

# Old Huntingdonians' Association

## Newsletter, January 2009

### The Chairman's letter

*Dear Old Huntingdonian,*

#### **Very Warm New Year Wishes for 2009!**

Our 75th birthday celebrations continue into this new year. What a special birthday it has been so far with our wonderful Annual Reunion in March 2008. Soon after we gathered at The Performing Arts Centre, current pupils of Hinchingsbrooke School gave a short pre-dinner concert featuring the Bösendorfer Grand Piano that we presented to the school a short time ago. After dinner, guests Elizabeth Atkinson (Betty Softly), Pip Harrison, Dick Horrex and Douglas Reading shared their memories with us of life at HGS in 1933. The talking went on late that night!

The 2009 Annual Reunion will take place on Saturday 28 February. **Please note that this is a week earlier than our usual Saturday in March owing to a clash of bookings.** The Reunion will be held in Hinchingsbrooke House when we will be celebrating our 75 years in music and dance – a Dinner Dance with a difference! Don't be scared off! - dancing is optional and there will be plenty of quiet places to just talk if that is what you prefer on these occasions. Once again, if you would like to bring along memorabilia for display and discussion, we will have tables ready. Please book your places NOW, using the reply-slip enclosed with this Newsletter. Let's make it another night to remember! I am excited to hear that there could be a sizeable group of first-timers joining us. All are very welcome.

Our 2009 Summer Reunion will take place on Sunday 5 July. This will be our usual informal lunch-time gathering in Hinchingsbrooke House, giving you another opportunity to meet up with school friends. Again, please book your places by returning the enclosed reply-slip.

Once again we have a trip down memory lane . . . Alan Butler has delved into *The Huntingdonians* and compiled a snapshot of the years ending with a 9. Thank you so much Alan . . . there can't be many more

to go but I'm sure we will think of other ways of using our history that you summarise so well!

For those of you who can access the internet, please read details below about our new web-site, set up and maintained by Lynn Fortin.

Hoping to see lots of you on 28 February and 5 July,

***Hilary While (Angell)***  
***Chairman (01480 457900)***

## **The OHA Committee**

The Committee comprises Hilary While (Chairman), Alan Butler (Vice-Chairman), Ann Davies (Treasurer) Peter Downes (President), Richard Cook (Data controller), John Gill, Lynn Fortin (Web-page Coordinator) and Ann Monk (Secretary).

There is no formal subscription for the OHA: we function by mailing list. Inevitably, our mailing-list gets out of date. Some of our 'members' move house, change name and, sadly, die. We are very sorry if we inadvertently send correspondence inappropriately and we would be pleased to be told of changes of address or circumstances.

If you are still receiving this Newsletter via the post and would prefer to read it via e-mail, let us know. The occasional voluntary donation helps to cover the cost of postage and printing. The Treasurer will be pleased to hear from you with a cheque if you feel so inclined (payable Old Huntingdonians' Association).

The OHA is moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with its own web-site. You can access this by going to the Hinchingsbrooke School web-site [www.hinchingsbrookeschool.net](http://www.hinchingsbrookeschool.net) and then click on Old Huntingdonians' Association in the left-hand column. A further click will give you details of events and in due course we hope to be able to add photos too!

Our contacts are:

**Hilary While 01480 457900; Peter Downes 01480 398082; Ann Davies 01480 891372 Richard Cook – [richardcook@aol.com](mailto:richardcook@aol.com)**

## **Hinchingbrooke School News from the Headteacher**

As 2008 draws to a close, we can reflect on a very successful year and look forward to new opportunities in 2009. Our revised sequence of celebration events will conclude with our Sixth Form Presentation Evening on the final Monday of the term. The calendar now includes additional celebrations for Year 9 and Year 11 to mark the conclusion of the Key Stages. Hinchingbrooke recognises a wide range of achievement to reflect, as comprehensively as we can, all the things our students do in a school year. Key Stage 4 students were inspired by our youngest ever guest speaker, Matt Bullimore. Matt was Deputy Head Boy in 2003/4 and is now a research physicist at Oxford University and an international gymnast. Prizes which have been donated by former staff and students have been retained for the final Sixth Form celebration unless they are specifically intended for younger students. These generous gifts have been supplemented by others supported by the OHA and the Hinchingbrooke School Foundation to cover all areas of achievement.

As a school, we received an achievement award from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. Head of Year 11, Jackie Hodgson, collected the award at a celebration event in the London Café Royal last month. Our local authority has also noted that Hinchingbrooke is the most improved school in the county.

Nothing stands still in the way of the national effort to improve educational achievement. However, having made great progress in raising achievement, we will not wish to be too radical in 2009 but some things will change. There will be a revised curriculum for Key Stage 3, most significantly in Year 9 and some new courses for Year 12 students. Our GCSE programme will remain much as it is now but changes there will follow in 2010. We believe that the changes we are making reflect the consensus views of the school community. We believe that they will restore opportunities for teachers and students to be more creative in purposing learning interests.

Hinchingbrooke is doing well and I look forward to seeing you at OHA events in 2009.

All best wishes

Keith Nancekievill

# More of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century through the eyes of *Huntingdonian* writers

Owing to paper shortages there was no magazine in 1919 so we begin with....

## Spring, Summer and Winter, 1929

An Editorial ran '*We again find ourselves floundering in the sea of finance...*', the prelude to increasing the price of the magazine to eight pence to become self-supporting.

Climate change was not apparent when, owing to frost, many games' days were cancelled but the compensation was that it was permissible to go ice skating.

In the Christmas play '*Make Believe*', Betty Softly '*made a stately and beautiful Queen*'.....'*while Stopps produced great laughter in his attempt to be the kindest-hearted Prince*'.

In the Sports' notes was '*an attempt to give advice to new boys and girls of the school on the barbarous and cruel amusements called games in which the present pupils of the school indulge.*'

The hockey report stated '*It was played by strong females of Amazonian and massive physique, who have short hair, a fiery image and a terribly ferocious face .....armed with a huge club for the purpose of braining or otherwise disposing of her opponent*'.

The Sir Alan Cobham Flying Circus was touring England and arrived on Portholme. Sixty pupils had excursions flying '*over Huntingdon's angelic gasworks*'...'*thundering over the meadow*'...'*at a stupendous height over the top of Trinity Spire*'...so small indeed was the school and the school field that it was only with difficulty that we could distinguish them from amongst the notable and imposing edifices which constitute the peculiar and indefinable charm of Huntingdon'.

Electric light was replacing the old Gas lights at school. A great deal of the work of fixing wires and switches was done by several boys of Vc under Mr Everitt '*so we shall begin to think that H.G.S. is now giving training to future electricians.*'

'*A Week's Diary in Term Time*' by Joan Auberton included '*a stately walk from station to school in crocodile*'.

## **Spring, Summer and Winter, 1939**

The outstanding event was the four day (every ten years) General Inspection. The result was an improvement and an extra day's holiday. The Headmaster was visiting other schools for various ideas prior to the opening of the new school in September. The move to the New School was continuously mentioned and on July 27<sup>th</sup> the New Building was officially opened by Earl de la Warr, President of the Board of Education – who commented that education was what was left behind '*when you have forgotten everything you were ever taught*'. The School notes reflected ... '*At last we are settled, or perhaps we should say unsettled, in the New Buildings*'. These buildings were formally opened with a ceremonial key after which the platform party went to the quadrangle where a crowd of nearly 1000 awaited them.

However H.G.S. pupils were not the first to use the New Buildings, evacuees from Highbury Hill High School for Girls used them before the official start of term. Indeed, as you would expect, the outbreak of war overshadowed the move to the New Buildings. '*On September 1<sup>st</sup> we played our part in the ration tents at Huntingdon and at St. Neots. On that day and the following two days we handled more tinned meat, milk, biscuits and chocolate than we thought existed in this country*'.

Members of The Air Defence Corps were each doing one night duty per week and an article by D.F. Reading '*Blacking out*' commented on the use of stepladders – '*as soon as you step upon one, at once it assumes a savage and antagonistic mood and will do all in its power to heave you off.*'

Mr.G.F. Lumley joined the staff to begin a lifelong association with the area beginning with P.E. training for the Air Defence Cadets, re-starting the Boxing Club and the Scout troop.

*'Things We Have Heard'* included '*The very latest bathing costumes have the owner's initials embroidered on them in large letters..... Our sympathies are with Miss Alice Susan Smith*'.

The Sports' Notes included the Cricket team scoring only 24 against Fletton but then dismissing their opponents for nine – Robinson 6 for 2 and Jacklin 3 for 6.

## **Spring, Summer and Winter Terms, 1949**

Reflecting the effects of the war, the O.H.A. appointed a committee to discuss the choice of a War Memorial. This culminated in '*War Memorial Week*', a series of social, sporting and educational events to raise funds. This, and other donations, reached £234/1/9 to go towards

a 'plain oak plaque to be designed and shaped in the School Woodwork Room' and then to be 'lettered in gold leaf by a local firm'. Garden seats would also be part of the Memorial. On a lighter note 'Kenneth Hunter, stationed at Southend, finds army life agrees with him as he is now 14 stone'. Many other reports included moves in and out of the Forces.

The Football report included a 5-3 lead against March being reduced to a defeat by the odd goal in fifteen!

The Summer Edition marked a drastic change of cover from the plain green to fawn with the contrasting red and green school badge. Paris seemed a popular destination for visits with both an Easter and Whitsun visit, one group having 'a large reception at the Hotel de Ville attended by representatives of the 13,000 schoolchildren who were visiting Paris.' Judging by the title 'Another Visit to the Lake District', this also seemed a popular area for school trips, embarking on, for example, such hikes as that over Honister Pass where a very steep mountain road was decorated with danger signs, one of which read: 'You have been warned'

The tone of 'Our Cricketing Personalities' can perhaps be judged by 'The Onlooker': 'Connan. Captain and Wicket-keeper who lets byes go as byes go.; Darnell. Should get many runs (in his bowling analysis); Hunter. Excels at hitting anything but the ball; Rippon. Must have in-growing toe nails, as he is often rooted to the spot when fielding.' However, there would perhaps be an opportunity for improvement as Sports' Day included the 'Ball and Stump relay'.

The Guide Company were successful in winning the County Flag, Miss Pearson later representing the County at the special service for the dedication of the Standard of St. George.

## **Summer 1959 and Winter 1959-60**

Among the various Societies and Clubs, the Historical Society received two contrasting talks, Mr. Munro on 'The History of Mathematics' and Mr. Bellamy 'drew a record attendance with his talk on American Gangsters, 1920 to 1958'. The informal nature of 'The Huntingdon Luncheon Club' was corrected by Gargantua, Esq. with a detailed procedure or drill including 'Guardsmen and graduates may hold the small finger not more than quarter-inch above the rest'.

'The Circus' theme was Classicism and included visits to the British Museum, the National Gallery, Thaxted and Clarence House.

*'Behind the Scenes at Shakespeare at the George'* M.Irons,1B. was worrying about more than remembering his lines...*'Are all my buttons done up? Is my hat straight? Entry, bow, say my piece, exit.'* Anon debated in *'A Form Divine'*, the pros and cons of having a statue at school perhaps to cause *'heated controversy in the columns of the Hunts Post. It will be attacked on the grounds of artistic merit, expense, siting and finally morality'*. A suggested subject was not mentioned.

*Ruminations at the end of the first year at school'*, included, *'H is for History. Bright Mr. Bright We're always wrong and he's always right ; M is for Music. Mr. Brown's in the hall. When we open our mouths, he flies up the wall ; N is for Needlework. Poor Mrs Gray. Searching for needles and scissors all day ; W is for Woodwork. Mr. Boreham's beard one day on the lathe was all but sheared'*.

The Cricket Junior X1 statistics included the quite remarkable bowling analysis of *'Woods 5-0 ' v. Orton Longueville unfortunately in a defeat. The condition of the Sports' field has improved but ' the Out-Patient department of the hospital has been well occupied in treating the football and hockey players who fell upon the grass and discovered the flints underneath'*. The introduction of Rugby appeared to cause anxiety in the soccer camp.

O.H.A. Life Membership was fixed at five guineas for ten years and three guineas for three years.

The School general election 1958 reflected the voting trend in Huntingdonshire with Morgans (Conservative) 143, Pell (Labour) 44 and Lamb (Liberal) 32.

*'Murder in the Cathedral' ...'was altogether a satisfying experience'* , with great credit going to Ian Newland as Becket and Amaryllis Garnett as the fourth tempter.

## **1969**

This issue marked the retirement of Mrs. W.M.Stuart – *'an important force around this place for about 15 years'*. She seemed to give the impression that it was as a teacher of English rather than as an administrator she valued herself, hoping she'd reveal to some at least *'the poetry in their souls'*. Having a quick ear for a cliché, her final thought was *'For Heaven's sake don't describe me as a devoted teacher and a loyal colleague, for which only reason we won't'*.

Also marked was the retirement of Mr. K.Brown: *'With his departure the school has lost a schoolmaster in the fullest sense of the term'*.

His name no doubt will be forever associated with music in various forms as well as Tug-of-War cheerleader for Pepys. But it was largely due to Ken Brown that the O.H.A. still functions and it is *'difficult to imagine H.G.S. without K.B., nor, for that matter, K.B. without H.G.S.'*

*'You Never Can Tell'* featured *'John Souter as Valentine, a walrus-moustache assisting his wide repertoire of facial expression, as he played himself with utter conviction'*.

Those going to *'Venture 99'* with Mr. Rowe were prepared for a fair amount of railway talk as in *'the coach had engine trouble outside a narrow gauge railway station.'* On one trip civilisation was only reached by *'making the perilous mile-long journey along rough, steep, rocky mountain tracks, one of which is known as the A591'*. However the best journey seemed to be the *nightly pilgrimage to Grasmere. There the public lavatory could be located by the presence of a great queue of campers.'*

The Sailing Club's highlight may have been Roger Green's *'impressive appearance in his new wet (neoprene, fully nylon lined) suit greeted by the rest of us with admiration and envy'*.

The Science Society had a memorable year including a Grand Self Entertaining and Curry Taking Festival where *'we ate curry cooked with enthusiasm and some say skill by a group of girls whose names were on every charred tongue'*. Mr. Mills went on a pilgrimage where, *'confused and angry, he felt 'that something nasty was happening to Greece'....'tourists see everything and nothing'....'air-conditioned coaches protect and cushion from any real contact with the country or people'*. He mentioned that the Greeks have no word for a foreigner, xenos being used meaning a guest. He felt that they were acquiring the word 'tourist' and deserved better.

A lengthy interview with the Headmaster started with *'What is your idea of the perfect school?'* while *'H.G.S. makes £34,000'* turned out to be the *'second round of a nationwide, computer-based game designed to introduce schools to the decision-making process of business'*.

## **1979**

The Opening Concert of the New Music centre comprised *'a varied programme in a setting of unrivalled charm, fortunately also of acoustic felicity'*.

Also a highlight was The Charity Football Match of the Year involving such as Geoff Capes and Dave 'Boy' Green resulting in over



£1,300 being raised for Addenbrooke's Kidney Patients Association and the Hospital. Another money raising exploit was for the Hinchingsbrooke Minibus, Mrs. Bown predicting a total revenue of over £2600 and a fine new mini-bus in 1980.

The school magazine seemed to be diversifying with the new Middle School magazine, *'Middle Age Spread'*. The Sixth Form has also started its own magazine, *'a witty little publication known for arcane reasons as House Mouse'*.

In the drama department, *'The Daniel Jazz'*, the biblical Daniel *'Now be ye ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship'* might have had the Darius of this performance saying something similar but perhaps adding *'Got it? Yeah/...Cool'*, but from the first sound *'the audience was compelled if not to fall down and worship at least to sit up and take notice'*. *'Desmond Ford as Darius, King of all Kings and top of the punk pops was splendidly regal and Adrian Marsden as Cringe, superbly sycophantic.'*

In some contrast John Haylock's sixth form troupe combined seriousness and levity in a *'tragicomic double bill'*, .....*'Riders to the Sea'* .and.. *'The Real Inspector Hound'*.

The Duke of Edinburgh scheme attracted great coverage with 120 pupils participating at different levels.

## **1989**

In the year in retrospect, Head Peter Downes remarked on *'the expansion of the School's publications made possible by the purchase of desk-top technology'*. He also noted the planning of the New Buildings including the Performing Arts Centre.

There was the staff Farewell to Mrs.Christine Gray leaving after nearly 40 years' service. She had *'thorough and traditional standards'....'idiosyncratic ways and characterful remarks'*...with *'green-fingered expertise running the Lower School Gardening Club'*.

*'An Aussie Abroad'* was exchange teacher Jeff Burns' thoughts among which was *'Life for teachers in this country is too tough'*.

The annual *'Skiiiiiiiiing'* report included *'Poser of the week on skis...Faller of the week....Person who contributed the most amusement on skis'*.

The summer of '89 was one of the sunniest of the century with the final School Assembly in the school grounds. Perhaps this contributed

to outstanding sports' achievements among which were Angus Kelly (British Single Sculls Champion), Katie Aked ( Eastern Region Volleyball), Richard Amphlett and Guy Baxendale ( Eastern Counties' Rugby Representatives) and David McDougald and Mark Stern reaching National Athletics' Finals in the 200m. and 110m hurdles respectively.

Emma Daniels in '*Getting There*' wrote about the daunting prospects of commuting on the School bus – '*fingers on steamed-up windows*' - and being eager to get on the bus not being confused with being eager to get to school.

*'The Fun Charity Event of the Year'* involved '*Hannah Cawdell leading the Fashion Stakes...The Invasion of the Nuns...Mr.Lock, a touch of sanity*'.

Down Memory Lane was the reminiscences of Mrs Stuart as she compared the bustling hordes of Hinchingsbrooke School children with the thirteen in the Hinchingsbrooke House – six Montagus, the Butler's children and those of the Gardener and Under-Gardener.

Outings included Pepys' Ten Pin Bowling Trip – '*a great day for Mr. Baker who, unlike all the other teachers who kept their jubulations to themselves, he jumped up and down with glee, at one time nearly falling over*'.

There was an obituary for '*Kenneth Brown, 1905 – 1989...who loved his 'Fenland Turnips*'.

(Please note that most of the Huntingdonian magazines, beginning with the first edition in Summer 1910, may be found in Huntingdon Record Office under Accessions 5043, 1796, 2272/109/1, 3673, 4063 and Misc 17 – Alan Butler, unofficial Huntingdonian Archivist.)

## **Staff Reunion, September 2008**

In September 2008 former Heads John Wakelin and Peter Downes arranged and hosted a reunion for members of staff, both teaching and support staff, from the time of their headships (1965 – 82, 1982 – 1996 respectively). Over 140 came and enjoyed a marvellous buffet lunch and a blissfully warm day, Hinchingsbrooke House at its most idyllic. It is impossible to name all who came but it was particularly pleasing to see 'famous names' from former times, such as Frank Lunn, Frank Arran, Anthony Stanton, Peter Christopher, Christine Gray, Len Rowe, Don Riach, Rod Stratford, Rodney Wilson, Roger Mitchell, Chris Shepperd, Madeline Atkins, Roger Green and, of course, Mike Baker.

## The OHA Music Fund

Last year we reported that a committee of Old Huntingdonians has managed to mount a series of concerts built round the Bösendorfer grand piano bought for the school by former pupils in memory of Ken Brown.

The series was a great success in every respect: the quality of the performers, all recruited by Jillian Skerry, was outstanding. Audiences averaged about 120 and, although the purpose of the series was not to make a profit, we did in fact manage to donate over £500 to the OHA Music Fund. This is used to provide prizes and bursaries for promising young musicians in the school today.

Encouraged by this, the OHA has gone on to promote a further series this year, 2008 – 2009, and already three concerts have taken place, with bigger audiences than last year.

There is one concert left in the series: on **Friday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>**, Masa Tayama will be returning to Hinchingsbrooke and everyone who has heard him before will be delighted. In May 2008 Masa performed Rachmaninoff's 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Concerto with Huntingdonshire Philharmonic Orchestra in the Performing Arts Centre and a capacity audience was thrilled by his blend of superb pianistic technique and very sensitive playing.

Those of you who live within reach of Huntingdon may like to join us for this occasion. You can reserve tickets by telephoning the box office on 01480 375678.

This series, and the piano that inspires it, gives the OHA a valuable opportunity to contribute to the cultural life of Huntingdon. Free places at the concerts are available to current and former pupils up to the age of 25, funded by the Foundation of Hinchingsbrooke School.

The OHA Music Fund remains open for further donations. A form, including a Gift Aid statement that enhances the gift by 28%, can be obtained from me on [peter.downes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:peter.downes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or by phone to 01480 398082.

***Peter Downes, OHA Music Fund project director***

## ***Forthcoming events . . .***

**'The Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House'**

**Annual Dinner, Sunday, February 8th, 2009, 6.30 for 7 p.m.**

***Theme: 'Hinchingsbrooke and Huntingdon'***

**Guest Speaker: David Cozens MBE,  
Chairman, Huntingdonshire Historical Society**

Tickets: **£27.50** (gala meal including wine) from:

Julian Curtis, Pepys House, Huntingdon Road, Brampton, Huntingdon  
PE28 4PA. Cheques payable 'Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House'.

Please enclose stamped addressed envelope.

**O.H.A. Reunion and 75<sup>th</sup> Celebration Dinner Dance**

**Saturday, February 28th, 7 for 7.30 p.m.  
Hinchingsbrooke House**

**Tickets: £20**

**Please use the enclosed reply-slip to book your tickets.**

**OHA Summer Lunch Reunion**

**Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009, from 12.30**

An informal buffet lunch and a chance to look round the grounds, the school and the House.

**Tickets: £12**

**Please use the enclosed reply-slip to book your tickets**