

2012 AGM

Looking through some late photos of Old Scholars Association AGMs I was reminded by that very haunting song ['Who Knows Where the Time Goes'](#) by Maria and Arthur. I did indeed wonder where the time has gone, these pics go back to the AGM of 2012.

I think it was my first visit to the Old Scholars AGM since leaving Chailey in 1950. Of course, a lot of water had flown under the bridge since I had left. It had been 62 years and the thought lingered in my mind, on the journey down from Swindon to Chailey, as to whether I would meet up with any of my contemporaries or indeed if I would recognise them if we met. As things turned out I was not recognised but, even so, I immediately felt at home as I was greeted by Janet and her husband Richard who gave me a warm welcome.

I had already received by post the programme of events for the day and, as a new attendee, Janet took me through the itinerary explaining the important features of the occasion. I remember we gathered in the Staff Room, with the message over the door 'Men Made Here', for coffee and biscuits. During my stay at St Georges this used to be the Carpentry Shop where I was put through my paces by Mr Marchant the carpentry teacher.

After enjoying coffee and bickies, and a getting-to-know-you session, we had a church service in St Martin's which brought memories flooding back of my days as a choir boy singing in the gallery. I was stunned by my emotions; it had been 67 years since I had last passed through the ornate oak doors of St Martin's. I was struck by how small the interior of the chapel appeared and how close we all were. As a child I had remembered St Martin's as being spacious and overwhelming. I now found it to be compact and welcoming, its elaborately decorated ceiling of blue and gold enchanting.

However, there had been so many changes, with new buildings and old familiar ones gone, that I was disorientated while trying to find my way around. The Hospital where I had spent so much time and where I had my leg amputated had gone. I was shocked. I have so many memories of lazing in bed on the balcony through long hot summers and of course it was war time and we had World War II going on around us. There always appeared to be troops passing by or doing something dramatic on the common, not to mention air raids and the war in the air.

I had attempted to visit St Georges in 1989, when I retired from work. It was a visit that left me in shock. I had arrived by taxi from Haywards Heath Station only to find the place closed but intact.

So now here I was at my first CHOSA reunion, in the heart of Sussex. It was a golden opportunity to visit St Georges once again and my driver agreed that we should go there. I found that, as we drove up Mill Lane, I was choked with emotion. I had spent the whole of my formative years at Chailey and was now returning after an absence of 67 years.

It continued to be a day of shock and awe for me. The changes at St Georges were substantial. The arch between Matron's Office and the main building had been bricked up and the whole of St Georges converted into residential apartments. Practically all peripheral buildings had gone; the Old Dispensary had gone, aka The Boot Room, so had the Sanatorium where I had spent three weeks in isolation, the Sewing Room had also gone, so too had the Scout Hut and the Liberty Sports Hall, but a real eye opener for me was the restructuring of the Play Ground. This was on raised ground with an embankment down concrete steps to the Liberty Hut and out through the gate onto the North Common. The ground has been levelled but with some remaining raised ground carved out for underground garages for the residents.

After this visit of dismay, we returned to St Martins to enjoy the most delicious buffet arranged by volunteers. It was scrumptious, which I learned was the customary standard, that I always enjoyed at later CHOSA meeting.



Having written the above memoirs, what I really wanted to say at the beginning, and before I got carried away with my emotions, was to mention the attached photographs. I suppose it was these particular pics that triggered my memories. I like the one showing Janet reading out the itinerary to keep us all informed, this was taken at the 2012 meeting.



The photo of the Windmill painted white was new to me, I had left it painted in war time camouflage. What I hadn't realised about the St Martin's photo was that the steeple was undergoing maintenance work. It has a ladder up to the weather vane where a fearless steeplejack is clocking in.

Sadly, we have now been visited by the Covid-19 virus and future CHOSA meetings are on hold. Meanwhile. I enjoy reading the CHOSA Magazine. Janet does a good job with any updates. I also keep in touch with Ian's OSA website.

Jack Hayward, St Georges, Chailey 1939-1950.