

The Pavior



The Newsletter
of
The High Pavement Society
(founded 1989)

August 2022

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: Vacant

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



**Faces to Remember
Malcolm Thomis
History Master at High Pavement
1960 - 63**

COMMITTEE NOTICES

ROBIN TAYLOR

We were informed by Anne, his wife of 70 years, that Robin Taylor died at the age of 85 on May 9th 2022 after a short illness.

Robin was a long serving member of the Society and for many years has acted as its efficient Treasurer, a task that often put great demands on his patience but he always overcame the difficulties and kept our finances in good order. His will be a hard act to follow.

At the invitation of his family a group of some 10 Old Paviers from the Society attended his funeral at the Gedling Crematorium and honoured Robin's memory with a heartfelt rendition of *Carmen Paviorem*.

ooOoo

LATEST ON THE GOLF DAY

An important notice for golfing Paviers from the Golf Day organiser

Following the recent notification of the Golf Day at Wollaton Park, sent to many members by email, (also sent to our fellow golfers in the Paviers RFC), I regret to say that I received zero response. Though a little disappointed, I suspect that most golfers might have regarded the price as a little high, even though the course is a very good one.

I have therefore withdrawn the booking.

However, I have now asked **Chilwell Manor Golf Club** to hold the **23rd September** as a provisional date. **The cost will now be a more acceptable £45**

As before, we would have:

bacon rolls from around 10:30,

first tee at 11:10 am,

a two course meal afterwards

(Non-playing guests will be welcome if booked at same time).

If you find this arrangement more suitable please contact me by post at

Apartment 11, Green Court, Moor Lane, Bingham, Notts. NG13 8AA

with the following data:

Name (and address)—Present Club—Handicap

Alternatively contact me by email ken.kirk@pagekirk.co.uk or phone on **07885 739981**

Ken Kirk, Golf Day Organiser

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THE HIGH PAVEMENT SIXTH FORM AWARDS EVENING 2022

A report by John Chambers

The Chairman of the HPS, Ken Kirk, supported by committee member Malcolm Pilkington and myself recently attended the end of term **Awards Evening** at High Pavement College¹, Chaucer Street, Nottingham.

A most impressive and enjoyable occasion it was, embracing a substantial number of awards. Appropriate certificates, and in some cases also mementoes, were handed out to students covering a wide range of academic subjects and also for exceptional attendance and meritorious activities.



It was rewarding to see an excellent turnout of recipients, their families and friends plus all of the staff involved, making for a fine atmosphere and a memorable evening.

High Pavement Principal, Adam Beazeley, and his excellent assistant, Dawn Ashley, made us very welcome and invited myself to say a few words about our school's history and the High Pavement Society, which was a source of considerable interest to those present

For some time I have been pushing for closer association with the college which events like this can only

assist. Unfortunately the current Principal may be moving on to higher office which could be a loss to the close relationship he has been keen to foster but I am sure that he will assist in our intention to build on the good relationship currently enjoyed.

12 A group of the many recipients pose with their support staff members, proudly displaying their Award Certificates. **Left to right**, they are:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| George Johnson - | Year 1 Student |
| Ramin Salehi - | Year 1 Student |
| Charlotte Stone - | Year 2 Student |
| Jacob Locke - | Pastoral Tutor |
| Elizabeth Edwards - | Year 1 Student |
| Tom Raynor-Banks - | Year 1 Student |
| Anya Matthews - | Pastoral Tutor |
| Jonathan Doering - | Pastoral Tutor |
| Kyle Hutchinson - | Pastoral Tutor |

(photo by John Chambers)

I myself was at the school from 1954 to 1961 and regard my education at the school as second to none and I am very keen to see the links develop between the Sixth Form and our Society. Unfortunately I am currently too involved with other activities to take up a committee role though I am happy to assist where I can.

New committee members are *urgently needed* and I ask anyone with the time to devote to this valuable work to please come on board.

John Chambers

ooOoo

¹ The customary title used by the Society members.

THE HPS ANNUAL REUNION LUNCHEON 2022

Preamble

There were considerable difficulties to be overcome by the Committee when they decided to continue with the traditional Reunion of members in the summer months. A date was chosen in June and it was decided to send out the invitations together with the May issue of *The Pavior*. This would give sufficient time to allow members to respond and notify our caterers. The Committee had decided to choose Welbeck Hall as the venue as it was more spacious than the rather cramped room at our last Reunion.

As announced elsewhere in this issue we had suffered the sad loss of Robin Taylor, our former treasurer and until the office of treasurer was reorganised we could not access our funds. Unfortunately this meant that our printers were unwilling to proceed with the invitations as we had been unable to settle our last account with them. There was a delay of some two weeks before the invitations could be sent.

There was also reluctance by some members to accept the higher rate charged for the celebration meal. The outcome of all these problems was a smaller number than usual attending, totalling twenty six members and guests. Now read on...

. On the day

Our event began on Tuesday 14th June in bright sunshine as a small group assembled at 11.00 am prior to the main activity. This group were to take part in a pre-lunch ramble around the Trentside area, led by John Chambers. This took us over the Suspension Bridge, that Nottingham landmark where we enjoyed the views up and down the river, for which

Nottingham is almost uniquely blessed. We then entered the War Memorial Gardens and inspected some of the interesting changes now taking place. As we emerged on to Victoria Embankment we heard a roar of enthusiastic cheering from the England – New Zealand Test Match in progress at the famous Notts County cricket ground, now in its fifth and final day.

After crossing Trent Bridge itself we negotiated the busy traffic route on to the island roundabout which contained the old arch of the former Trent Bridge to have a better look at this

On the Old Trent Bridge our group poses with their HP ties prominently displayed.

antiquity, so often ringed by streams of traffic. We managed to get a snapshot of some of our group on the bridge itself!

After this we walked the last stage past County Hall and joined the remainder of the Reunion for a welcome drink in the bar and the opportunity to meet friends old and new.



John Chambers is to be complimented on his innovation of an interesting and convivial beginning to our event.



The lunch in progress

An excellent lunch then followed, after which the Chairman, Ken Kirk, invited Alex Rae to introduce our Visiting Speaker: Emeritus **Professor Carolyn Steedman FBA** of Warwick University Department of History.

Dr Steedman has studied the works of Old Pavior and HP English teacher, Stanley Middleton and has earlier corresponded with the Society on the subject.

Her topic concerned a play written by Stan based on the abortive ‘Pentrich Revolution’ which took place in 1817, beginning at the village of Pentrich in Derbyshire. Variousy described as a revolution or a rebellion, it was England’s last armed uprising.

The play *The Captain from Nottingham*, (an allusion to Jeremiah Brandreth the principal leader of the rising) originally performed in the school, was also broadcast as a BBC radio play with members of the school dramatic society acting the major roles. We were honoured to have two of these Old Paviors, John Lacey and Nick Todd, at this Luncheon and they graciously acknowledged their identities.

Dr Steedman examined the play, which unusually had school-age actors developing strong themes dealing with anarchy and murder. She had explored the themes in depth and delivered a critical commentary of interest to us all.

Alex Rae proposed a vote of thanks to Dr Steedman for her learned discourse.

In keeping with our tradition Ken Kirk then assembled those Old Paviors present to form an impromptu ‘choir’ to sing the School Song *Carmen Paviorum*. As usual this was delivered with great *brio*, if not accuracy, and brought our Reunion to a triumphant conclusion.

[It’s worth mentioning that later in the day at Trent Bridge the England team went on to win the Test Match against New Zealand in great style. It was a day for great triumphs!]



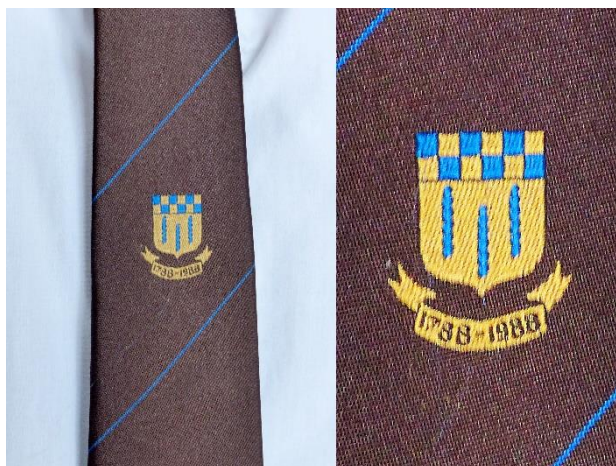
Dr Carolyn Steedman

ooOoo

An Unusual HP Tie

One of the guests attending the High Pavement Society Annual Luncheon wore a rather unusual tie (see photo). It is clearly a High Pavement tie and, from the dates below the shield '1788-1988' I would guess that it was a special tie created to mark the School's Bicentenary in 1988 (some 34 years ago). The owner of the tie, Arthur Lacey, recalls that it dates from around that time.

However, the current High Pavement Society was not founded until the following year 1989. Curiously, the colouring of the Shield is incorrect. The blue squares in the upper checker 'Pavement' should be dark brown and the lower part of the Shield should consist of yellow ears of wheat on a blue background (not the other way round as on the tie). Do any of our readers recall a Bicentenary Tie like this, and if so, do they know who produced it?



Regrettably, I was busy photographing the tie and forgot to take a photo of Arthur Lacey.
Graham Wybrow

THE H P SOCIETY TIE



This must be an opportune moment to draw attention to our regular notice. Our ties are now readily available for any member at a price of **£12.00** each including postage. Quality is excellent and enhances any formal Society occasion.

Please send your order with cheque to the Secretary (address on page 2). He will do the rest.

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BESTWOOD REMEMBERED

The Gymnasium

The Gymnasium was similar in size to the Main Hall. The Gym was 72 x 40 ft compared with the Main Hall² which was 87 x 42 ft (including the Stage) and 67 x 42 ft (excluding the Stage). For comparison, the Assembly Hall at Stanley Road was 70 x 32 ft.

The Gym had an excellent sprung pine floor. Coloured plastic tape (white, yellow & red) was used to provide markings for a Badminton Court, a Basketball Court and a 5-a-side Pitch.

In the 1960s, the Gym was also very well furnished with 'formal' gym equipment, much of which seems to have been removed since and does not appear in the photo (taken c2000).

Static equipment included Narrow Wall Bars down the whole west wall and two Basketball Hoops (see photo). Some equipment, although stored against the walls, could be brought out into the body of the gym using systems of ropes and, where necessary, small bolt holes in the floor to fix the equipment. Such semi-movable equipment included Large Aperture

² Excluding the Side Walkway.

Wall Frames³ on the north wall. These Large Aperture Wall Frames extended from floor, almost to ceiling height. They were made up of many square wooden apertures, each approximately 30 in square. I would estimate that each frame was composed of about five apertures horizontally and about seven vertically. Pupils would typically be



required to climb to the top (about 15 feet above floor level) using the apertures as a widely spaced ladder, then climb through the top aperture and down the other side. An arrangement of Horizontal Beams⁴ was mounted on the west wall. There were also two Rope Ladders, two Climbing Ropes and a set of Gymnastic Rings hanging from the roof.

Fully moveable equipment included a Pommel Horse and a Box Vaulting Horse (as featured in the film *The Wooden Horse*) and several long benches (as on the right hand side of the photo).

There was one rule that was very strictly enforced, namely ‘**No outdoor shoes in the Gym**’. I believe that this was to prevent the Gym floor from being marked by the black rubber soles which were common in boys’ day shoes at that time (even today, my local Sports Centre insists on ‘Non-Marking shoes only’). However, it could not be interpreted literally, as we would all wear the same shoes for Gym classes as for Cross-Country.

For a couple of months each summer (and for one week in January⁵) the Gym was transformed to provide its second major function, that of an excellent Examination Hall for the all-important GCE ‘O’, ‘A’ & ‘S’ Level) Examinations. Rolls of Hessian matting (like coarse sacking) were used to cover and protect the floor and five or six lines of individual examination desks were set out all facing the North wall (shown in picture) to which a single large wall clock was affixed. I would estimate that there were about 15 desks in each line. The Gym was excellent for this purpose as it was quiet with no visual distractions (only high windows), well illuminated and comfortably cool.

G Wybrow

[Editor’s footnote: *Some of us can remember the hideously inadequate gym equipment in the Hall at Stanley Road with its worn out wood-block floor. Apart from splinter danger it was dressed occasionally with an oil-based compound (‘to lay the dust’) that transferred almost indelible stains to the clothing and skin. The floor at Bestwood appears to be in another world entirely.]*

ooOoo

³ side. This was, of course, only possible when the Frame had been fixed in place after being pulled away from the wall.

⁴ Which allowed two parallel beams to be configured horizontally for practising Gate-Vaults.

⁵ For the ‘Mock’ GCE Examinations.

FROM OUR READERS
FROM DEREK TONKIN

More Metheringham Memories



Inspired by the reminiscences of Tommy Gee (February 2022) and Roy Taylor (May 2022), I thought I might pen a few of my own recollections about wartime harvest camps at Metheringham.

Metheringham Airfield, nearby, was operational, so their Museum website tells me, between November 1943 and the Spring of 1946. It was home to 106 Squadron RAF during the whole of this period and in the autumn of 1944 they were joined by 1690 Bomber Defence Training Flight. It was also a main staging post for the repatriation of American wounded after D-Day. 106 Squadron flew Avro Lancasters and that was most probably the type of aircraft which Roy Taylor says crash-landed 200 yards away from where he and his friends were working. There are accounts behind an online ‘paywall’ of exciting events at Metheringham on the *Wartime Memories Project* website, and it might be that this pancake landing features there.



106 Squadron was mostly engaged on night-time bombing sorties over Germany, but after the D-Day landings on 6 June 1944 they flew daytime sorties against targets in France, and those were the aircraft which we saw taking off in the morning and returning to base in the afternoon. Occasionally we would spot a Lancaster with one engine feathered, and I guess they could probably fly on just two out of four engines.

The farms I worked on in the summer of 1944 and 1945 were a mixed bag, and the farmers themselves variously tempered. Some treated us like family, so we worked all the more willingly. When loading stooked corn on to a trailer one day, the farmer asked me if I would like to drive the tractor on the fields as his other workers were better able than me to hoist stooks onto the trailer. I was only 15 at the time, but after a 10-minute lesson (three forward gears, one reverse, no accelerator, use the clutch for speed) I was up and away, with occasional protests from the workers if I let the clutch in too quickly and the trailer shuddered too violently.

When stooking wheat to dry, it was the practice for one or two workers to shoot rabbits and other wild-life as they sought to escape the advance of the threshing machine. I never felt all that comfortable about this as guns banged off right and left. I felt sorry for the rabbits, especially for those mangled by the threshing machines. It put me off blood-sports for life.

A Bad Guy farmer mistakenly thought we were borstal boys needing firm discipline. He never seemed to stop shouting at us, for no good reason. We stuck this for a day, and then complained to ‘Chick’ Farr who was one of the masters running the camp. We made it clear that we would not be returning. Mr Bad Guy was promptly boycotted by ‘Chick’ to our great relief. Generally, I was impressed by the devotion to work of the farm labourers, their wives, sons and daughters, who could merrily go on potato-picking all day long, while we soon became exhausted. Such a long way down too those elusive potatoes.

My mother, who was a farmer's daughter herself, seemed delighted that I had to learn the hard way.

Another experience was coming into contact with German and Italian prisoners of war. The Italians were hopeless, always skiving off behind the barns. One farmer sent me off to find out where his Italians were, and I soon found them snuggling down behind a stone wall flirting with two Land Army girls who saw nothing wrong about consorting with the enemy. That was in the summer of 1944. A few months later the Italians were no longer our enemies, becoming 'co-belligerents' in the words of their revolutionary leaders, so they were repatriated much sooner than the Germans.

German POWs on the other hand were a much sought after commodity, particularly if they came from farming families themselves. Our farmers invariably treated them with courtesy. They would be dropped off about 8.00 a.m. at the farm gates and collected again in the early evening. I was learning German at High Pavement so my budding linguistic talents were put to early use. After Christmas 1946 German POWs were allowed relative freedom of movement and there were some romances, as British farmers blessed with daughters and no sons saw Hans or Heinrich as a good bet to take over the farm eventually. Altogether, some 25,000 German POWs remained and settled in the UK after the last had returned home in 1948.

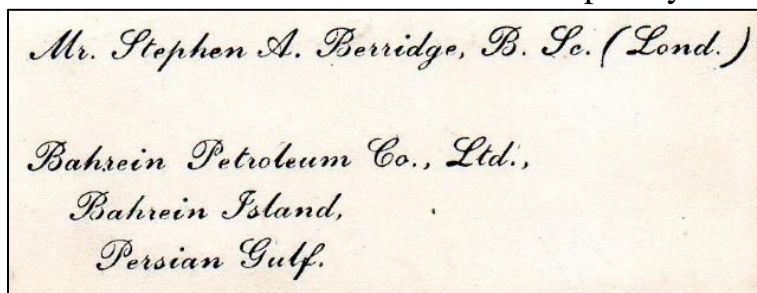
These adventures at Metheringham were formative, mostly remembered with pleasure and fondness, not least for the masters who ran the camps who were invariably up before we were and the last to bed. I have no recollection of how much I earned—or what I did with the money!

Derek Tonkin
High Pavement 1942-1948

ooOoo

FROM TOMMY GEE
A Pavior's Calling Card

Hello Colin, I have written before about my naval career as a Lieutenant Instructor, pointing out that it enabled me to travel around the world at the government's expense. I have described a visit to the oil fields developed by the British in the Middle East.



One person springs to mind namely an Old Pavior named Stephen Berridge. When I was in Kuwait on HMS Glasgow in 1946 he was the Chief Chemist opening up the Oil Field in Bahrein having graduated in 1933 (like so many other Paviors) via University

College Nottingham. I recall having lunch in the home of the British Resident, an Arab style building in what was then a sleepy village or town, and of being collected in one of the oil company's fleet of large black Humber cars and whisked across the desert, with Stephen explaining that there were massive developments ahead. As indeed there were..

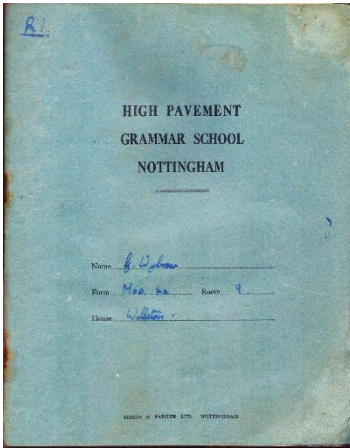
I recently found his card among my treasures, reminding me of how widespread the old school spread its alumni.

Tommy

FROM GRAHAM WYBROW

Exercise Books

When I joined High Pavement School (Gainsford Crescent) in 1959, I remember being very impressed to find that the Exercise Books used at the school were printed with the name of the School on the front cover. The Exercise Books were supplied by Sisson & Parker Ltd of Nottingham and were 8 in x 6½ in [204 x 162 mm] - surprisingly smaller than I remember them and smaller than the modern A4 standard 11¾ in x 8¼ in [297 x 210]. Each had 24 leaves and card covers with the pages held in place with two strong staples along the spine.



However, the High Pavement Exercise Books had different coloured covers depending on subject. This greatly helped finding the appropriate exercise book when required. However, this scheme only really worked for the years up to O-Level. In the Sixth Form, the similarity of subjects studied by each student tended to lead to exercise books of the same colour (e.g. those studying Maths and Physics would have *Blue* exercise books for all three A-Level subjects). Curiously, the exercise books used for History had covers of a quite different design. These were made of matt black card with a large white paper label stuck on the front. The montage above shows my own 'History' exercise book of this design which, in my case was used for 5th year 'Civics'.

Most Exercise Books had faint blue rulings of 'normal' width, with an inch margin ruled in red down the left-hand side of each page. However, the Blue Exercise Books used for Maths and Physics had faint blue narrow rulings and with NO ruled margin (we were always required to rule these ourselves).

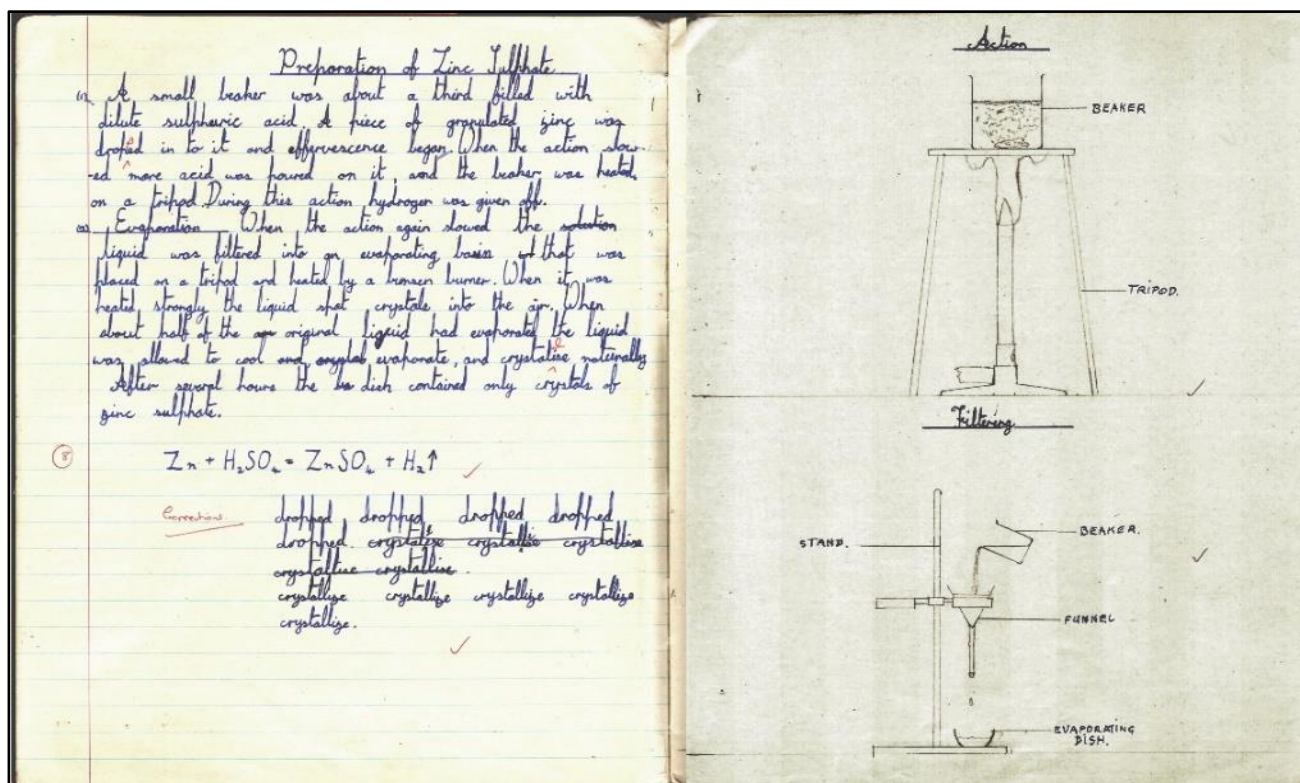
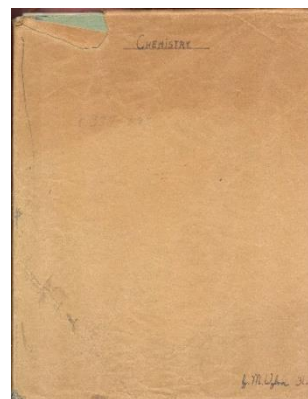
In addition to exercise books, all pupils were issued with a 'Jotter' for 'rough work'. This was a cheaply made 'exercise-type' book of similar size but made of thin poor quality paper (similar to newsprint) with a thin grey paper cover.

Those studying Science subjects would also be issued with a hard covered 'Lab Book' for the subject. Pupils were expected to treat their Lab Books with great respect and to cover them in brown paper for extra protection. These Lab Books were 10 in x 8 in [254 x 203 mm] each with 46 leaves. They had faint blue normal-width rulings on half of the pages (for text),

| Cover Colour | Subject |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Deep Red (Wine) | Latin / Classics |
| Pink | Geography |
| Orange | Chemistry |
| Yellow (Sand) | French / Modern Languages |
| Green (Mid-dark) | Biology |
| Blue (Mid-dark) | Maths, Physics |
| Grey | English |
| Black | History (different design) |
| Violet | Not used |
| Brown | Not used |

but these were interspersed with pages which were either plain (unruled) or graph rulings (1/2 in and 1/10 in) for diagrams, graphs, tables etc.

I include a photo of the cover (brown paper covered) of my 3rd year (age 12/13) Chemistry Lab Book and a copy of the first 2 pages to show the quality of my handwriting, spelling and drawing at that age. The teacher was John Preston (himself an Old Pavior)⁶ and he had a way of encouraging students to improve their spelling.



The first 2 pages of my 3rd Year Chemistry Lab Book. Note the compulsory spelling corrections, the mark - 8 (out of 10) and the quality of the drawing (mostly pencil with inked text). !

As always, if you can add any details / corrections to this article, please contact the Editor. Copies of *Pavior* newsletters are destined for the Archives and I always wonder, when writing them, what a reader in 200 years' time will make of it. I have consulted 200-year-old Archive articles myself and often wish that the author had included a bit more detail.

Graham Wybrow

[**Editor's Footnote 2:** *During the war years (my period) supplies ran very low and sometimes we were asked to bring stationery from our own resources. Generally we scraped by.*

The Chemistry Department, led by the redoubtable Croc, jealously guarded their jotters which were for Chemistry purposes only and it was a cardinal sin to use it for other subjects. However, Croc did manage to stretch this rule to include his first year Geography classes!]

Colin Salsbury

ooOoo

⁶ John Preston also went to my Infants / Junior School, namely Southwark Street School, Old Basford.

FROM GEORGE HEYWOOD
'Baked Alaska'

[George sends greetings from Alaska where (rather surprisingly) it has been very hot but in the US they still measure temperatures in Fahrenheit so I have added the Celsius values for those of us who now find them more familiar –Ed.]

Hello Colin and fellow Pavors,

Like you, we have had a glorious summer with temperatures in the mid to high 70's F (= mid 20s °C) most days but with no rain so there were high fire hazards. We were lucky in Anchorage but not so lucky up north with over **500** fires and only about 50 being manned (i.e tackled by firefighters) because they were dangerously close to communities. Some of these have had to be evacuated. A lot of these fires are started by lightning strikes with several days enduring over 2,000 strikes a day.

All over Alaska wildfires are spreading at a rapid pace. There have been 365 fires confirmed by the end of June 2022 (ref.: *Alaska Interagency Coordination Center Wildland Fire Dashboard*). Almost 1.8 million acres have burned, which exceeds the end of June acreage of any previous record fire year to date (i.e. 2004, 2005) since observational data began.



On a personal note we have not been back to the UK since 2018 due to the *Covid* virus but did go to Vegas in April for my 89th birthday and then in June to meet up with one of my granddaughters who had come over to run a half marathon in San Diego. Temperatures on our June visit topped 111°F (44°C!), with most days at 106°F.

◀ George and grand daughter both looking well.

Unfortunately *we* both had Covid on our return from the June trip. More fortunately we had both had our second boosters so the symptoms weren't too bad but we had to remain quarantined for 5 days. We were both given medication which no doubt helped. We discovered our infection by doing the home test.

The Covid problem doesn't seem to have gone away. Cases have reduced a little but still quite high but the number of people in hospital has been reduced considerably.

My thoughts on HP are still the same as I have mentioned in other articles. I loved my time at HP and I know it was instrumental in my careers both in the Navy and in the Oil business. I left the Navy (submarine service) in 1963 and the Oil business in 2021.

George

ooOoo

FROM CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH

[Christopher Joseph is a members of the Society whose connection with HP was as a member of staff, rather than as a pupil. He writes here about a well-known colleague at HP]

Dr Roger Dalton – Colleague and Friend

An Appreciation

I am writing to deliver the sad news of the death of my great friend Roger Dalton, or more formally Dr Roger Dalton. Roger died on 14th March aged 85, but the funeral was not held until 6th April.

Born in Reading 1936, he graduated from Reading University in 1957 with a BA in Geography, becoming MA in 1959.

Roger was a member of staff at High Pavement from 1961 and when I arrived at HPGS as the most junior geographer Roger was number two to the legendary Eric Shepherd.

I feel I owe so much to Roger. My first year was the 'Great Winter' of 1962-63 when I nearly froze and was ill twice. We had a disastrous field trip to a study centre near Malham where the accommodation wasn't properly finished because the winter weather had held up operations. The boys in our party were seemingly only interested in a girls' school group at the same address and were consequently rather ill-disciplined. By the end of our stay I could have quit.

However, Roger took me off to what I think was The Red Lion at Burnsall and with a few hearty meals and plenty of red wine encouraged me to stay in teaching. The rest, as they say, is history.

As time passed I think Roger knew how school reorganisation was developing and he left before I did to work at what was then Lincoln Teacher Training College, (which bore the rather fancy name of Bishop Grosseteste College). The cold wind of the Comprehensive revolution promised to blow our jobs away and neither of us stayed to see HP become a Sixth Form College.

From Lincoln Roger went on to become Head of the Department of Geography at Bishop Lonsdale College, Derby in 1972, which later became part of Derby University. Here he built up the Department and was effectively Professor by the time he retired. In 1996 he crowned his qualifications with a PhD from Nottingham University after 10 years part-time study.

Roger was a lovely man, quiet, calm and devoted to his family, his subject and his students. In retirement he published works on local geography, but his strength was in his teaching rather than obscure research.

We always kept in touch, although, as I later lived in Marlborough, it became an annual trip up to Etwall where he and Frances were so happily settled.

In his later years lack of mobility and then prostate cancer limited his life, but he never complained. I didn't find out about the end as, sadly, my own health problems prevented me from getting to the service.

Another good man and one of my last remaining really strong friends, now gone.

Christopher Joseph

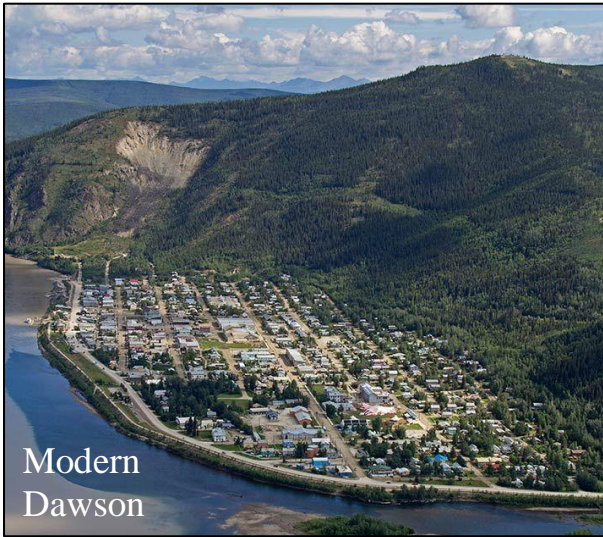
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OUR END PIECE
FROM TREVOR JONES
America to Canada 1994

[We have enjoyed our globe-trotting Pavior's travels through Canada and, earlier, the United States Now he tackles the Arctic Circle and Alaska.]

Alaska Adventure

With our friend Rachel aboard we left Whitehorse (we were in the Yukon area of Canada) and drove up to Dawson Creek, an old gold mining town, It was like driving into an old western film set. They had a famous old fashioned gambling hall called 'Diamond Tooth Gertie's' which we just *had* to try out but we were as successful there as we were in Las Vegas!



reds and pinks - quite stunning.

We arrived at the Arctic Circle at 2.00 am and decided to get the obligatory photos taken right away. Unfortunately, we'd picked the two weeks of the year that mosquitos have their annual 'summer camp' up there. These mosquitos weren't just big - they were huge - and could they bite! However, the intrepid traveller has many obstacles to overcome and this was just another one of those times. We could talk and laugh about it later - after the lumps had gone!

As there was no chance of sleeping (the bites we're seeing to that), we decided to head straight back to Dawson, filling up with petrol at Eagle Plains - they were open even at that time in the early morning. We stopped at Dawson for breakfast, topped the petrol up again (remembering never to pass a petrol station up there - remember!) then headed west on 'The Top of the World' highway towards Alaska (part of the USA, remember). This road was unique in as much as it crossed an actual river by ferry - with no charge! Rachel then told us that we were heading for a place called 'Chicken' which she'd always wanted to visit.

At the Yukon/Alaska border, we again met a 'guilty-until-proven-innocent' female border guard. Whether it was because we'd caused her to have to do something for once, or that it was July 4th (American Independence Day) and she was stuck there out in the sticks, I don't know, but she insisted I get out of the car to show her our passports and also give her the reason for us going into Alaska, where were we going and for how long. After 20 minutes of standing there explaining everything twice over and again being bitten by a slightly smaller version of the Arctic Circle mosquitos, she let us through.

We arrived in 'Chicken', to be greeted by the obligatory town sign (see right >) If ever there was a one-off place on Earth, Chicken, Alaska was it. It was like a U-shaped cul-de-sac with a few houses, and a place that looked like a store and a pub. Outside the 'pub' was a rocking chair which had a sign over it saying '*Old Grump's Chair*'. We walked into the pub and asked who the Old Grump was - and the landlord and his wife pointed at each other! Chicken was, in earlier times, a gold mining town with a much bigger community and was initially called '*Ptarmigan*' because of that bird's breeding grounds all around there. Unfortunately, hardly anyone could spell or even pronounce Ptarmigan (can you?) so they settled for 'Chicken' instead!

As it was Independence Day, the flags and bunting were out and everyone was in party mood. Once again we were inundated with questions such as: 'Why we were *there* in the middle of nowhere?' 'What were we doing?' 'Where had we been?' 'Where were we going next?' etc etc. We had a great couple of hours there, but then decided to head straight back to Whitehorse so we wouldn't have to sleep in the car again. We said our goodbyes and headed off south east, still none the wiser as to what it was the twenty seven remaining 'Chicken' residents actually did up there! This time the border guard was fine with us, just stamped our passports and waved us on our way (probably because we were *leaving* American soil)!

Back in Whitehorse, we relaxed for a couple of days, then Ed (Rachel's dad) asked me if I'd like another trip out in the plane as a friend of his had just finished renovating. It was a Canadian Air Force 2-seater trainer plane and was taking a photographer friend of his for a spin. We flew over some incredible scenery, forests, small mountains, rivers etc,

At this point Ed told me we were going to land for some coffee. I couldn't see *anywhere* within a 100 miles where you could possibly land, but as we dropped lower, a landing strip appeared in the shape of a narrow field where we parked up and had a coffee.

The day came when we had to say goodbye to Rachel's family and Ed, having learned that I saved baseball type caps, presented me with a limited edition, 150-year Anniversary Royal Canadian Mounted Police cap which was evidently only presented to the top RCMP officials (Ed being one of them) and he'd somehow got hold of another one for me (how kind!).

So we headed back south and a few hours into the journey, got a message from *another* friend whom we'd met in New Zealand asking us how were we and, for that matter, where in the world? He told us that he was in William's Lake, British Columbia. Tricia messaged him back, telling him that we'd be there sometime tomorrow as we were just driving back from Alaska to Kamloops - small world eh!

We finally arrived back in Kamloops, cleaned the car (i.e. put it through a car wash) and returned it that night to the hire company. The lady there gave it the once over, thanked us for cleaning it, did the paperwork and thanked us for using them. I'd have loved to have seen the boss's face the next day when he checked the (unlimited) mileage - remember, we *had* said perhaps a 300 mile trip. From memory, I think we must have done well over 5000 miles!

We stayed a few more nights in Kamloops telling everyone what we'd done and where we'd been, then it was time to move on. We booked a 7- day pass on the Greyhound buses - it was cheaper than doing it from place to place - and headed east. Next stop Toronto. **Trevor**

**Welcome to
Chicken, Alaska
Population :- 26 Normal People
& 1 Old Grump**