

Old Kingstonians



R C Sherriff

The earliest distinguished Old Kingstonian we know of was **Edward Gibbon**. The celebrated author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was a sickly child who attended the school only briefly in 1746-1747; he records in his *Memoirs of my Life and Writings* that "at the expense of many tears and some blood, I purchased the knowledge of the Latin syntax". It was during his time at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School that he first acquired his love of books; the School is fortunate enough to have in its Archives two volumes from the extensive library which he built up over his lifetime.

R C Sherriff (1905-1913) served in the 9th East Surrey Regiment in the First World War, and although severely wounded at Ypres he survived – unlike many of his fellow Old Kingstonians. His best known play, *Journey's End*, written in 1928, is set in a dug-out on the Western Front and

despite its grim subject matter was a huge success and became an instant classic. It is still regularly performed and is studied as part of the English curriculum. This was followed by a string of later successes including television and radio plays and screenplays. Bob Sherriff was a generous benefactor to the School, and particularly to the Boat Club, whose social club bears his name.

Michael Frayn (1946-52) has had an equally distinguished career as a playwright and novelist, having first been spotted as a talent by R C Sherriff while he was still at school. He has won a host of literary prizes, including the Whitbread Prize for Fiction for his 2002 novel *Spies*, the London Evening Standard Award for his plays *Alphabetical Order* (1975), *Noises Off* (1982), *Copenhagen* (1998) and *Democracy* (2003). His memoir *My Father's Fortune* was nominated for the 2010 Costa Book Award while his novel *Skios* was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2012. He has produced highly regarded translations of Chekhov and other Russian and French dramatists, and has written a number of screenplays. The School's Library was formally named the Frayn Library in 2007 and in 2013 Frayn was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual Olivier Awards.

S H (Stanley) Shoveller (1892-1898) was one of the first Old Kingstonians to highlight the School's growing reputation for hockey. He played for Middlesex in 1899 and then went on to play for England in 1902, winning two Olympic gold medals. Nearly fifty Old Kingstonians have since played hockey at international level; followers of the game will recognise names such as **Richard Dodds** (1970-1977), **Guy Fordham** (1986-1993), **Danny Hall** (1986-93), **James Wallis** (1985-92) and **Brett Garrard** (1987-1994), all of whom have represented Great Britain at hockey in the Olympics more recently.

Our rowers have fared just as well. **James Cracknell** (1984-1990) won Olympic gold medals in 2000 and 2004, and 6 gold medals in the World Rowing Championships. He has undertaken a range of gruelling physical challenges and adventures, many of them for charity. In 2008 he travelled 1,400 miles from London to Africa, rowing, cycling and swimming. In July 2010 he sustained serious head injuries while attempting a similar marathon from Los Angeles to New York, from which he is slowly recovering. He has worked as a sports broadcaster and columnist and was awarded the OBE in 2004. Amongst the many other Old Kingstonian rowing internationals are gold medal winners **Simon Fieldhouse** (1987-1995), **Jaspal Bhular** (1986-1991) and **Jane Hall** (1985-1992). **Sophie Hosking** (1999-2004), Gold medal winner at the 2012 London Olympics, was awarded an MBE in the 2013 New Year Honours.

A number of Old Kingstonians have gone on to distinguished military careers. They include Marshal of the Royal Air Force **Sir Dennis Spotswood** (1926-1932), whose career culminated in a term as Chief of Air Staff in the 1970s. Air Marshall **Sir Gerald Gibbs** (1910-1912) commanded the Indian Air Force and was an ace pilot in World War II. **Lieutenant-General Jonathon Riley** (1966-1973) served in Northern Ireland and the Balkans, has written extensively on military history, and until 2013 was Director General and Master of the Royal Armouries. In May 2011 **Ian Fortune** (1992-2000) was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism while serving as an RAF helicopter pilot in Afghanistan. **Terry Charman** (1961-1969) has written extensively on the Second World War and since 1974 has worked at the Imperial War Museum, where he is now Senior Historian.

Many have been called to the church; two currently serving bishops, amongst the youngest in the country, were at Kingston Grammar School. The Bishop of Kingston, the **Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham** (1966-1974), was a keen hockey player at school and is currently President of the Old Kingstonian Hockey Club. An exact contemporary of his at school, the **Rt Revd Paul Butler**, is the newly appointed Bishop of Durham, having previously been Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham. Other Old Kingstonians have been drawn to politics, most recently **Howard Stote** (1965-1972), who served as MP for Dartford from 1997 to 2010. **Alex McLean** (1996-2003) founded the African Prisons Project to improve the welfare of prisoners while only 18, and has won several high profile awards for his charity work. In December 2013 *Time* magazine voted him one of the 30 people under 30 who are changing the world.

Old Kingstonians have also risen to prominence in the arts and media. **Neil Fox** (1972-1975) has had a long career in radio and television and is currently presenter of the morning radio show on Magic 105.4. **Professor Stephen Walsh** (1953-1956) is a music journalist and broadcaster who holds a Chair in Music at Cardiff University. He is the author of a number of books including an award-winning biography of Stravinsky. **Vic Flick** (1948-53) is perhaps most famous for having played the lead guitar in the theme music for the 1962 James Bond film, *Dr. No*. **Andy Sturgeon** (1976-1983) is a prizewinning garden designer who is well known via his BBC programmes, newspaper columns and books. **Neil Mullarkey** (1972-1979) was a founding member of the Comedy Store Players and is well known as a comedian, actor and writer in film and television and on the stage. **Jonathan Kenworthy** (1954-59) is a sculptor whose vivid, almost life-sized bronzes of the nomads, horsemen and particularly the wildlife of Africa have won him international recognition. The School was proud to exhibit some of his works in the Baxter Gallery as part of its 450th anniversary celebrations in 2011.

Sophie Cornish (nee Vincenzi, 1981-83), who founded the hugely successful Not on the High Street (.com), was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in July 2013. Six months later, in the 2014 New Year Honours, **Professor Sir Michael Edwards** (1949-57) was knighted for services to UK/French cultural relations. He was the first English person to be elected to one of the 40 seats of the Académie Française, in February 2013.

This is by no means intended to be an exhaustive survey, but rather a brief glimpse of the many walks of life in which Old Kingstonians have excelled and continue to do so.