

OLD CAMDENIANS CLUB

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October 1991

The Chairman's Newsletter

At last year's annual general meeting, a motion was passed to send £500 to the school to help toward the cost of a reading week. The Headteacher has sent me a letter of thanks saying that money was used towards providing reading and writing workshops for the first and second years. The venture received very favourable local and national publicity. Apparently, the Council was so impressed that they voted £1000 towards the cost of the forthcoming year's reading week. Some of the Old Boys money was put towards prize money for attendance and achievement. Those of you who remember the "Old Hall" will be pleased to know this was where many of the reading week activities took place.

The Head tells me that standards are being improved and maintained at the School. The number of applications to enrol has increased considerably following a long period of decline. Because of the competition for new places at the School, it has been possible to introduce once again the wearing of school uniform for the first to third year and that shoes are worn in place of the ubiquitous trainer. A 'Parent Support Group' (the equivalent of the old Parent Teacher Association) has been restarted. An exhibition of memorabilia has also been held at the school during the year. If you have an item that you would like to donate to the school as part of the permanent exhibition, please let the Head know. The school was recently featured in a rather flattering way on the London Programme and ITV News at Ten.

Since the school is the referent point for all of us and identifies the beginning of our development into whatever we may have become or achieved, then it is good to know that the present Headteacher and staff are doing their best now to look after the future. The joyful schooldays of childhood are that stage of man when there is less care about how little money is in the pocket; when he plays the part of the schoolboy with his satchel, whining, wining or winning; loving, learning and leaving. "Thou has most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school" was a view expressed in Shakespeare's time. I don't know whether that's true, but whatever the system, it is the people working and being actively involved in the process who matter most. I congratulate the current Head and his staff for restoring the basic 3R's.

This newsletter, as well as bringing you up to date on all the news that has come my way, also serves as official notice for the AGM and the annual dinner which will be held at:

The Kenilworth Hotel
Great Russell Street
London

on
Friday 29th November 1991
The AGM starts at 6.30 p.m. followed by the dinner.

And now on to correspondence I have received during the year. Ron Wilby wishes to be remembered to all old friends. I have sent Theo Crabtree's address to Ron, and hope they've been in contact with each other. A leaver of the 60's, Laurence Marks, tells me that he was invited to appear on BBC Radio Four programme "Start the Week" to discuss 'school days' and recounted stories of academic aspirations exceeding his achievements at the time he took his leave of Hilldrop Road. He was reunited with year mates at the 1989 dinner through an old colleague, Robert Hartley. One of those prophetic remarks made by his English teacher was "I think you may have a future in writing".

Frank Pottinger continues to attend his regimental reunion on the last Friday of November, and whilst unable to be with us, sends his best wishes. John Maskell met Alan Knights, who remembered Frank Penfold and Frank Oirschot, at a football match between the Old Boys Football League and the London Banks FA. Copies of the Old Camdenians magazine from 1937 to 1939 are available from Ben Hooberman if anyone would like them.

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And it was lovely to hear from that Grand Old chap of English letters and now resident of Stratford, Gordon Clarke.

I am constantly reminded by so many people of the affection with which Gordon Clark is remembered. He has been a regular attender of our dinner over many years and his name is so often mentioned during the toast to the School and staff. He sends best regards to all former colleagues and pupils and hopes to be with us again at a future dinner, though at the moment the journey is rather difficult. Gordon gives two little snippets of information on former pupils, Frederick Pyne (whom he taught in 1947 in form 1C) has been the principle character in the long running Yorkshire soap, Emmerdale Farm, and a pupil who was at the School in the late 50's and early 60's - Dr Dennis Deletant, who has appeared on television discussing the Rumanian crisis (brother to Richard, whom I mentioned last year). Thank you for your letter Gordon. We look forward to seeing you soon.

In Memoriam

James Clokie (aged 80) who taught German
at the School between 1954 - 1971

At the dinner you will be able to see two photographs of the School ATC Squadron taken at Upper Heyford in the early 40's. They belong to John (Ginner) Barnes who has been telling me stories (out of school) of the fun and games (including the 13th cow!??) while the School was evacuated. John also recalls Bill Wraight hitting straight sixes back over the fast bowlers head and being a "pretty good bat". Some names from that period that John recalled included Len Fost (pianist at Towcester), Charlie Stoker, Nick Eadie, Frankie Hughes, Johnny Smith, John Radcliffe and Peter Le Cheminant.

Still on the subject of evacuation, Tom Head, recalls being sent first to Rugby before being transferred to Towcester, and hitch-hiking lifts home back to the Nag's Head on Marston Brick Company lorries with his pal "Charlie" Chase. Tom remembers himself and a few others being invited round to where Daniel McCarthy was billeted listening to Beethoven's 5th - while "pipes were being smoked and ale consumed". Tom then wanders to another topic of reminiscence, playing cricket in the 50's with Charlie Simpson. I quote Tom's last paragraph "My memory of Charlie is not so much his fearsome, naked aggressive bowling as of the over following one of his less successful overs when we would all line up trying to prevent overthrows (usually to the boundary) when Charlie tried to redeem himself with a run out - albeit that the batsman had not left his crease.

The mention of Simpson as a fast bowler immediately prompts the name Yates. Together they were the spearhead of the Old Camdensians 1st XI cricket attack for nearly two decades. I visited Paul Yates in his home town of Woodingdean earlier this year, and you will be pleased to learn that Paul has made a remarkably good recovery from two nasty heart attacks suffered last December. Paul is still bowling - though now he uses woods to obtain bias on the green rather than swing and cutback from a good length.

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Another sportsman of longstanding who has not been enjoying the best of health is Stan Heritage. Stan was at the School during the early years of the 39-45 war and was evacuated with the School. He was part of that fantastic first XI football team which had such a long running success. Many of you who were evacuated with the school or were at the school during those halcyon football days always have a great time at the dinner talking of the goals that were or might have been scored or saved. I was just a fag at the time, and whilst I can't remember all the names involved, here are a few which Paul Yates and I could recall in addition to Stan. George Robb, Bill Steel, Dave Metzger, Leskin, Chris Anstiss, Lal Thompson, Ken Morley, Peter Wakefield, Mickie Gasman, Aleck Godfrey and George Sale. There must be many more and if you know their whereabouts, it would be nice to invite them to come along. As far as I know, Dave Metzger is still in New Zealand - it may be just too far for him to come for the evening.

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Another great master at the School, who proposed the toast to the School and staff at last year's dinner is Jim Ritchie, who writes to say he is getting better following his "dickie ticker". Jim met another old staff member while shopping in Muswell Hill - Guy Davies and between them they came up with another name Roy Gore (Ernie Brewer will remember both of them). By the way, Harry Hawkings, who plays bowls at Jim's club, will most certainly find someone of his vintage (31-36) at the dinner - so come along on Friday 29th. John Young (1948-53) heard about last year's dinner too late to attend - let's hope you can make it this year, John.

A Mr Helon who is writing a history of Bury High School, Lancashire. has written from Formby, Merseyside, asking if anyone can give information on one of their previous headmasters, Frank Unsworth Woods. Apparently he was on the staff of Holloway sometime in 1932. So it would take one of you old'uns to remember him.

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Finally, let me remind you once again of the dinner on Friday, 29th November. Please return the enclosed form to Phil Cowley as early as you can so that numbers can be confirmed. Let Phil know if you want to sit near to colleagues. As always, if you could make some contribution towards letting one of those fifth formers, who invariably have no money, come to the dinner it would be most appreciated. (We hope to invite at least four of them.) We are still looking for someone who is pretty good with a pentax or box brownie to take a photograph of the role of honour notice boards in the Old Hall.

I look forward to seeing you all. If you know an Old Boy who doesn't normally attend, ask him along to join the party. Please let me know the address of any Old Boys you may be in contact with, who you feel would like to receive this newsletter. Looking through our membership list we seem to be particularly short of the 70's and 80's decades.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Richard Brown', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard Brown
Hon Chairman
Old Camdenians Club
October 1991

