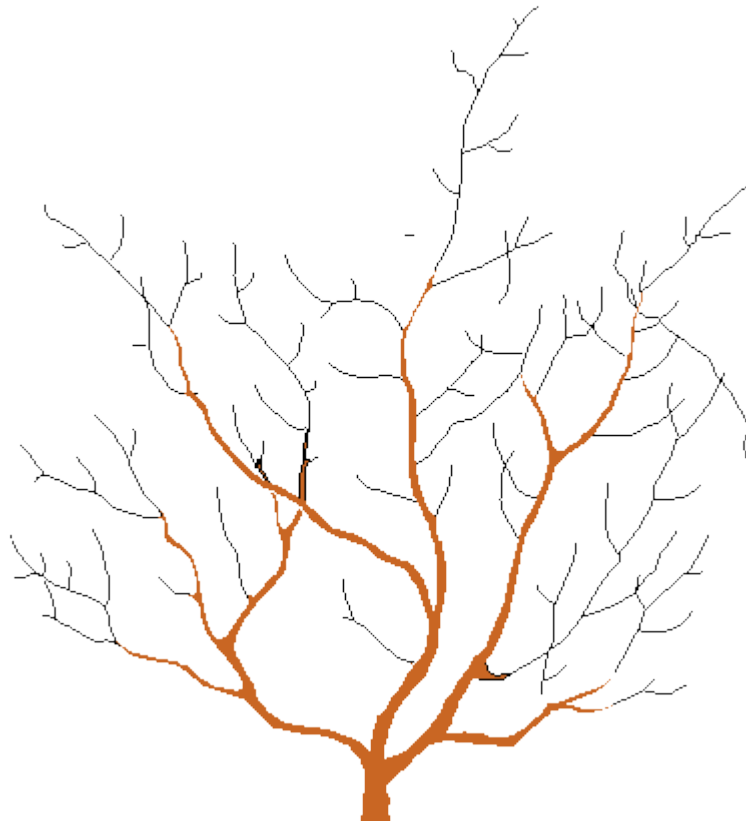


# NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 10 2003

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## SOME SNIPPETS FROM THE SECRETARY

It is interesting how many people are trying to find out about their ancestors. Someone who was working on her family tree contacted me from Australia to see if I could find out about a distant relative who was at the RGS in about 1880. Earlier in the year somebody else was asking about an ancestor who she had found out was Headmaster of the RGS in about 1830. The History of the School came in very useful on that one. Somebody else said that his was the only family in Britain by the name of Rowne. He had spotted that a missing member of the OW Club was an R P Rowne. I could not actually find out when he was at the school. Anybody recognise the name and able to help?

In addition a number of Old Wycombiensians have asked for guided tours of the RGS. It was great to take Mark Fisher and his wife round the RGS for his first visit to the school since his last day here in 1976, and also Ian Gregor who left in 1987.

Finally three OWs who left in 1950, Dennis Smith, David Wood and John Why, enjoyed reminiscing about their old school and teachers as they toured the buildings.

## HMS CARDIFF PHOTOGRAPH



A real highlight was an invitation from Mike Beardall (1977-82), who has recently been appointed as Commanding Officer of HMS Cardiff, to spend the day with him. Roy Page, present Deputy-Head, and I travelled down to Portsmouth for an 8.00am start. The ship went out with others into the English Channel, where we were able to observe at close hand the various manoeuvres to deal with hostile planes and submarines. Helicopters and other planes flew overhead. We also saw how ships got very close to the supply-ship for replenishing, and had a very detailed guided tour round the ship. Roy and I were very impressed. Many thanks, Mike! Also on board was James Edgerton (1980-82), a fellow-guest of Mike's and Mike Tyler, who was serving on the ship.

In the Summer Newsletter, I offered a free copy of John Mitchell's book to any OW who wrote about their memories of the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s. Two OWs of the 1970s have responded, and have received their free copy. There are still four free copies to be won. Do send in your account of what the RGS was like when you were there! Some accounts are published below, some will be published in a later newsletter.

If you are not yet a member of the Old Wycombiensians' Club, now is the time to join, as you will be able to receive the Annual Magazine in February, and details of the Annual Dinner to be held on Saturday April 24th. Also the date for the O.W. cricket match against the school 1<sup>st</sup> XI and the golf match against the teachers has been fixed for Wednesday July 14th. Do book the dates now!

Finally if you have sent in an amendment to the web site in the last six months, please check your entry. I am very sorry that I have lost a few e-mails, and if your entry has not been amended, would you please be good enough to email again.

With my very best wishes

**Ian**

## RETIREMENTS

The following tributes to long-serving teachers, who retired or left in the summer, appeared in the School magazine:

### Ian Blyth



Ian Blyth first came to RGS as a boy in 1954. In common with other boys he only took four years to complete the O Level course, thus allowing extra time in the Sixth Form after A Levels, to take Oxford or Cambridge entrance. By the age of eighteen he seems to have read more than most people read in a lifetime, and in 1961 he won an exhibition in English examinations to Lincoln College, Oxford.

He made his mark at the school in a year when there were many other able boys - eight others won open scholarships including Roger Scruton. Ian was a prefect the philosopher Head Librarian, Treasurer of the Dramatic Society, and fearsome CSM in the CCF Army Section.

In 1965 he was invited back by A.C. Hills, Senior English Master, to teach English, and since then many generations boys have benefited from his attention to their spelling syntax, and the highways and byways of English Literature. He wears his tremendous erudition with deceptive lightness and has a detailed knowledge of the widest range of literature, from Chaucer to Chandler, and beyond.

For his colleagues in the English department, Ian's greatest asset has been his jokes, which have helped us through a grim week. The English department saved gallons of red ink when he taught them to simply write 'eh' against a baffling paragraph in a pupil's essay. The horrendous task of marking the comprehensions of the whole of Year 9 was made bearable when the 137th script was in Ian's unmistakable handwriting, and was answered in the style of Damon Runyon.

During the 1990s 'teacher appraisal' entered our classrooms, and I had the privilege of assessing many of my colleagues' lessons. Ian Blyth's lessons were - especially at Sixth Form level - always enhanced by the wit, (sometimes lost on the boys) and the breadth as well as the depth of knowledge of the man at the front. He has always been willing to help weaker boys if they were prepared to help themselves, but the lazy and incompetent were unlikely to be in any doubt of sir's attitude to such a situation.

Although the essence of our work is in the classroom, schools like RGS a huge amount of effort is put into extra-curricular matters. Here mention must be made of rowing and Staff Revues. Ian was in charge of rowing from the 1960s until the end of the century! In that period a huge amount of time, effort and skill exercised by the coach led to successes at regattas up and down the country. It may well be that some of the more colourful abusive

epithets were coined or polished on the tow paths of England - 'twassocks' and 'wazzocks', they knew who they were.

Over the last thirty years Staff Revues have been master- minded and largely written by, as well as produced by, Ian Blyth. Teachers are more difficult to organise than boys - they have even greater difficulty in getting to rehearsals, learning lines and remembering moves. It must be something to do with age. Out of disparate material, Ian managed to entertain boys and parents packed into the Queen's Hall, bringing such stars as Messrs White-Taylor, Moffatt and Gamester, not to mention the ladies, before the incredulous public. Who will take up the mantle he has now laid down?

Ian has also produced Shakespeare in the Queen's Hall, including a fine *Macbeth*, and his short public statements in staff meetings as Chairman of the Common Room have included wonderfully brisk hatchet-jobs on colleagues who 'borrow' newspapers, or can't be bothered to return coffee cups.

All present members of the school, and many past generations, have reason to be glad they have known a valued colleague, a devoted classroom teacher, and a loyal son of the school. We will miss his sense of fun and his boundless general knowledge (which made him a pillar of the staff quiz team), but we wish him a long and happy retirement.

## **Colin Tattersall**



Colin Tattersall joined the RGS back in 1984 to teach Physical Education, having graduated from St Luke's College, Exeter, and having previously taught at Verulam School, St Albans. Colin is most noted for his work with the rugby teams but has also helped teams to reach national final: in swimming, cricket and athletics. Colin has been instrumental in the school's growth from a good rugby playing school in the county to the top rugby playing state school in the country, no fewer than seven of the sides that Colin has been involved with having gone on to play at Twickenham in the Daily Mail Final. Over the past four years Colin has also coached the England U16 side, having coached both the South West and London Divisions at this age group.

Tatts, as he is known by the senior rugby players, (amongst other less savoury names, depending upon selection), has also helped launch the successful FRORGS, and thanks to this Colin has led major tours to both South Africa and Australia. Former old boy Matt Dawson (Northampton, England and British Lion) came to the Sportsman's Dinner 2003 to pay tribute to Colin and the hard work that he has put in over the last 19 years. No fewer than 30 RGS boys have achieved international honours at differing age groups in this period of time. He is famous for his safe and slow driving of the school minibuses and perhaps should be reminded

of his trip to Twickenham to a national final with a full squad of players and no shirts. Tatts will be sorely missed and those staff and boys who have travelled to South Africa, Australia, or the far reaches of Ipswich on a wet weekend in October will all wish him well. Colin will be recuperating over the summer after an operation on his ankle, and I have no doubt that whatever the future holds Tatts will be a regular visitor to cheer on the Ist XV, particularly as a certain Simon Tattersall should figure prominently in next year's senior side.

## Colin Howe



Colin Howe first joined the RGS in 1988, when he became the school's Head of Design and Technology. He brought with him a passion for engineering, problem solving and an ability to devise interesting projects that have inspired hundreds of boys over the past fifteen years. The energy and enthusiasm that he put into teaching his subject also went into other areas of school life too. He established the school's Karting Club, which in addition to seeing many drivers compete at national level has also given many boys the thrill of being part of the pit crew.

A keen skier, Colin also organised many of the school's ski trips until 2001. His many merits as a teacher and a form master can only be matched by his ability to lose things continually. Missing items have ranged from car keys and glasses to rather more important items such as a piece of GCSE coursework! Colin is equally forgetful too. He recently drove the entire Karting Club (and the kart) to an important meeting in Crawley only to find that they had turned up a week early. Perhaps Colin's most notable quality is the way in which he works with others. Whether as a student or as a teacher, you are instantly aware of his respectful, kind and disarming personality. Sylvia, his wife, also retires from the RGS this year. They have many hobbies including skiing, tennis, >cycling and squash. Their main passion is, however, for their children and grandson, who will no doubt soon enjoy much more of their time. For years to come, I suspect many grown men will look nostalgically at their old Desk Tidies, Motion Alarms and Electronic Organs, and remember Colin.

**A number of other teachers have left the RGS recently. They are:**

- Mary Ames
- Duncan Rudge
- Alex Smith
- Louis du Toit
- Carmen Webb
- Jenny Ramsden

Mike Jones, the School Bursar since 1991, has retired.

## **PETER RANCE (1940-1947)**

Richard Rance has written to say that his brother, Peter John, has unexpectedly died. We send our condolences to Richard and the family.

## **GEOFFREY PERFECT (1932-1937)**

It is very sad to report that Geoffrey Perfect died on August 22. During the war he served as an airframe fitter in the RAF, working on Lancasters and Spitfires. His greatest joy was on his birthday when he flew up his home valley in a rare two-seater Spitfire. After the war, he founded Perfect Homes. Geoffrey had a special love of racing and vintage cars. He served on many committees, all driven by his desire to put his Christian faith into practical action. He had been in addition a Wycombe JP, and was Vice-President of Penn and Tylers Green Cricket Club. We send our condolences to his family and friends.

## **DUDLEY COLLARD (1943-1949)**

Ron Wynands tells me that Dudley, who was an aircraft designer and designed the wing of Concorde, was interviewed in his home in France for a TV programme entitled "Concorde: a Love Story"

## **An appendix to Roger File's article in the last newsletter on the RGS at the end of the war (1943-1951) by John Carrick**

I preceded Roger File by 2 years at RGS. I went as a scholarship boy in September 1943 having been taken by my parents on a bus up Amersham Hill and informed very portentously, that this was the Grammar School and I had to pass the scholarship.

So at the age of 10, I was assigned to 3 Lower C (form teacher Mr Rees). All our class were scholarship lads and we were really taken to task if anyone made a stupid mistake. It was wartime and I remember weeding vegetables on the patch in front of the school to boost the war effort and also going on organised Harvest Camps to Lincolnshire to pick "taties". In fact I was on one of these camps when we heard, in 1945 that the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and I remember our joy when a neighbour told us that war with Germany was over and that next day would be a holiday.

The teachers in these 2 war years seemed no better or worse than later. Woe betide anyone who took on Miss Pollard, the Latin teacher who had returned to teaching from being a land girl working on a farm.

In the second year, I joined 3 Upper A and had to choose between Greek and German (we already did Latin and French). Science was abandoned and 2 years later I was taking School Certificate in 8 subjects at the age of 14. We were the express stream allowing us to take Higher School Certificate at the age of 16 - not much of a balanced programme of education but it did allow me to go to University. I cannot say that the war really affected me. We just seemed to take in our stride the occasional buzz bomb, the American servicemen who were encamped in the Abbey grounds, the trains full of troops going off to embark somewhere or other and food rationing (although in all fairness the ratio became more austere just after the war).

The Head, Mr Tucker, caned me on one occasion but bore me no grudges when he took me for Greek. I look back at my 8 years at RGS with affection, certainly more so than at the next 2 years on National Service.

## RGS Building Developments



In the last year the School Chapel has been deconsecrated and has become the school's Business Studies and Economics Dept. The Department must be the only one in the country with stained glass windows. The picture shows the teachers gathered for the Deconsecration Service.

In October 2003, the New Music Centre was opened at the RGS.

What were the Staff Rooms and the teaching rooms for the Economics and Business Department have become rooms for class teaching and a whole series of rooms for individual instrumental teaching.

## MEMORIES OF THE SEVENTIES

Peter Newman (1972-1978) writes that he is not sure this is really interesting but it was fun remembering as he wrote it. I remember being very impressed with the RGS when I started in May 1972. My family had moved down from Derbyshire where I was attending another albeit less noted Grammar School. How grand it all seemed! In those days the fountains in the quad even worked, intermittently.



My form masters, or at least I think they were, were Ian Blyth, Roy Page, Graham Ryder, Mr Waller, Trevor Durbin, David Flinders, Roger File (terribly posh it seemed- he pronounced Nestlé the correct way!) and our German assistant, Mrs Long, unkindly referred to as Frau Cow more for the rhyme than for anything she had actually done. Also I have fond memories of Rev Skipp who would beat us regularly.

In the sixth form there was a huge fad for bridge and boys would spend every minute between lessons playing. I never really understood the rules.

I took part in the school exchange with the Lycée Daudet, Nîmes in April 1977. My exchange partner wasn't actually chez lui on my arrival as he had come to the UK on a rugby tour. Just as well really as we didn't get on. Ironic now that my partner is French! Being in France was great but we had to have them back in July, and French teenagers away from parental control were a nightmare.

I was really into tennis mostly to escape having to do any other sport. Although my skills were minimal it was at least something I enjoyed. Chris Williams and I would play through the year when the weather allowed it. When games periods are washed out, do the boys still get to see "True Grit" or has the tape worn out yet?

I remember there being a book fair once a year in the Resource Centre. I still have some of the penguin paperbacks I bought, 25p in the new still new decimal currency.

I was a member of Vulture, the cultural society, which whisked us to theatres and other venues mostly in London as I recall. I particularly remember the day that Harold Wilson resigned as Prime Minister and we spent the whole journey debating whether there would be a general election. Of course there wasn't. We went to see "No Mans Land" and "The Caretaker" among other productions.

My O Levels took place in 1976 when the sun beat down all summer and we sweltered. I think we were given permission to leave off both blazers and ties. My friends included Ian Holliday (still in touch occasionally by email), and Ian Fuller (last time I saw him he was teaching in Chelmsford). I wonder what happened to twins Mike and Robert Standing. Others whose names ring bells faintly include Gary Tizzard, Jeremy Young, Mike Fallows, Gary Wise, Bill Vestentoft, Jim Moorcroft - the Grey Book 1976 is coming in useful for this! (Ed. I wonder if any of these who aren't in contact with us already might wish to make contact)

Although my parents moved house again in 1977 - to Coventry - I stayed on and lived at my grandparents in Amersham. My grandfather was an old boy too, (he died in 2001) and the younger of my two brothers, Mark, was also at the RGS for a short time. I recall having to obtain passes to get the bus to leave early when I had free periods.

I left in December 1978 having unsuccessfully undertaken the 7th term sixth form. I have never been back, yet I have fond memories and am proud to have been a pupil at the RGS.

## **PHOTOGRAPH of BASKETBALL TEAM 1981-1982**



Can anyone name all the players? Names to Ian Clark please.

**Mark Fisher 1969-1976 writes:**

Ok, this is what I remember from my time at the RGS. It was a long time ago, and, if what I remember is not what you remember, then forgive me, time changes memories.

When I arrived at the RGS aged 11, I had only been in High Wycombe for 3 days. I had only been in England for 1 year, 6 months of which I spent in hospital due to a nasty accident. Before then, I had spent the past 3 years, i.e. all of my primary education, in Lusaka Zambia. So, arriving at this huge school, with so many pupils, scared me to death. It was huge, I knew nobody in the school, I knew nothing about English life and what English schoolboys should do and think. I was totally lost.

I don't remember much about the first two years here, and most that I do remember is sad and not worth mentioning. There was however something that happened that was great fun. It was not part of the school teaching, it just happened. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, somebody came up with the idea that we should help the children at Amersham Hospital. I think the person was Balam (Bralam?), (how I hated the use of surnames only at the school!), but if not him, then, he was a big part of it. A group of about 5 of us got together and decided on a show. Some would be clowns, some would sing, I was to be a magician. Now, until then, and remember, we were only 12, I had never done anything for anyone else, but I had to be a magician, so, I got a few books from the library and learnt some tricks. The day before the show, I remember crying to my parents that I could not get the tricks to work, but, we turned up at the hospital, a great

show was put on, and we all had fun. To this day I think the nurses enjoyed it more than the children, but, we tried, and it led to other things. (I have no idea why this idea came about, or what inspired it, but many other similar ideas arose during my time at RGS. Was that a sign of the times, or the ideals the teachers were installing in us?)



The only other thing I remember from the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 years was the Model Railway Club. Ok, I am now 45, so, why do I still remember a silly club, under the stage in the Old Hall, where we had a simple track with little scenery and a few engines. We had to wait and queue to be allowed our 15 minutes to control one section of the track, but hey, yes, I enjoyed it, I loved it, I spent most of my lunchtimes there. I have no idea who the teacher was who ran the club, but it was one of my happy memories of the lower school.

Ok, teachers now, the big problem is teachers' names. See, we never called the teachers by their names. They were Sir, or Miss (Strangely never Mrs, and Ms of course was years down the line). Talking amongst ourselves, we used their nicknames, so one day, in the 5<sup>th</sup> year I think, or lower 6<sup>th</sup>, I had to go to the staff room and speak to my form teacher. The staff room door opened, some anonymous teacher asked what I wanted and I said I needed to speak to Mr Gas Fitter. Blush, shock, shame. I could not for the life of me remember his real name. (Mr Guildsthorpe, I think) I still don't know how I escaped detention for that, but my form teacher did appear, and I managed to ask the question I needed.

School is about classes, teachers, learning and friends. Teachers now. I can remember one bad teacher, one teacher I had a problem with and the rest were either ok, or great.

The bad teacher, well fortunately I can't remember his name though I can still see his face clearly. He did not take me for a subject, rather he took over a position of responsibility after another teacher left. This new teacher called me a liar and a hypocrite in public, in front of other teachers and pupils. Ok, in 7 years, only one bad nasty experience with a teacher is a good thing.

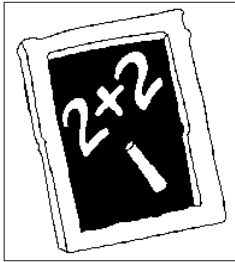
The teacher I had a problem with, that was Mr Holmes. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, he was convinced I had broken the schools only clarinet and banned me from clarinet lessons. I so wanted to play, and my father saved up and at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year brought me my own instrument (which I still have and play). Mr Holmes relented, let me take lessons again, which I continued up to my A levels. Whilst I was never that fond of Mr Holmes, he gave me the most precious education I learnt from this school (see end).

The other teachers I remember, well, Mr Hillier, who taught History. I really liked him, worked for him in the library, but I sucked at history and failed the mock O level. Still, he was my form teacher for 4 years and a nice guy.

Biology, Jez Lingard. Now, this guy really had it in for me in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, mainly because I was useless. (I was not aware until a long time later that I was under threat of being removed from the school for poor performance) At the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, I came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the annual exam. Mr Lingard chased me round the class, calling me a cheat (jokingly) and finally praising my performance. In the following year I remember him helping me on my biological

drawings, which I could not do. I also remember him giving us the 'sex education' lesson, which appeared to be a stock film suited for soldiers in the Vietnam war about VD. After the film, he told us what rubbish it was, and then went on to talk to us, answer our questions, and give us a proper education. I was sad when he moved on to a better position.

Who else? ah, Sam Morgan. Now Mr Morgan never taught me, he just terrified me. Walking around the grounds in his gown, with his walking stick, or was it his cane, he typified to me the English School Teacher. I was called to his office once, for reasons I cannot remember, but he certainly made his presence felt.



Maths now, for maths in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> form I was taught by Dr Puritz. He was (or is, as I understand he is still teaching at the school) a very intense person, forever trying to stretch us as far as we could go. I remember him trying to persuade us to sit the S level paper but I did not have the confidence at the time. Still, today I read maths books for fun, whether it is because of his teaching I do not know.



My worst subject at the RGS was languages. I hated Latin and was useless at French, but I so wanted to speak it. I got a grade 8 in my French mock O level, a grade 9 in the real thing and when I sat it again in the 6<sup>th</sup> form, a U. However, I wanted to learn Russian, but you could only take Russian as an option in the 6<sup>th</sup> form if you had a French O level, which I had failed. However, the headmaster said I was so keen, he would let me take Russian, especially as I was going on the Russian trip at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> form. There were only 4 or 6 of us in the lesson, and our teacher was Mr Perfect. I tried so hard but like my French I was useless. Mr Perfect lived close to my home and he gave me free after school lessons every week. I did learn enough to be able to read the street and metro signs in Odessa, but never enough to speak. He still lives in the same house and I went round to see him last Christmas when I was with my parents. He is retired now but we had a long chat about school, bee-keeping and Russia. A great teacher.

If languages were my worst, science was my best and one of my best teachers was the aforementioned Mr Gas Fitter. Ok, now the details have faded, but the principles of this lesson still stand out today.

This is lower 6<sup>th</sup> and the lesson before we had been putting potassium into water and seeing it burn. So, this lesson, we were asked, 'What if you put potassium into alcohol?' Now first of all, it might have been oil, not alcohol, so long ago, and secondly, I am sure this question was asked by someone in the class. So Mr Gelsthorpe got us all debating and discussing, and we spent half the lesson trying to theorise what would happen. In the end, half the class said nothing would happen, the other half, including me, said it would explode, or burn more than it did in water. Both halves of the class had some theory to back up their ideas. Sir then set up the experiment, in the secure cabinet, with miniature sandbags and all precautions taken. Dropping the potassium into the alcohol (or oil) nothing happened, anti-climax. As an example of the scientific method, coming up with a theory, testing the results, it was brilliant. 30 years on I still remember that lesson.

My best teacher had to be Mr Chamberlain, who taught me Physics from about the 3<sup>rd</sup> year up to A Level. What I remember most about him was he would let us talk, discuss, argue. Yes, he taught us what we needed to be taught, but he would also let us challenge things, argue why things were the way they were. To this day, I still don't understand why things are the way they are, but Mr Chamberlain opened my eyes to ask the question.

I have gone on a lot about the lessons and the teachers, what about the social side of school, what about sports? Well, I hated games and sports. I managed to get out of it for 5 years, till I got caught, and caned (Well, I guess I deserved it)

Social life, I did not see any. I now have an American wife and for her, the social side of school is the most important. I don't know whether there were any social activities in the RGS in the 1970's, but if there was, I was not involved.

I did get involved with some activities though these were organised by the pupils, not the school.



When Idi Amin expelled all the Asians, a large number came to High Wycombe. I went on sponsored walks, peace marches, helped out at the multi-racial centre etc (all organised by other pupils more politically aware than me)

I also remember being involved in a demonstration against the CCF on open day, handing out leaflets and running like mad from the teachers. That was the day the peace sign was written in weed killer on the quad lawn. At the time, I think I could have said who did it. 30 years gone, no idea. Whilst I am sure the staff were very angry and upset, I remember seeing that peace sign for the next few years, in new green grass and thinking, yes, we can make a difference.

The school gave me a great education, but it gave me more than that. As well as the academic subjects I was studying, I had access to a wealth of other opportunities. There were sports, games and athletics. Ok, I did not care for these, but they were there if I wanted them. There were clubs and societies, some I belonged to, the rest I ignored. What I did go for, what made the school special for me were two things.

The first was the library. It may have been no big deal to others, but to me, the school library was bigger than the town library in Lusaka. I loved it from the first day I saw it and read so much.

The other big thing was music. In fact, it is what I most remember the school for. I'm sure if I had gone to another school, I would have got similar grades, similar results, but, I would not have had the opportunity to learn about music. I remember trips to the Globe, now the ENO to see Tales of Hoffman, Marriage of Figaro and other operas. It cost us £1 for the coach trip and opera and I went to as many as I could. In the 6<sup>th</sup> form, I took up Music Appreciation, and learnt so much. Ok, no use to me in university, no use to me in work, but, the one aspect of RGS education I still use every day when I listen to my music.

There were some bad things about the school, some negative aspects to my education. I guess the main one was lack of female contact and any teaching about life issues. I know I raised this in debate in English, and also in a questionnaire (Government or Council, not sure which) we all had to answer in the lower 6<sup>th</sup>. I know that I was not the only one in the school who only knew what a girl was from biology lessons, and had no idea how to interact with them in real life. There was also a problem of bullying in the school, hopefully that no longer exists. The 1<sup>st</sup> time, in the lower school, the headmaster sorted it for me. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and worst time, for my 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years, I was terrified, but eventually some others in my class took it upon themselves to sort it out for me. They were not my friends. I hardly spoke to them, but they saw I was having a problem and sorted it. If you are reading this, then thank you, you know who you are.

Good things about the school. Well, on balance, I had a great education. I can't imagine going to another school and having a better education. I had great teachers who taught me the foundations upon which I have built my career, but they also let me express myself, to be me, to have my own opinions. They also taught me to justify those opinions and to defend them. The school also gave me a love of art, mainly music, but art in general. It is that love of art that I remember the school for the most.

Well, that was my time at the RGS, much has been left out, much has been forgotten, and I am sure much is wrong. As I said at the start, time changes memories.

### **Do you remember Jimmy Carr? (1990-1992)**

An article about Jimmy Carr appeared in the Daily Telegraph in August. It said how Jimmy Carr likes making people laugh at things they know they shouldn't laugh at. Besuited, hair neatly parted, like a punchably condescending school prefect, he reels off one-liners of shimmering wit and often dubious moral fibre, all delivered in an archly mannered, very received deadpan. Last year his debut solo show at the Edinburgh Fringe, earned him a nomination not for the best newcomer, but for the main award itself.

Subsequent appearances as co-host of Channel 4's game show, Your Face or Mine, followed and this year he had a new show at the Edinburgh Festival. After leaving the RGS, he read social and political sciences at Cambridge before taking a job in marketing and then on to the comedy circuit.

## PHOTOGRAPH OF SCHOOL HOUSE BOARDERS



Can you name the year when this photograph was taken? How many boys can you name?

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Dear Ian**

I've dredged around in the memory bank and the best that I can come up with for the Fourth XV of 1963-4 as shown in the Dec. 18 newsletter is as follows:

Rear row from the left - No 5, I believe is Tim Wakefield's older brother whose Christian name escapes me. I am the last (8) of the back row.

Front row No 2 is Nigel Hampton, the captain with the ball is? Anderson, who joined the Army, and I believe the last man in the front rows? Wills. Also in the team was a well-known footballer A R Daines who was our kicker.

**John Haley**

**Dear Ian**

Hi from Canada (Toronto). I happened across the site while "surfing" and have been wallowing in a nostalgia trip ever since! I was interested to read of Ian Drury and saddened by his death. I was a prefect at School House for one year (1955/6), previously I was an Uplymer, and remember him quite well. I agree with your correspondent that he seemed happy enough in his mischievous way. One matter that I can attest to is that he did receive the slipper from the Head Boy at School House. I think that the principle was that he was to be treated as any other boy and in those unenlightened times that included lining up for disciplinary "treatment" at the prefects' meetings. He always accepted his punishment most stoically and was not really a regular that year. It is good to know that he was able to fulfil his dreams and enjoy a satisfying career. On the subject of corporal punishment, I visited the School House prefects' study a year or so after I had left RGS and found a couple of former Uplymers had transferred there. They were Watson & Hackett and to their very great credit they had abolished the practice of giving the slipper. As housemaster, Runswick, was opposed to that form of discipline, I imagine that the odious and undignified anachronism was thus consigned to history!

The mention of "Jock" Evely reminds me that he taught me when I was taking "O" levels. It is true that he did have a problem controlling classes but one day I happened to walk past his home in the Hazlemere/Holmer Green area while he was gardening. He was so pleasant and seemed genuinely happy to chat for a while that I felt quite ashamed for any discomfort that I or my classmates had caused him. He seemed a really decent man.

I will give serious consideration to joining the OWs although it is unlikely that I will be able to attend any of your annual events. I notice that Ian Birch is on your committee. Please give him my best regards - we were at Leeds University together. Also, if anybody remembers me and wants to drop me an e-mail line, I shall be delighted. I have changed a lot and am really quite a nice guy now!!!!

Very best regards

**John Bedford-James.**

**Dear Ian**

Some memories I have of my schooldays. Hollingsworth was our English teacher, and also captain of the School CCF. The rumour was that he was a lance-corporal in the Home Guard during the War! We used to take it in turns to say that our pen has run out and he would always reply, "Where has it run to?"

I remember too some of the colonial teachers. I think that it was the Geography teacher, (initials TVS, hence the nickname tus, which we used to emphasize in the song "Oh, come let us adore him"), that had a 25 or 50 horsepower elastic bands, which he used as a punishment by flicking our ears.

Regards

**Peter Seaton.**

**Dear Ian**

Having seen Roger File's contribution to the last Newsletter (and my own brief note), I wonder if I might add some more details. Most of what he had to say chimes with my own recollection, but he neglected to add that he was a memorable Jack Point in the school's production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*.

Part of the uniform, I think obligatory, but perhaps some OW will confirm, was a sports shirt with the house colours. Mine was blue for Queen's House (later Fraser), the other colours were red, green and black, but I can't remember whether what houses they represented; there were Disraeli, Arnison and Youens, and one of them (which?) had been changed from another name. For gym we were issued with plimsolls from a smelly cupboard. Our gym mistress was at first Miss Z C U Body, a very well endowed young woman, who had been head girl at the High School in one of my older sister's time.

My school career as a sportsman was inglorious. Having the effective use of only one eye, I was a complete duffer at fast ball games. Cricket (apart from being volunteered by Mr Benson to help roll the wicket) was therefore out; rugby not much better since I couldn't catch; at tennis I was outclassed; and cross-country seemed the only option, but even there I only managed to get back with about half the runners ahead of me. Am I the only man in the country who has never played soccer?

At first most of us juniors wore short trousers, even during the freezing winter of 1947, and they were fitted with button flies (temptation for 'pilling' – don't ask). Most of us graduated into longs soon after though, and I remember Brian Debenham outraged that one particular lad just going up to the sixth form was still in short trousers.

Throughout the later forties there were great heaps of coke in front of the school, handy for the caretaker who had to stoke the boiler under the main entrance. What was his name? Near the entrance to the cellar was a stationery store, and Reg Howard would only let us have a new exercise book if we produced the filled old one. Sixth formers were treated more generously.

A classmate of ours in the express forms, Dion O'Brien, was a competent self-taught pianist, and he got some of us together in the Music Room to play Latin American stuff with maracas, claves and other characteristic percussion. After he left school he and his sister formed a group called the Springfields; he changed his name to Tom, and his sister Mary became the famous Dusty. Dion used to refer to her as Rusty-Dusty because of the colour of her hair, though I gather she always wore a blond wig during her stage career. That was my first encounter with a major celeb; there have been very, very few others. I wish I could remember the names of some of the boys who took part in his group: Colin Goodchild certainly, but who else? Was it Keith James? And was Eric Hall our double-bass player?

Along with most of you I have been watching *That'll Teach Them* on Channel Four during the summer. Amazing what those lads and lasses didn't know! When we were that age ... but how would we have done on their present curriculum? Would it not have been possible to include some of the present generation of RGS boys who are doing their GCSEs? My time was a bit before the one they were illustrating, but even then the regime was not as harsh as depicted in the series. Our canteen food was much better than the stuff they were given. We had beatings, and on CCF parades rifles, neither of which is now permissible. I look forward to reading other Old Boys' reactions.

Yours sincerely

**Paul Kirwan**

**Dear Ian**

Re Cricket photograph 1956

I would have been 13 at the time playing for the junior colts so these were all heroes of the junior school.

From left to right front row Wright(?) Alan Harvey who played for Bucks and I think England schoolboys as an opening bat Freddy Hawkins who became a master in about 1960, Squib Squires who bowled with the slope on the square and Jimmy Briden. Back row left to right not so good, Dick Dawe(?) RC Jones and then no names I'm afraid.

Like your other correspondent lots of nostalgia with the TV programme but I don't recall it being anywhere near as regimented as portrayed. There was a thriving tuck shop after all so hidden sweets weren't an issue I thought tough but fair and if you stayed within the parameters set nobody gave you a hard time and given the size of the school bullying seemed to be rare.

**Ralph Stockwell**

NEXT EDITION OF THE NEWSLETTER WILL BE A SHORT PRE-CHRISTMAS ONE AND WILL BE PUBLISHED ON DECEMBER 16<sup>th</sup>. IT WILL CONTAIN AN ARTICLE BY SIMON NORTH-KEELING (84-90). THE NEXT FULL EDITION WILL BE ON JANUARY 25<sup>TH</sup>

