

Subject:

Forty years on.... an Old Standian reminisces...

Date:

Thu, 13 Jan 2000 14:07:37 EST

From:

WRichman@aol.com

To:

martynarnold@newnet.co.uk

Forty years on
When afar and asunder
Parted are those who are singing today
When you look back and forgetfully wonder
What you were like in your work and your play...

Follow Up, etc....

'til the field ring again and again
with the tramp of the twenty-two men.....FANTASTIC!

Hello Martyn... (whoever you are)

Thanks for your web-site devoted to the Old School. I absolutely loved reading the recollections of former "inmates". For one who had such a fucking nightmare of a time there, I am absolutely amazed that I can look back with such fondness. I still live in Lancashire, up in the Pendle area, but I still maintain strong contacts, business and social in the Manchester area. Am I too late for the Old Standians final bash? It would give me enormous pleasure to hear from you, even if I don't know who you are!

I'm going to give you a bit a material for the site. As you can tell by now it contains a bit a strong language, but I would ask that you keep it in and you do not censor it, because we are all grown men now, and the industrial language is merely an extension of the passionate feelings I have about those days - if I was talking to you, it is exactly how it would come out. I tell the stories in what I consider to be a humourous fashion, but make no mistake, beneath the veneer of jokes and one-liners lies a pretty miserable existence. Let's just say that I laugh a lot more these days.

My name is Warren Richman, and I was born in Manchester in 1955 and raised locally. In 1961 our family moved to Prestwich, and I attended King David Infants and Junior Schools in Crumpsall, Manchester. I breezed through the 11plus exam, (well anyone would so long as their IQ was higher than your shoe size) but what I didn't know, was what sort of culture shock was waiting round the corner for me when I proudly emulated my elder sister by "Going Up" to Stand. Holy hell, I soon found out. From the cosy environs of being a big fish (prefect, respected sports player etc) I soon discovered that I was very much the small fish.

I started Stand in 1966, shortly after England won the World Cup, and I encountered things I had hitherto did not know existed. Things like Bury FC supporters, and "Lanksher" accents. I didn't know it at the time, but I suppose I must have sounded like a proper Manc.

The Headmaster throughout that period being Doc Barnes, with Les Lumley as deputy until his retirement, and subsequent replacement by Mr Hudson.

My first form master was "Kerry" Holt, who you probably wouldn't know about because I seem to recall him leaving to go to Salford GS at the end of my first year. All I can remember about him are the beer fumes on his breath each morning as you went near him. I also remember a complete psychotic called TJ Longstaffe, and he taught Music, Maths and practised Scaring The Shit Out Of Young Boys (proficiency in ascending order). Better known as Wimpy, after the burger-chomping character from Popeye, by the time I met him, he had lost the vast bulk of his weight (available for posterity on the

massive school photos dotted around the Hall). He left at Xmas 1966 (what effect must I have had on these poor teachers) to go to QEGS Blackburn, where he allegedly.....well never mind! He had a particularly mean and painful method of punishment. He would hit the offender across his finger nails - with the edge of a fucking ruler! If a teacher tried that little party piece today, he would be banged up before you could say "Child Abuse". Which brings me nicely round to his successor in the music class, the infamous "Benjy" Brittan. It is no secret that this lowlife finished up doing a stretch courtesy of Her Majesty, not so much because he liked fredding little boys, more like because he got caught!

PE master, the infamous Haggis, I could write a whole book about this fellow, and I might just do that. Do you remember having to have your name embroidered on the outside of your black gym shorts? This was a cunning device designed to save Haggis the trouble of having to remember your name before you had seven shades knocked out of you by him. Some of the lads seemed to have had theirs done either mechanically or perhaps their sisters were in the England Embroidery Team (U-16 XI). You should have seen the state of mine. My mum was in hospital at the time, so I threw myself upon the generous spirit of my sister, who clearly under duress produced a piece of embroidery which somehow managed to express the reluctance of the artist. You would have been forgiven for thinking that the shorts had been embroidered by a blind quadriplegic. My sister, incidentally hated me from the moment I was born - I think she really wanted a little sister, and failing that a dolls house instead. Anyway, after the first gym session, Haggis still hadn't gone through the formalities of actually introducing himself to this bewildered group of sprogs known collectively as Form 1C, so he asked if anyone knew who he was. "Er, yes sir", piped up one Spud Fletcher. "It's Mr Haggis isn't it". If I had had the words to describe Hargreaves' s face at that point, I would have described it as a picture. I thought the twat was going to explode! I'm sure you can imagine. My lasting recollection of Haggis is that he seemed such an extraordinarily fit and strong man for his age. I just could not work out how he managed to inflict such colossal damage to young boys' buttocks with Percy the gym shoe, using such a minimal amount of effort. I mean, where was the fucking backlift? Answer, there wasn't any, it was all in the wrist action. Is the old bastard still around, or has he gone to meet his maker ? I hated the bastard then, and I probably still hate him now - but I can't find it within me to wish him dead. Can you believe it, but once, when my sports kit got lost/mislaid/nicked, in the middle of winter, he made me complete the entire cross country course wearing a just a fucking pair of swimming trunks! The only warmth I got that freezing Monday afternoon was from the tears streaming down my face. How the hell did they get away with it? If someone put my boy through that sort of humiliation, they would be eating their meals through a fucking straw! I'm sure you feel the same way, but I'll tell you how they got away with it. If I had told my dad that Mr Hargreaves made me spend the gym class picking up empty crisp packets in the school yard because my pumps were off-white, my dad would have said, "Well that'll teach you to keep your kit clean". Another era, I suppose. It was just the norm then.

But was there ever a more sadistic teacher than RW "Hairy" Hynes? The only time that bastard ever looked uncomfortable was when he was instructing the facts of life to thirty sniggering thirteen year olds who had just seen a grainy black and white film of rabbits shagging each other.

In my early years at Stand, my saving grace was that I could play a decent game of chess, even at the age of eleven. (It probably meant that I knew that P-K4 was a better opening move than P-QR4). I was no Nigel Short, but I beat the best player in the school during my first lunchtime session, and got a draw against another school team player the next day. These guys were fucking A-level students for God's sake, and one was even in year eight, biding his time before he went up to Oxford, so you can imagine the stir this made. They must have thought they had a child prodigy in their midst. I was swiftly drafted onto the school chess team, had a metal badge pinned to my then still pristine, but shortly to become very tatty school blazer. Admittedly, I never reached those dizzy heights again, but I did get the undeniable advantage of guzzling plenty of tea and scones at inter-school Chess matches, whilst my contemporaries were either getting piss-wet through on cross country runs or having abuse screamed at them at choir practise. Not of course that the latter could ever have been an option for a Jewish boy, thank God!

Ok, I'll come clean. But how many other OBs will put their hands up and admit that they too were in love with Mrs Sandra Foster. Looking back, she probably wore too much make up, and was no real oil painting but at the time she represented 50% of the female staff, the other 50%, a Miss Tiffin later to become Mrs Fletcher after marrying of the English teachers looked like Billie Jean King. And what the hell, she was a WOMAN! I saw one lad, who shall remain nameless, oh all right then, the aptly named Paul Cox, actually get his knob out for a hand shandy during one of her, fittingly French, lessons.

Paul, I think became a music writer on the Bury Times, so looking back at that incident, I suppose it is not altogether surprising. No offence, Paul.

However in the beauty stakes, the lovely Sandra was to be superseded by a Gallic blonde stick insect called Mlle Boulanger. She was so lovely and slender that she must have had to run around in the shower to get wet (what a thought). Sadly I never had the pleasure. I wasn't even in her class. But she was a very pretty lady, and I am prepared to bet that Paul would not have been the only one performing a be-bop solo on the old spunk trumpet.

Is it a fair observation to say that the collection of sadists who masqueraded as teachers back in those days would not last five minutes had they operated in such a manner in today's molly coddled institutions they call schools. I shudder at the thought of my own little boy, Joshua who is just five, having to endure what is more akin to something from Tom Browns Schooldays. I think they would have called it character building.

To be fair however, some of the teachers were quite personable. Some were even quite kind, and some were downright soft! Anyone remember Mr Hill, the maths teacher, known as Fat Fred. He always wore a black gown over his Harris tweed sports jacket. His catch-phrase was "you pays your money and you takes your choice". By the way, what was the purpose of wearing a gown, if it wasn't to intimidate the pupils?

There was a biology teacher called Holden and he was a good sort. He must have made a few quid somewhere else, because he had two cars, an NSU Prinz and a limo of some sort, perhaps a Princess-like wedding car. The NSU was a East German little number, and had a Wankel Rotary engine (no jokes here please) and it went through rotor tips (expensive fix, even then) like other cars needed oil filters. Mr Holden therefore used to ferry us to away chess matches in his limo, and a more lunatic driver, I have never met. Put it this way, have you ever seen a St Christopher wear a blindfold before?

What about Mr Hunter, the History teacher. I thought that the nickname of Tab referred to his missing fingers on his right hand. It was years later when I discovered that it was after some nondescript actor or pop singer. A very methodical man whose entire life was organised around his scribbling diary and who spoke in the crispest of Oxonian tones, the man transformed himself into a brute whenever a gym shoe was put in his hand. His modus operandi was to stand at 90 degrees to the target arse, and bring the slipper down from a great height in a great sweeping movement. The complete antithesis to Haggis's method of economy of movement you might say.

Cock of our year, and everyone else's I would have thought was a lad called Bob Leigh. He arrived in the middle of our first year, transferred from another school, and at twelve years of age he looked about seventeen. He was a man in a class of boys, and he soon set about the task of proving it casting aside anybody foolhardy enough to challenge this unwritten authority. He was like one of the Piranha brothers. By the time he left school, he had been responsible for more scar tissue than the surgeons at Harefield Hospital. I certainly made it my business to either get on the right side of him, or keep the fuck out of his way. I think I managed to achieve the former, because he used to regale me with stories of the sexual acts he would perform with his girlfriend, just five years his senior. Bob, do you still bite the heads off whippets or whatever it was that you did for entertainment outside school hours? Bless him, he's probably a hairdresser now. Not.

Worst prefect â€” it has got to be that twat Metcalfe. He once gave me four sides because I looked at him. Even then, it still wasn't good enough for this power-crazed despot. He made me run round the tree. The tree, remember that? It was always debatable which was the shorter distance, round the tree at the bottom of the field, or once round Mr Toseland (Toady, or Uncle Fester to his legion of admirers). Where are you now, you evil little man, I sure as hell hope you've had your comeuppance by now. You're probably running a team of mercenaries in darkest Africa.

May I acknowledge Harris Frazer, a former class mate to whom I owe thanks for advising me of the web site and sending me on this trip down memory lane. I see Harris occasionally down at Old Trafford for the football. Last time I saw him was outside the Nou Camp Stadium in Barcelona before the European Cup Final in May 99. Also can I say hi to Gez Diamond, Tony Simmons who to this day I still think of as being called Harold, and if you're out there somewhere, possibly in Australia, Stephen

Selwyn. At the risk of sounding like a Radio 1 listener making a dedication - hi to anyone else who knows me. All those guys, we never fell out, but we never tried hard enough to stay in touch.

If you want more anecdotes and dreamy memories, you only have to ask - trust me, I've got absolutely shitloads of them! Just mention Rick McVitie, who used to hit me around the head with my geography work book. . We met up again a few years later and we wiped the slate clean and shook hands. His argument - you must have deserved it. Then a couple of years later I read that he died, a tragic victim of meningitis. He was only thirty five, and I genuinely grieved for him.

Good luck with web-site, I hope you get lots of contributions.

Please reply, preferably with your comments, but failing that, an acknowledgement will suffice.

Warren