



ORWELL PARK SCHOOL

Celebrating

150

YEARS



Spring 2023 Old Orwellian Newsletter

Orwell Park School, Nacton, Ipswich, IP10 0ER

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A WORD FROM THE HEAD



We started this year with the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, marked by a moving service in St Martin's Church, and have just celebrated the coronation of King Charles III with a whole school picnic in the sports hall.

The day after the Queen's funeral in September we had an ISI Focused Compliance and Educational Quality and we were delighted that the inspectors found us to be fully compliant (no judgement, just pass or fail) and that we were rated as excellent in all areas of educational quality.

The top grades for achievement and personal development are testament to the hard work of all concerned. The children were a credit to the School and showed the inspectors the qualities that we are fortunate to see every day at school. The final report captures much of the essence of the School and the holistic education which we value so highly.

The new inspection framework, which comes into force in September 2023, will have wellbeing as the main focus and we continue to develop our wellbeing structure in school, with a mental health lead, a staff wellbeing group and pupil wellbeing ambassadors.

The School roll is very healthy and boarding numbers are strong, with 37 children in at the weekend and 67% of pupils between Years 3 and 8 boarding at least once a week.

We are running a wide range of trips and activities and this term Year 7 will be travelling to Normandy for a week and Year 8 will embark on their annual leavers' trip to the Ardèche after their Common Entrance exams in June. Year 7 pupils once again travelled to Mayo College in India in February and we look forward to their return visit this June.

Last year all our Year 8 pupils once again passed Common Entrance and achieved entry to their senior schools and this year 24 scholarships have been achieved so far to a wide variety of local and national senior schools.

Sport has continued to thrive in the last year and perhaps the standout achievement is the performance of the boys' 1st rugby team, who enjoyed an unbeaten season in the Autumn term and then proceeded to prosper in the 7s game, winning all their matches at the internationally renowned Rosslyn Park 7s and finishing third in the Northampton Saints national 7s tournament in April.

The creative arts continue to flourish and this year's senior production was *Annie*, with all members of Years 7 and 8 involved. Art and Design are popular subjects and Jim Notcutt and Eita Eraki were shortlisted for the Young Furniture Makers exhibition. Jim won the Schools Design Prize and Eita came third in the Young Furniture Makers Awards at the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers in London on Tuesday 12th October. They were the youngest students in the exhibition, as most were 16+.

Music goes from strength to strength and highlights have included the Autumn and Spring Concerts, the annual recital at St Mary Abchurch in the City of London and numerous wonderful performances at our weekly Chapel Services in St Martin's Church, including a wonderful rendition of *Zadok the Priest* during Coronation week.

Our Coronation Proms on Saturday 24th June on the school field is a picnic proms featuring the Gilbert and Sullivan Operetta *Cox and Box*, performed by Handmade Opera, as well as British classics old and new, including performances by the children (all are welcome and tickets are available via the website).

This year we are supporting the Dogs Trust, Green Light Trust and the World Land Trust. Our 2022-23 charities were well supported at the Christmas Fayre, which raised a total of £1,850 on the day. We continue to invest a significant amount of school funds into means tested bursaries and are developing the Wilkinson Spurgeon Bursary Fund to create more opportunities for children who would otherwise not be able to benefit from an Orwell Park education.

We also continue to develop our relationship with Community Interest Company, PLOT, which has been based on our site since September 2020, using the Buck House and the area of land leading down to the foreshore alongside the boundary wall. PLOT works with vulnerable children to help them reintegrate into mainstream education.

The Rev Canon Ian Wilson oversaw his last Chapel service before retirement on Saturday 29th April at the annual School Commemoration. He will be much missed by everyone at Orwell Park and we wish Ian and Trish well for the future. Robin Beck, Head of Geography, retires at the end of this term after 34 years of dedicated service, both in and outside the classroom.

At the beginning of this academic year I announced my retirement this summer after 12 years as Headmaster of Orwell Park School. Nicole and I will look back on our time here with great fondness and I believe the School is in a very good position to deal with the challenges and opportunities of the future. The new Headmaster is Guy Musson, currently Deputy Head at Ludgrove School, having gained experience in leading Prep Schools such as The Dragon and The Perse, and he will join the School with his wife Milly, who teaches Mathematics and English at Ludgrove, and their two children: Charlotte, 6, and Freddie, 4, who will join the Prep and Pre-Prep in September. We wish them every success as they become part of the local community.

Adrian Brown
Headmaster



Orwell Park unbeaten 1st rugby team in the Autumn term!

FINANCES IN THE COVID ERA

I have been asked to write about the financial aspects of the School but I would like to start with some reflections on my time at the School so far. I attend the School Open mornings and, with the greatest respect to the Headmaster, I particularly enjoy the speeches of the Head Boy and Head Girl and senior prefects. Recently, whilst listening to the Head Boy, I found myself reflecting on his words and also the year that he and his cohort have had. Even working at a distance from the pupils, in the rather Hogwartian vaults of the bursary, I am aware of their successes and their achievements so far have been exceptional. But, what struck me was the emphasis given by the speakers to simple experiences like their friendships, the sharing of great experiences and their awareness of leaving with memories of happy times. The person I listened to had been a leading light in the rugby team and had done well; he had been offered a place at Harrow although he did not mention this; he spoke well, he was confident but not arrogant; he was likeable. The way he spoke about his school experiences and clearly thought about them differed tremendously from memories of my own schooling, although this was followed by a comparatively more enjoyable and worthwhile time at university and then the supportive environment of The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the late 80s.

In my eight years at the School I have met many Old Orwellians, often when they have popped in to look the old place up when on holiday or travelling. I have met OOs from far afield - the USA, Europe and as far away as Chile. It's great to listen to them speak about their times at school: they speak freely; they have stories of friends, fun, experiences and sports and some of the eccentricities of their times; invariably they are great fun to spend time with and very likeable individuals.

As borne out by the stories above, Orwell Park continues to have a fine reputation and a great deal of success, reflected also in the excellent inspection report this year. It is easy to assume that because the School is successful in its academic and pastoral achievements it follows that it is hugely profitable but the reality is somewhat different. Prior to Covid, the School governors often debated the correct line to take on finances and were always very mindful of the charitable status of the School. Emphasis was given to moderate fee increases, which were typically around the 2.5% inflation level of the time, and funds were reinvested in maintaining the facilities and grounds thus avoiding a large operating surplus which was viewed as contradictory to the charitable aims of the Trust. In addition, governors were keen that access to the School and the excellent opportunities it offers should be broadened so that in some cases lives and life chances could be improved with above average support for bursary places. A testament to the success of this approach is the high number of such pupils and families that have gone on to achieve fully funded places at prestigious schools such as Eton, Harrow, Wellington and Winchester. Traditionally, any operating surplus at year end was kept at a moderate level which was typically an operating margin of 4-6% - Covid has shown that such a strongly charitably minded approach may need a re-think.

Prior to Covid the school had no borrowings and funded a range of modest improvements from its operating surplus and in some cases donations. Covid struck hard in 2020 and a significant amount of income was lost because of the online nature of the school during the lockdowns. The various forms of support offered by the government were very limited and came with strings attached, most notably interest payments. In common with many independent schools Orwell Park does not have sizable endowed funds.

Over the years, the Foundation has done well to fund a number of discrete projects and has started the Wilkinson-Spurgeon Fund (WSF) to support bursaries; the ultimate aim for this fund is to support the majority of assisted places thereby allowing the School to focus on investment in the facilities, services and staff. Although the WSF has made a decent start it has far to go to meet this aim. In communicating with the Foundation, many OOs have stated that they feel support for bursaries is a priority area and would like to support these efforts. Please do feel free to consider how and when you could do this.

Alongside the impact of Covid, the School is subject to a very competitive local market in the East of England; in competing with this field there is an inevitable pressure on the facilities. Although Orwell has an enviable location, our heritage buildings present a challenge to the budget, and at over 10,000 square metres of gross internal area the size alone is a factor in costs. Some of our facilities are in need of repair or refurbishment, notably the sports and music facilities.

Within the school facilities other areas are also remembered fondly by the alumni. The Observatory is a truly unique facility and very few schools have such a structure, let alone a historical and working telescope. OO and current families are also incredibly fond of the swimming pool; it is a truly stunning facility but is in need of attention and almost at the end of its life.

As I alluded to earlier, in comparison to the OOs and current pupils that I have met, my own memories of school days are pretty dismal. I can understand why the OO community refer to the School as a special place and as a member of the Orwell Park community you are part of the legacy and the traditions of over 150 years of pupil cohorts as well as the history and heritage of the broader location of the Orwell Park Estate and its place in the historic lives or events like Admiral Vernon, Colonel Tomline and the efforts in preparing British troops for D-Day during the second world war - this is no small legacy.

I hope that the above gives you an insight into the financial context of the School. The key message I would like to pass on is that although the School does fantastically well and has a growing reputation for excellence it does not follow that the finances are also excellent; rather like many independent schools, outside a few very fortunate few, there is a need to manage finances very closely to ensure that the 150 year plus history continues into the future. I would ask, respectfully, that if you are able, you do try to support the Foundation and the School with its many projects to ensure the future of this magical place and the special people it supports.



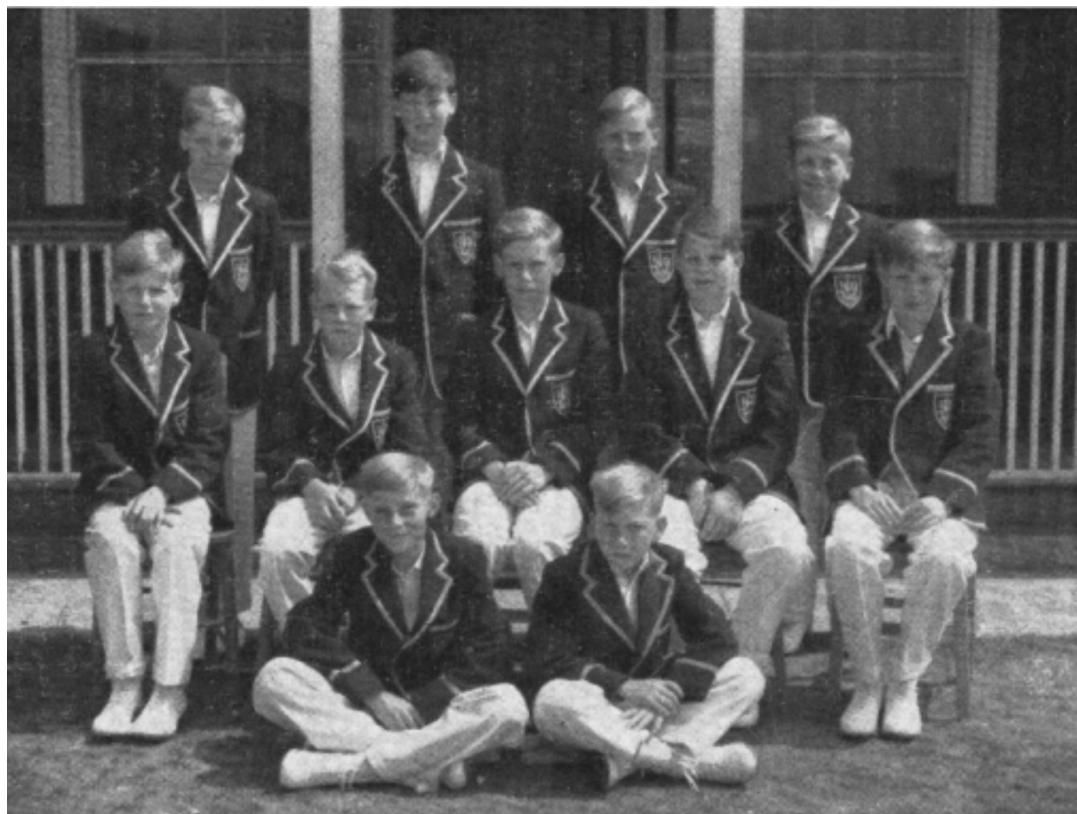
WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL, PAPA? Charles Peacock

I recently dug out a piece of writing about Orwell Park that I had done for my grandchildren in answer to the question, "Where did you go to school, Papa?" Here are some extracts from that piece.

The country was all around us. It was truly a country school, with acres of woods, the River Orwell, beautiful trees in the park, a ha-ha (a broad ditch with one vertical side to discourage deer), a bamboo forest, a camellia house and a rose garden. We made our huts in the woods, we went down to the poplar trees to search for caterpillars, and we played under the vast cedar tree. We learned about nature effortlessly by living in it. Across the river was Pin Mill, where Arthur Ransome set a couple of his stories of the Swallows and Amazons. The bamboo forest was a wonderful place to imagine we were in the jungle, and we had our little square flower gardens up by the camellia house, and we had the full run of the grounds and freedom to explore within the confines of the vast estate surrounded by the brick wall, and we had the playing fields.

We were spoiled for choice of sports. There was the squash court, the tennis courts, the sea-water swimming pool, billiards and ping-pong, bowls outside on the lawn, and then football, rugby, cricket, field hockey and the luxury of our own nine-hole golf course. The cricket ground in front of the school remains in my memory as one of the most beautiful cricket grounds I have ever played on and, before I was in the cricket team and able to play there, one of the great pleasures of life was spreading out your blanket on the grass around the boundary to watch the game, with a full box of tuck and the afternoon in front of you. In contrast to those sun-lit afternoons I remember playing on the football team and going to away matches against Old Buckenham Hall and other schools whose names I have forgotten, playing football on grey, cold and wet Suffolk winter afternoons as the darkness gathered and the mist spread across the fields.

The main school building had all sorts of cellars, underground basements and sundry outbuildings. Down in what were probably the old stables was the woodworking shop presided over by the man who taught us carpentry, who rejoiced in the utterly appropriate name of Chandler. We made boxes and tried some more ambitious projects amid the wonderful smell of sawdust and the glue made from horses' hooves. If you went along the dark subterranean passage beyond the changing rooms there were other rooms leading off. In one of those basement rooms we made our model aeroplanes, elaborate balsa wood replicas which came with patterns and you had to cut and glue the pieces and cover them with tissue paper and 'dope'. The smell of modelling glue takes me right back to that room where, thank goodness, none of us ever figured out the intoxicating effects of the glue.



The food was pretty awful. I don't entirely blame the school. The war had not been over for long and the choice of food was probably not very great. We had a lot of spam. When the spam was made into fritters it was unspeakably nasty. Lima beans were hard and horrible. The porridge and mashed potatoes were always lumpy. The jam was indistinguishable red mush, though sometimes we did get honey. We christened various dishes with names like 'dead man's leg' or 'elephant's trunk'. Soames was the name of the cook, and on our forays into the kitchen, we would sometimes ask him what was on the menu for the next meal. We only asked the question to elicit the unvarying reply, "Kippers and custard!" Frankly the thought of kippers and custard is quite appetising when I think back on some of the things we did have. Tea was the best meal; you could actually bring homemade jam from home, and one of my friends regularly brought comb honey from his father's hives.

Of all the teachers at Orwell, Pat O'Donnell was undoubtedly the one who had the most influence on my life. I think it was partly because of him that I became a teacher. I always thought he was the most humane of men, and even at the age of nine or ten I think I saw in him a breadth of intellect and something which makes me think as I look back that he would have cut an even larger figure in the world of arts and letters had he not chosen the profession of a country schoolmaster. In that position he was not some kind of Mr. Chips or a kindly, avuncular tweed-jacketed dispenser of Latin but rather someone slightly eccentric, or slightly outside the mold. He was a very accomplished artist, he was always interesting and never predictable, and I always felt he liked us little brats. He was kind, funny, brilliant and patient; bad-tempered, gentle, morose and cheerful—a very real person and I remember feeling that I would like to be teacher and be like "O'D".

So we grew up in the late fifties. We were innocent and were losing our innocence, and waking up to a world that was far from innocent. I remember vividly having a conversation with my friends one day in the dining room where the huge mirrors on opposite walls reflected each other into infinity, and the space they opened up seemed somehow like we imagined our lives, going on forever, but disappearing into an invisible and unknown land. We were talking about the 'bomb' and someone said that if they dropped one on London we in Ipswich would probably die, and suddenly death and war seemed a bit close and the joys of lying on your rug watching the cricket with a box of tuck seemed to be threatened. But here I am still surviving the atomic age and Orwell Park still stands and I am sure that there is honey still for tea.

Charles Peacock, 1955-60

We were delighted to receive a message from Charles recently requesting a school visit whilst he was on his travels in the UK from Canada, we enjoyed showing his family around the School to show his grandchildren the place he has so fondly described to them!



OPS AT HIGHAM POINT TO POINT

Every year on Good Friday Orwell Park School sponsors the Children's race at the Higham Point to Point, it was made even more exciting this year as one of our existing students, Annabelle Pallister, and her older sister, Olivia who left Orwell Park last year, took part in the race to fly the Orwellian flag for us.

The event broke its record crowd again this year with over 10,000 in attendance.

The girls did a wonderful job in the race, riding their what they call 'very normal ponies' and not racing ponies and finished with huge smiles on their faces, it was an amazing experience for both of them and particularly Annabelle is now of the opinion she needs a racing pony for next year!

Very kindly, Old Orwellians Emilia and Isabella Rivett, who are now at Stowe School went along to support the Pallister sisters in their race - pictured below!

We are looking forward to attending Higham Point to Point again next year and we hope to meet even more existing and Old Orwellians there again.



ART AND DESIGN AT ORWELL PARK

Our Head of Art, Louise Greenwood, is delighted to be entering some 'colourful artwork' to the 'Broadening Horizons' Competition. This fundraising Exhibition for Cancer Research will be held at the John Gibbons Gallery in Woodbridge. Selected work will be on display from the 23rd to the 25th of June. Our contribution to the fundraising, with entries from Years 1 - 6, has raised £132.50 to this worthy cause.



Above - Art Scholars Exhibition



Above - Broadening Horizons Competition Entries

With so many students taking a keen interest in Art and Design, securing scholarships to senior schools in the subject, we would be delighted to get in touch with any Old Orwellians that have had, or currently have, a career related to the Visual Arts, Architecture, Design, Textiles or Fine Art photography. Louise Greenwood is producing a display in the Art Room on careers and would love to have some links to websites or knowledge of former pupils careers.

Please contact Louise Greenwood - louisegreenwood@orwellpark.org

1994 RUGBY TEAM!



Richard Skeet, a current parent and Old Orwellian (1989-1994) has very kindly sent us in a photo from when he was captain of the Rugby Team.

Richard Skeet mentioned that at the time Mr Mack was the coach and the team list was as follows:

S Stoop, D Clegg, J Engleheart, M Jenkins, G Bramley, T Konarzewski, A Brooksby, H Mellar, F Wake-Walker, T Colbeck, J Copp, C Bond, J Layton, J Rowe, R Skeet

Team: IXV Orwell Park - Winter 1994

1959 DORM PHOTO - STEWART ORROCK

During our Half Century Club visit back in November 2022, the group of attendees were taken on a tour of the boarding house, which reminded Stewart that he had a photo from his time at Orwell Park. He has kindly managed to find it for us to see and we thought we would share it with you.

Steward captioned the photo: *Roughly 1959 and clearly a large dormitory, Lily or Willow perhaps. We would all be 10 or 11 at the time.*

Left to right are David Wharton, David Harley, Neil McLeod, Tom Penistan, Patrick King, David James, Stewart Orrock, George Burton, Anthony Gold and James Service.



MEET THE GOVERNORS: ADRIAN MELROSE



Tell us a bit about yourself and how you ended up at Orwell Park?

Raised in South Africa, I attended school at St John's College, Johannesburg, an all-boys institution where I bucked the trend, spending most of my time in the orchestra pit instead of the rugby field. Post University education led me to Deloitte where I qualified as a Chartered Accountant. As the millennium approached, I relocated to London, transitioning from finance-based management consulting to operating my own internet and software ventures.

My English-born wife, Fiona, and I were drawn to everything that Suffolk offered our two daughters, Imo and Clara, so we relocated to a village near Woodbridge before their prep school years. A conversation with Adrian Brown during the always impressive musical demonstration at The Aldeburgh Food Festival persuaded us to join the Orwell Park community, a pivotal decision for our family.

Imo and Clara are now nearing the end of their tenure at King's Canterbury and Orwell Park played a vital role in paving their way to King's. Meanwhile, I've embarked on an exciting new

journey, pursuing an M.A in Advanced Psychotherapy in London. This shift reflects an enduring interest in this field, more profound than my initial career choice, a testament to never being too late to learn or to change direction!

What inspired you to want to be a Governor?

In the girls' final year at Orwell Park, I joined the board amidst the school's 150th year celebrations. My initial term was served on the Finance and General Purpose committee. Little did I realise that the world was on the brink of the Covid pandemic. It was an honour to support OPS during those challenging times.

We were fortunate as a family to have been a part of Orwell Park's first 150 years. Now, as we join other Old Orwellians who share a similar first-hand experience of what makes OPS unique and special, I am eager to help respond to the continually evolving educational and social environment that our world is now confronting; it's a daunting yet exhilarating time. Having the privilege to contribute to Orwell Park's next 50 years is truly rewarding.

What do you love most about the school?

OPS provides a nurturing and inspiring culture that genuinely allows children to be themselves, and to fit in, regardless of who they are. The extensive range of opportunities available to any child attending OPS enables them to find their 'happy place', and I believe the co-curricular offerings are key to this. OPS has always felt like a family, and its stated values have always felt profoundly authentic – a real testament to the leadership and staff of the school. It was wonderful not to have to bid everyone farewell when our girls completed Year 8 - my role as a governor has allowed me to maintain our connection to this family.

What do you hope to bring to the board of Governors at the school?

In my second term, I now serve on the Education committee. Our daughters greatly benefited from the co-curricular offerings, and I have a special interest in further enhancing these offerings. With the new field I have chosen for my professional career, I've gained a heightened awareness of the importance of mental health. There's no doubt that the formative years in prep school play a significant role in the development of self-identity and personal growth, and I hope to be involved in this continuously evolving agenda.

We were privileged to enjoy several incredible years under the leadership of Adrian and Nicole. I extend my personal gratitude to them for the exceptional care and commitment they have devoted to OPS. As one of the longer-standing board members, I hope to support Guy and Milly Musson in their exciting new chapter at OPS. I invite all Old Orwellians to partake in this ongoing journey and contribute to building Orwell Park from strength to strength for its next 150 years.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Alumni Drinks in the City - Thursday 22nd June at 7pm

An informal drinks gathering at The Vintry pub in central London. Join fellow classmates to catch up over a pint, a G&T, or whatever takes your fancy!
Open to all Old Orwellians aged 18+. Please RSVP via the Alumni Events page on the website or call 01473 653274 to help with numbers. Partners very welcome! Free to attend with paid bar (cash/card).

Proms in the Park 'Coronation Proms' - Saturday 24th June at 4.45pm

Tickets can be booked via the eventbrite website, just search Orwell Park School or alternatively head to our website and click the 'Coronation Proms' link in the header of the homepage to take you straight there!

Half Century Club Lunch - Friday 10th November 12.30pm (Venue TBC)

Our annual lunch for members of our alumni community who left the School more than 50 years ago. Partners are welcome.

Candle Lit Carols at St Martin's Church, Nacton - Friday 8th December 6pm

We invite all Old Orwellians to come and join us for Candle Lit Carols as St Martin's Church, Nacton with the Orwell Park Chapel Choir.
Mulled wine & mince pies in the Alston Room afterwards.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ALUMNI OFFICE

Hello!

I hope you have enjoyed reading the latest newsletter. Please get in touch if you have an update or project you would like to see included in a future edition.

My first Spring term now feels like a distant memory with the busy Summer term in full swing!

In March a number of school musicians travelled to London for our annual concert at St Mary Abchurch in the heart of the city; we had a great turnout of parents, governors and Old Orwellians. The drinks reception in the nearby Vintry was well attended, and we are already looking forward to next year.

We have lots of events coming up that we would be delighted if you could join us for, including the first Proms in the Park, Drinks in the City, as well as some Autumn Events with further information to be confirmed.

We would love to hear from you if you have any news, stories or even just to introduce yourself and hear about your time at the School. You can reach out via the contact details below.

Best wishes,

Ella

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Don't forget to follow us on LinkedIn 'Orwell Park School', Instagram @OldOrwellians and Facebook www.facebook.com/oldorwellians

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