

President's Welcome Saturday August 17th 2024

It's our 26th Reunion, and as always great to meet up again. Thanks to you all - the old boy's, partners, families, teachers, House Mothers and friends... you all make this a success.

How today works...

Quite a few of you have suggested a visit to the Golden Oak and walk through the Woods down to the river, so if you would like to join in, then let me know and we will leave to go down to Nursery lane around 2.30 – Parking on Nursery Lane near Woodlands.

Alternatively, you can - stay at the Roebuck Inn and have a chat, drink and look through the photos! If there are any photos you would like, give Terry your name and address and he will send you a copy in the post free of charge. Please don't take them out of the Albums, as they are all we have. Peter has been busy adding some others photos that were given to him by Ursel.

Eating this evening

There is a change to our eating arrangements this evening. By popular request, we shall eat here (Roebuck Inn) together in the dining room at 6pm. I hope everyone is happy with this? As always its a pleasure to welcome Sonja, and Doris, Karin and Deitmar. One of our old housemothers will not be joining us sadly -Ursel passed this June – she has been a stalwart of our 2 Reunions over the years and will be sadly missed.

She often stayed with Mick and Anne Whyton. Ursel was a great communicator and when I did not get a response from the email with the Reunion details and no reply to my What's App, I had that dreaded feeling that something was wrong - As it happened, Peter went out to Germany a few weeks back to stay with Ken and Beate – for those who remember, Beate Stockbauer as she was known when at Woodlands was a Housemother and remained in regular contact with Ursel.

They were able to confirm that Ursel had passed. – very sad! At this point in proceedings, I think it is relevant to say that over the past year, we have had two amazing people undertaking searches that have proved highly successful. Firstly, can I introduce June Jeffreys, June is the daughter of 'Old Boy' Ronald Jeffreys who I would also like to welcome. We were able to meet up when I was down in London doing a search for Tommy Phipp -to cut a long story short, I found Tommy, but his brother John sadly passed away 2 years ago.

Those of you who were at woodlands and knew them both, will know how popular they were. Ken and Peter Waterman were close to Tom and John, as they were in the same Group. Getting here for Tommy is difficult as he doesn't drive and lives in Islington. He sends his best wishes to all the Old Boys. Going back to June Jeffreys, -she has been a god-send and had found dozens more old boys -but and there is always a but.... Many of those found had passed away, but not all, so we hope some of the newly found ones will join us. A huge thank you to June- we could not have done it without you and Terry who is fastidious in getting all the D of B, Deaths and Marriages and follows all the Genealogy, making sure we do not end up on the wrong road. Can we have A ROUND OF APPLAUSE for their perseverance. Wolfram Schnaidt sends his best wishes.

Harry Fannin phoned me on Tuesday to say he is writing up his memories of Woodlands for us – and with the help of my 'list of Groups', of the 'Old Boys' and the Housemothers, we are getting closer to achieving correct lists of boys in their respective House-Mother's

Groups. Harry sends his best wishes to us all for today. Do take his lead and write up your memories at Woodlands & Rocks House and send them to us to put in the Memories book. Terry nearly located Leslie Aldridge in Queensland Australia.

His real name was McDonald - little wonder we have such difficulty locating the boys.- never mind we will try again soon. I feel the vibes of a TV sitcom heading our way – Terry and June have recently found :- Alan Taylor, Andrew Gregory, John Lovelidge, Anthony Earnest Gillet, John Hughes, Leon Kennedy, Ranjit Nandi, Constantine Douglas, John Phipp, David French (Mee) and Russell Tutthill, who sadly passed away just a week after we met last year. We are in contact with his partner Alan – They both met shortly after leaving Woodlands, and had remained together ever since.

Although these boys have sadly passed, Tommy Phipp and Martin Walkerdine are still very much with us and with June and Terry's help, we will find more very soon. Andrew Gregory's brother Robert Gregory was hoping to join us today, but work commitments got in the way, so hopefully he will be with us next year. The photo albums are here – so do take a look. If you want a copy of any, then let me know and we will post them on. The large Portfolio Albums are about to be updated, which will involve a lot of work and Patience - Terry is kindly going to undertake this massive job - Thanks Terry!

Over the past 26 years, our friendships have grown and we look forward to that continued bond, but we all understand that sometimes it is not possible to come along each year, but do remember if you move, or change your phone number and email address etc ...then do let us know please.

We are asking everyone to give us another contact for family or friend, so if someone forgets, then we can still get in contact and get a new number. So don't leave today if we do not have another contact for you. I will get around to each of you and take the extra contact details down today. Our Web Site News – If you have been on the Woodlands Web Site recently, you will have noticed that the Photo Gallery has been updated into a new format that is easy to look through. We still need to put some of the names to the photos. Memories of the old boys and your time at Woodlands and Rock's House- and I know each year I ask if you can jot down memories of the old Boys you remember in your Group and our times and experiences, both good and bad, but it helps to keep memories fresh. - So you can imagine how pleased I was to hear Harry Fannin was writing his memories down. John Childs went to great trouble to put his memories of Mervyn Hickson together, which I forwarded on to Mervyn's daughter Sue. Sue and her husband Adam, were to have joined us on Saturday with some friends but owing to a typo (my typing) I gave them the wrong date, My apologies!! But I hope we shall be able to welcome them next August.

Mervyn was at Woodlands for over 8 years, which meant most of the boys remember him. In John's words :- 'Mervyn was an easy going cheerful character who was confident and intelligent and also liked a laugh. He had the ability to settle in with a new crowd of people he had just met very quickly such as when he had started at the chicken factory. Within the hour you would of thought he had been there years, because it was his easy going manner. People just took to him straight away. I expect some of you here today will have memories of Mervyn, so do share these with Sue and Adam today.

Memories as you can see, are great for us old boys, but are also a great source of comfort to family members, so if I could ask you could find a moment sometime in your busy lives to jot down memories of those boys in your Group at Woodlands and Rock's House, then we can add them to a 'Memories' folder. It doesn't have to be a hefty tome, but some of the memories you have of your mates during your time at Woodlands. Try starting with your

House Mother's Group. Everyone of us had that memorable moment of someone or an event during to time they were at school. You can always speak to those you are writing about to clarify or confirm events. I have chatted with John Vince over the years It was amazing what we both remembered of shared events when we were at school.

The Reunion for 2025 will be on a Saturday in August- details in the New Year. At the Roebuck Inn, Wych Cross, Nr Nutley, RH18 5JL Do Join us if you can – we are not short of anecdotes or good humour.

Best wishes

Peter, Terry and John.