



## Westcliff High School for Boys

# Alumni Network Newsletter

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## Issue 6 - Summer 2018

### WELCOME FROM THE HEADMASTER, MIKE SKELLY

Welcome to the Summer Term edition of the WHSB Alumni Network Newsletter. As we near the end of the academic year, we prepare to say goodbye to those students who will be leaving WHSB at the end of Year 13 following their A Level examinations. As another cohort of most able young people focuses on important examinations and, beyond that, the next step towards realising education and career ambitions, I thank all those Year 13 students who have served the School in a variety of capacities. We are delighted to welcome them to the wider School community, following their departure, and sincerely hope we shall maintain contact with them through the School's Alumni Network and their membership of the Old Westcliffian Association (OWA). WHSB students leaving our Sixth Form, after two years or seven, will have established many friendships and now have this opportunity to be a part of a strong, life-long network of Old Westcliffians. I look forward to joining many of this year's leavers at our Alumni Summer Drinks on Monday 16 July, and at our City of London Alumni Drinks event in October.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those members of our existing Alumni Community who have offered their support, both in making generous donations to the School and by participating in events such as our careers evenings for current pupils. As our plans for the School's forthcoming Centenary are developing, we

also look forward to working with Old Westcliffians in making the preparations. We are planning two significant formal dinner events during 2020, the first of which will be a Centenary Launch event early in the year involving all members of our wider community. Old Westcliffians will be honoured guests at that event and therefore you will shortly receive details of the date in a separate flyer so that you can reserve this in your diary. We shall also be asking for assistance in spreading the word to other Old Westcliffians - there will be tables of 10 people and we would be delighted if you would begin thinking about who you might join on a table for this important event. This event is an opportunity to celebrate, reminisce and to acknowledge the importance of one's education in shaping one's future. It is also an important opportunity to meet with current pupils, to share your experiences with them, and to support them to build a strong foundation for the next 100 years.

Our second dinner will be exclusively for members of the OWA and will be held in September, to coincide with the date of the annual OWA dinner. I am currently working with the President of the OWA, Cllr David Norman MBE, and the OWA Secretary, Mr Terry Birdseye, on this event and we hope that we shall also see a large number of Old Westcliffians at that celebratory dinner. Again, we shall include details of the date for this event in the flyer and we would be delighted if you could



reserve both dates in your diary. There will, of course, be other special events running throughout 2020, and we will aim to circulate the full programme as early as possible in order to keep you updated.

In the meantime, and as our plans progress towards marking this most significant milestone in the history of your School, please do contact either myself or our Community Development Office Team if you or your organisation is able to offer assistance or sponsorship towards the organisation of our Centenary year. Thank you, and I wish you an enjoyable Summer.

## ALUMNI PROFILE: DES DESPRES

After 37 years of superb service at WHSB, Des Despres will retire from teaching in August 2018. Mr Despres joined the School in 1981 and, during that period, has taken on a number of senior positions including Head of PSHEE, Head of Biology, Specialist School Community Links Co-ordinator (pioneering the School's enormously successfully Science Roadshow for local primary schools) and Outward Bounds Education Co-ordinator. Mr Despres has always enjoyed a high profile at the School and many will remember his role in support of School sport.



However, it is perhaps his leadership of the WHSB Annual Ski Trip across the last 37 years that will come to mind for many current and Old Westcliffians. Across those 37 years, it is estimated that Mr Despres, supported by other colleagues, enabled 1,750 pupils to enjoy the experience of skiing. Should any Old Westcliffians and their families want to wish Mr Despres well in his well-deserved retirement he would be delighted to hear from you, although he has said that he would like to use the occasion of his retirement to raise funds for the Aaron Lewis Foundation (ALF). As most in the School community will be aware, ALF was set up following the tragic death of Lt Aaron Lewis, an Old Westcliffian, whilst in the service of his country in Afghanistan in 2008. ALF was the nominated charity of the School in 2015. Those wishing to make a donation to ALF, and to wish Mr Despres well in his retirement,



can do so by going to his JustGiving page at <http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/des-despres>.

The School will mark Mr Despres' retirement towards the end of this Summer Term.

## WELCOME TO YEAR 13 LEAVERS 2018

As a student at Westcliff High School for Boys, whether for two years or seven, you will have made many friends and are currently part of a strong network. That can stay with you for the rest of your life. When you leave WHSB, keeping in touch with your friends, the School, and the Staff can provide support to you as you progress through the different phases of your life and career. There will inevitably be Old Westcliffians at your university who can help you to find your way around, and they can also offer support as you enter your

chosen career. Conversely, as you progress through your career you will have knowledge, experience and skills that you may like to share with pupils still attending WHSB.

This year's Leavers are invited to attend the Alumni Summer Drinks on Monday 16 July 2018 from 7.30pm onwards at the School, and also the OWA Annual Reunion Dinner on Friday 7 September 2018. Taking place in the School Hall, tickets for the three course dinner are priced at £17.50 for Year 13 Leavers and

can be booked online at <http://whsb.ticketsource.co.uk/>.



## ALUMNI NETWORK SUMMER SOCIAL

Join us for our Alumni annual summer get-together in School on Monday 16 July 2018. This year's drinks will follow the Old Westcliffian



Association's AGM which commences at 7.00pm. The OWA provides invaluable support to the School and the AGM affords the opportunity to review the Association's activities over the past twelve months and to look ahead towards the coming year. This is particularly significant in light of the School's upcoming centenary in 2020 and we would encourage as many members of our Alumni Community as possible to attend.

Wine, beer, soft drinks and nibbles

will be available from 7.30pm either outside in one of the Quads (weather permitting) or in the Forum area of the School's modern Sixth Form Centre. This enjoyable evening enables past pupils and staff to network with fellow alumni and hear recent School news. Tours of the School will also be available with Prefects from our current student body. For further information please contact our Community Development Office Team. We look forward to seeing you there.

# WHSB DRAMA SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Every two years, Westcliff High School for Boys stages a major whole School musical production in the School Hall. WHSB's last production of *Oliver!* was seen by over 1,100 students, teachers, parents and members of our local community. It was a significant event in the life of the School and helped bring our school and local communities closer together.

In February 2019, the School will be staging "Guys and Dolls", considered by many to be the perfect musical comedy, and we will again be hoping

to show this to over 1,000 people. At present, we are aiming to fund this through ticket sales. Sponsorship of this production could help us make this an even more successful and spectacular event, giving a more enjoyable experience to the students involved and raising the School's profile within our local community. We would welcome sponsorship in specific areas such as costumes, lighting or choreography, or general support for the project.

To discuss ways in which you could

help, please contact our Community Development Office on 01702 475443 or [community@whsb.essex.sch.uk](mailto:community@whsb.essex.sch.uk) in the first instance.



## OWA ANNUAL REUNION DINNER 2018

This year's OWA Annual Reunion Dinner is on Friday 7 September 2018. The event promises to be, as always, an extremely enjoyable evening with fine food and reminiscing. This year's speaker will be Old Westcliffian Neil Harman, celebrated sports journalist, author and latterly chief tennis correspondent for *The Times* (pictured above with Roger Federer). 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 leaving School this year and those in full-time education). Over 100 people spanning eight decades have attended the last two dinners and we are looking forward to building on that success.

The menu for the evening is:

- Terrine of red pepper, sundried tomato and avocado;
- Braised rump of English beef and ale pie with vegetables and new potatoes;
- Raspberry torte - fresh sponge

with raspberry mousse, summer fruits and ice cream;

- Cheese board with celery, grapes and biscuits;
- Tea or coffee with chocolates.

A vegetarian alternative is available - please state this in your dietary requirements when booking.

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 online at <http://whsb.ticketsource.co.uk/>.



## ALUMNI IN THE NEWS: STEVEN FINE

Steven Fine, CEO of City Broker Peel Hunt and Old Westcliffian (1977 to 1984), appeared in the London Evening Standard's Business Section in April this year.

The article can be read in full via the Standard's website: <https://www.standard.co.uk/business/meet-steven-fine-the-southend-cheeky-chappie-leading-peel-hunts-city-advance-a3819296.html>. Our thanks to *The Standard* for granting us their

permission to reprint this section of their article.



## DONATION

We are very grateful to the family of Michael G Smedley (Old Westcliffian 1943-1950) for their very kind donation of a whole School photograph taken in 1948. Michael Smedley was appointed School Captain (Head Boy) in 1949. The photograph has been framed and placed on the wall outside the Headmaster's Study.

## STORIES

Our thanks to those members of the School's Alumni Community who have contributed to the '100 Years 100 Stories' project. More information will follow in subsequent editions of the Alumni Network Newsletter.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

The School posts regular updates on Facebook and Twitter (both @WHSforBoys) - follow both sites for all the latest news and photographs.

# ALUMNI OBITUARIES

## Angela Skinner, Former Member of Staff (1983 - 2013)

Mrs Angela Skinner passed away on 20 March 2018. Members of the School's Alumni Community, amongst whom a number of current long serving staff, will remember Mrs Skinner as the former Head of Science at WHSB.

A member of the Senior Management Group and an outstanding teacher, Mrs Skinner was highly popular with students, especially those studying A Level Physics. She gave over thirty years of dedicated and loyal service to the School.

Following retirement, Mrs Skinner kindly returned (part-time) to School to assist with A Level teaching and to support her former colleagues. Outside of School Mrs Skinner enjoyed great success as a Senior Examiner for A Level Physics as well as working as an Ofsted Inspector. Mrs Skinner's contribution enriched the lives of generations of very many Old Westcliffians and we honour her outstanding contribution.

## Professor WGP Lamb, Old Westcliffian (1931 - 1938)

Professor Lamb's obituary was compiled by Mr Raymond Batkin and published in the Guardian on 25 April 2018.

"My mentor, research supervisor and friend, the physicist WGP (Percy) Lamb, who has died aged 97, was a member of the celebrated King's

College London team that contributed to the unravelling of the structure of DNA in the early 1950s. His PhD work at King's was supervised by John Randall and as a result Percy joined the team led by Randall and Maurice Wilkins, which also included Rosalind Franklin, who was responsible for the famous "photo 51" that revealed the structure of a double helix.

Percy specialised in the use of light and electron microscopes to study the nature of cell nuclei. He worked closely with others including Rene Bovey, Marlene Friedlander and Angela Martin during the formative period of the research.

He was born in Southend-on-Sea, Essex, the only child of William Lamb, a civil and structural engineer, and his wife, Letitia (nee Scaers). After attending the nearby Westcliff high school for boys, he went on to study physics at Queen Mary College, London, graduating with a first in 1941.

He was seconded to the Armaments Research Establishment (ARE) – the forerunner of the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE) – at Foulness, Essex, where, throughout the remainder of the Second World War, he was involved in the measurement of blast waves. He wryly remarked that the main preoccupation of the wartime ARE work was "trying not to get oneself killed". He was with ARE until 1947, when he went to King's for his PhD. He remained there until 1952.



He returned to the AWRE in Aldermaston, Berkshire, where he developed specific instrumentation to analyse the effects of shock waves including the UK's first atom bomb trials off Western Australia before briefly joining JD Bernal's group at Birkbeck College, London, in 1959 to set up an electron diffraction unit.

In 1960 he was appointed research fellow in physics at the Sir John Cass College of Science and Technology (now part of London Metropolitan University) where he supervised research in the Ultra High Vacuum Group and where I first met him, in 1970, when he became my research supervisor. He retired in 1985 but continued working on many projects until well past his 90th birthday.

Percy was a versatile and talented scientist of the old school. He had a polite and somewhat reserved manner, but was a kind, loyal and compassionate friend to those who knew him well."

*With thanks to Raymond Batkin for granting his permission for this article to be reprinted in the Alumni Network Newsletter.*

# CENTENARY SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

We would like to invite you, or your company, to consider becoming involved in our Centenary Programme of Events, in the run up to and throughout 2020, the School's Centenary Year. Of course, we offer these opportunities in order to make a real difference to the experiences of our current pupils and the wider community, but if you are able to consider sponsorship there are many potential benefits from an association with a School which features regularly in the top 50 State Schools in the Country.

The WHSB Community is made up of several constituent groups with whom a sponsoring partner may have appropriate exposure to, including almost 1,200 pupils living in the local catchment area and throughout Essex, over 1,000 families and more than 5,000 Alumni in the UK, other European countries and beyond. Equally, the School hosts events involving external organisations, and many external Sports Clubs including rugby, football, cricket, hockey, athletics, badminton and archery utilise the School's sports

facilities each year. The School attracts thousands of visitors each year to its sports events, exhibitions, productions, concerts and prospective Open Evenings.

If you would like to discuss ways in which you, or your organisation, could become involved in sponsorship and make a difference, please contact the Community Development Office ([community@whsb.essex.sch.uk](mailto:community@whsb.essex.sch.uk)).

# ALUMNI CITY SOCIAL AUTUMN 2018

Following the success of the last two years' networking events, this year's WHSB Alumni City of London drinks are planned for Thursday 18 October. This year we will be gathering from 5.30pm until 7.30pm in Davy's Wine Bar 'The City Flogger', 60 Mark Lane, London EC3R 7ND – a stone's throw from Fenchurch Street Station.

This London networking event is aimed at ALL members of our Alumni Community and further information will follow in next term's Alumni Network Newsletter and on our Social Media feed. We look forward to meeting more members of our Alumni Community, so please do spread the word.



## FORTHCOMING SCHOOL EVENTS FOR ALUMNI

### Art, Craft & Design Evening Thursday 5 July 2018 - 7.30pm

The School's annual Art, Craft & Design Evening is an opportunity to share and celebrate the work created by both the Art and Design & Technology departments. The Parents' Association will be providing complimentary refreshments. Entrance is free.



### Summer Band & BBQ Friday 13 July 2018 - 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 £14 for adults and £10 for pupils, including food. Tickets are £7 for adults and £4 for pupils excluding food. Booking for this event closes on Friday 6 July at 9.00am.

***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 applies 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 Autumn 2018. Please contact Mrs Clarke or Mrs Weller 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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