

## **CAN'T WAIT TO SEE OLD PALS FROM KINGSHOLM**

The Gloucester CITIZEN interview Andy Vanes

07 October 2006

In response to last week's article about the forthcoming Kingsholm School reunion, one former pupil has already got in touch. Andy Vanes left school in 1970 and now lives near Yeovilton, in Somerset. But he is planning to come to the reunion and get back in touch with his old chums. He is delighted by the idea of a get-together and still has fond memories of Gloucester and his schooldays." I'll hopefully get to the reunion. It will be nice to see everyone again because I'm not in touch with anyone from school now," he said." I've only heard from Mario Mager, who contacted me about the reunion, and from people via Friends Reunited." It'll be interesting to see everyone. There isn't one individual in particular I'm looking forward to seeing, but people should keep in touch because they're part of each other's history. "My only concern is whether I'll be able to recognise them now." I know that one of the boys I went to school with, Sam Peck, has died, but I don't know what of or when. It's important to find out what happened to him." Andy has vivid memories of life at Kingsholm. He said: "I remember my schooldays well. I remember the steam trains - I used to watch them for ages. We could hear them in class because they always passed by the windows." I enjoyed going to school and was pretty well behaved - although I do remember being caned a few times. "I'm not sure what I was caned for but it was always painful. "I remember the teachers well too - Mr. Hopkins was the deputy head and Jim Ward was the math's teacher - I can still recall his crew-cut hair. "I can also recall my geography teacher John Stangroom, who had lovely handwriting. "Geography was my favourite subject - the only one I was good at. "Now, years later, I work as an aircraft navigator and read maps for a living." Mr. Vanes, 53, used to live in Tuffley, Gloucester, and his mother Edna, 78, sister Lesley and nieces Leanne, 21, and Laura, 18, continue to live there. His son Iain, 30, also lives in Gloucester after leaving school in 1970; Andy joined the Royal Navy where he worked for 22 years. He began as a chef but quickly moved into flying. His schoolmates Mike Hughes and Phil Egerton joined him, although the trio were quickly separated. Today Andy works for the Royal Naval Air Station in Yeovilton - a job he loves because of the camaraderie and flexibility. He describes working for the navy as "exhilarating". Despite having spent the past 20 years living all over the UK, Andy says Gloucester remains dear to him. He said: "I come back regularly to see the family and watch the rugby on Saturdays. Every time I visit things have changed. "I really like Gloucester people - they're top draw - and Gloucester still remains a friendly, fantastic place. It was a great place to grow up. "When I come back I walk down Worcester Street and often look at the school. "It's sad it's no longer a school - perhaps they should try to reopen it. "Andy added: "My dad passed away 10 years ago and my mum is on her own so I do try to come and see her. I'll be staying with her for the reunion. "Since I joined the Navy I've always called my mum. Next weekend, at least, she'll get me in the flesh."