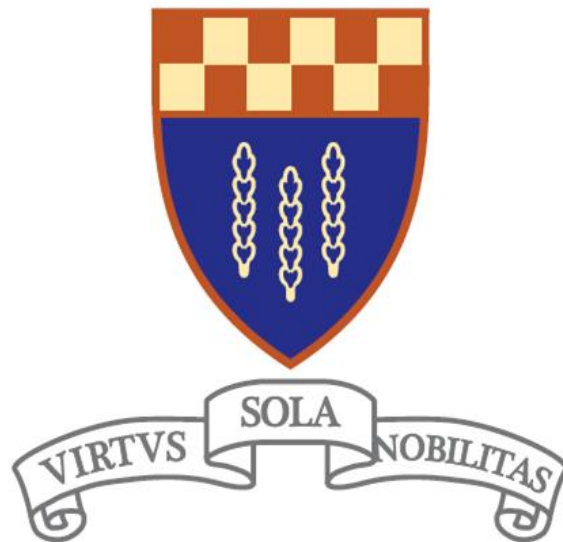


The Pavior



The Newsletter
of
The High Pavement Society
(Founded 1989)

February 2018

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

Committee Chairman: Ken Kirk 0115 9568650

Deputy Chairman: John Elliott 0115 9266475

Secretary: Noel Gubbins 0115 9756998

Treasurer: Robin Taylor 0115 9609483

(robinatnottm@aol.com)

Registrar/editor: Colin Salsbury 01509 558764

Archivist: Lance Wright 01246 590029

Committee Members:

John E Mason 01509 768578

Malcolm Pilkington 01623 491260

Graham Wybrow 0115 9626249

Copy for *The Pavior* may be sent to:

Colin Salsbury: colin.salsbury@outlook.com

116 Leicester Road, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 2AQ

The HP Society website address is: www.highpavementsociety.org.uk



Faces to Remember
Guy Richards
Geography Master at High Pavement
1955-61

THE COMMITTEE-MEN'S COLUMN

HPS Member Ken Olisa Receives Knighthood



The committee would like to offer their congratulations to Ken Olisa (HP 1963-70 and for many years a member of this Society) on the award of a Knighthood in the recent New Year Honours list. Ken is best known to us as the Lord Lieutenant of Greater London but he is also a most successful businessman who devotes much of his time and organising ability to important philanthropic works.

The Society and all its members will be immensely proud of this well-deserved honour for such a distinguished Old Pavior.

The Ken Bateman Award for Engineering

The Committee would like to acknowledge the further contribution to this award fund (a dedicated part of our Education Fund) by our member Ken Bateman. The fund was due to run out next year but will now continue for several more years. The purpose of the awards is to encourage a student at High Pavement Academy who might wish to pursue an engineering subject at university. Ken is a retired Mining Engineer and worked formerly in the Queensland coal industry. He resides in Brisbane. (His photo appears on page 14.)

ooOoo

EDITORIAL

Help needed, help received

From time to time we receive requests for help in tracing people or information associated with our former school and we endeavour to link people via the pages of this newsletter. It is rare that we get any feedback but last May an appeal was made by a historical research team of Teresa Batchelor and Nicholas Richardsons, associated with Nottingham University, about a Henry Simpson. We think he was an Old Pavior who, among other achievements in his lifetime, endowed some scholarships at the school during the 19th century.

Time passed but early in December we received a response from a lady in Gloucestershire to say that Mr Simpson was her great, great, grandfather and she had come across our appeal in the August Pavior, which was by then filed on our website. This happened when she was undertaking an internet trawl of her own regarding Henry Simpson (who was a prosperous lace manufacturer). The reply was forwarded to the researchers who were jubilant to have reached a fruitful source of information.

Concurrently, our member Graham Wybrow has been independently researching the history of industrial buildings in Basford and has corresponded with Nicholas Richardsons about the premises in which Henry Simpson ran his business in High Church Street, later to become an armaments factory in WW1.

Colin Salsbury

NOTICE

To all our members and their good friends who might read this



**The High Pavement Society
(founded 1989)
2018 Annual Reunion Dinner
will be held
on**

April 16th 2018

**Please note the date which has been recently altered because of
special booking arrangements.**

**The venue is as usual:
The Welbeck Hall, Welbeck Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham.
(near the Suspension Bridge)
There will be ample private parking.**

**This year the guest of honour is our distinguished Member and Old Pavior
Sir Kenneth Olisa
A Gainsford Crescent alumnus
and also Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Greater London**

Formal invitations will be sent out during March.

**'Please make every possible attempt to attend this event which should be of
outstanding significance to the Society' – Ken Kirk, President and Chairman**

**If you live at relatively long range it may suit you to stop overnight.
We can advise on comfortable yet reasonable hotel accommodation.**

Please contact Colin Salisbury for details.

FROM GRAHAM WYBROW
Wanted – Technical Magazines

As announced in our last issue, I would be interested to hear from any members who have a regular subscription to **Technical/Business/Academic** magazines that could be relevant to the work of High Pavement Sixth Form College. The aim is to make available to the College Library, background reading material that can provide insight into potential careers by illustrating the practical applications, technical challenges and typical work involved. Many professional institutions produce monthly ‘glossy magazines’ that are pitched at just about the right level for sixth form students. If anyone receives magazines of this type which they would be willing to donate to the College (when they have finished with them), would they please contact me (0115-962-6249) to discuss this further. **Graham Wybrow**

Dr Louis Essen’s fading glory arrested

In the past this Society has been pleased to arrange a commemorative display in the foyer of the Sixth Form Centre describing the outstanding career of former Old Pavior, Dr Louis Essen FRS. Louis Essen was educated at High Pavement School (1918-24) and in later life went on to develop the world’s first Atomic Clock at the National Physics Laboratories in 1955, a clock which established standards of time measurement of previously unattainable accuracy. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) in 1960 and is regarded as the “Father of Atomic Time”, a technology that underpins so much of modern life (eg GPS, Encryption).



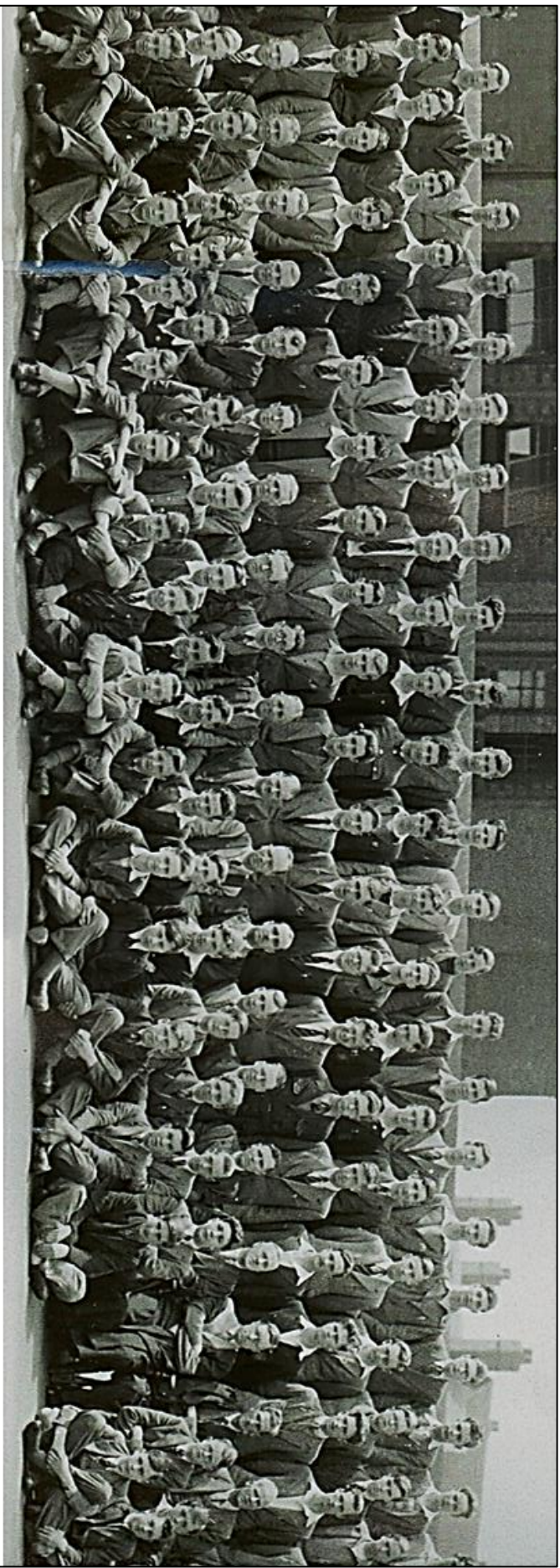
The display includes a portrait of Dr Essen, a digital clock and other data. However, on a recent visit to the High Pavement Sixth Form Centre building, it was noticed that the portrait of Louis Essen had noticeably faded. Since the portrait forms a distinctive part of the display (see photo) which commemorates his achievements, the Society has now taken steps to provide the Centre with this new (and hopefully more durable) copy of the portrait. **GW**



Memorial photo of the last High Pavement School



Happy days recalled? The image shows a photo, obtained by Graham Wybrow, of the old Gainsford Crescent premises before their sad demise. Somewhat better souvenir copies may be obtained from GW (phone **0115 9626249**).



PICTURES FROM THE PAST

Part 2 of the late Peter Bentley's copies from the 1948 panorama of the Senior School. It was necessary to stitch together the main view with a section of the previous view (not shown in our last issue). The line would pass between Messrs Humphreys and Bullock, but hopefully does not show. This explains why the image is rather wider than the last one and the figures are correspondingly smaller – but still a long way short of Lilliputian! The staff top brass are in this view; notably Messrs Davies and Crossland.

AN OLD PAVIOR OF DISTINCTION

[Our Archivist, Lance Wright, discovered these biographical details in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography of the National Library of Wales*. He was impressed by the distinguished career of this learned geologist which had begun in the studies he followed at High Pavement. This precis is made from the original entry. The Welsh aspect would relate to his initial field of employment, one would think.]

Sir Arthur Elijah Trueman (1894-1956)

Arthur Trueman was a distinguished Professor of Geology. He was born on the 26th April 1894 at Nottingham, son of Elijah Trueman and Thirza (nee Cottee).

He was educated at the High Pavement School, Nottingham (1906-11) and the University College of Nottingham. He graduated in 1914 with first-class honours in geology and was awarded the degrees of M.Sc. in 1916 and D.Sc. in 1918, for his research on Jurassic rocks and fossils.

From 1917 to 1920 he was assistant lecturer in the University College, Cardiff, and then from 1920-30, head of the geology department in the new University College of Swansea¹. From 1930-33 he was Professor of Geology and head of the department of geography at Swansea.

In 1933 he was appointed Channing Wills Professor of Geology at the University of Bristol and from 1937-46 he became Professor of Geology at the University of Glasgow.

He became deputy chairman of the University Grants Committee (1946), later chairman of that body in 1949. This was, of course, during the very important transition years of the universities from war to peacetime conditions, with the resultant great expansion of university operations. He was chairman of the Geological Survey Board, 1943-54, again during the period of post-war expansion, when work of the Survey in the British coalfields was greatly intensified.

In 1945-47 he was president of the Geological Society of London. He had been awarded the Bigsby Medal of that Society in 1939, and their highest award, the Wollaston Medal, in 1955. Other distinctions which he gained were the Gold Medal of the South Wales Institute of Engineers in 1934, and the (honorary) degrees of LL.D. *honoris causa* of the Universities of Rhodes (South Africa), Glasgow, Leeds and Wales. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1938 and F.R.S. in 1942. He was created K.B.E. in 1951.

Arthur Trueman's considerable research on Jurassic stratigraphy and palaeontology was internationally acclaimed, but he is best remembered for his work on the Coal Measures of Britain and especially on the use of the non-marine *amelli-branches* (a fossil structure). This work, entitled *The Coalfields of Great Britain* (1954), made a considerable contribution to the development of both the exposed and concealed coalfields of Britain.

Arthur Trueman was interested in the popularization of science and wrote widely on the geology and scenery of England and Wales (1938, 1949).

He married Florence Kate Oilier in 1920 and they had one son, Dr E R Trueman a distinguished zoologist.

Arthur Trueman died on 5th Jan. 1956.

Lance Wright

¹NB this appointment was only nine years after leaving school!

FROM OUR READERS
FROM MIKE HOPEWELL

[Well known as our aviation correspondent, Mike sends us yet another of his hairy adventures as a pilot. What an adventurous life he has led! The title must be from the very depths of his imagination –Ed.]

‘Meteor shot down by Russian pigeon?’

On the 8th of May 1953, after a week of eleven flights, five on Friday, permission was given by the squadron commander for me to take a Meteor 4 from my base to RAF Driffield for the weekend. The Meteor 4 was the first jet fighter to outrun the Doodle Bug (the Nazi ramjet missile or flying bomb) in 1944/45.

Permission had been given once before in April, as a result of which a close friendship had developed with my future wife in nearby Bridlington. I was eager to go. My flight plan was filed from RAF Worksop to RAF Driffield, altitude 2000 feet, VFR (visual flight rules), 250 knots (about 290 mph), duration 20 mins, estimated time of arrival 1100 hrs. (Service airfields usually closed at 1200 hrs on Saturday.)

Take off was normal, radio contact made with area control, permission given for direct VFR flight to Driffield. There was good visibility when, near the River Humber ... *Crash! Bang!* Blinding white vapour cloud filled the cockpit.

I throttled back to reduce the deafening airflow over the now open cockpit. The main metal windscreen and its two side panels were all that was left of the cockpit canopy. There was silence on the intercom; the radio connection to my helmet had been neatly sliced through by razor sharp fragment of the Perspex cockpit canopy. What the devil has happened? A bird strike, perhaps?

I made a quick check around everything on the aircraft. Everything was operating normally and speed was now reduced to around 150 knots to control the air flowing so strongly around the cockpit (like driving an open sports car at 180 mph!). So I continued to Driffield, ready to land as carefully as possible, after a preliminary flight past their control tower for them to inspect the aircraft for unseen damage.

Over the airfield at Driffield, in good weather, I flew past the tower signalling by waggling the wings (no radio, remember), and then a second time for their inspection. The green Aldis lamp flashed - all clear for landing. Normal landing followed and I taxied to the apron. Brakes on, harness released, I climbed out of the completely open cockpit to see the damage done by the shattered Perspex canopy.

There were many, many large and small sliced cuts in the metal panels. All down the fuselage, the tailplane, the engine nacelles and the leading wing edges. At least two weeks work, after new panels arrived. Estimated cost £24,000!

A happy weekend followed and I was picked up afterwards by my squadron CO who wanted to see for himself the damage that Russian pigeon had done!

Mike

ooOoo

FROM TOMMY GEE
Childhood Memories of a Nonagenarian

[Our prolific contributor has been recalling his early years from the now-distant viewpoint of his 10th decade]

The other day I came across an old press cutting, undated, about 'Armitages'. That was the Harrods of Nottingham, located in the old Exchange which preceded the present Council House. Before he was 'retired' the shop was managed by my Grandpa Whitby. Why the quotes? Well, he was said to have been engaged to the owner's daughter but they parted, so he was 'retired'.

Did he work again, and if not how did he manage? When I knew him his activities were, as I recall, largely as a prominent Liberal politician, and a charity worker for St Dunstons (for the blind), and the 'Pearson's Fresh Air Fund'. The latter took over Wollaton Park once a year in the summer for one whole week to provide days out for the children of Nottingham's poor.

The Gee family thought it a wonderful week because we were enrolled as helpers, which required us to distribute food and presents. We must surely have learned about deprivation and charity from that experience, and from observing and reading in the press all about Grandpa Whitby in action.

Grandpa was a JP too, which caused some embarrassment during the war when a food inspector found that my pork butcher father's sausages did not contain a sufficient percentage of pork so he was prosecuted and fined, but not sent to prison. The family shame was awful.

Another annual event to which we four Gee children looked forward was the Nottingham Goose Fair held on the Forest's gravelly ground. Not only did we have swings, helter-skelter and roundabouts, but the opportunity to shoot, roll pennies down a slide on to a grid with numbers squares and win *money*, say 3d, if the penny fell inside the number 3 square. At night the fair was all lit up and full of noise and fairground music played on mechanical organs. And there were dodgems, those electric cars for two, which gave us the first taste of motoring and the dangers involved. All such memorable and happy events of childhood.

We had three sweet shops near our house in Bobbers Mill Road. The closest was called Smiths and lay across the road. You walked up past the garage, and turned left towards the shop. I can still remember the jars and boxes on display in the shop window and on the counter. Just a halfpenny Saturday pocket money went a long way. My favourite was liquorice strips. Then there was a yellow paper tube containing icing sugar perhaps which one sucked up through a liquorice tube, chewing gum, bulls' eyes, liquorice allsorts...but I don't remember chocolate. You chose most sweets from a large glass jar, and they were sold in small white triangular paper bags, and often eaten before one arrived back home.

Another sweet shop was next to the Old General Pub, on the corner of Bobbers Mill Road. It was also a newspaper shop where we bought comics, and where our parents got their Journal or Evening Post. Our reading matter included titles I can no longer recollect. Wizard and Rover perhaps? Mother lifted the tone with Arthur Mee's Childrens' Newspaper.

We had a radio, the earliest being a crystal set which, I seemed to recall, required an acid accumulator which was taken to be charged regularly. There was a photographic shop called Heathcote's opposite the Old General, who also hired out 8mm films, of which father would obtain one on his way home from the shop on Saturday night, for us to watch on Sunday

morning. We actually owned one short film, in a cassette, which we managed to play and show ourselves since it did not require threading through the projector. It was called The Biscuit Factory and I can still recall the content, having watched it so often. We had three nearby cinemas which we attended unescorted. One was called Leno's and known to us as 'the flea pit'. The more posh one was appropriately called 'The Grand'.

Our parents took us to the cinemas in town called the 'Hippodrome', the 'Elite' and the 'Ritz' (later to become the 'Odeon') with its Wurlitzer organ which emerged from a hole in the ground and was played in the interval by a real and famous local organist (Jack Helyer, I believe). Then there were visits to shops in town such as Sisson and Parkers' for books, or was it school uniform? No, that was Dixon and Parkers. (Staddons, our big store on Radford Road had most of what we needed.)

In the city centre there were two live theatres, the Theatre Royal for serious stuff, and the Empire for Music Hall. Just before the war an ice skating rink open in town. Those of us who could roller skate found that we could ice skate too, but although, like most children, we owned roller skates, we did not own ice skates. We did manage to go sledging, on home-made sledges, down the lane which led to the River Leen. That was high risk sport and unsupervised.

All boys collected cigarette cards. I don't think they were included in Craven 'A' smoked by our father, though I don't recall pressing him to change to Players which did. One had albums for the collection of say 50 film stars or football players. Then a new brand called Kensitas launched a very collectable card printed on silk which were highly prized with just one swapping for several of the ordinary cards.

Yet another popular activity was stamp collecting. Foreign stamps were sold in newsagent windows, but were much swapped. In 1936 I bought an entire sheet of 2½d blues of the new King Edward 8th. They survived for many years in my album, but then disappeared because, according to the Stanley Gibbons catalogue which was the standard reference work for us collectors, they became valuable collector's item.

Tommy Gee

FROM MIKE GLADWELL

Peter Bentley

I knew Peter Bentley well, not at school, but at the City of Nottingham Probus Club, where he is sadly missed. One of his attributes was to deliver a very witty one line quip at an appropriate moment when we had a guest speaker – one of his best was at the height of the MP's expenses scandal when the speaker describing Sir James Paxton who was working at Chatsworth but living in Coventry and Peter piped up 'Second home!'

Peter did well to archive those 1948 group photos (see p 9). I was thirteen in 1948 so will endeavour to identify myself thereon. The photographs are extremely good and everyone looked so young (of course). I note that most had open necked shirts, although I seem to remember wearing a tie *every* day, in fact I have still have one in a drawer somewhere.

My last word on Peter, who joined the male only Probus Club, is that with his wife and daughters around him, not to mention the canine female, he was much in need of masculine company!

Very kind regards, Mick Gladwell (Jenny)

FROM DEREK WROUGHTON

[Though not a member Derek Wroughton is an Old Pavior who has made a successful career in music, working at Birmingham's Newman University. He recently contacted us via our website with this communication.]

I read with great interest Jerry Morris's article in the Pavior, remembering music and musical productions at High Pavement. Such times I too remember with great fondness. Jerry, Stan (Middleton) and Bill (Gray) were each in their own way inspirational to me and I have much to thank them for.

My career in music is moving towards retirement, I suppose, since in 2018 I will reach the ripe old age of 70. Time then to go with a 'bang' conducting Berlioz's great Requiem – 'Grande Messe des Morts' in Symphony Hall, Birmingham, with a combined universities choir of some 300 voices, accompanied by the wonderful Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra plus extra percussion and brass!

Should be an exhilarating occasion, on Saturday 24th February 2018. No doubt you will read this after the event. Perhaps you were there? I hope so!

Derek Wroughton

ooOoo

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2018 Annual Reunion Dinner

Monday

April 16th

Please note that the above date has changed from that originally stated in the last issue of the Pavior.

2018 AGM and Quiz Night

Monday September 24th

Please consult your diaries to make sure these dates are entered as priorities

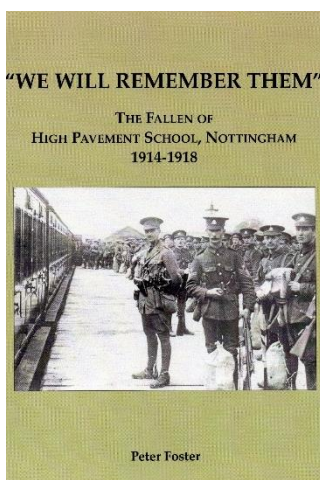
ooOoo

A REMINDER

Perhaps you had a Grandfather or other relative who attended High Pavement in the early years of the 20th Century and sadly lost his life in the Great War. This fine book by Peter Foster, commemorates all those Old Paviors who died in the conflict. The text is well illustrated and is particularly absorbing to read.

Copies are available *at all our Society functions*, priced at only £10 each. They can also be ordered by post at an extra charge of £3.

The Society has helped with the cost of producing the book and will be able to recoup the expenditure from any sales. **Robin Taylor**



PUB LUNCH NEWS

The 2017 Christmas Lunch – Mapperley Golf Club.

The venue for our festive meal together, organised by our Chairman Ken Kirk, was again the well-liked premises of Mapperley Golf Club where our group numbered some 32 members and their guests. Those present included Harold Blythe, who made the pilgrimage from distant Fleetwood (102 miles) to be with us.

Before we commenced to have our lunch we took the opportunity to invest our newly elected President with his newly-minted badge of office, bearing the original 1933 coat of arms. After the round of applause Ken Kirk donned the medallion and expressed his surprise and thanks to the Society. In the absence of Jessie Woodhouse Ken said a simple grace before our meal.

The excellent food was served as a carvery, always with the attendant risk of overloading our plates, but everyone seemed to achieve satisfaction. Many of us were able to enjoy the traditional Christmas pudding or other suitable alternatives. The drinks flowed freely and we all became most convivial as befits the occasion.

After the meal and a session of friendly chatter we were called to order by Ken Kirk who offered the Season's Greetings to one and all then asked for volunteers to step forward



and sing the High Pavement School Song *Carmen Paviorum*.

John Jalland, our talented musician, had volunteered to accompany us on his guitar but he'd left it in his car and was quickly dispatched to collect it as we tuned up a little. Then, once we had breathed deeply, we let rip with a particularly fervent rendition of the noble verses. Christmas carols were not in the same league.

We slowly bade each other farewell and set off homeward after a most enjoyable start to this year's festive season.

Left: President Ken and Musician John

Above: A Fervent Rendition!

ooOoo

OBITUARY NOTICES

ALAN STEVENSON

We have been informed by his wife Olive, that our member Alan Stevenson died on December 4th 2017, at the age of 86, after a battle with cancer. He will be well remembered for his cheerful, outgoing personality and also for his musical ability on the piano, which he played with great skill. He will be sadly missed.

DON WOODWARD

Our member Don Woodward, the former Sports Editor of the Daily Express, died on February 5th at the age of 88. For his funeral, held on February 14th at Wilford Hill Crematorium, a large congregation of family and former sports journalists gathered to pay their respects. The Society was represented by Ken Kirk and Colin Salsbury.

We send our sincere condolences to both of these families.

FROM BRIAN (DICK) SCORER

An appreciation of Alan Stevenson

Alan attended High Pavement School (1942-50) when it was situated on Stanley Road, about 100 yards from his house. A short commute indeed!

He took a very active part in sports, was a good cross country runner and a member of the unbeaten schools 'Sevens' team who won the Three Counties Trophy in 1950. He was also a Counties swimmer of distinction.

After leaving school he qualified as a teacher at Loughborough College where met his lovely wife Olive. They were very happily married for 60 years and had two daughters, three grandchildren and a few months ago, a great grandson.

Alan was a very successful and popular teacher where his love of the English language inspired many pupils in the Bulwell area where he worked. Some indication of his love of teaching showed when ex-pupils visited him at his home after his retirement and took him out for a coffee or a meal together. For three consecutive years while teaching in Bulwell, Alan won awards for community service (instituted by the NatWest Bank) on behalf of the school.

He was an excellent pianist and loved to entertain, leading his own group for many years. His love of music, and of his family, showed when he played keyboard in his grandson's group.

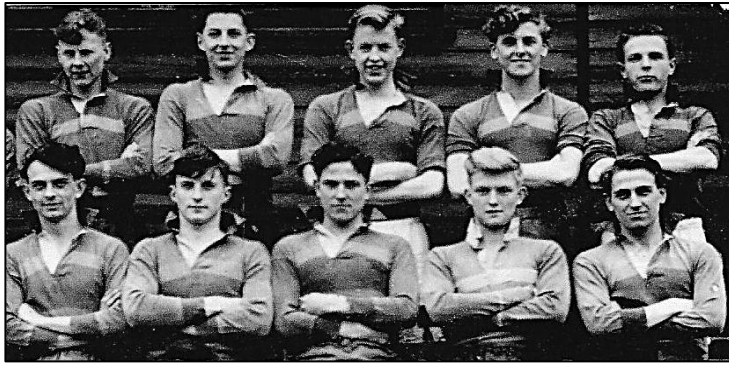
Alan enjoyed camping and enjoyed many holidays in the both the Peak District and Lake District with fellow Old Paviers, Adrian Harrison, Leo Bryan, Barrie Cholerton and myself, among others.

In 1981 he taught English and PE for a year at Jesmond High School in Australia and the school offered him a permanent job there but he saw fit to return home with his family.

Alan was always fit and strong until he contracted bowel cancer in 2012. It went into remission but then returned a few months ago and proved fatal.

Alan Stevenson was always cheerful, caring and much loved and will be sadly missed by those who were fortunate enough to have been his friends.

Dick Scorer (HP 1943-50)



In their vigorous youth!
Part of the 1950 HPS Rugby team

Back row left to right:

Barrie Mills; Ken Bateman; (unknown);
Alan Stevenson; 'Click' (Clive) Rutt.

Front row left to right:

Don Jones; **Michael Tomlinson**;
 Leon Bryan; Mike Hopewell; Dick Scorer.

Michael Tomlinson (HPS 1942-49)²

Mike Tomlinson was not a member of this Society but would be well known to many members who remember him as the determined School Captain in his last year at High Pavement. His death which occurred last November was reported to us by Mike Hopewell.

I personally have memories of 'Tommo' from the age of eight when he joined our Junior School (Haydn Road, Sherwood) in 1939. The war broke out a week later. For several years I was a member of the same school class, up to 1946. Even after that I knew him well, although we now followed different programmes of study at HP. He was a great thespian, well remembered for the role of 'Pal Green' in the school play, *'The Amazing Doctor Clitterhouse'*,

I always thought of Mike as mildly eccentric - probably the result of his superior intellect: he went on to Oxford after HP. During 1951 I met him in the town centre and he invited me to have a coffee with him in the old Robin Hood Café in South Sherwood Street.

It is good to recall our passing friendship. We never met again.

Colin Salsbury

REMINISCENCES OF MICHAEL TOMLINSON

I knew Michael very well, both at High Pavement and afterwards. We both spent periods away from England, mine short, his long. In the late fifties, on a very overcast afternoon in Oxford (sports afternoon at the RAF Central Flying School) I spotted someone with the unique Tomlinson rolling walk. Yes! It is Michael. Long 'Hellos' and, finally, 'Goodbyes'.

Fast forward to the early seventies. At my house near Wilmslow Cheshire, that walk again, past our front lawn, and it is indeed Michael, this time accompanied by his wife, dear Sheila ('who is just like Elizabeth Taylor' says our young son). Mike relates how he is building a beautiful boat in his garage.

Next, the early eighties. Michael and Sheila now live in a lovely medieval cottage in Wallingford Oxon, (unfortunately with medieval flooring problems), and have three children. The family were with us for my early British Airways retirement party. Then I was with them for an always-remembered fondue party.

To the early 2000s. They stayed over at my home in Beverley, on their way north, escorted by their beautiful Labrador, 'George', who lived with them, in Nailsworth Glos.

I recall how we always received many great Christmas cards from Mike, with news of his long and exciting career with Dow Chemicals, in Switzerland and the Far East. Then, in late November last year we received the very sad news of his death.

A dear friend, always remembered.

Mike Hopewell

² Not to be confused with our member Mike Tomlinson (HPS 1948-53) who is still in the best of health.

OUR END PIECE Brian Ferrill Looks Back



[Continuing this survey of his life and times Brian tells us this time about members of his family, as seen from his childhood viewpoint.]

To start with, few words about my mum and dad. After the arrival of my sister, early one morning, my dad went off to work as usual, leaving my mother in the care of Grandma Hall (her mum). He worked for Gunn and Moore the cricket bat manufacturers (no paternity leave in those days!).

Just after Dad left school he entered a competition to write an essay for which the first prize was a made-to-measure suit from Burtons, the multiple tailors. To everyone's surprise he won it! His essay on 'The Niagara Falls' was even published in the *Nottingham Evening Post*. Yes, Dad had only an elementary education but could write neatly in print and was a whiz at arithmetic but had never even seen the Niagara Falls! (His 'cursive' handwriting was the best I have ever seen.)

Dad was quietly spoken but people always listened to what he had to say. Politically he was very left wing and in the kerfuffle over King Edward and Mrs Simpson he was heard to say 'Stalin would make a good king!' but he did say it with a smile on his face. I still have his photo of Stalin in my possession.

About this time we moved house a short distance to a rented house available at 8 Belton Street (people made this kind of move quite regularly in those days). We now lived opposite Grandma Mariah (Hall). Nobody explained the time that my mum was experiencing post-natal problems, on top of other health problems and it seemed wise to be near her mother's home.

Like my father, my mother was hard-working at things she enjoyed but quick-tempered and ever at war with herself. She was well-known in the garment machining workshops off Alfreton Road and possessed an industrial Singer sewing machine at home. When she plugged it in to the electricity (DC everywhere around us in those days; AC came much later) and put her foot down on the control switch the material just seemed to flow through her hands. She was paid a guinea a week. Do you remember those guineas? They were worth £1. 1s (twenty one shillings) really but people liked to talk in guineas sometimes, (Worth quite a bit then, perhaps £65 or more in today's money. Even a 'ten-bob note' would buy a lot of merchandise.)

When mother was given a contract by her employer she went on to piece-rates and would earn double the average wages because of her dexterity. She also did work at home. Bridal dresses were a particular speciality. Of course she made clothes for all her children and herself. As someone once said: 'You only have one mother'.

While I am reminiscing about childhood I must mention my childhood encounters with the last two Presidents of this Society, Arnold Brown and George Taylor. Our house at No 8 Belton Street had the usual blue brick tiled yard with a very small back garden, at the rear of which was a seven-foot brick wall. Just over that wall, at 5 Beaconsfield Street lived George Taylor, with Arnold living almost opposite at No 2. They were perhaps 8 or 10 years older than me but I knew them both because every Sunday I had to visit Arnold's establishment (an off-licence) to fetch 1½ pints of beer in a large jug with a white napkin over it. Actually it

would have been a shorter walk to the off-licence of Mr Flint, across Radford Road but I had been warned from the age of five about the danger of its busy traffic, so to Mr Browns I had to go.

Today, each time I go to ASDA, I pass Belton Street and remember the owner of Nos 6 and 8 calling to collect his 13 shillings a week rent. Each time he would offer to sell my father the house for £300, even offering to organise the necessary mortgage for him. But each time my father said ‘No!’ no doubt fearing the burden it would impose. The house has changed hands several times since then and in 2016 it was worth £95,000!

When I was 6 years old I was sent to Sunday School and also found that I could join the Cubs. I think the Rev Jervis Twycross, Vicar of St Stephen’s Church on Bobbers Mill Road, may have visited the new arrivals at No 8 Belton Street, or at least sent one of the Sunday School Teachers round to recruit us. My parents were certainly married in that church and at one time worshipped there weekly. When I entered the Sunday School I quickly found my way into the church choir and sang there until my voice broke when I was fourteen.

I haven’t yet mentioned my Grandfather, Joe Hall who knew just about every person in Nottingham, or so it seemed. Prior to the (1914-18) war he left school to become the ‘boots’ at the Swan Hotel in Bedford³ From this he worked his way up to become a barman. When he was called up for military service and (in his own words) ‘I was asked what I did for a living and I told them. To which they replied “Right! Officers’ Mess barman!” ’ And that was what he remained for the duration of the war, barman at the officers’ mess in Aldershot. He once said he saw many troops pass through the town on their way to France and he knew his name was entered on several drafts but the colonel told him ‘No Joe. Stick to bar work here!’ And that was it!

After the war he came back to Nottingham with a military moustache but Grandma said it ‘looked silly’ so he shaved it off. He always used an old cut-throat razor and kept himself very smart. He obtained a position in the Gas Department and his job was to collect money from the coin-operated pre-payment meters. They were always set to overcharge by a small amount and one of his tasks was to calculate a rebate to give to (usually) the housewife. Joe was, like many men, a heavy smoker and liked a pint or two but in spite of this lived to be 84.

My other grandfather (Ferrill) worked at Gerard Brothers ‘INO’ Soap Works on Wilkinson Street, one of Nottingham’s prominent industries. I also would like to mention his daughter (my father’s sister), Irene, but always known as Renee, who married George Hawkesley. *His* grandfather, Thomas Hawkesley, was instrumental in installing safe water supplies in Nottingham during Queen Victoria’s reign, thus preventing the severe cholera outbreaks that ravaged towns less well supplied.

My new Uncle George worked at Players on cigarette machines and (as Tommy Gee once commented) could earn £10 per week—so Aunt Renee did *not* have to go out to work.

Brian

[Further chapters are in preparation.]

ooOoo

³ One of Bedford’s leading hotels