

# Old Huntingdonians' Association Newsletter, January 2012

## *The Chairman's letter*

Dear Old Huntingdonian,

### ***New Year Greetings for 2012***

2012 is a year in which, nationally, we will have a lot to celebrate with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics in our country. However, your OHA committee is looking even further ahead – to 2015 and the 450th anniversary of the Foundation of Huntingdon Grammar School. We are already working closely with the school to ensure that 2015 will be a year to remember! The date of foundation was **2<sup>nd</sup> May 1565** so you are promised a May Weekend of celebratory activities, plus much more throughout the year. We will be letting you know more about this as the year approaches.

We do also need your help towards a very special commemorative book that we plan to publish before the year gets underway – details on page 18.

Our 2011 Reunion was a big success with former student **Spencer Freeman**, well known in music circles and a loyal OHA supporter, as our guest and entertaining speaker.

The 2012 Reunion will take place on **Saturday 3 March** at Hinchingsbrooke House when our guest and after dinner speaker will be **Keith Nancekievill**, current Headmaster, who will be leaving Hinchingsbrooke at Easter. **Please book your places NOW, using the reply-slip enclosed with this Newsletter.**

Our 2012 Summer Reunion and **AGM** will take place on **Sunday 1 July**. This will be the usual informal lunchtime gathering in Hinchingsbrooke House. Again, **please book your places via the enclosed reply-slip.**

If you would like to bring along memorabilia to these events so that you can share your memories with others, we will have tables ready.

In this Newsletter we have yet another nostalgic trip down memory lane from Alan Butler . . . thank you so much Alan for trawling through all those *Huntingdonians*, ones ending with a -2 this time!

Hoping to see lots of you in March and July.

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

# The Old Huntingdonians' Association

## What it does and why

The OHA exists to provide a link between former pupils of Huntingdon Grammar School and Hinchingsbrooke School. The OHA was founded in 1933 and has had uninterrupted existence since then. We organise two main social functions each year in March and July and publish this annual newsletter.

There is no formal subscription for the OHA: we function by mailing-list. Inevitably, our mailing-list gets out of date. If we inadvertently send correspondence inappropriately (e.g. because of a death), we apologise and would be pleased to be told of changes of address or circumstances.

The OHA is run by a small group of volunteers and the current committee comprises: Hilary Angell While (Chairman), Alan Butler (Vice-Chairman), Ann Davies, Helen Hale (Treasurer), Peter Downes (President), Richard Cook (Data controller), Ann Monk (Secretary), Gary Buckenham (Web-page Coordinator) and John Hinsby.

If you would prefer to read this newsletter via e-mail, please 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 (payable Old Huntingdonians' Association).

The OHA now has 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 photos too!

Our contacts are:

**Hilary While 01480 457900; Peter Downes 01480 398082; Helen Hale 01480 382587 Richard Cook – [richardcook@aol.com](mailto:richardcook@aol.com)**

PS We really would prefer to keep in touch with you via e-mail. Printing and distributing 600 magazines by post is an expensive and time-consuming activity for an organisation with no subscription, run entirely by volunteers. Please send Richard Cook your e-mail address today.

# Hinchingbrooke School News from the Headteacher

December 2011

***Dear Former Pupils of Huntingdon Grammar School and Hinchingbrooke School,***

This will be my last report to you because I am retiring at Easter after nine interesting years at the helm. An important element of my job is planning ahead. In a very busy organisation which is intensely focused on delivering the best education we can offer in a safe environment, it is my task to survey the horizon for icebergs and palm trees. There are always some of each emerging into view. If I take my hand off the tiller, when my successor picks it up, the horizon will be in a different place. So, I need to keep steering.

The most significant hazards and opportunities for Hinchingbrooke are clustered around Post-16 education. The government is cutting funding by at least 20%! They are also consulting on changing the funding method. This looks quite a large iceberg. On the palm tree side of the horizon, modular examinations will go, being replaced by terminal examinations at the end of Y12 for AS level and Y13 for A level. This means lower examination costs, less disruption to teaching time and fewer stressful and sometimes unproductive re-sits. It does, however, place a premium on getting it right first time.

We have a very large and highly successful Sixth Form which continues to attract high levels of external recruitment. The future can be faced with considerable confidence. We expect to be able to sustain a broader offering than the funding base will support in the future as a result of our economies of scale. There is no need to panic but we need to plan ahead.

Our ex-pupils can help here. We are planning to make a major splash with our 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2015. The Hinchingbrooke 2015 project is a great opportunity to tell the community just what a good school this is and what terrific opportunities the Sixth Form here offers. We are planning, with the OHA, a major series of high profile events and we will need your support in due course. So, watch out for the notices as we prepare to fly the flag for Hinchingbrooke.

Best wishes,

***Keith Nancekievill***  
***Headteacher***

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

### Spring 1912

The Editorial announced the arrival of the magic lantern. The Old Boys' Association was formed with a subscription of 5 shillings per year but the Old Girls reported that no further steps had been taken '*towards forming our Association*'.

The football team avenged a 4-5 defeat by Fletton Secondary School with a 10-1 victory. '*A good game but mostly in our opponents' half*'. The Hockey 1<sup>st</sup> X v. March High School reported that '*The result should have been a draw as the teams were equally matched, but unfortunately the home team managed to score a goal which was so plainly off-side that an appeal was made against the decision of the referee, a mistress of the school, but without result*'. Interestingly, v. Slepe Hall '*Every time a long hit was made, the ball was sure to land in the middle of a stream. Then with an opponent on either side of the water, each trying to 'fish' out the ball, shower baths were the order of the day*'.

### Summer 1912

It was reported that the School Titanic fund had reached £2 .10 shillings. On May 19<sup>th</sup> the School Scouts attended Church parade at Kimbolton '*a journey performed on horse back. Having met punctually at 12.30 at the stables our noble steeds were ready with eyes which shot fire and feet which already were tearing at the ground in readiness to be off. People on the way regarded us as though we were some cowboys escaped from a circus*'.

The Historic Pageant at Hinchingsbrooke depicted the visit of King James 1<sup>st</sup> to Hinchingsbrooke. The schoolboys of Dr. Beard, the grammar school Headmaster, lined up respectfully to be presented to Prince Charles. When Oliver Cromwell's turn came '*he at once attacked him and the two combatants rolled over on the grass*'. Oliver was dragged off to be birched until King James interceded and '*bore no malice and ordered a holiday for the boys*'.

Girls' cricket was new and they had a good start, bowling out St. Neots Ladies for 21, having scored 105 themselves. Measles prevented any more games.

Measles in fact inspired '*The Joys and Sorrows of Measles*' by J.A.H. '*Measles ought to be abolished. It encourages laziness and laziness is the greatest sin of the modern schoolboy*'.

There were no 1922 Editions, probably owing to the shortage of paper.

### **Spring 1932**

J.M.Barrie's play *'The Admirable Crichton'* attracted interesting reviews. *'Henson as Lord Loam had an excellent speaking voice and a marvellous control over his cachinnatory organs.....equally capable of being choleric, obsequious, ludicrous and pathetic and of playing a concertina'*.

*'Beckingham as a lover was not up to his own usual high level...but he decidedly improved with practice'*. Betty Softly as Tweeny appeared very flattered at Crichton's saying he had *'cast a favourable eye'*.

In Football *'the weight of many of the boys is in an inverse proportion to their skill'*. In the 1-4 defeat v. Wisbech *'some members of the team attributed our reverse to the exceptional number of magpies and funeral processions they saw on the outward journey'*.

### **Summer 1932**

Mr.Howgate, after 27 years as Headmaster, retired having had *'a proud record and service'*, hopefully to *'enter years of retirement fully conscious of the great success his work has shown and knowing of the surety that it is still bearing fruit and will do so in the years to come'*.

The school canteen had a popular variety of good things *'even ices have been added to the list of sweets'*. However, the litter problem had increased hundredfold *'although ample receptacles are provided for all the wrappings of your purchases'*.

The Cricket team made local headlines by defeating Fenstanton, holders of the Smith-Barry Cup (Smith bowling unchanged to record 6-44) before going out to Hemingford Park. Other commendable bowling figures during the season were recorded by Smith, 7-14 in 18 overs, Harradine 5-11 and Wiltshire 7-27 and 5-16.

### **Winter 1932**

There was an innovative Hockey film, from which it was thought that Football, Cricket and Tennis teams no doubt could benefit. *'The zenith, or to be more modest, the stratosphere of desire, would be reached if we could possess such films in perpetuum and by constant gazing and practising, acquire the kick that scores, the bat that is straight and the cannonball service'*. Indeed, Peggy Hopkinson took her place in the Ladies' County Hockey Team as right wing for the third year, a high honour especially for one still at school. The film may have had some effect on the football team who won 12 out of 13 matches with score lines like 10-2, 8-0 and 8-2 (Quinn scored 26 goals, Northfield 17 and Jones 13) in spite of *'persistent lack of support for home matches'*.

Sports Day had included the Throwing the Needle Race – possibly painful ! Grace Wallis, who left in 1930, wrote to Mr. Charles: *‘Cher Monsieur’...‘toutes mes lettres en français’...‘mes sentiments respectueux’*. Other travels included W. Ostergaard – ‘Why I lived in Denmark’ and ‘A trip up the Suez Canal’ by A. Hancock.

### **Spring 1942**

The Editorial left little doubt: *‘We live in stirring times. Business as usual is indeed our slogan now. We maintain a continual fire-watching guard, thrilling or otherwise, according to the varying abilities and moods of the Hun. Knitting parties maintain a continual supply of comforts for the Forces and the School’s adopted ship’*.

Old Pupils’ Notes were all related. Five POWs in varying parts of the globe. The death of Maurice Vintner (1927/29) in Libya was recorded and two former pupils were in Singapore at the time of the Japanese attack.

The previous November the school garden had been ploughed and the *‘sowing of seeds will begin as soon as the weather is right’*.

The History Society debate *‘That His Majesty’s Government has the confidence of this house in the prosecution of the war’*, was carried decisively, while the Literary and Debating Society’s motion that *‘Socialism would be of a greater benefit to England than the present system of Capitalism’* was defeated by 14 votes to 19.

In spite of the war there was a trip to Bedford to hear the BBC orchestra play, amongst others Elgar and Brahms. *‘Even sophisticated senior boys who insist that swing is the only really good music and that highbrow music has no rhythm, admit that they enjoyed the entertainment’*.

The visit of Queen Marie of Yugoslavia to present a mobile canteen to the WVS was recorded and the school provided a Guard of Honour with the School Guides and ATC Companies. Queen Marie regretted her reparation from her country but expressed faith in the ultimate victory.

R.H. Gush, Form 5a Up, reported on his assignment to the War Agricultural Executive Committee where he drove *‘a beautiful orange Fordson tractor on the lower football pitch, shown gears, clutch, choke and various other controls. To drive backwards and forwards and eventually fixed up with a farmer at Offord’*.

### **Summer 1942**

£241.8s.6d had been raised for seventeen different War funds.

The OHA listed the benefits of membership including *‘to buy a ticket for the Victory Dance – time and place to be announced’*.

Sgt. Len Ball heard his mother speak on the BBC Overseas Programme. In the Drama Society's production of 'Pride and Prejudice', Henry Summerlee *'as a soldier appeared rather bashful after marriage owing to the exuberance of his wife'*.

Murden of the Upper Vth's talk on the history and working of the wireless valve including *'the Science VIth operating the epidiascope with reasonable efficiency'*.

The adjudicator at the Music Festival was Sgt. F. Jackson, Professor at the Royal Academy of Music who offered *'instructive criticism'*.

The middle school gave a performance to the school and patients at Hinchingsbrooke Emergency Hospital which raised £75 towards the school's Warship Week effort.

### **Winter 1942**

Two D.F.C.s were reported. Leslie Worsdell *'for causing trouble for the Nazi planes off our own coast'* and Alan Hancock for work in the Middle East. Sgt. Pilot George Mitchell (1935-40) was reported as missing while the deaths were announced of Wing Commander E. Knowles DFC and Lance Bombardier Bob Dawson, the latter while training in Wales.

The up-to-date production of the school garden was announced as 90 lbs of peas, 60 lbs of beetroot, 200 lbs of runner beans, 240 lbs of sprouts and three tons of potatoes, swedes and carrots!

The History Society debate on wars prophesied *'probable destruction of the whole world as a result of future wars'*.

A report on the Highbury Hill High School performance of *'The Lady with the Lamp'* included *'We have to thank the evacuated school not only for a most enjoyable afternoon but also for a reminder of the great work of Florence Nightingale which is most appropriate at a time when so much depends upon the efficiency and sacrifice of our nursing sacrifices'*.

G.P. Clifton – *'A Thumbs-Up Holiday'* – certainly showed a spirit of adventure recounting an 800 miles' round trip to the Isles of Scilly. The local squatters' rights custom meant that if you could build a house in a night that land became yours and entailed the use of *'many relatives on a moonlight night'*. He met a refugee colony of Belgian fishermen and three French lads who had escaped from France covering 150 miles in a single trip. Brown, the football team centre-half and captain, was *'a very conscientious captain, who studies prevailing weather conditions so as to be able to wring every advantage he can for the team'* while Mason, inside-right, *'has recently tended to slow down considerably, no doubt due to rapid growth'*.

Swimming races continued to be held in the river between the road and railway bridges, including, perhaps worryingly, an underwater race.

## **Spring 1952**

The Editorial recorded the departure of Mr. Silk at Christmas who said that he was going to *'a residential establishment somewhere on Dartmoor'* which turned out to be Blundell's School, Tiverton.

The Debating Society reflected the issues of the time – *'That Modern Art is not Art (defeated) ; That this House deplores any colour bar (carried 11-6) ; 'That professionalism is ruining sport (approved narrowly 6-5); That co-education is a good thing (approved); That Britain is benefiting from re-armament (defeated 5-3).*

A visit to the Christmas holiday lectures for the Council for Education in World Citizenship included Dr. Josef Bronowski speaking on *'Scientific Knowledge and Human Rights '* which received the most applause.

B.A.S. (6 Sci) reported that the issue of Women's Rights was controversial as *'we poor males had to concede a victory to the ladies; this was probably because they outnumbered us by three to one.'*

An early insight into the delights or otherwise of television was afforded by J.G. (6 Gen) *'heralded by numerous flashes the picture eventually appears.....the picture begins to spin madly around.....after a few seconds a polite message – Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible'*.

In table tennis Charles McCartney won the county open where *'he flattened some of the county's best players'*.

## **Summer 1952**

A photograph by Janet Killick (6 Arts) titled *'Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage'* was actually from behind the school entrance railings!

*'The Study of a Named Habitat'* recounted a Science Expedition *'urged on by the syllabus '* to that named habitat – in the middle of Views Common *'we pitched camp, unloaded our mules and proceed to survey the area precariously balancing over a liquid-filled chasm with, net on one end of a bamboo cane, yanked out a filthy stinking mess of sludge, slime and .....Movement of this sediment brought instant cries of ' Look, Corixa Geffroyi and Planorbis Corneus'.*

## **Winter 1952**

OHA notes mentioned the ordination of Cecil Richard Rutt (1937-42) on September 21<sup>st</sup> at Ely. *'He is Assistant Curate at St. George the Martyr, Chesterton, Cambridge'*. (See Tribute on page 16) Also mentioned was Dr. Charity Taylor (1926 – 31), Governor of Holloway Prison, who had been admitted to the 'Portrait Gallery' of the Sunday Times.



The Music and Choral groups were very active. *'Once again a series of concerts were held at Hinchingsbrooke but it is felt that not nearly enough pupils are availing themselves of these fine opportunities to hear really good music performed by well-known musicians'*. There were also concerts at the Hippodrome.

The Railway Club had a trip to Loco Depots at Bletchley, Wellingborough and Kettering.. *'Most of the members had a ride on a locomotive and several were allowed to drive one'*.

In Hockey the 1<sup>st</sup> XI played the boy prefects. Rosemary Finnimore and Janet Killick reported *'to our horror the boys wore football boots.....we had all secreted maths books inside our socks to ward off any blows.....the boys were gently shepherded to their positions.....the fray began.....there were many members of staff thronging the side-lines to enjoy the loss of prefectorial dignity.....apart from technical details such as ignorance of the rules, the boys got on well.....the pitch was churned by 44 elephantine feet.....the boys winning 3-2.....we now eagerly await our chance of returning those bruises and reversing the decision'*.

Janet Killick's Tennis Notes noted a demonstration of tennis coaching given by world famous professionals Dan Maskell and Fred Perry.

### **Spring 1962**

It was announced that magazines would be annual rather than thrice yearly. A report on the Music and Choral Society stated that at Christmas they had gone to the Market Square to sing carols in penetrating cold and then back to school for steaming soup, mince pies and punch.

A. Fisher of the Gym Club stated that *'Mr. Bright kindly instructed us for one lesson on the use of the trampoline after Miss Glynne-Jones's unfortunate accident. We have made good progress and have gained control – if only in the gymnasium'*. The Race Walking group thanked Mr. Bright *'for his patience with the advocates of this (to the rest of the school) somewhat obscure and unusual sport.'*

### **1962**

The V1th. form Society was *'a mixture of spontaneous discussion and instant coffee'*. Bob Joyce illustrated 'Design Today' with a saucepan and an assortment of chair legs. Brenda Russell led *'a very lively and worthwhile discussion on Teenage Morals'*.

The Rev. Murray MacDonald posed the profound question *'What is God?'* which failed to find answers *'but minds were stimulated into deeper thoughts about philosophy'*.

John Witchard asked: *'Can an intelligent Sixth Former really like Pop Music?'* During the playing of records, Brenda Russell *'noticed that although the staff present disliked both the words and music their feet were tapping in tune to the beat'*.

Hilary Angell (VI Upper) described Easter at Flatford Mill studying Ecology. There were long days arising at 7.30a.m. at Willy Lott's cottage, retiring to bed at 11.30 p.m. There was pond dipping, classifying species using 'keys' and intensive study of a hedge bank and salt marsh. *'The final evening was an hilarious sing-song and six miles' starlit walk.'*

P. Sharp's Easter Lake District report was highlighted by an early morning swim in Derwentwater near a sign saying *'No Free Bathing Allowed'*.

Pitch and Putt was enjoyed at Keswick where Mr. Riach, although part of a twosome soundly beaten, *'proclaimed himself the best golfer after the event which led to many mutterings from his opponents'*.

Impressions on the way home from a visit to The Houses of Parliament included *'What a way to run the country'* to admiration for the way several MPs argued. R.K. (Upper VIth) thought that it all confirmed A.P. Herbert's remark *'If nobody said anything unless he knew what he was talking about, a ghastly hush would descend upon the earth'*.

Sheila Collett, Secretary of the Huntingdon Young Farmers' Club, became the first Young Farmer in East Anglia to win a Gold Badge for passing seven selected proficiency tests including poultry plucking, trussing, machine milking and fruit bottling.

## 1972

The main staff farewell was to Miss K.M. Burton. She had joined in 1952, when the number of staff cars outside HGS numbered about five. Everyday among them would be a scooter and on this the intrepid Miss Burton, whatever the weather, travelled from Stukeley. *'She observed the pleasant traditional sequence of the seasons –marmalade ,jams and jellies in the summer, chutney in the autumn. Then there was the splendid procession of family cakes for Christmas, for Mothering Sunday and the Simnel cake for Easter.....and a perfect replica of a local church in icing and marzipan. Many girls and boys must have blessed her when having to fend for themselves at College or in a job'*.

Drama included 'Capt Noah and his Floating Zoo' to a huge audience and an emergency seating plan. The impromptu Christmas panto 'Snow Pan' involved *'Bovva People, pirates and teachers fought it out, and the day was saved by a large male teacher wearing a ballet-skirt on his head'*.

There was special mention of the producer for whom *'Each play is like a pregnancy. Like a pleasure mixed with pain'*.

The article 'The Minibus will leave the Gatehouse', a reference to the occasions when VI formers occasionally left the ivory towers of Hinchingsbrooke to inspect ancestral homes of their competitors – namely twelve country houses from Derbyshire to Dorset. This included Mr. Baker's research on Coca Cola and Ice Cream Sales in Country Houses and *'Richard Meredith's readings from great guide books of the world and the record for a tour of a house – Osterley Park plus toilets in ten minutes – all these are part of our labours'*.

Hinchingsbrooke Banquets completed their second successful year. Formal Banquets in the State Dining Room were provided for various local groups. Potholing seemed to be a new activity in mud, slime, oozing water and pure Derbyshire muck. *'My light's gone again'* would be followed by *'One of the Liverpool Lot, JoeP. or Super Syd, in pit-boots and slimy, kinky wet-suit rushes to the rescue'*. *'Mike Watson is dragged down protesting and screaming quoting Gray's Elegy.'* *'Three hours and 4000 potholing feet later, unrecognisable figures emerge blinking from the shaft of the old lead-mine, most of them still fairly sane.'* *'But seriously this is a dangerous activity'*.

The Rugby 1<sup>st</sup> XV *'were a delight to work with and I think age for age is the best school 1<sup>st</sup> XV we have ever had.'* Among the blends mentioned were *'Hutton who dazzled at scrum half.....the exciting running of Davies on the wing.....the explosive Owen.....the tireless Pett.....the thunderous second row player Fowler'*. It was reported that opposition teams could not take liberties *'as the Inebriation XV found to its cost'*.

## 1982

The Editorial bade farewell to Mr. J.D. Wakelin, Headmaster for 17 years, and welcomed his successor, Mr. P.J. Downes.

John Wakelin was *'indeed the founder of Hinchingsbrooke School. Long before the transformation of Grammar into Comprehensive in 1970, he spent years of patient research into all possibilities, visiting existing Comprehensive Schools, consulting, adding, rejecting and eventually, like a good architect, drawing up a scheme which was full of promise for children of widely differing abilities and talents.'* He took over a rural Grammar School of around 400 and left it the largest Comprehensive School in Cambridgeshire with 1800 pupils. *'He was a man of integrity and unswerving principle'*.

With sadness the death of Mr. Fred Marsh was announced. He had seen war service as a Unit Commander in the R.A.F. in the Middle East and retained involvement in the Civil Defence long after he came to Huntingdon. *'As a scientist and teacher Mr. Marsh gained the respect and gratitude of*

*many generations of students, many of whom took up scientific careers.'* He also contributed much to the launching of Hinchingsbrooke as a comprehensive school and was an *'all round schoolmaster of high standing'*.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme near record Gold Awards – eighteen – and an overall pupil participation of about 140 indicated the worthiness of the scheme. As M.G. Baker noted: *'The giving of service in the community is often, paradoxically, of greater benefit to the giver than it is to the community – although we hope the latter does benefit !'*

The Lower School's play 'Tom Sawyer' was a lively and enjoyable performance *'including very creditable deep south accents'..... The courtroom scene included a lovely episode featuring a cat, at first alive and within minutes pretty stiff!*

The Middle School created the atmosphere of Medieval York presenting the York Cycle of Mystery Plays. God (Jonathan Thurley) looked down appropriately from the balcony, backed up by angels. There was *'the humour of Adam and Eve (Mark Ellender and Rachel Austin)'* and sympathetically naïve shepherds. The second half *'was dominated by a moving and impressive portrayal of Christ by Andrew Thackray and included the agony in the garden, crucifixion and ascension'*. Appropriately the play was directed by Ann Heavens.

The Sports' Report began with the approximately 3,000 items of pupil property which P.E. teachers take responsibility for each week. The list included earrings, flutes, digital watches and false teeth! Mass participation was the order of the day. *'One Saturday in February, 110 boys played football, 50 girls played hockey and netball, 40 girls and boys ran in a Cross-Country Championship, 75 boys and girls participated in badminton, table tennis, squash and swimming at the school's Sports' Club'*.

At the All-England Athletics' Championships, Tamsin Green placed a very creditable 5<sup>th</sup> in the long jump, while Richard Youngs similarly placed an excellent 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 1500m. in the Six Counties and the All-England.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Form Maths Club had various talks including 'A Method of Discovery', 'Infinity', and 'Relativity' but also a game of 'Frogs', 'Nim' and a puzzle drive with prizes.

'Music in Hinchingsbrooke' highlighted: *'For the first time in our history as a school, a serious opera was produced'*. Two performances were given of Purcell's Dido and Aeneas. Major inspiration and dedication came from Ann Heavens and the remarkably mature singing of Bridget Corderoy. A Stravinsky centenary concert, a baroque concert (and tour of Europe), a banquet group, and a jazz group (in some cases having to turn down engagements!) give some idea of the spread of musical expertise.

A History Pageant turned back the clock six hundred years as 60 first and second years presented a medieval pageant not only in the correct attire but with food and drink made from authentic medieval recipes!

## 1992

By now *The Huntingdonian* had become highly pictorial and the pages are crammed with photos of the vast range of extra-curricular activities available to pupils. As usual, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme played a prominent part in the school's life. The visit of HRH Prince Edward was the highlight of the DofE year. *'As the royal car drove through the gatehouse on a cold windswept day and whilst the Prince was being greeted by the Chairman of the Governors, Nigel Kimpton and Duymy Tran stood poised with axes chopping wood a few yards away. The Prince didn't seem intimidated by these potential royal executioners and showed genuine interest which he maintained throughout his hour with us'*, wrote Mike Baker.

Two pages are devoted to photographs of the Mock General Election held on April 1<sup>st</sup>, just a few days before the real thing which saw John Major returned as PM. The School's student newspaper *The Hinchingsbrooke Herald* reported in more detail that there were three constituencies (Lower School, Middle School and Sixth Form) which voted on the First Past the Post system, and then a whole school election for political parties using the Single Transferable Vote system. No trace can be found of the results!

The Languages Department put on a *Pot Pourri* evening of music and sketches with Mr. Potten doing a fair imitation of Maurice Chevalier as compère.

The new astro-turf pitch was opened with a match between a staff XI and a team from Peterborough United. The professionals just managed to win in spite of Mr. Downes's efforts as the referee.

The big event of the year was the closure of the old Grammar School building on Brampton Road which had been opened in September 1939 and served as the Grammar school until 1970 when the new comprehensive school was opened. From 1970 the building was used for the new entrants to the school, the first and second years, but many of the buildings were in a poor condition, having been 'temporary' decades earlier, and the frequent crossing of the road to the main school site, for staff every day and for pupils at some points in the week, was a huge waste of time.

The OHA marked the end of the HGS building (which some recalled as the 'new building' as it had replaced the earlier one in the town centre) with a nostalgic reunion including the singing of the school song with Raymond Wood conducting and Jillian Skerry at the piano.

The last two Grammar School Headmasters, Geoffrey Rowntree and John Wakelin were able to attend. Sadly Mr. Rowntree died a few weeks later. OHA Chairman Michael Petty commented in his report that the attendance of over 400 ex-pupils had exceeded all expectations.

In his report, Mr. Downes stressed that the history of the Grammar School building would not be lost: *'the war memorial boards have been given a new place of honour in the entrance to Hinchingbrooke House and the foundation stone dating from 1938 will be salvaged and displayed prominently on the new site.'*

So September 1992 saw the whole school consolidated on the same site and the Head, Peter Downes, wrote about how well the new buildings and transition to a single site school had been managed, thanks largely to Deputy Head Sheila Hargreaves. He outlined the opportunities provided by this significant development in the history of the school: *'the fact of being on one site has given the 6<sup>th</sup> Form the chance to be more involved in the life of the whole school and it is most encouraging to see how they are helping with Lower school tutor-groups, with a paired reading scheme and with a number of clubs'*.

The pupils and students achieved excellent standards in their concerts, plays and particularly in Mrs Kennedy's dance production (Norma Major was the guest of honour at one of the performances).

Jason Peters and Sarah Fitzpatrick represented the school in the Observer Silver Mace Debating Competition and reached the Eastern Region Finals held at St. Paul's School in London.

PE teacher Trevor Fowler wrote warmly about Callum Kennedy who left the school in 1992 after holding several senior posts in the school, including succeeding Mike Whiteside as Head of Cromwell House: *'Callum was also renowned for his sense of humour and practical jokes ... his departure means that staff no longer live in fear of opening their internal mail for fear of something horrendous dropping out.'*

*Alan Butler*

## The OHA Bösendorfer piano series

The concert series based on the Bösendorfer grand piano, bought for the school by former pupils in memory of Ken Brown, is now in its fifth season.

Jillian Skerry continues to find excellent performers for us to enjoy in the Performing Arts Centre. After our fourth series, we were able to donate a further £300 to the OHA Music Fund. This is used to provide prizes and bursaries for promising young musicians in the school today.

The support for the concerts from the local Huntingdonshire community has been growing gradually as more and more people have realised that they are getting top London performers at a bargain price and without having to travel to London or even Cambridge to hear them.

In the current 2011-12 series we have already had performances from a brilliant solopianist Ashley Wass and from a virtuoso clarinettist Joy Farrell with Philip Shannon at the piano.

Two more concerts remain in the series:

- on **January 20th** we have a welcome return visit of cellist Jamie Walton and pianist Daniel Grimwood.
- on **February 24<sup>th</sup>** the soloist will be Marina Nadiradze who gave a thrilling performance last season.

Those of you who live within reach of Huntingdon may like to join us for these concerts. You can reserve tickets by telephoning the box office on 01480 375678 between 9 and 3.30 during the week.

A loyal Old Huntingdonian, Spencer Freeman, also helps OHA Music Fund by liaising with Huntingdon Rotary Club to put on a piano concert featuring the prize-winner from a competition Spencer runs in the South East. This event raises money for the OHA Music Fund as well as for local charities supported by Rotary.

The concert in 2012 will be on **Friday, March 16th** in the PAC at 7.30 p.m. and the soloist is Cordelia Williams. Tickets from 01480 398082.

***Peter Downes, OHA Bösendorfer Piano Concerts promoter***

## Tributes

The OHA cannot undertake a full obituary service in this short newsletter but we do now have an 'In Memoriam' page on the web-site so if you hear about any former pupils who have died, please let us know and we will add them in. We make an occasional exception . . .

**Monsignor Richard Rutt** died in July 2011 aged 85. He was a Biggleswade boy who came up by train to the Grammar School. He went straight from school to the Royal Navy but after the war, he went to Kelham Theological College and also got a degree at Pembroke College, Cambridge. He volunteered for missionary service in Korea where he stayed for 20 years, becoming a highly proficient linguist and a bishop, greatly respected by non-Christians as well as by their relatively small Christian community. On his return to England he became a suffragan bishop in Cornwall (where he also learned the Cornish language) and was later Bishop of Leicester until 1990. Four years into retirement he left the Church of England because of its decision to ordain women priests and became a Roman Catholic priest and served as an honorary assistant priest in Cornwall, where he and his wife Joan settled.

He was best known for being the 'Knitting Bishop' as this was his unusual hobby and he became recognised as one of the country's leading practitioners. Richard Rutt kept in touch with the OHA during his time in Leicester and was a guest speaker at one of our Annual Dinners.

**Professor Peter Hale** was a pupil at the Grammar School from 1935 to 1942. After leaving school Peter went on to have an interesting and varied career including the GPO and the King's Speech broadcasts. He created the blueprint for the Open University and helped Lord Perry to set it up. With UNESCO he was posted to Ethiopia as an adviser on tertiary education establishments. He used his psychology degree as a colour consultant for the James Bond films. Peter returned to his roots in Huntingdon at the end of his life where he sadly died from leukaemia in June 2011. His widow, Dr. Helen Hale, has kindly agreed to become the OHA Treasurer. Her professional experience and expertise will be an asset to the OHA and will be particularly useful in relation to the 2015 celebration.



**Harold Ruston** came from a well-known Huntingdon family and attended the Grammar School from 1934 to 40. He joined the family ironmongery and farm machine business straight from school. After a narrow escape from death in a war-time plane crash and years as a prisoner of war, Harold returned to the family business and set up Rustons Engineering Company (RECO) which went on to become one of the country's leading suppliers of farm machinery. His sporting interests were mainly football (a loyal Arsenal fan) and cricket (he played for Ramsey CC for 40 years). Harold died in August 2011 aged 88 after a year long struggle with motor neurone disease.

**Derek Brown** was born in Wyton in 1925, came to HGS in 1936 and went on to be Head Boy. He was an enthusiastic sailor and an aerodynamicist. He went to work for De Havilland in Hatfield, designing, among other things, the world's first jet liner. He went on to lead the team designing the first Vtol transport (vertical take-off and landing). His work on the Airbus 320 is regarded as his greatest professional legacy. From 1981 he was vice-president of Airbus based in Toulouse where he lived until retiring to Norfolk in 1986, there able to indulge his love of sailing. He died aged 85 in late 2010.

## **A new version of the School History**

As part of the celebration of the 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the school in 2015, the OHA will be coordinating the production of a new version of the school's history entitled:

### **Hinchingsbrooke School 1565-2015 Its place in history**

The OHA has commissioned two local Huntingdon historians, Alan Akeroyd and Caroline Clifford, to write this book, which will place the development of the school in its local social, historical and national educational context. It will show how Huntingdon Grammar School and then, from 1970, Hinchingsbrooke School, responded to the changes in society and educational expectations and how it has played its part in contributing to recent changes in the way schools are managed.

The book will be highly illustrated and will contain snippets of comments from pupils from across the last 70 years.

If you would like to submit some thoughts about Huntingdon Grammar School or Hinchingsbrooke School, please send them to the Chairman of the editorial committee, Peter Downes, either

- by e-mail to: [peter.downes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:peter.downes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)
- or by post to: 42, Huntingdon Road, Brampton, Huntingdon,  
Cambs PE28 4PA

The authors will obviously reserve the right to use or not use items provided but even if what you say is not used *verbatim*, it will contribute to the overall description of school life.

To help finance this ambitious project, an appeal will shortly be made for Patrons and we hope that many former pupils of the school will be able to help. You will receive further details of this shortly.

## Latest news from the 'Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House'

Many former members of staff and pupils are members of 'The Friends'. We help the school protect and enhance Hinchingsbrooke House and promote the House as a historic monument.

We put on two events every year:

- An Annual Dinner early in February when we have a visiting speaker who talks about some historical aspect of the House. In 2012 the speaker will be Mr. Charles O'Brien who has been undertaking a complete update of the famous Pevsner Architectural Guides, begun in 1951 by the architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-83). It will be good to hear an expert's opinion on the architectural jigsaw that is Hinchingsbrooke House.
- A Summer Evening meeting on the first Sunday in July when, after the short formal AGM, we have a short talk followed by a tour of the grounds.

This year we have been very concerned to ensure that the condition of the House will not be adversely affected by the school's decision to become an 'academy'. The Head has given us assurances that the school and/or Foundation of Hinchingsbrooke School will provide whatever funds are required, possibly with the help of external grants. As an academy (a state-funded independent school), Hinchingsbrooke can no longer call on Cambridgeshire County Council for support.

The Rose Garden and adjoining herbaceous border were visited by the judging team from 'Britain in Bloom' and Huntingdon got a Gold Award (though we only got marks for effort rather than achievement!).

Membership of 'The Friends' is open to anybody interested, whether or not they have direct links with the buildings as a former pupil or teacher.

To join, send a cheque for £12 (payable 'Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House') to the Treasurer, Ian Nicholls, 9 Glebe Road, Perry, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE28 0DG.

Enter 'Hinchingsbrooke House' in Google and find out what a fascinating and historically important place it is.

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

**'The Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House'**

**Annual Dinner, Sunday, February 12th, 2012, 6.30 for 7 p.m.**

**Theme: 'Hinchingsbrooke House re-visited'**

**Guest Speaker: Charles O'Brien, editor of the Pevsner  
Architectural Guides**

**Tickets: £23 from:**

Ian Nicholls, 9 Glebe Road, Perry, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE28 0DG.

Cheques payable 'Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House'. Please enclose stamped addressed envelope. Tel: 01480 811870

e-mail: [ij.nicholls@btinternet.com](mailto:ij.nicholls@btinternet.com)

### **O.H.A. Annual Spring Reunion**

**Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012, at 7 for 7.30 p.m.  
Hinchingsbrooke House, Huntingdon**

**Guest Speaker: Keith Nancekievill, Head of Hinchingsbrooke School**

**Tickets: £23**

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

### **OHA Summer Lunch Reunion**

**Sunday, July 1st, 2012, from 12.30**

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

**Tickets: £15**

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