

# The Hardyens' Club

TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR FRIENDS

*Hardye's School, Dorchester, Dorset*

## Newsletter

Autumn 2009 : Issue 109

Published Winter, Spring and Autumn

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor

### FROM THE PRESS OFFICER

#### OLD HARDYEANS ARE EVERYWHERE

John Newman was at Dorchester Grammar School - which later became Hardye's School - from 1943 and now lives in South Africa. On a trip back to the UK with his son Andrew, they joined other Old Hardyens at the lunch - held every last Thursday of the month - at Dorchester Conservative Club. John's brother Roger Newman [at school from 1938] came from Southampton and was joined by John "Jammy" Mathews [started 1944] from near Harwich and by David McCririck [started 1946] from Weymouth. They were warmly welcomed by Colin Lucas, Treasurer of the Hardyens Club, who remarked there are Old Hardyens all over the world and how good it was to see four reunited from the 1940s. Chairman Bob Rench said Old Hardyens are always most welcome, particularly those like John Newman who had come so far to be at the monthly lunch.

*Photograph: [standing left to right:] John "Jammy" Mathews, Andrew Newman, Roger Newman, Dennis Norcombe, David McCririck, Michel Hooper-Immins. [seated:] John Newman, Bob Rench [Chairman of the Hardyens Club,] Colin Lucas [Treasurer of the Hardyens Club,] Peter Foster.*

*Photograph by Helen Rench.*



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**STOP PRESS !! Rt Revd Stephen Venner, Bishop of Dover, is due to preach at St Peter's, Dorchester on Christmas Day, during celebration of Sung Eucharist at 9.30am**

*Other Christmas-tide services at St Peter's::*

Thurs 17th Dec 7pm Carol Service - The Thomas Hardye School Chapel Choir

Sun 20th Dec 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight - St Peter's Choir and friends

Christmas Eve 10am Said Communion (1662); 4pm Christingle - carol service for the Church of England Children's Society

11.30pm Candlelight Eucharist - Preacher: The Revd Vicky Thurtell, Vicar (OH - Green School) (midnight mass)

## Hardyeans' Club Information

**President** Hugh GRIFFITHS  
**Chairman & Hon Membership Secretary**  
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**Copy deadline for Issue 110** 15<sup>th</sup> December 2009

*Hardyeans' Club Website* : [www.hardyeansclub.com](http://www.hardyeansclub.com)

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Also have a look at the school website: <http://www.thomas-hardye.dorset.sch.uk/>

**MONTHLY LUNCHEONS:** Last Thursday of the month, except December, 12.30pm for 1pm at the Conservative Club, South Walks, Dorchester. Please contact Colin LUCAS if you intend to come (Tel: 01305 265446)

NB April and October luncheons feature a Gourmet Menu at £15 per head. ALWAYS EXCELLENT VALUE !!

**LONDON DINNER** : will take place at Twickenham on **Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009**. As numbers are restricted to 60, early booking is essential. To avoid disappointment, send your cheque to Colin Lucas, 4 Fir Tree Close, Poundbury Park, Dorchester DT1 2PY. The cost is £60.00 which includes a tour prior to the dinner. Please see Dinner Booking details at the end of this newsletter. **STILL A FEW PLACES LEFT!**

**CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON** : Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2009 12.30pm for 1pm, Conservative Club, South Walks. Contact Colin Lucas as above. Price expected to be around £13 per person

**ANNUAL DINNER & AGM for the Club and Charitable Association** : *Advance Notice* : 20<sup>th</sup> March 2010 at the School 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre 6.45pm start to be confirmed

**CRICKET MATCH - CLUB v THE SCHOOL** took place 8<sup>th</sup> July. *Colin Lucas reports*



The fifth ball of the first over despatched Rob Waite back to the pavilion with no runs on the board. In past matches Rob Waite usually plundered the opening bowlers but on this occasion it looked as though the School opening bowlers Mitchem and Kellaway were to reap rich revenge for recent defeats by the Hardyeans Club side.

After only four overs the visitors were struggling with only 13 runs on the board and 3 wickets down. It was left to veteran Tony Foot (39) and S. Voss (59) to steady the sinking ship. Valid contributions by Simon Joslin (32) and Paul Basendale (16) pulled the score round to a commendable 197 total all out. Principal bowling honours to S. Mitchem 3 for 19 and C Kellaway 3 for 36 Tea was taken and the usual team photograph taken by Michel Hooper-Immins.

The School eleven were determined to build a firm foundation to their innings and both openers R. Cole and M. Stickland progressed to 16 in the first 3 overs against the wily Dave Trotter putting in his usual stalwart performance. M Richards had a particularly bright spell of bowling taking 4 wickets. Steady and consistent batting from all-rounder S. Mitchem provided the backbone of the School's fight back ably supported by C. Moss 21 J. James 19 and C. Fry 16. However despite their gritty display they were unable to master the Club's total and finished 50 runs adrift. There was a good availability of talent displayed and this augers well for both the Hardyeans Club's future and that of local sides. The Club thanks those involved in the arrangement of another successful event.

The weather was fine and it promised to be good day and a decisive result would be the outcome at the end of the day. The Hardyeans Club decided to bat on the School wicket. Several Dorchester Club players made themselves available to support the Hardyeans Club eleven captained by Tony Foot the Club sports Officer. It was obvious from the start that the Club side were unaccustomed to the School wicket and were soon surprised by the tenacity and aggression of the School bowlers.

A black and white drawing of the old School in Barnes Way has been completed by Richard Cove. A limited edition of 50 is being produced and will go on sale at £10.00. This should raise £500.00 for the Hardyens' Club Charitable Association and represents an excellent memento of school days. Contact Treasurer Colin Lucas

*Please support the Club for these worthwhile activities, after all it is YOUR Club.*

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### **Obituaries via the Treasurer and the Membership Secretary**

**Denis Paxman** sadly died earlier this year. His widow, Jenny, wrote to Colin Lucas, Treasurer

Dear Mr. Lucas,

Thank you for your sympathy. Denis's family are all very sad that he has gone from us, but at the age of 85, after a long decline through illness, we feel that he has earned his rest. Through the last months when Alzheimer's disease was affecting him increasingly until the last swift descent into death, his obsession, a common factor of this unkind disease, was constantly to want to go back to Dorchester to see if his parents were all right! As they have long been at rest in the Cemetery, it was a wish I was not able to satisfy. But Dorchester was always, lifelong, his lodestar.

Denis James Paxman was born in 1924 and brought up in Dorchester. His parents had moved there after the first World War, his father having been one of the 'Old Contemptibles' who joined up in 1914 and was advised not to live in London as before due to having had tuberculosis in the trenches. They were lifelong members of the Baptist Church, and gave loyal and unstinting support to the church, Dorford, at the top of the town.

At the age of eight Denis started at the junior department of the Grammar School. When he went to the school for the entrance test he met a boy called James Parsons, who was obviously a kindred spirit, and the two small boys diverted themselves on the way home with a visit to the woodyard, mostly to watch train movements on the railway line and also to get exceedingly grubby in their good school clothes, incurring later much wrath from their mothers. Denis and James became lifelong friends even when separated by distance, and on James' untimely death in 1978, Denis became the guardian of his only child, Felicity, then aged twelve. His chief friends at school as well as James Parsons, were Bryan Barnes and Brian Freake, and also Ian Parsons, the son of the head brewer at Eldridge Pope's brewery.

His progress through the school was normal for his age and the times he lived in. Some of the masters fired up his imagination. In old age he remarked many times on walks through the Derbyshire village to which he had retired, that the name of a side road: Charles Grove was also that of the physics master at school, a fact which always amused him. He was never very interested in games, being more inclined to watch anything going on on the railway lines which were of much greater interest. Dorchester, with both the Southern Railway and the Great Western, was a godsend to a boy who achieved a lifelong habit of meticulously recording his observations.

Like all of his generation, the 1939-45 war caught him up in other matters than school. In 1941, in the summer term when he was just 17 and about to take Higher Certificate, he left school before the exams in order to take up a post in the Meteorological Office as an observer, which sent him after initial training to the office on Poole Quay, where he spent an interesting year doing weather observations and attending to the fax machine, which entered them and many others for transmission to the RAF for the use of aircraft over the UK and Europe. The following year, then aged 18, he volunteered to join the RAF as a met observer, and spent the rest of the war flying in Coastal Command on sorties over the Atlantic, based in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and then for the last year of the war, in Gibraltar.

From the age of 16, Denis had felt the call of the Church of England on his life. He also felt that his role was to be as one who should teach. After demobilization he spent a year teaching in a prep. school, and then went to Oxford, to St Edmund Hall, where he read history, and then having got his degree, went on to take the Theology Diploma. He then spent two years in Theological college, first at St Stephen's House in Oxford and then at Ely. He was ordained in 1953.

His first curacy was at Bearsted in Kent, where he and his wife, having married in 1953, spent the first two and a half years of their married life, before he was able to go to do the teaching he had wished to devote himself to. He spent nine years as Chaplain of Solihull School, a happy and fruitful time in school and also acquiring a love of mountains and mountain walking which lasted the rest of his life. After this he became Warden and Headmaster of St. Michael's College, Tenbury, a choir and preparatory school out in the Worcestershire countryside, which included care of a small parish.

After twelve years at 'the top of the heap' as he described it, which had been a happy and interesting time, he decided that he would like to move down a step, and became Chaplain to Howells' School, Denbigh, in North Wales for nine years, and then, feeling that school-mastering had had its day, became vicar of the parish of Lakenheath in Suffolk, and then Rector of the Scottish Episcopal Church at Tain, in Scotland, and also in charge of a diocesan ordination course. He was a born teacher, both as priest and as schoolmaster.

He retired in 1991, and went to live in Cumbria. In 1993 he and Jenny, his wife, converted from the Church of England to the Roman Catholic church and in 1997 he was ordained to the ministry of that church, becoming one of the few married Catholic priests! Being by then 73 he had no parish responsibilities, but for the next years had a happy time filling in gaps where needed in the eastern half of Cumbria where he and Jenny lived after retirement, until in 2007 they moved to Derbyshire to be near their daughter Victoria and their son James and his wife. Their son Richard lives in Australia with his family, and Felicity in London.

It has been a happy life, and a peaceful death, and many people loved him. Nobody could ask for more.

**George RIGGER**

From: Philip Mackie [mailto:phildm@philmac.demon.co.uk]

George Frederick Rigger (30 July 1919 - 22 September 2002).

George was one of the school governors during the 1970s; George was a super chap - not only father to my best and oldest friend Alistair, but respected headmaster of Stinsford school.

A great loss and it is hard to believe that it is actually seven years ago.

Faternally yours

Philip

**Geoff RYALL** *Former Classics master, died on New Year's Eve.* An Appreciation

From Peter Grundy, 54 Manor House Road, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 2LX [grundypeter@btinternet.com](mailto:grundypeter@btinternet.com)

"Come on Hardye's! Come on Hardye's! Hardye's come on! Well done! Well played! Pass the ball! Pass the ball! Pass the ball!" and turning away in exasperation, "Silly boy!". He looks along the touchline and as his eye catches yours, you see the twinkle. He seems to be chewing his tongue, which appears, quite literally in his cheek, because Geoff is much too nice a man to mean that a boy is silly - the moment he speaks, he knows that his passion for Rugby and his perceptive analysis of the game have run away with him. Away from the touchline and less subject to moments of passion, he refers to one colleague as 'a super chap', to another as 'a brilliant classicist', to another as 'a very kind man', to yet another as someone for whom he has 'a lot of time' and for whom he has 'a soft spot'. Someone he teaches is 'a very clever boy', someone else has 'bags of talent' - even the naughtiest boy in the school is someone 'you can't help liking'. As we all know, Geoff was the most generous person you could ever hope to meet, generous not only in material things, but generous too in his judgements of other people. He was an enthusiast - for Rugby, and choral music and Latin. And for everything he ever tried. And for every person he ever met, and for even the tiniest things they achieved. He was incapable of voicing a criticism of anything or anyone, except tongue in cheek, which he did often and to the delight of everyone who knew him: I used to buy the *Guardian* for the pleasure of hearing "What are you doing with that frightful socialist rag?"; to wear an extravagant tie for the joy of "What a ghastly tie - does your mother know?" I used to ask his opinion of the Nuffield classics course for the delight of "The play way - absolute rubbish if you ask me". He loved getting cross but he was much too nice to be any good at it.

I first met Geoff in the 1968 Easter term at Hardye's when I was doing my teaching practice. He took me under his wing, introduced me to the King's Arms and showed me the country pubs of Dorset, invited me to watch him teach and treated me to regular sherry sessions in the resident house tutor's flat at Heathcote. I was always struck by the immense interest Geoff took in even the most unexceptional and mundane aspects of a teaching practice student's life - *he* after all had been parachuted into Amhem, was half-way through his career, was a scholar and an accomplished sportsman, had a wife and teenage daughter - and yet somehow he gave an absolute beginner on life's path the feeling that that beginner was the most interesting person in the world. Of course, this was the supreme gift that Geoff brought so naturally to his vocation as a schoolmaster - the ability to encourage you until you almost began to believe that the expectations he had of you were achievable.

I mentioned his wife, his first wife. Although most of our conversations in that Easter term were happy in the extreme, it was also a time of deep agony for Geoff. His marriage had broken down, he was living a bachelor life, and he was having to contemplate divorce. He was so troubled by what he typically, and probably wrongly, saw as his failure that he sought the advice of even the bishop. In these sombre moments at Heathcote, neither of us dreamed that three years later we would be sitting in the same house tutor's room, he as a recently married housemaster and me as his house tutor.

Geoff and Sue got married in the summer of 1969. As the time of the wedding drew near, there were two or three occasions on which Geoff was assailed by doubt, and like the protagonist in a Hardy novel, would say: "Oh Grunders, do you think I'm making another mistake?" "Of course you are !" I'd reply, "It's out of the frying pan into the fire for you, Geoff !"

"But I do so love Suzie. Anyway, what do you know about women - look at the dreadful way you treated that poor girl you picked up at the airport !" The rest is history. So much so that, when we met up last July, he still wanted me to know how much he loved Sue.

Everyone will have a treasured memory of Geoff. Mine is of a dinner duty at Wollaston House, where the boys in their first two years at Hardye's were based. One memorable day, Geoff climbed up on to a table, blew a whistle for silence and proceeded to deliver a lecture on the appalling table manners on display all around. Sad to say, his harangue didn't appear to have any discernable effect. But who knows whether the courtesy shown today by the older male residents of Dorchester may just be owed to an extraordinary experience they had one lunchtime forty years ago? In those days eccentricity was normal - or at least, at Hardye's it was.

Or the time when the archaeologists descended on Wollaston and dug a couple of neat trenches on the edge of the playing field. Over the weeks, various Roman coins and small pieces of broken pottery were unearthed. And then one day an intact and perfectly formed small clay bird emerged. It was taken to the Dorchester museum for expert dating - and was found to have been made the previous week in the Wollaston Art Room. No one laughed with more absolute delight at what he termed "a childish prank" than Geoff himself

Inevitably at such a sad time we find mortality hard to understand. As we mark Geoff's passing with the music he learned to love when a chorister at Exeter, we should mark it also with the Latin that he valued so highly. In tribute to Geoff, we might recall Virgil's explanation of mortality in Book VI of the *Aeneid* - *Nimium vobis Romana propago visa potens, superi, propria haec si dona fuissent*. If the gift of life had been absolute, the Roman race would have been too much for you, superior powers, to tolerate. (I'm afraid this is the kind of loose translation of which Geoff would have strongly disapproved)

Obviously enough, the explanation of mortality as a consequence of the existence of jealous gods who don't allow human beings to outshine them is a fanciful notion (although not entirely absent from Thomas Hardy's novels). But if there were jealous gods, they would certainly be jealous of Geoff's generosity in all things, of his heartfelt kindness, of his warmth of spirit, of his fundamental commitment to goodness and truth, of his deep interest in other human beings, and of his immense capacity for enthusiasm. He was, as Sue said on the telephone, 'a lovely man'.

**Mr J.Ware**, at the School from 1916 to 1926.

Mr Ware passed away in 2000 aged 92.

*Condolences are offered by the Club to all relatives and friends of the above.*

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**You Write** *Thanks to Chairman & Membership Secretary Bob Rench and Secretary Tony Day for forwarding some of these*

**Richard COUSINS** [mailto:rhacousins@hotmail.com]

Subject: W G Morris

As a pupil during the 1960s a visiting old boy related the story of a fictitious 'W G Morris' (or G W Morris) who had been created by sixth formers in the late 1950s. He was apparently awarded colours (in his absence), contributed articles for the Durnovarian and finally disappeared down a manhole in the playground, leaving a footprint trail over the school roof and his name-tagged rugby kit behind. I would be very interested in more information regarding this? I believe it also resulted in some publicity in the Dorset Evening Echo. There was also a story about a car being hoisted onto the flat roof in front of the gymnasium - but I suspect that is folklore!

Sincerely  
Richard Cousins

**From David CULVER**, 8 North Park, Eltham, London, SE9 SAP Tel 020-8850-1008

*Re Issue 108 You Write*

I hesitate to contradict an academic as distinguished as Peter Garland, but my recollection of the events he describes is quite different from his.

He says "two staff members ... were convicted of criminal offences against pupils ... the other was Mr. Johnson." As I recall it, Mr. Johnson was not one of the two accused (one of whom, incidentally, was acquitted); he fell foul of the law through unrelated matters, arising from a legal anomaly which has subsequently been corrected - too late, alas, for poor Mr. Johnson. All three masters are probably dead now, but, if I am right, the Newsletter has inadvertently done a disservice to the memory of a nice man. More to the point, if Mr. Johnson is still alive, he could sue.

Yours,  
David Culver

PS. I was sad to see that Dave Nickell has died - I would have relied on his recollections of all this.

**Richard CUMMINS** [richardcummins2002@hotmail.com](mailto:richardcummins2002@hotmail.com) RE: Class of '58 appears in Dorset Life from an email sent to members of the Wollaston House Class of '58 (see also issue 106) and passed on from *Press Officer* Michel Hooper-Immins

Thanks Michel for this tip, well done to all concerned, including those of you who modelled for the Wollaston House photo lasSeptember. I arrived just too late to be in it !

When I discovered yesterday that Smiths in Weymouth appeared to have sold out of Dorset Life, I assumed you had all rushed there ahead of me . So on returning to my alternative place of residence today in Ferndown [my recollection is that no such place existed during my years at Hardye's - it appeared as a new place in East Dorset in 1974, almost a suburb of Bournemouth], I was pleased to find plentiful copies on sale locally.

Spurred on by the success that Colin, Ken and others have had in tracking down so many of our year group, I will take this opportunity to add a few reflections in case it is of interest to the many old colleagues who I have yet hopefully one day to catch up with.

Although I was fairly sure at the time of leaving Hardye's in 1965, that this would be the happiest day of my life, I'm pleased to say that there have been many even happier days since. By about 25 years later I started to realise that it was the people that mattered and not the institution. So I even subscribed to the Old Hardyans newsletter - and this year [after the 44 year gap] went with my friend Sue to my first old boys school dinner at the 'new' school which was a modest but enjoyable event, very Dorset still ! I am pleased to say that there was hardly a mention of schooldays on our table at least, and the company at the table was excellent including John Barbara, Chris Brown and a couple of sixth formers.

It took me 41 years after leaving school to get back to living in Dorset, I now spend my time 40% in Weymouth, 40% Ferndown, and 20% travelling. [not just between the two - I'm not one of Smudger's cycling group [yet]. It is great being back here, I'm gradually exploring some of the Weymouth and country village pubs and am open to ideas of new ones if anyone wants to meet up for a drink sometime in the future.

A slight regret is that we didn't specify [in 1963/5 before escaping] one day each year when anyone in town could meet up casually at a specified place for a drink - say The Kings Arms in Dorchester on the first Friday in October at 8pm - we might well have only got 6 or 10 of us there, with a changing cast each year. I think I'd have made it about once every 10 years, a real opportunity for the occasional 'return of the native'

Anyway, enough from me at this time, I'll wait to see if any of you are encouraged by this to put in a few personal thoughts - including which regular day each year and which pub we would have specified, had we opted to do so.

I hope this finds you healthy and happy, whichever part of the globe that the game of life took you to.

Best wishes, Richard [Cummins]

[Editor - There is now an arrangement for a celebratory meeting on the evening of 4<sup>th</sup> December being on or about the birthday of at least 3 of the Class of '58, which this year is to be held at the Nothe Tavern in Weymouth. Further information from Ken Stephens [ [ken\\_stephens\\_1947@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ken_stephens_1947@yahoo.co.uk) ]

**Gordon HUTCHINSON** [mailto:gordon.hu@talktalk.net]

### THE LIDBURY EVENT

My name is Gordon Hutchinson and I was a pupil at D.G.S. from about 1933 until 1942. My age is 84 so some of the names and dates are lost in the mists of time

I was one of the many boys that lived in Weymouth and travelled by train to school. On leaving the school you had two choices to get to the two stations, the first was to go straight down the road, I remember a shop on the corner which sold sweets and was extremely popular. Continuing down the road passing South Walk And then up a slight hill, Holland the butcher was near the Great Western Station. The alternative was to turn left on leaving the school gates and proceed down the avenue, from my memory Mr Cole the chemistry master (known to all as Ticker) lived on the left and further down on the right side lived Mr Lidbury; further on you turned half right passed Mambury Rings (I have probably got that name completely wrong) and on to the Southern railway station adjacent to the Eldridge Pope Brewery. On the day of the incident we walked past Mr Cole's residence and reached Mr Lidbury's house, His frontage had two wooden gates, a small one about 4 feet leading to the front and back doors. The other gate was about 8 feet leading to the garage so it was a very simple operation to interchange the two gates. Having completed our prank we went on our merry way little realising the fury that would erupt the following day.

After assembly Mr Hill requested that those responsible should remain behind. Needless to say no one did. However it did not take the staff long to find out the guilty parties and we were told to stand outside the Headmaster's study. After a while Mr Hill appeared. We were all in awe of him and to find him in a towering rage did not auger well for the future. We were threatened

with expulsion, called vandals, letting down the school and damaging property( actually no damage or harm was done to the gates, it would take one or two minutes to restore) .He would not rush into a decision but the least we could expect was a severe caning. We all went home severely chastened, I do not think any of us had a good nights' sleep. At assembly the next day we all feared the worst but nothing was said then or on subsequent days. Mr Hill may have had second thoughts, Mr Lidbury may have seen the funny side of it after all no damage had occurred. Perhaps one of the parents had contacted the Head, I just don't know.

I would like to close by paying tribute to all the staff and in particular Mr Steemson, a great teacher of latin and Mr Cole (Ticker) who first whetted my appetite for chemistry so much so that when I came out of the army I studied pharmacy and became a member of The Royal Pharmaceutical Society until I retired in 2004

Gordon Hutchinson

### **Change of Address from Godfrey Lancashire**

Dear Friends,

Well, Alison and Godfrey have left 14 The Stocks, Cosgrove and are now living at their Devon apartment on the beach:

Apt 21, Burgh Island Causeway, Marine Drive, Bigbury-on-Sea, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 4AS Tel 01548-810169

- until we move into our new home (we hope) in Dorset, sometime in September (again we hope). More news later -

In the meantime Godfrey continues to work at the address below and is in jolly old B&B three nights a week getting back to Devon late Thursday eves.

Very best wishes

Godfrey and Alison

Godfrey W Lancashire ACIB FICM, Managing Director, London House International Ltd

London House, 6 The Stocks, Cosgrove, MK19 7JD T: 01908 262444 F: 01908 262234 M: 07889 101296

W: [www.londonhouseinternational.com](http://www.londonhouseinternational.com)

E: [godfrey@lh-services.co.uk](mailto:godfrey@lh-services.co.uk)

**From Colin NORMAN.** [lw616Colin@btinternet.com](mailto:lw616Colin@btinternet.com)

A mention of Mr Duncan Lidbury in Dorset Life magazine some years ago prompted me to write a series of articles on my time 1936-45.

Unfortunately Dorset Life were not interested so it was all left 'on file' for some time.

Recently there was a mention of 'Old Hardyens' in Dorset Life - so I found out about it and joined straight away. Oddly, over all the years I have never seen a mention of any 'Old DGS' type association but I do remember the 'Old Grammarians' being discussed when I was at school.

Attached is one part of one of my articles - perhaps you could have a quick read and see if it would interest your readers. There are about half-a-dozen more if of interest !

Rgds -- Colin Norman.

### **OLD MASTERS      Memories of the 'old' Masters at Dorchester Grammar School.**

Because of unstinting efforts by my parents I was privileged to be a pupil at Dorchester Grammar School during the momentous years between 1938 and 1945. Some months ago I saw, in an article on Dorset schools, mention of a Dorchester Grammar School master I knew well, Mr.Duncan Lidbury, and this has prompted me to dredge my memory and set down what I can remember of the masters I knew, good men that they were.

When I joined the School all the masters wore gowns but as WW2 gradually took it's toll of standards and clothes rationing became tighter, gowns became 'tattered n' torn' until most were abandoned, but the headmaster always wore his.

Generally the masters were well respected, one was addressed by one's surname, one raised the cap as a greeting and with hands out of pockets waited quietly until asked to speak and always said 'Sir'. Sadly, as WW2 progressed, some masters just did not reappear at the beginning of term and one wonders what happened to all those good men.

Of course, as children will, we had nicknames for them all. Mr.R.W.Hill, the headmaster was always respectfully known as 'the Old Man' or occasionally 'Monty' from the Latin. He was a first class headmaster and taught Latin when no one else was available. It was a singular achievement to bring the school from the old historic premises in South Street to the then superb new buildings in the best possible site to the south of town.

Mr.Hill's judgement in staff selection must have been of the highest order because, as will be seen in my remarks on the masters, they were of the best quality and it was not until towards the end of WW2, when so many masters had just gone away and some of the later replacements were not quite to the standard of those that had gone before that they did not gain quite as much respect, with obvious consequences – some occasionally had a hard time.

'The Old Man' was held in awe by the younger boys and this grew to high regard as one progressed to the upper forms. When he was around peace reigned. My abiding memory of him was when, in the 'lower fifth', sauntering (that was one thing I was good at !) down the stairs opposite his study, probably with hands in pockets, he passed by and rounded on me, gown whirling. Perhaps he saw something he considered to be 'dumb insolence' (something that caught up with me again forty years later with a lady Director). After sixty-five years his words still ring crystal clear, a roar of 'Norman, WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE' with a string of comments on my attitude and demeanour, the tongue lashing of a lifetime came my way leaving me, in the now current phrase, 'totally gobsmacked'. I slunk away as soon as it was safe so to do. I must have been a fairly stropky teenager in those days.

Mr Hill had a sister, a pleasant lady we called 'The Duchess'. Miss Hill taught maths and Divinity to the lower forms. In those days one was given a rough guide to the Bible and an effort was made to hammer home the basic tenets of right and wrong which, as a code of conduct, was a good way as any to start a child on the road to life.

The regular Latin master was Mr. (Steamboat) Steemson, who always achieved good results, always wore his gown and had a speciality he called the 'circularius' which, starting at one corner of the class he would rapid-fire questions on Latin grammar and phrases at each boy, passing on until he received the correct answer. The fact that the correct answer was not forthcoming left one with a feeling of some inadequacy and pointed to further revision. I dropped Latin in the fourth but ever since have been glad that the basics were drummed into me, after all Latin has had an enormous influence on all the European languages and so can frequently point one in the right direction in many questions of general knowledge !

Another likeable man was Mr.(Ticker) Cole the chemistry master. Prematurely bald and somewhat short in stature, but not in ability 'Ticker' introduced us very efficiently to the mysteries of elements, compounds and the complications of chemical formulae. Under his guidance we set up our experiments, watched what happened when various noxious materials were mixed in test tubes (glass!) and tended our Bunsen burners.

There was no such thing as personal protection gear in those days but I cannot ever remember anything untoward happening, then perhaps we were a fairly docile lot, one just did not skylark about in the 'lab', we just concentrated on learning.

The geography master was Mr.(Harold) H.G.Mann who took us through the physical and political parts of our planet, describing it all in detail and drew, from memory, all in coloured chalks, detailed maps of countries and continents with all the mountains, cities, rivers and mineral deposit areas shown. These we duly copied down, in doing so, one hopes that some of it sank in. War is a good geography teacher, we very quickly learned where place like Peenemunde, Tobruk and Guadalcanal were.

I can remember three French masters, and later one lady who actually was French. My first French masters were (by coincidence) Mr. French and Mr. (Bert) Cruse. We had Mr French for about three years until he no longer attended and was replaced by Mr. Rouselle.

If memory serves, teaching policy percolated down from the universities, ours was Oxford, and so the fourths and fifths were duly separated into 'Mods' and 'Sci's', which was Modern Studies and Sciences. Modern Studies included Art which I loved and just the basics of the sciences. The sciences being written in the languages of maths and formulae, required good memory recall, so I took the easier way and went 'Mod'.

'Bert' Cruse took the 'Sci's and had his own way of teaching, thereby achieving extraordinarily good results. Greeted with a chorus of approval on arrival in class there followed a session of French conversation with quick-fire questions and answers into which the whole class joined with gusto. The noise level had to be experienced to be believed which was all right when surrounded by two feet of brickwork, but the fourth form 'Mods' and 'Sci's were in the old Assembly Room upstairs which was divided by a moveable wooded partition. At times Mr.Rousselle, who took us 'Mods' for French at the same time was not well pleased at the decibel level and said so !!!.

When I joined the school the P.T (Physical Training) master was Mr.(Johnny) Johnson , a young man full of enthusiasm for his subject. 'Games' were routinely in the second period of Tuesday afternoon, Thursday afternoon and 'matches' were played on Saturday afternoon after morning school. So his was virtually a six-day week. In WW1 the emphasis was on body building but policy changed in WW2 , agility and 'thinking on your feet' being considered more important. As an introduction to the art of landing by parachute (we were about 12 years old !) we had to get up on the 'box' which was box (!) in sections with a padded

top and using a climbing rope, swing forward and land on a mattress. The idea to land safely on ones feet and keep running. If one made a hash of it then the instruction was 'tuck your shoulder in and roll' which stood me in good stead about thirty years later when, helping my wife down some car park steps, I realised I was 'going', did as I had been told years before and finally stood up – slightly shaken but not stirred !!

As was the way of things, sadly, one term we found that 'Johnny' had been replaced by Mr. Hopewell an ex-military gentleman with a son at the school. My home was at Wool and in my very early years I attended the village 'Council' school there. It was a typical village school with just two rooms and draughty corrugated iron outside toilets. Mrs. Dewfall was the head teacher and lived in the school house with her son Geoffrey, who also taught. Mr.Hopewell was the other teacher.

Mr.(Jimmy) Whittaker took English Language in the lower school, teaching every possible variation of sentence construction, things like the transitive and intransitive verbs, subjunctives and the future perfect and, most important, correct use of the apostrophe !!!!!. Under 'Jimmy's guidance, a bit of Latin and some French stood me in good stead in later years with my first efforts towards writing acceptable business letters. 'Jimmy' ran the school OTC (later JTC) and must have been fairly well up in the Home Guard command. He used us pupils as post boys for carrying instructions to his 'outposts'. "Anybody here live in Sydling" "Yessir" "Take this for me will you boy" " Yessir". All part of the War Effort ! A lot of 'ordinary' people had absolutely no spare time at all during WW2.

Probably the master most underestimated of all was Mr. (Dunc) Duncan Lidbury who taught English Literature. Dunc was grey and wore a beard.

Even then, plays and poetry were not 'macho' subjects so 'Dunc' sometimes had problems conveying to his often reluctant hearers the deep love he had for his subject.

'Dunc' took Eng.Lit.(!) for the whole time I was at the school and it was not until the fifth that we BEGAN to realise the true value of his teaching. He took us lovingly through the main works of Shakespeare, introduced us to such other characters as Wackford Squeers and Mrs. Malaprop and, using Palgrave's Golden Treasury, saw to it that we read the very best of the poetry written in the English language, in doing so touching on the Muses, the Greek and Roman god's lives, battles and disasters and, not least, various poet's love lives!! We had a well rounded education!!!!

I must have disappointed 'Dunc'. One afternoon in Longman's I was looking for a book I could afford (a shilling?) involving ships which was my consuming interest. The only book within my reach was a slim volume on some naval battle and 'Dunc' leant over my shoulder probably hoping I was buying some literary gem. On seeing my choice he just said "Oh, I see" and quietly walked away.

My best subject was Art and this was taken by Miss 'Stella' Evans, an expert at instilling interest and imagination into those who even had difficulty drawing a circle. How I enjoyed my Art periods, made more pleasant by the fact that they were 'double' periods. Miss Evans' task was not helped by the fact that the 'Art Room' was a new temporary wooden building which also had to serve as the canteen. Heating was by a pot-bellied stove at one end and the cookhouse at the other. One froze in the winter and roasted in the summer! The first of many such buildings one has seen down the years!

There must have been other teachers, including a pleasant history master whose name escapes me, Mr.(Beafy) Winters who, I think, taught maths and Mr.Hazelgrove who was the physics and music master.

These masters left nothing but good memories. They were good, effective teachers that made learning a pleasure.

Colin Norman 1938 to1945.

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**LONDON DINNER 6th November 2009**

**STILL A FEW PLACES LEFT!!**

A provisional booking has been made at the Presidential Suite, RFU Stadium, Twickenham.  
Cost £60.00 per person. Dinner will be 7 for 7.30pm. Please intimate your requirements.

Name.....

Dinner (including stadium tour) £60.00.....Transport required.....

Please forward booking form and cheque to: Colin Lucas, Treasurer, 4 Fir Tree Close, Dorchester DT1 2 PY  
Please enclose stamped addressed envelope. Phone no for further details:01305 265446

## From the Headteacher

Out of the mouths of babes..... before the summer break I informed the Student Council that they would be involved in the forthcoming interviews (October 21, 22, 23) for my successor. A student who has recently joined the school looked baffled and was informed by a Year 10 student 'oh don't worry we do this every year!' As noted interviews are scheduled for the end of October and it is to be hoped that the school will be successful this time.

The summer results were nothing short of spectacular.

One listens with depressing regularity of easier A Levels, but whatever the standard of the examinations there can be no doubt our students are very good at passing them and at a very high level. Thirty seven subjects gained a 100% pass rate and the overall pass rate of 99.7% does little to reflect the real achievement.

83% of all grades were A-C and 33% were the top A grade – an increase of 6% on 2008. As ever mathematics led the way with 59 A grades and 16 A grades in further mathematics.

Our International Baccalaureate results were also excellent and we sent our first student to Cambridge after undertaking the course.

The school was placed 29<sup>th</sup> in The Independent's top 40 comprehensive school sixth forms in the UK.

After such a wonderful performance we were prepared to accept GCSE results which we hoped would match 2008 (our best ever). How wrong we were. In fact results increased by 5% to 91% the first school in Dorset to break the 90% barrier. Once again mathematics (130 A\*/A grades) and English (120 top grades) led the way. Twenty students gained 12 or more A\* grades and a substantial number, 10 or more.

A wonderful performance which placed us 14<sup>th</sup> in The Guardians top comprehensive schools in the UK.

All of these students and of course their teachers deserve great congratulation.

The term has started well, with the momentum of the examination results encouraging all concerned. Already we have the Guardian Young Critic of the year, our equestrian team defeated Bryanston, Millfield, Bruton, Sherborne Girls and Stonar (I especially enjoyed this victory) and one of our youngsters became the National Young Chef of the year just before the summer break.

A very good start to what should be an interesting year, then again 'we do this every year'

Dr I E Melvin  
Headteacher