

# The Waterloo Society 1950s

Newsletter 2023



## The Potter Pavilion



▲ The newly refurbished Potter Pavilion

For the past year, College has been undertaking a thorough modernisation of the Pink Pavilion. The work has transformed the interior of this iconic building, whilst importantly retaining its original external character.

The new pavilion will provide high-quality co-educational changing facilities, as well as providing the opportunity for Wellington to host representative sport both on Turf and around College more widely.

Upon its reopening in May, the Pink Pavilion was renamed 'The Potter Pavilion', in honour of the Potter

family who have given so much to generations of Wellingtonians over the last 90 years.

This legacy began with Arnold Potter, who joined the Common Room in 1932 where he served College for a record 42 years as a highly respected HM and a distinguished teacher of Mathematics. He and his wife, Fraye,

brought up a family of five sons and two daughters here, most of whom attended College in the 1960s and into the 1970s.

Chris, their second son, has had an immeasurable impact on College life and many readers will readily identify with his powerful, understated and enduring presence around campus and the positive affect he has had upon the lives of countless Wellingtonians and their families both as a teacher, an HM and for the past 10 years, as a member of the Wellington Community Office.

The ties between Arnold, Fraye and their family with the Wellington community are manifold. Together, they have served College for well over half of its history and the College is so pleased to be able to honour the family in this way.



◀ The Potter family **Top row, L-R:** Chris (C 60-65), Arnold (CR 32-72), David (C 59-63)  
**Middle row:** Fraye **Bottom row, L-R:** Tim (C 65-70), Mark (C 71-76), Suzanne, Jacqueline (Day), Hugh (C 63-68)

## Memories of James Wort

One of the most popular teachers at Wellington during the 1950s was James Wort. His enthusiasm as a teacher, House Tutor and much more was recalled by many contributors to our 'Decades' project.

James taught Maths, and Colin Innes (C 49-54) wrote, 'I admired him greatly for he succeeded in coaching this very thick young Scottish boy into being able to pass the Army exam.' His contemporary, Bertram Rope (P 49-54) recalled 'Jack Wort taught me Maths and I got 98% at O Level. I don't know who was more surprised.' Douglas Miller (Bn 51-56) described him as 'the best Maths teacher I had... He had a philosophy that whatever one was doing it was best to get it done quickly because life had so much else to offer to which you could then devote your attention.'

In the early 1950s James was Tutor of the Combermere, where Mark Yorke (C 50-55) described him as 'very charismatic and competitive for the dorm to win interhouse sporting

events'. He carried this attitude with him to the Talbot in 1954, at first to the consternation of Talbot boys who were used to the laid-back and lovable R. G. Evans. Soon, however, they were won over by what Colin Mattingley (T 52-56) described as his 'madly enthusiastic driving force... a whirlwind, keen on everything, no member of House could escape his eagle eye and enthusiasm'. Soon the Talbot excelled not only in sport but in academic achievement, music and drama. In Colin's words, 'everything was to be approached to win. He was most successful in transforming the House into a hive of rewarding activity'.

James had been a leading light of the Cambridge Footlights and brought his love of theatre to Wellington, encouraging boys in House and



James Wort (CR 35-73)

College productions and appearing in staff revues. Situated conveniently close to the theatre, the Talbot gained something of a monopoly on theatrical makeup and lighting, both skills taught by Mr Wort. He also played the violin in the College orchestra and, although not its President, is remembered as the driving force of the 'Sing Song Society', an enjoyable group which performed for the College and local institutions.

Stuart Dowding (T 57-61) described James as 'a great rugby coach', while Bertram Rope (P 49-54) wrote 'Jack Wort taught the 3rd XV rucker team and I can't remember ever losing'. Another of his passions was cricket, and he will be remembered for leading the 'Occasionals', a team for boys who enjoyed cricket but were not a high enough standard for the College

teams. Rope recalls, 'We used to pile into his Ford Pilot and another usher's car and play the local village teams.' Robin Ballard (O 55-59) commented, 'I kept wicket for the 2nd XI, but I particularly enjoyed playing for the Occasionals because the team was made up of staff members as well as boys. Mr James Wort was a slow left-arm spinner, and I remember late one afternoon, with the batsmen having to face a dipping sun, I stumped five of them off his bowling. Thereafter he referred to me as his favourite pupil'. James Wort gave nearly 40 years of devoted service to Wellington, only retiring in 1973.

## Music From Mars

Those Wellingtonians who were here for the College's Centenary celebrations in 1959, or who came back for them, may remember a very special and unusual part of the events – the performance of the College's Centenary Opera, *Music From Mars*.



In reality a short operetta, the piece was specially commissioned for the Centenary, and brought to life by the combined efforts of OWs, students and staff. The music was written by an Old Wellingtonian, James Bernard (Hg 39-42) and the lyrics by his professional and personal partner, Paul Dehn. Both were near the beginning of successful careers. Bernard, after a period as assistant to Benjamin Britten, later became a successful composer of theatre and film scores, notably for Hammer Studios, writing for many films in the golden age of Hammer horror. Dehn went on to write the screenplays for several successful films including the third James Bond film *Goldfinger*, John le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold*, and the 1974 all-star version of *Murder On The Orient Express*. Together, Bernard and Dehn had already won an Oscar for Best Story for their work on the 1950 film *Seven Days To Noon*. It must have been something of a coup for Wellington to secure them for this specially commissioned work. The

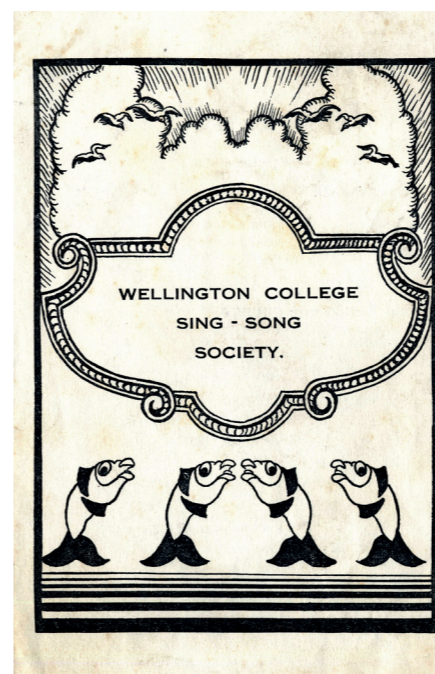
set was designed by another OW, Timothy O'Brien (Bd 42-47), who subsequently worked for the RSC, the National Theatre and on the musical *Evita*.

The plot, allegedly set in 'any boys' school in England but Wellington, follows a schoolboy, Finch, who is writing a piece for the House Singing Competition. Bernard may have drawn on his own experience for this: we know that Benjamin Britten, visiting Wellington to collaborate with Art Master Kenneth Green, took an interest in the inter-House competition and advised Bernard on a piece which he was writing for it. Finch's music 'came to him in a dream' and unbeknown to him was telepathically received from Mars. Rehearsing it, Finch and two other students, along with a Music teacher and a Matron, are miraculously transported to the grounds of a boys' school on Mars, where they find that the pupils, through tuning in to Earth radio stations, can understand English as long as it is sung, not spoken. ►



**Bertram Rope (P 49-54) wrote 'Jack Wort taught the 3rd XV rucker team and I can't remember ever losing'.**

◀ James Wort explaining rugby tactics



▲ Programme of a Sing Song Society concert

The High Master of the Martian school becomes telepathically aware of the interlopers and orders his students to 'empty their minds' and 'think of nothing', to avoid mental contamination from the Earthlings. He fears that Mars, a 'quiet star', might be infected by Earth's warlike ways. Discovering that one of the boys shows signs of contamination, he orders him and all the Earthlings to be 'ground to nuclear dust'.

Awaiting their sentence in a Martian dungeon, the prisoners decide that as Finch's dream brought them to Mars, so the Martian boy Elbert must dream them back to Earth. They learn that Martians never sleep, but helped by Matron's medicine and a sheep-counting lullaby, Elbert begins to snooze. Seconds before disaster, he dreams a tune which transports the group safely back to Earth and, moreover, proves to be the missing piece of Finch's incomplete tune for the Singing Competition.

We might have known little more than the synopsis on the programme, were it not for OW Tom Courtenay-Clack (Hg 54-59), who sang the part of Matron. When sending in his recollections for our 'Decades' project, he offered the College archives his vinyl LP of the opera, which we were delighted to accept. Thanks to Tom, the recording can now be heard on our Heritage website, in the 'Podcasts and Audio' section. It is well worth a listen – a clever and light-hearted piece which is still amusing today. Who could resist the Matron's list of boys requiring care:

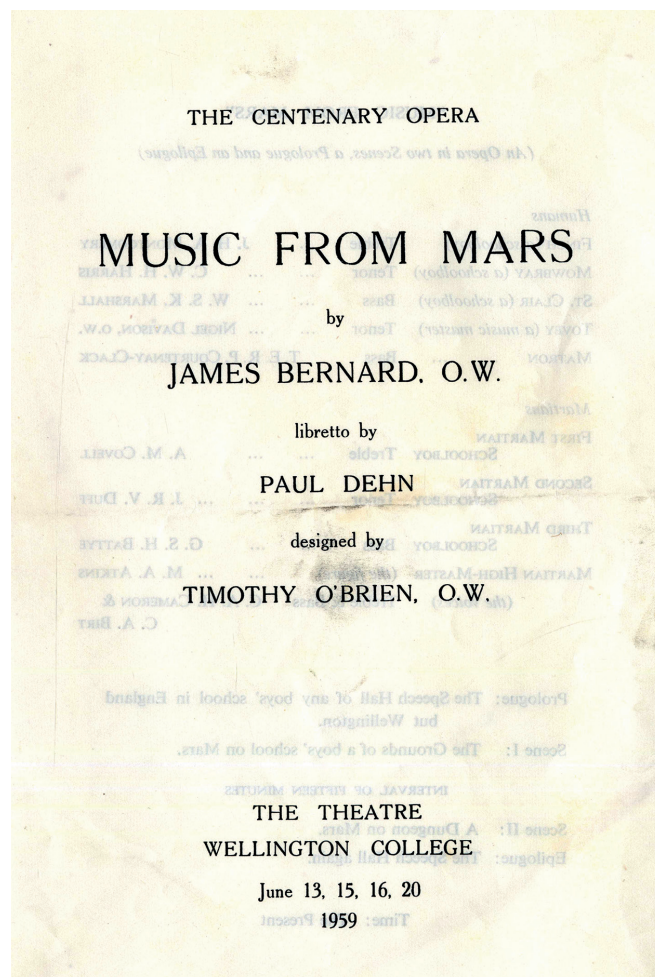
*'Atkinson major's sprained both of his wrists, Carter's got tinnitus and Symonds has cysts, Brown needs clean*

*towels, both Joneses have chills, and Bottomley's bowels need infinite pills?'*

Looking at the list of cast members, it is striking how many of them went on to pursue careers in the performing arts. James Montgomery, who played Finch, became a TV and radio broadcaster and had a long career with Southern Television. Colin Harris became an actor and drama teacher, working at the Institute of Theatre Studies in Paris. Tom Courtenay-Clack founded and ran a successful sound effects studio in New York, while

Anthony Covell, who played Elbert, was the Founding Director of Poole Arts Centre.

The opera was performed in the College Theatre on four occasions, as part of the Centenary celebrations in June 1959. We would love to hear from anyone who saw it, and especially from anyone who was involved, either on stage or behind the scenes. Do you perhaps have another copy of the recording, or even a score? Who knows, maybe it might be possible to stage a revival one day?



▲ Music From Mars programme

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