



Tadcaster Grammar School Old Students' Association

NEWSLETTER

For former students and staff Number 30 - January 2007

450th ANNIVERSARY REUNION AT THE SCHOOL 22nd SEPTEMBER 2007



Chairman, Roy Gittins, writes

I was attending a luncheon date for old students of my old school a few weeks ago. These are held every four months and the conversation regularly turned to the little piece of school history taking place at that moment. The centenary of the school occurs during this current school year of 2006-7 - were any events being considered to celebrate the great milestone?

Actually, the rather more chilling thought crossing my mind was the sobering one that I had been a former pupil the thick end of ten years by the time of the fiftieth anniversary. I was cheered a little on claiming that our anniversary at TGS involves a number much bigger than one hundred and have on a number of occasions since revelled in the reflected glory of TGS's old age. However, I digress.

The word is beginning to get around that TGSOSA is calling a reunion on Saturday, 22 September 2007. We shall be reminding you of that date throughout the coming months, and at the moment are urging, nay pleading with you to spread the good news. In 1994 when the first reunion of 'the modern era' was in preparation, before the OSA came into being, I was faced with the problem of publicising the event. With the full blessing of David Impey, the then Head, I went into school each Thursday

morning during the Autumn term to tackle that problem, using the school facilities, especially the telephone, to spread the word. During that period I wrote letters or made telephone calls to all former students or members of staff whose addresses or telephone numbers I was able to find. The number of ex TGS folk I actually managed to contact was, fortunately, but a small fraction of those who turned up at the reunion. Each of those I contacted rang around to pass on the message, and I imagine that recipients of those calls, in turn, did likewise. Despite notifications to the press, to radio stations, and the display of posters locally, I remain convinced that the huge numbers filling the three halls at the reunion were very much the result of the 'chain reaction' effect of all those calls passing on the news.

As the year 2007 is a year of some significance I would urge all members to ring, write to, or e-mail any old students who, to the best of your knowledge, are not members, tell them about 22nd September 2007, and ask them to pass on the message to others. No prize is being offered to those who recruit the largest number of former pupils, but I can assure you that the many calls I made in 1994 gave me a great deal of pleasure - and not necessarily because they cost me nothing. We hope to be able to contact a larger number of former members of staff than we have seen in more recent reunions and will keep you informed of this and other matters concerning the reunion. Please, start your own chain reaction

A piece of friendly advice - don't be putting money on the age of TGS - St. Peter's, York is the local champion, founded 627 AD.

Wine & Cheese Evening Disappointment

Our sincere thanks are due to those members who attended the Wine & Cheese Evening on 15th July 2006. Sadly the event seemed not to be popular with members and was very poorly supported. Your committee has decided against holding such an event in the foreseeable future. Our secretary, Helen Walker, has her say on page 4.

We're on the World Wide Web

Visit our website at
www.tadcastergsosa.org.uk

Terry Hirst

1950 - 1958

My grandfather was Station master at Bardsey train station which I and my friend Warwick Bartle used to visit often. When I learned that I had gained a place at Tadcaster GS and would be travelling there and back by train, that added to the excitement, an excitement maintained in the following few weeks by all the varied new experiences encountered in this new (to me) school. One of the abiding memories of my first year is of doing woodwork with Mr. Fletcher. I have never been very good at DIY, as shown by the fact that, at the end of the first year, I took home my one and only finished product – a pan-stand, made of two shaped pieces of wood jointed together. Mr. Fletcher would give me a piece of wood and tell me the dimensions to saw, plane, and sand it. Half an hour later I would take it back to him. Upon checking it he would say "Too small. Chuck it in the bin. Here's another piece of wood". There were four of us whom he referred to as his 'firewood manufacturers'. At the end of the year we had to choose between woodwork and Latin. Needless to say I chose the latter, for which I later became most thankful, having found it useful in so many ways.

I always enjoyed Chemistry with Mr. Taylor. In the 1950s there were no health and safety regulations as we have now. None of us thought it strange when he said that he wanted a drop of blood to examine under the microscope, asked for a volunteer, picked up a pin from his desk, and stuck it in the boy's ear lobe. Promptly there was a thud as another boy fainted and fell to the floor. Happy days!

At some point (I can't remember which year) the senior school moved to a new site at Toulston, about two miles out of Tadcaster off the road to Leeds. Toulston Lodge Hall, which I revisited about four years ago, had a lasting impression on me, particularly the wooden staircase rising up from the panelled hall to the first floor. I remember the morning when I first stood nervously awaiting the moment to read the lesson in morning assembly. More enjoyable was the occasion at Toulston when I sat at the piano to play Beethoven's 'Moonlight' sonata to the sixth form. During that fairly recent visit to the site it was interesting to note how the school had expanded up the slope from Toulston Lodge since the 1950s, surrounded by beautiful woods and fields – and also that the gas fittings in the old Chemistry lab were still there, although no longer in use.

In the Sixth form I studied Geography, Zoology and Chemistry and had taken the opportunity of participating in the Geography Field weeks from earlier in my school career. Despite my enthusiasm I developed an embarrassing talent for getting lost which must have caused Arthur Coles some concern as to my prospects in the art of map-reading. My first field week was in 1954, our base being a Youth Centre at Longhope in Derbyshire. In the following year we stayed near Hay on Wye. On the Sunday afternoon my friend Ian Graham and I got Mr.

Coles' permission to go for a walk up the nearby mountain. We climbed up, over some patches of snow, without any problem until we turned to return to the house. Ian decided that he preferred not to go back down over the snow because he was wearing ordinary smooth-soled shoes, so we set off on a different route which I thought would lead us back to the house. However, after some time we realised that we were lost, walking (squelching!) down a little valley – in gathering darkness. Fortunately we found a little farmhouse, explained our predicament, and were answered, at first, in Welsh! When the farmer finally understood the problem he kindly phoned the house. At 8 o'clock Mr. Coles arrived in the Land Rover belonging to the house. He was not best pleased!

On our 1958 field trip to Borrowdale Ian and I again 'went astray'. Mr Coles had taken us up Scafell, the second highest mountain in the Lake District, and on beginning the descent Ian and I saw an inviting little gully into which we went. Gradually it became steeper and deeper until the little stream in the gully occupied its entire width. There was no way out other than struggling back up the gully on to the regular descent. On learning where we had been Mr. Coles was horrified. We had tried to descend Piers Ghyll, which was classified as 'a difficult rock climb'.

We were privileged to have a Combined Cadet Force and as my father had served in the RAF. I naturally joined that section. There remain the memories of ironing the serge uniform, trying to get a crease in the trousers, of polishing belt buckle and cap badge with Brasso, and of polishing boots until they glistened. I was lucky enough to be able to go dual-control flying at nearby RAF Church Fenton. My father would drive me over on Saturday morning and I would be taken up in either an Auster or a Chipmunk. To be flying around the sky on a summer's day in a tiny aircraft was a wonderful feeling. Sometimes I was allowed to take the controls, which was even better. On one occasion the pilot asked me if I would like him to 'loop the loop', a stomach churning but exciting experience. Each summer I went on a week's course at an RAF base, to RAF Shawbury, near Shrewsbury, in 1957. By that time I had reached the dizzy heights of corporal (as had my great friend Roy Turgoose) and was hoping that I might get my sergeant's stripes in this final year at TGS. At the Shawbury camp I was in charge of a six-man tent and during the week an Officer decided to do a spot check of my tent. Unknown to me one of the boys had left a bottle of beer in his kit bag. I did not get my stripes, but they were picked up by my good friend Roy Turgoose.

I consider myself very fortunate to have been at Tadcaster GS, benefiting from the firm foundation it gave me for my degree course at Exeter University followed by a career in Teaching, from which I retired seven years ago. Many thanks to Mr. Bicknell and to all the staff of the 1950s.

Contributions to the Newsletter Needed

We are very grateful to Terry and Roy for their articles on these two pages. We cannot produce a newsletter without contributions from members. So why not try your hand at writing a few lines about anything you think might be of interest to members: you don't necessarily have to reminisce. We are even open to constructive suggestions about the newsletter.



In December 2003 the CO of Northumbrian Universities Air Squadron at RAF Leeming decided to beg, borrow or steal one of each type of aircraft his unit had operated since its beginning in 1941. The aim was to fly this mixed formation around the villages and towns of North Yorkshire to celebrate 100 years of powered flight.

The Tiger Moth, Chipmunk, Bulldog and Tutor were duly gathered and I was lucky enough to fly the Tiger Moth. The owner advised me that this particular aircraft started life early in WW2 as a submarine spotter, operating from a small airfield on the east coast of Scotland.

Why am I telling you this? Arthur Coles, my sixth form mentor in both Geography and in the RAF section of the CCF began his wartime operational flying on Tiger Moth submarine-spotting patrols out of a small airfield on the east coast of Scotland. We may have flown the same aircraft, albeit 60 years apart! The one I flew bore no evidence of pigeon excrement, but in Arthur's day, with no radio, the only means of communication was a homing pigeon housed in a wire cage on top of the fuselage between the two cockpits. In the unlikely event of spotting a submarine, the pilot would scribble his 'guesstimated' position on a message form, reach forward to open the cage, grab the pigeon before it escaped, insert the message into the container on its leg, then release it - hopefully to H.Q. Arthur never had the opportunity to test the efficacy of this system, but he did spend many cold and uncomfortable hours collecting the inevitable pigeon droppings on his goggles and helmet.

I owe Arthur a great deal, and was deeply saddened to hear of his death on Arran. I appreciated his memorial stone at Toulston when I visited TGS many years later to see the Headmaster, David Impey, and to present awards to two CCF cadets. (David had been one year ahead of me in the School of Geography at Nottingham University). Incidentally these were amongst the last such awards as the CCF, already reduced to RAF only (but including girls!) disbanded shortly after. I had flown a number of cadets on air experience sorties and had flown flypasts over their Annual Inspections. The close-down was a sad day for those of us who had gained Gliding Certificates and even Flying Scholarships through its auspices.

Arthur Coles featured largely in rounding off my time at TGS but I had come a long way in most respects since 1951, in Form 2A with Miss Watts as Form Teacher. In the wooden huts alongside London Road on the brewery corner in Tadcaster, I sat alongside Geoff Skeels and wondered how on earth I would survive in this new

environment. I lived on a farm, over a mile from the small village of Wighill, where I had attended the small village school pre-TGS. I was considered a bright child academically, but was aware that 'puny' was a generous assessment of my physique. This did not bode well for my chosen profession. I have no idea why I decided to become a military pilot, there being no family history of military service (except in wartime) and certainly no hint of aviation, but this had been my ambition since the age of five. It helped *enormously* to have such an aim throughout school and university. During the school holidays I worked on the farm, and this helped to build up my body. There were still problems however. I was hopeless at PE and sports, and certainly no credit to Dawson House in scoring Athletics points. Throughout my schooldays the Staff were unfailingly kind and helpful, their encouragement eventually leading to 'A' levels and 'Oxbridge' applications, seeking a Scholarship or even a place. The latter were to no avail, but I did qualify for a County Bursary (worth £80 per term) and was offered places at Exeter and Nottingham. Since Exeter had no University Air Squadron my choice was Nottingham University. Arthur Coles' tuition in the third year of the 6th form had covered much of the university first year Geography course, so that I was able to concentrate on the Geology and photogrammetry - and, of course, flying with the UAS. Eventually, once I had been provisionally accepted for aircrew service in the RAF there was almost unlimited flying available with the UAS including solo, formation, solo night flying and solo navigation - all in the little Chipmunk. It is very different now!

By the end of my third year I was President of the Geographical Society, had met my future wife, had flown 226 hours with the UAS, had gained a lower second honours degree and had exactly four old pence to my name.....but no debts. I had made it.

On 28th January 2005 I flew my last sortie as captain of a military aircraft, giving air experience to an Air Cadet. I had served 34 years in the RAF and 10 years in the RAFVR. I have a long-suffering wife who was a teacher for many years - a trail blazer for working wives of RAF officers - and two daughters. One went to Aberystwyth and is now a Chartered Accountant in Exeter. The other went to Oxford, became Design Co-ordinator in the Jaeger head office, and then married. She lives in Surrey, the wife of a consultant paediatrician, and has three children. I have retired to a small house within the walls of York, and through my wife's church membership met Peter Hulbert who had arrived at TGS as PE master a year before I left. He introduced me to the TGSOSA Newsletter No. 26 containing Peter Dawes' article, which triggered this one.

[Photo - Roy as a member of No. 37 Squadron, Aden 1963]

450th Anniversary Reunion

The TGSOSA committee is determined to make this reunion the best since the inaugural meeting. How can you help?

1. Make every effort to be there.
2. Pass the word to your contemporaries.
3. So often we hear of people not coming because they couldn't be sure there would be anyone there

that they knew. There are two ways you can help here

- a) Bring a friend
- b) Let us know you're coming and allow us to put your name on a list of declared attenders to be posted on the website. (see the website for how to do this)

More on the Reunion on page 4.

Do you have a copy of this photo?

The photograph to the right which shows the prizewinners at the 1966 Speech Day was e-mailed to me by Dr. Jenny Bimrose. Sadly the e-mailed photo was of very low resolution and so Jenny agreed to post the original to me. Unfortunately that original went missing in the post. If you happen to have a copy of the photo I should be grateful if you would e-mail a copy to info@tadcastergsosa.org.uk. The resolution needs to be in the region of 1500 pixels by 1000 pixels to produce a decent print. It would be nice to supply Jenny with a replacement print.

Gerry Nutton



REUNION 2007 - Latest

Last November the TGSOSA committee contacted Geoff Mitchell, the Headmaster, to arrange a meeting with him with a view to persuading the school to help celebrate the 450th anniversary of the school's foundation. Three members of the committee, Helen Walker, Gerry Nutton and Laurence Myers went to the school on 9th January. Laurence has kindly agreed to rejoin the committee on a temporary basis to lend his considerable knowledge of the school's history and organise an exhibition. He had given a great deal of time to putting a detailed scheme on paper for the team to present to the school. When we arrived at the school the headmaster apologised for not being able to meet with us because he had been called to an urgent meeting elsewhere. He left us in the capable hands of Assistant Head Mrs. Glover.

Laurence presented his plan which involves mounting an exhibition for the reunion and continuing it in school for the benefit of students who could be encouraged to produce work for the exhibition: prizes might be awarded for the best work. It was also suggested that a booklet about the history of the school could be produced. Originally it was thought that this would be given or sold to members but it was also suggested that it would be good to present a copy to each student though this would require funding help from the school. It would be nice to have volunteer students show members round the site at the reunion. This idea was received warmly by Mrs. Glover

Mrs Glover was most helpful and agreed to pass on our ideas to the head and ask him to reply to us by half-term.

Grumpy Old Lady Shoots from the Hip

Dear Old Students

What a pathetic bunch you are! The Cheese and Wine Evening held for your benefit this Summer was very poorly attended. A small group of willing helpers compiles and posts the Newsletter and organises reunions, not for their own pleasure and satisfaction, but to try to get old students together on campus. At the first reunion some twelve years ago there was standing room only in the hall: laughter and happiness abounded. So where has everyone gone?

On 22nd September 2007, 450 years after the school was founded, there will be a reunion, we hope a rather special reunion, so please get out of your comfy chairs, leave your happy homes, tell your friends, just make an effort and come!

Helen Walker (Inman)
Grumpy Old Lady

Helen has been Secretary of TGSOSA from the beginning. She has helped in the organisation of every event and has probably filled, labelled and stamped over 10,000 copies of the newsletter in that time.

Pixie Puzzle Solutions

Two Pixies

A traveller comes to a fork in the road and is unsure which of the two roads to take. At the fork are two pixies about whom the traveller has been informed. He knows that one pixie always tells the truth and the other always lies. Each of the pixies knows about the other's honesty or lack of it. The traveller can ask only one question about which road to take to reach his destination and can ask it of only one of the pixies. He doesn't know which pixie is which.

What question should he ask and what action should he take?

Answers

Two Pixies: He should ask either pixie this question, "If I were to ask the other pixie which road to take, which road would he tell me to take?" Whichever road he says the traveller should take the other.

Three Pixies: The truthful one couldn't say "I'm not the one who tells the truth" - he'd be lying. The liar couldn't say "I'm not the one who tells the truth" - he'd be telling the truth. So the first one's the ditherer. The second one says "I'm not the ditherer" which is true - the first one's the ditherer. So the traveller should ask the second one for directions. As to the third one? - cabbage soup, deep-fried Mars Bars, red herrings even. Whatever, he's a liar. G.N.

Three Pixies

A traveller comes to a fork in the road and is unsure which of the two roads to take. At the fork there are three pixies about whom he has been forewarned. He knows that one always tells the truth, one always lies and the third is a ditherer who might tell the truth or lie. He does not know which is which.

The traveller asks each one in turn "Which one are you?" to which the first one replies "I'm not the one that tells the truth", the second one replies "I'm not the ditherer" and the third one replies "I don't like cabbage soup".

Which one should he ask for directions?