

NEWSLETTER JAN 2009

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS!

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OW CLUB WRITES TO OWs:



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Dear Old Wycombiensian

During 2008, I took over from Crispin White of Chairman of the Old Wycombiensians' Club. I would like to, at this point, extend by thanks and gratitude to Crispin for all of the work he did as Chairman and, in particular, his sterling efforts in leading the arrangements for many Old Wycombiensians' dinners.

It is an exciting time for the OWs' Club. As you will read elsewhere in the magazine, Matthew Appleton (1996-2002) joined the committee in 2008 and is leading the important work on re-engaging with all OWs. As part of this process, the committee took the decision - in consultation with the Headmaster - to change the membership process for the club. From

now on, all boys when they leave RGS will automatically become a member and there will be no membership fee. We will be presenting this change for ratification at the next Annual General Meeting on 9th May 2009. However, rest assured that these changes will not mean any alteration to the way the OWs' club runs; rather it will just ensure that we are in contact with an even broader cross-section of the OW community. This will have very obvious benefits for, not only the club, but also RGS itself.

2009 is also an important year for the OWs as it sees the Centenary of the OWs' Club. It was founded in 1909 by the then-Headmaster of the school, Mr Arnison and that is it still going strong 100 years later is a testament to the warmth of feeling so many OWs have for their time at RGS. It would be great to see as many of you as possible at the OWs' Dinner in the Queens' Hall on Saturday 9th May to help celebrate this great milestone.

I would also like to draw your attention to the range of RGS and OW merchandise that is on offer:

OLD WYCOMBIENSIANS' TIES

These are available from the Treasurer - Danny White - and cost £25, including p&p.

If you would like one, please send a cheque for £25 - made payable to "The Old Wycombiensians' Club" - to Danny at 18 Coppice Way, Hedgerley, Buckinghamshire, SL2 3YL.

If you live abroad, please e-mail Danny (dannywhite@hedgerleyfsnet.co.uk) and he will provide a cost including overseas postage.



The tie is 100% silk.

A range of other RGS merchandise is available from the School. Details can be found by [clicking here](#).

Finally, as ever, I must pass on my thanks to Mrs Steph Russell and her colleagues in the School's Resources Centre, without whose help in printing and collating, the production of this magazine would not be possible. I would also like to thank all the members of the Committee, Ian Clark and the Headmaster for their continued support of the club.

My best wishes for 2009.

Yours sincerely

Simon Molden (1989-95)

THE HEADMASTER WRITES TO OWs:

Dear Old Wycombiensian

It is difficult to comprehend that it was a year ago that I was writing to you to inform you of the activities undertaken by the boys at RGS as well as proposed developments. Once again, it has been a busy year, with much achieved and enjoyed by the boys and details can be found on our website (www.rgshw.com). I would encourage any OW to regularly log on to the site to keep up to date with RGS news.

This has been a sad year with the loss of two eminent OWs. Ian Fraser VC, died in early September (a memorial service will be held later this year in London to celebrate Ian's life). Richard Hickox, conductor of the LSO died in November. We remember these OWs with affection and thank them for their contribution to their country.

The core business of the School is to provide an outstanding educational opportunity for the boys and I am delighted to inform you that Ofsted visited the school in November and concluded that RGS remains an 'outstandingly effective school'. A copy of the report can be found on the school website.

Last year's examination results were excellent with over 75% of grades at A level being either A or B and at GCSE over 72% of grades were either A or A *. This reflects the hard work of the boys and the staff who continue to ensure that the boys are 'excited and enthused by the challenge of learning' (Ofsted 2008).

Activities on the sports field continue with many opportunities for boys to represent the school in a wide range of sports. The U15 XV and the 1st XV are still competing in their respective groups in the Daily Mail competition. The annual fixture against the MCC will be on 24 June and all OWs are welcome to this event.

This year's production will be the much acclaimed musical 'Guys and Dolls' and will take place in the Queen's Hall between Wednesday 25 March and Saturday 28 March inclusive. Tickets can be obtained from the RGS Resources Centre or using the RGS on line booking system. The OW's annual dinner will be on Saturday 9 May 2009, when Peter Gibson will be the guest speaker. I am sure that many of you will remember Peter who taught English and Philosophy at RGS from 1970 until 2006.

Last year, I brought you up to date on the situation with the Campaign 'Shaping our Destiny'. We have now submitted plans to the local planning office for new facilities which will incorporate changing rooms, fitness suite, sixth form centre and maths classrooms. Many of you will remember the gym block, probably with mixed emotions, and I hope that next time I write, I will be able to confirm that the building has been considerably improved. As soon as the plans are confirmed, we will place them on the website.

This year we were due to produce a new prospectus. I am delighted that OW, Simon Noakes, has led an innovative and original initiative in producing an interactive prospectus. We introduced this at the Open Evenings in September and it was a delight to watch prospective RGS students leaving the Queen's Hall encouraging their parents to be more prompt in their departure so that they could explore the enclosed CD. I am very grateful to the commitment and loyalty shown by Simon and his team. It has been a proud Headmaster who has produced examples of the prospectus at every Heads' Meeting he has attended and the response has been very positive. You can view the prospectus on the School's website. Please make sure you have the sound turned on!

I do hope to see many of you at the school functions and do be assured of a warm welcome should you call into the School. We are always pleased to see Old Wycombiensians.

Roy Page

Headmaster

MATTHEW APPLETON WRITES:

There are many important questions about RGS and its history that can be readily answered, such as when did it receive its Royal Charter and which two Old Wycombiensians were awarded the Victoria Cross? However, one seemingly simple question proves much more problematic: just how many OWs are there? The only thing certain about the answer is its uncertainty. Estimates range from around 5,000 to over 8,000. It was this question and its uncertain answer which earlier this year led a small group of OWs, with the full support of the Headmaster, to investigate the relationship that RGS has with its old boys.

The precise reason that this seemingly simple answer is unknown relates to the fact that often when a Wycombiensian becomes an OW, their relationship with the School ends. Those who do maintain a relationship with RGS do so of their own volition, and their proactive endeavours should be rightly applauded. However, that is not to say that those OWs who lose touch do so deliberately. For many, the frantic university years followed by a hectic working life away from south Buckinghamshire, mean that keeping in touch with the School understandably slips down their list of priorities. In losing touch with its OWs, it becomes impossible for the RGS to know how many there are.

The conclusion that was reached is that for RGS to know how many OWs there are, it must re-establish a relationship with the majority of them. Whilst doing this will be a means to the end of answering the numerical question, it is also very much an end in itself. Following meetings with the Headmaster, the OW Committee and a number of OWs, a plan was formed to build that relationship.

It was decided that the most effective way to achieve it would be to develop an OW e-newsletter, which will be e-mailed quarterly. Ian Clark has already started this process by contacting all OWs whose email addresses appear on the website and he will continue to do this. This process enables OWs to receive information without themselves having to seek it out. However, it may also prompt them to go further and respond to invitations to attend the OWs' dinner, tour the school, watch the 1st XV and more.

Our initial aim is to increase the spread of the e-newsletter. Many OWs who have received the recent e-mails have sent Ian contact details of other OWs, which has been much appreciated. Through this, we will have 1,500 active addresses by the end of the year. This is only a start. In due course, they will be stored on an OWs' database, which will be an invaluable way of ensuring that the RGS never again loses track of so many OWs. If you would like your e-mail address to go on the website, where details can be seen by other OWs, please let Ian know.

Every OW I meet speaks of RGS with great warmth and, if they have lost touch, laments it. By means of the e-newsletter and database, we hope this will be prevented. I very much hope that we can count on your support in this venture and would welcome any thoughts as to what

we can do more to improve communication. Please contact me at matthew.appleton@cantab.net.

As outlined above, the first step is to collect as many OW e-mail addresses as we can. I would ask you to ask any OWs you know to send an e-mail with their name and years at the RGS to ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk. This exciting venture will then be able to begin.

Matthew Appleton (1996-2002)

EDITOR WRITES:

The above letters appeared in the OW magazine that has been posted out to pre-1950 OWs and those of the OW Club, who requested a copy. All members of the Club should receive by mid Feb. either a magazine or letters about the Dinner and Sporting Reunions. If you do not receive one, it may be that you did not let us know about a change of address. Please contact Ian Clark about that.

We publish below some other items that appeared in the magazine. As Matthew has said above I have sent out two emails to all OWs, whose emails I have. If you have not received an email and would like to receive one about four times a year or more often if there is something urgent to communicate, please send your email address to me ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk

There will be more items from the magazines in the next newsletter.

OLD WYCOMBIENSIANS' SPORTING REUNIONS, AGM AND ANNUAL DINNER

Saturday 9th May 2009

From 2.30 p.m. Hockey or Shooting matches.

6.00 p.m. A tour of the School for those who are interested. Bar opens.

6.30 p.m. AGM in the School Library.

7.30 p.m. Annual Dinner in the Queen's Hall.

Our Guest of Honour will be Peter Gibson who taught English and Philosophy at RGS between 1970 and 2006. Peter is remembered for many contributions to the life of the school, but perhaps mostly for having established Philosophy at sixth form option, firstly as an 'AS' Level in 1988 and then as a full 'A' Level in 1994.

The Headmaster, Roy Page, who will have taught many of you over the last 35 years, will talk about the RGS present and future and reflect on the Centenary of the Old Wycombiensians' Club, which falls in 2009.

There will be a four-course meal, and it should be a very good one. A bar will be organised by the RGS Parents' Association and all profits go to school projects. As in past years, we are reserving tables for those who play in the various sporting events in the afternoon. For

everybody else we will try to arrange the seating to suit you. The intention is that the formal part of the evening will be over by 9.45 p.m., so that there will be plenty of time for conversation. It should be a really enjoyable occasion. We are always very happy to see groups of OWs attending, so if you would like us to advertise a group reunion on the website, please e-mail Ian Clark (ianrclark@yahoo.co.uk).

This year the cost of the Dinner will be £29.00 for those in full time education and £35.00 for all others. If you would like to come, please complete form (see below), and send it to Danny White as soon as possible, and by Tuesday 28th April at the very latest. You will receive the confirmation of your application and the Agenda of the AGM, by email or by letter shortly after 1st April. If you would like a reply through the post, please send an SAE with your application.

Apart from the hockey and shooting on 9th May, we are arranging golf, cricket and tennis matches in the Summer Term. Dates, where known, are given on the attached reply slip. If you want to participate in any of the Sporting Reunions, please complete and send in the reply slip with your dinner application. If you want further information, contact David Stone for hockey (david.stone5@ntlworld.com), Chris Andrew (chris.andrew@besfordgroup.com) for shooting and Ian Clark (ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk) for the summer sports.

We look forward to seeing you on 9th May.

Simon Molden

Chairman

[Click here for Ticket application form for the OW Dinner and Application for Sporting Reunions.](#)

Please return this form to: D White, 18 Coppice Way, Hedgerley, Bucks, SL2 3YL by Tuesday 28th April.

OLD WYCOMBIENSIAN LODGE

During the last twelve months the lodge has seen two new and youthful members. This may not sound very much but we are small and as one humourist remarked, "the new members have significantly reduced the average age and increased average mobility!"

The lodge welcomes members from the ranks of close relatives of old boys - fathers, brothers and sons and recently a son-in-law. School staff are also qualified to join and in the past have included E.R.Tucker, Peter Smaje and Ron Emery.

Charity, the primary consideration of every Freemason, has been well addressed over the last year. We have given financial support to the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmans' Families Association, an old peoples' home, the HURT appeal for children in pain and the appeal by High Wycombe hospital for the keyhole surgery fund. In addition, and foremost among our concerns over the year, has been the Opportunities Playgroup in Marlow. This organisation, largely run by volunteers, supports families with children suffering some form of disability. The work done by the playgroup gives much needed relief to hard pressed parents and much

happiness to the children. The playgroup found itself without funding and local freemasons stepped in to keep them going.

We are proud of this charitable side to our activities and this year we have donated a cup - The Community Service Cup to the school. The cup, along with a book to the value of £50 will be presented annually to the pupil who has done most for the community. We are delighted that the school accepted our offer and we are pleased that this link with the school has been formed.

We are hoping that the lodge and the school may find joint activities in community work.

However, freemasonry has its lighter side with much good fellowship and new friendships made with other masons, including overseas. Wherever a mason travels, he can find a brother and attend meetings.

Enquiries about the lodge are welcome and can be made to our secretary:

W.E. Shackell C.B.E.

"Applewood"

Tudor Close

Pulborough

West Sussex.

RH20 2EF.

Tel: 01798 875109.

Email: willie_shackell@tinyworld.co.uk

SAD NEWS

2008 sadly saw the deaths of two of RGS' most distinguished old boys. In earlier newsletters we reported their deaths. Here are fuller obituaries

IAN FRASER

Old Wycombiensians and the whole school community was saddened to learn of the death of one of its most illustrious Old Boys, Ian Edward Fraser, VC, DSC, RD and Bar, who died in Liverpool on 2nd September 2008, aged 88. He was at the RGS from Sept 1933 to December 1935.

Lieutenant Fraser commanded HM Midget Submarine XE-3 in her successful attack on the Japanese heavy cruiser Takao (9,850 tons) at her moorings in Johore Strait, Singapore, on 31st July 1945. During the long approach up the Singapore Straits, XE-3 deliberately left the believed safe channel and entered mined waters to avoid suspected hydrophone posts. The target was aground, or nearly aground, both fore and aft, and only under the midships portion was there sufficient water for XE-3 to place herself under the cruiser. For forty minutes she pushed her way along the sea bed until finally Lieutenant Fraser managed to force her right under the centre of the cruiser. Here he placed the limpets and dropped his main side charge. Great difficulty was experienced in extricating the craft after the attack had been completed, but XE-3 was finally clear and commenced her long journey out to sea.

The Official Citation of the award of a Victoria Cross stated: "The courage and determination of Lieutenant Fraser are beyond all praise. Any man not possessed of his relentless determination to achieve his objective in full, regardless of all consequences, would have dropped his charges alongside the target. The approach and withdrawal entailed a passage of eighty miles through water which had been mined by both the enemy and ourselves, past hydrophonic positions, over loops and controlled minefields, and through an anti submarine boom."

The School was delighted when he agreed to lend his name to our new Fraser-Youens Boarding House and he was proud to be associated with our earlier VC winner, Frederick Youens.

RICHARD HICKOX

Richard Hickox - who was at RGS from 1959-62 - was one of the most talented, successful and popular conductors of his generation with boundless energy and a gift for inspiring the musicians he worked with to produce often brilliant performances.

Richard sadly died on November 23rd 2008 of a suspected heart attack after a recording session in Wales. From RGS, he won an organ scholarship to Queens' College, Cambridge, and returned to his native Wooburn with a group of friends to put on the first of the town's annual festivals. He would also personally conduct a choral concert at the Wycombe Swan every other year and formed the successful Wooburn Singers Choir in 1967.

He was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2002.

[The Times obituary is here.](#)

DOUG HODSON

The death has also been reported of Doug Hodson, who was at the RGS from 1942-1947.

He played rugby for the School with Ted Woodward, the future England winger. After leaving school, he went on to a wide range of over 30 jobs, including the Royal Navy, a Bucks Free Press reporter, BOAC, a music writer, started his own flooring company and then the first Wine-Bar in Wycombe.

We extend our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of these three OWs.

THE CLOCKTOWER

In 2008, the Clocktower was given its first renovation since 1981. Pictures of this and the impressive finished article can be found [here](#).

MEMORIES OF THE ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL IN THE 1940s

From Air Vice-Marshal P.S.Collins, CB, AFC, BA (1941 - 48)

In September 1939, as war was declared, my twin brother, David, and I were evacuated from the outskirts of London. Initially, we were sent inexplicably to Ipswich, 90 miles closer to the enemy and with a significant docks area! After a number of vicissitudes, we were moved to High Wycombe and started at West Wycombe Primary School, where we both passed the 11 plus and in September 1941, we were enrolled in the Royal Grammar School. Each day we travelled by bus from Hughenden Valley, alighting at the bottom of Green Lane. From there we climbed the hill, passing the relatively few houses that were there at that time and then through the beech woods, emerging on to the playing fields at the rear of the school.

The Headmaster then was the redoubtable E.R. Tucker - "Boss" Tucker as we knew him. "Sam" Morgan was the Deputy Headmaster. Many of the regular male staff were away fighting for their country and there had obviously been a few stop-gap appointments. Gym was taught by Mr Howard Johnson, who suffered from a club foot, and he was assisted by the strangely-named Zoe C.U. Boddy to whom he later became engaged! There was also, I remember, an austere and dignified lady, Miss Pollard, who taught some Classics. She had come from the Abbey School, I think. Other names I recall include "Pilgy" Jones, the Maths master who had an unerring aim with the chalk if he thought your attention was wandering, Mr Hett (possibly French) and Mr Bicknell (possibly English).

After our induction year in the Lower Third, David and I were separated. Since we were identical twins and looked very much alike, this was probably just as well. David was put on the Science side while I would follow the Arts curriculum. Both of us were placed in the fast stream, which meant we would take our School Certificate (the GCSE of the day) at 15 and our Higher school Certificate (A Levels) at 17. Such a timeframe enabled the brighter pupils to stay on for a third year in the Sixth Form and contend for Oxbridge scholarships and exhibitions, but we were scarcely conscious of that at the time. I was introduced to Latin and at a later stage to Greek, both subjects taught in his inimitable way by our ebullient Headmaster. I still remember his joke about the drunk who tried to order yet another bottle of wine in an upmarket restaurant: "Bring me some more Hock, waiter," he slurred, "You know, hic, haec, hoc!". The wine did not arrive. He summoned the waiter, saying, "Didn't I order another bottle of Hock?" "Yes sir," replied the erudite flunkey, "but then you declined it!" Each morning began with assembly in the school hall (now the Library) where we gathered for prayers and a hymn. This was accompanied on the piano by one of the boys. I remember Cowlett was especially skilled at this - and if he did not turn up Mr Tucker would leap to the instrument himself and lead the singing from the keyboard. His announcements would include reference to the progress of the war and to any news of Old Boys. When Lieutenant Fraser was awarded the Victoria Cross for his exploits in midget submarines, echoing the achievement of Youens in the First World War, he decided to rename two of the school houses (previously King's and Queen's) after these two heroes. He was an inspiring Headmaster with a great and justified pride in his school. He was enormously proud when he was able to announce that he had been elected to the Headmasters' Conference, an accolade which, as he assured us, put RGS in the same academic bracket as the best public schools. He acquired an enormous black American car - a Packard - which he drove regally around the district and parked ostentatiously on the parade ground in front of the main building. Lord knows how he got the petrol!

As it has now, the RGS then had an excellent sporting reputation. The rugby XV enjoyed spectacular success and two pupils of my generation, Ted Woodward and Ron Syrett, ended up playing for England. Woodward was an exceptional all-round athlete. I think he held the school record for the 100 yards and the long jump as well as captaining the cricket team. Neither David nor I were distinguished sportsmen but we held our own academically and in the musical side of the school. Music teaching had been revolutionised by the arrival of Mr Bernard Rainbow. He made it fun and inspired many of us to participate in ways which

would have been inconceivable before. He persuaded the Headmaster to allow Gilbert and Sullivan to replace Shakespeare in the annual school drama production. In 1947, we put on the Pirates of Penzance as our first venture in this exciting genre. At that time, of course, it was not considered proper to invite the girls from the High School to play the female parts. I had been obliged to play Viola in Twelfth Night in the previous year! However, we had plenty of treble voices in the Junior School and they performed very well. I was the Pirate King, Bernard Peatey sang Frederick and D.B.Hawkins was an impressive Major-General Stanley. It was the start of a new era. Mr Rainbow was in many ways a similar character to Mr Venvell who inspires the magnificent standards achieved by the RGS Music Department today.

The Sixth Form in those days occupied what was then the Library in the right hand wing of the old main school building. As a Senior Prefect, I had some disciplinary powers over the younger boys and we had a periodic Prefects' Meeting at which recalcitrant miscreants were forced to appear for summary justice. Corporal punishment was still permissible in those days and the Head Boy was empowered to administer it (up to three strokes, I think). I have a faded photograph of A.G.Duckering in full swing! Academically, I was profoundly influenced by some outstanding teachers. Mr Cave and, later, Mr Ashford encouraged me in History, while Mr A.G.Standing (who also produced the Pirates) was an inspiring English master. I think my year achieved four State Scholarships and I gained a County Major award which took me to Birmingham University where I joined the Air Squadron and, unknowingly at the time, began a path towards the upper reaches of the Royal Air Force.

They say that school days are the happiest days of your life. Looking back over 78 years, I would not go quite that far, but I did thoroughly enjoy my time at RGS. Even in wartime it was a special place and it undoubtedly provided me with the foundation for a happy and successful life.

Long may it continue!

LETTERS/EMAILS TO THE EDITOR

Hi Ian,

I hope it's not too late to mention that my son Alex represented Oxford in the Varsity match on 11 December and secured his 'blue'. There was also another ex-RGS boy (or should I say young man) on the Cambridge side Andy Daniel who I believe was at RGS some years ago. Alex was a regular 1st XV player until he went up to Oxford in 2007. I attach a press report of the game and a photograph.

Best regards,

Mike Cheesman

Ed: Congratulations to Alex and Daniel on gaining their blues. Here is a very short report of the game:

Oxford University 33, Cambridge University 29

This 127th clash between the universities must rank as one of the best ever.

Tim Catling, who played in the same Whitgift School side as Danny Cipriani, bagged Oxford's first Varsity Match hat-trick at Twickenham as they hung on for a dramatic victory today. The flying wing's tries all came in a first half that the Dark Blues dominated, but it was

a different story after the break. Cambridge battled back from 33-15 down, and came close to an incredible comeback.

Hello Ian,

I was browsing through some of the past issues of the newsletter and came across a basketball team photo from January 2007.

I recognise all of them but can only name a few, sadly.

Back row - Carl Goodman, Murray Scott, Paul White, ?, ?,?

Front Row - Paul Carpenter, ?, ?, Charles Platts, Tony Hazelton.

Best regards,

Chris Vlarar.

CHRIS ROLLASON (1965-1972)

It was great to see Chris after almost 40 years and a real pleasure to give him a tour of the RGS. Chris is working as a translator in Luxembourg. If any OW would like a tour, please do not hesitate to contact Ian Clark.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE RGS THESE DAYS?

BATTLE OF THE BANDS

Click on the photo for more details.



Ed Did you have anything like that when you were at the RGS?

JEANS FOR GENES

Click on the photo for more details.



REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE IN THE QUAD

Click on the photo for more details.



For a full account of present activities at the RGS, please click on the crest.



NEXT NEWSLETTER

This will be published on Mar 22nd. Please send in your contribution, your memories, and your photographs to me, Ian Clark ianclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk or post it to 5, Foxhill Close, High Wycombe. HP13 5BL

Ian edits the Newsletter, Martin Berry ensures that it appears on the website.