

**Mitcham Grammar School for Boys**

**Obituaries**

***Gerald Bernbaum***

***George Farebrother***

***Hugh Clarke***

***Alan Simpson***

***A J Doig MA***

***Don Walsh***

## ***Gerald Bernbaum***

My friend Gerald Bernbaum, who has died aged 81, was a poor East End boy who went on to have a successful academic career and became vice-chancellor of South Bank University, London.

Gerry was the son of Ben, a tailor, and his wife, Betty (nee Sack), and the grandson of Jewish immigrants from Poland and Ukraine. He was brought up in a rented house in Hackney, east London, with an outside toilet. He attended Hackney Downs School, at the time a grammar school. From there he went on to study at the London School of Economics, enrolling for statistics but switching to economics and politics.

He began his career in 1958 as a history teacher at Mitcham county grammar school, in south London. In 1962 he became head of history at Rutherford school, Paddington, but in 1964 he gained a lectureship at the School of Education at Leicester University.

Aged just 37, he became a professor there in 1974 and, shortly after that, director of the School of Education. He wrote extensively: one of his books, *Schooling in Decline* (1979), a critique of dysfunctional teaching and embedded inequalities in the school system, became recognised as a classic.

In 1985 Gerry became pro-vice-chancellor of the university. His accomplishments included overseeing Leicester's unlikely establishment as a European leader in space and rocket research and in genetics. Gerry also captained Leicester University staff cricket team for about 20 years.

In 1993 he became vice-chancellor of South Bank University, which had only just achieved university status. He

Gerry was a natural leader. He grasped issues and resolved them with a fairness and aplomb that brought him deep respect and loyalty. He described himself as "a man of strong views, weakly held", by which he meant he mixed tolerance and humour with determination and resolve.

He is survived by his long-term partner, Margaret Mathieson, by his two sons, Kevin and Anthony, from his marriage to Pamela (nee Cohen), which ended in divorce, and by five grandchildren.

Anthony Giddens Thu 26 Oct 2017

## ***Hugh Jenner-Clarke (aka Hugh Clarke)***

Known at school as Hugh Clarke. His father George's birth surname was Clarke, but his mother remarried a Mr Jenner after her first husband died and Hugh took the surname of his stepfather and prefixed this to Clarke.

Hugh died on 31st March 2016 at Cape Town in South Africa and I'm still piecing together details of his life, but what I have is summarised below:-

Student at Chelsea College from 1950 to 1954; he graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Geology

Joined the mining company AngloAmerican in 1954 and was seconded to De Beers in South Africa where he worked as a field geologist specialising in diamond exploration

Went freelance and became an independent consulting geologist in the late 1950s (still exploring for diamonds in South Africa, but later worked in Canada, Australia and other countries)

Became director in charge of exploration at Firestone Diamonds plc in 1995 (in South Africa)

Helped establish Frontier Rare Earths in 2002 and acted as consultant for rare earths exploration in South Africa and other countries

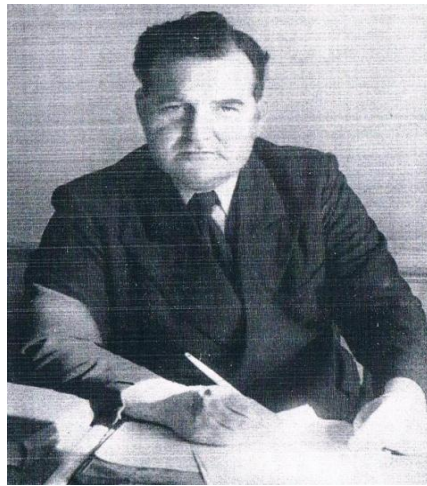
Hugh had a species of pollen named after him by the South African Museum in 1985 - this was to honour his discovery of this rare species when he was exploring for diamonds in the 1960s; the species is *Spinicolpites jennerclarkei*. This is mentioned in the Annals of the South African museum on p68 which says "The species is named after Mr Hugh Jenner-Clarke, an exploration geologist, who during many years work has located numerous kimberlite pipes in the Gamoep area". A digitised version of the book can be found here: [https://archive.org/stream/annalsofsouthaf951985sout/annalsofsouthaf951985sout\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/annalsofsouthaf951985sout/annalsofsouthaf951985sout_djvu.txt)

The Mining Feeds journal of 29th June 2011 carried an interview with James Kenny, CEO of Frontier Rare Earths in which he mentioned how he first met Hugh: "On an early visit we were very fortunate to meet a renowned diamond exploration geologist by the name of Hugh Jenner-Clarke who had, at that time, spent over 40 years in the diamond exploration sector in South Africa and elsewhere and had some important discoveries to his name. On a handshake we formed a partnership with Hugh and established Firestone Diamonds plc, an emerging diamond producer now with operating diamond mines in Botswana and Lesotho". See: <http://www.miningfeeds.com/2011/06/29/james-kenny-frontier-rare-earths-tsxfro/> (7th paragraph)

Hugh was also a fellow of the Geological Society in London and a member of the Geological Society of South Africa.

### **Steve King (relative)**

## **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 boys playing the female parts and the older ones the males. My mother always played the piano for rehearsals and during "live" performances together with an orchestra. He received very good reviews from local papers and was much honoured when Bridget Doyle Carte came to his last production of the "Mikado" at Surbiton and praised him for the high standard he had achieved. His love of G&S has been passed on to me and whenever the opportunity arises I will try and go to a performance (professional or amateur).

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.

## ***George Farebrother***

My friend and colleague, George Farebrother, who has died aged 77, was a deeply committed member of the global anti-nuclear movement who was intricately involved in moves to mount legal actions against governments that possess nuclear weapons.

From 1991 to 2004, George and I worked together as secretary and chair, respectively, of the UK affiliate of the World Court Project, an initiative that used the International Court of Justice at the Hague to challenge the legality of nuclear weapons. After the court confirmed in 1996 that the threat or use of nuclear weapons should generally be regarded as illegal, George sustained the project virtually single-handedly until his death.

For many years he had been a history teacher, but from the moment he learned about the World Court Project in 1991 he took early retirement and dedicated the rest of his life to its activities. Applying his Quaker beliefs and teaching experience, he came up with the idea of collecting individual "declarations of public conscience" against nuclear weapons, which were accepted by the International Court of Justice as "citizens' evidence". This characteristically inventive concept was taken up all over the world, especially in Japan, and George helped present nearly four million declarations to the Court before its historic judgment.

He never gave up trying to engage with decision-makers and their advisers, and became a familiar figure in the corridors of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, parliament and London embassies. His cogent writing, networking flair and grass roots appeal brought in enough funds to allow him to travel to key United Nations events in New York and Geneva. Constantly devising fresh ways of using the law to mobilise against nuclear weapons, he became adept at producing computerised publicity material.

George was born in Streatham, south London, to Robert, a docker, but never knew his mother, who died when he was very young. He went to Mitcham County grammar school and met his future wife, Jean (nee Rudd), a neighbour in Mitcham, in 1956. On his return from Leeds University, where he studied history and philosophy, he began teaching at Baughurst secondary modern school in Hampshire in 1960 and married Jean, who also went into teaching, a year later. George subsequently had spells at secondary schools in Newmarket, Letchworth and Kingston upon Thames, and for his final 20 years in teaching was head of history at what is now Hailsham community college in East Sussex.

George's favourite recreation was countryside walks, which helped him explore how history had shaped the British landscape. Enthusiastic about amateur theatre, he also enjoyed an annual pilgrimage to Shakespeare's Globe in London.

He is survived by Jean, by their two sons, John and James, and by five grandchildren.

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Robert Green

Guardian

## *Alan Simpson (1929-2017)*



Alan Simpson, who has died aged 87, was half of one of the most talented and socially-perceptive comedy-writing partnerships of post-war Britain. He and Ray Galton created two of Britain's best-loved comedy series, Hancock's Half Hour and Steptoe and Son.

Alan Simpson was born in Brixton to a working class family, the son of a window-cleaner. He attended Mitcham grammar school but left early to work as a shipping clerk.

Simpson and Galton met as teenagers and became close friends, their sense of humour forming the heart of their bond. They sent in a script to Frank Muir and Denis Norden, the most successful broadcasting comedy writers of the time. Then in 1954, Tony Hancock commissioned them to write a series.

The 1950s was the decade when Tory prime minister Harold Macmillan assured the British people that they'd "never had it so good". With the rise of the supermarket, shopping centres and television, class and class conflict had also allegedly withered away.

But the 1950s was also the decade that witnessed the beginnings of the industrial action and political protests that reached a climax in the 1960s. Playwright John Osborne caught this mood of rebellion in his 1956 play *Look Back in Anger*.

Hancock, Galton and Simpson revolutionised British comedy by inventing sitcom. They created a character - Anthony Aloysius St John Hancock - whose comedy burst the bubble of complacency to reveal British society as still racked by class conflict and contradiction.

Hancock hates the rich and powerful who frustrate his search for fame and social acceptance. His humour is the collapse of the grandiose into the mediocre, the powerless or the bewildered. He gets his revenge by parodying their arrogance and snobbery.

At its height, the TV series was watched by one third of the British population.

The essence of *Steptoe and Son*, about a father-and-son rag and bone business, is the inter-generational conflict between "dirty old man" Albert Steptoe, and his son Harold who is full of social aspirations and pretensions reminiscent of Hancock.

At the heart of Galton's and Simpson's work is the notion that the best comedy reveals the true nature of the world we inhabit, debunking society's myths and phoney images.

Sabby Sagall

Socialist Review 3/01/2017



**Donald Walsh, BSc, MA, DPhil, Emeritus Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford**

**22.2.1926-16.12.2015**

***My brother Don died in December 2015, a few months before his ninetieth birthday.***

He was born in Canonbury, north London and came to Mitcham in 1928, when my parents escaped “the smoke” for leafy Surrey. He started at the school aged 10 in 1936 as a scholarship boy, as I was to do 10 years later, though by that time the financial benefits of the scholarship had been made obsolete by Butler’s Education Act of 1944. His schooling was interrupted in 1940 by evacuation – not with the rest of the school to Weston-super-Mare, but with me and our mother to join relatives who had already fled the Blitz to rural Huntingdonshire. Life in those parts was still surprisingly basic; we had no mains water, electricity, gas or sewage. Water came from a hand-pump in the scullery and then had to be heated on a fire that was also the only means of cooking, so it had to be lit every morning, winter and summer alike.

One amenity available was, however, secondary education, in the form of Kimbolton School, a boarding, fee-paying institution that, under the war-time arrangements, admitted Don free as a day boy. Something he told me about this has remained with me: at Mitcham, he had done fairly well academically, usually being in the top half-dozen in the form at exams time; at Kimbolton, he suddenly found himself to be “the school genius”. This says much for the standards of attainment of our little south-suburban establishment compared with a typical public school of the time.

Returned to London, he took a war-time degree at King’s College and then opted for work in the coal-mines as a “Bevin boy” rather than military service. This choice was rare enough to make a story in the Evening Standard (with photo, to our mother’s delight) but it came to nothing, for he started work in electronics, first with Mullard’s at Hackbridge and then in the Scientific Civil Service, employment which gave immunity from National Service, including its coal-mining version. In 1955, with several innovative electronic developments to his name, he was awarded a research fellowship at Oxford and this led to his gradual absorption into the academic life. He became a University Lecturer and fellow of Oriel College and was at the height of his powers when, in 1977, tragedy struck: he was cycling to work when knocked over by a car. He very nearly died as a result of the brain trauma that resulted and probably owed his survival to the close proximity of the Radcliffe Hospital.

He recovered well, but after some time it became clear that he would not in fact be able to fulfil all his previous duties, because of the permanence of some of the damage, and he took early retirement. The remainder of his life was still active, with particular interests being silver-smithing, coin-collecting and, above all, gardening, all pursued with the thoroughness that had made him such a good researcher. He enjoyed it, but it was a poor alternative to “what might have been”.

His enduring memorials are a part of the research programme in the Engineering Department at Oxford and the text-book “Lectures on the Electrical Properties of Materials”, co-authored with Laszlo Solymar and now in its ninth edition. My memory is of the complete selflessness and limitless generosity he always displayed towards his younger brother. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy (Reynolds), their sons Nicholas and Andrew, and five grand-children.

**John Walsh, December 2015**