



THE OLD TAUNTONIANS' ASSOCIATION

# NEWSLETTER

Edition No: 6

December 2025

Welcome to the latest edition of the OT Newsletter. Back in July, on a pleasant summer's day, 40 people attended the Summer Reunion Lunch, held at Ampfield Golf Club. As everyone who attended seemed to enjoy the occasion, we have booked the same venue for next year. The date for your diary is **Thursday July 16th 2026**. Interestingly, a number attended for the first time, whilst some regular attendees were absent for various reasons. Let's hope they all attend next year and we reach the 50, our much-missed friend Tony Robinson wanted to achieve.

We continue to look for a long-term home for the significant collection of memorabilia we hold, as the College no longer seems a possibility. We have therefore been in contact with the City Archive Department and after a positive first discussion with Joanne Smith via Zoom, she has kindly agreed to come and assess the collection. More on this to follow.

Best Wishes  
Roger Parsons  
Chairman

## Wisdom of hindsight

How lucky we were to receive a grammar school education by brilliant committed teachers with wide experience including war service (although little was talked about).

### REGRETS

Due to career moves from the south coast to Glasgow and back I did not keep up with friends. What happened to 'Dreamy' Simson the cyclist, 'Genius Squires', Roy Parker - merchant navy and great swimmer, George Percival - Senior Doctor etc.

### BIGGEST EMBARASSEMENT

Trying to make bread pudding at school camp despite living in a bakery - luckily boyhood hunger saved the day.

### GREAT TEACHERS

The legendary Ted Colenutt, Sid Sidebotham who we threw in the river at the launch of the tub four (who never spoke of the Japanese prisoner of war experience). Cleve Clowser who for several years took a group of us for a few days stay on HMS Vanguard our last battleship - us in hammocks, him in the officer's mess. Sambucus Stafford (he assured us he was our elder) - a brilliant new biology teacher. It was many years before the world caught up with his lectures on DNA.

Colin Staples (1951 – 1954)

## The 100 Club

### Recent Winners

June 2025	£20
David Neale	1960 – 1967
July 2025	£20
David Lloyd	
August 2025	£20
Ralph Turner	1959 – 1964
September 2025	£20
Malcolm Howell	1958 – 1963
October 2025	£20
Ron Sizer	1948 - 1953
November 2025	£250
Arthur Spencer	1932 – 1940
November 2025	£100
Gordon Birch	1953 - 1958
November 2025	£50
Peter Muddiman	1954 – 1962
December 2025	£20
Mike Flux	1944 - 1952

## Deaths

Mike Bristow	1940 - 1948
Alan Poynter	1941 - 1949
Arthur Spencer	1932 - 1940
Colin Wilson	1954 - 1958

# Summer Lunch 2025



This year's Summer Lunch was held at Ampfield Golf Club. The occasion was very much enjoyed by all who attended.



## Memories of Tauntons

Just a little story about Mr David Brown (Pecker) in 1950. It was his last lesson in Engineering which ended abruptly half way through. He had a strong sense of humour and at the beginning he said Dr King had been very helpful. Someone spilled a bottle of red ink on a table in the staff room, Pecker mopped it up with a copy of the Daily Worker brought in by Horace King, everyone else was Conservative not Labour so they found that newspaper very absorbing. Then the drawing office door opened and the boss said something to Mr Brown who left immediately never to return. That meant most of the class left the sixth form and only I remained to take A level Engineering a year later. No replacement teacher ever appeared and it was suggested I left too. Twenty years later I became a Chief Inspector of Schools and Colleges for Engineering and Design and Technology in the second city of Engineering. Another quite absorbing story. I am almost 92, my two brothers Jim and Jack also went to Tauntons but died in 2016. They were extremely successful.

Bob Barnes 1946 - 1951

The year is 1948 three years after WW2 ended, Southampton like many other towns and cities is badly blitzed. On a bright September morning that year, about 130 boys from various Junior Schools in the City, made their way to Tauntons' School in Highfield to begin a new chapter in their lives. Many of the boys, now in their late 80s (approaching 90s) have fond memories of the school, not only from the educational side but discipline and activity wise, such as, school operas, HMS Pinafore and Pirates of Penzance, under the Directorship of Mr Jenkins, were wonderful and bring back many happy memories. Little did I know at the time that two years after leaving Tauntons at age 16, I would be in Army uniform doing my two years National Service stint. It would be great to see or hear from the boys, perhaps a meeting at the school.

Dennis Batt 1948 1953

I was finishing my O levels in the summer of 1960 when we were all launched into the celebrations for the 200th Anniversary of the School's foundation. And, what a time we had in that very sunny summer. Amongst many other things (many of which are best left un-published!), with my fellow art enthusiast, Bob Tillier, we were given the task of painting an enormous mural of Crystal Palace, which was one passing point in telling the story of the School's development. This picture was one of many exhibits during an all-day event held in the main hall. We also all shared the line-up inspection by Earl Mountbatten. I'm sure the Masters were very anxious that us 'senior boys' would conform throughout, and I have to say that with a few honourable exceptions we did. That September, Bob, Julian Culley and myself took ourselves off to Southampton School of Art to study on the National Diploma of Design Course. They were much more proficient artists than me, they stayed and I left, went out to work for a while then went to university, and the rest is history, or rather Sociology. I retired some years ago as Professor of Sociology of Culture. Most of my books are on my Amazon page.

John Astley 1955 - 1960

I think it was 1943 but I fear that my memory isn't what it might be. Anyway, I was a recent addition to Taunton's 2A2 classroom during its wartime period of evacuation to Bournemouth. My own lodgings were with a friendly family in Boscombe where I shared space with two other similarly aged boys and two seniors. I won't mention names for fear of embarrassing someone but I must say that we all got on pretty well together. Possibly the major fly in our residential ointment was the fact that our host family, although kind and caring, were rather religious and we three juniors were inclined to cross the boundaries at times. Not intentionally, of course, but, at our Southampton homes, we all had been used to a somewhat more free view of the way our lives were to be enjoyed. Never-the-less, the three of us made the most of it and, I admit, by-passed quite a few home rules when the occasion arose. One of those is as follows: Some of you may remember the Daily Mirror with its various daily strip cartoons. One of these, now ceased since the 1950s, featured a buxom young lady called Jane, with Fritz, her pet dachshund. Today the cartoon would not raise many eyebrows but, in those days, Jane was considered to be a bit over the top. Somehow, she kept getting into situations where she accidentally lost most of her clothes and rushed hither and thither in the scantiest undies. Needless to say, we were not permitted to read these cartoons but, equally needless to say, we did whenever we had the chance! One of Boscombe's establishments was the Hippodrome Theatre and although I cannot recall how we managed it, we three juniors obtained tickets for one of the performances. Not Shakespeare, which may not have attracted us, but, and you've guessed it, the show featured Jane and Fritz. I truly cannot remember much about the show (we three were seated about as far from the stage as was possible) but I do remember our laughter and, dare I say, wonder at what went on..... and off! Today, bearing in mind what we all see on TV, it would be looked upon as unremarkable but in the early '40s, it was a memorable event. And, no, I can't recall how we returned to barracks, so to speak, after the event. But we had loved watching Fritz!

Brian Joyce 1942 - 1948

# Arthur Spencer - 104.75 years old - A life well lived !

*It is with much sadness we report the death of Arthur Spencer at the age of 104.75 years. We believe he was the oldest Old Tauntonian.*

*This remarkable man, was school captain in 1940, before joining the RAF and having a distinguished career during WW2. Arthur then had a long and successful career in teaching. Amazingly he and his wife Eva, attended our Summer Lunches until their late 90s, driving to Southampton and back in the same day from their home in Weston-super-Mare!*

*By a strange twist of fate, Arthur was the winner of £250 in the November 100 Club draw, made shortly after his death but before we knew. On Brian Osman's suggestion, we contacted Arthur's daughter Val and suggested the prize be sent to a charity he supported. Val said he would be 'tickled pink' and suggested the charity should be the RAF Benevolent Fund, of which Arthur was a regular supporter. There is to be a memorial service on 11th February 2026 in Taunton, Somerset. We will confirm arrangements as soon as we receive them. Below is a letter sent by Arthur's daughter Val a few years ago, which we felt was appropriate to print.*

Roger Parsons



Few people are able to boast spending one third of their life of Riley in retirement! One such OT is Arthur Spencer (1932 - 1940) and the sums are these. He retired at 64 from his job as Headteacher and 32 years later he is still very much enjoying life, with the gorgeous Eva at his side!

Eva and Arthur were a case of southern boy meets northern girl in the Midlands, right at the end of World War 2. Arthur, having trained as a navigator for Bomber Command had completed all his 'ops', spent some time in Italy dropping supplies to partisans and returned to the UK to fly in Transport Command, and later with BOAC on their flying boat service to Singapore where he had the good fortune to meet up with fellow Old Tauntonians.

Eva had moved south to train as a nurse in Nuneaton where she was swept off her feet by the handsome Flight Lieutenant (were all OTs of that era such smooth operators?)! Her quip to having been married to Arthur for 73 years is that it is more than two life sentences....

Their secret is, apart from a fine sense of humour, they love walking, eat well, enjoy a good wine, take regular breaks – usually a river cruise in Europe these days, keep in touch with friends and enjoy their family (most of the time!), read avidly, do the Guardian Crossword and continue to participate in lifelong learning through the U3A. And they still live independently in Weston-super-Mare and Arthur drives...

Arthur would be too modest to mention the accolades he has received. Most recently the state of the Art Science block at Priory School in Weston-super-Mare, at which he was the first Headteacher, has been named the Arthur Spencer Science Centre. The irony is not lost on him - science was not his forte as a Taunton schoolboy!

Two years ago Arthur was awarded the Legion d'honneur for services to France during the liberation by assisting the Resistance in a diversionary attack while the French were attacking a German airfield in the Vecors.

Arthur has also been invited to Bomber Command celebrations including to the unveiling of the memorial at Green Park and another in Lincoln, with all the top-brass present. He enjoys being able to support the RAF Benevolent Fund through delivering lectures on various significant raids in which he was involved.

Looking back, a schoolboy diet of cricket, hockey, English prose and poetry and 1930s French exchange visits has served the only child of working class parents pretty well.

Val Saunders (Arthur's Daughter)