retired). In our last year (2000), Tony pointed out that we had to cope with 90 urns and pots!

Being involved in the gardens was one of my most enjoyable and rewarding occupations at Rendcomb. It was a privilege to work with Tony; we became firm friends and always kept in touch. There was some problem over finding a successor; Paul Cairns, the Clerk of Works, declared “But all you and Tony do is sit on a bench with an empty barrow in front of you”.

Eventually, it was decided that the cosmetic appearance of the College was important for visitors and we were fortunate to be able to appoint Harry Evans to take over.

I shall long remember Tony as a great character and friend.

Joan Hawkswell died suddenly at home at Willowfield in June 2020, **David** (Staff 1973-94), **Steven** (1975-82), **Sara** (1983-85) and Alastair write: She had been using a wheelchair for about 10 years after having an unsuccessful knee operation. In the last few years, she had been in increasingly greater pain and discomfort but had continued to get out in the garden and to local cafes. Before that though, since **David**'s retirement, they had travelled widely around the UK, Nepal, Namibia, Iceland and India. She is greatly missed by all of her family.



On the
summit of
Cairngorm

Victoria (Tory) Donnan *née Penney* (1972-74) died from cancer in 2017. While studying Persian at Durham University she became interested in making theatrical costumes, which led to a course in textile design and a subsequent career. She married Mark Donnan in 1988, and they lived in Walsall.

Christopher Jefferies (1957-65) died in May 2020.

FRIENDS OF RENDCOMB COLLEGE

Registered Charity No. 290373

Chairman: Richard Wills, Governor and Rendcomb College Trustee appointed 2004

Executive Trustee: Mark Naylor (Staff: 1998-2017) appointed 2017
Jane Gunner (*née Watson*) – OR (1975-77),

Honorary Sec. OR Society, former parent 1994

Rob Jones – Headmaster (2015-), Ex Officio 2015

Keith Winmill – OR (1972-79)

Richard Law – OR (1964-70) appointed 2009

Dr Tessa Hicks (*née Wolferstan*) – OR (1974-76),
former parent 2010

Jessica Weston – OR (1998-2005), OR Society Vice-Chairman

It is with great sadness that this year Colin Burden passed away after a short illness, he was very much the backbone of the Friends of Rendcomb for 20 years as both a Trustee and then as a dedicated Executive Trustee, working tirelessly to raise funds for the benefit of the charity, his knowledge contacts and dedication will be very much missed.

The Friends of Rendcomb have continued to support both the College and Students of the College throughout 2020-21 with donations helping to support two students where family circumstances would have prevented them from continuing their education at Rendcomb. With thanks to two very kind and generous benefactors of the charity, the Friends have been able to give financial support to a student to join the 6th Form to further their studies. This would not have been possible without the kind and generous support of these two people. To mark the Centenary Celebrations the Friends of Rendcomb have donated a 50% of fees scholarship for the Head of College to award to a student for their studies through the Sixth Form. This student will come from the State Sector and be both a keen sports person and would benefit academically from all that Rendcomb has to offer, very much in line with the founder's ethos. Working with the Old Rendcombian

Society, the Friends have jointly funded a smart interactive teaching and learning tool to assist students and staff in the Maths department.

If you would like to donate on either regularly or just a one-off donation to assist the work of the Friends of Rendcomb, please contact Mark Naylor either by letter to 7 Hampton Grove, Meysey Hampton, Cirencester GL7 5JN, e-mail naylorm20@hotmail.com or through the website oldrendcombian.org.uk/friends – or should anyone wish to join the Friends of Rendcomb Charity as a Trustee please feel free to do so. We can only continue with the generosity of supporters.

Mark Naylor (Staff: 1998-2017)

St. Peter's Church UPDATE

For churches as a whole, 2020 has been a very difficult year. St. Peter's suffered the same fate with the doors locked for most of the year and only a few socially distanced services, with no singing, in the Church. We were able to enjoy a service together in Church on Christmas Day and the College was able to produce both Junior School and Senior School Carol services with a lot of skilful editing of pre-recorded readings and carols by small groups gathering in the Church in their 'social bubbles'.

Having renewed the heating in 2018, a small roof committee was formed to sort out the leaking roof. Buckets in the aisles and wet bottoms had become a feature that we needed to resolve! Under the Chairmanship of **Rev. Bob Edy** (1959-67, Staff 2015-), the College Chaplain, the committee has worked tirelessly to overcome all the obstacles and difficulties that have been thrown at us. At one point only Sue Fawcett, our long-suffering Secretary, seemed to know what was going on and she has been the lynch-pin in all the negotiations.

Initially, we needed to acquire a faculty from the Diocesan Chancellor, via the Diocesan Advisory Committee and planning permission before trying to raise the money. As you can imagine all our fundraising plans for the year had to be cancelled and we are

very grateful to our regular givers, without whom this project would not have been possible.

Jane Gunner (1975-77) has spearheaded our grant applications and we have been lucky enough to receive a grant from Historic England. We are also extremely grateful for the very generous donations from the Wills' family trusts, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust, Allchurches Trust and many private individuals including those who gave so much in memory of the late **Colin Burden** (Staff 1963-97).



We are pleased to announce that the work started on 1st March 2021 and just before Easter the scaffolding was removed. The roof has been renewed with terne-coated stainless steel, which was the only option that we could afford. However, as you have to go up onto the roof or in a plane to see the roof this did not present a problem in gaining all the relevant approvals. You will see from the photograph, that the roof looks very smart and in a short while, it will lose its shine and blend in with the chancel roof that we replaced about eight years ago. It also means that we have reduced the risk of theft as the lead is very vulnerable. The weather was good, the contractors were fantastic and helped by our friendly architects the project was completed in record time. The bats are now able to emerge from the belfry where they have been roosting during the winter!

The Church will be open again for services from Sunday 23rd May and we do hope that you will come and visit us with the assurance that your bottom will remain dry! We are now thinking of the future and the redecoration to parts of the Church damaged by the leaking water.



As you can imagine, the bank account is looking a bit empty! If you would like to give a donation or become a regular giver please contact our Treasurer, Annabel Purcell, e-mail annabelpurcell@hotmail.co.uk

...and inspecting the roof afterwards!



RENDCOMBIANA

Geoff Bye (1940-48) wrote in July 2020: **Rendcomb at 100**

There are two milestones for me in 2020 – Rendcomb turns 100 and I turn 90. The first – a very commendable effort on the part of many people (particularly the Wills family) to nurse the school through the remarkable changes that have taken place, the second – well, a combination of genetics and luck. If there is a secret to a long life, I have not found it. I often quote the wag who, on being asked the secret of his long life, simply replied “I haven’t died yet”. My thoughts exactly, as I write we are under the threat of COVID-19. This might well be as big a threat to our lives as either Rendcomb or I have so far experienced.

It is however a good moment for me to reflect on what the school has meant to me. The guiding principles very much in effect when I joined in 1940 were egalitarianism (all wore same clothes, no pocket money other than the weekly allowance from the school, no “care packages” other than a birthday cake which had to be shared, no parent visits except emergencies; personal lockers were not lockable. In fact, no treatment for anyone that would imply a higher socio-economic background); no fees for a good portion of the student body; a school that, outside the classroom was largely self-governed by the boys.

The environment resulted in boys who understood that a privileged background did not necessarily make one “better” in any sense of the word, and of course the reverse. It also developed a strong sense of community and understanding of an individual’s contribution to the community. The Meeting, which met weekly, was an open forum at which issues were aired, grievances resolved, committees were formed and disbanded, elections were held, and all with minimum supervision from staff. The Head was a sometime visitor but usually kept a low-key approach. Here was democracy at work! The wide-ranging areas that were governed by boys are best understood by reference to the college magazines (*oldrendcombian.org.uk*) which detail the make-up of the Meeting and its committees, term by term. Participation in this “government” led to a level of self-confidence not otherwise easily acquired. There were no adults to blame if things didn’t go according to plan - it was you or your peers.

I arrived at Rendcomb in September 1940 as one of four “scholarship boys”, and left in July 1948. I left with a healthy regard for community and a good level of self-confidence. I left with deep gratitude to Elsa Young (Maths), and Aggie Richards and Jack Fell (Physics) who set me on my career path. I left with a love of books largely because I had been a librarian with its

responsibilities, which included in the post-war years the buying books at Cheltenham bookshops in the company of Mr and Mrs James. It gave me a love of music thanks to Mabel Carnel's music appreciation classes and the hi-fi set-up that occupied the music room, now part of the dining hall. In later life, I took up painting as a hobby and have had a few fairly successful shows as fundraisers for local charities, this due largely to the drawing instruction from Mr Molyneaux. I might also mention my addiction to sports, and especially to Mr James' cricket instruction which led in 1948 to my taking 6 wickets for 13 runs when playing Cirencester Grammar. It would be remiss of me not to remember the "back office" that did such a remarkable job feeding us during the war. I remember especially the cook, Auntie B (Bassett), who ran a kitchen somewhat antiquated by today's standards, and with little help produced three meals a day for about 100 people. She was always extremely kind to us boys, hence Auntie. My mother died in June 1944. I was just 14. For reasons not relevant here, my home life became uncertain and insecure. The school became my home, sad though that sounds, it gave me security that I badly needed and was scarce outside. All the family I needed at that time I could find there. When I left in 1948, I took all this with me to start my new life. I truly believe that my ability to "get along" with people and confidence to take on challenges for which not necessarily prepared, were the direct result of my eight years at Rendcomb. I can look back and say with some certainty that critical life-changing events that happened because of other's confidence in me, and my own confidence to accept some risk if the others were ready to trust me. For this I thank Rendcomb. The result has been an extremely enjoyable career with very few dark spots and has made me the patriarch of a family blessed with 14 grand and 3 great-grandchildren. Despite having lived outside the UK since 1961, I have not been a stranger. I have followed Rendcomb affairs through the Newsletters and Web site and have visited from time to time when visits to the UK allowed. I was delighted to be able to represent the school at the unveiling of Saul at the Museum of N. Carolina earlier this year. It was a huge disappointment when the July Centenary had to be cancelled. I was determined to be there.

And now, speaking of Saul. the 2020 Centennial Newsletter advertises a special ale – Saul's Toe. Being sold on behalf of The Friends. As of now, it is unlikely that I will taste it any time soon, being 3,000 miles away. I have however anticipated a review...

Clearly an ale – neither mild nor bitter. But to every toe – a nail. Unsurprisingly Saul’s Toe has little body. Oddly it does have a well-formed head which is firm or even rocky. It has some of the hoppy tendency of toes in general. The bouquet is pleasant enough with only a little trace of bromhidrosis. The mouthfeel is pleasantly clean, polished as an ale should be, and marble-like. Like Saul himself it is best drunk in a contemplative mood, wearing open sandals. This Toe is not for sucking. This is a new testament.

Continuing the theme of ingenuity amongst pupils in previous newsletters, **Michael Naish** (1952-60) writes:
 The telephone cable from **Lee-Browne’s** (Headmaster 1932-60) office to the secretary’s office was enclosed in a lead conduit and exited the building near a cast iron radiator, I discovered quite by chance that by putting one lead on the lead conduit and the other lead on the radiator (must have been the ground), I was able to hear the conversations between I think it was Miss Savage and the Headmaster. This was pretty serious stuff so that I was cautious in use. The signal was faint but could make it out and I never learnt anything of significance!

An article from the Wilts & Glos Standard from 1997. **Jess Weston** (1998-2005), **Luke Gunner** (1998-2005) and **Harriet Stutchbury** (1998-2003) are all in the picture.



● Sports instructor David Essenhigh with pupils from Querns School at Rendcomb

Secondary slice of life

PUPILS from Querns School in Cirencester recently spent a day at Rendcomb College to find out about life in a secondary school.

A full timetable of lessons and sport was arranged for the day and afterwards Rendcomb headmaster John Tolpitt had many letters from the visitors to thank him for an enjoyable time.

"Thank you very much for the wonderful experience of secondary school. It was very nice to start the day with German. The teacher was very nice and made it fun. We did drama and biology.

"We had a yummy lunch, break and tea (it was nice to have a biscuit at break!" wrote while Jess Weston declared that she couldn't wait to go to Rendcomb next year. Rendcomb also played host to pupils from Airthrie School in Cheltenham and summed up their feelings in her letter of thanks.

"All the teachers were really friendly and always had a smile on their face. The swimming was great, computers were fascinating, the treasure hunt was exciting and the lunch delicious. I hope to come to your school next year."

Friendly

Nick Cox, Deputy Head (Academic) at the College writes: **O Juliet, Juliet wherefore art thou Juliet?**

***Meta bourneti* part 2**

In the centenary 46th edition of the OR newsletter, **Colin Twissell** wrote of a group of *M. bourneti* living in his compost bin. Colin's investigation led him to **C.M. Swaine's** (Staff 1952-79) sighting at Rendcomb College recorded in the Chronicle Vol.12, No.5 March 1962.



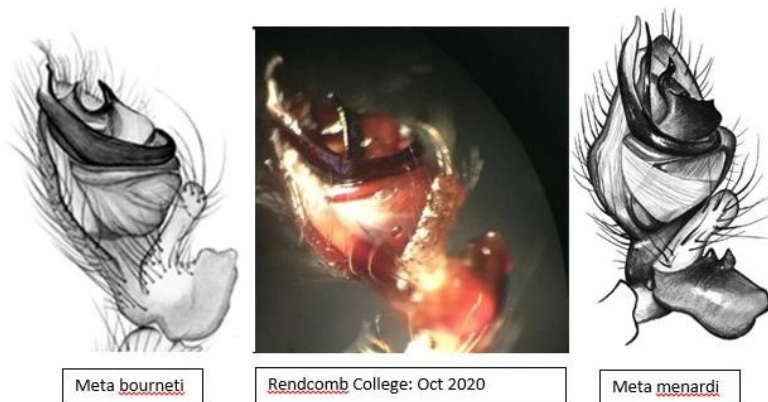
I have an interest in the

Theraphosidae family of spiders, more commonly known as tarantulas and have enjoyed sharing specimens from my personal collection with pupils and staff at the College. With no sighting of *M. bourneti* having been recorded at the College for nearly 60 years, I felt I might be the person to put the College back on the *M. bourneti* map.

It took less than an hour on the 19th October 2020 to find a suitable candidate. I captured a large brown specimen on a wall in the darkened shed opposite the entrance to the Otters. I could see from the bulbous pedipalps that the specimen was a mature male. The pedipalps of male spiders, their copulatory organs, only become fully developed on the final moult. The remainder of the male spider's life is spent searching for females and they often become a meal for their final mate. We will never know whether this specimen found a mate but from his location it seems likely he was still looking, so I named him 'Romeo'.

Comparing images of Romeo with those of other male *M. bourneti* on the internet, I was confident I had *M. bourneti*. However, a more scientific means of identification was needed to be sure. With mature male spiders, the best means to positive identification is the examination of the structure of the fully developed pedipalp. The pedipalps are remarkably complex and each species has a unique

structure to serve as a fingerprint for identification. Sadly, Romeo only lived a few more days, but on his passing, I was able to dissect one of his palps and use a microscope in the science department to complete the ID. It was an exciting moment that I was delighted to share with members of the science department and current pupils, **Jensen Hill** and **Debjit Mukherjee**. We compared an anatomical drawing of the *M. bourneti* palp to what we saw in our microscope and were thrilled to reach agreement that Romeo was *M. bourneti*.



Anatomical drawing of *M. bourneti* palp (left) and Romeo's palp (right)

The sighting has since been recorded with the British Arachnological Society and the national distribution map has been updated to show a post-1992 sighting at Rendcomb College. We know the native habitat of *M. bourneti* includes caves, so I have checked the cellar of the College, the drains by the swimming pool and other similar areas across campus. Sadly, no other specimens have been found.

Nonetheless, there must be a colony of females somewhere, so the search for Romeo's Juliet continues.

Spider Recording Scheme website entry for *Meta bourneti* accessed 29.3.21:

srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Summary/s/Meta+bourneti

Pictures of Romeo and his palp taken by Nick Cox October 2020

OLD RENDCOMBIAN NEWS

In June 2020, **Hermione Llewelyn-Bowen** (2009-13) now a criminal psychology graduate, her father Laurence and her fiancé, Drew took part in celebrity Britain's Brightest Family on ITV, hosted by Anne Hegerty of the Chase, hoping to win £25,000 for their nominated charity. In a close-fought episode, they were just beaten 250 to 270 points by Dr Ranj Singh's family.



Keith Winmill (1972-79) writes: It all seemed such a good idea, on the sofa one winter's evening with a glass of something warming, shouting answers at the television and seeming getting quite a few right. Then the dreaded words were uttered, "Do you know, I think I could do that". That was the embryonic moment where this Chase started.

The quiz show "The Chase" had just ended with the host Bradley Walsh laying down the challenge "Do you think you can beat the Chaser – come and have a go if you think you can!". And so, several years, several auditions and several "short lists" later, there I stood outside the gates of Elstree Studios walking past the car parking spaces for Dermot O'Leary and Davina McCall (honestly!) to be admitted to the inner sanctum of the quiz show world. A cold, wet and cloudy day was not conjuring up the right auspices, nor was the timing – lockdown number two had ended and some normality was returning to the country, but the clouds of a further lockdown

were gathering – hence the decision to drive to the studios rather than take public transport!

Entrance was duly granted after a mask free identification process was completed – do I really look like my passport picture? and the four of us victims, sorry contestants, assembled and were led to a very impressively COVID-19 compliant waiting area to be briefed, fed, watered and briefed again (just to check we had actually seen the show!). Several coffees later we were invited to display our 4 choices of attire to the dressing team to ensure we all complimented each other’s impeccable dress senses (well, that is what I told myself). Outfits selected, further “team bonding” as we chatted about who we would like our “Chaser” to be, and then it was makeup time. Yes, I kid you not, make up for all of us! I was hopeful that the old saying that a camera puts 10lbs on you would therefore be mitigated by a layer of foundation which would remove 10 years... case unproven, I fear!

Back to our dressing rooms for a final change into our stage gear (!) and then a somewhat nerve wracking 30-minute wait until we were called to the studio. So off trotted a student, a restaurateur, a retired company secretary and an author to our respective destinies. Arriving there, my first impression was the



familiarity of the set (well, any quiz show that has been on the 5pm teatime slot for what seems like a decade should be familiar!) ...and also, how small it was! The pandemic had cast its effects on the area – Perspex screens between each of us, masks to be worn at all times when not on camera, and a stage crew all masked up made it a somewhat surreal experience. And, an inside secret, there is no audience in for the ordinary shows – the celebrity version is the one that draws in the crowds!

No time to take in all the surroundings as within minutes Bradley Walsh, the host, appeared on stage and came over to us all and chatted to us, putting us all at ease and giving us a few tips on ignoring the cameras etc. And off we went!

First up was Charlotte, the student who quite naturally was a tad nervous, as going first is always daunting, and she amassed £2,000 in her cash pot to play for. Studio lights dim as we awaited the arrival of our Quiz Opponent – The Chaser. And this is genuine, we did not have any idea who this was until the music played and the Chaser walked out from the shadows. The stable of now 6 Chasers is indeed quite daunting, with them all being in the top 10 quiz brains in the country, and so whoever it was would give us no easy ride!

And then, through the darkness arrived our Chaser – “The Vixen”. Okay we know our opponent! Time for Charlotte to now play head-to-head against play the Chaser – she opted to accept the high offer of £25,000 but only a gap of 1 between her and the Chaser... not enough it turned out. The Chaser was clearly well on form and caught our first team member within 4 questions. Ouch!!

The restaurateur, Ben, was up next and navigated a £2,000 reward for questions answered correctly in the Cash Builder minute round. The Chaser returned. A low offer of £1,000 was accepted as the strategy was now to try and get back for the final round. Ben did really well with a few tricky questions. So, after two players we had 1 back in the final team and £1,000 in the pot.

And now, waiting game over, it was my turn to stand on the “Black cross” on the set and chat to Bradley. It all started very gently with references to my very tasteful Hawaiian shirt (well, if I cannot go on holiday in the year, I have to find somewhere to wear it!), and then chatting about onto Walt Disney World, EPCOT Center and all the exciting Disney watering holes that we both knew.

And here is when it all went a tad “uh oh”, or “entertaining” as the team said afterwards! I mentioned that since retiring early, I had become fascinated with Genealogy and had been tracing my family tree back. And, it seemed, that some 23 generations back, I appeared to have a direct connection to the Plantagenet line. Bradley's ears pricked up and then followed what is known as a bit of “banter”. And then the mistake. A simple throwaway line, seemingly innocent! I mentioned that following this discovery, for a laugh, my sister bought me a special Christmas present, a small (1 meter squared) plot of land in Scotland which allegedly confers me the right to be known as “Lord Winmill of Glencoe”, or so the marketing materials and documentation subsequently received said!

And that was it! A significant (mostly off-camera) barrage of banter and commentary came flying my way! Resulting in Bradley deciding just having my name on the board as Keith was “not sufficiently noble or respectful” and then arranged for my contestant name to be reset as “Lord Keith”. Tremendous hilarity all-round, although being referred to as Lord Keith for the next 90 minutes did have a certain ring about it!

My Cash Builder round was navigated reasonably well with a £5,000 pot secured. Then the return of the Chaser to be challenged. Suitable introductions were made and the Chaser then offered me the chance to win £45,000 if the gap were reduced to 1. After a little pondering, and yes it was pretty tempting, my rationale and conservative thought process pointed me to the £5,000. Through a few educated guesses and a bit of knowledge, I was able to beat the Chaser and get home ...but why didn't I know that “chipmunking” and “dunking” were terms used in professional eating competitions ?? nevertheless, we now had 2 in the final and a £6,000 pot.

Time for the final team member...our author, Melanie. Another £5,000 in her Cash Builder following a solid round and an entertaining battle won v the Chaser, so we had £11,000 and 3 players in the final. The final question round is for two minutes to accumulate as many right answers as possible for then set the Chaser a challenging target. And this is where our fate was sealed – two minutes is not a long time! And in reality, we struggled to get to a final total of 14 for the Chaser to get. It was not enough by a long way. And we would need for the Chaser to get a handful wrong, and us to get the right answers back to have any chance.

The Chaser returned and galloped through the first few questions with ease (but a question asking what a female fox is called. Really?!). One stumble, a question wrong on a little-known tennis player, and we could not come up with the right answer. Off she went again, getting closer to our total and then another stumble. Highlight of the round was my bizarre hidden knowledge of 19th Century French Literature and the name Emile Zola giving us the faintest of a chance. And that was it, off she went again and got every following question right leaving us caught with some 30 seconds to go.

Fair enough – we really did not get enough momentum in our round to put her under any pressure. And that was it. A final “wrap up” from Bradley and a number of exchanges, now lying on the cutting room floor and it was game over. And a sense of slight disappointment but overall, relief that no

“outtake” moments were generated, and also a sense of what great fun it had all been.

An intense, but highly enjoyable two hours had come and gone so very quickly and with that, it was “exit stage left” and home. And then subsequently, a wait of 4 months, keeping it all under wraps until the day when we hit ITV at 5pm. Friday 26th February – it is etched in the mind! I remember it well because it was my “15 minutes of fame” with the phone going off afterwards with messages of well, all sorts of comments from friends and acquaintances, all who had an opinion, knew all the answers and had views on my dress sense! All in a day’s work! And the following day, low and behold, the story was picked up by the press with the Daily Mail, Daily Express and a few other online versions of their newspapers running the story of a Lord on the Chase. As well as Twitter (for the younger audience!)

Final thoughts – Team Chase were fantastic, all of them. We were looked after so well, and at no time felt in any way compromised by the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, it felt doubly safe. All the behind-the-scenes team were helpful, friendly and so professional. In front of the camera, Bradley Walsh was brilliant – a true professional and as funny off-camera as on. The show lasts an hour when aired on TV, but it took us two hours to film – this is due not to any second takes but the interaction between Bradley and us contestants and the sometimes bizarrely funny directions our discussions took. But so so funny! And the Chaser, The Vixen, so professional and her knowledge showed no gaps on the questions (well, a losing contestant would say that!), but also very kind and gracious in victory. Would I do it again? Only time will tell, but if “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” rings, I may have a diary opportunity, and a tasteful tropical shirt!

Iora (**Holly Phelps** (2001-2012) featured with the Untold Orchestra at the



Headstock virtual festival held in May 2020 singing *Love will Tear Us Apart*

in aid of Mind Manchester.



Love Will Tear Us Apart - The Untold Orchestra and The Northern Session Choir Ft. IORA

Headstock Festival
10 May 2020 G

In January 2021, **David Hart (1950-56)** and **Hart's silversmiths, Guild of Handicraft** was featured on Susan Calman's Grand Days out – in the Cotswold on Channel 5. She visited **David's** workshop in Chipping Campden and was helped to make a silver spoon.



David Hart (1950-56) 25 years earlier at the **75th Anniversary Exhibition** organised by the late **Colin Burden** (below) in 1996



Martin Griffiths (Staff: 1982-2003) wrote to Jane at Christmas that this last year has seen him painting, potting and producing articles and cartoons for the online magazine West England Bylines. He says it has been interesting to go back into journalism and cartoon work after so much teaching.

Nicki Scott (*née Agius*) (1981-83) wrote to Jane: Having spent 25 years in the US, I am so enjoying living back here in the Cotswolds again – especially this lovely village of Notgrove where **Ed Slark-Hughes** (2001-11) lives too! Small world given my sister Caroline Collett now works at Rendcomb as a Sister in the Medical Centre too!

Yasmin Lester-Powell (2004-11), graduated from The Royal School of Veterinary Studies.

Working remotely is not a problem for Old Rendcombian **Doug Ellison** (1992-97). For the man whose cameras are 101 million miles from his



fingertips, the novelty wore off some time ago. Doug works on the Mars Rovers as the engineering lead on the Engineering Camera Payload Uplink Lead. His job is to prepare sequences (small bundles of spacecraft commands) that tell a Mars Rover which pictures to take with its Navigation and Hazard Avoidance cameras. He works with the science team and the rover drivers to make sure he is pointing the cameras the right way

so the rovers can see where they are travelling to.

Dr Matt Cox, Head of Science at Rendcomb College arranged for Doug to become the first guest speaker to take advantage of the College's digital learning environment, where being on the other side of the world is no barrier to engaging with the students.

Doug joined them live from his home, close to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, on a Thursday afternoon, a punishing 0600 California time. He gave some background information about his role and the road from Rendcomb to NASA then answered questions from the students on a huge range of topics, from what the rovers do, what they have discovered, how they work, in the process confessing to some awkward errors and the role of Porgs (one for the Star Wars fans out there) when times get tough. He explained why it is worth funding these missions and what sort of missions he would like to see undertaken in the future. He also explained the sort of individuals that NASA seeks to employ, emphasizing the importance of working as part of a team, being adaptable and being able to learn new skills. Grades are important, but on their own, they won't get you into a place like JPL.

Photo credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech.



A Navigation Camera mosaic taken by the rover on the 2,616th day of its mission. Parts of the rover, its shadow, and the 18,000ft tall Mt Sharp are all visible.

In 2013, **Jane** (*née Watson*) (1975-77) and Richard **Gunner** started a campaign to re-open the railway link between the Kemble mainline station and Cirencester which had been closed as a result of the Beeching cuts in the 1960s. Reaction to the idea was at first sceptical but with the proposed



RCTS Image Archive

development of 2,350 houses on the Kemble side of Cirencester and the Climate Change emergency, opinions began to change.

The Railbus was used for a couple of years before the line was axed. 60 years on it's hoped to be replaced by the VLR.

The Very Light Rail vehicle. Photo credit tdi.com.uk



By 2016, a board had been set up to explore the feasibility of the project and the Warwick Manufacturing Group had put forward the suggestion that the 4 miles of line might be suitable for Very Light Railway, which was under development being used in Coventry City.

The thinking was that VLR might also provide a rural solution as heavy rail costs are between £35m and £50m/km while VLR costs between £5m and £7m/km. The VLR should also encourage a modal shift in a way that bus routes do not. Further, it does not produce the particulates from rubber tyres on tarmac as it is running steel on steel.

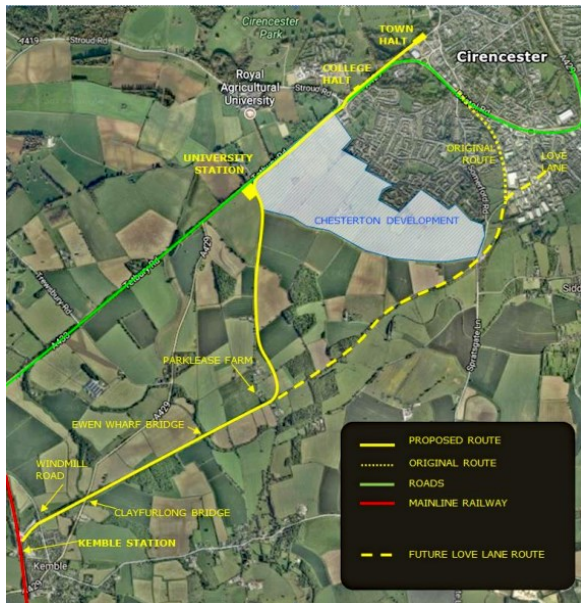
A local charity provided seed funding, which was matched by Cotswold District Council, Cirencester Town Council and St James Place. This allowed the preliminary phase of the feasibility study to be carried out to ensure there were no show stoppers. There weren't so the board and their consultants EI Ltd moved on to the first phase of the study, looking into everything from passenger numbers to the safety of the old embankments and bridge design.



Proposed lightweight bridge over the A429 to replace the original Clayfurlong bridge.

Photo credit EI Ltd

With the pandemic's arrival, it was not possible to do on the ground passenger surveys but Southampton University was able to model the figures to give a best guess under the circumstances. The results were encouraging. Then the government announced the *restoring your railway fund*. So the Cirencester



Community Railway Project applied and were lucky enough to qualify in the second round of funding for £50,000 towards the next phase of the feasibility study, essentially the detailed design of the project. A Strategic Outline Business Case had to be submitted to DfT by April 2021 to see if it warrants further funding.

For further information visit cirentain.org.uk or listen on youtube to Richard's talk to the Cirencester Science and Technology Society.

Derek Wiggall (1966-74) wrote to **Brian Smith** (1965-72) in June and subsequently, on request, sent Jane an update in February this year.

June – Whilst we moan about the cost of getting on and off the Isle of Man it has been a very good place to be during the virus pandemic. Our government has dealt with the situation pretty well on the whole. Importantly they've communicated well and kept the messages clear. We're in a good position, being an island, to lock the place down, which is just what the government did early on by shutting our borders. Nobody is allowed in or out unless they are key medical people or people being repatriated. The latter group were dealt with in a couple of groups and had to go into isolation. Ferries are still sailing but only for freight. We're also lucky in that we have plenty of space, proportionate to other islands such as Jersey and Guernsey. We've now been here 15 years.

Because of the low population, people tend to know one another. Whilst this may be a disadvantage in certain circumstances it's been a great advantage for contact tracing and also tracking down miscreants. You don't get far if you misbehave here! The police will know you or know somebody that knows you or know your parents! By and large, people have dealt with it well and stuck to the rules - again it helps that people will think twice about contravening those rules because friends and acquaintances will rebuke them. We recognised that being a small island if everybody pulled together, we had the opportunity to contain the virus and stop it. The police have had to intervene in some instances but a quiet word in the ear usually works, although a couple of people have been jailed for contravening the rules on more than one occasion.

The other smart move that the government took was to reduce the speed limit to 40mph. The message to people was that, as we only have one hospital, we need to protect our health service as much as possible and not overload it with unnecessary cases caused by RTCs due to speeding. Again by and large people have recognised why it was done and have complied.

Whilst we do rely on imports of foodstuffs and other products, we do have our own corn mill, which produces a lot of our flour and bread. We also have our own dairy for the supply of milk, butter and cheese, as well as a number of smaller artisan producers of various foodstuffs. However, there have been a few days when it's been very windy and the ferry hasn't sailed – shops have bare shelves when that happens. Not the best thing to occur in time of pandemic but of no real concern. We're growing a lot more

vegetables in our garden than normal. At first, we couldn't get seed due to garden centres being closed and there not being much available to buy online. However, friends and family have stepped up and sent supplies. As for everybody the internet and online ordering has been invaluable, although we have struggled to find our usual brand of jigsaw so have had to revert to other makes.

I'm fortunate to still have a good head of hair so with no hairdressers being open it's grown and grown, taking me back to my youth (there's a thought!). I refuse to let anybody cut it (and Alison has refused anyway) and have told my hairdresser that I'm in no rush to see her, even though they are open now! I found photos with me in them on the ORs website a while back. In particular, the one of me posing with the Hockey team on the set of A Comedy of Errors, and the first XI Cricket of 1974.

My hair is now just as long at the back as in those! Two differences though: it has receded slightly and is a fetching shade of grey!



1. Paul Rose (1968-75) 2. Tim Longworth (1969-76) 3. J. Lane (1967-74) 4. Donald Pearce (1969-74) 5. A.W. Medhurst (1968-75) 6. J. D. Whiteside (1968-73) 7. M. R. James (1968-75) 8. A. Jenkins (1968-74) 9. Jeremy Stupple (1972-76) 10. Timothy Stroud (1967-74) 11. Stephen Bushell (1967-74) 12. Derek Wiggall (1966-74) 13. Robert Weston (1968-75) 14. Michael Denley (1968-74).

February – The island came out of lockdown at the beginning of July. Everything was opened up again: pubs, restaurants, cinema, shops, buses. No more social distancing or restriction of any type. Life was back to ‘normal’, albeit with the borders still closed except for returnees, key workers and exceptions for compassionate reasons. All of those were required to self-isolate for 14 days and were rigorously checked up on.



The Manx Wildlife Trust reserves opened again so Alison and the rest of the ‘Midweek Muckers’ volunteers could get out on task. As I was not working, I joined them. We carry out a range of activities on the Trust reserves, depending on the time of year. These include pitchforking grass across fields, clearing fence lines

and ditches, cutting back trees and bushes, replacing fence posts with post hammers (and brute strength), maintaining paths and walkways. All good physical work, in all kinds of weather. In September I decided to retire and so continue with this voluntary work.

My choir resumed in July. It was a great pleasure to meet with fellow choristers and sing again. Very uplifting. I joined another choir for the summer as well, based in Ramsey, again singing similar types of songs. When that choir finished in September, I joined a winter choir in Ramsey. This choir sings more serious stuff so is challenging my singing skills. Our rehearsals are aimed at a big concert after New Year in Ramsey with part of the Isle of Man symphony orchestra (yes there are some talented people here). As well as a few shorter pieces from Handel, Mozart and others our main piece is a 45-minute requiem in five movements. Requiem for the Living was composed by Dan Forest in 2013. Challenging to say the least but will sound wonderful on the night.

We had some concerts and carol services with both choirs before Christmas. One in particular stood out this year. We were singing carols at the head of the lantern parade walking down our main shopping street in Douglas for

the Christmas lights switch on. The street was packed with people so much so that our parade ground to a halt a couple of times. Photos of the street crowded with Christmas shoppers appeared in UK media and further afield.

We had just over 6 months of relatively normal life from July. At one point there was an air bridge with Guernsey so that people could holiday there, and



vice versa. That was until Guernsey started getting cases again. People could leave the island (which here is regarded as the mainland!) to visit family in the UK ('across' or 'the other island' as it's referred to here) but have to quarantine for 14 days on return.

There were a few incidents of miscreants breaking quarantine rules, For example, thinking they could visit a shop after leaving the ferry and before going home to self-isolate. Typically, somebody in the shop or garage would inform the police and the miscreant would be dealt with, sometimes with gaol sentences up to 4 weeks.

Then there was jet-ski man, which you may have heard about. Decided it was a good idea to try to get to the island on a jet-ski he'd only just bought and had never been on one before. After 4 hours he did get here (how we're not sure) landing in Ramsey and then, allegedly, walking 15 miles to Douglas where he met his 'girlfriend' who he'd only met for a short time whilst working here for a week or so. He was duly caught, locked up for 4 weeks and then deported and banned from coming here. This hit the headlines in the UK and other countries.



We heard that there were some sympathetic views for him and a few people across questioning our policy of getting tough with miscreants. Most folks across agree with the policy as do people here. Here, we know how important it is to protect the island to preserve our freedom, hence the border closure. We only have one hospital so it is critical that it is not put

in jeopardy with the virus running rampant.

Unfortunately, there were a few cases in the community, arising from a returnee developing symptoms after isolating for 14 days and being tested twice in that period. Having complied with the rules they were free to be released from quarantine. The government acted quickly and decisively again. Locking us down for 24 days and requiring the use of face masks for the first time. Once again, the population complied. After there were no new cases in the community lockdown was once again lifted, everything is open, choirs are singing and we are back to normal.

Stuart Shellswell (1958-66) In July last year I wrote to Jane Gunner advising her of a change of address, and I've agreed to provide a brief update of what I've been doing since I left Rendcomb. I'm now 73 (fast approaching 74 at the end of July) and I was at Rendcomb from 1958-66, where I became the Senior Prefect in my last year (3rd year, 6th form). On leaving Rendcomb I went to Sussex University, where I obtained a 1st Class Honours Degree in Automatic Control. Yes, that event is recorded on the Honours Board in the school lobby, although, sad to say, my surname is not spelt correctly! After graduating from Sussex University, I went up to St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, where I undertook research on Time Series Analysis and the Control of Printing Presses (I know, two totally disparate subjects!) in the Control Engineering Group at the Cambridge University School of Engineering, (eventually) obtaining a MSc in Control

Engineering. And no, that was never recorded on the Rendcomb Honours Board!

My subsequent career after leaving Cambridge is detailed in the May 2006 edition (32nd Issue) of the Old Rendcombian Newsletter but a brief synopsis is probably in order. From 1972 until 1987 I worked at Applied Research of Cambridge (ARC) and Cambridge Interactive Systems (CIS) in Cambridge, both companies then at the forefront of research and development of CAD and Drafting Systems. In August 1987 I relocated to the Boston area in Massachusetts, to manage the Operations Group of CIS Inc., which was then part of the Computervision CAD company.

Unfortunately, this coincided with a hostile takeover of Computervision by Prime Computer and consolidation (read redundancy!), so I spent the next 10 years in senior product management, marketing and operations positions in companies involved in document management (Interleaf) and knowledge-based engineering software (ICAD). By the end of the 1990s, I had transitioned to being an independent Year 2000 consultant, and I spent time at Mellon Bank, Gillette and John Hancock remediating their financial systems for the dreaded date change. Following that I joined a consulting company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that used control engineering theory to help business decision-making (finally my University education was becoming useful, albeit being somewhat dated!), but after another takeover, this time by a London-based consulting organization, I joined EMC (now part of Dell) in 2001. For the next 10 years I spent my time researching and analyzing data, creating documents, spreadsheets and presentations for corporate executives, and managing the technical documentation team in the disk drive and array group. Well, I was the only English-educated person in a group of 120 software engineers, so management believed that they had little choice! (I was possibly the only person in the entire company who knew the correct usage and difference between ‘that’ and ‘which’ –

Kathleen James (Staff 1932-69) would have been very impressed!) In 2011 I transitioned to Greenplum, a ‘Big Data’ company acquired by EMC, as a Senior Consultant Global Program Engineering Manager (try putting that on a business card!), and I remained in that position until I retired in 2013.

I now spend my time between an apartment in Miami, Florida (to avoid all the snow, ice and very cold weather in the US north-east in winter; also, I became a Florida resident as Florida does not assess US state taxes!) and a house in Framingham, just 20 miles west of Boston, in the summer months (when it gets far too humid in Florida). The best of both worlds! I usually get back to the UK about once a year to visit my grown-up children, but due

to the circumstances and travel restrictions in 2020, I had to cancel my visit in June of last year to celebrate my brother's 70th birthday. I hope to visit the UK later this year on my way to and back from a cruise in the Mediterranean. My days of playing rugby, field hockey and cricket have long since disappeared, but I still play squash two or three times a week (COVID-19 restrictions permitting) when I am in Massachusetts (unfortunately there are no squash courts here in Miami). As one of the original members of the Rendcomb Motor Club, I continue to have a great interest in cars, although my stable has declined in recent years to just four vehicles – a 1969 Lotus and a 1976 Lotus, both of which I am restoring, an Audi RS5 Cabriolet, and a Tesla Model 3.

So, there you have it. I did visit Rendcomb a few years ago during term time and enjoyed looking around immensely. I hope to do this again in the next year or two, particularly as a (slightly younger) Rendcombian, the Rev. Bob Edy, is now on staff (Bob was a year behind me at Rendcomb). Maybe I should look out some old photographs of that era; prepare to be embarrassed, Bob!

David Marshall (1972-79) writes: I left Rendcomb in 1979, not having the first idea what I wanted to do. If I have a criticism of the place at that time, it is probably the absence of careers guidance. As something of an 'all-rounder', I never had a career in mind – so I wasn't ready to choose a degree course and therefore end up getting 'channeled'. Come to that, if I had my time again, I'm still not sure what I'd want to do – even with the benefit of hindsight!

To cut a long story short, I joined Cotswold District Council in 1980. After moving across to Stroud District Council, I eventually got involved in the Cotswold Canals project in 2006, finally becoming Project Manager in 2014.

The project aims to eventually restore the historic canal link between the River Thames at Lechlade and the Gloucester/Sharpness Canal at Saul Junction – a distance of 36 miles. It had come to national prominence thanks to the efforts of the Cotswold Canals Trust, chaired by the very able Bruce Hall, father of my classmate **Nigel Hall** (1972-79).

By 2021, and thanks mainly to Lottery funding, a 5-mile length of canal has been restored between Brimscombe and Stonehouse. Although it remains landlocked, the canal has transformed the Stroud valley, securing further investment of £137 million into the canal corridor since 2006.

Despite this success, it will only reach its full potential once the restored length is connected to the national waterway network, making Stonehouse

and Stroud canal towns once again. A further bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund was successful, and in October last year, we were awarded £8.9 million. With further substantial contributions from Stroud District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, the Canal & Rivers Trust and the Cotswold Canals Trust, we now have a viable project which is getting ready to roll, with the opening due in 2024. Attention is already turning to the derelict Eastern end of the canal, between Lechlade and the Cotswold Water Park.

The importance of restoring canals is that they are a catalyst to achieving other benefits – attracting investment, biodiversity gain, health and wellbeing, community connectivity, heritage-based learning and tourism. The task is too big for one organisation. Though led by Stroud District Council, the project in reality consists of a mix of paid staff, contractors and – most importantly – an army of volunteers. Many different organisations are involved, often with differing agendas. The biggest part of my role is to hold all this together, always remembering that volunteers give their time and can't be pushed around!

For me, the reward is seeing the canal now, remembering what it used to be like and knowing that I had a big part in the transformation. To find out more, go to cotswoldcanals.com or cotswoldcanalsconnected.org. Despite the Lottery grant, we still need funding – all donations welcome!

In my spare time, I work as a volunteer on restoring a length of canal near Lechlade. This mainly consists of removing 100 years of vegetation from the channel. The benefit to me is that I can look volunteers in the eye. At work, I depend on them – but I can't ask them to do anything I'm not willing to do myself.

I also work some weekends at Cotswold Airport, formerly RAF Kemble, where I am a qualified Flight Information Service Officer. My job is to give pilots enough information, especially about weather and other air traffic, to enable them to go about their business safely. Cotswold Airport is now famous as a home for retired airliners, most recently the ex-British Airways Boeing 747s. I used to cycle to Kemble from Rendcomb; never did I dream that one day I would be in the control tower ensuring the safe arrival of a Jumbo Jet.

Olivia Round (2006-2011) and partner Ben Hughes featured in a BBC1 documentary about male fertility.

bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p08rkzcq/me-my-brother-and-our-balls

TRAVEL BURSARY

Madeleine Morgan (2010-18) writes:

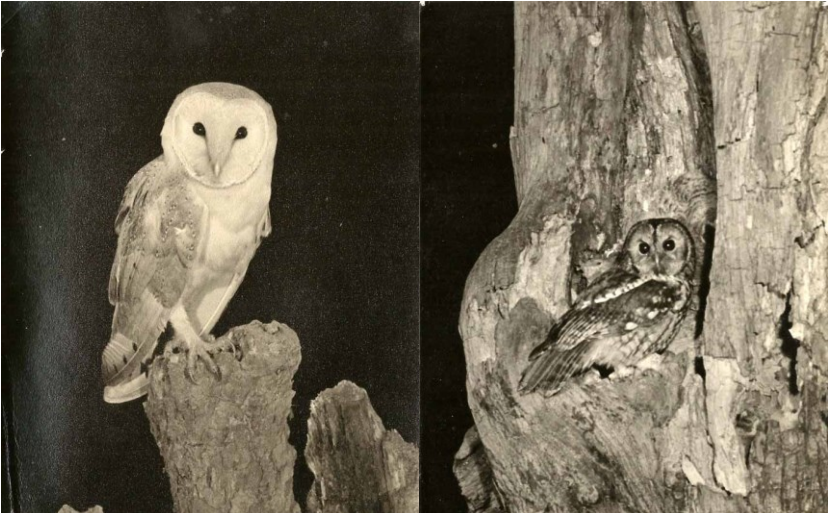
Travelling to Namibia during my gap year was an enriching and humbling experience. I worked on a reserve called Oana which required 2 flights, a bus trip and a jeep ride to reach. The main focus and goal of the expedition was conservation. Throughout my time



there, we achieved this through removing invasive trees, taking down fences erected by 19th century colonisers, and setting up cameras to record the wildlife that was living on the reserve. Recording animals such as mongooses, leopards, mountain zebras on camera was entirely surreal. Especially since there was nothing separating our base camp from the wildlife other than distance. Luckily, they would not enter into the camp vicinity – as a self-preservation method having been scarred by colonisers – however we did have to watch out for scorpions and snakes.

Cooking with a local cook and bonding with other gap year students was the most humbling part of my trip, as well as the hospitality of our neighbouring camp who opened their doors when a storm took a couple of our tents with it. This evacuation was an unfortunate few days of the trip but made for an incredible travel story.





Photos taken by Head of Science **Chris Swaine** (Staff:1952-79) in the early 50s. Chris published his book *Birds of Gloucestershire* in 1982.



Rendcomb Badgers made famous by Badger Man, Biology master **Ernest Neal** (Staff: 1936-46) in his book, *the Natural History of Badgers* published 1986.

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