



# AD-VISOR



## The Newsletter of the Birkenhead Institute Old Boys

Issue 18, Autumn 2013

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### Ingleborough Road

**W**e have Alun Hughes to thank for the unbelievable work rate that he has put in with regard to Ingleborough Road. Alun works full time but he spends a considerable amount of his spare time fighting against the odds for this cause. I have asked him to try to summarize the events that have happened over the last year or so and this is his report. It does not contain all of the items that he has pursued but it does give a very good outline. Alun has agreed that if there is time at the Dinner he will try to answer any questions that you may have, but keep them short and sweet.

### Ingleborough Road Memorial Playing Fields

**I** came late to the fight to save Ingleborough Road. First prize for far sightedness goes to Rob Wood who, at the time of the sale of the site by Wirral Council to Tranmere Rovers Football Club (TRFC) in 1995, made sure it was registered on the UK National Inventory of War Memorials, in particular its pavilion (built with donations from friends and family of the fallen Old Boys of WW1) and the ornamental archway over the entrance.

Despite Restrictive Covenants put in place at the time by the Council to protect these features, TRFC have neglected their responsibilities, firstly removing the arch and then allowing the pavilion to become slowly dilapidated.

Now the owner of TRFC, Peter Johnson, having failed to sell the club on the open market, appears intent on the sale of Ingleborough as housing land in an asset stripping exercise.

Once this became apparent, as a result of a planning application being lodged, first in 2011, then withdrawn before being resubmitted in 2012, Dean Johnson stepped up to protect the playing fields, generating much media coverage controversy and discussion.

It was then that I joined the debate, speaking on the Old Boys collective behalf at the Planning Committee meeting (sadly unsuccessfully) in October 2012, with Harry Burkett, Rob Wood and Dean Johnson in attendance.

The principle justification for the Council allowing development of Ingleborough, is the 'supposed', simultaneous improvement by TRFC to a Council owned leisure centre at Carr Bridge Road, Woodchurch. It is generally expected that this 'replacement' facility (which would allow TRFC control of the facility for 99 years at a peppercorn rent) should be completed before work can start on Ingleborough, but it is clear from information which has since come to light that TRFC are trying to find ways of avoiding this by merely paying a small sum of money into an upfront account thus enabling an early sale of Ingleborough. Many of us are suspicious that the profit will go straight into the pocket of its owner, Peter Johnson and also that insufficient money will be left to create the new facility expected.

Successful lobbying of Wirral Council's Cabinet in March 2013, by the 4 Old Boys mentioned above, resulted in a last minute, further condition being inserted into their approval to release, in principle, the Restrictive Covenants on the site preventing their use as anything other than playing fields. This stated that:

“The Petition submitted by Birkenhead Institute Old Boys be noted and within any provisionally agreed terms officers be instructed to negotiate an appropriate financial sum and delivery mechanism for a replacement memorial with Birkenhead Institute Old Boys to be involved in the creation of the new memorial”.

It might be imagined that this would ensure, at least a more respectful and dignified memorial solution than that currently offered by TRFC (a cheap brick apology for a skateboard ramp stuck in one corner of the field) but despite repeated, polite requests for a meeting with Peter Johnson, we have not received the courtesy of any reply.

During the months that have followed the Planning approval, multiple attempts have been made (and resisted) through Freedom of Information legislation to get certain Wirral Council Officers to reveal their complicity in facilitating TRFC's plans throughout.

What is clear beyond doubt is that of the £5m TRFC expect to receive from the site, only £2.5m is 'supposed' to be invested in Woodchurch and of this Wirral Council itself is contributing the entire £1.6m it will receive from the lifting of the Restrictive Covenants. Even if this were feasible (and both land values and building costs are already 3 years out of date) it is believed that this arrangement will breach European Community Law. Furthermore while pocketing the remaining £2.5m, TRFC it seems, claim that it cannot afford to be required to make any of the new housing 'affordable', as is the normal Council requirement in such planning applications. This is something in which Council Officers have acquiesced despite the acute need for such accommodation in the Borough. This also gives the land greater value as a result.

Whilst at one level, many Old Boys merely wish to see a more respectful remembrance of the War dead than currently on offer, others want to see the fields kept as an amenity space in the memory of the Fallen in perpetuity. Some believe that only by stopping development, even temporarily, a better chance of securing any respectful outcome is more likely.

It is therefore considered that while the Old Boys generally should continue to lobby for that outcome intended by the Council's Cabinet, individuals should be invited to become involved in a separate sub-group specifically aimed at stopping any development of Ingleborough Road. This group would require funds to enable it to seek legal advice on how best to block such development.

Whilst the media debate has focused on the most famous of our Old Boys, Wilfred Owen (rightly in my view), my limited research on the Roll of Honour (now displayed in Birkenhead Library) has shown the extent of the commitment to King & Country, to their comrades and also the sacrifice of the individuals, as well as their families, who lost in some cases only sons, only offspring and in the case of one of the families 3 out of 4 brothers who came back from Canada to fight but who never returned. The fate of the 83 individuals listed (plus one more found since) tells the story of the First World War in its entirety, from the date of the first to fall on 30th October 1914, on the outskirts of Ypres to the last to give his life on 13th February 1919 in Southern Ireland.

At very least such people deserve better than that currently on offer simply to satisfy the publically stated desire of a private company to sweat its assets.

Alun Hughes (66-73)

## STITT HOUSE

### SAMUEL STITT 1816-1898

Samuel Stitt was born at Whitehaven on the 24th May 1816. He was the son of Mr. James Stitt J.P., a gentleman of Scottish extraction, who early in the 19th century transferred business of Iron Merchant and Ship-owner to Liverpool and very soon became a prominent citizen. Samuel Stitt received his education in Liverpool, and on attaining his majority in 1837, was taken into partnership by his father, the firm becoming James Stitt, Sons & Co., and subsequently, on retirement of the father, Messrs. Stitt Bros.

The firm was a prosperous one, and in 1862 Mr. Samuel Stitt retired from business, but maintained his interest in mercantile affairs for several years, as a member of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. For thirty years he acted as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Finance Committee, of the British and Foreign Marine Insurance Co., in the formation of which he had taken an active share. His residence in Birkenhead dates from 1844, when he removed from Liverpool to "Enfield House" in Palm Grove, where he continued to reside until he built "The Grange" on Tollemache Hill in Claughton in 1857. In 1871 he was made a Justice of the Peace for the County of Chester.

A strong Liberal in Politics, he took a very active part in the Anti-Corn Law movement and in 1874, on the death of Mr. John Laird, he came forward as the Liberal Candidate for Birkenhead in opposition to Mr. David McIver, but was defeated by 947 votes. For several years he was Chairman of the Birkenhead Liberal Association, and devoted much of his time furthering its principles. When Mr. Gladstone introduced his Home Rule Bill, Samuel Stitt allied himself with the Liberal Unionists whilst retaining his admiration for Gladstone.

Stitt was also one of the founders of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, and for some time acted as its Treasurer. His affections and activity however were always chiefly engaged by religious and benevolent objects, mostly in connection with Presbyterianism. In the United Presbyterian Synod he took a leading position, becoming an intimate friend of its prominent Ministers. During the ten years he was Chairman of the Presbyterian Church in England he did much to promote Church extension.

Stitt joined the Birkenhead Literary and Scientific Society in 1869, was its President 1871-72 and remained a member till his death in 1898. He was twice married, first to Hannah, daughter of the Rev. John Stewart and later after her death in 1881 to the widow of Mr. Richard Bryans of Claughton. He left two children, Col. Samuel Stitt, and a daughter, wife of Captain James Hartley.

He was one of the Founders, and also a Director of the "Birkenhead Institute", in the welfare of which he took a keen interest, as indeed in all educational matters.

Samuel Stitt was present at the opening ceremony of the School on Saturday January 12th 1889.

### OBITUARY - BOB LOWSON (1931/37)

It is with deep regret I have to inform you of the death at 92 of Bob Lowson. Early in WWII Bob was in the Middle East and volunteered for the SAS. After training he was dropped behind enemy lines in North Africa then in Italy and Yugoslavia and finally before D Day in Central France. Bob never complained about his several wounds and despite them played Rugby for the Old Boys First XV. He was awarded the DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal), and the MM (Military Medal), both of which were only awarded for acts of bravery of the highest order. When I spotted details of these medals during one of my visits to his home he dismissed them with the comment "Oh them they came up with the rations". After the war he joined Shell and worked at their Stanlow Refinery rising from a clerk on the Lube Oil Plant to Manager of their Computer Department. On his retirement at 60 he devoted himself to his garden and was well

known for keeping all his friends and neighbours in Vegetables. His exploits in the SAS are recorded in the book STIRLINGS MEN by Gavin Mortimer. A good read about the acts of some very brave men. I understand that there is a good chance that Gavin might attend the funeral. This will be at 11.00am, on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013, at the church of St. Barnabas (Near Bromborough Cross) Bromborough.

#### **OBITUARY - MIKE POLLARD (1939/45)**

Mike Pollard was one of my "Band of Helpers" and will be missed by our Association. He was an excellent Cricketer and an outstanding Stand-off half for both the Old Boys and School sides. He was an all round Athlete and won the Victor Ludorum. Mike was a great friend and will be missed His devotion to the Old Boys was without equal.

#### **OBITUARY - GRAHAM DICKSON (1941/50)**

Graham Dickson was another excellent sportsman a very fine athlete who was awarded Colours for Rugby at a very early age, such was his prowess. He was competent at every sport he set his mind to conquer. He even tried Rugby League at one time.

#### **OBITUARY - ERIC BIBBY (1928/32)**

Eric Bibby has died just short of his 100th Birthday. Eric was the leader of that special band known as the "Old Farts". He attended every reunion until a couple of years ago. His claim to fame was that he was one of the Bibby family. Bibby and Perkins I think outfitted us all with our School uniforms

#### **OBITUARY - JOHN MANDY (1941/47)**

John Mandy another of our sporting stalwarts has died. John was Captain of the Old Boys 3rd fifteen for many years. His ripostes to stiffen the resolve of his side will long be remembered by all who knew him.

#### **Old Instonians Golf Society** **2013 Pyke Cup**

Last year the Pyke Cup was again played for at Caldy G.C. and the competition was won by Arthur Howarth. This year the competition will take place on the afternoon of October 4th before the Dinner at the Golf Club. It is an excellent afternoon's golf on a well prepared course. It is anticipated that a special green fee in the order of £20 for non-members, as charged last year, can be arranged again with the Club for this year's competition. It will take the form of a Stapleford Competition with full Handicap. Tee times available from 1.00pm to 2.00pm.

Those wishing to play this year can contact the organiser, Arthur Howarth, by email 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. Playing the golf does not require you to attend the dinner however we will talk about you if you don't.

Don't forget the BIOB website [www.BIOB.co.uk](http://www.BIOB.co.uk)

**Annual Dinner 2013**

The annual dinner will be held at Caldy Golf Club on Friday October 4<sup>th</sup>. The price is being maintained at £28.00. Please complete the Application Form to be found at the end of this Newsletter and return it to me as soon as possible. Any groups of people who wish to be seated on the same table please indicate the names on the form, and I will try to have you on the same table, if there are too many for one table, I will make sure that the tables are adjacent.

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**APPLICATION FORM FOR THE ANNUAL DINNER**

Please return the completed form to :-

Harry Burkett  
13 Prenton Farm Road  
Prenton  
Birkenhead  
CH43 3BN



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I will/will not be attending the Dinner at Calday Golf Club on Friday October 4th 2013  
Time 6.30pm for 7.30pm.

(For those attending please enclose a cheque for **£28.00** made out to **BIOB**).

Donations for the draw will be welcome.

Dress:- Blazer and Flannels or Lounge Suit.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

Email ADDRESS.....

TELEPHONE NUMBER.....  
(including dial code)

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

Any Special Dietary Requirements.....