



# Royal Russell School Old Russellians

## Newsletter Autumn 2020

### Adrian Edwards, OR Committee Chair (At School 1969-1976)



Well, this has been a very difficult year for all of us in one way or another due to the Covid-19 Public Health crisis starting in March, exactly when we were planning on releasing this edition of the Newsletter. Please excuse the delay but I am sure you can appreciate the difficulties we found ourselves faced with?

The ORs, with the help of the school had organized several big events for 2020 only for the Covid Pandemic to obliterate almost everything throughout lockdown. Hopefully we will be able to reinstate some of these activities next year and the next March edition will announce all future events.

For your interest, those events we had planned and were forced to cancel this year were the following, some of which had been announced prior to cancellation or postponement.

- 1/ June CCF reunion at the RAF Club Mayfair (Postponed to 2021).
- 2/ Southbank Centre Drinks on the River June (Postponed to 2021).
- 3/ ROR June Barge Trip cancelled.
- 4/ Queens Tea during RRS Day June (a tea party for old members of North/South/Queens) and hopefully will be rearranged for a future date.
- 5/ ORGS Golf was delayed from early July and a small group eventually did manage to meet up in late August with a report later in this edition.
- 6/ OR November Reunion for 90's leavers at the Croydon Park Hotel (postponed to 2021).
- 7/ OR Football all events cancelled.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all the best from the OR Committee and stay safe.

# NEWS FROM ABROAD

Sarah Hewitt Hicks and Helen Georghiou (at RRS 1983-1988) went over to New Zealand in February to visit Jane O'Neill (nee Cable) (at RRS 1983-1988) for a 50th birthday weekend on Waiheke Island. They visited vineyards and beeches and managed to squeeze in a bit of a Geography field trip, taking them back to thoughts of Llandudho days.



Left to right: Helen, Sarah, Jane



OR Vice President Chris Gough returned to the UK from New Zealand when himself and Penny Hill had to urgently abandon their tour and subsequently spent ten days in lockdown at a hotel in Auckland Airport.

Whilst staying overnight they were interviewed by a reporter and their story appeared in the papers.

Tourists like Chris Gough and Pennie Hill, from Somerset in England, would normally be keeping Hermitage staff busy but over breakfast said had been forced to cut short their New Zealand stay by nearly a month.

They were sad to go but had been told they might not get home until June if they didn't return immediately.



ALDEN WILLIAMS/STUFF

British tourists Pennie Hill and Chris Gough are pleased to be heading home.

# FOR THE LOVE OF SCRUBS

Throughout the never ending grim news of infection and deaths during the Pandemic there have also been many instances of acts of kindness. It was therefore with great interest that an Old Russellian made the Six o'clock News in mid April to this effect.

Sue Bruckner (nee. Blannin and at RRS 1968-1977 ) was interviewed in April for BBC South with regards to her involvement in making scrubs for the NHS at a time when many nurses and doctors were finding it difficult to acquire supplies of Personal Protective Equipment.

Sue along with an army of other helpers around the country (including ex member of staff Julia Powell (at RRS 1970 - 2005) set about making as many sets of scrubs as possible. Once the need for scrubs had subsided Sue didn't just stop there, she decided to keep up the good work and began making face masks with all sorts of designs on them.



Please see the link below if you would like to watch the interview with Sue :

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tU\\_ibQJof0w&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0nYHHQIfiO6HIPa6UdnCVVZWizRxh5LjZzNrYhcKwianrXr1ZrOZJ5TLg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tU_ibQJof0w&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0nYHHQIfiO6HIPa6UdnCVVZWizRxh5LjZzNrYhcKwianrXr1ZrOZJ5TLg)



Both Sue Blannin and I have been busily sewing scrubs during lockdown. My scrubs were for Croydon Practitioners and Practise nurses. The cut out material was delivered to me with, what were rather brief instructions at first, and then collected when finished. The person overseeing our work was ultra critical initially with some of the groups efforts which resulted in better more comprehensive details following. I am pleased to say that we did eventually get good reports for our efforts.

Julia Powell

# ORGS 2020

Event organised by Adrian Edwards

The Old Russellians' Golf Society was established in 2015 with an original membership of a dozen players. We now have a roster of over thirty players who have all played at some time or another in our Summer competition.

Each year we seem to have at least one new member and this year the society was delighted to welcome David Selby (member of staff 2006-2020) to his first game with fellow Old Russellians.

This year's event was an interesting challenge as we had to organise things around all the Covid-19 restrictions. The original date was due to be in July but was postponed to the 14th August due to the golf club only just being allowed to serve basic refreshments etc.

This year we attended Woldingham Golf Club and had a great day with decent weather. Upon arrival there was coffee and the traditional bacon roll and we had to make the most of that as there was to be no meal after the game. Everyone had to gather outside the clubhouse for the results and prizes while keeping socially distanced from each other.

Given that due to the Pandemic we had a fair few members not wishing to attend this year I am pleased to say the eventual turnout of 14 players was very pleasing.

Everyone enjoyed the day and the chance to have a chat after the game with refreshments served in disposable plastic glasses.

The eventual winner was Nigel Rocca (ex member of staff 2004-2019) with a very respectable score of 39 points playing off a handicap of 10.

Runner up was David Selby (ex member of staff 2006-2020) who was just one point adrift with 38 points and not a bad start to his first outing with ORGS.

Next year we are hoping to hold our 2021 Covid free event on Friday 9th July with a venue yet to be decided. Yet again any new members are very welcome, please contact either Vicky Rees the OR Membership Secretary by email at [vrees@royalrussell.co.uk](mailto:vrees@royalrussell.co.uk) or myself at [edwardsa@royalrussell.co.uk](mailto:edwardsa@royalrussell.co.uk)



Winner Nigel Rocca  
(ex member of staff Head of Business & Economics  
2004 – 2019 and Deputy Head of Cambridge House)



Runner up David Selby (ex member of staff 2006-2020)



John Piggin and Andy Rogers



Ian Walsh and Martin French

## ROYAL RUSSELL CCF - 1916 TO THE PRESENT DAY



Tony Starkey preparing for a jump while serving in 10 Para prior to Arnhem in 1944

A unit was formed at Russell Hill in 1916 as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cadet Battalion of the Queens Regiment.

Throughout this time there have been only 6 Unit Commanders beginning with Major C A Roberts who was also Headmaster between 1914 – 1937

The post is currently held by Wing Commander C Leggatt who took command in 2005.

Between 1963 – 1985 the position was held by the much admired and inspirational Lieutenant Colonel Tony Starkey and we are planning on compiling an article about his career for the next Newsletter which we hope will be published in March 2021.

Tony Starkey arrived at RRS in 1960 as an Art teacher having served in the Paras during and after WW2. He took command of the CCF upon the death of Captain W A Wright (who died in office) in 1963 and carried on as commander until his retirement in 1985.

We are looking for any interesting stories and memories from those pupils who served in the CCF during his tenure to add to this article.

These should be sent to the OR Secretary Vicky Rees at [vrees@royalrussell.co.uk](mailto:vrees@royalrussell.co.uk)

## AN EMAIL FROM AN O.R.

### **Valerie Harfield-Simpson (at RRS 1958—1970)**

Thank you for this exciting update on the OR's and the school as it is today.

I have just returned from a very exciting road trip down the Rhine in Germany. Still practicing my German, always useful although I'm certainly not fluent.

My two sisters Jacqui Rousseau as well as my younger sister Heather Soper are hoping to visit sometime next year as well as myself. It will certainly bring back lots of memories.

I would very much like to visit 'The Hope Morley' in a separate residence, however I'm unclear whether or not the building still exists. It had a sunken swimming pool in the basement with green coloured water. I don't recall any of us taking a plunge in it! Although this was prior to us being moved to the new school, my younger sister and I were both in 'Leaf House' it was great fun and being the sandwich filling I was usually rather confident but did get into trouble with matron on occasions.

It really is engaging to keep up to speed with all and sundry. I do recall Sally and Roberta Tainton, Roberta being Jacqui's friend and Sally mine. Another dear friend of mine was Rosemary Wall, I know Jacqui has in the past connected with Roberta, however I have lost all contact with my old boarding school friends. Interestingly, one fact in my life that has transpired from The Royal Russell School is the art of writing. We were all expected to write properly and actually had lessons in this subject. To date, my writing is admired by all who have the opportunity to read whatever I write. What a shame this is no longer practiced in schools. It was a privilege to have learnt this. I now write more emails, however Christmas cards are always handwritten. My adored godson will be getting a beautiful fountain pen for his birthday, hopefully he will also learn to write in his lifetime.

Kind regards

Valerie

## CONDOLENCES

### **John Brown (at RRS 1938 - 1945)**

John Brown was sponsored by Harrods to attend Ballards for his education. He was in St. Andrew's house whilst at the school. Throughout the years since leaving he has been an active member at Reunions attending his last Biennial in 2019 with his wife and daughter.

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### **John Dennis (at RRS 1935 - 1947)**

John Dennis passed away on Friday 4 September 2020. Whilst at Royal Russell he had been in St Andrew's house. Many years ago, John wrote a history of the school which some of you may have read.

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### **Peter Copley (at RRS 1945—1949)**

Peter Michael Copley passed away on 8th April 2020 aged 87. Peter was based in Oxford House.

# CONDOLENCES

## Derek Cheeseman 1929-2019 (at RRS 1935-1947)

Derek was born in New Malden, Surrey. His mother, Daisy and father, Thomas, a silk buyer, already had a son, Mike, born 14 months earlier. Unfortunately their father died in Como, Italy, whilst away on business when Derek was only 21 months old.

The two boys were sent age 6 and 7 to Ballards near Croydon, which became Royal Russell School, a boarding school established as a charitable institution for orphans of warehousemen, clerks and drapers livery companies. Derek spent many happy years there playing every sport possible, especially swimming. He had a penchant for languages and sciences. He stayed on at school to do his Highers, now A levels, but there were no dedicated teachers available so he was not very successful.

During the Second World War, the family moved to Macclesfield after the family business warehouse was burnt down. Derek and his brother loved spending their school holidays cycling all over the area and in August 1945 even cycled the 20 miles to Old Trafford to see the Fifth Ashes Victory Test. They just left their bikes on the verge outside and at the end of the day's play, they were still there.

He did his National Service, joining the Wiltshire regiment on April Fools Day 1949 and could still recite his number. He enjoyed his time in the army as a corporal and typically engaged in any sporting activity available in order to avoid doing anything more arduous. In particular he boxed and needless to say played cricket, including alongside Ken Barrington.



After National Service he joined the Royal Insurance in Fleet Street where he made many lifelong friends. His weekends were spent playing cricket for Malden Wanderers, followed by Wigmore, and hockey in the winter for Spencer.

In 1964 after being taken ill, he accepted a transfer to the Royal Insurance branch in Banbury. He immediately joined Banbury Cricket and Hockey Clubs, and also, slightly bizarrely as he was not known for his singing ability, Banbury Operatic Society.

He played cricket whenever he could, every summer weekend and occasional weekdays. Cricket and hockey were a big part of Derek's life and he loved going on tour, with Banbury and later with Barclays for cricket and to Clacton with the Hockey Club.



In 1972 he left the Royal Insurance after accepting a job as area manager for Barclays Insurance in Oxford. The following year he moved to Deddington with Jill and Claire. Rachel was born in 1975, followed by Will in 1980.

Derek started coaching the under 13 cricket team which included Will and some of his school mates. This continued well beyond Will playing in the under 16s side and progressing to the men's team. He was an active Chairman of the club for many seasons, organising advertising for the fixture card and doing a skydive to celebrate his 80th birthday to raise funds for the club and for Dogs for Good. Latterly he was President of the club for a few years.

# CONDOLENCES

## **Chloe Matthews 1980 - 2019 (at RRS 1995-1998)**

Chloe enjoyed her time at Royal Russell School in Buchanan House and was really happy. Unfortunately after leaving, she suffered from PTSD leading to anxiety and panic attacks. Chloe's parents are most grateful for the support they received from her Royal Russell friends.

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## **John Francis Todd 1938 - 2020 (at RRS 1948—1954)**

John passed away in March 2020. Whilst at Royal Russell School he was part of Oxford House.

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## **Gavin Woolgar**

Gavin was a weekly boarder at Royal Russell in Cambridge House. He died on 15/04/2020, we had a very small funeral for him. Gavin had MS and was living in Ashley Place in Bognor Regis at the time of his death. He died of complications after 2 infections and a small operation in April from which he did not recover. The Doctor informed us that you would need to be fit to recover from everything he was going through, I feel letting us know it was not good news.



## **Clive Washbrook 14/01/1958 - 9/11/2018**



Clive arrived at Royal Russell in 1969 and made an immediate impression on his fellow first year students as a weekly boarder in what was then Transition House. He was both charismatic and crafty and the House Master Mr O'Brien had to keep a careful eye on him most of the time! After Transition Clive, as a second year pupil, was bound for St Andrews House but Mr Kefford (House Master of Cambridge) was always on the lookout for sportsmen and he managed to pilfer Clive from St Andrews as he was a very useful cricketer and often opened the batting with a keen ability to belt sixes all over the ground until he was inevitably caught out just short of the boundary. Thereafter Clive enjoyed a successful academic life at the school, always in the top stream. Outside of school hours he was involved in sport and the CCF where he achieved further success. After the 5<sup>th</sup> form

Clive decided not to return to the school as being a keen yachtsman and living in Lymington on the south coast he preferred to continue his education and to pursue his outdoor activities closer to home. Clive then ran a successful surveying business in The New Forest and lived there with his wife and three daughters enjoying a happy life by the sea with his love of the water and sailing along with walking when he was generally accompanied by his dog.

# CONDOLENCES

## John Harrison 1940-2019 (at RRS 1947 - 1958)

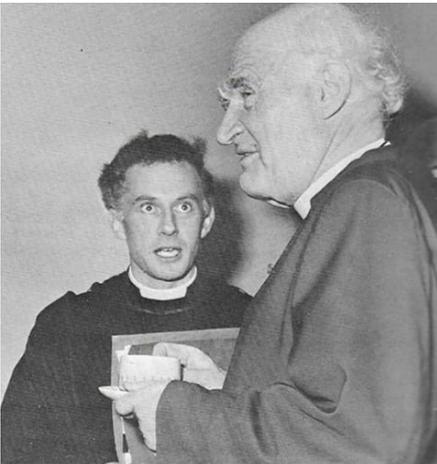
John passed away in 2019. During his time at Royal Russell School he was in St Andrews

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## Revd. Philip Clements 1939 – 2020 (at RRS 1968 - 1975)

It is with great sadness we heard of the passing of Philip Clements on the 31<sup>st</sup> May this year at the height of the Covid pandemic. Philip had been living in Bucharest at the time and had recently been through heart surgery. In his own words he was 'recovering remarkably well' however he took a turn for the worse and was rushed into hospital where sadly he passed away the following day.

Philip had studied at Kings College London and joined the school in 1968 as Chaplain and Assistant House Master of Transition House. He then became Transition House Master in 1972 until he left in 1975 to follow a rich and varied career firstly at Denstone College in Uttoxeter until again moving to Lancing College in 1981. He then became Vicar of Hooe in 1990 and later Chaplain to St Bartholomews Almshouses in Sandwich, Kent. He ended his career in the Ministry in 2014 after serving as Chaplain of Northbourne Park.



Philip kept in touch with numerous pupils at RRS and had a remarkable memory, recalling much of his time at the school and the children he mentored while there. He will be deeply missed and will always be remembered for the kindness he showed to everyone he met.



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## Chris Johnson (at RRS 1967 - 1974)

Old Russellians throughout the 1970's and 80's will be saddened to hear of the passing of Chris Johnson (known fondly as 'A' level Chris), earlier this year. Chris was head groundsman at the school for many years and his daughter, Heidi, remarked that her father had very fond memories of the school and really enjoyed his time working on the grounds and especially keeping all the pitches in top condition. Heidi said his last request was that his ashes should be placed on Top Pitch which will hopefully take place in due course.

