

Hitchin Boys' School Old Boys' Association

Formerly Hitchin Grammar School Old Boys' Association

Quarterly Bulletin December 2009

A Date for your Diary –
APRIL 24TH 2010 – AGM and Annual Reunion.

General

Please don't shoot the Messenger !!!!!

I am taking over from David after what seems to be a lifetime of his presence with the Old Boys Association. When we eventually let him go from the Committee it will create a big void, as David has given his soul to keep the Association running. We will be looking for some of you youngsters out there in Old Boys Land to stand up and join the Committee. They are not all old fogies, some of them are under 60 !!

It is now my task to keep you up to date with Old Boys matters, however, you also need to keep me informed. All my contact details are at the end of the Newsletter. I will take anything from articles of interest, snippets of meetings with other Old Boys, gossip, requests for information, obituaries, etc., etc.

In order to keep our mailing costs down.... Yes, snail mail is alive and kicking !! I have entered into an arrangement with Tony Norgan (1962) of Norgans whereby, for the gratuitous insertion of an advertisement for his business over the next four newsletters, Norgans will pay for our postage. My first action, as you will have seen by the last Newsletter was to print it in A5 booklet format. This may be a bit hard to read for some of us but I have improved the size of the print in this edition to compensate for the reduction.

If anyone else wishes to become a sponsor, we still have to pay the school for printing and Viking Direct for the Stationery. Next years Menu for the Old Boys Dinner is also up for grabs. It is not that we are short of money but if you feel benevolent, I am willing to accept the sponsorships. How about a Cup for the annual Hockey match against the School ??

Obviously I will accept comments on my style of presentation and also what different things we can put into the Newsletter (within reason, please!).

The Annual Dinner is fast approaching and we do not, as yet, have a speaker. Do any of you have a star candidate to entertain us and enable you to create a table for his year ? Names will be accepted, as long as we have a short CV of his fitness for the role.

News from Members

David Walker (1957) was pleased to see the message from **Geoff Allenby(1949)** in the last Bulletin. He writes: "I well remember your cheerful and supportive role at scout meetings and camps.

It was much appreciated - then and ever since. I even recall that you prepared a small group of us for the Tenderfoot badge in the old Scout Hut.

Exactly sixty years ago now.

It was quite an experience for me being in the patrol led by the late **John Constable(1952)** and **Guy Randle (1956)**.

Life has never been any more challenging since.

This afternoon I am meeting the vicar to try to influence his ideas for scout parade next month.

John Cotton (1963) has ordered his limited copy of the drawing "A View of the School" by Rob Norris () and writes of fond memories of the Centenary Reunion.

‘Incidentally the reunion was truly memorable and well worth the trip down It has already led to other reunions up here. I shall never forget emerging from the Cock with my brother just before the start to see the lines of penguins [can you have a crocodile of penguins?] proceeding from every direction on their way to school. The whole event flooded my thoughts for weeks afterwards ‘.



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Rob Laurens () I went to Birmingham Polytechnic and studied for a degree in Urban Estate management. But I left before completing and spent a couple of years working and travelling all over the world – Asia, Australia , US and South America .

I worked for a marketing consultancy in London before starting in the travel industry with Trailfinders. After a spell as General Manager of a chain of travel agencies in London I moved into marketing and then became ecommerce Director of Campus Travel, a national student travel company.

After a spell as Marketing Director for another group of travel companies I set up a digital marketing agency in London which I ran for a company for 3 years.

I then joined First Choice as ecommerce Director for the Activity Sector which has now merged with Thomson to become TUI Travel.

I look after ecommerce for 60 or so companies with my team based in Brighton .

I married my lovely wife Linda in '97 and we have lived in London , Kingston upon Thames and now Brighton .

We have two great boys – Harry 8 and Max 6.

Life's pretty good on the whole!

New Members

We are pleased to welcome: **Bill Flint (1941)**

He writes 'I grew up in Welwyn Garden City and travelled daily to Hitchin by train. Boys walked from the station to the school on the right hand side of the road and girls on the left. No fraternisation! One journey was made memorable when the train was machine gunned by an enemy plane.

School was enjoyable (especially the doughnuts from the tuck shop) but I was only an average academic and sportsman. As a member of the Scout troop, I have memories of the jamboree in Hatfield Park and hauling the trek cart some way up Mt.Snowdon via the Watkin Path where we camped for the night, the base camp being at Nant Gwynant. I also joined the school ATC unit when it was formed in 1940.

1943 saw me in the Royal Navy where I spent quite an exciting war as a telegraphist on MTBs in the North Sea.

On demobilisation I joined the WGC and Hatfield New Towns Commission as a trainee surveyor. Moved on to Fine Fare supermarkets and later gained further experience with a large chain of clothes shops. My final position was with a life assurance company as the property manager responsible for the investment portfolio. On retirement I did part time consultancy work for Richard Ellis, Chartered Surveyors.

Now living in Goring-by-Sea, married with two daughters, three grandchildren and two great grandchildren. I lead an active social life, enjoy travelling and playing bowls several times a week.

My regards to **Rory O'Brien, Denys Carnill, Geoff Powell** and anybody else who remembers me'.

We also welcome **Stewart Scott (1993)**, who lives in Bedford Street Hitchin. I hope he will forward us a short CV for our next issue.

Another new member is **Andy Sheridan (1969)**. He is already retired (what did I do wrong - ED ??) and lives in British Columbia. His e-mail address is andys@netidea.com. I am sure there will be some contact from his peers.

News from Members

A little moment of humour:-

Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

He who laughs last, thinks slowest.

Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

Those who live by the sword get shot by those who don't.

Nothing is foolproof to a sufficiently talented fool.

The 50-50-90 rule: Anytime you have a 50-50 chance of getting something right, there's a 90% probability you'll get it wrong.

If you lined up all the cars in the world end to end, someone would be stupid enough to try to pass them, five or six at a time, on a hill, in the fog.

If the shoe fits, get another one just like it.

The things that come to those who wait will be the things left by those who got there first.

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will sit in a boat all day drinking beer.

Flashlight: A case for holding dead batteries.

The shin bone is a device for finding furniture in a dark room.

A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.

When you go into court, you are putting yourself in the hands of 12 people who weren't smart enough to get out of jury duty.

Other Old Boys

Roger Thirnbeck (1959) paid me a visit recently and he was around long enough to see a number of other Old Boys and talk to them at length ! He is not a member, being too tight to spend the small sum required ! Roger did write to David some time ago on the subject of allowing any Old Boy, paid up or not, access to the web site. Here is an extract, I welcome any thought you may have on the subject :-

Unannounced, my sister mailed me a copy (No. 130) of the Centenary Book "We Were There..." which arrived today. I knew that one was being produced but, by the time I found out about it, I had missed the deadline for both a subscription and contribution. At one time I had hoped that I would be able to attend the 100th, but it does not look as though that will be possible. Congratulations on a great production. My brother **John (1940-1947)** also sends his congratulations on a really great effort. He too would like to have contributed and today I telephoned him and told him to get pen to paper (cataracts notwithstanding) and send me his recollections including his experiences in ATC Squadron 1066. We both agree that it more than makes up for the "error strewn" 1989 production of Joyce Donald "The John Mattocke Boys."

As a member of the first 5R Class Joe Monk asked you a question and then gave you his assessment (mid-page 104). As so often in his discussion with you, his observations were very astute, *"That had a lot of characters in it who weren't very happy with this arrangement."* For most of us (15), we did not regard ourselves *"...as academic failures."* but we were rather frustrated in that we were only able to sit four "O" level examinations in the first year. Unlike Jones, at least Maurice Dolden made an attempt, almost 20 years ahead of some of the changes that came in the 1970's (he was right to oppose the overall sweeping "dumbing down" that occurred) in that he recognized that not all students were made from the same "cookie cutter" pattern. It was frustrating for the 5R Class because having identified them, there appeared not to be a positive learning strategy but rather a teaching approach that consisted of a series of "could not do" edicts. I and others passed exams without ever really learning how to study, none with great marks, but in the end I managed to accumulate a total of 8 "O" level passes and 2 "A" level passes, this "in spite of" not because of instruction. I subsequently gained another 3 more "O" levels and 1 more "A" level after I left school. Another member of that first 5R Class (standing behind Percy Mumford in the "retirement photo" for Frank Tromans and Mr Richards in 1971(?)) used to spend lunch hours debating higher mathematics with Dr. Tupper. Many of the 5R were integrated the following year into 5B and some went on into the Sixth Form.

I found it interesting that Denys Carnill credited playing against the various military sides as *"...as a marvellous introduction to adult hockey....for a bunch of schoolboys!"*. I wish that I had had this information when I proposed a Colt's side for Blueharts in 1957. My battles with Frank Tromans and Freddie Bowker in Barry & Wendy Cook's house would have been much easier. The schoolboys who played for the Colts very quickly gained playing knowledge and then went on to play for their county and country within a very short time. In Alberta during the 70's and 80's I had similar success with four Alberta players going to the Los Angeles and Soeul Olympics the 1990 World Cup in Pakistan. If I had known that John Cotton was Headmaster of a School in Durham, I would have made sure that the Junior Alberta Hockey team we sent over to England in 1989 would have visited him. I had to over-rule my employee who wanted to play at the Worthing Festival by insisting that the boys would have a much more enjoyable time at a smaller festival (Scarborough), a suggestion by John Harrison of Letchworth Hockey Club (they visited North America twice in the late "70's), again, within a year five of those players made the national team squads.

Freddie Bowker's "grouse" on pp. 268/269 still has not been acted upon. The Association has a web-site, but for the most part it lacks any "draw" for recruiting past school members and implies a "secret" society. As Freddie Bowker said, *"...I am aware of thousands (probably hundreds) of Old Boys, disspered nowadays, not nation-wide, but*

world-wide;..." As he also said "...*COMMUNICATION...*" How can one communicate if you do not have the contact.

As a solution, I would suggest that you list every members' name you have on file sorting them by the year they either entered or left the school, add to that list any other names you might have and, make all the names available on the internet. For a former school member to access someone on the list they would have to submit their contact information which would then be forwarded to the person(s) they wished to contact, it would then be up to this person to reply.

I was in San Diego last May and would have been most interested in getting together with Graham Stubbs as we both started school together in 1951. Similarly, I met up with Norman Ross last year, he came to Calgary in 1980, 16 years after myself. I can assure you that memberships will flow. It is very possible that annual "get togethers" will take place in many other parts of the world. e.g. Aberdeen Grammar School has an annual meet in Alberta attended by many Alumni who make the journey alternatively to Calgary or Edmonton. The University of Durham, my UK Alma Mater, not only holds regional meetings around the UK, but also holds them in many places around the world.

Does anyone have a contact for David and Ian Entwhistle, , Anthony Gribbins, Craig Hook, Rob Laurens, Howard Gregory, David Leonard. Please let me know if you have a contact for any of them.

School News

We have given £1000 to Parents Association from the Dinner, due to saving costs on the Marquee that they had used the week before.

Not a lot of news from the School in this issue. Needless to say that the School is excelling itself in a variety of areas, notably Choral and orchestral.

There is a new facility at the school, to be named Woodlands. It is the site just off Bancroft which had been in a poor state. The extensive refurbishments mean that space is now available for seminars, workshops, extra teaching area etc., etc. It is hoped that there will be furniture in the building in time for the next Old Boys Committee Meeting in February !!

The Headmaster is in negotiations with Hitchin Lawn Tennis Club, with a view to them using the new tennis facilities at the school. Their previous premises in Bancroft Rec were recently burnt down. There are floodlights available and it may be possible to extend the playing facilities in due course.

Stop Press

I am sorry to report that Reg Bonfield, who was our oldest Old Boy died recently, at the age of 99. I remember Reg when I was growing up, because he lived in Lancaster Avenue, opposite to where I lived. He was flanked on either side by Gerald Lincoln and Richard Butcher. If anyone has any memories, please send them to me and I will publish in the next Bulletin.

Memorabilia Sales

Memorabilia Sales: from David Stancombe (contact at end of Bulletin)
All prices include postage and packing.

******* Special Offer – All three items for £20.00, including p&p !!!**

*******There is one copy of the Old Boys Centenary book available now.**
Contact David Stancombe

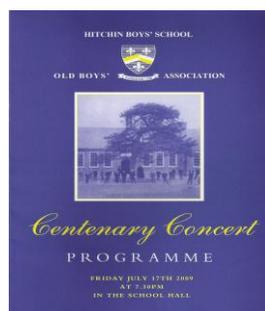
Centenary Badge - £5



Print of school view – signed and numbered - £10



CD of centenary concert + programme - £10



ORDER FORM

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

Contact Addresses for HBSOBA

Communications for the Association may be sent to the **Hon. Sec. Peter Hollingsworth**
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