



# AD-VISOR

## The Newsletter of the Birkenhead Institute Old Boys

Issue 23, Autumn 2018

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## **Editorial**

I would like to thank all those members who responded to my rather desperate request for AdVisor copy. I was inundated with e-mails and excellent copy for use herein. There are some wonderful recollections, which I consider a real success for the AdVisor. If your story has not been included, then let me know, I must have lost it! It was my intention to include all stories that I received. So, send me another copy, please be patient, it will be in the next issue.

This newsletter is best read online. - In case you're wondering what the blue text means.

Blue text is for Hypertext, that means text that is a link to something else, either within the document or on the Internet. So, to make Hypertext work, you need to be reading this on a computer, with access to the Internet. Click on the Blue text and it will take you to a related subject, somewhere else. Try it on [HERE](#), then on the browser click on the "Back" button to return here.

This copy of the AdVisor is online at:-

<http://birkenheadinstitute.co.uk/BIOB%20AdVisor/AdVisor%202017.pdf>

Obviously, you can't click on anything when you're reading a paper copy!

**Keith Dutton (1960/63)**

## **Usual Reminder**

If you've received this through the-mail, then please consider sending me your e-mail address, or even someone else's e-mail address, where I can contact you more quickly and cheaper than the-mail system. If there's any old boy's news, then you can hear from me as soon as I find out.

Please also remember to update me if you move address, or change your e-mail address, make sure you stay in the loop. This can be done online at our website see [http://www.birkenheadinstitute.co.uk/BIOB\\_Membership.html](http://www.birkenheadinstitute.co.uk/BIOB_Membership.html).

**Web Site** [www.BirkenheadInstitute.co.uk](http://www.BirkenheadInstitute.co.uk)

Once again I've made some changes and major additions to the website. The website is at [www.BirkenheadInstitute.co.uk](http://www.BirkenheadInstitute.co.uk). As last time, it's the same basic website as before, but with additional functionality. If you write the old address of [www.BIOB.co.uk](http://www.BIOB.co.uk) you'll still find it, we still own the old address, it's set up as a "re-direct".

I've added an "[In Memorium](#)" section accessible from the Main Menu. The idea is that it's a place that we can remember the former members who have passed on.

In addition, I've added the ability for Old Boys to add their particulars to our database, and for existing members to update their details if they move home, add or change an e-mail address, or change their phones etc. This is under the "[Membership – Join BIOB](#)" section on the Main Menu.

I've added a link to the [1989 Centenary Dinner](#), and the [1979 Rugby Club Dinner](#), both courtesy of Dave McCann (1963/68)

## **Old Farts Day – Prenton RUFC**

More formally known as the Former Player's Reunion Day. An opportunity to meet with your former playing colleagues, and a chance to share a beer and reminisce. As those of you who played rugby for Old Instonians RUFC at any time in the past will know, the Rugby Club at Woodchurch closed many years ago. Most of the members at the time then joined the then Old Rockferrians RUFC in Prenton Dell and formed Prenton RUFC. This new club is now a very successful local club, regularly running 3 teams in various leagues.

To celebrate the joint Instonians/Rockferrians history of the club the committee normally hold a Former Players Reunion Day, in the first part of each season. This year, the Prenton RUFC

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committee have arranged to hold this event on **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October**. The bar will be open from 12:30, followed by a buffet lunch at 13:30, and at 15:00 the 1<sup>st</sup> XV kick-off against Old Parkonians. The 2<sup>nd</sup> XV will also kick-off at 15:00 against Manchester Spartans. Finally, there will be a presentation on the development of the Prenton RUFC proposed community hub.

In addition, any BIOB members who would like to visit the club on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October, the day after the dinner, will also be made most welcome by Prenton RUFC.

[Prenton RUFC](#) is at Prenton Dell Rd, Birkenhead, Prenton, Merseyside CH43 3BS 0151 608 1501

### **Tollemache Road**

I've still had no response to my many requests for information in general, or photographs in particular, that refer to Tollemache Road. Does anyone have any school magazines from any period, but again, especially from Tollemache Road, that they would be prepared to loan to me so that I can scan them for the web site? All material will be returned. Contact me at [Editor@BIOB.co.uk](mailto:Editor@BIOB.co.uk).

**Editor:** The following article is the penultimate instalment and was penned by Alun Hughes (1966/73). This article covers part of 1918.

As with previous AdVisor's, it is based on his research for a forthcoming book about the BI Old Boys who sacrificed their lives during the First World War.

### **BIOB at War 1918 – The Year of Reckoning – PART 1**

As the year 1918 arrived, attitudes at home towards the Germans were hardening, borne out of the frustration of the bloody failure of the Allies to evict them from their occupied territory as well as the terrible, ultimately wasteful toil they were exacting on their loved ones at the Front. It was seemingly a war without end and yet the arrival of the USA into the war offered a glimpse of a time when sheer weight of numbers would force a capitulation of the enemy, albeit at a cost in time, money and men.

Yet the Americans were arriving in a trickle, they would require time to consolidate and train before taking their place in any new push. Realistically all the Allies could do was to mark time until circumstances allowed, probably not until 1919. In the meantime, they braced themselves in readiness for the inevitable titanic struggle that must surely come as a result of the transfer of German troops from the collapse of the Eastern Front following the revolution which put Russia out of the war.

Things were not however as easy as might be imagined for the Germans however either at home or for their High Command and their best chance for victory lay in returning to the offensive before the Americans entered the field. Time was of the essence.

The year started badly for the Old Boys. The seasonal goodwill of Christmas 1914 was a distant memory and too much blood had by now flowed to make it possible to repeat. As if to emphasise the point a German trench raid on the 1st January took four British lives that evening and included [Henry Gordon Bickley](#). He had enlisted as a Cavalry Man but with the effective redundancy of mounted operations he had found himself making up numbers in a composite 18th Kings Liverpool, a PALS Regiment virtually wiped out on the Somme.

Unseasonably good weather allowed the German's Spring Offensive to begin early on the 21st March and they struck with a well-prepared attack on lightly defended and ill-prepared defences south of Arras. A new tactic was employed of storm troopers overwhelming British defences at speed with pockets of resistance mopped up by following waves of attackers. Like so many that day, [Arthur Lionel Calvert](#) of the 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers was annihilated. The same day, not at the Front but equally in danger in the city of Arras, Second Lieutenant [George Hazelwood Foster](#), a mining engineer employed in the 175th Tunnelling Company of the Royal Engineers fell victim to a random shell.

Reeling from the impact of the attack, British forces began a fighting retreat in the face of a creeping German artillery bombardment. As a consequence, Captain [Eric Paton Beaumont](#) of the 17th King's Liverpool a decorated war hero with a Military Cross, was badly injured in a shell blast. Popular amongst his men he was carried at great risk to themselves back to British Lines for transportation onto hospital at Rouen where he died a few days later.

For a variety of logistical reasons, the German attack slowly ground to a halt just short of its strategic aim which was the capture of Amiens and attention was shifted north to the zone between Armentieres and Ypres. Here the Germans hoped to drive a wedge between the French and the British by capturing the town of Hazebrouk.

Once again, the initial impact was devastating. In the intensive artillery bombardment on the 9th April, Lieutenant [Henry Vernon James](#) of the 41st Battery, Royal Horse Artillery received wounds from a bursting shell. Carried from the field to a nearby Casualty Clearing Station he submitted to his injuries there. Once again, the offensive ran out of steam short of its geographical and psychological target but not before one localised push by the German army simply overran the command post of the 4th King's Liverpool where in the ensuing struggle Lieutenant [Campbell Robertson Fraser](#) lost his life.

As the offensive reached its inevitable stalemate, attempts were made to redress the balance by showing the enemy that the British were in no mood to take matters lying down. In one poorly conceived action to take control of ground of marginal advantage, Lieutenant [Arthur Owen Owens](#) of the 17th Royal Welsh Fusiliers made the ultimate sacrifice. If this wasn't enough his parents suffered months of anxiousness as they hoped for news of his possible capture and internment in a PoW Camp, only for these dreams to be subsequently dashed.

By this stage aerial warfare was being perfected in terms of its strategic benefits and superiority in terms of numbers of aircraft was dramatically swinging in favour of the Allies. As such there was a resultant significant demand for aircrew. Likely candidates were identified from the ranks to supply the schools of aviation and play their part at the Front.

One such was [Ernest George Goy](#) a merchant seaman who had already come under fire in the Mediterranean but for whom the attraction of the Royal Flying Corps proved irresistible. The aeroplanes, although increasingly sophisticated were still prone to failure and Ernest Goy crashed while training at Stonehenge. His body was brought back for burial at Flaybrick Cemetery.

Also, a merchant seaman, [James Hicks Good](#) sadly did not have such a lucky encounter with a U-Boat in the Med. He was one of two people in the engine room of the ship when it was hit by a German torpedo. The ship however managed to limp back to Malta where the dead personnel were buried.

Meanwhile back on the Western Front, [Alfred Herbert Hindle](#) was serving as a Lieutenant with the Royal Field Artillery. It was the 12th May, when with his unit North West of Ypres, when he lost his life.

Another tragic loss in aerial training was [John Stabb Tuckett](#) who is remembered on the memorial which stands on the edge of the golf course at Turnberry in Ayrshire now the proud possession of the American President, Donald Trump, the golf course having been pressed into service as a wartime airfield. He also lies in a simple grave in Flaybrick Cemetery.

[Joseph Brayton Scott](#) had been not long at the Front when he was thrown in to the action to successfully defend yet another German offensive intent on capturing the heights South of Ypres. The smashed remnants of his regiment were withdrawn to a quiet zone far to the South, close to Reims to regroup. Little did anyone know that this was exactly where the Germans were to push next, this time in attempting to capture Paris itself. Wounded in the onslaught, German troops encircled the woods in which he and his comrades remained. His body was never recovered.

[Keyser Atkin](#) possessed talent both in sport and in the classroom. The nephew of George Atkin one of the founders of the school, he had completed his training as a Doctor shortly after opening of hostilities in 1914. He was captured in the mayhem of Passchendaele in 1917 and spent time in a German PoW Camp before repatriated in early 1918. The month's leave he was granted was however cut short by the German Spring Offensive which caused him to be sent back to a

battered Division which was to crumple under the same offensive that carried away Joseph Brayton Scott. As the offensive again ran out of steam a stray enemy shell burst at the Dressing Station where he was stationed ending his life.

[James Harper](#) was a Bank Manager but in his early service saw action (or not) most likely in the warm conditions of the Italian Front. It is hardly surprising that he and his unit were hurried away to Flanders to help plug the gaps in the British ranks. It was now 28 June 1918 and the zenith of the German offensive had been reached. In a hastily crafted order he led his men in a successful attack to disrupt the enemy but fell in the attempt.

My narrative ends with the death of two aviators, [Leslie Campbell Story](#) who returned from his family's new life in Canada to serve his Country. He joined his squadron around a month after its brush with the legendary Manfred Von Richthofen which had seen the Red Baron's death. As was often sadly a common experience Leslie's aircraft was seen going down in flames shortly after his arrival at the Front.

[William \(Billy\) Fitton](#) similarly qualified as a pilot in the fledgling Royal Air Force and similarly spent little time in conflict going down in an unfortunate spin which, at too low an altitude, he was unable to correct.

It was by now August 1918 and the pendulum was swinging the way of the Allies, although few if any harboured any thoughts of victory until 1919. The year had up to this point claimed the lives of sixteen Old Boys.

The Allies were now entering a period described by some historians as the Last Hundred Days when they were not to lose a battle. The price to be paid by the Old Boys was however a further ten deaths by the Armistice and three war related deaths more in 1918, 1919 and 1932. The concluding episode in this summary narrative will be published next year.

## **Old Instonians War Memorial**

### **Update (Rob Wood 1953/60)**

**T**he statue forming part of the new BIOB Memorial in Hamilton Square is now ready for the next stage the stage of the bronze casting using the lost wax process.

The remaining details including the replica Ingleborough Road Playing Fields Memorial Arch are yet to be finalised.

The unveiling of the Hamilton Square Memorial is to form part of the Wilfred Owen Commemoration Festival Birkenhead 1918 – 2018 details of which are due to be announced in the local media.

Details of the Ingleborough Road memorial with a plaque describing the history of the Memorial Playing Fields are still being developed.

It is hoped more information will be available at the Dinner 5th October 2018.

### **Update (Alun Hughes 1966/73)**

**T**he information regarding the Memorial unveiling is still being developed, but the intention is carry out a number of significant events. For example, the 4th November marks the anniversary of Wilfred Owen's death and obviously the 11th is another key date. During that week Frank Field has arranged a programme of events details of which should be publicised any time soon (see <https://wilfredowencommemoration.com/new-events>) so we may organise something DURING that week. Finally, we are working with Frank to get a VIP in to perform the final ceremony, but it would have to fit in with his availability and as a consequence may have to be when we can get him at some point in the month.

As for 'events' in respect of Hamilton Square we have 2 potential ideas. One is the backdrop arch feature and the other is the completed article with statue. Finally, we are working also on having a historical interpretive panel at Ingleborough which should be formally marked as well.

Sorry to be so imprecise but we will let you know as soon as we can as things get confirmed. Keep an eye out in the press and we hope to have finalised things for the Annual Dinner.



Incidentally the wax effigy is now at the foundry near Oswestry & the casting in parts in bronze will happen over the next couple of weeks. BBC NW Tonight are interested in covering the story, so I'll try to get information out about that if or when.

### **BIOB Merchandise**

**W**e still have supplies of BIOB Ties, Tie Tacks, Lapel Badges, they can be viewed and purchased on the website at  
[http://www.birkenheadinstitute.co.uk/BIOB\\_Tie.html](http://www.birkenheadinstitute.co.uk/BIOB_Tie.html)  
[http://www.birkenheadinstitute.co.uk.co.uk/BIOB\\_Lapel\\_Badge.html](http://www.birkenheadinstitute.co.uk.co.uk/BIOB_Lapel_Badge.html).

Ties are £10, and Tie Tack/Lapel Badges are £5. Postage on orders is £2.50.

Unfortunately, the Cufflinks have now SOLD OUT, there are no current plans to re-stock.

### **OBITUARY**

Geoff Brown	1958/65
Peter Carruthers	1949/54
Terry Carter	1960/63
Keith Davies	1948/54
Tom Hodgson	1950/53
Dave (DSW) Jones	1940/85
Thomas Pealin	1946/50
Alan Powell	1942/48

### **BIOB Funds - Update on the annual accounts 2017.**

**O**verall, there was a slight increase of funds.

We have three sources of income, the Annual Dinner, Sales of Merchandise, and Donations. The Annual Dinner is the biggest source of income, but also the largest expenditure. The Merchandise Sales keep ticking along, The Donations are what keep us afloat. The total cost of the dinner was £1491.00 + £132.30 = £1623.30, slightly below the income of £1620.00. The merchandise sales of £75.90 helped, but the donations of £219.00 were the biggest contribution to our other costs. So, overall, we were able to deposit an additional £45.63 in the bank.

54 persons attended the dinner on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2017

All income from the dinner (Excluding Donations) was	£1620.00
All Donations	£ 219.00
All income from merchandise sales was	£ 75.90
Expenditure for the dinner (Invoice from Caldy Golf Club)	-£1491.00
Additional expenditure for dinner (Raffle Prizes, Golf Club gratuities)	-£ 132.30
Further annual expenses (Postage, printing, stationery, website)	-£ 245.97
	=====
Deposit to bank (Added to existing balance)	£ 45.63

Please keep the donations coming in, thank you.

## **Old Instonians Golf Society 2017 Pyke Cup**

Last year (2017) the Pyke Cup was again played for at Caldy G.C. and the competition was won by Peter Wilson (1971 – 1977). This year the competition will take place on the afternoon of October 5<sup>th</sup> before the Dinner at the Golf Club. It is an excellent afternoon's golf on a well-prepared course.

As with last year's dinner, I want to try and increase the numbers. If you have a friend or relative who played for the Old Boys (Football or Rugby), and would like to play in the golf, then bring them along to the golf and dinner. They will not be eligible for the Pyke Trophy, but will be very welcome anyway.

It is anticipated that a special green fee in the order of £25 for non-members (of Caldy G.C.), as charged last year, can be arranged with the Club for this year's competition.

It will take the form of a Stapleford Competition with full Handicap. At the moment, tee times are available from 12.02pm to 12.34pm, additional times can be arranged if required.

Arthur Howarth (1959/66) has once again kindly volunteered to organise this year's event. Those wishing to play this year can contact the Arthur, by e-mail at: - [arthur.howarth@btinternet.com](mailto:arthur.howarth@btinternet.com) or on 0151 336 1026. If out, leave your details on his answer phone and Arthur will get back to you. Don't forget to leave your own phone number.

The golf is a pleasant outing in good company and enjoyed by all that play.

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### **Readers' Letters**

The "escape" clause. - I have corrected most of the spellings, and some of the grammar, but take no responsibility for the content. The views expressed here are those of the correspondents and are not necessarily those of BIOB or the Editor. So, feel free to write to me anytime the mood takes you. It all goes in!

#### **This note concerning DSW (Dave) Jones, from John Riding (1962/64)**

##### **Master of Art**

I was one of many pupils who benefited from the teachings of "Davey" Jones, as we used to call him at my time at BI. He never failed to show his enthusiasm in every lesson and firmly believed that all pupils had the ability to "draw what you see".

I will always be grateful for him teaching me how to execute perspectives, which was one of his pet subjects, which I am sure many old boys will recall. My other recollections are of a very astute man who knew when I had done a piece of art homework for a mate! I remember a school chum called Frank Swift for whom I had painted an aircraft and skilfully disguised it, so it looked a bit "naff"- no such luck, Mr. Jones asked him "did Ridin' do this for you?", to which Frank nodded. I can't remember being punished apart from a word in my ear!

I went to see Dave a few years ago at his home and had a nostalgic journey discussing the old days. He had forgotten the time he sent four of us running around the playing fields at Ingleborough Road after rugby because we had not got out of the bath on time.....and dressed in only a towel each!! He was surprised that I remembered his 2-seat Lambretta with the full windshield that he would travel to school in.

Looking around his kitchen he had one particular large canvas which showed off his skills and I suggested he get an exhibition in London, but I think he was quite happy if visitors appreciated his works although I think he loaned some of his art from time to time.... perhaps someone can throw some light on this?

So, my memories of a man who always smiled and who commanded a lot of respect from the boys he taught.

#### **An e-mail from John Croft (1958/65)**

##### **Geoff Brown: memories from the Institute and the Old Boys**

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”. It is funny how one can suddenly remember quotations, learned by rote at school, but lain unused for decades. In this case from Dicken's Tale of Two Cities, a set book in one of my English literature classes; definitely not one of my favourite subjects! The trigger to this memory was sitting at my PC sorting through images of my gorgeous 11-month-old granddaughter for a photo album, and then seeing one of Keith Dutton's all too frequent "sad news" e-mails pop up; in this case the death of Geoff Brown. It hit hard, and I am not ashamed to say that there were tears.

Geoff had been a best friend throughout our time at the Institute and for many years after that. I was Best Man at his wedding to Beryl. However, over the years our paths diverged, mostly due to me moving ever further away; first Manchester then Leeds and finally to Wantage in South Oxfordshire. I am really glad that Keith Dutton cajoled me into going to the 2016 annual Old Boy's dinner, where I sat next to Geoff and we were able to catch on each other's lives.

This article is not an Obituary for Geoff, as I still do not know all about his later life, but again cajoled by Keith, it is an eclectic collection of memories from school and the Old Boys, which in turn I hope will trigger other good memories from our contemporaries.



Myself, Geoff and Mike McNulty all lived on the “Woodie”, the Woodchurch Estate; and with our common love of sport it was almost inevitable that we would become friends and “hang out” together. That is not to say we were not competitive with one another, we certainly were; whether it be at school, the Youth club on the estate, or the tennis courts, bowling greens and golf course in Arrowe Park. It helped develop our skills. We all had something we were best at, but it was quite clear that Geoff was the best all-rounder. We were together so frequently that my Mum called us “the 3 Musketeers”.

Going from football at Primary school (Overchurch) to rugby was quite a change, learning the different positions and techniques. Mike was always going to be a second row and in the early years Don Kennedy was the other. I remember Don took a while to get to grips with the concept of the hand-off, which without any malice intended, looked more like (and felt like!) a straight left punch. In the first few years I played every position in the pack, eventually becoming an openside wing forward. With Geoff’s speed he was always in the backs and a star performer. For one of our away matches [I cannot remember who it was against] we walked through Birkenhead Park to get the electric train. Suddenly we were set upon by a gang of pupils from another local school. Most of them were just trying to frighten us by rushing down the slopes at us, but there were a few who were more intent on fisticuffs. Unfortunately for their ringleader he tried to pick on Mike McNulty: a bad and painful choice! I think it was stopped by a Park keeper, but here the memory is a bit hazy.

By the 6th form we had quite a decent Rugby team, with JD Hall and Davy Jones getting us fitter than ever before and working as a team. The highlight of the final year was winning the traditional fixture with the Old Boys. By this stage we were very familiar with the Old Boys RUFC; often training there in the week and playing for them on Saturday afternoons, after playing for the school in the morning! Geoff was good enough to play in some of the 1st XV matches. We continued playing when home from Universities and for several years after that.

A couple of instances stick in my mind. One of the Old Boys wore a toupee when not playing but played bald headed and hung his toupee on a cloths hook in our changing room. One of the visiting team saw this and was heard to say in their changing room “bloody hell: they take their rugby seriously here – they take scalps!”. There was one match where I scored a very unorthodox try. We were playing a miners’ club team near Wigan on a pitch with a very pronounced slope, in appalling wet conditions. We were playing downhill and I was passed the ball between halfway and their 25. The covering defence would normally have got me, but I slipped on my backside, slide downhill at speed for about 30 yards and with the cover defence not able to adjust, was able to simply dob the ball down for a try.

The cricket season had a more laid-back pace to it, with of course Lenny Malcolm keeping us focused. Geoff, Mike and I played in the 1st XI. The class act of the team, and a sight to behold, were the Parry brothers, Roy and Phil, who would steam in with their fast and fluid bowling action.

At some stage we discovered the value of becoming members of the YMCA, just down the hill from the

school. I think the initial attraction was access to the snooker tables, but we also took up playing Table Tennis, which Mike was really good at. One of the adults entered us into a local league and ferried us around to matches. We learned a lot from playing a wide variety of styles. I still play league table tennis and over a beer after one match I was talking to a team mate of a similar age who went to school in Southport. I related a tale from JD Hall about how a number of applicants for his job had not read the job descriptions very well and had misinterpreted the word “Institute” in the School’s name, with phrases in their CV like “I have great experience in working in Correctional Institutions”. To my surprise he asked if that was the Birkenhead Institute? He was able to describe the place quite well, and it turned out he had played several chess matches and tournaments there – with the accolade that the school had a very good reputation for chess. So, pat on the back for our chess teams of the era.

Turning to what we were primarily at school for; education, there were some subjects I liked less than others, but overall, I thought Danny Webb and his teachers did a pretty good job. They all had their quirks, which we mercilessly made fun of. Of course, the reverse may have happened in the Staff room! Physics was the subject I took my degree in and of course I must give an accolade to Lenny Malcolm for preparing me for this and later working life – although it did not feel like it at the time! I am sure many of you will remember getting back work with a plethora of red ink corrections; many of which were not to do with the physics content but the English content. On one occasion, seeing the bemused look on my face he said “if you want to pass exams do not give the markers cause to stop over silly mistakes in grammar and punctuation, it makes them look more critically at your paper. Also, if you cannot write a coherent report you will struggle in science jobs” - sage advice. I do wonder what he would make of the lexicon and grammar in use in today’s social media?

To get to University you had to have an “O” level in a foreign language. Despite the best efforts of our French teacher, J Phipps, I really struggled with French and was lucky to scrape a pass. Perhaps the crunch point came in the comprehension paper where a passage of text was read out to us in French and we had to write answers to the questions about it on the exam paper. J Phipps’ reading of the text was very expressive and full of what might be diplomatically described as Gallic arm waving; but in another world you could have imagined him as a mime artist!

My final anecdote is from the early 70s, when Geoff had just set up his dental practice. I was home for a holiday period and the back of one of my lower molars disintegrated whilst crunching the batter from fish and chips. Geoff suggested I come to his practice and he would sort it for free. When he had had a good look at it, he said normally he would simply remove the remaining front of the tooth, and I would be left with a gap or a very expensive process to replace. However, if I wanted he would rebuild the tooth with dental filler; indeed, he was quite keen to do this as it was a bit of a challenge. Later sitting in the chair with my mouth wide open and sweat on the brow, I reflected on some of the frightening tools he was manipulating and our youthful gung ho experiences, plus some of the challenges where we had fallen a bit short. I need not have worried; this was the adult professional Geoff. His “fix” for the problem

lasted some 40 years, and the dentist who eventually removed the tooth, because the front bit was crumbling, was impressed with Geoff's work. My quid pro quo was that in my professional capacity, I did a radiation survey of his dental X-ray set and sorted out his Local Rules. I think I got the better end of the deal.

Geoff's death is a sad event, but I am sure he would want us to concentrate on the positives and the good times we had. There are many more class and team mates from that time that I have not been able to work into the anecdotes, but who were part of the good times we had. If these anecdotes have stirred your memory, I am sure Keith Dutton will be happy to hear from you.

**An e-mail from Dick Bell (1931/38)** (Probably our oldest member! - Ed)

### **Klondyke & Me**

**H**aving started my education in the Claughton Higher Grade School, I sat the Institute scholarship exam in Cole Street School and having passed, found myself in Form 3J at Birkenhead Institute. My form master was Mr Lord, who may have been highly qualified but was no match for the thirty 11-year olds in his class, unlike Mr Morris, who saw his pupils were not listening to his words of wisdom and hurled the blackboard duster in the direction of the miscreants.

I followed my brother Vic who joined the Institute in 1929 when Miss Bowers was the Head of the Junior School. This was also the year Mr E Wynn Hughes was appointed Head Master of the Senior School. This was a shock to the parents of the pupils, who expected the current Deputy Head to be promoted – he eventually got 2nd prize and became Head at Rock Ferry High School. The pupils of the old BI did not take kindly to Mr Hughes, and as he flashed his gold teeth at the parents of prospective new fee-paying pupils, he thereafter became known as “Klondyke”. Klondyke and I had an unwritten agreement that we would not speak to one another.

Klondyke introduced changes to the Institute, Rugby took the place of Soccer and a black and gold ribbon was added to school caps so that any pupils not on their best behaviour away from the school could be easily identified.

My brother Vic was one of the earliest pupils to play Rugby for the BI school team. The coach at that time was a former International player who taught the boys touch kicking, but I cannot recall his name. I subsequently went on to play rugby for the team and then the Old Boys.

After leaving BI I applied for a job at the Borough Treasury and this involved the Treasurer getting a reference from Klondyke. Whilst he apparently was not aware of the fact I was head of the cricket team I am fairly certain it was his reference that got me the job over the other 24 applicants. One of my first jobs at the Treasury was to hand deliver the BI Masters pay packets, including Klondyke's but he continued to ignore me. I still recall the thick fog of cigar smoke in the Master's Room on the top floor.

Many years after Klondyke had left the Institute I bumped into him one day and we chatted. I discovered that he did in fact know who I was, and all about me and my 2 brothers. And looking back, it's fair to say that

both Klondyke and the Institute gave me a good standard of education that has seen my through life well.

### **An e-mail from Rob Shaw (Cohen 1970-1977)**

#### **The School Cottage - Gellioedd Uchaf.1973 -1983**

**S**ituated off the B4501 between the Welsh hamlet of Cerrigydrudion and the market town of Bala lies a typical stone farm cottage, Gellioedd Uchaf. Unfortunately, Latin trumped Welsh for languages at school. Uchaf meaning “upper” and Gelli a “grove” suggests possibly the farm at the upper grove of trees or orchard. An aerial view certainly shows 2 adjacent farms surrounded by trees and the school cottage being on a slightly higher elevation. The adjacent farm being called Gellioedd-Ganol meaning the centre or middle Gellioedd.

The cottage was obtained on a 10-year lease, from the Davies family, in 1973 by the school after its move to Tollemache Road. It was to be a place of learning through Field Trips and also became a venue for sports training, team bonding weekends and a holiday let for teachers and families. The description of the cottage by an Estate Agent would probably have included the words “in need of attention”. The first wave of Birkenhead pupils to shatter the peace of this part of rural Wales saw them learning the age-old tradition of “hard graft” as cesspits were dug, fireplaces bricked up, old slate floors dug out and concreted, walls plastered and rendered, and new toilet and washing facilities installed. Prior to the installation of the Royal Doulton one would sit on makeshift toilets that had been fashioned from old steel oil drums in the metalwork department, deep in the bowels of Tollemache Road. Unfortunately, toilet seats were not designed for use on oil drums thus necessitating the careful protection of one's crown jewels from the jagged cut edge of the steel. If that was bad enough then at some time during the vacation a couple of errant souls would have to carefully lift the semi filled drums, carry them downhill over sheep rutted terrain and carefully pour the fermenting contents into a cesspit. If I remember correctly, Health and Safety did not require you to triple boil and disinfect your hands. Common sense seemed to be the order of the day especially if “can” emptying was done just prior to dinner.

Asked to offer a description of Gellioedd, a former pupil wrote, “Dodgy three up and three down shelf.” Sleeping arrangements in the early days saw three people sleeping on an upper shelf with three below. Slightly disconcerting if the First XV front row decided to claim top bunk. Old mattresses had been provided by St James Hospital. In true Dads Army Pike style one Antipodean pupil, Todd Russell recalls “Mum says we can't sleep on them --we don't know what disease and body fluids have been on them” This dire warning must have fuelled the night time ghost story contest held by Vic Wilson. Poor impressionable kids worrying about catching VD... At the end of the 10-year lease members of the Davies family renovated the cottage over a number of years and moved back into it in 1990. The current occupants being Gwilym Lloyd and Michelle Irene Davies who run it as a sheep farm with a microbrewery, Geipel Brewing, using a nearby barn. The original stairs were reused in an adjacent building. The original black leaded iron range in the dining room was restored and still used to

this day. During the renovation work a secret hidden space was discovered behind the fireplace, thankfully empty with the exception of an old shoe which is believed to have been traditionally left to ward off evil spirits.

Situated on a hill just above the cottage lies the old ruin of Ty'n Fawnog. Photographs provided courtesy of owner Michelle show graffiti attributed to pupils "Moorsy" and "Pablo" accompanied by the word "Birkenhead". Still there after 35 years. Talk about leaving your mark.

Pupils were transported to the cottage in various forms of School transport including an old brown ambulance and a restored coach. Several old boys had a lucky escape whilst driving to the cottage for rugby training when their car decided to go off-piste somersaulting down a hillside much to the consternation of resident sheep. The only injury of note I have found associated with the cottage was that of a broken arm sustained by a teacher's young relative falling out of bed. Minor cuts and scratches were par for the course given that training was done on a field resplendent with nettles, thistles and sheep poo. I still wince when I remember a teammate sliding down the hill in his shorts and ending up straddling the national emblem of Scotland. Much schoolboy humour about pricks added insult to injury. I also recall that tragedy was averted when a friend swimming in Bala Lake disappeared below the surface when out of his depth, thankfully we managed to turn the front of one of the canoes for him to grab and get back to shallower water looking as white as the proverbial ghost.

In hindsight we might question the wisdom of a Birkenhead School leasing a cottage so close to the site of much hatred and anger towards the Liverpool Water Companies who with Government backing drowned the local village of Capel Celyn to create Llyn Celyn. This might go some way to explain the frosty reception encountered on several occasions when teachers, sixth formers and old boys visited the local pubs in Cerrigydrudion and Bala. One incident I was personally involved with was the Bala Town Centre Showdown. The school "ambulance" had parked by Bala Lake and a few of us ventured into the town. Whilst walking along the High Street we noticed a gang of local youths following us. A couple of empty milk bottles were purloined off a doorstep ready for the impending beating we were expecting from the welsh lads who outnumbered us. The thought of legging it and discretion over valour evaporated when in the distance we saw the school ambulance coming down the High Street behind the "Sons of Glyndwr". Oh, I wish dash cams or CCTV were around in those days ...the ambulance screeching to a halt, the back doors flying open and a hoard of scruffy pupils and teachers in hiking boots pouring out. The poor welsh lads caught by the element of surprise scattered like a flock of sheep. We escaped with a tale to tell and the Welsh lads escaped to burn down cottages and urinate in Llyn Celyn as their protest against the English flooding their valleys.

Not all our encounters with the "locals" were confrontational. A local farm lady nostalgically recalls the site of the lads, after training, running across the fields to take a wash in a stream pool. This potentially insignificant event was probably remembered all the more because we skinny dipped and the occasional

passing motorist was treated to the sight of a "full moon". The pool was turned into a "Brut" scented bubble bath as we washed the combination of sweat and sheep poo off, ready for the 4-mile walk to the pub and Spar in Cerrigydrudion. Although unable to verify the full facts I believe another confrontation on the outskirts of Bala made the local press. Some members of the Old Instonians RUFC were having a training break at the cottage and after a heavy night in the Bala hostleries an unnamed member decided to walk the 7-mile back to the cottage. I don't think he had even reached Frongoch where upon seeing a light in a window, which he drunkenly mistook for the cottage, tried to climb in and was subsequently arrested. Whether it was the window to a girl's boarding school dormitory remains a matter of conjecture.

Space only allows me a couple more tales to tell that being Rabbit hunting and The Post. We had convinced ourselves that we were not being fed properly by the teachers so one dark starry night several of us hatched a plan to catch a welsh rabbit, not the cheese variety. I cannot remember all the names of the hunting party but rather the instruments of death they were carrying, namely: torch, wire, axe, sack and wooden club. We had noticed their hillside abodes during the daytime and the most knowledgeable in country ways out of us townies suggested that rabbits stand still if blinded by flashlight, the club or axe would then be used to dispatch our quarry. Plan B was to set a wire noose in front of a burrow and return after dawn. Despite stumbling our way around the hillside in the dark and the valiant efforts to provide meat the sack was never used.

The second plan we hatched was intended to encourage our sports teacher that all the training was bearing fruit. We were each being timed to run downhill past the cesspit over a small bridge, up the hillside track to a wooden post and back. After several days of this, one bright spark knowing the formula that speed equals distance over time reckoned if we reduced the distance then our times should in theory improve. To put this assumption to the test a group of us, now familiar to rabbit terrain in the dark, crept out one night to move the post downhill. What we did not bargain for was that, although this post had about 5 feet above ground, it became increasingly obvious that an equal if longer amount had been buried. With several of us hugging and lifting the post it became top heavy as we extracted it and we fell into fits of laughter. All that was missing was a few kilts as we managed to toss this veritable caber and position it further down the hill. Will never know if the teacher spotted that the fence post had mysteriously become a telegraph pole overnight, but he must have been mightily impressed with our times.

The school leased the cottage for 10 years so there must be many more tales and anecdotes concerning the Boys from Birkenhead. Another article perhaps? I would just like to finish with the words of another pupil

"I also recall the trip home and jumping off the bus at the Seven Stiles and the feeling of being as fit as I'd ever been in my life, an 'I can conquer the world' moment. Shortly after our return, I played my first game for the old Instonians 1<sup>st</sup> XV truly memorable times.

There were no mobile phones no iPads or laptops, not a care in the world. They were the good times, and they were the best of times.

## An e-mail from Rob Wood (1953/60)

### **End of Term Memories**

Who remembers the hymn we sang at the end of each term and the lesson it taught us?

“Lord dismiss us with Thy blessing.

Thanks for mercies past received

Pardon all, their faults confessing

Time that lost may all retrieve.

May Thy children

Ne’er Thy Spirit grieve.

For one boy in 3A at the end of Summer term 1957 it would have special resonance.

As we departed the classroom in high spirits for a last game of cricket in the yard of Summer 1957, Tommy Thacker our form master took out his diary and stopped one boy.

On the first day of term I gave you fifty lines of the school motto: “Doctus in se semper divitias habet”.

I note from my diary I have not received them”.

“You know my rule every day late they are doubled.

According to my calculation which has been verified by the maths masters Mr Sorby and Mr Boulton, you now owe me over 1,000,000 lines.

Within the spirit of the departure hymn still in our memory I have decided to reduce the punishment to one hundred lines now and a further hundred to be handed in first day of next term.

## An e-mail from Walter Girven (1950/56)

### **Birkenhead Re-discovered - A Recollection**

A couple of years ago I was quietly driving along the road into Hermanus, South Africa, enjoying my holiday, and looking forward to some whale watching when I received a shock. There, on the verge, was a large sign marked ‘Birkenhead’ As it was a rural area with not a house or building in sight, I was intrigued. I turned down the adjacent unmade road heading to the coast and after about a mile found a delightful small thatched pub. - typical of country pubs in the U.K. Inside I found the walls decorated with nautical charts, and the bar selling Birkenhead ales. What a find! From the barmaid I learned that the whole area was known as the ‘Birkenhead Estate’, but she did not know why. Continuing along the road I found myself on a rocky headland surmounted by an impressive lighthouse. The headland is known as Danger Point, and overlooks Algoa Bay, some 87 miles south-east of Cape Town. Nearby was an information sign which answered some my queries and sent me searching for more facts.

About 2 miles out in the Bay was a submerged rock, visible due to the breaking waves in rough seas, but not in calm weather. At about 2.00a.m. on 26th. February 1852, the H.M.S. Birkenhead, a troopship carrying between 630 and 643 men, women, and children, and 9 cavalry horses, struck the rock and shortly thereafter broke in two and sank. The ship’s manifest and papers were all lost so the numbers on board cannot be precise but there were only 193 known survivors.

The ship, an iron-clad paddle steamer, had been built at Birkenhead by the John Laird Company in 1845 for the Royal Navy as a frigate, the H.M.S. Vulcan. She was never commissioned as a frigate because of the Navy’s

concerns regarding the effects of cannon shots on iron sided ships, and the preference for propeller driven vessels. She underwent various modifications, became a troop carrier in 1851 and, other than assisting in retrieving and re-floating Isambard Kingdom Brunel’s SS Great Britain from the sands of Dundrum Bay, she had an uneventful history. It was her sinking which secured her immortality.

When the ship struck the rock, the Captain ordered ‘engines astern’, however the ship struck again, and the sea poured into the hold, forward compartments and engine room, drowning over 100 soldiers in their berths.

The surviving military, comprising officers and men from 10 different Regiments all heading to duty in the 8th. Xhosa War were assembled on the deck and poop deck. Of the two 150man lifeboats, one was launched and immediately swamped, whilst the other could not be launched due to poor maintenance and paint-jammed winches. The women and children were placed in the ship’s cutter alongside, leaving 3 smaller boats available for use. The ship broke in two, and the Captain called for those who could swim to jump overboard and make for the boats. Lieutenant-Colonel Seton, who had taken command of all the military at this time, realised that this could result in the boats being swamped, and the women and children endangered, and so he ordered the men to ‘stand fast’, and all bar three did so. The horses were released to swim to shore, but the military did not move until the ship broke up and sank. During the next 12 hours some managed to get to the shore 2 miles away, swimming or clinging to wreckage, but most drowned, died of exposure, or were killed by sharks of which there were many. This incident has given rise to the unofficial “women and children first” protocol when a ship is being abandoned, which is acknowledged by mariners throughout the world. The chivalry of those on board that night also ensured that HMS Birkenhead would secure its place in maritime history.

Of course, I discovered much of the above information on my return home, but on the day, I retraced my steps back to the main road and beyond where I found the Birkenhead Brewery, set among fields of vines, with a welcoming restaurant and gardens. The Manager kindly gave me a guided tour and being fully aware of the history of the area, told me that they held a short commemorative service for the victims of the shipwreck each year on the anniversary of the wreck. Descendants of the both deceased and survivors often attend, and there was no shortage of stories about the event and its aftermath, but I think they will have to wait for another occasion. Suffice to say that the incident has produced a variety of results, including references by various authors to the “Birkenhead Drill”, e.g. Rudyard Kipling in his poem “Soldier an’ Sailor Too”; the naming of both a mountain and a river in British Columbia, Canada; the building of the lighthouse on Danger Point, and the naming of the infamous rock as Birkenhead Rock. Painters too, have not been slow to use the incident as a worthy subject, including Thomas Hemy whose Victorian work is displayed in the Williamson Art Gallery, Slatey Road, Birkenhead - or was the last time I visited. Isn’t it surprising what you find when you are not really looking!

### **An e-mail from Bob Byrne (1953/58)**

#### **A Call to Arms**

There was I, quietly enjoying day on my own as my wife was away and I was tasked with dealing with the washing machine engineer whenever he or she chose to appear, anytime between 8 and 5 they said.

I should just check my e-mails I thought and was astonished to see a request from our esteemed Editor asking if I could help with something for the next edition of "AdVisor." As someone who had never contributed to the School Magazine "The Visor" throughout my Institute years, this represented a "Call to Arms" to help.

The quandary then was what on earth to write about. Various ideas came to mind, none of which I fancied at all. However, a walk down Memory Lane focussed me on a Fixture Card I have had for many years. Reading through it again, I thought some of you might recall your memories of the time.

First of all was our ground address,

c/o Old Birkonian Football Club

The Ridings

Noctorum

Birkenhead.

Why so you may ask. This was the time when those chaps who built the Motorway came to see us at the Club sometime before and told us we were in their way as they wanted to put the Woodchurch Junction in our place. Reassurances were given that whilst they regretted what was wanted, they, the constructors, would ensure that the Club would be reinstated with a sweetener of a new Clubhouse being provided. I am not sure how many of us around today appreciated the work done by those Club members at the time who were unstinting in their time and effort to secure a proper base for us after the Motorway was finished.

The problem that faced us, as you can imagine, was where to play. Fixtures are arranged for years ahead and we were running 4 teams as well. Fortunately, the Rugby brotherhood came to the rescue and Old Birkonians offered us some facilities and their offer was taken up.

My involvement in this is that, I had the honour of being Club Captain in this 1969 Season, yes, a long time ago. In addition, I remained Fixture Secretary.

Rather than relate the ups and downs of what was a difficult season, I submit the names of those others who were either Officers of the Club and/or Playing Members at the same time. This is just intended as a memory jogger.

Our President was E.G. Webb, Chairman, J.B. Huntriss, Vice, J. Bassett, Hon Sec, A.K. Jones, Treasurer, P.A. Ryan.

On the Rugby side, 2nd XV Captain was B. Cadman, 3rd XV Captain, B. Riley, 4th XV Captain, S. Blaylock who also served as Team Secretary.

Press was C.J. Westwater, Membership, G. F. Brown, Social, M. Shaw, Chairman of Selection, J. Bell, House, W.J. Upton, Ground, R.W. Jones, Assistant Secretary, D.N. Forshaw, Bar, P.A. Ryan, Deputy Bar, I.G. McDougal, Ground Development, B.R. Smith and our Cheshire Representative, Dr. A.S. Hodgson.

In this Fixture Card as well is reference to the 80th Commemoration Dinner of the founding of the School, tickets via L.T. Malcolm, who else I hear you say.

To me, these names evoke more than a few memories. They recall friends who are no longer with us, not least Geoff Brown. I mourn their passing and remember those days which were both difficult and enjoyable at the same time, if that is possible. Of course, there remain a number of friends who are alive and kicking, maintaining as we all do our connections with both the School and the Rugby Club.

Hopefully, when reading this you are reminded as I am, of times gone by and I sincerely trust that your memories and recollections are as fond as mine.

### **An amusing e-mail from Les Cowle (1943/48)**

#### **Lexophiles**

An annual competition is held by the New York Times to see who can create the best original lexophile.

This year's winning submission is posted at the very end.

"Lexophile" describes those that have a love for words, such as "you can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish," or "To write with a broken pencil is pointless."

No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

If you don't pay your exorcist, you can get repossessed.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down.

I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.

Did you hear about the crossed-eyed teacher who lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils?

When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.

When chemists die, they barium.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.

I changed my iPad's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

Haunted French pancakes give me the crepes.

This girl today said she recognized me from the Vegetarians Club, but I'd swear I've never met herbivore.

I know a guy who's addicted to drinking brake fluid, but he says he can stop any time.

A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.

When the smog lifts in Los Angeles U.C.L.A.

I got some batteries that were given out free of charge.

A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.

A will is a dead giveaway.

With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.

Police were summoned to a day-care centre where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.

Did you hear about the fellow whose entire left side was cut off? He's all right now.

A bicycle can't stand alone; it's just two tired.

The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine last week is now fully recovered.

He had a photographic memory, but it was never fully developed.

When she saw her first strands of grey hair she thought she'd dye.

Acupuncture is a jab well done. That's the point of it.

Those who get too big for their pants will be totally exposed in the end.

### **An e-mail from Kenneth Nelson (1955/57)**

#### **"Rudolf Hess & I"**

I expect all Instonians, certainly of my own vintage (1955/57) and older, are familiar with the name Rudolf Hess. Briefly, this was the former Deputy Fuehrer of the Third Reich - he of the oddly unsettling, deep set dark eyes - who undertook a clearly madcap, personal mission in May 1941 to end Anglo-German hostilities by commandeering a Luftwaffe plane from its base in southern Germany and flying it to Scotland. His objective was to initiate peace talks with the Duke of Hamilton (strangely regarded by Hess as a personage of influence in the UK) and thus bring the war to an early end. Hess was a skilled flyer and the flight itself a remarkable feat of airmanship but, as we all know, the mission ended in complete failure and Hess in prison. The complete story is easily accessible on Wikipedia for anyone interested in the detail.

Rudolf Hess & I crossed paths in 1979 when, after several years of teaching German & history (my subjects at Reading University) I had joined the Ministry of Defence & been transferred to the British Military Government in Berlin. There I discovered that Hess & I were, relatively speaking, neighbours. I in a quite modest government quarter in Charlottenburg, he in much grander, very spacious, official accommodation in Spandau - two adjacent boroughs (Bezirke) in Berlin. Both lay in the British Sector of that city. Mine was a modern dwelling of post-war vintage, his, a splendid Victorian (Wilhelminian in German terms) converted military barracks. We lived perhaps a mile apart. I, together with my wife & family, in domestic comfort; he alone in a prison - the notorious Allied Military Prison of Spandau - his fellow inmates all having been released or executed for war crimes.

Did I know Hess? Yes. Did Hess know me? No. Let me explain. When I referred to our paths crossing I meant it literally. We shared, for instance, the same doctor and, likewise, the same dentist. Both, of course, military officers and located in the same hospital, the British Military Hospital, Berlin, situated a stones' throw from my home. On occasion we would attend (uncoordinated) appointments with one or the other at roughly the same time. We might pass in the corridor, I alone, he with the privilege of an RMP escort. Security was, of course, always very tight on these occasions so close approach was out of the question. Clearly there was no threat from Hess himself - by this time a much shrunken, shrivelled and shuffling version of his former, imposing, physical self as seen by many in films of the Nazi Party rallies. The threat - if any - was deemed to come from his supporters - and in particular - from his son, Wolf Ruediger Hess, a Frankfurt lawyer, who regularly surfaced outside the hospital demonstrating (volubly but justifiably perhaps) for the release of his aged father from his lonely & protracted incarceration.

There were several other factors which drew me closer to the ambit of Rudolf Hess during my first tour of duty in Berlin. One was my contact - officially and domestically - with the then British Governor of Spandau Prison (co-governor, more accurately, as each of the Allies supplied an official governor, as well as

chef, doctor and prison guards, both civilian and military) and, in addition, my wife's friendship with the wife of one of the British civilian prison guards. I hasten to add that, off duty, neither of these two acquaintances breached their duty of confidentiality about their work with Hess but our regular proximity to them in a certain sense brought Hess himself quite close to us. Indeed, as one passed the walls of Spandau Prison the very presence of Hess inside sitting in his cell or working in his garden was almost palpable. Whilst he was alive and in Spandau Prison he had become as much of a feature in Berlin (at least in the western sectors) as Checkpoint Charlie or the notorious Berlin Wall and he was on the itinerary of every member of the Allied forces seeking to entertain visiting relatives or friends with the local "sights".

It all ended, of course on the 17th August 1987 when Hess hanged himself with the flex of a reading lamp in his cell followed quickly with wild accusations of British involvement, propagated inter alia by his son as well as his other sympathisers. Although by that time I had been moved to another office in Duesseldorf I had a final link to his wretched end in that a very close friend of mine in Duesseldorf had, on the eve of Hess's death, been transferred to the British Military Government office (Public Safety) with responsibility for dealing with the Hess "case" including his demise. Fortunately for my friend, despite hardly having had time to unpack his bags, he was able to unearth the old file which held the official instructions on what action was to be taken. This also contained the decision for the destruction of Spandau Prison itself and the clandestine disposal of the very stones of that vast edifice. In official Allied circles it had been feared that, had the debris of the Prison remained in any way visible and accessible, it might have attracted the attention of Hess sympathisers and could have been turned into some kind of shrine to the man or the regime he had served.

Thus, ended my vicarious connexion with Hess and his fate as the sole senior Nazi survivor of the Nuremberg trials. As I said earlier, no, he did not know me from Adam but, through lengthy proximity to him during my service in Berlin - sometimes physically quite close to him - and my knowledge of him garnered from friends and acquaintances who had official contact with him, I felt, yes, I did know him as well as I wanted to. When I returned to Berlin on a second tour of duty in 1989 I found that Nemesis had been busily at work in my absence for on the site of the former Spandau prison there stood a large, modern Naafi shopping site and cinema with the name "Britannia Centre". For the children playing in the creche there and, probably, for the crowds of young soldiers and their wives shopping there the name Hess would have meant very little or nothing at all. For the wider Berlin community, a long shadow cast from the darkest days of German history had also disappeared and in 1989, it will be remembered, other world-changing events were taking place.

### **An e-mail from Keith Cross (1966/71)**

#### **The Picture says 1970/71..**

The picture says 1970/71 so it must be true, though I've no idea where the intervening 48 years have gone. Their names are still so familiar; Richie



McKie, Al Simmons, “Degsy” Jones, Mal Lynskey, Colin Pemberton, and of course myself, though as I approach my 63rd birthday I can’t believe I was ever that young and fit.



I had spent 4 years at the “proper” B.I. on Whetstone Lane, when education know-it-all’s, in their wisdom, decided to uproot us all to the other side of Birkenhead. But hey, we got to call ourselves a “High School”, as if that fooled anybody. I seem to remember there being some minor altercations on the first day at Tollemache Road, about us “Lord Snooties” coming across town, but by and large it was a pretty uneventful transition. Sacrilege was then committed by we, who turned our backs on the traditional rugby playing B.I. and opted to play football, that “silly” game (Lenny Malcolm) instead. However, it was the first opportunity any of us had to play football, and we were representing the school, after all. I do remember that “Big” Bill Edgar and Denis Hughes seemed particularly aggrieved at this perceived treason.

We played at Valley Road playing fields in the North End, and the contrast between there and dear old Ingleborough Road was marked. Utilitarian changing rooms and showers replaced the giant baths supplied with constant hot water, and the homely atmosphere so familiar to hundreds of boys down the years.

We played a game against the Staff that year, and about ten minutes in I tackled a young P.E. graduate whose name escapes me. His leg was broken, and the game called off, but I especially remember the kindness of the late, great Davy Jones who insisted on taking me back home across town in his car (we lived around the corner from Ingleborough Road). After a week or so off with a badly bruised shin myself I returned, limping, to school. Upon encountering the aforementioned Lenny Malcolm in the corridor, I was again given the “silly” game quote as he floated past like a giant bat with his gown billowing behind him.

#### A few e-mails from John Jordan (1946/53), now in Tasmania

#### **Ingleborough Road**

The playing fields at Ingleborough Road have received much publicity in recent years. In my years at B.I. they were the venue for cricket, athletics, cross country and rugby and were home to the Old Instonians R.U.F.C. Heroic battles of all kinds were fought out on the grass (and mud). Mud was particularly in evidence on the sloping 3rd XV pitch on the side away from the pavilion which had been used for allotments during the war.

**Ad-Visor 2018**

At the appropriate time on the timetable, boys rushed to the bike shed for the dash along Derby Rd or congregated at the number 60 bus stop near the gym. Conductors probably dreaded being on the roster for that trip. With a bit of luck, you could alight without having paid your fare.

Sports Day was often held in the evening of a summer’s day starting at 6p.m. to give all parents a chance to see the fun. The obstacle race was of special interest as it included a tarpaulin, very securely pegged down. Under this it was quite possible to lose ones shorts or all sense of direction.

The cross-country season was not a particular favourite of many Instonians. According to age, the distances were 7.5, or 2.5 miles. Much of it was run on roads and all courses included at least a part of the Lever Causeway. Many will doubtless recall the farm at the bottom which had to be negotiated twice during the Senior race. The mud here had its own special quality, very evident after heavy rain and milking.

I cannot remember exactly when it took place but possibly it was 1955. On a Saturday in mid-summer, the Old Instonians R.U.F.C. decided to raise funds by putting on a Grand Fair. A Committee was formed, and meetings were held monthly at first, starting before the previous Christmas. As the great day drew nearer, they became a weekly commitment, usually held at a residence in Bromborough. They also grew longer, and I well remember cycling home through Spital Dam well after 11p.m.

On the appointed Saturday, Ingleborough Rd. fields sported stalls of all kinds, usually designed to separate the patrons from their hard-earned cash. For example, could you knock a 6" nail into a piece of (very) hard wood in 3 blows using a rather light hammer? Head to be flush with the timber.

The Committee had to forgo Vic Oliver as the Fair opener on discovering that his appearance fee was £750. A local champion boxer did the honours. Sometime after the Fair, the Committee held a final meeting when the Treasurer presented his report. After the hours spent in planning, the final profit was, I believe, just seven pence halfpenny.

But it was certainly a Great Fair and I do not think Ingleborough Rd ever saw another.

#### **School Meals**

Enjoyed by many, disliked by many and tolerated anyway by all, the school meal was part of school life for the majority of pupils. Particularly during and for years after the war, they provided a carefully chosen and balanced diet which was hard to achieve with food rationing in full swing. Like them or loathe them, they served a very useful purpose. It was also a good time for social interaction.

Apart from the nourishment angle, they were welcomed by families where no one was at home at lunch time to prepare meals as many families had both parents working. In those years, 1940’s and 1950’s, the Institute also had a fair number of pupils who travelled a considerable distance to school, from Prenton or the Heswall area for example, who simply could not get home and back in the lunch period.

At the Institute in the mid-40’s, we ate in the School basement, often referred to, among other names, as the dungeon. Because seating was limited, I think we ate in

two shifts. When summoned by a whistle blast, we lined up alongside the toilet block, silence was enforced, and we proceeded down the steps to take our allotted places. The meals were delivered by van from a central kitchen in town. They arrived in metal containers and were dished out by the kitchen ladies. These ladies must have had a very good sense of quantity as it was very rare for any shortfall to be encountered. For those occasions when items ran short, there were emergency replacements like corned beef to hand. Miraculously, too, they managed to keep things hot.

I believe that on one famous occasion, thanks to an error in the delivery system, the main course failed to arrive but double the dessert was delivered, so we all had two helpings of dessert, but no main course. The diners thoroughly enjoyed the experience!

Around 1950 the powers that be, built us a lovely new dining room with its own cooking arrangements. This was a great improvement on the previous system and enabled all to dine at the same time. If memory serves me correctly, each table seated 6. Two were delegated at the end of each course, in rotation, to clear away. The Prefects served the meals once Len Malcolm had said Grace. When all was cleared away and the tables had been wiped, Len pronounced the 'Grace after meals' and we were dismissed in an orderly fashion to pursue lunchtime activities.

The Prefects had their own style when it came to serve and most opted for taking plates 2 at a time. One courageous soul who stood 6' tall managed, on several occasions, to carry 6 plates of semolina, complete with the regulation spoonful of jam in the centre, at the same time - without dropping any of them. 3 plates on each arm.

When the hall was finally cleared, the Prefects had their meal, usually fitting their size and status! On very rare occasions, they had to eat 'emergency rations' after everyone else had eaten. My personal favourite, provided perhaps once a month and only on a Friday, was cheese pie. For some unknown reason this was not popular which meant there was always plenty left. For many years I have tried to get hold of the exact school meal recipe, alas with no success. I have eaten this delicacy in schools in Birkenhead, Taunton and Wallasey, etc, etc, so it must be a standard recipe. But get hold of it, I cannot.

Perhaps a Birkenhead Institute Old Boy can assist???

#### **An e-mail from Ken Beattie (1961/66) now in Australia**

##### **Memory**

The Australian Nobel Prize winning writer Patrick White through one of his characters in his novel "The Solid Mandala" proclaims. "I dunno... I forget what I was taught I only remember what I've learnt". Memory can be an amazing thing. Why do we forget essential facts 10 minutes after trying to cram them into our brain yet recall a lesson "learnt"? After more than fifty years there are recollections people and of BI which fall well and truly into the "learnt" category. Geoff Brown recently passed away and as soon as I was informed I remembered an incident which has stuck with me. Having just broken one of his athletic records he congratulated me – he didn't need to but being courteous cost nothing and left an impression. The

off-curriculum sporting enthusiasm of a people such as Hughesy and Jonesy. The love of sport participation for the pure joy of it lasts for a life time. During an informal group discussion with Physics/science teacher Lenny Malcolm he shared his personal delight in Amateur Dramatics after work. At the time it bemused me somewhat as science and the arts appeared to me like oil and water. But after a life time of practicing and studying engineering and business management I increasingly "learnt" the wisdom behind those words. I kept up football and cricket playing and coaching as best I could. As my sports participation options were becoming less due to pressures of work and an aging body, literature became increasingly important as a non-vocational mental rather than physical outlet to keep the mind fresh and enthusiasm elevated.

Now in my late 60's I look forward to the regular Shakespeare and poetry groups I'm involved with at the local U3A (University of the Third Age) here in Eltham, Victoria. Keeping in touch with literary interests throughout my life was complementary to my business studies and has made easing into a retirement phase of study and review so much easier. I became a fleeting celebrity when I mentioned I went to the same school as Wilfred Owen! I was expected to be an expert on Owen's life and works. As is the way with U3A organisations as soon as someone knows something of passing interest there is a pressing requirement to present a session for an interest group. So, I had to get up to speed pretty quickly.

I can recommend U3A to anyone looking for a stimulating activity in retirement. U3A started in France at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Toulouse in 1973 and until the 1990s there remained a link to Universities proper. The scheme reached the UK in the early 1980s and started to broaden into a self-help style group. This model is also used in New Zealand, South Africa, Cyprus and here in Australia. Like all U3A organisations a small fee is charged for participation and local and State governments usually offer reduced cost resources for venues. Courses are run by volunteers who have particular skills or knowledge on a subject. Courses can be ongoing or one off. Primarily the membership are all retirees and the general principle is that ongoing physical and intellectual activity enriches and prolongs life. Despite my developing love of Shakespeare, I cannot agree with Dogberry in "Much Ado About Nothing" – "...when the age is in – the wit is out". For we know; *Doctus in se Semper Divitias Habet*.

#### **An e-mail from Brian Taylor (1949/56)**

##### **What did we learn?**

I was a proud part of the September 1949 intake and stayed at school until I finished my Sixth Form in 1956. Although this period was probably not the best in the School's history; plans were afoot to merge us with Rock Ferry (and finally to link us with Tollemache Road) so we had a succession of internal appointments as Headmasters culminating in EG Webb our Senior Languages teacher. Non-the-less we managed both to enjoy our schooling and to acquire life skills which would stand us in good stead.

Of the many teachers, some liked, some feared, some respected and some abhorred the two that made the

greatest effect on me were my Form Master and my House Master, WE Williams and Lennie Malcolm.

"WEW" remained our Form Master from Years 1-5; he taught us History, but he also taught us humanity trying hard to inculcate in us a sense of respect and human concern. I can think of two incidents that illustrate this. Our first Latin Master was called Thomas and most of us were terrified of him! We certainly learned some Latin, but we also learned how to sense when the board-duster was coming our way! Thomas had a lethal arm and chips out of the wall were testimony to the venom of his throw. One morning I was expelled from his class and was standing petrified in the corridor when WEW trundled along with his shoddy gown, old leather case and battered club. He would not have been out of place in a Harry Potter movie but instead of alluding to my plight he simply said "I see your Church is advertising for an Organist" thus transporting me into a much safer scene!

And he stayed by my side as Thomas came out of the classroom and said not a word to me!

During our preparation for "A" level History we would do an hour's essay writing on a Friday afternoon. WEW would sit with us and answer the same question and when we were finished would read his essay to us and leave us the script. It was then that we appreciated that we were in the presence of a Cambridge First and also a man of great humility!

Len Malcolm was Atkin House-Master and our Physics teacher. No-one ever failed GCSE "O" level Physics! Even someone like me with no aptitude for Science or Maths took Physics in our stride; in fact, the 65% I achieved was my best "O" level grade!

Atkin were the Cross-Country specialists; each year before the race we were addressed by Lennie with these famous words: "It's against the Law of Averages that Atkin should win again. But..." And we did all the time I was there! "Failure" was not a word Len Malcolm knew!

"Doctus in se semper divitias habet" Yes indeed but not only in knowledge gained but also in values imbibed we have much for which we can thank the BI.

### An e-mail from David Silcock (1942/48)

#### **Some Personal Schoolboy Memories of the 'Institute' in the '40's**

**M**y first encounter with the 'BI' was in 1935. I was a five-year-old in a convalescent home in Pensby after a month in Clatterbridge with scarlet fever. A much older boy was going home and sported a very impressive school cap heavily ornamented with gold and a blue button on the top - little did I think that one day I would be wearing one.

In 1941 we lived in West Kirby and I was expected to pass the 'Scholarship' to Calday Grammar. It did not happen. Several of my pals who also missed that boat did not appear with me at Hoylake Parade Elementary School the following September. Apparently, they had gone to a grammar school in Birkenhead. This rang bells with my mother who was soon on her way to meet the Klon. Suffice it to say that he fell for her charms - can you imagine that! Anyway, I found myself sitting an Entrance Exam for the Institute in the November. This proved to be a better judge of my academic talents as I managed to pass. Early in January 1942 I arrived with

all my brand-new text books on my back in this strange new world eight miles from home. Many will remember that later in 1944 we had to hand all our books in and have them reissued as part of the free schooling provided by the Secondary Education Act. So, began my first experience of commuting and the six years that moulded my basic outlook on life, but I still wonder what the local boys thought about all those outsiders coming in.

My day began by catching the ten to eight Crosville bus from West Kirby to Birkenhead Park Station all for the 10/- a month 'contract'. Then, across the road, to pick up a penny fare to Charing Cross on a Yellow (Wallasey) or Blue (Birkenhead) Corporation bus. After a walk up Whetstone Lane I would arrive in the playground at about quarter to nine in time in the winter to join a slide on the polished frost which was always destroyed with cinders by the Janny before the morning break. As I remember this did not prevent Viv Smith from knocking a piece out of a front tooth on the railings at the bottom of the slope - no Insurance Company involved!

On my first day at the Institute I didn't have a hat or tie because I didn't have a 'house'. I was taken by Fred Bird, also from West Kirby, to see Jake Alison who as well as being the Geography master also dished out Houses. He said I could be in the same house as my pals, so I quickly made my way to Robbs in Grange Road and bought a hat with a purple, or as Len Malcolm would have said, 'Magenta' button for Atkin.

I started in 2A with Maggie-Maillard as form mistress and Gordon Jackson (I wonder where he is/) as my minder until I found my feet. So, began my career at the Institute. I hope the following account will bring back a few of the memories shared to varying degrees by those of my time.

There was the stamp shop on Borough Road at the bottom of Whetstone Lane full of old stamps being aged rapidly in the foul pipe tobacco smoke being produced by the owner - Mr Sharrock. The Institute must have been a gold mine for him. Also, on Borough Road was a chippy that we all made for in the early years to avoid the 'healthy' but uninteresting school dinners. We would then come back to face the music because Biddy Harris had seen us out without our caps. Later on, as Prefects we carefully marked up our plates in the school kitchen which lay waiting for second helpings on the hot stove after we had finished serving. It didn't seem to matter that we had to go and play rugby on overfilled stomachs. Yes, there was rugby, designed I now realise to get rid of all that pent-up energy of adolescents. Most memorable result was the beating of Harwarden County Grammar by 88 points to nil. I remember the referee's embarrassment - I think it was Bummy Jones - when he blew the whistle five minutes before time. The following year Harwarden changed to soccer.

Our once a week swimming session at Livingstone Street Baths was a logistical masterpiece. The two periods allowed for the sport saw between 30 and 40 youths use scheduled Corporation bus services that left us with 15 to 20 minutes in the water to do what we liked. All this was accomplished without fuss. At the time we took it in our stride unencumbered by the rules and regulations that would apply today. The only mishap I ever heard of happened to me when I jumped off the bottom and hit my head on the rail around the edge of the pool. A large patch of blood in the water,

two stitches on the head and a mother who nearly had a fit when I arrived home with full head bandaging was my punishment - again no insurance involved. The following morning in assembly as we were leaving I heard the usual bellow from the Klon 'that boy come and see me afterwards'.

In school there were many moments that lightened the task of learning. In the Art Room pencils were often dropped and retrieved when Hetty Rosenbloom passed down the aisle! Farthings were turned into sixpences when a physics experiment with poor Mr Bloor involved mercury and in the Chemy Lab Bunsen burners would mysteriously pop out en-masse. Lunch time shove ha'penny football in the Library with Alan Powell and Harold Taylor was OK until the Klon got fed up listening below in his room to coins dropping on the floor above. Alan was instrumental in writing off for a pen friend. After a short time, he was inundated with replies ten or twenty enthusiastic American girls all anxious to send him parcels of sweets, which were very scarce at the time. Of course, he dished the addresses out and we all benefited from his initiative!



Members of Year '41 at Old Boy's Dinner c2005

*Figure 1 – Annual Dinner 2005 – L-R David Silcock, Alan Powell, Harold Taylor, Michael Caddick, Walter Hurst, Arthur Rixon, Vivian Smith*

The masters also played their part. French with Moggy Morris, which I only experienced once, was more like an artillery bombardment with the blackboard cleaner providing the ammunition. It certainly focused the mind! Dear old WEW's, famous bus drawing, accurate to the last detail, kept us busy when the art teacher was away. I never could quite fathom what was going on in Biddy Harris's head behind that sweet smile. We were all pulled up in our stride by Gerry Hall's parade ground shout from the staff room window on seeing snowballs being thrown in the playground. I can see now the look of pride on Len Malcolm's face in the Physics Lab as the jelly bubbled in the large beakers in preparation for the Atkin Christmas party. All these and many others are shared moments to cherish from a time unencumbered by much of the present restrictive environment of school life.

But like everything else all this came to an end and we went our separate ways. For me it was two years in the Air Force after which I followed many other Institute boys to Liverpool School of Architecture there to achieve a dream held since I was a small boy. I qualified in 1955 and after a career in Bank Architecture, marriage and a family, I retired in 1988. Since then, apart from occasional charity work, my focus has moved away from architecture. My time at the Institute and the influence of its staff gave me a very wide breadth of interest so that my time is still filled with a thirst for

knowledge in many different fields. I delight in finding, when I occasionally meet an Old Instonian, that time has stood still, and we are able to carry on very much where we left off.

I hope that this light-hearted piece written from a school boy perspective will encourage others to chip in with some memories of their own time at the Institute. Even though the school has gone, I feel we owe it to those who influenced our minds during the formative years to occasionally revisit our time there and remember our debt.

'Doctus in se semper divitius habet' - Did you ever hear of a better school motto? - I Haven't!

### An e-mail from Brian Tavor (Atkin 1949/56)

#### **WEW and Lennie**

**T**here were many characters on the teaching Staff at the old BI; when I started there in 1949 quite a number had been active in the War years, some having served with distinction.

Bertie Bloor and "Danny" Webb would have been among these.

They never referred to their war-time activities, probably preferring to put those memories behind them, glad to settle back into the routine of school life.

However, the two teachers I remember most vividly are Lennie Malcom and WE Williams (WEW)

WEW was my Form Master through Years 1-5. With dark Denis Healey eye-brows, shuffling in carrying an old leather case and a battered wooden club he would not have been out of place in a Harry Potter movie. He did his best not only to teach us History but also to teach us respect- lessons some needed more than others!

I recall one instance of his genuine kindness; I had been thrown out of our Latin lesson by Tiger Thomas for not completing my homework and was standing in the corridor feeling forlorn when along shuffled WEW; not a mention of my plight or its causes but a statement "I see your Church is advertising for a new Organist", taking my mind immediately away from my predicament!

Later, when I was in the Sixth Form something of WEW's scholarship was evident along with his humility. As we struggled to write a reasonably coherent essay he would sit and write with us and then read his work out and pass over the script. There we all realised we were in the presence of a Cambridge First!

Lennie Malcolm was House Master of my House (Atkin) as well as our Physics master. I always struggled with Maths and Science subjects, but Len never knew the word "Failure"!

Everyone passed their "O" level Physics in which I recorded my highest percentage- 65% (I got 5% in Chemistry!!)

Every year from 1949 to 1956 Atkin House won the Cross-Country trophy and every year before the race Len came out with the same speech; "It's against the Law of Averages that Atkin will win again this year, but..."and each year we did it!

It's odd isn't it to think back and realise some of the characters we took for granted but perhaps important to acknowledge the values we imbibed from their examples and to be grateful that we were BI Boys!

## An e-mail from Brian C. Merritt (1944/49)

### Coming to Canada

**W**e flew into Montreal Quebec in January 1973. A family of four, us in our forties, with two teenage boys and two dachshunds.

I had visited Halifax and Montreal during my service with the British Merchant Navy. I told my family that if we could get through a Canadian winter, we'd have a good chance of making a new life for ourselves. Hence our choice of arriving in January!

We started our Canadian adventure to a cacophony of barking from our dogs who spotted us going through Customs and we sailed through!

Leaving the terminal our two boys began walking with difficulty. The suede coats they wore had frozen stiff in the minus 20C temperature! We hailed a cab, but found we needed two with our luggage and kennels. The two cabdrivers gave us a tour of downtown Montreal (with their meters down) before depositing us at the Hotel in downtown Montreal.

Our last night in England was at an hotel near Manchester Airport. Breakfast in an English hotel is quiet, with only the rustle of newspapers and the occasional mutter of 'pass the marmalade if you please' to disturb the diners. When we came down to breakfast at the hotel in Montreal we were amazed at the lively, almost carnival atmosphere in the coffee shop!

Our intention was to become self-employed by purchasing and operating a small pleasure craft marina, and to this end we had pre-booked a train journey through to St. Johns New Brunswick, where we had arranged with an agent to view several properties.

A person with whom I had worked with in England had emigrated to Canada. I had last heard from him when he was based in Montreal. I telephoned the company and was told by his manager that he'd been relocated to Vancouver. In the same conversation, the manager ended up offering me a position with the company in Montreal! He thought I was mad to risk starting a business from scratch in a place I'd never been to before! I was adamant in my quest however and politely refused his offer.

Our train journey from Montreal to Moncton was delightful, but a problem arose when we transferred to the 'Dayliner' train which would take us to St. Johns. Dogs weren't allowed to travel on this train. The friendly guard took pity on us however and made an exception.

We were less than thrilled at the prospective properties available for purchase. That night we decided that our goal had been overly risky, so the following day I placed a call to the Montreal company, and asked if the job offer was still open. Fortunately for us it was, so we rented a car and drove back to Moncton, unwilling to risk having problems with getting our dogs back on the train.

The vehicle we rented was a station wagon. It seemed huge! its cavernous interior took both travel kennels and our suitcases with room to spare, and we set off on the drive back to Moncton. We drove through snow, floods and torrential rain at times. I was proud of my navigational skills picked up while serving in the Merchant Navy, as we didn't get lost once! (There was no GPS in those days!)

Upon our arrival back in Montreal I met with my new employer and we checked into a hotel near to my new job, rented a vehicle and went house hunting.

We quickly found a modest townhouse unit for rent. The next job was to make it a home. My new boss suggested we go to a large department store down the highway, where we selected the bare essentials of furniture. As there were no ceiling lights in our new home, we purchased several large table lamps which we took with us. The two boys sat in the back of our rented car nursing the two lamps.

When our purchases arrived, we were surprised that much of it was 'flat packed', something we'd never seen in England. I spent quite a time protesting to the delivery crew that we'd ordered furniture - not cardboard boxes. The driver and his mate spoke little English and my schoolboy French made for a somewhat hilarious discussion!

I started my new job as a field service technician to 'learn the ropes' One of my first assignments was to deliver and install a large compressor to a paper mill in Cornwall, Ontario. I set off from Montreal in a blinding snowstorm. The heavy compressor sat in the back of a 3/4-ton pickup truck which kept the vehicle firmly on the road. I'd been driving for an hour or so when I spied a barrier across the road. I climbed out of the truck and pushed the barrier aside then carried on. The snow was getting deep, but the truck stayed glued to the road. When I reached Cornwall, I was advised that I'd driven over a road closed by the police!

We stayed in Montreal until 1979 and enjoyed every moment. The warmth and conviviality of Quebecers still bring fond memories of our initial start to our life in Canada. I travelled extensively for my employer, and everywhere I went I was met with kindness.

We moved to Ontario in 1979 where I took a position with Westinghouse Canada. I then became a self-employed consultant, finally retiring in 1998. I travelled across most of Canada and the United States of America and saw parts of the world in my service at sea in my early days. Where we live now in Grimsby Ontario is, for us, the best place in the world!

## An e-mail from Cliff Griffiths (1963/70)

### Doctus in se semper divitias habet

**W**e were waiting one afternoon for our normal Maths lesson – a group of 4th Years, in one of the upstairs rooms in Whetstone lane.

Instead of the normal teacher, in walked the head of French. We expected, as sometimes happened when our normal teacher was absent, to be allowed to get on with homework while the substitute teacher got on with his marking. Instead, he decided to make us think.

He asked us what we thought of the conflict in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis. We almost all saw the situation from the Israeli point of view. He asked us to think of the other side. How would a Palestinian see the situation? He wasn't trying to push a point of view but to think about the two sides of the conflict.

It is possible that I am the only person who remembers the occasion. But it was a seminal moment for me. It taught me that everything has two sides; that newspaper reporting was something to be questioned; that my view of the world might be partisan, and I should think more

deeply before accepting things at face value; that unpopular views are not necessarily wrong. 50 years later it still stands out as a moment when I became a more critical thinker.

That lesson would almost certainly be judged as unsatisfactory by a modern OFSTED inspector. It did not have a clear aim stated and written on the board; it didn't have constant recount of what had been learned; it didn't have any measuring of what concrete things had been learned and could be measured; it didn't fit into a hierarchy of increasingly difficult 'skills'.

But it taught me to think. What higher purpose does education have? If you can learn to think everything else becomes possible. We can all think, of course, but deep and critical thinking can be encouraged and my gratitude to that teacher is still with me to this day.

I am in the second year in a Chemistry lab. Like most 13-year olds, I liked Chemistry labs – they were smelly and there was always a chance that something would explode or behave in other interesting ways. The Chemistry teacher seemed ancient (he was certainly younger than I am now) but he had that crucial quality for a teacher – common sense. He was explaining how to write up Chemistry experiments: 'Use the passive voice. Don't say I took a test tube say a test tube was taken. It takes the personal and subjective out'

This opened up a whole new world to me. I started to notice what else a passive can do. It can enable people to be devious. It has been suggested to me avoids having to say who suggested something. It has been agreed avoids having to say who agreed it. Newspaper opinion columns are full of passives which enable opinion to masquerade as fact: it is generally agreed by who? It didn't matter that it was in a Chemistry lesson that I learned this but that I did learn it and it deepened my understanding of how the world – particularly the worlds of language and deception- works.

Sitting at home while my parents are at a parents' evening, I am concerned at what they will come back with. I knew that at 13 I was as capable of misbehaving with a weak teacher as anyone, and my parents would be intolerant of my wasting my opportunities. When they returned, as well as the bad reports, I got the surprising news that one teacher, who I respected a lot, had reported that I was a 'born leader' and that I would captain the school in both rugby and cricket. While I was a reasonable cricketer, I was a bit of a weakling and nowhere near my rugby year team – not in the best 15 out of 50 - so it seemed unlikely I would ever play rugby for the first team never mind be captain.

Both the predictions came true.

How could a teacher who saw me once a week with 24 others have spotted something that I, and I suspect nobody else, had seen? It gave me great confidence and I have taken on many leadership roles in my life.

These three examples illustrate to me the privilege I enjoyed in my education. The staff of the Institute were by and large educated men, and (occasionally) women – educated in the wider sense. Of course, there were some staff who were not well suited to the job. Some could not control classes and some lacked empathy or stood too much on their own authority – but these were the minority. They were not generally teachers who thought that education was solely about results in exams or about passively absorbing knowledge. Some of them had seen active service in the war. Not all of them seemed to work terribly hard some of the time. But it is

hard not to look back with affection for the abilities and values of most.

I enjoyed a liberal education. I was introduced to a wide range of ideas. Although I had little ability in either, I was introduced to Art and Music. I learned that there were causes that were worth fighting for. I learned that many things are complex but to see the big issues. I knew the staff in a small school and they knew me and often gave me confidence (perhaps too much sometimes!) I learned that a true education makes you a lifelong learner and doesn't stop once you leave school. I don't think I am seeing the distant past through rose-tinted spectacles. My school prepared me for life.

Did any school ever have a more appropriate motto than ours or live up to it so well?

A learned man always has riches within himself.

### An e-mail from Graham Vahey (1945/51)

#### **Summer days at the Institute in Whetstone Lane.**

**I**t was the year following the Education Act 1944, I believe. I was in the Third Form or perhaps the Fourth Form (4A). We had spent a happy year in the Junior School building next door. I had learned to hate Maths, be indifferent to Science, but I rebelled in English Language and Literature, the latter being my forte. I also loved Art, maybe because we had the lovely Nancy Price as Art Mistress, and she always encouraged me. After a hasty lunch in the Dining Room I would scuttle off to the Junior School garden, sit down by the big beech tree by the gate and listen to Alf Morris, Chemistry Master, become a wonderful concert pianist. On the first floor was a lovely grand piano and with the French windows flung wide he would play Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Schubert and Chopin with great passion, flinging his head from side to side. He was a great romantic (for an erstwhile Chemmy Master.). From him I learned to love classical music and later, when we were all taken regularly to the Liverpool Phil my interest and love of music developed further. To this day, now in my eighties, I love classical music and have a love of Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Chopin. Thank you, Alf. I said a excellent at English Lit, because our Form Master was Johnny 'P' (John Paris), graduate of Edinburgh University. He was also taught English and encouraged me. I'm now writing a book about Russia and Scotland. He also took us for Rugby and he always stuck me in the Scrum. I asked him 'Please Sir, why am I always stuck in the Scrum?' "Well Vahey, you've nothing between your ears so you can't be injured." 'Oh, thank you Sir!'

Games Day was always Wednesday afternoon. I found Rugby and Cricket quite boring but loved middle distance running - down Lever Causeway and Landican Lane (always with ankle deep mud) and back. I ended up joining Port Sunlight Athletic Club and later running for Southern Command of the British Army. I had read a book from the Library about Emil Zatopek, a Red Army Officer who used to run through the Finnish forests when off duty. He became my hero, particularly as he was dismissed from the Red Army for being critical of the USSR regimes. I admired his rebellious streak of being an individual.

It was just after the War and both the Public Library on Borough Road and the School Library were depleted of books. Most books were dated in the 1920-1940 era. I



think I read every book in the School Library and would take up to three books a week from Borough Road Public Library. Looking back, I'm amazed how many books I must have read. I had once asked Johnny 'P' for reading suggestions and he gave me a written list of a range of authors to 'fill that space between your ears Vahey.' 'Oh, thank you Sir!' To be facetious so long as you were polite, was all that was required to learn.

I didn't much like Algebra and at my final exam I wrote my name and Form number on the paper and then wrote 'Algebra is of no use in everyday life and is an illogical subject. Art and Literature are all that are required to gain logic and intellect.' I then handed the paper in and made a dramatic exit, left! I was quite opinionated then.

I confessed to Len Malcolm, Physics, much the same sentiment as who would fill a bucket with water in which a hole one inch in diameter was leaking the water? What is the use of knowing where a train, leaving Euston would cross its opposite number after leaving Glasgow? The Maths side disappointed me. He coached me in lunchtimes to ignore the Maths and concentrate on the philosophy behind Physics. I passed with an 'A'. Later, when I worked at Glasgow University as an Honorary Lecturer in Psychological Medicine, I noted that in the older Scottish Universities they do not have Physics, they have Natural Philosophy!

I gained a free studentship from the BI to Liverpool College of Art but was deterred by the Principal as he said there was no future career for men in art! I continued to draw for a while but moved on to develop elsewhere. I ended up at Sheffield and then Bradford Universities doing Psychiatric Social Work and later, being Principal PSW and I worked in Glasgow University Psychological Medicine, and then did my Psychoanalytical training over 5-6 years. I think the 'space between my ears' is now beginning to be filled up.

It is extraordinary that such small incidents at the BI should impact so greatly, but then as children we absorb everything as normal. Thanks to Johnny 'P', Alf Morris, Len Malcolm, Nancy Price, also to 'WEW Williams', history Master who was an able artist, drawing his history lesson on the blackboard to enhance the lesson, et al. May God bless you in heaven, for you gave so much of yourselves to us - well, me in particular.

### An e-mail from John Wade (1957/62)

#### **Reminiscences of Life after the Birkenhead Institute**

**D**uring my time at the BI, our "Careers Master" was 'Squinty Squires' the Latin Master (who was absolutely useless as I never received any guidance from him at all). I had some thoughts of being involved with an electronics career, exactly what I don't know but thought it would be something with a future; however, one day I looked at the careers notice board and saw a notice advertising forthcoming entrance exams for Apprentice Ship's Draughtsmen at Cammell Lairds and I thought that as I hadn't sat a proper exam since I passed the eleven plus [scholarship as we called it] it would serve as a good test to get me into a routine for the GCE [General Certificate of Education] which I was to sit in June. Therefore, one Saturday morning I presented myself at the Ship Drawing Office (SDO) at Lairds and sat the exam which I passed and was invited back for a second exam which I also passed. As a

consequence, I was invited to attend an interview and eventually offered a position of an "Indentured Apprentice Ship Draughtsman". Of course, I accepted it and actually started in the SDO at eight forty-five on Monday 20th August 1962. I hadn't even taken technical drawing at school [which was included in the woodwork set whereas I took the other option which I think was French] and really didn't know how to sharpen a pencil! My father was required to sign my "indentures" to say I would attend for the required period of five years. My first wage was £3-4s-11d for a 37-hour week which is actually now less than the minimum hourly rate – yes, I know different times.

Over the years of my apprenticeship, I attended Birkenhead Technical College on Day Release and evening classes taking Naval Architecture, technical drawing and Engineering courses before leaving with a Higher National Certificate in Naval Architecture with Endorsements in Ship Design and theory of Structures. Eventually these qualifications were sufficient to allow me access to Fellow of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects plus at other times Fellowship of other Societies.

Although I must admit I never really liked the academic side of the BI [I was more interested in sports] I now really appreciate the great grounding I received, and it set me up not only in maths but also English and it really irritates me when I see such blatant errors in the media for wrong spelling and grammar.

After I left Lairds I progressed as Company Naval Architect through various Ship-owning Companies in Liverpool and Mexico before changing to surveying of ships, cargoes and dock properties in Liverpool.

Although my Fellowship of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects was always considered satisfactory for most purposes one Company required a degree as they did a lot of legal work for law cases, so I subsequently took a degree course with the Open University and obtained a Batchelor of arts degree in mathematical and technical subjects in 1987.

Later in 1987 I moved back to the country of my birth and was employed by the fledgling Isle of Man Marine Administration as a ship surveyor. This required visiting various countries all around the world including the US, Brazil, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Ascension Islands etc. plus just about every country in Europe to ensure the equipment on board the ships met the required technical and safety standards. This included all types of vessel from general cargo, containers, oil tankers, gas carriers, chemical tankers, standby vessels, offshore structures, car carriers and passenger ships. Eventually I was promoted to Principal Marine Surveyor and during my final years at the Administration I was responsible for the acceptance onto the Register of Large Commercial yachts as well as writing various pieces of legislation to ensure the Manx regulations were up to the latest international requirements regarding such things as security, pollution prevention etc. – again where my thanks are owed to my education at the BI.

After leaving the Administration and taking retirement I became a "freelance" advisor including giving advice with respect to safety and security measures to the billionaire owner of a large yacht which required writing numerous manuals for those onboard the yacht and which required approval by the Cayman Islands Authority where the yacht was registered. Eventually though I had had enough and took retirement a few

years ago but remember how things were throughout those years and play some golf.

### An e-mail from Alan Edmonds (1961/66)

#### **Near Death Experience on the Matterhorn**

**I**t was the Summer of Love and I was in Zermatt alone. Arrangements made at Leicester University had gone awry. An inspiration germinated: I'll solo the Matterhorn!

I bivouacked outside the Hörnli Hut in a rough stone shelter. At 3 am the guided parties began their ascents. I allowed them to make progress, evident by bobbing specks of headtorch-lights. Thirty minutes later I set off in darkness and quickly followed the illumination ahead. Difficulties were moderate in good conditions and the parties were long behind me as I approached the Shoulder.

I digress into the mindset of a 19-year-old who despite his classic long mountaineering development typical of the 1960's was about to overstep the line of prudence. Fired-up I dismissed the icy slope as unworthy of crampons and continued in Vibrams alone and without impediment.

Above, the fixed ropes were akin to thick hawsers. I preferred to do without and so at 8am I stood on the summit. Below a light aeroplane lazily circled the peak and the magnificent Pennine Alps were resplendent.

Still fired-up I descended at a good rate. On reaching the Shoulder the same dilemma as on the ascent presented itself. The answer in a young mind was the same. Despite an abundance of time I shunned crampons.

I can't recall how far down the slope it was that the slip occurred. I tobogganed on my back.

Now I had been on the Second Winter Survival course at Glenmore Lodge and practised under the gaze of various Scottish legends on how to arrest myself with my ice-axe in just such circumstances. In the event my ice-axe sheared down the slope beside me.

And now the bravest act I have ever witnessed. Parties were ascending the Shoulder. The leader of the roped first party was perhaps 30 feet above his second who was sensibly belayed to an in-situ metal-spike. I careered towards him and he performed a classic rugby body-tackle on me as I swept past at some speed. We went down together.

A scree slope of perhaps 20 feet lay between the icy slope and the lip of the North Face. At the cusp my tackler released me, but I felt the abrasive scree slow me down rapidly to a halt a few feet from the abyss.

Recriminations followed with the German leader gesticulating to his crampons. The meaning was clear. Moreover, I had ruined their ascent. We descended together, and I helped them on the Moseley Slab as they were both shaken and uncertain rock-climbers. I continued alone to Zermatt and was back that afternoon to greet my tardy companions who responded, "Where the hell have you been?"

Somehow this abject failure had perversely granted me increased confidence and, mostly with Mark Vallance and Rick Johnson, classic ascents followed including the Rothorngrat, NE Face of the Lenszpitze, South Ridge & SE Wall of the Salbitschijen.

The Lenszpitze ascent was led by Mark and Rick and I seconded simultaneously.

We began in a green dawn comprising lenticular clouds and distant lightning flashes.

I still can't figure out the phenomenon of youthful scorn of death when there are so many years to lose. Something to do with testosterone perhaps!

### An e-mail from John Davidson (1948/52)

#### **The Good Old Days**

**D**uring the 70s and 80s the Shipping Industry went through dramatic changes. It would be no exaggeration to say as great as the change from sail to steam that took place at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

These changes were brought about by different factors, too many ships of the wrong type, continuous low freight rates, the continued growth in containerisation and the advances in technology, especially satellite communications and navigation. Owners in the advanced nations were squeezed by low freight incomes and the high cost of employing European crews. This in turn led to the disappearance of national flags and the growth of FOCs. In their search to reduce costs traditional owners devolved the management of their fleets to management and crewing agencies, thus officers and ratings no longer identified with an owner but moved from ship to ship and company to company with each contract.

There was also, at this time, a perceived, though often unspoken acceptance within the industry that technology could replace the skills that had been acquired, by high standards of training and experience, in the past. This was fortified by the dramatic improvement in communications which allowed superintendents in Head Office to monitor ships daily and taken most of the decisions that were taken, in earlier times, by the master devaluing even further the mariner's role.

Sadly, just as the passing of the age of sail took away the need for special skills and a way of life so too did the technological revolution of the 70s and 80s. This article is about the "Good old Days". Days when we were badly paid, leave was only three weeks per year plus one day for each Sunday spent at sea. Days when we were well trained and considered professionals. Days when over half the world's fleet was under the British Flag.

I joined the Clan Line after my two years on the 'Conway'. In those days the Clan Line consisted of the three companies, all totally integrated, only the names reflected their original owners. Clan Line ships were named after the Scottish Clans - Clan Davidson, Clan McDonald etc. Scottish Shire Line after Scottish counties - Perthshire, Lanarkshire etc whilst the third was the Houston Line after Greek mythology - Hesione and Hesperides etc.

In these good old days all major British owners had their own berths in their main ports. Clan Line used the Alexander Docks in Liverpool for example. And it was there one weekday morning in August 1954 I arrived at Alexandra docks in Liverpool to join the 'Hesione'. I had three very happy, if impecunious, years leaning my profession. We worked long hours, often 12 per day, and often seven days a week. I learned how to handle horses, sheep and cattle all of which we carried on deck most voyages.

One voyage we carried a bull and four heifers. The bull was a very difficult animal. His delight was to lean against you, whilst his box was being cleaned, and press you against the sides of the box. Then he took a step forward and a step back rolling you against the woodwork. It was very painful, and he could only be stopped by a jab with a pitchfork not always easy from that position. On one of our 12 passenger vessels we carried a gelding and several fillies. The gelding obviously felt life had been somewhat unjust to him and was bad tempered. Our delight as cadets was to pinch his upper lip which forced him to throw back his head and curl his lip in a manner that gave the impression of hilarity on his part. This was far from the case and one day after a couple of gins the mate tried it for the benefit of the passengers and he was bitten.

I learned how to paint, how to clean bilges and do all manner of filthy jobs. I learned how to control large numbers of workers for in India we would have maybe 200 workers painting and cleaning the ships during our stays in Calcutta working round the clock and we cadets were their overseers. Most of all I learned about the stowage and care of cargo for, as we were repeatedly told, this was our main purpose in life. Sitting for hours on end down holds to record damaged cargo and prevent pilfering was one of the most boring jobs we did. It was not all work and no play for we had many good times playing cricket and football against other ships in Colombo and South African Ports. We were not averse to causing mischief either. I remember on one ship the Master and Mate hardly talked. The funnel had been painted by the crew and the paint had run making it look untidy. The Master wrote in chalk 'Chip and Paint again' on the offending funnel, rather than speak directly with the mate. We apprentices wrote 'piss off' underneath and waited to see what would happen. Nothing happened that we heard about, however, I got drunk on my birthday a few days later. I woke in the night to visit the toilet and fell on my face. This happened twice, and I shouted to my mate I was paralysed - you've both legs in one leg of your pyjamas he said and went back to sleep. The Mate next day had me working in an enclosed space chipping all day not a recommended cure for a hangover, but I always wondered if my punishment was for being drunk or using chalk on the funnel.

Often as a young man I felt constrained by the conservatism of senior sea-going officers. When I first went to sea we did not have radar on any ship in the Clan Line and most ships did not even have gyro compass. Radars were fitted to the newer ships first and I was amazed to find the master would lock up the radar when he was off the bridge, despite the fact that all the junior officers and cadets had been trained in the use of radar whilst they had not! One ship I was on as 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate, was issued with a very modern radio direction finding machine. It allowed us to see a sound signal visually and was far more accurate to use than the old-fashioned way of the Radio Officer using headsets. We officers used it a lot with some success, but the master preferred to use the old ways and reported the machine as unsatisfactory. Ironically the first victims of the technological revolution were the Radio Officers.

Despite this there were some real characters about in those days. My father who was a master in Clan Line had the initials S.S. and was known throughout the fleet as 'Steamboat Stanley'. We were a Glasgow Company

with mainly Scots on board, but we did have one Welsh Master. He was known as Puckin Jones. He spoke using the word continuously. What are we puckin' havin' for our puckin' dinner then? Pass the puckin' condiments. He even broke long words up, 'in-consi-puckin-quentially'. However, the moment his wife joined the ship his habit stopped, and we never heard a single puckin until she left then it was back to normal.

There was the tradition that one of the superintendents would attend the berthing of each ship in Glasgow. They arrived in all weathers wearing their bowler hats, one in particular used to fend the ship off the quay with his umbrella if he thought she was landing too heavily. How he imagined his gesture would affect several thousand tons of ship is beyond me.

There was a master in Cunard called Neddy Studholm. His particular quirk was the need for deck officers to wear gym shoes on the bridge at night. The whole deck below the bridge was the Master's accommodation and he reckoned he could hear us pacing back and forth during our watches and he couldn't sleep. There was a system of stair wells from the bridge down to all parts of the ship but Neddy insisted we all used the outside ladder on the port side, he slept on the starboard side. Thus, we would leave the bridge, in bad weather, often the port side was the weather side, in rain, gales, seas breaking over the boat deck and wearing gym shoes, so his sleep was unaffected. On one Clan Boat the mate was a Campbell and the chief engineer a Cameron. It seems these Clans were involved in a bloody feud at some time in the past. The chief was unable to trust a Campbell and would not speak to the mate, so they communicated by notes. Each had a numbered, duplicated notebook, and sent the originals, always keeping the carbon copy in their book. Mundane things like, please pump out bilges or steam on deck. Cadets were used to ferry the messages to and fro.

Each Sunday at sea was Inspection Day. The crew emptied their rooms and put all their belongings on No 5 hatch. The Master, Mate, Chief Engineer and Purser strode imperiously around inspecting the cleanliness of the quarters. In their wake was the Serang, and cadets. At a sign from the master the cadet, carrying a flit gun, would rush forward and spray insecticide on some poor cockroach that was unfortunate enough to show its face on Inspection Day. The millions of his brothers remained safe and out of sight.

Though poorly paid we were extremely well treated in other ways. We ate in a well-appointed dining saloon with company insignia on all the crockery, linen and cutlery. Generally, we fed very well, largely dependent on the Chief Steward/Purser, one was called Cheese Sparing Waring so you can imagine how well we fed on that ship! Breakfast was a grand affair and as cadets we had been working from 0700 so by 0900 we were starving. Usually we had Fruit, Cereal, a fish course, eggs and bacon then toast. We cadets used to try and eat all the courses by 0915 to allow us maximum toast eating time.

Crews were large. An average cargo liner of the period carrying about 6 or 8000 tons of cargo would have had a crew of between 50 and 80 persons. Today the largest container vessel will have about 15. Larger crews tended to be Asian. In the Clan Line 70 plus was the norm. 16 or 17 British officers and the rest Indians. The Master had the luxury of the Mate, second mate and sometimes even the third mate having master's certificates. Officers

were appointed to the same ship for periods of about 2 years for Juniors to, sometimes, 10 plus for the Master and senior officers. All officers had their own steward or boy to clean their cabin and wait on the tables.

Sea voyages were often long periods of boredom broken up by short adrenalin moments! For the masters' long voyages with little to do sometimes caused drink problems. I remember as third mate on passage from UK to Bombay when the old man was hitting the bottle. He used to listen to the BBC Overseas Service on his short-wave radio. When the news ended he would blow up his voice pipe link with the wheelhouse and this plaintive whistle would sound. The conversation went: - 'Good evening third mate'

'Good evening sir'

'I have just been listening to the news'

'How interesting sir'.

He would then recount the news in some detail after which he would wish me good night. About five minutes later the same routine exactly, then again, some minutes later - it could go on for an hour or more. One night I was so fed up I wrenched the whistle from the voice pipe that served his cabin and hid it. We heard blowing sounds and muffled curses and then the master staggered onto the bridge. I have been blowing and you did not answer me, really sir we heard nothing. Upon examination he realised the whistle was missing so wrenched one from the next voice pipe, there were about six all side by side to different parts of the vessel, replaced it in his and stormed off the bridge. A few moments later the whistle went. 'Good evening third mate I have just been listening to the news.....'

Another voyage this time in the Cunard we left Surrey Commercial Docks bound for Le Havre and Montreal. Ossy Austin was master. Famously at party on one of the Queens, which had been thrown by the Medical Staff, he passed out in the physiotherapists cabin. He awoke sometime later and announced to the party at large he was phisioed and thoro pissed. After we had cleared the locks and were steaming down the river Ossy told the pilot he had work to do but, as he had friends living on Canvey Island he would like to be on the bridge as we passed and wanted to give them a blast on the whistle. No problem said the pilot and the old man left us. About 30 minutes later he burst onto the bridge full of good will, how are you, jolly good show, pilot I have friends on Canvey would like to blow the whistle as we pass Canvey Island, no problem captain. Off he went again. Each time he left he had another glass and then returned to the bridge and repeated his request by now we were amused but the pilot was getting very fed up. A few more visits and we were off Canvey. Ossy was called, staggered onto bridge and prepared himself to blow whistle. Cunard ships all had very powerful whistles in the key of G. The whistle was compressed air driven and controlled by a lever attached to the side bulkhead of the wheelhouse not unlike a gear lever in appearance. Ossy was a huge man with large hands. He grasped the lever and pushed it forward sounding the whistle. Unfortunately, his hand jammed between the gear lever and the bulkhead. We were steaming out to sea at full speed, whistle sounding, ships altering course, fishermen throwing themselves to the decks of their boats, panic ensued whilst we tried to free his hand. It took some time. When the pilot left us, he seemed an exhausted man.

One time in the Cunard I was on a ship called the Pavia, a small ship which traded almost exclusively in the med. These ships had British crews and in this case a Liverpool crew. Unlike Clan Line the helmsman was one of the Abs on watch and we would chat away in the darkness. One evening we got to talking about ghostly things that had happened on ships. The stories became spookier and spookier and as I looked forward I saw someone had left the light on in the bosun's store and there seemed to be a body, hanging there swinging gently to the slow roll of the ship. I did not know what to do for a minute, but it was then the new helmsman came up to relieve his mate. Go forward will you and switch out that light in the focsle store it is bothering me. As he reported nothing after switching out the light I knew all was well.

These days stays in port are very short, often only a few hours. Can you imagine the car carriers coming from the Far East will spend only 4 hours in each European port before heading back again? In my day we spent weeks in port, especially on the Indian coast. Calcutta was a home port for us and we regularly spent six or eight weeks there. South and East Africa we spent about a week in each port - though at one time delays at Beira could result in up to three months at anchor outside awaiting a berth. Colombo too in those days could have delays of a couple of months. This port time allowed for runs ashore and a break from ship's routine, though the anchorage stays were boring beyond belief.

My voyages with the Clan Line were to East and South Africa, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh - in my day, Ceylon and East Pakistan. With Cunard it was Canada, Eastern Seaboard USA and the Meddy. On the Indian Coast we would anchor off some small ports and they sailed the cargo out on local dhow like barges. Cargo lists would be sent to us by Aldis light from a signal station. We had to be pretty competent at signalling in those days. I remember we had a Bangladeshi cadet one trip and off Calicut were called up by the signal station. 'Quick get a pencil and paper and write down the signal as I read the light' I told him. Laboriously, letter by letter, I read the flickering light for about 20 minutes. 'Did you get it all?' I asked - 'My pencil broke after first word' he said.

On the Indian coast ships worked 24 hours a day. The Dockers would sleep in the alleyways outside our cabins and use the bulkheads for toilets. We tried all sorts of measures to combat this. I remember once we had great success putting the powder from smoke floats along the bulwarks with satisfactory results. One electrician fixed up a plate and battery which was hit and miss but most dramatic when it was a hit. Bugs of all sizes were endemic. Bombay canaries were very large, slow flying beetles with no sense of direction. They bumped into everything. Lunar moths could be a hazard off the Indian Coast. They flew towards the moon from the jungles and when tired would look for somewhere to land. If this was over the sea the lights of the ship would attract them. I left my port open and lights on one night and when I came down to my cabin it was alive with these beasts. I switched off the lights and beat a hasty retreat.

I spent several months on a Cunarder carrying whisky to the States from Glasgow. If any bottles were broken in a case it was not worth the cost of repacking, so the customs placed them on deck for disposal by us at sea. On joining the first purchase was a bottle of whisky

from the bond. This bottle was treasured, and it was brought back after leave empty for refills. The bottles on the ship were different to those we exported to the USA, so we could not take them home as our customs would catch us

New York was a real adventure in the 60s, it was the time of Hoffa and the teamsters controlled all the waterfront with their Mafia connections. The Cunard ships had an officers Ward Room and Bar and it was here some unsavoury characters would assemble during cargo operations. What they did I never really knew, but they were able to get us good deals on radios etc. One lunch time we officers all assembled for pre-lunch drinks with the Captain and there, asleep, were two of these hoods. One of them lolled in such a way as we could see the butt of his gun. No-one said a word we all carried on as though nothing was amiss. They woke up, stretched and one broke wind resoundingly. Shock horror from the assembled officers drinking their pink gins - sounds better since you had it tuned mac quipped the other hood - laughter all round.

I was in Newport News/Norfolk the day Kennedy sent the fleet to sea to intercept the Russian cargo ships carrying the missiles to Cuba. We watched all the navy ships putting to sea taking on stores on the move. Very frightening times for us all.

I remember one of my friends was up for Mates with me. Our exams were in three parts, writtens, orals and signals. It was possible to pass one and fail the others as long as they were retaken within a week or so. A real problem could occur in the oral exam if the examiner felt the candidate was really poor. He could give the dreaded sea time. This happened to my friend and he was given 4 weeks sea time. Sad and dejected he went to the Shipping Federation to find any ship which could give him the necessary time. We have a Baron boat here needs a 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate to coast from Liverpool, Rotterdam Hamburg and back. She is due in Liverpool in about 4 weeks to load for Canada. Despite the reputation of the Baron Line as one of the very worst tramping companies under the British Flag, he accepted the berth. He paid off in Liverpool 2 years later!

On my first voyage in the Cunard I was in the port of Houston, it was lunch time and we were having our pre-lunch noggin. We saw a strange vessel arriving in the dock - that is one of these new container vessels said the master. It will never catch on! So very prophetic!

Today, no-one can use a sextant, all latest gadgetry is made available. Satnav on every ship, modern radars with true motion, a truly cavalier attitude to updating charts and publications and many other complaints I could list as an old fashioned, and very proud of it, master mariner.

I hope this has given you a slight flavour of the good old days in what I consider were the halcyon days of British Shipping.

#### **An e-mail from Harry Merry (Cohen 1971/73)**

##### **Football Clubs**

Since my retirement in March 2007 I have been able to put a bit more effort into my hobbies.

The main interest is watching football on different grounds and had visited all 92 football league grounds by 1991. This was accomplished supporting mainly

Tranmere and Everton. I was even lucky enough to watch Tranmere 3 times in Italy.

Recent years have seen me visiting various grounds around the UK and Europe. This has been aided by having family spread out around the country. My family history interests have also led to watching in Somerset and Yorkshire.

The joy of the hobby is not just the game of football but the overall experience of travel, seeing parts of the UK at different times of the year enjoying the changing countryside. Many towns/villages have been visited along with various hostelrys.

I have watched football in the UK as far north as Brora and in deepest Cornwall along with a couple of trips to Northern Ireland. It is interesting to see the difference between grounds in Scotland and England. Health and safety has taken over in England whilst Scotland has retained many characterful grounds which would be condemned in England.

The hobby is changing quickly with less variety in the types of ground and less character. I am not sure the new venues will provide the same interest to fans in years to come.

Unluckily the old grounds that started me on my journey have nearly all disappeared, and I am glad I was able to visit some even during my rugby playing days (retired 2004).

Finishing the article, I am just sorting out the Saturday trip to Cambuslang hoping for good weather through the Lake District and the Lowlands of Scotland.

#### **An e-mail from John Baker (1941/46) now in Canada**

##### **The Institute in War Time**

Attending the Institute during the war years was wrought with many memories, some good, some not so good.

In 1941, the year I started as a pupil there, I was lucky to be alive. During the May seven night blitz our house, on Cloughton Road, opposite the Cloughton Cinema, was completely demolished by a German bomb leaving my mother and I trapped under the debris. We were there for several hours before being rescued and just before the demolished remains went up in flames.

Ironically, without a mailing address we were never informed that I had won a scholarship to the BI and learned of it through my best friend at that time, Eric Jones, who also was to become a fellow pupil following his older brother Bernard Jones.

For several years I was guilty of cheating, not in class but in my extracurricular activities. I preferred to play soccer rather than rugby and thought cricket was a slow game at that time, a waste of sparse summer weather and my forte was swimming and diving. On sports afternoon, my cheating took the form of taking the bus and when others got off at Inglewood I kept my head down and continued on to Byrne Avenue Baths. There I spent the afternoon enjoying my favourite sport, swimming and diving. Little did I know that my actions here would lead to winning medals in the first post war BI swimming gala, details of which I have shared in the past for inclusion in the Visor.

Whenever weather permitted I would spend the whole day at the open-air baths, sometimes New Brighton but more often at the New Ferry Baths, each of these locations had high diving boards which required a pool

of at least 16 feet depth. Climbing to the top 30 feet board at the latter site was exciting and an adrenalin rush during the dive. Before moving to the end of the board one could look out over the Mersey and feel the cooler wind coming off the river.

Unfortunately, at 88 years of age my legs would no longer allow me to climb those many steps to the top board, but the thrill of those dives remains in my memory.

So much for my daytime activities. The aforementioned Byrne Avenue Baths played a dual role as they would cover the pool with a wooden dance floor and hold dances every Saturday night. Many of the church halls did the same thing, no disc Jockeys in those days it was always dancing to a live band. Borough Road had the Kingsland Dance Hall where I would go on Thursday and Saturday nights.

The "Klon" would not have approved if he had known my activities while still a pupil of the BI.

It is hard to believe these days, but the war created unusual situations to say the least.

At that time, 1943, the US armed forces were segregated, and this was forced on the Kingsland management.

No restrictions on locals but only black GIs were allowed in Monday nights for fear of unwanted incidents. Other weekdays were open to white GIs and locals only.

There were hundreds of GIs stationed in camp at Arrow Park. On days when a troop ship had docked it was not unusual to see dozens of trucks and armament in uninterrupted convoy travelling up Borough Road en-route to Arrow Park. At those times one might have to wait half an hour or more before being able to cross the road.

Hope the above ramblings of an old man are not too boring and merit a read.

"Doctus in se semper divitias habet." (written so many times when given lines for a wrong doing.)

#### **An e-mail from Len Rigg (Westminster 1956/62)**

**"What am I doing here, I am lost."**

**M**y first day at the BI and I was truly lost. My mum had taken me to the school entrance and in I went.

I and two others had passed the 11+ at our primary school- The Dell in Rock Ferry.

I could not relate to this new location or buildings for my future education. I Lived within walking distance to Rock Ferry High but here I was travelling miles and maybe 2 buses to get to the BI. Why wasn't I sent to RFH?

The Dell was a new building, very homely and I felt comfortable. The BI dominated me and made me feel lost.

I came from a poor background but happy in our little community. The money for my BI uniforms etc, came from goodness knows where as I knew that mum and dad could not afford it out of their wages.

At the time I considered that other students parents had plenty of money to afford whatever, so once again I was out of sync and "lost"

As a newt my first taste of bullying came in the school cafeteria. Tables were usually set for 7 places including a Master and prefect. The prefect asked me to get him

something. When I returned my entire meal was covered in pepper and I mean covered. I was too hungry and angry to do anything other than sit down and eat my meal, pepper et al and watched in silence by the others. I did manage to get some revenge a few years later when I played rugby against the bully. I did not feel lost and I do like lots of pepper on my meals.

I have very fond memories of the BI but do wish that I had been able to understand my new and different environment before I set foot over the threshold.

#### **An e-mail from Keith Sedman (Stitt 1942/49)**

##### **Remembering Lives**

**W**hen I read an obituary in a newspaper, I am often struck with the thought that here is somebody who has had a full and interesting life and is a person I had never heard of. And I think how much better it would have been if we had seen a sort of half-life account so that we could then follow the rest of his/her exploits until the time for his/her full obituary.

I had this in mind recently when we were told of the death of Ray Morris.

I played cricket with him at school and remember, in particular, one hot Saturday when we played Quarry Bank High School (away). He took 7 wickets and I took 3. The master accompanying us was Mr. Mitchell – on a Saturday! How many schoolteachers give up their weekends now.

So, I had not heard of Ray in all the intervening years. What did he do in later life. Perhaps somebody will say. But I really wanted to write about another of our schoolfriends who is still alive but seriously ill and therefore by my reasoning deserves a rather more than 'half-life' account. He is David Orville Jones – or D.O. Jones as we called him. He was at BI from 1943-50.

David is now 86 years of age and lives in a London nursing home suffering from advanced Alzheimer's Disease. We are distantly related by marriage as his sister married my brother-in-law and we have kept in touch, often with big gaps, over the years.

David was thought at the time as possibly the best scrum-half the school had had. There was talk of a Welsh school trial, but it didn't happen. He played in the team of 1947/8 when BI beat Birkenhead School for the first time. And I played with him in the 1948/9 side which beat them again.



*Figure 2 - D.O. Jones, Ray Williams, Keith Sedman 2011*



After school, David went to Sheffield University and, later, qualified as a doctor. He did National Service in the RAMC with the Gurkhas in Malaya and then became a GP. He married Gwenllian and the family went to live at Merthyr Vale, Mid Glamorgan, where he practiced. This was the time of the Aberfan coalmine disaster. He had two sons in the local school which was destroyed by the slurry. One boy survived, but one died. David's family moved away from Aberfan to the Gower Peninsula and then to Newport where he became an anaesthetist at the Morriston Hospital and then at the Royal Gwent Hospital, Newport, where he was a consultant anaesthetist.

He was, of course, always keen on rugby and played for Merthyr RFC.

I was privileged to attend his 80th birthday. One of the other guests was Ray Williams. Ray had been the sports master at BI and at that time played for Wrexham. He went on to greater things, playing for Northampton, London Welsh, coaching the Welsh national team and becoming Secretary of the Welsh Rugby Union. He died in 2014. I attach a photo taken at David's 80th.

I have mixed feelings for Birkenhead School. It was, of course, our main rival and it was great to beat them. But in 1974, when I was posted to New York, my son went to board there so my views changed somewhat!

I recall taking Christopher to be interviewed by the head master, the great J.A. Gwilliam, captain of Wales, [playing No.8 and winning the Grand Slam in 1950 and 1952 and beating the All Blacks in 1953]. I think I was more overawed than the boy!

Birkenhead School was then a Direct Grant school. Bearing in mind the current furore over whether Grammar Schools help or hinder social mobility, I am reminded of his words when he said: "Yes, I can take your [fee paying] boy because that means I can take another boy from the town".

I think that sort of ethos was important also at BI where our friends and colleagues came from 'town and country' and mixed well together.

#### **An e-mail suggestion from Steve Marriott (Atkin 1980/86)**

#### **How about a "Where Are They Now?" feature**

**I**f kept short...you could entice a lot of old-uns to pen a few words.

After leaving the 6<sup>th</sup> form in 1986 I studied history at Loughborough University for 3 years, playing for the old boys whenever I came home, but also playing rugby (league) for Loughborough. After leaving university, I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do for a living (still don't to be honest), so I took some time searching for the right role (in other words I couldn't get a job to begin with). Eventually, lady luck smiled on me and I got a job with the Bank OF England Printing Works based in Loughton, Essex in 1990.

The downside to this was I had to leave Birkenhead. The upside was Essex girls.

Fast forward 27 years and I'm back at the same site, though following privatisation I now work for a company called De La Rue, which opened up several other opportunities for me, so there's been a variety of roles at various sites. For the last 10 years I've lived in Bishop Stortford, Hertfordshire where I joined the local rugby club and starting coaching juniors. It was a

welcome surprise to link up with some other Old Instonians also involved with Bishop Stortford Rugby Club. Legends like Len Lindop and Frank Hadfield remain stalwart supporters of club rugby (with Len club treasurer) and always available to reminisce about Instonians of old. Richie Evans is another regular Stortford supporter who also played for the Instonians and Mike Merry played 9 games for Stortford at some point in his career.

On the domestic front I married in 1995 and we've had three children. Two girls now aged 21 and 19 and a young lad of 14 whose team I coach.

Would always be interested to hear from anyone I played colts with down at the old boys.

#### **An e-mail from Bill (Biggles) Billings**

#### **B.I. Memories**

**G**ood gracious it's sixty-eight years ago - where did that time go?

So, what did I get from being a Birkenhead Institute Grammar school boy?

I often used to wonder about that but now, in my eightieth year, I look back with such affection and happy memories!

Not being tremendously academic I never made it to University and ended up taking up an apprenticeship at Cammell Laird. This was a disappointment both for me and my family, but I then began to discover that our school had imbued in me a certain self-confidence and self-belief that fortunately, never went away.

We had such marvellous and inspirational masters: Masters Malcolm, Hall, Sorby, Webb, Woods and Walsh and the lovely Miss Price and our strict but kind secretary Miss Cojeen. These are just a few of the people who blessed us with their wisdom and certainly passed on to me a lifelong love of learning.

And then there were our heroic old boys such as Wilfred Owen to look up to and aspire to and measure up to. Not to mention our peers who excelled academically and out on the field of play. Guys like Geoff Walsh, whom I once tried to tackle during an inter-house rugby match.

From memory, Geoff was playing for either Westminster or Atkin and I for Tate and, I'd just picked myself up from a scrum and was over on the left wing when Geoff received the ball and came thundering down the field towards me. A shout rang out from our ranks, "Billing, you're the last man so get him!"

Manfully, I faced up to the task but to no avail as Geoff, without breaking stride, simply ran over me as if I was a welcome mat! Cue, collective groan, as yet another try was chalked up.

I have particularly fond memories of dear Nancy Price as on one memorable day, Wally Girven and I were in her art room and she reckoned we looked like brothers and asked if we could pose for her. Ha ha, would we pose for her, we nearly wet our pants accepting. Spending time with the legendary NP, oh joy! Sadly, she kept the painting and after several years probably used the canvas for a much better purpose.

Well, I could go on for several more paragraphs but suffice it to say, attending the B.I., was one of the best things that happened to me and a memory I will always treasure.

William (Biggles) Billing

## An e-mail from David Anson (1956/61)

1957

Historically 1957 is remembered as the year man made his first steps into space with the Russian's launch of Sputnik I or, politically, for the resignation of Anthony Eden after the Suez Crisis and his replacement by Harold Macmillan. Less well known is that 1957 was the year that Birkenhead Institute was invited to enter a team into BBC's Top of the Form competition which was a radio quiz programme featuring secondary schools from across the United Kingdom. It was essentially a knockout competition starting with preliminary rounds and culminating in a grand finale. Each school entered a team of four pupils ranging in age from under 13 to under 18.

At the time I was a 12-year-old and had just started my second year at the BI and classroom 2A was located first right off the main entrance in the Whetstone Lane school. Our form teacher was John Robins, the Welsh Rugby international who, in addition to being the school's sports & PE master, also taught geography and religious studies to the younger school pupils. In an effort to set the scene I was seated on the front row of the class nearest the door, the reason being that Mr Robins had selected me to be the "bell pusher" purely on the basis that I turned up on the first day of term wearing a wrist watch. To explain this a bit further, the "bell pusher" was tasked, on instruction from a teacher, to push simultaneously a set of push buttons housed in a panel situated in the school's main entrance and used to signal the morning and afternoon breaks together with the lunch period.

It's perhaps a good time to also mention that 1957 was also the year of the Asian flu pandemic and hardly a household in the UK was unaffected by this. I'm guessing that over a period of say four months class sizes were probably reduced by 10% - 20% because of it. It was in this climate that Mr Robins opened the classroom door one morning and peered straight into my face. I thought I was in for a telling off for perhaps not pushing the bells correctly but all he said was "What's the capital of Australia". I just gave him the answer "Canberra" and he then asked me to go to see the headmaster, Danny Webb, and say Mr Robins had sent me. I had no idea what was going on, but I left the classroom and noting Mr Webb's office door was closed I reported to Miss Cojeen's office. She duly accompanied me across the entrance hall, knocked on Danny's door and told me to come in.

He was seated at his desk and I was told to stand in front of him. He asked me what Mr Robins had said to me and then asked me if I would like to be on the radio as part of the Top of the Form team as the chosen candidate was off sick with Asian flu and they had to get things moving. At age 12 you do not say no to your headmaster with the result that I was now the junior member of the team. He told me to go away and read my history books and generally brush up on my general knowledge.

There wasn't too long between this encounter and the recording of the program. We were given some coaching by a gentleman called Arthur Maddocks, a Birkenonian who had won the Brain of Britain competition which was a forerunner of today's Mastermind. His main

piece of advice was, attempt to answer everything even if it's only a guess as you may be right.

The program was recorded in the main assembly / gymnasium at Whetstone Lane in front of the whole school plus teaching staff. We were sat at a table on the stage together with the quiz master. Our opponents were the Middlesbrough High School for Girls and to say we were comprehensively beaten by them is a bit of an understatement. In mitigation I did answer correctly at least 50% of the questions asked me but Mr Maddocks advice was not the best; for example, "what instrument did Pan play?" - answer "piano" was not the best of guesses and something that I was often reminded about throughout my school life.

So, I have to thank the BI and my appearance on Top of the Form for teaching me that it is never a bad thing to admit that you don't know something and to live by that old adage that "it is better to keep your mouth shut and be thought of as a fool than to open it and remove all doubt."

### **The 1957 Top of the Form team**



*Figure 3 - Back Row: Robin Salmon + Alan Ainsworth  
Front Row: John Girvan + David Anson*

## An e-mail from John Green (Tate 1948/55)

### **What I can remember**

Keith's e-mail said he was short of material for the Advisor, "So pretend you're back at the Institute, and you're writing something for 'The

Visor'. Say something about 'My Holidays' or 'My Hobby', I don't know, help me out here! Just put something on paper, or e-mail, and let me have it tout suite".

As far as I can remember, I made one or two feeble attempts between 1948 and 55 to write something for The Visor but nothing I did got printed. I reckon my holidays and hobbies now won't make for interesting reading, so perhaps I will write something about my times at the BI. I was not a typical BI lad, arriving as a country yokel from the South only three days before my first day at school, but I did have Merseyside roots, so perhaps I should start there.

I have an old article on the retirement of my grandfather, also a John Green, from a Mersey Docks and Harbour Board house magazine of 1933. I understand that he was born in Lydiate, on the northern fringes of Liverpool, was apprenticed as a shipwright and began working as a qualified shipwright in the Liverpool docks in 1890. Around that time, while still living in Lydiate, he married May Rimmer. I only knew her by reputation, which was formidable, but it is worth digressing for a moment about the Rimmers. They are a tribe of the Northwest, originally Lancashire. There are lots of them in the Liverpool phone book but few in places further afield. The name is said to come from Rhymer, meaning a poet in Anglo Saxon times, but they carry a sporting gene. During my time at the BI there was a Rimmer a couple of years below me who was a strong cricketer, a couple of years older than me at Birkenhead School was Laurie Rimmer, who captained the school rugby team, got a rugby blue at Oxford and in 1961 the first of five caps for England. Slightly younger was Keith Rimmer at Park High, who played full back for Birkenhead Park while still at school and also got a rugby blue at Oxford. Most significant, during my school years, was Gordon Rimmer, the scrum half for Waterloo who was capped 12 times for England. My father was a sportsman and so is my son but, although I played open side wing forward for the school, I did not carry the full Rimmer sporting gene.

My grandfather had a daughter followed by seven sons, the oldest children born in Lydiate and the later ones in Bootle, where he moved in the 1890s. He was involved in a number of dock building schemes in Liverpool, was promoted to foreman in 1901 and in 1909 was moved the Birkenhead to be in charge of the Graving docks. He and May and the eight children moved into a three-storey terraced house, 129 Conway Street, from which each of the seven boys was in due course sent out as an apprentice in a trade related to shipbuilding. My father, the second son, finished his schooling at Gray Street School, Bootle and was apprenticed as an engineer at Harland and Wolff in Bootle.

My grandfather was sixty-nine when I was born and the article on his retirement ends with the sentence "Born in May 1868, Mr. Green is still going strong and has now plenty of time to speculate as to what Mr Gladstone really did say in that eventful year." That prompted a thought.

My generation and those before us will remember WEW with affection. He was a gaunt, white faced history master with dark-rimmed glasses and a sardonic manner. He was, I believe, and for reasons I cannot explain, the most popular of our teachers. He lived alone with his cat. I remember him expounding his theory that cats, with their high intelligence, were the original

master race. However, they found running the world too much trouble and looked around for a gullible species to take over the job. They decided on man. As a result, man now feeds them and provides them with warmth and shelter and spends his time worrying about how to run the world.

I remember that WEW was an enthusiast for Gladstone and I thought I remember it being said that he had written a book on Gladstone. In the remote hope that, if it had existed, I might find a reference to it, I Googled on Amazon. Up came "The Rise of Gladstone to the Leadership of the Liberal Party: 1859 to 1868" by W. E. Williams, originally published in 1934. The book is available in paperback from Amazon Prime at £18.99 and a new hardback copy is available from America for £359.34 plus £3.00 delivery. What a surprise. An article on my grandfather's retirement 85 years ago leading to the discovery of a book by my history teacher of 70 years ago, which he wrote 84 years ago, being available now for next day delivery by Amazon. A copy was delivered yesterday, from which I find that the book is based on research he did as a postgraduate at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, partly supported by the Education Authority of the City of Stoke on Trent, which may explain why I find it difficult to place his accent. The extended essay, which was later published as the book when he was already teaching at the BI, won the University Prince Consort Prize for history. A kindly and remarkable man.

Back to my roots. My father, born in 1893, completed his apprenticeship at Harland and Wolff's in time to serve as a second engineer in the First World War on a passenger ship converted to operate as an "armed boarding steamer", HMS Duke of Albany. The ship was torpedoed in the North Sea in August 1916 with the loss of 25 lives, mainly because the ship sank quickly, causing its own depth charges to explode. The sinking was said to have changed the course of naval history, leading to new procedures to prevent such an incident recurring and saving many future lives as a result. My father survived some considerable time floating in a lifebelt. After the war he married a young woman from Bootle of Irish descent. She had joined the Women's Forage Corps during the war and marched through Liverpool at the head of a recruiting procession for the Women's Land Army. They set up house in Heswall and my father bicycled to the Woodside Ferry each day to continue working at Harland and Wolff. However, Britain was still in recession after WWI and times on Merseyside were hard. A close friend, who had a job as a chauffeur at the big house in Thornton Hough, moved with the job when the family moved to the big house in Frant, a village in East Sussex. Life in Sussex seemed better and in 1926 my parents moved to Rotherfield, the next village to Frant, to live in Bellmeads Cottage, a small cottage with a one-acre field with a stream at the bottom, three quarters of a mile out of the village. I was born there in 1937 and lived there until 1948, with two interruptions during WWII.

My father was too old for military service and so, at the outbreak of war, he moved back to Merseyside to lodge with his parents in Conway Street and work in the Harland and Wolff shipyard. His oldest brother had moved to Canada before WWI but the rest of his siblings, all too old for military service, lived in or near Birkenhead. When the German air raids on London began in the summer of 1940, with Rotherfield on the

bombers' route from Northern France to London and with dog fights in the skies over Sussex, my father decided my mother and I would be safer in Birkenhead. We stayed a short while in Conway Street and then moved to lodge with my Uncle Ted. He was superintendent of the embankment along the top shore of the Wirral and lived in a house on the embankment at Leasowe, at the end of the road running in a straight line down from Moreton Cross. The house, like 129 Conway Street, is no longer there. It had a sizeable air-raid shelter built into the embankment, which was just as well because, soon after we arrived, the German raids on Merseyside began.

The bombing of London in the summer of 1940 was initially mostly in daylight but the raids on Merseyside were mostly at night. There was, however, one celebrated daylight raid, on 21 September 1940, when a single German bomber scored a direct hit on the Argyle Theatre. The Argyle was a famous variety theatre, (opened in December 1868, when my grandfather was 7 months old) that had shown the first moving pictures outside London and had seen stars from Marie Lloyd to Charlie Chaplin and Harry Lauder perform there. Bombing it was a coup that the propagandist William Joyce, Lord Haw-Haw (who had relatives in Birkenhead) boasted about in his broadcast the next day. I was walking with my mother along Moreton shore that day and still remember seeing this twin-engined aeroplane fly low over our heads. It caused excitement because it had flown over in broad daylight and the talk among the adults the next day was that it had been the aircraft that bombed the Argyle. I have convinced myself that this was the case by looking at the map. If you are a crack German bomber crew, given the special propaganda task of hitting the Argyle, you fly in along the coast of North Wales as the night time bombers did. You then fly low along Moreton shore, turn right down the Mersey and half-right again at the end of the Birkenhead docks, (perhaps using the tunnel ventilator as a navigational aid) to fly along the right-hand side of Hamilton Square and down Argyle Street. The theatre is the building with a tower in its centre. You can't miss it. The bombing of Merseyside was the heaviest in Britain outside London. My mother told me that, when the siren went and we all moved into the air-raid shelter, I would say "I want to hear the guns firing". If they didn't, the "All Clear" would sound and we would all troop back into the house. If they did, my mother told me, I knew we were there for the night and would go to sleep. In late November and December 1940, the bombing of Merseyside was particularly intense, with fires ablaze along seven miles of the Liverpool waterfront at its peak. By then the Battle of Britain was over and, although the night time Blitz of London was continuing, it was decided that a village in Sussex was a safer place than the Leasowe embankment and my mother and I went back to Rotherfield. We saw out the rest of the war there, with the exception of ten months evacuation to Lower Beetham in Somerset to avoid the Doodle Bugs (V1 flying bombs, heading for London and again coming straight across Rotherfield). Lower Beetham was a hamlet a mile from the nearest village and school at Whitestaunton, which has a current population of about 250 and a school that in 1944 had 13 pupils and one teacher. Lower Beetham was in fact two buildings at a crossroads, ours being a pair of semidetached cottages. The family next door were the Jenners who

had two daughters, Winnie and Joan. I vividly remember 9-year old Joan, the younger and prettier of the two, killing wasps by flattening them against the window pane with her thumb, something I never had, and have never had, the courage to attempt.

From 1942 onwards, there was a steady build-up of military activity around Rotherfield, with British and American bomber formations flying overhead. We would watch the formations flying out and count the depleted formations returning to see how many had been lost. An American army unit was based in the grounds of Rotherhurst, the big house in the village, and the locals, including children, went to watch films there - mostly morale raising war films. Activity increased as D-day approached, with military convoys, including tanks on trailers regularly passing our front door. A week after D-day the Doodle Bug campaign started and shortly after that we decamped to Somerset, returning just before VE day. On VE day my mother took me to London and we climbed the 259 steps to the dome of St Paul's. At the weekend there was a village bonfire and a torchlight procession in which my father played the piccolo in the band. For the fancy dress parade, I wore a pair of pyjamas. Torchlight processions and bonfires are a big thing in Sussex, with the most famous one in Lewes traditionally rolling barrels of burning tar down the High Street. As a nine or ten-year-old I remember going to the procession in a nearby village, Mayfield, in which the main float carried the Carnival Queen, Deborah Kerr.

In the post war years, I spent my play time with friends roaming in the woods, collecting birds' eggs and butterflies, camping out in our field in an improvised tent, looking after my billy goat, being taught by my father how to draw cartoons and paint watercolours and learning to ride someone else's bike. As the scholarship (the 11 plus) exams approached, two of the boys at the village school were promised bikes if they passed the exam. I asked my father, "Dad, what will I get if I pass the scholarship?" I can still hear his Liverpool voice replying, "I know what you'll get if you don't". In the event, I did pass the scholarship to go to Skinners' School in Tunbridge Wells, a seven-mile train journey from Rotherfield. I sat the exam at the school. It was the sort of school I had read about in story books, with a tuck shop. It was founded in 1887, two years before the BI. It lost 87 old boys in WWI (As with the BI, their lives were commemorated in a memorial pavilion on the school playing field that was demolished in 2012). A week or two before the end of the summer holiday, I was told that I would not be going to Skinners. We were going to sell our home and move to 129 Conway Street to live with my grandfather. I would be going to the BI in Whetstone Lane, a school my father knew - I think I remember him saying he had played football against the BI when he was at Gray Street School Bootle.

So, on Friday, 3 September 1948, eight days after my 11th birthday, my mother took me by train to Victoria and across London to Euston and put me on a train to Lime Street. I was met at the other end by my father and Uncle Sep (Septimus, the youngest uncle), who had visited us in Sussex the year before. I remember being astonished and intimidated by the sheer height of the wall of the Forum cinema in Lime Street. It was the day of my grandmother's funeral and I was taken to join the wake in the cafe at the Ritz cinema. I had a knickerbocker glory ice cream - something I had never

heard of before. The next day, Saturday, I was taken to Bibby and Perkin to buy a school uniform and on the Monday or Tuesday my father walked me up Whetstone Lane and in through the front door of the school.

I was put in Form 1b, form master Tommy Thacker. We were seated alphabetically and on my first morning the lad sitting in front of me, Geoff Edwards, went around the class pointing to each one in turn – I can fight him, I can fight him, I can't fight him, I dunno about him – until he had done the whole class. I was the youngest and smallest in the class and I did not know if I could fight any of them. I was quite quick on the uptake and was good at physics, which was taught by Dickie Richards. One day there was a knock at the classroom door and a boy from 5c came in. "Mr Richards says can Green of 1b come, please?" I went upstairs to 5c, which was next to the art room. Dickie Richards asked me a physics question - I don't remember what it was about - and I answered it. None of the fifteen or so boys in the room - great big and fearsome characters - had been able to answer the question and, after some sarcastic comments from Dickie Richards, they looked at me, the clever little weed, in a way that was unsettling, to say the least. I survived. No one from 5c came to sort me out afterwards.

In my first week I found that Tony (A.W.) Hughes lived in Market Street and, like me, walked up Exmouth Street to school. He came past our front door, so we did the walk together. The Klon had announced, for the benefit of the new boys, that the school scouts, the 23rd Birkenhead, met on Wednesday evenings and Tony suggested that we went along to see what it was like. We both joined. I don't remember how long he lasted, but I stayed with the 23rd for the rest of my school days. The strongest memories from the 23rd are the camps. My first time under canvas was Easter 1949 at Brynbach, near Denbigh. Most of the troop and all the kit travelled there in an old army lorry. The three smallest, which included me, went in Don Coughtrie's Hillman, the two of us on the back seat submerged under a pile of camping kit. On the journey we drank cherryade and ate walnuts, which were novelties for me, and just through Denbigh I said I was going to be sick. My fellow back seat passenger, I think it was (Geoff?) Cookson reached behind and found a ladle which I filled with pink, nutty fluid. I have never touched cherryade since and only very rarely can be persuaded to eat walnuts.

In the summer of 1949 the camp was at Palnure, near Newton Stewart. Don Coughtrie, Frank Thomlinson and Joe Clarke were our scouters and Dave Moore was my patrol leader. One day the troop were taken by coach to climb The Merrick. At 2764ft it is the highest mountain in Southern Scotland and, not counting Moel Famau, the first proper mountain I climbed. I still remember the events of the day vividly – particularly the blackcurrant jam sandwiches beside the Buchan Burn on the way up and, nearer the top, Brian Cadman and I wrestling a dog biscuit from a Scottish scouter's border collie. Brian broke the biscuit in half and, being bigger and older than I, gave me the chewed half. I remember that I went on to the summit, but Brian was in the party that turned back short of the top – something in the dog saliva, I concluded. I also remember mugs of tea waiting for us at the farm when we were down off the hill and then having to walk three miles down the road in a state of exhaustion because the coach to take us back to camp

could not get across a narrow bridge. I have a soft spot for The Merrick and my wife has climbed it with me a couple of times since.

The next year's summer camp was at Knucklas, near Knighton in Radnorshire. My clearest memory of that camp was somebody's aluminium plate floating away after being washed in the stream after breakfast and us throwing stones to sink it. Donny Mathieson was my patrol leader then. I bent down to pick up a stone and stood up just as Donny let fly with one about the size of an egg. He would be 14 then and went on in the sixth form to break the school record for throwing the cricket ball. I woke up in my blankets around the middle of the day and survived without further medical attention.

The following year we camped at Long Compton in the Cotswolds. One of the hands on the farm enjoyed scaring us with stories about witchcraft in the area. I was a patrol leader then and, one day on a wide game, we investigated the Rollright Stones, a Neolithic stone circle on a hilltop. Outside the circle is a single standing stone, the King Stone, and we were told the legend of a man being told by witches that if he could take seven strides and see Long Compton he would be King of England. The King Stone is said to mark the end of his seven strides, and you cannot see Long Compton from it. Howard Finney, who was in my patrol and was into athletics, paced out the distance and persuaded us that the distance was more considerably more than seven times the then world long jump record of 26ft 8in, set by Jesse Owens in 1935. The legend couldn't be true.

What I most remember of the next year's camp in Bala was that it rained a great deal. I remember spending a lot of time in a bigish tent listening to Johnny Davidson telling stories. He was a great raconteur with an unstoppable flow. In the following years we camped in the Isle of Man, then Knucklas again, then near Coniston Water. I don't remember much about these camps except it was very sunny in the Isle of Man and at Coniston some of us walked half way round the lake to a camp of the 63rd (I think) Birkenhead Air Scouts. They had one or more kayaks and I remember us having a go in them – which fired in me a great but eventually unfulfilled urge to build myself a kayak.

I remember a couple of long hikes with an overnight camp, the first with Ewart Mitchell, who was in the upper sixth when I was in the third form, for our First-Class badge. We were some way down Lever Causeway on the way to Thurstaston when a car stopped for a friendly chat. It was the local District Commissioner. I was small, and I suspect my scout shorts came below my knees. Mitch was tall, probably the tallest boy in the school by a good few inches, and was wearing very short shorts and, I'm pretty sure, rather than proper scout socks with garter tabs the sort of short socks you wear with long trousers. When the District Commissioner got home he rang up Don Coughtrie and tore him off a strip for letting two of his scouts roam around the Wirral "improperly dressed". The other, a couple of years later, was with Norman Wilkinson over the Denbigh moors – a very gruelling expedition over a wilderness, with a haunting building on top a high hill in the far distance whenever we looked over our shoulder and me with very blistered feet at the end.

There were a couple of world scout jamborees during my time, the first in 1951 in Bad Ischl in Austria. Dave Moore, Campbell Weir and I think Harry Smith were part of the Birkenhead and Wallasey contingent. I was

just on the bottom age limit and was a reserve and went to all the training meetings of our contingent but in the event did not go to Bad Ischl. I believe it rained most of the time and the camp site was a sea of mud. Dave Moore was a great mimic and a mischievous chap. I remember him telling me that one day he was sitting on a toilet listening to two members of the group in the open part of the toilets speaking disparagingly of our contingent leader, Geoff Beavan. Putting on Geoff's far-back military voice, he said "I say, is that Colin Campbell out there?" – dead silence and quiet tiptoeing of the guilty parties out of the toilets. The troop held a Gang Show in Beechcroft, perhaps to support the travel of our lads to Bad Ischl. I remember Dave, who had a fine baritone voice, in a penguin suit singing a Scottish ballad which, at the line "The sound of the pibroch and the marching of men", was interrupted by a bunch of us marching across the front of the stage. Idiotic stuff, but we thought it was funny at the time and the audience seemed to like it.

Four years later the world jamboree was at Niagara on the Lake, Ontario. I was just not too old and went as one of the two from Birkenhead in the West Cheshire contingent. We had another Gang Show at Beechcroft to help raise my £130 air fare. I remember staggering down the aisle from the back of the hall with a heavy rucksack on my back, climbing on to the stage, dumping the sack on a table and launching into "Hey Ho for the open road!" At the end of the first verse, the rucksack burst open and out popped David (?) Anderson to sing the second verse. He had a fine voice and was small, but I am amazed I had the puff to sing after humping him down the hall. The weather in Canada was great for the whole of my stay there. I met a boy from Oregon at the jamboree, about 10 days my senior and, like me heading for an engineering course at university, who lived "down the road" – i.e. only about 30 miles away – from my aunt. We swapped uniforms and corresponded for a short while but then he married and his wife, being jealous of his friends, destroyed all his correspondence and we lost contact. In due course he divorced the lady and 25 years later, in 1981 when he was sent to England on business for the first time and was temporarily based in Maidenhead, went to Baden Powell House in London and said he was looking for a John Green who was in the 23rd Birkenhead scout troop in 1955. Three days later Baden Powell House gave him my address and phone number. My mother had been a supporter of the scouts and had exchanged Christmas cards with Don Coughtrie, who was able to give BP House my contact details. He now lives in rural Oregon and every Christmas Day, at 8.00am UK time, midnight Oregon time, one of us rings the other to say Happy Christmas and put the world to rights for the next hour or so.

In my first two years at the BI my accent went through a transition from rural Sussex to Birkenhead and part way through I had a crisis in pronouncing the long a sound, which came out like weird sheep bleat. In 1b Dickie Richards had me stand in front of the class and say 'caarbon' and chaarcoal', but it didn't cure my problem. In 2a Foggy Allen\* was our form master and English teacher. Somewhere I have a school report in which he says something like 'very good but must improve his pronunciation'. In second year English we did Tennyson's Morte d'Arthur. Foggy Allen had me on my feet reciting bits of it to improve my speaking and in 2b – I forget who the master was – there was an incident

along the lines, 'Dakin, what's the joke? 'Nothing, sir' 'I say again, what's the joke?' 'Nothing, sir' 'For the last time, what's the joke?' 'I was only saying what Green in 2a says, sir' 'And what does Green in 2a say?' 'And slowly answered Aarthur from the baarge.' 'Go for the Detention Book'.

I was quite good at indiscipline and did a fair bit of fetching of the Book myself. I remember being caned by the Klon with a chair leg after Reggie Thynne had sent me to stand in the corridor, but my finest achievement was when I was in the lower sixth. One Wednesday afternoon the lower sixth members of the rugby team were hanging around in the senior science room and finally decided that, since the day's game had been cancelled, we ought to join the lower sixth RI lesson given by Jake Allison in the Geography Room, upstairs in the Junior School. Two or three of the group were prefects. I, not a prefect, led us into the room to be met with 'Green, why aren't you here?' 'I am here, sir.' 'No, I mean why aren't you here NOW?' 'I am here NOW sir'. 'Go for the Detention Book' I managed to get about five of us, including the prefects, thrown into detention. Nobody thanked me for it but I can still hear Jake's exasperated question – he had a very distinctive voice which lots of people liked to mimic.

I was keen but not much good at sport, so in the lower sixth I was the school scorer at cricket and the rugby touch judge. I was Tate House Captain in the upper sixth and Foggy Allen was Tate House Master. I don't remember any consultation with him about the house teams, but I did pick myself for both the rugby and cricket teams. I have a clear recollection of me with a bat of facing Donny Mathieson, bowling for Westminster. I had never encountered swing bowling before and Donny, who would be 18 by then, was fast and swung the ball about a foot – about as much as Jimmy Anderson does now. It was always in the same direction and therefore predictable, but I didn't last long. First fifteen rugby in the upper sixth was more fun. We had a strong team that year, captained by Andy Hodgson in the second row, with Kenny Jones as hooker and Gerry Haggerty as one of the props. I remember Ian Marrs at scrum half, Howard Jones at fly half, Tommy Jones and Donny Mathieson at centre, Brian Lloyd on the wing and Billy Longton or David Horne at full back. I was open-side wing forward and was fairly quick off the mark, so at scrums I tried to get up on the opposing fly half so that he passed the ball to a centre who would then be flattened by Tommy or Donny, both of who were formidable crash tacklers.

I was good at Art, it was my second-best subject at O-level after French, so I did Maths, Physics and Chemistry in the sixth form! Even so, I produced cartoon posters for the school Debating Society while I was in the sixth form that so impressed our form master, Jake Allison, that he strongly advised me to take up a career as an architect. I was doing the standard three science subjects, however, taught in the upper sixth by Eric Sorby, Len Malcolm and Bummy Jones, the Headmaster by then. I can still hear Eric Sorby saying, "I'm not amused", which he did frequently when we were a bit frolicsome. David Horne was the strongest mathematician in our year, and mischievous with it. One day he did something which caused Eric to ask, "What's the matter, Horne?" which produced the immediate reply "A mountain in Switzerland, sir," Eric was not amused. When we did our A-level applied maths exam,



I finished the paper with time to spare and went over the answers at least twice to confirm them. Applied maths is a subject in which you know if an answer is right or wrong, and I walked out of the room confident that I had got 100%. Outside the room, Eric said, "Did you see the mistake you made in question 4, John Edward?" "I didn't make a mistake in question 4, sir" "Yes you did, you took the diameter instead of the radius." "Oh" "And in question 7...." My 100% illusion was in ashes on the floor. Even so, and in spite of Jake Allison's advice, my A-levels were good enough to get me a place in Cambridge at St John's College to read Engineering, following Willie Bryant who had gone to the same college the year before to read History. That shaped the rest of my life, but the years at the BI, and the final efforts of Eric Sorby, Bummy Jones and particularly Len Malcolm, paved the way.

#### **An e-mail from John Gurden (1955/62)**

##### **Where are they now?**

I receive a couple of newsletters from groups I've belonged to in the past and one thing that's always interesting is the entries by other members outlining what they have been up to recently. Usually it's just a few lines. It may be about holidays or other members they've met in far-flung places but sometimes it's just their latest ailments.

I often wonder what happened to people I knew at BI and similar newsletter entries could be a way of keeping us all updated (a bit like Facebook but without having your details sold around the world). If Keith received a few contributions for each edition, it might make his life a bit easier when compiling the Newsletter. The following is an outline of what I've done since leaving in 1962.

After BI, I worked in international banking, initially in Liverpool then abroad, followed by London and finally in Poole. When I started, pen and ink reigned supreme; when I left, most of the work was computerised. In the course of my work I met many well-known people and was even able to put Mr Meador's efforts to teach me basic Russian to good use when in discussions with Mikhail Gorbachev.

I leapt at the chance of early retirement in 1995 and since then life has got even busier. To stop getting under my wife's feet, I took a part-time job in a local pharmacy, acquired some qualifications and still work there, although now just half a day per week. Interesting, but an eye-opener to the wastage in some NHS systems.

I was keen on flying when I was younger, flew at the Shropshire Gliding Club and took up powered flying when I moved to Bournemouth. Since then I have joined the committee of the local branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society. The area was a centre for aircraft production up to the 1980s (remember the Viscount, BAC One Eleven and Sea Vixen, among others?).

For years, mountain walking has been a hobby and since retirement I've hiked over most of the Alps and Pyrenees. I'm just back from the Harz Mountains in Germany, not as high as the Alps but an interesting area. The old Iron Curtain ran through it and there is still evidence of the border fences and cleared zones. It also has a great network of steam trains.

What happened to everyone after leaving the Institute? Drop Keith a line – we would all be interested.

#### **An e-mail from David Ball (Westminster 1982/86)**

##### **After leaving Birkenhead Institute 32 years ago ....**

After leaving BI in the summer of 1986, I entered Cammell Lairds on a steelwork apprenticeship, which lasted 4 years. During that time, I was nominated for the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights Silver Medal Award and attended a week's residential assessment in the Northeast of England. Competition was tough with 25 candidates from across the country and all forms of the shipbuilding/boat repair disciplines. I was informed a few weeks after the assessments I had achieved a respectful 4th place.

It wasn't long after leaving school that I bumped into Terry Baker, an old classmate who had continued into the 6th form and we spoke about rugby, whether I had continued to play or not, I hadn't. So, Terry persuaded me to attend a training session at Old Instonians where he was playing regularly for the colts and the 5th team.

At the Insties I meet many, many old boys including Badger Davies, John Touhy, the Parks brothers, Dennis and Tony Welsh, Robbie Harrison, Greg Pandit, Arthur Howarth, Billy Roe, Billy Shaw, Lennie Davies, Brian Bowker (who had coached at school); and enjoyed the company of such a league of gentlemen. I remained a member of the club until the amalgamation with Old Rockferrians in 1992. During this time, I was awarded Young Player of the year for 1989. Unfortunately, I played less in the final years of the club due to entering the Royal Navy.

In 1990, due to lack of orders Cammell Lairds had to make redundancies; and as a newly qualified tradesman I fell victim to the "last in first out" policy Lairds had adopted. Always having a naval interest, I thought this the ideal time to pursue a career with the Royal Navy, knowing that if a life at sea wasn't for me I had my shipbuilding and fabrication skills to fall back upon. September of that year I entered the gates of HMS Raleigh for 6 weeks basic training. I had selected to train as a metrological and oceanographic observer, as I had an interest in oceanography after a visit to Liverpool university whilst at school, but unfortunately, I had selected all the wrong subjects at O level to complete the A levels required to enter for an oceanographic degree. Shortcut I thought, but no, military oceanography and scientific oceanography; oceans apart!! (I know, very poor!!). However, I stuck with it and passed out as a "Met Observer" which basically was a weather forecasters assistant, which meant I would produce all the chartwork, including synoptic plotting and Tephigram plotting (data sent back from weather balloons) and other upper atmosphere data plotting to enable him or her to produce twice daily weather forecasts for fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

My early naval years were spent mainly in the southwest of the UK at RNAS Culdrose near Helston in Cornwall. I then served aboard various frigates with small ships flights including HMS London and HMS Boxer. On both vessels I was involved with ships rugby teams and played numerous social fixtures across Europe and the Caribbean. During leave periods running to the Wirral I continued to play for Instonians and latterly Prenton RUFC's and enjoyed a few beers with all the old boys.

On promotion in the early 2000's I found myself appointed to a NATO job on the Estoril Coast in Portugal. This posting was the last bastion of the cold war and we provided weather forecasts for any NATO vessel operating in the South Atlantic. Much to the dismay of my new bride, I continued to play rugby for the local expats side, Lisbon Casuals, based at St Julians International School at Carcavelos. During my time there, Terry Baker would visit regularly!! Casuals hosted a Prenton RUFC tour in 2002 and I played half a game for both teams!!

On my return to the UK after 3 I was appointed to the Fleets Flag ship at the HMS Illustrious, and again was heavily involved with the ships rugby team, acting as secretary for 2 years as well as playing. Two hi-lights from my 3 years onboard, being presented my long service and good conduct medal, which I managed to retain, and being selected to represent The Fleet Air Arm Command rugby team. This was my one and only cap but to be selected at 36 and travel to Brest to play against the French Northern Fleet was my Twickenham moment. Alas we lost 30 – 0, but 4 days I will never forget. Promoted again I moved to the Fleet Weather Centre near Watford and ran a shift, and after a few courses produced weather forecasts for all Naval vessels operating worldwide, Naval Command, and various other UK military commands. It was here I found myself promoted in house to act as the office manager to ensure the smooth running of the section, more of a HR role then of a weather forecaster. Nearing my 40's I endeavoured to pursue a Naval ambition, and this was to run in the Field Gun Competition; now I'm not talking about the spectacular event we have all seen at Earls Court, the carpark version run annually at HMS Collingwood in Portsmouth. 12 teams from across the Royal Navy compete, and I ran twice for JSU Northwood.

After 5 years at Northwood and an extension to my Naval career I found myself aboard HMS Echo, ocean survey vessel, but not to practice oceanography but to act as ships protection manager, which entailed running the ships security and weapons training for all ships company. Whilst surveying the Indian Ocean the ship was re-tasked to assist in the search for the missing Malaysian airliner given the equipment we had onboard. After an unsuccessful 2 weeks searching we visited Fremantle and Singapore, were I captained the ships rugby team to 2 defeats, but 2 very good socials!!!

I left the service in 2014, having served operationally globally including counter drug operations and disaster relief in the Caribbean, conflict zones including the Balkans, Gulf and Sierra Leone, and further disaster relief in South Eastern Africa.

After working locally on the Wirral, thinking I could settle into a part time job and support the wife and family on this income and my Naval pension; however, the lore of the sea was still there, and I write this article in my new role as navigational watchkeeper for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary aboard the newest fleet tanker, RFA Tiderace. I still remain an active member of Prenton RUFC and enjoy the Old Boys Day at the club immensely catching up with old faces from Instonians, I have attended one BIOB dinner at Caldy Golf Club and will continue to support this event when possible, I also hope to contact Old Boys of my own age and introduce them to the delightful event organized by Keith Dutton and others.

**Ad-Visor 2018**

### **An e-mail from Alan Jones (1956/63)** **(Formerly known as A.K. Jones)**

#### **Musical Appreciation**

I spend a great deal of time these days with various musical activities which incorporates two choirs, a men's acapella harmony group and a ukulele band. This provides much enjoyment and the experience of performing in some notable venues including UNESCO in Paris, various concert theatres, cathedrals, Music Festivals and recently the Lincoln Centre in New York.

I guess you could say that in part at least the training in appreciation of music that I received at BI helped to prepare to enjoy these experiences.

I well remember music lessons in the old dark basement room under the direction of Pebble Shaw. Everyone was given a grading and were encouraged to challenge a boy with a higher grading in a sing off. One of the songs included actions of tapping feet and clapping hands-such excitement!!

Mr. Shaw also ran the school choir which performed Christmas Concert which was an institution in itself. Once you were in the choir it was different to escape, and I remember one Christmas after my voice had broken and I was no longer a treble being told I had to stay in the Choir and sing the part of the King in Good King Wenceslas.

Outside of formal lessons we had some musical fun. In about the 3rd year some of us formed a Skiffle Group which performed Lonnie Donegan songs at a School Show. From what I recall we had Fred Hillhouse and Doug Halligan on guitar, Roger Wade on Tea Chest Bass and Geoff Blease and myself on vocals.

When we were prefects in the early Sixties we were given permission to organise Dances in the School Hall to help with fund raising. The Pathfinders who were the resident group at the Kraal Club in New Brighton were booked for £6 a night. We had some great evenings and even brought in some girls from Holt Hill Convent.

Most people enjoy music in one form or another and it can be uplifting in all sorts of ways. Some people say I cannot sing but everyone can sing and enjoy it. One concert compere trying to encourage an audience to join in a song said please all join in but if you were one of those people who were told at school that you could not sing please sing a bit more quietly!!

### **A few e-mails from Dave Garry (1961/69)**

#### **University Rugby 70's style....an alternative to 2004 World Cup fever**

I started my First Year in 1969 with every intention of playing little rugby and concentrating entirely on studying. This ambitious intention lasted as long as the Freshers' induction in the Sports Centre where I signed up for the Club trials. I duly turned out and to my amazement was selected to prop for the 1st XV in it's opening game at Bradford University. I was impressed by a lot of things about the club: the large physical

presence of my colleagues (though we later had lots of problems matching any Club opposition in the 2nd row), the fixture card for three teams, the high quality of my Fresher colleagues (2 Lancs U19 players) but especially that we played in all black, though we changed to the University colours of red, gold and black. The whole thing seemed very professional compared to my previous school and Old Boys experience. However, I soon started to realise the Club was as full of eccentrics as all rugby clubs. You daren't have a lot of beer and nod off on the coach coming home as one nut had discovered if the poor unfortunate's fingers were dipped into a mug of water (handily smuggled onto the coach in preparation) then he would involuntarily wet himself to the immediate amusement and subsequent discomfort of his colleagues.

Another player often felt the need to relieve himself on the way home and on one occasion when the driver refused to stop, he persuaded two of his chums to hold him in the coach's open door while he did what was necessary. Inevitably, the coach had to stop in traffic and he found himself opposite a bus stop. During the subsequent uproar he didn't particularly help by shouting "I'm going to have a crap next."

My original plan not to be involved with rugby failed though I did stay interested in my subjects so avoided the post-match games of "Buzz" and "Fizz Buzz". My first step to a "responsible" position in the club was "volunteering" to arrange for all the Club's (i.e. 45) shirts to be washed twice a week. My partner in this horrible business and I decided we should privatise the contract. When we offered Club funds to girls (in the sexist 70's), to do the washing provided we delivered the kit we had to fight off the bids. Things went well for the first, second and more weeks but what would you think about 45 muddy jerseys being delivered to you late on Wednesday night by two drunks who expected them back on Saturday morning? So, we ended up in a launderette a lot.

I was quite well established in the 1st XV now despite a few challenges from a player who reputedly existed only on oranges and beer. Being a prop, I quite fancied myself as a hard man and would be fairly nasty to any frail, elderly opposition though this was always in short supply. I managed to shoot myself in the foot on a number of occasions. I was particularly grateful on one occasion when we were receiving a battering from a very large, physical side who were several stones heavier than us, when I was laid out following a scuffle. While feigning concussion to get a rest, I allegedly said, "Don't hit me, hit them!" as I recovered. One of our 2nd Row had felled me. I was quite offended when everybody laughed, and I was reminded of the quote for weeks to come.

This particular team-mate tried to kill me on other occasions. He was kind enough to give me lifts in his ex-police white Jag but the magnificent-looking car had been sorely treated by the boys & girls in blue, so the doors had a tendency to fly open when cornering to the alarm of passengers, though I don't remember it bothering the owner.

For some weird reason our game against another University was reported in the "Daily Telegraph" and "Guardian" (I still have the cuttings, sad person that I am) I chose that game to get badly mauled by the opposition prop who had me out of the scrum regularly. The only one who ever did, I claim...and a detailed

account of my shortcomings duly appeared in both papers.

In my second Year I was privileged to be appointed pack leader and Club Treasurer (a suitable combination). The year was when the country changed £sd (or some said LSD) to £ and "new" pence, so my accounts were entitled to include a mysteriously technical-sounding "balancing item" to explain the rounding effects of the currency change but it was also useful to conceal my many arithmetic blunders that my Dad couldn't find when I went to him for help. And I'm now an accountant working as an auditor and find many uses of "balancing items" which seem familiar.

I used to feature prominently in the major financial decisions of the Club i.e. whether to open another barrel of "sale or return" beer at the disco. Surrounded by a group of minders I would empty the box of gate money, count as best I could and work out if we could "open" or had to "return" the next barrel. All these calculations were difficult for me even though (or because???) I read Physics & Geology with Maths as one of my subsidiary subjects.

In my third year I was elected Club Captain and was fortunate to have one of my friends as Vice-Captain as well as a very supportive Club as a whole. Another of my friends was one of the biggest characters of the University. He was a "mature" student though this was in name only due to his advanced years (about half my age now!) after serving as a commissioned officer in the Royal Navy. He really looked the part; very short hair (which was not the norm then), tie, white shirt, blazer, all worn in the correct places on his body on all occasions.... but he was the absolute life and soul of any party and would do anything for entertainment. He also read Physics & Geology and then his first job after graduating was jousting... I'm not making this up and I can hardly believe it either...

We had a few adventures on field trips including the Great Man playing the piano.... from the INSIDE....and us getting chased by the police after we tried to "borrow" a flag from the walls of a city which rashly gave us hospitality. However, his main claim to fame was that he climbed onto the Chapel roof and laid out strips of paper spelling "CAFE". At the time the University employed security guards due to student demos but as they were mostly ex-Servicemen the officer qualities were usefully deployed. Not only was a "blind eye" turned but they actually helped in the scam! He was also famous for being in the Guinness Book of Records for drinking the fastest pint of beer whilst standing on his head and a picture of the feat (pun?) appeared in a national paper. He was a big participant in Rag Week and his specialty was the 3-legged pub-crawl. At one pub, he allegedly drank the required 1/2 pint and then immediately threw up into the empty glass, neatly filling it to the brim before bidding the landlord good-day and carrying on with the race.

Fire-breathing was another favourite hobby. The great man was on the Club Selection Committee and another member rashly mentioned that he was particularly frightened of fire. To liven up proceedings, the fire-breathing seemed a good idea...even in a hall-of-residence room! The man who didn't like fire (who wouldn't in a room?) decided to protect himself by putting the room's metal waste-paper bin on his head. The fun was enhanced by flames being breathed on the bin so that the inside of it gently roasted.

In my year as Captain, I moved myself to the back-row of the scrum as I had always fancied myself there and... more to the point... there were some good new props in the Club. One of the major struggles during each year was always against Loughborough Colleges and it was in this game that I particularly regretted being in the back-row. On one occasion we played their full 1st XV complete with Internationals, massively-wide pitch and huge crowd... not our scene at all! We lasted for a few 2nd -phase recycles (I'd only just learned the term) and then it was one-way traffic. We had gained the privilege of getting annihilated after a surprise success against their 2nd XV. The main reason for the miracle was we scored under the posts, converted and were awarded a penalty from the centre due to their foul play (no doubt due to frustration and amazement at us scoring at all) as we were touching down. Having no other ideas, I asked our kicker to have a go. He was an excellent No.8 who played in gym-shoes...and he duly obliged... via the cross-bar from all of 50 yards. Astounding!

The major social event of the year was the Annual Dinner. It used to be held in a local hotel but each year the event was progressively further away as each location banned us. I was keen for us to return to being personae grata and diagnosed the problem as due to it being a stag do so I suggested partners should be invited and implored all to be properly dressed and well-behaved. On the night, I entered the banqueting room which had a small hatch that served as a bar. This was staffed by a couple of elderly (about 10 years younger than me now, probably!) who were talking very happily to several club members who were propping up the bar. The room was in total uproar as they could see what the staff could not (and probably would have objected to) i.e. that all the boys at the bar were very smartly dressed ... from the waist up but had no trousers on. Consequently, the event proceeded as previously with the usual race between the booked mini-buses coming to take us away and the police arriving to perform the same service. There was also some difficulty as a result of the curtains going on fire and many glasses of beer appeared from beneath coats to be finished on the bus, despite the driver's threats. My biggest mistake of my captaincy was to hold the dinner on a Friday night before what I thought would be an easy game on Saturday!

A very sound centre was Charlie Mead whose presence on the team sheet was a significant psychological blow to naive opponents as Colin Meads was a formidable All Black 2nd Row of the time (the first player to be sent off in a televised game) Charlie revealed his high opinion of us in one of his early games when he said he would meet us at our away game against Newport. We went to Shropshire for our usual hiding which Charlie missed as he went to the Welsh club of the same name, the one that had once beaten New Zealand, and he was surprised when they laughed at him.

There wasn't a Past v Present game in my day but there were many other events designed to be "fun". There was a Geology Dept game, a sevens competition for the "Plate" which was a standard Refectory dinner plate and an annual entry of a Rugby Club XI in the university's Summer Soccer Competition. We used to recruit a couple of proper soccer players who got progressively less interested in playing with us as each year came around. There was regularly a bruising semi-final against the post-graduates' team which involved many calls from the them for hosts of us to be sent off for

"retaliation" which was an offence then unknown in Rugby as it was seen as a normal part of the game to resolve disputes without legal intervention by the ref with a rule book. Amazingly, this approach was frequently encouraged at schools!

I played in a few Past v Present games after graduating and would love to turn out again but as I've recently got rid of my mouldering boots and I now have even less of a grasp of the laws than I did then, I know I'll confine my rugby to watching the TV and now have the excuse that I'm banned on medical grounds as well as being that little bit too old, hard to believe though it is!

## Transplants

**D**ave Garry has kindly offered to share his life saving experience. For me it is amazing to find another man given a heart transplant at Wythenshawe hospital whose younger life showed no indications of needing a transplant in the future. There is a popular misconception that people who need transplants have been ill all their life or have brought on their problems through unhealthy lifestyles. This couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, Dave experienced just a couple of weeks of feeling poorly in September 2001 when he was taken into the emergency department at Arrowe Park Hospital on the Wirral on the 18th September. He was then diagnosed with heart failure - a viral infection had caused myocarditis which in turn led to partial liver and kidney failure. Why? Nobody is too sure what the source was.... working too hard, gardening too much, knocking down walls, mozzie bites???

The photo to the left shows Dave Garry - the fit young member of the Hampshire constabulary. No thought in his mind at all about life saving transplants!

When Dave was referred to the heart failure team at Wythenshawe hospital for transplant assessment the doctors said his list of conditions excluded him from the chance of a successful transplant. A bitter blow for a 51-year-old family man. Dave's cardiologist at Arrowe Park, Dr Ritto, decided to insert an intra-aortic balloon pump to support his heart function. This was left in place as a hopeful bridge to a transplant. Dave's condition stabilised his liver and kidney function improved enabling him to gain sufficient strength. He was discharged from Arrowe Park at the end of October. He became strong enough to be listed for a heart transplant on December 19th, 2001. Mr Jones, the transplant heart surgeon, gave Dave and his family reason to celebrate the New Year when he received his new heart on January 2002. An amazing life transforming few months which are happily continuing today.

Dave's view on matters of his heart

In 1969 I left school having played lots of rugby but with enough 'O' levels (remember them?) and 'A' levels to get to University. There, guess what..... I played a load of rugby.....made Club Captain, played in Universities Athletic Union Cup competitions against the likes of Loughborough Colleges, international players and such, and the type of clubs that merited the game getting reported in the Daily Telegraph and the likes. Mind you, they got my name a bit wrong, but I was grateful as I got 'worked over' as a prop.

Oh, I also got a degree; Physics and Geology...honours...only just, mind you. To the right

you can see one of the Keele University rugby seven teams I used to play for.

To my Dad's disappointment, I joined the police; Hampshire Constabulary. Guess what? I played rugby, against Royal Navy teams and similar. I also worked the beat (Remember those days, when cops were Constables on Patrol???) ...a lot! 'Handled' fights.....a lot! To my Dad's joy, I left. Became a "boring accountant". You know, I played rugby.....and squash....and badminton.... and.....!!!

Then I joined gyms, ran..... Of course, I did smoke, drink.... but not much, no lies, it really was not much. I joined the "Special Constabulary" as a bit of "do-gooding": I walked beats, "handled fights".... yawn the usual!!! Wot a hobby!!!!

I married late, soon had 2 children. I was never, never ill... till we went on holiday in September 2001.....!!

Aged 51, still playing things but on return from holiday I felt so tired. I couldn't "throw off" what I thought was flu.... eventually going to the G.P., then to the hospital. I couldn't believe it, that I was diagnosed with heart failure probably caused by a virus! My wife couldn't believe it when she was told I had about 2 weeks to live, but not to tell me!!

I survived that by some medical magic but only to be told I had to have a heart transplant. More bewilderment. It wasn't for a better quality of life; it was a transplant or death! The shock, surprise, fear, disbelief all mixed up with determination and acceptance!! There'd never been anything wrong with me before!! What had I done wrong? The answer was nothing... these things happen!! We're all "fragile systems" as ICT people put it.

I was so ill that I was at the top of the waiting list twice! The first heart was deemed unsuitable. The 'right one' was transplanted on New Year's Day, 2002, of all days!

I was never really very fit, but a few medics told me I only survived because I was fit and hadn't smoked or drunk much!

I was off work for a year in total. I went back the day before my sick pay finished. Odd that, isn't it?

I've been back at work for 7 years or so now and everything's well. So far, so good!!! I do voluntary work for the British Heart Foundation and there's quite a 'market' for people interested in a talk about my experiences, or so they say. I've been given a few bottles of wine for my trouble, so it must be OK.

It was a terrifying, surreal experience probably more so for my wife. It's always more difficult for the "support staff"!! Oddly, our children seem to treat it as routine! They wonder why everyone doesn't have a heart transplant!

I'm a big walker, cyclist and do the dreaded gardening, at a push, so it's like it never happened.....er.... almost. It's one hell of a trick if you can pull it off!!! But, but it still makes me shiver ...and, there's never, never, ever .... a day the donor and her family doesn't feature in my thoughts, the real "star of the show". "Thank you" is such an inadequate phrase to express the sentiments but it's all there is to say.

Transplants keep families and friends together

From September 2001 until January 1st, 2002 the Garry family did not know what their future held. At the second attempt Dave received his life saving heart from a donor. His son Ryan is not attacking him – despite the appearance of the bandages. He may have been using

the truncheon to fight off aliens. The bandages were courtesy of some further treatment Dave had to undergo. To say that Dave is oozing with pride looking at his daughter Michelle is an understatement. Dave could so easily have died before seeing Michelle off to her prom. From being hours away from death in September 2001 Dave is now able to live a full and active life. Christmas walks with his wife and friends are a real bonus – looking a bit horny Dave if you don't mind me saying so! I suspect Dave could now give Sir Chris Hoy a good run for his money on the push bike. He and his family are certainly making the most of his second chance of life. Thanks to you all for contributing to this website. Transplants definitely transform lives.

### How to Get Better?

It's good to have a smile from doctors, nurses and all the people who helps us patients and it's good to ask questions about diagnosis, treatment and prognosis but it could be useful to remember that doctors, nurses and all hospital staff don't exactly have a fun-filled time. It can't exactly be barrel of monkeys and easy to keep smiling when your way of making your living involves meeting many ill people daily and becoming friends with several, some of whom, sadly don't get better. Are they known for being overpaid? Do they go home at the exact stroke of the end of their shifts? Are they immortal and immune from every known illness? Does their washing machine/ fridge/ car...etc never go wrong? Are their loved ones never ill or "difficult"? Of course, not.... they have all the usual problems of life... not a lot different from us, in fact, but with the added problem of practising. what is widely recognised as THE most taxing profession both academically and emotionally. Us patients need to give to receive and help them help us, if you're with me. Tell them a joke, perhaps.?

For instance, let's try to be positive and make it easier for our helpers to want to help us. They may even try harder... if that's possible, which I doubt. However, can we learn from Winston Churchill (a man who had a few problems to consider as well as his health) who when speaking to pupils at his old school, he advised them that losing a battle is one thing but said, "Never, never, never... ever give up.". If Winston 's not to your taste, how about Jimmy Hill who I suggest might be the ideal patient as he seems aggressive TOWARDS the ILLNESS (that's the thing!) but not to people who are trying to help him. When he had cancer of the colon he made friends with his surgeon –very important to have good friends and relatives... if you haven't, now could be a good time to develop them. Jim saw his illness as 2-0 down but said "Teams come back from 2-0". When he came around from surgery, his surgeon greeted him with "We've won!" Perhaps more to the point was Michael Caine, when talking about possibly retiring (a completely different issue, I accept but the moral may be of help to us) "If you give up, you die!" can we take a hint from this?

The modest ways I put my actions where my mouth is when I had extreme, severe, sudden, horrible heart failure at 51 (I know I don't look it... dream on!!!) included not having my important things-teddy bears, other "cuddlies" and the like... you know the type of thing-with me, in case I lost them. My constant intention was that I wanted them at home WHEN I returned.

Nobody actually told me I was dying but I got the picture and after some thought, I decided NOT to say “Goodbye” and felt very motivated to live when I got hold of the idea that a friend who kindly visited me, was asking me questions about my life with the intention of preparing a eulogy at my funeral, it was very nice of him but I remember thinking “Not for me ,yet!!” Get the idea? I also saw a vicar (as you know, there a few atheists in Cardiac Care Units) when I was exceptionally miserable and in confessional-mood and I had a few of them, believe me. I said I’d tried to live a good life, but it hadn’t been unusual for people I’d met to say I was arrogant and aggressive. He said, “My boy, now is the time to be aggressive!”, but here’s the thing.... WITH THE ILLNESS, NOT the medics!! Whatever’s happened to us it’s not their fault and all they do is aimed at helping you. I always tried to make a point of considering my illness as THE enemy. You may think all this is very minor, to the point of being pathetic. I don’t know about you, but I’ve never heard of small steps not adding up to big steps, and here I am back at work and fighting fit (in the nicest possible way!) and these little things may have helped. I’m pretty sure they didn’t do any harm, anyway... oh, and the heart transplant helped a lot!!

I feel we are in a curious sort of “Twilight Zone” as we are unlucky to have contracted our illness (though there are several “self-inflicted” cases) need I mention our old friends (or is it “fiends”?); over-eating, especially of the wrong things, under-exercising and ...SMOKING ...habits, that if continued after diagnoses and during treatment are guaranteed to unbalance the most stable and caring medic) but we are also lucky to be living in the times we do. In most cases, if we’d been taken ill about 5 years ago and definitely 10- years ago, the treatment we benefit from, was probably not available and few of us would not be likely to play the violin again, as it were maybe the harp, though. I’ll leave you to ponder on whether it’s more likely to help recovery to think of ourselves as unlucky or lucky

I know we wouldn’t deliberately fence (literally or metaphorically!) with our advisors but let’s take care not to even seem like that’s what we’re doing. When we’re following the fashion of having a bigger say in our treatment. Presumably we’re not called “patients” for nothing so let’s try to display some patience at all times. The nurses and doctors have studied long and hard to pass lots of horrible exams. and know what they’re doing. Personally, I like to know the truth, if only so I can plan, (but I wish the facts weren’t about me, sometimes!!). but do I really know enough about the science to enable me to question the treatment? And I’m a Physics & Geology Honours graduate... pardon the trumpet-blowing! I regularly try to apologise for enquiring about my treatment, even though I know I don’t have to extend that courtesy, but don’t you find it a tad irritating in your profession if the customer keeps quizzing you... almost as if they don’t trust you... and it doesn’t do a lot to help the concentration, don’t you think.? Do we really want to do anything to spoil their concentration when they’re treating us?

I’ve mentioned that ANYTHING I’m told to do I’ll do. and so, one surgeon said to me” Smart guys do what we say, and you’re a smart guy!” I couldn’t have put it better myself. Perhaps the Nike advert “Just Do It!” is a rather harsh way of putting it but it does have the merit of being clear. Can it hurt to be polite? Try it, watch

their faces light up and their stress vanish... they’ll love you for it and perhaps it’ll help you get better. as you’ll enjoy doing it and make new friends. Amazingly enough, the statistics really indicate that more patients get better if they’re liked and thought about (and prayed for...) by friends than those who aren’t remembered... what do you make of that? Who better to encourage to like you and think about you than the medical team? And how can we arrange that situation to come to pass do you think...? Being nice especially at difficult times could help. I know that, alas, that’s not easy but what’s the alternative likely to produce? Your carers will recognise what you’re going through to try to be polite to them. and you’ll get the friendship, respect and smiles we all crave.

I was lucky enough to have a heart-transplant on New Year’s Day, 2002 (what a way to celebrate Hogmanay! I always planned to do “something different” for New Year but this wasn’t what I had in mind...), I’m now back at work and exercising happily..... some have said there might be something wrong with my head, now. However, I feel that anyone who thinks that is badly mistaken as I believe work and exercise help a lot in living. I feel that not trying to do something in the world after having been lucky enough to get “extra-time” is a sort of insult to all the many people who have done so much to delay the final whistle, not least being the donor and his or her family. I’m determined to earn what’s been given to me, even if it’s only by being more polite and nicer to EVERYONE I meet from now on. And I do mean EVERYONE in EVERY circumstance. Would you say that’s worth doing? It’s bound to be tricky but anything worth doing is never easy... believe me, I know lots about that concept.

Exercising helps in every way but it’s also FUN which I think is an important part of life. It also goes towards preserving any recyclable bits of me that are selected for use when my donor card is examined. Have you got one? I can give you a solid-gold, ocean-going, fur-lined guarantee that it’s the sure way to be remembered every moment of every day for your bravery and generosity (apologies for only being able to think of such a weak word for such a magnificent gift) by a complete stranger and his/her family. In fact, the fashion in treatment currently is to exercise as soon as possible after a transplant. A sort of “use it or lose it”-philosophy. I’m sure I wasn’t hallucinating when I remember that I was in the hospital gym almost the day after the operation! One of my doctors said he thought that was “heartless” and I was very sympathetic to his acute embarrassment when he realised his inadvertent joke! As you may guess, I think it’s a good idea not to lose your sense of humour it’s bound to help. If you haven’t got one, NOW would be a good time to work on one, perhaps. I gather the current record for survival (a term I’m not too keen on... conjures up images of “just clinging on” in life-boats! How about “living” ... that’s the idea, after all!)) is about 25 years and perhaps needless to say, I’m aiming for that as a minimum...but I’m a little aggressive about illness... how about you?

In the words of my favourite TV cop (showing my age, badly) “Let’s be careful out there” .... and no monkeying - about!!



**So, how on earth did I end up as a CIPFA member.....**

(Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy – Ed)

Dave Garry has recently proven that CIPFA members do have a creative side. In fact, upon delving into his life a little further, he is not only proven creative, but you can't help wondering, how on earth did he end up doing CIPFA. After winning the North West & North Wales recent competition to give their Newsletter an official name - NW<sup>2</sup>



*Figure 4 - Whilst on the twining visit to Antigua, the Leader of the Council thought it more appropriate to go with the blue background.*

Dave gives an account of his journey to his current position of Audit Manager at Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.

I guess it all started when I joined the Special's. Not the 80's Mod come Ska band of course, although I imagine that would have been an experience in itself, but the Special Police.

It would have been round about the time that The Sweeney and Hawaii 5 O were the top shows on TV (all you younger ones can catch them on UK Gold), we all thought we were the next big thing and you could constantly hear the Hawaii 5 O theme belting out from our Panda Car. Unfortunately, the people we arrested weren't impressed when our closing lines were 'take him down town and book him Danno'



*Figure 5 - DI Burnside got by running a successful kissogram business after the cast of Eastenders took over The Bill*

Eventually I became a fully paid up member of the police force and was asked to lead a training session on crowd control which involved my group acting the part of a rowdy mob and posing a violent threat to the trainee coppers. Being told to give them a bit of a hard time – they'll never learn unless it seems real and all that – I led my group into a right fisty-cuffs session the problem was that I'd actually got the wrong group of trainees and we ended up duffing up an innocent bunch of young trainees out for morning exercise!

They say old habits die hard and always happy to play the hero, whilst on my lunch one day I was strolling through Birkenhead when I saw a man running towards me being followed by a security guard. Putting two and two together I thought that the first man had been up to no good and managed to put my rugby training to good use with a full-on shoulder tackle. The man went straight down, and I proudly awaited the security guard to turn up full of praise. Needless to say, that the man I'd knocked over was none too pleased, especially as I realised that he was actually a plain clothes guard and they had both been chasing the offender who thanks to me had it on his toes.



*Figure 6 - Banksy took a lot of practice to get that good. The flowerpot man realised that once he was in the pot, there really was no escape*

It did take me a while to adjust from all this Frank Burnside behaviour when leaving the boys in blue to adapt to a slow and lazy life in Local Government. In one of my earlier jobs my colleagues were a bit surprised at my response to an inappropriate request as they were not usually in the habit of pinning their boss by the lapels to a filing cabinet. They didn't give me any hassle though!

Unfortunately, I was not successful on my first attempt at CIPFA while employed by Lancashire County Council, falling down on Audit (!!), however upon receiving my results I knew I wouldn't be upset for long as later day that I was playing rugby for the local club. Eager to get rid of the pent-up frustration of not being a perfect CIPFA student I raced up to Preston to take part in the game. So eager was I that I was caught in a police speed radar trap. Now, having been in the police myself, I knew that upon mentioning this I would be able to share a laugh and a joke with 'one of the boys' and soon be on my way. Unfortunately for me the WPC read me my rights.



*Figure 7 - The Fratelli's won the Burtons contract after their first single went to No 1.*

Well they say that bad news comes in three's and sure enough when I finally got to the Preston Grasshoppers ground where I should have been playing rugby, the game was cancelled

During my time at Lancashire where I worked in Audit, I was auditing a farm college and the audit included a stock check of the herd of cattle. This sounds like a load of 'bull' but back then there was actually a big problem of cattle rustling. Anyway, the audit involved using the stock records of the herd which has an outline of a cow on each one. Unbelievably, to verify the stock the stock man had to ink in the markings on each outline leaving the auditor to run around the field trying to tick off the cows to their identikit picture.

Talk about moving targets

Actually, speaking of farm animals when I was in Knowsley I remember a time when on an audit of a sport centre, one of the auditors had to pay a visit to the Gents. Upon realising that the cubicle next to him was occupied by someone rather odd he went to check it out. It turned out that it was occupied by a horse – a small horse at that but still a horse. The sports centre had rented it out to the horses' owner as a stable!!





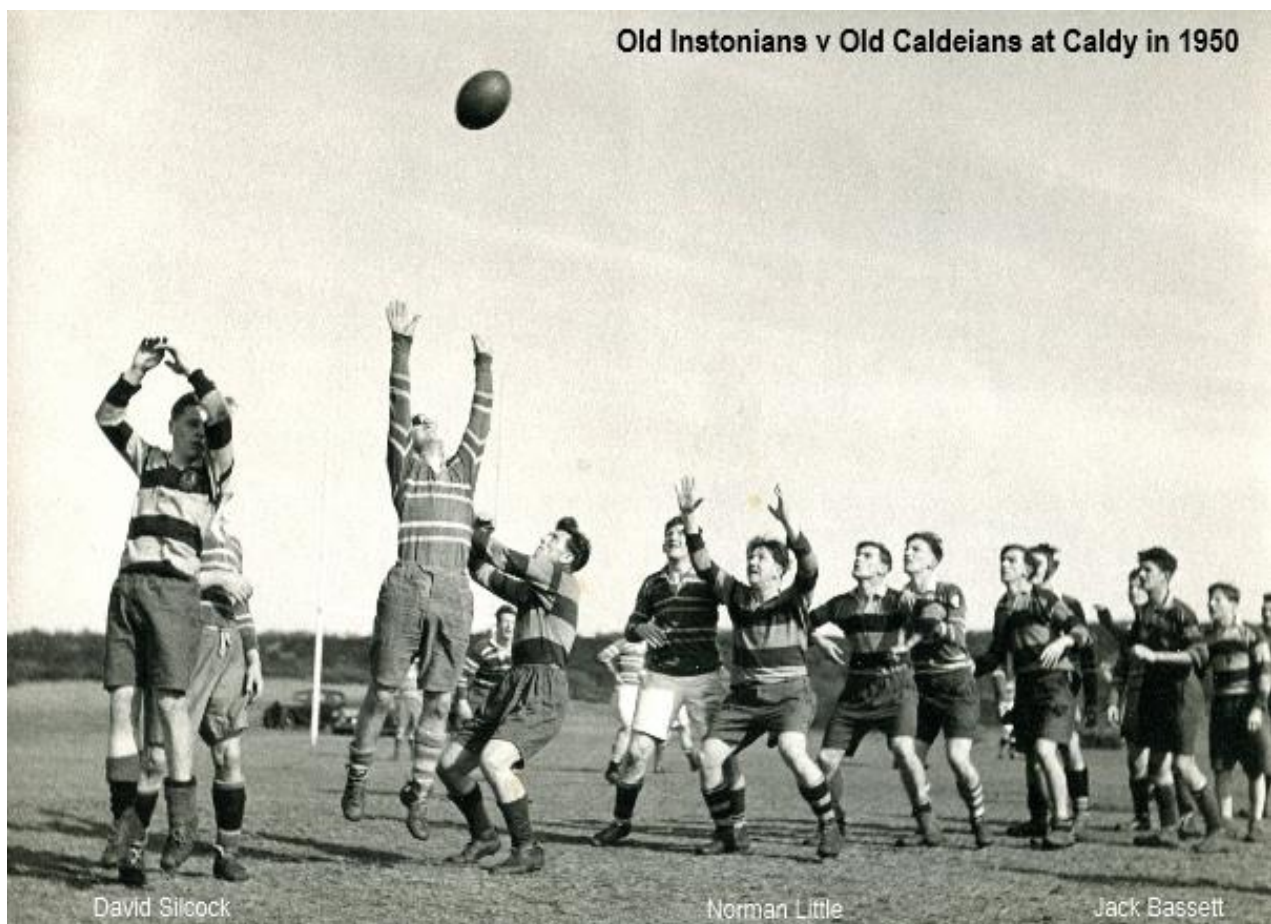
*Figure 8 - The Audit Section awayday contributed the cost of their colour printer to the authority's efficiency savings target as long as they were allowed to keep green pens.*

The field of cows is not the only time that the auditor has had to get in the thick of it to earn his crust, at Wirral, auditors have been known to paddle across the boating lake to make sure customers have been given tickets



A photograph from David Silcock (1942/48)

Old Instonians v Old Caldeians at Caldy in September 1950



*Figure 9 – David Silcock, Norman Little, Jack Bassett*



## Annual Dinner 2018

I am still hoping to increase the numbers for the annual dinner, this year on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October, as usual at Caldy Golf Club. Frankly, last year was rather disappointing, in the numbers who attended. It was the lowest number in my memory, 54 attendees. Socially, the evening was a great success with several new members attending, it was a very enjoyable evening.

So, as the last few years the theme is **Bring a Friend**.

If you'd like to go to the dinner, but perhaps feel that you wouldn't know anyone there, then the answer would be to bring all your (ex-school) mates with you. Over the last few years, several groups of members organised their own tables, which made it much easier for me, and was very successful. Ideally tables will sit 8 to 10 people, if you can't make 8 or 10, then try a 4 or 5 half table, I'll put another small group with you.

As usual, you can pay by bank transfer, or send me a cheque. Just let me know who is part of your group. Don't forget, if you're travelling a long distance and staying over, there's a normal fixture at Prenton RUFC on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October. Visitors would be most welcome.

### APPLICATION FORM FOR THE ANNUAL DINNER

If you wish to attend, then please return the completed form to: -

**Keith Dutton**

11 Finstall Road

Wirral

CH63 9YW



I will be attending the Dinner at Caldy Golf Club on Friday October 5th, 2018

Time 6.30pm for 7.30pm.

Dress: - Jacket and tie or Lounge suit and tie.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

E-mail ADDRESS.....

TELEPHONE NUMBER..... (Including dial code)

SCHOOL YEARS AT B.I (To arrange SEATING Plan) .....

Any Special Dietary Requirements.....

Any Special Seating Requirements.....

Please enclose a cheque for £32.00 made out to BIOB or transfer £32.00 to Sort Code = **30-15-52** Account = **03162233** Account Name = **Birkenhead Institute Old Boys** remember to include your name in order to identify the payment.

If paying by Bank Transfer, please send an e-mail confirmation after doing the transfer to [webmaster@BIOB.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@BIOB.co.uk)

Donations for the draw will be welcome.