

# NEWSLETTER



**DECEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>**

## **ANNUAL DINNER**

***DATE: SATURDAY APRIL 12<sup>th</sup>***

***VENUE: QUEENS HALL***

**DO BOOK THE DATE NOW!**

**The chief Guest will be Ian Blyth who was at the RGS as a boy from 1954-1962, and then returned to teach English from 1965 to the present day. He also organised the rowing for most of that time, and produced many staff revues. He retires in July 2003. It would be great if lots of old boys who have been taught English or Rowing by him could come to the Dinner to bid farewell to him.**

## **OWs V RGS SPORTS DAYS**

Next year it is hoped to arrange lots of matches in different games, some against the school. Rugby, hockey, rowing, and fencing would take place on the same day as the annual Dinner on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April. Cricket, tennis and golf would take place on 16<sup>th</sup> July. A number of OWs have already expressed an interest, but how many of these activities run will depend on the interest shown.

If you are interested in playing rugby, do contact Ralph Miller:

[rmiller@glencoecourt.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rmiller@glencoecourt.fsnet.co.uk)

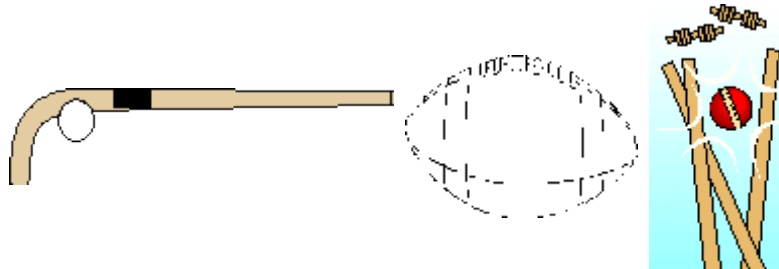
Hockey, David Stone:

[david.stone2@ntl.world](mailto:david.stone2@ntl.world)

Any other activity, Ian Clark:

[ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk)

It would be great to have an early response. The more the merrier. More details on this website during the coming months.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I remember that during his final year Mr Tucker went to great lengths to find out who had bandaged the hands of the clock with what appeared to be an article of female apparel. From the quad it certainly appeared to be one! Sam was merciless in getting to the truth.

Regards,

R.O. (Bob) Davies. 1963-1970.

Dear Sir,

I have many memories, many unprintable! I remember the seven lean years as a boarder when I was always hungry. I now never leave a plate unless it's clean and I grieve over all the food that goes to waste. The hard times, the rough justice dealt out to those who did not fit in, or who broke one of the unwritten laws that governed our lives as boarders. Boys like Steven Mardell pinging his garter at the pipes above his head after lights out, Dennis Hollingham who always wore his underwear back to front and inside out. Whatever happened to him? Hitchhiking around the Home Counties on a Sunday afternoon to relieve the tedium of a Boarding School Sunday. Gym Club on a Friday night, playing games like Murder in the dark, or British Bulldog that would be banned with a shudder today, learning to live with strangers, a very solitary experience for a North Bucks boy who felt he was far from his roots and far from home.

Roy Jones 1951-1959

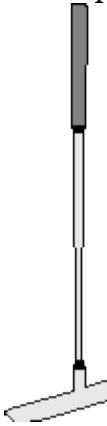
**Editor:** Anyone else have other memories of the Boarding House?

## EXTRACTS OF OLD WYCOMBIENSIANS

In the 1992 Wycombiensian was published the following account of a Royal Visit:  
**THE VISIT OF HRH THE PRINCESS OF WALES - 6th JUNE 1991**

Royal visits to Wycombe RGS do not occur over frequently. There have been three in the last thirty years. Any traces of earlier visits have been lost in mists of time, so the school counted itself exceedingly fortunate to have received a positive response from Kensington Palace to its invitation for the Princess of Wales to come and open the new library and information technology centre on the first Thursday in June 1991.

After months of careful preparation and with close cooperation from the security services, the arrangements came to a smooth fruition on the momentous day. Computer equipment for the IT centre had the final jinxes sorted out, new books for the library arrived in time, staffing changes in the library service rippled the surface but failed to cause disaster and all the gleaming new furniture, built by the local manufacturers, Ercol, was in place.



Every boy in the school had the chance to see our royal visitor, either as she arrived or after the opening of the centre. When the day dawned with overcast skies there was concern that the day might be remembered more for its dampness than its celebration. Certainly the school's musicians were glad of the giant blue and white umbrella beneath which they provided the background music in the quadrangle. However, when the several hundred expectant pupils, staff and guests saw the royal car sweep into the precincts and stop beneath the Queen's Hall, all thought of dull weather dispersed as the Princess's radiance swiftly cast its magic spell. After introductions to the visiting county dignitaries and the school's Senior Management team, Barnaby Miller of 2F presented Princess Diana with a bouquet. The Princess's comment to Barnaby exemplified why she has such rapport with people: she quipped, " You must have been so embarrassed to have been chosen to do this. You'll have lost all you street cred. with your friends." Into the new library the party moved, formalities and plaque unveiling ensued and then came part of the day that will remain green in the memories of those who were there. The Princess chatted with the school's internationals in rugby, hockey, rowing and fencing together with the Voluntary Service Unit and exchanged banter with Mr. John Roebuck on the comparative safety of fencing as opposed to golf, alluding to Prince William's unfortunate blow on the head from a school friend's putter three days earlier. The IT centre was a major feature of the visit and IT Coordinator Mr Peter Gibson had a class of second year pupils displaying their confidence in handling computer graphics and word processing.

The broad spread of the RGS family was reflected in those next introduced on returning to the front quad - long serving staff Miss Pamela Blackwell, Headmaster's Secretary, and Mr Ted Bradmore, Chemistry Department technician - and a group of youthful Old Wycombiensian Gulf War veterans, whom the Princess had particularly asked to meet. The Princess then went "walkabout", going up to chat to RGS pupils of various ages and asking prefects, "What's the local talent like?" and "How many A grades do you expect to get?" As the royal visitor progressed towards the departure point through the lines of the superbly turned out CCF Guard of Honour, the school was invited to give three

cheers for the Princess. The volume of the cheering was something of which the front quadrangle had never heard the like. As the royal car sped away towards Marlow's Cottage Hospital opening, it left behind a thousand RGS members who would have concurred with the ninety year old whom the Princess met later in Marlow who said to her, "I don't know what they are paying you m' dear, but whatever it is you are worth double."

**Editor:** If you were there what were your memories of that visit? Do write and let me know.

### *Extracts from December 1905*

"Amongst the many changes in the School during the last two Terms, we must mention the three half-holidays in the week, which we now enjoy. The result is better work, both in School and on the playing-field."

**Editor:** A good idea for the Headmaster and the Governors to consider today?

"Our numbers last term were 10 boarders, 46 day boys: Total 56."

"The new Cricket pavilion was opened. In times past the School had to be content to play games on the public ground of the Rye Mead. Then the ground adjoining the Rye was acquired, and now they had a pavilion of their own. The cost of the Pavilion was £47 10s."

"RGS v Old Boys' Cricket Match.

RGS 63 all out and 37 all out. Old Boys 53 all out and 9-4"

**Editor:** What a low-scoring game!

### *Extracts from April 1907*

Two debates in the Debating Society:

"It would be a national calamity if women were given the suffrage." This motion was carried by ten votes to six.

"A Channel Tunnel is desirable." This motion was defeated by eight votes to two.

### *Extracts from July 1907*

"In May the Headmaster obtained permission for the boys to bathe in the River Wye above Fryer's Mill four evenings a week."

**Editor:** Anybody know where Fryer's Mill was?

### *Extract from April 1908*

“A new feature this term has been the introduction of the House system. The School has been divided into three houses entitled East, West and House. East and West includes all boys in the borough living east and west of the Church, while House includes Boarders and those living outside the borough”

*Extract from December 1908*

Sole comment on a first-team cricketer:

Weller: “very stiff at present and slow in the field.”

*Extract from April 1909*

“ For the first time in the history of the School a cricket professional was appointed.”

## TEACHERS WHO HAVE LEFT THE RGS

Several teachers left the RGS in 2001 and 2002. We print below extracts from the tributes to a number of them that appeared in the School Magazine.

### RAY LOVELL



In 2001 we bade farewell to Ray Lovell after 25 years’ devoted service to the RGS. A Marlow boy, Ray attended Sir William Borlase’s, and after graduating from London University he came to the RGS to teach Maths. In 1982 he became the RGS’s very first Head Of Computer Studies, helped departments to become IT-literate and played a major part in the expansion of the school’s computer facilities. As a dedicated form-teacher, and in the classroom, he was insistent on the highest standards, and was famously punctilious about the sacrosanctity of course deadlines, even down to the last minute.

Beyond the classroom, he made a major contribution to school life. For many years he compiled the Grey Book. In the late 1980s he was Computer Consultant in the Resources centre, and was responsible for the installation of TVs and Videos in a number of classrooms and the school’s Electronics network. In addition over a long period of time, he ran the Model Railway Club, and helped to organise a number of widely attended exhibitions in the Queen’s Hall.



Outside school, Ray was both line umpire and chair umpire at the Wimbledon tennis championships, and each June was frequently to be seen on television during Centre Court matches. Ray was also a connoisseur of minor 1930s British comedy films: more sadly he was an avid Star Trek fan.

Ray was an immensely dedicated colleague who did not spare himself in the service of the school, and we wish him good fortune in the next stage of his career.

## **RUSSEL EVERETT**

In 1982 Russel and his family moved from Zimbabwe to the UK and the RGS. He was originally employed to teach Physics and Maths, and with 17 years' experience, it was clear that he had much to offer the RGS.



Once at the RGS, Russel took over stage lighting and sound. Leading from the front, he galvanised the team and started developing the technical side of the stage area into what we have in the Queen's Hall today. He spent countless hours installing a new sound system and many other improvements and coordinated the development of the school's first computer controlled lighting interface. Nobody who has been to any of our recent shows can have failed to notice the impressive system that we now have. As a testimony to his enthusiasm, many boys have become involved in the technical side of the theatre, when they have left the RGS.

In 1986 Russel was appointed Head of the newly formed Electronics department, and gradually he became a full-time teacher of Electronics. It is of note that in the last round of AS modules, all the candidates achieved grade A in all their papers.

Away from the RGS Russel and his wife have completed the Thames walk and are now concentrating on the Grand Union Canal. As for retirement, they have plans to travel in the UK and abroad, and Russel intends to take up digital photography and develop his computer skills. We wish them both every happiness.

DM

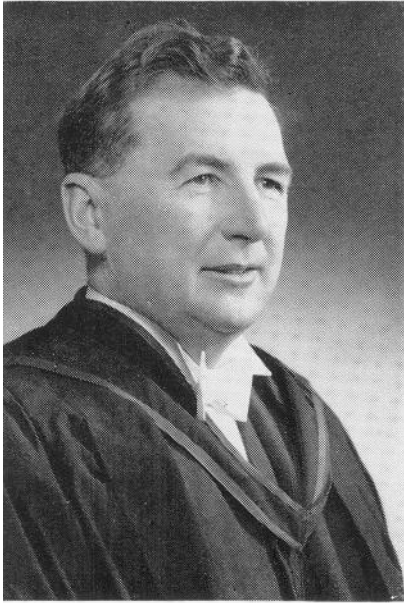
Editor: In the February newsletter there will be tributes to other teachers who left the RGS in the last two years.

### **FOUND AT THE ANNUAL DINNER**

A book about the Hughenden Valley. If you lost your copy at the dinner, please contact me. (Tel: 01494 530782)

### **PHOTOGRAPHS AND MEMORABILIA FROM THE EARLY 1960s**

Many thanks to John Haley who has sent me a lot of Photographs and memorabilia of life at the RGS in the early 1960s. Published below is part of the appeal in memory of Mr Tucker.



EDMUND RONALD TUCKER  
HEADMASTER  
1933 to 1964

*“Let us give thanks to God that we can remember Ronald Tucker with so much gratitude and admiration in our hearts, with so much sincerity in our praise of him, with so much confidence in the value and permanence of his life’s work.”*

(C. HOWARD ENSOR)

What are your memories of Mr. Tucker? Do send me them.

**Below is a photograph of the 4<sup>th</sup> XV in 1963-1964.**



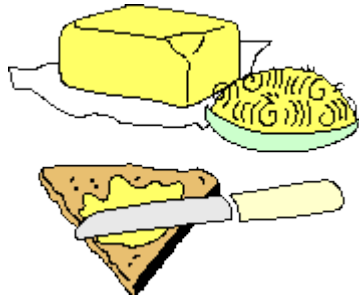
Can anyone give me the names of those in the picture?

### **Andrew MacTavish recalls life as an 11 Year Old Boarder in 1948-9**

The Junior Dormitory at School House, just before seven in the morning in the Christmas Term of 1948. Sixteen army steel beds, each with three blankets line the sides of the long room. Some blankets are doubled as the room is not over-warm. Most beds have dressing gowns thrown over them. The beds are separated by low lockers. The floor is of bare polished wood. There are no curtains or pictures. The large gilt mirror on the wall at one end is the only decorative feature.

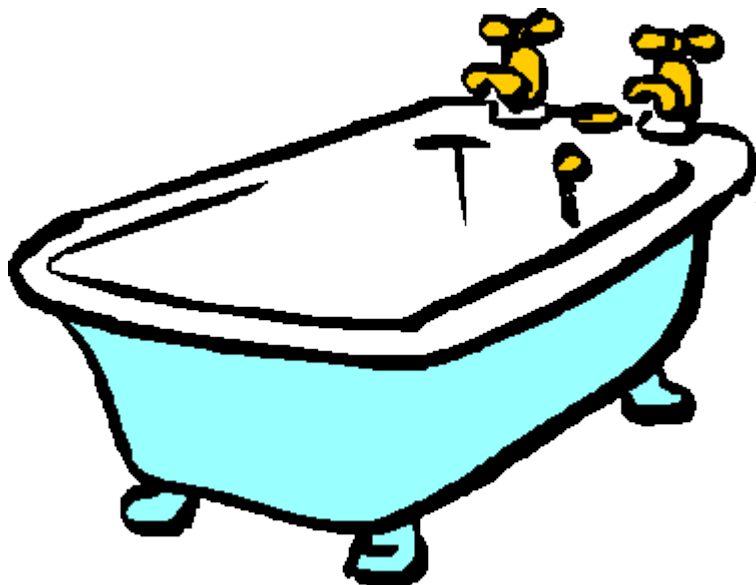
The school clock chimes and a hand bell is rung violently downstairs. Fourteen figures yawn, stretch and reach for dressing gowns and slippers. The two other humps do not move. They are prefects and can rest longer. The fourteen eleven year olds trail to the bathroom, wash and trail back again. They make little noise so as to avoid recriminations from their seniors. They dress: pants, vests, grey shirts, standard school tie (for everyone wears the same), short grey trousers, long socks with garters, black lace-up shoes. They are uniformed to a point, for the war has been over for a mere three years and clothing rationing is still in force. The school can 'not insist on blazers so there is a variety of jackets, though all are of quiet, subdued colours. Some wear grey suits. But all are in shorts because no one in the first year (second forms then - Year 7 now) would consider wearing longs, and it will be another two or three years before they all cover their knees.

The Middle Dormitory go to wash and on the top floor some of the Seniors are rising. The Juniors drift down to the Common Room which is another bare room. Again with a wooden floor and similarly carpetless, pictureless, and curtainless, it has fixed benching around two sides, under which are stored individual tuck boxes. There are a couple of sets of wooden lockers and a radio on the wall. The centre of the room is occupied by a half-sized billiard table (for use by the seniors only) and to one side is a miniature, one-eighth sized table for the others to play on. Next door is the locker room where games kit is kept. The corridor is lined with pegs, each holding a standard navy blue mackintosh and a cap. Of all possessions, the cap is critical. It is a grave offence to be caught outside the school grounds without it being properly worn on the head, and this goes for day boys (or 'day bugs') as for boarders.



At five to eight, the warning bell goes for breakfast. It sounds again at eight, and everyone lines up under the prefects. "Lead on!" and everyone goes to his table in the dining room, eight at each with a prefect at the head. The Housemaster, Matron and the Cook appear from the other doorway. The Housemaster says grace. All sit, and one boy from each table goes to the end of the room and brings bowls of cereal. Food rationing is still in force, and the fare is plain. The cereal bowls are cleared and a cooked breakfast is served. Most boys eat everything. If someone does not want something, others readily eat it for him. (The offer is made by saying 'Quis?', the Latin for 'Who wants?') the first person to answer 'Ego', the Latin 'I (do)' gets it). A plate of bread is already on the table. It is sliced thickly and buttered thinly. There is a saucer of marmalade. This is passed round and everyone takes a share. If the sharing goes wrong and none is left for the last boy, then his plate is passed around and, everyone puts back a little. At the end of each table are pots of jam or peanut butter belonging to individuals to supplement the issued ration. When everyone has finished and the plates have been stacked, the prefects nod to the Head Prefect. He stands and all rise. The tables then lead out in order, leaving a couple of duty boys to wipe the tables down and sweep the floor. Everyone returns straight upstairs to make beds, and to have the neatness and the "hospital corners" approved by a prefect before being released.

After school boarders' tea is at 5.30pm and there is time to kill. On Mondays there is Boarders' rugby practice, which always seems to be a fairly pointless exercise even to those who are devoted to the sport. On Wednesday, homework (known always as 'prep' for 'preparation') is early as the 25th High Wycombe Scout Troop meet after tea. On the other three days boys usually walk up to Archie's stores and the chip shop at Terriers.



Tea is not a very exciting meal - a hot course and bread and butter. Immediately afterwards is 'Prep' run by the Duty Prefect in a school classroom. It takes place in total silence and lasts until supper at 7.30 pm. Supper usually comprises whatever Leftovers are available and is the

one casual meal on a cafeteria basis, though the cocoa is usually acceptable. Prayers are taken by the Housemaster in the Common Room at 8.00 pm. An evening prayer, the Lord's Prayer and the Grace. The cry 'Juniors up' comes at 8.30 pm. There is a bath list, and each boy has one once a week (though it should be remembered that they always have showers after games and the two PE lessons). After they have all washed, they are minutely inspected by 'the Duty Prefect: hands, nails ears, knees, feet and finally their shoes, cleaned for the next day. Boys are sent back to wash if they are not acceptable; if their shoes are not shining, this is recorded in a book. Three defaults will result in a Prefects' Meeting and a slippering. Lights out for the Juniors is at 9.00 pm. And snuggled under the sheets is the only time a boy is by himself and alone.

Discipline is harsh and rigid. The Housemaster is nominally in charge. His study is to the immediate left of the entrance door, he is present at every meal and he usually checks the dormitories each evening. But the real control lies with the prefects of whom there are five, all in the Upper Sixth. They have their study on the top floor and reign supreme. The Headmaster leaves all organisation and punishment to them. A hundred or two hundred lines are commonplace sanctions and a regular part of life. Boys who transgress further are given a "Prefects' Meeting". These are held after supper on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The list is posted on the board and the boys line up outside the prefects' room at the top of the Boarding House after supper. Sometimes a dozen or more boys may be summoned. They are called in one at a time, and the charge is read: " Not wearing cap in High Wycombe on Saturday morning". The verdict is always guilty and the punishment usually one or two of the slipper (that is, a gym shoe.)

Appeals may be made to the Housemaster, but he always backs the prefects so any appeal is a waste of time. He has only a moderate knowledge of his smaller charges. There is no routine whereby he meets them all individually at regular intervals. If they do not have a major problem, then he may never speak to them in private. It is not that he does not care or is callous; the plain fact is that the world does not run any other way. Pastoral care has yet to be discovered. The closest he gets is when he reads the weekly letter home that boys have to write on a Sunday morning before Church. Letters are collected unsealed and he reads and posts them. The other regular meeting is when he issues pocket money on a Friday. Junior boys receive two shillings (that is, 2s 0d, the modern 10p). To put matters in perspective, and remembering there are twelve pence (12d) to the shilling, 3d (pronounced "thruppence" will buy a 2 ounce bar of chocolate, or a small bag of chips, or a small bottle of lemonade or Tizer. To buy the chocolate, the boy will have to produce sweet coupons as rationing is still in force. The boarding house holds his ration book for the main items of food, such as butter, bacon, eggs and meat. The sweet coupons are removed from the book and held by the individual. They do not stretch far. Most months, and it varies, the ration is a quarter of a pound of confectionary for each week.



In this barren world, there is one place of fun and relaxation for the smaller boys. It is the Scout Hut. The boarders' Scout Troop, 25<sup>th</sup> High Wycombe, has a wooden hut directly opposite the schoolhouse door. It is the size of a classroom, it has old woodworking benches,

tables, chairs, lockers, posters, displays, and, above all, a large stove for heating, in the middle of one

wall. This is an old coke stove set on a concrete base with an iron chimney pipe running straight up to the roof. Virtually all the boarders in the first three school years are members of the Troop - about 35 boys. They parade once a week on Wednesday evening. Boarders Prep is earlier on that night, and Scouts takes place immediately after tea. The Housemaster, Reg, runs the Troop. There are wide games in the Green Hill woods, tracking practice, tree identification and everyone has to show he can construct and light a fire without paper with only two matches. This is done in the shrubbery, the very small shrubbery in the space between School House, the scout hut and the main buildings. (Most of it is now car park and road). It offers just about enough space and twigs for half a dozen scouts to light fires in reasonable safety.

But the Scout Hut itself is the haven. Scouts can go there at any time and the week's Duty Troop have to keep the fire alight in winter so that the wooden hut is habitable and can serve as an overflow common room. Indeed it is more attractive than the common room; it is less bare, and the prefects rarely bother to go in. Scouts are beneath them. There is therefore an air of freedom in the room. The stove takes this freedom further too. The modern eleven year old would shudder at the overall discipline and restrictions of the boarding house, but the stove gave an outlet that few modern boys can ever experience. The stove had to be lit. This involved carrying wood from the store at the rear of the boarding house and coke from the huge coke heap, for coke was the fuel of the day. The school and the boarding house both had coke boilers that needed constant tending. The school boilers were under the Headmaster's and the Bursar's studies, to the left and right of the main front doors. Coke was dumped to the side and was shovelled by the caretakers into the bunkers below. In the boarding house, it was the Duty Prefect's job to 'bank' the furnace fast thing at night – that is, to fill the firebox and close the air intake or 'damper'. If this was not done, the boiler would burn out, and the house would be cold in the morning....

... The Scout Hut stove would usually smoke appallingly while it was being lit. Even with the chimney damper fully open, smoke would pour out of the top lid and fill the room. Sometimes there was a total fog, which was immensely satisfying to small boys. Then the coke would catch and, if the damper was left fully open, the heat would build up. There were a number of options if you were bored. You could continue to leave all the air intakes open, and load the stove continuously with the smallest coke you could find. In a short time, you could get the entire stove a-roaring red-hot with the chimney glowing up to the ceiling plate. The only problem was that this might attract the prefects as usually sparks tended to shoot out rather noticeably. Or you could get a few of the small milk bottles and pack them in the top. After a few minutes, molten glass would begin to drip out of the bottom. You could then get the poker and try your hand at glassworks, or find a metal tube and try glass blowing. On one occasion, we found that the stove had gone out, leaving a 3" collar of glass welded to the iron interior. To clear it, we had to light the stove and blast it at full heat for half an hour (We could have smashed the glass out, but that was too simple). Or again, you could shove the poker in the bottom until it was red hot, and try your hand at boring holes in pieces of wood, or burn decorative scars on the benches (though Reg tended to get mad about this). Again,

this tended to fill the hut with smoke, which was satisfying. Looking back, it staggers me that we had this freedom. The Scout Hut and the stove were an oasis in a harsh life.

**Editor:** Andrew's account of life as a Boarder continues in the February newsletter.

**Below is a photograph of a cricket team in the 1970s**



Which year and who are the boys in it? Please let me know.

The next newsletter will be published on February 1 2003. Please send any memories or suggestions to me.

A very happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year to all