

THE OLD CESTREFELDIANS' SOCIETY



*Non quo sed quomodo
1594 to 1994*

Ninety Second Annual Dinner and Reunion

The 92nd Annual Dinner and Reunion took place on April 14th 2023 at the Technique Stadium, home of Chesterfield F.C. The 80 attendees spent a very enjoyable evening in the company of old friends and colleagues.

Derrick Priestley, OCS Secretary, was again Master of Ceremonies (MoC) for the event, John Drabble being the retiring President. Proceedings began with the Loyal Toast, for the first time to King Charles III.

During the meal, many further toasts were taken at the request of the President: with Past Presidents of the Society, other Officers of the Society, those who started in decades from the 1930s to the 1980s, (singling those out from 1960, the same year as the President), those who represented the School at Rugby and other sports, those who had been in the School orchestra, choir, the CCF, or had received Duke of Edinburgh Awards. The oldest and youngest Old Cestrefeldian and furthest travelled to the Reunion also had their moment in the spotlight.

The MoC proposed the toast to those no longer able to meet, mentioning masters Tim Searcy, Ian Newsome and Roy Parkin (who had also been a pupil and President of the Society), Past Presidents Roger Mason and Rev Canon Peter Downham, Elliott Beresford, Arthur Mitchell, Graham Oldfield, Graham Stevenson and Michael Irwin.

Rob Wadd gave an OCS focussed tribute to Michael Hadfield which had been composed by David Finney (see below). Michael had been pivotal in the reforming of the Society in 1986 and had both headed the Reunion Organising Committee and been Treasurer until 2019. Rev. Ron Smith led a prayer in his memory (also below). Following a minute's silence those assembled gave Michael a respectful round of applause.

Frank Gorman, Chairman of the Old Cestrefeldians' Trust, gave a brief background on the Trust's objectives and activities since its formation in 2014. A further plaque, in memory of Russell Varley, long serving and highly respected master, is being restored and will be unveiled outside the Headmaster's Office at Sheffield Road after the Remembrance Day Service on, unsurprisingly, November 11th. Frank encouraged attendees to consider donating to the Trust which is a recognised charity to enable it to continue its benevolent activities. Trust membership requires a minimum annual donation of only £10. Tom Roberts can provide application forms.

Ian Christison presented the Society's accounts covering the 3 years to December 31st 2022. The balance then was £544. Outgoings, other than on reunions, included contributions to the new Presidential board, Queen's Green Canopy commemorative oak trees and a Society wreath for laying at the Remembrance Day Service. Assistance had been received from the Chesterfield General Charitable Fund.

Mention was made that, thanks to the standing of Charlie Briars and the Parish Church Choir, an OC, Kenneth Yates, had joined the choir at the late Queen's Coronation. Asked about the ceremonial spade, the MoC said that last year's raffle winner, Keith Seacroft, wished to return it to the Society for potential reuse and raffling for funds in future.

The time-honoured formal process of toasts and speeches preparatory to the installation of the new President then began.

First Andrew Simpson was called upon to propose the toast to the Old School and the Old Cestrefeldian Society. Andrew, who started School in 1973, had been recommended for the role, fittingly, by his friend of 40 years, Mike Hadfield. He admitted that he had not excelled academically at School and shared stories of sporting escapades. He agreed with then Deputy Head, John Smith, that he had gained the values of teamwork, leadership and integrity while at School which had served him well in 35 years of senior management in the car industry.

The retiring President, John Drabble, responding to the toast, recognised comments that Andrew had made. John reminded the assembly of the lengthy time in waiting as President Elect to Covid-19 and the unfortunate indisposition of Past President David Allsop last year. Elected in 2019, his tenure began on the day of the 2022 Reunion with an emergency installation immediately prior to the arrival of the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire's arrival to plant the Queen's Green Canopy oak at Brookside (Brookfield School) in memory of past, present and future at that site. Following speeches and a school tour, the entourage decamped to reassemble at Sheffield Road to repeat the ceremonies there.

After an enjoyable Reunion Dinner and more traditional reinstallation, the pace slackened significantly. He was able to report that the commemorative trees had been re-inspected earlier in the day and were in good order having been ceremonially watered. In stepping down, the day job of webmaster would continue, one which brought its own compensations, not least in hearing from the families of late OCs how much the Society had meant to them. Then came an appeal for information. Gaps in Cestrefeldians on the website were being closed but little information post 1975 was available. Attendees were asked to make contact if they had access to suitable material. Finally, retiring President thanked the committee for organising an excellent dinner and especially the MoC for keeping the Society relevant and an important link for many to old chums and indeed Chesterfield. He was sure that Ron would make an excellent President having already contributed greatly in the leading of Remembrance Day Services.

Rev. Ron Smith was then proposed by Tony Hine for President. As a fellow resident of Wingerworth and thespian, Tony had known of Ron for many years. Ron was born in Canada in 1943 where his father had been posted by the RAF to service aircraft. Having returned to the UK by ship, he joined the Parish Church Choir at the age of seven. He was in Clarke House at School (from 1954 – 1960) but not an academic student. He did however hold the school “hop, skip and jump” record for a time.

After his School days, Ron became a civil servant spending 40 years in the Ministry of Pensions and National insurance, at one time being responsible for a £100m budget for care of the less able. In parallel, he trained and became an ordained minister of the Church of England in which he has now served in a non-stipendiary role for 30 years.

The President then formally installed the Rev. Ron Smith as his successor, placing the Presidential medal around his neck. Also passed on was the Old Cestrefeldian Society crest which had been kindly donated by Past President Andrew Elliott.

Ron, as an ordained minister, started his response with a “bible text”; ‘And the Lord said unto Jacob, “Come forth and you will receive eternal life.” But Jacob came fifth - and won a toaster.’ He said that he had in fact been second to Kenneth Yates for nomination to sing as part of the choir at the Queen’s Coronation. He had recently met Camilla, the Queen Consort, at York Minster but had blotted his copy book by asking which knee to genuflect when curtsying so was not expecting an invitation to the Coronation. His time at School had not been without incident being no stranger to detentions but did achieve a Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award. In conclusion, Ron also thanked the Committee for their organisation of the evening.

The raffle prizes were then drawn. £460 had been collected thanks to the generosity of all and persuasive abilities of John Thacker and Jim Marriott. The MoC auctioned off two remaining tickets for Saturday’s football match between Chesterfield FC and Eastleigh again giving the proceeds to the OCT. In total, £230 was donated to the Old Cestrefeldians Trust.

The formalities were completed by the competitive singing of the School Song, followed by a rather more sedate rendition of Jerusalem accompanied by a recording of the School Choir and Orchestra.

Next year’s Reunion will take place on May 17th 2024.



Retiring President, John Drabble, formally installs Rev. Ron Smith as his successor.



[Top Table Video](#)

In order of appearance:

Andrew Simpson – Proposer of the toast to the Old School and the Old Cestrefeldian Society

John Drabble - Retiring President

Rev. Ron Smith – President Elect

Tony Hine – Proposer of Rev. Ron Smith

Graham Young – 1960 entrant

Tim Hallett – Youngest OC present (1983)

and finally, a whimsical

Derrick Priestley – Master of Ceremonies and OCS Secretary



Some other photos of the assembled OCs

OCs' Tribute to Michael Hadfield OBE.

Michael started at the Grammar School in September 1951 arriving from Highfield Hall Junior School and was placed in 2P (G.S.Wood 'Woody's class). That class also contained two other O.C.'s Presidents to be in John Little and John Goodman. He was in Lingard House.

He was the first to admit that he had an undistinguished academic career but nevertheless for the rest of his life he often expressed his gratitude for the education he received at C.G.S. and this played a large part in his passion for the Old Cestrefeldians' Society. After it appeared to have been disbanded in 1975, he was determined to do something about it and together with Rob Wadd they resurrected it in 1986. From then until he was forced to step aside in 2019 because of bad health, he alone did most of the work in organising the annual Re-unions.

Initially he was assisted by Rob Wadd, John Roberts, Mal Hughes and Syd Cooper and latterly by the late John Moss and David Finney.

This tribute to Mike is not meant to be a Eulogy as there were so many other facets of his life that will be covered in a comprehensive Eulogy later. This tribute is for his tireless work in keeping the O.C.'s going and but for him we would not be here tonight.

R.I.P. Michael.

Courtesy of David Finney

A Prayer in Memory of Michael

Loving God,

We come this evening struggling for words to express our feelings, lost for words to express our thanks for all that Michael meant to us.

We come with sorrow as we think of our loss, with gratitude as we recall the person Michael has been, with praise as we remember, all you have done through him with faith as commit both Michael and ourselves to your eternal care.

Amen

Courtesy of Rev. Ron Smith