

## Distinguished Alumni of King Edward VII School Dr Warren Perks, Consultant Physician and Medical Educator

Old Edwardians Dinners provide a wonderful opportunity to catch up with friends from our time at the school and, for many of us, an opportunity to reflect on the lives we have lived since we left. This year's dinner also gave me an opportunity to spend some highly enjoyable time with Warren Perks, elder brother to Derek (Des), a good friend of mine during our school days. Derek and I were members of the last grammar cohort entering in 1968, whilst Warren had completed his time at the school in 1966 and was by then already away at university. So, whilst I dimly recall knowing of the existence of Derek's big brother, I never actually met him until decades later at an OE Dinner.



Having spent some time with Warren at this year's Dinner and hearing something of his fascinating career from Derek, I concluded that our existing list of distinguished OE Alumni omitted an important entry, which I have set out to remedy. This has not been a particularly easy task, because despite his tremendous achievements, Warren is the most modest of men, prone to deploying his wry sense of humour to play down his many accomplishments.

After considerable cajoling from me, Warren produced the following account of his time at King Edwards and the life that followed.

*"I spent six years at King Teds, leaving in 1966. I never had school lunch because I used my dinner money to buy five Park Drive cigarettes instead. I often ventured out of school grounds via the swimming pool gate, together with David Siddery, my best friend at school. I was never caned at school but I suffered worse punishments. I recall winning the Physics and Chemistry prize most years, but that didn't seem to prevent me from frequently being in trouble. I was captain of the cross-country running team and we always stopped for a cigarette half way round which necessitated taking a short cut (caught and sentenced to missing the end of term film). Whilst at school I nearly became a professional rock climber. We went climbing with Mr Wild who took us to the Lake District climbing. I instructed at the 1965 Scouts World Jamboree, which was held at Chatsworth.*



Warren and Mr Scobie at KES c1964

*I loved school and the teachers were amazing. Best of all was Mr Scobie who taught me nothing other than the importance of name-dropping (he is in the picture behind me). He invited my girlfriend (Linda, who became my wife of 55 years) to play tiddleywinks at his flat on several momentous occasions. His death was a sad loss to the world.*

*I went on from school to spend five years at Manchester University, qualifying in 1971 at the tender age of 22. Married whilst at Medical School, I became a somewhat reformed human. I moved around the country in training jobs and even spent a year in Jamaica as a lecturer in medicine. My final job before becoming a consultant at Shrewsbury was at the Royal Brompton Hospital doing research with Sir Malcolm Green. I published many peer reviewed publications and gained an MD in medicine. I was appointed as a consultant at the tender age of 29.*

*During the 1980's I became a boring country physician which I enjoyed, but became concerned about the poor training of junior doctors in my specialty. One of my ex-bosses told me that if I was so bothered, I should do something about it! So I did!*

*In the 1990's I became chairman of training for Respiratory medicine in the West Midlands. Because of our success I was made Chairman of training nationally. I edited a manual of training posts in the UK and instituted appraisal and logbooks. Because of this I was asked to do the same for Europe. I joined the European School of Medicine where we tried to improve and standardise training from Norway to Greece and from Ireland to Latvia. Less successful because of Subsidiarity!*

*I continued publishing clinical research mainly around sleep apnoea, occupational asthma and lung cancer. I appeared on television a couple of times promoting the dangers of passive smoking and my team presented at the inaugural meeting of the Roy Castle Foundation. Not bad for an ex-smoker.*

*I was on the respiratory committee of the Royal College and, in the great reorganisation of post graduate training, I was sent around the country bashing heads together to make intransigent respiratory physicians cooperate in sharing and training their trainees. I hosted the Membership of the RCP exams in Shrewsbury for several years. I am only one of five members of the college who identifies as a Romani (my mother was from a long line of Romanies with a great, great grandfather being a Romani Prince).*

*In 2000, I changed tack again and was appointed Honorary Senior Lecturer in Medicine at Keele University (whilst continuing my busy day job). Keele was a new medical school and it rapidly rose up the rankings all because of me (although the Keele hierarchy would deny this). In 2022 I was asked to do the paperwork to become a professor but Linda had been diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer and it wasn't a priority.*

*During COVID I triaged patients for hospital admission and set up Zoom training for the undergraduates. I lived for a time in a hotel so as not to take the virus home to Linda. On the first day of the vaccination program I was the only doctor with the correct qualifications to supervise the jabs! I was chosen to talk about vaccination on Radio Shropshire.*

*I retired 2 years ago. I play bridge and golf to a reasonable standard - county seniors and have been ranked as high as 5th in Staffordshire and Shropshire at Bridge). I have received quite a few awards for teaching and the hospital clinical dinner is named after me. My favourite award, however, was when then the students voted me as the coolest doctor in the hospital!*

*Despite all my scientific publications my greatest publication achievement was to have a poem published in the Shropshire Magazine this year.*

*That is a potted history of my work life, which is the least important aspect of my achievements. I met Linda when I was 14. We had a long and happy love affair. She became Head Girl of Grange Grammar school. I looked after her during her long illness with Ovarian Cancer and she died peacefully in my arms at home in January this year. We had three gorgeous daughters and have five grandchildren who love me. In addition, I have Derek, the best brother in the world.*

*Looking back now, I can see that King Teds made me. Without that school, I would most probably have ended up in borstal."*

This, then, is an account in his own words of the life and times of Dr Warren Perks MBChB, MD, FRCP (London and Edinburgh), MRCPATH (ME), CertMed Ed. He may have been a mildly mischievous pupil at King Edwards, but the evidence suggests that he was a brilliant one. He became a consultant physician by the age of 29, probably a decade before most of his medical school contemporaries. He dedicated his entire professional life to practice as a consultant physician and to the advancement of medical science and education, excelling in all. At the same time, he values his family above all.

If Mr Scobie were here today, I believe that he would proudly conclude that Warren Perks has more than fulfilled the potential to make a great contribution to society that was evident to his teachers some sixty years ago and that, as a result, he should feature prominently upon the Old Edwardians roll of Distinguished Alumni.

**Phil Bramwell**

**KES 1968-75**

April 2026