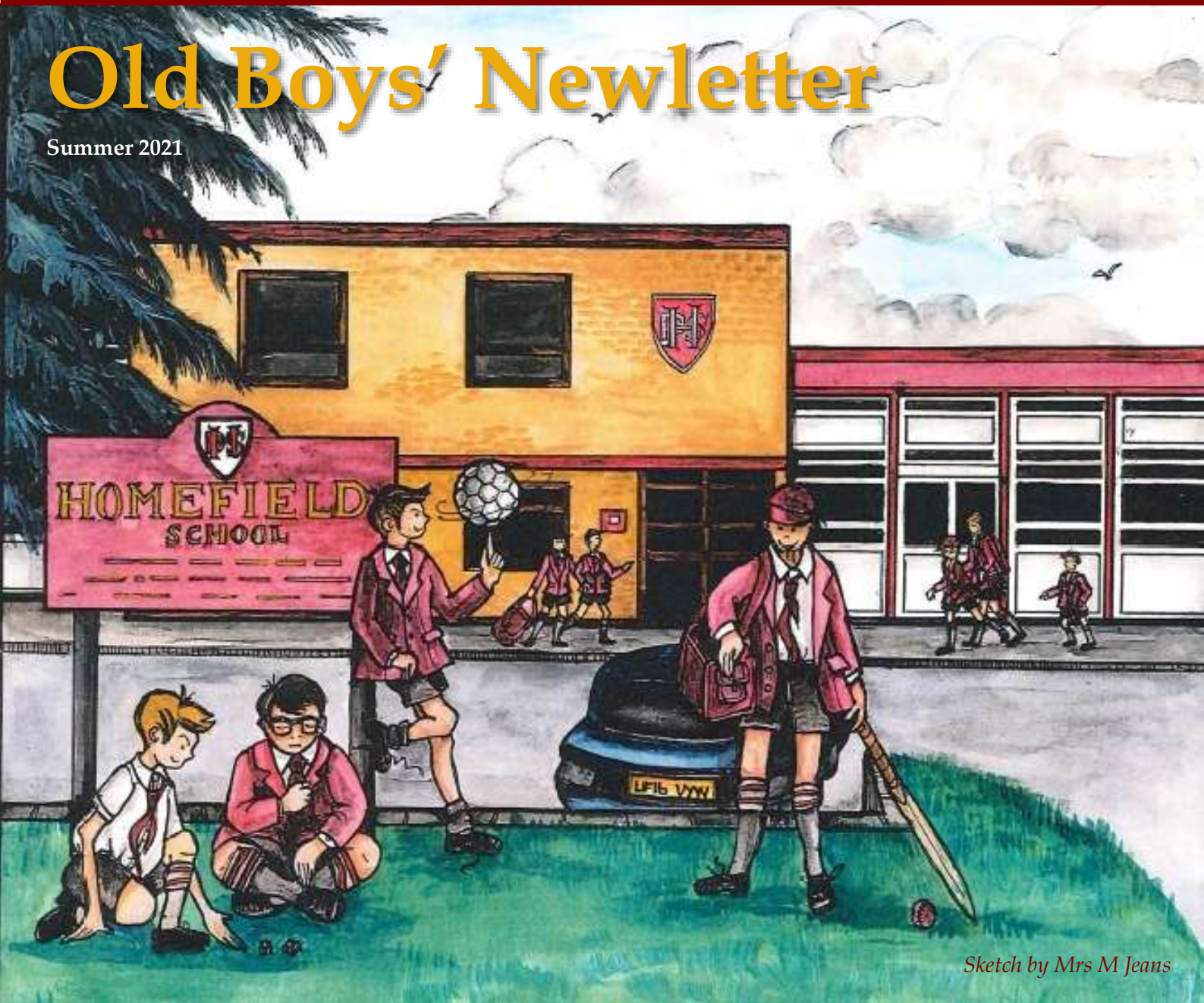


Old Boys' Newsletter

Summer 2021



Sketch by Mrs M Jeans

Dear Old Boys and Friends of Homefield

From the day that they join Homefield Prep, boys become part of a unique community, which includes not only their peers, but those who have gone before and those who will come after.

We invite Old Boys of every generation to keep in touch and be a continuing part of the Homefield family legacy by sending us updates of their latest exploits and adventures, ensuring that they reconnect with each other and the School. Friendships forged at Homefield can last a lifetime!

Upon leaving the school, you become a valued part of our alumni community.

Whether you have just left or it has been over fifty years since you were last at Homefield, we would love to hear your news.

As we progress with our impressive school redevelopment, offering a wealth of opportunities and state of the art facilities, we are mindful of the rich heritage of the school, which celebrated its 150th Anniversary in 2020. Our Grand Ball to mark this momentous event could not go ahead, as planned, last year but we anticipate hosting a Summer Ball in 2022 and further details will follow.

Additionally, we plan to invite our Old Boys to a programme of social events and a tour of the new building project as soon as we can.

Why not take a look at our website to catch up on what is going on with our exciting building redevelopment works:

<https://www.homefield.sutton.sch.uk/about-homefield/school-development>

Scanned archive material can be viewed at:

<http://homefieldprepschool.cook.websds.net/Authenticated/Browse.aspx>

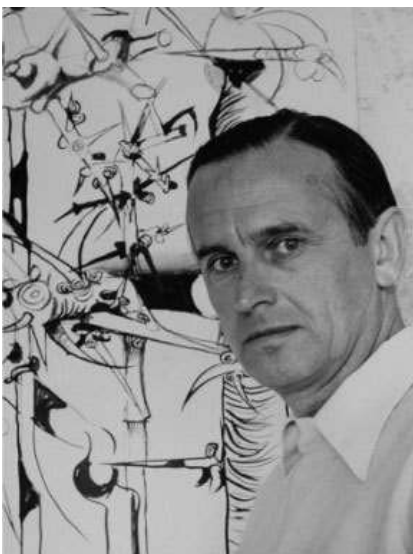
Recollections of Homefield – by the artist Graham Sutherland (early 1900s)

Homefield preparatory School, unique in the minds of many of us in having the marks of a miniature Public School – and one of the better Public Schools at that, was intimate and friendly. Yet its structure and working was of an order to prepare us for sterner things to come.

This was very largely due to the Headmaster of that time, Mr Walford, a man at once awesome and yet tender, and one of the founders of the School. He created an atmosphere and a tradition which I believe exists to this day. Surrounding himself was an excellent staff, he created a closely knit unity of staff and pupils and there was no facet of this entity of which he was ignorant.

I was hardly aware of it at the time, I believe we were subtly fitted with an eagerness to learn and compete, not only in school but in sport – a great feature and excellently organized.

I will spare those who may read this, my strong nostalgia for the place, except to say that as I think back, I am conscious that my days at Homefield gave me a warm complex of emotions: that one was looked after, that one mattered, that one was encouraged and that one could make friends, could learn and want to learn. For this, I shall always be grateful.



Homefield Old Boy; Graham Sutherland

Revd George Coppin (1946 – 1952)

I have just been looking at the Homefield website and was amazed at how the school has not only grown in size but also in excellence in teaching and in nurture. It is so different to the school of the late forties and early fifties of the previous century.

I with my twin brother Pete (and elder brother David who left in 1950), were at the school from 1946 to 1952 when Charles Walford was owner and Headmaster. It was a formidable school in those days and for the most part housed in what seemed to be in pine walled buildings clad in corrugated iron, the exceptions being Grove House and The Limes. The classrooms and boarding accommodation were spartan but this is not surprising as these were immediate post-war years. They were inefficiently heated by single coke stoves and the dormitories, not at all. Discipline was in the spirit of Sparta which made good preparation for public school and military service afterwards where stoicism was a precondition of success.

On the sports field, Walford or 'Wally' as we knew him, was happy if we won but if we lost, he made it clear that we had let him down. I still think back with a certain pride in that I was the last Homefield boy to be awarded football colours by him in December of 1952 just before he died in 1953. Thank goodness the ethos of schooling has changed since these days as the only way of coping with it all was by developing a sort of masochism which made it all rather fun when it most decidedly wasn't. Perhaps Rudyard Kipling expresses all of this in his poem 'If'.

Walford had a kind heart. During the winter, we used to put water down on the small playground to create an ice slide. At the morning break, he would stand at one end acting as a buffer for us sliders whereas other members of staff would lay ashes on it.

Good memories even if seemingly small are there, memories of .22 target shooting, of stag beetles on the fence, of playing cricket after breakfast in the playground, of military style PE classes from Mr Cornford, of Walford shouting from the touch-line, of one bath a week or was it two, and the smell of coffee being roasted in a shop in Grove Road.

With rationing, I am not quite sure how Olive the cook, a lovely person, managed to provide meals for day and full-time boarders but she did, even if the suet puddings were quite inedible. After such food and that of Marlborough afterwards, army food was a banquet fit for kings even if not appreciated by all my fellow soldiers. Olive's real redemption was her battered fried slices of marmite bread.

After leaving the army and after university, I settled and married in what is now Zimbabwe, taught at Thornhill High School, Gweru and then became an officer of the then Rhodesian Parliament. On return to this country in 1975, I taught at Durham School, became an Anglican priest working in the Oxford Diocese and also a sessional psychotherapist at HMP Grendon. I have fond memories of Homefield and am delighted to see it move from strength to strength...

“That is how my life at Homefield Prep began “ Some recollections of an Old Boy

Being deposited by my parents as a new boy boarder at Homefield Preparatory School in 1949 was a daunting experience for a 9-year old boy from Australia and one which I shall never forget.

I recall that I was determined to deal with the occasion manfully and accordingly any inclination to show emotion or any sign of tears was to be rigorously resisted – if I failed, Mother would be reduced to floods and, whatever else, that had to be avoided at all costs!

It soon became apparent that I had set the bar very high for myself and I was on a razor's edge. As we arrived at the school, speech was becoming increasingly difficult. Time seemed to be flying past faster than ever before. My dread of being left alone in foreign surroundings with no friends was swiftly becoming a reality.

It was then that I first met Matron, a most kind and motherly woman of whom I would become very fond during my time at Homefield. Matron's many years before the mast clearly left her in no doubt about the demons that I was then confronting.

My parents reassured me that they would visit me at the very first available opportunity, bid me farewell and then clopped off into oblivion down the linoleum covered floor of the main entrance hall.

Matron slid her hand into mine and drew me towards another equally bereft youth. “Here's someone you might know” she trilled brightly, “- he's from New Zealand.” The naivety of Matron's ‘helpful’ remark amused me greatly and I began to smile. It was the tonic I needed.

That is how my life at Homefield Prep began – and a very happy chapter of my life it proved to be.

Sadly, for Mr Walford, I never quite emulated the illustrious feats of Don Bradman who had toured in England in 1948 but my lifelong love of cricket certainly took root at Homefield where cricket was then the religion.



Jonathan Bell - Dressed for his first day at Homefield - 1949

David Frost (1951)

I am still in intermittent contact with one of my Homefield chums who has lived in Belfast for many years. We both lived on the Haigh Housing estate for officers' widows on the south side of Green Lane in Morden. Donald's father had been in the Indian Army Service Corps and was killed during the retreat from Burma; mine was killed when his submarine HMS P33 was sunk in late August 1941, months before I was born.

We travelled by bus each day into Cheam Village or into Sutton and the fare for us at 6 years old was 5d. No doubt, these days, our parents would be arrested for child neglect and we'd be taken into care for being allowed to travel alone on public transport at such a young age! We thought it perfectly normal and just part of our everyday life! At that time, the school was on the old Grove Road site. I remember the day when torrential rainfall caused flooding inside the school buildings.

The water ran off the playing field, across the tarmac playground and into the rear of the school where the doorstep was worn. A ‘causeway’ of benches enabled us to move round without getting our feet wet. I guess today everyone would have been sent home but there were no snowflakes then!

Life on the estate was, with hindsight, rather unusual. The majority of residents were widows mainly those whose husbands had been killed in WW1 but a few from WW2. Such men as there were, were all disabled, almost all wheelchair users although there was one very skilled blind carpenter, Captain Luckman. In The Sanctuary, where we lived, there were two other boys of our age. The grounds were and are extensive so there was plenty of space for adventures. I think I must have left Homefield at Easter 1951 to go boarding at Southey Hall in Great Bookham. When that closed in 1954, I went to the junior school at Hurstpierpoint before getting an exhibition to the senior school in 1955. I left aged 17, in December 1959 and joined the Royal Navy at Dartmouth in January 1960.

I had a very enjoyable career as a seaman officer before retiring in the summer of 1987. Initially I worked for BBC TV and then the World Service at Caversham before becoming the bursar of St Hilda's College from 1992-2001, when it was still all women. I have many fond memories of Homefield!

Sir Nicholas Young (1960 – 1965)

I loved my Homefield years. The school had some great teachers when I was there (1960-1965), and they introduced me to cricket, books, acting, travel, carpentry - and responsibility. I made some friendships which have lasted a lifetime. I arrived, I think, as quite a nervous little chap - and left feeling confident, happy, and grateful to the school for the start it had given me.

I attach a couple of pics - the cast of *Toad of Toad Hall* (I was the Washerwoman!), and the 1st XI team with Colin Cowdrey, who captained the Old Boys in 1964, and cruised to an easy 77 with one of the famous cut-down bats, on the school's beautiful cricket ground in Grove Road.



Toad of Toad Hall 1964

After I left Homefield, in 1965, and qualified as a commercial lawyer, I ended up running Macmillan Cancer Support, and then the British Red Cross, working in conflict and disaster areas all over the world. Before that I had worked, at various times, in a prison, the kitchens of a mental hospital, a German hospital, and on a yacht in the West Indies!



However, forget the knighthood and all that - my proudest moment is still being made Captain of cricket at Homefield!

Lindsay Walton (1960)

I went through the Junior and Senior Departments and left in the summer of 1960 with onward progression to KCS, Wimbledon. It was nostalgic to see some of those old pictures on the school website from my era, especially those of all the teachers that I remember so well - some good, some bad and some in the middle!!!! I remember Mr Chubb who taught at Homefield from his student days until his retirement and even deputised as Headmaster for a short while. The photo of the whole school from around 1957 was amazing as I could still name well over 25% of the pupils and all the staff!!! My time there obviously had a great effect on me.

I got my colours in all the sports teams and was vice captain of the 1st XV. In my last year, I shared the Victor Ludorum with Richard Truscott. Academically, I was middle of the road which didn't stop me from having a successful working life in the Oil Industry, ending up in international oil trading for many years. I retired from the rat race in 1994 and went into business with my passion for antique furniture restoration which I still get involved with and do a fair amount of work for the Royal Society for Science in London - a far cry from oil but extremely satisfying.

I played rugby for KCS, Wimbledon's 1st XV for three seasons ('63, '64 and '65) and then went on to the Old Boys' and from there down to Sussex to play for Hayward's Heath, East Grinstead and Brighton. I retired when I was 51 (maybe a little too long) after playing Vets rugby for Centaurs and Thamesians. My son and two grandsons are following in my footsteps.

I have played guitar in bands on and off throughout my life after it all started at Homefield with a skiffle group, encouraged by the carpentry master, comprised of myself, Simon Thomas, Simon Prudden and Tim Hayes. I still play to this day in a trio - not skiffle any more !!!

I live with my wife, Rosemary, in Cambridgeshire having built my own house in 2005. I even called it Homefield! Good health is still hanging in there even after open heart surgery in 2013 (faulty valve). This gave me a new lease of life!



Timothy Bridge (1957 – 1965)

My first teacher was Miss Clements, a lovely lady, who at the age of six, nurtured us all with her gentle kindness. At this point, we were housed in Grove Road. Next was a move across to "The Limes", where Miss Holmes and Miss Darling ran 2A and 2B respectively. Then, on to "Big School" and Mr Hedges, a wonderful avuncular character who operated in 3B. 3A came next, with Mr Herbert, a frightening ex rugby player who taught Maths and PE. On to 4B and Mr Greer, a very colourful fellow, who taught singing (in French!) took us away to Belgium, and generally entertained us. 5B was next and subject teachers suddenly began with different teachers delivering English, Maths, French, RE, Latin, History, Geography, Art and Science. Amazing times!

In 1962, three young male teachers arrived, who really made a difference: Trevor Worton, taught History and Cricket, Tony Packwood, Maths and PE and Nick Jones, Science and Rugby.



These three, close friends, revolutionised Homefield, bringing with them, vitality, energy and panache. Tony and Trevor have sadly passed away, but Nick Jones, who will be 80 next year, still keeps in touch.

When I started, Michael Hall was Headmaster. In 1962, Martin Carnes arrived and took us boys on our first cruise! SS Dunera specialised in taking school boys abroad, a sensation for us. Flying to Venice to meet the boat, we saw Athens and other wonderful places over two magnificent weeks

After school clubs saw us shooting, boxing, learning gymnastics, photography, football (George Stafford ran the famous Under 11 team).

Discipline was kept by "Bessie" and "Brutus" a pair of size 11 plimsoles, which when wielded by the young members of staff, left an impression on our behinds.

A wonderful, comprehensive education, that saw us arrive at our next school thoroughly prepared. Having failed my Common Entrance, I was sent to an unknown school in Sussex. I was top of every subject! My education at Homefield was so staggering, that suddenly a boy, me, who had floundered at Homefield, was top of the class! I had never been top at anything! As you can imagine, my self-esteem went through the roof and I never looked back, starring in the school plays and passing my 'A' Levels. All because of Homefield!

From 1971 – 1974 I attended King Alfred's College, Winchester and having graduated from their teacher-training programme, started my teaching career at Slindon College. I joined the Prison Service in 1977 in my attempt to change the system(!). Having failed in my quest I returned to Slindon and in 1986 joined Barnardos, working at their special school: each boy the worst in 40,000 in London.

In 1999 I was promoted to Headmaster! Now retired and celebrating my 70th birthday in November, I truly believe that everything I ever achieved was because of spending eight years at Homefield! Great days!

Hugh van Gennepe (1965 – 1973)

It is good to know that Homefield goes from strength to strength. I was one of the generation who started at Homefield in Grove Road and finished from the Western Road site. I can remember the official opening ceremony by Douglas Bader and how new and modern everything was when we moved in compared to the old Victorian buildings. It is frightening to think that is over 50 years ago. I have found a copy of "A History of Homefield" by David Warren which commemorated the centenary and I appear in a photo in the inside back cover wearing long trousers and carrying a briefcase.

Although I no longer live in Sutton, West Sussex is not that far, and I think of Lawrence Jones who taught me French when I pass Horsham train station as he used to travel up from Horsham every day. I have happy memories of my time spent at Homefield.

Stephen Watson (1971)

I left Homefield exactly 50 years ago, seeing which rather takes my breath away as it seems like yesterday. I will be retiring this year after a career working as an accountant, latterly with a company involved in printing and packaging machines.

I much enjoyed looking at the old photos in your archive, particularly the whole school photo 1974 where I recognized some of the teachers, Messrs Jones, Packwood and Colley and Mr Carnes together with Miss Darling. Wonderful to see the memories of Homefield past.

'Chip' Braulick (1970 - 1973)

My father worked for Esso and he was transferred to the London office from New York, hence my time in England.

I was very fortunate to go to a traditional English School. My older sisters both went to the American School in London, so they did not get the same experience as me by any stretch. I was fully immersed and when I returned to the USA, everyone thought I was English due to my strong accent and my inability to handle the hot humid summer!

Bruce Watston (1973 – 1981)

Many moons after leaving Homefield, I became a French teacher and taught in Walsall, Pakistan and then Kent.

I left teaching about three years ago to be ordained and since June 2019 have worked as a Curate in Ashford, Kent.

My brother, Phil, was about two years behind me. He also became a languages teacher but favoured German. He also works to promote fostering and adoption in Merseyside and has written a series of highly entertaining, emotive and informative blogs.

Gareth Jones (1989)

As someone who is 'in the business,' I can sympathise with the challenges the school has faced over the last year. Having not lived in the area for some time, I must admit I had not seen that the school had so much building development going on at the moment. If I may, quite right too. The main building was a product of its time and it definitely needed to be modernised!

I was a pupil at the school when the Sports Hall was built on what was the old playground for the Pre-prep. This was circa 1986 and it felt state of the art at the time. I left in 1989 and from there went on to St John's, Leatherhead, before doing a gap year at Lichfield Cathedral School with Rev'd Andrew Walters who had been Head of Homefield in my latter years there.

My family's connection to Homefield is deeper than just my experience though. I am the youngest of ten children and five of my brothers all passed through the school. My two eldest brothers were in the school when it moved to Western Road and the new buildings were opened by Douglas Bader. We have a picture at home in fact of them meeting him and also Colin Cowdrey.



In the 70s, before the school could afford a proper minibus, one of the teachers would occasionally come and borrow the comma van that belonged to my parents (because we were such a large family) to escort pupils around.

I loved my time at Homefield and had very happy memories. Indeed, I was clearing out my mother's house recently and stumbled across many old sports team photographs and other Homefield memorabilia. My oldest and closest friend is from Homefield days too so you are right to say that friendships are forged there.

Right now, I am the Headmaster of St Andrew's Prep School in Eastbourne but I shall be leaving at the end of this term to take over at Bilton Grange Prep School in Warwickshire, which has just joined forces with Rugby School. It has been a long time since I last walked on Homefield's hallowed turf but, one day, when I am next in the area, I hope to.

Jonathan Isaby (1982 -1991)

After leaving Homefield, I went on to KCS, Wimbledon, and then read Modern Languages and Linguistics at the University of York. I have spent most of the ensuing two decades or so ensconced in or around Westminster as a journalist or campaigner, working variously at the BBC and Daily Telegraph, editing websites ConservativeHome and Brexit Central and heading up the national campaign group The Tax Payers' Alliance, with a brief stint as Director of the think-tank Politeia.



I have also popped up regularly on TV and radio as a political commentator.

Married with a son and living in New Malden, in 2008 I was also co-author of the only book published about that year's London Mayoral election, *Boris v Ken: How Boris Johnson Won London*. I wonder what happened to him?!

Toby and Josh Lyndham (1990s)

Toby now works as an A & E doctor in New South Wales and lives with his partner, Alice, in Queensland. Josh now lives in Maidenhead and is Head of Drama at a school in Slough.

Sameer Zaman (1996 – 2003)

After leaving Homefield, I joined KCS, Wimbledon. I then went on to do my undergraduate medical studies at King's College and Imperial College, London, graduating as a doctor in 2014. I am currently working as a Cardiologist in the NHS and doing a PhD in Artificial Intelligence at Imperial College. I live in Wimbledon with my wife and two boys aged 2 years and 6 months.

Alexander (2001 – 2005) and Fergus (2005 – 2007) Vickery

Both Alexander and Fergus left Homefield to join KCS, Wimbledon. Following a Masters in Chemical Engineering from Pembroke College, Cambridge, Alexander Vickery joined BAE systems. He met Amy at university and they are to be married next June 2022 in the Lake District. They currently live in Putney.

Having completed a Masters in History at Jesus College, Cambridge, Fergus Vickery joined the Teach First programme. He completed his two-year training at Selsdon Primary School and then accepted a teaching position at King's College School, La Moraleja, in Madrid. He met Laura, a fellow teacher in Madrid and they too are to be married next year, 2022, in July on the island of Solta, Croatia. Fergus loves living in Madrid.

Freddie Meyers (2000 – 2010)

I left Homefield in 2010, gaining a Music/Academic scholarship to Trinity School and it was while at Trinity that I started to take composing more seriously. In 2012, I was a winner of the BBC Young Composers' Competition which led to a commission from the BBC Symphony Orchestra and a broadcast of my new composition on BBC Radio 3. In 2015, I was offered a place to read Music at St Hilda's College, University of Oxford.

Enduring friendships

Please do get in contact with us to share your exploits and adventures with the Homefield community and if you are in contact with any Homefield 'Old Boys' who may have missed out on receiving this newsletter, please do encourage them to get in contact with us via: <https://www.homefield.sutton.sch.uk/about-homefield/old-boys> We would be delighted to receive any memorabilia that you hold – we could scan any photos and return them safely to you as we try to extend what is currently held on the website.



There my life was filled with practical music making: I conducted two chamber orchestras, played principal cornet and soprano cornet with the University Brass Band, and in my last year I put on a full production: my 90-minute one act opera, "A Sketch of Slow Time".

After Oxford, I gained a MMus in composition, studying with Morgan Hayes at the Royal Academy of Music. My last year was rather disrupted by COVID-19; however, the pandemic led me to found a new ensemble "Bandwidth" which explored the implications of internet delay, on live performance online. I'm currently working as a freelance composer living in South London and work teaching both the piano and trumpet.

From September 2021, I will be composer-in-residence at Eton College, and my hope in the future is to study for a PhD in Composition, focusing on the way that new musical practices can develop by performing online between multiple locations. With my dad (Mr Andy Meyers) still working at Homefield, it's lovely to hear what's currently happening at the school and it is always a highlight when I'm able to play trumpet descants at the school carol concert!

Christopher and Ian Wilcox (2004/2006)

Chris Wilcox (left 2004) to study medicine at Cardiff University. He is training to be a GP and also doing research on infectious diseases (very topical!) at Southampton University.

Ian Wilcox (left 2006) developed an interest in the human mind (it must have started at Homefield!) He has an MSc in counselling and psychotherapy and works as a psychotherapist in a psychiatric hospital.

Samuel Warren (2007 – 2018)

Sam left Homefield to join Royal Grammar School Guildford, and graduated with 3A*s and 1A in his A levels. He is currently finishing his first year at Durham University where he is Reading Mathematics.

Thomas Gunningham (2001 – 2011)

After leaving Homefield, I joined St John's School, Leatherhead. There, academically, I found a passion for design and maths and beyond the classroom I completed the Gold Duke of Edinburgh award, contributed to the CCF, becoming an NCO, and proudly represented the school's 1st team for rugby for a couple of years.

I successfully gained a place at the University of Leeds to study Civil and Structural Engineering. At Leeds, I achieved a Masters and Bachelor of Engineering, learning more about concrete and steel than one could ever need! At university, I carried on playing rugby and managed to play in the varsity game at Headingley Rugby Stadium in front of 10,000 people.

Now I am currently beginning my career in Structural Engineering Consultancy at Waterman Structures, where I'm attempting to make my mark on London's skyline!

Zain Ahmad (2011 – 2017)

2021, as for so many individuals, was such a strange and difficult year but one of reflection too. It made me realise how fortunate I was to have attended Homefield from the ages of 7 to 13. The responsibilities given to me at Homefield have provided the confidence to challenge myself as well as seeking to help others. I will in September, become School Captain at Kingston Grammar School (KGS) and I am also one of the two CCF Flight Sergeants in the school. I also have been enjoying learning how to run a business in a responsible way and am a Young Enterprise Sustainability Director. Our fledgling business is actually turning a profit much greater than we had hoped! I remember the many productions which I took part in at Homefield and I'm sure Ms Cook and Ms Hartle would have been delighted to hear that I am one of three drama scholars at KGS.

Some of the challenges I have faced in my life, which Homefield helped me through, have shaped my outlook on life. Probably my most significant achievement since leaving Homefield has been my fundraising activities for charity. I am proud to have raised over £25,000 for the Royal Marsden Trust to help young children suffering from cancer.

Balraj Dhingra (2010)

Balraj graduated from the University of Warwick in 2018, and served as the Sports Sabbatical Officer at the Student's Union after winning an election in his final year. Since then, he has progressed and is now working as the Sport Development Manager at Northampton SU.

Joseph Dean (2010 – 2018)

I spent 8 years at Homefield and I have many fond memories of my time at the school thanks to the staff and my friends, many of which I am still in contact with!

Following the 3 years since I left Homefield I have continued my passion for piano and art. I am now moving forward, starting my GCSE courses in Year 10. Here, attached, are some of my recent artworks.



In Memorium

At the start of 2021, we were saddened to hear of the sudden death of one of our Homefield 'Old Boys', Mr Peter Franklin, who has been a passionate supporter of the school over the years, maintaining close ties and curating the vast collection of Homefield memorabilia. His titanic knowledge and passion for plants has inspired generations of our boys to take a keen interest in their environment and to hone their 'green finger skills'. We will be commissioning a tree in Peter's honour, with a commemorative plaque, to ensure his legacy continues to live on at Homefield. A great friend of the school who will be greatly missed.

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