

Tanfield Association

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Ted Brabban, our editor for many years, has gone into honourable retirement, leaving a big gap to fill. So I'm filling in at the moment, though I'd be happy to hear from anyone who would like to help out. Ted is a tough act to follow and I know we all appreciate the grand job he has done for such a long time.

Now that the euphoria of the 110th has died down, it's back to the normal routine. Ted leaves us with his latest creation – a Christmas card he has designed. **Merry Christmas, everyone!**



Winter 2022

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Where are the 46ers?

If you came to Stanley Grammar School in 1946, and would like to be put in contact with others from the same year group, please get in touch. There are several of you out there. You can contact me by email, phone or letter if you're interested. I look forward to hearing from you!

A reminder of who may have taught you during your time at SGS during the 40s. How many of them can you name? Ten of them were still there in the 60s!



Ted remembers...

Ted Brabban, a pupil at the school from 1944-51, and who returned later for a long career as a member of staff, remembers getting to school in the morning and back home again in the late afternoon: "My journeys to Tanfield have been varied. As a pupil, living at Sleepy Valley, there was no alternative but to walk. It was a pleasant walk initially, through woodland, then through the Margaret pit at Tanfield Lea and finally through Tanfield Lea itself. After 7 years I knew every bump in the path!"

When I resumed as a teacher, things became interesting. At first I lived in Stanley so it was a walk down the hill. Then we bought our first house in Chester le Street. Those were the days when a lot of girls were shipped up to Tanfield from Chester le Street, so initially I joined them on a 'Scholars Bus'! Then we bought our own car and things changed. Then we moved to Harelaw. From there it was mainly car, but I did use the local Scholars Bus to leave the car for my wife, Mavis (also a former pupil). I also did a 'Mr Carr' - I bought a bike. I used to cycle down through Harperley to school and back again at night. The climb out of the valley was a killer, especially if the prevailing West wind was blowing. Then my bike was stolen, and I ended my career by car again. So my trips to Tanfield were varied - not to mention ploughing through snowdrifts to show my face! Those were the days!"

[N.B. Tanfield – the name has Anglo-Saxon origins. The Anglo-Saxon word 'feld' means a patch of land where trees were 'felled' to clear the ground for cultivation or to construct a building. Does anyone have an idea of where the 'Tan' might have come from?]



Ted with his form in the 1970s. One of the girls, Rosalind Caine (now Rosalind Le Quesne), recalls making the fish (right) in Ted's Culture Class in the VI Form. She said, "I made this some 50 years



ago.....my dolphin had pride of place on my mum's wall for many years and on our wall now."



Alan Lowerson, (right) in Ted's woodwork class



Another example of the art work coming out of Ted's class – tiles, this time.

Who remembers Mike Butynski?

A post on Facebook recalls the influence of Physics teacher Mr Butynski:

The Tanfield School's lunchtime 380z Research Machines Limited Microcomputer-driven Computer Club run by Mike Butynski changed all our lives. This unique opportunity to learn software development allowed many of us to take up a role in industrial software development, (and in my case) the Cambridge Silicon Fen / Cambridge Uni Electronics Industry as a technologist and "end to end" software development work later on in life. It led to many of us purchasing our own computer, to learn machine code, to write video games and to become highly adept in all aspects of numerical computing. We joined computer clubs at Newcastle University, Tandy Radio Shack and Handyside Arcade and Computer Shop. Many of us stopped engaging in mainstream culture as we dropped the TV screen in favour of the colour monitor. This changed all our lives for the better.



Mike Butynski taught Physics and computing at Tanfield in the 1980s and he is still remembered today for the way he influenced pupils' lives.

To Miss Thornton



Those who remember Miss Joyce Thornton, History teacher supreme, can imagine her taking a keen interest in the following article, addressed to her, by Jean Simpson.

So, Miss Thornton, History is fascinating. The fragrant bluebells in the Causey Gorge are nothing compared to imagining the gushing waters of the declining Ice Age carving the ample depths which were spanned much later by the famous Causey Arch - the oldest in Christendom.

There must have been a Tudor house on the ridge at Stanley, facing the substantial remains of a lovely Tudor stone house at Tanfield, in visual contact for security. The latter sadly disappeared with the new housing estate, withering a child's dreams.

More recent memories are of the growth of Stanley as a mining community, the work of which a historian described as 'the worst work under heaven.' This fostered a close-knit community from which our school was born. Then Stanley was vibrant as truck-loads of coal clattered, clanged and squealed along Joicey terrace, spraying dust over Spen Street as housewives clashed the miners' clothes against the walls. Houses were sprayed with black dust by full lorries while South Moor was hidden by the choking smoke of coal fires. Hidden, too, was the miner with a broken back for ten long years and those with breathing troubles.

Returning from a hard day's work, miners stood on buses to avoid being cajoled by other passengers.

Yet, lingering attitudes still prevailed – 'It's not wise to rise above your station' and 'Are women worth further education?'

So, as one of our past pupils waited outside an examination room for one of life's most important examinations, all jitters were gone as the mind completely focused with empathy on Stanley and home, with his kinfolk involved in the Morrison disaster which raised a tremendous fund for dependents.

What would Joyce have thought of such wormholes to the past, or better, gleaned from lessons of History?

Jack Herdman

I recently received this photo from Jack's daughter, Jane. Anyone remember him at SGS?

John Hardy Herdman (Jack) celebrates his 96th birthday today. Always remembers Dipton with such fondness and incredible recollection. He was born in the hospital in Stanley and attended Stanley Grammar School. Dad left Dipton to work in Norwhich and eventually moved to Port Elizabeth, South Africa in 1952 where he has had a full and rich life in the automotive business. But he still clearly remembers a very happy Childhood and youth in Dipton.



Life After Tanfield

Before the celebration day, we asked members (and others who had been to Tanfield) if they would tell us what they did after they left the school. More than 30 people responded, and the 'Life After Tanfield' folder provoked a lot of interest at the celebration. Here is the first of those entries. More to follow.

Moira Bryan



Moira at school



A recent photo of Moira and her family in Australia



LIFE AFTER TANFIELD
NAME MOIRA BRYAN (née NETHERTON)
PUPIL AT TANFIELD FROM 1947 TO 1952

MY LIFE AFTER LEAVING TANFIELD

Prior to leaving S.G.S -as it was then, in 1952 I had applied to the R.V.I to take up a nursing career & was accepted. In Oct of that year, I commenced working at the R.V.I's Convalescent Home in Wylam. I was excited & nervous at leaving home at 16 and a half, but being quite a confident lass, I was keen to start work & have some money. In those days, you were able to learn the Practical side of Nursing, prior to commencing your nursing training at 18. I loved it all made life-long friends. Looking back, my Nursing

training at the R.V.I was exceptional, moving through the different wards to gain all facets of Medicine & Surgery. We worked long hours in those days. We would save our money for holidays, which included backpacking in Scotland, good fun. Going by boat from Newcastle to Bergen to Ulvik, Stavanger. Good fun spending Midsummer- daylight all night at a party with students at an island across the fjord. Rowing there in a boat, 5 of us, no life jackets. We also went to Salzburg, all the way by train, 3 days & nights staying in Anif for 2 weeks in a pensionette, doing trips to Hellbronn, a salt mine, fun, Black Forest & Badgastein in Germany & Hitler's bunker house & Eagle's Nest at Berchesgaden etc.etc.

After 4 years at the R.V.I. I decided to do another year & become a Midwife. Did the 1st part at Middlesbrough Maternity Hosp. & 2nd part at Newcastle General Hospital, delivering babies on the District around Newcastle & loved it. I also took another exam to become a Queen's Nurse, QIDNS. Queen's Institute of District Nursing.

By this time I was engaged to be married & my fiancé Alistair had just finished National Service in Germany & decided to join the Metropolitan Police in London. When I qualified as a Midwife, we moved to London in 1959. I worked as a Midwife at St George's Hosp. which was then at Hyde Park Corner. The Mid. Dept. was on the top floor & had amazing views of London. Quite a few perks working there with free tickets at times to West End shows. We lived in a furnished flat in Battersea on the middle floor of a terrace house with a typical London landlady. Lots of stories there.

Eventually we saved enough money to buy a bungalow in Erith in Kent, on the edge of the Met Police District, Al still in the Met, & I, the local District Nurse.

Considering starting a family, but Australia was advertising that you could go to Australia for £10 each for 2 years. Alistair was very keen, so we applied, accepted & had a sailing date on the 'Fairstar' in a month. People we knew bought the house & took the dog. I was in tears when we left. Our families thought we were crazy leaving good jobs. etc. etc. They were born in a different era.

In 1965 when we left, the population of Australia was 13 million, the same as Greater London, it is still only 26 million.

The "Fairstar" looked huge, sitting there in the docks at Southampton. We had a cabin on our own, & enjoyed every minute of our cruise to Australia. Plenty of activities on the boat, great food, bands & artists entertaining us, dancing.

The trip was great going thro' the Med to Pt. Said, traders coming to the boat to sell their wares.

Coming thro' the Suez Canal, so fertile on one side & sandy on the other. We were followed by numerous boats from various European countries all emigrating to Oz.

Next stop Aden, where we bartered for cheap electrical goods, movie camera & equipment, binoculars etc. Across the Indian Ocean to Perth, where I met a nursing friend, hubby & 4 children, who had emigrated & couldn't settle & were going back.

We disembarked in Melbourne & had a flat waiting for us in Frankston, a beach suburb about 30 miles away & soon bought a new house. I got a job as a sister in a doctor's Surgery & Al joined the Police Force.

We started our family, Andrew was born in 1967 & Graeme in 1969. Our 1st trip back to the UK was in 1971 to visit family & friends.

In 1974, my hubby thought it would be a change to live in the country - good for the boys, so we moved to Bairnsdale- tears again leaving friends & a nice area.

Al now worked for the Country Roads Board & they gave us an old house to live in for a cheap rent. It was so bad compared with the new one we had sold.

However, this enabled us to buy a 51 acre property about 5 kms. from Bairnsdale where we still live. We became farmers rearing cattle which still continues.

In 1977 Colin was born which was great.

We have had lots of ups & downs in our lives & one bad incident where Alistair was badly injured in a car accident on his way home from work with serious injuries, including head injuries & brain damage. He was 46 at the time, Colin was only 6 at the time. Al did recover after a long time but had to leave his job, as he had short term memory loss. Life was never the same. He passed away in 2004 due to heart problems.

The boys have grown up & have families & they have built on the extremities of the property. I have 11 grandchildren, so we have helped to populate Australia.

I have travelled extensively - before Al died, we travelled to Perth by train, across the Nullarbor Plain to see The Americas Cup when it was held there- amazing experience. Also to L.A then UK to see family again, & Hong Kong. In the 80's we had a trip on the old Oriana around the Pacific, taking in Fiji, Tonga, American Samoa - all beautiful, New Zealand, Tasmania, most of the Capital cities. After Al died, I visited Italy, Switzerland, Paris, Bordeaux & vineyards in Loire valley, then to Barcelona, Istanbul, Izmir, Greek islands, Egypt, Rhine cruise, Prague, Croatia, Norfolk Island plus most of Australia, Outback & remote areas & all the capital cities.

I feel so fortunate to have achieved so much in my life & feel that it's important to take any opportunity that arises, life is so short.

Letter from Andrew Cogle

In November, Ted received a pleasant surprise – a letter from former pupil Andrew Cogle, who was at Tanfield from 1959-62 before moving away from the Stanley area. Ted thought it would be nice to share it with the association – it may bring back memories! Read on.

Good afternoon Ted,

I guess I don't need to call you Mr Brabban now. I grew up in Stanley and was a pupil at Stanley Grammar School from passing my 11+ in Sep 1959 until I left to move to Heaton Grammar in Newcastle, with the family in July 1962, and my name is Andrew Cogle.

My first year was in Miss Grieveson's Class. I think she taught French but we started to learn French with Fifi Thompson. I wasn't a natural at languages, perhaps if we had started sooner, but I have to say that I managed fine when I did visit France and Belgium to sample the culture and visit relatives' graves or memorials from the First World War, so some of it stuck.

When it came to woodwork, although my step-Grandfather was a Joiner and Cabinet maker and I desperately wanted to do well, I really wasn't cut out for it. I wanted to run before I could walk, but I do remember you, and that tray you had us make was around for a long time. Over the following years, I was often the one who had the job of collecting the money and coming into the woodwork room at lunchtime to purchase one of those plastic, coloured balls with lots of holes in, to make them light enough not to break windows when they were used as footballs. The goals were two frames of the bike sheds and a bag or jacket against the opposite wall. This was played, despite the throng of other boys moving about the yard, until the ball had absolutely no more places to tie it back together with string and we had a whip round from those who were playing – one shilling I believe you charged.

I remember the segregated lunchtimes. In the second year I was promoted to waiter and was under strict instructions to get the best plates of food for my end. In fact, there was always little to choose between them but I managed to satisfy the 5th years running my end so well I had protection from the other end who always complained that their serving plates were not as good as ours – it was all in the mind. Greyish mashed potatoes, dark brown gravy with just about everything the consistency of about 90SAE and some indeterminate cuts of meat along with overcooked veg. Sweet was a milk pudding, or a cake with a custard reminiscent of the gravy, only yellow, and a dish which I recall was topped with custard and some pink and white material that most people liked. Nouvelle cuisine it was not. I survived two years as waiter and became quite adept at it.

The teacher who had the most influence on me was Mr Dolman. No messing with this man but he was a good teacher I felt. In 1964 I was sitting in my O level Physics wondering what to put when suddenly I had a blinding revelation on what he had taught me. I was able to put together enough to pass.

Another 'no messing with' teacher was Mr Robertson, whom we had as a form teacher in perhaps the second year in the Biology Lab, down some stairs opposite the New Assembly Hall. His weapon of choice was a Jakari bat, which he reputedly used as chastisement. One afternoon he had some admin to carry out and asked for the general hubbub of chatter to cease which we all did bar two girls. As a result, he read the riot act whilst walking around the lab, Jakari bat in hand. In order to emphasise his annoyance and reinforce the message he hit the bat down flat side to

one of the desks with a very loud bang. It was my desk and I leapt 6 feet into the air, I'm sure, despite being innocent on this occasion.

PE was with Mr Geddes and Mr Westwater, but it was Maths that I did best in although I can't remember the teacher's name, and enjoyed the most along with Art. English I was not too good at but enjoyed the range of literature we read. However, I had chosen my subjects for O level including Physics, Art and Geography as I was in the 'only taking 7 O level group' when we moved.

Moving was not great for my education as I was in the same position of not being in the top group and therefore not having the best teachers and the syllabus was different too. I ended up without Art but with Chemistry and History to make 8 O levels. I didn't do as well as I would have wished and didn't go directly to university but into the National Air Traffic Control Service in West Drayton near London. I returned after four and a half years and did a sandwich course which included some chemistry and textile lectures for the local NHS. This I found quite easy and I thought about doing a degree with one of the best things to happen to tertiary education – The Open University, when I moved to West Cumberland. However, life intervened in the form of a girl who I married in 1975. I did however, after joining MENSA, go back and take a BSc (Hons) in 1994 and when I graduated, I was so lost I decided to continue and did a BA (Hons) and then an MA in Modern History.

So perhaps I did deserve that place at Stanley after all, and perhaps I should have worked harder but the most damning part of my education on reflection was changing curriculum after three years. The lesson I took from this was that once my own three boys started secondary school, I would not move them on any account, so despite some hard times employment-wise for me they remained where they were and I even became a parent governor.

The result was that all three went to a good University, the eldest is now a senior instrumentation engineer based in Glasgow, my middle son is the head of the European part of the International European School in Warsaw (his 8 year old daughter is fluent in Polish and English and has started to learn French, I rest my case on my earlier comment regarding languages) and my youngest son gained his first degrees here then went to Oregon in the USA and married and American, did a second Masters and is now a fully paid up American working for Oregon Power.

Whatever else, I feel that my years at Stanley as well as my time at Heaton had given me a good, well-rounded start in the world I was in, that was on the cusp of change. I am sure today education has changed again to reflect the changing and challenging times young adults face and prepare them for it. I retired in 2012 and three years later moved to Scotland, my father's homeland. Having found your website, it was nice to see the pictures, I'm second from the right, back row, Form 1A in the late 50's collection. I went on to 2 Beta I think, I can't see myself in any other pictures but I recognise some of the others. It was fun reading through some of the newsletters too, it brought back a lot of memories

Well that's about it, Just to wish you all, all the best for the future.

Andrew Cogle

(If any of you 59ers remember Andrew, and would like to get in touch, please let me know. If you have any memories you'd like to share with him or with us, drop me a line!)

The photo Andrew mentioned in his letter – Form 1A in 1959. He's 2nd from right, back row.



Barbara Davison (Dawson)



Barbara, who lives in Alberta, Canada, recently came back to Stanley for a family visit – here's her account of the amazing amount she and her family managed to do while she was here!

Introducing my Grandsons to Stanley!

I had the pleasure of introducing my grandsons to the area where their grandparents had grown up. This was over a period of about four weeks. My older grandson had travelled to Tanfield Lea (our Stanley area destination) with me mid-September. For two weeks my younger daughter (who lives in Tanfield Lea) chauffeured us around to places he especially wanted to visit. We saw the gardens at Durham University (I did not even know they were there!), travelled many miles along the Roman Wall, visited Holy Island as he wanted to see the causeway flooded! We visited Knaresborough, Bishop Auckland, Tynemouth Aquarium, and his aunt took him to places that I could not go because of my mobility problems.

Beginning of October my younger grandson joined us, as his job had not allowed him the privilege of taking so much time away. As both boys wanted to visit London, off we went, driving down on a cold wet day. After we arrived at our hotel, we took off for London City!

The boys were fascinated to be eating in a restaurant across from the Tower of London. Next day off we went again to the city, after riding across the river on a gondola! My daughter and grandsons then dropped me off at the National Gallery, while the three of

them investigated all areas of the “City.” I had never been to Spitalfields Market, so it was a pleasure to meet up with a colleague of my daughter, and we all had lunch.

After lunch I went back to the Hotel, and they “went out on the town.” A cousin met me at the Hotel, and we had a lovely visit until the three wanderers arrived back at the Hotel. The boys were keen to see Kew Gardens, and so off they went, with arrangements to be picked up later that day. I was driven to Purely, where my brother-in-law resides, and after lunch out in the country with Jim and his friend Liz, Katherine and I drove eleven miles in 2 hours to pick up the boys at Kew! The M6 was pretty good until we discovered the infamous ROAD WORKS! We should have listened to the Sat Nav, which wanted to take us to Doncaster, but we keep on going. What a mistake, instead of arriving back in Tanfield Lea around 11:30 pm, it was 12:45 am, and we had lots to do the next day, so off to bed.

As there were many invitations to visit friends and relatives, we were not able to meet with them all, so a room was booked at the Masonic Hall in Stanley, and food was provided, and about forty people showed up to meet with the boys and me! I really should not call them boys, as they are 26yrs and 24yrs old, but as their Gran, I can still call them my boys.

We had a nice visit to Raby Castle; the boys went to Durham to see the gardens again and visit the Cathedral and the Castle. Durham Castle was closed due to students being in residence. I stayed home and the three “young ones” went off to High Force, visiting Low Force on the way. We did not have lots of time left, as we were off to Amsterdam for a three-day visit, before the boys and I left for Calgary, and Katherine left back to Tanfield Lea. I saw places during this time, that I did not know were in our area, but have found that is typical, as when you live in a place, and there are things to see, there is always tomorrow. I find the same here in Alberta. I must end with the note that my Grandsons Robert and Andrew were very impressed with the history and the friendliness of the people in the area. I am proud to be “lassie from Stanley,” even though I was born in Hare Law.

Barbara Davison (Dawson)



Barbara with her daughter and grandsons

Letters Page

Hi Elizabeth

Just dropping you a line to say thanks for compiling 'Then and Now'. I enjoyed reading about the school for it brought back some happy memories. The school has come through many changes and the present one seems incredibly different from my memories of it. It is heartening to hear that it is thriving once more and has a great future.

Also, I wanted to say well done, for you made the book 'alive' and interesting: it made me want to pick it up again and again for I kept finding new, interesting titbits.

So, well done to you for all your hard work in producing an excellent tome. It is a worthy companion to your copies of the 80th and 100th anniversary books, which still sit on my bookshelf.

Regards,

Thornton

(Dr T F Davison)

Dear Elizabeth,

Nice to hear from you, and I must compliment you on the latest edition of Tanfield Then and Now. Obviously, many hours of hard work for the many people who were involved in its publication. So interesting.

So pleased the "110th" Celebration" went well. Joan Callaway sent me a photo of 4 of my old school mates.

Kind Regards

Moira Bryan

Dear Elizabeth,

Thank you all so much for all your efforts which resulted in the success of the 110th celebration. It must have been gratifying to see the numbers who attended and their clear enjoyment. Well done! To my surprise, I met a cousin of my Dad there – she was in the Upper VIth when I was in my first year at SGS. She is Doreen Baggett (was Ash) who lived in Tanfield Lea. She had several brothers who, I believe, came to SGS too.

Best wishes,

Claire Humpherson

Hello Mrs Hawkins

Emma Mann (now Bridge) here. You taught me English many moons ago; I did my GCSEs in 1992. I have just stumbled across this fantastic website! It has brought back so many memories. My son is off to France on a school trip next year and I was browsing the web looking for pictures of Mondidier when our school photos popped up. You can imagine my surprise! I have just emailed the link to Fiona (was) Lightburn for her enjoyment!

I didn't realise that we had a school association. I will be looking at the website regularly to keep up to date with things. Finding this page has really made me smile; I think I will keep it bookmarked.

Hope that you are fit and well

Emma

Hi Elizabeth

Just to let you know the books arrived in the post. Thank you for that.

The book is amazing, thrilled to have a copy, congratulations to you for all your hard work. My Gran, Sarah Armstrong attended the school when it opened in 1912 so Tanfield history through the generations!

Cheers Mave (Mavis Stoker, née McEwan)