

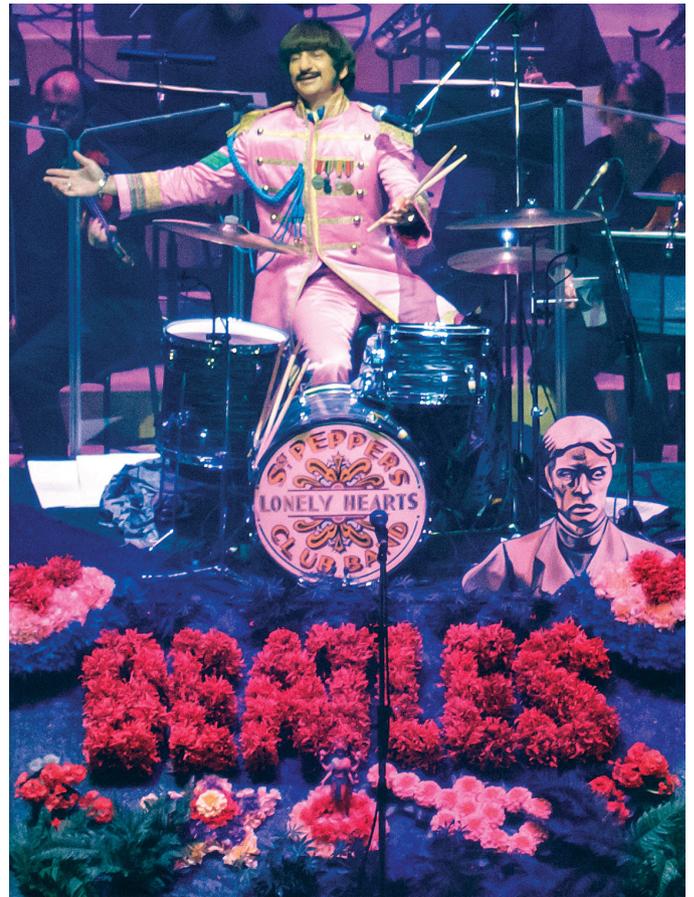
OM NEWS

THE FIRST QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER TO BE DESPATCHED ELECTRONICALLY

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

Gordon Elsmore (1985-92) portrays Ringo Star in the world's premier Beatles tribute band **The Bootleg Beatles**. They have shared stages with the likes of Rod Stewart, Bon Jovi and David Bowie, and in 2002, played at the Queen's Golden Jubilee Party at Buckingham Palace. 2010 saw them headline the Acoustic Stage at Glastonbury Festival, drawing the biggest crowd for five years. Gordon has been kind enough to put together a video in response to various questions, which can be viewed on the website: this is a synopsis of the 'interview'. When Gordon was at Monmouth School, his principal interest was music and he was a member of the concert band, under the baton of Sean O'Neill. The band recorded and sold tapes to parents, raising sufficient money to fund a European tour. Gordon studied Psychology (via Biology!) at Loughborough University, and supplemented his student finances by playing with bands in Nottingham and Leicester.

After university, he returned home to Bream and lived with his parents but recognising that the Forest of Dean was not a mecca for budding musicians, he moved to London and lived in a friend's attic. An advertisement in *Melody Maker* attracted him to audition for and win a place in a Beatles tribute band. This subsequently landed him the role of Ringo for six months in the West End, in the concert revue *Let It Be*. Dedication and reliability earned Gordon the reputation of being the go-to drummer whenever a Beatles tribute band had a requirement, so when Hugo Degenhardt left The Bootleg Beatles in 2016, he was the natural replacement. Since then, he has



played several times at Glastonbury, Royal Albert Hall, and the Liverpool Echo Stadium. He has travelled the world and before the pandemic, the band was playing around 120 concerts a year.

Asked if he would recommend his experience to young musicians, Gordon emphasised that it can be very tough especially when, at the beginning, you meet friends from school or college who have established careers and are making decent money. But success shouldn't be defined just by money. He observes that one should "Learn to fail. We always talk about success, but failure also plays a part in the process towards being the best you can be."

A Day in the Life is the last track on The Beatles' iconic *Sergeant Pepper* album: a day in the life of Gordon Elsmore sounds pretty exciting.

NEWS OF OTHER OMs

Anthony C.E.Williams

(1973 -78) New House. After working for Midland Bank in Brecon, Builth Wells, Pontypool and Newport, in 1981 Anthony went to Goldsmiths College, and gained an Upper Second in History. He worked in the City for Extel as a Data Analyst, and then relocated to Bournemouth with Chase Manhattan Bank. In 1995 he moved, with his wife and son, to New Zealand “for a year”. 25 years on, he is still there and is a Craftsman Plumber and Gasfitter with his own business. “The change is great”, he says, and “there’s nothing like working for yourself.”

Anthony believes that just because you’ve been to a good school and are clever it doesn’t mean you have to be content with a white collar job, working for someone or doing something that you may perceive as “rather worthless in the greater scheme of things.”



Tony (A J) Jones (1960-67) received his Green Welsh Cap for representing Wales’ Football Veterans for 10 years. The cap was presented by Dermot Gallagher, at St George, after Wales beat England last October.



Tom Fairfoot trained at Webber Douglas Academy, and also has a BA joint Hons degree from London in French and Drama. He is best known in the UK for his role as Eddie in *Blood Brothers*, on the first UK National Tour and then later in the West End. Other leading roles include Hamlet and Romeo in UK productions and in South Africa as Jake

in the acclaimed two-hander comedy *Stones in his Pockets* and as Jerry in Pinter’s *Betrayal*. He played Detective Gavin Archer in South Africa’s ETV series *Gold Diggers*; has featured in many international movies including *Doomsday*, *Amelia*, and *Blood and Oil* alongside top Hollywood actors; and had a leading role in the action film *The Message* using his martial arts and weapons training.

Tom has appeared in *Our Girl* and *The Crown*, and used his French in the Belgium tv series *Salamander*.

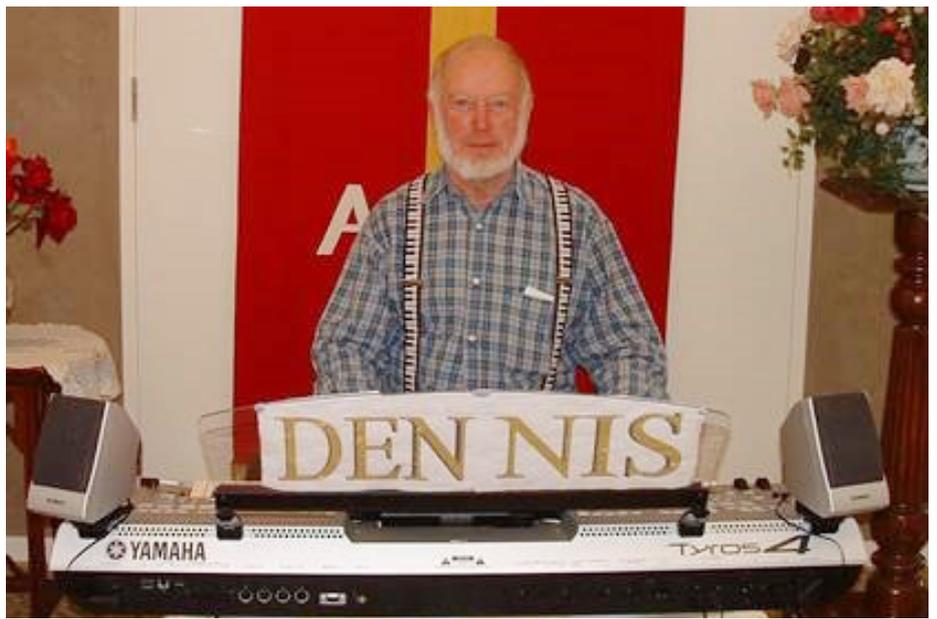
He is an award-winning Voice Artist on dozens of campaigns for top global brands; has narrated numerous international documentaries, has been the main announcer for the

local SATV “Mnet” channel and the voice of the National Geographic Channel and Nat Geo Wild international channel for many years. He also voiced two international comedy children’s animations, playing various characters.

Tom set up and ran a successful actors’ agency, whilst also training new talent in South Africa. He has worked in comedy and also written and produced the short film, *A Soldier’s Story* based on the Falklands War, which received special selection at Palm Springs Festival in 2001, and was picked up for broadcast by BBC Wales.

Tom is involved in independent film-making in the UK and South Africa, and also writes about Mental Health issues as they pertain to depression, bipolarity, anxiety and suicide.

Dennis Oyson (1949-52) was only 13 when he emigrated with his family to New Zealand, but he found that his schooling at Monmouth put him well ahead of his new school classmates. The headmaster recognised this and put him onto a special study course. In 1954, Dennis joined the Royal New Zealand Navy to further his education. He left the Navy in 1960 and continued studying civil engineering. After periods with local councils and then private consultants, Dennis decided to start his own contracting business. He had purchased a book, 'The Peter Principle', which states "In every hierarchy every employee will rise to his level of incompetence." He was



determined that was not going to happen to him and he was happy to undertake contract draughting for whoever paid his fee. Dennis's wife 'tolerated' a bit of globe-trotting, living in New Zealand, Australia and back in the UK, during which time

they saw many interesting places. They returned to Australia to retire and Dennis kept up his enjoyment of playing music at retirement homes. "Sadly", he says, "the keyboard and equipment are now too heavy for me to take around."

Stewart Rogerson (1971-74) reported a strange experience. "Having played golf at Prestwick Golf Club a year or two back and with catering being unavailable there on a Monday, a member of our party graciously invited us all to lunch at The Ladies Golf Club at Troon, which is nearby. After a thoroughly enjoyable lunch shared in delightful company, and just as I was leaving, I decided to avail myself of the, understandably modest, gentlemen's facilities and to my utter amazement found that the only decorative artefact on display was a Monmouth School plaque!" Any ideas on how it got there?



Dave (Ali) Palmer (1963-70) was at Henley last year for the 150th anniversary row-past, where he coxed the same crew of 1969. He has challenged the 2019 crew to row past at Henley in 2069! – to celebrate the 200th anniversary! Dave is still working part-time, and hopes to see other OMs in March next year, if/when a 100th anniversary/memorial is held.



FROM CHARLIE WALKER

In recent months there has been much discussion about ways in which younger members can become more involved with the Club and its activities. A working group is being set up to discuss opportunities for engagement, exploring areas such as communication and events. If you have any comments or suggestions, or would be interested in joining the group, please get in touch with Charlie Walker (charlie.walker1@icloud.com).

Joseph McMinn (1951-60) reminisced about his 'Trip of a Lifetime' in 1995, which came about purely by chance. Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, where he was working, was assisting fallout victims of Chernobyl when Aberdeen became a twin town of Gomel in Belarus, which Joseph was invited to visit. This is a précis of his experiences.

Crossing the Channel by elderly jet ferry from Ramsgate to Ostend was followed by a late departure from Brussels, during one of the coldest ever June days in the Ardennes. Next came an early train departure from Cologne to Prague, where Joseph encountered 'baroque', as overwhelmingly exemplified in St Nicholas' Cathedral. The next leg was to Warsaw, via a village in Moravia, where he changed to a train from Vienna. A strapping couple got on the Brest train in a country district and unpacked huge amounts of food and fruit: they were unamused by Joseph's interest.

In Belarus, he discovered the country's passion for allotment gardening which gave the nation the nickname of 'spudbashers'. Food outlets exposed the employment situation, where often double the number of assistants needed were trying to look busy. The next bit of his journey is best described in Joseph's own words. "I arrived in Minsk a day late due to a misunderstanding of trains but on the next day met the right man to keep me right in a number of ways. Staying outside the city with someone, we had a taxi laid on, another German car stolen from the West and resprayed. Two visits to the world-class opera cost \$12 in total for two.

On to Gomel where I saw handsome buildings like Telekom HQ in solid marble and evidence of extensive coal mining. The night club singer had a characteristic husky voice perfected by smoking. (She) asked if I could get her a job in England; I mused if she was perhaps a bit young to leave home. "Oh no, I'm divorced"; and not yet 20!

chance meetings which helped things out of a number of tight situations; twice in Katowice in 20 minutes. The journey back from Prague by a different route was the icing on the cake. On the way out of Dresden was a bottle gas depot, which could have been the site of poison gas production by AG Farben. Liepzig appeared comfortable



A lavish banquet for about 20 people turned out to be hosted by scrap metal merchants from Georgia. A top sculler on the river wanted a coaching job in England; Shrewsbury School were initially interested but his ever-increasing demands and absurd expectations ruined it. Back to Brest, where the Museum displayed photos of cooks and nurses who were murdered. Back then, locals conducted an effective guerilla war from the nearby forests and there were still little men in Sunday-best, sporting medals as part of everyday wear. The railway stations were usually packed: I estimated 700 here at 7am on a Monday, many going off to try selling illicit vodka in Polish markets. I can count eight seemingly

with their new freedoms and then on through the magnificent countryside of Thuringia. If you take the trip you might miss something; in this case an attempted coup against Mr Major, massacre at Srebrenitsa, and the Rugby World Cup." My over-riding verdict: **I'm proud to be a European and the best antidote to materialism is the religion as espoused at Monmouth. Photos of wedding parties enveloped in gloom as a prelude to mechanical marriage, completely devoid of fun and romance, are quite striking.**



WEIRHEAD HOUSE 1961-62

This was the number of boys occupying the new boarding house shortly after its opening. Who do you recognise?

If you haven't returned to the School in the last decade you certainly would not recognise Weirhead now. Part of Middle School boarding, along with New House and School House, it provides a much-increased number of boys with facilities of the highest standard.

OBITUARIES

Paul John Nicholson Parkin

(1954-61) died on Friday 4th September, aged 77. His funeral will be on Tuesday (15th) at Hereford Crematorium. If anyone wishes to attend, please contact his daughter, Catherine on mobile 07778 362729: spaces are limited in line with government guidelines.



David Rees (1981-88) sadly passed away on 21st August 2020, after 11 months of battling cancer. From Monmouth School, David studied at Oxford and went on to become Managing Partner at Izy Capital. He was a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, a technology analyst, strategist, investment banker and entrepreneur. He leaves behind his wife Karen, daughters Tara, Sian and Izzy, and his Dad.

Ernest Graham Watkins

(1943-49) died peacefully at home, of kidney cancer, on 14th April 2020, aged 88. Ernest was a keen cricketer and rugby player whilst at school and was pleased when the front row reunited for a photograph at an OM event. On leaving school he did his national service in the RAF and then joined Gloucestershire Constabulary, where he served for 32 years. On retirement, Ernest joined the Royal British Legion and was the standard bearer for his local branch.

We have also been informed that we have lost the following OMs:

Alun Bebb (1962-69)

Rob Evans (1970-1977)

Alfred John Phillips Gear
(1939-42)

Phil Hollins (1947-53)

D. Clive Howes (1950-58)

Cecil Walter Kay (1943-46)

F D Perkins (1948-53)

Jacob Picken (2012-14)

John Mervyn Tommey
(1935-39)

The Club extends sincere condolences to all families and friends.

