

Hitchin Boys' School Old Boys' Association

Formerly Hitchin Grammar School Old Boys' Association

Quarterly Bulletin June 2011

A Date for your Diary –

APRIL 21st 2012 – AGM and Annual Reunion.

General

Welcome to the June edition of the Bulletin !

We had a good AGM and also a very good reunion with over 70 attending. The speeches were good and the Head Boy, Lewis Carmody, was outstanding. Martin Brown, in his first reunion with the Old Boys showed that he was up to speed with the school and said all the things that we wanted to hear from a New Head. His review is the School News section. Craig Hunter's memories of school, his life managing British swimming teams and also the Commonwealth Games were very well received. So, if you weren't there this year, put next year's date, see above, in your diary NOW !!

Howard Gregory has taken over as Membership Secretary and all his details are at the back of the Bulletin, he would love to hear from you. If there is any difficulty, you can write to me, my details are at the back of the Bulletin.

Keith Allard, a very well known and liked member of staff for many years is about to retire and he has graciously accepted the honour of being our President for 2012 to 2014.

We were going to put on a games afternoon at the School, in July. However, we didn't give ourselves enough time and it has been postponed until next year. The objective was and still is, to raise funds for the refurbishment of the Cricket Pavilion, for the use of the Scouts. If any of you would like to donate, I would be willing to take cheques and pass the money over to the school, to help with the work. More details of the event will be in future Bulletins.

We would still like to hear from some of the 'younger' Old Boys who would be willing to join the Committee. It is not an onerous task, four committee meeting each year, usually on a Tuesday evening, starting at 7.30pm, plus the AGM and Annual Reunion in April. Give it some thought and talk to me if you have any questions.

The web site is still a concern and I am trying to get it running correctly. However, I will keep the Latest News column up to date whilst I learn how to fix the rest of it. If anyone knows about the Joomla web site management system, please, please get in touch !!

Reunion

As stated above we have the date for next year's reunion and I am looking for suitable speakers. Please contact me if you have any ideas, I would welcome them ! I am looking to get back to the 100+ that we were achieving before the Centenary event. It is only one evening in the whole year, I am sure you can make time for it, I have given you plenty of notice !!

In Memorium

I have to report the sad loss of four members :-

Guy Randle (56) 10 July 1937 – 1 June 2011

David Simmonds (56) Noel Parkhouse (56), David Walker (57) and I attended the memorial service in Beverley Minster last week. The congregation almost filled this immense Minster. The following notes are based on the tribute that his daughter Kate made at the service.

Guy's priorities in life were his family, his job, sport and mountains. He was Head Boy at Hitchin Grammar School, a Queen's Scout, and played County rugby for Hertfordshire. He continued to play rugby when attending Bart's Hospital, studying to be a doctor – but playing a little too much rugby, in fact, as, along with the entire rugby team, he got thrown out and finished qualifying at Liverpool University, where he played rugby for U.L.H. After qualifying he took up posts at St Alban's City Hospital, during which he married Diana (a pupil at Hitchin Girl's School). Guy then moved to Liverpool to work under the eminent Obstetrician and Gynecologist Professor Jeffcoate. As his career advanced he moved first to Leeds and then, as a Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, 36 years ago to Beverley, a most happy choice. Altogether, he spent half a century practicing as a doctor, rising to become a Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and a Medical Director within the NHS. Not to mention delivering a fair old proportion of the younger generation in East Yorkshire! He was very involved with the planning of the new Maternity Unit in the Westwood, providing a far more pleasant and modern environment for expectant mothers and their families. His medical career was noteworthy for the passion with which he approached his work, the enthusiasm with which he embraced new techniques and passed his knowledge on, the care with which he treated every single patient, and the respect he accorded to all of his colleagues, a respect which was warmly reciprocated. He was acquiring new techniques at 70 and had only just retired from locum posts that took him to Gibraltar, Stornoway, Cyprus, and even The Falkland Islands. Guy and Diana had three children; Katy, Marcus and Louisa. He was a wonderful husband and father, and enjoyed his life surrounded by the best friends he could have wished for. He was Alison's big brother, loved her daughter Helen like a father, and was utterly besotted by his four grandchildren, Thea, Sarah, Felix and Daniel, and by Helen's children Francesca and Luca.

Outsiders were welcomed into the family with gusto, although not without the occasional challenge, as Kentra, Steve and Tony well know. He was a fiend on the squash courts in his younger years, mastered every sport he tried, including waterskiing and windsurfing (we will draw a veil over the episode when he was rescued by the Greek police, just feet from the coast of communist Albania...), and turned into a frustrated fiend on the golf course in his later years. He travelled with Diana to most corners of the globe.

He did occasionally get itchy feet, and shortly before his 50th birthday, Diana suggested he take a trip to at least see Everest before that milestone. He had rather reluctantly given up climbing after the children arrived, on grounds of danger, and Diana hoped he would thereby “get it out of his system”. Slight miscalculation there; within a year he had enrolled at the British School of Mountaineering and scaled the Matterhorn again, and then, bit firmly between his teeth, set out to conquer the highest mountain on each of the seven continents (including a quick side-trip to the North Pole). He managed four and a half of them, too, Everest and Mt Vinson proved out of reach. He was by far the oldest on each expedition. The “Half” in question was Denali, or Mount McKinley, in Alaska, which nearly killed him. He survived by holing up for a grim few days in an ice cave, with other climbers dying. He squeezed thirteen more years out of life, enjoying every minute to the full.

There is a quote from Horace which sums him up perfectly:

“Call him happy and lord of his own soul who every evening can say, ‘Today I have lived’.”

John Rainbow remembers some of the school and scouting days Barker, Bonnet, Brown, Brown, Brown -----Rainbow, Randle, ----- . So ran the register of the second year (now called year 8) class of 1949. The seating order, starting from the front right, up one row and down the next was similarly in alphabetical order so in front of me was Guy Randle. He was, no doubt, as uninterested in the French lesson as most of us, but rather than be bored he found something to do. He reached round, took my pen off the desk and proceeded to dismantle it into its constituent parts. He returned it still in bits just as Mr. Tromans began a French dictation!

Edward (Ted) Elliott

I have received a document from the nephew of Ted which gives a good account of his life, until he died, from cancer, aged 76, on November 8th 2010. Born and brought up in Knebworth, he passed the exam for the school. Nothing is said about his school life but he went to college to gain an HNC. He spent his national service in Hong Kong with the Royal Artillery. On returning to England he went to Southampton University to read Economics

He went to live in London and worked for a number of Corporations, including finally the GLC, in the planning and transport policy department. When the GLC closed he had other smaller jobs, in order to pay for his main interests in life, which were bell ringing, philately and train spotting.

Whilst Ted never married, he had enjoyed an active life and when he finally retired, he was only ever at home on Sundays, to go to church and rest up ready for the next week's adventure. He had never had any health problems until he became increasingly unwell and took a bus to the Lister Hospital to see what the problem was. As I said above he had well advanced Cancer and he never left the Hospital.

Roy Bolton

My name is David McLoughlin. I am a grand nephew of Mr. Roy Bolton who attended Hitchin Boys' School and received your bulletin.

I write to inform you of the recent death of Mr. Roy Bolton after a short illness. He passed away peacefully at Limerick Regional Hospital aged 86. He is survived by his loving wife Elizabeth ("Beth") who now resides in a nursing home in County Clare.

Roy and Liz returned to Ennis, County Clare, Ireland in later years to retire and lived nearby Elizabeth's family.

He was a very knowledgeable man who had a passion for photography producing many interesting prints throughout his lifetime. Roy often spoke of his life in Hitchin and recounted a very happy life in the area.

In later years he suffered from emphysema, however despite his illness he was very outgoing and continued his life with great vigour. As a tribute to Roy, you might remember him in your prayers.

Roger Davies (1949 – 1952)

Roger died aged 73 on June 3 2011. He had been ill for some time and died in his sleep at home near Chelmsford

Roger left HBGS at the end of the second year to continue his education at Bootham School in Yorkshire. His early years in employment involved working for his father, who was attempting to revive the John O'London's Weekly. He then worked as a designer at Oxford University Press throughout the 1960's but when OUP moved out of London in 1971 he decided to go freelance. His wife Gill returned to work as a midwife and Roger combined design work with teaching in Art Schools in Harlow and London. He was one of the chief designers for the British Museum from the mid 1970's until the 1990's and the excellence of his work was recognised with a number of National Book League Awards.

Roger was born in Darwen Lancashire. His grandfather was a socialist cotton manufacturer and adult education worker who was made a hereditary peer by Clement Attlee in 1946. The family moved to Letchworth, a town with a strong Quaker tradition for them to join and continue to follow their Quaker principles. His father was warden of the Letchworth Adult Education Settlement and managing director of Darwen Finlayson, the publishers – two employments that were to shape Roger's career. Roger succeeded his father, the second Lord Darwen, in 1988.

I did meet Roger in the late 1990's when searching out some of my contemporaries. He was digging out a large pond to enhance the natural environment of his part of rural Essex. As we talked it was clear he was a man of integrity and kindness towards his fellow men and a passion for his art work.

He and Gill had hosted concerts, poetry readings and three years of an open-air music festival at their home.

Roger is survived by his wife Gill and his five children, as well as 13 grandchildren and five step grandchildren. His eldest son, Paul succeeds him as the fourth Lord Darwen.

By David Stancombe (57)

New Members

Do encourage friends, who you know are Old Boys to sign up. It is not expensive, as you well know and, whatever your memories of the school, there is always someone you got on with during that time !

Craig Hunter has joined as a result of his attending the reunion.

Peter Duncan (1987) who now lives in Chicago and works for RABO Bank, I hope to hear more from him for the next Bulletin.

Simon Gainsford writes -My life after Hitchin in a few words... I decided to become a farmer and went to Agricultural College In St Albans, graduated as top student, was promptly grabbed by HMG to do the mandatory (then) 2 years National Service in the RAF. I then spent 2 years hitch hiking around 25 countries in Europe and Northern Africa, doing the wine harvest, selling reindeer skins in Northern Sweden and teaching English to survive. I then abandoned farming went into computers and joined ICL. After a spell as a hopeless programmer, I went into sales (my true forte) and went from the UK to Sweden, Mauritius, Zambia, London, Nigeria, Egypt, Iran and finally the USA running the 11 Western States. I left ICL after 17 years and went to Norway and Sweden for an American Software Company and then joined a Norwegian group as their European President based out of Holland but travelling all over. I needed a change and went to Australia and after 12 months

was appointed the MD of an Australian Software Company running Australia, New Zealand and Asia. Later I moved to Hong Kong as the VP for an American Company set up the HQ in Bangkok and worked for 11 years building a 20 million \$ operation from scratch, (that was fun) with success in Japan, China and Australia and 650 customers across the region. 5 years ago my US employers were bought out by another US Company, I did not like the new owners and opted out and set up 2 new small operations in Thailand and the Philippines. That is where I am today.

I now 73 years old, have been married 2 times, to a Swedish girl, a Thai lady and now live with a beautiful Filipina who is all of 29 years old. I have 3 dreadful kids as a result of these liaisons. I am pretty fit, still play tennis and golf and am an advanced diver. I speak 4 languages and will never retire.

Peter Duncan has come in via the web site. He lives in Chicago, working for a bank. Peter left in 1987, so I am sure that there are a number of you out there who remember him. If not how about his father Brian Duncan who was a member of staff for a number of years.

News from Members

ED :- As usual there are number of communications from members, mainly to ask how to get into the web site !!!

Sukh Nijjar would like to hear from the Class of 2000 – Matthew Atkinson, Matt Clarke and Andrew Llewellyn were the only ones I could find. Contact me and I will pass you onto Sukh.

Nick Chappelz, Peter Ashmole and Mike Hunt were also in touch

Please keep in touch, through me, to tell your old friends where you are and what you are doing now. Then arrange to meet up for the reunion on April 21st 2012.

School News

Martin Brown is settling in at the School and wondered if any Old Boys would be able to provide informal assistance to the Boys.

He says :- ‘Hitchin Boys’ School Sixth Formers are currently making decisions about future careers and are always keen for advice and guidance from Old Boys with careers experience. If you are prepared to be contacted by the School directly, please send details of your name, Careers on which you could give advice and an e-mail contact. Please send the details to Head of Sixth Form, Ms Jackie Lansdown (lansdownj@hbs,herts.sch.uk).

Martin is almost through his first year and this was his report to the Reunion/AGM :-

It has been an eventful year since your last AGM.

With a new Head teacher in place there are obviously questions in your minds about the direction of the school.

There are things which need to change, and will. But let me reassure you by pointing out that in my first address to the staff on day one I took as my theme “Tradition with Innovation” and I have used the same theme when presenting to parents.

The traditions of this great school are part of what attracted me here in the first place.

And the tradition of excellence foremost:

The exam results at GCSE level this year were the best the school has ever achieved, with 73% of boys achieving the Gold standard of 5 GCSEs graded between A*-C including English and Maths. This puts us amongst the highest achieving schools in the country. In Hertfordshire however there are a lot of

high-achieving schools in the league tables. On the current measurements our performance puts us in a middling position. However, as I'm sure you know there are many games being played behind the scenes of those tables and it was interesting to note that when the Government's latest way of counting the beans was applied – by which I mean the English Baccalaureate or EBAC as it is now sadly becoming labelled – when that measure is applied to the league table Hitchin Boys' outperforms all other non-selective boys' schools in Hertfordshire and indeed is placed third of all non-selective state schools in Hertfordshire. But these tables are really only a fashion and come and go with time, what matters is the individual success of each boy. There were indeed some amazing results one boy achieving 15 A* grades, over 40% of all boys achieving 5A* or more and in Biology 49 out of 84 entries achieved A* giving Hitchin Boys' School 0.6% of all the A* grades in the country. This is an outstanding achievement.

As many of you will know, we were recently visited by some aliens from Planet OfStEd. I had been skiing during the February half-term break and returned refreshed on Monday morning. At 08.50 Pam on reception rang through and said: "There's somebody from OfStEd on the line, they want to speak to you...." All of sudden Austria seemed a long, long way off.

But the staff pulled together, brilliantly and over 70% of the lessons observed by inspectors were judged good or outstanding. The boys were marvellous and their behaviour and politeness was specifically commented on by the inspectors in their letter. I won't bore you with the details of the inspection process, but suffice it to say we had to go into battle against some very negative thinking.....

When considering what to say at this event I was kindly shown Mr Wadsworth's last address to the Association and I noted his comment about OfStEd – and I quote – "It will be very, very hard for a school like this to keep its Good with many Outstanding features"

....well we went into battle....and we won ! The judgment was exactly that – Good with Outstanding features. And rightly so.... Now my task is to

motivate, enthuse, challenge and hopefully inspire everyone connected with the school so that next time we achieve the Outstanding grade we deserve.

Because there are so many outstanding things happening here.

The sporting side of Hitchin Boys' has been a revelation and a joy to me. I have been so impressed with the dedication and diligence of most of the staff, but the PE department really go the extra mile or should that be the whole nine yards....

There have been fantastic performances throughout the school since I have been here in rugby, hockey, swimming, badminton, basketball, athletics. **In Cross Country** Yr 7, 8, 9, 10 & Seniors are all district champions – 1st place overall in North Herts - won four out of the five individual titles and won all five team titles!!); Yr 7 2nd in Hertfordshire School Games; In **SWIMMING** All age groups are N. Herts district champs; In **BADMINTON** and in **TABLE TENNIS** Juniors & Intermediates are District Champions & runners up across all Herts schools. In **TENNIS** we reached the Quarter-finals of the National Tennis Championships the only state school to get that far. **In BASKETBALL** we were Yr 7 District Finalists, Yr 10 District Champions I could go on....but I just want to highlight three outstanding examples in my time here. (Full details will be in my Easter newsletter).

The outstanding **Rugby Team of the Year** were the **Under 15s**. They have really set the bench mark for other teams in school to follow. Having scored 344 points with only 58 points conceded illustrates the attacking flair and defensive qualities the squad possesses.

The Year 9 Hockey team is another example of the many fine teams which represent us. At the very first training session in September, all of the players turned up – keen to play – even though the first match would not be for several months. The first game, against Bedford, was expected to be tough. We won 2-1. We beat Desborough School – 7-0, at St.Albans despite losing 1-2 at half time we won 5-2. Against Dr. Challoners there was a 3-1 victory and then the

final test -Watford Grammar School – but after a nervy first 10 mins – we ran out easy winners at 3-0. Played 5 Won 5 Scored 20 Conceded 4

Then there was the Year 9 Hitchin Boys' School athletic team at the Lee Valley indoor athletics Cup. This is a prestigious National competition and we had already beaten the Hertfordshire County champions to get there. The boys faced the National Indoor Champions Southend High School for Boys and the current holders of the Lee Valley Indoor Cup Woolwich Polytechnic. We had personal bests across the board, two stadium records in the 60m Hurdles, the High Jump 1.65 and the 200m. and I have to mention one of the standout performances in the 800m final, our boy was tripped and injured. A fast race where falling would seem to be the end of your race. So did he give up ? No chance, this Hitchin Boy, not only got up and carried on, not only finished the race but in fact managed to win the race and break the stadium record by two seconds. His performance was described by the senior steward as " one of the bravest and most courageous runs seen on that track". There should be Chariots of Fire music playing now.

There were two big events supported by our technology focus so far this year. A glittering yet somewhat bizarre night involved extensive lighting and technical equipment plus lavish decoration to recreate the TV show called Strictly Come Dancing. This was essentially a two night fundraiser for the World Challenge expedition to Africa which takes place this summer. I was a judge and really had no idea what to expect. There were I believe 8 “couples” who had prepared dances ranging from the paso doble to the jive. It was a classic example of the need at any kind of performance to “suspend your disbelief” and just go with the flow. It really was most strange to realise that the apparently attractive young thing in the backless frock was in reality one of our 6 formers who also plays fly half for the rugby team.....

We have also taken part in the BBC School Report in which the boys have the chance to work with actual BBC staff on producing a 10 minute news bulletin in real television style. This was a great experience for all – except perhaps me

due to the Mastermind style grilling they had decided on.... The end product was broadcast via the web.

Our school production was Calamity Jane – more boys wearing falsies and skirts – is this one of those HBS traditions I ask myself ?!– but, all very professional and quite hilarious.

The list of school trips is virtually endless and continues to grow. Just in the next few weeks we have a languages trip to Spain, a Maths trip to Greece and a Rugby tour to Disneyland. This does not involve using Mickey Mouse for tackling practice but is actually quite a prestigious tournament bringing together school teams from all over the place.

One more event is worthy of note. This year we decided to make a big fuss about raising money for the Comic Relief Red Nose Day charity. We held all sorts of events in school including biscuit, cake and Indian food sales, caricatures in the Quad, all sorts of sponsorship from silences to head shaved and painted red. There was a very popular event involving custard pie throwing at the teachers – with their prior consent of course ! We had old-fashioned school races as well – sack races, three-legged race, egg-and-spoon race which was great fun. We also took the fun and activity into the main Town Square and arcade. Our drama groups performed old sketches such as the Monty Python Parrot Sketch and the Two Ronnies Fork Handles sketch, there were human statues and juggling, and buskers at 5 different locations. The jazz band played, so did the brass band, there were several rock performances and even the whole orchestra played. It was a great fun day and really livened us all up after the OfStEd experience and most importantly showed the great generosity of the people of Hitchin including the boys themselves and their parents because as a result of all that activity we raised £ 3, 866.41 (and money is still coming in).

There have been countless other trips, events, performances and activities and it forms a fundamental backdrop to what I have been trying to convey to staff, boys and parents since I started here.

I believe that Hitchin Boys' School has got a lot of the fundamentals of good education in the right place and the right order. The curriculum choice is good and gives the boys a broad and balanced choice and most importantly in my view keeps their options open as long as possible. The sporting and musical achievements here and the focus on technology and languages are a profile which I am determined to keep. The life of this school is vibrant with activity and it is this vital spark which I guarantee to you I will cherish and preserve while driving the school from its current position as a good school to become an outstanding school.

Finally a word about the importance of the Old Boys' Association. A word I have used continually since starting here is community. This is I believe a vital part of our nation's heritage which is being lost in so many ways. Places like Hitchin and Associations like this help fight back against that tide. When a young boy of 12, 13 years old sees local professionals closely linked with his school, successful people who once walked these same corridors, played in the school teams, the orchestras, the drama groups, took the exams – that boy subconsciously sees himself as part of something bigger than himself, as part of something special, something that will remain with him for life....a Hitchin Boy.

Memorabilia Sales

My special offer of the last bulletin only sold three sets, very disappointing !! Offer is still open.

******* Special Offer – All three items for £10.00, including p&p !!!**

All prices include postage and packing.

Centenary Badge - £5.00



Print of school view – signed and numbered - £5.00

There is another option, to have a framed copy with the Badge from ‘The Picture Framer’ at 30, Sun Street Hitchin, Tel: 01462 453272. Esther Kirk will assist you and she is, in fact, Rob Varey’s niece. Rob was Head boy in about 1957/8.

CD of centenary concert + programme - £5.00

ORDER FORM

Item(s) required :-

Name:

Years at School: -

Address:

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

Contact Addresses for HBSOBA

Communications for the Association and memorabilia queries may be sent to the **Hon. Sec. Peter Hollingsworth**
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Membership matters, please contact **Howard Gregory, Membership Secretary**
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