

## **NEWSLETTER    SEPTEMBER 2006**

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### **ANNUAL DINNER**

The Annual Dinner will take place on Saturday April 28th in the Queen's Hall. There will be opportunities for OWs to have a tour of the buildings before the Dinner, attend the Annual General Meeting, and hear a report on how the School is doing. Do contact your OW friends, and come with them to the Dinner! If any others of you are thinking of coming, and would like to encourage others to come from your era, do contact me and I can advertise this in the January newsletter, or perhaps be able to give you some addresses of OWs with whom you have lost contact.. More details of the Dinner will appear in the January newsletter on this website, and of course in the magazine or letter to be sent out by post.

### **REMINDER**

If you are a member of the OW Club, you can expect to receive from us a letter with details of the Annual Dinner and Sporting Reunions. If you left before 1950, you will receive our magazine. Some of you who left after 1950 said that you would like to receive a magazine and you will do so. If any other member of the Club would like to receive one, please contact me. The magazine will consist of articles and snippets of information that have appeared or will appear in the newsletters on this website.

NB If you are not a member of the Club, and would like to know how to join, [PLEASE CLICK HERE](#). It is only £30 Life Membership

### **OWs v RGS 1<sup>st</sup> Team**

On the hottest July day ever, the OW Cricket Team played the School 1<sup>st</sup> XI in the Annual match for the Duncan Moore Trophy. It was great to see Duncan's father at the match and he presented the trophy to Bobby Dix, the captain of the OW's Team, that won by 8 wickets. The RGS scored 167-6, with Graham Cochrane scoring 53, and Oli Lowe 43\*. The OWs replied with 169-2, Sajid Ali scoring 55 and Richard Royce 69\*. It was another very enjoyable match in the series. If any OW reading would like to play in any future OW match, he should contact [ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk) to be put on the mailing list for details of any matches.

### **News from the school**

**Senior Prize giving held on Monday 17th July**  
This year's Guest of Honour was Commander Mike Beardall. Besides being an RGS Old Boy, Commander Beardall has had a distinguished career in the Royal Navy and recently has

been the Commanding Officer of HMS Cardiff, a Type 42 Destroyer. His final tour on board HMS Cardiff was to the Falkland Islands and his ship was present at the Fleet Review celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. From an early age, Commander Beardall was a Coxswain of the Navy Contingent of the CCF when he was at RGS.

Ed: If you were at the RGS 1977-1982, do you remember Mike?



**Headmaster Roy Page**



**Commander Mike Beardall**

Speaking first, the Headmaster Mr Page, outlined the 'extraordinary' year that the school has just completed. It was a year with difficult challenges but many, many highs. RGS received the ultimate accolade from the OFSTED inspectors, being rated 'excellent' in 9 out of 9 categories. Our A Level and GCSE results were outstanding; cultural and sporting trips had taken RGS pupil to several continents; we had seen first rate drama performances and individual sporting achievements.

Mr Page thanked the governors, parents, Friends of RGS, and not least the Parents' Association, which raises £20,000 a year for the school.

Finally Mr Page paid tribute to the staff leavers, mentioning especially John Roebuck, Peter Gibson, David Moore and Jean Frost, who collectively have provided 117 years of service to the school.



Commander Beardall gave a brief resume of his career and job. He referred to a busy previous two days which he had spent in helping to plan the imminent evacuation of 20000 British citizens from Beirut. He had enjoyed a varied career in many parts of the world and had faced many challenges. Based on these experiences, he shared with the audience of parents and prize winners his thoughts on life's journey. He used the metaphor of life being like a ladder, easy to climb in the sunlight but harder in the dark; harder still when you have to juggle some very precious and fragile balls as you climb - the balls representing Work, Friendship and Family.



He finished by congratulating the prize winners on reaching their particular rung on the ladder, but encouraged them for and warned them about the climb ahead.

The evening continued with the award of the prizes and concluded with refreshments on the lawn.



## **STAFF LEAVERS**

The following are extracts from the tributes paid to this year's staff leavers in this year's Wycombiensian.

### **JOHN ROEBUCK**

David Keysell, a colleague of John's in the History Department, writes as follows:

Appointed to the RGS in 1970, John was responsible for introducing Modern World History at GCSE. On the retirement of David Jones as Head of Department in 1991, he was the natural successor. He built on the Department's strengths, allowing his colleagues to follow their enthusiasms. John succeeded in improving the department's resources and obtained a much-needed office. Many a staff and heads of department meeting were enlivened by John's mischievous contributions!

Although a talented manager, it is as a teacher that John would choose to be remembered. He enjoyed teaching enormously. While nationally, recruitment for GCSE and A Level History were failing, RGS spectacularly defied the trend. Sixth Formers won national competitions, and the steady flow of Sixth Form historians to Oxford and Cambridge, and elsewhere owes much to John's inspiration. He is justly proud that several former RGS pupils are now professional historians. John has always brought inimitable style and a great sense of fun to his work.



History was not confined to the classroom. With Hilary Munday, John ran the Year 9 trip to Northern France. John also organised three trips to Valleriois-le-Bois, a mediaeval castle to help with its restoration. Never a mere onlooker, John threw himself into the hard physical work, and his excitement as the rubble blocking up a thirteenth century window was removed, was palpable.

John introduced fencing in 1971, and by the mid 1980s his teams were winning national championships: more than twenty of his fencers have represented England, Wales or Great Britain, and many others have gained blues and four have won Commonwealth Games Medals.

John ran cross-country for four years, went on two Osnabruck exchanges, initiated with Peter Gibson an American exchange, and served as one of the first two teacher Governors. For the Millennium, John arranged an exhibition and reception, celebrating the achievements of distinguished OWs. Pupils will certainly remember him for his outstanding appearances in Staff Revues. Always a highlight of the show, John's immensely funny performances were enlivened by the suspicion that his sense of anarchy could triumph at any moment and lift proceedings to a different level.

Despite his commitment to RGS, he has a life independent of the school. He is interested in literature and reads voraciously. Recently he has taken up amateur dramatics. He sails, paints, plays tennis, follows sport and listens to music. We wish him and Wendy, his wife, every happiness. RGS will certainly miss his wit and dedication.

## **PETER GIBSON**

John Roebuck writes about Peter:



Peter and I were in the same boarding-house at the same school. He was a well-known cricketer at school, and when he joined the RGS, he became the Staff Team's opening bowler for 30 years, and played cricket for Bledlow. At school he was a skilled basketball player, and the RGS basketball teams have benefited a great deal from his experience here. He also, like most of us, "did time" with an RGS rugby team.

After gaining an English degree and teaching at Dagenham, which gave him an allegiance to West Ham, he joined the RGS where he soon established himself as an inspiring classroom teacher. He was a man interested in ideas and new challenges. He ran a literary magazine for eight years, took boys on poetry week-ends in darkest Dorset where among other things he was embraced by Yevtushenko and helped Ted Hughes do the washing-up. He has read Proust, and had a passion for 17<sup>th</sup> century London and Pepys, and American literature and briefly American football. So he helped set up the American exchange and took out the first group in 1979.

Peter secured a sabbatical year in the late seventies, and studied for a Master's in the Philosophy of Education. He introduced Philosophy into the RGS and at A Level in 1994. The course has been outstandingly successful. His record of pupils going on to study philosophy at top universities speaks for itself. True to his professionalism and dedication to the subject, he will be returning next year to ensure that his current Year 12 complete the two year course.

Peter has always had a huge breadth of interests. He was one of the first of the staff to get to grips with Computer technology and played a part in introducing IT at RGS. His mastery of minutiae propelled him on to the Timetabling Team where he has, along with Martin Berry, struggled successfully with the demands of department heads and the column system.

Peter has served the school in all sorts of ways that characterizes him as a professional career teacher of the best type. He has been a form tutor to all age groups. He was a teacher governor for eight years. He coordinated the data for the recent school development plan. He has been the NAS/UWT union representative for over 20 years and chairman of the common room. He has been a leading light in staff teams: he ran the football in the 1970s and started up the basketball group in recent years. He is also a man of enormous cultural and intellectual interests. He is an enthusiastic amateur piano player and his deep interest in music sends him off to London several times a week. He loves the theatre. He reads widely. He collects art. He is a good chap to have around the staff room. All who have known him wish him well in retirement.

**Have you any memories of John or Peter? If you have, do send them in, so that we can publish them.**

## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Dear Ian,

Re the information in the previous newsletter the Vets badge is now available to those who served at or before 31 Dec 1959.

Regards,

Ron

Dear Ian

I don't know whether this will be of any interest.

I recently wrote as much about my life as I could remember, mainly for my own enjoyment and maybe for my children to read some day.....

Anyway, I have extracted the chapter that deals with my life at school, and in particular boarding in School House around 1973/75 and I have attached it.

I have blanked out a couple of surnames - you will understand why! I hope the Statute of Limitations means that these events from over 30 years ago will not cause any problems now!

You may want to use some of this if you have some space to fill up!

Best Regards  
Kelvin Jouhar (1969-1976)

Ed: I think it is a wonderful account of life at the RGS and Boarding-House in the Seventies, and I am delighted to publish it. One or two names have been changed for obvious reasons. I hope that it may inspire some of you to write your own account of your days at the RGS, in whatever decade you were there.

## **MEMOIRS OF KELVIN JOUHAR**

The school I attended was in High Wycombe, about 7 miles away from Beaconsfield. I was entitled to free transport to High Wycombe, and because we lived quite close to the railway station in Beaconsfield, it made sense to take the train, rather than a bus. The railway station in High Wycombe is at the bottom of a hill and the Grammar School is at the top. This meant that there was a 20 minute walk up this hill every morning to get to school. My mum did give me the return bus fare each day, but there was a tuck-shop at school, so most days I would walk so that I would have a few pence to spend on sweets.

The train from Beaconsfield got to Wycombe each morning around 8.30 am and I would either take the bus up the hill or, more often I would walk. There were two routes. The quicker route was directly up Amersham Hill which was steep, and it took about 20 minutes to walk it. The alternative route involved a bit of a detour and was along the side of a cemetery, but this way was flatter, although it took longer. Both routes were always occupied with legions of schoolboys shuffling along with bags laden with books and sweaty sports clothes. Occasionally we would see a guy digging out a grave in the cemetery as we went by.

Not long after I started at the Grammar School, I discovered the game of Fives. There were not that many schools that had outdoor Fives courts. I know they have them at some of the public schools, like Eton and Harrow, but to have courts at a Grammar school was quite unusual. We had two courts and the game was very popular at lunchtimes and even before school started in the mornings. I got very keen on playing and I became quite good at the game.

Older boys, even sixth formers, often invited me to play in their game if they were a man short as I was able to hold my own, even in that company. You could play either singles or doubles. The court was a bit like a squash court, but with an open back. There was a step across the middle of the court and ledges around some of the walls to make the bounce of the ball unpredictable if it hit them.

Fives, when played properly, is played with padded gloves and a small hard ball about the size of a golf ball. However, we did not have the luxury of this equipment and so we played with a tennis ball and bare hands. I think the game was better like this, at least for us as the ball did not travel quite so quickly. The best balls to use were tennis balls that had had the fur cut off and they were then just like a squash ball. These were highly sought after. Once they warmed up, they played really nicely.

Next to one of the Fives courts, just above the height of one of the side walls, there was a huge oil tank enclosed in a brick structure, with an open top. If you hit the ball too hard off the front wall at just the wrong angle it would go over the side wall and down into "The Tank".

Behind the Fives courts was "Out of Bounds" to us, but if you went down the side of the court, and took a run-up, or got a leg-up from a friend, you could scale a wall of maybe seven or eight feet in height. This would take you onto a flat roof. A twenty foot run across this roof, and you could climb up another wall of maybe four feet in height and there you were at the top of The Tank. You had to then lower yourself down carefully, as the gap between the side of the oil tank and the wall was only about three feet. Once you were down at the bottom of the tank you could collect any number of balls that had been lost down there.

Not many people had the nerve to go down The Tank. Whilst running across the flat roof, you were in full view of all of the windows in School House, one of the three Boarding houses at the school. I was one of the ones who were prepared to take the chance. I got caught a few times, but the risk was worth the reward, which was that many balls that could be sold or swapped with other lads.

The other sport that I was getting interested in was Basketball and we played it during PE lessons as well as occasionally after school. During my second term at the school, we were due to play House matches and I was hoping to be chosen for the team. Disaster struck not long after the New Year term had begun. I was attending the lunchtime gymnastics club, and all the equipment was set out ready to be used.

We were under strict instructions to wait in the changing rooms until the gym teacher arrived, and not to go in and use the equipment. I don't know why I could never follow these instructions. I always seemed to do my own thing and of course it often ended in tears. On this occasion, I thought I would just try a vault over the horse by running up to it and bouncing on the trampette, which was like a mini-trampoline a couple of feet off the ground. I took it too fast, and with too much bounce because next thing was I was flying over the horse and plummeting onto the floor, head-first.



I instinctively put out my hand to break my fall, but the only thing that broke was my left arm about six inches above the wrist. The arm was literally at a right-angle and I don't know whether it was the shock of seeing it like that, but I immediately grabbed hold of my hand and tried to pull it down to straighten my arm. This made a bad break even worse, and within half an hour I was down at Wycombe hospital Accident & Emergency waiting to have it set.

I had that arm in plaster for almost 6 months because the break was so bad and once the plaster came off I suppose I should have had proper physiotherapy, but in those days I don't think they really did that, so it was just a question of trying to build up the strength in it myself. For years afterwards my left shoulder was higher than my right as the muscles had got so used to the weight of the plaster on my arm, that when it was removed my shoulder went up slightly.

Back at school, in that first year, as I have mentioned, I was in a class with boys who were in some cases, nearly 2 years older than me. This may not sound much but at 10 or 11 years of age it makes a big difference. I guess my parents felt that they were doing the right thing when they pushed me all through my schooling, but I struggled in that first year at Grammar school. We had a form-master called Mervyn Davies, a Welshman who was very friendly and taught us maths.

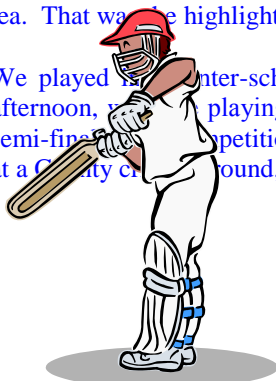
I was the youngest boy in the school by a year or more and I was also quite small for my age, so I came in for a bit of teasing. I would not call it bullying, as there were never any real threats of violence, but I did get a good pasting one day from a lad called Brian Lawrence who I used to tease as he was a bit thick. I can't remember how it happened or what I said, but I found myself flying through the air across a few desks in between lessons one day. I think I laid off him after that.

At the end of the first year we all had to do exams and, depending on the results, we would then be "streamed" from the second year until we took our "O" Levels, in the fifth year. There were five classes from years 2 to 5, depending on the subjects you were good at. Class 2A was for those who were good at languages, Classes 2X and 2Y were for the real swots who excelled at maths and science. That left 2 classes, 2S and 2T, which were for the also-rans who were not particularly strong in any one area. I ended up going into 2T.

The next couple of years at school were fairly non-eventful. My reports always used to say "Could do better" or similar, and I know that my parents thought I could achieve more, but maybe I was a bit lazy, if I am honest. I played in a few of the sports teams. I was too small to play rugby, so I was in the hockey team which was good fun. I was not keen on gymnastics anymore, having had the nasty fracture of my arm (due to my own fault, it has to be said) I played in the basketball team and the cricket team.

I was not a particularly good batsman, but I was a fair bowler and quite good at catching and fielding. I really used to enjoy the cricket matches in the summer. It meant having the whole afternoon off lessons and half way through the match we would break and have tea in the pavilion. This was usually sandwiches, cakes and cups of tea. That was the highlight of the day.

We played in an inter-schools competition that was sponsored by Esso, the petrol company. One summer afternoon, we were playing away in Marlow against Sir William Borlase, a boys' grammar school. It was the semi-final competition. If we won that game we would be in the final, which I think was going to be held at a County cricket ground, so there was everything to play for.





It was a lovely day and we were fielding. I forget what the score was but the opposition had their best batsman at the crease. I was standing around the mid-wicket area and I was aware of a dog that had run onto the field and was quite close by to where I was fielding. I attracted the dog's attention and it came over to where I was. I was messing around with this dog when I heard a shout of "Kelvin, catch it!!" and I looked up too late and the ball dropped very close to where I was standing. I had missed an easy catch and to make matters worse, the batsman who had drolled it up to me went on to make a high score and we lost the match. I was not popular on the coach on the way back to school.

Towards the middle of 1972 my Dad got a new job. He had been working for Glaxo in Greenford as a Medical Adviser in their pharmaceuticals division and he then had a job offer from a Swedish firm called Kabi to go and work in Stockholm in a similar type of job. This was really going to break the family up as my brother had already been at a boarding school in Gloucestershire for a few years and this move to Sweden meant that I would start in the Boarding House at the Royal Grammar School.

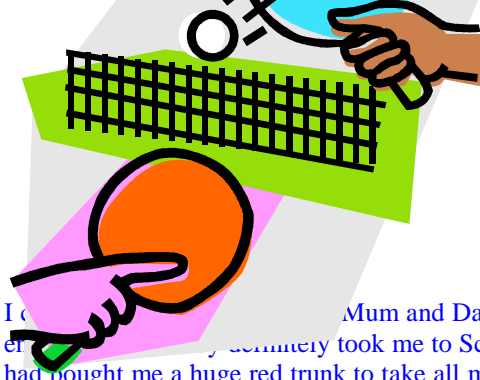
My sister, Venetia, would live at the house in Burkes Road, being looked after by our Grandmother, my mum's mother, who had been living with us for a while. I guess that my parents thought that I would be too much of a handful for my Grandmother to look after and it would not be fair on her. They may as well send me off for someone else to worry about!

There were three Boarding Houses attached to the RGS. School House was right in the centre of the school grounds and was literally yards away from where I went to lessons, and all of the school facilities. Uplyme, the second boarding house, was a short distance away, probably less than 5 minutes walk, and the third house was called Tylers Wood, and it was about a mile and a half away, towards Hazlemere.

I don't know how the particular boarding house was decided, but just before the summer holiday, my parents announced that I was to go into School House at the beginning of the Autumn Term 1972. The Housemaster there was called Reverend Skipp, and it happened that he also taught me English and Divinity. Several years later he was to officiate at my marriage to Jane. I was not unhappy at this prospect. I had become quite good friends with a lad called Simon Roe in my class. We had been together since the second year, so I had known him almost 2 years.

He was boarding in School House as his parents lived abroad. His Dad was quite high up in the Royal Navy, and at that time his parents were living in Malta. He told me that boarding was fun and there were plenty of opportunities to use all of the school's sports facilities after school and at weekends. The boarders used to make up quite a large proportion of the sports teams, probably because they had more opportunity than day-boys to practice.

### **The Boarding House**



I can't remember Mum and Dad actually moved out to Sweden, but it must have been towards the end of the summer. My dormitory took me to School House a day or so before term started in the September. They had bought me a huge red trunk to take all my belongings and when I arrived, I met a few of the other boys and I was shown to my dormitory. I didn't want them to hang around for long as it was important to make a good first impression with the other lads in the house and being seen hugging my parents would not have helped my "street cred."

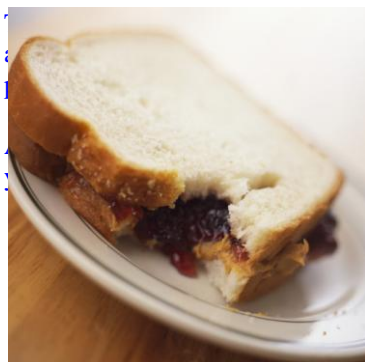
There were about twelve beds in the dormitory that I was assigned to. The dormitories were occupied according to age group, and as I was joining the boarding house part-way through my schooling, I was in the middle one. There were three in all and in addition there was an "annexe" which had just three beds in it as well as a single room that the Head Boy of the boarding house could occupy. There were two Common Rooms, one of which had a television. The other Common Room had a table-tennis table – actually it was not really a proper table-tennis table, but it was about the right size and when the net was broken (which was more often than not) we would put up a wall of books to make a "net".

We had a dining room that seated about 50 boys. The boarders from Uplyme would walk over to School House for their meals, as they did not have a dining room at their house. Each of the houses had a Housemaster and a Deputy, as well as a matron, in case anyone got sick. The adults would eat at a separate table at the end of the dining room. The food was not bad. It was better quality than the regular school lunches. Breakfast was the usual cereal and then toast and jam or marmalade. The toast that the boys had was variable in its quality, to say the least. Some pieces were left over from the day before and I think the cook used to just spray them with a fine mist of water and then warm them up again to give the impression that they were fresh.

In contrast, the toast that the adults had on their table were lovely fresh pieces in a toast-rack and towards the end of the breakfast, if you timed it right, you could wander up to their table when it became clear that they were going to eat no more, and ask for their left-over toast.

School House was very close to the school buildings and the dormitory that I was sleeping in was a very short distance from the clock tower, so it took me a few weeks to get used to the chiming of the clock during the night. We were woken up every morning by a loud bell which was rung about half an hour before breakfast was served. It was so convenient to then stroll a few yards to the classrooms for lessons.

There was a definite hierarchy in the boarding house environment. There were boys ranging in age from 11 or 12 right up to second year sixth formers of 18 or 19. There was a Head Boy, as I mentioned, and he had his own room on the top floor, which was in between the Senior Dorm and the Annexe. There were prefects that were responsible for making sure there was a degree of discipline in the boarding house and they were allowed to sanction anyone who stepped out of line. At certain times of the day we had to do homework, and only after that period was over were we allowed some free time, during which we could watch television, play records or go to the gym to play basketball or five-a-side football.



where they could spend their leisure time. This room had an electric kettle and a toaster to toast bread. They had an allowance of about one loaf of bread, half a day that they would collect from the cook in the kitchen.

chance to partake in some of that luxury, and I would get my chance a few times. If anything was going wrong, you were summoned to appear before the prefects in their

room and it was a little bit like a court. You would have the opportunity to present any mitigating circumstances, but more often than not, you were guilty and the punishment was meted out. There was no physical punishment. That was definitely not allowed, although there was the occasional cuff round the back of the head or a kick in the pants.

The official punishment were things like being "gated" which meant you were not allowed to leave the school grounds for a period of a few days – this was not a nice punishment, because we often went up the road after school to "Archie's Stores" at Terriers to buy sweets or an ice-cream in the summer. One stage more serious than being gated was to be "close-gated" which was usually given for a weekend. This meant that you were not even allowed to go out of the boarding house, no fun at all on a weekend when you may have wanted to play basketball or go down to High Wycombe town centre to the shops. For minor offences we would be given "lines" by the prefects. It was always the same line that had been handed out in School House since time immemorial:-

*"Strict obedience is absolutely essential for the smooth and efficient running of the Boarding House"!*

You could be assigned to write any number of these depending on the severity of the offence and there was a thriving trade in "pre-written" lines that had been done before but which had not been destroyed after they were presented to the prefects, but woe betide you if it could be proved beyond reasonable doubt that you had NOT written them yourself.

Archie's stores was a popular venue after school. We would go back to the boarding house at the end of school time, and change out of school uniform and then stroll up the road to buy a snack before tea was served at 5.30pm. I didn't get much pocket money. My Dad would already have told the Housemaster how much I was to have. I can't remember exactly, but maybe it was something like 50p a week. Remember this was 1972! Anyway, we had to fill out a Pocket Money form on a Thursday, and list on the form any extra money that we needed, in addition to pocket money, for things like stamps, shoe repairs, cleaning, fares etc.

Of course it became necessary to make up some tale virtually every week in order to extricate additional money from the Deputy Housemaster, Derek White-Taylor. This additional money would be added to the bill at the end of each term and my parents had to settle up.

The routine was the same every week – I would put down for my 50p pocket money but then I would also put down for a couple of stamps, saying I was going to write home. I would also say that I was intending going down to the town and back at the weekend and I needed bus fare etc. etc. DWT would say "are you sure you need to write home again – I thought you wrote last week", and I would reply with some rubbish – it was a battle of wills, but DWT could not really refuse any request if it sounded even half-true. On a Friday evening after tea we would all line up in the Common room and DWT would hand out the cash from a metal strong-box and we were all set for the weekend.

I always seemed to be short of money or put another way, I was always shorter than I wanted to be! I don't think I was a profligate spender but my parents had never really given us much pocket money, and the problem when you are younger is that there is always the pressure from what your friends have or what they do. As parents ourselves, Jane and I have experienced exactly this with our own two daughters and it is very easy to say to them that they should "do your own thing", but I well remember how I wanted to have a bit of money to be able to do the things that the other lads were doing.

So it was that type of feeling that drove my behaviour and I used to fill out my pocket money slip with all sorts of spurious "expenses" that would supplement my weekly income. Of course, as I mentioned, my parents had to settle the bill at the end of each term, and that was when the chickens came home to roost, if I had overspent drastically! I can't remember exactly what my Dad would say but he was not over-impressed with my spending.

One afternoon at the end of school I went up to Archie's Stores to buy a snack. I rather liked the apple pies that he used to stock, and I noticed that some of the boxes had a special promotion. There was a coupon to cut out of the cardboard box that entitled you to another apple pie FREE. Well of course, you were only supposed to get one free pie but I came back the next day and took another "special promotion" box, handed in my coupon from the previous day and went off with a free pie. I managed to work this routine every day for about a week and a half before they realised what was going on!

There was a fish and chip shop up the road at Terriers. I think it is still there. At that time it was called Fred's Fish and Chips. We could never afford fish as well as chips but a bag of chips soaked in vinegar was a real treat. If you were really short of money the trick was to go up there just before he closed at around ten o'clock in the evening, when he was starting to clean up. You could buy a bag of chips quite cheaply, as he would only throw them away if they did not sell.

Another way of getting additional money was to go car-washing. I became friendly with another lad who happened to sleep in the bed next to me in the dormitory. His name was Richard Smith, although everyone called him "Log". This was because he had apparently visited the toilet on one occasion and left what looked like a piece of a tree in the toilet pan! On a Sunday morning Log and I would borrow a bucket and sponges from the cook in the kitchens and go to the big houses in Manor Road near Penn.

It was obviously highly dependant on the weather, as there was no point in going if it was raining. We would normally go in pairs, and there was an agreement between different pairs over the territory. There was no point in more than one pair knocking at the same houses. On a good morning it was possible to do three or four houses before it was time to return for lunch, but there were also occasions when we would draw a commission and gradually built up a few customers who would look kindly upon us and we could earn three or four pounds a morning, which we would split. If the customers did not want a car washed, we would offer to do the sweeping, which was an alternative job.



At that time, I was continuing to play a lot of sport, particularly basketball, and I became captain of the school basketball team at Under-14 level. We had an advantage over the day-boys because we could play any time outside school hours, as well as at the weekend. I was spending a lot of time in there practising shooting and passing with the other lads in the boarding house, some of whom were also in the team.

We played matches both at home and away. Our court was quite small and took a bit of getting used to so we felt that we always had an advantage at home and there were not many schools that could beat us. The away games were harder, but we enjoyed them a bit more because we occasionally got to play on a full sized court with proper overhanging backboards.

On moving into the 4<sup>th</sup> year at school, I was able to join the Combined Cadet Force. We had an Army, a Navy and an Air Force section. The Army cadets did not seem to do anything much of interest. They were constantly to be seen on a Thursday afternoon marching up and down on the parade ground, near the school tennis courts and they did not look any fun at all. The RAF section also looked a bit lame and that did not appeal to me. In contrast the Navy cadets looked much more interesting. My good friend Simon Roe was keen to join the Navy section as his father had quite a high rank in the British navy, so I was happy to go along with that plan.



We would travel over to the river at Marlow on a coach, and do rowing (or "pulling", as it is called in nautical circles). It was a big wooden boat with 6 or 8 cadets, each of us would have one oar, and we would go up and down the river. We also occasionally would do canoeing or sometimes sailing in small 2-man dinghys. This was much better – and an opportunity to get out of school for a few hours. I also joined the CCF band, playing the snare-drum. We would practice every couple of weeks and the band would play at special occasions at the school.

The parade ground was about 50 yards square and covered in concrete – it was a perfect venue for an impromptu soccer match, and we would play there during lunchtimes. These were no ordinary games as there could be up to 30 people on each team, depending on who wanted to play. As new players turned up, they

would just be assigned to one or other of the teams. We played with a tennis ball, and there was not quite the same adherence to the rules of the game as in a normal soccer match. By that I mean that hacking your opponent down or pushing him off the ball was an accepted, and necessary, part of the game.

Our geography teacher was called Malcolm Cook, a northerner who supported Oldham football club. We knew that because he was always going on about them in our lessons. Oldham football club were rubbish and we let him know – I particularly let him know because I was a Chelsea fan and they were a head and shoulders above Oldham. I think he thought I was a cheeky little sod, and to be fair to him he was probably right.

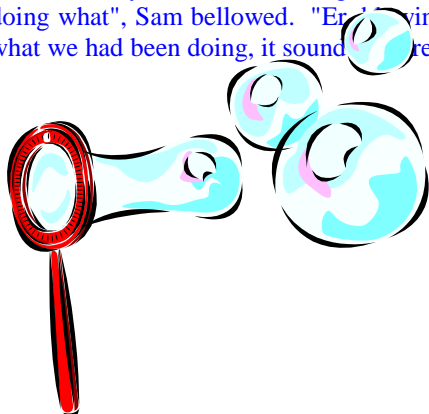
On this particular day, we were playing a massive soccer game on the parade ground and I was effing and blinding about something or other. The next thing I know is that Malcolm Cook has grabbed my ear, given it a good twist, and is dragging me off to the teachers staff room because of my bad language. Well, the staff room was a good 200 yards from the parade ground and all the way there he had hold of my ear – I thought he was going to tear it off from the side of my head.

Of course, caning is not allowed in schools any more. I don't think the teachers are allowed to lay a finger on unruly pupils, but at that time, the cane was given for particularly bad behaviour, usually by the Deputy Headmaster, Sam Morgan. He was approaching retirement age and had been at the school as a boy, before coming back as a teacher of Mathematics in the 1930's. I was never taught maths by Sam Morgan but apparently, one of his favourite tricks was to fling the wooden board rubber at the head of any boy who was persistently not paying attention in class, and his aim was good! He had a loud booming voice, a bit like an Army Sergeant Major and he would shout at anyone who was not doing what they should be doing. CANES

My good friend Simon Roe and I used to get into a few scrapes together. On this particular morning we were attending the assembly in the huge Queens Hall at the school. This hall could hold over a thousand boys and there was a big stage at the front where the teachers would sit. I don't remember where we got it from, but we had a pot of bubble mixture, the stuff that comes with a little ring that you blow through to produce soap bubbles. We were sitting very close to the back of the hall and we had already decided that we were going to produce streams of bubbles during the assembly. We mistakenly thought that no-one would notice where they were coming from, and we could get the pot of mixture hidden before we were found out. This was a big mistake!

Neither of us had noticed, but one of the teachers – I forget who it was – had arrived a little late and was standing not ten feet away from us at the side of the hall, a little behind our line of vision. Well we were both hauled out of there as quick as a flash and we were sent to stand outside Sam Morgan's room. A little while later, after the assembly had finished, Sam turned up – he had obviously been told what had happened and we both followed him into his room.

As I say, he already knew what we had done, but he wanted to hear us admitting to it. "Righto," he boomed. "What have you both been doing?" "We have been blowing bubbles in assembly, Sir", I replied. "You've been doing what", Sam bellowed. "Er... blowing bubbles in assembly, Sir", Simon said. Well each time we repeated what we had been doing, it sounded more and more ridiculous, and maybe that was Sam's plan...



Sam went over to his big break-fronted bookcase and opened up the glass door. Inside there were a selection of canes, and he chose one of them. We both knew what was coming next, and he confirmed our fears by shouting "Right, three of these for each of you". Simon and I looked at each other, neither of us wanting to show that we were afraid. Secretly I was wondering how badly it would hurt, and maybe Simon was thinking the same.

"Right...who's first", Sam bellowed. Simon glanced at me again and he said "Me", and he stepped forward. Sam went behind him and shouted "Touch your toes, sonny". I could not believe what happened next and I almost burst out laughing.

Rather than bending from the waist and touching his toes, Simon just squatted down with his hands on the sides of his shoes! Well ...Sam went wild. "What do you think you are doing, sonny! Do you think that's funny?" I can still remember the deafening sound of his voice in my ear as he was such a short distance behind the two of us. "That's three more for you, sonny. Now TOUCH YOUR TOES", Sam shouted.

Simon now realised what he had done and assumed the correct position. Sam laid into him with a vengeance and when Simon had received his six, I could see the tears in his eyes, and I think it was worse being second, because I knew what effect it had had on Simon.

I duly received my three, and I can tell you it was agony. We were dismissed out of Sam's room and we both walked rather gingerly back to the boarding house to inspect the damage. I won't go into detail, but the weals that had been left by the cane were purple, and I could not sit down for the rest of the day. That should have taught us not to misbehave, or rather not to get CAUGHT misbehaving!

**Ed: Has anyone any memories of receiving the cane, or of any mischievous behaviour in Assembly? Kelvin's account will be finished in the November newsletter.**

Dear Mr Clark

I have just spent an enjoyable hour looking through the RGS websites. You can now delete my name from the missing old boys list.

I was at the school from 78 to 82 boarding in School House. I can't say that I really contributed much at the school, apart from working in the tuck shop and I was your babysitter on a couple of occasions. I was often in trouble and failed a couple of O levels, one of which was Latin taught by you.

I am now living and farming in New Zealand which is going well as it is still possible to make a living out of farming here. I live about 50 miles from Auckland and can offer airport pick-ups and overnight accommodation to visitors in exchange for a box of Park Drive Mild rolling tobacco and a bottle of gin from the duty free! I can also arrange pig hunting and duck shooting.

I will be setting up a campsite and B&B for the 2011 World Cup, all will be welcome except the Welsh. I am still playing rugby just, as the physio is my best mate!

I believe I am a fully paid up member of the club so please send the newsletter to:

2 Goodin Road  
RD 1, Te Kauwhata,  
New Zealand  
Ph: 0064 7826 7525

I look forward to hearing from anyone who may remember me.

Kind regards

Richard Sansome (They used to call me Farmer Norman)

**Ed: After I replied, Richard sent me a second email**

Dear Ian,

Thank you for your note. Attached is an interesting photograph.

Mr. Brown read out the timetable for the photographs to be taken and put no pause between School House and Chess Team, so we very quickly got a School House Chess Team together. The cup which I'm holding was one that I won at Young Farmers for Fatstock judging. I got into trouble for that!

Back row: Pete van der Lee, Graham Dutton, Rob Jenkins, James Hendry

Front row: Andy Platts, Nick Morris, DWT, Richard Sansome, Simon Gwenlan.

Kind regards

Richard Sansome



**Ed:** Do you recognize yourself on the photograph? Do you recognize a friend?

**Dear Ian,**

Should any OB ever get to Pebble Beach, California and want to play a couple of the most beautiful courses anywhere in the world do let me know.

As for bullying, it occurred to me but once. I won a scholarship to RGS in 1940 and as my mother had died a year earlier and my father was missing in action at Dunkirk, I was not sure if I could attend. Just before school was to assemble he was found in a Scottish military hospital badly wounded. He arranged for me to get to school.

On my first day I was decked out in my grey uniform with indoor shoes/pumps and the boy serving lunch deliberately poured soup over my clothes. I was the youngest kid in the intake, being ten years and eight months old and probably the smallest. My nickname in 3 Lower B was Kidlet. I rose from the table and confronted the bully who was a half a size bigger and kned him. I never had a problem thereafter, especially after becoming a friend of Nigger Bailey and Dennis Harding, the former a splendid boxer and the latter, a big SOB who brooked no nonsense from anyone.

**Bob Huntley**

**NEXT NEWSLETTER**

This will be published on November 22nd. Please send in your contribution, your memories, your photographs to me, Ian Clark [ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk).

In the next newsletter, there will be tributes to other teachers, who left the RGS in 2006, Tim Dingle, David Moore, and Jean Frost, and also David Keysell, who left in 2005. Also we will complete Kelvin Jouhar's very full and fascinating account about life in the Boarding House in the Seventies.

Ian edits the Newsletter, Judy De Gelas embellishes it and Martin Berry ensures that it appears on the website.

