

NEWSLETTER MAY 2005

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ANNUAL DINNER

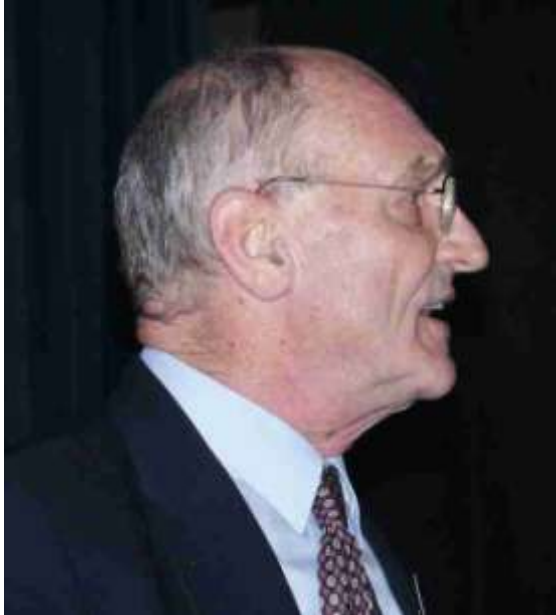
The Annual Dinner was attended by 88 Old Boys and former teachers. It was great not only to see so many of the regulars there, but also others coming for the first time. Among the latter was Otto Decker, his first time back at the school since leaving for the USA. He is the only known Soccer International educated at the RGS, and played for the USA against England. A number of those who had been in Andrew Mactavish's form in 1965, which was a form that learnt Russian, returned and were on the same table as John Perfect, their Russian Teacher of forty years ago. Howard Anderson attended and he left the RGS in 1930! Peter Thorneycroft, who left in the seventies, came back from the USA. But there are so many I could mention.

Before the meal, there was a minute's silence for former teachers, Mervyn Davies, Bert Scott, Mike Eaton and former Governor, George Knox, who had all died in the last year, and the Headmaster, Tim Dingle, gave an account of the school's activities. After the meal George Bates introduced the Guest of Honour, Andrew Mactavish, Old Boy, teacher and Governor of the RGS. His speech brought back many memories for Old Boys of his era, with references to TUS149, elastic bands and ears and other gems. There was still time for lots of chat, and reminiscences.

Prior to the Dinner the AGM took place. The Committee was re-elected and the accounts were approved. A good number of Old Boys were given tours of the school by the prefects, highlighting the

new developments. Judging from the comments of those who were there, the evening was a very enjoyable one. If you did not come this year, how about coming next year? Do contact your OW friends and book a table next year. The date is Saturday 22 April 2006.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Andrew MacTavish, Guest of Honour



Photo 1



Photo 2, Ken Armstrong



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5, John Perfect



Photo 6, Donald Sainsbury



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10



Photo 11



Photo 12



Photo 13



Photo 14



Photo 15



Tony Sollars, David Willmot



Photo 17



Photo 18



Photo 19



Photo 20



Photo 21

If you can put a name to some, if not all, of the OWs in the photographs, please [email me](#).

HOCKEY REUNION



David Stone sent in the following report on the hockey match:

This event happened for the 3rd. year and it was pleasing to welcome Andy Burnette and Edward Harrison who were participating for the 1st. time. Andy is a regular umpire in the National Hockey League and has umpired the England U21 team, while Ed is a medic who has played regularly for London Univ.

Two balanced teams were selected, with 'whites' beating 'blues' 7-6!! Andy Burnette scored a hat-trick for whites and Duncan Parnis 2. Murad Vassib scored twice for blues.

SCHOOL CERTIFICATE QUESTIONS

At the Dinner an OW gave me to pass on to John Mitchell, the School Archivist, an old school tie, and also copies of School Certificate papers exam papers set in 1938. It was interesting the exams were held in the period between 11th July and 22nd July, much later than nowadays. Here are some questions for you to ponder on:

PHYSICS: How would you arrange two convex lenses of focal lengths 20cm and 5cm respectively to form a telescope? On a scale diagram show the course through the system of three rays from a very distant object. Indicate clearly all the images formed and describe their nature. What adjustment, if any, would be required if the person using the telescope were short-sighted?

CHEMISTRY: Explain the chemistry of one process by which phosphorus can be obtained from calcium phosphate. Describe five differences between the two common allotropic forms of phosphorus.

ENGLISH: Essay. Has the invention of the motor made life happier?

GEOGRAPHY: Explain two of the following statements and draw sketch maps to illustrate your answer:

- a) Both France and Germany have many interests in the Rhineland.
- b) Vienna will always be important because of her position in Europe.
- c) Singapore is the key to the Far East.
- d) Rainfall is very unevenly distributed in India.

GEOGRAPHY: Name one example each for two of the following: a block mountain, a scarpland, and an area of Karst scenery. In each case selected describe the features and plain how they have been formed.

ALGEBRA: Find the first term and common difference of an arithmetical progression in which the 30th term is twice the 8th term and the sum of the first 8 terms is 111.

TRIGONOMETRY: AB is a diameter of a circle and P is a point in AB distant 6 inches from B. If the chord CD, drawn through P perpendicular to AB, is 18 inches long, calculate the radius of the circle and the area of the segment CBD.

GEOMETRY: P is a point on the side AC of a triangle ABC. PQ drawn parallel to BC meets AB at Q, and QR drawn parallel to BP meets AC at R. Prove that $AR.AC=AP.AP$.

ARITHMETIC: NO TABLES ALLOWED. A long-distance flier kept up an average of 122.7 miles per hour, and was in the air for 2 days 2 hours 12 minutes. Find the length of the flight in miles.

Can YOU do all the above???

CALLING ALL OW GOLFERS AND CRICKETERS!

If you are a golfer (do not worry about your standard!) and would like to play in a match against the present and former teachers on Friday June 24th, please send me an email. The match will be played at Weston Turville, a course near Aylesbury starting at about 4.00pm. In the last two years it has been a very enjoyable game.

If you are a cricketer and are able to play in the Duncan Moore Memorial Match against the School Team on Tues July 19th, please send me an email. There have been some very good games in recent years.

DO YOU LIVE OR WORK IN LONDON?

A group of OWs have managed to meet up a couple of times in London, with increasing numbers each time. Last time Mary Nicholls who taught Maths at the RGS came and David Levin almost made it but ended up at the wrong pub! I'm hoping to get another group together on Wednesday 22nd June (venue to be confirmed). If you are interested in coming, please contact Martin Davidson on Martin.Davidson@herbertsmith.com The more the merrier!

CONGRATULATIONS TO LUKE!

I am sure that a good number of us stayed up to watch the last round of the Masters, and were so pleased to see Luke Donald do so well to finish third. Congratulations, Luke!

HELP!

If any of you have a walkman at home that is in order and now surplus to requirements, it would be great if you could donate it to the School. Students are required to have a walkman for Foreign Language examinations, and it is very difficult to buy one. Please contact Alan Yeates, Head of Modern Languages, at the School.

Similarly, if you are going to dispose of any Computer equipment, CD players, video-players, or camera-equipment, do please contact Andrew Brant at the School.

NEWS FROM THE RGS

In the latest newsletter, the following news items appeared:

- The Tsunami Appeal raised over £6,000 and Comic Relief over £1,500.
- A RGS Company, CCS, did very well in the Young Enterprise Trade Conference. It is a profitable, high tech company that fixes computer problems with a no-fix, no-fee policy. It has established a good consumer base, and has also provided considerable voluntary help in the community and welcomes any redundant computer equipment that it can refurbish and pass on to a good cause. If you have any computer problems or can donate equipment to the community initiative, CCS would be pleased to hear from you. They can be contacted at www.ccs-ye.tk (Editor: I am not sure how long they will be operating.)
- An RGS team entered the Proshare Portfolio Challenge, and by successfully managing their shares and explaining their investment strategy, reached the final.
- RGS teams took part in a national code-breaking competition at Bletchley Park where the famous 2nd World War Enigma Code was cracked. (Editor: Did you know that Mervyn Davies and John Perfect, former teachers of the RGS both worked there during the war?) A year 10 team won first prize. They had to crack various codes, including the "Caesar cipher", "Mono-alphabetical code," "polyalphabetical" undecipherable code" and the Playfair code. If any of that means anything to you, can you crack the following, using the Playfair code, with the keyword "cipher":

LS HU IE NP XD FC KQ YD GV ON PY.

- **Murder Mystery in the Library.** Working on a few leads and a hunch or two, Naseem Mahmood from 8P figured out the ten clues to the Murder Mystery and took first prize.
- **Michael Mcevoy is running in the Marathon des Sables,** 150 miles in six days, carrying everything he needs in a rucksack, when the temperatures soar to 120 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Design and Technology Tournament.** Three teams entered the Annual Tournament, which involved solving an engineering problem. The Junior Team came first.
- **Karen Penn's Personal Social and Health Education Groups** have been washing cars, dogs, sweeping leaves and baking cakes, to raise money for needy families in the community as part of a citizenship course. 96 boys raised £1211 for ten families in High Wycombe through their fund-raising efforts. After collecting the money they decided to seek personal family recommendations from Wycombe-based charities, such as Homestart and Wycombe Central Aid.

Editor: How many of these activities operated when you were at the RGS?

TRIBUTES TO FORMER TEACHERS

In the last few months two stalwarts of the RGS teachers died, Bert Scott and Mervyn Davies.

Published below is a tribute to Bert Scott. I believe that what Roger File said about Bert at his retirement Dinner gave a very good picture not only of Bert but also of the RGS at the time. Here is what he said:

Bert, in my eyes, absolutely typified the strengths and virtues of the kind of staff who gave the RGS its character and direction in the post-war years.

The strength was in the purposeful recovery from great disruptions of the war. I only came in the Autumn of 1945. The evacuated Chiswick Grammar School had gone some time before but left many legends behind them. The anti-aircraft landing posts had been removed from the school field but the ATC soccer posts remained as an affront to our Headmaster, Mr Tucker, who thought soccer, and smoking, the most deadly of sins. Not that he approved of rape or even dirty play on the rugby field, but he did not think them quite so unforgivable!

The scars of wartime horticulture disfigured the ground at the front of the school that ran down to the Amersham Road. A rather mangy aeroplane guarded the site of what in the Brave New World was to be the Tuck Shop - and which has littered the place most, is still in some dispute.

The staff was still predominantly female even though Mr Tucker insisted on all staff being addressed as 'Sir' - not all that inappropriate for some of them but rather absurd for the lissom and appropriately named PE mistress, Zoe Boddy.



Into this rather cosy shambles marched the returning war heroes - Bert amongst them - altho', in his case, for his first teaching job - and his last! Now, whatever else may be said about Bert, he and a shambles could never go together. Although still in his twenties Bert had risen to be Major in command of an Artillery battery in India. He knew how to handle the awkward squad and the idle (not a bad description of my form, 4G). In some ways it was a bit like the SAS relief at the Iranian Embassy. As soon as the soldiers moved in the scene was transformed. They didn't muck about! That of course was our role but we were left in no doubt where we stood and what sharp responses we could expect.

It was of course an era in which corporal punishment was a normal part of the daily scene, and I must admit it actually added colour and some fun to our daily round. Many of Bert's generation were absolute masters of the art. And the highest manifestation of it was their ability to imply its imminent and explosive use. Its supreme master was Sam Morgan. He could quell the entire school with a mere change of facial colour and odd twitch of the vein at his left temple. Nor did he shrink from its application. His supple wrists and elegant swing that could propel a cricket or golf balls legendary distances applied the cane with devastating effect on several generations of adolescent backsides.

Bert was of course a member of the same Golf Club as Sam, and he too was no mean practitioner of showing he meant business. Although he claims not to remember it, he once had me by the ear - I think it was for doing something silly with a quadratic equation. The point is though, we not only respected him for his firmness but the way in which he applied his discipline with such good humour and control. His lessons were always lively and brisk as well as effective - or as effective as they could be with 4G!

The mood had changed greatly by the time I returned as a teacher.

There was more turbulence in society at large and the mastery of the Sams and the Berts was not granted to the next generation of schoolmasters who had to turn to less colourful methods.

There were naturally some reversionaries but the age and the art had largely gone and its death-throes were rather ugly. One member of the staff at that time (who was quickly dispatched) not only knocked a boy clean off his

chair but then proceeded to kick his victim when on the ground. The boy, who was a generally mild lad, did recover to go on to university where he took a Law Degree and is now, I believe, a Senior Police Officer. The master, I hope, is still in hiding.

Despite the changing times and the decline in fire-breathing and ear-clipping, Bert remained one of the finest of his breed who continued to exude his no-nonsense and ever-so-slightly feared authority, together with what was described in the Wycombiensian as his 'Pickwickian joviality' that inspired universal affection amongst boys and colleagues.

I referred earlier to the strength of his generation but also to its virtue which was, I think, its wholehearted and characterful devotion to the business of the RGS - social as well as academic. Bert was always an excellent Maths master. He won an Exhibition in Maths at St John's College Cambridge from Stourbridge Grammar School. At Cambridge he distinguished himself and in other times might well have gone on to an academic career. But Academia's loss was certainly our gain. This was well instanced by the fact that all five of the boys in his final form who attempted the Oxbridge exams won scholarships or Exhibitions in Maths last year. A five-card trick that few can have performed.

In his early years at Wycombe he led a bachelor's existence, apparently subscribing to Kit Howarth's dictum that a schoolmaster was only any use until he got married. With another bachelor, Reggie Howard, he started up the School's second Boarding House out of the clapped-out remains of the Ingersol's manufactory at Uplyme. I gather the domestic demands and the unfathomable female staff proved too much for them and only the take-over by Mervyn Davies and his family resolved the situation. Bert returned gratefully to bridge playing, golf, and other bachelor pursuits.

It was not long, however, before he became powerfully aware of the charm and vitality of the latest School secretary. Nor was he the only one! It was Bert however who led Joan Potter up the aisle (the part of the church he got to know best) having had three daughters of his own.

As you will gather, Bert took well to married life. I remember someone asking how he managed to change his relatively new cars as often as he did (always suspicious behaviour amongst schoolmasters). "It's simple" said Bert - "You send your wife out to work!"

Bert was always quick to sum up situations. Strip them to their bare essence and act positively - the true mathematician and administrator that he was. I once commended camping holidays to him. "No thanks", he said. "I had a few months under canvass in the Indian monsoons. Didn't care for it."

Finally, an old schoolmaster's story, not about Bert, but reflecting his terse style - An exam which invited examinees to describe the principle features of a list of animals included an octopus which invoked the response from some wretched lad.

'An octopus is an underwater animal which has eight testicles.

Examiner's comment - 'What a load of balls!'

In the next newsletter we hope to publish a tribute to Mike Eaton and Mervyn Davies.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Ian,

I was sorry to hear of the recent death of Mervyn Davies - I only learned of it today from the website otherwise I would have come to the funeral.

I entered the RGS in 1961 in form 2E, of which MMD was the form master, and we inhabited one of the still-extant wooden huts at Uplyme. Mervyn was the ideal man to look after a new intake-very approachable, warm and friendly in what seemed a large and frightening environment to an 11-year old. In those days we used to have a form outing (it must have been in the summer term, but I don't recall) and whereas many forms went on coach trips away from the area MMD proudly took us to one of the local sights - the Hell Fire Caves at West Wycombe - and we had a wonderful time. Incidentally, I appear sitting on MMD's right in the photograph of form 2E (incorrectly captioned 1E) on page 79 of John Mitchell's book.

I left the RGS after only two years and lost touch until a change of job brought me back to the area in 1997 and I ended up living close the school. I found out that Mervyn Davies was still alive and living close by and I spoke to him on the telephone. Although old and blind there was still that wonderful warmth in his unmistakable voice.

With best wishes,

Tim

(Father of Matthew, currently in 13SD)

Dear Ian,

One lunch-hour while completing my A Level Art sculpture piece I was chatting to Mike Eaton, who suddenly burst out laughing. He had seen a young lad or so leaning over the fence and plucking an apple from a neighbour's tree. Said lad had the most awful grimace on his face. The tree was in fact a quince. Mike said, " I remember doing exactly the same thing with the same tree when I was a pupil here."

Graham Bell.

Dear Ian,

I have made a few updates and corrections to the website showing the RGS School Photos for 1967 and 1964. Some of the amendments are based on my own hunches as to the identity of the individual in questions. I shan't list all the changes and amendments in this email, but there are quite a few tentative IDs of the Form 2 people from 1964, mainly in the front row. Please feel free to challenge any of the identities I've given.

A reminder that the URLs are www.btinternet.com/~john.saunders14/rgs/index.html

for the '67 photo and www.btinternet.com/~john.saunders14/rgs/1964index.html for the '64 equivalent.

I've sent this email to everyone who has ever sent me identifications or emails about the subject. If you would rather not receive these occasional reminders, please let me know and I shall remove your email address from the distribution list.

Regards and thanks for your help with this project,

John Saunders

Dear Ian

As always the RGS newsletter makes interesting reading. Tony Male mentions the framed photograph of the Classical Sixth from (I think) 1961 and you ask for all the names. This is quite easy as the photo is reproduced in John Mitchell's RGS photo book, on page 79.

Here are the names: I've added initials and names where I know them.

Back row, left to right: Colin H Farmer, PE Sleigh, MB Wood, Patrick A Taylor (later teacher at the school), RPH Green, AJ Mahoney, BN Buckley, DM North.

Middle Row: JB Marshall, G Evans, (GJ?) Palmer, CR Durham, PD Hamilton-Eddy, PHW Bristow, DR Walker, Les Macready (hockey international), CB Garner, MG Smith, TE Chandler.

Seated: Helena Ellis, Mr DJ Curry, Mr Stanley A Male, Mr ER Tucker, Mr CM Haworth, Mr JB Benson, Mr JW Pursey, Edwin W Burrows.

This photo also used to hang on the wall of the Classics room (no.28) when I was in the Classical Sixth in the late 1960s. I've a feeling it may have been taken in 1959/60 rather than 1960/61, judging from which pupils were in the line-up.

While I was looking at the photo on page 79 of John Mitchell's excellent book, my attention was drawn to the picture of the late Mervyn Davies with form 1E in 1961. There is at least one error here, as there was no such thing as "1E" in 1961. First forms were numbered "2" until academic year 1966/67 when forms were renumbered (more logically) from "1". As regards the photo on p79, I could be wrong but I think it more likely that this photo was taken in the 1970s (1971?) or late 1960s than the early 1960s and so it could indeed have been 1E.

Taffy Davies was a lovely man, and an ideal form-master for those of us who arrived at the RGS aged only 10. The school could be a terrifying place for little boys (which is what we were) but he was very

protective and fatherly. A gentle man in every sense, but with a slightly wicked Welsh wit. I reminded my elder brother recently what Taffy wrote on my first term's report: "Conduct good - much better behaved than his brother!" RIP MMD.

Best wishes,
John Saunders.

Dear Ian,

Thank you for including my letter on the building of the Queen's Hall in the January newsletter. I wish to add a few words about my tentative claim to be the first pupil to use a motor-bike to travel to school. I am certainly wrong, as apart from a few pupils who may have done so between the wars, I remember the Head Prefect, Hubert Bass used a noisy two-stroke, and later in '46-'47, Dave Tanner, Norman Brudney and young Carter (first name eludes me) and I all zoomed around noisily. Mr Tucker was very tolerant!

The photograph of the ATC OBs' Flight, sent in I believe by Dennis Parker (3rd from the right, middle row), includes in addition to those cadets identified by Lou Hanks, John (Ev) Everett and Stuart (Henry) Furseman (1st and 9th from left, middle row). The silver badge worn over the left pocket by some cadets was awarded for attaining the "A" certificate of the British Gliding Association of the gliding school at Booker. John Bunce's article in the 2004 magazine describes very fully the activities of the school. Ev. and Henry became qualified gliding instructors and Tiger Moth tug pilots despite vision defects that denied them white cap flash PNB status.

I note with interest the OWs 1st XV '49-'50 photo and pedantically point out that the well-liked and respected Ron Emery is in the middle row, not the front row. How he managed to play such a tough game after being badly burned piloting a doomed Lancaster (PLANE) over Germany (so badly he was repatriated) is a tribute to him and his love for the game. The middle chap in the front row looks a little like Graham Philpott, though the quality of the photo makes him look older than his 18-19 years.

I hope that a few more of us elderly old boys can dig up a memory or two send them to you for your perusal. Thank you for the good work you are doing.

Yours sincerely
Bill Mercy

ED. It would great if some of the recent leavers could also send in their memories of the RGS

Dear Ian

I am just working through the latest on the school website-good stuff - baffled by the photo quiz, but it must be about 1952-3. I recognise B. Sinnatt (left sit), Nobby Hall (centre sitting-hat and Roger File (right standing). I heard from Falih Caffoor that all was well with his and Ali Hussein's families in Sri Lanka at the Tsunami.

Regards,
Jeremy Edwards.

Dear Ian

I have just opened the current on-line Newsletter, and scrolled down to Photo Quiz 2: to answer your query, the production in question was Gilbert and Sullivan's Patience, which took place in the Queen's Hall in December 1966, conducted and produced by James Dawes. I still have a programme. At this remove I should be very hard put to identify exactly who was who, but the three principal Officers of the Dragoon Guards were K F Woodbridge, C J Andrew and B J B Fox; Bunthorne was played by Paul Roberts, Grosvenor by A D N Havard, Bunthorne's solicitor by Richard Wombwell, and the Rapturous Maidens by C A Hardy, J L Vernon, D A Lowe and K D Ray. Patience herself was played by A W South. Yours truly was the Heavy Dragoon on the far left!

With best wishes
Michael Painting
RGS 1963-67

Dear Ian,

I would like to thank those who have written kind things about Mike in the newsletters. My son and daughter join me in sending our heartfelt thanks and good wishes to his former pupils.

With my best wishes,
Naomi. (Widow of Mike Eaton, the RGS Art teacher who died in the Autumn of 2004.)

Dear Ian,

I noted in a previous newsletter a request for more from the 1980s batch, so I thought I'd share a couple of staff memories you may wish to publish.

The first member of staff we all met, in that first day long ago in September 1980, while modelling our new uniforms, was the legendary Mr Dennis Smith (affectionately known as 'Big D') the head of the Junior School. A huge man with a black cape, face like thunder, he looked like he had just walked out of a Dickens novel. He was a fearful sight for any 12-year old. In the first week he entered our classroom. Dutifully we all stood up.

He looked around the room, saw me at the back and asked the form teacher my name. 'GOOD MORNING, KEITH NEVOLS!' he then boomed. 'Good morning, sir', I squeaked in reply. He then turned, and with a swirl of the cape, exited to look for fresh meat.

On one occasion I was sent to his office (can't remember why). Having thought he would be wise to the old book-down-trousers trick of various Will Hay/Jimmy Edwards films, I decided to take my medicine with upper lip firmly stiff. Timidly I knocked on the door. It flew open and there stood the mountain peering down at me.

I stood there, with defiant chin in air, inwardly trembling but being very British about it. He grinned and presented me with a black bin bag. My punishment was to go round the quad and fields picking up litter. Quite a relief! In later years, I often saw the lower years going round with black bin bags and wonder if they had the same emotions.

The headmaster was Mr Rowland Brown. He had a sort of God-like quality as I only ever saw him at assemblies, up on the stage far, far away overlooking us all. In my five years at the school he only ever said one line to me, a line I can still remember all these years later. ('Can you take this note to Mr Clark in Biology?') On one occasion I was watching the BBC news, which reported on a head teacher's union conference and in the clip was Mr Brown himself criticising the then government's education policy. It was somehow comforting to know that our headmaster was really a bit of a rebel.

Finally I must mention the best teacher I have ever had the pleasure of being taught by the great Mr David Flinders. Mr Flinders was, I think, head of modern languages at the time, and I was in his French class for three years. He was full of enthusiasm, highly energetic, would literally bounce into the classroom, hurl himself at the blackboard, and clearly loved his subject.



I remember his distress at timetable changes when we only had four lessons a week instead of the previous five as we had a lot to cover. He was also a talented singer, and would perform at concerts. (My mother was a fan). His enthusiasm rubbed off on us, his classes were a joy and, despite never being much of a linguist, I can still remember a lot of French even over 20 years later.

In 1993-4 I had a part-time job lecturing to members of the army on international affairs, so I would try to remember the good teachers I had over the years (and the bad!) to learn from their styles to incorporate into my own lessons. (I assume all teachers do this when starting out).

The RGS had many good teachers whom I remember with much fondness. I am saddened to learn that some are no longer with us, and pleased (and astonished!) to see that one or two are still there 20 years later!

And I note many are still going strong and appearing in the newsletters. Long may they all continue!

Yours sincerely

Keith Nevols (1980-85)

Editor: It is great to receive such a letter from Keith about life in the eighties. Any more contributions about the eighties or indeed nineties

HAVE YOU REMEMBERED TO LET ME KNOW IF YOU CAN PLAY GOLF OR CRICKET FOR THE OWs?

This newsletter was edited by Ian Clark, embellished by Judy De Gelas, and produced by Martin Berry. Any comments, suggestions, or memories of the RGS to Ian please.

Next newsletter to be published on 29th July 2005 - apologies for the late publication this time.

