

MAY

NEWSLETTER

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ANNUAL DINNER AND SPORTS REUNIONS

On 24th April OWs came from near and far for the Annual Reunion. Some came back for their first in thirty years or more. In the afternoon the more energetic played hockey in very warm conditions. In the Sports Hall OWs took on the school fencing team and on the rifle-range the shooting team.

HOCKEY

A report from David Stone: The second Old Boys' Invitation Hockey match took place at Bisham Abbey on the afternoon of the Annual Dinner. The weather was so hot that a 'comfort' break was taken after 15 minutes! It was a pleasure to see Tim Berendt (who left RGS about 20 years ago) at this event and also good to see Brendan McNally in action. His toe had just recovered from last year's game!

The Old Boys always like to see Staff turning out and they were not disappointed this time with 'vintage' performances from Roy Page and David Willmot. An outstanding goal-keeping performance from guest James Richardson thwarted the attempts of the organiser to achieve a close finish and so although possession was Old Boys A 5 – 1 Old Boys B.

We will look forward to seeing you all again next year, perhaps with some more recent Old Boys. Thanks go to the umpires Richard Spragg and Tim Stone.

FENCING

Colin and Alistair Gerrard and Seang Tan represented the OWs. The OWs won, with the scores: Foil 11-5, Sabre 10-6, Epee 9-7. John Roebuck said that it was a very enjoyable occasion, and hoped that there would be another such occasion next year.

SHOOTING

John Haley, Chris Andrew and Chris Cunningham took on the RGS team. The OWs won convincingly, as the boys tired towards the end. Again this was a very enjoyable occasion, and more OWs have already said that they would like to take part next year.

Unfortunately there was not enough interest for any Music or Rugby Reunion. If any OW would like to get together a team of OWs of his generation on the rugby field, to take on another team, please contact me. If any OW would like to organise a reunion of musicians to play at the OW Dinner next year, please let me know.

A number of the school prefects conducted tours round the buildings. Those I spoke to were very impressed with the new developments, but also enjoyed seeing the Gym Block, now called the Maths Block. They said that the very smell was just as they remembered it, and they recalled with relish the story of Zoe Body and the showers.

At the AGM the usual formalities were conducted. The Committee was elected, and the financial report was presented. A question was raised about the state of E R Tucker's grave. (He was the Headmaster until the early 1960s.) Roy Page, Senior Deputy Head, said that the School would contact the family. Everybody was urged to bring along his friends to next year's dinner.

All then went to the Queen's Hall for the Annual Dinner. 88 OWs, 18 teachers/former teachers, and 7 prefects sat down and heard Roy Page give a report of the school activities. After the Dinner John Burrows and Malcolm Cook spoke with real affection about the Guest of Honour, Mike Moffatt, who had taught at the RGS for 29 years and been Deputy Head for most of that time. Mike responded with a series of reminiscences about his time at the RGS, clearly indicating how much he had enjoyed his time there. Certainly a number of OWs enjoyed themselves very much, as they were still chatting well after midnight.

If any OW who was there has any comments to make about the arrangements for the evening, please do not hesitate to contact me. I have received some critical comments, which the Committee will need to consider. The date for next year's Dinner and Sporting Reunions is Saturday 16 April 2005, so do put it in your diary now, and urge your friends to come.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THOSE AT THE DINNER APPEAR BELOW:



Mike Moffat, Guest of Honour



Mike Grout, John West



2, Frank Collins, 3



Andrew MacTavish, Ian Birch



Christopher Andrew, 5, Martin Hampsom



Ian Clark, John Burrows



Mike Moffat, Malcolm Cook



7, 8, 9, 10



John Haley, Christopher Andrew



Philip Barker, 14



Ray Dosser, Tony Sollars



Richard Wallen, Crispin White



Tony Blakelock, Peter Turner



Simon Hopkins, David Willmot, 18



19, Michael Hopkins



Bert Hickman, Geoffrey Green, Roy
Fredricks



Ray White, Gordon Rayner



Terry Williams , John Mitchell



Michael Baud, Ron Wynards



Edwin Keep, Jan Lord



Simon Tyrell, Julian Davies



Andrew Redrup, Kenneth Armstrong, Tim Kingham



Ed Phillips, 31



Ben Saunders, 33



34, 35, 36,37



Ray White, Gordon Rayner



Martin Priestley, 40



Martin Hampson, Mike Moffat

CRICKET, GOLF, TENNIS

If you would like to play cricket or tennis against the school, or golf against the teachers, on Wednesday, July 14th, do let me know, and see if you can persuade your friends to come along. If you would like to participate in another sporting activity on that day, do let me know and we will see if we can organise something. Already a number of OWs have said that they would like to play. The more the merrier!

HELP

David Slattor who left in 1958 would like to contact Dudley May and Malcolm Smith who left a couple of years after him. Anyone with any contact with either or both of them, please contact me.

Forthcoming Retirement

Martin Berry after many years of noble service as Head of Maths is retiring at the end of the Summer Term. Tribute will be paid to him in the next newsletter.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Ian

I recently had the delightful experience of meeting Colin Rackstraw, a former RGS student. We met on a cruise ship. He saw my name; remembered such a name from the RGS back in 1948 when he started there; introduced himself and we spent some very pleasant time together reminiscing about our respective pasts.

At the beginning of March I had occasion to be in the UK and I travelled to High Wycombe to enjoy a very pleasant afternoon with him. He was kind enough to provide me with the January 2004 issue of the 'RGS Old Boys' magazine since I had indicated to him of my interest to re-establish contact with the alumni of the RGS. In that issue I found your name and as Secretary of the RGS Old Boys thought I would start with you to try and find out how to become a member of the 'Old Wycombiensians' Club.

A little background on myself:

I transferred to the RGS from the old Wycombe Technical Institute in 1948 for the explicit purpose of studying for the Oxford Higher School Certificate exams, (not given at the Tech).

I entered the school and since I resided in Waddesdon, Bucks, I became a resident of the Boarding House. In those days Richard (Ed. Ronald) Tucker was the Headmaster and Reggie Howard was head of the Boarding School.

Although my tenure at the RGS was only a brief two years, (1948 to 1950) they were great years and I thoroughly enjoyed all that the RGS had to offer. I was active in school sports and a member of the schools' cricket XI, (wicket keeper) playing for the Berks and Bucks team a number of times. The only major sport I did not participate in was in Rugby, primarily because by the time I started at the RGS I had been playing for the Wycombe Wanderers Football team for a while.

I received my 'Higher' but instead of starting my Engineering studies at London University, went to America to rejoin my mother from whom I had been separated since before the war started in 1939.

I have revisited England pretty regularly, trying to make all the 'Tech' reunions held in and around High Wycombe. I feel very sad that in all my trips I failed to try to reconnect with the RGS Old Boys, although I made several sentimental trips up 'Marlow Hill' to visit the grounds but never got around to stopping in to inquire about Old Boys' activities. Hopefully with whatever information you can provide me I can remedy that shortcoming. I am very much interested in becoming a member and coming over to attend future functions. I realize that a great deal of time has passed since I was a student at the RGS but if I can meet Colin Rackstraw on a cruise ship in the Caribbean there is still a chance that I can re-establish contact with some of the students who were my classmates.

I appreciate any information you can send me, and thank you in advance for your effort.

Otto Decker

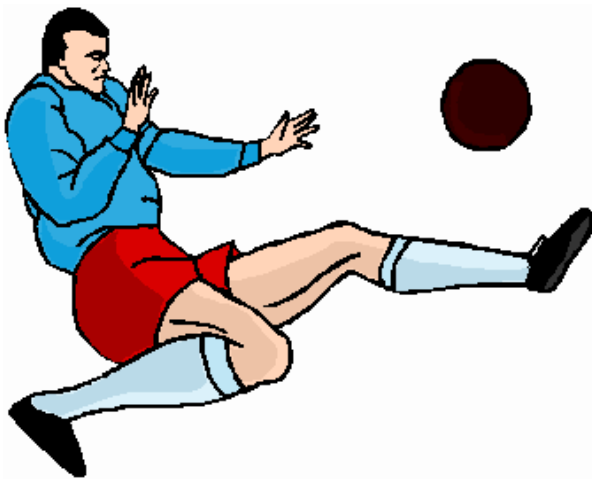
Ed. Does anybody remember Otto? Please contact me if you would like to be put in touch with him.

Dear Ian,

Thank you so much for your prompt and welcome response. I am very excited about re-establishing contact and look forward to visiting the school and attending a function in the near future.

As you recognized, I will not be able to attend the April Annual Dinner. Is the informal London gathering in June still in the works? If so there is a possibility that I might be able to make that event. Can you let me know how a 'colonial' used to Dollars can pay for his membership? Is there a separate club for OW and RGS Old Boys'?

Hopefully my letters will trigger someone from my former class to respond and let me hear from them. As soon as I return from my two April trips I will be happy to provide you with any additional personal and RGS information you feel might be helpful. In response to your comment on the Honours Board, yes I did play football for The USA national team on several occasions. In fact shortly after arriving in this country I was selected for the first time to play for the USA team against a select team from the UK who were on their way to play a series of games in South America. No other than Frank Adams from High



Wycombe, owner of a famous sporting goods store and very involved with the Wycombe Wanderers, was in charge of the English team. Needless to say he was very surprised to see me playing for the USA team so soon after leaving England where I had played for the Wanderers. I seem to remember we lost by a score of 4-1. Still my greatest thrill was in 1953. Again the US National team played against a touring team from England. The game was played at a famous field, Yankee Stadium. On the English side such greats as Ted Ditchburn in goal, Billy Wright at centre-half and Tom Finney on the wing. Pretty heady stuff for someone who had until recently played for the Wycombe Wanderers. These chaps were my heroes. To top it off I was lucky enough to score two goals in our 6-3 loss. Sorry, I didn't mean to carry on so. I

should leave the bragging until I get to meet Ted Woodward again, who was a year ahead of me and I tried very hard to follow in his footsteps. I know he played for England and the Wasps and was an outstanding athlete.

With my very best wishes,

Otto

Ed. Does anyone know of other OWs who are soccer internationals or who indeed have played football for Wycombe Wanderers? If so please let me know.

The following is a letter sent to the Headmaster, which he passed on to me:

Dear Headmaster,

From time to time I see the RGS mentioned when GCSE results are listed in the press and it suddenly struck me that I must now be one of the very few survivors of the fire in, I think, 1934.

Mr. Tucker was the Headmaster at the time and Mr Bicknell was, in addition to being the English Master, Housemaster in charge of the Boarders. A few of the names that I can recall were Doug Yeoman, the Ross Brothers, Roy Cramb, Harry Richards, and Ron Edwards. In those days "Lights Out" was at 9.30pm. At about 10.15p.m. Matron shook my shoulder to awaken me, as I was Head Prefect at the time, and asked me if I could hear anything. After listening for a minute or so, I could hear a crackling sound from above. I said



that it sounded like burning timber, and suggested that we both go outside to see if we could see anything. Slipping on my dressing gown, I accompanied Matron downstairs and outside looking up we could see smoke pouring through the roof tiling.

Both Mr. Tucker and Mr Bicknell were out. Matron said, "I will call the Fire Brigade. Will you go and get all the boys out as quickly as possible!"

I woke my best friend, Ron Edwards, and together we woke all the boys in all the dormitories, and led them downstairs and out on to the playing field. Ron and I then returned upstairs, opened the windows, and started to throw out the drawers containing the boys' clothes. We were halfway through, when the Fire Brigade arrived and ordered us out of the building. Regrettably Ron and I had not got round to our own clothes!

It was now about 11.00pm. Mr Tucker and Mr Bicknell had arrived back, and all the boys were taken into the School Hall. The parents of all the boys, except those who were abroad, were phoned and asked to collect their offspring. Most were no further away than London. All the Boarders' wing was totally gutted, the dormitories, bathrooms, toilets, matron's room the Common Room, Locker Room, Mr Bicknell's room all destroyed, but the Fire Brigade did stop the fire spreading to Mr. and Mrs. Tucker's house and to the kitchens. It was quite a night. The school some two weeks later managed to rent a large house in town and the boarders were all recalled.

Other masters I remember at the time were Mr. Morgan (Geography) Mr Simpson (Latin) Mr Grant (Art), and we had a real Frenchman teaching French! Oddly enough, although I can to this day clearly visualise Matron, I cannot recall her name, probably because everybody called her "Matron". I do remember that her own home was at Abingdon.

What other memories do I have? On Sundays the boarders all wore black jackets, striped trousers, stiff white collars and all proceeded down the hill in black bowler hats to the Parish Church.

Mr Tucker used to wield the cane at posteriors for "serious" offences, whilst prefects were allowed the same privilege(?) for the punishment of lesser offences, although we were only allowed to use a gym shoe!! I'm quite sure that this had no long-term ill effects on the recipients. There was little or no vandalism and a great respect for our tutors and elders.

I was not a particular achiever in academic terms, but I do remember two lessons I have to thank the RGS for. When I first became a boarder and had meals in the Dining Room, I used to occupy a seat from the entrance-door. The Headmaster and his wife, Matron and Mr Bicknell used to sit at the small table at the head of the room. Every day for quite a while, I used to finish my meal and head for the door at the other end of the room. As I nearly got to the door, Mr Bicknell's voice used to ring out "Ritchie, come back and replace your chair properly." This memory occurs to me nearly every day. My wife inevitably forgets to replace her chair. I dare not call out, as Mr Bicknell did, but I carefully put it back and hear his voice!

The second lesson also involved Mr Bicknell. As Housemaster he was in charge of the Boarding-House pocket money. At the beginning of term we were required to bring £5 with us, given to us by our parents as pocket money. We had to hand it in to Mr Bicknell for safekeeping. He in turn then handed out one shilling a week to those who asked for it or more if it was for a special purpose. I seldom withdrew any cash (my father was a Scot and my mother Manx!) Finally Mr Bicknell called me into his study and gave me a severe lecture from which I was given to understand that it was people like me who were responsible for the serious unemployment in the country at that time. If I did not use money to buy goods, goods would not have to be made and men and women would consequently be put out of work and



factories closed. He ended the lecture by handing to me £1-10-0, out of my own money, with instructions to go down into Wycombe, spend it, return and show him my purchases. I recall that I bought two books, one at 12/6 and the other at 15/-. (Ed. I wonder how many readers can work out how much money he had left.) Both the books dealt with the history of English Literature. I feel that my choice was governed by the fact that

I was to show my purchase not only to my Housemaster, but also my English Master!

I have one other memory. One Saturday evening at the end of August or beginning of September Ron Edwards and myself decided to go "scrumping". Down the hill we went into one of the roads off, down the back lane behind a row of houses, filled our pocket and two bags with apples from the gardens of houses that had apple trees, and went round to the front again, straight into the path of the local policeman. (Yes, they did patrol the streets on foot in those days!) We must have looked very guilty. He ordered us to empty our pockets and show him the contents of the bags. He told us what wicked, bad lads we were, cuffed us both about the ears and ordered us to knock at the front door of each house to apologise and return the apples. What a sensible man! He would probably be suspended and put on a charge today!

I am now nearly 85, served in the Grenadier Guards during the War, (volunteered in September 1939) invalided out in 1943, had numerous jobs, never unemployed, motor trade, service industries, licensee, and actually finished as a Director of a small Company. I have now retired, living happily with my wife.

With my best wishes to one and all,

R.Ritchie

Ed. For the record, according to the History of the RGS, the fire occurred on 1st November 1935. The boarders were housed in Godstowe Lodge. By the beginning of the next academic year, the building had been restored with the addition of a third storey, containing a dormitory, sick dormitories, a prefect's study, lavatories and accommodation for the assistant housemaster. It could now house 46 boys. The cost of these additions was £3,000!!

Does anyone else remember the fire? Does anyone have any memories of the Boarding House or the teachers, whose names are mentioned? Does anyone remember of any other occasion when the Fire Brigade was called to the RGS? Do write in with any memories!

Dear Ian,

I hope I'm not too late, but I remember this photo well and still have my copy. It is an oddity because the day of the photo coincided with a County game, so the team's stars are missing (see below) and a few of these boys were dragged into the photo to make up the numbers. It is the 1st XI photo from 1981-2.



CRICKET PHOTO So here goes:

Back (L to R): SRG; ?; 5th former; Tim Scriven (went on to a long career for Bucks); Andy Duncan; scorer?

Front: Peter Price; Stuart Newport (Phil's brother); Mark Sullivan; Gareth Evans; Ian Rundle; ? Stiles; Guy Lewis?

I haven't changed of course, neither has Goldilocks!

Missing stars were one SJ Noyes, who you may know of, Martin Gillingham, Duncan Gibson-Smith, Jon Carr, Peter Cowdery and Jon Atkins. These 6 were the reason that I never got a bat that season!

I hope that helps, and I got my Full Colours soon after.

Peter Price (1976-1982)

When was the photograph below taken? What is it? Can you name any of the faces?



BITS AND PIECES

1. At the dinner Geoffrey Green (1940-1946) gave me a cutting from a newspaper about a group of five young people who in about 1947 published a 40-page magazine, entitled *The Under Twenty*. This was sold at newsagents throughout South Bucks for 9d, and the first run of 500 copies was sold out. Among the young people was Michael Zander. (1946-1950)

2. In the Bucks Free Press recently there was an article about Adam Smith (1987-1993). He was bidding to compete in the world-famous Marathon des Sables endurance race, and was facing six days running 150 miles across the Sahara desert in the hottest temperatures on earth. He was accompanied by David Bouquet. (1987-1991)

A LOOK INTO THE PAST

What was it like to be at the RGS fifty years ago?

HERE ARE EXTRACTS FROM THE WYCOMBIENSIAN APRIL 1954:

It cost 1/6d, which for the benefit of younger readers was the equivalent of, 7.5p.

The 6th Form had two lectures, one on Gambling, and one on Roman Remains in Britain.

The School had a half-holiday on account of the Oxford v Cambridge Rugby Match.

Boxing Championships were held.

There was a prefects' room.

The school play was Agatha Christie's "Black Coffee."

There were general articles on a course at the Outward Bound Sea School at Aberdovey by G.B.D.Jones, the Foundation of the School by Edmund Peckham in 1551 by Mr Ashford, John Milton and Joe McCarthy by D. Rear, and the origins of Jazz by G.Warner. Andrew MacTavish wrote imaginatively about the Korean War, and there was a letter from Mrs Williesmar about concern that Welsh might become the official language of the RGS! (Ed. I wonder who the author was.)"

The Pirates of Penzance was produced. Among the cast were T.B.Baldwin, J.A. Norrish, D.J. Maurice, F.J.R.Hobson, W.F.Hodge, R.J.Orsler, P.Read, S.C.Dell, and P.J.Woods. Messrs Hills, Piner, Grant, and Mr. and Mrs Eldridge were responsible backstage for the production.

Thirty boys were confirmed by the Bishop of Oxford at Terriers Church.

There was a schools' Conference in London on the "Challenge of Africa" with discussions on the colour-bar and electoral reform. The writer ended the report of the Conference with the statement that "it must be realised that Africa is not so much evil as mediaeval."

There was another conference in Holland where there was talk of a "United States of Europe", and there were meetings of the Youth Section of the United Nations Association.

There were four houses, Arnison, Disraeli, Fraser and Youens. (Ed. Can anyone remember the name of the other two houses that were to be introduced later?)

All three sections of the CCF flourished. There were meetings of the Spanish Society, Science Society, Chess Club, Dramatic Society, Music Society and T.C.O.S. (Ed. Does anybody know what these letters stand for?) At T.C.O.S. meetings there were debates on the following motions: "The Communist Party should be outlawed in this country", and "This House regrets the shortage of English gentlemen."

Among the sports mentioned, the following appeared in the cross-country team: A.D. Barrett, J.L. Fellows, T.J.Bond, K.G. Faulkner, K.J.Cattermole.

The cricketers included J.W.Pursey, F.E.J.Hawkins, R.C.Ashby, A.Harvey, R.F.Sainsbury.

Those playing in the rugby team included T.W.Abdullah, A.J.Gordon, R.E.Lomas, J.C.Colver, T.E.Uphill, B.K.Johnson, K.C.Jones, J.W.Pursey, R.C.Ashby, B.E. Devlin, J.S.Kelly, R.A.Mann, J.Weaver, M.J.Garratt, and R.C.Jones.

In the magazine there was an advert for Hull, Loosely and Pearce who sold D.B. blazers in hopsack, serge and flannel. Their phone number was 16!

Editor: If you were at the RGS in 1954, how many of the above names do you recall? Do you have any memories? If so, please send me them for publication.

Below is a picture of a Chess team, can anyone say which year, and also name the handsome lads!



The next newsletter will be published on July 16th.

