



# INDEFATIGABLE

OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION



2022 NEWSLETTER





# Greetings Everyone and welcome to your 2022 Newsletter.

Firstly, my thanks to everyone who has once again showed that true “Indeboy” spirit and can-do attitude to keep our association going. To all those new committee members welcome to the next chapter. To all those who stepped down at the 2022 reunion my thanks to each of you for your sustained loyalty and support over the years, may you find the time to enjoy another reunion or two.

By the time you read this 2022 will be just a memory but a year that was full of so many moments that will mark the year as special. We can look back at a very unpredictable year where Russia invaded Ukraine, we celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, the lionesses did the nation proud winning the Euros and we had a record-breaking 40°C heatwave during the summer!

Boris Johnson’s reign as PM was over and The Queen on her passing was succeeded by her son, King Charles III and once again we thought “football was coming home” only for history to repeat itself with another miss from the spot.



As Indefatigable Old Boys we once again came together for a weekend in June to reflect on the past and meet up with friends with whom we share a common interest... this for most is where the path to our careers started, I think it is true to say for many the path took a different course, but for those who have enjoyed a lifetime at sea I was reminded of just what that means during the Merchant Navy memorial day service in Liverpool in September. The parade down to

the pier head and the thanks we owe to the seaman who dedicated their lives to the service of our Nation was once again a poignant moment of reflection for all in attendance.

We ended the year in a cost of living crisis marked by high inflation and rising energy bills.

It's truly been an up and down year but amidst it all there are those that go above and beyond and do that little bit more in the interests and support of others. So, as we all reflect on what 2022 meant to each of us let us take a moment to say thank you for all that we have.

On a personal note, 16th December 2022 marked my final day in the workplace as after 44 years and four months I decided to call time on my career and retire to a more sedate lifestyle.

Who knows how unpredictable 2023 will be, but if we stay strong at heart and remain true to our beliefs this will be another year to remember and will also contain memories that we remain with us for a lifetime. What we do know is to live life to the full...Covid reminded us of that.

Make the most of every opportunity life brings. Be kind, considerate and show compassion in the hope that the future is brighter, fruitful and rewarding.

Wishing all my friends and colleagues a peaceful, prosperous and healthy new year!

See you again in June as we come together to celebrate our 40th year as an old boys association.

God bless you all.

**Andrew I. Butler**  
**Chairman Indefatigable OBA**



# **IOBA 38<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Minutes**

# IOBA 38<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

*Saturday 11th June 2022 at JSMTTC Indefatigable*

## MINUTES

### **1. OPENING ADDRESS - Andrew Butler (77/78), Chairman**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the change of location as the main hall was under repair.

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Andrew Butler (77/78), Chairman**

Sir Michael Bibby (IOBA President), Mrs Pamela Brown (IOBA Honorary Member), Steve Humphries (75/76) – IOBA Archives Secretary, Rev, Canon Bob Evans (IOBA Honorary Member), Lt Col Jennifer Painting (Commandant JSMTTC), John Young (63/64), Adam and Rachel Meacham, Martin and Linda Bell, Steve Spencer and Will Gyte.

### **3. OBITUARIES RECEIVED 2016/2017 - Andrew Butler (77/78), Chairman**

The Chairman with sadness, asked to record the names of Indefatigable Old Boys that had been notified to the Committee as having “crossed the bar” since the last AGM. They were:

- Terry Dewfall – Associate Member and was the Father of Inde Boy Chris Dewfall (74/75)
- Gerald Corral (1951)
- Ian Houghton (1946)
- Doug Marks (AKA Alfie) (45/46)
- Gwen Moreland – Matron at Indefatigable

Falklands War 40th Anniversary remembering those Inde Boys who bravely gave their lives:

- Robert Griffin (74/76) -Sadly lost his life on a landing craft 'Foxtrot 4' from HMS Fearless during the closing days of the Falklands War. Robert was 22 years old.
- John David Stroud (77/78) - Sadly lost his life on-board HMS Glamorgan in June 1982 when the ship was hit by an Argentinean Exocet missile. John was 20 years old

All present were asked to stand for a minute's silence.

#### **4. 2021 AGM MINUTES - Andrew Butler (77/78), Chairman**

The Minutes of the Last AGM held at JSMTTC Indefatigable on Saturday 24th June 2021 were approved by Adrian Baker and seconded by Mark Palmer.

#### **5. MATTERS ARISING FROM 2021 AGM MINUTES – Andrew Butler (77/78), Chairman**

There were no matters arising from the 2021 AGM Minutes.

#### **6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2021/2022 - Andrew Butler (77/78), Chairman**

The Chairman began by explaining that it had been a very quiet year in terms of events for the IOBA although circumstances have meant one of immense concern regarding the ongoing survival of the Association and thanked everyone who has considered keeping alive our traditions & Values.

The Sea Cadet HQ awards will be reintroduced in 2022 so we hope to have another little trip to the winning sea cadet unit in 2023.

A busy time preparing for the reunion planning and ensuring all the necessary protocols are followed also could not be achieved without support including that of the Staff at JSMTTC I wish to record my thanks. Sadly, the Commandant will not be joining us for dinner this evening but will be represented by Lt Will Brennan.

Thank you to Tony for the Newsletter in 2021 and the interesting articles from our members.

My thanks to all the team for their support and to you our members I look forward to the next twelve months and hope that we have some more great tales to tell.

The Chairman read out a personal note from Adam Meacham as he and his wife Rachel were on a cruise which was their first holiday since Adam's cancer scare. Adam wished to thank the committee and those who have donated to his 'Just Giving' page (Adam and Simon Pilgrimages 2022) which made a positive start towards his £5K target. He wished everyone a great time at the reunion and hoped to see most of them there next year.

Vibrant Shirt night raised a magnificent £452.23 for Prostate Cancer Charity. This has been the most made on the night to date and a big thank you to all those that donated to this worthwhile cause.

## **7. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

At this point in the meeting the Chairman took control as 6 x Committee roles were up for re-election. The new election process was in the main a success and although all advertised had a single nomination the committee saw it fit to bring them to the AGM for challenge. The results are as follows:

- IOBA Chairman (2022-2025). Andrew Butler was challenged for the position on the day by Tony Eastham and after supporting briefs the AGM voted for Andrew Butler to continue in the role.
- IOBA Treasurer and Membership Secretary (2022-2025). Nomination was John Aspinall who was unchallenged.
- IOBA Newsletter Editor (2022-2025). Nomination was Owen Sutton who was unchallenged.
- IOBA Vice Chairman (2022-2024). Nomination was Ian Parr who was unchallenged.
- IOBA General Secretary (2022-2024). Nomination was George Brown who was unchallenged.
- IOBA Social Secretary (New Role for a 3 year period). Nomination was Richard Lawson who was unchallenged.



## **8. MEMBERSHIP - Tom Keyes (63/64), Treasurer & Membership Secretary**

The membership stands a 252 Members as at 31 Dec 2021.

A proposal was made by Adam Stubbings and seconded by Nigel Godfrey to pause or remove the membership fee to encourage new members noting that on the various Facebook pages we have over 600 members. This could be seen as an opportunity to increase the membership by capturing details for future re-unions or events. The proposal was put to vote and the AGM approved the proposal noting (1) those members who already pay the membership fee and wish to continue as a donation can do so (2) Committee will assess the membership on the understanding that the proposal can be reverted back to a membership fee if deemed necessary to ensure ongoing funds were available. The IOBA Constitution will need to be amended to reflect this. Action: General Secretary

### **Membership Stat's - 2022**

252 Total Members @ 31st December 2022

178 Paying members (68%)

51 Life members (20%)

23 Honorary members (9%)

27 Overseas members (11%)

2 New members 2021

4 Moved to delisted list

## **9. PRESENTATION OF 2021 ACCOUNTS - Tom Keyes (63/64), Treasurer & Membership Secretary**

- The Treasurer ran through FY 2021 accounts providing details of revenue (£4,550) and expenditure (£2,721) and the balance in the bank as at 31 Dec 2021 (£21,487.86).
- If you would like a Summary of Accounts for 2021, please feel free to speak to the Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

## **10. IOBA SHOP - Ian Parr (74/75), Merchandise**

The shop continues to offer new and encouraged the members to visit the shop stall today and online.

IOBA shop web site: [www.rolldovestudio.co.uk/rolldoveshop/cat\\_603654-Indefatigable-old-boys-association.html](http://www.rolldovestudio.co.uk/rolldoveshop/cat_603654-Indefatigable-old-boys-association.html)

## **11. IOBA NEWSLETTER - Tony Eastham (75/76), Newsletter Editor**

All paid up members should have received your copy (via mail or electronic version) of the 2021 'IOBA Newsletter'. If you have not received a copy, please speak a member of the committee and we will get one to you.

- Thank you to everybody who contributed to the 2021 edition
- Remember It's your stories that make it such a fascinating read
- 2021 Newsletter Costs: Cost per person (incl worldwide postage) = £2.89 (to the doormat)
- Need contributions for the 2022 Newsletter

## **12. IOBA MEDIA UPDATE – Owen Sutton (91/95) – Web Master**

Nothing significant to report.

## **13. KEY EVENTS 2021/2022 - Andrew Butler (77/78), Chairman**

- Saturday 25th June 2019. National Armed Forces Day
- Sunday 4th September 2022 (TBC). Merchant Navy Day Liverpool
- Saturday 08th October 2022. IOBA Southern Branch Meeting (London)
- Saturday 03th June 2023. Proposed date for the IOBA 40th Anniversary, 39th IOBA reunion and IOBA AGM.

Please check regularly on <http://indeoba.com> and Instagram page for updates, where you will find various activities the IOBA participates in.

#### **14. AOB - Richard Lawson (85/88), General Secretary**

Sunday 12th June 2022 – St Mary's Church Morning Service at 10:00. This year, old boys would like to remember in thought two of our lost friends, who were sadly killed in action during the Falklands Conflict in 1982, forty years ago.

IOBA Constitution. Updated to reflect the new Election process.

Indefatigable Silverware and Ships Bell validation 2021

Validation fee costs £500.00 + VAT (£600.00)

<http://www.rickjenningsconsultant.co.uk/>

<https://www.silverlady.co.uk/>

A 'Hard Bound' copy was included in the cost of the validations, digital copy available on request from Steve Humphries.

The Indefatigable items below held at JSMTTC are now covered by Towergate insurance Brokers , which includes transportation to and from JSMTTC.

- Silverware = £42,185.00
- Ships Bell = £22,500.00
- Total = £64,685.00
- Annual insurance cost = £179.32

**The meeting is now closed, thank you**

Saturday: 11th June 2022 @ 1230hrs

# Treasurer's report

## Summary of accounts for FY 2022.

Starting Balance Jan 2021 = £19,647.62

| <b>Revenue FY 2021</b> | <b>£</b> | <b>Expenditure FY 2021</b> | <b>£</b> |
|------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|
| Reunion 2021           | 2,329    | Reunion meals 2021         | 2420     |
| Membership             | 1,188    | Travel & Tolls             | 71       |
| Reunion Raffles etc    | 385      | Wreaths                    | 88       |
| Robert Griffin Award   | 50       | Website                    | 142      |
| Shop goods             | 208      | Total Expenditure:         | 2,721    |
| Vibrant shirt Night    | 390      |                            |          |
| Total Revenues:        | 4,550    |                            |          |

*Notes: £21,487.86 Balance in bank as @ 31st December 2021*



# **IOBA Gala Dinner**

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2023**

# Training-ship Indefatigable Old Boys Association 40<sup>th</sup> celebration

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2023**

In celebration of the Indefatigable Old Boys Association 40th Anniversary.

**YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO:**

A 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner to be held on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2023 assembling at 19:00 hrs in bar '1884' for dinner at 20:00 hrs.

**Venue:** The Hugh Owen Room, Bangor University Event Management Centre, Collage Road, Bangor, Gwynedd. LL57 2DG

**Ticket price:** £55.00 per person.

Ticket price to include 4 course dinner with a limited wine selection per table, live entertainment, small promotional gift and a raffle ticket for a one off prize.

Payments by Cheque: £55.00

Cheques made payable to the 'Indefatigable OBA' send to: John Aspinall 59/60: IOBA Treasurer & Membership. Shepherd's Cottage, Pinfold Lane, Knowsley, Lancashire. L34 9EL.

or Pay instantly online via PayPal: £57.75 (www.indeoba.com)

**Dress code:** Smart / Black tie optional.

For those who wish to join the annual 'Vibrant Shirt' night, in aid of Prostate Cancer, will also be held at Bangor University on the previous evening Friday 2nd June, in the bar '1884' with exclusive use for the evening.

The University are able to provide a hot buffet for the Friday evening at a cost per head of £22.50 ~ attendees should make clear on the BOOKING FORM (when published) if they should require the hot buffet to enable the committee to advise the caterers accordingly.

The BOOKING FORM for Dinner on Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd will be found on our website when available.

[www.indeoba.com](http://www.indeoba.com)



**Accommodation:** There are rooms available to book directly with Bangor University now (18/11/22). Rooms at the university have been block booked by the IOBA for Friday 2nd June and Saturday 3rd June evenings but must be booked directly with the university by yourself.

Please contact the reception team directly and quote the group code = GA01671 in order to book the rooms at the group rate, guests can either call on 01248 365900 or send an email to [info@themanagementcentre.co.uk](mailto:info@themanagementcentre.co.uk).

Please state when booking accommodation, if you require Breakfast or not.

**Wheel Chair users:** Facilities are fully accessible for wheelchair users, please note that due to The Management Centre being a Grade II listed building, there is no lift access to the third floor bedrooms.

**Venue contact details:**  
01248 365900 [info@themanagementcentre.co.uk](mailto:info@themanagementcentre.co.uk)

**Parking:** Parking is free on site and there is capacity for up to 100 cars.

*NB: The final cut off date for booking, will be Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2023, not a day later.*

*Visit the website for the latest information: [www.indeoba.com](http://www.indeoba.com)*



# **2022 Reunion Gallery**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2022**















**Good Reads**



Contribution got the Newsletter from  
Charlie Claridge 62/63.  
The event happened 1979/80.  
STORY PERHAPS

## Dredging up the past - 1979

I became Captain of a small sea going dredge called the Sand Gull 600 ORT. We dredged aggregate mainly off the Belgium coast and the Thames estuary.

On occasion we would dredge up ordnance left over from the 1st and 2nd world wars

Nearly all these were harmless and we used to dump them on the quay at Dover where the army would collect them.

This one day we dumped some on the quay and the army turned up to collect them. They took one look and evacuated the whole area including the ships while they dealt with them.

I have never been faced with something like this so I decided to muster my crew in the bar of the Jolly Roger Pub just down the road clear of all the trouble and found all correct. As we could not return onboard we were forced to take refreshments there.

The all clear came about 1430 as the pub was planning to shut. We returned onboard and after a couple of hours of well earned rest we sailed at about 1600.

The local paper printed an article about another kind of sea shell being dredged up.

The company I worked for declined to comment.

### **Charlie Claridge 62/63**

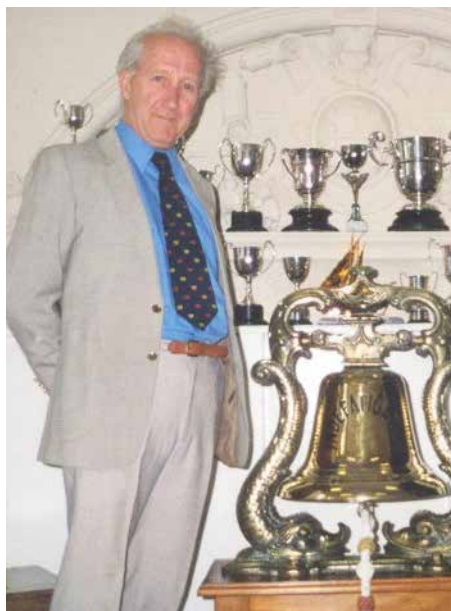
*Charlie sadly crossed the bar in January 2023*

# The Indefatigable Years 1977 - 1991

*Excerpts from Pat Purser's  
autobiography*

## Chapter 1

In 1968 I took early retirement from the Royal Navy and qualified as a schoolmaster at St Matthias Teachers Training College, Bristol. I then taught for seven years at the village Primary School in Chilthorne Domer, situated about seven miles from my home at East Lydford in Somerset. Being a 'mature' teacher (I was then 40 years old) with only a few years teaching experience, it was difficult to gain promotion in this sector of what was a female dominated profession. I was beginning to feel claustrophobic, and coupled with the fact that I was the only male in this 3-teacher school, together with the strained relationship developing between myself and the Headmistress, it was time for a move! But where? In 1977 I applied for a teaching post in a private Boys Boarding school at Eastbourne, attended interview and was awaiting a decision.



In the meantime, I had noticed somewhere that the Captain Headmaster of the 'Indefatigable' Boarding School on Anglesey was none other than an old 'Conway' pal of mine, Bob Youngman. In our days aboard the old ship, we never mentioned the 'Inde', considering it socially our inferior as it trained boys to be ratings in the Merchant Navy; whilst we were embryonic Officers! However, I loved that area of the country and considered that if an 'Old Conway' could find suitable employment there why shouldn't I ?! Not wishing to presume on our

friendship I wrote a formal letter asking if there was the possibility of a teaching post at the school. Bob immediately recognised who I was and telephoned me to ask if I would like to bring the family up and look at the place. Having so far heard nothing from Eastbourne I jumped at this opportunity. It was the middle of the warm summer of 1977 and we had a delightful drive north, booking in for B & B near the 'Inde', in the village (with the longest name) of Llanfair Pwll.

Bob and his wife Pauline, welcomed us enthusiastically. He then took us all on a guided tour of the empty school. It was Spartan but spotlessly clean, kept that way, I was later to learn, by the boys themselves! Each dormitory housed from twelve to twenty boys in single or double bunk type iron bedsteads. The grounds were extensive, but the whole place had the air of 'poverty'. Again, I learned much later that there was little capital investment, the school almost running on a 'hand to mouth' existence.

A brief word here about the history of the 'Indefatigable'. Charles Dickens, with his writings in the Nineteenth Century was making Victorian England uncomfortably aware of the social deprivation and exploitation of its poor, in particular the children. Wealthy philanthropists, possibly with a conscience to salve, were beginning

to put their money towards helping these less fortunate people. The wealth of Liverpool had been built up on the enterprise and entrepreneurial activities of local ship owners. One must also say here that much of this wealth derived from the infamous "triangle of trade" between Africa, the West

Indies and Britain, which involved slave trading. Among these 'new rich' was one, John Clint who began to realise how he and others would not have been able to reap their rewards without the men who manned their ships, and whose welfare was not even considered. In those days a high percentage of any sailing ship's crew (steam had yet to arrive), would either be lost overboard or would die of disease, usually scurvy. A direct result of course was that their families were left destitute. With the Welfare State still a century away, the only alternative for these unfortunates was the workhouse and child labour down the mines or in the factories. Many abandoned children took to the streets and a life of crime. There were two Reform Ships anchored in the Mersey at that time, the "Akbar" and the "Clarence". One was for Protestant, the other for Roman Catholic delinquents boys.

In the early 1860s John Clint, a self made man and now a successful shipowner himself, began to write articles in the local Liverpool press saying, "We have two Reform Ships for bad boys, kept at ratepayers' expense, yet we do nothing to stop these boys from becoming criminals. Would it not make more economic sense to take them off the streets before they go bad, give them a trade and so turn them into respectable, responsible citizens?" His words struck a chord with others. A public meeting was held and a subscription list opened, to provide a 'suitable vessel' for the purpose of re-habilitating the "orphaned and destitute sons of seamen". The Admiralty were approached and the redundant frigate "Indefatigable" was loaned. James Bibby who founded the present day Bibby Shipping Line agreed to re-furbish the vessel at a cost of £5,000. The ship arrived in the Mersey in 1864, and the first boy was received on board in August, 1865. Her charter was to take these "orphaned and destitute" boys, train them to be sailors and send them to sea. Later, the mandate for entry was widened, but priority was still for 'the poor' who were supported by public subscription.

The "Conway" was already established on the Mersey, so the 'new' arrival joined the line of three stately 'men-o-war' anchored in the Sloyne. There they all lay, for the next half century or more till the Reform Ships were abolished in the early part of the 20th Century. The "Conway" was towed to the Menai Straits during World War II; and during this same period the "Indefatigable" abandoned the ship and became a 'Stone Frigate' ashore

In 1914, the first 'Indefatigable' was condemned and the Admiralty approached for a replacement. This time they were offered, at a price, the "Phaeton", an iron-hulled cruiser built during the last days of sail and converted to steam. Once more, the Bibby Shipping Company came to the rescue and paid for the ship and its refurbishment. She was renamed "Indefatigable". In 1941, with the air raids on Liverpool during World War Two increasing in intensity it was decided that the boys must be moved for their own safety. The Admiralty requisitioned the ship for use as a store depot on the Clyde, renaming her 'Carrick II'. The boys were moved to a disused holiday camp at Clawyd Newydd, near Ruthin, where they remained in very Spartan conditions till, in the Autumn of 1944, a lease



on the mansion of 'Plas Llanfair' overlooking the Menai Straits, was negotiated with the Marquis of Anglesey, and the boys moved in. The house, mainly of early

Victorian origin, had enjoyed a chequered career, as private home, hotel, and during World War II a special U.S. Army Base. In 1945 the house and estate (about 8 acres) were purchased outright by the 'Indefatigable', from the Marquis. And this is where I found myself on that summer's day in 1977.

By now, boys were being recruited from all over the country. Some were nominal fee payers (which were very low by normal boarding school standards), the majority supported by Social Services or their local Education Authority. The Merchant Navy was in rapid decline and was no longer the main outlet for the boys, who were now being prepared for the Army or a rating's life in the Royal Navy. Very few at that time aspired to further education and civilian life. From the main curriculum, emphasis was centred around seamanship, with academic work limited mainly to the "three Rs". School leaving examinations were limited to the old CSE. One or two boys would sit the occasional 'O' level. In other words the standard was that of a Secondary Modern or Elementary School. However, subsequent Education Acts raising the school

leaving age from fifteen to sixteen (up to now most boys joined at fifteen AFTER they had left school) were forcing the 'Inde' to become less a training establishment and more a conventional school. But of that, more later.

Before we returned south I asked Bob if he could offer me a job. He said that he had considered the school needed more academic teachers with less Seamanship instruction, and fortunately, one of the instructors had done a 'moonlight flit' just at the end of last term. He reckoned he could persuade the Governors to take me on instead; even though my salary would have to be considerably higher than that of my 'predecessor'! But before finally making up his mind he wanted me to meet the local parish Rector, and if he thought I was O.K. then that would clinch it! So down we went to the rectory not far from the school, beside the Menai Strait, where I met Victor Jones, a middle-aged priest to whom I immediately warmed. Later, Bob told me that Victor thought I would prove an asset to the school! It was agreed that I would start the very next term and

Live in one of the semi-detached staff houses in the grounds, until my own domestic arrangements had been completed, and the whole family could join me.

No sooner had we returned home to Somerset when I received a telephone call from Eastbourne to say that the job was mine if I wanted it! For the first time in my life I had been given the choice of two career moves. I was in a dilemma. Not knowing which way to go I consulted a family friend, Chandos Morgan, a Naval chaplain who both Miriam and I knew and respected. He had just been appointed Chaplain of the Fleet, and was living in West Lydford. When I put my problem to him he immediately said, "there is no contest. With your teacher qualification and your years of service in the Navy, there is only one place for you to be, at the 'Indefatigable'". I formally declined the post at Eastbourne, and in view of my relationship with my Headmistress, I had no difficulty with the short notice I gave school grounds. I was 'in clover', and could start building my own little 'empire'! I worked every spare minute of my time, including the holidays to perfect the syllabus and prepare notes, coloured slides, and later videos in order to make the subject as enjoyable as possible for the boys. In fact I learned more geography in teacher preparation than I ever knew before! My single minded dedication to my work was no doubt another contributory factor towards the strains developing within our marriage. My excuse at the time

was that my work must come first as it earned the family's 'bread and butter'. Also, I was never happy teaching 'off the cuff'. My work had to be well prepared in advance. Not an unreasonable demand?! I am not sure to this day whether my considerable efforts 'paid off' as far as examination results were concerned. By today's "National League Tables" we were pretty low down on the list. One grade 'A'; a sprinkling of 'B's; and a handful of 'C's is all I can boast for the whole of my time at 'Inde'! I remember moaning to Bob Youngman about the low academic achievements of the school, and how the boys spent their spare time polishing their boots and ironing their uniforms! His reply, "You must remember that most of our parents want us to straighten out their kid and make a decent man of him. This we pride ourselves in doing. Any examination success their son might gain is a 'bonus'." He was right, of course; but as a schoolmaster I couldn't stop pushing for greater priority to be given to the classroom.

The Board of Governors were a self-perpetuating body of Liverpool business men connected with the shipping industry. I may be maligning some of them but I am sure they had little idea of how a boarding school should be run. I think they looked upon

their position as a charitable duty towards the less fortunate. This was amply illustrated at the annual Prize Day festivities. Parents would be invited, and in the forenoon the school, classrooms and teachers would be open to their inspection. This was followed by a buffet lunch; and in the afternoon the boys were paraded and inspected by, not only the Guest of Honour, usually some notable with nautical connections, but the whole Board of Governors who had descended on the school en masse after a slap up lunch at a local hotel. Here they came into their own. Keeping the whole assembly waiting, including the Guest of Honour, they would solemnly parade down the lines of boys chatting to any who caught their fancy. This would be the one and only time they had any contact whatsoever with those they were supposed to be governing. And didn't they make the most of it - the 'squirearchy and the peasants' - while we champed and fumed at the delay! I grew so incensed at this annual ritual that one year I complained. Word must have got about, because from then on only the Chairman joined the inspection team! A 'march past' the inspecting officer, with the school band leading would then be followed by speeches and prize giving, at one time in a large marquee, but latterly in the school Sports Hall. There was an amazing number of good quality

prizes donated over the years by charitable philanthropists. Those for academic ability were eclipsed by those for seamanship and boatwork, and for such abilities as, "The smartest boy of the year"; "The boy likely to make the best seaman"; "The boy who's devotion to duty has been outstanding"; and many more

## Chapter 2

It was a beautifully mild and sunny day as we trundled north on that early autumn morning, up the A5 and across the border into Wales. Stopping for a snack at a transport café en route, we arrived outside “No: 3 Plas llanfair Villas” soon after noon. The driver was anxious to get back to Somerset, and after helping to unload my pitiful belongings I was left to sort myself out and ponder upon my new situation. I won’t waste time describing my new abode. It was a typical 3 bed-roomed ‘semi’ one could see any day of the week filling the council estates around the country. The only consolation here, being the open countryside all around.

Over the next few days I was introduced to the Deputy Head, John Gauge; and because I had been appointed without consulting him or attending a formal interview, he was, for a long time afterwards, very suspicious of my exact relationship with Bob Youngman! Was I there to ‘spy’ on them all? Was there nepotism in the air?! It was from him I learnt that there was no real job for me except to be a remedial teacher in Maths and English, and “oh yes – you will teach R.E. with help from the Rector, Victor Jones!” I immediately began to feel a little ‘unwanted’. Victor Jones, our honorary chaplain would

visit the school assiduously once a week, take each class in turn AND enthuse them. Not an easy task considering these were 14 to 16 year old adolescent boys. Many of them extremely ‘streetwise’! Victor was what I would call a ‘Muscular Christian’. He would dragoon boys into being confirmed by telling them that they would then get the best treatment at the various ‘Seamen’s Missions’ they would come across in the seaports of the world! It was not unusual for a batch of thirty boys or so to be confirmed by the Bishop of Bangor! Victor and I agreed to work together on the CSE R.E. syllabus, which was relatively easy, as it merely meant being familiar with the Bible stories designated for the examination. Some years later, whilst on his way home from the school Victor suffered a heart attack and died. He was a sad loss to us all, as the parish priests who followed took very little interest in the boys, except to conduct the obligatory special Sunday morning service down at the little church of St Mary’s near the water’s edge. This took the form of a church parade, when the whole school was marched to worship! I am ambivalent about compulsory church for the young. At the least, I think it can do little harm to their

spiritual development; at the most it will give them something upon which to base their 'prejudices' as they grow into their late teens! Better that than ignorant antipathy!

However, back to the present. I was issued with my 'badge of office' – two gold shoulder stripes for my 'woolie pully'(regulation navy blue jersey). We all wore a pseudo-naval uniform –the teaching staff boasted two gold stripes; the deputy Head three, and the Captain Headmaster four. The boys wore the sailors' 'square rig' for divisions and formal occasions. Naval type 'No: 8s' with gymn shoes was for everyday wear, where each boy had sewn onto the pocket of his blue shirt, a piece of white linen on which had been stencilled his name and allotted number. To an outsider, this did give the impression of an orphanage or reform school!

In fact, contrary to popular belief at the time, 'Indefatigable' never accepted delinquent boys. It would however take boys who could go wrong if left in their present environment. These boys needed guidance at a crucial time in their lives, and the regimen and discipline offered by the 'Indefatigable' offered such a 'lifeline'. It gave these boys a pride in themselves and a purposeful meaning to their lives. Over the years I have spoken to many 'ex-Inde' boys who told me that if it

hadn't been for the school they would have ended up in trouble. And these remarks came from those who had subsequently made a real success of their lives.

Two members of staff were required to be on duty out of 'working hours'. This meant taking charge of 150 or so boys during evenings, throughout the night, and at weekends; supervising their meals, domestic work (no cleaning staff employed), bedtime; and in fact every aspect of their lives. I found it thoroughly exhausting, both mentally and physically, as it meant remaining on the premises after a full day's teaching, with no prospect of a break till the end of the following day's work. The nearest the school got at that time, to a matron was the employment of an ex-Naval Sick Berth Attendant who was only available during working hours as he too joined the roster of 'Duty Officers' where one's turn came round about twice a week.

My first term was not a happy one. Though my age and the 'military style' atmosphere gave me little anxiety about keeping discipline, I couldn't help having the feeling, with a few exceptions, that the boys weren't really interested in 'lessons'. That was 'kids stuff'! The fact that I was not teaching a particular subject also added to the frustration of it all.

A welcome break came at half term when Miriam drove up with the boys, to spend a few days with me. Whilst showing them the sights of the island we happened to be driving along the Beaumaris sea front, when at a corner, right on the water's edge we espied a board announcing, "Desirable Marine Residence for sale", attached to the end dwelling of a short terrace of four three-storey early Victorian town houses. We got out of the car to look more closely. The building stood about ten feet back from the sea wall. There was no garden of any sort, merely a concrete patio. "This is what we want", said Miriam. "We can make money by running Bed and Breakfast accommodation for summer visitors!" The asking price was £27,000. Obtaining the key from the agents Miriam and Bob's wife inspected the house from attic to cellars and pronounced it ideal for us. However, one snag. We had to sell our own first, AND at a considerable profit! So I was not too confident. I remember the feeling of desolation as they drove away at the end of their short stay. I was still not sure whether we had made the right move.

Not long afterwards I received a telephone call in the middle of a morning's teaching. It was Miriam's voice announcing that she had sold our home for £29,000! Considering we paid not much more than £5000

for both houses and the extra land, this was a very good price indeed. But, I was visibly shaken. "Are you sure we want to sell just yet?" I quavered. Her manner hardened. "You'd better make up your mind what you want to do", she snapped. I agreed the sale should go ahead, and I would negotiate the purchase of "The Moorings" in Beaumaris. Without bargaining I offered the asking price, and it was accepted. Vacant possession was agreed for early in the New Year of 1978, provided I was prepared to purchase the few contents still in the house, which included a fibre glass dinghy and seagull outboard engine, all for an extra sum of £150, I agreed.

January 8th, 1978 dawned a crisp, clear winter's day when an enormous pantechinon drew up outside "The Grooms" and commenced loading all our worldly goods for transport to our new home in Wales. By late afternoon the house was bare, with the garden tools, extension ladder and an assortment of 'useful' timber being the last to be loaded. The removers drove off, intending to 'kip down' for the night in the empty house in Beaumaris, spend the next day unloading, and depart for home on completion.

Later that same evening we bade a last farewell to Lydford. By now the car was laden down with the three boys, the cat, and last minute items, as we set off up the Fosseyway to our new home, breaking our journey at Leominster for a 'fish and chip' supper. I remember the clear night sky with its myriad of stars shining down as we crossed the border into Wales at about 8 o'clock. An hour later or so we pulled up at the school to collect the house keys which Bob had obtained from the estate agents. The furniture van had already arrived and was waiting. We all somehow managed to 'bed down' for the night knowing that we had a busy day ahead. Early next morning, Miriam cooked us all a good breakfast and the unloading began. The house slowly took on the appearance of 'home', and by early afternoon, with their work done the removers wished us luck and set off on their return journey. Financially, the cost of the house, and removal expenses left us just about 'breaking even', with a few hundred pounds 'in hand'. Thus commenced the longest stay I have ever spent in one place – twenty years!

Even though compensation for the 'out of hours' duties required from the staff, was the provision of free accommodation, I was told that as I had voluntarily chosen to live off the site I would retain the school house

and continue to carry out these duties. At least I would now be able to get away from the claustrophobic atmosphere of the school after a day's work. Towards the end of the summer term of 1978, Bob Youngman could see that I wasn't very happy with my lot as a 'spare' teacher. He asked me one day what I would like to do as he didn't want to lose me. My reply, "there is no one to teach the boys Geography, an important subject, especially if they want a sea career!" "O.K." he said, "set up your own department and I will support you". With the Governors approval, money was allotted, and by the beginning of the new school year I was ready to teach my very own subject. Within six months, a new classroom had been built for me in the at these signs of 'change' in the air. At last the academic potential could be properly and more fully developed. This new post was taken by a teacher from the minor public school, Bedstone College on the Welsh border. 'P. W' was an ascetic looking rather cold and humourless man in his middle thirties. His status within the school hierarchy was necessarily vague. After all we had never had such a being as 'Head of Studies' before! It became apparent to T.B. that the school now had two 'heads', which was making his position almost untenable. The following summer he tended his resignation. Without blinking an

eyelid, the Governors appointed P. W. as the school's first (and as we shall see, last) Headmaster free, so I fondly thought, from the fetters of a nautical background.

I have to admit things were going just the way I wanted. I and other teachers would have long discussions with the Headmaster and the bursar 'D. F.', outlining our proposals for the way ahead. Over the next few years a great deal of money was raised or borrowed to fund an extensive building project supervised by the Bursar who acted as the 'Clerk of Works'! Alterations were underway within the main building to provide new sleeping accommodation for the boys and two new self-contained flats for the extra numbers of teaching staff now required. One of the classrooms was converted into a long needed new staff room, and another classroom was turned into a library. The indoor swimming pool was heated for the first time! Meanwhile outside, a complex of new classrooms was built, in the old kitchen gardens, around a quadrangle – eight rooms in all including a brand new laboratory. Two accommodation blocks were constructed to house the new intakes of eleven, twelve

and thirteen year old boys; and finally an impressive sports hall was erected, to the envy of many a local school! All these changes took place over less than a three-year period!

Meanwhile, after a year of P.W's 'reign' I began to grow disillusioned with his abilities as a headmaster. I became increasingly aware that he would implement his changes without consultation. Changes which were being resented by both staff and boys; not because they were not needed but because they were happening too fast, before the school could digest them. He seemed oblivious to the dangers of turning a school's ethos, built up for more than a century, on its head. I admit I was party to his earlier ideas, but even I was wondering if all this was perhaps 'too much; too fast and too late'! Another factor was weighting the odds further against our success in attracting recruits. By now, all local authorities had virtually ceased to fund 'out of area' education. The M.O.D. had decided to 'means test' any application for boarding school fees from the Service ranks. Crudely, this meant that whereas an NCO could send his son 'for free' to Inde; now he was required to pay an albeit small percentage of the fees. This, of course, the majority were not prepared to do. Also, these education grants were only available for personnel stationed



abroad, where a rapid reduction in manpower was in progress. Both these developments had a drastic effect upon our recruitment and income. The intake age was finally lowered to eleven in the hope of recouping on numbers. To cap it all, the Bursar and Headmaster fell out and the former was in like vein. All very laudable but not what one expects from a modern educational establishment?

In those early days there was one main intake of boys each year, in September. For the whole of the first week of term, there would be no schoolwork at all. An "Assembly line" would be set up to receive the new entrants, with members of staff controlling each phase. Each boy would be stripped of his civilian clothing, weighed, measured and issued (free of charge) with his items of uniform including a pair of marching boots! He would be given a very simple "3 Rs" test in order to put him in the right class; and then initiated in the mysteries of wearing a naval uniform and marching! Many boys would only join for one year at the age of fifteen, which was the main form of entry for many years. Any sort of academic syllabus would be very difficult to introduce as these were geared to a two-year preparation before the examination year. When I joined, a two-year course had been introduced, which meant taking boys at the age of

fourteen. Later, as recruitment steadily fell, boys were taken at the age of thirteen, and later, after I had retired, the entry age went as low as eleven in the forlorn hope of keeping up viable pupil numbers.

Some of my more enjoyable moments was at weekends when I would take a small group of boys out on to the mountains for a day's hike. This was a splendid way to get to know them outside the classroom. I have happy memories of these mountain walks still. The boys were splendid company, chatting as we rambled along on low level walks around the breathtaking scenery of Snowdonia – Beddgelert; Betws-y-Coed; Idwal; Aber Falls. If there were more than three or four, a colleague and I would get the school to hire a minivan to take us on more ambitious high level climbs – Carnedd llewelyn; The Glyders; and of course Snowdon itself. On three occasions, during the summer holidays I and a colleague would plan a week's walking holiday, 'B&B-ing' on the way. Two of these were to Offa's Dyke. The first with the history teacher John Tranmer, took us from the canal at Froncysyllte to Hay-on-Wye; and the second with Howard Trillo, from Llangollen to Prestatyn. My walk along the dyke is still incomplete as I have never yet managed to tackle the southern part from Chepstow over the Black Mountains to Hay-

on-Wye. On another occasion, Brian Marshall, also a one time teacher at 'Inde' and I, took a leisurely three-day walk around the Cotswolds between Cirencester and North Leach. All were thoroughly enjoyable experiences. On many occasions, during weekends and holiday time, Howard Trillo and I would climb and tramp over the Snowdonia Ranges, and venture to the Yorkshire moors and dales. It was wonderful to feel the freedom of 'high places'!

Soon after my arrival at Inde I began to grow unhappy at the lack of any formal 'moral teaching'. Lip service would be paid to the requirement for an 'assembly' by detailing a boy to read from the Bible during a pause in the daily morning Divisions, inspection and march past. I considered this inadequate and persuaded Bob, an acknowledged agnostic, to let me conduct a "Thought for the Day" at these assemblies. I took great pleasure and much effort in trying to produce a 'homily' on the lines of the daily radio broadcast of that name. In vain, I tried to get other members of staff to take part. Eventually, after nine years of 'solo' performance I did persuade a new staff member to take over. I have my notes still, and often wonder if any of my little 'stories' were ever remembered by the boys. I have only been told by one boy from

the school how he remembered my "story about the Hitch hikers"! It would be nice to know that my considerable efforts were not entirely in vain!

At about this time, the early 'eighties', Bob Youngman wanted to recruit an extra teaching member of staff, and the only accommodation on offer was my house, 'Number 3'. He called me in, and much to my delight said that he wanted my staff house and in return he would take me off the 'Duty Roster'! There was so much staff opposition to what they called 'preferential treatment' that I told Bob to forget it. However, he convened a staff meeting, to which I was not invited, and read the 'riot act'! There were no more overt dissenting voices, and from that day, apart from agreeing to 'emergency cover', I was FREE!!

During the short 'Falklands War' of 1982, I put a large map of the 'War Zone' on the notice board and two boys volunteered to keep it daily up to date. I thought it right that the school should know what was going on during these curious yet dangerous events taking place on the other side of the world. We later learnt that two 'Inde' boys had lost their lives – one a sailor, the other a Royal Marine. In fact one of them I had been teaching not many years earlier. By about this time too, I realised there was something 'missing' about the Indefatigable

which set it apart from other schools. There was no association which boys could join after leaving to enable them to keep in touch with their 'alma mater', and with their schoolmates. Once they had left, the school seemed to lose interest and wash its hands of them completely. Unless they bothered to visit us, we never learned how successful, or otherwise, our influence over them had been. This state of affairs I thought was deplorable and suggested to Bob Youngman that we should start an 'Old Boys' Association. Neither he, the Governors nor the staff were impressed with my idea, thinking it a waste of time. However, after many months I was finally given the 'go ahead' to try and set up such an organisation. I received no encouragement or support from anyone save for a personal £100 loan from Bob himself. I wrote a short article for the "Sea Breezes" magazine and put advertisements in the local and regional press and on the Merseyside radio, calling on any ex-Indefatigable boys to contact me at the school. Very slowly I began to get replies from middle aged and elderly men who fondly remembered their days at 'Indie' and would be delighted to help in the formation of such an association. With this positive response I wrote back and informed each of them that an initial meeting would be held at

the school at the end of Prize Day in 1983. They would be welcome to attend the festivities and an evening buffet supper would be provided by the school. I think about twenty, with their wives attended this very first of many subsequent annual meetings. A Chairman was appointed and an annual subscription of £6 was agreed. Meanwhile I had written up a Constitution, with the approval of the school solicitor. This I presented to the meeting, and it was formally accepted. I retained the offices of Secretary/Treasurer and editor of any future newsletter which might be produced. So successful was the recruitment that within twelve months I was able to repay Bob's loan, and within in a few years, the membership had risen to over two hundred. The bi-annual newsletter had developed from a couple of foolscap sheets produced on the school Gestetner, to a professionally printed magazine with coloured photographs and illustrated cover. Our Annual General Meetings took place after Prize Day when an outside caterer would provide a superb buffet meal. From the very start wives were encouraged to take part, and their efforts in running 'bring and buy' sales, raffles and the like produced some very welcome revenue! Many boys, or their parents on their behalf, would take out a subscription for membership as they left the school. Suitably

engraved and inscribed souvenirs were commercially produced and sold to the members. I felt proud of my 'creation' which had flourished despite the scepticism! The 'raison d'être' of the OBA, as it was now called, was centred around the school and its activities, to give financial assistance when asked. To this end the Old Boys, over the years, made donations for specific projects – a bicycle shed – library books – a £600 annual bursary, and many more, to the tune of several thousand pounds. It was the Old Boys who took the ship's crumbling figurehead to Liverpool and completely rebuilt it, with the intention of returning it to the school. Alas, when 'Indefatigable' was forced to close down the figurehead, now in pristine condition, was presented to the Liverpool Maritime Museum at the Albert Dock, where it now proudly stands outside the restaurant. But, I am getting ahead of myself! I will have more to say about the OBA a little later on.

By 1987 it became apparent to me, if nobody else, that the school would have to take a radical new turn if it was not to become an educational anachronism. By now, Bob Youngman had re-married a childhood sweetheart, having lost his first wife in a horrific local road accident a few years earlier. He decided that he had had enough

and sought early retirement. Despite the efforts of the staff to persuade the Governors to appoint an academic to the post, a young member of the board of Governors was offered the post of Captain Headmaster. Strangely enough he was another 'Old Conway', but of a rather later vintage to Bob and I. 'T. B' remembered me when I was the Navigator of 'Sidon' and he was a Midshipman RNR doing his 'time' in the Depot ship "Maidstone"! He was now a Master Mariner who latterly had been Head of the nautical department at Riversdale College in Birkenhead. A thoroughly pleasant character but sadly, rather ineffective, he found the job overwhelming. More changes however, were to come. The Bursar John Chiverell, who had served the school diligently for many years, retired. His successor was a pleasant but brash younger man who had grandiose ideas about the future of the school. It wasn't until much later we learnt that the Governors hadn't even bothered to check up on his references! At about the same time an advertisement was placed in the press for a "Head of Studies" subordinate to, but to work with the Captain Headmaster. We on the teaching staff were thrilled dismissed amid much acrimony. It was then discovered that money had gone astray and the school, for the first time in its long history, was deeply in debt to the bank. In March

1991 I had reached the age of 60, and deciding I had had enough of the stresses and strains of teaching, retired at the end of that Summer Term.

The final desperate 'shot' fired in order to keep the school on an even keel was the introduction of a 'Sixth Form' in an effort to retain boys at school to sit 'A levels'. The retention was small. Most 'Inde' boys were not 'A' level calibre. Finally in 1995, at a staff meeting on the last day of the summer term, unusually, a member of the Board of Governors attended and baldly announced to the assembled company that as from "now" the school was closing down, and the Receivers were being called in! It transpired that the bank had foreclosed on an overdraft of over £500,000!

One or two members of the teaching staff set themselves up, together with a few local parents to try and re-open the school. Though very laudable, the plan was doomed to failure from the start. Once a school has closed and the pupils dispersed the chances of 'turning the clock back' are minimal.

In the Autumn of 1995 the liquidators held an auction to realise the complete assets of the school. Everything, from beds, uniforms, band instruments, right down to the Ship's Bell came 'under the hammer'. What a sad

sight it was to see every intimate item which had formed the very 'essence' of the school, stripped down, labelled and waiting to be sold. The place was packed. Dealers, like vultures had descended from every direction. There were private school representatives hoping for a bargain. And there were many who were merely curious. I attended on behalf of the Old Boys, intent on purchasing the Ship's Bell for the Association. I had earlier asked for the bell not to be included in the auction, but was told that everything had to be sold to try and meet debtors demands. At first I was the only bidder for this item. I later heard that the dealers had agreed amongst themselves not to bid against me! I would have been able to get it for less than £100 until one loan voice started bidding too! When I thought I could bid no higher the hammer fell in my favour at £1200! Together with the figurehead, safely out of the way in Liverpool, we had managed to save the two most priceless artefacts belonging to 'Indefatigable'.

It took over a year to sell the property which was finally purchased by the M.O.D, and after several millions of pounds spent on extensive repairs, alterations and additions (including a perimeter fence), is now used as a Joint Service Mountain Training Centre(JSMTC). I lobbied the Army

by letter, and they agreed to retain the name 'Indefatigable' in their title. The price paid for the property did not even 'square' all the debts let alone leave any surplus, from which I had hoped to form an 'Indefatigable Trust Fund' to give financial help to needy youngsters undergoing further education. I use the 'first person' because there was now nobody to champion the 'Indefatigable' corner. The Headmaster and staff had melted away, and the Governors had disappeared back into the woodwork! So it was up to the Old Boys Association to salvage what they could. One further 'dream' of mine was to create a stained glass window commemorating the ship, the school and all who had passed through. A local artist produced the design which was approved by the Church and transformed into stained glass by another local craftsman. Finally, in the summer of 1998 the window was installed in the North transept of the little church of Saint Mary, where generations of boys had worshipped. The dedication took place before a congregation of Old Boys, a few weeks later; The Liverpool Sailors Home Trust agreeing to pay the cost - £7,000.

One last note before closing this sad account of the school's latter days. The question has since been asked many times. Would the school have closed down if no changes had been made? I believe it would. In fact I said so publicly many times during my early days. "Indefatigable" was created for a specific purpose, to give self-respect to disadvantaged boys. This it did with remarkable success for over a hundred years. But with the introduction of the Welfare State and the radical changes made in our educational system over the years, her 'raison d'être' was slowly being eroded and the school was becoming somewhat of an anachronism. She was unique in the way she handled adolescent boys, and from the early 1970s it was becoming clear to all but the most entrenched minds that a radical overhaul would have to be made to the academic and social structure of the school if it was to survive the century. Recruitment was not high, but it was fairly steady at this stage. There were very few capital assets, and to make the sweeping changes necessary, courage and a great deal of money would be needed. The Governors had neither; nor had they the expertise or foresight to recognise the problems, preferring the 'status quo'. This was their great mistake. Since that time many privately operated boarding schools have been forced into closure because

they could not compete with the larger, better endowed and more successful establishments. To mark the school's 125th Anniversary, the Bursar organised a prestigious reception in London to try and raise funds for the re-development. Money was indeed raised, but to try and turn 'Indefatigable' at this late stage, into a thriving boarding school in its own right, amidst such fierce competition from these well-founded and well-known establishments was a big gamble. Looking back, I regret some of my more outspoken outbursts brought on by frustration. I failed to understand what 'Inde's' REAL job was, and it wasn't to try and turn boys into 'Brains of Britain'! Sadly, the school was, by the 1980s, in a situation where any changes would have to come fast or else it would be too late. No changes and she would no longer have any place in the 'educational establishment'. A typical 'Catch-22' situation! The only question remaining, "in which of these two situations would closure have come the sooner?" Alas, we shall never know the answer to that!

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Soon after my retirement from the 'Indefatigable', and while things were still fresh in my memory, I wrote a long letter to the Chairman of the School Governors, giving my perspective over fourteen years of teaching - the present standing, and future prospects for 'Inde'. I wanted to get it all 'off my chest' before it was too late. Alas! Little did I know that the end was so near! Attached is a facsimile of the letter I wrote and the rather tart reply I eventually received to my rather un-diplomatic approach !

4, Alma Street,  
Beaumaris.  
Anglesey.  
LL58 8BW.

Wednesday, September 12th, 1991.

The Chairman to,  
The Governors of  
The Indefatigable School.

As you may be aware, I retired from the teaching profession on the 31st August, 1991; and I feel that it might be worthwhile, before the waters finally close over me, and now that I am no longer actively involved, to set before you my thoughts and views on the Indefatigable School, which I have served 'at the chalk face', for the past 14 years.

I am sure you are aware that I have been a vociferous voice urging changes at the school ever since I joined the Staff. There is no doubt that outwardly, at least, the school has seen considerable changes taking place, particularly over the past two years. It was patently apparent however, as far back as 1977 that the school seemed complacently satisfied with its traditional role and position, in a Society which had changed, and was continuing to change rapidly. Already at least a quarter of a century behind the times, there was a danger that, like the 'Conway', Indefatigable would, by the turn of the Century, if it lasted that long, be a complete anachronism.

The Governors, I fear, gave credence to this view. They seemingly failed to appreciate the need for change in those days. Their attitude, certainly as seen by the teaching staff, was remote, paternalistic and unprofessional. To us, their motives to become members of the Governing Body, and their attitude towards the school 'smacked' of the 19th Century "Squire and Peasant" - the Governors the Squires, the staff the Peasants! This attitude we found very discouraging. So, for many years, apart from slight 'tinkering', the Governors seemed happy to preserve the 'Status Quo', and appeared to frown on anybody who dared to suggest otherwise! For example, it took me close on three years, before approval was given to start an Old Boys Association!



It seemed undoubtedly the case then, and as far as I can see is still so, that the only 'feel' the Governors get of life, conditions and attitudes at 'Indefatigable', is through the eyes of one man, the Captain Headmaster, and today, the Headmaster; who, like most people with a position to hold, will only tell you what he wants you to know! This brings me to my first recommendation.

I was sad to learn a year or so ago, through the Headmaster, that the Governors had 'vetoed' the suggestion that a member of the teaching staff, other than the Headmaster, should be 'ex-officio', a non voting member of the Governing Body. I think that was a mistake because:

1. The school now employs a preponderance of well-educated, qualified professional teachers. For such people to be well-motivated and to give of their best, it is vital that their views are listened to, and taken note of. I am afraid that the impression given, is that this is not the case.

2. Modern educational practice allows for, and encourages the representation of teachers on the Governing Body of their school, for the very reasons I have stated above.

There is a 'malaise' in the 'Indefatigable' Staffroom which is not new. It was there at least as far back as 1977. The reasons for this are hard to 'pinpoint', but I shall try to sum them up as follows:

1. The 'unique' make up of the school staff - on the one hand, qualified school teachers, and on the other, 'Instructors', inevitably leads to 'in-fighting' over 'status' and pay.
2. As a result, the staff divides into 'factions', each one justifying itself at the expense of the others. It is even hinted that these 'jealousies' are aired by some staff members, in front of the boys; who, in any case are intelligent enough to be aware of the situation.
3. We have to face the fact that 'Indefatigable' is an 'unknown' school in Educational circles. It has a 'coloured' reputation based on ill-founded knowledge, by that very small group of the 'British Public' who have even heard of the school.

As a result, recruitment of staff, whether teaching or managerial, is going to come from applicants who, for one reason or another need to move from their present positions at any cost. They do not come as a 'stepping stone' to future advancement in the teaching profession. To put it more crudely, I have always maintained, publicly, that the Staff of 'Indefatigable' are 'a bunch of mavericks' - and I included myself in this category!

Because of this 'unique' staff structure, it is imperative to have 'good management'; especially now, during this traumatic period in 'Indefatigable's history'. I fear this has not been, and still is not the case. Here I must briefly mention 'personalities'. The two Captains Headmaster I worked for, I respected. They were full of humanity towards both staff and boys. The first, with a tragic personal problem to contend with, was not over anxious to face the further problems of radical change. The second, unfortunately, was completely 'out of his depth' to carry out these changes. In fact with regard to this latter appointment, we, the Staff, deplored the appointment from the very day the Governors insisted on advertising for a 'mariner', and not an educationist.

I will say little about the recent Management appointments save to say:

1. The Bursar of a school should never be allowed to interfere with the academic organisation, however covertly, or be concerned with the recruitment of pupils, except for the inevitable 'paperwork'. If he does, this leads to resentment from professional teachers. All active recruitment should only be conducted by qualified teachers, for obvious reasons.

2. If the Headmaster has little humanity or tolerance; puts 'self' before 'school'; has little or no experience in 'man management', and is not prepared to learn - then I suggest that is a recipe for disharmony and ultimately, disaster.

I realise that what I have written above, are blunt words. They reflect 'Indefatigable' as I have observed it over a period of 14 years. Believe it or not, as my wife will wryly testify, I have given much more than 'paid' time to both the

boys and the school. I had grown to love 'Indefatigable'. I did not want her to go the way of 'Conway'. I had high hopes, with the appointment of a purely 'academic' Headmaster, that perhaps the school had 'turned the corner'. Sadly, I am doubtful. Changes which are taking place should have started years ago when 'the writing was on the wall' for those who cared enough to look. Are you, as Governors, trying to do too much, too quickly, too late? I sincerely hope not.

Our recruitment for this year, I believe, is still 'below par'. Despite protestations, we are playing the 'numbers game', and recruiting boys who are patently unsuitable for what the school must aim to achieve - improved academic standards. A long time ago I proposed that rather, at this stage, spend money on 'grandiose' projects (e.g. the Sports Hall), would it not be better to deliberately run the school 'light' for a year or two if necessary, taking only the 'right' boys? In this way, the school, could slowly build up a reputation which would make 'Indefatigable' more acceptable to caring parents we need to woo; and to such Bodies which will enable us to be advertised in 'ISIS'. Without this latter accolade, I fear the school will remain on the fringe of National Education.

There is a further aspect of school life, which I feel has been neglected in the past. I am talking about a structured moral teaching programme. There is no doubt in my mind, that the school's founder, John Clint considered sound Christian standards and teaching to be of paramount importance to the education of the 'poor boys' of his day. To my mind, in this secular age, children are, in increasing numbers being brought up with little help in understanding those Christian values which are so important for producing the 'well rounded' person the school apparently prides itself in turning out. 'Indefatigable' pays 'lip service' to Christian and moral teaching, which is a very sensitive subject, and needs to be dealt with by a duly qualified member of Staff. I fear that all the 'Heads' I have worked for have admitted to no personal Christian Commitment. I realise that the school could not afford the 'luxury' of a resident chaplain; but again, I have advocated, over the years, that when advertising for any particular teaching post, the school could stipulate an ordained clergyman, who would have a

'dual role', both secular and spiritual. Personally, I would dearly loved to have seen a small 'purpose built' chapel, or 'Quiet Room' at the school, where the boys could go, for private prayer and contemplation, whenever they felt the need.

My final brief point is to do with statistics. Examination results can be presented in many forms. The 'true' picture can only begin to emerge after careful examination of such matters as, the number of candidates involved in each subject, and the relevance of that subject to the National Curriculum. Being 'economical with the truth' is a safe option when attempting to convey to others the success of ones own pet project!

Please do not dismiss this letter as the "ravings of an embittered old man". I do not think I am any of these things. They are personal views, very strongly felt ~~and~~ at the time whilst my memory of events is still fresh. If anywhere, the 'key' lies with the Staff. I do strongly urge the Governors to take a closer interest in their well being. For, without their wholehearted active support, the future of 'Indefatigable' will not be assured.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick John Purser.

P.J.Purser Esq.,  
Beaumaris

Clwt yr Arian Bach

Myrddin

1991

Clwt yr Arian Bach

28<sup>th</sup> November 1991

Dear Mr. Purser,

I apologise for your having to ask for an acknowledgement of your letter of 12th September. After making one copy I misfiled the original with two other letters, all of which I found after receiving your note of 21st November, so you have done me a service in more ways than one.

Thank you for your letter of 12th September which covers a lot of ground, and reads rather like a catalogue of disaster. A lot of this I find unacceptable, because it is in part rude, in part patronising to staff as well as governors, and is somewhat disparaging of the boys in our care.

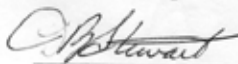
However, I would not dream of dismissing a letter from a respected past member of staff as the "ravings of an embittered old man". On the contrary there are a number of things with which I have great sympathy. Not least your comment about a structured moral teaching programme and quiet area. The Board would also agree with you on examination results and statistics, and we have to remember the need for recruitment of sufficient boys to pay costs, of which staff salaries are far and away the major item.

The money for the sports hall would not have been made available for revenue costs to enable us to run light on numbers for a time - and it would have needed more than a year or two to find and change to the "right" boys as you put it. I am sure you agree that we must aim for a rounded, rather than an elitist education. To paraphrase your comment, the Government is trying to do much, quickly and not too late; I trust Indefatigable can match up to the aspirations of boys and parents.

The items raised in your letter, which has gone to a sub committee of the board, will be studied over the next few meetings. Whether any changes we make are to your liking will be a matter for you to judge in the future.

In spite of my comments in the second paragraph of this letter, I do appreciate your interest in Indefatigable, and can understand your continuing concern after fourteen years of teaching at the school.

Yours sincerely

  
D.B. Stewart

# Indefatigable Memorial Benches



In 2019 the IOBA removed the old Indefatigable bench from the National Memorial Arboretum Alrewas, and placed it in the Memorial Garden at JSMTC Indefatigable (the Old School).

Names of those 'connected to the Indefatigable Ships and School' (who have passed away), may now have their names attached to the old bench (as on 2" brass plaques). Names so far included are, Lt Col Simon Hall OBE, Spencer Bell 1958 (past IOBA Chairman) and now Mac McNeill 1941/42.

It has been agreed to include named plaques of past 'Indefatigable Connected' Old Boys & Staff at the following cost of £40:00 each, paid by the requester, to be coordinated through the IOBA Committee.

If you would you like to purchase a named brass plaque please contact us, once payment has been cleared, we will ensure named plaques will be attached to the Indefatigable Memorial Bench at JSMTC Indefatigable by the following IOBA Reunion.



## NEW Indefatigable Memorial Bench at the National Memorial Arboretum

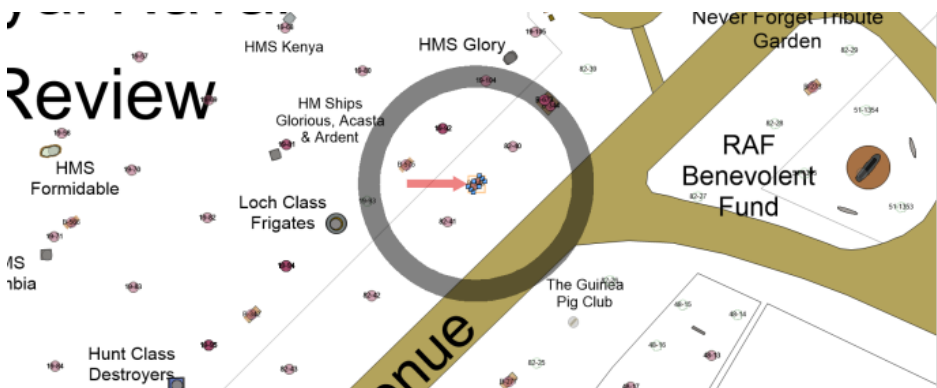
The replacement Indefatigable bench has been placed in the Navy Review area at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Mapped location: Please note the bench's mapped location is not at any of the NMA kiosks in the remembrance centre at this time (Jan 2020). So to find the Indefatigable Bench, please ensure you have a copy of this map (below) and or bench reference B343. B343 is the bench behind the Indefatigable, B343 has been here for a while so will be on the kiosk maps.

The National Memorial Arboretum is an evolving, maturing woodland landscape featuring 30,000 trees and a vast collection of memorials. The 150-acre site is a living, growing tribute to those who have served and continue to serve our country.



Other than the Indefatigable Memorial Bench, we have another memorial called the TS Indefatigable Memorial. The NMA team of volunteers are always happy to help visitors locate memorials and individual dedications in their grounds. You can also use the computer terminals in the Remembrance Centre to search for individual dedications and their locations. Memorial listing R-Z: TS Indefatigable Memorial.





## **IOBA Membership**

At the 2022 AGM, members voted to remove the IOBA membership fee of £15 per annum. You can, therefore, now become a member of the association for free.

We do, however, recognise that many new and existing members may still wish to make an annual donation to the association. Should you wish to do so, please use the form overleaf and tick options 2 or 3.

You can also download a copy of this form from our website:  
[www.indeoba.com](http://www.indeoba.com)



# The Indefatigable Old Boys Association



Please complete the form below in **black ink** and in **BLOCK LETTERS**

## Section 1: Personal Details

|             |  |  |  |  |  |    |  |  |           |  |
|-------------|--|--|--|--|--|----|--|--|-----------|--|
| Surname:    |  |  |  |  |  |    |  |  |           |  |
| Forename:   |  |  |  |  |  |    |  |  |           |  |
| Address:    |  |  |  |  |  |    |  |  |           |  |
|             |  |  |  |  |  |    |  |  |           |  |
| Postcode:   |  |  |  |  |  |    |  |  |           |  |
| Tel:        |  |  |  |  |  |    |  |  |           |  |
| E-mail:     |  |  |  |  |  |    |  |  |           |  |
| Inde Years: |  |  |  |  |  | to |  |  | Division: |  |

## Section 2: Payment Details

Please tick one:

- ☐ 1 I would like to become a member of the IOBA for free.
- ☐ 2 I would like to become a member of the IOBA and make a £  donation
- ☐ 3 I would like to become a member of the IOBA and I wish to make an annual donation by standing order. I have completed the form below.

**CHEQUES MADE PAYABLE TO 'INDEFATIGABLE O.B.A.'**

Standing Order Form:

|            |  |  |  |   |  |  |   |  |  |  |
|------------|--|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| Bank:      |  |  |  |   |  |  |   |  |  |  |
| Sort Code: |  |  |  | - |  |  | - |  |  |  |
| Account #: |  |  |  |   |  |  |   |  |  |  |
| Address:   |  |  |  |   |  |  |   |  |  |  |
|            |  |  |  |   |  |  |   |  |  |  |

I wish to donate the sum of £  on January 1st of each year and thereafter until cancelled or altered by me.

Into the account of: The Indefatigable Old Boys Association  
Lloyds Bank plc. (Branch Sort Code: 30-90-43 Account No: 00595463)  
268 High Street, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 1RT

Signed:  Date:

## Section 3: Return Details

Please return this form and payment to:

John Aspinall  
OBA Treasurer & Membership Secretary  
Shephers's Cottage  
Pinford Lane, Knowsley  
Lancashire, L34 9EL

**Notes:**



# FALKLANDS



2nd April – 14th June 1982

HMS Sheffield - HMS Ardent - HMS Antelope

HMS Coventry

SS Atlantic Conveyor - RFA Sir Galahad

**"LEST we FORGET"**