



# THE OLD BORLASIAN NEWSLETTER

Spring 2025

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# THE OLD BORLASIAN NEWSLETTER

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## Message from Headteacher

And now 400 years have passed... While the fun and festivity of the 400th anniversary came to an end with the traditional family and alumni carol services at All Saints Church in December, we now find ourselves at the business end of the academic year with the Year 11 and 13 students completing their final preparations for their respective GCSE and A Level exams this summer.



While the educational landscape of Marlow is changing with Great Marlow School joining the Marlow Education Trust of which Borlase is part, the school has continued to remain busy and has enjoyed some notable events in the past months. The Senior Play, *One Man, Two Guvnors*, was a roaring success as was the excellent Senior Concert which included the Year 13's Leavers' Medley which simultaneously showed the students' appreciation of the Arts staff who have supported them with their development (whilst gently poking fun at them too to keep their feet firmly on the ground!)

As you read on, you will see that the school is involved in two building projects. The first is to install a fire door in the Chapel to get it back into full use after fire regulations resulted in its capacity being reduced to just 60 people. The second is to begin a plan to install solar panels on the site, starting with 27 on the Canteen roof, as part of a move towards improved environmental and economic sustainability.

While you may feel moved to support one or both of the projects, I encourage you to save the date of Saturday 13 September in your diary when we will be hosting the first "OB Day" at the school. The event will comprise sporting events (at which you can be a participant or a spectator, as you wish) and pop-up exhibitions around the school site as our new Captaincy and Prefect team welcome back Old Borlasians of all generations, ahead of The Old Borlasian Club dinner that evening. I look forward to sharing further details in due course and, hopefully, to seeing many of you there!

## Message from Our President

It is such a privilege to take over the role of President of the Old Borlasian's Club (OBC) this year, if not a little daunting following in the footsteps of Greg Lim (OB 1997-2003) who did a wonderful job preparing the school for its 400th anniversary celebrations. I have retired now as Headteacher but am still connected with the school and delighted to see it thriving under the Headteacher, Ed Goodall. It was a joy to direct the senior musical in 2024 with Seth Miall, Director of Music (OB 2002-2009) (*Jesus Christ Superstar* - attended by Tim Rice!) and I'm looking forward to working with him again next academic year on the senior show - Seth that is, not Sir Tim!



When I joined the school back in 2005 it very quickly became clear how important the OBC is to the school and how fortunate we are to have such a dedicated committee of former students and staff leading the club's activities. Your support as members is invaluable; I've seen first hand, year after year, the positive impact your generosity has on generations of Borlasians. The careers programme receives fantastic support from the OBs network and the school is currently in the middle of the celebration "dinner" series where the Arts, Sports and





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## Message from Our President

STEM students receive awards for their achievements and commitment; the OBC has provided the prizes for nearly twenty years and this year have added HELM to their list - Humanities, English, Literature and Modern Languages. Many of you will still have your BOSCAR or Captain's Cap in pride of place somewhere (or stuffed in a box maybe) and will remember the joy of receiving it, so thank you everyone for keeping this tradition alive for Borlasians today!

We are always looking for new ways of helping you stay connected with each other and the school. The school welcomes OBs back anytime, either to events that are always advertised on [TicketSource](#) or just email Ilona Cains [icains@swbgs.com](mailto:icains@swbgs.com) in the development office if you want to visit as a small group.

This year the annual OBs dinner is taking place at school again and we'd love to see you there. It's a great event - drinks on cloisters lawn, music, croquet if you're up for it, great food from The Little Urban Chef and then all off to the pubs of Marlow. Do spread the word - see the Save the Date.

Kay Mountfield

## Where are they now?

### Cormac Diamond (OB 2015-2020)

On January 26th this year Cormac Diamond (OB 2020) performed his Cabaret Show, Nostalgiarama at The Phoenix ArtsClub in the West End! After graduating from Oxford, and completing his masters at The Royal Academy of Music, Cormac is touring his first solo Cabaret show - try and get to Norden Farm to see him perform before May the 8th. The show is full of clever, witty musical theatre performances by Cormac and his many talented guests from RAM, university and the cabaret circuit. The guest close harmony group also features Fergus Cooper (OB 2020).



While at Borlase, Cormac musically directed an excellent barbershop group featuring Callum Kuchner, Mark Darcy, Charlie Evans, and Rafael Conte; he also stood out as a musical theatre performer playing Gaston in Beauty and the Beast and the title role in Sweeney Todd. Look out for him on the Borlase Former Students Facebook and his instagram!

### Isley Lynn (OB 1999-2007)

Isley has recently had her collection of plays published and talked to the Borlase Staff and Former Staff Book Club about the plays and her career as a writer. After leaving Borlase, Isley studied at Exeter University and has since had a very successful career as a writer and director. Most recently in 2025 she received the Imison Award for her play Tether broadcast on Radio 4. In 2023, she was nominated for 'Outstanding Achievement In An Affiliate Theatre' at the Olivier Awards and was awarded the Charles Wintour Most Promising Playwright Award for her play, The Swell at The Spring 2025 Orange Tree Theatre. Her work addresses important contemporary





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## Where are they now?

issues and is highly innovative in style. She was very active in Drama at Borlase, taking part in plays like The Ash Girl so it is wonderful to see how far she has come as a writer and artist.

There are so many Old Borlasians involved in exciting careers and projects across all sectors. In the arts, just a few from the Arts include **Sophie White (OB 2009)** now a stand-up comedian, **Eve Shanu Wilson (OB 2017)** playing the lead in Phantom of the Opera in the West End; also in the West End in a lead role in Operation Mincemeat is **Maddie Smith (OB 2020)** and many of you will have been following the music and theatre career of **Chris Weeks (OB 2008)** for many years as he tours with Buddy and Jersey Boys.

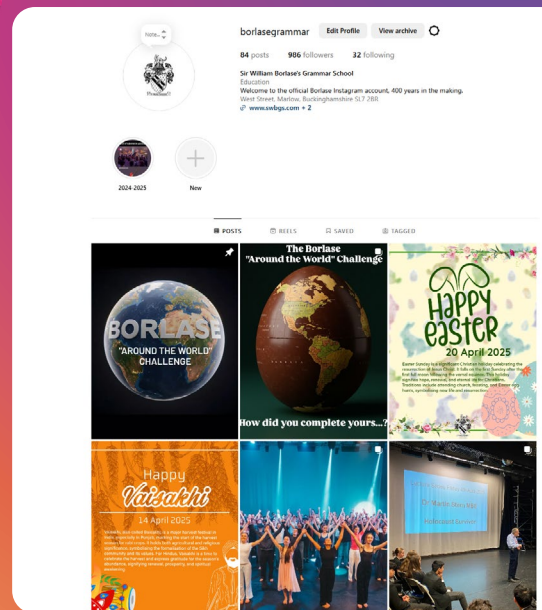
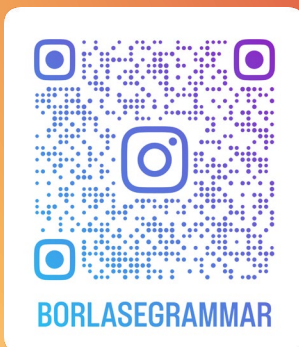
At this week's Senior Concert we saw **Harry Allpass (OB 2017)** who was a passionate film-maker while at Borlase and who has been involved in a film about to be released on Netflix with Jennifer Lopez. Harry shared some successes of other OB film-makers and there is definitely a whole article that can be generated on that.

We would love to hear what you are up to as well. In the next issue, we'd like to focus on Environmental and Conservation, so if this is your field, please do get in touch by emailing [icains@swbgs.com](mailto:icains@swbgs.com).



## Join Borlase Instagram!

### [@borlasegrammar](https://www.instagram.com/borlasegrammar)





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## Chapel Door

Since it was built in 1914, funded by Old Borlasians, the school Chapel has brought the Borlase community together for services and assemblies. Until the beginning of this year, the Chapel has hosted Chapel assemblies for each of the different Houses with an address and hymn accompanied by Mr Robson on the organ. The site of the school's War Memorial and Book of Remembrance, it also plays host to the annual Remembrance Service and also the incredibly moving Leavers' Service when the school song is belted out by teary-eyed Year 13s at a volume you would not believe.

However, in December 2024, a routine fire inspection determined that until a second fire door is added the maximum occupancy of the Chapel is just 60 people and not the 220 needed to accommodate a whole House. Undeterred, since January we have persevered determinedly with 2 of the 8 Form groups in each House coming to the Chapel on a rotation with the assembly beamed to the others back in their Form Rooms around the school. It's not the same but it's the best we can manage.

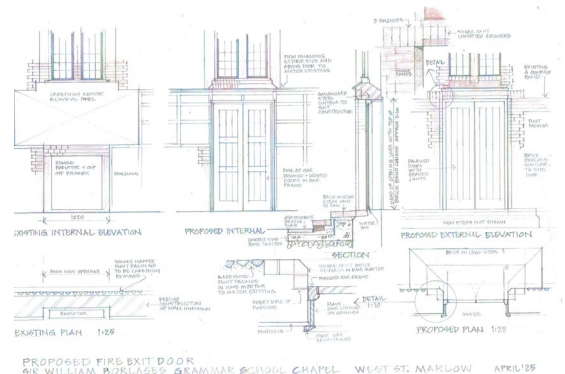
This is where we are appealing for your help.

For a cost of approximately £30,000, we can add a door of the required width on the west wall of the quire, re-positioning the war memorial in the apse, adjacent to the altar. Tony Compton (OB 1957-1964) is drawing up the architectural plans in keeping with the school's listed building status. Skilled builders, joiners and French polishers will ensure the work is completed sympathetically and seamlessly including adjustment and addition to the pews to increase the seating capacity.

While memories of being able to see your breath while singing hymns on a cold morning may be a thing of the past with under-seat heating having been installed a few years ago, we don't want memories of the Chapel, one of Borlase's many characterful idiosyncrasies, to become a thing of the past too.

- £16,000 will pay for the doorway, brickwork and relocation of the War Memorial
- £6,000 will pay for the reconfiguration of the wooden pews to increase the seating capacity
- £8,000 will pay for the landscaping and fencing so that the fire escape exits onto school property

If you would like to donate towards the Chapel Door, please click [here](#).





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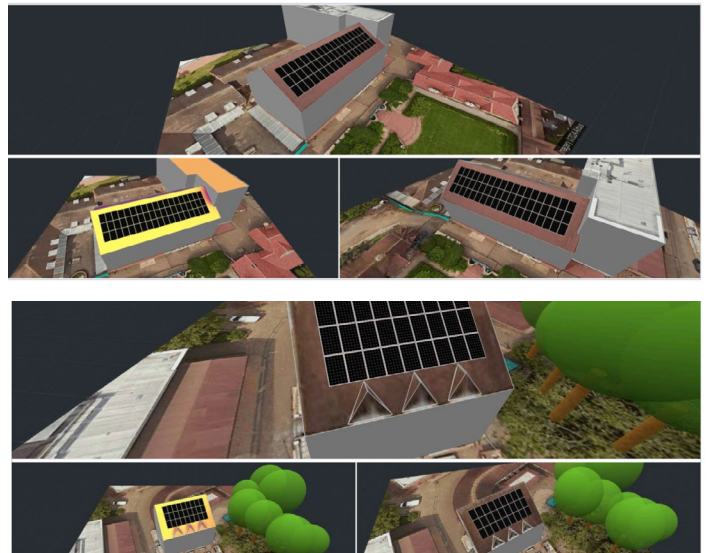
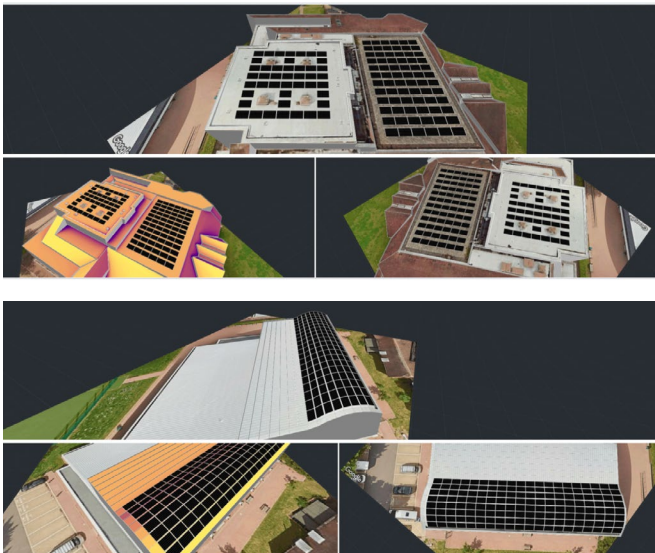
## Borlase Solar Project

At a time of rising energy costs and reduced educational funding, we are seeking to secure a more economically and environmentally sustainable future for Borlase through an ambitious plan to install 360 photovoltaic solar panels on the canteen and sports hall roofs producing an estimated 159kWp.

Students have been getting active and raising funds for the Solar project over the Easter break, attempting to (virtually) circumnavigate the globe and complete 40,075 km on foot, on bikes, in rowing boats, in swimming pools and even on skis, to secure sponsorship for the first 27 panels to go on the Canteen roof at an approximate cost of £500 per panel. They are also baking for a cake sale while student bands will be performing on stage with lessons themed around sustainability being delivered by teachers across the curriculum.

With a single MPAN serving the school site, an estimated 25% return on investment for each panel, and a 25 year life span, each panel will pay for itself more than four times over by not only saving us close to £40,000 each year from the full installation but also allowing us to sell back to the grid during peak months. All of this allows us to spend money where it is most needed - educating students.

If you would like to contribute to our Solar Campaign please click [here](#) If you would like to contribute £500 (or a multiple thereof!), please contact [icains@swbgs.com](mailto:icains@swbgs.com) and we will inscribe your name on your panel(s) on the solar map of the school.





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## Borlase and The RAF

During the first World War the School had strong ties with the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). A number of former pupils, who joined both before WW1, are remembered in the War Memorial in the School chapel.

Borlase's links with the RAF (both the RFC and RNAS were merged to form the RAF on 1st April 1918) was further strengthened during the Second World War. A couple of miles from the School gates, RAF Medmenham was set up as a Photo Intelligence and Interpretation Unit in 1941. The Unit was stationed in Danesfield House, originally built in 1901, and now a luxury Hotel. It was ideally situated – close to RAF Bomber Command in Walters Ash, which opened in 1938, and not far from Bletchley Park, the Headquarters for British Intelligence.



Soon Danesfield House became too small as the workforce grew from 231 to more than 1,700. Huts like those used at Bletchley Park were constructed to house many of the CIU sections (Central Interpretation Units). During the build up to D-Day and beyond, almost 1,500 intelligence reports and 600,000 prints were being produced every month. This was photographic intelligence production on an industrial scale and was made possible by the organisation of Medmenham into 20 photographic intelligence sections with 15 intelligence support sections.

While Medmenham initially produced detailed analysis on Bomber Command's missions, the Photographic Interpreters as they were called, with the use of basic stereoscopes, also provided extensive intelligence on targets in advance of operations.

Operation Chastise (known more famously as the Dambusters raid) was one of the most iconic RAF missions during the war. It involved the bombing of the Möhne and Eder dams by 617 Squadron. Before the raid Medmenham provided intelligence reports, photographs and models of the dams to aid planning. It was essential to the success of the operation to know the water levels to within a couple of feet and any anti-aircraft defences protecting the dams, and these reports were the only way Barnes Wallis and the planners could gain that information.





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## Borlase and The RAF

In 1943 a Medmenham team spotted scorch marks on the runway grass at Peenemünde in Germany, showing that the Germans had developed a twin-engine jet. Later that year a rocket-like object was picked up at the same site – later identified as the V1 'Doodlebug'. This discovery resulted in a special team being created to further study the V Weapons programme. Between late 1943 and early 1944 this team, known as Crossbow, successfully identified all V1 heavy launch sites. Medmenham photographs also supported D-Day. They monitored the railways around Normandy daily in the build-up to D-Day and afterwards to ensure that the Allies were keeping the region inaccessible by rail, and thereby delaying vital German reinforcements.



*Courtesy of Elinor Florence*

RAF staff, who were stationed at Medmenham, often sent their children to Borlase and when RAF Bomber Command merged with RAF Fighter Command to form RAF Strike Command at RAF High Wycombe on 30 April 1968, 2 Borlase boarding houses called Sentry Hill and The Heights were opened on the Henley Road around the same time to assist RAF families.

From the 1930s right up to the mid 1960s Borlase frequently played RAF Strike Command and RAF Bomber Command in a number of sports particularly rugby and cricket.

More recently former Air Marshall, Greg Bagwell, and former Air Vice Marshall, Ian Duguid, have sent their children to Borlase.

## Poetry Corner

### Just You and Me

The wind caresses our cheeks with coldness,  
sending unwilling shivers down our spines.  
Your salty, crispy-thin hair brushes briskly against my cheeks,  
Grazing them with its tender abrasiveness.  
Our footprints imprint the grainy sand,  
cherishing our last moments together.  
Just You and Me.

Your pale skin illuminates against the darkness,  
Engulfing me with desire and passion.  
You are beautiful,  
A mesmerising dream,  
Time ceases when I am with you:  
No seconds.  
No minutes.  
No hours.  
The world, in our hands.  
Just You and Me.

*Minoli Vehella, Y13*

### Who has seen the wind?

Have you seen the wind my dear?  
I heard that it passed by.  
Yes, two days past not far from here;  
I heard its sharp voice cry.  
Have you heard the wind my dear?  
I've missed it for too long.  
Yes, last week in the open fields;  
Its cold bite burnt my tongue.  
Have you the taste of the wind my dear?  
I long for its icy heat.  
Yes, today by the dry riverbed;  
Its embrace swept up my feet.  
Have you felt the wind my dear?  
I was told that it was near.  
Yes, last month in the evergreen woods;  
I caught its fresh scent clear.  
Have you the scent of the wind my dear?  
For it seems that all but I,  
Have felt the breath of the spirit earth;  
Descended from the sky.  
Yes, I have seen the wind my dear  
But never with an open eye;  
Stand arms wide on the mountainside  
And feel its colours rush by.

*Sarah Bowler, Y13*

### AN OAK

A mighty oak stood on a cliff  
Secure for a hundred years —  
And now as the cliff begins to crack  
The death of that old tree nears.

The ancient tree falls from firm land  
And hurtles down to the sea,  
To be pounded by sand and sea and rocks  
Is now its destiny.

Like the grim death-cry of mighty Mars  
Bursts forth a groan from the tree,  
And the waves roar and hiss for evermore,  
While the oak sinks under the sea.

*D. Muir, HIB.*



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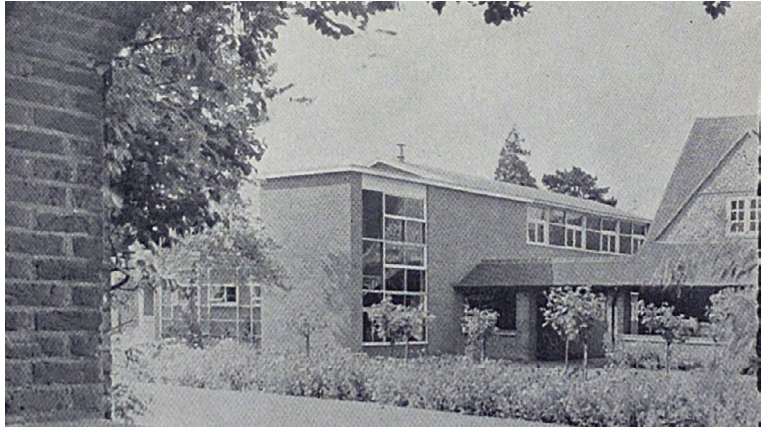
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## A Trip Down Memory Lane – Borlase in 1957

The South Block was built in 1957 to provide more classrooms:-

According to the Borlasian of this year Borlase pupils were being courted to join the Fleet Air Arm on the Royal Naval fleet of aircraft carriers as well as the National Coal Board providing careers in Mining, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering.

The school clock on the cloister tower had been stuck on twenty past one for years but was worked on this year and now keeps perfect time. As was suggested in the Borlasian:



“Perhaps it symbolizes a new age of efficiency”

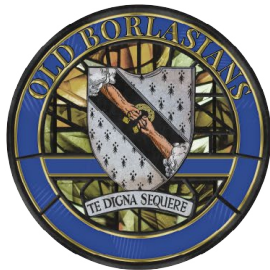
Basketball was introduced for the first time at the School. It created so much interest that in the Spring term it was decided that an inter-form league should be organized. An inter House then took place in the second half of term and 2 matches were played against Slough GS and Newlands Park Training College.

The school play was “The Merchant of Venice”. Produced by Mr R.H Sage it has been quoted that “Many productions of the Merchant of Venice have been marred by undue emphasis on well-known speeches in the play. Mr Sage with his broad experience avoided this mistake”.

The Borlase Jazz Club had to contend with 3 of its stalwarts departing the School and leaving just 1 member. The sole member had to regrettfully report that any future jazz meetings were put on hold for the time being passionately stating that this “Much maligned art form cannot be sold to a person- he must listen and convince himself of its quality”. While Jazz obviously went through a rocky time during this period, it was re-surrected by Art Master, Mr Hamer, in the 1970s. Jazz concerts involving such luminaries as Humphrey Lyttelton graced the Hall stage at Borlase. Jazz at Borlase continues to thrive to this very day.

And finally the Photographic Society was formed for the first time in 1957. With a darkroom already in place in Mr Boddy’s Physics lab, the Society undertook to teach the fundamentals of photography and to develop, print and enlarge films for all School members much lower than the market rate. Local photographic shops in South Bucks were to experience a sharp drop in their turnover!





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## What's In a [Nick] Name?

To start with “let me make it absolutely clear” as all the politicians like to say, this is about a school boy sense of humour which I admit to having still, 60 years after leaving school.

When I was at Borlase in the late 1950s and early 1960s it was all boys, no girls, so the general level of humour tended to be rather boyish and masculine. I expect it is very much different today in a co-ed environment.

What may have changed is the use of nicknames not just for your mates but what was even more fun was those of the teachers. In my day, the teachers were all male. So they were all masters, they would wear black gowns and called you by your surname. The only women we ever saw in the school were Elsie Horrocks the school secretary and a few dinner ladies in the canteen. It was a complete male hierarchy from Headmaster down to first-formers.

Let's look at some of the masters' nicknames. Some of which I have not a clue how they evolved. Any older OBs reading this may be able to enlighten me.

First of all the headmaster. In my day it was Mr Hazelton known as “The Monk”, I think because he stayed closeted in his study for much of the time and was rarely seen around the school plus his hair style was a bit monastic.

In no particular order, I recall Mr Wills known as “Pongo” but why I do not know. Mr Saunders was “Tuff” because on his first day he said that he was going to have to get tough with a few boys who were misbehaving. So that's an easy one. Mr Morris was “Tooty”, obviously the Tooty man from Morris dancing. One of my favourite teachers was Mr Sage [languages and rowing], he had several names, “Uncle”, “Fish” and “Sago”.

Mr Bailey was an older teacher of maths. Biff Bailey was a comic boxing character so inevitably it was “Biff” Bailey. Mr Peirce [music and RE] was fondly known as “Beak”, well he did have a rather prominent nose.

Deputy Head was Mr “Jammy” Robertson, pretty obvious if you know your jam manufacturers. Other obvious nick names were Mr “Tube” McClean – toothpaste! And Mr “Snowy” Chapman a lovely much older teacher who had white hair.

Some other names that I recall but never knew how they earned them were Messrs “Pussy” Rees, “Seth” Teasdill, “Len” Malim, his first name was Tony, “Foxy” Davies, “Bumbly” Welch and “Noddy” Bateman.

Am I being too boyish, I hope so? Many boys had their nicknames of course, too many to list here but I will just mention a few favourites. Terry Thorpe, a very good all round sportsman was always known as “Wacker” since the first form. My old mate Tim O'Brien was “Toby” or “Jug” and then there was “Nana” White, I never knew his first name, everyone called him Nana pronounced as in banana.

One curious aspect of nicknames was that some boys were known by different first names as in Colin Baker was “Joe” and Tony Brooker was also “Joe” whilst Peter Wallum was “Bill” and Vincent Crump was “Ted”.

Probably some boys hated their nicknames but once established they stuck for the rest of their school life and even beyond.

Tony Compton (OB 1957-1964) - “Compo”





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## Borlase Girls' Hockey and the Marlow Connection

Marlow Women's Hockey 1st team has enjoyed a meteoric rise through the ranks in recent years and were promoted to Conference West 1 Division at the beginning of the 2024-2025 season. They are just one league away from playing in the Premier Division!

The season has just finished and Marlow has kept its place in Conference West 1 for 2025-2026.

The following Borlase girls past and present have represented Marlow Women's 1st in the 2024-2025 season:-

### Martha Goodridge (Captain) Y13

Emma Buxton Y12  
Mia Cranfield Y12  
Ruby Duncan Y13  
Lauren Hilditch OB  
Ellie Lane Y13  
Holly Lohead Y13  
Jess Rees OB  
Alice Ramm OB  
Ellie Yeomans OB



Good luck with the new season in September!

## Save the Date

**Borlase 1st Cricket XI vs Old Borlasians**

26 June, 1pm Start

**Alumni Sports Day**

13 September

**Annual Old Borlasians Dinner**

Drinks, dinner, music, relaxed atmosphere with friends!

Borlase Cloisters - 6.15p.m. 13 September

£35 to include a *meal & welcome drink*





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## Don't forget the 'Merch'!

Don't forget, we have fantastic Old Borlasian Club merchandise available:

### OBC Scarf:

OBC Members £15  
Non Members £30

### OBC Tie:

OBC Members £12  
Non Members £20

### OBC Badge:

OBC Members £5  
Non Members £7.50

All proceeds go towards supporting Borlase. Please [email us to order](#). Please include the items you would like to order, the quantity and your address.



## OLD BORLASIANS



**YOUR CLUB NEEDS  
YOUR SUPPORT**

If you are not already a member, we would love you to join the Old Borlasian Club. Please click here for the membership form.

We are also keen to receive any anecdotes or memories you have of your time at Borlase.

Please send them to [obclub.membership@gmail.com](mailto:obclub.membership@gmail.com)

