

“Our shared interest in computing saw our paths converge back in the late 1980s. Robin had set up a network of Commodore Pets and another of BBC Bs, in two rooms in Cornwallis. He kindly agreed to my joining him in the delivery of ABC Computing, giving Sixth Form pupils their first taste of spreadsheets. I am sure that there has been no looking back for many of them! Always patient and self-controlled, I can honestly say that I never heard a cross word from Robin, even in circumstances that would have driven mere mortals to distraction, such as putting my foot clean through the wooden hull of one of his Sea Scout Mirror dinghies while sailing on Lake Windermere. Robin knew the power of computing and was one of the visionary pioneers who wrung every ounce of use out of what were, by today’s standards, laughably limited machines.”

Mark Thomas (RGS staff 1987-1998)

“As a schoolboy at RGS in the 1950s I have vivid memories of Robin attempting to explain to me, and my contemporaries, the principles and applications of Pythagoras’ Theorem. A fact of which I personally reminded him at the Golden Jubilee celebration of my own year which he attended and was the last occasion on which I saw him – he actually claimed to remember!”

John Streeter (RGS 1954-61)

“Robin Bligh and I joined RGS on the same day in 1953, although I left before him, of course. I wasn’t a very good pupil or Scout (I’ll correct that – I was terrible!). Autism wasn’t recognised in those days, but later investigation determined that I was mildly autistic. But, despite my misbehaviour in maths classes and later in the Scouts, Robin always treated me more than decently. Indeed, so much did he trust me that he asked me to make an electric camp fire for the Scouts which was still in use when I left.

So far as the Scouts is concerned, I was in the first group to join and the first member to leave (the problem was mine – I was just not Scout material!). Nevertheless, I remained in contact with Robin via the old Scouts network and attended the reunions with great enjoyment.”

Richard English (RGS 1953-58)



1954 Scout camp with thanks to
Richard English (RGS 1953-58)



1967 Under 14s XV rugby

“I was one of those who benefited from all the life skills that were imparted by Robin through his dedication and running of the school Scout group and also rugby and cricket teams.”

Simon Arnold (RGS 1967-73)

“I was a great admirer of Robin although I was never taught academically by him. I did though come into contact with him through rugby and, very early on, he changed my position from back row to hooker, a position I stayed in, with a bit of success, for the rest of my playing days.

After leaving school, meeting Robin was always a pleasure and he always showed an interest in what you were doing. A real gentleman and a wonderful school master.”

Keith Ireland (RGS 1956-64)

“I have fond memories of Robin Bligh as he was my Form Master in both the Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth at RGS (Sept 1966 to July 1968). I also played cricket with him for many years at Merstham Cricket Club.”

Patrick Periam (RGS 1961-68)

“My first contact with Robin Bligh, or ‘Sir’ as I knew him then, was in the U13s cricket team where I was an aspiring off-spin bowler. Robin’s advice was to the effect that if I was going to bowl off-spin I should emulate the England and Surrey off-spinner Jim Laker and proceeded to instruct me in this art. I appreciated his interest and was not cynical enough then to wonder why, if he was so knowledgeable on this subject, it was Tony Lock and not Robin Bligh who was so frequently at the other end from Jim Laker. All my contact with Robin was in a sports context and I was pleased to see him again a few years back at the Class of 1962 Golden reunion.”

David Segrove (RGS 1955-63)

“Robin was a truly remarkable man and I have so many fond memories of happier times with Robin leading the troop at the many Scout camps. He was devoted to the school and passing on his learnings to all those Reigatians with whom he came into contact.”

Lee Skinner (RGS 1985-92)

“Robin was my Scout Master throughout my time at RGS and my Form Master in the Sixth Form, so I have many memories. Perhaps the most vivid was being permitted to take the tiller of ‘The Tub’ for the first time on Lake Bala during a Summer Camp. I remember Robin gently prompting me that I could always bear away from the wind and let out the sheets a little, but it was so much more fun to be close-hauled and heeled over, so I continued. The chances of capsizing that venerable dinghy were negligible! I have the movie of that memorable event – shot by Robin, of course – and transferred to VHS cassette, also courtesy of Robin. (I really must have that clip transferred to DVD before that’s no longer possible.) It was occasions such as these, when we were allowed to explore situations for ourselves without any fear of reprimand, which in retrospect gave so much value to the whole Scouting experience under Robin’s supervision.

Of all the things this brilliant teacher showed me, one is frequently remembered. It was how to coil a rope by putting in a half twist with each loop, thus avoiding the tangles of the figures-of-eight that would likely form otherwise. I use the same technique to this day whenever I coil ropes, extension leads, hoses and the like, and am reminded of the person who taught me that practical skill, amongst so many others!”

Malcolm Avery (RGS 1965-72)

“With Dennis Wheatley and the Scouts, Robin was an important part of my education, from which I draw benefit and happy memories almost every day.”

Robert Cole (RGS 1977-84)

“I am grateful for Robin’s tireless leadership, enthusiasm, organisation and commitment, which helped to make Scouting such a pleasurable experience.”

Peter Cowl (RGS 1962-70)



With thanks to Adrian Ballisat (RGS 1961-69)



With thanks to Martin Yeats (RGS 1965-72)



1976 Poole

“Of all the teachers at Reigate Grammar, the one who had the most influence on my school life was Robin Bligh. Every Friday evening, Robin would run a session where we would learn useful life skills such as first aid and navigation. Field days were enjoyable and included activities such as rowing on the River Thames. (I believe Robin was a Blue for Oxford in this sport). He also ran three or four Scout camps each year. The most memorable were the summer camps including the River Dart, French Alps and, best of all, Sweden. One thing RGS was superb at, was providing ‘the opportunity to experience a broad curriculum experience’ through groups such as the Scouts. Sometimes I would be away literally the entire summer holiday on adventurous RGS trips. I don’t think there is quite any school that provides the equivalent today. Somehow there seemed to be so much time for green field

camping, hiking through the mountains and messing about in boats. Childhood should have more time for days like these.

Robin achieved something special with his leadership of the 16th Reigate Scout troop and that, without doubt, is worth celebrating.”

Stephen Hasler (RGS 1976-81)

“Robin was an excellent Maths Teacher and helped me get the top grade possible in maths which I took in the 4th form. I was also a member of the Sea Scouts group at RGS in which we were taught many useful life skills and given amazing opportunities to travel for next to no cost. Robin was the principle leader, organiser and driving force behind the group. I am indebted to him.”

Paul Shrimpton (RGS 1966-73)



“My memory of Robin in the classroom was primarily of a good Maths Teacher who also took classes in geography and coached rugby on the sports field, normally wearing a Wasps jersey whilst doing so. That is how things appeared to me in the early sixties. Things may of course have changed during his many years of teaching thereafter.

My main memories of Robin were as a very committed leader of the 16th Reigate Scout group. He was a quiet, undemonstrative person, but he showed enormous commitment to the Scout group over many years. It is no exaggeration to say that he presided over, and participated fully in, an exceptional Scout troop that afforded life-changing opportunities to those who took part.

I have many memories of Scout camps in Wales, Luxembourg and France; long hikes over foreign territories, normally with just one other Scout; map-reading routes between landmarks identified by our leaders. The process of mapping out all those walks must have meant many hours’ work on Robin’s part.

And then there was the gradual transition to something rather like a Sea Scouts’ troop. Much of this seems to have taken place after I left the school; but maybe a first step was taken by the construction of canoes, carried out by senior Scouts under the supervision of our leaders. I well remember one camp where we paddled 85 miles down the River Wye. We all had to pass a swimming test before we could take part. No-one drowned!

Many of us old Scouts will feel a huge debt of gratitude for the influence that Robin had on our lives, lessons of leadership, teamwork, self-reliance, yes even survival, and that is to make no mention of the role he played in encouraging Scouts to improve their knowledge and skills, to work towards badges that might ultimately result in the coveted award of the Queen’s Scout badge. There is no doubt in my mind that Robin is someone who richly deserves his place in the Reigate Grammar School Hall of Fame.”

Michael Jackson (RGS 1959-66)



1984 Dart. Getting ready for a day out

“My connection to Robin goes back to when I was at the Grammar School, though I did not come into his sphere of maths influence until later in my school career (1967). Being a member of a ‘rival’ Scout troop, I came more into Scouting contact when I was a District Scouter in the late 70s, through meetings and events; and as District Commissioner always enjoyed Robin’s newsletters and occasions where I could meet him. I have always had a great respect for his Scouting activities; especially as I found myself in a similar position at the Royal Alexandra and Albert School, running the Scouts and Cubs from 1989 to 2013 (in later times almost single handed).”

Steve Robinson (RGS 1961-69)

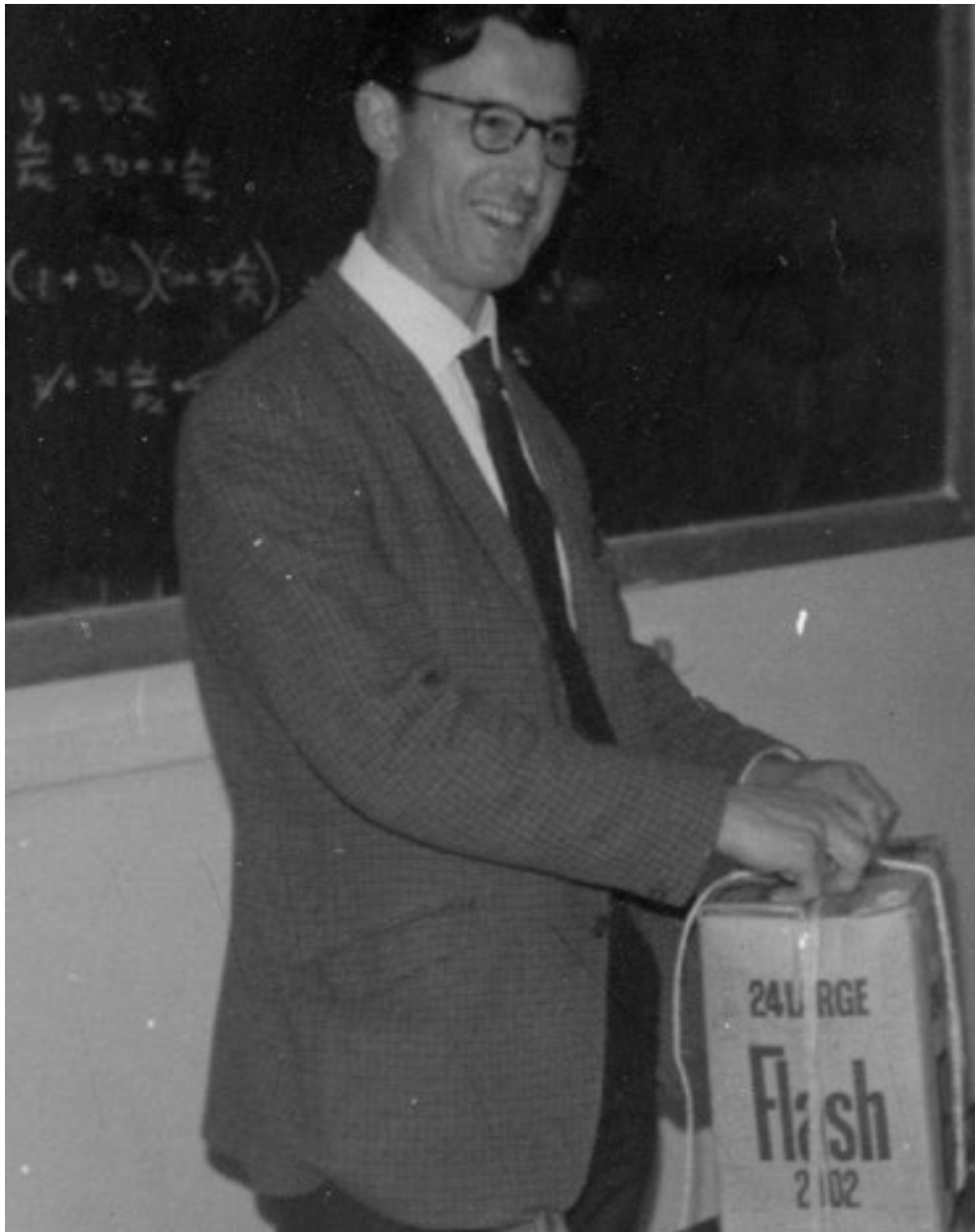
“Robin was one of my main inspirations at RGS and my introduction to Winnie the Pooh! I have used Pooh as an inspiration for many young people during my coaching career. He and Aubs must have sent many young men on a path to help both themselves and others.”

Ralph Ransom (RGS 1958-64)

“I knew Robin well through the Scout troop from 1954-60, but he never taught me. The troop had only been going for a few months when I joined it, having entered the school in what was then the second year. I had a marvellous time as a Scout, being challenged by Robin (and Mike Holmes and then Aubs) to learn a wide range of new skills, to think deeply and to develop my personality and my spirituality. I never thought of Robin as a traditional Christian but one who pondered the deep questions of life and faith.

My wife and I kept in touch with Robin ever after, the last time was Christmas 2019. He quite often came to spend a few days with us and our daughters – indeed he made them some clever toys and we still have a game he made. We shared his disappointment when the Scout troop closed, but I did write then to say that forty years was a good span for any human institution, and I hope he found some comfort in that. Margaret and I feel grateful to have known him so well.”

Peter Brice (RGS 1954-60)



“Robin joined RGS at the same time as I did. He taught me maths from the start and I was also lucky enough to be a founder member of the 16th Reigate Scout troop. I kept in touch with Robin ever since I left RGS and he visited my wife and myself in Aberdeen and Aviemore on a few occasions.”

Richard Green (RGS 1953-61)

“My main memory of Robin is from back in 1962, when aged 15, I was a member of the top maths set with Robin as our teacher. We were the first group at the school to take our O Level Maths exam a year early. This took place in early July and as a reward Robin took us on a day trip to Cambridge which included punting on the Cam. Some of us fell in!”

Bob Knox (RGS 1958-64)

“Robin Bligh taught me Maths at A Level and as I later managed to pass tertiary level maths courses as part of my technology degree, he clearly did a good job. I always remember him saying that everyone reaches a level with maths when it stops making sense and the skill is to be able to be able to cope at that point!”

Tim Whittle (RGS 1962-69)

“I remember Robin with great fondness and was very glad of the opportunity to talk to him at the 50 year reunion before lockdown.”

Alan Hudson (RGS 1962-69)

“Robin was a major part of my RGS life from the start as I joined the Scouts in the First Form, played under 14s rugby and he taught me Maths and Geography at O Level. Whenever I see a river meander, I think of Oxbow lakes thanks to his Geography lessons.

With the Scouts, I went on my first trip abroad (Luxembourg I believe in 1961), shot the Symonds Yat rapids as a 12-year-old in a canoe with Roy Monk and traded a fresh fish for a can of peaches with Lady Astor during the Gower Peninsular summer camp; Llanstephan I think.

Robin got me through Maths O Level a year early, but with AO Maths I only just struggled through and did not take the subject further.

A great asset to the school. He will be well remembered.”

Duncan Wesley (RGS 1960-66)

“Mr Bligh taught me Maths in Lower and Upper Sixth Engineers. I owe him a great debt of gratitude.”

John Cant (RGS 1953-60)



1983 River Arun

“Robin was a very important influence when I was growing up, in particular I benefited hugely from my time in the Scout troop.”

Peter Emery (RGS 1964-71)

“I wrote to Robin about 10-12 years ago to thank him for the great number of skills that he and Aubrey Scrase taught us through the Scouts. It was only when I retired from work and was able to look back that I realised what a fantastic Scout troop they ran. To allow us to have the experiences we were given they must have had nerves of iron! We were allowed to hike in Switzerland, find our campsites for the night and wake with an incredible view over the Bernese Oberland. The fundraising was done by performing music and operetta. We made and repaired canoes, with some repairs being done on trips down rivers. He also trained us to be modern men in that we could all cook and budget.

The mnemonic for remembering the Scout Laws was: Trusty, Loyal Helpful, Brotherly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Smiling, Thrifty, Clean in thought word and mind. He very quietly helped a great number of Scouts towards these very exacting standards.”

Peter Tayler (RGS 1962-70)



1995 Lake Windemere

“At one time, I think probably 1967-1968, the four Tayler brothers were all in Scouts together. Robin, as Scout Leader therefore had tremendous influence on all of us; taking us to Scout camps in both this country and Europe, sailing, hiking, canoeing and even, perhaps most exceptionally, to the opera (in the Scout’s double-decker bus, bought, I think, for £25!) These interests have remained with us until today. We owe him a great debt, even if we have not been able to follow his example of purity of speech and avoidance of alcohol!”

Michael Tayler (RGS 1965-72)



1957 Under 14s cricket

1982 Under 12s cricket



“I have fond memories of Robin coaching me in the nets as an U14 cricket off spinner, and also for U14s rugby. He was also by far the most supportive and able Maths teacher I experienced at school – I had the benefit of his skills over two years.”

Duncan Smeaton (RGS 1956-63)

“I have especially fond memories of Mr Bligh, who took charge of the U14 cricket team shortly after his appointment. I was hugely impressed by his Cambridge sweater which he wore when he took us for practice. I was also much impressed with his decision to make me U14 Captain! On reflection it was not his best decision but he was a wonderful teacher who never failed to encourage and reassure. In my final season at RGS I played alongside him in a staff match at Merstham CC. He was a fine keeper and it meant a lot when we were at the crease together and his calls for a run were to ‘Michael’. Fond memories.”

Michael Glogg (RGS 1951-58)

“Robin ran the U11 cricket team which was the first school team I’d ever played in. We reached the final of the Surrey Cup in the summer of 1981 under his guidance. I recall he was a very good cricketer himself, which definitely helped us on our way.”

Paul Radford (RGS 1980-88)

“Robin enjoyed a long and rewarding life and enjoyed the knowledge that he had positively affected the lives of so many people. I was one of those beneficiaries having been a member of the 16th Reigate Scouts during my years at the school. In addition to his leadership of the Scouts, I remember his commitment to RGS sport and much enjoyed playing in both rugby and cricket teams.

It is sad that both Robin and Aubs have now passed, after their lifetime commitment to the school, but their legend will certainly live on.”

Nick Pizzey (RGS 1956-60)

Memories of Robin H Bligh

My overriding gratitude to Robin Bligh is the enormous, unstinting, commitment, energy and knowledge he gave to the 16th Reigate Scout Group (the school's scout group). We used to meet in the room up the fire escape at the side of Broadfields every Friday evening after school. It gave me and many others a more rounded grounding for life and so many happy memories and experiences and for that I am forever grateful.

Some of the incidents included swimming across Lake Windermere and back during one summer camp in about 1955. I am sure that now it would not be allowed without any support boat but we all felt safe with Robin and his swimming "blue" he gained at Cambridge. I also remember walking up Leith Hill with the scouts to see the sun rise one midsummer's day, we never saw the sun due to the low cloud. On the way up we bumped into some young men who had been at Cambridge with Robin and they greeted him as "old Gus Bligh" that gave us much mirth although the epithet didn't stick as far as the scouts were concerned. During that time we became fascinated to find out how old he was, his reply was always "Twenty-one and a bit" and that remained his age for as long as I knew him. We were also fascinated to find out what the "H" stood for in his name – he never told us and we never managed to find out.

I also recall going sailing on the Broads in 1959 in two boats, one with Robin and Aubs Scrase and the other with David Mundy and myself. We had a great time that could have turned out disastrously as our boat got caught under a pier during a rising tide. This was while our attention was diverted playing bridge until I, as dummy hand, went up on deck and noticed that the boat was listing and how firmly we were stuck under the pier. We just managed with all four of us to using all our strength to push the boat down and safely away, albeit with some superficial damage.

Let me say again: "Thank you Robin for the real and positive contributions you made to my life".

John Mowlam
1953 - 1961

Two memories of the earliest days of the 16th Reigate Scout Troop established by Robin shortly after he arrived at RGS.

1. The first camp at Gilwell at Easter 1954.

Robin Bligh, Jonny Mackinson (who helped Robin initially, Tom Lockett, Richard (Horse) Carter, Paul Sweeting, ? Bracken and David Goldson.

2. A weekend on the River Thames.

I think Robin had been involved in the Sea Scouts earlier in his career – hence the blue uniforms. He and Mike Holmes introduced three of us to boating. Tom Lockett, Richard Carter and David Goldson.

Both examples of Robin's unstinting willingness to give of his time. He has been a major influence on my life ever since.



David Goldson (RGS 1951-57)



1972 Upper Sixth

The 'Tub'



1979, Windermere



1981, Dart



1984, Dart

Robin's leadership of the RGS school scout troop, the 16th Reigate, must have involved a huge amount of time and energy, which I probably didn't sufficiently appreciate during my own time in the scouts. This was during the 1960s, at which time Aubrey Scrase ('Aubs') was also helping, and what an excellent team they made!

The school scout troop was an outstanding institution and one to which I feel immensely privileged to have belonged.

Particular memories of Robin include his organisation of scout camps (including overseas) and concerts. He was a competent rugby player as well as player of the squeezebox. Not one to shout the odds, he would typically quell a hubbub by clearing his throat.

Many years after Robin's retirement a neighbour, newly moved in, knocked at his door to introduce herself. Learning that he'd been a teacher at the Grammar School she asked what he'd taught. 'Boys' came the reply, typical of Robin's dry sense of humour. Whilst no doubt accurate, this short reply did not begin to do justice to the selfless way in which he'd dedicated the whole of his working life to the education and welfare of those 'boys'.

Peter Jackson (RGS 1959-66)

Michael Pearman 1954 – 1961

I was born in 1942, my father was in the RAF and our household consisted of my very shy mother a dotty aunty and my widowed grandmother. I was very shy! In the 16th Reigate we did a lot of very exciting things but Robin quietly in the background always made sure that we were okay. When I became a patrol leader, I realised that my patrol had lads who needed “care”. Robin was very shrewd.

I well remember, probably in 1955 when we were camping in Lyme Bay that on a Sunday morning we walked to a very small local church. Some 25 of us plus Robin and Orbs went in and sat down with seven or eight elderly parishioners. The elderly vicar looked at us and said “I will not do the service that I was planning”. He shook every one of us by the hand as we left.

Good Bears, Naughty Bears and Bricks

I don't remember what Xmas Malcolm and I were given these imitation house bricks. It was the earliest years of the war. No one was making toys for sale. All spare labour was for rearmament. In any case our parents rightly believed their children should have toys that presented creative constructive opportunities, not ready made finished imitations of reality, where there was little you could do with them.

These were the last toys we were ever given. If we wanted toys, we would have to make them with whatever we had. For example, socks had to be darned, not thrown away. So cotton reels became available rolling stock for making toy trains.

Our Father was a classics scholar. His older brother was the practical one. So as the eldest boy, Robin took a major role in making things. We got off-cuts from the Baltic Timber Yard down the road. Years later I bemoaned that the saws and chisels were blunt.

I can't make much sense of the story in "Good Bears, Naughty Bears and Bricks". So far as I know, the pages are in the right order. I thought it made sense at the time. I cannot imagine how some came to be torn. The sheer scarcity of possessions meant that I looked after things, (as you can see over 80 years later), not throw them away.

I would rather direct your attention to the care Robin devoted in making a book. First, the cover is substantial. He has bent cardboard around in the right places so that it has no inclination to spring back to its original flat shape. How has he treated it to prevent that?

The picture on the front page is accurate and proportionate of the various bricks we were given. He has drawn them and painted them before making flour and water paste to ensure a thorough adhesive to the cardboard.

Most interesting is the stitching of the pages together as books were in those days. The use of strong glues only became common in the 1960s. I know he studied the sequence and direction of cotton thread through three holes ensuring not to make them too big or tear despite the number of times each paper hole is used. And then how was the stitching attached to the cover?

He has borrowed my father's typewriter and must have worked out how to manage the restricted page width. He did not, however, work out what would be typed on right- or left-hand pages. Everything is on a right-hand page.

Nevertheless, I ask you to look into Robin's mind at the age of 11 or 12. He had to plan each stage of production with their different techniques, tools and materials.

Donald Bligh