



## THE WAR YEARS

This period tells the story of how the Society carried on with only two of its sub-section, namely Bowls and Tennis still active. During those years the Baseball, Cricket, Hockey, Ice Hockey, Rugby and Swimming sections were dormant, and Ice Hockey was never resuscitated for the game became professional soon after the war.

With so many members in the forces and with sporting activities strictly limited, the Society took on a new character. Fund Raising functions, especially for the Old Edwardian Gifts and Charities Fund and later the Old Edwardian Remembrance Fund became major activities. The Saturday night dances became the most popular in town and provided a wonderful opportunity for the men on leave to relax and to have reunions. The Society had to cope with endless difficulties, not only financial, but due to the shortages of material and equipment, but when hostilities ceased we had a Society which was ready to resume its roll as a leading sporting club and amazingly enough our bond had been reduced during this period.

There were many willing workers who kept the club going, and the Ladies Committee did a fantastic job of work, yet in the final analysis a special tribute must be paid to Pat Charlton who was the Society's President from 1940 to 1948, and to Eurie Hall and Hugh Marshall. Eurie not only took over the Secretarial duties when Doug went on service, but became the general factotum, doing a quite incredible job of work to keep the Society functioning. In due course, and in appreciation of all her labours Honorary Life Membership of the Society was conferred on her-the first woman of the Society to gain this high honour. Hugh Marshall took charge of the finances when Pat became President: he kept the books and controlled the expenditure. He was a tower of strength to both Pat and Eurie. As the story relates it was he who first put down on paper in an article in the magazine in March 1946 the grand plan for rejuvenating and expanding the Society. Unfortunately he died before he could see his dream become a reality and I am quite certain that had he lived, he too would have been honoured with Honorary Life Membership.

It had become a tradition in the Society that Honorary Life Membership was not conferred on a serving Executive member, but only when he retired from that Committee, and so it was that it was only in 1953 that Honorary Life Membership was conferred on Pat Charlton. How great a debt is owed to this man can only be fully appreciated if one reads extracts from the tribute paid to him by Hugh Marshall when at the 1953 Annual General Meeting he proposed the award.

“In 1922 he matriculated, and shortly after leaving school joined the Society. He has played tennis, rugby, cricket and bowls for the Society. In some sports he has excelled more than others, but in all he has been an ideal club member, prepared to play in any position in any team, wherever he was needed, and always ready to assist beginners....”

From the outset Pat realized that for the Society to function it was necessary for somebody to do the work, and it was not long before he was helping on the sub-club committees and then on the Executive Committee, and it is for his work as an Executive member that the Society owes its gratitude to Pat.

In 1927 the Society, in its present form, had been in existence for two years. During that year a gravel cricket oval was completed and a wood and iron shack was erected to serve as a pavilion and storeroom. Early in 1929 the Society's initial programme was completed by the construction of four tennis courts. From these beginnings Pat had seen the Society grow to its present state, and has played a very big part in stimulating that growth.

After two or three abortive attempts to form a tennis club, the section was launched in 1933 under A R B Anderson. Shortly afterwards Mr Anderson was transferred to Cape Town, and Pat took over the chairmanship, an office which he held for the next decade, and it is in no small measure due to his efforts that the tennis club is today one of the largest sections in the Society.

During the same period from 1931 onwards, he was chairman of the rugby section, an office which he only relinquished when the section ceased to function during the war years. He also assisted the hockey section by looking after a nursery team of young players who, under his supervision, became remarkable proficient in a very short space of time.

Shortly before the war the bowling section was started, and Pat was one of the early members. He was on the bowls committee for some years and in 1948 was elected chairman of the bowls club.

But, as you know, Pat did not confine his activities to the sub-clubs. In 1934 he came onto the Executive Committee as “Minister of Finance”, an office which he held until 1940 when he was elected President. During those years he also acted on the entertainments committee, a general purpose committee and on several sub-committees formed for the raising of funds.

It is interesting to read in the first minutes of the Executive after Pat took over the finances, that the monthly accounts totalling 60 Pounds were passed for payment, while a further account for 20 Pounds was held over “until more funds were available” and that the Society had 497 members of whom only 298 were in good standing. At the end of 1952 there were 1347 in good standing.

In 1940 when the Second World War was upon us, and when the major portion of the Society's members had gone on active service, Pat was elected President. It was certainly not an enviable position. A careful estimate of the financial position revealed that with the reduced subscriptions which we had to expect and the decreased activity

at the club, despite reducing expenditure to a minimum, we stood to lose 500 Pounds a year. It was apparent that tremendous efforts would be necessary in order to keep the Society financially sound during the war years.

At the same time Doug Hall, then Secretary, had been granted permission to go on active service, and while Eurie did everything she possible could, Doug's absence threw additional burdens and responsibilities onto Pat's shoulders. It was uncommon for him to have to come to the club five or six nights a week to attend to club affairs.

Under Pat's able leadership the Society actually progressed in those difficult years, and by the end of 1945, 1100 Pounds had already been spent on turfing the Oval, 534 Pounds on a second bowling green, and a further 900 Pounds on other capital expenditure. In addition, the bond over the Society's property had been reduced by 3000 Pounds.

By 1948, when, owing to pressure of business, Pat handed over the reins to Paul Loeser, the Society had indeed advanced a long way compared with 1927 when he joined, and 1934 when he became a member of the Executive Committee.

One would have thought that, under the circumstances, Pat's spare time-what there was of it- was fully occupied: yet when he was approached in 1945 he had no hesitation in accepting an appointment to the School's Governing Body, on which body he has served for the past eight years, carefully watching the interests of the school, and, indirectly of the Old Edwardians.

All Pat's activities on behalf of the Society have meant the sacrifice of many hours which would normally have been spent in the comfort of his home, and we are grateful to his wife, Dorothy, for making it possible for Pat to devote so much of his time to our interests. We are also grateful to her for her activities on the Ladies' Committee. At the outbreak of the war under her direction, the ladies ran a fete at the school and raised over 1200 Pounds for the Old Edwardian Comforts Fund.

At the outset I said that I would not be able to do Pat justice, and I am afraid I was right. This tabulation of dates and events, which I have given conveys nothing of Pat's charming and friendly personality, his thoughtfulness for others, and his unfailing good humour.

I have been privileged to serve on the Executive Committee with Pat for some years, and have been, I think, in a better position than most to appreciate just how much he has done for our Society and how much we owe to him."

To Pat Charlton, Eurie Hall and the late Hugh Marshall, and all those many other willing workers too numerous to mention by name, this Part 2 of our history is respectfully dedicated.

## **CARRYING ON**

At the Annual General Meeting of the Society in April 1941, it was announced that men on service would not be called upon to pay any subscriptions. It was a fine

gesture greatly appreciated by the men concerned as army pay was a pittance at the time. This meant however, that the Society had to find other sources of revenue and here we tell the story of how the Society managed to keep going, and with the work done during the war years.

It is a matter of regret that the school magazine which had previously had copious Old Boys Notes was unable to record more of the affairs of the Society, for the space was naturally devoted entirely to records of Old Boys on service, the names of those who won decorations and details, and usually pictures of those who made the supreme sacrifice.

Although regular meetings of the Executive Committee were held, the minutes were very sketchy and give only the barest minimum of decisions taken, and appeals to Old Boys who were around at the time to fill in the details have met with a poor response. This is to be regretted for these difficult war years were vitally important years and it had been hoped that we would be able to tell far more of the human side of the story.

Betty Norman, wife of Les Norman, a stalwart member of the Society since the early days and a very active member of the hockey and ice hockey sections before turning to bowls, lived with Eurie Hall during the period that Doug was away on service. Nobody knows better than Betty just how much Eurie did for the Society and has been kind enough to submit some interesting notes which are incorporated.

Her notes to me start with a tribute to Eurie:

“Very few of the Old Edwardians know what a debt they owe to Eurie Hall for keeping the social side of the club going. As I lived in her house I know how many hours both day and night she spent at the club, and the endless organizing it took to keep things functioning-everything from Petrol from the Petrol Controller for the petrol driven mowing machine to organizing a dancing partner for a lone member far from home: including catering, coping with a staff of blacks who did duty as cleaners, gardeners, waiters combined-the hiring and firing of so-called cooks, running the dances, keeping the monies straight for Hugh Marshall to “book-keep”, banking etc.

She often used to have dinner on a Saturday night and get right into bed where she would stay until 9 pm. She would then rise, bath, don her “glad rags” and toil up to the Clubhouse to see to the food for the “supper dance” and stay there until 1 am. There was always an Old Boy, usually Hugh Marshall or Joe Fussell, but others who were temporarily available “helped out.”

Betty then goes on to describe what she calls “Sunday Nights”:

“Many of the “war widows” came to the club for tea on Sunday afternoon or to watch sport if there was anything going on, and we would stay and have a couple of sundowners together.

Dear old “Splot” Lewin was always so kind to us and Noni was happy to share him with us. Often men were down on leave or on a course and they would give some support. I don’t know how many drinks I personally owed to Slot-he would never let

us pay-said looking after us was his war effort-sadly he was unable to join up because of his eyesight and ill health.

“Eurie’s warm welcome to all the lads who came down on leave, her ready hospitality, her friendliness and interest in their doings, will remain with me for ever.”

Very similar thoughts were expressed by Jean Greig who also referred to Splots “war effort.” She also recalls the Sunday mornings for she wrote to me:

“A few of us went across on Sunday mornings to help Eurie in the kitchen. The club was usually very crowded with servicemen on leave and the W.A.F.S using the grounds as a training depot, and all the relatives and friends coming to watch the marching. Eurie served morning and afternoon teas non-stop, and her tea and cream scones were something to remember! So many of the “boys” on leave would come to the club to meet their friends, and they were always made welcome by Eurie and the Staff. Weekends were nearly always busy but throughout the war the Club was a happy meeting place for all Old Boys, pre war members and non-members.

### **THE OLD EDWARDIAN COMFORTS COMMITTEE**

Although much more will be written about this Committee’s work and the assistance received from the bowls and tennis sections and the School, it is appropriate to introduce it at this stage, for it was established in the early days of the war.

It was on the 9th July 1940 when comparatively few Old Boys had left for East Africa and A.C.F. units were still being mobilized, that fourteen ladies interested in the welfare of the School and the Society met at the clubhouse and decided to form The Old Edwardian Comforts Committee. Unfortunately there is no record of the names of the fourteen ladies. However, Mrs R Herbert was appointed Chairlady, Eurie Hall became Vice Chairlady and Dorothy Charlton was appointed Secretary/Treasurer.

It was reported that there were already 900 Old Boys known to be in the armed forces and the two schools had undertaken to keep lists of names as they were received.

The Committee soon got down to work. Mrs Alexander Fisher, the mother of a high school pupil, organized a very successful morning market which raised nearly 300 Pounds. S G Doig, a pupil in Form 111 D made two beautiful models of sailing ships and these raised 20 Pounds. The boys at the schools donated their prizes and the tea proceeds from their sports meetings. From all sides came offers of help. A fete at the school raised over 1200 Pounds.

Betty Norman recalls those early days and the years that followed when she wrote:

“I remember the happy Tuesday evenings we spent in the old kitchen doing up gifts and comfort parcels-Frankie Chapman, Marge Allen, Jean Greig, Heather Gardner, Connie Abraham (whose son David is now a member of the Executive Committee), Noni Lewin, Mrs Ballard, Mrs Chitterden, Joy Inchbold and Mrs Milford (whose son Rex later became President of the Society and is currently Chairman of the School’s Governing Body), all come to mind, and of course Eurie Hall who had got everything

assembled for us-begging magazines and paperbacks from all and sundry, bullying us into knitting, getting donations in cash and in kind. We had a lot of pleasure trying to keep the boys supplied

and each giving news of their “men up North” and what he fancied to eat-all this being a great comfort to us.”

### **THE CASUALTY LIST**

It was obvious that the war would take its toll, but we were all saddened when news reached us of the loss of yet another of our members. Harold Rosofsky, who had joined the RAF was the first casualty-losing his life in a raid on Kiel only a few days after war was declared; then there was Norman Lewis who had been a keen member-he was also in the RAF. Others also went, but within the next year we lost three prominent sportsmen in “Dooley” Briscoe, Springbok and Old Edwardian cricketer, and also a member of the baseball section; John Ayton (cricket) and Doug Pannell (rugby). There was also Bob Silson-Executive member and organizer of a Boy’s Club in Craighall for underprivileged children.

### **THE LIGHTER SIDE.**

Letters from “up North” brought us plenty of news-for Old Boys often mentioned their fellow Teddybears and their letters were full of humour.

“Lt. Harold Anderson tells us of Paul Grice’s use of a two-way stretch as a cure for sea sickness.”

“Air Gunner Jack Carlisle (later killed in action) suggests that Old Edwardian hangovers will be spread over a wide area of Africa this year. He suggests that they give the Barberton Bell a special ring for Christmas Eve.”

Corporal “Hoosit” Houet (later to gain prominence as a Wimbledon tennis umpire and hockey scribe) is of the opinion that if Kenya had not heard of the school before, she has certainly learned a lot before the end of 1940!”

“Pte Keightly-Smith is making a name for himself in a baseball side comprised mainly of Old Edwardians and using “Ossie” Graham as an “Aunt Sally.”

### **THE EXECUTIVE CARRIES ON**

In March 1941 the members of the Executive Committee were; A L Charlton (President), F A Hossack (Vice President), J H Fussell, A W J Troye, G P Prescott. J Hofmeyr and H Marshall.

The Executive report for the Annual General Meeting started with a list of sixteen casualties and seven decorations.

In spite of the war a record 75 new members joined, but as members on service did not pay subscriptions, revenue from subscriptions dropped from 912 Pounds to 809 Pounds, but it was noted that quite a few servicemen had sent in donations.

In these days when our catering turnover is over R200000 a year, and the profits from this department make a major contribution to our funds, it is interesting to note that in 1940,

the catering profit was 85 Pounds but the bar in its second year of operation had contributed 690 Pounds.

Two years earlier J D Downs had proposed an amendment to the Constitution to provide for a larger Council including past Presidents as well as Chairmen of the sub-clubs-this Council to meet four times a year and the Council would have powers to elect an Executive Committee of seven. Pat Charlton felt that owing to the war it was inadvisable to make any changes-the Constitution was finally re-drafted in 1947, when the Council was dropped altogether and the members elected the entire Executive.

In September the wages of the three of the Black staff were increased by two shillings and sixpence per week and a sub-Committee was asked to look into the question of giving them a "cost of living" allowance.

When Christmas came the barmen received a bonus of 5 Pounds and each of the Black staff five shillings plus some additional food for the festive season. Everything is relative, but these figures show how lowly the wages of our staff were in those days-but then everything also cost so much less!

## **CLUBHOUSE DANCES**

It would be appropriate at this stage to introduce this subject because it was in 1941 that the regular Saturday night dances were started, and as the war progressed and even for some time after the war, the "Old Edwardian Saturday Night Clubhouse Dances" were almost a household word, not only amongst members but also amongst their friends.

The Annual Ball had been held in November 1940 and the minutes make some reference to monthly house dances, but they give no details.

On 7th October 1941 there is an interesting item in the minutes: "The advisability of running weekly dances was discussed and it was resolved that these be held. The commencing date was left to the discretion of the Entertainments Committee who were authorised to spend up to 20 Pounds on publicity."

The date for the first dance is not recorded, but I can recall somebody telling me that there was such a poor turnout the first night that the organizers were a bit despondent. However, a better attendance the following week was encouraging, but it is obvious that the idea was slow in catching on, for in January 1942 the Executive Committee questioned whether they should be continued and wisely they did decide to carry as

suddenly they became very popular. This can be gauged from the fact that in January the Ambassadors Dance Band was paid 8 Pounds a night (for the whole band, not per player!) and in May it was decided to increase the size of the band from four to five players.



*Bruce McMurray, Wilfred Isaacs, Alistair “Scotch” Taylor – at the November 1997 King Edwards VII School Armistice Day Memorial Parade*

In March that year the Executive Committee found it necessary to introduce a number of rules-dancing was to stop at 1 am sharp! The Jack Ryan Gates were to be locked at 11 pm and the dancers were to leave by the Whytock Gates (in Third Street) so as to lessen complaints from neighbours.

The war news had its effect on dances for in July Bill Ramsey reported a fall off in attendance, and said that this was probably due to the unsettling news from Libya for Tobruk had just fallen.

Things brightened up however when the German advance was halted a month or two later, and in December Bill was able to announce that in that month seven dances were held-the regular Saturday night dances as well as the Christmas Eve and New

Year's Eve dances on the Friday nights-and the attendance at all of them had been very good.

Doug Hall, who served in the Air Force during the war recalls:

“There were Old Edwardians in all branches of the armed forces, with the biggest representation in the Air Force, and it was these chaps who started the Saturday night dance ‘boom.’ A certain flying instruction course contained many Old Boys and they decided to celebrate the receipt of their “wings” at the clubs Saturday night dance. This proved to be so successful that many others followed and it became necessary to book well in advance. The Saturday night dance had become the most popular in town. Incidentally the parades at which “wings” were awarded were known as “Passing Out Parades” and at the parties to celebrate these occasions the “passing out” part was often demonstrated.”

These dances continued throughout the war and for sometime thereafter, but then dancing was going out of fashion and, after being reduced to a monthly function, they eventually had to be abandoned.

They must have contributed a great deal to the revenue to the Society, and had in no small measure been responsible for keeping it solvent and enhancing its popularity and reputation.

However before they were abandoned, the Executive had to introduce a number of rules to keep the growing attendance in check. First of all it was laid down that the men had either to attend in uniform or in dinner jacket-every youngster possessed a dinner jacket in those days. Then table bookings were confirmed to Society members and a careful check was kept on the names and addresses of those booking, and also those attending.

Among the many willing helpers at these dances were Hugh Marshall, Joe Fussell, Bill Ramsey, Fred Hossack and John Clouston.

### **SAM (POP) GOTTBURG.**

It is not often that a club barman gets a special mention in the history of a Club or Society such as ours, but then Sam Gottberg was no ordinary barman.

When the Society obtained its Liquor Licence, the trading hours were restricted to certain evenings of the week and over the weekend. It was realized that the Secretary could not be expected to add the running of the bar to his other duties, and although a few members lent a hand when necessary, it soon became necessary to have a part-time barman and the appointment went to an elderly gentleman, the father-in-law of one of our bowlers. His name was Sam Gottberg, but very soon he became known to all and sundry as “Pop.” He was a loveable old chap, gentle by nature and courteous and efficient and as long as he was there, we never had any trouble in the bar-he was highly respected by everyone. Perhaps one of the greatest tributes that can be paid to his memory is to record that when an Old Boy was serving “up north” told fellow Old

Boys' that he was going on "Home Leave", the usual message was "When you go down to the club give my regards to Pop."

It was fairly soon after the war (August 1945) that he was taken ill and while his illness was not thought to be serious, he died suddenly and was mourned by all who had had the privilege of knowing him.

## **LETTERS FROM MEN IN THE FORCES**

The members may have been scattered far and wide, but such was the wonderful spirit amongst Old Edwardians at that time, that they wrote not infrequently either to the School or Society to tell of their exploits, of meetings with fellow Teddys, and often of their amusing experiences.

In September 1941 Ossie Graham having arrived in the Land of the Pharaohs complained that it was a land of "Flies, fleas and fleecers." He said the flies attacked in 300-400-100 scrum formation whereas the fleas still used the old fashioned 300-300-200. He also reported that Johnny Hodgson went visiting one Major Cyril Cochran somewhere in the desert and returned home "in his cups."

Sometime earlier Alf Green described Addis Ababa in the following words. "The town itself is a cross between an architect's bad dream, and just an ordinary bad dream. The Italians have an idea that as long as they build roads the job is done with the result that the pavements are faintly reminiscent of "Dougies" tank traps around the Oval. It is a bit disconcerting to find your girl friend disappearing down a pit with a faint hissing sound!"

It was reported that Major Paul Loeser had played cricket in Alexandria, and he also played baseball against a team which included Jack Jardine and Jeppe Old Boy, Bob Catterall.

J W C (Jock) Wilson had earlier announced his engagement to Faith George but as he "went into the bag" at Sidi Rezegh, his marriage was postponed until June 1945!

There was also a comment that "John Seccombe D F C has been in the news again through an amazing adventure with a snake in his cockpit while on a raid."

Alf Green, in later years in his "Libel Pen" series had a dig at many of his old friends and in most of them he recalled some war-time incidents. Of your editor he wrote, referring to a time when they shared a two bedded ward in a Cairo hospital-Alf suffering from a throat infection-"Off to hospital went Green, only to find the hero of this piece prostrate on the couch of pain with sandfly fever. But even the enervating attentions of the sandfly could not curb Eric's diligence. There he lay with his skull feeling like a Clarendon Circle traffic jam, attempting to set a new Inter High record for the destruction of the sandfly's big brother, the musca domestica. Never has a fly swatter swished with such devastating effect.....and this in spite of a fever which feels like every known type of hangover served with a glass of castor oil as a sweetener!!

But there was also a great deal of sad news as the casualty lists grew and we learned of the death of more and more of the lads who had been so active before the war, but were to return no more.

### **TRANSFER OF OUR BOND**

Problems arose with our bondholders and as mentioned in Part 1 of the History of the Society, it was our old friend and good friend of the school-the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company Limited-which came to the rescue and they agreed to take over the Bond of 7000 Pounds at 4 and a half per cent interest.

There was a legal hitch as the transaction required the Sanction of a Special General Meeting. But this was duly rectified, and while the amount of the Bond has varied, we still have a Bond of R14000 owing to JCI-our only Bond indebtedness.

### **REDUCTION OF THE BOND**

In 1942 the Society had raised sufficient funds to repay 1000 Pounds off our Bond which then stood at 7000 Pounds. In May of the following year a further 1000 Pounds was repaid whilst a further 1000 Pounds was repaid in November of the same year.

This was a remarkable achievement as it resulted in a reduction in interest payments and the capital funds raised for the purpose could not be spent on capital improvements due to the war time restrictions.

### **THE 1942 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Nearly half of the Executive report referred to the war. Our death toll had risen to 54 and six others were missing. 29 were prisoners of war. Nineteen decorations were recorded-two of the persons concerned having gained two awards-Flight Lieutenant J W Louw had gained the DFC and bar and Major Cyril Cochran the DSO and MC.

Although the deficit for the year was a mere 8 Pounds there was a drop in subscriptions from 809 Pounds to 430 Pounds. Twenty four new members had joined during the year and our members in good standing (including those on active service) was 786. We were helped by donations of 318 Pounds.

Our property, plant and equipment were shown in the Balance Sheet at 14,097 Pounds. The report made mention of the activities of bowls and tennis and also hockey and cricket, although we have no details of just how active hockey and cricket were played in that period.

Due to members leaving on service etc, there were quite a few changes in the composition of the Executive Committee and new members during the year included Hector Ogilvy, T D Nelson, Bill Ramsey and B K (Stalky) Reid. Subsequently B Melman joined the Executive, representing cricket.

## **OLD TIMERS**

In September 1942 it was recorded that Arthur Howes, the first boy to be enrolled as a pupil of the school in 1902 had joined the Society-forty years after becoming a pupil. It was also noted that other contemporaries of his at school who were at that time members of the Society included Arthur Troye, Claude Mann, Evelyn Dacomb, T D Nelson, Ernest Mackay, J D Downs and Toby Louw.

## **PREPARING FOR THE DROUGHT**

This has nothing to do with the weather! Early in May, the Executive Committee resolved that stocks of whiskey be set aside for the future "at as rapid a rate as possible." Then in September it was decided to stock up brandy as well as we had received news that this might also run short. To make certain that our precious supplies should not be looted, it was agreed to install burglar proofing in the storeroom. The stock position worsened and some months later it was resolved that half tots would be served at nine pence whilst full tots remained at one shilling and five pence.

## **PAINTING THE CLUBHOUSE**

In spite of the shortage of funds and the need to conserve money, it was felt that the clubhouse could not be allowed to deteriorate and so in mid1942 it was decided to paint both the interior and exterior. The cost of painting the interior was 100 Pounds while the cost of repainting the exterior came to 85 Pounds-the work was carried out by Mr Douglas who generously bore the cost of the first 50 Pounds himself.

## **GAYDON'S GENEROUS OFFER**

In September of that year Norman Gaydon offered to pay the subscription of any widow of a member killed on active service-this offer we've gratefully accepted, but there is no record of how many availed themselves of Norman's generosity.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

T D Nelson, as Chairman of the Membership Committee was disturbed at the lack of new members and in 1942 he reported that he and his committee had gone through the school records and that they were going on a recruiting drive for members amongst the older Old Boys as well as instituting a membership drive amongst the boys about to leave school. Although no figure was given of the new members enrolled during 1942, the paid up membership at the end of that year had increased from 786 to 884.

### **AGM APRIL 1943**

It is interesting to note that Cecil Baumann was present at this meeting. He was the first Old Boy to be made an Honorary Life Member for his services to the club during the period when the Combined Old Boys' Association was raising funds to help the various Old Boys' Clubs to develop their properties. He referred to the fact that that this was called the 18th Annual General Meeting whereas the Society was formed in 1908. It was pointed out to him that the Society had been completely re-constituted in 1925 and this was the 18th meeting of the re-constituted body. He then appealed to those present to remember that if somebody at some future date should write the Society's history, not to omit the work done and the existence of the Society prior to 1925. This was agreed.

### **FULL TIME GROUNDSMAN**

As it was not possible for the depleted staff and the willing committee members to supervise all the work of maintaining the grounds, in August 1943 Mr Busson was appointed as groundsman at a salary of 20 Pounds per month, plus cost of living allowance plus one Pound travelling allowance.

At the same time it was decided that native wages would be increased by ten shillings a month, and they would no longer receive any rations from the club.

### **WHEELBARROWS**

There is an amusing note in the minutes of May 1943. Referring to a certain contractor who had carried out some work at the club, we read that "it was agreed that Mr X's outstanding account of 17 Pounds ten shillings be paid subject to his returning three new wheelbarrows to the Society."

Shortage of paper due to the war cut down the size of the Annual Report for 1943 and 1944, so that there is no record of membership figures and only the scratchiest notes on activities within the Society. However, there were comments in the minutes over the next year or two of the excellent work done by Mr Nelson. Then suddenly at the Annual General Meeting of May 1944 when the war still had a year to run in Europe but the second front had been established, the members turned their thoughts to what would happen when hostilities ceased. The Chairman expressed the hope that the war would have ended before the next Annual General Meeting, even though at that stage Germany still controlled most of Europe and the Japanese were still masters of the Pacific.

Attention was drawn to the limited club facilities and in order to ensure that there would be a place in the Society for men when they returned from service, the following resolution was adopted for implementation by the Executive Committee, namely that:

“ For the duration of the war, except in special cases or under special circumstances, the consideration of application for membership from male persons be confined to persons on Active Service or those who have returned therefrom, and to past pupils of the school who have passed out immediately prior to-or reasonably soon before-their application for membership were made.”

The following month the resolution was implemented when applications from three parent members were deferred.

Although most of those who had been on active service resumed their membership upon return, and quite a few ex-servicemen who had not previously been members, joined the Society after their discharge, the Society was never overwhelmed with applications to an extent where we could not cater for all those who wanted to be active members.

Another decision taken at the 1944 Annual General Meeting was that all outstanding sub-club debts would be written off so that all sub-clubs could resume their activities with a “clean slate.” The amount written off was 124 Pounds.

### **MEMORIAL BENEVOLENT FUND**

One other vitally important matter was discussed at this Annual General Meeting, namely the establishment of the Old Edwardian Benevolent Fund. It is worth noting the objectives of the fund, as worded in the notice of the meeting.

“To create a Fund, under such name as may be deemed suitable, having as its main object the assistance of members of the Society and past students of the School returning from active service and may be in need of financial assistance and to assist widows, children and dependants of past students who have lost their lives or been incapacitated as a result of their proceeding on active service, and having such other ancillary subjects as may be deemed desirable.”

No time was lost in getting the fund established and whilst other contributions were received, the main contribution came from our own Old Edwardian Comforts Committee which transferred an amount of just under 2500 Pounds to the fund and undertook to arrange a number of Fund Raising efforts.

### **EXTENSIONS TO THE CLUBHOUSE**

Here we must pause a while and go back to the Annual General Meeting of 1943. It had been proposed that the verandah should be extended, but a heated argument ensued as to whether we should extend to the east side or the west side and finally on being put to the vote, it was resolved by 14 votes to 3 that the extension should be on the east side-that is, the side nearest the Oval. The motion was proposed by Maurice Smollan and seconded by Dr Fred Hossack. The estimate cost was 550 Pounds-but the meeting could have saved itself all the trouble for the proposed extensions were turned down by the Municipality, They then tried a scheme for extensions to the west side but were informed that no permit for the use of steel could be obtained.

While some improvements were made to the facilities, such as the erection of screens, major improvements had to wait until after the conclusion of the war.

## **SOCIAL AND PERSONAL**

Whatever else happened that was unusual because of the war, certain things did not change. Members still celebrated their 21st birthdays, some got engaged and others got married, and many of these occasions were celebrated at the club.

Betty Norman remembers those functions well-“buying flowers at the market, arranging same, including small posies for each table: flowers for all the dances too: usually arranged on Fridays and Noni Lewin and Peggy Jarvis were a big help in this respect-doing wonders with very little, cash being in short supply.”

Then there was the memorable occasion when the 1st South African Division came home from the Western Desert-there were many Old Edwardians in their ranks. Jean Greig (nee Brownlee) recalls some of the weddings which took place then, including her own. “In January 1943 when the 1st Division returned to South Africa there were many weddings at the club, ours amongst them. Clem (better known as “Scotty”) returned to Johannesburg on 16 January and we were married one week later. On the Wednesday before the wedding Cyril Cochran, Denis Begbie and Clem all had their bachelor party together and Clem can tell you about the riot!! I had only one week to prepare for our wedding and so sent out no invitations, but the word soon got around and over 200 people arrived-mostly Clem’s army friends. Eurie was a brick. She organized the Club and we all had a very merry afternoon. Cyril Cochran was Clem’s best man, and I think the two of them spent most of the time reliving all their army experiences with their pals, rather than paying attention to a mere wedding! We had a week in Parys (petrol restrictions) and then had to rush back to attend Cyril and Jean’s wedding so that Clem could be his best man. Denis and Dorothy were married in Durban on the Wednesday after ours. After Cyril’s wedding we went by train to the South Coast where we spent the rest of the honeymoon, meeting up again with Cyril and Jean. On the way back Clem had to get off the train at Pietermaritzburg to rejoin his unit, and I returned home where I remained until after the war. However, our home was opposite the club and this meant that I remained in constant touch with all our Old Edwardian friends. The club meant so much to all of us and what a debt we all owed to Eurie.”

Jean also recalled the messages from “Up North” recorded by Bruce Anderson and broadcast locally. The wives’ used to gather at the club in a spirit of “togetherness” for they were always thrilled to get messages from their loved ones and to hear messages from others they knew, speaking to their families. As Jean says “My particular message was very terse (you know Clem) but many of the Transvaal Scottish wives received loving messages from their dear ones.”

Quite some time before all this there was a note in the few Old Boys’ Notes in the School magazine recording the birth of eight daughters (no sons) to old Edwardians, and the suggestion was made that a request should be addressed to the Headmaster of the Prep, to start a girls section to accommodate these daughters.

In the meantime the war was going on and news came either directly or indirectly from our members in the forces. Louis Duffus wrote a special article entitled “Notes from the North”, and much of this recorded in Paddy Cartwright’s wonderful book “Strenue-The Story of King Edward VII School.” Yet the opening paragraph is worth recording here:



*The late Louis Duffus, a senior life member and renowned sportswriter of international repute, who died on July 25, 1984.*

“Some of those who left the school in the early twenties were tough young gentlemen. They had no worries. They pioneered baseball and rugby, played three brands of sport each weekend and consistently declined to pay their hockey dues (as Captain H E Seccull may well remember). They had no emotions except perhaps occasionally on Saturday nights, but lived with zest. Their shortcomings were no fault of the School-theirs was just a particular vintage which even Mr Davis had no power to dilute.”

Many of these same “young gentlemen” were amongst those who were now on active service, and in their spare moments remembered the Society.

However, the losses kept mounting and at the Remembrance Service in November 1943 there were no fewer than 100 names of those who had died in this war.

## **THE TIDE TURNS**

Alamein and Stalingrad were the turning points of the war in Africa and Europe respectively. Slowly the Allies were gaining the upper hand. The Axis forces were driven out of Africa and we crossed into Italy. The Russians started their drive westwards and with the Americans now in the war, the tide had turned, and the end inevitable. Not unnaturally back home thoughts were gradually turning to the end of hostilities and the preparations for peace.

The Executive Committee in 1943 consisted of A L Charlton (President); G W Ramsey; F A Hossack; G P Prescott; J H Fussell; B K Reid; T D Nelson; G T Grosch; A W J Troye; H A Marshall and B Melman.

By the end of 1944 several changes had taken place with F A Hossack, B K Reid, C T Crosch, A W J Troye and B Melman being replaced by R Badham, S J Inchbold, B Newcombe and E Serrurier.

Apart from the bar which yielded nearly 50% of our revenue-1586 Pounds out of a total of 3253 Pounds, Entertainments-thanks to the Saturday evening dances-brought in a net 834 Pounds and Subscriptions 486 Pounds. Salaries and wages absorbed 753 Pounds, Maintenance of House and Grounds 581 Pounds and Interest 251 Pounds. We were still able to show a small surplus after adding 350 Pounds to Depreciation Reserve and Sundry Provisions of 500 Pounds.

1944 was not quite so successful a year-we wrote off the cost of the borehole which had been sunk without yielding adequate water, made no provision for Depreciation and set aside only 100 Pounds for sundry provisions. Salaries had risen to 1102 Pounds and Maintenance to 706 Pounds. The bar earned exactly 400 Pounds less and there was a drop in catering profits from 172 Pounds to a mere 19 Pounds. Even Entertainments yielded 80 Pounds less.

For all that, 1944 was a momentous year. In January "Cost of Living" allowances were added to salaries, and in the case of our Native Labour, their allowances ranged from seventeen shillings and eight pence to one pound a month.

## **THE TURN OF THE YEAR**

Although the Allies were continuing to advance on all fronts in Europe and the Americans were "rolling up" the Japanese held islands in the Pacific, the war was not yet over and it is worth recording some of the views received at the time and recorded in November 1944. There were quite a few escape stories from the P O W camps-these included Major Frank Cochran who was awarded the OBE: Vernon Hacker: whilst it was said that "Major Paul Loeser is a regular correspondent from a German Laager; his dream is to get going with cricket once more."

Doug Hall was adjutant to a SAAF squadron in the Middle East, and it was said that he had a branch of the Club in his mess. "With him are Major Mauritz: Captain Temple-Moodie; Lt Cox: Lt Harold Norgarb; Lt Feinberg," it was also recorded that "he had a session in Cairo with Bob Lindsay; Bob Lawson; Alf Green: Bob Jones: Dudley Edmonds and Harry Campbell." Knowing Doug and the gentlemen concerned, we can imagine that it was a real session!!

## **CLUB HOUSE IMPROVEMENTS**

In March 1945 Joe Fussell (Chairman of the House Committee) reported that the new floor for the Hall would cost 250 Pounds; the covering of the open verandah 300 Pounds and a temporary structure with asbestos roofing as an extension to the verandah a further 200 Pounds. Approval for these projects was received from the Municipality in August, and in the meantime Joe reported that 60 "suitable" chairs had been purchased at a price of one Pound each. Chairs! Shudders probably still run down the spines of the members of the Executive Committee of the post war era when they think back on the problems we had in trying to find chairs for the club house which met the following requirements-durability, easy to stack, did not tear ladies' stockings and were reasonably comfortable.

## **TURFING OF THE OVAL**

Although the cricket was dormant, at the 1944 Annual General Meeting of the Society a strong recommendation was made by "The Old Edwardians on Service."

- a) that turfing of the Oval be commenced in the spring otherwise no first league cricket will be played on our grounds for years. (This came from Denis Begbie, Guido Keightly-Smith, Ossie Graham, John Secombe and several others.)
- b) that congratulations be extended to the Executive Committee and Council for the great job of work that they are doing, the progress of the club and the outstanding success of the Saturday night dances.

## **JULY 1944**

Bernie Newcombe reported that the ground had been inspected by the groundsman of Parktown School and Florida grass could be planted without soil having to be brought in. It was agreed that the opinion of Mr Hubbard of Witwatersrand University be sought. A sub-committee consisting of Messrs. C B Newcombe, A L Charlton, S J Inchbold and H A Marshall was appointed to investigate possible changes to the Oval with a view to early turfing.

## **THE OLD EDWARDIAN**

In the minutes of the executive Committee held on 3 June 1944 it was recorded that a meeting between Messrs Charlton, Marshall and Nelson had been held to discuss the financial arrangements for the establishment of our own club magazine. The minute stated that "The Finance Committee had considered the financial arrangements and

had approved them, and it was recommended that while no definite agreement be entered into yet, Mr Nelson be authorized to proceed along the lines agreed to." This proposal was accepted.

Unfortunately it was recorded in October 1944 that the Paper Controller had refused the application for paper, so that the project had to be placed in cold storage and it was not until January 1946 that the first edition appeared.

### **LIBERTY CAVALCADE**

With the Allied Forces making progress on all fronts a monster "Liberty" Cavalcade was organized at Zoo Lake, and in September 1944 it was recorded that the Society had agreed to help in the "Gaiety" Section. Unfortunately no further details of our participation are noted.

### **THE BOREHOLE**

The Society's water supply was inadequate and with the projected turfing of the Oval, it was necessary to ensure that we had enough water. In August 1944 C R Jacobs was appointed to sink a borehole at a price of twenty two shillings and sixpence per foot. At 200 feet the borehole had struck virtually no water, and after first deciding to abandon the hole it was decided in July of the following year to deepen it by a further 50 feet at a cost of thirty shillings a foot, but alas, there was still no water.

In March 1945 a Mr Cliff was engaged to bring his water divining machine to try and locate an adequate water supply. His fee was 5 Pounds. He eventually reported that the strongest indications of water lay between the Sullivan Ground and to the west of the Robinson bowling green. By then however, the Executive Committee had had enough of searching for water and eventually we switched to Municipal supply.

### **THE JACARANDA TREES**

When the Oval was enlarged a few years ago it became necessary to remove the Jacaranda trees from around the northern side of the Oval and flanking the original exit driveway into Third Street. There were quite a few members who complained about the removal of these trees, but the extension of the grounds had to take precedence. It is therefore interesting to note that Bernie Newcombe, a tremendous worker during these years, reported to the August 1944 Executive Meeting that 45 Jacaranda trees had been planted around the Oval.

### **NEW CONSTITUTION**

The preparation of a new Constitution is a very lengthy business and it was in October 1944 that Russell Badham presented the Executive Committee his first draft, which only covered part of the task in hand. Little did those who studied this draft realize that another two and a half years hard work lay ahead before the Constitution would be ready to place before a Special General Meeting for adoption.

## TURFING THE OVAL

The war in Europe was over and almost co-incidentally with the final defeat of the Japanese, the Executive Committee met on 15 August 1945 to consider the first estimates for the turfing of the Oval. It was like a dream coming true at last. It had been mooted when war broke out and was raised by S J (Inch) Inchbold on his return to the Executive Committee as chairman of cricket in September 1944.

The estimate, which did not include a turf wicket, amounted to 1988 Pounds and was made up as follows:

1500 cubic yards of soil from outside	750
1500 cubic yards of our own soil	188
250 cubic yards of manure	250
250 bags of grass	250
Alteration to water pipes	100
Labour	450
<hr/>	
Total	1988

At another meeting later that month the special sub committee reported that the work could be done for 1250 Pounds as outside soil was not required.

Mr Murray was instructed to proceed and that the turf wicket was laid under the supervision of Mr Houlston of the Wanderers. Mr Hall was also authorized to have the water supply from the Municipality changed from three quarter inch piping to one and a half inch.

## **OLD EDWARDIAN MEMORIAL BENEVOLENT FUND**

We referred earlier to the establishment of this Fund which was to assist returning Old Edwardians servicemen and their families as well as dependants of fallen Old Boys. By November 1945 the Fund stood at just over 4000 Pounds and the Trustees were Pat Charlton, Bill Ramsey, Russell Badham, G P Prescott and Hugh Marshall.

## **RE-UNION**

With the war over the men were returning home, either from overseas or from various bases in the Union. It was felt that they should be welcomed back to the Society. In July 1945 the Executive decided that an informal re-union would be held during October with a dinner later that year and also an official "welcome back" dance which would be confined to members of the Society. The informal re-union, being the first of the functions was a tremendous success-it is impossible to recall just how many Old Boys crowded into the club house and onto the verandah that night, but many were the happy greetings between friends who had possibly not seen each other for upwards of five years. It was an emotional evening, especially when somebody enquired about an old friend, only to be told that he had died.

## **MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS**

In the first part of the history of the Society, it was stressed how Douggie Downs, our President from 1923 to 1936 constantly talked about expansion, even in the darkest days when the Society was struggling to pay its way and balance the budget. That wonderful spirit, that determination to build up an even better Society has been characteristic of succeeding Presidents and Executive Committees. There have been periods of stagnation, but they have never lasted long, and we have then moved ahead strongly again in the right direction. How else could we today have the magnificent Society we possess?

The war was not yet at an end when major development plans were being discussed, and behind these ideas we detect the thinking and planning of our wartime President, Pat Charlton and his hard working and dedicated Chairman of Finance, Hugh Marshall.

In November 1944 there was an article on the major developments which lay ahead; these included the extensions to the Oval to take two hockey fields whilst leaving the cricket wicket free: half the Sullivan ground to be re-laid to take two hard surfaced hockey fields: a larger Clubhouse with a proper hall; re-grassing of the rugby field and as longer term projects, a swimming pool and a squash court.

Some of these projects were proceeded with fairly quickly, others had to wait many years, but for all the changes in the plans, we have achieved results even greater than those envisaged in 1944.