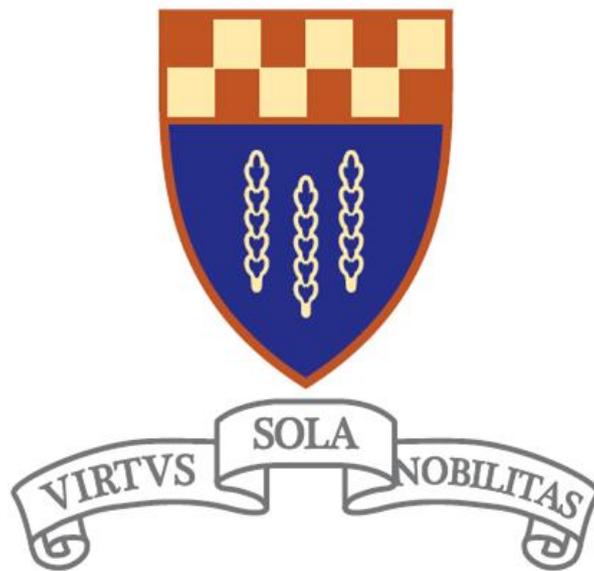


The Pavior



The Newsletter
of
The High Pavement Society
(Founded 1989)

May 2014

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!

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Deputy Chairman: John Elliott 0115 9266475
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Faces to remember
William Thomas Nicolas Thompson
Languages Master at High Pavement
1945-59

COMMENT

[This column was regularly written with wit and wisdom by our late President, Arnold Brown but now he is no longer with us and the committee have decided to take it in turns to address the membership on topics of the day which require particular attention. This month the baton is passed to your editor (and registrar).

A Stern Message

Gentlemen! You may recall that the message below appeared in the November 2013 issue of *The Pavior* and it is sad to relate that no responses have been forthcoming from our membership (or anywhere else for that matter). Well, it's just possible that some readers never noticed the message languishing at the foot of the page even though we used our best typography to make it stand out. So now it is there for all to see and read. We know that in retirement everyone seems to lead a busier life than we ever did while working but the demands of committee work are not particularly burdensome. Unless, that is, the numbers available are so low that some members have perform an unfair share of the work. Our paid-up membership is between 170 and 180 and it is hard to believe that we can only field seven bodies at the last two committee meetings. If you live within reach of Gregory Boulevard we appeal to you to think hard about it. We need your counsel and advice if not your labour. **Colin Salsbury**

HELP WANTED

Due to the incapacity of some of its regular members the Society's committee is now in need of extra help, much of its work having to be carried out by a small nucleus of members. In particular we urgently need someone to help in the job of organising our extremely popular pub lunches. If you can spare an hour or two of your time, we meet together every month or six weeks at the offices of Page-Kirk on Gregory Boulevard, thanks to the generosity of our Chairman Ken Kirk. Occasionally, by invitation of the Principal, we meet at High Pavement Academy. Our proceedings are quite informal. Act now! Contact the secretary as soon as possible, your help will be invaluable.

FROM OUR READERS

FROM THE LATE DERRICK WILSON



[This reminiscence from Derrick Wilson was compiled by him shortly before he died. His fond memories of those days were passed on to us by his widow, Bunny, to whom we extend our sincere thanks.]

Harvest Camp

During the war many farm workers had been called up into the forces leaving a severe shortage of workers on the land. This was a particular problem at harvest times when the manpower requirement on farms is at its annual peak. To help avoid a serious food shortage becoming critical Paviors were recruited as volunteers at camps during the harvest periods.

The volunteers with their bicycles, tyre pumps and puncture repair kits met at the Midland Station and travelled to Oakham and from there cycled to their camp at villages such as Thistleton and Metheringham in Lincolnshire. On arrival at the camp one of the first tasks was for everyone to each stuff a paliasse (mattress cover) with straw. These, if well stuffed,

were surprisingly comfortable. At one camp we had bunk beds in a hut and, at another camp beds in a large country house.

Each morning we cycled to one of the farms. The work was potato picking, sugar beet pulling and so on. Also at the farms were girls from the Women's Land Army and Italian prisoners of war. The prisoners had no guards with them as they had no interest in trying to escape. The tractors were mainly driven by WLA girls. Some of the potatoes were extraordinarily large and only three could be got into a bucket. After picking, the potatoes were loaded into carts and taken to a small local railway station where we transferred them into railway wagons which, when full, were sprayed on the top with a blue dye to discourage pilfering during their journeys. The railway engine driver told us they were destined for the fish and chip shops at Sheffield. At lunch times the fireman on the engine would place potatoes on his coal shovel and cook them for us by putting the shovel into the fire. The work in the fields gave us big appetites. The civilian food rations were somewhat meagre but in some cases our food was supplemented by contributions from the farmers themselves.

A more satisfying job was pulling the sugar beet and then using a machete to chop off the foliage before loading them into wagons to take to the railway station for transportation to the sugar beet factories in Norfolk from where they emerged as 'Silver Spoon' brand sugar granules. At one camp the pay rate for us was 6d (2.5p) per hour. On the first day we objected to this very low pay rate and the next day it was increased to 7d per hour.

In the surrounding areas of the farm there were a large number of RAF and United States Air Force aerodromes. In 1944 and 1945 we saw bombers, Lancasters and Boeing B17 Flying Fortresses, taking off in very large numbers, forming up and heading to Germany as part of 1,000 bomber raids on industrial targets in places such as the Ruhr Valley, Hamburg and several others. Not all of these would return. One day whilst potato picking we heard a single Lancaster flying slowly but suddenly it stopped, its nose dropped and it spiralled downwards, crashing about two miles from us. No parachutes emerged. These episodes prompted us to consider that in a very few years some of *us* might be RAF air crew.

I do not recall that our farming experiences persuaded any Paviers to take up farming as a career.

Derrick S Wilson

FROM IVAN KING

I have just enjoyed reading the latest Pavior and seeing the photo of a group of the Arts 6th Form. I can recall Frank Hudson, having played rugby with him a few times at both school and in the Old Boys teams. I was never in his league as he was a great player but being taller than most I was at least useful in the lineouts! 'Bacca' Buxton was also someone I knew and remember him from his friendship with one of my best pals: David Dalton, 'Dolly' (now deceased) who smoked a pipe well before anyone else and was therefore a good compatriot! 'Purtle' Davies is also remembered as being a great fun character to be around. Derek Tonkin who wrote the article was also one of the 'gang'. I remember him as 'Tonk'.

'Nat's Natter' also brought back memories of various the so-called 'corrective methods' applied by some of the staff. My favourite recollection was of Alfie Marrow (who I learned later was never a fully qualified teacher but only an assistant at the time) who held a fear factor over everyone with his briar cane which he used to apply on a bare arm with light tappings until the pain increased sufficiently! I experienced this on a couple of occasions. My most painful memory is of one day being pushed along by a surge of bodies trying to exit the school hall in a hurry after assembly (as we always did). Alfie was stood in the doorway and I knocked

him flying. As stated I was a taller than most and Alfie not liking that proceeded to deal out a couple of hard slaps around the face. My rotten luck I suppose for being the nearest. However many years later I was at a function at the Trent Bridge Inn and who should be the speaker that night but Alfie. After the meeting was over I approached him and reminded him of the event and enquired after his stick. He smiled and offered to shake hands, possibly because I was by then even taller and a lot heavier.

Another treatment was meted out by Mr Odell, actually a popular teacher with whom I always got on well. However, on one occasion I had owned up to Mrs Palin about having put calcium carbide from the science lab into some of the inkwells (which resulted in very frothy ink). It was confess or the whole class would be put into detention. She sent me to Odell for him to administer punishment which usually consisted of a face slap. Unfortunately for me he was aware of the trick we had of moving your face with the blow to lessen the effect and he held the other side of your face in his hand to prevent any side movement!

Ollie Barnet, the Latin teacher, was also a good dispenser of discipline, despite his small rotund size. If you did not punctuate ('conjugate'?—Ed) the Latin verb 'amo, amas, amat, etc (hope this is spelt OK) his ruler, with which he conducted the combined class in the singing of the verbs, would be flung in your direction. I always remember a classmate called Peter Schofield, who was very spirited and took objection to being called out to the front of class to be chastised. He subsequently started to wrestle with Ollie, eventually having to be dragged off. I also always remember Peter for another occasion when Page, the gym master, put him against me in a boxing match. Peter and I floated around for a while until Page instructed us to 'Get on with it!' and Pete then started to knock seven bells out of me. We always remained friends however. (Unfortunately, so I believe, he was killed later in life whilst flying a plane into a hangar).

After reading the above it sounds as if school was a like a concentration camp but I do have some very happy memories and only wish that I had made better use of the education I received there. Of the six school friends, with whom I kept in close touch for many years afterwards (being each other's best man etc), only Tony Wills and myself remain (both now 83 years old). Jack Bland, David Dalton, Don Boyden and Don Hardstaff have all passed on.

Ivan King (Classical 1-5 Trent House) 1941-6

FROM GEOFF GAY

A seven-year stint at HP seemed then like half a lifetime, which I suppose in a way it was. Much of my time at HP was traumatic to say the least.

I think my psychological problems were to do with being uprooted at the age of 10 when we emigrated to Australia, where I was in a class two years above my chronological age so that most of my classmates were going through puberty and I wasn't. Then, on returning to Nottingham, I was put into 1D where, as I had already turned 12, I was now older than all my classmates. My extreme rebellion started at the end of the first year, when I had my first encounter with Stan Middleton. He was in charge of prize-giving and I had been awarded the 'Progress' prize for 1D. I knew I hadn't deserved it as, in spite of coming top of the class, I had actually made very little progress from my previous two years' education in Australia. I tried to tell this to Stan but he got very annoyed and told me that I wasn't allowed to refuse the prize.

Another memory from my first year involved 'Old Crock' Crossland, who took us for RE. I once walked into his classroom, the Lecture Theatre in the Science Block, and something

struck me as funny. Almost as soon as Old Crock started to speak, I burst into uncontrollable laughter. Old Crock said, 'Boy, what are you laughing at?' Thinking I would be really bold and tell him the truth, I said, 'You, Sir!' Of course, I expected some sort of outraged reaction, but he told me to go and walk around the playground until I had calmed down. After five times round, I re-entered and immediately burst out laughing again, and again he told me to walk round the playground. I think I must have controlled myself this time.

Along with a number of other pupils from the lower classes, I was promoted to 2A, where those of us from working class backgrounds found ourselves alienated by a distinctly non-working-class culture so we formed a sort of mutual protection society called 'The Blood Brothers'. That year, there were two subjects, History and Latin, in which I came top in the January exam and bottom in the summer exam! Things went on from there, to the extent that one incident put me very close to expulsion.

I think Harry Davies spared me because he had some understanding of what I was going through, and realised that I had some academic ability. I grew up just in time to get reasonable results at 'O' level and to play Odysseus in Stan Middleton's play. I really enjoyed my time in the sixth form, marked by three more school plays and culminating in my being awarded the Westmorland Prize for Mathematics.

Whenever I think about Keith 'Jack' Train, I think about the Jazz Club. One day on the number 6 bus on the way to school, Mr. Train came up to me and said that, as many masters had contributed to various clubs and societies, he would like to contribute to the jazz club by paying for refreshments – what a brilliant idea!

I also remember Mr. Train for this incident which happened when I was 18 years old in the Upper Sixth. By this time I was well out of my ultra-rebellious phase but I wasn't going to miss the traditional booze-up on the last day of term before Christmas. In fact, I had drunk six pints of mild in the 'Deerstalker' and was certainly not sober. But I staggered back to school in time for 'final assembly' and was just managing to hold my gait through the corridor when I felt a tap on the shoulder. I turned round to find it was the deputy head, Mr. Train. I know that among the staff there had been a major disagreement at the end of the previous term as to whether I should be a prefect – given my history, I wasn't surprised not to be, but some vacancies had arisen, and Mr. Train couldn't resist being the first to tell me. 'Gay, boy! Do you know you're going to be a prefect next term?' 'No. Sir', I muttered. I think he then sat me down and tried to talk to me. He must have known about the booze-up but I think he realised that it was better to let sleeping dogs lie. I think I did quite well considering the six pints, and also did quite well as a prefect!

I went on to take mathematics at university, but there were more problems there, and my pass degree was a hopeless underachievement. Who was it who said, 'Those who can do: those who can't, teach'? Well, I went on to teach mathematics and via the Open University eventually (in 1994) obtained the master's degree in the subject that I should have got in the first place. My third and final encounter with Stan Middleton was at the OU Degree ceremony when, as guest of honour, he presented me with my certificate. I think he recognised me. I now do part-time teaching for the OU.

If Colin will give me the chance, I will tell some more stories about those years.

Geoff Gay

[We are always in need of good copy from the Gainsford Crescent era. Send us more!—Ed]

FROM MIKE HOPEWELL

Hello Colin, Thank you for my beautifully-presented copy of *The Pavior*, bringing both sad and happy news (I too used to be a co-editor—of the village magazine, *Wargrave News*).

I remember the faces of most, if not all, of those on the 1948 school photograph of the Arts 6th Form, but not all their names, except Frank Hudson, and G. F. Buxton. Geoff Buxton was a member of the 1947 HP Swimming Team (Midland Counties ASA School's Champions), together with Barry Cholerton (Capt), G.M. Ward (Vice), "AJ" (Alan Stevenson), Leo (Bryan), myself and eight other good swimmers. Buxton was very tall, and famous for winning the 'Plunge' at the HP swimming galas. Not a vertical dive but horizontal, holding your breath, with head under water, for as long as you were floating forwards. Mr Bullock or Mr Farr would then record a mark in line with your fingertips.

[G.F.B. was also known to have a photographic memory and, I think, went up to Oxford? Am I remembering correctly?]

But where is the old bath house/cellar¹? Tales of awful happenings down THERE to poor first formers still bring a shiver to the spine. As for the school itself, the dear old girl looks great, at least inside with all that new paint. But is it like returning to other homes you knew, they aren't as you remember them? We are very fortunate these days that it is still there to remember!

Thank you Colin for all your work and all of you who give us such happy memories.

Yours gratefully, Mike

AN UNEXPECTED LINK

The recent passing of our member Derrick Wilson calls to mind the method by which we were able to put him in touch with the Society. A little time ago we were privileged to have as one of our members Mrs Celia Nicholas who had attended High Pavement as long ago as the 1920s when it was still a co-educational institution. We rejoiced when Celia was able to celebrate her centenary and we organised one of our pub lunches around the event. Now, Celia was of necessity a frequent visitor to her GP and mentioned in a conversation that she was wont to attend our pub lunches in the Nottingham area (actually travelling by car from her home in Weybridge, Surrey). Her doctor, Dr Lindy Fozard, remarked that her father had also attended HP and was called Derrick Wilson. Celia told us of this on one of her lunch visits and I immediately remembered Derek from school days in the 1940s (he was a little older than me).

I resolved to ask Dr Fozard for her father's address but, alas, had no address with which to get in touch with her. However, I then thought of the internet and its magical ability to deliver information and Google soon supplied the address of the Weybridge medical practice where Dr F worked. This raised a point of etiquette. Was it in order to write to a doctor via her professional place of employment on what was a rather personal matter? I took the plunge and sent my enquiry (marked 'Personal') and awaited a response. Dr Fozard had no problem with the matter and responded promptly with the address, Derrick was contacted and joined the Society forthwith. He passed away recently, having been seriously ill for some time. (Many of us will recall that Celia has now also passed away.) A little time prior to his death Derek penned an article for us (see page 3), a task which was difficult due to his increasing blindness.

It was good to have made the contact with him, however indirect the means.

Colin Salsbury

¹ Still there but it is the Reception Office now. Plus ça change...!

FROM ALAN FRANKS

[Alan Franks is not yet a member of the society but has been in touch with us, initially via our website. He has sent this article with an appeal to find out if his friends from school days are still around. They were distinguished by being part of 'the last generation' to attend the old HP Grammar School.]

Memories from the 1969/70 season of the Under 15 XV



Back row L to R: Mr Bill Gray (coach), Steve Alsop, Clive Swinn, Alan Franks, Alex Rae*, Martin Nelson, Dave Baird, Neil Crosby.
Front row L to R: Ian Reynolds, Richard ('Baz') Norton, Arthur Broughton, Geoff Critchlow, John Frazer, Phil Molyneux, Jon Billam.

The above picture shows the High Pavement 1969/70 season Under 15 First XV (minus one player!). They were a very talented group.

Many of the above went on to represent the County, Three Counties, and The Midlands. Ian Reynolds and Jon Billam were selected for Under 19 England XV. Those who stayed on into the sixth form were the core of the school First XV of 1972/73, who won the County Cup against Manor School, Mansfield.

I cannot recollect for certain the identity of the missing player: it could be Chris Rees who played hooker. Many of the team played in different positions through the school years.

Bill Gray was an inspiration to us, he was a very charismatic coach.

Alan Franks (HPGS 1966 to 1973)

* Alex Rae is a member of the HP Society

The Science 6th Form of 1948



A group of Science 6th formers with Mr W E Morris 1948

Front row seated L to R: John Dexter; John Cawkwell; Alun Jenkins ; Mr Morris (Chemistry); John Townsend; Alan Woodiwiss; Barrie Cholerton

Back row standing L to R: Colin Salsbury; Dick Thornhill; Charlie Bramley; Gerald (Ged) Ward; Brian? (Diz) Hazel; John Mason; David Pickbourne

I came across this snapshot during a clearance of our lifetime collection of photos and thought there might be other members of the Society who would remember these people.

John Dexter, a former headmaster now deceased, was my predecessor as Registrar of the Society and welcomed me to the first of many Society events. Sadly, we have also lost both Barrie Cholerton, a teacher and college lecturer, who was a member of this Society, and Dave Pickbourne. Frank Woodiwiss followed a career in medicine, John Mason veterinary science and John Cawkwell went into teaching. John Townsend entered the Royal School of Mines, part of Imperial College, when I last heard of him and I entered the gas industry as a pupil engineer. I regret I have no knowledge of the careers followed by the other five people. W E Morris (who once had ambitions to stand for parliament) left a couple of years after this and became head of a school in East London.

Colin Salsbury

ooOoo

EDUCATION FUND

Very many thanks to the members who responded to my appeal in the November issue. The Education Fund has benefited by almost a thousand pounds which means we will be in a much healthier position to meet the requests for the Awards from the High Pavement Academy in the very near future

Further donations, however modest, would be welcome. You can contact me on 01159609483 or robinatnottm@aol.com.

Robin Taylor, Treasurer

KEN CASS

Kenneth Cass, a long serving member of the Society, passed away peacefully at home on Feb 15th 2014 at the age of 91. He will be remembered by many for his friendly nature and his great skill on the violin.

The cremation was at Bramcote Crematorium on February 26th, when the Society was represented by George Taylor.

DERRICK WILSON

We have received the news from his family that our member Derrick Wilson passed away in Weybridge, Surrey, on January 6th 2014, at the age of 83, after a long period in failing health.

PETER BENTLEY

Our member Peter Bentley passed away on March 23rd at the age of 80, after a short illness. At the well-attended funeral, held on Wednesday 2nd April, the Society was represented by Mike Watkinson.

DEREK DUNN

Our member Derek Dunn, a memorable sportsman in his time, passed away peacefully on Wednesday April 16th 2014, aged 86. The funeral was held at St Helen's Church in Burton Joyce on April 29th, when the Society was represented by Colin Salsbury. Several other Old Paviers were present.

VIC TAYLOR

Vic Taylor, one of our longest serving members, has passed away, on April 22nd, a few weeks short of his 97th birthday. Until recently he was a regular participant in our activities and was very popular with all who met him. His funeral was held in Derby on May 8th. The Society was represented by Robin Taylor.

KENDRICK PARTINGTON

As we go to press we have received the sad news that Kendrick Partington, a most distinguished musician in his time, passed away on Monday May 5th. An appreciation of his life will be included in our August issue.

The Society sends its condolences to the families of these members, in their sad loss.

ooOoo

MEMORIES OF DEREK DUNN



DD in his prime

[*This short appreciation of Derek Dunn was compiled by John Elliott with assistance from Derek's family, for whose co-operation we are very grateful.*] Derek Anthony Dunn was born on the 2nd July 1927 in Alfred Street South, Nottingham. Later the family moved to Woodthorpe and Derek had fond memories of his school days, firstly at Haydn Road Junior School and afterwards at High Pavement Grammar School. At school he was an outstanding sportsman whether it be on the cricket pitch, the rugby field, in the boxing ring or even on the athletics field where he excelled with the javelin and shot putt in the county championships. Whilst at High

Pavement he had to do an extra year as he was unable to sit his Higher School Certificate due to breaking a thumb whilst in the boxing ring!

On leaving school Derek worked for many years as a dyer and finisher in the textile industry, and for the last 20 years or so, before retiring, he became a textile merchant in partnership with Jim Gilbert, a long-time friend from school days at High Pavement.

Outside his work his passions in life included cars and gardening but it was sport which dominated his early life, an activity in which he always excelled. In the summer three afternoons a week were taken up playing cricket. He was a good fast bowler and one of his finest performances as a cricketer was taking all ten wickets for 50 runs for Notts Forest CC against Hucknall in 1950. For the rest of the year it was rugby, in which he was also an outstanding player. Firstly as a wing forward then as prop forward, he played 320 games for the Nottingham 1st XV. He also played for Notts Lincs and Derby in the County Championship before ending his playing career with the Old Paviers RFC.

When his playing career finished, Derek was briefly a selector for Nottingham RFC, and was also President of Notts. Forest Cricket Club. In later years he became a keen gardener.

Derek married Sheila in 1950 and they were happily married for 57 years before she sadly died in 2007. Derek's last year or so was spent in a Residential Home - Ivy House - as Alzheimer's took a greater hold and he was not able to manage his own care.

Derek passed away on the 16th April 2014 - he is survived by his two sons, Andrew and Jeremy, daughter Helen, seven grandchildren and a great grand daughter Josie.



The Mystery XV

In this photo supplied by Derek's family the youthful Derek Dunn is pictured kneeling on the front row right. Also in the somewhat older team was Eric Shepherd (extreme right). At the back on the left is Bill Benner who taught art and architecture but was a main promoter of rugby at High Pavement, from the time of its adoption by the school as the principal team sport. The actual identity of this team is shrouded in mystery, Can anyone identify it and when the photo was taken?

2014 ANNUAL REUNION DINNER

The 2014 Annual reunion Dinner was held at its usual venue, the Welbeck Rooms, on Monday April 7th. A very good attendance saw some 65 members and guests assemble for a splendid evening of fellowship and reminiscence. Before sitting down to the excellent meal we were called to order by our Master of Ceremonies, Robin Taylor, to stand in silence in memory of

our late President, Arnold Brown and his wife Barbara, who both died earlier in the year.

Grace was then said by Jesse Woodhouse and after the meal the Loyal Toast was proposed by our Vice-Chairman, John Elliott, who also read our message of Loyal Greetings to The Queen and Her Majesty's letter of reply. After the short interval our Chairman, Ken Kirk, rose to propose the toast of



'High Pavement'. The response was made by Denise Jelley, Head of the High Pavement Sixth Form Academy who thanked the Society for its support and friendly interest in the Academy. She quoted several examples of the excellent results obtained by students of this institution and recognised the help of the Society in their work.

Our after-dinner speaker for this occasion was Captain Geoff Dyer, an expert on aviation history who had chosen as his subject *'Death in the Clouds'*, an account of the life and mysterious disappearance of the 1930s aviatrix Amy Johnson.

We greatly enjoyed his absorbing talk about this ambitious and unpredictable lady flyer, who became the nation's heroine in the years 'before the war' (as our generation is wont to refer to that decade).



Geoff Dyer gave us a detailed account of her audacious and sometimes reckless attempts to break records for hitherto male-dominated long distance flights. She used primitive and



We regret that the photos don't include everybody attending the Dinner but these were the best shots (photographically) and there is insufficient space to insert any more!

inadequate planes of which Geoff Dyer, very much a hands-on historian, had practical flying experience and was ready to acknowledge the (appreciable) shortcomings of these aircraft. The audience were quite fascinated by this account from a speaker who really knew his subject.



Ken Kirk then proposed the Vote of Thanks to our Speaker and to all who had contributed to making the evening such a success. He then called upon all the Old Paviers present to form up as the ‘HP Choir’ to sing our school song *Carmen Paviorum*. Quite the biggest number ever then stepped forward to participate. Under the gallant leadership of Lance Wright, and *entirely unaccompanied*, they gave a spirited performance of our glorious anthem, stirring our

memories of Speech Days in the past and thrilling our audience.

The occasion concluded with the usual conversations between friends, which nobody wanted to terminate but at last we dragged ourselves away, after a particularly successful event.

ooOoo

PUB LUNCH NEWS

The Crown Inn, Rolleston

The March pub lunch was held on the Thursday the 20th of that month at the Crown Inn, Rolleston, near Southwell. A group of 25 members and guests gathered there, swelling to 26 with the most punctual arrival of Edgar Jackson, on the dot at 12.30 as lunch was served. This was our first visit to the pub as a group and we found it to be well appointed



▲ The Crown Inn, Rolleston.
 ◀ Our Party enjoy the pub’s relaxing surroundings.



with a really excellent bill of fare. We enjoyed a most relaxing environment dedicated to our exclusive use. Most, if not all, the regulars were present and very much enjoyed the occasion which was efficiently organised by our Chairman, Ken Kirk. We would perhaps like to pay a return visit to the Crown, at some later date.

JUMPING FOR JOY

Historical records for Nottingham contain this enigmatic entry: ‘1888 – The American Aeronaut ‘Professor’ Baldwin made the first parachute jump in Nottingham from a balloon over Wollaton Park as part of the Goose Fair attractions.’ Hmm! Quite an event!

*The Society’s Archivist Lance Wright has since discovered the article below that suggests the practice of parachuting had links to **High Pavement School**—even in those days! Now read on:*

In the year following Professor Baldwin’s leap, a local lad, ‘Professor Russett’, also made a parachute jump. The event was reported in the *Nottingham Daily Guardian* of 2nd September 1889:

‘A Nottingham Parachutist’

‘On Saturday evening considerable interest was evinced in Nottingham in the parachute descent of a ‘Professor Russett’. The ‘Professor’, who is a Nottingham youth, of the age of 18, was announced to ascend from Trent Bridge Ground by means of his balloon to a height of 10,000 feet, and then to descend to earth on his parachute. The mere fact that the performer belonged to the borough caused something more than ordinary curiosity to be shown in the advertised feat, although it mostly seemed to tend—to put the matter somewhat bluntly—in the direction whether he would ‘break his neck’ or not. In spite of the fact that parachuting is a comparatively new ‘craze—and *ergo* a new way of making money—Russett is about the latest addition to the ranks of its exponents. He commenced to emulate ‘Professor’ Baldwin about April last, when he tested his parachute by means of a flight from the Black Rocks, in Derbyshire, a height of 250ft. This, however, was only an experiment to test the weight-carrying qualities of the parachute, an apparatus of his own design. It proved a success, and accordingly the ‘Professor’ essayed a descent from a balloon at the Bournbrook Grounds, Birmingham, on Easter Saturday, when he rose to a height of 8,500 feet, and descended in safety.

‘This led to a tour in Holland, where he made descents at Alknaar [sic] (*Alkmaar*), Arnhairn [sic] (*Arnhem*), Harlem [sic] (*Haarlem*), Rotterdam, and Amsterdam, falling in the Zuyder Zee at the latter place. Since returning to England he has made an attempt to ascend at Wednesbury in Staffordshire, but the balloon would not carry him up. ‘Prof.’ Higgins, a rival in the same line of ‘business’, had been announced to make the ascent, but the gas with which the balloon was inflated did not possess sufficient carrying-power to carry his weight into the air. He thereupon requested Russett to make an attempt, and the latter consented, but, although his weight is only 9st. 9lb. the balloon would not even carry him. Thereupon a third parachutist was requisitioned in the person of Mizzen, a young man about eight stone in weight, who had previously made successful ascents at Christiania, the capital of Norway, and Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. On this occasion, however, he came to grief, and had the spine of his back broken.

‘Ever since Russett’s return he has been anxious to appear before his fellow-townsmen, and offered to give an ascent free on the Forest, but the Race Committee² refused to sanction it. Trent Bridge Cricket Ground was accordingly secured for the purpose, and there the ‘Professor’s’ balloon, which had only been used once before, at Birmingham, was inflated with 15,000 feet of gas from the Corporation mains. Although, as we have before stated, great

² The Forest was then a racecourse.

interest was centred in the event, most of the spectators witnessed the ascent and descent from outside. The gates on the ground were thrown open at three o'clock, but not more than a thousand people paid for admission. They were hardly a decorous crowd, and at about a quarter to six put a stop to the final of the Notts. Cricket Cup by rushing across the ground to the small circle marked off in which the balloon was being inflated. In the meantime the gathering outside had grown to tremendous proportions. Trent Bridge was packed, the roads from that point, running in all directions, were almost blocked with people, the banks of the Trent were lined for quite a mile with spectators, while hundreds could be seen scattered over the neighbouring fields, perched on housetops, in trees, and occupying every coign of vantage.

'Six o'clock was the hour fixed for the ascent, but by that time the balloon was hardly full of gas, owing to the small pressure to be obtained from the main. However, the 'Professor' was on the ground, ready to carry out his contract. He made no attempt to appear in acrobatic dress, but when all was ready, and his parachute had been fixed to the balloon, he simply divested himself of his jacket and hard low-crowned hat, and placing a soft felt on his head, was attached to the balloon and 'let go'. The balloon sailed away beautifully to the south—west until Russett was a mere speck in the sky. After reaching a certain altitude, however, he appeared to remain stationary, and was then observed to let go his hold on the balloon, and trust himself to his parachute. It opened out at once, and Russett gracefully descended to the earth, alighting somewhere near Wilford Bridge, on the south bank. The balloon was in the air some time longer, but when once the whole of the gas had escaped, it came down like the covering of an old umbrella, and was found somewhere near Wilford Church.

'Russett made his way back to Trent Bridge Ground, none the worse for his descent with the exception of a slight bruise of the lip and two loosened teeth, caused by the hoop of the parachute striking him on the mouth. He was perfectly cool and collected during the preparations for the ascent, and on his return preserved the same easy nonchalant demeanour. Called upon for a speech, he stood on the wall at the side of the Pavilion, and stated that he had gone as high as the balloon would go, and with the exception of the blow in the mouth from the hoop of the parachute, the descent had been a most successful one. He hoped to make another descent in Wollaton Park during the Goose Fair week. The suggestion was made that collectors with boxes should be appointed to go amongst the thousands of people outside, and it was afterwards stated that eight men had turned out for the purpose, but if that was the case the managers of the affair knew nothing of it, and they certainly never sanctioned any such proceeding.

'One of the first persons to meet and congratulate 'Professor Russett' on his return to the Pavilion was **Mr William Hugh, headmaster of High Pavement School**, where Russett received some portion of his education. The exact altitude which he had reached Russett could not tell, but he was in the air over two minutes before he left the balloon, which travelled at a good rate, the evening being fine, with just a slight wind. Russett ascribed the fact of his not being able to travel any higher to the insufficiency of gas in the balloon. Russett suffered a loss by his venture, the receipts not being sufficient to cover more than half of the expenses. A subscription has consequently been started on his behalf.'

[With acknowledgements to *Victorian Nottingham* (vol. 10) by Richard Iliffe and Wilfred Baguley (Nottingham Historical Film Unit)]

ARNY'S BOOK



[Arnold's family agreed that we should continue to select suitable pieces from Arny's Book to remind us of our old friend and how much we appreciated his company when he was with us. This short extract reveals some of his thoughts on travelling by rail.]

On the train

Years of bakers' meetings in London provided me with the opportunity of many happy hours in a first class seat on the British Rail route between Nottingham and the Great Metropolis; happy because these railway rides gave me the opportunity both to study the English countryside in all its moods, as well as the less attractive backyards of the towns and cities through which we travelled. Furthermore, my fellow passengers were an unfailing source of amusement because of their curious behaviour.

During my earliest youth first class passengers belonged to a superior group in the presence of whom it was necessary for the likes of Arny to maintain a reverent silence, for to speak would immediately reveal my humble origins. During the war first class compartments were occupied solely by officers, and out of bounds to ordinary mortals of lower rank, and thus the exclusivity was maintained. After 1946 until 1960 to 70 the monopoly of this superior accommodation gradually gave way to a new generation, the cost of whose travel was reimbursed by their employers. I refer, of course, to the group of 'executive' employees who eventually became known as 'Yuppies'.

As I sat luxuriating in the comfort of my seat, protected by its distinctive pure white antimacassar, I was in an ideal position to observe the behaviour of this species. After selecting a seat, removing jacket, and latterly ensuring that mobile telephone was at the ready, the brief case would be opened and various documents removed. They would then proceed, with varying degrees of intensity, to study intently the contents, in many cases also scribbling madly away, presumably to record their feelings about the printed word. Maybe one day some old and retired yuppie, having attained better days, will let me in on the secret. Whatever was it that kept them beavering away?

British Rail³ have the reputation for delayed and disrupted services but I have to say that during over twenty years of travel between Nottingham and London my train has only once been seriously late. One evening on a return journey the train was travelling noticeably slowly, and finally came to rest at Wellingborough station. After a wait of about fifteen minutes an announcement was made as follows:

“This train has failed”.

After what seemed an interminable wait of a further half hour a new proclamation clarified the situation:

“This train has *absolutely* failed”.

The hapless announcer then asked all passengers to leave the train, and board the following service to Nottingham, where we wearily arrived more than an hour behind schedule.

ooOoo

³ As it then was. Some say only the name has changed—Ed.