

Old Huntingdonians' Association

(for former pupils and teachers of
Huntingdon Grammar School and Hinchingsbrooke School)

Annual Newsletter, January 2015

Chairman's Letter

Dear Old Huntingdonian,

Happy New Year 2015 and Happy 450th Anniversary HGS/Hinchingsbrooke School!

What a year this will be for us all.

Recognition of this important year has already begun with the launch, in October, of our special book **1565 - 2015 from Huntingdon Grammar School to Hinchingsbrooke School** which is being hailed as a great success and is selling fast.

Our guests for the March 2014 Reunion were **Alan Akeroyd and Caroline Clifford**, co-authors of the now published history of the school, outlining some of the interesting things they had discovered while researching education in Huntingdon over the last four and a half centuries.

In this historic year we will be sending an extra Newsletter, due to arrive in a few months time, when details of all events are finalised.

The first 2015 Reunion (target group: pre-1970) will take place on **Saturday 7 March** when our special guest will be **Graham Stroud** who left HGS in 1970 and has recently retired from the European Commission. **Please book your place NOW, using the reply-slip sent with this Newsletter.**

Two more dates for your diary are as follows:- **Sunday 7 June, Reunion and Lunch** (target group: 1970 - 90) and **Sunday 5 July, Reunion, AGM and Lunch** followed by a **Musical Promenade and Tea**. At the **AGM** we will be discussing and taking a decision on the proposed merger of the OHA into a new Hinchingsbrooke Alumni Association. We will welcome your thoughts and opinions on this big step **BEFORE July** so that we make the right decision for us all at the meeting - do get in touch.

I would love to see **YOU** on 7 March - let's make it a record year! If you would like to bring along any memorabilia so that you can share your memories with others, your committee will have tables ready. **Please be there!**

Hilary Angell While, OHA Chairman
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Letter from the Principal

As we approach our special anniversary year it was good to meet so many of you at the launch of the excellent new history of the two schools, so well authored by Alan Akeroyd and Caroline Clifford. If you haven't yet purchased a copy, I can highly recommend it.

Our very own 'waterfall cascade of poppies,' which adorned the PAC during the week of 10 - 14 November, provided a fitting backdrop for the remembrance services we held for each year group in this centenary year. As well as the poppies, each year group was piped into assembly by our very own master of the pipes, Tony Best, dressed in full Scottish regalia.

I believe it is important to pass on the traditions of remembrance to the next generation and to spend time in remembering just how much we owe our freedom to those who sacrificed their lives in earlier conflicts. We also acknowledged the sense of duty and service shown by those members of the armed forces, some of whom are in our parent body, and how much we can learn from their example.



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The school's senior ex-pupils

One of the OHA activities related to the 450th anniversary has been to identify and track down the oldest surviving former pupils of the school. To the best of our knowledge so far, these are Elizabeth Atkinson and Pip Harrison, pictured above at Elizabeth's 99th Birthday party at the end of September 2014.

Atkinson is Elizabeth's married name (and, by the strangest of coincidences, her late husband, Thomas, was a colleague of Peter Downes at Banbury School in the 1970s). When she was at school she was known as Betty Softly. Pip and she were in the Sixth Form at the same time (1932). Pip left school a year before Betty; he will be 100 in April 2015.

Both of them went on to be teachers. Pip was a primary school teacher and taught in several local schools, ending up as a headteacher. Pip still lives locally, in Houghton, and is a regular attender of OHA events.

Betty set up an independent prep school near Banbury and taught there for many years, retiring eventually to Moreton-in-Marsh. Shortly after her birthday party in September, she moved to live Germany so as to be closer to her only daughter, Jane, her grand-daughter and great-grand-daughter.

Peter Downes comments: 'It was a joy and a privilege to be invited to Betty's birthday party and to see Pip and her together again after such a long time. They were both in very good spirits and in remarkable health. An example to us all!'

If any readers of this Newsletter think they know somebody even more senior, we would be pleased to know.

OHA communications come into the 21st century !!

Thanks to the expert help we are getting from a younger member of the OHA committee, we are gradually modernising our way of keeping in touch.

Yes, we have our own page on the School web-site so if you like browsing, why not go to www.hinchingsbrookeschool.net, then click on About and you will find a link on the left-hand column to the Old Huntingdonians' Association. There you will find details of events and activities.

We also have an *In Memoriam* page so if you want to inform us about the death of a former pupil, we can post that there. We are not able to publish lengthy obituaries and tributes, just name and, if possible, dates of attendance at school. We are planning to build up an *Archives* section so that photos of past events and people can be posted there. For obvious reasons we cannot publish every photo that has ever been taken of pupils and ex-pupils but we hope, over time, to build up a representative collection.

We will be starting with some items that were provided for the 2015 book (see page 4) and for which there was not space. If you have other items, please send them to Gary Buckenham, contacting him via the Archive page Contact Form to arrange scanning.

He will do his best to scan them and post them on the right bit of the Archives section. If you want the items back, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. We look forward to hearing from you.

Valuing the past and moving forward into the future . . .

The OHA has existed for over 80 years. We have about 700 people on our mailing-list, most of whom were pupils at the Grammar School. About 12,000 young people have passed through Hinchingsbrooke School since 1970 but very few of these are signed up with the OHA. Perhaps the word 'Old' puts them off, or they simply do not know much about the association. The OHA committee is in discussion with the school to see if we can find a way of merging the OHA into a '*Hinchingsbrooke Alumni Association*'. This might enable more recent ex-pupils to offer their experience and expertise to current pupils e.g. in careers advice and work experience, and/or to make donations in cash or in kind to the school today as a way of saying 'thank you'.

The OHA will contact you again before Easter 2015 to provide more details and to seek your support for the closure of the OHA and its incorporation into the HAA.



The 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 eighth season. Jillian Skerry (above) is the Musical Director of the series.

Three more concerts remain in the 2014-2015 series:

- * **January 30th** - The Fitzwilliam Piano Quartet
- * **February 27th** - Yulia Chaplina (piano);
- * **March 27th** - 450 Years - a musical journey

You can reserve tickets by telephoning the box office on 01480 375678 between 9 and 3.30 during the week and speak to former pupil Lynn Pettitt.

Hunts Phil joint concert

As part of the celebration of the 450th anniversary, the Hunts Phil Orchestra and Choir, whose concerts always take place in the School's Performing Arts Centre, will join forces with Hinchingsbrooke's most talented young musicians on **Saturday, November 7**. The programme will include the 'Hinchingsbrooke Suite', composed by former teacher Barry Russell.

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As you might imagine, the school's year since last I wrote has been as fast paced as ever and full of challenge and opportunity. The biggest challenge remains the budget projections going forward, which will mean further drastic reductions, largely as a result of changes to national insurance and pension contributions, none of which have been funded.

We now have 3 Directorates, and not four as I reported last year, which are proving very effective in the quest for improvement. Like me, many of you will remember 'O' levels being graded 1 - 9 until the change to letters in 1975. Well, we are to go back to a 1- 9 grading of GCSEs, as well as having new and more rigorous A level and GCSE content, which is to be taught from September 2015 and 2016 respectively.

AS levels and A levels are to be 'decoupled' making them separate qualifications, and there are other major changes to the way league tables are going to be constructed. We are used to constant change in education and these curriculum changes are being carefully planned, as is our response to the changes to the construction of the league tables.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!

On behalf of the school, I send you all good wishes for the New Year 2015

Andrew Goulding

Principal

Some other events planned for 2015

May 2nd and 3rd Anniversary Weekend: Guest Lecture by Dame Hilary Mantel on Saturday, May 2nd (Tickets £8 (to include welcome drink on arrival) on sale from January 19, ring 01480 375678

Wednesday, 21st October The Foundation of Hinchingsbrooke School Special Recognition Awards 2015. 7 p.m. in the PAC ^^

Friday, October 16th Bösendorfer Concert, PAC 7.30 p.m. First concert of new season

Saturday, November 7 Huntingdonshire Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra: Concert in conjunction with Hinchingsbrooke School students, PAC, 7.30 (ticket details to be confirmed)

Friday, November 27 Bösendorfer Concert, PAC 7.30 p.m. * Gala concert

Other events in preparation:

Flower festival with Brampton Flower Club

Lecture by distinguished academic on 'Education through time'

Outdoor event in the grounds

Ball/Elizabethan banquet

Venue for BBC Any Questions or Question Time

OHA Reunion and Dinner - Saturday March 7th 2015

The guest speaker will be **Graham Stroud** who retired a couple of years ago from his high-powered job with the European Commission. He had been director of the largest agency in Brussels, administering a budget of more than 1 billion euros to fund scientific research throughout the European Union.

He and his wife Alison decided to settle back in Birmingham, the city where they'd met 40 years ago. They have immersed themselves in the cultural life of the city. They both sing in the 80-strong Birmingham Bach Choir, while soprano Alison also sings for the University of Birmingham choir and Graham plays the horn for the South Birmingham Sinfonia.

Tickets for this dinner cost £24. There is a bar available so that guests can buy whatever drinks they feel are appropriate if they are driving. Tickets can be booked with the OHA Treasurer: John Hinsby, 30, Thrapston Road, Brampton, Huntingdon, PE28 4TD, using one of the booking forms on the separate leaflet. John prefers to receive bookings by post rather than by e-mail. Cheques payable to the 'Old Huntingdonians' Association'.

Guests are asked to arrive at Hinchbrooke House from 7 p.m. for a 7.30 start.

A new history of the school: 1565 - 2015

The book commissioned by the OHA to mark the school's 450 years of existence is not just a run-of-the-mill school history. It tells the story of how a small 16th century grammar school developed over 450 years into one of the largest comprehensive schools in the country. The special feature of the book is that it sets this development in the context of the many social changes that have taken place, both locally and nationally, over this period.

The authors are experienced local historians and they have been able to draw on a wide range of documents to illustrate the process of change.

Many former pupils and teachers from Huntingdon Grammar School and Hinchbrooke School have also provided photographs, anecdotes and information.

This book will therefore be of interest not only to former members of the two schools but also to a wider public in Huntingdonshire.

Educational establishments exist to serve society and are also a reflection of it. The OHA hopes that this book will be a fitting contribution to the celebration of 450 years of Huntingdon Grammar School transformed into Hinchbrooke School.

You can obtain a copy of this book in person from:

Hinchbrooke School Reception; W.H. Smith, High St. Huntingdon; Huntingdon Town Council office in Market Hill, Huntingdon; Brampton Village Primary School Reception; The Pharmacy, 2 Causeway, Godmanchester; The Cromwell Museum; the Grafham Community Shop; St. Neot's Museum. It costs £15 if you collect it in person.

To order by post, please write to: Finance Department (450th Anniversary Book), Hinchbrooke School, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, PE29 3BN, enclosing a cheque for £15 + £4.50p postage = Total of £19.50p payable to 'Hinchbrooke School'. Please write your full address (including postcode) on the back of the cheque. Or you can pay by credit/debit card by ringing 01480 - 420502. Please direct general enquires to communications@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk. School main Switchboard - 01480 375700

The Friends of Hinchbrooke House will be holding their Annual Dinner on Thursday, February 19. The guests will be the Earl of Sandwich and the Countess of Sandwich, John and Caroline. Caroline will be talking about running a stately home which is also a lived-in house, i.e. Mapperton in Dorset where they now live. For ticket details, ring Peter Downes on 01480 509471.