



KITALE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER 2015/2016

GREETINGS FROM BOURNEMOUTH

Hello all Kitaleites

I met up with Bridget when I was in South Africa in March this year and we had a long chat about the newsletter and the need to keep it going as long as we can but I think a lot of it depends on you, the readers and contributors!

There has been mention of a Kitale School Reunion here in UK, what thoughts do you have on this? Do we have time to have one this year or do we plan to have one in 2016? Where do we have it and what format would you prefer? A lunch on a Saturday or a full weekend starting with Saturday lunch, a dinner and a Sunday breakfast before heading home?

1 JUDITH HOLLOWES

Visit to Kitale School as a volunteer teacher from September to November 2015

by Judith Hollowes, Kitale School from 1955 to 1960

judithhollowes@gmail.com

Address: Kitale School, PO Private Bag, Kitale 30200, Kenya. Email: info@kitalchool.sc.ke

Vision: To be recognized as a national institution of academic excellence and integrity

Motto: Persevere in quest of excellence.

Donations will be much appreciated: Kenya Commercial Bank, Kitale School Reserve Account 1108015166 Swift KCBLKENX

Mrs Margaret Wanyoni, Principal, Kitale School gave me a very warm welcome in September when I visited her to ask if I could return to 'my' school to teach as a volunteer for a couple of months. A couple of days later I was installed in the Guest House – accommodation built onto the back of the former sanatorium – which has been used for several years by visiting 'Gap Year' students from the UK, France, Australia, USA and Russia!

I have posted to my Facebook page many photographs of the school, Kitale and surrounding farms, which you are welcome to view. There are photos of the honour boards in the hall, school buildings and campus, Kitale town etc.

The school is a national school and now has standards 1 to 8 in the primary section, forms 1 to 4 in the secondary section and 3 levels in the kindergarten section (Early Childhood Development Education). In the primary section there are 3 or more classes in each year and 3 classes in each year of the secondary sections, and more than 200 children in the ECDE section. So the school has well over 2,000 students and close to 100 teachers. All secondary and most primary students are boarding in the original boarding accommodation until a new hostel is finished to replace the one that burnt down earlier this year, fortunately during the school holidays. Despite the challenges of cramped classrooms and dormitories, the challenges of water shortages, the challenges of insufficient funding for textbooks and for development of the building infrastructure, the school has talented teachers and students. I was very impressed by the quality of the teachers and the achievements of the students. The textbooks I used in teaching English were well written and encouraged learning through activities rather than by rote.

Kitale School maintains its reputation for being the best in the area, and continues to improve year on year KCPE and KCSE national exam results. The standard 8's are able to go onto good secondary schools (only girls are accepted in the secondary section of Kitale School). The secondary girls are able to qualify for entry into good universities.

The school has several funding sources: parents, the PTA, Ministry of Education (through bursaries, and grants), the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Trans Nzoia County Government, donations from well-wishers and strategic partners including financial institutions, and competitive loans from financial institutions. Support from alumni could be strengthened;

if anyone would like to support the school, please get in touch with the Principal Mrs Margaret Wanyoni (+254 724 722 888 which is also her WhatsApp number). Donations can be sent to: Kenya Commercial Bank, Kitale School Reserve Account 1108015166 Swift KCBLKENX.

Kitale School students in October 2015

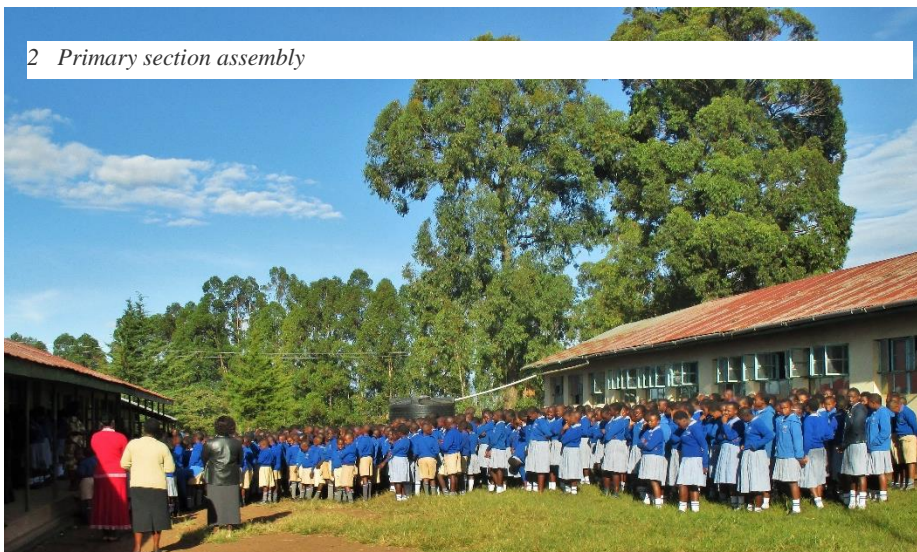
1 Standard 8's relaxing before their KCPE exams



3 Form 3 students revising for exams



2 Primary section assembly



I have taken the editors prerogative and added some of the photos that Judith put onto Facebook that you may not have seen.





2 JOANNA PICKFORD

Hello Lovely Doves and Beautiful ones,

Last Saturday I caught the train up to Stoke on Trent to meet my Niece Claire and her lovely family half way for a day out. The whole family came so I saw George and Tommy again and Met Ben and Zoe for the first time. My sister in law Gill was there too. We went to Trenton Gardens which were delightful and seem to have something to do with Capability Brown, I sort of half read stuff and pick up smidgens of information. There is a huge lake and they have installed fairies around the lake and gardens. We had a lovely walk and spotted all the fairies which were beautifully made out of wire and had such fine details like the toes which were made from little springs. They had other surprises in the gardens with little fairy sculptures and hanging fairy ball shaped homes. It was a delightful day out and the children loved it. Half way round was a café and then there was a flower meadow which was beautiful just full of lovely flowers. The children's playground is the very best I have ever seen full of great pieces of equipment for all ages of children and not the kind of equipment you buy out of a catalogue and plonk in a play space. We had a lovely calm chatty peaceful day catching up and sharing family stories. All in all, a lovely day.

Dave is doing well and is excited to have finally started his rehab he is so eager that the staff have to hold him back. There is a lovely assistant nurse there called Geoffrey and he is so full of fun and humour and is excited with every little bit of progress Dave and the others make. We take Dave around the gardens if it's nice weather or down to the Café where we all have a drink. Dave still has to have everything thickened with something that looks a bit like wall paper paste he says "it's all right" with a grimace.

Aly and I have been walking up Beacon Hill regularly and yet despite all my huffing and panting the sylph in me is refusing to emerge! Probably because all Aly's lovely friends have been inviting us to dinner and plying us with delicious fare. We also walk up steep hills in Malvern which is totally built on steep slopes. I attach a picture from the Theatre of Small Convenience which is a real theatre in what used to be a public convenience.

Lots of love Jo xxx

3 DAVID & HELEN O'LOAN

Good to have your message...I haven't sent an update for 8 years.

Helen Hilder (O'Loan) and David O'Loan moved to Saltaire, West Yorkshire in 2007 and live near our 4 little granddaughters which is quite different from growing up on a farm near Kitale and where we had no grandparents, uncles, aunties or cousins. Saltaire is a world heritage village and our church hosts lots of visiting groups.

David & I just recently met Lindy Northcote (Wilson) & her husband Tug in Kyrenia, N. Cyprus. Lindy's mother Betty & Grandmother Kathleen Taylor were friends of my mother's (Belinda Hilder). Kathleen played the violin, Betty taught ballet & my mother Belinda played the piano. Lindy has also put me in touch with Judith Hollows who is currently teaching at Kitale Primary and has sent lots of pictures through on FB.

4 GAVIN AND SUE MCKENZIE

My cousins Don and Poll Brooksbank have just spent 4 nights with us in Durban, they were enroute to Botswana and Namibia.

We spent a night in Himeville to catch up with Chris and Karin Norman and stopped off for tea in Howick with Heather Davidson.

The group is Susan McKenzie(nee Brooksbank) Chris Norman, Helen (Poll) Brooksbank (nee Paterson) Gavin McKenzie, Karin Norman (nee Falck) and Don Brooksbank. We all farmed at Endebeess.



Heather Davidson (nee Munro) and Helen (Poll) Brooksbank (nee Paterson) Heather and Poll have both recently celebrated their 80th birthdays, they started at Kitale School in 1940 and became best friends.

5 RALPH NICHOLSON

Helen Bailey (Nicholson) and Ralph Nicholson went to Kenya in early October this year for a holiday, with great trepidation we hired a self-drive car from the middle of Nairobi and set off. Ralph's driving licence had expired and so Helen and Ralph's daughter Melinda ended up doing all the driving. Melinda and Helen had friends so there were five of us in a Toyota four-wheel drive. The last time we were in Kenya we were caught by Police twice and fined our way out of it and vowed never to drive in Kenya again!!



Kenya appears to be doing very well at present. Nairobi is growing faster than ever and absolutely full of well-maintained cars and on the whole the standard of driving is very

good. Most of the roads have been cleared of litter and all of the drains cleaned before the arrival of the short rains. The Mombasa road is now a good quality motorway as far as Athi River and is virtually built up areas the whole way with good quality gated housing estates being built. There are southern and northern bypasses but are still huge traffic jams so you can imagine the number of cars there are.



Turning off the Mombasa road at Emali you cross the new Chinese railway (90% financed by them) which is standard gauge double track and about 6 ft. above the plain so of extremely high quality.

Amboseli was full of elephant and all the plains game and roads well graded and lodge very well run and Ol Tukai lodge about a third full. Tsavo also with a lot of game at Kilaguni and saw the largest tusked elephant, nearly touching the ground, which is supposedly continually guarded.



From Tsavo west we crossed the road at Tsavo river where the Chinese have built a huge 200 ft. high bridge about a mile long to allow the game to travel underneath. We then followed the Tsavo River and left the park at Sala gate and stayed at Crocodile Camp where we were the only guests apart from 6 Israelis who were helping on an irrigation scheme. The manager of crocodile camp said he would arrange for us to have a look round. They were just harvesting their first maize crop which looked to me to be doing about 25bags per acre. It is a huge scheme on the 1,000,000 acre Galana cattle ranch and hope to get up to 450,000acres under irrigation.



Stayed at Watamu which is very quiet and Hemmingway's hotel closed. It seems a great pity that when they have got the tourist industry so cleaned up and good there are no tourists.

Despite this Kenya has the fastest growing economy in Africa and you can see this as you drive around. On the way back stayed at Hunters Lodge and were the only guests. I include a photograph of the Mombasa road with the new Chinese railway alongside and an account of the same trip from Nairobi to Athi River done in 1903 by Meintzhagen to show how Kenya has changed in 110 years.



This is a photograph of the Chinese railway taken from the Mombasa road near the Chyulu hills. The white cross, cross pattern is the concrete channels to take the rain water off without eroding the embankments.

This is the same journey as we did but in 1903 and recorded by Meintzhagen to show how Kenya has changed in 110 years.

Delamere asked me to go on the morning.

12 . V . 1903. Nairobi

game census I made a game census today of animals between Nairobi and the Athi River south of Nairobi over an area of about 24 square miles; I was assisted by Harrison. We counted:

18 giraffe	894 wildebeeste
4 rhino	276 Coke's haartebeeste
11 wild dogs	46 eland
22 warthog	326 Grant's gazelle
7 great bustard	184 impala
684 zebra	426 Thomson's gazelle
2 common duiker	7 steinbock

Over 4000 head of Masai cattle

13 . V . 1903. Nairobi

Tsavo Station



6 JOANNA PICKFORD

I keep finding hidden reservoirs of photos taken by mum that I appear to have never seen before. My brother Nic made all family photos digital and gave us all a copy. When I was in NZ for the reunion with Paula and Ian, Paula mad an amazing cake and she made a (she made 2 just in case) plaque of icing for the cake of the school coat of arms. She gave me one and I have it still and it's still perfect. Here is a picture of it you might want to fiddle with it and use it on your Newsletter.
Cheers Joanna



A run-down of the Pickfords.

Tim's Family continue to thrive his wife Rae and son Philip and family live in Tasmania, his daughter Katherine and 3 sons in New Zealand and son Stephen in UK. He now has 5 grandchildren.

Jay lives with his wife Marilyn in Spain and continues to be very active despite as he says getting old. He is still a creative force with sculpture, poetry, drawing painting etc and incredibly prolific as well as still working looking after expatriates and the purchase mistakes they make. I am currently putting his poems and illustrations into a book for him and it will be for sale on the web.

Nic and his wife Pam Live in Stallion Springs Southern California. His two children are doing well. Nic and Pam are both retired and busy Nic makes exquisite puzzle boxes which confound the people who receive them into hours of fun trying to open them. This year saw the deer that visit their place each day have twins and they still have the famous acorn tree outside the living room.

Martin and Jill, Martin Still works for the institute of palaeontology in Paris and is a proud great grandfather of 4 grandsons and one granddaughter. Google his name and you discover what he has been up to.

Ben and Mary live in Atwater California, Ben also does some amazing wood work projects he put some up on face book and occasionally sells some in local markets. He is very creative with using some interesting features of recycled wotnots creating some great novelty items. They have an extended family of grand and great grandchildren.

Aly and Dave live in Malvern Link and have a very active busy walking a lot life. They have 3 grandchildren to son Hugo and wife Emma.

I am happily retired and busy with my many creative outlets. I published a book called "From the sublime to the ridiculous, Letterboxes of Australia" you can see a preview on <http://au.blurb.com/b/5996102-from-the-sublime-to-the-ridiculous> I have my daughter Abra and her husband living close by with my two Grandsons Matthew 6 and Oliver 3. Of course they are the most smart and beautiful grandkids ever!

7 JOHN EAGER

Jambo Aiden,

Thanks for your reply. With regard to Tim's current address, he moved several times and although he is still in Vancouver, I don't have his current address. Incidentally, my brother Mike was in Rhodesia from 1971- 1975 working for the Rhodesian Government as an Entomologist in the control of tsetse fly. During that that time he was called up for the army and served as a 2nd Lt.

As for myself, probably some people will already know certain parts of my history, but for those who don't here it is as briefly as possible.

After a short stint in the Kenya Regiment in 1963 (it was disbanded early that year due to the coming of Independence at the end of '64) I joined Total Oil in Nairobi with a year at their main oil terminal, then as Depot Manager for the Kitale oil depot for most of 1964, before Total decided to close it down and all oil and fuel products came from their larger terminal in Eldoret covering that whole northern area of Kenya. In early 1965 I moved to Somerset West in South Africa and joined A.E. & C.I. as a Supervisor in their distribution of explosives department where I spent two years. I then moved up to Johannesburg, ran a Caltex service station for a few years before joining SONAP a Portuguese oil company in 1971 and occupying various marketing positions. I married Christine in 1972 and our son Nicholas was born in 1974. We left South Africa near the end of 1977 and moved (back) to the UK where I joined Duckhams Oils Industrial Lubricants handling the industrial lubrication for Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. In early 1980 we immigrated to Australia and I joined Caltex oil Australia, moving around New South Wales in the marketing of industrial fuels and lubricants to many different types of industries, in particular the heavy industries around Wollongong, south of Sydney where I was a Sales Engineer.

In January of 1994 Christine and I moved to Karachi, Pakistan where I took up the role of Technical Advisor to Caltex Oil Pakistan and Caltex Oil India based in Karachi. We remained there for the next four years where I ended up as the Deputy Divisional Manager Product Engineering and Brand Management (those four years are another story entirely!). We moved back to Australia early in 1998 and I joined the Caltex Perth office as Lubricant Sales Manager Western Australia – Automotive and Transport. That lasted until the end of 1999 when Caltex had a major retrenchment and my job in Perth became redundant, to be handled from the east! I therefore took their generous retrenchment package and my retirement and left the oil industry for good!

In September/October of 2000 we drove over to Sydney towing a camper trailer to see some of events of the 2000 Olympic Games, on the way back to Perth we camped for several nights at a town in South Australia called Clare named after the Clare Valley in which it lies and now famous for wines, in particular Rieslings which although different to the German/Austrian Rieslings are amongst the best of their type in the world. While in Clare we decided to look at small acreages around the area and made a fairly ridiculous offer on a three acre property near a small village in the middle of the Clare valley called Watervale. Not thinking much more about it we continued on our way back to Perth, only to receive a phone call along the way from the Estate Agent, to say that our offer had been accepted! We sold up in Perth early 2001 and travelled back to SA moving into our Watervale property in early March 2001.

I re-joined the workforce from late 2001 - mid 2005 (having completed several courses on wine over the years) working in the wine industry, firstly freelance as vine pruner, grape picker and cellar door sales at various wineries to mid-2002 and as a permanent employee with Leasingham Winery, Clare Valley, mid 2002 – 2005, as cellar door sales person.

In August of 2005 we sold our property in Watervale, having bought a fairly decent sized off-road caravan and took off around the country. We circumnavigated the country twice and

travelled up the centre once and in 2007 bought into retirement village in Hervey Bay in Queensland, but in 2008 feeling a bit too young for that type of life at the time, we sold and went back on the road again in early 2009, headed off back up to Darwin then back down the WA coast, Perth to Adelaide, Melbourne and over to Tasmania where we spent three months. Finally, we came back to SA and the Clare Valley and bought a quarter acre property in the town of Riverton about 90 minutes north of Adelaide and between the Clare valley wine region and the Barossa Valley wine region. Having sold our caravan, we are here for the long term, we have the best of two wine worlds on our door steps, the Festival City of Adelaide not too far away and the peace and quiet of rural Australia around us. We now spend our time on growing our own veggies, collecting eggs from our three chickens, walking our 13-year-old Labrador Katie, who has travelled all around the country with us and meeting up with friends in Clare and other parts of the Clare Valley. I brew my own beer of various types and distil my own whiskey and bandy, while Christine has her sewing room where she can get away from me when she wants to! Our son Nicholas who is an ambulance Paramedic with the NSW Ambulance Service is married with four children and lives north of Sydney on the NSW Central Coast at Gosford, but due to the 1,600 kilometres in between us, we are unable to see a lot of them, apart from Skype calls.

Anyway, for what it's worth, here it is. I have tried not to be too long winded, but a lot of water has passed under the bridge over the past 50 plus years! Feel free to cut it back if you feel the need.

8 DAVID (DAVE) VOORVELT

A whistle-stop tour of my memories of Kitale School - 1953-1957

I still have memories of a plump elderly lady, sitting on a chair nodding her head as she instructed a herd of little boys, all totally naked in the showers, to "wash here, wash there". Mrs McDonald was a great old stick, and the house matron of the junior boys' house. She also instructed, in her spare time, the gardeners who tended the front garden of the school. Miss Yule, the matron for the girls upstairs, I noticed from the quadrangle downstairs, was very glamorous. I seem to recall some names, mostly those of the nice persons I came to know while at this school. The under matron was nasty, especially holding your hand painfully tight to cut finger nails to the quick.

The top field was littered with trapdoor spiders. A popular Sunday sport was to capture them using sticks and then place them in constructed sand cells. Each boy had a tarantula that they would push into a type of Roman colosseum also made of sand where, to the delight of us boys, the spiders would fight to the death. I have since developed a real phobia of giant spiders. This may be the sub-conscious reason I eventually have moved to a cold country where the spiders are small. The bottom field held piggy's (grubs?) that could be drawn out of their holes with a blade of grass. I thankfully don't remember what we did with them.

Mrs Jacobus was my class teacher for 3 years. She inspired me to love history and therefore the desire to read about past personalities. This was a personal breakthrough in my life, as I

have dyslexia, a learning problem that was not recognised or understood in those days. I kept well-hidden the fact that I could not read until I taught myself to read, in my own way, driven by the passion for history transferred to me by Mrs Jacobus. She lived in a little cottage behind the swimming pool. Sometimes selected boys were invited for tea; it was a great honour. Her classroom moved around, from behind the curtain of the stage, or in tents, as more baby-boomers came to school.

Mrs Talentino I forgive for all the injections she inflicted upon us. She was the San Matron. How she dealt with all the blubbing kids I do not know. As my name started with a "V" I was almost last in line as we queued in the dining room. At first it was a relief to be last in line, but then the pending fear and agony was experienced for longer as I awaited my almost certain execution at the end of the line. Interestingly she kept a bowl of human knuckles in her flat hallway.

The art teacher, whose name may have been Mr Mortimer, constructed beautiful sets for the play held at the end of each year. I distinctly remember the real beauty of the Baroque Versailles style of the set he made for the Cinderella production. I used to examine them as they leaned against the back of the hall walls. By then I was in the back row. He often placed kids paintings outside the art room each side of the door. One I liked was the Tudor dressed figures. I wonder if this inspired me to become an artist. As they are all passed away it is not possible to thank them, or wreak revenge, especially on the headmaster, Mr Brooks.

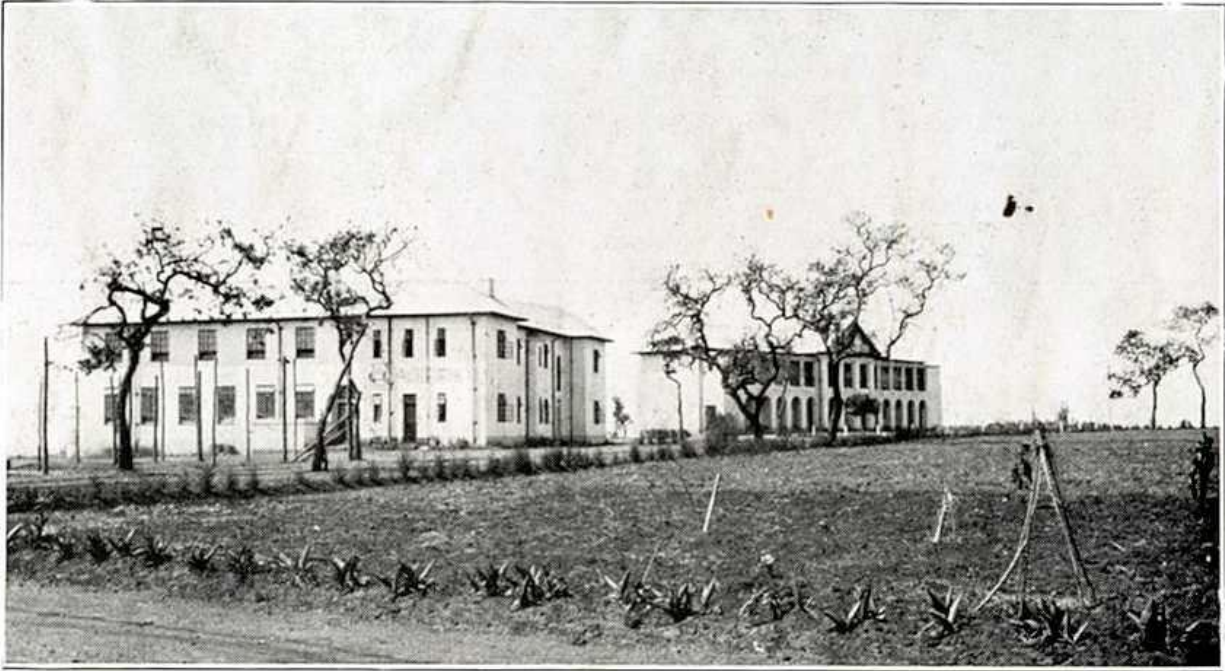
Morning prayers in the hall were very boring and my mind drifted inevitably towards the names in gold on the boards around the hall walls, wishing so much my name would be placed there, but these names were inscribed after the children had left Std. 7, so could never drool over their names while there. I wonder what has happened to the boards of gold inscribed names, a history of achievements. I notice the school has recently recognized the colonial past and has been trying to communicate with past pupils and have changed the school name back to "Kitale School".

I was poor at sport, very poor. I would close my eyes when a ball came towards me and of course most school sport is played with some sort of ball, large or small. My humiliation was when teams were chosen. I was always the last one chosen and forced upon a reluctant team. I understand their reluctance, as I became so bored on the field that I would spend my time looking for piggy's, feathers etc. in the grass so that when the shouting to catch, kick, pick-up the ball finally infiltrated my distracted mind, it was too late.

I recall a friend, John Tory, who had a beautiful older sister. He was not in my class and therefore I do not know how he coped with schoolwork. He often cried at night, I felt distressed when he suddenly left school. I met him later on a Nairobi farm with his wonderful sister whom I think I fell in love with. Later, on reflection, I realized John had an intellectual disadvantage. Why his parents placed him in a boarding school I cannot fathom, nor how the teaching staff coped. Happily, I came to know years later that he was happy and married.

9 RONALD (RONNIE) STANDFIELD

Have attached this photo I found somewhere.



European School, Kitale. Designed by Government Architect, P.W.D.

Photo: H. O. Weller.

May be of interest. Maybe mid-1930s? I first attended as a boarder about 1938. There were considerably more trees by then which we were not allowed to climb, and a large group of Gum trees to the far right, beyond of the main building in the picture. Ever since then if I smell gum trees reminds me and feel 'homesick'.

10 HUGH GLADMAN

We don't have a lot of news, other than we have moved house after 40 years at the same address. We have moved to a Lifestyle Village which has imposed a big downsizing for us. We are quite happy in the new "lifestyle" as we can do as much or as little of the programmed events and just continue our lives as we have been used to. I note you have flagged a reunion in September /October next year and also note, it clashes with a trip we have planned to New Zealand with The Wagga City Rugby Male Choir which I am a member of. We are very unlikely to be attendees at the reunion. No other news so cheers and keep up the good work

11 HORACE HORSEY

Sorry for the late reply but currently in Eastern Canada starting our trip across to Vancouver Island

Should be fun and fairly leisurely as we have 10 weeks.
Great being retired with no obligation on time!

Horsey Clan

- Horace and Mandy (We married 2 months ago)

Kitale school 1956-1962

- David and Vicki

Kitale School 1959-1962

- John and Penny

Kitale School 1961-1962

My two sisters Catherine and Ruth did not go to Kitale School and were incarcerated in Loreto Convent in Eldoret

A small update on the Horsey clan

Kenya has been very kind to the Horsey's and we all work and still live in Kenya

David and I set up a construction company in the mid-70s and sold it 3 years ago
Both families are now happily retired and spend our time travelling for around 5 months of the year and the balance of the time on a golf estate Vipingo Ridge 30km North of Mombasa

John has spent most of his life farming and owns a farm in Nanyuki where he grows various herbs from which he extracts the oil and manufactures soap, shampoos, conditioners etc.
He supplies the various upmarket lodges' safari camp with their complimentary bath supplies.

Aiden you are doing a great job if sometimes probably thankless task and as we all come to our twilight years it is so important to catch up with old friends

So keep up the good work!!!

I will try and make contact with Raymond Forrester and Michael Mayers in Calgary who were both in my year at Kitale School

12 OLIVER LONG

Salaams Aiden,

Thanks for all your work to keep the KS news and network going.

I apologize that I failed to reply to your e-mail below Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2015. My excuse is that surgery made it difficult to sit at the computer.

About a week ago we received the sad and unexpected news (below) that **Michael Reveley**, my "oldest" friend, had died in Poole, Dorset (his home for many years after he retired) on Oct. 8, 2015.

Bournemouth Daily Echo: Wednesday 21 October 2015 / News

REAVELEY Michael John Peacefully at Dorset County Hospital, Dorchester, on 8th October. Funeral Service at Poole Crematorium on Wednesday 28th October for 12 noon. All enquires to J J Allen, Funeral Directors, Seamoor Road, Westbourne, Bournemouth BH4 9AN Tel: 01202 763765.

Michael and I met in January 1946 as "new boys" at Kitale School, both proceeding to the Duko 1950-55 & then to UK and University - he to Bristol 1956-59.

Our friendship endured nearly 70 years, despite us living in different countries from about 1962. I did visit him or he me/us whenever we could. This includes May, 1966 in Kilembe, Uganda, in England many times - the last time was May, 2014 (when attached image from his penthouse balcony was taken), in the U.S.A. (Boston, New York & New Jersey) and when he was transferred to Toronto for a couple of years in the 1980's. He worked for Barclay's Bank (as did his Dad) mainly in the USA, and became a director in both USA and Canada.



Aiden, in my last e-mail to you sent 07 July 2015 (the day before my op.!) I sent you my brother Peter's e-mail and postal addresses. He has moved & bought a house in Northampton. I am also copying my brothers and those KS friends that I still keep in touch with. I met Bridget in South Africa - as you will know she is the sister of the late Peter Doenhoff who attended the Duko when we were there.

In July I had a total hip replacement revision (2nd time, since earlier one made walking increasingly difficult). Rehab was only partially successful, so I still need to use a walker & continue intensive physiotherapy.

Season's Greetings to everyone for a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

13 BRIDGET WALTON



It's the time of year again when thoughts fly overland and across the waters as we connect with family and friends to wish all first a very Happy Christmas followed by a New Year that has to be better than the one just gone by.

In all and in spite of the economic situation, massive corruption, summer rains failing as well as our deteriorating roads and many days without electricity, there have been good times. In March we celebrated my sister's 80th birthday first in India with Adrian and Helen and later in May when Mike, Judy and all the Doenhoff side of the family met in Devon for a further celebration. In May we also had a gathering at college to mark our 60th anniversary. This was a day to remember and, albeit that the college is no longer in West Hill, Putney, the soul that was there in our time is still there today.

August saw Adrian and Helen return to England after their five years in India with Adrian immediately stepping into a job. They have just become owners of a home in Woking, an excellent centre for commuting to London and they will no doubt enjoy settling in and being home owners again.

In September, my sister and niece Susy visited and we did some enjoyable travelling to places neither had been to before. I met them in Johannesburg and we spent the weekend at the Vaal before driving on to Clarens where we spend two days at the cottage – always lovely because it is so peaceful, especially mid-week. From there and en route back home to Hilton we went to Nambiti Game Reserve. Helga had won return air tickets to Johannesburg as well as spending money, which she very generously shared. This was three days when we enjoyed being in the bush. Tented accommodation might sound ordinary. It was pure luxury, greatly to be enjoyed, as were the game drives, all part of the package. We saw all of the big five although, because we were the only ones who spotted the leopard, many disputed that we had placed a large dummy on the hilltop. Even our photographs were disbelieved!

Theresa and Peter continue to enjoy their lovely home on the outskirts of Johannesburg. For Theresa this is a much easier commute to work, 11 minute as against over an hour. She continues to travel widely and this year this included an overseas business trip as well as her travel throughout Southern Africa. Currently, she and Peter are on holiday in Zanzibar. Shortly after they return we will join them and spend Christmas together with all members of Peter's family. There will be twelve of us gathered to celebrate Christmas Day, with only Adrian and Helen unable to be with us this year.

Robin, although retired, is still busy with his choir and he plays the organ at church so has plenty of outlets for his music. My year has been incredibly busy and quite challenging at times. I am again the organizing secretary for a teachers' Conference to be held next August. We already have our full complement of teachers registered with many more on the waiting list. The host school will welcome 1100 teachers over three days. Apart from organizing a programme the catering for such numbers is a huge task. We have 43 workshop presenters lined up as well as Plenary Speakers so it promises to be an enjoyable three days of teacher development for all.

In 2016, I shall also be continuing my involvement as a mentor in schools. All schools have to be 'Quality Assured' every six years and we are a group of retired 'oldies' who run workshops, visit the schools to which we are appointed and do an evaluation in which the school looks at itself in areas of teaching, learning and functioning. There is emphasis placed on celebrating strengths while looking to improve areas where this is needed. We place emphasis on self-evaluation in preference to looking on the process as an inspection and we find generally that schools enjoy the experience and continue to self-evaluate beyond the mentor visits.

For the family, 2016 promises to be a good year for getting together – milestone birthdays and anniversaries abound and need to be celebrated. How all might be fitted into a busy programme, which includes work, remains to be seen. Somehow we must and will manage it all!

Robin joins me in sending love and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Bridget

