

Worth Prep School Reunion

On a bright autumn morning, Thursday 21st September 2017, over 70 guests arrived at Worth for a major reunion of Worth Prep School boys. There had been a 'Queen's Jubilee' reunion in 2012 for those in the school 1952/53 (with a couple of younger brothers joining the party) but this was on a very much larger scale. 48 of the 70 guests were Worth Prep Boys covering every year from 1936 to 1965. That is almost every year of the Prep School's existence. Added to that number were 3 monks; Frs Richard, Kevin and Stephen, who were Prep School boys. Sadly Fr Charles, the fourth Old Worth boy in the community couldn't be with us, but everyone sent their best wishes. Add in a couple of matrons, Helen Sweetman and Tigs Sacre, Abbot Luke (Worth School but not Worth Prep) and Fr Bede, the monastic archivist who's sister, Fear, was also a Worth Matron, and the party was complete.

8 of the 51 went up to Worth School and 4 of those 8 were Founder Members in 1959. The remainder, bar 1, all went on to Downside and many of those had lost contact with Worth over the years. Getting together such a wide ranging guest list was the culmination of much activity over the last year in gathering the archives together, tidying up the typed official list of Worth Prep boys that Fr Bede had, and then sending emails to known contacts and posting messages to Old Gregorian (Downside) groups.

The day started with everyone arriving in the Whitehead Room. This was the first notable difference to many. In our day it had been called the Day Room or Assembly Room and the only way in was from the inside, not through a door off The Quad. People soon discovered those in their school years (and with such a spread of years there was bound to be someone else you knew) and stories of the 'good old days' were exchanged. I was glad to see 4 others in my year. Rupert, who I had caught up with earlier in the year, and Ross, Adrian and George who I hadn't seen in 40, 50 and 51 years respectively. We have dubbed ourselves '66 Leavers and were there for the final year of the Prep School in 1965 when it changed into Worth Junior House, an institution that lasted for another 35 years. There were other guests who I had made contact with in the previous year by email or Facebook - Peter Pavry, Nicolas Bellord, Nicholas de Piro, James Sherry and last, but not least, my brother Michael, who was doubled booked with an A&B Grandparents Day taking place in the Abbey Church.

After tea and coffee we all assembled in The Quad to start our tour of all the old haunts led by some willing sixth-formers. I have to say they did amazingly well to keep tabs on their errant groups with people darting off in odd directions to investigate some favourite play area of old and swapping groups as we moved around. But they did contrive



to get us all back to the Abbey in time for Midday Office.

We started off around the original (main) building which all the pre-1959ers would have known as 'their day room', 'their dormitory', 'their whatever'. Us '66ers only ever resided in the buildings around the Tower (Tower, Butler and Ford House) and if we were ever ushered into the Head Master's Room (Dom Maurice and then Dom Dominic), where it still is, then we were probably in trouble. The current Head Master, Stuart McPherson, observed our reactions as we all trooped into the hallowed chamber.

Then up the hill to have a look around the buildings we '66ers were most familiar with. Ah yes, this used to be a courtyard, this was the old gym, this was the 'cinema' (such as it was), this was where the Tower House chapel was. I particularly wanted to see one room on the first floor corner of Tower House (later Bede House) that I knew as 'S-dorm', my first dormitory that I entered on a cold day in January 1962. In there were 4 'new' boys and a prefect. 3 of the 4 were nephews of monks - Doms Denis, Roger and Hugh. And our first prefect was Dom Jerome's nephew. My wish was fulfilled, although I found that a partition wall had been removed, that it was somewhat bigger and was now a sixth-form recreation room. Fr Stephen was in our group and was enthralled as any of us to be walking around his old domain from when he was St Bede's Housemaster.

After Midday Office we were back in the Whitehead Room for a tasty lunch. While we were eating we had the famous Worth Film projected onto a screen, which caused quite some interest. This had been filmed by Doms Denis and Benedict in the '50s, then languished and discovered in a cellar, transferred to video and now DVD.

As we were finishing lunch we had speeches from the Head Master, Stuart McPherson, commenting on all the changes we had found during the day and Development Director, Edward Schneider, talking about his wish to build on the legacy and raise funds for bursaries for future generations at Worth. Thanks were given to Mary Lou and Johanna for organising a most successful day.

Nicholas de Piro then gave a speech on behalf of everyone with thanks for all that Worth had done for each of us, with stories from his time and a recollection of pretty much every name in one particular school photograph. And I loved hearing his gentle Maltese accent - a country very close to my heart!

Finally we all walked over to the Monks' Cemetery to pay our respects to all our old friends, starting with Dom Maurice. It was a very moving and fitting end to what had been a marvellous day and with everyone saying 'when's the next one?'

Over 1,500 can say they were 'Worth Prep Boys' and so there are many more out there still to contact. During the last year I have compiled an almost complete archive of Worth Records 1946-1966 on Facebook thanks to Peter & Michael Hawkins, Peter Pavry and Rupert Cuddon-Large, and this has proved to be a great means of making contact with the lost. But realising that most are of an age that 'don't do Facebook' I volunteered to host the archive on a webpage and the school photos and Worth Records can now be found on www.agiusww1.com/worth Have a look and pass the word around. Here's to the next time!

Peter Agius WPS62-66



The following former pupils attended the Worth Prep School Reunion:

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| 1936-1941 Timothy Matthews | 1948-1953 Patrick Branigan | 1955-1961 James Sherry |
| 1940-1944 John Taggart (Fr Kevin) | 1948-1952 Michael Legge | 1955-1961 Martin Whinney |
| 1941-1946 Robin Gowlan | 1948-1951 Anthony Mallet | 1956-1961 Neil Cook |
| 1942-1944 Simon Wilson (Fr Richard) | 1948-1951 Dudley Plunkett | 1956-1961 Christopher Dobson StB'66 |
| 1942-1945 John Clyne | 1948-1949 Peter Wright | 1956-1961 George Higgins |
| 1943-1948 John Albert | 1950-1955 Tony Bueno | 1956-1960 Nicholas Kittoe |
| 1944-1950 Peter Davies | 1950-1955 Nicholas De Piro D'Amico Inguanez | 1957-1962 John Young C'67 |
| 1944-1949 Peter Kemmis Betty | 1950-1955 Richard Pavry | 1958-1962 Brian Mooney |
| 1944-1949 Peter Koe | 1952-1958 Michael Agius | 1959-1961 Timothy Clarke |
| 1944-1950 Carl Tantum | 1952-1957 Johnny Harrison | 1959-1962 Stephen Kittoe C'67 |
| 1945-1948 Simon MacLachlan | 1953-1958 Peter Pavry | 1961-1966 Rupert Cuddon-Large |
| 1945-1950 Byard McHugh | 1953-1956 Anthony Pontifex | 1961-1966 Ross Kilpatrick |
| 1945-1949 Michael Wilson | 1954-1959 Rodney Bligh C'64 | 1962-1966 Peter Agius |
| 1947-1952 Maurice Asprey | 1954-1959 Bernard Elkington R'64 | 1962-1966 Adrian Holmes |
| 1947-1951 Nicolas Bellord | 1954-1959 Simon Slaughter R'64 | 1962-1966 George Hutchins |
| 1947-1952 Simon Matthews | 1954-1959 Nicholas Wynne C'64 | 1964-1968 Mark Lee-Barber |
| 1947-1953 Richard Ortiger (Fr Stephen) | 1955-1960 Nicholas Mellish | 1968-1972 Peter Barnes (W/Junior House) |