



Eton College

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'FLOREAT ETONA' – LET ETON FLOURISH

Most of us know something about Eton College. Probably the names of a few politicians or Prime Ministers that were schooled there - or perhaps your perception of the college may still be, 'an old academic institution where corporal punishment, fagging and top hats are de rigueur' ?

That all disappeared before the mobile phone was even invented. So too has the 5 a.m. reveille and Spartan existence recorded back in the mid-16th century with prayer chanting before breakfast and strict teachings in Latin.

We are aiming to write something for the majority of us that are not Etonians and may never have even visited the place. Here is a glimpse with some insight to what really goes on, so welcome to the 21st century.

For those Etonians, past and present, joining The Journals magazine for the first time – we have endeavoured to be as accurate as possible so please enjoy the read. I'm told that there are 15,550 members of the Old Etonian Association (OEA).

James Bond, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Tarzan and Lord Greystoke came out of Eton College – courtesy of fictional writers Ian Fleming and E R Burroughs respectively. Both were pupils at the school. You may have heard of John Le Carre who taught here in the 1950's and George Orwell who was a dry bob on sunny days. HM King Prajadhipok of Siam, HM King Leopold III of the Belgians, HM King Dipendra of Nepal and HRH Prince Henry and Prince Richard, Dukes of Gloucester were Royals at the school.

And we can't forget HRH's Prince William and Prince Harry. Speaking with Giles Kent who works at a local bookshop, I discovered that the gold covered book 'Hurricane' by Charlie Higson is a bestseller with pupils - which happens to be about a young 007. Thrillers continue to sell.

If any of our readers also watch a television you may have enjoyed an episode of the medical drama House with actor Hugh Laurie aka Dr House? Mr Laurie is an Old Etonian - although we can assure you that students are treated with greater skill than the screen character Dr House who seems to have left his Hippocratic oath behind on his way to work.

Damian Lewis is another Etonian actor who has made it big in Steven Spielberg's movie Band of Brothers. The Provost praises "Julian Ovenden playing a lead role on stage in Marguerite as our future Geilgud" Sir Matthew Pinsent, 4 time Olympic gold medallist rowed and studied at the college. Peter Benenson was a pupil and later went on to establish Amnesty International. Sir Ranulph T W Fiennes and the Duke of Wellington are past boarders at the school.

American boys at Eton, Thomas Lynch and Thomas Nelson were signatories of the American Declaration of Independence. There are currently pupils from 30 nations studying here. The Victoria Cross is still 'The Highest Military Award for Conspicuous Bravery in the Presence of the Enemy' and 37 of them have been awarded to Old Etonians. The largest number of any school.



A VC was awarded posthumously to Colonel H Jones in combat at Goose Green in the Falklands in 1982. *“The chaplain who held Colonel Jones in his arms as he perished has ended up as chaplain at Eton. The blue plaque here was unveiled by his widow”* (Sir Eric Anderson, current Provost).

On Saturday the 26th April, 2008 whilst writing this article I took time out to gather with the crowds for the return of the 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards in Afghanistan. They marched past Windsor Castle in glorious sunshine with a traditional band and the bells of the nearby Church of St John’s the Baptist saluted them with Auld Lang Syne. Some were not marching due to injuries from the conflict – but still in uniform. Others were perhaps watching from above.

‘If I should die, think only this of me : That there’s some corner of a foreign field that is forever England’ Rupert Brooke’s The Soldier 1915 One in four Etonians that went into battle never returned. In WW I, 1150 were killed.

We will look at the labyrinth of fine Listed Buildings, the magical interior art that adorn the ceilings and exterior architecture but also speak with the Old Etonians Association, the Provost and his crew.

Let’s first briefly look at its beginnings 568 years ago. In 1440 Henry VI founded ‘The King’s College of Our Lady of Eton’ and in 1441, just a year later, established King’s College at Cambridge which was to be supplied by scholars from Eton.

“By way of background, Eton, like other educational establishments, is a charity and under new legislation, in order to retain charitable status, may need to demonstrate

an effective fundraising capacity for bursaries. So if we wish to preserve the breadth, quality and individual nature of the Eton experience and wish to put something back, then the best way we can do that is to contribute to the long term value of the College’s endowments.” Sir Dominic Cadbury, MA, MBA from Eton News & Events, Lent 2008, Fellow at Eton College since 1996

The college raises money in many ways and some of the charities that have benefited include : Whizz-Kidz, Marie Curie Cancer Care, National Deaf Children’s Society, The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths, Schools in Africa and Afghanistan.

A Lexicon

We’ve compiled a Glossary to help define and translate some of the ‘Eton speak’ foreign to some of us. The purpose is to reflect the heritage, traditions and history surrounding the school.

Usage: (B) indicates a term generally used by boys (and adults too) whereas (H) shows a historical term still sometimes encountered.

- Abracadabra** – is Eton’s basic academic timetable, determining who does what when
- Almanac** – an outline diary for the current and forthcoming terms
- Beak** – a Master, i.e. teacher, male or female (B)
- Burning Bush** – an antique lamp-post (1864) conveniently positioned right in the centre of Eton often used as a meeting point

Bill – if a boy misbehaves, he may be placed ‘On the Bill’, which means that the Head Master (Mr Anthony Little, MA since 2002) or Lower Master will see him and rebuke or punish him appropriately

Capping – Acknowledging a Master when passing him out of doors

CCF – The Combined Cadet Force or Corps, provides military and adventurous training for volunteers. HRH Prince Harry was part of the CCF

Colleger – One of the 70 King’s Scholars with the letters KS after their surname in School lists and who live in the College

Dry Bobs/Wet Bobs – Cricketers/Rowers

Fagging – A fag performed tasks for a senior boy. The practice was abolished in the seventies

Fellows – The Provost (Chairman) and Fellows constitute the School’s governing body

Fourth of June – A special gala day when parents, friends and relations are made welcome. An important day in the school year celebrating George III birthday, Sports, Speeches and a Procession of Boats. The Eton Boating song was written on 4th June, 1863 by Master William Cory and composed by Captain Algernon Drummond whilst serving with the Rifle Brigade in India*

Head Man – The Head Master and CEO (B)

Jackets – The school uniform at one time for boys, under a certain height, abandoned in the mid-sixties. The top hat was abandoned in 1940 so pupils could wear a gas mask if needed during WW II.

King’s Scholars – One of the 70 ‘poor scholars’ provided for in Henry VI’s original statutes. They are housed in College and are hence generally referred to as Collegers.

Non-Dies – A day on which there was no regular work whatever (H)

Oppidan – Any boy who is not a Colleger. There are about 50 Oppidans who live in 24 Oppidan Houses. An Oppidan Scholar is one who has distinguished himself academically and receive no financial benefit – but have OS after their surnames in School lists

Pop – The school prefects, more properly known as The Eton Society

Rowing Lake – A rowing course of Olympic quality near Dorney. The College’s rowing lake here is 2200 m long with 8 lanes, each 13.5 m wide with a minimum depth of 3.5 m. The Eton College Rowing Centre will be the venue for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and flat-water canoeing events (Sir Mathew Pinsent is a Trustee)

St Andrew’s Day – An open day for parents in late November, its principal features being the annual Wall Game match between the Collegers and the Oppidans

Tap – Tap serves food and alcoholic drinks to C and B blocks

Tug – A Colleger (B)

The Wall Game – Invented in Eton played throughout the year by boys of all ages. A 12 page Article has been produced to try and clarify the rules, teams, tactics and regulations of the game. It helps to watch the game to understand it.

A Brief History of Time

(EC) & (OE) are both an Eton Connection & Old Etonian :

2200 – 1300 BC – Stonehenge

AD 50 – London founded

105 – Paper invented in China

1078 – Work starts on the Tower of London

1209 – Cambridge University founded (EC)

1422 – The infant Henry (VI) succeeds to the English and French thrones (EC)

1440 – Eton College founded (EC)

1471 – William Caxton produced the first printed book in English

1497/1503 – Leonardo Da Vinci’s The Last Supper/Mona Lisa

1594 – Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet (1616 death of Shakespeare)

1650’s – The first Coffee Houses open

1712 – Sir Robert Walpole becomes First or ‘Prime’ Minister (EC)

1815 – The Battle of Waterloo/Duke of Wellington (EC)

1859 – Charles Darwin’s The Origin of Species

1877 – 1st Wimbledon Tennis Championships (All England Croquet Club 1868)

1926 – John Logie Baird invents TV

1940-7 Winston Churchill is Prime Minister

1940 – The Battle of Britain, the RAF wins the ‘battle of the skies’

1949 – George Orwell’s 1984 (EC)

1969 – Neil Armstrong conquers the moon

1982 – The Falklands war (EC)

1991 – Sir Tim Berners Lee invents the World Wide Web

2003 – England wins the Rugby World Cup

2005 – England wins the Ashes

2008 – Military struggle for peace continues in Iraq and Afghanistan (EC)

2008 – Boris Johnson new London Mayor, David Cameron leads Conservatives (EC)

2012 – Olympic games commence in the United Kingdom (EC)

1740 – ‘Rule Britannia !’ Words/Music by J Thompson/Dr T Arne (OE)

1745 – ‘God Save the King’ Words/Music by H Carey/Dr T Arne (OE)

1897 – ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ Words/Music by A C Benson (OE)/ E Elgar

1918 – ‘I Vow to Thee My Country’ Words/Music by C Spring-Rice (OE) /G Holst

Eton College’s Listed Buildings

It makes sense that the Statue of Henry VI (by Francis Bird 1719) positioned in the centre of the school yard is listed as Grade I. After all the college was his idea. In December, 1940 a German bomber jettisoned its remaining load and part of its ‘drop’ landed and exploded within 100 yards of the statue. The Northwest part of the yard was badly damaged and as a consequence repairs were made.

Henry VI remained unscathed and resplendent in his Garter robes.

The Foundation Buildings are all Grade I (1441-1766) and include the College Chapel, Upper School, Lower School, School Yard Buildings, Lupton’s Tower, Cloister Buildings including Library and College Hall, Brewhouse Gallery and adjacent kitchens.



We also asked for an outline of Listed surrounding buildings which has included properties that stretch about a mile to the Thames river and west to Eton Wick. These have been identified and given to us by name, location, address and in parts as an amalgamation – such as the ‘Church of St John the Evangelist (incorporating Sanatorium, Surgery and Flats)’.

These are Grade II and our count gives us between 45 and 55 listings. A **Grade II*** listing hasn’t been factored in. Today some are Inns, antique shops and restaurants such as the Cockpit – now serving fragrant Indian food. They remain relatively unchanged.

The wall paintings in the Chapel are the most considerable works of art in the College and are the work of at least four master painters who completed them between 1479 and 1487. They depict miracles of the Virgin Mary to whom the Chapel is dedicated and on the south side they tell a popular medieval story of a mythical Empress.

The paintings were whitewashed over by the College barber in 1560 by order of the new Protestant church authorities and remained obscured and forgotten about for a very long time. It was 1923 when stall canopies were removed that they were revealed and subsequently cleaned and restored.

Looking up to the heaven and stars the roof appears to be late-medieval fan vaulting however it was completed in 1959, superseding the old wooden roof which had become unsafe due to rot and death watch beetles. The new roof, carrying out the Founder’s original intention for a stone vault, is of stone-faced concrete hung from steel trusses.

Meeting The Provost Sir Eric Anderson, KT, FRSE 10.00 am, 8th May, 2008

To say that Sir Eric knows something about life is more than an understatement. At points in his career he has been Housemaster to a Prime Minister, Tony Blair and Master to the current Mayor of London, Alexander Boris Johnson and Conservative Party Leaders, David Cameron - “1982 was the year Boris was here, yes I remember that boy ... there’s been so many Johnsons through here” commented the Provost as he flicked through the relevant almanacs.

He pulled up his chair next to mine and we spoke comfortably and in depth for half an hour or so before he gave me a tour of the Chapel and outlined the story behind the memorial plaque of the fallen soldier Colonel H Jones – as we stood in front of it.

“You’re right, as The Provost I’m acting Chairman of the College whereas Anthony Little the Headmaster is the CEO.

That’s easy, Eton means Island Farm.

It was the 5th December, 1940 the eve of the 500th anniversary of the college when one of Hitler’s bombs hit – it blew out most of the stained glass windows in the chapel, so the following day when we were in there, we all had to

wear jackets to keep warm from the wind blowing through the gaps and to be careful of all the shattered glass fragments throughout.

John Piper designed the replacement stained windows which (executed in glass by Patrick Reyntiens) I believe took him about 10 years – it was started by an Irish lady (Evie Hone of Dublin) but she told us that she was getting too old for the work.

Proudest moment ? Proudest moment was as Chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund for 4 years. I was able to help save and restore old buildings, revive old museums in parts of the country full of heritage and history, which eventually received a blue plaque. So when I travel around the country with my grandchildren I can point to those signs and tell them that I helped make this happen. That’s my proudest moment”

I asked the Chairman something I thought to be more academic. If he were a contestant on Mastermind which topic would he pick ?

He immediately pointed to a bust of a man in the corner of his office adding “the Life and Works of Sir Walter Scott” I’m sure you’d fly to a winning final, I added. Smiling but with no uncertainty he responded - “I might not do so well on the general knowledge”.

Shortly after this light hearted exchange I was to learn that in 1972, our Provost had written and released The Journal of Sir Walter Scott (a 700 page edition of his Diary) – Sir Walter Scott was a renowned Scottish author and poet (Rob Roy, Ivanhoe). Not to be confused with Captain Robert F Scott the Antarctic explorer. Despite my mix up with the 2 Scotts, another ex-Etonian was revealed - Captain W Oates who joined Scott on that fateful journey as he went out into the sub-zero temperatures to his death. Captain Oates did so knowingly, in his attempt to make the rations go further for the others.

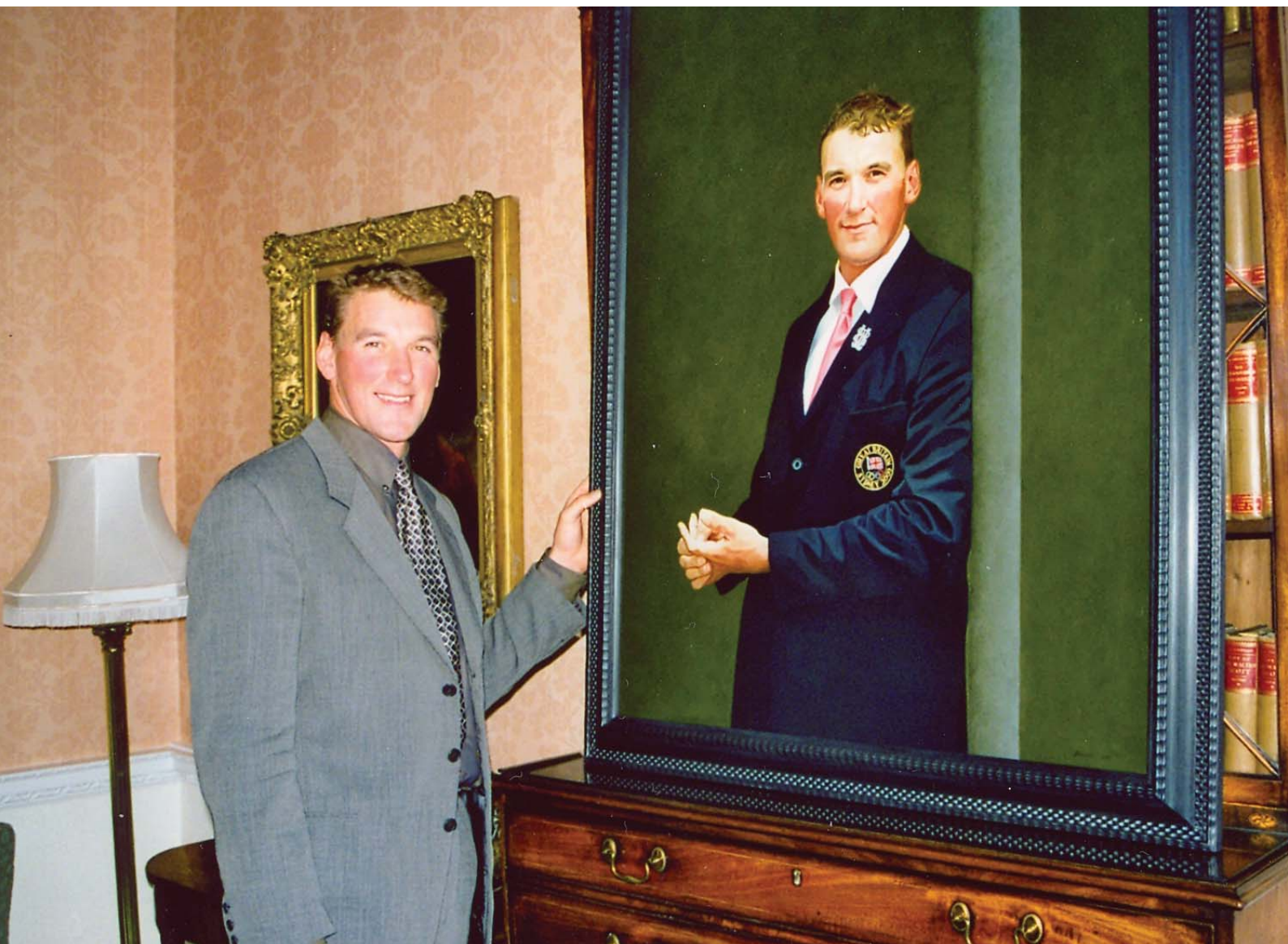
When Sir Eric and I parted company at the school gates he asked me where I was parked, we shook hands and he said “I look forward to reading the article”.

Leaving the College

Eton College’s bricks, mortar and fibre remain firmly on the ground at its birthplace in Berkshire not far from Windsor Castle and although it’s pupils have an impact at an international level within our global village, the school has not moved into any type of franchising/expansion – unlike Dulwich, Harrow and Shrewsbury that are tapping into the Far East for profit and expansion.

Eton remains a boarding school where teachers and pupils live within a square mile of historic buildings, fields and waterways doing what it does best – elevating students to a standard of academic achievement envied by many.

Equally, Eton has a reputation for sports and tradition and is proud of sharing it’s heritage, moral standards and



discipline with students who range from the age of 13 to 18. It's been working successfully for over 500 years. The feeling I got was one of mutual respect and courtesy between all those who lived and worked in and around the college.

A smile was brought to my face one morning before a scheduled meeting with the Photographic Archive. I was early and sat parked in my car with the roof open. I watched Eton in action. Several boys in 'uniform' walked quickly from one building to another chattering with books under one arm, the refuse collection lorries were at work and another man worked on his own sweeping leaves into a trolley.

Then rather suddenly, a senior stocky Master swept hastily passed in his flowing black and white gowns towards a narrow lane.

The man sweeping the leaves took a break, looked over and spoke softly "Good morning Alan, sir" whereby the Master raised his left arm into the air, jiggled his hand as acknowledgement and continued with his journey.

I headed to the entrance of the School Yard for my meeting still 10 minutes early and was greeted by a Mr Philips who

had already been there 20 minutes. We shook hands, smiled and headed towards his part of the college, chatting on the way.

I left Eton College that day with some great photos. The clock began chiming as I walked back through the building quadrangle observing the many commemorative headstones to those who gave their lives to their country.

May I add that since my interview with Sir Eric Anderson in this article, Lord Waldegrave has taken over from him as The Provost.

Floreat Etona – "Let Eton Flourish"

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