

OLD VARNDEANIAN

Newsletter

Archive re-issue

OCTOBER 1990

TONY ALLT

It is with very sorrowful regret that we have to report the death of Tony ALLT in the Royal Sussex County Hospital after many weeks of pain and suffering very patiently borne. Tony came to Brighton from Merton College in 1948 to teach History at Varndean Grammar School for Boys and soon became a well respected and popular member of the staff. Countless pupils and students at Varndean were privileged over 35 years to be on the receiving end of Tony's careful scholarship. He was an enthusiastic and conscientious Secretary of the local branch of the Historical Association and did an incredible amount of work for the AMA, the OVA and Heads of Department meetings. Tony was instrumental with Cyril Shelley in the introduction of the OVA Newsletter in about 1970 and as S.G. Neve (Staff) said at Tony's retirement party in 1982 these two were always in arm chair session whilst hammering out the Newsletter and checking the list of names and addresses of Old Students. Whilst Editor of the Newsletter he carried out the duties of the President for three years.



A.H. ALLT – Schoolmaster and Gentleman
1918-1990

Tony was never heard to grumble about the most tedious of chores, He had an engaging sense of humour with a vast repertoire of anecdotes told with inimitable wit. The Association members and all old students will know they have lost a valuable friend and counsellor as well as a very hard working Editor of the Newsletter and member of the Dinner Committee.

Tony was a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers, one of the City Guilds. He was admitted into the Freedom of the City of London in 1964. His family had belonged to the Guild for well over 100 years.

Our President Writes:

The OVA has suffered a great loss with the passing of Tony Allt, as you will read in this issue of the Newsletter. In fact, the editing and compilation of material for the Newsletter was just one example of Tony's sterling work on behalf of the Old Varndeanian Association, and it will not be easy to fill his place in this and other spheres. Tony's subject was History and it is undoubtedly true that he played a large part in the history of Varndean. We shall miss him a great deal and I, as your President, together with the members of the Council will feel keenly the loss of his guidance and advice.

We extend our sympathy to Mary and the family; however we shall, I am sure, remember him not with sadness but with warmth and affection as he would wish.

Ken Brown

FOR TONY ALLT: A homily for Tony's funeral service at the Church of Christ the King, Patcham, 20 September 1990.

The hardest task that can ever befall a pupil is that of delivering a public farewell to his master. It is harder still when the master in question always taught, good historian that he was, the need for considered verdicts in proper and objective perspective. But then, Tony, you never did set an easy essay! I just wish I couldn't sense that meticulous pen hovering above my script, ready to protest at the slightest hyperbole or the faintest whiff of false piety. But, Tony, you never traded in anything less than total integrity and utter honesty, and nor shall I. I can't claim to have known you longer than others here, or better, but you will appreciate as an historian that I do have the advantage of a variety of perspectives. When I was five you were just John's father, but even then the devotion with which you and Mary saw John through his early operations made an impact on me, as it did on everyone all that love and care disguised under a gentle and ready humour. When I was eleven you were "Harry", sometimes even "Screaming Harry", as I, along with the rest of Varndean's latest intake, learned to duck when that quiet voice suddenly rasped out at some wretched miscreant. When I was sixteen, your sheer delight in history as the canvas on which all the splendours and stupidities of the human race are portrayed had infected me, and I've never been cured.

Yes, your approach sometimes seemed old fashioned: "Geography is about maps", you'd say, "but history is about chaps", and you didn't have much time for the trendy Marxist approach which devalued the role of personality in favour of analysis of class and economic dynamics. That was one approach, you would concede, but it's personalities which gave history its unpredictability and fascination, and somehow you always had the right anecdote, the most apposite quotation that made it all come alive. When I was twenty five you were my Head of Department, kind, caring and considerate in a year that was for you plagued by ill health and operations that didn't go quite right. Ever since you have been a firm friend: loyal, constant, candid. And always that sense of humour Mary calls it a cockney strain that would not be denied. It bought a sparkle to the highlights of life and found light in the darkest moments

But I can see the frown. You're right, of course The historian should never rely on his own memories, however rich the material. Others knew you long before I did, and saw that underneath the humour was an immensely serious, sensitive and idealistic man. That's why you were a conscientious objector in World War 11, serving in the Friends Ambulance Unit. It was no soft option, but vital work in dangerous places, especially the blood transfusion unit in North Africa and Italy. Then came work with displaced persons in Germany, to which you brought the compassionate understanding that later was to mark your work for the Assistant Masters' Association and the Old Varndeanian Association. That's why the AMA awarded you their Certificate of Honour and the OVA made the old Whitgiftian their President.

But before the schoolmastering, your beloved Oxford, and what joy was yours when John followed you to Merton. I never quite understood why you chose American History as a specialism or why, as a conscientious objector, you used the scholarship you won to visit the Civil War battlefields. But, as Mary says, you were ever full surprises.

And of course the long career at Varndean, to which you devoted so many years and so much affection. But once again you never looked for the easy route or the glittering prizes. You took on the jobs some of your colleagues preferred to avoid: inter school committees; caring for members of the profession throughout the country who had chanced upon misfortune or handicap; staff rep. on the Old Varndeanian Association and editor of its Newsletter And that history of Varndean which you were writing. A labour of love, alas unfinished, leaving a number of Elishas all fervently hoping that Elijah's mantle won't fail on them! It's alright, I've nearly finished. You (and John Cunningham) cured me of longwindedness when I was in the Sixth Form. in any case, you disliked essays that were just lists of dates and facts. So here are two final clues to that complex character of yours The first we all know, and appreciate at its full worth, namely your devotion to your family and your deep, deep love of them all of your Mary, true Partner, companion and very best of friends. Of John and his Mary, and we know that whatever the doctor's certificate may say, there was a heart broken when John died that could never fully be healed. Of Rosemary and her Ian, and those grandchildren who were your most recent joy and delight

And then, finally, your devotion to your Church, by which I mean both the Church of England whose history you knew so well, and your own parish church which you served in a whole host of ways, from KC and care of the Church Hall to those monthly Sunday afternoon teas for the lonely. And underlying that service to your church, a faith in the Lord of the Church that showed itself above all in the courage with which you bore those last years of almost constant pain and much personal sadness. It was a quiet and simple yet thoughtful and profound

faith which this noisy world would do so well to ponder. For the greatest lesson you had to teach, and taught me and countless others privileged to be your pupils, your colleagues and your friends, is that to prepare for death we need to make the most of life; to enjoy life ourselves and to be thankful for it; to do all we can to make it possible for other people to enjoy life more; to move through that enjoyment of life into enjoyment of God, the source and giver of life, and to begin to experience that renewal of ourselves through His love which gives us the promise of fuller life to come To make the most of life is to come to be persuaded with St. Paul "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord "

And what I read in St Paul, Tony, on a printed page, I read in your life and your faith and for that, and for all that you have given us, thanks be to God.

Eric WOODS (1962-69. Staff 1974-75) Vicar and Rural Dean of Wroughton.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 88th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the ASSOCIATION will be held at VARNDEAN on WEDNESDAY, 24th OCTOBER 1990 at 7.30 p.m. A list of the Association's current Officers can be found on the front page of the March 1990 Newsletter. Please make every effort to attend

OVA COUNCIL

Your Council consists of 10 elected members and the Honorary Officers The death of Tony ALLT and two members leaving the district means that there are now three vacancies. Nominations for these vacancies should be sent to the Hon Secretary, Derek ASHCROFT, or handed to him at the Annual General Meeting on 24th October

Are you willing to serve on this Council?

JUBILEE

While we are talking of dates, 1991 will commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Varndean. In May next year the college is celebrating the 60th anniversary of its opening on its present site. Over the weekend of May 11th there will be many events in connection with the Jubilee including an Exhibition of Varndean past and present, its history and its achievements. The OVA hopes to play a part in these celebrations. Indeed we shall be holding our Annual Dinner at the College on Friday May 10th 1991. Other commitments permitting there should be visits from such OV's as Paul SCOFIELD and Desmond LYNAM and we are sure that many more of you will make an extra effort to come 11 onward and upward" along Surrenden Road to renew acquaintance with what Ted POTTER would call our "ALMA MATER "

An outline programme for the Jubilee is attached.

ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner took place on Friday, April 20th 1990 at the Preston Resort Hotel and proved to be a most successful reunion of some 57 members. The Association's President, Ken BROWN, was unfortunately absent on the other side of the world, but his place was more than adequately filled by our Vice President, Keith ELLIOT. Many messages were received from OV's both in this country and overseas sending best wishes for a happy reunion and an enjoyable evening. Our poetic tradition was maintained by these lines from Ken BROWN:

*Old Vardeanians could do worse
Than recall schooldays past in verse.
Such efforts some might say could hoist a
Derisive howl in Hall or Cloister.
But, dear friends, no need to panic
At least our verses aren't satanic.*

NEWS OF OLD VARDEANIANS

Obituaries. We regret to announce the deaths of the following:

In December 1989 S.W.H.THOMPSON (1918-23).

In February 1990 Dr. S.H.HARVEY (1928-35). There was a very full and interesting obituary in his local paper from which I quote extracts. After mentioning his schooldays at Vardean it goes on to say "While studying for his doctorate at London University he was evacuated to Aberystwyth where he became devoted to the rugged grandeur of Mid Wales. He was recruited into an elite team of research chemists which was responsible for the design and testing of numerous incendiary devices for the Army and the RAF After the war he began a long and successful career as a lecturer at Leicester University He became a City Councillor and chaired both Education and Water Committees. He became the Senior Scientific Advisory Officer for the East Midlands. With his retirement in 1974 and his wife's death in 1976 he busted himself with the setting up of the Lynwernog Mine Museum in Ponterwyd, just inland from Aberystwyth " "Stephen Harvey was a one off, a brilliant scientist, a kind and just man who believed that a good sense of humour was perhaps the most essential element in the long journey through life ";

In May, 1990 Charles KNIGHT R.W.S.(1913-18). It is impossible in a few lines to cover adequately Charles KNIGHT's contribution to art or to teaching. The appreciation in the national press has said it much more effectively. Painter, designer, lecturer and Principal of Brighton college of Arts and Crafts, Vice President of the Royal Watercolour Society, he was asked by the present Queen Mother to give Princess Margaret lessons in watercolour painting. His long friendship with John Denman, lecturer in Architecture, gave him opportunities to work in other media quite removed from watercolour and he became expert in the design of architectural stone and metalwork. His paintings hang in many public and private collections;

In June 1990 Dennis H. COLGATE, M.M. (1934-41). After distinguished War Service in the Far East in which he gained the Military Medal and was mentioned in Dispatches he went on to a long and successful career in the Law. An entry in Who's Who gives the details,

Also in June 1990 F.W.SHAW (1920-24). We send our condolences and sympathy to the families of the above and also to Cyril SHELLEY on the loss of his daughter, Paula, in America. She had been a pupil at Vardean Girls' School.

Our congratulations to Clive and Tricia HENLY on the birth of their son Philip in May. Clive was our membership secretary until he moved to Nottingham

NEWS OF OTHER MEMBERS

Tom BASTOCK (1918-25) sent his apologies for not being able to attend the Grand Reunion in September due to other engagements. It appears his diary will continue to be full for at least two years as Deputy Mayor and then Mayor of Telscombe.

Paul HOPWOOD (1971-76) has had a successful career in accountancy since leaving school He looks forward to meeting old friends in the future

D.SMART (1968-75) has just been awarded a First Class Honours degree in Civil Engineering after six years part time study on Day Release. Many congratulations. He is currently working in Brighton for a Consultancy Engineering Partnership. We wish him all success

H.G. (Harry) HOBDELL, Head of Science for many years and famous for his impromptu appearances as lighting director of many school plays, sent us news of his retirement near Clacton in Essex. He is verging on 90 and still coaching for exams!

Alan GUNN (1954-59) had the distinction of refereeing the Cup Final last May We sent him congratulations and I am sure many of us saw him.

Geoff HEBDEN tells us of his latest marathon, his excuse for not being at the Dinner. This year he started with the Elite Ladies which meant a fast start. How's that for handicapping! He took one minute longer than last year, four hours six minutes, due to being tripped and failing at nine miles. He has much praise for the Casualty Station patching up knees and elbows and dealing with cramp. He also tells of his running in the first London Marathon when there were only 7000 competitors. He recalls a sign saying "Free champagne for all London Marathon Runners" at the 20 mile mark So that accounts for the unsteadiness of some runners over the finishing line! It was an offer not repeated in following years.

COLLEGE NEWS

Growth

Vardean continues to grow and, with a total roll in September 1990 of 704, is now at its maximum given the capacity of the buildings A number of physical modifications have been made to increase the number of classrooms, including the addition of a new temporary building, and to improve specialist accommodation Plans are afoot for further improvements including the library area, the information technology room, and the student social areas. Help is needed financially to bring about these improvements and I would be very pleased indeed to discuss proposals with any Old Vardeanians who would like to recognize the value of the past by investing in the College's future.

Exam Results

At A level, the second best ever year (following 1989) with 80% achieving A E pass. At GCSE 64.5% of entries were rewarded with an A C grade and this is far the best 0 level/GCSE record in the College's history. It is a little too early to be more specific on the direction all our leavers have taken; three are certainly moving on to Oxbridge Michael COOPER to Sidney Sussex, Cambridge for Natural Science (1991), Thomas BROOKES to read Geography at Emmanuel College, Cambridge and Sukey MONTFORD to read PPE at Balliol College, Oxford. Don't forget, though, all those very many students who have worked very hard indeed to achieve their full potential even though their actual grades may be (apparently) more modest!

Drama

With three main productions during 1989/90, the College maintained the splendid tradition dating back to York Place and Varndean Grammar School. "Volpone" and "The Revenger's Tragedy" as major works stood with "Immigrants" a student devised entry to the National Drama Festival as highlights of the year.

The Future

we look forward to a good year Certainly the early signs are that our students are committed and seem to take up every opportunity on offer. The College cannot grow very much larger within its early buildings though demand will increase from prospective students. We shall be working hard to improve on our provision and evidence for this already exists in the new nursery which opened in September 1990 within the bike sheds (now converted!) and in the community education evening classes shortly to be launched in conjunction with Dorothy Stringer School and Brighton College of Technology. All signs that Varndean is flourishing and in good health in readiness for the 60th Anniversary celebration in May 1991.

VARNDEAN: CLASS OF 1960 REUNION, SEPTEMBER 7th, 8th and 9th 1990

Brian Hills

As many of you may know, a reunion weekend had been planned for the boys who started at Varndean in September 1960.

The initial suggestion came from Bernie HAINES, who now lives and works in Houston, Texas, but was left to those somewhat nearer home, to organise Consequently the gang of four, Michael DARTNELL, Richard ANDREW, Dave HUGHES and myself, Brian HILLS, met over the course of two years to plan this event

I am pleased to report that the whole weekend was a tremendous success, more possibly, than any of us could have hoped.

It began at the King & Queen, that local inn so beloved by our generation. When I arrived to be confronted by Mike and a totally transformed Bernie, I knew the evening was to be full of surprises. And so it proved Over the course of the next three hours, over 35 reunions took place. Most had not met for 20 years! The happiness and laughter that evening was great, even when Pinnochio's in New Road allowed a crowd of 25 (still sober), in for a midnight pizza

I should say that most had travelled a considerable distance, many from far corners of this country, but several from France, Germany and Canada.

Somewhat fatigued, many met yet again on the Sunday, complete with wives and children. This time for a look around the old school, a short service of dedication in the Hall, followed by a picnic on the lawn. Again, it was a lovely occasion, enjoyed by all.

We all renewed a lot of friendships that weekend, and made new ones, as now the wives and children could put faces to names so often mentioned. if there is one regret, it is that after all our efforts tracing 90 out of the 102 in our year, only 50% ever wrote back to us I hope that once the others hear how successful the weekend was, that next time.... yes, there is going to be a next time, (maybe in four years or so), we will encourage even more to come. One further sadness is that we

have learnt that at least three of our year have died, a symbol of our own mortality

There will always be special moments that will stay with each of us after this reunion. Mine will be of Bernie Haines, now looking more like a ranch foreman punching cattle at South Fork, putting his hand on my shoulder and saying in the broadest drawl you will ever hear this side of the Rio Grande, "Brian, it sure was GREAT!"

FOOTBALL CLUB

The 1st XI are again competing in the Premier Division of the Brighton Hove & District League and hope to have a successful season in the League and cup competitions. So far they have won two games and lost two. The 2nd XI are in the 4th Division of the same league and hope to finish in a respectable position.

The Association are fully aware that George WHEELER (1951-56) is keeping the name of Old Varndeanians to the fore in local football but to do this he has to rely on too many "Guest Players." George started playing for the Old Boys in 1957 and carried on until in his forties and has been Hon Secretary for about 20 years. He deserves better support from past and present students of Varndean and can be contacted at 84, Cross Road, Southwick.

Please rally round and give him your support and encouragement.

CRICKET CLUB

The Cricket Club had quite a good season. They played 16 matches, winning 5, drawing 6 and losing 5. Some of the most notable achievements were G.SEELEY's 96 against Sompting and Guy BAIGENT's 7 for 54 against Rodmell. M.BROWN topped the batting averages and Guy BAIGENT the bowling. On 3rd July, the Old Varndeanians won a close match against the College by 144 all out to 140 all out

SAMARITAN COMMITTEE

This Committee, Ken BROWN as Welfare Officer, C.A.SHELLEY and C.R.P.GOODWIN have not called a meeting since the last Newsletter as no case of hardship or serious illness has been reported to them. They can only deal with cases if they or the Hon Secretary are advised, so we ask members to remember this if and when they know of a member in hospital, ill at home or incapacitated.

NEW MEMBERS

Paul HOPWOOD (1971-77). Cedric L. PALMER (1934-41). N.T. SMITH, Dr W.A. DUCHARME, R. DUCHARME (1954-61). P.M.J. FAGIANO (1954-61) T.M. BROOKS (1988-90), Deborah ATKINSON.

IN DEO FIDEMUS LODGE

Colin WEST (1944-49) is in the Chair of the lodge this year. A very successful meeting was held at the College on April, 7th. Our Senior Vice President, Don OSBORNE (1944-52) is Acting Secretary. OV's interested in learning about the Lodge should contact him.