

Dispatches from Old Boys

1. On the 23rd November 2010 a very special and historic reunion took place in St James Street, London, interestingly just a few doors away from the secret wartime offices of M.I.5 where the famous operation ‘Mincemeat’ was hatched. Nine of our Old Boys got together for drinks and dinner. Mrs Cheetham was present, looking amazingly young, and Mr F.M. de Beer, the current headmaster attended the dinner. Mrs Adrienne Smith, an ex-teacher, now resident in the U.K. was also present.

Old Boys in attendance were Martin C.M. Bashall (1962-67), John B.A. Burnie (1960-64), John Clark (1950-55), Richard J. Davies (1961-65), Dominic Gray (1958-61), John Fleming (1950-56), James W. Huddleston (1961-66), Anthony Phillips (1961-66), Michael J.P. Wright.

A splendid evening simply flew by with much laughter and some of the most amazing stories ever to ‘burn’ the ears of a headmaster. To think that headmasters and teachers actually believe they are in control of their pupils!

Perhaps the most startling story of the evening was to hear how Whitestone Year 1 and Year 2 pupils from Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), were put on the train at Ndola unaccompanied, and were met by the teaching staff some days later, at the Bulawayo railway station, to be transported to school on the final leg of their journey. This in stark contrast to our modern pupils who are held by the hand right up to the classroom door. More often than not mum or dad help them unpack their satchels!

What a wonderful evening. Thank you Michael and Anthony! F.M. de Beer

2. What a delight to meet up with everyone at the splendid reunion dinner – many thanks to Messrs Wright and Phillips for bringing us all together. And congratulations to those for bringing all their archive material – fascinating to see so many familiar faces once again.

I am now back on my vessel in Lymington on the South Coast wondering if we should be casting off immediately to avoid all the icy weather. I don’t think we are long for the U.K.!! Anyone who ventures this way please do stop by and visit me in the Berthon Marina. I have an indecent hoard of Caribbean rum on board and in particular some rare Venezuelan sipping rum – ideal for “splicing the main brace”.

Fair Sailing to you all – looking forward to another dinner together before the next 50 years pass!
John Burnie

3. It almost seems like another lifetime when I was a pupil at your school 1960-65 when Tony Cheetham was headmaster and Mary Lane was the matron (I see on your website that she has just passed away). I was barely six at the time and I needed a lot of mothering which Miss Lane supplied though I don’t remember the sweets! There was a real aeroplane in the school ground when I was there – its wings had recently been removed as too dangerous for small boys to play on! I’m sure many things have changed since I was there – for example corporal punishment which all staff administered though I doubt you do now. We were about 120 pupils

then and all of us had to congregate in the staffroom at 5.00. The junior class went for supper at 5.45 and then to bed. The older ones at 6.30 after which we had prep with lights out at 9.00pm.

I was the eldest of three Ewbanks who passed through your school (1960-65). Benson a bit later than me (arrived 1963 I think) – he went on to graduate from the University of Southampton and became a very inspirational teacher of ‘A’ Level Chemistry before passing away in 2007. Mark went on to Oxford and was an ordained priest. After working in Bulawayo until 2000, he moved to Britain where he is now vicar of St Jude’s Englefield Green, Surrey. Both have two children. I have worked as Maths, Science and English teacher in seven countries, in particular Zimbabwe (Majoda School, West Nicholson 1985-90), Egypt and China. I am currently working in Ukraine. My father was the Principal of Cyrene Mission who came and used your premises towards the end of the Zimbabwe war. He preached in the School Chapel and I remember the sermons well. Rev. Wormsley was Chaplain then and I can’t remember any of his sermons, though I must have heard hundreds. I remember reading the lessons one week in the Chapel.
Best wishes – David Ewbank

4. I finished my M levels at Falcon in 1974 and attended University of Natal, Durban from 1976-78. I graduated with a B.A. in Classical Civilisations and English Literature, and went on to do a TEFL certificate. I moved to S.E. Asia to teach in 2000 and have been there ever since.

I am currently working for Intercontinental Hotels in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, as an education consultant.

I confidently claim to all and sundry that Whitestone was the best school I ever attended, and indeed the best school I could have hoped for, especially under the stewardship of Mr Jack Cheetham. I have very fond memories of it, and was saddened to read of the death of Ms Mary Lane, who was my dormitory matron along with Mrs Brookes in my first year.

I have many amusing anecdotes about the school, and hope one day to write a book including these. We often used to sneak downstairs past the ‘Inyati’ Room, where teachers and staff had dinner, to eat hidden stashes of sweets.

I remember the marble game very well, we used to play it a lot near the fort at Gibbs House. I think it started during the rainy season, so the tracks for rolling the marbles were easier to make. I remember we also had ‘wars’, between juniors and seniors. At one stage the seniors attacked our position and Alan Shearer confronted Clive Barwise, who was armed with a spear tipped with a long white thorn. He laughed at Clive, as if to say ‘You don’t have the *****’. Clive stuck the thing in his arm, all the way. We were dumbstruck. Anyway, the ‘wars’ were promptly banned.

I remember lots of things, guys stealing the communion wine, Dave Cant playing doctor!! Woodwork lessons with G.O.M. Pennington (designer of the deadly butter pats), feeding the Wools brothers Brooklax under the guise of chocolate and laughing when they had to run for it at 2.00am.

I used to catch snakes and other reptiles, and I remember Mike Nunn trying to catch a spitting cobra and getting it in the eyes, being taken to hospital, and I was so angry that they shot the poor cobra.

We used to run hell for leather down to Gibbs House after meals, down the steps past the small pool behind the chapel, I'm surprised nobody ever broke a leg.

I was in the choir, and I remember every boy looking forward to the parents coming for evensong so they could check out Sally French-Constant.

I remember tying strings round beetles to make buzzbombs, and drilling two holes in our rulers to make 'vurra-vurras'.

Cheese on toast and fish on Fridays, making model aeroplanes we ordered from the hobby shop, writing letters on a Saturday morning and then tuck shop, 1 & 3d, the visits with Wormy to the Matopos, spying on lovers at the Hillside Dam on Sundays, trying to catch frogs and crabs in Shit Creek, and Luke, the kitchen hand, refusing to show us all how far he could jump on Sports Day, even then I sensed it was a political decision. Rob Stringfellow throwing the cricket ball 77 yards (no M those days), hockey on the fastest pitch in Rhodesia, night swims, the gala, playing soccer and losing 7-0 to Barham Green.

Those were the days, my friend..... David Moller