

# The Old Ashfordians 1899 - 1999

**A Short history of the Old Boys' Association  
of The Norton Knatchbull School,  
(formerly Ashford Grammar School)**

**- The Old Ashfordians' Association**



*by R.W. Thomas*

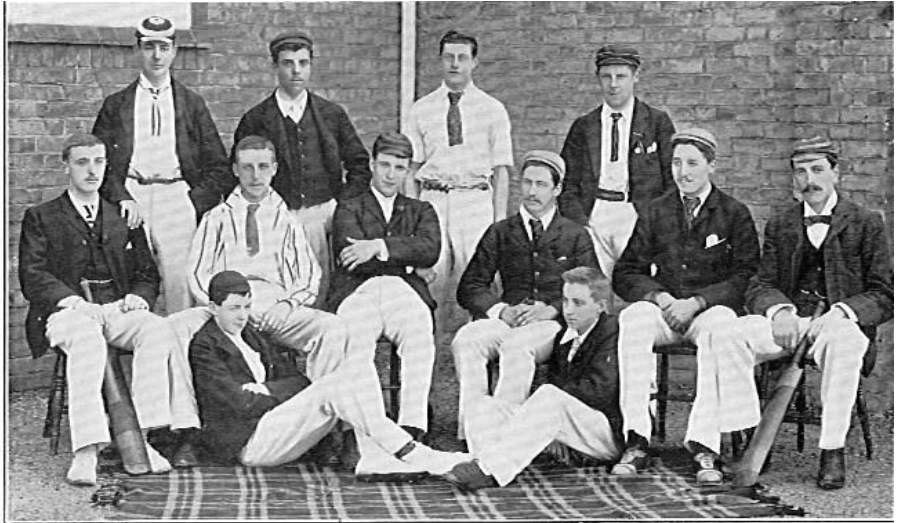
A REMINISCENCE OF THE PAST - FIRST OLD BOYS CRICKET TEAM 1893

G. E. HART

H. CHAPMAN

C. S. BODY

W. CRUST



R. S. CHAPMAN  
CULMER

S. S. WILKS

R. S. WALLACE

G. P. WAINWRIGHT

W. GIBSON

F. G.

# INTRODUCTION

After the 1996 Annual Dinner, I was approached by Stephen Miller and Greg Hooker. They asked if I would be prepared, to write a short history of the Old Ashfordians' Association, for the centenary. I felt honoured by this request and agreed to do so; in the cold light of day, I wondered what I had let myself in for. Actually it has been an enjoyable and interesting experience. I had written 'Sir Norton's School' for the School's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I joined the School in 1958 and so had automatically become an Old Ashfordian - though not a very active one! I had, therefore, been an observer of most of the Association's activities for some forty years.

This is the result. For financial reasons, it had to be kept brief. One of the few snags of this is that I have not been able to include many of the interesting tales about OAs which I have been told or read about in some hundred years of The Ashfordian and The Old Ashfordian. This means that readers will often find missing what they would like to read. This is inevitable but errors are not. I hope there are few but, if there are, I am to blame!

A large number of people have helped me and I can thank only a few. I am grateful to the School's new Headmaster, John Speller, and his staff for allowing me to use the School's facilities and for giving support; to Philip Cox, Chairman, and his Committee (especially Stephen Miller and Greg Hooker who talked me into the project and are undertaking its production), and of course all the OAs who have passed on their reminiscences - I have treated these discreetly.

The people who have run the Association have done a good job and it is still very thriving. I hope that future members will keep the Association and the School informed of their activities so that these can be put on record for whoever revises this history in 2099.

Bill Thomas

December 1998  
Ashford, Kent

# 1. EARLY DAYS

Over three hundred and fifty years ago a boy left the Ashford Grammar School building in the Churchyard on his last day at the school. In doing so, he became the first Old Boy. More than a hundred years later a notice appeared in the August edition of the 'Kentish Gazette':

## *A School Feast*

*will be held on the 20<sup>th</sup> August at the Saracen's Head in Ashford.*

Sir Edward Knatchbull, Bart

Thomas Knight, Sen, Esq.

(Stewards)

**N.B. - A sermon will be preached on the occasion.**

*The Company of any Gentlemen not educated at  
this School will be acceptable.*

*Dinner will be on the table at two o'clock.*

This notice will be well-known to those attenders at the Old Ashfordian Christmas Dinners who take the trouble to read their menu cards but, in fact, little more is known about this early venture. The reference to 'gentlemen' should not be taken lightly. Ashford Grammar School's best-known and certainly most influential Headmaster of these early years, Rev. Stephen Barrett, had retired only three years before to become Rector of Hothfield and so was probably at the dinner. Among his pupils had been sons of East Kent's most eminent families - Boys, Deedes, Dering, Jemmett, Toke, Tufton and, of course, Knatchbull - so it seems likely that at least some of these would have attended.

From early times, a 'Grammar School Anniversary Meeting' commemorating the Founder had been held at the Saracen's Head (which stood on the site of the present Boots' store until 1966, when it was demolished) and this was followed by a dinner for local dignitaries and Old Boys of the School. So, the 1776 event may have been more widely publicised to widen the attendance.

We cannot be sure that the event was held annually, but we do know that, on

Wednesday 14 August 1782, Rev. Francis Whitfeld preached at ‘the annual meeting of gentlemen educated at Ashford Grammar School’, which implies that it had now become a regular event.

At the end of the Eighteenth Century, the School had reached its peak of influence. From then on the number of pupils declined until the School in the Church-Yard building, which now houses the Borough Museum, closed in 1871.

The School reopened in January 1881 in its new building in the Hythe Road, which was itself to be demolished in 1996. This rebirth of Ashford Grammar School sparked off a new enthusiasm and the number of pupils gradually increased.

The late Victorian period was a great time for forming organisations, for men’s ‘smoking dinners’ and for making one’s own entertainments. A large proportion of the boys remained in the town after leaving and many became influential citizens. The railway now made it possible for others to travel from London and beyond and so many Old Boys must have met socially. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in the spring of 1899, it was decided to form an Association of Old Boys. A meeting was held at the Saracen’s Head on 10<sup>th</sup> April with Mr Benjamin Snell, the School’s Headmaster, in the Chair. It was proposed by Mr G.S.Wilks and seconded by Mr B.C.Drake that ‘an Association of Old Ashfordians’ should be formed and this was agreed. A large number of members were ‘then and there enrolled’. A few of these had been pupils at the original School.

The main objects were to promote interest in Ashford Grammar School and ‘to unite all Old Ashfordians in a band of fellowship’. The Headmaster was elected President and Messrs R.S.Chapman and H.Thompson were appointed as joint Hon. Secretaries and Treasurers. Seven Committee members were elected.

As early as 1891 there had been an Old Ashfordian football team which played a number of matches against local village sides. In 1893, a cricket team of Old



Boys had played against the School (who won by 129 to 84) and other matches followed. On the formation of the Association it was agreed to make this a regular event and a ‘Past v Present’ cricket match would be held annually on 1<sup>st</sup> July on the School ground, followed by the Annual Meeting of the Association in the Saracen’s Head at 6.30 PM. The School won the first official match by four runs. At the Annual Meeting it was agreed that the Association

*Henry Thompson (left) was one of the original joint Secretaries of the Association. Members of the Thompson family have been associated with the school for over two hundred years.*

should adopt the original colours of the School, silver and black. Ties and hat-bands would be available later from the Secretary, Henry Thompson.

Mr Body then proposed that a Dinner should be held in London in January as many OAs worked in the City. This was agreed and it was also decided to hold a Smoking Concert in Ashford in November, preceded by a Past v Present football match at the School. The forty members present then adjourned to the Dining Room.

Much of this reads little differently to an account of events today, but those attending the 1899 Dinner were gluttons for punishment and quickly embarked on an impressive series of toasts and speeches. The Loyal Toast was proposed from the Chair, followed by a rousing rendering of the National Anthem. The Toast of the Archbishop and Clergy was given by Mr Drake; Captain G.S.Wilks replied suitably. Things were now warming up and Sgt F.S.Hart, Pt.Thorn and Cyclist Thompson (this being the period of the South African War) all jumped up to speak. A Toast to the Chairman was then proposed by Mr Wainwright, who spoke of 'the kindness and interest evinced by the headmaster as shown by him in his interest in the welfare of his former pupils'. This was received with musical honours and the President responded. Toasts to the Elevens and to the Ladies (in their absence of course) were proposed and seconded. Rather amazingly after all this, five members took it in turn to sing and Mr Drake gave a recitation. Auld Lang Syne and the National Anthem (again!), brought to a close the first Old Boys' Day held under the Auspices of the Association, having been marked by the greatest heartiness and enthusiasm.



Following this successful start the rules of the Association were formulated:

1. The Association shall be called the Old Ashfordians Association.
2. The object of the Association shall be

*The Saracens Head was for many years the spiritual home of the Association. It stood on the site of the present Boots Store.*

to generally promote interest in Ashford Grammar School, to unite all OAs in a bond of fellowship and for other purposes.

3. Present Masters, Past Masters and Old Boys shall be invited to join the Association.
4. Members of the Association shall receive notices of Speech Day, the Annual Sports, Cricket and Football matches and of such other events in connection with the School as shall be deemed advisable.
5. The Annual Dinner of the Association shall take place in Ashford, or elsewhere, on such day as shall be most convenient, in June or July.
6. The Association shall be under the management of the Committee, composed of two Honorary Secretaries and Treasurers and nine others elected at the AGM of the Association. The elected members shall hold office for one year but shall be eligible for re-election. Five members shall be a quorum.
7. The annual subscription, fixed at five shillings, shall be due on 1<sup>st</sup> January of each year and be payable in advance to the Hon. Secretaries, to whom changes of address should be notified without delay.
8. Boys, on quitting the School, are invited to become members and to leave their addresses with the Hon. Secs.
9. A Special General Meeting of the Members, to take place before the AGM, shall be called on a requisition presented to the Committee 21 days before the AGM, signed by at least 20 Members, stating the object of such a meeting.
10. No alteration shall be made to any of the Rules of the Association except at the AGM, 21 days notice thereof being given to Members together with the statement of the proposed alterations.

At this time there were 86 Members and a roll of their names was included in the AGS Magazine of December 1899.

## 2. Into The 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 1900 saw the first 'Town Dinner' at the Holborn Restaurant in London. Mr Snell presided over some thirty Old Ashfordians and friends. The Loyal Toast was received with Musical Honours followed by the Clerical Toast. The fact that the Country was now at War was marked by a toast to the 'Army, Navy and Volunteers', mention being made of the splendid send-off given to the City Imperial Volunteers on their departure for the front in South Africa. Trooper Thorn (Inns of Court), Cyclist Thompson (The Buffs) and Private Clements suitably responded. The 'Association' was proposed from the Chair and responded to by Secretary H.Thompson. Toasts to 'The Visitors' and 'The Chairman' were responded to by the Headmaster, who hoped that this evening would be the forerunner of many similar occasions.

Back in Ashford, the promised ties were now available at 10½d (about 4p) and hat-bands at 2/- (10p) from H.Thompson.

What were to become regular features of the School's and the Association's sporting year, the cricket and football matches between Past and Present began. The School was, of course, very small and some OAs were occasionally recruited to strengthen School sides against such intrepid opponents as the Ashford Drapers and Kennington.

It was decided that Old Boys' Day should take place annually on the Saturday nearest to Midsummer Day. It would consist of the Cricket match followed by the Annual Meeting and a Dinner. The latter would normally be held at the Saracen's Head. Each November a Smoking Concert would be held, preceded by a football match against the School.

At the AGM, an addition was made to the Rules to the effect that 'the Committee has the power to invite others to join as Honorary Members'.

A yearly pattern had now been established which was to change more in style than in principle. There is little point in describing every event for the next hundred years! Suffice to say that the Annual Dinner of 1900 included some nine toasts and the musical part of the proceedings was supplied by eight named OAs and several anonymous ones. The account does not say what time Members went home.

The Smoking Concert was more informal but included three toasts followed by Banjo songs, musical sketches and 'an original song with topical and personal allusions, which was much applauded'. The Victorians liked their money's worth.

The now renamed London Dinner of 1901 was cancelled because of the death of Queen Victoria. The South African War had now ended and several OAs had been welcomed back safely from active service. H.Chapman, with the aid of another mem-

ber, of his Company, won distinction by capturing the Boer General Pretorius. The Association now had 102 members. Although the subscription remained at 5/- (25p) it was agreed to donate five guineas (£5.25) towards a new gymnasium. In 1903, following a hint from the Headmaster, a few OAs (who wished to remain anonymous) presented a 45-foot flagpole to be erected on the green adjoining Hythe Road. They asked that a flag should be flown on a number of special occasions such as Old Boys' Day, Sports Day and on the anniversaries of famous British victories, such as Trafalgar and Waterloo.

The 1902 London Dinner had had to be postponed until July because of the Coronation of Edward VII and the next year's event was held in January at the Masons' Hall Tavern, Basinghall Street. A Committee, chaired by G.P. Wainwright, was elected to organise the event on a regular basis. Among the attractions in 1903 was a musical programme ranging from 'Muvver's Nursing Rhymes' to 'The Holy City'.

The OAs' sporting activities blossomed and the 1903 Sports Day included an Old Boys' race over the rather unusual distance of 150 yards. It was won by A.A. Palmer in 17.8 seconds. The balance sheet of the Association for 1903 showed an income of £17.10.2, mainly from the subscriptions of 58 members. Outgoings included £1.16.0 for Sports Day prizes, £5.3.6 towards the AGS Magazine, a guinea towards the London Dinner expenses and £2.1.6 as the losses incurred on an Association Dance. The balance for the year was £2.8.6. The discrepancy between the hundred or so members and the 58 mentioned above illustrated what was to become a regular headache for the Treasurer; the membership was both fluid and forgetful!

In 1905, Benjamin Snell resigned as Headmaster after 21 years and was replaced by John Evans. The School roll was still only 69 (of whom 35 were boarders) so a recorded Association membership of 121 was remarkable. Among the boys was one, Peter Woodworth, whose name will appear often in the future.

The London Dinner was now being held at the Golden Cross Hotel near Charing Cross. Among those present in 1905 was S.S. Harris, who had gained his first England football cap and in 1906 was to play against Scotland before the first 100,000 International crowd.

Headmaster Evans, at his first Speech Day, emphasised the importance of the Association and thanked members for the interest they took in the School.

At the 1906 London Dinner, members presented G.E. Hart with an inscribed silver cigarette case in appreciation of his services as Secretary of the London Dinner Committee. He modestly replied that the little he had done was a labour of love. That year's Annual Dinner, held as usual at the Saracen's Head, was the best attended so far, since it was to pay respects to Benjamin Snell who had moved to Devon on his retirement. He was presented with an Illuminated Address carrying the names of 106 subscribers together with a writing table. His two sisters (who had played a big part in supporting the School) each received a gold bangle. As usual members tolerated a long series of

toasts praising Mr Snell, but they still had time for a number of songs and, finally, a selection by 'Messrs Thornes' Band', before pouring out into the streets of Ashford.

At the 1906 AGM, G.E.Hart took over from R.S.Chapman as one of the Secretaries. By 1908 the London Dinner had moved to the Florence Restaurant in Rupert Street. F.R.Musson and G.H.Thorn had become Secretaries and Mr Snell travelled up from Devon to take the Chair. It was revealed that the Association was helping to provide the School with a cricket pavilion. This was built shortly after. Henry Thompson, the Association's first secretary, moved to Rochester and H.S.Wilks was appointed to assist George Hart. A year later, the Editor of the AGS Magazine, which had now become 'The Ashfordian', welcomed information from Old Ashfordians of all generations 'For then, and only then, will the Ashfordian be fulfilling its duty as a medium to keep up the interest in the Past, by the Present'.

This was to be a landmark year in the history of the School. John Evans went to Judd School as Headmaster and his place was taken by Arthur Sydney Lamprey. He was to be the most dynamic Head the School had had since the days of Barrett. He was to become a great supporter of the Association. By now the School received considerable grants from the K.C.C., but still had only 70 pupils.

Lamprey's first public outing was at the 1909 London Dinner, held for the first of many occasions at Frascati's Restaurant in Oxford Street. He told OAs that, like the God Janus, he had two faces, one looking in front at his pupils and the other looking back at the Old Ashfordians whom he described as 'The material of the old School'. He said that he would encourage leavers to join the Association and he urged as many London members as could, to visit Ashford for Old Boys' Day. Two of those present, P.F.Bunyard and F.F.Musson, had been pupils at the School when it reopened. Lamprey regarded himself as a historian and once claimed (on very dubious evidence) that the OAA was the oldest in the world.

Sports Day still boasted an Old Boys' race. OAs must have been getting fitter, since this was now over the longer and more usual 220 yards. However, the General Rules of the Meeting contained the proviso that 'no Old Boys' race will take place with less than six competitors'. The results published make no reference to this race, so perhaps the organisers over-estimated the athletic abilities of former pupils.

In 1910, a Visitors' Book was provided at the old School building in the Churchyard, 'since many Old Boys turn their steps towards this School'. The book, unfortunately, seems to have disappeared but the building now houses the Ashford Borough Museum. Many of the stewards are OAs, and members of the Association are always welcome to sign the Museum's Visitors Book.

That year, so many OAs turned up to play in the Past v Present cricket match that there was talk of setting up another match. In the event, the fixture was declared 12 a side, but the OAs were badly defeated, only one batsman reaching double figures.



*One of the few early photographs showing both Past and Present cricket teams together. This was in 1909 and the day was cold and miserable. Headmaster Arthur Lamprey is in the middle wearing a cloth cap.*

At the Dinner which followed, now at the King's Arms, there was a large attendance. Peter Bunyard claimed to be the oldest member present. He mentioned the competition, which existed at the time between the London members and the Ashford ones, but said that this rivalry could be good, provided both Dinners proved to be a success. Mr Bunyard was well known at functions of the time because of his 'party piece': he gave what were described as 'clever impersonations of the nightjar, dog, cow, sheep, lamb, hen and cuckoo'. Today's OAs can see what they are missing!

In 1911, the School had started playing hockey. The Editor of the Ashfordian wrote that this game was free of the unpleasantness which 'now seems inseparable from Club Association football'. However, on another page he records that R.Kerr was awarded his Amateur International Cap playing football for England against Bohemia - but of course he was an amateur and an OA, which obviously made a difference.

Two of the diverse highlights of the 1911 London Dinner were a speech by Ashford's MP, Laurence Hardy, and a performance by 'a charming group of entertainers known as "The Gay So Simples"'. More seriously, the gathering mourned the death of the School's benefactor, James S. Burra, who is perpetuated by the name of one of the School's Houses.

Sports Day had wisely dropped the OAs race. Perhaps, as a substitute, there was a Pillow Fight competition - not presumably for Old Boys. 1911 saw the Coronation of King George V and the Cricket match was memorable in that J.A.Horne scored 101 (Retired) out of the School's 274 for 6 declared and followed this by taking 7 for 16 to dismiss the Past for 66. The temperature was reported as 129°F in the sun, which obviously affected the aged. It was so hot at the supper following, that Chairman Lam-

prey allowed those present to dine in shirtsleeves.

Headmaster Lamprey, speaking at the 1912 Dinner, said that he felt that the Association was not as large as it ought to be (an opinion frequently echoed in the future), but asked 'Are we downhearted?' to be greeted by loud bellows of 'No!'. The Ashfordian was so carried away by the enthusiasm of the occasion that it devoted five pages to an account of the function.

Members of the Association regularly attended the Founder's Day Ceremony, which was held annually on or near 24<sup>th</sup> May, then known as Empire Day. The date had been Queen Victoria's Birthday. At this time, the function was still held in the original School building. The date was appropriate. Reading the Old Boys' notes in the Ashfordian of this period, it is surprising how many OAs went abroad to seek their fortunes in the Colonies and other distant parts. For example, Leonard Robson had left for Trinidad some 25 years before and had now become Mayor of 'The Principal Town' and was offering to start one of the present generation of OAs in a post in the Colony.

In 1912, another of the School's benefactors to make his mark as the name of a School House, was George Harper, who did much for the town and made generous donations to the School. Robert Chapman, one of the Association's first Secretaries, died in the same year. In this year, the football fixture against the School was renewed after nine years. The School won 6-2.

In 1913, the Association was in some decline and had only 33 paid-up members and 4 honorary members. The School had 87 pupils and 4 teachers. At this time, the AGM was, rather oddly, held in the lunch interval of the Past v Present cricket match. A report stated that this had advantages, since 'the business, which is a secondary to the cricket match, is generally got through quickly'. C.S.Body was elected Secretary of what was then called 'the London Branch' and several younger members, straight from School, were elected to the Committee to liven things up!

Someone had publicly declared that Ashford Grammar School did not fit boys for 'the path of life'. News of this remark eventually reached ex-Headmaster Snell in deepest Devon. He immediately dashed off a letter to be read out at the 1913 Dinner, saying that 'hundreds of OAs were doing useful and honourable work in the various paths of life'. This, not surprisingly, was greeted with loud applause from those present. The same year, OA, H.F.Abell, castigated those who sneered at the celebration of Empire Day, urging 'the lads from AGS. to behave not only as Englishmen, but to think and act imperially'. Some of these critics were to be answered vigorously within a year.

From time to time, news of OAs who had been pupils at the Churchyard School filtered through. In 1914, Alfred Williams, who had attended before 1850, died in Texas. His main claim to fame was that he had played for XX of Ashford and District against a South of England XI containing many famous players. The game was



*The OA cricket Team in 1913. Three of the team, E.Rayner, C. Greenland and J.Horne were to die in the war.*



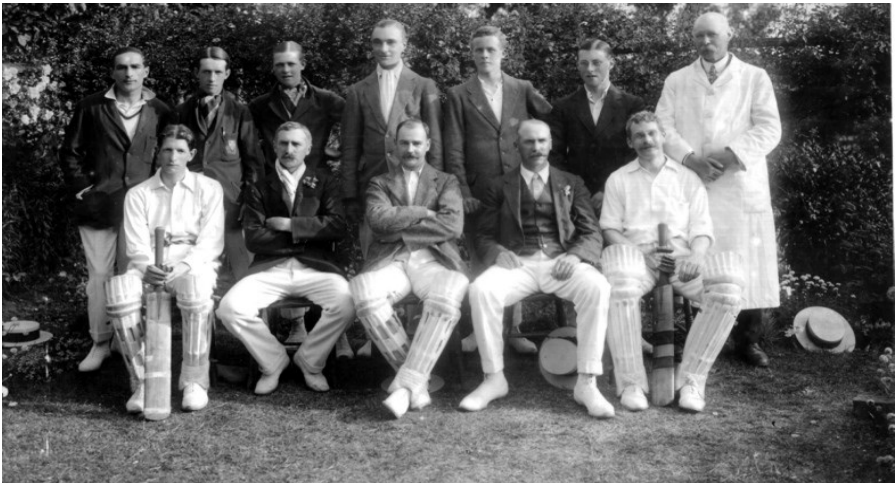
*The Headmaster used to entertain the teams to lunch on Old Boys' Day. The picture shows the Hall prepared for the hungry cricketers.*

played on the old Ashford ground, but he scored only 8 and 3.

In June 1914, the Annual Supper at the King's Arms was 'as lively and convivial as usual', in spite of the announcement by Secretary Body that they now had only 28 members with an income of £7, but 'of course they had a good many who extended a sort of platonic love to them (laughter)'. School numbers had risen to 107, but the membership of the Association had reached an all-time low.

The atmosphere at this lively gathering - and the July 1914 issue of the Ashfordian -

gave no indication of the fact that, within six weeks of that supper, Britain was to be at war and some of those present were in the Armed Forces.



*The 1914 cricket team. Within six weeks, England was at War and this year's Old Boys' Day was to be the last Association function for nearly five years.*

### **3. The Association at War**

It is difficult to believe how suddenly the Country – and Ashford – realised it was at War. The December 1914 Ashfordian described how those at the School were able to hear warships shelling German trenches in Belgium. ‘We have thought of our Old Boys under fire on land and sea or making ready for the fray’. The Editor feared that science equipment he had ordered from Germany ‘might(!) be delayed – a sad comment on our dependence on foreigners’.

Already, the School Caretaker, Mr J.Hemmings, one of the first to join up, had been captured and was a prisoner-of-war. Under the heading 'Pro Patria 1914', a list of OAs in the services was published. It contained 66 names and the Editor invited additional news. By April 1915, the first obituaries of OAs killed on active service were appearing. First of all was that of Edward J.Ward, aged 23, who had been a pupil from 1904 to 1906 and was shot through the head by a sniper. Not surprisingly, the 1915 Dinner was abandoned 'as so many of our younger members are serving in England or abroad'. The Old Ashfordian contained long lists of OAs – and masters – who had joined up. It was, however, decided to continue with the Past v Present cricket match in June. Many of the OA side arrived in uniform. They could not be blamed for scoring only 23 against the School's 209. The Association's first Secretary presented the School with a St. George's flag.

The list of OAs in the Services had now reached a hundred, remarkable for a School which had rarely had 100 pupils. News of members poured in, either from them or from their parents. The first of several OAs to be decorated was 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Wyndham Green, who received the Military Cross. After intensive fighting, he had been almost the only officer in his Battalion to survive. L.Tipper had survived a bullet passing right through his body. Of 120 boys in the School, nearly 100 were in the Corps. The 1916 Founder's Day service was again held in the old School, which had been occupied until the day before by a unit of the Lancashire Regiment. OAs who had already fallen in the War were remembered. Three pupils from the days before the Association was formed were fighting with the French. They were cousins of General Nivelle, Commander in Chief of the French forces.

In July 1917, the Ashfordian Editor was complaining that he was short of material and pleaded with OAs at the Front to send him contributions, somewhat optimistically in view of the conditions in which many of them were trying to survive. Mr.Lamprey was never one to accept excuses. F.W.Roberts, who had received the MC, was reported killed in action but his wife was shaken to receive a letter soon after to say he was wounded, but in a PoW camp.

It had not been possible to continue with any Association activities. The list of OA casualties and decorations increased steadily and, in November 1917, Headmaster Lamprey declared that the School should have a chapel as a memorial to them. In 1918, the old School was not available for Founder's Day and so for the first, but by no means the last time, the School marched to Mersham Church, an experience etched in the minds of many OAs

The War ended as suddenly as it started. The July 1918 Ashfordian contained no hint of the possibility, but in December the Editor was able to write that 'we entered the past term with misgivings as regards the War, but we ended it with rejoicing for the Armistice'.

An appeal for funds to launch a War Memorial – but not a Chapel – was made.

Among the OAs who lost their lives was John A.Horne, perhaps the School's greatest sportsmen of the decade, who died from pneumonia after surviving two battle campaigns with the Dragoon Guards.

A full list of OAs who gave their lives is in the Book of Remembrance. Criticisms of the abilities and moral fibre of Old Boys of the School, which had been made five years before, were now forgotten. The number of known dead was thirty-six.



*This Honour Board was erected in the School to commemorate the 36 OAs lost during the 1914-18 War.*

## 4. The Return to Peace

By April 1919, Mr Lamprey was hoping that the Association would be revived. In ten years, some 300 boys had left the School and he felt that at least half of these might be available to join. Most of the OAs who had served during the War were now returning and there was much discussion of the form that the proposed War Memorial should take – this problem was to linger on for a long time. Bearing in mind that so many of those returning were trying to put their lives together under difficult circumstances, it is not surprising that few were able to give much attention to the Association. Nevertheless, there was a good attendance at the first post-war Past v Present cricket match. It proved a worthy occasion with P.M.Care scoring 102 not out for the Old Boys and Mr H.L.Jenkins making a century for the School, who won by five wickets. Mr Jenkins had suffered from gas attacks during his War service, but eventually went on to become Headmaster.

An Old Boys' Day was held in December 1919 and it was hoped that this would mark a revival of the Association. To encourage this, a copy of the Ashfordian was sent to every member who was still on the roll, even if not fully paid up.

This worked and a record number of Old Boys attended the football match. There were in fact so many who wanted to play that two matches were spontaneously arranged. In one, Knatchbull OAs drew with those from Burra and School Houses. In the other, the School team beat an OA XI, 4-0. At an informal meeting that followed, the Headmaster discussed the future of the Association. It was decided to form a Kent Branch (with its Headquarters at Ashford) and a Committee was elected. Peter Woodworth was appointed Secretary and was to play a major part in reactivating the Association. It was decided to contact as many Old Boys as possible to agree on future activities.

Later, a Supper and Smoking Concert was held at the Saracen's Head. Some fifty OAs attended and Mr Lamprey took the Chair. There was a silent toast in memory of those Old Boys who had died in the War. Even now the list was incomplete as further information trickled in. This toast was followed by others and by musical items, so the traditional pattern was being re-established.

The Committee met on 25 February 1920. It was decided to start collecting subscriptions immediately and F.Ames agreed to act as Treasurer. The sub was 2/6 (12½p). The AGM would be held on Old Boys' Day in July. The 'Indian' contingent of OAs was thinking of showing their support by holding a Dinner in Delhi on the same day.

The Past won the cricket match against the present by 223 to 92, even though Mr Frank Pinch took 7 for 56 for the School. W.S.Horne scored a record 107. The supper that followed was held in the Parish Rooms. The event was well supported and the oldest member present had left the School in 1882. Enthusiasm was so great that it was agreed to investigate the formation of an OA Football Club.

By 1920, Association events had become termly and were well supported, even though it had only 61 paid-up members. A football supper was held in the old School and the musical items were considered well above average. The event met with wide approval although, unfortunately, the match which was supposed to precede it had been snowed off!

The second post-war London Dinner had been held at the quaintly named Villa-Villa Restaurant, in February 1921. It went well and the well-dined proposer of the toast to the Association said that the event 'would not fizzle out as long as it had a Hart, Body and Sole present', a reference to three of the six original members of the Association who were present.

By 1921, the Memorial Fund had reached £320 but it seemed unlikely that much would be done until the long awaited new buildings arrived – this meant a long wait! The School now had 150 day boys and 60 boarders and was full to capacity.

The 1921 cricket side contained seven of those who represented the School in 1914, but was heavily defeated by a School side supported by several staff, including Mr Pinch, now a Glamorgan county player. The 40 OAs present at the Supper heard Mr Lamprey appeal for a dial on the School clock; the Committee agreed to consider it. In the event, the Vice Chairman of the Governors, F.Knock, agreed to provide the dial and the Association funded a House Football Shield, instead.

The 5<sup>th</sup> November saw the inauguration of the short-lived Cambridge Old Ashfordian Society. Mr Lamprey entertained the six resident OAs to dinner at the Red Lion Hotel. Yet another spin-off appeared in the 6<sup>th</sup> (Kent Brigade) Royal Field Artillery – a territorial Army unit – which now had an Ashford Battery entirely made up of OAs. Other Old Boys were urged to join up to form a signals unit, but no-one volunteered.

At the 1921 AGM, Mr Peter Woodworth was elected Hon. Secretary, a post he was to hold for many years with great distinction. The year after, Mr Lamprey offered to present a sports ground, and hopefully, later, a pavilion, to the School. This spurred more athletic OAs to meet on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1922, to form the Old Ashfordian Football Club. Mr G.M.Dickinson was elected both Hon. Secretary and Treasurer. The intention was to arrange ‘friendly’ matches in the 1922/3 season and possibly enter one or more of the local Cup competitions. The subscription was 2/6 (12½p). Some twenty members signed on, but they appealed for more young OAs to join. The Club eventually entered the Kent Junior Ashford and District Charity Cup and the Lydd Charity Cup competitions.

The O AFC made a good start and reached the semi-final of the Ashford Cup. They even fielded a 2<sup>nd</sup> XI. The Ashfordian claimed that ‘Cup ties were played in the proper spirit by both sides’ – Mr Lamprey would have tolerated nothing else!

In view of all this activity, it was not surprising that the Past thrashed the Present 5 – 0. About sixty attended the supper afterwards in the old School, hired for 15/- (75p). The year after, the Club was unbeaten at the top of the Ashford and District League Division 2, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI struggled. Dickinson had to resign as Secretary on moving away and was replaced by A.G.E.Heritage.

That year, two football teams were fielded against the School; one drew and the other won. At the AGM, it was revealed that the Association had a balance of nearly £19 and so it was agreed to present a House cricket shield to the School at a cost of £6.10.0 (£6.50). Seventy OAs attended the supper and two additional toasts were proposed; one to the O AFC, and one to the Secretary, Peter Woodworth.

At the 1924 London Dinner, once again at Frascati’s, the Rev Mills Robbins presided. He had been a teacher when the School moved to the Hythe Road and later admitted being the hitherto anonymous author of a small booklet called ‘The Haunted Grammar School’, based on life in the old School, which had been published more than thirty years before.

The Football Club continued its success by winning the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division championship of the Ashford and District League and was runner-up in the Charity Cup. The 2<sup>nd</sup> XI had improved its position in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. The shield and medals were presented at the supper at the Saracen's Head. Mr H.Godden of the League, making the presentation, was glad that the OAs had entered, but hoped that they would not poach other Old Boys from local village sides. Earlier, the Past had beaten the Present 5-2, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI drawing 4-4.

At the 1924 AGM, it was decided that, although £500 had been collected for the Memorial Fund, it was not enough to provide a suitable Memorial. It was, however, agreed to produce a temporary oak Memorial Board for the School with the 36 names on it. The rules of the Association were updated.

1924 seems to have marked the post-war regeneration of the Association. All the activities were well supported, the London Dinner attracting over 40. The Association now had 104 paid-up members. Patterns for an OA blazer, scarf and, possibly, a badge were being considered. OA football was going well. The 1<sup>st</sup> XI had been promoted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Division and had lost only one match and the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI had won half its matches. However, it was felt that the pressure of fielding two competitive sides was too much and it was reluctantly agreed to withdraw the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI from the League; it would, however, still play friendly games. OA H.F.Piper (a Cambridge Blue) was playing regularly for the Corinthians (the last of the great top-class amateur sides). He was said to be the best OA footballer since the days of S.S.Harris. He played for the Past against the present in 1925, but the School managed to draw 5-5.

In April 1926, the Editor of the Ashfordian wrote that 'This issue was largely an Old Boys' number'. At the last London Dinner, the Editor, no less than Peter Woodworth, had been chided for not including enough Association news in the magazine!

The O AFC now had over 30 members and so it was decided to re-enter the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI in the League. An annual Football Dance was now held at the Masonic Hall, the present home of the Christmas Dinners.

The design for the so-called 'OA Uniform' had now been agreed. The blazer consisted of royal and navy blue stripes, each two inches wide, with a silver pocket badge composed of the Knatchbull crest – a leopard on a cap of maintenance. The material had to be specially woven and the cost was expected to be about £2, the badge being an extra 3/6 (17½p). A silk tie with a narrow light blue stripe cost 3/- (15p) and scarves would also be available. OAs were warned, however, that all this could only go ahead if sufficient purchases were guaranteed. The total cost was in fact about one week's wages for an average working man of the time.

The 1926 Cricket match was perhaps unique in that the two captains were father and son. Father, G.E.Hart, scored only 8 and was on the losing side, whereas his son, K.K.Hart, scored 92. The Football side was not doing well, even though Mr Ian Ham-

ilton, an amateur international, had joined the Staff and now played for the O AFC. It was decided to withdraw from all competitions and play only friendlies. They did manage to beat the School 3-2.

Although membership had now reached 200 (140 paid-up), only 50 attended the 1926 Dinner. It was decided that only members who lived within reasonable distance of the School should serve on the Committee; attendance of some 'out of town' members had been very poor.

In August 1927, Headmaster Lamprey died suddenly while at Cadet Camp. The Cadets had been one of his great loves; he had been a dynamic leader and a great supporter of the Association. Among floral tributes at his funeral were wreaths from the Association and from the O AFC. Among his many innovations was the march to Mersham Church on Founder's Day. He was buried at Mersham. His place was taken by Harry Jenkins, who had been a teacher at the School for many years and who could be relied upon to continue support for the OAs.

By 1928, the membership of the Association (247) exceeded the number of boys on the School Roll. Peter Woodworth suggested that it might be possible to arrange other local activities. Tickets for the London Dinner were now 10/- (50p) and it was becoming a little less formal – 'Evening dress is now optional'.

A new OA tie consisting of oblique quarter-inch gold and light blue stripes, side by side, on a dark blue ground was approved, surprisingly soon after a different design had been agreed. This was to be available, as were School uniforms for years, from Mr Handover, 1, High Street. Similar scarves were to be produced, but the blazer design was left unchanged.

News of the activities from OAs now came in frequently, thanks largely to Peter Woodworth's communications network. Many of these members worked overseas, where opportunities were at this time often greater than at home. The father of one pupil who worked in India, had been amazed to find that the builder he had recently employed was an OA, J.A. Woodgate.

The next few years passed quietly, but in 1928 a large number of members attended Old Boys' Day and several actually boarded at the School for the weekend. Membership was 227 paid-up OAs; the Association had a turnover of £37, most of which went on the magazine, but the balance was only about one pound! In 1929, the London Dinner changed its venue to the Golden Cross Hotel at Charing Cross, but the next year went back to Frascati's. 'Ordinary dress' was now accepted for all attending.

In 1930, the School celebrated its 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. 1630 is still kept officially as the year of Foundation, although it may well have been later and the original School was not built until 1635. By a coincidence, membership of the Association reached 300 and actually soon reached 350. The Association did not organise anything specifically to mark the Anniversary, but it was decided to revive the O AFC and enter the Ashford

League Division 2. The Club organised a Dance at the Co-operative Hall at which some eighty members and friends danced to Walter Smith's band.

It was believed that some twenty of those pupils who had braved that snowy day in January 1881 to attend the Hythe Road School were still alive, although only two were members. A third soon joined and gave a generous donation to the School Sports Found.

The 1930 Old Boys' football match was a moral victory for the OAs, since they were winning 6-0 when the game was abandoned as nobody could see the goals in the fog! In an effort to attract younger members, it was decided to hold a Dance and Social Evening after the 1931 Cricket match. Ironically, the length of the membership list was becoming embarrassing and so it was decided to exclude anyone who had not paid his sub since 1929. Finances were precarious. On a turnover of £33, Treasurer Amos produced a balance of 1/4 (6½p).

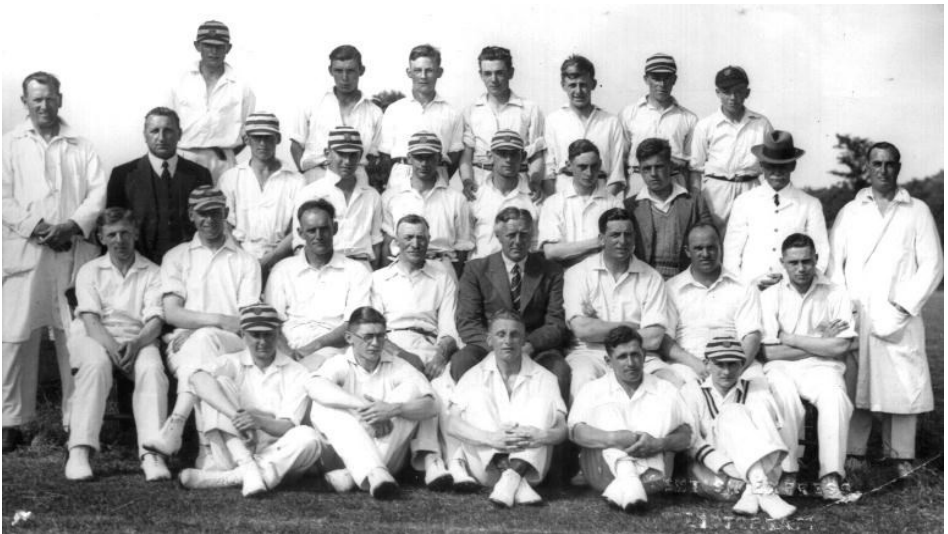
The O AFC was now facing a situation in which it was bemoaning the competition for players from local sides – the boot had moved to the other foot since a few years before. The increasing popularity of hockey in the Town was also having an effect. Even more OAs were working abroad. Bob Carey was managing nearly ten thousand acres of rubber plantation in Malaysia and had met another OA whilst playing Rugby. J.G.Stuart ran a tea plantation. R.H.S.Drake, serving on HMS Suffolk, had visited Hong Kong, which he described as 'Not a very interesting place'. Closer to home, several OAs working in Paris played cricket for the Paris Standard Club. Richard O'Connell wrote from Shanghai to say that Japanese bombs were falling on the town, this being the period of the Sino-Japanese conflict.

Perhaps, because of the economic situation, attendance at social events was disappointing. The 27<sup>th</sup> London Dinner had moved to the White Horse Restaurant, but few attended. The list of toasts was markedly shorter and there was no musical entertainment. Likewise, the numbers at an OA Dance at the County Hotel (entry fee £1) was poor. It was feared that, unless support improved, the dances would stop.

Because times were so bad economically, a plea was made to Old Boys in responsible positions to try to help pupils find jobs when leaving. More and more were finding it difficult to get work. Some statistics on the occupations taken up by boys on leaving had been compiled. Out of 606 who had left the School since 1918, 452 had been traced. Ninety six became clerks (mostly with banks, insurance companies and solicitors). Seventy two took up engineering in the widest sense, 27 on the railways. Seventy one became farmers and 21 went into teaching. Grocery was the most popular retail trade. The remainder covered a wide range of occupations including a philatelist, a Suez Canal pilot, an organist and a Hollywood actor (Henry Wilcoxon). Of the above, 27 went to University, 11 to Farm Institutes or agricultural colleges and 43 had gone abroad.

The School now played hockey and often met OAs in the opposition. It was therefore decided to arrange a Past v Present Hockey match on 1 April 1933, in the hope that this might lead to an annual fixture. The match was played but there appears to be no record of the result.

The Association still had over 300 members and it was agreed that a ten-year subscription of one guinea (£1.05) should be introduced to overcome the problem of chasing up subscriptions. After a short break, the Annual Dinners were still taking place. The venue remained the Saracen's Head and the entertainment following the toasts was still extensive, including community singing organised by Frank Pinch, conjuring,



*The 1931 Past and Present teams. Headmaster Harry Jenkins is in the centre. On his right is W.C. Blacklocks who was to become the first official Association School Governor. On the left of the middle row is Frank Pinch (who played for Glamorgan) next to Peter Woodworth.*

a violin solo and several other choral items

Some speeches at the 1933 Dinner were directed at the younger generation and were perhaps a little unfortunate in view of the wish to attract younger members. R.Somerville, proposing the Association, felt that it needed more of the pioneer spirit. 'Was anything more pitiful than that it had become necessary to provide a youth with social clubs to spend his time on such things as rug-making etc?' A.E.Hicks, proposing the School, wondered 'whether the modern schoolboy, who did not enjoy the advantages of corporal punishment to the same extent as his fore-runners, was the better or the worse for it'. Headmaster Jenkins said that the relationship between master and boy had largely changed (he thought for the better) and the former was now more of an elder brother, to whom the boy could take his problems. His remarks may have surprised anyone at the School then.

An increasing number of marriages were being recorded in the Ashfordian. This inspired the School statistician to find that of the 185 OAs between the ages of 30 and 40 that he had investigated, 102 were married and 83 were bachelors.

Lord Brabourne had died in 1933. He had been Chairman of the Governors and a keen supporter of the Association. The new Lord Brabourne had been appointed Governor of Bombay and wrote to say that it would be some time before he could resume close links with the OAs.

In 1933, the Old Boys' Day reverted to the practice of holding a supper in the School Dining Hall after the cricket. The poor attendance at the last OA Dance caused the Association to abandon such events.

Nineteen thirty three also saw the start of the Old Boys' Tennis Tournament 'arranged in a tentative way', but, in spite of the short notice, there was a good attendance. In September, the Headmaster, Harry Jenkins, died suddenly in Somerset. He had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Association, attending most of its activities and often playing for them at cricket and football. Peter Woodworth temporarily filled his post and presided over the Annual Dinner, following an overwhelming 5-1 defeat of the School at football. The attendance was one of the largest for years and the gathering expressed its sympathy to Mrs Jenkins and her daughter. Many tributes were paid to Harry Jenkins. The sadness of the occasion did not mean the exclusion of musical entertainment. This year, F.H.Griffith combined his piano playing with 'lightning caricatures'

In 1934, Leslie White was appointed as the new Headmaster. He attended the London Dinner only a week or two later. Since 1919, the event had been organised independently by a London Dinner Committee, which had sometimes distanced itself from the Ashford OAs. The Association felt that the time had come to put the arrangements in its hands and this was agreed.

Among another large batch of marriages reported that year was that of Mr William Fewings, who was to be associated with the Association for many years and with several generations of AGS mathematicians. After the 1934 Past v Present cricket match, the final of the second Tennis Tournament was held, F.Older beating K.Chittenden. At the 1934 AGM, Leslie White was elected President; P.L.Franks became Chairman and, of course, Peter Woodworth and F.H.Ames carried on as Secretary and Treasurer.

Nearly fifty members attended the 1935 London Dinner (again at the White Horse) – the first to be organised directly by the Association. It had been suggested that a Football League for Old Boys' teams from secondary schools in East Kent should be formed. The OAA was approached and showed interest. In May, the League was inaugurated with representatives from AGS, Dover, Faversham, Harvey and Simon Langton Grammar Schools. Peter Woodworth was appointed Chairman. The OAFC



*Some of those attending the 1934 London Dinner. Second from the left at the back is Leslie White, who had been appointed Headmaster only a week before.*

decided that it would play in this League and also a few friendly matches, but would withdraw from the Ashford League. N.P.Huckstep and D.Bacon were appointed Joint Secretaries. Each team would play each of the others at home and away. There would be a Trophy and medals would be awarded.

A new wave of enthusiasm now struck the Association and the first OA Dance for some time was held in January 1936. About 80 dancers were present. 'There was a slight preponderance of ladies but none suffered through lack of partners.' A.W.Clark was MC. and the Melodians band gave 'general satisfaction'.

Details of hockey matches between Past and Present were often not recorded but this year there was a 3-3 draw. This was apparently the first time that the OAs had not won. At the end of the first season in the Old Boys' League, the OAs finished third, the Old Harveians taking the Trophy. The OAs apparently found it difficult to field a settled team. The next Captain was to be H.Smith, R.E.Bowles being elected Vice Captain and Treasurer. Faversham dropped out and were replaced by teams from the Duke of York's School and the Old Bordenians in the next season. Unfortunately, by Coronation year 1937, the OAF had gone into decline. Eventually, only five players could be found and the team had to drop out of the Old Boys' League. This was disappointing as they had beaten the School 5-1 the December before.

An OA Dance had attracted only 60 dancers but the poor response was blamed on a flu epidemic in the Town. The Secretary of the organising Committee was Roy Bowles who, it was revealed, had won the Wakefield Bowl for the best competitor in

the Ashford Motorcycle Club Trials for the second time running.

The July Ashfordian recorded how OAs throughout the World had celebrated the Coronation of King George VI. H.R. Angel in Wisconsin got up at 4.30 a.m. to listen to 'the wireless' and reported excellent reception from England. A.N. Barthorp attended an all-night Ball in Paris with 1900 British citizens. J. Day, in his tea plantation in India, organised a series of tea parties and then listened to the broadcast from London. In Brazil, A.R. Piper made a round trip of 57 hours to attend the British Colony Ball in Sao Paulo but found it 'too full of uniforms for comfort' and went home. OA Gordon Paine had been chosen as one of the Barons of the Cinque Ports to officiate at the Coronation ceremony.

Perhaps, as a reaction to all the celebrating that was going on in Coronation year, the 1937 London Dinner was held at the Cheshire Cheese, rather informally, and the meal included the traditional steak and kidney pie. The Headmaster asked for donations to the fund, which had just been set up to provide a new Swimming Bath for the School.

Because a Fête was to be held on Old Boys' Day to make money for the Bath fund – in those days Swimming Pools were always Baths – there was no meal after the Cricket match. The Fête realised £230 towards the £2,000 needed and construction soon started.

A reminder that all was not peaceful in Europe came with news from D. Moyle, who had set out with 25 others to fight on the side of the Government in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. He returned a few months later having disagreed with the politics involved.

This year, the OAs heavily defeated the School, both at cricket (207 for 7 against 44) and hockey (5-0). The Annual Dinner was held at the County Hotel, where a large number was entertained by 'Billy and Teddy' from Canterbury. The Association's membership and finances were thriving and a Dance was held in January 1938 at the new Odeon Cinema. Over a hundred guests danced from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. and 'the roominess and comfort of the new venue was greatly appreciated'.

In 1938, the Association mourned the death of Percy Bunyard, one of those who had joined the School in 1881, and also of Lord Brabourne. He had researched much of the early history of the School and had been a good friend to the Association before moving to India. On the bright side, this year saw the first OA Darts competition. This seems to have originated from the early abandonment of the Cricket match because of rain and the tennis because of bad light. The winner was T. Clark. It was so successful that it was repeated a few months later when 'a self-confessed beginner' – Peter Woodworth – was the winner.

The 1939 Dance, again at the Odeon, coincided with one of the worst blizzards for years, but even so 49 dancers attended. The Dinner and AGM were held in 1938 in the Masonic Hall, as in recent years. Peter Woodworth was presented with a fountain

pen and inkstand at the London Dinner as a mark of his efforts as Secretary since 1919. There was an atmosphere of crisis in the Country and this perhaps explained the poor attendance at the Cheshire Cheese in 1939.

Since 1918, the School had marched to Mersham Church for the Founder's Day ceremony. This year, the Association joined with the boys and teachers to present a silver chalice to the Church to show their appreciation. This was designed and produced by OA Percy Norman. Over eighty members saw the Past defeat the Present at cricket and sixty stayed to supper afterwards in the School Hall. A typewriter was presented to Peter Woodworth on the completion of 25 years as master at the School and 20 years as Secretary of the Association. Membership had grown from 66 in 1919 to over 400 in 1939.

Unlike 1914, when War had arrived almost as a surprise, storm clouds had been gathering throughout 1939. Many letters of apology for absence from the Cricket Supper were received, because a 'practice' blackout had been organised for that night and some OAs were involved in Air Raid Precaution duties. Many of those who did attend must have been wondering what would happen before the next Old Boys' Day – or even whether it would take place.

## 5. In the Front Line

September the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939 saw the start of nearly six years of global warfare. By the time Leslie White had written his report for the December Ashfordian, the School had received evacuees from Wilson's Grammar School in London, since the Government envisaged immediate and widespread bombing of the Capital. The same issue saw the first details of Old Ashfordians and Masters who were joining the armed forces or taking on civil defence duties at home.

By March 1940, the Association was appealing for news of OAs serving, but response was low – doubtless they had more important things to do than write to the Ashfordian. It was, however, decided to send copies to all Old Boys in the forces who could be traced, even if they were not officially members. This caused a deficit in the funds so the Secretary asked any Old Boys who had not paid their subs for 1938 and 1939 to do so as soon as possible.

In spite of the war, the Past v Present football match still took place, the OAs winning 7-2. At the AGM which followed, the Officers and Committee were re-elected, but A.W.N.Clark, G.C.Taylor and R.Apps were away on active service. Somewhat optimistically, it was decided to try to keep the regular Association activities going. Certainly, the number of OAs getting married shot up!

The list of Old Boys serving had already reached 150. The first name on the Roll of Honour was Edward William Oxspring, who had joined the Merchant Navy as an 18-year-old cadet. On his first voyage, his ship was bombed in the Channel (on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1940) and he was posted missing. He had left the School in 1937 to go on to King's School, Canterbury.

The situation was changing rapidly after a slow start. By July 1940, Leslie White was writing a stirring letter in the Ashfordian to the background of talk of invasion. In months, Ashford Grammar School had changed from a haven for evacuees from London to a School which would be partly evacuated itself. Old Boys Day in July was cancelled – through no fault of Hitler's, but because of the first heavy rain in weeks. The March to Mersham was abandoned because of the risk of air attack. Ashford was now a front line town and would soon be designated a fortress town if invasion was imminent – though few locals knew that.

Among the notices in the Ashfordian was news of the engagement of Richard Apps to Kathleen Goldup of Ashford. On the same page we read that R.Apps was badly wounded in a bombing attack on a train in France. He was evacuated with the British Expeditionary Force and survived to play a big part in the running of the Association.

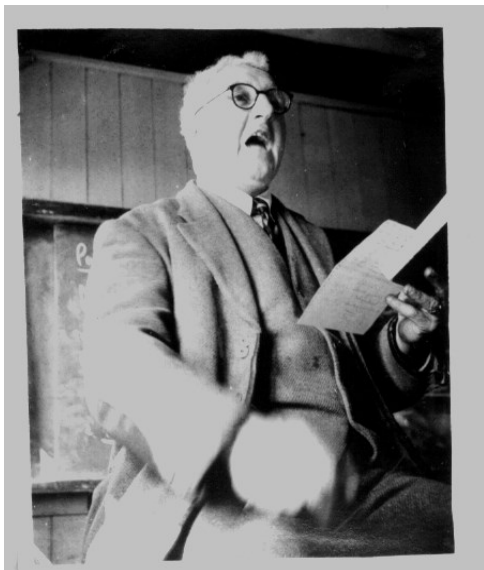
With the help of some of the pupils, the Association circulated hundreds of post-cards to families and members so that the lists of serving members could be kept up to date.

Only nine months after the start of the War, some 200 names were on the list and, amazingly, many OAs were finding time to write in.

On 12<sup>th</sup> September 1940, one hundred and fifty boys from the School were evacuated to Witney in Oxfordshire. For many future OAs, these were to be memorable times. OA Secretary Peter Woodworth moved to Witney. Some boys stayed behind under the supervision of Mr Frank Pinch.

The Roll of Honour was beginning to grow. Major Douglas Hendin (1905-7) was killed in France. Civilians at home were not exempt. Charles Ashdown of Pluckley (1933-38) was killed on railway duty when an aircraft brought down in an air battle fell on 'a country railway station in Kent', where he was working. News of OAs who had been captured gradually filtered through from PoW camps. Information of members now filled several pages of tiny close-packed type in the Ashfordian, now greatly reduced in size because of the paper shortage. There is unfortunately insufficient space here to mention all those killed or wounded but the names are recorded in the school's Book of Remembrance. Neither is it possible to include most of the fascinating accounts from OAs which were now pouring into the Ashfordian.

In September 1941, Leslie White left Ashford for Beckenham, to be replaced by Evan T. Mortimore. Many of those evacuated had now returned to Ashford, in spite of the risk. In his first letter in the Ashfordian, Mr Mortimore wrote that 'a new Headmaster



*Peter Woodworth (above) must take great credit for maintaining links between the Association and OAs on active service. This was in addition to his many School duties in Ashford and on evacuation at Witney.*

is never more conscious of his newness than when faced with Old Boys of the School'. He was grateful to those OAs who had called at the School and treated him with great friendliness. OAs soon learned where his heart was.

Details of some 300 OAs had now been received and their experiences took up half of the magazine's twenty pages. Among these was information on decorations received by several OAs. Peter Woodworth, alongside his many responsibilities in the School, kept pace with all these communications, tried to maintain some normality in the Association and, although bombs were falling all around, reminded members that their half-a-crown (12½p) subs should be in by 1<sup>st</sup> January 1942, as he did not want to send out a lot of reminders. We have a mental picture of OAs throughout the world defying enemy fire to send in their Postal

Order: Woodworth 1 Hitler 0.

In April 1942, Peter was warning readers that shortage of paper might stop the production of the magazine. He assured Old Boys that, if this was so, every effort would be made to issue a bulletin of Association news. By March 1943 'The Old Ashfordian' was being distributed and, in October 1944, Peter, miraculously, was able to say that he had to send out no reminders and the balance was £52. One sub was received from the family of an OA who was a Prisoner of War – he had asked them to pay a ten-year subscription.

Actually, ten OAs were known to be in PoW camps and it was arranged by the School that a small parcel of books should be sent to each one by Selfridges of London. It was intended that further batches should be sent in April (from the Association), July (from the Staff) and in October (from the pupils). OAs and others who had old sports shirts and other unwanted School items of kit, were asked to send them in, as such articles were now difficult to buy.

By 1943, the paper situation was even more dire and the Old Ashfordian was now down to eight pages of very thin paper. For the first time in history, the Editor had more news than he could print. More than 350 members were now known to be serving and Sixth Formers were joining up direct from School. Each Form adopted one OA PoW to send him 'comforts'. The three Carey brothers were all now known to be in Japanese camps.

The March 1944 magazine was a little larger and suggested – somewhat optimistically

# THE ASHFORDIAN

JULY, 1943

## Headmaster's Letter

"The Ashfordian" gets thinner and thinner and but for the enthusiasm of Mr. Woodworth and the skill with which he interprets the most complicated regulations regarding paper rationing, it would not have appeared even in its present scanty dress.

News is plentiful; space is at a premium and this letter must not exceed airgraph proportions. To Old Boys scattered throughout the world, the School sends its warmest greetings and good wishes. We stand on the brink of great events in which you will play a victorious part. You are often in our thoughts and prayers, and with you we mourn the loss of our fallen comrades. We are carrying on and, we hope, proving ourselves not unworthy members of the School which stands so high in your affections.

*The Ashfordian carried on throughout the War on a few flimsy pages.*

– that ‘Victory, Peace and even a new School were dimly on the horizon’. By now, 33 OAs were known to have lost their lives; eleven were in German PoW camps and eight were in Japanese hands. Three weeks after the Normandy landings in June 1944, the Secretary sensed the beginning of the end and immediately declared that some subs were overdue. He felt that events were moving so fast that he managed to scrounge enough paper for a four-page supplement. In this, he assured OAs overseas that, although Ashford had seen many flying bombs, only one had fallen in the locality. There had been no fatalities and all looked forward to the time ‘when we shall all meet again’. It is difficult to realise in times of peace how eagerly those serving abroad awaited every snippet of news from home – and from their old School.

In December 1944, a 16-page Old Ashfordian was included in the Ashfordian. Headmaster Mortimore wrote that he had heard from Leslie White who, after reading the latest list of losses, had written: ‘Ashford is suffering many heavy blows – nearly all lads of my time.’ After a temporary hold-up, the despatch of books to PoWs (now 22 were known) continued. Although casualties were still occurring, the War was nearing its end. By Easter 1945, advertisements for OA clothing were reappearing. In the Old Ashfordian of 21<sup>st</sup> May, Peter Woodworth was able to say that ‘VE Day is now past, although a big task is to be done in the Far East’. All OA PoWs had now come back from Germany, but news of deaths still trickled in. Lt Lord Brabourne (aged 21), a direct descendent of the Founder, had been shot by the Germans after escaping from a PoW camp and members of the Association attended his Memorial Service at Mer-sham. The December Ashfordian, still in tiny print but on heavier paper, expressed thankfulness for the way the School had survived the War. In August 1945, the War in the Far East came to an unexpectedly sudden end because of the nuclear bombing of Japanese cities. The eight OAs in Japanese camps had been released, but were in poor shape. Although there had been much rejoicing, many still had cause to grieve. Another four members were added to the Roll of Honour and two were still missing. Returning Old Boys were pouring into the School and some were even persuaded to relate their experiences to the boys. Many of them were returning to rebuild their lives in a country that was facing difficult economic problems. Some of the younger OAs had not yet experienced working for their living as civilians.

## 6. The Revival Begins

Peter Woodworth had done a magnificent job in keeping the Association going. Its wartime activities had changed greatly from pre-war days when a more or less regular series of social events and Annual Meetings had been the norm. However, anyone who reads the wartime issues of the Ashfordian and Old Ashfordian can sense that the Association had perhaps formed even closer bonds with its members than in times of peace. This was particularly so in the case of those serving overseas.

In the December Ashfordian, Peter wrote: 'We are now thinking of getting the Association back on its peacetime basis' and called a special meeting for that purpose, on Old Boys' Day 1946. Never one to lose touch with practicality, he pointed out that 'with the concurrence of the Treasurer, members who were in arrears with their subs will find a note pencilled in on the last page of this issue'. Actually, the Association had a balance of £61, the largest for many years. As the School grew, obviously the number of Old Boys grew proportionally, though the Association's membership rarely increased at the same rate.

The 1944 Education Act had provided a new Instrument of Government for the School (which in August 1945 was designated as a Voluntary Controlled School). This specified how the Board of fifteen Governors should be appointed. Five were to be Foundation Governors and the Kent Education Committee would nominate the other ten. One of the Foundation Governors was to be appointed by the Association, which duly elected Mr W.C.Blacklocks (who had been at the School from 1916 to 1921) to be the first official OA Governor, though other OAs had been on the Board in the past.

The annual march to Mersham was resumed on Founder's Day 1946 and was supported by a large number of OAs. The first post-war gathering of the Association, on 20 July 1946, was marked by the presence of two Old Boys' XIs. So many wanted to play, that the traditional Past v Present match was replaced by an Ashford OA XI against a District OA XI game. The two sides were selected in an effort to produce a good competition and the Ashford side eventually won by 29 runs, after a sudden collapse by their opponents. The meeting afterwards was attended by over a hundred members. For many years, there had been a wish to erect a War Memorial for what was now known as World War I. This took on a new urgency and the meeting agreed to go ahead at once on a Book of Remembrance, listing all Old Boys who died in the two World Wars. The official Past v Present cricket match was played a few days later. Again, so many wanted to play that it was made a 12-a-side game. The School declared at 100 for 10(!) and the Past reached 98 for 8 in a nail-biting finish.

Before the War, a plan had been agreed to launch an Old Ashfordian Hockey Club. A fixture list was arranged for the 1946/7 season. A.G.Hummerstone was appointed



*The first post-War OA football side in 1946, captained by Roy Bowles.*

Captain; matches would be played on the School pitch and catering for teas was to be supplied by the County Hotel.

Although money had been collected for some time towards the War Memorial, nothing had been done. Still undecided on how to proceed, the Committee proposed that some of the money should go towards repairs to the original School building which was in a bad state. A commemorative plaque was placed in the Hall.

In March, Peter Woodworth had been stricken with cerebral meningitis, but ‘thanks to penicillin’ had completely recovered and was able to resume his duties in the autumn. He was able to see the OAs, captained by Roy Bowles, defeat the School at football in December by 5 goals to 1. The Dinner at the Saracen’s Head afterwards, had a record attendance of over a hundred. After a period of silence in memory of those who had lost their lives, A.G.Hummerstone, proposing The School, described how it had kept going under almost impossible difficulties. Headmaster Mortimore, replying, said that he was meeting OAs at their Dinner for the first time. Mr Blacklocks praised the Secretary and Treasurer for keeping the Association going through the War. The final toast ‘to Absent Friends’ perhaps meant far more than usual to many. The Annual Meeting had agreed to postpone any decision on a War Memorial until agreement was reached on the site of the proposed new building.

In September, a Reunion Dance had been organised. This was an historic occasion in that it had been agreed by a joint committee of the Girls’ County School (now High-worth School) Old Girls’ Association and the OAs. It was held at the County Hotel and was very successful. Peter West had attempted to organise a London Dinner in

1947, but time was against him.

In 1947, the Winter Old Boys' Day was brought forward to October. The OAs played their usual football match against the School, winning 4-3. The same afternoon, there was also a hockey match between an OA XI and Maidstone YMCA. Elsewhere, an Ashford Hockey Club side (containing several OAs) beat the 121<sup>st</sup> Training Regiment, Royal Artillery, 4-1. After this festival of sport, teams and visitors were entertained to tea and this was followed by the AGM. The Headmaster was re-elected as President together with Peter Woodworth and Bill Fewings as Secretary and Treasurer. The Committee was strengthened by the inclusion of more younger members. The Annual Dinner, unseasonably early, followed later. In the early days of the Association, outside guests had attended but, more recently, the practice of only inviting those with direct connections with the Association had become normal. It was decided that this produced a more family atmosphere and has been the situation ever since. This seems to have been the last time that the Annual Dinner moved away from the Christmas period.

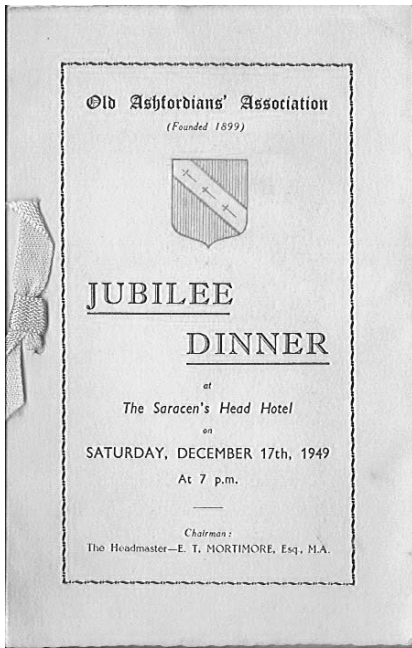
It was decided to enter a team in the revived Old Boys' Football Competition. The OAs beat Old Harveians 4-1 in the Semi-final, but were defeated 9-1 by Old Pharosians from Dover in the Final. The OA Hockey Club now played regularly but won only five of the 22 matches played. Hockey was now becoming very strong in East Kent and, in 1947, the Club decided to organise an Open Tournament. In 1948, twelve teams entered the Second Tournament; the winner was Tunbridge Wells.

At last, details of the War Memorial were agreed. It was to be of stone and would be situated in the garden in front of the School. OA Percy Norman was entrusted with its preparation. That year, he had again exhibited at the Royal Academy and the Committee's choice was widely acclaimed.

At the 1948 Dinner, the first hints of changes afoot were given by Mr Mortimore. In his speech, he prophesied that they might have to 'fight for the name of the School' since there was a movement not to 'differentiate between different types of secondary school'. The word 'comprehensive' was entering educational vocabulary! Henry Thompson, a founder of the Association, was present, as was Lord Brabourne. At this Dinner, the President started the practice of the Headmaster toasting each decade of OAs present. This has now become traditional.

By the end of 1948, membership was 564 and the financial balance had reached £200. However, the regular complaint that many had not paid their subs was voiced once more. The Secretary finally lost patience with the offenders and wrote in the Ashfordian that the magazine would no longer be sent to those more than two years in arrears.

The year 1949 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of the Association. It was decided that an informal gathering would be held at the Saracen's Head, after the



*The Cover of the special menu for the 1949 Golden Jubilee Dinner.*

seemed to be little interest.

The 1949 cricket match was such a low scoring affair that it was made a two innings competition, the OAs winning by nine wickets. Social enthusiasm had waned and the proposed informal gathering afterwards was cancelled only a week before, once again through lack of interest. On Old Boys Day, 17 December 1949, Gordon Paine, OA and Mayor of Lydd, unveiled a memorial plaque to Arthur Lamprey. The Vicar of Ashford, Canon Duncan Bowen, presided over a large gathering of OAs in the original School building. This had now been restored to its former glory and Mr J.W.Kennard, a trustee, thought that 'with average luck it should now stand for another three hundred years'. In fact, it needed further refurbishment before re-opening in 1989 as the Ashford Borough Museum.

Although other social events that year had been greeted with little enthusiasm, the Jubilee Dinner attracted nearly 120 members. The hall in the Saracen's Head was decorated with evergreens from the Mersham-le-Hatch estates at the suggestion of Henry Thompson, the Association's first Secretary. A special menu card, with a colour picture of the Founder, was produced. N.K.V.Bowater suggested that a notice board should be erected in the School to keep pupils informed of the Association's activities and the idea was adopted, but only, it seems, for a short time.

cricket match on 18<sup>th</sup> June and that the Jubilee Dinner would take place on 17 December.

Appropriately, the Book of Remembrance was completed this year. Unfortunately, there was no suitable place to display it. A cabinet was made and it was agreed that this would be placed in the Hall of the proposed new building; no-one realised that nearly ten years would pass before this opened. Thanks were given to Mr W.M.Gardner and his binder, Mr Cockerell, for the magnificent work they had produced.

There were periodic bursts of athletic vigour from members, and a table tennis team, captained by M.C.Hawkins, entered Division I of the Ashford League. The OA Hockey Tournament was still very successful, but the O AFC could not raise a team to play Old Langtonians in the Old Boys' Cup. A second Combined Dance with the County School Old Girls was held, but was poorly attended due to unspecified 'counter-attractions' and the event was never held again. The Committee decided not to proceed with a London Dinner, as there

## 7. The Second Half-Century

By 1950, signs of changing attitudes were appearing. The Association decided that, although it would still support the annual Past v Present cricket match, it would no longer label the occasion as Old Boys' Day. With the loss of boarders from School House and the cessation of Saturday morning schooling, attendance had dropped rapidly. This decision seems to have been realistic and produced little or no opposition. In 1949, the Founder's Day March to Mersham had been changed from its scheduled Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> May, to the following Wednesday, because it was thought that the large amount of traffic now appearing on Market Day would make the event dangerous. In 1950, it was now re-designated as a 'Walk', rather than a 'March', and, for the first time, no military uniforms were worn.



*The 1950 Annual Dinner. Future Chairman Ray Carlton can be seen fourth from the left near the front. Headmaster Mortimore is third from the left standing at the back.*

On a brighter note, 1949-50 saw the OA Hockey Club have its most successful season and even started an A XI. The East Kent Hockey Tournament was still thriving with twelve teams. The 1950 football match and AGM were both cancelled because of heavy snow. However, OAs are a robust crowd and only one of those expected at the Saracen's Head in the evening did not get there – and he lived in Oxford.

By 1951, the subscription had still remained at 2/6 (12½p) or one guinea (£1.05) for ten years. The latter proved to be a bargain as inflation began to bite in later years. OA ties were now 5/6 (27½p) to 9/6 (47½p) according to type, and scarves, blazers, cricket caps and badges were available.

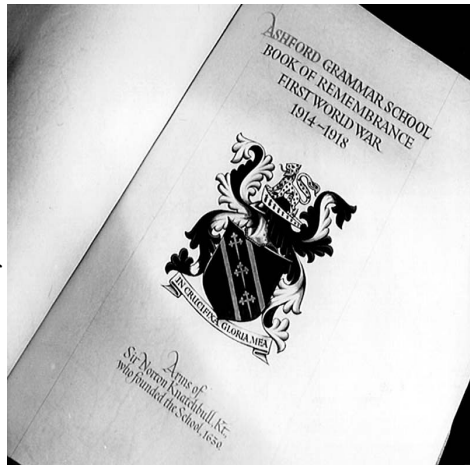
Because of increased production costs, the Ashfordian now began to appear only twice a year instead of three times. The OA Table Tennis Club was runner-up in the Ashford League and the Division II team was 6<sup>th</sup>. Like nearly every event in Britain in the year 1951, the OA East Kent Hockey Tournament became a Festival Tournament as part of the Festival of Britain. As usual, twelve teams entered and, also as usual, Tunbridge won. OA Peter Eades had played for England in all the International Hockey matches the year before. The Past v Present cricket match was played in miserable weather and few spectators turned up to see the School win by five wickets,



*Above, the long-awaited War Memorial is unveiled on 7 October 1951 by W.P. Garner, OA and a parent. Top right, the Book of Remembrance was unveiled by Peter Woodworth on the same day.*

helped by the Headmaster scoring 56 not out.

The weather relented for the final ceremony in connection with the War Memorial and Book of Remembrance. On a perfect autumn day, Sunday 7 October 1951, the Memorial was unveiled by W.P.Garner, an Old Boy and parent, followed by the unveiling of the Book of Remembrance by Peter Woodworth. The Vicar of Ashford dedicated both Memorials and a wreath was laid by A.W.N. Clark on behalf of the Association. The book is now housed in the Brabourne Building.



April 1952 saw the appearance of the Old Ashfordian as a separate magazine. This came about as a result of the cancellation of the Easter issue of the School magazine. Several members had strongly expressed the need for some means of keeping them informed in the gap between the January and July issues of the Ashfordian. The format of the new publication was really the eight pages related to Old Boys' affairs which would normally have appeared in the cancelled edition of the Ashfordian, but it also included a short diary of Association events.

The unprecedented large number of applications for the 1952 Christmas Dinner meant that the 'younger generation' had to be allocated places in the smaller Dining Room at the Saracen's Head; this was not widely approved of.

In the June 1953 edition of the Ashfordian, the Editor wrote, 'I suppose that no OA under the age of 55 can really remember Ashford Grammar School without Mr Woodworth'. On 31 July 1952, Peter Woodworth retired from the School after 38 years as a member of the Staff. Much has already been said about his work with the Association and he was to continue as Secretary for some time. At the Annual Dinner, a presentation was made to mark his years of service to both the School and the Association. He had done more than anyone to strengthen the bonds between them, particularly during the difficult War years. Peter chose a TV set as his gift 'and braved recent criticism of television by basing his judgement on the verdict of the School Debating Society, which had agreed by a large majority that TV was not a social evil'.

The 1953 Hockey Tournament was particularly rewarding, since the winners of the two sections were Ashford Hockey Club and the OA Hockey Club. In the Final, these two teams met. There was no score after extra time and so the OAs were declared winners, having gained more corners. In the same year, what was believed to be the

youngest ever OA football team drew 2-2 with the School. The Dinner was again over-subscribed, with 110 attending, including Henry Thompson, the oldest regular attendee.

The 1954 Old Boys' cricket match was memorable for the 105 not out, scored by J.G.W.Marshall, the first century for the School since 1938. This enabled the School to declare at 198 for 3, but the Old Boys struggled to 109 for 7 at the close. The OAs were finding it increasingly difficult to field a reasonable team, since so many leavers played for local sides.

Bill Fewings, who had done valiant work as Treasurer of the Association, was now appointed Assistant Secretary as well. The Committee now had nineteen members, but the number of other members at the 1955 AGM was poor. As is still the case, a lot more turned up for the Dinner following. Three of those who had joined the School in the decade 1900-1909 were present. A speaker felt able to label them as 'genuine Teddy boys', a reference to the large numbers of rather wild youths about at this time who dressed in the, then fashionable; 'Edwardian type' clothing. In spite of the fact that it was now producing the Old Ashfordian magazine, the Association still had a balance of £100. It was, nevertheless, decided to raise the subscription to 5/-(25p).

After a few abortive attempts to revive the London Dinner, the first post-war gathering was held at the Prince of Wales Hotel in Drury Lane, on 14 March 1956. Chaired by A.H.(Bert) Button, nearly fifty members attended. Ex-Headmaster Leslie White proposed the School and brought the greetings of the then Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Lord Cornwallis. Mr Mortimore was able to assure those present that the new buildings were imminent and that the first turf had been cut.

Attendance at the 1956 Dinner was greatly reduced because of the petrol restrictions, which had been imposed during the Suez crisis. At the end of the 1956/7 season, the OA Hockey Club ceased to function. It had found it increasingly difficult to field good sides, since many members preferred to play for other teams. They won only one match that season. Sadly, the Committee decided not to continue to hold the East Kent Tournament which had been so successful.

On 13 January 1958, the School finally left the building next to the Hythe Road, which it had entered 77 years before. The last Old Boys' Day to be held in that building took place in December 1957. The School beat a quite strong Old Boys' side 2-0. It was a bitterly cold day and most of the few 'spectators' present preferred their last look at a blazing coal fire in the old Staff Room. They then gathered in the Dining Room for a nostalgic tea party. At the AGM, the Association was said to be in good shape both financially and numerically. No decision was made on what to do with the £800 or so left in the Memorial Fund.

Even more sentiment flowed at the Saracen's Head in the evening. Mr T.G.Gilbert,

Head of the ‘new tenants’ of the old School, the North Secondary School, was present and promised that OAs would always be welcome to visit their old home.

Some forty OAs attended the 1958 London Dinner in yet another new venue, The Printer’s Devil, in Fetter Lane. This was a great success although organiser Tony Ruff was beginning to panic as London and the South East was trapped in a deep freeze-up. Fortunately, his prayers were answered and it thawed the day before.

Although the Hockey Club had been disbanded, the OAs managed to field two sides against the School, winning one and losing one. In an effort to build up interest in the Past v Present sports fixture, the Headmaster agreed to hold the 1958 cricket match on a Wednesday, after the exams, so that the boys could watch. It was also thought that OAs might like to inspect the new buildings and so some of the pre-war atmosphere would be restored. In practice, the weather was dreadful and the OAs were thrashed by 9 wickets in a poor match.

In December 1958, 80 OAs met for the Annual Dinner, still at the Saracen’s Head. Mr Mortimore again expressed the fear that ‘the time might come when the OAs might have to close ranks and fight for the Grammar Schools against the impending threat of the Comprehensives’. How often history repeats itself in education!

Although the School was revitalised by its move to new buildings, this was a somewhat worrying period for the Association. Peter Woodworth bewailed the loss of Hockey, Tennis and Table Tennis OA teams, together with a decline in support for the cricket and football matches, even though the Association as a whole had never been stronger. There was some good news with the successful revival of the London Dinner, the good attendance at the Christmas Dinner and a move to bring back the Dances, which could now be held in the new School Hall.

Not all OAs were impressed by the new buildings. One, perhaps fortunately anonymous, was quoted as saying, ‘Quite honestly, I’m not surprised we did not have a photographer at the opening of the new School [not strictly true, incidentally]; I’m all for organising an Old Boys’ party to burn it down with a photographer present’. However, those who had sons at the School (and many other OAs) did not agree, even though the buildings had been conceived in one of the frequent ‘credit squeezes’ of the time. This is, perhaps, more obvious in comparison with recent additions to the school buildings.

The celebration of the Association’s Diamond Jubilee in 1959, helped to sweep away some of the pessimism. The proceedings were launched by the London Jubilee Dinner, again at The Printer’s Devil. The toast ‘The School’ was given by OA, Colonel W.H. Barlow-Wheeler, taking time off from his duties as Sir Winston Churchill’s political agent. The oldest member present, a certain Peter Woodworth, cut the Jubilee cake.

Again, the OAs fielded two teams against the School, drawing the 1<sup>st</sup> XI match and

losing the other. Following the drawn cricket match, a Diamond Jubilee Dance was held in the School Hall. More than a hundred OAs and guests danced to Mr Jordan's Band. The successful event was organised by a Dance Committee, 'especially Mr and Mrs R.Apps'. The ladies of the Scouts' Parents' Committee arranged the refreshments. A move was made to start a Badminton Club in the former School gymnasium, but it was short lived.

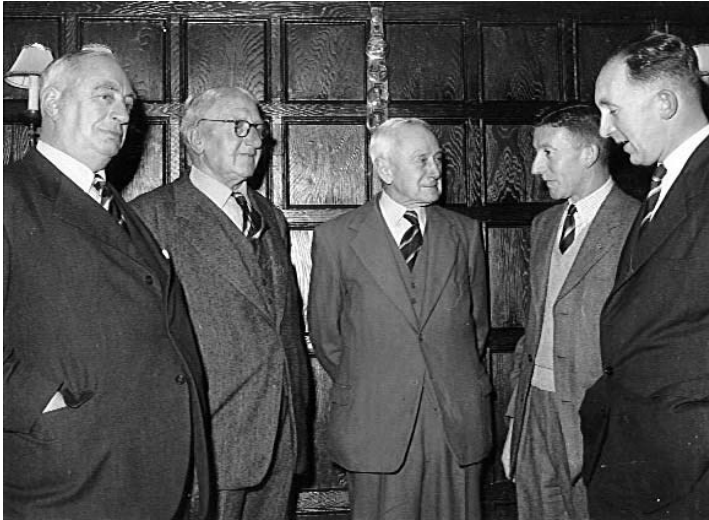
In December, the Past defeated the Present 4-2 at football. Eighty-five members attended the Diamond Jubilee Dinner. The number of toasts, which had decreased steadily since the early days, actually increased that year. There was much to talk about – the new School, the Diamond Jubilee of the Association and, of course, the possible death of the Grammar schools. D.Norrington, proposing the School, took up this theme and was brave enough to suggest that there was, perhaps, a need for improvement in the present system of education.

At the London Dinner, now costing £1.5/- (£1.25), fifty members listened to Bill Deedes, Ashford's MP, toasting the Association. The last time an Association Dinner had been graced by an MP was nearly fifty years before, in 1911, when Laurence Hardy, the town's MP of the time, was present. Mr Deedes said that he felt 'a cuckoo in the nest as a non-OA', but 'to an MP working in London, a free dinner could not be missed'.

At last a decision was reached on what to do with the outstanding £800 in the Memorial Fund. It was agreed that it should be added to the Swimming Bath Fund (which then totalled £500), so making £1300. It was hoped that a further grant of £250 might be obtained from the K.E.C. There was also good news about the East Kent Hockey Tournament. It was agreed that support should be given to the Ashford Hockey Club to reinstate it in 1962. In the event, this never happened because there were too many conflicting fixtures. The School magazine would now only appear once a year, with the Old Ashfordian filling in about midway.

For some forty years, Handover's in the High Street had supplied the OAs blazers and other items of clothing. In 1961, Mr Handover retired. The Association decided that he should be made an Honorary Member, along with Canon Duncan-Bowen, Mr J.W.Kennard and Mr H.Sutton, in recognition of his services to the OAs and the School. Henry Ruffle, who had left the School in the thirties, took over the service from his shop at 73 High Street. The new 'city wear tie', now the familiar dark blue silk with the Knatchbull crest in gold, was available at 18/11 (95p). This was not cheap – the Christmas Dinner in 1962 cost one pound. Over a hundred members attended. This year, the London Dinner changed its venue to Martinez in Swallow Street and there was a record attendance.

By now the demolition of the Saracen's Head was on the cards. Unlike their London brothers, the Ashford members had not been wanderers and this Hotel had become a sort of spiritual home. Consequently, the Association sent a strong objection to the



*Photographed at the 1959 Annual Dinner are Harry Rand, Peter Woodworth, Henry Thompson (the original Secretary), Knightley Bowater and a youthful Dick Apps, who was himself to play such a big part in the af-*

Ashford UDC planners – with little effect.

At the 1964 London Dinner, the toast to the Headmaster was proposed by his son, Martin. Mr Charles Levy, speaking later, wondered ‘whether the hard days of the 1930s produced a better boy than the easy days of the 1960s’; some OAs wondered whether he was referring to life in the School Chemistry laboratory. David Cooper resigned his post as London Dinner secretary, since he had left for the U.S.A.

In 1964, the OAs, captained by Hugh Marshall, who had just skippered the England Under-23 Hockey side, beat the School by a goal in the last minute. The Swimming Pool had now been built at a cost of £6,045. Arrangements were made so that members and their families could make use of it at certain times, by paying a small subscription.

In 1965, W.C.Blacklocks, the first Association School Governor, died and his place on the Governing Body was taken by Dick Apps. Cecil Blacklocks had chaired many Annual Meetings and did much for the School; he had been described as being ‘the epitome of an Old Ashfordian gentleman’.

For the first time in many years, the 1965 Past v Present cricket contest reverted to an, all-day match. The OAs declared at 166 for 6 and bowled the School out for 70. Membership of the Association now topped 600 and more than a hundred came to the Annual Dinner. Former Headmaster Leslie White and his son Bill were present; Ashford MP Bill Deedes proposed the Association.

The 1966 London Dinner was held on 1 April, the day after the General Election. Both the Secretary and Treasurer were stricken with flu and the weather was dreadful. However, John Ward, an OA from the 1904 entry, struggled from Huddersfield through six inches of snow. That year's Annual Dinner was, in spite of the Association's efforts, the last to be held at the Saracen's Head. This had been bought by Sainsburys to build a supermarket, which later became a Boots' store. This caused the Committee to look elsewhere for a venue for the next year's Dinner. It was not a cheerful occasion. At the AGM, the sub was raised to 7/6 (37½p), largely to cover the increased cost of the Ashfordian. The OAs lost 7-0 to the School that afternoon.

To add to the gloom, Morty described 'a depressing tale' and forecast the 'demise' of Ashford Grammar School as OAs knew it. Luckily, before the more elderly members had succumbed with shock, he thought that the Association was unlikely to be affected by any future changes in the organisation of the School.

After much research by the Committee, which doubtless involved touring the hostleries of Ashford, it was decided to hold the 1967 Dinner in the School Hall. The Sittingbourne Co-op agreed to produce a meal similar to that in past years. A parent, Mr Williamson of the New Inn, New Romney, agreed to run the bar. The cost to members would be one guinea (£1.05).

The Ashfordian, which had been printed since its first issue in 1899 by the Kentish



*The 1965 Annual Dinner. On Mr Mortimore's left is Bill Deedes, now Lord Deedes and then Ashford's MP. Many familiar faces can be spotted including several retired masters in the middle*

Express, and the Old Ashfordian were now to be printed by the Thanet Press, because of a large increase in charges by the former.

About a hundred members attended the 1967 Dinner in the School and the attendance at the AGM was a record. Perhaps members had been stirred out of their apathy by the previous year's predictions of gloom. Mr Wyndham Green, (of Godinton House) hoped that the School would not just become known as 'The Upper School'. Henry Thompson, the first Secretary of the Association and a regular attendee at the Dinner was unable to come and did, in fact, die a few months later, at the age of 91.

In an effort to boost attendance at the London Dinner – a perennial problem – it was decided to send out an invitation with an acceptance slip to every member living in England, early in the New Year. In spite of this, the numbers at the 1968 London Dinner were little better than average. Peter West sponsored this mailing and had provided the menu cards for some years.

1968 had seen the complete abolition of the School cap. Due to illness, Peter Woodworth had, for the first time, not been able to complete the editing of the Old Ashfordian. Bill Fewings, who had for some years been the backbone of the Association, finished the task. He was, however, retiring that year and moving to Northamptonshire and so had to give up the posts of Treasurer and Assistant Secretary. He was to be much missed by both the Association and the School. Roy Cross was elected to take over as Treasurer.

The 1968 Dinner was again provided by the Sittingbourne Co-op, this time at a cost of 25/- (£1.25). The following year, over a hundred members attended the Annual Dinner, again in the School Hall, at which Bill Fewings was presented with a clock in appreciation of the great work he had done on behalf of the OAs. More than 300 had contributed to this gift.

That same year, Peter Woodworth had completed fifty years as Secretary, greatly supported by Bill Fewings in later years. He had been the 'Grand Old Man' of Ashford Grammar School and everything connected with it. It was agreed that Mr William M.Gardner should produce an Illuminated Address and this was presented to Peter at the 1969 Annual Dinner. Mr Mortimore said, 'He has made a unique contribution to both School and Association'. PFW responded and commended his successor, Dick Apps, who was himself to become a pillar of the Association. Earlier in the year, at the London Dinner, W.Cdr Bert Button was presented with a stainless steel tea service for his work in keeping the event going. Peter Woodworth was unable to attend, but during the evening he was greeted on the phone. He had been a great supporter of the London Dinner. He later wrote, 'Both from a social and catering point of view, this is a function worth the while of any OA to attend'. Some forty members attended, about a third of them from Ashford.

Periodically, there were discussions as to why not more attended the London Dinner.

The meal was not expensive by London standards, but the cost was more than 50% higher than the Ashford Dinner. To this, Ashford members had to add their rail fares and were faced with a mad rush to catch their train back. For them, there was little opportunity to chat after the meal although the Londoners often went on far into the night. One former organiser of the event, who should perhaps remain anonymous, told the writer thirty years afterwards, that it was 'a great opportunity for a booze-up'.

Back in Ashford, the School's Head Cook and her staff had agreed to cater for the 1970 Christmas Dinner. Mr Thomas, of the Castle Inn, would provide the bar arrangements. Boys would 'volunteer' to act as waiters – a job they actually enjoyed. In 1970, the impending retirement of Headmaster Mortimore, caused the Committee to think about the administration of the Association. Morty felt that the Committee should appoint a Chairman from within its own ranks, and not assume that the Head of the time would take the post. This suggestion was taken up and W/Cdr Bert Button was elected as Chairman. To maintain the links with the School, it was decided that two representatives of the staff should be elected to the Committee. Mr Mortimore would become President until December 1971, after which it was hoped that Mr Philip Cox, the new Headmaster, would agree to take over. It was felt that, in future, the London Dinner should liaise with the Secretary, Dick Apps, and not with the Headmaster, as in the past.

OA Hugh Marshall, made Hockey news by gaining a full International Cap for Scotland, even though he had captained the Under-23 England team.

1971, as well as seeing the introduction of decimal currency, was marked by the retirement of Evan T. Mortimore, after thirty years as Headmaster. Many OAs could not remember the School when he had not been in charge, but all would remember his kind and caring attitude to everyone. It was agreed that presentations would be made at both the London and Ashford Dinners that year.

The finances of the Association had been steadily improving as membership increased and also because it received the surpluses from the War Memorial Fund and the now-defunct OA Hockey Club. Roy Cross reported a balance of £584. The OA Swimming and Tennis Club was set up to enable Old Boys to make use of the School facilities on payment of a 50p sub – though some members still called it 'ten bob'. Lord Brabourne made the presentation to Mr Mortimore at the London Dinner. Some fifty members were present. N. F. Horne was now Secretary and J. G. Perry was Treasurer of the London Dinner Committee. The Annual Dinner also drew a near record attendance, as is often the case for a special occasion. W/Cdr Button proposed the toast to the School and Staff. The new Headmaster, Philip Cox, who had agreed to become President of the Association, replied. Morty's predecessor, Leslie White, proposed the association and Lord Brabourne then presented Mr Mortimore with a cheque for more than £200 which had been collected from members. Lord Brabourne said that he had found it a memorable occasion with three Headmasters present. Messrs White and Mortimore were now to be known as Past Presidents. At the AGM before the

Dinner, Mr Mortimore had presented Mr Cox with an OA tie and a gavel 'to keep unruly members under control'.

In 1972, Mr Cox attended his first London Dinner, at which there were 35 members. Mr Cox informed members that, in future, the School's Prize Day would be held in the evening so that more OAs could attend. He thought that there was a strong case for keeping the School's original home in the Churchyard, possibly as a local Museum. In fact, the Ashford UDC took over the building which has housed the Ashford Borough Museum since 1989. H. E. Boulding resigned as Chairman and N. F. Horne as Secretary and it was agreed that a Committee meeting should be held at the Strand Palace Hotel in October to discuss the future of the London Dinner. 'Members should meet in Reception and then have a working dinner.' The LD Committee always conducted its proceedings in style!

The price of OA blazers had now risen to £6.30 with blazer badges 65p (or £3.50 in gold wire). Cricket caps to match the blazers were 50p and ties were 75p for the Terylene striped type or £1.30 for the silk crested ones.

In 1972, the Friends of Ashford Grammar School was formed; its membership would comprise parents and others with an interest in the School. The Association agreed that it would maintain close links with this organisation.



*Three ex-Headmasters and Past Presidents of the Association meet at the 1971 Speech Day. From left to right: Philip Cox (1971-1997), Evan Mortimore (1941-1971) and Leslie White (1934-1941)*

## **8. What Shall We Call It?**

By now it was known that 1972 would see the last 11+ intake of pupils. In future, boys would be admitted at 13+ and 'selected' by 'guided parental choice'. The School was now designated an Upper School. Some years before, Peter Woodworth had hoped that it would not be known as 'The Ashford Upper School for Boys' and all agreed that this must not happen. There was a general feeling that the School could no longer be labelled as a Grammar School, although many Old Boys – and not a few parents – disagreed. Indeed, for a while feelings in the Association became quite inflamed. The choice of name as 'The Norton Knatchbull School' was, on the whole, accepted. The Old Boys certainly did not want to become 'Old Knatchbullians' and so there was complete agreement that the old name should be kept. The Committee was unanimous that this should be made clear, both at the AGM and elsewhere. In the end, what was potentially a controversial topic, was resolved without bloodshed. The Friends of the School did, however, change its name and so F.A.G.S. became F.O.N.K.S.

Bill Fewings gave his views in his usual style, and probably with tongue in cheek, in the Old Ashfordian: 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new.... No doubt in the new system, where all are equal, the scholars in each class are all tied not top because that would indicate someone below'. He went on to admonish OAs: 'You have only to blame yourselves for my views – if you don't send in news I have to fill the space with bedtime stories'.

Although OA sports clubs had fallen by the wayside, Old Boys still played a big part in local sporting activities. Ashford Hockey Club had been in the Final of the Kent County Club competition, with a team containing Mr Alan Watson and four OAs; they lost 2-1. Someone had unearthed a picture of Ashford United Football Club in the 1905/6 season. Their squad of 16 contained 13 OAs! Another OA regretted that the

number of spectators at Old Boys' Days decreased annually even though in 1973 the Association had 550 members. He went on to say that 'older members who did attend would be amazed at the amount of verbiage used on the field and the distances covered by the players'.

The Annual Dinner was still being held in the School hall, but there were problems. The K.E.C. kitchen staff were no longer able to do the catering and so Mr G. Atkinson was asked to provide the meal. The Castle Hotel would continue to arrange the bar and the boys, encouraged by a small fee and some free food, would act as waiters.

At the AGM, Ian Thomas, a member of the staff and an OA, said that he found it difficult to justify a subscription of 50p when boys asked what they got for it. Fifty pence was, of course, worth a lot more then than now and the point was taken seriously. It was suggested that leavers should be given a year's free membership on leaving. This was agreed at a later Committee meeting, but inflation was now raging and so the subs had to go up to 50p anyway.

Since 1972, a Carol Service had been held at the Parish Church each Christmas and it was agreed that a member of the Association would read one of the lessons each year. There was usually a good attendance of OAs.

The redoubtable Bill Fewings wrote from 'the remote corners of Higham Ferrers', expressing more views on changes in the School. 'There seems to be some belief that the School has become comprehensive. This is not so! There is no fear of this happening whilst there is still an Old Ashfordian alive!' Lord Brabourne was in Scotland at the time of the 1973 Dinner and rumblings had even reached that far. He wrote a letter to be read at the Dinner saying how pleased he was to know that the School was now to be named after the Founder. He wanted it made clear that 'of course, there is no suggestion that the name of the Association would change; the Association will always represent ALL Old Boys'.

An effort to make the London Dinner in 1974 less formal was only partly successful and only 31 were present. Peter West, now Acting Secretary of the LD Committee, said that it should still be held on a Friday, even though several OAs had said that they couldn't attend on that day. The Treasurer was surprisingly happy even though he recorded a balance of 60p.

Dick Apps was now visiting the School each year to tell the leavers about the Association. In 1974, he spoke to some eighty leavers; all joined on a free sub, but the drop-out later was considerable.

At the Annual Dinner, Chairman Button felt that the Officers of the Association should change more frequently. Roy Cross wished to give up as Treasurer, but he had to stay on some time before a replacement could be found. This was really the snag to Bert Button's views.

Inflation was rising wildly. The Dinner now cost £2.50 and the subscription had to go up to 75p. Those OAs who had taken out long-term subs years before were no longer productive. The Committee was adamant that every effort should be made to maintain the annual events. In 1975 the Dinner cost £3.50 and complaints were being received, particularly from younger members. Ray Carlton felt that the cost of invitations to the Dinners should be borne by the whole Association and not just by those attending. This was eventually agreed. The Association's balance was dropping (to £259) and the number of subs received was falling as well. There had been no Old Ashfordian published in 1975 and so no reminders had been sent out. From 1976, the subs would have to go up to £1 (or £4.50 for five years) Only 32 attended the 1975 London Dinner, whose prices had also been hit by inflation; the next year only 21 were present.

These situations were not really the fault of the Committee and most voluntary organisations had similar problems. Costs were one fact, coupled with the fact that many OAs were having to fight for survival in difficult inflationary times. It was not helped by a general apathy among Old Boys in general. Although the Old Ashfordian had lapsed since 1974, this was as much due to lack of material sent in by OAs as to production costs.

Bert Button resigned as Chairman in 1976. He said that he had left the School 55 years before. He was moving away from Ashford and thought that new blood was needed. He had worked hard for the Association and had, at least, achieved a period of stability until the present crisis. Dick App's annual talks to the leavers were paying short-term dividends. Graham Thomas, a popular member of the Staff, agreed to liaise between the Association and the School.

What was now needed was an energetic and determined Chairman to build on what had been done. Ray Carlton, who had been active on the Committee for some years, was elected and immediately went into action. Roy Cross had at last been allowed to retire from the post of Treasurer and was replaced by Graham Bowen. David Coupée was Auditor and, of course, Dick Apps stayed on as Secretary.

The new Treasurer at once launched an attack on the many 'members' who had not paid their subs for some time, but still received the magazines. He set up a standing order arrangement. It was felt that the Old Ashfordian must be restarted in some form to improve communications. The Committee thought that members ought to hear from them at least twice a year, ideally in November and late spring. This meant that details of future events could be included to save sending out separate notices; this would reduce postal expenses.

Much discussion went on about the cost of the Ashfordian, which was a great drain on the funds. The Association's balance was down to £24 (with £250 on deposit). In 1976, Six hundred copies had cost £254 but, with inflation, one year later, four hundred copies cost much the same.

The scheme whereby all leavers were given free membership, including the magazine, had been economically disastrous and it was agreed that, in future, boys wishing to join should pay a full subscription; this would, however, last until the end of the next year. The sub was kept at £2 but the Committee decided to abolish the reduced five or ten year subscription which some had paid years before; this had now become derisory. In 1977, the London Dinner attendance had risen slightly to 32, but only sixty went to the Christmas Dinner.

Apart from the annual events, there had been few organised OA sporting events for some time. One bright spot was the instigation of an OA cricket tour. This was arranged by Geoff Petts and Pat Lacey and the party stayed in Exeter University. Four matches were played against local teams, the OAs winning one, drawing one and losing two. The Old Boys were supported by two teachers, Alan Watson and Steve Burgoyne (who scored 105 not out on one occasion – the highest score of the tour). It was felt that the tour had been a great success, both for the cricket and, particularly, the social side – details of which are, fortunately, very vague! Spurred on by this success, the OAs actually played another match when they returned, beating Biddenden C.C. by 91 runs. On a sadder note, Peter Woodworth died in November 1978, aged 88. He had been connected with the School since 1904, only five years after the Association was formed. His achievements had been so memorable that a special issue of the Ashfordian was produced in March 1979, entirely devoted to memories of him – he was truly a legend. In the same month, the first issue of the revived Old Ashfordian appeared. Much of it was devoted to an open and honest appraisal of what had gone wrong and what steps were to be taken to reactivate the Association. A full list of members, with their addresses, was to be made generally available.

## **9. A Royal Event**

Perhaps what was really needed to liven up the Association was a catalyst and this was supplied by the arrival of NKS 350. The official year of the foundation of the School is accepted (on rather slender evidence) as 1630, and so it was felt that a special effort should be made to celebrate the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Although this proposal was at first received with mixed feelings amongst the Staff, the Association and the pupils, enthusiasm steadily grew as specific projects took shape.

The Chairman now felt that he had enough material for two issues of the Old Ashfor-

dian (which was now being produced in a duplicated form at about 10p a copy) to come out each year. Thanks to Treasurer Bowen's efforts, the Association's finances were growing fast; it now had £488 and most unpaid subs had been recovered. By now, tickets for the 1979 Dinner cost £5.

The President was now able to reveal publicly some of the plans for NKS 350. It had been hinted that 'a Royal Personage' might attend and he was now revealed as HRH Prince Charles. A Fund was set up to collect £25 000 to build a cricket pavilion. Rupert Godden agreed to act as Treasurer for the Fund; a Committee, comprised of teachers, parents and OAs was formed. The Opening Ceremony would take place on 15 July 1980; in the morning a service would be held in Ashford Parish Church, which the Archbishop of Canterbury would attend. Built around this would be a special week of events and it was hoped that the Association would co-operate.

The OAs agreed to organise a cheese and wine evening after the Past v Present cricket match on the 12 July 1980. A small exhibition of the School's history was put on show. Mr R.W. Thomas was preparing a short history of the School and members were asked for material. It was suggested that members should be asked to offer hospitality to visiting OAs.

The Rector of Mersham Church had raised the question of a Founder's Day service during the Anniversary Year. The School approved of the idea, but the Headmaster suggested that the OAs might like to take on the organisation. He offered the help of the School Choir. The Association eagerly took up the idea and it was fixed for 21 May (close to the traditional date of 24 May). It was now known that admission to the Centenary Day celebrations would be controlled for security reasons and arrangements were made allowing OAs to apply for tickets.

The 1979 London Dinner had an attendance of more than fifty, including more younger members. At this time there was much discussion about the production costs of the Ashfordian. Editor Trevor Eaton was on the OA Committee. Eventually, the School decided to reduce expenses by going over to photo-litho production and the Association decided to delay further discussions until the first issue appeared. The run-up to the NKS 350 Celebrations was marred by the news in August 1979 of the IRA bombing attack, which killed Lord Mountbatten and several of the Brabourne family, severely injuring Lord and Lady Brabourne. Later the same year, 'Chug' Summers was killed in a car crash at Mersham. He had taught at the School for 43 years and was remembered by many OAs, particularly those who had been Scouts. At the 1979 AGM, it was revealed that more than a hundred members now paid their subscriptions by Banker's Order. Although expenses were rising, the Association now had a balance of £600 and Graham Bowen was warmly congratulated for his efforts in putting the OAs' finances in such good order.

One problem with writing an account of the activities of an organisation is that many of the activities (such as the Dinner and the AGM) tend to be repetitive. In fact, one

member who has attended the Annual Dinners since the thirties, was asked how different they were then. After a few seconds thought, he smiled and said ‘not much’.

This view was confirmed at the 1979 AGM. The Secretary – renowned for his conscientiousness and reliability – started reading the Minutes of the last meeting. After a minute or so, he realised that he was reading an account of the 1977 meeting and not of 1978. Being Dick Apps, he was completely unruffled and started all over again on the correct version. A few members discussing the situation after the meeting confessed that they hadn’t noticed the mistake until Dick did!

The 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations passed off with great success, although the Prince of Wales was forced to delay his arrival and the retired Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Coggan, had to stand in for his successor. Prince Charles’ late arrival did, however, give more opportunities for the many OAs attending to socialise with old acquaintances before the Opening of the Pavilion. The first signs of an invigorated membership came at the London Dinner, where seventy members attended; the Hon. Michael Knatchbull was a guest. A large number of Old Boys had attended the Anniversary Founder’s Day Service at Mersham Church, which had really become the Association’s main contribution to the celebrations.

The only real controversy over the events was about invitations to the Anniversary Lunch at the School. Only a small number of Staff and OAs were invited, whereas many of those present had little direct connection with the School. The matter was raised again at the 1980 AGM. After hearing that OAs had responded generously to the Pavilion Appeal (though donations were made by individuals and not from the Association), Peter West expressed the widely held view that the Association should have had a larger representation at the Anniversary Lunch. The Secretary explained that the lunch had been arranged and paid for by the K.E.C. This meant that invitations had gone out ac-



*In 1980, HRH Prince Charles opened the School's new pavilion, to commemorate the School's 350th anniversary. He is seen here with Lord Brabourne, a great supporter of the OAs and Lady Mountbatten. Both were still recovering from the bombing attack in 1979.*

ording to their official list; this included many local dignitaries in accordance with the usual procedure for Royal visits to the County. Several OAs had therefore attended in other capacities. Apart from this criticism, it was felt that the celebrations had been successful and had certainly attracted many Old Boys who had not been to the School for years.

Old Boys' Day, a few days before, had attracted more attention than usual. The first match using the new (but officially unopened) pavilion, was marked by Simon Spelling taking all ten School wickets, so enabling the OAs to win by six wickets. In the evening an informal party was held and this was well attended by Old Boys and their guests.

Lord Brabourne was present at the 1980 Annual Dinner; this was to be the last to be held at the School. Encouraged by the previous year's success, the London Dinner Committee decided to make the 1981 event 'a more resplendent occasion' by introducing an extra course on the menu. Although all agreed that this was an excellent meal, those coming from away felt that the longer time it took gave even less opportunity to talk before having to rush off to catch trains. Nevertheless, the Committee decided that the extra course was worthwhile. This was the last London Dinner chaired by Ted Boulding who was replaced by Peter West. Peter Taylor took over as Secretary. 53 members attended.

The organisation of the 1981 Dinner presented problems. As an energy saving measure, the K.E.C. had decided that Schools should have a longer Christmas holiday, when it was cold and dark, and shorter holidays in the Summer, when it was warm and light. This meant that the Dinner would now have to be held before the School closed down for the holidays, on 12th December. This date meant that OAs at Universities would not be in Ashford and so other venues were sought. The Dinner was moved to the Masonic Hall in Ashford, where it could take place on 19th December. The Association has used this Hall ever since with great success. This meant that the cost would be higher to cover the cost of hiring the Hall and providing waitress service. Sixty six attended. It would have been possible to move the 1982 Dinner back to the School, but it was decided to stay at the Masonic Hall. The London Dinners were still being held at Martinez in Piccadilly. Tickets for the 1982 event cost £8 and 53 members were present. A further attraction provided this year was Jim Brigg's 'all-talking, shining, flashing slide show'. The festivities went on and on – one of those present describing the scene afterwards said, 'the barman stifled a not so surreptitious yawn when the last of us rolled out of Swallow Street and into the Cafe Royal for night-caps'.

During the year, Ray Carlton had suffered a slight stroke, but was able to carry on as Chairman. In 1983, OA Arthur Gadd, who had been Vice Chairman of the Governors and Chairman of the NKS 350 Committee, died.

The 1984 London Dinner was the last of the 22 held at Martinez and was attended by 39 members. The Committee discussed other venues and eventually settled on the East India, Devonshire, Sports and Public School Club in St James's Square, where it was to remain until the present time. Tickets were now £13.

This year there was again a problem over the Annual Dinner. The Masonic Hall had been booked for the date required so, to resolve the situation, it was reluctantly agreed to hold the event on the nearest Friday. Perhaps because of this change, only 54 members attended.

As a result of the 1980 Education Act, it had been necessary to produce a new Instrument of Government for the School. Dick Apps, who had been involved in the discussions about this, explained that the Old Ashfordians would still be able to nominate one Governor. Two others would now be elected by and from the parents of the pupils and two from teachers at the School. At the 1984 AGM, those present voted in favour of the new Instrument.

During the year, a new list of members had been produced and had been computerised by Jim Small. For some years, John Parker had been cataloguing the considerable collection of photographs of School and OA functions held in the School. These mainly dated back to about 1910 and, thanks to Mr Lamprey, there was an almost complete record from 1910 to 1926. The early 1930s were reasonably covered. The main gaps were, and are, pre-1910, late 20s, late 30s and the 40s. The Committee hoped that OAs would donate pictures and that the collection would be kept in good order. By and large this is the case but, to aid future historians, it is important that photographic records should be kept up-to-date.

During 1985, the Committee had been working on a new Constitution for the Association to bring it in line with the changes in the organisation of the School. This was printed in full in the Old Ashfordian for November 1985 and was eventually approved at the AGM. One of the consequences of this was that the Association now needed a Patron. Lord Brabourne readily agreed to take this position.

Early in 1986, both Evan T. Mortimore and Leslie W. White died within a month of one another. Both were remembered with affection by OAs and had supported the Association with enthusiasm, particularly Morty, who had been Head for thirty years.

There was much discussion about memorials for them. After learning that a Memorial for Mr White was likely to be donated from another source, the Association agreed that it should go ahead with a memorial for Mr Mortimore alone. It was decided that this should take the form of a Travelling Fund for pupils, but that a plaque would be erected as well.

The Association now had a new Treasurer, Marcus Joy, and he discussed with Mr Cox the best way of administering it. It was decided that an appeal should be launched in the November 1986 issue of the Old Ashfordian. When the Fund reached a satisfacto-

ry amount, a small committee consisting of the Headmaster and two OAs would interview candidates annually to decide who should receive awards. The general opinion was that 'need' would not, in this case, be a deciding factor. Actually, the setting up of the Fund proved to be more complex than expected and about two years passed before the Inland Revenue finally approved the regulations. By this time, the Fund had reached nearly £2,000.

At the 1986 AGM, one of the rare points of controversy surfaced. A member queried the use of the Masonic Hall for the Annual Dinner. He felt that some members might be objecting to this venue because of its association with the Masonic movement. The Secretary stated that the Hall was used because it was economic, convenient and provided good catering in a suitable environment. It was agreed that other places could be considered but, in the event, none of them proved to be as good as the Masonic Hall. No other objections were received.

During the year, a memorial had been set up for Leslie White by his son. In 1987 two annual bursaries of £50 were awarded.

In 1987 an epoch-making decision had to be made. Mr Cox reported to the Committee that he had been interesting some of the younger members of the Staff in coming to the Dinner. This seemed innocent enough, but he then went on to say that there was a possibility that a lady teacher might wish to attend. At times the School had had women teachers but hitherto none had wanted to attend the Christmas Dinner, although they were, of course, constitutionally members of the Association. Mr Cox, perhaps fearing banner-carrying mobs in the streets of Ashford, asked for clarification as to who could attend this event. Looking back ten years or so, younger OAs may be somewhat amazed that any problem arose – after all, the function was hardly one which might cause the most sensitive feminine cheeks to redden. Anyhow, the Committee now had to bite the bullet. Chairman Carlton ruled that, as all members of the Staff were ex-officio members of the Association and all members of the Association could attend the Dinner, therefore male *or* female teachers could attend. For the record, the first woman to attend was Mrs Linda Walker, Head of English, in 1987; she seemed to enjoy herself and no demonstrations were reported.

After a lively discussion, it was agreed that the annual subscription (which had not changed since 1977) should be increased to £5 in 1988; this was partly due to an increase in the price of paper. It was decided that the names of both Mr White and Mr Mortimore should be inscribed on the same memorial plaque. This was produced in the School metalwork department and was placed in the Pavilion.

It was strongly felt that Old Boys' news should still be included in the Ashfordian and so the Old Ashfordian would be produced in the autumn of each year. The cost of 1,000 copies of the Ashfordian was now £1,375 and the Association paid roughly half.

The London Dinner in 1988 was again held at the East India Club. At the Association

AGM in December, some of the 34 who had attended criticised the meal and asked the Secretary to see whether some improvement could be made. Earlier in the year, the OAs had defeated the School at cricket, assisted by Bert Palmer, then in his 80<sup>th</sup> year.

Now that the membership was so large, it was decided to appoint an Assistant Secretary and Mr Greg Hooker took up the post. Some of the more fashion-conscious members had asked whether bow ties could be produced. As an experiment, 24 were made up from the striped tie material and they all sold out at £4.50 each.

A regular pattern of OA events had now set in. Attendance at the sports events against the School was still poor, in spite of occasional efforts to make them more attractive. The London Dinner had now settled in to a regular spot in April, at the East India Club. Numbers were rather disappointing – usually 30 to 40 – but, apart from the mild complaint already mentioned, the event was enjoyed. There were some moans about the cost, but it was generally accepted that London restaurant prices were high. Attendance at the Annual Dinner, now regularly held at the Masonic Hall, varied but was usually upwards of sixty. The presence of Dick Apps hovered over all of this. Like Peter Woodworth, he had a figure in almost every OA pie, making sure that everything ran well and ironing out the occasional problem with his constant, quiet and friendly approach. Philip Cox had been as strong a supporter of the Association as his predecessors, though the growth and complexity of School administration put more demands on his time.

In 1989, the first two grants were made from the E.T.Mortimore Memorial Fund. These went to Russell Lancaster and Daniel Fineman, who were involved in a National Youth Theatre production.

Marcus Joy had set up his own business and so had to resign as Treasurer. Greg Hooker agreed to take over; Dr Stephen Miller replaced him as Assistant Secretary. To reduce expenses, the School intended to produce the Ashfordian in-house. Ray Carlton suggested that the Association should offer £1,000 towards the cost of an off-set printing machine and that they should make a further £1,000 loan, interest free, for one year; F.O.N.K.S. also made a grant. This was done, but the Committee was told a year or two later that the machine was not being used in the School because there was nobody who could operate it! Mr Carlton reported later that he had bought the machine back for his own use and to print the Old Ashfordian. It was hoped that the money realised could be put towards a School minibus and this was, in fact, done. OA Ian Hunt had been killed in the Falklands War, so bringing the Roll of Honour up to one hundred.

Occasionally, news was received of unofficial OA Dinners in far-flung parts of the World. In October 1989, D.L.Ayres, R.D.Cross, J.W.Webb and P.G.West (some of the veterans of London Dinners) held their own celebration in the ‘Sherlock Holmes’ in Melbourne, where they dined on steak and kidney pie or roast beef.

## 10. Into The Nineties

At the 1990 AGM, Dick Apps was again re-elected as Secretary. He accepted, but felt that the time had come for a younger member to become Secretary. He had been Secretary since 1969 and assistant to Peter Woodworth from 1946 to 1949. He asked to retire in 1991. Bert Button voiced the feelings of many when he praised the great service that Dick had rendered to the Association and said that he would be 'a hard act to follow'. From this year, Mrs Moir and her team took on the catering for the Annual Dinner. It was now known that, from September 1991, the School was to revert to taking in new boys at the age of eleven.

At a Committee meeting of the Association, in May 1991, Stephen Miller presented a draft copy of a survey he had devised for gauging the views of members on future activities. This had apparently been suggested at the London Dinner, a month before. After a preliminary discussion, the Chairman, Ray Carlton, announced that he did not agree with the procedure and immediately resigned, leaving the meeting. At the following AGM, it was explained that he later wrote to the Committee confirming his decision and giving up his membership of the Association. Both the Chairman (Dick Apps) and the Secretary wrote thanking him for his services to the Association.

Ray Carlton had been a great worker for the OAs, not only in his more obvious role as Chairman (a post he had held for 15 years) but in his work behind the scenes. He had produced the Old Ashfordian himself for some time and had been greatly involved in the revival during the seventies. He died in 1998.

Dick Apps took over as Chairman, but was admitted to hospital in July and was out of action until November. Stephen Miller took over as Secretary and Jim Small became responsible for membership records. The 1991 Old Ashfordian was the first to be issued in a stapled, unfolded form, more in the nature of a news letter and is still produced in this format. There had been problems since the School decided to produce

the Ashfordian itself, but a computer virus had caused long delays. This meant that OA news was appearing very late.

Now that the original building, which had later become the Wilks' Memorial Hall, housed the Ashford Borough Museum, the Committee suggested that the old Headmasters' Board on show there should be repainted and agreed to fund this. Many of the Stewards there were OAs. At the time, the Museum authorities preferred to leave it as it was, but it was agreed that the Committee's offer should remain, if the Museum changed its mind.

By now, what had become the annual hockey fixture between the OAs and the School was played on the Ashford Hockey Club's new all-weather pitch. Over the years, victories were shared between the two sides, depending largely on how strongly the OAs could recruit good players.

At the 1991 Dinner, eighty-four members were present to welcome Dick Apps back after his illness. There had been only two Secretaries of the Association in 72 years and both Peter Woodworth and Dick had been guiding lights in that period. Thanks were expressed to Kathleen Apps for holding the 'secretarial fort' during his illness. Looking back at attendance at Annual Dinners, it is remarkable how landmarks in the Association's history such as retiring Heads, long-serving OA officials and School 'celebrities' cause a considerable jump in the numbers present.

The School had now started playing Rugby as a serious sport, but there seems to have been no rush to put out an OA team!

Throughout this period, attendance at London Dinners hovered around the middle twenties. However, the finances of their Committee, which were independent of the main Association, remained satisfactory. The annual anonymous donation of two Test Match tickets for a raffle certainly helped. David Batchelor took over as their Treasurer in 1993. The annual event was still a valuable item in the Association year but it was felt that a combination of high London restaurant prices and increasing rail fares prevented many Ashford members from attending. The Association was now very healthy financially with funds of over £5,000 and the sub was kept at £5. The price of the Annual Dinner was unchanged at £9.50.

The new Brabourne Building at the School was opened on Friday 23 October 1992. Dick Apps attended in his capacity as School Governor, but there were no official invitations to the Association. The explanation was the same as for the NKS 350 celebration lunch, that the event was funded by the K.E.C. rather than by the School. It seems a great pity that important functions like this, which so directly involve the School, ignore the existence of the Association. It was unfortunate too that, on this occasion, there were many empty seats at the ceremony.

The Ashfordian was now being printed at the South Kent College of Technology at Folkestone, far more cheaply than in previous years. This meant that, although the

Association had to send out a separate London Dinner notice, the cost to the Association dropped considerably.

In 1992, the numbers attending the Dinner exceeded 80 and the caterers were showing some concern. However, numbers dropped a little in the next few years and, in fact, in 1996, when they rose dramatically at short notice, the caterers still managed to cope – even though seating was tight.

By now, the Association had a financial balance of over £7 000 and the Committee felt that more practical use should be made of it. One innovation was, from 1994, to provide an annual prize for the School Captain. For some time, members attending the annual Carol Service in the Parish Church had complained that they found the Church very cold and the Association offered to finance additional heating. In the end, this proved unnecessary.

By 1995, the E.T.Mortimore Memorial Trust Fund had provided grants of £1,350 to pupils. The Fund continued to grow and it was felt that a greater effort should be made to publicise it to the boys. That year's grants had been given to boys attending the British Schools Expedition to the Arctic Circle (Simon Ruck later reported on this at the Annual Dinner), the World Scout Jamboree in Holland and for a canoe-training course. A number of OAs offered to renew links with the School, by talking to pupils about careers and provide places for the work experience scheme. It was decided that a list would be kept of members who were prepared to help in this way.

A welcome visitor to the 1995 London Dinner was Bill Fewings who, at this time, had just celebrated his Diamond Wedding. He still kept a great interest in the Association, for which he had done so much. Sadly, his wife died in 1998.

In September 1995, OAs heard of the death of Dick Apps. As the Old Ashfordian said, 'He was a true gentleman ... He stands, alongside Peter Woodworth, as one of the two people who have been *The* Association and, when its Centenary is celebrated in 1999, Dick's name will be writ large in whatever history is produced'. No one who knew him could argue with that. He had been associated with the School since he joined it at the age of nine in 1927. The day after he left, he joined the OAs' Committee and was to complete 59 years of service! 'Dick was born within the sound of the School bell, lived much of his life within earshot and in his heart never left the School – a true Old Ashfordian'. Dick's widow, Kathleen, had given him great support when he was Secretary or Chairman, particularly when he was in poor health. The Association paid her the tribute of electing her as an Honorary OA. Dick had been a great sportsman and the Association decided to remember him by presenting 'The Dick Apps Challenge Cup'. Each year, the School plays the OAs at cricket, football and hockey. The Cup was to be awarded to the side who won the best of three each year. It was presented in 1995 for the first time at the Dinner. This first year, the School won it on the basis of winning the football only. Later that year, a Memorial Service was held in the Parish Church and this was attended by many of his friends; including,

of course, a considerable number of OAs. Gray Bowen took over as caretaker Chairman 'for one or two years' and Jim Small was appointed the Association's Foundation Governor, in place of Dick. As an innovation, two Social Secretaries, Simon Hallam and Sean Page, were appointed. By now, the Association had some 450 members and a financial balance of £9,000. The London Dinner Committee was conscious of the low attendance and was aware that cost was probably a major factor. The Committee of Association offered some assistance, which was willingly accepted, as it was recognised that the annual event was greatly enjoyed by those who did attend and was certainly one of the highlights of the Association year. Some years, for example, the Dinner attracted members whose total School record spanned seven decades. The Committee offered to pay for the cost of running a mini-bus from Ashford for the Dinner and buying a ticket for the Staff member who drove it. They would also pay for the meals of two guest – the Headmaster and School Captain and, would pay for the cost of a reduction in the price of a double ticket. It was hoped that this might give a 'kick start' to the event. Attendance at the 1996 Dinner (which welcomed Lord Brabourne) did rise to 34, although none came by minibus! The capacity of the room at the East India Club was 45 and the enthusiastic Secretary proposed booking the larger Luncheon Room (holding 80) for 1997, if required. The Chairman of the London Dinner Committee was now Len Holdstock, later to appear on 'This Is Your Life', paying a tribute to his old friend, Raymond Baxter, of BBC fame. The Secretary was Geoff Petts and the treasurer, David Batchelor.

Because of its strong financial situation, the Committee agreed to transfer another £500 to the Mortimore Fund, which was now better known and so more applications were being received. This meant that grants totalling £300 a year could now be made. Readers may recall that features of long past Annual Dinners were the long list of toasts and the entertainment that followed. No one would want to bring back the former, but, among the grants made in 1996, was one enabling five boys, who were in the Ashford Guitar Ensemble, to make a trip to Hopewell, Virginia, U.S.A. with whom the Town was developing links. Consequently, they were asked to play at the 1996 Dinner, and four were able to attend.

It was now known that Philip Cox was to retire as Headmaster in August 1997. The Committee unanimously agreed to offer him Honorary Life Membership, in recognition of his services as President during his 26 years at the School. In that year, the annual Old Boys' Day was moved to the first Saturday in July and an informal buffet meal was held in a marquee afterwards. This was a glorious day and, although the cricket was drawn, most of those present were so absorbed in nostalgic gossip that few noticed and the organisers were kept busy making the tea urn work! There was a good attendance in the evening and members were entertained by Philip Sibbald and Daniel Fineman on the piano. After supper, Geoff Petts (1963-71) and Nick Croxford (1985-90) spoke as representatives of the 'pre-Cox' and 'post-Cox' eras, respectively. After reminiscing about some of his 'differences' with Mr Cox, Nick presented him with a can of lager and declared him to be 'an honorary Knatchbull lad'. Gray Bowen then presented Mr Cox with an engraved silver tankard, in recognition of his term as Presi-



*To mark the retirement of Philip Cox in 1997, a special event was organised by the Association on Old Boys' Day. The weather was kind and there was a good attendance by OAs.*

dent.

The more formal farewells had been voiced at Mr Cox's last Dinner as President in December 1996. Over 80 members were present. This, coupled with the fact that several reply slips had gone astray, created a last minute panic when it seemed that there might not be enough food or seating to go round. The problems were quickly solved and all went well. One of the toasts was proposed by the Headmaster's son, Malcolm, himself an OA, who revealed some of the domestic effects of having a Headmaster Dad. Father naturally had the last word and shared some of his memories of 26 years at the School. He followed the traditional practice of taking wine with the decades by toasting the four Deputy Heads (past and present) who were present. Secretary, Stephen Miller, welcomed Mrs Kathleen Apps in her new capacity of Honorary Old Ashfordian. Simon Ruck related some of his experiences in the Arctic funded by the Mortimore Fund.

Philip Cox attending his last London Dinner in 1997 as Headmaster, described some of the changes which had occurred during the previous 26 years. Older OAs, and some not so old, were amazed by the mysteries of School administration in the 1990s – a decade which had seen so many changes.

By now, it was known that the new Head would be Mr John Speller, who would be joining the School from the Blue Coat School in Liverpool, where he had been Headmaster. Mr Speller agreed to take over as President of the Association and assured Old Boys that he held the Association in high esteem. Gray Bowen had taken over as Chairman only in a 'holding capacity'. Following Phillip Cox's retirement as Headmaster, the Committee asked him to take over as Chairman and he readily agreed.

Those present at the 1997 AGM welcomed John Speller as President and Phillip Cox as their new Chairman. Gray Bowen was thanked both for his efforts in restoring the Association's finances and for acting as Chairman. A substantial amount was passed over to the Mortimore Fund so that even larger awards could be made each year. John Speller made his first speech at an Annual Dinner and the revived tradition of musical entertainment was continued by songs from Sam Collins, a pupil at the School, who had received a Mortimore grant towards his work with the National Youth Musical Theatre. In 1997, the hockey was won by the OAs, with the football and cricket



*Philip Cox, now Chairman of the Association, at the 1997 Dinner. The regal figure on his left is Greg Hooker, the current Treasurer.*

drawn. Thus, for the first time, the OAs received the Dick Apps Challenge Trophy.

And so, virtually a hundred years have passed. The Association is in a thriving state and is busy planning events for the Centenary year. It has a proud record – as has the School – which sets it high among Old Boys' organisations in similar schools; indeed many of these have gone to the wall. There seems little doubt that future generations of Old Ashfordians will maintain this record.



*The top table at the 1998 London Dinner. New Headmaster John Speller was now President of the Association. On his right are former Chairman Gray Bowen and Len Holdstock, Chairman of the London Dinner. Geoff Petts, Secretary of the London Dinner seems to have been caught unawares!*

# 11. Sports News

It was hoped to include a list of results for the Past v Present (or OAs v School) sports contests, but not all the information is available. Details have not always been published in the Ashfordian or the Old Ashfordian and few other records remain. The introduction of the Dick Apps Challenge Cup may help in the future – Editors please note!

Of the cricket matches whose results have been traced, the OAs have won 41 and the School 34. A few were drawn and about ten were cancelled for wars or weather. The biggest defeat for the OAs was in 1911: School 274 for 6 declared, OAs 66. In 1937 the OAs won by a huge margin: OAs 207 for 7 declared, School 44!

At football, the OAs have won 30, the School 24 and ten have been drawn, but the list is very incomplete. In the early days, the great weight and skill of the Old Boys nearly always triumphed, but as the School grew and perhaps the pupils became fitter, the situation evened up. The biggest win for the School was in 1993 (9-1); the largest margin for the OAs was 7-1.

Although the OAs first played the School at hockey occasionally in the thirties and fairly regularly over the last forty years, many results have been unrecorded. The ones available show a fairly even weighting: OAs 9, School 10 with two drawn. School and OAs have each recorded two 5-1 wins and in 1996, the School won 6-1.

Perhaps future historians may be able to fill the gaps!

