

Mitcham Grammar School for Boys

Staff Obituaries

A J Doig MA Gerald Bernbaum Norman Morris

A J DOIG MA



Assistant Mathematics Master - Rutlish School Merton Park (1923-1930)
Headmaster of Mitcham County Grammar School for Boys (1930-1952)
Headmaster of Surbiton Grammar School for Boys (1952-1965)

Alan John DOIG was born on 1 February 1901 (the day after Queen Victoria's funeral) in the Whitechapel Road where his father and mother ran a highly acclaimed and well used bakery business. He was the youngest of three sons. Being within the "sound of Bow bells" he was considered to be a true cockney and until the age of 10 went to local schools.

John then went on to Christ's Hospital (Blue Coat School) based in Horsham until the age of 18 when he progressed to Trinity College in Cambridge. His mother died during his first year at College. He studied mathematics and history there and obtained a BA at the end of his time. A few years later he attained a MA.

John's eldest brother enlisted in the army and served in WW1 but joined his father in the bakery on his demob. His middle brother who also attended Christ's Hospital joined the navy when he left school and reached the rank of Captain at his height, also being much involved with other high level naval matters in Portsmouth where he lived until his death.

After coming out of college, John got a position at Rutlish School, Merton Park, under the headmastership of a Mr Vamish, as a mathematics teacher. One of John's passions was playing rugby and he started refereeing and coaching the school's teams and in the process taught my mother's younger brothers and one thing led to another and as a result he and she married on 29 August 1925.

My eldest brother, Noel, was born in 1927 and I came along 4 years later. Another son, Clive, was born 9 years later in 1940. My mother died quite young in 1956 and my father remarried in 1960 and his widow will reach her 90 birthday early next year.

Noel (a doctor of medicine) emigrated to Canada in 1957 with his wife and family where he has proved to be most successful and now is the proud grandparent of some 20 grandchildren. I went into the Civil Service and Clive followed a career in television with the BBC, later becoming freelance. We are now all retired.

Alan John Doig had already been appointed at the age of 29 as Headmaster of Mitcham in 1930 and at the time was considered to be the youngest headmaster in Surrey. In 1940 a group from his school and part of the girls' school were evacuated to Weston-Super-Mare for just over a year when over one weekend the building there shared by four separate schools was bombed and therefore it meant us returning to London.

Our family had always lived in the Mitcham area but now found accommodation in Croydon where we resided until in 1958 when we moved back to West Wimbledon.

Towards the end of the war it was arranged that the senior boys of the school were taken on organised harvest camps. The first one, I recall, was on the top of one of the hills surrounding Cheddar Gorge and every morning the camp was engulfed in a mist until the sun was up. The cooking was done in straw ovens in holes in the ground. Everything was very basic. It did not prove to be very satisfactory or comfortable for all those concerned so from then there was a change of direction and for two or three years consecutively the camps were held at Cowdray Park in Midhurst. The boys were accompanied by a couple or so of their mothers who volunteered to help with the catering (mostly done in much more civilised fashion this time in potterton boilers) and a few of their teachers. VJ victory was declared whilst we were at one of these camps and celebrations were held in the town over one weekend which proved to be great fun and exciting.

John stayed at Mitcham until January 1952 when he attained another headship at Surbiton Grammar School for Boys. He remained at Surbiton until he retired in 1965, again being regarded as the longest serving headmaster in Surrey. Because Surbiton Grammar was being done away with under Labour policies, he helped to plan and set up Esher Sixth Form College which was to replace it but because he was near retirement decided he would not go on to be the head teacher there. He did, however, continue part-time at another school (Raynes Park County) for a little while after he retired.

John was a well loved and much respected teacher during all his years as a Headmaster and always his boys came first and he had a high regard for them all. He served on many committees and the NUT where many of his views were taken on board so he contributed much to the education world.

John's greatest passion was Gilbert and Sullivan Operas which he loved to produce and direct with his younger

John had a very strong rich bass singing voice and was in the Fleet Street Choir where he was the only amateur among professionals performing old English music and madrigals unaccompanied. When their conductor died (a T E Lawrence) the group either disbanded and did not perform again but I cannot recall John attending after that event. John also was a very accomplished cello player and was self taught on the piano.

Alan John DOIG had a long, happy and fairly active retirement, playing a lot of golf and bridge which he loved to do. Unfortunately, he suffered with dementia during the last three years of his life and died just after his 80th birthday in May 1981 of a chest infection.

Bob Bateman



Bob Bateman who served the club as player, captain , coach, committee member, chairman and ultimately club president, has died at the age of 73 after a long illness ..

During his college years Bob played for Rosslyn Park and Streatham and Croydon. On his return he became an outstanding captain for West playing mainly in the back row, but also featuring on the wing and at hooker both for the club and the county.

Club Chairman Peter Olsen says: "Bob was a formidable player who was a member of the highly succesful Durham side of the 60s.

"As a West player he was known and respected across the country, and he was equally successful as an administrator when he was one of the leading lights who took the club to the very highest level.

"In between he was a no-nonsense coach who helped produce many fine players. Throughout his life he had a tremendous impact on the club and continued to offer support whenever and wherever he could.

"We will all miss him very much."

Bob, who had moved to Shropshire after his second marriage, leaves Barbara and sons Stephen and Richard. Our thoughts and sympathies are with them.

By Dave Picken - May 7 2013

Norman Morris

Norman taught Maths at Mitcham CGS from 1958, when he was 26 years old, until the early 60's, when he moved to Bromley Grammar School. He had been recruited to Mitcham by G.J.P. Courtney, who was head from 1952 to 59 before moving to Isleworth Grammar School. Mr Courtney then recruited Norman as Head of Maths at Isleworth in 1968.

At the age of 39, Norman married Liz Courtney (the head's daughter!) in 1971, and they moved to Derbyshire where Norman specialised in teacher training firstly at what is now Derby University and then at Nottingham University. He was chief examiner for the Cambridge Board (later OCR) for many years. After early retirement, he did private coaching, quite successfully with even the most reluctant pupils.

Music was a great love- he played the piano until arthritis made it too difficult, and listened to his collection of opera CDs. He was a member of the Derby Bach Choir and attended summer courses at Dartington. At Mitcham he was credited in the G&S HMS Pinafore programme of 1961 as 'Valuable assistance at rehearsals given by'. Of course Mr. Courtney had continued the MCGS's G&S's tradition and he took it to Isleworth; it was at these performances and at the Courtneys' house in Isleworth that Norman and Liz met.

Norman and father-in-law, Mr Courtney, were very close, shared many interests and had a great respect for each other; and in Liz's words 'Norm and my father were at their happiest, professionally, at MCGS'. It was also the time when two other young teachers at MCGS, David Harris (who taught French) and Adrian Jackson (who taught English) worked with him there, became Norman's greatest friends, and remained close family friends until they pre-deceased him.

Norman loved teaching. It was what he had always wanted to do. He never regretted the choices he made in life and was proud that the children shared his values. (Apparently some of his wider family thought dismissively that he 'should have made something of his life'.)

It is, of course, as a teacher at MCGS that some OM's will remember Norman. I remember him only as a teacher at 6th form. There he showed how good a mathematician he was and how well he could get it over to boys only a few years younger than himself. The 1961 photo of Norman on a walking holiday in Snowdonia with some of the 6th formers shows him clearly getting on well with them. And I remember Norman taking a couple of us to the famous Soho restaurant The Gay Hussar to celebrate our exam and university entrance successes. He was dedicated and interested and many of us owe him a great deal.

Norman Morris was born in Manchester 2nd April 1932 and died of Covid in 2020. He is survived by Liz; and by his daughter Sophia, who works for the NHS; and by his twin sons Ted and Sam who are both music teachers. He was a doting father when he recovered from the shock arrival of all three within two years relatively late in his life. He also leaves 5 grandchildren who brought him great joy. He played a large part in their lives during his later years.

Prepared by Brian Forsdick