



Royal Russell School Old Russellians



Newsletter Spring 2018

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



The last three years (2014-2017) have shown a great improvement in the activities of the society under the stewardship of the outgoing Chairman John Piggin (Staff at School 1974-2013) who along with the enthusiastic support of fellow Committee members has built a solid base for future OR events.

As the incoming Chairman, the Committee and I hope to further build on this success and we have a number of events scheduled for this coming year, so I do hope as many OR's as possible can take the opportunity to attend one or more of these events.

The school is evolving in many exciting ways and the building program shows the considerable investment in the long term future for the school, I would thoroughly recommend a visit to see how this development is progressing and should any OR's wish to come along then Julia Powell (Correspondent and retired Head of PE 1970-2004) will be delighted to show you around the grounds.

We are also planning on approaching past pupils to write up a brief synopsis of their time at the school and then their careers to date after leaving. I'm delighted to say that Murdo Urquhart, a '76 leaver and a close friend has kindly offered to be our inaugural contributor. I hope you enjoy his efforts as much as I have and for those of us who were at the school during this period I am sure it will bring back many happy memories. Murdo also discovered during his research a link to an audio history file interview with 'The Biz' (aka Harry Crispin Smith at school 1935-1939 & 1945-1973) who was our senior master at the time we were at the school. Please have a listen to his dulcet tones and enjoy his recollections of his life before joining up for the war and then during WW2 where he served with distinction at El Alamein and in Burma and particularly the siege of Kohima whereupon he returned to the school to continue his teaching career.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80018086>

Remembrance Sunday

Sunday 12 November 2017

It was good to see so many Old Russellians at the service, especially Captain Joe Begley (1997-2004) Air Assault Regiment who addressed the congregation on his life both when he went into the army and as it is today.

He can be seen below standing next to Adrian Edwards who was the wreath bearer representing the former students.



Looking For....

Esme Cowmeadow and Enid Head

Janice Williams nee Farmer (1939-1943) attended school from the age of 6 with her twin sisters, Pamela and Beryl (also known as the terrible twins!).

Although the twins were removed from school and put out to work when their mother remarried, Janice won a scholarship to stay on until the age of 16. Pamela married and is living in the UK but sadly Beryl passed away many years ago.

At school, Janice was friends with Esme Cowmeadow and Enid Head and was wondering if anyone has heard from them. If they have can they let Julia Powell know so that she can put them all back in contact with one another.



Music Update

The Music Department has been very fortunate to receive a generous legacy from Roger Billington, OR. This money will be used to refurbish many of the musical instruments that we have in stock, in order that instrumental playing may be revitalised. Any money that is remaining will go towards encouraging students further to receive Instrumental tuition, possibly making use of the refurbished instruments.

This is a gift that has been gratefully received, and will be put to great beneficial use within the department.

Old Russellians wishing to leave a bequest to benefit the current school and pupils should use the term 'Old Russellians' (not Royal Russell School or Russell School Trust) in their Will to avoid any confusion with the original charitable trust. More details regarding this can be found on the website: <http://www.royalrussell.co.uk/Old-Russellians>



Visits from former pupils

Sam Antrobus (attended Royal Russell 1985 to 1996)

Sam was Head of Madden House and President of the General Assembly at the RRS MUN.

Sam founded the Wishford Schools Group, which owns and operates 7 Prep schools including St David's Prep in West Wickham, which has strong links with Royal Russell.

Sam was particularly interested to see the school's impressive new boarding house, the performing arts facilities and the sports pitches, and to hear about plans for further development.



Simon Coupe (attended Royal Russell 1963 to 1969)

Simon was in Cambridge House. He lives near Lancashire but his son is now in Tooting, so it was a rather impromptu visit to the school.

Simon qualified as a solicitor in 1977 and is now a Partner at Coupe-Bradbury, where he specialises in Family Law.

Simon is an Advanced Member of the Law Society Family Law Panel and Resolution. He is also a member of the Legal Service Commission Appeals Committee and formerly a Senior Peer Reviewer.



Murdo Urquhart

When I was at RRS it was at the back end of the hippy era. It was fashionable to both have long hair (I blush when I see photos of myself from that time) and be vaguely anti-military. Despite this I chose to become a regular army officer, the first from RRS for many generations, followed soon afterwards by Nigel Smith and Keith McGowan, all three of us going on to reach or exceed the rank of our legendary CCF Contingent Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Tony Starkey.

Despite our long hair, many of my generation at RRS chose to join the CCF. It was good fun and who could not be inspired by Tony Starkey. With his glinting piercing eyes, bristly moustache, bushy eyebrows, loping walk and gruff “bah” voice, the ‘Colonel’ was a



'PeeWee' Green

formidable character. His stories of jumping into Arnhem with 10 PARA and patrolling at night against the Germans enthralled us. He used the language of his time and you knew you had incurred his displeasure when he growled “Poor show”. Nor can I forget that he was a pipe smoker, frequently lighting up and being surrounded by clouds of smoke. I think it was Tim ‘Bogbrush’ Lynch who was promoted in the field on exercise for finding the Colonel’s lost pipe on the training area. That Tony Starkey was the art master seems secondary in my memory, although I cannot forget that his classroom was a disorganised mess and that in the store one was more likely to find ammunition lying loose and compo rations.

Subordinate in CCF rank but senior in school rank was Major Harry Crispin-Smith (aka The Biz), the Deputy Headmaster, and another formidable and legendary character. No one could grip the entire school like him in the Great Hall; he was fearsome. I

recall him patiently

teaching me .22 shooting in the underground range and his self-deprecating story of being shot in the backside by a German Spandau machine gun at the battle of Alam Halfa in 1942, something he described as ‘quite an experience’. He recovered from his wounds and went on to fight at the battle of El Alamein. He was a modest man and it was only later that I discovered that he played a key part in the immortal defence at the siege of Kohima in 1944. It is remarkable that he was present at two of the great battles in British military history, the first in North Africa and the second on the India/Burma border.



Keith McGowen, Julia Powell and Nigel Smith



Left to Right: Julian Edwards, Adrian Edwards and Murdo

My generation was lucky to have two such extraordinary characters training us in the CCF. They were ably supported by 'PeeWee' Green, a stickler for military etiquette, and 'Ticky' Thompson, who like the Colonel and the Biz, taught us by day and were CCF officers on parade afternoons and during camps.

Did they influence me to join the Army? I don't think so because from about the age of 16 I knew that I wanted to be a career infantry officer and that is indeed what happened, however the fact is that my military career started as a cadet in the CCF and I have no doubt that it had a significant and positive effect on my subsequent development. Given that

Tony Starkey ran field exercises like a Parachute Regiment battle camp, with exercise names like ROUGH DIAMOND and BROKEN BLISTER, my training at Sandhurst was not the shock it might have been. The wheel of time has now turned full circle because now, in my second career, I continue to work closely with the CCF as I am the Chief Executive of both the Army Cadet Force Association and the Combined Cadet Force Association.

I was a regular army officer for nearly 37 years, joining the Army straight from leaving RRS in 1976 aged 18 and retiring in 2013 aged 55. I passed the Army Officer Selection Board in my final few weeks at RRS and so my teachers and fellow pupils knew I was Sandhurst bound. If they knew then what I would go on to do, they, and I, would have scoffed in disbelief because I truly was an undistinguished pupil, academically, sportingwise and even in the CCF I was not the most senior cadet. Last year I went to my Sandhurst reunion and we were given copies of our reports, including those from the Army Officer Selection Board. The then Headmaster's report on me (Stephen 'Sid' Hopwell) is telling and damning: *In my view he is of only average officer potential material*. I do not resent his assessment at all, because it was entirely fair and accurate, however I would like to think that time has proved him wrong.

None of us in 1976, least of all the unambitious drifter that was me, would have foreseen that I would command a platoon, a rifle company and then an infantry battalion on operations in Northern Ireland. (It defined my career. I did six tours there between 1978 and 2004 totalling over seven years, culminating in being the Deputy Commander of the brigade responsible for the notorious border region.) Bearing in mind that I failed my A levels completely, I am ashamed to say because I was idle and enjoying non-academic life too much, it would have been unimaginable that my written and thinking skills would be good enough for me to be appointed to fill a particularly demanding staff job in the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall for three years. As a young and newly promoted Lieutenant Colonel I led the Middle East Operations Team, working closely with the Cabinet Office and the Foreign Office as we coordinated operations against Iraq. It was exciting and stimulating work having to produce succinct papers and briefings under sustained pressure for Ministers. I was genuinely stunned when I learnt that I was appointed OBE in recognition for that work. Finally, back in 1976 no one would have predicted that I would reach the rank of Colonel and thus outrank Tony Starkey. How therefore can this transformation be explained?



Colonel Tony Starkey (left), Major Harry Crispin Smith (right)

I am convinced that, quite simply, I am one of those who was slow to develop and mature. I was lucky that in 1976 the world generally and the Army in particular was more forgiving than they are now for young people heading out into adult life. The Army then was prepared to take a chance on me and I am thankful for it, because I went on to enjoy a rich, varied and satisfying career. Tony Starkey's report on me to the Army Officer Selection Board perhaps shows greater foresight than Sid Hopewell's. He wrote: *I had doubts concerning his potentiality, but he has matured considerably. I now feel sure that training at Sandhurst could well bring out, and develop, the latent qualities in this young man and that he would become a very good officer in a Line Regiment.* Tony Starkey departed this world some years ago, so I cannot thank him for his shrewd assessment of me all those years ago. The least I can do is recall the lasting impact he had on all of us who were in the CCF when he was the Contingent Commander.



Bagdad Murdo with Alistair Cooke (at school 1969-1976)

P.S. Back to failing my A Levels, including History, I would like to publicly apologise to John Piggin. Then a young man fresh out of university and teacher training, I must have been one of his earliest A level students. I loved history and enjoyed his sessions in the Douglas Higgins library. Failing my History A Level was entirely my fault and nothing to do with his teaching.

6th Form Latessa Wing

In addition to the wonderful memorial for Maria Latessa (page 8) that was designed and created by Mr Parmar from the D&T Department, a wonderful 6th Form Latessa Wing has been created in the Aston Webb Building, formally Oxford House, which has been decorated in a style that Maria would have approved of.



Royal Russell South Korea



Royal Russell has entered into a partnership with an existing international school in South Korea to open a new school, to be named Royal Russell School Korea.

This school, opening in August 2020, will be a fee paying, co-educational day and boarding school for up to 2280 pupils aged 5 to 19. It will be located in a new development zone in Busan, set up by the Korean government on the south coast of Korea. Pupils will be recruited from the local population and, in addition, from China, Russia and Japan.

Royal Russell will support this new school by sharing expertise and best practice in terms of

our operating model, curriculum and oversight in the form of annual quality inspection.

In return, this partnership will attract a significant annual income stream that will contribute to the development plans, of Royal Russell, for the direct benefit of our pupils, staff and families here in the UK

OR Football

The Old Russellians are enjoying their first season under the leadership of Sion Foss with Ryan Walters running the team. They have played regular fixtures and achieved excellent results. To date they have only lost one match including cup games.

The team play their home matches at school enjoying the use of the pavilion. New members are always welcome, anyone who is interested in playing should contact: jpowell@royalrussell.co.uk who will pass their details to Simon.



Condolences

Geoffrey David Forster (1941-2017)

My brother Geoffrey (on right) was 7 and I was 8 when we were sent to Russell Hill School at Purley in 1948 and we stayed on in the Sixth Form after the move to Ballards.

Geoff left Russell School in 1959 and had a successful career in banking with Lloyds and retired as regional corporate manager for Oxford.

We grew up in Stockport, Manchester, but he met and married Fay King after our parents retired to Exmouth in Devon. They lived at Uffington in the Vale of the White Horse and had a son David and a daughter Sarah, both now married with families of their own.



Banking was Geoff's working life but boating on the Thames at Oxford became his passion. He took his boat to Calais and followed the waterways to the South of France where, for four years, he spent several months each year.

As a boy at School he was told he could make a career as a singer and in recent years when ill health brought an end to boating he joined the Oxford Choir. From 2014 he was a Governor of Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Geoffrey was 76 when he died suddenly and without pain on Tuesday 21 November from pneumonia after he developed cancer of the throat. His funeral took place in Uffington on Tuesday 12 December.

Maria Latessa (1964-2017)

We were very sad to hear news that Maria Latessa, our inspirational, loyal and long serving Head of English as an Additional Language had passed away at home, after losing her fight with cancer. A service to celebrate Maria's life was held on Saturday 6 May when the Chapel was

full of staff, ex staff,

3 Headmasters, current and Old Russellians.

Our condolences to Maria's sister, Claudia, her partner, Neil Marshall and her parents, Giovannina and Antonio.



Condolences Cont...

Molly Goriely (1923-2014, Senior Mistress 1974-1980)

This resume of Molly's life came from her daughter's tribute to her. Her full tribute will be published on the OR website.

Molly was a third daughter and her father called her Ernestine. Her mother added the name Mary and from then on she was called Molly.

Molly was extremely bright and was proof reading her father's accountancy books at a young age. It was his wish that she followed in his footsteps. She became an emergency teacher at the age of 16 and in 1940 obtained top marks in the country to gain a scholarship to Girton College, Oxford. As her father did not want her to



read English, he refused to sign her entry forms. Due to this she ran away from home and eventually got a job at the Air Ministry in Edinburgh and became a RADAR operator. By 1944 she was acting flight controller in Hope Cove where the D-day plans were in preparation.

After the war at the age of 21 the Air Force awarded her another scholarship to Girton to read English which she now managed to take up as Molly was able to sign her own entry papers. She spent two years studying English and a further six as a fellow.

In 1952 she became a lecturer at Kings College, London and by 1954 had been appointed as Professor of English in the new university of the Saar in Saarbrücken. In 1955 she married and two years later had her daughter Tamara. Unfortunately her marriage collapsed and in 1960 she returned to the UK.

Back in the UK her main interest was now bringing up her daughter and so she took several jobs in residential boarding schools including Royal Russell.

Tamara married in 1978 and this is when Molly indulged in her passion for travel and adventure, finally taking a job in Singapore preparing students for Oxford entrance.

Once retired Molly became a VSO volunteer teaching both in Thailand and China. During the Tiananmen Square protests she assisted students and those injured until a compromise was agreed. After her final two years teaching in Yunnan Province, where she gained excellent results, she was awarded the title of Professor and a medal from Xiaoping, the architect of Tiananmen.

At the age of 70 Molly returned to her beloved Cornwall and found the changes to modern technical life in England difficult to come to terms with but despite this threw herself into local life. Unfortunately 15 years later she developed vascular dementia and started to withdraw from everyday life. It was then that Tamara moved her mother to a home in Isleworth so that she was near her.

Molly achieved a lot in her life and for many years it revolved around her daughter and later her grandson.

LONDON HONOURS O.R. WRITER

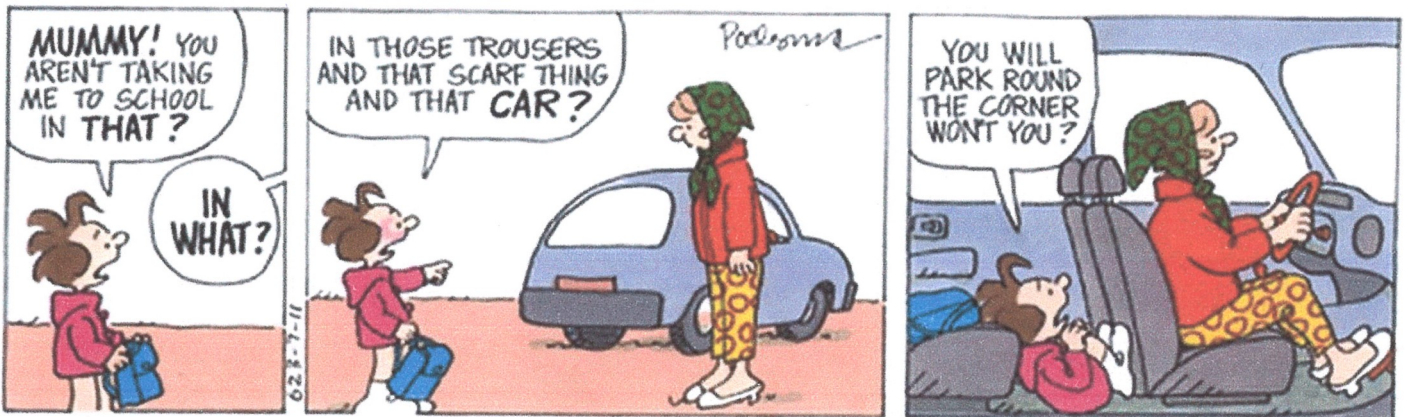
Old Russellian Angus McGill who died in 2015 had always been a major contributor to The Russellian, the school's magazine. And visitors to the Wikipedia website can trace his own extraordinary story on leaving school. He soon became a popular witty columnist, biographer and cartoonist for the Evening Standard. Now he has just been commemorated at a ceremony in London. "This maverick's distinctive prose graced every page he ever wrote" said "The Independent" newspaper.



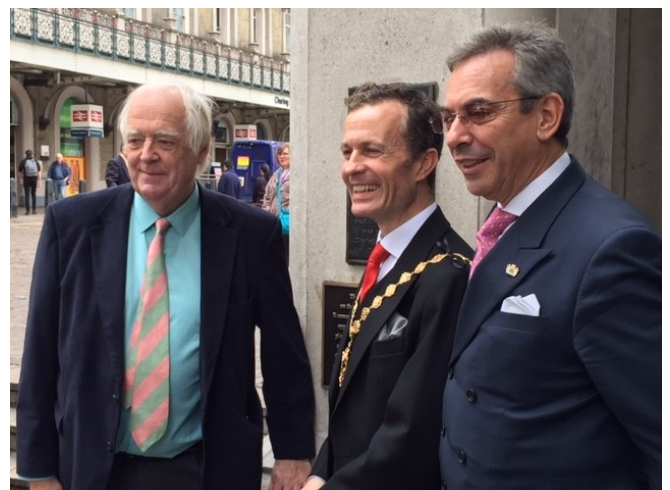
OR President Brian Angel, Angus's oldest friend from schooldays at the ceremony.



The Lord Mayor of Westminster together with staff from the Evening Standard, The Times,



McGill created the Augusta cartoon strip. Credit: The Sunday Times



Sir Tim Rice (left) told the audience he and Andrew Lloyd Webber got their first 'fun biography break' from their friend Angus

Retirement



Martin Tanner will be retiring from Royal Russell this summer after 36 years as Head of Geology. During his time at the school he has also been Madden Housemaster, Head of Geography and Marketing Director, to name but a few roles!

His retirement party will be held at the end of June and if you are interested in joining us for this special event, please contact mun@royalrussell.co.uk for your personal invitation. We are hoping to attract ex Madden boys, geographers and geologists as well as footballers from Martin's teams, MUNers from his press teams and anyone else who has been influenced and inspired by him during their time at Royal Russell.

Digital Archive

Anyone wishing to look at our digitised archive website should go to:

<https://rrsarchives.daisy.websds.net>. The Username and Password are both: rrsquest.

OR Membership Secretary



You may remember in our last newsletter we said goodbye to Sue Tanner, who was standing down from the role as the OR Membership Secretary, after 12 years on the OR Committee.

I am now pleased to announce that Vicky Rees will be stepping in as the new OR secretary. She has a background in administration and comes to Royal Russell from a school in Dulwich. If you need to contact Vicky, her email address is vrees@royalrussell.co.uk

Dates for your diary

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Sunday 25 March: | Palm Sunday Choral Evensong with Chapel Quad procession. 5.45pm |
| Saturday 21 April: | Old Russellians' Annual Football Tournament. |
| Friday 22 June: | Riverside reunion at The Anchor Pub. All welcome |
| Wednesday 27 June: | Oldie OR's (Pre-1970 Leavers). Biennial Tea Party at Northwood.
Details from carole@theblands.me |
| Friday 6 July: | ORGS. For further details contact Adrian Edwards |
| Saturday 13 October: | 1980s Leavers' Reunion, Croydon Park Hotel. |

Click [here](#) for full details of all events