



# Companionship & Partnership: Celebrating 125 years of the Old Glenalmond Club

In July 1888 two young OGs, Henry Barr and Edward Neish, wrote a joint letter to the *Chronicle*, calling for a club to 'keep alive the interest of all OGs in the welfare of the school and enabling them to keep in touch with one another'. 125 years on, the seed sown then has flourished into a club of a stature that neither Neish nor Barr could have imagined, actively supporting bursaries and the enhancement of Glenalmond's facilities. As it celebrates its 125th Anniversary, **David Willington** looks back at the evolution of the OG Club.

**30 years after** the College opened, Warden Robinson thought that Glenalmond, like other public schools, should have an old boys' association. It was estimated that there were between 600 and 700 of them at the time. He sent out a circular letter on 22 March 1877 calling for a meeting on 19 April at the Palace Hotel, Edinburgh; 50 replies were received. The Marquess of Lothian, the first boy to arrive at Glenalmond, attended, as did the first Captain of Coll, the Rev'd Dr Sandford. At the meeting, the Warden was elected Chairman and W T Farquhar (1863-69) Hon Secretary and Treasurer.

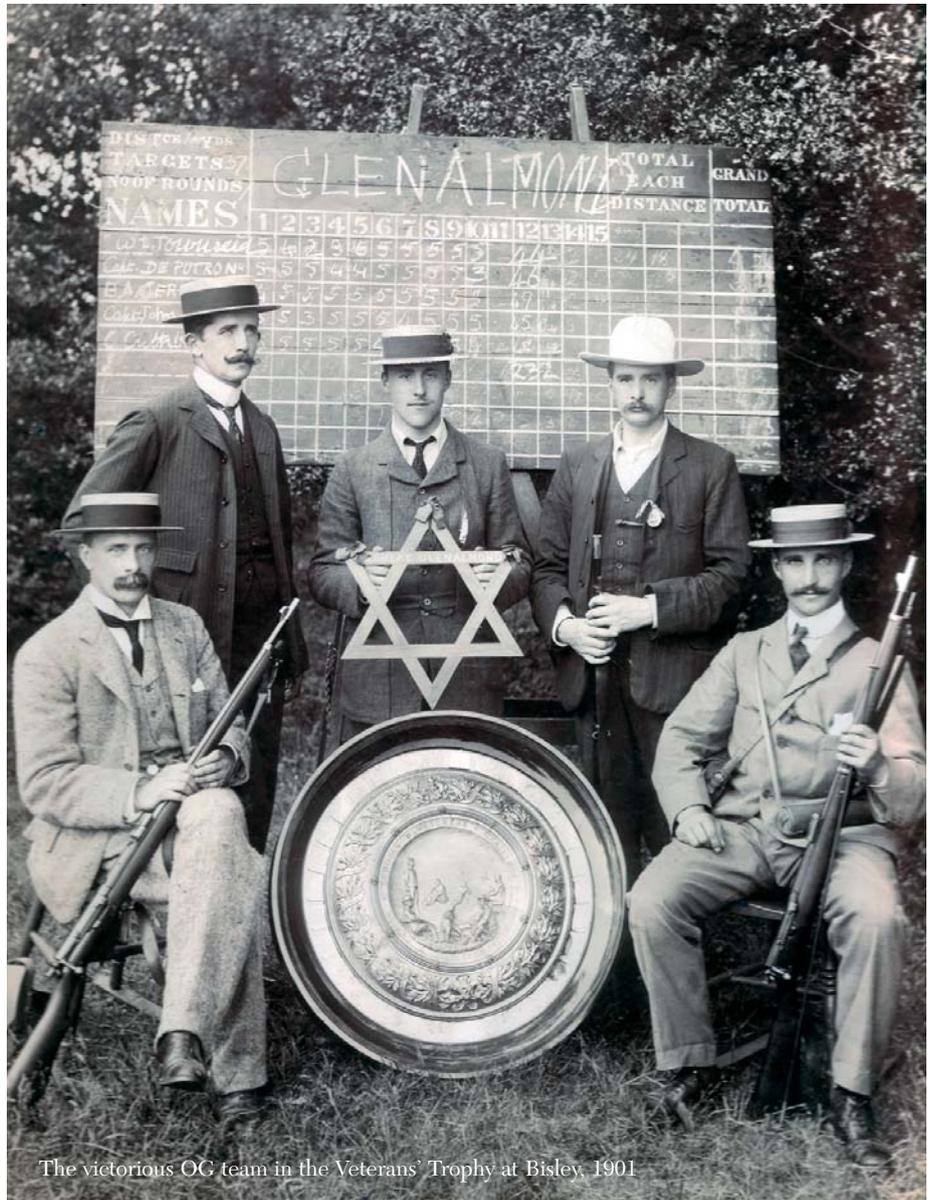
It was resolved that steps be taken towards establishing a permanent old boys' club or association "for the purpose of keeping alive interest in the welfare of Trinity College and, if possible, raising a fund to provide one or more university scholarships in connection with Trinity College". Dr Sandford proposed that a dinner should be held to inaugurate the new club - this took place on 15 January 1878 at the London Hotel, St Andrew's Square, Edinburgh. Tickets were 26/- (including wine) and 29 attended. Various venues were

suggested for subsequent years - London, Oxford, Perth, Glasgow and Glenalmond - though the matter was left to be decided later. A controversy, pursued through the correspondence section of the *Chronicle*, concerned the title of the new club. 'Glenalmonder' was considered execrable and 'Glenalmondonian' (cf. Etonian) too long. 'Old Glenalmond' seemed the most suitable. Despite this promising beginning, nothing more is reported of this fledgling OG Club.

Ten years later, in February 1888, Warden Richmond resigned and J H Skrine from Uppingham was appointed in his stead, to begin in May. This seemed an opportune moment for a fresh initiative. Enter Barr (1878-82), a Glasgow lawyer, and Neish (1874-83), an advocate in Edinburgh, and their letter. This elicited 120 replies, all but two in favour.

A preliminary meeting of 26 OGs was held on 27 July 1888 in Edinburgh. The Marquess of Lothian became Hon President, three surviving former Wardens were among the Hon. Vice-Presidents and E W Neish became Hon Secretary and Treasurer, a post which he

'After dinner, the company danced reels and sang Scottish songs until after midnight.'



The victorious OG team in the Veterans' Trophy at Bisley, 1901

held for 50 years until his death in 1938. At this meeting a number of resolutions established the general direction of the club's activities for the future.

The first object of the new club was to establish a scholarship fund by a small annual subscription from members. Secondly, a register was to be compiled of names and addresses; of the estimated 730 OGs at the time, the addresses of 400 were unknown. Thirdly, the club would provide teams for the OG matches at Glenalmond and a team for the Veterans' Trophy at the NRA Meeting at Wimbledon (later Bisley). A dinner was held that evening which 28 OGs attended in a spirit of good fellowship, not an insignificant aim of membership of the club.

The 'Rules of the OG Club' were established at this meeting and have remained substantially unchanged since then. One article, Number 2 ('All OGs shall be eligible as members of the Club, subject to the approval of the Committee'), was soon amended by removing the last clause. In 1888 the annual subscription was 10/-, but a donation of £10 entitled an OG to become a Life

Member and so exempt from annual subscription.

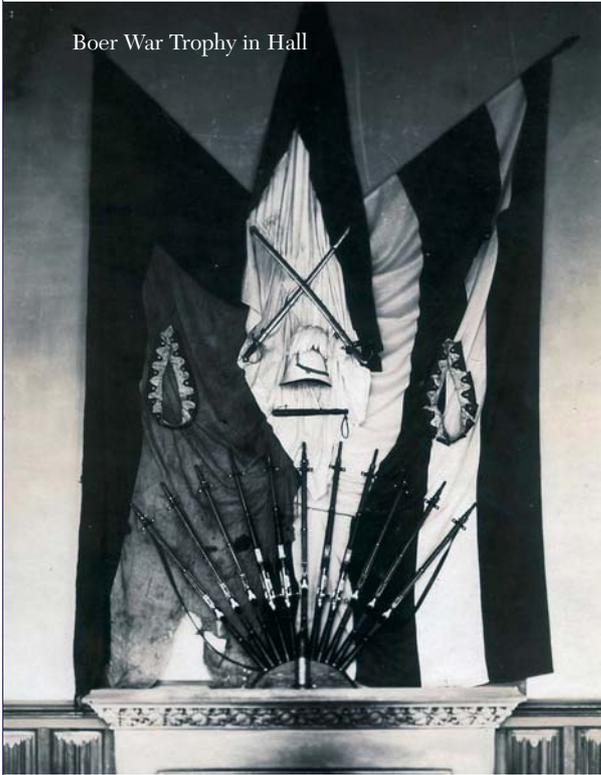
By the first AGM on 8 August 1889 in Edinburgh 97 OGs had joined. There were seven life-members (including the Marquess of Lothian, then Secretary of State for Scotland) and ten OGs had contributed to the Scholarship Fund. The terms of the OG Club Scholarship were as follows: £40 a year for at least three years, tenable at any university in the United Kingdom; the holder must have spent no less than three years at Glenalmond; it was to be awarded "in such manner as the Warden and [OG Club] Committee shall decide". The first recipient was E H Cunningham-Craig in 1892, who went on to become a distinguished geologist. Later, these awards were given the names of Buccleuch (the Duke had served on the Council from 1845 to 1884 and had been a considerable benefactor to the College) and Lothian (the Marquess had been on the Council from 1872 until his death in 1900).

A revised edition of the Register was printed at the expense of the Club in 1894. A new edition of the *Index Glenalmondensis*, a

glossary of terms illustrating Coll's history and topography, was also published. The club's Annual Report was issued every year from 1889 and a resume of OG news, reporting honours, promotions, appointments, births, marriages and deaths, appeared in the *Chronicle* from February 1889; previously occasional items had appeared in the 'School News' column.

The Annual Dinner was held initially at the Salutation Hotel in Perth at the time of Commem but, from 1894, at various venues in London, Glasgow and Edinburgh. The toasts were 'The Queen', 'Floreat Glenalmond', to which the Warden made a reply, and the 'OG Club', with a reply by the Secretary. From time to time, there were dinners in whatever continent OGs gathered. Before the Second World War we hear of dinners in Buenos Aires, Calcutta, Johannesburg and at Nuwara Eliya, Ceylon. A memorable dinner was given in Simla on 19 July 1914 at the summer residence of Sir Beauchamp Duff (1868-71), C-in-C India. There were 13 members sitting down to table and a piper led in the haggis. In his after-

Boer War Trophy in Hall



‘Neish was remarkable for his devotion to Glenalmond. Quite apart from his activities as Council member and OG Secretary and Treasurer, he was generous with his money. Robberds said of him: “He was the best friend that Coll has ever had.”’

dinner remarks, Sir Beauchamp declared that “Glenalmond, on account of its open, hilly country and freedom, was the best training ground he knew to prepare a boy for a military career. It taught him to have an eye for country and a sense of direction”. He also made the point that Glenalmond had a bigger percentage of OGs in the military than most public schools. After dinner, the company danced reels and sang Scottish songs until after midnight.

A visible way for the OG Club to show its support for the school was through sport. In the 1870s there had been occasional cricket matches against the old boys, called ‘Past and Present’ or ‘The Old Fellows’. E W Neish brought up teams to play in the 1880s and the OG Match became a regular fixture from 1890. The first rugby football match was played in 1885, which the College won by two goals and a try. For the OGs, J R Wordsworth (1876-84), a son of the first Warden, was prominent in the three-quarters and E W Neish played in the forwards. Shortly after the Centenary Match in 1885, new safety regulations banned mixed-age matches and also put paid to the Puffins, a combined masters/boys team. (\*1) Where they could not participate directly, the OGs supported athletics, or ‘The Games’. One of the first acts of the new club was to award a prize for the Quarter Mile. The winner in 1893, M H M Hunter, established a record of 54 seconds which was not broken until 1953. To mark the new century, in 1901

the club presented challenge cups in various athletic events, such as hurdles and high jump. The OG Golf (1933), Rifle (1950) and Curling Clubs (1962) were established later and, although there were matches against the school and they gave their support whenever possible, their main purpose was to promote these activities among their own members. (\*2)

Over 100 OGs took part in the South African War; 11 were killed or died of disease or wounds and there was one VC (Dick-Cunyngham). At the suggestion of Sir Beauchamp Duff, a trophy was erected in Hall of items from the war, including a Boer flag taken down by Duff himself in Pretoria. Beneath the West Window of the Chapel is the elaborate commemorative plaque. But the most significant memorial is the Library, funded by OGs and designed by A G Heiton of Perth, which was opened by Lord Roberts of Kandahar on the 20 October 1906.

In 1914 there were 334 members of the Club, 87 Life Members, 229 Ordinary Members and 18 Hon Members (previous Wardens and select members of the teaching staff). In that year a Glenalmond Endowment Trust of £1200 was established, to which benefactors, mostly OGs, could contribute. By the terms of the deed, only the income could be used for College purposes and any loans from it had to be repaid as a priority. (\*3) However, war curtailed many a venture and nothing of substance could be done in

the short term. By 1917, plans were afoot to provide a War Memorial Fund, for a physical memorial in Chapel and for entrance scholarships, especially for the sons of the fallen. By 1919, nearly £9,000 had been raised. The elaborate memorial to the 157 OGs who fell, at the east end of the Chapel, was designed by J N Comper (OG), later Sir Ninian, and dedicated in 1922.

OGs made large contributions to the building operations of F W Matheson’s Wardenship. In 1924, dinners were held in London, Glasgow and Dundee at which the new Warden spoke of his plans for the College. Within a short time, donations and pledges of support for new buildings reached £10,000, “a fitting recognition by OGs of their satisfaction at the appointment of one of their number as Warden”. Spontaneous generosity certainly, but one can detect the hand of E W Neish behind the scenes. He had been a member of the Council since 1910 and later was Convenor of the Committee of Council. He acted as Matheson’s confidante and adviser during his Wardenship, as can be seen from their extensive correspondence, even on trifling matters.

Brigadier-General A B Purvis (1863-69) died in 1928 and left £1,000 to the OG Club “to be expended by the Club in such manner and at such time as the Club may think fit, for the benefit of Trinity College”. This became an entrance scholarship; the first recipient

(\*1): There was one more match in 1992 in which Scottish internationalists D M B Sole (1975-80) and R I Wainwright (1978-83) played. The OGs won 25-12.

(\*2): There are separate histories of the Golf and Curling Clubs by Andrew Primrose (1952-57); the history of the Rifle Club remains to be written.

(\*3): Thus a significant reserve was built up, which amounted to £31,000 by 1950.

OGs gather at a number of formal dinners each year at locations across the country



was R N K Barge who was killed in action at Dunkirk. There were several other entrance scholarships not associated with the OG Club, but in 1947, out of the War Memorial Fund, the Club established its own; one of the first OG Scholars was Allan Massie, the novelist and commentator.

Since 1889 the Club had edited and issued at its own expense the College List, which was updated every five years or so. In 1927 there was a proposal to publish a Glenalmond Register to be edited by E W Neish and W M Todd (1905-9). At the beginning of the volume was A Short History of Glenalmond by Neish and, at the end, the fourth edition of the *Index Glenalmondensis*. Neish kept his interleaved edition up to date with notice of individuals, team scores and other data. After his death, C H Thomson (1905-09) carried on the work. This provided the template for St Quintin's Register 1847-1954, which is remarkable for the wealth and accuracy of its information. Both volumes were funded by the OG Club.

Neish was remarkable for his devotion to Glenalmond. Quite apart from his activities as Council member and OG Secretary and Treasurer, he was generous with his money. For example, when the newly levelled pitch that bears his name was sown and the grass did not take, he paid for it to be turfed. At this distance it is impossible to measure his impact on both club and school, but the memorials testify to the esteem in which he was held. In

1935, to mark his 70th birthday, the OGs presented him with a Loving Cup from the reign of Charles II; this he left to the College in his will. At Commem 1936, his old friend Bishop Robberds unveiled the portrait of him that hangs in Hall. Sadly, he died in February 1938, just before the Golden Jubilee of the Club, from complications after an operation. In his memory, the E W Neish Entrance Scholarship was established and the physical memorial, designed by Sir Ninian Comper, is on the north wall of the Ante-Chapel. Robberds said of him: "He was the best friend that Coll has ever had".

After Neish's death in 1938, his duties were divided up. W M Todd became Hon Secretary

and Treasurer, dealing with correspondence, meetings and finance. D R Wilson (1910-15) was Second Secretary, who dealt with the Register, OG notes for the *Chronicle* and liaison between the OG Club and the College. Todd was elected to the Council and Committee of Council and represented the OGs in the arrangements for the Centenary in 1947. Todd continued in office until 1958 and was succeeded by E O St John (1941-45) until 1968. H R Munro (1916-27) took over for a year, then W R Rankin (1928-34) held the post until 1988, followed with A R Muir (1944-48). The current Secretary (from 1992) is D G Sibbald (1961-66) – a total of only seven Club Secretaries in 125 years.

The sporting arms of the OG Club continue to compete against the school





There can be few cities in the world untouched by the presence of an OG – seen here are the OGs of New York City in 2010

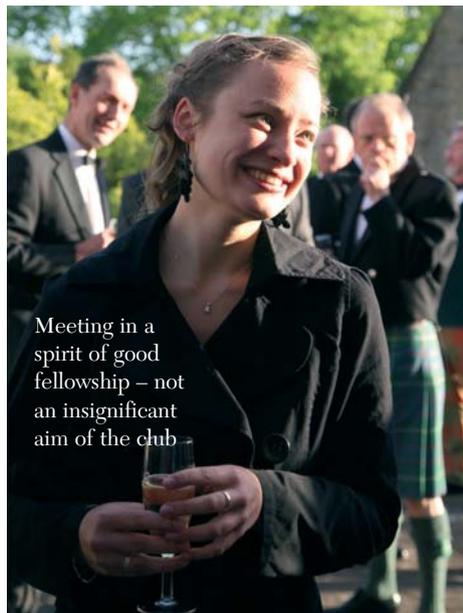


The Rifle Club's Simon Glen and John Gilmour at the recently reopened Gilmour Indoor Range – the support of the OG Club has made possible a number of valuable enhancements to the College's facilities

At the time of the Club's Jubilee in 1938, only about half of OGs were members of the Club. In order to increase members, Life membership was reduced to £5. This proved a success and D J D Dixon became the 1000th member. In 1982, by arrangement with the Council, life membership of £60 was added to a boy's final bill, with parental consent. In 1985 there were 1940 members. Inflation, especially in the 1970s, had eroded the value of the original life membership and senior OGs were invited to contribute further. Over £6,000 was raised. One of the biggest items of the club's expenditure, apart from the scholarships, was the *Glenalmond Chronicle*, available free to members. Over the years the frequency has changed, reduced from several times a year, then thrice and in the 1970s and 80s twice. From 1988 it came out annually and in A4 format, which gave great scope for illustrations and imaginative design. Publication of the OG Annual Reports began in 1889 and ended in 1962 – most of the material was by then duplicated in the *Chronicle*. The OG Notes were enlarged and a list of officers was included, and from 1973 a summary of the Minutes of the OG Club AGM.

Relations between the OG Club and the College Council were generally harmonious. However, there were grumbles in 1983 about lack of communication when the official name of the College was changed from Trinity College, Glenalmond to Glenalmond College. OGs could understand the reasons for the change but objected to the lack of formal consultation.

In 1986 a new Register of 1950-85 was published. A supplement brought up to date the careers of those in the 1954 Register, that is, of those who sent in



Meeting in a spirit of good fellowship – not an insignificant aim of the club

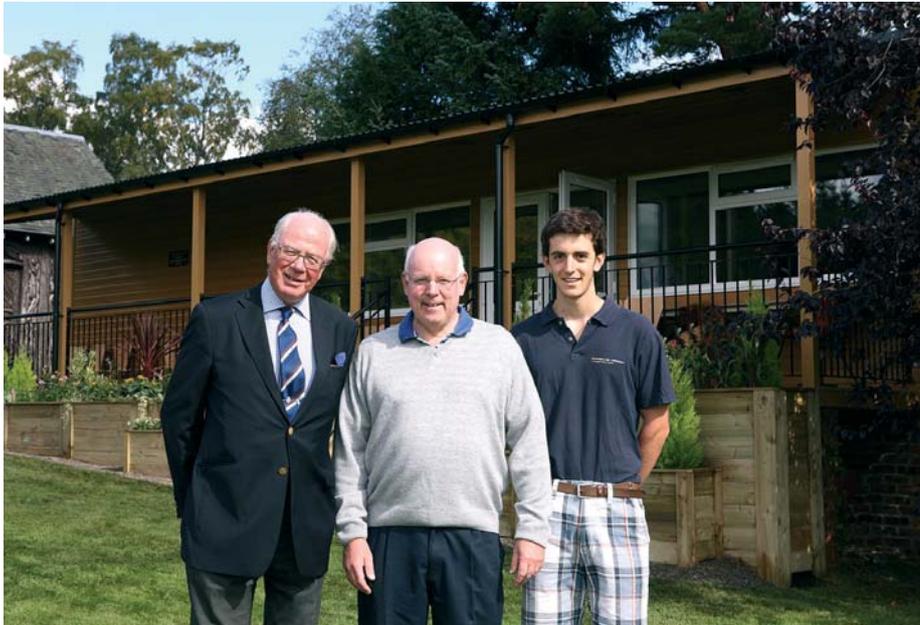


particulars of their careers. There are therefore some lacunae and the volume does not have the wealth of detail of previous ones.

In 1988 came the Centenary of the club. On Saturday, 4 June, there were a variety of activities: clay pigeon shooting, golf, sailing on Loch Freuchie, hockey and cricket. Mrs Felicity Given set up an exhibition of College Archives. That night there was a dinner for 200 in the Station Hotel, Perth, with J B Stevenson (1943-48) in the chair. As a sign of changing times, members' ladies were invited. On the Sunday morning there was a special Chapel Service. To mark the occasion, the OG Club created, at a cost of £1,000, a new hardwood plantation to the west of Front Avenue.

Commem was becoming more a day for current pupils and their parents rather than a reunion for OGs. Therefore in 1993, as an experiment, an OG Day, organised by W A M Crow, was held in May. 200 OGs attended. There were matches against the boys in golf, squash, hockey and cricket. Only in golf were the OGs defeated, even though they had put out a strong team. 1997 was the 150th Anniversary of the College. 130 OGs came on 18th May, but the day was marred by heavy rain. Another milestone was the 150th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Chapel in 1851. On that occasion the OGs gave £2,500.

The relationship between school and club has flourished since the inception of the Development and Alumni Relations in 2004. Maureen Marshall was appointed as the College's first Director of Development and Alumni Relations and she has worked tirelessly to strengthen the bonds between Coll and the OGs, and to support the activities of the club. Today, the OG Club has a membership of 4,208, of whom 3,816 are in direct communication with the Alumni Office.



Colin Brown (OG), Warden Woods and senior Coll golfer Andreas Frey at the refurbished Golf Pavilion at Cairnies – made possible by OGs

Modern communications have enabled contact to be established and maintained with many more OGs round the world than before – the club is in contact by email with 3,202 members. Each year College leavers reinforce the club as fully paid life members. Several OGs continue to serve actively on the College Council, including the Club Chairman and current Club Secretary. The club continues to hold annual dinners in London and in Scotland - in the

Borders and, in alternating years, Glasgow and Edinburgh – while the club sporting arms, in curling, golf, shooting, hockey and cricket run and maintain their own social events with some regularity.

Glenalmond has been fortunate over the years to produce a very loyal group of old members who have contributed much to the College, from support for specific projects to careers' advice and help for individual pupils. The Club Scholarship & Bursary Fund has

‘In this anniversary year the club has donated and installed handsome lanterns by Front Arch to enhance the ambience of the College on winter evenings.’

been nurtured and grown so that it provides £16,000 a year for the support of three pupils. In this anniversary year the club - through the Golf Society – raised very substantial sums to rebuild and refurbish the Hugh Price Memorial Golf Pavilion at Cairnies, while the club has also donated and installed handsome lanterns by Front Arch to enhance the ambience of the College on winter evenings. Furthermore, the club is committed to financial support and expertise on an ongoing basis for the replanting of specimen trees across the College estate.

As the College sets out upon a medium-term strategy of upgrading the College facilities, through a new development process under the newly-appointed Development Director Craig Fleming, and with the support of Maureen Marshall, the club stands well placed to continue its support at all levels. Edward Neish and Henry Barr could not have imagined the scope of the Club which they helped create 125 years ago, but they would surely applaud their successors through the years and today's enthusiastic alumni. “O Floreat The Old Glenalmond Club”.



The handsome lanterns either side of Front Arch, a gift to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the club