

Association Newsletter November 2008



Hitchin Boys' School Old Boys' Association
Formerly Hitchin Grammar School Old Boys' Association

Quarterly Bulletin

November 2008

General

The date for the Centenary Reunion Dinner is July 18th 2009.

Preparations are steadily gathering apace and we are looking to ensure that as many members and other old boys will join us for the celebrations. So if you bump into any old boys over the next few months please encourage them to join us. If they are doubtful then please let me have their contact details. Table heads will be contacting members in the near future with all the details and hoping that you will be able to confirm your attendance.

There is also:

The Golf Day on Wednesday 15th July at Letchworth Golf Club

And a Celebration Concert on Friday 17th July

For your immediate attention!

Application for the Old Boys Centenary publication.

The Commemorative Book has had its testing initial print run. We are pleased with the way it is shaping up. The aim is to print in February/March 2009 and be ready to distribute at the AGM in April. So!! If you haven't signed up for the subscription list I suggest that this is something to do in the near future. Your name will then be added to the list and published in the book. This will be a limited edition of 300 numbered copies and we expect that there will be a sell out. Please complete the form printed at the end of this bulletin and send with your cheque to the HON Sec – contact details also at the end of the bulletin. Remember the print run will be 300 copies so to ensure that you get one please apply early. It is our intention to number each copy - so you will receive a limited edition.

Peter Cherry 1931 – 2008

We are sad to announce the death of Peter Cherry (1947), a former President of the Association and one of its most consistent supporters. Peter, who lived at Tring, had not enjoyed robust health for several years following a heart attack, but his death at the age of 77 was still unexpected. He was in good form at this year's Annual Dinner and thoroughly enjoyed his traditional summer holiday at Southwold with his wife Joan. However, shortly after they had returned home, he complained of feeling unwell and was found to be suffering from the advanced stages of leukaemia. He died peacefully in hospital a fortnight later on October 1st.

Peter was 16 when he joined Barclays Bank in Hitchin as a trainee clerk and rose steadily through the staff system until he was appointed to the management team for Luton and District. In the mid-1960s he and his family moved to Tring where he managed the local branch for several years. He later became the district's principal relief manager, supervising most of the Luton and District branches at one time or another, until his retirement.

On Monday 13th October a good number of Old Boys travelled to Tring to join the large congregation that crowded into St Martha's Church for Peter's funeral service. Many had to stand. As a long-time friend, our President Richard Whitmore gave the eulogy. Here is part of what he said:

"One cannot but admire Peter's sense of timing. Here he is taking his leave of us on what his newspaper – The Daily Telegraph – describes as 'the most important day in banking history.' Although he served Barclays well, ending his career as one of the management team for Luton and District, I suggest his real priorities in life may best be gauged from a description he once applied to himself: "A frustrated actor who had to do some banking for a living."

"It was as actors that he and I first got to know each other. On leaving school – where we had both enjoyed appearing in various Shakespeare productions – we decided quite independently to join the local amateur dramatic society, the Bancroft Players. Because Peter was two years older and we both had National Service to contend with it was not until the mid-1950s that we found ourselves acting together.

"I always felt that Peter bore a remarkable similarity to Alec Guinness. In day-to-day life, he was an unassuming, almost diffident chap who might not attract a second glance when walking down the High Street. On stage, however, the persona changed and could become quite powerful. His mellifluous voice and crisp diction, the large expressive eyes and that razor-sharp sense of timing saw him cast in more than twenty productions throughout the 50s and early 1960s. He was one of the most reliable and 'giving' actors that I have ever worked with.

"Then, in the mid-60s, Barclays went and spoilt everything by promoting my friend and sending him across the county to their branch at Tring. Here our 'frustrated actor' wasted no time in joining Tring Festival Company with whom, and with other church and local dramatic groups, he was an enthusiastic and much-respected performer for forty years or more.

"Yet Peter never lost touch with his friends in Hitchin. He kept his membership of the Bancroft Players and, after we built the Queen Mother Theatre, he sold literally hundreds of tickets for our shows. Hardly a production

went by that he and Joan did not bring a party of friends over from Tring. It was this 'long distance' support that prompted us to elect Peter our Vice President. A job he took very seriously, regularly making the tedious journey from Tring to Hitchin and back for committee meetings.

"In 1995 the Bancroft Players' celebrated their Golden Jubilee. To commemorate the early years that he and I had enjoyed so much together, we decided to have a nostalgic 'last hurrah' by staging a special production of A Month of Sundays, Bob Larby's play about a friendship formed between two residents of a home for the elderly. We performed it at both the QMT and the Court Theatre, Tring, and agreed afterwards that it had been one of the most rewarding experiences of our acting careers.

"As things turned out it was certainly not Peter's last hurrah. In the new millennium he became the first amateur actor to portray Captain Mainwaring on stage, when Tring Festival Company obtained special permission from the Dad's Army writers to present the first-ever stage production of episodes from this evergreen TV series. Peter's splendid portrayal helped by an uncanny stage likeness to the bumptious commander of the Walmington-on-Sea Home Guard Unit, resulted in a lot of publicity that included a splash on the front page of Connection – Barclays magazine for retired staff.



Peter as Captain Mainwaring in 2003. Left, relaxing backstage. Right, as he appeared on the front of Connection, Barclays magazine for retired staff.

"Dad's Army proved such a success that the authors invited the company to perform two other episodes of which there were no official recordings, so they could be specially recorded for posterity. Such was the demand for seats that the show ran for a fortnight and included a special matinee for members of the Dad's Army Appreciation Society. The run grossed more than £15,000.

"I have described Peter as a 'giving' actor. He gave much else to the community as well. One thinks of the dozen or so voluntary organisations whose accounts he would regularly audit year after year without expecting any sort of reward. One thinks of his work over many years with Tring Round Table and the 41-Club. His strong Christian faith celebrated as a young man with the Brand Street Methodist Church in Hitchin and then here at St Martha's where he played a major role in the church's recent development.

“Courteous, cheerful and kind, he was something of an anachronism in the often bitchy world of amateur dramatics. Even when the end came with fearful suddenness – and from a direction that nobody had expected – he bore his last difficult days with patience and fortitude. Those who knew this good man well will not be surprised by the tribute that Clare his nurse paid shortly after he left us. ‘He was so polite. A gentleman to the very end.’ Amen to that.”

Richard Whitmore

Congratulations to Simon Garrod who has been promoted from the post of Remuneration & Policy Manager at the Bar Council to Head of Professional Practice at the Bar Standards Board.

Committee News

We are still working hard to deliver an appropriate occasion. Matters are proceeding well but success will depend on the degree of support that we receive. The Golf Day is fully organized and the Concert plans will start taking shape in the New Year. The Saturday reunion with Hockey on the all-weather surface and a display of memorabilia in the library during the afternoon followed by a dinner for 300+ guests in marquee to be erected in the quad. We really do need a full turn out for this event so please note the date and make every effort to be there.

If members feel they can offer accommodation for those coming from far afield please let me know.

We now have a chain of office for the President and Richard will be wearing it at the reunion. We also have stick/pin lapel badges (you don't need a button hole) to mark the centenary. They consist of the school shield in the school colours with HBSOBA

1909 – 2009. These are in enamel and we think very tasteful. Price £5 so why not get one?

News from Members

It is sad to note the passing of another member of the Association. Paul Stoten (1954) died in January this year. Despite losing his sight due to diabetes he remained cheerful and continued with the council work he had been involved with for more than 20 years. His loss of sight meant that his wife had to read the Bulletins to him and she told me that he very much enjoyed the memories that this brought back. I hope to receive a lengthier eulogy to publish in the future.

Dick Hawkins has also died recently and I hope to have a suitable tribute to him for a later bulletin.

Other Old Boys

D.Scholfield (1954)

After completing an apprenticeship in foundry technology & metallurgy I joined DSIR, working at Warren Springs Laboratories in Stevenage as part of a team engaged in classified research.

I married my wife Sylvia in 1958 and in 1965 we emigrated to Benoni which is near to Johannesburg in South Africa.

During our stay in the country our sons Carl and Neil were born and, in my position as Inspection Manager, I was fortunate enough to travel extensively throughout the sub-continent.

In 1975 my company transferred me back to the UK and we chose Stotfold as our new base.

I became very involved in the inspection and quality assurance aspects of offshore oil installations and, interspersed by periods spent in oil company head offices in London and Aberdeen, we were able to live and work in some interesting and diverse locations.

We spent four years in Spain based in Almeria and Algeciras followed by another four years in Denmark during which time we lived in Virum near Copenhagen. After a further two years commuting to Gothenburg in Sweden my final project was for yet another four years based in Genoa, Italy. I retired in 1996 and play golf and bowls when we are not involved with our children and three grand-children.

School News

Following the recent OFSTED inspection the school was identified as a high performing Specialist College. As a result of this the school can be redesignated with a specialism in two subject areas. The second area will be Modern Languages so the school name will become Hitchin Boys' School - Specialist College in Technology and Modern Languages. This redesignation will produce additional funding to enable further liaison with feeder schools e.g. by setting up video-conferencing facilities, and the local community.

Application for the Old Boys Centenary publication.

Name:

Years at School: -

Address:

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Please indicate preference in the tick boxes below –

Pick up from Dinner (£15.00)

Postage in UK (£17.50)

Postage to Overseas (£22.50)

Please send me a centenary badge £5 inc postage

Cheques made payable to HBSOBA and sent to the Hon. Sec. – contact details are at the end of the bulletin.

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 davidstancombe@tiscali.co.uk or via our website www.oldboysonline