

TANFIELD ASSOCIATION

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Newsletter 49 – Post Covid Edition

How does one come back from the dead? That is how it feels having to sit down and write an Editorial when the Newsletter has been hibernating for so long. The effects of covid reach everywhere, and we are no exception. We are slowly awakening. We were invited to the school to see for ourselves the ‘upgrades’ that have taken place while things have been quiet, and we have enjoyed our first pub lunch since we were obliged to close down, so things are happening again. Hopefully life will start to gather pace once more into the future.

The school visit was an eye-opener. Changes that are being made are not merely cosmetic, but some are a radical re-think of how the site is used. It is fascinating to see how new eyes view the old place, and how it can be used. This is not ‘tinkering’, a lot of money has been spent to create an establishment fit to educate the new generations of this century. I am sure that pupils to come will be as proud of the place as we were and that this is a positive leap forward in the history of Tanfield.

Thinking of which, the school will be having its 110th birthday in 2022. A new book is being prepared for the occasion. The author is again our secretary, Elizabeth Hawkins. She has already embarked on the project, but is again appealing for contributions, both literary and financial. Get those keyboards tapping, she would love to hear from you.

On a personal note I must mention the surprise/shock that I had on the tour when we went into my old woodwork room. No longer a workshop, now a conference /meeting

Xmas 2021 Editorial

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room, beautifully decorated and laid out formally with tables and chairs. I had spent many happy years in there, now it is all gone. It took my breath away, but I still have my memories.

Ted Brabban.

P.S. Remembrance Day. I was alerted to the availability on 'You Tube' of a video of 'Tanfield Remembers 2021'. I watched and found it very moving. I would recommend that you watch, if you are able to.



Remembrance Day at school. - Cllr Joyce Charlton

I was very honoured to open the new Garden of Remembrance, in its new location. The garden is a reminder to our pupils of the sacrifice of war.

The pupils and staff have some great ideas to add to the garden, and I am hoping to be invited to help implement them in the coming months.

The relocation of the Garden was necessary to make way for the new, and much needed, outdoor space for the pupils' recreation.

So, well done Team Tanfield, and 'Thank You' for the hard work and the wonderful result. I am sure that anyone who has the privilege to attend future Remembrance Ceremonies will be equally impressed and will join me in congratulating the Team for their efforts.



The School Hall

Those of us who were pupils before the building of the 'new' assembly hall (now the dining area!) will have memories of the school Hall. Full school assemblies were held there each morning, and during the day it became the gym! Nowadays it is hardly noticeable as anything different, - just another room along the corridor! I was reminded of how things had changed when I saw this old photo.



I am old, but this was even before my time!

The photo must have been taken very soon after the school opened. I surmise this, because the supporting pillars that lined the corridor wall and the window wall are not yet in place. I had always thought that the pillars were put in place to reinforce the ceiling after mining subsidence, but it was put to me recently that they may have been needed as extra support for the concrete floors and structures on the upper floor. Perhaps a 'design fault'. Whatever, they were evidently not part of the original construction.

One thing that struck me, when I looked at the old photo, was the dais in front of the windows. That survived into my time. Mr Carr would enter the Hall and mount the dais to conduct morning assembly from behind a lectern. The dais was not a fixture! Later in the day if you had P.E. in the Hall, one of the first tasks was to pull out the dais and retrieve the gym mats which were stored underneath. Conversely, at the end of the lesson, the mats were neatly piled and the dais placed back to cover them.

Mr Bob Chapman was our P.E. teacher. He was bringing Physical Education up to date in the school. He it was who updated sports day from sack races etc. to Olympic style athletics. You ran in lanes, and there were timed records of races over various distances, and so on. He must have been intent on improving physical exercise in the Hall too. I remember great excitement as 'wall-bars' were attached to the wall in the background of the old photo. They were an extension of exercise to add to the pommel horse and the vaulting horse which were there, as were the climbing ropes which appeared with the wall-bars.

We enjoyed our PE in the Hall (no showers available) and we boys enjoyed the girls' PE lessons if you happened to be in one of the classrooms that overlooked the hall. Girls in their brown grammar school knickers leaping around the other side of the door (which, as you can see, are glazed!) was a great distraction to whoever was teaching you!

It was not to last! When I left SGS in 1951, to start National Service in the RAF, the builders were already working on building the new purpose-built gym which had been left in abeyance during the war years. When I returned to Tanfield, as a teacher, eight years later, the gym (with showers!) was functioning and a new School Hall was built. Morning Assemblies were now quite formal with the Head, Dr Sharp, at a lectern,

centre stage (literally), and the full staff sitting behind. At that time they were still full school assemblies. Ah, memories!

It is fascinating how looking at an old photo makes you think and brings back related memories. I hope that my readers find it interesting too. I would be delighted if it inspires some to write of their experiences before all is forgotten and lost in the mists of time.

Who remembers Joe Binks, Abdul, Ganny Jeffery, Jack Dobbs, Fifi Thompson, Froggy Miller or Bart Gunns, or even Colin Milburn, to name but a few. There you are, your 'starter for ten'. Now get writing.

Ted Brabban.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Today I had the great pleasure of putting in touch two members, Eileen and Elizabeth, who were friends at school 70 years ago. It's nice to think that the association can bring friends together again after many years.

The get-togethers over lunch once a month have now resumed. On Wednesday October 13th, eleven members met at the Shepherd and Shepherdess pub at Beamish, to enjoy not only lunch but the chance of catching up over a good old natter. If you still live in the area or if you are visiting, why not join us? The meetings are always on the second Wednesday of the month, at a place which is decided once lunch is over. The next meeting will also be at the Shepherd & Shepherdess, on Wednesday November 10th, then we will consider where to go in December (weather permitting!)

Since I have to book in advance, I need to know numbers. If you would like to join us, please contact me to let me know and I'll give you the details of where and when we meet, as well as a menu for you to make your choice. We'd love to see you! My contact details are on the front of the newsletter.

A convivial occasion in October at the Shepherd & Shepherdess, Beamish

On the left: Jack Nelson, Bob Harrison, Jean Stoddart, Margaret Jones, Margaret Bray, Amy Bilton.

On the right: Ted Brabban, Walter Peacock, Maureen Peacock, Tony Bray.

I'm behind the camera, as usual!

Elizabeth Hawkins

Dr. Arthur Naylor.

People of my generation, and older, may remember Arthur Naylor as a pupil. Sadly, we have been informed by his family that Dr. Arthur Naylor died in March this year.

Do you know these people?

These photographs came my way recently, and I am sad to say that I know no-one apart from Dr Sharp. They are the 'prize-winners' of 1959 I am told. That was the year that I began teaching at Tanfield, so sadly the faces are not familiar. Perhaps they mean something to some of our older readers. Please let us know who they are and if possible, what they did.



I tell a lie! I can see Claire Flowers (who is now Humpherson and designed the Tanfield Glass) front row second from right.



Now it is your turn.

Ted

Well, someone knew who they were!

Reba
Abberson

Alfie Karagan

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Terry Hills, Jim Burrows, Clifford Skelton



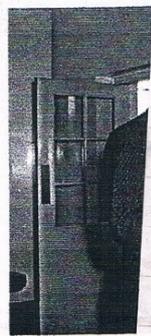
Tom G

Sand
Wag

To
Josephine
Gibbons

Hi Ted.
Many thanks to
you and your
team to spread
the news to us
in the South and
further afield.

I tell a lie! I can see Claire Flowers (who is now Humpherson and second from right.



This photo is of
students in the year
following me. I
left in 1958
I have marked a
few that I remember
for you.

Now it is your turn.

Ted

might be
Mick Ardron.

Howay the lads!

Jack Stephens

1958 Football Team

Back row - L to R

Mr Kidd, captain to us, Harry Davison, Joe Graham, Cliff Stubbs, Arthur McArdle, Doug Scarth, Bill Hall, Ian Woods, Terry Wiles, Alan Taylor, the "Doc"

Front row -

George Gibbon, Alan Johnson, Harry Baxter, John March, Alan Mills, "Dick"Christon



This must bring back memories to some! A successful team I gather!
Names supplied by Alan Mills.

The Conference Room

Howay now! Would any of you lads who did woodwork with me recognise the old Woodwork Room. It pulled me up sharp I can tell you!



Lunch and Tour



The newly-refurbished Conference Room, with (l to r) Ted Brabban, Walter Peacock, Tony Bray, Margaret Bray, Jack Nelson, Amy Bilton, Euan Ross (standing), Margaret Jones, Jean Stoddart, Claire Humpherson and Elizabeth Hawkins about to have lunch.

Members of the association were cordially invited to Tanfield on September 29th to have lunch and to see the improvements made to the school in recent months.

We all gathered in the new Conference Room beside the new reception area – a large, airy room that can seat more than 50 people and which surprised Ted

somewhat as it used to be his Woodwork Room! We were welcomed by Head Teacher Steven Clough, Finance Manager Jonathan Coates, plus two members of staff.

We were treated to hot drinks, a roast chicken and vegetables lunch, with cake to follow. Thus fortified, we went on a tour of the school, escorted by the Head and his staff.

The first impression of the school building was how light, clean and well-kept it was. It looked brand new. The next was how little noise there was – classroom doors were open as it was a warm day, and the only sounds we could hear were the murmurings of pupils hard at work.

The more we saw of the interior, the more we were impressed – new windows (at a cost of half a million!), new floors, new décor, new lighting – we lost track of all the improvements to the building. Then we went outside and marvelled at the amount of space that has been created, with seating and tables as well as facilities for play. We finished in the Gym and Sports Hall; the Gym seemed much as it had been in our time at school – minus the wall bars – but the Sports Hall was improved beyond recognition.

We made our way back to the Conference Room for a final chat and cup of tea or coffee, passing on the way students who were impeccably behaved and smartly dressed. Then we departed, knowing that our old school, without doubt, is in safe hands.

Elizabeth Hawkins

The following are some of the comments made by members of the group and included in our letter of thanks to The Head:

“I think the school has never looked better and I was equally impressed by the smartness and calm behaviour of the students. As someone who holds Tanfield very dear to her heart, I found the whole visit immensely comforting.”

“The changes are mind blowing. Tanfield has been through some tough times and it is good to have a team with ideas and ambition to give the local youth the dream to aspire, and in inspiring surroundings. Proud to be a Tanfield boy again.”

“Thank you so much for hosting us today. Like everyone else it brought back strong memories of my time at Tanfield. I am so pleased the school is in such good hands. Thank you for a wonderful visit.”

“I have never seen a school painted white yet manage to stay white and look so good. I think that the noise we made in our chatting as we went round the building was the only sound I heard all day. Can't really say how impressed I was on our visit and think the head and his staff are doing a great job.”

