



PROPERT HOUSE

1883 to 2010

REFLECTIONS OF FORMER MEMBERS AND MASTERS



A NOTE FROM THE HEADMASTER

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this Proport Reunion. Proport House is one of the four original houses established in 1883 under the headmastership of Rev William de Lancy West. Today we celebrate the many generations of pupils and Masters who have passed through its doors.

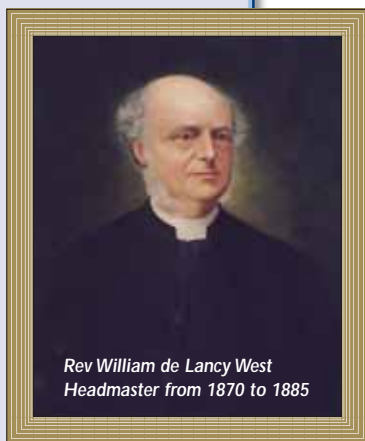
Reading the recollections shared in the following pages will certainly spark a memory or two. I also hope it will prompt you to reflect more generally on the importance of your Epsom education. If it has made a difference in your life, please consider the importance of preserving these same opportunities for future generations.

Through the work of the Education Trust and the Old Epsomian Club, we seek and value the support of Old Epsomians, parents and current and former members of staff. Support can take the form of a written reflection, like these, career

guidance for a pupil, a legacy bequest or as an enthusiastic guest at an event, as you are today.

Thank you for your participation and support of Epsom College.

With every good wish,



*Rev William de Lancy West
Headmaster from 1870 to 1885*



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Borthwick', written over a horizontal line.

MR STEPHEN BORTHWICK, HEADMASTER
12 June 2010



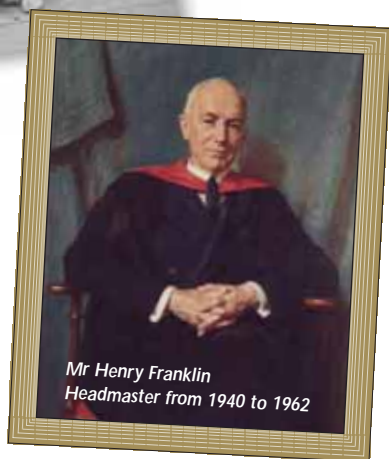
Early photo of 1st XV rugby football team wearing jerseys. All four houses were represented, with the exception of Wilson, which had been separate from 1872. The date of the photo is unknown but is estimated to be between 1882 and 1890.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PROPERT HOUSE IN 1883

In the early years, there was a conflict between the charitable aims of an orphanage versus the need to run an efficient school. In 1882, a series of disciplinary problems known as the 'Great Disturbances' brought this conflict to the fore. The Headmaster argued he needed a stronger hand and proposed adopting a house structure, like other successful schools, which would greatly increase supervision of pupils. In January 1883, Council adopted the measure and four houses were created; Carr, Forest, Gilchrist (which was changed to Granville the following year) and ProPERT, each bearing the name of the greatest benefactors.

Housemasters were asked to **'undertake to watch over the conduct of their boys in all matters, giving them advice when needed and taking interest not only in their work, but in their dress, manners and general conduct, so as to influence them for good in all the details of school life...'*** By this definition, the role of Housemaster (or Housemistress) has not changed in over 125 years.

* *Benevolence and Excellence, 150 years of The Royal Medical Foundation of Epsom College* by Alan Scadding



Mr Henry Franklin
Headmaster from 1940 to 1962

HANS GARDE-HANSEN (1940-46)

I was admitted to Epsom in October 1940 without the Common Entrance Exam which, at that time, was a requirement. We originate from Denmark, and came to England in June 1938, at which time I knew not one word of English. However, Epsom was in the path of Bomb Alley to London and there were several untaken places, and I believe Mr HWF Franklin (commonly called 'Bloody Henry', although he gave no beatings in the six years I was at Epsom) took this into consideration. I was 11 years old. I was doomed to go into Hart-Smith House, under a certain Mr C (Connie B) Berridge. He was quite a caner, and only near the end of



ABOVE LEFT: 1930s *Proper* dormitory. ABOVE RIGHT: *During the war the boys moved downstairs. The conditions were in sharp contrast to the orderly dormitory prior to the war. Interesting to note, covers on lights and metal hats resting on ptoyces.*

my time there, when 40 boys had received over 180 strokes by half term, did someone have the nerve to complain. Beatings were far less common after that.

I went to *Proper* in the Summer Term of 1943 and left at the end of the school year in 1946. An unusual event while I was there was when our Housemaster Mr Raymond vanished one night and was never seen in the school again. Mr Warburton, a much nicer man, took his place.

Sometime during the war my father joined the Navy and could no longer afford to keep me at school. However, HWFF saw that I got a scholarship so I could stay until I got an Intermediate BSc, equivalent at the time to the Higher School Certificate.

There was a rule that Sergeant Major Moger could give '8 of the best', as I think HWFF could, but neither ever did give any while I was there. A Housemaster could give 6, school prefects could give 4 with a hairbrush for houseroom offences and a house prefect could give 4 with a slipper for dormitory offences. I do not recall ever receiving any canings other than those from Mr Berridge.

While I was at Epsom we asked HWFF if we could have a dance with the girls' school on the other side of the road down to Epsom. The answer was NO. When HWFF was asked

THE TALE OF TUCK BOX 551

My Epsom College tuck box has had a long and productive life. In 1949 it served as my trunk as I travelled to Mozambique to see my parents and younger brother and sister, following the completion of my studies at Imperial College. Following two years of National Service, I travelled with it to Peru and subsequently to Canada to work. In 1975 my tuck box and I returned to Denmark for three years, only to return to Canada, where we both remain to this day. It is now in my garage used for storing odds and ends.



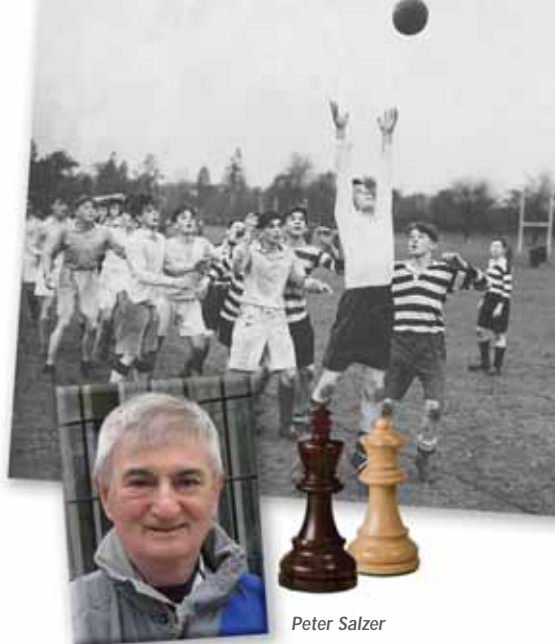
why not, the reply was simple and correct: there was nowhere for ladies' toilet facilities.

Every pupil had a tuck box, with name and number, mine was 551. I still have it. Mine was always empty as all my grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other kind souls lived in occupied Denmark, and my mother probably did not know its real purpose. Everybody at school got 6d per week, enough for one chocolate bar and a piece of apple pie from the Tuck Shop.

At Epsom I was a Corporal in the CCF under Mr Sammy Weare, and this helped me get a commission in the Royal Engineers when I was called up later on for National Service, having become a British subject in Canada in 1932.

PETER SALZER (1946-49)

In September 1946 I found myself among the new boys in Propert, with Thomas Warburton as Housemaster and the stern and fearsome Headmaster, Henry Franklin. Our kind and gentle Housemaster had many nicknames: Tim, Gus or Tom to name a few. He was a great chess player (some kind of Grand Master) who challenged us to a chess game in his study after bath evenings. He was also noted for his 'token beatings' when he felt the 'crime' was better handled by a firm talk rather than a physical punishment.



Peter Salzer

There were many signs that the Second World War had ended only a year earlier: rationing influenced what came on the table in the dining room, the teaching staff included the wartime novelty of lady teachers, and many of the Masters were recently de-mobbed from wartime service and just getting back to life on 'Civvy Street'. Some were an easy mark for getting them to recount their wartime exploits, a relief from a 'boring' lesson.

I had some great years at Epsom, benefiting lifelong from the excellent teaching and making some good friends. My only regret is that I never made a representative rugby team, although I seem to have spent half my time on various rugby pitches. But I did win the inter-House boxing in my weight class two years in a row.

MICHAEL SALMON (1948-53)

When Alan Parker was Housemaster, I was once hauled up before him for a minor misdemeanor. He had a one square metre of carpet that you had to stand on while he confronted you. You



Probert House photo 1952



Paintings of A Parker and R Tillson by M Stille from the Common Room pantomime Aladdin

JOHN GRAHAM-POLE (1954-60)

Fifty Years On... Early October 1955, lying abed thirty minutes after 'lights', awaiting the junior prefect's telltale tread down the corridor: my 13-year-old bottom was about to receive its first thrashing from the Head Prefect. Rising to that lofty status, I applied this punishment only once, announcing to my seemingly petrified victim before he 'assumed the position': "I'm going to give you six. Anything to say, have you?" After the third stroke, I decided the boy's whimpers signalled he'd suffered enough. "Go on, get out of here," I told him as gruffly as I could – only to hear his barely concealed giggles as he scampered back to the dorm.

The escapades that never earned a stroke were the nocturnal excursions Bob Melhuish and I made to the day room. At two in the morning we'd creep downstairs, across the quad's shadows and through an unlatched window. Carefully covering the windows, we'd switch on the lights and help ourselves to coffee and toast in the head prefect's study before goofing off for an hour or so.

Our more aggressive instincts found expression

stood to attention while he lounged in his large leather armchair. On that occasion he informed me that I had let the College down, the House down, my parents down, my colleagues down, and myself down. While he went on about this he snapped a Cadbury's bar of chocolate into six squares with one hand. Then with a deft flick he shot one square into the air and with a sharp movement of his head caught it in his mouth. He was sensible enough not to attempt it twice. To have failed on the second attempt would have meant loss of face and failure. I have tried his trick several times but have never succeeded in catching the chocolate in my mouth.

A few months after I left, he married Margareta Stille a Scandinavian artist! I am the proud owner of one of her paintings.



John Graham-Pole



Probert Day Room



John Graham-Pole

in the (compulsory) boxing ring. A longtime Quaker pacifist, I wonder at the delight I took in hitting even my friends with my bunched fists under the watchful eye of the Marquess of Queensberry's code.

As for raging hormones, many beatings came for hanging out with the cleaning girls outside the quad gate after dark; I still remember Nancy, a 'sweet colleen' who was convinced we'd marry as soon as I left school. Charlie Fox's crime, however, was deemed beyond the pale: after a bike visit to his Leatherhead girlfriend, he returned late for Alan Parker's evening roll call.

AMP: "Where were you, Fox?"

CJF: "Cricket practice, Sir."

AMP: "Always wear bicycle clips to cricket practice, do you, Fox?"

Charlie's Epsom career was promptly terminated. All of which leaves me wondering: when did beating children, or urging them to beat up each other, finally become not okay? And the interest of teenage boys in teenage girls okay?



Robert Melhuish,
Stephen Charles Fox,
William Fleming

BILL FLEMING (1956-58)

During the summer of 1957, I somehow found the courage to risk an unauthorised departure



Bill and Pamela Fleming

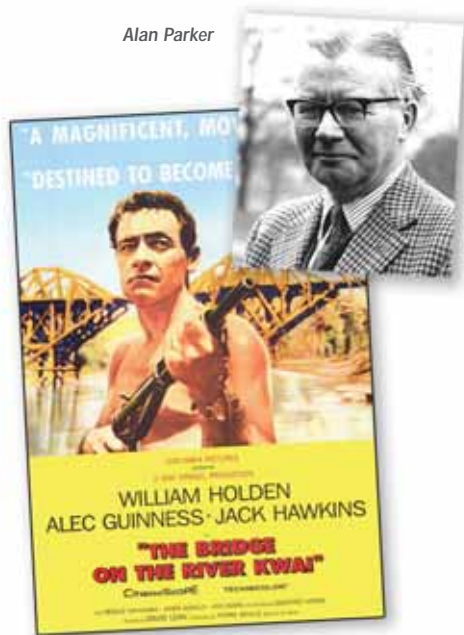
from Epsom College to walk into town and see the newly released movie 'Bridge Over the River Kwai'. The movie, with Alec Guinness, William Holden, and Jack Hawkins depicted the horrible loss of life

by British and Australian POWs at the hands of the Japanese during the building of the Burma Railway in 1942-43. I even remember to this day the miniature model of the bridge on display in the theatre lobby.

Following the movie, I was en route back to the College, when 'Pills' Parker pulled up to the kerb and asked me if I needed a lift back to school! Well, this was not according to plan, and I reluctantly accepted the offer even though it meant 'six of the best' for sure. On the way back to the College, he inquired as to what I was doing in town without an 'exeat chit'. I told him in great detail about why I absolutely had to see this movie regardless of the consequences and we had a great conversation about the British POW experience at the hands of the Japanese



Alan Parker



during World War II. In lieu of a Housemaster's caning, I was permitted to memorise and recite 20 lines from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar which, by the way, I can recite to this day!

The postscript to this story is that I was not aware, until recently, of Alan Parker's very awesome service in North Africa during World War II with the Royal Green Jackets and later the push into Germany following the Normandy invasion. Only today, after reading Alan Parker's obituary in the 2006 OE Magazine, do I now understand why I never received the caning that I so richly deserved!

MICHAEL SQUIBBS (HOUSEMASTER 1965-80)

I took over the House from the "redoubtable" Alan Parker in September 1965, this coinciding with Propert's last year in the main school building. The following year, in September 1966,

Carr and Propert moved into the refurbished Newsom Building, vacated a year previously by Fayrer and Holman, with Propert occupying the ground floor to the left and the whole of the first floor and with Carr occupying the ground floor to the right and the second floor. We were, however, very separate entities!

The Squibbs family – wife, Elke, daughter, Nicola (aged 3) son, Christopher (3 months) and myself were therefore accommodated at the tennis court end of Newsom – not an ideal set-up, perhaps, as the Propert junior dormitory was above the Housemaster's bedroom and the boys' 'box-room' directly below it, hardly the most convenient layout for any Propertians wanting to let their hair down or for the Housemaster and his wife to get much sleep!

But the refurbished quarters afforded the 'luxury' of shared studies for members of the Lower and Upper Sixth on the ground floor of the study block (study bedrooms in Newsom being no more than a twinkle in the Council's eye at this time). Nevertheless, these studies were a real bonus, in spite of the fact that all personal electrics, decorations and wall pin-ups were strictly and regularly monitored! An additional 'plus' in our new quarters was, of course, an upstairs library/quiet room.

It should perhaps be remembered that the late sixties and early seventies 'revolution' made life potentially difficult. Many pupils, worldwide, at the College – and even in Propert(!) –

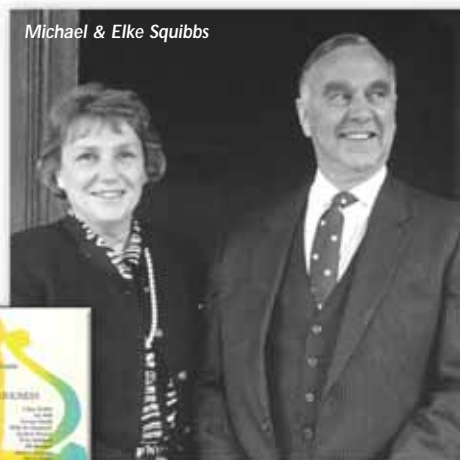


wanted to exert their individuality and be seen as anti-establishment. Dealing with this required plenty of listening, some – though not a lot of – compromising and the Housemaster always had to make sure that he had his metaphorical machine-gun at the ready! We all survived?

The Newsom building was where our children learnt to swim, not as a recreation but from sheer necessity, as the ground floor of the Housemaster's accommodation was flooded to a depth of 11½ feet several times. On each occasion, a quick internal phone call for help to the Head of the House's study saw 60 Propertians on our doorstep within minutes, armed with mops and buckets etc. The water was returned almost immediately whence it came!

Members of the House were indeed almost part of our family and more than once they would bring our children home with a broken bone or whatever and, as parents, we particularly appreciated the occasion when a three-evening voluntary silence was carried out in the House when it became known that our daughter was more than a little unwell.

An article in the 'Epsomian' by John Potter, referring to Propert during these years, stated that "Propert entered everything with two aims: to enjoy life and to win, always achieving the first and pointing to a never empty trophy cupboard



to prove the second". It is true that the House was always very competitive and rugby, cricket, athletics and hockey competitions rarely saw Propert other than 'there

or thereabouts' – not that music and drama – or even the CCF – were ever the poor relations or any the less successful. Many will have fond memories of "Hernando's Hideaway", "76 Trombones", "The Hippopotamus Song" and the dramatic productions of "Sweeney Todd", the "Duke in Darkness" and – with Carr – "Witness for the Prosecution". Fewer perhaps will have fond memories of the early morning house drill competition practices on the tennis courts (yes, even on a Sunday!).



Norman Rice



David Lees-Jones



Kevin Shaw

A steady stream of Oxbridge awards and places and a very healthy number of Heads of School, however, bore witness to the quality of many individual members of the House in these years. ProPERT was also very fortunate to have the support, wisdom and guidance of some excellent House Tutors in the sixties and seventies: Norman Rice, David Lees-Jones and Kevin Shaw to name but a few, all of whom went on to bigger and better things.

Many may remember that ProPERT inaugurated the first of the College's House soirées during this era and may even remember Elke's Deutsches Abendbrot suppers (well, those who lived to tell the tale!).

But as in any school, a House is only as good as the boys in it or as good as the boys want it to be and, in this respect, my family and I were indeed most fortunate.

15 years and one term – challenging, rewarding and (mostly) enjoyable. ProPERT is now, I understand, a day house (shock, horror!) and is housed at the Carr end of Newsom (shock, horror again!).

But whatever, wherever, "Floreat Dyfalad".

ROBERT KNOWLES
(1966-71)

I remember well an event that occurred during my last year at Epsom. We all know that the 1st XI cricket pitch was, and probably still is, hallowed ground. So it came to pass one evening that a bunch of 'seniors' (American term for final year students) decided to push a certain red mini onto the pitch. It belonged to a Mr Ryan, who was our Second Master at the time.

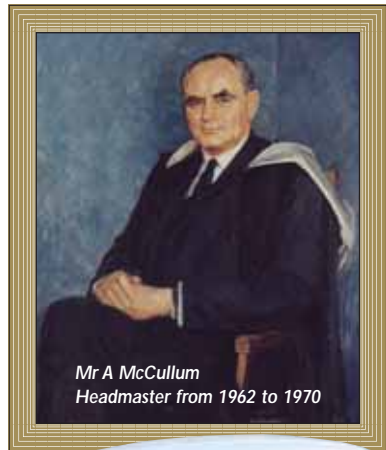
Around 2 am, half a dozen of the lads were somehow able to steer the mini past the Housemaster's house (at the time Michael Squibbs), along the grassy ridge by the tennis



ProPERT House photo 1966

courts and then a left turn up towards the 1st XI pitch.

The next morning, Headmaster McCullum got the shock of his life when he saw a red mini parked between wickets on the XI pitch. Needless to say there were sore bottoms!



*Mr A McCullum
Headmaster from 1962 to 1970*



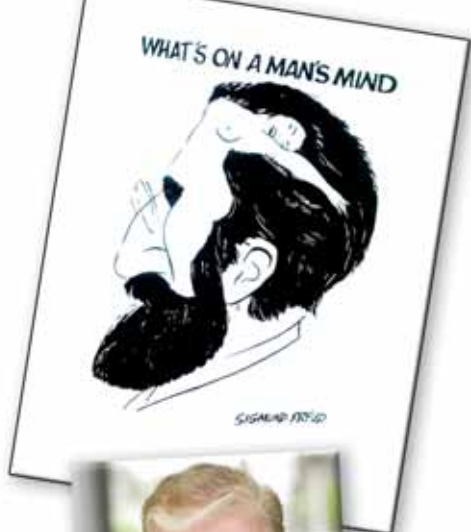


My time at Epsom was filled with study and sports. Being part of the swim team gave me the chance to swim in local and out-of-town meets, and yet as I look back, I am very grateful for the structure, work ethic and values that really help me in today's world. Thank you Epsom College, and to Propert House. I wish I was with you on this special day. My congratulations to a school that has leapt into the 21st century with success and has become a place that OEs are truly proud of.

IAN MILL
(1971-76)

The proverbial Squibbs... I particularly recall the following two utterances in my direction from the great man:

1. During a practice for the House Drill Competition, at a time when I had chipped the end of the middle finger of my left hand and it

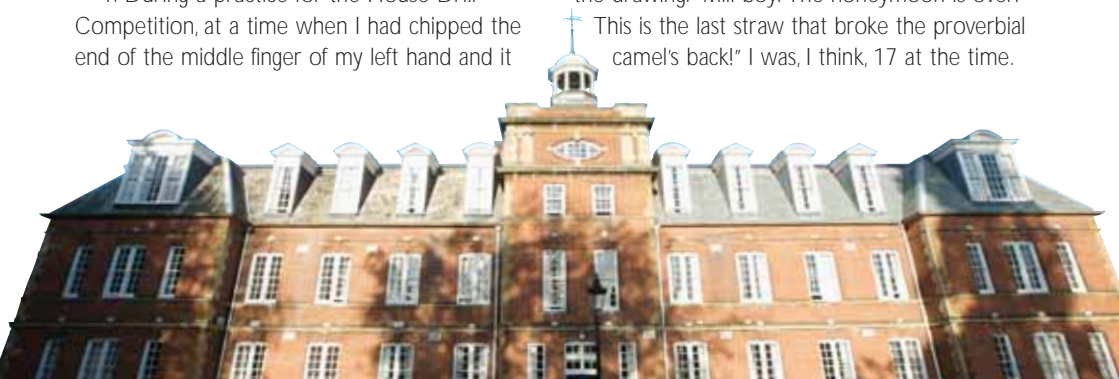


Ian Mill

was held pointing straight out in an unsightly plastic contraption: "Mill boy! You stick out like the proverbial sore thumb!"

2. After he had spotted, while showing prospective parents round the House, a poster in my study showing a drawn profile of Sigmund Freud with the legend "What's on a Man's Mind" and a female nude cunningly included within the drawing: "Mill boy! The honeymoon is over!

This is the last straw that broke the proverbial camel's back!" I was, I think, 17 at the time.




JEREMY GOULD (1972-77)

- 1) The house changing rooms – cold, hard concrete floors making it like a fridge in the winter.....we had to congregate in the (tiny) boiler room to get warm! And no locks on the loo doors!
- 2) Mike Squibbs doing his famous hand-stand trick walking from one end of the junior dormitory to the other.
- 3) The telephone link between the Housemaster's study and the Head of House's study. When Head of House,



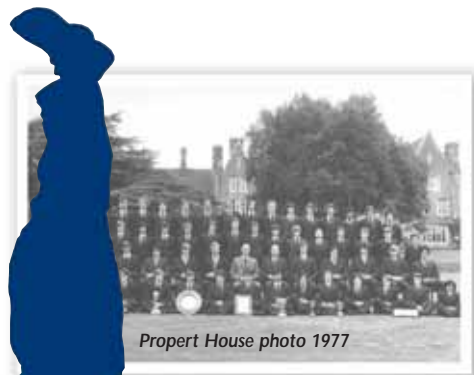
I was having coffee with my very good friend, Graham Goddard (sadly no longer with us), when the phone rang. Graham picked it up to hear that famous 'Squibbs' voice asking "Who have I got?" Graham, quick as a flash, said, "Goddard, Sir. And who have I got?!!!!"

- 4) Flooding the Squibbs' house when someone over ran their bath. 
- 5) The smell of hot, buttered toast coming from the Study Block kitchen at break times (made a welcome change from the cold, soggy stuff provided in the school canteen!). And of course, Vesta curries and Chow Mein!

- 6) As complete underdogs, winning the House Senior Rugby trophy in Michaelmas 1977, with a team made up of one 1st XV player, a few second XV players, several 3rd XV players and a number of Colts players. We beat the mighty Wilson (five 1st XV players and several 2nd XV players) in a famous semi-final.....I don't think I ever saw Mike more happy, having put one over the tournament favourites!
- 7) Squibbs' many nicknames – especially 'Meathead'. And of course Norman Rice's – 'Mr Spock'.
- 8) Trying to fool Mike Squibbs into believing that your hair was shorter than it really was by tucking it under your collar. On one occasion, Jonny had forgotten to have his hair cut before returning to school and so asked our Mum to do a quick trim. Mike's first words on seeing Jonny were, "I see your Mother's had another go at your hair, Jonny old boy!"

MARK LOOI (1973-78)

As an M4 starting at Epsom as a boarder, September 1973 was a new and uncertain beginning. I had never been away from my home and family for more than a week before and I was anxious and uncertain as I took in my surroundings as a new boy in Propert. I was going to learn an entirely new vocabulary: ptoyces/ lights out/ ability to brew (make toast or cook a Vesta meal) if one was willing to



Propert House photo 1977

become a fag/early morning PE/6th form dances/White House girls. All this was yet to come!!

What I remember most vividly was our first night in the junior dormitory:

a room with no curtains, 14 black cast iron beds with uncomfortable thin horsehair mattresses and an imposing man of obviously some seniority, who had previously introduced himself as our Housemaster, walking up and down the dormitory in a suit. He could obviously see the concern expressed in our faces as new boarders when all of a sudden, without any warning, he was going up and down the length of the dormitory on his hands. This was stupendous and we were wondering how he was able to do this. Little did we know that in Michael Squibbs' youth he had been an excellent gymnast and was therefore able to carry out such feats at the drop of a hat (although some encouragement was needed to repeat the feat whilst we were advancing through the school). Before Harry Potter, this was an amazing thing to see from a senior teacher and served its purpose of distracting us from the worries of our first night in Propert.

This was the start of a memorable and enjoyable journey in the best House in the school due to the diverse talents of its members, duly harnessed by Michael Squibbs as its Housemaster.

DAVID BEER (HOUSEMASTER 1980-88)

I am a frequent visitor to Epsom, usually accompanying a rugby or cricket team from Eastbourne. There is a healthy, friendly rivalry between the two schools and it is always a joy to see the impressive Newsom building as you arrive through the main gate. I remember the building being jointly occupied by Carr and Propert. There were large dormitories and prep rooms for the junior years and a study block for the sixth form. The sixth formers also slept in dormitories, a far cry from the en-suite facilities that many sixth form boarders enjoy these days.

It was a time of great change as full boarding gradually gave way to weekly boarding and the large dormitories were partly replaced with study bedrooms for the more senior years. The one thing that did not change was the tremendous House spirit. Whether it was a rugby match against old rivals, Fayrer, or the house choral competition and another fine rendition of a Lennon and McCartney favourite, you could rely on the boys to pull out all the stops. The finest team efforts were reserved for House plays. Of all the House events, putting on a play has the unrivalled capacity to integrate the year groups and allow the most unlikely characters to come to the fore. I have



David & Fiona Beer



particularly fond memories of Frankie Cooke's production of the "Irresistible Rise of Arturo Ui".

Fiona and I enjoyed the spacious accommodation and it was a fantastic building in which to bring up a young family. We soon became used to the regular floods from the boys' bathroom above our sitting room or through the front door after a summer thunderstorm. These episodes did little to dampen our enthusiasm for what was a thoroughly enjoyable seven years. In fact we relished the challenge so much that we went on to run another boys' boarding house at Eastbourne!

CHARLES DAVIDSON
(1980-85)

As a mainly sport focussed person, I measured our success in ProPERT by victories on the sports field and we usually put in a creditable performance, be it thanks to David Beer's practice sessions or the team spirit that he instilled. These games seemed to be more intense than actual school matches and he was always keen for us to do well and keep the tradition of being 'there or thereabouts'. While 'Dave' was probably most comfortable on the sports field, he also needed to extend his repertoire to produce a half acceptable inter-House Choral Competition entry, of which his first entry in



1981 of "Just Blew In From The Windy City" from the musical Oklahoma was commended by the judges for its sheer volume! We also chalked up a 1st place in the inter-House Corps Competition with some early morning marching practice in sub-zero conditions under his supervision. Individuals were encouraged to pursue all areas of interest. In short, 'Dave' fostered a great team spirit and led a happy House with enthusiasm and thoughtfulness.

MATT SOLAN
(1980-85)

Shortly after DJB and Mrs Beer took over the reins from Michael Squibbs, ProPERT and Carr had a major re-fit, and although ptoyces were

retained for the middle and upper fourth years, the majority of dormitories became bed-sit studies. Like MJS before him, DJB liked to see Propert on top of the pile, and so the competitive nature of the House continued. All inter-House sports matches, concerts and plays were enthusiastically embraced with a good measure of success. The all-round ethos meant that most boys helped Propert earn some silverware during their time. The House that bears the founder's name had a friendly and successful reputation during the Beer-era.



JOHN HARTLEY
(CRAWFURD 1962-68 AND
PROPERT HOUSEMASTER
1988-2003)

When I took over the reins in 1988, Propert was a conventional boarding house. The two junior years slept in dormitories and did their prep together in one large dayroom under the supervision of a prefect. Notices were generally hand-written, though posh ones did sometimes have to be bashed out on a typewriter. There were no mobile phones, no fax, no answering machine and no email. The Housemaster's telephone, which had a circular mechanism on the front called a dial, served also as the Housemaster's family's telephone. This was just as well because in those days it was perfectly normal for a Housemaster's wife to involve herself in the

well-being of the boys in the house. Certainly in my case, often when I answered the phone I got the distinct impression that the parent who had made



the call would rather have spoken to my wife, who knew the boys and their families every bit as well as I did. All that changed over the years as accountability, professionalism and regulatory procedures came in and took away much of a Housemaster's freedom to run his House as he saw fit. Individualism, let alone eccentricity, was seen as amateurish if not downright irresponsible. There was little that a Housemaster's wife, who was not in any other respect a College employee, was permitted to offer.

Without doubt the lowest point in my tenure came on a hot summer day in 1994. The fire that broke out just after lunch on Tuesday 13th June destroyed half the roof of the Newsom building and put the whole top floor out of use for six months. Officers from Surrey Fire and Rescue were able to save the building, two injuring themselves in the process. Boys' possessions and those of resident staff in the rooms below were destroyed more by water than fire; some boys lost virtually everything they kept at school. The exam season was well underway, so quite a few boys were already on study leave, but remaining boarders had to



be 'farmed out' to other Houses for the remainder of that Summer Term.

Throughout most of the following Michaelmas Term, during the renovation process, half the House had to live in temporary accommodation consisting of linked Portakabin units put up in the area between Forest and the tennis courts. Life was never dull.

At the end of that same academic year, in the summer of 1994, came news that saddened some and surprised all: the House that proudly bears the founder's name was to lose its status as a boarding House and would, from September 1994, take in only day boys. Propert had been selected to play a significant role in the momentous change to full co-education that was about to sweep through Epsom College.



John Hartley



Propert House photo 1988

It seemed, however, that the House had other ideas: a few boarders were admitted, mostly to the Lower Sixth, every year until 2003, at which point Propert and Carr swapped both roles and occupancy in the Newsom building. Sixteen years after the decision was taken to end boarding in Newsom, the defiance of Propert then and its refusal to accept with total acquiescence that it should lie down and die as a boarding house is still marked today by the presence of boarders in Carr.

Needless to say, in contrast to all of that there were lots of high points, of which three House plays and successes in House competitions, especially those that were not expected, are perhaps the most memorable. Naturally it is to the boys themselves, who would always turn up trumps when least expected but most wanted, that tribute is due. A Housemaster is in the position of being able to see how much all have to offer, and it was a tremendous privilege to attempt, even in some small way, to steer each one towards fulfilling his individual potential. Over my time there wasn't one boy who was enticed or encouraged to join the House. Some asked to be shown round, but no-one got the hard sell, or faced an inquisition about prowess on the games field or musical ability. The only familiar names that appeared on each year's list of new boys were those of brothers.

Fifteen years is a long time in the life of a family. Our part of the House itself became the place my wife and I and our children will forever remember as our family home. We always tried to sit down to Sunday lunch together. Those moments I shall treasure.

GREG FROOME
(1997-2002)

"Write something about Propert!", they said, evidently not realising the sieve-like properties of my memory. So I began to think about my time in the blue-striped house and, after much brow-knitted concentration, I did reconnect with those faraway days.

My first thought was of the House Choral Competition. Unlike many of my fellow Propertians, I fell ungracefully but decisively on the Music side of the great Sports/Music divide, allowing me, just once, to represent my house in a school event. At the behest of John Hartley, Housemaster and evidently closet *My Fair Lady* fan, the song would be *Get Me To The Church On Time*, but with subtle alteration. It was felt that "For *Gawd's* sake, get me to the church on time" might prove offensive to the undoubtedly pious audience; it was therefore changed to "For *Pete's* sake", assuming, I suppose, that those listening who worshipped God would greatly

outnumber those who worshipped Pete. So it was that I found myself in a pair of extravagantly white conductors' gloves, leading a large group of unwilling choristers through a religiously cleansed version of *My Fair Lady*. The result was moderately successful: a tuneful chant, if not the eight-part Cathedral choir sound I was hoping for. In the end, I think we still lost rather pitifully, but winning was never really the point anyway. (Or maybe it was, and I was just too un-sporting to realise...)

While not exactly a floodgate opening, more memories, taking their lead from the first, soon trickled from the recesses of my mind ...

Our large, desk-strewn day-room, often filled with toxic clouds of Lynx, up on the top floor at the end of the white, institutional corridor ... The dark and (in my eyes, at least) infuriatingly cooler corridor on the other side of the top floor: the mysterious and exciting domain of ProPERT's few remaining boarders ... Between the two, the common room, with flashes of high ceilings and endless supplies of toast ... Then the House assemblies, presided over by



My Fair Housemaster, the face of the ProPERT I knew, with serious stare and habit of pushing weight onto one leg in front of the other, like an athlete limbering up for a marathon ... And the view out the window, to the lush grass where those big trees once stood, sheltering my little yellow car, the lawns and the severe red-brick of the main school beyond ...

Even if this recollection was all fact, rather than the rose-tinted exaggeration I suspect most of it is, I doubt anyone else would remember ProPERT in the same way. But I also doubt that it matters. Whatever memories trickle out of everyone else's little floodgates, I'm sure we can at least agree on one thing: that we, for Pete's sake, were part of the best damn house around.



ANDY WOLSTENHOLME
(CURRENT HOUSEMASTER
SINCE 2003)

Welcome to ProPERT House in its latest guise on the ground floor of the Newsom Building. Since 2003 a number of changes have taken place. The old ProPERT library has been converted into two new computer rooms to complement the existing computer room. The M4, U4, 5th form and L6 day rooms have been revamped, modernised and given upgraded lighting. The games room, brew rooms, changing room and showers have all been modernised or replaced.

Today, ProPERT is home to over 70 day boys and, with increasing numbers, the need for more space has become paramount. The solution was to reclaim some redundant rooms upstairs and



Andy Wolstenholme

build a new staircase in the entrance foyer to access them. This area is now the U6 dayroom, containing four studies, a kitchen and an area in which to socialise. This gives the U6 some much needed breathing space from the hurly burly of day to day life in the House.

I am often asked by prospective parents 'And what is Propert good at?' and that always reminds me of a reply my predecessor, Mr Hartley, gave to the same question, 'Propert is good at nothing'. I was taken by surprise at first and so was the parent, but I know what he means. In Propert we give everything a go. If I look down the list of House reps and captains for 2010, I note over 20 boys taking responsibility for organising events such as

raising money for charity, to the school council through to music, drama and the usual huge range of House sporting events that take place each year, and we do enjoy a fair bit of success!

The House choral competition gets things going in September and with a bit of encouragement talented singers emerge to guide the House. This is followed in November by a 'House soir e', a relatively new but popular event where the boys entertain their parents, after a convivial dinner, with a range of sketches from comedy and line dancing to solo singers. This is done to a background of a Simon Cowell-style mauling at the hands of that fearsome judge of talent Mr Bob Ellison!

The faces may change but the tradition remains strong and the House is proud of its heritage, pulling together in extraordinary fashion to meet the challenges to compete and contribute in all areas of college life.



2010 Proport leavers'



“...we, for Pete’s sake,
were part of the best
damn house around.”

GREG FROOME
1997-2002

PROPERT HOUSEMASTERS

George le Blanc Powles 1883-87

Clemens von Engel 1887-90

John Alexander Newsom 1890-97

Thomas Neale 1897-1927

Joseph Norriss Peart 1927-30

Ernest Lionel Raymond 1930-35

William Eric Radcliffe 1935-38

Peter Warwick Ching 1938-40

Ernest Lionel Raymond 1940-46

Thomas Marshall Warburton 1946-49

Alan Montgomery Parker 1949-65

Michael Squibbs 1965-80

David Beer 1980-88

John Hartley 1988-2003

Andy Wolstenholme 2003-present



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