

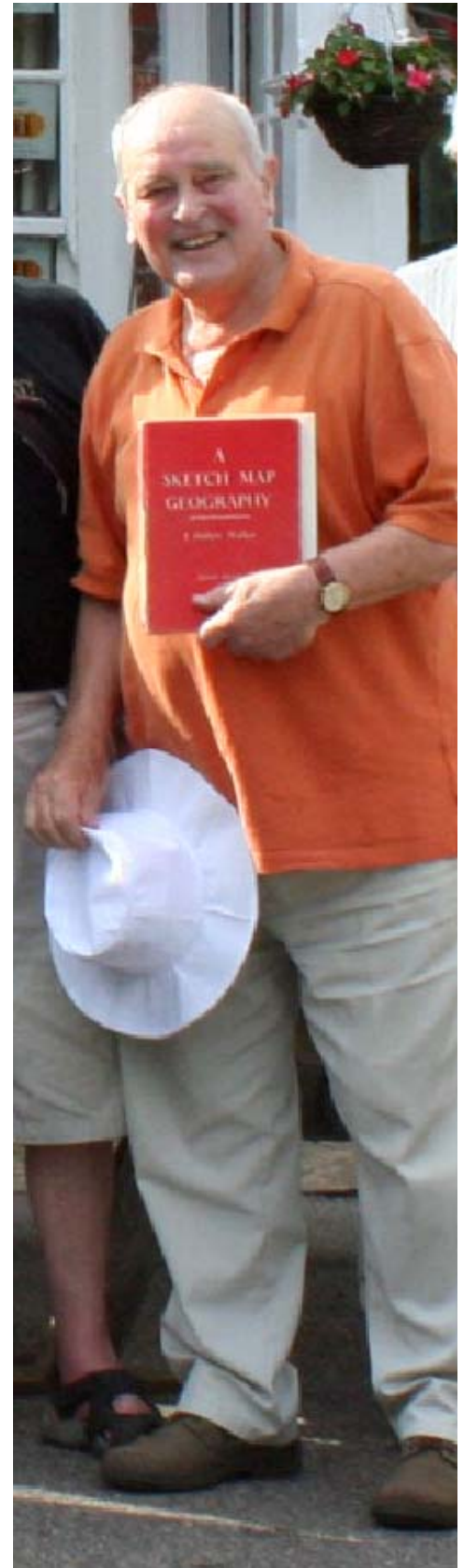
The Gazette



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OTTERSHAW SCHOOL OLD BOYS' SOCIETY

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Former Geography and PE teacher Graham Reynolds joins seventeen other Old Boys for their annual summer reunion



The 1960s Group held their fifth meeting at The Castle in Ottershaw on Thursday 17 July this year. A full report and more pictures of the event appear on pages 16 and 17.

Above - Graham showing some of his photos to and chatting with Old Boys John Chapman and Malcolm Alison.

Right - Graham proudly holding the actual Geography text book he used when teaching at Ottershaw in the 1960s, a tome fondly remembered by many.



An afternoon with the first Old Boy to teach at Ottershaw

On the afternoon of Tuesday 12 August I arrived in the pretty village of Sandling in Kent to visit Graham Reynolds, whom I had known as the P.E. teacher when I was at Ottershaw (nicknamed 'Body!'), and his wife, Janet. After a most agreeable lunch interspersed with lively conversation, including of course reminiscences of the school, I unveiled my mini recorder and proceeded with the "interview" which was the purpose of my visit. This piece is based on what we talked about that day as well as during a couple of subsequent phone calls.

Graham was born in Ramsgate in 1936. The family later moved to Surrey and he started at Ottershaw School in 1948 at the age of 12. He recalls being one of the two smallest boys in the school and acquired the nickname "Dormouse", shortened to "Mouse" and on occasion to "Moose". His memories of the school are entirely positive, and he was at pains to say that, despite what he has heard from later Old Boys, he did not experience any bullying – although there were among the boys a few "bruisers"! He left Ottershaw in July 1954.

Arthur Foot and Graham's tutor, Harry Burrow, were perceptive enough to advise him to go into teaching. Having enjoyed physical education, especially gymnastics, and acquired an 'A' level at Geography, he was accepted into Harry's *alma mater*, St Luke's College Exeter, to train as a teacher

of P.E. and Geography, starting in September 1956. Before that, however, there was the small matter of National Service. This involved two enjoyable years at No. 5 Flying Training School (FTS) at RAF Oakington, near Cambridge, where he worked in the air traffic control section. While there he took up hockey, which was to become his favourite sport. He hitchhiked to London every weekend, his uniform ensuring that he never had to wait long, completing his journey to his home via Morden by Tube. At weekends he played cricket in the summer and hockey in the winter.

When asked if he had ever been inclined to stay on in the military, Graham said they had suggested he might consider flying but that would have required a five-year commitment. "I didn't want to be bribed, and I thought two years' National Service was long enough, and I did want to become a teacher." Thus, as planned, he started his teacher training course at St Luke's. He enjoyed his two years there, including the opportunity to play hockey and cricket. Towards the end of that time, when he was thinking of doing a third year there specialising in Physical Education, he was advised by one of the lecturers to go instead to Carnegie College (now incorporated into Leeds Metropolitan University), which specialised in Physical Education. There he gained a Specialists' Diploma in Physical Education – "and I was one of only a very few that got a Distinction in Teaching, which I was very pleased about!" While there, he kept up his cricket and hockey and improved at gymnastics.

In September 1959, Graham started his first job, teaching P.E. and Geography at Wallington Grammar School in Surrey. After only about five weeks, he received out of the blue a letter from Arthur Foot asking if he would like to go and teach at Ottershaw as the incumbent P.E. teacher was leaving. Normally such a position would have been advertised, so there was perhaps something providential about the direct approach. Graham was delighted at the prospect of being

able to go back and teach at the school he loved. So, having braved the frosty reaction of the headmaster at Wallington, in January 1960 he began teaching at Ottershaw.

All the staff made him most welcome. He got on particularly well with Harry Burrow and Arthur Oettinger ("Oett") but made many other good friends, such as Tony Stowell and Stephen Hindley. At first he lived in a room at the top of the Mansion, but was subsequently offered more comfortable accommodation near where Denys Hall, the Housemaster of East House, and his wife, Margaret, lived. At the same time he was made Deputy Housemaster of East House. After a year he moved to West House, where he became Deputy Housemaster under Harry Burrow, living in "a proper bachelor flat" above that occupied by Harry and his wife, Doreen.

As at Wallington, Graham's primary role was to teach P.E. and Geography. He thoroughly enjoyed his duties, especially the former one, and always tried to show the boys what to do rather than tell them. "My motto was, if you like, 'inspiration before perspiration'. I didn't expect a boy to do anything in P.E., swimming, cross-country, gymnastics, that I couldn't do myself." Although he accepts he was probably the best gymnast in the school, he recognises that he was not the best at swimming or cross-country. However, he always got stuck in! "I always took part in the cross-country, I wasn't standing at the side with a stop-watch. I went round with the boys, jogging along with the stragglers, searching in the bushes now and then for anyone who had stopped off for a cigarette, and thoroughly enjoyed the physical side of the main subjects I was teaching."

In the early phase of his career, various jobs were passed on to him by more senior members of staff. These included the Treasuryship of the Old Boys' Society, the responsibility for selecting and showing films for the boys' Saturday night entertainment (at some cost to



Graham in the 1968 School photo

his social life!) and the role of organising Ottershaw's participation in the Surrey grammar schools' annual swimming competition (which the school won every year). As he rose up the pecking order, he handed the film projector's job to somebody younger, although he retained the other two functions.

Graham loved teaching the boys gymnastics and organised county displays at various official functions and the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards. He also organised the teams for the Walton and Weybridge District Athletics and Cross-Country competitions. "The final big triumph was when Ottershaw won the Surrey Grammar Schools at Motspur Park." When asked how it could be that Ottershaw regularly produced boys who could excel like that, he modestly replied: "Well, without blowing my own trumpet, I like to think that I really did get the best out of them." The school's achievements in Athletics in 1966 and 1967 were "the culmination of everything I had worked for".

Meanwhile, Graham enjoyed taking part in staff cricket matches, and his bowling prowess eventually led to him turning out for the local cricket club in Ottershaw throughout the summer months. He won the club's Bowling Cup in 1965 and 1966. A bitter-sweet cricket memory from those years concerns a Masters' Sunday afternoon match against a village side. Graham went in to bat at No. 8 after the team had slumped to 36 for 6 and proceeded to notch up 97 runs. Then the captain, Stephen Hindley, declared, thus depriving Graham of the opportunity to record the only century of his cricketing career. "Yes, the most disappointing moment at Ottershaw School was not being allowed to get my century!" However, Graham admitted that the decision was vindicated in that the team won in the last over of the day.

Graham's life while a teacher at Ottershaw was fulfilling in other respects, too. He had an active social life, joined the hockey club at Hampton and Sunbury and played there every winter. It was through

hockey that he met Janet, who had taken a teachers' training course at Dartford College of Physical Education, and in 1963 when Graham was 26 they got married. They lived for a couple of terms in the bachelor flat in West House, then moved into one of the staff houses, and subsequently bought a little house of their own in Ottershaw. By then Janet was a Senior Lecturer at Kingston College of Education (called Gipsy Hill), to which she commuted in the brand new MG Midget they had bought at the time of their marriage. They have three children: a daughter Anita, born in 1966, another daughter Tracey (1968), and a son Daniel (1970).

One of Graham's fond memories of the school, evidence of which can be found in the accompanying photograph, involved a P.E. lesson with the Upper Sixth Form outside in the snow! It took place near the tennis courts, and they all played touch rugby, in bare feet and wearing only shorts. Graham's good friend Tony Stowell came upon the scene and took the photo in



Winter 1960-61 with the Upper Sixth:

The boys included: Hugh Donovan, B L Bezodis, D K Dana, Neil McIver, Ian Stevenson, Barry Strevens, Ian Thomas and Michael Timms. Can anyone identify the others?

question. The lesson reportedly ended with Graham and Tony being pelted with snowballs, after which the whole group plunged into the (indoor) swimming pool! As Graham remarked with a chuckle, "Daren't do it now! You'd be in serious trouble!"

In his last three years at Ottershaw, Graham took three groups of boys skiing. The first trip was to

Kandersteg in Switzerland over Christmas, the second was to Seefeld in Austria over New Year and the third was to Adelboden in Switzerland during the Easter holidays. The snow conditions were excellent on every occasion, and "a good time was had by all"!

Graham's time as a teacher at Ottershaw came to an end in 1967

when he went to what was then the Laban School of Movement in Addlestone for a year's course in "educational dance", as "dance was the in thing then". He admits to having had "quite a good time" there, offering the further information that "there were seven blokes and about 120 women"! Although he did not really enjoy what was being taught, he felt it would aid him in his aspiration to obtain a lectureship. And he was president of the student union, to boot!

In 1968-69 he spent half his time teaching at Ottershaw Primary School and the other half doing teacher advising for Surrey County Council. Thereafter, in 1969 he became a lecturer at Newland Park Teacher Training College in Buckinghamshire, teaching P.E. and Mountain Leadership. For the latter subject, he took students to such places as Snowdonia, the Lake District, the Peak District, the Brecon Beacons and Scotland. He remained at Newland Park until the Teacher Training College closed down around 1986, when it became the Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education and subsequently Buckinghamshire University, specialising in Business Studies. He stayed at the college until 1992 as a Senior Lecturer in charge of "sports and recreation". This was a non-teaching post and afforded "a really cushy life"! After that he did two days a week supply teaching at a school in Amersham before retiring fully in 1996 at the age of 60.

He is, he says, paying the price for a lifetime of strenuous physical activity and suffers bad arthritis in his back and pelvis. However, having taken up golf at Newland Park, he has continued it in his retirement, has won a number of trophies and now enjoys himself as a veteran at the local golf course. He still plays three times a week, weather permitting, even though he now uses a buggy to get round the course.

Graham was "very, very sorry" when Ottershaw School closed. "It's the best thing that ever happened to me. I enjoyed myself as a boy, but I found that my teaching years there were the most satisfying in my life. Without any doubt."

Stephen Turner



Stephen Turner poses with Graham Reynolds outside Graham's house in Kent.



Summer reunion at The Castle

When a few Old Boys from North House first decided to meet up five years ago, little did we think we would be starting up an annual event. In fact, the gathering has grown each year to encompass all the houses from the school in the 1960s, and this year also a master from our time.

We have no particular reason for meeting other than to enjoy an afternoon of good company, a chat and reminiscences about things from our past and present lives. Several friendships have been rekindled through these gatherings and new ones made, and each year more and more people seem to want to join us.

In this, our fifth year, we enjoyed a hot summer afternoon at The Castle in Ottershaw – a haunt not so unfamiliar to many of our group, who used to break out at night from their dormitories for a swift one or two at this very venue whilst the staff seemed to be doing the same thing further down the road at The

Otter. Did the staff ever suspect their charges were a lot closer to them than they were supposed to be? On this occasion, John Burrow had arranged a buffet (thanks, John), which was enjoyed by all.

Our gathering was almost wrecked before it even started by the effects of different accidents on the motorways. I was stuck with Graham Reynolds in a jam on the M25 for well over an hour, and so we did not arrive until mid-afternoon. At least we had time for some catch-up chat as we had last met over 45 years ago. Several others arrived even later than us! No matter, we all still had enough time to enjoy what was left of the afternoon and to get a group photo – that is, apart from Ricky May, who alas could not get there until later in the afternoon.

For the first time our group enjoyed the company of one of our former teachers, Graham Reynolds, who of course is also an Old Boy although not from the 1960s. It was great to

meet him again and hear his perspective of the school, especially during the 1960s, which he stated were some of the best times of his life. He brought along several interesting photos and a copy of *A Sketch Map Geography*, the red textbook which so many of us recalled from our Geography lessons with him. It was interesting to read his notes neatly penned in alongside the various texts.

Our mailing list now has over 20 people, although not all can attend every year. Despite this our numbers are steadily growing, and since our 2014 meeting yet another Old Boy has asked to join our group for next year's reunion.

If you fancy joining us next summer, please get in touch at osobsmoderator@gmail.com and I will add you to our mailing list.

Josh Lovegrove
OT 812; North



The 1960s Group 17 July 2014

From left to right : Brian Stahelin (819), Nicholas Bennette (830), John Burrow (749), John Chapman (841), Roger Cheshier (666), Khalil Lawry (762), Josh Lovegrove (812), David Robertson (590), Ewen Summers (702), Malcolm Alison (742), Stephen Turner (922), Colin Blowers (947), Byron Bogawski (793) David Turner (821), Graham Reynolds (47), Nick Roberts (695) and Pat Gibbon (676).