

AD-VISOR



The Newsletter of the Birkenhead Institute Old Boys

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OBITUARY

Miss Rene Cojeen

Miss Cojeen, Irene Isobel, passed over quietly in her sleep on Friday March 14th, 2008, 10 days short of her 98th birthday. Rene served faithfully at Birkenhead Institute from 1942 to 1975 and, as the school secretary, contributed in a major way to the management of the school.

She spent her later years in Derwent Lodge in New Ferry and through her window would watch the boats sailing to and from the Isle of Man, an island to which she was very attached. She received a commemorative plaque from the Manx Society for her work for them.

It was fortunate that on her 97th birthday she was delivered of a splendid birthday cake inscribed "From the Old Instonians" which she was able to share with other residents. This she very much appreciated. She retained her sense of humour to the end.

The funeral service was held at Tranmere Methodist Church.

Editor I started the Newsletter earlier this week and was wondering from what source or what inspiration I could use to fill it. The phone alongside my computer rang and it was a call from Ernie Hewitt (49/54). Ernie lives in Victoria Australia and had decided to ring from Oz on a different matter I took the opportunity to bemoan the fact that I was, as I always am, short of copy. He berated me with the fact that he had sent me an article four years ago and I had not used it. This brought home to me the fact that people may be sending messages by email that I am not receiving. If this is the case please will you send a further email with your article. My email address is harry_burkett@btopenworld.com I am repeating this because some parts of the address are not clear on the letterhead. Ernie would love to hear from anyone who remembers him from school. His email address is erniehewitt@iprimus.com.au. Here is the lost missive from Ernie Hewitt.

Ernie Hewitt (1949-54)

early 60 years ago (59 to be exact) I and about 60 other boys attended the Birkenhead Institute in Whetstone lane for the first day of schooling in the big school.

My recollections of the school may have dimmed over the years but in issue 8 (Ray Binion1938-46) they seem to tally with some of his well remembered facts.

Whilst I was at the B.I. from 1949 to 1954 I endured 3 (three) headmasters-The Klon, Biddy Harris and Bummy Jones.

The Klon was the most frightening man I had ever seen in my life and for that matter he still holds a prime position in my memory. Then came Biddy Harris who perhaps was not so frightening but his discipline was no less strong than the Klon. Thirdly Bummy Jones didn't seem as bad as the other two but maybe that was because I was a little older and hopefully a little wiser.

Having lived in Australia since 1966 I missed out on the closure of Whetstone Lane and the transfer to Tollemache Road and also the closing of that school and had it not been for the formation of the Old Boys register I would still be ignorant to these facts, when I did find out I was very surprised and disappointed at the loss of all the history.

Another memory I have is playing rugby at Ingelborough Road and being so muddy that we went into the communal bath with our togs on and then getting out undressing and going back into the dirty muddy water (I wonder what the cleanliness police would say about that today?) It also has come to my attention that Tranmere Rovers are thinking of selling the land to developers this must not happen and anything I can do to help just call on me.

As I said before, I emigrated to Australia in 1966 and did not visit the U.K. until 1997 and my time was fully occupied with relatives and trips etc, however I visited in 2000 and was going to attend the dinner but I couldn't fit it into my schedule so I missed out. However on the trip in 2000 I did contact Howard Jones in Devon where he lives in a small village and his home is the old Post Office. It is a wonderful house.

The B.I.O.B. listings was a good idea but I note that not very many of the boys from my years (1949/1954) are listed. Sadly I heard about the death of Tom Ellis-Jones in 2002 and I extend my belated sympathies to the family.

My time at the B.I. was mostly happy and I left the school with many fond memories especially of playing rugby for 5 years.

I hope that I have stirred some people's memories

<u>EDITOR</u> This is another of those wonderful research items that Rob Wood is so accomplished in producing. He is a great asset to our association. Thanks once again, Rob.

Rob Wood (1954/60)

ome months ago Roy Dennett the Chairman of the Birkenhead History Society (incidentally an organisation founded by J.E. Allison the former B I Geography Master) asked if I was aware of an Old Instonian called C Desmond Greaves, whom he had come across while making enquiries at Salford Museum of the Working Class.

Well I've heard of Wilfred Owen, Sir Herbert Manzoni, Lord Cohen of Birkenhead and even Joe Morgan, but never a C Desmond Greaves, then I recalled reading an article contributed by a C D Greaves on Wilfred Owen in an old copy of the "The Visor" dated Christmas 1933

I decided to follow the subject up and do some research on the Internet and found the following information about an Old Instonian few, if any, of us had heard about.

The information is taken from an obituary essay for the Irish Labour History Society under the heading "Century of Endeavour" by Anthony Coughlan in 1991 and up dated in 2006. Anthony Coughlan, Senior Lecturer Emeritus in Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin is Desmond Greave's literary executor and knew Greaves well from 1958 to 1988. Charles Desmond Greaves 1913-1988, internationalist, champion of Irish unity and independence, revolutionary socialist and Marxist historian was born at 7A Rockville Street Rock Ferry Birkenhead on 27th September 1913. His family had a Middle Class, Protestant, Irish and Welsh back ground. He grew up in a stimulating social environment. His father was a post office official who conducted the Liverpool Post Office orchestra and ran the local Methodist Church Choir, his mother had a degree in music. Greaves used to say he knew more about music than any other subject. He attended the Birkenhead Institute Grammar School (1925-1932) he later described this as a "cram shop" but the school stimulated his interest in science and in particular botany. He joined the Liverpool Botanical Society and had his first scientific paper (written at the age of 18) published in the North-Western Naturalist. He attended Liverpool University from 1932 to 1936 graduating in botany, chemistry and geography. He began to write poetry in his teens and continued doing so throughout his life. Some of his early pieces were carried in the Poetry Review during the 1930s. At university Greaves joined the

Communist Party of Great Britain and remained a member throughout his life. From the time of his political awakening perhaps because of his Irish and Welsh family background he became interested in Irish politics above all the National Question. Much further information on his involvement in Irish politics can be obtained by going to www.irishdemocrat.co.uk/greaves/obituary-essay. After leaving university Greaves worked from the 1930s until 1951 in the chemical industry, during which time he added several scientific patents to his name. He was employed at Woolwich Arsenal during World War 2. Later he worked with the British Coal Utilisation Board and Powell Duffryns, where he became chief research chemist. In 1951 he gave up this well paid position to become editor of the Irish Democrat the newspaper of the Connolly Association an organisation he had joined in 1941. His decision to devote himself full time to politics constituted the mature second choice which, he used to say, all revolutionaries had to make if they were to sustain throughout their lives the commitment first entered on in the idealism of youth. Greaves involvement with the "Irish" question led to him writing and lecturing on the subject as he continued his editorship of the Irish Democrat and it is accepted that his analysis was the basis of what we regard as the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland. Further proof of this can be acquired in reading Anthony Coughlan full obituary of C D Greaves. The many books he wrote included

Life and Times of James Connolly

Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution

The Irish Crisis

The Sons of Prophecy: Henry Tudor's Road to Bosworth

The Easter Rising in Song & Ballad

Elephants Against Rome: 150-page comic epic in iambic pentameter, and an unfinished verse novel he was working on at his death, published posthumously in 1999. Desmond Greaves never married. He seems to have made a conscious decision when he took up full-time political work (on a miniscule wage) in the early 1950s that this was not compatible with the responsibilities of a wife and family. After the death of his sister in 1966 he made his base in what had been their family home at 124 Mount Road Birkenhead, from where he used take the train regularly to London on Connolly Association business or travel the length and breadth of Britain on his historical researches, lecturing and holding meetings." I do not fear death although I can imagine fearing dying". He considered that the best death was a sudden one that came in the middle of the work one wished to do. This wish was granted, for he was struck down on 23rd August 1988 by a sudden heart attack, as he sat in the buffet-car of the train bringing him back to Liverpool from Glasgow, where he had gone to speak at a Connolly Association branch meeting the night before. His body was taken off the train at Preston. The funeral took place at Anfield crematorium Liverpool, and his ashes are buried in Bebington cemetery near the corner to the left of the main entrance. In his will he left his estate to be used for political purposes, at the discretion of his literary executor. It was his wish that his literary remains should be eventually deposited in the National Library of Ireland.

It was his wish that his literary remains should be eventually deposited in the National Library of Ireland. The most important of these are his Journal, a political and personal record that he kept from his youth, which extends to several thousand pages. There are volumes for several years in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. It maybe other Old Instonians were aware of Greaves but I was certainly surprised when I started reading about him. Scientist, historian, poet, musician, political organiser, orator, journalist, wit, excellent cook and dedicated gardener, Desmond Greaves was an extraordinary man. His genius confidently spanned C.P. Snow's "two cultures". Although without obvious vanity and a caustic subverter of cant and humbug, he did not pretend to false modesty. His achievements deserve to be recognised alongside many other Old Instonians.

It is often said a prophet is not recognised in his own land, C Desmond Greaves seems to have been one.

Wilfred Owen anniversary 2008

This year is the ninetieth anniversary of the end of the First Word War as well as the death of Wilfred Owen who was killed at Ors in France on the 4th November 1918.

To commemorate this occasion the Old Instonians in conjunction with the Birkenhead History Society are to issue a new Wilfred Owen trail which will take in his childhood homes, site of the Birkenhead Institute in Whetstone Lane and the display at the Central Library where the School's First World War plaque resides with his name on.

Reference will also be made to the Ingleborough Memorial Playing Fields established in memory of all Old Boys killed in the First World War.

It is hoped to publish the new booklet in the School colours of black and gold.

The new publication has raised interest in the Wilfred Owen Society who are holding their own commemorations in Shrewsbury and Peter Owen (their President and Wilfred Owen's nephew) will be coming to Birkenhead to the re-launch of the booklet in early November.

It is expected that Dominic Hibberd who wrote the most authoritative work on Owen will also attend.

It appears Wirral Council unlike Shrewsbury have no plans to commemorate this event.

EDITOR I have been in contact with an Old Boy who left School in 1945 and who has lived for many years in Southern Africa. His life seemed a very interesting one and after a great deal of persuasion he has summarized it as follows

Walter Hinds (1939/45)

fter evacuation to Shropshire and North Wales I obtained late entry, by scholarship, to the B I. and entered 'Stitt' House. I had a feeling that I was placed in 'Stitt' because I was not from a privileged area of the Borough.

To help the family coffers I took a morning and evening paper round but kept this fact very quiet because I felt that Head would not approve. I was not very good at Ball Sports, I did not realise that I was short sighted I thought that what I saw was normal. The paper round exercise seemed to do me some good because I was entered for a long distance race and 'Waga' Ware who was some years older than me was expected to win. Half way through the race I found that I was closing on Ware but he beat me to the tape. I joined the Air Training Corps and trained seriously entering for the North West Championship in Manchester The winner was a chap called Bond and I finished second We went on to the White City London and finished one & two for the UK. Championships

I decided to leave School early. In my innocence thinking that I could get a job and study for a profession. I soon found that without School Certificate I was in an impossible position. It turned out the most fortunate decision of my life had I gone on I would have gone to University, then a profession and a settled job in the area. As it was I secured a job as a junior Auditor with a firm of Chartered Accountants in Liverpool During the interview the Senior Partner asked which School I attended. I told him and he offered me the Job at twenty-five shillings per week. I found out later that his son was attending Birkenhead School and I think he might have misunderstood but who was I to enlighten him. Never tell the Boss he is wrong.

I joined the RAF for three years as a radar/wireless operator Fortune favoured me yet again because the Air Commodore at the HQ of the Signals Development Unit (SDU) was the President of the RAF Cross Country Unit. This meant time off for training 'No Boots No Marching'. I qualified for the Hertford Cross Country to add to my Cheshire County Vest. I was in the Annual RAF Championships at Uxbridge. It was just my luck in the 880 to be against Flt/Lt Arthur Wint, a West Indian, who won an Olympic Medal. He became the High Commissioner for Jamaica. After demob I went back to my old job this time at thirty shillings per week. I carried on with my studies and moved on to Cooper Bros on a real salary. For three years during my summer holidays I registered for the AAA coaching courses for track and field. It was an inexpensive holiday and a chance to meet the national coaches and top athletes including the

Oxbridge teams. Cooper Bros was a chance to travel around the North and two of my Audits were Lever Bros and Prices Bromborough. I was headhunted into Prices but realised that it was a dead end Fortunately I spotted a Unilever HQ notice offering jobs in Africa. I applied and went for an interview to the United Africa Co. (UAC). Blackfriars, London, Was successful and was soon on my way out to Kenya and the Mau Mau 1955. I joined Gailey and Roberts, the UAC subsidiary as an Assistant Accountant. My off duty hours were spent assisting in the coaching of the Kenya Athletics team for the 1956 Olympics.

Racing through the years, Nairobi. Nakuru, Kisumu, Kampala, Dar es Salaam. Accountant; East Africa Senior Auditor; Commercial Manager and eventually Chief Accountant and Financial Director. I had by this time retired from running and decided to tread the Boards with the Nairobi City Players and the Donovan Maule Theatre, lots of straight plays and musicals. I was 'MC' in 'Cabaret'

In 1972 I fortunately retired and entered private business. I formed a group with three Optical Shops operating in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. I then saw a niche in the Electronics Market. At the same time I purchased a Food Business in the UK. I operated these with the help of friends all retired ex UAC Senior Managers. We eventually sold out to a UK Public Company.

In the seventies I borrowed from a friendly banker (Yes there are a few about) and bought out the British Airways subsidiary International Aeradio East Africa (IAL) At the same time I purchased the Kenya operations of IBM Cleaned them up and got rid of the ridiculous American Salary structure We then retained the electrical engineering side of the business and sold off the rest. Two of my sons are now running the business.

I now regard Kenya as my home but have pleasant memories of the Institute and often wonder was I FORTUNATE? What would have happened to me had I gone on with my education at the old Alma Mater????

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Old Instonians Golf Society

There was no meeting this year, at Prenton Golf Club. This is the first time for some years that the meeting was cancelled. It is hoped that the meetings will resume in the near future.

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APPLICATION FORM FOR THE ANNUAL DINNER

I will/will not be attending the Dinner at Caldy Golf Club on Friday October 3rd 2008 Time 6.30pm for 7.30pm.

(For those attending please enclose a cheque for £25 made out to BIOB).

Donations for the draw will be welcome.

Dress:- Blazer and Flannels or Lounge Suit.
NAME
ADDRESS.
Email ADDRESS
TELEPHONE NUMBER (including dial code)
YEAR OF BIRTH
Any Dietary Arrangements

OBITUARY

Derek Burls	(42/48)
Peter Dobbing	
John McFarland	
Fred Keith Lane	(45/50)
Alan Roberts	(47/54)
Frank Geoff (Buck) Hughes	(35/42)
William Hastings	(18/29)
Harry Kelsall Evans	
Rev. Ian Latto	(22/29)
John (Tudor) Owen	(31/36)
Prof. Tim Cooke	(59/66)