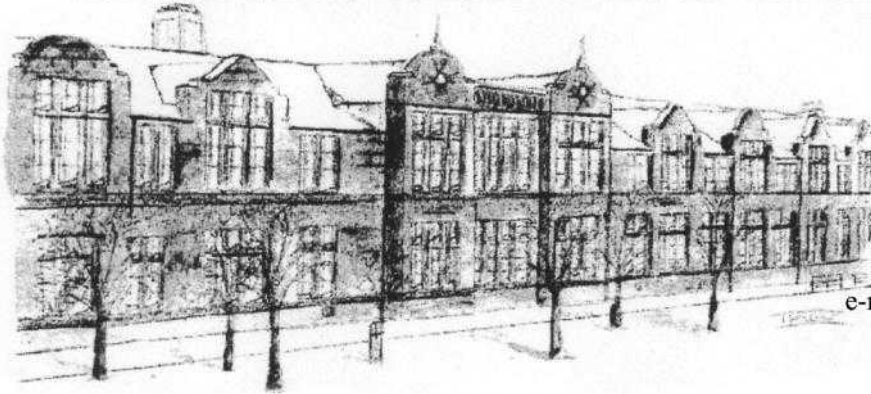


# TANFIELD ASSOCIATION



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## NEWSLETTER No. 21 Easter 2011

### Editorial

It is good to be able to tell you that the response to our last newsletter has enabled us to put together another issue sooner than expected. We hovered on the brink of having to pay excess postage with Issue 20 - it only just made it through the thickness gauge folded, and sending it out flat would mean paying large letter rates thus making costs really jump. To avoid the problem I am hoping to spread the articles into three issues for the year, rather than two. I think that you will still have a good read.

There was sad news after the publication of the last issue: two of our contributors had died. Past Head Boy David Portsmouth had only just made contact with us, but sadly died about the time that you received the Newsletter containing his article. Sam Hunter died about the same time. He has been a regular contributor over the years, often commenting from Canada on what had been written. You will find items about both inside. Normally we don't publish obituaries, but in special cases personal memories of significant people are used, and that is the case here.

We receive a majority of our copy from, shall we say, the more mature of our members. It would be good to have more from, the middle aged group. So I would like to appeal to those of you who perhaps have not yet gone grey to put pen to paper, or, as you will be part of the electronic age, to produce a .doc file and send it to me by e-mail. If you include or add .jpg files that would be even better. Incidentally, our membership demographic age range is distorted too. We have more older members than those who were more recently at school. It would be very helpful if you are in contact with any younger ex-Tanfield people if you would do a sales pitch to them and persuade them to join the ranks. We

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need members and stories from the 1970s, 80s, 90s, and this century too.

Collecting copy for the Centenary book is under way. Elizabeth Hawkins would love to hear from you on this count. We have had some response to our appeal for page sponsorship too, but much more would be welcome. See more inside.

The national economic climate has caught up with The Harperley Hotel, so we have probably lost the usual venue for our functions. The ever diligent Fred has irons in the fire, so watch this space as they say.

No one has written to confirm that the Sixth Form did fire watching duties at the school during WW2. Perhaps we are too late.

### **Tanfield School – 100, Not Out**

Elizabeth Hawkins has got the ball rolling. Already she has had some contributions, but that is just a start. We need many more memories of the school, its staff, its various activities etc, from former pupils, and we would like to cover as much of the age range of the school as is possible. In other words we need your help and participation. Through these pages we can appeal directly to yourselves, but our membership is only a small fraction of the thousands of people who have passed through the school. If you know of anyone who is ex-Tanfield, and who might have a story to tell, please give them the details of what is happening and ask them to join in, and to contact Elizabeth. We need copy. It doesn't have to be a 1000 word essay, a short paragraph of something relevant is just as welcome.

We also would welcome photographs. Previous books have had a wide range of images, some of which might be used again, but it would be better if we could find more original material to publish this time around. If you think that you have something relevant we would like to see it. If you send us photographs we will return them if that is what you wish. If you can scan them and send them as .jpg files that would be great. Ted and Elizabeth are both on-line.

To help finance the venture we are looking for page Sponsorship. For £10 (minimum) you can sponsor a page of the book. The page would be dedicated in your name to someone that you greatly respect, dead or alive, and you can write your own dedication.

All you need now is to know where to send your stuff. The addresses were in our last issue, but in case you are like me and forget such things, here they are again:

Mrs Elizabeth Hawkins	e-mail: <a href="mailto:Hawkins_15@o2.co.uk">Hawkins_15@o2.co.uk</a>
15 Thirlmere	N.B. There is an underscore between Hawkins and 15
Birtley	
Chester-le-Street	
DH3 2JY	

If you are wishing to dedicate a page your cheque should go to our Treasurer, Susan Donkin.

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

Cheques should be made out to The Tanfield Association.  
The wording of your dedication can go to either Susan or Elizabeth.

Please help us to produce a book that is a worthy memorial to the school's 100 years.

## **E-mail Addresses**

It is an expensive business sending out letters to the whole membership, as well as being 'labour intensive'. It would certainly be much cheaper, and it would ease the load if we could send out some by e-mail.

As we already have your postal address details and 'phone number on database, we don't think that we would be infringing the Data Protection Act by adding your electronic address.

We know that not all use e-mail, and we are not ruling out the use of the Royal Mail. However it would be a help if those who can, would agree to receive mail by computer. If you are in this category I would be grateful to be told so by e-mail, and this would supply your address to me.

[ted.brabban@nasuwt.net](mailto:ted.brabban@nasuwt.net)

N.B. If letters arrive with an incorrect address, please let us know so that the database can be corrected.

## **Subscription News**

The current subscription is £5 per year, and we have no current plans to change that. However you may remember reading a letter from one of our overseas members raising the cost of transferring money to the UK to pay his £5. He suggested that we might institute a Life Membership fee that would solve his problem. Well, Mark, the executive committee don't meet often, and it has taken a while, but we got there!

It has been decided that Life Membership can be offered for a single payment of £100.

This will apply to all members, and not just those overseas. If you wish to take advantage of this offer, please contact our Treasurer, whose address is given in the '100 - Not Out' article.

Don't all rush or she may be changing her address to the Bahamas.

## **Where are they now?**

It has been suggested that we might use the newsletter as a vehicle to connect you with past school friends. A sort of Tanfield Friends Reunited! This would simply take the form of you contacting me and asking me to publish your e-mail address or your phone number or your postal address, in the hope that other readers would contact you.

I am quite willing to do this, but the contact and permission to publish your details would have to come from you.

As a start, if anyone would like to renew their acquaintance with Jack Nelson (who only got 45% for his woodwork in 1963!) they can do so at:

[j.nelson@tesco.net](mailto:j.nelson@tesco.net)

The ball is now in your court. Ted.

## **Tanfield Is ....**

The Executive Committee were concerned that the Association was not known to most of the school population. We were also concerned that we were not known to many of their parents, a lot of whom would be past pupils. We decided that we needed to do something to rectify the situation, and one of the steps that we have taken was to launch a competition amongst the pupils.

The competition is to run over three years, 2010, 2011 and culminating in the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the school in 2012. We invited the pupils to express their thoughts about Tanfield in any way, written word, work of art, computer graphics, etc. In other words, any way in which they felt comfortable working.

We began at the close of 2010 by giving them the title 'Tanfield Is ...'. We offered three cash prizes of sums sufficient to make it attractive and worthwhile taking part.

The entries were judged and the winners chosen. At the beginning of this term we were invited to a school assembly to make the presentation. Professor Warren Pescod, Elizabeth Hawkins and Ted Brabban attended. We were able to address the pupils and further publicise our existence and to encourage them to pass on the word to their parents, making the point that this was all a build up to the important event happening in 2012. No not the London Olympics, the Centenary of Tanfield School. Hopefully more of our younger ex-students are aware of us.

This year the competition moves on. We will offer the title, 'Tanfield Was ...' and hope that this will lead to some research amongst former pupils, and archives. The response to the last competition was not of a standard that we had expected, so the Executive Committee will be looking again at the rules which we set. We need to ensure that the prize that we offer is worked for and deserved. This is important to us because for the centenary we thought of offering two prizes of £100 for a topic, 'Tanfield in the Future', or something similar.

Our Newsletter is 'coffee tabled' in the school entrance and waiting area, and also in the staff rooms. Some members of staff are already members and receive personal copies. We do make efforts to make the Association known, but the more recent ex-pupils are slow in coming forward. The Executive Committee will be further considering the problem.

## **Olga Reay (Hide)**

(Olga lives in Lanchester. She is 91 years old, and has a very good memory of events and names. I went to see her to collect the following item which she had written, with much effort, for the Newsletter. I was amazed when she produced a handwritten itinerary of the trip that she describes, asked to borrow it and show some of it below. She also had a wad of photographs, some of which are reproduced with her article. Ted.)

## **Coblenz 1937**

In 1937, my last year at Alderman Wood School, I was in the lower sixth form, the intending teachers group, under the Headship of Mr Carr. We took a Commercial Course including German (Miss Miller) Spanish (Miss Butters) Shorthand and Book-keeping (Miss Nixon) and Modern Poetry (Mr Westgarth).

We were given the chance of an 8 day trip to Coblenz at Easter with the School Journeys Association. A small group of 9 or 10 girls were able to go, under the charge of Miss Nicol (Senior Mistress) who was accompanied by her sister Mrs Boggon and her niece (Tibby) who was not yet a pupil at A.W.S., and Miss Lumsden (Domestic Science). Travel was by train and ferry from London via Dover, Ostend, Brussels, and Cologne.

HOTEL RHEINTEARASSE  
I HREN BREITSTEIN  
GERMANY

*Itinerary*

THURSDAY  
Friday. London to Coblenz via Dover, Ostend,  
Brussels, Cologne, leaving Victoria about 10am

FRIDAY. Morning - free (for rest if required)  
Afternoon - Meet in gardens of Festhalle.  
German scholars will conduct small  
groups sightseeing round the town.

SATURDAY Morning - Visit to fortiers of Ehrenbreitstein  
Afternoon - By car along Moselle valley  
to Kuesen to visit Castle

SUNDAY Sunday morning - free  
Afternoon - ramble conducted by German  
scholars through mountain and forest  
scenery to Harthaus and Rittersburg -  
return via Honigsbach.

MONDAY Car to Limburg across mountains of  
Westenwald back through lovely valley  
of the Lahy - through Ems. Lunch in  
hotels at Limburg. German scholars  
as leaders.

After an early start from Newcastle we travelled to Victoria Station and met up with scholars from other schools. We were given S.J.A. badges to pin on our coats and boarded reserved carriages for Dover. A calm crossing, then a long and uncomfortable journey by train on hard wooden seats to Coblenz.. We arrived about midnight tired and weary, to be wakened by a brass band playing on the platform to welcome us. Then we had to carry our luggage across a pontoon bridge (boards fastened onto a series of small boats) over the Rhine to our hotel, the Rhein Terrasse, in Ihrenbrettstein. (The bridge was subsequently destroyed during WW2)



The party on the pontoon bridge.

Our first day was a sight-seeing tour of Coblenz which was full of young people in uniforms of various hues of grey, blue, and brown. ( With hindsight these would be 'Hitler Youth')

The following days we were taken in cars to various places of interest with German students as guides. The highlight was a steamer trip on the Rhine with lunch on board.



On a trip with 'guides'

An Anglo-German concert was held in the Festhalle on the last evening, with song and dance and much flag waving.

We returned home little knowing that two years later we would be at war with Germany.

### School Photos from Olga

Her new A.W.S. school uniform:



Lower Sixth girls on Sports Day 1937 :



The School hockey team in 1935 with Mr Carr. Behind Mr Carr is Barbara Churcher (Bott)



Other names unknown.

## Harvest Camps

Harvest Camps during the Second World War were run from Stanley Grammar as part of the "Lend a Hand On the Land" scheme to produce home grown food and save on shipping. The first camp that I can remember was at Morden near Bradbury just off the old A1. I am a bit hazy on the date, but I think it must have been in the summer of 1943. Mr Elliot was in charge and supervised all aspects of the day to day running of the camp. We were under canvas which for most of us was quite an adventure. I remember one of the farms we worked on was at Dalton Percy near Hartlepool. The work was mostly potato picking and "stooking" hay, both of which were very hard work for 13 and 14 year olds. The next camp was at Trafford Hill farm near Yarm (26 August -09 September 1944). This was a bad camp because it rained for nearly two weeks. We had good fun, however as it was right next to an RAF base(Now Teesside Airport).We used to go to the base and watch the Halifax bombers being loaded during the day. I can tell now after all this time that we used to often find discarded clips of 303 ammunition and make fireworks by extracting the cordite. We worked alongside German and Italian prisoners, very interesting for us as they were all very friendly so we were regaled with tales of fighting in North Africa and Europe - all very exciting. On most of the camps we were involved with general duties - including taking horses to be shod and I believe milking cows. The last camp I was on was at Birlingham on the river Avon near Worcester in August 1945. This camp was not popular because it was supposed to be fruit picking and we ended up most days picking potatoes again, so I came home early and as it happened when I got to Stanley they were dancing in the streets because it was August 15th VJ day. All in all the camps were really very, very good for us and we enjoyed them most of the time. Sorry this is a bit delayed but I have read the recent reports in the school magazine and can confirm Sam Hunter's comment about Colin Bell playing chicken with a railway engine. That was the Morden camp in 1943. Colin was really very lucky to escape being mown down by a train and he had in fact some bruising to show how close it was!



As a point of interest I am enclosing a photograph which was taken at Trafford Hill farm in August 1944. I am the young man kneeling down with wearing a very "trendy" hat. To my immediate left is someone whose name I cannot remember but from then on going to my left is Kenny Grimes, Lol Kingston, Tommy Larvin, Harry Pinkerton, Basil Hutchinson, Jimmy Golightly and Mr Elliot. I can't remember the names of all the boys behind me, but on the extreme right (standing) is Ossie Barrass. Two from him is Jimmy Clennell (one of the school's best ever footballers). Behind Harry Pinkerton is Ronnie Nattress. Front row was form 5A and the rear row are all 6th years. Perhaps others may be able to fill in the missing names. Hope this helps...better late than never.

Best wishes

Keith Hagar

### **Alan Hutchinson**

Alan was a pupil at Tanfield from 1960 - 1967. He came back onto the staff for two years from 1972-74. Being a clever lad, Alan has built his own website which has links to 'School Days' and 'SGS Reunited'

If you too are clever and know your way around a computer, you will find his site at:

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/a-b.hutchinson/>

If you were of the 'Swingin' Sixties', and into 'Folk' you will remember Alan and find your fix of nostalgia at this site.

### **Sandy Boggon**

Sandy contacted us to dedicate a page of the next book to his Aunt - known as Miss Nicol to many of us oldies. He included a potted family history which readers may be interested in reading.

She was born on a farm in Aberdeenshire in 1887, and was one of twelve. She went to Aberdeen University and took her MA there. She joined the staff at Tanfield in 1912 when it opened to teach English. She became Senior Mistress and retired in 1952. She had 29 years of retirement and died in 1981 at the grand old age of 94.

Sandy himself is 85 and still maintains his 3/4 acre garden, plays golf and is Secretary and Treasurer to a local curling club. He obviously has some of his aunt's genes.

### **Memories of Sam Hunter**

On Friday, 5<sup>th</sup>. November 2010 a 75 year friendship ended unexpectedly with the death of Sam on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

Sam and I were enrolled into Catchgate Infants Class in 1935. In 1936 Sam and I, together with the remainder of the class, paraded to Annfield Plain tin school, now the site of Stoneleigh Nursing home, to receive commemorative mugs, still in my possession, to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935.

At the age of 8 we were both members of Catchgate Cubs pack with the Scoutmaster, a certain Jack Gare, a former member of Alderman Wood School.

My lasting memory of cub activities was that as a Mahout, an elephant rider, at a jamboree in a field near Brooms Church, Leadgate. I was resplendent in a grass skirt, over swimming trunks, and completely covered in greasepaint perched on top of two cubs, joined together pantomime horse-style, covered with a grey blanket with a lady's stocking stuffed with straw as a trunk. All this was caught on cine-camera by Sam's Dad, Sam senior, and there weren't many cine-cameras in Catchgate in the 1930's. Although fully clothed to travel home by bus I was still covered completely in greasepaint.



On Saturdays we would visit the King's cinema, Annfield Plain to watch Flash Gordon or the Lone Ranger and Tonto before hurrying to Derwent Park to be admitted, free of charge, for the second half of matches with the likes of Middlesbrough and Sunderland Reserve teams.

In the early years of the war I remember Sam senior taking the pair of us to Newcastle to view the bombed-out remains of Byker Goods Station which had received a direct hit from German bombs and was left a smouldering mass of twisted steel.

I was fortunate to be ever present at Sam's birthday parties in February each year when a hard core of ten or so presented him with presents and later went home with more than we had taken. Our parents made a habit of coming to collect us early in order that they could see the last half hour of films, both bought and homemade ones, including the cubs' jamboree.

After Catchgate Junior School Sam went on to the Grammar School while I was admitted to Annfield Plain Intermediate School, locally known as the Upper Standards. I was able to join Sam in 1944 and became a regular member of the school football team under the captaincy of the Rev. John Maughan. Sadly, a freak accident while playing for Dipton Juniors in 1947 resulted in the loss of my left kidney which ended my playing days, with Sam assuming my position of left back in the school team.

He and his schoolgirl sweetheart, Norma Suddick, a former pupil, became regular visitors to my parents' home during his days at University and as a member of the Royal Navy, doing National Service, while I was studying for Bank exams.

In 1954 I was delighted to be their Best Man at their wedding, with Norman Collin, another former pupil, their groomsman. I was also Godfather to Linda born in 1955.

I feared the friendship might end when they announced their decision to emigrate to Canada in 1956 and unknown to Sam, Norma was pregnant with John when they left U.K. and he was born, a Canadian National, four months after their arrival in Ontario.

My fears were unfounded and they made my parents' home one of their first ports of call when visiting their respective parents back home in the U.K.

Christmas cards and telephone calls were exchanged over the years and in 1973 my son, Paul, who was nine years of age at the time, and I visited their home in Bright's Grove near Sarnia, Ontario and spent a wonderful three weeks of Hunter hospitality. Sam was ever keen to show off his country of adoption and in the company of John, Sam's son, the four of us visited as far afield as the Houses of Parliament, Ottawa, the unmissable Niagara Falls and Detroit Zoo in the U.S.A. Linda and John enjoyed their days with Paul swimming in Lake Huron despite the age discrepancies. Paul also enjoyed driving the ride-on mower when cutting Sam's 'prairie' lawn. The three of them enjoyed 'pigging out' at a branch of the London Ice cream company.

When it became evident that I was likely to marry again Hazel, Paul and I were invited to return to Ontario in 1977 and did it all over again.

On retirement Sam and Norma moved out to Vancouver Island where both he and Linda maintained their love of the sea as members of the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve, a position she still maintains in the Regular Forces.

In 1992 while Hazel and I were visiting ex-in-laws in Calgary we were invited to the island and travelled via Greyhound Bus through the Rockies to be met by Sam and Norma in Vancouver and transported to the island. We were made very welcome by the whole family, including Mabel, Norma's mother who had joined them to spend the rest of her days there. Sadly she died, having lived in a care home for a couple of years, after we returned home. Hazel and I enjoyed a round of golf with John at Olympic View Golf Club before returning to Vancouver on the way home.

Whilst their visits to the U.K. diminished after the deaths of his parents, Martha and Sam, contact was still maintained by phone and more latterly e-mail. One of his last visits was to allow the pair of us to seek Grant of Probate, as co-executors, to his father's will, at the Probate Court in Newcastle.

It came as a shock when Hazel and I learned of Norma's death in 2003, losing her battle with cancer after so many years. After a time Sam resumed his love of the sea by taking to cruising again despite having to endure dialysis which prohibited his visits to the U.K. However, he was still able to enjoy the company of his family including his two Grandchildren Siobhan, daughter of Linda and Sam, another Sam, and Sean, son of John and Helen.

Linda informs me that Sam, herself and her husband, Sam, visited Norma's Memorial Garden plot on the 28<sup>th</sup>. October 2010. Just a week later her dad died. He is sorely missed.

Harry Taylor  
1945-48

### David Portsmouth

You will remember an article in Issue 20 sent in by David. At about the same time that the issue was being sent out I received a letter from Harold Reay informing me that, sadly, David had died.

David was Head Boy from 1958-1959, took his Ph.D at Birmingham University, worked for ICI as a chemist, but eventually became a banker, a Financial Analyst. After working in the USA he ended his career in Paris, where he lived and became a local Councillor. He was living in Edmundbyers with his wife Eileen (Walker) at the end of his life.

David was an active member of the 52'ers -those who started the Grammar in 1952. Others in the group are Amy Bilton (Seccombe), Alan Jenmsen, Euan Ross, Harry Baxter, Peter Atkinson, and Harold Reay of course. David's enthusiasm and inspiration will be a great loss.

### Denise Holden (Gowland) -Victrix Ludorum

Following our article about Dennis Hall who was the Victor Laudorum in 1943, I was contacted by Denise Holden (Who was Denise Gowland when I knew her at school). Denise was Intermediate Champion for two successive years, and then Victrix Laudorum for each year afterwards until she left the school.



With the intermediate Cup



Vitrix Laudorum with Bill Pattison, who was Victor Laudorum. 1949

After leaving Stanley Grammar Denise trained as an Infant School Teacher. She played hockey for the college. On qualifying she taught at Felling, then at Catchgate Infants. At this time she played hockey for Newcastle Ladies, and Northumberland County. She played tennis too for Rowlands Gill Ladies.

She moved to Keighley to teach in a Special Needs school. She continued to play hockey and tennis there too. She also met her husband, Cedric, there too. Before marrying Denise taught for a year at Felling Special School.

After marrying she and Cedric moved to Lincolnshire and lived at Wrangle between Boston and Skegness. Here her two children, Angela and Philip were born. Tennis took a back seat!

When Cedric was appointed Headmaster of a Special School in Newcastle they moved back to the North East. Denise taught at Whickham and Dunston. Their last move came when Cedric was appointed Head of a new Special School in Dorset. They settled and have lived there for the last 40 years, but they have maintained contact with friends in the Durham and Newcastle area.

Although living so far away Denise tells me that she is happy to be a member of our Association, and was quite complimentary about it, and our Newsletter. Thank you Denise. Thank you too for taking the time to give us your life story. Many of our contemporaries will be really interested.

### **Bill Pattison - Victor Ludorum.**

Following all the information and the photographs from Denise I thought that we should fill some gaps about Bill.

Bill qualified as a PE Teacher at Bede College, Durham, and Carnegie College in Leeds. He taught PE at Shield Row until the muscles started stiffening and then moved over to his second subject, English. When Shield Row School combined with Tanfield he became a member of the Tanfield staff and was there until he retired.

His school athletics career is impeccable! He was school Junior Champion in 1945, he was Intermediate Champion in 1947 and Victor Ludorum in 1949.

He ran an Intermediate Record time for the 100 yards in 1947, and he ran a Senior Record time for the 440 yards in 1949. These records still stand as the system went metric while they were still in place.

He ran like the wind - and that was to finish his paper round to avoid being cuffed by Scotty's key fob for being late!

(There must be other record breakers out there. Are you one of them? Let us know. There must also be some other ex-pupils who still hold Imperial records from before the race distances went metric. We would love to be able to record who they are, and to publicise their achievements. Without you letting us know, all may well be forgotten! Ted.)

### **Betty Watson**

A letter was received from Betty commemorating her aunt, Doris Taylor (Wanless) who was a Tanfield pupil pre second world war. Like so many of her generation she had to give up secondary education to earn money to help support a large family. The family history that she outlines is a very interesting snapshot of the social history of the 1930s.

Interestingly amongst the possessions of Doris was the photograph below.



You will all recognise The Terrace, where the girls stretched their legs at morning break, whilst the boys played football in the yard at the other side of the building. What is interesting is the grand entrance built at the centre of the old school building.

We had previous correspondence about this but no photograph until now. It was installed during the 1950s. The entrance proved to be a white elephant. It was rarely used, and must only have lasted a couple of decades. Here it is for posterity.

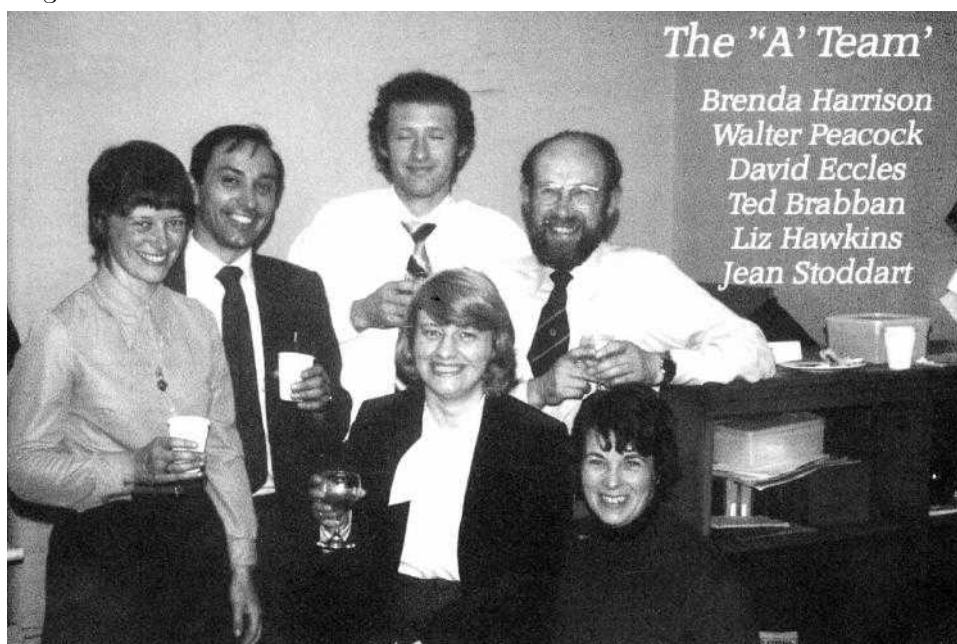
What a shame there are no pupils evident.

### **The A-Team**

Where did all that youth go?

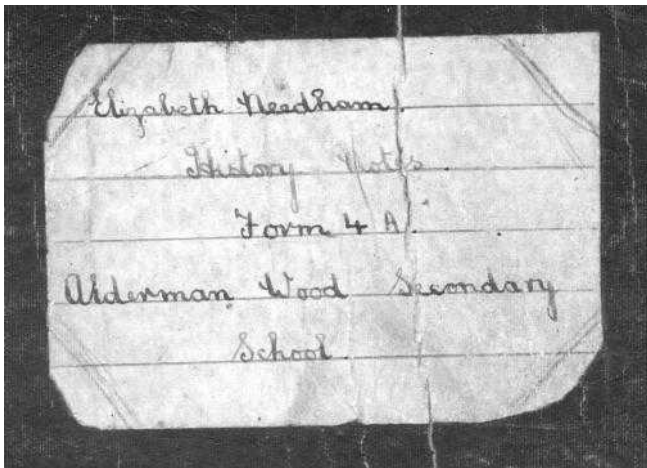
This photograph was taken in a staff room and shows a Duty Team of us teachers. We patrolled yards, corridors and porches during break times and lunch time. The name was given in the staff room because of our efficiency and effectiveness. (What a trumpet blower!!)

The faces might revive a few memories.



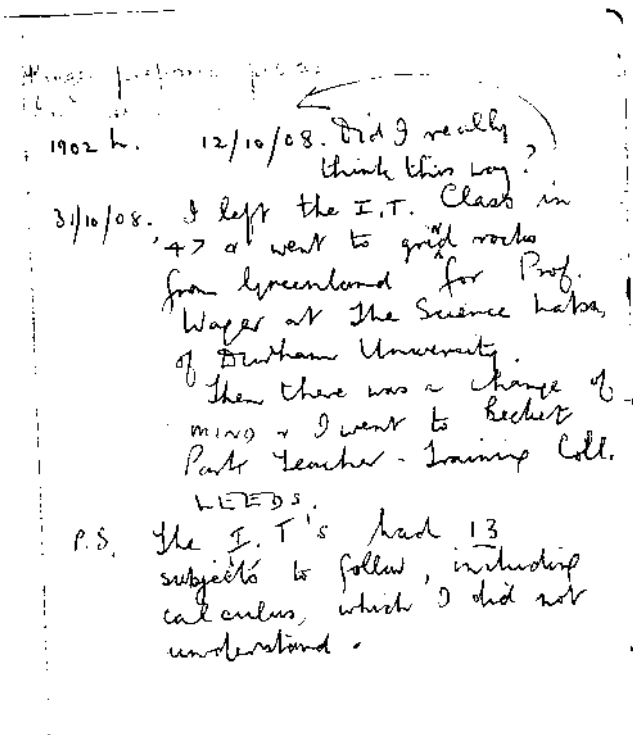
## Elizabeth Needham - 1944

We were given, for the archives, Betty Needham's history exercise book dated 1944, and covering her School Cert. course. It is maroon coloured, hard backed, and labelled as below.



The notes are meticulously kept, in longhand, and very comprehensively cover European History. I wonder if the teacher was Mr. Foster?

It would appear that Betty grew tired of either history, or the intrigue thereof! The last page gives it all away:



N.B. I.T.s - a 6<sup>th</sup> Form group of Intending Teachers

Thank you Betty.

## Jennie Goodfellow

Dear Ted

Tanfield Association newsletter no 2 was most interesting and I was especially fascinated by the discovery of work by Jenny Goodfellow.

Born in 1911 (which corresponds with her place in the 5th form at AWSS in 1928) she lived next door to my family home in Shield Row. She became Jenny Watt in the early 1940s and her husband served in the 8th army in Egypt. She worked for an insurance co and later had two sons. I believe that at that time she lived in the Rowlands Gill area.

I lost touch with her after she moved away but heard from her younger sister Peggy that she had died.

With best wishes  
John Wilson (1943-1948)

## Dear Ted

I am writing to you as my Mother, Alice Jean Barnett used to go to the Alderman Wood School and receives your Newsletter.

Sadly Mum passed away in April last year but told me many stories about her school days.

I have attached a couple of photos that you might find of interest and was wondering if they could go in the next edition of the newsletter to see if anyone can add some more detail behind them.



The first is of the hockey team and has the following written on it - " Hockey Team AWSS 1936-7. To Alice with love from Mary xxx". I believe my mother used to play hockey but left the school around this time as her father was a coal miner and came down to Wolverhampton in the Midlands to find work. I would imagine that Mary probably played in the team and sent my mother this photo shortly after she moved. I am not able to confirm whether mum is in the photo or not, perhaps one of your other readers may recognize some of the other girls.

The second photo looks like a group of the girls from the school. My mother is in the middle of the group standing up. Again if anyone has any information on the photo I would be very interested to hear about it.

I am not sure how many more editions of the newsletter mum will have subscribed to, but I would be very grateful if you could send the remainder to my home address.

Regards,

Philip Barnett (son)

## Dear Ted

It was sad to read the letter from David Portsmouth in the latest Newsletter. As you've probably heard by now David died on the 7th December 2010 after being ill for a few months. Eileen wrote to me just after Christmas with the news - I'm sure that all who knew David will wish to pass on sincere condolences to Eileen and her family.

Eileen and I were in the same year at SGS 1954 - 1961 along with old boy and now Assistant Secretary John Hogg. Sadly over the years we'd lost touch and then were re-united via the Tanfield Association. We visited David and Eileen in their home 3 years ago on our way through France and it was wonderful to

relive so many happy memories. We all agreed that being a pupil at SGS has been an absolute privilege and had given us all a great start in our lives.

Thank you for keeping us in touch via the Newsletter. I wonder if you have considered doing an on-line version which would have the benefit of saving postage and paper and could potentially reach even more old pupils.

Good luck with the planning for the Centenary celebrations - I and family members and friends do plan to attend.

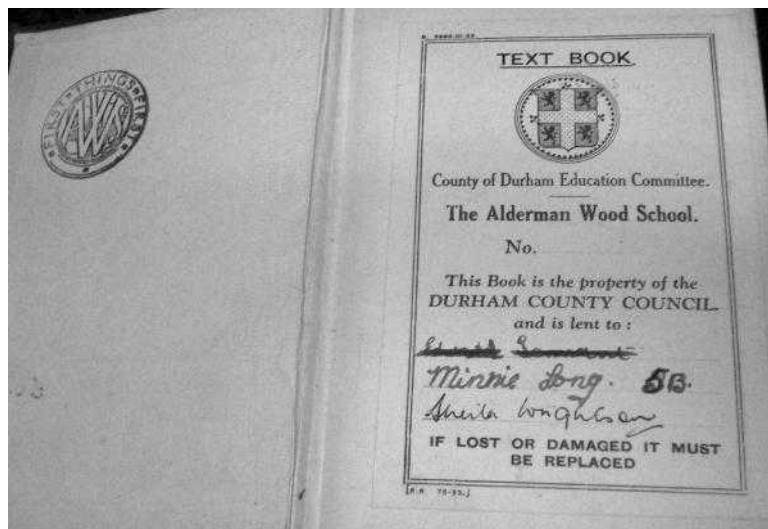
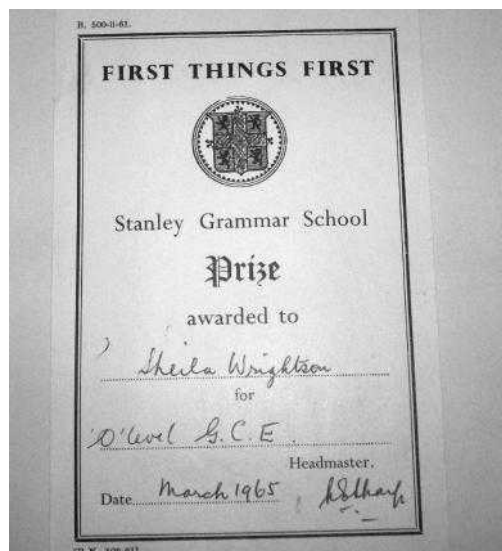
Carolyn Anderson (nee Bott)

## Dear Ted

Reading the comments in the Winter 2010 Newsletter about former students' woodwork brought to mind my own experience (and yes, I am a girl!). When I was in the Fifth or Lower Sixth (1963 or 4), "The Doc" finally relented and allowed boys to do cookery classes and girls woodwork (after school and under constant teacher supervision of course). A couple of friends and I decided to give the woodwork a go - maybe there was an ulterior motive, I can't remember!. We very much enjoyed the classes under your expert tutelage and I still have the item I proudly produced, after hours spent carving, smoothing and varnishing. It took pride of place on my parents' sideboard, until one New Year's Eve a friend of theirs decided to use it. However, wooden ashtrays aren't particularly suited to their purpose and it still bears the scar!

On a different note, I was also pleased to see the item on badges, as I too still have my blazer badge and enamelled prefect's badge, along with my report book and home-knitted school scarf.

Also in my possession is a book bought after my O level GCE exams with a voucher given by the school (do they still give them, I wonder?), containing a bookplate signed by Dr Sharp himself (photo attached). Even more precious is a 'Golden Treasury' which belonged to my late mother who attended the school 1931-6, also containing a bookplate (attached). However, since it says that the book "is the property of Durham County Council", I wonder how come she kept it?



It can be seen that both of the book plates bear the school motto "First Things First" and I would be interested to know if this is still the motto. Also, I can remember singing the school song, but apart from the first line ("First things first must be our motto....") I can't get any further. Can anyone else fill in the blanks?

Best wishes,  
Sheila Parkes (nee Wrightson)  
1959-66

## Joan McMahon - (Davison)

I do enjoy reading the Newsletter, and seeing the there letter from Sandy Boggon set me thinking about Tibby. She was a year younger than me, but I got to know her quite well as I travelled to school with Ella Bailey who lived next door in Sleepy Valley and was in the same class as Tibby. If Ella was involved after school I would wait for her and watch their rehearsals. I seem to remember them practising a routine to the music of 'In a Persian Market'.

It is strange that I remember my teachers better than my classmates, but my best friends were Joan Coulson and Margaret (Peggy) Seymour. In my class too were Joyce Stones, Ossie Barrass , Joyce Church and Alan Atkinson.

I started at Alderman Wood School in September 1938, getting to know the teachers, my classmates and the school routine. However the Second World War was declared in 1939 and things dramatically changed. For the Autumn term we only went into school to collect homework - carrying satchel and gas-mask. When we returned to full time attendance in the Spring, air raid shelters had been built and all the windows were criss-crossed with tape to prevent flying glass.

I sometimes wonder if I remember the above correctly, but my report book (yes I still have it, it's not brilliant but I am a hoarder!) shows no class position, and homework was graded A,B,C, or D. Perhaps someone else can corroborate my recollections.

I don't remember being in the shelters more than three or four times and they were practice runs. I realise how lucky we were in our part of the NE that we didn't have many air raids, and it was a pleasure to miss lessons every now and then.

I was in Tanfield House and we seemed to do well on Sports Day. I enjoyed games but was never an athlete.

Incidentally, my Grandmother is sister to Isobel Jenkins (Harrison) Great Grandmother. My mother was a County Councillor and attended with Mrs Jolley.

Best wishes,

Joan McMahon

## Ted

The recent wintry weather reminds me of an incident which took place during the 'Big Freeze' of Winter 1962-63 involving half a dozen SGS 2nd and 3rd-year pupils from Whickham.

Normally, after school the school bus would take us home via Tantobie, Burnopfield, Marley Hill and Sunnyside but, when one Thursday afternoon the blizzard conditions were so bad that no bus arrived, about six of us had the bright idea that we would walk home through the snow. The only names I recall are David Heath and Geoff Cullen, both in 3rd Year and myself in 2nd year. The journey turned out to be like a scene from Scott of the Antarctic. In my case my SGS woollen scarf froze to my face and I remember on one side of Crookgate Bank the snow had drifted halfway up the telegraph poles. Later it turned out that police had been searching for us and the German teacher (Mr. Bull?) had even used skis to track us. After nearly 50yrs it's hard to disentangle truth from legend but I think we got as far as Marley Hill before being rescued. Although up till then I had a 100% school attendance record, I was wise enough to take the Friday off - apparently Geoff Cullen (?) was the only one who turned up, only to be given a quite memorable lecture about our foolhardy exploit from the great Dr Sharp himself.

Warmest Wishes

John Cameron (Stanley Grammar School 1961-64)