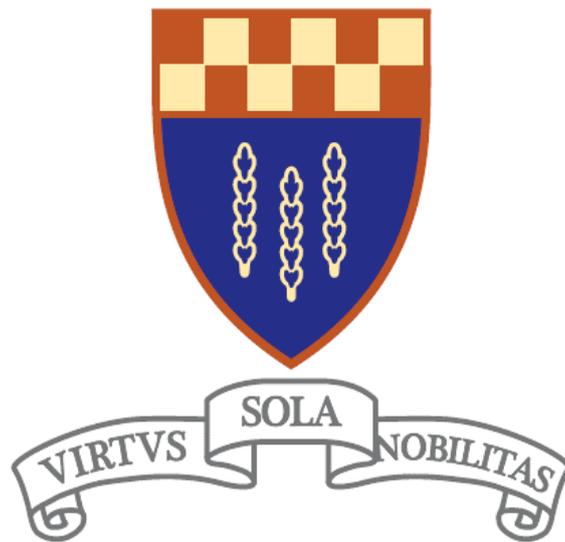


The Pavior



The Newsletter
of
The High Pavement Society
(founded 1989)

August 2019

Your Committee

The Committee Members listed below are always delighted to talk to you on any matter – particularly if you have a contribution to make to this publication!

President: Ken Kirk

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Deputy Chairman: John Elliott 0115 9266475
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The HP Society website address is: www.highpavementsociety.org.uk



Faces to Remember
Ronald Edward Jackson
Mathematics Master at High Pavement School
from 1945

COMMITTEE NOTICE
The High Pavement Society Annual General Meeting 2019

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Society will take place on **Monday, September 30th 2019** at the **Poppy and Pint Restaurant**, Pierrepont Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham. NG2 5DX at **12.00 noon**.

Please make every effort to attend as there are some important decisions to be made.

NB, The AGM will be followed by our **Autumn Luncheon and Social at 1.00 pm** in the same premises. As is customary on these occasions we will organise our fund-raising raffle.

Full details of both events are given in the separate sheet enclosed with this issue.

(Please ensure that you have not discarded it inadvertently.)

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EDITORIAL

We never fail to hope that we can fill the pages of *The Pavior* with interesting material about the Society, its aims and its activities. However, to me, every three months, just how we are going to fill those acres of white space which stare so mockingly from the computer screen, is always a stern challenge.

So please send in your contributions to make this a genuine group activity and not the inane ramblings of a slightly demented editor. Don't worry about spelling (yes Mr Middleton, Sir!) or even accuracy of the content. We have magic ways to check it for you before it appears in print. And the world will then behold the brilliance of your 'matchless prose'. Poetry too if you wish, we have had some very good stuff of that type in the past. Photos are always welcome, the older the better. Over to you my friends!

Colin Salsbury

APPEALS FOR HELP (1)

Norman Collins would like to hear from anyone who has any information on the whereabouts of **Bob Haywood** who was at HP about 1955/56. He particularly remembers Bob's achievement of running the Mile in 4 mins 31 seconds which was an exceptional result at that time and, he believes, still remains as a school record. Contact can be made via the editor.

APPEALS FOR HELP (2)

The family of **Ronald Maurice Edwards** wish to learn more about his time at HP during the years 1939-46. He was in Newstead House and a vigorous rugby player. If you knew Ron or have a photo of him, please contact the editor who will pass it on to the family.

ooOoo

FROM OUR READERS

FROM LAWRENCE MILBOURNE

[An article bearing this title, written by John Fox, Former Chief Education Officer for Nottinghamshire, appeared in the Times Educational Supplement dated 27.5.1988. The article below was adapted from its text. The original was passed to the Society by an elderly lady now deceased, possibly a former pupil of HP, and eventually reached our webmaster Lawrence Milbourne.]

The First County School?

High Pavement School in Nottingham was founded in 1788 to combat the influence of the Anglicans, and in its current identity is still going strong.

The overwhelming majority of schools which were established before 1870, and which are still in existence, were established by the Churches or by eleemosynary¹ bodies and are now voluntary aided or controlled. But in Nottinghamshire there is a county school which celebrated its bicentenary in 1988. It may well be the oldest county school in the United Kingdom.

High Pavement Sixth-Form College is a fascinating example of how education has changed during the past 200 years. It was initially established by the congregation of the Unitarian Church on High Pavement in the Lace Market area of Nottingham. The intention almost certainly was to combat the Anglican influence which was spreading in the city through the Bluecoat School which had been established earlier in the 18th century.

High Pavement school was established for the children of poor families of the congregation of the Unitarian Church, and its first pupils were admitted on January 26, 1788, the same day as the landing of Captain Arthur Phillip and the first settlers in New South Wales.

Over a period of 200 years, Australia and Sydney in particular have changed beyond all recognition. The same is probably true of High Pavement. But there are some features of the school which the founders would recognize and through which their principles have been continued.

The first teacher at High Pavement was Thomas Wheatcroft and the present college emblem includes three ears of wheat as a reminder of him.

The school was co-educational from the beginning, and the girls wore a brown ribbon in their bonnets. The school remained co-educational for its first 143 years, but was split in 1931 when the girls were provided with their own premises. High Pavement became a boys' grammar school under the 1944 Education Act, a status it retained for only 30 years before becoming a sixth-form college in 1974. Events seem to have gone full circle, as the sixth-form college is co-educational and thus fulfils the intentions of the original founders.

The Unitarian congregation had difficulty in funding the school, which was handed over to the Nottingham School Board in 1891 as 'a higher grade and organized science school'. It has been a county school ever since.

High Pavement has always enjoyed an enviable reputation among Nottinghamshire schools. Many men who are now active in a variety of walks of life look back at their school with great affection and respect.

But some of them were surprised when they attended a bicentenary reunion (in 1988) to realize that the girls who had preceded them as pupils take a similar pride in the school. One

¹ Related to charity

lady who had been admitted in 1914 took the Civil Service arithmetic examination at the age of 56 and scored 100 per cent. She still attributed her success to the quality of teaching she received at High Pavement more than 70 years earlier.

At a time when Nottingham is trying to come to terms with the establishment of a city technology college, it is interesting to realize that the High Pavement curriculum was always vocational as well as academic. The early curriculum included accounting for the boys and needlework for the girls. Science was added shortly after the Great Exhibition of 1851. Indeed, High Pavement must have been one of the first schools in the country to offer science to its pupils. Not only was science taught at High Pavement more than 130 years ago, but science and technology were given greater impetus with the introduction of science scholarships in 1880.

The curriculum was broad and balanced: music and singing were encouraged, and cricket and football were introduced. From 1875 onwards pupils had their horizons further enlarged by annual outings to places outside the city. These must have been more edifying than the day off which they had in August 1864 when one of the last public hangings in Nottingham took place near the school!²

High Pavement is now a well-established sixth-form college. During 1988 it celebrated its bicentenary, and many more stories concerning its 200 years of service to the Nottingham community have since to come to light. But will anyone challenge its claim to be the oldest county school in Britain?

John Fox

ooOoo

HIGH PAVEMENT 6TH FORM CENTRE AWARDS EVENING

The High Pavement Sixth Form Centre held their Annual Awards Evening at the Chaucer Street premises on the evening of Tuesday 18th June.

Parents and friends of the students were in attendance in good number to see the presentation of certificates that recognised the academic achievements and the efforts in the student work and their contribution to the Centre's life. Visitors were also entertained with musical items provided by three lady members of the Staff.

Robin Taylor and Graham Wybrow represented the High Pavement Society and were introduced by David Morgan, the Faculty Area Manager, who made brief, but glowing, reference to the support that the Society has given to the Sixth Form Centre and, previously, to The High Pavement College.

This year the Society made three awards, with book vouchers accompanying their certificates to:

Lydia Omun	for Academic Excellence and Being a Model Student.
Laurence Bennett	for Academic Excellence and Progression.
Sarah Curtis	for Academic Excellence and Overcoming Adversity.

Robin Taylor

ooOoo

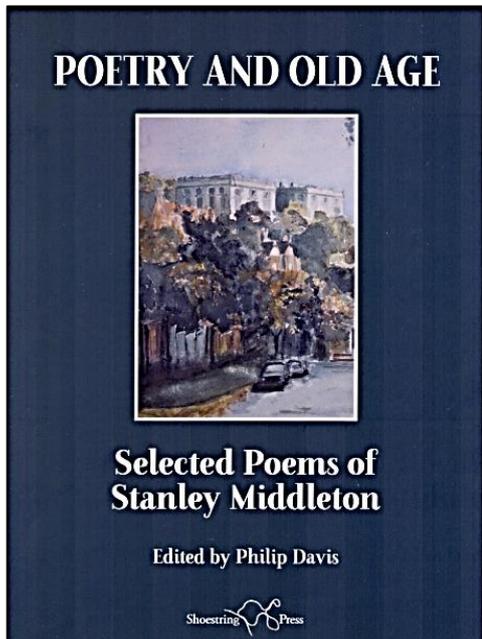
² The premises on High Pavement Nottingham, which are still standing, almost next door to the then County Gaol (now the Galleries of Justice Museum)

STANLEY MIDDLETON CENTENARY CELEBRATION

[A report compiled by Alex Rae of this Society, who was present at the events.]

Under the auspices of the Nottingham Civic Society, one hundred people attended events in Sherwood on Thursday 1st August on the 100th anniversary of Stan Middleton's birth. This included a group of Old Paviers led by High Pavement Society President Ken Kirk.

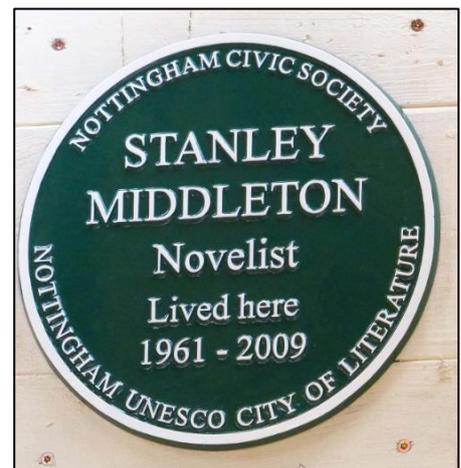
The first event was held at Sherwood Library on Mansfield Road which Stan visited most Saturday mornings. It was hosted by David Belbin, a novelist who teaches creative writing at Nottingham Trent University.



David - a close friend and neighbour of Stan and his wife Margaret (who died in April this year aged 95) - has put together a collection of more than fifty previously unpublished poems by Stan. They have been edited by an Old Pavior, Professor Philip Davis (Liverpool University), and published under the title '*Poetry and Old Age*' by Professor John Lucas's Shoestring Press. Crowdfunded copies of the collection have been presented to all Nottingham libraries.

Selections from the poems were read to the assembly by Philip Davis, John Lucas and David Belbin and also by local authors Sue Dymoke, Stephen Lowe and Tanya Myers. We were all pleased to see Stan's elder daughter Penny was present for the occasion.

Many of those present then travelled to Stanley's former home on Caledon Road, Sherwood (undergoing some



building work at present) where they witnessed the second event: the unveiling by Penny of a commemorative plaque at the house.

Copies of '*Poetry and Old Age*' may be obtained from Shoestring Press (www.shoestringpress.co.uk) or Five Leaves Bookshop, 14A Long Row West. Price £10.

Alex Rae

ooOoo

HIGH PAVEMENT TROPHIES (1)

[The collection of high Pavement School trophies in the care of this Society has been frequently mentioned in these pages and now **Graham Wybrow** has prepared two helpful articles to give a better idea of the history and quality of these articles now in our care.]

1943 FE Whalley Trophy (Cricket)



Inscription

In Memory of FREDERICK E. WHALLEY, Wollaton House 1927-34.
Captain of School Athletics, Cricket and Rugby Football.
Presented by his wife to the High Pavement School for Junior House
CRICKET.
1943

The trophy is Sterling Silver, made by William Henry May of Clumber Street, Nottingham and assayed in Chester (year unclear). Dimensions: Height 27cm, Width (including handles) 26cm, Width (rim) 17.5cm, Weight 900g.

Frederick was clearly an all-round high achieving sportsman in his days at the school. He died in September 1942, aged approximately 26 and his name appears on the School Roll of Honour for World War 2, which records his service with the Royal Artillery. In civilian life, he was an accountant, and married with a son aged 2.

1944 M Marshall Trophy (Athletics)³



Inscription

Presented to High Pavement School for
ATHLETICS by E. MARSHALL, ESQ.
in memory of his Son MAURICE of Forest
House 1938-44
who lost his life in a Boating Accident at
Pwllheli, 7th Sept 1944.

The trophy is Sterling Silver, made in Bristol but assayed in London in 1909 (suggesting that this may have been a 'second-hand / recycled' trophy, reflecting wartime shortages). Dimensions: Height 18.5cm, Width (including handles) 22.5cm, Width

(rim) 13cm, Weight 580g.

This trophy is another memorial to a lost Pavior. Although this death occurred in the war years, it was a civilian accident, not directly connected with the war. At the time, Maurice was a current pupil and a prefect in the school. (One of the fellow pupils present, Patrick Fellowes won a bravery award for his attempts at rescue in the incident.) Our Editor, Colin Salsbury, still remembers this tragic accident being announced in School Assembly.

³ The school saw fit to use the trophy for success in achieving *Athletic Standards* in which *all* pupils were entered, regardless of ability, and were encouraged to reach reasonable competence in athletic performance. Points were awarded on a house basis for reaching an approved standard. The first winning house was Woodthorpe. It did much to broaden interest in athletics generally within the school community.

1945 AW Abbott Trophy (Life Saving)



Inscription

**High Pavement School, Nottingham.
Presented by MR & MRS A.W.ABBOTT
for
LIFE SAVING
1945**

The trophy is Sterling Silver, assayed in Birmingham in 1936 and manufactured by James Fenton & Co, Great Hampton Street, Birmingham.

As far as is known, this trophy has no direct connection with the previous trophy, but reflects the fact that there was, in the school at that time and for many years, a keen interest in Life-Saving as a skill. It is possible that the trophy was for success in achieving awards of the Royal Life Saving Society rather than for an individual act of valor.

1947 R Caulton Trophy (Rugby)



Inscription

**Presented by R. CAULTON 1947 for
Middle School Rugby**

The trophy is Sterling Silver, made by Elkington & Co Ltd, Newhall Street, Birmingham and hallmarked Birmingham, 1936 Dimensions: Height 15.5cm, Width 11.5cm, Weight 240g.

There can be few Old Pavors who do not remember Ray Caulton, either as School Captain in the early War years or as a PE and Maths Master from 1947 until his untimely death in 1973. His love of rugby was also well known. It would appear that Ray presented this trophy to the school in his first year as a master after returning to the school following service in the RAF. The trophy would have been quite expensive and indicates the respect that Ray had for the school. I feel it reflects his gratitude to the School for providing him with an outstanding education (and, as it proved, a lifelong career).

OUR ANTIPODEAN VISITOR Continuing the Maggie Varley enquiry

Regular readers will perhaps recall the two articles in the August 2018 and February 2019 issues of this journal which described the historical research conducted on behalf of Mr **John Chester** of Wellington New Zealand who had contacted the Society through the website. He was particularly interested to learn more about the early life of his grandmother, **Maggie Varley** as she then was, whom he knew in his infancy in New Zealand. She attended High Pavement School in 1893-95 (aged 14-16) when it was initially operating at the premises on High Pavement.

Our Archivist, Graham Wybrow, has since obtained her address, in the Sneinton area, when she attended the School. She emigrated to New Zealand in 1905. Rarely do we get an opportunity to learn about the later lives of former pupils, especially a girl from the Victorian era, but thanks to John's own family research we are now able to fully appreciate Maggie's life, one of tragedy, struggle and yet courage.

John Chester informed us that he would be visiting the UK this summer and wanted to visit some of the scenes of his grandmother's childhood. As a result an appointment was made for Graham Wybrow, accompanied by your editor in a supporting role, to meet John on Thursday July 4th outside the former Unitarian chapel on High Pavement (now fulfilling a new existence as the *Pitcher and Piano* bar).

It was good to meet this smiling Kiwi (in his Kiwi 'fernleaf' tee-shirt) and we commenced with a reviving coffee within the *P&P* while GW began a description of where we were and what we would find during the day. The interior of the former chapel revealed much of interest including its fine stained glass which is still intact. We then moved to the rear of the chapel where the original buildings of the late 19th century school are situated, with much of the original structure intact. As previously mentioned, a substantial part of the interior is being converted into a suite of studio apartments

The *Pitcher and Piano* is a well-known landmark. To the right are the former buildings erected to house High Pavement School. ▶



and the site manager of these works generously allowed us to enter the area for a closer look. After this we moved from the building to obtain a better view from the beginning of the tram viaduct, formerly site of the Great Central Railway.

A tour of the Lace Market area followed, which would have been be recognisable to Maggie Varley, 126 years earlier. This historic quarter of the city is crammed with distinguished buildings. At this point the time of day demanded a lunch break which was spent in the Kean's Head pub opposite St Mary's Church⁴.

⁴ A venue memorable for an earlier event described in the February 2019 issue when his Old Pavior school friends arranged a welcome for member **John Randall** of Sydney Australia.



John Chester and your editor (wearing hat) in front of one of the family addresses: 54 St Stephens Road, Sneinton

Refreshed on this warm July day we completed the brief tour of the Lace Market and set off for the half mile walk to the Sneinton area where the young Maggie Varley had lived, following as closely possible the route she would have walked from school.

She seems to have lived at several addresses, but the most important of these was her residence while at HP which was given as **62 Belvoir Crescent**. GW had struggled to locate this as it was not shown on any map

(but, strangely, *is* listed in street directories).

Some diligent probing had revealed that on a street in Sneinton called ‘Lees Hill Street’ *part* of the south side had once been named Belvoir Crescent, although the numbering was consistent with that of Lees Hill Street. We tracked it down and John Chester was now able to view his grand-maternal residence, which formed a direct link with his family’s past. We took a photo or two to remember the occasion.

Close to Lees Hill Street is Sneinton Hermitage with its sandstone caves which are recorded as having provided living accommodation since at least 1518 and would have been recognisable as dwellings in Maggie’s day. We made a close inspection of the relics.



A proud moment for John as he stands by the entrance to 62 Lees Hill Street (aka Belvoir Crescent) where his grandmother Maggie Varley had lived while at HP.

Our next migration took us to that prominent feature of the district, Green’s Mill, the restored windmill that is so clearly visible from many areas of the city.

Green, the former mill owner was also a talented mathematician and devised the eponymous *Green’s Theorem* with which GW and John were well acquainted (both highly qualified engineers). Yours truly (also engineer of sorts) was never really in command of the abstruse calculus involved but could recognise the work of a genius when I saw the equations displayed in the Mill visitor centre. We all three entered the mill to examine its traditional, well-maintained mechanisms.

The last investigation took us across Carlton Road into Leighton Street (another hill!) where Maggie Varley had lived at No 10. However when we surveyed the numbers it appeared

that the location of No 10 was now a gap containing another building, although there were houses with higher numbers still in existence.

Regretfully we decided to call it a day and caught the number 24 bus into the city centre, where we repaired to the Bell Inn on Angel Row for a farewell drink before we dispersed. A most enjoyable day and very rewarding for all concerned.

Colin Salsbury

PUB LUNCH NEWS

Annual Reunion Luncheon

For the first time in its history The Society held its Annual Reunion function as a midday Luncheon instead of a formal dinner. The scattered nature of the membership had often meant that many of our older people (all of us?) felt unable to travel the necessary long distances back to their homes during the hours of darkness. And attendances had consequently been declining for some years. The new timing was found to be more agreeable.

The Venue selected was one of our favourite lunch stops, Mapperley Golf Club, where some 40 or so guests assembled in good spirits.

The occasion commenced with a talk by Mrs Janice Moulds (wife of our member Ken Moulds) of the National Trust on the subject of *'Dirty and Smelly'*, a commentary on the topics of personal and domestic hygiene in the 16th and 17th centuries. There was much amusement at some of the revelations which involved never changing one's clothes for months on end and taking an annual bath in May (followed by a blossoming in the number of marriages taking place!).

The audience applauded with great enthusiasm. Perhaps it was as well that we did not wait until after lunch to hear of such things.

The Society in session ►



As expected, the Golf Club carvery supplied an excellent repast. Anticipating a more welcome meal than some about which we had just been hearing, we queued up and tucked in. As the eating and drinking proceeded all present were able to chat to their neighbours about anything and everything relating to our past life, from schooldays onwards. A very convivial scene.

The Loyal Toast was proposed followed by the toast of 'High Pavement' by Ken Kirk, our President. The formal proceedings concluded with the Pavior Choristers, accompanied by John Jalland, delivering their traditional rendering of the School Song, *Carmen Paviorum*.

The party continued for some time and slowly dispersed in mid-afternoon. It was agreed that the new format for our traditional annual rally had been a great success.

A Pub Lunch Afloat **The River Cruise 2019**

Wednesday August 21st saw the assembly of a party of twenty nine pub-lunchers, mainly Old Paviors and their guests, who then boarded the *M.V. Nottingham Princess* on a special summer cruise down the River Trent. It was a venture we have made in several previous years and were pleased to renew our acquaintance with the vessel.

We set sail from their new base at the *River Lodge* near Colwick Racecourse and took our ease as we sailed down the river. We were a little daunted on our arrival to see that there

were three large coaches with other parties and a smaller mini-coach too. However, most of their passengers were able to travel in the commodious lower deck of the Nottingham Princess leaving the whole top deck to our party and a smaller family group with some small children (who were exceptionally well-behaved!). We were able to partake of a splendid hot Roast



Lunch of either beef or chicken and the usual trimmings, with dessert to follow. We devoured it all with our usual gusto.

The river boat cruised downstream at a stately 5 mph (or its equivalent in knots) and passed Holme Pierpont with its famous water sports centre before arriving at the Holme Sluices where the river level drops abruptly by some 12 feet. We negotiated this in the Holme Lock while we continued to enjoy our meal.

From the lock we left the industrial area of Colwick behind us and continued past Radcliffe

▲ The group relax after lunch as we enjoy our coffee together.

A few familiar faces take the air on the after deck: John Jalland, Marjorie Salisbury, Noel Gubbins, Colin Salisbury and (part of) Paul Evans. ►

▼ We have (from the left) Pat Mantle, Robin and Anne Taylor, Vivian and Paul Evans who with a few others, defied the hot conditions to proudly flourish the HP Society colours.



on Trent's waterside cliffs until we had reached the halfway stage of our trip. Many of us took the air on the small after deck and enjoyed the breeze for a while. The boat made a stately manouvre until it was

facing upstream and we began the return journey, with different views to be surveyed, including much wildlife. The sun shone throughout, much photography took place, it was quite idyllic.

The *Nottingham Princess* took us gently back to our starting point and by 3.30 pm we trooped ashore with some enjoyable memories of an afternoon spent in good company.

While the *hoi polloi* from the lower deck clambered aboard their coaches, heading for distant counties, we dispersed to travel homeward in in cars, taxis and, in one notable case, by bus. It had been a good pub lunch by any standards.

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OBITUARY NOTICES

MICHAEL OSBORNE

We have learned that our member Michael Osborne passed away aged 79 on September 18th 2018 at his home in Corfe Mullen, Dorset. He attended High Pavement from 1951 to 1958 and was a member of Trent House.

The High Pavement Society sends its sincere condolences to his family.

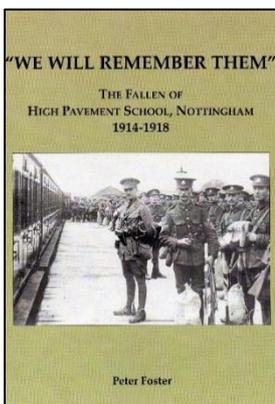
MARGARET ROBERTS OBE

We regret to report the death, aged 88, on June 15th 2019 of Mrs Margaret Roberts OBE who was for several years an honorary member of this Society, often attending its social events. Before that she was a governor of the High Pavement Grammar School for several years and took a great interest in its affairs. Her funeral was held at Wilford Hill Cemetary on Monday July 8th and the Society was represented by our President, Ken Kirk.

The Society sends its condolences to her companion John Allan and to her family.

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'WE WILL REMEMBER THEM'



Please note that this publication, sponsored by the Society and compiled by Peter Foster, is subject to an increased charge, now **£3.50**, for postage and packing. If you wish to order a copy in this way please ensure your cheque is for **£13.50** and send it to the treasurer:

**Robin Taylor, 190 Kenrick Road, Mapperley,
Nottm NG3 6EX**

who will arrange for its delivery. It is a splendid read.

ooOoo

HIGH PAVEMENT SOCIETY TIES ARE STILL AVAILABLE

Price: £10 + £1.0 p&p.



If you wish to acquire one for state occasions, please send your cheque for **£11.0** made out to **The High Pavement Society** (marked on the back: 'HP Tie Purchase'), to the treasurer:

Robin Taylor, 190 Kenrick Road, Mapperley, Nottm NG3 6EX

We will dispatch your tie by post without delay.

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OUR END PIECE



[Our old friend, contributor and long-time HPS member Tommy Gee is, like so many of us in the HPS, no longer quite such a young and vigorous man. Here, in a philosophical, but slightly exasperated, set of notes he relates the way he experiences life's problems for the aged—and his ways of coping with it all.

He remarks that he wrote this during the winter months and avers that in summer weather he would have written it in a more 'upbeat' style.]

Age—a note of how it seems

Memory

My long term memory is in overdrive, but my short term memory is deteriorating fast. I have devised various schemes to deal with this as my diary is no longer reliable, as I forget to consult it e.g. a kitchen diary board, and reminder notes in prominent places. Friends know this is happening and send me reminders. There are countless examples. leaving the stove on, burning food, using the kettle before rinsing the descaling liquid out, forgetting faces, names, numbers, words, and follow through. Simple examples are say mower repair. As I cannot remember the name of the repairer, I cannot ring him up. Often my neighbour rings to ask why I am late for lunch. I regularly lose my to-do lists, my hearing aids, my wallet, my specs, my walking stick. Last week I mislaid my *dentures* and a replacement is costing £250. Oh dear!

Some people have routines for putting items where I shall find them, but they are not there. My walking stick went missing some weeks ago. It has my name and phone number on it. I have lost my 30-year-old Barbour hat. (This has now been found.) I spend a great deal of time looking for things.

If asked my phone number, I cannot be sure of it any longer. I have had to revert to a single simple password for all devices and contacts, which is insecure. I now have to ask people whether I have said something e.g I now say to people in my uncertainty 'Have I said this before?' I can no longer be sure about my medicines. What was simple has become now a complex matter; ordering, setting out, remembering to take or having taken medication. No system is fool-proof.

Lethargy

I suppose I once might have been described as over active but now the reverse applies and an inability to cope has become frustrating. There is so much to be done, and I cannot do it. The main reason is physical inability. I cannot easily hang up laundry, change a light bulb, drive the car, garden, lift items, dress and undress easily, especially my elastic stockings, so all simple operations take time. Walking short distances soon tires me out.

In addition to my seven drugs taken three times daily, because of a troublesome rash I was also on two different antibiotics, which have to be taken on an empty stomach one hour before and two hours after a meal. The doses differ. One of the seven drugs has also to be taken on an empty stomach. I find myself unable to cope reliably with self-administration, and have had to ring the pharmacy in my confusion. I now get into muddles over requests for repeat

prescriptions. The pharmacy is helpful and long suffering. There is no longer a simple solution to getting this right because those with whom I deal assume my faculties measure up to theirs.

My GP however understands that it is no use telling me to do this or that as I ask him to write it down, which he now does without being asked. This is not always a solution as I can forget that I have his instruction or just mislay it. So I write reminders in the diary, but then forget to check them. There really is no reliable solution to the failure of short term memory and the promptings which it provides. One would think that being aware of the problem would enable a solution to be found but it doesn't.

Reading

Two opticians have said there is nothing can be done about my reading difficulty. I cannot read small print, and my reading speed has slowed right down. I misread e.g my bread machine instructions, and often have to re-read as I do not get the sense of what is written down. It now takes all day to read the paper. In order to read I either have to close the right eye or hold my hand over it as vision in the right eye is blurred at the centre.

Hearing

I have two hearing aids, but I do not hear the phone or door bell, and too often do not hear what people are saying. NNUH⁵ operated on my left ear performing an exiduous procedure to remove an incipient cancer which reduced the opening. Some months later, when the ear had settled down, a replacement aid was made which is painful to insert and wear. Some speakers I fail to understand, and others I hear half and guess the rest.

At (Quaker) Meeting the clerk usually asks whether I have heard the notices and I may seek clarification or elaboration afterwards. On the whole I manage, but can miss out or misunderstand. The deterioration is gradual. I find Facetime helpful rather than just phone. I no longer hear what is said in meetings especially in Quaker worship. But I ask speakers to tell me afterwards, which isn't how we worship.

Mobility

I have a driver/companion and I can still manage to mow with the Countax⁶, but have difficulty when problems arise. I fear it is no longer safe, so will have to get somebody to mow the grass and woodland rides. I cannot handle the other implements. I use a wheeled Zimmer for walking, and take a wheelchair when travelling. I no longer use the train because of making rail connections. Hospital visits are challenging but I can cope with door to door trips.

I can climb stairs making use of my arms. Steps are problematic. I have difficulty getting in and out of vehicles and trains. Ice on pathways could be my downfall (ho! ho!). I cannot cross the Diss station bridge. I have fallen on a number of occasions. Last year I fell badly from my shepherd's hut, which has made me very careful about what I do. My left arm was unusable for 6 months. It didn't break, just rammed into the shoulder because of the way I fell.

Capability (or incapability perhaps)

I have acquired various gadgets to help me to open bottles, cans, jars etc. but have reached the stage when such operations have become dangerous, difficult or impossible and now cuts, failures and spillages are the order of the day. I can't, so don't, do ring pulls. I gave up bell-ringing some years ago when I could no longer guarantee to catch the 'sally'⁷, a most

⁵ Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

⁶ A 'ride-on' machine

⁷ A **Sally** is the fluffy part of a bellrope you hold at handstroke.

dangerous happening. Similarly when I fell from a ladder and landed on my left elbow I gave up using ladders.

I have two garden tractors and two lawn mowers but now rely on four geese to keep the grass down. I do have valuable helpers. Michael maintains the 3 acre community wood and sprays weeds. David cuts my firewood with the chain saw, which is lethal. Sharon does a weekly two hours changing bed linen, laundering, vacuuming and mopping, bagging refuse. Simon organizes my annexe services, water, electricity, phone, council tax, building repairs.

My *Workaway*⁸ guest has introduced me to SIRI, the i-pad machine which answers my questions, and which takes dictation and converts it into typescript. I have problems with ordering repeat prescriptions as I now find computer orders do not always arrive for collection. The pharmacy has tested the system, so it must be me.

Hernia

The current advice from the surgeon is that when pain strikes I should lie down prone until the organs move back in place. This is not as simple as it sounds and restricts what I do. I remain hopeful that the stomach wall will be sewn up i.d.c.⁹

Although the NHS commissioning body has decided not to do hernias in future, Dr Manto has managed to get the surgeon to do a day surgery on me, after I explained I had not got '£5K and the rest' to go private, which I won't do anyway, on principle.

Domestic chores running the annexe¹⁰ .

Having failed after two years advertising in the *Friend*¹¹ for a Quaker driver companion, a *Workaway* guest has now taken up proffered host board and accommodation in Abbey Cottage north and in exchange helps me with meals, shopping, and a variety of tasks and coping problems, not least in acting as my PA. I don't use the word carer, as this represents a stage I refuse to accept, family and friends too. So it is still possible to survive in comfort in a simple home and lead a normal life on a modest income.

My current interests are prisons, asylum seekers and refugees, politics, the wood¹², writing and community. I find my new state of the art Apple i-pad is an invaluable enabling tool. As I mentioned, it answers spoken questions (SIRI) and takes and types dictation!

Conclusion.

Despite the decline I believe my mind is still as competent as it was some 70 or 80 years ago when I was an aspiring mathematician, and that my capacity to reason logically and reason still exists. What has happened is a functional disconnect between my body and my mind. Perhaps it is the decay of body and brain which is responsible for my performance. Curiously, as an ex-administrator, I still feel, as competent as ever and unwilling to accept the effects of aging and decay. The driver companion and the blue badge are significant in making it possible to enjoy normal life and to appreciate our remarkable Cosmos.

Tommy Gee

ooOoo

⁸ A help scheme.

⁹ 'in due course' — of course!

¹⁰ The part of the house in which I live.

¹¹ Quaker journal

¹² TG is raising a plantation.