

## OP Memories – John Paton Philip (1943)



### Perse all-rounder still striding out at 85

*The following article was kindly contributed by John Paton Philip OP*

I wonder if a few very old reminiscences of my times at the Perse Prep and the Senior Schools Cambridge would have any interest to present and past members of the schools.

Now 85, I was brought up in Cambridge, where my father was a doctor and my brother, two years older, also went to the Prep and Senior Schools.

I think a Mr Lindeman was head of the Prep School and Mr Wootton (we called him, Gob) of the senior school. A Mrs Beacock was a senior teacher at the time. I forget the name of the deputy head (Mr Hawkins?), but I remember his daily talks to Wootton, high up on his toes as he was so shorter much than Wootton.

I walked to School from Cavendish Avenue where we lived. During the war an incendiary bomb landed in our garden. One of the several, in its large container, came straight down the chimney of my study – I had the presence of mind to throw it out of the window on to our lawn with the rest of the container. I kept the container and bomb as a souvenir.

I became Captain of Athletic and Shooting and then Rugger after the then Captain – Whybrow I think – signed up for the army. I remember Mr Barry writing that Philip was not a very good Rugger captain but always seemed to be at the right place at the time. (Perhaps I was a shower offer?)

I became a school prefect – I don't seem to have taken it too seriously as I remember going down to the town to do some personal shopping with another prefect! During school time!

Our PT instructor Mr Finch was called up during the war and a woman, Miss Hincup I think, took his place. She, I think, took a fancy to me as she “admired my posture” and took numerous photos of me.

But I was far more interested in the Perse School and County school girls – most of them on bikes – as I cycled to school. I also took a fancy to a much older girl – she was walking to Homerton College as I was walking to school. She stopped this by holding up one of her hands to show me that she was engaged!

I then decided that I wanted to go to Cambridge University, only made possible by some concentrated teaching by one of the alternate pre-entry dons. Between us I ended up with 90% pass!

I broke my right arm a few months before going up; I was sad because I hoped to take up rugger and possibly end up with a rugger blue! (Not really possible as I wasn't good enough). To help strengthen the arm I was advised to take up rowing, ending with a rowing Blue and “Captain” of rowing (and all other sports!). I finished up with a first class degree in the three agricultural subjects.

This enabled me to get a teaching job and a charge of rugger at Chadacre Agricultural Institute, in Suffolk. I eventually took over as principal of a farm in Northern Ireland for one of the Guinness family, the Marchioness of the Dufferin and Ava.

In Ireland I met and married my wife. We had our four children there, and eventually I returned to Chadacre as principal.

On retirement I came up to Scotland and worked as a shepherd with two sheep dogs for ten years. We then took our present house (minus dogs). Our landlady has agreed for us to stay here indefinitely – with death of one of us determining the next move.

What a wonderful life we have had, and are still having despite my recent stroke which limits my physical abilities. I'm not allowed to drive a car and a bike is not suitable for me either. But I can, and do, walk a mile with a stick every day, and keep reasonably fit, though running is no longer possible.