

## Memories from the Common Room



**Michael  
'Mike'  
Gavins**

Member of Staff 1968 to 1994, Housemaster of School House 1972 to 1987

I moved from Yorkshire to Uppingham in 1968 at the invitation of John Royds, the School's Headmaster, to introduce the subject of Economics. The Common Room was a little intimidating at the time with only two of us not being graduates from Oxford or Cambridge. However, my great friends and colleagues, Malcolm Bussey and Tim Montagnon, soon allayed my fears and I settled in to life at Uppingham.

As well as teaching Economics, and later History too, I enjoyed coaching rugby at all levels through the School. Two of my favourite seasons were coaching the Colts in 1972 and 1974 which were both all-conquering sides. One of my most enjoyable memories is the final game of the 1974 team against Oakham. The master-in-charge of the Oakham team was also the Leicestershire County Coach. Despite my recommendations, none of the Uppingham team had been picked for the county, and the bulk of the

October		Colts XV		Result	
Sat	5	v. Rugby	(H)	17-0	W
Tues	8	v. Trent College	(A)	27-3	W
Tues	15	v. Oundle	(H)	17-9	W
Sat	19	v. Solihull	(A)	27-6	W
November			(H)	36-6	W
Sat	16	v. Bedford	(A)	22-9	W
Sat	30	v. Bedford Modern	(A)	50-0	W
December			(H)	86-0	W
Sat	7	v. Wyggeston	(A)		
Sat	14	v. Oakham	(H)		
			TOTAL	276	- 29

Colts XV winning fixture card, 1974



French Rugby Tour poster, 1976

Oakham Colts had. In my team talk I mentioned this, and the lads got so fired up they went on to win 86-0 – amazingly they got quicker and quicker during the match rather than tiring or taking their foot off the pedal.

I also remember some fantastic rugby tours to Grenoble, Vienne, Bourgoin-Jallieu in France, Portugal, and a

wonderful trip to Canada. I enjoyed working with Malcolm Bussey, and didn't mind being his number two, especially in Grenoble where he stayed at the Head Coach's house, and I was billeted at the Chairman's Michelin-starred hotel!

My career at Uppingham took a step up when I was asked to be the Housemaster of School House in 1972, the first non-Headmaster to hold that position. I moved with my family from 1 Lodge Close (now the site of Samworths'), to School House, and, at the Headmaster's suggestion, retired from playing rugby for Leicester Tigers.

Being a Housemaster was daunting but I was very lucky that my wife Hilary had a qualification in domestic science. I looked after the academic and extra curricula activities and she headed an experienced back of house team, which included the wonderful Peggy and Freda in the kitchens. We had very happy times in School House and were immensely proud of all "our lads".



I also enjoyed Uppingham's music with the fantastic Chapel singing, concerts and the House Shout. The Christmas Carol service was always very special.

And finally, one of my strongest non-academic, sport or house memories was being persuaded to appear in an end-of-year review in the Theatre, dancing the New York Hustle to the Bee Gees' *Night Fever*.

I am very grateful for what Uppingham gave me, and my family - and hope that I've been able to give something back in turn.

**Michael moved to Wantage in 2015, nearer to his family than Uppingham, where he is living independently and, in his own words, is "plodding along". He is well known in the town for always being smartly turned out, "gentlemanly", and able to sing songs spontaneously on most topics.**