This Year’s President; Rick Reynolds [1993-]

Rick Reynolds was appointed to teach Mathematics at Newport in 1993 having worked for a major industrial company for several years. He very quickly became involved with Cross Country, Rugby and Athletics at the School and for many years he has organised the ON Society v School Cross Country Match. Since his very early days at the School he has been a very keen supporter of the Society and has done much to encourage school leavers to become members. He writes the following about himself:

Keep Trying; Keep Smiling

Rick went to primary school in Wembley, secondary school in Harrow (no, not THAT Harrow) and then to study computer science at Brunel University. He worked for British Petroleum for 16 years in various IT roles, working in such exotic locations as Harlow, Dubai, London and Glasgow. He took his PGCE at Homerton College, Cambridge in 1993 and has been teaching at Newport [mostly] ever since.

This personal tour will be of some interest I hope to many ONs who have recently joined the Society, as those who were at Newport in the last 13 years may remember me. Many may recognise some parallels from my own schooldays, many of which could have been better. (Clearly I have been writing too many reports.)

I attended Barham primary school in Alperton, where I thought I was quite good. I only got into one fight (an honourable draw) and I was always second in the top class, curses Linda Rayner. But I must have been doing something wrong as I often discovered to my cost if I was too slow to evade the back of my teacher's hand, or the front of it come to that. I was also caned twice by the Headmaster; one of those was on my 9th birthday.

I went to Harrow County Grammar School for boys. All boys were expected to join either the school scouts (the 4th Harrow) or the cadets. As I was already in the 6th Harrow scouts, I joined the army cadets. Not for the last time, I had taken on too much. I was to find many times that it is good to aim high but it is also good to recognise your limitations. Eventually I went to see Colonel "get oot yer Mackeans lads" Bigham, God rest his soul. He wasn't happy when I told him I wanted to leave the cadets. (Note Mackean was the author of the biology text and not some odd Scottish euphemism.)

Around the same time I gave up rugby too. Ironic really as I have been managing school rugby teams for the last 8 years. My tackling was good, mainly because any wimping out would result in a loud observation from the Welsh PE teacher Viv Edwards, which frequently ended with “damn rabbit”. But I was seriously fed up with sitting out on the wing waiting for the pass that never came.

But it wasn't all ending in failure. You have to try a few things and get them wrong, in order to get some right.

I continued in the 6th Harrow scouts to patrol leader, took up running as the alternative to rugby, and started tenpin bowling, which became my favourite sport for the next 25 years.

I don't really remember doing any homework at Harrow! I suppose I must have done because I only ever had one detention. The Deputy Head, George Cowan, had asked to see me at break and I forgot. When I went at lunch instead, he was very nice about giving me an after-school detention. No second chances in those days! The detention was mind-mangling, having to write “the ploughman homeward plods his weary way” for one hour.
I do remember always admiring (most of) the teachers but never really thinking that I would become one, mainly because I thought I was not good enough. I hardly ever spoke up in class – although I remember one occasion in economics when the teacher Reggie Goff asked where Jarrow was. Before I knew it my hand was up “County Durham sir”; “Very good” Reggie beamed. I didn't mention I had no clue about the Jarrow March of 1936, but I DID know that it was at Jarrow, County Durham, that the national tenpin bowling championships were taking place.

I sent in my UCCA (now UCAS) form and received conditional offers from Southampton, Bath & Reading universities but, after some disappointing A level results it was my mother (I'm the son of a French immigrant) who stood over me while I sent off my clearing form ... for computer science courses. The year was 1972. No-one had computers, but clearly I had had a bad attack of foresight.

Within days I received a call from Brunel University offering me a place ... on a maths course. For the second time in a short space of time I made the right decision, I accepted the place knowing full well I would look to change course at the earliest opportunity.

That opportunity came at the end of the first year because one third of the computer scientists had failed their first year.

Unfortunately I had too. I failed 3 modules out of 6, partly due to too much time in the bar, at the dart board, table football and bar billiards tables, but mainly at the bowling alley.

Fortunately I got A+ in differential equations & vector algebra, so they assumed I wasn't a complete dunce (hence I was an incomplete dunce?). So I was told to pass re-sits in statistics & mechanics in September to proceed to the second year. Job done, I continued at Brunel, switching to computer science within a few weeks, much to the annoyance of the mathematics lecturers. But the moral of the story is, get in there and look for opportunities.

Brunel courses at the time were thin sandwich leading to a Bachelor of Technology (BTech) degree, thin sandwich meaning a 4-year course with the first 3 summers spent in industry from April to September. I worked with British Gas, the Ministry of Defence and British Petroleum. It was an excellent course. I would recommend industry-based courses to any student. Do they still do them I wonder?

I went to work with BP in Harlow after graduating and commenced the search for a local bowling alley. There wasn't one, so it was a drive to Stevenage every week. Before I knew it I was posted to Dubai, by now married with a daughter, and I was in heaven because there were three bowling alleys.

Three years later we were back in England with another daughter and they were soon at school at Babraham near Cambridge. It was a tiny school, only 45 on the roll, and I joined the PTA. I had already been on stage briefly at the Harlow Playhouse and doing pantos at Babraham village hall was slightly different but far more satisfying. It was all good stuff for my second career which was awaiting. Teaching has a large chunk of acting in it, but I have no wish to go on stage again.

By the early 90s the oil price was weak and so was the dollar, and BP buys oil in dollars. So business contracted under this double whammy and the company concentrated on the things it does best: looking for oil, digging it up, refining it and selling it. Many other parts of BP were outsourced, including IT. By then I had been promoted beyond my comfort zone and my technical know-how was way out-of-date. I remembered the line from the Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, “you can't pay yourself if you don't produce anything”. I should have stayed being a technician and avoided management, but you have to try these things don't you? Not for the last time ...

BP was a great company to work for, but the entire IT department was made redundant. I took this opportunity to retrain as a teacher. It was expensive but worth it. After qualifying, there was more expense as I more than halved my salary and 14 years later I still haven't caught up! But every day teachers produce the goods bigtime and you get some real fun moments.

For instance, recently I was teaching maths class, part of the exercise the students were working on was a game for two using dice. One of them came out to the front with a very puzzled expression. She's a lovely girl, 12 years old. She said “I'm going through this exercise sir, and I'm on the game”. I don't remember what she said after that.

At a school in Hertfordshire, I was told not to smile until Christmas, or even Easter, as the students will take advantage. While having some truth, I have always ignored that advice. I keep smiling because I go to work to enjoy myself, otherwise what's the point? And I tell the students that too.

My teaching course at Homerton eventually brought me to Newport thanks to Richard Priestley. I was studying to teach maths and junior science so I was working for Martin Peake & Keith Huddlestone. I have always known Martin Peake as ‘Peakie’, and so have thousands of students. Soon after my arrival Peakie uttered the immortal words “do you run?”. I hadn't run for 20 years but I soon started again, very slowly.

I was just about to catch him up when he had his stroke. I have never forgiven him for this, because now he says that I only only overtook him because he had a stroke. But seriously, it indirectly taught me that life is too short, and worse was to follow.

I got into the rugby coaching scene courtesy of Kev Walker and it was an absolute tragedy when he died. As I write we are about to go to Twickenham again, and also of course to the Prince Blucher on Twickenham Green where Kev and all of us went for the pre- (and post-) match preparations. He is still sorely missed.

I tried a couple of other things. I was examinations officer for 2 years but it was very time-consuming. I was even appointed Head of Maths at another school, but I soon disappeared under a pile of paper so just over a year later I was back at Newport again. Thank
you Richard Priestley! The Head of IT post here was tempting but I had already made the mistake too many times, and life is too short. So I gratefully accepted coming back to Newport as a maths teacher working for Martin Peak again. It was great.

Newport is a great school; the students are fantastic and the staff tremendous. Backing the school all the way is the ON Society. Now of course we have a new Head, Seán O’Hagan, who has already had the excitement of two ON committee meetings! We really know how to show someone a good time. There is better to come. I always look forward to the ON matches in April, and of course the annual dinner. May I record here the tremendous amount of work that Keith Huddlestone does for the Society, and hence for the School.

I am delighted to be the 76th President of the ON Society. Thank you all for your continued support. Keep trying, keep smiling.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1. Friday 23 February 2007: 20.00 onwards;
Gathering of ONs at the Coach & Horses, Newport
The committee hope that as many ONs as possible who are in the Newport/Saffron Walden area on the evening of 23 February 2007 will try to drop in to the Coach & Horses at some time during the evening. This is always a most enjoyable occasion and frequently brings together ONs who have not seen each other for a long time.

2. Saturday 21 April 2007: Annual Football, Hockey & Cross Country Matches against the School
The Football and Hockey Matches start at 10.15am and the Cross Country Match starts at 11.00am. If you wish to take part in any of these matches please complete the enclosed proforma and return it to the O.N.Society Secretary at the School. This occasion has now become a major event in the Society and School calendar. Apart from the players many other ONs [as well as Parents of students who are playing for the school] come to watch and often meet some of their contemporaries whom they have not seen since leaving School. The usual Refreshments will be served in the Club House [next to the pavilion] after the matches. Please make a note of the date and try to come along on 21 April 2007.

3. Saturday 7 July 2007: Annual Mixed Hockey and Cricket Match against the School
The Mixed Hockey match starts at 11.00am and the Cricket Match starts at 2.00pm. If you wish to take part in either or both of these matches please complete the enclosed proforma and return it to the O.N.Society Secretary at the School. Arranging for the mixed hockey match to be played in the morning and the cricket match in the afternoon makes it possible for ONs to take part in both matches if they so wish. Those ONs who do play in both matches usually adjourn to the Coach & Horses for lunch. The Annual Cricket Match will be, as usual a limited overs game [40 overs per side]. Tea, to which everyone is invited, will be taken between the two innings at about 4.30pm in the Club House next to the Pavilion. Di Read will organise the Hockey Teams for the matches on 21 April and 7 July.

4. Annual Golf Match between the Society and the Saffron Walden Golf Club: Friday 7or 28 September 2007
These are provisional dates. The actual date will be in the next newsletter in July 2007. Anyone who may be interested in playing and would like more information please contact Don Hirst, 1 Highfields, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 2AD; Tel, 01799 502244

5. Saturday 6 October 2007: AGM in the Library at 5.00pm: Annual Dinner in the School Hall at 7.00 for 7.30pm
Please make a note in your 2007 diary of these two most important events. Further details will be given in the next newsletter which will be sent out in July 2007.

REPORTS AND RESULTS

The Saffron Walden Golf Club retained the Fred Thompson Trophy by easily winning the match four and half games to half a game. The trophy was presented to the winning captain by Fred Thompson who was present at the dinner after the match. The match as usual was a most enjoyable occasion and the hospitality of the Saffron Walden team was again excellent.
The following played for the O.N.Society team:
Thanks must go to all those ONs who took part especially to Don Hirst who, as usual undertook all the hard work in arranging the match with the Saffron Walden Golf Club and getting the O.N.Society team together. David Kenworthy [70-77] came all the way from the Isle of Man to play in the match.

2. AGM:  Saturday 7 October 2006 at 5.00pm
This took place in the Memorial Library and was attended by 23 members of the Society. The Treasurer, Graham Harding presented the audited statement of accounts for the year ending 31 May 2006 copies of which were distributed to all present. He explained the salient points and informed the meeting that the statement of accounts clearly showed the Society’s finances to be in a very healthy position. The Treasurer then told the meeting that due to the sad death of the Auditor, Ron Hockley [see the report of this later in the newsletter] on 4 September 2006 the accounts had been audited by Richard King ON [70-77] a former Treasurer to the Society who is a qualified account.

The following elections were made for 2006/07:
President: R.Reynolds [1993-]
The AGM expressed its sincere thanks to Reg Nash [69-97]] for all his work on the committee as both President and Assistant Secretary. Reg Nash felt that after 20 years on the committee in one capacity or another it was time to step down. However, he very kindly offered to continue to carry out a number of small but important administrative tasks for which the committee are extremely grateful.

3. Annual Dinner: Saturday 7 October 2006
This was held in the main School Hall. Over 70 people attended and there were a number of ONs present who were attending for the first time. The Head Girl, Rachel Cooper proposed the toast to the Pious Memory of Dame Joyce Frankland. Alf Bush [41-49] proposed the toast to the School and in the absence of the new Headmaster who was at the AGM of the Euro-School Net in Sweden Gordon Scott, Deputy Head of the School, replied. The Head Boy, Tom Howe gave a quite excellent speech in proposing the toast to the Society and the President, Kevin Dalley replied in a very witty and humorous manner. At the end of his reply the President then presented a framed oil portrait and a cheque for £150 to Richard Priestley who retired as Headmaster on 31 August 2006. Richard Priestley was clearly overwhelmed by this presentation. He thanked everyone at the dinner for such a wonderful retirement presentation and has written the following to all members of the Society.

ON Society presentation to the retiring Headmaster.
On Saturday 7 October 2006 I attended the Annual Dinner of the Old Newportonian Society at which a presentation was made to me by the President, Kevin Dalley, following my retirement in August after 22 years in the school, 15 as Headmaster.

The presentation was in the form of a framed oil portrait of myself and a very generous cheque for £150.00. Through these columns, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Society and all members who contributed so generously to my retirement presents. I would also like to thank Kevin Dalley for his complimentary words on making the presentation, Keith Huddlestone for the generous eulogy he gave at the Annual General Meeting earlier the same day, and Gordon Scott, my colleague and friend in senior management for over 20 years, for his kind words in responding to the toast to the school by a senior ON, Alf Bush.

I feel I should explain about the framed oil portrait for those not at the dinner. As ON’s will be aware, it is the tradition in the school that the Trustees commission an oil portrait of the retiring Head to hang in the Memorial Library. David Newens, an accomplished portrait artist who has had several of his portraits feature in the National Portrait Gallery’s summer exhibitions, was commissioned to paint my portrait. He started by photographing me from different angles and then proceeded to paint a small canvas of my head and shoulders. He then took this away and came back two weeks later with the full portrait that now hangs in the Memorial Library. I wondered what would happen to the small portrait and expressed an interest in buying it as I would seldom have the opportunity in future to see the full portrait. Somehow Keith Huddlestone got wind of this, and to my surprise the beautifully framed smaller portrait was presented to me at the dinner. I am so grateful to the Society for this lasting memory of my time at Newport. The monetary donation I shall be putting towards Life Membership of English Heritage, of which I am a keen supporter.

It has been a great wrench to leave Newport after 22 years. At present I am still getting used to the idea, and freedom, of retirement. Most of my time at present is taken up with two very aged and infirm parents, but at the time of writing things are progressing well towards them entering a residential care home together. I leave Newport with a great deal of pride and satisfaction at the achievements made over the past 15 years. Examination results at GCSE and A level have risen dramatically; the fabric of the school has improved out of all recognition; the new facilities have been added such as the Science and Technology Centre, the Sixth Form Centre, the Sports Hall, the new Language block and the extension to the Noreen Allen Music Suite, and the school is now a Specialist Language College with a national reputation. But none of this would have been achieved without the support of my colleagues over the years. It has been a true team effort and it is this that has given me the most satisfaction.

As I stated at the dinner, I now become a “true” Old Newportonian. I thank the Society again for its generosity towards me. The Society has a valuable part to play in the future development of the school, and I wish it every success for the future.

Richard Priestley

4. The ON Society 100-Club
As reported in the last newsletter the 100-Club has again been highly successful with a record number of 192 membership tickets sold for 2006. The committee are extremely grateful to all those ONs who became members of the 100-club this year and much appreciate their generosity. The vast majority of members support the 100-club on an annual basis and it is because of this continued loyal support that the finances of the O.N. Society are in such a healthy state. The income generated by the 100-Club this year is well over £1000 after the payment of prizes of £1160.

The fact that the finances are very sound means the Society has no problems about its administrative costs and is able to continue to support the School in a number of different ways such as helping with the cost of refurbishing the pavilion, maintaining the pavilion clock and updating the Headmasters’ Board in the library.

Current membership of the 100-Club will end on 31 January 2007. The committee very much hope that all those who purchased tickets this year will renew their membership in 2007. The committee also hope that more ONs will join the 100-Club. The cost of one ticket is £12 and there is no limit on the number of membership tickets anyone can purchase. If you wish to join as a new member please complete the relevant section of the enclosed proforma and send it with your cheque to the O.N. Society Secretary at the School. Please make cheques payable to the ON Society 100-Club. The closing date for entry into the first draw of the New Year is 31 January 2007.

Those ONs who are already members of the 100-Club will, as usual receive a separate invitation to renew their existing membership.

Winners since the last Newsletter

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### New Members since the last Newsletter

C.Brett[98-06]; G.Sammons[02-06]; M.Stanley[76-83]


### Deaths

The following deaths have been reported to the Secretary since the last newsletter:

**R.W. [Ron] Hockley [45-50]**

Ron Hockley had been a member of the Society since he left the School in 1950. He was a qualified accountant and for many years held the position of General Manager of the Saffron Walden Building Society. He had been the O.N. Society’s Auditor for over 40 years a job he did with great efficiency. He always offered friendly advice when he thought the accounts had not been presented in quite the right way. He also audited the School’s Trustees’ accounts for several years. Ron lived in Saffron Walden all his life and was often seen around the town. He was a great stalwart of the Society and the whole membership owes him a very large debt of gratitude for all that he did in his capacity as auditor for so many years. He will be greatly missed.

**D.W.Last [1928-34] of Cambridge**

Sheila Innes [1979-2006], who taught at the School for 27 years. Richard Priestley [Headmaster 1991-2006] has written the following tribute:

**SHEILA INNES**

It is with great sadness that I have to report to members of the Society the untimely death of Sheila Innes. Until August this year, Sheila was the Curriculum Coordinator for Creative Arts and Head of Drama at the school. She retired in August of this year after 27 years of service to the school, but sadly passed away on 10 November 2006 after a particularly virulent and aggressive brain tumour.

Sheila was born in Leicester and left school, for family reasons, after her O levels and became a shorthand typist. She met her husband, Michael, at a cricket club dance, and they soon realised that they were meant for each other. Their son, Stephen, was born in this country, but their daughter, Kate, was born in Uganda to where Michael and Sheila moved on business. They stayed there for 2½ years before returning to this country at the outbreak of the Amin crisis. They moved to Sawston in 1971 and lived there to the present.

While still a mother looking after young children, Sheila decided that she wished to continue her education. She completed her A levels, a degree in English Literature and European Thought at the Cambridge College of Arts and Technology (now Anglia Ruskin University), and finally a PGCE at Cambridge University to become a teacher. This latter course brought her to Newport on teaching practice, and she was appointed to the school the following September.

During her 27 years at the school, Sheila taught English, Drama, Theatre Studies and latterly Philosophy. She was instrumental in Drama becoming a mainstream subject in the school today. She was passionate about Theatre Studies and later English Language becoming part of the A level curriculum, and started both these subjects in her own time with enthusiastic students before they too became part of the mainstream A level provision. Sheila was gifted at inspiring young people in the study of these subjects. Not only did they enjoy the study, but also produced outstanding performances in their examinations.

But Sheila will be remembered for so much more than her gifted teaching. She gave up so much time, taking young people to the professional theatre, mainly in London. For many it was their introduction to live theatre. Sheila’s main love was for Shakespeare, and who will ever forget the many school productions she put on, culminating in this summer’s triple production “A Night of Shakespeare”? So many young people who had never performed before gave the performances of their lives under Sheila’s direction and guidance.
Students respected Sheila but also loved her. They frequently returned to school to see her and keep in touch. My son, Ben (ON 1994-2001), was taught Drama and Theatre Studies by Sheila and appeared in several of her productions. His words sum up the feelings of all students whose lives were touched by her:

“Sheila Innes was not just a teacher in the eyes of her students, she was a legend. If you speak to any of her former students now, virtually all will agree that she has influenced or been responsible in some little way for where they are now, doing what they are doing. She always gave 110% to her students, giving up so much of her own life in order to help and support her students. She was a unique lady and was respected by all the students she helped because she had respect for you. She was always willing to put her neck on the line for you, and fight your corner, and because of that you always doubled your efforts as you never wanted to let Sheila down. She always told you how things were, straight, no messing about. If praise was deserved she would be the first to give it, or if you needed a good kick up the backside, then she would tell you that as well. She was quite simply one in a million, a legend, who will be greatly missed by all those who have had their lives touched by Sheila Innes.”

Sheila looked for the good in every one of her students. Her funeral took place on Tuesday 21 November 2006. The school was closed as a mark of respect to her. Newport Church was packed to standing room only with family, colleagues, friends and past and present students. Sheila, you will be sorely missed. We owe you so much.

Richard Priestley

Email Addresses
If you have an email address but do not receive the newsletters via email please send your email address to the ON Society Secretary at the School. If you have sent in your email address but still receive the newsletters by post please let the Secretary know.

President Designate
It was not possible for the Committee to put forward somebody to be elected as President Designate at the AGM. It was therefore agreed that the Committee be empowered to elect a President Designate for 2006/7 [i.e. President in 2007/8] at a subsequent Committee Meeting. This was done at the Committee meeting on Monday 13 November 2007. At the meeting Mr. Gordon Scott [1985-] was elected as President Designate. Gordon Scott was appointed to succeed Alec Selby as a Deputy Head in 1985. Since that time he has played in most of the ON Society v School cricket matches and has been very much involved in helping to organise and run the ON Society v School Hockey Matches with Di Reed. On several occasions he has deputised for the Headmaster at the Annual Dinner.
Proforma for taking part in the Sporting Fixtures against the School

Saturday 21 April 2007

Football_________________; Hockey_________________; Cross Country_________________

Saturday 7 July 2007

Cricket__________________; Mixed Hockey__________________

Please tick on the appropriate line

Name [Block Capitals]__________________________________________________________

Address [Block Capitals]_______________________________________________________

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______________________________________________Tel No._____________________

Email Address_________________________________________________________________

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Application for membership to the O.N.Society 100-Club

The cost of annual membership is £12.00. There are no restrictions on the number of tickets any member can hold. Cheques should be made payable to the O.N.Society 100-Club.

I wish to apply for [please print in words]____________________ticket[s] for membership of the O.N.Society 100-Club.

I enclose a cheque for £______________

Name [Block Capitals]__________________________________________________________

Address [Block Capitals]_______________________________________________________

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