

RGS High Wycombe Old Boys

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2009

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A LETTER FROM THE HEADMASTER, ROY PAGE

Dear OWs

As we approach Christmas and the end of term, I would like to bring you up to date with news of the RGS. On the sporting front, both the U15 and the U18 sides have progressed successfully in the Daily Mail Cup and they have important games coming up, the U 18s playing the Royal Hospital School, Bristol. This year, we are arranging a fixture on the afternoon of 18 December when two teams consisting of OWs and current boys will play a game to commemorate the memory of Nick Duncombe, an OW, Harlequins and England player, who sadly died in 2003. His parents will be present to award a trophy in memory of Nick to the winning side. Any OW who is able to attend, will be very welcome. The hockey sides had a block fixture against Millfield School and the 1st XI were delighted with their win.

Last week, we had the annual music concert and as always I am in awe of the talent and skill of the young men at RGS. This year, we do seem to be blessed with a rich vein of talent. The carol service will be held on Wednesday 16 December in All Saints Parish Church, High Wycombe. The choir will be singing during the service, and I can assure you of a warm welcome should you be able to attend.

The Shaping our Destiny Campaign continues to raise money, but as you would expect in this time of recession, we have found it more difficult to access large sums of money. On a more positive front, we have appointed Isabella Eastham as our Director of Development, a new position for the RGS. Isabella will focus very much on raising funds for the school as well as liaising with OWs. I know that she will be attending most of the OW functions during the coming year and I hope that you will have the opportunity to meet her.

The school remains in good heart with the young men currently at school striving to emulate their predecessors. Please do find time to log on to the RGS website (www.rgshw.com) to find out more about the activities at the RGS. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the OW's dinner on Saturday 8 May 2010. Why not contact some of your old friends from RGS days and come and enjoy a pleasant evening at your old school?

R M Page
Headmaster

OWs RUGBY MATCH

Friday 18 December, 2PM Kick Off

The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe is having its first Old Boys' rugby match on Friday 18 December. RGS Old Boys include England/Wasps players Matt Dawson and Tom Rees and Wasps stars Jack Wallace, Christian Wade, James Honeyben and Peter Elder. We hope some of them will be in attendance. We anticipate that many RGS Old Boys will consider playing or supporting on 18 December and we would like them to enjoy a good reunion!



If you would like to play in the OB match, do reserve this date in your diary and most importantly contact Pete Manning who is our Old Boys' Director for this event. You can contact Pete using the contact form here. We already have a good list of players who want to play, so we simply ask that you confirm your interest quickly to Pete and that you are at least 18 years old and that you are an Old Boy from RGS!

If you would like to support the match, we look forward to seeing you for the kick off at 2pm on Friday 18 December at RGS. (RGS breaks up at 1pm on 18 December so that the current boys should be out in full force to watch the match too). After the match we will have an Awards ceremony at RGS before going to Beaconsfield Rugby Club where the bar will be open!

If you are prepared either to give some money to sponsor the rugby match, offer a raffle prize or to give some of your time/skills to help us organise this event, please contact Kate Wood using [the contact form here](#). We are working hard to ensure we have a great event both at RGS and at BRFC too. We do hope to see you on Friday 18 December, either at RGS or afterwards at BRFC to enjoy a Friday night with a good rugby atmosphere!

Liam Doubler, RGS Director of Sport/Head of Rugby and Roy Carlisle, Chairman of Friends of Rugby, RGS

ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner will take place on Saturday May 8th (not the 9th, as stated earlier) in the Queen's Hall. There will be opportunities for OWs to have a tour of the buildings before the Dinner, attend the Annual General Meeting, and hear a report on how the School is doing. Do contact your OW friends, and come with them to the Dinner! If any of you are thinking of coming, and would like to encourage others to come from your era, do contact me and I can advertise this in the January newsletter, or perhaps be able to give you some addresses of OWs with whom you have lost contact. More details of the Dinner will appear in the February newsletter on this website, and of course, if you are a paid-up member of the OW Club, in the magazine or letter to be sent out by post.

REMINDER

If you are a paid-up member of the OW Club, you can expect to receive from us a letter with details of the Annual Dinner and Sporting Reunions. If you left before 1950, you will receive our magazine. Some of you who left after 1950 said that you would like to receive a magazine and you will do so. The magazine will consist of articles and

snippets of information that have appeared or will appear in the newsletters on this website. If you have moved since last year, please let Ian Clark have your new address.

Last year the decision was taken to enable all OWs to become members of the OW Club for free. If you contact Ian Clark, ianrclarkuk@yahoo.co.uk you will receive 4 newsletters by email a year with information about the OWs and the RGS. About 1600 OWs will receive a newsletter before Christmas. So if you do want to resume contact with your old School, just email your name, the years you were at the school, and the email address you would like Ian to use.

ARE YOU A HOCKEY PLAYER OR A SHOOTER?

If you would like to play hockey in an OW Reunion match on Sat. May 8th and perhaps come on to the Dinner, do let me know. If you participate in Shooting, how about taking part in the Annual match against the School on May 8th (not the 9th, as stated earlier)? If you would like to participate, do let Ian know.

ARE YOU A GOLFER, OR A CRICKETER?

If you play golf, you might like to play in the Annual Golf Match against the RGS Staff on Friday June 26th at 4.00pm. If you play cricket, you might like to play in the match against the RGS 1st XI, or the Teachers. The dates will be announced later.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Christian Wade, a recent OW, has been called up to play for the Emirates Airline Dubai Rugby Sevens next month.

For Christian, a Wasps Academy winger, this is his first assignment in the senior abridged version for the opening leg of the 2009/10 IRB World series.

Remembrance ceremony

Over 1300 boys, staff and guests commemorated Remembrance Day in a moving ceremony in the school quadrangle.



We remembered those who made the ultimate sacrifice in conflicts from the First World War to those occurring today, including the Old Wycombiensians who gave their lives in both world wars for our freedoms.



VIVIT MEMORIA CENTUM DUO ET VIGINTI
SCHOLAE REGIAE WYCOMBIENSIS FILIORUM
QUI PRO PATRIA MILITANTES POSUERUNT VITAM



If you wish to read about the other activities at the RGS, including as of Dec 6th details of the Shoebox Appeal, and the recent German exchange with Osnabruck, please [click here](#)

LETTERS/EMAILS TO THE EDITOR

Hello Ian,

Just confirming that the OW newsletter arrived ok, so the address must be correctly recorded.

Am planning another UK visit in 2010, so I may see you next year. A group of us have been putting names to the 1947, 1949 & 1952 school photos which appear on Tony Hare's website.

Does anyone have a copy of the 1951 2nd XI Cricket Team squirreled away? After all it's only 58 years back!

Kind regards

Brian Ransley (1947-1952)

Ed. Has anybody got a photograph?

Dear Ian,



Several of those who have put much of their remaining brainpower to work on identifying the names of those on the 1949 school photograph met up again at "The Polecat" for lunch. Rather than lead to further head banging over who is who, these are their names:- Seated (foreground) Ron Wynands, Tony Barr, Rennie Vickers, Standing David Wiltshire, Then Seated, Terry Williams, Brian Bignell, John Read, Donald Sainsbury.

David Wiltshire (1943-1950)

Dear Ian,

I just received, read and as usual enjoyed your October newsletter. You always do such a good job in reporting on the important highlights in the school and our Old Boys Association.

I was happy to attend the last Annual Dinner, marking the 100th anniversary of the Association. 100 used to be a big number when it comes to years. That is before I reached the ripe old age of 78 this September. Now I have problems with trying to understand what happened to the 59 years, since I left the RGS to make my future in the USA.

Having read the appreciative article about Mr. Tucker's years as the head of the RGS, I was reminded of the many kindnesses and personal interest he displayed on my behalf, while at the school and when I was ready to emigrate to the USA. The letter of recommendation he prepared for me, (I still have it to this day), his foresight in providing me with copies of the then Oxford Higher School Certificate examination that I passed, (I still have them to-day), were very instrumental in my being accepted as an undergraduate student at Columbia University, with a year and a half credit for the studies I completed at the RGS. In other words I started as a second semester sophomore, and was able to complete my four years at Columbia in just two and a half years.

As a boarder, I probably had more contact with him and his family than most boys at the RGS. I remember with much appreciation being allowed to play tennis on his then grass tennis court joined by his wife and youngest daughter and other prefects of the Boarding school.

In 1949 while I was in the Boarding House, the then serving boarding school master, Reggie Howard, invited me to go on a bicycle tour, starting in High Wycombe, all the way to Lands End via the northern coast of Cornwall and Devon and then back to Wycombe along the southern coast of England. Thanks to him, I got to visit, see and

appreciate more of England in those four weeks than in all the 12 years I spent in England from 1939, when I and 30 other "Kindertransport" Children from Germany arrived in England, until 1950 when I left to go to America.

All the very best,

Otto Decker (1948-1950)

Ed. Anybody remember Reggie Howard?

TWO APPEALS FOR INFORMATION

CAN YOU HELP?

Dear Ian

I'm keen to contact two former teachers at RGS. I only have a little information on each.

Mr R. M. Strickland, Maths 1963 to 1966 First name Richard?

Mr I. R. Hancock, Physics 1964 to 1971, First name Ian but known to us as "Pitchfork".

If you have email or postal addresses, I would be grateful.

Peter Ross (1962-1969)

Dear Ian,

Having seen the 1947 photo on the website <http://www.rgs.tonyhare.co.uk/photos/1947/1947-2.htm> I believe Tony Duckering mentioned is a relative of mine and was wondering if you have any information on him or his family please. I believe that he came from a musical family and his father was named Eric.

Any information would be much appreciated.

Janet Ellingworth nee Bartlett

Ed: Any information on either of the above to me please?

Dear Ian,

I was interested to see the letter from David Cox and his involvement when fire watching in school when the VI Doodlebug came down opposite the school in 1944.

I was too young for fire watching duty, being in my first year at the time. We were housed in the "junior building", protected from the blast which, as David describes, blew in a lot of windows on the front of the school. However they were all taped up to prevent flying glass so internal damage was limited.

From my home at Hazlemere I heard the noise of a V1 engine and saw it flying quite low and it then cut out and glided on. That was the one which landed in woodland opposite Hughenden Manor. We went soon afterwards to see what damage had been caused and found many blasted and mangled trees. In both of these incidents nobody was hurt but it brought home to us that war was a serious matter. The hundreds of bombers flying over in the evening heading for Germany proved, night after night, that it wasn't all one way traffic. When the war ended it took some time to get things back to normal. Although new boys were kitted up with school blazers, using valuable clothing coupons, they did not seem to last long and by the time boys were in the senior forms uniforms were not much in evidence, which was tolerated, as long as a tidy appearance was maintained. There really wasn't much alternative.

During the immediate post war years there was a shortage of labour for agricultural work, despite many German and Italian prisoners of war, who were prevented from going home in order to fill the labour gap. We were also permitted to pack up school a week or two early to enable those, who wanted to help on the land, to do so. So, we would gather in front of the school early in the morning and pile into the back of an open backed lorry to make our way to Emmett's Farm at Little Marlow. The farm is still there and the large barn where we ate our sandwiches while we had our lunch break. We then hurled rotten turnips and other objects at each other to the annoyance of the elderly foreman, distinctive in his leather gaiters and old time moustache. The work was back breaking and picking up potatoes was particularly so. The machine scuffing the potatoes out of the ground worked one row at a time and you had to clear your patch before he came around again. There could be no slacking. Picking peas was particularly frustrating. You thought you had a full bag, but then the foreman would shake the bag up and down to demonstrate that it was nowhere near full. The bag wasn't full until he said so and it weighed the required amount.

Despite the hard work, it was, to us, reasonably well paid and so we were glad to do it. The journey back to school in the lorry saw some ribald singing by some of the older and more worldly boys, and on one occasion a bus queue at Cressex was pelted with rotten potatoes to their obvious annoyance. It was lucky that it was during the school holidays or the headmaster would have heard about it and justice would have meted out for sure. As it was I still expected something to be said when the next term started but it wasn't. A diversion from Little Marlow was to be taken to a large fruit farm at Ley Hill near Chesham for plum picking. We could eat what we liked but I

soon found out that a surfeit of Victoria Plums was no good for the stomach and I had several uncomfortable nights, before I took the hint and kept to picking rather than munching the produce. These extra-curricular activities were all good experience for life and I remember them as much as most of my experiences at The RGS during the war and soon afterwards.

Yours sincerely,

David Wiltshire (RGS 1943-1950)

Hi, Ian

I have just enjoyed the newsletter on the train via a blackberry.

I was very lucky to play in David Stone's unbeaten under 14 cricket team in 1984 and I'll always remember what a happy time it was through his enthusiasm and never ending encouragement! Even after I left the school, David always showed an interest in what I was doing and where I was playing! His love for sport is still infectious and I'll never get bored of talking cricket with him whenever I see him!

Regards

John Skrimshire (1982-1988)

Dear ex-RGS Men,

If you were at the RGS in the late 1950s or 1960s, you might want to become a member or supporter of the RGS Photo Face-Spotters Club, regarding the elderly photos which appear at <http://www.rgs.saund.co.uk/>

The club has had another successful year, with hundreds of new faces being recognised and logged at the website. Here is a summary:

		Total	Total		
		in Photo	identified	Unidentified	% done
1958	Senior	625	505	120	80.80%
1958	Junior	250	234	16	93.60%
1960	Senior	658	587	71	89.21%
1960	Junior	333	203	130	60.96%
1962	Senior	722	590	132	81.72%
1962	Junior	341	254	87	74.49%
1964	Senior	342	265	77	77.49%
1964	Middle	534	409	125	76.59%
1964	Junior	333	314	19	94.29%
1967	Senior	496	459	37	92.54%
TOTALS		4634	3820	814	82.43%

As you can see, we are nearing completion for the 1958 and 1964 junior school photos. Overall, our combined memories have so far put names to a staggering 3,820 faces from the past - but that still leaves 814 left to do. One more big push, gentlemen! I want to hear the sound of all those highly-educated brains taking the strain in the coming year.

Can I put in a plug for the RGS Photo Forum which has been started at <http://www.rgs.saund.co.uk/bb/index.php> to discuss old photos or other matters relating to our old school. I look forward to meeting you there. Also, of course, the official OW website - <http://www.rgsow.com> - where you will be made very welcome.

Many thanks for all your help.

John Saunders (RGS 1963-70)

SAD NEWS

We have to report three deaths and send our deepest sympathy to their families and friends.

WINIFRED WOOD

Paul Wood writes:

I am sorry to report that my mother, Winifred Wood, died on October 24 aged 88. She taught Maths part-time at RGS from 1956 to 1965, mainly to 6th formers. She left to study for a PhD at University of Reading, where she was appointed to a teaching post in the Department of Mathematics in 1967. She retired slightly early but returned each year to give lectures in a Masters programme until she was 77.

PETER RICHARDS

Graham Smith writes:

I have to inform you, if you don't already know, that [today's Times contains the obituary of an RGS old boy](#), Peter Richards. He was a contemporary of mine in the 6th form, but stayed for a further year in the 4th year sixth, during which I think he was Head Boy. He then went on to Cambridge. Peter and I were friends in the 6th form and went on holiday to Italy together in the summer of 1970. I think he was at the RGS 1962-1970.

This is a bad year for my old school friends.

EXTRACTS FROM THE OBITUARY

Peter Richards was the editor of CAM, the magazine written for the 183,000 or so Cambridge alumni, for 40 of its 58 issues. The publication was launched in 1990 and Richards was appointed to the editorial chair in 1994, where he remained until 2007. He was well qualified to inform graduates, from Nobel prizewinners to dropouts, about the place they had left behind, having spent four years as an undergraduate at Emmanuel College and stayed on to do a PhD in archaeology.

He then joined the Cambridge University Press, where he worked on reference books covering topics that ranged from theatre to birds. In the eight centuries before the arrival of CAM, the university had not communicated much with its graduates. Now everyone who has gone down, and whose address is known, receives the termly publication recording Cambridge's achievements and recalling its colourful past.

Glittering graduates were sometimes happier to talk to CAM than to the rest of the media. Peter Bazalgette, who as supremo of television's

Big Brother must have had other calls upon his time, not only made notes to jog his memory for the interview, but also chose socks that he thought would stand out in the photograph.

Peter Martin Richards met his future wife, Mary, on an archaeological dig when they were students. He is survived by her and by their three children.

Peter Richards, magazine editor, was born on March 13, 1951. He died of cancer on November 9, 2009, aged 58.

Hello Ian,

I forgot to tell you about the recent death of Rex Davis. I attended his funeral at Great Hampden church recently, and there were over 300 mourners, many from the local farming communities.

Rex was son of Wren Davis, founder of the Prestwood milk business, now carried on by the third generation. I do not know his dates at RGS, but presumably he started in about 1939/40. He may have been a late starter, because he had missed schooling with meningitis.

He spent all his working life in the family business; field work, milking, and collecting milk from other local farms. He drove Land Rovers since their introduction, and had traveled to all parts of Europe and into the Arctic Circle! His most recent vehicle was purchased in 1953!!

His donkeys were very popular at local events, and his current animal pulled the trolley on which lay his coffin, to Great Hampden church where he was laid to rest.

Rex had been a regular worshipper at the church for over 65 years, and had rung and maintained the bells for 50 years. He purchased the organ in memory of his parents.

Terry Williams (1947-1952)

NEXT NEWSLETTER

This will be published on Feb 14th. Please send in your contribution, your memories, and your photographs to me, Ian Clark ianrclarkuk@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.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR READERS!