

Tue, 2 Nov 2021

Fellow Old Retfordians.

Here is a belated report from the very enjoyable Zoom Meeting held recently.

Present were:

Our host David Waterfield 1956-62  
President Ged Moss 1977-84  
Treasurer Edward Otter 1953-58  
Secretary Peter Holdsworth 1955-62  
John Brooke 1955-62  
Jonty Connor 1956-62  
John Dornie 1955-62  
Peter Howells 1961-66  
Geoff Hughes 1960-65  
Malcolm Lynn 1960-67  
*Peter Skelton 1964-72*  
Phil Towler 1955-61  
Chris Trend 1970-77

These Zoom meetings are primarily social events so there is very little business discussed. However, the following matters were raised and social interactions are added at the end.

President Ged was to re-approach Robin Williams with a view being the Liason Officer for Bassetlaw Museum.

Secretary Peter mentioned that we three officers could really do with deputies. I wondered whether Geoff Hughes might fancy being Assistant Secretary, however he declined on the basis that he considered that the job required peers within the group. I also wondered whether Peter Howells, a retired bank manager, might like to be Assistant Treasurer, however as a Canadian resident he felt that there would be too many obstacles to overcome. However, he has since agreed to be Assistant Secretary, NOT with a view to becoming Secretary upon my retirement, but to stand in for me in my absence.

Ged then mooted the idea of a joint reunion; joint being between the official ORA2021 Reunion and his 1977-84 cohort. To that end he offered to send out a questionnaire to establish preferences. The options are Spring/Autumn, lunchtime/evening and midweek/weekend with guidance that you can select all 6 options if they suit you. You should all have had that document by now, and hopefully lots of you will have responded.

It was agreed that, whatever preferences emerged, all suggested venues would have accommodation on site.

Discussion suggested that other important issues were that weekends tend to have wedding bookings which might cause problems securing a function room and bedrooms. Also weekend accommodation rates were likely to be higher than midweek. It is worth

mentioning that there is already a 1977-entry Reunion scheduled for Friday 13th May, as published on the Old Retfordians website. This group traditionally meets at weekends.

Historically, the original 1950s Reunion has always been midweek since its inception around 2000, usually Wednesday. Originally it was an evening do, but more recently has become a lunchtime event. At the last Reunion in September it was decided that, in order to simplify the Secretary's job, it should be adopted as an official ORA2021 event, but still open to all ex-pupils as previously, rather than confining it to paid-up Life Members.

It was mentioned that both the West Retford Hotel and Ye Olde Bell Hotel had not made a room charge. Also Ye Olde Bell had been more than reasonable in refunding both function room and bedroom deposits, both of which were deemed to be non-refundable at the time of payment.

There followed at least an hour of discussion, ranging from Scottish anecdotes, underage drinking, MacFerran, Sir Stuart Goodwin, holiday jobs including farming, Bachelors factory and the Christmas post. I'm adding all of that below for those who're interested. For those who are not, I can tell you that the meeting finally closed after 1hr 38 minutes.

Regards,

Peter,  
Secretary ORA2021

---

### Discussions

The first string of anecdotes related to the Scottish accent. This was started by **Phil Towler** who moved to Fife, close to Glamys Castle, soon after university. He explained that his strong accent is related to his situation in Scotland where it's better to sound more like the locals. **David Waterfield** related an occasion where he actually found the original call centre in India easier to understand than the one in Glasgow where he was transferred, after apologising for not being able to understand! Geoff Hughes remembered visiting Hamden Park to watch England v Scotland in 1967 and adopting a Scottish accent because he was so intimidated by being the only Englishman around.

Discussion then moved onto Retford pubs, non of which were familiar to me. **Peter Skelton** remembered that there were originally 62 in the borough and there was a competition to drink a pint in every one before the age of 18. At this point Ged suggested a quiz based around Retford pubs and Chris Trend was volunteered to organise it. He does appear to have an in depth knowledge and be the right person for the job.

It was suggested that the Duke of Newcastle, whose family seat is Welbeck Abbey, and after whom lots of local pubs were named, was actually the Duke of Newcastle under Lyme! However, I cannot find any internet corroboration of that claim. It appears that he is indeed

the Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne unless someone can share information from the internet to the contrary.

The discussion moved on to the bun van, the tuck shop, school dinners, the Tin Tab and the Annex including the Rev. McFerran, always a popular subject. **John Brooke** repeated a story previously told at the Summer Zoom and reported in July. Apparently, one year, McFerran was unavailable to set our Geography exam paper, so it fell to John's father Hedley, the alternative Geography teacher, to set the exam. On examining John's textbook, he was staggered to discover that the only entry was relating to the tilt of the Earth's axis!! Not a lot of scope for setting 9 questions so John believes that his father must have set the most creative geography paper ever devised.

**John Dornie** related a tale of being sent to Mac's house to pick up some papers. Mrs McFerran filled John's pocket with sweets, but Mac relieved him of half of them upon his return to the classroom. John Brooke then recounted a rumour that Mac or his wife used to throw exam papers down the stairs and the marks were determined by which steps they landed on! It could even be true.

The discussion moved on to O-levels and other teachers including Doug Grounds, Alan Taylor, Jack Penrose, Hedley Brooke, Harry Brammer and Tash. On to the Squash Courts, a privilege for a grammar school, due to a donation from Sir Stuart Goodwin, a distinguished Old Boy. He was a noted steel industrialist and philanthropist who also funded a new pavilion and financed Outward Bound grants.

The discussion moved on to holiday jobs, initially spuds, both planting and picking. John Brooke had an uncle with a farm at Laxton where John worked during school holidays. John recalled being somewhat surprised, possibly intimidated, by the rather 'uncouth' women drafted in from Ollerton during the spud bashing season. He particularly remembered a rather graphic potato sculpture done by one of the women; it was of ladies private parts which he described as being 'deeply fascinating'! He also went on to recall potato picking for Bo Beasley on his small-holding, together with his brother. They earned enough to buy a large box of fireworks for the usual domestic bonfire celebrations. Unfortunately, the box was left open and a ball of fire from a Roman Candle landed in the box! Possibly the origin of the term 'fireworks' for explosive events of all unrelated types.

Other holiday jobs discussed were Bachelors Surprise Peas which most of the Worksop contingent had worked at. John Dornie recalled the destinations of the different grades of peas. Grade 1 were destined to be Surprise Peas, Grade 2 went to Woolworths, Grade 3 to restaurants and Grade 4 to the kitchens at Worksop College! He also remembered that a factory girl came to the lab asking for phenolphthalein because she had heard it as a good laxative. The chemist in the lab realised that, if taken, it could result in her going to hospital, so instead he gave her green food dye. Apparently she didn't come back!

I recalled leaning over the balcony of the Quality Control lab to watch the factory girls dropping the flaps on their boiler suits en route to the ladies toilets, to give us lads an eyeful. I particularly remember a stacker truck driver called Mary who took me behind a hedge on our way home from 'afters' to have her wicked way with me! I don't know about

cougar, the modern term for an older woman, but my impression was that she was a bit of a tiger! I went back to University before I could return the favour.

**John Dornie**, who has a vivid memory for those long gone times, recalled bonuses of one shilling/hour for working nights, which he did regularly. I only did it for one week and was probably lucky not to get the sack. Having turned on the deep fat frying vat in the canteen kitchen, we proceeded to forget about it. When the kitchen staff arrived for the day shift, blue smoke was billowing out of the door; luckily the fat had not actually caught fire. I don't actually remember whose idea it was to turn it on, but somehow we got away with it.

**Peter Howells** remembered getting his sex education at Skinner & Johnson's factory in Ranskill where the factory girls were of a similar uncouth nature to John's potato carvers!

On to the Christmas post which lots of us had done. **John Brooke** recalled going out on the parcel delivery van which, apparently, had to be parked somewhere discrete to waste time because, otherwise the job was done too quickly.

Similarly, **Geoff Hughes** had a job timing 4 dustbin lorry routes, because it was difficult to put accurate times on country routes, which may have necessitated an extra lorry. Armed with a small handheld clicker he was treated with severe distrust until he explained the situation. He then learned that the men worked efficiently for an hour before going to the pub for 2 hours. They then did 50 more bins followed by a stop at the tip where they played cards until it was time to knock off!! One of the as an ex-member of an armed gang in London. He was the only one who got caught Accurate timing was obviously not possible. Whether or not the council bought an extra lorry wasn't mentioned.

**Jonty** said that Parkinson's 1st Law states that work expands to fill the time available, which seems to fit these scenarios admirably.

Treasurer Edward thanked the group for a new experience. **Peter Howells** that sent his subs by Western Union, the only way he could find to send money to the UK. Edward had then discovered that the only Western Union outlet in Wisbech was in a pawn shop! He felt that it didn't do anything for the reputation of a retired bank manager to be seen using a pawn shop in the town where he had worked. Overall he was quite happy not to have been seen!

Apart from a few alternative suggestions as to how Peter might have sent his money, that was the last item discussed.

I'm sorry that it's taken me so long to produce this report, and also that it's so long winded. Hopefully, if you're still here, you've enjoyed it as much as we enjoyed to Zoom.

Cheers, Peter