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The Newsletter of Birkenhead Institute Old Boys

Issue No. 12

**Autumn 2007**

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## OBITUARY

I have the sad news of the death of a former master in the passing of J.D.Robins. Mr. Robins who played for the 1950 Lions in New Zealand and Australia had an England trial in 1948 having played in Service Internationals for England against Wales and Scotland in 1945.

He was then selected for Wales in 1950 and turned out in all four matches that year as Wales won the Triple Crown and Championship.

We send our deepest sympathy to his daughter Alison and all his family

## EDITORIAL

I was very disappointed with the response to my request for information about EVERYONE who is on our Old Boys register. I made the request as a result of the rise in expenses incurred by your Association in Printing and Postal costs. As everyone is aware we do not make any charges for membership and I feel it should remain like that in future. I asked everyone to let me know their details and if they had an email address. I received a reply from about half of the Members. I am now asking you all to identify yourselves and if no such reply is received I will have to assume that you are no longer interested in Membership and delete your name from our register. I do this with reluctance and hope that everyone will want to stay in touch. Using the email service will save us a considerable amount of money.

The information I require is your Name and full postal address. Year of Birth. Years at B.I. Telephone Number and of course your email address I will still be prepared to send the AdVisor by snail mail if any one prefers it that way, even if they are on the internet, but I would still like your email details in case I need to get in touch quickly with anyone.

Please do not consider this as a threatening gesture on my part. It most certainly is not!!! I do feel that an expense of £400 is not sustainable, if there is another way. I also realise that people do move and do not let everyone know of their new whereabouts so *please* let me have your details. In case you know of a member who has moved in the last few years will you please let him know that I require his new details I hope that everyone will try to get both old and new members to stay in our Association. If you know anyone who qualifies please try to get him to join.

MEMBERS the above request is pure economics. Whilst we welcome donations we are not in dire straits at the moment

Last years Dinner was a great success and everyone had a great time. The agreed speaker was taken ill just before the date of the Dinner and I had to make alternative arrangements. One call to Tom Norton (34/39) produced his usual ten minutes of humour. Tom always can come up with something for me at a moments notice. Thanks from a very grateful organizer. We then had an explanation from Rob Wood

(54/60) regarding the Ingleborough Road Playing Fields. I think that the best thing is to leave the explanation to Rob.

**This article is based on the presentation made at the last Old Boys Reunion Dinner following the announcement by Tranmere Rovers to sell The Ingleborough Road Memorial Playing Fields for housing.**

**HISTORY OF INGLEBOROUGH ROAD PLAYING FIELDS**

The information is contained within the following publications:

- School Jubilee 1889-1939
- A History of Birkenhead Institute 1889-1949
- Birkenhead Institute Its Foundation And Growth.
- A History of Birkenhead Institute 1889-1959

In 1925 seven acres were purchased at Ingleborough Road for the Birkenhead Institute playing fields.

Previously the School had played its games in many places first in Wilmer Road. Then The Old Archery Ground in Birkenhead Park; Port Sunlight; Prenton (where Carlaw Road now stands); and Higher Bebington (on the site of The Wiend)

The field was levelled and sown and all that was needed was a pavilion, a want that was to be remedied in 1926 by the Old Boys. it had been decided that this would be a fitting Memorial to the Old Boys' who had fallen in the First World War.

At this time there was a great movement nationally by the civil populace to remember the victims of the First World War.

A committee was formed and a Playing Field Fund established.

Various fund raising activities were then undertaken to raise money. These varied from drama presentations to a bazaar.

There were no lottery grants or "object one quango" funding in those days.

Through the generosity of the Old Boys and the hard work of the Staff the foundation memorial stone was laid by Alderman G Solly on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1926 and formally opened on 6<sup>th</sup> November that year by the Mayor of Birkenhead, Mr R.P.Fletcher, who accepted it on behalf of the Corporation. This was just in time for Armistice Day that year.

Mr F Seward asked the Mayor to accept the Pavilion on behalf of the Corporation. He said he felt sure that the Old Boys who laid down their lives would have wished the Memorial to take the form of a sports pavilion and playing fields.

The fields were to be known as "The Mount Road Memorial Ground; Ingleborough Road."

The Architect was a Mr Thomas Taliesin Rees who gave his services free

The ceremony was followed by a football match between the Old Boys' F.C. and Old Holts.

The flagstaff was erected in 1930

The eighty-eight poplar trees were planted in 1933 to honour those pupils who lost their lives these including the poet Wilfred Owen.

A film was made of the event and later shown to an audience of parents, friends and Old Boys to raise further monies for the Playing Field Fund. This enabled the ornamental Entrance Archway to be added in 1933

The remaining funds were used to set up the Old Boys Memorial Prize awarded each Speech Day.

In 1938 a bell was donated by Mr & Mrs Luton, this was to honour their son and a bracket to hang it on was presented by R.N. Smith. The playing fields were used by the school and in their early days by the Old Instonians Rugby Football Club.

Historically the site is rightly listed with the Imperial War Museum as a First World War Memorial as were the eighty-eight poplar trees planted on the boundary

After the closure of the School the playing fields were acquired by Tranmere Rovers FC from Wirral Borough Council on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1995 in exchange for some industrial land in Hurrell Road Bidston plus a sum of £25,000.00.

When Tranmere Rovers acquired the playing fields they fully undertook to accept the covenants imposed in the Deed of Exchange of 30<sup>th</sup> August 1995 which amongst other things protected the status of the Memorial Ground as a playing field. The memorial gates were removed by Tranmere Rovers in 2001 and have not been replaced, although in the deeds it was expressly understood that "the gates must be maintained in good order by "Rovers""

Copies of this information have been sent to the leader of Wirral Borough Council (an Old Boy himself). The Borough Solicitors' Office and The Chief Executive also the local media has provided publicity.

A meeting was held with the Chief Executive Steve Maddox to present our case and The Old Instonians are now recognised as an interested party in the matter of any proposed development at Ingleborough Road.

At the meeting other issues were raised with regard to the following:

The Second World War Memorial Plaque (the First World War Plaque has pride of place in the Central Library with Wilfred Owens name picked out by spotlight)

Location of the School Trophies.

Former bursaries and prizes.

If any Old Boys requires further information then please contact me by e-mail at [rewoodassociates@btinternet.com](mailto:rewoodassociates@btinternet.com)

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Editors Note.

It would help if the above were to be raised with your M.P and/or with local Councillors. Rob Wood is to be congratulated on his efforts over this matter. He has researched his subject very fully and has a considerable amount of detail at his disposal.

I asked him to produce some details when we first heard about Tranmere Rovers intentions to dispose of our old Playing Fields for housing. I may add that, WITHOUT PREJUDICE, they appear to stand to make a considerable amount of money out of this deal, several million at the latest calculations although the figures vary depending on where they originate. It has never been our intention to stop them making money out of their dealings, but the ground was sold to them on the strict understanding that it would always remain as recreation fields and not an adjunct to their moneymaking schemes. The rights of our fallen Old Boys must be of paramount importance, or has the sacrifice been in vain?

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Keith Dutton 1960/63

### **Doctus in se semper divitias habet**

Can any of us forget the school motto? How many times have we written it out, probably many years ago, but we still remember.

I never studied Latin at School, I joined the Institute in September 1960 on a 13+ scholarship from Woodchurch Secondary School. I joined in 3B, and the "B" form never took Latin. I was quite pleased at the time, but as time has passed I felt that there was a missing piece in my knowledge. Actually quite a lot of missing pieces, but that's another story.

The motto fascinated me, "A wise man has riches within himself", as I was always told. I believe that there are many instances of mistranslation in history, but I didn't know any better, in this case I just believed what I was told, like almost everything at school. It has taken me a long time, but I finally decided to investigate.

Actually, the investigation was nothing more than typing the motto into Google, and seeing what happened. This is probably another foreign language to some people, but it's the new language of computer speak, the Internet. What happened was very quick, and very interesting. It turns out that our school motto is from a Greek proverb, one of Aesop's Fables, in fact.

Two things were immediately obvious there had been a possible mistranslation, a change of emphasis, and a missing word. The phrase is more usually translated as "A learned, or educated man always has riches within himself". The missing word is the first word "Homo". So, the full proverb is more usually stated as "Homo doctus in se semper divitias habet"

The proverb is associated with Simonides, a legendary wise man of ancient Greece. The proverb itself is a line from a poem by Phaedrus, a Roman poet, who told this story about Simonides:

*A learned man always has rich inner resources.* Simonides, that extraordinary author of lyric poems, had found an excellent remedy for his straitened circumstances by travelling around the most famous cities of Asia, singing the praises of victorious

This now raises even more questions, when was the motto adopted? Who was instrumental in selecting it? Why was the first word dropped? Why was “wise” man used in the translation when “educated” man would have made more sense? If anyone can enlighten me, I would be grateful for the information.

## John Moseley (1935/40)

My dear Marybeth,

Thank you for your card and also for your letter which I read with very mixed feelings. I am deeply sorry to hear that your father has lost his life owing to enemy action. I recall the number of times you spoke to me about him, and the number of Christmas seasons he had been away from you on the bright sea even in peace time. At least you have the consolation that he died for a high cause and for that you can be proud. But what a tragedy it is that men have still to be sacrificed to serve their country best.

After the World and Years of 1914-18 that I should still have to be gone through again. We have tried through such a time of despair, of hellish promise, of vicious and wicked pledges that it seems a mockery to try and live any kind of all war. Yet I believe the darkest experiences of this dark time will bring men to a unity at last as that you and your generation will have peaceful years to live through. In that sense, your abilities for constructive ends. In that sense, your father's death is closely linked with your own future and we pray that this, the last time, we personally live, "they have not died in vain" will express instead the real truth. I am very grateful for you in your love and I send my sympathy to you. Mother at this present time. She has a great deal on her mind, and I am certain that the leaders

My dear Mosley,

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Dec. 28. 1940

395 Woodchurch Road,  
R. W. (a.)

**Bitterhead:**



395 Woodhurst Road,

Birkenhead:

Page I

Dec. 28. 1940.

My dear Mossley,

Thank you for your card and also for your letter which I read with very mixed feelings. I am deeply sorry to hear that your father has lost his life owing to enemy action. I recall the number of times you spoke to me about him, and the number of Christmas seasons he had been away from you on the high seas even in peace time. At least you have the consolation that he died for a high cause and for that you can be proud. But what a tragedy it is that men have still to be sacrificed to serve their country best. After the blood and tears of 1914-18, that it should all have to be gone through again. We have lived through such a time of despair, of hollow promises, of vicious and broken pledges that it seems a mockery to say that this war will end all war. Yet I believe the dreadful experiences of this dark time will bring men to a unity at last as that you and your generation will have peaceful years to live through and be able to use your abilities for constructive ends. In that sense, your father's death is closely linked with your own future and we pray that this, the last time, we presently hope, they have not died in vain will express indeed the real truth. I am very grieved for you in your loss and I send my sympathy to your Mother at this grievous time. She has a great asset in you, and I am certain that the leaders

See page II of this letter  
overleaf

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of your department will now appreciate your stationer and comparatively careful work. Your experience (however brief) as an Assistant will be of definite value. I suppose you thought about old Pitt when you were an audit - or perhaps you have forgotten all about him. If so, I can't blame you. I expect you fellows often wonder what value your history lessons had, particularly in times like these. I wonder too and have been doing so for years. For the common good, we shall have to alter our values. The time will come - it has got to come - when men like Bismarck will be regarded as cunning examples of human perversity and not as attractive topics for adroit certificate candidates. I believe the old diplomacy will have to be swept away. Why should we keep it if it plunges the ordinary decent nation into misery every twenty years or so? Perhaps when you are high up in the Civil Service we shall be teaching some history because some history will be in process of formation all around us. Good luck at the Ministry of Supply! I am very glad to hear of it. Your details about former members of the old GS are interesting and valuable and I can pass on some details to the Head, for we like to know what happens to you all. Mr. Wether should enjoy himself in the hot and sunny atmosphere of a dance band, but I am too much of a mid-Victorian (as you doubtless discovered long since) to regard this as a career. I know it can be left lucrative and prominent but I am still old-fashioned enough not to regard it as "work". I hope it will lead to something permanent for him so he was a wise lad with a pretty sense of humour. At school, the services were followed by Mr. Bloom, Mr. Fox and Mr. Lewis. Mr. Clark was

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called up at the beginning of the war. We are very short of staff, and we have spent so much time in the streets that even the professional walk-doggers are beginning to kick when the warning sound. Since Mr. Parca died in May, I have been looking after "Visa" distribution and finance generally. This last number was sold out (we cut down printing to a bare minimum) but as soon as I get back to school, I will do my very best to get hold of the two numbers you have asked for, though I can't guarantee them. If you would like a copy regularly in future, I will add your name to the list with pleasure. I want my drop in a line; if you can, come in to see us or remember that we are as near as your telephone.

It is always a pleasure to hear from members of the old firm, for they were a sound lot and always treated me with preference and civility despite the ups and downs which lay by no means sweetest nature tempest. I have a new lot of books now - Form 38. At present they seem a poor lot compared with the old family, but I suppose I shall get to love them in time. Of course, new conditions have given them a poor start. I wish you every good future in the coming year and send special regards and sympathy to your Mother. I am glad that your future arounds are adding - in the lines that I ventured to promise for you.

Yours very truly,

W.E. Williams :