

NEWSLETTER MAY 2008

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Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Club took place on Saturday 26 April 2008 in the school library, with 15 Old Boys present. The Treasurer explained that the auditor had unfortunately not as yet issued his report on either last year's or this year's accounts, but that he expected this situation to be rectified within a very short time. Draft accounts were tabled and these were approved. Ian Birch, George Bates, Robin Dorkings, Andrew MacTavish and Martin Myers, the committee members retiring by rotation, offered themselves for re-election and were so re-elected. Matthew Appleton was elected to the committee in place of David Woodbridge, who has resigned. Those present then adjourned to the Queen's Hall for the Annual Dinner.

Annual Dinner

The Annual Dinner was attended by 59 Old Boys, 6 teachers (both past and present), the head boy and his two deputies and 6 World Challenge boys. The reduced number of Old Boys attending compared with previous years was disappointing and it is to be hoped that this downward cycle in attendance will be reversed next year, which will be the Club's centenary year.

After the dinner the Headmaster gave a brief review of the school and presented a slide show reflecting the diverse nature of activities undertaken over the past year. This was followed by a light show put on by the boys from the lighting team, which was most entertaining. The Guest of Honour was Colin Tattersall who taught at the school between 1984 and 2003, notably contributing to the prowess of the various rugby 15s and leading to the school becoming a force to be reckoned with in national competitions. David Andrew proposed the toast to Colin and Colin replied with reminiscences and anecdotes of his time at the school.

During the afternoon of the dinner there were sporting reunions for Hockey players and shooters.

Photos from the 2008 Annual Dinner

We would like to put names of people in each photo. If you recognise yourself or somebody else, could you please [email](#) any names for any photograph and its number and we will publish the names in our next update. The photographs were taken by Peter Glendinging.



Ali Americanos, Tom Rixon, JC Potgieter



Ian Birch, 2



Colin Carter, Simon Samuel



Roy Page, David Wiltshire



Matthew Appleton, Jonathon Peacock



3, Peter Allen



Christopher Swinhoe-Standen, David Pickering



Daniel Green, Alex Horsefall-Turner



Ian Wilson, Roderick Griffiths



Arthur Grover, Stuart Wilson



Mark Thomas, Jas Purewal



Tony Male, Martin Priestley, John Hills, John Taylor



5, 6, 7, 8, Johnny Steward



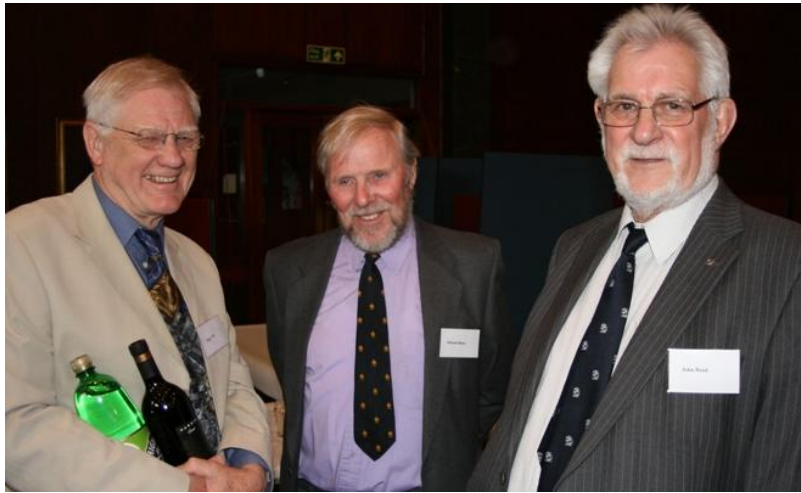
9, Roy Page



10, Paul Deraney, Colin Tattersall, Colin Carter



11, Norman Stanners



Roger File, Michael Band, John Read



David Stone, 12, 13



14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20



21, 22, Ian Wilson



23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, Mark Thomas



Shooting Reunion

The shoot took place in the school rifle range and was attended by eleven OWs and five boys from the school teams. Split into four details the shoot comprised five ranging shots, ten shots deliberate, ten shots rapid deliberate in 90 seconds and finally ten shots rapid deliberate in 60 seconds. Scores for OWs and boys were averaged out and the result was 249 for the OWs and 255 for the boys; yet another win for the boys, but we are closing the gap. Congratulations must go to Chris Webb and Artyom Tucker, respectively highest scorers for the OWs and the boys.

The OWs who shot were Peter Allen, Chris Andrew, Paul Arthur, Chris Barber, Ed Clark, Rodrick Griffiths, Graham Jeal, Francis Mostyn, Dave Pickering, Chris Swinhoe-Standen and Chris Webb.

The boys were Patrick Nicholls, Robin Price, Richard Vanryne, Nick Miller and Artyom Tucker.

Our thanks to the boys for coming along, the school for the use of the range and a special thanks once again to Chris Cunningham for giving up his afternoon to run the shoot so calmly and efficiently. The afternoon was most enjoyable and hopefully we can repeat it next year.







Chris Andrew.

Hockey Reunion

A match took place late in the afternoon at the Cressex Astro between an OWs team and players from High Wycombe H.C. which included three OWs.

Both sides played with remarkable continuity considering that they had just been brought together on the day but HWHC took an early lead through quality play from Duncan Parnis.

An exquisite lob from ex G.B. Olympic captain Jon Wyatt opened the OWs scoring but HW extended their lead from 2-1 to 6-3 as the OWs tired.

However a late rally from the OWs in a most entertaining and enjoyable game earned them a victory by just one goal with the final score 8-7.

Special thanks go to the members of HWHC and the umpires Richard Spragg and Tim Stone for their contribution to a memorable match.

OWs : Dan Anderson, Scott Ashdown, Colin Carter, Gavin Elliott, Michael John, Arshad Khan, Levon Lister, Mark Madden, Simon Molden, Simon Samuel, David Willmot, Jon Wyatt.

OWs playing for HW : Ian Harman, Duncan Parnis, Simon Webber (ex staff).

No less than 10 of the OWs had represented RGS in National Finals Days between 1986 and 1993.



Players in Photograph:

Tim Stone, Michael John, Jon Wyatt, Gavin Elliott, Simon Samuel, Colin Carter, Dan Anderson, David Stone, Richard Spragg

Simon Molden, Arshad Khan, Mark Madden, Paul Reeman (Guest), Scott Ashdown, Leven Lister

Not in Photo (Played for High Wycombe Hockey Club): Ian Harman, Duncan Parnis, David Willmot.

DGS

CRICKET

Would you like to play cricket against the school in the Duncan Moore Memorial match on Wed July 16th?

Would you like to play cricket against the RGS staff on a date still to be arranged?

If yes, please contact Ian Clark ianreclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk

GOLF

Would you like to play golf in the annual Golf match against the staff on Friday June 27th? This will be the fifth in the series and has always been a very enjoyable occasion. You do not have to be Luke Donald, as it is based on handicaps.

If you would like to play, please contact Ian Clark ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk

The RGS in the Thirties

Andrew MacTavish had a conversation with Dennis Jones (1933-1939) about his memories of the RGS in the thirties, and this is his report of the conversation:

Dennis Jones has lived at Terriers most of his life. He was a farmer before he retired. He is an alert man who moves about easily and holds a lively conversation. His animation belies his years...and he has some years too, because he arrived at the RGS in September 1932 when Arnison was in his last term as Headmaster.

Dennis' grandfather was a farmer and he used to deliver milk to the School. The young Dennis attended Kingshill School, and at some stage his grandfather discussed his future with Arnison. The boy was invited in to take an examination - he thinks it was called "The Scholarship" - and he passed. He started at the RGS that September at termly fees of Five Guineas (that was Five pounds, Five Shillings, or Five pounds, Twenty Five pence - quite an expense in those days). The school buildings were smaller then: the old frontage lacked the two wings, the Hall was small and open to the corridor, and the Gym (Maths) block was still "new", having been opened in 1930. The old boarding house was there; it did not burn down for another couple of years.

Dennis' uniform included a cap, short trousers and indoor (or "House") shoes. There were about 200 boys in the school, about the same number as are in one Year group today. All boys had lockers and changed from their outdoor shoes when they arrived in the mornings. The only members of the School who could wear their outdoor shoes in the building were prefects or Colours. Dennis still has his Colours cap and it is in remarkably good condition. It was the prefects who kept the younger ones in order and who did most of the caning. School hours were 9am to 4.30pm on weekdays, and up to lunchtime on Saturday mornings. (Almost everyone in all occupations worked on Saturday mornings then. The working week was 5 ½ days). Tuesday was Sports afternoon. Thursday afternoon saw one taught period followed by sports or OTC (Officer Training Corps, the precursor of the CCF). Cadets took the Certificate "A" examination. Dennis remembers that a cadet was well on the way to satisfying the army examining officer if he told him that, when he was in charge of a platoon, his first priority was to check the earth latrines, and second was to check his juniors' feet.

Saturday afternoons were for inter-school sports. In the winter term there was soccer. Rugby followed in the spring term, and cricket in the summer. Boys could play tennis, and there were tennis courts between School House, and the main buildings and the old Hall (now the Library). In the book of RGS photographs in the "Images of England" series, by J.I.Mitchell, a tennis net can be seen on page 55, and court markings are visible in the gymnastics display picture (ibid.p.57). This latter picture also shows the back of the Hall before it was extended, with the Craft Room on the right and the enclosed bicycle shed on the left. The picture of the School, taken from the air in 1948 on the same page, shows the enlarged hall, and also the two wings which were built while Dennis was a pupil.

Dennis arrived to find himself in Form 2A of 30 boys, in the Gym Block. Until the massive enlargement overlooking Amersham Road was completed in 1963, generations of small boys started their careers in the Gym Block with its gloomy black-and-white pictures of Scott's last, doomed expedition to the South Pole. He found his form mates had come from what seemed a huge area and from wide backgrounds. There were no school buses. All traveled on foot, by bicycle or public transport. Some came from Gerrards Cross and one from Haddenham. There was no kitchen, and no school lunches. But there was a small tuck shop

run by a member of staff from the back room under the Art Room staircase. There were no bells; every room had a clock and everyone knew when to change lessons.

The day began with Prayers in the Hall. This took the form of a hymn, a passage from the Bible read by a prefect, prayers by the Headmaster, and notices. The masters were always gowned and wore their university hoods on many occasions. Lessons started at 9.30am with a curriculum that one might expect, except that there was no Biology nor the modern 'Personal, Social and Health' education; but they did have Latin, a period of Bible study ('Scripture') and an hour of Woodwork each week. Boys kept all their books in their wooden desks. They had no locks on them, but a boy's desk was sacrosanct; no one ever opened another boy's desk. They did not have to carry huge loads about with them, no more than they needed for the evening's homework, and the textbooks were much smaller in size. The light, single strap satchels were good weapons for swinging at one's friends. Boys used dip pens, and every desk had a recess for a small china inkwell in the top right hand corner - it was assumed that everyone was right-handed. Every room had a large bottle of ink and boys filled their inkwells as needed. It was a standard joke to add a piece of carbide to an empty inkwell, and to watch gleefully as the ink exploded in froth and bubbles as the victim filled it up. Rubber bands and pellets were, of course, the standard armaments of all small boys then. Health and safety had not been invented. In times of snow, no one stopped boys making slides. Dennis made a galleon in the workshop and managed to hack a lump out of his hand while doing it. His memory of being rushed to the hospital is less concerned with the wound and more with the excitement of a ride in a motor car, a rare treat.

Life was strict and the classroom was a tough place. It was common for masters to hurl pieces of chalk and to cuff inattentive boys. The main weapon, though, was sarcasm. Dennis always did his homework to avoid biting sarcasm. He could have been given an after-School detention if he had not done it, but it was the sarcasm he wanted to avoid. Canings were not uncommon, though most were performed by the prefects as noted. The standard punishment for running in the corridor was 50 lines, doubled if they were not done on time, with a caning if there was further default. It was also an offence to talk to girls from the High School, who were then in premises in Benjamin Road below the cemetery and who used the playing fields on the other side of Hamilton Road by the School. (However this did not stop Dennis meeting and later marrying Aileen, who is still as proud of his Colours cap as she was when he wore it every day).

E.R.Tucker, at 31, clearly hit the School like a meteorite. He was interviewed by the Board of Governors who were unanimous in appointing him. Dennis remembers this fact. Indeed at the opening of the 1963 buildings, one of the speakers who had been on the interview panel mentioned this unanimity. He also remembered that Tucker declined to sit down during the interview and was interrogated while standing. Dennis remembers the strong rumour that, after the appointment, it was discovered by the chairman, Coningsby Disraeli, that Tucker was not a member of the Church of England, but, being of Welsh background, attended chapel. Disraeli was shocked, and it was said that he would not have agreed with the appointment had he known beforehand.

Tucker wanted the best from everyone. He wanted every boy to succeed to the best of his ability. Speech Day to celebrate academic success became a big occasion. He wanted the School to be known nationwide. He visited Oxford and Cambridge, and set up links with colleges, in particular Jesus, Cambridge. Boys were issued with fortnightly report cards which gave them a mark for each subject. These were totaled and boys were given a position in the form. Tucker followed these up rigorously. Dennis came top of the form on one report, but a fortnight later, he did badly. He was summoned by Tucker who told him that if he did not improve, then he would be taken off games. Academic success was important, and

Tucker's word was law. He caned Dennis on one occasion for something he had not done. But as Dennis had managed to get into the clock tower and sign his name there without being detected, he thought the caning was reasonable in the circumstances. One of the first successes under the new regime was F.W. Essex, who as Head Boy and Captain of Soccer in 1933 (ibid. p.54) won a scholarship to Reading University. Tucker gave the whole School a half day's holiday to mark the occasion. Interestingly, Tucker stopped the soccer and concentrated on rugby after a couple of years.



One of the highlights of the school year was the annual summer camp in the first weeks of August, organised by Mr G.A. Grant, the Art and Woodwork master. Many people did not have the chance of a holiday away in those days, and "Gag" gave them the opportunity of going to the south coast for two weeks - or three weeks if a boy was selected to set up camp on the advance party. The roll usually consisted of 50 to 60 boys and 4 staff. The School owned all the equipment, from the tentage to the kitchen requirements. Everything would be loaded onto a lorry and taken to Wycombe station, where it would be transferred to a wagon which was shunted on to the rear of a convenient train. On arrival in the West country - Newquay, Babbacombe or elsewhere - the railway company would deliver it to the chosen field where the advance party would find it waiting in a huge heap. At that time, the furniture factories had their annual shut-down. An older factory worker came with his wife, and he did the cooking, having had cookhouse experience in the First World War. Dennis remembers the food as "splendid".

The days in camp would start with the fatigues, which included fetching water, assisting in the cookhouse, ensuring that the dug latrines were fit for use, cleaning the tents, rolling up the brailings, and laying out personal kit for inspection. Everyone slept on paliasses (mattress covers which they stuffed with straw). Then there would be games and swimming. In the evenings there was a campfire with songs and a concert on the last night. There were free times, too, where boys could go out by themselves. On one occasion Dennis went to a livery stables, hired a horse and rode down across the cliffs at Newquay. His friends, Winter-Taylor and 'Starchy' Bartlett, rode with him. (The latter was so called as he had left the RGS and gone to Bromsgrove School for a time. When he came back, he picked up the nickname as he had had to wear starched collars at the other school. He was later a Hurricane pilot and was killed during the Battle of Britain).



On the camp at Babbacombe in 1936, Dennis shared a tent with Jack Keen and Ian Fraser. One night they had got hold of some rough cider and, in high spirits, they decided to venture out in the pitch dark to the harbour. "Fraser was mad about boats". He saw a small motor launch moored by the quayside, reckoned he could start it and suggested they went for a

quick cruise. They embarked and started off, the petrol engine shattering the silence of the night. A moment later they were blinded by all the harbour lights being turned on by an aroused Harbour Master. There was an almighty row about this escapade. Fraser was sent home and Dennis and Jack Keen were severely punished.....

....and if Ian Fraser - who, as we all know, later messed about with boats elsewhere and was awarded the Victoria Cross for his efforts - if he happens to read this and wishes to explain in greater detail why the motor launch business "seemed a good idea at the time", we shall be delighted to print it.

Dennis also attended the first recorded School trip abroad, to Paris in 1939. He does not remember where the picture in the book was taken (ibid p.60), but does have vivid recollections of the very smart hotel they stayed at, and a pillow fight they had - because he broke his arm and had to be rushed to a French hospital with the attendant expenses. He remembers the master, Mr Polmear, arriving at his home afterwards to collect the cost of his medical treatment from his father. He was also at the 1937 cadet camp at Aldershot (ibid p.61) where there were a number of well-known public schools, whose cadets were adept at getting to the cookhouse first at mealtimes. So, having got over the excitement of firing blank cartridges through their .303 rifles on their first day, he and others then tried to avoid firing them on the later exercises. This saved cleaning time when they returned to the camp, so that they could get to the cookhouse faster. Dennis was clearly a smart cadet in more ways than one. He still has the picture on his wall of the annual inspection of the Officer Training Corps in 1938 where he is right marker, and Captain Pattinson with drawn sword is escorting the Inspecting Officer.

The cadet Armoury was then where it is today. The keys were held by a senior cadet in those days when terrorism was unheard of, and boys took rifles home to clean them. Dennis' form room in 1939 was the room next door. At lunchtime, no one could gain entry to the Armoury unless he had the password. Why? Because the senior boys smoked in there. The fumes were sometimes so thick they could be seen coming out of the window. Couldn't the masters smell cigarettes? Apparently virtually all of them smoked heavily themselves so they didn't notice. This was a very different world. Jokes were different too. Occasionally boys arriving at the bicycle shed would get a full 240 volt shock off the door handle which had been wired to the mains. Somehow no one was killed.

While it was against the rules to talk to the High School girls, they could be seen and admired from the end window of that same room next to the Armoury. The girls arrived in the afternoon to play games. The trees had not then grown up to obscure the view. The girls arrived one day after lunch, and Dennis' form crowded to watch them. Dennis went so far as to sit on the windowsill outside, with his feet on the sloping roof over the porch to keep his position. Suddenly the master entered the room. There was a rush by the others to take their places, and someone closed the window. Dennis remained in his perilous position, undetected and frozen, for the whole lesson, until released by his form mates after the master had left.

The Second World War started on 3 September 1939. Dennis and his friends had just entered the Sixth form. It was clear they were going to be called up in the near future. Other boys who had recently left were already in uniform. They knew that Air Crew were recruited at 17 ½. It was impossible to concentrate on academic studies in the circumstances. Dennis was not quite old enough to join the forces, but he decided to find employment while he was waiting. He left the RGS in October 1939 and found a job at the High Wycombe (West End Branch) of Barclays Bank at 15/-d per week (Fifteen shillings then, or 75p today). They needed boys like him as all their staff who were in the Territorial Army had already been called up. And there he stayed until he himself was called to the RAF a few months later.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Clive Stainton on his appointment as Visiting Professor at the University of Barcelona

LOST

Someone who did a Classics degree at Birmingham would like to contact Neil Treble who was in the same class and who left RGS around 1999-2000.

Ed. Are you reading this, Neil? Or does anyone have his contact details? If so, please contact me ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear ex-RGS Men,

Just to let you know that another school photo has been posted at my website (www.rgs.saund.co.uk).

It is the April 1964 sixth form photo. Like Caesar's Gaul, the school photo was divided into three parts that year. The junior and middle school photos were already posted, so the addition of the sixth form photo means we now have the full set. I am very grateful to Chris Williams for scanning this and sending it to me.

One curiosity of this photo is the inordinately large number of smirking faces to be seen in it, including those of certain masters not normally noted for their sense of humour or light-heartedness. What on earth could have tickled their fancy? Can anyone remember something funny happening at the time? Perhaps the photographer's flies were open?

Also to be noted is the large number of boys grasping their lapels in imitation of the favourite speech-making pose of 'Boss' Tucker. It is hard to believe that this hackneyed jape (a feature of every school photo I've ever seen from the Tucker era) was the cause of the mass hilarity.

I look forward to receiving your identifications of the people in the photo. I'm also open to offers of loans of other 1960s photos not yet displayed (e.g. junior photos from 1960, 1962 or 1967, or the senior photo from 1958).

Regards

John Saunders

(1963-70)

Ian,

I read the piece about the clock tower in the newsletter. I have the Greybook from 1943(3) which was when I joined the school and I can see one or two WBs, but no AF, picking up Andrew McTavish's query about those who might have been the ones adding their initials to the lead on the tower. The two WBs are not likely at all to have been climbing up to the tower but workmen have a long tradition of scribing initials where it will be found later, so, as I said that is the likely answer.

Sorry to have missed you on Saturday. May see you next at Adams Park (or even Wembley).

Best wishes,

David Wiltshire

Ed. David and I are both keen Wycombe Wanderers supporters.

Dear Ian,

I was inspired to write by the letter from Eric Chipps (1939-1944). I rather envied his time with the ATC when he made contact with the USAF at Bovingdean and cadged flights in some wonderful aircraft. I was also in the ATC from its foundation under the leadership of Mr Bicknell. Ian Peddle and I cycled to White Waltham a couple of times in 1942 and cadged flights with the ATA (Air Transport Auxiliary), which consisted of non-military pilots of any age or sex, who ferried aircraft between factories and squadrons. I had a few circuits in an Anson, their maid-of-all-work, while Ian flew in a Wellington, while a woman was being instructed in the work of flying these bombers single-handed. I, a couple of years older than Ian, completed flying training in South Africa and was awaiting transport back to UK on VE day in May '45. Ian started his training at about that time and went on to become Air Marshall Sir Ian.

My time at the Royal Grammar School was the best preparation I could have had for the best years of my life. I lived in Beaconsfield, where my next-door neighbour was Geoffrey Green (1940-46). I wonder what he or Mr Chipps thought of French teacher Mr Polmear who taught at the school for a short time around 1939-40. He impressed me greatly, but moved on to higher things in Education, becoming, I believe, Chief education Officer for Somerset. I retired from the University of Manchester in 1983 and moved to Brighton to find that Mr Polmear's son, Andrew, is a near neighbour. He is a retired GP and a very accomplished amateur musician -a cellist. What a wonderful small world!

I had better not start on reminiscences. They are too many and of little interest to today's generation, who are coping remarkably well with the mess that we left for them. But we too did some good things and had a lot of fun.

With all good wishes,

Donald McDowell

Archie - Roving RGS Ambassador

A small brown bear, Archie, has just returned from his latest trip as a representative of RGS. His most recent journey took him above the Arctic Circle to a small village in the North of Canada. Earlier visits saw him in Poland and Kenya.



Archie on home turf



Africa

In 2005 he spent some weeks in Kenya with former RGS teacher Roger Hollingworth and his pupils at the Marinyin School. There he enjoyed a lot of excursions and visits to local homes. Ed. Do you remember Roger, who was a Physics teacher, was i/c the CCF and ran World Challenge trips for many years?



in the Kenyan highlands on top of Kilimanjaro



in a maths class

North America



His most recent trip was to a village near the small town of Inuvik in Canada's frozen north where -25C is a mild day.

His patron was the sister of Miss Munday but he spent a lot of time with the local children.



at school again



getting about



Archie on igloo

For more information about the activities of the small, brown bear do [click here!](#)

NEWS OF RETIREMENTS FROM THE STAFF

The following teachers will be leaving the RGS in the summer:

Peter Cowburn, Ian Wilson, Martin Smith, and Joan Henderson. Ian Blyth and Jean Frost will both be leaving their part-time posts after their official retirement some time ago. If you have any memories of them, do send them in.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

This will be published on July 22nd. We hope to publish photographs and reports of the OW Golf and Cricket matches. Please send in your contribution, your memories, and your photographs to me, Ian Clark ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk.

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