



Newsletter

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Welcome to the Spring / Summer 2014 edition of the Newsletter. The organ for all ex - Craft, Central, Technical and post-amalgamation Old Boys.

Editorial

Those members who pride themselves in keeping up with the times (a feat which seems to get more difficult every day) and who regard themselves as 'with it', will be familiar with the term 'left field'. For the benefit of those who are progressively more perplexed at 'modern progress' the Oxford English Dictionary gives the adjectival definition as: 'That (which) is outside the mainstream of fashion, unconventional.'

Amongst the triumvirate of English masters encountered at school two, perhaps, could definitely be excluded from this definition. We speak, of course, of Norman Ford and Harry Cooke. The third, Charles Gordon Levitt, most decidedly fits the description admirably.

CGL had a fondness for obscure poets and had a particular admiration for that doyen of Victorian Scottish doggerel, William Topaz McGonagall. Some members may be familiar with McGonagall's sad lament chronicling the fate of the Tay Bridge which, in 1879, collapsed in a storm while a train was crossing, killing everyone on board:

*'Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay!
Alas! I am very sorry to say,
That ninety lives have been taken away,
On the last Sabbath day of Eighteen hundred and
Seventy-nine,
Which will be remember'd for a very long time.'*

We won't go on. It doesn't get any better.

Were McGonagall to be writing today, he would surely feel compelled to compose a commemorative epic describing the magnificent

structure which has appeared at the top of Beards Lane. For some time now concerns have been raised over the safety of the foot crossings at Downfield and Beards Lane. Doubling of the track between Swindon and Kemble and the planned electrification of the Great Western main line from Paddington to South Wales will see a marked increase in traffic on the Swindon to Cheltenham line hence the decision to close the Downfield crossings and build a footbridge at Beards Lane. However, this is no rudimentary 'up and over'. This is a footbridge on a grand scale; it dominates the scene (much to the annoyance of residents of Central Road) and incorporates long double ramps for wheeled traffic (buggies, bikes and Quingos). Finished in a fetching scheme of green and yellow, it is beautifully engineered and no doubt Gus, Ganger and Brunel are looking down approvingly; (although Brunel would probably have preferred it if it was a bit wider).

The path between Beards Lane and Downfield Lane, which was long overgrown, has been reinstated and the whole arrangement is well worth a visit although intending tourists should be wary of marauding High School girls who appear to have no awareness of moving traffic and wander about in herds, eyes and fingers permanently glued to those gadgets to which all young people seem to be addicted these days.



Despite misgivings of the directors, Mr Brunel is pleased with the day's production of washbasin plug chains for the SS Great Eastern.

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## Annual Dinner 2014

The Annual Dinner will be held this year on Friday October 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:30pm. The venue will again be the Whitminster Inn which has proved so popular over the past few years.

To whet your appetite the menu will consist of the following:-

*Home made soup served with crusty bread.*

*Roast chicken with roast and new potatoes accompanied with seasonal vegetables.*

*Cheesecake with cream.*

*Cheese board.*

Vegetarian and special diets can be catered to. Further details are available on application to the Secretary, however, please allow plenty of time for requests to be acknowledged and accommodated.

Admission cards are available from the Secretary or your usual agent. Rising costs have inevitably meant an increase in the ticket price to £27:00. Cheques should be made payable to S.T.S.O.B.A. Whilst we regret the increase this still represents exceptional value and we are indebted, once again, to Mr Bernard Trott for negotiating such a favourable deal on behalf of the Association.

As in previous years you are welcome to bring your own wine. Corkage will be charged at £3:00 per bottle as usual.

Details of our guest speaker, raffle and sponsor will be announced nearer the time.

The Annual Dinner is always a special occasion and a highlight of the Association's year. Since moving to the Whitminster Inn we have been able to 'expand' considerably, space no longer being at a premium. We are therefore able to accommodate many more attendees in air-conditioned comfort and look forward to welcoming all members, old and new. If you haven't been before why not give it a go? You're bound to meet up with some familiar faces perhaps not seen for many years. At the very least you'll be guaranteed a top-notch dinner in some convivial surroundings. If you're already a 'seasoned pro.', twist some arms and get some old mates out of their 'comfort zone'. You never know, they might like it so much they will be keen to come again next year when the Association will commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the amalgamation in 1965.

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## Committee News

We are very pleased to report that the Committee has been joined by two new very able and welcome members.

Regular readers of this journal will have enjoyed occasional articles and snippets from Chris Blick. Chris is Secretary of the Aden Veterans Association, Gloucestershire Branch. The Association produces an excellent and informative Newsletter. Any member interested can contact Chris on [chris.blick@talktalk.net](mailto:chris.blick@talktalk.net)

Matters spiritual have not been overshadowed by matters temporal since the retirement of Michael Withey and we are very pleased to welcome the Reverend Brian Woollaston to the fold as our new Association Chaplain. Vicar of Randwick, Whiteshill and Paganhill, Brian was born in Southern Rhodesia and joined Ian Smith's Army. He came to the UK with his family when life out there became difficult, and later became a Chaplain with the British Army.

Should the family of a deceased member have no priest or minister available to conduct their service, Padre Brian is most willing to assist and can be contacted on 01453 764 757 or via The Secretary.

We welcome both Chris and Brian and hope that their tenure with the Association will be a long and happy one.

## Farewell

**David Gerald King (1950-55 Scott)** aged 75 died 1<sup>st</sup> February. Of Ebley but many years at Chalford playing cricket regularly. He leaves his wife Allison, two daughters, two grandsons and his dog Hamilton.

**Francis John 'Jack' Durn (1936-40 Drake)** aged 89 died 27<sup>th</sup> March. Of Leonard Stanley and formerly of Spillmans Road, Rodborough.

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**Bob Young returned from Southampton to Australia with the P&O Aurora and provided this report:**

The cruise back to Australia went off brilliantly. We were unsure how we would cope with so long at sea, but to our surprise the days just flew by. We had terrible weather just out of Southampton with gales and rain but the P&O Aurora handled all that

nature could throw at us with ease. Once we arrived in the Caribbean the weather became mostly warm and sunny which was a welcome change from the storms experienced getting there. Without going into great detail of each port, suffice to say the isles of Aruba and Antigua were quite fascinating for their mix of wealth and poverty. Multi-million pound ships parked alongside the locals' modest craft was a contrast indeed. Aruba being influenced by its Dutch heritage looked more loved and money from the Netherlands had made the place more up to date. Obviously the shops were aiming at the many cruise ship passengers that arrive almost daily. For me the highlight of the entire voyage was the passage through the Panama Canal, which was everything I imagined and more. The transit took us through jungle and lush greenery before eventually exiting near to Panama City and into the Pacific Ocean. From here we visited Nicaragua, which is a country that is still underdeveloped compared to most other places we have visited. We travelled around 100 miles from our port to the old city of Granada which has a distinct Spanish feel. Loads of squares with old churches everywhere. The poverty that does exist does not appear to affect the locals too much, as they generally appear happy with their lot in life.

After a few days at sea we next arrived in San Francisco for a two night stop over. The shopping here is a highlight and sightseeing a must. The days we were in port the usual mist was missing and the views over the city incredible. The USA is not immune however from problems, as many homeless folk gather in the Union Square looking for handouts. Once we left the USA mainland we steamed south to Hawaii where again the ladies on board our ship took full advantage of the shopping. We have been to Hawaii many times over the years and feel it is too commercial for us so we were glad when we set sail for the more remote islands of the Pacific. Our destinations included Samoa and Tonga both of which are interesting and worth seeing. The locals again are not wealthy but seem happy.

On the final approach to Australia we spent a few days sightseeing in New Zealand, a country which we love for its countryside and Maori culture. A 'must visit' is the Bay of Islands which has some beautiful scenery and loads of Maori heritage. After a couple more days at sea we were back in 'Oz' and, as usual, we were "knocked out" by the beauty and splendour of our favourite place in Australia...Sydney Harbour!

Well David this is just an overview of our trip back to Australia and I hear you ask "would we do it again"? You bet!

Looking forward to catching up at the dinner in October.

### **From the Archives~ Fifty Years Ago**

A glance through the 1964 School Magazine reminds us of what doughty stock Technical School boys were made. Drew Buck undertook a cycling holiday in Scandinavia covering 1400 miles in three weeks at a cost of an eye-watering £40. We trust that saddle-soreness was not quite so painful.

Despite the whole cast going down with the dreaded lurgi, Drama Club successfully performed 'Summer Comes to the Diamond O'. David Ireland, the prompter, went down with tonsillitis on the day of the performance but thankfully was not called upon to croak very often.

Michael Wear waxes lyrical about Australian Rules Football for teams of eighteen on an oval field. At Sydney on Christmas Day it was 105°F at 7am. Hot enough to make your Christmas Pud spontaneously combust. We wilt at the mere thought.

Wren were 'Cock House' with the wooden spoon being awarded to Arnold.

### **Industry Spot**



'Castle Class' No 5017, 'The Gloucestershire Regiment 28<sup>th</sup> 61<sup>st</sup>' stands at the head of a down Paddington-Cheltenham train at Stroud Station in the early 60's. The Stroud Brewery chimney is clearly visible. A good view will be had from the school library in about ten minutes although you'd risk a clip round the ear from CGL if he caught you.



**Two views of the new footbridge over the railway at the top of Beards Lane.**

**And finally:-** Woodwork with Stan Marchant: ‘Now boys, who can tell me the best wood to make our roller towel holder out of?’ Keen second former, ‘A good deal, Sir!’ From the vicinity of the gluepot: ‘The way ’e cuts ’is joints ’e’ll need a b\*\*\*\*y lorry load.’

That’s all folks! Keep in touch – Stay in touch! Chas Webb – Hon Newsletter Editor.