

HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

(Formerly Hitchin Grammar School Old Boys' Association)

ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER August 2001

General:

The School Hall Appeal is going well. So far 76 members and other Old Boys have contributed over £9000. I was hoping that we would reach £10,000 so if there are members who would still like to help reach this figure and be party to a well deserved upgrade to the hall please send in your donations – cheques payable to Hitchin Boys' School Charitable Trust. Work is currently in progress and will hopefully be completed by the beginning of next term. If you would like to see the results why not come to the Autumn Reunion Concert on October 12th. Those who have contributed to the appeal will receive complimentary tickets from the School and will be asked to reply by return if they intend to come. This is because there is a limit to the numbers that can be accommodated and we anticipate that the attraction will cause considerable interest and many friends of the school will wish to attend. So members who wish to come and have not contributed to the appeal you will need to let us know. It looks like being a grand evening. Richard Whitmore will be MC and many well known musicians will be performing. There will be a limited number of seats available and programmes are initially being sent to all those who have made donations to the appeal fund. Other members who would like to come on that evening will need to send for tickets from the school and I would advise them to do so at the beginning to next term.

David Baines (1949) wrote an article for the Hertfordshire Countryside 'Good Manners, Good Work and Good Ganes at Hitchin Grammar School in the 1940's'. David has kindly sent me a copy to make available to members. I may put it onto the website. How about other members doing the same for the 20's, 30,s 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's? Let me know if you feel so inclined.

New Year resolution: - could all members please make contact once a year so that I know that

you are receiving communications and we are not wasting printing and postage cost.

It is always sad to report the death of a member. Reg Smith (1926) only joined the Association last year but I understand from the family that reliving those early school days gave him much enjoyment. I have asked Bill Bowker to write a few words and his appreciation follows.

Reginald Daniel Walter Smith, 22 January 1912- 29 April 2001, an appreciation.

I first met Reg in the 1970¹s when our crop spraying operation at Rush Green was in full swing. As a local beekeeper he had to be consulted when insecticides were used. On one occasion the message asking him to close his hives failed to get through. That evening I was confronted by Reg, complete with 12 bore, and told in no uncertain terms what he thought of us. Forthright would be an appropriate word to describe him.

Later I got to know him quite well. He kept his hives on the airfield for a while, to be sure of knowing what was going on, and he was around with his gun after rabbits and pigeons nearly every day. He and his wife Megan moved from Langley to Hitchin to be nearer the shops when they were in their late seventies. He decided to stop running a car at about the same time and bought a motor- scooter. The sight of him, gun over shoulder, on the B656 was a sight to behold. Eventually, to everyone's relief, he was unable to find a company willing to insure an eighty-year-old driver of a scooter and his gun club friends and others would give him a lift. Up to last autumn on a fine morning the phone would ring and an unmistakable voice would enquire if I was off to the airfield. The sound of distant gunfire indicated that Reg was in his element. Occasionally, if we had to make a local drive to Codicote or Wheathampstead, Reg would come and the anecdotes soon followed. There can hardly be a field, wood, cottage, house or barn with which Reg or his extensive farming forbears have not had some connection.

He was born and raised at Shilley Green Farm, now a private house. In 1924 or 5 he won a scholarship to the Boys Grammer School when the Headmaster was Jabez King. I think that Mr Huckle was the only master of his time who taught my generation at the school. Tragically Reg had to leave after only two years.

His mother was killed in a road accident in a Model T Ford driven by his father at Knebworth. The effect on the family was such that Reg had to stay on the farm. From what was said it seems that they did a good deal of carting of farm produce into Hitchin, collecting loads of some by-product of local industry to take back for use as fertiliser.

He became apprenticed at some point to the head gamekeeper on the Bowes-Lyon estate at St Pauls Walden, carrying a gun for the Duke of York, later King George VI, on special occasions. He remembered seeing Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, now the Queen Mother, on the estate with the young Princess Elizabeth.

On the death of his father the farm changed hands and Reg decided that the Army was for him. Still too young to enlist, he lied about his age and got in, serving in time in the Middle East and India. In 1939 he found himself in the British Expeditionary Force in France trying to stop the German invasion and was taken off the beaches at Dunkirk. Posted as missing he turned up later having been landed by his rescuers in Devon and found his own way home. As a gunner in the Royal Artillery he thought he might try his hand as an air-gunner and volunteered for the RAF, but the Army would not let him go. He served throughout the war finally, again in India, as an instructor. After demob he went to work at Vauxhall Motors at Luton. He spoke little of this, seeing it as a steady and reliable way to support his family in contrast to the ups and downs of farming and the army. He kept in touch with his regimental association and with various Old Comrades charities and helped many old soldiers in need. Later, with the family grown up, he devoted his spare time to his garden and to the country pursuits, which he had learned to enjoy as a youngster. Reg was a true countryman in every sense of the word.

Bill Bowker

John Toll (1962) died Hampstead Marshall, Berkshire 26 May 2001. John was an outstanding musician of international stature and helped form some of the finest ensembles in the early music renaissance of the last quarter-century. John Holloway (1961) who was a close personal friend since their schooldays wrote the obituary in the Independent Weekend Review dated 16 June 2001.

John D. Cooper (1954) died on 29th July 2001 aged 66. Robin Barker (1954) his personal friend at school and to remain so for the rest John's life, sent me a few notes about John. He was an outstanding scholar at school, winning a scholarship to Merton College Oxford, where he studied Law. He went to Manchester to gain his articles and then followed a distinguished Law career. He and his wife Sheila have two children, Richard and Caroline who is living in Canada. John moved to Cornwall in 1968 and eventually became the Solicitor for Cornwall County Council until he retired in 1999. He fell ill shortly afterwards and suffered a long illness until his recent death.

Membership: Numbers continue to grow slowly to over 600.

Subs: Could I remind Associate members who left in 1996 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)

Reunions:

Autumn Concert on October 12th in the School Hall – 7.30pm.

Associate Members evening 15th December venue to be announced.

Spring. April 13 2002 2.30pm Football Tournament, Boules, Tours of the School, Meet in the Library. Followed by the AGM at 6.00pm in the Main Hall and the Dinner at 8.00pm.

Website: We could do with some help in developing this so if you have the expertise and some time please contact Nigel Webb via the website.

Committee News: A meeting on 23rd July received a report from the Treasurer – Nigel Webb – and are pleased to note that the accounts are now computerised and his recommendations for future investments. In the near future it is hoped to reconcile the Membership List with the subscriptions paid.

The Associate membership continues to grow and 50+ have signed up this year. We are conscious that it is necessary to provide 'something different' for the younger members and to that end a meeting is being set up between the younger committee members and recent leavers. The date for the AGM and Annual Dinner was agreed for April 13th 2002 and we are delighted that our Current President Hugh Russell, our President Elect Barry Robinson and next year's President Elect Emlyn Cooke will all be there. We hope that members will pass the word around and expect the largest turnout ever on that date. Reports on the progress of the fund raising for the School Hall Project and the Autumn Concert were also received. The latter looks like being a grand affair.

News of Old Boys:

Reg Bonfield (1926) still enjoys the Newsletters and apologises for not being able to receive it

via e-mail ' These modern things mean little to me now'. Now turned 90 he is one of a few Old Boys at School when Jabez King was Headmaster.

Colin Bates (1969) I have had a number of 'essays' from Colin and am about to send him an e-mail of corrections. It is interesting how well he remembers staff and pupils from 30+ years ago. He confesses not coming to a reunion dinner for 10 years but is due to play in the concert in October. Colin has taken on a new role in Shropshire, alongside General Practice, namely that of Primary Care Cancer Lead, liaising between doctors and nurses in Primary and Secondary Care. I will keep the anecdotes for the archives as I am sure members will enjoy the reminiscences you recall.

Frank Papworth (1938) sends his regards to Stavely Harding. He retired from the Civil Service 20 years ago and moved to Hastings. Sadly he lost his wife last October following two years of care in a nursing home. As Frank says of himself 'Parts of me are quite all right and the rest is receiving attention'. Medical advances have provided new life to his thyroid gland and save the daily pill regime. We wish him well in the warm climate along the South Coast.

Brian Kinnear (1950) confesses that he has not communicated with the Association since he left school and Frank Parker had sold him the benefits of Life Membership. On the other hand few days pass when he does not reflect on the benefits of the education he received at HBGS. He remembers Joe Monk and will shortly be writing to him when I forward Joe's address.

Matthew Poulton () 'I have stayed closely in touch with David Burton, William (Bill) Reed, Andrew George and Tony Rhodes. David went on to study Fine Art at Lancaster University and is now doing corporate web design, Bill Reed studied English at Keele and is now teaching (following in his parents footsteps), Andrew studied Microbiology at Portsmouth and then studied to become a Chartered Accountant, he is currently working for IBM. Tony studied Electrical Engineering at Leeds and now works for a electronics consulting firm. As for me, I have been in the States for almost 4 years (time is going way too quickly!!). I wrote to the HBSOBA just before I moved to the US, and I believe some of that letter appeared in the newsletter at the time. But to recap, I went to the University of Birmingham after leaving HBS to do Physics. While at Birmingham I bumped into another old boy, Dan Sefton, who was studying medicine at Nottingham (I think). After that I did a Masters degree in Microwave Engineering at Portsmouth University. While in Portsmouth I met yet another old boy, Paul Walton, who was teaching at one of the local schools in the area. From there I worked for one of the many Marconi companies (this one based in Portsmouth), designing satellite communications equipment, specifically power amplifiers which were used on the INMARSAT3 communications satellites. At Portsmouth I also met my wife Samantha, who was also studying biology at

Portsmouth. Incidentally Bill Reed was my Best Man at the wedding. Sam and I have been married for 3 years, no children (yet). While at Marconi I was offered a job in the States with Hughes Network Systems. Hughes designs, builds and runs satellite networks, including DirecTV, which is the US equivalent of Sky TV. This job was based just outside Washington DC in Maryland. Sam and I had never been to the States before, so to leave Britain and move 3600 miles was an interesting experience. While at Hughes I was involved in satellite terminal equipment design. These satellite terminals are used for large secure corporate networks and are used for such tasks as credit card checking during a shopping transaction. Washington was an interesting place to be. We even saw President Clinton on a number of occasions, but usually in an oversized motorcade. We still manage to visit home once or twice a year. I try to make sure I visit as many pubs and curry houses as possible when in Britain. Recently Sam and I have moved south from Washington to Charlotte, North Carolina (my new contact details are given below for Association records). I am now working at a new company designing semiconductor chips for wireless (cellular and satellite) and fiber optic communication applications. This has been a big change moving from a large company environment to company of less than 100 people. But it is a lot of fun, and Charlotte is a great place. Incidentally there is a very unflattering picture of me on the company website. With much less hair than when at HBS !! The picture can be found at the company website (www.rfnitro.com). Go to the Nitro News section, under a June 20th article (I think) on a recent trade show and conference I attended with the company, you will find the offending picture (second of three). Try not to laugh too loudly !! Anyway, once again thanks for the reply. Please say hello to Jeremy Finch for me. I remember both Jeremy and Simon Basten (who was always playing a lot of cricket as I remember). Both were in my form through years 2 to 5. I would be very much like to hear more detail of what you did after leaving HBS, so please write back. Regards, Matthew Poulton 8382 Bampton Drive Concord NC 28027. USA

Tom Cardy hello there - it has been a long time! I believe one of the last times I saw you was when you made Dan Walker and I go round to your aunts house as penance for writing slightly abusive messages out of the back of the minibus window! Times have not changed. I am moving into a house in Harpenden Hertfordshire with him in a couple of weeks. Neither of us have managed to get married! Quick update: since I left school I did a degree in molecular biology at reading. I then spent a year at SmithKline Beecham working as a scientist, I moved on to do a PhD in molecular genetics at Cambridge (never again!). I then did a couple of years at a Strategic Consultancy called BCG in their healthcare group and am now a manager in the Business and Commercial Analysis group at GlaxoSmithKline. I have a responsibility for commercialising the Human Genome (sounds awful!) and making sure we get the best medicines from the information that we have gathered.

Peter Brand 'Thanks for the newsletters. My clearest memory of you is when you took us for hockey - you put me on the left wing and enjoyed whacking the ball out of defence and making me chase after it. I have sent one or two updates since leaving school in 1975 - perhaps no-one will remember so I'll go over the whole thing briefly. Cambridge (Trinity, Natural Sciences) led to

7 years in the Middle East with Schlumberger, an oilfield services company (John Moore, from my year, also worked for them but I lost track of him about 1984). Married in 1983 to Alex, we have a boy and a girl, both teenagers. An MSc in Petroleum Engineering from Imperial in 1986 led eventually to my joining BP, and in 1989 we arrived in Scotland and have pretty well settled in the country near Aberdeen. I'm currently working on a possible future project to capture carbon dioxide and pump it into oil reservoirs, which I find exciting. Work, children and a smallholding don't leave much leisure time, so interests like skiing and sailing are mainly pursued on holiday, but this year we had fantastic snow in Glenshee, and I spent a couple of days there. My parents still live in Letchworth, and although so far my visits haven't coincided with an AGM, if I am in the area when one is held, I hope to attend. I was interested to read Adrian Sillence's news, because I remember him as one of a small handful who got better marks than me in exams, although I must say I wasn't as surprised as he seems to be that he ended up in computing. I look forward to reading of more of my contemporaries in future editions.

Andrew Noble (1985) 'Well, I am the one you're thinking about; the elder of three brothers - Richard and Charles being the younger two. I was in the same year as Jeremy, although I left after my O'levels to start an engineering sponsorship program with a company in Royston. I qualified with an HND in electronics after three years and then moved into their overseas engineering department. I spent the next four years overseas, primarily in Europe and Asia. I remained there for thirteen years - how is that for loyalty towards a company that put me through college. BY the time I left, I was head of the European Sales Department. At this time, I'm head of International Sales for a company in Boston, US. I've been working for them for four years, starting off in the Cambridge office. We manufacture specialist instruments to detect and identify narcotics and explosives. All of our customers are government security agencies; customs, police, prisons, facilities protection, airports etc. It's interesting, but my working life now revolves around chemistry, a subject that I detested in school and one which I only learned to succeed in, later in life. The principles of our instruments are Ion Mass Spectrometry and Laser Raman Spectrometry. The work is tremendously satisfying and I just love the type of people we come into contact with. I am responsible for the overseas offices in Holland, Hungary and Hong Kong as well as the office in Miami, which operates for the South American markets - as you can imagine, South America is the home of Cocaine.

Sadly, I have not played the trumpet in many, many years. I often think about starting up again, but never seem to get around to it. I think about Bill Thompson often and have a photograph of some of us kids at infant school, standing around him with a birthday card we'd made for him during one summer - I guess that would have been around 1974! I enjoy skiing, running and swimming. I started to play for a water-polo team but alas, time constraints held against me. I also fence at the Boston Fencing Club. My two great passions, aside from the boys of course - are Opera and my 1969 Jaguar E-Type. I have no idea how the Opera crept into my life, but my travels have certainly helped me to see some of the most beautiful Opera Houses in the world. The E-Type is a car that I've loved since being a teenager and after working hard all my life, I

decided to treat myself to one. I drive it as my everyday car and still smile as I walk out to the garage, each day. I've never been passionate or concerned about cars, except this one. Richard and Charles still live on the coast. Richard works for a financial organisation and is dating a girl called Lynn, she's a Biology teacher for A' level students at a school in Liphook. Charles lives in Bognor (isn't that where Jeremy went after school?) and runs a shop called Adrenalin Sports; selling surf boards, mountain bikes, etc, etc. We are very close, more so now than when we were kids. I've been back to the HBS a couple of times in the last years, primarily for soccer 5-aside on the new hockey pitch (I used to live opposite Malcolm in Mount Pleasant) and recently for a birthday party that Jack went to, in the new sports complex built on the site of the caretakers house.

Tim Woodward (1986) has been traced to Biggleswade thanks to Al Holmes – he is on the e-mail list if members wish to contact him. He writes 'Yes I am back in the country and now living in Biggleswade via Guildford. Hitchin, Woking and High Wycombe. I feel guilty about the postage you used to send me the newsletter in Atlanta especial since I forgot to inform you of my return to the UK. I have put a cheque in the post that I hope will go some way to covering the cost. I returned from Atlanta nearly 4 years ago. Since then I have married and have three kids, Sam and the twins George and Henry. I work for a computer company SER that is based in Bourne'.

Alex Tilbury (1993) Many thanks for all the newsletters over the past few years - and for the note demanding my e-mail address! As you can see from the address I'm in Poland at present. I graduated from York in '97 and have been here ever since bar a few summers. I'm working as assistant director at an International House school in the south of Poland: lots of teacher support / training and admin. work - as well as teaching itself, of course! Don't know how long I'm going to be here...might be in Cairo or Budapest next year, but I'll keep you informed of any change of address. I'm also in touch with Paul Davies - whom you may remember from my A-level group? He sends his regards. After a year out he went to London and got a first in zoology, and is just completing a PhD. in something to do with the taxonomy of woolly mammoths - which seemed to involve lots of visiting beautiful continental cities on the pretext of going to museums and measuring teeth! He's also just about to finish a PGCE and I understand he's got a job teaching at a secondary school somewhere in London. I think that's it - must get on. Once again thanks for the newsletters - they are appreciated even if they are usually met with silence! And thanks also for such memorable and effective lessons, at A-level in particular - fond memories.

New Members: We welcome the following new members:

Gary Ashdown (1965) Shortly after leaving school I joined the RAF. Left and joined Gloucestershire Constabulary but had to leave on ill health. Since then I have been self employed most of the time and now work in Leicestershire.

David Leal Bennett (1965-1968) 'I worked in the City as an Investment Banker for 30 years - now retired and director of my own virtual Internet company operating from Hitchin. I do not miss the commuting or International Travel. Am married to Val (old girl of Hitchin Girls' Grammar school) and we have two boys Russell & Sebastian both of whom went to the Boys' school and are working in the City in computing.

Stephen Hunt (1989) I have been working in the finance industry since leaving school, moving to London in the process. I am a IMC qualified Fund Administrator currently working for Merrill Lynch Investment Managers

Chris Freeman (1999) I am at Hitchin College studying popular music. Going to Buckinghamshire University College to study music industry management in September.

Stephen Langstaff (1994) I completed a degree at Portsmouth University in Information Technology and Society. Obtained a 2-1 degree. Now working for Compaq, formally Digital, as a Technical Account Manager, providing technical support on Open VMS and account management. Living just outside Reading in my newly purchased flat. Still heavily involved in Scouting and run a Scout troop in the next village.

Perry Woolley (1979) Graduated Imperial College Aeronautics 1982. Currently PricewaterhouseCoopers consulting. (Bit brief Perry. What about the flying you do nearly every weekend?)

Nick Brown (1998) Toured the world as a Drummer for a Gospel Choir. Now work as a computer technician in the Learning Resources Centre in North Herts College, Hitchin

Andrew Baker (1997) I recently finished a GNVQ IT course which gave me 4 equivalent GCSE's also a GNVQ in Mathematics. I am now studying a City & Guilds ONC in Electronic Engineering and hope to complete a HNC degree within the next five years, attending University for the final year. To fund my way through college I have started a job at a Photographic Laboratory.

Bjorn Stevens (1997) Since leaving school in summer of '97, have moved to Gloucestershire. However I studied Environmental Science at Lancaster University between October '97 and June 2000. I am currently working in marketing for BMW GB and BMW dealerships.

Stuart Poyser (1996) Associate Member graduated after five years.

Michael Plant (1955) He has at last given me his e-mail address on sufferance. As Michael puts it 'Despite still running my accountancy practice in Baldock on a full time basis I have never formed a liking for this high-tech world and am having to be dragged into it under protest. Since I gave up my painting stall in the late lamented Corn Exchange Arts and Craft Market I have done virtually no painting although I retain my contact with the art world as Treasurer and Membership Secretary of the Guild of Motoring Artists. This is a flourishing band who regularly exhibit at Beaulieu, Coventry Motor Museum and Bexhill as well as other motoring events throughout the country. I fear that only retirement will provide me with the time to return to my first love so actively encouraged by the late, great Norman V. Cope.

My stable of cars has now been reduced to 12 and will inevitably be further 'culled' as with advancing years I fear there will not be enough time left to tackle the restoration of them all. The 1932 Alvis 12/50 however, which I purchased exactly 40 years ago for the princely sum of £75, is now nearing the end of a complete rebuild and will hopefully be ready for a trip to France in September. My three cycle cars, the Alcyon, Villard and Francon, were also present at a recent 'air-cool' day at Brooklands, the Francon at last equipped with its correct rear wheels and tyres.

Modest wine drinking and pub quizzing lighten the weekday evenings and execrable golf at John O'Gaunt takes up the rest of my free time. If I could remove the frustrations of this hi-tech world and revamp the whole of the insane UK tax system, life would be really quite pleasurable'

Peter Webb (1958) I remember when we were scouts together, how Stan Rainbow had great difficulty in controlling Peter once he was in possession of a hand axe. Anyway he is now married

with for children and lives in Ampthill. Unfortunately his wife Robin is in the strokes unit at Bedford Hospital recovering from a number of strokes (we wish her well). Peter is doing a bit of teaching – I know the feeling – and is still keen on Amateur Radio. I look forward to meeting up at the next Reunion.

Also the 50+ Associate members who will hopefully be getting they're own version and an update on the website of their prospective futures, on leaving school.

The School

12 members of staff left at the end of term. Brian Duncan retires after 34 years devoted to smells and dangers of the Chemistry labs. Others are retiring or moving on to other teaching posts or leaving the profession altogether. The Headteacher Keith Wadsworth pointed out the crisis situation that the Education system faces throughout the country. He was pleased to say that he had managed to find replacements, half of them from overseas, and was confident that the staff would be at full strength by the beginning of next term. He reported that the School has been awarded a £80000 grant to build new sixth form facilities and discussion with architects would take place in the near future. The Head had been pleased to receive a visit from two Old Boys, Colin Masters (51) and ? Stokes from the same era. Colin said that they would rejoin/join the Association so I look forward to receiving their applications. Or next meeting is on 30th October so if there are any matters members would like the committee to consider please let me know.

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. David Stancombe Hon. Secretary.

Reunion Concert

Friday 12 October 2001.

Please let me know if you wish to attend, as tickets will be scarce.

SCHOOL HALL PROJECT £9000 RAISED ANOTHER £1000 NEEDED

CAN YOU HELP?

MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO:

HITCHIN BOYS SCHOOL CHARITABLE TRUST

AND SEND TO THE HON SEC