

History of the Old Buckwellians Association - Part 6 - The 21st Century

The search for former BHCHS pupils and staff took off in earnest in 2000-2001 during which time hundreds of alumni were traced and contacted. Many of these were able to provide contact details for others — in fact over forty percent of all contacts were made via word of mouth. Most of the rest were via electoral register data and other internet sources. Some Old Bucks living abroad helped with the search in their respective countries. Those found were offered a complimentary copy of the latest *Old Buckwellians News*, with the option to join the Association. By November 2001 half of all former pupils had been traced, of whom around 1,400 became members.

Calling all old County High students

FORMER pupils of Buckhurst Hill County High School are the subject of a newsletter which has been put together by an Old Buckwellian now living in Hertford.

Graham Frankel, 50, has been working hard to trace his fellow pupils at the Rodling Lane school which opened in 1958 and closed in 1989.

Mr Frankel, who left the school in 1969, has compiled a database of 550 names and estimates there are still about 3,000 people to find.

His newsletter - Old Buckwellians' News - contains bits and pieces of information sent in by former pupils.

"I'm not sure why I started it really - I was on holiday and started wondering what people from my old school were doing now, and it snowballed from there," he said.

He began his search last October and added, "It's developed into something bigger than I could have imagined."

Many of the people who have contacted him did so in response to his letters printed in the Guardian, appealing for anyone who went to the school to get in touch.

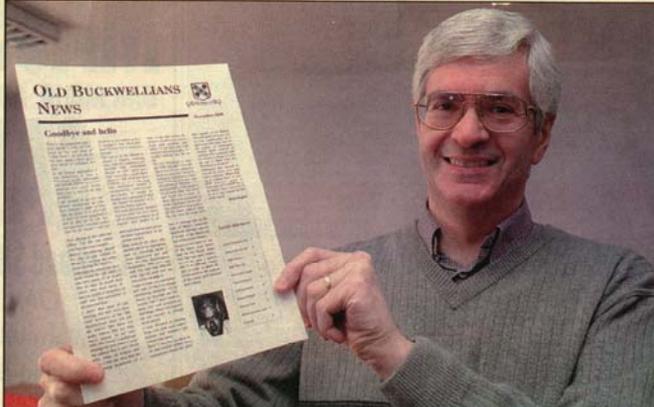
However, Mr Frankel, whose interest in people is evident in his job as a personnel manager, has only been able to find three people who shared his own school days.

He said: "I've hardly found anyone from my own era, so in that sense this has failed miserably - however, I've been able to reunite people who haven't seen each other for forty years which is brilliant."

The first newsletter was sent out last November, and he hopes to be able to send the second edition in May.

If you went to Buckhurst Hill County High School, Mr Frankel wants to hear from you. Ring him on 01992 422246 or e-mail him at gfrankel@bigfoot.com.

(A343-23A)



Graham Frankel

Epping Forest Guardian March, 2000

771 copies of the May 2000 *Old Buckwellians News* were mailed out. By May 2002 this had reached 1,637, and by May 2005 well over 1,800. The newsletter grew in size and quality – comprising mainly a mix of Association news, school history and reminiscences, and information about individual old boys. Material came in from all over the globe, including numerous contributions to the popular *Where Are They Now?* feature. From November 2005 *Old Buckwellians News* was produced in full colour.

The BHCHS website – for which Pete Berrecloth (1976) took over as webmaster in 2001 – now featured a regularly updated database, where all of the individuals who had attended or taught at the school were listed, with an indication of whether or not they had been traced.

Graham Frankel was volunteered by the Chairman to take the notes at the 2002 AGM, thus earning him at a stroke the additional role of Secretary. In 2002 Chris Waghorn (1949) took over as Treasurer. Chris, a level-headed former bank manager, set about bringing OBA's accounting into the twenty first century. He also instigated the drawing up of a new constitution, the original having apparently disappeared without trace in the 1970s, along with all the other official documents. In addition Chris was a pioneer of year group reunions, with the '49ers'.

After 27 years as Chairman, Trevor Lebentz decided to step down in 2003, and was appointed honorary President, thus holding that position for both OBA and OBFC. Alan Woods (1962), a senior banker and champion hammer-thrower, was elected Chairman.

Over the next five years the paid-up membership settled at around 1600. The Association began to spread its wings in modest ways, with activities as diverse as holding an AGM at the Houses of Parliament (courtesy of David Evennett MP (1960)), refurbishing the former BHCHS school sign to be held at St John's Primary School in Buckhurst Hill (where Peter Tidmarsh (1976) is the Headmaster), organising trips to professional football matches, and procuring various items of club merchandise for sale to members. These comprised:- a new design of Old Bucks tie more like the old school tie but bearing the school crest (kindly organised by Fraser Donald (1961)), baseball caps (initiative of John Hannah (1959)), and polo shirts, thanks to Alan Woods. Also offered for sale, and very popular indeed, was a fascinating and unique DVD of life at the school in the late 1960s, based on cine footage shot by former teacher John Robins.



OBA AGM at the House of Commons, May 2006

Alan Woods resigned as Chairman in 2008, and was elected an honorary Vice-President, along with Malcolm Beard the outgoing Vice-Chairman. The incoming Chairman was Richard Battersby (1962), a moderniser who puts a high priority on teamwork, communication, and professionalism. One of Richard's first initiatives was to set in motion an overhaul of the by now rather tired OBA website. An all-new version was launched in July 2009, professionally developed by Ben Woodward the son of David Woodward (1958).

In May 2009 Chris Waghorn decided to hang up his spreadsheets, and Peter Sharp (1960) became Treasurer.

OBA branched into charity fund raising for the first time in September 2009, with the holding of a fun quiz. This was expertly run by BBC radio producer and Old Buck Phil Hughes (1965). The event was very successful indeed, helped by some most generous donations, raising nearly £800 for St Clare Hospice, Hastingwood. A second charity quiz, also run by Phil, was held in September 2011, raising £650 for the hospice.

In October 2009, Chris Moody (1962), having organised the annual dinner for several years, decided to call it a day as a committee member. Rob Lane (1969), a senior law firm partner, accepted the invitation to join the committee, with a non-specific role.



2012 committee: Rob Lane, Richard Battersby, Graham Frankel, Peter Sharp

By 2011 87% of ex-pupils had been traced, and 41% of those traced, and living, were paid-up members, representing a third of those who ever attended the school.

OBA is now a substantial and viable former pupils' Association, which might be the envy of some of those attached to schools which still exist. Even Old Etonians have been known to comment that our magazine knocks socks off theirs — and one can bet that they pay a lot more.

The demographics of the OBA membership indicate that the Association could be viable for at least another three decades, if enough people want to keep it going.

“We do have this one vital thing in common: at some time (it matters not when) we all spent a few years at the School. We will all spend a great many years away from it. It is only through the Association that we have this last frail link.”

Roding magazine 1956