



## Whitehill F.P. Club Newsletter

Issue XXII, March 2021

Welcome to Spring, there are buds on the bushes, daffodils are blooming, the Calcutta Cup is back in residence at Murrayfield and most of us will have had our first Covid jab. Good to be in a positive mood!

### **The first "Gray Day"**

Thanks to the eagle eyed Bill Sang who spotted the tie worn by Alasdair Gray during his "interview" and broadcast on YouTube to mark 40 years since the publication of Lanark.



**The Gray on the right is wearing his Whitehill F.P. tie.**

### **The Ranger's Sports, 1947 (by Tom McNab)**

It is August 1947, and at the age of fourteen I am wedged in a crowd of over sixty thousand, high in the terracing at Ibrox Stadium, a spectator at the annual Rangers Sports. And there for the first time I will set eyes upon the exotic, athletic Americans brought across the Atlantic by the Rangers manager Bill Struth.

But- and I can say this for certain - I am surely the only spectator in that sixty thousand whose presence was dictated by a man of one hundred and fifty years of age. Let me try to explain, in words that will combine truth with evidence of my sanity. For I had arrived at Ibrox because for years I had been a slave to the comic book called the "Wizard" and within it the feats of the great William Wilson.

Wilson had been born back in 1795 in the village of Stayling in Yorkshire, a weak, weedy lad, prone to the bullying of his classmates. But help was close at hand, because he encountered in a cave on Stayling Moor the hermit Matthew, who claimed to be over three hundred years old, the result of his discovery of the Elixir of Life. The recipe for this elixir he bequeathed to Wilson, and this was a prelude to his embarking upon a rigorous life chasing hares, running endlessly and isometric exercise, attempting to lift a massive boulder called the Grieve Stone.

Alas, his possession of the Elixir of Life proves to be no protection for Matthew when the roof of his cave fell in on him. But the hermit's death did not deter the young Wilson, who had by this time succeeded in lifting the Grieve Stone from the ground, and taking on the bullies at school, before taking up a career in athletics. I well remember Roger Bannister expressing surprise when I informed him that Wilson had broken four minutes for the mile back in 1820.

Upon the feats of William Wilson my young imagination feasted, as did those of the other boys in my street, and athletics took the place of football as our summer sport. The fact that I was not even the best athlete in the street did not trouble me, for even at this early point in time I had realized that athletics is not about who you are now but about who you will be next.

Thus it was that I stood in the cramped terraces of Ibrox Park on that warm August Saturday in 1947, as down on the field the final of the five a side football took place between Rangers and Celtic, and directly below me, behind the goal, the high jump was now reaching its conclusion.

Suddenly there boomed the stentorian voice of the commentator.

"In the high jump, the bar is now at six feet six inches, and remaining in the competition are two competitors, from the United States of America, Bill Vessie, and from Glasgow's Victoria Park Athletic club, our own Alan Paterson!"

There was a sudden silence, and all eyes were now focused on a pile of builder's sand behind the goal, directly below me.

Vessie, a tall blonde American, came flowing in and cleared easily, to polite applause. Then Alan Paterson, two metres tall, basically a pair of legs with a head on top, came lolloping in. He leapt, but from much too far out, and down came the bar to groans.

Then, as he walked back to his mark, there were sudden scattered bursts of shouting from the crowd, directed at the Rangers and Celtic players below. They were telling them to stop playing.

And something truly remarkable happened. A Celtic player, ball at his feet, suddenly stopped, and sat on it. The referee, bewildered, shook his head and pulled the two teams around him. Then he pointed to the high jumpers, and went over and sat with the players behind the goal as Alan Paterson took to his mark for his second jump, jumping from the left.

Alan soared, and cleared easily, landing from his Western Roll lay-out on his left foot. The crowd erupted, and when the noise subsided, the announcer declared that the next height would be six feet seven and a half inches, a new British All Comers Record.

You could have heard a pin drop as Vessie made his smooth, flowing run towards the bar. He cleared it with nothing to spare, to applause.

Alan Paterson stuttered in, adjusting as he approached the bar, but again he was much too far out, and came down on top of it, to sixty thousand groans. Alas, it was exactly the same on his second attempt.

There was sepulchral silence as Alan made his final attempt. It was a truly massive leap, but he was again too far out.

He touched the bar, and it wobbled. Alan lay in the sand looking up at it, as it continued to wobble. But it stayed on and for the first and last time in the history of Scottish sport, a packed stadium applauded a high jumper.

On the following Monday it was reported that there had been a record number of Scots boys and girls reporting with injuries to hospital Accident and Emergency departments. For from Hawick to John o' Groats they had jumped in their hundreds, on pavements, on beaches and football fields, alas without the benefit of sandpits. It was to be the dawn of a surge of Scottish high-jumpers, men like Crawford Fairbrother, Alan Huston and Gus McKenzie. But I often wonder what might have happened if that Celtic player had not sat on the ball. We will never really know.

### **Our website continues to work its wonders!**

**a)** We were contacted by **Robert Newton**, seeking any information we could provide about his father, also Robert Newton, who had attended the school between 1933 and 1939. Ron Fernand diligently searched the magazines for those years and he was able to find photographs in the 1938 and '39 magazines with Robert in the cricket team.



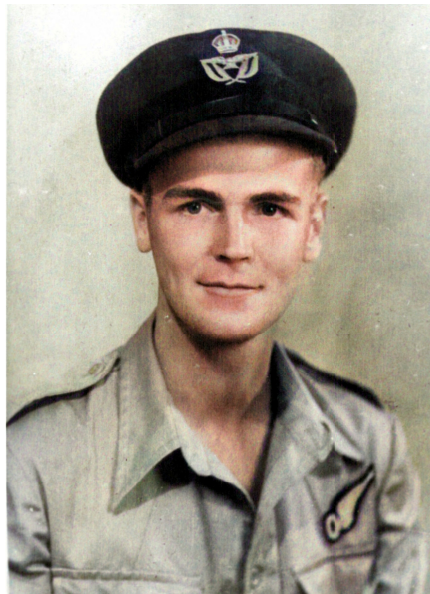
### **CRICKET TEAM.**

T. Donohoe, W. Marshall, J. Burt, G. Boal, G. Brand.  
R. Newton, J. Brodie, H. Carson (Capt.), J. Gordon, J. Oag.  
J. Sim (Scorer). J. McKinlay.

Ron forwarded this information to his son and we were able to discover what Robert senior had done after leaving school in 1939.

The Newton family, including Robert's elder brother **Walter** who had attended Whitehill some 4 years earlier, lived at 265 Golfhill Drive. On leaving school, Robert enrolled at Glasgow University to study Mechanical Engineering,

After completing his first year, he enlisted in the RAF in July 1940. He flew as a navigator with bomber command and remained in the RAF until 1949 attaining the rank of Flight Lieutenant.



During his flying days, he survived a bad plane crash whilst on a training mission in Africa. On his return to Glasgow he settled in Bearsden, but died in tragic circumstances in 1961.

We are pleased that we have been able to assist Robert to add to his research into his father's life story and to be able to add the story of another Whitehill FP to our records.

**b)** Just a few days later, Ron received an email from **Elizabeth Boath**, who had started at Whitehill in the first year of the "new" school opening. Liz grew up in Roebank Street, and attended Alexandra Parade primary. Her brother **David** also attended Whitehill.

The main reason for Liz's email was to obtain a copy of the school song for her mother, **Mary Cameron** who was a pupil in the 1940's. Mary is now 87 and has fond memories of her schooldays, remembers the song but not all of the words. We sent the full song sheet.



After our request, Liz sent us some lines about her schooldays which we have summarised as follows:

*"I was a prefect ( or defect as we were called) and House captain. I am sure that my mum still has the badges."*



*I was the school archivist. It was part of ICA (Inter curriculum activities) where we got to choose an activity that wasn't part of our core curriculum). I worked with an archivist from Glasgow city Chambers who came to the school on Friday afternoons to archive all the school memorabilia and to set up a display in the entrance. I loved looking through all the old photographs and huge old registration books and finding my mum, aunts and uncle. My most exciting memory of that time was seeing photos and finding a letter sent to the school from Buffalo Bill Cody From when he brought the Wild West to Dennistoun. All those little pencil reference numbers on the back of the materials .*

*We had been taught at primary school (Ali parade) all about the Dennistoun Family and how the Drives got their names. We had chatted about this and I said I always wondered what their lives were like.*

*So, on the final day of ICA the archivist invited me for an amazing private tour of the city archives. We were right underneath one of the arches in John St. and the archivist really brought all those names to life for me by showing me the letters written by Roslea, Ingleby, Finlay, Onslow, Garth etc to their families. An amazing real insight into the soap opera of their day to day lives at that time.*

*I really enjoyed Whitehill and we had loads of fun, but all those tales had best remain under wraps at least for 100 years."*

Elizabeth (Liz) Boath graduated B.A,(Hons) at Strathclyde in Psychology followed by her PhD at Keele and is now Professor of Health and Wellbeing at Staffordshire University. She has authored or co-authored many books and publications on her subject. She remains in touch with several school friends and has promised to point them in the direction of the FP club. Further information on Liz and her work can be found at <https://www.staffs.ac.uk/people/elizabeth-boath>

### **A Quiz to tax your brains. (Very Tricky)**

Can you name these places in Scotland from the clues below? Answers in next Newsletter.

- 1) Some very small alcoholic drinks.
- 2) Stupid chips.
- 3) Won't find hot water here.
- 4) Two parts of your face.
- 5) Trip up outside the church.
- 6) One parent is fit and healthy.
- 7) Good looking card game.
- 8) Murder with a gardening tool.
- 9) Not in a medal position.
- 10) Can't live without this.
- 11) Not staying.
- 12) Surrounding the churchyard.
- 13) You and I are fit and healthy.
- 14) Use a spoon for this fish.
- 15) Popular drink from the Abbey.
- 16) Adds up to 21.

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