

O·N·A

OLD NOVOCASTRIANS ASSOCIATION **MAGAZINE**



Issue 71
Spring 2007

NOVO Day



The RGS cricket season starts



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Contribute!

We are always looking for articles and news from Old Novos to include in the magazine, so send your contributions, via email (if possible) to: ona@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk or to the ONA Office at the school.

Please include relevant pictures if you can. They will be returned as soon as the magazine has been printed.

The deadline for acceptance of copy for the Summer 2007 issue is: **Thursday 12 July**. Copy may be carried over to a future issue.

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NE1 3BT Tel: 0191 232 0379

All correspondence should be addressed to:
The ONA Office Royal Grammar School Eskdale
Terrace Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4DX
Telephone, ONA office: 0191 212 8924
email: ona@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk

The Editor reserves the right to edit, alter or omit all submissions to the magazine. Copy may be carried over to the next edition. The Editor's decision is final.

A Message From the President

Welcome to the Spring edition of our magazine. I hope that you find the content interesting and that it fills you with nostalgia! As usual we are on the look out for articles, pictures, news and events to share with other members of the Association. We would particularly welcome information from the 1960's-1990's as we are lacking material for those years. Please also let us know if there are any particular features you would like to see covered in forthcoming magazines or events that the Association can organise or assist with.

This edition comes hot on the heels of our recent Novo Day held at School. I was delighted to see over 200 former pupils together with their families and friends in attendance. I am sure that everyone enjoyed the opportunity to catch up with old friends, celebrate the centenary of the main school building and see the developments which have taken place over the last few years. Highlights included the guided tours by current prefects, the buffet lunch and the temporary revival of the school song, played by Mike Barlow on the organ in the main hall. Thanks to all those who gave their time and support to make the day a success.

As the facilities available at the school continue to grow and improve it is worth noting that the school has taken a long lease of the County Cricket Ground in Jesmond. RGS has entered into a partnership with Newcastle Cricket Club that not only preserves the future of the ground for the club and the community but also ensures that RGS has one of the best school grounds in the country.

Many of the changes evident in the school fabric and structure, and many of those which are less tangible and visible, are the result of the inspiration; vision; determination and leadership of the current Headmaster, James Miller. Some of you will already have heard that he has announced his decision to retire from teaching in around 18 month's time. No doubt much more will be said and written in the coming months but, for now, let me thank James on behalf of the Association for all of his efforts over the last 14 years.



A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "R.P.V. Etherington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rod Etherington (80-90)
President

Christian Union Reunion

Few will want to remember every aspect of the fashion-challenged and abundantly hirsute late 60s and early 70s, but clearly some have much to be thankful for when at the RGS during that period. Among the teachers of the time was the remarkable John Rowling (on the staff 1963-74), who later moved on to Hirst High School in Ashington before beginning a long and exceptional headship at Nunthorpe School on Teesside – with a knighthood for services to education on his retirement in 2003. Not only did John contribute hugely to sport at the school, alongside his maths teaching, but he proved an inspirational and energetic



leader of the Christian Union, providing meetings for every age-group of the school and a wide range of holidays, houseparties, and other events (in partnership with other staff and often in collaboration with other schools).

With customary initiative John invited a number of folk with whom he was still in touch to consider the idea of a reunion (a particular impetus being the imminent departure of John Clark (left 1972) to a school headship in Africa), and the electronic bush telegraph resulted in

dozens being contacted. John and Sheila generously made available their lovely house and garden in Stokesley, on the edge of the North York Moors, for a memorable sunny day together on 8 July. Folk, some with wives and a few with children, had travelled from all over the U.K. to be present, and after reassuring ourselves that “we haven’t changed in the slightest”, we settled down to excellent refreshments, lengthy reminiscences, whole-school and other photographs, houseparty-style games (including croquet) – and a time of worship and thanksgiving for God’s love and faithfulness, which, after all, is the one reason why we were together both in the 1960s/70s and also in 2006. Some may wish to reconsider their verdict that the school CU offered only an emotional adolescent skirmish with Christianity which would not stand the test of time!

A commemorative brochure was produced for the day, featuring photographs of long-remembered houseparty venues such as Featherstone Castle, Corchester School in Corbridge, Ridley Hall and Broomley Grange, and written contributions from those who attended the day and those who sent greetings from elsewhere (Taiwan included). We were delighted to welcome several members of staff – Colin Dales, Alan Wright and Bill Gibson. The day’s pianist was Don Gunton, who contributed to many houseparties over the years, and Bill Cuthbertson (with other absent friends) was fondly remembered.

Roger Mills (66-75)



Left: Alan Wright (59-66) and Roger Mills (66-75).

Above: Anthony Cowey (62-72) and David Archer (62-72); Don Gunton at the keyboard. Below: Graeme Fairbairn (59-67) Rod McPhee (67-73), John Clark (65-72), and Colin Patterson (60-69).



The End of Prizegiving

It goes without saying that the annual Prizegiving ceremony at the City Hall must be a tradition whose origins go back into the dim mists of time. In fact, the City Hall Prizegiving started only in 1963 and so, like many traditions, is much shorter lived than most people think. Bill Haden brought it into existence because the School itself had grown to the extent that it could not sensibly be accommodated in the School Hall. I imagine that making it possible for large numbers of parents to attend was one of his objectives.

I am not sure what people thought of Prizegiving then; what is clear now is that it has the support of very few. Pupils and staff value the day off before Prizegiving in the evening; very few enjoy the occasion itself. The attitude of parents is clearly demonstrated by the numbers attending; in 2006, this was down to below 320 – ie only one in seven parents attended. Though it is important that we celebrate academic achievement, Prizegiving as it stands is a dreary occasion held at a dreary time of year in a dreary location. We have therefore decided to abolish the City Hall ceremony.

We have yet to finalise our plans as to how to replace it. What we shall probably do is to have year group prizegivings in the new theatre during school time. We would like to have these at the end of the summer term; practicality may mean that they need to be in the autumn term, but, if that is the case, they will happen much earlier than the November Prizegiving. The Autumn Term half-term will also start on the Thursday, rather than the Friday.

My feeling is that Prizegiving in recent years has existed merely because Prizegiving has existed. Inertia alone, however, is not a good reason for maintaining it. I hope that we can produce more appropriate celebrations of academic achievement and also, perhaps, take the opportunity of looking to institute a new big occasion, possibly some sort of summer fête open to both the RGS and local communities.

James Miller, Headmaster



The Headmaster Retires

As you may have heard, I have decided to retire at the end of next academic year, i.e. in the summer of 2008. This is not a snap decision; it is something that I have been contemplating for some time.

Being Headmaster of the RGS is a wonderful job – in my view the best job in education. But it is also very demanding, and I am concerned that, if I were to continue beyond September 2008 when I shall be 58^{1/2}, I might simply not have the reserves of energy to enable me to do the job as I feel it needs to be done.

By that stage, I shall have been a headmaster for 19 years and Headmaster of the RGS for 14 years – two years longer than I would normally reckon is the desirable maximum for any headmaster. It also happens to be a

particularly good time in the cycle of events for a new Head to come in.

I anticipate that my job will be a very attractive proposition for lots of able heads and deputies and that the Governors will have no difficulty in finding an outstanding new Head; I expect everything – appointment and transition - to go very smoothly. And we do, of course, have an excellent Senior Management Team. In the meantime, it will be business as usual from my point of view.

It has been, and remains, a real privilege to lead such an outstanding school as the RGS. I know that I shall find the process of leaving in 18 months time very difficult. Equally, I know that it will be the right time – for me and, more importantly, the RGS.

James Miller, Headmaster.

RGS gets rates right!

Four members of the Upper Sixth took third place in the final of the Bank of England's *Target 2.0% Competition*, and were awarded a cheque of £2,000 by the Governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King. The team of Kooyeon Kim, Jeffrey Li, Martin Bell and Giles Strachan reached the final from an initial entry of over 300 schools, where they presented their views on the economy and the direction of interest rates to a panel of judges including members of the Bank's Monetary Policy Committee. RGS reached the national final two years ago, finishing fourth, and last year were runners up in the area final, putting them in the top 12 in the country.

RGS Rugby News

In the recent Ampleforth Rugby Sevens competition, the U15 team produced some outstanding performances to reach the final, beating Wakefield, Manchester Grammar, Hymers, St Peters and Barnard Castle, before finishing a close second to Sedburgh, 17-12, losing in the last move of the game. The U18 team reached the semi-final and were eventually knocked out by Hymers, 19-17. The U13 team had an excellent run in the Edinburgh Sevens – eventually losing the final to George Watson's School, 12-9, in extra time.



Novo Day

100 years of RGS at Eskdale Terrace

Old Novos, their friends and family gathered at RGS for Novo Day on the first Saturday in March.

Over 230 people filled up the main hall, the cornerstone of the 100 year celebration, where, over a coffee, they caught up with old school friends, and perused the archive displays.

Most also took the opportunity to have a guided tour with the school's prefects, which included the new stunning Performing Arts Centre, as well as a OTC/CCF display.

After the buffet lunch in the dining hall, Novo Day finished in style – a rendition of the school song, played by Mike Barlow on the organ in the hall!

Many Old Novos commented on what a good shape the school is in, and how friendly and informative the prefects were – and how they don't want to wait 100 years for the next Novo Day!

Above: Richard Porter (50-59) and retired teacher John Elders. Below: Geoffrey Wheeler (45-48) Below left: Ray Eden (32-36), Chris Mordue (49-56) and Peter Malone (50-61).



high hopes for the cricket season

THE SCHOOL CAN LOOK AHEAD to the forthcoming season with optimism. The 1st XI contains a large number of senior players in their last year. The captain is wicketkeeper-batsman Richard Coughtrie who is contracted to Durham Academy. Last year his availability was limited; this year he is expected to play more often and he should be a real asset.

Other stalwarts are Tom Akehurst,

wicketkeeper-batsman Niall Penfold and all-rounder James Finch. We can also field a right arm and a left arm wrist spinner in tandem, which not many teams can boast. All rounder Michael Craigs will be a key player and will captain the side in Coughtrie's absence.

There is a cluster of promising younger players. Year 11 batsman Dan Young is expected to make an impact, as is opening bowler Chris Goodfellow. Martin

Speight will for the first time assist with the coaching of the 1st XI on Saturdays and given the ability in the 1st XI squad, we should have a productive season.

The finale will be the annual RGS Cricket Festival, this year held at Worcester, a lovely place to play and watch cricket.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF RGS

cricket is gradually improving. There have been developments at the County Ground: ew fencing has been put in place, netting will be erected at the cemetery end of the ground and we have a new mobile net for practice.

Head Groundsman John Grey has also levelled the ends of the square. Investment is ongoing: next year we can look forward to an artificial pitch in addition to the relaying of several pitches. It will also be our turn to host the RGS Cricket Festival in 2008. Meanwhile a generous gift from Northern Rock has financed the installation of completely new nets on the school site which will be ready for the beginning of the summer term. They should prove a superb practice facility.

Let's hope the sun shines and look forward to what I hope will be a happy and successful season for all RGS cricketers.

O. Edwards, Master ilc of cricket.



First ball being bowled at Jesmond Cricket Ground

All Old Novos, their family and friends are very welcome to watch the school matches (and all other matches) at the cricket ground in Osborne Avenue. The fixture list is as follows:

Date	1st XI versus	Time
Saturday 21 April	Newcastle CC	13.00
Wednesday 25 April	Middlesbrough College	14.00
Saturday 28 April	Barnard Castle	11.30
Wednesday 2 May	Northern Universities	14.00
Saturday 5 May	St. Bees	11.30
Wednesday 9 May	Yarm Shool	14.00
Saturday 12 May	Durham School	11.30
Wednesday 16 May	Dame Allan's	14.00
Saturday 19 May	King's Tynemouth	11.00
Wednesday 23 May	Middlesbrough College	14.00
Sunday 24 June	Glenalmond College	13.00
Tuesday 3 July	MCC	11.30

Who?

Jonathan Holbrook (67-77): I'm married to Ruth with three children aged from 11yrs to 6yrs. We live in Surbiton, Surrey (it's a good life!). I work as a GP near Epsom, where I have been for the last ten years. I enjoy the job and am currently looking to develop an interest in immediate care and trauma medicine. We are settled in the London area but travel back to the north-east at least yearly as both my wife and I have relatives there. We are active in our local church and I am also a governor at our children's primary school. I still play chess (I captained the school team in my time at RGS) but alas no longer rugby - age creeps up on us all!

John Kankalil (90-00) I qualified as a chartered accountant recently and am currently working for Ernst & Young in Newcastle. Old friends in the Newcastle area wishing to meet up can contact me via the ONA.

Nicholas Baylis (76-83) is chief executive for advertising agency M&C Saatchi in Auckland, New Zealand.

Jonathan Sewell (92-99) I've been working for the Scottish Executive for the last four years, and was promoted to economic adviser last spring, which led to my transfer to the Scotland Office where I am the head of the economy team. The new post is still based in Edinburgh, however, involves trips to our London office Dover House (which was used as the external set for Yes Minister!). Very much enjoying it and looking forward with interest to see the results of this May's Scottish Parliament elections.

Richard Rollison (76-85) is a civil servant, working for the Scottish Executive.

Ben Giaretta (82-92) writes: I got married last year in Gloucestershire (where my wife, Naomi, is from). I am working in international arbitration at the London office of Ashurst, where I have been since 1999. I live in West Hampstead in London.

William James (Bill) Peacock (45-50) writes; An undistinguished career at school was followed by National Service in the Royal Engineers. I then became a Chartered member of the Institution of Civil Engineers and is the dual recipient of the James Forrest Silver medal for Civil Engineering research, the only dual winner since the award's inception in 1847. In 1968 I formed a company involved in construction design and management and has largely operated in that and associated spheres to the present. After many years as a league cricketer and becoming involved in the administration of the game in the N.E I became chairman and am now President of the Northumberland County Cricket Club. The wheel turned full circle in assisting in the recent acquisition of the County Cricket ground by the School. My brother **David Peacock (48-56)** is now living in Sydney, Australia. I have two sons, **Tim Peacock (73-83)**, who, after joining the Royal Navy as a University Cadet attained a B.A (Hons) in Modern History at UCL and a M.A in War Studies at Kings College, London. Since then he has carried out a variety of appointments as a fleet officer in ships ranging from a minesweeper HMS

Inverness to the aircraft carrier HMS Invincible. Tim became a qualified fixed wing and helicopter pilot, and was appointed Commander R.N in 2006. He is presently Commanding Officer of H.M.S Monmouth, currently on a 9 month deployment in the Far East and Australasia. Tim Married Sally (with Bharat Nurali as best man) and father of Matthew (11) and Sara (9). My other son, **Chris Peacock (82-92)** obtained a B.A.(Hons) at Nottingham University, then carried out research in econometrics at Southampton University leading to the award of a M.Sc and then Ph.D. After initially working for the Government Economic Service Chris joined the Bank of England in 2001. He is

When?

principally engaged in research into the global economy and a member of the team that provides advice to the Bank's Monetary Policy Committee. He has represented the Bank at chess and football. Chris married Rachel and recently become the proud father of Emily.



Left to right: Chris Peacock, Tim Peacock and William Peacock.

Old Novo hits publishing success with first novel

Paul Torday (54-64) has spent most of his life in industry, but in the last three years has found the time to write. For the last fifteen years he has also been a keen salmon fisherman, and as he lives close to the River North Tyne, he has been able to indulge in this enthusiasm.



Salmon Fishing in the Yemen is the story of Dr Alfred Jones, a fisheries scientist - for whom diary notable events include the acquisition of a new electric toothbrush and getting his article on caddis fly larvae published in 'Trout and Salmon' - who finds himself reluctantly involved in a project to bring salmon fishing to the Highlands of the Yemen ... a project that will change his life, and the course of British political history forever.

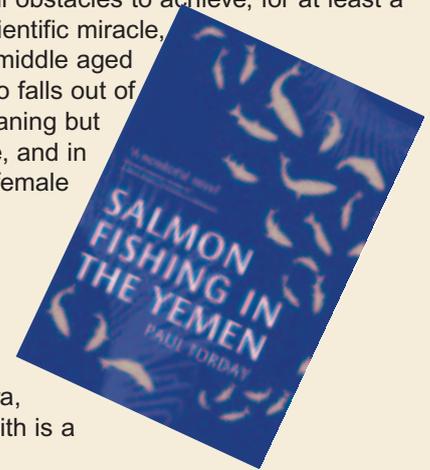
With a wickedly wonderful cast of characters - including a visionary Sheikh, a weaselly spin doctor, Fred's devilish wife and a few thousand transplanted salmon - *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* is a novel about hypocrisy and bureaucracy, dreams and deniability, and the transforming power of faith and love.

Paul says: "I suppose the first inspiration for the book was when, at a conference I was attending on improving the environmental quality of English rivers, a scientist said

something about "in-stream organisms such as migratory salmonids" and it took me some time to realise he meant 'salmon'. From that came the idea of an (entirely fictional) fisheries scientist, devoting his life to writing papers on other sorts of 'in-stream organisms', in this case caddis fly larvae, who is suddenly confronted by a demand to work on a project to introduce salmon into the dry river beds of the Yemen, which flood once a year in the rainy season.

"That was the genesis of a book which unexpectedly, at least for me, turned out to be a comedy about faith, a story about how money and the devout belief of a Yemeni sheikh overcome all obstacles to achieve, for at least a brief moment, a scientific miracle, and the story of a middle aged fisheries scientist who falls out of love with his well-meaning but career obsessed wife, and in love with a beautiful female chartered surveyor.

"Behind all of the narrative is a serious point: the tension between a world where faith is too often an optional extra, and a world where faith is a necessity."



Salmon Fishing in the Yemen was BBC Radio 4's Book at Bedtime earlier this year. It is published in hardback by Weidenfeld & Nicholson, price £12.99.

Congratulations to **Gautam Deshpande** (95-02) who last year graduated with an MEng in Information Systems Engineering from London's Imperial College.

Duncan Preston (94-01): Since leaving RGS in 2001, I have graduated with a 2:1 BA (Hons) in Classical Civilisation from Nottingham University, and am now a manager in the collections department of the Royal Bank of Scotland. My brothers, **David Preston** (90-97) and **Ian Preston** (91-98) are both doing well for themselves. David has completed two masters degrees and is now a geography teacher at Manchester Grammar School, and Ian is area manager for one of the largest estate agents in the country.

Congratulations to **Arnie Dunn** (70-77), recently elected as the new president of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS).

Jonathan Stoddart (67-77) Acting Chief Constable of Durham, has been awarded the Queen's Police Medal.

The Human Rights lawyer **Geoffrey Bindman** (46-50) was knighted in the New Year Honours list.

Ben White (89-99) is teaching economics at Bromsgrove School and runs the 1st XI football team there.

Simon Cuddeford (83-90) is currently working as a Contracts Engineer for TOTAL in Paris and Nigeria.

Alan Douglas (75-85) I am the younger son of John Douglas who taught Maths from 1956 through to his retirement in 1994. I began rowing at school (to avoid playing 7-a-side Rugby) and continue to do so now at Staines Boat Club, which is located on the Thames to the west of London. Through rowing I have recently caught up with **Simon Todd** (78-85) who has returned to the UK following several

years living and working as a freelance photographer in Hong Kong. He continues to ply his trade as a photographer and now rows for Thames. Through work I have also met up again with **Peter Kilner** (74-81) who is now a Partner for law firm Clifford Chance in Tokyo. John Douglas and his wife moved south to Berkshire some years ago to be nearer to their 3 grandchildren - 2 belonging to me and one to my older brother, **Martin Douglas** (74-84).

Where?

MORE NICKNAMES FROM THE 1940'S

Geoffrey Marsh's article (ONA Magazine issue 71) on 1940's nicknames provoked a big response from ONs of that era. Here, we publish edited extracts of some of the letters we received, as there simply isn't enough room to print the full versions.

Having been briefly a pupil at the RGS from 1945 to 1948, I much enjoyed Geoffrey Marsh's piece on nicknames in the latest edition of the ONA magazine.

Among the masters who are mentioned I was surprised to note the absence of one of the most formidable, namely 'Dickie' Akhurst. As a new boy in Form Two one, I remember that we were all much in awe of him. At that time he was already fairly elderly, and although he was never remotely violent he had the sort of personality which demanded total subjection.

He taught Latin (rather well I think). He also did French, where he was less comfortable (certainly less fun than Jimmy Herdman).

Keith Grant (45-48)

Geoff Marsh's piece in the last issue about nicknames brought back many memories – however, he states that "S.G Middlebrook who taught history, was Deputy Headmaster".

There has never been at the RGS a dignitary known as a Deputy Headmaster. There is a Second Master, but in our day that position was filled by the redoubtable H N (Boiler) Smith. It was after Boiler's death in August 1950 that Sammy Middlebrook succeeded as Second Master.

Sammy's actual (and only) Christian name, incidentally, was Sydney. Not many people know that.

Bryan Stevens (44-49)

T Taylor (Chemistry) was Tommy Test-tube. There were two Baileys (not Bayley). The elder (G.H.) was known as 'Bill' which caused problems when his younger brother joined the staff as he was really Bill. GH Played for Northumberland at Rugby and ran the RGS rugby. The proper Bill was a cricketer.

Among pupils, Eric Krause (Head of School 38-39) was known as 'The Oaf' a nickname he inherited from a former pupil when he left. N E Wood (captain of cricket 38-39) was often called 'Mother'. Dr H G Barnes was 'Bingy' and his younger brother 'Dingy'

Denis Marrian (34-39)

Belonging as I do to the period which Geoffrey Marsh wrote about, I can make some additions: Mr Macro: a tall, patient maths teacher, who played the double bass with the School Orchestra, was known as Ob, named, so I was told by older boys, after a river in Russia which was long and wet. (Sounds like another Brian Redhead invention!)

The Meaken brothers: the one who taught Geography to lower forms was known as Stoker. The other, who taught Sixth Form Geography, was Spitty, on account of what happened when he spoke. I remember friends talking about the consequences of a lesson on 'alpine penneplains'. He had kept up connections with his Cambridge College, for which he had played cricket, and could rely on obtaining places there for outstanding cricketers. When others of us were aspiring to State Scholarships, these were known as Spittyships.

Mr Dean: chemistry, was Dixie (for a famous footballer?).

Mr W.Cuthbertson, geography, was doomed inevitably to be known as Bogs. I was caned by the Headmaster Eb Thomas in my first year, having been caught squirting water about in the toilets by the caretaker 'Guts' Innerd (another nickname). A salutary lesson for a future Head Boy.

Puffy Williams taught physics in my first year. He began each lesson by laying in front of him a complete stack of file paper, in preparation, I presume, for inflicting his unique imposition: "Take five cubes" (of many digit numbers, to be

worked out for the next lesson). Every time he went out of the lab we helped ourselves to the paper. He never showed any reaction to the way his pile shrank during the lesson.

Neil Robinson (46-54)

I remember the following: Ebb and, inevitably, his wife 'Flo' 'Pharaoh' (MG) Robinson 'Gloops' Daviea (chemistry) 'Potson' Capt as he was then, Robinson **Ian F Angus (33-37)**

I would like to add my memories of the nicknames of masters that I can remember during the six years I attended the RGS. These are my personal recollections of more than fifty years ago which I believe are quite accurate although to be honest I can hardly remember what I did yesterday! Friends tell me it is an age thing.

J.A. Herdman: French master, went under the nickname Chopper, reason unknown.

W. Cuthberton: English and R.I. master known as Bogs due to his



unfortunate initials WC. Also known as the Big Fisher due to his stature and that he took a lot of R.I. lessons. A kindly man.

M.G. Robinson: English master known as the birdman due to his interest in bird watching.

Gordon McKay (50-56)

I can reveal why Colonel Robinson found an old nickname "Capo" waiting for him when he returned to the RGS after five years active service. Just before the war he was promoted to Captain in the Territorial Army and he made sure that everyone knew that henceforth he was to be known as Captain Robinson. His resulting nickname showed the usual combination of respect and affection.

This rule did not apply to Akhurst the Accursed who taught French in a forthright manner. "How many times do I have to tell you something before you remember it?" he would ask. "Three times, sir" replied one honest Second Former.

Dr. Davies of the Physics Department went by the strange name of Gloops who was a plump benign character in a strip cartoon in the Newcastle Evening Chronicle.

B R Cook (36-44)

Eric Reeve (36-45) writes:

George Holloway (36-44), who many will remember as a very personable and good all-rounder rang me from Tunbridge Wells where he lives to say Marsh got it wrong about the way TitchBla got his nickname. He didn't get it because of his shock of yellow hair, he got it because of me, and George witnessed the incident:

Tucker Anderson, form master and J3 junior school nicknamed you BLA and it came about like this, you had chased a boy called Taylor down the stairs of the junior school; he dashed into the toilets and slammed a heavy door behind him to



stop you catching him. Unfortunately your little finger was in the door when it closed and on opening it the end of it was hanging off.

You proceeded to run around like a chicken without a head leaving copious amounts of blood and making one hell of a noise (blaring out).

Tucker Anderson was in an adjacent room to the toilets and named you bla as a result. When your younger brother P.B came to school two years later you were promoted to Big Bla and he got called Titch Bla.

Colonel ROBINSON was "Capo" because that was his rank when he came to the School before the Second World War. He was also known as "Potsun" "Buggy" LITTLE pre war form master of J2 BRIAN REDHEAD's Tot was surely after the Newcastle Centre Half – Tot Smith PETER TAYLOR "Pimpah" **Chris Emmerson (36-47)**

Bull Canning who outdid Billie Boll's chalk throwing prowess by requiring any offender to chew a piece of chalk.

Then there was the fearsome, and slightly mad Mr Featherstone who allegedly taught woodwork, who outdid the Boll and Canning combination by throwing chisels when angry.

Peter D Smart (42-49)

And finally...

Dear Editor

I have no right to write to the ONA as I was a pupil at Church High! My reason for writing is, I disagree with Herdman's nickname. He was Herdy. Jimmy was his Christian name. I had three sons at RGS. One of my sons agrees with me, the other two disagree!

Pam Fay



FROM THE

I believe that the boy on the right in the 1970 Photo in issue 70 is called Nick Cosby. I think he came from Ponteland. He was, if my memory serves me right, in either the year above me or the one prior to that. I feel sure that I should recognise the person on the left, but the name escapes me for the moment.

Tim Armstrong (64-74)

The three fine gentlemen on page 6 of the ONA magazine are John Bransden, Bernie Helm and Nick Cosby. They were contemporaries of mine and I was in the 6th form from 1971-73 so the photo might be a bit later than you thought. I haven't seen any of them since I left school but if my hair situation is a guide, the answer is no they haven't .

David Hood (67-73)

Eventually we received an email from one of the boys, Nick Cosby (66-73):

Regarding your archive photo of the three 'hairies' in issue 70, page 6, I can confirm that from left to right they are; John Branson, Bernard Helm and myself. Just to confirm that I still have all my own hair, albeit somewhat shorter, I enclose a recent photo.

I don't know what happened to John or Bernard, I have not seen either since leaving school. I can't remember why the

Asking if anyone knew the names of the boys in the above picture, prompted quite a few Old Novos to phone and write in; the ONA office was also visited by a sixth former, whose mother had recognised her ex-boyfriend in the picture!

I recognise all three miscreants in the right hand picture at the bottom of page 6 of Issue 70, but I am having trouble with their names after all these years. All three would have been in my year which, in 1970, should have been the fifth form, not the sixth as stated. I believe the surname of the fellow in the middle was Helm. The boy on the right was at the school for as long as I was (if I recall correctly) and his name may have been Cosby or Crosby. The left member of the group was a comparative newcomer, having joined the school in 1969 I think.

I doubt if they still have as much hair, even if it is still as long!
Bob Bramwell (66-71)

SUMMER OF 61

At the Central High Gymkhana!

Left to right: **Tony Kysh**(51-60), **Roger Squires** (54-62), **Malcom Staig** (51-61), **David Jenkins** (56-66), **Graeme McClagan** (?), and **Simon Milne** (57-59)

Picture taken by David Goldwater (51-62).



ARCHIVES

picture was taken, or who took it, but we all seem to be posing like mad! I think it was taken when I was in the Fifth or Lower Sixth, circa 1971 to 72.

I now live in Cheshire near the beautiful Peak District. I am married with one daughter who is now in her third year at Stirling University studying Philosophy. My mother still lives in the North East so we do return from time to time, and I still think of Northumberland as my 'spiritual home' as it is the most dramatic and lovely county. My hobbies are clay pigeon shooting and walking.

I have spent most of my working life in the financial services profession, and currently run my own Independent Financial Adviser practice.

So if there are any old Novos who have cleaned up on the Lottery, and are stuck for what to do with the money, I would be delighted to hear from them!

Finally, Bernard Helm (66-73) phoned us. A friend had told him about the picture, but he hadn't actually seen it, so we sent him a copy. He



Nick Cosby

replied:

I am enclosing the least worst recent picture of myself and if you actually publish it you could maybe mention that those people that remember me as a complete and utter prat were absolutely right. I was. I think I may have improved slightly with age. I do hope so!

After leaving RGS I went to Leeds Polytechnic, studying communications & graphic design. I then did a postgrad at Bristol before eventually returning to the North East. I am an Editor at Tynes Tees, editing amongst others Dales Diary and The Way We Were.



Bernard Helm

We still don't know what happened to John Bransden after he left RGS. Bernard continues:

Actually it was John Bransden who I have Googled intensively but can only find reference to his father, Brian who is a distinguished and now retired Professor in the field of Nuclear Physics at Durham University. However I think John was actually Barry John, which means that the books published by B. Bransden could perhaps be authored by father or son.

Do you know where John Bransden is, and what he is doing? If so, please let the ONA office know.



FIFTH FORMERS 1983

Photographer, **Nicholas Posner (78-85)**: "I took this photo when I was at RGS in 1983. The boys were not known to me but struck this spontaneous pose when they saw the camera. This look was entirely natural at the time and will evoke memories for anybody who was a teenager in the 1970s or early 1980s. Some parents wrote to complain about the picture bringing the school into disrepute. Exactly the kind of reaction teenagers of any generation try to provoke!"

Nicholas D Scott (73-84)

Nick Scott, 41, former cox at Newcastle RGS Boat Club, Tyne Rowing Club and Newcastle University Boat Club, sadly died on 23 January 2007. Nick loved sport, but had a congenital heart problem that meant he was unable to take part in active sport. Rowing gave Nick the chance to train and compete in sport as a cox. Throughout the 1980s Nick was an ever present sight in the coxes seat on the River Tyne. He began his coxing at school for Newcastle Royal Grammar School and later moved on to Tyne Rowing Club and Newcastle University Boat Club.

Nick hung up his rudder when he graduated in 1989, but made a return to coxing in December 2006 when he coxed a veteran Newcastle University Boat Club alumni crew from the 1980s of Chris Squires-Parkin, Chris Davey, Bruce Willoughby and Kevin Oates at Tyne Rutherford Head Race.

It was fitting that Nick managed to make a final coxing trip on his beloved River Tyne before he died. Nick still retained an interest in rowing and regularly attended local regattas in the North East. Nicks final visit to a regatta as a spectator was in August 2006, when he attended the World Rowing Championships at Dorney Lake. Rowing and coxing gave Nick years of enjoyment, pleasure and the chance to compete in sport.

Professor Leslie William Hepple (58-65)

Born 24 July 1947, died 2 February 2007 of a heart attack, aged 59.

Les Hepple went up to Cambridge to read the Geographical Tripos at St Catharine's College in or around 1966. He was first appointed to a lectureship at Bristol University in 1973 and was recently elected to a chair in geography. He remained a Tynesider at heart, retained a home in Northumberland, and was proud of his connections in the north-east, not least RGS. Among his very many publications he found time to write a history of Northumberland and more recently a number of papers in your local archaeological journals. **Emeritus Professor Peter Haggett, Bristol University**

A full obituary written by Professor Haggett, can be found on: www.bristol.ac.uk/news/obituaries

David Hope (44-53)

Born 1934, died 2006

David was an all-round sportsman who was outstanding both at school and at university. At RGS he played for the 1stXV and was captain of tennis and was one of the most complete boxers that the school produced. His boxing style was graceful, elegant and brilliant and he won all but one of his bouts for the school.

RGS had an annual fixture against Ampleforth College as well as an annual trip to London to box against St Paul's and other schools and also had matches against RMA Sandhurst, RAF Cranwell and the occasional university. The school produced many top-rate boxers over the years, many of whom boxed at Oxford and Cambridge, and David was one of the very best as his record of wins shows.

In 1955, after National Service, he came up to Fitwilliam College, Cambridge. He won his boxing blue in his first year, at bantamweight, and won convincingly. He was elected Secretary and organised the Diamond Jubilee Varsity match which took place in 1957 and was won by Cambridge. David not only won his bout but was awarded the prize for the best boxer of the evening. Sadly, the following year, the year of his captaincy, he was taken ill a few days before the varsity match and he had to drop out, his place being taken at bantamweight by Inder Mirchandani who brilliantly maintained the sequence of Cambridge wins at that weight.

David was Captain of the CUABC at a time when boxing was a major sport in Cambridge. At David's behest, he was an exemplary skipper, we trained each day, and sometimes twice a day, under the supervision of the incomparable and unforgettable Len Brooker.

We boxed in a series of matches in the first two terms and some went on to the University Championships. In those days for many young men boxing was an additional sport, so the gym was filled to capacity daily. They needed leadership, and it was David who provided this wonderfully well, combining experience, ability and, above all, good humour. If leadership is grace under pressure, David was graceful and his leadership was inspirational. He will be remembered with great affection by those who knew him.

Peter Goring (47-54)



Nigel Ewart Wood (32-39)

Nigel entered RGS in September 1932, where he excelled at both rugby and cricket, and to this day still holds the RGS 1st XI batting record of 206 not out in a school match against a strong Old Novos side. He represented Northumberland at cricket, but potential for progressing further was interrupted by the war and the fact that he became a GP. When he left the army in 1947 after national service in India with the RAMC, he married a young nurse Sylvia who pre-deceased him in 2005. In 1948 he set up a medical practice in Blackhill, where he remained in practice until retirement. Thereafter he continued working in a medical capacity until age 70. He took a particular interest in alternative medicine and during the '60s began using homoeopathy and hypnosis with excellent results, complementing his GP work. He was also secretary of the BMA's Consett division during this period. An old medical colleague and Old Novo recently remarked that there was a time when Nigel would deliver on average 130 births per annum. He was well known for flying flags from his garden flagpole, particularly the Skull and Crossbones on budget days, election days or whenever the grandchildren were due to visit. In retirement, he enjoyed gardening which he continued with vigour into his early '80s. He leaves two sons and five grandchildren.

Julian & Gordon Wood.

Obituaries

Jeremy Thomas RGS Staff 1977 - 2005



Jeremy joined the RGS English Department in September 1977 straight from Cambridge and his PGCE, and his arrival was a great success: he was a confident, enthusiastic, serious teacher, making a lively contribution to departmental meetings with invigorating fresh ideas. He was to prove an unfailing ally of the arts, a leading singer in school choirs, and a humanitarian.

Jeremy's Sixth Form General Studies plays over more than 20 years were great: he made his groups, few of whom were regulars on the RGS stage, choose, rehearse and perform their plays themselves. Usually modern – such as Epsom Downs, Real Inspector Hound, Abigail's Party, but a fine Volpone too – they always seemed full of energy, enthusiasm, invention, adventure. Jeremy engaged his sixth-formers on their non-examined course: they weren't allowed just to go through the motions, still less to opt out.

Jeremy loved theatre and performance with great generosity and an absence of 'professional' jealousy – because he took such pleasure in the achievements of RGS actors, performers, directors, musicians, and had such interest in what they were doing. He was perceptive, appreciative, an expert.

His own productions were stamped with his own style and he would never be satisfied with the slipshod. He was great on crowd scenes, their choreography and teamwork. Only

with Taming of the Shrew did he choose a play earlier than his favoured nineteenth century: Government Inspector, Dickens adaptations, Alice, Gilbert and Sullivan—a preference for comedy and melodrama. There were many modern plays too, like his first for RGS, Black Comedy. Lord of the Flies was a most special book for Jeremy: his excellent workshop production of a stage version had a superb cast; in some significant respects the odd man out among Jeremy's productions, it had strong emotions and powerful drama.

Other favourite writing included Browning, The General Prologue, Herbert, Dylan Thomas's 'A Child's Christmas in Wales'. All these preferences seem a true reflection of Jeremy.

It seemed surprising that Jeremy, who could be so fixed in his opinions, ran Novo so democratically: his editors all had equal voices; he insisted on his routine of termly consultation with Novo form reps – a practice he inherited from his own English teacher at King's Canterbury, so influential on the way he did things himself.

I feel Jeremy was happiest with groups – with casts, choirs and classes, with editorial committees and A level sets – and not only in his role as teacher. He loved his study weeks in Oxford and those annual Head of Drama gatherings, with their communal social life; he enjoyed his various choirs beyond school; he enjoyed Easter house parties with wet weather walks. He always loved a party. For so many years Jeremy enjoyed life so much and he gave so much enjoyment to so many other people.

John Armstrong
(Retired Second Master)

Dr Gordon J Westland (43-50) died 11 November 2006, aged 74.

Christopher D Gowans (36-40) died 16 November 2006, aged 80.

Ian J Guy (47-53) died 21 November 2006, aged 70.

W Manners (30-34) died 8 December 2006, aged 88.

J E H Forster (39-50) died 18 December 2006, aged 74.

Raymond Bernstone (41-47) died 21 December 2006, aged 76.

John K Mouat (37-35) died 21 January 2007, aged 88.

Geoffrey Linnell (31-39), died 17 January 2007, aged 86 years old.



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