

...continued

Mr. Mason's rules for good behaviour in Keil were, 'No swearing', 'No smoking' and 'No speaking to girls'. Well I confess to breaking two of those rules – and there were a few of us equally guilty! Some broke all three, but that's another story!

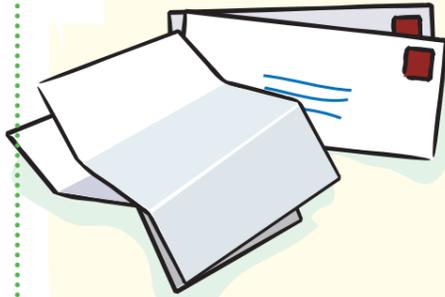
We all remember getting the 'peech' ('ch' pronounced as in loch) During a 'permission' Bobby Headrick ('Bunny'), 'Tubby' McArthur and I were caught smoking in Cranston's cinema, Glasgow. After supper the three of us were to report to the Chief's dorm. Oh, mi misere! The 'peech' was administered, six whacks with a slipper on the backside. The 'rules' were, you had to grip the bed-end with both hands and rest your head on the blanket. If you raised your head, you got another whack! Well, it was better than being reported to the 'Head' and we were 'first offenders'! This episode seemed to be the cause of mirth for some, because each whack was preceded by a drum roll, ably executed by Donald Brown ('Doc').

The 'No speaking to girls' rule I broke, when for the first time ever, Keil and St Brides School for girls, were to hold an inter-school debate. It would be quite impossible not to break the rule at some point of the debate, but it was after the debate was over that.....! Anyhow I doubt whether Mr Mason would have approved of the whole venture in any case. Can you imagine the sudden rush to join Keil Debating Society! Well, I was one of the lucky ones. I could not for the life of me remember what on earth the debate was about, but at the end of the night when we all returned by coach to Helenslee, we all had names and addresses of the girls we met that night.

On that high note, I conclude my reminiscences.

**Bill Menzies**

## More Memories of Keil in the 50's



*How many of us could lay our hands on correspondence, the very letters we sent to our parents while at Keil? Well, this Old Boy found the very same when clearing out the family home after the death of his mother. Being the Past President of the Kintyre Antiquarian Society, and a collector of family memorabilia, she was reluctant to throw out family cast-offs. Here are just a few excerpts of the letters he sent home, in 1st Year, which he thought might kindle the memories of some of the reportable events of life at Keil 50 years ago.*

**'18th Sept. 53**

Dear Mum,  
I arrived safely at Keil. I would like you to send some food. I am feeling hungry all the time. I have made friends with Colin Bryden he is from Helensburgh. There are three new boys from Malay and one from Egypt.....remember my tuck box.  
Love from Iain'

**'Wednesday 23rd**

There is a strong attack of Polio (infantile peralisis) in Dumbarton and we are not allowed out of school. The house where the decease is is 200 yards from the school .....my skin has stopped

peeling.....My trunk arrived on Thursday.'

**'29 th Sept.53**

.....I would like you to send me a pot of Apple Jelly (Jam) and a tin of beans and spegetti.....I would like you to send me a tin of pears, a pound of sugar for my cornflakes. At breakfast at 8o'clock there is only enough sugar for tea. I would like you to send me 2 tins of condensed milk and a couple of oranges. ....Also biscuits, apples , plums and a couple of bananas.....  
Love from Iain'

**'Oct 53**

I have not got another pillow slip.....My friend Colin Titterton from Colonsay got a parcel the other day with 2lbs of pears, biscuits and other fruits and not one thing was eatable except 4 apples, the rest was soaking wet with salt water from Saturday's gale. Latin is my best subject at Keil I am having a good time playing rigger nearly every day..... We were allowed out on Sunday but I did not go out because I had a paragraph to write out 10 times for laughing in the science class.... I have no NH yet....I got the peich(skelping) from one of the teachers for making a bad mistake in English.....I am all scratched and bruised with a black eye and a swollen leg from my last rugby match on Saturday.....I am feeling hungry as usual Did you get my parcel with sheets in it?.....We had a period of outside work.....I had to scrub a floor....  
Love from Iain  
PS I am hungry'

**Iain Wottherspoon**

## Club Merchandise

- Old Boys' Ties ..... £10
- A History of Keil School ..... £20
- Old Boys' Lamb's Wool Jumpers ..... £30
- Old Boys' Club Enamel Badges ..... £4

Limited stocks of these items are still available!! If you wish to purchase before they all disappear, why not place an order with Lesley Currie, or the Secretary and you can collect at the Annual Dinner, or we'll send by post at no extra charge!



## Old Boys' Club

### From the President

First let me introduce myself. I am Graham Murray. I joined the Keil community in the second Year Class in September 1950 at the same time as Mr Alex. Robertson, Headmaster replaced Mr. James Mason. Both of us had in the past been at Kelvinside Academy. In that 2nd year class was a very well known and dedicated past President of the Old Boys – Bill Menzies. Together we have been to many Old Boys Days and Dinners since. I'm the nearly bald one by the way. Bill has a good memory for names, unfortunately, I do not.

Well that's the intro. over, now to say how difficult it will be to step into Lesley's shoes, apart from the size that is. We owe Lesley a lot for the cheerful way in which she carried out her duties at a difficult time for the Club. Among her most noticeable achievements was organizing along with Michelle Oliver, the Balinakill Weekend in Kintyre and the organization along with Bill of the saving of the School artefacts and the setting up of a single location archive in which all the records, cups, dux boards and photographs will be stored. Lesley plans to be an active co-opted committee member.

That leads me into a proposed trip, similar to the Kintyre weekend (Friday-Sunday) to the Mansefield House Hotel, Hawick, whose proprietor, Ian McKinnon is an Old Boy and would make us most welcome. If you are interested in this proposal, would you please get in touch with Bill or myself, or speak to us at the Dinner. I look forward eagerly to being your President and to meeting as many of you as possible at the Annual Dinner on Friday 6th May; for further details, read on. Our guest speaker this year is to be Old Boy, Donald Cowey, Sports Editor of the Herald.

**Graham Murray**

### Annual Dinner

Hillhead Sports Club, Hughenden, Glasgow  
On Friday 6th May 2005, 7 for 7.30pm

Guest Speaker: **Mr. Donald Cowey**

Please use enclosed slip to place your order for tickets

Tickets  
**£25** pp



**Anyone interested in setting up a Clay Pigeon shooting team?**

The idea would be to set up a team for a small informal event between ourselves, which we could possibly add to the annual club diary. A shotgun certificate and some experience would be preferred, but is not necessary. Club members as well as family and friends would all be welcome. If you fancy an afternoon of good sport and friendly competition, please contact myself.

**Scott Tyler**  
tel. 01389 759894



Well it's that time again to update you all with Club matters. The sale of Keil School and grounds finally went through on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2004, much to the relief of the Trustees. The site is now in the hands of a local developer. Plans for the conversion of School House and the development of land for house-building was made available for inspection last Old Boys' Day through our Honorary President, Tom Smith, who is now Clerk to the Mackinnon Macneill Trust. A few weeks ago, the Old Boys' Club were approached by the Trustees to nominate an Old Boy, perhaps two, to join the Trust, in their endeavours to award bursaries when they are in a position to do so. The names of one or two likely candidates have been suggested. The committee now await the response from those concerned, whether or not to accept this invitation. In the event that a positive response is not forthcoming soon, any Old Boy with capital fund management experience preferably and would be interested to represent the Club on this Trust should contact myself in the first instance.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of March 2005, the wishes of those present at last Old Boys' Day and AGM were carried out, when the archival material from Keil School was gifted to West Dunbartonshire Council Archive Services. Present at the hand-over was of course the 'receiving' archivist Yvonne Ewing, Murdo MacDonald, archivist, Argyll and Bute Council, Alasdair Aitken, Club archivist, Scott Tyler, Club committee member and myself. There was no great ceremony, but it was thought appropriate to have the local press involved, namely 'The Lennox' and several photographs were taken. A photograph with caption is planned to appear in the 'Buteman,' as well as the 'Oban Times' and 'Campbeltown Courier.' A photograph taken on 15<sup>th</sup> March at the 'hand-over' appears elsewhere in this newsletter. The collection of memorabilia handed over may not be complete, in that there may be 'out there,' some Old Boy who possesses something that would add considerably to the collection. If willing to part with it, then please contact Yvonne Ewing at Dumbarton Library, tel. 01389 733273 or E-mail : yvonne.ewing@west-dunbarton.gov.uk. For future reference, our own Club website will eventually carry information which will allow viewers to access what the collection contains.



*Left - Right*  
Scott Tyler, A.M. Aitken, Yvonne Ewing, Murdo MacDonald, Bill Menzies

Three-dimensional objects, such as trophies, school uniform, etc. are not archive material as such. These are 'collectables' which, when we get word from Dumbarton Museum will be stored separately and possibly made available at some future date for an exhibition. The intention to gift certain items of 'silverware' to selected clubs has not so far been successful, for a number of reasons, including cost of refurbishment and engraving. However the committee are pursuing the original intention that

whoever decides to accept these trophies, the name of 'Keil' will be incorporated in the inscription.

Tickets priced £25 for the Annual Dinner on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2005, will be available by the time you receive this newsletter. Please use the enclosed slip when ordering your tickets and return with your remittance to Lesley Currie, 16, Sunningdale Place, Helensburgh, G84 7JB, or myself.

**Bill Menzies**

## OBITUARIES

### Duncan John Gillies (1927-2004)

The older Keil generation and in particular the Clachan contingent will have fond memories of Duncan, better known at Keil as DJ, the gentle giant from Applecross. At school apart from academic success he was a fine athlete and captain of rugby but unfortunately the war years having severely curtailed the opportunity for schools rugby he did not have the opportunity to terrify the Glasgow schoolboys as so many of his predecessors had. However his class as a player was demonstrated during Arnr service were he found that he could his own at a much higher level.

Like many Scots and Keil boys too, the wanderlust took over and Duncan was to be found in Malaya as a rubber planter but unfortunately as the result of a serious road accident he was forced to return home to recuperate. It was then that he married Margaret and they eventually settled in Helensburgh and he pursued his career with a pharmaceutical company. For many years he taught the Gaelic at evening classes and took up golf with great enthusiasm. Margaret bore three fine sons and the family grew up happily together but within sight of retirement a serious road accident changed life for ever.

Duncan was severely injured, such that would have killed a man of lesser strength, but the determination and will to live supported by Margaret and the family carried him through many months of surgery and hospitalisation. He was never again to be the robust and active man but his spirit remained as strong as ever. He was eventually able to visit his beloved Applecross again where he could relax and recover. I last saw him not long before he died and on asking how he was he replied with that friendly grin, "Well I'm not very good but you have just got to get on with it". This was the very essence of a gentleman that we were all privileged to know.

### John MacNeill

### David Boothroyd

Joined the staff of Keil School in 1993 until 1998 as English teacher. He was Housemaster in Mackinnon House and also taught drama. After leaving Keil he later moved to a school near Blackpool, Rossall. David died in October 2004 under tragic circumstances and was buried privately in Inverness. Our thoughts and condolences were passed to David's brothers.

*'Memories of early Days' in the last newsletter got the response I was hoping for and not surprisingly awakened memories for some readers, not least that of a classmate of mine, whose encouraging words provide the inspiration for this article. If put to it, I'm sure we can all recall events of our time at Keil, which remain in the memory as fresh as though it was yesterday. How many readers are around to picture scenes and the characters we had in staff and pupils during above period of Keil history, I wonder. Snapshots of the time – and these are just that – I hope will bring a smile to a few craggy faces!*

It is the beginning of term and for those of us travelling from the Kintyre outposts of Campbeltown, Tarbert, Ardrishaig, and Lochgilhead, including a few from Kilmartin, Tayvallich and Cairnbaan, we faced a long journey by Macbraynes bus. Alighting finally at 'the fountain' in Alexandria, hauling a heavy case, we'd then board a 'Central SMT' maroon double-decker bus for Dumbarton. At last we get off at Levensgrove Terrace and trudge our way up Helenslee Road to Keil at the summit.

My first term in 1<sup>st</sup> Year began as for most, in New House (latterly MacKinnon House). New House Chief was Hamish Gray ('Pin') and Deputy, Angus McKinnon ('Teekit') – what a pair! I rather enjoyed my first year there, until I think in 2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Kenneth Ormiston ('Foxy') and I ('Wem') found ourselves quartered in the small two-bedroom room below the Chief's room upstairs. We found p.d.q. that it was our task to keep the anthracite-fuelled fire in the Chief's room well stoked, particularly at all times thro' the night – or so it seemed. If not, Hamish had a novel punishment which he used on me, once only, and I'm sure my backside to this day still bears witness. Punishment began having head and shoulders pushed thro' an open window of the Chief's dorm and the window dropped down to hold one securely in place. The 'bow' window frame provided one's posterior to point in the direction of the bed upon which Hamish sat upright, pointing a pneumatic air pistol! Yelps of pain and anguish would echo into the dark night air, until Hamish was satisfied one was punished sufficiently. Angus of a more clement nature (he ultimately became a Free Church minister), would 'tut, tut' and mutter something in Gaelic by way of a benediction! As an aside, it may seem remarkable, that in later years as Old Boys, Hamish and I had a good laugh together and I was saddened when I heard Hamish not long after I met him, was drowned in a boating accident.

There was, you might call it a compensation for 'Foxy' and I because we discovered our 'orderly' was the head's house. Mr. and Mrs. Mason had already retired the previous year, and was replaced by Mr. A. Robertson ('Rab'). Now Mr. Robertson had a family of four, the eldest, Elizabeth, a good-looker held the attention of every Keil boy around at the time. I remember being quizzed about going into Elizabeth's bedroom to tidy up. It never happened; it was 'off limits'!!

In my 1<sup>st</sup> Year, I remember an amusing incident when Mr Mason ('Pete') was taking morning prayers. Mr. Mason was invariably accompanied by his faithful black labrador,

"Darky" who settled usually at the side of the lectern. This day, I was sitting near the piano beside the lectern and during a prayer, 'Darky' stretched and 'let off' a cracking rasp. Unperturbed of course, Mr. Mason continued in prayer, while the cheeks of Alec Macpherson, sitting at the piano were bright red stifling a good laugh.

I used to envy Billy Craig ('Squeaker') who had the enviable task of looking after Mr. Mason's car and acting as chauffeur. He never seemed to do anything else, as I remember. More about cars later on.

Sadly during my 1<sup>st</sup> Year, Mr. Alexander ('Musty') technical master and life-long friend and fellow teacher of Mr. Mason since the beginning of the school, died. A great loss was felt throughout the Keil community. However, the successor to Mr. Alexander was of course Mr Ian Macdonald ('Wee Aye') who arrived at Keil during the Easter term of 1950. He arrived at Keil driving a black, pre-war 'Morris 8' Coupé'

It was not long before our classmate, Ben Mundell ('Tiddler') an aspiring car mechanic convinced Mr. Macdonald that his car required a 'de-coke'. So one Saturday afternoon outside New House (where the two staff cars were garaged) Ben had dismantled the engine with cylinder head, valves and springs all laid out in order on newspaper. 'Wee aye' nearly had a fit! But Ben ground the valves in, re-assembled the engine, and turned it over without mishap, as I remember. We, his class mates were greatly impressed (Ben was only aged about 15 then). I think that was when Colin McNab ('Bertie bum' a nickname given to his older brother Bert, who had been at Keil) and Jim Carson ('Jum') started up the 'Car Club' which never amounted to much. Jim left in his 3<sup>rd</sup> Year to follow his father in banking. I remember on the following Old Boys' Day, Jim appeared resplendent in Old Boys blazer and badge, the first time I'd seen the Old Boys' blazer badge. That was in 1952.

Scrubbing the corridors before the start of the holidays was an absolute chore. I remember being given a 'dod' of soft soap on a piece of cardboard from Ian Weir ('Baggy') and with wee Jimmy Pow and others, scrubbed our way from the then Library (top corridor, School House) pass the Chief's sitting room, to outside the Common Room, which at that time was opposite the head of the staircase. When I got home later, my mother was shocked at the state of my knees; engrained black they were! Speaking of the Common Room, one term I got a 'scooshy' orderly to go to the newsagents just across the Leven Bridge to collect the newspapers for the Common Room.

Friday nights for some of us Argyll lads was eagerly looked forward to. Our 'washing' and 'tuck box' came by 'West Coast Motors' mail van, courtesy of the Campbeltown Craig family and Jimmy Russell the driver, then. At 8pm or thereabouts, the mail van would arrive and dropped off the parcels at the shoe shop, across from the foot of Levensgrove Terrace. Two of us were allowed to go down to collect the parcels, thereby missing a bit of 'prep'!

*continued overleaf...*