



Draxonians Association

News
Autumn 2019





A Warm Welcome from the new Draxonians' Administrator



Nicola Mooney
New Draxonians'
Administrator

Having attended Read School from 1990-2001, and being one of the first girls to start at the School in the newly created Pre-Prep Department - located at Strickland House in Camblesforth - it is now a great delight to be reunited with the School and I'm honoured to be taking on the administrative role on behalf of the ODA.

Since leaving Read and post A' Levels, I pursued tennis full time playing on the Pro Circuit. After life competing on court, I have a history of coaching, teaching and business. Currently I'm working for LNER, which is where I quite unexpectedly 'crossed tracks' with David Ward. It seemed our timing was far from coincidence, and we quickly arranged a follow up, a meeting with Ruth and here we are!

It's been fantastic to walk back into Read and see the changes that have occurred over the years. I've been impressed with the plans for the future, and the positivity I've been greeted with. I hope that with the continued development of the ODA, we will be able to work even more collaboratively along side the School; not only giving past pupils the opportunity to see 'old', familiar faces on a regular basis, but to also support the School in its growth and an exciting future.

Do feel free to pop into the School. We would love to welcome all Draxonians back to the School at any time and especially for open days, concerts and reunions. Details of forthcoming details are included in this newsletter and I very much hope that, despite busy calendars, you will be able to attend at least some of these.

I look forward to meeting you all (again) soon,

Nicola Mooney

Mark your calendars for the
Draxonians' Winter Reunion Luncheon held at Read School.

Sunday December 8th, 2019

10.45 am Church Service at The Parish Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Drax

12:15 pm Annual General Meeting in Performing Arts Studio (old Gym)

12:30pm Pre-lunch drinks in the Head's Dining Room (pay bar)

1:00 pm Winter Reunion Luncheon (please refer to the enclosed invitation letter) with special guests Mr & Mrs A. Saddler



Spring Reunion & New Draxonians Administrator

The Spring Reunion event saw 26 Old Draxonians, parents, staff and even a couple of pupils come together on Saturday March 30th at Selby Rugby Club. As well as plenty of good company and an occasional beverage, Draxonians enjoyed a steak pie lunch in the clubhouse followed by some good Saturday afternoon rugby. A cheese course was kindly supplied by William & Zoe Bayston and cake was enjoyed by all in celebration of Read School Chair of Governors, Peter Watt's 70th birthday.

Building on a long and historic association between the Club and the School, Read School still works closely with Selby RUFC, sponsoring the annual Minis festival and other events. Almost 15% of Read School pupils currently play at the club and with Selby RUFC coaching girls rugby in school as well as the School's 1st XV team, the link is thriving and set to continue for the future.

It is with great delight and pleasure we are able to announce the appointment of an Administrator for the Draxonians' Association. She is Nicola Mooney, a resident of Selby and a pupil at the school from 1990 - 2001.

Nicola's initial priorities will be to bring the membership database up to date, issue the newsletter and organise the Winter Reunion and AGM. In the longer term she will be proactive in fund raising for the Association and boosting the membership. Her position will be part time but she comes to the position with enthusiasm, skills and experiences to make it a great success and an asset to the school. Nicola can be contacted by email on mooney@readschool.co.uk

This appointment fills a long standing need and we hope you will all welcome Nicola back to the school.

Best wishes,

David Ward (President)



David Ward, Draxonians Association
President - 2001 to date,



Photo 1 – L to R: Mr & Mrs J. Lancaster (1952-58), Peter Watt, Chairman of the Board of Governors (1958-1963?), Joan Bond (parent), David Ward, President Draxonians Association (1943-1948), Don Bramley (1948-1955), Miles Sawdon (1977-1981), Craig Jackson (1980-1983)

Photo 2: L to R: Class of 1958-64: Bob Gascoigne, Dave Mennell, standing David Grant, Paul Kendall, Stephen Ward and Ken Houghton

Photo 3 – L : R: Craig Kavanagh (parent), Tracey Chapman (parent), Ruth Ainley (Head), Mark Voisey (Deputy Head), Trish Kavanagh (staff)



School life is always active and varied at Read



Our May Day celebrations included dancing around the Maypole, a charity colour run and a father and son's cricket match in front of our spruced up cricket pavilion.





What a fabulous
year we had
in 2018-2019;
Pupils, parents
and staff all
working together
to grow our
school.

Building strong links with the local
community- at Selby RUFC Minis
Festival, at Drax Church and with
local businesses at our careers fairs



Sport continues to play a major part
in pupils' life at Read School



The Phantoms - a Ghost Story?

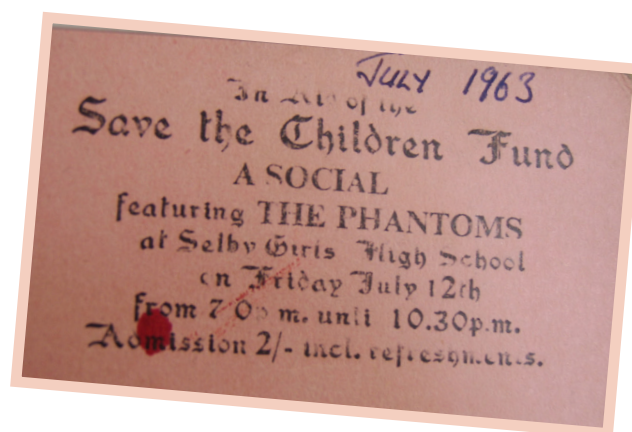
“We never set out to be a group, we had no instruments and we didn’t know how to play, but like all teenagers of the day we loved our music.”

Ken Houghton, Drummer (Read School 1958-1964)

We were fans of The Shadows mainly. ‘Ben’ Meredith, Bob Gascoigne and myself were masters of the air guitar even before the air guitar had been invented and we could hold the common room mesmerised at the precision and synchronicity of our Shadows ‘walk’. Then somebody mentioned instruments. Well why not? Ben was a genius keyboard player so he was all right and there was always a piano around. Bob decided he would be a bass guitarist but didn’t have a bass guitar and I knew I was born to play the drums, but didn’t have a drum kit. One half term Bob asked Ben and myself to look out for a bass for him. We found one in a music shop in Bradford and for the price the shopkeeper even shipped it out to the school for us (you could do that sort of thing with British Rail in those days). Now Bob had a guitar but no amplifier and I still didn’t have a drum kit.

Word of our endeavours spread and along came Dick Parkinson who not only had a guitar, albeit a well worn Spanish style acoustic, but knew a few chords. We were on our way but I still didn’t have a drum kit. Next came Ellison R Stephenson (Roy) who not only owned a decent guitar that he knew how to play, he also owned an amplifier! At last we would be able to hear what we were playing, but I still didn’t have a drum kit.

At this stage we were still doing this for fun and for our own entertainment - until the beginning of the summer term 1963 when Roy announced that we had been booked to play at Selby Girls High School summer dance in July.



These days you would call it a prom.

Cold shivers ran down our spines at the sudden realisation that Dick and Bob would have to speed up their learning program and I still didn’t have a drum kit.

Ben, being the master musician that he was started writing out the parts for the three guitarists who spent a lot of time learning them.

Just when we thought we were getting the hang of things, Dave Menzell came along and said “What you need is a singer”. And that was it. Suddenly we were a group with no name, all set to take over the world. There was the small problem of GCE ‘O’levels getting in the way but somehow we managed to cope with both.





But things turned out well in the end. Every rehearsal was at a different location so we didn't upset anyone (ie the head) with too much noise and by the time of the dance we could perform enough numbers well enough not to disgrace ourselves. It's interesting that at the time we were still in a sort of 'cross over' stage as far as dances were concerned so the program for the evening meant we played three or four numbers then there would be a break for a waltz and a quick step. Then we would play a couple more, then another break for a fox trot and a tango. And so the night went on.

We played at the High School the following year (so we must have been good) where James Everatt had replaced Roy and Dave Mennell had left therefore we were without a vocalist the second year. We performed for the parents during the school plays and played at a couple of Christmas dos in local village halls. We didn't take ourselves seriously, and at the end of the second year, with no Simon Cowell to help us achieve world domination, we all left school and went our separate ways.

I still feel proud that we managed to achieve all this by ourselves. This wasn't a school thing, it was our thing. Strangely, apart from Roy, nobody continued to play and I still don't have a drum kit!

Ken Houghton.

Read pupils recently learned about the Phantoms and the long tradition of rock groups at Read in a weekly assembly. With over 60% of pupils having music lessons in school, it is surely only a matter of time before a modern day equivalent to the 'Phantoms' appears. Watch this space for news of 'Read Rocks' a festival to celebrate the talented musicians of today and yesterday..



Still Rocking!



The Phantoms with their army of fans from Selby High . Move over Buddy Holly





Head's Post Bag

In this new section, we will publish excerpts of important and interesting correspondence received from the Draxonian family

Dear Head,

My name is Mike Taylor and I am an Old Draxonian, in fact a Very Old Draxonian, (1944-1952). I am writing to you to explain how much I enjoyed the form and content of your recent Draxonian Newsletter and also to mention 2 or 3 other 'historical' matters.

When I joined the School in 1944 we were still very much at war and several of the pre war masters were members of the forces, their posts having been taken temporarily by women teachers or older men who had come out of retirement. As we moved into 1945 the ex servicemen began to return to Drax and I distinctly remember 'Spike' arriving back at School.

I was looking out of the upstairs science corridor window when a tall, lean, figure wearing an officers' raincoat came striding up to the main door. Although I was not a cricketer, and joined the Science Sixth, I came to know him very well and to admire him greatly, in fact I visited him in Salisbury a couple of times after his retirement [I have lived in Chichester since 1971].

There is an amusing story connected to my visits which I will tell you about if ever I speak to you, suffice to say that Spike was untechnical and a terrible car driver!

Secondly to say that I have a copy of a booklet produced by John Hunter entitled 'The Life and Times of Charles Reade' which was given to me by my good friend Don Bramley some years ago.

On page 29 of the booklet it is stated that Charles is buried at St Margarets Church, Lincoln; The church is now a ruin. I have asked Don to make a copy of the book available to you but perhaps you already have one. I lived at Hirst Courtney where my Dad was the Head of the Primary School [now closed] and so I toiled through Carlton on the way to Drax six days a week.

And finally 1667. The 17th Century was a time of enormous change with the 60's being particularly important: The Plague, The Fire of London, Pepys, the foundation of the Royal Society, and of course the three Reade Schools. In 1665 Isaac Newton was an important figure at Cambridge University but the University closed for several years because of the plague and so he returned to live at Woolsthorpe Manor, his family home, a few miles from Corby Glen where Reade was establishing a Grammar School.

It is at Woolsthorpe where he is supposed to have watched his apple fall and worked on the development of calculus which he needed for his 'Principia' etc. I wonder if Charles Reade knew Isaac Newton? What a Thought!!

All the very best,

Mike Taylor
(Read School 1944-1952)

We would love to receive news from all Old Draxonians, whether it's memories of school days or current news. Contact details overleaf..



Dear Head,

I apologize for the lateness of this response to 'Spike' Moloney's appeal but I have been ill recently. I am pleased to have the chance to contribute as I owe him, literally. I joined Drax in 1947 and it was quite common for the junior boarders to send off to a local firm for foreign stamp approvals. The idea was to sell some, keep a percentage and return the rest with a postal order.

As it was a hot summer the tuck shop took precedence and I didn't return mine until a threatening letter arrived at school. I was called before the Boarding Master, Mr Moloney who reminded me of my responsibilities and then told me to leave it in his hands. I heard nothing else and so, obviously, he settled the account.

On another occasion Dom Carty-Forest and I were the only two boarders not to have visitors to take us out on a Saturday afternoon at half term. Mr Moloney paid for our fares to Selby and cinema seats.

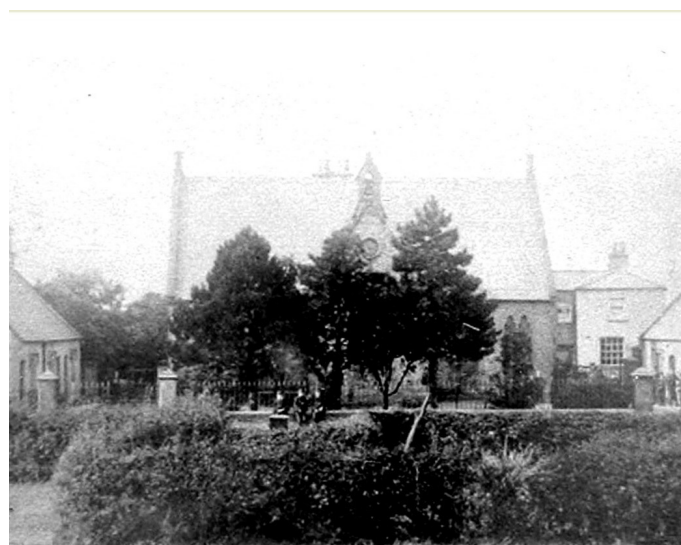
There are many other positive comments I would like to make about him along with memories of Creenan and Ballard, evoked when reading the newsletter but they will have to wait a little.

Yours faithfully,

AG Durkis

(joined Read in 1947)

Earlier last year we launched our Moloney Hall ceiling appeal and to date have raised nearly £3000 of our £12,000 target. We are very grateful for all contributions received so far



John Fishley - Memories of a Much Loved Physics Teacher

In May the school received the sad news that John Fishley, who taught Physics here in the late 1980s and into the 1990s had passed away after a short illness.

John came to Read after taking retirement as a Headmaster, perhaps wanting a quieter location. However he soon threw himself wholeheartedly into school life. Not only did he do an excellent job of teaching Physics alongside Harvey Tripp, but he took on additional responsibilities, including for a time Director of Science.

I will be forever grateful to John for the tremendous support and assistance he gave to me in my role as CCF Contingent Commander. Despite a dark blue naval background he soon adapted to the pale blue uniform of the RAF section. John was equally at home dressed in shabby trousers and even shabbier pullover doing adventure training in the Cheviot Hills. He carried a very battered rucksack with him all the time on camps. He had taken it to the top of a number of mountains in New Zealand in the 1970s and he refused to let go of it!

His former pupils and colleagues will know what I mean when I describe him as 'firm but fair'.

Lt Col(retired) J Staves





All Change for the Head's House: A New Admin HQ for the School

First impressions of the school are very important and particularly to potential parents contemplating spending over £100,000 on their child's education. In the past year a major refurbishment project has been completed in school, making an admin HQ and improved visitor reception centre. It is both the charm and frustration of Read School that some arrangements have not changed for over 50 years but in the case of accommodating visitors to the School, it was time to make some changes. The new Head's decision to remain in her nearby Snaith home rather than occupying the Head's House, offered a solution.

additional load, redecorating and new carpets throughout. Gutters and barge boards also needed replacement and all this work was done between August 2018 and February 2019 at a cost of just under £75,000.

As the House has now become part of the school, an Architect was employed to ensure the work brought the building up to modern standards, particularly regarding fire risk, lighting standards and design of a high quality visitor washroom.



The existing arrangements were unsatisfactory because the School's Main Reception is off the narrow corridor from the main entrance to the school and is through a glass sliding window to the School Secretary and the Admin. Assistant/Exam's Officer resulting in noise and congestion at busy times.

The Matron occupied two rooms off the corridor to the Dining Hall. In my day they were the boarders boot rooms and it was a serious offence not to change to slippers before going upstairs to the dormitories. The room occupied by the Matron was unattractive and it was difficult to maintain confidentiality which is essential with health matters. The other room was the patient's rest room and as it was positioned at right angles to the Matron's room it had difficult access for stretchers.

The Head's PA was located in the old 'F' classroom with direct access to the adjacent Head's Study. Meanwhile the Bursary was located at the opposite end of the school making cohesion and communication a challenge.

The Head's House is the oldest part of the school, probably dating from the late 1800s, and although in sound structural condition it needed significant refurbishment. It needed new uPVC sash windows throughout to replace the existing rotten and inoperable sash wooden windows, replacement of the night storage heaters by new radiators connected to the school's biomass boilers which had the capacity to take the

The outcome has been the Head is now located in the former ground floor lounge giving her a large and attractive office with windows on two sides overlooking the lawns. Here the Head can interview parents and important visitors in a welcoming and comfortable environment giving a good impression of the School.

The Head's PA is often the first person a visitor to the School comes into contact with. For this and confidentiality reasons it is vital she has a welcoming personal office and this is now located directly across the corridor from the Head in the former Head's Study.

The former Head's PA's room is now the Bursary which has enabled the administration of the school to be brought together and in turn has released the former Bursary building (which at one time occupied the old Library and 'G' Classroom) to the Inclusive Learning Department. In turn this has released rooms on the other side of the main entrance corridor (former boarder's tuck room) for occupancy by senior teaching staff. The Matron is now located in a much nicer and more secure office with convenient stretcher area on the ground floor of Norfolk House and her old rooms off the corridor to the Dining Hall are now the Reprographic Office and Stationery Store with the WC removed and the room converted to a secure store for exam papers.





The refurbishment has also converted the former Head's Dining Room into a very useful meeting room which now houses a display of school photographs and other historic memorabilia. The offices and meeting room have also been equipped with some nearly new furniture donated from a business in Leeds thanks to a contact from a parent.

A few tasks remain: lighting of the driveway and resurfacing of the roadway, both of which are desirable remain to be done. However thanks to a donation from an old Draxonian, a number of excellent lights originally ordered for the Humber

Bridge but not used have been purchased at a bargain price and these have now been installed to illuminate the Head's Driveway and along the swimming pool side of the Moloney Hall. Further generous donations have provided fixtures and fittings for the lights.

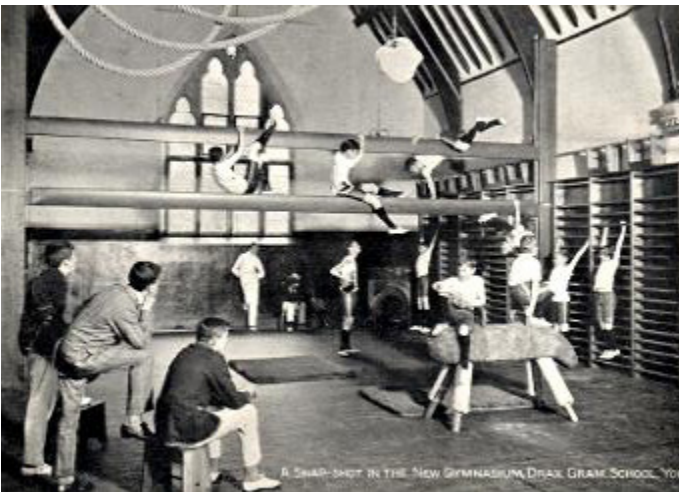
The driveway will be an expensive job as it is a circular one-way drive round the lawn which will need edging and includes a small car park at the entrance.

All in all the School now has Visitor Reception and Management Office facilities fit for purpose and in keeping with Read's history and the prestige of an independent school.

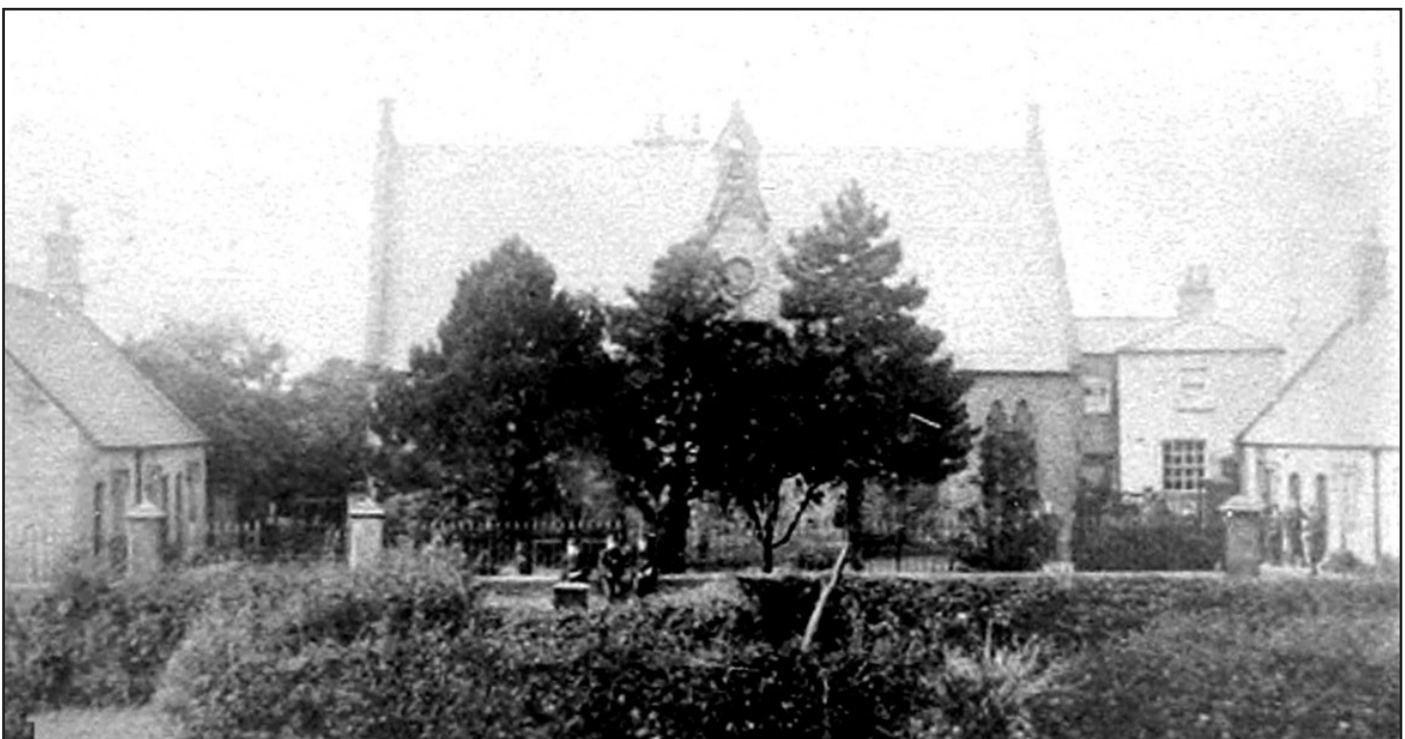
The refurbishments have been successful in delivering a practical solution to visitor logistics while capitalizing on one of the nicest aspects of the School and making it accessible to all.

We hope you will have the opportunity to see all of this on a future visit to Read School.

David Ward



The Old Gym - now a drama studio and adjacent to the Management & Finance offices





Our Autumn Term 2019 Draxonian Calendar of Events

Our 2019 Autumn Term Draxonian Calendar for Read School alumni ranges from School Open Days to Draxonian-specific networking and social events.

We welcome former pupils of all ages as well as retired staff to all events which are great opportunities to meet fellow alumni of all ages and from varied backgrounds. Please mark your calendars for the following:

Friday, November 8th 7:00 pm
PFA Curry Night & Sixth Form Quiz

Monday, November 11th 10:45 pm
Remembrance Service at St Peter & Paul Church, Drax followed by lunch in school

Friday, November 29th
Winter Music Concert 7:00 pm

Saturday December 7th
Artisan Christmas Market 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Saturday December 8th
Winter Reunion Lunch
Service at St Peter & Paul Church, Drax 10.45 am
Welcome Drinks and DA Committee Meeting 12:15 pm
Reunion Luncheon 1:00 pm
All Draxonians and spouses / partners welcome!

To be announced:

January Reunion Supper & Disco

Spring Reunion Lunch at Selby RUFC

We also extend a warm welcome to all Draxonians for 'drop in visits' when a cup of tea and a perusal of the old archives is always available! Please come and visit us soon.

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Please let us know if you would like to receive a copy of the weekly school newsletter or our Draxonian Publications for Junior, Senior School & Sixth Form

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