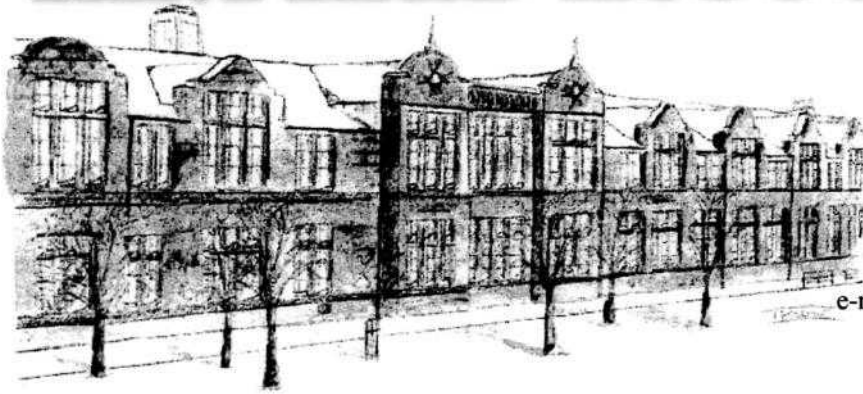


TANFIELD ASSOCIATION



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NEWSLETTER No. 20

Winter 2010

Editorial

Well, we made it to Issue 20 so we must be doing something right! We had quite a good response to items in Issue 19 which is very pleasing, and which, I hope, makes for an interesting Newsletter. Keep them coming.

The Summer school results are out, and again Tanfield pupils have done exceptionally well. We, who have fond memories of the place and a sort of allegiance to it can only be dead chuffed! Fred and I have occasion to visit school on business, and you'll be pleased to know that there is a nice atmosphere about the place. The décor is pristine, the place is quiet, and the pupils are polite and courteous. I am sure that they must be proud to be part of it.

Success breeds success they say. The school has just held on open night for prospective pupils, next year's intake. I am told that families came from a wide local area hoping to enrol their children. The staff too must be doing something right!

After a very enjoyable late summer lunch for members at the Harperley Hotel, we followed up with our new style AGM. We had a Saturday lunch (on the house, or at least the Association) at the Harperley, and we kept formalities to a minimum. It was well attended, but without the MPs that we expected. Sadly for us the Labour Party chose the same day for the leadership announcement at their Conference. Most inconsiderate of them, but we survived! Those present agreed that it made what can be potentially dull, into an enjoyable afternoon. Something else we did right.

How smug can I get?

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We have had a good response to information regarding the School's involvement at Harvest Camps. See inside. Now can you tell us about 'Fire Watching'? We understand that during the early years of WW2 senior pupils were used as 'Fire Watchers' overnight at school. That is all we know, so if you know more please pass on the information.

We always look forward to your letters and your photographs. Sadly we can't publish everything that we get, and most items are 'edited', but be assured that they are not 'binned', but kept for posterity. If you would like items returned please say so. Photo files (.jpg) by e-mail are great!

Ted Brabban.

Late News: Mrs Jack's book, 'Calendar Pigs', is to be launched at the London Book Fair in April.

Annual General Meeting - 25th Sept 2010

40 people were present at the AGM, more than any previous AGM, which seems to justify the decision to hold it early afternoon on a Saturday, starting with a buffet lunch, and keeping the event as informal as possible.

The absence apologies sadly included the two MPs who were going to be present. Wouldn't you think that the Labour Party would avoid clashing with us to vote on their new leader? Some folks are so inconsiderate. The two MPs apologised but pledged their continued support for the Association and the School.

Prior to the buffet, Grace was said by Rev. Peter Atkinson (52-59). We were grateful for his presence and his contribution to the afternoon.

The Tanfield Glass was presented by Professor Pescod to Mrs June Todd (nee Pounder -'50 to '57). June has been very active in helping with the work of the Association, and is a most worthy recipient of this trophy. To keep business as brief as possible the Reports of the President, the Secretary and the Annual Accounts were pre-printed.

Prof. Warren Pescod ended his summary of a successful year with a rather sad announcement in that he felt that it was time to stand down and hand over the reins. This year will be his last as President.

Your Officers for the coming year were re-elected 'en bloc' and are:

President : Prof Warren Pescod

Vice President : Ted Brabban

Secretary: Fred Westwater

Assistant Secretary: John Hogg.

Joint Treasurers; Karen Scott and Susan Donkin

Membership Secretary: Susan Donkin

Newsletter Editor: Ted Brabban

It was proposed by Fred, and agreed by all, to institute the post of President Elect and so prepare for Warren standing down. Professor Robert Harrison (Bob to his friends) was nominated and agreed to accept the position. Bob was Head Boy in 1962, and is son of Bob Harrison who taught woodwork and went on to be a County Advisor (making way for yours truly, -Ted) He also became a school Governor. Prof Harrison's mother was a County Councillor and Chair of Tanfield Governors. His grandparents were Mr and Mrs Jolley. The latter was also a County Councillor and Head of Tanfield Governors. His granddad was a local councillor and school governor. What a school pedigree!

Speaking on behalf of Elizabeth Hawkins who sadly is undergoing medical treatment, Ted Brabban asked for support for the Centenary Book. Elizabeth has compiled and edited the previous two publications, and has agreed to do the same for the 100th birthday. The book is likely to be titled '100 - Not Out'. Previous books have been subsidised by County Durham Education Department. In the current economic situation this is a non-starter so we will have to do it all ourselves. This is a major concern. So, apart from appealing for items for publication, we are appealing for financial help. It is agreed that we try a sponsorship scheme. For £10 or more you could sponsor a page in the book, and your sponsorship will be printed on the page. Your generosity generally will be greatly appreciated to help in this venture. Stanley Town Councillor, Joyce Hunter suggested that some funding may be available from that source, and County Councillor Joe Wilson has also said that we could get help from the Community Fund. We may be able to raise something from advertising, but the main source of income will be your generosity we hope.

Head Teacher Graeme Lloyd told us how well the school is doing. (More elsewhere) As a result of hard work all round the GCSE results this summer were the best ever - an awesome 95% passes in grades A-C, and 65% in Maths and English. He spoke of his ambition to see a Sixth Form re-introduced at Tanfield, and told us that pupils are already studying for Lower Sixth exams before leaving Tanfield.

Speaking on behalf of some overseas members who have problems with subscriptions, Ted asked the opinion of those present with regard to the institution of a Life Membership fee. The idea was thought to be a good one and will be discussed by the executive committee.

To conclude a most unusual AGM a raffle was held with numerous prizes. This helped defray the cost of the free buffet. All present were of the opinion that the event was very successful and should become the 'norm'. Fred was also asked to organise a Christmas Get Together at the Harperley.

Message from the Treasurer

We have joint Treasurers, Karen Scott and Susan Donkin, who do an excellent job in taking care of the Association finances. We all very much appreciate their work on our behalf.

They wish us to offer a gentle reminder to the membership that the Annual Administration Fee of £5 for 2010 / 2011 was due on 16th October last. Those who pay by Bankers' Order are automatically up to date. A Standing Order form was printed on the back page of the Summer Newsletter. If this was not presented to your bank before October, the first payment won't be until next year. If this is the case, then a cheque for this year will be welcome.

The Treasurers express their thanks for your continued support to the Association.

Please make any cheques payable to The Tanfield Association, and address them to :

Mrs S. Donkin
19, Lindom Avenue
Chester le Street.
Co. Durham
DH3 3PP

Tanfield Scores Best Ever GCSE Results - Again!

Congratulations to our Year 11 2010 students who have produced the best examination results in the history of Tanfield School.

The Headline above came from the local newspaper! What a standard the school is setting.

95% received 5 or more passes at Grade C or better, and 65% received five or more passes at Grade C or better including Maths and English. These results put Tanfield amongst the top places in the county, league table! What a fantastic achievement.

We extend our congratulations to both pupils and staff. Very well done.

We feel proud to be Associated to the school.

Tanfield's Got Talent

On the last day of the Summer Term Fred, Ted and wife Mavis, representing the Association, along with some school governors and parents, attended the stage presentation of Tanfield's Got Talent.

An appreciative pupil audience, who thought that the performers were great anyway, applauded the performers those who had volunteered to stand on the stage to 'do their thing'. The enthusiasm lasted the whole show from 10 until noon, and over twenty two acts. There was evidence of real talent among the performers who sang, danced, played instruments or did stand-up comedy. In the eyes of the audience they were all winners!

The Staff organisers were Mr Keith Alder and Mr John Stephenson (Head of Music). They told of the good feeling that the show had engendered throughout the school, and the enthusiasm of the pupils to join in and help either on stage or off stage. This was self evident.

The previous day they had performed for an audience of over 250 junior school pupils to rapturous applause. Formally thanking Mr Alder, one little girl said: "I speak for all my friends when I say that it is the best show we have ever been to".

To end the show, compere Martin Wigham (now at New College, Durham) led all, including audience, in singing Summer Holiday, (the Cliff Richard song). True, some of us oldies felt our ears muffled after the show, but you couldn't help but be impressed by the enthusiasm and hard work put in by the participants, as well as the talent on show.

This will not produce any extra GCSEs, but it does demonstrate the worth of present day Tanfield as they continue the traditions of our old school, but in a present day environment. So, thank you to all concerned for demonstrating to us that as in the past, Tanfield has still got real talent.

Fred Westwater

Once a Head Boy ...

Umpteen years later and he is still wearing his badge and his tie!!



John Hogg at the Harperley.

100 Not Out

This is the proposed title of the book to record the school's centenary. We are just hoping that it is going to happen.

There are 2 reasons. First, financial. The previous two books (80th and 90th birthdays) were subsidised by the County Education Department. In a time of restraints and cuts this is not going to happen this time, so we are at an immediate disadvantage. We need your help!

Previously people have donated to the book as sponsors, i.e. for a donation they sponsored a page of the book, and were named on the page for doing so. We would like to do the same this time around and are asking members to sponsor a page for £10. If you can afford more, well As we will be going it alone on this one, any financial help would be very welcome. If you wish to dedicate a page in memory of someone, when you send your sponsorship donation, please include the wording of the dedication with it.

Secondly, we need your help to fill the pages. We will need copy to fill the pages that I hope are going to be sponsored. We will need your memories, your comments, or your anecdotes, or anything relevant to make it an interesting and memorable book to mark the 100th birthday. Photographs and images by e-mail (if you can scan them, or have them scanned in .jpg format) would be very welcome.

The Editor of the book is Elizabeth Hawkins (previously Miss Thirlaway). Any articles should be sent to her.

Mrs E. Hawkins,
15 Thirlmere,
Birtley,
Chester le Street.
DH3 2JY

e-mail: Hawkins_15@o2.co.uk (N.B. there is an underscore before the 15 !)

The Association Treasurer is Mrs Susan Donkin. All sponsorship money should be sent to her. If you are dedicating your sponsorship, include the wording with your cheque and she will pass it to Elizabeth. If you are sending a cheque with an article for publication, send both to Susan and she will pass on the relevant part to Elizabeth.:

Mrs Susan Donkin
19 Lindom Avenue
Chester le Street.
DH3 3PP

Cheques should be made out to: **The Tanfield Association**

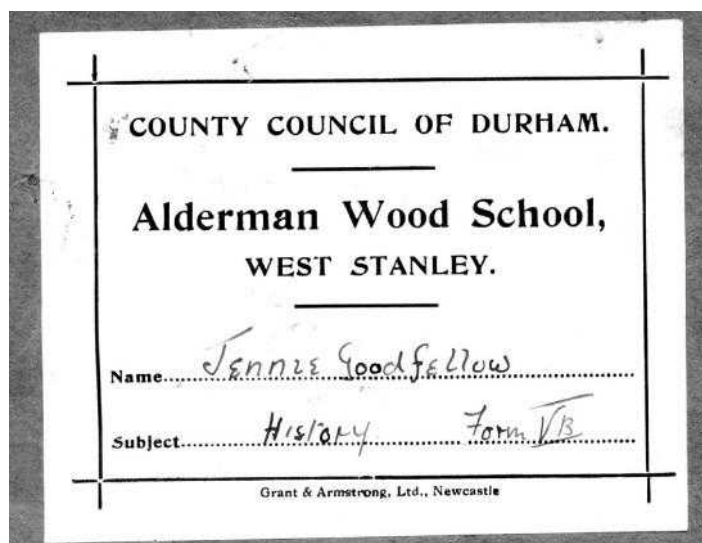
We are considering a scheme of asking for pre-publication orders and payment to build up a fund to pay the bills. This would happen when we know the publication costs and the book price to cover them. Your comments on this possible scheme would be very welcome.

Be sure to make a note of the addresses above, you are sure to need them!

Thank you in advance. Ted Brabban, Editor.

An Old Exercise Book

A builder demolishing some property discovered an old exercise book in the loft. He knew the school and handed it in there.



The year was 1928, but the label will be very familiar to pupils much later than this. The name changed, but Grant and Armstrong must have had a County contract for many years.

Inside, the work was done with an ink pen! Although the cover says History, the contents appear to be exercises in English :

Oct 10th 1925. Description of an Orange

As we eat an orange I wonder
if we ever think what a
bundle of mystery it is. Commencing
with the outside the first thing
we notice is its shape, it is
not perfectly round but it is flat
at the top and bottom, why that
is we do not know but probably
Mother Nature has ~~the~~ ^{the} reason. Now
the skin looks as if someone would
been polishing it all over with
a spin, this again is one of Nature's
secrets.

Now when we remove the skin
we find a kind of white substance
called pith which also has to be
removed before eating.

There is more of course, and Jennie got 7 out of 10 for her work!

You should beware! Who may be looking at your adolescent work 80 years after the event?

It would be interesting to know if anyone out there has any knowledge of Jennie Goodfellow, or the family who followed her. You know my e-mail address!

School Uniform - From Joan Charlton

In the article on School Uniform in the Summer edition of the Newsletter I read that 'the girls, of course, wore brown'. My recollection of our uniform in the 1930s is that the girls wore 'browns'. There were three official suppliers - Shimelds, Murrays and the 'Store', and while our tunics started as much the same rather gingery shade, the different dyes wore and faded differently, so that by the third year we were a 'pastie' coloured lot, and grew more piebald as time went on.

These times were certainly not glamorous, but they were sensible garments - their pleats and adjustable shoulder straps meant that one's first tunic might serve for the whole of one's school career. Less sensible were the blouses - how could anyone have thought of tussore silk? Perhaps it is forgotten now how hideously difficult that is to iron. (and in the 1930s many families still used flat irons) In the event, a blind eye was turned - as long as one's blouse was of an unobtrusive beige or cream no questions were asked. We had brown blazers, but wore the same black and gold tie as the boys. I remember the satisfaction of being senior enough to have a silk tie instead of the rough knitted one that made such a lumpy knot.

Girls did not wear caps, of course, but were supposed to wear a sort of mop-cap of brown serge such as one sees on old photos of factory lasses - hideous! But authority was again accommodating. We were not allowed to wear any other headgear, but we did not have to wear the mop caps. Nor did we have a standard outdoor coat. Most of us wore the hard working navy blue trench coat which would stand up to the Stanley weather!

Stanley weather, being what it is, there was no great demand for Summer uniform, but somewhere about 1935 we were given the option of wearing cotton frocks in the summer term. They were rather skimpy affairs of brown and white checks trimmed with brown, and the Sixth Form girls were allowed to choose their own styles in recognition of their senior status.

Looking back I can see that whoever planned the uniform managed a reasonable compromise between contemporary fashions for schoolgirls (teen-agers had not then been invented) and practicality (excepting those tussore blouses), but one exception stands out in my memory - we had to wear long brown woollen stockings. True, in a Stanley winter they were comfortingly warm, but in summer they itched abominably, and always they wore into holes. Not your discreet little ladders, but great penny size holes. (Old pennies!! Ed.) Girls were expected to darn their own stockings- and the brown darning wool always showed up as a different colour after washing!! However, when I shed my Tanfield uniform for the last time in 1939, the miracle of 'Nylons' was still a generation away!

Looking back over this letter, I am surprised at how vividly I still remember my school uniform, -worn with pride and without protest (apart from the darning). It must seem so strange to the present generation in their school dress. However, it was hard wearing and comfortable (except for the stockings) and schoolgirls were not expected to look like pop-stars!

I expect that this screed is much too long for you to use, but you may be able to extract some snippets.

Yours sincerely
Joyce Charlton.

No way Joyce! Why would I diminish a gem? Ted.

School Uniform - from Jean Bennett

I certainly do remember Alan Westwater in his new school uniform. We both started Stanley Grammar School at the same time and we were in the same class for the next five years.

For reasons I cannot really understand I still have my school scarf, blazer badge and Prefect's badge. They have travelled with me from England to South Africa, back to England and eventually to Canada.

Best wishes to anyone who remembers me,

Jean Bennett (nee Railton) formerly of Craghead
Port Hardy B.C. Canada

Howard Bott - School Uniform

Ted,



I may regret this later but I attach a photo of myself in school uniform just before I started in September 1957. The girl on the tricycle is my cousin Karen, daughter of Barbara Churcher.

Also, there's a photo of some SGS boys on a tennis outing (1960ish) to Chester le Street park.

Back row left to right: Howard Bott, Reynolds Reed, David Proud.

Front row left to right: Philip Waller, Geoff Reynolds.

There are some other photos I hope to send but my sister is vetting them first!

Howard



School Uniform - From Bill Errington

Dear Ted

After reading the article about school uniform I had a look at some old photos and found the attached. It was taken in July 1954, first long trouser - I think



I also still have my school badge, prefect's badge, athletics badge and somewhere in the house my junior and senior gymnastics badges.

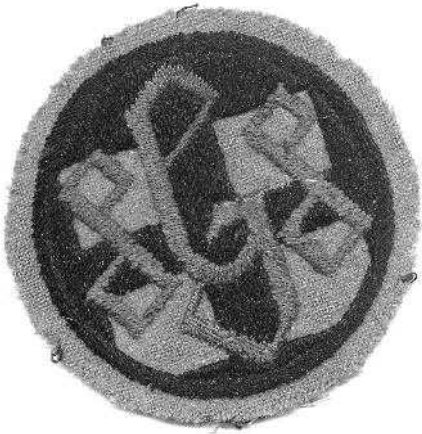
Best wishes

Bill (Lol) Errington (1953-60)

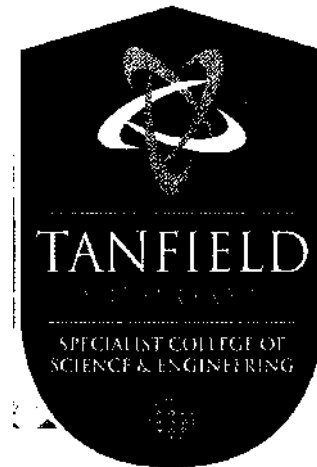
PS Sorry no cap, cannot remember wearing one

School Badges

It is amazing what some folks keep and treasure! Following my appeal in the last Newsletter I had a number of replies. Some had scanned their badges, whilst Norma Hutchinson (Redfearn) donated hers for the school archives.



Above is the old blazer pocket badge (sent by Norma Hutchinson), resplendent in Gold, red and black. Alongside is a later enameled Prefect Badge in similar colours. I say later because mine (Yes, I still have it!) is an enameled copy of the pocket badge. Below is an athletics badge to be sewn onto an athletics vest - and obviously proudly worn. (I apologise to the sender, I have 'lost' the original e-mail!)



Alongside is the new School Badge which is a complete departure from tradition, but which reflects the school's bias towards science and engineering. Currently it is only seen on letterheads, publicity and so on. However things are set to change!

We were given a preview of a new black jacket (blazer?) which is to be encouraged for school wear. It looked very smart, in a sharp material, and with the black badge on the pocket. The badge was without the bottom lettering and the globe, but looked just right. How many of the new owners will still have theirs in a few decades' time? They will, after all, be a significant milestone in the long history of Tanfield School.

The Old Tower block memories

I attended Tanfield from 1971 -1978 and we thought of it as the new tower block. My memories are the amount of stairs I had to go up/down every day going from one class to another. We weren't allowed to use the top corridor, Dr Sharp made sure of that and the time tables always seemed to take us all the way down stairs, along the ground corridor and then all the way up the stairs again. Mr Barron benefited from our fitness for the basketball team courtesy of the Tower block!

Design was something to be desired, Chemistry labs three floors up. probably, potentially the most dangerous room in the school! Mind you, the only incident during my time, was in the Biology lab, after a rock found under water, at the coast, was taken to Dr Bolton to identify. When it dried out, it caught fire and gave off pungent fumes...it was phosphorous. Unfortunately Dr Bolton was hurt and the tower block had to be evacuated!

My final memory of the tower block was the area under the canopy which was handy to play football if it was raining. Dr Sharp insisted on us using an airflow ball, but it wasn't too exciting to play with, so we improvised by stuffing paper in it to speed the game up. Unfortunately it resulted in us all being given a stoke of the cane from Dr Sharp.

On a separate note, I have some photos of our last day after playing cricket against the staff, I caught and bowled Mr. Barron, a memorable day for me.

Also have a photo of the cast of our sixth form show, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. If you want electronic copies of the photos for "100 not out", let me know.

Regards,
David Cook

I remember the phosphorous incident very well. The 'unidentified rock' had been left at the school office for Dr. Bolton. I arrived there (near the base of the Tower Block) just after it had 'gone off'. The place was smoke filled and no-one knew the cause, and no-one knew if there was anyone in the 'back office' where the duplicators were. Clutching a wet hankie over nose and mouth I crawled through to check that it was empty. It was. Firemen arrived, and an ambulance, and the staff who had been involved (starting bell had not rung so the school was empty of pupils) were whisked off to Shotley Bridge Hospital where we spent a day 'under observation'. I remember spending the day nursing an awful headache. Ted B.

Harvest Camps

Harvest camps were introduced in 1943 by the Winston Churchill wartime government to help allay the shortage of agricultural workers and to ensure that the harvest was collected in a time of national food shortage. The Women's Land Army had been formed and this scheme was designed to supplement their labours at harvest time. Churchill called upon organisations such as schools and Scouts etc. to volunteer, and to 'pull together' in the national interest.

At Tanfield a 'boys only' scheme was started under the charge of Mr Elliot (Little Ell). Boys from the 4th, 5th and 6th years were eligible to volunteer for two weeks work. Dennis Hall and Kenneth Bragan, along with others volunteered.

They were sent to Piercebridge, and were accommodated in dormitory huts. They were allocated, in pairs, to local farms.

They experienced mixed weather. On some farms the volunteers could shelter when it rained, but our two were unfortunate in having a boss who when the corn was too wet, sent them to hoe weeds amongst the root crops. They enjoyed stooking corn alongside the Land Army Girls, but the work in general was heavy and tiring. They remember the cut hands and the scratched forearms from the straw, and the amazing sight of the wild creatures scuttling out of the last cut.

All the wages that the boys received were handed to Mr Elliot, who divided the pot at the end of their time. They were quite aggrieved to have the same share as those who had sheltered from the rain. Ken has a vivid memory of receiving his School Certificate (nowadays GCSE) results while at the camp. I can still remember the flimsy paper, and the results that were too good to be mine. I still believe a mistake was made but I didn't ask for them to be checked.

The boys agreed that they had enjoyed the experience, and all felt that they had done their bit in helping the War Effort.

Dennis Hall went into mining and became a manager. He moved to Nuneaton after marrying Edith Golightly, who happened to be Kenneth Bragan's cousin.

Kenneth Bragan went into medicine. He practiced in Scotland until 1965 when he emigrated to New Zealand where he still lives, and still corresponds with the Association.

Harvest Camps - from Sam Hunter

Dear Ted,

I don't know how much of this will be of use to you with regard to harvest camps but you can cull it as necessary. I first went to Pershore in 1944 but not with a school group. This was organised by Annfield Plain Boy Scouts although there were a number of Tanfield pupils, not necessarily from the local area, that were included. At that time we were under canvas in bell tents. It would appear to me that this was probably the source of the school selecting Pershore either through one of the pupils that attended this camp or through the scoutmaster, Jack Gare, who was also a schoolteacher. Otherwise it is too much of a coincidence for both groups to select Pershore. I went there again with the Scouts in 1945 and can be sure of the date because one afternoon while working in the fields with Land Army girls and German POW (Prisoners of War) the local church bells suddenly started ringing. It didn't take us long to find out it was V-J Day!!! The POW were just as elated as we were because it meant they would be going home. Following the Scout camps I branched out with Norman Collin and Ken Nicholson to Ministry of Agriculture camps in Wiltshire (1946) and Somerset (1947) and I'm not sure whether there was a camp at Pershore those years. I did attend one school organised camp and that was near Sedgefield. I'm a little hazy on the details but it strikes me that it was during the March break in 1947. About the only two things I'm sure about is that Collin Bell got struck by a locomotive playing "chicken" on the railroad track that ran past the camp and the other is that the farmer's daughter was called Dinah !

One more thing and then I'll go. Isobel (Harrison) mentioned Mr. Bell as being the first German teacher since the war but I took Scientific German from Miss Smith in 1947. I realise it was not a full course but it was "German".

Best wishes from Victoria BC,
Sincerely, Sam Hunter.

Harvest Camps - from Elsie Patterson (nee Firstbrook)

Hi Ted,

As you know I was in Bermuda July/August and saw Bob (Patterson) and Helle. They both look very well! As usual the conversation turned to the latest newsletter - Number 19 this time. We both remember going to harvest camps - it must have been '48 when I went along with Joyce Snell, Annie Douglas and Ruth Watson. Where we were exactly I don't know - other than the fact it was in the Evesham Vale somewhere. We seemed to be a long way from any town of note, and by the time we'd picked potatoes, beans, plums (I remember canning plums too) we were too tired to care anyway! We went by train and lived in those long corrugated huts. We were paid a few shillings - but how many I don't know. So, like you, there are still more questions than answers!!!

Bob may have dredged up some memories - I know that my late husband, Brian (Patterson) told me about being offered a bride by one of the gypsy families that used to spend summers helping farmers, and Bob mentioned this too. Brian went more than once to camp. It had to be government/ schools organized event. Now I know why some people keep a journal --- things we were never going to forget just fade away! I know too why it's sensible to write names of people we're never going to forget on the backs of photographs!!! Sorry not to have been of more help.

Elsie Patterson (nee Firstbrook)

Thank you Elsie. No need to apologise, all of these snippets add up like pieces of a jig-saw to make a whole picture, and it all makes interesting reading.

I was at Harvest Camp with Bob and others. My old friend Alex Bainbridge reminds me that we were at RAF Honeybourne, as was! I remember picking pea-pods, he remembers picking plums. We worked at Smedley's Jam and Canning factory too. My strongest memory is of enjoying 'Scruppy' at the village pub. (Some over-enjoyed!) We hitch-hiked to Stratford too, and had fun on the Avon.
Ted B.

Harvest Camps - The Roger Clough Story

Following the publication of the last Newsletter, Fred received a phone call from Roger Clough (1932-39) recalling his experiences of Harvest Camps.

He was at a camp in 1947. In 1939, at the end of his 6th Form, Roger went from being a pupil on Friday to being a Navy entrant on the following Monday.

After experiencing WW2 in the navy (more in a later edition), he was demobbed and took his Civil Service entrance exams. Now at 25 years of age he was a junior civil servant, foot-loose and fancy free, - but desk bound!

To his delight the Government of the day introduced civil servants. To deal with the shortage of agricultural labourers, and because of the urgent need for crops to feed a hungry nation (rationing of food was still in force) Civil Servants were called upon to volunteer their services on the land for a week, on their civil service pay.

Jumping at the chance of leaving his desk, Roger was off, in mid-August, to a camp near Pershore. They were housed in ex army huts and fed very well. Summer 1947 was glorious, the sun shone every day. The snag was that crops had ripened early and by the time Roger arrived most were gathered in. He had one full day of work, and six days to enjoy the weather along with other young folks who'd volunteered.

Romances occurred amongst them, but of course Roger was not amongst them. Being a young fit demobbed sailor, he wouldn't think of such a thing! At least that is what Fred understood as Roger appeared to be speaking with his tongue in his cheek!

Roger returned to his desk. He didn't collect much harvest, but the interlude did provide memories that have stayed with him.

Harvest Camps - Scouts

Warren Pescod (our President) and Clifford Beacroft have happy memories of a scout organised camp. Why write here? It happens that at that time the 1st Annfield Plain troupe was composed of pupils from Alderman Wood School. Even the Scoutmaster, Jack Mackeson was a past pupil. Among those who went were John Temple, Jim Ridley, the Posselt brothers, Eric Rainbow and Harry Blackburn.

They went for three weeks to Pershore in 1948 (remembered because of the Olympics and Fanny Blankers Koen, with her three Golds!). They lived in bell tents, and the weather was great. The Eton Boating Song is well remembered as it was used each day for Reveille. The night had been spent on straw palliasses covered by a blanket, (these were the days before sleeping bags), and their toilet was a trench in the ground!

Their main work was in the enormous bean fields. Clifford adjusted the River Avon irrigation system each day. Their foreman was an ex P.O.W., a German who had decided to remain in the UK. His name was Heinz. (very apt on a bean farm! Ed.) who treated the scouts well.

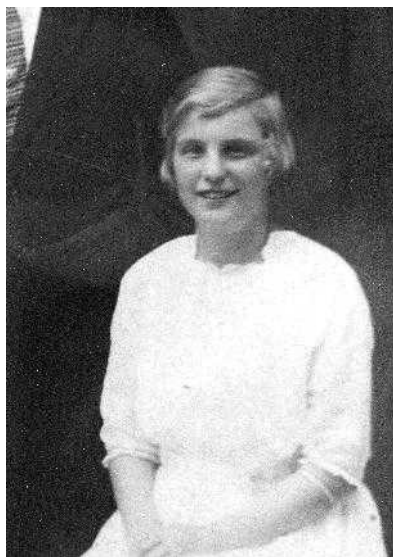
Clifford remembers seeing the new planes without propellers (the prototype jets) flying overhead, and working with Land Army Girls erecting plant supports.

Out of work hours they had various misadventures which always seemed to involve the River Avon and Harry Blackburn. On one occasion he accidentally went into the river wearing his best clothes! It must have been enjoyable however - they all volunteered to return the following year. Fred.

From Edna Hughes (Aged 97), Australia.

Thank you for the literature with news of the 1912 Centenary.

In 1924 I started at Alderman Wood School. I was thrilled to be given the opportunity and I loved it. The uniform was so attractive with the brown tunic and blazer, and a cream blouse.



As I was the only one that year from South Moor Primary, I had a lonely six mile walk there and back each day, but do not remember it being any hardship. After only eighteen months my family emigrated to Australia which was a big break.

We settled in a town on the South coast of New South Wales, and my report from Alderman Wood gave me a place in a Selective High School. What a change of uniform! We had a black blazer and a white blouse.

Australia went into deep recession twelve months later and I had to find a work position to help family finances.

Since then I have enjoyed working in different fields of Secretarial responsibility. I married, but my husband, a major in the army, was killed defending Singapore in World War Two. My work was good to have as we were only twelve months into building our home. Working has enabled me to educate my daughter and to lead an active life.

I wish to send greetings for the Centenary, I am sure that it will be a big success.

My brother and I visited England in 1975. Taking photos outside the school, 3 boys popped their heads over the wall to be included. I was assured by them that it was “a grand school”!

Yours truly,

Edna Hughes (nee Tweddle)

From Jack Jeffery

Dear Fred,

You may remember the Elsie Jeffery Bursary that I set up in memory of my mother, and me telling you recently about Mark Robson and Laura Pillar the first two recipients. (*The Bursary is for former students at Tanfield applying to Newcastle University for whom higher education may impose a financial hardship. Successful applicants receive a £1000 grant for the first year of study. - Editor*)

Mark took a 4 year course in Mathematics and Laura a 3 year course in History and Archaeology, and both have now received their degrees from the University.

At dinner with them and their parents recently I asked if they would write a few words for the Newsletter. I enclose a piece that Mark has sent to me.

Kind regards,

Jack.

Mark Robson wrote: Some thoughts on my Tanfield years

Throughout my time there, Tanfield school was a place of, and for change. Committed to bettering the learning and teaching environments for the students and teachers, complacency was never an entertained mindset.

As students we were loyal to a fault, proud of our competitive standing over local rivals be it through sporting or academic achievements. Being a small secondary school in a small community, relationships were easily forged and, in my experience some seven years later, maintained. The school was a place for the students to be students - to be nurtured, independent and intuitive, guided as opposed to forced.

That's not to say that our teachers weren't capable of asserting their authority (there are those who'd still have me tuck in my shirt and straighten my tie were I to walk past them today!) but the more open approach to our teaching was often the better received.

On the subject of teachers, I cannot help but think of the varying eccentricities (the English department springs to mind) - a passion for their subjects was, if not infectious, at least entertaining. Through the staff and the school philosophy we were taught, perhaps without realising it, some very important messages which remain with me to this day.

Perhaps the most important message came from the Headteacher addressing us on our first day. We were introduced to his personal motto: “Aspire to Achieve”. With a mindset such as this at Tanfield School, I am, and will remain, proud to have been a part of it.

Mark Robson

'Happiest Days' from Malcolm Trewick

Hi Ted

Of course I remember the Happiest Days of your Life! I was the vicar and I have one of those signed programmes somewhere! I think I was in First Year Sixth, which would make it November 1955, but it might have been November 1956.

I attach five photo's which I have scanned in. I'm not sure how well they will reproduce, but they bring back happy memories.

In one picture Fred Clough (who in the play has a son at the school) was astounded to find a pair of frilly girl's knickers. I (who had a girl at the school) was supposed to trip over a pair of boys football boots. I realised that there weren't any boots to trip over! Suddenly a pair of football boots was hurled from the wings to arrive at my feet in the nick of time!

Malcolm Trewick



Hi Malcolm,

Thanks for the e-mail and the photos. I'm sure that they will respond to a bit of 'Photoshopping'.

I'm intrigued by one aspect. Dr. Sharp as I remember was quite prudish about girl/boy topics. I think that 'frilly knickers' might have been a bit risqué! Was he in charge when this show was produced, or was it still Mr Carr?

Best wishes.
Ted Brabban

Hi Ted

Oh Doc Sharp was very definitely in charge: I think Mr Carr retired about three years earlier. I think that the production was done by an English Teacher - was it Miss Middlemast?? I see her signature beside Doc Sharp's.

This wasn't the start of a glittering career on the stage for me: I had my arm twisted once more in, I think, 1994 to play one of the Knights who murdered Thomas A' Becket in Murder in the Cathedral in St Nicholas church in Kenilworth.

Hope this helps
Malcolm Trewick

From David Portsmouth

Dear Ted,

You have in the past requested some copy from old pupils. I have finally got round to responding to your appeal, so here is my bit, for what it is worth.

Starting at SGS in 1952 in the last year of Mr Carr's reign, my experience at the old school has had a profound and enduring influence on my life ever since.

First and foremost, I met my wife of 46 years (Eileen Walker, 1954) there, probably in the dark room of the photographic society !

Secondly, I owe unrepayable debts to some outstanding teachers, with special mention to Mr Livesey, Mr Proud, Mr Scott and Mr Hall, all of whom gave me an excellent grounding in natural sciences and mathematics, which was the basis of my subsequent career, first as a research chemist, then, after a complete change of direction, as a financial analyst.

Also, without the help of Miss Thomson (Fifi - my main French teacher), the last 37 years I have spent resident in France, ending up as a local councillor in a small Paris suburb, would have been impossible. I dearly wish I could have thanked her personally before she passed away for giving me the grounding necessary for example, to hold my own in Council meetings, or for reporting on environmental matters to the corresponding the French Ministry.

Finally, a special mention for Mr Harrison (woodwork). Not being specially intimidated by the spectre of political correctness, I do not hesitate to record his nickname of "Limpy Bob". Limpy or not, it was he who inculcated me with the basic techniques of woodwork. This has been indispensable to my lasting interest and modest competence in woodwork jobs around the house.

I would like to thank your readers for recent articles concerning Dr Sharp. I was totally unaware that he was totally fluent in German and that he was active in the secret service during the last war. This information goes some way in explaining what I always thought was an unfathomable aspect of him. I have to admit that I always felt him to be a bit "creepy" and I could never really get on the same wavelength. I always felt more comfortable with his predecessor, Mr Carr (a Quaker) who, though we only overlapped for one or two years, I felt was an outstanding model for pupils and teachers alike.

David Portsmouth.

David was Head Boy 1958 -59 (Editor)

From: Mark Clift

Dear Ted

I recently received the Summer 2010 edition of the Tanfield Association Newsletter (#19), and as usual read it with great interest.

It did however prompt a number of thoughts...

1. The membership arrangements for the Tanfield Association are not clear. Is it the case that a member should pay GBP5 pa to be a member? If so please let me know what if anything I owe, as for overseas members such as myself the direct debit option does not really work. Is there a Life Member option? Perhaps this is a way of collecting fees from overseas members and saving on administration?

2. You mention an interest for members to submit articles. I left Tanfield in 1982, was Chief estates Surveyor at Derwentside District Council for a number of years, but have lived in Hong Kong since 1996. I managed several businesses across the Asia Pacific region for a number of years, and for the last seven years have built/run Hong Kong's Digital Flagship, a world renowned digital hub and one of the original Metro-LAN's. If there was any interest, I'd be happy to pen something, say one side of A4 plus photograph? Please let me know.

3. On a side note, we noted with interest the recent correspondence from Barbara Davison, since I married Elisabeth Dawson's youngest sister, Sue. Small world!

Look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

Mark

Mark O. Clift

MBA FRICS FCIM BSc(Hons)

Acting Chief Executive Officer, Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited

Hi Mark,

Good to hear from you - after all those years!! I'm pleased that you find our Newsletter an interesting read. I'll get around to checking with the Treasurer concerning the state of your account and let you know. As far as I know there is no provision for Life Membership, but it's something that I will bring up with the Executive Committee. Some of my overseas friends send an order for four or five years at a time to make it worth while. (Yes it is £5 p.a.)

I'd love to receive a bit of 'life history' from you, and I'm sure that folks would be pleased to read that the world is your oyster! Some of us never got further than Tanfield School!!

Ted Brabban.

Dear Ted

Thanks for the prompt reply. I'll pen something when I have a moment and send it through.

Regarding fees, please do let me know what, if anything, I owe and I'll settle up. Regarding the life membership issue, FYI I am a member of the Royal Society of St George (Hong Kong Branch). The annual fee for that is HK\$250, but there is an option to pay a one-off HK\$1,500 for life membership, mainly to save administration for the society, and inconvenience for the members.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Mark

From Norma Hutchinson (Nee Redfearn), Staffordshire.

Dear Fred,

Thank you for sending Newsletter 19 about the Tanfield Association.

I was at Stanley Grammar School from 1951 - 1956, having passed the 11 plus at Greenland School, South Moor. I lived in Quaking Houses.

Leaving school in 1956 I worked at the Trustee Savings Bank in Stanley under old pupil Harry Taylor, the Bank Manager. He taught me everything about banking. I married Robert Hutchinson in 1960 and in 1962 we moved to Cannock in Staffordshire. I spent the next 28 years working as a Magistrates Court Clerk in Cannock.



I enclose a photo of me proudly wearing my new school uniform alongside my three brothers, Brian, Peter and David. Brian and Peter went to the 'Upper Standards' while David went to Chester le Street Grammar School.

The other photo was taken at one of my birthday parties, and all the girls were at the Grammar. In front is Avril Easten (later Gales) who sadly died aged 57. We kept in close contact as she lived in Wolverhampton about 11 miles from Cannock. Behind Avril, on the left is Rosemary Brabban (sister of Ted I believe. (Sorry Norma, we are cousins) . We were best friends at the time but we have not kept in touch. We did meet at a reunion at Beamish Golf Club 12 years ago - immediately recognisable. I am alongside Rosemary. Behind me is Ann Pendleton, who I know married Douglas Lonsdale, but unfortunately we lost touch. Back left is my cousin, Marian Redfearn who was a year ahead of me at Tanfield. She now lives with her husband, Fred Smith, in Melbourne and we keep in touch.

I also enclose my blazer badge. It means nothing to my family, so please keep it for your archives.

Yours sincerely, Norma Hutchinson (Nee Redfearn)

From John Cameron (1961-62)

Ted (if I may?),

It was so good to hear from you on Friends Reunited. Hearing from you has brought back such happy memories of SGS - born 1950, I was there from 1961 till I left in 1964 to move to Teesside.

I applied to join Tanfield Assoc only last Saturday using the address given on the school website -Mrs Susan Donkin in Chester le Street. The name Westwater reminds me our Maths/PE teacher in 1961 was Mr Westwater (crew-cut hair, navy blazer with discus-thrower motif on the badge)

Your First-Year woodwork classes were very important to me - lessons in how to be calm and methodical as opposed to my erratic disorganised nature. Always wearing your brown lab coat your lessons were good-humoured, witty and memorable, even after 49 years. In your Tech Drawing lessons I was one of the select few whose drawing was displayed sellotaped to the glass cabinet in the woodwork room. Your nickname amongst pupils was Ted but, thinking your initials were TEB, I thought they called you Teb. That woodwork bench built in winter 61-62 is at present in my brother's garage in Hertford. He used it when building a boat/yacht a few years ago and now my nephew still uses it.

When I think back to you and all your colleagues in early 1960s, what an extraordinary group of people you were. Not least Dr L Sharp, quietly enigmatic, unfathomable, with eyes like Lord Kitchener's in assembly - he was our neighbour living in Whickham.

High spot of my career was a First(1971) then PhD(1975) in Chemistry at Newcastle - probably inspired by Kenny Cousins and Cedric Dolman - but it was all a bit too much for me and I had health problems. Nevertheless I worked for 30 years as an Industrial Chemist here in London. In 60s & 70s did a lot of cycle racing, road and track, but in 2000 swapped cycling for daily swimming following serious cycle collision with 40 ton articulated lorry and right leg amputation.(I've just had a thought - do you think surgeons use tenon saw or handsaw??) Life is good with me, hope yours is too.

Looking forward to hearing from the Tanfield Association.

You've no idea how pleased I was to hear from you, Ted.

Warmest Wishes
John Cameron

P.S. One thing I meant to ask you. On Friends Reunited you say that Mavis and you are retired. The only Mavis I've ever met in my life was the lovely and kindly school secretary at SGS in 1961, who I can remember as if yesterday. Is this coincidence or is your Mavis another Mavis?
Please forgive my curiosity.

Yes, John, my Mavis is another Mavis. By coincidence they were in the same form as pupils at SGS!
Ted.

The Jolleys

I received my copy of the newsletter number 19, and, finally got round to reading it. Imagine my surprise at the mention of the Jolleys and the opening of the new entrance.

I am related to the Jolleys, my mother's eldest sister Doris, was married to their son James (Jimmy) for over 50 years, their children William (Billy) and James (Jim) I see infrequently these days usually at family funerals, the last time was last year at the funeral of Billy's wife.

My aunt and uncle lived for many years at 55 Tees Crescent South Stanley and I remember meeting "Grandad and Gradma" Jolley on many occasions.

While I am in the mood, after reading my report card again this morning, could you kindly explain why you only gave me 42 for woodwork in 1962!?

Jack Nelson 1962-67

Hi Jack,

Thanks for the e-mail. All of these tit-bits add up when we are putting together a new issue.

With regard to your woodwork mark, being the honest chap that I am, you probably only deserved 42%.

Of course if you have since out Chippendaled Chippendale, then I will hang my head in shame!

I hope that you have still got your coat peg, sea-grass stool, tea-pot stand or whatever!

It's surprising when I meet past pupils how many of them still do have artefacts from those days.

Best wishes, Ted.

Hi Ted,

You were too generous with my mark! My coat peg is now in the Tate Modern.

Jack.

From: Kenneth Bragan

Dear Ted,

You ask if anyone knew Dennis Hall. I knew him very well, and all his family too. As a small boy I was frequently at their house.

They were poor. I wondered how they all fitted into the house. The shop bell seldom tinkled. The father was a pit casualty, suffering from severe miner's nystagmus. One time he slyly asked me if the cigarette Den and I had been smoking was a long one. I fell for it and told him it was only short.

I called on Nancy when she was a missionary in E. Africa and I was in the army there. They were a family who achieved a lot from very little. Perhaps going to the Methodist chapel helped. It provided a rich, happy and encouraging social milieu, as well as hymns to sing, which we did a lot.

The Halls were one of those working-class families who when given a small window of opportunity made a big contribution to society, and I feel pleased to have the opportunity to give that some acknowledgement and praise.

Den Hall married my cousin Edith Golightly and I have kept in occasional touch with them although I have been on the other side of the world for almost fifty years now. I became a psychiatrist and a writer.

I also knew Bill and Tibby Boggon very well. Another fine family. I believe Sandy got an OBE for services to agriculture.

Ken Bragan. New Zealand.

Dear Ted,

In a previous communication I mentioned that I thought Sandy Boggon got an OBE. In fact he did one better than that he got a CBE.

Ken

From Ray Cairns

Dear Ted

Many thanks for my copy of the latest newsletter. I always look forward to receiving it and appreciate your efforts in producing it and posting it out.

All the best

Ray Cairns (1959-1965)

From Marion Clarkson

Dear Fred,

I'm so pleased to get your Newsletter.

I left Tanfield in 1945 to go to Durham University, as it was then, and qualified as a Dental Surgeon in 1949. I now have grand-daughters in dental schools.

I introduced Rev. John Maughan to the Association. He was my neighbour in South Shields at one time, but I've lost touch now. I also introduced Peter Ardron from Leatherhead. He was in my form.

I recently had a bus ride to Stanley and Consett, which was possibly a mistake! I couldn't find my fathers warehouse, or Derwent House where we lived! Even the pit ponds have disappeared!

Hope that this makes sense. I'm old, but still trying to write legibly as I was taught in A.W.S.

Marion Clarkson.