

NEWSLETTER

For former students and staff -October 2005 - Number 27

Chairman's Remarks

Roy Gittins

As these pages fall onto your doormats it will be almost exactly fifty years since I first set foot on the old Leeds Road site as a member of Staff, Toulston Lodge being some distant colony set within the bounds of the far-flung T.G.S. empire - pupils were drawn from a catchment area of a good ten miles in radius. I had, of course, visited the old site at an earlier date when I arrived clad in my best suit hoping to impress the Headmaster sufficiently to persuade him to offer me employment. I well remember my first sight of the school as the bus from Castleford turned the corner into Leeds Road on that interview morning. From my seat on the upper deck I had a clear view of the activity in the playground where there appeared to be much carrying of books and various bits and pieces towards the gate by the Sherburn Road. Directing operations was a well built, imposing figure of a man, presumably a caretaker, although his general manner and dress (despite the braces) did not suggest that this was necessarily the case.

Being in good time I chose to ride to the next stop, or possibly there was not a bus stop directly opposite the school - or if there was such a stop I may well have missed it! Whatever the reason I recall my walking back past John Smith's Brewery to find the playground almost deserted, but I have not the slightest recollection of how and where I entered the building. There must have been a period of waiting in the men's staff-room and I can still remember a comforting feeling of how friendly everyone appeared to be. This was no false impression, but more of that later. When the moment arrived I was ushered (with the utmost courtesy I am sure) into the Headmaster's office where I came face to face with the man in the braces, now wearing a smart jacket as befitted this more formal occasion. This was something of a surprise and the ensuing 30-45 minutes produced other little surprises which, in hindsight, were characteristic of the endearing eccentricity of T.G.S. during the W.N.B. years. Introductions over, I found myself seated across a table from Mr. Bicknell and a Mr. Edward Taylor - nothing unusual in that. I did find it odd that, as the interview began, there should be the continual chatter of a typewriter as the Headmaster's secretary settled down to the daily routine of letter writing, four or five feet to my left. There were a few moments of amiable chat (probably to enable me to pitch my voice at an appropriate level so as not

to distract the typist) during which I was desperately endeavouring to recall the clever answers I had prepared to the questions I was about to field. Then, more shock than surprise, Mr. Bicknell eased back comfortably in his chair, smiled pleasantly, and said "Now then Mr. Gittins, tell us all about yourself!". At such moments one's life seems to have been empty and quite worthless. The ultimate in surprises was the offer of a post at the conclusion of the interview. Much less surprising, at a later date, were suggestions that the absence of Governors, or of other candidates on that fateful morning was easily explained. This had been a one-horse race. I was reminded of this about eighteen months later one evening in, of all places, Pontefract Town Hall. At that time Geoff. Wood directed an Evening Institute choir in Tadcaster and he entered us in a Music Festival held annually in Pontefract. There were three Classes for small choirs and we were placed fourth, second, and first in the three competitions. Not a bad evening's work! On relating our experiences in the ensuing few days we did not necessarily remember to add that the number of entries in those Classes happened to have been four, two and one respectively.

During the weeks following the interview I suppose that my thoughts regularly turned to early September, to the new term at Tadcaster and the host of new faces and names to learn. I was confident that the Staff would be a friendly lot on the evidence of the few brief meetings at the interview, and the words of Edward Taylor. He had been at pains to emphasise that on appointing Staff the Head regarded as almost a first essential that the candidate should fit easily and amiably into the Staff room. I believe that W.N.B. had an impressive success rate in that particular area. In my early years at T.G.S. (before my age rendered me virtually unemployable elsewhere) I can state quite categorically that the thought of leaving so many good-natured colleagues was a weighty factor in persuading me to stay put. But what of the children? What sort of monsters awaited me....and how many of them? That I am sitting at a keyboard some fifty years later writing for a T.G.S. Old Students' Newsletter suggests that they cannot have been such a bad lot either.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The address label on the envelope contains important information about your subscriptions to TGSOSA. Please do not destroy the envelope before reading the information. More details on page 2.

There was a full attendance at the meeting of the TGSOSA Committee on 24th May. Present were Roy Gittins (Chairman) Geoff Beevors (Treasurer), Richard Hunt, Laurence Myers, Gerry Nutton (Membership Secretary and Newsletter), Louise Smith, Helen Walker (Secretary) and Jane Walker.

NEXT REUNION

It has been policy to hold a reunion once every two years, the last one being in September 2004. The committee felt that, since 2007 will be the 450th anniversary of the school's foundation, it would be appropriate to hold the next reunion in that year. It was suggested that an evening function might be held in the Summer Term of 2006.

FINANCE

Treasurer Geoff Beevors reported that the Association's account stood at £329.92, just sufficient to cover the cost of printing and distributing the next newsletter. He added that it was important to ask members, in the next newsletter, for a further subscription.

Richard Hunt pointed out the new postal charges scheduled for 2006 would be higher for the C4 envelope currently

used for the newsletter but not for the smaller C5 envelope. Members felt that it would be wise to keep the present A4 format for the newsletters, fold them and post them in C5 envelopes. [Ed. *The new charges come into force in August 2006. The postage charges will be C4 - 35p and C5 - 21p.*]

RESIGNATIONS

Fellow members of the committee expressed their sadness at the resignations from membership of the committee of Laurence Myers and Richard Hunt. Roy expressed his sincere thanks to them on behalf of the membership (*See his article below*)

Laurence was a member of the History teaching staff for 38 years and for much of that time was School Librarian. His two daughters also attended the school.

Richard attended the school from 1977 to 1982, having started in the third year. He was responsible for the design, editing and production of the first 23 newsletters.

Both had served on the committee since inauguration.
Both

Many Thanks

Having served loyally on the Committee of this Association since its inception Laurence Myers and Richard Hunt have recently announced their retirement. It is often the case that committee members are unsung heroes, devoting many hours of their own time in a cause to which they are totally dedicated. The unstinting efforts of both Laurence and Richard are surely well appreciated by members. Richard has transformed the early, somewhat 'home-made' looking Newsletters into the polished and, in the opinion of many of us, professional product of today – he can hardly be held responsible for the copy which some of us have presented to him! Laurence was largely responsible for the repair of the Bishop Oglethorpe tapestry which has been on display in the School Hall some 45 years and which was in such a sorry state that it was in danger of complete

from Roy Gittins

disintegration. This sounds a simple enough matter, but the negotiations involved were indeed lengthy, not least in finding someone prepared to do the work for a fee not requiring massive Lottery funding. Both these major contributions have been well documented, and I can assure you that during the past decade Laurence and Richard have readily taken on board those countless and often irritating problems which just have to be sorted out – 'unsung hero' territory.

As it happens, they are splendid people to work with and will be sorely missed by the committee. On behalf of all members I thank them sincerely for their many contributions to T.G.S.O.S.A. and wish them great enjoyment of the extra leisure hours now available.

Subscriptions

The only significant item of expenditure for the Association is that of funding the printing and distribution of the Newsletter. As you will see above, we have sufficient funds only to print and distribute this issue. It has been our practice to ask for a £5 subscription only when we need to boost funds and we have never asked for payment more frequently than once every two years. If you have paid within the last year or so you do not need to pay again. The address label on

the envelope carries details of your payments since inauguration. The figures are printed in red. For example *y 8 0 2* means that you paid at inauguration (*y*) and in the years 1998, 2000 and 2002. Please send your £5 subscription to the treasurer,

Geoff Beevors
1 Ash Hill Drive
Shadwell
Leeds
LS17 8JT

In our last issue we published the first part of a long article by Peter Dawes and we publish the second part below as well as the first part of a long contribution by Robin Whittlestone. We need contributions from members on a variety of topics, preferably of a length no greater than would occupy, say, one of our four pages. We welcome all contributions, however brief. Two hundred words on what you are doing now or about your school memories is not difficult to produce. So how about it? Start writing and send the result as an attachment to an e-mail to either Roy at royjeangittins@aol.com or Gerry at gnu@gnutton.fsnet.co.uk. If you don't have access to the internet please write to Roy at the address given at the foot of page 4. Our secretary, Helen, shows the way with her contribution in this issue.

The Ramblings of a former T.G.S. Pupil (part 2)

Peter

Whilst still a junior I came across Phil Oxtoby who was about five years older than me and a cashier in the Bank. He also hailed from Tadcaster and attended TGS where he remembered my sister, Joan, as Head Girl. At that time, Phil was as bored as I was with banking but he got a break (don't we all need them in our careers?) and he was promoted into the Foreign Department of City Branch in Leeds. He had found his real niche in his working life and apart from being an Associate of the Institute of Bankers he also qualified by examination as a Member of the Institute of Export. Shortly after that he was seconded to UBAF (an Arab bank in the City of London) and after two years decided to move to them permanently. Phil had a very interesting career and retired as Deputy General Manager of the Bank. In the course of his work he flew out of Libya the night before the U.S. bombed Colonel Gaddafi's Tripoli and was on the same flight number exactly seven days before the Russians shot down a Japanese airliner – both incidents in the 1980's. Who says that banking is boring.

I had a period as sub-branch cashier in the South Leeds areas of Holbeck and Beeston and these were some of my happiest in the Bank. I well remember in the 1960's going up to Beeston Park sub-office on the back seat of the ordinary service bus with a suitcase full of cash strapped to my wrist and my sole protection was a dodderly old guard about 70 (almost there myself now) with a wooden cosh. On Friday, wages day at the local factories, we had increased security. On that day we had two male cashiers (always had to be male, ladies could not be exposed to danger) rather than one and we went by taxi! Our protection was still the 70-year-old retiree with the wooden cosh. Do you think that Securicor would get away with that today?

Having obtained my professional qualifications my management career took me from Leeds to Manchester where I worked in Business Banking dealing with medium sized businesses and some PLC's. The last job I had in the Bank was a career change within the Bank, to set up the new unit of Midland Private Banking (now HSBC Private Clients) covering the area from the Yorkshire border to the Scottish border. This involved dealing with the very wealthiest clients of the Bank – 10 years ago you had to have £100k of liquid assets before we became involved. Through this I was privileged to meet some very interesting people from the worlds of politics, sport, entertainment and the Aristocracy but mostly self-made business people.

I retired in December 1997 and then my new career began. In a similar way to Michael Orriel who wrote recently, I could not face total retirement and so wrote to a number of institutions offering my services. I started work in 1998 with Durham Business School as a mentor/assessor on their postgraduate Business Management and Financial Management programmes. At that time I also obtained further qualifications to do with the Teaching of Adults and became an NVQ level 5 (in management) Assessor. Because of my business experience that work led to my becoming a Tutor/Assessor with the national programme Technology Means Business, sponsored by the Chartered Management Institute. Eventually, I became one of six Agency (External) Verifiers for the programme across the whole of the U.K. I am glad to say that, six years after my first retirement, I am planning to retire a second time at the end of the year. That does not mean an end to all paid employment though. I have always been an old car enthusiast - courting in an M.G.A., honeymoon in an M.G.T.D. and restoration of a Morris Cowley Ice Cream Float in the 1990's – but more of that another time. Upon my retirement from the Bank we bought a 1954 "R" Type Bentley purely for our own pleasure. Within a short time I had people knocking at the door asking if I would provide the car for their daughter's wedding. This snowballed and I now have a

thriving Wedding Car Hire business. It is a very pleasant way of "earning a few bob" and will continue for the foreseeable future.

Married Life

In 1970 I married my soul mate, Maureen (Townesley). Although Maureen did not attend TGS, because her parents ran the local garage and petrol station in Barwick-in-Elmet they knew many of the Scholes/Barwick families. One of the reasons why we got on so well when we first met was that we knew so many people in common – the "Heppies" (Big and Little), Pivatts, the Horners (Jennifer was in my class), the Routledges and so the list went on. Amazingly, only two days before the last Newsletter containing Michael Orriel's article arrived, we had been discussing Michael and where he might be now. We have been blessed with a daughter, Naomi, who presently lives in the U.S.A. and has recently presented us with our first granddaughter. We live in the beautiful Tyne Valley – if you have never been to Northumberland you do not know what you are missing.

TGS – was I a "taker" or a "giver"?

Regrettably, I can think of very little which I contributed to TGS but a list as long as your arm of the benefits, which I enjoy to this day:

- It will be 50 years this autumn since I met Brian Naylor. I am unsure how we became friends – he was very sporting (Soccer First Eleven, always in the first 3 places of the annual Cross Country race) - I was not. He was very clever, I was not – and so the list goes on. We were both members of the CCF, which is probably where our friendship developed, but he and his lovely wife Rosemary (Foster) are our longest (carefully avoided "oldest") and most loyal friends. The good thing is that they only live about 12 miles away in Co. Durham and we see them regularly.
- People often assume that to work in a Bank the most important skill is mathematics. Whilst important, it is way behind being a good wordsmith and a good negotiator/debater. The ability to express myself verbally and in the written word **have** stood me in good stead all my working life – thank you Miss Watts, Mr. Heselgrave and, of course, "Big Heppie". My TGS training in this regard also benefits the next generation. On occasions, I will receive a call from my daughter (who has a Masters in Archivism) and my son-in-law (who is an international expert in cell division) asking "Dad, how would you say..." I am sure that sometimes they do it just to make the old man feel needed.
- TGS also gave me a sense of community of belonging and having a responsibility to a group or community. Is this what has been missing with today's education and which they are now, belatedly, trying to rekindle? Could it be anything to do with that lady who, reportedly, said, "there is no such thing as Society"?

With very many thanks to Mr, Bicknell, for whom I had enormous respect, and all those members of staff who had the patience to try to encourage me to learn.

Peter Dawes

Antics at Toulston Lodge

It all started in the Chemistry lab. Do you remember those high, arched taps over the sinks? Well some boys thought it would be fun to flick drops of water at the unfortunate girls opposite much to their annoyance. Revenge was plotted. At that time our form room was upstairs in Toulston Lodge next to the girls' toilet. The plan was to squeeze soggy paper towels onto the boys below. All went well for many a day and revenge was sweet. Then the soggy towel went into the hands of one of our not too subtle members and with awful timing. Mr. Taylor (Chinny) was walking by and saw the lot. Fear struck. What would happen to us?

Next morning in assembly Mr. Bicknell announced that the upstairs toilets in Toulston Lodge were to be out of bounds until the girls concerned confessed their

Helen Walker (Inman) (1959-1956)

sins. There was nothing for it but to troop to the head's office to confess. A little gang of girls received a telling off and left much humbled. We thought that was it but no. When the head came, as was his habit, to deliver the fortnightly marks he also delivered another lecture to the guilty party in front of the form. He called us "sexually perverted" because we "hung around in toilets". I have never forgotten this incident and wonder if Betty Walker, Susan Hale, Anthea Burrill, Ros Jackson and others also remember it.

Happy days!

It all started in Mr. Gittins' Chemistry lessons!

TGS Years

First Days at TGS

Memory of that first day is very hazy. It was all so different. I had arrived that cold, wet February morning from a very relaxed Grammar School in Otley, some 15 miles up the dale, which had large open grounds, set well away from houses and the road, and with rugby, hockey and cricket pitches to the north and west, and tennis courts to the south. The Leeds Road site was very different: surrounded by the odorous brewery on 2 sides and busy roads on the other two sides. Inside was very crowded too and, the day being wet, was full of bodies between the door and the Headmaster's study. Prince Henry's Grammar School had been spacious internally. The only thing in common seemed to be that the boys & girls stairs were separate.

The interview with Mr Bicknell went smoothly. Dad had moved from Otley to Boston Spa as head of the secondary modern school there, and he had already met Mr Bicknell. Before long I was given books and introduced to Form 5A. What a difference here too. The form included several older pupils who had transferred to TGS at 13. Because conscription was still in force, the older boys had to do GCE exams that year if they were to pass before call-up, and so I found myself in an O level form, with a different syllabus, and with the exam 12 months nearer.

As the day progressed break proved very constrained by the small yard and made memorable by the smell of malting barley. The lessons all seemed to generate homework with returns due next day. An even bigger surprise came at the end of the day. I discovered that next day we were due at Toulston Lodge and all the books, exercise and text, needed next day had to be packed into my satchel, along with those required for the 5 subjects of homework. What a difference from PHGS, where no more than 3 subjects were ever set on one night, rarely called for next day or took more than 15 minutes a subject. Half an hour was expected per subject at TGS. It was all new to me and it took a *lot* longer. Perhaps that is why PHGS rarely achieved more than one County Exhibition

Robin Whittlestone (Feb 1953-1957)

scholarship to put on the honours board every other year. It made that first night quite unforgettable!

Next day, another wet one, found me squashing onto another crowded bus, then huddled under a glass canopy in the boys' yard in the rain, waiting for the bell to let us in. What a difference too when once inside. That hall, with its elephant heads and wooden panelling. What views of countryside outside the windows; the smell of the kitchen... all still fresh in the mind. This was so much better. After that it was all routine and plain sailing for the next few years. Lots of hard work, but lots of fun too, especially once we moved up full time to the Lodge.

I'm glad I made the move from PHGS. I look at the difference in approach between the 2 schools and wonder what I would have become if I had not moved. I would have struggled even to get to Teacher Training College; most likely ended in a bank or shop. I'm very glad I moved!

After TGS

I left TGS in July 1957, and after an idyllic summer went to Bristol University. Mr Bicknell had insisted that the nearest university that he would support entry to, was Birmingham, but I opted to go further, to Bristol. Two of us went that year; I thought we were the first from TGS, but that wasn't so.

I chose Bristol, partly because they offered me a place, but also because of the content of the Physics course offered and the superb location. I had opted for Physics (when what I really wanted to read was electronics & radio) because the A & S level Physics course (old style) included some electronics. I discovered fairly soon after arriving, that at Bristol the Electrical Engineering course had a major electronic content; however I had, by then, become interested in Physics, and three eventful years later I graduated with a sufficient grade to stay on to do an MSc course, later converted to a PhD course.

To be continued