



# AD - VISOR



## **The Newsletter of Birkenhead Institute Old Boys**

Issue 8  
Autumn 2003

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### **RECOLLECTIONS**

Brian Ware (1936-44)

In previous issues of Ad Visor Harold Beckett has referred to the success of BIOBs in Rugby but on reflection I wonder if this was more due to innate ability than the 'coaching' provided by the school.

It should be borne in mind that I am writing about the period 1939-44 -scrummaging machines and tackle bags were in the future. As a forward 'coaching' consisted on how to pack -presumably to avoid broken necks -otherwise we were left to our own devices to learn the finer/coarser arts of forward play. To be blunt, and possibly unfair, the coaching would have left room for the Lords Prayer on the back of a postage stamp.

Progression as a forward was from front row to second row and finally the back row, but whether by accident or design, this did stand me in good stead later on -as will become apparent.

However two Old Boys did help me considerably in my rugby 'career' .One was Harry Brooks who introduced me to an Old Boys side in Liverpool so I got experience of junior club rugby whilst at school. Teams like RAF West Kirby and Rootes come to mind and this made the transition to University Rugby not such a quantum leap.

However if it had not been for Jasper I may not have continued with rugby. I was looking at the sheets in the Students Union and had virtually decided not to put my name down when he reminded me that I had played second row. As is said the rest is history so whether by accident or design the moving through the various rows of the scrum was useful.

Another occasion was when at the very last moment I was put into the Northern UAU side against Waterloo and played as a prop forward -admittedly it was a painful learning curve - but my abiding memory was the look on Mr. Jones' (aka Bummy) face when I told him I was not there to support Jasper but to play.

Two other occasions come to mind. One was when we were to play RNC Dartmouth, who were evacuated to Eaton Hall, and the Head summoned a team meeting, which was to ensure that we all wore school caps, ties and blazers. Whether it was because of this that we only just lost we will never know -it certainly was not of rugby knowledge that had been imparted.

The other was when I convinced the Head that 'touch' rugby in the gym and grounding the ball on coconut matting was not the ideal way to prepare for a school match in the afternoon. Another real joy was to be given a rugby ball, rather than an oblate spheroid, to start a game -

it was almost too good to play with.

As I said at the beginning this was wartime and it is thanks to all concerned that rugby flourished at the school during this time but above that I suggest that the game was a focal point and possibly was the catalyst for the camaraderie, house matches apart, that existed and still does through the Old Boys Association.

## MEMORIES

Ray Binyon 1938-46

'I'm short of copy,' he said, 'Five hundred words will do'. I don't think I could have managed more than a hundred words in my heyday with 'Gerry' Hall giving his critical acclaim and his red ink, four out of ten, try harder to expand the subject.

The trouble with being an old boy rather than a schoolboy (scholar as we used to be known, or in the case of one or two of us, 'that fool',) is that now we can only look to the past. We can relate what we have done with our life or we can just sit back and trawl through the memory bank. It is probably boring to strut your stuff about the things you almost achieved in life, whereas every old boy can tune in to some elements of history which can be identified with school days. My days at school spanned the Second World War and many of you will remember from September 1939 until the following spring schooling was a very haphazard arrangement. Those who were evacuated had some advantage over those who stayed at home, and those of us who did stay at home were amazed at the stories of the evacuees when they returned. They told of such things as visits to the local slaughterhouse 'and the smoke rising from the dead bodies'. What they had seen was the steam and other vapours arising, but our jaws would drop at the horror.

All sorts of memories keep popping into mind from those years, some about staff, some about scholars, pupils or that fool.

I don't want to be unkind, but some memories are to their disadvantage, but I don't mean any offence.

Does anyone remember 'Klon'? That apprentice to the Gestapo who always managed to appear at the wrong moment. 'That boy, go to my room' followed by the wringing of hands and the gnashing of teeth and trying hard not to weep. Then, there was 'Biddy' Harris who I always thought of as a kind man, very much the Mr Soft against 'Klon's' Mr Hard. I was always in awe of that dark grotto adjacent to the Remove classroom. 'Biddy' Harris presided over a den of General Notebooks in all their glistening glory and spare canes and other instruments of torture favoured by the Gestapo.

One of the boys we had in my class would now be seen as dyslexic, I won't mention his name, but he was put upon by all and sundry. 'Biddy' Harris tried to maintain our interest in history. Mid 19th century was the subject and was it Disraeli who 'Weathered the storm' of some threat to the country? This phrase formed part of the search for our knowledge of the period in the form exam at the end of term. 'Disraeli was the purolet that worthed the stone' wrote this lad. He was the one in my preamble that didn't qualify as scholar or pupil. I laughed with the rest but I wonder what happened to him.

Then we had Alf Lord who unlike most of the staff came into the classroom like a whirling dervish and commenced to distribute pieces of chalk at high velocity around the classroom to try to quell the sheer excitement of his presence. His favourite second strike weapon was an old gym shoe, which he had concealed about his person. Was it a lad named Robinson who was lambasted with this ultimate deterrent? 'It wasn't me, sir,' he said. 'You'll do " said

'Alf'. Goodness knows what his reaction would have been if one of our plots had worked. It was the old trick of balancing the blackboard duster on the top of the door and spanning to the architrave. It was meant for the next scholar, pupil, or fool who entered or by a long chance if Alf had stormed in. We calculated it wouldn't hit him because he always came in so fast. But horrors! It was the apprentice from the Gestapo who entered. God was on our side that day. The duster stayed quietly on the door whilst we were castigated for the noise. During the harangue, as you can imagine, we were deathly quiet.

Friday morning after prayers saw the emergence of 'the preyers' when the mortarboards were held out at the door after the strains of 'I vow to thee my country' Woe betide you if you had forgotten to bring your donation to the Prisoners of War Fund'. I often wonder how effective that scheme was.

Late on in my school years we had a most wonderful event. Well, those of us in the 6th form arts group did. Enter Hetty Rosenbloom. To us the most perfect woman we had ever seen and at a reachable time span to us later teenagers. In her early twenties and with a portfolio of drawings the likes of which we had never seen before. They would have damaged our health if we had seen them in our formative years.

What else is there in the memory bank. What about that enormous 'bobby' on traffic duty at Charing Cross. He was huge, or so it seemed. Sometimes kindly, other times contemptuous of our wobbly progress on our bikes across his domain, with his 'Stop here', at his podium when we hadn't pleased him with our progress.

Then there were the girls from the Girls Secondary School which backed on to the lower part of Birkenhead Park. Those of us who cycled through the park on our way home feared these amazons who had a habit of creating a very female human barrier across the road to waylay we intrepid cyclists. But remembering the command of the all seeing, ever present apprentice of the Gestapo who had decreed that we should not speak or be seen with girls, we fled.

These days 'waylaid' would be translated to 'wayward and get laid'. The things we missed out on. In fact, if the family went for a walk at the weekend I would walk ten yards in front or behind in case 'the apprentice' should see me consorting with my sister.

There were other decrees, of course. 'Thou shalt not cycle in front of the school' and 'take your cap off as you pass'. Bikes must be pushed across Whetstone Lane' and woe betide you if you were seen 'scooting' the bike across. And I think our school hours were modified in the afternoon so that we innocent boys would not be tempted to consort with those creatures of sensual pleasure and delight passing the school on their way home from the convent at the top of the hill. The uniform, brown, and that beautiful cream blouse filled with their presence. We were deprived as distinct from depraved.

Our bicycles gave us many pleasures in lieu of the pleasures denied us by decree. Do you remember the 'pudding fields'? An area of undeveloped building site in the vicinity of Bedford Road. A bit out of the way for me, but a must on the way home from Ingleborough Road. The grassy hummocks, shallow wetlands, slippery yellow clay slopes made it a cycle destroyer for the unwary. The questions that arose when you got home late and dirty with the bike caked in mud couldn't be explained by 'I've been playing rugby'.

Summer days were a pleasure. During the holidays Ingleborough Road was open to us to play games. For many hours we would practice our bowling and batting under the benevolent eye of 'Johnny' Paris, (he of the red socks) and other members of staff. Whatever happened to Baker Days etc., They gave their time willingly, even to presiding over detentions. All that practice only to play rugby when school went back.

I am sure five hundred words have been exceeded, but the memory bank isn't empty though it is looking a bit spotty at the moment. I was told by a friend who has been glancing over my shoulder as this was being put down that you should always finish with a bang.

So 'A BANG'.

## Editor's Notes

The above letters do contain certain criticism and maybe other Old Boys have similar memories. They may also have fonder reminiscences, and either way I would love to hear from you. Please let me have your comments and I will publish them in full. A number of articles sent in by members will be published in the next news letter .

## Where are they now?

I have received certain letters from Peter Swaine who was in his 5th year at school in 1961/62. Peter is presently living in Belgium. His address is: -

Maaseikersteenweg 135

Smeermaas

3620 Lanaken

Belgium.

Home email Peter. Swaine@pandora. be

Tel -00 32 89 703319

Would anyone who knew Peter and is not yet in communication with him drop him a line at the above address.

Peter would particularly like to hear from the following: -

Ray Holbrook, Dai Davies, Ken Anders, Tony Armstrong, Richard Knight

Raymond Llewellyn, Graham Hodgson, Ralph Dixon, Dave Hughes, Roy Cooke, Ian Duncan

## Travel Agency News (Ed ; My heading not his)

Tom Harris (1951-58) Head Boy (1957-58)

Tom writes to me from his home in France He informs me that he has been working on the renovation of a 16th Century Farmhouse and complex in the most beautiful part of France he knows. He makes the following offer:- " To any of BIOB who may be tempted to come to this most lovely part of France to drop in and spend a couple of days with us' ,

Tom's address is: -

Tom Harris

Cournoble

53600 St George sur Erve

La Mayenne

France

Telephone No.0243 372951 (plus the usual dial code for France)

Tom has the final word "I may have given the impression that the place is falling down. It was, but has risen like the Phoenix and is a joy to behold in an exquisite setting. Come and see!!

## COMMENT

I am putting this note in to all Old Boys who kindly wrote to me after the last Newsletter and have not had the courtesy of a reply. The truth of the matter is that I have, for the first time in my life, had a run of bad health (Gall Stones~ Appendicitis~ and a re sectioning of my bowel) this has resulted in several operations and nine scars for the trouble. It appears that all is now

in order, I will be getting around to my letter writing duties I do hope you will all accept my explanation and not think too badly of me.

I am still in need of good copy so please send your contributions to the above address. I threatened Ray Binyon with a fate worse than death and asked for 500 words and he came up trumps. The next thing was the letter from Brian Ware I have included both of them. I was toying with the idea of giving a prize for the first person to be able to decipher the phrase in the fifth paragraph of Ray's letter but funds won't run to it. Lets have some ideas on what was meant? .The answer might include a 500 word contribution to the next newsletter, and this can take the form of agreeing or not with the sentiments expressed in either or both letters. .

## **ANNUAL DINNER**

The annual dinner was held on October 11 th last year. The numbers were slightly down on the year before-- 80 Old boys attending. I managed to persuade John Birtwhistle the Editor of the Wirral Champion to give the speech, he chose for his subject "The history of the Wirral Champion " and included his meeting up with the late Harold Beckett and thereby his association with the restarting of our Old Boys Association. I mentioned last time that without the good offices of the Wirral Champion the Old Boys Association would not have got off the ground. The next dinner will be held at Caldys golf club on Friday October 3rd 2003. Those wishing to attend will find an application form at the end of the Newsletter please return it to me as soon as possible.

### **OBITUARY**

D.J.Grayson (Stan ) Died 20th October 2001  
Rev. Sidney Richardson (1922-28) Died 26th January 2002  
Desmond Cracknell Died April 2001  
Ted Wevill (1932-37) Died 16th April 2002  
Stan Allsop (1927-33) Date unknown  
John Alexander Halliday (1923-31) Died 15th September 2002  
Leonard Brian Heath (1934-42) Died 3rd February 2002  
Michael (Mike) Kenneth Porter Died July 2002  
James William Tector (1922-2) Died 9th May 2003  
Andy Larson (1938-44) Died Feb 2003  
Ron Burton Date Unknown

**GONE,  
BUT NOT FORGOTTEN**



## **BIOB GOLF SOCIETY**

The annual golf match took place at Prenton Golf Club in May during one of the heaviest downpours of the year .In spite of the wind and rain the match and subsequent dinner proved to be very enjoyable thanks to Mick Turner. The next match will be held at Prenton Golf Club on 7th May, 2004. All are welcome. Please contact Mick Turner or Harry Burkett for further details.

## **THANK YOU**

The editor wishes to extend his appreciation of the work carried out by our treasurer, Eric Jackson, who has ensured that we remain financially viable. Without his help and hard work our organisation would not be as strong as it is today. I also extend my appreciation to Vic. Swift who has been responsible for turning the articles your Editors have written into a viable form for the Printers to produce your Newsletters. Vic has done this since we restarted the Association. He has intimated to me that if anyone with a computer would be interested in taking on this duty and/or maintaining the web site he would like to hear from them either by phone or email.

My thanks go to my able helpers Jack Bassett, Mike Pollard, Bert Bushell and Don Mathieson. They are always ready to help and respond willingly and speedily to any requests I have ever made to them. Thanks a million.

cut here -----

I desire to attend the Annual Dinner at CALDY Golf Club on Friday 3rd October 2003, and enclose cheque for £20 (this covers the cost of the Dinner plus wine on the table, free entry into the Draw and gratuities to catering and bar staff). Donations for the draw would be very welcome.

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE NUMBER

DATE OF BIRTH (For seating arrangements)

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

DRESS Lounge Suit/Blazer  
6-30p.m. for 7 -30p.m.

Please help by using the application form and replying as soon as possible.

Return to Harry Burkett, 13 Prenton Farm Road, Prenton, Wirral.  
CH43 3BN