

## HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

(Formerly Hitchin Grammar School Old Boys' Association)

### ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER JULY 2000

#### General

I must start with a couple of apologies. Firstly Norm Ross (1959) who corrected my geography and pointed out that Mount McKinley is in Alaska and has not slipped over the border into Canada - I hope dear old 'Gabby' Parker did not turn over in his grave.

Secondly, Gordon (Angus to us scouts) Brown (1947) put me right about John Coxall (1949) has taken over from Hugh Russell (1941) as chairman of Hitchin Probus club NOT Hitchin Priory Probus which is a younger version, both clubs have a number of Old Boys among their members. I have also received several letters wishing me well as your new secretary and I thank everyone for their regards.

Joe Monk has kindly responded to my request for a few words about Roy Allen who died on 19 May 2000 at the age of 85. His appreciation follows later in the newsletter. Staveley Harding (1938) will be writing about Ted Harris whose death was recorded in the last newsletter, in our next Newsletter. Ted was one of the 'big characters' of his era.

The last committee meeting noted that Joe and Bernard Poole are the last surviving members of staff from the T E Jones era. The next 'Dolden Days' began with Maurice's appointment of the likes of Trevor Bartlett, Peter Cooper, Ken Maynard, Emlyn Cooke, Barry Robinson. Bob McLeish and John Gwinnell.

I received an early phone call from Bob to listen to Desert Island Discs as Sir Peter Bonfield (why isn't he on the list of members of the Association?) was talking about his old school and reminiscing about a superb Welsh maths teacher.

We have received a donation of a brown sepia photograph of the staff in 1925/6 from Reg Smith (1926). This has now been framed and added to the collection. Reg is a real character and when I visited I had a fascinating hour or so hearing about his life at school and what happened to him after leaving. Since my visit Reg has decided to join the association, so we are attracting all age groups despite concentrating on the younger ones.

The Newsletter can now be found, and downloaded from the school website on [www.hbs.herts.sch.uk](http://www.hbs.herts.sch.uk) and for the first time I am sending some out by e-mail. So far I have 45 e-mail addresses so if you receive a hard copy and would be willing for me to use your e-mail facility then please let me know.

Norm Ross (1959) says he feels guilty still surviving on his life membership of \$5, appreciating that postage each year exceeds that amount. I hope to get most of our overseas mailing done electronically, and as many of the rest as possible, provided I get all your current e-mail addresses.

#### Committee News

We welcomed Robert MacCarthur (1986) onto the committee and hope he will be the first of many younger members to help direct the future of the Association.

The other main points discussed were about the current efforts to raise the number of members and in particular those from the 60's, 70's 80's and 90's. Perhaps you could check that those you are in contact with are members and if not give them a nudge in that direction. Application forms can be downloaded from the school website or by post from me. Our initial aim is to raise membership to 1000 by the April reunion.

David Whitaker OBE (1966) is our guest speaker at the dinner so we hope all members around

that era will try and make the reunion on 7 April 2000. Apart from being a pupil at the school David came back as a member of staff. I hope that we shall be able to encourage a number of other Old Boys who have done the same thing, to join us.

R A (Roy) Allen. (1915 - 2000)

Those old boys who were at the school during the years 1938-77 and who studied German will be sad to learn that Mr R A Allen has died. Roy was appointed by T E Jones to teach German and Modern Languages, before the beginning of the Second World War, and for a time during that war, served as an Intelligence Officer. His experiences during this time left a mark on him and he suffered at times with periods of deep depression. He returned to his teaching at the School at the end of the war. Some of his leisure time was spent playing rugby in London so that when M G Dolden introduced the game into the school in 1955 he joined other staff to regularly train boys to play rugby. His love for the game was maintained throughout the rest of his life, and many local clubs experienced his interest, support and enthusiasm for the game. Many will remember, with pleasure, the visits to Germany that he organised and the town's link with Bingen owes much to the hours of work and dedication that he contributed during the initial stages.

As a schoolmaster, he was always painstaking and insistent on high standards of work and conduct. Inquisitorial as a chance encounter with Roy might have seemed, it stemmed from a genuine interest in people and never meant to cause harm or offence.

He was one of the last characters that T E Jones brought together to form the staff at HBGS, and which together has left an indelible mark on many generations of boys, has passed away. Our sympathy goes out to his wife Cynthia and his children Rosemary and Nicholas in their loss.

J A Monk.

## News of Old Boys

Back to Norm Ross again. He has NINE offspring out in Calgary - not quite the 'Cheaper by the Dozen' Galbraith stories that Joe Monk used to read as an end-of-term treat, but well on the way. It has not turned out to be cheap last year as two daughters and a son got married. Uncles Mike Ross (1963) and David Ross (1965) went out for the weddings. Job-wise he has been involved with the development of an innovative steel housing system, shortly to be introduced into Ireland and then to the UK. Hopefully this will bring him over at the time of a reunion in the not too distant future. He fondly remembers me pushing on his rump in the early days of the school rugby matches and there cannot be many of you that say that.

Eddie Abbott (1957) got very nostalgic on reading of his contemporaries that have just 'joined up'. He is also impressed by their physical achievements and confesses to do little more than dig spuds. That is not the Eddie I remember, quite fleet of foot in those younger days, and a good hockey player - centre forward wasn't it? Jon Finch (1989) is still playing with fireworks but has clearly taken the necessary precautions at home by installing a water fountain - I wonder if it plays music as well!

## New Members

We welcome the following new members :

R A (Ron) Chandler 1944  
P E (Peter) Doling 1950  
J C (Just) Snoxall 1989  
S R (Rex) Kingsley 1954  
R D W (Reg) Smith 1927

### e-mail addresses

Justin Snoxall (1989)  
Justin.Snoxall@btinternet.com  
Rex Kingsley (1954)  
rexx@interface-br.co.uk

Justin Snoxall (1989) writes to update his career since leaving school. He completed a degree in Hotel Management at Middlesex University which included work experience in a number of London hotels and a six month period at Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire. His career took a change in direction when he joined the John Lewis management training scheme. Five years on the shop floor, a second degree and he switched to the IT department where he manages the account card system. His other interest at John Lewis was a girl called Angela who he married earlier this year. I hope some more of Just's contemporaries will join the Association and let us know what they are doing.

Rex Kingsley (1954) completed his higher educational qualifications in Business Studies at Cornell and Harvard Universities. His earlier career encompassed 12 years in a variety of senior

roles within the Unilever Organisation. He then branched out onto the international scene as International Vice-President of Babcock Industries Inc. (leading pharmaceutical and genetics company). He was Business Development Director within Tate & Lyle plc and then Director of the Netherlands-British Chamber of Commerce. Within the public sector he was instrumental in the successful privatisation programme of the State Plant Breeding and Research Establishments in the UK. <I wonder where we went wrong in portraying the public image of GM crops which currently seems to be harrowing essential research work? - Ed>

Reg Smith (1926) was from Shilley Green Farm and attended HBGS from the age of 11-14. In the February of the year 4 he was due to leave, his mother died and Reg went back to work on the farm. In those days about half of the 4th year group left at the end of that year to go to work and the others carried on to higher education. He then became a trainee gamekeeper on the Knebworth House estate, only to lose his job, as about 90% of estate workers did in the 1929-30 slump. February 1930 saw him volunteer and join the army at Woolwich. He was posted to India in 1931 and returned in 1937, to marry and get a job at Vauxhall. As a member of the army reserve he was recalled in 1939 and spent the early war years on the NW frontier in France. He came out with the Dunkirk Armada and when the regiment was reformed, he was posted to India where he acted as an instructor to the Indian Army. He finished the war with a spell in Burma and came home in 1947. He and his wife settled in Houghton Regis and Reg went back to Vauxhall's until he retired at the age of 63 (that was 25 years ago). In 1976 he went to live in Langley and moved to Hitchin in 1990. Reg was a keen bee-keeper and met Reggie/Stan Rainbow at county bee shows. He knows Bill Bowker (1949) from the agricultural days. He gave me a list of lads in his year but there are none on the current Old Boys list. However I notice that John Gatward (1924), Reg Bonfield (1926) and Wally Ward (1927) must have been at school at about the same time - perhaps they can get in touch with each other and talk about those old days!

I must say that I found it a salutary experience listening to Reg and to realise the time scale involved and the tremendous differences experienced by a schoolboy today.

The School

SPORT

I am glad to note that Mattocke was top House after the Senior Sports this year. Michael Ackerman has been selected to represent the county in the Millennium Regatta in July -

this sounds a bit more high-powered than the fleet of Mirror dinghies that used to buzz around Arlesey pits in the 1960s and 70s.

The athletic season produced some notable successes in County events at different age groups and the Year 8 cricket team lost their regional final in the national Calypso Cup, to Whitgift School, an independent school near Croydon. The boys acquitted themselves well in all departments - manners, sportsmanship and team spirit.

Chess - the school team has one the North Herts league so their is another challenge for Anthony Burrows (1956) on Old Boys day to see if an Association team can meet a school challenge.

There is a plea in the School Newsletter from the librarian Pat Thornhill, who is being most helpful in setting up the old boys archives/memorabilia, that if you are thinking of signing up or changing your current internet provider then contact the school library and ask for an information pack for supanet. The company offers a PC for every 99 people who sign up for its free access service via the school.

The Headteacher speaks of the farewells to staff leaving, most of whom have joined the staff relatively recently. However it was an omission not to mention Richie Davies who left in January, after many years of service to the school in many different fields. I will catch up on his news for the next newsletter. Another long-serving member of staff who is going to teach in the USA is Charles Twigger, but it looks as if he will be returning at some time in the future.

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The memorial book edited and researched by David Baines is still available (in Richard Whitmore's loft) cost £4 or (£5 if you require postage and packing.) The book contains some information about all those Old Boys who lost their lives during the two world wars. The books will be available on Old Boys' Day but if you would like a copy before then contact the Hon. Sec.