



Old Leicestrian Newsletter



Tim Cawston with Margaret Thatcher

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Trinity

2006

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From The Chair

KATHARINE STAUNTON

A funny thing happened the other week. Within half an hour of turning up at LGS for my first OL Committee meeting in five years, I had been elected Chair. As I drove home afterwards in a state of mild bemusement, I wondered exactly how that had happened.

Let's set to one side for the moment the fact that I was one of only four OL's at the meeting. Any Maths teacher that taught me will tell you that numbers were never my strong point, but I believe I'm right in saying that the chances of leaving without being elected Chair, Secretary or Treasurer were rather slim. There are, however, nobler reasons why I decided to take on this role.

I joined Leicester Grammar School in September 1984. To a worried yet earnest Prep-former, it seemed enormous and quite intimidating. Yet it was the place that nurtured my often-underachieving self for eight years and prepared me for the big wide world.

I have many memories of my time at Leicester Grammar. Of course I remember the work; French translations, Latin lessons in the First Year, Sylvia Plath at the impressionable age of 17. The great teachers I had were at least partly responsible for the fact that I'm a teacher now.

Then there's the other stuff: grey school uniforms, school photographs that could fit the entire school into one picture, Sports Day at Saffron Lane, school discos, fire practices, hockey matches, record cards, school plays and House Evenings, Cathedral Services, the Leavers' Yearbook we put together in 1992.....

Leicester Grammar gave me so much and I wanted to put something back. That's why I became an OL and why I joined the OL Committee in the first place.

The OL's are not just about helping former pupils reminisce about their time at Leicester Grammar, though there's ample opportunity for that. The Leicester and London Meets continue to be well supported

with another planned in Leicester on 12th May. It's also incredible how many OLs come back each year for the Christmas Carol Service, though it might be the promise of wine and mince pies! And of course, there's the 25th Anniversary Ball.

The other thing that the OLs are committed to is supporting former pupils in any way we can. Many have received travel grants - the Committee are quite generous, so if you'd like to apply for one, then do write. If you want a free plug for your business, send in your advertisements to the newsletter. I'm looking for a job at the moment, so I might advertise myself!

Of course, we wouldn't have achieved the things we have thus far without the outgoing Chair, Jon Langley. The Committee and I would like to thank him for all his hard work.

My vision for the future of the OL's? That brings us back to that meeting, the one with four OL's. While we are a dedicated and enthusiastic bunch brimming with potential and ideas for the future of the organisation, the most obvious step forward seems to me to be members. We would welcome any former pupil onto the Committee. It's not as scary or time-consuming as you might fear, and it's your chance to encourage former pupils to stay in touch with each other, and to continue to support the school that helped them get where they are now. We would love to have representatives of each year at Leicester Grammar. In this way, we can be sure we are reaching the maximum numbers of OLs and putting on events that everyone will enjoy. If you're interested in joining the Committee or just finding out more, then do contact us.

2006 is an exciting year for Leicester Grammar School as it celebrates its 25th Anniversary. The 25th Anniversary Concert in March was a fantastic evening and the Ball promises to be even better.

Why not make this year the year you give something back?

Sermon preached by Canon D.W. Gundry

at the Inaugural Service of Dedication of Leicester Grammar School
on Saturday 10th October 1981

At a time of widespread pessimism what a joyful thing it is to be optimistic for a change. Here we are celebrating a very special event, the beginning of Leicester Grammar School, in which all of us are playing our part - patrons, trustees, teachers, parents, friends and, most important of all, pupils.

I am taking as our text from Holy Scripture some words which may at first seem strange at the start of the school, but which will become clear as you think about them. They come from the book Ecclesiastes, where in the thirteenth verse of chapter twelve the wise old preacher says, 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.'

It is always good when you begin something significant to ask what is its end, its purpose, its goal. The first step and the last in any enterprise are inextricably bound up together.

in my beginning is my end

and

In my end is my beginning.

As we begin the history of this school we must cherish deep in our hearts its progress towards the ideal.

Most of you have probably never heard of Thomas Gaisford, though your Headmaster will certainly be acquainted with his reputation as a great classical scholar. Gaisford became Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford 170 years ago and was later appointed Dean of Christ Church. He must have had a delicious, donnish sense of humour, because it is said that he began a sermon in the Cathedral at Oxford with these words:

The advantages of a classical education are twofold - it enables us to look down with contempt on those who have not shared its advantages, and also fits us for places of emolument not only in this world but in that which is to come.

Today, though the classics have their place in this school, education here also rightly embraces the study of our present incomplete, inexperienced civilisation, including the arts and the sciences. I would like to think that we had matured enough not to be intellectual or social snobs; but I fear that technology and the social sciences have done no better to banish the old Adam in us all, because penitence is not part of their vocabulary. That is why education without spiritual and moral sanctions is a dangerous affair.

Again, if we are honest we have to admit that many in all sections of society look upon education as fitting us for places of emolument - certainly in this world. Modern man, in his short-sightedness, is not so concerned about that which

is to come. Of course, we all have to earn our daily bread and do our part in promoting the commerce and industry of our country. But if that were our only concern there would be no need for Leicester Grammar School or, indeed, for any places of religious and liberal education.

Those who have generously and unstintingly given time, thought and money to this foundation wanted Leicester to have a school, healthily independent of the state, which will always aim at all-round excellence; and there are parents who, often at considerable self-sacrifice, equally desire such a school for their children. This kind of enterprise we desperately need in every department of our national life.

The quest for excellence is partly a matter of academic, athletic or cultural prowess; but it is even more a matter of helping young people to grow into large-minded, self-disciplined, compassionate men and women.

The trustees have deliberately written into the constitution of the school that it is a Christian foundation, because the tradition of this country has been Christian for a thousand years and more. But that does not mean that the children of other faiths are excluded. Indeed, today adherents of all major religions must stand together to defend and advance what I can only summarise in the old-fashioned phrase, a God-fearing philosophy of life.

Here I must appeal to parents, because you are quite as much a part of this school as the governors, teachers and children. You will make your contribution not just by paying fees and expecting a good return but by ensuring that you yourselves lead the way at home, the other half of a child's education, in courtesy, integrity and care for others, particularly those dependent on you in the family, at work and in your social scene.

The Headmaster, his Deputy and the teachers have gladly and adventurously embarked on what is still largely an uncharted voyage. They see the promised land on the distant horizon, but they and their pupils need the encouragement and loyalty of parents - and of many friends too. Tell the world about Leicester Grammar School, and call on everyone of goodwill to support this inspiring initiative in education in a free society.

But the most important people in the school are the one hundred young ladies and gentlemen who are its pupils. Within a few years you will be five hundred or more. All this is for you, not simply so that you can take all you want but so that you can give all that you are. It is one

of the truths of life that being a complete, happy person comes from giving yourself to others, particularly at this stage to your school. From now on you are largely the makers of Leicester Grammar School.

There was once a master-builder renowned for the quality of his firm's products. He insisted on the best materials and the highest standard of workmanship. To him you went if you wanted quality building.

This master-builder had a son who entered the business and learned it thoroughly from his father. He was a good-looking, charming, intelligent young man. He met an equally attractive young lady, to whom he became engaged, and the wedding was planned for some future date.

His father thought it was time that his son took on fuller and eventually full responsibility for the business. He told his son that there was a special contract to build a fine house. The plans and specification were drawn up, requiring the best of materials and workmanship. The young man was told to take entire charge.

But something went wrong. It didn't start with the foundations or the workmen or the bricks and timber. It started deep in the young man himself. He and his bride had wild ambitions.

They dreamt of plenty of money, a gorgeous home and living it up. The temptation was too great. Honest service to the client was forgotten. Behind the scenes poor materials and shoddy workmanship went into the building. As the house neared completion it looked splendid to the untrained observer, but, of course, the young man knew the truth. Within a few years the defects would show and the house would not last.

Eventually it was finished. The father, who had been away and who trusted his son, returned. The young man, smothering his shame and putting on a false self-assurance, showed his father round the house. The inspection was more thorough than he had expected, but not a word was spoken. He hoped his father could not see what lay behind the outward appearance. At the end of the tour, his father turned to him and said, 'This is your wedding present. Now you and your wife can live in it.'

You the pioneers of Leicester Grammar School, will not build like that, because you will grow in enlightened mind and sound character. And so I complete our text from that wise old preacher of long ago: 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandment; for this is the whole duty of man.'

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Foundation Day



Fred Berry, former OL President, with David Roebuck



Margaret Float, Anne Tester and Judith Hughes, former members of staff



The Bishop of Leicester, greeting guests after the service



John Sugden, former Headmaster

The Beginning - A Memoir

J E HIGGINBOTHAM

In 1980 I was appointed, much to my surprise, as First Headmaster of L.G.S. I had seen myself as a Mr Chips, or even a Crocker Harris, so beautifully played by Michael Redgrave in The Browning Version, an aging classical fossil declining towards retirement.

I would give it the best shot and in fact in the following decade I saw a school which started with 90 pupils reach close on 600, and earned the Daily Telegraph's accolade of the fastest growing school in the country. I wrote to every headmaster / mistress who sent us pupils. Not all were best pleased. Word had gone out from County Hall (I had my sources who told me everything) that there was to be no cooperation with this strange new animal which even practised selection, pace Mason. I only once received a letter from a primary school Headmistress refusing cooperation and thereby looking for favour from the County Council. I wrote back, more in sadness than in anger, asking how I was to avoid selection when we had three times as many applicants as places. I had no reply: there was none!

It was not always so. I was accused in the early days of admitting too many, stretching the class sizes and compromising standards. I am unapologetic: few people other than my Chairman, Michael Cufflin, to whom I shall be eternally grateful for his unwavering support, and I knew on what a knife edge we were poised: we had a crumbling building which the County Council had abandoned in favour of a new school in Glenfield, beams which had dry rot, classrooms and labs with no facilities, and lights which sizzled and sparked when switched on. Nobody who was not there in the beginning can imagine the primitive structure which we took over. I remember when the roof fell in on one of the classrooms on the Applegate side and it was unusable. Buses used to roar round St. Nicholas circle (which in 1980 ran along the existing Applegate) affording a pleasant oasis of inaudibility to my teaching. Yes, it was all hands to the pump in those days: no remission of periods for extra responsibilities as we all did a full load including the only Headmaster in Britain on 20 periods a week. I don't regret one moment of it although it was pretty hairy at times. Many Headmasters now don't teach - a great

mistake: the Captain of the side needs to perform if he is to gain respect and know his pupils as they deserve to be known - as valued individuals. You knew us all by name, they say, when I meet them now. I could not ask for a greater compliment in an age when we are often no more than an N.I.or pin number. I like to think that the 'family' ethos of LGS remains in this Silver Jubilee year and I feel very privileged to have played a part in it.

I have written of the alarms as well as the delights of those early days. Alarms yes, I remember Michael Cufflin ringing me up in 1980 to tell me that the school (which had been empty for a number of years) had been vandalised as such structures frequently are in these anarchic days. This doleful news was followed by a chuckle. 'Fortunately', he said, 'we took out the insurance last week, and the claim is likely to be in excess of £100,00.' This contribution to a building, which in any case had to be totally refurbished, set us on our path. We started on a shoe string, and when I maximised our entry members of Common Room came to understand when I reminded them that we had to pay them to teach here!

There were few frills: I remember a prospective parent asking if we had a computer. 'Of course' was the answer, followed by several days consumed in a desperate search for one. Rotary came to my aid when my need reached a local individualist who had just upgraded and presented us with an aging main frame of colossal bulk which practically filled one classroom on the Applegate side. Like many requests from parents it was fulfilled in the nick of time. There were those who thought that my Rotary lunches each Monday were a piece of personal self indulgence on my part, but my Chairman's encouragement to get to know the leading figures of Leicester paid dividends. To be able to ring up one of our Vice-Chancellors, County or City councillors, Chief Fire Officer, or even Chief Constable and talk on Christian name terms had its advantages.

None more so than when the loony left Council tried to clip our wings. A leading cleric, who was then leader, made no secret of his antagonism in spite of his wife's leading role in getting the school founded, and there was many a running battle with the local authorities: our success story was

achieved in the teeth of determined though, fortunately generally ineffective opposition. I remember how the Conservative government made grants available from central funding for the cleaning of inner-city buildings. We were at first denied a grant by the local authority on no better grounds than that we were an independent school. I remember how Maurice Chandler rang up the Secretary of State whom he knew well (Maurice always knew anyone who was anyone very well) and the cleaning of the building took place in the next holiday break. I was always grateful for the unstringing support of all my governors, but Maurice was constantly at hand. If Maurice can't fix it, it can't be fixed!. I used to say: he and Michael Cufflin were an effective duo: $E = MC^2$, as I once summed it up on Founder's Day to vigorous acclaim.

It sounds as though we lived in a constant state of crisis, and in many ways we did. I remember being rung up by a national paper which had heard of our debts and asked whether we were near bankruptcy! 'not of ideas, vision or determination', was the reply - money was the only problem. My answer was to write hundreds of personal letters - to local industrialists, foundations (Wofson produced £25,000 and a City Livery Company endowed scholarships) and address constant meetings from Rotary to Mother's Unions. Political lobbying won the support of Derek Spencer (Leicester. S) and Peter Brunvals (Leicester. E) and with it the grant of now long lamented Assisted Places. Scholarships for the needy were a key part of the vision I had for Leicester Grammar School, and I am proud to have had some entirely free places in place when we first opened in spite of our straightened

circumstances. I remember being invited to lunch by the Headmaster of Loughborough Grammar School whose main purpose seemed to be to tell me that he wouldn't be in my shoes. 'Give me a few years, and I wouldn't be in yours', I replied and, sure enough a few years later I learned that a whole group of pupils who had not gained admission from a local prep school at 13+ had been accepted elsewhere.

There will always be snide remarks born of envy against a school which achieves ever increasing prominence in the league tables at a time when so many schools were in 'special measures', failing or actually closing. Although public relations were paramount in those early days, I never stopped feeding the media with the story of our success, ultimately a schools' results will do the talking and it was very gratifying to see that, although in the early days we were not as selective as I hoped to be, we rarely failed to produce pupils with less than five CCSE's (A to C) and a high proportion with good A-levels and university places - the very criteria on which our admission to H.M.C. depended.

The school soon acquired an 'established' feel to it as though it had been there for years. I must not give the impression that it was just a 'results factory'. Sport, music and drama all flourished, and I have been glad to see them still doing so.

Above all, the Christian ethos, emphasis on good manners, and firm but unfussy discipline have made it a much sought after prize, not just for parents, but those Heads of Primary Schools who initially dared not mention it publicly, but now list their successes as jewels in the crown.



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LGS 'Looking Forward'

C P M KING

Reputations, worth having, may be hard won but are soon lost and this is certainly true of the perception prospective parents may have of an independent school. I believe it was certain critical decisions taken in the very earliest days of the Grammar School that have shaped the school we see today and allowed the very good reputation we now have in the city, county and indeed nationally to be developed. The appointment of specialist high quality staff who are dedicated to their school and the pupils they teach is an important quality. (Just for the record the Headmaster does have a teaching timetable). The emphasis from the start on academic excellence underpins all that we do and the fact that we are able to select our pupils is a great strength. The machinations within the current government with regard to the Education Bill, currently stuttering its way through parliament, often seem to centre around the opposition some people have to selection in any shape or form. I find such debate unproductive as I have no doubts at all that not every child has the innate ability and potential to benefit from the unashamedly traditional academic emphasis we place on education. LGS is not the right school for every child and I do not believe that one type of school can ever be appropriate for every child. The fact that we are the right place for children who are motivated to learn and deepen their understanding of subjects that form the foundation to understanding so many other aspects of general life is supported by the examination results of the pupils and the way in which the careers of the OL's are now unfolding.

It was only very recently that the first OL reached the age of 40. The first child of a former pupil is now at the Grammar School and we have a former pupil on the teaching staff. I meet or hear of OL's who are developing their careers and are taking on posts of considerable influence and responsibility. We have our first OL as a sitting member of parliament, although sadly it seems her political allegiance leads her to forget to include her secondary education in

her public curriculum vitae! I have no doubts at all that there are no limits to the successes of OL's likely to be reported in the future.

The Grammar School has never spent lavishly when it comes to marketing and publicity. Word of mouth and a happy current pupil population has provided ample and compelling evidence for prospective parents. That having been said I am still frequently surprised at the numbers of prospective parents who know little of us, where we are and what we stand for in Leicester. There is still work to be done in this respect it seems.

In order to arm the reader should you be asked about the Grammar School, you might like to have a few statistics to absorb in assessing where we stand currently as measured by a number of parameters. Last year 80.3% of all A levels were at A or B grade level - a new record. Eleven pupils have conditional offers from Oxbridge, twenty four pupils have applied to study medicine and all have at least one offer from a medical school. During the past twelve months LGS pupils have represented their country in hockey and fencing and 74 pupils gained representative sporting honours at county or regional level. Two-thirds of our pupils have a musical instrument or singing lesson during the school week and the extra-curricular life thrives sufficiently for our last whole inspection report to describe us as 'busy'.

The Grammar School roll is currently 704 and the Junior School established during John Sugden's Headship, has another 265 pupils. The growth in numbers from the initial 94 in 1981, has given confidence to the Board that is responsible for the Leicester Grammar Trust. The hand to mouth existence of the early days has given way to a development plan which envisages the continued reinvestment of the financial surpluses, achieved recently, in order to improve the educational experience of all pupils. We now have nearly 200 computers at both schools, interactive whiteboard technology is appearing in all departments and modern management systems are effectively steering the organisation.

It is, however, the proposed relocation of the two schools to a new integrated site at Mount Farm, Great Glen that potentially will be the biggest development in the history of the school following its foundation. The site will allow all the sports facilities we have sought over the past twenty five years to be available on the doorstep along with state of the art teaching facilities. At the time of writing the Public Inquiry called by the Secretary of State is scheduled for April 4th, almost twelve months to the day after Harborough District Council approved the plans. The outcome will be known later this year and if all goes the right way then the new school building should be open in September 2008.

A relocation, such as proposed, is not an original idea. Many other schools, with a longer history than ours can trace similar moves to the one we contemplate. The move would not be a one-sided event and it is

recognised that there are negative aspects to relocation. The main one would seem to be the dislocation from the cathedral which clearly will no longer be so readily accessible. However, the appointment of the current Precentor as official chaplain to LGS and the pastoral connection that has been cemented as a result will allow the cathedral to be brought into the school on a regular basis.

LGS has every reason to look forward with confidence to the future, wherever that may be. We continue to fight to allow children of academic potential to join the school regardless of their family's financial circumstances, but we do so with limited bursary funding. If there is one thing that I would wish to change for the future it would be our ability to fund bursaries for future generations. Perhaps our increasingly successful OL body will be able to help us in this respect in the future.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



25 Years Young

T R CAWSTON



Left to right: Tim Cawston, Neil Evans, John Christie, Scott Clarke

I was delighted to be asked by Andrew Harrop to contribute to this publication celebrating the first 25 amazing years of LGS. Accepting was easy, but reflecting on all that has happened since 1981 in a few words was not - especially as we teachers of sums use the minimum number of words whenever possible! So not an essay, but a time line with some memories.....

1981 We open for business with 94 pupils and the paint literally still wet - the adventure begins.

1982 Richard Longson complete with hair joins the staff along with our man from Nassau (or was it NASA?!) John Christie - he rescues Physics from my very unsafe hands - yes I did teach all the Physics for one very long year!

1983 A main frame computer is donated to the school - did it ever do a useful calculation I wonder, but it looked impressive and in those days that was very important!

1984 The St. Martin's building is open for use.

1985 We take delivery of our first very own minibus courtesy of the Friends who

have worked tirelessly from day one to help provide the vital 'extras'. The first (and last?) staff pantomime performed at the Y theatre (see picture).

1986 Numbers go past the 500 mark - a sixfold increase in 6 years making us the fastest growing school in the country.

1987 We become part of an election campaign when the new St. Nicholas wing is opened by Margaret Thatcher (complete with rent-a-mob at the main gate greeting the 'battle bus'). We also see Kevin O'Reilly join the school - he who gave many of the best excuses for not doing homework that I've ever heard!!

1988 All the staff and pupils raise nearly £4000 doing a sponsored walk around Rutland Water - a great deal of money back then.

1989 John Higginbotham retires to be succeeded by John Sugden

1990 Our first Careers Convention takes place and our very first Speech Day is held at De Montfort Hall. Rebekah Ojari becomes the 1000th pupil to enter LGS.

1991 The year we had three different bursars!

1992 Leicester Grammar School Junior School opens with 180 pupils.

1993 LGS is elected to HMC status - an official stamp of approval and to celebrate it we are placed top co-ed school in The Times Top 1000 schools following an amazing set of A-level results.

1994 The 9 period day is introduced (for the first time!).

1995 First and so far only trek in the Himalayas.

1996 The very first major overseas sports tour to Australia and Kevin O'Reilly finally leaves!

1997 The St. Katharine's building is opened and a new school uniform is introduced.

1998 Our musicians embark on the very first European tour.

1999 We survive our first full inspection, are visited by The Duke of Edinburgh and our 2000th pupil enters the school.

2000 We are visited by Sir Garfield Sobers - a boyhood idol of mine and a great honour to talk to him. Caretakers Ron and Nev retire.

2001 John Sugden retires as does Judith Hughes who had been a friend and wonderful colleague since the first day in 1981. Chris King takes up the helm.

2002 At last I go on Trevor Allen's Battlefields trip - an experience I, like hundreds of OL's, will never forget. Dr. Rupert Thompson becomes the first OL to be the guest speaker at Speech Day.

2003 Sarah Teather becomes the first OL to be elected as an MP and Diana Ibanez-Lopez collects her final prize so ending my Speech Day pronunciation nightmare!

2004 Harry Ellis becomes the first OL to gain a full England rugby cap.

2005 The first child of an OL enters the Prep form.

2006 25 years old and the wonderful journey continues.

OL Travel Grants

Inca Trail, Peru - April 06

S REDMAN

During 2004 I spent a considerable amount of time working on designs for a residential home for severely disabled adults in Southend, for the charity John Grooms. It was clear that Grooms work ceaselessly to raise money for capital projects and to maintain their existing facilities. Their website gave (and still gives) details of various ways people can raise and donate these much needed funds. From a selection of challenges including Everest Base Camp, the jungles of Borneo and Turkish white water rafting I opted for the Inca Trail, as it seemed one of the more demanding but potentially rewarding trips.

Charity Challenges such as these are generally operated by separate companies, in this case Global Adventure Challenges. In return for a small percentage of the funds raised they shoulder the administrative burden and liability and provide knowledgeable guides. Thanks to friends, family, colleagues, the OL's and professional contacts I was able to double the minimum

sponsorship, ensuring a meaningful contribution to Grooms coffers.

The trip was to last nine days, including acclimatisation and limited sightseeing. After landing in Lima we were to transfer directly to Cusco, ancient Inca capital and the base for all treks to Machu Picchu. The trek itself would take three and a half days with an overnight in Lima at the end of the trip. It became clear at the airport that the other group members came from a variety of backgrounds and were on the trip for different reasons, some raising money on behalf of a local cause, others for or in memory of a specific friend or relative. Our common cause and lack of altitude trekking experience helped us to bond quickly and we enjoyed good relations for the duration of the challenge.

The effects of altitude were immediately apparent upon our arrival in Cusco. I could not climb three stairs at a trot without being completely out of breath and feeling the beginnings of a severe headache;



months of stamina training cannot prepare the individual for this. You either suffer or you don't. Thankfully we had a day or so to adjust, walking slowly around the spectacular ruins of Sacsayhuaman, whose function is still a matter of some conjecture. The ramparts appear heavily fortified but there are also signs of sophisticated lunar mapping and worship. The walls are made of enormous stones weighing tens of tonnes, with joints so tight a credit card cannot be inserted into them.

The trek proper started early the following day, in heavy and unrelenting rain, which was to continue for most of the journey. Alongside the trekkers teams of local porters carry tents, food, chairs and all manner of creature comforts for the lazy Westerners - these men exist on a tiny wage

and run up the mountains wearing flip flops, skipping by us with four foot high bundles on their backs as we wheeze slowly along. Fewer and fewer people can be seen higher into the hills, but a few still eke out a living as hill farmers and the occasional herd of llamas causes amusement along the way. The trail creates huge sums of money for the local people, and naturally the Peruvian government. The inequity in Peruvian society is readily apparent on such a trip - locals scratch a living or beg for pocket change whilst the rich live in lowland compounds with armed guards on constant patrol.

Our team of porters were cheerful, friendly and helpful and cooked basic but excellent food for us every day. They all slept together at night for warmth and were by our standards totally unequipped for the journey.

Completing the trek in a woolly jumper and sandals didn't faze them a bit, although they did pilfer the surgical spirit from the medical kit at the coldest point of day three. It certainly seemed to spur them on.

The journey to Machu Picchu took in cloud filled rainforests, barren ridges and precipitous pathways with tunnels carved into the mountainside. Visitors can see giant humming birds and birds of prey wheeling high overhead. The forests are filled with orchids and other exotic plants and lizards scamper across the boulder strewn footpaths. We experienced highly unseasonal weather for September; on the penultimate day over Dead Woman Pass, the steepest and highest ascent, we moved from humid to rainy to cold and finally snow and strong winds. At lunch we literally clung to the mess tent to stop it blowing away down the valley. Light relief was provided by fellow trekkers building small snowmen along the way. A wide variety of groups will always be trekking alongside you, although numbers are now strictly limited to reduce erosion and the unfortunate persistence of litter dropping, which is laziness of the worst kind in such a place. We trekked alongside a large group raising money for the Douglas Bader Foundation which included several amputees. One man with a prosthetic leg managed the entire trail unaided until the last prolonged descent which he made on the back of a small wiry porter at a gallop. 'The most frightening experience of my life' was his verdict.

Only a few remote ruins remain of the mighty Incan Empire, which existed for a short period around the fifteenth century before being destroyed by the Spanish conquistadors. Today travellers from across

the world visit these sites for their historical interest and spiritual resonance. The trail has tambos or guest houses dotted along its length and a series of religious sites, most of which have their own terraced farms, houses, temples, civic buildings and irrigation systems which today's hill farmers still use. The ingenuity and complexity of the architecture is staggering given the gradients, remoteness and rudimentary technology on offer. The crowning glory of the trip, Machu Picchu itself, is now partially reconstructed, and tired trekkers reach it along a ridge whilst tourists are ferried up a switchback by bus should they feel less energetic. Luckily trekkers arrive at dawn, before the crowds of video camera-wielding families descend, which gives a rare opportunity to drink in the atmosphere and reflect on the previous days exertion.

The trip was rounded off by a return to Lima and a celebration dinner for those who had not picked up a severe stomach bug, which I was to endure on the long haul flight home. Lima itself was fascinating - we were lucky enough to stumble into a huge religious festival full of marching bands in dazzling costume. The people regarded us with some curiosity as Lima is not particularly popular with tourists - bag thefts and robberies are not uncommon.

Overall a great trip and a fantastic way to raise money as it seems to capture the imagination of potential sponsors. I am planning either Kilimanjaro or Everest Base Camp in 2007, again for John Grooms. You can learn more about their history, ethos and current projects at www.johngrooms.org.uk

Sincere thanks again to the OL's for their generous support, which they continue to give year on year to deserving applicants.

Fiji 2005

MATT SCHAAF

Setting off for Fiji on a hot sunny June day I have to admit to wondering why exactly I was going to spend my summer in a country full of mosquitoes, volcanoes and extremely large (previously cannibalistic) natives. Five minutes into my taxi ride and I realised why as I sat in a traffic jam on the M1. I was going to an island paradise I told myself, no traffic, no work, just sun, sea and

rugby. The mosquitoes would not bite that hard, the volcanoes rarely erupted and I may look tasty but am in fact surprisingly chewy.

Having landed at Nadi (pronounced Nandi) airport on the West side of Viti Levu, the main Fijian Island, it was necessary to take a taxi to the east and the Fijian capital, Suva. Three things were striking about this journey, the first was that it cost me \$12

dollars (around 4 pounds) for a three hour taxi ride, the second was how strikingly beautiful the scenery was and the third was how poor the rural areas of Fiji could be. Fiji is a volcanic island with a semi tropical climate about three and a half hours north of New Zealand by plane. It has a combination of heavily forested mountains and beautiful beaches, many of which are protected by coral reefs. This is offset by many people wandering along roads, generally driving unhealthy looking cattle.

Having survived the taxi ride, which my driver cheerfully told me 60% of his passengers did, I decided to fight off the jet lag by going to my first coaching session with the two boys who were already staying at the house. Another salient feature of Fiji is the excellent upkeep of its schools. It would be unfair to describe Suva as a poor city but Fiji in general is not a rich place. However, its school children are always dressed smartly in uniforms and the buildings are well kept up. The coaching session could be described as organised chaos, due mainly to the kids' enthusiasm. It is easy to reconcile the character of the children we were coaching with the nature of the national rugby team, bags of enthusiasm and talent with no real idea of what they are actually meant to be trying to do. Nevertheless their enthusiasm was infectious and made coaching them a real joy.

In the evening I made my first trip to

Naila, a village about half an hour's taxi ride outside of Suva. This was my first experience of anywhere outside a large city in Fiji and the culture shock was enormous. The 'pitch' was in fact a field and the cow we had to oust from it did not look pleased to be displaced while the posts were made from what looked like large pieces of bamboo stuck into the ground with the cross bar lashed across. Fijians are not particularly renowned for their knotcraft however and the result was a rather large bruise running across my neck and shoulders the following morning! This was one of the most satisfying places to go to however as in the last week of my trip this team won the Suva Challenge Trophy. The format of the competition is similar to that of the Ranfurly Shield in New Zealand. Once you have beaten the holders you then play 'challengers' until someone beats you and then they become the holders. Obviously it was the players who won the trophy but they were convinced it was us that had caused the improvement and their gratitude made the trips out there all the more worthwhile. The trophy itself was enormous, I am not a tall man but anything that is taller than me seems a little excessive!

At the end of all the club training sessions a prayer was said or something sung. This was totally unique to us all and, as it was said in the twilight, it created a special atmosphere. Just down the road from where we stayed was a club called Lomai Viti where



Simon Redman with his display about OL Travel Grants at the Silver Anniversary Ball

some of the guys played at the weekends. At our last training session we were presented with shirts and they sang a song to us to say goodbye, it was a surprisingly emotional moment as both the players and coaches had been so friendly and welcoming. We had also attended a church service the club held every month. This provided the rather amusing moment when both me and Paul attempted to sing a hymn before realising it was in Fijian, needless to say we shut our mouths rather quickly!

At the end of the trip Paul and I went out to some of the Fijian Islands off the eastern coast of Viti Levu. Having been completely fleeced by the taxi driver in Nadi we went to Beachcomber the following day

which is a tiny island well known for it's nightlife, followed by a couple of days chilling out at County Island. If that name rings a bell it is because it is the island used for Celebrity Island, yes, I have stood where the likes of Paul Danan, Abi Titmus and that disappointingly not fit bird from American Pie 3 have stood, could my life be any better?

Fiji is certainly a beautiful country full of beautiful scenery and friendly people and is somewhere I would recommend visiting to everyone, it was certainly a trip I will remember for the rest of my life. I would also like to thank the OL's for their contribution towards my trip, it was very much appreciated.

Silver Anniversary Ball at Walkers Stadium



Tim Cawston in conversation



Members of The Dance Band



Guests enjoying the meal

Letters

My name is Liesl Houghton (nee James). I was in the first Prep class, with Mrs Buckingham.

Mr Longson set an exam paper in 1982 with a statement: WRITE AN ESSAY ON ARTHUR - FACT OR FAIRYTALE? (I missed the question mark obviously!). When the papers were handed back out a week or two later, everyone else was handed out theirs, except me. Everyone was told to sit back and listen. He started to read my answer to that question, "Once upon a time King Arthur sat on Hadrian's wall.....". Everyone was laughing but I still didn't understand what had done wrong. He gave me back the paper eventually and said "Write an essay explaining whether Arthur was fact or fairytale not a fairytale using Arthur's name!!". Oh dear...

However when I was in the 5th form they were still having that question in their exam papers and Mr Longson said I should have had full marks as the teachers had never laughed so much in the staff room! I did think it was a pretty good story - needless to say English has been my favoured subject and History HAS NOT. There was even an exhibition with the King Arthur theme in 1987, and it said FOR DETAILS...and someone had written in please see Liesl James.

Nevermind, despite all this I never disliked Mr Longson.

Love to all the old staff.
Liesl (now teaching 3-5 year olds, and married to a Dr.)

Memories from my time at LGS (1982-1987)

- 1) Shaking Maggie's hand at the opening of the extension during the 1987 election campaign - can't say whether it was a good or bad memory. My hand shaking a test tube featured on the BBC news though!
- 2) My dad reversing into the basketball post in the main school yard when delivering my tie that I'd left at home and requested urgently as I was minutes away from a severe ticking off by Miss Smolenski - something to be avoided at all costs! (1985)
- 3) Putting popped blue ink cartridges into

the taps in physics during Mr Haynes' chaotic lessons (1985)

4) Various school plays and their parties at the Y Centre - "He who gets slapped, Mid Summer Night's Dream, The Review".

5) Breaking my collar bone playing my one and only competitive game of rugby for the VIth form team in September 1986.

Thanks, Dave Champy

I was one of the first intake back in 1981. I am sitting in the middle on the floor with extremely sticking up hair.

I remember the school as being focussed mainly on academic studies at that time although we did have our fair share of 'academically challenged' pupils. We were fortunate enough to enjoy the trappings of a travelling businessman's lifestyle at the age of 11 when the Holiday Inn allowed use their swimming pool for swimming lessons. I have no idea what the poor people staying there thought when they came down for a swim and found lots of small children playing merry hell in their pool.

The same restrictions applied to outside field events and I remember being bussed all over the county in an attempt to find a home for our rugby team. Incidentally we were not the most successful at that either in the early days. Our team was rather cobbled together and we frequently got tonked by other schools. We did have a few memorable wins including one where we were down to 14 men and actually had a very slight chap on the wing who would get flattened everytime he got the ball.

All in all it was good fun and hard work. I stayed to the sixth form and am occasionally in touch with some members of that photo although it has been a long time since I have been back to Leicester. I left to go to Warwick University then into the City to work in derivatives. Still there and married with a kid now.

We also had a number of interesting teachers in those early days who inspired us - in particular I remember a particularly dry Scottish physics teacher whose name escapes me.

Julian Tams