

# The Waterloo Society 1960s

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)

## Rowing at Wellington

Rowing was not historically a Wellington sport, no doubt due to the College's location away from any major river. That changed, however, in 1960, when an anonymous donation led to the introduction of rowing for a two-year trial period.

Proponents of the scheme felt that it 'would provide an excellent outlet for those who were not good at ball games'. Up to 30 boys would row in the Lent and Summer Terms, travelling to Reading where they were allowed use of the Reading Club boathouse. Two fours and a tub-pair were purchased for use on the river, while for training a rowing tank was constructed in the Sanatorium garden.

Twelve boys began training in January 1961; by the Summer term their number had doubled, and they were able to enter crews in three regattas. The following year numbers were at the full complement of 30 and teams took part in several competitions, albeit not very successfully. The trial period was ended, and rowing became an official College sport.

In 1964, the Boat Club won its first event at a regatta (for Novice Fours) and ventured into a Rowing Eight when they were lent a boat to compete in the Reading Head of the River race. The 1965 Year Book reported that

'Thanks to a generous gift from N. J. Amey (Pn 60-65), we now have a roof for the rowing tank, which will make it a more comfortable place to work... In the past, we have often had to contend with several inches of water in the bottom of the 'boat', so that tanking was seldom an enjoyable occupation'.

By 1967, the Club numbered 40 and had its most successful season: the 1st Four won all its races including its event at the National Schools Regatta. Rowing was an established Wellington sport until 1975, when it was sadly deemed too expensive to continue.

Among those who contributed to the success of College Rowing were teachers Donald Parkes, George Macmillan, Max Ramsay and later, Mike Fox and Alistair Jones. The Year Book recorded that 'Mr Macmillan was a most enthusiastic and effective coach who was always ready to sit in the back of a tub at the shortest notice, and would turn up at the rowing tank at any hour. It is worth putting on record that he never actually collided

with other craft on the river, though he had many nerve-racking moments'. The latter comment was added as Mr Macmillan was partially sighted. Assistant Chaplain Tony Winterbotham also contributed much, as did the College Medical Officer Gerald Hawkins, another excellent coach whose carpentry skills were much valued for mending broken oars or boats.

Despite a couple of excellent accounts from OWs, the 15 years of Wellington College rowing are a lesser-known part of our history, so we would love to hear from anyone involved and to learn more about it.

Top: Training in the rowing tank  
Middle right: The tank being de-iced



The Rowing Eight, Summer 1963

## Debating Society

Alec Annand and Philip Letts, both Presidents of the Debating Society in the 1960s



The Debating Society is Wellington's second-oldest society, founded in 1869. Its written records run from then until the 1980s, and the topics chosen for debate over the decades give a unique insight into the political, social and moral questions of the day. The records from the 1960s are no exception.

As might be expected, many motions proposed during the 1960s reflect society's changing attitudes to conformity. At the beginning of the decade, it might perhaps be said that English society, and schools like Wellington in particular, expected their members to 'fit in', respect authority and conform to norms of behaviour, attitudes and dress. This was gradually replaced by more emphasis on individualism and self-expression. The first glimpse of this can be seen in November 1961, when students discussed the motion 'This House pooh-poohs convention'. While this was a light-hearted debate, the motion was carried 90 to 50. In 1966, the proposers failed to carry the motion 'This House approves of Anarchy', but it was a close vote (27 in favour, 34 against, 12 abstentions). The following year, the motion that 'The rights of the individual must be made subordinate to society' was lost by only two votes.

Aspects of popular culture were sometimes considered in more detail. ►



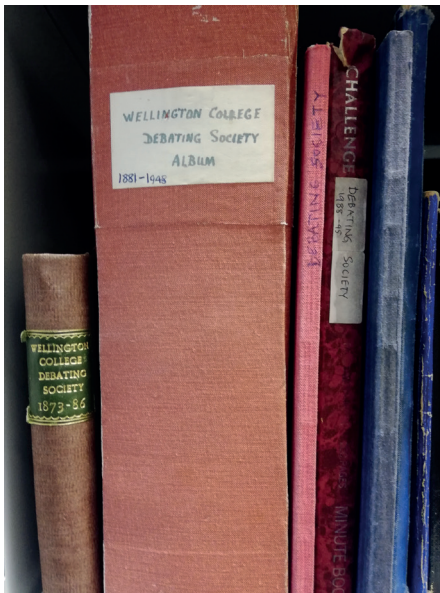
College VIII 1964



Donald Parkes giving instructions for 'tubbing'

In October 1960, the motion 'This House refuses to be Beat' prompted discussion of the 'Beatnik' movement. It was defeated by 28 votes to 20. The following year, the Society contended whether 'This House welcomes with enthusiasm the break-away from tradition in contemporary art and literature'. The proposers championed playwrights such as Robert Bolt and John Osborne, and the sculptor Henry Moore, but were defeated by 19 votes. In 1964, the motion 'This House thinks College is square' split the voters almost evenly. Of this debate, the Secretary wrote in the Society's minute book, 'The standard of speaking was deplorable, but the boys seemed to enjoy it'.

Wellington had always been a School proud of its strong military connections, but by the early 1960s, this too was something that students were beginning to question. In 1961,



▲ Debating Society record books

the contention that 'The Army is the dustbin of the unenlightened and incapable' was defeated, but only by 47 votes to 40. In December 1964, the Society was due to debate the motion 'This House refuses to fight for Queen and Country', famously carried at the Oxford Union in 1933 and revived several times since. In the event, the records tell us, the debate was cancelled 'owing to a combination of circumstances, not least of which was fear of intervention from the outside Press'.

The power and influence of the Press itself had been a popular topic of debate at Wellington for decades, and was tackled no fewer than three times during the 1960s. In 1963, the motion 'The freedom of the Press has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished' was narrowly carried, but in 1965 'This House abhors the popular Press' was roundly defeated. In a similar show of support for the Press, in 1969, 'If Guy Fawkes were to return, this House would welcome him should he turn his attention to Fleet Street' was lost by 28 votes to 8.

Occasionally, the Society turned to current affairs. In 1967, the motion 'This House would give Home Rule to Scotland' was lost by 42 votes to 70, while in 1968, 'This House regards the recent student demonstrations as arrogant and irresponsible' obviously split opinion – it was lost, but only by 15 to 22, with 4 abstentions. Shortly before the first moon landing, the motion 'This House regards the amount of money spent on space research to be totally out of proportion to the benefits gained' was won, although not well-attended.

Some debates highlighted social changes of the time. The rights and the acceptable behaviour of women had been debated throughout the Society's history, generally resulting in a refutation of equality, but in 1964, the motion 'A woman's place is in the home' was lost by 26 votes to 21. Immigration to the UK in the 1950s and 60s brought debates on the desirability of what in those days was known as 'the colour bar'; encouragingly, in a debate of 1962, such racist discrimination was decisively rejected.

Lastly, Wellingtonians sometimes debated the way they were being prepared for the outside world. In 1960, the contention that 'Wellington is only capable of producing charming half-wits' was defeated by 14 votes. In 1966, the motion 'This House supports "Richard Francis"' produced some interesting debate and participation from the floor. It referred to a recent letter to the Wellingtonian in which the author, using this pseudonym, contended that College gave older boys too many responsibilities, to the detriment of their academic success and chances of getting to university. The motion was lost by 25 to 16 but with 10 abstentions, suggesting a spectrum of opinion on the matter.

Throughout the decade, attendance at debates could be anywhere between 30 and 80. The Society was supported by members of the teaching staff, who often participated in debates. If you were involved, we'd love to hear from you!

Wellington Community Office  
Wellington College  
Crowthorne, Berkshire RG45 7PU  
community@wellingtoncollege.org.uk  
+44 (0)1344 444023

**wellycom.net**

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