

HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

(Formerly Hitchin Grammar School Old Boys' Association)

ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER November 2002

General:

After the note in the last Newsletter to say that Frank Abbott would be speaking at the dinner on 5th April 2003, someone said 'Who is Frank Abbott?' Well in the words of Richard Whitmore 'he was Frank Abbott. Anyway to help you along Frank has given a synopsis of his interesting career which I have included later in the Newsletter.

I am thinking of starting a new section where I apologise for previous errors. Peter Highton has put me, and others I feel right on a number of points. Mainly scouting ones so I hope non scouts will be tolerant. Apparently Richard Whitmore was not Derek (Sammy) Sarson's PL in fact Sammy was PL of the Woodpeckers that included Peter, David Woodbridge and the late John Constable. It is suggested that Richard was a Curlew. With reference to the dramatic roles Sammy was certainly Wackford Squeers but Richard was just one of the small boys he whacked. Nicholas may have been John Mayhead (President 2000). Peter also remembers cycling down to Brockenhurst in 1949 with Geoff Allenby and Ken Rowland and in 1950 they went to Devon and Cornwall. Peter has not seen Geoff since they went to the County camp in the Cairngorms in 1951 – so there is a good reason for them to meet up again. It is worth mentioning that Peter camped in the New Forest at Brockenhurst this summer, which presumably brought back all these memories.

In the last Newsletter I noted the loss of Cliff Darlow. I asked his widow Denise to let me have a few notes to outline some of Cliff's activities. In 1944-5 he was a Swordfish pilot on Russian convoys. After the war he went to St. Edmund Hall Oxford to read PPE after which he joined the LCC. In 1964 he was appointed Administrative Officer in the newly formed Public Health Engineering Department and later while Deputy Director he handled all the contracts for building the Thames Barrier. He retired early due to health problems in 1983. He and Denise moved

back to Oxford in 1997 to be near their daughter. He died on February 10th 2002. On your behalf I have sent the Association's condolences to Denise and her family.

HBGS Through the Decades is making slow progress with contributions from the 20s and 30s from Reg Bonfield, Frank Papworth Peter Gould and Phillip Mallpress. David Baines article, which he wrote for the Hertfordshire Countryside magazine, covers the 1940s. We have contributions from Derek Wheeler and John Windsor for the 1950s and a Headmaster's view of the 70s and 80s by Bill Kaye and David Garvie for the 90's. Joe Monk is working on the T E Jones days – I have some notes from Ernie/Frank Whitwoth that I have given Joe to include with his account. John Gwinell is working on the Dolden era and Keith Wadsworth is bring us up to date with the 21 century. Music contributions are from Jonathan Burton on that special period with Peter Cooper in the 1960s and Peter Noyce is writing about his time as Director of Music (1979-85). Roger Sexton, Geoff Marshall and Bob Watkin cover the sixties. Paul Linford has agreed to contribute for the 70s and Michael Burgess (see below) has agreed to do 'The other side of the coin' as he puts it 'On behalf of the John Russell Field Smokers' Society I feel I should put together 3,000 words for your book, but it won't be easy.' Simon Lupton has covered his era from 1983 –90 so we have managed a pretty good coverage. Hockey with contributions from Denys Carnill and David Whitaker, Rugby starts with some notes by Trevor Bartlett and cricket is being covered by our President, Barry Robinson. The School Scout Troop is being done by Gordon (Angus) Brown, John Rainbow (Son of SGR) David Walker and the last forty years a tremendous contribution from Peter Cranfield (and Michael I believe). Any other contributions will be gratefully received so if this list inspires you to put pen to paper then please do so and let me know.. We hope to include a number of photos so if you have anything you think would be interesting and relevant to our contributors please let me have them. Publication will hopefully take place in time for the April reunion.

Membership: Numbers have fallen to below 600 as we have lost the 1996 Associate Members who have chosen not to join at this stage. We will keep their details and hope to keep in touch and enrol them at a later date. At the present stage we have only recruited 3 2002 leavers. Unfortunately the arranged occasion for our representative, Martk Russell, to speak to the year 13 leavers had to be cancelled due to the untimely loss of a member of staff, Andrew Tickner.

We sent a letter and application form to join the Association in the leavers exam notification envelop and hope this will encourage this year's 'crop of new Old Boys to join up. Please encourage any Old Boys that you know who are not members to join. We need 1000+ to make ourselves strong and viable for the rest of this century.

Subs: Mark Hart (Treasurer) and I are about to reconcile our records and to update the state of payment on subscriptions. My apologies to Eddie Abbott (1957) in not answering his letter re the state of his subscription but I should be able to do that shortly Could I remind Associate members who left in 1997 that they should now send in their subscription. Ordinary £4 per annum or Term £30 for 20 years (can be paid in three annual payments of £10)

Committee News:

Your new committee met on 12 November 2002. The minutes can be found on the website or can be emailed on request. Some of the points we discussed: -

School photographs the series in the library is nearing completion. We understand that there was not a photograph between 1982 and 1989 so when the 1982 photos have been copied and put in the library the series will be complete. Our thanks to David Simmonds (1953) who has been doing this work for a number of years now and is about to produce the final prints for our collection.

There have been a number of requests concerning these photos and we are thinking about making them available via the web. Karim Akhtar (1985) has done a few on the friends reunited site so we might extend this. Let us know your thoughts on this.

Association Tie: We are looking at possible ties and suitable designs. The intention is to have the new tie available for the April Reunion 2003. We are currently thinking of the school crest + HBSOBA + 1908 – 2008. I.e. to make it a centenary tie. A blue tie together with yellow artwork would seem appropriate. Please let me know if you have any thoughts on this.

Careers Advice: There has been a good response from members and we hope to have the service up and running when our much-harassed web provider can manage it.

Old Boys Day 2003 will be on the 5th April. Please make a note of the dates and think about organising a party of your contemporaries to the reunion. Is it 10 or 25 or 50 years since you joined or left the school? Then why not make a special event of it? Last year saw 140 sit down to dinner and this number is almost the limit. We are catering for 150 in 2003 so when the details come out in the next Newsletter be ready to book your places.

Last year 8 teams 'fought it out' on the Astroturf to become the 5-a-side champions for the year. We are hoping that 16 teams will sign in for 2003 so why not get your team committed to the date? Please let our organiser Robert MacArthur know that you have a team to enter. His details are in the Note re the reunion on the last page of the Newsletter.

Emlyn Cooke will have take over from Barry Robinson as President (They will both be there so come and say hello if you did manage to make contact last year. Barry is looking forward to listening to his past A level History student, Frank Abbott (1964) who will be our guest speaker at the dinner so if you were at school with Frank why not make a special effort to attend this year?

The headmaster Keith Wadsworth mentioned the rather dilapidated state of the school pavilion (The Association played a large part in building the pavilion in the 1950s under the eye of Maurice Dolden with Geoff Grant acting as site foreman). Your committee felt that the refurbishment of the pavilion is something that the Old Boys might like to consider making a contribution to. There are several Old Boys in the with building companies and perhaps with

their help and experience the pavilion could be put to rights. Please let me know if you have any contacts that might be willing to support this project.

News of Old Boys:

John Sanders (1941) is very pleased to have the books that he has bought. 'How lucky Hitchin is to have had a historian such as Reginald Hine! His scholarship and humour are unrivalled and his style is immaculate. I have already enjoyed the 1931 edition of the History of HGS (much nicer than my 1951 reprint) and The Story of the Sun Hotel (of fond memory) and am now reading the Relics of an Un-Common Attorney'.

Robin Gardner (1947) is still on the Isle of Wight but he and Avril decided to move to a smaller, more easily manageable home. At the same time they were not willing to give up their friends and the local church so they have moved to the other side of the village. He hopes to make the reunion next year.

Jeremy Ash (1996) After school I went to the University of Southampton where I spent 3 years studying Mechanical Engineering and French, and spent a fourth and final year "studying" at a French university in the Pyrenees, (this involved more snowboarding and mountain-biking than the curriculum would have led you to expect). I also spent a few months living in Montreal, Canada where I just about managed to balance two jobs - working in the translation department of PriceWaterhouse and a job as a white-water rafting guide on the Lachine Rapids. I've now settled in Bath and am enjoying the relaxed west-country life considerably. I have been working as a Project Engineer for Anthony Best Dynamics for 2 years. It is a small (ca. 28 people) automotive engineering firm specialising in vehicle dynamics and noise & vibration. I am involved in the design of our range of specialised test machines for dynamics testing, particularly the "Steering Robot". I am enjoying the opportunity to travel with my job, especially to France (being the only French-speaker in the company), but also to Germany and - imminently - to Tokyo.

Frank Abbott (1952) My record and achievements are not as grand as you made out. I am definitely not a Circuit Judge only a part time Recorder. It does mean that I get the opportunity

to lay down the law but usually I am defending criminals who have done something pretty bad as a barrister, which I have been since 1972.

Before that my career at school amounted to parts in the school play which as you remember was always Shakespeare. Good old Diz Thomas. Edwin and I both played the part of Feste in Twelfth Night but though he was better looking than me I was the better singer and actor. After University at Nottingham studying law, I then went abroad teaching English in the Sudan. As a very naive young lad I certainly got to know a few things and its hard to believe that I did that. It was a much safer world in those days.

After that I became a professional actor for 4 years and I did a variety of small parts mainly on TV I did work with a lot of people who have become very successful Joanna Lumley, David Jason, Maureen Lipman and Roy Hudd, for example but highlight was to be a small part of a production which was booed off the stage in the West End on the first night. Even the presence of star actors didn't prevent this and it still wakes me up at night.

I was never in Z cars or played a policeman except in the occasional comedy sketch and I duly went back to the law in 1972 and became a barrister. Not that I haven't had my share of laughs in the subsequent 30 years but though I know a lot of "grand" people I have never been one myself.

Kit Burdess (1960) has resurfaced thank to the website. I am now retired from H M Diplomatic Service, but working on business-in-society issues; I am also Vice-Chair of Governors at the school

Simon West (1997) is currently in the closing stages of studying for his MSc in Information Technology at Cranfield University. The thesis is being written up at the moment and finishes at the end of August 2002 -- so not too long to go!

David Leyland (1964) is still having problems with his ISP Virgin who cannot sort out whether he is .com or .net. If you have to contact David please use the .net version. He mentions 'During the foot-and-mouth horror last year I saw a television interview with the Chairman, or Secretary, or somebody, of the Herdwick Sheep Society. He was talking about the hefting of flocks to particular moorland pastures, and I am pretty certain that it was G.R. "Geoff" Brown, who was

known to be Herdwick sheep daft when he was at School.

New Members: We welcome the following new members:

Philip Whitbourn (1941-43) A surprise meeting in the Kent County Cricket Supporters Marquee during Tunbridge Wells Cricket Week with a contemporary at school has led to a new distinguished member of the Association. Philip retired in March this year. He was formerly Secretary of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (UK) and previously Chief Architect, English Heritage.

This year's leavers who have joined the Association are Sandeep Chizar (now in Canada), Natham Lambert, Stuart Macreynolds (Head Boy) Richard Roseblade, Ben Smythe, Timothy Walker, Michael Weeks, John White and Ian Wood. We welcome them to the Association and trust they will keep in contact via the website and let us know how they and their contemporaries are getting on.

Other Old Boys:

Vernon Speed (1976) responded to my plea for help in composing the 1969 entry list and sent the following info about himself: After school I studied English at Reading University, got my BA in 1979, then did some voluntary work before moving back to Reading. Here I joined the Civil Service (Inland Revenue, then the Intervention Board, which looks after farming subsidies etc). I spent a few years in financial work, then moved to IT before leaving and joining the local Council. There I co-ordinated the setting up a new computer system. Currently I am working on

electronic government.

In my spare time I am involved in my local church (Vineyard) and also music (keyboard and guitar - writing, playing and teaching)

Vernon is also trying to make contact with C.J. Donald in his year group. If any one can help please contact Vernon via his email address or send it to me and I will forward.

The School: The School was oversubscribed again this year and year 7 has a full compliment of boys. The staff is at full strength after two appointments from overseas. It was encouraging that some of those who had taken a one-year contract have decided to stay for a further year.

The exam results were up on all fronts. The A level group were somewhat hit by the 'grading shambles' but at the end of the day all went to college and the vast majority to their first choice. At GCSE level 12 boys gained all grade A* or A grades and 40 gained all A and B grades; these results are excellent for that group. As a result 90+ boys have entered the sixth form this autumn.

The Year 7 cricket team are County champions and the Year 8 team lost in the Final to Watford.

The year 10 ruby XV has won all their matches, many against Public School opposition. They play the 4th round of the Daily Mail National Trophy on Thursday of this week.

Much refurbishment went on during the summer holidays. Two laboratories have been refurbished, the Dining Hall and Junior block have been redecorated. The North Court toilet facilities have been upgraded. A total of £90,000 has been spent on this refurbishment and the boys have been most appreciative of the improvements. Overall it has been a good start to the school year. The new Head Boy is Andrew Smith.

Old Boy Rugby shirts: These are available from Keir Dow at the School. If you would like one or would like more information can get in touch with Keir either via e-mail (keirdow@hotmail.com) or in writing to him at school.

Concert CDs: I still have a few copies left. If you would like one please send a cheque for £5 – payable to HBSOBA (Hon Sec)

Books: The books, which Frank Papworth (1936) has kindly donated, have raised £160 for the Association.

A list of the books is still available is listed below together with a guide price of what you could expect to pay on a bookshop. If anyone is interested in making a purchase then please contact me (Hon Sec) and I will arrange to get them to you.

Mirror for the Society of Friends Hine 1930 £45

Hitchin Worthies Hine 1932 £45

The Natural History of the Hitchin Region Edition Hine 1934 £45

Hitchin Old and New Hine 1946 £7.50

The Story of Hitchin Town with drawings by Gerald Ceunis who signed the copy for Frank's Father) Hine 1954 £10

A Short History of St Mary's Hitchin Hine 1936 £7.50

Charles Lamb and his Hertfordshire Hine 1949 £22

Relics of an Uncommon Attorney Hine 1951 £12

The Book of Hitchin (No. 457) Anthony Foster 1981 £25

Highways and Byways in Hertfordshire Tompkins and Griggs 1913 £15

The Spirit of Christianity Frederick Seebohm 1916

(Published posthumously. Copy "To W.J.Fitch from Hugh Seebohm) £20

Notes on the Biggin (pamphlet, 1930) W.O.T. & W.J.F. 1923 £7.50

Old Boys Day April 5 2003

BOOK YOUR TEAM FOR THE 5-A-SIDE FOOTBALL
2.30 on ASTROTURF PITCH

CONTACT Robert MacArthur
Address: 39 Benslow Rise Hitchin Herts SG4 9PN
Phone: 01462 433291
Email: biffymac@aol.com

AGM: 6.00PM IN SCHOOL HALL

DINNER: 7.00 FOR 8.00 PM

Contact Address for HBSOBA
Communications for the Association may be sent to me at 25 Chiltern Road Hitchin Herts SG4
9PJ or phone 01462-457-510 or e-mail Sheila_David@dstancombe.freemove.co.uk
Or via our website www.oldboysonline.com.