

20, Merton Hall Gardens,
Wimbledon,
London SW20 8SN,
January 2006

Dear Vadhans, Families and Supporters,

Considering the world in which we live, my New Year's hope for us all is to Keep Safe and Well. We started "well" with a visit to Dereyck's family where 36 of us gathered, and the next door neighbour, a vicar's wife, pranged our car. Ah well!!

Before I go any further, I must tender ABJECT apologies to Merna Wakefield and her brothers for omitting the sad news of their sister Joan's demise last year. The news came too late for the January Newsletter, and I have no excuse for the omission in the June one. I tried to make amends by asking Aubrey Ballantine and John Feltham to put this on their Web pages through my intermediaries----Peggy Littlewood and Stanley Prins, but for us "Computer Luddites", may I quote my message. "All Vadhans who knew Joan Wakefield as a fellow pupil, and us who knew her as a teacher will be deeply saddened at the news of her demise on January 22nd last. Mrs. Beniston was not "just another teacher"-- she was adored by me and our entire class. Not only was she an excellent teacher, but she was so beautiful and kind, and we were thrilled when Miss Wakefield married such a handsome Prince Charming. It was a fairy tale come true! We missed her sorely while she was on honeymoon, but it was so romantic, and we felt so privileged that she was OUR Mrs. Beniston. I was in Std. 3 at the time. I know others will have memories of her too, as a school friend and a teacher. We were always so pleased to see her at the Reunions. Our deepest condolences go to Merna, Bill and Brian and to all her family.

John Webster wrote, "August 28th was a sad day for our family, as our brother Dickie passed away suddenly with a massive heart attack. Dickie was one of us who attended VS." Our thoughts and love are with you, Shirley and the family.

In my last letter I asked for years attended by Vadhans in school, and received a list compiled by Alice Wrigley, (Hardaker). Bless you, Alice, for making such a start. It will be appended at the end with those I have collected. Please will you send me your dates for this list.

Mainly as a surprise to Stanley Prins, but also to many of you, just as it was to me, the following snippet-- I received a copy of the Northumbrian magazine of Winter1993, from Sheila Smith (Raymond) and Lo and Behold! At the top of P17 there is a delightful picture of Stanley and another of "one of his collages of Humshaugh buildings". And what is almost obscene is that he does not look any older to-day!! This will be on display at the next Reunion. We knew of his talents as a writer through his book "Summoned By the Bell" but I was unaware of his artistic attributes. I appeal to his wife Marian to fill us in with anything else we should know. (Now that's a thought! We should get our "other halves" to write on "Living with Vadhans". On second thoughts----- forget it!!!) Stanley was invited to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party in mid July, but as he said he "didn't get close enough to say 'Hi' to HM". Never mind HM, he didn't mention the food!

Malcolm Robertson thoroughly enjoyed the Reunion-- the first he has attended. He is in touch with Parlane MacFarlane and has visited him before now, but would like news of any of the following-- Peter Grout, Neville Hatch, Sheila Murray, Sheila Daniels and the Baptiste girls whose first names he failed to recall.

I had a delightful phone call from Norman Clark. He was in VS and his sister Shirley was with me. I know many of us have wanted to trace her, so it was great to learn that she now lives in Cheltenham. Perhaps we will see both at the Reunion. Norman wanted to get in touch with Amit Bose re the hopes to help the Schools. I do feel that a select few will be more effective in assisting the regeneration at the Hill Top, than many of us who have no business acumen nor the means of

offering financial support. Norman knows Shumshere Rana's nephew, whose brother became the King of Nepal, as well as Lloyd Farquahar (sp?) and Ayden Edwards. Norman's address will be appended at the end of the letter.

Yvonne Jackson (Keymer) wrote, "The schools had a reputation of excellence and many old boys and girls are a credit to the education they received."

After seeing the video of the anniversary celebrations Warren O'Rourke wrote "The alumni of the schools are a proud and successful group. Behind their whooping it up was a real regard for the schools. Compared with other Kurseong schools featured in the video, VS & DH were less academically orientated but more socially at ease and adaptable, and these qualities, I think, made for their doing well in their careers and their personal relationships. Their education had been attuned to life rather than books, and this was still the animus of the schools. Moreover, present day students were more into social trends than we, their predecessors, ever were. Their musical activities, with several groups of guitar players, and their dancing and singing were evidence of widespread participation and creativity. There was strong Western influence in these activities, but there were essential Indian elements too. VSDH represented a blend of the cultures, in popular fashion."

Muriel Glendinning, (Seymour-Shove) loaned me the DVD of the Toy Train. What nostalgia! The sound is enough to transport me back, never mind the zig-zags and the loop the loops. Muriel wrote, "Hearing the familiar place names brought back so many memories. In the news there is much said about the time children spend playing computer games, etc, instead of playing games in the fresh air. How blessed we were with the variety of games we all enjoyed. Different versions of Hop Scotch, Kick the Can, Five Stones, Skipping to ;Salt, Pepper , Mustard, Vinegar'. Then we had such a special Sports Day for which we trained so hard, and practised all the group displays Miss Smith (and later Miss D'Sena!) arranged. From the hill overlooking the Sports field it must have looked great to the many local kids and adults who came to watch, including Tum -Tum Mary in her striking hats!

Alison Blunt invited us to her book launch-- "Domicile and Diaspora" on Anglo-Indian women and the spatial politics of home. My sister Felicity and her husband came down for this. She is on the cover in a photograph taken by my Dad when she was two years old. The "do" was very relaxed and friendly and we met a lot of interesting people.

We keep in touch with Francis and Lloyd Crump, Anna Yates and Gareth Swan-Brown with visits. Crystal David (Cowan) lives very near but we both lead busy lives and don't see as much of each other as I would wish. Thank heavens for my phone! I pay a fixed sum monthly and can talk to locals and U.K. wide 24 hours a day. (And I do?!!) e.g. Ask Olga Barker (D'Sena). Olga has been on a few holidays to the hospitals of her area, and has enjoyed the invigorating effect of these sojourns!! Thankfully, we all say.

On Oct.16th, Dorothea Ingles (Myers) invited me over for the day, together with Peggy Littlewood, Rosemary Ingels (LaRiverre), Angela Gribble (Carter), Joan Steinhouse (Peters) and Betty Brown (Copley). Betty and Don were over as part of their Golden Wedding Anniversary Celebrations. We had a magical day, of Heavenly Grub and Hilarious Gossip!! We all took pictures and a selection will be on display at the Reunion. Our very sincere thanks to Dorothea for making this possible and for all the trouble she took. I shall patronize her restaurant anytime she plans to open one!

The last night of the year saw us, as usual at the Anglo-Indian New Years Eve Dance where we met Dudley and Coral Avery. I had received an X'mas card from Marie to say that Bob had had a mini stroke but Dudley alarmed me. So I phoned Bob, and yes, he has been through the mill, but is well on the mend. However, he is not able to drive for a year. He is prepared to use public transport, unless anyone can offer a lift, to attend the Reunion. I feel he may really need the latter, so if anyone can help I am sure you will.

As we all missed Megan Myers (O'Rourke) at the Reunion I was very concerned. She IS OK now but I feel you will be interested to read of her illness. "Three days before the Reunion I went down with (Dr speak) 'flu/malaria (Megan speak). I had it a few times in India during the school holidays, but never in the mountains. I had it again in England in my late forties when there was an epidemic labeled "Asian Flu". I told my then Dr. it felt like Malaria and he said that that was exactly what it was. I next had it, aged 75, when I went on an expedition up the Irrawaddy from Rangoon to just beyond Mandalay. Fortunately, there were three Doctors in the party who had fought in the Burma Campaign. Now , aged 85plus I have had this latest attack in spite of the annual jabs and all my plotting and scheming." So, Megan, we shall be seeing you for the next 10 plus Reunions-----Good.

I received a beautiful letter card from Madhusree DasGupta (Sen). The card was photographed and produced by Anita Blackman (Mordecai). Madhu's husband has been through the mill, physically, but is doing well now, thankfully. She wrote "On the happier side Warren O'Rourke, Rose ,Aubrey and Clare Ballantine, Mr. And Mrs. Charan Mathur and I had a leisurely lunch at Aubrey's house, among an idyllic atmosphere of Clare's garden. We also had a second lunch today with Rita SenGupta (visiting Toronto), the Ballantines, Urmilla Bannerjee, Brenda Brewster and her husband. The venue this time was the "Madras Palace".

Warren O'Rourke gave some details about Mr. And Mrs. Mathur that were of interest. They "were both teachers at the Hill Top schools, which their children attended. Their daughter Deepaka was born while they were living in one of the masters bungalows below the school---one of a limited number of VS/DH babies. Charan taught Science and was Scoutmaster. Carl Bloud was Acting Headmaster. It was when the schools were in transition from Anglo- Indian to Indian. The video showed the schools in completed transition."

Joyce Dobra (Staynor) wrote a lovely letter about her family. With three grandchildren of my own, I do enjoy hearing of others' experiences. She, too, keeps in touch with Warren, and , with great thankfulness, I say "Who doesn't?"

Alice Wrigley (Saunders) wrote on receiving the June Newsletter, "It is always nice to see the names of people we knew. One name was Ian Cann, an old boyfriend---more like dancing partner. Here is what he wrote in my autograph book---"Your future lies before you, Like a sheet of fallen snow. Be careful how you tread it, for every step will show. Best wishes Ian Cann VSK 47". He had nice handwriting as well. He was fair haired and blue eyed". Memories!!

Alice gave news of Charlotte Dunne who writes to her regularly. "Charlotte wrote that the water situation in Darjeeling is critical . She goes down to Siliguri once a week to do her washing at her sister's flat! Apart from the locals and the tourists, how do the dhobis manage? She also sent cuttings from the newspapers about the schools' situation--they are more interested in changing the curriculum than in maintaining the buildings and caring for the pupils' welfare."

She also wrote that last year she visited Bulbul and Sally Carapiet. She said, "It took me two hours getting there by two trains, ferry and bus, but it was well worth it. Bulbul was waiting for me at Manly Wharf. He looked as though he had lost weight. Sally had made a delicious chicken curry. We had a lovely time chatting. Sally went to school with my two Hardaker cousins at La Martinierre in Lucknow. Bulbul grew up with my cousin's husband Winston Woodhouse in Calcutta. It is indeed a small world. In March, Natalie (Noney) and the two Kelly sisters , Noeline and Maureen and myself went out to lunch. The sisters have a wonderful sense of humour.

In April we met again at Natalie's house. This time, Doreen Grezoux (Colah) and her daughter Julie were present. Also Melanie, Doreen Scott's daughter. Doreen was a Culloden and a DH girl." Alice continued, "I saw the Howrah Bridge being built and completed. During the War Years barage balloons flew over the bridge. Before the Howrah Bridge was built we went across a pontoon bridge. Warren remembered this as he lived near Howrah."

Alice's letters are always so interesting that Dereyck can barely wait for me to finish reading them

before he asks for the news. She sure gets around! In October she visited a friend in Adelaide who drove her to Glenville to visit Yvonne D'Sena (Howe). She wrote, "I did not recognise her but she recognised me. We spent a very pleasant afternoon chatting about school days and looking at old photos. Yvonne has bad arthritis and misses Olsen very much. Her daughter Cheryl drove me back to my friend's house---a very nice person. Whilst in Adelaide I went on a tour of the wineries and on the coach there was an unmistakable Anglo Indian voice! On introducing myself I found I was talking to Denis Woodward who came from Jamalpur, and went to Oak Grove School. His sister Shirley went to D.H. 1942 -1946. I do not remember the name. He said that Oak Grove has an annual reunion and gave me his address. Shirley died of cancer in 1986."

Yes, Alice , and I plan to append their flier for their Reunion. Naturally, the information for our Reunion will be attached, but I must reinforce DO NOT PARK ON ANY MAIN ROAD. YOU WILL GET A TICKET. DO NOT PARK ON ANY YELLOW LINES.

I will also give the details of the Hill Schools Reunion in March.

Subs for 2006 remain at £3-00 for the UK and Europe, and £5-00 for the rest of the world. This is PER ANNUM.

If there is an asterisk here, it means you owe subs for this year. Please send subs in Sterling.

I have kept the most meaningful news till last. A card from Eva Das Gupta said, "my niece (Ela's daughter) was in the USA on a Full Bright Scholarship for six months. She met Dorothy (Bunty) (nee Swan Brown) and Daphne Brown (Hardinge). She tells me that meeting Bunty was the most memorable event in her life. Bunty showed her photos of Ela and told her all about life in DHS." I know how important our lives in DHVS were to US, but when our experiences are appreciated by our children, it gives even more meaning to our own lives, now.

I end on a quotation sent by Betty Brown (Copley), as I do feel it epitomises us Vadhans.
"Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming WOW----WHAT A RIDE!!"

Keep riding!

As always,

Love, Grace