



## Westcliff High School for Boys

# Alumni Network Newsletter

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## Issue 3 - Summer 2017

### WELCOME FROM THE HEADMASTER, MIKE SKELLY

Welcome to the Summer Term edition of the WHSB Alumni Network Newsletter.

Since the launch of the School's Community Development Office in January 2016, and the first edition of our termly Alumni Network Newsletter published in September 2016, I am pleased to report that the number of connections made with members of our alumni community continues to grow. I hope you enjoy reading about these in this issue.

Following the success of our first Alumni Network Social event that took place in the City of London last October, we enjoyed our Summer Alumni Drinks on Friday 23 June 2017 in the West Quad at the School.

As we near the end of another academic year, the School's Centenary in 2020 draws closer. A WHSB Centenary Committee has now been established and plans are being formalised as to the events and activities that will take place to mark this most significant milestone in the history of the School. Further details and information regarding the launch of the WHSB Centenary Fund will follow in next term's edition of the Alumni Network Newsletter and the School's own termly magazine, The Westcliff Diary, which is available to read on the School's website. The Westcliff Diary also lists all of the School's forthcoming events and we would be very pleased to see you at any of these.



Finally, I would like to thank our members of the Alumni who contributed to this academic year's careers programme. Please contact our CDO Team for further information or to arrange to visit the School.

### ALUMNI PROFILE: JON GERSHINSON



An Old Westcliffian (1975 to 1982), a Governor at Westcliff High School for Boys since 2004 and current Chair of Governors elected in 2016, Jon is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. His career in property consultancy has been varied during his 34 years in the profession. He trained at a small firm in London's West End, starting as an office junior then moving to dealing with flat sales, office lettings, rating and landlord and tenant work. His move to a larger firm in 1986 involved him continuing with rating and landlord and tenant work, together with a new role encompassing both commercial and

residential valuation. At the start of the long property industry recession in 1990, Jon was encouraged by banking clients to undertake property receiverships, a specialisation that he continued for a further 25 years.

In 1993 he joined Allsop & Co (now Allsop LLP), continuing in a valuation and property receivership role. Invited to join the equity partnership in 1997, he became Managing Partner in 2006, a role he held for seven years. Jon retired from the Allsop partnership in 2015 although remains a Consultant to the Firm and advises other clients whilst working from home.

Jon is best known within the property industry for his receivership expertise and for growing the Allsop team to be the market leader during the last recession. He acted as Receiver for many UK and overseas financial institutions, dealing with thousands of properties. These ranged from very low value residential and commercial units up to some of the most expensive

and highest profile casualties of the recession including the former In and Out Club in Piccadilly, London. Elected as a Fellow of the RICS in 1995, Jon was also the instigator and founding Chairman of the RICS/Insolvency Practitioners Association/ACCA Joint Registration Committee, the only professional body responsible for regulating property receivers.

An avid Essex County Cricket Club supporter and life member, Jon lives in Leigh with his wife Helen. They have two sons who have attended or are current students at WHSB. The eldest left Year 13 in 2011 and their younger son is presently in Year 9.

## **SCHOOL NEWS: WHSB WELCOMES HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER TO OFFICIALLY OPEN THE NEW SIXTH FORM BUILDING**

Pupils and staff at Westcliff High School for Boys were delighted to welcome HRH The Duke of Gloucester to the School on Thursday 11 May 2017 to officially open the School's new Sixth Form Building.

The building, partly funded by a grant from the Education and Skills Funding Agency, cost £3.2m to construct and has created a modern space allowing students to study in an environment that prepares them for university. The building includes two state-of-the-art Science laboratories, four new classrooms, a computer suite and study area, a café and a large multi-purpose area, all of which the students have found very beneficial.

Dr Anton Machacek, Director of Sixth Form Studies, said of the building "The classrooms are ideal for Sixth Form teaching. A bright, modern, well-aired and well-lit environment lends itself to lively discussion and to sustained concentration."

Students themselves are equally taken with the opportunities the new facilities have given them, with Year 13 student Monty Clark commenting on the "tasty food and sociable atmosphere of the Café" and noting that "the peaceful Study Area allows me to get my head down but also get help from my peers when a difficult question arises."

His Royal Highness spoke to pupils and staff, and members of the Parents' Association and Old Westcliffian Association. The Duke also had the opportunity to see Year 9 and Year 12 pupils perform Science experiments in the School's newly-refurbished



Science Building before meeting with some of the School's finest Art students and members of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). His Royal Highness also met the design team behind the project and the Sixth Form Pastoral Team.

As part of the celebration guests to the School were treated to a number of displays from talented students, including poetry performances from Shakespeare's King Lear and Henry V, musical pieces by Bach, a debating display, and an excerpt from Kit Marlowe's play Dr Faustus, before

His Royal Highness unveiled a plaque celebrating the opening of the building. Speaking after the event, Headmaster, Mr Mike Skelly, said "We would like to thank His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester for visiting the School on this special occasion to open our fantastic new Sixth Form Building. We are delighted with the facility that we now have available and were pleased that His Royal Highness was able to celebrate with us."



## OWA ANNUAL REUNION DINNER 2017

This year's OWA Annual Reunion Dinner is on Friday 8 September 2017. The event promises to be, as always, an extremely enjoyable evening with fine food and reminiscing. This year's speaker will be Neal Martin, the internationally-recognised, award-winning wine critic, author and Old Westcliffian (1982 to 1989). Taking place in the School Hall, the drinks reception begins at 6.15pm for a 7.00pm dinner. The price per head is £29.50 (£17.50 for those in full-time education). Almost 100 people spanning eight decades attended last year's dinner and we are looking forward to building on that success.



The menu for the evening is:

- Vodka and beetroot-smoked salmon with dill dusting served on a bed of mixed leaves with lemon mango dressing;
- Roasted sirloin of beef served with roasted cherry tomatoes and red onion and a rich red wine sauce with seasonal vegetables;
- Passion fruit mousse served with vanilla ice cream and compote of exotic fruits;
- Cheese board with celery, grapes and biscuits;
- Tea or coffee with chocolates.
- A vegetarian alternative is available.

Please note, the OWA Annual Reunion Dinner is open to ALL members of the WHSB Alumni Community (previous students and past and present staff) and not just members of the Old Westcliffian Association. Places can be booked via TicketSource at <http://whsb.ticketsource.co.uk/>

## SUCCESS IN 'PROGRESS 8' LEAGUE TABLES

In January 2017, league tables for more than 5,000 secondary schools across the country were published by the Department for Education based on the results for exams taken in the summer of 2016.

This year the Government also introduced Progress 8, an indicator which shows how a school is performing nationally in terms of measuring students' progress in eight core subjects from primary school to secondary. Whilst the process

of calculating Progress 8 is rather complex, the main point to note is that a minus score (below 0) means a school is performing below the national average, a neutral score (0) means a school is performing at the national average, and a positive score (above 0) means the school is performing above the national average. The higher or lower the score, the better or worse the school is performing.

Measuring Westcliff High School for Boys' performance at GCSE in 2016

using the "Progress 8 Score", the School managed to achieve the highest score in the Southend Borough with a point score of 0.66.



Department  
for Education

## ALUMNI NETWORK SOCIALS - SUMMER/AUTUMN 2017

Our Summer Social took place in the West Quad of the School on Friday 23 June 2017. Old Westcliffians, staff, current students and members of the Community Development Office Team met for drinks and nibbles and the opportunity to catch up. Tours of the School and new Sixth Form Building took place from 7.00pm onwards. It was a wonderful evening, enjoyed in glorious sunshine.



Following the success of last year's London drinks we have arranged our Autumn 2017 Alumni Social on Thursday 19 October, starting at 5.30pm. This year we will be meeting up in the Mahogany Bar at Wilton's Music Hall in the heart of London's East End within 10 minutes walking distance of Fenchurch Street Station. For those of you who have not been to Wilton's before you will have the opportunity to experience the world's oldest and last-surviving grand music hall. Further details will follow in the next Alumni Network Newsletter to be issued in September.

## ALUMNI IN THE NEWS: KEVIN O'NEILL

Kevin O'Neill, Head of Neurosurgery at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust in London and Old Westcliffian (1974 to 1981), appeared in the BBC documentary series 'Hospital' broadcast in January this year. The programme in which Kevin - one of the country's leading brain surgeons - and his colleagues appeared saw them deal with some of the country's most complex and challenging neurological cases.



## ALUMNI IN THE NEWS: PROF TONY GERSHLICK

In February this year Professor Tony Gershlick, a Consultant Cardiologist and Old Westcliffian (1963 to 1970), was given a lifetime achievement award by a leading cardiology institution. Prof Gershlick, who grew up in Westcliff, said how it was a “true

honour” to receive the inaugural British Cardiovascular Intervention Society Lifetime Achievement Career Award in recognition of his contribution to the field.

Prof Gershlick, who is now a Consultant Cardiologist and Professor of Interventional Cardiology in Leicester, acknowledged the importance of a strong start to education, praising the School. He said “I thought this was an excellent opportunity to show how important early education is. I had a fantastic start to academia at Westcliff High School for Boys and I am very grateful for that.” Prof Gershlick has been involved in coronary intervention since the mid-Eighties

and still remains active clinically, being on-call for patients with heart attacks and having a full clinical practice.

He has been involved in practice-changing research, conceiving, initiating and running four major national and international trials that have changed the way patients are treated and which have been incorporated into international guidelines for doctors.

Of his award, he said: “This is indeed a true honour and my sincere thanks go to the British Cardiovascular Intervention Society and to all those who have supported me in trying to make a difference.”



## ALUMNI DONATION TO THE GEOLOGY DEPARTMENT

We are extremely grateful to a member of our Alumni Community who recently donated a very generous sum of money in recognition of the enjoyable and worthwhile contribution made to his own education and those of many others by Head of Geology at the School, Mr Nick Cooper. With the sum of money, the Geology Department has been able to purchase a beautiful and varied collection of minerals, rocks and fossils which are now on permanent display near the front entrance of the School for the benefit of the whole School community.

The Old Westcliffian, who wishes to remain anonymous, suggested that the exhibit be named the “Nick Cooper Mineral and Fossil Collection”, in recognition of the fact that Mr Cooper has taught the subject at the





School for many years. The collection has already provoked much thought amongst parents, staff, students and visitors to the School.

Geology has been taught at Westcliff since 1976 when 'O' Level Geology was introduced and 1978 when A-Level Geology commenced. Since then GCSE and A-Level Geology have been taught uninterrupted through to the present day. Central to the teaching of Geology, and well known to many Old Westcliffians, have been the Year 10 Field Courses to Swanage, Dorset (since 1977) and the Year 12 Field Courses to Dyfed (1979 to 1987) and Isle of Arran (1987 to the present day). Such field courses have helped inspire many Old Westcliffians to study the

subject at University and pursue a geology career within such industries as oil and gas, mineral and rock, mining and engineering and environmental geology. Such vital industries provoke an interesting saying about the importance of Geology as a subject: "What we do not grow or hunt for, we must take from the Earth".

In the last twelve months, the Geology Department has prioritised the development of technology. Recent developments have included the School's own seismograph which can record earthquakes from all over the world. This was supported financially by the British Geological Society (BGS) and interesting results are often displayed on the School's website and

social media feeds. Also, the Geology Department has its own Twitter account (@WHSBGeology).

In the near future we hope to provide an opportunity for Old Westcliffian Geologists to link up with each other for the purposes of job and course opportunities, advice, social links and more. The School hopes that Old Westcliffian Geologists working within the industry might also be willing to provide advice to current students and perhaps contribute to the Westcliff Geology Conference held in December each year. Anyone interested in offering their services should contact the Community Development Office in the first instance.

**Contact the Community Development Office by e-mail at [community@whsb.essex.sch.uk](mailto:community@whsb.essex.sch.uk)**

## ALUMNI DONATION TO THE DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

We are very grateful to the family of Robert Marshall, Old Westcliffian (1948 to 1954), for visiting the School earlier this year on Robert's behalf and donating to the Design & Technology Department original patent documentation belonging to Robert.

Robert, who now lives in the USA, left the UK in 1963 to work for the Institute of Technology in Chicago during the 1960's 'Brain Drain' (a term adopted in the 1960s in the context of concerns within the UK that the country was losing skilled scientific and engineering personnel to other countries, notably the USA). The headline of an article about Robert and his family leaving for the USA in the Southend Standard in June 1963 stated "Eastwood man sails off so more scientific 'brains' lost to America".

Robert was born in 1937 and attended Eastwood Junior School before joining Westcliff High School for Boys. After leaving Westcliff in 1954 Robert commenced his technical education at Southend Technical College. His first research position was with the A.W.R.E. on Foulness Island and,

until leaving for America, he was engaged on research work at the A.E.I. laboratories in Harlow. After obtaining his Ph.D in the United States he spent many years in the electronics industry working on items that have significantly changed the way people

live today such as the modern day use of barcoding and the development of the first texting pager. Following retirement Robert became a specialist witness in many large electronic patent violation cases.



# WHSB CENTENARY: MEMORIES AND MEMORABILIA

Following our request in previous editions of the WHSB Alumni Network Newsletter, we would like to thank all those members of our Alumni Community who have made contact, sent us information, and visited the School to lend us their photographs and memorabilia. We hope to continue this momentum as we are now accumulating a wealth

of information and material to work with as this project progresses towards the School's Centenary in 2020. The Community Development Office Team is looking to produce a WHSB Centenary Exhibition for the benefit of both the School and local community. In addition, an approach has been made to the Essex Records Office with regards the loan of

relevant material to the School for the duration of the exhibition in 2020. We will be involving current students in this project and would also be delighted to hear from any members of our Alumni community who would be interested in volunteering to work with us. Please contact Jemima or Nicki in the Community Development Office for further information.

## FORTHCOMING SCHOOL EVENTS FOR ALUMNI

### Summer Sinfonia Concert

**Wednesday 5 July 2017 - 7.30pm**

The Westcliff Sinfonia continues to go from strength to strength, with each term's programme presenting new and exciting challenges. This term will be no different, with the orchestra tackling some of the most thrilling and exciting music in the orchestral repertoire including Bizet, Weber and Stravinsky. Ticket Price: £5.00 for adults, students free of charge.



### Art, Craft & Design Evening

**Thursday 6 July 2017 - 7.30pm**

The annual Art and Design Show is an opportunity to share and celebrate the work created by both the Art and Design & Technology departments at WHSB. The Parents' Association will be providing free refreshments.



### Summer Band and BBQ

**Friday 14 July 2017 - 7.00pm**

Join the Westcliff Big Band in welcoming the summer with lively music and delicious food. Performers at this anticipated annual event include the Saxophone Quartet and the Westcliff Choir who will entertain the crowd with a selection of well-known songs from popular genres while hot dogs and burgers are flipped on the grill. Following the entertainment outside in the quads, the Westcliff Big Band will take to the stage to play a selection of jazz and swing numbers. This event is open to all, costing £16 for adults and £13 for students, including food. Tickets are £7 for adults and £4 for students excluding food.



Tickets for all events are available to purchase at <http://whsb.ticketsource.co.uk/> or via the TicketSource Box Office on 0333 666 3366 (please note that a booking fee of £1.50 will be charged for telephone bookings).

## LAST WORD

If you or someone you know would like to join the WHSB Alumni Network and/or join the OWA, please take a few minutes to register your details via the WHSB School website. Select 'Community' from the Main Menu followed by 'Alumni & Old Westcliffian Association'. You will then receive password information enabling access to the secure 'Alumni' area of the School website. For further information, contact Mrs Clarke or Mrs Weller in the Community Development Office on 01702 475443 or via email ([community@whsb.essex.sch.uk](mailto:community@whsb.essex.sch.uk)). The WHSB Alumni Network is completely free to join and we very much look forward to hearing from you.

In addition, you can follow Westcliff High School for Boys on Facebook and Twitter where you can find out about the latest developments and events taking place at the School. We would be delighted to welcome members of our Alumni Community back to the School to see what is going on. You can also network and keep in touch with other members of the WHSB Alumni Community on LinkedIn and the Old Westcliffian Association (OWA) Facebook and Twitter accounts.

We welcome your comments and contributions for future editions of the Alumni Network Newsletter which will be published termly, with the next scheduled for Summer 2017. Please contact Jemima or Nicki in the Community Development Office on 01702 475443 or via email at [community@whsb.essex.sch.uk](mailto:community@whsb.essex.sch.uk). We look forward to hearing from you.



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