

Alfredians



A newsletter for King Alfred School Alumni

Autumn 2010

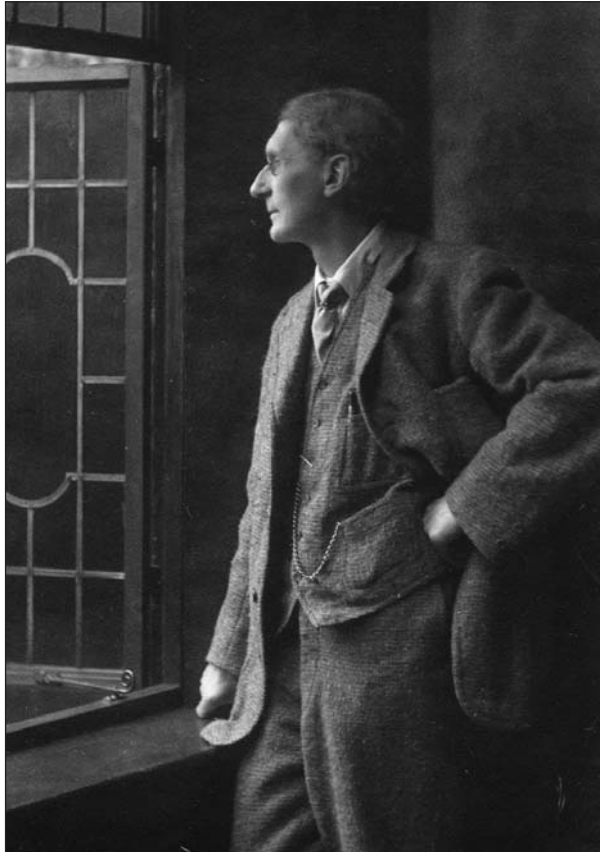
JR – In His Own Words

An extract from a collection of John Russell's writings, compiled by Brian Rance, school archivist. John Russell was King Alfred School's second head teacher – from 1901 to 1920. He died on 15 January 1937.

The ultimate good in life, the *summum bonum*, is happiness and nothing else; I believe every man and woman, however unconsciously, to be in ceaseless quest of it, and to be entitled to as much as they can win (for it has to be won) by fair means (without infringing, that is, any other right), and especially do I believe that little children are as much entitled to find daily happiness in their own way...

What is education? We mean, I suppose, two chief things – that education at its best provides not only necessary instruction but also necessary inspiration; not only the knowledge by which we may do joyous and effective work in the world, but also the ideals by which that work may be dedicated to the service of the world...

Do we wish, in the shortest possible time, to fill all our children's heads with a passable amount of the second-hand knowledge that happens to be fashionable, to fit them all up with the everyday minimum of manual and mental dexterities, and drill them all into the everyday minimum of moral habits, or do we wish, with Montaigne, "to forge rather than furnish their souls," to help them grow, that is, chiefly through their own efforts, and more or less at their own temperamental pace, into their own image –



not the image of their parents, or of their teachers, or any other transient heroes, but into the full and perfect fruition of the seeds of capacity and goodness they bring with them into the world?...

Education has suffered in the past, and is still largely suffering today, from too much convention, too much constriction, too much fear. Those are some of the educational sins of our fathers, and of ourselves. We are afraid of liberty, both of body and of mind. We try to fit the mind to formula as we try to fit the body to desks. We spend our labour on the memory rather than on the understanding. We overload the head at the expense of the hand. We hastily fit our children out with ready-made ideas, second-hand ideas, instead of providing them with material for rational experiment and then patiently leaving them to make through repeated failure their own discoveries...

Then, not sufficiently trusting nature, not

JR – An Impression

"JR was without a hat and upon his arm he carried a coat, a coat of soft greenish hue of the famous rough tweed of Harris make. His shirt was of grey flannel with a turn-down collar and a green tie of the school colours. A broad leather belt of brown and thick shoes of the same shade completed the picture.

The rank and file of the children now made their appearance, not in any sort of order. They straggled behind in twos and threes, producing charming silhouettes against the sky.

JR walked with great strides and, as he passed down the hill to our right, looked a very big man, and in contrast the children looked very small. Some of them were very small, but even those of ordinary height contributed to the general effect: - that of a giant followed by a line of little people from another world.

'It is the Pied Piper of Hamelin!' I cried under my breath, for fear of shattering the illusion, though we were too far from the scene to be heard.

'Now I know,' replied my friend: 'I have often wondered over and over again of what Mr Russell reminded me. Of course, it is the Pied Piper! Shall we follow and see what happens next?'

Mrs Claremont
In 1932 (remembering c1907)

sufficiently trusting the normal child's spontaneous desire to be doing, we coerce him (or her) away from such natural things as rough play, rough noise, rough drawing, rough constructive activities in or out of doors, and set him to uncongenial, dry-as-dust, irrelevant tasks in spelling and figures and grammar and languages and (may I add) catechisms, which we wickedly endeavour to make palatable if not intelligible by such bribes and corruptions as marks and prizes and (what is worse) ►

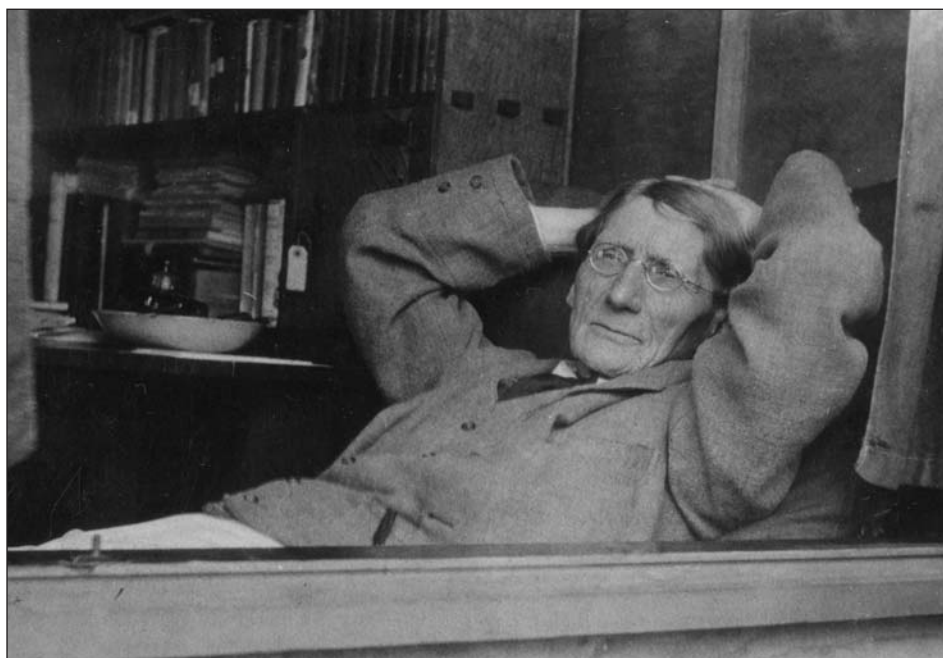
inhuman punishments...

And thus it seems to me that the school has a threefold duty: to instruct and train the heart, to instruct and train the mind, and – if you allow me the expression – to instruct and train the body. And these three are so interconnected that neither can be neglected without ultimate loss...

Shall I be understood if I say that the school is built on almost the same foundation ideas as (the) garden village? Both were deliberately planned at the beginning; both aim at the chief good of the whole community, not at money profit for individuals; both retain as much of the past as seems to them to be still good; both reject, without any tenderness for conventions, what in their judgment is bad; both are indebted to the spiritual resources of the founders for having brought them into being; and both are indebted to the material resources of their clients for keeping them going. Finally, both offer those clients an opportunity of taking some part in the management of their affairs. (38)...

In setting out to educate in accordance with the laws of health – physical, intellectual and moral (all big issues, I know) – it determined that its curricula and methods should be free, should be based, that is, not upon the requirements of examining bodies, but upon the teachings and warnings of educational science. (47)...

The pace of any school for which I was solely or chiefly responsible would be the resultant of the following considerations: First, that no two children have ever moved, or ever will move, at exactly the same pace. Then, that I should wish my children of leaving age (which would vary somewhat



with the character of the school) to be in possession of such beginnings of knowledge, capacity, behaviour, and idealism as are necessary, on the one hand, for easy and serviceable social intercourse, and on the other for further self-development and personal happiness. Next, that even at the risk of some apparent loss, these beginnings, these foundations, must be laid as far as possible by self-education, designed and guided as scientifically as possible, and then unreservedly trusted. Lastly, that comparisons with merely conventional standards of any sort are misleading and mischievous, the essential comparison being that of stages of personal growth of each individual child with itself...

Ex corde vita we have chosen for our motto – translating: “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life”. A little child can, I believe, be made to understand that his feelings, his shame his joy – in a word, his heart, burning or cold, is the helm of his life...

But what I do urge is that we must always make as sure as possible of the wisdom and justice of our own demands; that we must satisfy ourselves we are not overtaxing immature powers, not trying to grow old heads on young shoulders; that we arm ourselves with infinite patience, and never forget that equality, liberty, and fraternity, generously understood, are perhaps the greatest schoolmasters for all ages...

We are co-educational, because we are living life now and preparing for life eventually, and life is co-educational; because the chief end of all education is the civilising of human relations, and because no human relation is so much in need of civilising as the relation of the man and the woman...

Our disciplinary ideal follows certain fundamental conceptions: that discipline is

not coercion (physical or moral) but self-government; that it goes hand in hand with liberty, without which there can be no discipline; that self-government (perhaps the hardest thing in the world) can only be learnt by practice in self-governing; that the sooner such practice begins the better; that it is the educator's most important function to provide opportunities for such practice, to provide sympathetic suggestion and guidance, and above all to know two things: when to interfere and how to interfere...

In other words I hold that, though by wise information, suggestion, appeal, and rare coercion, we can materially aid children in their task of self-education, we are in danger of stultifying all our own efforts (and of course theirs) unless we leave them the very largest measure of liberty and time, and give them the largest measure of encouragement to become – what so many of us flatter ourselves so self-deceivingly we have long ago succeeded in becoming – “the captains of their souls”...

I do not say pay no heed to authority. What is the foundation of education but the paying of heed to authority – the authority of knowledge, the authority of experience, the authority of love? But I do say, in the first place, listen to no authority without first testing its claims, and, in the second place, believe that in every concern, big or little, of your life the ultimate authority is yourself...

If I were to try to formulate a golden rule for educators, whether teachers or parents, it would be something like this:- Subject to the comfort and well-being of neighbours, allow the fullest possible measure of freedom; give the fullest possible encouragement to all initiative – bodily, intellectual, spiritual; and have the fullest possible respect for the child's rights, the spirit of which, if not the letter, is essentially the same as the spirit of your own. Lastly (to use a familiar phrase

which is never literally exact, but which expresses my meaning here better perhaps than any other form of words) always treat a child as an equal...

It is as difficult to distribute marks equitably as to distribute wealth equitably. Class orders do little more than to set up false standards of value. Prizes, at their best, are bribes; at their worst, temptations...

Bribes and punishments do more than discourage joy and effort for its own sake (surely one of the deepest satisfactions of the human spirit), they also arouse and foster that ravening spirit of commercialism, of competition, of beggar-my-neighbourism, that has so long played, and must still, I fear, so long play, its devastating part in our national and international life...

Punishment, if it any longer have a place anywhere, is for the jailer and the hangman, certainly not for the gardener, the physician, or the educator. Does nothing judicial then happen? Yes; but in this respect we are Spencerians, and the misdoers are allowed to suffer, in reasonable measure, the natural consequences of at least their deliberate

misdeeds. So that to be deprived of privileges that are abused, to have neglected duties exacted, to forfeit good opinion, may reasonably said to be "natural"...

There is no overt, no covert, hostility to revealed religion. It is simply not mentioned, unless a child's questions compel mention...

And if I now try to sum up in a single sentence the total impression (of) my work at KAS, I think I should say that while more and more certain that many of the old ways in education are utterly wrong, I am a little less certain than I used to be that the new ways are all (as yet) utterly right.

"We founders were a tiny group of men and women who had a vision of a school much nearer to our heart's desire than any school of our experience: a school of greater freedom, of self-discipline rather than coercion: a school of larger kindness, of greater purity: a school where the children grew rather than were forced into moulds. To take us through the perils of a dangerous and uncharted

channel, our little ship needed a wonderful pilot: a pilot of infinite tact and good humour, of unfailing forethought and wisdom, of tireless watchfulness and faith and courage. Such a pilot we found in JR.

G Maberly, a school founder,
16th July 1920

"The JR that we know will always remain an essential part of the school, though all other things change. A great man will never die, his work remains as the essence of himself".

Ethelberta Claremont, Old Alfredian,
16th July 1920

"When his time was drawing to a close, it was all too common to hear people saying 'KAS is JR. It can never be the same again.' And this John Russell thought was unforgivable and he would hear none of it."

Muriel Locke,
later Janet Muriel Livingstone.

(A small booklet with a fuller collection is available upon request - cost £1.)



OA News & Correspondence



Sebastian Cody writes:

I left KAS in 1974 and so it gives me particular pleasure to report that this September, 36 years later, my son Christopher (known as Kit) joins Year 2 and my eldest Elisabeth (known as Elsa) joins Year 7. I hope they have at least as good a time as I did.

Paul Davis (1938-1951) sent this:

First, thanks to all for a delightful get-together once again (Open Day reception – Ed.) – much appreciated.... It's a shame more OAs of my generation weren't there, but there was a lot of competition from tennis, football, and even the weather. I'm the Paul who wrote after the last 'Alfredians.' I'm only now writing to you, as I was awaiting the magazine, which has just arrived. I well remember Jack Pole, mainly from cricket matches against OAs when I was at school. He was about 11 years older than me. Incidentally, who wrote the obituary, quoted from *The Guardian*? (see the answer in "From the Editor.")

Charles Posner has given us a further update:

After 3½ years working for consulting engineers, I emigrated with my wife and young son to Israel in 1972. I spent some

time in Ghana inspecting bridges and designing their repair or replacement, and the family spent a year rich in experience in Nigeria when I was working on the supervision of construction of dams to provide potable water and hydro-electric power. Following the family's return to the UK after 15 years abroad, I worked for engineering consultants, a county council and now for a major infrastructure contractor as a training manager covering health and safety, professional engineering training and communication.

Juliet Mitchell has written to us:

I retired from Cambridge University in 2008 and am now directing a PhD programme with the Psychoanalysis Unit at

UCL. I live in Cambridge with my husband, anthropologist Jack Goody and, when in London, with my daughter, Polly Rosedale, who works at Reprieve. I continue to write, lecture and supervise in my fields of Gender and Psychoanalysis. I established a course for Gender Studies in the University of Cambridge.

And **Dr Protheroe** writes to tell us that his wife, **Joan (née Mason)**, who died in July 2008, "always spoke very highly of her education at the school, much better than mine although science was slim at that time." Joan's mother was **Hilda Lowy**, who entered the school when it started. Her sister was **Audrey Mason**, born in 1912, who was also at KAS.



An Open Day 2010 mini-reunion: Kim Franklin, Clare Smallman (biology teacher), Sebastian Cody and Naomi Segev (née Shapiro)

KAS Society Conference:

'What Does It Mean To Be Well Educated?'

The old school looked its loveliest in the misty October sun as it welcomed 250 delegates to the 2nd of the KAS Society's conferences, which aim to explore the fundamental aims of education. Following on from the well-received 'Should Education Make You Happy?' three years ago, the subject this time was the perennial question for progressive education: 'What Does It Mean To Be Well Educated?' If we're not solely chasing A*s, is it possible to be clearer about what we are chasing? Can we articulate a broader view of educational success?

Delegates, including many KAS staff, pupils and parents, heads from both state and private schools and those working in related fields, listened to (and challenged) the conference's distinguished speakers, drawn from a wide range of disciplines. First, Emeritus Professor at the Institute of Education, John White, one of the original people calling for a National Curriculum in the '80s (the government's interpretation of which he subsequently disowned), explained how he thought it necessary to go back several steps from the current curriculum: surely it made more sense, he said, to ask what we were trying to achieve in education first before any decisions were made about what to teach and what subjects to have? Next, Kathryn Ecclestone, professor of Social Inclusion at Birmingham University and visiting professor at Oxford Brookes, expressed concern over the current belief (now promoted by the state) that part of the purpose of education was active intervention in children's emotional well-being, whether they had specific needs or not; she proposed this was intrusive of children. The ever-contentious Professor Frank Furedi of Kent University, the most-quoted



Piers Plowright addressing the delegates

sociologist in the UK, called for greater confidence in the value of the traditional subjects: he believed education was primarily to show children knowledge beyond what they could acquire outside school.

After a coffee break buzzing with delegates exchanging ideas and counter-ideas in relation to what had been said, the editor of the Royal Institute of Philosophy's journal THINK, Stephen Law, discussed the difference between liberal and authoritarian approaches to education, and Professor Cathy Burke, historian of education at Cambridge's Faculty of Education, provided pupil's perspective on what they wanted from education, based on her research with *The Guardian* newspaper which had asked 15,000 children nationwide to imagine their ideal school. Finally, the Head of the progressive Calhoun School in New York, Steve Nelson, specially invited to the UK by the Society, excited the audience with his

idealistic (and poetic) view of the central purpose of education: specifically, doing anything it took to 'avoid murdering' pupils' own understanding of what they believed in and wanted to do with their lives.

Following a brief talk from a UNICEF representative on their belief that developing an understanding of rights and responsibilities is fundamental to being 'well educated,' all the speakers took part in a panel discussion. The disparity between the speakers sparked some stimulating controversy, much of which centred on the difference between 'education' and 'wisdom.' Of course there was no finite conclusion to the debate – there never could have been – but in the true spirit of progressive education, the questioning was as important as any answer.

● Lisa Keane

(For those interested in a transcript, please email Lisa Keane at lisagodolphin@yahoo.co.uk - cost £5.)



From left to right: John White, Stephen Law, Kathryn Ecclestone, Piers Plowright, Frank Furedi, Cathy Burke, Steve Nelson

King Alfred School Under Monty

An Article by Christopher Kellerman (KAS 1948-1961)

Next June it will be 50 years since I left KAS with one 'O' level GCE. Although to the outside world I was a complete failure, I felt that my parents had given me the best education that money could buy. I did not learn to read and write until I was 14 and I suppose nowadays I would be labelled a "late developer". Fortunately I had the opportunity of going to university in America and subsequently obtained a Masters degree from the LSE.

It is difficult to convey how different KAS was from conventional schools during the first 70 years of its history. We inhabited another planet from children attending private schools such as UCS, grammar schools such as William Ellis, or grant maintained schools such as Henrietta Barnett. Since then the differences have narrowed and there has been a gradual convergence of the education provided by KAS and these other schools.

There are a number of factors which in the 1950s made the school so different. It was co-ed, there was one class of around 20 for each age group, there was no need to change schools at either 11 or 13, and older children could not order the younger ones around. Few children wore the school uniform and within reason we could dress as we pleased, teachers were called by their first names, and afternoon activities from the age of 11 were chosen by the children.

When, at age 8, I negotiated the site of my first camp with the headmaster I naturally called him Monty, yet 17 years later when I started my first job in the city my boss expected to be called 'sir'. On being given a camp Monty issued a permit setting out

our rights and obligations.

Since the school was so small we went around in groups spanning wide differences in age. Children who could not adjust to life in conventional schools often ended up at KAS with the result that there was a disproportionate number of eccentric, odd ball and maverick kids at the school. In modern day state schools half the children would probably have been characterised as having "special educational needs". Having gone through KAS I was never put out or fazed by how people behaved in later life. The overriding ethos of the school was humane. Everybody was an individual and encouraged to develop their own personalities.

In my class there was a wide cross section of people including the son of a Labour Cabinet Minister, the daughter of the first black member of the House of Lords (Lord Pitt of Hampstead), sons of wealthy entrepreneurs and the daughter of the school caretaker.

Looking back it was amazing how the school was kept on an even keel. In retrospect there appears to have been unstated rules setting limits to what was acceptable. In other schools putting the headmaster's Isetta bubble car on the print shop roof, allowing the Bayes gang to dig deep holes all over the school, Mischa's homemade bombs, unauthorised experiments in the chemistry lab and adventures involving the "black spot" would all have been beyond the pale.

During my time there was a group of extremely keen sportsmen. Between the ages of 15 and 18 there were probably no more than three dozen boys, yet the cricket, football, hockey and tennis teams could all hold their own against grammar schools such as Kingston, private boarding schools such

as Bedales and Frensham Heights and public schools such as Highgate. Their teams had at least five times the number of boys to choose from. I still shudder when I think of the KAS team arriving for away games like some marauding hoard, and the havoc we



1st IX Cricket Team – 1958. Back Row: John Mason, Nicky Isaacs, Nicky Wright, Hugh Pearman, Ralph Steinberger, Alan Keeble. Front Row: Derek Cheek, Anton Smith, Robert Pearman (Captain), Michael Faraday, Chris Kellerman

caused on Southern Region.

I went to school before health and safety had been invented. An inspection would have resulted in the school being closed down within five minutes. For example, in the open air theatre there is a large old oak tree and in my day there were steel climbing footholds going up. Near the top, about 30 feet from the ground, there was the remains of a large branch jutting out which could only be traversed by climbing upside down!

The main problem in adjusting to life outside KAS was that in those days privilege, rank and status still played an important part in professional and social relations. In contrast at KAS everything and everybody, including teachers, were fair game and nobody would get away with any form of arrogance, cant or hypocrisy. KAS was not good training for playing company politics in a large organisation.

One of the recurring themes in the history of KAS is the ongoing tension between providing children with a genuinely progressive education while satisfying the requirements of the outside world for successful examination results. In terms of academic attainment approximately half my class went to university, and they would probably have achieved the same result whichever school they went to. The home environment was an important factor in neutralising the laissez-faire atmosphere of the school. It is important to remember that in those days only about five per cent of school leavers went on to university.

In days before mobile phones, text messages and Facebook, interpersonal relations were long lasting and intense, and some of them have lasted to the present day. I shall always remember the first kissing parties and playing postman knocks to the tunes of Buddy Holly and Elvis.

There are differing views concerning Monty's headship. In his history of KAS published in 1998, Ron Brooks was quite critical. In contrast Baron Harleigh in his obituary in The Times on 10 April 1993 said "Its (KAS) survival owes much to one man who, in all, devoted over 25 years of his life to it."



Class – 1958. Standing from Left to Right: Rosemary Green, Dorothy Woolf, Phylis Pitt, Michele Kimche, Denese Weatherall, Patricia Lane, Ruth Jacobs, Jenny Gordon, John Mason, Peter Steinberger, Ralph Steinberger, Anthony Lawson, Christopher Kellerman, David Rose. Sitting from Left to Right: Jane Robins, Charlotte Beresford, Malcom Manwaring (Form English Teacher), Nicky Isaacs, Anton Smith, Jonathan Epstein, Charles Posner



1992

Are you in the photo?
We'd love to hear from you.
Please drop us a line.







Nigel Sutton: www.nigelsuttonphotography.com

Elizabeth Jenkins

31 October 1905 – 5 September 2010

Valedictory Remarks made by Sir Michael Jenkins at her funeral on 17 September 2010.

My aunt Elizabeth was an intensely private person. In her Will she asked to be cremated with no funeral service and her ashes scattered. So the low-key ceremony today is, I hope, in accordance with her wishes. And she would I think have drawn comfort from the knowledge that this is taking place at the last resting place of William Thackeray and Anthony Trollope, two writers she much respected.

I do not intend to rehearse today the chronology of Elizabeth's long life, a life which spanned virtually the whole of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty first. The very full obituaries she has received in every broadsheet bear witness to the literary reputation she deservedly acquired through her talent and sheer hard work, a quality she much admired. The fact that she never married, living alone as she did in Hampstead, also meant that she was able to focus on her writing to an unusual, some would say, to an enviable degree.

So rather than summarising inadequately her achievements, I will simply give you one or two of my personal impressions of Aunt Elizabeth – or Aunt Betty, as she was known in the family, going back to my childhood and youth.

First was her great devotion to her two brothers, Romilly and David, both of whom predeceased her (my father Romilly in 1969, and my uncle David in 1987), and whose loss she felt very deeply. That close

tie went back to the time when all three children, who were born close together between 1905-1909, were reared together in the nursery and schoolroom of Bocket House where my grandfather had founded and was running Caldicott Preparatory School. Years later, during the Second war, Aunt Betty was a frequent visitor to our house in Cambridge, and subsequently to our house in Hertfordshire. A trim, diminutive figure, often carrying a basket, rather like Mrs Tiggywinkle, she would appear on Sunday mornings and regale us over lunch with her sharp observations and anecdotes about literary London. As she herself once remarked of an acquaintance, in a typical phrase: 'she was small but determined, and gave the impression of being valiant to a degree'.

Second, are my boyhood memories of my own visits to 8 Downshire Hill, the Regency house in Hampstead which my grandfather purchased for her on the publication in 1929 of her first novel, *Virginia Water*. She lived there for more than fifty years in what her friend Elizabeth Bowen described as 'rather threadbare elegance'. It was, I have to say, unbelievably Spartan: the beds hard and somewhat damp, the gloomy kitchen in the basement sporting a barely functioning coal-fuelled range, which must have been a very distant ancestor of the Aga; and the rest of the house heated, if you really had to, by single-barred electric fires. But the house was, as you would expect, full of books, and someone interesting always came to dinner.

Third, when I was rather older, is my recollection of often being taken by her to the theatre. She was passionate about the theatre and very knowledgeable, not least

about Shakespeare's plays from which she could unsurprisingly quote at will. She loved the company of actors and actresses, and wrote a play for her close friend Balliol Holloway, whom I remember as a large, noisy and untidy man. But he was a great actor, and the play had a successful run, and was adapted and broadcast by the BBC. Another good friend was the BBC script-writer Jonquil Anthony, and I remember once being taken by her to meet the cast and watch a rehearsal of episodes of that long-forgotten serial, *Mrs Dale's Diary*.

The small contribution I was able to make to Elizabeth's immense literary output came at the end of her writing career, in the composition and publication of her memoir *The View from Downshire Hill*. For years I had been badgering her to write her memoirs, which she had always resisted on the grounds that she had never kept a diary or properly archived her papers. The real reason, I think, was that she was fearful of revealing to the world outside too much of herself, of betraying to any extent her much prized privacy. But in the end she did set to work on a carefully selected set of recollections which she allowed me to edit; and which was finally published in her 100th year to much acclaim.

For me that book does contain the essence of Elizabeth: the sharp observation, the ability to puncture pretentiousness in a single telling phrase; the very decided views on people, and the wit which at times makes you laugh aloud as you read. Life for her was a theatre which she endlessly enjoyed observing and recording; but I think one lesson she learned early on, was that when you yourself departed from the role of spectator and became one of the actors you lost control of events and were in grave danger of becoming hurt, as she was on several occasions. There was, however, in her case always an upside. As Somerset Maugham once put it: 'when one has to suffer so much [in life] it is only fair that one should have the consolation of writing books about it'.

In closing, I cannot, I think, do better than quote from the sentences with which Elizabeth closed her memoir; indeed these are the last sentences she ever published. 'When [recently] I was in hospital, I was asked if I would like to see a Catholic priest, who called on any patients who would welcome a visit. I said yes. When I told him that 'Everybody belonging to me is dead', he said: 'Then they are all waiting to welcome you on the other side'. I had thought this, but received considerable comfort from hearing him say it. Henry Vaughan's poem 'To Friends Departed' says: 'They are all gone into the world of light.' A great many people do not believe this. I do not want to contend with them. I will add nothing.'

King Alfred School Pupils remember Elizabeth Jenkins...

Not many people in their eighties have had the pleasure of their English teacher still being alive until a few days ago, but Elizabeth Jenkins will always fill a special place in my memories. She managed to instil a love of English literature in the German Jewish refugee children like myself at King Alfred School in the thirties which for obvious reasons we could not have in our family backgrounds. However, I will never know what we did to make her write at the end of Young Enthusiasts that while a living could be made out of washing floors she would never want to be a teacher again.

(Gerry [Gerd] Weiss, KAS 1936-1940)

Elizabeth Jenkins in her quiet way made a lasting impression and I still quote her on Anthony and Cleopatra. I used to correspond with her for a time.

(Jack Pole, KAS 1929-1939)

[Jack Pole died this year on 31 January – Ed.]

Elizabeth Jenkins: senior English, an inspiring and thorough teacher. I think did not approve of the more 'advanced' ideas and theories – just got on with the job.

(Margaret Maxwell,
KAS September 1929 – July 1940)

Elizabeth Jenkins... gave us a tremendous interest in literature, poetry, etc.

(Marianna Archer, née Collingwood,
KAS 1925-1933, from age 8 to 16)

Miss Jenkins, tiny, 6-inch heels on her shoes, admired by the girls who loved reporting (for 'stages') on their reading on Jane Austen or Charlotte Brontë; Miss Jenkins, telling us about the gothic novel; herself a novelist, her novels strong stuff, said some older boys. Was she? Were they? Why didn't we ask?

(Val Morris, KAS 1932-1939)

Elizabeth Jenkins was impressive, but I don't think that she was really happy with rowdy children who were not dedicated literati.

(Michael Selson, KAS 1928-1938)

I remember Elizabeth Jenkins – a petite, absolutely authoritative person with a marvellous gift for stimulating her pupils' literary enthusiasms.

(Professor George William Brandt,
KAS 1934-1937)

Miss Jenkins: no good for the punters, but excellent for the talented.

(Sidney Crown, KAS 1932-1939)

Formidable English teacher, petite and severe.

(Peter Plaskitt, KAS 1931-1940)

Apart from Miss Hyatt, the next most memorable member of staff was Elizabeth Jenkins – five-foot nothing in a fur coat dealing with a Sixth Form, most of whom, at one time, were well over 6 ft. She was an excellent teacher if you met her half-way. I was no reader (esp. not Jane Austen) and she struggled with me.

(Claire Baines, née Boulter, KAS 1933-1938)

Elizabeth Jenkins also inspired a love of English 'literature' and a desire to continue reading and writing.

(Mrs Jennifer Letts, née Thomson,
KAS 1931-1939)

Miss Jenkins, the English teacher, affected a studied elegance the full extent of which only became apparent when she took off her elegant grey fur coat, which did not happen very often. She was, I think, by far the best teacher in the school... She detested the progressive educational methods in force at KAS. Nevertheless, working within their constraints she managed to instill in us a lasting love of English literature as well as a moderate ability to write clearly and correctly. Also a love of the theatre; she directed the annual Shakespeare play as well as the occasional Goldsmith and Sheridan. Unlike what, I understand, goes on to-day, poems, plays, novels were not analyzed to death. They were read, enjoyed, and discussed informally. Poems were learned by heart and recited standing at her desk – in constant terror of being fixed with her steely blue eyes if you faltered. Grammar was not taught, but we wrote lots of essays, which came back with corrections and comments. 'Good but much too untidy' was standard for me.

(Gideon Rosenbluth, KAS 1933-1938)

Elizabeth Jenkins, well she was particular, but not authoritarian as I recall. She was dainty, and her style of dressing much at variance with the other rather homespun attire of the female staff – she wore her fur coat in winter, because she was very cold. I think she was rather shy and without formal teaching experience. I recall that she was only 21 when she joined the school – I may be wrong here, but I do remember something like that. She can hardly have been authoritarian! She had already published a novel. Later she could be seen writing another in her room

during break. She was hand-picked by Wickstead.

(Jocelyn Selson, KAS 1928-1935)

Then in her twenties, she was already a published author of murder stories and biography...

Like all our teachers, she taught very conscientiously; but we got the message that she would much rather be writing than teaching us. Although she had been educated at a progressive boarding school, she was antagonistic to this form of education. She was, however, a master/mistress of her craft and knew her subject extremely well. I for one am very grateful for the apprenticeship she gave me...

Miss Jenkins, nicknamed Jelly, was fixated on Jane Austen and her times. She even resembled an eighteenth-century heroine: fragile, inhibited, languishing, yet at times waspish. She suffered from the cold. In spite of her smallish, centrally-heated room in the new block and ignoring the school's fresh-air cult of open windows, she huddled in her squirrel fur coat, her bloodless face tinged blue, fondling her mousy curls as she spoke with correct diction and carefully chosen words. An example of her pedantry was the taboo she placed on the word 'nice' if used in the sense of 'agreeable, pretty', and not in what she claimed was the correct sense of 'decent, precise, particular.'... She made healthy, athletic tomboys like me feel like barbarians.

I used to be fascinated by the sight of her tottering homewards down North End Road on her high heels, hugging her fur about her and hugging the fence as if suffering from a combination of scoliosis and agoraphobia.

I remember a good technique she used for training one's powers of observation. We concentrated on some object in the room, observing it in fine detail, and then wrote a description of it in detail as graphically as possible. This helped me to sharpen my powers of observation and expression generally and in particular in writing and in art...

Miss Jenkins very efficiently produced Shakespeare plays. They were performed in the covered-court. I remember Romeo and Juliet (Romeo played by a girl – Renee Beloff), Richard II (Richard played by the same girl) and The Winter's Tale. I was given a small part in the last two, cast in both as an old man with a grey beard!

(Lindsay Nichols, KAS 1928-1935)

And it was reported that Richard Gregory (who died this year on 17 May) had always said that he would not have succeeded without her having made him learn to express himself with good English.

A Eulogy to William Alan Wood

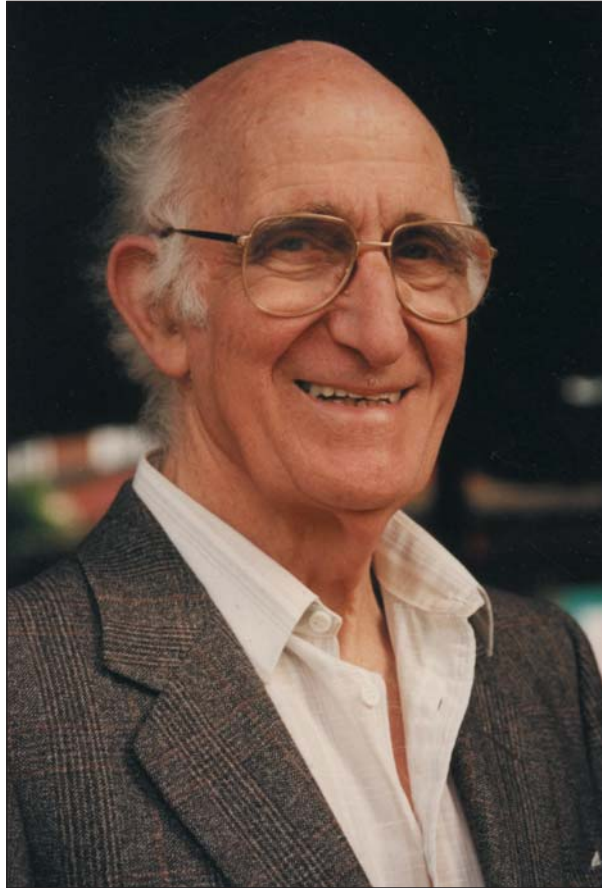
8 December 1916 – 28 June 2010

This is to celebrate the life of William Alan Wood. As a child, and professionally, he was known by his first name of - William or Bill. But Zoe, his first wife, preferred his middle name of Alan. So his children always called him Alan, as opposed to Dad or Daddy - which says a lot about Alan's non-hierarchical approach to parenthood. Indeed, one of Alan's great qualities as a parent was simply to love and trust his children. He often said 'You can never love your children too much.'

Two of Alan's defining characteristics were his modesty and candour. The first meant he rarely talked about himself and never about his achievements. What follows is only a very compressed sketch of an inspirational father, a distinguished public servant and a devoted husband... who enjoyed not just one, but two very happy marriages - together totalling 67 years.

Alan was born during one world war, lived through the Great Depression and saw active service in another world war, all before he was 30. In addition to this, some time around the turn of the 20th century, his family suffered a catastrophic decline in their fortunes. Alan's grandfather, a very successful accountant, who lived in a large house in South London, lost most of his wealth and had to move into a very modest three bedroom house in Camberwell, in which Alan grew up. In a Radio Oxford version of Desert Island Discs, Alan described his upbringing as "decayed middle class", which I think captures it very well. He vividly recalled a disused distillery near his home, where large numbers of homeless people lived under tarpaulins draped around its walls. And there were destitute disabled veterans of the First World War playing makeshift instruments on street corners in the hope of being given a few coins. So Alan grew up with an almost Dickensian appreciation of how people's lives could be radically transformed, for better or worse, often by forces outside their control.

Alan was born in Manchester, where his mother was temporarily staying with her sister, while his father was away fighting in the First World War - but his mother moved back to London when Alan was 2 weeks old. After the war Alan's father became a mining engineer and his work in West Africa and Mexico meant he was largely



absent from Alan's life. Alan recalled it as a Victorian and quite lonely upbringing. Fortunately, at his elementary school, he formed a life-long friendship with Tom Hall and the Hall family, in one way or another, was to play a large part in Alan's life. As a child he spent many Christmases in the convivial company of Tom's family. Ever the diplomat, he used to eat two Christmas dinners, one at home, and the other with the Halls.

Alan won a scholarship to Dulwich College, where he was picked out as a star pupil, and steered towards Classics at aged 13. From Dulwich, Alan won an Open Scholarship to read Classics at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He played rugby for his college and joined the University's judo team - as captain of which he was awarded the first Half Blue ever given for that sport. Alan continued to excel in his studies in his own idiosyncratic self-taught way. At the end of his first year he informed his Corpus tutor that he was going to give up going to lectures because he could learn more on his own - which he clearly did because he graduated with a double First, the only Corpus student in his year to do so, and a rare achievement across the University as a whole.

As Alan saw it, with a Classics degree you could teach, become a clergyman or join the civil service. Having a real

passion for public service, he chose the latter. And if there is a theme running through Alan's professional life it is that he felt compelled to do whatever he could to improve people's living conditions generally. Growing up surrounded by poverty, no doubt contributed to this desire.

Alan's first Civil Service assignment was to the Ministry of Home Affairs in Belfast. It was to be a life-changing posting, because while there he met and married his first wife, Zoe Frazer-Hurst, in 1943. Zoe was a talented amateur actress, one of three daughters of the Rev. Dr Douglas Frazer-Hurst. It was a perfect example of the attraction of opposites, which resulted in a very happy marriage that produced four children and lasted 42 years, until Zoe's death in 1985.

Despite resistance from his Civil Service bosses, who thought he would be better employed planning emergency hospitals, Alan volunteered for the Navy in 1942 and had a relatively uneventful war. After training as a gunner and rising to the rank of Lieutenant, he spent most of the war protecting convoys from submarines. On a trip to the Far East his ship became one of the first to put into Nagasaki after the Americans had dropped the atomic bomb. His experience of walking ankle-deep in ash surveying the devastation caused was to make him a life-long opponent of nuclear weapons.

After the war Alan joined the Ministry of Town and Country Planning where he worked on an epoch-making piece of legislation - The Town & Country Planning Act of 1947, which established the modern post-war planning system as we know it. It set up the need for planning permission for the development of land, the separation of industrial and residential areas, as well as the creation of green belts and new towns. As reputedly one of only half a dozen people in the country who knew what the Act was all about, the Town Planning Association invited him to tour the country lecturing on it. That led him to write a book: *Planning & The Law: A guide to the Town and Country Planning Act*, which became the Bible for planners and councils up and down the country.

Alan steadily rose through the ranks of the Civil Service, working in the broad areas of planning and housing. For the last ten years of his formal career, Alan was Chief Executive of the Crown Estate, managing its multi-billion pound property

portfolio, not on behalf of the Queen, but on the behalf of the tax payer. He was still involved in housing, but housing of a rather more august nature. He enjoyed the stewardship of some of the country's finest properties: from negotiating with tenants who could afford the tens of millions of pounds needed to restore the villas in Regent's Park, to overseeing the re-laying of the Savill Garden at Windsor and succession planning for the 500-year-old oaks in Windsor's Long Walk. Having been made a CB in 1970, Alan was made a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order in 1978, an honour not in the gift of politicians, but bestowed by the Queen herself.

Having seen so much unemployment during the depression, Alan took pride in the fact that he never actually had to apply for a job - other than to join the Civil Service. Instead, people had always approached him, to recruit him for his special blend of talents: a wide experience of public life, wisdom and diplomatic skills - not to mention charm... And so it continued after his retirement. Robert Maxwell, of The Mirror Newspaper Group, persuaded him to become Britain's first newspaper Ombudsman. Arthur Koestler signed him up as a consultant to the KIB Foundation, which promoted research in parapsychology, and endowed a Chair of Parapsychology at Edinburgh University. But Alan's real passion, was the provision of housing and he was most proud of what he achieved in his work with social housing organisations. He was Chairman of Delves House, the Inlight and Trumark Trusts, as well as London & Quadrant Housing Trust. The latter named a block of sheltered housing in Sydenham, south London, after him: "William Wood House," which is perhaps a more fitting memorial to a long and distinguished career in planning & housing than the oak trees he had planted in Windsor's Long Walk, although the latter will undoubtedly last longer.

This survey of Alan's professional life has to mention King Alfred School. Wanting all four children to go to the same school, Alan and Zoe chose KAS. They started there in the mid-fifties and Alan remained pivotally involved with the school over the next 45 years or so, even pitching in, with other parents, to construct classrooms. He served as a member, and later Chairman (from 1966 to 1978), of the school Council, and, then for 22 years, he served as President - during which time a succession of Heads benefited from his wisdom and advice.

Following the death of his first wife, Zoe, Alan married Mary, the widow of his childhood friend, Tom Hall, and enjoyed a further 25 years of very happy married life in Abingdon.



Alan was a good man. Everyone would like to be able to say that about a recently departed person, but in Alan's case it was simply true. He was handsome, athletic, learned, wise, kind and principled: when Alan reluctantly, but deservedly, became part of the great and the good he was offered a fast track to an MCC membership (he loved cricket). He turned it down, seemingly without regret. To what do we owe this seemingly disastrous and frankly incomprehensible decision? Simply, it was "not fair." The temptation to avoid the 23-year waiting list would have undone many a lesser person.

He had a continuing openness to ideas as the turbulent twentieth century blazed on, a love of wisdom which - as the Bible reminds us - is priced above rubies. He learned many languages and read voraciously. Some of the many authors Alan admired were Spinoza (a Jewish connection of course), Henry Thoreau and William Morris.

He had no religious beliefs, but when asked about his personal philosophy, he replied, "I suppose I am quite drawn to the Stoics." Stoicism teaches self-control and fortitude as a means of overcoming emotion. Stoic Virtue is to be free from anger, envy, and jealousy, and to know that even the lowest is the equal of all. The Stoic emphasises what he does and how he lives, rather than what he believes. The philosophy has been summarized as: "Sick and yet happy; in Peril and yet happy; In Exile and yet happy; in Disgrace, and yet happy. Dying and yet happy" (Epictetus). The term 'Stoic calm' could well have been coined to

describe Alan/William. In later years, he sometimes chose to accompany Mary to her Quaker meetings. He held that modern Quaker ideas and practice were close to his own.

Together, William & Mary built a beautiful family home in Anglesey, overlooking the Menai Straits towards Snowdonia. It had been a dream of Mary's and her first husband's for years, but they only got so far as to buy the land and stand on it, drinking in the spectacular views. It took William's drive and determination to get the splendid design built, and Coednant - which means, in Welsh, a house over a stream by a wood - stands as a tribute as much to Mary & William's infectious enthusiasm as to the original vision. It was in their last home, in Abingdon, that William and Mary brought together their ideal of the simple life. This home was the perfect setting for the final decade of their marriage. They were a devoted couple and rarely can there have been such an outpouring of warmth, hospitality, friendship, adventure and happiness generated by a late-life partnership.

Alan bore his declining physical and mental powers with calm fortitude. His was a tremendous example; and yet he knew there was no other way to deal with such adversity, but to accept it; so he did, magnificently.

Compiled from a tribute by his sons, Mike and Julian Wood, and his stepson, Andrew Hall.

Sir William (Alan) Wood

Alan was President of the King Alfred School Society for 22 years. He chose the school for his four children and served first as Chair of Council. His commitment to the school was absolute.

I first got to know him well when I myself took over as Chair of Council. As President he was always on hand to advise me and offer some of his calm and wisdom when the job of running Council seemed a struggle. He knew the passionate nature of KAS parents and the tricky business of establishing that vital co-operative trust between Council and staff essential to the running of the school. His experience was invaluable to me.

He was assiduous in his duties as President, keeping regular contact with Head and Chair. I was lucky indeed to have had such a good and loyal mentor. A lot to live up to, as I have now graduated to the President role myself.

The school will honour his memory. He was a vital part of our history.

Kara Conti (President of the King Alfred School Society)

Heritage Day at the King Alfred School

How many times have you heard an interesting person speaking and thought: "Someone should record this before it's too late"?

On Friday 1st October, KAS held its first Heritage Day: a wide range of speakers and interviewees shared their personal stories with us. We were very fortunate to have some Old Alfredians join us as well as grandparents, other relatives and teachers relating their personal experiences or reflections on a wide variety of topics. These included life at university in the 70s under Franco, Year 9 research on 'who do you think you are?', immigration to London and World War Two experiences.

Chris Kellerman (OA), John Peisley (KAS Head of Science) and Brian Rance (KAS Archivist), for example, talked about topics such as KAS in the 50s, the KAS class of boats and last but not least the school goats. Harry Stevens (grandfather of OAs), who was born in Austria in 1924, told the children about how he was evacuated to London and didn't see his parents again for 7 years; and Ollie Kazadi, KAS Catering Manager, told us of his life in the Congo.

The day was organized in conjunction with Storyvault. The Storyvault web-site encourages children to interview their grandparents (or parents, family friends, neighbours etc.) about their early lives and experiences – and then to upload their memories onto the site. The site is then searchable, under anything from "the Blitz" to "the Beatles," so that users can get first hand testimony from eye-witnesses. All the KAS stories were recorded and will be uploaded onto the StoryVault site (www.storyvault.com).

We are hoping to make this an annual event at KAS and to be able to invite more of you to visit the school during a normal working day.

● Dawn Moore



Katherine Klinger talking to Ollie Kazadi



Massimo De Martini (KAS parent) talks to Year 4 about the history of maps



Katherine Klinger (KAS parent) joining Year 6 in an interview of Harry Stevens

A word...

...from the Editor

I want to point out two mistakes, one of which is alluded to in Paul Davis' letter:

For some reason, both the obituaries of Richard Gregory and Jack Pole omitted to mention their authors.

Richard Gregory's obituary was written by Oliver Braddick, and Jack Pole's obituary was written by Godfrey Hodgson.

Apologies to Oliver Braddick and Godfrey Hodgson. I am happy to say that the version on the website has corrected these omissions.

I hope you enjoy this issue and, as always, I welcome corrections.

● Peter Palliser

Diary



2011

Open Day

25th June, 12:30-3:30pm
Reception 4-6pm

Bonfire Night

5th November, 5:30-8.00pm
Reception 6:30-7:30pm



Alfredians Autumn 2010. *Alfredians* is a biannual newsletter distributed in May/June and October/November.

We always welcome news and memories from Old Alfredians for publication. All copy should be sent to:

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