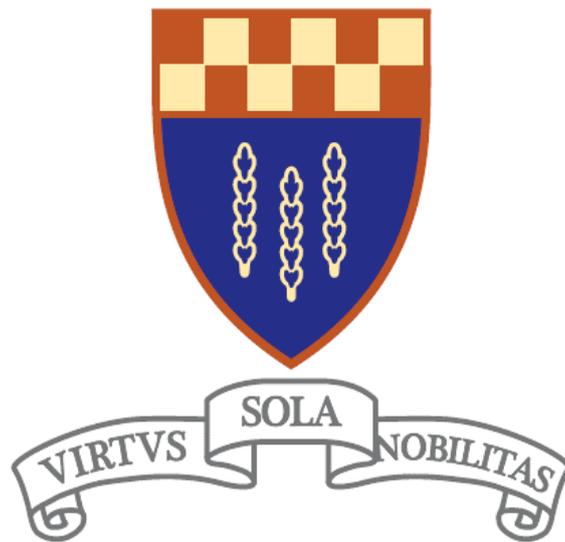


The Pavior



The Newsletter
of
The High Pavement Society
(founded 1989)

November 2019

Your Committee

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

President: Ken Kirk

Committee Chairman: Ken Kirk 0115 9568650

Deputy Chairman: John Elliott 0115 9266475

Secretary: Colin Salsbury 01509 558764

Treasurer: Robin Taylor 0115 9609483

(robinatnottm@aol.com)

Registrar: Alex Rae

Editor: Colin Salsbury 01509 558764

Archivist: Graham Wybrow 0115 9626249

Committee Members:

John Jalland

John Mason

Malcolm Pilkington 01623 491260

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
Thomas Ormanroyd
Languages Master at HP
1950-61

COMMITTEE NOTICE

Increase in Members' Subscriptions in July 2020

The committee wish to draw members' attention to the changes in the constitution made at the recent AGM and described in detail on p. 13.

It will be necessary for all subscribing members to **notify their banks** that their Standing Orders must be increased from **£10 to £15 per annum** in time for the renewal in July 2020.

Those few ordinary members who have yet to adopt the Standing Order as our preferred method of payment should take steps to ensure that their subscription payments of **£15** are made to the Treasurer **on or before July 1st 2020**. Please do not wait to be asked!

ooOoo

EDITORIAL

We have established contact with the well-known 'Paviors RFC' who were a vigorous offshoot (if they'll pardon that expression) of the former HP Old Boys Club, now long defunct. The Paviors are still active and have recruited many former pupils of the school, including at least one from our ranks. It is our intention to continue this 'happy liaison' in the future and their secretary has sent the letter on page 9 which I recommend you read.

My thanks to those people who responded to my appeal in the last issue of *The Pavior* for contributions. We have received much usable material and some will appear in future issues as well as this one. It would appear that *The Pavior* is a welcome item when it drops through members' letter boxes. As one member told me over a glass or two 'I read it from cover to cover!'

Colin Salsbury

ooOoo

FROM OUR READERS

FROM KEN MOULDS

[Ken has been a valuable contributor of many material items to the Society including some very useful documents (such as the GCE passes for his year, totalling some 175 persons!), The 1951 prize-giving Programme, many copies of the Pavior etc etc. An invaluable collection. Now he sets out his reminiscences of School and Life.]

The Mumbblings of Moulds

I was two years old when the Second World War started. My father had enlisted in the army because he reasoned this would enable him to *choose* a trade, rather than suffer one that might be thrust upon him by conscription. I believe I was about three years old the last time I saw him, as he did not come home after the war, though he was not killed.

My mother spent the next 14 years on her own, bringing up myself and my older sister. She was not clever and being born in 1912 left school, as many did, at the age of 14. By the time I left school she had turned 40 and never remarried. My sister's potential for academic



achievement was probably greater than mine, but because of suspected tuberculosis she had spent 6 months away from school and failed the eleven plus, the exams unfortunately occurring exactly one week after she returned to school. Much to *my* amazement I passed the eleven plus and became a pupil at HP.

The cost, as we all know, was considerable as blazer, cap, tie, rugby shirt (Trent House), cricket whites, boots, gym shirt etc. all had to be found.

They were probably all bought on 'Provident cheques'. In those days, at least where I lived, people did not like to owe money. Rent was the first thing to be paid out of mother's wage and of course food and the Provident repayments. There was precious little left for entertainment and I think that the situation contributed to mother not going out and meeting members of the opposite sex. So, with no help possible with homework and probably a lack of dedication on my part, I worked my way down gradually, starting high and finishing in General 5.

For me, most of the teachers I knew were called 'Sir' as their Christian names were unknown to me, and if they were, I would not have dared to use them. I enjoyed maths, science and woodwork lessons but the rest were much of a mystery to me, particularly languages. As far as German was concerned, my only recollection is, '*der Vogel fliegt in der Luft*'. However, I have progressed as I can now do a rendition of '*Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss, auf liebe enigestellt, denn das ist meine Welt und sonst gar nichts*', performed with leg on table, trouser leg rolled up above sock exposing a tantalising view of calf. Not quite Marlene Dietrich, but gets more laughs! (No requests please, fully booked!) My apologies to the true scholars of German.

I was quite good at cross country running and clearly remember one memorable day at Strelley when the first four home were Daley, Newton, West and Moulds, *all of Trent house*.

The sport I played far more than any other was table tennis. I remember going on a school visit where we stayed for a few days at the Youth Hostel in Whitby. On the first morning we found a table tennis table and started playing around 8.0 a.m. much to the chagrin of Mr Farr who personally took the net off the table and banned any further use. Too late! I had got the bug, and played for nearly 50 years, as did a present member Brian Collyer and a departed colleague, Geoff Gooch.

(For some reason this has set me thinking about the science lessons. I am sure many of you will recall 'Killer' Carter, who took great delight in slapping boys' faces - try that today!)

When I was 16 years old, it was time to leave school, even had I been clever enough to stay on, for money was still short. So a job was essential. Starting work was quite an eye-opener for me. You will realise that my home upbringing was totally female and their thoughts, desires and concerns were, to some extent, absorbed by me as there was no male presence to act as a counter-balance. I started work at Raleigh Industries Ltd, the cycle manufacturers in Nottingham. Even here, the hierarchy were all known as 'Sir'.

Initially I worked in the offices of the Transport & Vehicle Maintenance department. I therefore came into contact with lorry drivers and garage mechanics, who, it seemed to me, had received no education at all and I found their language and behaviour (particularly when referring to the opposite sex) acutely embarrassing. However, survival was always top of my agenda, so eventually I became immune and if anyone wanted to call a spade a shovel, I didn't blink an eye!

In my 30s I met Janice, who also played table tennis and we married in 1973. She has been my rock and has supported me through thick and thin, we are a great team. In my late thirties I again took up running and eventually completed the half marathon in 1:25 and the full marathon a week later in 3:10, which I was happy with, although I had hoped to achieve a time of less than 3 hours in view of my half-marathon time.

However, a few years later the dreaded coronary heart disease struck, resulting in pain whilst running, so that career was necessarily over. Four heart attacks and stents and angioplasties followed later, I carry on, having been a guest in most of the midlands hospitals!

Finally, retirement arrived and, since the need to accumulate money was no longer a priority, it was the second happiest day of my life. I could now do as I wished.

I am now reasonably accomplished at DIY, which, as far as I am concerned, stands for 'Determined Indefatigable Yokel'. (For those of you not of a scientific persuasion please refer to the web for an explanation of the following, as it would take up too much space to explain here.) I have built a lateral multiple pendulum device and probably a unique circular multi-pendulum device. These have been demonstrated on our 'pop up' science days at the National Trust property of Woolsthorpe Manor the birth place of Sir Isaac Newton. Finally after months of work last year, I designed and built a Foucault pendulum. This has now been installed at the Manor and is displayed in their science section, operating 24/7. When they tire of it I will place it on the open market.

Ken Moulds

[Your editor remembers Killer Carter who took him for 3rd year maths and a very good teacher he was. He took over from the gentle Miss Westmoreland, with whom we had been somewhat ill-disciplined. She had left HP to return to less demanding duties at another school.

FROM GRAHAM WYBROW

[GW recalls that it was, and perhaps still is, customary to allow youngsters to play, uninvited, in games of beach cricket, which they did by joining the fielders (usually there weren't any teams). He has unearthed this extract from the pages of 'The Children's Newspaper', October 9th 1954.

The 'CN', a well-intentioned publication, but with a rather boring appearance, appealed to parents who would buy it for their offspring to read in the hope it would enlighten them, rather than the usual comics (which were more popular).



This extract was taken from a regular weekly column in the CN called 'The Editor's Table' a miscellany of gossipy gleanings from many sources. Cricket enthusiasts will remember Reg Simpson who went on to play for England and rose to become the Notts CC team captain.-Ed.]

THE BOY WHO JOINED IN THE GAME

AN interesting story of the boyhood of an England cricket player was told the other day by Mr. R. Crossland, deputy headmaster of the High Pavement School, Nottingham.

He recollected that some years ago, during a game of cricket on the sands at a Lincolnshire seaside resort, a small boy joined his party, and fielded without being asked. After a while the boy was asked if he would like to bat.

"That was at eleven o'clock in the morning," said Mr. Crossland. "He was still in at one o'clock, and we had bowled everything at him.

"His name was Reg. Simpson. He had just started at the High School, had every stroke in the book, and he has had them ever since."

FROM GERALD TAYLOR

I read the appeal in the August *Pavior* by Norman Collins for information about athlete Bob Haywood and would like to offer a few comments. Norman mentions a mile run in 4 minutes 31 seconds by Bob Haywood in 1955 or 1956 and suggests that this may still be a school record.

Possibly it is; but I don't know whether *all* athletic performances were valid for consideration as setting records. However, I do recall that a Martin Winfield (or Wingfield, more likely the latter, I think) ran a mile in 4 minutes 26 seconds sometime around 1970. A member of the staff remarked that there was no hope, alas, of his making it into a four-minute mile, at least while still a *Pavior*, as he was due to leave in three weeks!

But whether or not Bob Haywood's performance is recognised still as the record, it is undoubtedly an extraordinary achievement. So far as I had ever bothered to think about the matter, I had supposed that the hard part of running a four-minute mile was to maintain the necessary speed of *15 mph* for four minutes (!) That much seems obvious.

Well, some years ago on a treadmill (that I believe was correctly calibrated) I was surprised at how much steam I had to put on even to reach that speed: it was not far off a flat-out sprint for me, and might have been kept up for four seconds but certainly nothing like four minutes. So Bob Haywood's mile in four minutes 26 seconds certainly fills me with awe.

On the subject of athletic records, there was a plaque in the assembly hall that bore the names of athletic champions of the school. Quite a lot of the records were ascribed to a J. Rutt of Newstead House in 1956. He must have been a mighty athlete, but I do not think there has been mention of him in our newsletters, and the year in question was well before my time at High Pavement.

Gerald Taylor (1964-71)



[Editor's note: The name J Rutt has cropped up in the past in the November 2010 Pavior. John Elliott then wrote:

John Rutt, who has died after a long illness, aged 67, was the youngest member of a family of six brothers and a sister and went to High Pavement in 1954. Two of the brothers, the twins Keith and Clive, also great sportsmen, preceded him at the school eleven years earlier.

He was nicknamed Ben after 'Big Ben' because of his size and sporting prowess; he won the 220 yards English Schoolboys Championship in County Durham in 1957. John followed a career as a teacher in Nottingham and later in London. He visited Canada for a year on an exchange, returning to England in 1970 to settle in Putney when he married Jane. They had twin boys, Tom and Sam.

John died on October 10th 2010 after a long illness.]

ooOoo

FROM JOHN CHAMBERS

High Pavement Rugby Legends—and a ‘never was’

I had a splendid time earlier this year at Nottingham Rugby Club in the presence of several Old Pavior rugby legends. In the

Outside the clubhouse

L to R: Bob Studholme, Bob Feeney (ex Forest Fields Grammar - Stanley Road of course), myself, John Pallant, John Elliott, Paul Irons (not an Old Pavior) and another gentleman not known to me, guest of one of the group.



marquee which currently serves as the ‘clubhouse’ I met up with ex-Nottingham Rugby players: Bob Studholme who played for England Schoolboys, John Pallant who gained 3 full England caps, and a former classmate John Elliott.

John, who was on the bench several times for England, played for Leicester Tigers and the Baba’s and was assistant manager for England at the time when Geoff Cooke was the manager and remains highly respected in the game. All these were Old Paviers. Also with us were two ex-Nottingham rugby players: Bob Feeney, ex-Forest Fields Grammar at Stanley Road and Paul Irons, who I believe is still Nottingham Rugby’s top try scorer¹.

I myself was no star rugby player, playing only on games afternoons and house matches for Basford House. My only claim to fame is hooking against John Elliott of Sherwood House in house matches. As we went into the clubhouse at this gathering I couldn’t help saying to the others ‘It’s great to be amongst so many distinguished *has-beens*, though here am I, a *never was!*’

My own sport was cross country for which I did get my school colours and this brings to mind another, rather sad, memory from my last year at the school.

In my final year, 1961, we raced in the County Championships at Wollaton Park. We competed as teams of 8 with the first 4 scoring according to their placing. As is usual in cross country, the team with the lowest overall score were winners.

I was our last scorer in 16th place. In front of me for the school came Chris Hall (unusually for a long distance runner he was also a very good sprinter), Matt Thornhill and Cliff Knapton, though I’m not sure in which order. (I believe that one of our current HPS members, Peter Preston, may also have been in that same team in 1961.)

Cliff was an outstanding pupil, also a very good rugby player and cricketer for which sports I believe he won school colours. Also very good academically and School Vice-Captain, Cliff went off to Loughborough



Cliff Knapton

¹ His father, the late Eric Irons, has recently had a plaque placed in his memory at the National Justice Museum (the Old Shire Hall on High Pavement in the Lace Market) in recognition of his being the first black magistrate in this country.

College to study Engineering in the September of that same year. Alas, in only his first couple of weeks at Loughborough he was killed in a freak swimming accident when diving in from the poolside. A chance in a million and what a tragedy.



Matt Thornhill

Matt Thornhill was a fine runner too and together with John Whetton of Olympic fame and other helpers he helped organise the first Nottingham Half Marathon in 1981 and the full Marathon in 1982. He was a keen Scout Leader and, when only in his early 50's, he went abroad on a Scouts' gathering. However, on returning home he was found to have contracted a serious illness to which he sadly succumbed. Such is the tenuous thread by

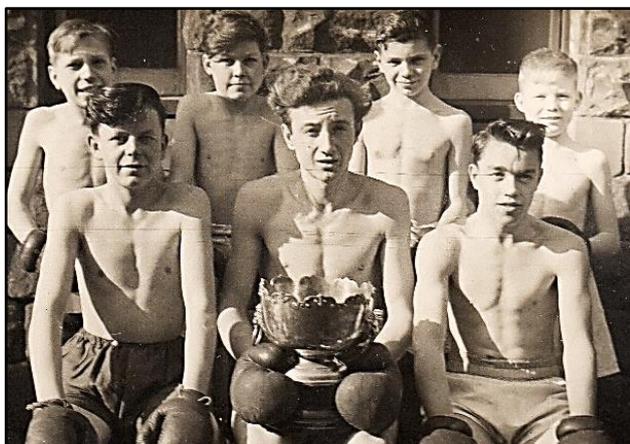
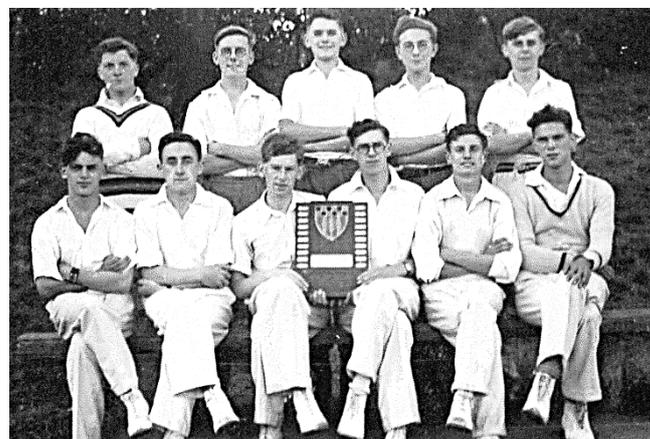
which our lives do hang.

I know not what happened to Chris, hopefully he is still going strong. Very sad aspects to this reminiscence but happy days they were and I cherish fine memories of great people.

John Chambers

FROM KEITH WOOLLEY

[Keith has sent us a few snaps from his album. (We also received comprehensive identification for the team shots but there wasn't enough room for that or for two other pictures.) Anyway, were you on any of them?]



Top left: 1950/51 1st XV (except there are only 14! Tom Walters was missing).
Right: School/Forest 1st XI 1949 Cricket Shield winners.
Bottom left: School House Boxing Championship, I am the worried one holding the Cup.
Right: Youth Hostelling with the HP-Manning Joint 6th Form Group Easter 1951. Centre is Norman Richards (aka 'NuDRah'). Left is 'Nicky' Nicholson (Photo: Patricia Allen, also from the Manning).

FROM NEIL KENDRICK
(Paviors Rugby Club)

Dear Colin

Robin Taylor informs me that you want me to make contact about our activities.

As he may have explained I edit the newsletter for Paviors Rugby Club which mainly keeps us in touch with past players, many of whom are High Pavement Old Boys. We meet formally once or twice a year, though many Old Paviors are frequent visitors to the club itself. John Elliot, I know is on your committee, (I wrote a chapter of my book on Gedling sport about John's rugby career - he's a lovely man... but I digress.)

It has been suggested to me that I approach you as Secretary of your society to see if you would want something about the club and its fortunes to put in your newsletter?

2022 sees the Centenary of the club's foundation and it would be good to link up with a group like yours at some stage. Phil Barton our club's historian may have been in touch with you about his research for our Centenary Book.

It has already been suggested that we formally invite your members up to a game one Saturday during this season with a view to ongoing joint activities.

Perhaps I could put a regular item in your newsletter and from that maybe some more formal link between our club and your Society of former HP pupils will develop.

Kind Regards,

Neil Kendrick

ooOoo

BRIAN KNIGHT

We have received word from his brother-in-law John Mason that our member **Brian Knight** passed away, aged 83, in the John Ratcliff Hospital, Oxford on the 12th of September after a short deterioration of his health following the death of his wife Eunice earlier in the year.

His funeral was held on 11th of October at the South Oxford Crematorium near Wantage, when the Society was represented by John Mason.

The Society sends its sincere condolences to Brian's family

ooOoo

2019 HIGH PAVEMENT SOCIETY PRIZE AWARD PRESENTATIONS

The presentation ceremony at 11.30 am on Thursday 19th September 2019, was held at High Pavement Sixth Form (Nottingham College) in Chaucer Street, Nottingham. Members of the Society's Committee were joined by members of High Pavement staff and some of the recipients of the 2019 High Pavement Society Prize Awards for 2019.

There were 5 awards this year instead of the usual four*:

Shannon Mower
Gabriella Sheard
Simranjeet Singh
Jessica Daniels
Jack Warren

Award for Excellence (Female)
Award for Excellence (Female)
Award for Excellence (Male)
Stanley Middleton Literature Award
Ken Bateman Award for Engineering

Owing to the early commencement of some university terms only Jessica Daniels was present to receive her award in person from Ken Kirk, President of the HP Society. She was supported for the occasion by her twin sister, Heather. Jack Warren was represented by his father and sister who received the award on his behalf from the President.

The remaining awards were accepted for delivery to



▲ Jessica Daniels displays her Stanley Middleton Award certificate, presented to her by Ken Kirk (right), with Alex MacDonald (left).

◀ Jack Warren's father and sister, display the Ken Bateman Award certificate, received on his behalf from Ken Kirk.

their recipients by Alex MacDonald, Head of Faculty at High Pavement Sixth Form.

Informal discussions followed, accompanied by light refreshments, before the ceremony closed at 12.30pm.

*[*This year, rather surprisingly, there were two candidates for the female Award for Excellence, since they had both achieved exactly equal UCAS points. The committee decided not to divide the usual prize but to award an extra sum of £150 to make all the awards of equal value.]*

ooOoo

HIGH PAVEMENT TROPHIES (Part 2)

[Continuing the review of former school trophies in the Society's care, by Graham Wybrow.]

1932 Otter Trophy

No Inscription



This Trophy was first awarded in 1932. The animal looks like an otter to me, so I think it may have been a trophy for Swimming. Like the Cricket and Cross-Country trophies, it also looks as if it might have been made (or assembled) in the School Craft Dept.



As it would appear to pre-date the other two trophies described in this article, it might even have been a prototype or 'proof of concept'. Unlike the other two trophies, this one does not seem to have been awarded during the War (39-45) nor was it awarded afterwards (although the other two were).

There is a silver plaque on the back (not shown in photographs), listing the Trophy Winners:

1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Woll/ News	Wollaton	Wollaton	Newstead	Newstead	School	Newstead

1933 Cross-Country Trophy



Inscription

High Pavement School Cross Country

This Trophy was first awarded in 1933. Like the Cricket Trophy that was first awarded at about the same time, it is thought likely that this was also made within the school Craft Dept.

Dimensions: Height 26cms, Width 40.5cms, Depth 16.5cms, Weight 3100g.

HOLDERS

1933	Forest	1938	School	1945	School	1950	Newstead
1934	Newstead	1939	School	1946	Sherwood	1951	Forest
1935	Wollaton	1942	Trent	1947	Newstead	1952	Sherwood
1936	School	1943	School House	1948	Wollaton	1953	Sherwood
1937	Wollaton	1944	School & Basford	1949	Wollaton		
1982	Woodthorpe	1984	Sherwood	1986	Woodthorpe		
1983	Forest	1985	Wollaton	1987	Newstead		

It is significant that this Trophy was NOT awarded in the years 1940-41, presumably because of wartime restrictions. There appear to be joint winners in 1944. As was the case with the Cricket Trophy, this Trophy was NOT awarded in the 28 years from 1954-81.

1934 Inter-House Cricket Trophy

Inscription

**High Pavement College
INTER-HOUSE CRICKET**

Motto

VIRTUS SOLA NOBILITAS



The trophy consists of a large wooden panel (approx 18 in x 12in) with a thickened base which carries a detailed wood carving. The central title plate is inscribed *High Pavement College*. However, since the Trophy was first awarded in 1934 this plate would appear to be a much later addition. The carving on the base shows, in the centre, two crossed cricket bats interlaced with a laurel wreath. At each end there is a set of stumps, all interlaced with a long, flowing



ribbon.

The Trophy shows a degree of considerable craftsmanship, both in woodwork and in the construction of the colourful School Badge, which appears to be vitreous enamel (essentially formed from molten coloured glass) on an engraved shiny metal substrate.

The Trophy is likely to have originated in the early 1930s, in the midst of the 1930s depression and one wonders if it was ‘home-made’ in the school Craft 12 department, either by one of the masters or students. This would also have been shortly after the departure of the girls to the new Manning School and one wonders if the school’s collection of trophies was shared with Manning at that time. (Does anybody have any information about this?)

1934	Sherwood	1939	Forest	1944	Wollaton	1949	School & Forest
1935	Basford	1940	Forest	1945	Sherwood	1950	Basford & Trent
1936	Sherwood	1941	Wollaton	1946	Forest	1951	Sh & Wd
1937	Wollaton	1942	Wollaton	1947	Basford	1952	Basford & Trent
1938	Basford	1943	Sherwood	1948	Newstead	1953	Sh, Wd, Wo, Ne
1982	Newstead	1984	Basford	1986	Woodthorpe	1988	Arnold
1983	Wollaton	1985	Sherwood	1987	Arnold		

It is significant that there was no break in the awards of this trophy in the war years 1939-45 (unlike the similar Cross-Country Trophy). From 1949-52, houses seem to have been paired for the competition. In 1953, there are **four** houses credited with the win.

There is a break in the award of this trophy for some 28 years from 1954-1981. The School moved from Stanley Road to Gainsford Crescent in 1955, but otherwise the reason is unknown. A new house ‘Arnold’ appears in 1987. Was this a replacement for School House after the transition to a 6th-Form College ?

Graham Wybrow

[See also the photo on p.8 from Keith Woolley -Ed.]

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

This year's AGM was held at 12 noon in the *Poppy and Pint Inn*, West Bridgford, Nottingham. Some 29 members attended in person and an additional 10 members authorised their proxy votes. The meeting was therefore comfortably quorate.

Ken Kirk, President of the Society chaired the meeting and bade the assembled members welcome. The business was briskly executed, including a detailed financial statement by the Treasurer Robin Taylor.

The meeting implemented three interesting changes to the Constitution. These were:

- a) A reduction in the quorum required to 10 members (previously 15).
- b) An increase in the annual subscription from July 2020 to £15 (previously £10).
- c) To permit the use of email for Society business, where available, as well as postal arrangements. This to include notifications of general meetings (previously postal only).

An appeal for more committee members resulted in two members volunteering their services: John Jalland and Alex Rae.

The Chairman announced that it was hoped to repeat the Society's November Remembrance Ceremony at the High Pavement War Memorial housed in the High Pavement Sixth Form building in Chaucer Street, Nottingham on November 8th.

THE HPS AUTUMN LUNCHEON AND SOCIAL

This social gathering was also held in the *Poppy and Pint Inn* and followed immediately after the conclusion of the AGM. Those not participating in the meeting had been relaxing in the lounge bar. Our good friend Elisabeth Tomlinson had been most diligent in selling tickets for our traditional fun-raising raffle consisting mainly of bottles of wine contributed by the committee and other supporters within the Society.



We reassembled in the function room at about 12.45 pm and sales of raffle tickets continued as we sipped our pre-prandial drinks. Our sincere thanks go to Elisabeth for her efforts.

There were 42 members and their guests present, who only just fitted into the rather small function room. However the atmosphere throbbed with conversation from the word 'Go!' At this point the food began to appear and the lunch proceeded but... although the P & P staff strove hard to

deliver, the service was very slow and some of us had to wait patiently until our eats arrived,

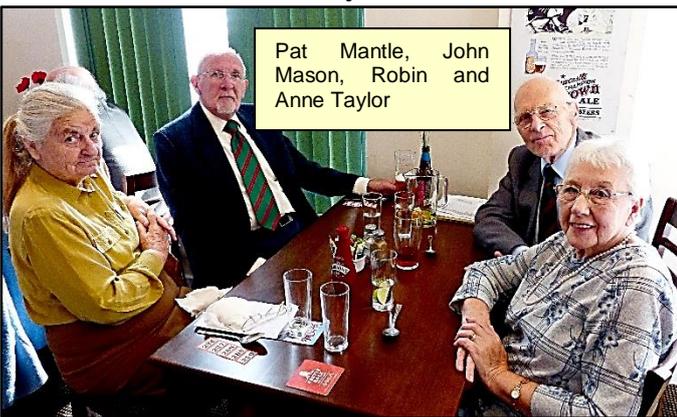
just as the early clients finished theirs. The menu was on the plain side but portions were



Above left: Barry and Helena Johnson chat with Tony Wheadon and Keith Woolley (extreme left).
Right: The wonderfully hirsute Mike Nesbitt and his wife Jayne, chat with Alison Fisher (front) and her sister Marian Selke.



substantial, almost intimidating. When a convenient interval developed we drew the raffle and the lucky winners received something to take home in triumph. Support had been good and a sum of £73 was handed to the treasurer.



Pat Mantle, John Mason, Robin and Anne Taylor

And so the early afternoon continued with everyone earnestly chattering to their neighbours about their school reminiscences and anything else that came to mind. The finale was the traditional singing of *Carmen Paviorum* accompanied by John Jalland on his guitar. The roof was suitably raised!



A panoramic shot of the gathering taken by Graham Wybrow (who also took the other views).

Did nobody want to leave? Well, yes, the meeting broke up at about 3.30 pm and we left the *Poppy & Pint* with a friendly glow inside us after a very pleasant gathering. Maybe the venue had struggled to accommodate us in the style to which we were accustomed but we'd enjoyed it none the less.

Colin S

ooOoo

OUR END PIECE



[Neville Kay has penned this thoughtful and amusing article about his early career in medicine (where he is still engaged at the age of 85). I knew Neville at school and am greatly encouraged to hear that he too neglected his studies when it suited him! –Ed.]

Lessons from Life – Humility

Surgeons, I know, are often seen as arrogant. In many respects, this is a necessary attribute, for who wants to be operated on by a surgeon who thinks himself second best? But early in every doctor's career and most certainly in mine, patients teach humility.

I claim to be the worst ever pre-clinical student of Sheffield University Medical School. I found Gray's Anatomy and the physiology texts simply couldn't compete with the delights of the Union Bar and the free range of novels I avidly read until, after my third attempt, I managed to scrape through Conjoint Second MB and so entered the wards and clinical medicine.

Since then, I have never looked back and also claim never to have done a days' work, my life, being one of pure enjoyment. Yet the lesson of humility was soon to be imparted to me, an arrogant know-it-all, flush with the success of a medical diploma.

The day after I qualified, I found myself as Casualty Officer in the Old Royal Infirmary of Sheffield. Not half a mile away was a tramp's refuge where, for a few pence per night, vagabonds or gentlemen of the road as they preferred to be called, could obtain a night's sleep, a meal, a wash and if prepared to pay a little extra, even a shower. I can't recall seeing a street beggar or homeless person in those days, yet currently, Sheffield streets are well provided with beggars—but I digress.

My other great delight in life, apart from never having done a days' work, has been my relationship with women. This is not the time nor place to go into personal relationships, but I have been blessed by the fact that Senior Sisters on the wards, in theatres, in out-patients and casualty have taken me under their wings, gone out of their way to be helpful and in return, I have learnt much. Where, oh where, in the NHS of today can we find these fountainheads of knowledge, experience and gentle teaching?

The examination room in the casualty department was a large area with two desks and two chairs, one each for the doctor and, hovering around, Sister Barstow, keeping a watchful eye on the whole proceedings and particularly the newly qualified doctors. My patient, a tramp from the nearby hostel, duly presented to me his right foot, clean, gleaming and minus his sock and boot. In truth, I forget his complaint, but full of my medical school teaching and knowing that I should compare his normal left foot with his troubled right, I politely asked him to remove his other boot and sock. He declined.

I can still see his clothes, his stubble, unkempt hair, the grime and wear of his trousers, as life sat heavily on his shoulders. Yet I was clueless.

'Would you please take off your other boot and sock, so I can compare your feet?'

Again he declined and just before I was about to ask for a third time, I felt the tap of Sister Barstow on my shoulder.

'Excuse me Doctor Kay,' she said, in that beautiful Northern Irish lilt. 'Could I have a word with you for a moment?' This was not an offer to refuse.

I knew she had been through the war and had a wealth of experience which I had yet to acquire. This much I gleaned from the regular coffee sessions when doctors, nurses and medical students deserted their patients and the cubicles for fifteen minutes for coffee, cigarettes, chat and inevitably, mutual education. So I readily followed Sister to a quiet spot where she whispered, 'He's only washed one foot, that's why he won't remove the other boot.' Blushing and humbled, I returned to my patient, dealt with his problem and remembered the lesson.

Yet we had fun in that casualty department. There were no on-call radiographers in those days, we were expected to do our own limb X-rays, including fractured femurs, and one boring Saturday (no patients for Sheffield United were playing at home) one of my colleagues noticed the goldfish in the superintendent radiographer's tank appeared to have died. Wondering why, he took a superbly exposed x-ray detailing every segment of the cartilaginous skeleton and placed the X-ray in a pile for the superintendent to see on Monday morning, when she regularly reviewed the weekend's films. Nobody liked her. She was soured by life, miserable to work with and best left alone in her darkened X-ray den.

It was no surprise when the weekend staff were called to the Hospital Superintendent's office to be lectured on the proper use of Health Service facilities. But his heart wasn't in it, though the superintendent radiographer's pride was assuaged.

Two years later, I found myself as a young national service Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force at Tripoli, Libya, before the Gadaffi regime came to power. Less than a mile from the runway where V-bombers, sometimes fully loaded with nuclear bombs, took to the air contrasting the wealth, power and technology of the western world with the small desert encampment where some of the local base workers lived in poverty and squalor.

I had been called over to a tent, no more than a small bivouac in the sand, where the wife of one of the local Libyans had recently given birth and was ill with a high temperature.

Leaving my RAF hat on the sand outside, I stooped into the gloom of the bivouac to find a body on a pile of rags. A new born baby, quiet and peaceful was being nursed by another woman. Even in the half light, it was evident that the mother was ill.

I was allowed to feel her brow, took her oral temperature, but when I attempted to feel her abdomen, hands from nowhere appeared and stopped my movement. It was clear that a clinical examination of the birth canal, even a glimpse, would not be permitted.

I gave her a hefty loading dose of streptomycin and penicillin, (the best prophylactic antibiotic combination of the time) left her with some oral penicillin and analgesics. On my way out, I found four eggs in my hat.

I had no need whatsoever of four eggs. The NAAFI kept us well supplied, and those eggs would have kept the patients family well fed for a meal or two. However, with the help of my sick quarters cleaner, who had requested the consultation and had accompanied us to the tent, I gave my effusive thanks and departed with my eggs. Two days later, I made a great show of eating an omelette for breakfast, assuring Ali, our local houseboy, a man of at least 35 years or more, that it was the finest omelette I had ever eaten and made from desert eggs.

The grape vine rustled, the news travelled and a few days later the sick quarters cleaner assured me that my patient was better. Whether it was time, nature or antibiotics that affected the cure, I shall never know, but I learnt that humility, of itself, can be rewarding.

Neville Kay