

and girls are members of the club.

The high point of last year (1988) was our convincing win in the annual inter-school match over the very strong Aranui High School Team in the third term.

The team for that game was:

Rikki Chapman, Andrew Simpson, Michael Shears,

Richard Genet.

The club has been ably led by Andrew Simpson who had been the motivating force behind all the school competitions. The Bowls Club owes a lot to his enthusiasm and dedication.

Princess Anne, Joe Stalin and The Teacher-Librarian

T. Agnew

The plain-clothes policemen were enormous. They filled the library doorway and blocked out the morning sunlight. 'We'll check the library again' said one, fingering his radio set. 'The bomb-dog will be arriving in a minute'.

Once the clatter of boots (and pater of paws) had died away, we were left alone with our nerves. White-faced students shuffled their history books. Teachers' palms sweated. Librarians' knees knocked. How do you bow? Curtsey? I don't know how to pronounce "Ma'am".

Suddenly a swirl of dignitaries preceded a blaze of yellow. Oh good, she's wearing Hillmorton High School colours.

Introduction, handshake and bow. 'Welcome to the library your Royal Highness.' Now, what's next? Oh, yes. I've got to introduce - er-gulp- the librarians here. Now, what are their names? I've worked with them for years. Croak. 'Ma'am, I'd like to introduce our librarians, Mrs Clarke and Mrs Steele.'

The Princess Royal whips off her glove and signs the visitors' book: 'Anne'.

It becomes clear that she has done her homework last night. She knows that a student, Sharlene Belcher, designed the carpet. She has intelligent questions to ask about the library and its use as a teaching resource. She's interested. She's asking very searching questions.

Fear replaces panic. Can I answer these questions? The obvious solution is to get the Princess Royal over to F5 History as quickly as possible, and let Ms Robertson field the knotty questions. Another croaking introduction.

Ms Robertson explains how F5 History have been examining a wide range of books to see what they say about Stalin. H.R.H. looks at

some student folders and we're all grateful that F5 History have also done their homework.

Students, who had promised to faint, if they were asked questions, find themselves chatting to the Princess.

Relief replaces fear. I'm tip-toeing away, just as Ms Robertson brightly explains where the 1953 Russian magazines came from. 'Oh yes, Mr Agnew found these for us!' The teacher-librarian is back in the Royal firing-line.

Hysteria replaces alarm. Does she think I'm a commie? Or does she know that historians never throw anything away?

'What has the class discovered about Stalin?'

Rattled, I decide to try my favourite Stalin joke out on royalty. 'When Stalin was at the height of his power, a bright reporter located his dear old mum and asked what Joseph had been like as a boy. The old lady replied, "Zo-zo was always a good boy".'

A royal chortle, followed by 'But that's what the mothers of mass murderers always say on television, isn't it?'

I'm speechless. The Princess Royal has stolen my punch-line.

'Of course, Stalin was a mass murderer' she continues. Clearly a reply is required. 'Croak, Gak. But isn't it nice that, no matter what you do your mother always loves you.'

As the Royal Visitor heads for the door in a burst of royal laughter, I suddenly remember who her mother is.

It's too late to run after her, shouting 'No reference intended'. Besides I'd probably get jumped by the bomb dog. I return to Ms Robertson and F5 History. 'Have you heard the one about Joseph Stalin's old mother ...?'

