

# Shiplake Stories









## **Shiplake Stories**

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# Introduction

I always say that the pupils at Shiplake College are the nicest I've ever met. I've been at the school for two years now and that 'honeymoon' period is definitely over, but I still believe that Shiplake boys are more helpful, polite and fun to teach than any other group of students. When I first browsed the school's website trying to find out what Shiplake is really like, I remember being impressed by Gregg Davies' words on good manners and personal presentation and even more so by the story of pupils digging a trench and the Headmaster setting off fireworks to give the boys, who had begged to spend the night in their version of Ypres, a more realistic First World War experience! This is a school with style.

Its site is one of staggering beauty and, like fellow teachers Tom Caston, Tom Crisford and Luke Foster, I chose to have my wedding here last summer. To be married in the same church as Alfred, Lord Tennyson was, for me as an English teacher, very exciting but to then celebrate on the College's terrace, looking out over the river also made the day extra special. So the school has good looks and charm, what more could you want?

The College has, of course, developed over the years and in its 50th year Shiplake prepares for a period of expansion and endeavour. We have new goals and great ambitions but maintain the standards and values that have always made Shiplake College stand out. This book aims to capture something of the rich tapestry of life at Shiplake from 1959 up to today. Mike Edwards and Charly Lowndes have my sincere thanks for their hard work collecting contributions that reflect each decade of the school's life. I'd also like to thank David Lane at Legends Publishing for his help in putting together this record of a place we know and love. I do hope you enjoy reading it.

**Michelle Baker** *Head of English*



# IT USED TO BE A PUNISHMENT

Prospective parents look alarmed. An axe, two shovels and a sharp-toothed saw are not items that you generally expect to see in a Headmaster's Study. Yes, they are there for punishment... sometimes. I have been known to give community service for an hour or two to miscreants. When I arrived at Shiplake there were many parts of the estate that were unkempt and overgrown. The path from the boathouses to the foot of Headmaster's Hill was a jungle in particular need of attention.

I can remember the Registrar telling me about one crying 18 year old. This boy had an undistinguished record at Shiplake and yet again he had been sent to me. The punishment was an hour of estate management. "No one's ever trusted me to do something like this," said the boy as he wielded his axe, overcome with emotion. After I had administered the necessary health and safety training, Tom did a very good job.

Woodland management is moving from hobby to obsession with me. Back home in Scotland there is a small tract of land beyond my garden. With the owner's permission I've taken on responsibility for its care. During the holidays I can spend a whole day working on it, blissfully unaware of time as it passes. And it isn't just me. Estate management started as a punishment at Shiplake but it soon grew too popular. I had boys and girls volunteering to take out the tools and look after our beautiful grounds. Now Estate Management is a very popular option as part of our Tuesday afternoon Community Service Programme.

**Gregg Davies** *Headmaster*







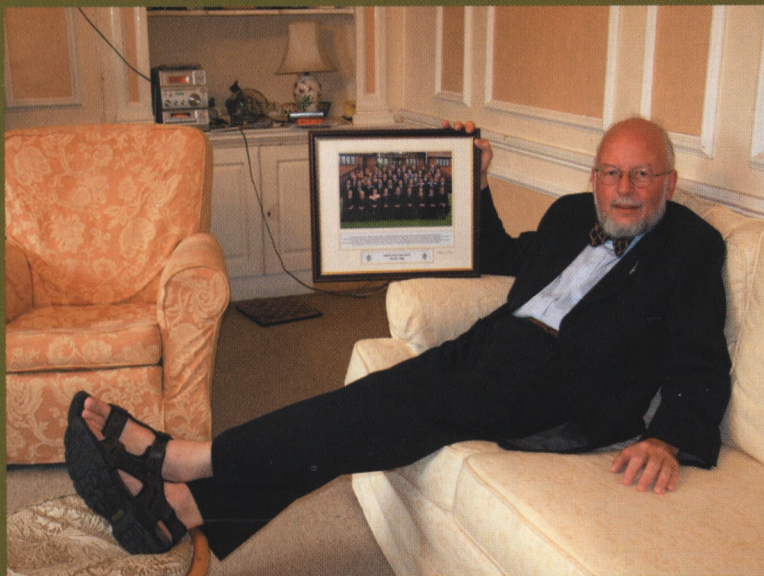
# **“ALL SAY ‘CHEESE’!”**

School photographs are not always what they seem. My wife worked in a prep school where one year several small boys are gazing with admiration, or possibly shock, at a smirking boy in the middle of the centre row, who had got out a part which is mercifully hidden from the camera. The old days of panoramic cameras which allowed the quick thinking and fast of foot to appear at both ends of a row, sprinting round the back ahead of the panning lens, seem to have gone.

Pulling silly faces while being photographed is rather like making sure you look at the CCTV in the bank as you produce a shotgun; you know you are going to get caught. A maths colleague told me the story of two young men who took their Dad's shotgun to hold up the local filling station. Two things gave them away, despite the balaclavas they wore: one was the school badge on their sweaters; the other was the way they asked in deep voices for "Everything in the till – and two Mars bars!" (This story came up when one of our Year 10 students was sent down for armed robbery - a breadknife at the corner shop, and he was only the lookout, but perhaps should have known better).

In one school photograph controversy John Winters and I were involved in clearing a boy called Andy Verrier who was suspected of having bent his knees to reduce his height, spoiling the careful arrangement of similarly-sized people in row five. He insisted he was innocent but the then Deputy Head wanted to punish him with a Saturday Detention. We tracked down the two boys next to him,





and photographed the three of them standing against a brick wall, with legs showing to prove that all were standing straight. John measured the bricks and produced evidence that he really was that short; he escaped the detention.

I have now managed to get over the shock of having my feet airbrushed out of the 2005 Staff Photo. I always wear sandals from March to October, partly for philosophical reasons (beard, sandals, tree-hugging, be nice to the planet, man) and partly because diabetes contracted after 20 years of excessive media lunching before I discovered teaching means I need to look after my feet. Somehow my toes offended Authority and were quietly replaced by (I think) one shoe from Chris Alcock and the other from Graham Wells.

**Charly Lowndes**





# SHIPLAKE

by James Gifford

## COLLEGE





There are Five houses; each represented by a different colour; Burr (blue), Orchard (green), Everest (Red), Skipwith (yellow) and Welsh (purple). There is also college house for the sixth form students. House colours are identified on the ties.



Once you get used to the time-tables you'll find there's never a dull moment, whether it's Art, Music, Science or Sports, any of your favourite subjects have their own extra-curricular activity.



Quality catering ensures you have a healthy as well as yummy meal every day.



Shiplake accepts both boarders and day boys...



There are also places for sixth form girls





OH BUOY...





Throughout my Shiplake rowing life I have been a B team cox. There has always been someone better than me. This is ok because I'm not very competitive and the rival cox is one of my best friends. One day, however, I was given a shot at coxing the A team. After a year-long struggle I felt thrilled to be given my big chance and was very happy. But of course this didn't last long; at some point I knew I would muck it up.

I was coxing the A crew for about two weeks before the incident happened. We were at the Schools' Head in London and it was a big occasion. Every crew was there, and, because my crew had won the National Schools' regatta last year, the competition were eying us keenly to see if we still looked like the danger team. A lot of pressure was on me.

It all started well enough. We got into the water and paddled up to the start confidently; evidently the crew were ready and in the right frame of mind. We started the race. Everything was going well; we were about three quarters of the way through and were overtaking and catching up crews.

And then it happened. Don't ask me why but at full speed we bashed into a big, bobbing red buoy in the middle of the river. How embarrassing! How had I not seen it? After the shock of hitting it had worn off I noticed that we had snapped an oar so there was no way of finishing the race.

The team was in shock and what I saw as we turned round was something that would make it ten times worse; my coach's face! It told of an imminent apocalypse. As if that wasn't enough it dawned on me that we were in perfect view of all the supporters standing on Hammersmith Bridge. They were all laughing and staring at us. I hung my head in shame and guided the boat back.

Since that day I have learned to laugh at the incident. Every time it's brought up I have to hold up my hands and take the blame, but I do it with a smile. It's important that we don't take ourselves too seriously.

**Auberi Chen**



# A Guide To Boarding



- ▶ Get son tee-shirt that says 'I am happy at boarding school' so that complete strangers and friends don't look at you like you are having him adopted.

- ▶ Buy all of uniform with name labels or buy extra plasters when you sew yourself to his twelve pair of socks.

- ▶ Learn to parent by text. Don't expect to have any sort of conversation before they have been home a day at least. 'Can't talk, sleeping!'

- ▶ Don't wait for your son to invite you to be at any sporting occasion – nothing personal, they worry about you being the only parent on the touch line.

- ▶ Be proud that the dorm looks immaculate but be aware that all his clothes are rolled up in the bottom of the wardrobe and if you don't sort it out, he will have nothing to wear on Monday.



- ▶ Get used to doing the washing for other boys, bits of their uniform will always come back with your son's.
- ▶ Be aware that your Sky Plus box will be full of recorded programmes that he is never going to have time to watch but you haven't the heart to delete.
- ▶ Don't be disappointed that he doesn't appreciate the view from Everett as much as you do, he is not a boy in an Evelyn Waugh novel.
- ▶ Follow uniform list to the letter but don't forget two pairs of jeans at least, one will be caked in mud by Monday when they have played football.
- ▶ Learn route to Royal Berkshire so you can find it, should the unexpected happen.
- ▶ Be confident that however fussy your parental enquiry may seem, at least one parent has asked it before.
- ▶ Be greatly relieved that Shiplake students hug their parents, it makes leaving them so much easier.
- ▶ Be confident that you will get used to that strange feeling of loss during term time and you can feel safe in the knowledge that you have chosen a truly happy, secure school where he will thrive.

*Enjoy – you've made the right decision.*

**A Year 9 parent new to boarding**

# The Skipwith Speakeasy & Other Tales

Not enough of our boys get to know the men who keep the school in good working order. David Greer's dedicated staff fix everything from boarding house beds to snow covered drives. This interview with the Maintenance Team gives us just a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes...

The men all agree that working in the Maintenance Department at Shiplake has highs and lows; one minute you might be clearing the pool on a sunny morning, the next cleaning drains or, even worse, dog waste bins. They believe that what defines their role is variety. As team leader David (specialist interest: motorbikes) says, the one thing you can rely on is that the 'to do' list will be rewritten at the start of each day. Expect the unexpected.

George (specialist interest: painting) loves working outside and tending to the College's beautiful grounds whereas Darren (specialist interest: "being a dad and going grey") believes the best thing about Shiplake is that it's a small community in which everyone knows each other. Interestingly, he thinks the worst thing about Shiplake is that it's a small community in which everyone knows each other! One of the dangers of being a maintenance man, it seems, is that you find yourself privy to all sorts of information...

Tosh and Mark (specialist interests: fishing and Formula One respectively) did let slip one story that I particularly liked. Skipwith House was once inhabited by an enterprising pupil who set up a drinking den in his room, having expanded his living space into the eaves next to his bed. In the concealed chamber he had a veritable pirate's cove of booze. Thanks to the team, the House





*[Pictured left to right] George, Graham, David, Mark, Darren & Tosh*

is dry once more! The men were also keen to tip off members of College House; taking the back off your bed to create a top secret hiding place isn't a good idea – too many people have done it before!

Graham (specialist interest: darts), like the rest of the team, believes that Shiplake boys are a nice bunch but all of them wish that pupils could be a little more careful around the boarding houses; no more head butting fire doors for a start.

It seems our tireless team get their energy from “great quantities” of toast, jam and cheese as I noticed during our break time chat. As I left the men to it, Tosh (also known for his love of Marmite and wearing shorts in all kinds of weather) reminded me to mention those who weren't present: Malcolm and Ken (evidently a busy man, as he's also known to the team as “I've just got to...”), Glen and Mark in Burr and Richard the groundsman.



# IS CHRIS THERE?

I was in Welsh House between 1973 and 1978. In the Lower Sixth I was one of four boys who were allowed to live off campus at Tigoni, a house in Binfield Heath. Because I needed to travel between the school & my new home, I was able to persuade my parents to buy me a moped. This mean machine which looked like a real motor bike, other than the conspicuous pedals, gave me a level of freedom I had never had before.

In late 1976 the punk rock group the Sex Pistols appeared on the Bill Grundy programme and swore on live early evening TV. The following morning Mr. Eggar, the headmaster, spoke at assembly denouncing their 'despicable behaviour' and took comfort that no Shiplake boys would ever behave like this. That was it! I had to become a punk rocker! I spent the next few months & years attending gigs of iconic punk bands like Siouxsie & the Banshees, the Stranglers, the Damned and the Buzzcocks. Many of these adventures started with my moped being wheeled silently away from Tigoni or Welsh House.

The school uniform at the time was a sports jacket, white shirt and black trousers. This was rapidly changed for tee shirts, safety pins & Doc Martin boots. Entering Bones, a punk club in Reading, a bouncer looked at my ripped & graffiti-covered school rugby shirt, that was attached together with safety pins and sneered that my Mum must be very happy about how I treated my clothes.

A few of the boys at school formed a band. There was an enforced name change after "public school punks" were exposed in a local paper and the band name deemed beyond the limits of decency. Watching the group was a good excuse to visit punk venues, including the legendary Roxy in London where the band supported some of the better known punk bands.





the music. I was discharged from Battle Hospital in Reading at 3 o'clock in the morning, on crutches. It was freezing and I had no way of getting home to London as the last train had long gone. I took a taxi to Shiplake and climbed through a Welsh House window and slept like a log on the comfy sofa in the day room. Obviously I just couldn't keep away from the place.

**Chris Rayburn**

Paul Mullin, who still lives near the school, had to be the manager because he had the car. Eddie Barnes, the lead singer went on to play keyboard for Department S and enjoyed a chart success with 'Is Vic There?'.  
I asked a Henley barber to give me a short punk style cut that would be OK for school. Unfortunately he didn't seem to understand the second part of my request. This was very adventurous as all the boys at Shiplake wore their hair long. By this time I was somehow Head of House and meals were eaten on the prefects' platform in the Great Hall. I was so embarrassed by my new punk hairstyle I ate the whole of my supper with my crash helmet on, so that no one could see what was underneath.

I left Shiplake in the summer of 1978. During the following very harsh, snowy winter, I went to watch the Lurkers and badly twisted my ankle pogoing to



# BREAKDOWN!

When I was in Year 11 we didn't have an under 16s team – instead every 5th form rugby player played for the 1sts, 2nds, 3rds or 4ths. I was in the 2nd fifteen run by Peter Webb. I don't think I made a tackle for the entire first two years I played at Shiplake but something about playing for Mr Webb made you never want to be the player who let his opposite man through. Our captain was a boy called Bill Tatchell. And he was psychotic.

We spent most of training sessions playing his favourite game – 'Breakdown'. This involved playing unopposed and working through phase after phase at top speed. Fitness, handling, precision and team unity were all developed. Mr Webb would shout "BREAKDOWN" at the top of his voice and the boy on the ball would drop, the pack fly over the top and recycle the ball. Tatchell and co in the pack would find it hilarious to 'accidentally' trample a poor, unsuspecting back unlucky enough to be holding the ball at the breakdown call! The victim would suffer under the weight of some huge forwards. Jeff Dunnit was the biggest at 6' 8" and we never lost a line out, even though Jeff could barely catch; Mr Webb taught him to angle his face so that when he missed the ball with his hands it would simply bounce off his head in the right direction.

Before each match Tatchell would assemble us in the Welsh House changing rooms to get us wound up. He would be breathe fire and walk around the room punching us all in the chest. I remember that it took until twenty minutes into my first game to be able to breathe properly after the beating! We would go out onto the main field and gather under the big fir trees, then all link arms and crouch down. By this stage Bill was at his maddest and would demonically scream "What are we gonna dooooooooooooo?" Our reply "WIN!" would be shouted three times and by the third I would have run through a wall for him – had I not still been in agony from his punch!





We would run in single file down the back drive all in unison so that the opposition, who were waiting for us on the pitch by then, would hear this warlike stamping getting closer and closer. Round through the gate and onto (if we were lucky that day) the 1st XV pitch half the team would be close to tears we were so wound up! That year the first team were strong and we were too; we had the confidence that whoever we played we would beat. Mr Webb would stand behind the posts in silence, watching. By not saying anything to us he was even more disturbing, making me desperate to not be the one who let him down.

Now that I'm a teacher I find being the coach really hard. To see my team playing all the schools I used to compete against as a boy gets my juices going to the point where sometimes I have to walk away from the side line in case I end up on the pitch joining in. Whenever a team I have coached plays Pangbourne I find myself unable to sleep properly for the whole week beforehand. I'm agitated in each training session and on match day find myself boiling with the kind of rage Tatchell would instil in me as a boy!

In my first year as a coach when we played Pangbourne I realised half way through my team talk, moments before the game began, that I was shouting uncontrollably with tears streaming down my cheeks. One of the subs had to lead me away and get me to calm down....

### **Tom Caston**

*Tom Caston was a Head of House during his time as a pupil at Shiplake and he returned to the College to become Head of Geography. He has since taken on the role of Head of Years 7 & 8. He is a very popular teacher and the pupils have been known to call him "one of us"!*





**NEVER  
LOOK  
GIFT  
HORSE  
IN  
MOUTH**



In my experience Shiplake parents are usually both generous and considerate in giving gifts to members of staff. I had a conversation one evening in a Chapel Service with one such parent about how I had seemed to have developed insomnia. We joked that, whilst lying awake at 3am I could have been getting on with my marking. Jokes aside the sleeplessness wasn't improving my general disposition with my classes when I was teaching. To my surprise the following day a small sachet of tea bags arrived with a note attached saying; "Try these to help you sleep. Make a cup of tea about an hour before you want to go to bed and you will be off for the night"

There are wily teachers who would never put such gifts to use but being a very innocent soul I duly tried the tea that evening and had a remarkable night of unbroken sleep. Two more nights of this followed and several of my classes remarked on the improvement in my temper! I managed to catch the parent the following Sunday to say thank you. "No problem" she said, "I heard they worked so I brought a box full in for you." I was extremely grateful and it was only on checking the packet later that evening that I found they contained a soothing blend of camomile, cinnamon and laudanum. With a drug derived from opium in my bedtime beverage it's no wonder I had a good night's sleep!

**AJ Foakes**





## Hi Mr. Curtis

I have been pondering about the idea of going uni but as I didn't listen too much at school I now need some help. I thought I would ask you because I want to pursue my rugby as well. I have rubbish A-level results and just want to know what path I could go down to study and play rugby, if you can spare some of your time so I can come see you or just keep it by email. I hope you can help me I look forward to your reply.

**Jack Mercer**

*PS I wish I had listened at school.*

*Jack Mercer, who left the College in 2008, is affectionately known as 'big Jack'. He is a wonderful chap who had come close to being asked to leave before the end of Year 13 but stayed the course and was awarded a prize at last summer's leavers' ceremony. Jack is a colossus of a man on the rugby pitch but readily admits that he's less of an intellectual giant. He sent this email to Richard Curtis (Head of Maths and rugby coach extraordinaire) once out into 'the real world'. Its reproduced here by his kind permission and the Shiplake staff hope its message won't be lost on current pupils!*





## Island Life

One of my most memorable experiences during the first couple of days at Shiplake was the camping adventure on Shiplake Island. When it came to dinner I was given the gruelling task of cooking sausages for everyone in my group. It was dark and we did not have a torch because we forgot to get one before we set off! You could not see what you were doing, never mind whether the sausages were cooked or not. Let's just say everyone

who ate them spent the next day in the medical wing with food poisoning. What really made it bad was that I was the only person who was not ill, so everyone thought I had done it on purpose. I was popular that afternoon!

**Cameron Dempster** *Year 10 Everett*

## Why I did not hand in my Maths Prep

My cat was sick on it. The dog chewed it. My brother ripped it. I posted it to you but it didn't get there because I didn't put a stamp on it. Collings looked at it and it fizzled up. It blew away and it landed in the middle of a cow field and a cow trod on it, chewed it and then ate it. When I was taking it out of my brief case I tore it. I put it in my History book and handed it in. I forgot to hand it in. I couldn't be bothered. I lost my book. I handed in the wrong Maths book. I forgot to take my brief case to the Maths lesson. I dropped it in a puddle .....

**Michael Rhodes** *(The Court 1986 – 87)*

# NO REGRETS

My first days as a Year 9 boy at Shiplake were all, to me, pretty interesting but on one day an extraordinary event occurred - the sponsored 25 mile walk from Wallingford to Shiplake. As a new member of the College this seemed a daunting task, on top of getting to know everyone with whom I caught up or who caught up with me on this marathon hike. As I walked the miles rolled by and the weather couldn't make up its mind from sun to storms. The struggle went on as with aching legs and death seemingly nearby I continued.

It was like being in the desert, the mirage of what looked like Shiplake, formed by fields and farms, turned out to be other villages and towns. I remember reaching the lunch post at Pangbourne with a greeting from the Headmaster - "Ready to give up yet?" In the background I saw other participants climbing onto the mini buses to return to the safe haven of school, having decided not to complete the walk. I must say that the thought of joining them was tempting but unfortunately for me it was outweighed by the thought of completing such a herculean task. I responded with a resounding "No." A decision I have never regretted.

**Tony Baylis**









# The Trench

Ollie Williams, Radio Berkshire journalist, told the story of his night in Shiplake's First World War trench in June 2007.

I thought they might not be serious. I thought maybe I'd be able to turn up, take a look at the trench, take some photos then run off before the night set in.

But when I reached Shiplake College to find the teachers Chris Bridgeman and Jon Cooksey in combats, wielding guns and throwing "my" sleeping bag at me, I knew there'd be no escape. Not of course that the many millions of soldiers who lived out their lives in World War One had any choice either and the life-sized World War One trench at Shiplake is designed to give today's teenagers an idea of the conditions their counterparts had to endure nearly a hundred years ago.



"It is remarkably accurate," says Jon Cooksey, a military historian by trade who teaches at Shiplake two days a week. "We studied photos of German and British trenches, then Chris built it to the exact same dimensions."

Jon is clearly in his element and, alongside Chris, soon has his troops working to a sentry duty rota, responding to rank, and making the officers (i.e. adults) tea. He believes the trench is a fascinating social experiment, and that today's youngsters are surprisingly similar to their World War One forebears. As an example, once the darkness encroaches on games of cards, some of the 13 and 14 year olds in the trench begin to sing.

The evening begins quietly as the troops settle in but, just before 11pm, the trench is rattled by a series of explosions. The boys immediately reach for their guns, although some naively try to aim at the smoke above them, rather than facing out of the trench at the enemy in the darkness.

It turns out that the enemy is the Headmaster, equipped with a box of fireworks. Happily, all survive the bombardment, although the Head admits to having grave fears should a school inspection team turn up.

Back in the trench the soldiers eventually settle down at gone 1.00 a.m, and the sentries change for the third time. But soon the rain starts to come down – and it's this that made trench life unbearable in the great wars of the last century.

By 4.00 am the trench is awash and in a foot and a half of water, and ladders designed to go "over the top" are employed practically as rafts. After all, no one wants to develop trench foot in Shiplake, of all places. 5.00 am rolls in and the bedraggled, damp Year 9s are beating a hasty retreat to the school, a shower, some warmth and some clean clothes.





## TOO FAT TO FIELD...

By the third Shiplake College cricket tour of Barbados the record of never having won a game was becoming an albatross round the neck. This time it seemed different, we had a powerful squad who didn't like losing. They had attitude whether it was in the classroom on the rugby pitch or on the hockey pitch. A disciplined bowling and fielding performance had restricted Foundation School to a moderate score. Bruce, their master-in-charge of cricket, from Sussex, was letting his usual easy demeanour slip.

"Come on, hit the ball, there are no fielders in the air." His frustration was palpable. Bruce became even more restless as Shiplake made a steady start.





"You're too fat to field boy," he screamed from the shade of the shack of a pavilion as Ed Blanchard and Will Downing pinched yet another risky single. Bruce didn't do political correctness when his team was losing.

The Foundation Ground sits next to a huge ancient graveyard, as a funeral took place it seemed as if the black suits were mourning Foundation's onrushing defeat and Shiplake's inaugural victory. But the heat was taking its toll – just two days earlier we had left Gatwick, where the puddles had frozen.

Beach cricket, water donut rides and sun-bathing were no preparation for a day of intense cricket. The temperature never dropped below 30° centigrade from first ball to last.

Burning, brutal Caribbean heat induced an error from Downing and he departed. Ed Blanchard was dehydrated, exhausted and despairing. The run-rate rose and Blanchard vomited as he took the long walk back to the pavilion. Foundation clung on to win by a handful of runs.

They cleared the goats grazing the pitch as we arrived for our next game. Isolation Cavaliers, in Scotland, a remote Bajan region were our next opponents. Cavaliers were clearly a poor club, the lavatory facilities were non-existent, the changing room the size of a phone box.

And in truth it was a poor game on a poor pitch but we eked out a half-decent score and Jon Ridgway bowled us to victory. The sun had long-set and the victory photo is dark and grainy but it was a historic moment for Shiplake cricket. We had played much better cricket earlier in the tour and played supremely well versus Wanderers on the last day of the tour but the visit to Isolation Cavaliers had been a win. Sometimes winning is all that matters.

**Michael Edwards** *Tour Manager*



## WE'RE NO ANGELS

STARS: Humphrey Bogart

Peter Ustinov

Aldo Ray and Adolf (the viper)

This was a light piece set on Devil's Island, French Cedeas, South America. This comedy started with the escape of three convicts from the Devil's Island penitentiary with their pet viper, who had done them a good turn by biting a guard.

It was hard to imagine Humphrey Bogart and Peter Ustinov as French convicts because of their accents, but Aldo Ray put it across considerably better. The family seemed too kind to be true, as were the convicts in preparing the Christmas meal.

What made the film so amusing was that the convicts seemed unable to tell the difference between right and wrong. For instance: in the case when Humphrey Bogart said that he would not steal the turkey as it was Christmas, but he would steal the money to buy it. Another case was when the wife of the shop owner, by whom they were being entertained, mentioned that the flowers that they had brought were just like the ones in the Governor's garden when in actual fact they had indeed been stolen from there. In the end their viper, Adolf, killed the cruel uncle and the even crueller nephew. Instead of escaping, the convicts changed their minds and returned to prison, just on the verge of getting away.



"Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves" - the British always enjoy a comedy directed against themselves, especially a nautical one with patriotic sea tunes. It had a simple plot about a sea-sick naval commander, the Sandcastle-on-Sea town council and a woman who owned some bathing huts.

In the beginning of the film we saw Captain Ambrose (Alec Guinness) receiving a Lloyd's medal for bravery. Later on he was met by a reporter to whom he started telling stories about his families' naval traditions right from the stone-age days to the 1914-18 war.

As Captain Ambrose continued the story there was a flash-back to the time when he bought Sandcastle pier from the Mayor of Sandcastle and got it registered as a ship for pleasure cruises. Upon this pier the Captain had many adventures up to the time when he received his medal. In the end we returned to the present when, at the end after he had related all his tales he staggered out of the pub completely drunk having finished a container of Rum. This film was very funny at all the time, and well worth seeing.



## LECTURE BY MR. EVERETT ON MOTOR RACING.

For one of our Saturday evening entertainments Mr. Everett gave us a lecture, with colour transparencies, on various aspects of motor racing and sport in open cars.

There were a number of slides on hill-climbs, with some showing Mr. Everett's last car before it was smashed up, also some on stock car racing, but the best parts of the show were (1) The various Grand Prix pictures from Germany and Italy. (2) The close-ups of some of the famous racing drivers such as Peter Collins and Stirling Moss. (3) The noise from the start of a race, which was very effective. (4) The close-ups of cars such as Vauxhall and Cooper. Amongst some of these familiar cars were some very little known cars from France.

The pictures were taken mostly in black and white though there were some ones in colour. The commentary was very good, and gave us a good impression of the new sports in motor cars also some useful information.

# The Early Days...

I arrived at Shiplake in the Autumn '58, there was no school then, just an empty building with a blue painted basement room which was supposed to have held emergency wartime transmitters. The weather was sunny and clear, I slept in an old hospital bed in the room at the top of the stairs looking past the cedars up the drive and waited for the school to start. It was a case of 1:1 tuition with Mr Everett, Mr Austin coming on the scene in early 1959 as the first tutor.

Roger Hands was my closest friend, and together with Charlie Bullock and Desmond Crow we started the 'Court Circular' producing several issues. Those first ever 'Court Circulars', in colour of sorts, were produced on a Banda machine we scrounged and contained current adventures and comment. Looking back I'm a little surprised at what we did achieve. I just





happen to have a copy here. We were proud of it at the time, and indeed it does represent an authentic view of some of the things we got up to in those early days of unparalleled freedom. Everett started the school without rules. Those came in a matter of months as the need for structure and necessary guidelines increased.

**Alasdair Barron**



# THE TIMES

## Top 20 Public Schools - 1986

In 1986 Shiplake College featured in The Times Top 20 public schools. At the time there was tremendous excitement around the article, which described the Shiplake policy as “obtaining the maximum results with the minimum of fuss”, and good at producing a “gentlemanly breed of chaps”. Shiplake did not produce many lawyers or accountants in the 1980s, but the school taught pupils how to survive in a grown up environment, how to converse with adults and how to conduct oneself in public. Shiplake had a carefully measured focus on life skills and academic achievements.

*I left Shiplake in 1989, and nearly all of my friends from that year have gone on to be successful in their chosen field. Shiplake taught us to be ambitious, hard working and despite our privileged start in life, the school produced grounded individuals. Perhaps that is why Shiplake produces so many entrepreneurs. The academic achievements at Shiplake have improved exponentially since the 1980's and the school is still turning out a “gentlemanly breed of chaps” (and ladies). Long may this continue.*

**Mark Soden, Everett 1989**



**Vital statistics:** Pupils 342 boys, 282 board, 80 day. Ages: 13 – 18: C of E: fee-paying

**Head:** Mr Peter Lapping (since 1979) extremely charming with an easy and approachable manner. Feels that "school shouldn't be too different from home."

**Academic matters:** Copes very well with less able boys, and those with learning difficulties. 16 places per year for dyslexics. Well spoken of by many prep school heads.

**Games, options, the arts:** Water sports prominent: sailing and windsurfing available, does well at rowing. Strong squash and cricket. Rugby and hockey also played, latter in superb sports hall in bad weather. Drama, music and art all high priorities.

**Background and atmosphere:** Established in 1959 in a beautiful setting overlooking the Thames, firmly traditional.

**The pupils:** Gentlemanly breed of chap, with an overriding desire to get rich: stock exchange and marketing high on the job intentions.

**Bottom line:** Fees: £1,850 per term boarding, £1,175 day.

**Remarks:** Certainly worth looking at if your son is better suited to a small school with much individual attention. Enhanced by the understanding and realistic approach of head.





# The Considerata

Lindsay McDonald's farewell sermon, as he departed to become Head of Modern Languages at Tonbridge School in 2007, included his contemporary parody of the *Desiderata*, the Christian exemplar on how to live your life. Lindsay's egocentric version focused on some modern day failings.



Wherever you go, make a lot of noise and you will be noticed. Avoid being friendly with people or they will take advantage of you. Make sure everyone knows your opinion and keep away from dull people as they will bore your socks off. Mix with loud people as they are seen as confident and people will associate you with confident friends. There are plenty of people worse off than you and anyone who's better off than you will no doubt come down to earth with a bang soon. Get out of life what you can by putting in as little effort as possible. A job is necessary to earn money, but don't be stupid enough to do more than you have to. In business affairs, make sure you do unto others before they do unto you, because there is no such thing as real virtue. Do not be yourself, or others will see your weakness. And do not be taken in by "love" - the only useful kind of love is if you love yourself. If you cannot love yourself then who else will love you? Getting old is an unavoidable hazard but botox and facelifts can help convince others that you are younger than you are. Always imagine that the very worst thing can happen and then when the second worst thing happens you will be less traumatised. Stay out late and party and you will always be happy. The more you party, the stronger you get. What doesn't kill you will make you stronger. Never forget that the universe owes you a favour, even though most of the time it seems that it does nothing but drop excrement from on high. There is no such thing as God or we would all be materially rich. The world is a dump. Get out there and prove yourself. Live your worst nightmares and laugh. Be careful. Strive to be wealthy.



**Work Hard,  
Be Determined,  
Keep Going!**





***Shiplake's 1st VIII — an interview with some of the crew: Ross McKellar,  
Adam Middleton, Toby Frossell, Jamie Albon, Freddie Marriott &  
Matt Tyrwhitt-Drake***

**What have been your best and worst races?**

A memorable race that was both good and bad was the National Schools' competition last year – the famous sinking! Things were going well up to the first 750 metres, but then the waves became stronger. We had started to pull away from the other crews but as the waves hit, the boat got heavier and we were struggling to pull the oars. As we fought on we passed capsized crews, guys swimming for the banks. We didn't realise it, but the race had been stopped. We were waist high in water as we crossed the finishing line. Our Cox, Joe Holmes, just thought it best not to say anything and we didn't want to give up after all that training. We were just focused on getting our best time after working so hard. Perhaps one of our most disappointing races was at Henley Regatta last summer. We drew a hard boat, but underperformed. We lost after having clear water on the other crew. The Headmaster, who had cycled along the tow path shouting his support, was pretty devastated. He didn't stop at the enclosure but kept riding all the way home. He pedalled off into the horizon, too upset to talk to us!

**Why is Shiplake such a great school for rowing?**

We're obviously fortunate to have a rowing club on the river at this school. We're also the only sport to have a parents' committee which helps enormously with the funding (Jamie). We have some excellent coaches and teachers too. Mr Crisford and Mr Mackworth-Praed are committed to getting those extra few seconds off our race time and Mr O' Brien and Mr Dennis, as Olympic champions, are excellent role models... but they only show off their medals infrequently – I'd wear mine every day! (Ross).









**Would you recommend that boys in Year 9 stick with rowing?**

The early starts on dark, cold mornings are pretty bad but when you win and when you feel the boat moving fast it's a great experience – so don't quit! It does get harder and more painful (Toby) but our J16 crew has shown that, in rowing, small schools can still compete nationally. Other Shiplake boys who make fun of rowers are just jealous!

**Can you sum up rowing in one word?**

TOBY *Rewarding*

ADAM *Exhilarating*

JAMIE *(Can I use two?) time consuming*

FREDDIE *Satisfying (when you're winning!)*

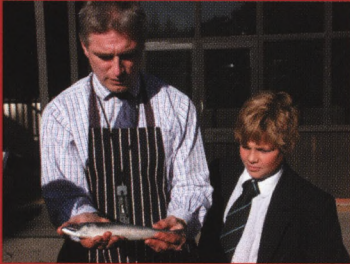
MATT *Frustrating (when you're not!)*

ROSS *Pain. Just pain*

ADAM *Ok then, painful in the short term, satisfying in the long term*



# The rise and fall of the semi-colon



The subject of my story is Mr Alcock; a wonderfully resourceful and rather eccentric English teacher who has a strange fascination with trains and 'The Hitch Hikers' Guide to the Galaxy'.

Many stories are out there involving Mr Alcock's wacky and wonderful teaching but I am going to focus on his lessons with 2008's Year 9 set 3. We had recently handed in a prep, the subject of which escapes me, but I handed it in nonetheless in the hope of getting a 'B' or maybe an 'A'. Mr Alcock seemed keen, however, to focus on grammar and wrote in large letters on the board 'The rise and fall of the semi-colon'. To the class this seemed to be an issue of little importance however Mr Alcock ploughed on with his teaching. What suddenly caught my attention was when he said, "I bet no one has put a semi colon in their prep".

I, sensing a fatal error, exclaimed "I bet someone has, and if they have you must dance on your desk for at least 3 minutes!" Mr Alcock, confident of his pupils' general disregard for punctuation, agreed to this bet. Everyone scoured their work for a dot above a comma somewhere in their work and Andrew Lloyd piped up

"I've got one, at the end paragraph, look!"

And so Mr Alcock, danced. He hopped onto his desk and danced for 3 minutes! Say what you will about Mr Alcock, he's a man of his word!

**Charlie Uprichard**







# RIVER THAMES BAPTISMS



The River Thames in April was considerably colder than the River Jordan. Yet Head of College, Ryan Weare, decided to be baptised in the River Thames.

"I hadn't been baptised and I decided to opt for the traditional method of total immersion in the river," said Ryan. Fellow Upper Sixth Former, Lucy Andrews, also decided to follow in the tradition of John the Baptist. The congregation was relieved to learn that it did not have to enter the river as in the full John the Baptist tradition.

"The Baptism Service started on the river bank then Ryan and Lucy walked into the river up to waist height," explained Head Chapel Warden, Joe Colman.

"Henry Mitchell, a fellow Chapel Warden, and I took an arm each. We immersed them totally on the words, "In the name of the Father," and then a second time on "The Son" and then on "The Holy Ghost" for the third and final dunking."







# FLAMEHEAD'S ALARM

You know there's a school rule that says 'no aerosols allowed', well you might want to know the fascinating story behind it. One day when I was in Year 9 I was in my room unaccompanied (my room mate was outside having a fag in the bushes) and a wild idea came to my mind - I was mesmerised just by the thought of it.

So, whilst he was out, I grabbed my deodorant can and I took out the lighter I'd stashed away in my coat. I sprayed some deodorant through the hole of the closed cupboard door. I held the button down on the can for about 45 seconds, and then I got my lighter and tried to see how incredible the flame would be by igniting it next to the hole. I regretted what I had done because instantaneously the cupboard door swung open as if someone had kicked it and, in excruciating amounts of pain, I dashed out of the room. All you could hear for those few seconds in which I bathed my scarred and scorched hand in copious amounts of cold water was a sound which can only be described as unholy wailing.

Moreover, what I did not know then but later came to realise, was that I'd singed off part of my hair. After my hand had cooled through a short but agonizing process I noticed a very pungent aroma and, anxiously, went into my room worried I'd left my cupboard on fire. To my amazement it wasn't. I walked out, found a mirror and saw what had happened to my hair. When I ran my hand through it it came out in clumps and felt uncomfortably straw like. I was determined to make myself look less foolish, so I found a pair of scissors and cut off what areas of my hair I could reach to make sure my head looked reasonably normal. Regrettably what I thought would





help actually made the situation worse; I now looked like a boiled hedgehog with a rather severe and avant-garde haircut.

Eventually I ended up at the Medical Wing and had to reiterate what had happened, but when I came out of Sister's room I was still in pain with my right hand wrapped in a mass of bandages. When I got back to House I had to tell my Housemaster and, dreading what his response would be, I pressed the doorbell. To my surprise his reaction was not as ferocious as I expected; when I explained to him the events he chortled and said "Well that'll teach you to play with deodorant and lighters".

In the end I became known to one friend in the year above as "Flame Head". My story is one from which I have learnt a valuable lesson and have never since been tempted to dabble in pyromania.

**Qahir Lalani**



# Rowing On The Rugby Pitches

It started with an e-mail to BBC South on a soggy Monday afternoon asking if they would like to film rowers on the flooded rugby pitches. They thought we were joking but a photo showed otherwise. BBC South decided it was old news and put it on their website. BBC Newsround were the first to pick up the story closely followed by the Henley Standard, Meridian TV and a number of photographic agencies. By early Wednesday afternoon there was a crowd of photographers, in wellies, taking photos of rowers performing in front of the rugby posts. For Newsround presenter Gavin rowing was a new experience. As he disappeared towards the horizon, unable to turn, veteran cameraman Dave sadly shook his head, "It wasn't like that when I worked with John Noakes on Blue Peter." Eventually Luke Foster successfully taught Gavin how to turn and he rowed back to complete his report for the BBC. The Sun, with a series of awful puns, decided to run a flooding photograph alongside a "before" photo that we supplied. Consequently Charles Johnson and Labrador Horace made it into The Sun running across dry playing fields back in the sunny days of September.

**The Court 2006 - 2007**







# GENEALOGIST TRACES HIS ROOTS

My time at Shiplake was exciting because the school was in its infancy. The buildings were being turned from the Everett's home into a brand new public school. Teachers like Mr Walsh and Mr Wells-Furby influenced me while at school.

I was the school's tennis captain and skippered the school on the Wimbledon courts and also at 1st Team cricket. I was not good at batting or bowling but the best at fielding! History was my strongest subject and I can remember the exciting classes with Wells Furby. I enjoyed boarding in the old building and walking over to the Tuck shop for a Mars Bar. The grounds were great and I made many a visit to the quarry and the Island. I also liked the visits to Henley and the occasional long walk to Reading to visit the Pictures. I would like to thank Miss Tomlin who was always there to help me when I got into trouble.

I acknowledge also the help of Aubrey Goodwin who was a family friend and Chairman of the Governors for many years. I have been self-employed for a long time now and my early days at Shiplake have helped me a great deal in later life. My present family have also benefited from boarding schools. I currently work as a Private Detective (Genealogist) with attitude.

**Bill Adams** *Shiplake, Skipwith House, 1959-64*









# IF YOU DIVORCE YOUR WIFE YOU WILL HAVE TO RESIGN

My Ministry of Education number began 56/ ... so I was considering the advice to young professionals, "stay at least three years in your first post but not more than five." This was complicated by the chances offered by the "Brain Drain" to North America. Furthermore I had been told "If you want adventure you will get more at a new school at Henley-on-Thames, than from teaching in Canada."

In contrast to today's schools, my interview at Shiplake was post lunch on a Sunday afternoon late in January 1960. A brochure sent to me, along with an invitation, showed that a change of Head from Everett to Skipwith had just occurred. On arrival I never expected I would be chatting for the next three hours.

After a preliminary word with David Skipwith I was entrusted to Charles Pepper and Daniel Maynard-Taylor, with Nicholas Findlay very much in charge. I was shown everything from kitchens to basement lavatories and to the Stable Block, in course of conversion to classrooms. Due to floods the river bank was off limits but I do recall the sailing club working on a dinghy and the motor club attempting to start a pre-war car. A long chat with David Skipwith then followed. He was in his early weeks as Headmaster. Above all I got the impression that Governors had told him











to strengthen the staff by replacing cheap and erratic oldies with well-qualified younger men. David Welsh, appointed for September 1960 was the obvious example of this policy. Paying more would encourage men to stay.

A senior colleague at Coventry had been quietly told, "Jock, if you divorce your wife you will have to resign," so being told fairly openly of why Mr Everett was no longer part of Shiplake after barely two terms was an impressive aspect of David Skipwith's own personality. It also seemed a tribute to my good sense. As I recall the reasons for Everett relinquishing his project were more from the parental and Mrs Everett sides than anything Everett himself said and wrote after 1989.

We then went downstairs for tea, presided over by Mrs Everett. Two or three staff present were no longer part of Shiplake when I arrived three months later. I moved onto a chat with E.M. Burr, tutor and bursar. Salary and emoluments were significant as the cost of accommodation and self-catering whilst working for a day school left me poorer than when an undergraduate. A combination of cash, benefits in kind and curiosity brought me to Shiplake. Having a car would make life in a scattered village quite manageable.

A final trip to Skipwith's study. A formal offer would be in the post (typed of course by Monica Tomlin. He hoped we would share together History teaching towards O Level and a first cricket season. However by May being Headmaster stopped Skipwith teaching at all and being i/c History and Cricket were the first of many opportunities given to me by a new and expanding school.

I came away with no idea of Skipwith's growing health problems and he had no notion of my bad temper. Because of the former and in spite of the latter during 1960-61 Skipwith handed over his tutor group to me, thus establishing Skipwith House. After this I was far more busy and well-rewarded than in the post I left to join Shiplake.

**Hans Wells-Furby**



# No Leg To Stand On



I probably shouldn't have been playing football anyway. When I'd gone into JJB Sports, back in August, and tried on a pair of football boots, a crowd, somewhat larger than Scunthorpe United's average home gate, had gathered round the fat, balding forty-something bloke buying football boots. And I was already booked in for my third knee operation on the first day of the Christmas holiday. Perhaps my shirt should have been sponsored by BUPA.

You know there's something wrong when everyone else is saying "I'm going to

be David Beckham / Thierry Henri / Didier Drogba today," and you're thinking Gerd Muller. Westminster must have legislation, vaulted away somewhere, stopping Nobby Stiles wannabes playing against innocent adolescents. If you are old enough think "Kes." Take a yard of pace away from Brian Glover, and add a pinch of compassion, and you've got my role.

It was Friday afternoon football, a Senior Minor Activity that had achieved cult status at Shiplake in the 1990s and early 21st century. For four days of the week boys played rugby, then on a Friday they played rugby with a football. Some of the tackles would have received both red cards and custodial



sentences with a sighted referee. No doubt that the banter was better than the skills. Perhaps for the only time ever we played alongside the 1st XI cricket square and it was worryingly wet underfoot. The opposition had been awarded a corner, they took it and I planned to accelerate away off of my right foot, to minimise the danger from a quickly taken kick.

I travelled vertically rather than horizontally. My right leg sank through the mire and kept going for about half a metre. The tearing sound from the standing left knee, fortunately the one already scheduled for an operation, was loud but the torn groin hurt more.

Ever professional and focussed on the game, my "Watch the short corner!" shout became contorted with a wail of pain. I don't know if there is anything in the Football Association's rules regarding limestone sinkholes but I decided to abandon the game. Health and Safety.

Dripping mud I limped into the Bursar's office to apologise for the damage I'd done to the College playing fields. Initially he did not seem too interested. Half an hour later, recovering from the trauma in the Senior Common Room, with three cups of tea and four sandwiches, the Bursar marched in.

"I thought you were exaggerating. By the time I got there I found two Welsh House boys up to their necks in the hole."

Later one of the boys, ever entrepreneurial, asked his Housemaster if you could buy and sell holes. He thought it might present an opportunity for some profitable trading. House Football had to be cancelled for the next week.

**Mike Edwards**



# GIRLS ALLOWED?



When I arrived at the College some nine years ago I was one of very few female staff. I came from an all-girls school and found myself in virtually an all-male environment and the differences showed:

- *An increasing sense of my height when I entered a classroom – the pupils stood up.*
- *No warning that something was going to change – it just did.*
- *Expectations that I could drive minibuses and arrive at touch lines and collect injured players – without any qualms.*
- *Few ladies loos – the first one I came across said ‘No entry’!*
- *No pens by notice boards – men have pockets.*
- *Complete tolerance of missed deadlines – girls meet them yesterday.*

Now the SCR is full of delightful females comparing shoe colours and jewellery. I suspect the adjustment for the long serving male staff must be much greater than mine had to be, but perhaps more agreeable!

**Lowri Cook**





### **Staff and their publications**

*Carl Lyon, Jon Cooksey and Dr Toby Purser were more than willing to pose with their books in the hope that publicity might increase their royalties. Carl had written the A Level ICT text book for a new course. Jon Cooksey, who is a military historian, had just finished collaborating on "Battlefield Archaeology" while Dr Toby Purser had written the definitive A Level History text-book on Medieval English history.*





# MOTHER AFRICA



The birds cry in the morning  
As if Mother Africa is awake  
While Zebra roam the plain  
like wind in the veldt  
And the stars shine above us  
Like in a midsummer dream  
Where a lion's roar is as strong  
as the mountain wind  
And flamingos fly like  
pink clouds in the sky  
While a summer breeze  
sounds like Mother Africa's whisper  
And a hippo's mouth is like  
an old man yawning to sleep.  
Oh! Mother Africa is  
rich in her children.  
Her children are as strong as the land itself  
And Mother Africa is glorious,  
yet unpredictable  
And raindrops are the tears of Mother Africa's sorrow.

**Christopher Clifford**









## The ascent of Mount Kenya - Day 3

I woke early, quickly realising that the price of warmth had been moisture. The underside of my tin foil sheet was wet with condensation as, predictably, was my sleeping bag. However, freezing temperatures overnight had ensured that the inside of the tent was covered with a fine layer of frost and not water so getting up

quickly avoided getting too wet although those later risers were steadily dripped on.

We ate quickly and packed our rucksacks. Following Marcus's guiding finger we looked at the path we were to follow round the lake and then up towards Minto's Hut (4300 metres), our final camp before the summit. It seemed somehow a more formidable route. Maybe it was the fact that we were getting higher, and therefore the air thinner, or maybe it seemed we had a long way to go and still would not have come close to reaching the summit by night fall, I don't know, but for the first time I lost my appetite and felt moody and under the weather.

JW had made it up in good time but was clearly still far from well. Quietly and single-mindedly he put his pack on and set off with the rest of us but it was obvious that he was suffering and as the heat grew and the sun burnt down he was pale with grim determination. The boys were concerned although they could see that he had no intention of letting the sickness beat him and so they leant their silent support.

**Emma Arnold**







# The secret of a Boarding House Matron's success!

When I joined Shiplake College in 2002 I knew little about how a boarding house ran. I soon learnt that they run on FOOD. If you feed a boy well, he will do almost anything for you. Not long after I started in Welsh House my Housemaster had a bright idea; hold a pig roast. Easy I thought – no problem! The pig arrived in a large plastic bag closely followed by a very large roasting spit. Then the fun started, how do you wrestle a large dead pig onto a 6 ft spit?

Apart from the weight of the pig, man-handling the animal was by no means easy (this was not in the job description when I applied for the post!). After much pushing and shoving, the pig was finally ready to go and, 10 hours later, beautifully roasted.

Within days term was in full flow, so again my Housemaster had another bright idea; 'toastie nights'. Who would have thought buttering 12 loaves of bread and making 80 cheese and ham toasties could take so long?

New ideas had to be thought up if I wanted to keep 53 boys happy, so the next cunning plan was 'BBQ nights'. Having Alex Hunt (an Australian) as our Housemaster meant that, for a time, come rain or shine, sunshine or snow, the boys in Welsh would enjoy hamburgers and hot dogs every Wednesday night.

New ideas keep coming in – chips and curry sauce, hot sausage rolls, hot pasties, pizzas... Welsh House is a hungry house!

**Julie Knight**



# Ten years at Shiplake

Since moving to the College as the son of a History teacher back in 1999, the school has undergone many structural and academic changes. At the age of 4, moving to a new home was like moving to a new planet but, as is always the case at Shiplake, it was easy to fit in and get comfortable. As a little boy I was in awe of the huge sports fields and facilities – I liked them so much that the only time I went home was at meal times. I was always either playing sport or watching some sort of school match.

One change to the school was the arrival of Mr. Davies, taking over from Mr. Bevan. I found them both very nice but it was immediately obvious that Mr. Davies was very ‘hands on’ with matters like uniform, always expecting that all his pupils were properly dressed. I remember being very envious of him as he was an international Rugby official.

I have always had strong loyalties to Skipwith House, since my Dad was Housemaster there for six years, finally leaving it to join College House. He left Skipwith the year I became a boarder there – no connection, I’m sure! Since Mr. Dix became Housemaster he has done a great job. Other changes include the outdoor swimming pool which has had a lot more use since it was heated last summer, especially by the women of the College! Personally I preferred it when it was more ‘refreshing’, but few people agree!

These are just a few of the changes I’ve seen. To old boys coming back to the school after 15 or 20 years, Shiplake will seem to have changed beyond all recognition. Don’t be put off by this. I really like the school and after 10 years of living on site I still am not bored with all it has to offer.

**Ian Brown**









# The season ends Wells

Much of the team's enthusiasm was due to the commitment and leadership shown by the captain Reynolds who played in virtually every position in the backs, usually during the course of one match. Wakeling blocked up the midfield at centre while Hill, at scrum-half, frequently terrified his opposite number with his massive shoulder pads. The props Lowry and Lowndes did not play the classic tight





game normally associated with players in that dark position but instead opted to talk their opponents into submission. Mellor was to the fore in the loose. Hall, Bayford and Ritson were all used as “impact” players. Emerson was a revelation on most match days by proving that he was capable of running very quickly indeed, having claimed all week that a brisk walk was the best he could do.

Ashcroft, Anderson and South were equally dangerous in attack and defence. South could have been even more effective had he managed to get some laces for his plimsolls, while Ashcroft’s helicoidal running and the mayhem that ensued will remain etched in the memories of all those who played. Inevitably, the composition of the team was rather fluid, but morale remained high throughout the season and some good wins were achieved along the way.

**Graham Wells** *reports on the U16C squad 1999 - 2000 Court Magazine*





**ALL CHANGE**



One of my earliest memories of Shiplake College was having to do the famous 'changes' This is a punishment sometimes used in Burr for being late and it was handed out to me by a very nice man and a great teacher, Mr Carl Lyon who has now left. Changes involves the pupil in trouble getting changed into his sports kit then going down stairs to show the teacher on duty who then sends you back to your room to get back into your school uniform. You have to do this as quickly as you can or you will be doing it all night! I completed the first change and showed Mr Lyon who was still getting to know the Year 9s. He said

*"You're Jack Cowmeadow aren't you?"*

*"Yes sir" I replied.*

*"You're the good footballer aren't you?"*

*"Well I don't like to boast but yeah I have been playing ok in House football," I replied,*

*"Well, good footballer or not go up and get changed into games kit."*

I went and got dressed and came back and he said "quicker next time, go get into your school uniform." So off I went and got into my uniform. Being cheeky I decided to make my tie ridiculously long. He soon made me go and get dressed back to games kit and I had to do this twice more. I have never returned back to House late since then.

**Jack Cowmeadow**





# TRIPS TRIPS TRIPS





Trips should have happy memories. Shared rooms in budget hotels, airports at odd times, unexpected friendships, strange language. But for staff, we tremble at the eternal terror of the lost passport, the exploding appendix, the vodka incident or – and perhaps the most likely – the one pupil not collected at the end, whose parents were waiting at Heathrow Terminal 3 instead of Gatwick Terminal 2.

In Disneyland Paris with an ICT A level trip, we were too complacent about the alcohol – the Disney park police required three ID checks before the few 18 year olds could buy even a beer – and I still think it was the girls' school who shared our coach who somehow tunnelled out through the wire and bought booze at an all-night service station.

In Italy – the first mixed trip after girls arrived in force – the cuddling stayed under control, and the main challenge was to instil a sense of time in David Stoker. The reward was David's unscripted lectures on frescoes, canvas, statues and buildings from Venice via Florence to Rome – the Renaissance and more (Max Ernst in Peggy Guggenheim's villa in Venice, for one) in a week of enlightenment.

In Berlin the lost passport turned up in the snack shop, on top of a pallet of mineral water, just as I was looking forward to persuading its owner's father that the only hotel with free rooms for the extra night was the 5 star Kempinski, before going to the Embassy for help the following day. It turned out on that trip that I was only invited to be one of the exhibits: Mr Lowndes is so old that he can remember when there was a Wall here, and even why it was built.

My best trip was with the 1st VIII to California. My role as guardian of good order and discipline turned out to be quite unnecessary, mainly because these were serious rowers turning out at 5 am and training for the San Diego Crew Classic the day before we flew home. Even so, staying with families from a Jesuit High School in a state where you can't buy a drink until you're 21 has got to be the best arrangement for any school trip.

**Charly Lowndes**



REIVED

29

TELEGRAM

Prefix. Time handed in. Office of Origin and Service Instructions. Words

Handwritten: *Handgrave*  
Circular stamp: *- 9523 -*  
Stamp: *873 4 54119*  
Stamp: *RGI IAA*  
Handwritten: *2.3*  
Handwritten: *24*

Ac  
To  
By

9032 1.45 BRISTOL A TELEX 22

SHIPLAKE COLLEGE HENLEY-ON-THAMES

091200Z SEP PLEASE INFORM HOUSEMASTER BURR  
HOUSE THAT PHILIP CARSON ON HI JACKED PLANE  
BAHRAIN TODAY = MAJOR CARSON +

006 091200Z HI JACKED BAHRAIN +  
Y" or call, with this  
and, if possible, the enval



# Sorry I'm Late!



On 9 Sept 1970, BOAC Flight 775 from Bahrain was hijacked by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of five hijackings in three days, which led to what became known as Black September - a rift between the Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinians with far-reaching consequences. Philip Carson was late back for the Autumn term, having been on flight 775. 27 years later he recalled:

*"I was indeed late as, after the hijack, when I arrived in London, it was to discover that I was allowed to remain off school for a further week in order to recover from the ordeal. As I remember it was less of an ordeal and more of a tremendous adventure and therefore I felt that I didn't need any extra time off. Needless to say, of course, I remained quiet and was delighted to have some extra holiday! Mr Gilliatt persuaded me to write an article for the school magazine – I don't know whether any copies survive."*

Hans Wells-Furry mentions the incident in the book he wrote of the history of Shiplake. As he mentions in the book, he urged me to use the experience in 'what I did in my holiday' type essays. I rather think I owe my O Level English to that advice!

I was Head of Burr and when I went up to receive my 'prize' from John Eggar at my last speech day, he paraphrased the cable in his resumé of my time at Shiplake as; 'Carson hijacked signed Carson'. It brought the house down!





**Caimbo**





Their first ever gig was in the courtyard of Burr House, playing for a free toastie in the summer of 2003. Leonardo Robarts, Piers Mortimer, Ali Sloane, and Dave Cullen took their name from their home town, Cambridge. All made their marks in different ways at school – all four were powerful sportsmen in different ways, with Leo playing first team sport in rugby, hockey and cricket with great style and aggression. Piers' guitar solo at the start of a Burr Family Service in the Parish Church bemused some of the grandparents, and Dave's drumming threatened to bring down the roof of the sports hall in more than one House Music Competition.

Caimbo's reputation is growing, as is the list of venues they play. Their debut album, *Electric Dreams*, was recorded in LA. Piers told *Classic Rock Magazine*:

"We were walking along Venice Beach one day and got talking to these guys who run this massive hat stall. They asked us if they could play our CD over their system. Luckily we had a copy on us. By about track three this huge crowd had gathered. There were a whole load of tramps dancing, a guy in a business suit, and even a guy on a skateboard who had no arms and legs. It was totally surreal. We really should have filmed it for a video." And a reviewer raved that:

"Guitarist Piers, with more effects than a Frenchman's wardrobe can seemingly do no wrong. And with Ali shaking that egg ever more furiously, Dave seemingly showing no signs of breaking sweat as he destroys the drum kit and Leo ripping up the vocals like Chris Cornell, Caimbo are the UK's answer to the Kings of Leon."

**Charly Lowndes**



A photograph taken from behind a person rowing a boat on a body of water. The person is wearing a red t-shirt with the word 'SHIPLAKE' printed in white, outlined letters across the back. They are holding two long, black oars. The water is blue with some ripples, and a green shoreline with trees is visible in the distance under a bright sky. The text 'SHIPLAKE' is positioned diagonally across the person's back.

SHIPLAKE

# **The Virtually Complete Guide to Shiplake Coxing**



Coxon, Coxswain, Cox – what's the difference? At Shiplake people live together for the purposes of study, work and making fun of coxes – but I tell you, as an expert on the matter, it's not all sitting around shouting at rowers – no sir! The cox is the only link between the bank and boat. Coxing is a matter of:

- Interpreting what the coach says and translating it into rower language.
- Assessing any situation, predicament or problem the rowers may present you with, and making the right decision instantly, as the chances are the rowers will not do it for you.
- Being in complete command of any situation – and always being right!

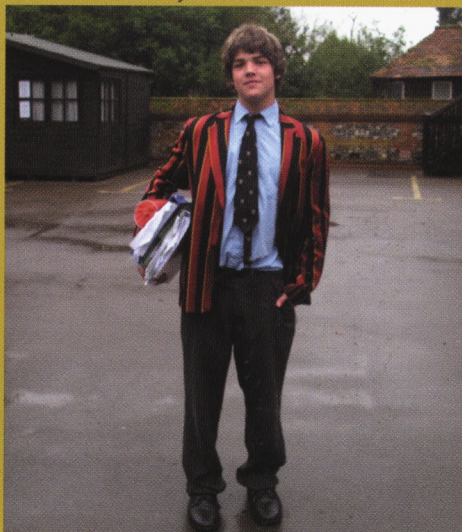
There is no substitute for experience – the unity in a boat is established by a clever cox. For example if there is a particular member of your crew who is insubordinate, you must silence him immediately before he severely damages the morale of the others.

A crew, for the benefit of land-lubbers, is either four or eight rowers, and a cox. Coxes have a tendency to be excluded from most fitness training (because of their size and strength), so if a cox does not get into the boat with a domineering attitude, the crew will exclude him there as well.

As I only started in June 1993, I have been fortunate to have been accepted as a cox, but this owes a lot to the fact that most of the J16 squad are friends of mine. Nevertheless, I still get “Go on Harrison, do something!” shouted at me from some distant place in the boat which has to be better than, “Harrison, what the hell are you doing?” as at least it shows that they think I am competent enough to solve the problem.



# THE GREAT FLOOD



We had all come back from our rugby match cold, soaked by rain and sweat, and in need of a good, long, warm shower. Harry, Jamie, Eddy and I were new to these Everett showers as we had only just entered Year 11 and had the privilege of our own communal wash room. Whether from high spirits, the foolishness of youth or a dedication to perfecting a skill I'm not sure, but we decided to cause a flood.

We were not virgins to this strategy; it involved great skill and determination. We blocked up the drain hole and used more towels to raise the levels so the water would rise to a decent height in which we could bathe. We had invested in some of the finest bubble bath Shiplake shop had to offer and poured it liberally into our newly acquired pool until it became nice and foamy.

The water continued to rise but what we did not know as we disported ourselves in a manly way was that the water was seeping underneath the seals of the shower room and into the ground floor ceiling. We left the showers unaware of the drama that was about to unfold.

Harry and I were the unlucky ones, caught like soldiers behind enemy lines as Mr. Pavey ascended the stairs at alarming speed, his face etched with anger and dismay. The water had, we learned, travelled through the ceiling and into Mr. Pavey's house and the Year 9 dorms. We were ordered to change instantly and make our way downstairs. As we arrived at the scene we were horrified by what we saw. Jamie (also known as Health and Safety man) took charge. He barked orders at us as if we were his slaves, telling us



to fetch towels and buckets and any other receptacles we could lay our villainous hands on.

After we had soaked up the majority of the water we were called to see Mr. Pavey. We did the thing that came naturally and tried to shift the blame onto Ed, but eventually caved in and admitted our equal responsibility and idiocy. We were sent trembling back to our rooms.

**Duncan Bell**





# Daddy the roof is leaking!



‘So why do you want to be a Housemaster?’ In any interview for any job you can expect to be asked this sort of question. Nearly five years after I was asked this I am still learning why it’s so difficult to answer.

Have you ever gone to bed knowing that you have over fifty teenagers in your building for whom you are personally responsible? Probably not! If we insert ‘teenage’ into the well known phrase ‘never work with animals and children’ it only takes on even greater resonance!

I vividly remember my first evening as a Housemaster; only Year 9 had arrived and the reality hit me for the first time. Even though it has all been explained to you and you have done your research, nothing truly prepares you for the feeling of awesome responsibility. I had similar



emotions as I drove away from hospital with our first child, Madeleine, in the back seat – the nurses and doctors no longer with us – the responsibility was all ours! I was now responsible for other people's children and, like driving someone else's car, you feel you need to take even more care than with your own! Very daunting.

Memories of those first days are dominated largely by the new weight of responsibility but there were also some interesting incidents. One phone call requested that I checked on a boy every hour or so through the night. Another boy told me that he was sleeping all night on a chair in the middle of the room! Later that week, on my first House outing, our double-decker coach broke down on Marylebone Road, three miles from the theatre we were visiting. We had an hour to spare and seventy pupils to get across London by foot, bus, tube or train. I had been Housemaster for four days and I was learning fast to expect the unexpected!

My third daughter was not even a year old at the time of these events but it was her excited little voice three years later that alerted me to the fact that the whilst brushing her teeth water had started pouring from the ceiling and light fittings in the bathroom – 'Daddy the roof is leaking!' she simply stated. On discovering that a fun game in the shower room and not the old pipe work in the House was to blame, the culprits knew full well to expect the expected from their Housemaster!

So why did I want to be a Housemaster? Because, like being a parent, it is one of the greatest jobs in the world!

**Brendan Pavey**





# The Fashionistas

There has always been something about Shiplake that has brought out the fashionista in pupils and staff alike. Holly Baird, Sixth Former, performed remarkable feats of organisation to encourage fashion labels to donate clothes. Her contemporaries were queuing up to take to the catwalk when she organised a Fashion Show in the Sports Hall.

Then Emma Bond, Old Viking, organised a charity fashion show to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Campaign. She was delighted by the generosity of Henley's boutiques and fashion retailers as they donated clothes for the evening. With a wonderful buffet, plenty of wine and the Great Hall decorated with pink balloons and tiny spotlights, the glamorous evening raised a substantial amount for the Breast Cancer Campaign.

Gregg Davies, Headmaster, and Neil Walne Bursar, demonstrated that perhaps they could have had careers in fashion. They also showed that they were masters of the quick change act as they wore causal, formal





and evening-wear for the evening. Though it was Brendan Pavey, Everett Housemaster, who probably looked the most 007 debonair in his black-tie attire.

Of course Gregg Davies had to undertake one more change of clothing and nationality as he modelled a kilt.



*Will Downing stole the show with his sarong modelling*





*Paddy Ranger cooking a barbie  
in the 1990s*

# BARBIE BOMB



One thing I can remember well from when I was in Year 9 was the time the Welsh House barbeque caught fire. It was a Wednesday night after prep and the Welsh House matron was doing a BBQ for us helped by a Year 13 prefect.

Everything appeared to be going well; the burgers were being cooked and most people were eating them. Then suddenly the BBQ burst into flames.

At first everyone thought the gas was on too high but when we disconnected the gas bottle and the thing was still in flames we began to realise something was wrong. Someone sprinted off to get Mr Hunt from his house. He dashed round the corner from his house and stared at the BBQ that was more like an inferno. Someone then hurtled out of the house with a fire extinguisher and sprayed it all over the BBQ.

The aftermath wasn't a pretty sight. The controls across the front had melted and were deformed and there were cremated burgers on the BBQ. The prefect then picked up some of the singed remains of our supper and said "anyone want a burger?"

**Ed Marsh**



# Smuggling In The Girls





I arrived at Shiplake in September 1972 at a school that was smaller than my prep school (Belmont, Mill Hill). On day one, at new boys' rugby, my first act was to push Andy Horne off the ball. Last August I attended Andy Horne's 50th birthday party in Newent so he must have forgiven me!

I remember history lessons when Andy Horne & Tim Wilkinson would answer Hans Wells-Furby's questions with a rapid fire of guesses and random names. Hans Wells-Furby achieved a good balance of being supportive but still scary. When shaving he always cut himself and would appear with tissue paper stuck to several patches of cut skin. He was very keen to advance his "Everett" boys, he was a great man and a positive influence.

The "Plunge" of the swimming gala was a highlight of the year. Hold your breath, from a standing start dive and behave like a torpedo. There was great competition to be selected for this event.

I remember Michael Charles' little black book for cricket. Our catches and run outs were supposedly listed. It took us a long time to work out that the book we were all so concerned about contained no notes at all and was a complete spoof. Eric Russell was a great cricket coach. He inspired the 1977 1st XI to a great win in our first game of the season versus Oratory. Shiplake were all out for 62. But Eric wound us up and we won by 32 runs.

Reverend Basil Wilkes took us for a confirmation day to a Monastery where we could only talk at lunch time. We all returned exhausted to school.

The school dances with Oakdene had a great reputation. Girls were smuggled into sixth form bedrooms. Not a good idea. So in 1977 we decked out the art room with huge bean bags & mattresses. Enough said. The Headmaster appeared in the Stableyard the next morning as we all ran to hide every spot of evidence. We were scolded but we had all had a great night!

**Alistair Newman**





# The happiest days of my life

My school days were not the proverbial "happiest days of my life." I was not that well co-ordinated and did not perform well on the playing fields. In the classroom my spelling was atrocious, foreign languages were just that, "foreign" to me. Mathematics I did well at, but in general I was a poor student. I never was popular since I neither excelled at sports or academically. I even remember deliberately talking in prep time one evening in order to





- *"Have you ever seen God?"*
- *"Do you think I could have caught AIDS?"*
- *"I hate my Housemaster and he hates me."*
- *"My dog died yesterday."*
- *"Does the Headmaster really like school food?"*
- *"How do I know if I'm gay?"*

# QUESTIONS & COMMENTS TO THE REV



gain attention and receive three strokes with the cane, and hopefully become accepted by other pupils.

So it was that at an early age I decided to start a school where all the boys would be happy; regardless of their abilities, and encouragement would be given to slow learners. At this time, in my mind, Shiplake College was already at the drawing board stage.

At the end of the Second World War I took the humblest of jobs in a prep school. The Headmaster noted my organisational abilities and in a short time I became the Second or Senior Master. By the time I was 28 years old, I started my own prep school at Bexhill-on-Sea, named Pendragon.

It was at Pendragon that I met my wife to be, Eunice. She had lost her first husband in 1954 and her son Richard was shy and nervous and needed all the help he could get. By chance I was asked to sell Pendragon, which I did and moved to Ashfold Prep School in Buckinghamshire. Richard, after Pendragon, became a pupil at Ashfold. During my stay at Ashfold, Eunice and I became closer and eventually we were married in little Dorton Church in the school grounds.

There is a great similarity between Ashfold and Shiplake since the Parish Church was in both cases adjacent to the school buildings. Peter Carter-Ruck was best man and it was now that plans were laid down in earnest to start a school for older boys.

It was through Knight, Frank and Rutley that I discovered Shiplake Court which was purchased for £17,500. My wife had private means and together with what I sold Pendragon for we were jointly able to scrape together the necessary amount of cash to buy the buildings and equip them with sufficient furnishings as well as have enough money for operational costs. I well remember the first Christmas – three of us – Eunice, Richard and myself, living in a forty-room mansion, huddled round a blazing log-fire in the Great Hall.

**Alexander Everett** *founder of the college*



- *"What does Sherry taste like?"*
- *"Can I borrow a pound?"*
- *"Did you ever do drugs?"*
- *"My Dad says Church is a waste of time."*
- *"Why do I have to play rugby?"*
- *"How do I know if I'm in love?"*
- *"Nobody likes me."*
- *"Do you take your vicar's collar off at night?"*
- *"My mum gets drunk and hits me."*
- *"Are you going to Tesco's?"*
- *"You've left your car lights on again."*

**The Court 2001/02**







# Rowing for gold

After a season of some successes and some problems (one of these being capsizing at Wallingford Regatta) my Year 9 rowing crew went to Nottingham to take part in National Schools' competition.

As we journeyed up we were optimistic as we had come second at nearly every event but we just hadn't quite clicked to get our first win. On the day of the National Schools' Regatta we were all nervous as we had never raced at such an important event before but all too suddenly the first race was upon us.

The only other fast crew in our heat was Reading Blue Coat, our



local rivals. Despite our nerves we started the race well and at 500m we were in the lead but as the line grew ever closer the Blue Coat crew pushed just ahead. This didn't matter too much as the first three to finish went through to the next round. The semi final was a tougher race as we were against Blue Coat, St Paul's and Radley – all of them fast crews. As in the first race, we got a good lane in the middle of the pack. We pushed hard off the start and again at 500m we were in 1st place but to our disappointment we began to slip back and eventually it was between us and Radley for the last qualifying spot. At the line we had no idea who had gone through until it came up on the screen; we were through by two tenths of a second. Our coaches Mr Crisford and Mr Keane were pretty mad as they believed we could row much faster. Mr Keane gave us an inspiring talk and we were ready for the final.

Our nerves were worse than ever as we knew this would be our toughest race and we had the outside lane. We started well, in the same way that we had done before, but at 500m we stepped it up again and there was a roar of encouragement as we passed the supporters from school and this spurred us on even more. As our cox called the last 50m I looked across the rest of the crews and from the 6 seat I could see 5 bow balls bouncing back and forwards. I then realised we were in 1st place. As we crossed the line my lungs were bursting but the pain was immediately replaced with euphoria and excitement as we were the national champions!

**Adam Roels**



# A day in the life of a third former

**06:40**

Alarm goes off. Prefect strides down the dormitory telling us how lucky we are – our duty week has begun. It's freezing – pull some clothes on, and rush downstairs.

**06:55**

Servery duty. Oh, no it's with Lee Pearce – not the easiest prefect to be working with. One false move, one little spill as you pour the orange juice and it's "Two sides, Barretto." Thanks a lot, that's all I need.

**07:10**

Josh De Haan hasn't turned up for his duty – that means I have to cover his too. Goodbye breakfast.

**08:05**

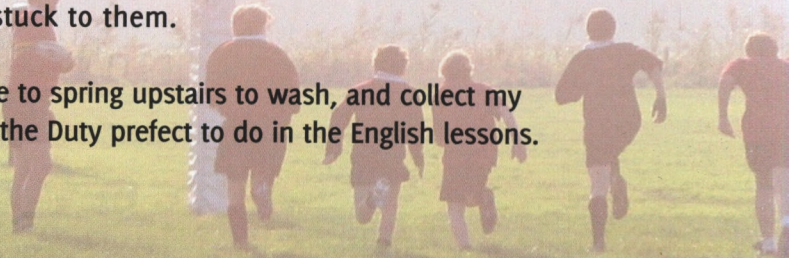
Clearing up. There are nicer ways to start the day than cleaning up dobs of butter floating in milk with Rice Crispies stuck to them.

**08:30**

Finished clearing up. Just enough time to spring upstairs to wash, and collect my books. I'll have to leave the sides for the Duty prefect to do in the English lessons.

**09:00**

Boring lessons until break.







**11:30** First bite of the day. Well it would have been if the seniors hadn't eaten all the buns before we got there. Not a lot in the tuck box either, but there's still the emergency pack of Polos.

**11:55** English and Maths – should give me time to finish off my sides and maybe that Geography prep as well.

**13:00** Lunchtime. This is the only meal of the day when Orchard have to clear up, so it should give me time to eat and watch *Neighbours* on television.

**14:30** Rugby. This wouldn't be too bad if the ground wasn't as hard as school fried bread – and even colder! The coach stands there with his three jumpers on, and his thick tracksuit bottoms, complaining about the cold, as we trudge around that slippery rugby pitch wearing our running vests and a pair of gym-shorts.

**Dominic Barretto**





# A day in the life of a House Matron

Monday – it usually is Monday. Is there more than one Monday to a week these days? 7. 30 ish. Step over yawning boys and the odd cup of cold tea on the bottom step. Try to dislodge the breakfast queue from the banisters and get enough space to battle up the stairs. Fight office door, but its lock has been filled with superglue overnight and needs more than brute force. Maintenance Department to the rescue. Time for a swim. No chance – laundry. There’s always laundry!

Glance at Sewing Room – wish I hadn’t! Have they really been risking life and limb to climb through that side window again? How many more times before someone is badly hurt? Are those shelves really the ones tidied only yesterday? Rubbish bin overflowing! The single rooms – we rely on and trust our Seniors. Crikey! That duvet moved! He can’t be – he is – still in bed? At 8.40?

“Move it, you stupid boy!”

That poster – he can’t have that on the wall, he really can’t. Whatever would visiting parents think? Take it down. The boy concerned will probably never dare ask about it – he would be pretty embarrassed at having to admit it was his ...

Nearly time to go – I wonder, though – would anyone mind if I played a favourite Te Kanawa tape just once more? What bliss! Now, did I put the sewing machine away, hide the keys, lock the cupboard, secure the office, leave things as I would wish to find them, but seldom do? Exemplum Docet is quite a difficult College motto to follow!

**Monica Tomlin, Skipwith, 1991**





*Gina continues the tradition  
at Everett*



# Summers in the Seventies

When I arrived at Shiplake in 1975 I was a little apprehensive to say the least but soon settled into things. My first term's pocket money was £5.00 which was a lot back in 1975. It cost nine pence on the train to Henley.

Shiplake certainly had its moments. Here are just a few:

Winning the Third Form prize in my first term following a Hans Wells-Furby outing to the RAF museum at Hendon.

Managing to sink a mirror dinghy whilst participating in Peter Webb's sailing club.

Acting with Ossie Swaine in HMS Pinafore and forgetting my lines the night my parents came.

Taking part in the Time and the Thames pageant on the river.

Slamming the door of Nigel Baddeley's study and bringing the whole ceiling down.

**Henry Summers (Skipwith)**

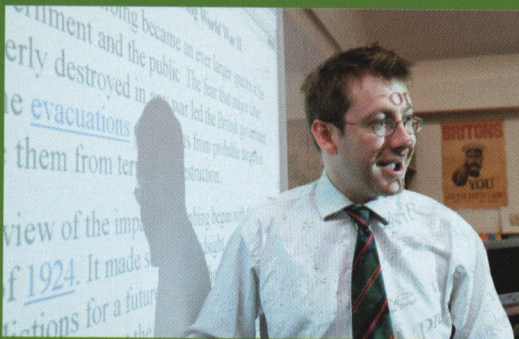




Shiplake College 1975



# IT'S JUST NOT CRICKET



It seemed that the 2008 U15 Bs cricket team were, under the coaching of the legendary Dr. Purser, bound to have a successful and triumphant year. It came as a surprise to us when, in fact, the season didn't go so well.

Our most memorable match of all was not one of triumph or success, but one of abject failure. We played Reeds School and after a long trip down to Surrey the whole team was psyched up. Unfortunately our adrenalin rush didn't last for long as Reeds started

strongly and eventually declared at 230 runs. After just 20 overs we were praying for them to stop the onslaught and, following a few gentlemanly words between Dr. Purser and the Reeds coach, we were ready to bat. There was sadly no opportunity for tea owing to the speed at which the innings ended.

Following an uplifting team talk from Dr. Purser our opening batsman stepped up to the crease... and three balls later returned to the pavilion. After the third batsman walked from the crease for just a few balls our performance became something of a joke shared between our team and coach, but mainly the spectators. Nevertheless, our fifth batsman went into the crease and we were confident; he had on new gear and wielded a new bat, but unfortunately although





he had the gear, he had no idea. We were all out for just 26 runs - the worst defeat any Dr. Purser side had ever faced. No small achievement considering the teams he has had before!

Despite this setback our team's mentality didn't change and we rallied ourselves for the last two games of the season. Dr. Purser changed his strategy - this consisted of him chasing around a pupil with a cricket stump, whilst the rest of the team lay on the grass laughing.

We ended the season losing all games except one, which happened to be against a prep school. Despite the fact our team's achievements will not be featured in the Court magazine the message we learnt will live on; sport is not all about the winning, it is also about having fun. Although Dr. Purser only ever won one match as coach of a cricket team at Shiplake, I don't think anyone will deny that every training session with him was better than the last. Whether we won or lost, it did not matter. This was undoubtedly the most unsuccessful season of cricket, and yet the most fun.

**Bertie Piasecki-Jarvis**



# Food Glorious Food

I love the food at Shiplake; it's so enticing and tempting but it can be a little too tempting like the pasta is trying to say,

"Come on, you know you want to, I'll be so nice"

"No I've already had one helping – I'm not having another." I reply.

"Why? Didn't you like me the first time?"

"It's not you, it's me."

I often find myself agonising over the choices at lunchtime and hope the catering staff don't guess what's going on in my head. My favourite food at Shiplake is breakfast where I have 'The Usual': two sausages, two bacon rashers, some beans, a croissant, a bowl of porridge and a nice cup of tea. You may think that is a lot to eat but I'm not the biggest lad in Year 9, in fact I'm the shortest and a growing lad needs his food!

It's not long after breakfast that my mind moves to lunch. I usually have the alternative choice to the main dish; pasta and the sauce that most appeals to me, often something with mushrooms or lamb in it with salad. And supper? Well that's what I love about the food here at Shiplake because every fortnight or so we get burgers and chips and a lovely bowl of either sticky toffee pudding or a fruit crumble with a cup of tea, it couldn't be better. I'd like to thank the kitchen staff for providing such wonderful food. They are very kind and always willing to chat or share a joke... I do hope they'll remember this when I next come back for seconds.

**Ashley Copeland**













COLLEGE



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## The final word

Fifty years. Over 3,700 pupils. Hundreds of teachers. Over a third of a million lessons taught. University entrance gained, O Levels failed. It is not just the remarkable story of how Alexander Everett's dream became one of The Times "Top 20 Schools" in just 27 years. Tears, tantrums and triumphs. There are thousands of stories, more than those contained in the pages of this book. Epic victories on the playing field, close defeats on the river, victories snatched from the jaws of defeat. This is book is full of Shiplake Stories but there are so many more to be told. Every lesson, every drama or music performance is a little piece of history in the making. We need to keep writing, keep recording and keep snapping with the camera. Schooldays should be remembered.

"Look Mr Edwards is going through his door into Narnia," Catherine Saker told her class one day as I entered the Tithe Barn attic to ransack the archives for more Shiplake Stories.

"Oh, he's even got a wardrobe too," she added.

"You could be the witch, Miss. And then he only needs a lion for the full set," a wonderfully quick-witted sixth-former concluded. Such priceless moments must be shared. Up in the archives, currently bulging out of three old wardrobes there are thousands of photographs, architects plans, minutes from meetings, magazines, prospectuses and now countless discs storing photos of plays, charity walks, CCF Field Days and concerts. Looking at photos of gymnasts, balancing on each others' shoulders in their 1960s gym kit, I remember those opening words of The Go Between, "The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there." Shiplake's precious past is a foreign country that we should explore more often. I hope that this book is merely a beginning.

**Mike Edwards**

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Love it or hate it, school has a powerful influence over our lives. Everyone has a school story to tell: moments of endeavour, determination and triumph; moments of fear, humiliation and injustice; memories of powerful characters and influences - of friendship and enmity, of lasting values and understanding. As you turn the pages of this book, the power of the Shiplake community unfolds - stories to make you laugh; stories to make you remember; stories to make you think.

Shiplake College  
— Henley-on-Thames —

