

THE MERCHISTONIAN

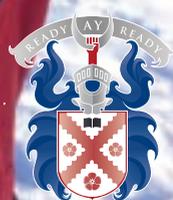
2015

CLUB MAGAZINE

It's Time for Sport...

RUGBY IN THE FREEZER

Andrew Walker
shares his chilly
story of breaking
rugby records





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"We all eat and it would be
a sad waste of opportunity to eat badly"
Anna Thomas

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Editor's Introduction

Dear Merchistonians

It has been a great pleasure and privilege to take a break from working as a photographer to return to Merchiston and put together this magazine again for you.

I approach the start of each magazine with great trepidation. Each time I wonder if I can improve the previous year's edition. However, with a little bit of cajoling, you've provided me with a vibrant patchwork of stories from across the globe and the generations.

I am particularly delighted with this year's edition. Of course there is rugby: Andrew Walker describes his world-record breaking expedition with some rugby legends to play a 7s match at the North Pole. Of his front cover photo, captured holding his old 1XV shirt, he says, "I wish had smiled but it was really cold."

Merchiston is at the beginning of raising funds for the new sports facilities and its community outreach programme. As this magazine is submitted to the printers, the first diggers begin cutting the turf for the 2G all-weather sports pitch. It is an exciting time of change. I was interested in speaking to those Merchistonians who are involved in driving this change and guiding the School.

In summer 2015, the Chairmanship was handed from Malcolm Gourlay to Gareth Baird. Roger Baird and Steve Abram are competing for the title of most active Governor, the former cycling great distances with some fellow former Lions and the latter galloping up the Matterhorn and partaking in a family triathlon... around Mont Blanc. David Whiteford describes the creation of the North Coast 500 to transform the furthest north-west corner of Scotland. It is a route which I think holds scope for a mass-Merchistonian cycle - judging by the number who have submitted their cycling challenges in the past 12 months.

There seems to be an unintended but constant theme in this magazine's articles. The path in life is never straight, but with enthusiasm, tenacity and hard work, you'll get there. Moreover, friendships formed here are those that endure. It is that strength of the Merchistonian community that is irreplaceable - bound to each other and bound to the School.

Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed to this edition - your time, photos and words bring this magazine to life. Do write to the Club Office (merchistonians@merchiston.co.uk) with all your news, expeditions and musings. Your thoughts and communications build this publication and strengthen the Merchistonian community.

Jo Tennant

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Apologies and Corrections

Last year we incorrectly stated that The Reverend Professor Norman W Drummond CBE FRSE (65-70) was former Chaplain to The Queen in Scotland. However, he remains and is the longest serving Chaplain to The Queen in Scotland.

Last year we published an inaccurate transcription of a conversation with Douglas C Morton (58-63, Captain of School) and we apologise unreservedly for this. His full story is published on page 49.

President's Report



Fellow Merchistonians

Each year seems to get busier for the Club and this year has been no exception. Again, I would like to thank the Development Team of David Rider and Joanna Khan (Acting Merchistonian Club Secretary) for their unstinting support throughout the year and Jo Tennant for returning to help produce another excellent Merchistonian Club magazine.

The Club's Committee, Sports Secretaries and Area Representatives have continued to play their parts in providing you with a number of varied opportunities to participate in Club activities ranging from sports events to Reunion Dinners and Business Network Meetings. All these gatherings involve a great deal of planning and co-ordination so I continue to extend a huge thank you to all those who get involved and who help in their organisation.

Indeed, in May, I had the great fortune to enjoy my own year's 30th reunion. I was delighted to meet up with a large number of my fellow classmates, some of whom had travelled from far afield to attend. As with most of these gatherings, you always have those that look just as they did the day they left school, those that have lost a bit up top but managed to add a bit around the middle, and then there are always those that you can't recall ever being with in the same school, never mind the same year! What didn't surprise me, of course, was experiencing the reactions of my former Senior Prefects and Head Boy acting as though they hadn't left school – the current pupils must have thought they'd entered The Twilight Zone during our visit.

With this year's Annual Dinner put on hold so that our full support could be given to the launch of the School's fundraising Gala Ball in October at the Sheraton Edinburgh, our Edinburgh Business Network Meetings have gone from strength to strength, and the pre-Calcutta Cup London Dinner, unlike the match itself, was a winner.

Details of all future events will continue to be posted

on the website and within your Secretary's weekly emails.

On the rugby side, our annual match against Edinburgh Academicals RFC, at Raeburn Place, has been arranged next year for Saturday 4 June 2016. In addition, a match against Watsonians RFC will take place on Friday 2 September 2016 at Myreside. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at both of these matches.

Of all of our Sports Clubs, the Golf section has been very active again, organising successful social outings, which included holding their Autumn Meeting at the new venue of the Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society. The Halford Hewitt Team's defence of their title saw them beat Brighton, Edinburgh Academicals and Berkhamsted before narrowly losing to the eventual winners, Eton, in the quarter finals – I'm sure most teams now view us as a serious threat and would look to avoid us at all costs. Our best wishes go to the team for their conquest at Deal in April 2016.

With no Annual Dinner this year, our Merchistonian Award was presented to Lieutenant Colonel Graeme Wearmouth OBE at the First Prizegiving in June. Graeme (86-90) was a most worthy recipient, having received his OBE in recognition of his work to support the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

As ever, I look forward to the forthcoming year and to seeing you at one of our many events and gatherings, in what I hope will be a busy conclusion to the Club's 150th Anniversary year.

Ready Ay Ready

W Andrew McDonald (79-85)
President



Merchistonian Award 2015

Lieutenant Colonel Graeme C Wearmouth OBE (86-90)
is this year's winner of the Merchistonian Award.

Graeme is one of four brothers who attended Merchiston Castle School. As the eldest, he set a very high standard for his brothers to aspire to, in an exemplary School career. He excelled academically, was Captain of Cricket, enjoyed a distinguished rugby career, was a keen pipe band member and also found time to play football, and enjoy the delights of cross country running!

His schooling at Merchiston burnished his already excellent character and throughout his School days he demonstrated outstanding personal qualities, including innate leadership skills, drive and good humour, all of which were the perfect foundation for his illustrious Army career.

Last year, Graeme, whose official title is Lieutenant Colonel Wearmouth, The Royal Highland Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (2 SCOTS), became an Officer of The Order of The British Empire (OBE) in recognition of his work to support the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Graeme and his team of nine were deployed to join AMISOM in October 2013 to support the Mission's key objective of defeating Al Shabaab's violent and prolonged insurgency campaign in Somalia. Due to the

complex and serious nature of the rebellion, Lt Col Wearmouth and his team were required to operate at both the strategic and tactical level simultaneously.

As a result of his outstanding leadership in such a difficult arena, Graeme is a worthy recipient of the OBE.

The OBE citation states: "Wearmouth's performance throughout his tour was faultless. He demonstrated selfless commitment, drive, vision, outstanding leadership, stoicism and humour every day for six months.

In extremely dangerous, isolated, complicated and challenging conditions, his personal and team outputs far exceeded his rank, team size and Permanent Joint Headquarters expectations.

Wearmouth's contribution to the mission was extraordinary and he is fully deserving in the strongest terms, of the highest formal recognition."

We are delighted that Graeme has received the Merchistonian Award and will look forward to following his distinguished progress in the future.

Words from the citation for the presentation of the Merchistonian Award on 26 June 2015 in the Memorial Hall at School.

If you would like to submit a nomination for the Merchistonian Award 2016, please contact the Club Secretary at merchistonians@merchiston.co.uk by 29 February 2016 with supporting testimony.

Headmaster's Headlines

Through Headmaster's Headlines on the School website I try to provide a flavour of all that is happening in the School on a weekly basis. This article therefore provides a mere overview of life at School. Merchistonians who 'tweet' can also follow our news on Twitter (@merchnews).

Last year we welcomed 111 new pupils of different ages into the School to begin their own Merchiston journey. Now, in December, with a full year completed, I hope these pupils and parents are all fully immersed in the Merchiston family.

Academic Results

This year's A level examination results day saw the usual flurry of activity in School. 51% gained grades A*/A; the School's combined A*, A, and B grade pass rate was a highly gratifying 81%. 64% of successful pupils have achieved places at the prestigious Russell Group of universities.

Turning to our GCSE results, the pass rate A*-C this year was 95%. Moreover, 59% gained grades A*/A; the School's combined A*, A, and B grade pass rate was an excellent 86%. We are delighted that eight boys achieved 11 A/A* grades; six boys were awarded 10 A/A*s and one pupil achieved a remarkable 13 A/A*s!

We received two offers from the University of Oxford, and we had two Ivy League successful candidates to Brown and Amherst which are in the top 15 US institutions.

Granted, examination results and performing to one's potential are critical. But, the world wishes to ask the following: Does this young man, presenting himself to me, have an interesting mind? How does he show this? Has he proved it? Our programme of Enlightenment and Enrichment is precisely about this. We are trying to ensure that the minds of the young men at Merchiston are truly educated and prepared for the rest of their lives. The Enlightened Curriculum is all about enriching the academic curriculum beyond the mere passing of examinations. Events included Dr Dan Kenealy, Edinburgh University, speaking on The Ukraine Crisis and the West's Response for Sixth Form; 'Everybody Writes' Day in Pringle; 22nd St Andrews University Prestige Physics Lecture held on an annual basis at



Merchiston and in November, a Politics visit to First Minister's Questions and a Shell talk on HIV and AIDS from Emma Cole.

Sciences

The life of Gibson House, the home of the School's Faculty of Science, is intellectually lively, to say the least. The culture there is one of learning through practical experimentation, which breeds proper understanding of scientific processes in our boys. Matthew King, Head of Biology, put it quite simply when he said – If you want to understand thermoregulation, pick up a snake. The boys learn about genetics through a special day-off timetable, when they analyse their own DNA. The end result this year has been an outstanding performance in the Science Olympiad Competitions, and I have had great pleasure in awarding numerous prestigious Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards.

Cecil Stagg Society

The Cecil Stagg Society plays a major role in our stretching of the able and talented and we are endeavouring to develop further this area of school life. Cecil Stagg was the Headmaster of Merchiston from 1915-36; he had an extremely fine mind, which was why we have named this Society in his honour. The Society operates on three levels within the School, namely: Juniors, Middle Years and the Sixth Form. The atmosphere of meetings is lively and enjoyable, and we are delighted to have accepted four additional members on the basis of self-nomination since the Autumn.

This year's visiting speaker at the Scholars' Dinner, now in its 17th year, was Mr Simon Mills, MA Cantab, the new Head of Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen. His theme was, Think Global, Act Local - The Challenges of Globalisation. Mr Mills challenged the boys to make the most of Merchiston's international diversity, for the job opportunities of the future will, more than ever, reward those who can work in teams from many nations.



Careers

The Careers Café programme, which some of you have contributed to, continues to offer boys in Fifth and Sixth Forms opportunities to hear from professionals in a range of career areas, and the discussions which ensue are invaluable for informing future decisions. These also reinforce the importance of the development of transferable skills and attributes so important to universities and employers. Career areas covered this academic year to date include Medicine, Law, Finance/Accountancy, Engineering, Journalism/Publishing, the Armed Forces and Sports Science. In addition to this, the Shell year group took part in a Careers Speed Dating event, in which they moved round tables of visiting professionals and tried to find out as much as possible about their career area. This proved to be an excellent forum for raising awareness of a diverse range of professions and many thanks to Merchistonians who attended this, giving something back to the School.

Chaplaincy and Services

The Annual Service of Remembrance and Dedication remains one of the centrepieces of the Autumn Term, its message and poignancy, if anything, growing in importance, as first hand memories of the two World conflicts of the 20th Century fade. Last year our Chaplain, Rev Nick Blair, researched the lives of Merchistonians involved in WW1 and introduced us to a few of them in his sermon. Through the stories of their experiences he highlighted three reasons why we should remember the individuals involved in wars: the suffering of the individual, the courage of the individual and the sacrifice of the individual.

The Senior Prefects faced their own giant by leading a Whole School Service on the theme Are You Sitting Comfortably? Their presentation was about the stories

of inspirational people – people from different walks of life, with different passions and goals – who have had the urge to stand up and make a difference in the world. So the message of the benefits of not 'sitting comfortably' really was inspirational.

Archie CA Millar (00-07) and Graduate Assistant for the past two years, addressed the School at the First Prizegiving ceremony. Archie has lots of memories from his time as a pupil at Merchiston, and he has found that even though the rooms may not look the same, and things will always shift and change, this place is like a microcosm within a cosmos, and "What we do here, what we learn here, we take along with us to echo from within us elsewhere". He urged our young men to choose to take all that is good from Merchiston and use what it has given them to create the best for the people they come across through life.

We welcomed Major General Ranald Munro, BA, CBE (73-78), back to School to address us at Saturday Prizegiving at the end of term, on the theme of 'Life can be hard but it doesn't have to be!' In his own words, he describes himself as not being a 'model pupil' when he was at Merchiston, he remembers that his last report said something like, "I hope the School has had some effect on Munro; he has certainly left his mark on us". However, he has gone on to have a high profile career in Law and as an Army Reservist. Drawing on his life experience so far, he spoke of 10 observations that he hoped the Sixth Form leavers will heed to help them carve out their own course in life. As a man who found the 'education' side of school difficult, he emphasised the importance of people skills, hard work, determination, decision-making, passion and vision. Ranald finished by saying, "Whatever you end up doing in the future, give it your best, of course, but have fun!". It was truly an inspiring address and we are certainly very proud that Ranald is a Merchistonian. ▶



Co-curriculum

The Co-curriculum is of course a fundamental part of Merchiston, which contributes to the development of 'well-rounded' young men.

On the Saturday of the September weekend leave, Mr Freddie Main, ably accompanied by three pupils, travelled down to Bang Goes the Borders at St Mary's in Melrose. It was a wonderful event that saw lots of youngsters from all over the region come to take part in Science and Engineering activities; there was even a live chat with Astronauts!

This year, Debating continues to flourish as two teams have progressed within the English Speaking Union's National Junior Competition, and two boys performed particularly well in their round by beating both Loretto and George Watson's, despite being novices. In the senior competitions, two boys have proceeded to the second round of the Law Society Competition.

Arts and Culture Programme

The Arts and Culture Programme exists to give every boy in Merchiston the opportunity to participate to some degree in the Arts. Everybody in the School goes to lessons and everybody in the School does sport; we also want everyone to have engagement in the Arts - be it participating (eg in School concerts or plays) or being a member of an audience; we also choose a varied programme of events in Edinburgh's theatres and concert halls.

Drama

Two productions with St George's were Twelfth Night (produced by and performed at St George's), involving seven Merchiston pupils; and West Side Story (produced by and performed at Merchiston), involving 19 girls from St George's, 20 Merchiston pupils on stage and 10 in the backstage and lighting crew. All our boys rose to the

challenge admirably, demonstrating perfect teamwork amongst the cast and crew, and bringing much energy and enthusiasm to the stage.

The Merchiston Juniors' production of *The Boy Who Fell into a Book* was one of the highlights of the term. The boys once again brought joy and laughter to their audience with superb comic timing and storytelling. What was particularly wonderful was the commitment that every boy gave to his character, using tiny tweaks to nuance their performances and contribute to a memorable, fun and heart-warming whole. To cite a senior pupil helping with the play: "One of the most amazing things that the cast has, is the way that, if someone misses a line or says it totally incorrectly, their friends will just improvise around that with ease and great skill."

Music

The major musical event of the year was the Choral Society performance with St George's School for Girls, which was this year hosted by Merchiston in our Memorial Hall. The packed Hall had a real sense of occasion, as we all assembled to support and enjoy the efforts of the Choral Society of Merchiston and the combined Schola Cantorum with St George's.

Pipe Band

The Pipe Bands held their annual Piping and Drumming Concert in the Summer Term, and this year's concert for the first time saw a group from South Morningside Primary School playing a selection of Marches and a very impressive Drum Salute. These children are part of the Sounds Like Friday initiative which the School sponsors by providing free piping and drumming tuition, which strengthens our links with the local community. The boys have also participated in events including Beating Retreat at The Palace of Holyroodhouse.

Art and Design

The Art & Design and Design & Technology Departments have enjoyed another successful year, peaking in yet another highly impressive exhibition of pupils' work over Commemoration Weekend.

We have continued to make full use of the Edinburgh Galleries and a particular highlight was the Fourth Form trip to the exciting BP Portrait Award at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. This exhibition showcased the very best in contemporary portrait painting from around the world. The exhibition was particularly valued by our boys for its diversity and scope.

Outdoor Education

Lots of boys like this specialist concept, which includes activities such as mountain-biking at Glentress, a Canadian canoeing day trip and white-water rafting and climbing - both indoor and out.

Boys also had the opportunity to go on outdoor adventure camps to Loch Tay, Castle Douglas and PGL Dalguise and many enjoyed camping out in the Secret Garden.

Duke of Edinburgh

With regard to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award this year, four boys completed their Gold and eight boys their Silver Awards. The Silver group tramped the hills in the Southern Grampians around Ben Alder, and the Gold expedition was in the Northern Grampians to the west of Loch Ness.

CCF

This year has seen over 140 boys enrolled in the Combined Cadet Force. The cadets parade throughout the week at Pipes & Drums and indoor shooting. Two boys have attended Army management and leadership courses. At present, five cadets are expressing an

interest in military sponsorship to university and then Sandhurst. The contingent has also seen two boys selected to attend training with the U21 Scotland Small-bore shooting team.

Sport

Merchiston continues to emphasise the importance of our major sports, whilst offering diversity and individual choice. This is an extremely delicate balance.

Rugby

Within rugby, we continue to concentrate on the diamond that has three points: the quality of coaching staff, the quality of boys, and the quality of fixtures. The rugby season started well on the back of the development tour to South Africa in the summer. With the 1XV and 2XV training together throughout the week, this allows over 40 boys to feel part of something special. Mr Rob Moffat (Director of Rugby) has introduced an inclusive team culture and positive environment with our boys. On a Thursday afternoon, our senior 1XV boys act as mentors to the younger boys in the School and run clinics for specialist positions for the first 15 minutes. This has been a real success.

Our 1XV performed for the 16th time at the annual St Joseph's Festival, Ipswich, now in its 28th year. This is an extremely competitive festival, and it is a good arena in which Merchiston continues to develop and learn away from the spotlight in Scotland. We finished in third place overall; the joint best performance by the School ever and the performance of the squad was superb. They played a modern and exciting brand of rugby which allowed us to compete and at times dominate against some of the top schools in the UK. To top the very successful weekend, one of our pupils received the prestigious Player of the Tournament award, the ▶



first time a Merchiston boy has received this. He was also named Rugby World Magazine Player of the Month for November.

Both the 1XV and the U16XV reached the finals of the Scottish Schools Cup and we all enjoyed a tremendous night at Murrayfield. It was a wonderful sight, seeing all the boys departing on 11 buses which lined the School drive.

The U16XV played in the first final against Dollar Academy, in a match in which we were labelled as the 'underdogs'. The scoreline went to and fro throughout the game and when the clock stopped at 70 minutes, the team was still four points short of Dollar. The team displayed a level of composure not usually seen at this age and managed to string some five minutes of play together without making a mistake and eventually they went over the line to win the match 25-24: a brilliant display of skill, determination and courage!

The U18 played the final against Watson's in a match that was billed to be a classic confrontation between arguably the best two schoolboy teams in recent years, and the match did not disappoint. The first half was nip and tuck and the teams retired to the dressing room at half-time with Merchiston just two points ahead. It was clear that Watson's were well-drilled and tactically aware and they managed to contain the expansive game of our 1XV. Whilst they managed to get away from us in the second half, the 1XV fought back in the final moments, but fell short by six points. Nevertheless, the School was represented superbly on and off the field on the night and secured yet another national title.

Cricket

The new WW1 Centenary Pavilion and electronic scoreboard have been a huge success and whet the

appetite for future 1XI/XV sportsmen. The 1XI have won all their Saturday fixtures, bar one against Fettes. They also qualified for the last four of the Scottish Schools' T20 competition. One pupil achieved four half centuries, and another bowled very well, picking up record figures of 8 for 31 against Loretto. This year we also hosted the Annual Cricket Festival with King's Bruton, Nottingham High School and Glenalmond, which was a huge success. One of our batsmen received the prize for Batsman of the Tournament, with a total of 122 runs.

Athletics

The athletics season started with real pace this year, with our annual visit to the HMC North of England Championships at Gateshead Arena, Newcastle, where the boys produced some notable performances, achieving five gold medals and 14 podium finishes in total. The senior team was superb in this competition, winning the 4x100m and coming second in the 4x400m events, which, alongside some wonderful individual performances, contributed to the team achieving an impressive third position in the whole competition. The highlight of the season came at the Scottish Schools' Relay Championships, where the 4x400m team became Scottish Champions for the first time: a truly outstanding achievement. At School the records for the U13 discus and the U17 long jump were broken.

Tennis

In June 2014, our U18 tennis team were runners-up to Reed's School in the boys' final of the AEGON Team Tennis Schools National Championships (otherwise known as the Glanvil Cup). This capped off a tremendous year for the Merchiston Tennis Academy on the UK-wide stage, which saw the U13s finish second, the U15s first and the seniors second, which gave the

School an overall ranking of second in Britain. Our leading player in the Tennis Academy also won the Zagreb Juniors Cup, his third International Tennis Federation singles title of 2014!

The U18 team also travelled to Doha this year, representing Scotland in the ISF World Schools' Championships. This was a fantastic experience and confirmed our position as one of the leading lights in school tennis in the UK. The team finished in a very credible sixth place. The U13 and U15 tennis teams won all their matches in the AEGON Schools' Championships and now progress to the Scottish Schools' finals in September. One member of the Tennis Academy was also away representing Great Britain in the U14 Summer Cup in Belgium this summer.

Golf

The Golf Academy has put in some good performances in its matches this term. In the Independent Schools' Golf Association (ISGA) Scottish Open, the School were Nett team winners in the U18 and U15 categories and runners-up for the Gross team trophy, losing out to Loretto. One of our golfers has also been selected for the Lothian Boys Squad.

The golf teams have had an extensive fixture list this term. The Golf Academy goes from strength to strength under the leadership of Alan Murdoch at Kings Acre. They were the U15 and U18 Nett team winners of the 2014 ISGA National Scottish Open. One pupil also picked up the U18 Nett individual winner prize. Merchiston also represented Scotland in the home internationals in the Lent Term, another first for the School, finishing in second place behind England. Finally, the U15 team travelled to Sunningdale GC, London, for the ISGA Junior Open in June, playing magnificently and achieving second place overall.

Shooting

The School clay pigeon shooting teams continue their success. They have defended their Scottish Schools Senior and Junior team titles. In addition, one pupil was second overall highest scorer and Scottish High Gun in the senior event, and two members of our junior team were awarded joint second place in the Skeet competition.

For the second year, we have two boys training with the U21 Scotland Smallbore Rifle team, and one boy has also been selected for the Lothian County Junior Squad.

Koinonia – Teamwork with the Community

This name, which stands for Merchiston's commitment to working with the local community, is beginning to bed-down. The term itself is derived from Greek, and I wished to have such a term in place for it is timeless and not pejorative, in comparison to terms such as 'outreach' and 'community service'. We continue to be closely allied with the charity Place2Be, and this year we have 30 boys working in three schools directly with P2B. One boy in the Upper Sixth Form is helping at Braidburn (a local secondary special school), 10 boys help at the local retirement cottages, and a further 10 are allocated to the retirement home. There are other boys variously engaged in the School library, helping with junior rugby coaching and the like.

As ever, the Merchiston community has proved to be extremely generous in its support of our fundraising activities this year. We were pleased to be given permission to arrange a collection for Hearts and Balls at Murrayfield on the evening of the Scottish School's Cup Finals. Hearts and Balls, which assists rugby players who have been injured whilst playing the game, will offer support to Connor J Hughes (07-12), who sustained a serious spinal injury on 13 September 2014 whilst playing rugby for Stirling University. ▶



Malcolm Gourlay: The Headmaster's Address

.....
 Andrew Hunter's tribute at Prizegiving 2015 to J Malcolm Gourlay
 (56-61), the retiring Chairman of the Board of Governors.

Registrar's Office

This term, there have been a number of trips and events organised to promote the School. Our international reach has seen members of staff travelling to China, Grand Cayman, Hong Kong, London, Nigeria, Switzerland and Saudi Arabia to meet with agents, prospective parents, current parents and Merchistonians.

Visiting Speakers

On occasion, we invite speakers to the School: this term it was wonderful to welcome to the School Mr Peter Mackay CB, former Chief Executive of the Scottish Office for Industry, who spoke to us on the theme of Heroes and Heroism. Mr Mackay has a personal interest in polar exploration, and whilst researching the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, he discovered the story of Reverend Arnold Spencer-Smith who was a former teacher at Merchiston Castle School and a member of the Ross Sea Party.

In 1906, the Cambridge-educated Arnold Spencer-Smith started as a teacher at Merchiston and was later ordained in post. He enjoyed the outdoors and often took boys out on excursions into the Pentland Hills. In 1914, he joined the Ross Sea Party of Shackleton's Trans-Antarctic Expedition as the team's chaplain and photographer. Reverend Spencer-Smith sadly perished in March 1916; it was not until over a year later that the remainder of his shipwrecked party were rescued. Not long ago, a wallet was found in Captain Scott's Discovery Hut at Cape Evans. The wallet contained photos of a camping trip and horse-riding, which were later revealed to be Spencer-Smith's photos from his time at Merchiston. He must have dropped his wallet down the side of the bunk one night in 1915 when they spent a long winter there before moving food supplies for Shackleton further towards the Pole. Mr Mackay

delivered an excellent lecture to the School in February and really sparked everyone's interest in this heroic story. We unveiled a plaque in memory of Spencer-Smith at our Commemoration Service, and it was a pleasure to welcome Mr Mackay back to Merchiston to celebrate this occasion.

In June, we welcomed Ms Mollie Hughes to give a leadership talk to the School. Ms Hughes climbed to the summit of Mount Everest in 2012 at the age of 21. She described her journey to the summit of the mountain and used stunning photographs and videos to communicate the importance of teamwork, perseverance and self-belief on such an amazing journey.

Board of Governors

At the main Prizegiving, we said goodbye to J Malcolm Gourlay (56-61), our Chairman, and parent of the 97/98 Captain of School, Christopher (93-98) and welcomed Gareth TG Baird (70-75), father of Tom (05-09). You can read more from the past and present Chairs in their own articles.

As our most recent Merchistonians rise to the challenges beyond the gates of the School, we hope that they will remember their School days fondly and maintain links with us in the years ahead. The School is in great heart. Once again, we have worked hard, played hard and pulled together and achieved so much. Above all, we remain a happy community where young people can thrive, flourish, excel, develop and mature into good people who know right from wrong. We do this by pulling together whether from within the School or the Merchistonians beyond the gates of the School. We have a shared vision and we achieve so much more together than the sum of our individual efforts. Merchiston will pull together into a bright future!

“Malcolm joined the Board in 2002 and assumed the role of Chairman in 2007; he retired from the Board on 1 July 2015. His first task was to complete the Laidlaw House Project. His calm approach, good judgement and business experience have provided a secure, stable foundation on which the School can develop. Malcolm has made sure our finances are sound and the School and Merchistonians owe him a great deal. Working alongside Peter Yellowlees, Convenor of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Derek Smith, our retired Bursar, and Andrew Clayton, our Bursar, Malcolm has shown great dedication and resilience. As a Chairman, he has walked the grounds, felt the atmosphere and he can both sense and affect the mood. My understanding is that he has two great qualities which we should be celebrating today. He has an interested word for everyone and always time to linger and listen. He never interferes, but he is always a supportive presence. This is a difficult thing for a Chairman of Governors to achieve.

Malcolm also has one other great quality that I would

like us to celebrate today. As a trustee of Merchiston, Malcolm knew that if any institution is to thrive, it must also change. The world changes – and so what you know, how you are taught and how you learn must change to accommodate it. Stagnation always causes a downward curve; resting on your laurels is acceptable only for a minute, because other challengers will come who have prepared better than the last. So, just as we encourage the boys to be the best version of themselves that they can possibly be, so Merchiston must strive to be the best version of itself. Thus, pieces of advice from Malcolm such as ‘Make marginal improvements as and when you can’ and ‘Make big ones too – Be bold’ have been so apt. Malcolm, I hope as you look back on the growth and improvement of the School over this period of 13 years, that you are acutely aware that ‘compound interest’ has achieved marvellous things!

Thank you Malcolm for everything you have done for Merchiston, a School I know you love. Thank you too to Avril, for allowing Malcolm to spend so many hours at Merchiston supporting his old School.”



A farewell dinner for Malcolm Gourlay in the Dining Hall



A Winning Team

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The retiring Chairman of the Board of Governors, J Malcolm Gourlay (56-61), reflects on his life as part of many teams and the decisions he has made along the way.

Words by Jo Tennant from an interview with Malcolm Gourlay.

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At Merchiston I believe that I was hard working without being particularly talented. Most of all I would hope to be remembered as a team-player. The best aspect of School for me was having friends and fellowship. In this respect the School was important to me because up until then, I'd spent a lot of time on my own as I lived in the middle of the country and my brother and sister seemed to be away most of the time. I was extremely keen on sport, but not a natural. I was fortunate to play alongside a spectacular group of rugby players. As we moved through the School, I recall that our team lost only two matches in those five years! We had some very talented players like Ronnie Lamb (56-61), Gordon Tweedie (56-61), Donald Bain (56-61), Quentin Dunlop (57-60) and Bill Mowat (56-60). They all achieved considerable success in rugby after school. I loved cricket but was no good at it but was privileged to be Captain of Athletics. The School experience which

probably brought me most pleasure throughout life was the introduction to music. I enjoyed the choir and particularly the music appreciation classes. I have been listening to, and participating in, music ever since. In my day, Merchiston was not a very musical school but it only takes one person to inspire.

I left Merchiston without knowing what I was going to do. In those days, there wasn't really the same amount of counselling and mentoring in the School as there is today; so you were left very much to your own devices, which was certainly character-forming! You had to take your own decisions, good or bad and make your own mistakes. I'm not saying that staff were not helpful, but I recall that pastoral care and advice seemed to be very much up to your Housemaster, so careers advice was in short supply.

On leaving School I didn't have a place at university and had to request an interview with the Head of

Business Studies at Edinburgh University who, fortunately, agreed to see me and then offered me a place. It was so late in the process that I missed all the fun of freshers week. When I found out I had been accepted I was in France and had to get back and find somewhere to live in a hurry. I was fortunate to link up with a friend of mine from School and we shared digs and, later, a flat together. It was very much, "this might be a sensible course for me" rather than "this is what I want to do" but I very much enjoyed student life and my three years there gave me time to become more focussed - I realised my degree was not going to get me very far in life but it certainly opened up some opportunities.

I took a decision to go to Canada to do Chartered Accountancy (CA) there; an unusual step. Whilst most people I knew wishing to qualify as a CA at that time went to an accounting office in Edinburgh, I actually had two choices - one to go to London, one to go to Toronto; I decided to take the Toronto option. In hindsight, it turned out to be a great decision. I worked with an incredibly talented and supportive peer group, the training was extremely good and the work, although intense, was interestingly varied.

After three years, I qualified, having learned a vast amount. Canada was booming at the time and I gained experience in a wide range of organisations from sole traders to international conglomerates. In addition to audit work I had exposure to stock market flotations, mergers and acquisitions, receiverships and financial investigations. I worked for a variety of large and small clients, both domestic and international which gave me a breadth of knowledge I simply wouldn't have had if I had trained in Edinburgh.

The decision to return to the UK was a difficult one because the career prospects in Canada were excellent. However, I was conscious that I was in danger of cutting myself off from my friends and family and, in particular, my parents who were not getting any younger. I felt it important to spend some quality time with them before looking for employment, which I did. This included a wonderful tour of the Highlands with my father, who had a passion for mountains and mountaineering. I then started the search for a job. Rather than returning to Canada or working in London or the USA, all of which were possibilities, I was determined to find an interesting and challenging job in Scotland which proved harder than I had imagined, but eventually was invited to join a small team to open a new office for a London Merchant Bank in Glasgow.

Starting a new investment banking business was certainly interesting and challenging and suited me well

but it didn't take long for me to get excited about the burgeoning North Sea oil and gas business which was growing on the doorstep. Having closely watched the sector for a few years, I took the decision, to leave the relative security of the Bank and join the fledgling oil and gas company, Clyde Petroleum, which I had helped form a few years before, as its first managing director.

During my time with the Bank I had met Avril and we were married in Edinburgh in 1976. A year later we had our first daughter, we moved house and I changed job, all in a three-month period!

Building Clyde Petroleum in the mid-70s was quite a challenge as we had to compete for technical staff with the newly formed British National Oil Corporation which set up shop in Glasgow and was the brainchild of Tony Benn who had little or no time for the independent sector. This competition made growing the company increasingly difficult and left Clyde relying heavily on its technical consultancy firm which was based in the Malvern Hills. To solve the problem, we decided to merge the two businesses and, as a result, Avril, I and the two children moved from Glasgow to Herefordshire. Some people commented that I had committed career suicide but it turned out to be a happy decision as the company grew to be a serious player in the independent Exploration & Production sector employing several hundred people in the UK and Overseas. We lived in a small village a few miles from Ledbury and two miles from the Head Office. I spent my time between Ledbury and London with a fair amount of international travel thrown in. In addition to the UK, Clyde had interests in some 10 countries including Ecuador, the Netherlands, Indonesia the USA and Australia.

Clyde had an interesting journey in its 23 years of existence: success and failure with the drill bit; and a highly volatile oil price to contend with (what's new?). The company was eventually taken over in 1997 and this gave me the opportunity to do something else. Rather than taking another full-time position I decided to accept a number of non-executive directorships, one of which was to Chair a small listed oil and gas company which had just lost its Chief Executive. We parachuted ▶



in the old Clyde management team, changed the company's name to Paladin Resources and had eight years of interesting and successful company building. Paladin's business model was mainly based on acquiring small packages of assets from larger oil companies and working them up to increase production and reserves. By 2005, the market price of such assets was rising exponentially. There's a time in all business cycles when, if you can't make an acceptable return being a buyer, the logical thing is to be a seller and that's what we did. Several people said that we sold too soon. My view is "always better too soon than too late" and "always leave something on the table for the next guy". Nevertheless, I was sorry to have to leave the oil and gas industry in which I had made many good friends and had enjoyed plenty of exciting moments.

Following the takeover of Clyde, I had taken on several other directorships, in addition to Paladin including Bibby Line Group in Liverpool, The Miller Group, Martin Currie and Havelock Europa. Because most of these directorships were based in Scotland and, following a family discussion, we decided to return to Scotland in late 2001 which enabled me to take on the Chairmanships of Martin Currie and Havelock and opened the door to reconnect with Merchiston.

Whilst living in the South our son Christopher (93-98) went to Merchiston, a decision he took himself following a taster-day organised by David Spawforth. It was hard to send him from Herefordshire to Edinburgh, especially for Avril, but it was a great choice for Christopher enabling him to get to Oxford and to pursue an academic career. He, too, enjoyed being a member of a successful 1XV which won the School's Cup in the 1997/98 season. I cannot thank the staff enough for helping him on his Merchiston journey.

Partly because Christopher was at Merchiston, the redoubtable Lord Robertson had tried to persuade me that I should become a Merchiston Governor on a number of occasions. I had always replied that there was no point being a Governor if I lived in Herefordshire because I would not be able to do anything constructive other than turn up at the odd meeting and that's not what I thought being a Governor was about. However within a week of being back in Scotland I was hoisted on my own petard. There was a letter from Lord Robertson saying 'no excuses now!'

Why did I say yes? Certainly the fact that I now lived in Edinburgh meant that I could participate more effectively. I definitely felt that I owed the School for the first class education and overall experience that they had delivered for my son, but I also felt that with my business experience and exposure to corporate

governance, I had something to offer.

It wasn't long before I realised becoming a Governor was another happy decision. I had joined a team that was working well together. This team comprised a very talented and diverse group of Governors, a successful Headmaster and a strong leadership team. I felt tremendously at home amongst these committed people. The School had changed dramatically from my day and it had changed for the better. The changes had been evolutionary, not revolutionary. I recognised, early on, that was the way we should continue. If we did not change we were going to fall behind. However, we didn't need a revolution; the School was doing well, the parents were happy and the boys were thriving.

I was fortunate that shortly after joining the Board the Governors, the Headmaster and the School Leadership Team held an offsite strategy session where the School's top five priorities were addressed and determined. Number one priority was a reaffirmation that a new Sixth Form House was essential for the future success of the School. Much work had already been carried out on this development including the receipt of outline planning permission for a 100-bedroom House on a site east of Rogerson House and an agreement to sell the Cedars to raise a substantial part of the funding.

After many iterations it was decided to site the new House behind Rogerson in order to preserve the architectural integrity of the main School buildings constructed in 1930 and to increase the number of bedrooms from 100 to 126 to allow the School roll to expand. This required us to re-apply for planning consent and to find alternative solutions for the replacement of staff housing. An incredible amount of work went into getting the building 'right' and great credit must be given to the Senior Leadership Team and particularly the Bursar, Derek Smith, for driving the project forward to its successful completion.

Shortly before embarking on this project the School had taken on debt to fund the building of the Pringle Centre. It was clear that with the scale of investment required for the Sixth Form House we needed to raise a significant amount from non-debt sources. This was made possible through a favourable sale of the Cedars and, thanks hugely to the generosity of Irvine Laidlaw, after whom the new House was named, the most successful fundraising in the School's history.

Being able to repay the debt, and in order to start to build a surplus for the next major project, it was critical to increase pupil numbers. Happily, shortly after the completion of Laidlaw House, this was achieved and it gives me great pleasure that on retiring from the Board the School does indeed have a healthy surplus. This



provides a good start for funding the current ambitious plans to improve the School's sports and leisure facilities. Getting to where we are today has been terrific. It always takes time but it's going to happen.

Another major issue which we confronted early in my time as Chairman was the need to pass the Charity Test. We were one of the first schools to be reviewed and received a direction to "up our game". When we analysed the findings, we discovered that we were not far away from the required provision of Public Benefit and the changes required were manageable. When implemented, I am happy to say that we passed the test. However, I am in little doubt that charitable status will continue to be a thorny issue for independent schools in future and that we will have to continue to improve our performance in this area. I believe that there is a great opportunity to do this through wider access to our new sports facilities, including the provision of coaching, when they are completed.

Overseeing the construction of Laidlaw House, driving an improvement in the School's financial position and making sure that we continued to evolve rather than live in the past, have probably been the highlights of my time on the Board. Attracting able Governors and encouraging them to become fully engaged has been another. I've been very lucky. Merchiston has a Board of Governors with many talents and much wisdom. This has become increasingly important as the pressures on the young, and the requirement for good governance in this highly regulated world, have changed out of all proportion, even in the 13 years that I have been involved. It is vital for the School to have wise and knowledgeable Governors to help the Headmaster and

his Leadership Team to continue to "get it right" in this ever more complex world for schools.

It is sad to leave the Board, but it is time to let others run with the batten. I know that Gareth is just the right person to take over the Chairmanship. Although there are, and will always will be, issues and challenges to deal with, I am bullish about the future for Merchiston. The School is doing extremely well, academically and in everything else it provides for the boys. Its long and fine heritage is a great strength and its heart is in the right place.

I am now fully retired though I don't seem to have a lot of spare time. I am still managing investments. I play golf, not particularly well, but I enjoy being outside on the golf course. Music is a big thing for me. Avril and I support the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in a modest way and go to about 20 of their concerts a year. I love opera and go when I can. We also dip into the Festival, although with some necessary circumspection! Edinburgh has so much to offer for people interested in the Arts. Lastly, but not least, I now have more time to travel and to spend additional time with my children and grandchildren in London and France.

When I reflect, I recognise, that I have really had three careers: one in banking and finance, one in oil and gas and one in corporate governance. I know that my time at Merchiston, Edinburgh University and particularly my time in Canada provided a solid base for whatever success I have had, but if I had to pick one important factor running throughout my career it has been the quality of the colleagues with whom I have worked. Through all the ups and downs I have always enjoyed being part of a team, especially a winning, team and that takes me back to the beginning at Merchiston.



Seeding the Future

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Gareth TG Baird (70-75) is one of three generations of Baird's who attended Merchiston and a second generation Governor. This summer he was appointed Chairman of the Board of Governors and here he tells us a bit about himself, his memories and aims for the School.

Words from an interview by Jo Tennant with Gareth Baird. Photos by Jo Tennant and Nick Callaghan.

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When I was asked to consider joining the Board of Governors at Merchiston it took me a long time to decide due to the responsibility the post carries.

Having spoken to the Headmaster and the Chairman of Governors, I visited the School and I was extremely impressed by the excellent condition of the buildings and the superb upkeep of the grounds. However, the defining factor in my decision to join the Board was unquestionably observing the dynamic between staff and boys. With my involvement on the boards of two other independent schools, St George's School for Girls and St Mary's School Melrose, I know the strength of that dynamic is absolutely critical.

I was delighted to join a Board with so much passion

for, and commitment to, the School. It also has a strong and appropriate cross-section of required skillsets required for the governance of a school such as this. We are extremely well-served in terms of educational experience, child protection experience, business, legal and medical expertise which is backed by a significant Merchistonian element. I've had one-to-one meetings with all of the Governors. As the natural rotation of Governors continues, we are identifying candidates with relevant skillsets. With our development plans and potential community partnerships, it is a very exciting time for the School and our Development Team has been hugely successful in driving this forward.

I'm proud that I'm a Merchistonian. I had a good time

here and I remember it fondly, but there wasn't anything like the edge that is has now. It's just a much, much better school. If my peers saw it now, they'd get a great shock - a really pleasurable shock - to see how it has moved forwards.

I enjoyed School. I wasn't outstanding at sport or academics but I enjoyed the sports side of it - rugby and fives in particular. We played a huge amount of sport which was such good fun. When we got older we were allowed out into Edinburgh. The Royal Lyceum had a great deal for schools so we would go there often. When I was at university, I kept going and I have a lifelong love of the theatre from that time.

How would my classmates remember me? As a good friend, I hope! It's funny but when we come back together, on the far too few occasions that we have, there's an immediate connection. We had a good year group with a really good bunch of guys.

My big regret from my time at Merchiston, when I see my son's peer group, is that we [classmates] didn't keep in contact with each other. My son, Tom (05-09) and the contact he has, means that they all have a very strong and lasting bond. They left with that - as did we - but they've been able to keep that going. Obviously, we didn't have social media and mobile phones and we all spread out quite a bit. However, the School is now doing so much more to facilitate that contact too. It's 40 years now since we left in '75 - and we've been focused on families and careers and it's only now you have a chance to look back a wee bit.

One of the things that Merchiston does so well is put a real stamp on people. You see it in the boys: They're confident but not arrogant, they have good manners, work hard and look after each other. If I hadn't seen that, then under no circumstances would I have sent Tom here nor got involved in the School.

I suspect that this was something my father hoped for us in choosing Merchiston. My late dad (Roger G Baird (44-46)) was a fourth generation vet who went through the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College in Edinburgh. In the end, I leaned more towards farming; I really enjoyed the mix - the seasonality of it, although it has its good and bad moments like every job.

I am a third generation tenant farmer, on land near Kelso on the banks of the River Tweed. My grandfather was the first tenant on our farm but died very suddenly. Fortunately, mum was named on the lease and she was able to take over. When I came home after agricultural college, I then took over from her. The farm is mostly arable, but I do have some suckler cows whose calves I take through to slaughter. The cattle enterprise is quite small and stands almost separate to the farm. That said, I usually find the livestock a bit of a de-stressor, although

sometimes it can work in exactly the opposite way!

My brothers ... Roger (73-78) is a grain merchant and also a Governor and Martin (75-58), my youngest brother, (whose son Lewis is in his last year at Merchiston) bought a butcher's business and that keeps him very busy. He also worked with me on the farm for a while and then went on to manage a potato co-operative, Scott Country Potato Growers, of which I'm also a member - together with two other Merchistonians, John Jeffrey (72-77) and Graeme J Aitchison (81-87).

I'm married to Kirsty, who has a private physiotherapy business. We have two girls. Lily, 26, was at the University of Aberdeen and is now a trainee GP in Edinburgh and Lucy, 21, was at the University of Durham and went into the TeachFirst programme. She is on her first placement in Stockton-on-Tees and is in at the deep end but really enjoying it. There are 68% free school meals in the school. She told me she's got a 12-year old girl who is the youngest of five siblings. Of the five, she's the furthest through her school career of any of them! My girls were both at St George's and all the children went to St Mary's School Melrose before that.

My dad always told me to get another string to my bow and that has been good advice which I've followed and passed on to Tom. He wants to take on the farm, but is currently away working elsewhere getting experience. With farming it's important, unless you've got a huge acreage, that you have another way of making a living so you can smooth out the dips as it's a very volatile industry. Tom did a Geography degree at Newcastle University, followed by an MBA at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, and is now working for the brewers, Charles Wells, in Bedford.

I've meandered through other board positions and gradually built up experience of a number of organisations. It has been very interesting as well as extremely useful. I try to fit everything around the busiest time on the farm which is from the end of July to mid-October. ►

Gareth Baird is Chairman of the Board at St Mary's School Melrose and former Council member at St George's School for Girls in Edinburgh. Within the Crown Estate he is Scottish Commissioner and also Deputy Lieutenant for Roxburgh, Ettrick and Lauderdale. His directorships include Vice Chairman of Grainco Ltd, Director of Scotland Food and Drink, Chairman of Pentlands Science Park and former Chairman of the Regional Advisory Board for Scottish Enterprise South of Scotland.

The Merchiston strapline of “Boys First” is absolutely fantastic and sums up what everyone is trying to do around the School. The academic and sporting performance goes without saying. The imminent development of the 2G pitch, followed by the swimming pool and sports hall, will provide great facilities and opportunities for our boys, and these will be embellished by plans to set up a community partnership with better sports facilities on the land adjacent to the School.

The entire Board is really excited about using our current and new facilities to assist with community engagement - an initiative to set up a community outreach programme similar to the Spartans charity model operating at Ainslie Park in the north of Edinburgh. I think there is a real appetite for Merchiston leading and redefining what independent schools can do. We’ve been hugely fortunate with this opportunity and it couldn’t have happened at a better time.

If we can share our facilities and the skills of our teachers and coaches with the wider community that will be a really important and significant change; this will benefit our own pupils, and also the areas surrounding the School. The boys at Merchiston are coming from privileged backgrounds and are very fortunate young men whose experience will be enhanced by community activity.

As a Board, at the beginning of the academic year, we were concentrating on working out how we could get our alumni, our parent body and the whole Merchiston family involved with helping the boys, to guide them for the future - getting some work experience, sowing seeds with the younger boys, explaining things like, ‘This is what I do for a living’, ‘I love doing this and this is why’. The more we get the wider Merchiston family involved in the School, the greater the benefit for everybody and most importantly the boys. Get in touch with the Club Office [merchistonians@merchiston.co.uk] if you’d be able to contribute to our careers opportunities.

At Board level, Duncan CM Moore (72-77) has led on this and Dr Dale Cartwright is matching this growing resource with the boys’ interests through his careers education and guidance. The manner in which we’ve engaged with our alumni in the distant past was rather sporadic, and the development and improvement of both communication channels and content is helping to strengthen the ties amongst the Merchistonian family.

A much valued mentor of mine in a valedictory speech, told the assembled company that in his long experience, “Ultimately everything is about people - and that is true in business, public life and of course, family.” This is first and foremost a people business, wholly focussed on educating and developing our boys. I will do everything I possibly can to assist in delivering that objective.



The Scott Country Potato Growers; from left - Graeme Aitchison (81-87), John Jeffrey (72-77) and Gareth Baird (70-75)

Photo © Nick Callaghan



It's Time for Sport...

I am now in my 18th year as the headmaster of Merchiston!

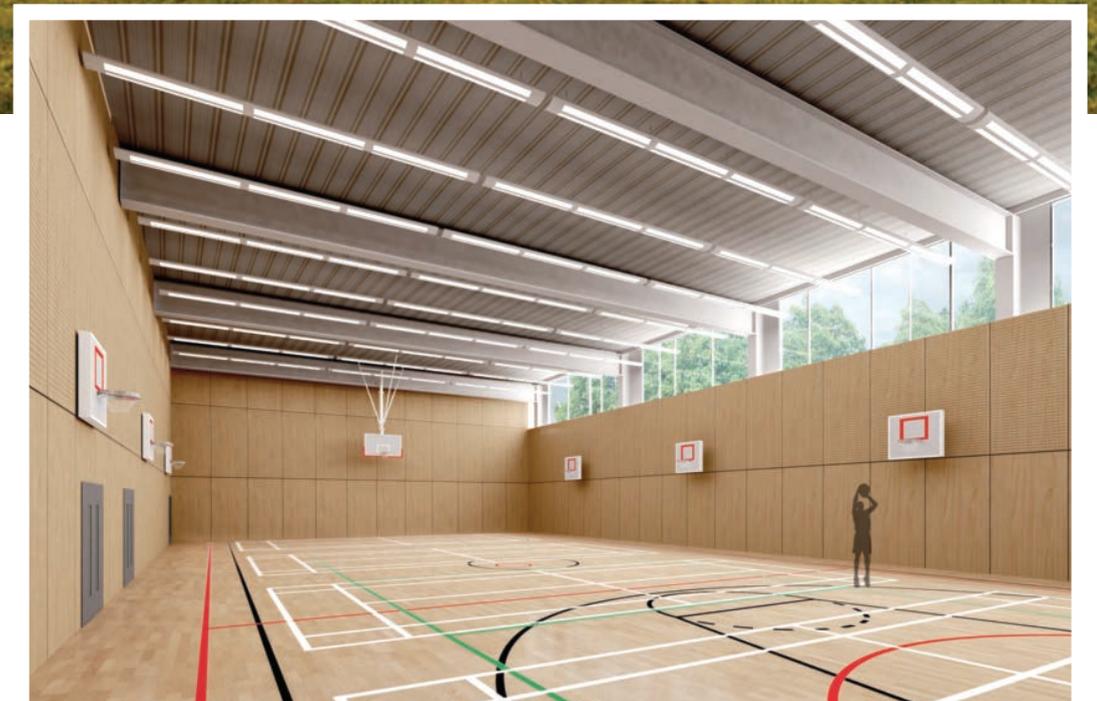
When I was appointed in June 1997, and when I started in 1998, I arrived as a very youthful 39 year old! However, Barbara and I, at one and the same time, had a developing yet clear vision for the School. Over time, we hope that we have provided security and stability in terms of the leadership of the School, but equally, we still carry in our hearts a sense of drive, imagination, initiative and passion ...

Let's wind the clock back ...

Merchiston Castle School opened in 1833 on its original site, obviously in that part of Edinburgh called Merchiston! So, on this Colinton campus, apart from a very few buildings which belonged to the land owner, we have this purpose-built school, constructed in the late 1920s for 250 boarders and 50 day boys The School,

on its present site, opened in 1930, and since then, Merchiston has ebbed and flowed both financially and academically. In 1981 when David Spawforth took charge as Headmaster, (Headmasters put in a long shift in this School!), the independent school sector, and in particular single sex boarding education, was going through a period of significant transformation, driven by changing parental attitudes to boarding and academic expectations, and growing competition stemming both within the independent sector itself and from grammar and state schools.

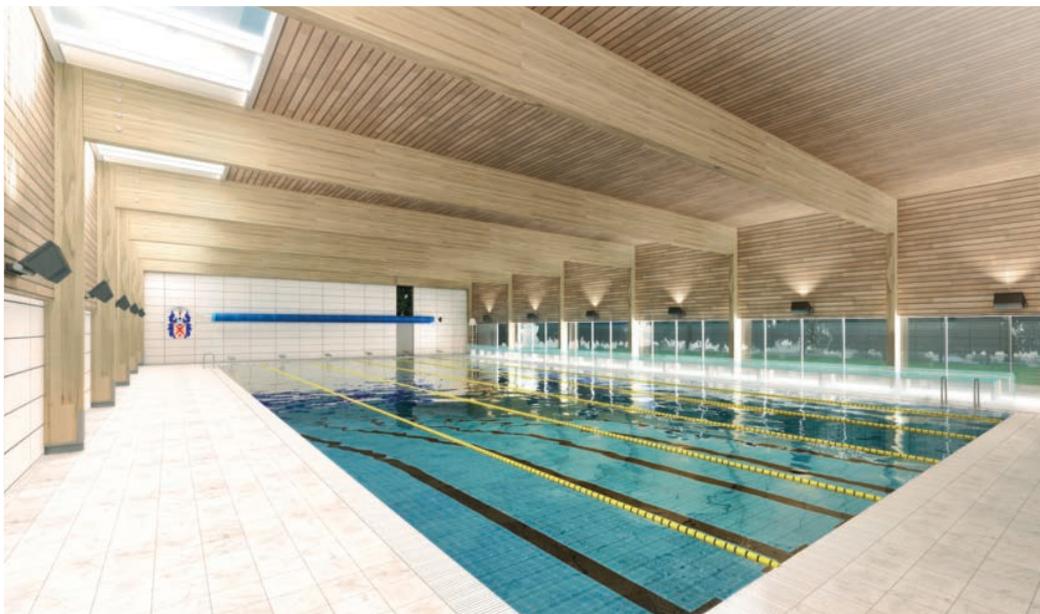
In response to the need for change, Merchiston has in the last 35 years prioritised, invested and successfully re-positioned its academic credentials by recruiting the most inspirational teachers that we can possibly find, and equally, to upgrade and construct first class teaching and boarding accommodation. This has ensured that Merchiston not only survives in a fiercely ►



competitive education sector but endeavours to stand head and shoulders above its competition in Scotland and side by side some of the great independent schools in the UK, developing in young men a sense of values and changing the way they think as well a strong academic platform to meet an ever-uncertain world.

The construction of Laidlaw House in 2009 was extremely significant. This allowed the School to grow a little bigger from when I first arrived here: from a school of 355 to a school of 460 with a turnover of £10 million, in other words a better economy of scale. It is important to note that we have no intention of becoming a bigger school for we believe a school of this size, ensures that every boy is known and feels a sense of belonging. We operate at the right charitable surplus for a school of this size: too high would mean that either we were charging excessive fees, or we were not investing in year-by-year capital projects or we were not valuing the staff! Laidlaw House enabled us to operate at the right surplus by creating the additional capacity, which in turn has led to the establishment of a development reserve.

The success of this school depends entirely on pupil numbers and non-fee income (it is simply not fair to charge parents for the use of the campus for 52 weeks of the year); and of course, it depends unequivocally on the relationship between the boys and their 'gurus', in and out of the classroom. There is one big difference between the Sixth Form boarding house development and this story. We sold an asset to kick-start the £9 million required to build Laidlaw House, and the



realisation of the asset helped us to the tune of £3.9 million. We will not be realising an asset for this project, for we feel that this runs totally against Boys First and what's best for the boys. The boys need this beautiful and expansive campus.

So yes, when I arrived – like all Headmasters – I had a large shopping list, and slowly these have become reality. Personally, I am extremely excited about the sport and leisure facilities development. Merchiston has an absolute belief in the 'Total Curriculum', and within this curriculum is the development of the mind of each young man and the development of the character and

personality of each young man. Very often, but not solely, co-curricular activities deliver the opportunities to display these transferrable skills. And it has always been a dream of mine – and I would argue it is seen in reality here at Merchiston – to see the best possible academic results for every young man, yet also in a 'sport for all' philosophy to achieve sporting excellence, let alone a high level of cultural participation.

And Merchiston's sport and leisure programme is at the heart of School life. The team of staff works hard to achieve sporting excellence, offering training and competition in 15-20 sports: athletics, badminton, ▶

basketball, clay pigeon shooting, cricket, cross-country, fives, football, golf, hockey, rowing, rugby, sailing, shooting, skiing, squash, swimming and tennis. In 2014/15, the boys competed in 543 fixtures in 78 different teams and during the session, Merchiston boasted 16 sporting internationalists in rugby, skiing, shooting, cricket, table-tennis, tetrathlon, golf and tennis. Our tally of schoolboy rugby internationalists now stands at 75. At senior level, Merchiston has celebrated 64 full rugby internationalists and three British and Irish Lions. The last full international rugby cap was awarded to Sam Hidalgo-Clyne in the 2014/2015 season and the three British Lions are John Jeffrey, Roger Baird and Sir Louis Leisler Grieg. Merchiston also has twenty-two cricket internationalists, the last being Oliver Hairs, the oldest son of one of our members of staff, Ms Waldron, who gained his full Scotland Cricket international honours whilst still at School. What I can say is that every Merchiston boy participates in a minimum of four hours of physical activity per week (some do nearer 10 hrs) and last year 84% of the boys represented the School in at least one sporting fixture. All of this is only achieved through the dedication of our teachers and coaches. Very few schools produce outstanding results in both the academic and sporting arena – usually, one is achieved at the cost of the other. It is extraordinary, therefore, that Merchiston, a relatively speaking small school, delivers on both fronts and more!

The Governors and I wish everyone connected with Merchiston to enjoy the very best teaching resources, boarding and day accommodation and sports facilities in order that they have the right tools to support them in their quest. Over the years we know we have underinvested in some areas as we have dealt with other priorities, but now the time is right for sport. We have a vision of the sporting and leisure facilities Merchiston Castle School needs to inspire the best in the next generation of Merchistonians, and also those outside the castle walls.

The renovation of the now named Centenary Pavilion was the start of addressing our leisure facilities, but how exciting is it to consider the concept of a tennis/football/hockey Astro, a new swimming pool and new sports complex and rugby Astro. Indeed, we have been telling this story to the city planners for over two years now, and I am delighted to say they share our enthusiasm and have granted us planning consent. It is also important to note that whilst we always put the Boys First, we will offer community initiatives on these facilities, but only when the boys have used them – not the other way round! And to this end the planning



application for the rugby Astro has been deferred as we look at how we can reach out and help those schools without facilities and to help children in our surrounding neighbourhood who might benefit from our plans.

We have been pleased to develop links to allow local primary schools to have swimming lessons in our current pool on a weekly basis. We now have two sessions for 15 children each week throughout the school year. In order to facilitate this, we provide minibus transport to and from the participating schools. Oxfangs Primary School, send all of their pupils for swimming lessons at Merchiston, having withdrawn from the City of Edinburgh scheme, thereby allowing the City to offer additional slots to other schools. To support this programme we commit three members of staff each week (with at least one member of staff in the pool to provide support and encouragement) and in order to provide more intensive support, the number of pupils in each session is restricted to 15 (30 per Thursday). This scheme generated 1050 child visits in 2014/15.

But we wish to do more. We have started discussions to form two community partnerships both of which have the potential to enhance our Koinonia – a Greek term for ‘teamwork with the community’.

The first potential partnership is with a leading

swimming club. Such an arrangement will give us unique access to performance swimming coaches and will assist us in delivering our external swimming programme. This partnership will add three additional days of activity to that which we already provide, meaning swimming lessons for a further 720 children from our local community per week, whilst also enhancing the provision for the boys of Merchiston.

The second potential partnership is with neighbouring sports clubs to enter into a venture to jointly develop a local community artificial pitch, giving Merchiston boys access to an all-weather facility which we would share with our partners. Whilst we do have plans to construct a similar facility in the heart of our campus, an equivalent pitch at the edge of our grounds gives us the same access, but provides more straight forward admittance for third party users. This then gives us the ability, with the help the wider partnership, to run sports, football and rugby programmes for our neighbouring areas of need. There is a very good model operating in the north of Edinburgh through Spartans Community Football Academy and we are fortunate that one of the directors of Spartans is a current parent and he is helping us to shape our approach.

And what about the cost?

Current value engineering estimates bring the total estimate across all components in the range of £10-14 million, with the breakdown being:

General Purpose Astro	£1.000m - £1.039m
Swimming Pool	£4.843m - £4.933m
Sports Complex	£4.821m - £5.737m
Rugby Astro	£1.547m

What about the finance? The Governors have agreed in a prudent business plan to fund the development, splitting the funding equally across a contribution from School reserves, bank borrowing and fundraising, meaning we are looking for a maximum of £4m for each of these sources.

As previously mentioned, the School is well on the way to creating an adequate reserve (we cannot possibly ask people to support our fundraising if our own house is not in order...); our bankers have agreed an appropriate facility and we have already started talking to some wonderfully generous supporters and I can disclose that funds raised to date to support our plans total over £2.6m.

With planning approval now received, we intend to crack on with this project. The first phase is the general purpose Astro adjoining the squash club as it provides the least disruption to School life during its construction. This pitch will be in place by next summer. It is important to note, that in terms of the order of our facilities, we have listened to pupil and parent voice in terms of the need to create greater diversity in our sporting programme, yet retain our points of excellence. Thereafter, the sports complex and swimming pool have a 100 week construction period and we would wish to start these as soon as the finance is in place to complete the swimming pool and sports complex in one building programme.

There is plenty on the go and a great deal more to do, but I am hugely encouraged that a project that was once a long way down the shopping list is now happening.

I see the approach we are adopting as being one that manifests our corporate and school social responsibility. This approach makes a difference not only to our boys but also to those who need to be afforded such opportunities.

We wish our boys, to enjoy these new facilities but at the same time to value and lead change. Thus, we also wish others to benefit from our initiative... It's Time for Sport!

Andrew Hunter

Ride of Lions

Roger GT Baird (73-78) and some of his fellow British and Irish Lions have swapped their rugby kit for lycra and carbon fibre to challenge themselves on the roads of Europe. Here he talks about the miles and scrapes as well as his thoughts, as a Governor, about the School's plans.

Words by Jo Tennant from an interview with Roger Baird. Photographs provided by Roger Baird.

This was Roger's second year in the saddle doing The Ride of the Lions (ROTL). The concept was thought up by Peter Winterbottom to bring the spirit of rugby to cycling. In practice, this means that 13 British and Irish Lions - amongst them Rodger Arneill, '72', Rodger Utlej OBE, 'about 67', Rob Henderson 'Irish', Craig Chalmers, Steve Bainbridge, Colin Charvis, Daffyd James, Dean Richards and Mike Teague - embark on an annual cycling challenge. They are joined by about 90 other riders who are keen cyclists and rugby enthusiasts. Roger is another British and Irish Lion who has joined their ranks:

"This year was to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo 200 years ago. We did it in June. The idea was to do the 215 miles in two days coming back from the battle site of Waterloo, which is just outside Brussels. We did 120 miles on the first day, got the ferry, stayed overnight in Kent and then into London. Day 2 was 95 miles from the coast to the centre of London. Our mission was to raise money for Walking with the Wounded, which helps injured servicemen; pleased to say mucho dosh raised!

Anyone that cycles will know that railway tracks are a nightmare for cyclists ... 40 miles out of Brussels - busy chatting - I didn't see the lines until it was too late. Wheels

caught in tracks and I went down in a flash - tarmac is not a forgiving surface. After a 360 degree check, all body parts intact and moving, a hole in my elbow and a very sore right hand side, but told not to be a 'girly back' by Mike Teague and to mount up and carry on!

Dean Richards is 23 stone - 120 miles, even on the flat of Flanders, albeit into a very strong head wind, was too much for Deano ... he couldn't even manage a pint of beer when we finally reached Kent at the end of the first day. If Belgium was flat, the rolling hills of Kent were another proposition. Mr Richards made the most of any downhill opportunity, frequently overtaking the safety car, at speeds in excess of 45 mph, all designed to take him as far up the next hill as gravity would allow.

I'd done one [ROTL] last summer. We did the four home Union stadiums. We started at Twickenham and went all the way over to Cardiff and the Millennium Stadium, continued through Wales - they've got some hills! ... Got the ferry to Rosslare and went all the way up the Irish Coast to Lansdowne Road. A big night in Dublin followed by the ferry from Belfast to Cairnryan and one of the most spectacular rides up the Scottish coast on a glorious summer evening. Finally across to Murrayfield ... 600 miles in a week, quite a lot of partying and some

very tired but happy cyclists.

This coming May 'The Ride of the Lions' are doing the 'The Clock to the Rock', which is a two-week ride beginning in London, the length of France and Spain, with the finish at the Rock of Gibraltar. If anyone wants to do part or all of it, just take a look at their website, I promise you it will be an unforgettable experience.

2017 they're going to New Zealand for the Lions Tour, not sure if I'm doing that one yet!

I only started cycling two years ago, when Peter Winterbottom suggested I'd really enjoy it. However I was fairly apprehensive doing 600 miles as my first outing but quickly found that tucking in behind Colin Charvis was the ideal energy saver!

At Merchiston I wasn't a very good student, not in the classroom anyway. I loved my sport and I did work reasonably hard but I 'could have done better' - let's put it that way.

My biggest regret was I studied the wrong subjects. English, History, Geography were my favourites but I was under the misguided belief that I could become a vet, despite being very ordinary in the Science and Maths departments. My father was a vet and probably for no other reason than that, I wished to follow in his footsteps. Consequently I never went to university, which I regret but also realise was not necessary to the career I fell into. Listen to your careers teachers!

I now work as a director for WN Lindsay Ltd, grain merchants. About 80% of our business is directly or indirectly involved with the Scottish whisky industry, which has enjoyed a massive period of growth over the last 10 years. Whilst it's not what you should be told at school, it's not the end of the world if you don't get into your 1st choice university, albeit much more preferable ... because life has so many opportunities. If you're hungry and you use the attitude of 'What you put in is what you get out', anything is possible!

In becoming a Governor, I wanted to give something back to the School and it was an honour to be asked.

With the new sports development, I see it as a unique opportunity to move things in a different direction and we can be the first independent school to really start thinking outside the box. We can make a big difference with shared facilities and using a community outreach programme, similar to the Spartans charity model operating in the north of Edinburgh, to bring opportunities to a whole load of youngsters who otherwise wouldn't have this chance: you know that is pretty special.

It's a great opportunity for our boys to be part of that too. It's giving them skills and an appreciation of what you can do to help others going forward throughout your life. I see it as a huge opportunity for Merchiston



Three Lions: from left Roger Utlej, Rodger Arneil and Roger Baird

boys to make a difference, at the same time learning massively important life skills on how to assist and manage those less privileged than themselves. That is not detracting from their education but instead is adding to their character and personality.

I see it as a win:win. The facilities development can change what we do beyond all recognition and that is fantastically exciting."

www.rideofthelions.co.uk

Mind over Matterhorn

On the 150th Anniversary of the first ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865 by Edward Whymper, Steve P Abram (70-75) climbed the Matterhorn.

Words by Jo Tennant from an interview with Steve Abram. Photographs provided by Steve Abram.



It has been likened to climbing the side of an ironing board with 2000 metre drops on either side.

We go to Cervinia skiing where the Matterhorn is in full view and I commented to the family that 'I am going to climb it one day', so having thrown down the gauntlet, I took the bull by the horns and made plans to do it this summer. The idea was to climb it from the Italian side via the Carroll Hut but due to a very hot summer resulting in the melting of the permafrost and resultant rockfalls, I had to approach it from the Zermatt side and the Hornli Ridge.

I spent the previous night with my Italian guide, Francios Cazzanelli, at the Hornli Hut at 3262 metres with all the other climbers and guides and it was at this point that I felt somewhat ill-prepared and apprehensive of the task ahead, especially on speaking to some of the other climbers who seemed to have had a wealth of climbing experience both in the Alps and further afield. You do start to question yourself when you are told that this is a very technical climb involving considerable rope work and abseiling, not to mention rockfalls.

Around 15 climbers a year and over 500 in total have been killed since Whymper in 1865, mostly through falls on the descent; some 10% of these tumble to their deaths onto the glacier below the Matterhorn. The weather is notoriously fickle and visibility and overall conditions can quickly change for the worse.

The forecast was good despite all climbers being winded-off the previous day. Our day started at 2.30am, with a mad scramble to double check kit, breakfast of porridge, toast with lashings of butter (very good energy source) and coffee. The Hut door opened at 3.30am and off I set with Francios into the dark, headtorches on, all rather daunting but no turning back. Only a 1215 metre

climb ahead.

With bags of energy, Francois was not hanging back, so we made record time reaching the Solvay Hut at 4003 metres at 6.16am, reaching the summit at 7.50am. We were taking in the sunrise on the way up and the beautiful panoramic 360 degree views across the Monta Rosa Range and surrounding glaciers. We noticed some climbers celebrating on the low Italian Summit having taken the Zmuttgrat route that was connected by an ever so thin 100 metre rocky ridge.

After taking a few pictures, giving some high fives and devouring two Mars bars, we set off back down, which is regarded as being harder and riskier than the ascent. There were long sections of abseiling over drops onto ridges - you were always conscious of the climbers above you loosening rocks onto you and there were a couple of times where you had to duck to avoid them!

We arrived back at the Hornli Hut at 10.55am feeling on top of the world, albeit emotionally drained. It was nothing that a beer and a plate of steaming spaghetti could not sort out.

A truly invigorating and emotional experience to have climbed this iconic mountain, even more so on the 150th anniversary, and I would recommend it to anyone who wants to push the boundaries.

Any other challenges?

I joined my three sons - Douglas (00-05), Alasdair (03-08) and Kit (03-08) - to do the Mont Blanc Triathlon; a 1.2 mile swim, 56 mile bike and 13 mile run. It has an extremely competitive field, testing bike course with 2500 metre climb, but also wonderful views of the Mont Blanc range and pretty mountainside villages. I came fourth in my category but there were only four in my ▶



Before the Mont Blanc Triathlon: From left to right, Steve, Douglas, Christopher and Alasdair.



group. So, room for improvement!

A great time had by all and we made the most of the evening partying till 1.30am the following morning. The boys are already talking about Majorca 2016!

Did you enjoy School? What kind of student were you?

It is fair to say that you always remembered the good times. I loved the School but not so sure about the lessons. It is also fair to say that I was enthusiastic in all the wrong areas! I was taught to work hard, play hard but spent too much time on the games field and neglected my studies. I put this down to some questionable teaching and am glad to see that the School is now flying high on the academic side and is now top of the educational table in Scotland.

What motivated you to become a Governor?

I have a passionate affinity for the School with my three sons also attending, not to mention my three brothers and three nephews. I have got a lot out of the School, even today, and I wanted to put something back. To me the School is like an extended family.

What do you see as the greatest strengths of Merchiston these days?

Great camaraderie, togetherness, working as a team. All the boys are equal. Whether you are an academic, sportsman, musician, artist, in the choir, member of the pipeband, or take part in the theatre: the boys take part

in all the extra curricular activities. There's no pressure to be seen to be cool.

And the biggest challenges facing the School right now?

The upgrading of the sports facilities: a new sports complex linked to the existing facilities thereby giving us two large multi-purpose halls, state-of-the-art fitness suite, upgrading of changing facilities, new six lane, 25 metre competition-standard pool, plus two all-weather facilities: total cost £12 million. This is an exciting but challenging project which will need the full support from alumni and beyond.

Proud to support Merchiston Castle School



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The Trust of a Prince

The North Coast 500 (NC500) is a 516-mile scenic route around the north coast of Scotland, starting and ending at Inverness Castle. In December 2015 it was named as one of the top 6 drives in the world. Though it was only launched last year by David R Whiteford (71-75), it has already reached iconic status. In November 2015, adventure cyclist, Mark Beaumont cycled it in under 38 hours. In this interview, David talks about the real aims of the road and the passions that have driven him to get there.

Words by Jo Tennant from an interview with David Whiteford.

North Coast 500

We're all connected by this road. We thought "Why don't we give the road a name? Then we can support and signpost each other." NC500 launched in April 2015.

VisitScotland estimates that some 620 million people are now aware of this 516-mile scenic route which travels in a loop along the coastline of Scotland from Inverness, venturing around the capital of the Highlands, up the West Coast and back via the rugged north coast.

The main goal of NC500 is to create opportunities that will grow the infrastructure and improve the economy of the area. It is hoped to create employment (in tourism and also wider industries such as food, drink and crafts) and to generate prosperity so that young people don't have to move away from the area to develop their careers. So it's more than just a scenic route. It is a road with a strategic goal much like Route 66 when it was created in the 1920s to promote economic development between Chicago and Los Angeles. This is the Scottish answer: a new iconic trail that circles the Caithness, Sutherland and Ross-Shire, coastlines.

I've done the NC500 - not on my bike like Mark Beaumont, although if someone sponsored me for charity I might do it! It's a bucket list thing. Bikers and cyclists like it too and camper vans stop frequently. It's about enjoying the road, about taking your time, climbing the Munros, visiting the attractions, taking in the beaches, playing the golf courses...

In years gone by, the 'dwell time' - the amount of time people spent when they reached John O'Groats - was 15

minutes! That's improved massively already and there is much more to do up there: to buy, to drink, to see. There's an international company called Natural Retreats who have taken over Cairngorm Mountain recently and they're developing the site at John O'Groats.

The Castle of Mey, which was saved from dereliction by the Queen Mother in 1952, has 27,000 visitors a year. Next door to that is a lovely flour mill which we want to renovate as another destination and add - a bakery and a micro-brewery - to create more things for people to do and to create more jobs. Anecdotal evidence is that the tourist attractions such as Dunrobin Castle have had a record year because of NC500, which is phenomenal. The only 'problem' - a good problem - is that it's too late to baseline because it's already having an impact. The impact of NC500 and its potential to bring prosperity to a remote and fragile area of Scotland is seriously significant. We have a brand now and people are really engaging with it.

I love the Highlands. However, connectivity is poor and is a barrier to trade and economic development. Would it be the same if it was well connected? It is 'where the crowds don't go' and it's quite special for that. I don't think NC 500 is going to diminish that in any way. It is a certain type of person who will go that extra mile - that extra 516 miles!

NC500 sits under the umbrella of North Highland Initiative (NHI) which was established by HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay. Its objectives focus on helping the fragile areas of the North Highlands with the



industries that the Prince loves, principally in food, farming and sustainable tourism. They also focus on preserving the built environment and bringing them to life for modern uses.

I was asked to become involved in the NHI by the Prince's Private Secretary because of my involvement in the food, farming and tourism sectors. I took over in 2010 from Lord MacLennan but it was begun in 2005. Having worked elsewhere for some time it was an opportunity for me to put something back into the Highlands. We have a board and a team in Wick who administer the various aspects of the charity.

On the tourism side, we help to bring the whole of North Highlands together. The bodies representing tourism have created a common strategy and a plan. The aim is to improve the destination experience for everybody. Within this, NC500 is the flagship project.

Certification in Farming

I was a founding director of a food certification body, SFQC which is now called Acoura. The reason I got

involved with the certification body was that Edwina Currie had made a comment about most of the UK eggs being infected with salmonella. After that we had the terrible BSE crisis when consumers were asking, "What are these farmers doing to their animals?", "What are they feeding them on?"

So colleagues and I set up a scheme in which we created an auditing system on farms which would be independently verified by our certification body. We, in turn, are accredited by the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) who verify that the whole system is independently assessed and impartial. The standards focus on points such as food safety, animal welfare - all things that consumers would expect all the way through the food chain from "Farm to Fork".

The Scotch Beef label is underpinned by those standards and it is about brand building, making sure the brand has a foundation, a structure and consistency of quality. The food and farming industry didn't really have any quality assurance standards or certification until the late 90s - the meat industry was the first to fully ►

David R Whiteford OBE BSc Dip (ag) FRSA, FRAGS

David Whiteford was a founding director of Scottish Food Quality Certification (SFQC) and is currently a Director of the University of Aberdeen Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health. David was appointed Chair of the North Highland Initiative (one of HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay's Social Enterprises) in 2009. He was awarded the OBE in 2000 for services to Agriculture and elected a Fellow of the RSA in June 2007. In 2012 he became a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Society. He is a director of Dingwall and Highland Marts. He is married to Joanie and has three children, Jenny, Claire and Rob (08-14).



The Provost of Inverness, Helen Carmichael, with Mark Beaumont and David Whiteford at the end of Mark's 516-mile non-stop cycle around the NC500.



participate with other sectors following soon after. Over 90% of the food produced in Scotland now complies with those standards.

SFQC was the first certification body in the world for the food industry. The Red Tractor scheme which covers a wide variety of UK produce followed after that and SFQC helped develop many of these systems initially as a joint venture with CMI based in Oxfordshire - eventually the two companies merged.

Seeing Mey Selections Scotch Beef in restaurants in Singapore was a source of great professional pride – this was the first time since the BSE ban that they had had British beef on the menu.

Mey Selection's (Food Brand of the North Highland Initiative) was set up because of the history of the Queen Mother having the Castle of Mey and the Prince continued the tradition of supporting that area. It is a premium food brand, mainly in export but in food service too. It helps to support farming in what is a very remote area of Europe, never mind the UK.

Farming

My first degree was in Environmental Chemistry from University of Edinburgh, and then I did a postgraduate degree in Agriculture. I used my Chemistry for a short time in the oil industry then the opportunity arose to expand the farming business and I was lucky enough to go back. I had always had a hankering to be involved in industry bodies or to support the industry in some way or other.

I farm in partnership with my brothers in Easter Ross. There are four Whiteford brothers: Stuart and James went to Gordonstoun whereas Alan (68-72) and I were sent to Merchiston. We are all involved in farming and have a group of farms in Easter Ross all within tractor-

driving distance of each other, so we work them together. We have a little sister too, Fiona - she lives in Lauder.

Merchiston

I wanted to put something back into a school that had done a lot for me and my son, Rob (08-14).

Nowadays, it's much better on all fronts - facilities, teaching staff, food, pastoral care. Most of the time I enjoyed myself at School ... the food was pretty awful in those days! I really enjoyed the sport - rugby, athletics, cricket - but I would say I was a reluctant academic. When I came here, there were 16 of us in a dorm and no separation between the beds. I think my parents rolled up, threw out my trunk and me after it! The camaraderie was fantastic and I have come away with great like-minded friends. I think my classmates would remember me as the geek with the big ears! I'm still friends with quite a few Merchistonians - some are past and present Governors!

That is also why I thought Rob would enjoy it too. He's an all-rounder, he loves his sport. He was a young tennis player and there was the Tennis Academy. That was the clincher - the opportunity to play tennis at a higher level. He's at the University of Bath now, in second year, studying International Relations.

I think that Merchiston helps boys to achieve a higher academic level than they would have been expected to elsewhere. It also helps to turn out boys who are: confident rather than arrogant; balanced, common-sensical, pragmatic people who think about others; who are willing to lead; and who are caring but not a soft touch.

I am really excited about the opportunities for the School to do more with the surrounding community and fully integrate with it.

www.northcoast500.com



"I wish I'd smiled but it was so cold!"



Frozen Tackle - Arctic Rugby Record

.....
Andrew G Walker (01-06) never imagined when he left school that, one day, he would be selected as part of a team to trek for three weeks across the Arctic to play the northern-most game of rugby at the North Pole.

Words from interviews with Andrew Walker. Photographs provided by Andrew Walker and Wooden Spoon.

.....
Now a solicitor at Eversheds LLP, Andrew Walker joined 13 others, including former international players, Tim Stimpson and Ollie Phillips, and fellow Scots, John Houston and Steven Turnbull, for the trek and world record attempt - Wooden Spoon's greatest ever challenge. Former British Lion, Lee Mears, was the special guest referee.

"In order for the game to be ratified by Guinness as an official world record (which it has been), the pitch had to be accurately marked out, a set of rugby posts had to be erected and we had to ensure the match was filmed. A plane of supporters and sponsors, along with our referee, flew in from Resolute Bay some 400 miles away where we had trained for the two weeks previously. Due to pilot hours we had a window of only an hour and a half to set up the pitch and posts and play the game before getting the plane back out. We played a full game of 7s but as you can imagine there wasn't much hanging about at half-time!

The first couple of minutes were fairly frantic with

everyone slipping all over the place but it soon turned serious when the guys got used to the conditions and terrain – as you can imagine everyone was desperate to win. The game was fiercely contested and the contact wasn't toned down any! It was a tight affair and in the last play of the game, my team, Team Tim, went the length and scored our third try to Team Ollie's two which got us the win, 17-14. The celebrations were fairly tame given that we weren't allowed to drink up there. I think we managed one bottle of champagne between us, so had to wait until we arrived back in Ottawa where we had an almighty blow out!

The challenge was organised by the Wooden Spoon charity and was the biggest challenge they had ever undertaken. I had come across Wooden Spoon many times over the last ten years and it was always a charity that I looked out for and wanted to get involved with, given the way they raise money for disabled and disadvantaged children through rugby. I did a couple of minor things with Spoon then was asked if I would ▶



like to apply for the Arctic Challenge – I did and I was successful! I urge any Merchistonians with an interest in getting involved with Spoon to do so. It really is a brilliant, and very active, charity that strives to help young people up and down the UK!”

Wooden Spoon’s aim was to raise an ambitious amount of £300,000 of which Andrew has exceeded his personal target of £25,000 and is still counting.

“It was the most incredible experience to have been a part of. It was undoubtedly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and something that I will remember for a long time. The memories I have, and the people I met along the way, can’t be described and to know

that we have given so much back to Wooden Spoon is a great feeling.

It was difficult to imagine what it would be like up there so all I could think about in advance were the extreme temperatures and polar bears! Unfortunately we didn’t see any live bears (just three or four dead ones) but it’s fair to say, at no point on the trek were we warm!

The trek was both physically and mentally draining as we walked across sea ice for over nine hours every day, pulling pulks that weighed over 50kgs and only ever stopping for a maximum of 10 minutes. With a severe lack of scenery and wildlife and with freezing cold wind constantly blowing in your face – it really takes it out

of you! We had a couple of really challenging days crossing peninsulas and where the weather was really against us – that was tough but it made it all the more satisfying once we finally got to the Pole.

I wasn’t completely prepared for the mental challenge and what the vast Arctic environment could throw at you – I really don’t think you can be. With nothing other than ice rubble to aim for on the horizon every day whilst walking you had to stay focused throughout, keep your head down and really grind out the hard yards. The temperature would often drop to as low as -30 degrees Celsius which is pretty chilly when you are active and walking during the day but it’s another level

when you have to sleep under canvas in that. By our eleventh night up there I was more than ready for a proper bed and a blast of central heating!

One thing you don’t appreciate is how every normal and day-to-day task (cooking, eating, getting changed) takes about 20 times longer than it would usually due to the temperatures and the equipment. If you didn’t do things properly you risked your own health as well as those around you so the pressure was on all the time.

We trekked together as one big squad relying on each person for a different task – if someone didn’t pull their weight they were quickly found wanting. We really had to dig in and pull each other through at various points when we were up there. The level of teamwork shown was extraordinary and the relationships that were built out on the ice will last a lifetime.

Whilst at Merchiston I was always a hard worker. I did well academically but that was down to hard work more than anything else. I loved my rugby at School and played all the way from the C1s to the 1XV. I like to think of myself as a bit of an all-rounder at School – worked hard in the classroom and played hard on the rugby pitch. I always took opportunities that were on offer – things like Duke of Edinburgh, drama etc – if you didn’t do these things at school when else would you get a chance!? I guess in a way, it’s meant I’ve grabbed opportunities like these when they’ve come by too.

Characteristics such as hard work, teamwork, respect for others – amongst other things – really helped on the trek and for the preparation leading up to the challenge: Merchiston really is great for everything like that – I cannot speak highly enough of the School in that regard. I had to bond and work with a group of men I had never met before in order to achieve what we did. We had to graft, train and learn extremely quickly as we only had 21 days to complete the Challenge from leaving Heathrow to being back there.”

What’s next for Andrew?

“Possibly the same thing at the South Pole in a few of years’ time but will need to wait and see!”

You can watch a short film of the game at bit.ly/andrewwalker

Andrew’s fundraising is continuing and anybody reading this, who would like to help, please visit justgiving.com/Andrew-Walker87 or to learn more about Wooden Spoon visit www.woodenspoon.org.uk or email Andrew at andrewwalker@eversheds.com.

Propagation, Persistence and Partnerships



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Hamish K Martin (79-86) has begun again. Since selling Scotland's most prestigious wine distribution company in 2011, which he had set up with his father, he has since established a unique site at the foot of the Pentlands. Here, he describes the journey that brought him to this point and the plans they have.

Words by Jo Tennant from an interview with Hamish Martin. Photography by Jo Tennant.

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The real gift of Merchiston to me was the gift of the outdoors. As soon as prep was finished I would run off up the hills. We would head up to the Pentlands with bivvy bags, cycle all the way to Peebles, have bonfires up on the hills with hot chocolate, do dares, swim under bridges - I still love wild swimming and wild camping at all times of year. It was everything I loved. I enjoyed the freedom which made a huge difference to me. Ironically I'm right at the foot of the Pentlands again.

Of my close friends, I only have one or two from outside School. I'm sure each of my friends from Merchiston will remember me differently; I wasn't part of just one group. I was never in the academia class, I wasn't purely rugby; I also loved fives and athletics. Additionally, I hung out with what I call 'the A-Level boys'. My abiding friendships are undoubtedly from Merchiston, as it was with my dad's (Ronald K Martin (45-50)) friends. His great chums were all his School

chums - McConnachie (Graham, 46-50), Laing (Robin, 43-50) and Carslaw (John, 43-50). Like them we lived together and moved together as a whole year group, so you bond even more closely. I think if there had been girls it would've been a nightmare for me - I needed as little distraction as possible!

When I was about 40 I found out I have dyslexia. I had to work so hard academically at Merchiston but I was still in the bottom of the class. It was quite a relief to know I wasn't that thick after all. During my school days, I don't remember anyone mentioning dyslexia - I just learned to get on with it.

All I wanted to do with my life was to play rugby. It led to some awkward conversations with dad about university which I just saw as a waste of four years. I wasn't professional when I left School but I became professional when I grudgingly went to University of Strathclyde. After that, I also only joined the army - 29 ►



Commando, the best rugby regiment- to play rugby ... The army only wanted me to play rugby and it was a very open relationship about that! I never really thought about having to be a soldier and the universe had different ideas. My army career - and rugby career - came to an abrupt end when I tore my knee ligaments in a match and I was medically discharged.

My father was the Production Director of DCL (Distillers Company Limited) and I had a passion for wine. We decided to join forces and set up Inverarity Vaults. Working with your dad has its ups and downs. He was old school: no loan, try and buy a second hand van, doesn't matter what it looks like; whereas I wanted the van to look pristine - image is everything. We had a wonderful relationship; it was fun and I'm so glad we did it. I say fun - everything has its challenges, but I wouldn't have done it any other way, nor without him. He died in 2005.

Inverarity became quite big - like when you start building up a snowman... it's quite good fun and quite hard to get that start, then you start pushing it and you're pushing it up a hill and it's building and building and it's good fun but then you get to the top of the hill and it suddenly has its own momentum. It takes control and you're now not driving or directing it - it's too big.

Inverarity got that way for me. The wine industry had changed to a focus on volume and aggressive sales and it lost its appeal. At the same time, I went through a big personal change and a divorce. In summer 2011, I was very fortunate that TM Robertson, another wine and spirits distributor, wanted to buy Inverarity.

After I sold Inverarity, I did a two-year diploma in Herbology at the Botanics which gave me a brilliant foundation knowledge in the therapeutic nature of plants. I don't use any text books when gardening - it's just done intuitively. I've always been interested in plants. When I first moved back up to start Inverarity, I had a cottage in Wynedales and the first thing I did was dig a 2m² plot of earth and plant herbs in it. It is herbs I just adore. They offer so much.

Liberty, my wife, and I bought the seven and a half acre site at the foot of the Pentlands four years ago - it was a derelict plant nursery overrun with rosebay willowherb. We opened on 1 May 2014 and this has been our first full year. The whole idea was to open a little bit of green space - when you come here, your kids can run around, parents can relax in the glasshouse - it's for everybody. We were featured on the BBC's Beechgrove Garden which was great publicity. We really had no idea if

anybody would come or not but this summer has been good. Now we know we're not nuts - people are enjoying it!

The cafe is the number one driver of income at the moment. We are open every day of the year from 10am to 4pm except for two weeks between Christmas and New Year. Everything for the cafe is made fresh on site and with as much of our own produce as possible. The menu is not complicated - just a daily quiche, soup served with our salads which we try to make completely different - and all the cakes.

The other thing which has been incredible has been the eight Full Moon Dinners which is in collaboration with a different restaurant each month. We've worked with Timber Yard, Gardener's Cottage, Monachyle Mhor, Edinburgh Larder, Aizle, and Cafe St Honore. Each restaurant brings their whole team here for the night. It's five course and I match the wines with the food. Every time we've seen the moon. I never dreamt that the dinners would take off the way they've done: we had 50 people on the waiting list!

Weddings will grow to be a vital part of the business. They have to fit around our normal hours. As most people want to get married later in the afternoon this is fine; after 4pm the place is theirs.

We also run a variety of courses: beekeeping, wreath making, yoga etc. We've had music recitals in the glasshouse where the acoustics were fantastic. On a Friday, we deliver herbs and flowers to the Edinburgh restaurants. There are so many little strands - a bit like making a rope. In fact, there is a huge amount of work, but it's something I am passionate about.

To me a herb is medicine, so the fact that it has culinary or aromatic attributes is a bonus. Everything at the Secret Herb Garden is herbal. My real passion is what people might call weeds - which includes everything from chickweed to oak trees. I'm doing a gardening club talk tonight and I'll get them to tell me their worst plant, or any weed they don't like, and I'll give them a medicinal benefit from it. You just have to change the way you look at 'the problem'. We're so busy trying to control everything rather than letting nature help us.

It's all been organic here but actually we don't even spray so we're 'just use our hands' and complementary planting. I believe that if you have a deep respect for nature then you can find a really good balance. It allows you to connect with the green space, and yourself again. This is what we aim to do with the Secret Herb Garden.

We've been living onsite in static caravans which is a bit like living in a goldfish bowl but as the public are ▶



only here from 10am to 4pm it's not too invasive. We have four children, five dogs and a cat and we finally have a house now which has taken a year to build. It was not until the Council could see what we were achieving, and the potential for the business, that they conceded and approved permission to build. In fact, I was up three times last night, in the gales, checking the glasshouse - we lost two panes - and checking the poly tunnels. We have to be on site.

My kids have been brilliant. They've had to see somebody who has had to start completely from scratch again. I hope they know that it comes from working so hard. This business is seven days-a-week.

I don't miss the drinks industry at all. However, I have been experimenting with making my own natural wines - using only wild yeasts, no chemicals, no sugar, no sulphur, no fining agents in the process. I've used grapes grown in the glasshouse. We made quite a bit of wine last year which has just finished ageing. I've got some beautiful barrels from Bordeaux, now filled with wine and today we've got to rack off the lees. When I started this experiment, I thought that if I could make something drinkable, I'd be really pleased. But we've actually made something which I think is phenomenal - it's so clean.

I've been talking to a couple of wineries to build a vineyard here, under poly tunnels, as part of a longer term goal. We can grow grapes to ripen in the greenhouse so there is no reason why we couldn't have a little vineyard.

We've also been making our own beer - Sticky Willy and Nettle Pale Ale, Couch Grass and Ground Elder Beer, Roast Elderberry Stout. The brewer came here to do our own test brews and now we are brewing and bottling less than a mile along the road. I am currently investigating spirits and natural ciders - so again no chemicals, just using wild yeasts from the air and the apple skins but I'm keen to keep it as a hobby at the moment.

I never thought alcohol would come back into my life but clearly it proves that it's not left me. I believe the opportunities for natural products are enormous. So, I suppose, the drinks trade is not yet dead for me... and in a funny way, I'm coming full circle, back to the foot of the Pentlands too!

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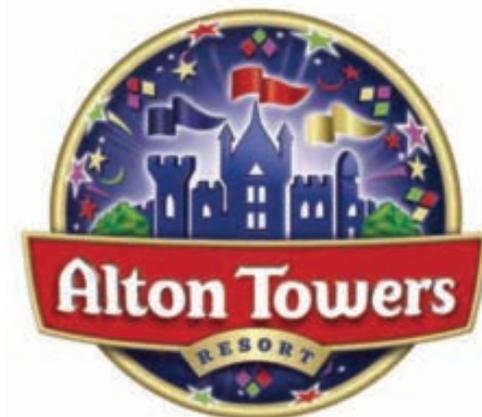


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Services to Bordeaux

On leaving St Edmund Hall, Oxford, Douglas C Morton's (58-63, Captain of School) working life twisted through the West African drinks industry and turned into working with wine royalty in a truly unique career path. Last year's Magazine saw us publish an inaccurate transcription of a conversation with Douglas, for which we apologise. Here is his full story.

Words by Douglas Morton

After three years at Oxford I was still unsure of what I wanted to do with my life, but managed to avoid making any decisions by having the good fortune to be awarded a Rotary Foundation Fellowship which enabled me to spend a year at the University of Southern California's Graduate School of Business Administration in Los Angeles.

In addition to studying, I also travelled the length and breadth of California and Mexico fulfilling my role of representing Scotland. My kilt and the Highland dancing, learnt at Merchiston, proved to be great assets.

On my return to Scotland my career path was still not clear to me but I decided that I needed to add to the theories I had studied in California through practical experience in business, and managed to get a place on the Unilever Companies' Management Development Scheme, less lucky to be assigned to Van den Berghs, their margarine subsidiary. I spent three years apprenticed to various departments, including a spell as sales manager in Northern Ireland at the start of the 'troubles,' and the marketing and new product development divisions, until one morning, during a tasting session for a new product, I made my first career decision- that my future did not lie in margarine - and spontaneously resigned. I still remember the dismay of my parents and the surprise of my flatmates when

I told them that evening.

Fortunately one of them was working for Guinness Overseas Ltd at the time and, as luck would have it, the company was looking for a marketing manager for West Africa. While I had never really drunk Guinness, and certainly had no idea of the popularity of it in Africa, I quickly updated my CV and he took it into the personnel director the next morning. Three weeks later I had myself a new job! And so, purely by chance, I started my career in the drinks business.

For the next two years I had responsibility for marketing Guinness and Harp lager in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Gambia, and additionally succeeded in persuading the company that Harp lager could steal a march on its competitors and improve its profitability if it could be dispensed in draught throughout Africa. There were obvious technical problems and therefore I was dispatched to test the practicality of this on St Helena island, in the middle of the South Atlantic, on the basis that if it failed, no-one would know about it! During this time I was also resident for six months in Liberia (well before the civil war) where I achieved a long held ambition of becoming an international rugby player by representing Liberia v Sierra Leone. However, this was not necessarily a great endorsement for Merchiston rugby!

When Guinness next proposed a two



year posting to Cameroun it was another crossroads for me. When I informed them, for personal reasons, I could not accept the position, I was told it was that or nothing as, and I quote, "if we let people pick and choose where they work we will never fill posts on the west coast of Africa". How employment laws have changed!

So once again, I found myself out of a job.

Over the following weeks I applied for all sorts of positions until one day I saw a small advertisement in The Telegraph for a 'wines and spirits marketing manager' Now, I had trained myself to drink Guinness, but the world of wines and spirits sounded much more sophisticated, and my application was successful. A whole new world opened up to me. I spent the following 12 years working with Hedges and Butler, the Bass group's wine and spirit subsidiary, which at that time was the UK agent for a portfolio of major international brands such as Bacardi, Remy Martin, Dewars whisky, Krug, Mateus Rose and Mouton Cadet. What a change from selling Guinness in Africa!

While I was involved in marketing all of these products it was Mouton Cadet that became my passion, and I held on to this wine brand as if my life depended on it.....and how true that was.

In my early days working on the brand I met and was inspired by the legendary Baron Philippe de Rothschild, owner of Chateau Mouton Rothschild, one of the great wine men of the 20th century. His charisma, sophistication, style and way of life fascinated me. Moreover, he was surrounded by dynamic and creative people.

So I couldn't believe my luck when, in 1986, I was asked to set up the UK office for the company. This was the biggest break in my commercial life. For 15 years I was responsible for marketing the ever-expanding portfolio sold under the Baron Philippe de Rothschild label. In this I was fortunate to work with the same sales management team that I had begun my Hedges and Butler career with nine years previously.

In addition to overseeing sales of his iconic chateaux and branded wines in Bordeaux, the company also introduced ranges from the Languedoc and Chile, always insisting that we spend time with our agents visiting the vineyards where they were produced. For those not able to do this, I held tastings and lunches in my London office. A far cry from tasting margarine in the Van den Bergh's kitchen, or Guinness in the villages of Liberia!

Then, in 2001, the company requested I move to the Napa Valley (how different to the request I had turned down 27 years earlier to move to Cameroun) where, in the '70s, Baron Philippe had formed a joint venture with Robert Mondavi, the doyenne of Californian wines, to produce Opus One, often described as the first 1st

Growth of the New World. This was another occasion of being in the right place at the right time (it also helped that I was the only native English speaker in the company). I spent almost three years in this wonderful region promoting this ultra premium wine.

My association with Rothschild allowed me to dine with royalty, attend glittering banquets, be present at private concerts (by Pablo Casals and Placido Domingo), meet the famous artists who designed the Mouton labels as well as many film stars, and even be photographed on the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival (not surprisingly no photos ever appeared in the press), and of course, taste some fabulous wines.

As part of the Rothschild international team, among other exciting activities, I skied annually in France, raced skidoos over frozen lakes in Lapland, tried unsuccessfully to ride a horse in Chile, and camped in the Moroccan desert.

When I retired in 2005 I was pleased to be offered the position of consultant to the Bordeaux Wine Council, a position I accepted for one year only, and from which I have just resigned ten years later, to become Master of the Worshipful Company of Distillers.

I am frequently asked how I ended up having such an enjoyable and rewarding career as it doesn't fit the modern pattern of career planning from an early stage. My answer is always the same. It has been a mixture of luck, being in the right place at the right time, but most of all not being frightened to walk through the door to see what was on the other side.

Editor's footnote: In 2012 Douglas was appointed Chevalier de Merite Agricole by the French government 'for services to French wine'.

Douglas Morton (left) being presented with the Chevalier de Mérite Agricole by His Excellency M. Bernard Emié, French Ambassador to the United Kingdom.



Douglas Morton (right) with A (Sandy) E Corstorphine (59-64) on the evening of his installation as Master of the Worshipful Company of Distillers



Counting the Pennies

Eric C Hodge (59-64) tells us about how his collection of late 18th to early 19th century merchant countermarked dollars came into being.

Words and photographs provided by Eric Hodge

My working life was as a Chartered Accountant.

My interest in numismatics started in my early 40s with some coins handed on by my grandfather. I researched them and became hooked. I had an interest in History at school and though there was a coin club I never joined it. If any History teacher wants a hands-on example you cannot go far wrong with a coin, be it Greek, Roman, Medieval or more modern. I started a collection of silver crowns, first issued in 1551. Eventually I decided to specialise even more and chose the period of George III (1760-1820) because there were so few crowns issued, though the reign lasted 60 years, and I wanted to know why. This was a reign of foreign wars (mainly Napoleonic), loss of America, extensive world-wide discoveries of new markets, new inventions and, most important for me, the Industrial Revolution.

By an order issued in 1601, the Royal Mint could purchase silver only up to 5s 2d an ounce, generally below the current market price in the mid to late 18th century. It was not that there was a shortage of silver - far from it. There were plenty of Spanish American silver dollar sized coins available as bullion. The Government of the day could have changed the rules, but for a variety of reasons they did not, so the Mint ceased to buy silver and between about 1750 and 1816 very few silver coins were minted. Copper coins, too, were in short supply as Mint workers were paid based on the value of coins minted, so gold coin issue was a better option. With the arrival of the factory system of manufacture this dearth of small change created a major problem for the early entrepreneurs. The workers had to be paid. Initially this could be in kind, but this created extra burdens on the employers. It was much better to pay in cash and let the workers fend for themselves. Slowly the idea of works' shops was implemented, first to make extra money from the workers, but latterly as a genuine attempt by philanthropic leaders of industry to improve the lot of

the lower classes.

The earliest and longest-lived attempt to provide a silver medium of exchange during those difficult years was the stamping of private tradesmen's countermarks on Spanish dollars and their fractions (Fig. 1). French coins were used for a few issues.

Production of one's own currency had its benefits: one could either tie the worker to one's own shop, or conversely give additional benefits to the employee who used the work's facilities. The countermarked dollars did both. They had their own intrinsic value in the silver, and also a higher value marked on them for use at the works, or as commonly became standard, in the surrounding community that survived from, and supported, local business. To avoid the withdrawal and melting of countermarked tokens, their stamped valuations obviously had to be higher than their bullion value, but not so high as to invite extensive counterfeiting with false punches.

Problems for the issuers arose when the market price fluctuated by more than a few pence. A drop would bring on a flood of demands for redemption of the tokens at their countermarked value. A significant rise would mean the countermarked tokens could be sold, more profitably, back into the bullion market. In either case, the issuer would not want to reissue redeemed tokens at their original countermarked valuation. One solution was melting, another was to repunch a revised value on the coin (Fig. 2) and a further option was to cancel the coin countermarked value and issuer's name, with either a grille pattern or by individual punch marks.

The most prolific issues came from Scotland. Of the approximately 70 known business issuers of countermarked dollars, over 85% were in Scotland, one quarter being in the cotton trade. Of the remaining, known, Scottish countermarked dollars, over 50% are from the cotton trade. Why was this?

There is no definitive answer to this question because there are so few records about countermarked dollars and also about the businesses that issued them. However, the answer seems to lie in a mix of factors: distance from London, so even fewer silver coins from an already short supply; a desire to retain labour attracted from the Highlands or agriculture in general, to factory conditions; a ready supply of dollars, perhaps from the tobacco and other trades to America and the Caribbean which developed from Glasgow; some of the larger issuing businesses being controlled by the same family, the Finlays; a realisation of how effective these issues were, coupled with the difficulty of the Government in London exercising its legislative powers in Scotland; the slower use of steam power driving the cotton factories into the city. In England, it was the use of steam power, over water power, that gave rise to the enormous growth of the cotton trade in Manchester which, using its own banking system and paper money, precluded the necessity of countermarked dollars. No issuers are known for Manchester.

The remaining issuers were mainly grocers and other merchant traders, and some banking concerns. The merchant traders would, of course, benefit greatly from their ability to give change for gold, where this was offered, and so ensure continuing future trade.

Finally, the New Coinage of crowns to sixpences, initiated in 1816-1818, saw the beginning of the end of the desperate need for private silver issues in Great Britain. The latest dated silver host coin showing a valid merchant countermark is 1827.

So not only do I have a numismatic interest, but also an interest in Social History covering wars and industry and an interest in the Spanish Empire in South America covering the difficulties in mining and minting silver coins a long way from the central control in Madrid. The scope is endless and keeps me out of mischief!

The shortage of small denomination coinage in Great Britain was also experienced in the Empire. One area to suffer was the islands of the Caribbean under British control. As the source of Spanish American eight reales coins was the Spanish Empire in South America, these coins were readily available, so the island cut the coins up in different ways to differentiate between the islands. Hence the pirate term 'pieces of eight'. The American term 'two bits' for a quarter also comes from an eight-reales cut into eight bits.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

About Time



Sailing single handedly down the west coast of Scotland, Robert AW Wilson (61-64) joined the flotilla of spectators at the Fife Regatta, one of the top classic sailing events in Britain. Here, he recounts his 555 nautical mile journey.

Words and photographs provided by Robert Wilson.



In 2010, 30 years since I had last sailed, I bought Khamsin, a 1982 Javelin 30 9m sloop. In June 2013 I fulfilled a long-standing ambition to spectate at the Fife Regatta. William Fife III built beautiful yachts at Fairlie during the late 1800s and early 1900s. A number, in superb condition, are still sailing the seas.

Seven days of single-handed sailing took me 240 nm down the Minch and Inner Sound, through the narrows of Kyle Rhea against the running tide, serenely on round Ardnamurchan Point, through the Sound of Mull and Cuan Sound – at slack tide past Cleit Rock – down the Sound of Jura past the infamous Corryvreckan whirlpool, through the Crinan Canal and Loch Fyne on a wet, midge-nibbling day to Tarbert and finally round the

Kyles of Bute and across the Firth of Clyde to Largs.

With a north wind, I set my spinnaker on the first two days but generally the wind was either too strong or from the wrong direction for flying and gybing it single-handedly. Spinnakers can be evil!

Crossing from the Sound of Mull into the Firth of Lorne, a huge ore-carrier approaching from my port-side and the Cal-Mac ferry from starboard required a judicious heave-to. Most of the time the wind was Force 3 to 5, but down the East Kyle I ran with wind astern at maximum speed (6+ knots), “under bare poles”.

I arrived at Great Cumbrae Island exhilarated and somewhat exhausted. Longer days sailing and good weather meant I hadn't needed the three “stormbound-

in-port” days in reserve.

Next morning, having five days in hand, I sailed off past Arran down to Sanda Island at the tip of the Mull of Kintyre. The 20-mile beat across, in confused seas, was very hard work indeed and at one point I seriously considered turning back. However, I reckoned Khamsin was coping well so I should grit my teeth and get on with it. I'm so glad I did – it was a challenge well met.

From Sanda I turned northwards and reached back up to Campbeltown, to overnight in the company of some very hospitable fellow sailors! The next night was spent in Lochranza after a very slow run up the Kilbrannan Sound and the next day in light winds I wafted back to Great Cumbrae Island. As I arrived off the watersports

centre, the wind suddenly picked up. Common sense demanded I should moor against their pontoon rather than anchor-off. A wise decision – the Centre is a very convenient and hospitable facility. It is also directly opposite Largs where all the Fife yachts were assembling.

For four days I followed the magnificent fleet, sometimes in light winds, on others in decidedly testing conditions. One night I had Saskia moored alongside me. She competed successfully in the 1936 Olympics when, reputedly, Adolf Hitler came aboard to meet her crew. Her stiletto bow and graceful lines are truly memorable.

The most thrilling day for me was on the non-race day, up The East Kyle to Tighnabruaich. Imagine “mixing it” with six Fife's within touching space, at speed, beating

through the Burnt Island Narrows!

I decided nothing could be better, so next morning, with a worsening forecast I left the Fifes and headed homewards. A truly horrible beat to Ardlamont Point and a hairy, cold and lonely broad-reach up Loch Fyne to Ardrishaig saw me safely into The Crinan Canal.

On Day 18 I transited the Canal, then bounced through the Dorus Mor and motored against the tide up the Sound of Luing, in glorious sunshine and light winds. It wasn't to last.

I overnighted in Seil's Puilladobhain anchorage then left for Tobermory next morning in a F7 southwesterly. The Sound of Mull was just plain horrible with, perversely, wind and sea on the nose to Eileanan Glasa. ▶



On reaching Tobermory I decided to “see how bad it could be outside”. I shortened the mainsail to three reefs and rolled in the jib to a handkerchief. Under sail and engine I slammed into the gale towards Ardnamurchan Point – fully intending to turn back, soon. After two hours I could see the lighthouse and although the seas were very big with breaking crests I kept going one further mile. And then I was passing the dreaded Point; I celebrated with a mouthful of flat soda water!

For 40 miles more, with the seas on my port quarter I surfed and yawed onwards under black skies, eventually making the haven of Skye’s Isleornsay, at 10 o’clock. On anchoring, I’d been at the helm continuously for over 12 arduous hours and 70 miles.

By contrast, on my final day to Loch Ewe the wind blew only Force 5, with blue skies. I reached all the way, encountering unpleasant wind-against-tide off Loch Torridon and Gairloch, but was rewarded by a pod of dolphins leading me on to Rubha Reidh lighthouse. A final beat to my mooring beside Isle Ewe brought me home after another 10 hours and 60 nautical miles.

My total distance covered was 555 nautical miles in 17 days at sea. I had experienced all manner of weather and sea, enjoyed numerous enchanting anchorages and friendly ports; and sailed alongside some of the most beautiful yachts ever made.

My full Log is available by email, for anyone interested in more detail contact the club.



In 2015, Robert Wilson single-handedly circumnavigated the British Isles. He tells us briefly of this expedition.

I started on 16 April and returned on 1 July 2015. I completed my circumnavigation in 1837 nautical miles. 41 days at sea, 76 in total. I was “in motion” for 378 hours; of which 104 were pure sailing, 237 were motor-sailing and 37 were motor only. I anchored for nine nights, picked-up six moorings, visited 30 different ports/marinas and turned left round all four corners of the UK!

My longest day’s run was 84 miles; also the longest open-water passage (Arklow, Northern Ireland to

Dale, Pembrokeshire). The longest time in motion was 19 hours from Talmine in Kyle of Tongue, rounding Cape Wrath in the dusk/night, and down The Minch to Loch Ewe in glorious sunshine.

The only really bad bit was leaving Padstow into big NW seas and F6/7 wind. But that day also saw me rounding Land’s End, again with a big swell, but in glorious sunshine. Rounding The Pentland Firth and Cape Wrath both turned out to be very calm, to my greatest relief!

Classrooms, Ceilidhs and Community-Chilean style

Below - A whole school display of traditional Chilean dances that the students performed as part of the independence celebrations.



This year, Andrew J Dobie (10-15) was the recipient of the Upper Sixth Travelling Scholarship. Just two months into his teaching role on the coast in Chile, he writes about his experiences so far.

Words and photos by Andrew Dobie.



Above - Andrew (far left) with host family, his Project Trust partner, Kyle, and a number of their friends.

Right - Andrew teaching a kindergarten class in Chile.



I was the grateful recipient of the Upper Sixth Travelling Scholarship in June 2015. I am now just over two months into my 12-month placement in Chile with the charity Project Trust. With so much of the year ahead of me, I write about my experiences so far.

I was inspired by the opportunity that this year presented, to make a real difference to English learning in a school by working there for an extended period. Furthermore, it seemed really worthwhile to share my abilities as a native English speaker in a place where such learning opportunities are valued. I also relished the chance to explore and experience such a diverse and interesting country thoroughly, as well as to immerse myself completely in the culture and develop a level of fluency in Spanish.

I first heard about the Upper Sixth Travelling Scholarship when I spoke with the Headmaster about my gap year plans. At this time I had almost achieved my large fundraising target set by Project Trust and decided to apply then in order to enable me to focus entirely on

A-Level revision. I saw the Scholarship as a chance to forge a link with Merchiston, both in Chile and, when I return, to share my experiences and hopefully inspire current pupils to consider similar opportunities when they leave School.

Project Trust has a policy of selecting partnerships before you travel. I met my partner for the first time on the training course, less than two months before departure. I am really enjoying the unique opportunity of living and working with someone new for a year and believe that over the course of the year we will form a lifelong friendship.

I am volunteering as an English teacher and assistant in a local school in Valparaíso, a beautiful port city on Chile's coast, known for its steep funiculars and colourful, cliff-top colonial homes. Having branched out from just working with primary aged children, I now work with and support students of all ages and abilities, which is great.

In addition, my project partner and I now run after-

school co-curricular activities: an English class for teachers, and a ceilidh class in preparation for the school's first St Andrew's Day ceilidh - a fun and interactive way of teaching some of the content from our combined English language and Scottish culture class. A local baker recently asked us about the possibility of giving English classes in the bakery and we are looking into setting this up as a community-based project outwith the school.

With so much of my year still to come, many happy - and some inevitably difficult times - lie ahead. An important part of my year is integrating into the host

streets and bundled into the back of a van to rush to high ground. Such an experience will remain with me forever. Experiencing such a major earthquake and witnessing the destruction it brought, reinforced the importance of community, especially in times of hardship. I now value this even more.

September's Independence celebrations, a vivid display of culture and national pride, were a unique opportunity and enjoyable experience. Whether it was the whole school display of traditional dances, dancing 'La Cueca' - the national dance, or attending the traditional 'fondas', it was fascinating to learn how

family; I enjoy the opportunities and benefits that this offers, such as attending family celebrations. Having developed a relatively proficient level of Spanish, I am really enjoying being able to interact with the family and locals, as well as learn about their country and experience its rich culture.

Another opportunity came when I was invited by another English teacher, who knew the area well, to spend a long weekend travelling in the north. Taking such opportunities is great and they are really broadening my horizons and experiences out here.

So far there have not been many hard times. However, it was quite a challenge at first, when we were finding our feet in the school, to establish a position that allowed us to contribute in the way I had aspired to - as we do now.

In September, Chile was hit by a massive earthquake and, in addition to the severe shaking, Valparaíso was hit by a tsunami evacuation warning. Although in the end it never arrived, I was caught up in the panic in the

important this festival is in Chilean society and the importance of preserving national culture and identity. I have also learned about the value of embracing and adapting to changing circumstances, as well as being proactive and open minded to new opportunities.

I am really looking forward to having the traveller's experience over the summer months and will no doubt have many stories to tell and memories to treasure from my planned trips to Northern and Southern Chile, and also to Peru and Bolivia. This year is a unique and diverse learning opportunity and all of the lessons I will learn over the course of the year, alongside having a year's "work experience" will stand me in good stead for my university years and beyond.

After I leave Chile in September 2016, I have a place to study Law and Spanish Law at Aberdeen University. I would like to either practice law in Scotland or, perhaps, to use a law degree and fluency in Spanish as a platform for an interesting career path in a Spanish-speaking country.



Gap Year Gringo

Aled DW Evans (10-15) received the Bill Wilson Memorial Prize and as a result finds himself giving German lessons to Spanish speakers in Central America. Here he narrates the daily thrills and challenges of a year of learning life lessons quickly!

Words and photographs provided by Aled Evans.

How did you come to hear of the two scholarships and what motivated you to go for them?

For one, I had a vague idea that there were scholarships available, as mention had been made by the Headmaster in assemblies. However, it was Mr Hunter personally who advised me to write to Project Trust.

Of course, the fact that I needed to raise a large sum of money to finance my year in Honduras undeniably played a part, but in the end I applied knowing that my project here matched the requirements for the scholarships and that the worst that could happen was for my application to be turned down.

What was the inspiration behind your travel plan or proposal?

I knew that I wanted to spend a year outside formal education. I did not want to make the journey of school, university and work without a stop in between. This was the reason I chose to take a year out.

Thus, the idea of volunteering grew. I wanted to return something to the community by sharing skills I have been so fortunate to learn throughout my time at Merchiston. Through Andrew Dobie I heard of Project Trust, a charity sending school leavers abroad to

volunteer in educational positions for a year. I knew that volunteering is not only a worthwhile experience for the volunteer, but also makes a difference in the lives of individuals and other communities.

Furthermore, I was tempted by another culture, language and way of life. The urge to live outside of my culture has always been part of my life; since growing up in a 'foreign' country, Germany, I have a keen interest in observing, sharing and taking part in foreign customs and traditions. Throughout the world people have vastly varied experiences and ways of celebrating. I wanted to gain more insight into some of these. An immediate example from Honduras is that a typical Christmas Eve here involves first a meal of chicken and plantain. Then children explode bangers for the next few hours.

What attracted me to Honduras in particular was my interest in its politics; I wanted to know exactly how strong the US American influence was on Central America and why problems of corruption and political instability persist. In part, as one might expect, the answer has to do with lower levels of literacy and general education.

Of course the sound of Central American Spanish also attracted me!

Did it turn out to be how you imagined it? If not, how did it differ?

Yes and no. As expected, I was challenged by the language and it has taken me a good two months since arriving to be able to chat casually about daily routine, although I still have to work hard to fill the sometimes vast gaps!

The school I work in is much better than what I had expected and is generally the case in Honduras. Our (I work with another volunteer from Project Trust) school is very organised and very keen on using all skills available in staff - I am even giving German lessons!

Also, Central American life certainly is what I am experiencing at the moment: playing football, travelling on the back of pick-up trucks and eating tortillas and beans in some form at least once a day.

What I did not expect - but maybe should have thought more about - was the looks I would receive from people, since I am, after all, a foreigner. From feeling confident with who I was, I was suddenly very conscious of my pale skin. Central Americans mostly presume that if someone is white he is a US American. So, if you are not quick to correct it, they will refer to you as gringo. It also means that conductors on any form of transport will demand sky high prices. If your Spanish is

not sufficient, you cannot combat it and are left feeling a little unsettled and helpless.

What were the happiest times on the expedition? And the hardest times?

Since I do not have a formal work permit, I have to leave Honduras every three months. It was great to travel to Belize for a few days and see more of this wonderful part of the world.

Trekking in the jungle and relaxing at a guaranteed daily temperature of 34 degrees Celsius on a tropical beach certainly is a perk, although that is seldom a treat here.

I also get an enormous amount of satisfaction out of teaching, when it does go well and I can be pleased with my students. Conversely, the hardest times I have are when my students won't listen, nor sit down, nor even pretend to care for the class we are having. My respect for the teaching profession has grown no end in these last two months!

Do you have any stories from the trip?

My Project Trust partner and I started a contest to see who could kill more cockroaches. I'm winning 7:5 at the moment. ▶

We also once went off to a national park, Pico Bonito, in order to reach a 50ft waterfall. Having been told where to get off for the bus we knew we had to cross some pineapple fields. But after an hour of walking in the burning morning sun through the fields – there is no shade, anywhere – we could not find an entrance, just a barbed wire fence. When we finally called a taxi, which cost a grand sum, believe me, we realised we were 17 kilometres away from the actual entrance. At least the cool river water was a refreshing relief when we arrived in the end.

Iguanas here are a very common reptile. But whereas I admire these protected species, the Hondurans have rather different plans; for them there is nothing better than iguana cooked in coconut oil. Asked whether that wasn't thoroughly illegal, I received the response that it was not illegal, insofar as the police did not see you eating the iguana.

My partner had to push-start the minibus in which we left from the airport to head into San Pedro Sula, which was a lesson for what was to come: nothing works well

in Honduras, whether it be taps, toilets, bus networks, air conditioning or electricity.

What lessons did you learn from the expedition and how will you carry them into your life?

Confidence is what I am learning. Teaching well, learning another language and a thoroughly different daily routine all teach you to have more belief in yourself.

I am responsible for myself and my own actions, more than I ever could have been at boarding school. I am learning the hard way that you can't overspend – and that this also happens very easily. Security is also a big risk; Honduras has the world's highest murder rate, so being watchful (and not expecting your parents to be there for you at all times) is definitely what I will take away from my year in Honduras.

What are your work/life plans now?

I have just sent off my UCAS application to study Spanish literature and linguistics in the UK.



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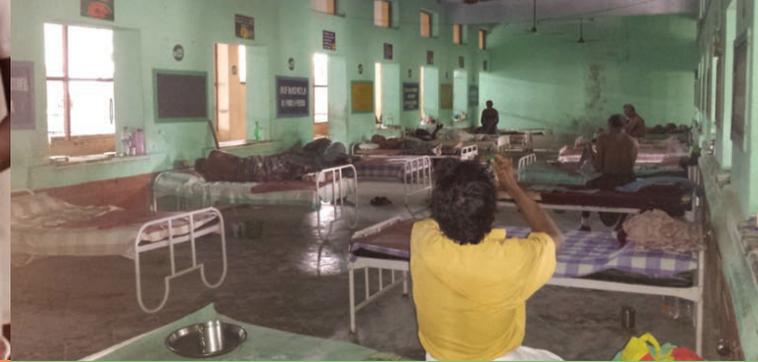
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Vital Signs in India

Harvey BF Kane (07-14) was the recipient of the Upper Sixth Travelling Scholarship last year. Here, he reflects on bedside manners and the vital signs of his trip where he worked in a hospital at the southernmost tip of India.

Words by Jo Tennant from an interview with Harvey Kane. Photographs by Harvey Kane.

About four weeks after I had received no offers to study medicine I had decided I would take a gap year and reapply after I had my A-level results to hand. It was in May 2014 in an email from the Headmaster when I first became aware of the Upper Sixth Travelling Scholarship.

By this point I was narrowing down my options to decide what I wanted to do with my year, which would help me build on what I and the School saw as an already strong platform to have another shot at the apple. I spent some time talking with Nick Blair, my Housemaster (Chispa Prini-Garcia) and Alex Anderson. Eventually I concluded that I wanted to travel to St Luke's Leprosarium, Tamil Nadu, in the south-west of India, with whom the School have been linked to for a number of years.

This Scholarship opportunity (and its subsequent awarding) were to allow me to be as involved as possible in the outreach, education and general work that the hospital engages in within the immediate community and further afield. Unfortunately, I had to push my trip back from the period September-November 2014 to

June-July 2015 due to an academic choice.

During my short time out with St Luke's I became fully involved in the day-to-day running of the out-patient clinic of the hospital, as well as assisting on the daily ward and drugs rounds and began building on my knowledge of how the medical profession operates.

The hospital was about as different to an NHS hospital as you can get; all the wards were open air (really just a roofed structure) and there was very little in the way of sterility when it came to changing dressings on the wounds of patients.

The temperature in that part of the world was easily the most challenging of my experiences, with 40 degrees Celsius the norm during both day and night - much more than what I'm used to from Bonnie Scotland!

The difference in culture surrounding a trip to hospital is also something that stood out to me. I feel that as members of the British public we can all too easily forget the privilege we have whereby we can be seen by a doctor for all manner of issues, cost free, even for something as simple as a sniffle. However, in India, the only time you go to a doctor is if you have a serious

complaint, this hit home every time I stepped into the hospital. One such example of this was watching as a gentleman - probably no older than his 30s- strode into the hospital missing the skin on the top of his right foot from his ankle to the base of his toes, so all the bone, muscle and ligaments were very visible at a passing glance. Had this been the UK, there would almost certainly be an ambulance and several hysterical bystanders involved, yet what I saw was treated nothing other than an everyday occurrence.

Most of what I was responsible for was taking a patient's history, vital signs (heart rate, pulse, blood pressure, temperature, etc.) and emergency contact details before conducting an initial assessment and diagnosis while being overseen by a nurse to ensure I had not missed anything vital. The patient would then either be prescribed pharmaceuticals and sent home, asked to return another day to see the doctor, or admitted to the hospital (although the latter option was a rare occurrence and would only happen if the patient was in a severe state of decline in his health).

Attached to the hospital was a children's home

housing approximately 20 young girls and four boys. These children were, more often than not, the children of bed-bound hospital patients at St Luke's, who had no other place to live but were being looked after by the nurses and two permanent house staff to ensure their well-being. Every weekday morning, all the children would leave the house on the hospital grounds at 8am to make the two kilometre walk to school for the day before returning at around 6pm to do chores and homework before dinner. One of the great opportunities I had during my time with the hospital, was to spend a couple of evenings a week playing with the children (to their delight and to mine!) and it quickly became my favourite pastime.

At present I am in my second year of study for a BSc in Medical Physiology at the University of Leicester with the aim of taking up a place in medicine at the end of my degree. I fully intend to return to St Luke's in the near future to continue supporting all the fantastic work they do. I am positive that they would also love to have more pupils (potential medics or anyone who is otherwise interested) to help out around the hospital.

Dark Matter does matter

Using an innovative technique Chris JS Young (99-05) is working on the detection of dark matter at CERN.

Words by Jo Tennant from several published interviews with Chris Young.

After a DPhil at Oxford, Chris now works at the ATLAS particle physics experiment at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) in CERN. He is involved in searches for new particles never before observed which could help explain the existence of dark matter.

Since the 2012 run that proved the existence of the Higgs boson, the LHC was rebooted in April this year. This time it has 13 TeV collision energy as opposed to 8 TeV of the earlier run and it is hoped the collisions will produce heavier, more exciting particles than ever observed before.

The detector works like a giant camera which takes photos of collision events. This enables reconstruction of the event from which it is possible to tell when particles have been produced by the collision. This allows the physicists to search for interesting collisions which could indicate the presence of physics processes never before

observed.

"I work on the ATLAS experiment and have been a member of the CERN group for nearly three years, having previously been at Oxford for my DPhil. I work on searches for Supersymmetry and also work on improving the reconstruction of hadronic jets."

The Standard Model of the universe - our best theory for physics at small scales - is widely acknowledged to be incomplete. With this latest experiment the team aims to test the principle of Supersymmetry. Supersymmetry predicts that for every particle that we know about, there is another, heavier one that we have not seen. Additionally, one of these particles could help to explain the dark matter observed in the universe by astronomers.

If Chris finds what he is looking for, his discovery could change the way in which we think about the universe.

The Big Cycle Home

How did it all start? 2 Medical Regiment were directed to move from Hohne in Germany to North Luffenham in Rutland County over the summer of 2015. This was part of the Army's rebasing plan.

But what then happened was this: a team of 16 cyclists, including regular and reserve personnel from across the Regiment, decided to cycle the 545 miles to our new home and raise funds for The British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association (BLESMA). Our aims were to introduce soldiers to road cycling and provide a suitable event to mark the Regiment's departure from Germany after 7 years

"Let's do something for charity, like cycle back to UK?" - and so it began! Major Stuart J Irvine (83-89) writes about 2 Medical Regiment's relocation from southern Germany and their decision to come home on two wheels.

Words and photograph by Stuart Irvine.

and our arrival in the county of Rutland.

The event relied on the key qualities and core values inherent in modern soldiers - fitness, courage, and discipline. It was to be a very challenging undertaking for all standards of cyclist.

Training for most cyclists, many of whom were inexperienced and even had to borrow their bikes, began in the cold German winter and we quickly became familiar with the Hohne to Fallingbostal Panzerringstrasse, a handily located 44 mile loop.

What did we achieve?

- In 5½ days between 29 June and 4 July we cycled from Hohne via Lubbecke, Dulmen, Arnhem, Rotterdam, Hull (visiting our Reserve Squadron), and Leicester (visiting our other Reserve Squadron) on the way to 2 Medical Regiment's new home in Rutland;
- we covered a total of 545 miles with a longest day of 122 miles;
- spent over 38 hours in the saddle;
- burnt over 18,000 calories a day in temperatures up to 40 degrees Celsius;
- consumed up to 14 litres of fluid a day each;
- the levels of support and encouragement were tremendous throughout, and we are especially grateful to our support team who kept the fluid and food coming at regular intervals.

The Team finally managed to raise £10,661.59 for BLESMA - well in excess of our initial £5000 target - and we are indebted to the generosity of all those who contributed.

Would I do it again? Of course! It was a blast!



Class Notes

News, views and reflections from Merchistonians across the world and across the decades.



David P Fullerton (43-47)

"On VE Day 1945, the students were immediately given a half day off. Rules at the time were clear in that, whilst out cycling, the boys were not to cross the tram lines. I chose to cycle into Edinburgh to go to the pictures but on the way back was spotted by a master and was subsequently asked to report to the Headmaster's study. Headmaster at the time was Mr Evans. So I duly presented myself at the Headmaster's study the next day. Mr Evans began 'Now Fullerton, you know the rules about going into town...' the punishment for which was six lashes of the cane. However, Mr Evans asked that perhaps, on this special occasion, I might like to remember something different instead and was allowed to leave the study without said punishment!"

Michael D Kidd (45-49)

"What I remember most clearly in my first few weeks [at Merchiston] was the newness of everything. After all, the new School was only 12 years old having been officially opened in 1933. Another thing that comes to mind was

the winter. Our clothes only consisted of blue shorts, socks, a white shirt and blazer... When it snowed we just put on a blue sleeveless pullover. Today, as I write, our Cape Town winter is cold - but nothing compared to Edinburgh!"

Jimmy W Young (52-56)

"I moved to Australia in 1966 and farmed at Congeith from 1970 to 2007. I am now semi-retired and am living in Naracoorte, a small country town in South Australia. I had five great friends during my time at Merchiston - WP (Bill) Bruce (52-56), James A McMyn (52-57), John T Mackie (52-56), and two who have sadly died, Donnie Fraser (52-56) and Alistair MacKelvie (52-57)."

John E Robertson (49-54) remembers the late William S Moore (49-55)

Bill was one of the key scientists who developed magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and in particular pioneered its development for brain scanning. It now forms the primary tool for the medical profession to

internally image the head and brain. Bill was awarded Chair of Electronics at Harvard Medical School. He died at the age of 47, during a game of squash, 'trying too hard'.

Robert B McColl (55-59) and Chris H Reid (55-59)

"I was reading the Scotsman recently and I was astounded to read that the School's tennis team were rated #2 in Britain and #1 in Scotland. Chris and I set up the tennis section in early 1959 when I won the School knock out competition. That year we had two matches against Watson's and Edinburgh Academy. We got no support or coaching from any masters and Mr Preston thought that we had no chance. I only got the opportunity to play on a Wednesday afternoon when you could choose your sporting activity and would go to Colinton to play. I played in the Scottish Junior Championship and, in the doubles, played with CW Fraser Low (56-60) against Low and Mathieson, both of whom went on to Junior Wimbledon. Fred Perry said that Ronnie Low looked like the best junior he had seen in a long time. From small acorns great trees grow. Fantastic. Makes me think my school days were worth it."

Peter JAA Muir (60-63)

Peter has been working in Nigeria for the past six years and is currently President of the Nigeria Britain Association. Peter presented the end of school prizes at the British International School (BIS) in Lagos. Last year three of the School's students were "Top in the World". As BIS counts Merchiston as one of its destination schools, how appropriate that a Merchistonian should be presenting prizes to their boys!

Robin G Copland (67-72) and John M Forster (63-67)

Robin has served his time as President of the Edinburgh Curling Club and recently won the Scottish Senior Mixed Curling Championship with his wife Lois, who is John's youngest sister. John now lives in Campbeltown, Argyll, where he has set up a rugby club.

Ian B Sloan (68-73)

Ian has been carving out a niche for his Chartered Surveying firm, Bankier Sloan, in the music festival world - they are the approved adviser on business rates on music festivals for two of the biggest music festival organisations in the country. "Visiting music festivals and getting paid... Well, someone has to do it!"

Greg M Ferguson (69-74)



"Found this recently - a faded memory from way back when. This was the 11th XV (aka The Mice) in 1969. The coach was Robert Common, a Canadian, who played rugby at that time for Edinburgh Wanderers, directed the School play and taught judo. He was also a pretty mean piper and loved folk music. Most of the boys in this picture were in Pringle at the time, though a few were in Chalmers West. Where are they all now? In Parliament? In Jail? I'm standing next to Bob Common." If you have any recollection of this team, email merchistonians@merchiston.co.uk and the Club will put you in touch with Greg.

John EN Macmillan (70-75)

John has just completed his first year back in the Managing Partner role at MacRoberts LLP; Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. John did this job from 1998 until 2005 and resumed again last autumn.

Bruce D Rose (81-85)

Bruce has sold his two businesses in Fife and taken on a position as Manager of a drink and drug recovery centre near Tain, Ross-shire.

Captain Craig S Street (83-90)

This October, Craig was awarded his private helicopter license in Florida. He is Captain of a cruise ship which is spending the winter in Mexico and the Caribbean.

Edward C Davidson (82-87) and Patrick H Costello (01-09)

Edward set up a fine and rare whisky merchant company in Asia called Cask88. He supplies bottles and casks to collectors, investors and the trade and also creates bespoke brands for hotels, casinos, and individual clients in Macau, Shanghai, and the Philippines. He has recently hired Patrick Costello (01-09) and they are looking to expand into Europe and America.

Euan CS Barley (92-95)

Euan works for Lockheed Martin helping to grow the business globally within the Airports division, specifically airside, landside and air traffic management.

Simon J Hannah (88-95) and Charles PB McLean (65-69)

Together Simon and Charles have recently set up a new business venture exporting Scottish Craft Beer around the world called The Craft Beer Clan of Scotland.

Bruce EA Lenton (93-98)

"I have been in the UK Benchrest Shooting team since 2010 and captained Team GB in 2014 at the European Championships in France, where we achieved a Team Bronze medal and I achieved individual Gold. I have been UK champion at 100 Yards (2013, 2014), 600 Yards (2013, 2014) and 1000 Yards (2012). I hold 5 UK Records at 100, 200 and 600 Yards."

A (Sandy) J Loynd (91-99)

"Slightly far down the line but work-wise it has been a good year. I got asked to sit on the editorial review board of Physics Review - a magazine style journal aimed at sixth form Physics students. I have also been promoted to Head of Physics (that should make Mr Houston chuckle!) at South Hunsley School in East Yorkshire and also for my sins am involved in coaching the younger students at rugby."

Steve A Biggart (96-03), Ross A McClymont (00-02) and David J Kirkpatrick (97-03)

Steve, Ross and David completed a six-day, 850km cycle from Barcelona to Biarritz, with over 18,000m of climbs, to raise over £6,500 for Maggie's Centres and Aspire. Aged 29, Steve was diagnosed with thyroid cancer; he is expected to make a full recovery. You can read more at bit.ly/stevebiggart.

James DG Lugton (94-03)

After Merchiston, James went to the University of St Andrews and graduated with a degree in English. He then took the Post Graduate qualification in Education at University of Cambridge. After four years at Glenalmond he is now teaching at Wellington College, as well as coaching rugby and squash. Earlier this year he completed the Cheltenham Marathon, raising funds for the Hearts and Balls charity.

Iain M Robertson (96-04), Iain J Mossman (99-04), Jon Day (00-04) and Chris A Collinson (99-04)

Iain, Iain, Jon and Chris retraced the tracks of Colditz escapees and cycled the 450 miles from Colditz Castle to Zurich in five days, camping along the way with only the kit they could travel in, in order to raise funds for the Royal British Legion.

Chris WF Sampson (97-03)

Chris has recently joined Google as an Agency Manager. He manages over 70 agencies in the UK and Ireland driving new revenue for businesses in his portfolio. He joined Google from 3 Mobile where he worked in their Head Office as the Senior Salesman for Outbound Campaigns. Chris, nephew of Charles RF Sampson (74-78), was a member of the C1s, B1s and was on the 1XV tour of South Africa.

Euan B Kelly (00-05)

Since graduating from the University of Aberdeen in Property, Euan has worked for Knight Frank in the Middle East and, for the last two years, has been based in London in the Portfolio Capital Markets Team.

Jamie RM Gordon (97-06)

Clockwise, from bottom left: Pat AJ Clarke (99-06), Dave JH Stewart (99-06), Jamie, Andy B Knox (99-06), Andrew G Walker (01-06), Hugh B Marshall (01-06), Tom JJ Rainey (02-06), Randal Clancy (Stewart's Melville), Mike D Black (98-06), Oli JW Rodi (98-06)

Jamie moved to Perth, Australia this year, with his fiancée, Emily Clarke. His leaving BBQ in August saw many Merchistonians around the table.

Gavin JL Reid (01-06) and Charles MacLean (67-72)

Gavin met up with Charles in Albany, Western Australia, after successfully crossing the Southern Ocean in Leg 3 of the Clipper Round the World Race. He has sailed over 15,000 miles so far and is currently in the Roaring Forties. His boat Mission Performance is currently lying in 6th overall [Editor's note: as of 3 December 2015] and won the Andy Ashman Memorial Ocean Sprint named after one of the crew of another boat who was killed in the first leg. His next stops, subject to good progress are Hobart (30 December to 2 January 2016), Airlie Beach (13-17 January), Da Nang (18-27 February) and Vietnam (12-20 March). He would be delighted to meet up with any Merchistonians and is contactable on land at gjlreid@gmail.com or on board at james_shepherd.cv31@skyfile.com (put Gavin as subject heading for this one). He is having the time of his life - try rescuing a sail in the middle of the night in a Force 10 gusting Force 11 off the Cape of Good Hope being bashed by waves on the bow and with humpback whales breaching 50 yards from the boat!

Oli JW Rodi (98-06)

Oli left Accenture in April after four years, and is enjoying himself at Clarasys - a four year old management consultancy based in London Bridge.

Jacob S Flapan (02-10), Callum RB Maclean (05-10), Patrick A Baker (06-11) and Angus V Paterson (05-12)

From left to right - Patrick Baker, Captain of School 2011 (Aberdeen); Callum Maclean, Captain of School 2010 (Edinburgh); Jacob Flapan, Head of house 2010 (Aberdeen); Angus Paterson Captain of School 2012 (Edinburgh).

Jacob, Callum, Patrick and Angus were all playing in a rugby tournament held annually amongst the Scottish and Northern Irish Medical Schools (SNIMS). There were four Merchistonians; both the Aberdeen and Edinburgh sides had two each. Three of whom were previous captains of schools.

The four teams in the round robin tournament were Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dundee and hosts Edinburgh. Aberdeen beat both Glasgow and

Dundee fairly convincingly to set up their final game against Edinburgh. Edinburgh beat Glasgow, and then had a close defeat to Dundee which meant that a lot rested on the final deciding game between Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

Aberdeen just needed to win the match in order to be crowned SNIMS champions; Edinburgh needed to win by a margin of eight. At half-time Edinburgh had a slim margin of around two points - which would have won them the game, but not the tournament. A late converted second half try from Edinburgh and a further penalty put Edinburgh 10 points ahead and ensured a consecutive SNIMS victory for Edinburgh Medical School. Each of the four Merchistonians in the match were playing in the back row.

Chris D Fulton (00-07)

In June 2015, Chris (right) starred in the BBC's adaptation of Iain Bank's penultimate novel *Stonemouth*.

Douglas CM Crichton (05-11)

Doug has moved to New South Wales to join Coffs Harbour Comets.

Scott Steele (10-11)

Scott was named as London Irish Young Player of the Season in May 2015 following his strong performances throughout the year, including a memorable try against Edinburgh in the European Challenge Cup.

Calum W Hill (11-13)

Calum is pictured here on the 18th green after his practice round for the European Tour AAM Scottish Open at Gullane Golf Club. Calum played alongside three of the world's leading golf professionals: world number 7, Ricky Fowler; world number 12, Jimmy Walker; and Cameron Tringale, ranked in the top 100 in the world. All three players commented that Calum has a real talent and was an absolute joy to play with. He won his first US title in the ULM Wallace Jones Invitational at Black Bear Golf Club, Delhi, Louisiana, in March 2015.

Rory Mackinnon (06-14)

Rory has been volunteering in Ecuador. He was in a small town in the Andes, repairing a damaged football field, harvesting vegetables with families and learning Spanish.

Matthew Mee (12-14)

Matthew is celebrating the worldwide release of his first electronic dance track, Don't you know, on the EDM music label, under his producer name MMEE.

Patrick JG Kelly (10-14) and Magnus DB Bradbury (11-13)

Magnus and Patrick took part in the Junior Rugby World Championships in Italy on the Under 20 Scotland Team.

Tom MR Henderson (09-15) and Simon D Goodwin (92-97)

Tom - "What are the chances that I find a Merchistonian at the school I'm working at in New Zealand?"

Do you have a story you would like to share? We love hearing about all sorts from expeditions to promotions, new ventures to adventures, memories to future plans- email the Club at merchistonians@merchiston.co.uk with your news and photos.

Book Reviews

Watchdog: A Credit Crunch Fairytale**Guy Winter (88-94)**

Guy's first novel is drawn from his personal experiences of working in the city of London during the collapse of Lehman Brothers, and ensuing global financial crisis in 2008 inspired this debut novel.

Matthew Verreaux is a frazzled associate in the London office of an international law firm. A nightmarish deal has left him disillusioned, cynical and embittered.

The never-ending hours of dedication to a job that offers him so little professional fulfillment drives him out of the office building and right over the edge - into a chasm of unemployment during what quickly becomes the 2008 collapse of the world economy.

With a romantic break-up following quickly on the heels of the loss of his career, Matthew is forced to start over - and he soon finds out just how hard that can be, in a city in the throes of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. He is forced to take a boring, pedestrian job with the Standards Supervision Team at cable television watchdog Ofcable, but what at first seems like a worse alternative to an already terrible professional life, ends up presenting unexpected circumstances that offer new purpose, romance, friendship and the self-reinvention he'd been hoping for.

Through the dark clouds of financial disaster, fear and desperation, *Watchdog* shines with satirical humor, love and truth in the way only a credit crunch fairytale could.

The Road to Dresden**Graham JH Wilson (05-10)**

A published author whilst still at School, Graham Wilson has published his second novel *The Road to Dresden*.

A gritty story set in a broken Germany in the dying days of the Second World War when seven refugees travelling from Berlin to Dresden form an unlikely



alliance. Among their number are an SS Colonel, a Russian deserter and two inmates from the infamous Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Unable to trust each other and with the road strewn with difficulties, they try to make sense of their upturned world.

Step Back, finding the way forward in life**The Revd Professor Norman Drummond CBE FRSE (65-70)**

The Revd Professor Norman Drummond CBE FRSE (65-70) launched his third book *Step Back* in May 2015.

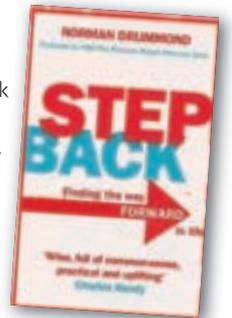
Modern life is frantically busy - we rush from one thing to another, never stopping to think about what really matters to us, what we could be achieving if we could only slow down for long enough to see it. Whether for a few minutes or for a few days, alone or with others - Norman Drummond shows how easy and how effective stepping back can be.

Following the success of his previous publications *The Spirit of Success* and *The Power of Three*, Norman draws on his wide experience as a headteacher, as a minister and as an internationally respected coach in life and business to bring home the fundamental lessons he has learned both for himself and for others: we can't hope to achieve our potential unless we take time out to work out what is most important to us.

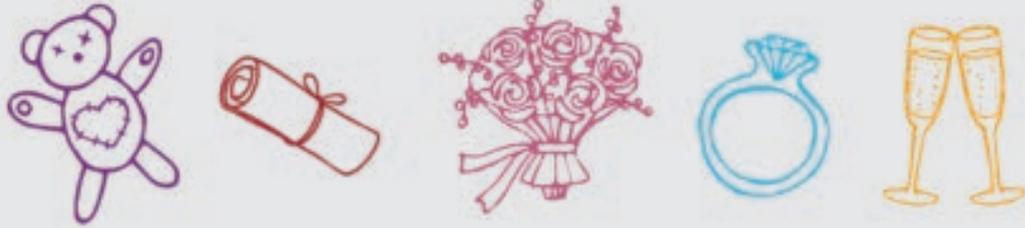
Most importantly, he focuses on the rich rewards of stepping back: clarity of thought, stronger objectives and the ability to discern the true priorities of your own heart.

Step Back is an essential book for a culture that is unable to rest and relax.

We are delighted that there will be a special Merchiston launch of *Step Back*, to be held at the school on the evening of Thursday 10 March 2016, when in addition to delivering a short talk followed by a Question and Answer session, Norman will also be available to sign copies of his book.



Notices



Births

Neil J Armstrong (88-93)



Neil and Claire would like to announce the birth of their son, Oliver Alexander, on 3 December 2014.

David M Stewart (90-97)



David and Kirsty would like to announce the arrival of their son, Oliver, on 1 October 2015, their first child.

Mark D McFarlane (90-97)



Mark and Kate would like to announce the arrival of their son, George Callum, on 24 April 2015. George is full of energy and easily outgrowing his Singaporean friends.

Philip RM Thompson (91-97)



Philip and Susan would like to announce the arrival of their son, Archie, on 7 September 2014.

Rory D Allan (93-99)

Rory and Sophie would like to announce the arrival of their son, Rowan Charles, on 26 May 2015 in London.

Jonathan O Paton (95-00)



Jonathan and Aimee would like to announce the arrival of their second daughter, Sophie Alice, on 24 September 2015. She joins her big sister, Annabelle, who is now 2.

Simon D Carpenter (97-03)



Simon and Zain would like to announce the arrival of their son, Maximus Inad, on 28 February 2015, weighing 6lbs 4.5 ozs.

Graduations

David J Pybus (05-10)

David has graduated with an MSc in Geography from the University of Leeds.

Shea Grimsdale (05-10)

Shea has graduated with a BEng Civil and Structural Engineering, Upper Second Class, from Newcastle University. Shea was also awarded the Brian J Lewis Prize for Best Stage 3 BEng Dissertation.

Weddings

Rory D Allan (93-99)

Rory married Sophie Kidman in Cambridge on 23 August 2014.

Andrew T Hadden (93-00)



Andrew married Dr Anna Tulloch in Brampton, Cumbria, on 7 June 2014.

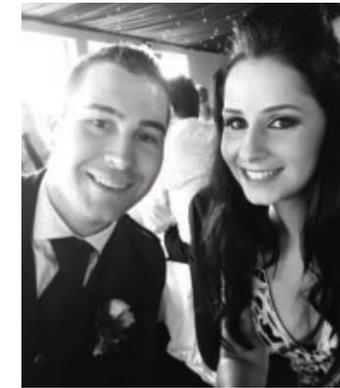
Scott A Hadden (95-02)



Scott married Caroline Hilditch in Cobham, Surrey, on 16 August 2014.

Engagements

Simon Collins (00-04)



Simon became engaged to Tracey Logan on 19 May 2015. "I met Tracey nine months prior to us 'dating'. After playing hard to get (me of course...), I decided that it was time to ask Tracey if she fancied a trip to the cinema on Boxing Day – knowing fine well that it was closed, she accepted my offer. After a fantastic three years together, I took her to Gleneagles Hotel where I was a gentleman and got down on one knee in the wine cellar, surrounded by candles, flowers and champagne. Our wedding is booked at Gleneagles for December 2017."

Andrew JM Duff (99-06)



Andrew became engaged to Alice Tozzi. "We met at Leeds University and got engaged on 22 July 2015 and our wedding is in October 2016 in Hildenborough, Kent."

Jamie RM Gordon (97-06)

Jamie became engaged to Emily Clarke this year and they have moved to Perth, Australia.

Jonny RT Paterson (98-06)



Jonny became engaged to Britney Keeler on her birthday, 19 July 2015, in Santa Barbara. "We met in Los Angeles in March 2014 in a coffee shop when I sparked up a conversation and the rest is history! We're getting married in March 2016 in Somis, California. Photo from the moment we got engaged."

Oli JW Rodi (98-06)



Oli became engaged to Danielle Moore on 13 December 2014. "We've been going out for almost six years. Danielle was my next door neighbour in halls at Durham University."

Congratulations

Major General Neil Marshall OBE (82-83)

Brigadier Neil Marshall to be Senior British Military Advisor, United States Central Command, in the rank of Major General in January 2016.

Obituaries

Fred D Lang (31-35)

Fred died in April 2015, aged 97. Fred was born in 1918, in Partick, Glasgow, to Douglas and Elsie Lang. He was raised in Paisley along with his brother Colin, educated at Dardenne, Craigflower and Merchiston, then went on to Leeds University where he studied Leather Manufacture.

When he was 18 he joined the RNVR as a Midshipman. Three years later war broke out and he was called up by the Royal Navy. He had what they called a 'long war', serving in Norway and the North Sea, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. He was part of the 1st Destroyer Flotilla for the D-Day landings and latterly in the Pacific Fleet in HMS Ariadne, a Fast Minelayer, where he was 2nd in command.

During the war he was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross. At this time he also met and married Anne Stevenson.

When he came home he joined the family leather company WJ&W Lang Ltd, becoming Managing Director of the firm in the newly formed Scottish Tanning Industries. He went on to become President of The British Leather Federation and became chairman of the Tanners Committee, formed to fight the Labour Government's National Enterprise Board over their unfair investment in Barrow Hepburn Ltd. An important battle for him and one they subsequently won.

During the 1980s he took on the role of Chairman of Scottish Tanning Industries, during which time he is universally credited with saving the company.

You can tell a lot about a man from the things that he loves. Fred Lang loved Scotland and its physical manifestation in its rivers and streams, in the hills and mountains, crags and glens which he walked and climbed for as long as his body would let him; the moors and fields on which he hunted, the salmon rivers, and the lochs on which he fished for as long as he could hold a rod; the small bays and islands that chart the west coast from Largs to Lochinver which he sailed amongst from his boyhood until his old age.

He loved his wife, Anne, and his three children. He loved certain ideas, and the idea of adhering to them at all costs: faith, justice, generosity, integrity, kindness. But he also loved to laugh, to drink fine whisky and to dance. From all reports he was a good dancer, and not just doing the Highland Fling on a table

For all his uprightness, he could be mischievous. It's time to reveal that it was Fred Lang and Bonar Hardie who, at the end of a sailing race in Tobermory, untied the painters of every dinghy in the harbour and rowed them into the shore sometime between 2am-3am, leaving only that of the commodore's attached to his yacht, eventually swimming back out in the darkness to their own.

He not only loved all these things but his passion for them was infectious. With his enthusiasm he passed on these passions to his children.

At the end, it is not our achievements - however grand they might be - and Fred Lang notched up a few of those - but the people and the places we loved which mattered. The people we allow ourselves to be touched by and whom we touch. This is the measure of a life well lived. According to these strictures Fred Lang lived a good life.

Words by his son, WJ Steven Lang (64-68).

Peter S Low (40-43)

Peter died peacefully, in Majorca, on 13 November 2015, aged 89. Brother of D Murray Low (50-55) and the late William Low (35-39). Husband to Betty, father to Peter, Bob and Mandy, grandfather and great-grandfather.

GG (Guy) Wilson (39-43)

Guy died in August 2014, aged 88.

Michael SSB Green (40-44)

We were notified in August 2015 of Michael's death. Husband to Joyce, father to Lynne.

Keith W Paterson Brown (42-47)



Keith passed away on 27 May 2014, aged 85. Keith was a past player and president of The Edinburgh Academical Football Club. Having played for Accies throughout the 1950s, he also represented Edinburgh. He was

described by Stan Coughtrie - the Scotland and Lions scrum half - as "the Neil Back of his era" because of his

speed on the pitch. He played in an era when The Accies were a dominant force in Scottish club rugby and was part of the Accies team that won the Unofficial Championship in 1955/56. On 26 October 1957, he played in The Academicals vs International XV Centenary match alongside legends such as Douglas Elliot, Stan Coughtrie, Gilbert and Tommy McClung, Brian Neill, Hamish Inglis, Tony O'Reilly, Rex Willis, Tom Elliot, Jim Greenwood, Clem Thomas and French star Jean Prat. The Academicals won 24-12, Keith scoring a typical 'KPB' try from the 25-yard line.

Keith retired from rugby at the end of the 1960 season. After playing, Keith became president of the Club from 1978-1980 and took great pleasure in watching his son Kenneth (another 'KPB') playing over the next few years.

Keith was also a long-standing member of The British Rugby Club of Paris (Scottish Section), serving as their president in 1991. He was a keen and accomplished golfer and was a member of Luffness New Golf Club and The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers. Keith was a true gentleman and a fine sportsman who will be sadly missed.

Words by Kenneth Paterson-Brown.

Peter HR Orrin (45-46)

Peter died in February 2014.

Robert D Bruce (45-48)



Bob died peacefully on 11 January 2015, aged 83. He was the second of three sons to Tom and Annie Bruce, Dundee; his two brothers, Roger (50-55) and Bill (42-46) predeceased him.

At Merchiston he met

friends, including fellow Dundee boys Iain S Taylor (45-50), JH (Iain) Barr (45-48) and David Goodfellow (45-48) - whose sister was to marry his elder brother, Bill.

In 1957, he married Margaret Greenlaw. Bob and Margaret had two children, Sally and Ewan (73-79). Bob had a varied business career starting out in catering and hospitality and gained a Diploma in Hotel Management from the Scottish Hotel School in Glasgow. He then joined the family business in Dundee, WG Grant Co Ltd, Jute Spinners and Manufacturers becoming a Director and serving the company for nearly 20 years, after only 'helping out' temporarily during a holiday break!

In 1971, he returned to the hotel business to own and

run the Greenmantle Hotel near Peebles, in the Borders, for 10 years. On leaving the hotel, Bob and Margaret moved to Dura Den in Fife, where he became a Business Advisor and Consultant, and worked in Blairgowrie up until his retirement, establishing and becoming Chief Executive of Blairgowrie and Area Development Association (BADA).

In their retirement, Bob and Margaret moved to Auchterhouse just outside Dundee, where Bob became closely involved with the local community, being Chairman of the Community Council and Editor of the ARGOS newsletter.

Quietly determined all his life, Bob's interest in people and attention to detail were a boon in researching family history, which led him to discover many family members all over the world. It was through this interest that, after Margaret's death in 2001, he met Barbara Ward from Maryland, USA, a distant cousin and so began another phase of Bob's life.

Bob and Barbara, married in 2003 and spent 11 happy years together enjoying their garden in Auchterhouse and exploring Scotland. They also enjoyed visits to the United States to spend time with his new extended family including Barbara's children, Ellen and Tom and their families. Many new friends were won over and charmed by this when visiting Scotland in that time.

Always a kind and caring family man, Bob was also intensely proud of his children's and grandchildren's achievements, Sally in her nursing career, Ewan studying languages and then going on to become a Chartered Accountant, and his grandchildren in their school and university studies. He will be sorely missed by those who had the privilege of knowing him.

He is survived by his wife Barbara, children, Sally and Ewan (73-79), his three grandchildren, and his sister, Sue.

James J Watson (45-49)

Jim died on 1 June 2014, aged 81.

James TW Gray (47-51)

James died on 16 April 2015, aged 80.

Robert Robinson (47-51)

Robert died on 24 November 2014, aged 81.

George B Sproat (50-52)

We were notified on 30 November 2015 of George's death.

Henry C Craig (48-53)

Harry died on 18 March 2015, aged 79.

A Gordon McBain CA (50-55)

Gordon died at home on 15 May 2015. He enjoyed his years at Merchiston where he forged long term friendships. He attained the honour of being a Senior Prefect and held the high jump record of 5'3" until comparatively recently. His School

records reported that "McBain's high jumping record remains streets above anyone else's and, in spite of his extra weight, never showed signs of faltering. His captaincy was quietly efficient and good".

He was a keen angler and attended many Merchistonian fishing weekends with John AA Speirs (50-54) and David Maxwell (50-55). He kept a close interest in the school especially when his nephews, Alan (74-80) and Douglas (79-83) Craik were pupils. He wore his School tie with pride.

Tongue, Sutherland, was a special place for Gordon and his wife Fiona where they spent many fun fishing holidays with the Speirs family. He will be sadly missed by his wife Fiona, sister Anne, and her family, and by his many friends. He was a true and loyal man who will never be forgotten.

Words by friend, Euan M Kirkwood (48-53)

Tom D Gibson (53-59)

Tom died on 30 November 2015, aged 75. He was a keen member of the Merchistonian Curling team.

J Bruce Kennedy (55-59)

Bruce passed away peacefully in a nursing home in Wortlestone near Guildford on 7 August 2015. After a few years in London, Bruce worked in the precious gems business in Thailand. He then joined the Swiss surveying firm SGS and worked for many years with them in Geneva and their associated companies in many countries in West Africa, subsequently retiring to the South of England. Bruce leaves a son and a stepdaughter.

Notified by John Rigg (55-59)

Dr Peter R Billingham (55-60)

Peter died on 14 November 2015, aged 73.

William Pryde (57-62)

William died on 10 July 2014, aged 70.

Dr IA (Sandy) Pullar (57-62)

Ian – or 'Sandy' as he was usually called – died on 1 March 2015 in Thames Hospice, Windsor. He had been diagnosed with metastatic pancreatic cancer only two and a half weeks previously. Sandy's death follows his brother (Alastair (54-59)), as

reported in the 2014 Club Magazine. Sandy is survived by wife Diane, children, Clare and Lindsay, four grandchildren and brother, Lesley.

Sandy's father (Eric G Pullar (17-24)), uncles, cousin and elder brother all preceded him to Merchiston. He was awarded the Wyville-Thomson prize for chemistry and, always a keen shot, was a member of the Shooting VIII which won the Brock Shield for the school in 1962. After leaving Merchiston, Sandy gained BSc Honours in Biochemistry at Queen's College, Dundee – then part of the University of St Andrews – where he met Diane, and they were married two years later.

In 1966 he returned to Edinburgh, where he began his PhD studies, supported by the Medical Research Council (MRC), in the University's Pharmacology Department. He was awarded his PhD in 1971 and stayed on in Edinburgh as a staff member of the MRC Brain Metabolism Unit, where he continued his research into Parkinsonism. By 1975, he and Diane had two daughters and that year he was offered a position with the pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly in their Erl Wood research laboratories in Windlesham, Surrey. So the family left their home in Edinburgh and moved to Sandhurst, Berkshire. Sandy was particularly involved in research into depression and schizophrenia and it was his group that developed the drug Olanzapine (Zyprexa). Sandy remained with Eli Lilly until his retirement early in 2005. His elder daughter, Clare, followed in her father's footsteps by joining the research team at Erl Wood in 1998.

Sandy continued to enjoy small bore rifle shooting for many years but as he grew older he turned his attention toward developing his other passion, photography. He became a member of Bracknell Camera Club and was awarded his LRPS (Licentiatehip of the Royal Photographic Society) in 2012. Following retirement Sandy and Diane enjoyed the opportunity to travel, spending wonderful holidays all over the world; Australia, Burma, Canada, China, Ecuador and the Galapagos, New Zealand, as well as Europe – all in their own way a photographer's delight – and were beginning

to think about their next adventure when Sandy became ill. Sandy is sorely missed by his family and his many friends and former colleagues.

Words by his wife, Diane Pullar.

Allan M Taylor (57-62)

Allan died on 29 January 2015, aged 70.

Bruce O Crawford (59-63)

Bruce Crawford was born on the 25 January 1946 in Glasgow to Boyd and Violet Crawford. Bruce started at Belmont House Preparatory School and entered Merchiston in 1959. Although he had poor eyesight which necessitated him having to wear glasses, Bruce was a very keen sports person, and there is a story of him creating quite a stir when he appeared on the running track with a pair of red coloured spiked running shoes.

Bruce was selected to play for the 1XV as Scrum Half and one of his good friends and teammates, Alan JR McGregor (59-64) said "I always remember him being the first person I knew to wear sporting contact lenses – by today's standards these were huge and covered the whole eyeball! I remember being horrified that he could put these things in his eyes! Despite their size they could still be dislodged, and I well remember crawling around the rigger pitch searching for one of Bruce's lenses".

Sandy Corstorphine (59-64) another of Bruce's friends and fellow 1XV teammate, also remembers Bruce's knack for putting the ball into the scrum as often as not at an angle to the advantage of his own team. This again was due to Bruce's problems with his eyesight. The interest and enthusiasm for rugby remained with Bruce for the rest of his life with him serving on the Glasgow and District Rugby Referees' Panel.

Bruce left Merchiston and embarked on his chosen career in stockbroking. His first position was with Campbell Neill, a firm of Glasgow Stockbrokers. Fairly soon after he joined, another Glasgow-based stockbroking firm, Stirling Hendry, the company that he would stay with for the rest of his career, and in which he rose to be a Senior Partner.

In the mid-1960s Bruce was seconded to a London firm of stockbrokers, Robinson and Glyn, to further his knowledge of stockbroking and widen his general experience in the business. On his return to Glasgow, he became a member of the Scottish Stock Exchange, and was appointed as a Partner of Stirling Hendry in 1969. He remained with Stirling Hendry until 1987 when it was acquired by Brown Shipley, merchant bankers, and following the acquisition, Bruce became a Director of Brown Shipley and remained in that position until his retirement in 1996.

Bruce was a keen member of the RNVR club when it was based in the "Carrick" up until the time that it sank in the Clyde.

Bruce married Liz in 1995 and enjoyed a very happy marriage.

Never a person who enjoyed flying, following his retirement Bruce and Liz discovered the pleasures of cruising, and were fortunate to have spent many enjoyable holidays as guests of the Cunard Line.

I remember that each time I returned from Australia either on business or on holiday that Bruce would make a point of giving me something connected with Merchiston: two Merchiston Castle School Registers and a Merchistonian sweater.

Bruce Crawford remained a loyal and enthusiastic supporter of Merchiston from the day he left School up until the time he died, financially supporting a number of the building projects undertaken by Merchiston over the years.

Bruce died following a brief illness on 21 May 2014 and will be sadly missed by his wife, Liz, and his many friends.

Written by friend, Ian Rose (59-63).

David J Maguire (59-63)

David died peacefully on 7 August 2014, aged 68. Brother to Lennie (54-60), Eddie (54-59) and Louise.

Duncan ML Robertson (60-64)

Duncan died peacefully at home on 20 March 2015, aged 68.

Andrew M Munro (67-72)

We were notified on 20 July 2015 of Andrew's death, by his brother Colin (65-70).

Colin J McDavid (68-73)

Colin died peacefully at home, surrounded by his family, after an illness on 21 April 2015. Husband of Ann, father of James, Vicki and Tom.

J Michael Dun (72-77)

Michael died on 1 February, 2015, in Gilston, Heriot, aged 54. Michael was born in 1960, the son of Robin and Sheila Dun and brother to Gordon. After Merchiston he went on to attain an HND in Agriculture at Auchincruive College.

As a young boy, Michael was a member of the East Lothian Pony Club and then progressed to riding in Point to Points, where he rode his first winner at Mosshouses in 1976 aboard Carndonagh, at the age of 15. One of his career highlights was in 1979, when aged 19, he won the BMW Men's Final at Chepstow aboard Carndonagh, winning a BMW and £4,000 in prize money. His last winner in Point to Point was aboard Two For One in 1995 and his final ride was on Kings Lane in the Lauderdale Members in 2000, when he was beaten by a head. While still riding, he took out his permit to train and enjoyed success with Coqui Lane – bred by his father-in-law George Hutchinson – and River Alder, who he bought for 2,600 gns and went on to amass more than £50,000 in prize money. More recently, Michael had deployed his knowledge of racing as an excellent commentator at many fixtures in the Northern Point to Point Area.

Michael had not only a good eye for horses, but sheep as well – he was a “great kenner of stock”. He built up the Gilston flock of North Country Cheviots and won the championship at the Royal Highland Show in 1993 with a home-bred tup, Gilston Protector, and again in 2004 with a home-bred ewe.

He was well respected as a judge and officiated at the

Royal Highland, The Royal Welsh and The Royal in England, as well as many county shows.

Three years ago Michael was diagnosed with chronic lymphatic leukaemia, but as with everything he did, faced the situation head on and beat the disease.

Michael was one of life's optimists, an inspiration to many and a charming entertainer. He is survived by his wife Jane, children Graham and Charlotte, parents Robin and Sheila and brother, Gordon.

The Scotsman, 9 March 2015 (abridged).

Bruce D Cameron (81-86)

Bruce died on 29 January 2015.

Steven J Birnie (84-87)

Steven died on 12 October 2014 after a short illness.

Where available, the extended obituaries are published on the Merchistonian Club website (www.merchistonians.co.uk). Every effort has been made to ensure that the information included within the obituaries is accurate and we are grateful to the Merchistonian community for sending in newspaper clippings and published articles for this section.

Norman GR Mair (42-47)

A tribute to the life of Norman Mair, 1928-2014, by his son, Logan M Mair (80-86), from the Memorial Service held at Merchiston in December 2014.

On 3 February 1951, 22-year old NGR Mair boarded the team bus outside the North British Hotel and set off for Murrayfield where he would win the second of his four rugby caps against a highly rated Welsh XV featuring 11 British Lions.

The 81,000-strong crowd had been swelled by a selection of his six sisters and five surviving brothers.

Against all the odds, Scotland prevailed by the then record margin of 19-0. But by November of that year, NGR had been dropped for the match against the touring South Africans. (As many of you will know, Scotland lost that South African test by a world record score of 44-0.)

His omission clearly rankled, but the heavy defeat would detonate one of his more memorable, tongue-in-cheek anecdotes when he came to pen his preview of a subsequent South African tour.

"I do not want to dwell for long on the disastrous events of the South African Test of November 1951", he began "but, suffice to say that never in the history of Scottish rugby has a selectorial error been so harshly punished".

His international rugby career may have been over, but his career as a journalist was well under way.

Norman George Robertson Mair was born on 7 October 1928, the last of the 13 children to Alexander William Mair, and to a no doubt much relieved, Elizabeth Mackay Bisset Mair.

Yet only five weeks later, the head of the family would die in a fire at the family home at 9 Corrennie Drive in the Morningside district of Edinburgh. "Death of Professor Mair – Brilliant Greek Scholar" read the headline in the Scotsman of 14 November 1928.

Dad was extremely proud of his father, who was not only a Professor at Edinburgh University but also a fellow



of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Had he been in better health, I know that he would have been similarly proud of the fact that his granddaughter, Jennifer, had won a place at his Caius to study medicine

Dad enjoyed a particularly close bond with both his mother, Elizabeth, and his eldest brother Gilbert – a former pupil (24-27) and distinguished master (35-40; 45-70) at this School.

Today marks one of the final chapters in the history of that family as, of the 13 children, the only survivor is my father's older sister, Gwen Thompson. In which connection, I recall my father and his brother Colin undertaking an impromptu roll call towards the end of the last century and reluctantly concluding that the family had suffered "a middle order batting collapse".

My parents set up home at 15 Dreghorn Loan, Colinton in 1969. That remains the family home to this day, although for a long time it was more of a "sporting base camp" from which Suzi, Patrick, Michele and myself nipped back and forth to report match scores from the tennis club at the end of the garden.

My brother, Patrick, was, and still is, a more than useful sportsman. He was also my father's most loyal confidant on sporting matters – and therefore on all matters!

Michele, the youngest of the offspring, represented both Scotland and Great Britain at tennis at various levels. Arguably her greatest talent was that she could play dad better than any of us. She was particularly

adept at shifting blame onto her rather downtrodden elder brother.

And so, to my elder sister, Suzi: there is more of dad in Suzi than in the rest of us put together – she has all the virtues he most admired and all the vices he really rather liked. She was the leading tennis player in Scotland in the early 1980s – culminating in an appearance at Wimbledon in 1984.

For my part, I never found dad anything other than supportive, although I would like to share one personal recollection to capture the somewhat unusual nature of that support.

It was July 1991, and I had been involved in an accident in Ecuador which resulted in the loss of the middle finger from my left hand.

Dad was reporting on the Open at Royal Birkdale when he and mum received a call from the British Consul. Now, interrupting dad at the Open was a very high risk strategy but, once he had ascertained that the injuries were potentially life threatening, he took the trouble to call me:

"Will it affect your throwing in?" he asked by way of an opening shot.

"No – it's my left hand."

"Thank goodness," he replied

"But dad, I write left-handed."

"Oh don't worry about that – you only need two fingers to write with – you need a full hand to throw a

rugby ball."

He then asked if I had given much thought as to whether I would now use an overlapping or interlocking grip for golf.

When I told him that my golf grip wasn't exactly my top priority, he told me not to worry - he had already looked into it on my behalf... He had asked Jack Nicklaus and Nicklaus had told him "that I would have no choice but to go with an interlocking grip!"

I will return to the family in a minute, but first I am eager to share with you a few facts from dad's career: At School he held all three "offices of state" Captain of School, Cricket and Rugby.

The editorial of the Merchistonian of August 1947 records:

"It is with particular pleasure that we congratulate NGR Mair on an almost unique distinction: that of being School captain; captain of an undefeated XV and captain of an undefeated XI. No one has achieved this distinction since 1882-3."

In addition, he was a fine scholar, debater and a one-time winner of the Rogerson Divinity Prize. That divinity prize is not something dad has often referred to but it may yet come in handy.

From Merchiston via National Service, dad headed to the University of Edinburgh to study law or, to be more precise, sport.

Again, he excelled: He was President of the University Athletic Club and Captain of both cricket and, for a three-year period, rugby.

On leaving Edinburgh, the official records of the university noted that "Norman liked to talk rugby in his spare time..." Some 60 years of spare time would follow!

If I give the impression that dad's early life was wholly dominated by sport then, I do him a major disservice.

He was as well read as many academics and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of Shakespeare, the great poets and a wide variety of classical and contemporary texts. Along with his sense of humour, his literary background formed the foundation of any number of his anecdotes.

Readers were frequently astounded at his ability to reference so wide an array of sources. To my mind, the essence of his writing was never better captured than in a book called Stargazing which tells the story of lighthouse keepers working off Scotland's West Coast.

It records how Ross, one of the lighthouse keepers, would eagerly await the twice weekly boat from the mainland bearing vital provisions. To Ross, no provision was more vital than dad's latest columns in the Scotsman and, at one point, he apparently advised the book's author, "You can keep your Robbie Burns. He

coudnae hold a candle to our man Norman".

I would like to mention some of dad's other notable sporting achievements and contributions away from rugby as I feel we have that position well covered by Andy Irvine.

As many of you might know, dad was a double cap playing cricket for Scotland against Worcestershire in 1952 and for two historic cricket clubs, the Grange in Edinburgh and Manderston, in the Borders.

He was also a keen, if occasional, outside left for the Spartans Football Club which emerged from the Edinburgh University football team of the late 40s/early 50s.

Although, in his later years, he was not keen on exhibiting his golfing skills in public, he was a good enough player to have navigated Gullane No 2 in 69 shots. He was a proud member of both Duddingston Golf Club and the R&A. He wrote the history of Duddingston and was subsequently made an Honorary Member of that Club.

He also wrote or contributed to the histories of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers and Prestwick Golf Club, both of whose rich heritage he so enjoyed researching.

Not only was dad an avid sportsman, but he also made significant contributions in terms of coaching and sports administration.

Journalism ruled dad out of a formal coaching role but, even on a part-time basis, he made a major impact such as when coaching the unfancied Oxford University side of 1964 (a side which included former Merchiston master Ken Houston) to victory in that year's Varsity Match.

Less visibly, he was Suzi, Patrick and Michele's tennis coach for many years - the fourth child being uncoachable. Whilst they all benefited from professional coaching, dad was their first coach and was undoubtedly the "guiding mind" behind all of their careers.

In terms of sports administration, dad was a member of Lord Mackay's panel that reported in 1999 on the future of Scottish rugby as well as serving on the selection committees for both the Scottish rugby and cricket Halls of Fame.

However, organisation and processes were far from his core strength and he was much better as an 'ideas man' than as a facilitator or minute-taker. That said, he spent 25 years as the secretary of Colinton Tennis Club - where he was way ahead of his time in being one of the first tennis club secretaries to move to a paperless record system... in that he kept no records!

At all levels, whether as a player, coach, administrator or journalist, dad made a significant contribution to sport and this was recognised by multiple awards culminating in an MBE in 1994 for services to sports journalism.

Andy Irvine the former Heriots pupil, Scotland and British Lions full-back and one of Norman Mair's most loyal friends, gave an appreciation of the high esteem in which Norman was held in the rugby world.

He highlighted the fact that Norman earned his four rugby caps in an era where there were far fewer international fixtures and no caps to be won as a replacement. Andy referred to Norman's own distinguished rugby career and the credibility that had given him in terms of writing about the players of subsequent eras. He pointed not only to Norman's playing career with Edinburgh University, the Army and Melrose but also to his captaincy of the combined Edinburgh and Glasgow XV against the 1953 All Blacks.

It was, in Andy's view, Norman's deep knowledge of the game that made him such a respected commentator and he recalled that if players of his generation wanted to know how they had played, the reference point was always Norman's Monday morning column.

Andy fondly recalled Norman's knowledge of all sports and in particular recounted the story of how he had sat next to Norman on a series of flights from London to New Zealand and how he had been completely absorbed by the conversation which covered rugby from London to Singapore; cricket from Singapore to Sydney and soccer on the final leg to Auckland.

To Andy's mind there was no more respected rugby journalist than Norman and he pointed to the fact that many of the great rugby coaches such as Jim Telfer and Ian McGeechan had seen Norman as an essential sounding-board, not only for Scotland but also for British Lions teams. It was no surprise that Ian McGeechan had referred to Norman as: "the best rugby writer of them all.... without question".

In particular, Andy emphasised that both players and coaches felt safe in seeking Norman's advice because they had complete trust in his integrity and discretion.

Andy concluded by commenting on how fortunate Scottish rugby had been to have two such distinguished and internationally renowned commentators on the game in Norman Mair and Bill McLaren.

Dad was also a respected golf journalist who wrote about many of the game's leading players. I vividly remember standing on the practice ground at an Open Championship and listening to him chatting with Gary Player when another journalist walked past and said to Gary: "Don't be giving Norman too many tips".

Mr Player replied instantly: "There is nothing I can tell Norman about golf that he doesn't already know!"

Dad was one of two distinguished golf writers at 15 Dreghorn Loan.

He was immensely proud of my mother, Lewine's,

efforts in building a very eminent journalistic career. Her achievements were all the more remarkable in that she had to combine her writing with the unenviable task of picking up the debris left behind by the mini hurricane that preceded every article that dad ever wrote. And that's without going into the near nuclear fallout that would follow from some poor sub-editor moving the odd seemingly innocent comma.

One critical role at 15 Dreghorn Loan in which we all had to play our part, was to act as the first line of defence when exasperated sports editors or publishers rang to chase after dad's copy.

There was one particular book publisher who dad kept avoiding for months on end and we all took it in turns to defend dad's patch. One day mum forced me to take the call:

"Is Norman there?" he asked

Looking at dad I got the sort of waspish look that indicated very plainly that he was out... so I replied with the stock answer that he was out playing golf.

"Again!" The publisher responded... "well he must be getting good at it by now!"

The same publisher rang again some days later and unfortunately, I was first to the phone... Even more unfortunately, dad and I had just had an argument:

"Is Norman there?" the publisher asked. I got the same "not on your life" look from dad but in a rash, anger-induced moment, I declared

"Yes of course he is - he is right in front of me - I'll hand you over".

THAT WAS A MISTAKE ... A BIG MISTAKE!

As many of you know the last two or three years have been difficult for dad as Alzheimer's tightened its grip. As Alistair McHarg, the former Scotland second row put it so kindly, "Alzheimer's was a particularly distressing illness to afflict such a fantastic scribe and a man of such exceptional wit".

On behalf of the family, I would like to thank all of my father's journalistic colleagues for their very generous words. In particular, the Scotsman's coverage was a credit to the great newspaper that gave my father his most prominent platform.

Can I also thank the Headmaster of Merchiston Castle School for allowing us the use of this fine hall and the Chaplain, Nick Blair, for taking today's service. In his quiet way there was no prouder Merchistonian than dad and he would have been as appreciative as the rest of us.

In my view, my father's defining feature was his complete loyalty:

To his many colleagues and friends across the sporting world;

To Scottish rugby;

And, above all, to his family.

The MRFC Report

Words by Oliver Green. Photographs by Roy Smith.

It has been a little over two years since the re-establishment of the Merchistonian Rugby Football Club and in that time the Committee has been pleased with the progress it has made.

The annual fixture with the Edinburgh Academicals has been established, with fantastic player participation and crowd numbers - albeit without the results that we had hoped for.

Alongside this, the Club has also taken part in a couple of 7s tournaments. At the North Berwick 7s, the team won the Plate competition in 2014 and reached the semi-finals in 2015. They also put in an admirable performance at the Leith 7s.

Perhaps the most promising sign of the potential strength of the Club came at this year's Edinburgh 10s in which several of Scotland's top club sides entered a team. An extremely strong squad - with experienced internationalists like Philip J Godman (95-99), and former age-group internationalist, now current Bath pro, Zach I Mercer (13-15) - managed to come within a point of victory in a hard-fought semi-final against the defending champions, and this year's eventual winners Steven Sims Cavaliers.

Looking to the future, we have arranged two XV-a-side fixtures against old foes in Edinburgh for 2016.

The Accies fixture will be held slightly later this year on Saturday 4 June at Raeburn Place to allow players tied to clubs to participate. Additionally, there will be a Friday night game against Watsonians on 2 September at Myreside. Both fixtures will have a charity dinner and we look forward to seeing as many Merchistonians as possible playing and supporting these events. In addition, the Edinburgh 10s looks like it will become a staple event for the Club, and we also hope to enter a number of 7s tournaments.

For members of the Club who have retired from the contact form of the game, touch rugby has been held on Tuesday evenings in the Edinburgh Meadows from late spring until early autumn. Get in touch - pardon the pun - if you would like to come along in 2016.

None of this could have happened without our sponsors who have been extremely generous in helping to get the Club going financially. The Club is in talks to renew sponsorship deals and help with the purchase of new kit, tournament entry, and further expansion. Updates on this will follow via our social media accounts.

The Committee would love to hear from anybody with tournament entry ideas, and from those interested in playing, sponsoring or helping.

You can contact us through the following links:

Facebook page - facebook.com/merchistoniansrfc
Twitter @merchiRFC
Email at rugby@merchistonians.co.uk

We have MRFC kit available at our online shop at bit.ly/MRFckit

MRFC Committee

President - Roger GT Baird (73-78)
Vice President - Shane A Corstorphine (89-97)
Secretary - Oliver J Green (99-07)
Treasurer - Alexander TD Yates (00-07)
Fixtures Secretary - Finlay RB Maclean (02-07)

Committee Members

W Andrew McDonald (79-85), Matthew S Gray (79-85), Jamie GB Maclean (71-76), James E Sutherland (75-80), Peter JD Aitchison (00-07), Chris J Robson (02-07), Freddie Main, and David Rider



Roy Smith Photography



Roy Smith Photography



Roy Smith Photography



Photographs of the matches were taken by Roy Smith Photography. More match photos are available at bit.ly/roysmith10s. Prints and copies can be ordered through Roy at roy@roysmith.co.uk

The Golf Club - Secretary's Report

This was yet another busy season for the Merchistonian Golf Club on the social and representative front.

There was the usual schedule of social matches this year, including Lorrettonians, OG/Fettesians, Sedburgh, and the match against the School boys. Unfortunately, this year the East-v-West match didn't materialise nor did the South of England meeting: it is hoped that both will be restored to the schedule in 2016.

The time and effort that the match managers put into arranging the social matches are greatly appreciated by the Committee and also the participants. These matches provide a fabulous opportunity to play some of the finest courses in Scotland at a knock down rate and in good company. I encourage you all to make contact with either the respective match managers or myself so that you can experience the fun that is had on these days.

In addition to the social matches, the Club fielded strong teams in all the representative fixtures that they competed in. The Club entered teams in the Stenhouse Quaich, the Halford Hewitt, the Cyril Gray, the Scottish Wayfarers Over 50s and the Queen Elizabeth. We put up strong performances in all these competitions and were successful in retaining the Stenhouse Quaich in Elie. Our defence of the Halford Hewitt saw us lose in the Quarter Final to an Eton team that went on to win the trophy – we have high hopes for 2016 with our pairings getting stronger every year and with a strong squad pushing for places in the team.

The Spring Meeting was held at Gullane No. 3 in

dreadful conditions. Full marks to the 15 participants who braved the wind and the rain and made it safely back to the Clubhouse. David G Morrison (83-89) won the Gold Medal for the second year running and the Silver Medal was won by A Morison Zuill (50-55).

The big change for the year was the Autumn Meeting and its move to Bruntisfield Links. As well as a change of venue, there was also a change of format with a BBQ lunch, followed by a Shotgun start and then dinner. We had 49 Merchistonians and guests playing on the day with 68 attending the dinner in the evening. Michael J Rolland (98-03) won the Gold Medal for the second year running (utilising home advantage) with a gross score of 72 (level par), with the Silver Medal being won by Peter K Young (77-82) with a net 71. The change of venue and format was deemed a success by all who participated and it was especially pleasing to be able to present all the prize winners with their prizes at the dinner afterwards. My thanks go to the staff at Bruntisfield Links for looking after us so well with the arrangements for golf on the day and also for catering.

The fixture list for 2016 will be published in January and I hope that as many of you as possible will take the opportunity to sign up for representing the school and the club. In the meantime I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible throughout the 2016 golfing season.

Kind regards

Robert A Forman (89-94)



Retiring Captain's Report

Words by A (Sandy) E Corstorphine (59-64)

After the Autumn Meeting at Elie in 2013, Robert A Forman (89-94) and I stepped gingerly into the shoes of Graeme RC Scott (53-58) and Willie M Biggart (66-72). The former had turned round the financial fortunes of the club over several years and Willie's enthusiasm fanned the flames. Our objectives were to encourage younger members to join the Club and raise support to send the strongest team possible to represent us in the Halford Hewitt.

The success in Deal in 2014 has been well documented and I was extremely fortunate to be involved with not only good golfers, but great ambassadors for the School. This year, with only one change to the team (Ross M Crumme (06-09) was not available due to exams and replaced by Ollie J Stephen (01-05)), we got knocked out in the quarter final in extra time by Eton who went on to win. Stuart L Briggs (60-65) and A Morison Zuill (50-55) are already having discussions about selection for next year and I have high hopes for a repeat of 2014.

We attempted a fundraising event at Kings Acre which failed through lack of interest but, thanks to the generosity of several Merchistonians, we have created a small "war chest" to assist younger players in the future. The Golf Academy has to be a pool of talent to be exploited as we

must continue to send down our strongest teams.

We have had little success in the Queen Elizabeth having been knocked out early in 2013 and 2014. However, we have won the Stenhouse Quaich in both these years. David J Hutchison (73-76) and his team of Gavin T Spencer (73-78), Harry J Thomson (72-78), J Donald Thomson (74-80), Niall C Donaldson (68-73), Alistair J Duncan (69-73) and W Graeme Dickie (75-80) have had tough opposition in the Cyril Gray over the last two years, losing to Fettes and Watsonians, both of whom went on to win.

This year we took a brave step and moved the Autumn Meeting from Elie to Bruntisfield due to requests from younger members. It was well attended and the evening was great fun - which I can confirm as I was the last to leave!

The club finances are in good shape and I am delighted to be handing over to W (Bill) Hannay (54-58). There have been three generations of Hannays (Bill's father, Alexander (33-36) and son, Iain (82-88)) at Merchiston and he will bring the same energy and enthusiasm he brought to the Curling Club for many years.

My thanks to Robert Forman and all those representatives who have made the matches possible.





Incoming Captain's Letter

Words by W (Bill) T Hannay (54-58)

Dear Fellow Merchistonians

I am delighted to be taking on the captaincy of the Merchistonian Golf Club and am looking forward to meeting all members over the next two years.

We have 60 members currently and I encourage those members to introduce a fellow Merchistonian, and any other Merchistonian golfer, to contact our secretary Robert A Forman (89-94).

I have taken over from A (Sandy) E Corstorphine (59-64) who will be a hard act to follow. He has been hugely enthusiastic and supportive of the Club - witnessed at Deal this year when I joined him for the Halford Hewitt competition. His captaincy, in fact, oversaw a win for our team in the Halford Hewitt in 2014. Thanks, Sandy,

for all your good work.

The Halford Hewitt is the flagship competition for Merchistonians, as it is for 63 other schools in Great Britain. However, the Club is about all ages and abilities, and this is reflected in our outings and other matches where handicaps come into play.

A suggested subscription of £40/annum is asked for as a contribution to Club costs but this is kept separate from the finances of the Halford Hewitt and other representative matches. This allows us to subsidise outings and friendly matches - both of which give us the opportunity to play a number of prestigious courses.

I look forward to working with our secretary Robert Forman and the rest of the committee.

Merchistonian Blazer and Waistcoat

By popular demand, a further bolt of Merchistonian cloth has been procured for stylish, distinctive, bespoke blazers and waistcoats.

We have negotiated, through a local tailor, the supply of made-to-measure blazers and waistcoats, as pictured below, for:

£350 for a blazer

£150 for a waistcoat

Both prices include VAT.

To place an order, please contact the Merchistonian Office by phone or email on

0131 312 2237 or **merchistonians@merchiston.co.uk**



If unable to attend a personal measuring, the tailors can talk you through supplying your own measurements and, once made up, we can post the item(s) out to you. Alternatively if you would like to purchase the material and have your blazer or waistcoat made up by your preferred tailor, a length of cloth will cost £75 per metre, including postage.



Merchistonian Merchandise

If you would like to order any merchandise please telephone **0131 312 2237** or email **merchistonians@merchiston.co.uk**

Merchistonian Club Officials 2014-15



Scarf | £20



Merchistonian tie | £20



Tankard | £25



Bow tie | £26



Pre-tied bow tie | £26



Socks | £20



Jumper – round neck | £45



Laing silver cufflinks | £50



Cufflinks – chain | £20

Other merchandise are also available from the school shop. Telephone 0131 312 2253

Club Committee

These Club Officials are here to help you with your queries.

President

W A McDonald (Andrew) (79-85)
0131 561 9114 (business)
07940 560 286 (mobile)
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Vice-President

M S Gray (Matthew) (79-85)
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Treasurer

G M Thain (Gavin) (79-85)
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Immediate Past-President / Social Convener

C J Gray (Chris) (75-81)
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0131 603 7540 (business)
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Secretary (acting)

Joanna Khan
0131 312 2262 (business)
merchistonians@merchiston.co.uk

Chairman of Governors

Gareth TG Baird (70-75)
07778 680 830 (mobile)
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Committee Members

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J G B MacLean (Jamie) (71-76)
01738 582450 (home)
07739 431975 (mobile)
jgbmac58@gmail.com

UK Representatives

Whether you're just passing through an area, or relocating - do get in touch with our Area Representatives. They can give pointers, reminisce and often meet for a beer. Every year, all the Merchistonians in an area will get together and it's the Area Reps who will be your point of contact. Give them a bell and make the most out of your Club.

London

M Ferndale (Michael) (86-92)
07855 850175 (mobile)
michaelferndale@aol.co.uk

B T McKerchar (Brendan) (96-01)
07734 112932 (mobile)
b_mckerchar@hotmail.com

R J Mitchell (Robbie) (85-90)
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South West of Scotland

R M Weir (Roy) (75-78)
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Chicago

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Southern California

J N Usherwood (Jack) (46-50)

+1 310 514 9404 (home)
juwood1@netzero.net

Sports Secretaries

These are the Merchistonians who are passionate about their nominated sport. Each one co-ordinates fixtures every year – get in touch with them to find out what they are planning.

Cricket

A R Evans (Alistair) (90-97)

07791 090069 (mobile)
alastairevans@me.com

Curling

A J Campbell (Alastair) (62-67)

0141 638 1753 (home)
ajcampbell82@hotmail.com

Fishing

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Golf

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07891 399 457 (mobile)
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Rugby

O J Green (Oli) (99-07)

07752 301312 (mobile)
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Shooting

R D Macmillan (Richard) (81-87)

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Skiing

M S Murphy (Stuart) (98-02)

0131 225 4668 (work)
07968 564112 (mobile)
stuart@snowtraxx.co.uk

Tennis

J A Robb (John) (67-72)

07821 725771 (mobile)
john.robb@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

There are still a number of areas and sports which do not have a Merchistonian representative. If you would like to become more involved in the Merchistonian Club, then please contact the office on 0131 312 2237 or by emailing merchistonians@merchiston.co.uk



MERCHISTONIANS RFC

THE XV

FIXTURES FOR SEASON 2016

EDINBURGH ACADEMICAL FC V MERCHISTONIANS RFC

RAEBURN PLACE - 4TH JUNE 2016 - MATCH & DINNER

WATSONIANS FC v MERCHISTONIANS RFC

MYRESIDE - 2ND SEPTEMBER 2016 - MATCH & DINNER

EVENT SPONSORSHIP & CHARITY OPPORTUNITIES
rugby@merchistonians.co.uk

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Dear Merchistonian,

As part of our on going support for the Merchistonian community, we would be delighted to offer all Merchistonians and their family £100.00 against any stove purchase and 10% off accessories, parts and fuel for the whole of 2016.

Terms and conditions apply, contact us for more information.

Offer only valid if chosen of school being in camp in full, instants.