

## HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

(Formerly Hitchin Grammar School Old Boys' Association)

### ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER MAY 2007

#### General

The Annual Dinner seems to have been a success from all accounts and the many appreciative comments I have received. 103 sat down to an excellent meal – thanks to the caterer Paul Cousins and his team – with good wine – thanks to the parents' society for their great bar work again. A special thank you is due to **Thomas Pitchford** – the School Librarian who diligently selected and laid out the memorabilia in the Library for members to peruse during the afternoon. There was a lot of interest and many memories were jogged. The speeches at the dinner from our President **Michael Norris** and the guest speaker

**Richard Vaughan**

were well received and we thank them for the quality that they served up.

**The date for next year is April 12th 2008** so please make a note of it and come and join us. Bring a new member or any Old Boy and we will try to persuade him to join – it worked this year!

**The date is fixed for the Centenary Reunion as July 18th 2009.**

Subscriptions are due from Associate members who left school in 2002 and Ordinary members who pay an annual sub – we shall be pleased to receive these.

**The end of an era - Joe Monk** died on May 5th in Lister Hospital. He was the last surviving member of staff appointed by T.E.Jones. **Robin Barker (1953)** who admired Joe as a teacher and a man remained in contact with him throughout all the time since leaving school. He writes the following personal tribute: -  
**Joe Monk "Jammy"**

I first met Mr. Monk in about 1947, three years after entering the school in the old preparatory class in 1944. That was the year he returned from war service, I believe with the RAF, and with his new wife Moira. They then lived with “Dickie” Richards, that well-known Biology teacher, who shared a large house with his sister in Green Lane, Letchworth. He used to come to school sometimes with us boys on the number 52 bus, at other times in Dickie’s open-top Singer 10 car. Later he lived out in the prairies at Bygrave and then moved into Cranbourne Avenue in Hitchin where he remained for the rest of his life.

His death marks the end of my generation of schoolmasters. His slightly stooped stance, due to a war injury in his back that he wore a brace for sometime, gave him a characteristic gait. He had a distinctive appearance with his slightly waved and centrally parted hair. He always wore his gown with the intriguing fur-lined MA hood.

As a teacher, form master and later deputy headmaster, he was highly respected with a natural air of authority that achieved a natural discipline. We never even thought of misbehaving in his classes – it did not even cross our minds as we worked through “Latin for Today” parts 1 to 4, Vergil’s Aeneid and numerous “unseens”. The latter I hated finding Livy and Horace particularly difficult.

Above all Mr. Monk was always a gentleman, requiring good behaviour and good work but tolerant of our difficulties with gerunds, gerundives, deponent and semi-deponent verbs. He had little ditties to help us with case governance “ A Ab Abesque, Corm De etc (prepositions governing the Dative. He taught me Latin from form 2 to 5A and then in the sixth form where he also taught a little ex-curricular Greek to budding classicists – I remember **Manning**, who left around 1950, being one of these.

Joe was a gentleman with a no-class accent. Being brought up in Preston I guess he had overcome his Lancashire brogue. I remember being mystified by his translation of ignavia as “cardice” and then realised it was his version of cowardice. In his characteristic deep tones I can still hear him calling me from the quad adjacent to the dining room: “Take your hands out of your pockets boy!”

He was a deeply Christian man. Both he and his wife were born in Switzerland. Moira taught at the Girls’ Grammar School while Joe taught the boys. They were both strong Roman Catholics and both had brothers who were Jesuit priests and I believe they both found it hard to come to terms with the reforms of Vatican II. As his second name was Aloysius(after Aloysius Gonzaya) suggests he was a strong conservative catholic and a doughty champion of the Society of Jesus, especially of their schools; Stonyhurst where he himself was educated and where both his priest brothers taught had no equal. When I mentioned Downside and Ampleforth he waved them aside with a gentle movement of the hand “ no, no, no”!

To Muriel and “young” Joe we our deepest sympathy in their sudden loss of both their parents. He was a perfect gentleman, a total teacher, contributing to the school not only as a classicist but also as an administrator and as a musician

May the chorus of angels receive thee in Paradise:  
At thy coming may the martyrs receive thee,

And bring thee into the Holy City of Jerusalem.  
There may the choir of angels receive thee  
And with Lazarus, once a beggar, may  
Thou have eternal rest.  
(Translation of the R.C. Order of Burial)

### **Robin Barker (1953)**

#### **Committee news:**

In our meeting earlier this month your new committee met for the first time this year. Mainly the old faces but we were pleased to co-opt **Matthew Jones (1994)** onto the committee. The feedback on the reunion dinner was all positive and our thanks to all those responsible for its success. The Bulletins are probably going to be photocopied at the school but we shall be looking for help to put them into envelopes and label them. If you are able to help in this please let Hon Sec know. Most of the discussion were looking forward to the centenary and the subcommittee for overseeing the arrangements is due to meet in July.

#### **New Members:**

#### **Michael Northwood (1958)**

I have kept in touch only with Peter Hailes (Haggis) over the years. He was my Best Man when I first married in 1965. Looking back I now see myself as perhaps a professional gypsy since after completing an apprenticeship with Bristol Syddeley and a Degree in Mechanical Engineering at Kings College London I set off to South Africa to work on the gold mines; working down as deep as 8500 feet below ground. We had two children there and were well settled but I looked for a broader input and was seconded to UK and spent a year in Mauritania en route. I joined a project group and found an avenue I liked. I then spent two years in Zambia, at that time one of the world's larger copper producers, once again enjoying life in Africa. Returning to UK I continued with large mining and metals projects concentrating on central/southern Africa, returning there quite frequently but based in Ashford Kent. In the late 80s I developed some interests in Waste to Energy and moved to this field in 1992 and at the same period became divorced. In 1994 I had an offer to work on a big new project in Brazil and went to live in Rio de Janeiro; a great place and very enjoyable. There I met my wife Grethe, a Norwegian, and at the end our contracts there we set up home in Maidstone Kent, I went into consultancy and Grethe continued in shipping. The consultancy took me to Kazakhstan, The Philippines and Kosovo and in 2002 I went independent and worked in Kosovo on mining recover and rebuilding a power station. Meanwhile Grethe was offered a senior position in

Atlanta Georgia USA and after completing my activities in Kosovo I went to Atlanta into semi retirement, as I had no work visa. We intend to stay for a few years more before finally retiring to UK or somewhere warm; I keep busy with garden projects, traveling in USA and building a replica AC Cobra. Last February I took Grethe back to Africa and we climbed Kilimanjaro. My son Michael lives in Whitstable and is married with three children. We will be visiting them in April when I hope to join you at the OB reunion dinner on 21st April.

I had a long conversation with Stuart Halsey (Podge) earlier in the year after a contact through Friends United. More than 40 years in not as many lines. I hope to meet you again in April.

### **Jack Fox (1943)**

I retired from Dentistry and now enjoy flying and boating as major pastimes and "making things" when the weather is lousy! Cook and frustrate myself with the computer and have kept reasonably healthy to continue to enjoy life.

### **Matthew Jones (1994)**

I have pretty much been a techie since the day I left school. Starting with a job doing technical support for a small firm in Knebworth called Widget Software. I left to get involved in systems testing for Britannia Airways and then to another small firm managing millennium compliance projects and in 2000 was invited back to Widget as their Technical Manager. I've since joined the board and we've moved to Stevenage from where we distribute portable/gadgety electronics to places like Amazon and PC World. In the last couple of years I've also become a husband to Karyn and a father to Milly and moved to Henlow. Perhaps my being outnumbered at home is what's finally driven me to sign up!

### **News from Members**

**Peter Cropper()** Bought his copy of Richard Whitmore's latest book 'The Ghosts of Reginald Hine' and has enthused about it " I would like to say how well written I think the book is. Having been born in Hitchin in 1927, many of the characters in the book are familiar to me. I recall seeing Hine himself strolling around the town, and Willie Latchmore (him of the 'Electric Light Studio' in Brand Street) out with his dog spot. My Dad had joined the HGS staff in 1924. While looking for reference to J.H.Ritchie I came across the following (1931): Mr. C. Cropper outlined a scheme for strengthening the bond among Old Boys by getting them together to study some subject such as wireless telegraphy. The evening was one of the happiest times the Old Boys had had together for some years.

**School News Please see the detailed report from the Head teacher in his AGM report**

**“Book of Remembrance” remembered**

Members may recall that some years ago the Association commissioned a “Book of Remembrance” to record the stories of “Old Boys” who lost their lives in the Great and Second World Wars and whose names appear on the School War Memorials.

The sales cleared the costs and the School Library was the beneficiary of the surplus.

Unfortunately about two years ago the last box of books disappeared but fortunately, following enquiries made by the newly appointed Librarian Mr Pitchford, the box has been located.

The book is a handsome little volume, A5 in a blue cover with yellow lettering that would grace any bookshelf and several requests have been received for it in recent months. With the supply having dried up and a second edition being most unlikely, it is interesting to note that a copy recently changed hands in the second-hand book market for £15.

The recent discovery means that we have a limited number of copies available to members at £4 each if collected, or £5 each inclusive of postage and packing to U.K. addresses. Should you be interested, please contact David Baines on 01284 828091, or at [dcbaines@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:dcbaines@globalnet.co.uk) or at

7a Beechcroft, Stanningfield, Bury St. Edmunds. Suffolk. IP29 4RT. Cheques should be made payable to “Hitchin Boys’ School”.

Since the book was written, quite an amount of additional information has become available including the stories of two “Old Boys” not mentioned on the School War Memorials. Taking advantage of modern technology to the best of a septuagenarian’s ability, David has produced an up to date version on diskette (floppy disk) using XP Home and Word 2000. If you would like to make a donation of £5 or more per diskette for the benefit of the School Library made payable to “Hitchin Boys’ School”, David can provide members with a free copy to U.K. addresses.

**“Ghosts of Reginald Hine” by Richard Whitmore**

You can get a copy from Richard directly or from Eric Moore’s bookshop. The cost is £20.00 + postage if required. Richard’s contact is 01462 433261 or email: [oldnewsman@btinternet.com](mailto:oldnewsman@btinternet.com)

**Contact Address for HBSOBA**

Communications for the Association may be sent to me at Beck Springs, Beckett End, Foulden. Thetford. Norfolk. IP26 5AF. Phone: 01366 328153 or e-mail [Sheila\\_David@dstancombe.freese.rve.co.uk](mailto:Sheila_David@dstancombe.freese.rve.co.uk)

Or via our website [www.oldboysonline.com](http://www.oldboysonline.com).

## **HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION** **Formerly Hitchin Grammar School Old Boys' Association**

### **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 6.00pm. on 21st April 2007 in the School Library**

**Present:** David Garvie (President), D. Simmonds, M.J. Cranfield, Mark Hart (Hon Treasurer), David Stancombe (Hon Sec), Keith Wadsworth (Headteacher), Eric Foster, Mike Pratt, Robert MacArthur, Mark Russell, Geoff Shaw, Ian Hare, Michael Norris (President Elect), David. Niven, Peter Cherry, Chris Born, Richard Whitmore, David Hall, Peter Webb, Rod Sillence, Neil Thomson, Bill Bowker, Stuart Halsey, Dick Crabbe, Chris Roberts, Bill Bowker, Brian Waters, Mick. Steeley, Michael Northwood, John Russell, Bob Bowker, Peter Cherry, Peter Downey, Andy Russell,

**Apologies:** Joe Monk, Phillip Mallpress, Peter Cranfield, Paul Brooker, Neil Pettigrew, Denys Carnill, Stavely Harding, David Walker, John Mayhead, John Gwinell, Adrian Sillence , Clive Eames, Barry Robinson, Hugh Russell, John Gatward, Insley Garrood.

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting** held on 22nd April 2006 were taken as read and confirmed on the proposal of Michael Cranfield and seconded by David Simmonds.

**Matters arising:** There were no matters arising from the minutes.

**Hon. Treasurer's Report:** The Hon. Treasurer tabled his report and the Statement of Accounts to the 31st December 2006. Geoff Shaw proposed and David Simmonds seconded that the Statement of Accounts be

adopted. This was agreed unanimously. The president proposed a vote of thanks for the Hon Treasurer and the meeting expressed its appreciation for the Treasurer's good work throughout the year.

**Hon. Secretary's Report:** The Hon. Secretary presented his Report. The President proposed the adoption of the report and expressed the appreciation of the meeting for the secretary's continued efforts throughout the year.

Votes of thanks were also expressed to Stuart Halsey for his efforts in producing the high-class bulletins during the year and to Vince Holmes for maintaining the Association website.

**Election of Officers and Committee:** The following members were put forward by the committee and elected or confirmed in office. All were agreed unanimously.

- **President for 2007:** Michael Norris
- **President Elect:** Richard Whitmore
- **Vice-Presidents:** D.C.Baines, T.P.Brooker, W.S.Bowker, J.C. Burges, D.Carnill, A.P.Cherry, B.I.Cook, R.F.K.Corder, J.C.Coxall, C.C.Day, P.J.Day, J.Gatward, S.C.Harding, J.R.Mayhead, J.A.Monk, G.L.Shaw, O.J.Stedman, M.J.Steeley, N.A.Thomson, and R.T Whitmore.
- **Hon. Treasurer:** M. E. Hart
- **Hon. Secretary:** D.E.Stancombe
- **Committee Members:** (Vacancies to be left to the discretion of the committee)

Retiring in 2008 - R.J. MacArthur, M. Russell, A. Russell,

Retiring in 2009 – Stuart Halsey and Chris Roberts.

Election of new members to retire in 2010 – Michael Cranfield and David Niven

There were no nominations from the floor.

The above were proposed by P.R Downey and seconded by G.L.Shaw.

The meeting unanimously approved the appointment of the new committee.

The President expressed his appreciation of the work of those committee members retiring this year – Neil Pettigrew, Andy Russell and David Hall.

Vote of thanks and appreciation to the retiring President – David Garvie. The Proposal by David Simmonds, Seconded by Geoff Shaw, was warmly applauded by the meeting.

**Re-appointment of Honorary Accountants** – it was proposed by Andy Russell and Seconded by Mark Hart to re-appoint Messrs Watts, Knowles. The meeting expressed its thanks to Stuart Guyton for his work on behalf of the Association.

**Headteacher's Review.** Keith Wadsworth reported that the School has had another successful and challenging year. The major events of the year included a further development of **Specialist School Status** with more computers, interactive whiteboards and other devices now in place. Now there is one computer to every 2 boys

A successful production of Oliver involving collaboration between the Music and Drama departments took place during the year.

A survey of parents indicated that 97% were pleased their sons came to the school; 93% said their son was happy at school; 98% feel the school has high expectations and 93% have the impression the school wants to improve. These comments came from an overall response of 90%+.

Paul Booton, Deputy Head, has secured £700000 for the new sports facilities proposed for the top field and due for completion October 2007

**Exams** In almost all areas there was a further improvement in results. A level results not as good – perhaps due to a change in ambitions. GCSE results were slightly up again on last year – 73 % achieved 5+ A\*-C. The top set Year 10 Maths entered a year early for Statistics – 19 of 34 gained A or A\* - all the others achieved grades A-C. All students are now entering a short course in PE as well as RE.

I reported last year the science department has seen one of the most significant improvements with results, and that has continued. The number of boys embarking on Science courses in the Sixth form is increasing and this bucks the national trend. So much so that the department was featured in The Times Educational Supplement, and so gained national coverage and prestige for the School.

**Sport** **Rugby** – James Tirrell was selected for the England U20 7s and the U21 Six Nations squad. 5 players were selected for the U15 County Squad 7s. The U13 XV were Herts Plate winners; the U16 XV was Herts Semi-finalists and the U18 XV reached the Quarterfinals. The under 16-**badminton** team were national schools semi-finalists this year.

We are North Herts **Cross Country** Champions

5 boys were selected for district **football** teams and one at County level. The senior and year 8 teams were 5-a-side champions.

The **cricket teams** enjoyed a good season again – U14 county team was captained by one of

our boys. Matthew Hicks is within a whisker of the U18 England **cricket** squad. The U14 team won all their district games and were quarter finalists in the County Cup. The U13 team won all their district matches and were County semi-finalists.

**Hockey** The under 18 Team won the St George's 6 a side invitation Hockey tournament. We were the only state school winners in the whole tournament.

We were second overall in the County **athletics** championships and one boy is on the fringe of national athletics selection. We have a national

**gymnas**

t finalist and a golfer in Year 10 who came third in the U18 England Junior

**Golf**

Finals. There have been great achievements in a wide range of sporting activities.

**Music** The music department continues to put on regular concerts and collaborated with the drama department in a production of the musical Oliver.

Concerts organised by the boys themselves have taken place for charity fund-raising.

**Good Cause** We continue to support the twin daughters of Lillian and Julian Nyangoma in Uganda – making it possible for the both to attend university: we have one more payment to make.

**Relations abroad** The German and French exchanges continue. We switch from German to Spanish as our second Modern Foreign language from September 2007.

Trips to Normandy, field study trips, days and residential trips go on. A trip goes to Peru in the summer and Iceland next Easter

**Admissions** We have the highest number ever of students wanting to come. Normally the entry is 160 but 175 so far this year because of a County error. There are appeals as a result of this error and the total number of appeals is far and away the largest number ever. Against that backdrop we are currently dealing with being part of A sixth form consortium; a Strategic Area Consortium for post 16 developments, a sports consortium to help primary schools; an Extended Schools consortium to provide all sorts of pre and post school facilities, our Specialist College consortium of schools and all of these are different groups of schools. We are also currently dealing with new requirements at Key Stage 3, GCSE, AS and A level along with complicated new specialised diplomas that the Government insists are the key to the future.

The President thanked the Headteacher on a most interesting and informative address.

**Any other business.** David Hall asked the Head teacher about any possible concerns over security at the school in view of the recent widely publicised events in America and increasing violence in this country. In his reply the head said that there was always concern when events such as these were highlighted in the public domain. He felt that a locked-up environment was not appropriate for the school and that HBS is still a place where traditional values are held dear. David Garvie spoke of his experience in some London schools and supported wholeheartedly the head teacher's expressed view. The president thanked David Hall for raising the topic. There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.49pm.

Date: 21st April 2007

Signed .....President