

The Cavalier: linking present and past

Looking back over the distribution list of The Cavalier it is not difficult to relate a large part of the encouraging increase in circulation to an increase over recent years in the numbers of the Cavaliers, as the members of the former Old Pupils' Association now affectionately call themselves. Exactly one thousand copies of the last issue of The Cavalier were printed and disposed of, and by the end of term we hope that a like quantity of the present number will have been circulated too. While the greater part of these is, quite rightly, consumed in School, the destinations of the few hundred remaining are astonishingly varied and the proportion going out to former pupils extremely gratifying.

Their support, of course, contributes most acceptably to the general health of the balance sheet, and is welcomed accordingly without reluctance or reserve. But the most agreeable aspect of their interest is the proof it furnishes that many boys and girls leaving School are anxious not to lose contact with the surroundings they knew, and that they regard The Cavalier as a medium to maintain the ties between the present and the past.

Relatively, however, the numbers of the Cavaliers are still quite small, and those leaving now at the end of the year, particularly if their school career is coming to a close, would do

well to reflect whether the benefits which derive from membership, not the least of which is the assurance that the subscription from year to year includes the cost of each successive copy of the magazine, are not doubly worth the trivial outlay of cash and trouble involved. The Cavalier would be happy to know that its appeal was to follow into their many varied ways of life still more of those who hope to cherish an interest in the School and its affairs.

Editorial from The Cavalier, Summer 1955

The first PRS pupils

The question of who was the first person to set foot on the school premises when PRS opened in July 1947 has never been finally settled, but several boys come into the reckoning. Malcolm Buckle lived not far from Wilhelmshaven and could quite easily have been the first. Peter Mettyear, who was the first to arrive at Drake House, had to get someone to open the building before he could enter. Michael and Peter Carter of Howe House arrived early in Wilhelmshaven via Bremen on June 30th. This was because within a day or two of arrival, Michael was due to sit exams and was given time to settle in first. I also arrived early when nobody was about and was directed upstairs to the boys' rooms. On the stairs I noticed huge

paw marks and wondered whether we had an eccentric housemaster who kept a lion as a pet. It turned out to be the paw marks of Henry, Mr Duxbury's pet St. Bernard who was fortunately well mannered and a great favourite of everybody.

All pupils had been expected to arrive by 4.30 pm in time for a handing-over ceremony by the Royal Navy at 5.30 pm when the White Ensign was lowered and replaced by the Union Flag. Pupils received their evening meal at 6.30 pm and lights out was at 9.30 pm, which was very early as many were used to spending time in officers' and other clubs. The first night was comfortless with everybody a bit homesick and the next morning school awoke to a rather empty campus, being only a company of 70 in a barracks intended for 250 pupils and designed to house as many as 500 people. And it was a motley crew that assembled for breakfast on that first day. There was no dress code and children who had been left to their own devices did not respond well to discipline. Everyone made their own way to Nelson House for breakfast, which consisted of two pieces of toast and a cup of tea – not as in later years when the much more substantial 'Farmer's Breakfast' (Bauernfrühstück) was served.

Pupils were housed in either Howe or Drake House and from then on it was a love/hate relationship in every activity, but mainly in sport, in which

Howe excelled, at least in football. The classrooms were Nissen huts with bare concrete floors and furnished with desks and chairs, and a bench for the teacher, otherwise quite bare. Pupils started the day with assembly and were in class from 9.15 to 12.55 Monday to Friday. Afternoons were devoted mainly to outdoor activities and sport, because the Head, John Smitherman, maintained that, "Healthy boys and girls should not require to study too long at a time. And what could be more stupid than to make them pore over textbooks on a lovely afternoon and then idle away the evening hours?" So, lessons were resumed again between 5.15 and 6.35 on three evenings during the week, and dinner was at about 7.00. This was followed by prep until 9.00. In the case of Drake House, a roll call was taken in the common room (attic) before bed, at which prayers were said. One can see that there was little time to get up to mischief, which was no doubt the whole intention of the timetable. During the night, German night watchmen patrolled the house to ensure there were no escapees – at least that is what most of us probably thought. Children made friends or asserted themselves accordingly and older pupils were drafted into the echelons of house monitors, prefects, and heads of house with powers to dish out punishment. It wasn't until the first full term that prefects had jurisdiction over the whole school.

Levels of pocket money were established to purchase sweets, etc.

and a tuck shop was opened in the basement of Howe House. Parents were allowed to visit every weekend, which was unsettling for many pupils and this practice was discontinued following the first short term. Parents usually stayed in a transit mess in Wilhelmshaven where pupils were able to join them for a meal. I remember a pupil called Hedley Tattersall coming out with us once when his parents were unable to come up from Hannover. Pupils and staff managed to get through the first term without real difficulties. Had this not been the case I believe that the school would have either not have opened again, or done so under a totally different concept. It was not until many years later that I became aware that the staff called us the 'Guinea pigs'!

Vic Longyear (Drake 47-50) et al

Memory shorts

I enjoyed music lessons and being an understudy in 'Androcles and the Lion' and actually getting a role in 'The Boyfriend' but being struck down with flu, which was so bad that year that even the common room was turned into a sick bay. I remember queuing up for polio shots outside the MI room and hoping that the needle was still sharp when it was your turn.

I well remember one day out walking with some friends down by the swing

bridge and finding an old briefcase in an old, bombed-out ruin. It contained Luftwaffe papers, which had targets on them, including to my horror, a planned raid on my hometown of Huddersfield. These papers were handed over, but how much would they be worth today?

One of my mates had a crush on a girl at school called Veronica Dobbin and carving on his desk, "I love VD". Oh, sweet, naïve youth, it is soon snatched away from you!

Ian Sutherland (Collingwood 58-59)



Photo by courtesy of Andrew Dickson (Collingwood 65-66)

I've never worn a scarf. What could I possibly want one of those for? Then I see the untidy train approaching – all those kids hanging out of the windows – it's all heads, arms and hundreds of scarves. So that's what I need a scarf for!

I say goodbye and leap onto the train. But why is mum crying? Suddenly it hits me. I don't know anyone, nor where I'm going or when I will get there. We arrive in Wilhelmshaven and pile onto buses that take us to a huge house by the sea – Collingwood. Tens of boys squash into two square metres and look fixedly at a piece of paper on a board. I do the same as they peel away one at a time. Suddenly I am looking at my name. I find it grouped with the names of four others. I somehow find this room, choose a bed and my own three square metres of space. I see the other boys. I don't much like the look of any of them. So many things seem to happen that night, but finally I'm in bed and matron switches off the light. Oh why did I come? I miss you, mum. Little did I know that this brutal introduction was to be the start of a most enjoyable three-year period of my life.

Ron Watson (Collingwood 60-63)

Wilhelmshaven revisited

Twenty years ago, the TWA stood on the brink of an epic reunion in preparation for which our founder, Liz Bird, paid an advance visit to Wilhelmshaven. Here is an extract from her report of that emotional journey that originally appeared in NL 9 of December 1996.

"Only on the week of our visit did I start to get excited about going to

Wilhelmshaven. Cas and I landed at Bremen and giggled almost all the way along the autobahn until we got to Wilhelmshaven. The hotel was great and within easy walking distance of the Deichbrucke, the mainsite and Karstadt. But we didn't walk that afternoon. Rudiger and Jurgen drove us. As we saw the bunker alongside the entrance to the old school, the dialogue between Cas and I went along the lines of, 'OMG, OMG, OMG, OMG!' We asked to be let out of the car. Rudiger willingly agreed, by this time doubting our sanity.



We walked past the old guardroom, Cas observing that the cigarette machine was no longer there. I observed that the clocking-in machine had also gone. Then we saw the sports field with the buildings beyond it. I felt compelled to walk on the pavement around the field, but Cas ran straight across it. I asked her if we'd been allowed to walk across the field. 'No,' she replied, 'That's why I did it!' I surprised myself by not being emotional at the time, but recalling it now, I could easily be so.

Rudiger, a German Navy Petty Officer, appeared with a large bunch of keys



bounds except stage crew'. We climbed up and saw evidence of all those who had contravened. 'Kill the Kopf' plus several names were there for all to see! At Howe Girls, everything was almost the same, except Mrs Bishop was not in her flat. I stood outside the locked door of one of my rooms. At Nelson, Cas walked across the prefects'

so that we could get into some of the buildings. Churchill was a little run down and had floor problems. Hardly surprising! As we entered, we could feel the assemblies, the drama productions, the dentist's roll calls, the dances, films and end-of-term parties of bygone years. I have almost total recall of an anti-smoking film we saw there. Obviously it didn't have much affect on the seniors who spent much time trying to circumvent the rules! Seeing the steps on either side of the stage made me realise why every other person collecting a prize on Speech Day fell over. Behind the scenes, we were delighted to see the faded but still visible text next to the ladder into the roof, which read 'Out of



balcony. The serving area has been changed around and you can now walk from one side to the other. Even the tables are laid out in a similar way and they are the same shape. It was uncanny. And I swear I could smell



Welsh Rarebit!

At Raleigh the labs are still labs, the classrooms still classrooms and the staff room is still the staff room. What can I say – you will not want to miss seeing it. Grenville, the old admin block, where Cas told us several times that she took typing lessons (she was very excited at this stage), nothing much had changed at all. Here we saw two boards



The bunkers were just as immovable. I didn't get inside the old MI room, but had that familiar feeling of dread as I approached. Cas pointed out where she used to sit and smoke. Then we spotted a repair in the chain-link fence and yes, Cas confirmed that this was the place where the escape to the outside world had been. On the back road, just along from the MI room, I had the strangest feeling. On that bit of tarmac I remember us having to run 100 yards against the clock. As we usually only remember our triumphs and disasters, and I know I didn't triumph, I can only guess that it was ignominy that was haunting me."

Ed. – As those who attended the 1997 Wilhelmshaven reunion well know, this golden-anniversary celebration of the school's founding was blessed with fantastic weather and became one of the most memorable PRS reunions ever.

that Rudiger rescued last year – Head Boys and Head Girls, plus Dartmouth, Sandhurst and Cranwell entrants. They are in pristine condition and will be on display next year.

Teacher's eye view

Shortly prior to Liz Bird's Wilhelmshaven trip 20 years ago (see 'Wilhelmshaven Revisited'), former PRS staff member and Howe Boys' Housemaster, Mr Alec O'Reilly, returned to his old stomping ground, which resulted in the following letter to Liz.

"I must congratulate you on the enthusiasm you have engendered for the Wilhelmshaven Association and I am sure you will enjoy your reunion. I won't be there for I had my own nostalgic return in late June 1996. My family offered my wife and me several choices to celebrate our golden wedding and we chose the one that said, 'a weekend in Wilhelmshaven'. We had a great time. Sarah and Alistair

were born there, were christened in the church and went to the primary school in Jever. Sue went to the primary school and had three years as a daygirl at PRS where she had more to do with the Howe boys than the Howe girls! We were able to share all sorts of memories. The terns are still nesting on the island jetty beside Sick Bay. Looking at them, I could hear, 'Summer is not here until Miss Mollett says so!' She was matron in the early 50s and this was something to do with the school uniform. At the other end of the mainsite I could hear Bryn Evans's voice filling the field we used for the farm. We could count the pigs and hens, but were never quite sure how many rabbits we had. I derived great pleasure from the account of the founding of the school in a previous newsletter. Mr Smitherman



Bonteheim pool being filled circa 1962 (photo courtesy of Bob Lintott)

was clearly doing a great job, but you must make sure that mention is made of the golden years under Hugh Pacey before he went on to become Director of BFES. He was a great headmaster who insisted on the highest standards for PRS and made sure that it was a school of quality. For proof of this look around at the people you see at reunions. It will be no surprise to hear that PRS was regarded as the jewel in the BFES crown



Mr O'Reilly during the pool's construction (photo courtesy of Bob Lintott).

Bonteheim is no more. All torn down and replaced by blocks of flats with nice views over the harbour. But the entrance to the site is there and you can work out where the building was and where we dug the swimming pool. There were lots of sceptics (among the staff too) particularly when we found two blocks of concrete 1-meter-cube right down at the bottom. But we thought about the way the pyramids were built, organised enough boy power, hauled them out and made our pool! Instead of Bonteheim with the 'Rudolph Schmidt' dredger lying

nearby there is now the Bontequai and a museum ship. But the ghost ship tied up in the memories of the single ladies on the staff is HMS Diamond, which paid a courtesy visit to the port and with a full crew of young officers, what a time the ladies had!

All of us have different memories of PRS depending on whose time coincided with ours (mine was 53-63). I remember Jim Yelland (Rodney staff 53-57) when asked by 'Poppa' Pacey to move some boys and girls from the long grass at the Sportplatz replying, 'I'm not a sheepdog Mr Pacey'. And I remember too the look of horror on Fred Turner's face (Rodney staff - 1950s) when he picked up the staff-room phone and mimicked 'Pacey here', only to hear at the other end of the line a booming 'PACEY HERE!' Fortunately he had a good sense of humour.

I've forgotten what the mainsite was like during the Asian flu epidemic, but on the Bonteheim we had over 100 Rodney and Howe boys in bed in the common rooms downstairs. This was the only way we could cope. By the time we'd made one round of temperature taking, it was nearly time to start the next. At least there was one blessing - they were all so knocked out by the flu they behaved uncharacteristically well.

When we went to PRS life was hard for the townspeople and the school was a help to the economy. Now as

you look about you can see that there have been good times for the town. The oil harbour must have helped and money has been spent on the parks and the sea walls, foot and cycle paths, making it a better place to live. But all the people we spoke to said that the good times were gone. Unemployment is over 18% and there is little hope for improvement. Your visit will be a welcome boost to trade in the town.

Good luck in your venture and do make sure that Mr Pacey gets a good, solid mention. For me he was PRS and one of the hardest things I had to do later, when we came to live not far from each other in Suffolk, was to learn to call him Hugh and not 'Sir'. He had great presence."

Mr Alec O'Reilly (Howe staff 53-63)

Ed. – Richard Loveday (Howe 60-64) well remembers the swimming pool and how they used to scrape their chests on the rough concrete slope when diving in!

Collecting the post – hic!

An amusing insight into life on the PRS staff was given in this 20-year-old letter to Liz from former teacher, Mr Jack Duncan (Collingwood 68-72).

"I arrived in Wilhelmshaven in January 1968. It was not cold - it was Arctic. We moved into our quarter out in the far sticks of the town and were soon

settled in. We were soon extracted from the same to visit the staff mess 'to collect the post', which we soon learned was a euphemism for a little, or large, alcoholic stimulation. As most of the staff had been connected with the services at some time or other, life in the mess and off duty was guided by service standards. Most ex-pupils will know this was anything but starchy.

We very soon settled in under the tutelage of a certain music master and his wife and it was all systems go. There was a very good reason for relaxing after duties. As most ex-pupils will realise, we had more than our fair share of intelligent pupils who were also determined to make the most of life there – no light task! From time to time we were obliged to let off steam with mess parties. These often occurred at the drop of a hat for birthdays, etc. This meant that the normally staid old men and women really went back to their youths. We often had to dress up and have vivid memories of Roman sandals, Olympic games and other 'sports'. I remember one of these involved a greasy pole over the portable swimming pool full of cold-water, white knuckles, and needless to say, going in headfirst! On one occasion we roller skated around the mainsite clad only in a pair of trunks. If I remember correctly the loudest cheer came from Howe Girls.

To come back down to earth, I found my five years there very meaningful

and full of pleasure. The majority of pupils were keen to work, were very courteous and relatively well behaved, particularly when as compared with the 'yobbish' behaviour associated with many of today's schools. Of course, I have now finished teaching – in fact, I am 80 years old – but I count my days at Wilhelmshaven as some of the best days of my experience and I will never forget PRS. I shall not be able to attend the 50th Anniversary trip to the school, but to all those who go, say a 'thank you' from me."

Mr Jack Duncan (Collingwood staff 68-72)

Drake Bog Race

How can it be that such a hard-fought and important end-of-term event has slipped from collective memory? John Newton (Drake 47-51) finds it is high time our memories are refreshed.

The now not-so-famous Drake House Bog Race first ran, I think, in 1948. Simple rules made it easy to follow. One or two days before the end of term, all Drake boys would gather at the bottom end of the corridor by the bogs at daybreak; naked, except for a towel or perhaps a stolen curtain, wrapped neat as ninepence around the waist. Pitched on toes, pushing and juggling, these finely toned athletes waited for The Off, hearts beating and faces grim, ready for the endeavour to come. Which one would succeed? Which one would starve? The rules were that the head boy would step from

his room at the top of the corridor, and shout the word 'GO'. Every boy would then hurtle himself up the corridor, dive into his dormitory, throw on full school uniform, dash down the stairs past a line of admiring girls, clapping, squealing helpful comments and blowing kisses. From there these gallant young athletes leapt out into the quad, sprinted along the road past the bunker and flagpole and dived up the steps into Nelson House. First in, known as The Winner, had full rights to the breakfast of the last in, known as The Loser. His utter humiliation and disgrace lasted until the end of the next term, when bigger and stronger he could aim for glory, or at least a middle place and save his breakfast.

The Bog Race, always truly competitive, started the night before The Big Day, when all Drake boys planned many devious ways of winning, including crowding in with the smaller juniors to shove them aside – or better trip or push them over – at the start gun.

Along with those dark and dirty plans came the preparation of running gear; your full school uniform, socks, pants, shirt tucked in and fully buttoned; properly knotted tie pulled tightly into position, shoes on and laces correctly tied. On the night before the race we all invented methods of dressing quickly for next morning. Socks rolled to be pulled on at speed. Pants and vests, rolled for ease of assumption. Shirts illegally buttoned as far as possible with room only to shove a dishonest

head through the almost-closed collar and shoes partly knotted. Trousers pulled right up and fastened, with no shirt, or anything else, sticking out from the fly. Even jackets were sort-of hooked by the shoulder pads into a partly closed drawer as instant release mechanism, ready to be located and engaged by backing into the sleeves and with a fast shrug releasing the garment for an accelerated take-off, rather akin to those Formula-1 tyre changes you see on television.

Of course, none of it worked. At the GO command boys would drop their covering towel or curtain and fly, naked, up the corridor. All those hurrying, shoving, pushing and falling white bodies and floppy bits crowding along were a sight to behold. All those carefully planned dressing ideas were the first to fail. Boys would cast off loosely tied shoes on the stairs and along the race track, unbuttoned shirts would fly free in the breeze of passage across the quad and along the road, with the tail often sending distress signals from beneath the jacket. Arrival of the main pack at Nelson House became an elbowing, growling mass trying to get up the steps and through the main door. Once in to that little hallway it became a traffic jam of enormous proportions. The large boys came off best, with the small boys sacrificed to expediency. One term, a little fellow trying to worm through at knee height and captured just before he made it into the dining room and later discovered stranded,

kicking and struggling, hanging from the coat hooks, the shoulders of his jacket twisted back to imprison him. Although he came in last, I think the German cooks took pity and he did not forfeit his breakfast.

The first couple of Bog Races went unnoticed by the rest of the school. But after a couple of terms, a straggle of observers stood along the route, watching this mad endeavour in some incredulity. A few more terms saw the straggle swell to a line of enthusiastic supporters, including a few teachers, urging and clapping the laggards along.

John Newton (Drake 47-51)

Ed. – Sorry to say there was no sign of the race in my time at Drake Boys in 1960.



Drake Boys House subsequently moved to Fliegerdeich, where it is shown here in the 58-60 period.

(photo courtesy of Roger Hall)

To the Dark Continent and back



Former Drake boy, John Newton, attended PRS from September 1947 to December 1951. His story is an unusual one of personal endeavour and entrepreneurship that took him to the Dark Continent and back. After serving in the RAF, he joined the colonial police, became a writer and broadcaster, a businessman and manufacturer, then finally an author and philanthropist. Now retired and living in Bedfordshire, John spends much of his time writing books.

Although I was eligible to attend the local grammar school in Taunton on return to the UK, funding issues stood in the way, so I left school at the age of 16 and started work at WH Smith. A year later I signed on for three years in the RAF and trained as a radio

direction finder, passing bearings or a course-to-steer for those brave lads in the air. I was subsequently posted to Aden and then on to Tanganyika where I was equipped with an ancient radio from before the Battle of Britain. This was complemented by a set of wonky aerials installed in an even more ancient caravan parked halfway down a 2000-yard airstrip in the middle of the African bush - at the centre of the most arid part of the Tanganyika savannah to be exact. My task was to bring flights of those tiny Vampire fighters in from Entebbe, Uganda, and send them on the correct route to Ndola, Northern Rhodesia en route for the South African Air Force. It could hardly have been simpler. I already knew where Entebbe and Ndola were on the compass grid, so I simply sat, earphones at the ready, until I heard them chatting to each other and called up with instructions on how to find me.

With little to do between flights, I would play tennis, swim in the pool at the club - they made me an honorary member - or fly back to Nairobi for a week or so, where I worked with the Army on radio. As a diversion, I went several times up into the Mount Kenya forests to help flush out Mau Mau terrorists and in doing so worked closely with the Kenya Police. I liked them so much, on demob I went for an interview and returned to Kenya as a contract inspector.

Knowing from the age of ten that I wanted to be a writer, I observed something that started me thinking and researching. Forty years later it became the basis for my first novel, titled 'White Sunrise'. During my time in Germany, I listened to both the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) and the American Forces Network, and from the age of eleven I wrote scripts for them in my head. Eight years later, a chance meeting in Nairobi gave me the opportunity to write and broadcast successfully to the troops in East Africa via BFBS. Between hopping up and down to Tabora, scrambling through the Aberdare and Mount Kenya forests and happily showing off on the radio, I had a great time in Kenya. On my return as a police officer, BFBS welcomed me back with open arms and I continued telling jokes and playing music for the next twenty years on Kenya Broadcasting, Uganda Broadcasting and half a dozen times on the BBC Overseas Service.

I loved being in the police, but the Mau Mau emergency eventually wound down and, loving Kenya, I grasped an unexpected opportunity to become a sales manager for Schweppes in Nairobi. This led to three years in Uganda, opening up the market in that lovely country for Schweppes. This was followed, to my great surprise, by a return to Nairobi and the responsibility for running operations for Schweppes in East, West and parts

of Southern Africa, along with Arabia and India. This involved much travel and much fun, during which time I persuaded Schweppes to buy the bottling company we were using. I also persuaded them to build a new factory for producing soft drinks and Cadbury products, such as chocolate and the like. Now responsible for four factories around East Africa, employing a total of five hundred workers and giving security to their families (not to mention access to education for their children) gave me immense satisfaction.

Schweppes eventually brought me back to England to work and develop business at its head office, but having been 'King' in Africa, I decided to start my own business importing food products from around the world. Not knowing British business methods, I simply developed my own. Much to my further surprise, within four years my company became a large supplier of raw materials to most large British food producers supplying all the major supermarkets (except Tesco, which is why I never shop with them). I still wonder how I managed to do this, as I had no specific business training and never really grasped the difference between a debit and a credit. But I think that my grounding at PRS taught me how to be independent and gave me the ability to develop and thus survive in East Africa without any form of backup and support from government agencies.



John stood outside Drake Boys in 1948

We finally sold our business, which my wife Pam had helped to run, and this gave me time to complete 'White Sunrise'. It sold well and this encouraged me to continue writing. Now, at the age of 82, I'm halfway through my eleventh book and have two more planned in my head. My current book is the third of a trilogy, titled 'The Kenya Police – a Living History'. It is based on the true-life stories of police colleagues, their wives, widows and children. So many wonderful stories flooded in as a response to my request for material that I simply had to continue writing. The stories are selling all around the world, even to Kenya Africans in

Nairobi. I take no fee or royalty. All income goes to Kenya Police funds and for our charities. I am amazed at their success.

So, here I am in vigorous health and looking back on a wonderful life blessed with some success, some failure, but always happiness. If I were to take my last gasp in the next few minutes, my final words, would be, 'Wow. That was great!'

John Newton (Drake 47-51)

A flurry of Snow

In the late 1950s our new headmaster, Mr John Sharp, was dead keen. He had just been to a conference at which the prominent novelist and social critic, C.P. Snow, had been expounding on his thesis of 'the two cultures'. The idea was that there had developed two distinct and contradictory mindsets in our society: one based in science and technology, the other in the literary tradition of the humanities – art, literature, music, etc. Snow saw danger in this conflict of perspectives and wanted to broaden the education of our up-and-coming technocrats, as well as acquaint the population at large with a deeper understanding of science. Thus the nation would be intellectually strengthened and culture would speak unto culture.

Mr Sharp and others at the conference had been impressed with Snow's ideas. We in the Sixth Form were the first generation to benefit from the opportunities opened up by the 1944 Education Act and the protections of the Welfare State. Snow had proposed that, in addition, we needed to have a depth and breadth of "CULTURE". Mr Sharp took it upon himself to be the principal agent of this prescription. Accordingly he had the Upper Sixth – there must have been no more than a dozen of us – meet with him in the inner sanctum of his office once a week to be tutored in the literary arts. Our first assignment was to write a piece on any topic of our choosing; the newspapers could help. With some effort I managed to write a paragraph or two in response to an article by the former 5,000 metre world-record holder, Chris Chataway, in The Observer. He wrote of the deleterious effects of professionalism in athletics and the undermining of the amateur Olympic spirit. Somehow I conflated this topic with society's treatment of the elderly: a bad show I suggested. This caught Mr Sharp's attention, arousing his indignation at the implied inadequacies of the Welfare State. I was quite mistaken, he insisted with agitated intensity. I felt duly corrected and remained mute in my embarrassment. The leather-backed armchairs creaked in the pause, feet shuffled and someone coughed. There was no time remaining for another essay to be criticized, much to the relief of the others.

The following week Mr Sharp reversed the roles, submitting a short impressionist piece of his own that had been published in some minor literary journal. We were to take copies for study and analysis, our responses to be given the following week. Our next session with the Headmaster was soon upon us. As an immature would-be scientist, I did not want to fail the C.P. Snow literacy test and be seen as the true philistine that I was. I decided to let others do the heavy lifting and to rely on them to keep the tutorial going. Besides, who needed more embarrassments from the Headmaster? Mr Sharp's greeting and demeanour were those of an eager young author; he really wanted to know what we thought. He waited for an opening remark: none came. Students shifted squeakily in the heavy leather armchairs, looked down, out of the window, avoided one another's gaze, hoping that someone would bell the cat, take the lead. Mr Sharp's gambit was to read the piece, no doubt hoping to provoke some kind – any kind – of response: still nothing. His hopeful almost boyish expression faded, his disappointment palpable. We moved on. The Headmaster recovered his pose; we were relieved to be dismissed at the appointed time. Shortly thereafter the tutorials were discontinued. *Mea culpa*, Mr Sharp, I was but a weak vessel.

*Terry Wonnacott (Rodney 55 – 59)
Extracted from The Book*

New Finds

Name at PRS	Name now	Years	House
Dave Knapp	Dave Knapp	71 - 72	Mountbatten
<i>Re-joined</i>			
Richard Bournnell	Richard Bournnell	67 - 70	Mountbatten/ Lawson
Michael Little	Michael Little	56 - 59	Collingwood
Keith Markey	Keith Markey	55 - 58	Drake
Patricia Stokoe	Trish Morris	56 - 59	Collingwood
Joan Weir	Joan Weir	50 - 52	Drake
Ruth Dunglinson	Ruth Lightfoot	51 - 52	Howe

Pre-reunion golf event

On Friday 2nd June 2017, a pre-reunion 18-hole golf event (stableford competition) will be held at Ingon Manor Golf and Country Club, Ingon Lane, Snitterfield, Stratford upon Avon, CV37 0QE, Tel: 01789 731857
Bacon rolls and coffee will be served

on arrival at noon and tee off will be at 12.30-45. Players finish in time to attend the evening dinner at the reunion hotel. Price £27 including premium for prizes. If you would like to play please e-mail Roger Stokoe at roger.stokoe@me.com, or call mobile 07774887874.

Subs for 2017/2018

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