

Hitchin Boys' School Old Boys' Association

Formerly Hitchin Grammar School Old Boys' Association

Quarterly Bulletin

May 2008

General

The Annual Dinner seems to have been a success from all accounts and the many appreciative comments I have received. 102 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 **Richard Whitmore** and the guest speaker **David Webb** were well received and we thank them for the quality that they served up.

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

Please make a note of it and come and join us.

Old Boy Reunions and Dinners are for all past members of the school whether they are members of the Association or not

David Tomlin (1970). I received a letter from **Simon White** with the sad news that David passed away in May 2006. He suffered a severe brain haemorrhage and died shortly afterwards. David was a partner in the Tayabali Tomlin chartered accountancy firm.

Robert Pakes (1936). He was born on the 9th January 1919 and lived in Normandy Road Luton. His father worked on the railways, and when Robert was just 2, the family moved down the line to the new town being built at Welwyn Garden City. The Pakes, therefore, were very much part of the original pioneers of this Garden City. Robert won a scholarship to Hitchin Grammar School and would no doubt have gone to University if the war had not intervened. So he first followed his father on to the railway and became a student of railway engineering. Robert spent considerable time designing the curve into Hatfield Station and was not surprised when the Hatfield crash occurred. Low and poor maintenance, and faster trains being the main contributing factors. He was then called up in 1939, being just twenty. He went into the Royal Engineers and rose to the rank of Captain, seeing service in France, North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Austria. He served in works and transportation units and seems to have spent most of his time designing bridges to move the army across, and then blowing them up so that the enemy couldn't use them! The war had a tremendous effect upon Robert in more ways than one. He witnessed things, which we can only guess at now, but changed his view of life forever. He also met his wife to be whilst serving in Italy. Elizabeth Spoor was a nursing sister in the Royal Alexander Nursing Corps who came from South Shields.

On leaving the Army, Robert secured work with the Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield Development Corporation. People are remembered for all sorts of different reasons, but Robert will be remembered for things cast in stone; when you drive round the roundabout at the end of

Parkway, at the intersection with Turnmore Dale and Rooks Hill, remember that it was designed by Robert Pakes.

Robert also changed his employment in 1947 and went to work for Sir Owen Williams and Partners. He started there as a Senior Civil Engineer and rose through the ranks to be an Associate by the time he considered retirement. On the way he became a Chartered Engineer, a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers and a Fellow of the Institution of Highways and Transportation. He will best be remembered during this part of his life for his design work on the M1 motorway, the M18, the M20, links to the M5 and M6, and the massive inter-section at Gravelly Hill on the M6 known affectionately by some as Spaghetti Junction. He also did work abroad on the toll road system in Portugal as well as developing sites in Scotland to build oilrigs

for the North Sea Exploration. Perhaps his most notable single achievement has occurred much nearer to home with the extension of the A10 northwards beyond Ware. By the time this scheme was announced, Robert was 72 and was well and truly retired. However, the proposed new road with its connecting links to the existing network would actually pass through his daughter Sally's farm. So, Robert set to work again, and designed a new layout that would actually save 28 acres of land. He then presented his plan at the eight-week public enquiry and won the day against all the planners from the Ministry of Transport, from the County and District Councils. After the death of his wife Robert did not cope very well on his own, he sold the house in the Ridgeway and travelled the world with his companion Joan Tanner who he married in 1993 but sadly separated from in 2000. After a short spell living in Ware, he finally moved into Churchfield House in Guessens Road in 2002.

Robert was a very complex man, in essence being very shy. He was a keen sportsman, playing hockey at the King George 5th Playing Fields and Cricket at Digswell. He loved the countryside and exercising his many different dogs over the years. He also became a keen golfer.

Lionel Hoskin (1952)

“Lionel Hoskin passed the 11 plus and attended school from 1947 to 1950 entering the Merchant Navy as a apprentice at the age of 14. On one of his leaves he met Josephine Gregory, a Hitchin girl and two years later married her and left the Merchant Navy to set up home with her. Having no capital they ran a café in Baldock whilst he worked a breakdown mechanic at night to save money to set himself up on his own. After two years his employer selling up precipitated his move, so with one of his colleagues they looked for premises in which to start a business. They found suitable premises in Flitwick and started trading as Flitwick Tyre, Exhaust and Battery Services. They were successful and Lionel put his roots down in Flitwick but his partner did not want to leave Baldock, so after two years Lionel bought him out and developed his business. He got himself on to “tomorrows world” as he met and backed a man who invented a textured snow band to go over a tyre instead of snow chains; it was designed to have a texture like a polar bears foot! Sadly the inventor died and a company who bought the rights from her to prevent it being marketed approached the widow.

Lionel enjoyed playing hockey at school but took up badminton as a sport becoming Chairman of the local Club boosting it to fielding 9 teams in the local league, and from that position became County Chairman. He was also known for his support of local charities and for always entering a float in the Flitwick Carnival.

In 1995 he had to give this up when his wife became ill with liver cancer, nursing her until she died in 2002. Lionel never really got over losing her. He had been a lifelong smoker and his lungs succumbed to pneumonia each winter from 2006 which illness took him away on 19th of February this year.”

John Mayhead (1949)

John Wyard Gatward (1924)

John the oldest surviving member of the Association, died peacefully in Lister Hospital on March 19th after a short illness. He had spent the last two years of his life as a resident at Halcyon Days in Graveley, having previously lived in Broadmead, Hitchin since 1983. He was born in 1909 above the Gatward family jewellers shop in Hitchin Market Square, and after attending H.B.G.S. he worked in the shop, having a particular interest in clocks. One of his regular tasks was the winding up of all the clocks in several prominent houses in Hitchin – including the Priory. As an infant he lost the use of his right arm due to polio, but despite this handicap he became a very able table tennis player. During the Second World War he cycled to work for Mr. Titmus at his farm at Almshoebury, where he enjoyed the outdoor environment. Apart from being an active and enthusiastic member of the Association he was a strong supporter of the Hitchin Fire Brigade, and a member of Probus Club, but his greatest interest was in singing and church organ music. His father had been organist at Tilehouse Street Chapel for over 50 years and during that time had acquired an extensive collection of specification data for church organs throughout the country; on many of which he had performed. This enthusiasm and love of the church organ he passed onto John. John was happily married to Edna Martin for over 50 years. In 1957 they moved to St. Ives in Huntingdonshire in order to manage a new branch of Gatward's jewellers. They enjoyed a busy life here until their retirement and return to Hitchin in 1983. John had a keen interest in sport, especially snooker and cricket, and enjoyed watching these on television. In recent years a steady deterioration in his sight and hearing made it much more difficult for him to follow the games. However right until the end he retained an incredible memory – particularly of Hitchin and its families, which made it such a pleasure to visit him and give him mental quizzes when he became housebound. He never lost his sense of humour - or his appetite. It is planned to hold a memorial service in St. Mary's Church, Hitchin when the organ has been restored to its full glory.

Hugh Russell (1941)

New Members

Dennis Shelford (1950), Vic Shelford (1954), Iain Baker (1977), Nick Chapallaz (1987)

Brian Thompson (1955)

After qualifying as a C.A. lived and worked abroad for 15 years firstly in Canada with Coopers and Lybrand and then in New York with The Singer Company the quoted US multi-national manufacturing and distribution company. International assignments included expatriate Director for Southern Africa, Thailand and Brazil. Returned to England with a young family and took up Group Board directorships with FTSE Public Companies managing international manufacturing and distribution subsidiaries. Whilst living in Far East was selected to play cricket for Thailand Select X1 against a visiting tourist side from Papua New Guinea. (Opened the batting with a Scotsman who had been capped for Mexico!) . So began and ended my Test Match career! Now very happily married with two children and two step children and retired and living in Northampton playing a little golf between showers.

News from Members

Phillip Malpress ((1940) has recently moved into an apartment in the same village and is very

happy with the new arrangement. He says 'I keep pretty well, commensurate with 84 years and am a proud great-granddad.

Reg Bonfield (1926) – now our oldest surviving member – writes to tell me that he has had a second bad fall and is now in a care home in Polperro. In his own words "life is not good, I'm under control and cannot go out without someone taking me. Still must expect such at almost 98 years." He wishes everyone all the best in 2008.

School News

Please see also the Head teacher's review of the year in the AGM minutes. What follows here is Keith Wadsworth's Toast to the Association at the annual dinner Mr President, Gentleman Welcome again – a week earlier than last year and yet after Easter. Quite why our local authority does not fix the Spring Holiday somewhere midway between Christmas and the Summer I shall never know. Schools in some places are on holiday right now and that seems very sensible to me. This term is going to be very long! Since I last spoke to you the school has continued to grow – we now have 1012 boys in the place and a number who are appealing to get here; exam results have improved at GCSE yet again and we continue to have many boys achieving results even the highest flying Grammar School would be pleased with. If you take account of the incredible and growing list of other activities which I summarised at the AGM earlier, by any measure the school is thriving. Trips the sort of which many of you might remember – the field trips, language exchanges, theatre visits – all continue. But in the last few months and in the next few months trips to Italy, one for opera another for skiing, Costa Rica, South Africa, Iceland have either been or are planned. The sports programme grows with this year's highlight looking like being the U14 team reaching the national finals in May. Internally I guess seeing Dracula Spectacular, Andrew Parr and John Gardiner's musical return to the place of its world premiere was a highlight. How John is missed and how wonderful it was to have his wife in the audience on the last night. Those of you who drive past along Fishponds will have seen building work and what a fantastic addition we will have very soon to our already excellent sports facilities. So good are they seen to be that we are one of just two schools in Hertfordshire (and the only one not a Sports College) to be selected to be offered across the world as a table tennis training venue for the 2012 Olympics. I intend to seize every public opportunity of congratulating Paul Booton, our Deputy Head, who conceived the whole thing, raised the money and has ensured its successful completion. He has declared his next project is to find about £1.2m for a new Arts block to allow for a major development of Music, Drama and Arts facilities. All in all we are doing very well, I believe. Maybe the single most unhappy time for us came just before the Easter holiday when, whilst the local paper consistently refuses to include in its pages anything positive about the school, they picked up on a YouTube clip which did not show us in a good light. A group of lads had been messing about on the field at lunchtime play-fighting and others had videoed it on their phones. I investigated and assured

the so-called journalist that there was nothing unpleasant about it in fact but he ran the story under sensationalist headlines. The Mail got hold of it and the clips now showed 'shocking scenes of violence'. It was a very unpleasant 24 hours with a Sun journalist illegally on the site, BBC interested and a sinking feeling that all that the school stands for was being destroyed by one misjudgement about how to use modern technology. I tell this story though because what happened in the following 48 hours just went to prove how strong this place is; its values understood and founded on years and years of success and effectiveness. I had no idea who had videoed the 'fighting' and uploaded it but they came forward to apologise and ask what they could do to put it right. All the lads involved met to ask what they could do and chose three to represent the school on local ITN Anglia News to put the record straight. Boys, apparently by the score, blogged the Mail and the Comet, rubbishing the story and condemning them for running it. I had email after email from parents supporting the school and vowing not to take the Comet again until they published an apology. Out of an unpleasant experience a number of lessons were learnt. The lads involved discovered just how big a gap there is between their understanding of 21st Century technology and many adults; they learnt a bit more about how powerful and difficult to control some of this new technology is and they discovered what sort of damage can be done, quite accidentally, from something quite innocent. What was underlined for me was just how loyal to their school, this school, most of the boys and their parents are. There was a mood of real anger around the school at what the local paper had tried to do to their school, anger that they refused to accept the truth, the facts. Never let the truth get in the way of a good story, they say. When people look round the school when they're making their choice for their sons the same things are highlighted time after time as attractions: the sixth form students, on the basis that they feel if their sons turn out like that then they will be very pleased; the buildings – as long as they see it when the son is shining; the exam results and our prowess in sport and music; and the school's history – the sort of history only a few schools have in terms longevity. And it's that history we celebrate each year, a history symbolised by the Old Boys' Association and it is my honour to propose the toast now to the Association as it enters its one-hundredth year. Would you please, then, raise your glasses and join me in the toast. The Association.

Contact Address for HBSOBA

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via our website www.oldboysonline.com.

HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 6.00pm. on 12th April 2008 in the School Library

Present: Michael Norris(President), Mark Hart (Hon Treasurer), David Stancombe (Hon Sec), Keith Wadsworth (Headteacher), John Mayhead, David Webb, John Garcia, Leslie Mustoe, Eric Foster, Mark Russell, Geoff Shaw, Ian Hare, David. Niven, Peter Cherry, Richard Whitmore, Peter Webb, Rod Sillence, Neil Thomson, Stuart Halsey, Dick Crabbe, Chris Roberts, Peter Cherry, Andy Russell, Kevin Franklin, Adrian Sillence, John Sainsbury, Dick Crabbe.

Apologies: David Garvie, Phillip Mallpress, Peter Cranfield, Paul Brooker, Neil Pettigrew, Denys Carnill, Stavely Harding, David Walker, John Gwinell, Clive Eames, Barry Robinson, Hugh Russell, D. Simmonds, M.J. Cranfield, Mike Pratt, Robert MacArthur, Bill Bowker, Brian Waters, Peter Downey,

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on April 21st 2007 were taken as read and confirmed on the proposal of Chris Roberts and seconded by Andy Russell.

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 2007. Peter Cherry proposed and Chris Roberts 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 Matthew Jones for updating and 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 2008:** Richard Whitmore

• **President for 2009:** 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, S.C.Harding, J.R.Mayhead, Michael Norris G.L.Shaw, O.J.Stedman, M.J.Steeley, N.A.Thomson.

- **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 - Robert MacArthur, Mark Russell.

Retiring in 2009 – Stuart Halsey, Chris Roberts.

Retiring in 2010 - Michael Cranfield, David Niven

Election of new members to retire in 2011 Andy Russell, Matthew Jones.

There were no nominations from the floor.

The above were proposed by John Mayhead and seconded by Kevin Franklin. 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 – Robert MacArthur and Mark Russell. Michael Norris expressed his appreciation of the work of the Chairman, David Simmonds and thanked him for guiding the committee throughout the year. A vote of thanks and appreciation to the retiring President Michael Norris was proposed by Richard Whitmore and seconded by Geoff Shaw. This was warmly applauded by the meeting.

Re-appointment of Honorary Accountants – it was proposed by Chris Roberts and Seconded by Adrian Sillence to re-appoint WKH. 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

Production of Dracula Spectacular – Andrew Parr retirement after 36 years in the school

New Sports facility almost complete

Chosen as a possible training camp for 2012

Visit from Chinese torch delegate

Learning Platform now established for Years 7, 10 and 11

Exams in almost all areas a further improvement in results

Not best A level results

GCSE results slightly up yet again on last year – 74 % achieved 5+ A*-C

Top set Year 10 Maths entered a year early for Stats but students are also being entered for GCSE in Astronomy, and several different languages

Sport In Rugby the fixture list was extended – B teams were taking part in the district rugby competitions

U13 semi-final County Plate and Plate finalists Bedford Modern 7s

U16 County Quarter Finalists

U18 lost in the County Final

U18 football finalists District cup

U13 Winners

Basketball – Under 14 into the National Finals in Nottingham May District winners

U12 district finalists

Athletics – Year 11 boy 3rd National School Heptathlon

Year 9 selected for Great Britain U15 sailing; another England Junior 14 Kayak

Year 8 in the County team for the England Schools Cross Country

Swimming – district Champions at all levels

Badminton – U14 regional champions having been County Champions

Cross County District Champions

Music Regular concerts again

Dracula Spectacular

Our Head Boy – speaking later - is a fine musician and won the school

Music Cup having won the piano and brass competitions

We won one age group in the Rotary Club technology competition. One of two teams who reached the final won the Herts Enterprise Challenge in Dragon's Den type of exercise. One student was one of the last left in a Balloon Debate done in French!

The German and French exchanges continue.

Battle Fields Trip saw our boys uniquely singularly forming the parade for the Last Post at the Menin Gate ceremony. Trips to Iceland this last holiday with trips to South Africa, Italy, Costa Rica and India all planned.

Admissions – highest number ever of students in the school - 1012

The Extended Schools and Specialist College provision has becoming very successful and both mean that we really reach out more and more to the community beyond the school.

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

Any other business.

Chris Roberts expressed his sincere thanks to the Hon Sec for what he has done in holding the Association together for many years. He made a number of observations that he felt are important for the Association. The centenary year will be crucial for the Association and it must change and move forward or it may die. Comments that Chris had noted from Old Boys he came in contact with showed that the Association does not promote itself sufficiently to the wider community or canvas pupils past and present so that the activities and benefits of the Association are not widely known, nor attractive to many old boys. He believes the Association needs to offer more and do more to attract and keep new members of all ages. But in particular to target old boys in their middle years (aged 35 to 55) that are settled, have money, and often have a growing desire to re-connect with their formative years. It is this group that is most likely to ensure the continuation of the Association.

He pointed out that two years ago he drew up a strategy document to guide the Association forward. He believed the need for such a plan is now greater than ever, and proposed that the plan be resurrected and its key elements be presented to the membership. Chris said that he would be happy to prepare a brief summary of the plan and a simple form to enable the members to quickly and easily provide feedback and give them a series of options on how they could actively support the activities and goals of Association. They would be asked to choose what they want the Association to do for members; pupils; the school and the community and ask what **they** would be prepared to do to achieve these things.

The President thanked him for this contribution and the Hon Sec agreed to place the matter on the agenda for the next committee meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.56pm.

Date: 12th April 2008

SignedPresident