



AD-VISOR



The Newsletter of the Birkenhead Institute Old Boy's

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PRE-WAR MEMORIES OF THE INSTITUTE SCOUT TROOP AND CUB PACK (B'HEAD 23RD)

Bryce Halliday (1928-37)

I started in the Junior school in September 1928, then under Miss Bowers the impressive Headmistress. I joined the Cub Pack run by Miss Ashcroft assisted by Miss Booth and Mrs Davies. The Pack always made a good showing at District Sports held in St Aidan's College grounds. The 1929 World Jamboree held in Arrowe Park and famous for its mud, saw some of us dressed as Mowgli in loin clothes and dyed all over with 'red raddle' (a door step colour preparation.) It didn't last long as the rain soon washed it off.

Moving to the Senior School I naturally joined the Scout Troop, then run by Mr.H.Davies (Chemistry) assisted by Old Boys Don Coughtrie, Frank Tomlinson, Don Magee, the two Wetherell's John and Geoff, and Bill Seed. Mr.A.R.Thacker (English) started a Rover Crew for the Old Boys that won many trophies for their hiking abilities.

Highlights of my time in the Troop were holding the music for The Guards Band at the Birkenhead Tunnel entrance at its opening by George V. Guarding the bon fire in Mersey Park in case the expected vandals caused pre-ignition!! Week-end camps at our own site at Five Lanes End, Thornton Hough and later at the Wirral Scouts site at Overchurch with its 'midnight' bathing in the flood-lit swimming pool and the Camp Fire singing.

Every year we had our annual camp for two weeks at the end of Summer Term going by train in a reserved carriage to places like Charmouth, Dorset; Ross on Wye, Gatehouse of Fleet, and other shorter stays at the Denbigh Scout Camp @ Brynbach. I will always remember John Wetherell then a senior Medical student at Liverpool holding his daily surgeries for the sick and wounded. 1937 saw two big events. Some of us went to London to see the Coronation of George VI, all paid for by Mr.F.O.Paul (the District Commissioner) who also gave Scouting the Brynbach and Overchurch campsites.

In August that year seven of us were part of the Birkenhead contingent that went to the 1937 World Jamboree at Vogelensang in Holland to join 25,000 other Scouts. Lord Baden-Powell visited us.(It was Lord Baden Powell who started the Scout Movement in Birkenhead in 1907, at the Y.M.C.A in Grange Road.) We all shook his hand and were very proud of ourselves.

In 1939 after our camp in Scotland, we were camping at Leasowe Hospital, where there was a Troop for boys who had been inmates for years and we visited regularly to help. I was there when Chamberlain read the Declaration of War. We were sandbagging the operating theatre at the time.

My friends in the Troop were Arthur Taylor (AJ of cross-country fame) Alec Turner, the two Ceha's , the two Vick's, Bill Williams, Joe Clark, Pete Ridout, Hugh Bryant, Stan Davies, the Edelsten's, Duncan Milne, Charles Hanman, Ken Smedley and many others. Some of these were lost in the war and others have died since. Don Coughtrie, who became the Group Scoutmaster after Mr Davies, remained with the Troop after the war. He became well known locally for producing the nationally recognised 'Birkenhead Gang Show' and was awarded the highest Scouting honour of the Silver Wolf. We were well known for concerts arranged by Don Magee and Don Coughtie. They formed a small jazz band. Songs were through megaphones – no mikes then !!! I became a Leader Trainer after the War. My son Andrew, in scouting near Bristol, was also in the 23rd.

The 23rd still exists, meeting in Costain Hall on the Woodchurch., celebrating its 80th year in September 2004-07-29

Editor

Bryce would like anyone that knew him or is an ex Scout to contact him at:-
70, Ringwood, Prenton, Wirral. CH43 2 LZ. Tele. 0151 652 4949.

THE SPECTRE AT THE FEAST

Tom Norton (1934-39)

‘Ah, Birkenhead Institute are you?’ I was chatting to an elderly member of Caldy Golf Club just prior to last year’s annual dinner: ‘Did you know that Wynne Hughes your retired headmaster became our Club Secretary and he used to sit where you’re sitting now?’

The very thought of the ‘Klon’ seated at the top table from where I was about to speak was somewhat off-putting: it almost felt as if the old tyrant was hovering over me like the ‘spectre at the feast’

Of course, some of you of my pre-war vintage will remember ‘Klondyke’ as a later day Wackford Squeers who turned BI into a scholastic sweat-shop. How I dreaded those lists of class positions and test results that were posted in form rooms every fortnight and how I hated that mortar-board wearing figure who patrolled those echoing corridors. I can still hear that Welsh accent booming ‘And wha-a-t do you think you are do-o-ing boy?’ as I clattered down those stone staircases in my hobnailed boots.

And that dislike was certainly mutual- I must have represented everything ‘Klon’ was trying to reform. Yes, I was incorrigibly scruffy, an under achiever (he once wrote ‘little waster’ in red ink across my school report) and I lived down at the rough end of town, but, above all, I played soccer.

In fact, my preference for the round ball resulted in my being the innocent catalyst that resulted in a final flare-up in a long standing feud between the ‘Beak’ and the Old Boys Soccer Club—a row that resulted in our being expelled from Ingleborough Road and forced to change in a converted cowshed at Woodchurch.

It all started because I produced a note from the secretary of the soccer club (that lovely man, the late Joe Mason) requesting that I should be let off School early one Saturday morning to play in an away match against Liverpool Collegiate OB's soccer team. 'Klonnie' hit the roof! He refused permission and demanded to see my father.

I'll never forget the interview that followed. The 'Klon' sitting in his study started sounding off with that old stuff about rugger being a rough game played by gentlemen and soccer being a gentle game played by rough-necks. 'Oh, do you really think so headmaster?' I can still hear my father's loud forthright voice. 'Actually, I was with Corinthian Casuals and at MY Public School we played soccer. I thought it was only the lesser Public Schools like Birkenhead that played rugby.' For the first time I felt some sympathy with the old snob – he was utterly deflated

After that his attitude towards me changed and I began to play rugby. In fact, I was at wing 3Q in one of the first games played by the Bantams (was it under 13's?) and we were slaughtered 78-0 by Caldys Grammar. I don't think that the ball ever came out to me – which wasn't surprising as some of us weren't even sure of the rules. Things changed rapidly, on the return game we managed to scrape a win.

Mind you we had plenty of potential talent. Amongst my near contemporaries were lads like Bob Lowson, Bill Garry and Stu Huntriss and the great Jasper Bartlett was only a year behind.

However, the rapid change in our status on the rugby field was largely due to the 'Klon' who had recruited 'Tiger' Lewis to reinforce that other enthusiastic Celt, 'Bummy' Jones with his coaching.

My Dad again met the 'Klon' this time it was post war and in Robb's restaurant where he would regularly join us for lunch. He still remained the same old snob (had I been an OFFICER in the Army?) and continued to be strangely deferential to my 'ex-public school' father.

The more I met the Head the more I began to understand him. Certainly my remark at our last years dinner about his 'Welsh Mafia' was a bit unfair. After all, our most famous Old Boy had a Welsh name, and, as a sociologist, I know

that the Welsh did well in Wirral and many of the brighter lads (and girls) emigrated here to become schoolteachers.

One of these lads was Wynne Hughes who, I gathered, came from a humble rural background. He certainly had to walk miles to get to school and must have worked his Welsh socks off to attain both a Cambridge Degree in Science and an MA from Bangor in Arts.

So I began to understand his early dislike for a disruptive young slacker like me, and to appreciate that he was largely responsible for turning the BI into the best school in Wirral.

Finally, I was pleased to learn that he remained associated with Caldy Golf Club until he was into his nineties – maybe the Welsh country boy was, at last, content amongst the class he always aspired to. God rest his despotic old soul.

GLOPPITY GLOPPITY MACHINES AND DIPPED HEADLIGHTS

R.E.P Wright (Peter) 1940-48

Greetings from Lincolnshire!

I have a belief in using the word “realignment” and not the other word! Part of my work nowadays is as Chairman of CoScan, the confederation of Scandinavian Societies of Great Britain and Ireland. We deal with grants to students and others going to Scandinavia, we have an International Award Scheme for distinguished Scandinavians eg Stefan Edberg, Mika Hakkinen and the Oresund Konsortiet (the bridge between Sweden and Denmark) among others. We hold our AGM overseas, in 2003 we were in Helsinki, and we publish the CoScan Magazine that is a shop window for our activities.

One key aspect of our work is identifying components of life in the Nordic countries that would be of benefit if transferred to this country. One such is the “gloppity gloppity machines”. When you go to a supermarket in Scandinavia, you take with you empty bottles and cans and put them in these machines and receive a discount receipt for when you leave the store. Incentive recycling and the world leader in the field is TOMRA of Norway. We have an exceptional MP in Lincoln, Gillian Merron, and she arranged for a meeting with the

Minister, Elliot Morley MP and myself and Morthen Johannessen of Tomra. Arising from the meeting, the Minister arranged for Tomra to meet with possible interested parties and Tesco are now to conduct some trials. If Tesco lead, others will follow and incentive recycling will have arrived in the UK.

The other component that is common throughout Scandinavia is driving with dipped headlights during daytime. This was enforced by legislation in Norway in 1988 and the annual death toll fell by 10%-15%. The simple fact is that dipped headlights make others more aware of your presence on the roads. The Norwegian experience was reflected throughout the Nordic counties when legislation was introduced and you will appreciate why I commend dipped headlights during daylight to all who read this.

Why this interest in Scandinavia you may ask? The answer is simple. I have a lovely Norwegian wife named Kari and for the last forty years Norway has been an essential part of my life.

Editor. To all those who remember Peter Wright he has assured me that unless something unexpected happens he will be at this years reunion dinner.

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COMMENT

I have managed to put this newsletter together and have it printed but am still in need of someone who is computer literate to help me with the data base of names etc, of 500 Old Boys. I can still call on Vic. Swift who gives of his time with a very willing heart but Vic has just set up a new business from scratch, and has not got the time to spare. Anyone who can help me operate my computer will be most warmly welcome. The job is not a big one and will only take up a couple of hours a YEAR. Please!

I have been thinking about the date for the annual dinner each year and have decided that a fixed date might be better than the present arrangement, so have fastened onto the second Friday in October each year. Any comments please??

Last years dinner was a success. A great speech by Tom Norton (1934-39.) This year we are returning to Caldy Golf Club. The reason for this is that we have two Old Boys in wheelchairs and the access at Caldy is first rate. I was amused by one of the wheelchair OB's who told me that arriving at Prenton was all right, with never a shortage of willing hands to get them up to the first floor, but going down when the evening was over and every one had had their fair share of the amber liquid was a little hairy. This year the dinner will be on Friday October 8th. Will you please make cheques out to BIOB not to me .My thanks are once again due to that willing band of helpers, one phone call and they are here. Thanks again to you all

I am now out of items for next year's newsletter so please try to get something off to me, on any subject, it doesn't have to be memories of school life.

Cut here-----

APPLICATION FORM FOR DINNER

CALDY GOLF CLUB FRIDAY OCTOBER THE 8TH

I enclose cheque for £ (This covers the hire of Caldy Golf Club facilities; the meal 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. Cheques to be made out to BIOB not to me please Dress: lounge suit/blazer.6.30pm for 7.30pm.

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE NUMBER

YEAR OF BIRTH (for seating arrangements)

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Please return this form as soon as possible to :-

Harry Burkett, 13, Prenton Farm Road, Prenton, Wirral CH43 3BN

BIOB GOLF SOCIETY

Old Instonian Golf Society held its Annual Competition on May 7th 2004. Eighteen Old Boys and seven visitors took part, the weather was kinder this year. Last years monsoon conditions just a bad memory.

The Bill Pyke Cup was won by Steve Haresnapewith 34 points. The runner-up prize, the Len Malcolm Tankard, went to Nigel Sims with 32 points. Don Whyte took the visitors prize

Next year the first Friday in May. Prenton Golf Club will host the Lancashire versus Cheshire competition therefore the OIGS will hold their competition on Friday May 13 all enquiries to Derek (Mick) Turner(1946-50) on 0151 608 5785 This is a great day out with good company and a great dinner to follow why not get a couple of golfing OB's and join in the fun