

THE NEW HOGHTONIAN

*The magazine of Preston Grammar School Association,
uniting Old Boys, former staff and friends*

Issue 8, April 2017

EDITORIAL

It barely seems a minute since the NH7 went out in January. In fact a lot has happened since then, and in any case from an administrative point of view the first four months of the year are always the busiest, as, amongst other things, there is the Annual Dinner to arrange (more of this later) and the AGM to prepare. As I write, I'm not certain all of you will get this Newsletter in time for this year's AGM, but I live in hope. Certainly you should do if you have an email address, but even this is not straightforward if your provider is aol, as emails from me are currently (on the whole) being rejected. I don't have any answers yet but I'm working on it!

There are two main points about the AGM. Firstly I am pleased to announce that we do now have a President-Elect, Jim Goring, and he will receive the Badge of Office on the night. He is a popular choice and will make a fine President. I'm sure we'll all give him our support, so congratulations Jim! Secondly, whilst we have most positions covered by some doubling-up, I haven't yet received any nomination for Treasurer. At the moment I am managing the finances, which I am very happy to do, but I am not an accountant and will not be seeking admission to the brotherhood! In any case the End of Year Accounts will be very difficult to do this year, as all things pertaining to PGSA financial affairs were destroyed or disposed of following the death of Mike Tyrer. However with the help of Jim McDowall I've managed to account for every transaction, so there will be a report at the AGM, but not of the 'smoke and mirrors' variety (apologies to all accountants!). Is anyone interested/willing?

I am pleased to welcome some new contributors to this Newsletter, including Dave Sharp who has produced a very full and perceptive report, with a few wry observations, of the combined Churches visit, which was unreservedly successful. A little more problematic was the Annual Dinner, which Brian Rigby touches on in his report. Whilst the occasion itself was a splendid affair and the camaraderie as superb as ever, there were some serious management issues on the night that had a knock-on effect on the quality of some of the food, the availability of beer, the service and hence the timing of the proceedings, although the staff who were there were brilliant. The Hotel management has acknowledged all this, but the recompense so far has been inadequate and I am about to escalate the matter. Barring a miracle we shall be looking for a different venue for next year. But let's not take everything away from the night – many people said they enjoyed it, there was much positive feedback and the bar was still populated in the middle of the morning! My personal thanks go to David Holmes for a splendid speech, and for being a rarity at PGSA events—an exact contemporary of mine!

Staying with events, although I have sent out an email, I shall repeat here that the PGSA Golf on 16th May has been cancelled, although the Roebuck Cup (Bowls) and the second Golf Tournament will go ahead as planned. Venues and timings will be confirmed and notified later.

The last few months have once again been a bumper time for emails, and apologies if I've not been able to reply to everyone immediately. I received a very interesting one from a young doctor in southern France who is also a World War II enthusiast. He is involved in searching for missing soldiers and with battlefield archaeology, and is the author of a book entitled "Autopsy of a Battle: The Liberation of the French Riviera." About 15 years ago during a vacation in El Alamein, Egypt, he had come across a WW2-era British Army fork that the Bedouins had recovered from the desert. He bought it from them in the hope of being able to research the soldier. On it was a serial number, which thanks to new archives on the Internet, he has now been able to connect to a man called Frank Hind, of the Royal Artillery. The only Frank Hind he could find was on the Grammar School Website, hence the email.

Brian Rigby and I got to work, but unfortunately it would seem that the trail has gone cold. Yes, we did have a Frank Hind who was a regular contributor to the Hoghtonian during the Second World War, but he was a Signaller and was in Carthage towards the end of the North African Campaign before being shipped to Italy where he appears to have remained until the end of the War. Being in the First Army he would not have gone into Egypt, although we can't rule out (as yet) the possibility of a transfer from the Eighth to the First Army on their uniting in Tunisia. **So here we have the challenge. Frank Hind (if it was the same man) was the President of the Association from 1959 to 1961. Does anybody remember him and what he did in the War? Can we reunite him/his family with the fork?**

On the subject of memorabilia I am pleased to say that the Headmaster's Chair and the Lectern (which is very useful at the Dinner!) are now back in the old Grammar School building. They are going to be given pride of place in the Hall, and suitable plaques will be affixed to both. The news on the paintings at Fulwood Academy is less encouraging as the Head there seems to like them, but I suppose we can't win them all.

One project that is finally getting off the ground is the production of a DVD. We already have quite a lot of footage of the School Building before it was gutted in 1988/89, and there is also some pertaining to the transfer of the WW1 Tablet and the WW2 Book of Remembrance from the School to the Parish Church (as was). David Holmes has also kindly given me some film of the 1958 School Camp and the trip to Nîmes, both taken by his father, and finally we are hoping to develop George Noon's idea of scanning long photos and adding music, but using very high definition for the images. I am liaising with a colleague from the Preston Historical Society and we are at the stage of looking to produce a script which David Bunting will read/possibly contribute towards.

Looking back, this has been a little more than an Editorial – it could have been sub-divided into smaller articles for example. But then again a similar observation was made about my response to David Holmes at the Annual dinner, so, suitably admonished, why should I seek to change the habit of a lifetime?

Charlie Billington.

THE PARK SCHOOL OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION

The 2016 Annual Reunion of the PSOGA took place in October last and was well-attended by 127 Old Girls, who thoroughly enjoyed their time at the Barton Grange Hotel.

This year's Reunion will take place on Friday 13th October, again at Barton Grange, with the Coffee Morning on the following day. For this and any other information about the Old Girls' Association, please contact **Lynne Cowperthwaite (née Lavender), Hon Sec PSOGA, at 67 Dukes Meadow, Ingol, Preston PR2 7AT. Lynne's telephone number is 01772 732200, and her email address is lynnecowp@btinternet.com**

MORE MEMORIES OF BILL STANSFIELD

The late Bill Stansfield (Harris, 1952-59) obviously left a huge impression on those who knew him, as I continued to receive memories and anecdotes long after the publication of the last NH. Ian Thompson, an exact contemporary of Bill's, shared digs with him at University and accompanied him on several interesting holidays. He was devastated by Bill's death and wished to share a few thoughts:

"The following story may be a slight exaggeration of the facts, but it has gone down in the annals of recorded history about William Charles (Bill) Stansfield. In his first few years at PGS he came top in just about every subject, and this continued until the end of fourth year when we had to choose our A-levels. Most people selected those subjects they liked and/or in which they showed some aptitude. Bill set about it differently; it appeared that various individuals had beaten him in subjects like Mathematics, English, Geography, etc. so Bill decided that, since no-one had ever surpassed him in Latin or Greek, he would choose these subjects (with Ancient History), resulting in his reading Classics at Manchester University.

In Mathematics – particularly when we had Dickie Dewhurst and were doing Geometry – Bill used to be asked to do something that astounded most of us (well, at least me, even though I went on to teach the subject). When we had spent most of the lesson going through the proof of, say, Pythagoras' Theorem and solving a few problems, DD would say 'Right Stansfield, the next theorem is Apollonius' Theorem which states the following... come to the front and take us through a proof of it'!

As everyone in the 1952-1959 cohort knows, Bill was something of a superstar, not just in the academic arena but also in terms of physical accomplishments. I remember when an article appeared in the Lancashire Evening Post describing some chap swimming with wetsuit and flippers from Brockholes Brow Bridge to Walton-le-Dale Bridge. All his classmates were up in arms, because we knew that it was one of Bill's regular activities to leave his clothes under Brockholes Bridge, swim to Walton-le-Dale (without wetsuit, etc) and then run back to retrieve his clothes.

In 1958, Bill, Keith Pearson and I spent several weeks hitching through France to enjoy the luxury of a Correos train 'runabout' ticket in Spain at a cost of about £5 for several thousand miles. Splitting up in France to increase the chances of a lift caused a few problems, for example, two days were lost on the outward journey because I went to the wrong Paris campsite. On the return journey, given our increased knowledge of Parisian campsites, Keith and I could not understand why Bill was not at the designated place. We later learned that he had secured a lift with a family that had offered him hospitality in Carcassonne. As we all know, this was a defining moment in the lives of Bill and his pen friend soon-to- be girlfriend, fiancée and wife, Jannine.

In the summer of 1962 Bill and I set off on a European journey on my newly-acquired Lambretta scooter. The plan was to visit six countries, stopping in Carcassonne en route where Bill was to stay with the family of Jannine. I was to continue to Spain and then return later to pick him up. Unfortunately, having stopped on the hard shoulder of the M1 to don our pakamacs, I lost control when restarting the journey and ended up spending the night in Luton and Dunstable Hospital. Bill returned home by train, and, not wishing to wake his mother, climbed in through his bedroom window. This nearly gave her a heart attack when she discovered him in bed the next morning. Bill later travelled to Carcassonne by train!"

Ian Thompson (Miller, 1952-59).

MEMBERSHIP

Obituaries

Since the last edition of the New Hoghtonian in January, the following Members have passed away:

HEANE, Flt Lt William Henry (Bill) DFC	Harris	1931-1938
TYRER, Michael Frederick (Mike)	Miller	1949-1956
WIGNALL, Richard	Harris	1938-1944

Notifications and obituaries were sent out at the time and they are also on the Website.

Past President John Whalley (Harris, 1941-51), who attended Bill Heane's funeral, later added: "Just to confirm that I went to Bill Heane's funeral today at Chipping and let the family know that I was also representing PGSA. The Grammar School was mentioned in 'Memories of Bill', as his sole place of education! After leaving school in 1938, Bill joined the RAF with the aspiration of becoming a pilot. During initial training in Canada he shocked his flying instructor by only just pulling out of a spin before landing safely! The advice, now, was for him to concentrate on becoming a navigator, which he did with great relish. He joined Bomber Command and the Lancaster Pathfinder Squadron 582 and completed 57 operational missions, mainly over Germany, with the same 'lucky' skipper and crew! After demob. he joined the family firm in Preston, WS. Heane, and enjoyed a number of leisure pursuits including sailing his boat Kingfisher from Glasson Dock, active family holidays and walking. He was a member of St. Bartholomew's Church Choir until last year. He leaves his wife, Margaret, whom he met when she was a midwife at Sharoe Green Hospital, son, David and daughter Janet together with five grandchildren."

Mike Tyrer, another Past President, had only recently taken over as Treasurer of the Association, and not long before he died I had met him to go over the accounts (needless to say in a pub!). Despite the fact that he lived in Fareham, he kept his house on in Ashton and was therefore a frequent visitor to Preston. Not only will Mike be missed as a very active Member, the Association also the task of finding someone to step into his shoes at the forthcoming AGM.

As I write I've just received the news that Ron Foreman has passed away, at the age of 100. Much has been said about him in recent NHs, and it was a privilege to be present at his centenary birthday party last year. In fact he was only one day short of another birthday, which a number of us were hoping to celebrate with him; alas it was not to be.

Much has been written about Ron, and I've no doubt this will be added to in the coming weeks, whether you knew him as a French or Spanish Master, a Form Master, a raconteur par excellence, a musician, a bookbinder or simply as a friend. If you have any stories that you wish to share with other Members, please do not hesitate to forward them to me, as Ron (Les) Eccles recently did (below).

New Members

We have three new Members, whom the Association is pleased to welcome on board:

CUMMINS, John	Thornley	1941-1943
GARDNER, Paul	Goodair	1964-1969
CLARKE, David	Miller	1948-1955

We hope you enjoy your Membership.

In addition we are pleased to welcome back Harry (Tim) Walsh (Thornley, 1939-1946), whose name, for whatever reason, had gone missing. He seems to remember that he might have been No 988 in the 1948 Membership List! These days, Tim, brother of Ronnie (Thornley, 1941-1947), lives in the Lancaster area, so he's not far away and in any case Ronnie usually keeps me up-to-date.

There are currently 297 active Members in the Association, of whom 247 receive communications by email. Please don't forget to notify me if you change your email address, or indeed if you acquire one for the first time.

Charlie Billington.

MEMORIES OF RON FOREMAN ("CARROTS")

I joined PGS in September 1958 and was in form 1A, the form room being on the top floor of the new block nearest Deepdale Road. I could see PNEFC and the primary school attended by Sir Tom.

"Carrots" took us for French and he was reasonably easily distracted and would sit on top of the front pupil's desk, wrapping the sleeves of his gown around him, whilst facing the class. He stated that passing French 'O' level would gain you a better salary at Lucas', who produced light bulbs for the car industry.

He disliked smoking and told us that with the money he saved he would purchase new rolling stock for his model railway (probably Hornby Dublo), or put the savings towards a visit to Spain. He regaled us in fine detail with the workings of a bull-fight. The bull would be kept in the dark until the matador was ready, and when it appeared in daylight the matador would watch in which direction it would turn its head - indicating which side was the strongest. Towards the end of the fight the horse-mounted assistants, picadors, had the job of injecting "banderillas" so that when the matador was ready for the kill its head would present itself in level fashion making a clean and swift kill. Any matador performing well was rewarded with one of the bull's ears.

He emphasized how dangerous it was for the matador and also how it was NOT animal torture.

He was also a keen supporter of the Film Club and described in great detail the film "3.10 to Yuma". This was shown on UK terrestrial TV recently but I was in Slovakia visiting my wife at the time.

For all his efforts I failed the exam FOUR times but got a distinction in the spoken part at the last attempt. If I lived in France for 5 or 6 weeks I would pick up the language easily. It is far easier than Slovak, but when I visit Slovakia, which is every month, I can make myself known in the bank, the supermarkets and the swimming pool.

I think my memories about "Sir" are correct but it WAS 59 years ago. I certainly do not have such vivid memories of other staff.

Leslie Ronald Eccles (Goodair, 1958-65).

THE GERMAN WAR CEMETERY, CANNOCK CHASE

In the last edition of The New Hoghtonian I read Trevor Sergeant's account of the Association's visit to the German Military Cemetery on Cannock Chase with interest. It brought back memories of a visit we made some years ago.

My son's Scout group in Shropshire was fortunate in having a particularly imaginative leader. For Remembrance Sunday he liked to do something which would encourage the youngsters to think about the significance of the occasion. One year he arranged for them to visit the Cemetery for the German Remembrance Sunday Service. My wife and I had been unaware that the Cemetery was so close and we agreed readily to go along as parent helpers. We, too, were impressed by the design and maintenance of the Cemetery, though we were unaware of John Whalley's connection with it. The moving service was led by the head of the Lutheran Church in Britain, and a most impressive address was given by the then German Ambassador, a civilised and well-regarded man.

What struck us about the occasion was how it differed from the Remembrance Sunday services and parades with which we were familiar in this country. There was no parade or martial music and no uniforms or medals. It was an altogether quieter and more sorrowful event, and it brought home to us how difficult remembrance must be for those who have not only been defeated but whose cause was so shameful.

We noted also how many of the dead commemorated in the Cemetery, including Commonwealth dead in an adjoining cemetery, had died in 1919, victims of the influenza pandemic of that year.

Maintenance of the Cemetery as well as the organisation of the service was done with the help of a local committee in the nearby village of Penkridge, between Stafford and Wolverhampton. The Scouts were invited to join in the buffet lunch the committee had prepared in the village hall. There they were able to talk to former German military personnel who had been prisoners of war and had, in many cases, maintained their connections with the area. The elderly Germans appreciated the Scouts' attendance and the opportunity it gave them to talk about their experiences. One had been a member of a tank crew who considered himself fortunate to have been captured by the British early in the Normandy campaign. A lady told how, as a very young child, she had pressed a bunch of flowers into Hitler's hands during a visit to the town where she lived. Saddest, perhaps, were those who had returned to Germany after the war to find that there was nothing left, that their homes and families had gone, and had returned to the communities and families they had known during their imprisonment. Many prisoners of war were put to work on farms in Shropshire and Staffordshire, and, in some cases, this had developed into lasting family friendships. We heard of one such instance where this had continued into the third generation of the respective families.

It was a heartening experience for us and for our son and his friends.

John Till (Harris, 1954-61).

THE COMBINED CHURCHES VISIT

A Catholic Experience

St. George's Parish Church is known as Preston's hidden gem, and with good reason. Hemmed in by the rear of Shopping Centre buildings to the south and east, the side of a modern brick building to the north and the Ring Road on the west, walking around the outside is not an uplifting experience. When local boy James Hibbert designed the Harris he said he chose Greek Revival to avoid "contemporary taste". Former Mayor Hibbert would have been familiar with the character of most Councillors, hence today 'giant warts' appear around the town, e.g. St George's Shopping Centre, which often obscure thoughtful architectural endeavours. One can only imagine what a thoughtful architect might have done given the space to the south of the Church; perhaps a green space dominated by St George's with shops on three sides. We used to have a good number of architects gracing our Annual Dinners, sadly not now quite as numerous, but Preston does have a number of competent home-grown architects who must surely be more sympathetic to the centre of our town than the "contemporary" barbarians usually favoured by our betters. This is said in the context of the site in which the Church now finds itself, the proposed vandalism to the Harris Museum (Purcell is not a Preston firm), etc...

On entering St. George's, try to imagine a motor enthusiast getting into a Lada and discovering he is inside a Rolls Royce, it is that sort of experience. One or two of us looked around before being properly introduced to the building by Canon Timothy Lipscomb. We were struck by the thought that we were in a Catholic Church, from the beautifully restored murals covering the entire ceiling and higher walls to the statuary much in evidence. St. George's is a comforting church which has not become austere in an attempt to turn its back on the Roman Catholic origin.

No-one would argue with Canon Lipscomb's view that the rather grand Henry Willis organ, each pipe decorated from tip to toe, is one of the finest in the country. Rebuilt in 1973, restoration could only enhance its status but where do you go for the £350,000 required? If anyone knows the answer it is probably Father Timothy.

After being stunned by the murals in the main body of the Church we were invited to the high altar and looked up at the ceiling of the semi-dome, superb. This part of the Church is to receive a new high altar, more in keeping with the fine surroundings and incidentally to house the Church's relic of St Walburge's brother. Puzzled looks at this point, but nobody thought to ask - probably still admiring the ceiling.

Next Father Timothy turned to the excellent stained glass windows. One of Lady Walsingham relates to a wonderful story starting with a vision in 1061. This story continues to this day with an annual pilgrimage to North Norfolk. Members not present would be rewarded by looking into this tale.

The Association is indebted to Canon Lipscomb for explaining some of St. George's many features to us in such a short time. Also our gratitude for the nibbles ought to be expressed. To properly describe the quality of the fare would serve only to vex Members of the Association who could not be with us. Anyone who wishes to visit, or revisit, St George's Church may wish to attend one of the regular concerts given there.

Onwards to Preston Minster...

Those of us who politely had seconds, or maybe thirds, when enjoying the refreshments, then waddled along Friargate on our own modest pilgrimage from St. George's to Preston Minster.

We caught up with the rest of our group gathered in front of the Great War Tablet on which are carved in wood the names of the fallen Grammar School boys. As Father Timothy put it, many of the eager young men who went to fight would have had no idea that in reality they would be obliterated after perhaps 20 minutes of sheer horror from the start of battle. The Roll of Honour/Book of Remembrance for the Second World War is displayed in front of the Great War Memorial. We should here mention the Masters who lovingly and expertly produced the tome. Henry (Harry) Ogle MC did the design and illustration on the finest vellum, Norman Hodgson wrote the brief biographies whilst Ron Foreman did the binding, gold tooling and decoration. At his 100th birthday 'party' Ron said "I've been very lucky, it has been a good life." Perhaps he was thinking of those less fortunate who did not return home from the War in 1945. We know from his writings that Henry Ogle had such sentiment for his deliverance from the trenches. "The Fateful Battle Line", Henry's Great War Journals and Sketches, tells us that in a diary entry of July 1916 he describes a scene of carnage as "...beyond tears, beyond immediate feelings". The tears arrived later. Ron once said "Henry often cried when he was working on the School Memorial Book".

Father Timothy cares very much for the church buildings under his wing. He explained to us the recently commissioned (2007) gilded triptych now in place on the high altar. Tradition has it that in c700 AD a small chapel on the site was dedicated to St Theodore a Roman martyr; this later became known as St. Wilfrid's until the Reformation when St. Wilfrid had to go and St John was adopted. These three are depicted on the panels in iconic Orthodox style, brought alive by the vivid colours beautifully painted by the Romanian artists Laurentiu Nechita and Cristinel Paslaru. We were then shown the closed triptych depicting implements of the Passion. High on the East wall the large window depicts the Crucifixion with scenes from the Passion. Below this there is quite a depth of wall down to the Chancel floor. The triptych is in place to bring interest and colour to the high altar and draw the congregation's eye beyond the nave altar, described by Father Timothy as 'Modern Catholic' which is in fact a very charitable turn of phrase given its functional appearance.

There is too much of interest inside the Minster to give depth to our appreciation in a short visit, bearing in mind we had already been looked after at St. George's. Father Timothy managed to introduce us to the Chancel with the low door on the north wall for the exclusive use at one time of the De Hoghton family (Patrons of the Living of the Church for over 200 years) which predates the rebuilding of 1855, the Chapel of Our Lady and St Wilfrid and the Loyals' Chapel with its military colours also dedicated to King Charles I. This seems strange in an Anglican Minster but perhaps reflects a time when everything was not black or white, leave or remain, and serious issues were properly debated. Regrettably if you lost the debate you may also have lost your head, so on balance we have seen some progress down the centuries.

The group was also guided to the Bushell Brass, a truly historic piece miraculously rescued from destruction after being found under the old building in 1855 and now impressively restored. The west wall is graced by the 'Sermon on the Mount' by Hans Feibusch. It is a masterpiece in stark contrast to the 'blue' painting on the right hand rear wall of the main body of the church.

Father Timothy has plans to save the left hand rear wall from a similar fate, having commissioned a painting of St. Paul's Conversion. We are all looking forward to the completion of this wall painting.

Overall everyone agreed it had been a worthwhile, eye-opening experience to visit both the Churches, neither of which will be ignored or left without improvement as long as Father Timothy is with us. Our thanks go to Father Timothy with best wishes for all his future plans.

Dave Sharp (Thornley, 1961-68).

THE ANNUAL DINNER 2017

PGSA's Annual Dinner was held at the usual venue, The Samlesbury Hotel, just to the east of Preston, on the evening of Saturday March 18th, and was attended by 56 Association Members and Guests, coincidentally exactly the same number that had attended the 2016 dinner, that is until an unexpected late arrival last year!

Once again attendees came from far and wide in order to meet up with old School chums. Franklyn Jackson had even made the trek over from Carcassonne in Southern France to be with us. Prior to the evening's formalities commencing, Guests were able to view a display of memorabilia that the Association has accrued/acquired. This year it included several new items including a football shirt worn by the PGSOB Team that won the Lancashire Amateur League Division 2 Title in the 1938-39 season. Also present was a collection of silver medals won by old boy E Hall for middle-distance running in the same years just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. Along with a photo collection of ex-Headmasters and Rolls of Honour listing Old Boys who had fallen during both World Wars, the display provided something to look over whilst enjoying an apéritif from the bar.

The evening's formal proceedings began with the entry of Officials and Guests to the top table, which this year comprised David Bunting (Master of Ceremonies/Toastmaster), Jim Goring (President-Elect) Canon Timothy Lipscomb (Vicar of Preston), Dr David Holmes (Guest Speaker) and David 'Charlie' Billington (Secretary). After the grace by Father Timothy came the normal enjoyment of the three-course meal (of which more later) during which we were invited by David Bunting to join in toasts to the various sporting fraternities, to those subjected to the reigns of various former Headmasters and to the Houses to which we were allocated as pupils - saving the best to last (many thanks David).

There followed a speech by our Guest for the evening, Dr David Holmes, older son of former Master Les Holmes, who some of us remember well. David entertained us with stories of his School days and his further academic studies in Classics at Merton College Oxford, prior to embarking on a long and distinguished administrative career at some of Britain's most prestigious Universities (Warwick, Liverpool and Birmingham) and culminating in his appointment as Registrar at Oxford University.

The response to David's speech came from Association Secretary David Billington, during the course of which he revealed how he came to be better-known by one and all as "Charlie". He came across as a 'Robert the Bruce' type character - if at first etc, - when he told us about how, having initially and wilfully bombed in his 'O' levels, he re-entered School, re-sat his exams and went on from there to claim an Arts Degree with Honours, a Master of Science Degree and several Post-Graduate University Diplomas as well as a professional qualification as a Linguist. He went on to forge a career in the Civil Service and the National Health Service before officially retiring as a Practitioner and taking up his host of current interests and activities.

At the end of the meal and speeches the Members and Guests retired to the bar, where one in particular made the very wise purchase of an Association tie – now only five left! Several more took the opportunity to buy a copy of the first volume of Ian Mather's memoirs entitled "Hot War Cold War, History from a Reporter's Notebooks, 1967-1980". Franklyn Jackson also had copies available of two of his books, "Loopholes" and "Bound by Chains and Sashes".

Back to the subject of the meal itself. There were one or two complaints, both on the night and on the following day, about the quality of the food served to some of the diners. Concerns were also raised about the bar service on the night. These and other matters have subsequently been raised with the Hotel management, which has been made aware that the Association will be reviewing its options for the 2018 Dinner. This notwithstanding, it was another successful evening and another opportunity to mix in convivial company, as well as to look forward with eager anticipation to next year's event.

Brian Rigby (Miller, 1956-61).

THE PGSA MEMORIAL AT LOCHNAGAR CRATER

Thanks entirely to the unstinting efforts of Trevor Sergeant there have been two PGSA 'tours' to the World War One Battlefields. The high point of the first one in 2012 was undoubtedly the laying of an Association wreath during the Last Post at the Menin Gate in Ypres. This was a humbling and emotional experience, and it led us to think that it would be most appropriate to leave a more permanent memorial to PGS Old Boys somewhere in Northern France. The seed sown, the opportunity presented itself during our visit to the Somme Battlefield last year (see NH 7). The Lochnagar Crater is the result of a huge underground explosion that took place on 1st July 1916, as a prelude to the infantry 'going over the top'. It was designed to undermine the German field fortification known as "Swabian Height", in the front line just south of La Boisselle. The mine had been dug by the Tunnelling Companies of the Royal Engineers and had been packed with 60,000lbs of ammonal in two charges 60' apart. It was one of 19 set to go off simultaneously beneath the German lines to signal the beginning of the Battle of Albert. In the event, whilst the explosion was devastating in every possible way, it by and large failed in the strategic sense – the Germans being much better prepared than had been believed. There were more than 11,000 British casualties in the follow-up action, the hardest hit Division being the 34th (III Corps) with 6,380 lost in the attack on the crater. These days that same crater, purchased by Richard Dunning in 1978 and lovingly cared-for since, is one of the most visited sites on the Western front, attracting over 200,000 people a year. Ceremonies are held on 1st July and Armistice Day, and commemorative plaques can be commissioned from the Friends of Lochnagar and affixed by them to the wooden walkway around it. Dedications, strictly-speaking, should only be made to individuals, but with a bit of lateral thinking and a very small payment from the Alick Hadwen legacy we arranged for a plaque with the following inscription:

13064 Pte Clive Whittle
Loyal N Lancs Regt (Preston Pals)
Bazentin-le-Petit 23 July 1916
"One of 59 Preston GS Old Boys"
Preston Grammar School Assn

It will be fitted some time this month (May) and we will be sent a photo and the location reference.

SO WHO WAS CLIVE WHITTLE?

Of the thirteen PGS Old Boys who joined the 'D' Company of the 7th Battalion, the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, the "Preston Pals", five did not return. Of these, Clive Whittle was the only one to lose his life on the Somme, not on the first day, but in the early hours of the morning of 23rd July, at Bazentin-le-Petit, just a short distance to the north-east of the village of Albert.

Clive William Cranshaw Whittle, one of three children including twin sisters, was born in 1893, and brought up in Ashton-on-Ribble, attending St Andrew's School and in 1906, Preston Grammar School. His father John was originally an oil and tallow manufacturer, becoming an auctioneer and subsequently founding the Preston Argus newspaper, which was apparently quite successful. He later wrote for the Preston Herald and his burgeoning career allowed the family to employ a servant and live in a substantial property in Powis Road.

Clive left PGS in December 1910 and commenced as a clerk in his father's auctioneer's business. He also had an interest in the theatre and set out as a performer, appearing at the Theatre Royal as a duettist and humourist alongside his friend Harold Fazackerley. This was right at the outbreak of war,

and the pals, now signed up as 'Pals', featured in the Preston Guardian of 26th September 1914. Their act had been greeted as "sensational" and it was hoped that they would soon be returning from the War to perform again in Preston. Of course, the War would be over by Christmas.

Clive, still a clerk when he signed up, obviously had to put his theatrical career on hold. During training at Tidworth he was confined to Barracks on a couple of occasions for relatively minor discretions, but on 17th July 1915 he embarked with the 7th Battalion at Folkestone for Boulogne, spending more than a year in France before having the opportunity to encounter any real action. On 20th July 1916 he found himself at Bazentin-le-Petit, his Battalion having just marched from Henencourt Wood after a period of 'rest' at Albert. Here they held an extended line of over 1000 yards, and on that first night actually managed to shoot down a German plane with a Lewis Gun! After three very uncomfortable days in the trench, where the Battalion had no facilities whatsoever and the men were being constantly machine-gunned, shelled and sniped at, in the early hours of the morning of 23rd July they were ordered to attack the switch line with the intention of taking High Wood. There had been previous attempts by other Divisions, and now it was the turn of the 19th (including the 7th Loyals) and the 1st, the irony being that High Wood had already been taken and lost just days before. As elsewhere, and on other occasions, the capture had (inexplicably) not been consolidated.

Word got back to Clive's family that he had been killed in the action and an article appeared in the local paper. However, at this stage there were precious few details and another month was to pass before one of Clive's surviving 'Pals' pals wrote a letter to his father John, who in turn published it in the Preston Herald on 26th August. The circumstances of the attack were explained in quite some detail. There had been the usual high level of preceding activity on both sides around High Wood, and at about 1am two companies of reinforcements had arrived over the top from the village. Ten minutes later the word came down, "B and D Companies prepare to mount the parapet." On jumping off the men were in high spirits, but when they reached a ridge to the right (which led up to High Wood) they were met by a strong enfilade fire which "mowed us down in rows like corn". Before they could get any footing all the Officers were gone, very few men were left, and those that were, following two failed rushes to get into a trench on the right, were forced to withdraw in order to regain their own trench. It was recorded in NH6 that the Cameron Highlanders rather pragmatically observed that by 02.30h the advance had been stopped by machine gun fire in front of Munster Alley.

Dawn was breaking as the correspondent got back to the British trench, and there was still no respite for the few who had survived as they were ordered to "stand to" in case a counter-attack had to be repelled. They were relieved later that day and went back to a reserve trench behind the village. As the wounded were pulled in or crawled in there was no sign of Clive Whittle. The correspondent had actually been separated from him in the trench before the attack, so he had no way of knowing where he was. However, a badly-wounded Sergeant Rawcliffe (he was to die a few days later) crawled in and said that he had seen Clive near the top of the ridge. He had been hit through the body and must have died instantly. Some days later another Sergeant, from 'A' Company, was able to confirm that Clive had been slightly behind him when he saw him fall, and went to him, but he was already dead. The correspondent, in regretting that he had had to accept the word of others, then paid a glowing tribute to Clive, but added rather poignantly "But a lot of us will be with him before long, and you really get that you don't mind dying if they would get it over quickly."

Clive was awarded the 1915 Star and the British War and Victory Medals. His name appears on a Special Memorial (no 13) in Caterpillar Valley Cemetery, Longueval, amongst 32 who are known to have been buried there. He was one of 223 7th Battalion men to have lost their lives that morning, but at least death for him appeared to have been mercifully quick and there was obvious closure.

Of course the plaque at Lochnagar Crater is not just about him, it is also about the 58 other Old Boys (not all the names are on the Tablet), but I do hope you agree that he is a worthy representative. His story is without doubt a good reason to ask all these years later, "WHY?", and he is also a direct link between the Association and the Preston War Memorial Trust. If/when you come across the plaque at Lochnagar Crater you will hopefully be in a position to match the person to the name.

Charlie Billington.